

Study: Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents in the United States and Canada, 1976 to 2013

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In the late 1970s, the prevalence of childhood obesity in Canada and the United States was the same at about 5%. However, the most recent statistics indicate that, overall, obesity among children and adolescents aged 3 to 19 was significantly lower in Canada (13.0%) than in the United States (17.5%).

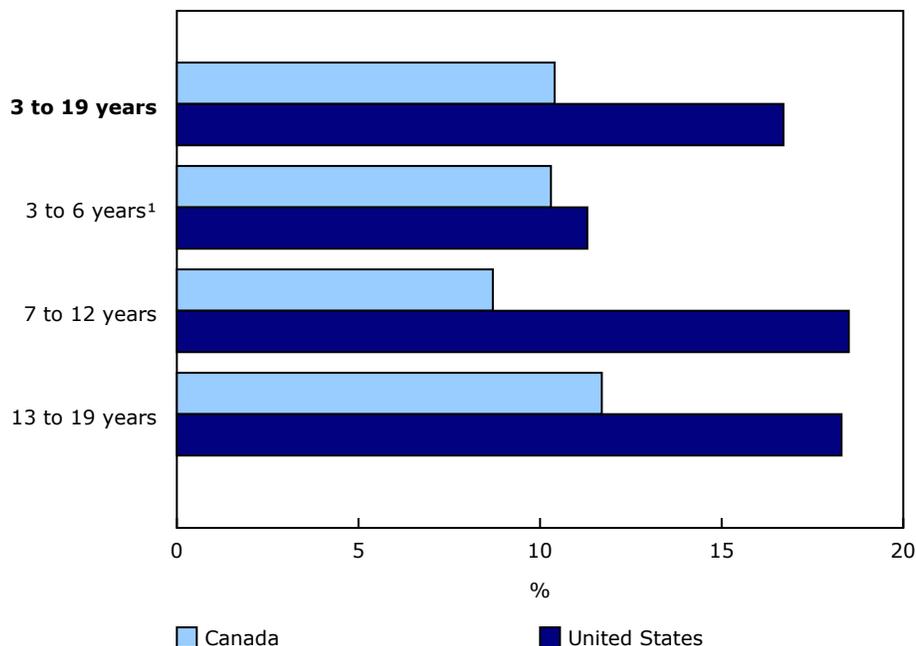
Monitoring trends in childhood obesity is important as obese children and adolescents are at risk of becoming obese adults and can experience immediate health consequences such as psychosocial stress, elevated blood pressure and cholesterol, and abnormal glucose tolerance.

Larger difference between Canadian and American girls compared with boys

Overall, among children and adolescents aged 3 to 19, the difference in obesity rates between Canada and the United States was more noticeable among girls than boys. The gap was largest for girls aged 7 to 12, among whom the obesity rate in the United States was 18.5%, more than double the rate of 8.7% for Canadian girls. Among girls aged 13 to 19, the prevalence of obesity was also significantly lower in Canada (11.7%) than in the United States (18.3%).

Chart 1

Prevalence of childhood obesity in girls, by age group, Canada (2009 to 2013 combined) and the United States (2009 to 2012 combined)



1. Data for Canada should be used with caution (coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%).

Notes(s): Pregnant girls are excluded.

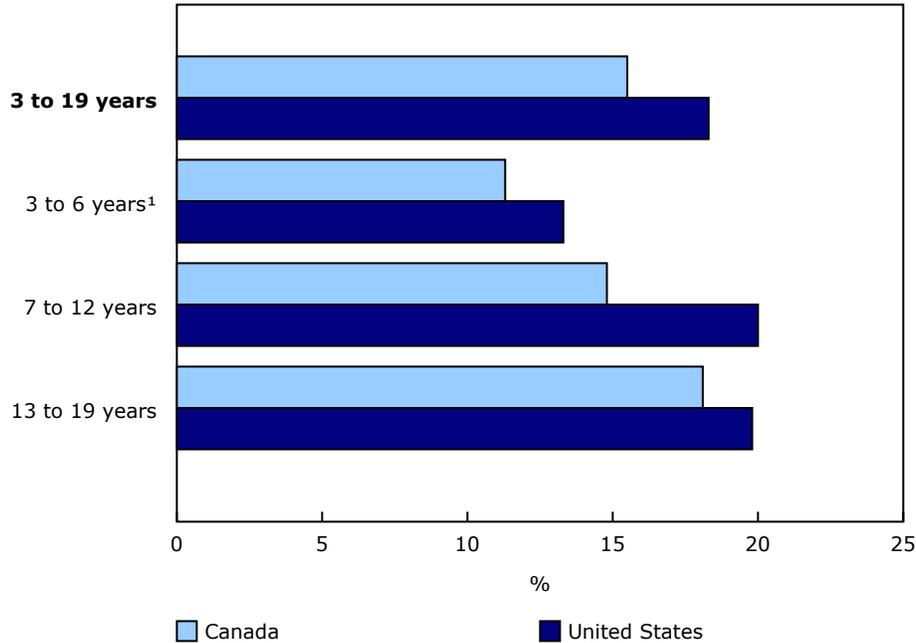
Source(s): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey; Statistics Canada, Canadian Health Measures Survey (5071).



There were no significant differences in the prevalence of obesity between American and Canadian boys, except for boys aged 7 to 12, among whom the obesity rate was 20.0% in the United States compared with 14.8% in Canada.

Chart 2

Prevalence of childhood obesity in boys, by age group, Canada (2008 to 2013 combined) and the United States (2009 to 2012 combined)



1. Data for Canada should be used with caution (coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 33.3%).

Source(s): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey; Statistics Canada, Canadian Health Measures Survey (5071).

Note to readers

Data for this release were taken from the article entitled "Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents in the United States and Canada," released by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). This NCHS Data Brief was a project carried out in collaboration between Statistics Canada and the NCHS.

Canadian estimates are based on data from three cross-sectional surveys: the 1978/1979 Canada Health Survey, the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition and cycles 2 and 3 of the Canadian Health Measures Survey (2009 to 2013 combined).

American estimates are based on data from three cycles of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES): NHANES II (1976 to 1980), NHANES 2001 to 2004 and NHANES 2009 to 2012.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3217](#), [5049](#) and [5071](#).

The full article "Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents in the United States and Canada" is available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca).