

National Child Measurement Programme 2023/24

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Executive summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) for the 2023/24 academic year for Kent resident children attending mainstream state schools in Kent. Children are measured in reception year (age 4-5) and year six (age 10-11).

The source of the data for the analysis in this report comes from the pupil level NCMP dataset. This enables analysis to be produced which is not available in the national report.

Where England data is quoted, this is from NHS Digital, National Child Measurement Programme: <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/national-child-measurement-programme>

Key findings

Indicator	Reception	Year six
Kent: excess weight	More than 1 in 5 children. Increased from 21.3% to 22.7% in the latest year	More than 1 in 3 children. 5-year trend increasing and getting worse
Kent: obesity	9.4%. Similar to the previous year	21.0%. 5-year trend increasing and getting worse
Kent: severe obesity	2.5%. Similar to the previous year	5.0%. 5-year trend increasing and getting worse
Deprivation: obesity	More than twice as high for children in the most deprived 10% of areas than children in the least deprived 10% of areas	Nearly twice as high for children in the most deprived 10% of areas than children in the least deprived 10% of areas
Ethnicity: obesity	Black children (16.4%) had a higher prevalence of obesity than white children (9.0%)	Black children (36.5%) had a higher prevalence of obesity than white children (20.0%)
Sex: obesity	Similar	Boys had a higher prevalence than girls (23.1% compared to 18.8%)
Districts: excess weight	Folkestone and Hythe (26.6%), Dover (25.8%) and Ashford (25.5%) had a higher prevalence compared to Kent (22.7%). Increase in Ashford compared to the previous year, from 21.2% to 25.5%	Gravesham (40.1%), Dover (39.4%) and Swale (39.6%) had a higher prevalence than the Kent average (35.0%)

Indicator	Reception	Year six
Districts: obesity	Higher in Dover (12.3%) and Thanet (11.8%) than the Kent average (9.4%)	Gravesham (26.3%), Dover (24.4%) and Swale (24.3%) had a higher prevalence than the Kent average (21.0%). Trend increasing and getting worse in Gravesham, Dover and Maidstone
Districts: severe obesity	Thanet (3.7%), Ashford (3.5%) and Dartford (3.5%) were higher than the Kent average (2.5%)	Gravesham (7.9%) and Swale (6.2%) had a higher prevalence compared to Kent (5.0%). Trend increasing and getting worse in Gravesham, Swale, Ashford and Canterbury
Participation rate	96.0%	94.8%
Ethnicity recording: proportion 'not stated' or missing	9.8% compared to 15.3% in the previous year	9.6%. Similar to the previous year

Call to action

- To promote and share awareness of responsive feeding with infants and in early childhood to help prevent excess weight
- To continue to support early years settings to implement the voluntary food and drink guidance.
- To procure a relationship with food programme for families and pregnant women.

Profile of the 2023/24 Year R and Year 6 data

The participation rate in Kent was 96.0% for Year R and 94.8% for Year 6 in 2023/24.

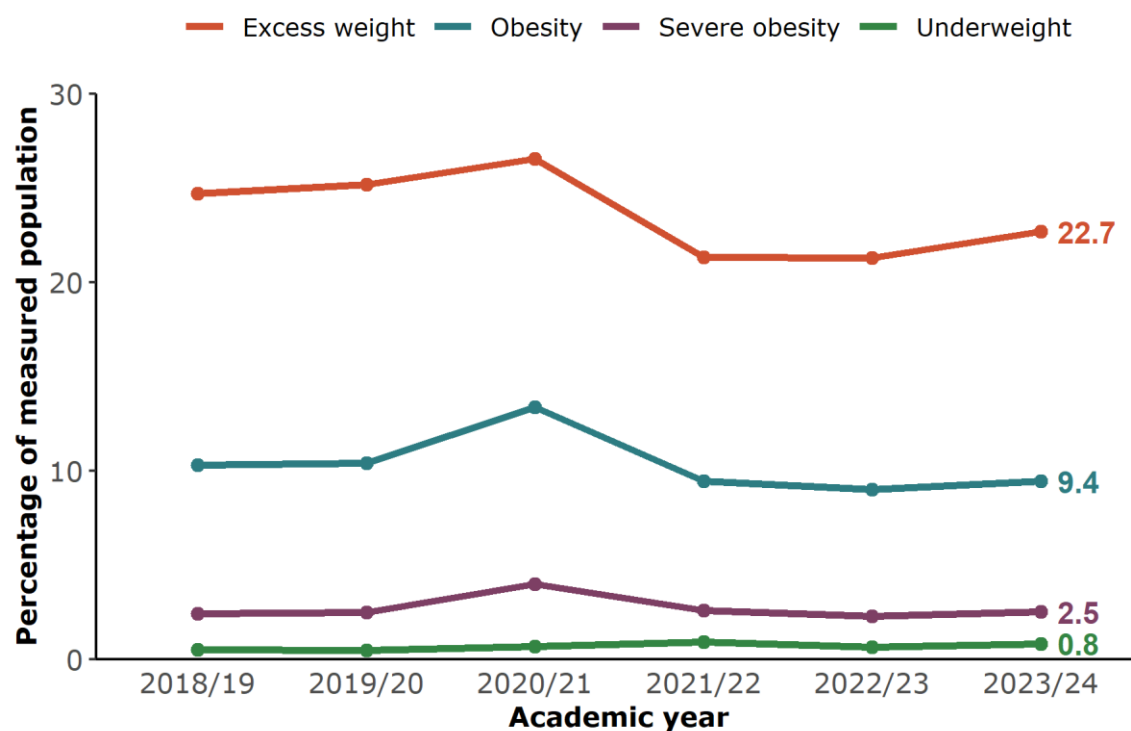
The deprivation profile of the measured children was similar to previous years for Year R and Year 6.

The proportion of 'not stated' or missing ethnicity in Year R was 9.8% compared to 15.3% in the previous year. In Year 6 the proportion of 'not stated' ethnicity was 9.6%, similar to the previous year.

Year R analysis at Kent level

Weight category trends

Figure 1: Year R, weight category trends in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Table 1: Year R, weight category trends in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24

Weight category %	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Excess weight	24.7	25.2	26.5	21.3	21.3	22.7
Obese	10.3	10.4	13.4	9.4	9.0	9.4
Severe obesity	2.4	2.5	4.0	2.6	2.3	2.5
Under weight	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.8

Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Excess weight is defined as being obese or overweight.

The prevalence of excess weight among reception year children increased from 21.3% in 2022/23 to 22.7% in the latest year but remained lower than the peak in 2020/21.

The prevalence of obesity (9.4%), severe obesity (2.5%) and underweight (0.8%) were similar to the previous year.

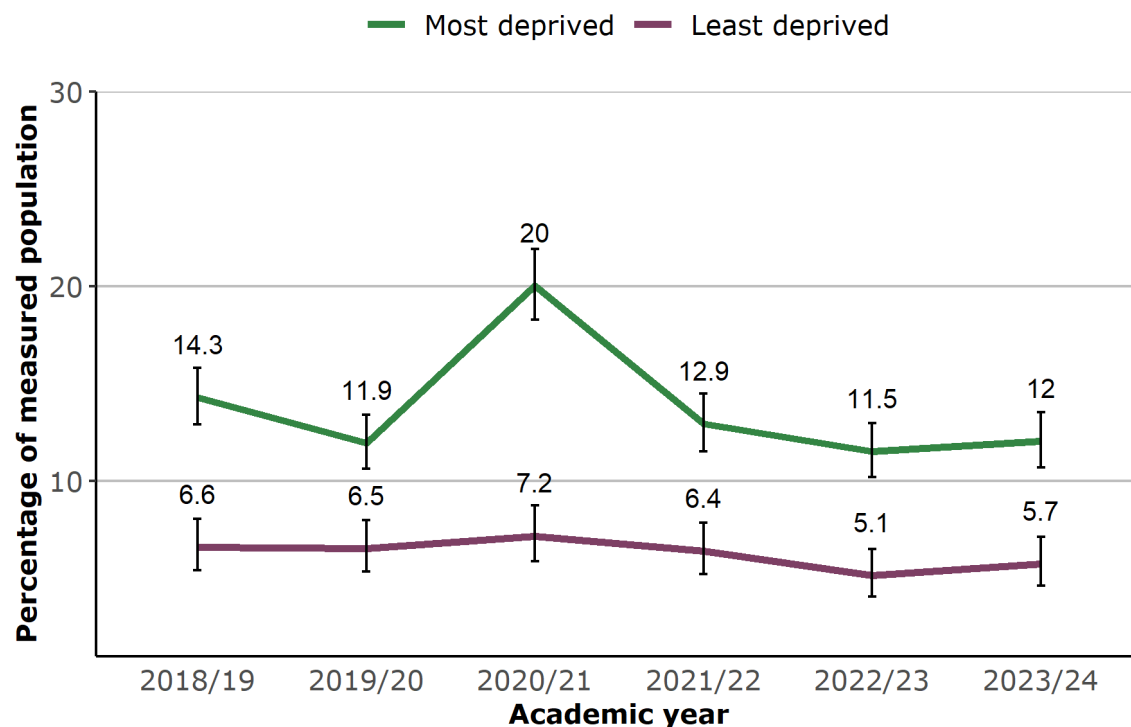
The healthy weight category is not presented in the chart, this was 76.5% in the latest year, similar to England.

In England the prevalence of excess weight in reception children increased from 21.3% to 22.1%, similar to Kent. Obesity and severe obesity levels in England were similar to the Kent average.

Inequalities analysis

Obesity by deprivation

Figure 2: Year R, prevalence of obesity by deprivation in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

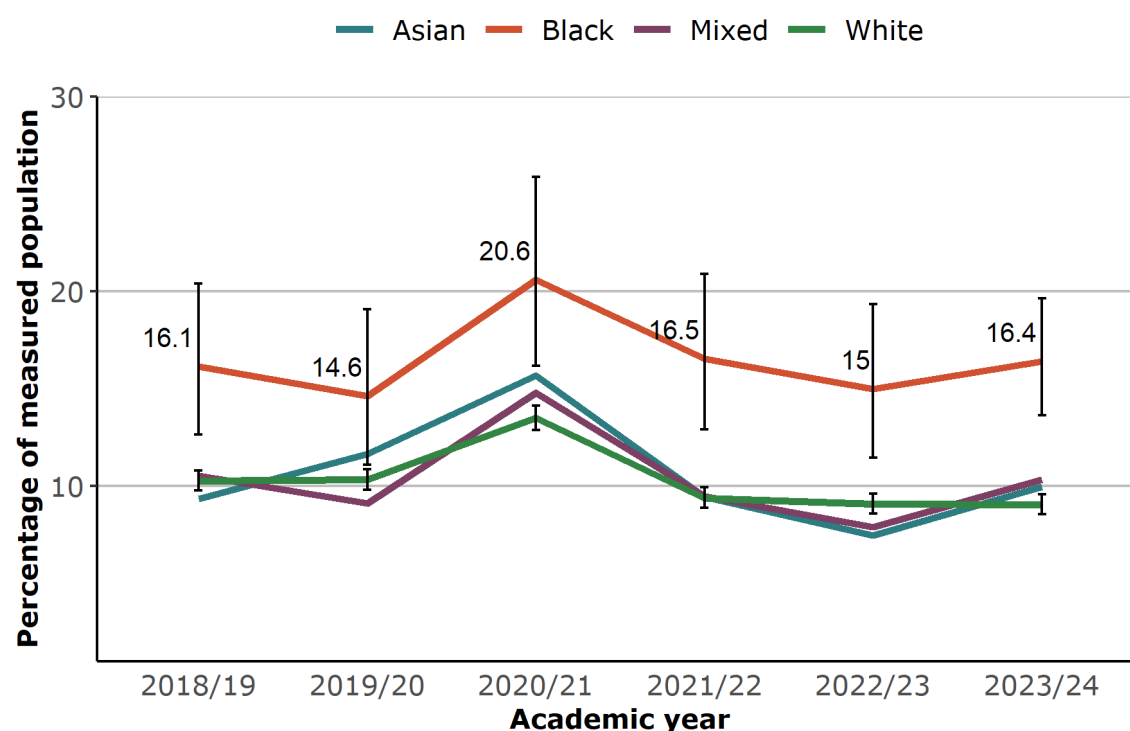
The most and least deprived areas are defined as the parts of Kent ranked among the most and least deprived tenth of the population. These are also referred to as 'deprivation deciles'.

Year R children living in the most deprived areas were more than twice as likely to be obese than children living in the least deprived areas (12.0% compared to 5.7%) in 2023/24. This was similar to the previous year and the prevalence of obesity in the most deprived group remains below the peak in 2020/21.

In England 12.9% of reception year children in the most deprived group were living with obesity compared to 6.0% in the least deprived group.

Obesity by ethnicity

Figure 3: Year R, prevalence of obesity by ethnicity in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

The prevalence of obesity for black children (16.4%) in reception year was higher than for white children (9.0%), and this has been the trend over several years. Asian and mixed ethnicity children had similar levels of obesity to white children.

In England the prevalence of obesity for black children in Year R was 13.7% in the latest year.

According to analysis by OHID, ethnicity has an independent effect on obesity prevalence in both Year 6 and Reception boys and girls after other factors are taken into account. Ethnic disparities in obesity prevalence are in general greater in Year 6 than in Reception, and there are smaller disparities between the sexes in Reception than in Year 6.¹

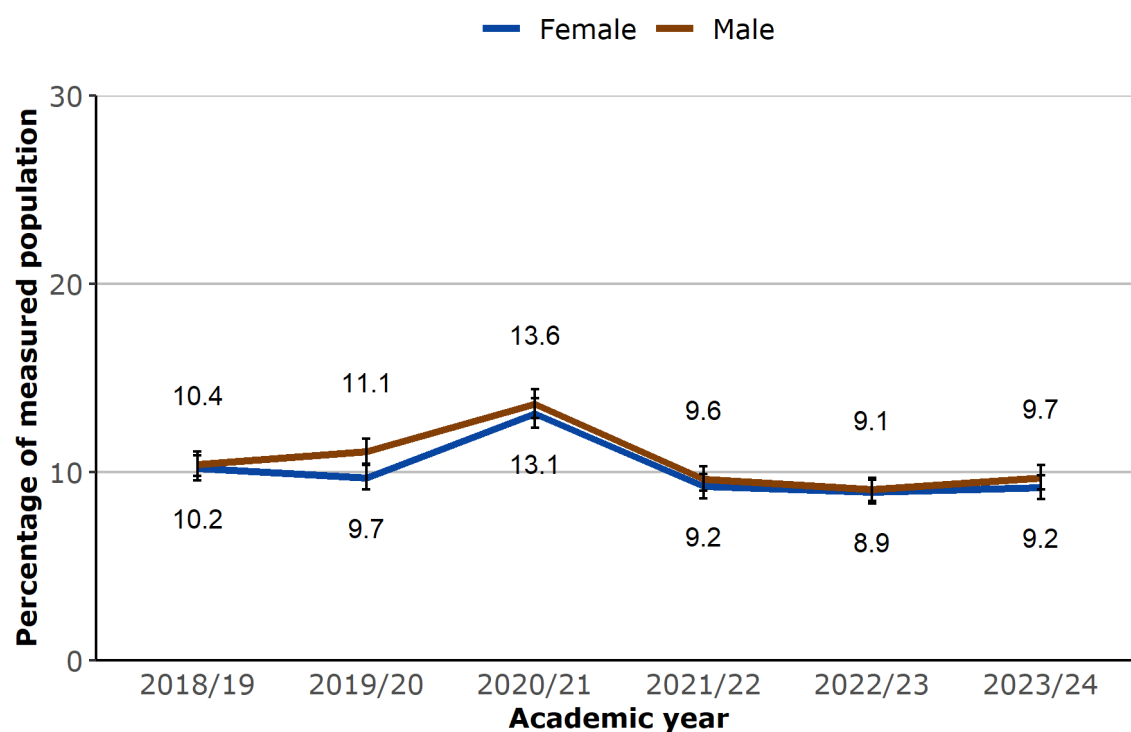
Table 2: Year R: obesity by ethnicity in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24

Obese %	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Asian	9.3	11.6	15.7	9.5	7.5	10.0
Black	16.1	14.6	20.6	16.5	15.0	16.4
Mixed	10.5	9.1	14.8	9.5	7.9	10.3
White	10.3	10.3	13.5	9.4	9.1	9.0

Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Obesity by gender

Figure 4: Year R, prevalence of obesity by gender in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

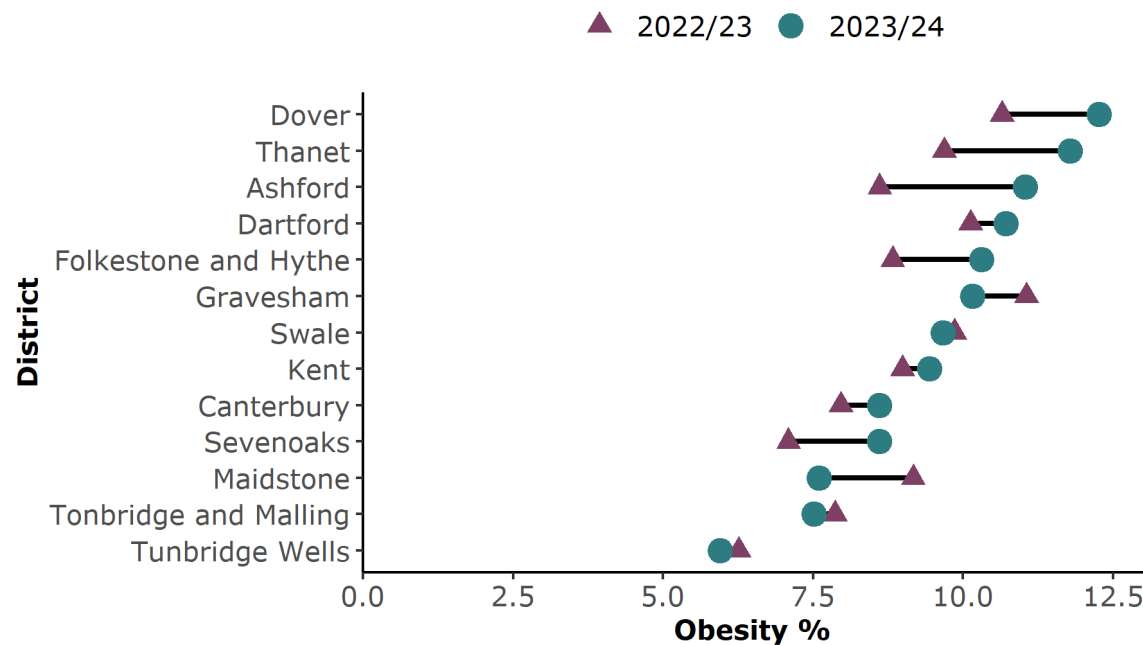
The prevalence of obesity was similar among Year R girls and boys in Kent in 2023/24 (9.2% and 9.7% respectively) and this has been the case over several years.

In England there was a significant difference between obesity prevalence in boys (9.9%) and in girls (9.4%) in the latest year.

Year R analysis at district level

Obesity prevalence

Figure 5: Year R, prevalence of obesity by district in Kent, 2023/24



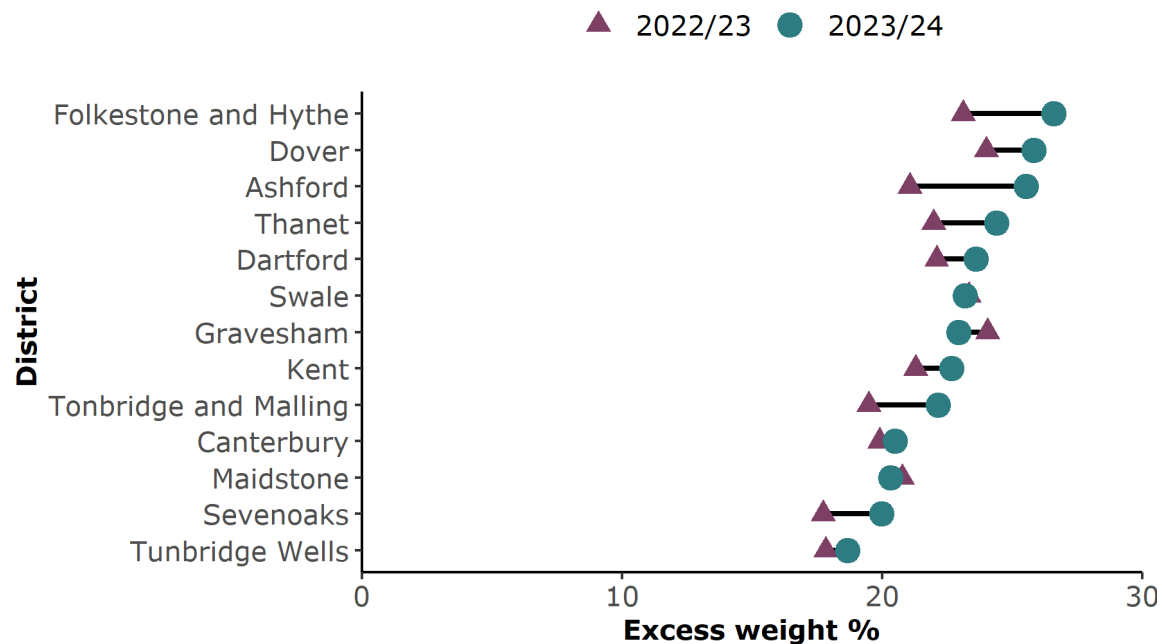
Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

The prevalence of obesity was higher in Dover (12.3%) and Thanet (11.8%) districts in Year R children than the Kent average of 9.4% in the latest year. Maidstone (7.6%), Tonbridge and Malling (7.5%) and Tunbridge Wells (6.0%) had a lower prevalence than Kent.

There were no significant changes in obesity prevalence by district comparing 2023/24 with the previous year.

Excess weight prevalence

Figure 6: Year R, prevalence of excess weight by district in Kent, 2023/24



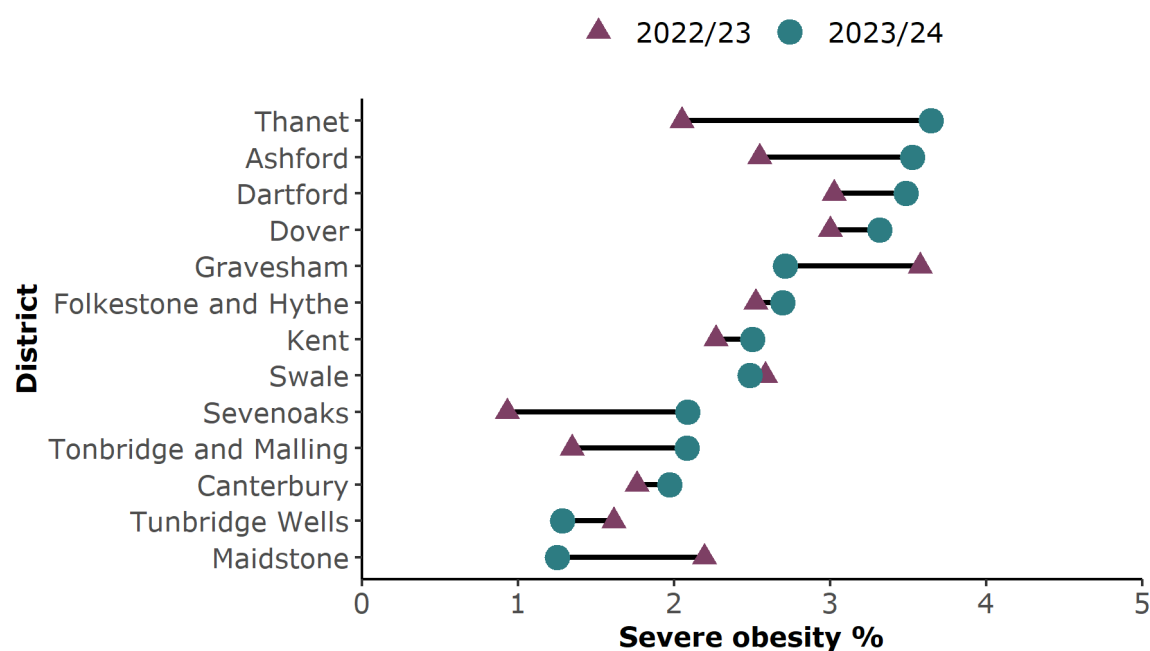
Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Excess weight increased in Ashford over the latest year from 21.1% to 25.5% for Year R.

Folkestone and Hythe (26.6%), Dover (25.8%) and Ashford (25.5%) districts had a higher prevalence of excess weight than the Kent average (22.7%). Tunbridge Wells (18.7%), Sevenoaks (20.0%) and Maidstone (20.3%) had a lower prevalence.

Severe obesity prevalence

Figure 7: Year R, prevalence of severe obesity by district in Kent, 2023/24



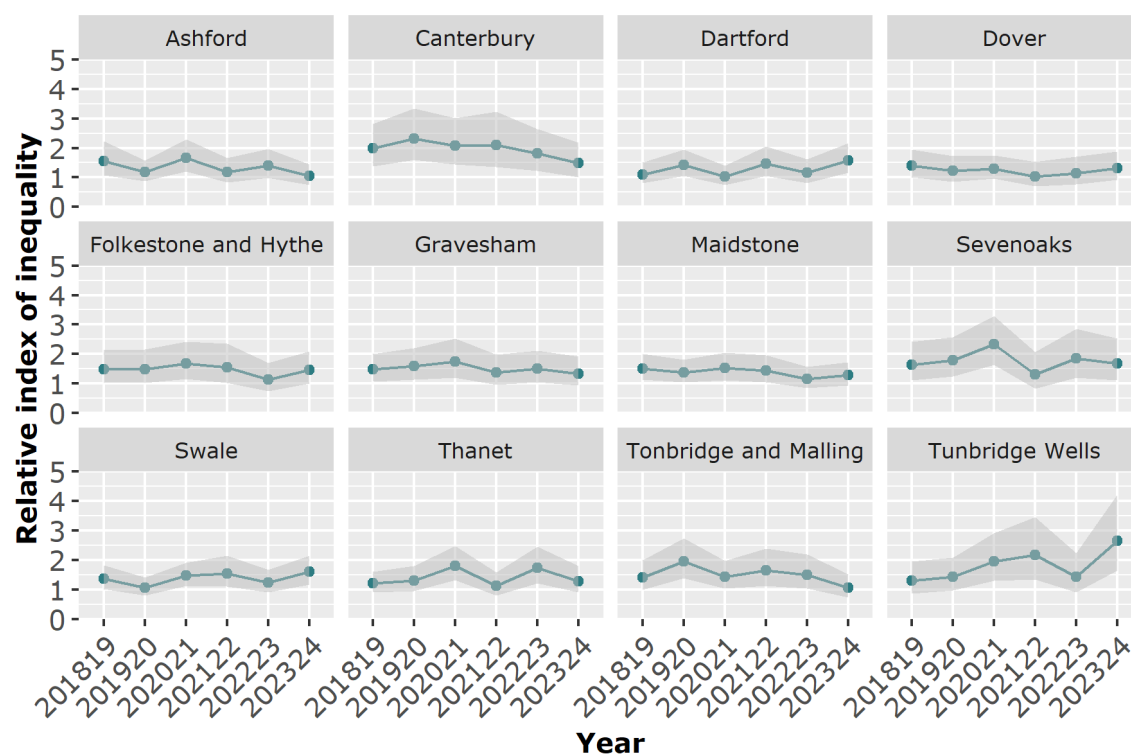
Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Thanet (3.7%), Ashford (3.5%) and Dartford (3.5%) had a higher prevalence of severe obesity in Year R compared to the Kent average (2.5%). Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells had a lower prevalence (1.3% for both districts).

There was no significant differences in severe obesity levels for districts compared to the previous year.

Inequalities by district

Figure 8: Year R, relative index of inequality by district in Kent, with 95% confidence intervals, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

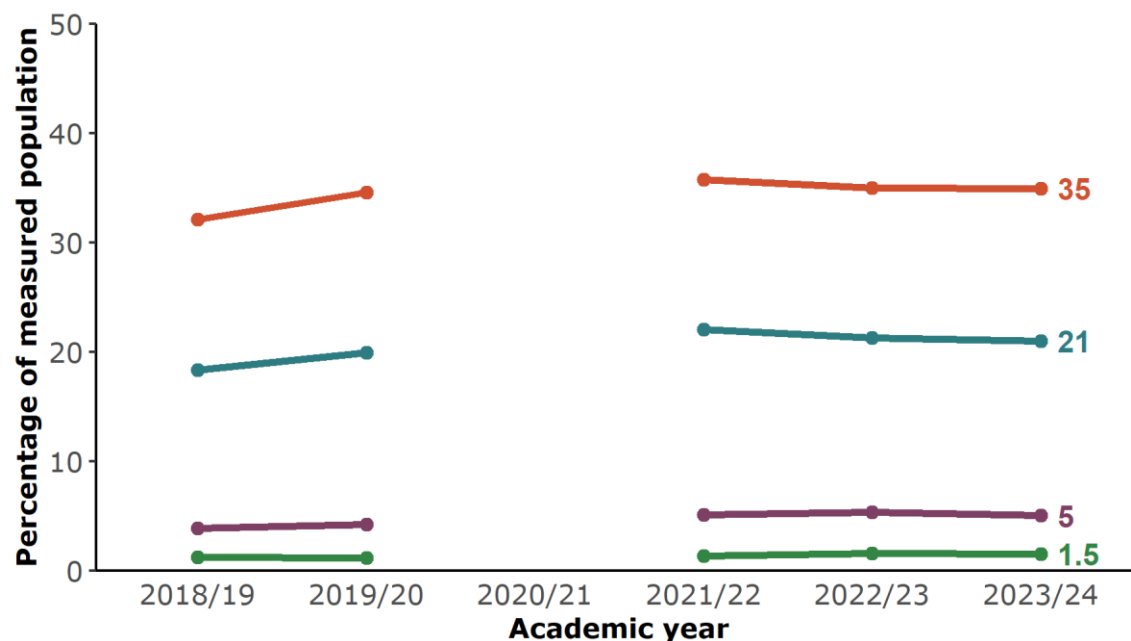
The relative index of inequality (RII) is a measure of how much inequality exists in a population, between the most and least deprived groups. Where the RII is 1 there is no inequality found. If the RII is greater than 1 the most deprived group have worse health outcomes than the least deprived group. If the RII is 2 this means the most deprived children are twice as likely to have excess weight than the least deprived children.

Several districts have a RII greater than 1 for Year R (Canterbury, Dartford, Folkestone and Hythe, Sevenoaks, Swale, Tunbridge Wells). In Tunbridge Wells the RII (2.7) suggests that the most deprived children are more than two and a half times more likely to have excess weight than the least deprived children in the district.

Year 6 analysis at Kent level

Weight category trends

Figure 9: Year 6, weight category trends in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Table 3: Year 6, weight category trends in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24

Weight category %	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Excess weight	32.1	34.6		35.8	35.0	35.0
Obese	18.3	19.9		22.1	21.3	21.0
Severe obesity	3.9	4.2		5.1	5.4	5.0
Under weight	1.2	1.1		1.3	1.6	1.5

Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

The prevalence of excess weight in Year 6 was 35% in Kent in the latest year which was similar to the previous year and lower than the England average (35.8%).

Obesity was also lower in Kent than the England average (21.0% compared to 22.1%).

Severe obesity for Year 6 in Kent was 5.0%, significantly lower than England (5.5%).

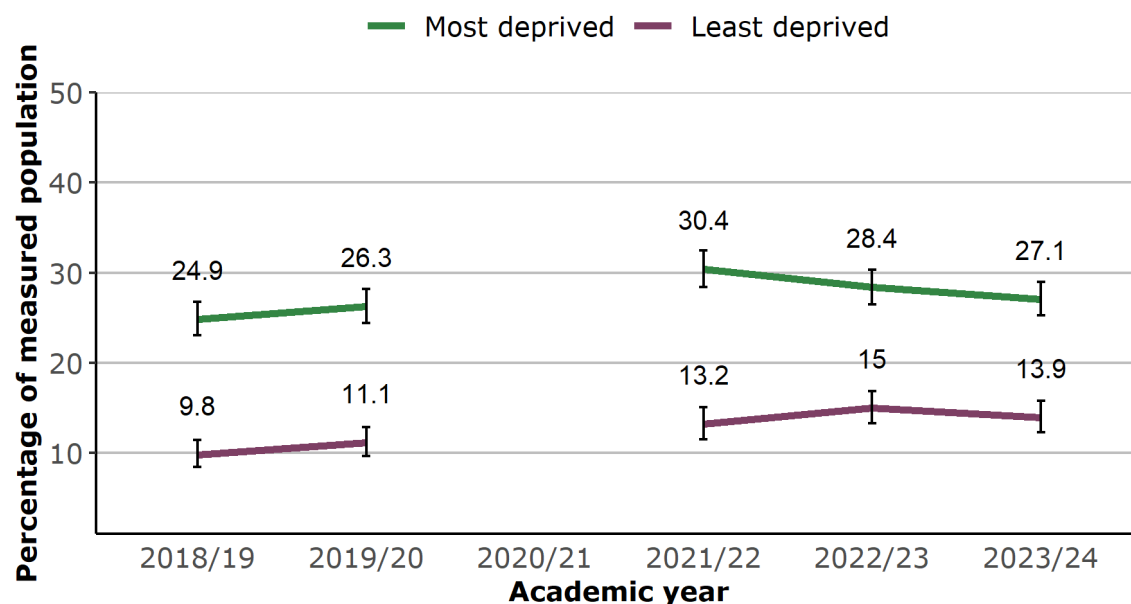
The healthy weight category is not presented in the chart, this was 63.5% in the latest year, better than the England average (62.5%).

Obesity prevalence has reduced in the last 2 years, from 22.1% in 2021/22 to 21.0% in 2023/24. Obesity, excess weight and severe obesity levels remain higher than they were in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Inequalities analysis

Obesity by deprivation

Figure 10: Year 6, prevalence of obesity by deprivation in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24

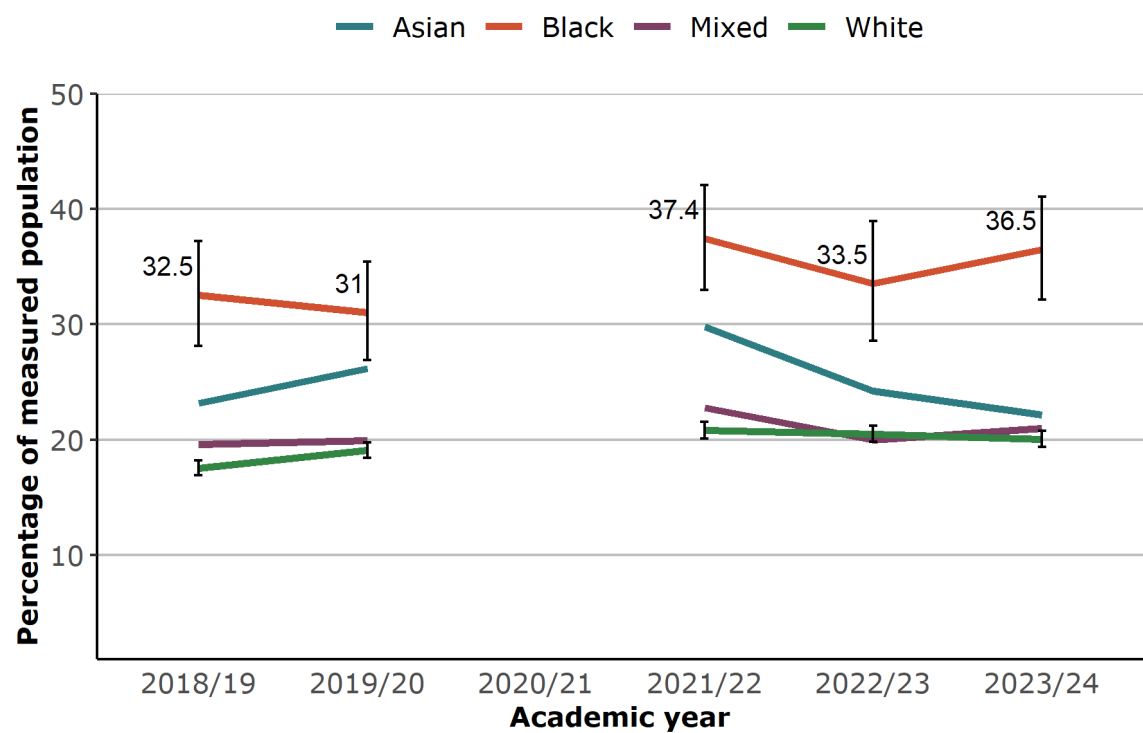


Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Year 6 children living in the most deprived areas of Kent were nearly twice as likely to be living with obesity than those living in the least deprived areas, 27.1% compared to 13.9%. For England this was 29.2% compared to 13.0%.

Obesity by ethnicity

Figure 11: Year 6, prevalence of obesity by ethnicity in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Table 4: Year 6: obesity by ethnicity in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24

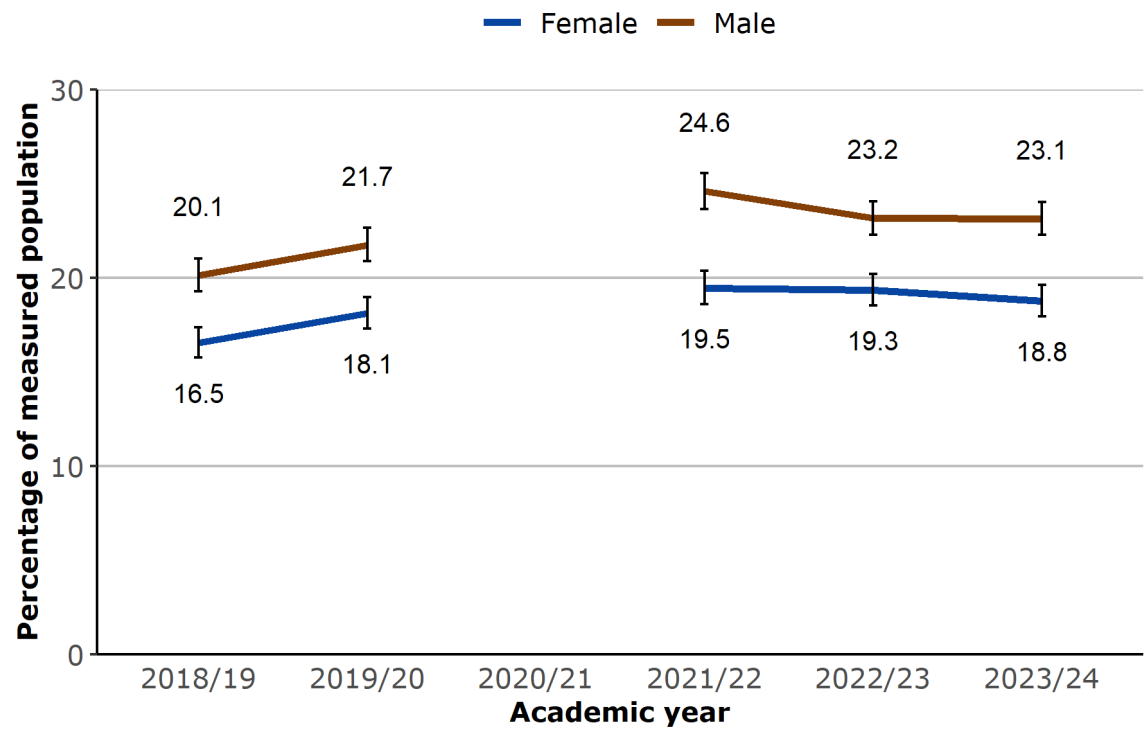
Obese %	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Asian	23.2	26.2		29.8	24.3	22.2
Black	32.5	31.0		37.4	33.5	36.5
Mixed	19.6	19.9		22.8	20.0	21.0
White	17.5	19.1		20.8	20.5	20.0

Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Black children in Year 6 had a higher prevalence of obesity than white children (36.5% compared to 20.0%) in Kent with a similar gap to previous years. In England this was 30.4% of black children compared to 20.8% of white children.

Obesity by gender

Figure 12: Year 6, prevalence of obesity by gender in Kent, 2018/19 - 2023/24



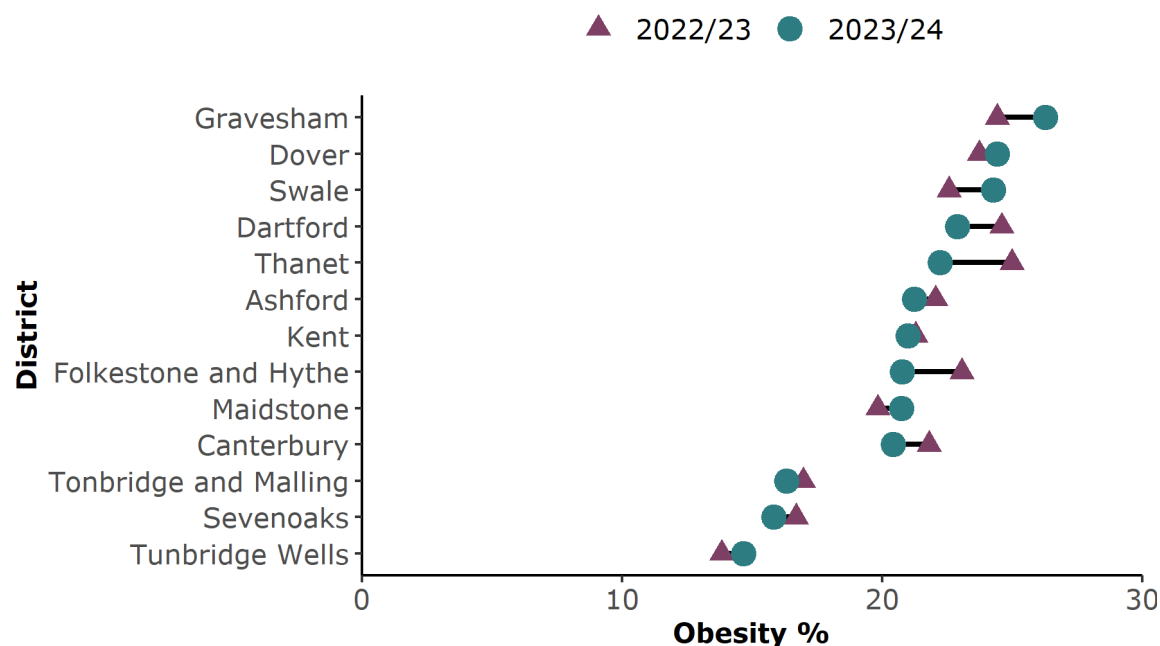
Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

In Year 6 obesity prevalence was higher among boys compared to girls in Kent. 23.1% of boys were living with obesity compared to 18.8% of girls, with a similar gap to previous years. In England 19.6% of girls were living with obesity compared to 24.5% of boys.

Year 6 analysis at district level

Obesity prevalence

Figure 13: Year 6, prevalence of obesity by district in Kent, 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

Gravesham (26.3%), Dover (24.4%) and Swale (24.3%) districts had a higher prevalence of obesity in Year 6 than the Kent average of 21.0% in 2023/24.

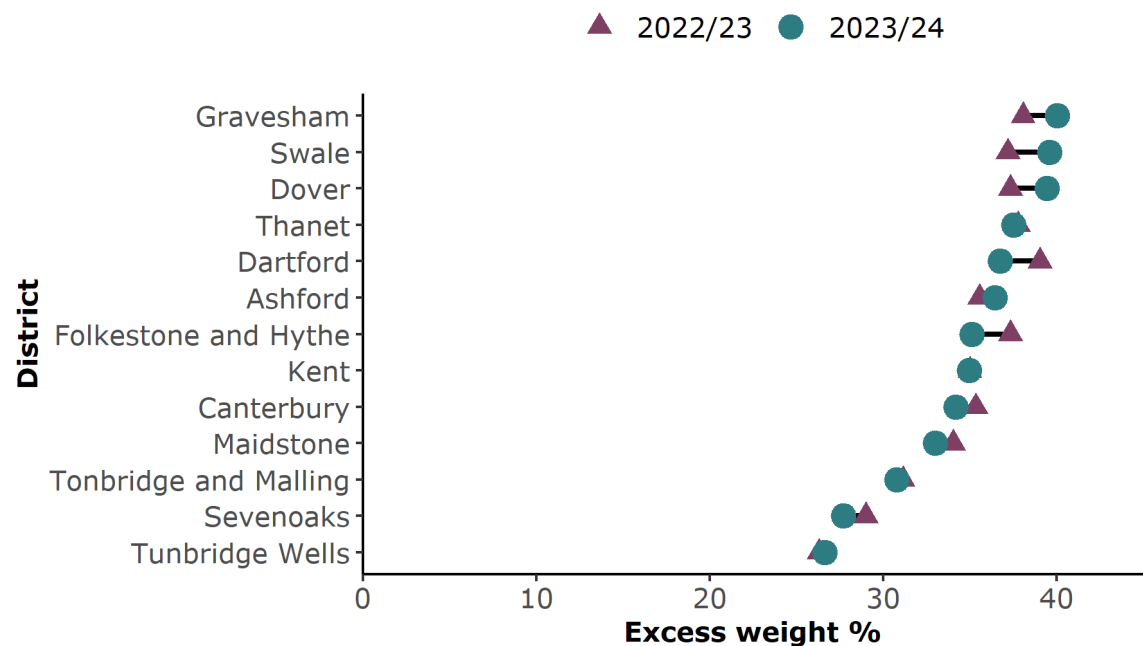
Tonbridge and Malling (16.3%), Sevenoaks (15.8%) and Tunbridge Wells (14.7%) had lower levels of obesity than the Kent average.

The prevalence of obesity among Year 6 children was significantly lower in Kent (21.0%) compared to England (22.1%).

There were no significant differences in obesity levels within districts compared to the previous year, although longer term trends show increasing rates in Gravesham, Dover and Maidstone.

Excess weight prevalence

Figure 14: Year 6, prevalence of excess weight by district in Kent, 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

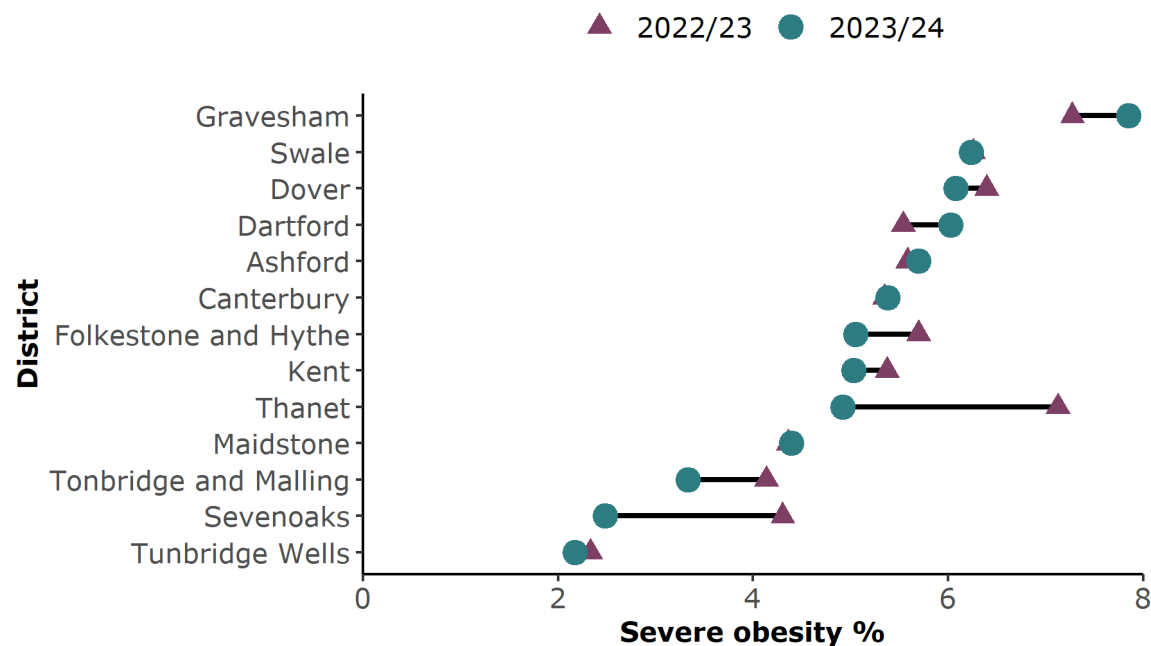
Excess weight prevalence was higher in Gravesham (40.1%), Swale (39.6%) and Dover (39.4%) districts in Year 6 than the Kent average (35.0%).

Tonbridge and Malling (30.1%), Sevenoaks (27.7%) and Tunbridge Wells (26.7%) had lower levels of excess weight than the Kent average.

At a district level there were no significant changes in excess weight from the previous year for Year 6 children.

Severe obesity prevalence

Figure 15: Year 6, prevalence of severe obesity by district in Kent, 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

The prevalence of severe obesity in Year 6 was higher in Gravesham (7.9%) and Swale (6.2%) compared to the Kent average (5.0%) in the latest year.

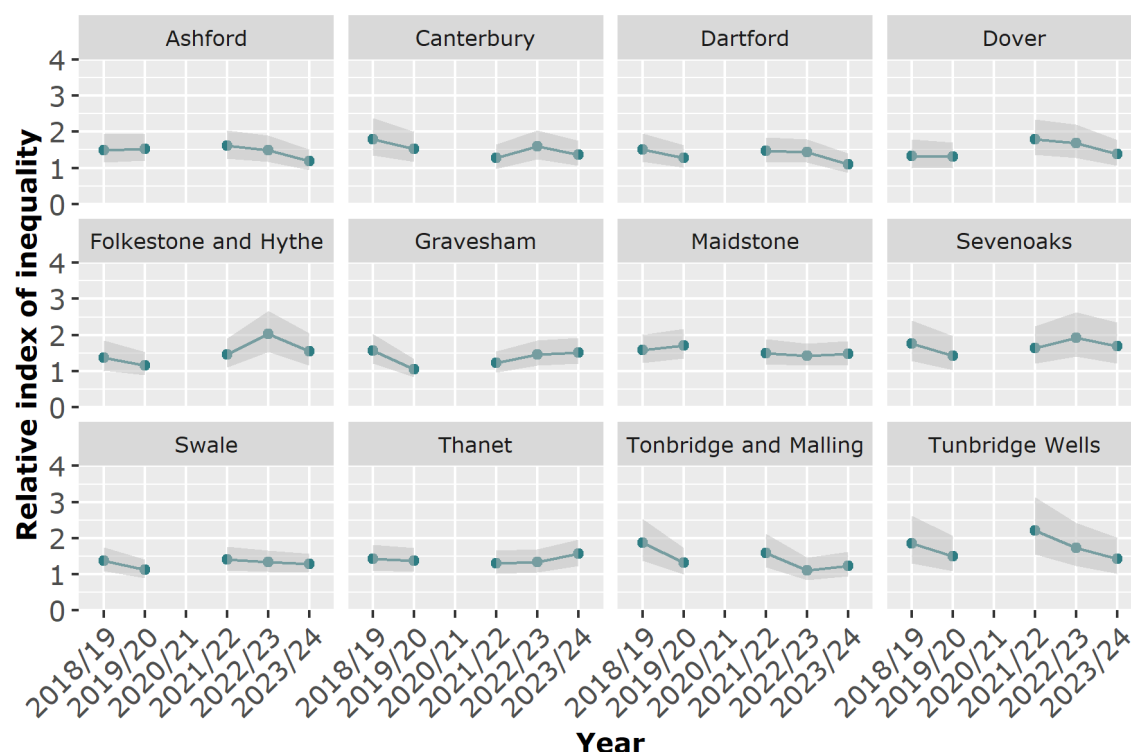
Tonbridge and Malling (3.3%), Sevenoaks (2.4%) and Tunbridge Wells (2.2%) had lower levels of severe obesity.

There were no significant changes at a district level in Year 6 severe obesity since the previous year, although longer term trends show increasing rates in Gravesham, Swale, Ashford and Canterbury.

England had a similar level of severe obesity (5.5%) to the Kent average (5.0%) for Year 6.

Inequalities by district

Figure 16: Year 6, relative index of inequality by district in Kent, with 95% confidence intervals, 2018/19 - 2023/24



Source: NCMP, prepared by KPHO

The relative index of inequality (RII) is a measure of how much inequality exists in a population, between the most and least deprived groups. Where the RII is 1 there is no inequality found. If the RII is greater than 1 the most deprived group have worse health outcomes than the least deprived group. If the RII is 2 this means the most deprived children are twice as likely to have excess weight than the least deprived children.

The relative index of inequality (RII) is greater than 1 in most districts for Year 6 (Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Gravesham, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Swale, Thanet, Tunbridge Wells). This suggests that the most deprived children have worse excess weight than the least deprived children within those districts.

Appendix

The height and weight measurements of children in reception year and year six are recorded annually as part of the National Child Measurement Programme.

Children living in Kent and attending mainstream Kent schools were included in the analysis. Children attending Free schools were included.

Year 6 data for the academic year 2020/21 has not been presented. 10.6% of Year 6 pupils were measured due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the participation distributions showed it was not a representative sample.

References

1. GOV.Uk. 2019. Differences in child obesity by ethnic group. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/differences-in-child-obesity-by-ethnic-group/differences-in-child-obesity-by-ethnic-group#fn:3> [Accessed 04 April 2023].
2. Hudda MT and others. 'Body mass index adjustments to increase the validity of body fatness assessment in UK Black African and South Asian children' International Journal Of Obesity 2017: 41, 1,048