

Obesity in the Czech Republic: an international comparison using data from the SHARE project

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Summary

- The World Health Organization considers obesity to be one of the greatest challenges for public health in the 21st century. On the basis of data from SHARE, we show that Czechs aged 50-70 years have a high rate of obesity (BMI > 29,99) in comparison with other countries.
- In 2015 around 35 % of older men in the Czech Republic suffered from obesity; that is almost twice as high as the rate in Italy or Switzerland and more than 50 % higher than the rate in Western European countries (c. 23 %).
- The BMI of Czech women is similar to the rates in Estonia and Slovenia, but much higher than for example in Switzerland, Italy and Denmark. The rate of obesity among older women in the Czech Republic was similar in 2015 to that among older men, at around 35 %. This rate is similar to the rates observed in Eastern Europe (Estonia and Slovenia), but is twice as high as in Northern and Western Europe, where the rate of obesity among women is close to 20 %.
- The high incidence of obesity among older Czechs has resulted in a clear increase of BMI and obesity among both men and women.
- The increase in obesity is particularly noticeable among people with lower levels of education (primary and secondary education). For example, the rate of obesity among Czech women with primary education has increased over the past decade from 30 % to nearly 45 %. Meanwhile among Czech men and women with higher education we cannot detect any increase in the rate of obesity. Across the professions, the rate of obesity is rising in particular among older workers in manual professions and employees in the services sector.
- Changes in the structure of the older Czech population, as regards their education, employment, health, age and so on, fail to explain the growth in obesity in the Czech Republic.
- Similarly, changes in the structure of the older populations both in the Czech Republic and abroad cannot explain the high rate of obesity among older people in the Czech Republic in comparison to other European countries.