

# Focus: Childhood Obesity

## Washtenaw County, MI

2016



Washtenaw County  
Health Department

### 11% of Washtenaw County children were obese in 2016

A child is classified as obese when he or she has a body mass index (BMI) greater than 95% of other children<sup>i</sup>. Obesity is a significant health issue in the United States. Being overweight in childhood puts individuals at risk of obesity and other chronic diseases in adulthood, and children who are obese are at higher risk than children who are simply overweight only.

#### Obesity Rates in Washtenaw County Children 2 to 17 year olds, 2013 & 2016

Demographic Group	2013	2016
Total Number of Children in dataset <sup>ii</sup>	18,595	34,001
	<b>% obese</b>	
<b>Sex</b>		
Females	11%	11%
Males*	13%	12%
<b>Age Group</b>		
2-4 years*	8%	7%
5-7 years	10%	9%
8-10 years	13%	13%
11-13 years*	15%	14%
14-17 years	15%	14%
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic or Latino (all races)	14%	16%
Asian (non-Hispanic)	6%	6%
Black or African American (non-Hispanic)*	21%	19%
White (non-Hispanic)	10%	10%
<b>Health Insurance</b>		
Private	10%	9%
Medicaid	20%	19%
<b>Washtenaw County Overall*</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>11%</b>

\*indicates a statistically significant change between 2013 and 2016

Data Source: Washtenaw County BMI Dataset (2013,2016)<sup>ii</sup>

Weight is a complex interaction of different factors, including healthy food access and diet, environment at school or at home, and genetic history and cultural practices. Differences in obesity rates reflect unfair disadvantages that children experience.

#### Highlights between 2013 and 2016

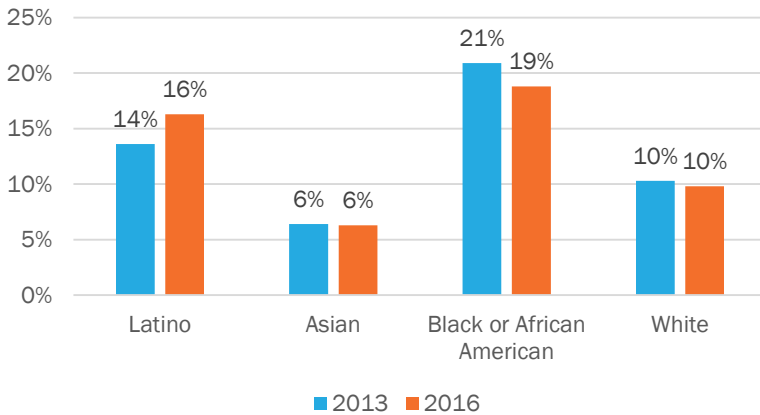
- 11.4% of children in Washtenaw County, ages 2-17 years, were obese in 2016.
  - There has been a consistent, significant decrease in obesity rates since 2013, when the obesity rate in children was 12.1%.
- Children with Medicaid health insurance are twice as likely to be obese compared to children with private health insurance.
- Although Washtenaw County overall is below the Healthy People 2020 national goal (14.5% obesity rate in 2-19 year olds), some children still have not reached this milestone.
- Some children who experience higher risk of obesity include:
  - Hispanic or Latino children – 16% obese in 2016
  - Black or African American children – 19% obese in 2016
  - Children with Medicaid health insurance coverage – 19% obese in 2016

<sup>i</sup> **Body Mass Index (BMI)** is a measure of body fat based on height and weight. BMI in children is interpreted using age and sex, and a percentile is assigned using standardized CDC growth curves. In children, overweight is defined by having a BMI greater than 85<sup>th</sup> percentile. Obesity is defined as a BMI greater than 95<sup>th</sup> percentile.

<sup>ii</sup> **St. Joseph Mercy Health System** and **Michigan Medicine** contributed electronic health records of Washtenaw County children who had their height and weight measured in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Washtenaw County Health Department created the Washtenaw Child BMI Dataset and performed the analysis for this report.

# Obesity rate is higher for African American and Latino children

**Obesity Rate by Race**  
Washtenaw County Children 2-17 yrs  
2013 & 2016

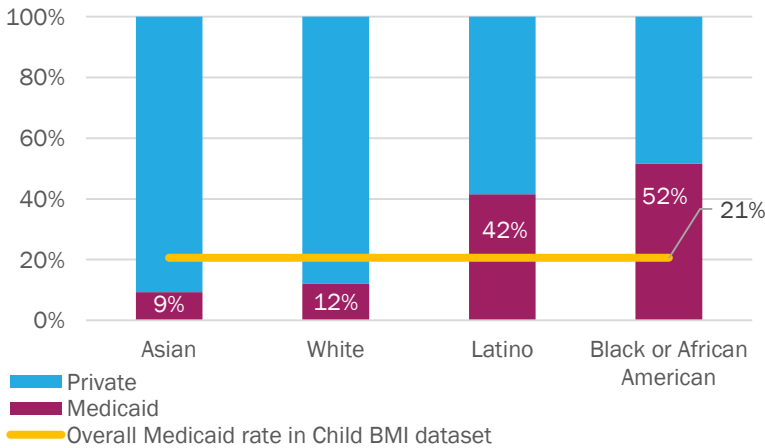


African American and Latino children have higher rates of obesity compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

- **Good news:** Obesity rates in African American children decreased significantly from 21% in 2013 to 19% in 2016.
- **Improvement Opportunity:** Obesity rates in Latino children increased from 14% in 2013 to 16% in 2016.

# Living in poverty increases the likelihood that a child will be obese

**Health Insurance Type by Race**  
Washtenaw County Child BMI dataset, 2016



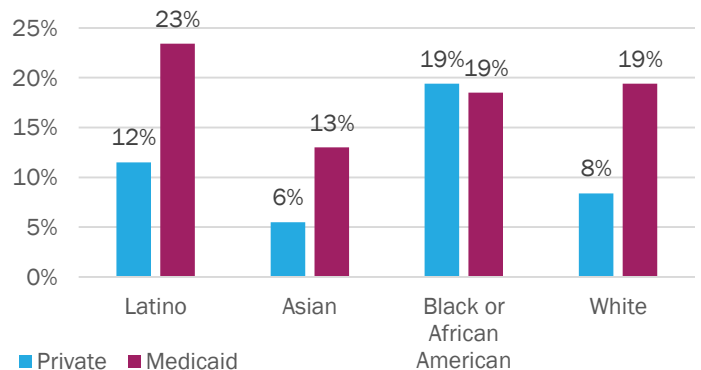
Medicaid health insurance is used as a proxy for poverty. According to the American Community survey, 24% of children less than 18 years have Medicaid health insurance coverage in Washtenaw County.

- In the Washtenaw County BMI dataset in 2016, 21% of children 2-17 years have Medicaid health insurance.
- The rates of children living in poverty are highest among African American and Hispanic or Latino children.
  - More than half of Black or African American kids in this dataset have Medicaid health insurance.

In Washtenaw County overall, living in poverty doubles the risk of being obese in most racial and ethnic groups.

- However, African American children with private health insurance have slightly higher rates of obesity, compared to children with Medicaid health insurance.

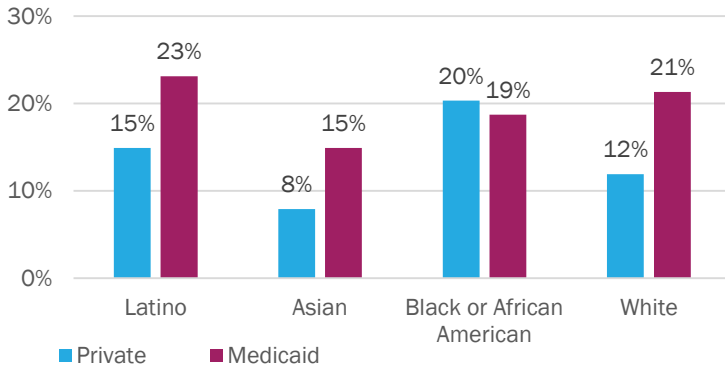
**Obesity by Insurance Status and Race**  
Washtenaw County 2-17 yrs, 2016



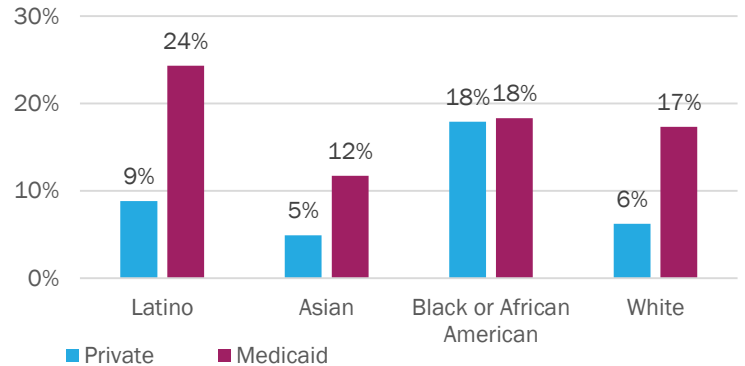
Data Source: Washtenaw Child BMI Dataset (2016)<sup>ii</sup>

# Obesity rates in African American children remain similar no matter where they live or if they are living in poverty

**Obesity by Race and Poverty in Ypsilanti  
Children 2-17 years, 2016**



**Obesity by Race and Poverty in Ann Arbor  
Children 2-17 years, 2016**



- For white and Asian children in both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, poverty is a strong predictor of obesity.
  - White and Asian children living in Ann Arbor, especially those who are not living in poverty, are less likely to be obese than children living in other areas of the county.
- Hispanic or Latino children with Medicaid health insurance coverage have the highest rates of obesity compared to other racial and ethnic groups.
- The obesity rates for black or African American children remain the largely the same, regardless of poverty status or zip code. This suggests other factors are stronger predictors of obesity rates for these children.

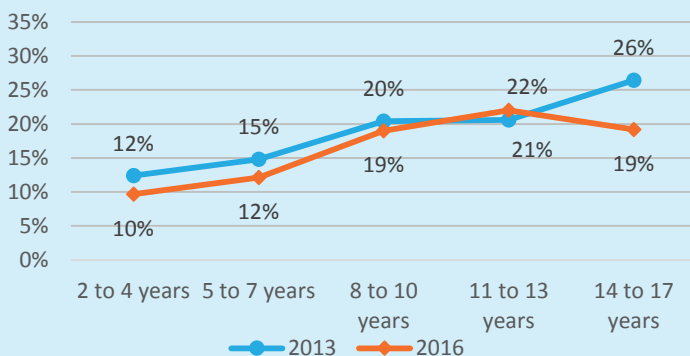
# Obesity rates in African American boys and girls have decreased in most age groups.

Black or African American children have the highest rates of obesity compared to other racial and ethnic groups in Washtenaw County. Additionally, after 2 to 4 years old, obesity rates in African American girls increase quickly and surpass the obesity rate in African American boys. These girls have the highest rates of obesity in Washtenaw County.

## Black or African American Boys

**Good news:** Obesity rates in 14-17 year old African American boys decreased significantly from 26% in 2013 to 19% in 2016.

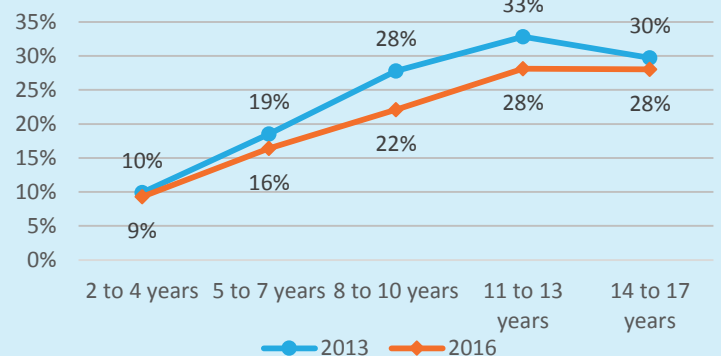
**Obesity in African American Boys  
Washtenaw County 2013 & 2016**



## Black or African American Girls

**Good news:** Between 2013 and 2016, obesity rates decreased for African American girls at every age group.

**Obesity in African American Girls  
Washtenaw County 2013 & 2016**



Data Sources: Washtenaw Child BMI Dataset (2016)<sup>ii</sup>