

**FACTS TO THINK ABOUT IN RELATION TO THE IRISH DIET
(SLÁN 2006 SURVEY RESULTS)
(Could be used as part of a Question 1)**

HEALTHY EATING AND THE FOOD PYRAMID

- A major concern is the overconsumption of foods high in fat, sugar and salt, which, according to the Food Pyramid, should be consumed sparingly. The majority of respondents (86%) consumed more than 3 daily servings of these types of foods from the top shelf of the Food Pyramid.
- One in 4 respondents (26%) were consuming the recommended 6 or more daily servings of cereals, breads and potatoes. Two-thirds (65%) were consuming the recommended 5 daily portions of fruit and vegetables. One-fifth (20%) were consuming the recommended 3 daily servings of milk, cheese and yoghurt products; men were more likely than women to consume more than 3 servings (25% compared to 14%). More than one-third of respondents (39%) were consuming the recommended 2 daily servings of meat, fish, poultry and alternatives; women were more likely than men to consume fewer than 2 servings (23% compared to 16%).
- Since 1998, the percentage of respondents consuming the recommended 6 or more daily servings of cereals, breads and potatoes has decreased: 40% (1998), 36% (2002) and 26% (2007). Since 2002, there has also been a decrease in the percentage of respondents consuming the recommended 3 daily servings of milk, cheese and yoghurt products: 22% (1998), 23% (2002) and 20% (2007). Conversely, the percentage of respondents consuming at least 4 daily servings of fruit and vegetables has increased: 56% (1998), 68% (2002) and 77% (2007). Consumption of the recommended 2 daily servings of meat, fish, poultry and alternatives and consumption of foods high in fat and sugar has remained similar between 1998 and 2007.

What kind of problems are caused by eating too many top shelf foods?

What are the potential risks of low dairy consumption?

Are there any disadvantages to eating to many foods from the Cereal group?

Can you think of any reasons for the increase in fruit & veg intakes?

OTHER EATING HABITS

- Almost one-third of respondents either always or usually added salt to food while cooking (30%) or added salt to food at the table (32%).
- Half (48%) snacked between meals, most commonly on biscuits and cakes.
- Overall, 10% of respondents did not eat breakfast on the day prior to the survey. The most common location for consumption of the breakfast, main meal and light meal on the day prior to the survey was at home (80%, 83% and 60% respectively). 7% of respondents purchased their breakfast outside the home, 12% purchased their main meal and 23% purchased their light meal.

What are the health problems associated with this type of snacking? Can you suggest any healthy alternatives?

Why is adding salt to food a serious health issue in Ireland?

Why is low breakfast consumption a health concern?

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Being 'physically active' was defined as taking part in exercise or sport 2-3 times per week for 20 or more minutes at a time or engaging in more general activities, such as walking, cycling or dancing, 4-5 times per week accumulating to at least 30 minutes per day. Over half the respondents (55%) reported being physically active, with 49% having been physically active for more than 6 months. Almost one-quarter (24%) reported some activity but not at the level great enough to be considered 'physically active'. Over one-fifth of respondents (22%) reported being physically inactive.

Should we be concerned that only 55% reported being physically active?

Can you discuss the potential health issues linked to being physically inactive?

BREAST-FEEDING

- Four in 10 women (42%) reported breast-feeding at least one of their children. This represents an increase from 32% from SLÁN 2002, with larger increases in younger women (aged 18-29 years).

Can you outline the advantages of breastfeeding?

Can you think of a reason for this increase?