

MEASURING WHAT THE WORLD EATS

Insights from a new approach

OCTOBER 2022

KEY INSIGHTS

- The majority of people in most countries—even in high-income countries like the US—are not consuming diets that even minimally adhere to dietary guidelines.
- Populations that consume more healthy foods also tend to consume more unhealthy foods. This means that all populations are at high risk of diet-related noncommunicable diseases.
- In many countries the majority of women are not getting the diverse diets they need, increasing their risk of vitamin and mineral deficiencies and related health issues.
- Men and urban residents are more likely to consume unhealthy foods.
- Higher income levels do not guarantee healthy diets.
- The first dataset of 41 countries captures two-thirds of the world's population. In more than half of these countries, this was the first nationally representative dietary survey in adults ever done.
- The new Diet Quality Questionnaire (DQQ) is a game changer. It's quick, affordable, and scalable. We can now monitor what the world eats.
- Guided by these new data, we must take urgent action to tackle unhealthy diets—the main factor threatening human health, while also affecting the environment and economies in all countries worldwide.

Diet—the food people eat—is a central component of health and well-being. Poor diet and malnutrition are the main drivers of ill health and premature mortality, with negative spillover effects on the environment and economy. What we eat is related to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Monitoring diet quality globally is thus essential for accountability to nutrition, health, and global development goals. Yet there has been no way of monitoring diet quality in a credible, affordable, and timely way. The Global Diet Quality Project offers a new approach that enables countries to track diet quality. The project's Diet Quality Questionnaire (DQQ) allows users to investigate both diet adequacy and diet components that protect against or increase risk of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Working with the Gallup World Poll data collection platform, the project has assembled the first round of diet quality data for over 40 countries in 2021 and aims to collect data for 140 countries.



Global Diet Quality Project

The Global Diet Quality Project aims to enable diet quality monitoring globally with tools and data. It is a collaboration between Gallup, Harvard University, and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), in collaboration with many global stakeholders.

WHAT WE DO

Provide the tools for valid and feasible diet quality monitoring within countries

- The Diet Quality Questionnaire (DQQ) and associated indicators enable population-level diet quality monitoring.
- The DQQ is a low-burden tool for collecting valid, comparable food group consumption data for the general population. It includes 29 food groups selected for their relationship to nutrition and health, sustainability, national food-based dietary guidelines, and alignment with United Nations indicators and recommendations.
- The DQQ takes approximately five minutes to implement.
- Low in cost and requiring no nutrition expertise on the part of enumerators, the DQQ breaks down barriers to monitoring diet quality.
- Country-adapted questionnaires for over 100 countries are ready to use and available for download at www.dietquality.org.

Collect data on diet quality across countries worldwide

- Data across countries have initially been collected by the Gallup World Poll, the only survey that collects nationally representative data in more than 140 countries annually, including countries of all income levels. The DQQ enables countries to take up diet quality monitoring in their own national surveys over the longer term. In 2022, data from 41 countries are available. In 2023, data from 56 countries are available.
- The first dataset of 41 countries captures two-thirds of the world's population. In more than half of these countries, this was the first nationally representative dietary survey in adults ever done.

Align with global recommendations

- The DQQ standardizes the collection of the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) indicator, following United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization guidance.
- The DQQ measures adherence to United Nations World Health Organization healthy diet recommendations, dietary risk factors for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), and nutrition transition trends including ultraprocessed foods.
- The DQQ aligns with World Health Organization and UNICEF indicators for infant and young child feeding, allowing coherent measurement of diet quality across the life cycle.
- Demographic and Health Surveys are using the DQQ questions for both women and young children.
- The DQQ can measure general adherence to food-based dietary guidelines. For example, almost all countries recommend consuming fruits and vegetables in abundance, in addition to starchy staples, animal-source foods, and pulses, nuts, or seeds. The DQQ can measure the proportion of people who are consuming all five of these recommended food groups daily.

Core Diet Quality Questionnaire indicators

MDD-W (Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women)

Micronutrient adequacy: proportion of women who consume at least five out of 10 specific food groups over the course of a day.

All-5

Food group adequacy: proportion of the population consuming all five food groups typically recommended for daily consumption in food-based dietary guidelines around the world.

NCD-Protect

Dietary factors protective against noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, pulses, nuts and seeds.

NCD-Risk

Risk factors for NCDs, proxied by foods to limit such as sweets, packaged salty snack foods, processed meats, and sugar-sweetened beverages.

Global Dietary Recommendations score (GDR score)

A summary score reflecting World Health Organization dietary recommendations, including dietary factors that protect against NCDs, and dietary risk factors for NCDs.

Zero vegetable or fruit consumption

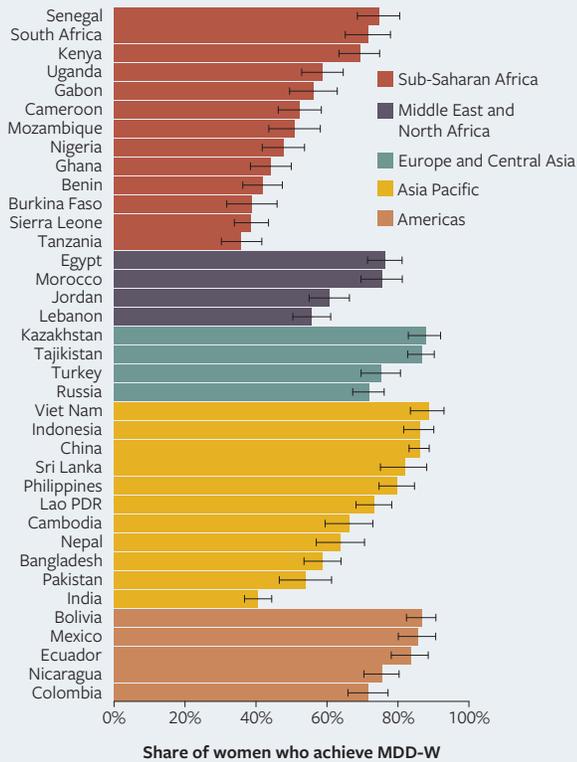
The proportion of the population who did not consume any vegetables or fruits during the previous day.

Sugar-sweetened soft drink consumption

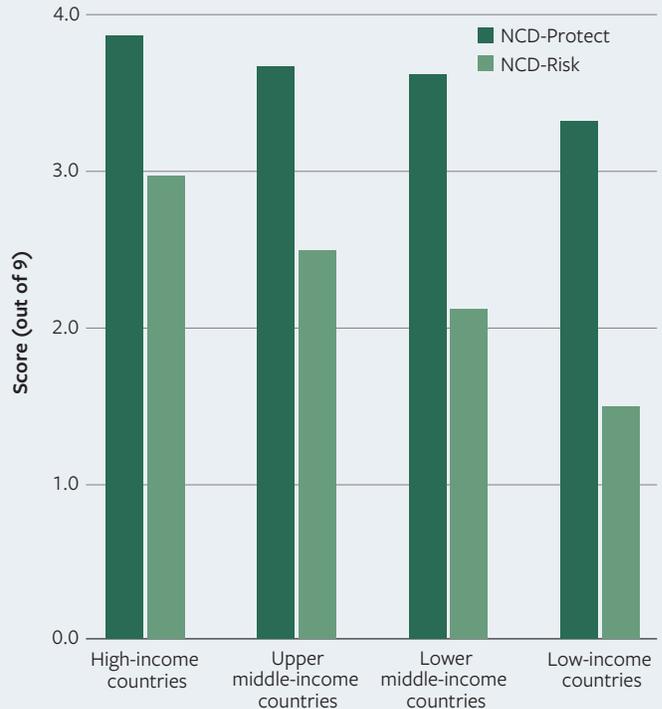
The proportion of the population who consumed sugar-sweetened sodas, energy drinks, or sports drinks during the previous day.

The DQQ data offer ...

... the first database on Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W)

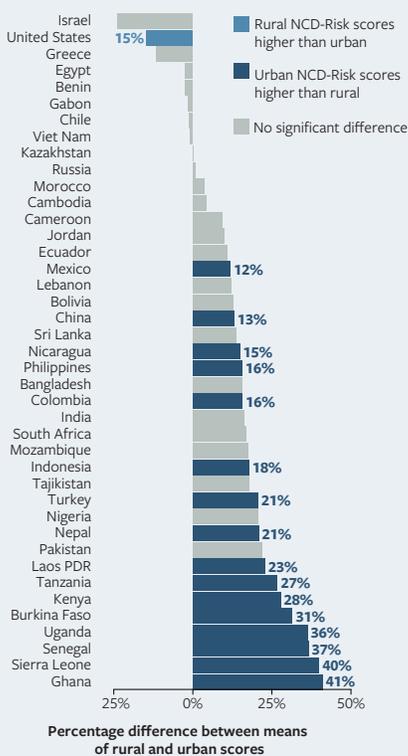


... new indicators of dietary factors related to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)

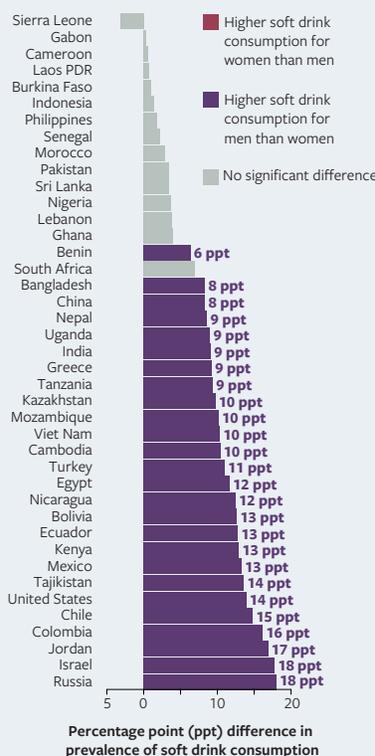


Note: NCD-Protect reflects dietary factors that protect against NCDs. The higher the NCD-Protect score, the more dietary recommendations have been met. NCD-Risk reflects dietary risk factors for NCDs. The higher the NCD-Risk score, the fewer dietary recommendations have been met, and the higher the percentage of dietary energy from ultraprocessed foods.

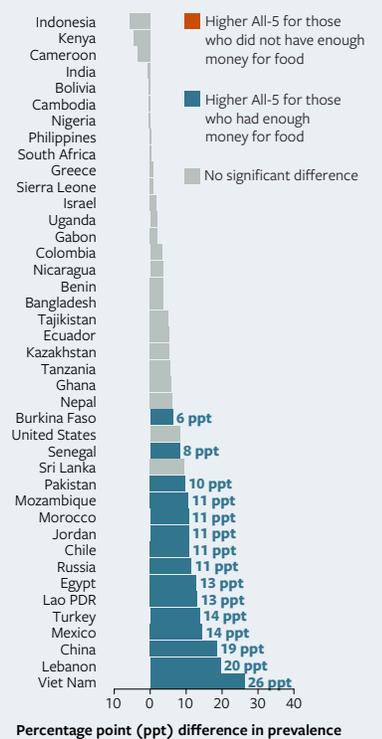
... the ability to disaggregate diet data by urban or rural status, gender, and other characteristics



Urban localities tend to have higher NCD-Risk scores than rural localities.



More men consume soft drinks than women.

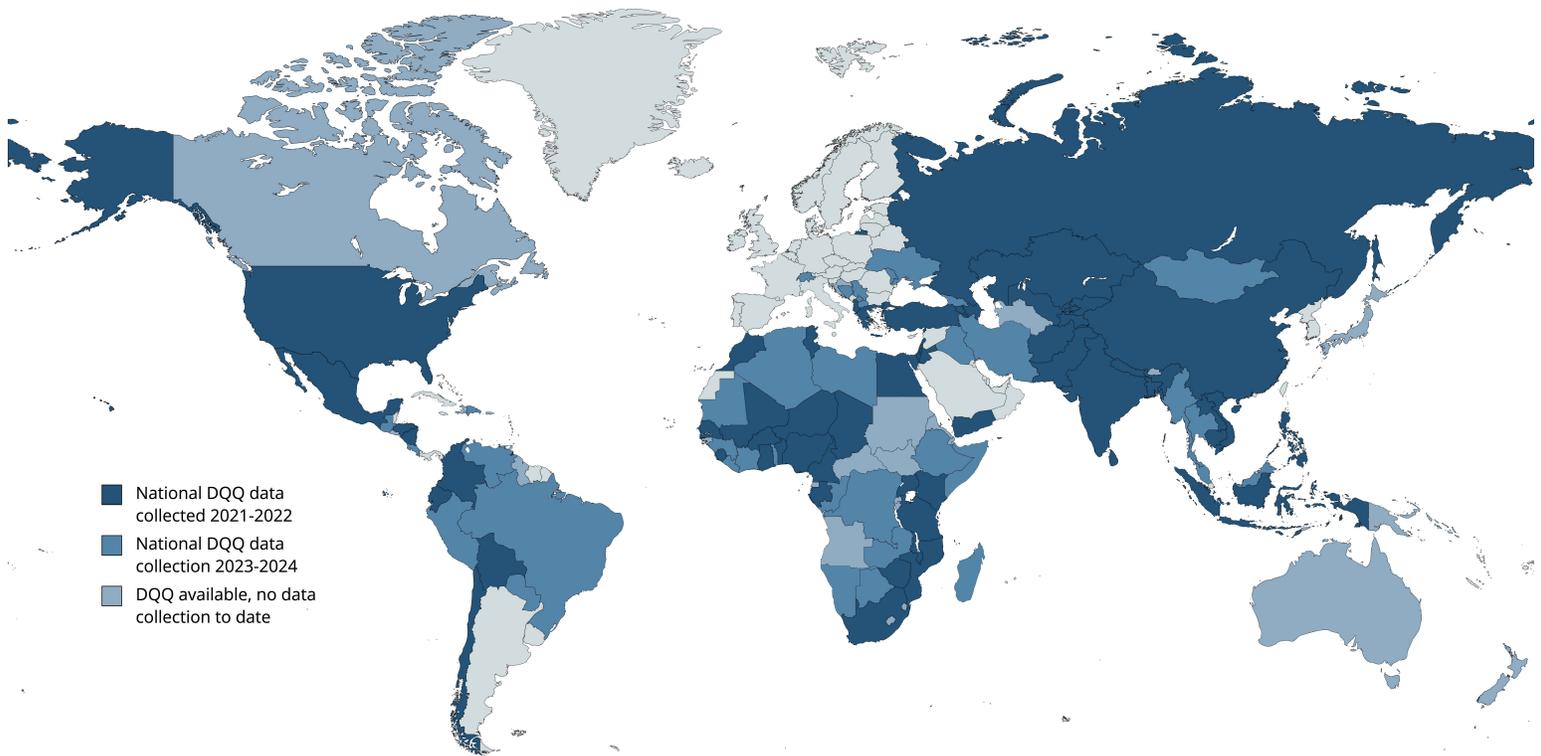


Consumption of all five food groups recommended in global dietary recommendations (All-5) is higher for people who report having enough money for food.



Global Diet Quality Project

The results from the Diet Quality Questionnaire (DQQ) are the first survey data across countries that show the current status of diet quality. Data across countries is a necessary condition for healthy diets to rise to the level of a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).



The brief draws from the following report: Global Diet Quality Project. 2022. *Measuring what the world eats: Insights from a new approach*. Geneva: Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN); Boston, MA: Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Department of Global Health and Population. <https://doi.org/10.36072/dqq2022>



dietquality.org

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