

Australians at Risk

2014 Grains & Legumes Consumption & Attitudinal Study



Executive summary

The 2014 Australian Grains & Legumes Consumption & Attitudinal Study is a nationally representative survey commissioned by the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council (GLNC) to track consumption and to understand Australians' attitudes towards grain foods and legumes, dietary recommendations and the barriers to meeting dietary recommendations. This is the third national survey conducted by GLNC. In 2014, consumption data from 3,031 Australians aged 2-70 years was collected from a two day food diary and an online survey.

Attitude and awareness responses were also collected for the 2,247 Australians aged 15-70 years. To ensure the data is representative, the data was post stratified and weighted by age, gender and location by the Australian Census data.

The survey indicates Australians are putting their health at risk as a result of not eating enough core grain foods and by choosing discretionary foods too often.

Key Findings

- Average serves of core grain food has dropped by almost one third (29%) between 2011 and 2014.
- The majority of Australians are not meeting the Australian Dietary Guidelines minimum recommendations for daily core grain serves.
- Lower consumption of grains appears to be driven by widespread misconceptions and a lack of understanding about the health benefits of core grain foods.
- Over the past five years, Australians have become more confused about quality grain food choices, with fewer people able to identify whole grain and high fibre grain foods.
- Young women (aged 19-30 years) are a key group in Australia who are actively limiting core grain food consumption with little awareness of the health impacts of their behaviours.
- Discretionary grain food consumption remains an issue with 81% of people eating discretionary grain foods on either or both days of the survey – an increase from 76% in 2011.
- More than two thirds (70%) of adults are not meeting the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommendation of consuming mostly whole grain and 55% are not meeting the whole grain Daily Target Intake of 48 grams, increasing their risk of chronic disease.
- Most survey respondents (64%) did not think to regularly include legumes in their meals.
- 35% of Australians reported eating legumes at least 2-3 times per week, and so many Australians may be missing out on the essential nutrients and other health benefits of legumes.

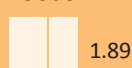
Are Australians eating enough grain foods and legumes?

The 2014 Australian Grains & Legumes Consumption & Attitudinal Study suggests that Australians are not adopting public health advice about the importance of consuming grains and legumes as part of a balanced diet. The study found that the average daily serves of core grain foods has dropped by almost one third (29%) between 2011 and 2014. Worryingly, 70% of adults are also not choosing whole grain options most of the time.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend people enjoy a variety of grain foods, choosing mostly whole grain and/or high cereal fibre varieties

Average Daily Serves Per Person of Discretionary Grain Foods vs Core Grain Foods

Discretionary Grain Foods



Core Grain Foods



Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council

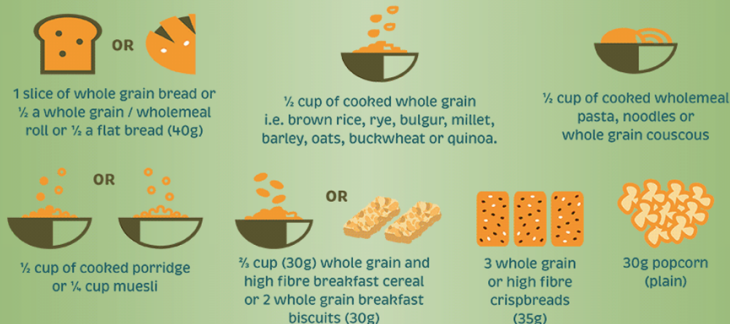
Cultivating Good Health

The study found that almost half (48%) of parents limit their child's intake of grains, putting them at risk of missing out on essential nutrients.

5 Reasons For Children To Eat Core Grain Foods

- 1 Grains contain magnesium for an active, inquisitive young brain and strong bones and muscles
- 2 Grains contain iron for growth and development and to fight fatigue and get the most out of each day
- 3 Grains keep your kids regular. Australians get more fibre from grain foods than any other food groups
- 4 Good quality carbohydrate grains give children energy to learn and play
- 5 People who eat whole grain and high fibre foods are more likely to be a healthy weight long term

ONE SERVE EQUALS



Grains

Lower consumption of grains appears to be driven by widespread misconceptions and a lack of understanding about the health benefits of core grain foods. The survey found that 60% of people actively choose to eat less grain foods than recommended by the Australian Dietary Guidelines. The decline in grain consumption is across most categories, with the exception of rice and flat breads.

Common reasons provided by survey respondents for grain avoidance were to assist with weight loss and a perceived link between grain foods and bloating. However, studies show that people who regularly eat whole grain and high fibre foods are less likely to gain excess weight over time and are more likely to have smaller waist circumferences.⁽¹⁻³⁾



Legumes

Legumes appear to be a largely overlooked food group in Australia, with only 35% of Australians reporting to eat legumes at least 2-3 times per week. Most survey respondents (64%) did not think to regularly include legumes in their meals. This means that the majority of Australians may be missing out on the essential nutrients and other health benefits of legumes, including reduced risk of chronic disease such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, some cancers and obesity.⁽⁴⁾

The 2011-12 National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey also shows that only 4.5% of Australians are regularly eating legumes such as lentils, chickpeas and beans.⁽⁵⁾ This is concerning as it falls short of GLNC's recommendation for Australians to be consuming legumes at least 2-3 times per week for reduced risk of disease. GLNC provides a range of resources to assist Australians to incorporate legumes more easily into their diet.

3 Reasons To Boost Legume Intake

- 1 Legumes contain essential nutrients including protein, low glycemic carbohydrates, dietary fibre, minerals and vitamins including B vitamins, iron, zinc, calcium and magnesium
- 2 Legumes contain phytonutrients, including isoflavones, which may help to protect health and prevent disease
- 3 Legumes are higher in protein than most other plant foods and are an economical source of protein



Confusion reigns over quality grains

Over the past five years, Australians have become more confused about quality grain food choices, with fewer survey respondents able to identify whole grain and high fibre grain foods.

Did you know
1 in 10 Australians
think brown sugar
is a whole grain?

People are also becoming more confused about the recommended number of daily serves of core grain foods. In all age groups except older women (aged 51+ years), less than 10% of people surveyed were able to identify the recommended number of daily core grain serves for their age.

Discretionary grain food consumption remains an issue, with Australians too often choosing grain foods that are high in sugars, fats and salts – such as cake, muffins and pizza. In fact, 81% of Australians reported eating discretionary grain foods on either or both days of the survey – an increase from 76% in 2011.

Boys aged 9-18 years in particular are eating high levels, consuming 36% of their grain food as discretionary choices each day, higher than any other group. This research reinforces the need for people to be educated about going back to core foods, rather than excluding whole food groups by following the latest fad diet.

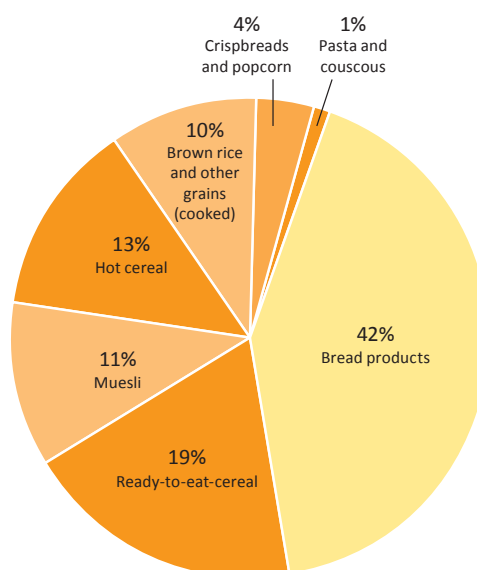
Despite the popularity of no-carb diets and other avoidance diet trends, Australians continue to consume 30% of the energy in their diet from discretionary foods⁽⁵⁾, while at the same time cutting core food groups, potentially putting themselves at risk of missing out on key nutrients.

Whole grains

Eating 2-3 serves of whole grain and high fibre grain foods daily, like breads and breakfast cereals, reduces risk of chronic disease by 20-30% which is why the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommends we eat 'mostly whole grain'.⁽⁶⁾ In line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, GLNC recommends Australians eat grain foods 3-4 times daily, with at least half of these as whole grain. However, more than two thirds (70%) of adults are not meeting these recommendations.

In fact almost half of Australian adults are eating less than one serve of whole grain food a day. Further, 55% are not meeting the whole grain Daily Target Intake of 48 grams, increasing their risk of chronic disease.

Leading contributors to daily grams of whole grain intake



Women aged 31–50 years are limiting core grain foods more than any other group and eating less whole grain foods, putting them at increased risk of excess weight gain and chronic disease in the long term

Spotlight on young women (aged 19–30 years)

GLNC has identified young women (aged 19-30 years) as a key group in Australia who are actively limiting core grain food consumption with little awareness of the health impacts of their behaviours.

In the survey, more women than men reported actively limiting grain consumption. The most common reasons women avoided grains included:

to prevent bloating (54%), to assist with weight loss (46%) and a lack of understanding of the health benefits (12%); as well as concerns about preservatives/additives (27%) and genetic modification (17%). This research shows that young women need to be further educated about the importance of grain foods as a source of essential nutrients and the health benefits of grain foods.

Based on the evidence of the health benefits of core grain foods, GLNC recommends women enjoy grain foods 3-4 times a day, choosing whole grain or high fibre grain foods most of the time

Women aged 19-30 years are falling 32% (or 1.9 serves per day) short of the recommended 6 serves of core grain foods daily. In fact, only 4% of women were able to correctly identify the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommendation for their age group.

Less than half (42%) of young women's core grain food choices are whole grain foods. Young women are also falling well short of the 48 gram whole grain Daily Target Intake, putting them at risk of increased weight gain and long-term risk of chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease and bowel cancer, Australia's second-biggest cancer killer.

By not eating enough core grain foods young women could be at risk of not getting enough of the key nutrients these foods provide including: fibre, folate, thiamin, iron, magnesium and iodine. This is particularly concerning as iron depletion is more common in young women and can have serious long-term

Swap it – Healthier alternatives to popular discretionary foods

Discretionary grain food (% of women 19-30 consuming on one or both days of the survey)	Core grain food alternatives
24% – Cookies or chocolate coated biscuits	Whole grain English muffin or raisin toast
24% – Grain based bars	Popped corn (lite butter flavoured)
16% – Sweet buns/cakes/cake-style muffins	Yoghurt with muesli and fruit (fresh or dried)
15% – Plain sweet biscuits	Whole grain crispbreads with a tablespoon of cream cheese

health effects. Similarly, folate fortification is specifically aimed at this age group as well as pregnant women and those wishing to conceive.

We also know that grain foods are the main source of fibre in the Australian diet, suggesting these women may be less likely to be reaching the recommended daily fibre intakes.⁽⁵⁾ These women are missing out on the benefits of cereal fibre which studies also show offers the greatest protection of all fibre types against total mortality (risk of an early death).⁽⁷⁾

Despite not eating enough core grain food, young women are eating on average 1.8 serves of discretionary grain foods each day. This indicates 31% of total grain serves eaten by young women are discretionary choices. Half (50%) of young women reported eating takeaway grain-based foods on the days of the survey. On average young Australian women need to increase their intake of core grain foods by 2 serves per day and make whole grain or high fibre grain choices more often.

Taking action

Ongoing dialogue about the Australian Dietary Guidelines across a range of forums is needed to help drive greater awareness of the benefits of core grain foods and legumes in the diet. Wider dissemination of this information is vital to help all Australians understand the importance of all core foods in a balanced diet to have adequate nutrition and reduce risk of disease.

A quantified recommendation within the Australian Dietary Guidelines for the number of serves of legume foods per day would also help Australians understand the benefits of these foods to everyone and provide guidance on how often to eat them for good health.

It is important for government at all levels, health care professionals, and public health organisations as well as GLNC, to continue to educate people on the nutritional benefits of getting back to core grain foods, and legumes as part of a balanced diet. Australians still need further guidance to understand how to incorporate good quality core foods like whole grain, high fibre and low Glycemic Index grain foods and legumes into their diet for optimal health.

More information

To find out more about the nutrition and health benefits of grains and legumes, receive research updates, sign up to our newsletter, and obtain cooking tips and recipe ideas, visit www.glnc.org.au. Join GLNC's growing Facebook and Twitter communities at www.facebook.com/GrainsLegumesNC and www.twitter.com/GrainsLegumesNC.

This information has been developed by the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council™ for general nutrition education. For individualised advice see an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD). Visit www.daa.asn.au to find a dietitian near you.

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