

2. NON-MEDICAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

2.8. Fruit and vegetable consumption among adults

Nutrition is an important determinant of health. Inadequate consumption of fruit and vegetables is one factor that can play a role in increased morbidity. 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 20% in men in Finland, to more than 90% in Australia (Figure 2.8.1). Across the 24 countries providing data, an average 57% of men and 69% of women reported to eat fruit daily. Women reported eating fruit more often than men in all countries, with the largest gender differences in Denmark, the Slovak Republic, Germany, and Iceland (20 percentage points or more). In Australia, Greece, Turkey and Mexico, gender differences were much smaller, under 5%.

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 (see also Indicator 2.3, “Fruit and vegetable consumption among children”). Fruit consumption also varies by socio-economic status, generally being highest among persons with higher educational levels (Figure 2.8.3). However, this was not the case in Spain and Greece, where less educated persons reported eating fruit more often.

Daily vegetable consumption ranged from around 30% in men in Germany to nearly 100% in Korea, with Australia and New Zealand at about the same levels, but counting potatoes as vegetables (Figure 2.8.2). The average across 28 OECD countries was 64% for men and 73% for women. Again, more women than men reported eating vegetables daily in all countries, except in Korea and Australia where rates were similar. In Norway, Denmark, Finland and Germany, gender differences exceeded 15%.

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

Highly educated persons ate vegetables more often, although the difference between educational groups was small in Belgium, Italy, Greece, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic (Figure 2.8.4).

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, 2011a).

Definition and comparability

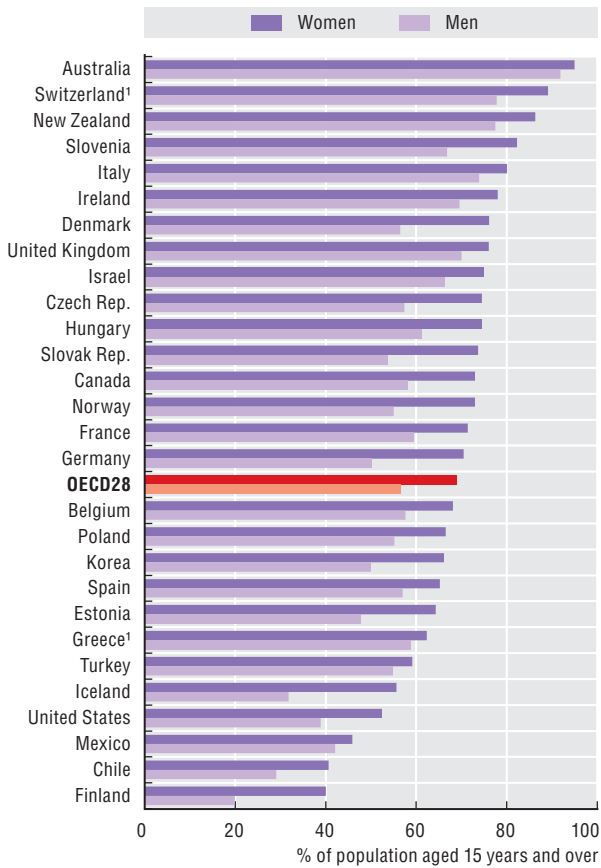
Estimates of daily fruit and vegetable consumption are derived from national and European Health Interview Survey questions. Typically, respondents were asked “How often do you eat fruit (excluding juice)?” and “How often do you eat vegetables or salad (excluding juice and potatoes)?”

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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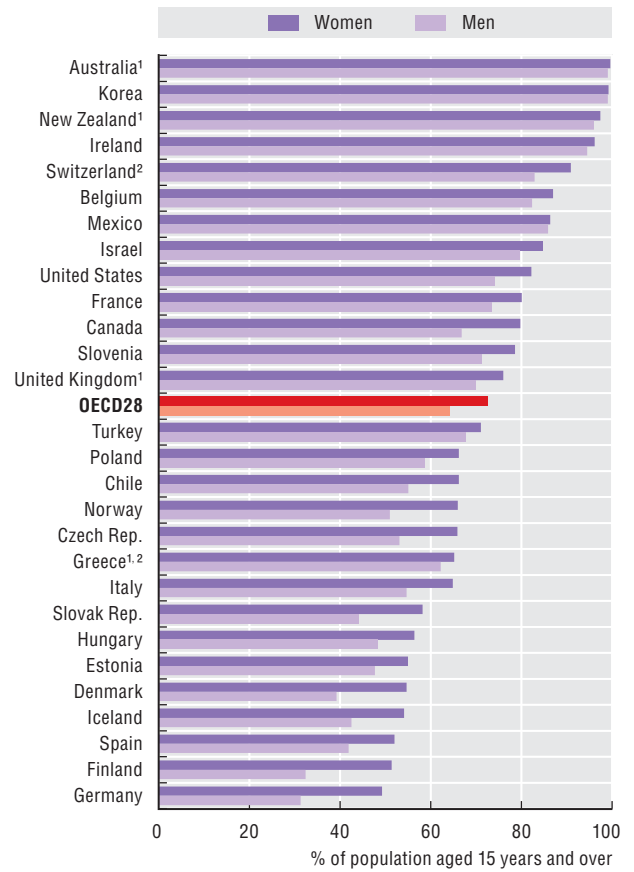
2.8.1. Daily fruit eating among adults, 2011 (or nearest year)



1. Include juices.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932916724>

2.8.2. Daily vegetable eating among adults, 2011 (or nearest year)



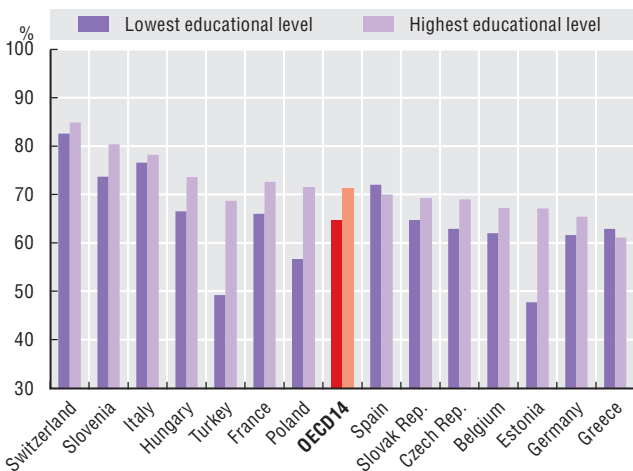
1. Include potatoes.

2. Include juices and soups.

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932916743>

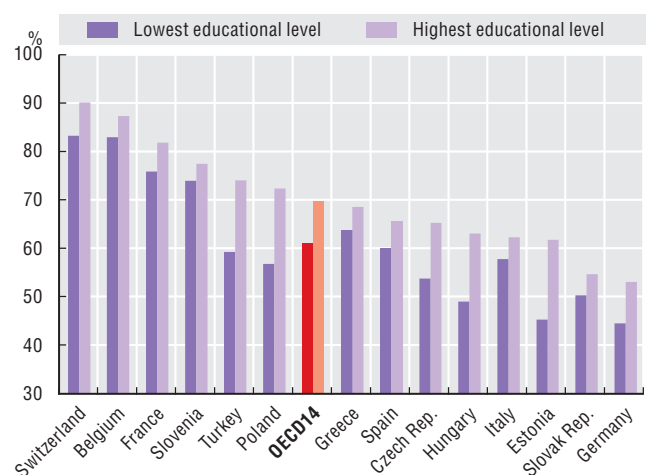
2.8.3. Daily fruit eating among adults, by educational level, European countries, 2008 (or nearest year)



Source: Eurostat Statistics Database 2013 (EHIS collection round 2008).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932916762>

2.8.4. Daily vegetable eating among adults, by educational level, European countries, 2008 (or nearest year)



Source: Eurostat Statistics Database 2013 (EHIS collection round 2008).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932916781>



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