

## Physical Activity / Dietary Behavior

Participation in regular physical activity among young people can help build and maintain healthy bones and muscles, maintain body weight and reduce body fat, reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, and promote psychological well-being.<sup>(1)</sup> Over time, regular physical activity decreases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, some types of cancer and premature death.<sup>(1)</sup> The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that youth ages 13-18 get 8 to 10 hours of sleep per day.<sup>(2)</sup> Among high school students nationwide in 2021, 77.3% did not get the recommended 8 to 10 hours of sleep on school nights.<sup>(3)</sup>

### 2023 Results

The following are findings related to various issues related to physical health and dietary behaviors among NJ students for 2023:

- Almost three-in-ten NJ high school students (29%) were classified as obese (12%) or overweight (17%).
- Three-in-ten students also described themselves as very or slightly overweight (32%).
- About one-in-ten students drank at least one glass of soda a day, every day for the past 7 days (9%).
- 5% of students drank an energy drink (like Red Bull or Jolt) once a day or more for the past 7 days.
- Only 28% of students had breakfast every day for the past 7 days.
- Over three-quarters of students have two glasses of water a day (78%).
- In the past 30 days, only 3% of students reported going hungry always or most of the time because there was no or little food in their home.
- In the past 7 days, 13% of students did not spend 1 day participating in any physical activity that lasted at least 60 minutes.









Other findings in these areas include the following:

- In the 12 months, 14% of NJ high school students reported having had a concussion from playing a sport or being physically active.
- 84% of students spent three or more hours of screen time (in front of a TV, computer, smartphone, or other electronic device watching shows or videos, playing games, accessing the Internet, or using social media, not counting time spent doing schoolwork, on an average school day.
- 80% of students saw a dentist (for a check-up, exam, teeth cleaning, or other dental work) during the past 12 months while only 1% have never been to a dentist in their lives.
- 22% of students got 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night.
- 1% of students reported an unstable housing situation in the past 30 days.
- 19% of students have been told by a doctor or medical professional that they have asthma.

### Trend Summary

The general 10-year trend related to physical health and dietary behavior issues among New Jersey youth is mixed, though largely unchanged. The percentage of students who were overweight/obese increased from 23% to 29% from 2013 to 2023 while obesity increased from 9% to 12%. Student self-perception of being slightly or very overweight did not change – remaining at 30% to 32%. Drinking a glass of soda a day went down slightly from 12% to 9% in this period; having one or more energy drinks a day like Red Bull or Jolt increased from 2% to

5%; and drinking two glasses of water or more increased from 74% to 78%. Eating breakfast daily decreased from 40% to 28%. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who indicated they went hungry because of a lack of food in the home declined slightly from 5% to 3%. There was little change in those showing a lack of physical activity with 13% of students not once engaging in 60 minutes of physical activity over the past 7 days compared to 12% in 2013.

Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
<b>Overweight</b> <i>were overweight (&gt;=85<sup>th</sup> percentile of BMI based on sex and age-specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts)</i>	14%	15%	16%	17%	No change in behavior 
<b>Obesity</b> <i>were obese (&gt;=95<sup>th</sup> percentile of BMI based on sex and age-specific reference data from the 2000 CDC growth charts)</i>	9%	12%	14%	12%	Increase in a negative behavior 
<b>Describe Themselves as Overweight</b> <i>Percentage of students who described themselves as slightly or very overweight</i>		30%	31%	32%	No change in behavior 
<b>Drink Soda</b> <i>drank a can, bottle or glass of soda one or more times per day, such as Coke, Pepsi, or Sprite, not counting diet soda, during the past 7 days</i>	12%	10%	10%	9%	No change in behavior 
<b>Drink Energy Drink</b> <i>drank a can, bottle, or glass of an energy drink (such as Red Bull or Jolt, not counting diet energy drinks or sports drinks such as Gatorade or PowerAde, one or more times per day during the 7 days)</i>	2%	2%	5%	5%	Increase in a negative behavior 
<b>Eat Breakfast</b> <i>ate breakfast on all of the past 7 days</i>	40%	33%	27%	28%	Decrease in a positive behavior 
<b>Drink Water</b> <i>drank a bottle or glass of plain water two or more times per day</i>	–	74%	74%	78%	Increase in positive behavior 
<b>Not Physically Active</b> <i>did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on at least 1 day did not increase their heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time during the past 7 days</i>	12%	15%	14%	13%	No change in behavior 

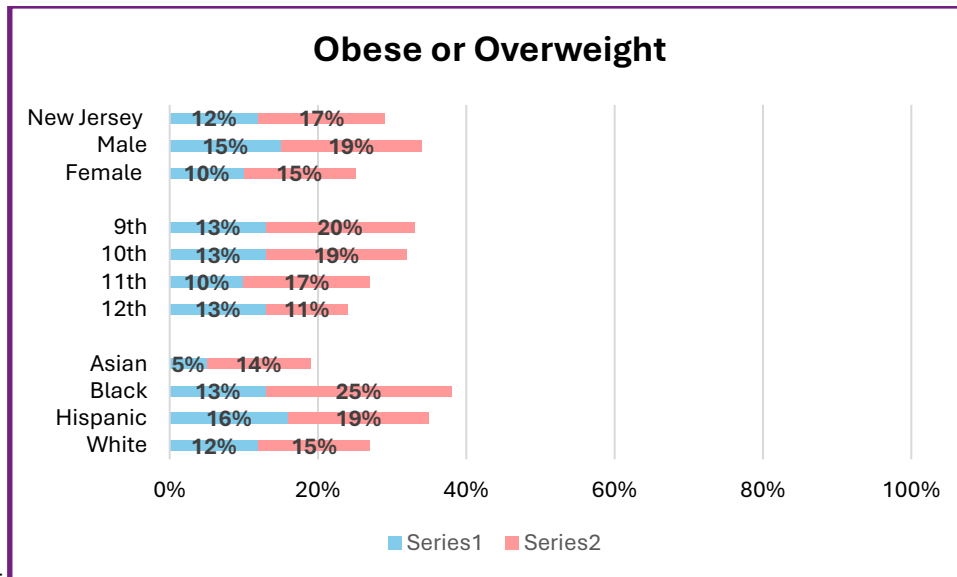
Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
<b>Went Hungry</b> <i>most of time or always went hungry because there was not enough food in their home (during the last 30 days)</i>	5%	5%	4%	3%	No change in behavior ●
<b>Adequate Sleep</b> <i>got 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night</i>	27%	16%	23%	22%	No change in behavior ●

**Note:** Trend analysis was performed by the CDC on data from 2013 to 2023 to determine which differences across years were statistically significant. For questions not asked in all survey years, the trend analysis was performed from 2021 back to the last consecutive year in which the question was asked.

### Demographic Breakdown

Almost three-in-ten NJ high school students (29%) were classified as either obese (12%) or overweight (17%).

- **Gender** – Males (34%) were more likely than females (25%) to be classified as obese/overweight.
- **Grade** – Those in 9<sup>th</sup> (33%) and 10<sup>th</sup> (32%) grades have the highest rates of being obese/overweight as compared to those in 11<sup>th</sup> (27%) or 12<sup>th</sup> (24%) grades. However, about the same percentage of students were classified as obese in all grades (13% in grades 9, 10 and 12 and 10% in grade 11).
- **Race/Ethnicity** – Black (38%) and Hispanic (35%) students were more likely than White (27%) and Asian (19%) students to be classified as obese/overweight.



### Resources

- New Jersey Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance: <http://www.njahperd.org/>
- State Obesity Fact Sheets-National Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality (NICHQ): <https://www.nichq.org/>
- New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association: <https://www.njsiaa.org/>
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation-Promotes Healthy Eating and Physical Activity: <https://www.healthiergeneration.org/>