



Behaviours and attitudes towards vegetable intake in WA, 2015

Background

The Nutrition Monitoring Survey Series has been conducted in Western Australia (WA) since 1995 to investigate knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of West Australians relating to food, nutrition and the Australian Dietary Guidelines. The surveys include assessments of dietary change as well as barriers and promoters of dietary change. The most recent survey was conducted in 2015.

The state-wide telephone survey included 1207 participants. One third (33%) of respondents were male and two thirds (67%) were female. Ages ranged from 18 to 64 years, with almost half (45%) residing in the Perth metropolitan area.

Data were weighted for sample design and probability of selection in 2015. Post survey adjustments were made to compensate for under or over representation of gender, age or areas of residence using the 2014 Estimated Resident Population for WA people aged 18 to 64 years.

Recommended intake of vegetables

The Australian Dietary Guidelines¹ recommend that Australians should enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from the five food groups every day. Consumption of 'plenty' of vegetables is recommended, including different types and colours, legumes and beans.

One serve of fruit is any of the following:²

- Half a cup of cooked green or orange vegetables
- Half a cup of beans, peas or lentils
- 1 cup of raw salad vegetables
- Half a cup of sweetcorn
- Half a medium-sized potato
- 1 medium-sized tomato

Key results

Consumption of vegetables on the day prior to the survey

- Most WA adults (97%) reported eating at least one serve of vegetables on the day prior to the survey, with the majority eating one to two serves (54%).
- Only 12% of WA adults reported eating five or more serves of vegetables on the day prior.
- Only 3% of adults reported eating less than one serve of vegetables on the day prior.
- The mean intake of vegetables by those who consumed vegetables was 2.6 serves.

¹ Australian Government. Eat for Health. Australian Dietary Guidelines. Providing the scientific evidence for healthier Australian diets. National Health and Medical Research Council, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2013

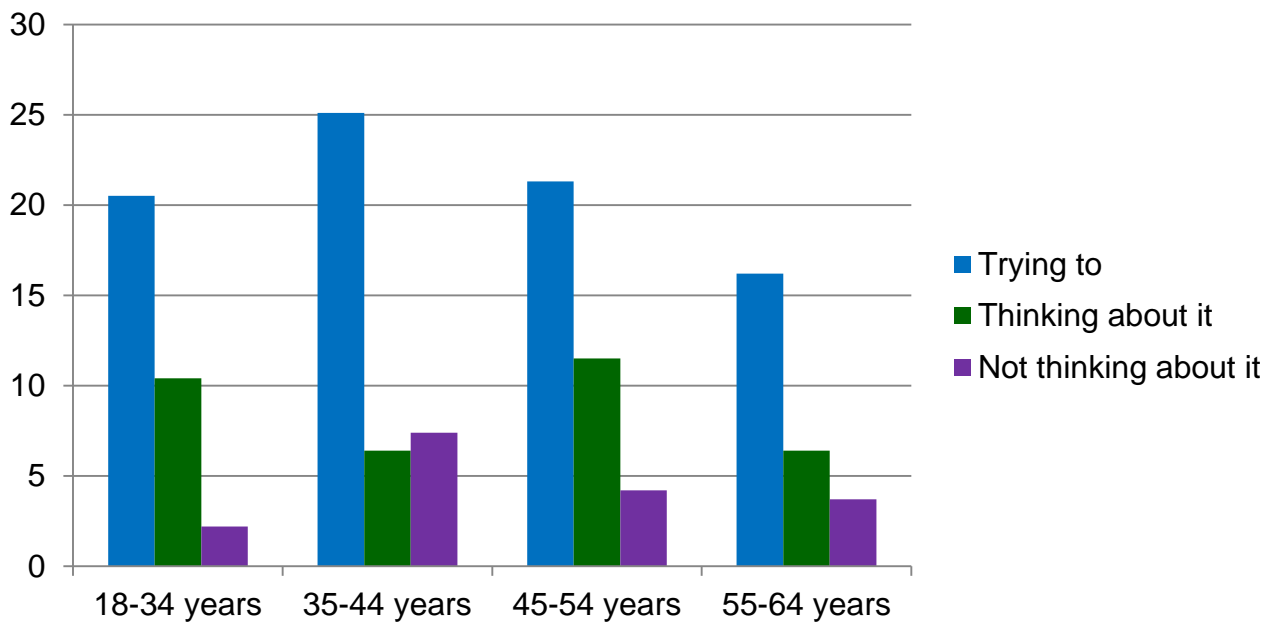
² Australian Government. Eat for Health. Educator Guide. National Health and Medical Research Council, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2013.

- Less than half (40%) of WA adults consumed five or more types of vegetables on the day prior to the survey.
- Forty per cent of WA adults also consumed three to four types. Those who consumed five varieties consumed more serves (3.2 serves).

Current attempts to increase vegetable intake

- Two thirds (66%) of adults believe they already eat enough vegetables, while 21% were trying to eat more.
- Of those who said they already eat enough vegetables, only 16% consumed five or more serves on the day prior to the survey.
- Of those who said they were not thinking about eating more vegetables, 83% consumed one to two serves on the day prior to the survey.
- Of those who said they were thinking about eating more vegetables (9% of all respondents), 67% consumed one to two serves on the day prior, 23% consumed three to four serves and 3% consumed five or more serves.
- Of those who said they were trying to eat more vegetables (21% of all respondents), 62% consumed one to two serves on the day prior to the survey, 25% consumed three to four serves and 4% consumed five or more serves.

Figure 1. Intention to eat more vegetables by age group, NMSS 2015



Attempts to increase vegetable consumption over the last year

- About one third (36%) of WA adults said they had tried to increase their vegetable intake over the past year.
- Females were more likely than males to say that they tried to increase their vegetable intake (43% compared with 29%).
- One third of WA adults (32%) reported eating more vegetables now than 12 months ago.
- Females were more likely than males to say they were currently eating more vegetables now than 12 months ago (41% compared with 23%).
- WA Adults aged 18 to 34 years were more likely than those aged 55 to 64 years to report they eat more vegetables now than 12 months ago (42% compared with 20%).

Knowledge of health problems caused by not eating enough fruit and vegetables

- The most frequently named health problems associated with not eating enough fruit or vegetables were: vitamin/mineral and other deficiencies (36%); constipation or other bowel problems (17%); digestive problems (16%); poor immunity (16%) and heart disease (15%).
- Nine per cent of people said they did not know what health problems were associated with not eating enough fruit or vegetables.

Knowledge of the recommended daily vegetable intake

- The majority of WA adults (57%) were aware that the recommended intake of vegetables is five or more serves per day.
- More females (66%) than males (44%) cited five serves of vegetables as the recommended daily intake.

Prepared by the Chronic Disease Prevention Directorate, Public and Aboriginal Health Division

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