

Trends in fruit and vegetable intake among Australian adolescents and young adults aged 10-25 using the National Health Survey 2014-2022

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Background:

Understanding the trends in fruit and vegetable intake (FVI) during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood is critical, as healthier eating habits established through this life stage persist adulthood. This study aimed to examine FVI trends among Australian adolescents and young adults aged 10-25 including analysis by age group, sex, and socioeconomic indexes for areas (SEIFA).

Methods:

Secondary analysis was conducted using the 2014/2015, 2017/2018, and 2022 of the Australian National Health Surveys (NHS). The percentages of FVI meeting the Australian dietary guidelines were calculated using population weights provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Survey-weighted chi-square test and logistic regressions were performed to test for the relative influence of survey year, age group, sex, and SEIFA.

Results:

The prevalence of adolescents and young adults meeting the daily recommendations for fruit and vegetable intake was approximately 50% and 4% respectively, across the surveys. The 2022 NHS showed a significant decline in adherence to fruit intake guidelines compared to the 2014/2015 NHS. Older age groups were less likely to meet FVI, whereas females are more likely to meet FVI guidelines than males. Adolescents and young adults from the highest SEIFA were more likely to meet daily FVI guidelines (fruit aOR: 1.35, 95% CI 1.09, 1.67, p=0.007; vegetable aOR: 1.68, 95% CI 1.05, 2.70, p=0.032).

Conclusions:

Overall, there was low consumption of fruit and vegetables among Australian adolescents and young adults, with a significant decrease in fruit intake in the 2022 NHS. Furthermore, a sustained very low percentage meeting the daily recommendation for vegetable servings was observed across all surveys. Future health promotion strategies should prioritise increasing vegetable intake in these populations, particularly those from lower SEIFA and males.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

No potential conflict of interest.