

COMMUNITY REPORT CARD SERIES

Health & Wellness • November 2015

A PROFILE OF

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

IN ERIE COUNTY

A Product of the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County



United Way of Buffalo
& Erie County

WHY IS CHILDHOOD OBESITY A PROBLEM?

For the first time in history, children are predicted to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the USA, and is projected to shorten American life expectancy by 2–5 years over the next 35 years. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that over 1/3 of children were either obese or overweight (i.e. at risk of becoming obese). This problem is only worsening, as obesity among children and adolescents has tripled over the past 30 years.

Being obese or overweight can cause serious health conditions including:

- Asthma
- Stroke
- Cancer
- High Blood Pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Heart Disease
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Premature Death

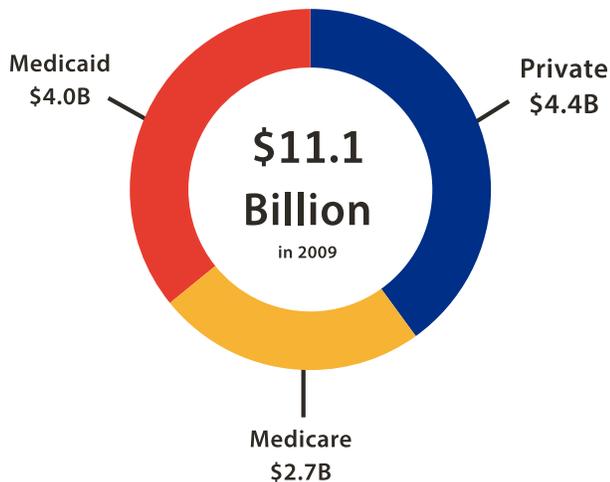
A child's weight status is determined through the body mass index (BMI), which is the child's height and weight as compared to other children of the same age and gender. Children that are obese have a BMI at or above the 85th percentile.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURES IN NEW YORK STATE

New York State (NYS) is second highest for obesity related spending in the United States. Over the past three decades, obesity and overweight rates among children and adolescents has continued to increase. Currently, 34% of children in NYS are currently obese or overweight.

In 2009, over **\$11.1 billion** was spent on obesity prevention and mitigation, including **\$6.7 billion** (60%) in public expenditures through Medicare and Medicaid.

Battling the onset of obesity could save hundreds of millions of dollars each year, making both families and NYS more financially sustainable.

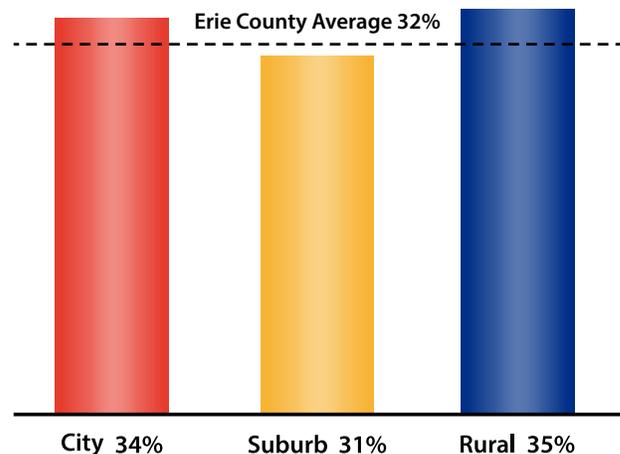


Public Expenditures exceed private spending on obesity-related illnesses in NYS (2009 Figures).

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE CHILDREN IN ERIE COUNTY

In 2012, 32% of children in Erie County qualified as obese and overweight. This is an increase from 28% in 2008.

- 30.4% of elementary school children are considered obese and overweight.
- 34.4% of middle and high school children are considered obese and overweight.
- 13 of the 29 school districts in Erie County had above average rates of obese and overweight students.

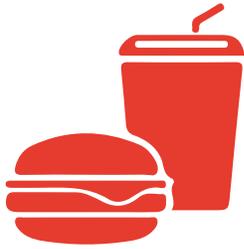


School Districts from rural, suburban, and city areas have high rates of overweight and obese children.

WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE
**CHILDHOOD
OBESITY**
IN ERIE COUNTY?

Obesity and overweight rates for school-aged children in Erie County have ties to access and consumption of healthy food, safe and accessible spaces to engage in physical activity, and neighborhood income levels.

■ Above Average Childhood Obesity Rates Can Be Caused By



Unhealthy Food

Children and adolescents may consume up to 40% of their daily calories from sugars and solid fats.



Screen/Media Time

Children who watch more than two hours of TV per day are more likely to gain excess weight that can contribute to obesity.



Neighborhood Income

Children from lower income households are more than twice as likely to be obese than those from higher income households.

■ Below Average Childhood Obesity Rates Can Result From



Nutritious Food

Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables are high in fiber and have been shown to reduce weight gain over time.



Physical Activity

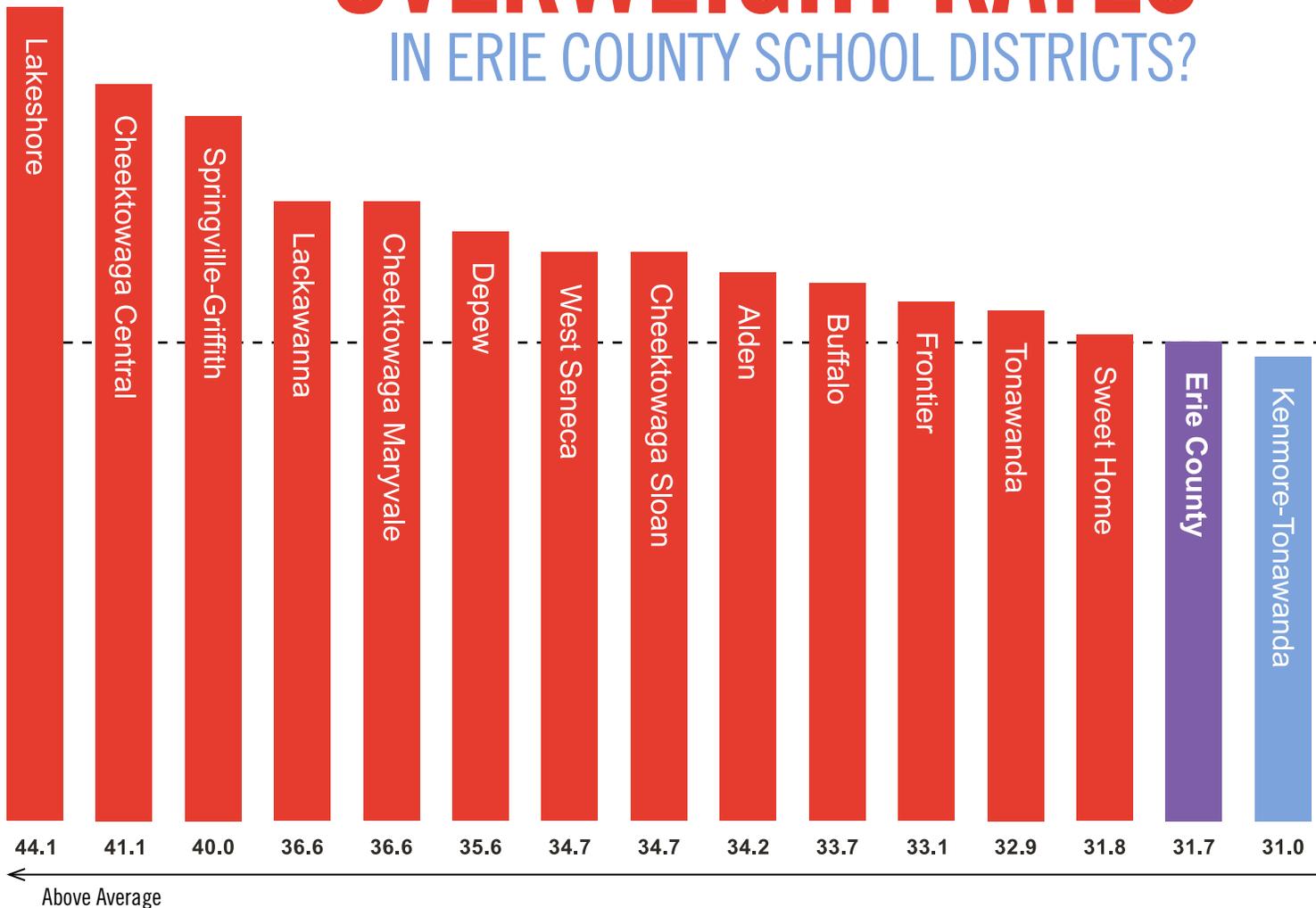
Regular physical activity reduces both body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference while improving aerobic capacity.



Community Wealth

Higher-income areas have greater access to parks, sports facilities, and healthy food options than low-income areas.

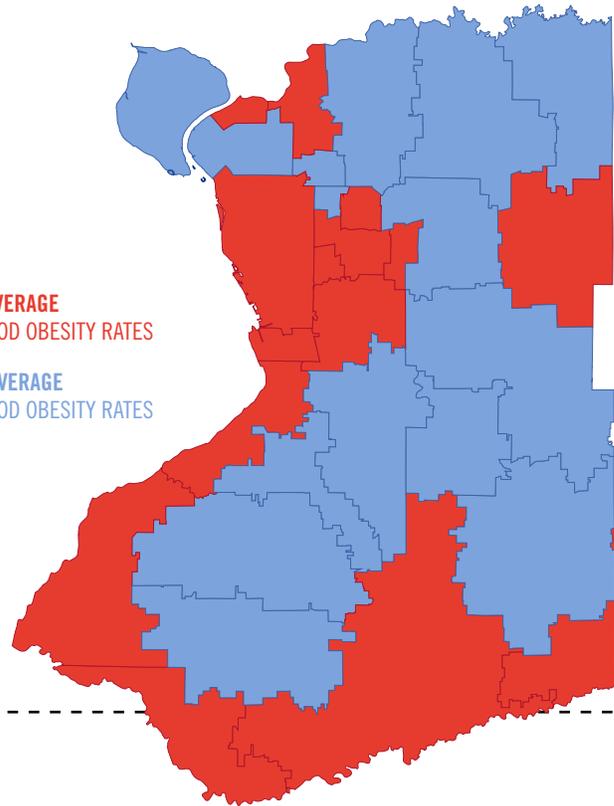
WHAT IS THE STATE OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY & OVERWEIGHT RATES IN ERIE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS?



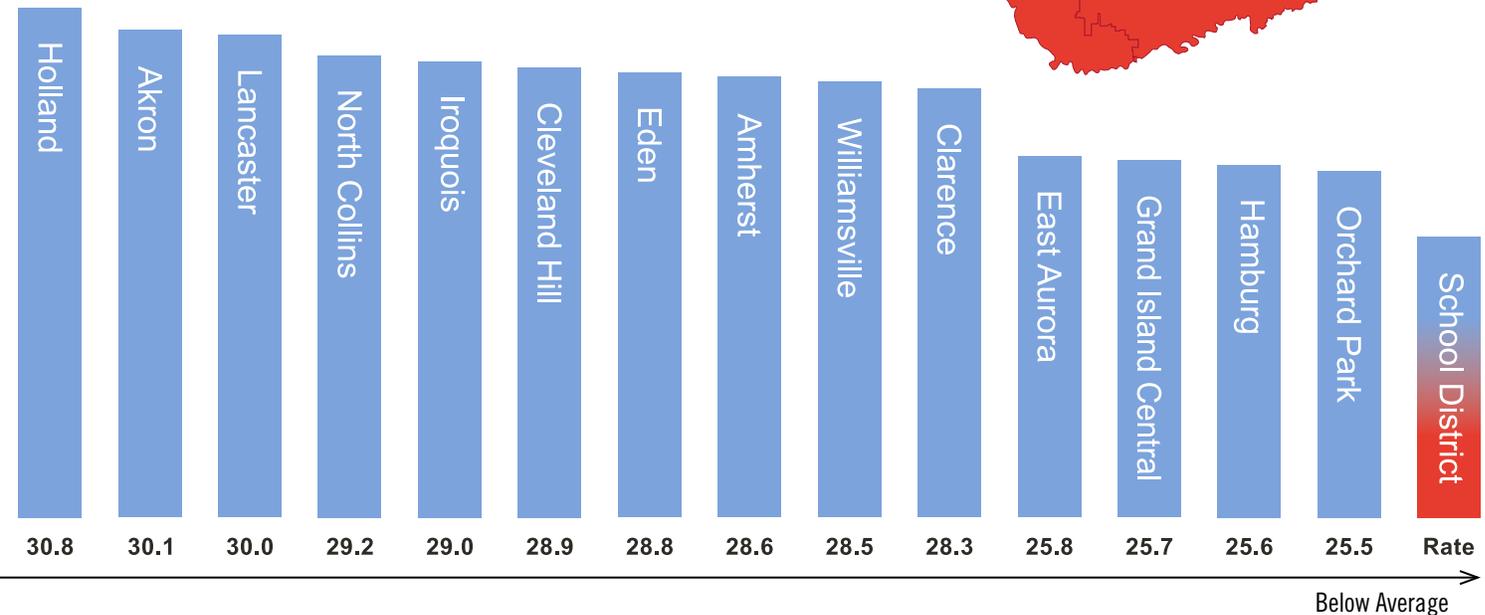
Erie County School Districts located in the City of Buffalo, suburbs bordering the city, and rural communities tend to have above average rates of overweight and obese children when compared to school districts in other suburban communities.

ABOVE AVERAGE
CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES

BELOW AVERAGE
CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES



Average childhood obesity and overweight rate in Erie County



Below Average →

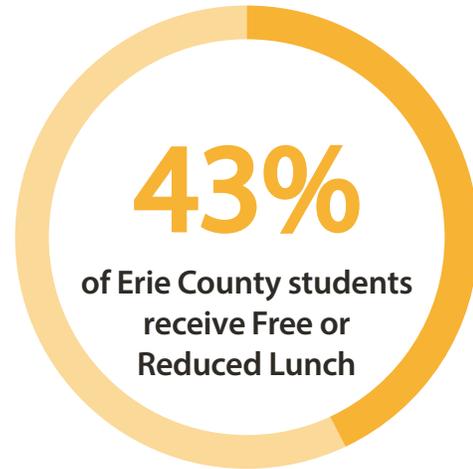
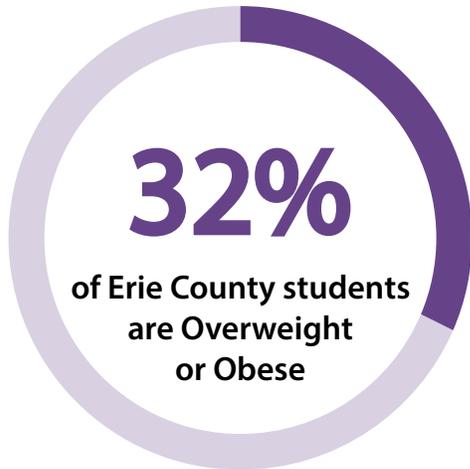
HOW DOES INCOME RELATE TO OBESITY IN ERIE COUNTY?

There is a close relationship between income levels of a school district and the proportion of children who are obese or overweight.

Traditionally high income districts like East Aurora and Orchard Park have relatively healthier students than nearby districts with lower income levels, like Lakeshore and Cheektowaga.

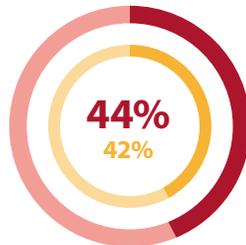
One way we can measure the income levels of a district is to understand what proportion of students are receiving free or reduced lunches, shown. Typically, these children and their families are either living in poverty or slightly above poverty and are considered low income.

Erie County Averages

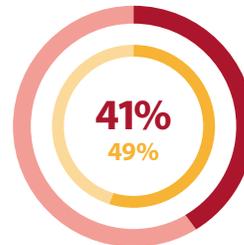


School District Averages

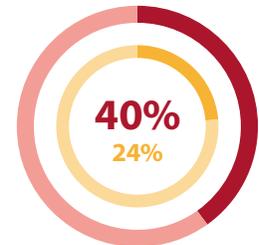
- ABOVE AVERAGE**
CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES
- BELOW AVERAGE**
CHILDHOOD OBESITY RATES
- FREE OR REDUCED**
LUNCH RATES



Evans-Brant (Lakeshore)
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Cheektowaga
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Springville-Griffith
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



East Aurora
UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT



Orchard Park
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Hamburg
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Grand Island
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

WHAT CAN WE DO TO IMPROVE HEALTH & WELL BEING?

Combating childhood obesity is a challenge the entire community must come together to address. From policy makers and parents to school districts and sports leagues, we can all work together to improve our children's health and well being.

Policymakers and funders should continue supporting school based programs and after school programs that are used to decrease childhood obesity, like Soccer for Success, Play 60, and CATCH.

Other strategies to promote healthy lifestyles include ensuring equal access to physical activity, such as recreational programs and safe play spaces, as well as equal access to nutritious food through nearby grocery stores and farmers' markets.

School districts should continue or start to collect data on childhood obesity to support policymakers in understanding which programs are the most effective to implement.

School districts can also take a leadership role by working with their wellness teams and other staff to provide a safe environment for children. They should enact policies and procedures that support healthy behaviors including:

- Delivering high-quality and nutritious school lunches
- Offering nutritional education at early ages
- Ensuring equal access to physical education

Families and individuals should make their children active contributors to the process of planning for meals, grocery shopping and preparing meals.

Children should be encouraged to reach for the fruits and veggies while avoiding the snack food aisles. We can also model good behavior by reducing too much screen time and encouraging active play time, both indoors and outdoors.

WHICH PROGRAMS ARE DELIVERING RESULTS?

United Way's Healthy Start Healthy Future for All Coalition, a partnership of over 50 organizations, promotes collaborative efforts across Buffalo & Erie County that are leading the way in the fight against childhood obesity. These innovative programs combine nutritional education with physical activity, while providing varying degrees of mentorship through school-based and after school initiatives. Three local examples are included below.



Uses soccer to combat childhood obesity and encourage healthy lifestyles. 75 minutes of after school programming 3x/week.

Local Availability

42 sites in the City of Buffalo

2013-2014 Results

Improved body mass index, waist size, and aerobic capacity

Partners

U.S. Soccer Foundation, Buffalo Soccer Club, Independent Health Foundation, United Way of Buffalo & Erie County



Assists schools in providing healthy and active environments; class rooms participate in 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Local Availability

522 classrooms, 61 schools in Erie County

2013-2014 Results

5,437 students participated in over 5.6 million minutes of physical activity

Partners

National Football League, American Heart Association, Independent Health Foundation, United Way of Buffalo & Erie County



Encourages healthy eating and physical activity from Pre-K to Grade 8; highly cost effective program for obesity prevention.

Local Availability

8 schools in the City of Buffalo

2013-2014 Results

Largest evidence-based child health promotion program in the world

Partners

Buffalo Public Schools, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, United Way of Buffalo & Erie County

USEFUL RESOURCES

For more information on childhood obesity and steps you can take, please explore the following resources:

NYS Health Data

Find data related to childhood health from Student Weight Status Category Reporting
health.data.ny.gov

Community Health Assessment

Erie County's 2014-2017 CHA, reporting on the overall state of health in the area
erie.gov/health

UWBEC Health & Wellness

Learn more about United Way's programs that are actively working to reduce childhood obesity
uwbec.org/wellness

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Find research briefs on some of the causes and consequences of childhood obesity.
rwjf.org

Please consider a donation to the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County to support the Community Report Card Series. Visit uwbec.org to give.



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