

Facts on ultra-processed foods and sugary beverages

Impacts: Health ([IARC](#), [World Cancer Research Fund](#) and [World Obesity Atlas](#)).

- Approximately two billion adults are living with high body mass index (BMI), including 800 million who are living with obesity (defined as BMI \geq 30).
- One billion people globally, including 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men are expected to be living with obesity by 2030.
- Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are the most affected, as the number of people living with obesity has more than doubled since 2010 and even tripled in low-income countries.
- Obesity is connected to 12 types of cancer, notable: mouth, pharynx and larynx; oesophageal; stomach; pancreatic; gallbladder; liver; colon and rectum; postmenopausal breast cancer; ovarian cancer; endometrial or womb cancer; prostate; and kidney cancers.
- The top five cancers for women where obesity is a risk factor are breast, womb, gallbladder, kidney and colon cancers.
- The top five cancer for men where obesity is a risk factor are colon, kidney, rectum, pancreas and oesophageal cancers.
- People with obesity are often victims of stigma and discrimination, including in medical settings ([World Obesity Federation](#)).
- [Multiple factors contribute to obesity](#) that are beyond an individual's control. In addition to genetic predispositions, a [toxic food environment](#) and poor nutrition education that contribute to being overweight ([Healthline](#)).
- Unhealthy food choices tend to be less expensive (about USD 1.50 cheaper per day than healthy food [according to a review](#) of 27 studies in 10 countries), more convenient (faster to cook or buy) and more easily satisfy craving for salt or sugar ([Plutus Foundation](#)).

The Food and Beverage Industry

- Fast-food restaurants spent \$5 billion in total advertising in the US in 2019, an increase of over 9% compared to 2012. ([Fast Food Facts 2021](#))
- Advertising continues to target disproportionately Hispanic and Black youth and fast-food restaurants did not actively promote healthier menu items. In the US in 2019, preschoolers, children, and teens viewed on average 2.1 to 2.3 fast-food TV ads per day, with Black preschoolers, children, and teens viewed approximately 75% more fast-food TV ads than their White peers.

- The unhealthy foods industry often finances research that supports results that are favourable to their business; for instance, studies financed by Coca-Cola reported no association of sugary drinks to diabetes. ([World Nutrition Journal](#))
- A study conducted in India found that most packaged food and fast-food items contained dangerously high levels of salt and fat in them, much higher than the thresholds set by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India ([Centre for Science and Environment](#), India)

Global commitments

- In 2013, governments agreed to [a set of voluntary targets to reduce NCDs](#) that they aimed to achieve by 2025, including to reduce the prevalence of obesity to 2010 levels. All countries are significantly off track, with most having [less than 10% chance](#) of meeting that target.
- [In the EU](#), there are various legislative or voluntary (industry self-regulation) policies to address sugar intake and restrict the marketing of foods that are high in sugar, salt and fats to children; a major industry self-regulation effort is the [EU Pledge](#).