

Easier to eat fewer calories than to burn them!

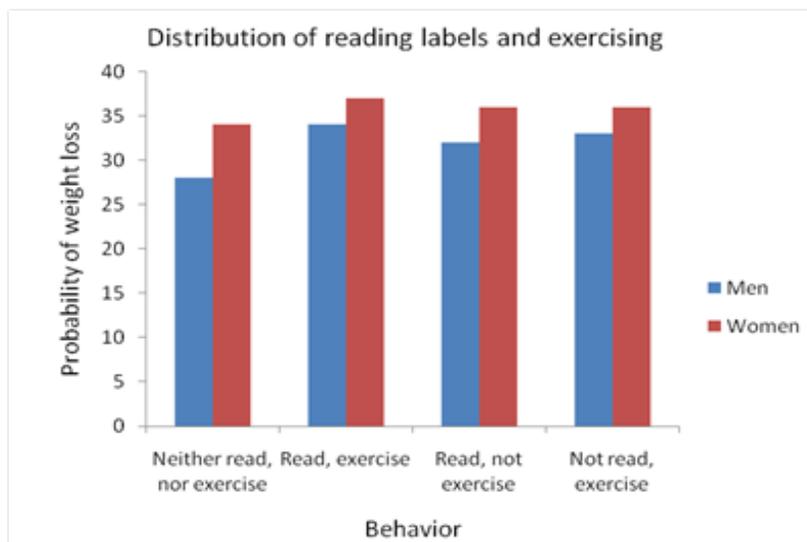
Bidisha Mandal, PhD

School of Economic Science, Washington State University

bmandal@wsu.edu; Ph: 509-335-7553

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- A recent study of middle-aged Americans finds that reading food labels could be an important tool in the quest for weight loss.
- Data from 3,000 men and women, who participated in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and were tracked from 2002 to 2006, were used in the study.
- Among those trying to lose or control weight in the study, 74% were obese or overweight.
- Almost 56% of those who were trying to lose or control weight were reading food labels, but only 17% were participating in regular vigorous physical activity as well.
- Women were more likely than men to read food labels when they purchased a product for the first time; they were also more likely to lose weight.
- It is possible that food labels provide important diet-related information that individuals are seeking in order to successfully lose weight.
- The combination of regular exercise and reading labels is the best method to achieve weight loss.
- Those who read labels but do not exercise are more likely to lose weight than those who exercise but do not read labels.
- The adjacent figure shows that changing behavior from neither reading nor exercising to at least reading the food labels is statistically significantly related to weight loss.
- Similarly, changing behavior from reading but not exercising to doing both is statistically significantly related to weight loss.
- Bottom-line: It is difficult to lose weight and many are often unsuccessful. But reading food labels can increase one's dietary knowledge and can improve the chances of weight loss.



Source: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 2002-2006

Note: The probability of weight loss was calculated after rigorous statistical analysis of the data. Complete methodology and results are available from the author upon request.

The author, Bidisha Mandal, is a Health Economist and an Assistant Professor in the School of Economic Sciences, Washington State University.

Contact the author, Bidisha Mandal, for a copy of the complete study. It was published as 'Use of Food Labels as a Weight Loss Behavior' in the Journal of Consumer Affairs, Fall 2010, Volume 44, Issue 3, pages 516-527.

Hear her interview with NPR on this topic at <http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/kplu/news.newsmain/article/0/0/1702236/news/Better.Weight.Loss.Through.Reading.Labels>

Read a report of this study on King 5 News website <http://www.king5.com/news/Reading-food-labels-can-help-you-lose-weight-102973554.html>