

MAY 2018



Documented Declines in Childhood Obesity Rates

According to the latest data, the national obesity rate among children ages 2 to 19 is 18.5 percent. The data, collected in 2015-2016 as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, show that obesity rates rise with age and are highest among Hispanic and Black children.¹

While overall childhood obesity rates remain higher than they were a generation ago,² the rise in rates has slowed in recent years and some places have documented a short- or long-term decline in rates among some populations. This factsheet highlights reports from states, cities, counties and school districts that have measured a decline in childhood obesity rates for three years or longer. The data collection methods, populations evaluated and time periods vary by location. This collection of reports may help inform future efforts to track obesity rates at the local or state level.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has committed \$1 billion over the past decade to ensuring that all children in America grow up at a healthy weight, no matter who they are or where they live. This vision remains a core part of our mission to build a Culture of Health in this country.

1 Hales CM, Carroll MD, Fryar CD, Ogden CL. Prevalence of obesity among adults and youth: United States, 2015–2016. NCHS data brief, no 288. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2017.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Childhood Obesity Facts. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm>

Table 1. National and Statewide Declines in Childhood Obesity Rates³

Place	Ages	Time 1	Obesity or Obesity and Overweight Rate at Time 1	Time 2	Rate at Time 2	Relative Percent Decline*	Absolute Percent Decline
National							
<u>National</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.9%	2014	14.5%	N/A	-1.3%‡
State or Territory							
<u>Alaska</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	21.2%	2014	19.1%	N/A	-1.7%‡
<u>Arizona</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.0%	2014	13.3%	N/A	-1.7%‡
<u>California</u>	Grades 5, 7, 9	2005	38.4%†	2010	38%†	-1.0%	-0.4%
<u>California</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	18.4%	2014	16.6%	N/A	-1.7%‡
<u>Colorado⁴</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2012	22.9%†	2015	21.2%†	-7.4%	-1.7%
<u>Connecticut</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	17.1%	2014	15.3%	N/A	-1.7%‡
<u>Florida</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	14.6%	2014	12.7%	N/A	-1.7%‡
<u>Georgia</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	14.4%	2014	13.0%	N/A	-1.3%‡
<u>Guam</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	11.4%	2014	8.7%	N/A	-2.8%‡
<u>Indiana</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.1%	2014	14.3%	N/A	-0.8%‡
<u>Iowa</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.6%	2014	14.7%	N/A	-0.7%‡
<u>Kansas</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	13.7%	2014	12.8%	N/A	-1.1%‡
<u>Kentucky</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	18.2%	2014	13.3%	N/A	-5.0%‡
<u>Louisiana</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	13.8%	2014	13.2%	N/A	-0.8%‡
<u>Maryland</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	17.1%	2014	16.5%	N/A	-0.6%‡
<u>Massachusetts</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	17.1%	2014	16.6%	N/A	-0.7%‡
<u>Michigan</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	14.4%	2014	13.4%	N/A	-0.7%‡
<u>Minnesota</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	12.7%	2014	12.3%	N/A	-0.6%‡
<u>Mississippi</u>	Grades K–5	2005	43.0%†	2013	38.0%†	-11.6%	-5.0%
<u>Missouri</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	14.4%	2014	13.0%	N/A	-1.5%‡
<u>Nevada</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.0%	2014	12.0%	N/A	-2.8%‡
<u>New Jersey</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	18.9%	2014	15.3%	N/A	-3.4%‡
<u>New Mexico</u>	Grade 3	2010	38.7%†	2015	34.4%†	-11.1%	-4.3%
<u>New Mexico</u>	Kindergarten	2010	30.3%†	2015	25.6%†	-15.5%	-4.7%
<u>New Mexico</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.7%	2014	12.5%	N/A	-3.3%‡
<u>New York</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	16.1%	2014	14.3%	N/A	-1.7%‡
<u>Northern Mariana Islands</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	14.1%	2014	9.0%	N/A	-5.3%‡
<u>Oklahoma</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.4%	2014	13.8%	N/A	-1.7%‡

<u>Oregon</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.8%	2014	15.0%	N/A	-0.7%‡
<u>Puerto Rico</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	20.3%	2014	13.9%	N/A	-6.4%‡
<u>South Carolina</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	13.3%	2014	12.0%	N/A	-1.4%‡
<u>Tennessee</u>	Grades K, 2, 4, 6, 8, High School	2007-08 school year	41.1%†	2012-13 school year	38.5%†	-6.3%	-2.6%
<u>Tennessee</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	16.0%	2014	14.9%	N/A	-1.0%‡
<u>Texas</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	16.9%	2014	14.9%	N/A	-1.6%‡
<u>Utah</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	12.5%	2014	8.2%	N/A	-4.3%‡
<u>Virginia</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	21.5%	2014	20.0%	N/A	-1.5%‡
<u>Washington</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	14.9%	2014	13.6%	N/A	-1.4%‡
<u>Wisconsin</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	15.2%	2014	14.7%	N/A	-0.6%‡
<u>Wyoming</u>	Ages 2-4, enrolled in WIC	2010	11.8%	2014	9.9%	N/A	-2.1%‡

3 Sources not posted online were received via direct communication, and are available upon request from media@rwjf.org

4 Colorado was also among the states marking a decline in the November 2016 WIC data set released by the CDC. The data used here are from the state, and are newer and broader than the CDC data.

Table 2. Local Declines in Childhood Obesity Rates

Place	Ages	Time 1	Obesity or Obesity and Overweight Rate at Time 1	Time 2	Rate at Time 2	Relative Percent Decline*	Absolute Percent Decline
School District, City, County, or Region							
Anchorage, AK	Grades K, 1, 3, 5, 7	2003-04 school year	35.4%†	2013-14 school year	33.5%†	-5.4%	-1.9%
Cherokee County, SC⁵	Grade 1	2012	43.0%†	2015	34.3%†	-20.2%	-8.7%
Cherokee County, SC⁶	Grade 3	2012	51.5%†	2015	40.7%†	-20.9%	-10.8%
DuPage Co., IL	Grades K, 6, 9	2011	31.1%†	2014	29.7%†	-4.5%	-1.4%
Greater St. Cloud Region, MN⁷	Age 12	2008	17.0%	2015	13.0%†	-23.5%	-4.0%
Kearney, NE⁸	Grades K–5	2006	16.4%	2011	14.2%	-13.4%	-2.2%
Lincoln, NE	Grades K–8	2010	17.2%	2013	15.8%	-8.2%	-1.4%
New York City	Grades K–8	2006-07 school year	21.9%	2010-11 school year	20.7%	-5.5%	-1.2%
Philadelphia, PA	Grades K–12	2006-07 school year	21.7%	2012-13 school year	20.3%	-6.5%	-1.4%
Seminole Co., FL	Grades 1, 3, 6	2006-07 school year	34.3%	2013-14 school year	29.7%	-13.4%	-4.6%
Southern Calif. (Kaiser Permanente members)	Ages 2-19	2008	19.1%	2013	17.5%	-8.4%	-1.6%

Notes:

Declines reported in this table are based on objective height and weight measures. Data obtained by other means, such as parent- or youth self-reports, have been excluded. The absolute percent decline is the difference between the rate at time one and the rate at time two. The relative percent decline is this difference as a percentage of the rate at time one.

*Reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) did not include a calculation for a relative percent decline. RWJF calculated a relative percent decline for all other locations.

† Indicates combined rates of overweight and obesity

‡ Absolute percent decline as calculated by the CDC. Calculated as [prevalence at time 1] x [adjusted prevalence ratio] – [prevalence at time 2]. The adjusted prevalence ratios that represent relative changes between two inflection years were calculated from log binomial regression models adjusted for age, sex, and race/ethnicity.

5 "Cherokee County: 1st, 3rd, and 5th Grade Students Body Mass Index (BMI) Report, 2012-2013"

6 Ibid.

7 "Child Obesity Rate Changes in Areas Served by CentraCare Health and BLEND Initiative 2015"

8 "Kearney Public Schools: BMI Report Card Summary Report 2006-2011"