

4. NON-MEDICAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Fruit and vegetable consumption among adults

Nutrition is an important determinant of health. Insufficient consumption of fruit and vegetables is one factor that can play a role in increased risk of morbidity (Bazzano et al., 2003; Riboli and Norat, 2003). Food insecurity, that is the inability to afford enough food for a healthy and active life, is also associated with adverse health effects (Seligman et al., 2010). Proper nutrition assists in preventing a number of chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type-2 diabetes, stroke, certain cancers, musculoskeletal disorders and a range of mental health conditions.

In response to a health survey question asking “How often do you eat fruit?”, the percentage of adults consuming fruit daily varied from about 30% in Finland, to 94% in Australia (Figure 4.5). Across the 29 countries providing data, on average 55% of men and 66% of women reported to eat fruit daily. Women reported eating fruit more often than men in all countries except in Switzerland, with the largest gender differences in Germany, Slovenia, and Iceland (20 percentage points or more). In Australia, Greece, Mexico, and the United Kingdom, gender differences were much smaller, under 5 percentage points.

Persons aged 65 and over were more likely to eat fruit than those in younger age group; with the lowest consumption in people aged 15-24 years. Fruit consumption also varies by education level, generally being highest among persons with higher educational levels.

Daily vegetable consumption ranged from around 33% in men in Slovenia to nearly 100% in Korea, with Australia and New Zealand at about the same levels, but counting potatoes as vegetables (Figure 4.6). The average across 29 OECD countries was 61% for men and 70% for women. Again, more women than men reported eating vegetables daily in all countries, except in Korea, Australia and Mexico where vegetable consumption is not significantly different between men and women. In Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Germany and Slovenia, gender differences exceeded 16 percentage points.

Patterns of vegetable consumption across age groups and by level of education are similar to those observed for fruit. Older persons are more likely to eat vegetables daily. Highly educated persons eat vegetables more often.

The availability of fruit and vegetables is the most important determinant of consumption. Despite large variations between countries, vegetable, and especially fruit, availability is higher in Southern European countries, with cereals and potatoes more available in Central and Eastern European countries. Fruit and vegetable availability also tends

to be higher in families where household heads have a higher level of education (Elmadfa, 2009).

The promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption, especially in schools and at the workplace, features in the EU platform for action on diet, physical activity and health (European Commission, 2014).

Definition and comparability

Estimates of daily fruit and vegetable consumption are derived from national and European Health Interview Survey questions. Typically, respondents were asked “How often do you eat fruit (excluding juice)?” and “How often do you eat vegetables or salad (excluding juice and potatoes)?”.

Data for Greece and Switzerland include juices as a portion of fruit, and juices and soups as a portion of vegetable. Data for Australia, Greece, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom include potatoes as vegetables. Data rely on self-reporting, and are subject to errors in recall. The same surveys also ask for information on age, sex and educational level. Data are not age standardised, with aggregate country estimates representing crude rates among respondents aged 15 years and over in all countries, except Germany and Australia which is 18 years and over.

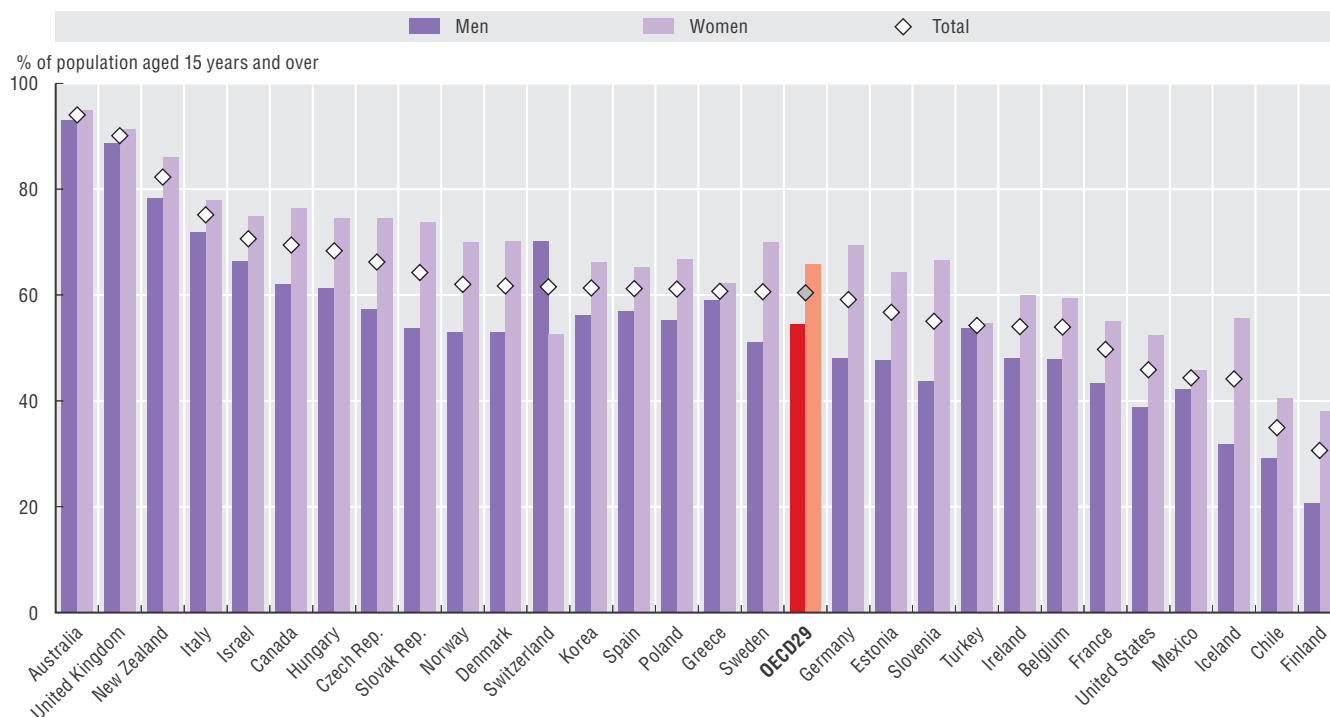
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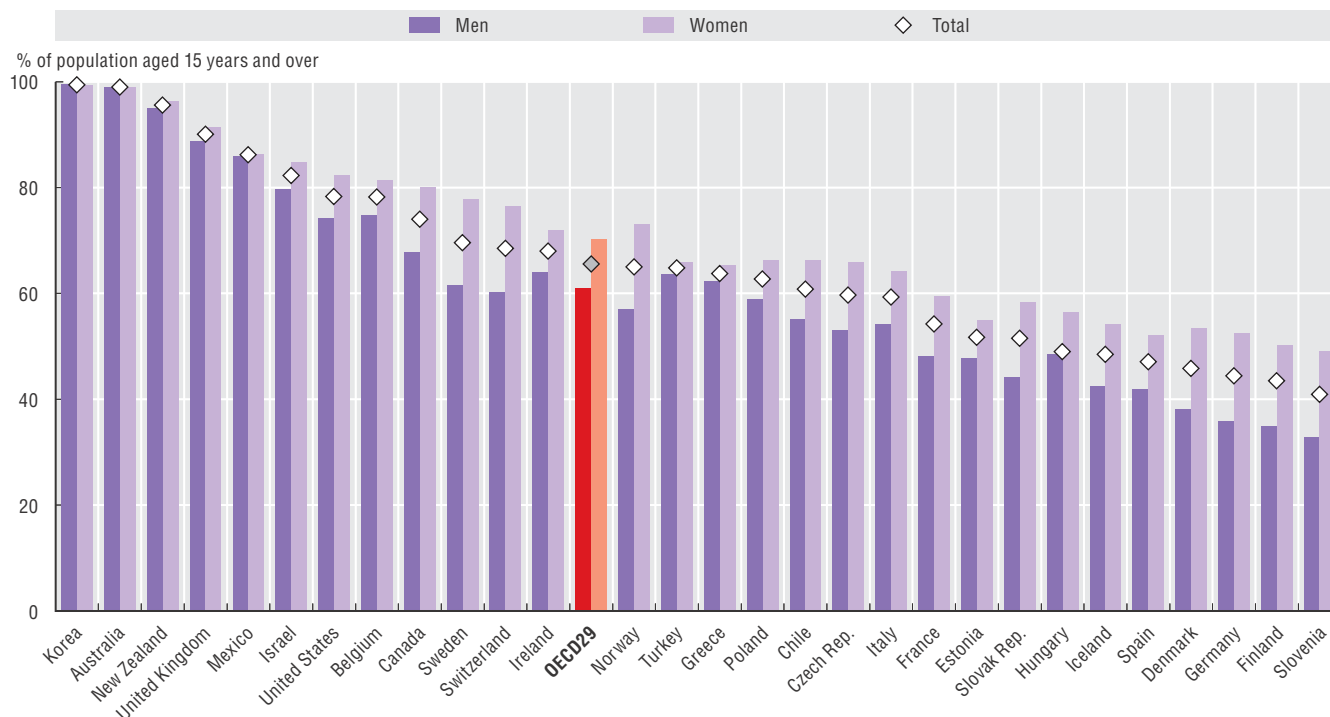
4.5. Daily fruit eating among adults, 2013 (or nearest year)



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933280841>

4.6. Daily vegetable eating among adults, 2013 (or nearest year)



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

Information on data for Israel: <http://oe.cd/israel-disclaimer>

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933280841>



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