



**Smaller  
portions  
PLEASE!**

**Making healthier choices  
Campaign evaluation**



## Purpose

Overweight and obesity is a major public health issue in Northern Ireland. Currently almost 2 in 3 adults here are classed as either being overweight or obese and it is the norm rather than the exception to carry excess weight.

The Public Health Agency's Choose to live better *Making healthier choices* campaign was developed to encourage adults who are overweight or obese to make healthier choices that would help reduce weight and have a positive impact on their health. This document provides an evaluation summary of the Public Health Agency's campaign.

## Background

Overweight and obesity is usually measured by Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a ratio of a person's height and weight. Having a BMI of 25-29.9 is classified as being overweight and having a BMI of 30 or more is classified as obese. Waist measurement is an alternative measure - a waist size of 37 inches or more in men, and 31.5 inches or more in women puts you at increased risk of developing serious health conditions. It is widely recognised that being overweight or obese increases the risk of life-threatening disease, and its impact affects individuals, families, communities, the economy and society as a whole.

To help reduce the harm related to overweight and obesity, the Department of Health developed *A fitter future for all framework* which aimed to empower the population of Northern Ireland

to make healthier choices, reduce the risk of overweight and obesity related diseases and improve health and wellbeing, by creating an environment that supports and promotes a physically active lifestyle and a healthy diet.

A key outcome of the Framework was a commitment to increase awareness and knowledge of the general population in relation to healthy eating and physical activity messages with actions to undertake a consistent, coordinated and integrated population health campaign highlighting the importance of good nutrition and physical activity, targeting those at risk of becoming and those who are already overweight or obese.

## Campaign objectives

- To encourage adults who are overweight or obese to make changes to their diet that will help to reduce weight and have a positive impact on their health.
- To encourage adults who are overweight or obese to think about portion sizes of the food and drinks they are consuming.
- To encourage adults to reduce portion sizes as a practical means to reduce weight gain and manage their weight.
- To visit [www.choosetolivebetter.com](http://www.choosetolivebetter.com) for further information and support.

## Target audience

The primary target audience consisted of all adults who are overweight or obese with particular focus on 25 - 54 year olds.

## Campaign advertising

The mass media advertising campaign ran in two bursts from 27 December 2021 - 16 January 2022 and 31 January - 13 March 2022 across the following elements:

**TV:** UTV, ITV Breakfast, ITV Hub, Channel 4, All4 and Sky Adsmart

**Radio:** Cool FM, DTR, DTR Country, U105, Q Network

**Outdoor:** Numerous formats NI Wide

**Digital:** Facebook/Instagram, Twitter, Belfast Live partnership, Spotify audio and video, Google search and Video on demand (VOD).

**The mass media campaign was exposed over 36.5 million times.**

The *Making healthier choices* campaign was also supported by PR. A communications toolkit was developed and shared with partners and stakeholders to promote key messages and extend the reach of the campaign.

## Evaluation methodology

To evaluate the *Making healthier choices* campaign, questions were included in an omnibus survey. The survey was conducted online with a representative sample of the Northern Ireland population of adults aged 18+. A sample of 1,012 adults was sufficient to provide an overview of the views of the population overall. Fieldwork for the survey took place online during March 2022. Following completion of fieldwork, data was analysed by the PHA's Health Intelligence Unit.

## Self perception of weight and weight loss behaviours

At the time the survey was conducted one in two respondents thought they were slightly overweight (50.8%) and one in five thought they were very overweight (18%). One in four (26.1%) thought they were the right weight and the remainder (4.6%) thought they were underweight. In the six months preceding the survey slightly over half (52.4%) of respondents were trying to lose weight. The most common method respondents used to assess their weight was to weigh themselves on scales (65.7%, n=665). Approximately one in ten (8.4%) said they don't monitor their weight.

## Methods used to measure portions

Seven in ten (71.1%) said they did at least one thing to measure their portions. The most common method respondents used to measure their portions was to use their plate as a portion size (45.5%). Approximately one in four (27.9%) said they did nothing to measure their portions.

## Campaign awareness

Respondents were deemed to be aware of, or exposed to, the *Making healthier choices* campaign if they recalled at least one of the following when prompted: TV advertisement, radio advertisement, OOH or digital campaign images.

- Overall, almost three out of four (73.5%) of adults had seen or heard at least one of the campaign advertising elements.

## Campaign impact

After being played/shown the campaign, all respondents were asked about their views on the campaign, specifically, how thought provoking and relevant they felt it was.

- Over four in five (81.1%) respondents said the campaign advertising was very or somewhat thought provoking
- Almost four in five (78.9%) respondents said the campaign advertising was very relevant or somewhat relevant to them

All respondents were asked if the *Making healthier choices* campaign encouraged them to do or think about certain things. The top three responses were that the campaign encourage them to:

1. Think about your own weight or waist measurement (48.6%)
2. Reduce portion sizes (43%)
3. Make changes to your diet to help lose weight (42.2%)

Of those exposed to the campaign (n=744), the top three responses were as follows:

1. Think about your own weight or waist measurement (53.2%)
2. Make changes to your diet to help you lose weight (45.3%)
3. Reduce portion sizes (42.7%)

Of those who felt they were slightly or very overweight (n=696), the top three responses were as follows:

1. Think about your own weight or waist measurement (55.6%)
2. Reduce portion sizes (50.2%)
3. Make changes to your diet to help you lose weight (49.6%)

All respondents were also asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement with the following statements relating to the impact of the campaign:

- This advertising would encourage me to think about my weight/waist measurement (78.5% strongly agreed/agreed)
- This advertising would encourage me to think about my diet/food choices (76.9% strongly agreed/agreed)
- If I needed to lose weight this advertising would encourage me to think about reducing portion sizes (82.6% strongly agreed/agreed)

Almost nine in ten (86.8%) respondents indicated they either strongly agreed/agreed with at least one statement.

All respondents were also asked if the advertising made them more or less likely to change their eating habits. Two in three (66%) said the advertising made them more likely to change their eating habits; whilst one in five (21.9%) said it made no difference. The remainder said they were less likely to change their eating habits (7.6%) or said don't know (4.5%).

## Evaluation summary

The post campaign evaluation shows there was a very high level of awareness of the *Making healthier choices* campaign, with almost three quarters of adults (73.5%) aware of a least one element of the campaign.

The campaign also encouraged a large proportion to think about their weight and to take action. Given the above responses in relation to campaign advertising and associated key messages it could be concluded the campaign has been effective in encouraging and motivating behaviour change among the majority of the target audience.

## Web traffic

Web traffic to choosetolivebetter.info increased significantly during the campaign period. The campaign ran 27 December 2021-13 March 2023.

**Figure 1: Total monthly visits to www.choosetolivebetter.com October 2021 – May 2022**

