

Nutrition is important for children's development and long-term health. Eating fruit during adolescence, for example, in place of high-fat, sugar and salt products, can protect against health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and heart problems. Moreover, eating fruit and vegetables when young can be habit forming, promoting healthy eating behaviours for later life.

A number of factors influence the amount of fruit consumed by adolescents, including family income, the cost of alternatives, preparation time, whether parents eat fruit, and the availability of fresh fruit which can be linked to the country or local climate (Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006). Fruit and vegetable consumption have a high priority as indicators of healthy eating in most European countries.

In European countries in 2009-10, only around one-third of girls and one-quarter of boys aged 15 years ate at least one piece of fruit daily, according to the latest Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey (Currie *et al.*, 2012). Overall, boys in Denmark, Portugal and Italy, and girls in Denmark, Norway, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Switzerland had the highest rates of daily fruit consumption. Fruit consumption was relatively low in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and in contrast to other Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, with rates of around one-in-four among girls and one-in-five for boys (Figure 2.3.1).

In all countries, girls were more likely to eat fruit daily. The gap between the fruit consumption of boys and girls is largest at age 15 for most countries, with the greatest disparities found in Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway.

Daily vegetable eating was also reported by around one-third of girls and quarter of boys on average across EU member states in 2009-10 (Figure 2.3.2). Girls in Belgium most commonly ate vegetables daily (60%), followed by Denmark, France and Switzerland (45-50%). Belgium also led the way for boys (46%), with close to 40% in France and Ireland. Eating vegetables daily was less common in Austria, Estonia and Spain, as well as in Croatia (girls), and Finland and Latvia (boys).

Similar to fruit eating, in all countries a higher proportion of girls ate vegetables daily. The disparity was especially large in Finland, where 35% of girls, but only 14% of

boys reported eating vegetables each day. Denmark and Germany also had large differences, although rates were comparatively high for both boys and girls in Denmark.

In most countries, it was more common for 15-year-olds to report eating fruit daily, rather than vegetables (Figure 2.3.3). However, in a number of western European countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland and France, daily vegetable eating was more common.

Average reported rates of daily vegetable consumption across EU member states showed some increase between 2001-02 and 2009-10, for both girls and boys (Figure 2.3.3). Fruit consumption however was less clear, with a small increase among girls, while the rates for boys have remained largely unchanged.

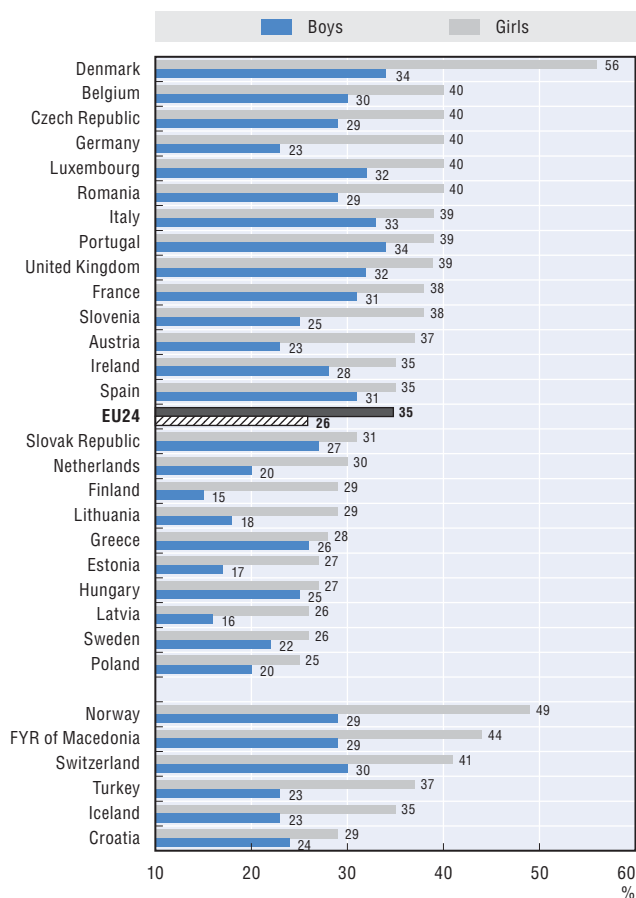
Effective and targeted strategies are required to ensure that children are eating enough fruit and vegetables to conform with recommended national dietary guidelines. A study of European school children found that they generally hold a positive attitude toward fruit intake, and report good availability of fruit at home, but lower availability at school and during leisure time. Increased accessibility to fruit and vegetables, combined with educational and motivational activities can help in increasing both fruit and vegetable consumption (Sandvik *et al.*, 2005).

Definition and comparability

Dietary habits are measured here in terms of the proportions of children who report eating fruit and vegetables at least every day or more than once a day. In addition to fruit and vegetables, healthy nutrition also involves other types of foods.

Data for 24 EU member states and six other countries are from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) surveys undertaken between 2001-02 and 2009-10. Data are drawn from school-based samples of 1 500 in each age group (11-, 13- and 15-year-olds) in most countries.

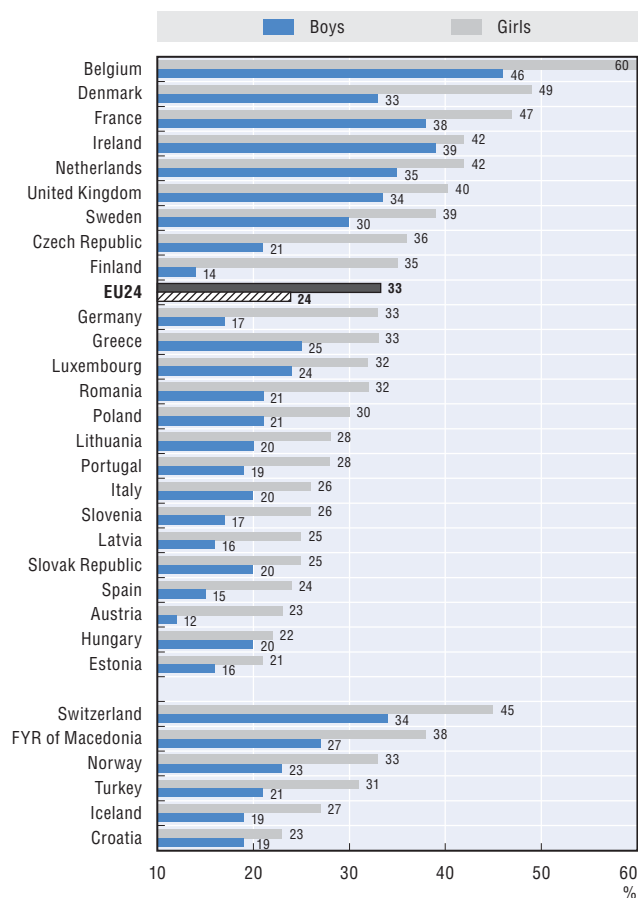
2.3.1. Daily fruit eating among 15-year-olds, 2009-10



Source: Currie et al. (2012).

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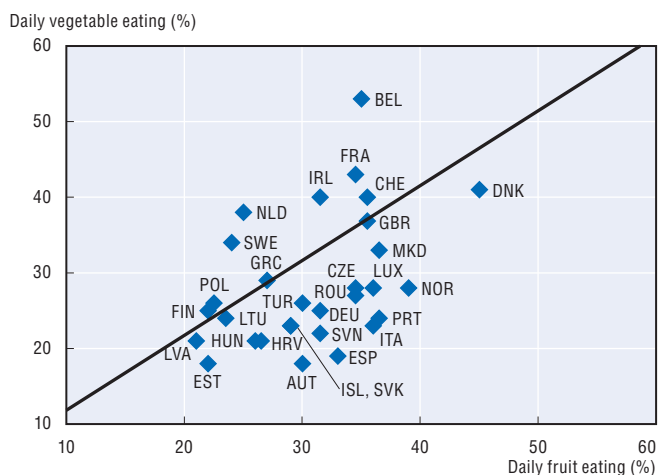
2.3.2. Daily vegetable eating among 15-year-olds, 2009-10



Source: Currie et al. (2012).

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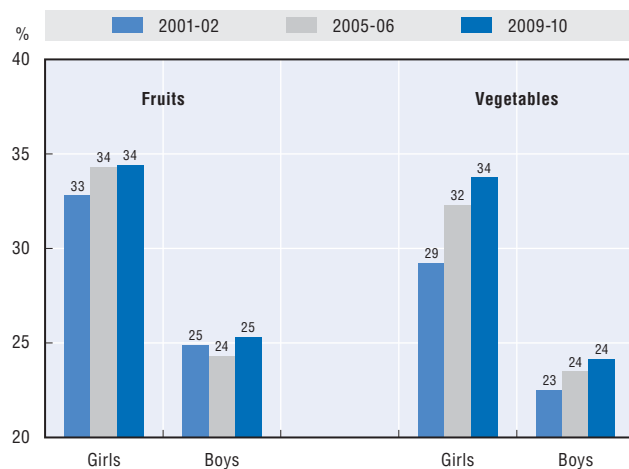
2.3.3. Daily fruit and vegetable eating among 15-year-olds, 2009-10



Source: Currie et al. (2012).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932703905>

2.3.4. Trends in daily fruit and vegetable eating among 15-year-olds, 21 EU countries, 2001-02 to 2009-10



Source: Currie et al. (2004); Currie et al. (2008); Currie et al. (2012).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932703924>