DIABETES CANADA

Public Understanding of **Diabetes Stigma**

A research report on the Canadian public's perception of diabetes and diabetes-related stigma.



Introduction

Diabetes Canada is pleased to present the findings from its first national benchmark survey, conducted to understand the Canadian public's perception of diabetes and diabetes-related stigma.

Methodology

The data presented in this report is based on responses collected from English and French-speaking participants from across Canada, 18 years of age and above. Conducted between September 3 and September 21, 2026, the survey included 1,559 Canadians, across all provinces and territories.

228 people with **diabetes**

856 people **without diabetes**, but know **someone living with diabetes**

475 people with **no connection to diabetes**

Report summary

Diabetes is closely connected to the lives of many Canadians through family, friends, caregiving and workplaces. This connection strengthens awareness: people who know someone living with diabetes are more likely to discuss the condition and feel more knowledgeable than those without a personal connection.

However, persistent misconceptions about sugar, weight and lifestyle choices continue to contribute to diabetes stigma. People living with diabetes report experiencing stigma from family, friends and healthcare settings, with lack of knowledge identified as a leading cause.

Canadians broadly support efforts to address diabetes stigma, including public education, stigma-free training for healthcare providers, more accurate media conversations and workplace education. The findings point to a clear need to turn this support into action by correcting myths and increasing understanding of the complexity of diabetes.

Connection to Diabetes

The closer diabetes is to people's lives, the more likely they are to have conversations about it and understand that it is a serious health condition.

Diabetes touches families, friendships and workplaces:

43% of people without diabetes have a **family member** with diabetes.





20% of people without diabetes have a **friend** with diabetes.

11% of people without diabetes have a **colleague** with diabetes.





6% of people without diabetes **provide care** for someone with diabetes.

Awareness and empathy for people with diabetes starts with someone they know and care about:

43%

of people **with family, friends or colleagues** with diabetes frequently **have conversations** with someone who lives with diabetes.

Those with a family member, friend, or other connection to diabetes report greater familiarity, compared to those who have no personal connection to someone living with diabetes:

55%

of people **with family, friends or colleagues** with diabetes report **knowing a lot or a fair amount** about diabetes.

28%

of those with **no connection** to diabetes report **knowing a lot or a fair amount** about diabetes.

Stigma

Diabetes stigma often comes from the people closest to us, even when they mean well.

Stigma doesn't always look like cruelty. Sometimes it looks like a well-meaning comment from someone you love. However, people with a connection to diabetes say they would avoid blaming jokes, use respectful language and see the harm diabetes stigma can cause.

For people living with diabetes, stigma can hit close to home:

Family	Friends	Healthcare settings	Workplaces
22%	15%	13%	9%

of people with diabetes indicate that they have experienced judgement, blame, assumptions or stigma from the above.

Stigma is mainly a result of lack of knowledge and judgement about what people living with diabetes can eat and drink, and being blamed for having diabetes:

76%

of people without diabetes agree that people with diabetes

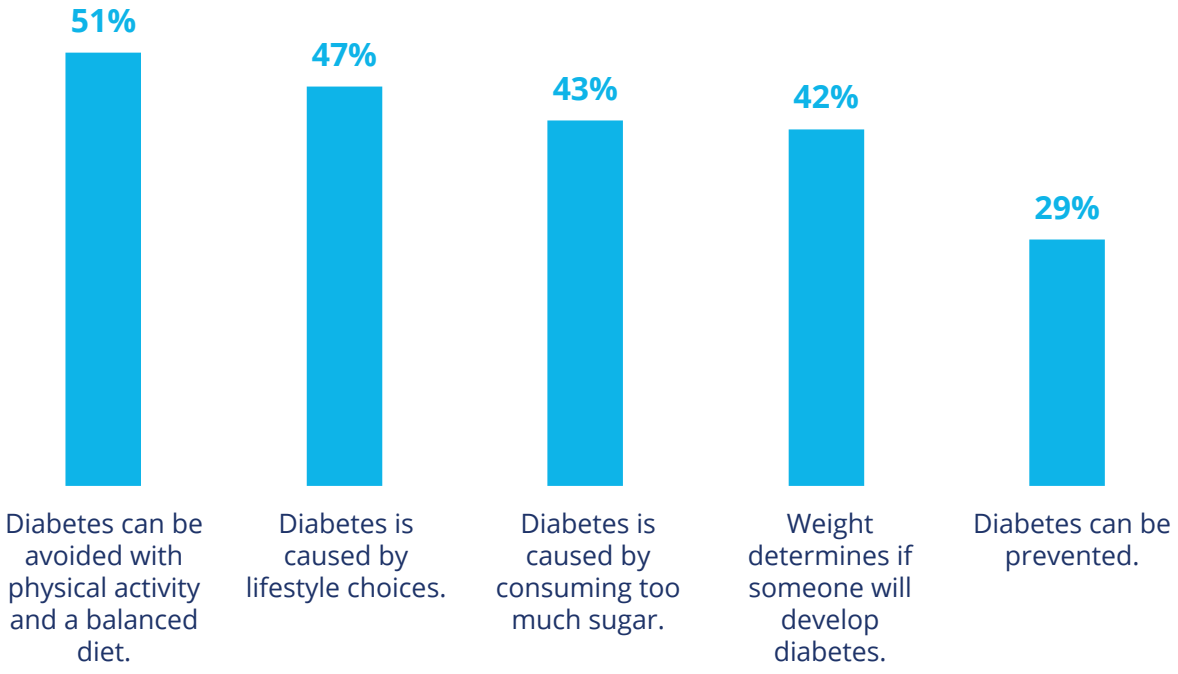
should limit or avoid eating sugary food or drinks.


33%
of people with diabetes
agree that some people
BLAME THEM FOR HAVING DIABETES OR THINK THEY BROUGHT IT ON THEMSELVES.

Understanding of Diabetes

Diabetes is complex, but many Canadians still see it as a matter of personal choice, with long-held beliefs that are harder to change.

Misunderstandings, a lack of knowledge and myths persist. People without diabetes indicate it is true that:



55%

of **people without diabetes** do not know that **type 1 diabetes** is an **autoimmune disease**

Public Support

Canadians support action against diabetes stigma. However, many people need to know how to help.

30%

of **people without diabetes** indicate they may **have a role** in reducing diabetes stigma but are **not sure** what that role it is.

There is broad public support for tackling diabetes stigma, from educating healthcare providers to changing the conversation in media and workplaces.

85%
of people without diabetes support

Healthcare provider education on stigma-free diabetes care.

82%
of people without diabetes support

Public education campaigns to reduce diabetes stigma.



80%
of people without diabetes support

Changing how **diabetes is discussed** in media and public campaigns.

79%
of people without diabetes support

Workplace training to better support people living with diabetes.

Conclusion

Public education and awareness are identified as the leading solutions – leading to greater understanding about the realities and myths of diabetes, as well as a better understanding of the medical and social complexity of living with diabetes

Diabetes Canada wants to improve the quality of life for every person living with diabetes and this includes promoting the changing of minds, words and actions to be more positive. **Let's reimagine a world with more compassion, empathy and better health outcomes for people living with diabetes, and then let's create it together.**

Learn more about how at diabetes.ca/changetheconversation





Education. Understanding. Empathy.

About Diabetes Canada

Our vision at Diabetes Canada is a world free from the effects of diabetes. That's why we work together to improve the lives of those living with diabetes – sharing knowledge and resources, supporting health-care professionals to improve patient care, advocating for change through policy, and funding research to advance treatments and discover a cure.

Living with diabetes is a complex and often relentless journey, testing the resilience of every individual affected. Diabetes Canada is here to help – providing tools, resources, and support to make that journey easier.

Diabetes Canada's Change the Conversation initiative aims to change the values, belief and language around diabetes.

Change the Conversation elevates the lived experiences of people with diabetes to mobilize knowledge and innovative programs that change how Canadians perceive, communicate, and act on diabetes.

diabetes.ca

This research report was developed by Environics Research, one of Canada's leading custom research and consulting firms, with a reputation for integrity, accuracy and insight. Founded in 1970 and wholly Canadian-owned, Environics Research offers a broad array of research, consulting and communications services, from traditional public opinion polling and market research, to advanced studies of human values and social change.

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