

# Survey of public readiness for addressing obesity

Obesity and the related health burden is a growing problem. Understanding public attitudes to policy interventions is important, as it provides a key indicator of the potential effectiveness of interventions and the readiness of the general public for policy implementation. This study aimed to determine public acceptability of a range of policies to address obesity.

**OBESITY IS A MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE**



**Adults**  
**61%**  
Overweight or obese

**Children**  
**25%**  
Overweight or obese

**STRONG LEVELS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR WIDE RANGE OF OBESITY-RELATED POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS**



**Child-focused policies**  
**93%**

support the promotion of healthy eating in schools



**Informational interventions**  
**92%**

support calorie and nutrition labelling on all foods



**Fiscal measures**  
**86%**

support subsidies for fruit and vegetables



**Industry-regulation measures**  
**87%**

support improving the nutritional content of processed foods

**LOWER LEVELS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR FINANCIAL INCENTIVES OR CHARGES**



**Fiscal measures**  
**50%**

did not support additional health charges for obese patients







**Industry-regulation measures**  
**37%**

did not support health insurance price reductions for those of normal weight

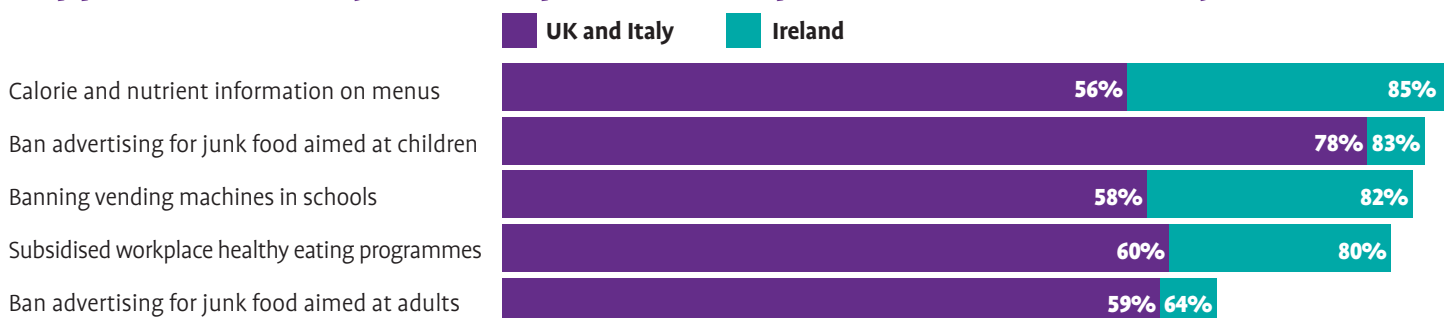
# Public policies and interventions on obesity

30 obesity-related policy items were included in the survey. Support was evident for 28 of the policy options. The highest level of support was evident for child-focused interventions, informational policies, government and food industry co-operation and subsidies for healthy foods. Comparatively lower levels of support were evident for policies which may be seen as restricting personal choice (e.g., restricting portion sizes in food outlets). The lowest levels of support were for an additional health charge for those presenting with obesity and health insurance reductions for those of normal weight.

## The three most supported policies in each category were

	Support	Policy
 <b>Child focused policies</b>	<b>93%</b>	Education to promote healthy eating should be provided in all schools
	<b>91%</b>	The government should provide resources to improve exercise and playground facilities
	<b>90%</b>	Children should have to participate in a minimum of 30 minutes exercise a day while at school
 <b>Informational interventions</b>	<b>92%</b>	All foods should be required to carry labels with calorie and nutrient information
	<b>87%</b>	The food industry should cooperate in financing governmental campaigns that promote healthy eating
	<b>85%</b>	The government should award companies for healthy food innovations
 <b>Fiscal measures</b>	<b>86%</b>	The government should subsidise fruit and vegetables to promote healthier eating
	<b>79%</b>	VAT rates should be lower for healthy foods and higher for unhealthy foods
	<b>76%</b>	There should be a tax incentive to encourage sports participation, with a tax break for the purchase of sports equipment
 <b>Industry-regulation measures</b>	<b>87%</b>	The government should work with the food companies to improve the nutritional content of processed foods (for example, less salt or fats)
	<b>81%</b>	The government should impose on food companies limits on certain ingredients (for example, salt or fats) to improve the nutritional content of processed foods
	<b>76%</b>	There should be public measures like free home delivery to support easier access to healthy foods for the elderly and those with lower incomes

## Support for obesity-related policies compared with UK and Italy



## Analysis

Overall, the findings indicate substantial public readiness for addressing obesity in Ireland, particularly through child-focused policies, informational measures, subsidies for healthy foods and co-operation between government and the food industry. The findings support prior research on behaviour change in key policy areas such as diet and smoking which demonstrates that support for interventions tends to decrease as the intrusiveness of interventions increases.

## Find out more

To download a copy of the report “Attitudes of the public towards policies to address obesity” visit [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu)