



## FOOD CONSUMPTION SURVEY 2022-2023

Food consumption and adherence to dietary guidelines in the Belgian population

## Team of the Food Consumption Survey:

Sarah Bel

Nicolas Berger

Laïla Boulbayem

Karin De Ridder

Elise Grimm

Thérésa Lebacqz

Eline Le Dieu

Isabelle Moyersoën

Elien Van Campenhout

Maria Salve Vasquez

Sam Vermeiren

Vicka Versele

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## Introduction

The **National Food Consumption Survey** (FCS) is a repeated cross-sectional survey aiming to collect detailed and quantitative information on the food consumption, nutrient intake and nutritional status of the general population. Physical activity and sedentary behaviour are also investigated. The third edition of this survey was conducted in 2022-2023 among the Belgian population aged 3 years and above, with 3777 persons randomly selected from the National Register participating between March 2022 and December 2023.

This third summary report presents key findings on how the population in Belgium eats and adheres to food-based dietary guidelines. It includes results on the habitual consumption of specific food groups and the proportion of the population meeting food-based dietary guidelines defined by the Superior Health Council. For food groups with low consumption, the proportion of people who never consume the respective foods was also examined. The results are analysed for the total population and further broken down by age, sex, educational level and region. Notably, the 2022-2023 survey provides results for older adults (65 years and older), which is new compared to the previous edition. Where possible, findings were compared with results from the previous survey of 2014-2015.

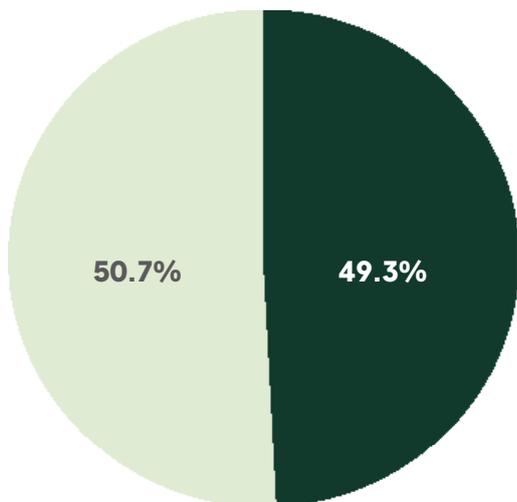
More results are available on our [website](#).

**We would like to thank all the interviewers who contributed to the data collection, and all the participants who accepted to take part in the survey!**

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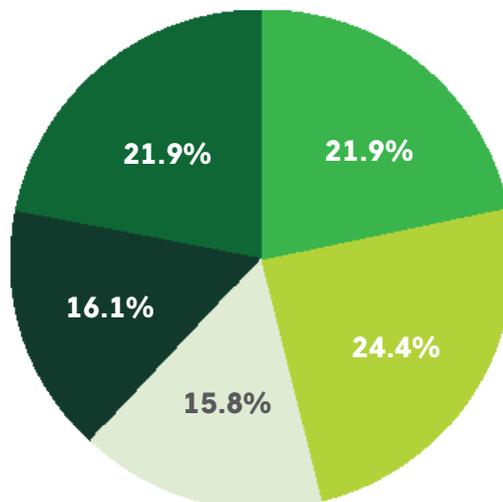
## Profile of the participants

Distribution (%)  
by sex



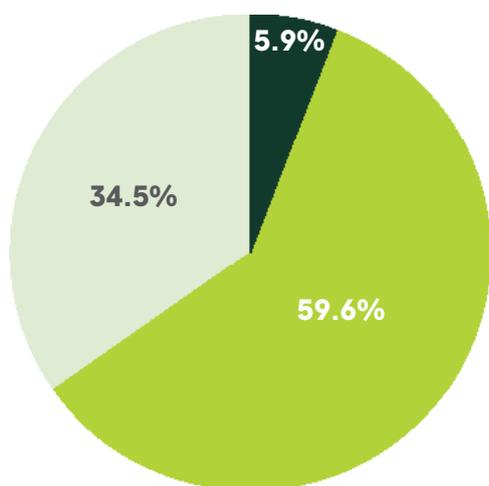
- Females
- Males

Distribution (%)  
by age



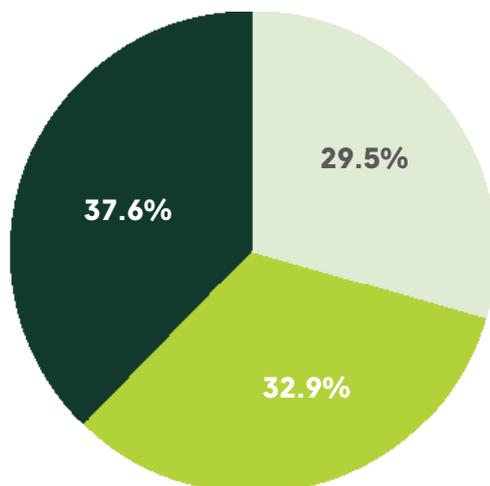
- 3-9 years: children
- 10-17 years: adolescents
- 18-39 years: young adults
- 40-64 years: middle-aged adults
- 65+ years: older adults

Distribution (%)  
by region



- Wallonia
- Brussels
- Flanders

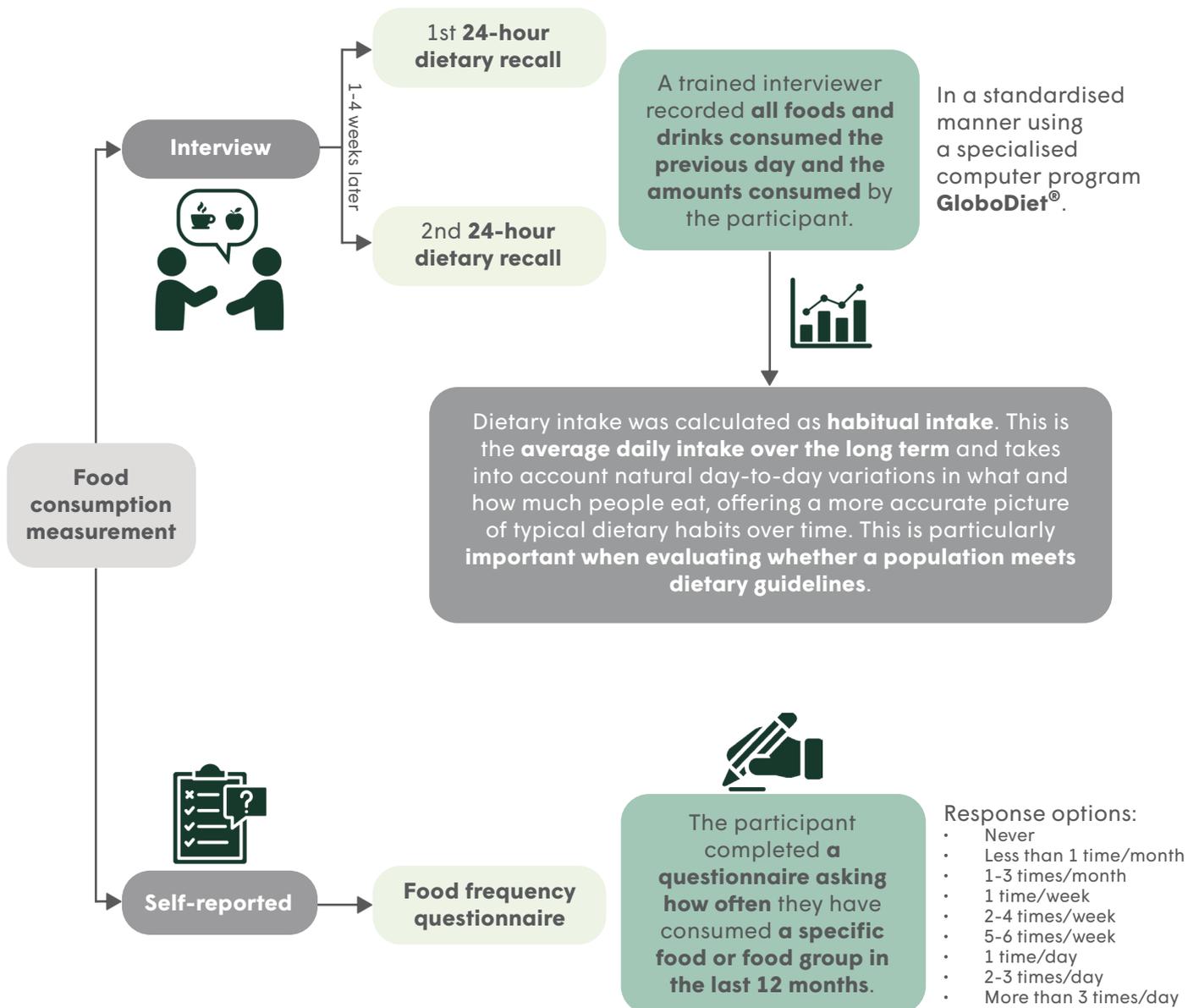
Distribution (%)  
by educational level



- Low: secondary school or lower
- Mid: short-type higher education
- High: long-type higher education

The results presented in this report are weighted to provide a representative picture of the Belgian population. A detailed description of the methodology can be found on our [website](#).

## How did we measure food consumption?



All consumptions (g/day, ml/day or g/week) mentioned in the results below refer to **mean habitual consumptions**.

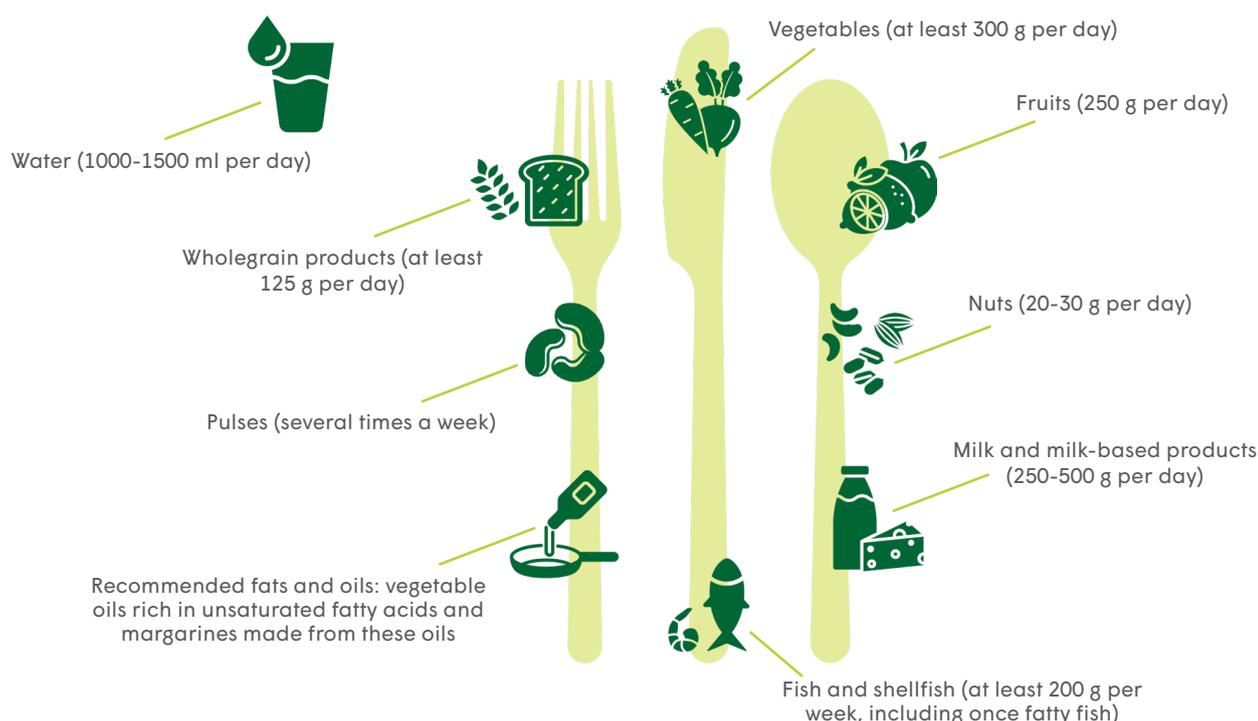
The **adult** population consists of individuals aged **18 years and above**. The age group 18-64 years is used solely for year comparisons.

# What are food-based dietary guidelines?

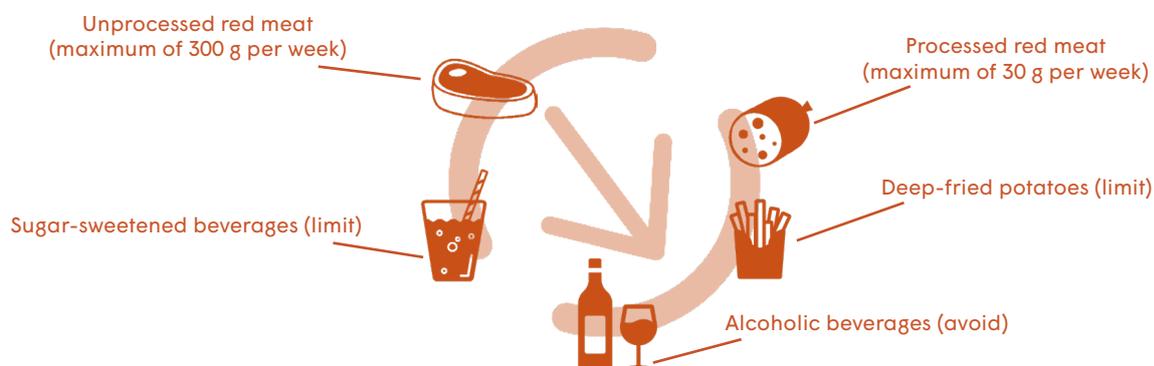
Food-based dietary guidelines are evidence-based, culturally appropriate recommendations that promote healthy eating and nutrition to support public health. A balanced diet plays an important role in maintaining and promoting health. The Superior Health Council provides food-based dietary guidelines tailored to the Belgian population, aiming to reduce illness, prevent premature death, and lower the overall disease burden, partly due to unhealthy eating habits.

Based on the latest scientific evidence, an update of the food-based dietary guidelines was published in 2025. The Superior Health Council provides, among others, the following guidelines:

## Recommended intake of foods and drinks associated with positive health outcomes



## Foods and drinks associated with adverse health outcomes that should be limited or avoided



**Quantitative guidelines** (in g/day, ml/day or g/week) are only applicable to the **adult population**, as nutritional requirements differ between adults and younger age groups due to variations in growth, metabolism and development.

**Qualitative guidelines** (such as frequency/week, limit consumption, give preference to, ...), however, apply to the **entire population**.

# How healthy does the population in Belgium eat and drink?

## Water



**Included:** tap water and spring or mineral water (carbonated or non-carbonated).

**Not included:** flavoured water, even without added sweeteners or sugars, or water added in recipes.

**Dietary guideline:** drink 1000-2000 ml of beverages per day, preferably water

**Mean habitual consumption:** 896 ml/day

**Percentage of adults meeting the guideline (at least 1000 ml of water per day):**

37% meeting the guideline



63% not meeting the guideline



Water consumption and the proportion of adults drinking enough water are similar between men and women.



Adolescents (10-17 years) (946 ml/day) and adults (18-64 years) (987 ml/day) drink more water than children (3-9 years) (715 ml/day) and adults aged 65 years and older (712 ml/day). More adults aged 18-64 years (43%) drink enough water compared to older adults aged 65 years and older (21%).



People with a low level of education drink less water (814 ml/day) than those with a medium (931 ml/day) or high level (976 ml/day) of education. More people with a high (47%) or medium level (41%) of education drink enough water than those with a low level of education (30%).



People in Flanders drink less water (847 ml/day) than those in Wallonia (957 ml/day). In Wallonia more people drink enough water (44%) compared to Flanders (32%).



The consumption of water in the population aged 3-64 years increased between 2014-2015 (773 ml/day) and 2022-2023 (949 ml/day). The proportion of adults aged 18-64 years who drink enough water increased during this period (from 30% to 44%).

## Wholegrain products



**Included:** wholegrain bread, rusks, wraps, cereals, flour, rice, pasta and breakfast cereals.

**Not included:** bread that contains only partially wholegrain flour or multigrain products.

**Dietary guideline:** eat at least 125 g of wholegrain products per day

**Mean habitual consumption:** 19 g/day

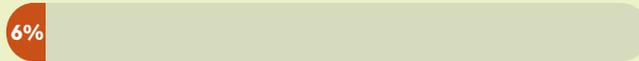
**Percentage of adults meeting the guideline:**

1% meeting the guideline



99% not meeting the guideline

**Percentage of the population never eating wholegrain products:**



There are no differences between men and women in the consumption of wholegrain products.



Children (3-9 years) and adolescents (10-17 years) have a lower consumption of wholegrain products (13 g/day) than adults (18-64 years) (20 g/day) and adults aged 65 years and older (24 g/day).



People with a low level of education have a lower consumption of wholegrain products (16 g/day) than those with a medium (21 g/day) or high level of education (22 g/day). More people with a low level of education than people with a medium or high level of education never eat wholegrain products (9% versus 3% and 2%).



People living in Wallonia have a lower consumption of wholegrain products (15 g/day) than those living in Flanders (22 g/day). More people living in Wallonia than in Flanders never eat wholegrain products (10% versus 4%).



The consumption of wholegrain products did not change between 2014-2015 and 2022-2023.

It is important to note that this classification of wholegrain products is very conservative, including only 100% wholegrain products. When partially wholegrain and multigrain products are included, the mean habitual intake rises to 53 g/day, and the proportion of adults meeting the 125 g/day recommendation increases to 8%. More detailed results are available on our [website](#).

## Vegetables



**Included:** fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, cooked vegetables, canned vegetables, jarred vegetables, and dried vegetables.

**Not included:** salted or pickled vegetables (for example, in brine, vinegar, or sweet and sour solutions), vegetable juices, seaweed, (sweet) potatoes and other tubers, and corn.

**Dietary guideline:** eat at least 300 g of vegetables per day

**Mean habitual consumption:** 160 g/day

**Percentage of adults meeting the guideline:**

7% meeting  
the guideline



93% not meeting  
the guideline



There are no differences between men and women in vegetable consumption or in meeting the guideline.



Vegetable consumption increases with age from 109 g/day in children (3-9 years) to 126 g/day in adolescents (10-17 years) and 172 g/day among adults aged 18-64 years and adults aged 65 years and older.



People with a high level of education have a higher vegetable consumption (171 g/day) than those with a medium (151 g/day) or low level (153 g/day) of education.



People living in Flanders eat more vegetables (172 g/day) than those living in Wallonia (134 g/day). More people living in Flanders (9%) than in Wallonia (4%) eat enough vegetables.



Vegetable consumption in the population aged 3-64 years, as well as the proportion of adults aged 18-64 years eating enough vegetables, increased between 2014-2015 (140 g/day and 4%) and 2022-2023 (157 g/day and 7%).

## Fruit



**Included:** fresh fruit, frozen fruit, fruit purée (with or without added sugar), canned fruit (in its own juice or syrup), (freeze-)dried fruit, and fruit coulis.

**Not included:** fruit juices, fruit coated in chocolate or other coverings, salted fruit, pickled fruit, chutney or jam.

**Dietary guideline:** eat 250 g of fruit per day

**Mean habitual consumption:** 123 g/day

**Percentage of adultes meeting the guideline (at least 250 g per day):**

10% meeting  
the guidelines



90% not meeting  
the guidelines



Women eat 127 g of fruit per day and men 119 g per day. 10% of women and 9% of men eat enough fruit.



Children (3-9 years) (139 g/day) and adults aged 65 years and older (152 g/day) eat more fruit than adolescents (10-17 years) (102 g/day) and adults aged 18-64 years (114 g/day). More adults aged 65 years and older eat enough fruit (14%) compared to adults aged 18 to 64 years (8%).



Fruit consumption increases with level of education, from 106 g/day in people with a low level of education to 128 g/day in those with a medium level and 142 g/day in those with a high level. Meanwhile, the percentage of people eating enough fruit increases from 7% (low educational level) to 10% (medium educational level) and 13% (high educational level).



People living in Flanders eat more fruit (131 g/day) than those living in Wallonia (106 g/day). More people living in Flanders eat enough fruit (11%) than in Wallonia (6%).



Fruit consumption in the population aged 3-64 years, as well as the proportion of adults aged 18-64 years eating enough fruit, did not change between 2014-2015 (112 g/day and 8%) and 2022-2023 (114 g/day and 7%).

## Pulses (including soy)



**Included:** fresh, frozen, dried and cooked pulses such as chickpeas, brown and white beans, soya beans, edamame, split peas and lentils, as well as processed pulse-based products such as tofu, tempeh, falafel, hummus and soya-based spreads.

**Not included:** peas, string beans, princess beans, and some meat and dairy substitutes, such as seitan or Quorn.

**Dietary guideline:** eat pulses several times a week

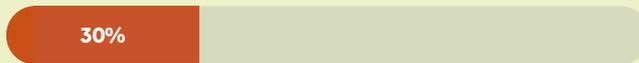
**Percentage of adults meeting the guideline:**

12% meeting the guideline



88% not meeting the guideline

**Percentage of the population never eating pulses:**



There are no differences between men and women in the consumption of pulses.



Less children (3-9 years) and adults aged 65 and older eat pulses at least twice a week (7%) than adolescents aged 10-17 years (13%), adults aged 18-39 years (15%) and adults aged 40-64 years (14%).

More children (3-9 years) (43%), adolescents (10-17 years) (36%) and adults aged 65 and older (32%) than adults (18-64 years) (26%) never eat pulses.



More people with a high level of education eat pulses at least twice a week (17%) compared to those with a medium (9%) or low level (10%), while more people with a low level of education never eat pulses (39%) compared to those with a medium (26%) or high level (18%).



More people living in Flanders (12%) eat pulses at least twice a week than those living in Wallonia (8%).



It is not possible to compare the consumption of pulses between 2014-2015 and 2022-2023.

## Nuts



**Included:** unsalted, uncoated nuts and 100% nut spreads without added ingredients.

**Not included:** seeds, salted and coated nuts, or nuts in ready-to-eat foods (such as breakfast cereals or nuts bars).

**Dietary guideline:** eat 20-30 g of nuts per day

**Mean habitual consumption:** 2 g/day

**Percentage of adults meeting the guideline (at least 20 g per day):**

3% meeting  
the guideline



97% not meeting  
the guideline



There are no differences between men and women in the consumption of nuts or in the proportion of adults consuming enough nuts.



The consumption of nuts is higher in adults (18 years and above) (3 g/day) than in children (3-9 years) and adolescents (10-17 years) (1 g/day). There are no differences by age in the percentage of adults meeting the guideline.



Data on nut consumption and the percentage of adults meeting the guideline are not available by education, region or year due to insufficient numbers of participants with an intake on both 24-hour recall days in certain subgroups.

## Recommended fats and oils



**Included:** vegetable oils rich in unsaturated fatty acids, such as olive oil or sunflower oil, as well as soft or liquid margarines made from these oils.

**Not included:** butter, hard margarines (in a wrapper), combinations of vegetable oils with animal fats, lard and tropical oils such as coconut and palm oil.

**Dietary guideline:** give preference to recommended fats and oils, and limit other types of fats and oils

Non-recommended  
fats and oils

Recommended  
fats and oils



On average, people consume 17 g of fats and oils per day, with 47% of the consumed quantity coming from recommended fats and oils.



Men consume more fats and oils than women (18 g/day versus 16 g/day). For both men and women, on average, 47% of their total fats and oils consumption is coming from recommended fats and oils.



The consumption of fats and oils increases with age, from 10 g/day in children to 23 g/day in older adults. On average, the proportion of fats and oils consumption from recommended fats and oils is higher in children (3-9 years) and adolescents (10-17 years) (52%) than in adults aged 65 years and older (42%).



The consumption of fats and oils is 19 g/day in individuals with a low educational level and 16 g/day in individuals with a medium or high educational level. On average, the fats and oils consumption coming from recommended fats and oils is higher in individuals with a high educational level (51%), compared to those with a low educational level (44%).



The consumption of fats and oils does not differ between people living in Flanders or Wallonia (17 g/day versus 16 g/day). On average, the fats and oils consumption coming from recommended fats and oils is higher in Flanders (50%) than in Wallonia (38%).



The consumption of fats and oils in the population aged 3-64 years decreased between 2014-2015 (18 g/day) and 2022-2023 (15 g/day). On average, the fats and oils consumption coming from recommended fats and oils decreased between 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 from 57% to 48%.

## Milk and milk-based products



**Included:** milk and milk-based products, such as yoghurt, fresh cheese, cheese, (fermented) milk-based drinks such as chocolate milk, and milk-based desserts like pudding.

**Not included:** butter, cream and vegetable drinks based on soya, rice, oats, almonds or hazelnuts.

**Dietary guideline:** eat or drink 250-500 g/day of milk and milk-based products

**Mean habitual consumption:** 151 g/day

**Percentage of adults meeting the guideline (at least 250 g per day):**

12% meeting  
the guideline



88% not meeting  
the guideline



Men consume more milk and milk-based products (164 g/day) than women (138 g/day). More men than women consume enough milk and milk-based products (15% versus 8%).



Consumption of milk and milk-based products is the highest in children (3-9 years) (204 g/day), decreases in adolescents (10-17 years) (154 g/day) and is the lowest in adults aged 18-64 years (142 g/day) and adults aged 65 years and older (149 g/day). There is no difference in the proportion of adults consuming enough milk and milk-based products between those aged 18-64 years and those aged 65 years and above.



Consumption of milk and milk-based products, or the proportion consuming enough, does not vary by level of education.



People living in Flanders (162 g/day) consume more milk and milk-based products than those living in Wallonia (138 g/day). More people living in Flanders consume enough milk and milk-based products (15%) compared to those living in Wallonia (7%).



Consumption of milk and milk-based products in the population aged 3-64 years decreased between 2014-2015 (180 g/day) and 2022-2023 (152 g/day), while the proportion of adults aged 18-64 years who consume enough decreased during this period (from 18% to 11%).

## Fish and shellfish



**Included:** fresh, frozen, smoked and canned fish (natural or in oil/vinegar), as well as seafood (such as mussels, oysters or prawns).

**Not included:** deep-fried fish and fish products, such as fish fingers or fish burgers.

**Dietary guideline:** eat at least 200 g of fish or shellfish per week, including fatty fish (such as salmon, mackerel or sardines) once a week

**Mean habitual consumption:** 126 g/week

**Percentage of adults meeting the guideline:**

23% meeting the guideline



77% not meeting the guideline

**Percentage of the population never eating fish or shellfish:**



**38%** of fish and shellfish consumed are **fatty fish**.



There are no differences between men and women in fish and shellfish consumption, nor in the proportion of adults meeting the guideline or never eating fish and shellfish.



The consumption of fish and shellfish is lower in children (3-9 years) and adolescents (10-17 years) (63 g/week) than in adults aged 18-64 years (133 g/week) and 65 years and older (168 g/week). There are no differences by age in the percentage of adults meeting the guideline.



More people with a low level of education never eat fish and shellfish (7%) compared to those with a medium (4%) or high level (3%) of education.



There are no differences by region in fish and shellfish consumption and in the proportion of adults meeting the guideline. More people living in Wallonia (7%) never eat fish or shellfish compared to those living in Flanders (4%).



It is not possible to conclude from the available data whether or not this proportion has decreased between 2014-2015 and 2022-2023. The proportion of people aged 3 to 64 years who never eat fish and shellfish did not change between 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 (5%).

## Unprocessed red meat



**Included:** fresh red meat from beef, veal, pig, sheep, lamb, goat or horse, which has not undergone any treatment other than chilling, freezing and/or reduction in size in order to be mixed with other red meat. This meat can be seasoned, salted (for taste) or coated in breadcrumbs.

Examples: beef steak, lamb chop, fresh minced meat, schnitzel, cordon blue or meat preparations such as fresh sausage or hamburger.

**Dietary guideline:** eat maximum 300 g of unprocessed red meat per week

**Mean habitual consumption:** 308 g/week

**Percentage of adults exceeding the guideline:**

46% exceeding  
the guidelines



54% meeting  
the guidelines



Men eat more unprocessed red meat than women (364 g/week versus 245 g/week). Among adults, the proportion of men eating too much unprocessed meat (61%) is higher than in women (31%).

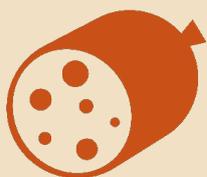


Children eat less unprocessed red meat (210 g/week) compared to adults aged 18-64 years (322 g/week) and adults aged 65 years and older (329 g/week), while adolescents consume an intermediate amount (280 g/week). The proportion of adults who eat too much unprocessed red meat is similar between adults aged 18-64 years (45%) and adults aged 65 years and older (48%).



Based on available data, it is not possible to conclude on the presence or absence of differences in the consumption of unprocessed red meat by education, region or year.

## Processed red meat



**Included:** red meat from beef, veal, pig, sheep, lamb, goat or horse, which has undergone a treatment. Such meat has been smoked, dried or salted for preservation purposes or preservatives such as nitrites and phosphates have been added.

Examples: cooked ham, bacon, prepared filet americain or salami.

**Dietary guideline:** eat a maximum of 30 g of processed red meat per week

**Mean habitual consumption:** 189 g/week

**Percentage of adults exceeding the guideline:**

91% exceeding  
the guideline



9% meeting  
the guideline



Men eat more processed red meat (231 g/week) than women (154 g/week). However, the proportion of adults who eat too much processed red meat is similar between men (93%) and women (90%).



Children eat 168 g of processed red meat per week, adolescents and adults aged 18-64 years eat 189 g per week and adults aged 65 years and older eat 203 g per week. The proportion of adults who eat too much processed red meat is similar between adults aged 18-64 years (90%) and adults aged 65 years and older (94%).



People with a high level of education eat less processed red meat (154 g/week) than those with a low level of education (217 g/week). It is not possible to conclude on the presence or absence of a difference in the proportion exceeding the guideline.



The consumption of processed red meat or the proportion exceeding the guideline does not differ between people living in Flanders and Wallonia (196 g/week and 91% versus 96%).



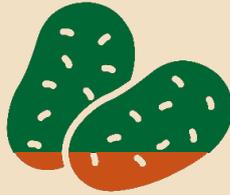
The consumption of processed red meat in the population aged 3-64 years decreased between 2014-2015 (231 g/week) and 2022-2023 (189 g/week). It is not possible to conclude on the presence or absence of a difference in the proportion exceeding the guideline.

## Deep-fried potatoes



**Included:** potatoes, sweet potatoes or other starchy tubers that have been deep-fried.

**Dietary guideline:** potatoes are a part of a healthy diet, but the consumption of deep-fried potato products must be limited.



On average, people consume **60 g** of potatoes per day, with **25%** coming from deep-fried potatoes.



Men eat more potatoes (69 g/day) than women (53 g/day). Deep-fried potatoes account, on average, for 27% of the total amount of potatoes consumed by men, and 23% by women.



Children (48 g/day) and adolescents (52 g/day) eat less potatoes than adults aged 18-64 years (58 g/day). Older adults aged 65 years and above (77 g/day) eat more potatoes than younger adults. The consumption of deep-fried potatoes, as a proportion of total potato consumption, is the highest in adolescents (38%), compared to adults: 31% for those aged 18-39 years, 21% for those aged 40-64 years and 15% for those aged 65 years and older.



People with a low level of education have a higher consumption of potatoes (68 g/day) compared to those with a high level of education (51 g/day). On average, deep-fried potatoes account for 26% of the total amount of potatoes consumed by people with a low level of education. This average proportion is 24% for people with a medium level and 21% for people with a high level of education.



The consumption of potatoes is higher in Flanders (65 g/day) than in Wallonia (54 g/day). The average proportion of consumed potatoes that are deep-fried is 23% in people living in Flanders and 27% in those living in Wallonia.



The consumption of potatoes in the population aged 3-64 years decreased between 2014-2015 (64 g/day) and 2022-2023 (58 g/day). The average proportion of potatoes consumed by an individual that are deep-fried did not change between 2014-2015 (30%) and 2022-2023 (27%).

## Sugar-sweetened beverages



**Included:** drinks with added sugar, such as soft drinks (carbonated or not), fruit juices, sweetened milk drinks or plant-based alternatives, sports drinks, energy drinks and non-alcoholic wine, beer and aperitifs.

**Not-included:** fruit juices without added sugar.

**Dietary guideline:** as low as possible

**Mean habitual consumption:** 129 ml/day



Men drink more sugar-sweetened beverages (162 ml/day) than women (94 ml/day).



Adolescents drink more sugar-sweetened beverages (195 ml/day) than children (130 ml/day) and adults aged 18-64 years (143 ml/day), while older adults (65 years and older) drink the least (47 ml/day).



The consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages decreases with the level of education, from 170 ml/day for those with a low level of education to 128 ml/day to those with a medium level and 81 ml/day for those with a high level of education.



The consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages does not differ between Flanders (127 ml/day) and Wallonia (133 ml/day).



The consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages in the population aged 3-64 years decreased between 2014-2015 (187 ml/day) and 2022-2023 (152 ml/day).

## Alcoholic beverages



**Included:** All drinks containing alcohol, such as cocktails, wine, beer, liqueurs and spirits.

**Dietary guideline:** no consumption

**Mean habitual consumption:** 137 ml/day

**Percentage of adults drinking alcoholic beverages and not meeting the guideline:**

82% exceeding  
the guideline



18% meeting  
the guideline



Women have a lower consumption of alcoholic beverages (65 ml/day) than men (213 ml/day), and are less likely (78%) to drink alcoholic beverages compared to men (86%).



Adults aged 18-64 years drink an average of 132 ml/day of alcoholic beverages, while those aged 65 and older drink 148 ml/day. 33% of adolescents (10-17 years) drink alcohol; this proportion increases to 82% in adults aged 18 years and older.



No substantial differences were observed between educational levels for the consumption of alcoholic beverages. However, more adults with a high level (89%) or medium level of education (85%) drink alcoholic beverages compared to those with a low level (77%).

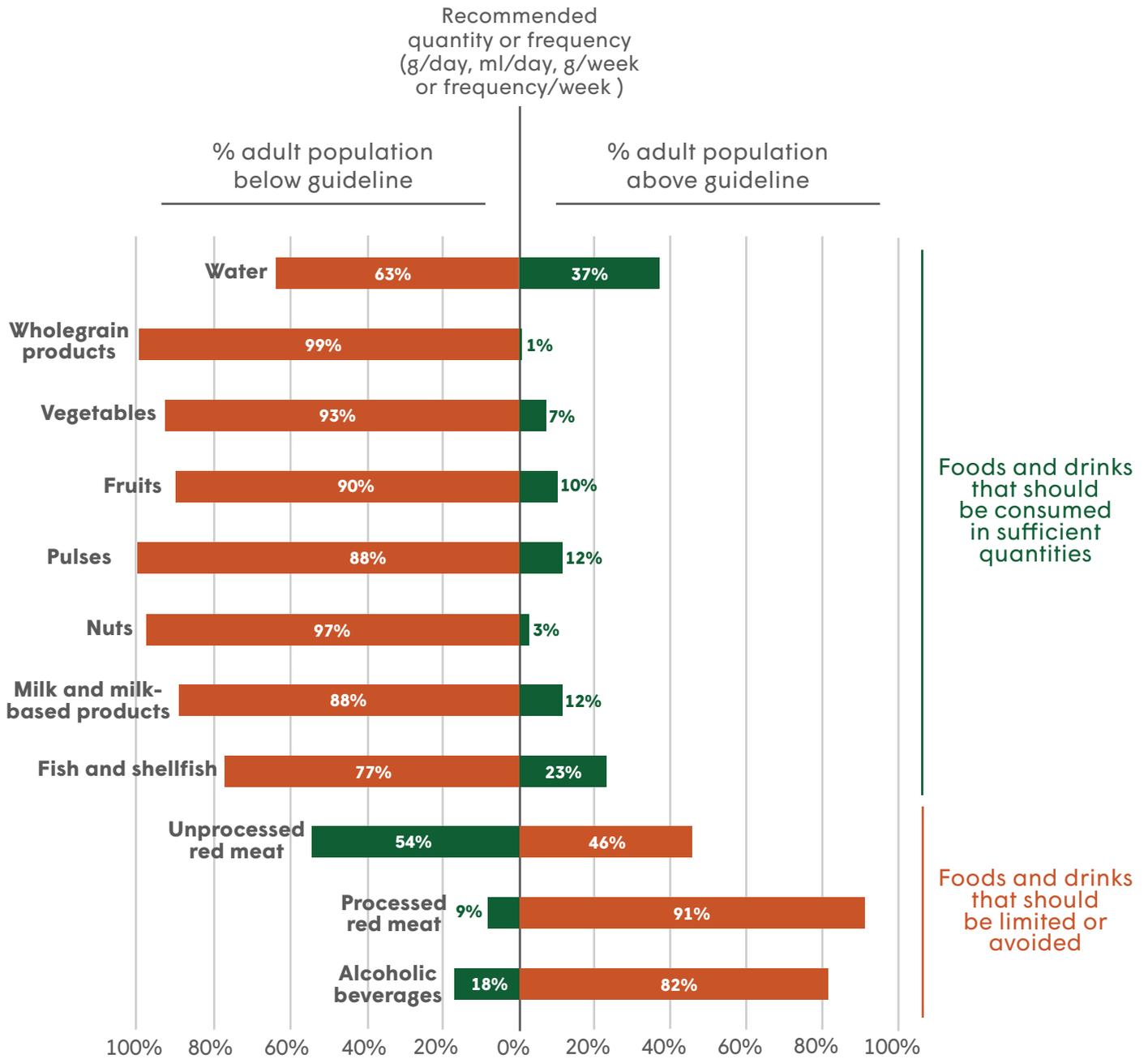


The consumption of alcoholic beverages in adults is 130 ml/day in Flanders and 156 ml/day in Wallonia. The proportion of adults who drink alcoholic beverages is similar in Flanders (83%) and Wallonia (84%).



The consumption of alcoholic beverages by adults aged 18-64 years decreased between 2014-2015 (193 ml/day) and 2022-2023 (144 ml/day). In addition, the proportion of adults aged 18-64 years who drink alcoholic beverages decreased from 86% to 83% during this period.

# To what extent do adults meet food-based dietary guidelines?



# Has food consumption improved since 2014-2015\*?



## Minor changes in the positive direction



The consumption of water in the population increased from 773 ml/day to 949 ml/day. Although still too low, the proportion of adults who drink enough water increased from 30% to 44%.



The consumption of vegetables in the population increased from 140 g/day to 157 g/day. Although still too low, the proportion of adults meeting the guideline of at least 300 g per day increased from 4% to 7%.



The consumption of processed red meat in the population decreased from 231 g/week to 189 g/week, although this is still well above the guideline of maximum 30 g/week.



The consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages in the population decreased from 187 ml/day to 152 ml/day, but should be as low as possible according to guidelines.



The consumption of alcoholic beverages in adults decreased from 193 ml/day to 144 ml/day, but should be zero according to guidelines. The proportion of adults drinking alcoholic beverages decreased from 85% to 81%.



## Negative changes



The consumption of milk and milk-based products in the population decreased from 180 g/day to 152 g/day. The proportion of adults who consume enough milk and milk-based products decreased from 18% to 11%.



In 2022-2023, recommended fats and oils accounted for a lower proportion of the total amount of fats and oils consumed by an individual (48%), compared to 2014-2015 (57%).

\*Comparison between survey years only in the population aged 3 to 64 years or in the adult population aged 18 to 64 years.

## Conclusion

In 2022-2023, the majority of the adult population in Belgium does not meet the dietary guidelines set by the Superior Health Council. The consumption of nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, pulses, dairy products, fish and shellfish, and water - which are linked to positive health outcomes and lower mortality – remains insufficient. At the same time, the consumption of foods associated with adverse health effects and higher mortality, including unprocessed and processed red meat, sugar-sweetened beverages, and alcoholic beverages, remains excessive.

Habitual consumption and adherence to dietary guidelines varies across population groups. Habitual consumption tends to increase with age, except for fruits, and milk and milk-based products, which are consumed more by children. Women, people with a high level of education, and those living in Flanders generally follow the guidelines more closely. However, exceptions include milk and milk-based products, where men have better adherence, water, which is consumed more in Wallonia, and alcoholic beverages, where those with a low level of educational adhere better. Adults aged 18 to 64 and those aged 65 years and older show similar levels of adherence to dietary guidelines, although older adults are less likely to meet the guidelines for water, pulses, and recommended fats and oils than adults aged 18 to 64. However, they consume more fruit, fewer sugar-sweetened beverages, and less deep-fried potatoes (expressed as a proportion of the total potato consumption).

Since 2014-2015, some dietary habits have changed in the positive direction, with increased consumption of water and vegetables and reduced consumption of processed red meat, sugar-sweetened beverages, and alcoholic beverages. However, a significant proportion of the population still fails to meet the dietary guidelines for most food groups.

These results underline that efforts to improve the food environment we live in and promote healthy eating habits must remain a priority in public health policy. Creating environments where healthy food choices are the most accessible and obvious option is essential. Evidence-based strategies – such as improving the affordability of healthy foods, regulating food marketing, enhancing nutritional labelling, and fostering supportive food environments – can significantly encourage healthier eating habits without relying solely on individual behaviour change.

**Questions? Mail [fcs@sciensano.be](mailto:fcs@sciensano.be) or visit our [website](#) FCS.**