

Adult Obesity

JSNA Factsheet

Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Southwark Public Health Division

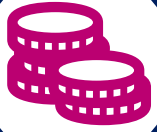
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Adult obesity significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of children in Southwark



Despite seeing an increase in the proportion of overweight or obese adults over the last 7 years, these proportions in Southwark remain comparable to the London average and lower than the national average. Over the last year, Southwark experienced a 13% increase in the number of overweight adults assessed and a 5% increase in the number of obese adults.



Socio-economic disadvantage impacts the lives of many Southwark families and individuals, negatively impacting their weight status. The most disadvantaged wards in the borough have at least double the rate of adult obesity compared the least disadvantaged wards.



There are significant inequalities in the proportion of obese adults in Southwark. Older females and those from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic background experienced the highest burden of obesity.

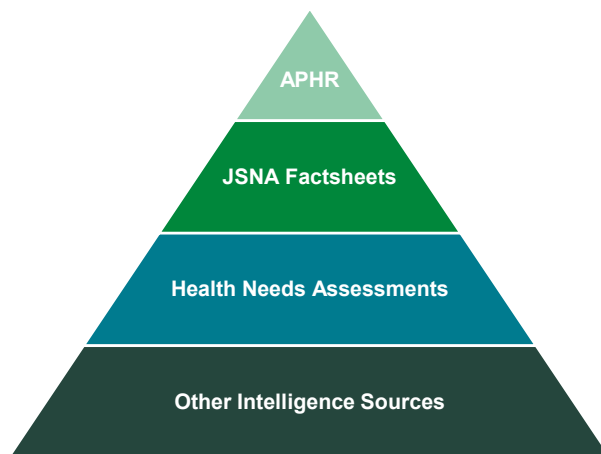


Food insecurity, the limited or uncertain access to adequate food, is a major factor in the development of excess weight in children and adults. With almost 600 takeaway food stores across Southwark and only 80 supermarkets, many families rely on the consumption of fast-food to feed themselves and their families, contributing to the burden of excess weight.

JSNA Factsheets form part of Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the ongoing process through which we seek to identify the current and future health and wellbeing needs of our local population.

- The purpose of the JSNA is to inform and underpin the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other local plans that seek to improve the health of our residents.
- The JSNA is built from a range of resources that contribute to our understanding of need. In Southwark we have structured these resources around 4 tiers:



Tier I: The Annual Public Health Report provides an overview of health and wellbeing in the borough.



Tier II: JSNA Factsheets provide a short overview of health issues in the borough.



Tier III: Health Needs Assessments provide an in-depth review of specific issues.



Tier IV: Other sources of intelligence include Local Health Profiles and national Outcome Frameworks.

- This document forms part of those resources.
- All our resources are available via the following link: www.southwark.gov.uk/JSNA

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BMI is used to assess a person's weight relative to their height; a healthy BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9

BMI is a tool use by clinicians and related professionals to assess a person's weight in proportion to their height. The result is often used as an indicator to identify potential health risks associated with either being underweight or having excess weight.

- A person is considered **underweight** if their BMI is below 18.5.
- A person is considered to have a **healthy weight** if their BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9.
- A person is considered **overweight** if their BMI is between 25.0 and 29.9.
- A person is considered **obese** if their BMI is 30.0 or above.

Though it is a useful tool, BMI does not account for variations in body composition (muscle mass etc.), age or ethnicity.

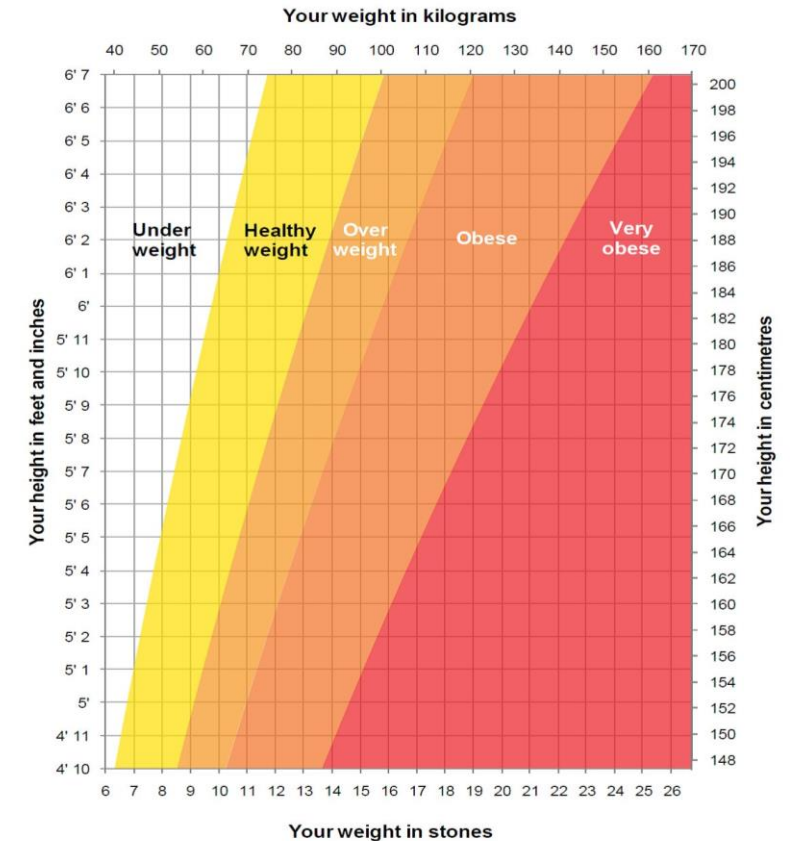
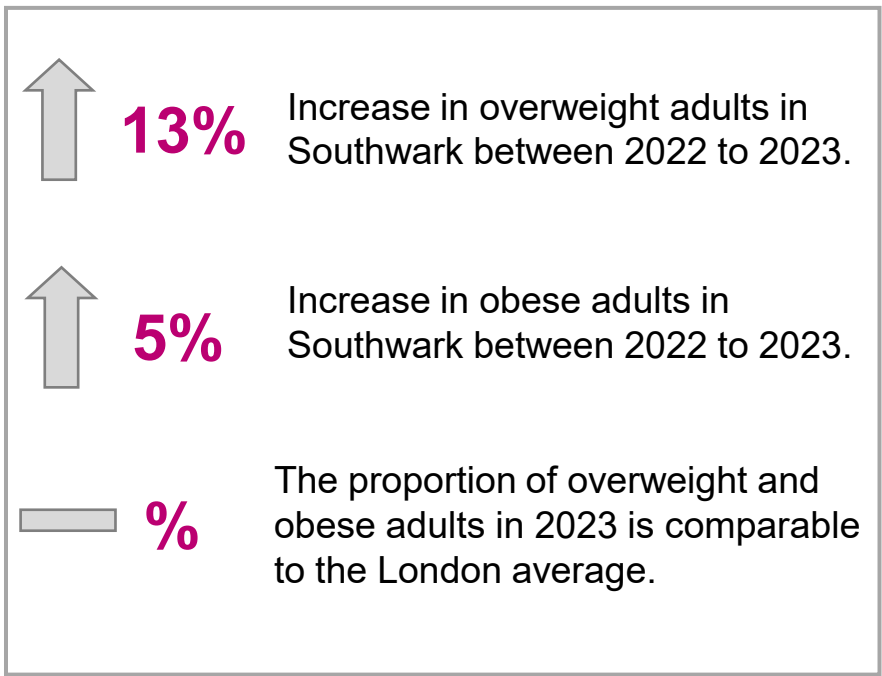


Figure 1: BMI classification scale

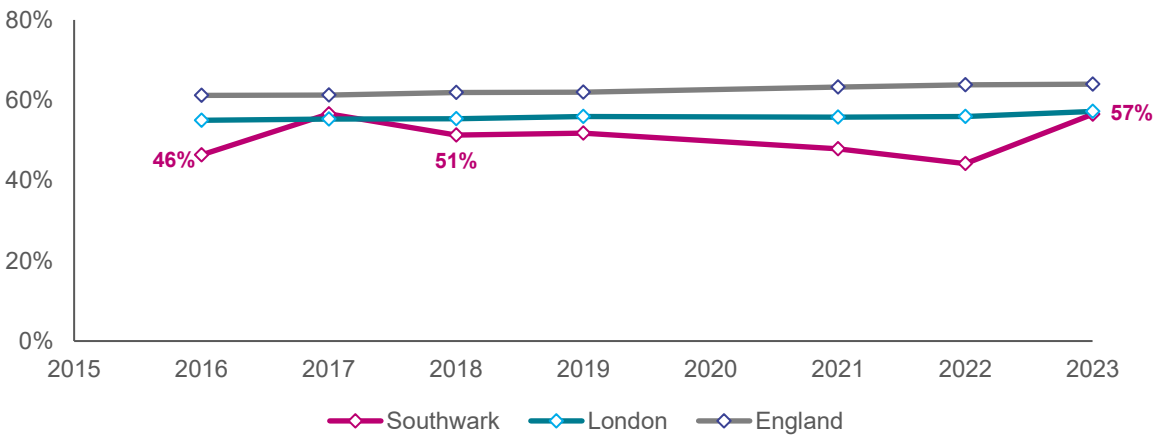
The prevalence of overweight and obese adults in Southwark are higher compared to levels observed five years prior

Despite this, both the percentage of overweight and obese adults in Southwark remaining lower than the England averages¹

Adult Weight



Overweight



Obese

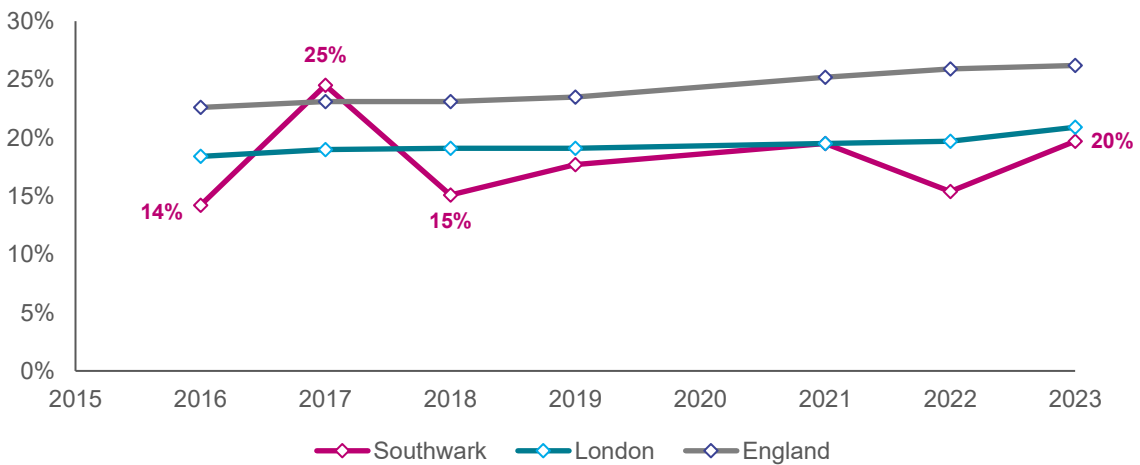


Figure 2 & 3: The trends in the proportion of overweight and obese adults (18+) in Southwark between 2015/16 to 2022/23

Adult obesity rates are highest across the central belt of the borough, mirroring patterns of socio-economic disadvantage

Using South-East London Primary Care Data, the wards with the highest adult obesity rates are comparable to those with the highest levels of child obesity.

- Adult obesity rates* across Southwark in 2024 were 80 cases per 1,000 people, with rates highest amongst females who were Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic. This is higher than the South-East London average.
- Data from General Practices* indicates adult obesity rates are highest in the Old Kent Road (114 cases per 1,000 population), Peckham (109 cases per 1,000 population, and Camberwell Green (104 cases per 1,000 population) wards.



2x

The rate of adult obesity in the most disadvantaged wards compared to the least disadvantaged.

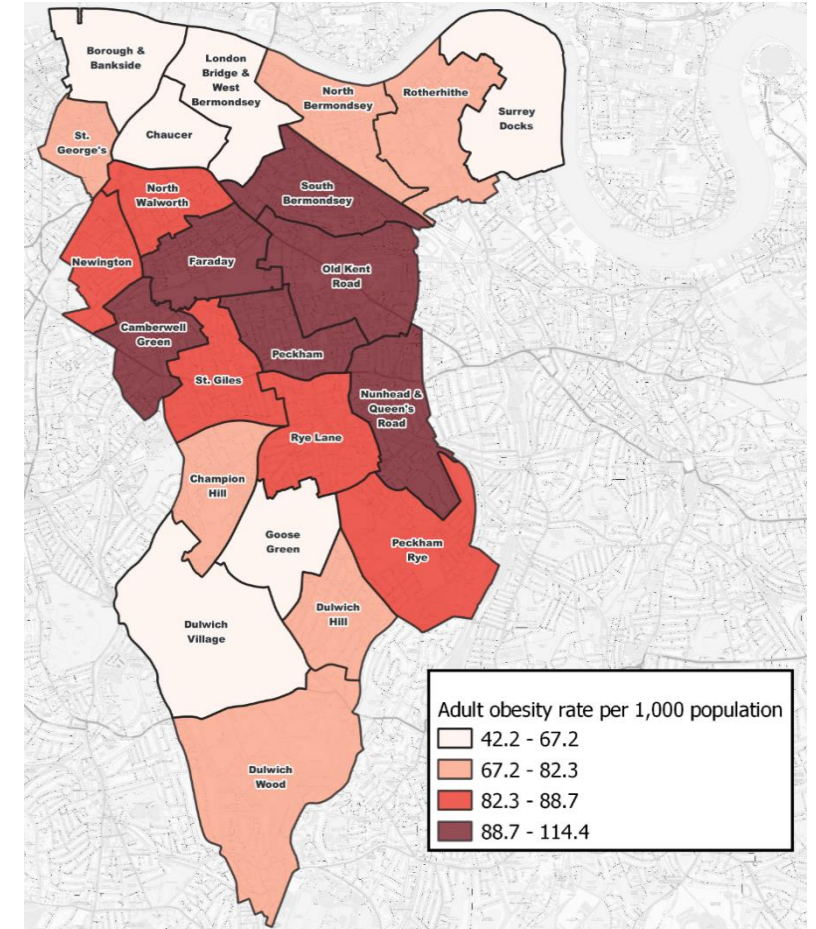


Figure 4: The adult obesity rate per 1,000 population in Southwark (2024), by ward

Obesity levels increase through to middle age, with adults aged 50 and over having the highest rates compared to their younger counterparts

Obesity is highest among those aged 50-59, with the youngest cohort having the lowest rates of obesity, according to South-East London Primary Care Data.

- Obesity rates are in line with existing literature which identifies age as a significant risk factor for the development of obesity in later life.
- Females in Southwark had an obesity rate 1.7 times higher than their male counterparts. This contrasts with the national picture which shows a similar obesity prevalence between the sexes.
- Lastly, Black patients in Southwark had the highest adult obesity rate when analysed by broad ethnic groups, displaying a similar pattern to other health conditions in the borough.

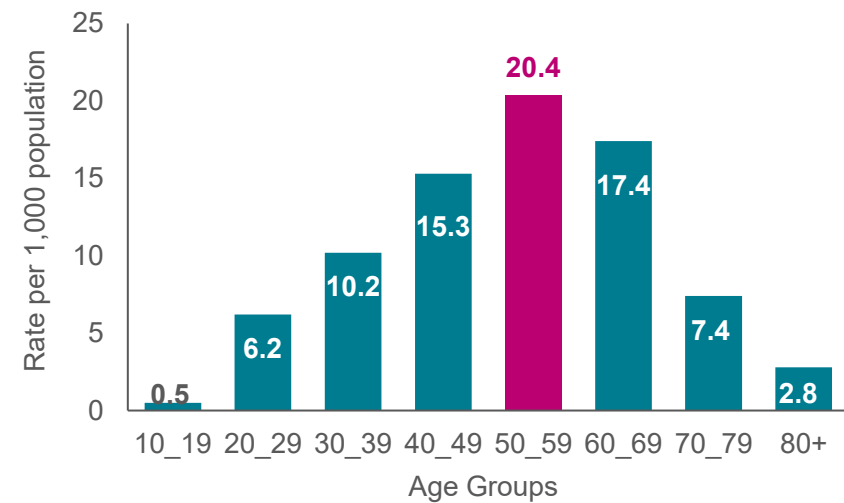


Figure 5: The adult obesity rate per 1,000 population* in Southwark (2024), by age groups

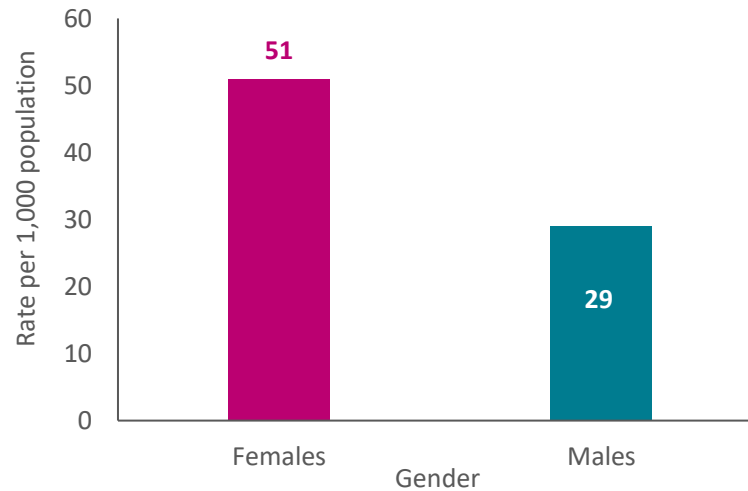


Figure 6: The adult obesity rate per 1,000 population* in Southwark (2024), by gender



Figure 7: The adult obesity rate per 1,000 population* in Southwark (2024), by broad ethnic groups

Older females and those from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic background experienced the highest burden of obesity

In Southwark, there is a normal distribution of adult obesity amongst age groups, with higher rates seen amongst females and those from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic background.

- When examining ethnicity, the highest rates were observed in patients from a Black background, particularly those aged 50-59 years of age who had a rate of 11 per 1,000 population, followed by White patients aged 60-69 with a rate of 7 per 1,000. This is despite Black residents making up just 25% of the Southwark population, with this higher obesity level amongst black residents also manifesting itself in the higher prevalence of chronic health conditions.
- Black females have a higher obesity rate (25 per 1,000 population) in the borough, compared to their White counterparts (18 per 1,000).

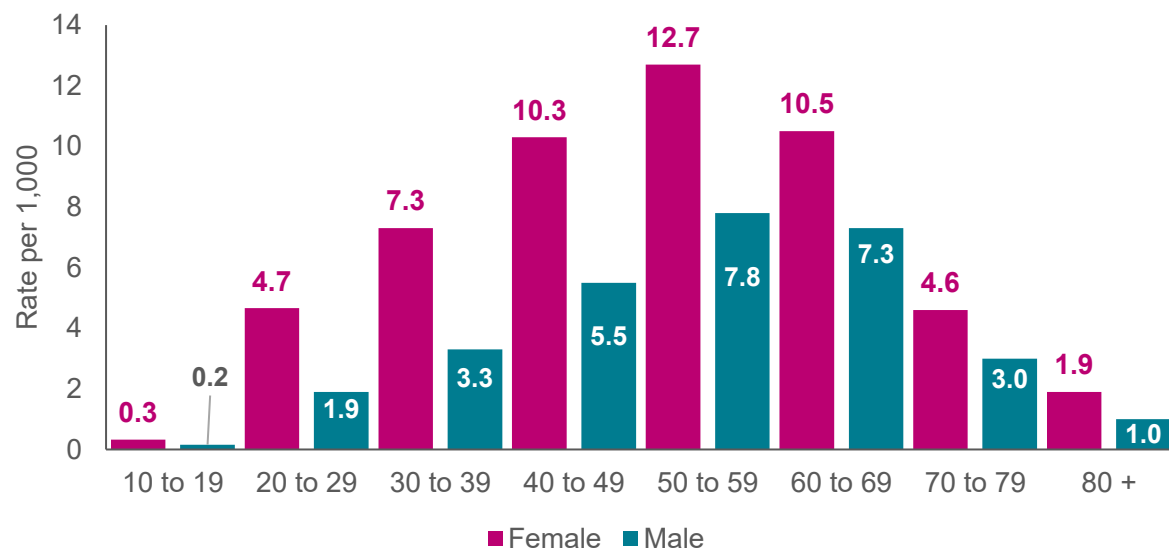


Figure 8: The adult obesity rate per 1,000 population* in Southwark (2024), by age groups and gender



Figure 9: The adult obesity rate per 1,000 population* in Southwark (2024), by age groups and broad ethnic groups

Obesity is closely associated with the development of several life-limiting chronic health conditions

These conditions include Type 2 Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardiovascular disease, and poor mental health.

- For residents identified as obese, approximately 2% (6,000) of the Southwark population live with at least 1 other long-term condition.
- Southwark has the 3rd highest rate per 1,000 population of patients being both obese and having hypertension (10,500 patients) and being obese and being a type 2 diabetic (7,400 patients) across all the South-East London boroughs.



Figure 10: The rate per 1,000 population* of patients in Southwark with comorbidities** associated with obesity (2024).

*Rate calculations are based on adult borough population numbers.

**Patients in these figures can have obesity alongside multiple other comorbidities. The data does not allow for inferences about disease progression and risk of developing diseases alongside obesity. Lastly, these figures represent diagnosed patients, so there may be a proportion of patients unreported.

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Fruit and vegetables are part of a healthy, balanced diet and can help the public stay healthy and manage their weight

National data indicates that males, those who have been long-term unemployed, and those from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic background have lower levels of fruit and vegetable consumption compared to the national average.

- The proportion of adults in Southwark consuming the recommended 5 fruit and vegetables has remained constant since 2021 despite experiencing a 3% percentage point decrease in 2022.
- These levels were higher than the London and national averages for 2023, which could be due to local initiatives in Southwark to improve access and availability of fruit and vegetables.

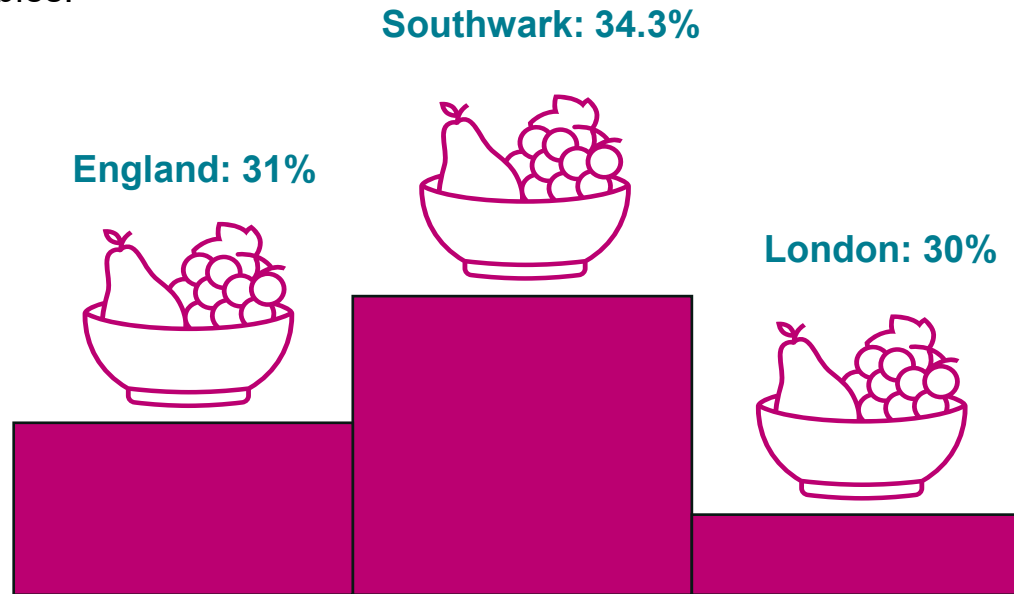


Figure 11: Trends in the proportion of adults meeting the '5-a-day' fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations (2022/23)

The frequent consumption of fast food is associated with the development of obesity and long-term health conditions

One of two major challenges highlighted by Southwark residents to being a healthy weight was the high availability of cheap and highly processed foods.

- For Southwark residents with young children, limited time for physical activity posed the other challenge to reaching a healthy weight.
- There are a higher concentrations of takeaway outlets across the north of the borough, concentrated along major transport routes, making accessibility easier. There were 586 registered takeaway stores across Southwark in 2024.
- These outlets are also located in the more disadvantaged areas of Southwark, which also have the highest levels of childhood obesity. There is a social gradient between the fast-food outlet density and area level deprivation, increasing with deprivation.
- There were a total of 80 supermarkets located across Southwark, with most located near major transport links in either Borough and Bankside or North Walworth wards.

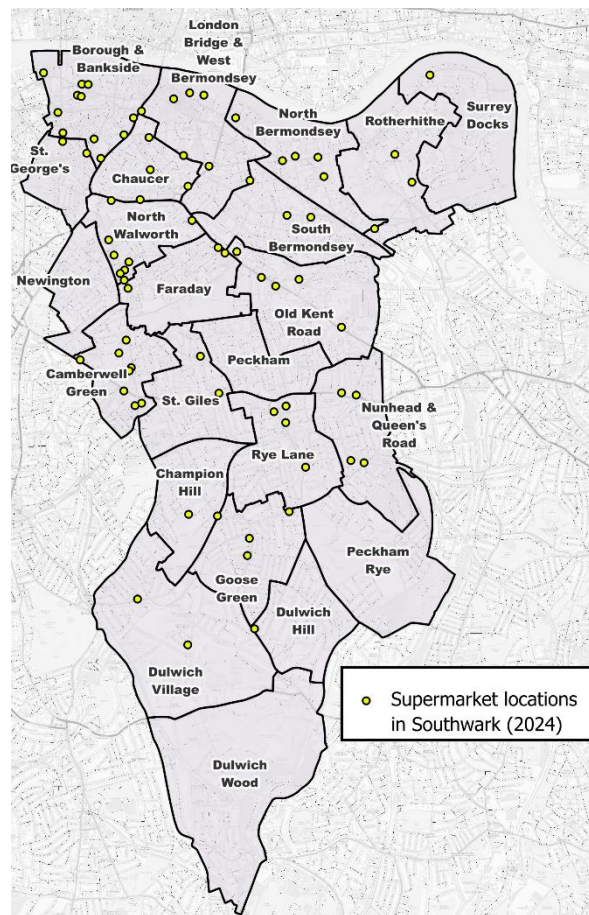


Figure 12: The locations of supermarkets outlets across Southwark.

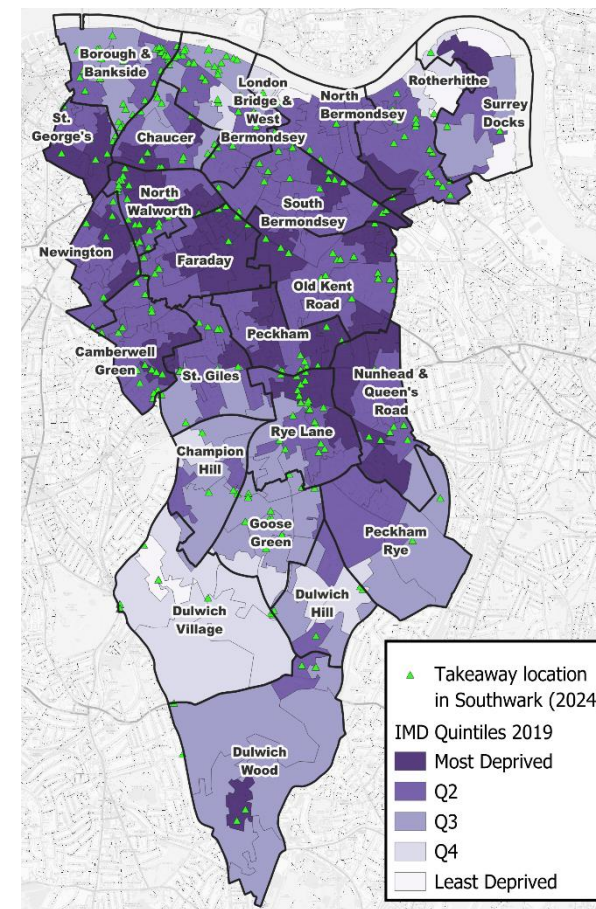


Figure 13: The locations of takeaway and sandwich outlets in Southwark.

Food Insecurity is a major concern across Southwark, especially amongst the most disadvantaged areas in the borough and ethnically diverse communities

Across the borough, over 1,000 residents responded to questions on their experiences with food insecurity in a 2023 survey conducted by Impact on Urban Health (IoUH).

- Almost 30% of respondents stated that over the last 6 months, they had smaller meals than usual or skipped meals because they couldn't afford or access food. This increased to 35% for those with children.
- For those financially getting by or struggling, 47% (537) of them reported skipping meals and 25% (136) of them not eating for an entire day due to their financial circumstances.
- 34% of those from a Black ethnic background reported missing or having smaller meals during the last 6 months, 12 percentage points higher than their White counterparts, highlighting the ethnic disparities in food insecurity.
- Evidence shows that food insecurity is linked and a risk factor for obesity, especially amongst those experiencing poverty and those from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic Background.

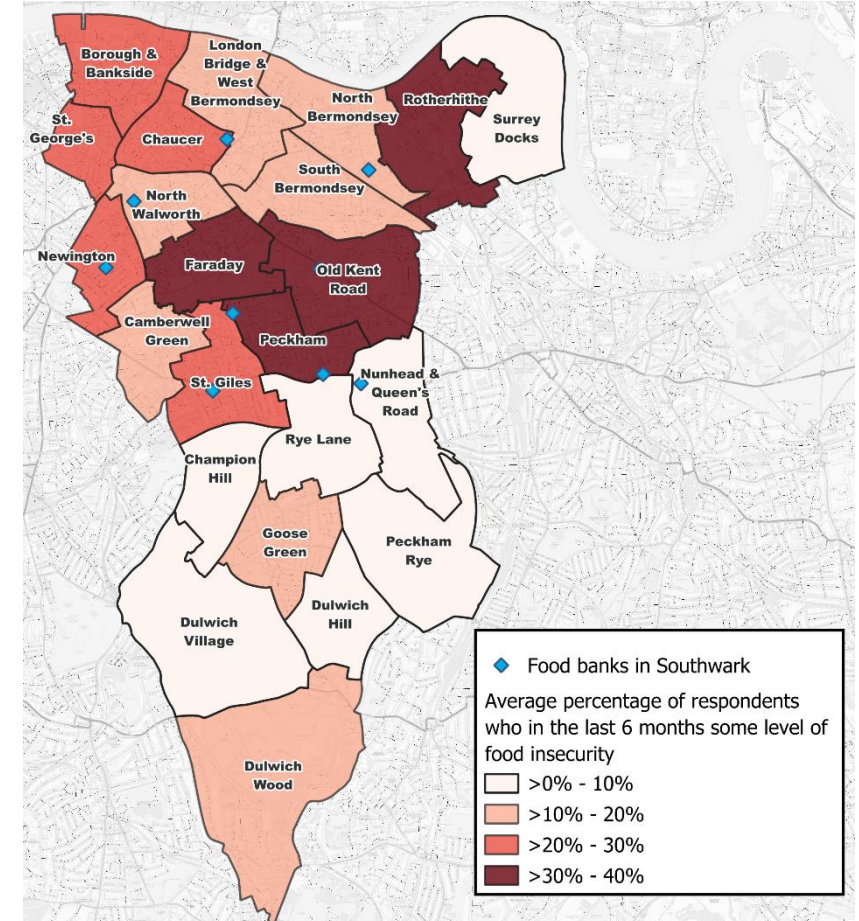


Figure 14: The average percentage of respondents in Southwark experiencing some form of food insecurity and the location of foodbanks, by ward.

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Southwark is doing significantly better in the proportion of physically active adults compared to the London and England averages

Physical activity levels amongst adults




150 minutes

The CMO recommended number of minutes an adult should undertake per week of moderate physical activity.



30 minutes

Physical inactivity is defined as engaging in less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week. The proportion of physically inactive adults in Southwark (18%) is lower than the regional average (24%), with the most deprived decile having inactivity levels twice that of the least deprived.



4%

The increase in the proportion of adults in Southwark meeting the physical activity recommendation from 2022 to 2023.

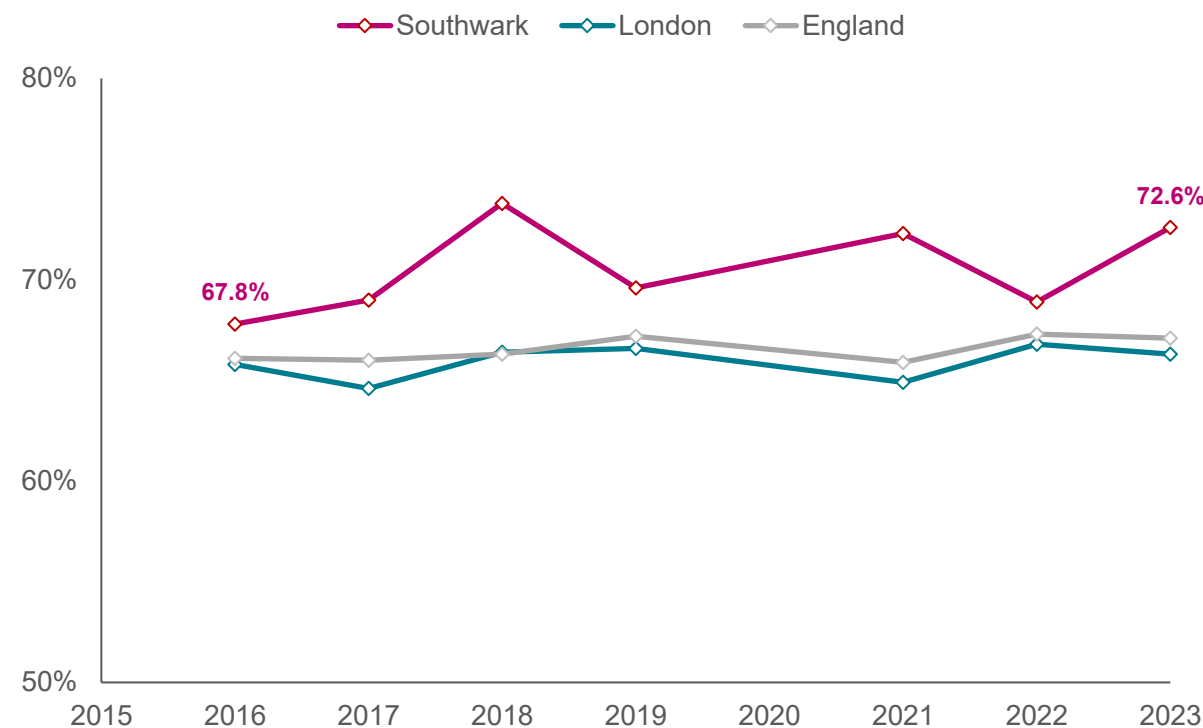


Figure 15: Trends in the proportion of adults reporting to be meeting physical activity recommendations (2015/16-2022/23)

Most adult active users of Southwark leisure centres resided in Goose Green, Rye Lane or Rotherhithe

There were just under 60,000 adults living in Southwark and registered as active members across all Southwark leisure centres, with the majority having The Castle Leisure Centre, Dulwich Centre or Peckham Pulse as their home gym.

- 83% of active members at The Castle Leisure Centre, those with either casual or current membership, were those aged over 19 years of age.
- The three most popular activities booked by adults across these 3 leisure centres were Gym sessions, Swimming, and Group Cycle.

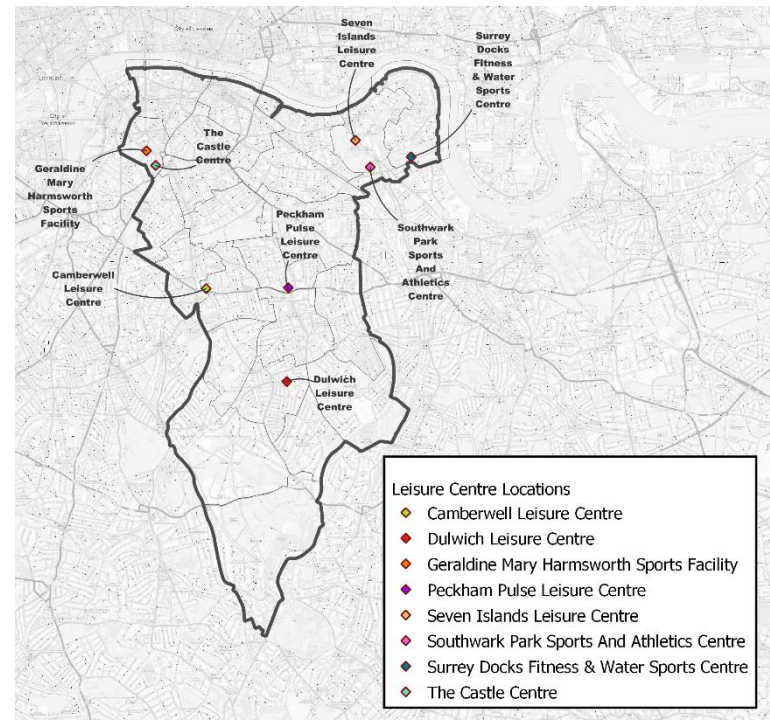


Figure 16: The locations of the 8 Southwark-managed leisure centres across the borough.

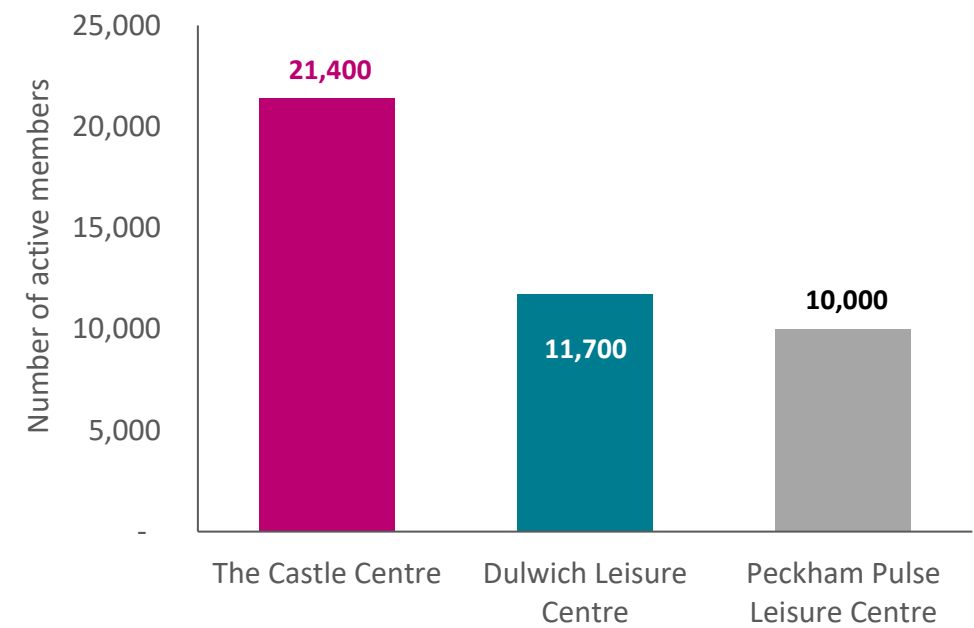


Figure 17: The 3 most subscribed leisure centres in Southwark by number of active leisure centre members aged above 20 (2023/24)

Access to open spaces and exercise facilities is a key component when maintaining a healthy weight

Across the entire borough, over 1,000 residents responded to questions prepared by IoUH their experiences with facilities in their local area.

- Most respondents viewed the green spaces, leisure facilities and cycle lanes in their local area positively, with 85% of them viewing green spaces in the borough as either good or very good.
- Those with a disability reported lower levels of satisfaction with sports facilities in their local area, with 51% viewing them as either good or very good.
- When disaggregating by ethnicity, those from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic displayed higher levels of satisfaction with their local sports facilities and cycle lanes compared to their White counterparts.

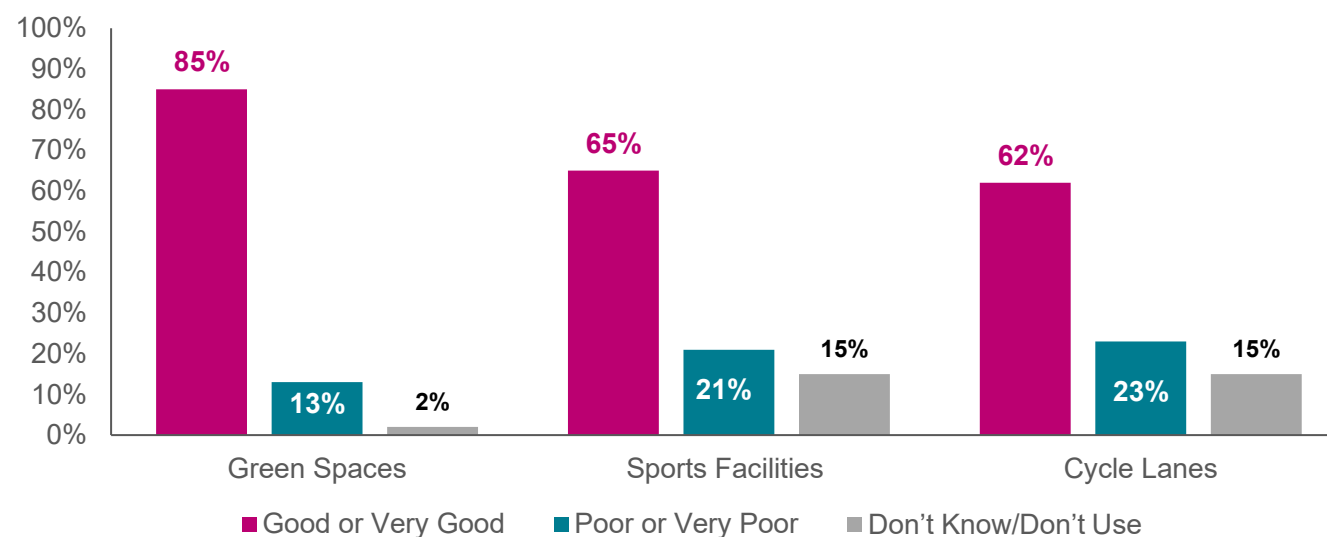


Figure 18: Levels of reported satisfaction by Southwark residents towards their local services (2023)

The proportion of Southwark residents using active travel methods has increased over recent times

The encouraging use of active travel, including walking and cycling can support healthy weight and increase physical activity in adults

- Southwark experienced a sharp increase in the proportion of adults reporting that they walked or cycled at least once a week from 76% in 2022, to 82% in 2023. This is higher than the national and regional averages. Furthermore, this supports the data displaying high levels of satisfaction with cycle lanes and green spaces across the borough by residents.

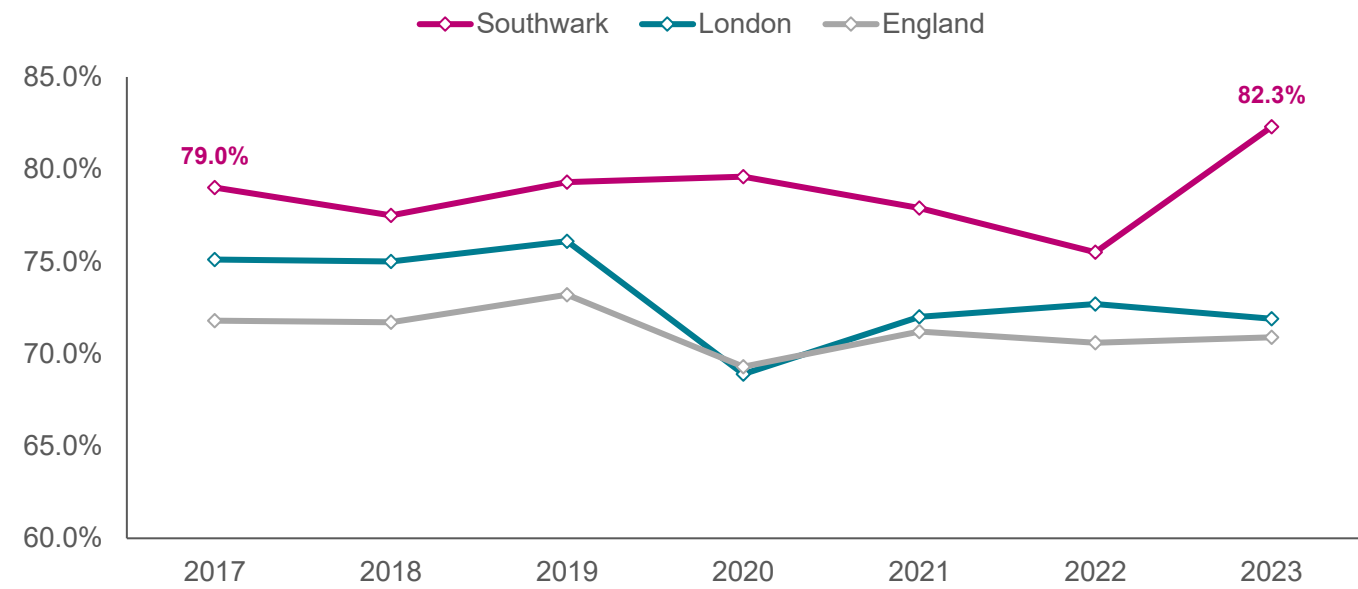


Figure 19: The proportion of adults walking or cycling for any per purpose at least once a week (2017-2023).

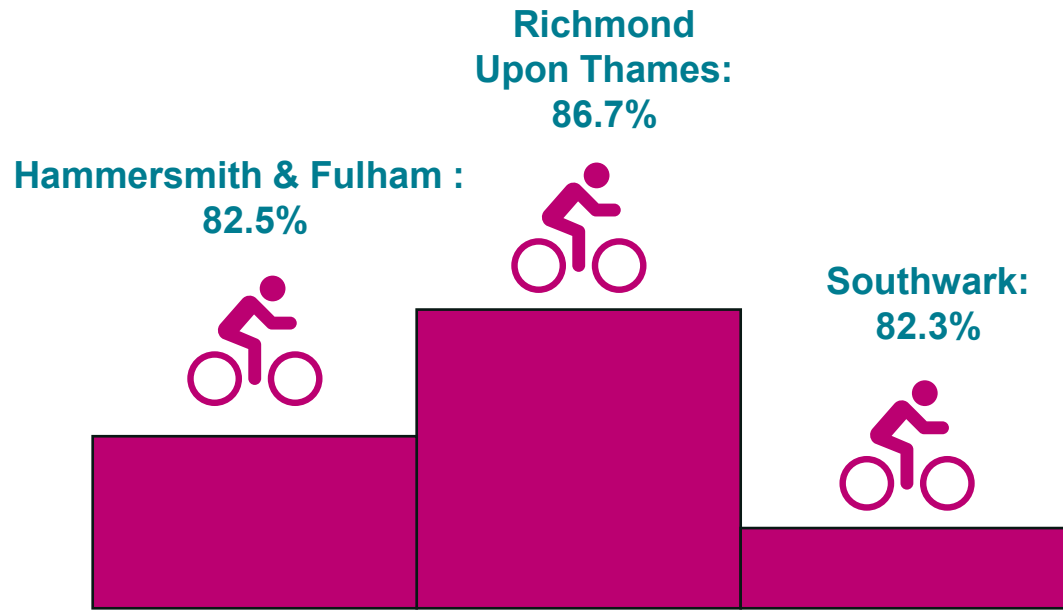


Figure 20: The top 3 local authorities with the highest proportion of adults reporting to have cycled or walked at least once a week (2022/23).

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Southwark-commissioned exercise services promote improved physical activity and mental health

There are 3 GP referral services offering a 12-week programme to reduce inactivity, each offering different levels of support depending on the needs of residents.

- The **Kickstart** programme is the lowest level of support, offering free 12-week access to leisure centres and group classes. This programme had the highest number of referrals, with an even split between patients who completed and left the initiative between April 2022 and March 2024.
- The **Active Boost** programme is the second level of support, including supervised group fitness classes. There were 60% of participants who left the programme before its completion. KPIs outlined by UKHSA state that at least 60% of participants should complete their respective interventions.
- The **Cardiactive** programme is the highest level of support, offering supervised activities and specialised rehabilitation programmes. This initiative had the lowest attrition levels across all the programmes offered.

Kickstart referral status	%
Completed	44%
Left Early	53%
Participating	1%
Not Participating	1%
Total	1002

Table 1: Patient engagement levels with the Kickstart programme (2022-24)

Active Boost referral status*	%
Completed	36%
Left Early	60%
Participating	1%
Not Participating	4%
Total	976

Table 2: Patient engagement levels with the Active Boost programme (2022-24)

Cardiactive referral status*	%
Completed	47%
Left Early	50%
Not Participating	3%
Total	298

Table 3: Patient engagement levels with the Cardiactive programme (2022-24)

*Statistical disclosure control has been applied to these table to avoid the release of confidential data by combining engagement groups and rounding, as a result, figures may not total to 100%.

The largest proportion of those referred to the Kickstart and Active Boost programmes were from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic background.

Those from a Black ethnic background in Southwark were the largest identifiable Non-White ethnic group referred to the exercise referral programme.

- The attrition of Black patients referred was highest amongst the Active Boost programme, and lowest for the Cardiactive programme. Possible reasons for this could include increased supervision, and the severity of their physical condition when referred to the Cardiactive programme.
- When analysing those who left the respective programmes early, most of them resided in the most disadvantaged quintiles in the borough.
- Across all 3 programmes, 60% of those who left the programme early were females. The highest number of females leaving early were identified in the Kickstart programme.

Ethnic Group	Kickstart referrals	% of referrals leaving early
Black	360	55%
Unknown/Withheld	307	51%
White	230	58%
Other	41	46%
Asian	34	38%
Mixed	30	43%
Total	1002	533

Table 4: The number of Kickstart referrals and proportion leaving early, by ethnicity (2022-24)

Ethnic Group	Active Boost referrals	% of referrals leaving early
Black	434	59%
Unknown/Withheld	300	57%
White	170	65%
Asian	34	71%
Mixed	23	65%
Other	15	27%
Total	976	581

Table 5: The number of Active Boost referrals and proportion leaving early, by ethnicity (2022-24)

Ethnic Group	Cardiactive referrals*	% of referrals leaving early
White	123	44%
Unknown/Withheld	80	29%
Black	70	21%
Other ethnic groups	25	5%
Total	298	149

Table 6: The number of Cardiactive referrals* and proportion leaving early, by ethnicity (2022-24)

The NHS health checks service in Southwark offers a free check-up, assessing the risk of developing chronic long-term conditions

These conditions are closely related to a patient’s diet and lifestyle, with the checks offered within their GP practice once every 5 years.

- In the year 2022/23, 8,191 health checks were delivered to eligible Southwark residents, an almost 50% increase on the 2021/22 figures. 98.2% of these patients had their BMI recorded, with the number of patients reported as being Obese seeing an 82% increase between 2021/22 to 2022/23. Part of this increase can be attributed to a doubling of the number of appointments being made available.
- Physical activity levels were recorded for over 90% of patients attending a health check in 2022/23, with those recorded as being inactive increasing by 40% from 940 in 2021/22 to 1,313 in 2022/23.

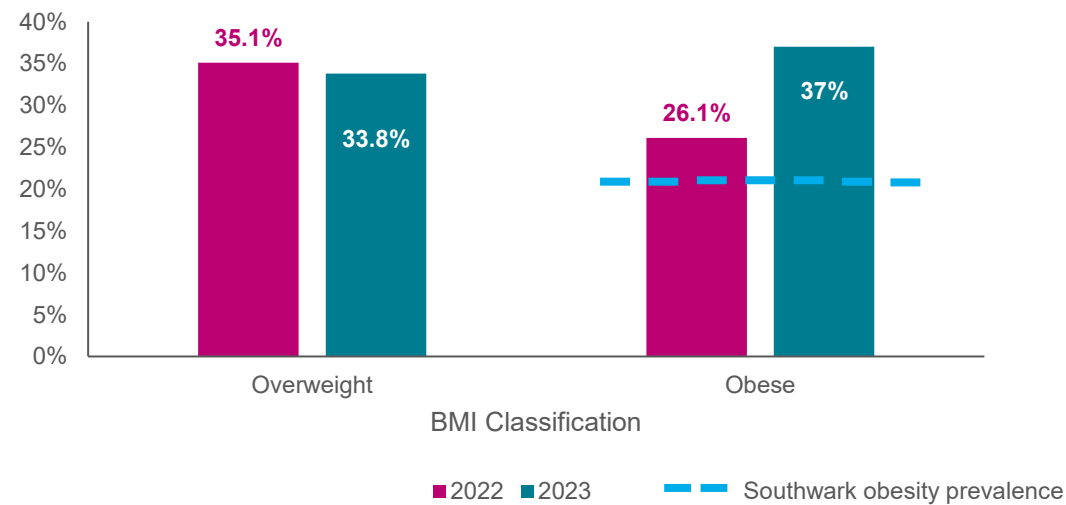


Figure 21: Clinical BMI classifications of those attending a Southwark NHS Health Check (2021/22-2022/23).

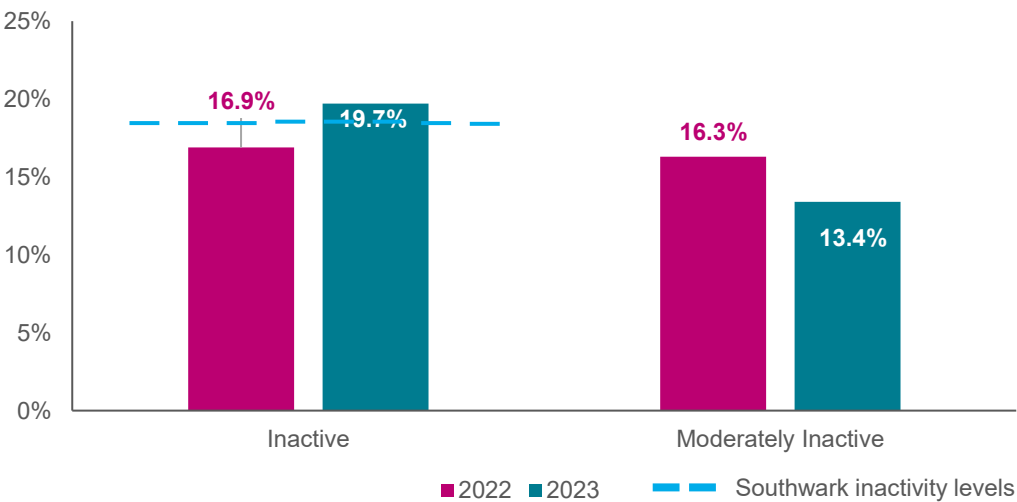


Figure 22: Physical activity levels of those attending a Southwark NHS Health Check (2021/22-2022/23).

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Find out more at:
www.southwark.gov.uk/publichealth