



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Clár um Bhia Sláintiúil agus an Maireachtáil Ghníomhach
4ú Urlár, Teach Óstaí an Rí, Sráid Parnell, BAC D01 A3Y8
T: 01-8659392 R: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Healthy Eating & Active Living Programme
4th Floor, King's Inns House, Parnell Street, Dublin D01 A3Y8
Tel: 01-8659392 e-Mail: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Deputy Alan Kelly
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

14 August 2020

Ref - PQ Number: 19865/20

Dear Deputy Kelly,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above referenced Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health. The question concerned was referred to Strategic Planning and Transformation, HSE, for review and direct response. Our response as provided by Sarah O'Brien, National Lead Healthy Eating Active Living Programme and Karen Gaynor, Obesity Clinical Programme Manager, is set out below and in the appendix attached.

PQ ref 19865/20: To ask the Minister for Health the number of adults and children by age and gender diagnosed as clinically obese in each of the years 2017 to 2019 and to date in 2020, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Response:

Overweight and obesity is defined as "abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health" (World Health Organisation, 2017). It is a progressive, chronic and complex disease affecting all ages and genders, but is disproportionately greater in disadvantaged groups. Energy balance is influenced by a complex and multifaceted system of determinants. Obesity is largely caused by genetic risk factors interacting with the environment and the current evidence suggests only about 10% of body weight is due to individual choices on eating and activity.

A central register of patients diagnosed with clinical obesity does not exist in Ireland. Data from national surveys including Healthy Ireland Survey; Growing Up in Ireland (ESRI) and Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative provide a population level picture of the prevalence of clinical obesity in Ireland.

Body mass index (BMI), defined as weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters (kg/m^2), is considered to be the best available population marker for monitoring trends in overweight and obesity in adults, children and young people over time. Direct assessment of body fat is not readily available in clinical



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Clár um Bhia Sláintiúil agus an Maireachtáil Ghníomhach
4ú Urlár, Teach Óstaí an Rí, Sráid Parnell, BAC D01 A3Y8
T: 01-8659392 R: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Healthy Eating & Active Living Programme
4th Floor, King's Inns House, Parnell Street, Dublin D01 A3Y8
Tel: 01-8659392 e-Mail: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

settings, so BMI is also the most commonly used measure of obesity in clinical practice. BMI should not be the sole measurement used when assessing or treating obesity, use of additional clinical assessment tools such as the Edmonton Obesity Staging Scale are recommended.

The healthcare costs associated with obesity are significant. Obesity is associated with over 195 related conditions, and is a risk factor for severe illness with COVID 19. Furthermore obesity is a highly stigmatised condition that also has a significant impact on quality of life for children, young people and adults. The RCPI and HSE through the National Obesity Management Clinical Programme have designed a Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Ireland.

The Model of Care describes high quality and best practice in obesity care and defines how services should be delivered across the spectrum of prevention and treatment. The Model of Care is currently undergoing internal and external consultation with key stakeholder groups and will be submitted to the HSE for approval by the end of this year.

I trust this information and data in the appendix to this correspondence, as provided by our National Lead for Healthy Eating Active Living Programme and the Obesity Clinical Programme Manager is of assistance to you.

Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact this office on 01 6352041 or via email strategicplanning@hse.ie.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin O'Neill

Gavin O'Neill, Assistant National Director
Strategic Planning & Transformation



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Clár um Bhia Sláintiúil agus an Maireachtáil Ghníomhach
4ú Urlár, Teach Óstaí an Rí, Sráid Parnell, BAC D01 A3Y8
T: 01-8659392 R: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Healthy Eating & Active Living Programme
4th Floor, King's Inns House, Parnell Street, Dublin D01 A3Y8
Tel: 01-8659392 e-Mail: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Appendix

Table 1: WHO Classification for BMI in Adults

Classification	BMI (kg/m ²)
Underweight	<18.5
Ideal range	≥18.5 and <25.0
Overweight	≥25.0 and <30.0
Obesity	≥30.0
Obesity, class I	≥30.0 and <35.0
Obesity, class II	≥35.0 and <40.0
Obesity, class III	≥40.0

Table 2: BMI cut-offs for population monitoring and individual clinical assessment in children

(National Obesity Observatory)

Underweight:	2nd centile for population monitoring and clinical assessment
Overweight:	85th centile for population monitoring, 91st centile for clinical assessment
Obesity:	95th centile for population monitoring, 98th centile for clinical assessment

Table 3: Adult BMI >30 by age & gender (Healthy Ireland Survey)

*HI survey is undertaken annually, during period 2017 to 2020 data on weight module was collected and reported on twice. The HI Summary report 2017 notes: Men aged 35+ are more likely to be obese than women in that age group - 31% vs. 24%. For those under 35yrs a narrower gender gap exists i.e. 13% vs. 10% respectively – see table overleaf.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Clár um Bhia Sláintiúil agus an Maireachtáil Ghníomhach
4ú Urlár, Teach Óstaí an Rí, Sráid Parnell, BAC D01 A3Y8
T: 01-8659392 R: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Healthy Eating & Active Living Programme
4th Floor, King's Inns House, Parnell Street, Dublin D01 A3Y8
Tel: 01-8659392 e-Mail: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Table 3: Adult BMI >30 by age & gender (Healthy Ireland Survey)

Age Group	2017	Age Group	2019	
	Full breakdown by gender not published in HI Summary Report		Men	Women
All	23%	All	24%	23%
15-24	9%	15-24	6%	11%
25-34	15%	25-34	22%	21%
35-44	22%	35-44	24%	20%
45-54	29%	45-54	27%	27%
55-64	32%	55-64	34%	25%
65-74	33%	65-74	35%	33%
75+	30%	75+	31%	27%

Table 4: Children's BMI >95th centile by age and gender (Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative)

*COSI data is collected at multi-annual intervals. During the period 2017-2020 data was collected once.

Age Group	2019	
	Boys	Girls
All	4.5%	4.2%
1 st class	3.5%	3.9%
2 nd class	4.6%	5.1%
4 th class	5%	5.2%
6 th class	4.9%	2.6%

Table 5: Prevalence of overweight and obesity across the lifespan (Model of Care for Overweight and Obesity in Ireland – in draft HSE 2020)

Age	Overweight	Obesity	Reference
3 years	19%	5%	GUI (ESRI), 2017
5 years	15%	5%	GUI (ESRI), 2017
7-8 years	15%	5%	GUI (ESRI), 2017



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Clár um Bhia Sláintiúil agus an Maireachtáil Ghníomhach
4ú Urlár, Teach Óstaí an Rí, Sráid Parnell, BAC D01 A3Y8
T: 01-8659392 R: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

Healthy Eating & Active Living Programme
4th Floor, King's Inns House, Parnell Street, Dublin D01 A3Y8
Tel: 01-8659392 e-Mail: healthyeating.activeliving@hse.ie

13-17 years	10.9%	7.5%	O'Neill et al, 2009
17-18	20%	7%	GUI (ESRI), 2019
20 years	24%	12%	GUI (ESRI) 2019
15-24	19%	9%	HI Survey, 2019
15-65+	37%	23%	HI Survey, 2019
Over 50	43%	36%	TILDA (Leahy et al), 2014