

A comparison of gender differences in food portion sizes consumed by Irish adults during 1997 and 1999

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Increased energy intake has been linked to an increase in the portion sizes of foods consumed⁽¹⁾, and with little information available on portion size intakes in Irish adults, this analysis aims to demonstrate typical portions sizes from the last decade, which can later be compared to current data. Food portion size (g), defined as the weight of the food consumed per eating occasion was calculated from the North South Irish Food Consumption Survey (NSIFCS). The NSIFCS was a 7-d semi-weighed food record collected from 1379 free-living Irish adults aged 18–64 years, from 1997–1999. The foods most frequently consumed from the six food groups which had the greatest contribution to energy intake were selected for analysis, accounting for 70,678 of 217,886 eating occasions. Median and interquartile values are presented for the total population and stratified by gender.

Food Group	Foods	Total population			Men			Women		
		<i>n</i>	M [^]	IQR	<i>n</i>	M [^]	IQR	<i>n</i>	M [^]	IQR
Meat & meat products	Meats, roasted*	2304	83	50–120	1170	98	60–130	1134	70	49–103
	Processed meat products	2846	40	26–78	1614	40	26–78	1232	36	26–80
	Ham, sliced*	2427	35	34–70	1372	36	35–70	1055	35	26–46
Breads	White bread products*	11 064	64	44–76	5287	72	54–100	5237	54	36–72
	Wholemeal bread products*	5563	72	46–92	2626	72	60–110	2937	61	40–76
Potato & potato products	Potatoes, boiled*	3757	290	160–435	1899	360	227–580	1858	200	120–300
	Chips & wedges*	2379	200	109–220	1289	200	150–250	1090	157	100–200
	Potato products	595	85	54–140	297	85	50–140	298	85	57–132
Cakes & biscuits	Biscuits*	4002	26	17–36	1846	30	22–45	2156	24	16–30
	Cakes, buns & pastries*	2376	60	40–90	1139	67	42–92	1237	60	40–85
Milk & yogurts	Milk*	29411	46	29–90	14068	50	30–100	15343	43	26–77
	Yogurts	1181	125	125–125	462	125	125–125	719	125	125–125
Confectionery	Chocolate, plain*	507	36	20–47	244	42	21–50	263	31	20–46
	Chocolate covered bars*	1860	40	24–55	963	48	27–62	897	31	21–48
	Sweets, all	406	15	6–32	160	15	7–40	246	15	9–30

n denotes eating occasions, M[^] denotes median portion size, *statistically different between gender with *p* < 0.05.

With the exception of processed meat products, potato products, yogurts and sweets (non-chocolate), men consumed significantly greater median portion sizes of all other food groups than women, which is similar to findings from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey on British adults⁽²⁾. Data published⁽³⁾ on the same cohort, as reported above, found a strong association between increased consumption of some food groups, including meat products and processed potato products and adiposity in total adults. This suggests that although men in general have significantly greater median portion sizes than women, both populations need to be active in consuming smaller portion sizes.

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2. Kelly MT, Rennie KL, Wallace JM *et al.* (2009) *British Journal of Nutrition* **101**, 1413–1420.

3. McCarthy SN, Robson PJ, Livingstone MBE *et al.* (2006) *International Journal of Nutrition* **30**, 993–1002.