

# NEW YORK

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

The state report is a resource to inform donors and funders about the local context of social issues affecting at-risk populations. This analysis can be used to better understand current local trends and the unique social and economic situation in which the

social issue exists. The information below complements the social issue report and the guide to giving by drawing attention to local initiatives related to the social issue.

## FACTS: CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION IN NEW YORK

Overall annual healthcare costs related to obesity in New York<sup>1</sup>

**over \$7.6 billion**  
2010

Percentage of New York youth watching three or more hours of television on an average school day<sup>2</sup>

**33%**  
2009

Percentage of New York youth drinking non-diet soda at least once a day<sup>3</sup>

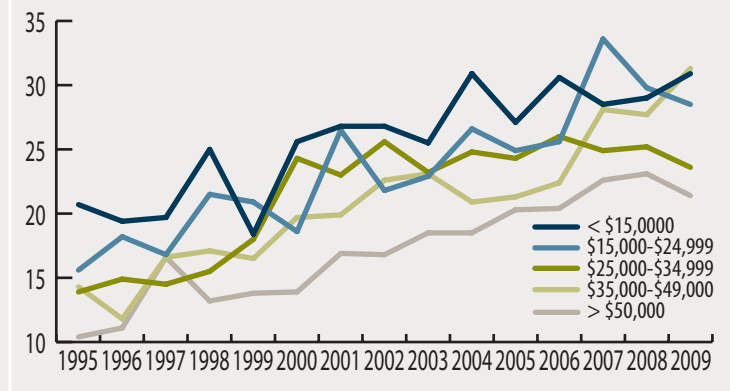
**approximately 25%**  
2009

## SOCIAL ISSUE INDICATORS

A strong correlation exists between childhood and adult obesity; lower adult obesity rates are a key indicator of success in childhood obesity prevention. Obesity is defined by body mass index (BMI), a measure of a person's weight in relation to his or her height. Because BMI does not account for body fat versus lean muscle mass, it is not a perfect measurement, and it often results in controversy regarding medical diagnosis. Still, using BMI to measure obesity for both children and adults is the most common system used.

As seen in the graph to the right, while obesity rates are consistently rising across all income levels, those with lower incomes are particularly affected. There are many reasons for this disparity; for example, low-income communities tend to have fewer resources to address the barriers to healthy habits and are therefore more likely to be obese.

**ADULT OBESITY RATES IN NEW YORK BY INCOME 1995-2009<sup>4</sup>**



## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN NEW YORK

In 2009, 60.2 percent of adults in New York were obese or overweight,<sup>5</sup> and those generations started with a lower rate of childhood overweight and obesity compared to today's children and adolescents. Addressing childhood obesity in New York is an urgent issue, as approximately 25 percent of New Yorkers under the age of 18 are estimated to be obese.<sup>6</sup> If the trend of obesity is not stemmed and reversed, it is likely that today's youth will face even higher medical, social, and economic costs than what we currently experience.

The following are key developments in New York aimed at encouraging healthy living and preventing children from becoming overweight or obese:

■ **Eat Well Play Hard** is a key childhood obesity prevention initiative of the New York State Department of Health. It aims to increase the availability and consumption of fruits,

vegetables, and low- or fat-free milk; increase physical activity; and decrease screen time among children. The program's activities include:<sup>7</sup>

- Providing funding to childcare and government agencies that work on nutrition, physical activity, and wellness programs for children
- Selecting childcare centers for intervention and providing tools to assess the policies and practices of the center to set goals for improvement
- Providing training and technical assistance for childcare center staff, enabling them to increase healthy eating at center sites
- Providing education on nutrition and physical activity for children and parents

■ **Healthy Kids, Healthy New York After-School Initiative**, funded through a grant from the National Governors Association, was launched in 2008. The initiative’s goal is to help New York children acquire healthy habits during their after-school activities, which will be incorporated into healthy lifestyles. Statewide health practitioners developed a toolkit in line with the Child and Adult Care Food Program and National School Lunch Program guidelines. The toolkit provides concrete steps for incorporating nutritional food options into after-school meals, increasing physical activity, and limiting the amount of time spent in front of the television during post-school hours. This toolkit was distributed by health advocates and adopted by 130 after-school providers in its first year, reaching over 10,000 children. Providers who implement guidelines in the toolkit can apply to be recognized and honored publicly by the governor’s office. Because of the program’s initial success, it is now funded through support from the state and private foundations.<sup>8</sup>

■ **Active8Kids!** was launched in June 2005 to fight childhood obesity and encourage healthy lifestyles in children under the age of eight. The initiative includes a school nutrition and physical activity toolkit with information on assessing the environment and developing wellness policies, nutrition guidelines, and best practices to help schools and local education agencies create healthier school environments. Program goals include instilling the following behaviors before the age of eight:

- Eating at least five fruits and vegetables daily
- Participating in at least one hour of physical activity daily
- Reducing screen time to fewer than two hours daily

■ **Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables (JSY)** is a nutrition education service that encourages food stamp recipients to eat more fruits and vegetables. JSY’s Stellar Farmers’ Market program enables low-income families to access fresh produce by promoting farmers’ markets that accept food stamps. A second program sends nutritionists to sites, such as food pantries and emergency shelters, where they teach participants how to create healthy meals on limited budgets. All programs promote the economic viability of eating “in season,” how to identify fresh fruits and vegetables, and how to safely store food to prevent spoiling and waste.<sup>9</sup>

Across New York, local initiatives are also beginning to address the issue of obesity:

■ **Shape Up NYC** offers free fitness classes at dozens of locations across New York City’s five boroughs and holds free nutrition seminars before those classes through a new partnership with Shape Magazine.

■ **The Green Cart Initiative** encourages vendors to operate in neighborhoods where more than 15 percent of residents surveyed consumed no fruits or vegetables the day before the survey. By giving vendor permits in neighborhoods with the most need, the initiative increases access to healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods.

## REFERENCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### ORGANIZATION

Alliance for a Healthier Generation

New York State Child Nutrition Knowledge Center

New York State Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Alliance (NYSHEPA)

The New York State Department of Health

### WEBSITE

[www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.org)

[portal.nysed.gov/portal/page/pref/CNKC](http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page/pref/CNKC)

[www.nyshepa.org](http://www.nyshepa.org)

[www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us)

## ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACT RESEARCH

Social Impact Research (SIR) is the independent research department of Root Cause, a research and consulting firm dedicated to mobilizing the nonprofit, public, and business sectors to work together in a new social impact market. SIR aggregates, analyzes, and disseminates information to help donors and funders identify and support the most effective,

efficient, and sustainable organizations working to solve social problems. Modeled after private sector equity research firms, SIR produces research reports, analyzes philanthropic portfolios, and provides educational services for advisors to help their clients make effective and rigorous philanthropic decisions.

## ENDNOTES

1. “Obesity Prevention,” New York State Department of Health (Sept. 2010), <http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/obesity>.
2. “CDC 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Database,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed Oct. 6, 2010, <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>.
3. “Overweight and Obesity: New York,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/new\\_york.html](http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/new_york.html).
4. “Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Database,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed Apr. 7, 2011, <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/income.asp?yr=1995&state=NY&qkey=4409&grp=0>. Graph generated by SIR.
5. “Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Database: 2009 Data,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed Apr. 9, 2011, <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=OB&yr=2009&qkey=4409&state=NY>.

6. “Preventing and Reducing Childhood Obesity in New York,” New York State Controllers Office (2008), <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/health/childhoodobesity.pdf>.
7. “Eat Well Play Hard,” New York Department of Health (2010), [http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/nutrition/resources/eat\\_well\\_play\\_hard](http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/nutrition/resources/eat_well_play_hard).
8. NGA Center for Best Practices, “Healthy Kids, Healthy New York: Snapshots of Progress,” National Governors Association (2010), <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/1003HEALTHYKIDSSNAPSHOTNY.PDF>.
9. “About Us,” Just Say Yes to Fruits and Veggies, accessed Mar. 29, 2010, <http://www.jsyfruitveggies.org>.