In 2011, 63 percent of adults in the United States were overweight or obese. Individuals who are overweight or obese have increased risks of developing conditions such as heart disease, type II diabetes and stroke. Obesity adds an estimated $147 billion to U.S. health care expenditures each year. Cost estimates cover Medicaid, Medicare and private insurers and include inpatient, outpatient and prescription drug costs. States are taking action by incorporating anti-obesity measures into their transportation and education policies.

Definitions:

- Body Mass Index (BMI) —A number calculated from a person’s weight and height. BMI provides a reliable indicator of body fat.
- Overweight—An adult who has a BMI between 25 and 29.9.
- Obese—An adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher.

Regional Analysis:

- In 2011, the percentage of adults who were obese in the East region ranged from 22 percent in Massachusetts to 29 percent in Delaware.
- The percentage of adults who were overweight or obese ranged from 53 percent in the District of Columbia to 66 percent in Puerto Rico.
- Racial and ethnic disparities existed in obesity in the East region in 2011. Maine had the highest percentage of obese whites at 65 percent. The national average is 62

1 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. “State Health Facts.”
2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Adult Obesity Facts.”
4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Body Mass Index”
5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Defining Overweight and Obesity”
Maryland had the highest percentage of obese African Americans at 73 percent. The national average is 72 percent. Pennsylvania had the highest percentage of obese Hispanics at 70 percent. The national average is 69 percent.

**Obesity and Transportation Policy**

- In the East region, nine states—Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont—each have land use policies designed to encourage more walkable or bike-friendly communities.\(^9\)
- Connecticut requires a minimum of 1 percent of transportation funding used at the municipal level be spent on cycling and/or pedestrian projects.\(^9\)
- Twelve percent of District of Columbia residents walk to work. A brisk walk to work can reduce the impact of genetic predisposition to obesity by half.\(^11\)

**Childhood Obesity and Education Policy**

- Students consume 35 percent to 50 percent of their daily calories at school.\(^12\)
- A 2012 report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found a correlation between the presence of school nutrition policies and lower rates of overweight and obese seventh-grade students.\(^13\)
- The percentage of children ages 10-17 who were overweight in 2011 in the East region ranged from 11 percent in New Jersey to 16.9 percent in the Delaware.\(^14\)
- Vermont led the nation in percentage of children ages 10-17 who were at a healthy weight with nearly 70 percent.14 In five East region states—Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island—the number of high school children who are obese increased between 2009 and 2011.\(^13\)
- Of the East region states, Delaware decreased its percentage of obese high school students the most, by 1.3 percent.\(^15\) Delaware partnered with Sesame Street to create a Healthy Habits for Life resource kit for child care institutions. The kit uses evidence-based strategies to promote five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day, no more than two hours of screen time, at least one hour of physical activity and no sugary drinks.\(^16\)

**References:**

6 CDC. “Adult Obesity Facts.” [9]
7 Kaiser “State Health Facts.” [8]
8 Kaiser. “State Health Facts.” [8]
10 CDC Chronic Disease State Policy Tracking System. [13]
11 CDC Chronic Disease State Policy Tracking System. [14]
15 CDC. 1991-2011 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. [18]
In 2011, the percentage of adults who were obese in the Midwest region ranged from 26 percent in Minnesota to 31 percent in Michigan.  

The percentage of adults who were overweight or obese ranged from 63 percent in Minnesota to 66 percent in Ohio.  

Racial and ethnic disparities existed in obesity in the Midwest region in 2011.  

- Iowa had the highest percentage of obese whites at 65 percent. The national average is 62 percent.  
- Illinois had the highest percentage of obese African-Americans at 75 percent. The national average is 72 percent.  
- Indiana had the highest percentage of obese Hispanics at 75 percent. The national average is 69 percent.  

**Obesity and Transportation Policy**  

In the Midwest region, six states—Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin—have community land use policies designed to encourage more walkable or bike-friendly communities.  

- Illinois requires the construction of bicycle and pedestrian paths on new construction near urban areas. The state also criminalized recklessly passing a cyclist.  
- Michigan passed two Complete Streets laws—one requires the state’s Transportation Commission to execute complete streets and one provides support for municipal planning.  

**Childhood Obesity and Education Policy**  

- Students consume 35 percent to 50 percent of their daily calories at school.  
- A 2012 report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found a correlation between the presence of school nutrition policies and lower rates of overweight and obese seventh-grade students.  
- The percentage of children ages 10-17 who were obese in 2011 ranged from 13.4 percent in South Dakota to 19.3 percent in Illinois.  
- In five Midwest region states—Indiana, Michigan, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin—the percentage of high school children who are obese increased between 2009 and 2011.  
- Kansas decreased its percentage of obese high school students by 2 percent between 2009 and 2011, the biggest drop in the region.  
- The Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District in Minnesota will begin a partnership with the University of Minnesota to implement a new after-school program in the 2014-15 school year to help elementary students fight obesity. In the voluntary program, students who are considered overweight or obese will have quarterly one-on-one sessions with a licensed school nurse where they will talk about how to make healthier food choices and how they can find ways to stay active.  

**References:**  

6 CDC. “Adult Obesity Facts.”  
7 Kaiser. “State Health Facts.”  
8 Kaiser. “State Health Facts.”  
9 CDC. “State Indicator Report on Physical Activity, 2010.”  
10 CDC Chronic Disease State Policy Tracking System.  
11 CDC Chronic Disease State Policy Tracking System.  
In 2011, the percentage of adults who were obese in the South region ranged from 27 percent in Florida to 35 percent in Mississippi.6
The percentage adults who were overweight or obese ranged from 63 percent in Georgia to 69 percent in West Virginia.7
Racial and ethnic disparities existed in obesity in the South region in 2011.8
- West Virginia had the highest percentage of obese whites at 69 percent. The national average is 62 percent.
- Kentucky had the highest percentage of obese African-Americans at 76 percent. The national average is 72 percent.
- North Carolina had the highest percentage of obese Hispanics at 73 percent. The national average is 69 percent.

Obesity and Transportation Policy

In the South region, seven states—Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia—each have community land use policies designed to encourage more walkable or bike-friendly communities.9
Florida requires future land use plans to support walkable and connected communities with a range of housing and transportation options.10
Tennessee operates a Safe Routes to School program in cooperation with the federal government that requires the renovation of infrastructure around schools to calm traffic and provide bike lanes and safe sidewalks for school children.11

Childhood Obesity and Education Policy

Students consume 35 percent to 50 percent of their daily calories at school.12
A 2012 report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found a correlation between the presence of school nutrition policies and lower rates of overweight and obese seventh-grade students.13
The percentage of children ages 10-17 who were obese in 2011 ranged from 13.4 percent in Florida to 21.7 percent in Mississippi.14
Louisiana had the smallest percentage of children ages 10-17 who are considered healthy weight in the country.14
West Virginia mandates at least 90 minutes of physical education per week in kindergarten through sixth grade. The state also mandates at least 225 minutes of physical education in seventh through 12th grades.14
Tennessee requires schools to collect student BMI in second, fourth, sixth, eighth and ninth grades. The aggregate school district level data is shared publicly. Individual student results are sent to each student’s parents or guardian, along with a written screening guide explaining these results.15

References:
6 CDC. “Adult Obesity Facts.” [9]
7 Kaiser. “State Health Facts.” [8]
8 Kaiser. “State Health Facts.” [8]
10 CDC Chronic Disease State Policy Tracking System. [13]
11 CDC Chronic Disease State Policy Tracking System. [14]
In 2011, the percentage of adults who were obese in the Western region ranged from 21 percent in Colorado to 27 percent in Alaska.\(^6\)

The percentage of adults who were overweight or obese ranged from 56 percent in Hawaii to 67 percent in Alaska.\(^7\)

Racial and ethnic disparities existed in obesity in the West region in 2011.\(^8\)

- Alaska had the highest percentage of obese whites at 65 percent. The national average is 62 percent.
- Washington had the highest percentage of obese African-Americans at 73 percent. The national average is 72 percent.
- Arizona had the highest percentage of obese Hispanics at 74 percent. The national average is 69 percent.

**Obesity and Transportation Policy**

In the West region, six states—Arizona, California, Hawaii, New Mexico, Utah and Washington—each have community land use policies designed to encourage more walkable or bike friendly communities.\(^9\)

The League of American Bicyclists ranked Washington the most bicycle-friendly state in the nation; Colorado was ranked second and Oregon ranked third.\(^10\)

Hawaii introduced the Mauka Area Rules to encourage that the new community developed appropriately, allowing children to walk to school, providing plenty of active transportation alternatives for adults and guaranteeing parks and open space for neighborhoods.\(^11\)

**Childhood Obesity and Education Policy**

- Students consume 35 percent to 50 percent of their daily calories at school.\(^12\)
- A 2012 report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found a correlation between the presence of school nutrition policies and lower rates of overweight and obese seventh-grade students.\(^13\)
- The percentage of children ages 10-17 who were obese in 2011 ranged from 9.9 percent in Oregon to 19.8 percent in Arizona.\(^14\)
- Montana experienced the greatest regional decline in high school student obesity rates between 2009 and 2011 with a 1.8 percent decrease. Utah experienced the largest increase, from 6.3 to 8.6 percent.\(^15\)

**References:**

6 CDC. “Adult Obesity Facts.” [9]

7 Kaiser. “State Health Facts.” [8]

8 Kaiser. “State Health Facts.” [8]


Obesity

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