

# Weight Loss Among the 18+

Bulletin Poll October 2013

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### About this research

The purpose of this brief poll was to investigate the weight loss experiences among a representative sample of people ages 18 and older. In addition, we want to compare two age groups (18-49 years of age with those 50+).

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Barbranda Walls of the AARP Bulletin for her ideas, suggestions, and request for this information. Additional thanks go to Teresa A. Keenan, Ph.D., for her review of this report.

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## General Research Methods Overview 2013

- Data Collection Mode: →Random-digit dial telephone omnibus survey
- Sample: →The total sample included 1,006 respondents age 18+
- Objectives: →To learn what proportion of people have ever tried to lose weight, why they wanted to lose weight, and how they tried to achieve their goal
- Fielded: →August 7 – August 11, 2013
- Margin of error: →For total respondents is +/- 3.09% at the 95% level of confidence

# KEY FINDINGS



## **Key Findings:** In light of rising obesity rates, the findings from this survey present an optimistic view of weight loss in America.

- Most people are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their current weight (61%).
- Given our cultural bias toward thinness among women, it is not surprisingly that women are more dissatisfied with their current weight than men (37% of females vs. 26% of males are “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”). No significant differences were found between younger adults (18-49 year olds) and older adults (50+) regarding their satisfaction with their current weight.
- While most (64%) people have tried to lose weight at some point in their life, women (73%) are significantly more likely than men (56%) to say they have tried to lose weight. Older adults (69%) are more likely than younger adults (61%) to say they have tried to lose weight. We do not know if this is because they have lived longer, or have experienced age-associated weight gains.
- When we look at those who are currently trying to lose weight, we once again find women (55%) are more likely than men (45%) to say they are trying to do this.
- By far, the main reason given for trying to lose weight is “to get healthy” (61%).
- The strategies people use to lose weight vary by age. Younger adults (93%) are more likely than older adults (80%) to say they “exercise” to achieve their weight loss goals. Older adults (90%), on the other hand, are more likely than younger adults (80%) to say they “eat less.”
- Most people are satisfied with their attempts to lose weight and to maintain their weight loss. More than seven in ten people (72%) report being satisfied with their weight loss. More than six in ten people (66%) report being satisfied with their ability to maintain their weight loss. These results did not vary by age or gender.

# Detailed Findings

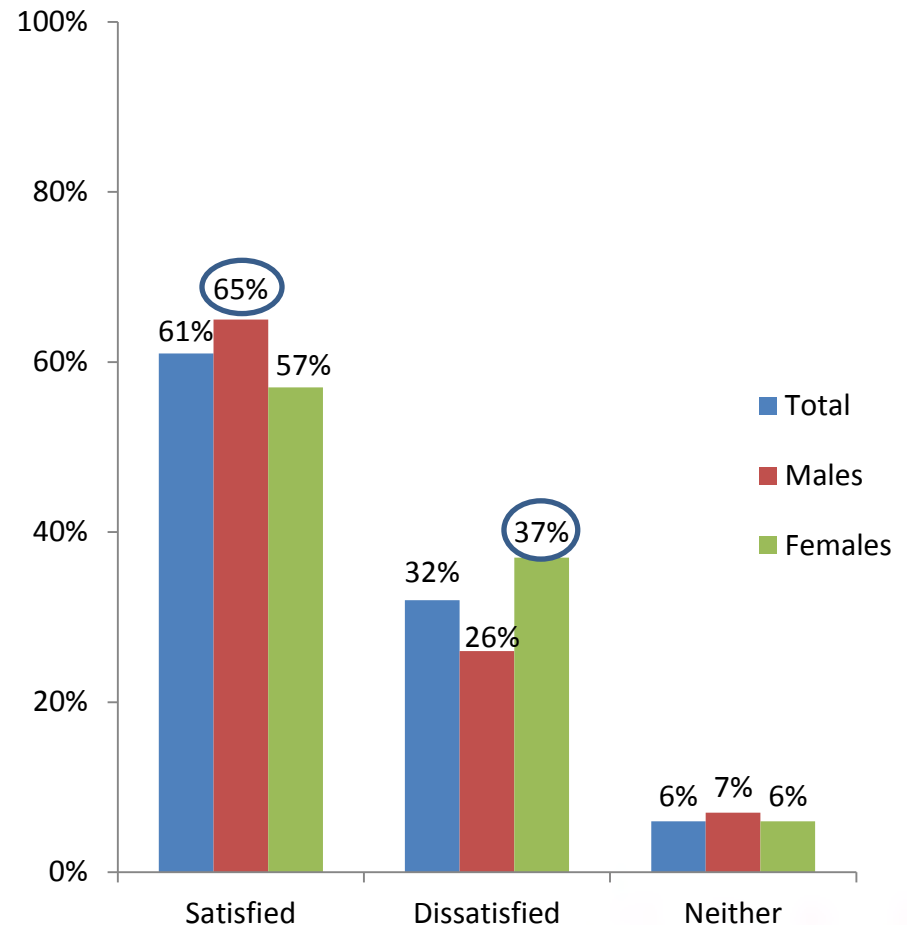


# Satisfaction with current weight?

## Q1. How satisfied are you with your current weight?

Most people say they are “very or somewhat satisfied” with their current weight (61%).

- Males are more likely to say they are “very or somewhat satisfied” with their current weight than females (65% vs. 57%). Conversely, more than one-third (37%) of females are dissatisfied with their weight compared with roughly one-quarter (26%) of males.
- There are no age differences in respondents’ level of satisfaction with their current weight.
- Interesting findings emerged regarding ethnicity. More than seven in ten (73%) Hispanics are satisfied with their current weight compared to roughly six in ten white, non-Hispanics (59%).



Source: AARP Bulletin Poll, Weight Loss Experiences, October 2013. N= 1006.

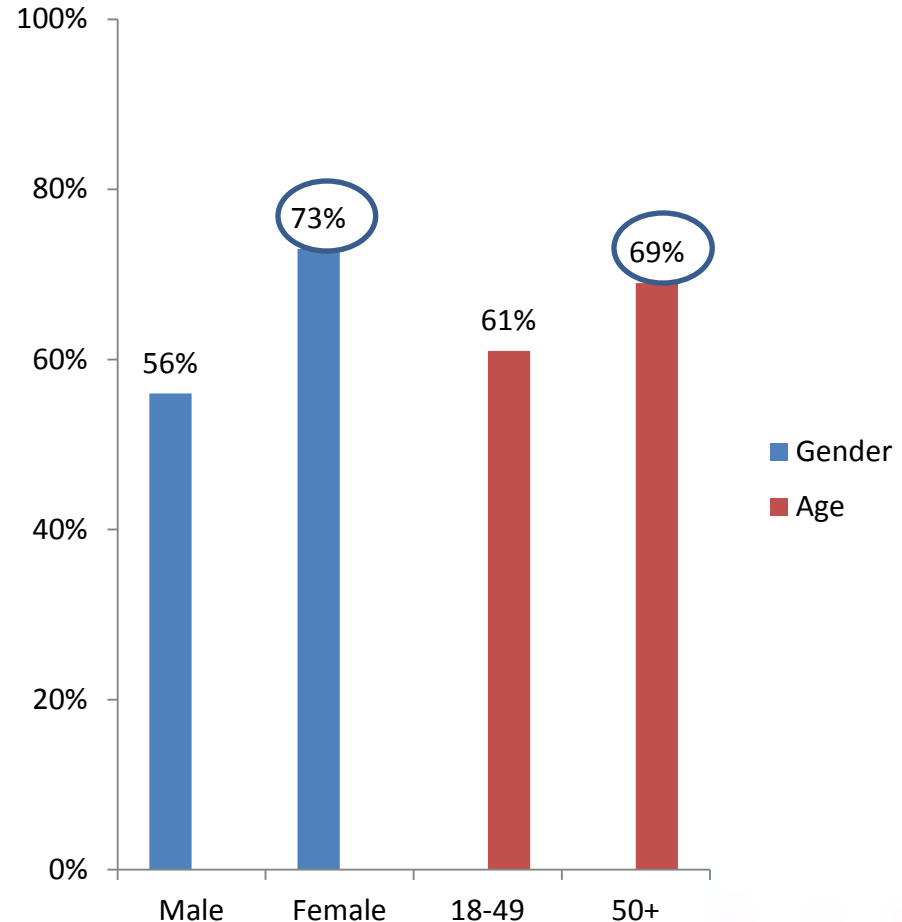


# Weight Loss History

## Q2. Have you ever tried to lose weight?

Most people (64%) have tried to lose weight at some point in their life.

- Women (73%) are more likely than men (56%) to say they have tried to lose weight.
- People who are age 50+ (69%) are more likely than those between the ages of 18-49 years (61%) to say they have tried to lose weight. There are at least two reasonable explanations:
  - This finding may reflect that as people age, their metabolism slows down and they are likely to gain weight unless they control their diet and exercise.
  - Alternatively, older adults have lived longer and thus had more time to try to lose weight than younger adults.

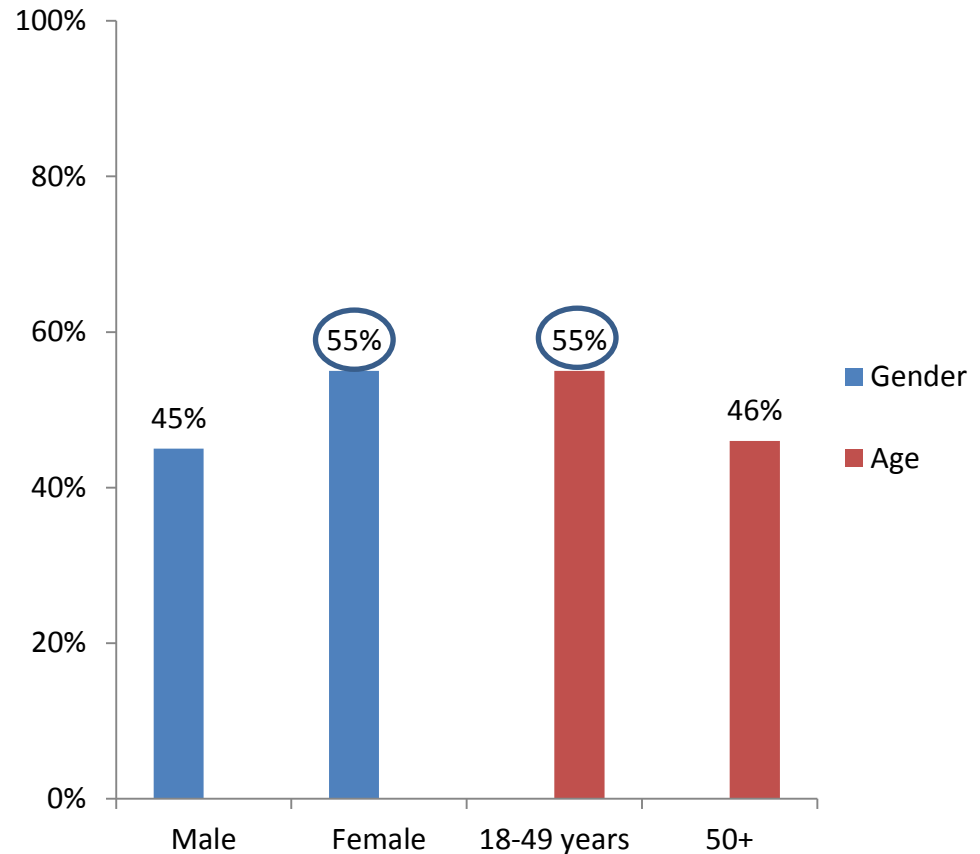


Source: AARP Bulletin Poll, Weight Loss Experiences, October 2013.  
N= People who have tried to lose weight.

## Current Weight Loss

### Q3. Are you currently trying to lose weight?

- Among those who have ever tried to lose weight, half (51%) say they are currently trying to lose weight.
- Not surprisingly, more women (55%) are currently trying to lose weight compared to men (45%).
- Younger adults are also more likely to say they are currently trying to lose weight than older adults (55% of those 18-49 years and 46% of those 50+).



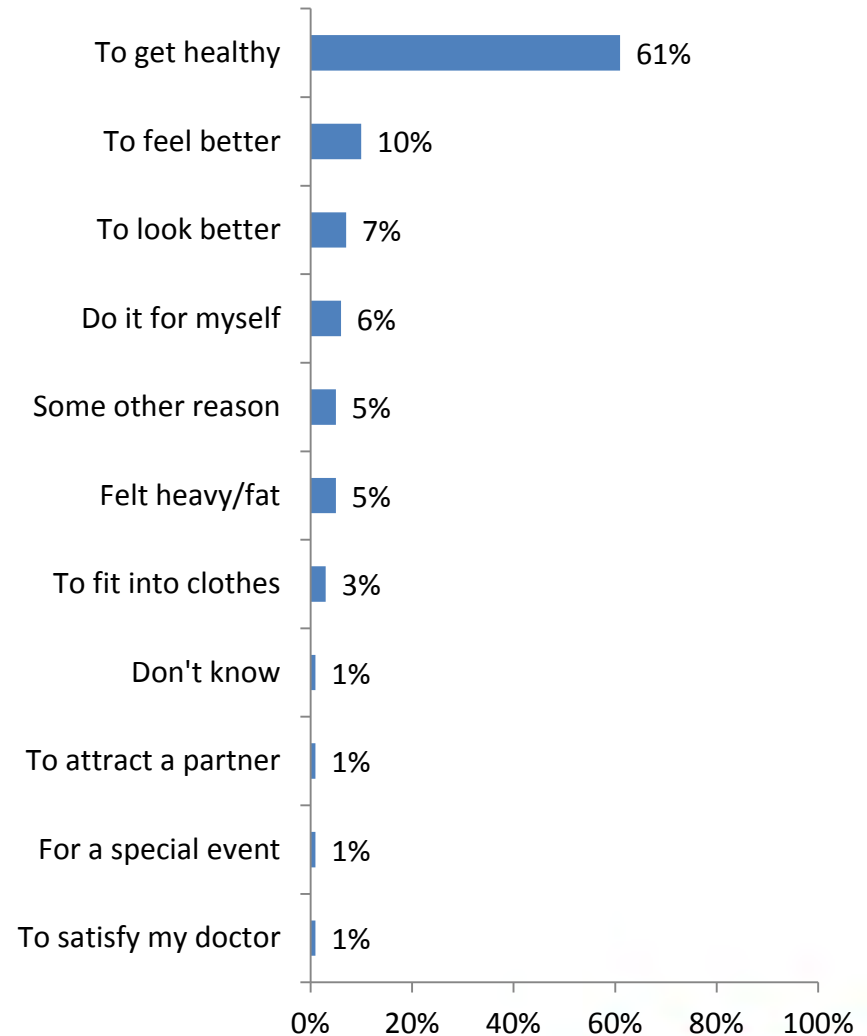
Source: AARP Bulletin Poll, Weight Loss Experiences, October 2013.  
N= people who have tried to lose weight.

# Reasons for Trying to Lose Weight?

**Q4. When you are trying to lose weight, what would you say is the MAIN reason you are doing so?**

Among people who have tried to lose weight:

- Most (61%) have been motivated “to get healthy”. No other reason comes close to wanting to be healthy.
- Younger adults ages 18-49 who have tried to lose weight are more likely than older adults age 50+ to say “they did it for themselves” (10% vs. 3%) or “they did it to look better” (9% vs. 5%).



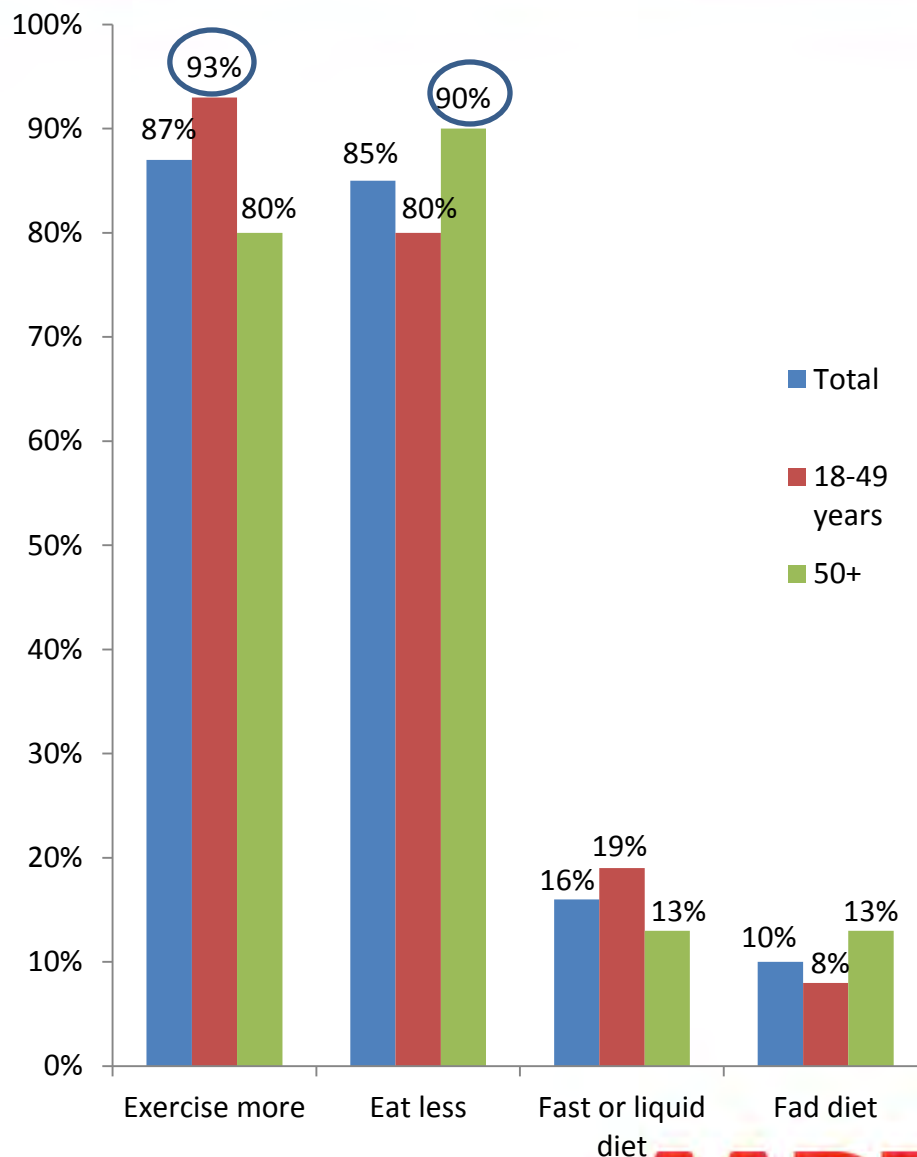
Source: AARP Bulletin Poll, Weight Loss Experiences, October 2013. N= people who have tried to lose weight

## Behaviors to Lose Weight

### Q5: What kinds of things do you do to lose weight?

We asked people who had tried to lose weight what they did to achieve this goal. Most people try to exercise more (87%) or eat less (85%). The choice of these approaches varies by age.

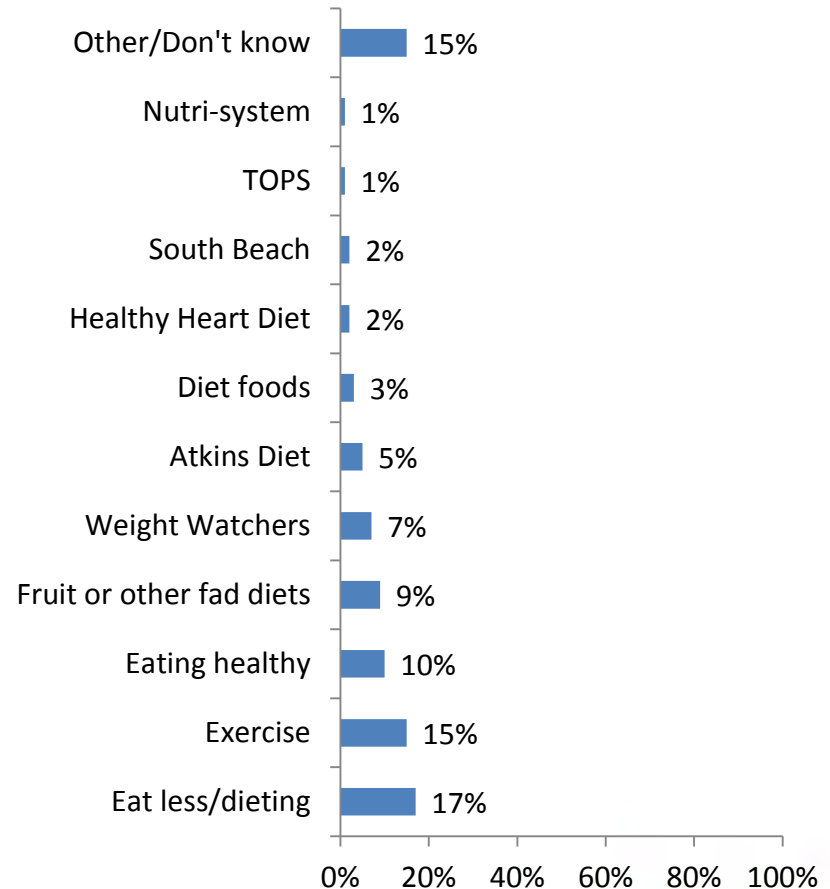
- Younger adults (93%) are more likely than older adults (80%) to say they exercise more.
- Older adults (90%) are more likely than younger adults (80%) to say they eat less.
- Few say they try to fast / use a liquid diet, or a fad diet.



# A One-size Fits all Approach Does *Not* Work for Weight Loss

**Q6. What was the last approach or weight loss plan you have used to try to lose weight?**

- We asked people what approaches they used last to lose weight. This was an open-ended question with a pre-designed set of codes.
- Nearly one in five (17%) revert back to the common practices of eating less. Older adults (20%) are more likely than younger adults (14%) to give this answer Younger adults (22%) are more likely than older adults (7%) to say they use exercise as a way to lose weight.
- Women (10%) are more likely than men (4%) and older adults (10%) are more likely than younger adults (5%).
- Fruit or fad diets are also more likely to be used by women (12%) than men (5%).



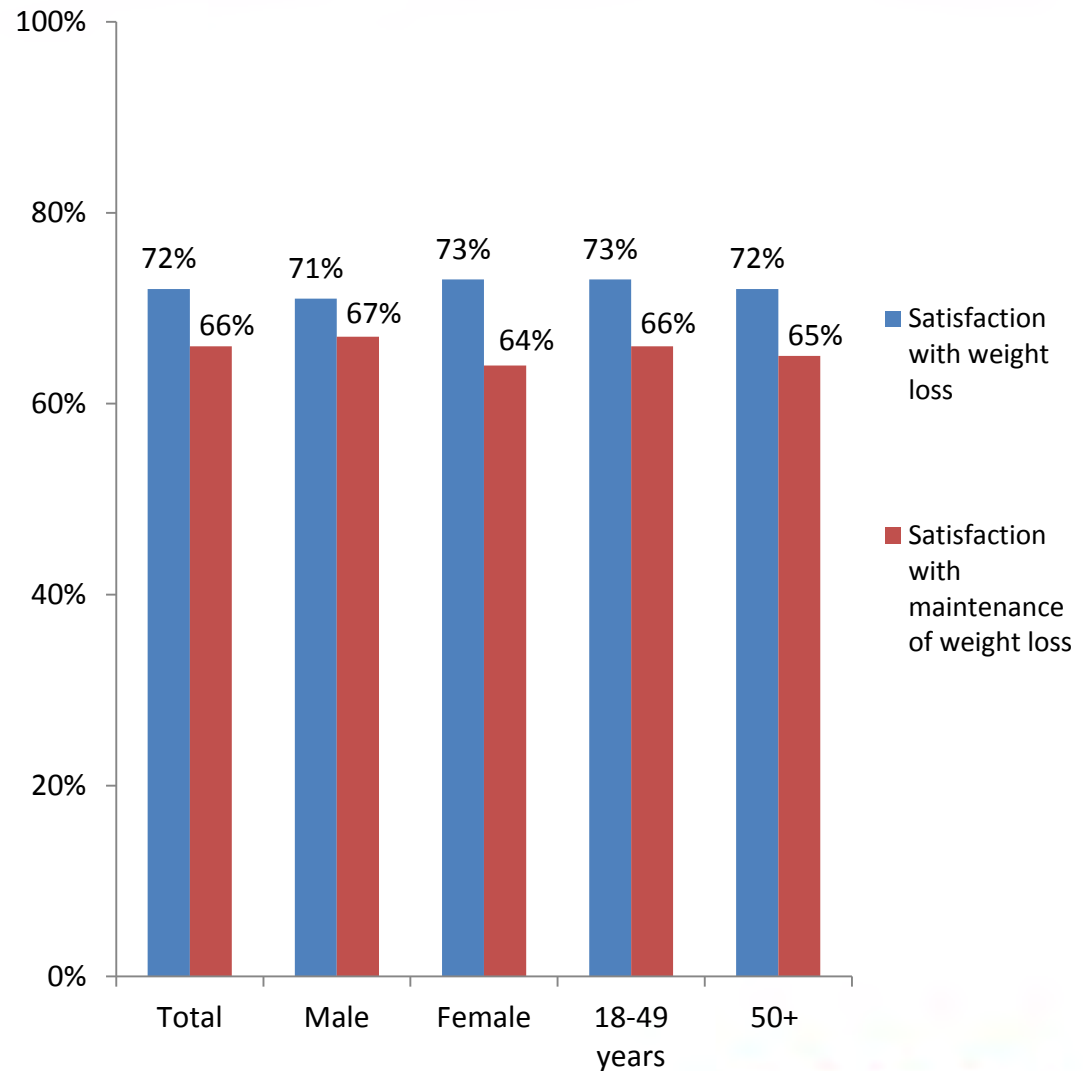
Source: AARP Bulletin Poll, Weight Loss Experiences, October 2013. N= people who have tried to lose weight

## Weight Loss Maintenance

**Q7. How satisfied are you with your success at losing weight?**

**Q8. How satisfied are you with your success at maintaining your weight loss.**

- A high proportion of people who tried to lose weight were “very or somewhat satisfied” with their results (72%).
- Somewhat fewer were satisfied with their ability to maintain their weight loss (66%). However, this figure suggests that two-thirds were satisfied with their weight maintenance. There were no significant differences by gender or age.



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# Annotated Questionnaire

## AARP Bulletin Poll on Weight Loss

8/12/2013 5:18:00 PM  
weightlossqn.doc  
Job #M8832  
August 7, 2013

*This study was conducted for AARP via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted from August 7- August 11, 2013 among a nationally representative sample of 1,006 respondents age 18 and older. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.09% at the 95% confidence level. More information about SSRS can be obtained by visiting [www.ssrs.com](http://www.ssrs.com)*

### WL-1. How satisfied are you with your current weight? Are you ...?

	SATISFIED			Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	NOT SATISFIED			Don't know	Refused
	NET	Very	Somewhat		NET	Somewhat	Very		
08/11/13	61	34	26	6	32	20	12	1	1

### WL-2. Have you ever tried to lose weight?

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
08/11/13	64	34	*	1

### WL-3. Are you currently trying to lose weight?

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
08/11/13	51	49	--	--

### WL-2/3. Combo Table

	EVER TRIED TO LOSE WEIGHT			Never tried to lose weight	Don't know	Refused
	NET	Currently trying to lose weight	Not currently trying to lose weight			
08/11/13	64	33	32	34	*	1



**WL-4. When you are trying to lose weight, what would you say is the MAIN reason you are doing so?**

	08/11/13
Attract a partner	1
Do it for myself	6
Feel better	10
Fit into clothes	3
For a special event	1
Get healthy	61
Look better	7
Look younger	--
Please my spouse or partner	--
Satisfy my doctor	1
Felt fat/heavy/gained weight	5
Some other reason	5
Don't know	1
Refused	*

**WL-5. What kinds of things do you do to lose weight? Do you try to (INSERT ITEM)...?**

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
Eat less	85	15	*	*
Exercise more	87	13	*	*
Fast	16	83	*	--
Try a fad diet	10	88	1	--

**WL-6. What was the last approach or weight loss plan you have used to try to lose weight?**

	08/11/13
Atkins Diet (no carbohydrates)	5
Diet foods or drinks (such as Lean Cuisine, Slim Fast)	3
Fruit diets or other fad diets	9
Healthy Heart Diet	2
Jenny Craig	*
Mediterranean Diet	*
Nutri-system	1
Pritikin Diet	--
South Beach Diet	2
TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)	1
Weight Watchers	7
Eat less/dieting	17
Exercise	15
Eating healthy	10
No plan/did it on my own	10
Other	7
Don't know	8
Refused	3

**WL-7. How satisfied are you with your success at losing weight?**

	SATISFIED			Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	NOT SATISFIED			Don't know	Refused
	NET	Very	Somewhat		NET	Somewhat	Very		
08/11/13	72	32	40	8	19	12	7	*	*

**WL-8. How satisfied are you with maintaining your weight loss?**

	SATISFIED			Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	NOT SATISFIED			Don't know	Refused
	NET	Very	Somewhat		NET	Somewhat	Very		
08/11/13	66	30	35	11	22	14	8	1	*