

Adult obesity rates rise in 6 states, exceed 35% in 7

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Another year, another not-so-great report about obesity among Americans.

The nation's obesity rate is approaching 40 percent after holding around 34–35 percent between 2005 and 2012, according to data in *The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America 2018*. No state has had a statistically significant drop in its obesity rate in the past five years.

Six states—Iowa, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and South Carolina—saw statistically significant increases in their adult obesity rates between 2016 and 2017, according to the obesity report. The annual report is from Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and based on data from Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey (BRFSS) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

Discover how the AMA is working to prevent and control chronic diseases, many of which are associated with obesity.

Big change in just 12 years

Seven states now have the dubious distinction of having 35 percent or more of the population battling obesity:

- Alabama
- Arkansas.
- Iowa.
- Louisiana.
- Mississippi.
- Oklahoma.
- West Virginia.

That's a stark difference from just a little more than a decade ago, when Mississippi and West Virginia were the only states above the 30 percent mark. And today's numbers are even more startling when you consider no state had an adult obesity rate higher than 15 percent in 1985 and no state was above 20 percent in 2000.

With the latest data from the NHANES showing that 39.6 percent of adults and 18.5 percent of children ages 2 to 19 in America have obesity, the *State of Obesity* report noted that "these are the highest rates ever documented by NHANES."

Demographics matter

Race, ethnicity, gender, income, education levels and where an adult lives all make a difference in how likely he or she is to have obesity. For example, the report found that:

- | Obesity rates are higher among Latinos (47 percent) and blacks (46.8 percent) than among whites (37.9 percent).
- | Women are more likely to have obesity than men, 41.1 percent versus 37.9 percent.
- | Women are also more likely to have severe obesity, 9.7 percent versus 5.6 percent.
- | Adults in rural areas are more likely to have obesity than those in metro areas, 34.2 percent versus 28.7 percent.
- | College graduates are less likely to be obese than those with less than a high school education, 22.2 percent versus 35.5 percent.
- | Adults with higher incomes are less likely to be obese. The obesity rate is 29.7 percent among those making 400 percent or more above the federal poverty line; the rate is 42.6 percent for those at 100 to 199 percent of the federal poverty line.

Some good news: The kids

One glimmer of hope in this year's report: Obesity and severe obesity rates fell among 2- to 4-year-olds enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.

Nationally, 14.5 percent of these children were obese, according to the most recent 2014 data, down from 15.9 percent in 2010, the report shows. The drop was seen in 31 states and three U.S. territories.

As the nation's obesity rate rises, so, too, does the concern for patients with diagnosed and undiagnosed diabetes.

In 2013–2016, 14 percent of U.S. adults had diagnosed or undiagnosed diabetes, according to a National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief. That breaks down to 9.7 percent of people being diagnosed with diabetes and 4.3 percent having the disease but not a diagnosis.

Men were more likely than women to be undiagnosed, 5.1 percent versus 3.4 percent and those over 60 were more likely to be undiagnosed than younger age groups.