

What Research Says About Sticking to New Year's Resolutions

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It's January 1st, which means everyone has a fresh opportunity to tackle their latest resolutions and improve their lives in some way, whether it be eating healthier, running more frequently, or finally cracking open *Mark Twain's* three-volume [autobiography](#). Unfortunately, research shows it's unlikely most will actually stick to those personal pledges.

One [2014 poll](#), [conducted](#) by researchers at the University of Scranton, found that, while 77 percent of people adhered to their New Year's resolutions within the first week, that figure dips to 46 percent after six months.

Given the subjects of most people's resolutions, that statistic is actually quite concerning. A [series of studies](#), published in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* in 2016, found that 55 percent of resolutions related to health, while 20 percent involved paying off financial debts.

The meta-analysis, led by [Ayelet Fishbach](#) from the University of Chicago and Cornell University's [Kaitlin Woolley](#), looked at participants' commitment to resolutions that centered around both "delayed rewards (i.e. improved)" and "immediate rewards (i.e. enjoyment)." The researchers found that, when it comes to resolutions, not all rewards are made equal: "[I]mmediate rewards predicted persistence in a single session of studying and exercising whereas delayed rewards did not," Fishbach and Woolley wrote. "Overall, whereas delayed rewards may motivate goal setting and the intentions to pursue long-term goals, a meta-analysis of our studies finds that immediate rewards are more strongly associated with actual persistence in a long-term goal."