Dietitians Australia

The nutrition numbers of the last decade are in and we've still got a long way to go towards a more nourished Australia

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has now released the most comprehensive dataset available on our nutrition habits in the country since 2011-2012, the National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey.

Dietitians Australia says while moderate shifts are being made in a more nourished direction, there is still cause for significant nutrition concern in this country.

“It is certainly encouraging to see Australians are drinking less sugar-sweetened beverages than they were a decade ago, dropping from 42.2 per cent in 2011-2012, to 28.9 per cent in 2023,” Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer said.

“The survey shows that discretionary foods, including things like biscuits, sweets, pastries and processed meats, still contribute to just under a third (31.3%) of Australians’ average daily energy intake.

“While this is an improvement on a decade ago, when we were at 35.4 per cent of total energy intake, it is still a sizeable portion that could be filled with more nourishing foods.

“The average sodium or salt intake of Australians is still well above the recommended daily limit of 2000 mg, at just under 2400 mg.

“You could look at these shifts and suggest that Australians are making attempts to improve the nutritional quality of their eating patterns.

“Unfortunately, for many, nutrition and dietetic care is seen as a luxury, and public funding limits make it incredibly challenging for people to access the support of a dietitian.

“Dietitians are critical to empower people with evidence-based nutrition information to guide nutritious eating patterns, and ensure they are sustainable and enjoyable,” Dr Willer said.

“The ABS also found that one in four Australians aged 15 years and over reported following a diet in 2023, with men most likely to follow energy restriction diets, and women most likely to follow food avoidance diets,” Dietitians Australia Chief Executive Officer Magriet Raxworthy said.

“We need to look at this trend very closely, it’s essential that anyone making drastic changes to their eating patterns is doing so with the guidance and support of their dietitian and their healthcare team.

“We are also deeply saddened to see that one in eight (13.2% or 1.3 million) households in Australia experienced food insecurity due to a lack of money at some stage in 2023.

“Dietitians Australia is calling on the Federal Government to ensure a new National Nutrition Policy is prioritised for rollout as soon as possible, is well funded for action, addresses the key drivers of poor nutrition quality, and prioritises investment in prevention.

“It is critical we ensure that dietetic and nutrition support is far more accessible for Australians,

no matter which State and Territory they live in, and we take serious action to improve our food system, including actions like mandating the Health Star Rating.

For media enquiries and interviews, contact our Media Manager Amy Phillips on 0409 661 920.

Note to Editors: Dietitians Australia is the leading voice in nutrition and dietetics, representing dietitians nationally and advocating for healthier communities. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia.