

*Discover your edge*

Monday, 21 July 2014

## Spotlight on Australia's Health: our weight continues to rise and our mental wellbeing is in decline

In July, Roy Morgan Research CEO Michele Levine presented the latest State of the Nation Report 19 with a special Spotlight on Australians' Health.

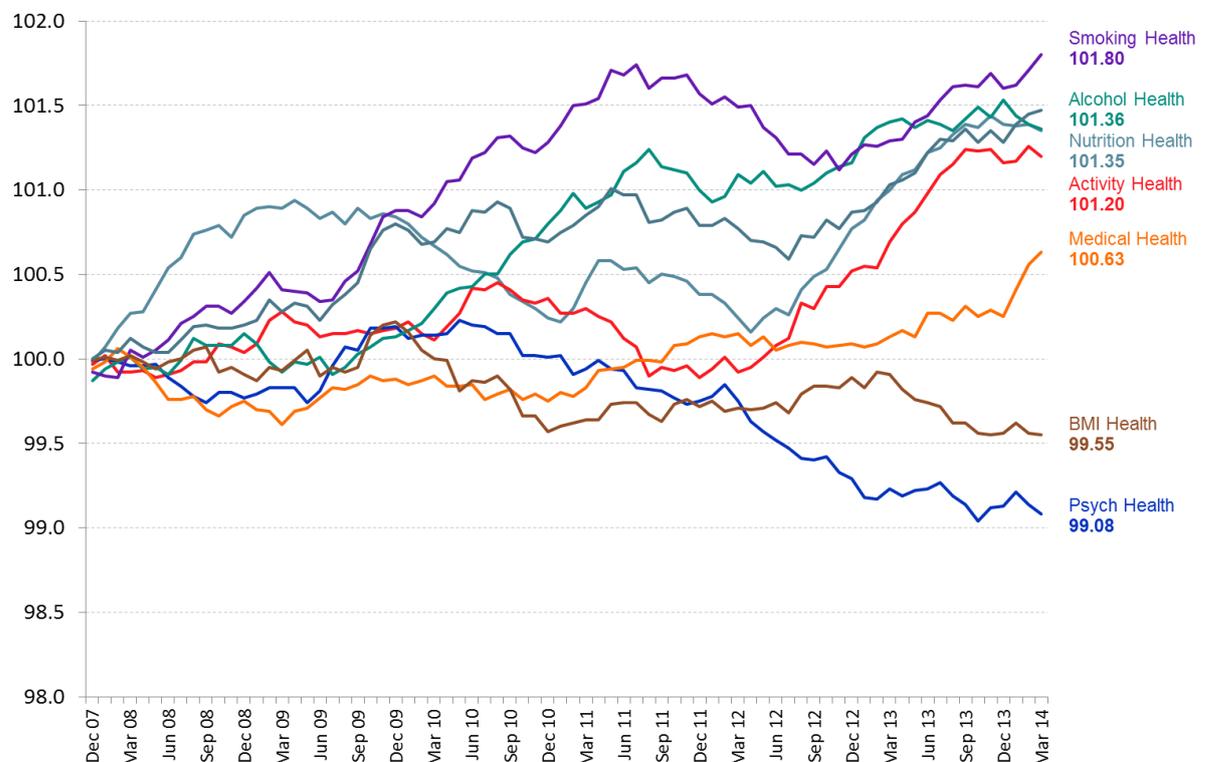
The report examines how Australians are faring across seven key health areas: smoking, alcohol consumption, nutrition, activity levels, illnesses, Body Mass Index (BMI) and psychological wellbeing.

While we are making solid improvements in some areas, especially in reduced incidence and consumption of smoking cigarettes, we are getting fatter and more anxious.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The Alere Wellness Index powered by Roy Morgan Research survey data shows an overall health gain from a base of 100 at the start of tracking in December 2007 to 101.47 as of March 2014.
- Of the seven subindices, we have improved in five: smoking, nutrition, activity and fitness, alcohol and medical conditions—but our BMI and Psych results are down.

Alere Wellness Index\* Sub-Indices Scores



\* Powered by Roy Morgan Research Single Source, January 2007 to March 2014.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## MEDICAL

- Issues with Bones, Joints or Muscles are the most common complaint, with 13.2 million Australians reporting having had at least one condition in this category during the past year.
- Other common conditions include Allergies, Cold or Flu (13.1m Australians), or problems with Ear, Nose and Throat (10.5m), Digestive System (9.3m), Lungs and Breathing (8.9m), Skin, Hair and Nails (8.6m), Mental Health (6.4m), Mouth and Teeth (5.7m) and Heart and Circulation (5.1m).
- Medical categories with fewer than 5 million sufferers in a 12 month period are Reproduction (4.8m), Brain and Nervous System (4.6m), Eyes and Vision (4.0m), Infections (3.2m), Blood (2.5m), Endocrine System (2.2m), Kidneys and Urinary System (2.1m), Cancers (1.4m) and Behavioural (1.2m).
- At a specific illness level, half of Australians report getting a cold in an average year, ahead of 39.3% for back pain, 33.2% with muscular aches and pains, 31.9% with a sore throat and 27.0% with hay fever.
- Overall, just 17% of Australian adults say they don't feel well and in good health.
- Of all illnesses, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has the most common adverse effect on overall wellbeing, with 62% of sufferers saying they don't feel well and in good health.
- Other sufferers with high rates of ill-feeling overall include those with Lung disease (55%), Fibromyalgia (54%), Frequent Infection (53%), Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Liver problems, Muscular weakness and Neuropathy (all 47%).

## SMOKING

- As of latest data to March 2014, 15.2% of Australian adults smoke cigarettes, down from 18.9% in the year to March 2008.
- Smokers' average per day is also down over the period, from 15.34 to 13.54 – almost two per day fewer per smoker.
- In total, Australians now smoke almost eight million fewer cigarettes per day than in 2008

## ALCOHOL

- 3 in 5 Australian adults drunk alcohol in an average week in the year to March 2014, down from 63.6% in the year to March 2008.
- Drinkers now consume an average of 11.9 drinks a week, down almost a full glass from 12.8 six years ago.
- Overall, Australians consume 129 million glasses of alcohol per week, down just 1 million from 130 million in 2008.
- Consumption of beer, wine, spirits and ready-to-drink alcohol have all declined, with only cider showing an increase over the period.

## BMI

- 3 in 5 Australian adults are overweight, with a BMI over 25.
- Around 5.8m men and 5.2m women are now overweight, but the average overweight man carries an extra 15.6kg compared with 17.1kg for overweight women.
- The average overweight Australian adult has an extra 16.5kg, up from 15.5kg in 2008.
- For a combined total of over 180,000 tonnes of extra weight, up from 150,000 in 2008.

## FITNESS

- 48.5% of Australians do some formal exercise, including gym, aerobics, running and cycling in an average three months, up from 45.4% in Mar 08. 24% of Aussies played a sport in that time, almost unchanged from 24.1% in 08.

## NUTRITION

- In the year to March 2014, 56.9% of Australians 18+ visited a quick service (fast food) restaurant in an average four weeks, down from 61.2% in the year to March 2008.
- However those who do visit fast food places today are more likely to go more often: 22.8% of visitors now go 10 or more times in an average month, up from 19.3% of visitors in 2008.
- Meanwhile only around 4% of Australians eat the recommended 2+ serves of fruit and 5+ serves of vegetables per day.

## PSYCH

- In the 12 months to March 2014, 2.8 million Australian adults (15.6%) reported suffering anxiety in the past year, up from 1.5 million (9.2%) in the year to March 2008.
- Anxiety has overtaken Depression as the second most-common mental health issue in Australia.
- Today, 24.4% report suffering from Stress, 14.2% Depression, 7.5% Sleep Disorders and 5.2% Panic attacks during the past year.
- The rise in anxiety mirrors a rise in un- or underemployment, from 11.3% (Dec 07) to 18.7%. People who are looking for work, either due to unemployment or underemployment, are 63% more likely to suffer anxiety than those who are fully employed.

As usual, this quarterly State of the Nation report also contains the latest statistics on Australians' attitudes and behaviours as revealed through extensive face-to-face interviews across the country.

**For more information or to organise an interview with CEO Michele Levine on the drivers and implications of these latest health results, please contact:**

**Nikki Taylor**

Office: (03) 9223 2486

Mobile: 0425 812 773

[nikki.taylor@roymorgan.com](mailto:nikki.taylor@roymorgan.com)

**Learn more about the [State of the Nation Report 19 with a Spotlight on Australia's Health](#)**

### About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years' experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

In Australia, Roy Morgan Research is considered to be the authoritative source of information on financial behaviour, readership, voting intentions and consumer confidence. Roy Morgan Research is a specialist in recontact customised surveys which provide invaluable and effective qualitative and quantitative information regarding customers and target markets.

### About Roy Morgan's State of the Nation Reports

**Roy Morgan Research Ltd.** A.B.N. 91 007 092 944 Quality System Certified to AS/NZS ISO 9001

401 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000 – GPO Box 2282U, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001, Australia

Tel: (03) 9629 6888 Fax: (03) 9629 1250 (03) 9224 5387 [melbourne@roymorgan.com](mailto:melbourne@roymorgan.com) [www.roymorgan.com](http://www.roymorgan.com)

Roy Morgan's State of the Nation Reports provide a long-term perspective on Australian society. Released quarterly, the Reports measure a broad range of issues affecting the nation, plot them over time, and explore in more detail the impacts on Society, Technology, Economy, Politics and the Environment.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE