**Trends in Obesity Prevalence**

**OBESITY** is a complex chronic disease in which abnormal or excessive accumulation of body fat impairs health. Adult obesity rates have more than doubled since the 1980s — in the U.S. today, obesity affects over 42% of adults and 18% of youth.\(^1\)\(^2\) Obesity and its related complications are major drivers of rising healthcare costs, diminished health-related quality of life, and the recent decline in U.S. life expectancy. This fact sheet is part of a series designed to provide basic information about the science of obesity and current strategies to address it.

**Obesity Prevalence and Disparities**

Obesity, defined as a BMI over 30 kg/m\(^2\), has increased significantly over the past few decades. The U.S. adult obesity rate has risen from 22.9% in the early 90s to 39.6% in 2016.\(^3\)

- In 1990, not a single state had an obesity rate of over 20%. In 2018, not a single state had an obesity rate below 20%.\(^4\)
  - Mississippi has consistently had the highest obesity rate with 15% in 1990 and 39.5% in 2018
  - Colorado has consistently had the lowest obesity rate with 6.9% in 1990 and 23% in 2018
- Disparities exist, not only geographically, but also by sex and race. The groups with the current highest obesity rates are:\(^3\)
  - Black women, with an obesity rate of 54.8%
  - Hispanic women, with an obesity rate of 50.6%
  - Hispanic men, with an obesity rate of 43.1%
- Obesity rate disparities are also found when looking at obesity rates by age and sex:

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**Epidemiology of Obesity**

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:

Obesity Rate Trend Graphics

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**Prevalence of obesity among adults aged 20 and over, by sex and age: United States, 2015–2016**

![Graph showing prevalence of obesity by sex and age](source: CDC/NCHS, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2015-2016)
**Trends in Obesity Prevalence**

**Rates of obesity are steadily rising.**

Rates of overweight have plateaued or decreased since the 1960s. Rates of obesity have continued to rise. The continuing rise in the rates of severe obesity pose the greatest concern.

**Future Obesity Trends**

Unless effective strategies to prevent and treat obesity are implemented, obesity rates will continue to climb. Projections suggest that the U.S. adult obesity rate in 2030 will be around 1 in 2, with severe obesity rates reaching nearly 1 in 4.5

- In Europe, obesity rates have been predicted to grow in 44 countries, despite WHO goals to halt the increase of obesity rates by 2025.6
- Globally, obesity rates continue to rise while undernutrition remains a problem in many countries. One study predicted that:7
  - If global obesity trends continue there is almost no chance of reaching the WHO goal by 2025
  - By 2025, global obesity prevalence will reach 18% in men and over 21% in women
  - By 2025, global severe obesity rates will be over 6% in men and 9% in women

**REFERENCES**


