

# Spain: Obesity Health System



## Economic classification



High Income<sup>1</sup>

## Health system summary

Spain has a universal healthcare system that is consistently ranked among the best in the world. The national system (*Sistema Nacional de Salud*) is primarily funded by taxation and is mostly free at point of service. In addition to the national health service, there are other statutory provisions for civil servants, the armed forces and the judiciary. Public sector workers, for example, are eligible to opt out of the public system if they sign up to the government-subsidised health insurance called MUFACE. Despite the comprehensive health coverage in Spain, out of pocket (OOP) payments make up 23.9% of total health expenditure (greater than the European Union average).<sup>2</sup> Most OOP payments are for pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

Spain has the highest life expectancy in the European Union and has relatively low mortality rates from preventable and treatable causes.<sup>3</sup> Obesity, however, has been increasing in recent years.

Does Spain's government define 'Obesity as a disease'?



Does Spain's healthcare provider(s) define 'Obesity as a disease'?



In practice, how is obesity treatment largely funded?



Is there specialist training available dedicated to the training of health professionals to prevent, diagnose, treat and manage obesity?



(●: Government, ●: Insurance, ●: Out of pocket expense, ●: Unknown)

Have any taxes or subsidies been put in place to protect/assist/inform the population around obesity?



Are there adequate numbers of trained health professionals in specialties relevant to obesity in urban areas?



Are there any obesity-specific treatment recommendations or guidelines published for adults?



Are there adequate numbers of trained health professionals in specialties relevant to obesity in rural areas?



Are there any obesity-specific treatment recommendations or guidelines published for children?



Catalonia

# Spain: Obesity Health System



## Obesity prevalence

20.5%	22.8%
Women	Men
11.8%	10.6%
Girls	Boys

## Overweight prevalence

32.1%	46.5%
Women	Men
22.2%	21.5%
Girls	Boys

## Key prevention policies

- ⇒ NutriScore front of package labelling
- ⇒ Restrictions on the selling and advertising of unhealthy products in schools
- ⇒ Tax on sugary drinks in Catalonia region

## Summary of stakeholder feedback\*

While seemingly not yet considered to be a disease by the government and healthcare providers, Spain has several prevention policies in place related to obesity. These include school-level interventions around physical activity and diet, and a sugar tax in the Catalonia region. Stakeholders and patients felt that obesity could be better prevented by the provision of cheaper fruit and vegetables, perhaps through subsidies.

Overall, the health system is generally not thought to be working in terms of obesity treatment. Having said that, one stakeholder felt that primary care centres were becoming better at addressing obesity, with several new and effective programmes being implemented. Generally, though, it appears that a high BMI is required before treatment is offered, and even then, there are long waiting lists. Long waiting lists are said to be one of the reasons individuals leave the health system without treatment.

There are insufficient numbers of obesity professionals in both urban and rural areas but in rural areas, there is said to be no possibility of receiving specialised treatment. There is no specialised obesity training available, except for training for bariatric surgeons.

*\*Based on interviews/survey returns from 3 stakeholders*

## Perceived barriers to treatment



Lack of political will, interest and action



Cultural norms and traditions



Poor health literacy & behavior



Stigma



Economic crisis

## References

1. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-country-classifications-income-level-2019-2020> (last accessed 29.08.2019)
2. [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/378620/hit-spain-eng.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/378620/hit-spain-eng.pdf?ua=1) (last accessed 08.01.20)
3. [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/spain-country-health-profile-2019\\_8f834636-en#page3](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/spain-country-health-profile-2019_8f834636-en#page3) (last accessed 08.01.20)

Last updated June 2020