

Year 7 Health Check pilot survey results



ACT
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ACT Health

A health snapshot of Year 7 students in the ACT



The Year 7 Health Check survey

The Year 7 Health Check (Y7HC) is part of the ACT Government's commitment to improving the health of young people.

It is an annual survey that complements the current health and wellbeing information collected by the ACT Government. Findings of the Y7HC survey will be used to inform, develop and expand population-based health and wellbeing programs.

The survey includes questions on fruit and vegetable consumption; discretionary foods including fast food intake, confectionary, high fat and high salt foods; fluid and sugar sweetened drinks intake; physical activity; sedentary behaviour; active travel to and from school; and sleep.

Survey respondents

There are currently **3,050 Year 7 students in ACT Government schools** (August 2019 Census).

Of this group, **1,756 students took part in the Y7HC survey pilot**. The overall response rate for the survey was 57.5%.

There was an **equal distribution of males and females** (49%) in the sample with 2% of the students identifying as other.

4% of students identified as **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**.

Results

Fruit and vegetable intake

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* recommend children should aim to eat 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables daily.

 **83%** of respondents reported that they eat **2 or more serves of fruit** each day


 **21%** of respondents reported eating **5 or more serves of vegetables** daily

 **63%** of respondents reported that they eat **2-4 serves of vegetables** each day.


Discretionary food choices

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* recommend children should limit their intake of discretionary foods that are high in saturated fats and salt, such as biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks from their daily diet.


Fast food


 **33%** of respondents reported that they **did not eat any fast food** in the 7 days prior to the survey


 **55%** of the respondents **ate fast food 1-2 times** in the 7 days prior to the survey

 **2%** of the respondents **ate fast food 7 or more times** in the 7 days prior to the survey.

Snacks (confectionery, cakes, biscuits, chips, crisps and ice cream)


 **4%** of the respondents reported that they **did not eat any high-sugar high-salt snacks** in the 7 days prior to the survey

 **96%** of the respondents reported that they **ate 1 or more serves of snacks** in the 7 days prior to the survey

 **13%** of the respondents reported that they **ate snacks such as confectionery, chips, ice cream 7 or more times** in the 7 days prior to the survey.

Drink choices

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* recommend milk and water as the fluids of choice for children. Intake of sugar-sweetened drinks including soft drink, sports drinks, vitamin waters, cordials, fruit drinks and energy drinks should be limited.

 **77%** of respondents reported that they **drank water 7 or more times** in the 7 days prior to the survey

 **Water and plain milk** were the **most popular drink options** among respondents in the 7 days prior to the survey

 **Energy drinks, diet soft drinks and sports drinks** were the **least consumed drink options** (Figure 1).



Fluid intake of ACT Government school Year 7 students in the past 7 days

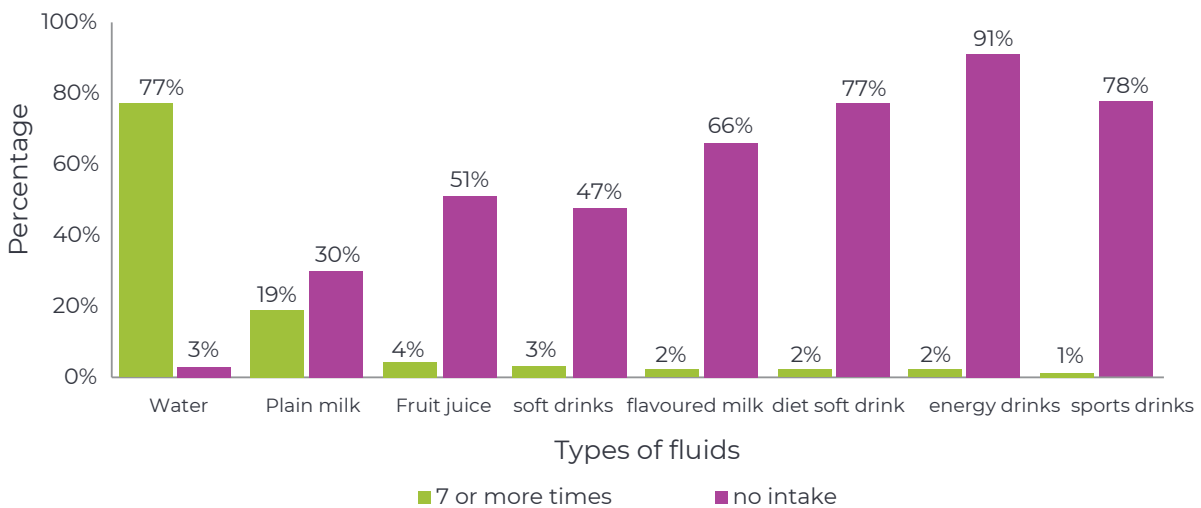


Figure 1: Fluid intake of ACT Government school Year 7 students in the 7 days prior to the survey

Physical activity

The *Australian 24 hour movement guidelines for children and young people (5 to 17 years)* recommend that young people do 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day to achieve optimal health and wellbeing.



25% of respondents reported that they **did at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily** in the 7 days prior to the survey



81% of respondents **did 60 minutes of physical activity on 3 or more days** in the 7 days prior to the survey



4% of students reported that they **did not do any form of physical activity** in the 7 days prior to the survey.

Active travel to and from school

- Travelling by car was the most commonly used mode of transport by respondents, with 49% travelling to school and 40% travelling from school via car (Figure 2)
- The top 3 modes of transport to and from school were car, bus and walking (Figure 2)
- 45% of respondents reported that they use active travel options such as walking, cycling, using a scooter or skateboard to travel to school. This increased to 52% when travelling from school.



Modes of travel to and from school, ACT Government school Year 7 students

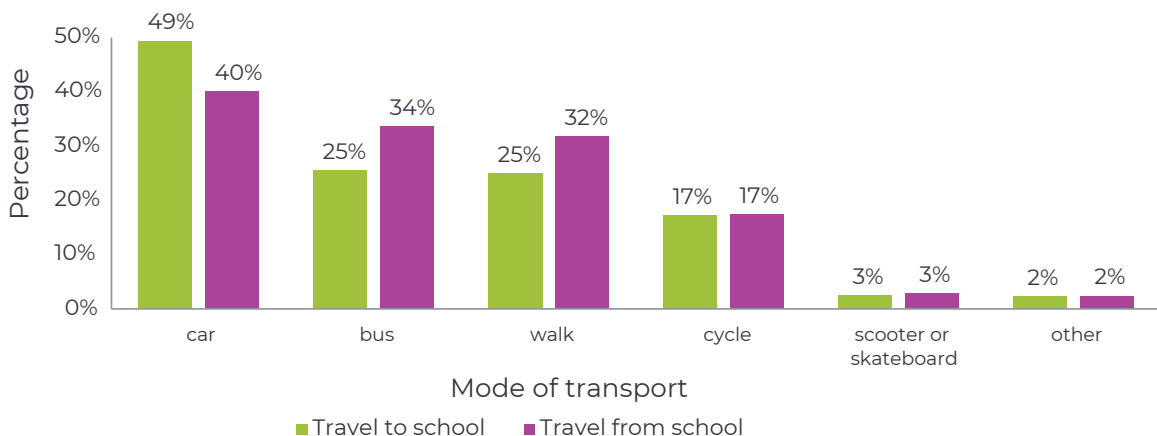


Figure 2: Modes of travel to and from school, ACT Government school Year 7 students

Sedentary behaviour

The *Australian 24 hour movement guidelines for children and young people (5 to 17 years)* recommend that young people should limit their sedentary recreational screen time to no more than 2 hours per day, on any day of the week. Sedentary behaviour is sitting or lying down and not getting enough physical activity.

All respondents were asked to report their sedentary behaviour against watching television, streaming videos, playing games and social networking both on computers and handheld devices.

22% of respondents met the daily sedentary behaviour guidelines on weekdays

19% of respondents met the daily sedentary behaviour guidelines on weekends

14% of respondents reported that they spend 6 or more hours engaged in sedentary behaviour every day throughout the week.

Sleep

The *Australian 24 hour movement guidelines for children and young people (5 to 17 years)* recommend young people aged 5–13 years should have 9 to 11 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night. This reduces to 8 to 10 hours per night for those aged 14–17 years.



44% of respondents reported that they met the sleep guidelines of 9-11 hours per day



56% of respondents reported that they slept 8 hours or less each night.

Summary of findings

The Y7HC survey was piloted across all ACT Government schools between 13 August and 11 September 2019. The survey was opt-out, and occurred alongside the annual School Satisfaction Survey.

At a population level, respondents did well in meeting the recommended daily guidelines for fruit intake and drinking water.

Respondents did not meet the recommended daily guidelines for sleep; physical activity and sedentary behaviour; or vegetable and discretionary food intake.

Healthy eating, regular physical activity and good sleep habits are important for a healthy body and mind.

ACT Health's *Health and Wellbeing Services for Adolescents and Resources for Adolescent Health and Wellbeing* factsheets provide a list of services and resources to help work towards improving the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of adolescents.

Please note that the findings of the Y7HC pilot are not directly comparable to the findings of previous ACT Health surveys, such as the ACT Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey. This is due to differences in the underlying population being sampled and differences in question structure.