



Press release

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14 Health

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Swiss Health Survey 2012

Improved health behaviour but also more overweight people

Neuchâtel, 10.10.2013 (FSO) – **In recent years, the Swiss population have improved their health behaviour. For example, in 2012, three out of four people were sufficiently physically active – 10 percentage points more than in 2002. However, the proportion of overweight people has risen by 11% since 1992. In 2012, 41% of the Swiss population aged 15 and older were overweight. These are findings from the "Swiss Health Survey", conducted in 2012 for the fifth time by the Federal Statistical Office. This survey is part of a new modular population census which analyses today's accelerated social change much more effectively than was previously the case.**

In 2012, some 21,500 people were interviewed in Switzerland with questions on their state of health and health behaviour. The corresponding analyses show that 41% of the Swiss population aged 15 and older were overweight or obese. Men were one-and-a-half times more likely to be overweight than women (51% compared with 32%). Overweight and obesity have therefore increased, having stagnated between 2002 and 2007. Since 1992 the number of obese people has almost doubled and in 2012 was 10%.

More and more cases of diabetes

Overweight and obese people are more likely to suffer from diabetes, high blood pressure or cholesterol, which can lead to cardiovascular diseases: For example, in 2012 obese people were 8 times more likely to suffer from diabetes than people with normal weight (16% compared with 2%), other overweight people were 3 times more likely to suffer, regardless of which type of diabetes. The majority of diabetes sufferers have the age-related type II diabetes. Furthermore, physically inactive people were twice as likely to suffer from diabetes as those who exercised sufficiently in their leisure time (9% compared with 4%). The share of people with a diagnosis of diabetes has risen from 3% to 5% since 1992. Since 1997 the share of people with high blood pressure has risen from 20% to 27% and that of people with high cholesterol levels from 12% to 17%. The increase is greater among men than women.

Social differences in health problems

The increase in overweight and diabetes concerns all social strata. However, people who completed only compulsory school are more likely to be obese than those with higher qualifications (19% compared with 8%). Similar differences can be seen for people suffering from long-term health problems (40% compared with 30%) or a good to very good self-rated health (62% compared with 90%). The World Health Organisation (WHO) refers to a social gradient to describe the relationship between social status (here by reference to education) and health.

More physical exercise

56% of the population aged 15 and older practised sport in 2012 and 72% of the population satisfy the current recommendations on exercise. The share of people who take sufficient exercise during their leisure time has thus increased by 10%. Over the same period, the proportion of people taking no exercise has fallen from 19% to 11%.

Less exposure to passive smoking

The proportion of non-smokers who were exposed to cigarette smoke from others for at least one hour per day was 6% in 2012, whereas this figure was 26% in 2002 and 16% in 2007. Young people are still particularly affected by passive smoking.

In 2012, 28% of the total population smoked. A slight decline has been observed only among men in the past 20 years. But smoking habits have changed: The share of people who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day has been halved within two decades from 18% to 9%.

Consumption of alcohol still widespread

The share of teetotalers has remained roughly the same as in 1992 and the number of people drinking alcohol every day has fallen in the past 20 years from 20% to 14%. 14% of the population showed harmful drinking behaviour in 2012. Among 15-24 year-old men, binge drinking in particular was more common: 7% of men aged 15 to 24 binge drink weekly and further 28% monthly. In contrast, the daily consumption of alcohol was more common with increasing age: 30% of people aged 65 and older drank alcohol on a daily basis.

SWISS FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE
Press Office

Federal Office of Public Health FOPH: Health2020

At the Federal Office of Public Health, the Swiss Health Survey is an important tool to measure the effects of its policy. The first results of the 2012 survey show that there are still considerable problems. An unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and harmful levels of alcohol consumption are the main risk factors in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and respiratory problems. The Federal Council wants to strengthen its efforts to combat these diseases. To achieve this aim, it has made improving prevention and early detection of NCDs a priority in its 'Health2020' global strategy. As part of the collaboration established under the "National Health Policy" dialogue, the Confederation and the cantons have agreed to begin work on developing a "Non-Communicable Diseases 2020" strategy.

In its Health2020 strategy, the Federal Council has also set promoting mental health and improving the prevention and early detection of mental illness among its priorities. In particular, the aim is to preclude people with a mental illness from being excluded from the world of work, thereby avoiding significant costs to the health system and businesses.

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New publication:

Swiss Health Survey 2012 – Overview, order number: 213-1204. Price: free of charge
Publication orders, tel.: +41 32 71 36060, fax: +41 32 71 36061, e-mail: order@bfs.admin.ch

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Online:

Complete press kit: http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index/themen/14/01/new/nip_detail.html?gnplD=2013-523
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The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) as Health Survey partner had access prior to publication. The Swiss Health Observatory (Obsan), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO), the Federal Gaming Board (FGB) and the cantons which increased their sample also had prior access.