

No. 33/2004
2 March 2004
Time of release: 11.00 hrs

WHAT WE CONSUME

SUMMARY

- Nearly two-thirds of Maltese residents aged 18 years and over are overweight or obese.
- Decrease in the amount of disposable income which Maltese spend on food, from 28 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2002.
- Decline in the amount spent by Maltese residents on food and beverages as a proportion of total expenditure, from 28 per cent in 1990 to 22 per cent in 2002.
- Increase in average expenditure (at 1995 prices) on bread and cereals, meat, oils and fats, fruit and vegetables, potatoes, manioc and other tubers, and other foods, preserves and confectionary.
- Decrease in average expenditure (at 1995 prices) on milk, cheese and eggs, sugar, beverages, and tobacco.
- One in every four of the adult population smokes cigarettes, with the proportion of male smokers decreasing by 6 per cent between 1995 and 2003, and the proportion of female smokers increasing by 6 per cent.

INTRODUCTION

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports that individuals who are either underweight or overweight share high levels of sickness and disability, shortened life spans and reduced productivity. Obesity increases the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, gall bladder disease and a number of cancers.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) carried out an analysis of food which is consumed by the Maltese population. The analysis is based on data for the period 1990 to 2002. For more information kindly contact the Research and Methodology Unit within the NSO.

COMMENTARY

Weight

During 2003 the NSO carried out a Lifestyle Survey which studied the way of living of the Maltese population. It was found that average weight of Maltese residents residing in private households aged 18 years and over stood at 72.0kg, whilst the average height stood at 164.8cm. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the population by the weight relative to the height (Body Mass Index).

National Statistics Office
Library & Information Unit
Lascaris, Valletta CMR 02, Malta
Tel: (+356) 21239225/25997219
Fax: (+356) 21249841
e-mail: nso@gov.mt
<http://www.nso.gov.mt>

Table 1. Distribution of persons by weight and sex

	Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Underweight	1,010	0.7	5,700	3.7	6,710	2.3
Normal	42,690	29.9	67,550	45.1	110,240	37.7
Overweight	66,430	46.5	51,400	34.3	117,830	40.3
Obese	32,680	22.9	25,260	16.9	57,940	19.8
Total	142,810	100.0	149,900	100.0	292,710	100.0

It was found that 60.1 per cent of the population aged 18 years and over is overweight or obese. On a gender level, 69.4 per cent of males and 51.2 per cent of females are overweight or obese.

The following table compares the proportion of males and females who are overweight or obese across different countries

Table 2. Proportion of population which is overweight or obese

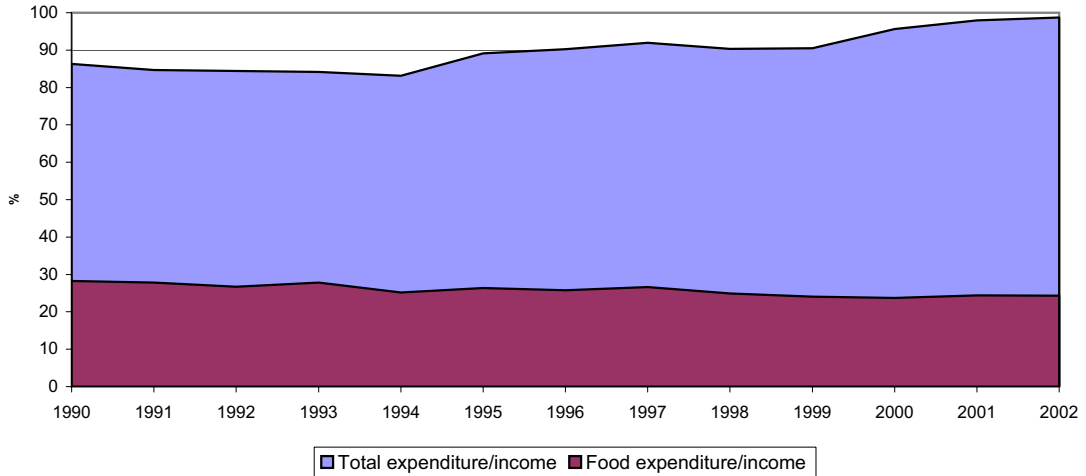
	Males		Females	
	Overweight (%)	Obese (%)	Overweight (%)	Obese (%)
Australia	45.2	18.5	28.8	18.2
England	46.6	21.0	32.9	23.5
France	49.0	12.0	30.0	17.0
Italy	41.0	9.5	26.0	9.9
Japan	24.3	1.9	20.2	2.9
Malta	46.5	22.9	34.3	16.9
Portugal	45.0	14.0	39.0	21.0
Russia	35.0	10.0	31.0	25.0
Spain	56.0	10.0	43.0	14.0
United States	39.3	27.7	28.0	34.0

Note: Table was collated by the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) from published sources. Data are provided as examples but are not necessarily comparable due to different years of survey and varying age ranges

Expenditure and income

Between 1990 and 2002 it was found that private households increased the proportion they spent of their disposable income.

Chart 1 - Expenditure at current prices as a percentage of income



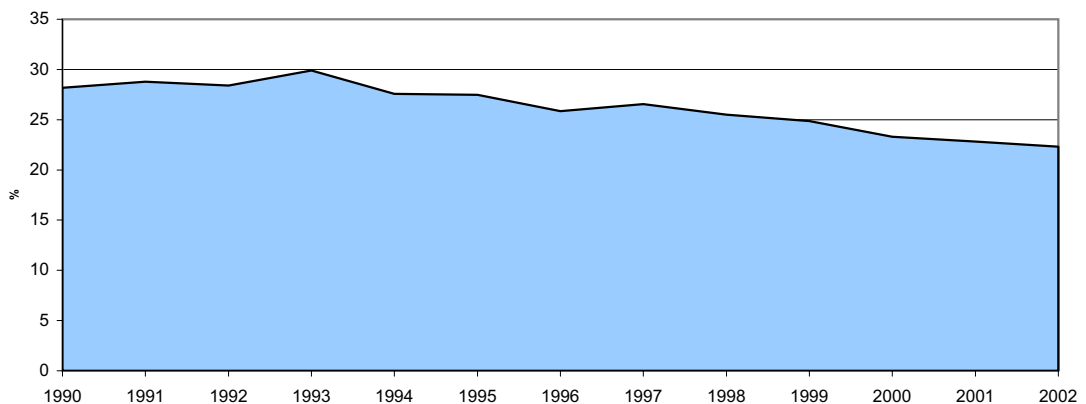
It was shown that whilst, on average, private households spent Lm0.86 of every Lm1 they earned in the form of disposable income in 1990, this amount had increased to Lm0.99 by 2002.

In the meantime private households spent a lower proportion of their income on food. In fact, whilst in 1990 private households spent an average of Lm0.28 on food out of every Lm1 they earned in the form of disposable income, by 2002 this had gone down to Lm0.24.

Food and beverages

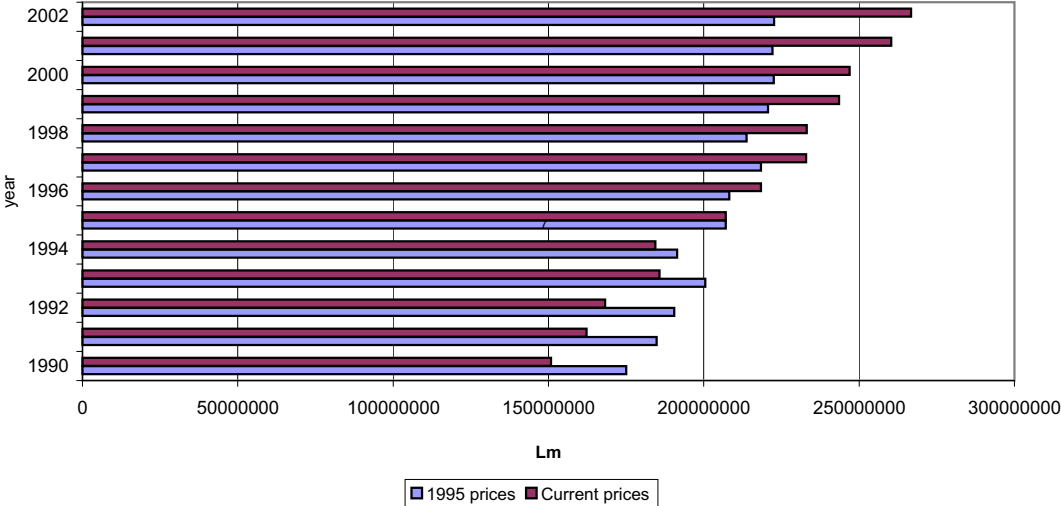
The amount which was spent on food and beverages as a percentage of the total expenditure declined steadily, going down from 28.2 per cent in 1990 to 24.3 per cent in 2002 (at 1995 prices).

Chart 2 - Expenditure on food and beverages as a percentage of total expenditure at 1995 prices



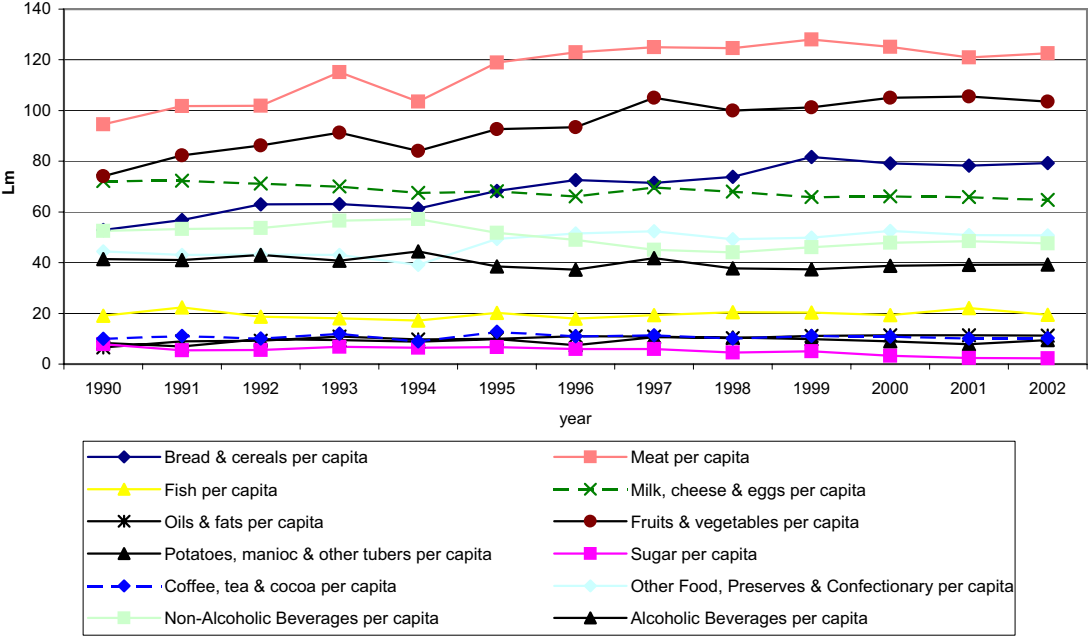
In relative terms the total amount Maltese residents spent on food and beverages increased by Lm48 million, from Lm175 million, or Lm484 per capita, in 1990 to Lm223 million, or Lm560 per capita, in 2002. All figures are at 1995 prices.

Chart 3 - Expenditure on food and beverages



It was found that the average amount of money which Maltese residents spent on certain types of foods remained the same, whilst the expenditure on other kinds of food increased (at 1995 prices).

Chart 4 - Expenditure per capita at 1995 prices



It is important to highlight that change could be due to a number of factors including an increased consumption of these foods, or switching to higher premium brands.

Table 3. Average expenditure at 1995 prices

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
	Lm												
Bread & cereals	52.8	56.9	63.0	63.1	61.3	68.4	72.6	71.4	73.9	81.7	79.2	78.3	79.2
Meat	94.5	101.8	101.9	115.1	103.5	118.9	123.0	125.0	124.6	128.0	125.1	121.0	122.6
Fish	19.0	22.4	18.7	18.1	17.2	20.2	18.0	19.3	20.5	20.3	19.4	22.1	19.5
Milk, cheese & eggs	72.1	72.3	71.2	70.1	67.5	68.1	66.1	69.7	68.0	65.9	66.1	65.9	64.8
Oils & fats	6.6	9.0	9.3	10.9	9.8	10.0	11.0	10.9	10.2	11.1	11.4	11.3	11.2
Fruits & vegetables	74.2	82.3	86.2	91.3	84.0	92.7	93.4	105.0	99.9	101.2	105.0	105.6	103.5
Potatoes, manioc & other tubers	8.4	6.9	9.8	9.5	8.9	9.8	7.5	10.6	10.5	9.8	9.0	7.9	9.5
Sugar	7.8	5.4	5.5	6.9	6.5	6.7	5.9	5.9	4.6	5.1	3.3	2.4	2.3
Coffee, tea & cocoa	10.0	11.1	10.2	12.0	9.0	12.8	10.9	11.4	10.1	11.1	10.8	10.0	10.3
Other food, preserves & confectionary	44.4	43.0	43.1	43.0	39.2	49.4	51.5	52.4	49.2	49.9	52.5	50.9	50.7
Non-alcoholic beverages	52.5	53.2	53.6	56.5	57.2	51.8	49.0	45.1	44.0	46.0	47.8	48.5	47.6
Alcoholic beverages	41.4	41.0	43.0	40.8	44.4	38.5	37.2	41.8	37.8	37.4	38.7	39.1	39.2
Food & beverages	483.7	505.2	515.5	537.2	508.5	547.2	546.0	568.6	553.3	567.6	568.4	562.9	560.3
Total expenditure per capita	1568.8	1612.1	1664.1	1659.8	1683.1	1851.0	1967.1	1983.8	2022.4	2132.5	2274.1	2293.4	2336.1

It emerged that the expenditure per capita on all items increased by Lm767.3, or 48.9 per cent, from Lm1,568.8 in 1990 to Lm2,336.1 in 2002. Maltese residents on average spent Lm483.7 on food and beverages in 1990, this increasing by Lm76.6, or 15.8 per cent, within a period of 12 years and going up to Lm560.3 in 2002.

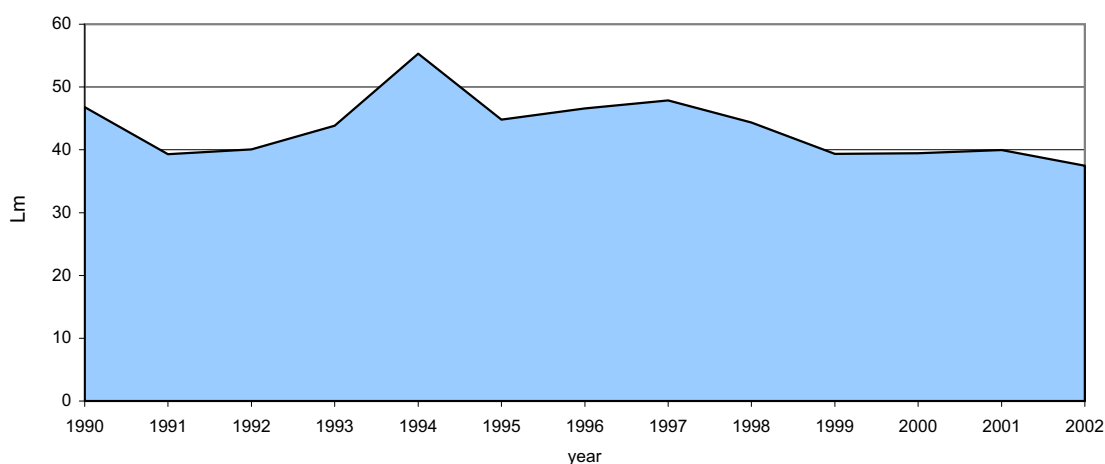
The analysis showed that Maltese residents on average increased their expenditure on bread and cereals, meat, oils and fats, fruit and vegetables, potatoes, manioc and other tubers, and other food, preserves and confectionary.

On the other hand the average expenditure on coffee, tea and cocoa, and fish has remained stable. During the same period Maltese residents spent less on milk, cheese and eggs, sugar, and beverages. All figures are at 1995 prices.

Tobacco

It resulted that at market prices Maltese residents increased their expenditure on tobacco by some Lm17 million, or 146.9 per cent, from Lm12 million in 1990 to Lm29 million in 2002. However once the impact of the increase of prices was accounted for and all prices were converted to 1995 prices it was found that, on average, Maltese residents spent Lm9.3 less, or 19.9 per cent, on tobacco in 2002 then they did in 1990. In fact Maltese residents spent an average of Lm46.8 on tobacco in 1990, this going down to Lm37.5 in 2002.

Chart 5 - Expenditure on tobacco per capita at 1995 prices



To corroborate these findings a comparison between Census 1995 and Lifestyle Survey 2003 results on smoking was carried out. The following table represents the findings.

Table 4. Cigarette smoking by sex

	Males		Females		Total	
	Census 1995 (%)	Lifestyle 2003 (%)	Census 1995 (%)	Lifestyle 2003 (%)	Census 1995 (%)	Lifestyle 2003 (%)
None	65.4	71.6	85.0	78.7	75.5	75.2
1 to 10 a day	8.1	6.9	7.2	12.1	7.6	9.6
11 to 20 a day	15.2	12.0	5.9	6.8	10.4	9.4
21 to 30 a day	4.1	7.7	0.8	1.4	2.4	4.5
31 or more a day	7.3	1.5	1.1	0.5	4.1	1.0
Do not know	-	0.3	-	0.5	-	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

It was found that the proportion of Maltese residents aged 18 years and over who smoke remained stable between 1995 and 2003. However there was a decrease of 6.2 per cent in the proportion of males who smoked, whilst the proportion of female smokers increased by 6.3 per cent.

The fact that female smokers, on average, smoke less than male smokers resulted in less cigarettes being smoked. In fact, 9.6 per cent of the adult population smoked between 1 and 10 cigarettes per day in 2003, compared with 7.6 per cent in 1995. At the same time the proportion of the population which smokes over 30 cigarettes daily decreased from 4.1 per cent in 1995 to 1.0 per cent in 2003.

DEFINITIONS

Household disposable income: This is computed by deducting taxation, including social security contributions, from wages and salaries and other forms of household income.

1995 prices: This is computed by converting prices to their equivalent in 1995 (base year).

Body Mass Index (BMI): This is an objective scientific measure of body fat expressed on height and weight. The BMI is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square of his/her height in metres.

The classification of underweight, normal weight, overweight and obesity by BMI are as follows:

- less than 18.5 - **Underweight**
- between 18.5 and less than 24.9 - **Normal**
- between 24.9 and less than 29.9 - **Overweight**
- equal or greater than 30.0 - **Obese**