

POLICY BRIEF

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**OBESITY CONTROL IN  
QATAR INFLUENCED BY  
EU REGULATIONS**

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كلية القانون  
College of Law  
QATAR UNIVERSITY جامعة قطر

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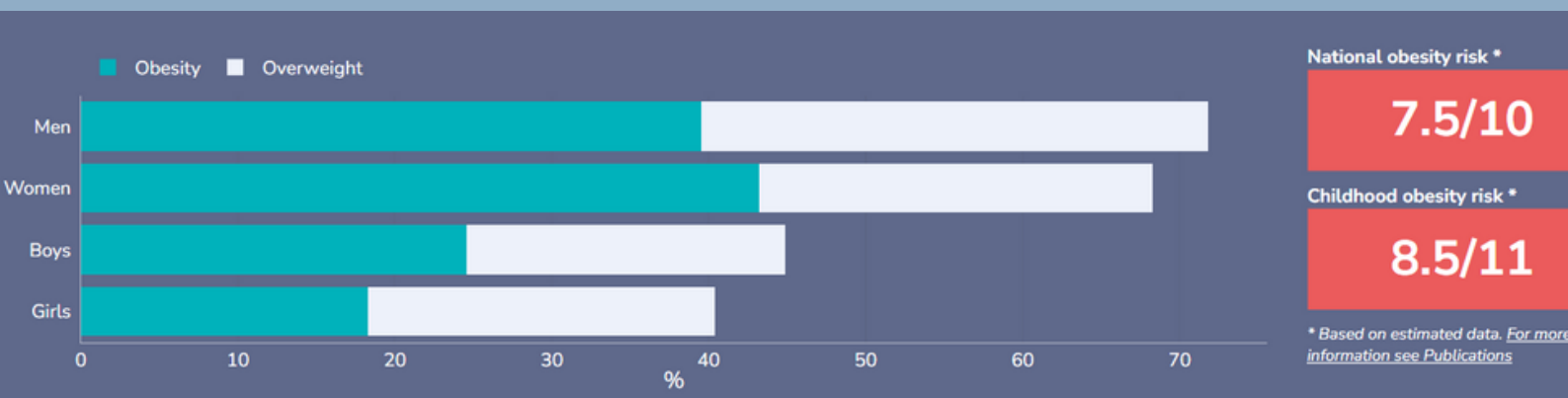
# INTRODUCTION

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According to the Global Nutrition Report, 46.1% of adult (aged 18 years and over) women and 35.9% of adult men live with obesity. As a result, Qatar is ranked as the 16th country globally with the highest obesity rates. Factors such as the excessive marketing of unhealthy foods, sedentary lifestyles, and the availability of unhealthy food choices have contributed to the growing prevalence of obesity among Qatari citizens.

To more effectively combat its obesity pandemic, Qatar needs to examine its present policies on obesity and incorporate lessons learned from EU health legislation.



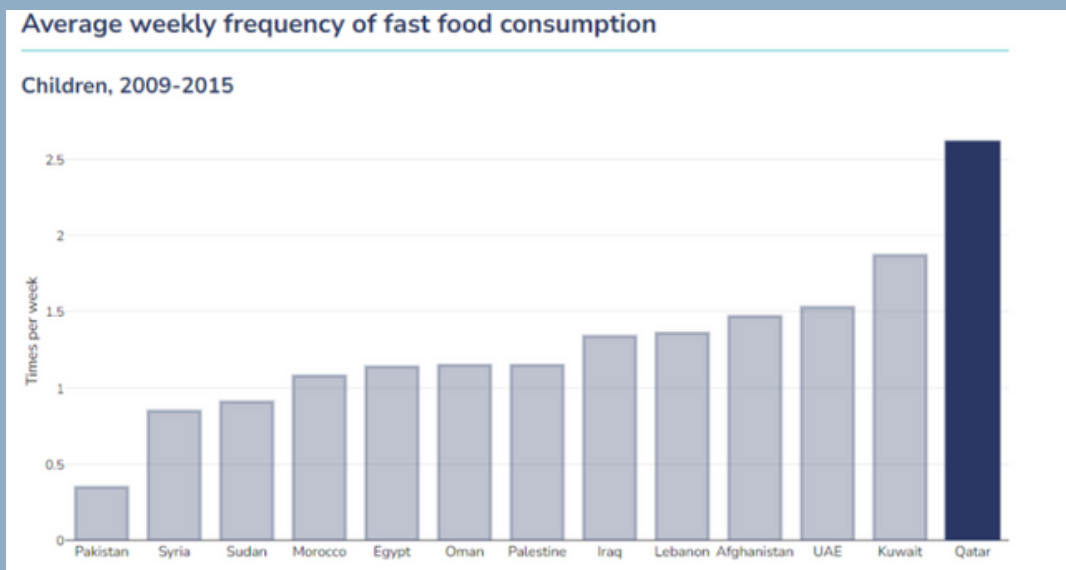
# 75%

"The national obesity risk in Qatar is 75%"  
according to the Global Obesity Federation



# FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION ANALYSIS

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The graph shows the average weekly frequency of fast food consumption across thirteen countries.

Qatar ranked first as the country with the highest rate of fast food consumption. This is why we consider it to be an urgent matter to take action

# EU'S EFFORTS TO LESSEN OBESITY COMPARED TO QATAR

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The European Union has regulated food advertising in various ways to protect public health and nudge the population to make healthier food choices.

## Tax Policy

The EU implemented the tax policy (European nations launch tax attack on unhealthy foods)-Denmark, France, and Hungary were among the nations moving over the course of the summer to introduce taxes on foods and beverages whose consumption is believed to pack on the pounds and drive up health care costs. Hungary's new fat taxes are perhaps the most comprehensive, having been levied on foods with high fat, sugar, salt, and caffeine content. The government also increased its tariffs on soda and alcohol. The value of the tax varies by product. For example, the added levy on soft drinks was €0.016 per liter. It was €0.33 per kilogram for prepackaged sweetened products, €0.67 per kilogram for salty snacks, and €0.84 per liter for energy drinks. Denmark targeted its attack on saturated fats, unveiling a levy of €2.41 per kilogram of saturated fat used in the production of a particular food.

A similar tax policy has been applied in Qatar. Qatar has introduced excise tax from 1 January 2019. Excise tax is applicable on the following goods ('excise goods') at their respective tax rates: Tobacco products: 100%.

Carbonated drinks (non-flavored aerated water excluded): 50%.  
The inclusion of fast food consumption in this tax strategy should be implemented to further enhance this policy in Qatar.

## **In terms of Audiovisual commercial communications**

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) is a key regulation governing audiovisual media services, while these regulations are more general to AV commercials within the region, the AVMSD aims to protect minors from advertising that may harm their physical, mental, or moral development. It states that audiovisual commercial communications should not directly encourage children to consume foods and beverages that are high in fat, salt, or sugar or that are otherwise not suitable for their dietary needs. In addition, it prohibits product placement, whereby a sold food commodity is used in media content that is published. It also prohibits surreptitious advertising which means firms are not allowed to advertise a commodity without making it clear that it is indeed an advertisement, thus ensuring transparency and decreasing chances of deception.

Qatar's present strategy is to put limitations on media outlets according to a drafting of the WHO's document. There aren't any applicable laws on this topic, though. Since advertising for junk food in the media is a major contributor to the consumption of fast food and unhealthy foods, strict rules must be implemented.

## **Reformulation of Food Products**

EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health: The EU established this platform to bring together stakeholders from different sectors to address the challenges of obesity and promote healthier lifestyles. It encourages voluntary commitments from food businesses to reformulate their products to reduce levels of salt, sugar, and saturated fats.

Emphasis on food quality in the European Union

# Public Health Initiatives

The EU supports public health campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness about healthy eating, physical activity, and the prevention of obesity. These initiatives often involve collaborations between public health agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations.

- Enable consumers to make informed choices to ensure that healthy options are available, e.g. in supermarkets and canteens;  
Encourage the involvement of the private sector;
- Employers could encourage healthy lifestyles (e.g. walking or cycling to work);
- Motivate people to undertake regular physical activity by stressing the health benefits.

Additionally, Qatar has promoted healthy food and exercise through initiatives like:

- **National Health Strategy:** Qatar has developed a comprehensive National Health Strategy that prioritizes preventive healthcare, encouraging citizens to adopt healthy habits and lifestyles.
- **Active Qatar:** This initiative aims to promote physical activity among the population by providing accessible and well-maintained public parks, and sports facilities, and promoting active transportation options.
- **Healthy Eating Campaigns:** Qatar emphasizes the importance of a balanced diet through awareness campaigns, nutritional education, and initiatives to improve the availability of healthy food choices.
- **Sports Day:** Qatar organizes an annual National Sports Day, where people of all ages and backgrounds come together to participate in various sports and recreational activities, promoting the importance of physical fitness and well-being.

# RECOMMENDATIONS:

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The recommendations that follow are meant to strengthen several areas in Qatar that are underdeveloped despite their critical significance.

**1**

Adopt a taxation policy on unhealthy and processed foods ( similar to the tax policy applied on tobacco).

**2**

Limit the advertisement of unhealthy food, especially ones projected toward children.

**3**

Enact nudge policies within various spheres of life to encourage adequate physical activity and healthy eating with special targetting to persons in vulnerable groups (i.e: children)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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**Written by Jean Monnet  
scholars:**

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Turim Elhaj

te2207758@qu.edu.qa

Hana Muneer

hm2208137@qu.edu.qa