

## FAQs: New Child Obesity Data

Prepared by the Colorado Health Institute  
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### Why are some people so excited about this data?

The National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) is one of very few data sources that estimate child obesity rates in all 50 states. The NSCH is released every four years, making it highly anticipated in the health data world. It was first released in 2003 and a follow-up survey was conducted in 2007. The new release reflects data from 2011/12, meaning that data was collected from February 2011 through June 2012.

### Who is responsible for this data?

The NSCH is conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics. The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI), a program of the Oregon Health and Science University, is responsible for analysis of the data and the website, [www.childhealthdata.org](http://www.childhealthdata.org).

### What are the results?

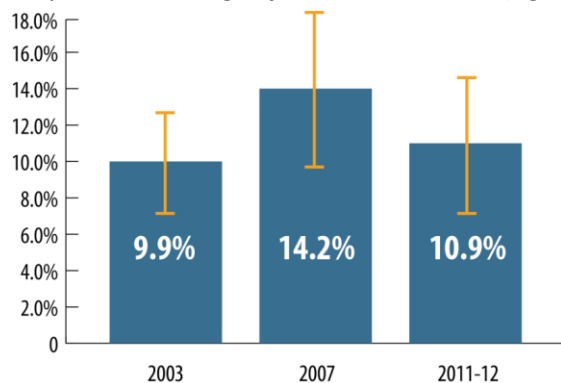
Complete findings are available on the website, but here are a few highlights:

Table 1. Percentage of Colorado children (age 10-17) who are **obese**, 2003, 2007 and 2011-12

	2003	2007	2011-12
<b>Number</b>	48,402	71,604	55,206
<b>Percentage</b>	9.9%	14.2%	10.9%

SOURCE: National Survey of Children’s Health, 2003, 2007 and 2011-12.

Graph 1. Percentage of Colorado children (age 10-17) who are **obese**, 2003, 2007 and 2011-12



SOURCE: National Survey of Children’s Health, 2003, 2007 and 2011-12. Note: Yellow bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Table 2. Percentage of Colorado children (age 10-17) who are ***overweight or obese***, 2003, 2007 and 2011-12

	2003	2007	2011-12
<b>Number</b>	106,857	137,517	116,638
<b>Percentage</b>	21.9%	27.2%	23.1%

SOURCE: National Survey of Children's Health, 2003, 2007 and 2011-12.

### **Are these changes statistically significant?**

Surveys such as the NSCH are based on a sample of Colorado's child population. Because it's not feasible to call every single child in the country, the CDC uses a representative sample and then generalizes that sample for the rest of the population. All survey estimates are subject to a margin of error, usually plus or minus a few percentage points. In statistical terms, that means that we can say (usually with 95% confidence) that the "real" rate of childhood obesity in Colorado is the published estimate plus or minus a few percentage points (represented by the orange bars in Graph 1).

The changes in Colorado's obesity rate between 2003, 2007, and 2011/12 are **not** statistically significant. That means that the difference is within the margin of error for each survey. It does not mean that the results are invalid, but is rather something to keep in mind when thinking about and communicating the findings from the survey.

### **What are the limitations of this data?**

The sample size is comparatively small for this survey. Around 2,000 surveys were collected in Colorado out of a total child population of around 1.2 million. This means that the margins of error around each estimate are comparatively wide.

### **How does this compare to the Colorado Child Health Survey, which is administered by CDPHE?**

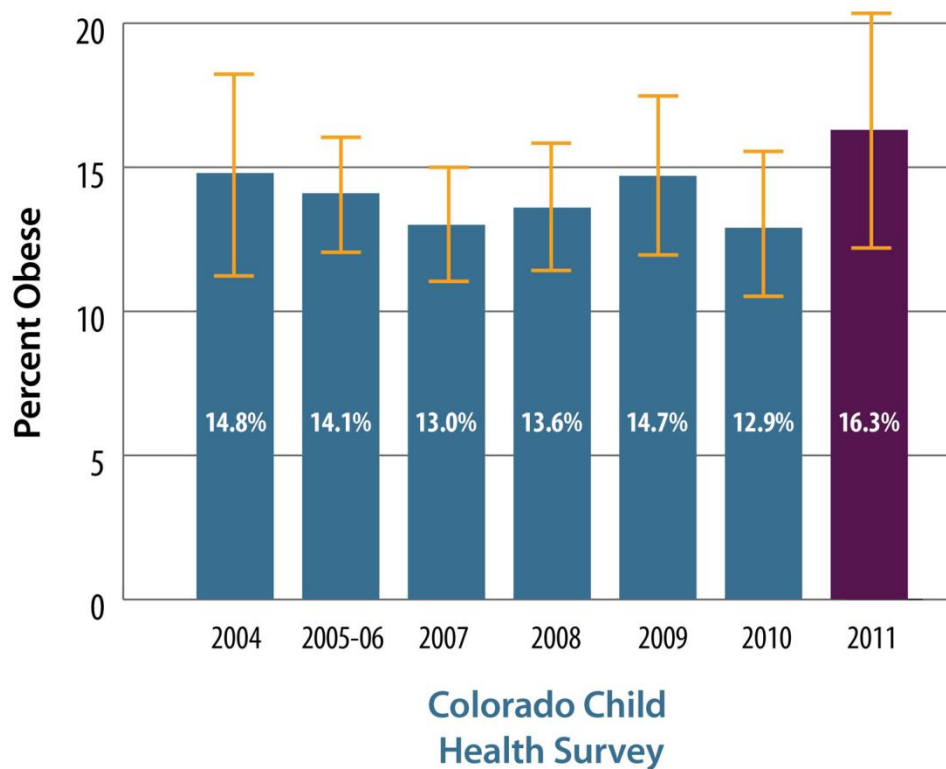
While the NSCH is one of a few surveys that compares Colorado's child obesity rate to that of the other 49 states, it's not the only source for child obesity data in Colorado. The Colorado Child Health Survey, administered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, releases childhood obesity data annually. Other surveys, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, do so as well. While the surveys have different methodologies, their sample sizes are similar – approximately 1,000 to 2,000 Colorado children.

It's important to keep in mind that the age ranges differ across surveys. The NSCH analyses obesity data for children **ages 10-17**. The Colorado Child Health Survey typically publishes obesity data for children **ages 2-14**.

The bottom line is that there is no “correct” data source. Each survey has its strengths and weaknesses. The key is to look at the bigger picture: What trends do we see across many surveys? How do findings from each survey compare year-to-year?

This graph lists findings from the CCHS. Again, keep in mind that the age ranges are different across the two surveys.

**Graph 2. Rates of Childhood Obesity in Colorado, Colorado Child Health Survey**



Source: Colorado Child Health Survey, 2004-2011. Includes children ages 2-14.

Note: Yellow bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. Obesity is defined as children having a Body Mass Index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's gender- and age-specific revised Growth Charts for the United States. Due to changes in the way the CCHS was administered between 2010 and 2011, data from 2010 is not directly comparable to 2011. These changes included the addition of a cell phone-only sample and a methodological change in the way the data was weighted.

**I have more questions. Who should I talk to?**

Please call or email Emily King, research analyst at CHI. Her direct line is 720.382.7085 and her email address is [kinge@coloradohealthinstitute.org](mailto:kinge@coloradohealthinstitute.org). In addition, Sara Schmitt (720.382.7081, [schmitts@coloradohealthinstitute.org](mailto:schmitts@coloradohealthinstitute.org)) and Natalie Triedman (720.382.7077, [triedmann@coloradohealthinstitute.org](mailto:triedmann@coloradohealthinstitute.org)) can answer questions as well.