From Processed to Fresh: Ireland's Food Habits Evolve

By Sakshi Murarka

- **Fresh is in:** Nearly 1 in 3 Irish adults have upped their fruit and veg intake—marking a nationwide shift toward cleaner, greener plates.
- **Less junk, more balance:** Consumption of fast food, sweets, packaged snacks, and salt is declining, as Irish consumers increasingly move away from less healthy eating habits.
- **Supplements soar**: With half of adults regularly taking vitamins, Ireland now ranks 4th globally—just behind the USA and Finland.

The **Worldwide Independent Network of MR (WIN),** the leading global association of independent market research and polling firms, has released new findings from its Worldviews Survey. This year's survey captures the perspective and beliefs of 35,515 individuals across 40 countries. As we mark the World Nutrition Day, the latest findings shed light on **global shifts in eating habits, partially driven by economic pressure**. Tracking trends over six years, WIN has assessed and provided valuable insights into global progress.

HEADLINES – IRELAND

A healthy shift is underway in Ireland, as people eat more fruits and vegetables while cutting back on sweets, processed foods, salt, and fast food — a clear sign of more mindful eating.

Ireland's Diet Gets a Health Check: Signs of Conscious Change Emerge

Self-reported good health in Ireland has stabilised at 68% this year, following a dip during and after the Covid years. Encouragingly, Irish consumers are taking action. Nearly 1 in 3 adults have increased their fruit and vegetable intake over the past year, while many are cutting back on health-harming foods such as fast food, packaged snacks, sweets, and salt. Although newer health alternatives—like low sugar/fat products and organic options—are seeing slower adoption, most are maintaining stable consumption levels. Meat and dairy habits remain largely unchanged. Younger adults are the most proactive in making conscious healthy choices but also lead in increasing overall food intake, while older adults are showing a steady shift toward better habits with age. Vitamin supplement use is widespread, with 4 in 5 Irish adults having ever taken them, and nearly half consuming them regularly—ranking Ireland 4th globally for supplement intake.

Sakshi Murarka, Research Project Manager at RED C Research, said:

"The data shows Ireland is not just talking about healthy change—it's making it. Consumers are more mindful of what they eat, consciously cutting back on junk food and turning toward fresher, healthier options. While newer alternatives like organic and low-sugar products are adopted more cautiously, the overall trend points to a nation actively reshaping its diet for the better."

HEADLINES WORLD

Global vitamin use is rising, but regional gaps remain wide

Since 2018, there has been a notable global increase in the number of people who report taking vitamins regularly — rising from 25% to 34%. This behaviour is more common among women (38%), older adults (only 27% of 18–24-year-olds vs. 39% of those over 65), and individuals with higher education levels (46% of master’s or PhD graduates compared to just 27% of those with no formal education).

However, this positive global trend masks strong regional and national differences. The U.S. tops the list, with 57% of respondents reporting regular vitamin use, followed closely by Finland (56%) and Canada (52%). At the opposite end, Côte d'Ivoire has the lowest percentage, with just 11% regularly taking vitamins, followed by Argentina (16%), Peru and Chile (both 17%) and Thailand (19%). These significant variations underscore how strongly health behaviours are shaped by regional and cultural contexts.

Global food habits shift, but trends vary significantly by country

Over the past year, significant portions of the global population have actively made changes to their eating habits. Nearly half (45%) report cutting back on fast food, 40% have reduced their intake of sweets, and 37% have decreased consumption of packaged foods. At the same time, four in ten people say they have increased their fruit and vegetable intake, while 29% have reduced their salt consumption globally.

However, when it comes to other food categories – such as dairy, meat, and low-sugar or low-fat products – six in ten people report no changes in consumption. Only around 17–22% of respondents indicated either an increase or decrease in these areas, suggesting more stable habits for these food types.

Despite an optimistic global trend, changes in diet varies significantly by region. For example, Europe shows a clear downward trend for meat consumption, with 23% decrease in consumption, while the Africa region reported 28% increase. Meanwhile, around 40% of respondents in Pakistan (41%) and Peru (38%) report decreasing their consumption of low-fat/low-sugar products – while a similar proportion in China (38%) and Hong Kong (36%) report increasing theirs. These contrasting findings highlight how dietary trends can move in opposite directions, even at similar magnitudes, depending on the region.

Japan: A case of culture, trust, and satisfaction in a world of changed dietary habits

Amongst all countries surveyed, Japan stands out for its remarkable dietary stability, with the majority of respondents reporting no significant changes in their eating habits over the past year. This consistency can be attributed to Japan’s food culture, which has long embraced balanced, nutritious meals – reducing the need for trend-driven corrective changes. Additionally, packaged and ready-to-eat foods in Japan are associated with high standards of freshness, quality, and visual appeal, unlike in many other countries where such products are often viewed as unhealthy. Only 10% of Japanese respondents reported cutting back on packaged food, as opposed to Peru, Turkey, and Morocco who report over 50% decrease (56%, 55%, 54%).

Cultural preferences for routine, strong trust in food safety regulations, and an aging population that tends to maintain established habits all contribute to Japan’s dietary consistency. The country reports the lowest rate of dietary changes in nearly every category surveyed, including sweets, fast food, organic, and packaged foods.

WIN finds economic pressures shape eating habits

A clear trend has emerged from the global Worldviews Survey: financial constraints are closely linked to changes in food consumption. Respondents who reported reducing their expenses in recent months consistently show higher rates of decreased consumption across nearly all food categories. For instance, 51% of those cutting back financially also report reducing their fast-food intake, compared to just 39% among those who have no plans to change their spending. Similarly, 44% of this group reduced their consumption of sweets, and 42% cut back on packaged foods.
In contrast, essential food categories like fruit and vegetables remain largely protected – only 9% of those reducing expenses say they've decreased their intake of these staples. However, 26% of the same group report eating less meat, suggesting even some core protein sources are affected.
These findings highlight how rising costs of living are pushing consumers to reevaluate their eating habits, prompting people to scale back on non-essential items like fast food and processed snacks while striving to preserve basic nutrition. As inflation and economic uncertainty continue to affect many regions, this shift points to more mindful and cost-conscious consumption patterns taking hold worldwide.

Richard Colwell, President of WIN International Association, said:

"This year's findings paint a clear picture: people globally are reshaping the way they eat. As we mark World Nutrition Day, WIN's research underscores how cultural values, trust in systems, and financial realities combine to influence our most basic daily choices with individuals and families striving to stay nourished while navigating uncertainty. We hope these insights support more thoughtful, inclusive responses to global health and nutrition challenges."

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Methodology:

The survey was conducted in 39 countries using CAWI / CATI / F2F/ TAPI /online survey methods.

Sample Size and Mode of Field Work:

A total of 34,946 people were interviewed. See below for sample details. The fieldwork was conducted in December 2024, January 2025 and February 2025. The margin of error for the survey is between 4.4 and 2.5 at 95% confidence level.

The global average has been computed according to the covered adult population of the surveyed countries.

About WIN:

The Worldwide Independent Network of Market Research (WIN) is a global network conducting market research and opinion polls in every continent.

Our assets

- Thought leadership: access to a group of the most prominent experts and business entrepreneurs in Market Research, Polling and Consultancy
- Flexibility: tailor-made global and local solutions to meet clients' needs
- Innovation: access to the latest strategic consultancy, tool development and branded solutions
- Local experts: access to a network of experts that truly understand the local culture, market and business needs.
- Trust: highest quality of talented members in all countries covered

In the years, WIN has demonstrated wide competences and ability to conduct multi-country surveys following the highest standards requested by the market. The accumulated expertise of the Association is formidable: among others, researched themes are gender equality and young people, communication and media research, and brand studies.

Methodology Sheet

	Country	Company Name	Methodology	Sample	Coverage	2023-2024 Fieldwork Dates
1	Argentina	Voices Research & Consultancy	CAWI	1027	NATIONAL	30 Dec 24 – 9 Jan 25
2	Australia	Luma Research	Online Panel	500	NATIONAL	20-24 January 2025
3	Brazil	Market Analysis Brazil	CAWI	1032	NATIONAL	16-23 January 2025
4	Canada	LEGER	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	9-19 January 2025
5	Chile	Activa Research	CAWI	1095	NATIONAL	10-27 January 2025
6	China	WisdomAsia	CAWI	1000	URBAN	WC 1-2 January 2025
7	Croatia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana Fides	CAWI	531	NATIONAL	17-23 January 2025
8	Ecuador	Centro de Estudios Y Datos - CEDATOS	CAPI	708	NATIONAL	1-3 February 2025
9	Finland	Taloustutkimus Oy	Online Panel	1112	NATIONAL	16-24 January 2023
10	France	BVA Xsight	CAWI / Online Panel	1001	NATIONAL	6-7 February 2025
11	Germany	Produkt+Markt	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	20 Dec 2024 – 6 Jan 2025
12	Greece	Alternative Research Solutions	CAWI	500	NATIONAL	5-20 December 2024
13	Hong Kong	Consumer Search Group (CSG)	Online Panel	516	TERRITORY WIDE	31 Dec 2024 -10 Jan 2025
14	India	DataPrompt International Pvt. Ltd.	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	19 Dec 2024 - 20 Jan 2025
15	Indonesia	DEKA	Face to Face	1000	NATIONAL	12-25 December 2024
16	Republic of Ireland	RED C Research & Marketing Ltd	CAWI	1013	NATIONAL	9-15 January 2025
17	Italy	BVA Doxa	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	13-16 December 2024
18	Japan	Nippon Research Center, LTD.	CAWI	1131	NATIONAL	22-27 January 2025
19	Malaysia	Central Force International	Online Panel	1008	NATIONAL	2-9 December 2024
20	Mexico	Brand Investigation S.A.de C.V	Online	800	NATIONAL	9-18 January 2025
21	Morocco	Integrate Consulting SARL	Online	509	NATIONAL	21-24 January 2025
22	Norway	Opinion AS	CAWI	1031	NATIONAL	13-21 January 2025
23	Pakistan	Gallup Pakistan	CATI	1000	NATIONAL	3 Dec 2024 -2 Jan 2025
24	Paraguay	ICA Consultoría Estratégica	CATI	500	NATIONAL	8-31 January 2025
25	Peru	Datum Internacional	F2F	1204	NATIONAL	31 Jan – 7 Feb 2025
26	Philippines	Philippine Survey and Research Center, Inc. (PSRC)	CAPI	1000	NATIONAL	14-31 January 2025
27	Poland	Mareco Polska	CAWI	1080	NATIONAL	18-22 December 2024
28	Serbia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana Adria	CAWI	536	NATIONAL	17-23 January 2025
29	Slovakia	Go4insight	CAWI	500	NATIONAL	17-22 January 2025

30	Slovenia	Institute for market and media research, Mediana	CAWI	700	NATIONAL	17-21 January 2025
31	South Korea	Gallup Korea	CAWI	1085	NATIONAL	16-24 January 2025
32	Spain	Instituto DYM	CAWI	1014	NATIONAL	16-20 January 2025
33	Sweden	DEMOSKOP AB	CAWI	1004	NATIONAL	21 Dec 2024 – 23 Jan 2025
34	Thailand	INFOSEARCH LIMITED	F2F	500	NATIONAL	22 Dec 2024 – 18 Jan 2025
35	The Netherlands	Motivaction International B.V.	CAWI	1023	NATIONAL	6-18 December 2024
36	Turkey	Barem	CATI	775	NATIONAL	24-28 January 2025
37	United Kingdom	ORB International	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	19-23 Dec 2024
38	USA	LEGER	CAWI	1000	NATIONAL	9-19 January 2025
39	Vietnam	Indochina Research (Vietnam) Ltd	CAPI	900	Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city, Da Nang, Can Tho - Urban population	18 Dec 2024 – 10 Jan 2025