Main Questions

• What proportions of students are overweight or obese in Massachusetts public school districts, and how have the proportions changed between 2009-2014?

• How do the proportions of students who are overweight or obese differ by gender, age and income?

• What are the next steps?

Study

Public school students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 had their body mass index (BMI) calculated in Massachusetts from 2009-2014. This study analyzed trends in overweight and obesity prevalence throughout the state, among districts, and among different gender, age, and income groups.

The Bottom Line

The good news is that overall, overweight and obesity actually declined throughout the state’s schoolchildren from 2009 to 2014. There were differences, though, when the data were examined more closely. As a group, boys had higher rates of overweight and obesity but their rates also decreased more. In terms of age, the rates of overweight and obesity were highest among 4th and 7th graders, with the highest increase occurring between 1st and 4th grade. The group of children that did not decline, however, was the group of children from school districts with the lowest median household income. Overweight and obesity rates declined in higher-income districts, but either remained the same or actually increased in economically disadvantaged communities. This study points out the need for interventions among elementary school age children in districts where families face more economic hardships.

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Source


The study was funded by Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Wenjun Li, PhD is associated with the UMass Worcester Prevention Research Center, a member of the Prevention Research Centers Program. It is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cooperative agreement number 5-U48-DP005031.