

Study: Diet and physical activity of dropouts not optimal

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The diet and physical activity habits of early school leavers are not optimal for health, according to a new study conducted by The Children's Research Centre at Trinity College Dublin.

The new study, "Early School Leavers and Nutrition – A needs assessment from a [nutrition](#) perspective," offers a comprehensive examination of food and [physical activity](#) related [health](#) issues for [young people](#) and service providers in alternative education and training settings on the island of Ireland.

The research, commissioned by Safefood, was led by Dr Michelle Share, Senior Research Fellow and Acting Director of the Children's Research Centre, in collaboration with Dr Barbara Stewart-Knox at University of Ulster, Coleraine.

Young people who leave school early represent a population group at risk of poor health outcomes. Research into the nutrition and physical activity habits of these young people is limited. This survey of young people revealed that their diets and physical activity patterns are a concern and similar to other socio-economically marginalised groups. They are at risk of poor health outcomes in terms of the major non-communicable chronic diseases because of poor nutrition, overweight and obesity.

Key Gaps Identified by the Survey:

- The survey of young people revealed that their diets and physical activity patterns are not optimal for health.
- Programmes related to the promotion of nutrition and physical activity tended not to be aligned with other relevant curricula and overall programmes in ESL settings.
- Young people lacked a critical awareness about diet and physical activity in general.
- Young people have some confusion about food, eating, weight and health. They preferred foods that were convenient and high in fat and sugar.
- Among both young men and women there was some confusion about nutrition and bodysize. For some young men there was a desire to increase weight while this was the opposite for young women.
- Challenges for [service providers](#) included: resources for food provision; appropriateness of programmes and curricula; and expertise to address the complexity of food issues in alternative education and training settings.

The project results will inform Safefood's and other agencies' future [food](#) and nutrition work in this area.

More information: The research and workshop reports are available online: www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-and-Workshop-Reports/Nutrition-A-needs-assessment

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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