

DESCRIPTION

This indicator focuses on the rate of overweight and obesity among youth. Most data on overweight and obesity is based on self-reported height and weight data which is then used in a formula to calculate body mass index (BMI). Obesity in children puts them at higher risk for other conditions and diseases, including asthma, sleep apnea, bone problems, diabetes and heart disease. Children with obesity are bullied more than normal weight students, and are more likely to be depressed, socially isolated and have lower self-esteem.¹

HOW ARE WE DOING

Looking at national data from 2011 – 2014, the prevalence of obesity among youth 2 – 19 years remained stable at about 17 percent. However, there are age group differences, with the rates among 2 to 5-year-olds decreasing significantly over the last decade. Prevalence of obesity is 8.9 percent among 2 to 5-year-olds, compared to 17.5 percent among 6 to 11-year-olds, and 20.5 percent among 12 to 19-year-olds.¹ In 2016 among Minnesota 9th and 11th graders, about 10 percent are obese, with another 14 percent overweight. In Ramsey County, the percent of overweight students is about the same as Minnesota, but the obesity rates are several percentage points higher.²

BENCHMARK INDICATOR

Healthy People 2020: Reduce the proportion of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years who are considered obese.

U.S. Target: 14.5 percent.³

DISPARITIES

There are gender differences in percentages of overweight and obese among young people. From 2010-2016 in Ramsey County, about 29 percent of 9th grade males have been overweight or obese, which is higher than females, but has stayed consistent. Females have lower rates than males, but rates have been creeping upward. In 2010, 20 percent of 9th grade girls were overweight or obese. That rate rose to 21 percent in 2013 and 23 percent in 2016. There are also economic disparities- as income goes up, the percentage of obese youth goes down. Racial and ethnicity disparities also exist. In 2016 among Ramsey County 8th, 9th and 11th grade students combined, 29.4 percent of students of color were overweight or obese, in comparison to 21.7 percent of white students.²

RISK FACTORS

Obesity is a complex issue and results from a combination of contributing factors including family history, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and low socioeconomic status. Additional social factors that impact obesity include the food and physical activity environment, education and food marketing.¹ Numerous factors contribute to physical inactivity, including unsafe neighborhoods, lack of parks and walkable sidewalks, and reduced physical education classes in schools. The use of electronic devices by youth is also growing, which could result in adolescents becoming less active, which may lead to excess weight.

(continued on back)

Information to note

- The percentage of 9th grade males in Ramsey County who are overweight or obese has stayed consistent at 29 compared to a lower but climbing rate among females at 23%.
- If children are overweight or obese, their risk factors for obesity and disease in adulthood are likely to be more severe.⁴

¹ Healthy Schools. Centers for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm>. Accessed January 2018.

² Minnesota Department of Health. Minnesota Student Survey 2016. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/surveys/mss/index.html>. Accessed January 2018.

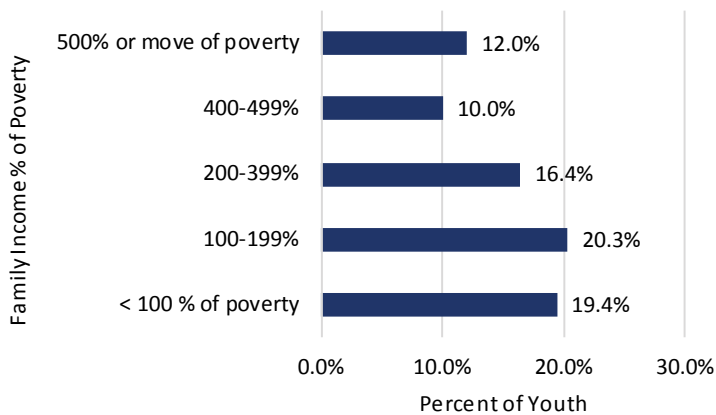
³ Nutrition and Weight Status. Healthy People 2020. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/nutrition-and-weight-status/objectives>. Accessed September 7, 2017.

⁴ Bass R, Eneli I. Severe childhood obesity: an under-recognized and growing health problem. *Postgraduate Medical Journal*. 2015;91(1081):639-45. DOI:10.1136/postgradmedj-2014-133033.

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

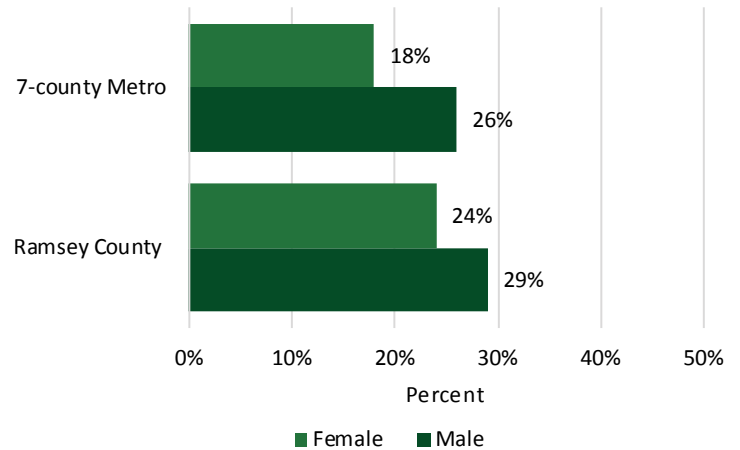
The Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) work has become an integral part of Saint Paul- Ramsey County Public Health’s efforts to help combat and prevent chronic disease among youth. There are numerous school yard garden programs, farm to school strategies, and smarter lunchroom strategies being implemented by all five county school districts using SHIP funds. Along with addressing healthy eating strategies SHIP also funds active living and active school day initiatives so schools can increase the amount of movement that students receive before, during and after school hours, including expanding Safe Routes to School. Additionally, Ramsey County is becoming a breastfeeding friendly health department, which encourages breastfeeding, which reduces the risk of obesity and diabetes in children. Healthy eating and physical activity are vital to preventing and addressing chronic disease and diabetes. Ramsey County Parks and Recreation offers many programs to get youth and families outside and increasing their activity levels, including hiking, canoeing, skiing and gardening. The Ramsey County Library partners with the Friends of Ramsey County Library each year to offer the “Book It 5K walk/run.”

Obesity Among Youth by Federal Poverty Level, U.S., 2013-2016



Source: Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. HealthyPeople 2020 Web site.⁵

Overweight or Obese, 9th Graders, 2016



Source: Minnesota Department of Health.

⁵ Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. Healthy People 2020 Web site. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/leading-health-indicators/2020-lhi-topics/Nutrition-Physical-Activity-and-Obesity/data#NWS-10>. Accessed January 2018.

⁶ Minnesota Department of Health. Minnesota Student Survey 2016. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/>. Accessed January 2018.