**Not a weighty issue for most**

Many S'poreans eat what they want: Survey

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MOST Singaporeans couldn’t care less about their weight, if survey results released yesterday are to be believed. And those who do care about the extra kilos generally use sensible methods like exercise to keep in shape.

In a weight management survey spanning 13 countries on five continents, Singaporeans turned out to be the least weight-obsessed, with 37 per cent of them never weighing themselves and 59 per cent eating “whatever they want, whenever they want”.

This puts them ahead of their peers in other parts of the world, with a third weighing themselves regularly and only about one in five never doing so.

Research firm Synovate, polled more than 9,000 respondents in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Brazil and Saudi Arabia.

The majority of Singaporeans, or 71 per cent, relied on exercise and reduced food intake to lose weight. Three in five had never tried weight loss courses, supplements or gym memberships to shed the extra pounds.

By contrast, the Americans and the French were the most weight conscious, with over half of each nationality checking their weight at least once a week.

Americans, however, are the world’s second biggest fans of fast food. About 44 per cent “like the taste of fast food too much to give it up”, Britons topped the fast-food league.

Some people in Singapore were surprised by the survey’s findings. “Most of my female friends are weight-conscious,” said business development executive Eileen Lee, 28. “Even if they are not actively on an exercise or diet regime, they would somehow be weight-conscious.”

Equally surprised was social sciences academic Ilya Farber of the Singapore Management University, who said a few factors may have contributed to the findings.

One of them could have been gender: The men might not be weighing themselves.

“In Singapore, the weight loss messages and weight loss products on the shelves are usually targeted at women,” said Prof Farber.

The survey did not specify how many of the 1,013 respondents here were male.

Being fat in Singapore may also be seen as a sign of prosperity.

“In the Chinese culture, it’s a sign of success, especially among older people,” said Prof Farber. Or in a food paradise like our little island, being slim and eating rich food may simply be “a matter of competing priorities”, he added.

Others said Singaporeans might be aware that they were leading unhealthy lifestyles, but did little about it.

Wellness and slimming enterprise Expressions said that too much junk food, lack of exercise and stress were the leading causes of obesity among its clients, many of whom do not monitor their weight.

Agreeing, consultant Gary Chua, 27, said: “People will complain that they are fat and that they want to lose weight, but still pig out.”

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**HOW THEY WEIGHED IN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>SINGAPORE</th>
<th>REST OF WORLD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their weight does not change</td>
<td>23% agree</td>
<td>21% of Hong Kong people agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I like the taste of fast food too much to give it up”</td>
<td>75% disagree</td>
<td>55% in the United Kingdom disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I’m too busy to cook or plan my meals, and eat whatever is quick and easy”</td>
<td>50% agree</td>
<td>22% of Brazilians agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>The leading factor in obesity is:</td>
<td>A lack of exercise, say 20%</td>
<td>Food, say 40% of all respondents</td>
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</tbody>
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— Prof Ilya Farber, SMU