

Britain set to be Europe's fattest country by 2025

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BRITAIN will be the fattest nation in Europe within a decade with almost four in ten adults obese, research shows.

The national reliance on cheap convenience meals and snacks is blamed for the obesity time bomb by the authors of the study.

Published in the *Lancet* today, it predicts that by 2025, 38 per cent of women and men will be dangerously overweight.

Almost two-thirds of adult Scots are overweight or obese, with studies showing we eat more junk food and are more sedentary.

Britain has obesity rates of 28.4 per cent for women – the second highest, behind only Malta – and the worst for men at 26.2 per cent. But within the next ten years levels in women will overtake those in Malta, while those in men will push further ahead, according to Imperial College London.

Public health officials warn that many of these adults will suffer 'life-changing consequences' including strokes, type 2 diabetes and cancer.

Professor Linda Bauld, Cancer Research UK's expert on cancer prevention, based at Stirling University, said: 'These figures are not surprising. Obesity is the leading preventable cause of cancer after smoking in Scotland. If you compare Scotland to the rest of the UK, we have higher rates of

obesity. One in three children in Scotland are overweight or obese, making them far more likely to be obese as adults.

'A key driver of this is 'energy-dense foods' – food high in sugar, salt and fat. These foods are very cheap, widely promoted and are the things many Scots choose to eat which contribute to obesity and could lead to cancer in the future.'

Obesity-linked illnesses are already exerting huge strain on the NHS's resources, costing

£6billion a year in the UK and £600million in Scotland.

The projections will put further pressure on the Government to intervene in the crisis and take tougher action on food and drinks manufacturers.

Only last month Chancellor George Osborne pledged to impose a sugar tax on fizzy drinks in two years' time.

But the authors of the *Lancet* study want the levy expanded to all junk food, with the money raised used to subsidise

fruit, vegetables and whole-meal products.

Today's figures show 4.2 per cent of women – almost one in 20 – and 1.7 per cent of men in the UK are morbidly obese.

The sugar tax has been welcomed but critics say manufacturers will simply raise the price of diet drinks and bottled water to cover the extra cost.

Campaign group Obesity Action Scotland has also called for action to make companies cut the sugar and fat content

Crisis:
More
Britons
are
obese



The nations staying slim

THE academics singled out France, Belgium, Switzerland and the Czech Republic, where obesity levels have not risen in 40 years.

This could be because vegetables, fruit, pulses and wholegrain bread and pasta are sold far more cheaply there than in the UK.

They credited the countries' policies promoting and even subsidising healthy food, as well as government initiatives warning about unhealthy snacks.

In France, for example, children's school lunches consist of chicken, bread, plenty of vegetables and a fruit salad for pudding.

of their food and restrict adverts for unhealthy food aimed at children.

Spokesman Lorraine Tulloch said: 'We need a package of bold, committed action to improve our diet and reduce obesity rates.'

'The UK Government has taken the first step with the proposed sugar tax. We need to see more UK and Scottish action on this issue.'

The Scottish Government was unable to comment last night due to the purdah period before the Holyrood elections.

However, a spokesman has previously said: 'We are running campaigns like Eat Better Feel Better to promote healthy eating, as well as spending over £10million on projects including the Healthy Living Award.'

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