



# IMPROVED NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & WEIGHT WILL IMPROVE THE REGION'S HEALTH

**A GREATER EVANSVILLE HEALTH SURVEY ISSUE BRIEF**  
GEHS VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

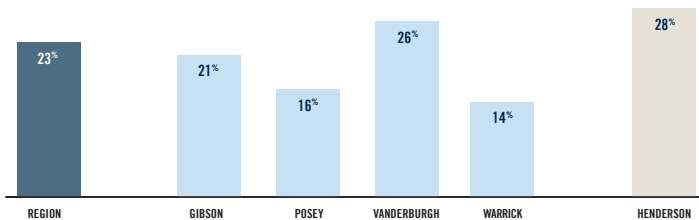


# IMPROVED NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & WEIGHT WILL IMPROVE THE REGION'S HEALTH

## NUTRITION

Guidelines recommend minimizing the consumption of sugary foods and beverages like sugar-sweetened beverages, desserts and snacks, sweetened coffee and tea, and candy. Sugar consumption is a driver of unhealthy weight. Though a small percentage of adults in the region (5%) consume no sugar, some residents consume sugar 100 or more times per week. Minimizing unhealthy foods is as important as increasing healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables.

### NEARLY 1 IN 4 RESIDENTS ARE UNABLE TO PURCHASE FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



where issues of access are persistent. At least 1 in 4 Vanderburgh County adults continues to report a desire to, but an inability to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

Ideally, food systems and networks are designed so that residents can afford and easily obtain nutrition-rich fruits and vegetables. However, 23% of the region has barriers to accessing fresh produce. Cost, quality, and location are some of the most commonly identified obstacles.

Access to and consumption of healthy foods is also an important part of maintaining a healthy weight. Obese residents are more likely to say they want to but are unable to purchase fresh produce (28%) compared to residents with a healthy weight (19%).

Many groups are working on access to fresh produce in Vanderburgh County

### VANDERBURGH COUNTY ADULTS

**Q:** During the past 30 days, did you ever want to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables (not canned or frozen) but were unable? \*

2015 ▶ 25% ◀ 2021 28%

## WEIGHT

**Q:** About how much does this child weigh without shoes? What is the age of the child? (used for BMI calculation)

### 2 OUT OF 3 CHILDREN IN THE REGION HAVE A HEALTHY WEIGHT, HOWEVER, MORE THAN 1 IN 4 ARE EITHER OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE



Weight, at a healthy level, contributes to good health across the lifespan. However, 28% of children ages 2 – 17 years in the region are either overweight or obese, which increases the risks of early-onset diseases like high cholesterol and diabetes.

Unhealthy weight is a contributing factor to many health problems. Obesity is a national, state, and regional health crisis and a leading contributor to illness, disease, and reduced quality and length of life.

Adult obesity rates in the region are similar to states and the nation, (Region 35%, IN 35%, KY 37%, U.S. 32%). Obesity rates are highest among the middle-aged, with 40% of adults between the ages of 45 – 54 weighing in the obese category. Residents with lower incomes are also more likely to be obese (37%), compared to 32% of those with higher incomes. Likewise, 21% of children from low-income households have an obese weight compared to 13% of children from higher-income households.

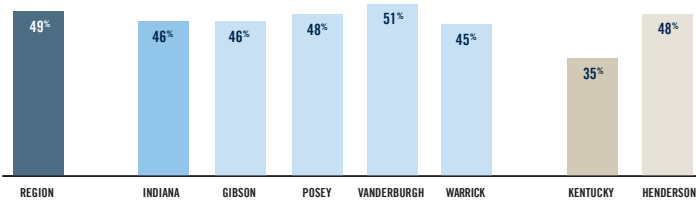


Eating nutritious foods and getting recommended physical activity will help individuals maintain a healthy weight, reduce risk factors for chronic disease and improve the overall health of the region. Supportive systems and environments that help make individual physical activity and good nutrition choices easier for everyone are essential.

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity plays a role in maintaining a healthy weight, reducing the risk for chronic disease, and promoting mental and emotional health. About half (49%) of adults in the region get recommended levels of physical activity.

## HALF OF ADULTS GET RECOMMENDED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



**Q:** During the past 30 days, how many times per week did you take part in physical activity, for how long did you usually keep at it?

The most common physical activities reported by adults require minimal or no equipment or memberships, e.g., walking, jogging, (83%). Other adults engage in activities that require equipment or memberships, get their activity through work or daily routines or through sports and recreational activities.

Many adults cite barriers to getting physical activity, like lack of time, having an ongoing or lengthy physical health condition or lack of access to facilities or equipment. Though most are still active, physical activity is more limited for older adults and those with chronic health conditions, e.g., asthma, arthritis.

About half of Vanderburgh county residents get recommended levels of physical activity.

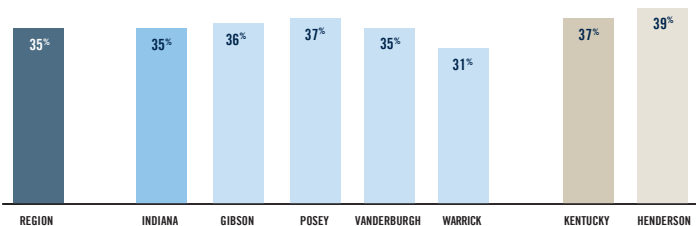
## VANDERBURGH COUNTY ADULTS

Recommended levels of physical activity calculated from type of activity, number of days and number of minutes performed. \*

2015 ▶ 48%  
◀ 2021 51%

## WEIGHT continued

## JUST OVER 1 OUT OF EVERY 3 ADULTS IN THE REGION IS OBESE



## VANDERBURGH COUNTY ADULTS

Recommended levels of physical activity calculated from type of activity, number of days and number of minutes performed. \*

2015 ▶ 48%  
◀ 2021 51%

Obesity continues as a top health concern for adults in Vanderburgh county with 1 in 3 adults self-reporting an obese weight. Obesity is a complicated health issue that can take years if not generations to see significant improvement.

# CONCLUSIONS

Improving the health of the region requires improved nutrition, physical activity, and weight status through coordinated strategies to make healthy choices the easy choices for residents.

## MAKING THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE

Home, schools, churches, health care, employers, and other systems and environments can implement strategies for nutritious foods and beverages, physical activity and healthy weight.

*County Health Rankings Scientifically Supported Community Strategies That Work* [countyhealthrankings.org](https://countyhealthrankings.org)

### Nutrition

- Competitive Pricing for Healthy Foods
- Fruit & Vegetable Incentive Programs
- Multi-component School-based Obesity Prevention Interventions

### Physical Activity

- Active Recess in Schools
- Complete Streets & Streetscapes Design Initiatives
- Worksite Obesity Prevention Interventions

## MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES EQUITABLE

Solutions should consider all residents, especially those with obstacles to obtaining healthy foods and lifestyles. For example, low-income residents are more likely to encounter barriers to fresh produce, tend to consume more sugar, and are less likely to meet physical activity guidelines compared to higher -income residents. Residents in certain counties and zip codes also face more significant barriers to healthy food access than others. Prioritizing these populations as part of community solutions will help provide equitable health for all.

Visit [welbornfdn.org/gehs](https://welbornfdn.org/gehs) for full report including references, methods and limitations.  
Welborn Baptist Foundation • Greater Evansville Health Survey 2021 Edition© Jan2021

*\*Due to methodological differences across studies, direct comparisons between 2015 and 2021 data points should be limited. Details around the limitations to these study comparisons are available at [welbornfdn.org/gehs.org](https://welbornfdn.org/gehs.org)*

*Low-income throughout report defined as less than 80% of the median family income for the Evansville MSA in 2020, accounting for number in the household.*