

Overweight and obese

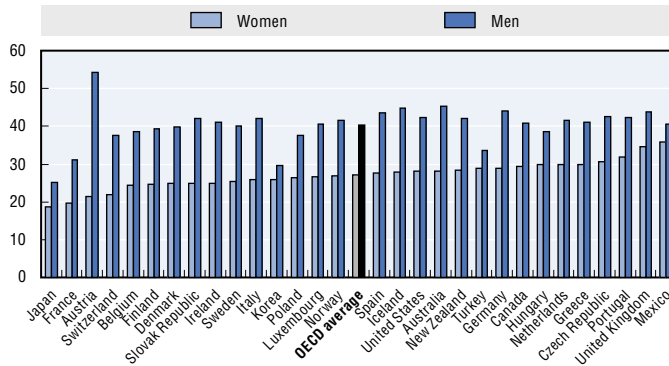
Did you know?

The standard test of being overweight is the *Body Mass Index* or BMI. It is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square of their height in metres (kg/m^2). According to the World Health Organisation guidelines, a BMI of 25 to 30 is considered "overweight" and more than 30 is considered "obese".

More men than women are overweight but obesity is pretty evenly distributed in all OECD countries. For most countries in the charts below, the statistics were obtained by "self assessment" surveys, but in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, actual measurements were made. The percentages for these five countries are among the highest in the OECD region. This is no coincidence.

More men than women are overweight in all OECD countries. In Austria, more than twice as many men are overweight as women, but there are also large gender gaps in Australia, Iceland, Italy and the Slovak Republic.

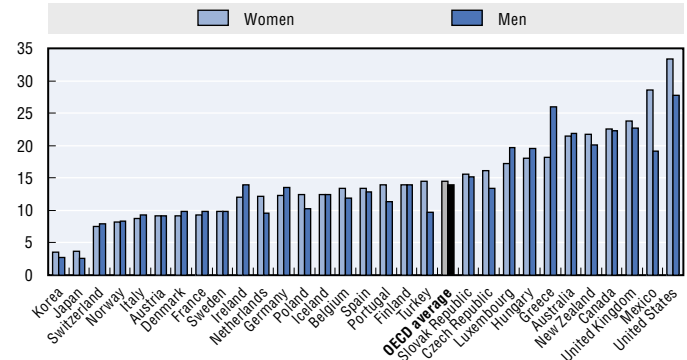
Percentage of adults considered overweight
(Body Mass Index between 25 and $30\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$)
2004 or latest year available



Obese men are substantially more numerous than obese women in Greece whereas the reverse is true in the United States and Mexico. In other countries the gender gaps are small. The low percentages for both men and women in Korea and Japan are most likely associated with their traditional diets which are low in carbohydrates.

In most countries, data on weight and height are self-reported. Evidence suggests that both men and women underestimate their weight and/or overestimate their height, so leading to an underestimate of the true prevalence of overweight and obesity problems. For example, evidence from Canada is that 13.3% of women and 15.4% of men were obese in 2003 based on self-reported data, whereas when actual measures were used in 2004, 22.5% of women were obese as were 22.3% of men.

Percentage of adults considered obese
(Body Mass Index exceeds $30\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$) 2004 or latest year available



Source: OECD (2005), *Health at a Glance – OECD Indicators 2005*, OECD, Paris; OECD (2006), *OECD Health Data 2006*, OECD, Paris.

Further reading:

OECD (2005), *Health at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2005*, OECD, Paris.