Children's Nutrition in California

Children Ages 2-17 Who Drank One or More Sugar-Sweetened Beverages in the Previous Day: 2015-2016; Showing Counties

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of children ages 2-17 who drank one or more sodas or other sugar-sweetened beverages in the previous day (e.g., in 2015-2016, 40.4% of California children had drunk one or more sugar-sweetened beverages in the past day).

**Data Source:** UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Health Interview Survey custom tabulation (Mar. 2018).


**What It Is**

Kidsdata.org offers the following nutrition-related indicators:

- Children ages 2-17 who drank one or more sodas or other sugar-sweetened beverages in the previous day, who ate five or more servings of fruits or vegetables in the previous day, and who ate fast food two or more times in the previous week.

- Students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who ate breakfast in the previous day.

- School staff reports on the extent to which their school provides students with healthy food choices.

**Why This Topic Is Important**

Children and youth need a nutritious diet for healthy growth and development. Proper nutrition over the life course can help reduce the risk of developing dental cavities, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis, cancer, and other conditions. Unfortunately, estimates show that about half (49%) of U.S. children have poor-quality diets.

Eating a healthy breakfast is an important way to promote proper nutrition. Children who eat breakfast have higher daily intakes of key vitamins and minerals and tend to make better food choices throughout the day. Eating a nutritious breakfast also is associated with improved mood, cognitive functioning, and school attendance.

Children in low-income households and children of color are at increased risk for inadequate nutrition, which can have long-term negative consequences. For example, economically disadvantaged children tend to consume more sugar-sweetened beverages, which contribute to obesity and increase the risk for chronic diseases later in life. In addition, food insecurity (limited or uncertain access to adequate food) can adversely affect children’s cognitive development and academic performance. More than 1 million children in California—and nearly 11 million nationwide—live in households experiencing food insecurity.

**How Children Are Faring**

In 2017-2019, an estimated 66% of California 7th graders, 60% of 9th graders, 58% of 11th graders, and 50% of students in non-traditional programs had eaten breakfast in the past day. Across grade levels statewide, boys were more
Students Who Ate Breakfast in the Previous Day, by Gender and Grade Level: 2017-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 7, 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who ate breakfast on the day of survey, by gender and grade level (e.g., in 2017-2019, 60.8% of female 7th graders in California had eaten breakfast in the past day).

**Data Source:** WestEd, [California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)](https://www.kidsdata.org) and Biennial State CHKS, California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

Children Who Ate Five or More Servings of Fruits or Vegetables in the Previous Day, by Age Group

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of children ages 2-17 who ate five or more servings of fruits or vegetables (excluding juice and fried potatoes) in the previous day, by age group (e.g., in 2017-2016, 24.8% of California children ages 12-17 had eaten five or more servings of fruits or vegetables in the past day).

**Data Source:** UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, [California Health Interview Survey](https://www.kidsdata.org) (Aug. 2020).