

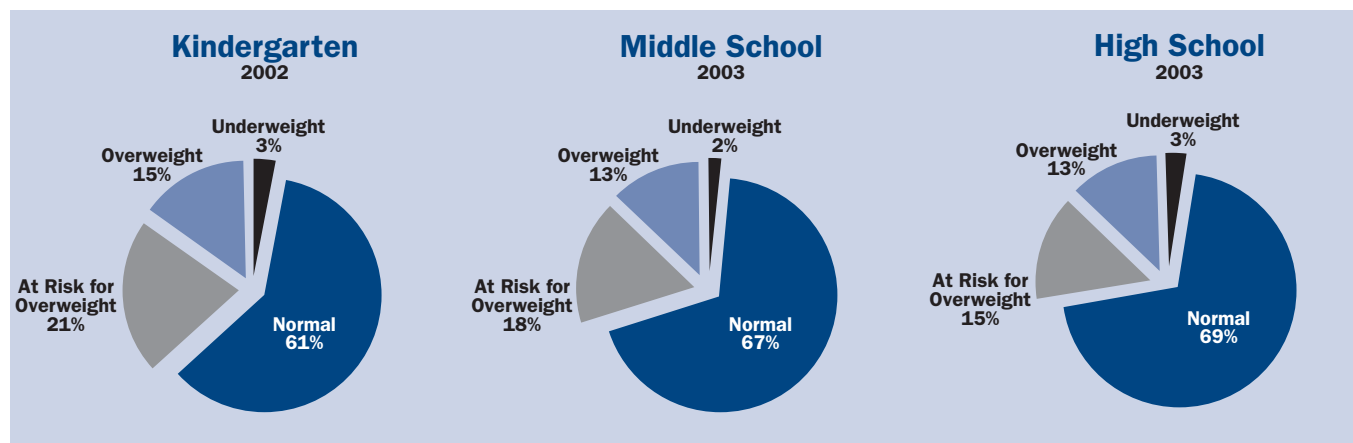
Maine Child and Youth Weight Status Fact Sheet

Bureau of Health, Maine Department of Human Services

The percentage of overweight young people has doubled (increased by 100 percent) in the United States since 1980.¹ In one study, fifty-eight percent of overweight schoolchildren were found to have at least one cardiovascular risk factor.² Type 2 diabetes, a disease closely associated with obesity that until recently occurred only among adults, is increasing among adolescents.³

One of Maine's essential public health functions is to monitor the health status of Maine residents, including the weight of our children and youth. This supports strategic planning, appropriate intervention and program evaluation.

Maine, like the nation, shows a high rate of overweight among its youth. Based on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Maine's prevalence of overweight and at risk for overweight does not differ appreciably from the national average for either boys or girls. Overweight is defined as being at or above the 95th percentile Body Mass Index (BMI) for age and gender; and at risk for overweight is defined as being between 85-94th percentile BMI for age and gender.



- 61% of kindergartners, 67% of middle school, and 69% of high school students in Maine are within the expected, or normal, weight range for their age and gender.
- Between 2-3% of these students were underweight.
- 15% of kindergartners and 13% of middle and high school students are overweight.
- The proportion of children considered at risk for overweight varied from 15% to 21% according to their age, with risk highest among the youngest children.

In Maine, boys in middle school and high school were statistically significantly more likely to be overweight than girls.

Maine's results mirror those of the nation in that self-reported weight on the YRBS is notably higher among boys than girls in both middle and high school students. Overweight is pervasive throughout Maine: regional differences were not seen within Maine for kindergartners either at risk for overweight or overweight.

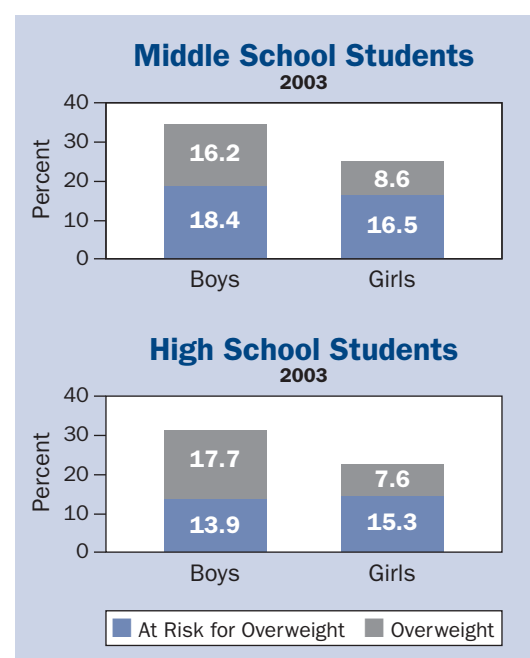


Table 1. Prevalence (95% Confidence Intervals) of overweight and at risk of overweight in 2003 among Maine middle and high school students.

	Middle School			High School		
	Boys % (95% CI)	Girls % (95% CI)	Total % (95% CI)	Boys % (95% CI)	Girls% (95% CI)	Total % I (95% CI)
At Risk of Overweight	18.4 (15.4-21.5)	16.5 (13.1-20.0)	17.5 (15.2-19.8)	13.9 (11.2-16.6)	15.3 (11.9-18.7)	14.6 (12.6-16.6)
Overweight	16.2 (12.8-19.5)	8.6 (6.4-10.8)	12.6 (10.2-14.9)	17.7 (14.4-21.0)	7.6 (6.2-9.0)	12.8 (10.9-14.8)

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Department of Education, State of Maine.

Note: The percent reported in Table 1 is the best estimate of the prevalence of each health condition among the students surveyed in Maine schools. However, this percent is just an estimate. Confidence intervals (CI) reflect the broad range of possible estimates of the actual prevalence. Confidence intervals are similar to "margins of error" in political polling.

Methods:

Height and weight are the most commonly employed measures of nutritional status primarily because of their simplicity and ease of collection.⁴ Overweight is calculated based on a child's weight, depending on height, age, and sex. Overweight and at risk for overweight are defined by a child's body mass index (BMI) in relation to their charted distribution of sex and age-specific expected BMIs. For example: overweight is defined as being at or above the 95th percentile BMI for age and sex; and at risk for overweight is between 85-94th percentile BMI for age and sex. To learn more about how to define overweight in children, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/>.

Maine currently collects data for children and youth on height and weight through two surveys. The first is the newly established Maine Child Health Survey (MCHS); the second is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

The MCHS is conducted in public schools at the kindergarten, third, and fifth grade levels every other year. Schools are randomly sampled within six geographic regions in Maine on a probability proportional to the enrollment in the school. All children at the individual schools are invited to participate. The MCHS provides regional- and state-level estimates of measured BMI. The MCHS started in 2002.

The YRBS is conducted in public schools at the seventh through twelfth grade level every other year. Schools are randomly sampled based on a probability proportional to the enrollment in the school. All classes within the schools have the same probability of being selected. All children within the selected classes are asked to participate. The YRBS provides state-level estimates of youth self-reported BMI.

References

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For more information on youth health:

www.healthymainepartnerships.org

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/results/>



Healthy Maine Partnerships
Maine Cardiovascular Health Program
 Bureau of Health, Department of Human Services



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