



FROM THE SLIMMING SIXTIES TO BABY BOOMERS BOOMING

- Over 20% more adults classified as obese today than in the 1960s – but much less likely to do anything about it -

Overweight adults today are far less likely to try and lose weight compared to their 1960s counterparts, according to a study out today.

The Change4Life campaign has re-run research conducted in 1967 with adults who considered themselves overweight and asked adults today who have similar weight concerns to compare attitudes to diet and activity then and now - revealing telling differences.

Despite the fact that people in the 60s had less access to gyms and a love of high fat foods like condensed milk and cooked breakfast, people were slimmer because they generally had more active, healthier everyday lifestyles.

The online survey findings are also supported by findings that highlight the differences between the way we live our lives now compared to the 1960s. Back in the 1960s, there were only 10.5 million TVs compared to a predicted rise to 74 million TVs by 2020. Similarly, the number of cars has exploded as commuter towns have developed, cutting down on the number of people who regularly walk to work or school.

Despite the fact that people actually have more fat in their bodies nowadays:

- In 1967, nine out of 10 people surveyed had tried to lose weight during that year but in 2010 that had fallen to just over half (57%).
- In 1967, only 7% of those who considered themselves overweight had failed to do anything about it. In 2010 a whopping 43% of adults who recognized that they were overweight in the last three months hadn't done anything about it.
- Two thirds (66%) of the people surveyed in 1967 still wanted to lose up to a stone, but by 2010, less than a half of them wanted to lose that much weight (46%).

- This trend continued for those desiring bigger weight loss with 33% wanting to lose more than two stone in 1967 compared to only 28% in 2010.
- In 1967, more than three-quarters (77%) of adults said that they walked for at least half an hour every day compared to only 42% in 2010.
- 13% of adults today who recognized that they were overweight in the last three months admit they hardly walk at all on an average day (this figure was 0% in 1967)
- Whilst weight loss technology was still in its infancy, 2% of people claimed to have used vibrating massage belts (the 60s equivalent of Power Plates) for weight loss in 1967

Professor Oddy, renowned social historian and author of *The Rise of Obesity in Europe: a Twentieth Century Food History*, commented: “Nowadays, our increasingly sedentary lives paired with the proliferation of a wide range of unhealthy foods have combined to create a very difficult environment for people to reach and maintain a healthy weight.”

Back in the 1960s only 1% of men and 2%¹ of women in England were classed as obese compared to today’s 25.2% of men and 27.7% women². At the end of the 1950s, the average man weighed 65kg and the average woman 55kg. Fast-forward to today and the average weights are 83.6kg and 70.2kg respectively³.

This month, Change4Life is extending its healthy living campaign to target middle-aged adults as the baby boomers of the 1960s are the first generation to reach this obesity crisis point. Most middle-aged adults are acutely aware that they have gradually gained weight with age and would like to do something about it but that they don’t know where to start. Change4Life aims to combat this by providing clear, simple swaps for people to build into their everyday lives such as swapping four wheels for two feet at least one day a week as a step towards to a healthy weight.

The research also revealed the following information:

Question	1967	Today
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¹ Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Tackling Obesity in England, HC220 Session 2000-1, National Audit Office, London HMSO

² Health Survey for England, 2008

³ The Annual Reports of the National Food Survey published as Household Food Consumption by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). Composite Tables from 1942 to 2000 were published by MAFF in 2001. From 2001 the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has (a) published the historical tables of the National Food Survey and carried on a Family Food Survey.

Number of adults who feel that they have weighed more than they would like to in the last 3 months	62%	74%
Of the adults who felt they weighed more than they would like to:		
Say they walk for more than 2 hours a day	26%	4%
Say they spend more than 8 hours a day sitting down	16%	23%
First considered themselves overweight as a child	32%	11%
Would find condensed milk hard to give up	52%	1%
Would find heavy puddings hard to give up	70%	4%

Modern life to blame:

Topic	1960s	Today
TVs	75% of families ⁴	98.8% of families ⁵
Cars	3 out of 10 households ⁶	7 out of 10 households ⁷
Hours spent on high-energy household chores	13 hours a week ⁸	6 hours a week ⁹
Supermarkets	572 ¹⁰	59,713 ¹¹
Cooking	Mothers spent one hour 40 minutes per day (fathers 26 minutes) ¹²	Mothers spent one hour per day (fathers 27 minutes) ¹³
Takeaways	Arrived in the mid-60s	50% of people regularly or occasionally purchase a takeaway ¹⁴
Average waist size for women	70cm / 27.5 inches ¹⁵	86cm / 34 inches ¹⁶

Diana Moran, fitness expert and journalist said: “There have been massive shifts since the 1960s in the way we live our lives. The 60s were a time when we didn’t have the size zero obsession and fad diets yet through more daily exercise in our normal routines, we managed to stay slimmer.”

⁴ BT Connected Earth Report, 2008 <http://www.connected-earth.com/LearningCentre/HowhaslifeinBritainchanged>

⁵ Broadcasters’ Audience Research Report, 2007

⁶ ONS Social Trends 30, 1961 - 1998

⁷ ONS Family Expenditure Survey, 1999-2000

⁸ The Future Foundation Families Report, 2002

⁹ As Above

¹⁰ FSA <http://www.meatandeducation.com/resources/downloads/pdf/consumerattitudes.pdf>

¹¹ IGD - <http://www.igd.com/index.asp?id=1&fid=1&sid=7&tid=26&cid=94#2>

¹² The Future Foundation Families Report, 2002

¹³ The Future Foundation Families Report, 2002

¹⁴ FSA <http://www.meatandeducation.com/resources/downloads/pdf/consumerattitudes.pdf>

¹⁵ SizeUK, 1951 data (no data available for 1960s)

¹⁶ SizeUK, 2004 data (latest available)

This research shows that building simple activities into part of a daily routine was a very effective way to stay in shape in the 1960s. Today, Change4Life encourages adults to make simple swaps in their lifestyles so they can live longer, healthier lives. Get involved with Change4Life at www.nhs.uk/change4life

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

1. For copies of the Change4Life creatives e.g. logo, Television adverts, print images, call Freud communications on 0203 003 6391, or email tim.potter@freud.com or call the Department of Health news desk on 020 7210 5649
2. **Additional collateral available:** Ministerial quotes, interviews with
 - Diana Moran, BBC Fitness Guru
 - Range of adult case studies
3. Anyone who wants to get involved with Change4Life should register at www.nhs.uk/change4life
4. Adults should work towards 5 x 30 minutes of at least moderate physical activity a week (or more if trying to lose weight). NICE guidance for people trying to lose weight is to do 45-60 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a day, particularly if they do not reduce their energy intake
5. All figures from 2010, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1546 for adults who have felt overweight in the last 3 months. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 8th February 2010. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).
6. All figures from 1967, unless otherwise stated are from Which Consumers Association. Total sample size was 1876 for those who had experienced being overweight. Fieldwork was completed in April 1967. The survey was conducted with people who responded to an advertisement in Which? Magazine