



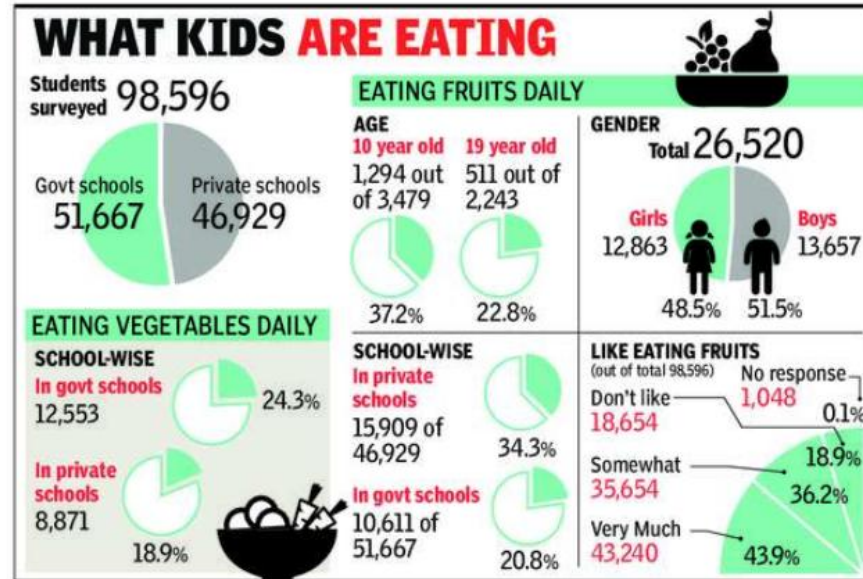
Are schoolkids eating healthy? Not really: Survey

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Gurgaon: Forty-seven in every 100 schoolchildren studying in classes V-XII don't eat enough vegetables, while 72 in 100 don't have enough fruits on a daily basis. The trend is the same for boys and girls in this age group, according to a survey across 90 government and private schools in NCR.

Data released by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), a non-profit research organisation, further shows that the average vegetable intake among kids in the given age group is 2.4 servings (one serving is 100g), as against five servings recommended by WHO. Similarly the average intake of fruits is 100gm as opposed to recommended 400gm.

The objective of this survey carried out last year, was to find out if schoolchildren are having enough fruits, vegetables, and juice to understand their consumption patterns and shortfall in intake, if any. "We found out that there is a gap between the recommended intake and the quantity consumed," said Arpita



Mukherjee, professor ICRIER. The survey covered a total of 98,596 students, including 50,560 boys, from various socio-economic groups studying in 36 government and 54 private schools in Gurgaon, Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad. Of them, 46,929 are in private

schools and the remaining 51,667 study in government schools. All the students were given a sample form with multiple-choice questions and they had to tick against the option best suited them. A closer look at the report reveals, the average intake of

vegetables among students in government schools is 2.5 servings as compared to 2.3 servings among children in private schools. In contrast, 34.3% children enrolled in private schools consume fruits daily, while only 20.8% in government schools do so.

"The intake gap is higher among younger kids since they are more likely to depend on their parents, teachers and other elders for their diet. Thus, it requires appropriate awareness programmes and policy interventions," Mukherjee explained. There are some students who claim that they want to have fruits and vegetables; but this option is not available in school canteens. "Globally fruits and vegetables are encouraged through school canteens. In this survey, we have found that schools are not recommending good eating habits among kids," she added.

Experts believe parents' role is crucial in matters related to kids' nutrition. "Most of the students' lunch boxes have pastas and maggi, instead of fruits and vegetables," pointed out Neha Pathania, dietician, Paras Hospital, Gurgaon.

Shraddha Khandelwal, nutritionist, Suncity School, Sector 54, echoed Pathania. "Some students are not bringing right foods in their tiffin. This is the reason that there are some schools that offer full meals which ensure all kids have the right intake of fruits and vegetables."