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A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finds that many states do not have the measures in place to support recommended levels of physical activity. The report identifies where states have been successful and where more work is needed. To help states achieve the desired results, it provides strategies for improvement.

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STATE POLICY REPORTS

Measuring States' Ability to Support Physical Activity

In a recent study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ranked the 50 states and the District of Columbia on the presence or absence of physical features and policies that can make being physically active either easy or hard to do. It also included data about individual behaviors related to physical activity in each state. According to CDC, the data in the report can be used to 1) assess how states support the behavior of physical activity, 2) monitor state progress and state success, and 3) identify opportunities for improvement.

The study has two components: behavioral indicators, and policy and environmental indicators. There are five behavioral indicators that measure each state's progress toward achieving nationally recommended levels of physical activity. CDC identifies 12 policy and environmental indicators, which are grouped into four categories, to measure several aspects of a state's ability to support physical activity.

The report does not provide an overall ranking or identify the "best" or "worst" states. However, certain states and trends stand out. Southern states dominate the bottom ranks and have the fewest policies in place to promote physical activity. For the most part, states from the West and Northeast do well on both the behavioral, and policy and environmental indicators.

Behavioral Indicators

This component is focused on the extent to which states achieve selected objectives and guidelines for physical activity. It includes five specific measures:

1. The proportion of adults in the state who achieve at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both.
2. The proportion of adults in the state who achieve more than 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both.
3. The proportion of adults in the state who engage in no leisure-time physical activity.
4. The proportion of students in grades 9-12 in the state who achieve one hour or more of moderate- and/or vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
5. The proportion of students in grades 9-12 in the state who participate in daily physical education at school.

Adults The table below shows how states rank on the first indicator, which is the percentage of adults in each state that are physically active. Among the states, **Vermont** holds the top rank with 73.3% of its adults physically active, followed by **Alaska** and **Montana**. **Tennessee** ranks last on the measure, preceded by **Louisiana** and **Mississippi**. States from the West and Northeast dominate the top ranks while southern states tend to rank lower. In fact, **Nevada** (#43) is the only western state to fall below the national average of 64.5%. **Georgia** and **Virginia** are the only southern states (and Georgia is the only top-10 most populated state) to rank in the top 20.

Percentage of Physically Active Adults

Rank	State	Percent	Rank	State	Percent
1	Vermont	73.3%	27	Ohio	65.6%
2	Alaska	72.5	28	Missouri	65.0
3	Montana	72.4	29	Maryland	64.9
4	Utah	71.8	30	Kansas	64.7
5	Maine	71.3		U.S. Average	64.5
6	Colorado	70.9	31	Delaware	64.3
6	Wyoming	70.9	31	Indiana	64.3
8	Idaho	70.7	31	South Carolina	64.3
8	Wisconsin	70.7	34	Iowa	64.1
10	Oregon	70.6	35	New York	63.9
11	Hawaii	70.4	36	Texas	63.7
12	New Hampshire	70.0	37	Florida	63.5
13	Washington	69.6	38	Illinois	63.1
14	Connecticut	68.3	39	Minnesota	62.9
15	New Mexico	67.9	39	New Jersey	62.9
16	Nebraska	67.5	41	South Dakota	62.7
17	North Dakota	67.3	42	Oklahoma	62.6
18	Virginia	67.1	43	Nevada	62.5
19	Massachusetts	66.9	44	West Virginia	62.2
20	Georgia	66.8	45	Arkansas	62.1
21	California	66.7	46	North Carolina	60.9
22	Michigan	66.6	47	Alabama	59.0
23	Arizona	66.5	48	Kentucky	57.9
24	District of Columbia	66.3	49	Mississippi	57.2
25	Rhode Island	66.3	50	Louisiana	56.0
26	Pennsylvania	66.1	51	Tennessee	51.8

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010

The state rankings for the percentage of highly active adults (the second measure) closely track the percentage of physically active adults in each state. Overall, 43.5% of adults report being highly active, ranging from 52.2% in **Montana** to 29.9% in **Tennessee**.

In contrast, 25.4% of adults reported that they do not engage in leisure-time physical activity, as shown on the next table. Those states with the highest percentage of adults that do not participate in physical activity are all from the South and include: **Louisiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Oklahoma** and **Mississippi**. Those states that have the lowest percentages are: **Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, Colorado** and **Washington**.

As expected, most states with the largest percentage of physically active adults have the lowest percentage of adults with no physical activity, and vice versa. However, there are a few notable exceptions. **Minnesota**, which holds the top rank on the table below, ranks below the national average for physically active adults. Conversely, **Alaska** ranks #2 for physically active adults but falls close to the U.S. average for adults with no leisure-time physical activity.

Percentage of Adults with No Leisure-Time Physical Activity

Rank	State	Percent	Rank	State	Percent
1	Minnesota	17.9	27	North Carolina	24.5
2	Oregon	18.8	28	Alaska	25.1
3	Vermont	19.0	28	Michigan	25.1
4	Colorado	19.1	28	Pennsylvania	25.1
5	Washington	19.4	31	Florida	25.4
6	Hawaii	19.6	32	Kansas	25.4
7	Utah	20.7	33	North Dakota	25.4
8	Idaho	21.1		U.S. Average	25.4
8	New Hampshire	21.1	34	Ohio	25.6
10	District of Columbia	21.3	35	New York	26.1
11	Massachusetts	21.8	36	South Dakota	26.5
12	Wisconsin	21.9	37	New Jersey	26.8
13	Connecticut	22.0	38	South Carolina	26.9
14	Maine	22.4	39	Missouri	27.2
15	Montana	22.8	40	Tennessee	27.3
16	Arizona	22.9	41	Indiana	27.4
17	Georgia	23.2	42	Nevada	27.6
18	California	23.5	43	Illinois	28.0
19	Virginia	23.6	44	Texas	28.8
20	New Mexico	23.8	45	Arkansas	29.2
21	Rhode Island	23.9	46	Alabama	29.3
22	Delaware	24.0	47	Louisiana	29.8
22	Maryland	24.0	48	Kentucky	30.1
24	Wyoming	24.3	49	West Virginia	30.5
25	Iowa	24.4	50	Oklahoma	31.0
25	Nebraska	24.4	51	Mississippi	32.4

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010

High School Students The last two behavioral indicators focus on students in grades 9-12 that participate in daily physical education at school or achieve at least one hour of physical activity daily. The table below shows the results for daily physical education, where data are available.

The proportion is highest in **Illinois** (47.3%), **Texas** (40.5%), **Georgia** and **Oklahoma** (both 34.3%), and lowest in **Maine** (6.7%), **Hawaii** (7.8%) and **New York** (13.1%). The national average has been skewed upward by three of the 10 largest states holding the highest ranks. In addition, the results vary substantially from previous measures; southern states perform better, the range of performance is quite large, and geographical regions are represented throughout the table.

Percentage of Students in Grades 9-12 Participating in Daily Physical Education

<u>Rank</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1	Illinois	47.3%	25	Kentucky	20.0%
2	Texas	40.5	27	Vermont	18.6
3	Georgia	34.3	28	Massachusetts	18.2
3	Oklahoma	34.3	29	Alaska	17.7
5	Montana	32.8	30	New Hampshire	17.2
6	Idaho	32.0	31	District of Columbia	16.3
7	Arkansas	31.3	32	Maryland	15.6
8	Tennessee	30.4	33	South Dakota	14.5
	U.S. Average	30.3	34	New York	13.1
9	Utah	29.9	35	Hawaii	7.8
10	Michigan	29.8	36	Maine	6.7
10	New Mexico	29.8		Alabama	n/a
12	North Carolina	29.0		California	n/a
13	Delaware	28.3		Colorado	n/a
14	Arizona	26.9		Connecticut	n/a
15	Ohio	26.2		Louisiana	n/a
16	Kansas	25.7		Minnesota	n/a
17	West Virginia	25.5		Nebraska	n/a
18	Indiana	25.2		Nevada	n/a
19	Missouri	24.1		New Jersey	n/a
20	Mississippi	23.4		North Dakota	n/a
21	Rhode Island	23.1		Oregon	n/a
21	South Carolina	23.1		Pennsylvania	n/a
23	Florida	23.0		Virginia	n/a
24	Wyoming	21.9		Washington	n/a
25	Iowa	20.0		Wisconsin	n/a

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010

While 30% of students participate in daily physical education, only 17% achieve (either in or out of school) one hour or more of moderate- and/or vigorous activity daily. Somewhat surprising, there is not a strong correlation between daily physical education and one hour of daily activity.

Policy and Environmental Indicators

Several states with high percentage of daily physical education have low percentages of physically active students, and vice versa. However, **Georgia, Oklahoma** and **Texas** hold top 10 ranks on both tables and **New York** and **Hawaii** rank at the bottom on both measures.

While the first component was primarily concerned with overall state results, the second component is focused on how states support the behavior of physical activity. It includes four different types of strategies to increase physical activity: 1) create or enhance access to places for physical activity; 2) enhance physical education and activity in schools and child care settings; 3) support urban design, land use and transportation policies; and 4) develop and maintain a public health workforce competent in physical activity.

Access to Places for Physical Activity

This measure looks at opportunities and supports that create or enhance access to places for physical activity, including neighborhood access to fitness and recreation centers, parks or providing access to local school physical facilities. It includes the following:

1. Percentage of middle and high schools that allow community-sponsored use of physical-activity facilities by youth outside of normal school hours.
2. Percentage of youth with parks or playground areas, community centers and sidewalks or walking paths available in their neighborhood.
3. Percentage of census blocks that have at least one park located within the block or ½ mile from the block boundary.
4. Percentage of census blocks that have at least one fitness or recreation center located within the block or ½ mile from the block boundary.

Only three states—**Connecticut, New York** and **Washington**—rank above the national average on all four measures. Eight southern states fall below the average in all areas: **Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee** and **Texas**. As expected, rural states and states that lack large urban areas have fewer census blocks with parks or recreation centers.

Physical Education and Activity in Schools and Child Care Settings

CDC notes that state-level policies, such as requiring physical education, recess and other opportunities for physical activity, promote and reinforce healthy behaviors. This category includes four measures:

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1. State requires or recommends regular elementary school recess.
 2. State policy requiring elementary, middle and high schools or districts to teach physical education.
 3. Percentage of middle and high schools that support or promote walking or biking to and from school.
 4. State regulation specifying that children should be engaged in moderate- or vigorous-intensity physical activity in licensed, regulated child care centers.

Twenty states require that schools provide scheduled recess, 37 states require schools to teach physical education and eight states have regulations that address physical activity for child care centers. **Arizona** has the highest percentage of schools that support walking or biking to and from school while **Mississippi** has the lowest percentage.

***Support Urban Design,
Land Use and
Transportation Policies***

This indicator focuses on state-level policies or laws that support physical activity through urban design, land use or creating non-motorized travel options, thereby providing the necessary infrastructure to support physical activity. The specific components are:

1. Existence of at least one state-level enacted community-scale urban design/land-use policy. Examples include zoning regulations and design standards that promote walking and mixed-use zoning and transit-oriented development.
2. Existence of at least one state-level enacted street-scale urban design/land-use policy, such as legislation to improve street lighting, street crossing, sidewalk continuity, traffic calming and other initiatives to ensure safety.
3. Existence of at least one state-level enacted transportation and travel policy. These policies can include creating bike lanes, expanding access to public transportation, providing bike racks on buses, providing incentives to establish car or van pools, and increasing parking costs.

Twenty-seven states have community-scale urban design/land-use policies, 23 states have street-scale urban design/land-use policies and 36 states have transportation and travel policies in place. Five states (**Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska** and **West Virginia**) do not have any of these policies while the following 12 states have at least one state-level policy in all three areas: **Arizona, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York** and **Texas**.

***Develop a Physically
Active Public Health
Workforce***

According to CDC, “state health departments are the central state agencies responsible for the public health and welfare of their state. Among their many responsibilities, employees in these agencies help ensure promotion of physical activity in public programs and services.” As such, this measure the number of state health department full-time equivalent (FTE) personnel primarily focused on state physical activity. CDC believes this can be an indicator of a state’s workforce capacity to assess and support physical activity. However, this measure does not consider how many FTEs a state may need or take into account a state’s size or population. The results range from 15 FTE in **California** to no dedicated staff in **Alaska, Illinois, Maryland, Missouri** and **Oregon**. Most states have one FTE.

Policy Responses

CDC identified several action items that states can take to enhance their ability to support physical education. Some examples include:

1. Form partnerships with organizations for the development of interconnected parks and open space systems.
2. Encourage schools to provide access to spaces for youth outside of normal school hours.
3. Develop guidelines or ordinances that foster the development of parks, recreation, sports and fitness facilities.
4. Require at least one daily period of recess.
5. Implement and promote safe walk and bicycle-to-school programs.
6. Adopt time requirements for physical education in schools and create systems to monitor compliance.
7. Collaborate with transportation planning agencies in the development of short- and long-range master plans.
8. Plan, build and retrofit residential and mixed-used streets to reduce speeds, accommodate bicyclists and improve the walkability of the environment.
9. Support a physical activity and health unit in state public health departments that function as part of an integrated approach to chronic disease prevention.

It is clear that states cannot implement these strategies alone. They require collaboration among various stakeholders including state officials, local officials, health professionals, non-profit organizations, urban planners, parks and recreation representatives, school staff, transportation officials and community members.

Moreover, many of these initiatives can be costly and require time to implement. Even if states want to move forward on these initiatives, it is unlikely that state or local governments will have the resources to act on these strategies in the near future.

The release of the CDC report comes at the same time that the administration is moving forward with First Lady Michelle Obama's new initiative, "Let's Move." The initiative is aimed at addressing the epidemic of childhood obesity through healthier schools, greater physical activity and access to affordable healthy food. As part of the physical activity component, the initiative seeks to "increase opportunities for kids to be physically active, both in and out of school and create new opportunities for families to be moving together."

The administration used this report to bring greater attention to its initiative and highlight the types of reforms that are necessary. What is less clear is whether the administration will provide the resources necessary to help states implement those reforms.

Technical Notes

Physical Education. More information about CDC's *State Indicator Report on Physical Activity, 2010*, is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/>.

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