

**New York State  
Student Weight Status  
Category Reporting  
System (SWSCR)  
Overview**

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**New York State Department of Health**  
Center for Community Health  
Division of Chronic Disease Prevention  
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research  
Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention

## Overview

The Student Weight Status Category Reporting System (SWSCRS) was established by amendments to New York State Education Law in 2007 to support state and local efforts to understand the extent of and confront the problem of childhood obesity.<sup>1</sup> Amendments added body mass index (BMI) and weight status category (underweight, healthy weight, overweight or obese, based on BMI-for-age percentile) to the school health certificate required at school entry (pre-kindergarten or kindergarten) and in grades 2, 4, 7 and 10 for students attending all public schools outside of the five boroughs of New York City (NYC). Mandatory reporting of aggregated data from the health certificate forms by schools to the New York State Department of Health started during the 2008-09 school year. All public schools outside NYC were required to submit data in either the 2008-09 or 2009-10 school year.

The “Student Weight Status Category Reporting System (SWSCR) County Dataset 2008-10” includes data from the first two years of mandatory reporting. Reports based on these data are available through the New York State Department of Health Public Website.

[http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/statistics\\_and\\_impact/](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/statistics_and_impact/)

## Methods

Data included were collected from personnel in public schools in during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years. Nurses or other school personnel at the school buildings used information on health certificate forms from health appraisals to tally the number of students in weight status categories by grade and sex using categories defined by BMI-for-age percentiles: underweight (less than 5<sup>th</sup>), healthy weight (5<sup>th</sup> through 49<sup>th</sup>), healthy weight (50<sup>th</sup> through 84<sup>th</sup>) overweight (85<sup>th</sup> through 94<sup>th</sup>) and obese (95<sup>th</sup> and greater). School personnel then reported these counts to the Health Department through the secure, HIPPA compliant NYSDOH Health Commerce System. In order to comply with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)<sup>2</sup>, school personnel were not allowed to report counts of students less than 5 to the NYSDOH.

County-codes assigned by New York State Department of Education (NYSED) were used to generate the county-level estimates of student weight status included in the dataset. Data from schools within a county were aggregated to produce estimates of the percent of students who were reported to be in each of the five weight status categories. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of reported students in a weight status category by the total number of students with weight status category information. The dataset includes separate estimates of the percent of students in each of the five weight status categories for all reportable grades within the county and by grade groups (elementary and middle/high). Variables representing the number of

schools and school districts contributing data to the county-level estimates and the number of students on which the percentages are based are also included. A county-state identifier is provided to enable linkage with other data sources containing this common data element. Documentation for all the variables included within the data, including formats and labels is provided.

### **Limitations of Data**

Because school district boundaries do not align with county boundaries, the county-level estimates reflect data from students attending school within schools assigned a particular county-code by NYSED. County assignment is not based on county of residence.

Because of restrictions in reporting due to the FERPA there was wide variation in how much of the student population was represented in the data schools submitted during 2008-10. Therefore, the percentage of the student population represented in the county-level estimates varies from county to county. This limits researchers' ability to draw absolute conclusions about observed differences in student weight status among counties. Starting with the 2010-11 school year, the reporting system was changed to require reporting of aggregate data for grade categories (as opposed to grades) from school districts (as opposed to schools). Changes made to the Student Weight Status Category Reporting System effective 2010-11 enable more data from smaller school districts to be represented.

The county-level estimates represent the percentage of students reported within a weight status category reported to the Student Weight Status Category Reporting System during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years. These data should not be considered to represent all school aged-children attending school in that county because of: restrictions in reporting due to FERPA, parents/guardians' ability to request that their child's weight status data be excluded from reporting, and other sources of missing data.

<sup>1</sup>New York State Education Law Section 903

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/schoolhealth/schoolhealthservices/s903.html>

<sup>2</sup> Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>