



Exploring the Barriers and Facilitators to Healthy Eating and Identifying Leverage Points to Minimise Food-Related Inequalities in Cork City, Ireland

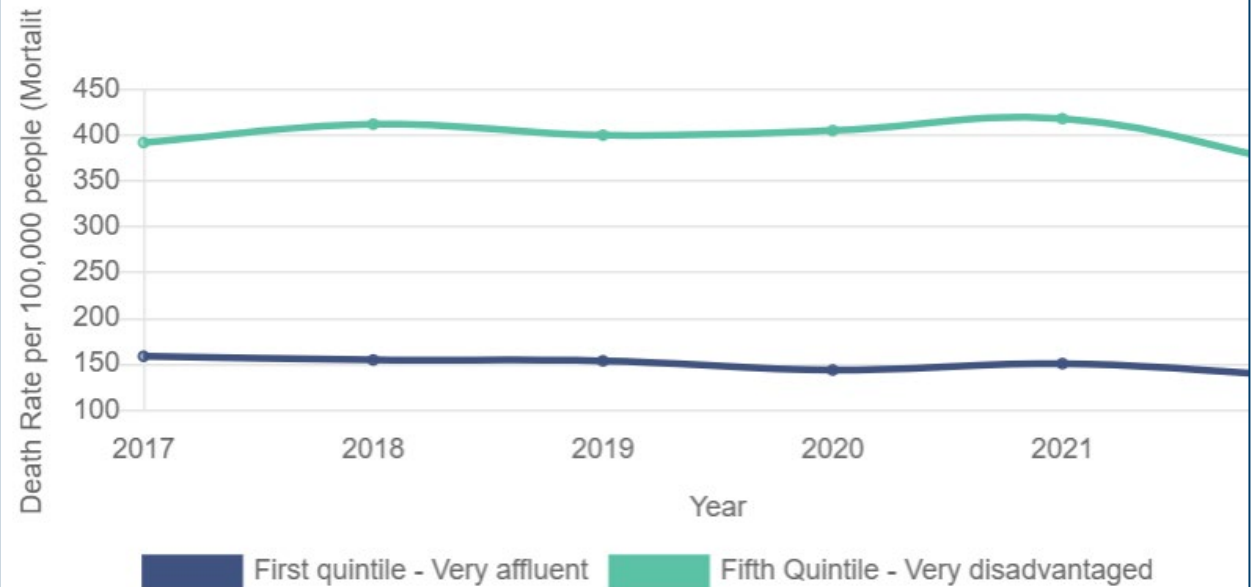
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Mortality rates in disadvantaged communities

- Individuals living in disadvantaged areas in Ireland have a higher mortality rate than those living in more affluent areas (1).
- There is a large gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas:
 - 5 years for men (2)
 - 4.5 years for women (2)

Figure 1 Comparison of Death Rates per 100,000 People (Mortality) for the 40 - 64 Age Cohort for selected Deprivation Levels, 2017 - 2022



Food-related inequalities

- Those living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas are at a greater risk of exposure to unhealthy food environments (3,4).
- Unhealthy food environments are characterised by:
 - The limited access, availability, and affordability of healthy food
 - Increased competition from nutritionally poor, energy-dense ultra-processed foods (5)

Unhealthy food environments

- Unhealthy food environments are linked to (4,5,6):
 - Food insecurity
 - An increased risk of malnutrition
 - An increased risk of diet-related diseases, including:
 - Cancer
 - Diabetes
 - Cardiovascular diseases

People today do not have less willpower, bigger appetites, or different biology. What has changed is our food environment (7)

Aims of the Study

1. To identify the systemic barriers and facilitators of healthy dietary behaviours amongst those living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas in the Southside of Cork City from the perspective of community members and community workers.
2. To determine the systemic leverage points for change and policy actions that can facilitate healthier dietary behaviours in disadvantaged communities.

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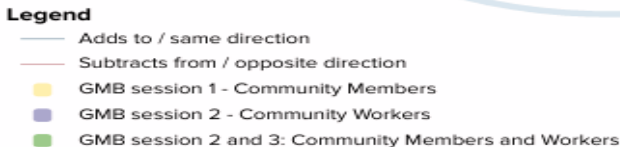
- GMB 1: Community members (n=13)
- GMB 2: Community workers (n=10)
- GMB 3: Combination (n=16)

“What factors influence food choices for individuals on a limited budget”



Diagram from GMB1, including the barriers, facilitators and loops

Citizens and Professionals



Results: Barriers to healthy eating

Theme 1: Availability of unhealthy foods

- Wide availability of ultra-processed, HFSS foods
- Nearby takeaways and convenience stores
- Advertising and promotional offers

Theme 2: Access to healthy foods

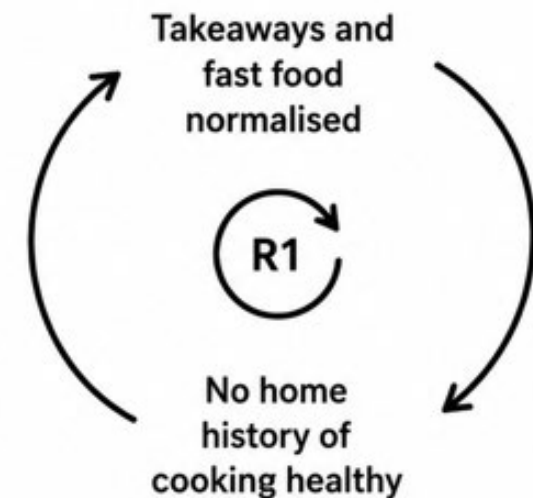
- Low car ownership and cost of public transport
- Cost of healthy food and lack of availability

Theme 3: Lack of time and support

- Cost of living crisis and competing priorities
- Mental health and fatalistic perceptions

Theme 4: Lack of food literacy

- Lack of (food) education
- Limited cooking or budgeting skills



Results: Facilitators to healthy eating

- Community gardens
- Increased health consciousness and gym culture among youth and adolescents
- Avoidance of chemicals in foods
- School meals



Togher Community Garden

Results: Leverage points and policy actions

Leverage Point 1: Advertising and retail environment

- Zoning restrictions to ban unhealthy retail outlets around schools.
- Banning the giveaway of unhealthy food items for free.
- Banning advertising of HFSS foods on public transport, near parks and on billboards.
- Restricting promotion of unhealthy foods in weekly supermarket brochures and decreasing promotional offers on unhealthy foods.
- Introducing calorie labelling for takeaway and fast-food outlets.
- Increasing farmers' markets in low-income areas.

Leverage Point 2: Access to cooking facilities

- Implementing community cooking facilities, using home economics rooms or canteen kitchens, out of school hours.

Results: Leverage points and policy actions

Leverage Point 3: Medical and government interventions

- Implementing nutrition assistance programmes or supermarket vouchers.
- Increasing health services in low-income areas, including increased breastfeeding support.
- Improving built environments through increased amenities such as parks and playgrounds, and spaces where community members can share meals.

Leverage Point 4: Education

- Increasing food/nutrition education in the school curriculum and integrating it into sports and hobbies.
- Community cooking classes that include deciphering misleading nutrition claims, reading food labels, shopping for inexpensive foods and budgeting.
- Increasing education around deciphering misinformation.

Results: Leverage points and policy actions

Leverage Point 5: School Meals

- Raising the standards for school meals.
- Increasing school meals to include breakfast for low-income families.
- Having the nutritional information of school meals readily available for parents.
- Incorporating a wider range of local and seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables.

Future directions

This research will feed into the upcoming Cork Sustainable and Healthy Food Strategy, currently being developed by the Cork Food Policy Council.

5 Goals:



Thank you!

Any questions?



FOOD Systems & Policy PATHways for
Equal Population Nutrition in Europe

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