

2024 Healthy Ireland Survey Results **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/112579>)**

Interim Chief Medical Officer, Professor Mary Horgan, today announced the results of the Healthy Ireland Survey 2024. Supported by the Department of Health, the annual survey by Ipsos B&A gives an up-to-date picture of the health of the nation, reporting on many health-related lifestyle behaviours.

Almost 7,400 people over the age of 15 were surveyed on a range of themes including general health, smoking, vaping and alcohol consumption, mental health, suicide awareness, GP service utilisation, nutrition, physical activity and caring responsibilities. This year, for the first time, the report evaluated the impact of Long COVID on the population.

Highlights include:

- 81% report their general health as 'good' or 'very good'
- 86% rate their quality of life as good or very good, while the number reporting a probable mental health problem has reduced
- GP service utilisation rates have increased
- smoking and vaping rates remain broadly stable

While the trends in the 2024 Survey are broadly positive, it also highlighted areas of concern including a rise in the proportion of people binge drinking, a decrease in the numbers meeting physical activity guidelines and a reduction in the numbers eating the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables daily.

Interim Chief Medical Officer, Professor Mary Horgan said:

"The data we collect in the Healthy Ireland Survey provides vital insights into the state of the population's health and wellbeing. It's a crucial resource that allows us to monitor trends, identify risks and respond appropriately through robust policies so that we can support people to be healthier. Overall, the trends in the 2024 Survey are encouraging, particularly the numbers reporting good health and good quality of life."

The 2024 Survey found that 17% of the population are current smokers, broadly in line with the 18% recorded in 2023, and continuing the downward trend from the 23% reported in 2015.

While smoking rates remain highest among the 25 to 34 age group at 20%, they are now significantly below the 32% recorded in 2015. The proportion of the population using e-cigarettes remains unchanged since last year at 8%.

Alcohol consumption, within the previous 12 months, has risen from 70% to 73% but remains lower than the 75% reported in 2018. There has also been an increase in the numbers who are considered binge drinkers (drinking six or more standard drinks on a typical drinking occasion), rising from 24% in 2023 to 28%.

Just 41% percent of people report meeting the national guidelines for being moderately active for at least 150 minutes a week, a reduction from the 46% recorded in 2019. However, walking isn't included in that calculation and more than 60% of people report walking for 10 minutes or more, at least five days a week.

The results also showed a rise in the numbers who reported consuming sugar-sweetened drinks at least once per week (32% this year compared with the 29% recorded in 2019). There was a small reduction in the numbers eating fruit and vegetables daily, while just 28% of the population now consume the recommended five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day, down from 34% in 2019.

Commenting on these findings, Professor Horgan said:

"These insights reaffirm the need for strong legislation that supports people to follow healthier lifestyle behaviours.

"We have made good progress in recent years, with notable measures including the Public Health (Tobacco Products & Nicotine Inhaling Products) Bill, and the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 which aim to reduce alcohol and nicotine related harm.

"The indicators in relation to diet underline the importance of creating a healthier food environment, which is the

focus of a new Safefood campaign. The department also supports several initiatives designed to encourage increased physical activity for all ages and abilities. Our next steps in this area will be set out in the forthcoming new National Physical Activity Framework."

The 2024 Survey recorded marginal improvements in the average positive mental health Energy and Vitality Index (EVI) score, and a small reduction in the numbers reporting a probable mental health problem (down to 12% from the 15% recorded at the height of the pandemic in 2021).

This year, for the first time, the survey included a module on the impact of COVID-19 and Long COVID, defined as COVID-19 symptoms that continue for four weeks or more following the initial infection. 7% of respondents reported experiencing symptoms of Long COVID at some point in time, with 3% receiving a Long COVID diagnosis from their doctor.

The number of people identifying as carers continues to rise, up from 9% in 2015 and 12% in 2023 to 14% in 2024. Carers are themselves more likely to have a long-standing illness or health problem, at 44% compared to 36% of those who are not carers.

The proportion of people that have visited a GP has increased each year since 2021. Visits are now at the highest level since first reported in 2015. 79% report visiting a GP in the previous 12 months, with an average of 4.4 visits per person.

Professor Horgan said:

"I'm encouraged by the continued, gradual improvements in mental health measurements since the height of pandemic restrictions in 2021. Record funding of almost €1.5 billion has been allocated to mental health services for 2025, facilitating a focus on child and youth mental health as well as mental health promotion and early intervention initiatives.

"Our health service continues to respond to the many challenges posed by the pandemic, with the implementation of an interim Model of Care for Long COVID and six Post Acute hospital-based clinics in place.

"GP visits are now at the highest level since 2015, reflecting increased demand for health services from a growing and ageing population. Eligibility for GP Visit Cards has been expanded, while the number of GPs and GP training places are increasing. These and other initiatives are helping to increase and improve access to quality affordable healthcare, in line with the vision of Sláintecare."

Region

Nationwide

[2024 Healthy Ireland Survey Results \(https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/8e7f7-interim-chief-medical-officer-announces-results-of-the-2024-healthy-ireland-survey/\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/8e7f7-interim-chief-medical-officer-announces-results-of-the-2024-healthy-ireland-survey/)

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