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Understanding Searches for ‘Weight Loss’ Using Google Trends

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It is common for individuals to seek information online when facing health and nutritional problems, particularly those with lower education level and nutritional knowledge⁽¹⁾. One way to access such information is through search engines, with Google being the most popular, currently used by 92% of the world’s population, with an average of 85.59 billion monthly visits⁽²⁾. Google Trends is a tool provided by Google, freely accessible, allowing users to observe patterns in internet searches⁽³⁾. The aim of this study is to identify patterns to predict trends related to weight loss at specific times.

Data were extracted from Google Trends over the past 20 years, from 2004 to 2024, using the keywords “weight loss” and “diet.” In Google Trends, users may input a keyword consisting of words or phrases that are relevant to the chosen issue or cases. The duration of time that users wish to examine can be specified. Furthermore, users can explore geographical regions or search worldwide. Figures generated represent search interest based on the highest points on the graph for specific regions and times. The popularity of search terms is relative and depends on the category: search term or topic. Data is normalised and presented on a scale from 0-100, where each point on the graph is divided by the highest point, or 100. A value of 100 indicates peak popularity, 50 indicates half popularity, and 0 indicates insufficient data for the term.

Over the past 20 years, there has been an increasing trend in searches for websites using the keyword “weight loss,” with an average interest score of 31. This differs from the keyword “diet,” which has shown a tendency towards stagnation in popularity, although it briefly peaked with a score of 100 in early 2014 and has an average interest score of 53. Both keywords exhibit similar search patterns, reaching their highest peaks each year in January and lowest points in December.

For the keyword “weight loss,” the most searches were from South Africa (100), Romania (96), and Vietnam (91), while the lowest were from Italy (4), Japan (5), and the Netherlands (9). For the keyword “diet,” the most searches were from Poland (100), Kuwait (87), and Greece (85), while the lowest were from Japan (2), Thailand (7), and France (11). Users also searched for other related topics or queries including ozempic and intermitten fasting.

Our data indicates a consistent increasing trend in searches for weight loss over the last 20 years via Google Trends. New Year resolutions may be linked to peak searches which occur in January. While this data may prove useful for researchers and policymakers, further validation of its validity and reliability is necessary.

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References

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