

Challenges and Evolving Perspectives in Obesity and Weight Management





KS&R conducted a nationwide survey uncovering how Americans above a healthy weight view their own health, the challenges they face in managing weight, and the opportunities for improving support and outcomes.

This report captures the voices of 501 adults across the U.S., balanced by age, gender, and region, to offer a comprehensive picture of how perceptions, motivations, and barriers are shaping the evolving landscape of weight management.



“Our findings reveal that weight management is as much an emotional journey as it is a physical one. People want support, consistency, and credible guidance—but most feel overwhelmed by the noise. By understanding these lived experiences, brands can play a meaningful role in helping consumers build confidence and long-term success.”

David Ouellette

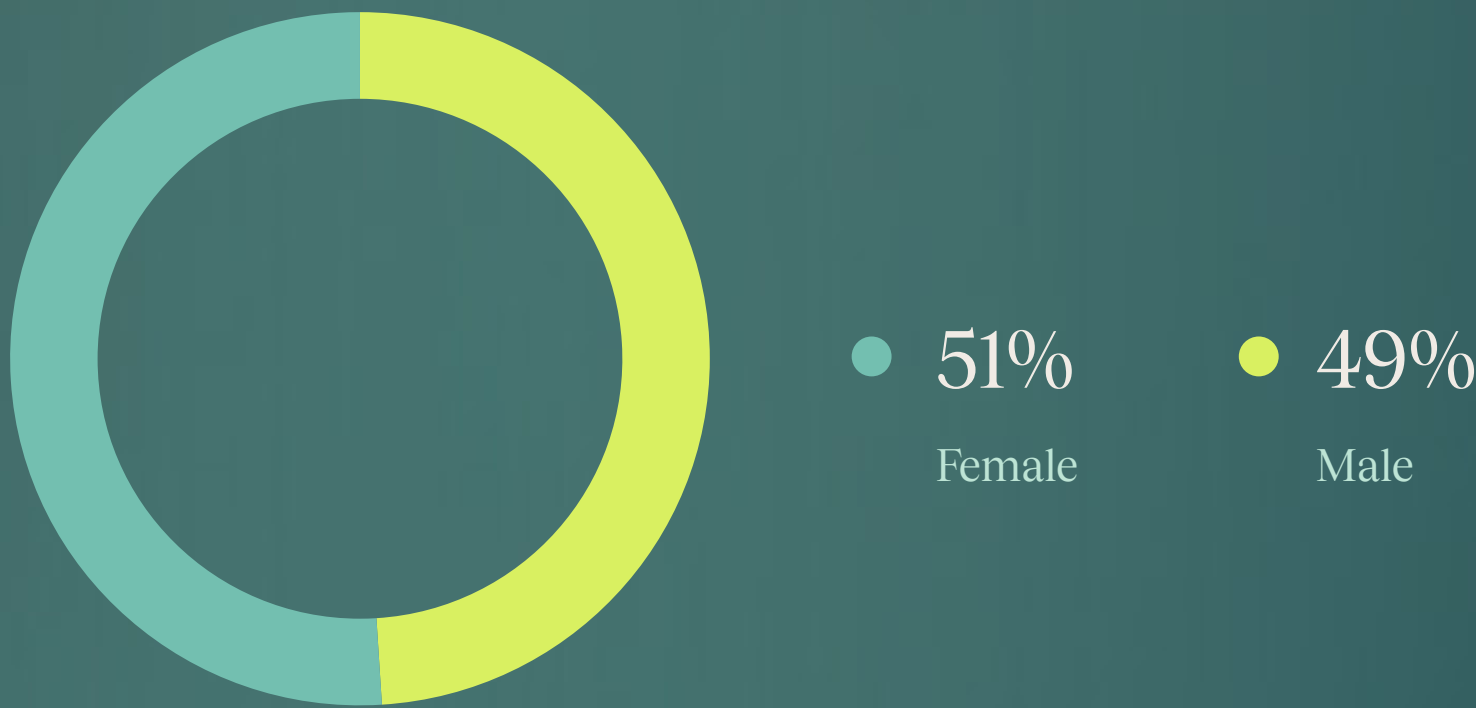
Director of Healthcare at KS&R

Who We Talked To

KS&R surveyed 501 adults who self-identified as being above or significantly above a healthy weight¹. The sample was balanced to reflect U.S. Census representation by age, gender, and region.

Here is a quick demographic breakdown of those who completed:

Gender



Age



Income



Region



¹Important to note we did not require any BMI requirements to define overweight as we wanted the survey to be a little more friendly and personal and didn't want to turn anyone off based on perceptions of that measure.

How Do They Look At Their Current Health

Aside from self-reporting being somewhat or significantly over a healthy weight, these people are at different stages on medication for weight loss, existing health conditions, and perceptions of their own health.

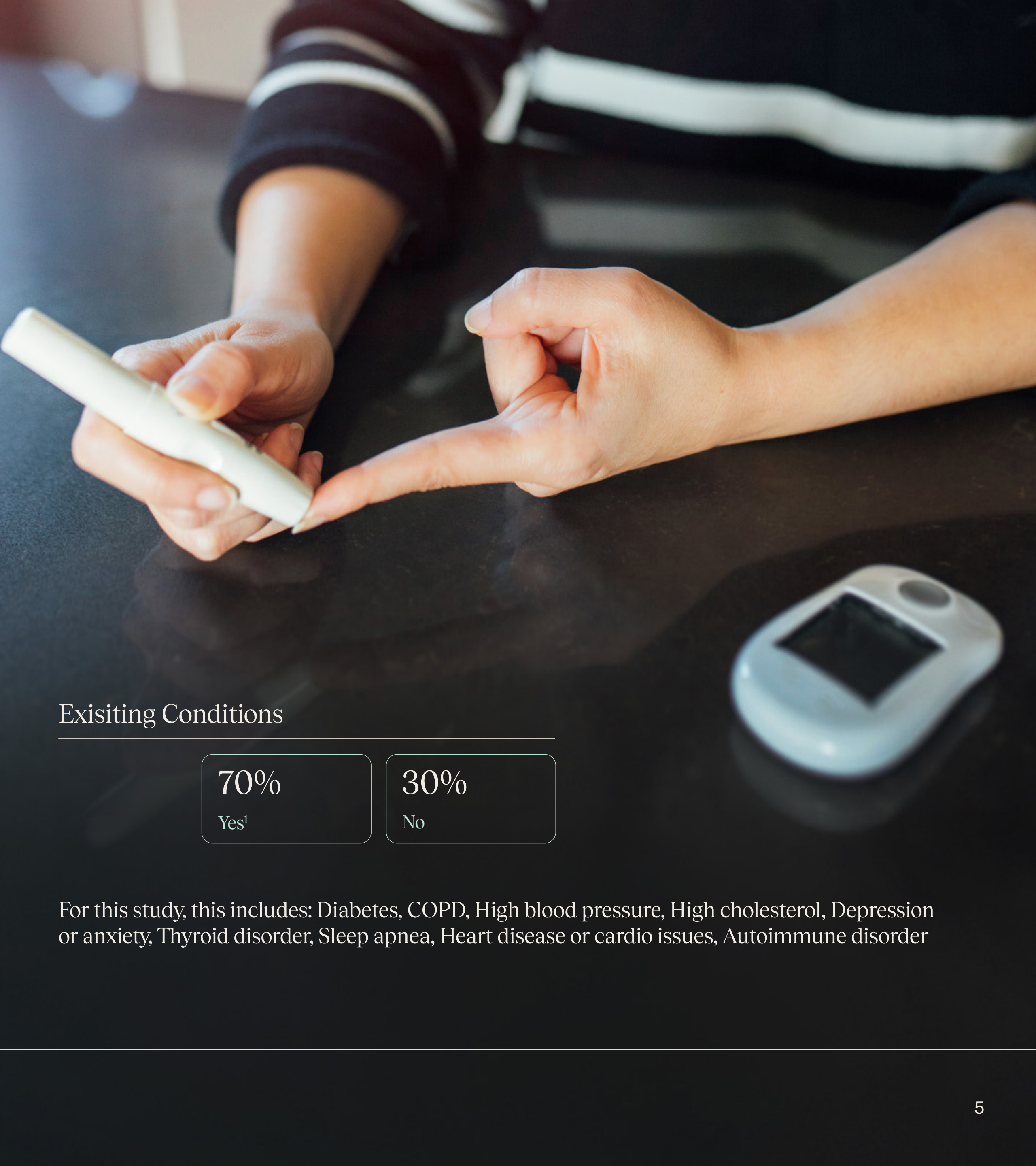
Weight



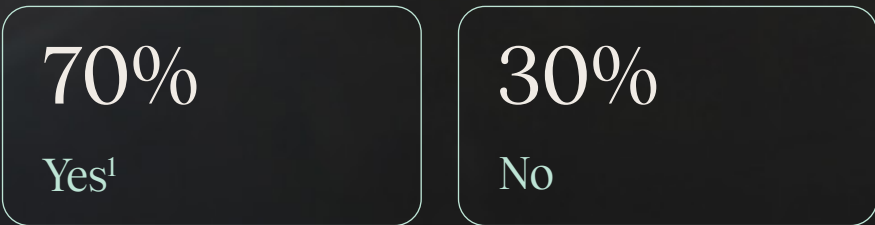
Medication



Health



Existing Conditions



For this study, this includes: Diabetes, COPD, High blood pressure, High cholesterol, Depression or anxiety, Thyroid disorder, Sleep apnea, Heart disease or cardio issues, Autoimmune disorder

Perspectives on Obesity & Weight Management

Gender

Women tend to internalize weight as a personal and social challenge, while men frame it as a practical one focused on tactics. Women emphasize confidence building, peer and provider support, and clear guidance on when medications help alongside structured nutrition programs. Men lead with exercise forward plans, simple information pathways, and concise coaching that addresses beliefs about stigma and medical framing.

Age

Age shapes both context and confidence. 18–54 lead with time-savvy, sleep-aware, integrated support and clear guidance on when meds help. For 55+, they foreground risk transparency, clinician-guided pathways, and reassurance on safety and outcomes.

Income

Lower income consumers report heavier health burdens and more financial barriers; mid income consumers show better self-rated health with growing time constraints. Higher income consumers are the most digitally engaged, reporting stronger clinical support, and participation in exercise programs more often,

while the perceived link between weight and other conditions remains consistent across income groups.

Region



- Diabetes is reported more often in the Midwest and West.
- Barriers differ: the Midwest most often struggles with hydration.
- The Midwest feels least supported by healthcare professionals and relies least on online sources.

Comorbidities

Self-reported pre-existing health conditions shape the weight management journey by shifting focus from social and confidence-related factors toward daily health management and clinical guidance. Those with conditions tend to emphasize medical support and quality-of-life challenges, while those without conditions more often focus on time pressures, affordability, and social support.

What Does It Mean to Be Healthy?

Health is widely viewed as empowerment and independence—rooted in eating well, exercising regularly, and maintaining mobility.

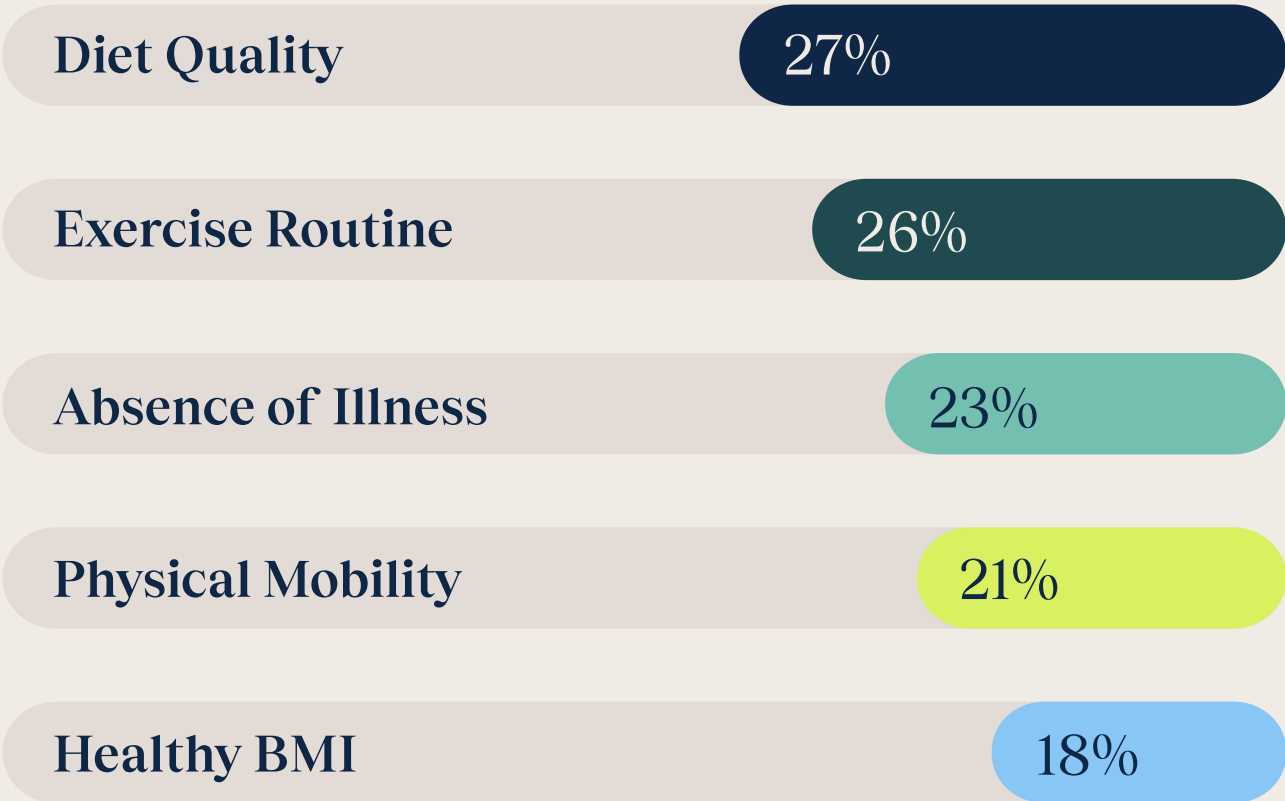
Consumers emphasize being proactive rather than simply avoiding illness. Mental health, confidence, and life balance are also central to their definition of health.

Health communications should focus on proactive living, empowering people to sustain energy, mobility, and confidence.

Notable Mentions:

Being healthy means I'm in shape and looking fit; Health means being pain-free in my daily life; Health involves both the mind and body; Valuing healthcare providers' perspectives; Health means feeling good every day.

5 Most Frequent Themes



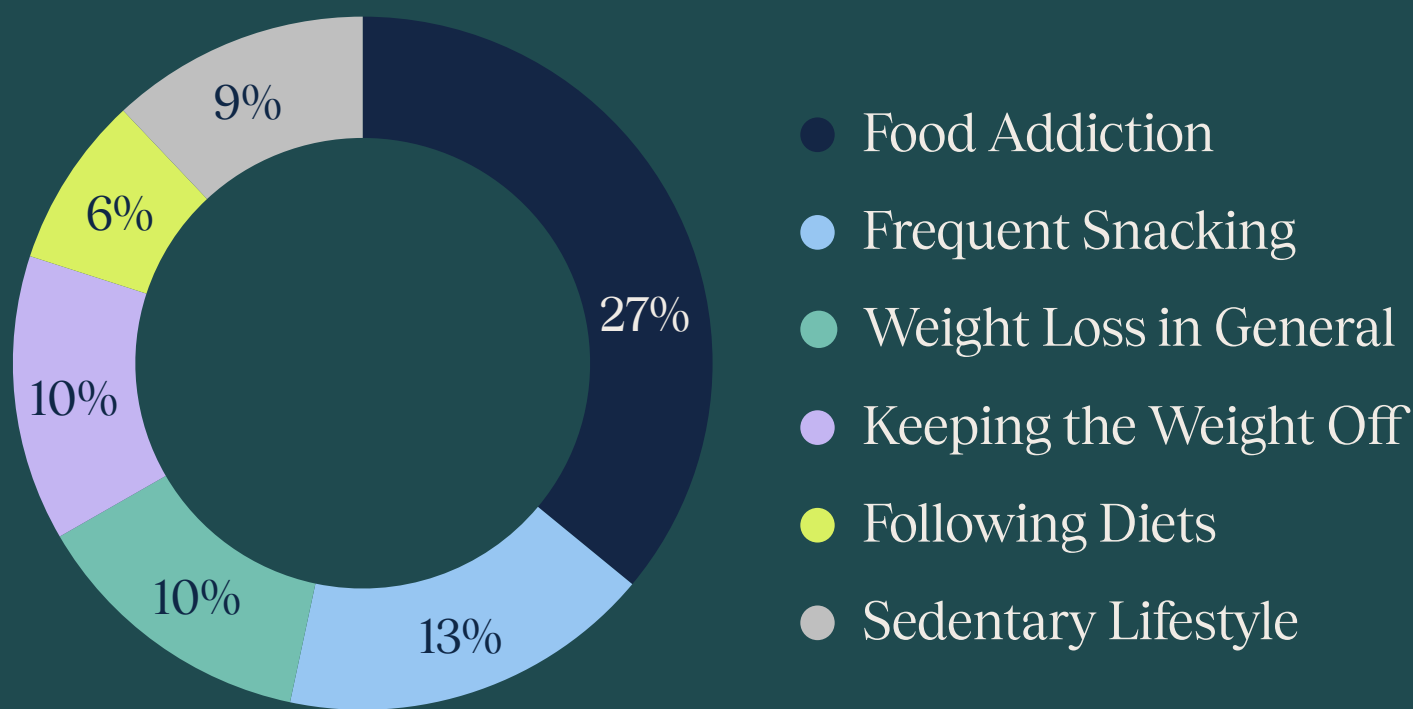
Biggest Challenges in Weight Management

Food addiction and cravings emerge as the single greatest barriers to managing weight, followed by time pressures, cost, and maintaining motivation. Emotional and behavioral factors outweigh physical or societal barriers. These challenges are amplified by age, income, and health conditions.

Addressing emotional eating and cravings directly through behavioral tools, affordable nutrition support, and small habit-based changes, could drive meaningful progress.

Notable Mentions:

General trouble losing weight, frequent snacking (junk foods/sweets), limited mobility due to pain, slower metabolism (age, thyroid), need for diet education, difficulty sustaining weight loss (habits, late-night eating), low willpower, difficulty staying on track, limited time for exercise, stress, cost, fast food accessibility, food quality concerns.



Most Challenging Lifestyle Changes

Eating healthier is the hardest change to sustain, followed by consistent exercise, hydration, and better sleep.

Consumers with pre-existing health conditions especially struggle with hydration, while those without conditions more often cite time as their biggest obstacle.

5 Most Frequent Themes (Ranked)

1. Eat Healthier (Avoiding Unhealthy Food)
2. Find the Time to Exercise
3. Drink Enough Water Daily
4. Improve Sleeping Habits
5. Avoid Dining Out

Perceptions Toward Weight Management

Most consumers find that food cravings make it difficult to stick to a healthy plan, and many report using food for comfort during times of stress. Over half say that weight impacts their confidence, creates feelings of being stuck in a repeated gain-loss cycle, and has day-to-day consequences.

- Women are more likely to describe themselves as “stuck” and to link weight to diminished confidence, while men are less likely to acknowledge stigma or the emotional burden of weight.
- People with pre-existing health conditions were less likely to say weight affects their confidence or that societal barriers hold them back, but more likely to agree that weight significantly impacts their day-to-day life.

Weight management isn't just about diet and exercise — emotions and habits run the show. Cravings, comfort eating, and confidence challenges often outweigh time or societal barriers, making emotional regulation key to lasting success.





Support and Resources

Healthcare professionals and online sources are the most common channels for weight management information.

Yet fewer than half of consumers feel adequately supported by their providers, and many describe conversations about weight as difficult or uncomfortable.

Those with pre-existing conditions rely more on medical advice, while others look to peers and digital communities for motivation.

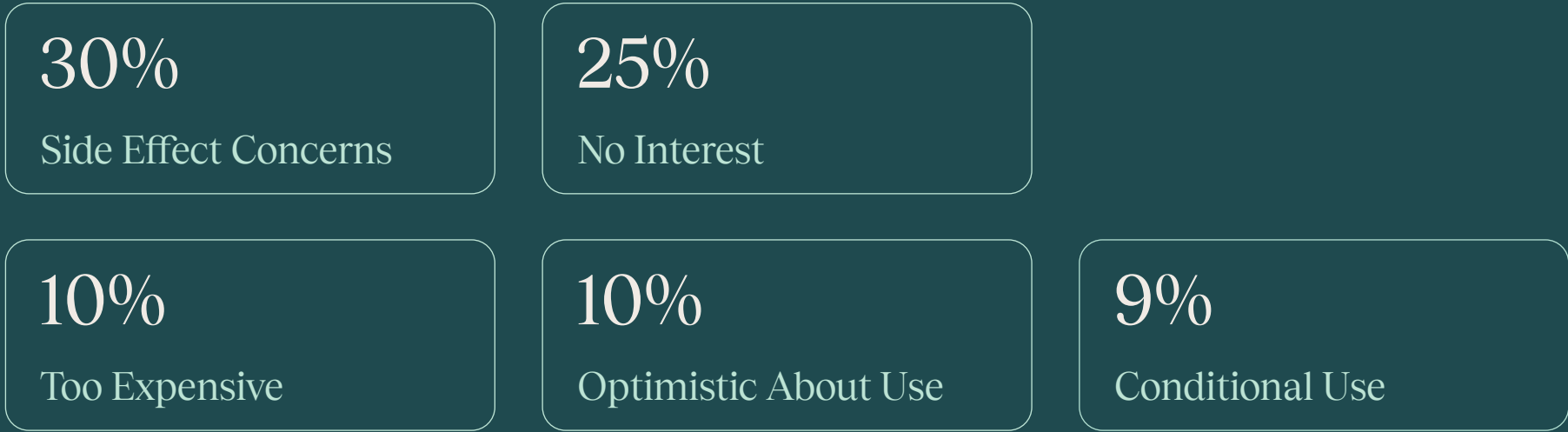
Support must extend beyond information to empathy, trust, and actionable guidance. **Providers should emphasize sensitivity and clear next steps, while peer networks can strengthen social motivation.**

Perceptions and Opinions of Weight Loss Medications

Concerns about side effects, dependency, and cost dominate attitudes toward medications.

- Younger adults (18-54) are more open to trying them, while older adults express greater caution.
- Regional variation shows stronger intent to use medications in the Northeast and South.
- People with pre-existing conditions were more inclined to seek professional guidance about medications.

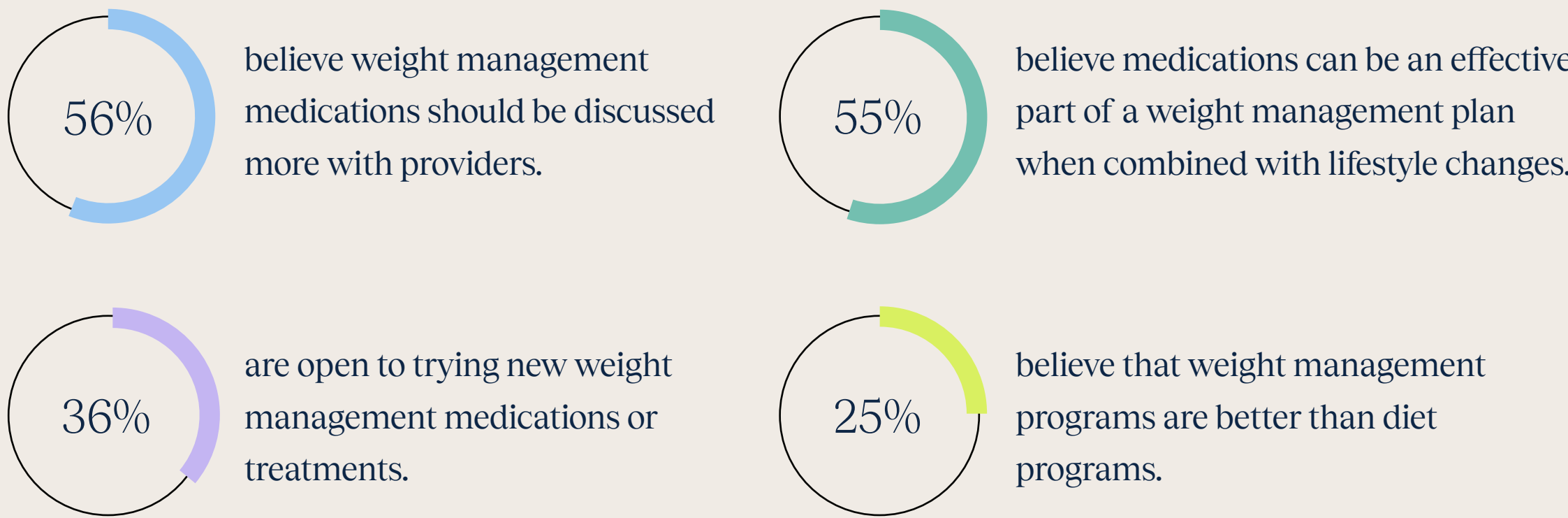
5 Most Frequent Themes (Surrounding Weight Loss Medications)



Approaches to Weight Management

Exercise and intermittent fasting are the most common strategies, though they are not seen as the most effective. Medically supervised programs and surgery are rated as more effective but remain underused due to cost and accessibility barriers. Women tend to favor commercial programs and meal replacements, while men lean toward exercise and tactical approaches.

Opportunities for Greater Openness



Looking ahead

Weight management is entering a transformative period, where conversations are shifting from appearance to health, from quick fixes to sustainable routines. Empathy, personalization, and integration across medical and lifestyle approaches will shape the next wave of progress in weight health.

Consumers want guidance rooted in understanding and transparency—with providers, peers, and themselves.

5 Most Frequent Themes (Survey Results)

- 1. **Start with shared goals between patients and healthcare providers:** Conversations are more effective when both sides agree on what “healthy” looks like and work toward it together.
- 2. **Approach weight loss discussions with empathy, not judgement:** Tone and sensitivity matter as much as the message.
- 3. **Emphasize the role of healthy habits:** Behavioral changes are still seen as essential, especially when framed as achievable and sustainable.
- 4. **Highlight long-term lifestyle changes over quick fixes:** Weight management is about building routines that stick.
- 5. **Acknowledge and address concerns about side effects:** Patients want honesty and reassurance about potential risks, especially with medications or treatments





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