



The Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) in the Republic of Ireland

Round 6 2022-2023 Factsheet

Participation rates in Round 6 (R6) were remarkably well maintained despite COVID-19 challenges

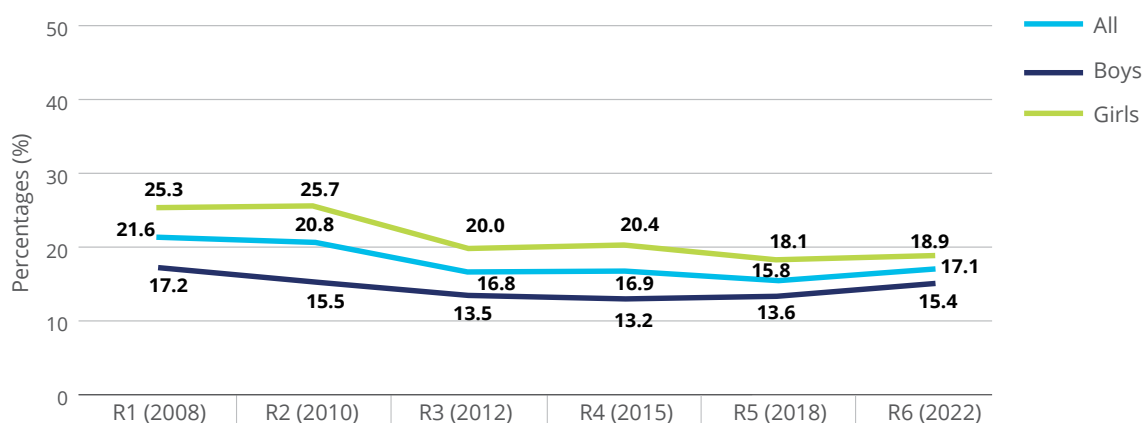
On average, 6 primary school children in a classroom of 30 living with overweight or obesity

Most schools are free from food and drink advertisement and vending machines

Sugar-sweetened beverages are not available in most schools

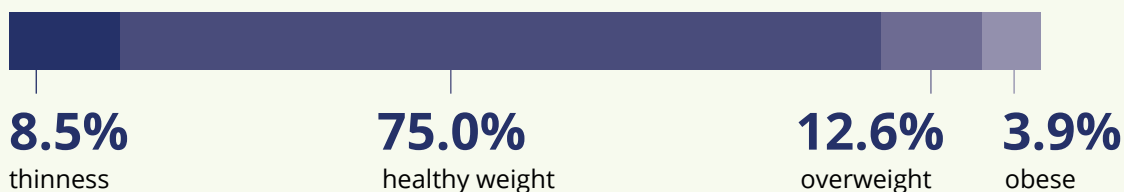
Ireland has participated in the WHO Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) since its inception in 2008, measuring trends in overweight and obesity in primary school children.

Figure 1. Prevalence of overweight including obesity in Ireland during each round of COSI (categorised using IOTF standards). Values are presented for first class children for Rounds 1-6.

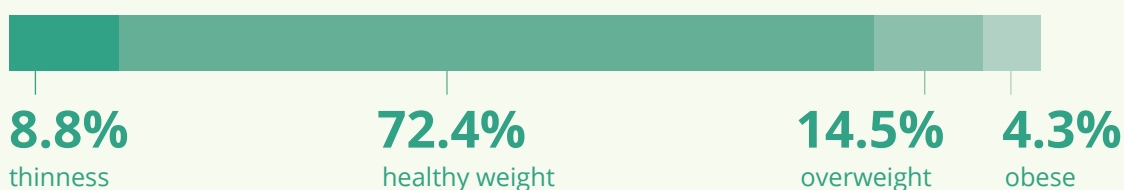


Weight Status Prevalence by Gender

BOYS

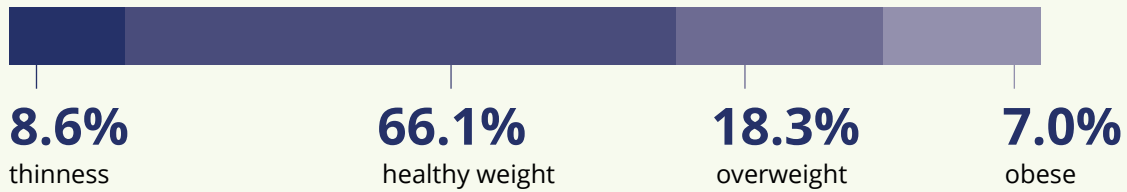


GIRLS



Weight Status Prevalence by DEIS Status

DEIS schools



Non-DEIS schools

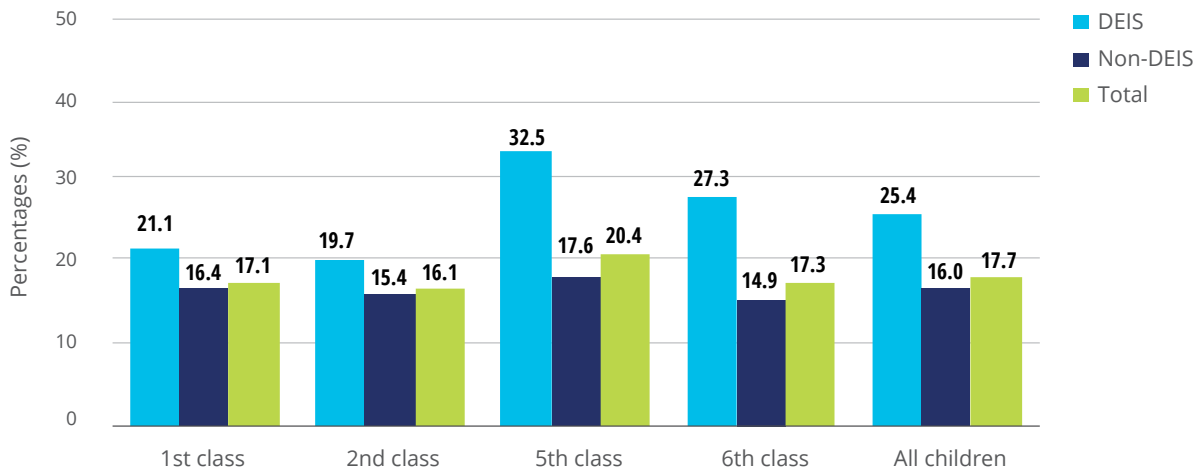
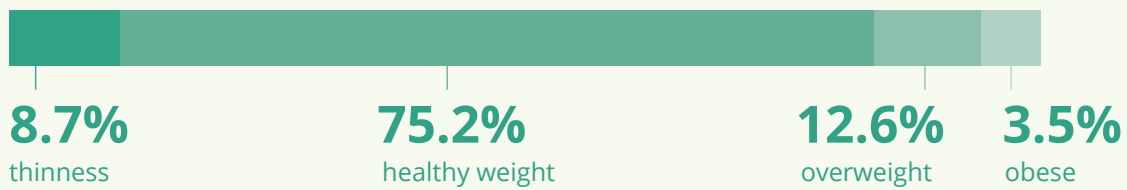


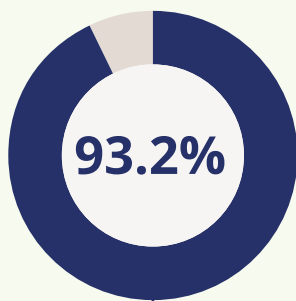
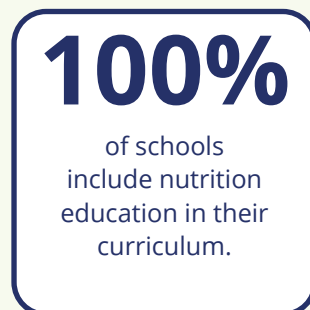
Figure 2. Comparisons of overweight including obesity prevalence (categorised by IOTF standards) in Round 6 of COSI for all children and by class based on DEIS classification.

*DEIS, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

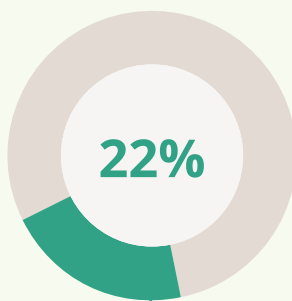
*IOTF, International Obesity Task Force

School Environment

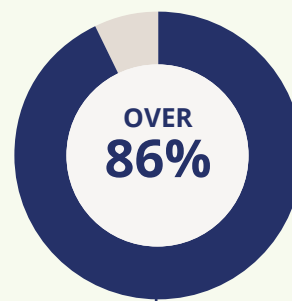
Nutrition Environment



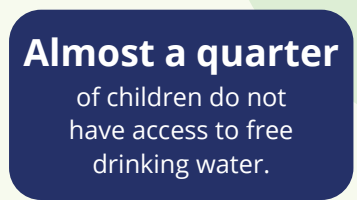
of schools have no sugar-sweetened beverages available



of schools provide free fresh fruit for students



of schools have no savoury or sweet snacks available



Physical Activity and Health Promotion Environment

100%

of schools include physical education in their curriculum.

60 minutes

The average duration of physical education per week in schools.



Almost all the schools organise health promotion initiatives for all the classes.

84.7%

of schools have an indoor gym for children.

100%

of schools have outdoor play areas for children.

Participation

65%

of invited schools participated in data collection.

76%
DEIS schools

61%
Non-DEIS schools

60.8%

of parents consented for their child to participate in the study.

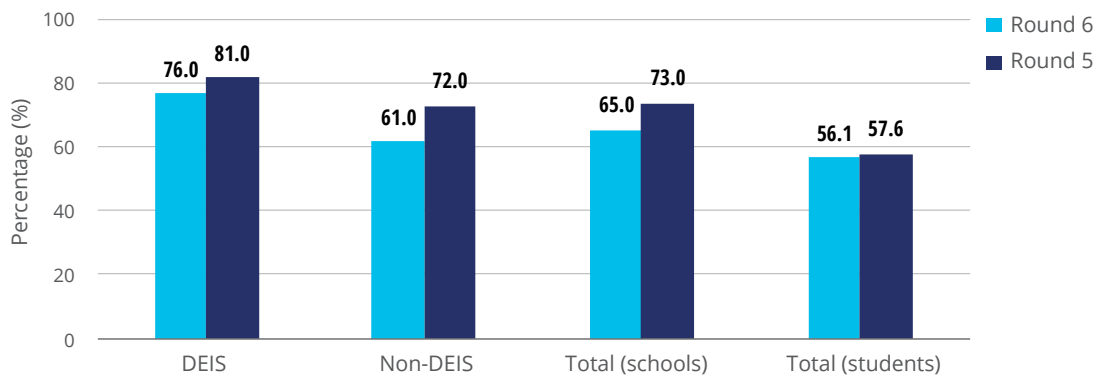


Figure 3. Comparisons of school and child participation rates between Round 6 and Round 5 of COSI-Ireland.

Policy Implications for Ireland

Children’s physical and psychological health are profoundly affected by obesity.

COSI-Ireland R6 Findings	DEIS Vs non-DEIS Comparison
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stabilisation of overweight and obesity prevalence appears to continue despite COVID-19’s impact on health behaviours ▶ 6 children in a classroom of 30 are living with overweight or obesity ▶ Higher prevalence remains in girls than boys, older than younger children, and notably children attending disadvantaged schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Both DEIS and non-DEIS primary schools are committed to improving children’s health by largely favouring healthy eating and physical activity ▶ Yet, the disparity in overweight and obesity prevalence between DEIS and non-DEIS schools holds firm.

Schools are crucial health promotion settings, but the broader conditions in which an individual is born, grows, and lives determine population health and need to be urgently addressed.

Existing Opportunities to Address and Enhance COSI Outcomes		
Action	Objective	Benefit
SCHOOL LEVEL		
Provision of fruit during school time in primary schools	To reinforce the strong healthy eating messages provided by the school curriculum and increase daily fruit consumption	May help children meet their healthy eating recommendations
Provide access to free drinking water for all children in all primary schools	To ensure adequate hydration	May lead to improved weight status, cognitive functioning, and dental health amongst other health benefits



Existing Opportunities to Address and Enhance COSI Outcomes		
Action	Objective	Benefit
POLICY LEVEL		
Implementation of policy to increase physical activity in the national curriculum	To increase the time dedicated to physical education to meet internationally recognized standards	May help children meet their daily physical activity requirements
Provision of further support and investment in the reviewed Department of Education Wellbeing Statement and Framework for Practice ¹	To ensure the implementation of the framework in all schools and to establish good practice and sustainability across the board	Effective implementation may positively impact children's mental and physical wellbeing and in turn their growth
Provision of further cross-sectional support and investment in Ireland's EU Child Guarantee Action Plan ²	To enable Ireland to meet its targets and guarantee effective access to 6 key services for 'children in need', including free healthcare, free education (including at least one healthy meal each school day), healthy nutrition, and adequate housing	Effective access will help to prevent and tackle social exclusion due to poverty and help to give every child the equal opportunity to thrive, no matter where they live in Ireland
Development of a central online system to support the monitoring and reporting requirements of schools accessing the School Meals Programme	To ensure that the food provided consistently meets the prescribed nutritional standards ³ and helps to achieve Ireland's EU Child Guarantee aim of providing 'at least one healthy meal each school day' ³	Ensuring adequately nutritious meals may help children meet their healthy eating recommendations and take full advantage of educational opportunities

1. Department of Education and Skills. *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*. 2019. Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

2. Ireland's EU Child Guarantee Action Plan Dublin; 2022, [cited 15 November 2023] [Online], available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/95dcc-irelands-eu-child-guarantee-national-action-plan/>

3. Healthy Ireland. *Nutrition Standards for School Meals*; Dublin; 2017 [cited 25 Mar 2023] [Online], available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/484f17-nutrition-standards-for-school-meals/>

