

Victorian Students: Healthy weight, underweight, overweight and obesity

Performance and Evaluation Division (PED) snapshot

September 2015

This fact sheet presents summary findings from the Victorian Student Health and Wellbeing Survey ('About You') first administered in 2014.

BMI

While two-thirds of Victorian students are within the healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) range for their age and gender (66 per cent), the study found that around one in five are overweight (21 per cent) and a further 6 per cent are obese. Around 7 per cent are underweight.



Rates of students who were overweight or obese increased slightly with school year level, from 25 per cent in Year 5, to 29 per cent in Year 8, and 30 per cent in year 11, however the differences were not statistically significant.

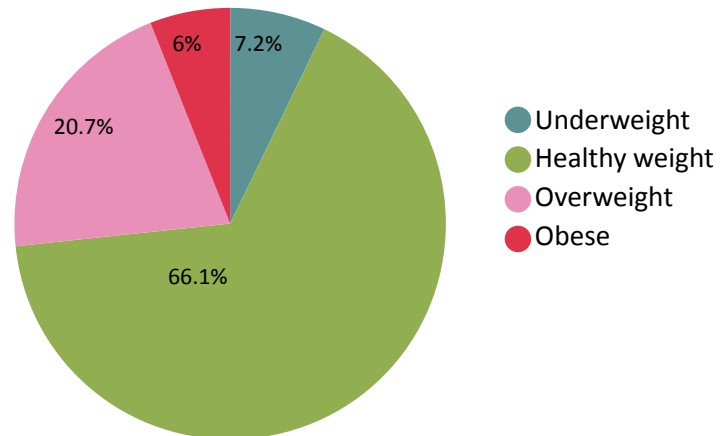


Boys were also slightly more likely to be overweight or obese (27 per cent) than girls (26 per cent), and slightly more likely to be underweight (8 per cent compared to 6 per cent) but again these differences were not statistically significant.



Overweight and obese students did not report more frequent consumption of lollies or soft drinks than their healthy weight or underweight classmates. In fact, underweight students were significantly more likely to report eating lollies every day (34 per cent compared with 22 per cent of healthy weight, and 19 per cent of overweight and obese students).

Weight status of Victorian students, 2014



Overweight and obese students fared significantly worse on a number of health and wellbeing outcomes:

Less likely to meet national physical activity guidelines of one hour of exercise per day (19 per cent compared with 28 per cent of students in the healthy weight range)

Less likely to rate their health as good, very good or excellent (75 per cent compared with 93 per cent of students in the healthy weight range)

More likely to show signs of depression or psychological distress (17 per cent compared to 12 per cent of healthy weight and underweight students)

Less likely to demonstrate psychological resilience (64 per cent compared with 73 per cent of healthy weight students)



Overweight and obese students were also not significantly less likely to meet national guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption.

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When asked about their own perceptions of their weight, around half of students in Years 8 and 11 considered their weight to be 'about right' (51 per cent of boys and 50 per cent of girls). Girls were significantly more likely to consider themselves overweight (39 per cent) compared to boys (28 per cent).



Most overweight or obese students in Years 8 and 11 perceived themselves to be overweight (68 per cent of overweight or obese boys and 78 per cent of overweight or obese girls). More than one in four healthy weight girls also considered themselves to be overweight (28 per cent, compared with 11 per cent of healthy weight boys).



A sizable minority of students reported being on a diet to lose weight (15 per cent of girls and 11 per cent of boys), however a further 26 per cent of girls and 18 per cent of boys reported that they 'should lose some weight' although they were not currently on a diet to lose weight.

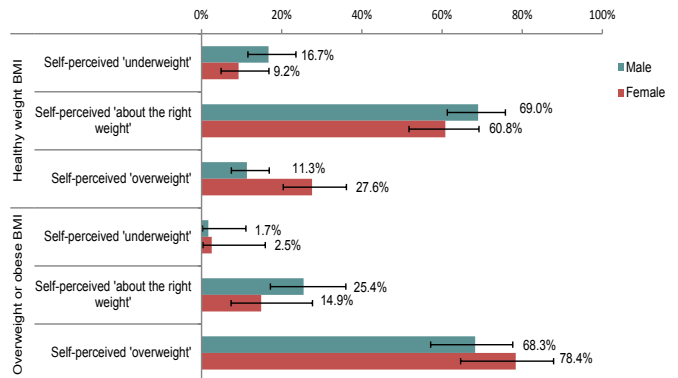


Around one in ten healthy weight girls reported being on a diet (11 per cent) and a further 19 per cent reported wanting to lose weight, compared with 6 per cent and 10 per cent for healthy weight boys.



Around one in four overweight or obese students were on a diet to lose weight (25 per cent of boys and 28 per cent of girls). Approximately half of overweight or obese students, while not currently on a diet, felt that they 'should lose some weight' (51 per cent overweight or obese girls, and 44 per cent of overweight or obese boys).

Weight perceptions of Year 8 and 11 students who were measured as Healthy weight or Overweight or obese, 2014



About the 'About You' Survey

About You was conducted across a sample of approximately 6,000 students from 264 Victorian schools in 2014. It was an anonymous voluntary population survey of Year 5, Year 8 and Year 11 students, undertaken with parental consent.

The About You instrument covers a wide range of outcome areas for young Victorians, including physical health and health risk behaviours, psychological/emotional wellbeing, perceived academic performance, school satisfaction and school and family relationships.

A key addition to the survey content was the direct measurement of students' height and weight from a subsample of around 1,500 students, which addresses a major data gap around obesity and overweight among Victorian children and young people at the state level.

More Information

If you would like to know more about this survey email the Performance and Evaluation Division at vcams@edumail.vic.gov.au