



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Income Disparities in Obesity Trends Among California Adolescents

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While some indications suggest childhood obesity rates could be leveling off nationally, disparities persist, especially among African-Americans and Latinos, and those who live in poverty. Using data from the California Health Interview Survey telephone survey, researchers tested that hypothesis among adolescents by socioeconomic status in California.

There was an inverse relationship between obesity and family income in each of the four years of the study (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007). Furthermore, obesity prevalence increased among adolescents in low-income families. In 2001, obesity prevalence was 17 percent among adolescents with family incomes below the poverty line, compared with 10 percent in adolescents from higher income families (income 300% of federal poverty level). In 2007, the gap widened and obesity prevalence was 23 percent in the lowest income group compared with 8 percent in the highest income group.

The results also indicate that:

- Male adolescents were more likely to be obese than females.
- African-Americans and Latinos were more likely to be obese than Whites.
- Asians were less likely than Whites to be obese.

Results suggest that efforts to prevent childhood obesity may be failing to help adolescents, especially at-risk boys from low-income families.

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