

# Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Ireland



This is one of the 53 country profiles covering developments in nutrition, physical activity and obesity in the WHO European Region. The full set of individual profiles and an overview report including methodology and summary can be downloaded from the WHO Regional Office for Europe website: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/nutrition-country-profiles>.

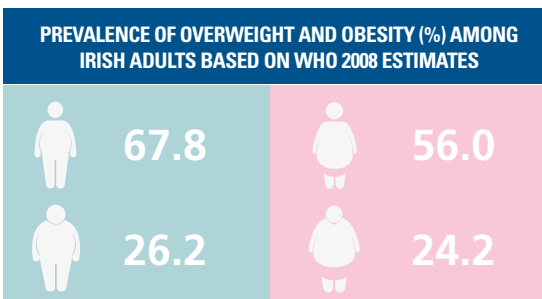
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| DEMOGRAPHIC DATA                               |             |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Total population                               | 4 470 000   |
| Median age (years)                             | 34.7        |
| Life expectancy at birth (years) female   male | 82.0   77.3 |
| GDP per capita (US\$)                          | 46 220.0    |
| GDP spent on health (%)                        | 9.2         |

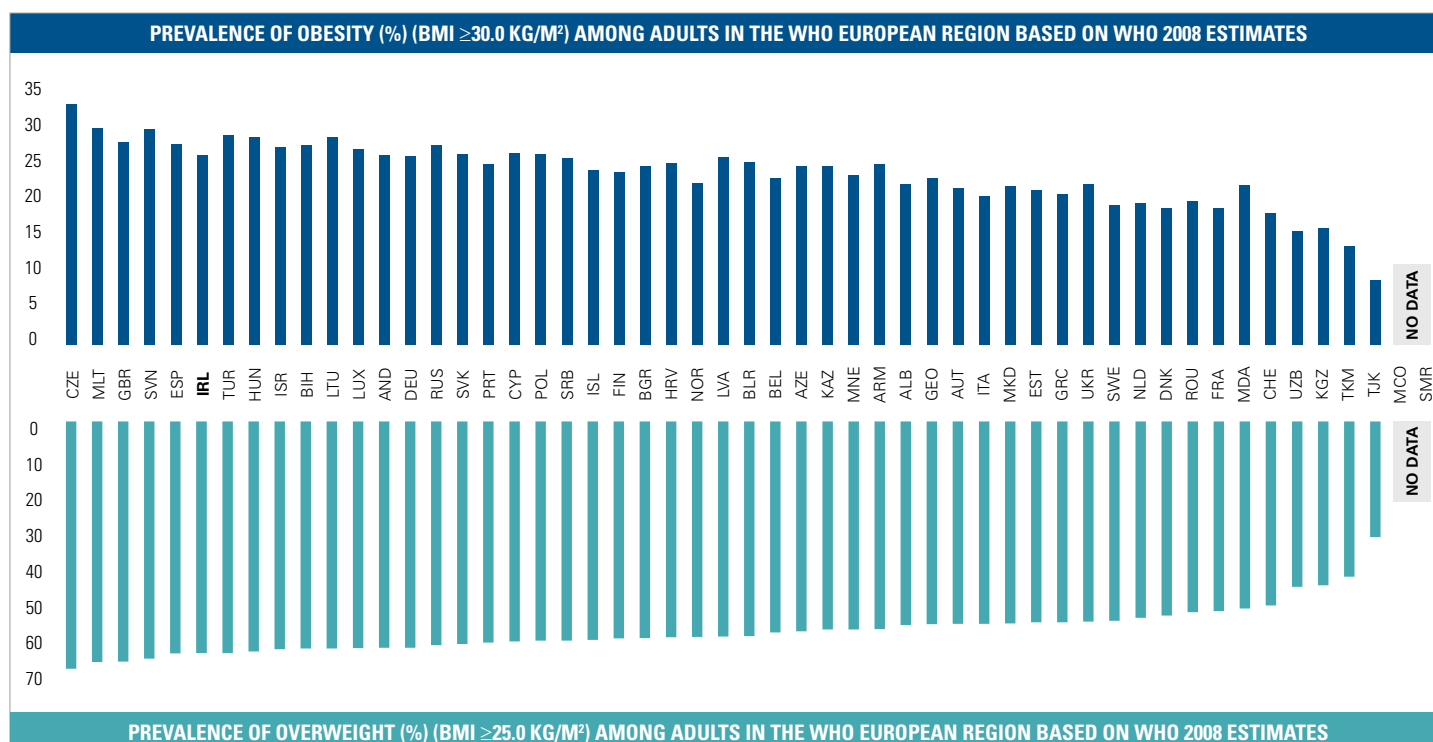
## Monitoring and surveillance Overweight and obesity in three age groups

### Adults (20 years and over)

Intercountry comparable overweight and obesity estimates from 2008 (1) show that 61.9% of the adult population ( $\geq 20$  years old) in Ireland were overweight and 25.2% were obese. The prevalence of overweight was higher among men (67.8%) than women (56.0%). The proportion of men and women that were obese was 26.2% and 24.2%, respectively. Adulthood obesity prevalence forecasts (2010–2030) predict that in 2020, 40% of men and 37% of women will be obese. By 2030, the model predicts that 47% of both men and women will be obese.<sup>1</sup>



Source: WHO Global Health Observatory Data Repository (1).



Notes: The country codes refer to the ISO 3166-1 Alpha-3 country codes. Data ranking for obesity is intentionally the same as for the overweight data. BMI: body mass index.  
Source: WHO Global Health Observatory Data Repository (1).

<sup>1</sup> Report on modelling adulthood obesity across the WHO European Region, prepared by consultants (led by T. Marsh and colleagues) for the WHO Regional Office for Europe in 2013.

The Regional Office is grateful to the European Commission (EC) for its financial support for the preparation of this country profile and the development of the nutrition, obesity and physical activity database that provided data for it.

## Adolescents (10–19 years)

In terms of prevalence of overweight and obesity in adolescents, up to 37% of boys and 23% of girls among 11-year-olds were overweight, according to data from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey (2009/2010).<sup>2</sup> Among 13-year-olds, the corresponding figures were 20% for boys and 11% for girls, and among 15-year-olds, 19% and 14%, respectively (2).

## Children (0–9 years)

Estimates from the first round (2007/2008) of the WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) show that among 7-year-olds in Ireland, 31.8% of boys and 27.3% of girls were overweight and 11.6% and 7.7%, respectively, were obese (3).<sup>2</sup>

### PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT (%) IN IRISH ADOLESCENTS (BASED ON SELF-REPORTED DATA ON HEIGHT AND WEIGHT)

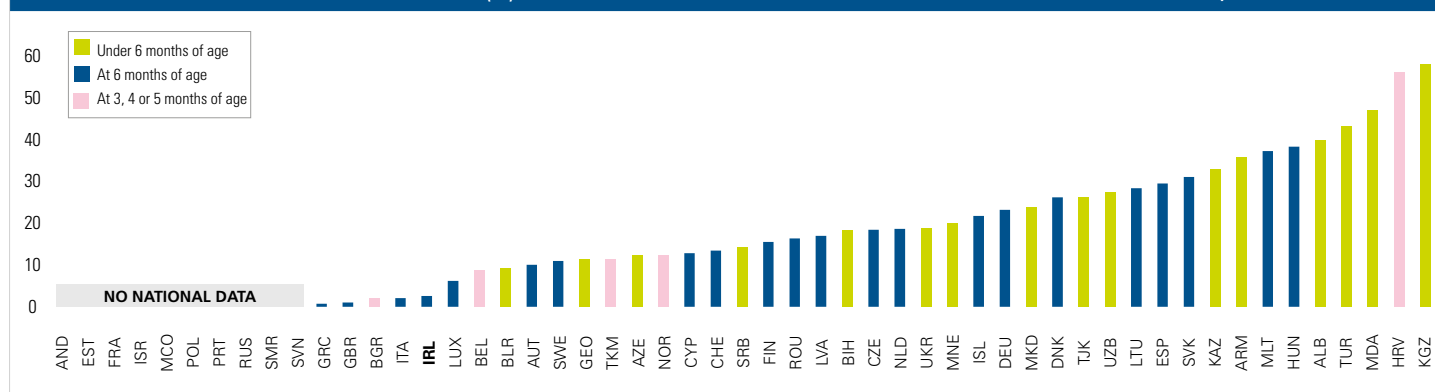
|              |    |              |    |              |    |
|--------------|----|--------------|----|--------------|----|
| 37           | 23 | 20           | 11 | 19           | 14 |
| 11-year-olds |    | 13-year-olds |    | 15-year-olds |    |

Source: Currie et al. (2).

## Exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months of age

Nationally representative data from 2008 show that the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months of age was 2.5% in Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

### PREVALENCE OF EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING (%) UNDER OR AT 6 MONTHS OF AGE FROM INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY-BASED SURVEYS, VARIOUS YEARS



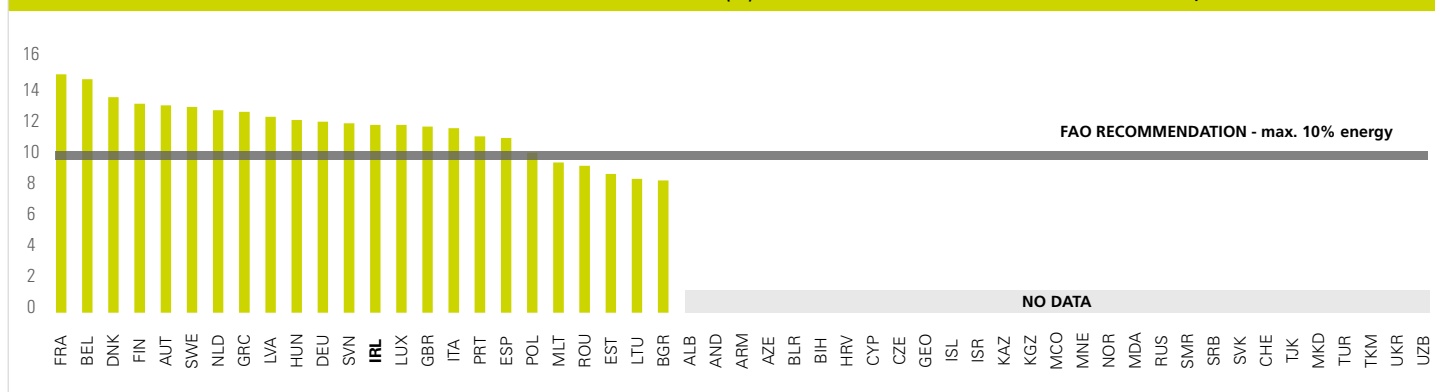
Notes. The country codes refer to the ISO 3166-1 Alpha-3 country codes. Data were derived from country-specific publications on surveys carried out in this field, not as part of a European-wide survey. Due to different data collection methods of the country-specific surveys, any comparisons between countries must be made with caution.

Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe grey literature from 2012 on breastfeeding.

## Saturated fat intake

According to 2007 estimates, the adult population in Ireland consumed 11.5% of their total calorie intake from saturated fatty acids (4).

### PROPORTION OF ENERGY FROM SATURATED FATTY ACIDS (%) AMONG ADULTS IN THE WHO EUROPEAN REGION, 2007



Notes. The country codes refer to the ISO 3166-1 Alpha-3 country codes. Ranking of data was carried out so that country data at the right-hand side of the graph – with values below the FAO recommendation – fall within the positive frame of the indicator. FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

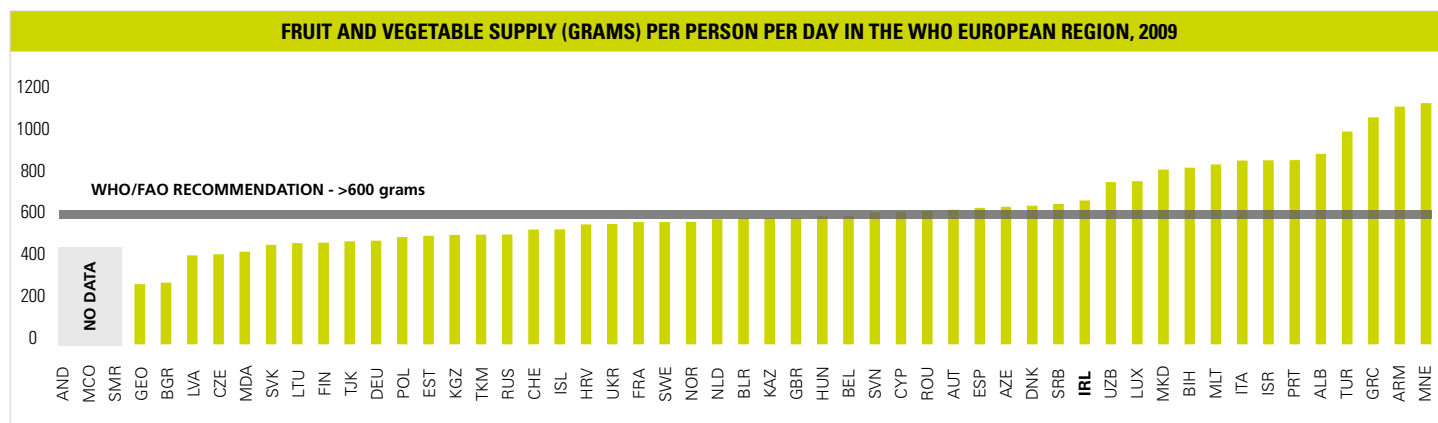
Source: FAOSTAT (4).

<sup>2</sup> Based on 2007 WHO growth reference.

<sup>3</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe grey literature from 2012 on breastfeeding.

## Fruit and vegetable supply

Ireland had a fruit and vegetable supply of 669 grams per capita per day, according to 2009 estimates (4).

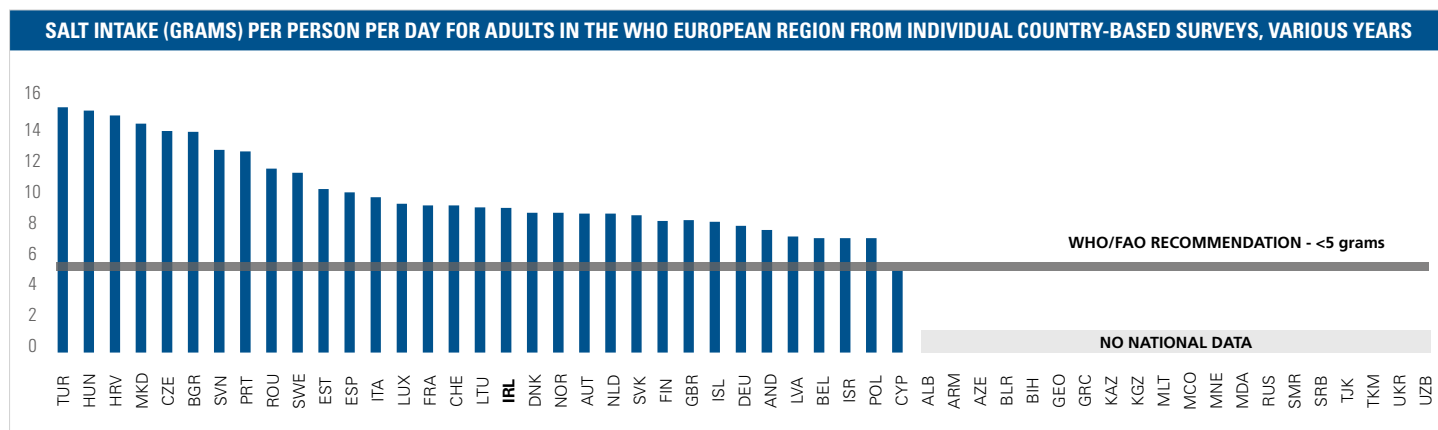


Notes: The country codes refer to the ISO 3166-1 Alpha-3 country codes. Ranking of data was carried out so that country data at the right-hand side of the graph – with values above the WHO/FAO recommendation – fall within the positive frame of the indicator.

Source: FAOSTAT (4).

## Salt intake

Data from 2007 show that salt intake in Ireland was 10.3 grams per day for men and 7.4 grams per day for women (5).



Notes: The country codes refer to the ISO 3166-1 Alpha-3 country codes. Data were derived from country-specific publications on surveys carried out in this field, not as part of a European-wide survey. Due to different data collection methods of the country-specific surveys, any comparisons between countries must be made with caution. Ranking of data was carried out so that country data at the right-hand side of the graph – with values below the WHO/FAO recommendation – fall within the positive frame of the indicator.

Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe (5).

## Iodine status

According to the most recent estimates on iodine status, published in 2012, the proportion of the population with an iodine level lower than 100 µg/L was 56.2% (6, 7).

## Physical inactivity

In Ireland, 46.6% of the population aged 15 years and over were insufficiently active (men 43.6% and women 49.4%), according to estimates generated for 2008 by WHO (1).

## Policies and actions

The table below displays (a) monitoring and evaluation methods of salt intake in Ireland; (b) the stakeholder approach toward salt reduction; and (c) the population approach in terms of labelling and consumer awareness initiatives (5).

### Salt reduction initiatives

| Monitoring & evaluation         |     | Stakeholder approach |                    |                                     | Population approach |                                |          |                  |                        |            |           |
|---------------------------------|-----|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------|------------------|------------------------|------------|-----------|
|                                 |     |                      |                    |                                     | Labelling           | Consumer awareness initiatives |          |                  |                        |            |           |
|                                 |     |                      |                    |                                     |                     | Brochure Print                 | TV Radio | Website Software | Education Schools      | Conference | Reporting |
| Industry self-reporting         |     | Industry involvement | Food reformulation | Specific food category              |                     |                                |          |                  | Health care facilities |            |           |
| Salt content in food            | XXX |                      |                    |                                     |                     |                                |          |                  |                        |            |           |
| Salt intake                     | XXX |                      |                    |                                     |                     |                                |          |                  |                        |            |           |
| Consumer awareness              |     |                      |                    | 16% salt reduction in bread by 2013 |                     |                                |          |                  |                        |            |           |
| Behavioural change              | XXX | XXX                  | XXX                |                                     |                     |                                |          |                  |                        |            |           |
| Urinary salt excretion (24 hrs) |     |                      |                    |                                     | XXX                 |                                |          |                  | XXX                    |            | XXX       |

Notes: XX partially implemented; XXX fully implemented.

Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe (5).

## Trans fatty acids (TFA) policies

| Legislation | Type of legislation | Measure |
|-------------|---------------------|---------|
|             |                     |         |

Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe grey literature from 2012 on TFA and health, TFA policy and food industry approaches.

## Price policies (food taxation and subsidies)

| Taxes | School fruit schemes |
|-------|----------------------|
|       | ✓                    |

Sources: WHO Regional Office for Europe grey literature from 2012 on diet and the use of fiscal policy in the control and prevention of noncommunicable diseases; EC School Fruit Scheme website (8).

## Marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children (9)

The 2005 Children's Advertising Code (10) contains statutory controls to regulate some aspects of TV advertising of unhealthy food to children. In June 2009 the new Broadcasting Act (11) contained provisions for the new Broadcasting Authority (12) to introduce regulations to protect children from advertising of foods high in fat, sugar or salt through the broadcast media. The Broadcasting Authority has reviewed the Children's Commercial Communications Code (13), which is a statutory instrument.

## Physical activity (PA), national policy documents and action plans

| Sport                                                                                                 | Target groups                                                                                      | Health                                                      | Education                                                     |                                              | Transportation                                                    |                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Existence of national "sport for all" policy and/or national "sport for all" implementation programme | Existence of specific scheme or programme for community interventions to promote PA in the elderly | Counselling on PA as part of primary health care activities | Mandatory physical education in primary and secondary schools | Inclusion of PA in general teaching training | National or subnational schemes promoting active travel to school | Existence of an incentive scheme for companies or employees to promote active travel to work |
| ✓                                                                                                     | ✓                                                                                                  |                                                             | ✓ <sup>b</sup>                                                | ✓ <sup>a</sup>                               |                                                                   | ✓ <sup>a</sup>                                                                               |

<sup>a</sup> Clearly stated in a policy document, partially implemented or enforced. <sup>b</sup> Clearly stated in a policy document, entirely implemented and enforced.

Source: country reporting template on Ireland from 2009 developed in the context of a WHO/EC project on monitoring progress on improving nutrition and PA and preventing obesity in the European Union (EU).

## Leadership, partnerships and professional networks on health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA)

| Existence of national coordination mechanism on HEPA promotion | Leading institution               | Participating bodies                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ✓ 2009                                                         | Department of Health and Children | Government departments on: health, agriculture, food, trade and economy, sport, transport, urban planning, social welfare, education and research, labour, culture; nongovernmental organizations; academia; private sector |

Source: country reporting template on Ireland from 2009 developed in the context of a WHO/EC project on monitoring progress on improving nutrition and PA and preventing obesity in the EU.

## PA recommendations, goals and surveillance

| Existence of national recommendation on HEPA | Target groups addressed by national HEPA policy             | PA included in the national health monitoring system |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| ✓ 2009                                       | General population, vulnerable and low socioeconomic groups | ✓                                                    |

Source: country reporting template on Ireland from 2009 developed in the context of a WHO/EC project on monitoring progress on improving nutrition and PA and preventing obesity in the EU.

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