

203/2016 - 20 October 2016

European Health Interview Survey

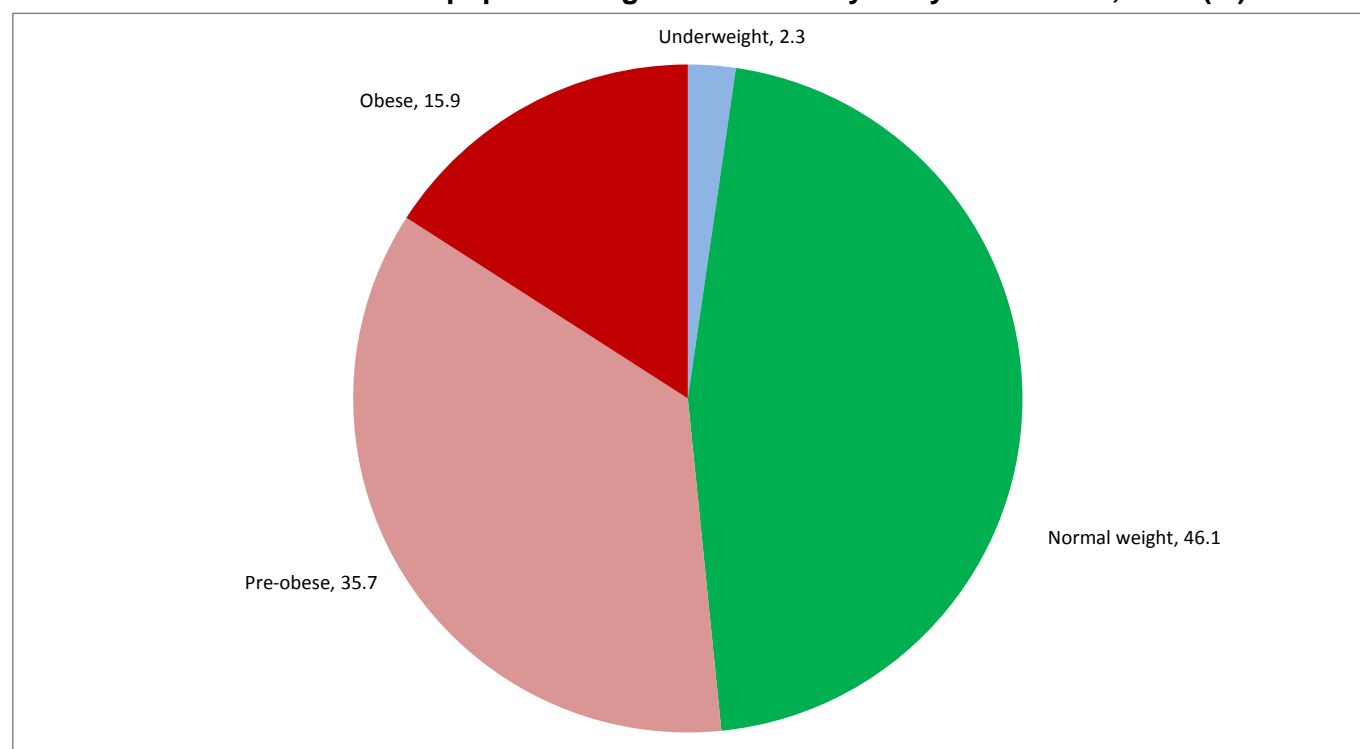
Almost 1 adult in 6 in the EU is considered obese

Share of obesity increases with age and decreases with education level

While 46.1% of those aged 18 or over living in the **European Union** (EU) had a normal weight in 2014, slightly more than half of the adults (51.6%) were considered as over-weight (35.7% pre-obese and 15.9% obese) and a further 2.3% as under-weight. In other words, nearly 1 in every 6 persons aged 18 or over in the **EU** was obese in 2014. Obesity is a serious public health problem that can be statistically measured using the Body Mass Index (BMI) of adults. Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30 or over.

The share of obese adults clearly varies between age groups and according to education level. With the exception of those aged 75 or over, the older the age group, the higher the share of obese persons: the obesity share in the **EU** stood at 22.1% for people aged 65 to 74, while it was below 6% (5.7%) for those aged 18 to 24. The pattern is also clear for education level: the proportion of obese persons in the **EU** falls as the educational level rises. Indeed, while the percentage of obese persons among those with low education level reached almost 20% (19.9%), it decreased to 16.0% for those with a medium education level and to less than 12% (11.5%) for the population with a high education level.

This information, extracted from the European Health Interview Survey, is issued by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**.

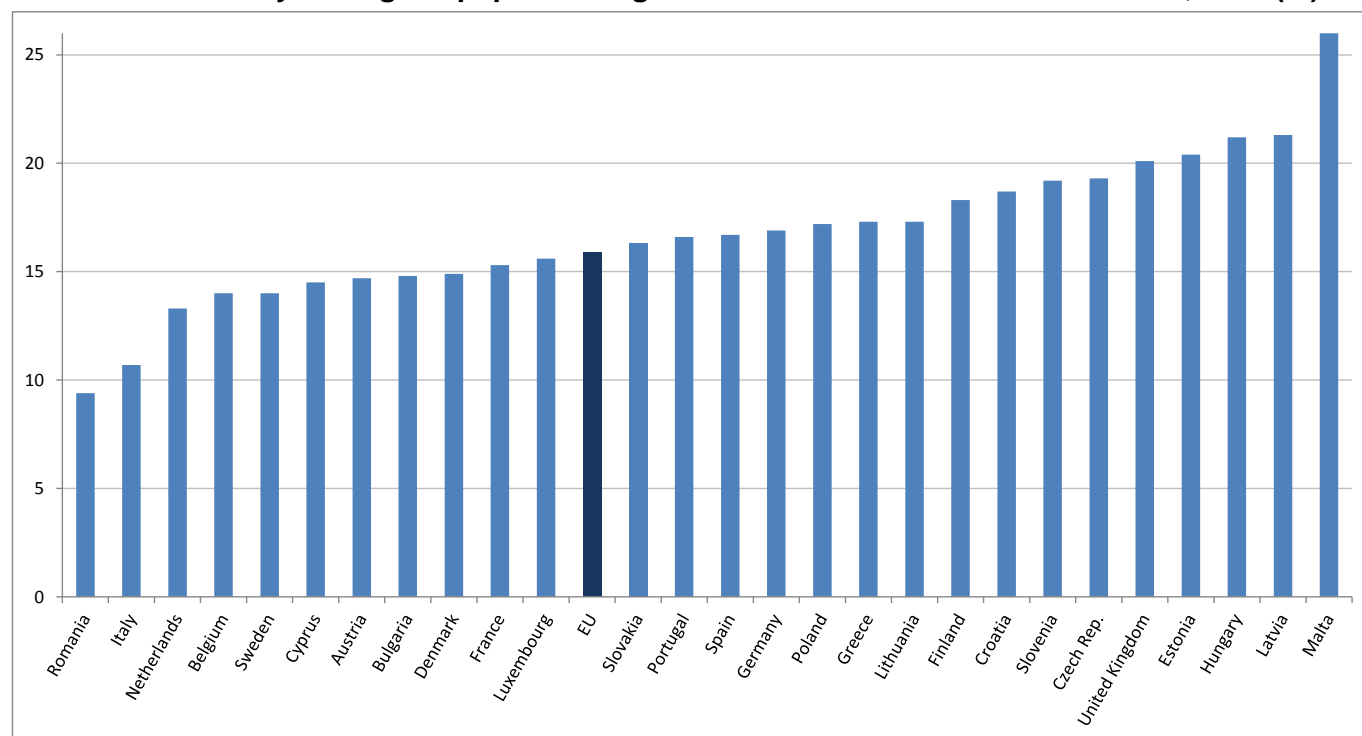
Distribution of the EU population aged 18 or over by Body Mass Index, 2014 (%)

EU, excluding Ireland for which data are not available.

Lowest share of obesity in Romania and Italy, highest in Malta

Among the EU Member States for which data are available, the lowest shares of obesity in 2014 among the population aged 18 or over were recorded in **Romania** (9.4%) and **Italy** (10.7%), ahead of the **Netherlands** (13.3%), **Belgium** and **Sweden** (both 14.0%). At the opposite end of the scale, obesity concerned more than 1 in 4 adults in **Malta** (26.0%), and about 1 in 5 in **Latvia** (21.3%), **Hungary** (21.2%), **Estonia** (20.4%) and the **United Kingdom** (20.1%).

Share of obesity among the population aged 18 or over in the EU Member States, 2014 (%)



Ireland: data not available.

No systematic difference in obesity between men and women ...

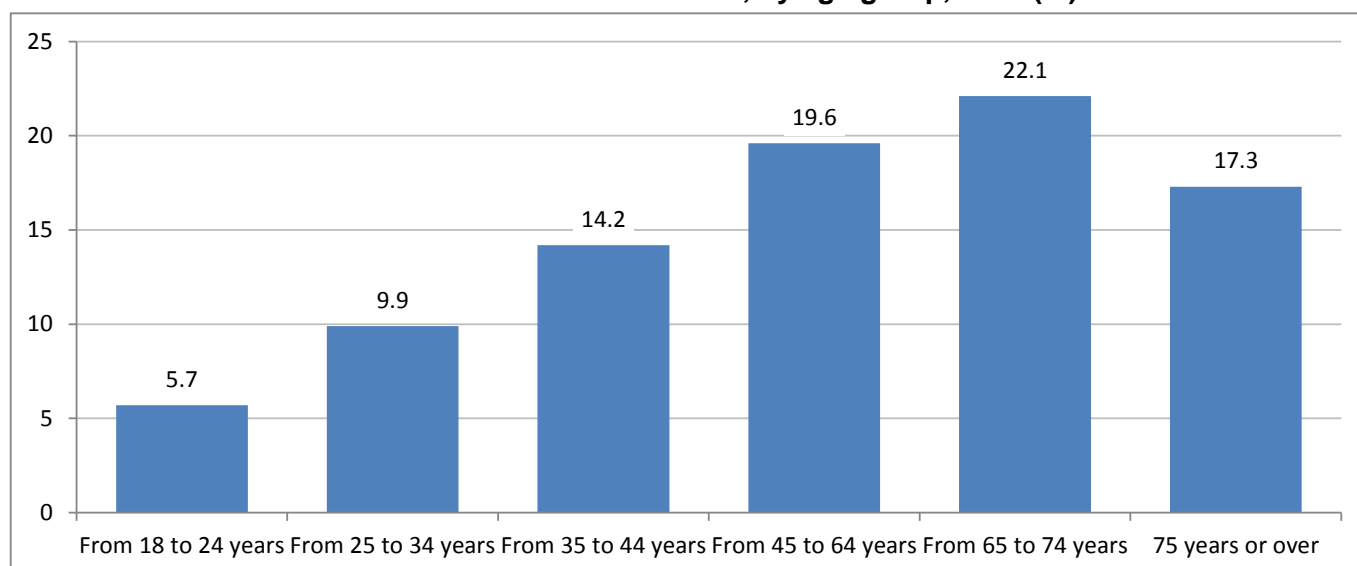
There is no systematic difference in obesity levels between men and women: the proportion of obesity was higher for men in half of the Member States, and higher for women in the other half. Within a Member State however, significant gaps can be observed, with the proportion of obese men being much higher than that of women in **Malta** (28.1% for men compared with 23.9% for women, or +4.2 percentage points – pp), **Croatia** (+3.9 pp), **Slovenia** (+3.6 pp) and **Cyprus** (+3.4 pp), and the percentage of obese women being much higher than that of men in **Lithuania** (19.9% for women compared with 14.1% for men, or +5.8 pp), **Latvia** (+4.4 pp) and the **Netherlands** (+3.6 pp). At **EU** level, the share of obesity was almost equal in 2014 between men (16.1%) and women (15.7%).

.... but a clear age effect

In nearly all Member States, the share of obesity increases with age. The widest gaps between the proportion of young people (aged 18-24) and older persons (aged 65-74) being obese were recorded in **Slovakia** (33.0% for people aged 65 to 74 compared with 2.7% for those aged 18 to 24, or +30.3 pp) and **Latvia** (+29.3 pp), followed by **Estonia** (+26.4 pp), **Lithuania** (+25.3 pp), **Poland** (+25.1 pp), the **Czech Republic** and **Hungary** (both +24.5 pp). At **EU** level, a 16.4 percentage point gap is observed between young adults (5.7%) and older persons (22.1%) as regards obesity.

About 1 young adult out of 10 is considered obese in **Malta** (12.0%) and the **United Kingdom** (10.8%), and about 1 in 3 older persons in **Malta** (33.6%), **Latvia** (33.2%) and **Slovakia** (33.0%).

Share of obese adults in the EU, by age group, 2014 (%)



Share of obese adults in the EU Member States, by sex and age group, 2014 (%)

	Total (adults)	Of which:							
		Men	Women	Aged 18-24	Aged 25-34	Aged 35-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 65-74	Aged 75+
EU	15.9	16.1	15.7	5.7	9.9	14.2	19.6	22.1	17.3
Belgium	14.0	13.9	14.2	3.0	11.0	12.9	16.5	18.8	14.9
Bulgaria	14.8	15.5	14.2	4.6	6.4	12.0	19.7	21.7	13.6
Czech Republic	19.3	19.9	18.7	3.5	9.4	17.3	26.5	28.0	18.2
Denmark	14.9	14.1	15.6	5.7	11.5	15.8	18.2	18.9	12.3
Germany	16.9	17.3	16.5	7.2	10.9	16.6	19.5	23.0	18.1
Estonia	20.4	19.1	21.5	5.0	10.8	16.8	27.1	31.4	23.6
Ireland	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Greece	17.3	18.3	16.4	4.2	9.0	15.3	22.4	25.2	18.0
Spain	16.7	17.1	16.3	4.4	11.2	13.9	20.0	24.8	22.5
France	15.3	15.3	15.3	6.7	9.3	13.0	18.0	22.5	18.3
Croatia	18.7	20.7	16.8	2.4	8.8	18.7	25.0	25.2	19.1
Italy	10.7	11.3	10.2	3.3	5.1	8.2	13.0	15.7	12.9
Cyprus	14.5	16.3	12.9	5.4	7.1	11.8	19.5	23.5	23.5
Latvia	21.3	18.8	23.3	3.9	8.7	16.5	29.5	33.2	25.3
Lithuania	17.3	14.1	19.9	2.8	7.4	13.8	23.8	28.1	19.5
Luxembourg	15.6	16.8	14.4	5.6	9.5	15.6	19.6	20.8	20.1
Hungary	21.2	22.0	20.4	6.4	11.6	18.3	28.6	30.9	20.3
Malta	26.0	28.1	23.9	12.0	19.8	26.0	31.7	33.6	27.8
Netherlands	13.3	11.6	15.1	5.4	8.8	12.9	15.8	17.7	15.9
Austria	14.7	16.0	13.4	5.6	10.0	11.8	18.1	21.5	17.4
Poland	17.2	18.8	15.9	3.3	8.5	14.2	22.9	28.4	22.0
Portugal	16.6	15.3	17.8	5.7	9.4	14.4	21.9	22.1	16.7
Romania	9.4	9.1	9.7	1.2	4.8	7.2	12.6	16.0	11.4
Slovenia	19.2	21.0	17.4	6.4	8.1	16.2	26.4	25.9	20.8
Slovakia	16.3	15.9	16.6	2.7	7.7	11.8	22.1	33.0	23.2
Finland	18.3	18.9	17.7	7.5	11.6	18.0	22.0	25.0	16.9
Sweden	14.0	13.6	14.4	6.7	9.4	14.7	17.9	16.0	12.4
United Kingdom	20.1	19.8	20.4	10.8	16.0	20.7	24.9	20.7	16.1
Norway	13.1	13.9	12.2	6.9	10.8	13.7	16.0	16.3	9.5
Turkey	21.2	16.2	26.1	3.9	11.0	23.0	35.0	29.2	21.6

EU excluding Ireland for which data are not available.

: Data not available

The source datasets can be found [here](#) (by sex) and [here](#) (by age group).

Education clearly plays a role in all Member States

In almost every EU Member State for which data are available, the share of obesity decreases with education level. In 2014, the largest difference in obesity between adults with a high educational level and those with a low educational level was observed in **Slovenia** (9.2% for people with a high education level compared with 26.0% for those with a low education level, or -16.8 pp), followed by **Luxembourg** (-14.5 pp), **Slovakia** (-13.9 pp), **Spain** (-13.0 pp), **Croatia** and **Portugal** (both -12.3 pp), **France** (-12.1 pp), **Austria** (-11.9 pp) and **Cyprus** (-11.8 pp). At **EU** level, an 8.4 percentage point gap is observed between high educated (11.5%) and low educated adults (19.9%) as regards obesity.

Share of obese adults in the EU Member States, by education level, 2014 (%)

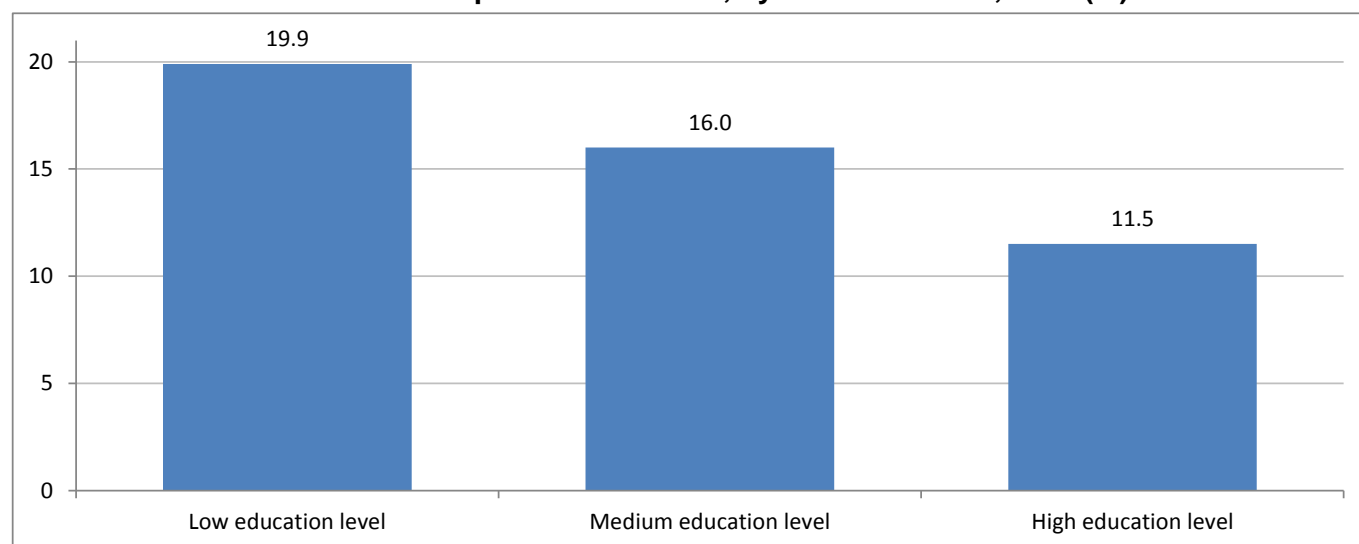
	Total (adults)	of which:		
		Low education level	Medium education level	High education level
EU	15.9	19.9	16.0	11.5
Belgium	14.0	19.5	13.4	9.8
Bulgaria	14.8	17.2	15.3	10.4
Czech Republic	19.3	22.6	20.5	12.5
Denmark	14.9	21.9	16.0	11.3
Germany	16.9	21.4	18.0	13.1
Estonia	20.4	22.6	21.3	17.6
Ireland	:	:	:	:
Greece	17.3	22.3	14.4	13.4
Spain	16.7	22.6	12.3	9.6
France	15.3	20.9	15.2	8.8
Croatia	18.7	24.9	18.9	12.6
Italy	10.7	14.2	8.0	5.8
Cyprus	14.5	21.1	14.6	9.3
Latvia	21.3	23.0	22.6	17.6
Lithuania	17.3	20.0	18.9	13.3
Luxembourg	15.6	22.8	17.6	8.3
Hungary	21.2	25.7	21.9	15.8
Malta	26.0	30.3	18.5	20.7
Netherlands	13.3	17.1	13.7	8.6
Austria	14.7	20.9	15.0	9.0
Poland	17.2	21.9	18.5	10.7
Portugal	16.6	20.9	10.7	8.6
Romania	9.4	11.6	8.8	6.7
Slovenia	19.2	26.0	16.9	9.2
Slovakia	16.3	22.2	17.6	8.3
Finland	18.3	22.6	20.4	14.8
Sweden	14.0	15.9	15.6	9.9
United Kingdom	20.1	25.0	21.5	15.9
Norway	13.1	15.5	14.1	10.4
Turkey	21.2	25.0	11.3	12.2

EU excluding Ireland for which data are not available.

: Data not available

The source dataset can be found [here](#).

Share of obese persons in the EU, by education level, 2014 (%)



Geographical information

The **European Union (EU)** includes Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Methods and definitions

Data presented in this News Release comes from the last **European Health Interview Survey (EHIS)**. The EHIS aims at measuring among Member States the health status, health determinants as well as use of health care services of the EU citizens.

The first wave of EHIS (EHIS wave 1 or EHIS round 2008) was conducted between 2006 and 2009. The second wave (EHIS wave 2 or EHIS round 2014) was conducted between 2013 and 2015.

Data presented in this News Release refer to population aged 18 to 74. However, the general coverage of the survey is the population aged 15 or over living in private households residing in the territory of the country. All indicators are expressed as percentages within the population and statistics are broken down by age and sex and one other dimension such as educational attainment level, income quintile group or labour status.

The **Body Mass Index (BMI)** is defined as the weight in kilos divided by the square of the height in meters, both self-reported by respondents aged 18 or over. For dissemination purpose, the following modalities are used:

- Underweight: BMI less than 18.5
- Normal weight: BMI between 18.5 and less than 25
- Pre-obese: BMI between 25 and less than 30
- Obese: BMI equal or greater than 30
- Overweight: BMI equal or greater than 25 (Pre-obese + Obese)

Low education level refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 0-2: less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

Medium education level refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 3-4: upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

High education level, meaning tertiary educational attainment, refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 5-8: tertiary education.

For more information

Eurostat [website section](#) dedicated to statistics on health status and determinants.

Eurostat [database](#) on health status and health determinants.

Eurostat [metadata](#) on European Health Interview Survey.

Eurostat [news release 197/2016](#) of 14 October 2016 on consumption of fruit and vegetables in the EU.

Eurostat [video](#) on the occasion of the European Statistics Day (20 October).

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