

Severe Obesity on the Rise in Young Latino Children

About 2.5% of all preschool-aged children studied were severely obese.

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A study published in [Pediatrics](#) supports existing research that the incidence of severe obesity has increased in young U.S. [children](#), particularly young Latino children, who had the highest rate of obesity compared with other racial groups.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) researchers looked at children ages 2 to 4 years enrolled in the [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\) program](#), which supports preschool-aged children in low-income families, according to [NBC Philadelphia](#).

Results showed that about 2.5% of all preschool-aged children had severe obesity at the time of observation. Latino children had the highest rate of obesity, at about 2.8%.

For comparison, in 2010, the rate of severe obesity in this group of kids was about 2.1%. By 2016, the rate had dropped to 1.8%, but by 2020, it had increased to 2%.

"We were doing well, and now we see this upward trend," said co-study author Heidi Blanck, PhD, of the CDC's obesity prevention and control branch. "We are dismayed at seeing these findings."

Childhood obesity affects nearly one in five U.S. children and teens, according to [CDC data](#). Latino and Black youth experience high rates of obesity, which research attributes to factors such as poverty, lack of access to healthy foods and single-parent households.

What's more, a study published earlier this year in JAMA Network Open found that racial discrimination may [increase the risk for childhood obesity](#), which already affects Latino youth at higher rates. Researchers found that children who experienced greater racial discrimination had a higher body mass index and larger waist circumference.

Some experts attribute the decrease in childhood obesity seen in 2010 to a WIC policy change that eliminated juice from infant food packages, reduced saturated fat and aimed to make it easier to buy fruits and vegetables. Others emphasize the need for additional interventions to curb childhood obesity.

Sarah Armstrong, MD, a Duke University childhood obesity researcher, told NBC, “The daily hardships that families living in poverty are facing may be harder today than they were 10 years ago, and the slight increases in the WIC package just weren’t enough.”

To read more, click [#Childhood Obesity](#) or [#Diet](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[Latino Youth With Food Insecurity Vulnerable to Health Risks](#),” “[NAFLD, NASH Cases Rising Among Latinos, Children](#)” and “[Study Finds Better Predictor for Prediabetes in Latino Youth](#).”

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