



EUROPEAN CHILDHOOD OBESITY SURVEILLANCE INITIATIVE (COSI) REPORT, UKRAINE 2024

RESULTS OF THE STUDY



ABOUT THE COSI SURVEY



The WHO Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI), Round 6 (2023-2024), is significant collaborative effort aiming at monitoring childhood obesity trends across Europe. In Ukraine, this initiative is led by the State institution “Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine” in partnership with the Ukrainian-Swiss project “Reducing Risk Factors for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Ukraine”. This project is led by the GFA Consulting Group with financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The initiative also benefits from the technical guidance of the WHO Country Office in Ukraine, the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and the support of the NGO “Ukrainian Institute for Social Research after Oleksandr Yaremko.”

The COSI survey, Round 6, focuses on collecting and analysing data to better understand the prevalence of obesity among children, providing valuable insights for public health interventions and policy development. The collaborative nature of this initiative underscores the commitment of international and national stakeholders to address the growing challenges resulting from childhood obesity, such as significant risks to the health and

well-being of future generations. By leveraging expertise and resources from multiple organisations, the initiative aims at building a robust evidence base to guide efforts to reduce obesity and promote healthier lifestyles among children in Ukraine and beyond.

The COSI survey, Round 6, was carried out in Ukraine during 2023-2024 in 20 regions. 185 schools, 3,557 children and 3,601 parents took part in the survey. In 2023-2024, every fifth 7-year-old child (21.9%) in Ukraine was overweight, including 8% or one in twelve children classified as obese.

In 2023-2024, among all children aged 6-9 years old nearly one in four children (23%) were overweight, with 9% or one in eleven children classified as obese. The data highlight the need for urgent interventions at the national and regional level to address the root causes of childhood obesity and overweight. This includes promoting healthier diets, increasing physical activity, and improving health literacy among children and parents. Schools, as critical environments for shaping children’s health behaviour, will need targeted policies and programs.

SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

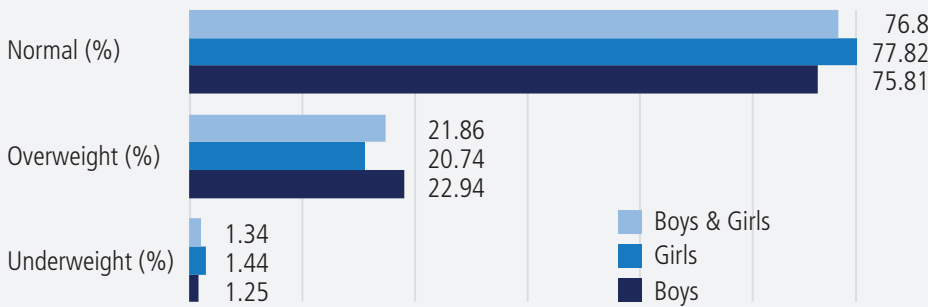
The findings underline potential socioeconomic and developmental impacts. Overweight or obese children are more likely to face stigmatization, lower self-esteem, and barriers to achieve their full educational and social potential. If unaddressed, this could perpetuate health inequity and reduce productivity in future generations, hampering Ukraine’s broader developmental goals.

NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are major contributors to premature mortality in Ukraine, accounting for approximately 650,000 deaths per year. Obesity and overweight are critical risk factors in the development of these conditions. NCDs continue to place a significant strain on Ukraine’s healthcare resources, a challenge compounded by the country’s complex socioeconomic conditions and ongoing conflict.

These diseases, often linked to preventable factors like obesity, poor diet, and physical inactivity, do not only reduce life expectancy but also lower the quality of life and impose economic burden on families and the healthcare system. The high prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity amplifies these issues, as affected children are more likely to develop NCDs during adulthood, perpetuating health risks within the population.

The Act4Health project has been implemented alongside national health programs to alleviate the burden of NCDs by reducing the risk factors associated with NCDs and contributing to an improved general well-being and increased life expectancy of men and women in Ukraine through an integrated, multidisciplinary and life course approach, empowering communities through the promotion of healthier lifestyles, and efforts to strengthen healthcare systems to better manage these conditions.

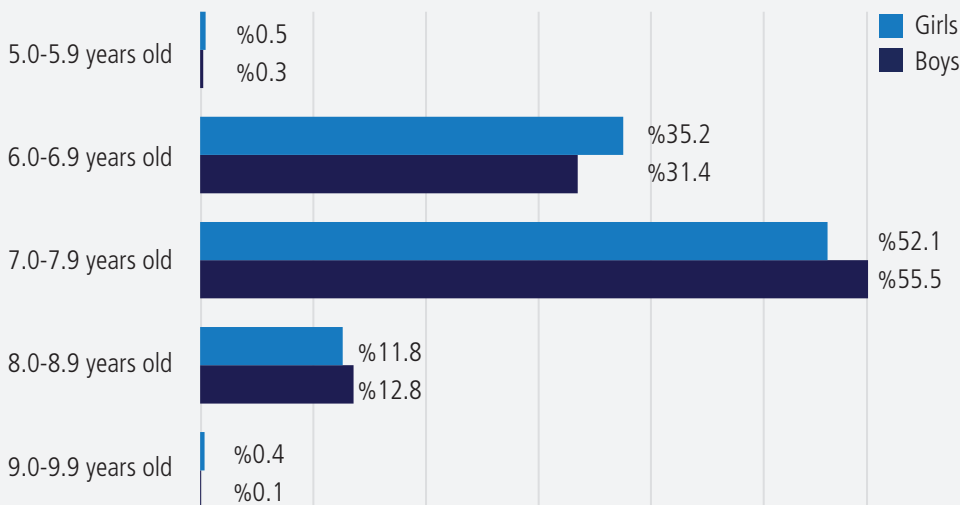
PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT, NORMAL WEIGHT AND UNDERWEIGHT AMONG CHILDREN BY GENDER, N=3 149, %.



ALL CHILDREN 6-9 YEARS OLD

In 2023-2024, in all children aged 6-9 years old nearly one in four children (23%) were overweight, with 9% or one in eleven children.

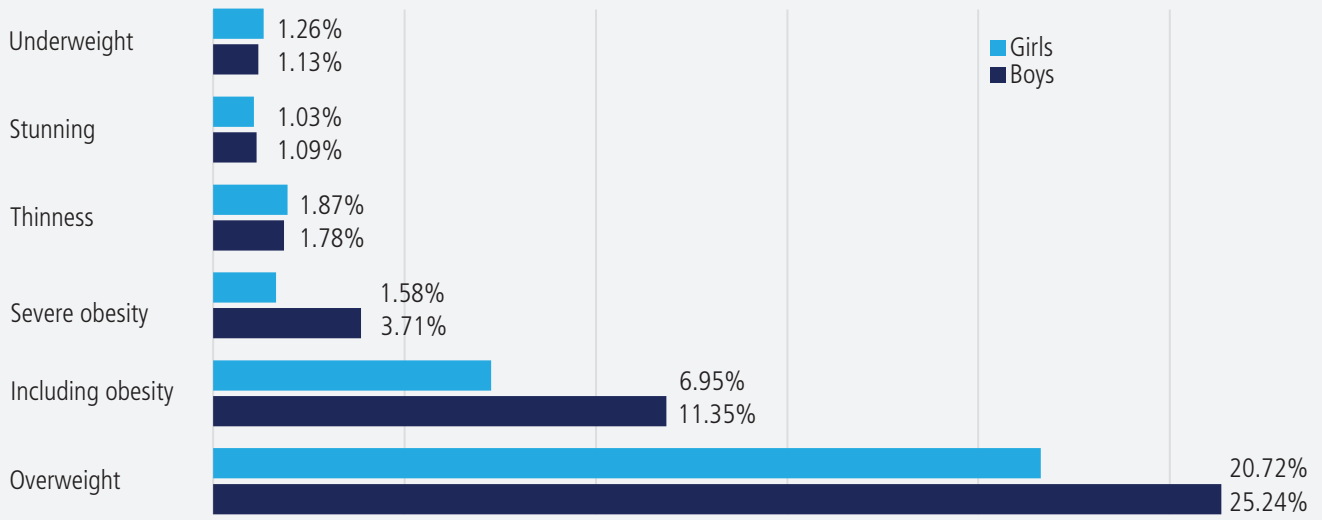
AGE OF SURVEYED CHILDREN, BY GENDER N= 3 557, %



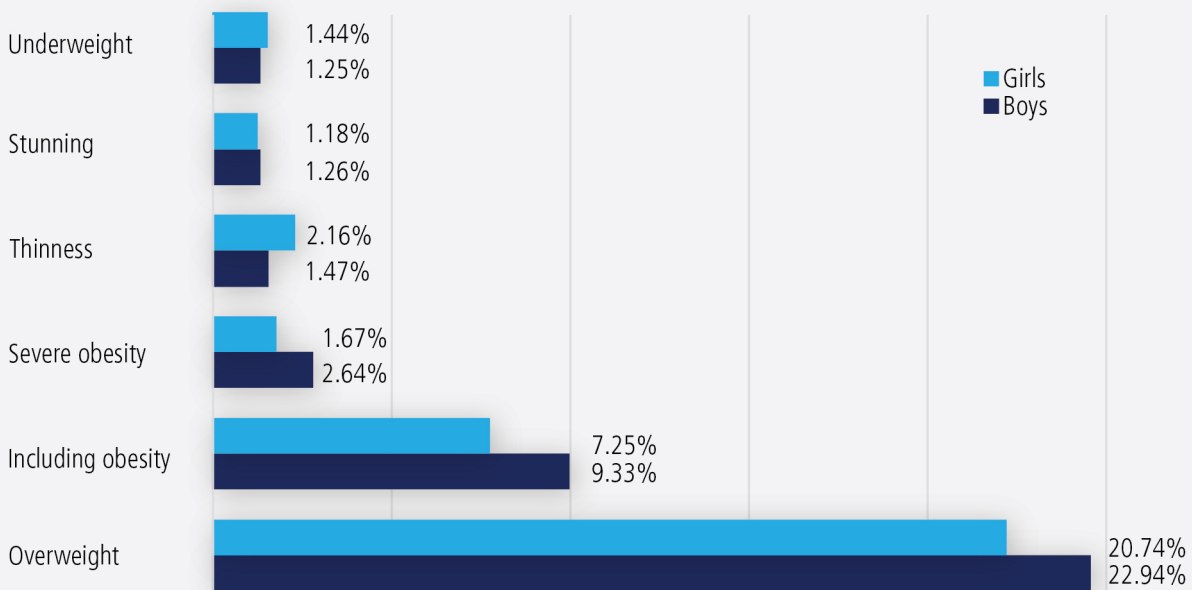
CHILDREN AGED BETWEEN 7 AND 7.9 YEARS

In 2023-2024, every fifth 7-year-old child (21.9%) in Ukraine was overweight, with 8% or one in twelve children classified as obese.

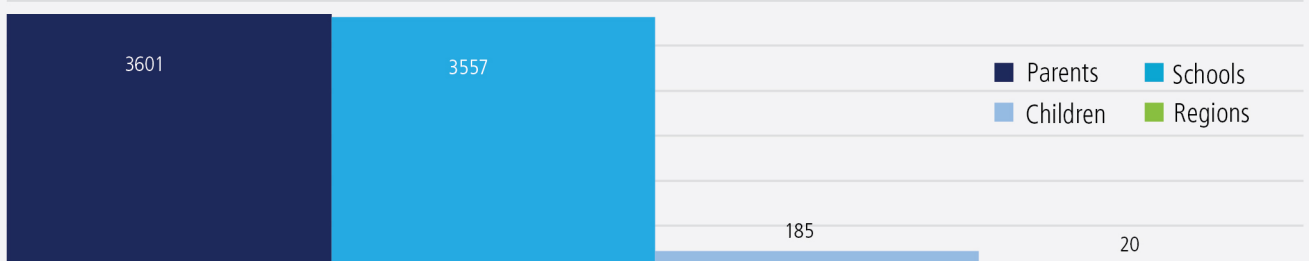
PERCENTAGE OF BOYS AND GIRLS BY WEIGHT-RELATED HEALTH CATEGORIES, AGE 6-8 YEARS



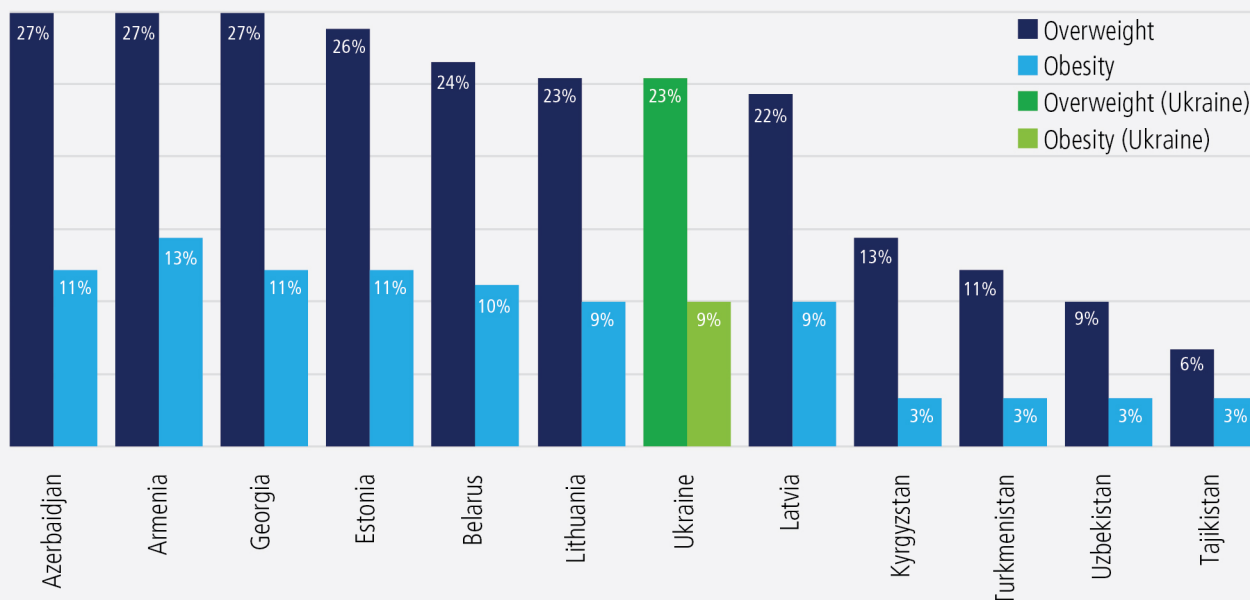
PERCENTAGE OF BOYS AND GIRLS BY WEIGHT-RELATED HEALTH CATEGORIES, AGE 7-7.9 YEARS



NUMBER OF PARENTS, SCHOOLS, CHILDREN, AND REGIONS INVOLVED IN ROUND 6 COSI SURVEY, UKRAINE 2024



ALL CHILDREN AGED BETWEEN 6-9.9 YEARS OLD - OVERWEIGHT INCLUDING OBESITY, COSI SURVEY ROUND 6. COMPARISON BETWEEN FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS (%)



KEY MESSAGES

TACKLING INCREASING CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN UKRAINE

The ongoing war in Ukraine has significantly disrupted the healthcare system, making childhood obesity prevention even more challenging. With 23% of 6-9-year-old children overweight including 9% affected by obesity, the country faces a dual burden of conflict-related trauma and increasing NCDs. Addressing these health issues is essential for Ukraine's resilience, as reducing the prevalence of obesity will enhance the well-being of its youth and ultimately strengthen the nation's post-war recovery.

ADDRESSING CHILDHOOD OBESITY IS IN LINE WITH UKRAINE'S EU ACCESSION GOALS

The European Union places a strong emphasis on public health standards, and Ukraine's increasing rates of childhood obesity present a pressing public health challenge that aligns with EU health priorities. By integrating COSI findings into Ukraine's NCD Action Plan, Ukraine can demonstrate its commitment to improve population health, aligning with EU standards, and paving the way toward EU accession. Such initiatives signal Ukraine's dedication to tackling NCDs as part of its broader European integration and reform efforts.

BUILDING A RESILIENT, HEALTHIER FUTURE IN POST-WAR UKRAINE

As Ukraine pursues EU accession and aims at meeting international health standards, the country's response to childhood obesity will be crucial. The COSI data provide a foundation for Ukraine to update its NCD Action Plan, focusing on accessible, comprehensive obesity prevention strategies amidst the war's strain on healthcare. This alignment with WHO and EU health strategies can position Ukraine as a proactive partner, fostering long-term health resilience and contributing to SDG Target 3.4 to reduce premature NCD mortality - a critical step in building a healthier, EU-ready nation.

LOW FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INTAKE

While 55.3% of primary school-aged children ate fresh fruit daily, only 41.4% consumed vegetables daily. Less than 1% met the recommended 5 portions of fruits and vegetables per day, and only 1 in 10 had at least 3 portions.

PLANT-BASED PROTEIN CONSUMPTION:

The near-negligible consumption of legumes (0.8%) and the very low intake of fish (2.7%) indicate that plant-based proteins and essential fatty acids from fish are severely lacking in children’s diets. This raises concerns about the variety and quality of the proteins and nutrients children are consuming.

FREQUENT SWEET SNACK CONSUMPTION

Over 40% of children consumed sweet snacks daily or on most days, with half drinking soft drinks daily, though savory snacks were less commonly consumed.

ACTIVE LIFESTYLE WITH SCREEN TIME LIMITATIONS

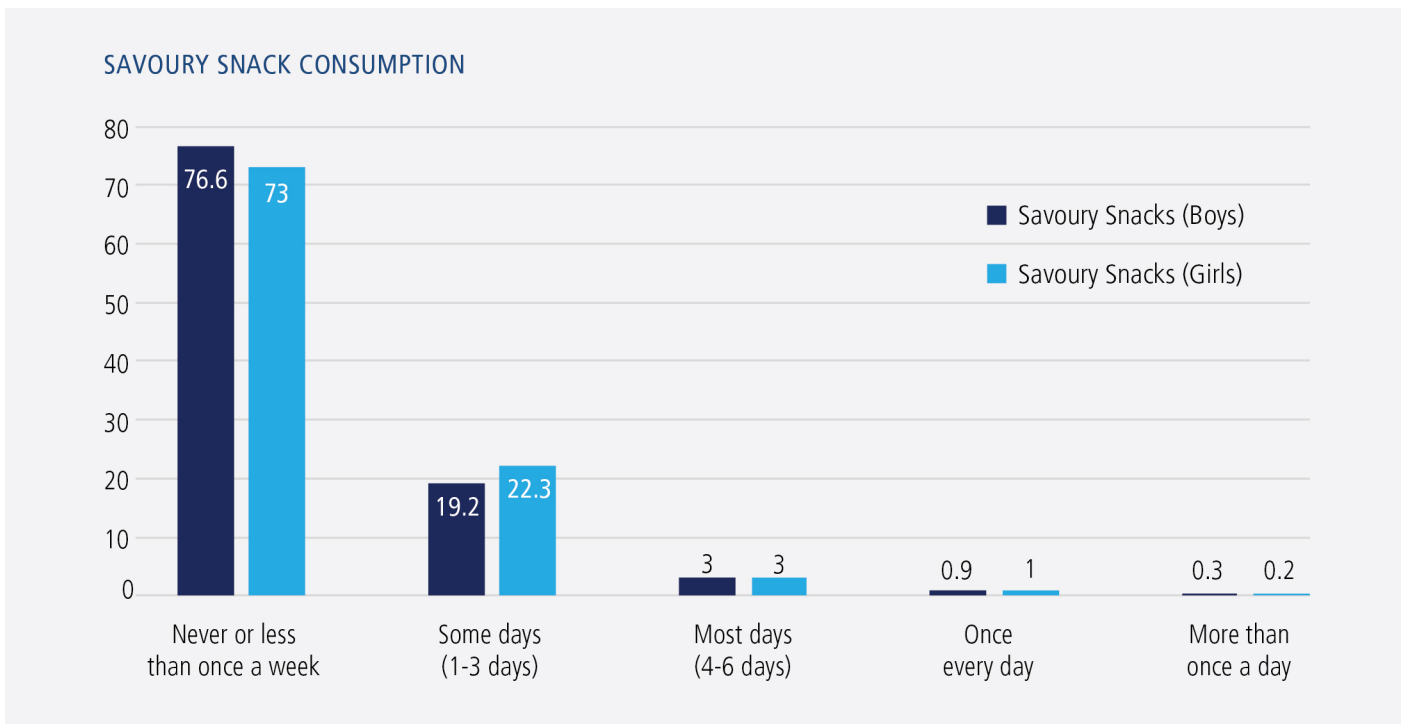
Nearly all children engaged in active play for at least an hour daily; 60.9% walked or cycled to school, and over 60% participated in at least 2 hours of sports weekly. Screen time was typically limited to under 2 hours daily during the week for most children

Overall, 75.6% of parents see their overweight children as having a normal weight, showing a significant trend of underestimation that could affect health outcomes. The reluctance to label children as overweight suggests social and psychological factors influencing parental judgment.

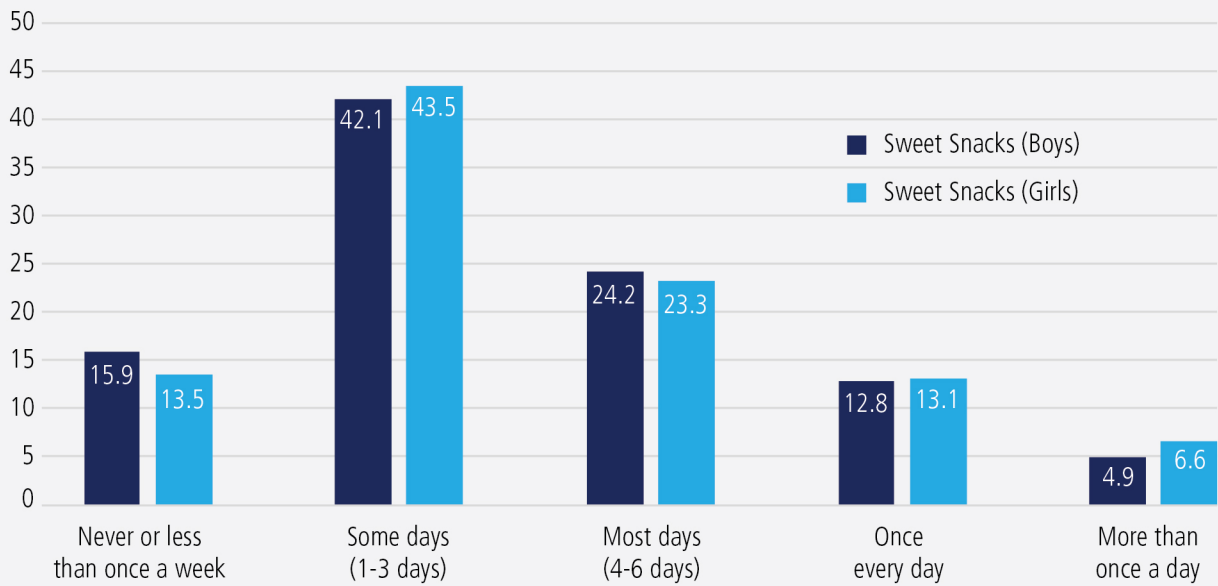
PARENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF OBESE CHILDREN

Girls: Among parents of obese girls, 50.9% believe their child is only a little overweight, and a significant portion (42.1%) still considers their child to have a normal weight. Only 5.4% acknowledge that their child is overweight. Parents of obese boys are slightly more accurate in their assessment compared to parents of girls, with 65.1% seeing their sons as having normal weight and 32.2% thinking they are a little overweight.

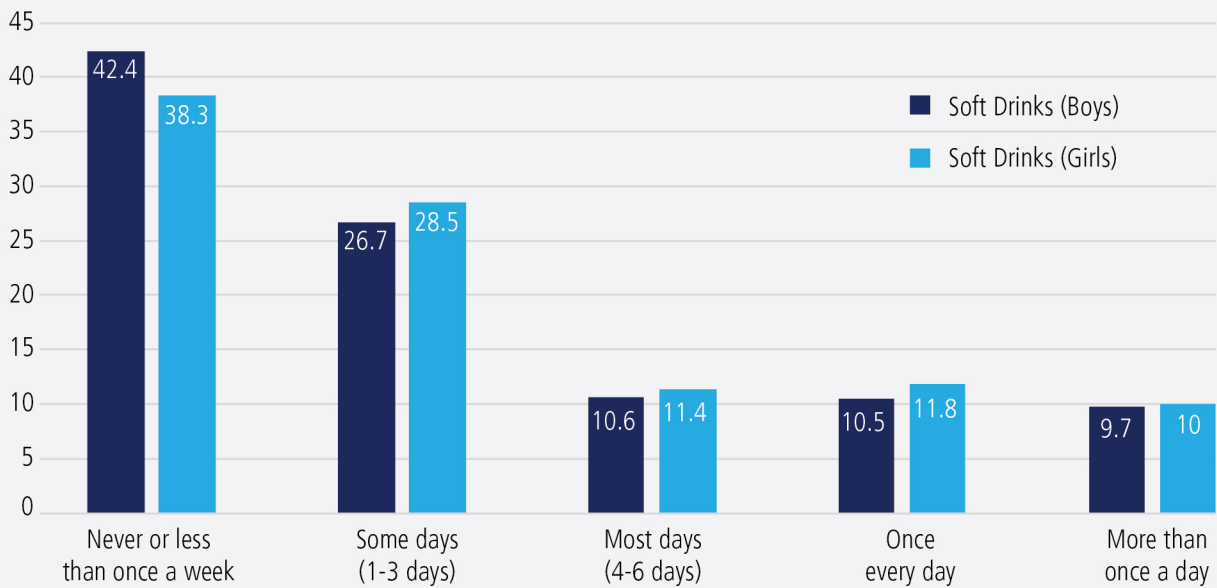
UNHEALTHY FOOD HABITS BY FREQUENCY OF CONSUMPTION (%)




SWEET SNACK CONSUMPTION



SOFT DRINKS CONSUMPTION



 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Швейцарська Конфедерація



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ЗДОРОВ'Я


CONSULTING GROUP



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