

The Philips logo is displayed in white, uppercase letters on a blue rectangular background that features a vertical gradient from a darker blue at the top to a lighter blue at the bottom.

The Philips Index

United States **Executive Report**

A National Study of Public Wellbeing
Based Upon Attitudes Toward Health,
Contentment and
Technology

August, 2004

**The State of the American Psyche:
As It Relates To Health and Health Care****Overall Health:**

America enjoys good health. By the public's own assessment, the vast majority (79%) rate their own health as being "excellent" or "very good". However the presence of a serious or potentially serious problem increases rapidly with age. One in three Americans ages 66+ faces a serious problem.

This should be put in perspective with the fact that America is aging. Unlike several Asian countries where the vast majority of the population is young, the median age in America according to the 2003 US Census update is 36.2. This means that health issues are going to be increasingly taking center stage as Americans wrestle with how best to manage their health for middle age and beyond.

Sources of Information

While Americans are most likely to turn to Doctors first with medical questions, reliance on the Internet as a source of up-to-date medical information is now as popular as asking friends and family members for advice.

With medical information so easily accessible, Americans now feel that they play a central role in managing their own health. The vast majority either believe that "the state of their health is up to them" or that at the very least, "how they take care of themselves makes a vast difference." Sometimes this even means not paying attention to what the Doctor says (41%).

Major Concerns

So what medical matters need to be attended to most? Over half of Americans consider themselves to be overweight and one-out-of-four Americans wants to lose over thirty pounds. This must be what drives the US Diet industry is now estimated (US News and World Report) as approaching forty billion dollars.

**The State of the American Psyche:
As It Relates To Health and Health Care****Major Concerns (continued):**

The “how” to lose weight is up for debate. Increased exercise is the number one strategy cited by almost two thirds of the public followed by cutting back on sweets, calories, fast food, fat and carbohydrates in that order. However, the truth is that only one-in-four Americans are “completely confident” in how to eat for maximum health. The country is hungry for dietary guidelines that can be trusted.

Meanwhile there are other worries on the horizon. Eighty-eight percent of the US expects to experience at least one of the fifteen maladies we probed for in the next five years. Perhaps what is most surprising is the top concern. Over a third of Americans (40%) are anticipating joint pain or arthritis. This anticipation or fear surpasses being overweight, having high cholesterol, declining vision, heart attack, diabetes, cancer or depression.

Perhaps Americans are caught in a vicious circle. Most fear obesity and therefore increase exercise. This can in turn make us risk joint pain. Is joint pain possibly the price we are paying or expecting to pay for maintaining weight?

Reliance on Medical Technology

Faced with potential health risks and feeling responsible for their own medical fate, the overwhelming majority of Americans (87%) say that they would want to know in advance through medical technology or devices if and when they are likely to contract a serious medical condition or disease.

It is universally considered to be very important that doctors and hospitals have access to the latest and best medical technology. And yet, only 25% of Americans are very confident that their own doctors and hospitals have the best.

Moreover, there is strong interest in using technology to improve the exchange of medical information and to gain greater direct access to physicians. This includes desire for asking questions of personal doctors, accessing medical records or test results, scheduling doctor visits and reporting home test reports - - all by email.

**The State of the American Psyche:
As It Relates To Health and Health Care****Sources of Treatment/Prevention**

Perhaps one of the reasons that Americans enjoy such good health is that the majority (71%) visits the doctor for regular check-ups at least once a year. Slightly less (64%) visit the dentist at least annually for check-ups and cleanings.

America is also not adverse, by any means, to taking medications or supplements to address current issues and maintain maximum health. Almost two-out-of-three Americans take vitamins or dietary supplements. More startling is the fact that almost half of Americans are taking some form of prescription medication at the present time. **One-in-four Americans on medication are taking drugs for anxiety, stress or mood stabilization.**

Among the half of the country that is on any form of prescription medication, the average number of medications is 3.9. Women take more prescriptions than men (4.4 vs. 3.4) and our country's senior citizens average 8.9 medications at one time

The Ultimate Prognosis

Expectations for a long life that equals or surpasses our parents age abound. It is universally believed that we will all live to be at least as old as our parents, if not older (81%) and over half (58%) expect to live beyond age eighty.

**The State of the American Psyche:
As It Relates to Lifestyle and Well Being****Satisfaction With Life**

If being “mostly content “ with life is all that we can practically hope for, then the majority of Americans have reached the ultimate dream. Two thirds say they are “mostly content” (68%) and another 12% say they are “completely content”. One-in-five (20%) are either “somewhat” or “completely discontent.”

What Do People Want?

The short answer is “money”. When asked what if anything Americans would most like to change or add to their current lifestyle, the top selected item was “more money” (70%) by a wide margin. Interestingly, the next most coveted item was “having more energy” (51%). This is true across ages, although the desire for more travel (47%) and less stress/anxiety (45%) trail closely behind.

The Flip Side of “Wants”

It becomes clear why Americans wish for more money when examined in the context of what the country is most worried about. Almost two-thirds (63%) say that they “worry frequently” about personal finances. Next in the “worry line” comes personal relationships (family, friends, children, spouses, partners and parents) followed by healthcare (41%) and the economy (40%). Even at a time of global unrest only one-in-three shows frequent concern for war (36%), terrorism (31%) or national politics (29%).

**The State of the American Psyche:
As It Relates to Lifestyle and Well Being****The Fabric of Everyday Life**

Perhaps, one reason that Americans are mostly content is that they are able to have a good laugh daily. The percent who laugh daily (78%) almost rivals the number who watch TV daily (81%). Laughter has long been associated with good health and is most likely an important cultural positive.

Ranking third among daily activities probed is being on the Internet (75%). This activity far out ranks cooking (40%) or exercising (17%) on a daily basis. It should also be noted as well that over a third meditate or pray every day (38%).

The Inner Psyche

If there is any attitude that defines the American cultural perspective it is the notion of self reliance. We saw evidence of this in the health section of the survey as well. Ninety-five percent of Americans believe that “it is up to me to get what I want out of life.” Coupled with this notion is a thick thread of optimism. The vast majority of Americans are “grateful for the way their lives are going” and believe that they “have a lot to look forward to in the future.” However, despite the rosy prognosis for individual American lives, few share high expectation for the world at large. Less than one-in-three (31%) believe that “the world is getting better.”

**The State of the American Psyche:
As It Relates to Technology****The Prevailing Perspective**

The belief that “technology makes life better for you” (88%) is a universally held tenet in the United States. Not only is this believed in general, but specifically as it relates to improving information(88%), communications (87%), medical diagnosis (80%), medical treatment (80%), education (78%) and entertainment (75%).

The only areas probed where technology is not perceived as making things better by a simple majority is for saving money (47%) and human/personal relationships (43%).

Room for Improvement

However, Americans have a lot to say regarding how technology can be improved. The biggest shortfall between technology designers and the American public is in the gap of understanding. The public does not feel that technology companies have adequately researched their needs. Perhaps the most obvious oversight lies in the area of simplicity. Americans tell us that “easy to operate and use” is the second most important attribute in selecting a new technology product (76%), second only to durability (78%). However, two-out-of-three people (64%) have been “sold off” a product because it seemed “too complex to set up or operate.” Most likely this is why only some of the features on technology products are being used (62%) and only slightly over 10% find that in general technology products are “easy to use”.

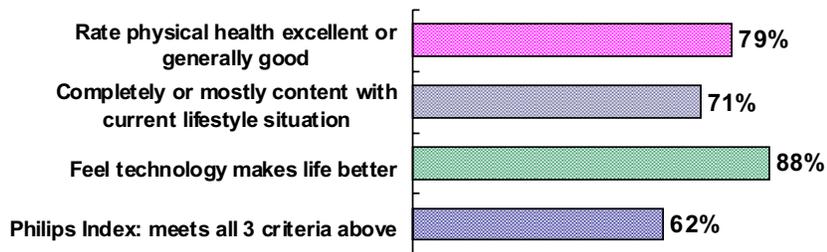
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What Do Men and Women Want?

The Philips Index was born out of a basic insight regarding the potential for human fulfillment. When people are happy, healthy and open to change, they thrive by experiencing a state of well being. There is also potential for enhanced creativity, prosperity and satisfaction with life.

When the majority of people in a community share this state of well being, the cultural and economic climate not only optimizes, but it feels good and makes us optimistic.

This notion led Philips to wonder, how many people in any given country are currently healthy (by their own assessment), reasonably happy (within reason), and open to (technological) change? In essence, what is the “well being” or Philips Index by country?



The Philips Index

Specifically, the Philips Index is the percent of the national population who report that their health is excellent or generally good, they are completely or mostly content with life and believe that technology makes things better. This means that they are feeling good both emotionally and physically and open to change. This Philips believes is a good working definition of modern “well being.” For America, the Philips Index is 62%

The role of technology in the mix translates into a factor of hope. If one perceives that developments in technology as positive, then there are endless possibilities for continued improvements in so many critical areas of life.

