



## Body weight and health

In 2022, more than three-quarters (76 per cent) of Western Australian adults were living with overweight (38 per cent) or obesity (38 per cent)<sup>1</sup>. Between 2002 and 2020, the average body mass index (BMI) for adults living in Western Australia (WA) increased significantly. During the same period, the prevalence of adult obesity in WA almost doubled, the prevalence of healthy weight decreased, and overweight remained relatively stable<sup>2</sup>.

The [WA Nutrition Monitoring Survey 2022](#) indicates that Western Australian adults underestimate their body weight and have varying levels of awareness of the health risks associated with excess body weight.

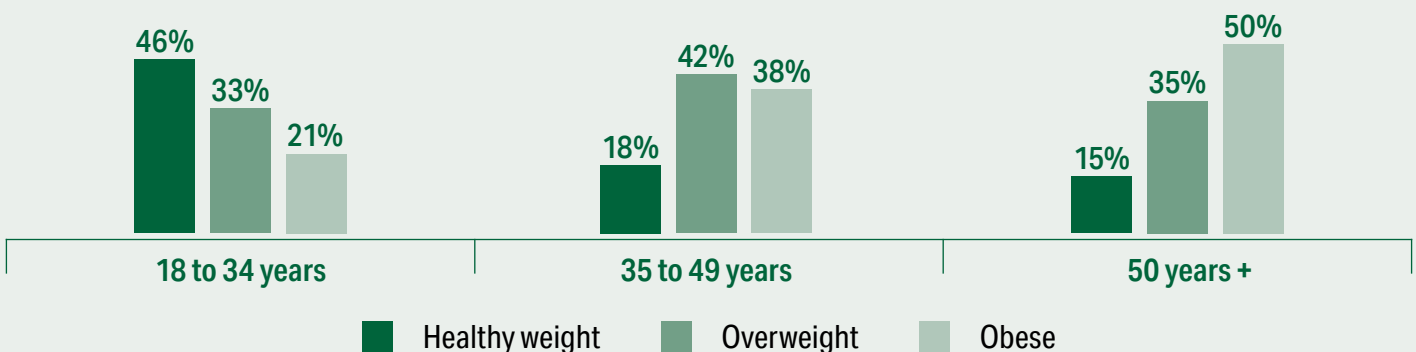
Respondents were asked to report their height and body weight. Based on BMI (calculated from self-reported height and body weight adjusted to account for systematic overestimation of height and underestimation of weight<sup>3</sup>), overall results show:

**25%** of adults are living with a healthy weight

**37%** of adults are living with overweight

**38%** of adults are living with obesity

**Self-reported BMI of Western Australian adults by age (excluding underweight)**



### How does the BMI of Western Australian adults differ by location and education level?

- Almost half (49 per cent) of all non-metropolitan residents are living with obesity compared to metropolitan Perth residents (35 per cent). Metropolitan Perth residents are more likely to be living with overweight (38 per cent) compared to non-metropolitan residents (32 per cent).
- 1 in 10 (10 per cent) adults with lower education levels are living with a healthy weight, compared to 1 in 4 (25 per cent) with higher education levels.
- Adults who have achieved low levels of education are more likely to be living with obesity (66 per cent) than those with higher education levels (37 per cent). Adults who have achieved high levels of education (37 per cent) are more likely to be living with overweight than those with lower education levels (24 per cent).

### How do Western Australian adults perceive their weight?

Respondents were asked if they consider themselves to be 'about the right weight', 'somewhat overweight', or 'very overweight'. Overall results show:

- 41 per cent of adults perceive themselves as 'about the right weight'
- 43 per cent of adults perceive themselves as 'somewhat overweight'
- 13 per cent of adults perceive themselves as 'very overweight'.

**Table 1. Western Australian adults' perceptions of their body weight compared with their self-reported BMI classification (excluding underweight).**

BMI	Body weight perception	% of adults
Adults living with a <b>healthy weight</b>	Perceived themselves as 'about the right weight'	76%
	Perceived themselves as 'somewhat overweight'	11%
	Perceived themselves as 'very overweight'	0%
Adults living with <b>overweight</b>	Perceived themselves as 'about the right weight'	48%
	Perceived themselves as 'somewhat overweight'	50%
	Perceived themselves as 'very overweight'	2%
Adults living with <b>obesity</b>	Perceived themselves as 'about the right weight'	11%
	Perceived themselves as 'somewhat overweight'	56%
	Perceived themselves as 'very overweight'	33%

Those living with obesity who are more likely to underestimate their body weight include adults aged 18 to 34 years, adults with higher education levels, males, and non-metropolitan residents.

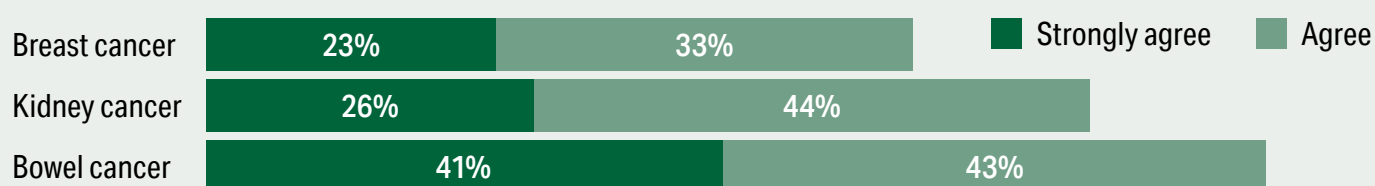
### Percentage of Western Australian adults living with, or at risk of, a chronic disease linked to obesity:

- Overall, more than one-third (34 per cent) of all adults reported having been diagnosed with either high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease or a stroke.
- Adults living with overweight (34 per cent) or obesity (44 per cent) are more likely to have been diagnosed with one of the above conditions, compared to those with a healthy weight (19 per cent).

### Knowledge of the risks associated with excess body weight:

Respondents were asked how strongly they agree or disagree that living with overweight increases the risk of certain cancers and chronic diseases.

### Percentage of Western Australian adults who agree that living with overweight increases the risk of certain cancers



- Almost all adults agree that living with overweight increases the risk of type 2 diabetes (98 per cent) and heart disease (99 per cent).
- Adults aged 18 to 34 years (79 per cent) are more likely to agree that living with overweight increases the risk of kidney cancer compared to those aged 35 to 49 years (72 per cent) or 50 years and older (64 per cent).
- Females (74 per cent) are more likely to agree that living with overweight increases the risk of osteo-arthritis, compared to males (67 per cent).
- Adults with a healthy weight (62 per cent) or overweight (61 per cent) are more likely to agree that living with overweight increases the risk of breast cancer, compared to adults with obesity (48 per cent).

## References

1. Epidemiology Directorate, 2023. Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia 2022. Department of Health, Western Australia
2. Epidemiology Directorate, 2021. Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia 2020, Overview and Trends. Department of Health, Western Australia.
3. Hayes, A. J., Kortt, M. A., Clarke, P. M., & Brandrup, J. D. (2008). Estimating equations to correct self-reported height and weight: implications for prevalence of overweight and obesity in Australia. *Australian and New Zealand journal of public health*, 32(6), 542–545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2008.00306.x>