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## **Chile: When overweight prevalence decreases, so will NCD deaths**



**In Chile, it is projected that there will be 117,000 deaths from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and chronic kidney disease between 2020 and 2030. But a new study demonstrates this doesn't need to be the case.**

It is known that [80% of premature deaths](#) [1] (before the age of 70) from heart disease, stroke and diabetes globally can be prevented or delayed into old age. Other NCDs like chronic kidney disease and some cancers reflect similar numbers. In Chile, one of many countries in the world where overweight and obesity are on the rise, [a study has confirmed](#) [2] that maintaining a healthy weight is a key factor in NCD prevention.

The modelling study shows that if the current rate of increasing overweight continues in Chile, approximately, 669,000 cases and 117,000 deaths from NCDs will occur from 2020 to 2030. But if the prevalence of overweight decreases by 6.7% during this time period, approximately 25,000 NCD cases and 5,000 deaths from NCDs would be prevented.

These findings support the government's decision to implement a set of strategies and public policies to stop rising rates of overweight by reducing obesogenic environments, and increasing health and nutrition. In 2016, [Chile led the way for food policy](#) [3] in the region with a mandatory, front-of-package nutritional labelling system. It required unhealthy food product to bear warning stamps - black stop signs that clearly state the product is high in sugar, fat or sodium. There was a 26.7% decrease in high-sugar purchases, 36.7% in high-sodium purchases, and 23.8% in high-fat purchases in Chile two years after the labels were implemented. In fact, this label has been so effective it's been replicated by other countries including Mexico, Peru and Uruguay.

But Chile has been working to create healthy environments since long before. In 2004 the "Healthy life" program (*Vida sana*) was launched, now known as "Choose healthy life" ([Elige Vida sana](#) [4]). It aims to control risk factors leading to NCDs like hypertension and type 2 diabetes by working with children, adolescents and adults to improve dietary habits and follow a regimen of physical activity. Another initiative, "Choose to live healthy" ([Elige vivir sano](#) [5]) takes an all-of-society approach to building communities that facilitate healthy choices.

Despite these efforts by the Chilean government, overweight and obesity continue to be a problem in Chile and there is still much work to be done. A person's ability to maintain a [healthy diet](#) [6] is often not within their control – vulnerable populations and poorer people in all parts of the world struggle to access and maintain a healthy diet. It is in these settings where ultra-processed food and beverage products are most prevalent. An estimated three billion people cannot afford healthier food choices with poverty negatively impacting the nutritional quality of food.

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Governments play a crucial role in protecting the health of their populations by creating health-promoting communities and implementing strong public health policies for NCD prevention, like Chile's mandatory front-of-package warning labels on unhealthy foods and the [WHO best buys](#) [7].

NCD prevention should be at the core of the global shift towards achieving universal health coverage and stronger health systems. Ensuring access to healthy food systems is one way to protect the health of everyone, everywhere.

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[1] <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/noncommunicable-diseases>

[2] <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-16255-w>

[3] [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00172-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00172-8/fulltext)

[4] <https://www.saludarica.cl/programas-de-salud/programa-elige-vida-sana/>

[5] [https://www.minsal.cl/promocion\\_participacion\\_evs/](https://www.minsal.cl/promocion_participacion_evs/)

[6] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/risk-factors-prevention/unhealthy-diets-and-malnutrition>

[7] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/new-guide-supports-civil-society-in-advocating-for-who-best-buys-for-ncd-prevention>

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