



Shape of Our Nation's Children Fact Sheet

Highlights from Recent Studies

More children in this country are overweight than ever before, about double the number who were heavy in the late 1970s. The latest statistics are part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and show:

13% of children ages 6 to 11 were overweight in 1999, up from 11% in 1988-1994 and 7% in the late 1970s.

14% of children ages 12 to 19 were overweight in 1999, up from 11% in 1988-1994 and 5% in the late 1970s.

Obesity-related diseases cost the U.S. economy more than \$100 billion every year.¹

Inactivity and poor diet cause at least 300,000 deaths a year in the United States. Only tobacco causes more preventable deaths.¹

Almost half of young people aged 12-21 and more than a third of high school students do not participate in vigorous physical activity on a regular basis.¹

Seventy-two percent of 9th graders participate in vigorous physical activity on a regular basis, compared with only 55% of 12th graders.¹

Children are not as active as they should be.

Fewer than one in four children get 20 minutes of *vigorous* activity every day of the week. Less than one in four reported getting at least half an hour of *any type* of physical activity every single day.²

About one in four children did not play on any sports teams, either at school or through community programs.²

Physical activity peaks in 10th grade, at 11 hours per week as the median, and then begins a steady decline that is likely to continue into the adult years.²

In all grade levels, girls get significantly less activity than boys, yet three-quarters of the girls surveyed felt they get enough exercise.²

Participation Rates

Participation in Physical Education Class

Nationwide, 56.1% of students were enrolled in a physical education class. Female students in grade 9 (75.6%) were significantly more likely than female students in grades 11 and 12 (36.8% and 29.4%), respectively to be enrolled in a physical education class, and female students in grade 10 (56.6%) were significantly more likely than female students in grade 12 (29.4%) to be enrolled in a physical education class.³

Male students in grade 9 (82.3%) were significantly more likely than male students in grades 11 and 12 (44.6% and 43.8%), respectively to be enrolled in a physical education class.³

Daily participation in physical education class

Nationwide, 29.1% of students attended high school physical education class daily, down from 42% in 1991.³

Among students enrolled in physical education class, 76.3% exercised more than 20 minutes during an average physical education class. Overall, male students (82.1%) were significantly more likely than female students (69.6%) to have exercised more than 20 minutes during an average physical education class.³

About one in four children surveyed did not get any physical education in school. For those who did, 93% said they enjoyed physical education classes. However, physical education classes accounted for, at best, less than one and three-quarters hours of physical activity per week.²

Participation on a sports team run by school

Nationwide, 55.1% of students had played on sports teams during the 12 months preceding the survey. Overall, male students (61.7%) were significantly more likely than female students (48.5%) to have played on sports teams.³

1 Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Guidelines for School and Community Programs: Promoting Lifelong Physical Activity, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 1997.

2 International Life Sciences Institute, *Improving Children's Health through Physical Activity: A New Opportunity, A Survey of Parents and Children about Physical Activity Patterns*, July 1997.

3 Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, 1999.