

# NEW ZEALAND BODYBUILDER SURVEY

## Differences between the responses of male and female bodybuilders

### Introduction by Anne Probert

This paper is part of a series I am progressively releasing to bodybuilders in New Zealand who participated in my national survey concerning competitive bodybuilding. 382 bodybuilders responded to the survey and these papers provide insight into the lives and views of such participants.

**The survey included a list of 36 statements and participants were asked to define on a scale from 1 to 4 the extent they agreed or disagree with the statements. (1= strongly disagreed; 2= somewhat disagreed; 3= somewhat agreed; 4= strongly agreed).**

This paper highlights the statements where the responses of female bodybuilders and male bodybuilders reflected a statistically significant difference in outcome (by way of their mean score on the 1-4 scale ranking).

In terms of survey respondents (382 in total), 63.6 percent were female, and 36.4 percent were male.

### Commentary overview of differences

Although the survey analysis is quantitative and exploratory in nature, its results suggest that “differences” exist between the responses of the male and female survey respondents. 51.4 percent of the “statements” contained in the final section of the survey (ie questions nineteen to fifty-four) reflected a mean score which was significantly different when responses were compared on the basis of gender.

The findings suggested that female respondents were more likely to consider their lifestyle as being “balanced” than their male counterparts. Furthermore, they appeared less likely to view bodybuilding as an activity they would be involved in for the “long-term” or one which would “change their personality”. The results seemingly implied that the male respondents perceived bodybuilding to a greater degree to be an “integral part of their life”, and relative to the female respondents, they viewed it as being an activity which made them “feel different” from others.

The results also suggested that the men more readily conceptualized bodybuilding as a “healthy activity”. Relative to the female respondents, the men supported more strongly the notion that bodybuilding reinforced their own sense of being “disciplined” and that it enabled them to display such characteristics and behaviours. When preparing for bodybuilding competitions male respondents, relative to the women, also felt more “emotionally in control”. These findings should

be read as being distinct from feelings of being “in control of one’s life” as per Question 22 of the survey, where no significant difference was detected between the male and female respondents. Men also seemingly reflected greater levels of outward competitiveness relative to the women. Such notions are based on the significant difference in response to Question 49, where men scored more highly with respect to the statement that their prime aim at bodybuilding events was “to win”.

Differences in the mean scores were also detected in relation to issues of bodily display and outsider “interactions”. Female respondents signaled greater tendency in their responses that they “enjoyed wearing clothes to show off their physique”, than the men. However, male respondents appeared more likely to “feel physically superior relative to others of similar age” than their female counterparts. Male bodybuilders supported more strongly the notion that “bodybuilding enhanced masculinity” and relative to the female bodybuilders, signaled they received “more positive response from women than men” concerning their involvement in the sport.

Conversely, female bodybuilders responding to the survey reflected a greater tendency than their male counterparts, to experience “concern and pressure from family and /or friends that they could become too muscular”.

Significant differences in the mean scores on the basis of gender were also identified in responses concerning the use of steroid and implants. Relative to the male respondents, the female respondents were more likely view New Zealand bodybuilding as largely “drug/steroid-free”. The men, in contrast, appeared not only more open to prospect that steroids were used in the activity but also that such technologies were a “legitimate tool” to enhance bodily appearance, if used carefully and in a controlled manner. The male respondents also considered to a greater degree that the use of steroids was “more acceptable for men than women”. The female respondents in contrast, signaled a greater tendency than their male counterparts to consider the use of implants to obtain “the ultimate bodybuilding shape”

### **Summary list of Survey Statements where responses of males and female bodybuilder responses differed**

**The survey results suggested that females agreed more strongly than males with respect to the following statements**

- I consider I have a balanced lifestyle.
- I enjoy wearing clothes which show off my physique
- If I wasn’t involved in bodybuilding I would still have the same personality.
- Bodybuilding is something which I do now, but isn’t something I see myself doing long term.
- I have experienced concern and pressure from family and/or friends that I could become too muscular.
- I would consider implants (e.g pecs, breast, calf implants) in order to obtain the ultimate bodybuilding shape.
- I believe bodybuilding in New Zealand is largely drug/steroid-free.

**It suggested that males agreed more strongly than female respondents with respect to the following statements:**

- Bodybuilding is an integral part of my lifestyle.
- I feel different from other people because I am a bodybuilder
- When preparing for a bodybuilding competition I feel in control of my emotions.
- I consider participating in bodybuilding to be a healthy activity.
- Relative to people of similar age, I consider myself physically superior.
- I believe I am a disciplined person and bodybuilding helps me to demonstrate this.
- If steroids were legal, I believe that controlled and carefully planned use of them is an acceptable way of enhancing bodily appearance.
- If steroids were legal, I believe they would be more acceptable for use by male bodybuilders than female bodybuilders.
- The muscularity of male bodybuilders enhances their masculinity
- At bodybuilding events, my prime aim is to win.
- When I tell people I am involved in bodybuilding, the reaction from women is usually more positive than men.

With respect to the remaining survey questions concerning bodybuilding statements (i.e. the final section of the survey questionnaire) no significant difference was noted between the responses of male and female bodybuilder survey respondents.

A full list of all statements can be found within the questionnaire or the survey results – both documents can be downloaded from [www.nzbb.info](http://www.nzbb.info)

These results, in conjunction with other research outcomes, provide preliminary insights on a range of issues. They will combine with more in-depth information, to be gathered via personal interviews with competitive bodybuilders in New Zealand, occurring in 2006.