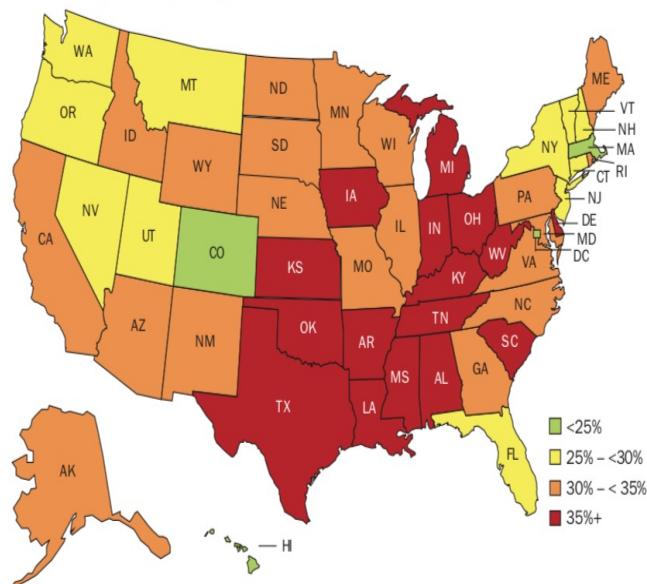


State of Obesity 2021: Better Policies for a Healthier America

Sixteen states have adult obesity rates at or above 35%, according to *State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America* released September 2021 by Trust for America's Health. In 2019 there were 12 states with obesity rates over 35%, and in 2012, there were zero states that reached this benchmark. The full report is available online at www.tfah.org.

Adult Obesity Rates by State, 2020



Source: TFAH analysis of BRFSS data

Despite this continuing rise in obesity and its consequences, the U.S. has failed to create a comprehensive response to the obesity epidemic. The higher rates of hospitalization and mortality from COVID-19 among individuals with underlying conditions, including obesity, underscore the importance of working toward a country where all Americans can live healthier lives. Furthermore, the racial and ethnic disparities that characterize COVID-19 and obesity are a reminder that underlying social, economic, and environmental conditions and structures can affect the health and well-being of Americans at the individual, family, neighborhood, and national level.

COVID-19, Obesity and Social Determinants of Health

This report focuses on the social determinants of health and how they, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, have impacted the obesity epidemic. The social and economic factors in people's lives, such as poverty, lack of access to healthy, affordable foods and living in under-resourced communities all increase a person's risk for obesity. These factors also put people at greater risk of being infected with COVID-19 and experiencing more severe health consequences if infected. Historical and social conditions, including discrimination, poverty, housing and educational attainment have major impacts on food access, physical activity, and chronic stress. These all lead to the factors that make some people at higher risk for obesity. Our report demonstrates that an individual's choices and ability to be healthy are often predetermined by one's social, economic, and environmental conditions. Addressing the social determinants of health is vital to ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

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State of Obesity 2021 includes policy recommendations – actions to be undertaken by federal, local and state government, the private sector, the healthcare sector, the education sector, the transportation sector and the food industry

Obesity is a chronic disease with multifaceted causes, therefore, public policy changes across key sectors are needed to ensure healthy choices are available and accessible for everyone. Policies should address key drivers of the obesity epidemic and reach communities with the highest needs. Some of the policy recommendations in the report include:

- **Increase funding for CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.** This investment should include at least \$125 million in FY2022 for CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity and \$102.5 million in FY2022 for CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health to ensure sufficient and equitable funding for obesity prevention programs in all 50 states.
- **Expand funding for public health approaches to social determinants of health (SDOH).** TFAH supports the President's budget request of \$153 million in FY2022 for CDC's SDOH program to support multisector collaborations to address SDOH, and The Improving Social Determinants of Health Act would authorize and bolster the program.
- **Make healthy school meals free for all students as a step to end child hunger and ensure access to healthy foods.** Protect the recent expansion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and enhance access to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- **Close tax loopholes and eliminate business-cost deductions related to the advertising of unhealthy food and beverages to children.**
- **Increase the price of sugary drinks through an excise tax,** with tax revenue allocated to local efforts to reduce health and socioeconomic disparities and obesity prevention programs.
- **Ensure that every resident has safe and convenient access to walking and biking trails, and that all students have safe routes to walk or bike to school.** State and local education agencies should prioritize physical activity during the school day.
- **Expand access to health insurance including through the expansion of Medicaid and by making marketplace coverage more affordable.** Insurance plans should cover all U.S. Preventive Services Task Force "A" or "B" recommendations for obesity prevention programs with no cost-sharing to the patient.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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