



Sugary foods, including biscuits, cakes, muffins, sweet pastries, chocolate, lollies, ice cream or dairy desserts.

Sugary foods are discretionary food that are high in added sugar, fat and energy (kilojoules). These foods are easy to overconsume and are associated with dental caries and an increased risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease¹. The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend these discretionary foods be limited in the diet and only eaten occasionally in small amounts².



The **WA Nutrition Monitoring Survey 2022** indicates that Western Australian adults overconsume sugary foods.

- More than half (55 per cent) of all adults usually eat sugary foods four or more times a week.
- Adults aged 18 to 34 years are the most frequent consumers of sugary foods, with almost two in three (62 per cent) eating these foods four or more times a week.
- Females (61 per cent) are more likely than males (49 per cent) to eat sugary foods four or more times a week.

How often do Western Australian adults usually eat biscuits, cakes, doughnuts, muffins and sweet pastries?

- Overall, one in five (18 per cent) adults usually eat these foods four or more times a week.
- Adults aged 18 to 34 years (33 per cent) are more likely to eat these foods more than twice a week compared with adults aged 35 to 49 years (26 per cent) or 50 years and older (27 per cent).
- Females (30 per cent) are more likely than males (26 per cent) to eat these foods more than twice a week.

How often do Western Australian adults usually eat chocolate or lollies?

- Overall, more than one in four (28 per cent) adults usually eat chocolate or lollies four or more times a week.
- Females (36 per cent) are more likely than males (19 per cent) to eat these foods four or more times a week.
- Adults with a healthy weight (42 per cent) are almost twice as likely to eat these foods four or more times a week than adults with overweight (22 per cent) or obesity (23 per cent).

How often do Western Australian adults usually eat ice cream or dairy desserts?

- Almost one in four (23 per cent) adults eat ice cream or dairy desserts once or twice a week.
- Males (26 per cent) are more likely than females (20 per cent) to eat ice cream or dairy desserts once or twice a week.
- Adults aged 18 to 34 years (14 per cent) are more likely to eat ice cream or dairy desserts more than twice a week, compared with those aged 35 to 49 years (6 per cent) or 50 years and older (7 per cent).

Intentions of Western Australian adults who eat sugary foods

Respondents were asked if they were 'trying', 'thinking about trying', or 'not thinking about trying' to eat less sugary foods. Those who never or rarely ate sugary foods were excluded from this analysis (Table 1).

- Adults aged 18 to 34 years (30 per cent) are the least likely to be 'trying to eat less sugary foods' compared with those aged 35 to 49 years (34 per cent) and 50 years and older (41 per cent). However, more adults aged 18 to 34 years (26 per cent) are 'thinking about trying to eat less sugary foods' compared with older age groups.
- More females (41 per cent) are 'trying to eat less sugary foods' than males (30 per cent).
- Adults with obesity (43 per cent) are more likely to be 'trying to eat less sugary foods', compared with adults with overweight (32 per cent) or a healthy weight (33 per cent).

Table 1. Intentions of Western Australian adults who eat sugary foods by age, gender and BMI



36%

of adults are trying to eat less sugary food
% (95% CI)

21%

of adults are thinking about trying to eat less sugary food
% (95% CI)

43%

of adults are not thinking about eating less sugary food
% (95% CI)

Age (years)			
18 to 34	30.1 (30.0 – 30.2)	25.5 (25.4 – 25.6)	44.4 (44.3 – 44.5)
35 to 49	33.9 (33.8 – 34.0)	21.2 (21.0 – 21.3)	45.0 (44.8 – 45.1)
50+	41.1 (41.0 – 41.3)	17.8 (17.7 – 17.9)	41.1 (40.9 – 41.2)
Sex			
Females	40.9 (40.8 – 41.0)	21.9 (21.8 – 22.0)	37.2 (37.1 – 37.3)
Males	29.7 (29.6 – 29.8)	20.3 (20.2 – 20.4)	50.0 (49.9 – 50.1)
BMI classification			
Healthy weight	32.7 (32.6 – 32.9)	19.9 (19.8 – 20.0)	47.4 (47.2 – 47.5)
Overweight	31.8 (31.7 – 31.9)	20.3 (20.2 – 20.4)	47.9 (47.8 – 48.1)
Obese	43.0 (42.9 – 43.1)	22.0 (21.9 – 22.1)	35.0 (34.9 – 35.2)

What influences Western Australian adults to eat less sugary food?

Of those who are trying to eat less sugary foods, the top five influences to do so are:



83%

Improve my health



58%

Look or feel better



57%

Lose weight



19%

Medical advice



10%

Health education campaign

- Non-metropolitan residents are more likely to be influenced by 'want to look or feel better' (68 per cent) than metropolitan Perth residents (55 per cent).
- Adults with obesity (78 per cent) are more likely to be influenced by 'want to lose weight' than adults with overweight (52 per cent) or a healthy weight (27 per cent).
- Males are more likely to be influenced by 'advice from a doctor or other health professional' (29 per cent) or 'a health education campaign' (13 per cent) than females (13 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively).

What would make it easier for Western Australian adults or their families to eat a healthier diet?

The top enablers reported by adults that would make it easier to eat a healthier diet are:

1	More healthy choices available when buying a meal or a snack	89%
2	If healthy food was cheaper	85%
3	More options for smaller portion sizes when eating out	78%
4	If food and drink labels were easier to understand	72%
5	Having a better understanding of the Australian Dietary Guidelines	71%
6	Less advertising for junk food	70%
7	Less specials and promotions for junk food and drink in supermarkets	70%
8	Knowing more ways of preparing healthy food	70%
9	Getting information from a health professional	70%

References

1. Huang Y, Chen Z, Chen B, Li J, Yuan X, Li J, Yuan X, Li Ji, Wang W, Dai T, Chen H, Wang Y, Wang R, Wang P, Guo J, Dong Q, Liu C, Wei Q, Cao D, Liu L. (2023). Dietary sugar consumption and health: umbrella review BMJ; 381: e071609 <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2022-071609>
2. National Health and Medical Research Council: Australian Dietary Guidelines (2023). Discretionary food and drink choices. <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials/discretionary-food-and-drink-choices>