

Alaska Health Status Indicators

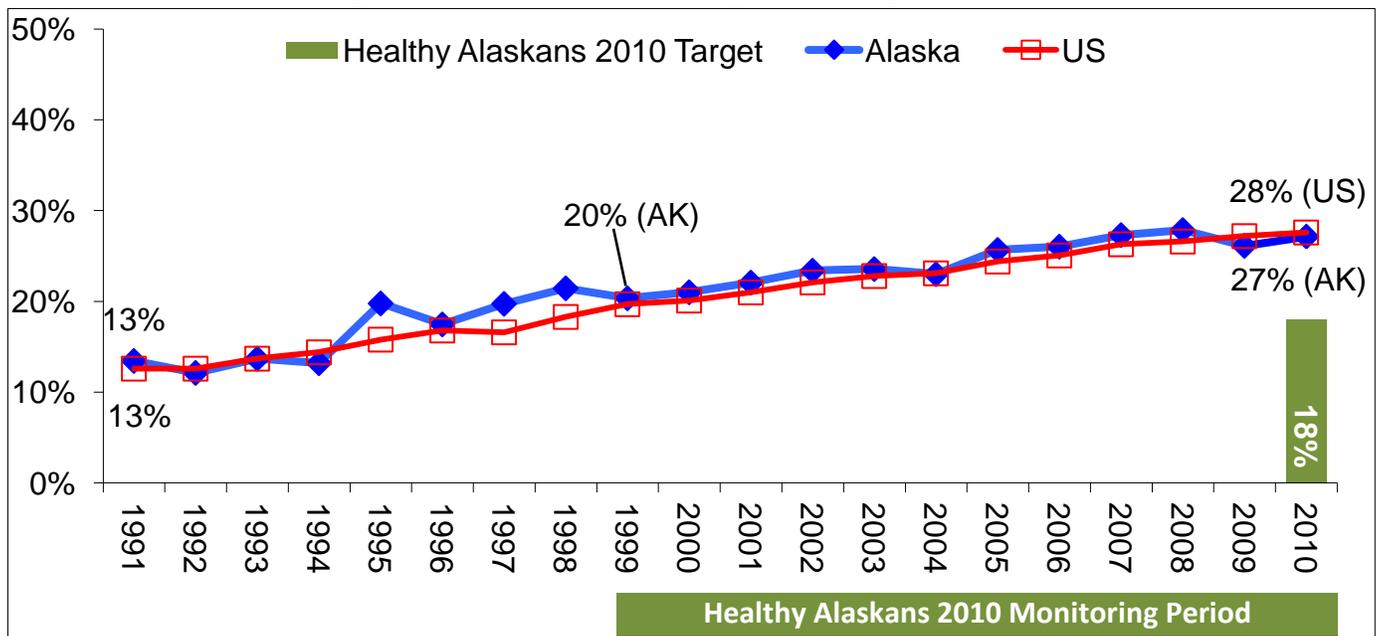
Indicator: *Adult Obesity*

Why is this important?

Obesity has become a major health problem for Alaskans and Americans. About a third of the adult population is now obese and an additional one-third is overweight.¹ Obesity is expensive. It is estimated medical complications of obesity cost Alaska's economy \$459 million a year in direct medical expenditures.² The spread of the obesity epidemic has been equally, if not more, severe among children and adolescents. Since 1980, the national overweight and obesity rates have tripled for youth, with 34% of two to 19 year olds above a normal weight (above the 85th percentile).³ Overweight and obesity are determined by calculating Body Mass Index (BMI) from a person's weight and height. BMI provides a reliable indicator of body fatness for most people and it is used to screen for weight categories that increases the risk of health problems. The impact of the obesity epidemic is reflected in the nation's concurrent epidemics of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases, and has even lead to the projection that, due to obesity, today's children may be the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents' generation.⁴

How are we doing?

Percentage of Adults Who Are Obese (BMI ≥ 30.0): Alaska and the U.S.



The percentage of Alaska adults who are obese has steadily increased over the past 2 decades, doubling between 1991 (13%) and 2010 (27%).

❖ How is Alaska Doing Relative to the *Healthy Alaskans 2010 Target*?

The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target for adult obesity prevalence is 18% or lower. Adult obesity prevalence has increased steadily from a baseline of 20% in 1999 to its current level of 27% in 2010. **The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target of 18% has not been met.**

❖ How does AK compare with the US?

The Alaska adult obesity rate has paralleled the increase seen in adult obesity prevalence nationwide.

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❖ How are different populations affected?

The prevalence of obesity is higher for Alaska Natives/American Indians (31%) than White Alaskans (25%). Those living in rural Alaska (30%) are more likely to be obese than those in other regions of the states (25-26%). Women with low household incomes and with less than a high school education are more likely to be obese. (Source: 2009 BRFSS) Additional statistics on obesity burden are available at:

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/resources.htm>.

What is the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services doing to improve this indicator?

In collaboration with partners statewide, the Obesity Prevention and Control Program provides professional development opportunities and technical assistance to school teachers and staff on evidence-based obesity prevention strategies appropriate for the school environment. The program also provides important surveillance data and publishes reports on the behaviors and risk factors that contribute to obesity to help community coalitions and partners identify and track health problems, and evaluate the effectiveness of obesity prevention efforts. Additional information on current efforts to prevent obesity in Alaska is available at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/>.

Indicator Definition and Notes

Percentage of adults aged 18 years and older with a body mass index of ≥ 30.0 . (BMI calculated as self-reported weight in kilograms divided by self-reported height in meters squared.)

Data Sources

Alaska: Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services; US: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alaska data were obtained from the Standard AK BRFSS from 1991 through 2003, and from the Standard and Supplemental AK BRFSS surveys combined from 2004 through 2010. The Supplemental BRFSS survey is conducted using identical methodology as the Standard BRFSS and allows a doubling of the BRFSS sample size for those measures included on both surveys.

References

1. Flegal KM, Carroll MD, Ogden CL, Curtin LR. Prevalence and trends in obesity among US adults, 1999-2008. JAMA. 2010 Jan 20;303(3):235-41.
2. Trogon JG, Finkelstein EA, Feagan CW, Cohen JW. State- and Payer-Specific Estimates of Annual Medical Expenditures Attributable to Obesity. Obesity (2011) 10.1038/oby.2011.169
3. Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin LR, Lamb MM, Flegal KM. Prevalence of high body mass index in US children and adolescents, 2007-2008. JAMA. 2010 Jan 20;303(3):242-9.
4. Olshansky SJ, Passaro DJ, Hershov RC et al. A potential decline in life expectancy in the United States in the 21st century. NEJM 2005;352(11):1138-45.



Available at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/>

