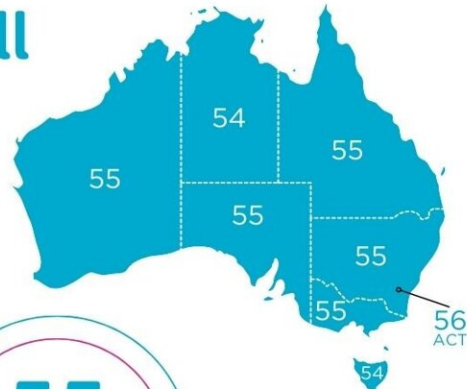


Australians failing when it comes to embracing a balanced diet: Report

September 12 2023

Aussie diet downfall

Australia is failing when it comes to a healthy diet. Of the **235,000** adults who completed the **CSIRO Healthy Diet Score** survey between 2015-2023, the average score was **55/100**



Worse than ever

The diet score has decreased slightly from 56 in 2015 to 53 in 2023.

Consumption categories high to low: SCORES OUT OF 100

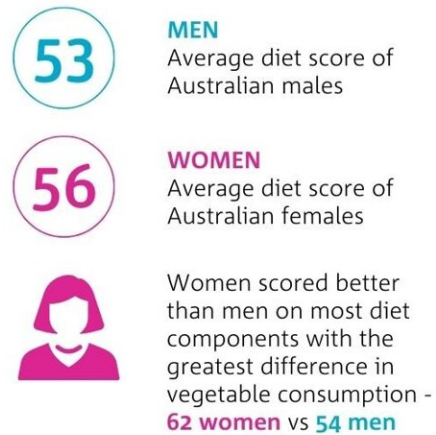


| | | | |
|---|------------------------|----|-------------|
|  | Beverages | 93 | GOOD |
|  | Meat and alternatives | 78 | |
|  | Breads and cereals | 70 | |
|  | Variety | 65 | |
|  | Fruit | 60 | |
|  | Vegetables | 58 | POOR |
|  | Healthy fats | 49 | |
|  | Dairy and alternatives | 38 | |
|  | Discretionary | 20 | |

Age matters



Gender gap



Job impact



Credit: CSIRO

Although Australia is ripe with golden soil and premium produce the nation is failing when it comes to embracing a balanced diet, with the national diet score falling well below a healthy level.

The [CSIRO Healthy Diet Score report](#), released today by Australia's national science agency, canvassed the [dietary habits](#) of more than 235,000 adults across the country between 2015 and 2023.

The results revealed an average diet score of 55 out of 100—and highlights some of the Australians most at risk from their eating habits.

Dr. Gilly Hendrie, CSIRO Research Scientist and co-author of the CSIRO Healthy Diet Score report, said although Australians are often perceived as fit and healthy, the low collective score shows that we just meet the pass mark when it comes to adopting the national dietary recommendations.

"The score is a stark reminder of the work that needs to be done to improve our eating habits and reduce the national waistline," Dr. Hendrie said.

People across Australia, in all occupations and age groups were invited to participate in the [online survey](#) between May 2015 and July 2023. The survey assesses nine areas of diet quality and estimates compliance with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

CSIRO researchers have used this information to create a detailed

picture of the country's [eating habits](#).

So what is the nation eating?

When it comes to dietary performance, Australians fall short when it comes to discretionary, or junk foods.

At about 28 servings per week, the discretionary food component was the lowest scoring area of diet quality across all age and sex groups with a score of 20 out of 100. Alcohol, cakes and biscuits, chocolate and confectionery, and takeaway foods were found to be the biggest contributors.

Weight status

53 **OBESE**
Obese Australians had a below average diet score

56 **HEALTHY WEIGHT**
Healthy weight Australians also have improvements to make



Obese weight adults scored lower than healthy weight adults in:

Fruit: 52 obese vs 63 healthy weight
Discretionary: 16 obese vs 23 healthy weight
Variety: 62 obese vs 66 healthy weight



Junk food nation

About **28** serves of discretionary foods are eaten on average per week. An estimated increase of **10** serves per week since 2015

45 serves Those working in the beauty, fashion or construction industry consumed the most at about **45** serves per week



Alcohol (31%), cakes and biscuits (14%), chocolate and confectionary (10%) and take away foods (10%) contributed most to total intake. **Men** consumed 10 more serves per week than **women** and younger adults about 5 serves per week more than older adults



Veggie variety fail

Only **4 out of 10 adults** eat 3 or more different vegetables at their main meal. **A decrease from 46% in 2016 to 32% in 2023.** Those eating 3 or more vegetables at the main meal:

47%
women

VS

40%
men

54%
older adults

VS

38%
younger adults

47%
healthy weight

VS

39%
obese

We need to do better - reduce, increase and add variety

Australians doing best had an average score of **70/100**

We can improve our score by:



reducing discretionary foods



increasing our intake of healthy foods



adding a variety of vegetables

To take the free CSIRO Healthy Diet Score visit www.totalwellbeingdiet.com



totalwellbeingdiet.com

Citation: Baird, D., Hendrie, G. (2023). CSIRO Healthy Diet Score 2015-2023

Credit: CSIRO

The average score for vegetables was 58 out of 100, with only four out of 10 adults reporting eating three or more different vegetables at their main meal—an indicator of a healthy diet.

According to the report, the closest Australians got to meeting the Australian Dietary Guidelines was with beverages, achieving a score of 93 out of 100. This high score was achieved by predominantly choosing water over energy dense drinks such as soft drink or juice.

Meats and alternatives came in second with Australians registering a collective score of 78 out of 100 for compliance with the dietary guidelines.

Construction workers were among those with the poorest diets (51/100), while retired Australians and those working in the fitness industry reported some of the healthiest eating patterns (59/100).

Those working in construction and the beauty/[fashion industry](#) reported the highest discretionary food consumption, at around 45 servings per week.

The report also showed that while women only have a slightly better diet quality than men (56 v 53/100), their vegetable intake is markedly higher (62 vs. 54/100).

"The good news is that a [healthy diet](#) can be achieved with some simple changes," Dr. Hendrie said.

"The things to keep in mind is reduce, increase and add variety. In other words, reduce the amount of discretionary foods being consumed, increase healthy foods including fruit and dairy and alternatives, and aim for variety by eating three or more different types of vegetables with your main meal.

"Improving our collective score is important to increasing our well-being, tackling Australia's obesity crisis, and mitigating lifestyle diseases such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and some cancers."

CSIRO is calling on all Australians to take the free, online Healthy Diet Score assessment, which both evaluates diet quality and identifies individual areas of improvement.

"It is clear that we have a long way to go. As a nation, we need to be eating better. We encourage people to take the test and improve their understanding of how their [diet](#) stacks up. It's never too late to improve eating behavior and overall health and well-being," Dr. Hendrie said.

For more information, or to take the free CSIRO Healthy Diet Score, please visit www.totalwellbeingdiet.com.

Provided by CSIRO

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