

Youth eating behaviours

Health indicator report

Background

- The purpose of this health indicator report is to provide information about eating behaviours among youth aged 12-17 living in Halton Region.
- Diet culture is a set of beliefs that values thinness, appearance, and shape above health and well-being.¹ These messages are pervasive in our society, from social media to marketing and conversations with friends and family, and can lead to unhealthy relationships with food and body image.^{1,2}
- Diet culture and a preoccupation with thinness can lead to behaviours such as disordered eating. Disordered eating is a term used to describe a range of behaviours and emotions related to food and body image. Examples of disordered eating include fasting, restrictive dieting, over-exercising and “yo-yo” dieting.³ In some cases, these behaviours can have a severe negative impact on a person’s mental and physical health, and can lead to developing an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia.³
- This health indicator report uses data from the Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth (CHSCY).

Key findings

- In 2019, 50% of Halton youth aged 12-17 reported being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner, 44% reported changing their eating habits to manage weight, and 5%* reported vomiting to lose weight in the last 12 months.
- Females were more likely than males to report being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner or changing their eating habits to lose weight in the last 12 months.

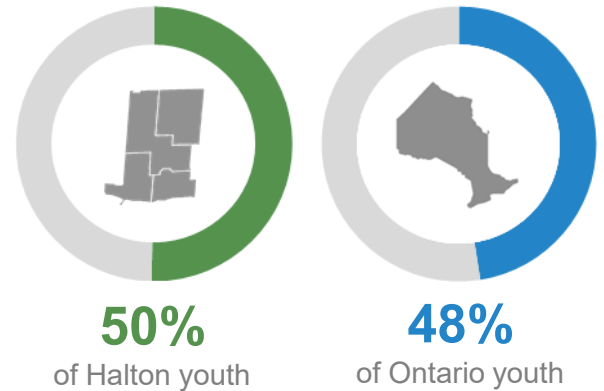
Estimates marked with an asterisk (*) should be interpreted with caution due to high variability.



Preoccupied with a desire to be thinner

Halton vs. Ontario

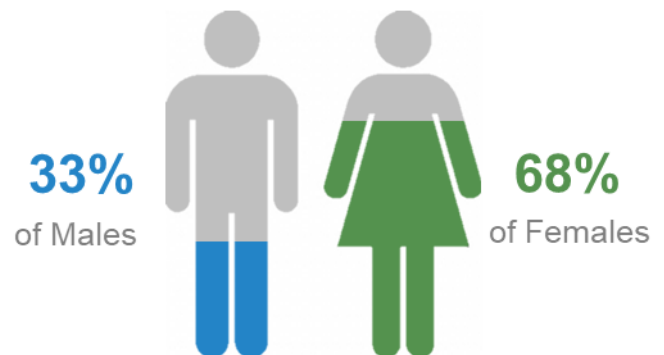
- In 2019, 50% of Halton youth aged 12-17 and 48% of Ontario youth aged 12-17 reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months. This difference was not statistically significant.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months, Halton Region and Ontario, 2019

Sex

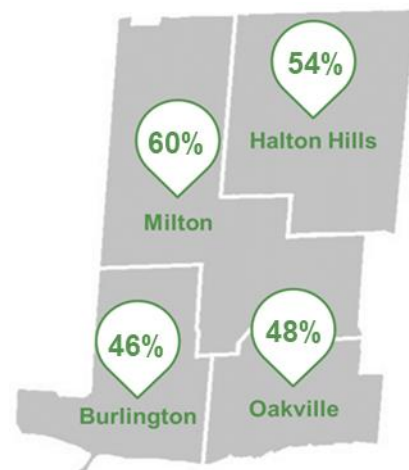
- In 2019, Halton females aged 12-17 were more likely than males to report ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months. This difference was **statistically significant**.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months, by sex, Halton Region, 2019

Municipality

- In 2019, there were no statistically significant differences by municipality in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months.



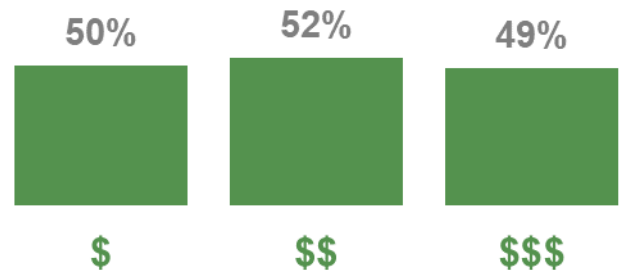
Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months, by municipality, Halton Region, 2019



Preoccupied with a desire to be thinner

Household income

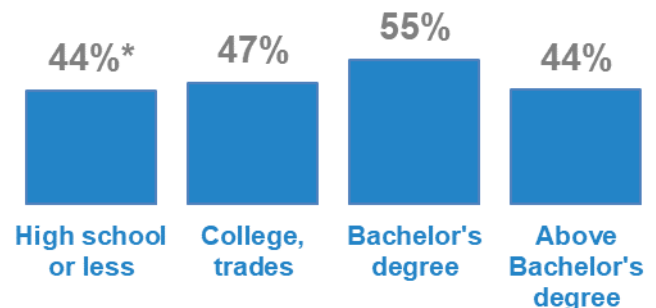
- In 2019, there were no statistically significant differences by household income in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months, by household income group, Halton Region, 2019

Parents' education

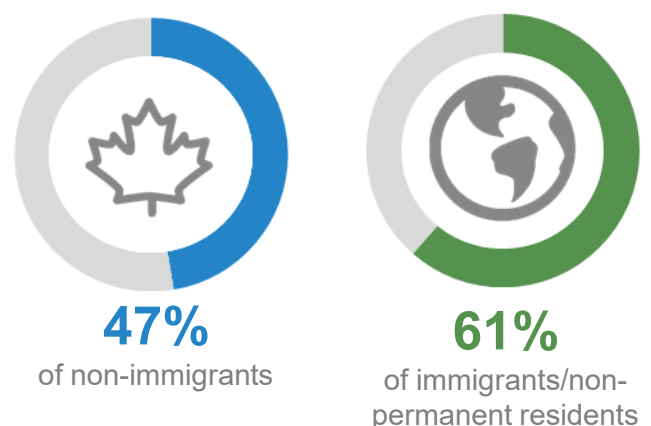
- In 2019, there were no statistically significant differences by parents' education in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months, by parents' highest level of education, Halton Region, 2019

Immigrant status

- In 2019, there was no statistically significant difference by immigrant status in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months.



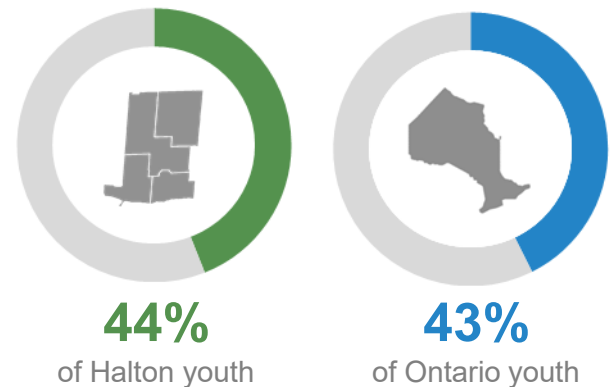
Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever being preoccupied with a desire to be thinner in the past 12 months, by immigrant status, Halton Region, 2019



Changed eating habits to manage weight

Halton vs. Ontario

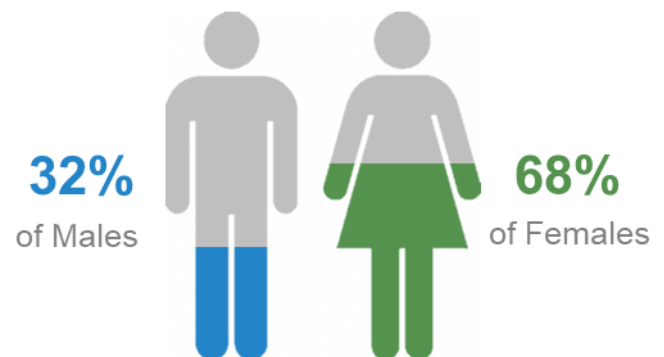
- In 2019, 44% of Halton youth aged 12-17 and 43% of Ontario youth aged 12-17 reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months. This difference was not statistically significant.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months, Halton Region and Ontario, 2019

Sex

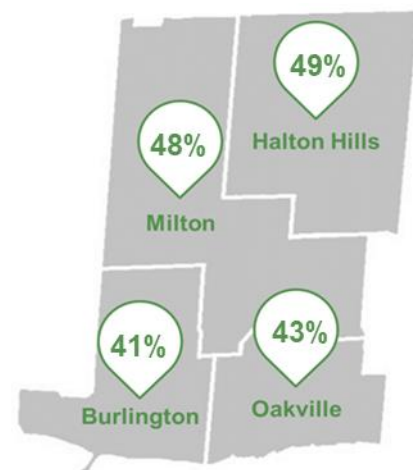
- In 2019, Halton females aged 12-17 were more likely than males to report ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months. This difference was **statistically significant**.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months, by sex, Halton Region, 2019

Municipality

- In 2019, there were no statistically significant differences by municipality in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months.



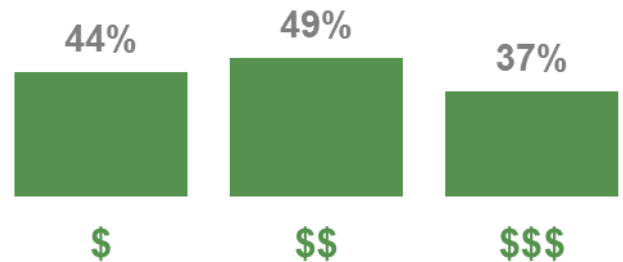
Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months, by municipality, Halton Region, 2019



Changed eating habits to manage weight

Household income

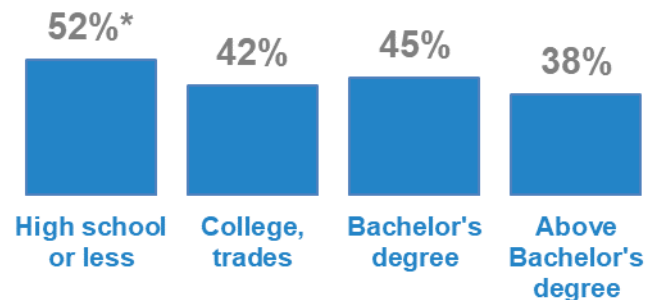
- In 2019, there were no statistically significant differences by household income in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months, by household income group, Halton Region, 2019

Parents' education

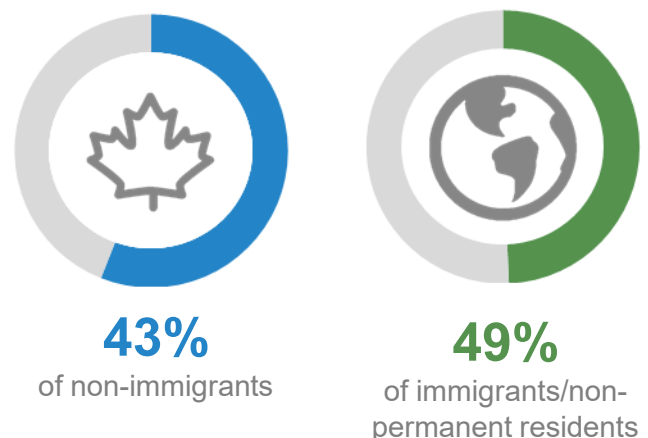
- In 2019, there were no statistically significant differences by parents' education in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months.



Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months, by parents' highest level of education, Halton Region, 2019

Immigrant status

- In 2019, there was no statistically significant difference by immigrant status in the percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months.



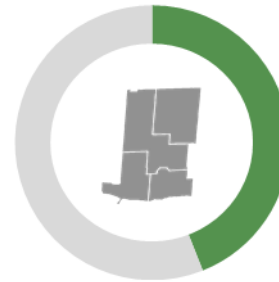
Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported changing their eating habits to manage weight in the past 12 months, by immigrant status, Halton Region, 2019



Vomited to lose weight

Halton vs. Ontario

- In 2019, 5%* of Halton youth aged 12-17 and 4% of Ontario youth aged 12-17 reported ever vomiting to lose weight in the past 12 months. This difference was not statistically significant.
- There were too few youth aged 12-17 in Halton who reported ever vomiting to lose weight in the past 12 months to report on any differences by sex, municipality, income, parent's education or immigration status.



5%*

of Halton youth



4%

of Ontario youth

Percentage of youth aged 12-17 who reported ever vomiting to lose weight in the past 12 months, Halton Region and Ontario, 2019

About CHSCY

- The Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth (CHSCY) explores issues that have an impact on the physical and mental health of children and youth. CHSCY is conducted by Statistics Canada.
- CHSCY is an occasional and voluntary survey that is designed to provide reliable estimates at the provincial level and across age groups. CHSCY was first conducted in 2019 and included 50,000 children and youth ages 1-17 from across Canada's provinces and territories, including 1,138 children and youth in Halton and 22,651 children and youth in Ontario.⁴
- In 2019, CHSCY was administered as a cross-sectional survey, meaning that respondents were surveyed at a single point in time.⁴ In 2023, a longitudinal component is being added to the cross-sectional survey, and respondents from the previous cycle (2019) will be resurveyed to assess changes in health and well-being over time.⁵
- Two questionnaires were used to collect survey data. One questionnaire was administered to the Person Most Knowledgeable (PMK) about the selected child or youth aged 1 to 17.⁶ A separate questionnaire was administered directly to the selected youth aged 12 to 17.⁶ Youth aged 15 to 17 could be identified as their own PMK if they lived on their own or did not live with a parent.⁶
- For more information on CHSCY methodology and limitations, see the CHSCY Data Notes and Data Interpretation Guide at www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Public-Health/Health-Statistics.

Data notes

Definitions:

Ever preoccupied with a desire to be thinner includes youth aged 15-17 who indicated that in the last 12 months they were preoccupied with a desire to be thinner a few times, monthly, weekly or daily. **Ever vomited to lose weight** includes youth aged 15-17 who indicated that in the last 12 months they vomited to lose weight a few times, monthly, weekly or daily. **Ever changed eating habits to lose weight** includes youth aged 15-17 who indicated that in the last 12 months they changed their eating habits to lose weight a few times, monthly, weekly or daily.

Data Source: Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth [2019], Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario MOHLTC

Estimates marked with an asterisk (*) should be interpreted with caution due to high variability.

References

1. A. Daryanani. 2021. What is diet culture?. University of California San Diego. Retrieved March 2023 from <https://recreation.ucsd.edu/2021/01/diet-culture-social-media/>
2. Grey Bruce Public Health Unit. Diet culture and your health. Accessed March 2023 from <https://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Your-Health/Eating-Well/Diet-Culture-and-Your-Health>
3. HeretoHelp. 2022. Disordered eating: A guide for parents and youth. Accessed May 2023 from <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/disordered-eating>
4. Statistics Canada. 2019. Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth. Accessed May 2023 from <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&Id=1215270>
5. Statistics Canada. 2023. Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth. Accessed May 2023 from <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5233#a2>
6. Statistics Canada. 2020. 2019 Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth (CHSCY): User Guide.

For more health indicator and health status reports, visit the Halton Health Statistics webpage at halton.ca.

Last updated: May 2023