

Weight Status, Self-Perception, and Management Activity

2011 Florida Youth Risk Behavior Survey Special Report

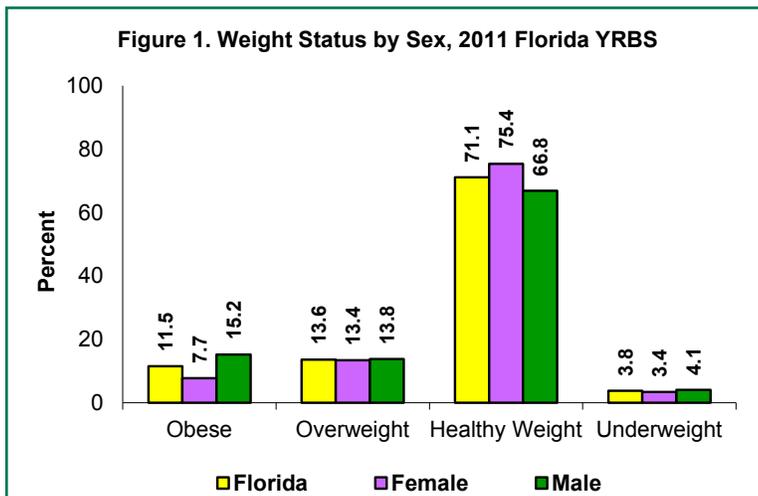


Background: The Florida Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a self-administered, school-based anonymous survey that has been conducted in Florida public high schools every two years since 1991. It is part of a national survey effort led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor priority health risk behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth in the United States. In 2011, 6,212 students in 78 public high schools in Florida completed the YRBS. The overall response rate was 75%. Since 2001, the response rate has been high enough for the data to be weighted to represent all Florida public high school students.

Definitions:

- Obesity is defined as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex.
- Overweight is defined as a BMI the same or more than the 85th percentile and less than the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex.
- Healthy weight is defined as a BMI the same or more than the fifth percentile and less than the 85th percentile for children of the same age and sex.
- Underweight is defined as a BMI below the fifth percentile for children of the same age and sex.

Introduction: In 2011, approximately 78,200 Florida public high school students (11.5%) were obese, 92,500 students (13.6%) were overweight, 482,000 students (71.1%) were healthy weight, and 25,500 students (3.8%) were underweight.



Overall, the rate of **obesity** was higher among males than females, and the rate of **healthy weight** status was higher among females than males (Figure 1).

Overall, the rate of **obesity** was higher among non-Hispanic black students compared to Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students. The rate of **overweight** status was higher among non-Hispanic black students compared to non-Hispanic white students. The rate of **healthy weight** status was higher among non-Hispanic white and Hispanic students compared to non-Hispanic black students, and the rate of **underweight** status was higher among non-Hispanic white students compared to non-Hispanic black students (Figure 2).

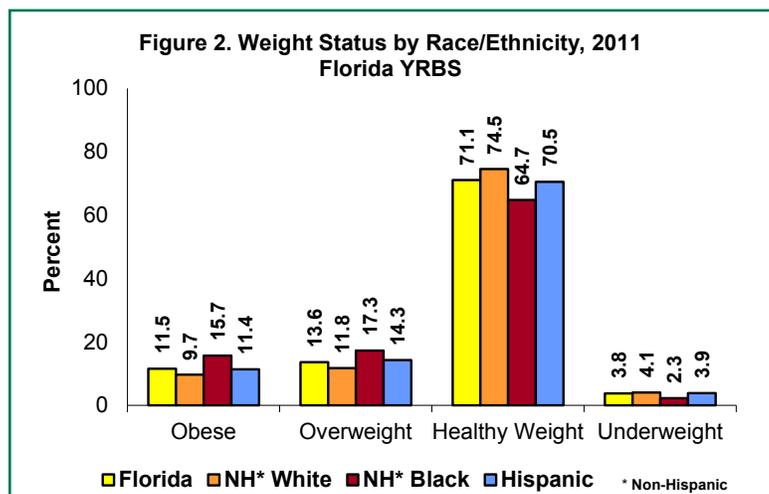
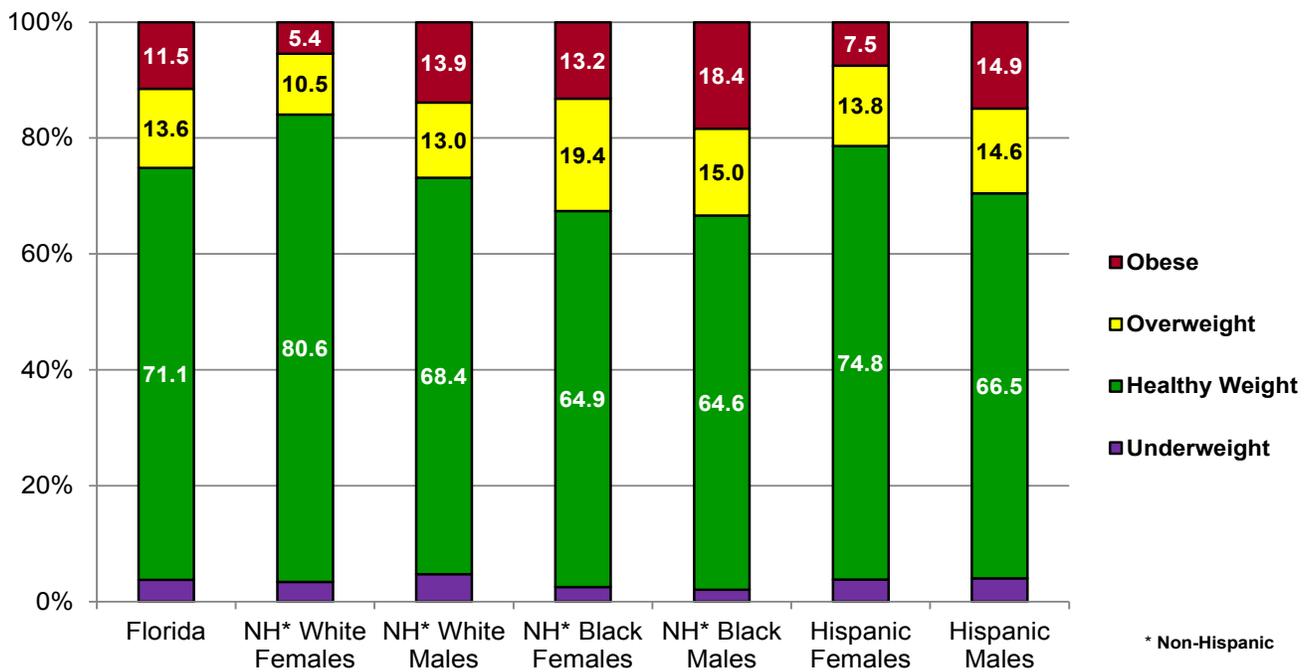
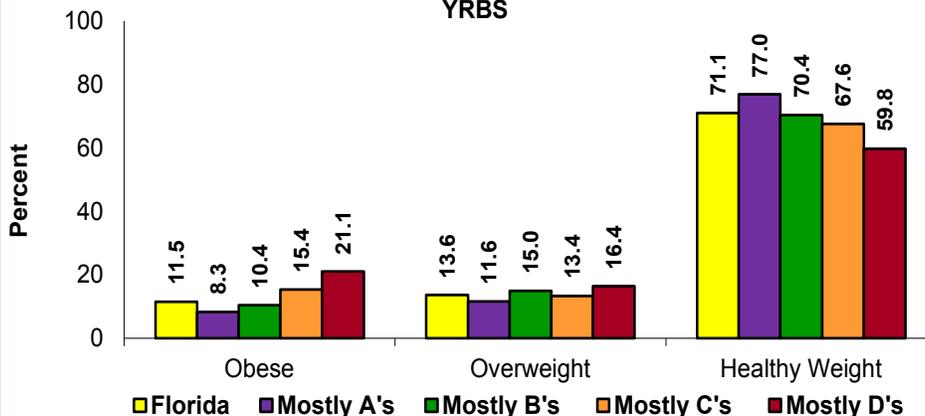


Figure 3. Weight Status, by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, 2011 Florida YRBS



The rate of **obesity** was higher among non-Hispanic black males (18.4%), Hispanic males (14.9%), non-Hispanic white males (13.9%), and non-Hispanic black females (13.2%) compared to Hispanic females (7.5%) and non-Hispanic white females (5.4%). The rate of **overweight** status was higher among non-Hispanic black females (19.4%) compared to Hispanic females (13.8%), non-Hispanic white males (13.0%), and non-Hispanic white females (10.5%) and higher among non-Hispanic black males (15.0%) and Hispanic males (14.6%) compared to non-Hispanic white females (10.5%). The rate of **healthy weight** status was higher among non-Hispanic white females (80.6%) compared to all other groups and higher among Hispanic females (74.8%) compared to non-Hispanic black females and all males. The rate of **underweight** status was higher among non-Hispanic white males (4.7%) compared to non-Hispanic black males (2.1%). Differences seen in percentages of students who were healthy weight, by race/ethnicity and sex, were mostly influenced by differences in obese and overweight status (Figure 3).

Figure 4. Weight Status by Self-Reported Grades, 2011 Florida YRBS

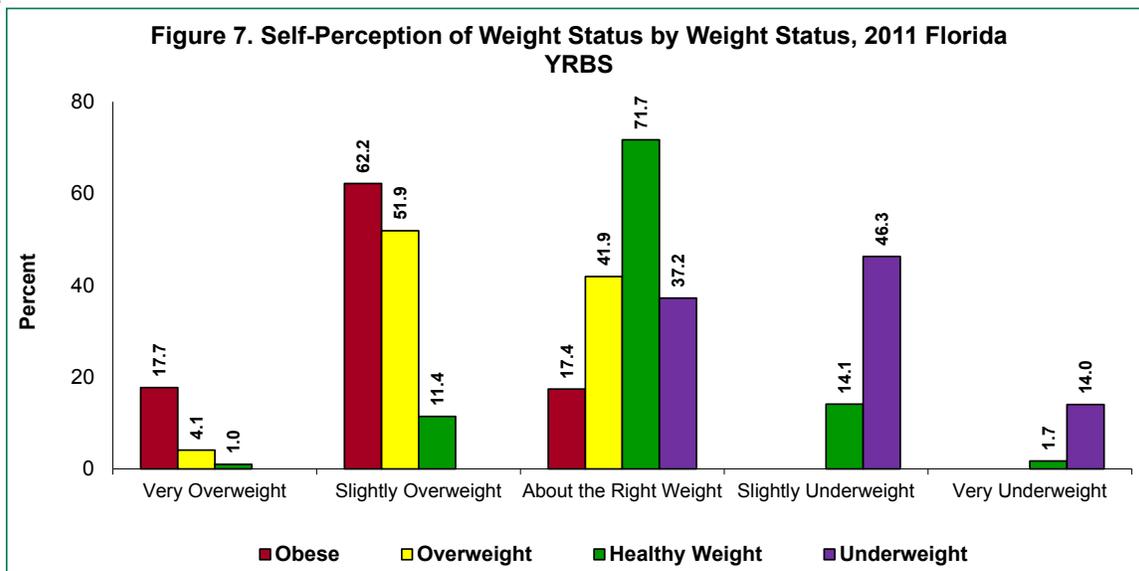
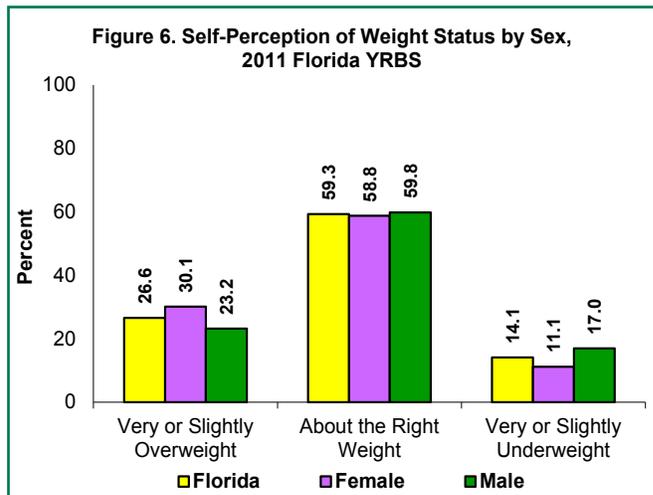
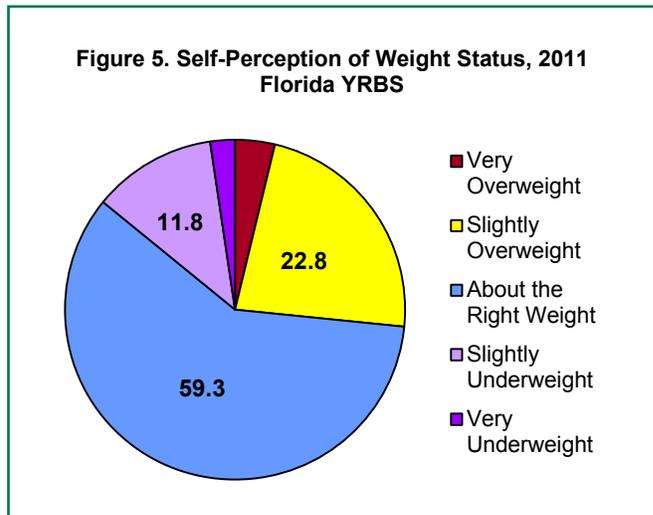


Overall, **obese** students were more likely to describe their grades in school during the past 12 months as mostly C's and D's rather than as mostly A's and B's. **Healthy weight** students were more likely to describe their grades as mostly A's rather than as mostly B's or lower (Figure 4).

Self-Perception of Weight Status: In 2011, approximately 29,200 Florida public high school students (3.8%) thought that they were “very overweight,” 176,000 students (22.8%) thought that they were “slightly overweight,” 457,400 students (59.3%) thought that they were “about the right weight,” 90,800 students (11.8%) thought that they were “slightly underweight,” and 18,100 students (2.4%) thought that they were “very underweight” (Figure 5).

Overall, the rate of self-perception as **very or slightly overweight** was higher in females than males, and the rate of self-perception as **very or slightly underweight** was higher in males than females (Figure 6). The self-perception of weight status did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity.

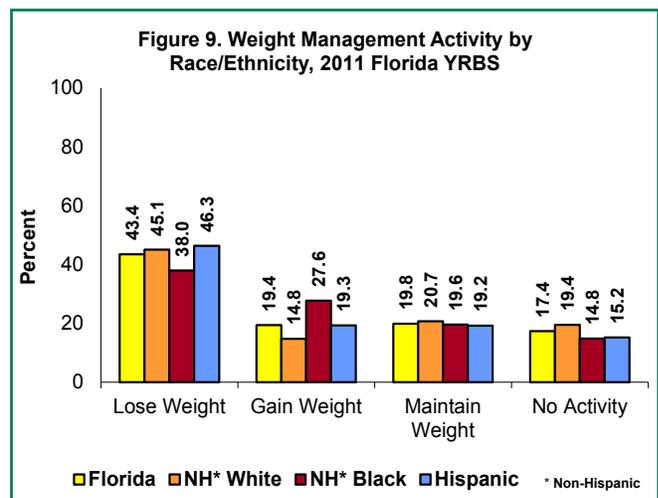
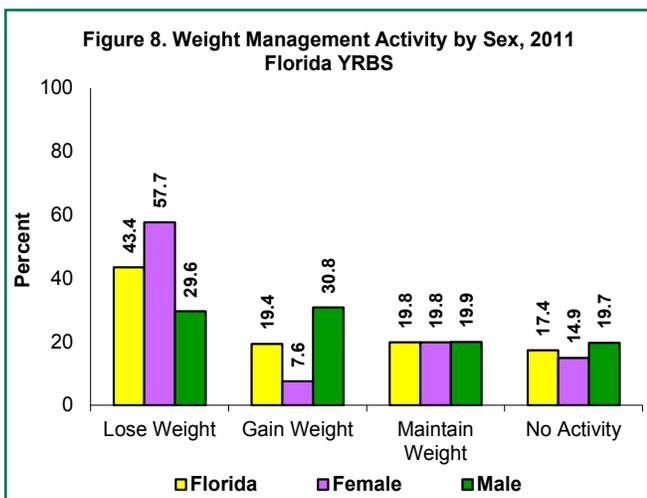
According to literature, many obese and overweight individuals perceived their body weight to be either “about right,” “appropriate,” or “acceptable,” or expressed satisfaction with their body size (Burke, Heiland, and Nadler, 2010). In 2011, approximately two in three **obese students** (62.2%) identified themselves as being slightly overweight, and 17.7% identified themselves as very overweight. Approximately two in five **overweight students** (41.9%) identified themselves as being about the right weight, and 51.9% identified themselves as slightly overweight (Figure 7). This supports the theory that an individual’s self-perception of weight status often shifts one category closer to healthy weight.



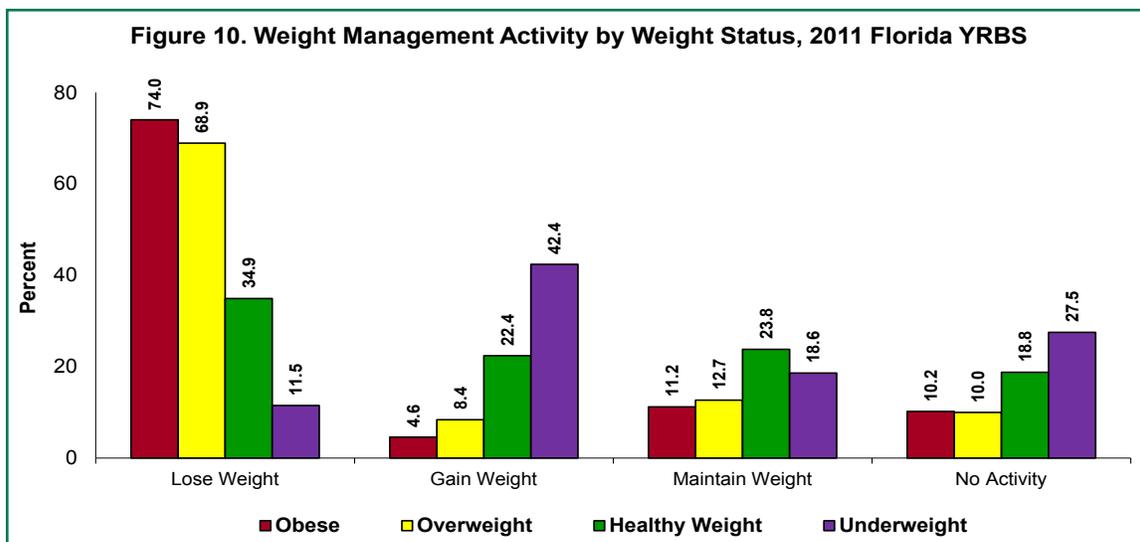
Weight Management Activity: In 2011, approximately 335,200 Florida public high school students (43.4%) were trying to lose weight, approximately 149,300 students (19.4%) were trying to gain weight, approximately 153,000 students (19.8%) were trying to maintain their weight, and 133,900 (17.4%) were not trying to do anything about their weight (i.e., no activity).

Overall, the rate of trying to **lose weight** was higher in females than males, and the rates of trying to **gain weight** and **no activity** were higher in males than females. The rate of weight maintenance activity did not vary significantly by sex (Figure 8).

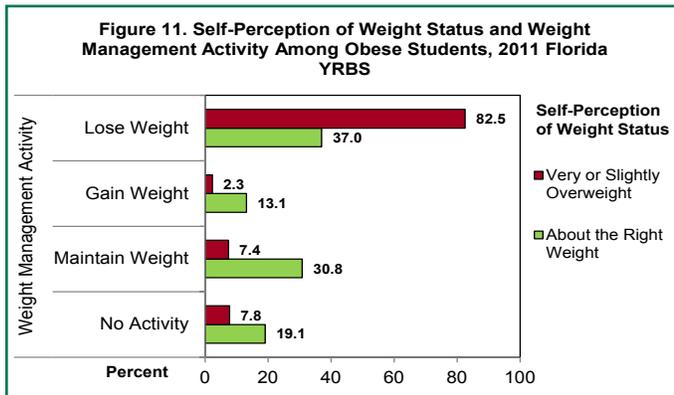
Overall, the rate of trying to **lose weight** was higher among Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students compared to non-Hispanic black students. The rate of trying to **gain weight** was higher among non-Hispanic black students compared to Hispanic students and higher among Hispanic students compared to non-Hispanic white students. The rate of **no activity** was higher among non-Hispanic white students compared to Hispanic and non-Hispanic black students. The rate of weight maintenance activity did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity (Figure 9).



The rate of trying to **lose weight** was higher among obese and overweight students compared to healthy weight and underweight students. The rates of trying to **gain weight**, **maintain weight**, and **no activity** were higher among healthy weight and underweight students compared to overweight and obese students (Figure 10).



Weight Status, Self-Perception of Weight Status, and Weight Management Activity:

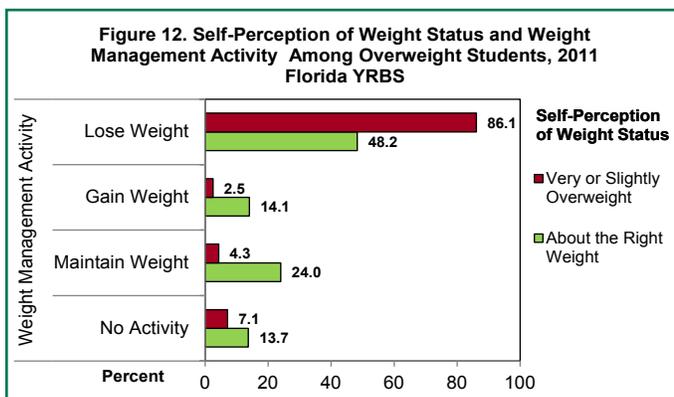


Obese Students:

- Four of five (80.0%) perceived themselves to be very or slightly overweight.
- The rate of trying to **lose weight** was higher among those who perceived themselves as overweight compared to those who perceived themselves as about the right weight.
- The rate of trying to **maintain weight** was higher among those who perceived themselves as about the right weight compared to those who perceived themselves as overweight (Figure 11).

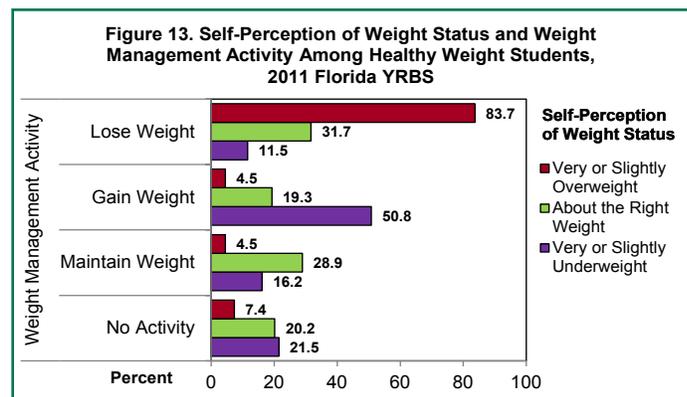
Overweight Students:

- Over half (56.0%) perceived themselves to be very or slightly overweight.
- The rate of trying to **lose weight** was higher among those who perceived themselves as overweight compared to those who perceived themselves as about the right weight.
- The rates of trying to **maintain weight** and **no activity** were higher among those who perceived themselves as about the right weight compared to those who perceived themselves as overweight (Figure 12).



Healthy Weight Students:

- The rate of trying to **lose weight** was higher among those who perceived themselves as overweight compared to both those who perceived themselves as about the right weight and underweight.
- The rate of trying to **gain weight** was higher among those who perceived themselves as underweight compared to both those who perceived themselves as about the right weight or overweight.
- The rate of trying to **maintain weight** was higher among those students who perceived themselves as about the right weight compared to those both those who perceived themselves as underweight or overweight.
- The rate of **no activity** was higher among both those who perceived themselves as underweight and about the right weight compared to those who perceived themselves as overweight (Figure 13).



Underweight Students:

- Approximately one in three underweight students (33.3%) perceived themselves as underweight and indicated that they were trying to gain weight.
- Given that underweight students were only 3.8% of the total Florida high school population, there were no significant differences among this group by self-perception of weight status and weight management activity.

Types of Weight Loss/Management:

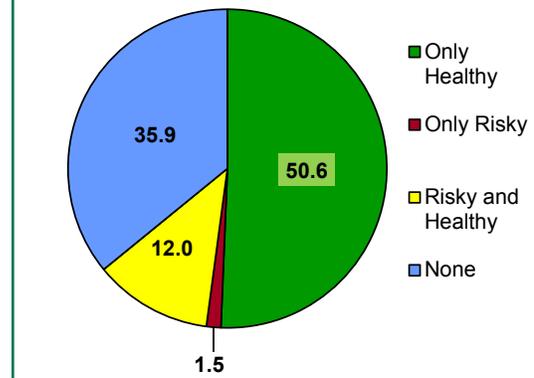
In 2011, approximately 493,500 Florida public high school students (62.7%) used at least one **healthy weight loss/management strategy** during the past 30 days:

- Exercise (59.4%) and/or
- Eating less food, fewer calories, or food lower in fat (38.4%).

Approximately 106,100 students (13.5%) used at least one **risky weight loss/management strategy** during the past 30 days:

- Fasting, i.e., going without eating for 24 hours or more (9.6%),
- Taking any diet pills, powders, or liquids without a doctor's advice (5.3%), and/or
- Vomiting or taking laxatives (4.1%).

Figure 14. Use of Weight Loss/Management Strategies, 2011 Florida YRBS



These weight loss/management activities were not mutually exclusive. Among students who engaged in risky weight loss/management activities, 89.1% also engaged in healthy activities (Figure 14).

Figure 15. Healthy and Risky Weight Loss/Management by Sex, 2011 Florida YRBS

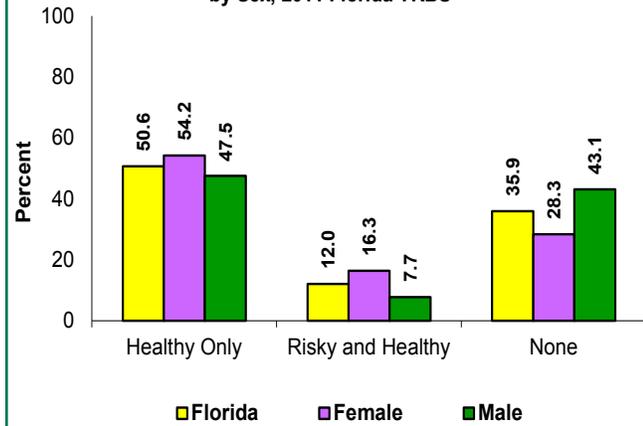
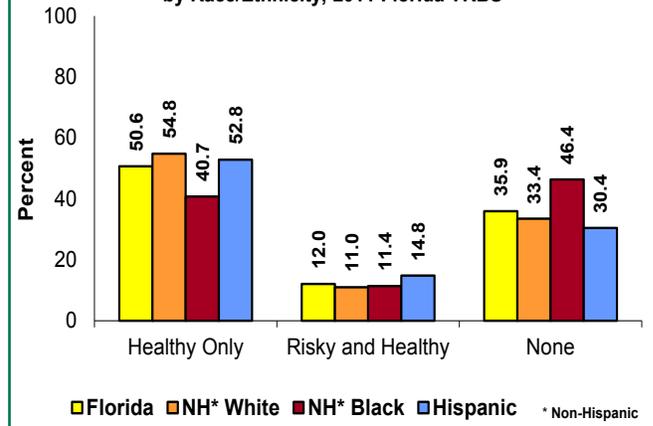


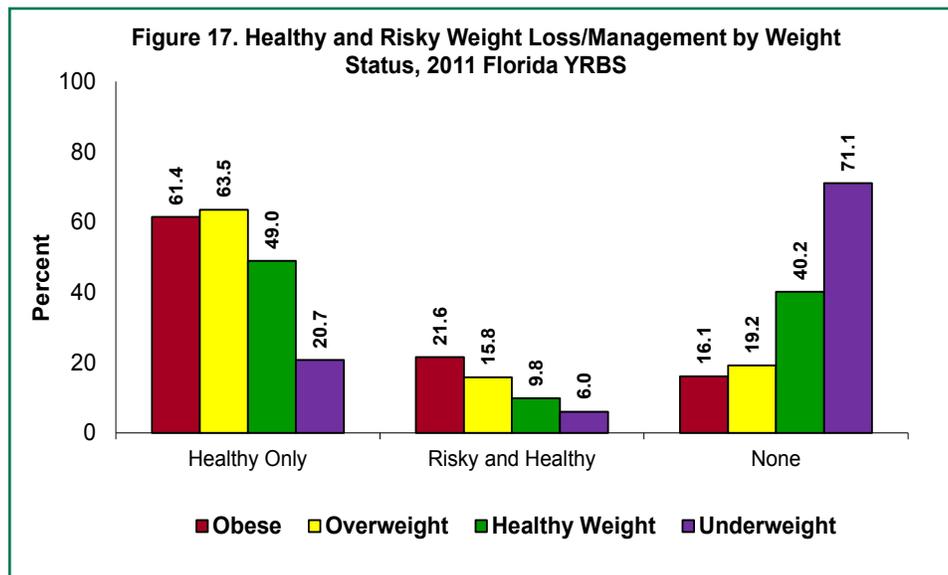
Figure 16. Healthy and Risky Weight Loss/Management by Race/Ethnicity, 2011 Florida YRBS



The rates of **healthy only** and **risky and healthy** weight loss/management strategies were higher in females than males. The rate of not using weight loss/management strategies, (i.e., none) was higher in males than females (Figure 15).

The rate of **healthy only** weight loss/management strategies were higher among non-Hispanic white and Hispanic students compared to non-Hispanic black students. The rate of **risky and healthy** weight loss/management strategies was higher among Hispanic students compared to non-Hispanic white students. The rate of not using weight loss/management strategies was higher among non-Hispanic black students compared to non-Hispanic white and Hispanic students (Figure 16).

The rates of **healthy only** and **risky and healthy** weight loss/management strategies were higher among obese and overweight students compared to healthy weight and underweight students. The rate of not using weight loss/management strategies was higher among healthy weight and underweight students compared obese and overweight students (Figure 17).



Conclusions:

1. **Weight Status:** Among Florida public high school students, the rate of obesity was higher in males than females, and the rate of obesity was higher in non-Hispanic black students than Hispanic or non-Hispanic white students.
2. **Weight Perception:** An individual's self-perception of weight status often shifts one category closer to healthy weight. In Florida, approximately two in three obese students identified themselves as being slightly overweight, and approximately two in five overweight students identified themselves as about the right weight, which are "misperceptions" demonstrating this shift towards a healthy weight self-image.
3. **Weight Loss/Management:** Obese, overweight, and healthy weight students who perceived themselves to be overweight were more likely to identify that they were trying to lose weight, compared to their peers who perceived themselves to be about the right weight. Correct perception of weight status is critical to motivate healthy weight loss/maintenance behavior, because while obese and overweight students are more likely to employ healthy weight loss/maintenance techniques, they are also more likely to use risky ones. Additionally, the majority of healthy weight students who misperceived themselves to be overweight were trying to lose weight. The majority of students using risky weight loss/management techniques are also using healthy ones. Educating all students about these risks is critical, regardless of whether they are also employing healthy weight loss/management strategies.

Citation: Burke, M.A., Heiland, F.W., & Nadler, C.M. (2010). From "overweight" to "about right": evidence of a generational shift in body weight norms. *Obesity*, 18(6), 1226-1234.

For more information about the YRBS, please contact the Chronic Disease Epidemiology Surveillance and Evaluation Section at (850) 245-4401, by e-mail at ChronicDisease@doh.state.fl.us, or visit our website at: <http://www.FloridaChronicDisease.org/YRBS/Intro.htm>. For an interactive database of YRBS data, visit the CDC's YRBS web site at: www.cdc.gov/yrbs. This document was developed by the Bureau of Epidemiology for the Florida Department of Education's Office of Healthy Schools in Cooperation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health Project Number U87/CCU001239-02.

