BBC

Obesity affects one in 10 adults around the world

One in 10 of the world's adults is obese, according to a joint UK-US study published in [**The Lancet**](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)62037-5/abstract%20%20%20%20)

Imperial College London and Harvard researchers studied body mass index (BMI), cholesterol and high blood pressure data from 1980 to 2008.

High blood pressure and cholesterol fell in many developed countries while obesity generally rose worldwide.

Men in the UK have the sixth highest BMI in Europe while UK women have the ninth highest BMI in Europe.

Obesity, cholesterol and high blood pressure are all risk factors for heart disease.

In 2008, 9.8% of men and 13.8% of women in the world were obese - they had a BMI above 30kg/m2.

This is compared with 4.8% for men and 7.9% for women in 1980.

**What is BMI - Body Mass Index?**

BMI is measured by taking a person's weight in kg and dividing by the square of their height in metres.

A BMI of 18.5 to 25 is considered healthy, over 25 is deemed overweight and greater than 30 is obese.

Pacific island nations had the highest average BMI in the world at 34-35kg/m2.

This was up to 70% higher than some countries in south-east Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

In common with the rest of the world, BMI rose among most high-income countries.

Among those countries, BMI rose the most in the USA between 1980 and 2008, followed by New Zealand and Australia for women and the UK and Australia for men.

**Western countries bucking the BMI trend**

Some countries in Western Europe succeeded in stabilising their BMI levels.

There was virtually no rise in women's BMI in Belgium, Finland, France, Italy and Switzerland.

Italy and Switzerland also saw the smallest increases in male BMI across the period.

However, while obesity rates in many countries across the world increased, many higher income countries succeeded in reducing both high blood pressure and cholesterol.

Large reductions in high blood pressure were seen, for example, in women in Australasia and men in North America.

Overall, the percentage of people in the world with high blood pressure fell slightly.

However, for UK adults, blood pressure fell by less that most other European high-income countries.

Blood pressure levels were highest in the Baltic and East and West African countries.

Systolic blood pressure levels reached 135 mmHg for women and 138 mmHg for men in those areas.

**UK BMI, Blood Pressure and Cholesterol Levels, 1980 - 2008**

* BMI LEVELS
* BMI levels for UK men were 24.7 in 1980, rising to 27.4 in 2008.
* BMI levels for women were 24.2 in 1980 and 26.9 in 2008.
* BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS
* Systolic Blood Pressure levels were measured - that's the pressure while the heart is pumping blood around. It is measured in millimetres of mercury.
* In 1980 men had blood pressure of 136.5 mmHg falling to 131.2 in 2008.
* In 1980 women had blood pressure levels of 131.0 falling to 124.1 in 2008.
* CHOLESTEROL LEVELS
* Cholesterol blood levels were measured in millimoles per litre (mmol/L).
* In 1980 men's cholesterol blood levels were 6.2mmol/L, falling to 5.4mmol/L in 2008.
* In 1980 women's cholesterol blood levels were 6.2mmol/L falling to 5.4mmol/L in 2008

Average levels of total blood cholesterol fell across many Western countries including North America, Australasia and Europe.

In the UK men and women both showed one of the largest drops in cholesterol in high income countries.

However the UK's cholesterol is still ninth highest in the world.

Conversely, blood cholesterol levels increased in the East, south-east Asia and the Pacific region.

Professor Majid Ezzati, a lead author of the study welcomed the improved results in high blood pressure and cholesterol in higher income countries, saying: "It's heartening that many countries have successfully reduced blood pressure and cholesterol despite rising BMI.

"Improved screening and treatment probably helped to lower these risk factors in high-income countries, as did using less salt and healthier, unsaturated fats."

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) said the increasing obesity rates were "striking."

However their associate medical director, Dr Mike Knapton welcomed the progress in high blood pressure and cholesterol saying; "It's not all bad news.

"We've seen marked progress in reducing blood pressure and cholesterol across the developed world, proving lifestyle and medical interventions can work."

**More on This Story**

**Related Stories**

* [**Obesity 'epidemic' turns global**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7057951.stm) 23 OCTOBER 2007, HEALTH

**Around the BBC**

* [**BBC - Health Cholesterol**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/physical_health/conditions/cholesterol1.shtml)

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**MAIL ONLINE**

**Women in Britain are the fattest in Western Europe... but still not as big as the Americans**

By [Jenny Hope](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=y&authornamef=Jenny+Hope)  
**UPDATED:** 20:38, 4 February 2011

British women are the most overweight in Western Europe, figures have revealed.

Despite the unwelcome honour, however, they are still not as big as their U.S. counterparts.

Meanwhile, men in the UK have the joint fourth highest fat levels, behind Ireland in top place, Spain and Andorra.

Latest data on global trends in obesity reveal that weight rose rapidly in Britain between 1980 and 2008.

Researchers compiled body mass index (BMI) scores – which relate weight to height – for high and low income nations worldwide.

Under World Health Organisation guidelines, a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered ‘healthy’, 25 to 29.9 is overweight and 30 or above is ­clinically obese.

In 2008, the average BMI of ­British women was 26.9, up from 24.2 in 1980.

The figure was the highest of 19 western European countries in the research.

Among the rest of the world, other high-scoring countries included Russia (27.2), Israel (27.3) and Malta (27).

For British men, the average BMI was 27.4, matched by Cyprus and Luxembourg in ­Western Europe.

This was up from 24.7 in 1980.

The U.S. had the highest BMI for men and women among high-income countries, with average scores of more than 28.

Altogether, findings from three global studies looking at BMI, cholesterol and blood pressure over the past 28 years were published in The Lancet medical journal.

The results showed that in 2008 more than one in ten of the world’s adult population – around half a billion – was obese, with women more likely to fall into the category than men.

The total is nearly double the level recorded in 1980.

A growing and ageing population also meant the number of people with uncontrolled high blood ­pressure rose from 600million in 1980 to nearly a billion in 2008.

Although average levels of blood cholesterol fell in Western countries, they increased in Asia and the Pacific region.

Professor Majid Ezzati, of Imperial College London, said blood pressure and cholesterol control in the UK were good.

‘But this is only managing the underlying problem, not providing solutions to the root cause, which is growing levels of obesity in the UK,’ he said.

‘There is also the rising incidence of diabetes to consider.’

Dr Mike Knapton, of the British Heart Foundation, said: ‘It’s an ugly, upward trend but it can be reversed with effective policies and sensible lifestyle changes, supported by important developments in medicines.’

Dr David Haslam, of the National Obesity Forum, warned that ­modern lifestyles were fuelling the problem.

‘We’re all living in ­environments that encourage weight gain, and blood pressure and cholesterol levels start to rise with even small amounts of weight increase,’ he said.

Read more: [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1353498/One-10-adults-obese-British-women-fattest-Western-Europe.html#ixzz25VUYtDD3](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1353498/One-10-adults-obese-British-women-fattest-Western-Europe.html" \l "ixzz25VUYtDD3)

**More...**

* [Young women are freezing their fat so they can use it to firm and boost their bodies 30 years later](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1353298/Liposuction-Women-freezing-body-fat-firm-boost-bodies-later-life.html)
* [Children with working mothers are six times more likely to be fat](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1353521/Children-working-mothers-times-likely-fat.html)

[Takeaways face £1,000 'fat tax' to help curb obesity](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1352743/Takeaways-face-1-000-fat-tax-help-curb-obesity.html)

**ECONOMIST**

**Global obesity**

**An expanding world**

Feb 7th 2011, 13:14 by The Economist online

**How mens' waistlines have grown since 1980**

RISING levels of obesity are bad news for people and health-care budgets, but they also correlate with good things such as rising economic wealth.

The three maps below, which are drawn from a new global study led by Professor Majid Ezzati of Imperial College, London, and published in the *Lancet*, show that, Polynesia aside, obesity was a rich-world phenomenon in 1980.

By 2008 the rich world had itself expanded, bringing obesity to groups within countries that were previously considered poor, such as Brazil and South Africa.

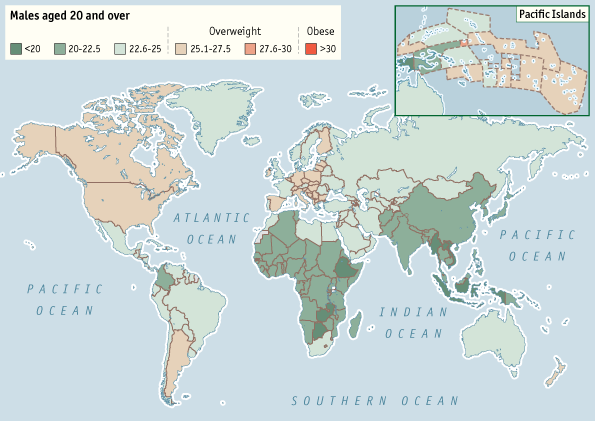
During that period, the prevalence rate of obesity among men doubled to nearly 10%.

One country has stubbornly resisted this trend.

For all its dynamism since India opened up its economy in 1990, its men have on average become even thinner.

The study suggests that Congo is the thinnest country in the world, and Nauru the fattest.

Imperial College's own map is [here](http://www5.imperial.ac.uk/medicine/metabolic_risks/bmi/" \t "_blank).



**EXPRESS**

**BRITISH WOMEN AMONG FATTEST IN WEST EUROPE**

Friday February 4,2011

**By Victoria Fletcher**

**BRITISH women are almost the fattest in western Europe.**

The average [woman](http://www.dailyexpress.co.uk/search/woman/) is now classed as overweight with a body mass index of 26.9.

Most of our svelte European counterparts stay within the normal range – the BMI of Swiss women is 24.1, French women’s is 24.8 and Greek women’s 24.9.

The only European women who are bigger than us, according to a study yesterday, are from Malta, with a BMI of 27.

All European women look sleeker than the average American woman, however.

They have an average BMI of 28.3.

In Russia, the figure is a chubby 27.2.

But the idyllic Pacific islands have the fattest women in the world.

In the Cook Islands, the average BMI of 33.9 is officially considered “obese”.

On the isle of Naura it is 35, borderline “morbidly obese”.

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Study leader Professor Majid Ezzati, of Imperial College London, said: “Doing less exercise and eating more is taking its toll.

The size of British people is increasing at a faster [rate](http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/227038/British-women-among-fattest-in-west-Europe) than most other countries.

“The only other western countries showing the same trend are Australia, New Zealand and, of course, the US.

“Food is more accessible than ever.

It is so easy to pop into a shop and buy a chocolate cookie.

Every other building seems to be a food outlet now.

Even the smallest things can make a difference, such as walking or cycling to work instead of getting the bus or train.”

The shock figures are unveiled in a study – the first of its kind – that has tracked obesity in every country in the world between 1980 and 2008.

**GUARDIAN**

**Study: Global obesity rates double since 1980**

* AP foreign, Wednesday February 9 2011

**MARIA CHENG**

AP Medical Writer= LONDON (AP) —

The world is becoming a heavier place, especially in the West.

Obesity rates worldwide have doubled in the last three decades even as blood pressure and cholesterol levels have dropped, according to three new studies.

People in Pacific Island nations like American Samoa are the heaviest, one of the studies shows.

Among developed countries, Americans are the fattest and the Japanese are the slimmest.

"Being obese is no longer just a Western problem," said Majid Ezzati, a professor of public health at Imperial College London, one of the study's authors.

In 1980, about 5 percent of men and 8 percent of women worldwide were obese.

By 2008, the rates were nearly 10 percent for men and 14 percent for women.

That means 205 million men and 297 million women weighed in as obese.

Another 1.5 billion adults were overweight, according to the obesity study.

Though richer countries did a better job of keeping blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control, researchers said people nearly everywhere are piling on the pounds, except in a few places including central Africa and South Asia.

The studies were published Friday in the medical journal, Lancet.

The research confirms earlier trends about mounting obesity and the three papers provide the most comprehensive, recent global look at body mass index, cholesterol and blood pressure.

Body mass index is a measurement based on weight and height.

Experts warned the increasing numbers of obese people could lead to a "global tsunami of cardiovascular disease."

Obesity is also linked to higher rates of cancer, diabetes and is estimated to cause about 3 million deaths worldwide every year.

In an accompanying commentary, Sonia Anand and Salim Yusuf of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, said the global forecast for heart disease was "dismal and comprises a population emergency that will cost tens of millions of preventable deaths" unless countries take quick action.

Even without the encroaching empire of Western fast food, Ezzati said waistlines are already expanding in parts of Latin America, the Middle East, and Western and Southern Africa.

Among rich countries, the U.S. had the highest average body mass Index, at 28.

Rates were the lowest in Japan, ranging between 22 for women and 24 for men.

Women in Belgium, France, Finland, Italy and Switzerland also stayed trim, with virtually no change in their BMI.

People with a BMI of 18-24 are considered to have a healthy weight.

Those with a BMI of 25 or above are overweight and people with a BMI of 30 or more are classified as obese.

Two other studies also published in the Lancet on Friday surveyed blood pressure rates and cholesterol levels.

Western countries including Canada, South Korea and the U.S. had some of the lowest blood pressure rates thanks to medication, while rates are highest in Portugal, Finland and Norway.

Cholesterol levels were highest in countries like Iceland and Germany and lowest in Africa.

Ezzati said national measures like reducing salt content in prepared foods or banning transfats could make a big dent in lowering blood pressure and cholesterol rates.

He added that it was uncertain if the world's obesity rates had peaked and predicted other health complications would soon follow.

"We don't know how much worse the obesity problem will get," he said.

"While we can manage blood pressure and cholesterol with medication, diabetes will be a lot harder."

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Online:

www.lancet.com

BMI calculator: http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/

**TELEGRAPH**

**Britain has fattest women in Western Europe**

By [Stephen Adams](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/stephen-adams/" \o "Stephen Adams), Medical Correspondent

7:30AM GMT 04 Feb 2011

**Britain now has the fattest women of any major Western European nation, a worldwide health study has found.**

Since 1980 the weight of the average British woman has increased by more than a stone (6.35kg) - leapfrogging countries including Spain, Italy, and Germany.

At the start of the Eighties the average 5ft 3in British woman weighed 10 stone (63.5kg), but by 2008 that had grown to 11st 2lb (70.6kg).

Only Malta and Israel - which was classified as Western Europe for the purposes of the report, [published today online in The Lancet](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)62037-5/abstract) - now have fatter women.

The global study compared the average body mass indices (BMIs) of men and women in 199 countries.

It found British women's BMI has increased from 24.2 to 26.9, up from 12th equal fattest out of 23 nations, to third place.

British men fared little better, with their BMI rising from 24.7 to 26.6, taking them from 17th to 5th place.

Of the major Western European nations, only Spanish men are fatter.

The weight of the average British 5ft 9in man has risen from 12 stone (76.1kg) to 12st 12lb (81.9kg).

Doctors prefer BMI because it takes into account a person's height.

It is calculated by dividing one's weight in kilograms by the square of one's height.

The 'average British couple', if they exist, are now officially too fat for their own good.

Under Department of Health guidelines, most adults should have a BMI of between 18.5 and 25.

A BMI of between 25 and 30 is classed as overweight, while over 30 is obese.

Numerous studies have found that people who are overweight or obese have a higher chance of developing heart disease and certain cancers.

Intriguingly, the study explodes the myth that Italian women are fat.

With a BMI of 24.8, they are the only group to have shed the pounds over the decades, and are now as svelte as their French cousins.

Only Swiss women are slimmer.

Tam Fry, of the National Obsity Forum, said successive governments since 1979 had undermined public health, by "feeding children junk food in school, selliing off playing fields, and failing to tackle the food industry".

A related report in *The Lancet* does provide some good news for Western nations.

While BMIs are rising, cholesterol and blood pressure are generally falling.

Professor Majid Ezzati, senior author of the joint study, from the School of Public Health at Imperial College London, described this trend as "heartening".

"Improved screening and treatment probably helped to lower these risk factors in high-income countries, as did using less salt and healthier, unsaturated fats," he said.

Globally, the picture is worrying.

Populations are rapidly getting fatter as prosperity brings more meat and products laden with fat and sugar to fridges and dining tables.

People in Latin America and the Middle East are fattening up fastest.

One adult in every 10 on the planet is now obese, or over half a billion people.

Doctors fear global epidemics of heart disease and cancer are now unstoppable.

**THE SUN**

**Why are British women so fat?**

By EMMA MORTON, Health and Science Editor

Published: 04th February 2011

**UK women are more likely than men to weigh over 30st, a study says.**

The shock statistic emerged as our women were revealed to be the fattest in any major nation across western Europe.

The average British female has ballooned since 1980. Experts have blamed ready meals, takeaways and driving instead of walking.

Average body mass index, a fat measurement based on height and weight, is 26.9.

This is classed as seriously overweight and well above women in Italy, France and Greece who have BMIs of around 24.

Only tiny Malta (27) has a higher level in western Europe — while Turkish women (28.2) are the fattest in the entire continent.

Thirty years ago, average Miss Britain had a BMI of 24.2.

The study found one in ten adults worldwide is obese, double the 1980 figure.

Britain’s fattest woman Sharon Mevsimler weighed 45st at her peak in Chelmsford, Essex.

She died aged 41 last year.

The world’s fattest man, Paul Mason, 51, of Ipswich, was almost 70st until a gastric bypass op. Study leader Prof Majid Ezzati, of London’s Imperial College, said: “Doing less exercise and eating more is taking its toll.”

US women top the western world’s chart with a 28.3 BMI. UK men have an average of 27.4 — ninth heaviest in Europe and up from 24.7 in 1980.

The pioneering study will be published in medical journal The Lancet.

Read more: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3389972/UK-women-are-more-likely-than-men-to-weigh-over-30st-a-study-says.html#ixzz25VVvgGCs>