Body Mass Index of P1 Children in Scotland
School Year 2018/19

A National Statistics publication for Scotland

Publication date: 10 December 2019

About this release

This release by Information Services Division provides annual statistics on high, low and healthy body mass index (BMI) for Primary 1 school children, and includes data for school years 2001/02 to 2018/19. Statistics in this release are derived from height and weight measurements collected at health reviews in Primary 1.

Main Points

• In school year 2018/19, around three out of four Primary 1 children (77%) had a healthy weight, 22% were at risk of overweight or obesity and 1% were at risk of underweight.

• Since 2001/02, the overall proportion of Primary 1 children who are at risk of overweight or obesity has remained fairly constant.

• There are now substantial inequalities in child unhealthy weight across Scotland. Since 2001/02, the proportion of Primary 1 children at risk of overweight or obesity has increased in the most deprived areas but decreased in the least deprived areas.

• Boys in Primary 1 are slightly less likely than girls to have a healthy weight.
Background
In school year 2018/19 a total of 44,782 children had valid height and weight measurements recorded in Primary 1. This is approximately 76% of all children in Primary 1.

A child’s BMI is calculated by dividing their weight (in kilograms) by their height (in metres) squared. Children are then allocated to a healthy or unhealthy weight category by comparing their BMI to the range of BMIs seen among a reference group of children of the same age and sex. This summary provides information on the proportion of children found to be at risk of having an unhealthy weight based on the thresholds used for monitoring the health of the child population (‘epidemiological thresholds’). The full report also provides information on the proportion of children found to have an unhealthy weight based on the stricter clinical thresholds used by health professionals caring for individual children. There is continued concern over the levels of overweight and obesity among children in Scotland. Obesity during childhood is a health concern in itself, and it can also lead to physical and mental health problems throughout adulthood. Being underweight in childhood can also be a cause for concern, indicating poor nutritional intake and/or underlying medical problems.

Contact
Dr Rachael Wood
Consultant in Public Health Medicine
0131 275 7028
rachaelwood@nhs.net

Susanne Brunton
Principal Information Analyst
0131 275 7646
susanne.brunton@nhs.net

Michael Nisbett
Senior Information Analyst
0141 282 2196
michael.nisbett@nhs.net

Further Information
Find out more in the Primary 1 BMI Statistics School Year 2018/19 report, and in the accompanying interactive data visualisation. Background information can be found in the technical report. Summary data tables and detailed open data tables are also available.

ISD Scotland publishes a wide range of information on Child Health including infant feeding, immunisations, and the 27-30 month review. Further information can be found in the Child Health section on the ISD website.

The next release of this publication will be in December 2020.