Children's Weight in California

Students Who Are Overweight or Obese, by Grade: 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th Graders</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Graders</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Graders</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Percentage of public school students in grades 5, 7, and 9 with body composition scores above the Healthy Fitness Zone of the Fitnessgram assessment (e.g., 40.3% of 5th graders in California public schools were overweight or obese in 2015).

**Data Source:** California Dept. of Education, Physical Fitness Testing Research Files (Dec. 2015).

5th Graders Who Are Overweight or Obese: 2015; Showing Counties

**What It Is**

On kidsdata.org, indicators of weight include:
- Percentage of public school students in grades 5, 7, and 9 identified as overweight or obese (i.e., scoring above the Healthy Fitness Zone of the Fitnessgram assessment), by grade, gender and grade, and race/ethnicity and grade (county- and school district-level). In 2014 and 2015 more than 90 percent of schools measured body mass index, which aligns with standards from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but some school districts may have used skinfold measurements or bioelectric impedance analysis to identify children in the Healthy Fitness Zone. For that reason, only the two most recent years of data are presented.

**Why This Topic Is Important**

Nearly one third of children ages 2-19 are overweight or obese in the U.S., according to a 2014 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (obesity is defined as having a Body Mass Index, BMI, at or above the 95th percentile for age and gender per the 2000 CDC growth charts, and overweight refers to a BMI between the 85th-95th percentiles). The childhood obesity rate has more than tripled over the past four decades, though rates have leveled off in recent years (1). While some progress has been made, data show that significant racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities persist in obesity prevalence (2, 3).

Overweight and obese children are at higher risk for a range of health problems, including heart disease, stroke, asthma, and some types of cancer; they also are more likely to stay overweight or obese as adults (4, 5). Some obese children are being diagnosed with illnesses previously considered “adult” conditions, such as high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes (5). In addition, children with obesity are at increased risk for joint and bone problems, sleep apnea, and social and emotional difficulties, such as stigmatization and low self-esteem (4). Obesity’s impact also extends beyond the individual; U.S. medical care costs related to adult obesity are estimated between $147-$210 billion annually, with California having the highest obesity-related costs in the nation, at approximately $15 billion (2, 5).
Many factors contribute to childhood obesity/overweight. The rise has been attributed to changes in food environments that make non-nutritious "junk" food and beverages more available, affordable, and appealing; as well as social and environmental changes that have reduced physical activity among children, e.g., increased sedentary time with TV and computer use, less physical education, neighborhoods that do not promote walking or riding bikes, and decreased safe places for children to play, among other factors (5, 6).

How Children Are Faring
In 2015, 40% of 5th graders, 39% of 7th graders, and 36% of 9th graders in California public schools were overweight or obese. Figures vary widely at the local level. For example, among counties, the percentage of 5th graders who were overweight or obese ranged from 19% to 54% in 2015. Statewide, a higher percentage of boys are overweight or obese than girls. Differences among racial/ethnic groups in California also emerged. Specifically, about half of all Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino 5th graders attending California public schools were overweight or obese in 2015, compared to 27% and 28% of Asian American and White children, respectively.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: http://www.kidsdata.org/topic/61/weight/summary