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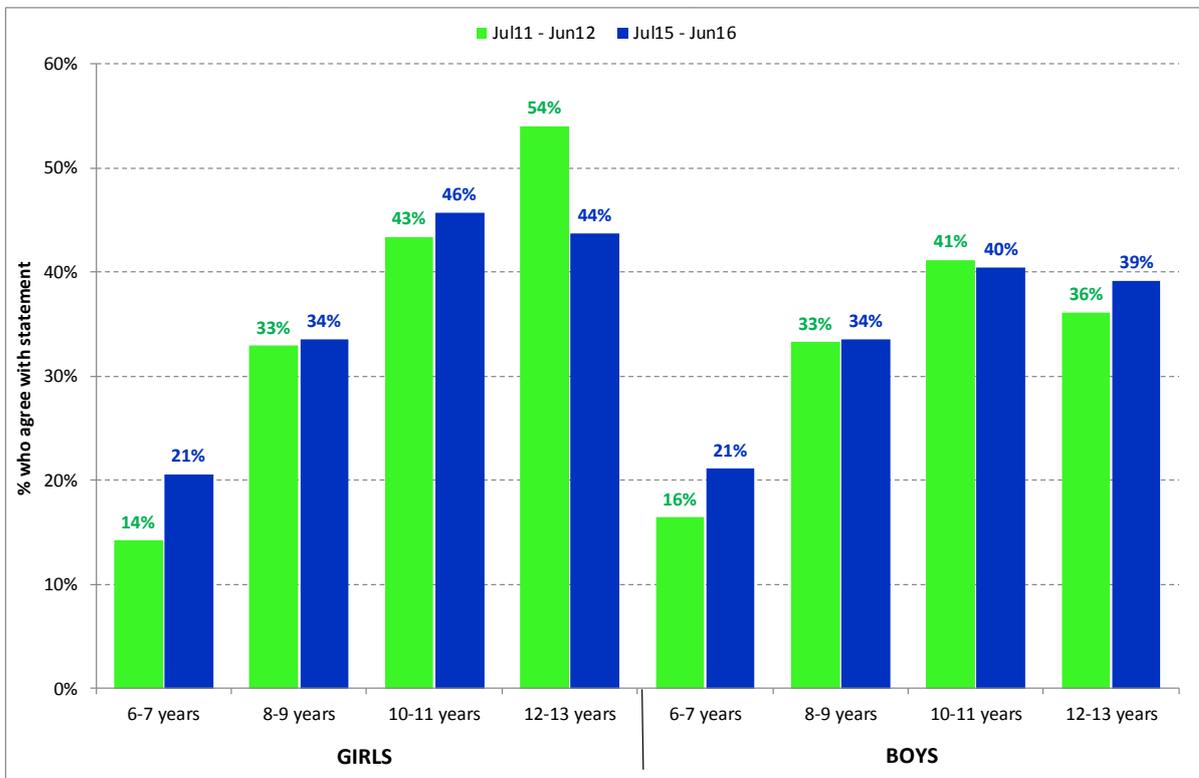
Over a third of Australian kids worry about their weight

Whether it's the latest fad diet, some Hollywood starlet's bikini body, the cult of 'thinspiration' on social media, or weight-loss TV shows like *The Biggest Loser*, popular culture's obsession with skinniness is no secret. For parents of young children, this can be worrying: will their child grow up believing that only thin people are loveable/happy/admirable/successful? The latest findings from Roy Morgan's nationwide Young Australians Survey reveal that such parental concerns are justified.

Asked whether they agreed with the statement, 'I worry about my weight', 35% of Australian kids aged between 6 and 13 years reported that they did. This represents a marginal increase on 2012, when 34% said they worried about their weight.

Among girls, there has been no change overall: 36% agreed with the statement in 2012 and 36% agree with it in 2016. At first glance, this static trend is encouraging news: after all, girls (and, obviously, women) bear the brunt of the body-image police. But upon closer inspection, we find that the proportion of girls aged 6-7 who claim to worry about their weight has risen some 50% from 14% to 21%. Weight concerns have also become more prevalent among girls aged 8-9 (33% to 34%) and those aged 10-11 (43% to 46%).

Australian kids who agree that 'I worry about my weight': 2012 vs 2016



Source: Roy Morgan Young Australians Survey, July 2011-June 2012 (n=3,447) and July 2015-June 2016 (n=2,876). **Base:** Australian children 6-13 years

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Offsetting these increases is the dramatic decline among older girls (12-13 years): whereas 54% reported that they worried about their weight in 2012, this has since dropped to 44%.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the traditionally feminine focus of most fat-shaming/weight-watching narratives, a slightly higher proportion of Aussie boys aged 6-13 now agree that they worry about their weight (34%) compared with four years ago (32%). This increased concern appears to be driven by boys aged 6-7 (up from 16% to 21%) and those aged 12-13 (36% to 39%).

Michele Levine, CEO, Roy Morgan Research, says:

“The fact that Australia has an obesity problem is well documented, attracting regular media coverage. Figures from Roy Morgan Single Source back this up: 28% of adults have a Body Mass Index that qualifies as obese, and 33% fall into the overweight category. But while being overweight can cause health problems, other body-image issues—such as the expectation that only thin women are attractive, or that overweight people are lazy—do not help matters.

“It’s inevitable that children internalise these commentaries to some extent, and the fact that over 35% of kids aged 6-13 are worried about their weight speaks volumes. While this isn’t necessarily all bad (for example, if it encourages them to avoid junk food), it is a serious concern if children develop low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction and/or eating disorders as a result.

“The striking increase in kids aged between 6 and 7 years worrying about their weight is not a trend that anyone wants to see. Childhood should be a happy, untroubled time, free of such insecurities. Fortunately, Australian schools are increasingly recognising that body image issues affect both girls and boys from an early age and addressing the subject in the classroom.

“On a more promising note, there has been a drastic drop in girls aged 12-13 who are worried about their weight. As they make the transition to high school and adolescence, we can only help this trend continues.

“Health organisations and educators concerned about the insidious effect of body dissatisfaction among Australian children would benefit from learning more about the attitudes and behaviours shaping it, in order to reach those kids most at risk. For example, data from Roy Morgan’s Young Australians Survey reveals that while fewer children are consuming sugary soft drinks, fast food and unhealthy snacks like potato chips and chocolate bars than they were four years ago, three in every 10 now agree that they’d rather play computer games than play outside...”

For comments or more information about Roy Morgan Research’s Young Australians Survey data, please contact:

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Related research findings

Learn more about what makes young Australians tick with the Roy Morgan [Young Australians Survey](#).

Surveying approximately 2,500 Australian children per annum, this report is a vital tool for any organisation or company looking to examine the influence that young Australians have in the marketplace, and gain a better understanding of how their attitudes and activities have changed over time.

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 Indonesia, 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.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2