

### Healthy lifestyles among children

Consuming a healthy diet and performing regular physical activity when young can be habit forming, promoting a healthy lifestyle in adult life. Daily consumption of fruit and vegetables can help reduce the risk of coronary heart diseases, strokes, and certain types of cancer (Hartley et al., 2013; World Cancer Research Fund, 2007). The most common guideline recommends consuming at least five portions of fruit and vegetables daily. Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity is beneficial to adolescents' physical, mental and psycho-social health, as it helps build and maintain healthy bones and muscles, reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, and improves academic achievement (Janssen and LeBlanc, 2010; Singh et al., 2012). The WHO recommends 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous daily physical activity for those aged 5-17 years.

Over 40% of 15-year-olds consume fruit daily in Canada, Denmark, Iceland and Switzerland, while less than 25% do so in Finland, Greece, Latvia and Sweden (Figure 4.11). Rates exceed 50% for girls in Denmark and Switzerland, while only boys in Canada reach 40%. Rates are under 30% for girls in Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Sweden, and under 20% for boys in Finland, Latvia, and Sweden. Across the OECD, nearly one in three 15-year-olds consumes fruit daily, with girls at 37% and boys at 28%. Girls consume more fruit than boys in all countries. Gender gaps are largest in Denmark, Finland and Switzerland (17-18 points).

Daily vegetable consumption in 15-year-olds exceeds 50% in Belgium and 40% in Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands and Switzerland (Figure 4.12). Rates are under 25% in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain. Overall, the OECD average is 32%, nearly identical to the average for fruit consumption. Rates are highest in girls in Belgium (over 60%), and Israel and Switzerland (over 50%); they are highest for boys in Belgium (over 50%) and Ireland (over 40%). Daily vegetable consumption is lowest for girls in Estonia, Portugal and Spain, and boys in Finland, Germany and Spain. In all countries, girls consume more vegetables than boys. Gender gaps are largest in Finland, Germany, Italy and Switzerland (15 points or over).

Rates of physical activity meeting the WHO guidelines reach 20% in Canada and Spain, and are lower than 10% in Israel, Italy and Switzerland (Figure 4.13). They are consistently higher in boys, and by a large margin, as gender gaps range from 5 points (Israel, Sweden and Switzerland) to 17 points (Luxembourg). Physical activity is lowest in girls in Austria, Israel, Italy and Portugal (5%), and boys in France, Israel, Italy and Switzerland (under 15%). Sufficient physical activity is most prevalent in girls in Canada, Iceland and Latvia (14-15%), and boys in Canada and Spain (nearly 30%). The OECD average is just under 15%, with nearly 20% for boys and 10% for girls, resulting in a 10 point average gender gap. Nearly all OECD countries promote fruit and vegetable consumption: most widely known is the "5 a day" guideline (OECD, 2017). In recent years, children's daily

habits have evolved, due to new leisure patterns (TV, internet, smartphones) which have led to a decrease in physical activity (Inchley et al., 2016). Age-specific policies should promote a decrease in screen time and an increase in physical activity levels. Furthermore, the gender gap between boys and girls has not decreased with time, suggesting that girls should be targeted with gender-sensitive approaches and interventions.

#### Definition and comparability

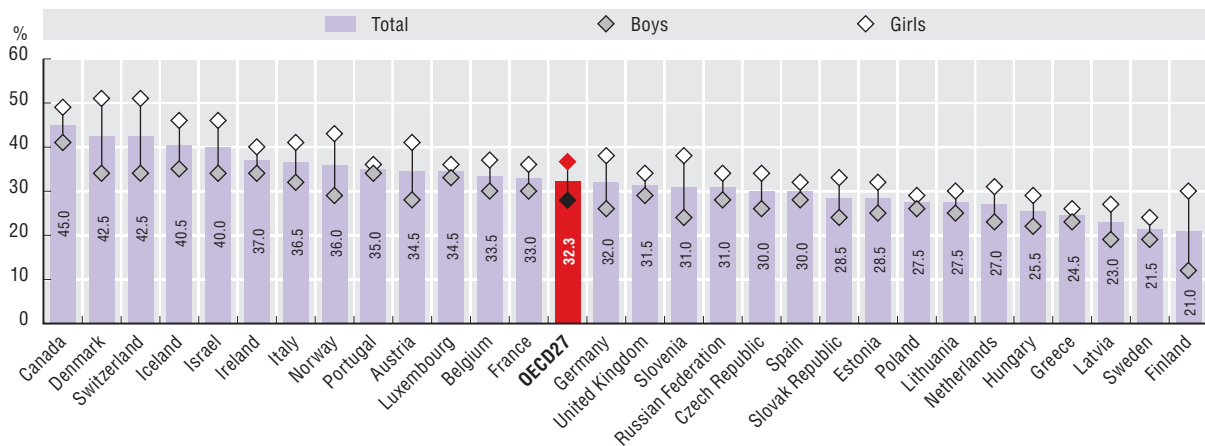
Dietary habits are measured here in terms of the proportions of children who report eating fruit and vegetables at least every day or more than once a day, no matter the quantity. No reference to exclude juice, soup or potatoes was mentioned in the survey questions. In addition to fruit and vegetables, healthy nutrition also involves other types of foods.

Data for physical activity consider the regularity of self-reported moderate-to-vigorous physical activity lasting at least 60 minutes. Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity refers to exercise undertaken for at least an hour each day which increases the heart rate, and sometimes leaves the child out of breath.

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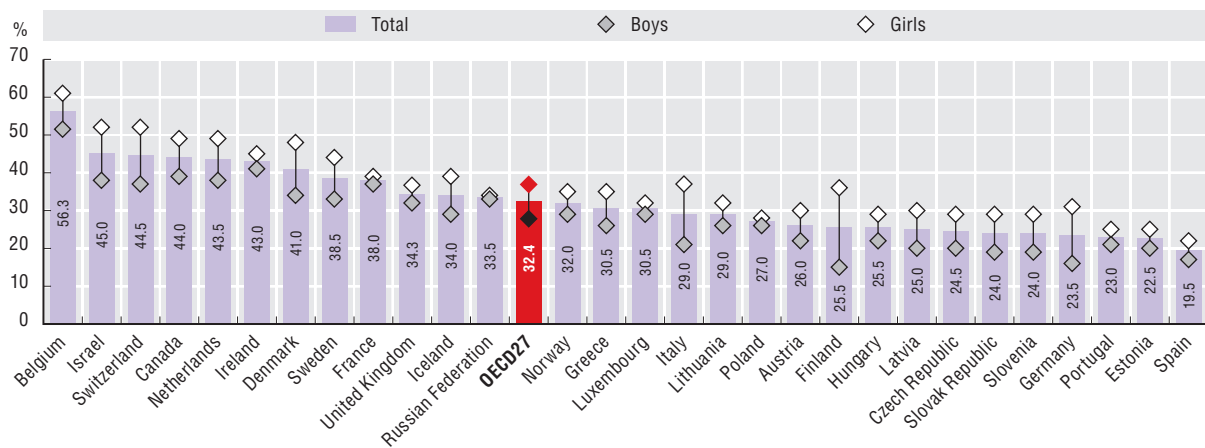
4.11. Daily fruit eating among 15-year-olds, 2013-14



Source: Inchley et al. (2016).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933602899>

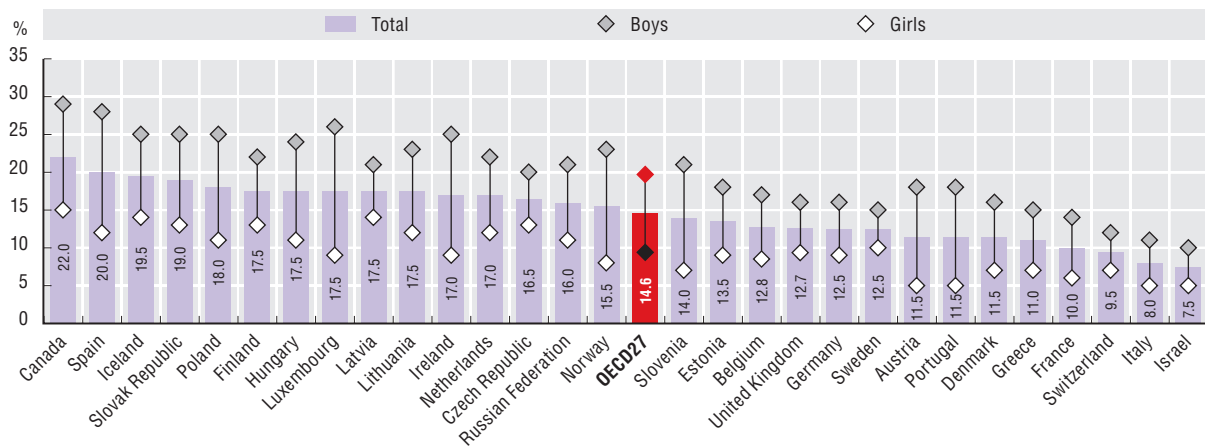
4.12. Daily vegetable eating among 15-year-olds, 2013-14



Source: Inchley et al. (2016).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933602918>

4.13. Moderate-to-vigorous daily physical activity among 15-year-olds, 2013-14



Source: Inchley et al. (2016).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933602937>



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