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Institute for Public Policy & Social Research

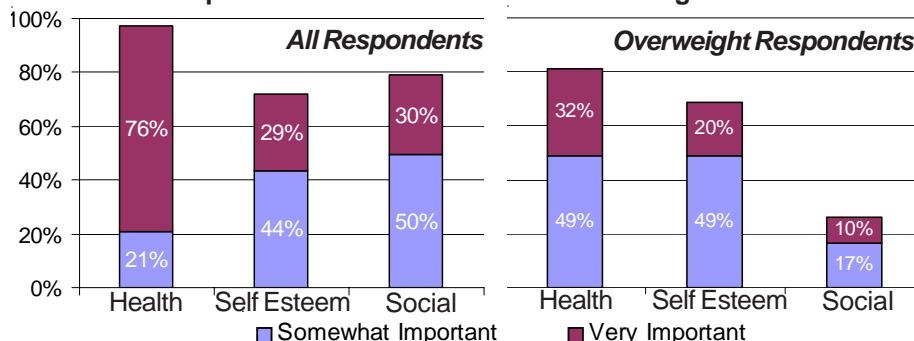
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STATE of the STATE Survey

Michigan Residents 'Weigh in' on Health Issues

How Important are these Factors for Overweight Adults?



Public Versus Private

The prevalence of individuals who are overweight and obese and its link to health risks such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, and high blood pressure, has led many in the health field to deem it an epidemic. While 62% of Michigan adults are overweight or obese—three points higher than the national average of 59% (BRFSS 2002)—only 28% of Michiganians thought that this issue was a public health concern (SOSS-31).

The number of individuals who reported in the 31st round of the Michigan State University State of the State Survey (SOSS) that being overweight was a public concern (28%) was actually lower than a year prior (33%) (SOSS-26). People who use tobacco were a little less likely to see being overweight as a public health issue, at 21%, versus 31% among those that do not smoke. Compared to African-Americans, Whites were slightly less likely to think it was a public concern.

Overweight Adults

While Michiganians did not think that being overweight was a public issue, almost everyone thought that health concerns were very (76%) or somewhat (21%) important for overweight adults.

A majority of respondents also said that appearance was a very (29%) or somewhat (44%) important reason for concern. Overweight adults were less likely to think their health was a very (32%) or somewhat important (49%) reason for them to be concerned.

Some 30% of respondents thought treatment by others was a very important and 50% thought it was a somewhat important reason for concern. Even fewer (26%) overweight people thought these social factors were very or somewhat important reasons for concern.

Overweight Children

Michigan residents were also asked how important health, appearance, and treatment by others were for overweight children. Almost all respondents thought that health was a very (84%) or somewhat (15%) important reason for concern. Similarly, concerns about appearance (98%) and treatment by others were very high (98%).

Fast Food and Portions

When asked how much they thought fast food contributed to weight problems, 52% of survey respondents said a lot, 33% said somewhat, and 16% said a
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About SOSS

The Institute for Public Policy and Social Research conducted the thirty-first round of the State of the State Survey (SOSS-31) by phone with 965 Michigan adult residents during June 27-August 12, 2003. The margin of sampling error was $\pm 3.2\%$.

IPPSR's State of the State Survey is the only survey conducted in Michigan that provides a regular systematic monitoring of the public mood on important issues in major regions of the state. More information on SOSS is online at: www.ippsr.msu.edu/SOSS.

This edition of SOSS focused on policy options relevant to the epidemic of obesity, the performance of schools, and setting educational standards. It was funded in part by MSU's Families and Communities Together Coalition (FACT) and The Education Policy Center.

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Fast Food and Portions (Continued)

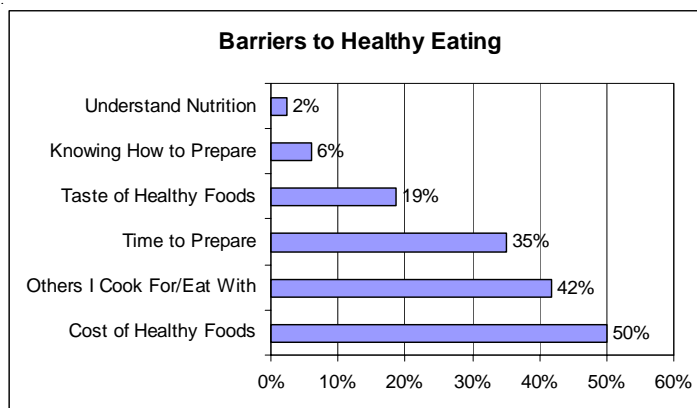
little or not at all. Despite their feelings about fast food, a majority (58%) of adults thought the portions in restaurants were the right size. African-Americans (20%) and men (27%) were much less likely than Whites (43%) and women (51%) to feel portions were too large. Most (79%) thought portions were a good value.

Most SOSS survey respondents (72%) thought that portion size did not impact how much they consumed. African-Americans were much more likely (90%) than Whites (69%) to say that portion size was not a factor. A nationwide study revealed that 73% of respondents who finished their entrees most of the time or always said that restaurant portions were just right. Only 1 in 5 said that they would be satisfied with a smaller portion (AICR 2001).

Residents were also asked how much having nutrition information readily available at restaurants would affect their choice of food and drink. Nearly 6 out of 10 (57%) people said the information would affect them a great deal or somewhat.

Healthy Eating

Residents were asked a series of questions on barriers to healthy eating. The most significant barrier was the cost of healthy foods. It impacted 50% of the respondents. The fact that these barriers were not identified as reasons why



Michigan adults would make unhealthy food choices may indicate either that the barriers do not exist, or that adults are not aware of the influence that the barriers are having.

It is also important to note that other factors, such as physical activity, are important in achieving a healthy weight. These factors are discussed below.

Michigan Residents and Physical Activity

There have been several changes in physical activity recommendations issued by public health organizations in recent years. Some are concerned that these changes have resulted in confusion by the public. The SOSS survey sought to determine what Michigan residents perceived the current recommendations to be.

The current recommendations of physical activity are as follows:

- Moderate-intensity physical activity for at least 30 minutes on 5 or more days of the week or vigorous-intensity physical activity 3 or more days per week for 20 or more minutes per occasion (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).
- 60 minutes of exercise on "most" days of the week, accumulated over the course of the day (Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine).

The most popular response for recommended days of activity was 3 days (40%). Unless Michigan adults are doing vigorous-intensity exercise, this belief that physical activity is only needed 3 days per week may be problematic. In terms of recommended amount of time, the majority (52%) of respondents said 30 minutes, 14% said 20 minutes, and 16% identified 60 minutes.

The SOSS survey also sought to determine whether Michigan residents thought they would be able to follow the recommended daily activity guidelines. Some 81% thought they could exercise 60 minutes each day, several days a week (provided the minutes could be spread out over the course of the day). A slightly higher percentage (84%) said that if the 60 minutes of physical activity over the course of a day was similar in intensity to a brisk walk (the Food and Nutrition Board recommendation), they could do this. The ability to fulfill this recommendation was negatively correlated to the individual's age.

Despite reporting they could achieve recommended levels of physical activity, most Michigan residents do not get these recommended amounts of activity. It appears that public education in this area would be beneficial and should connect days, time, and level of recommended activity along with whether the activity can be spaced out over the course of a day.

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