

European Health Interview Survey

Between 8% and 25% of adults are obese across Member States

No systematic differences between women and men

Obesity and overweight are serious public health problems that can be statistically measured using the Body Mass Index (BMI)¹ of adults. Obesity is defined as a BMI of over 30. Among the 19 Member States for which data are available, the proportion of obese people in the adult population varied in 2008/9 between 8.0% and 23.9% for women and between 7.6% and 24.7% for men. In the **USA**², the corresponding figure was 26.8% for women and 27.6% for men in 2009.

For both women and men aged 18 years and over, the lowest shares of obesity in 2008/9 were observed in **Romania** (8.0% for women and 7.6% for men), **Italy** (9.3% and 11.3%), **Bulgaria** (11.3% and 11.6%) and **France** (12.7% and 11.7%). The highest proportions of obese women were recorded in the **United Kingdom** (23.9%), **Malta** (21.1%), **Latvia** (20.9%) and **Estonia** (20.5% in 2006/7), and of men in **Malta** (24.7%), the **United Kingdom** (22.1%), **Hungary** (21.4%) and the **Czech Republic** (18.4%).

There is no systematic difference in obesity between women and men: the proportion of obesity was higher for women in eight Member States, higher for men in ten and equal in one.

These data come from the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS)³ published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. The EHIS aims at measuring the health status, life style and health care of citizens across the EU Member States on a harmonised basis.

The share of obese persons increases with age...

The share of obese persons varies between age groups. For women there is a clear pattern in all the Member States available, that the older the age group, the higher the share of obese persons. The largest differences between the youngest and oldest age groups of women were observed in **Latvia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Estonia**. For the two youngest age groups, the percentage of obese women in the **United Kingdom** is particularly notable.

For men, in twelve of the nineteen Member States available, the highest share of obesity was recorded for the age group 65-74, while in the remaining seven Member States, the highest share was registered for the age group 45-64. The largest differences between age groups for men were found in the **United Kingdom, Hungary, Malta and Greece**. For the age group 25-44 in **Malta** and 45-64 in the **United Kingdom**, the percentage of obese men is particularly significant.

...and tends to fall with educational level

The share of obese persons also varies according to the educational level. For women, the pattern is again clear: the proportion of women who are obese falls as the educational level rises in all Member States. The largest differences in obesity between women with a low educational level and those with a high educational level were observed in **Slovakia, Malta, Poland and Greece**.

For men, in eleven of the available Member States, the highest share of obesity was observed for those with a low educational level, in five Member States for those with a medium educational level while in **Bulgaria and Estonia** it was for those with a high educational level.

Share of obese persons by sex and age group, 2008 or 2009*

	Women					Men				
	Total aged 18+	18-24	25-44	45-64	65-74	Total aged 18+	18-24	25-44	45-64	65-74
Belgium	14.7	5.4	11.6	17.1	21.5	13.3	3.3	11.5	18.5	11.3
Bulgaria	11.3	1.0	6.6	14.6	18.9	11.6	1.3	12.1	14.8	14.9
Czech Republic	18.3	4.8	10.6	25.1	35.9	18.4	4.9	15.0	26.8	25.3
Denmark	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Germany	15.6	u	12.0	18.2	21.7	16.1	4.6	13.8	21.1	18.2
Estonia	20.5	3.7	10.1	30.4	33.8	16.0	3.8	15.7	21.5	20.4
Ireland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Greece	17.6	3.2	9.2	24.6	32.4	17.6	3.7	15.4	22.7	25.8
Spain	14.4	3.9	9.3	17.1	26.8	17.0	5.8	14.7	21.8	23.9
France	12.7	4.3	10.5	15.1	17.8	11.7	2.8	8.6	15.1	19.4
Italy	9.3	2.0	4.6	11.7	16.1	11.3	3.4	8.3	15.2	15.3
Cyprus	14.5	1.7	9.2	19.7	26.6	16.7	5.8	13.2	22.0	22.8
Latvia	20.9	1.7	9.6	31.0	35.3	12.0	2.3	10.0	16.5	19.6
Lithuania	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Luxembourg	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Hungary	18.8	3.0	12.8	25.5	26.0	21.4	7.2	15.5	28.6	33.9
Malta	(21.1)	10.7	15.6	(24.9)	(31.9)	24.7	7.8	25.0	29.5	(31.1)
Netherlands	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Austria	13.2	4.7	8.8	18.0	19.6	12.4	5.0	9.6	17.0	19.1
Poland	15.8	2.1	7.5	22.9	27.6	17.3	4.1	14.4	23.6	24.6
Portugal	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Romania	8.0	1.6	4.1	13.7	10.8	7.6	1.8	6.3	10.7	10.5
Slovenia	16.3	4.0	10.0	23.2	24.2	17.3	3.6	14.5	24.4	24.3
Slovakia	15.7	1.3	7.8	23.3	33.7	14.5	3.5	12.7	19.2	25.1
Finland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Sweden	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
United Kingdom**	23.9	16.6	20.7	27.7	31.1	22.1	5.9	17.5	33.2	29.6

* Data for either 2008 or 2009, except for Austria and Estonia: 2006/7, Slovenia: 2007 and Germany: 2009/10

** Age groups 16+ and 16-24 instead of 18+ and 18-24, data refer to England only

() Data with reduced reliability due to a large number of missing answers

u Data not published due to small sample size

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Data not available

Share of obese persons aged 18 and over by sex and educational level, 2008 or 2009*

	Women			Men		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Belgium	21.8	15.3	7.9	17.5	13.7	10.0
Bulgaria	14.0	11.5	6.9	10.4	11.7	13.7
Czech Republic	28.0	16.9	12.5	17.9	19.9	10.4
Denmark	:	:	:	:	:	:
Germany	21.9	14.7	8.8	16.4	17.4	13.1
Estonia	27.4	19.9	11.2	14.7	16.2	18.5
Ireland	:	:	:	:	:	:
Greece	25.2	13.5	8.4	20.2	17.6	13.9
Spain	21.1	8.3	6.0	21.1	12.8	12.8
France	18.7	11.3	5.5	16.4	10.7	7.5
Italy	12.9	5.3	3.6	13.8	8.7	7.6
Cyprus	23.6	10.8	7.1	20.6	14.8	14.6
Latvia	24.1	22.0	15.9	12.8	11.5	12.7
Lithuania	:	:	:	:	:	:
Luxembourg	:	:	:	:	:	:
Hungary	26.9	16.1	13.5	23.9	21.8	17.1
Malta	(30.5)	18.1	11.7	(30.5)	22.5	22.8
Netherlands	:	:	:	:	:	:
Austria	20.9	10.4	8.3	13.6	12.1	12.2
Poland	24.8	15.4	7.2	16.0	18.1	15.0
Portugal	:	:	:	:	:	:
Romania	9.0	7.9	5.0	5.6	8.5	7.3
Slovenia	22.7	11.2	6.6	20.2	15.7	7.0
Slovakia	28.2	15.0	8.8	14.6	15.5	10.5
Finland	:	:	:	:	:	:
Sweden	:	:	:	:	:	:
United Kingdom	:	:	:	:	:	:

Low level of education refers to pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (ISCED level 0-2), medium level to upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED level 3-4) and high level to tertiary education (ISCED level 5-6).

* Data for either 2008 or 2009, except for Austria and Estonia: 2006/7, Slovenia: 2007 and Germany: 2009/10

() Data with reduced reliability due to a large number of missing answers

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1. The definitions are based on the Body Mass Index (BMI): the weight in kilos divided by the square of the height in meters. A BMI of less than 18.5 is defined as underweight, 18.5 to less than 25 as normal weight, 25 to less than 30 as overweight and 30 or more as obese.
2. Source: National Health Interview Survey: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_249.pdf
3. For more information, see the [Statistics Explained article](#) on the Eurostat web site.

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