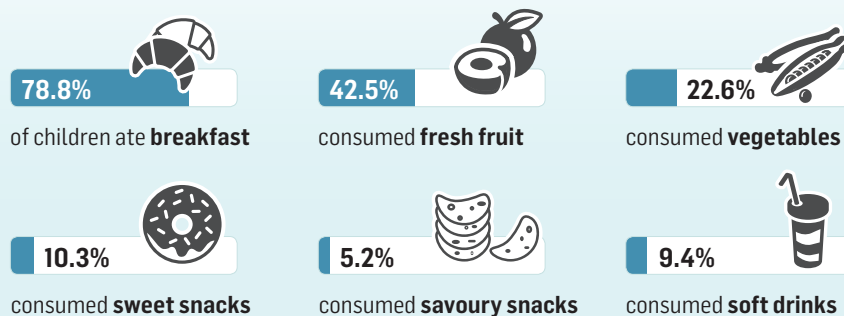


Eating habits of children in 23 European countries

This factsheet describes eating habits of 6 to 9-year-old children in the WHO European region, using data from 23 countries participating in the 4th round of COSI (2015-2017, n= 132,489 children). The details of the analysis are described in a peer-reviewed paper by Williams et al published in *Nutrients*¹.

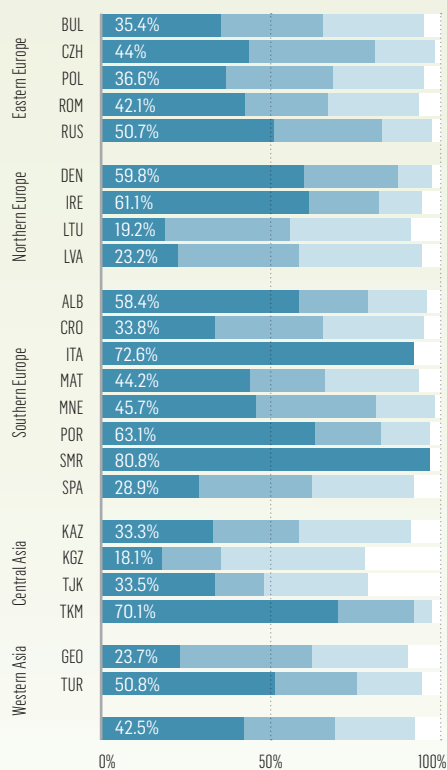
The numerals in the figures below show the proportion of children consuming fruit and vegetables "every day", and soft drinks "never or less than once a week".

On a daily basis, pooled data showed that:



However, there were large between-country differences

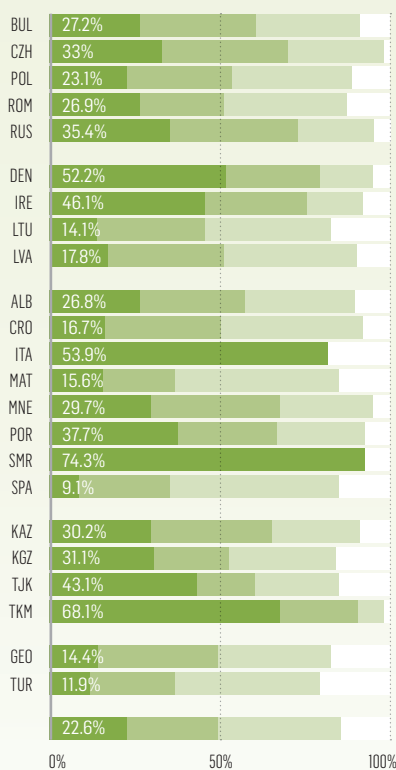
Fresh fruit



Every day
Most days (4-6 days)
Some days (1-3 days)
Never



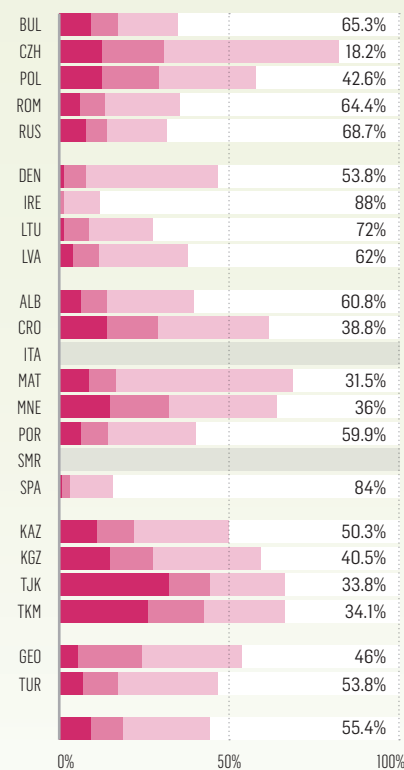
Vegetables



Every day
Most days (4-6 days)
Some days (1-3 days)
Never



Soft drinks²



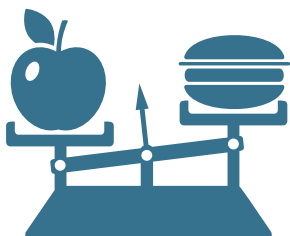
Every day
Most days (4-6 days)
Some days (1-3 days)
Never



1 Williams, Julianne, et al. "A Snapshot of European Children's Eating Habits: Results from the Fourth Round of the WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI)." *Nutrients* 12.8 (2020): 2481.
2 Data on the consumption frequency of soft drinks were not collected in Italy and San Marino

Country abbreviations: ALB-Albania; BUL – Bulgaria; CRO-Croatia; CZH-Czechia; DEN-Denmark; GEO-Georgia; IRE-Ireland; ITA-Italy; KAZ-Kazakhstan; KGZ-Kyrgyzstan; LVA-Latvia; LTU-Lithuania; MAT-Malta; MNE- Montenegro; POL-Poland; POR-Portugal; ROM-Romania; RUS-Moscow; SMR-San Marino; SPA-Spain; TJK-Tajikistan; TUR-Turkey; TKM-Turkmenistan.

Policy implications



Reliable data on children's eating habits and anthropometric measures can help governments implement effective strategies to combat malnutrition and obesity. By investing in these measures, we can ensure that more children can benefit from good nutrition and better health, both in childhood and over the life-course.

The overall findings from this study indicate that action is urgently needed to promote healthy eating habits among children in countries within the European Region; namely to increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, encourage daily breakfast consumption and discourage routine consumption of nutrient-poor foods high in sugars, saturated fats, trans fats and salt (HFSS foods).

WHO has called on policymakers to take action to promote wellbeing among children via:

▶ Facilitating healthy food environments

- providing appropriate and context-specific nutrition information and guidelines;
- implementing interpretive front of pack labelling;
- incentivising reformulation of HFSS foods;
- implementing the WHO's set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children;
- increasing access to healthy foods, in particular for under-served communities;

▶ Policies to promote healthy school environments

- establishing nutrition standards for food and beverages provided in schools;
- eliminating the provision of unhealthy foods and beverages in schools;
- ensuring access to free potable water in schools;

▶ Fiscal incentives

- implementing an effective tax on sugar-sweetened beverages; and

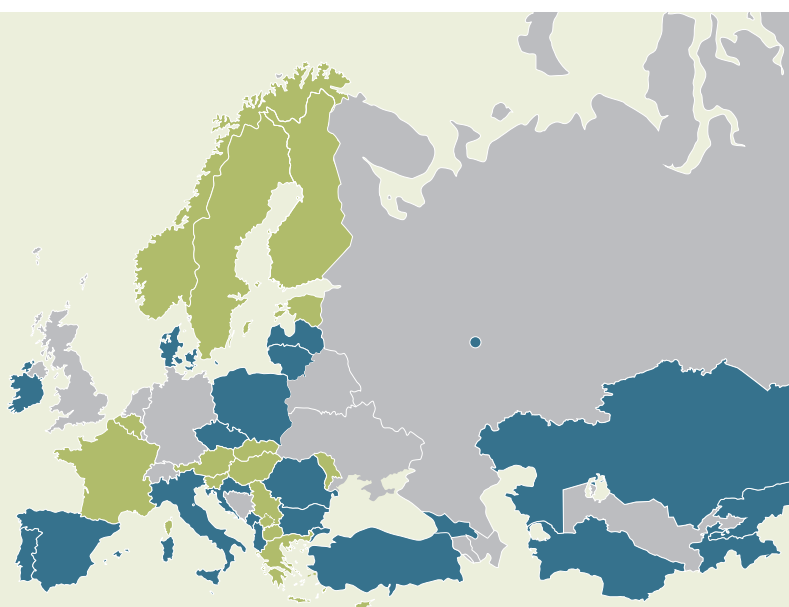
▶ Supporting monitoring initiatives

- continued surveillance of children's eating habits, anthropometric measurements and food environments to monitor policy impacts - with disaggregation by gender and socioeconomic status.

About COSI

The WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (or COSI) is a unique system that for over 13 years has measured trends in overweight and obesity among primary school aged children. COSI involves taking standardized weight and height measurements from over 300 000 children across the WHO European Region every three years. This provides nationally representative data for participating countries, as well as a large Region-wide data set for analysis of the determinants of childhood overweight and obesity. This map shows the countries that were included in the analysis, along with the countries who were not included in this analysis, but who do participate in COSI. This vital collaboration between the World Health Organization and research institutions from across Europe provides high-quality data that is needed to inform policy and practice in response to the challenge of childhood overweight and obesity.

For more information about COSI and recent publications please visit <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/nutrition/activities/who-european-childhood-obesity-surveillance-initiative-cosi>



■ Countries included in the analysis ■ Countries not included in the analysis but participated in COSI Round 4