SafeRoutes
National Course

Why Safe Routes to School Matters

Safety, Health & Transportation

Fewer kids are biking and walking. More parents are driving.

- 2001:
  16% walked

- 1969:
  42% walked

  (CDC, 2005)

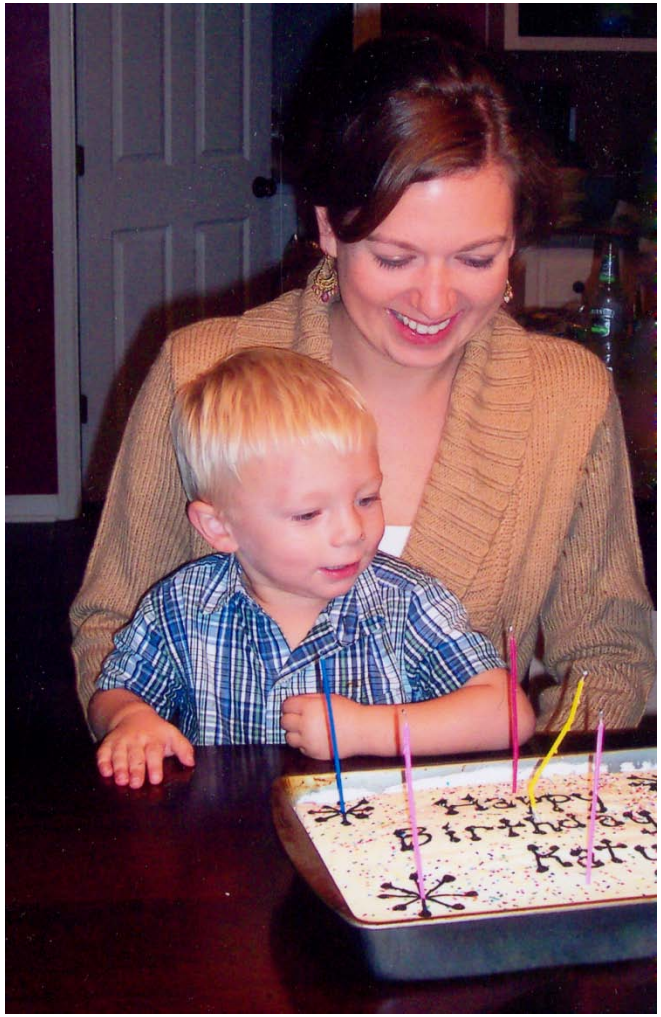
Parents driving

Parents driving their children to school account for 20%-25% of morning rush hour traffic. *(NHTSA 2003; Dept. of Environment)*

The consequences of *this*…

...instead of *this* can be alarming.

Today's children may be the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents have.



Promoting safe walking and bicycling is an ideal strategy to increase physical activity.

Safe Routes to School programs

- Make walking and bicycling safe ways to get to school
- Encourage more children to walk and bike to school

Benefits of SRTS programs

- Reduce the number of children hit by cars
- Reduce congestion around schools
- Improve children's health
- Reduce air pollution
- Can lead to cost savings for schools (reduce need for "hazard" busing)
- Others: increase child's sense of freedom, help establish lifetime habits, teach pedestrian skills

How did we get here?

- School siting issues
- Individual barriers to walking to school
- Community issues

1. School siting issues: a generation ago

- Small (average of 127 students)
- Located in community centers
- 42% of kids walked or biked to school

(EPA, 2003; 1969 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey)

1. School siting issues: today

- Mega-schools (average 653 students)
- 40% of high schools have attendance of 1500+ students
- Schools located on 10 to 30+ acres fringe land
- Lowest-cost construction

(U.S. Department of Education, 2002)

School consolidation has lengthened the trip between home and school

In 2001, about 16% of kids walked or biked to school

(CDC 2005)

It's not just distance

Students who live within 1 mile and walk or bike:

2001: 63%

1969: 87%

(CDC, 2005)

2. Individual barriers to walking and bicycling to school

- Long distances 62%
- Traffic danger 30%
- Adverse weather 19%
- Fear of crime danger 12%

(CDC, 2005)

Traffic danger

Adverse weather

Is this barrier reflective of changed social norms?

Fear of crime danger

- Identify perceptions and realities—both are important to address
- Some low probability events provoke the greatest fears
- Communities are finding ways to safeguard against these fears

3. Difficult community issues

- Traffic flow problems
- Abandoned buildings
- Illegal behaviors

The Bad:

Unintended consequences of less walking and bicycling

- to the environment
- to our health

Physical activity

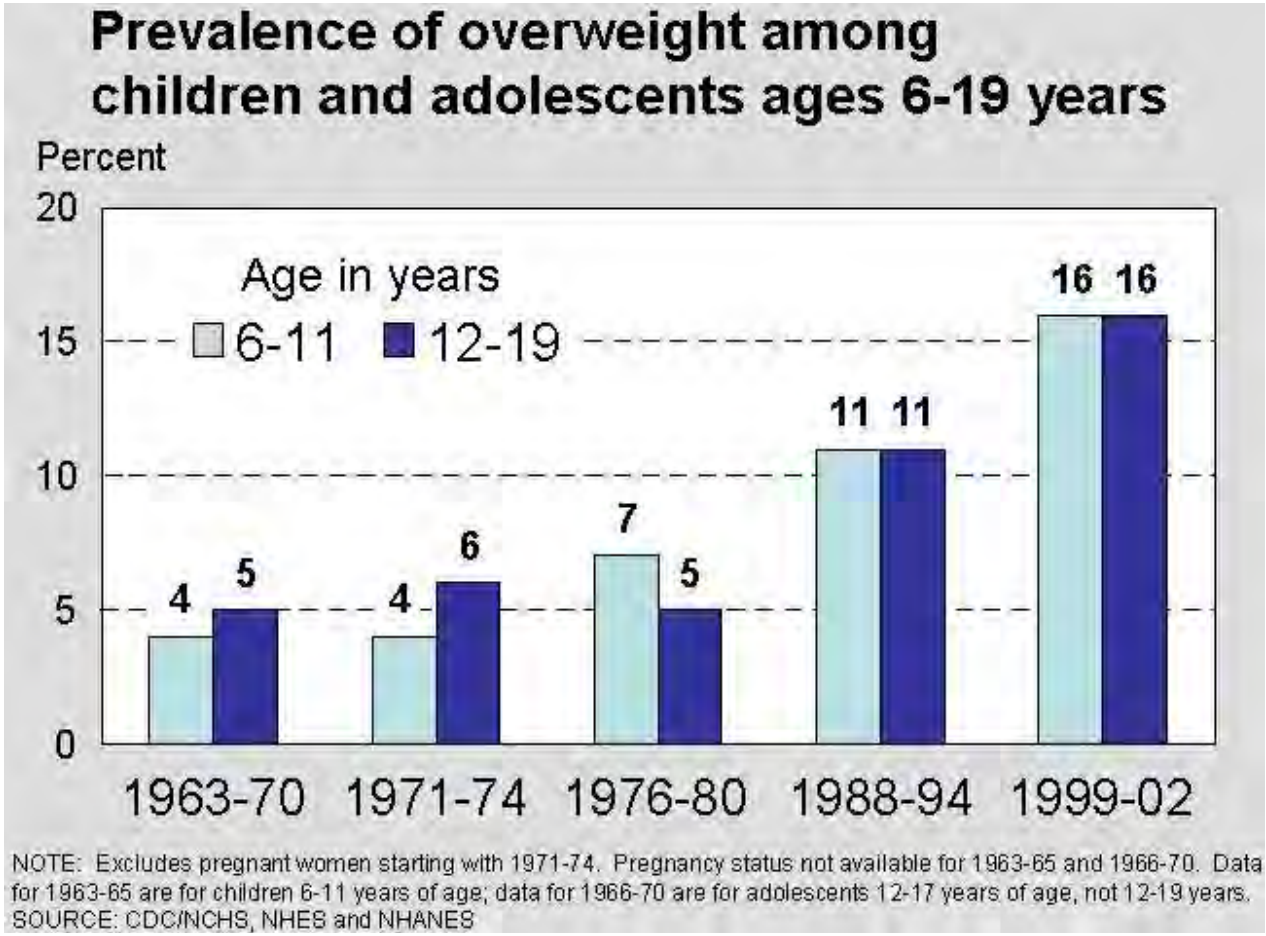
Most kids aren't getting the physical activity they need.

Physical activity recommendation for children:

At least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.

(US Depts. of Health and Human Services and Agriculture, 2005)

U.S. youth overweight rates



(National Center for Health Statistics)

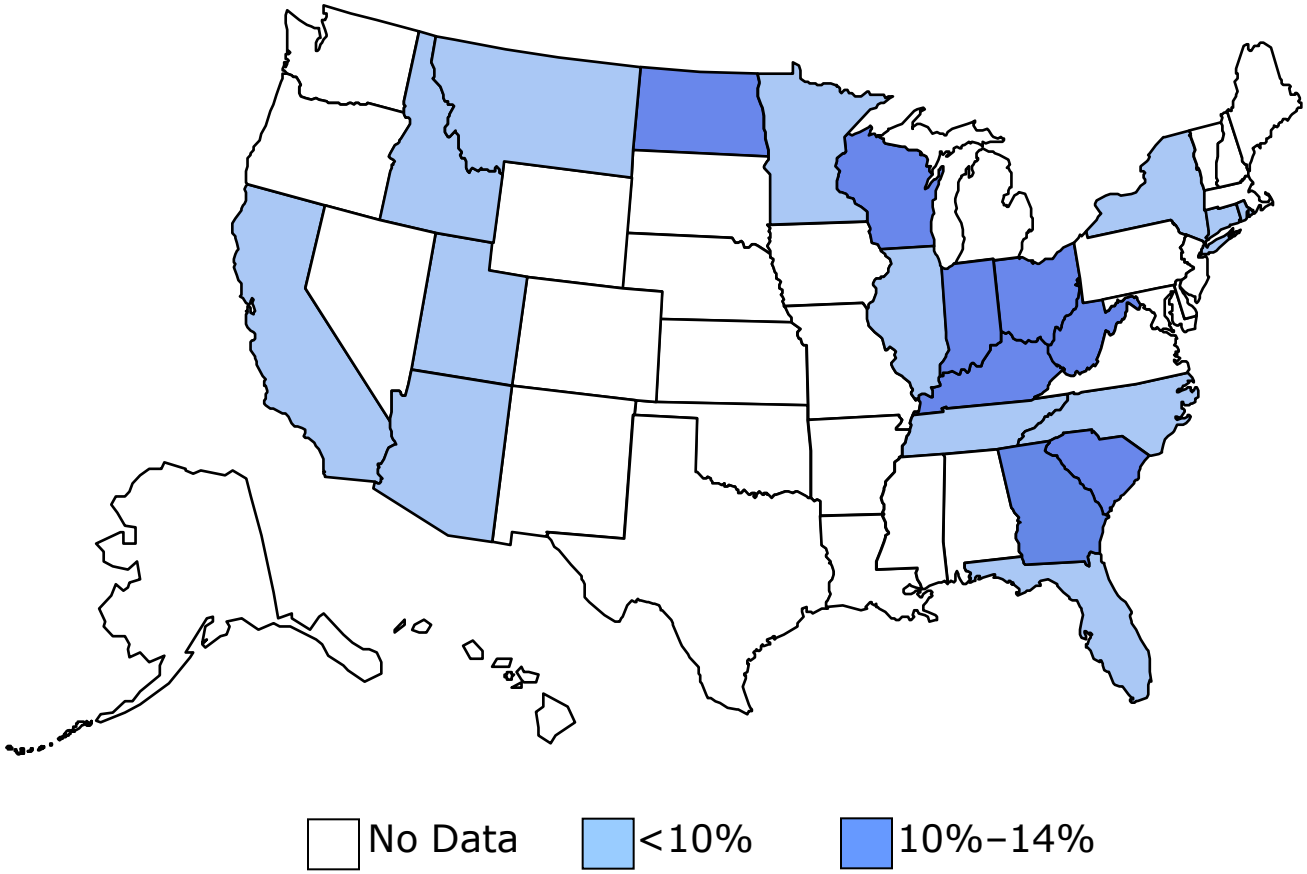
Overweight children have an increased risk of…

- Type 2 Diabetes
- Low self esteem
- Aggravated existing asthma
- Sleep apnea
- Decreased physical functioning
- Many other negative emotional & physical effects

(Institute of Medicine, 2005)

Obesity trends among U.S. adults: 1985

(*BMI ≥30, or ~ 30 lbs overweight for 5′ 4″ woman)



(Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, CDC, 2004)

Obesity trends among U.S. adults: 1986

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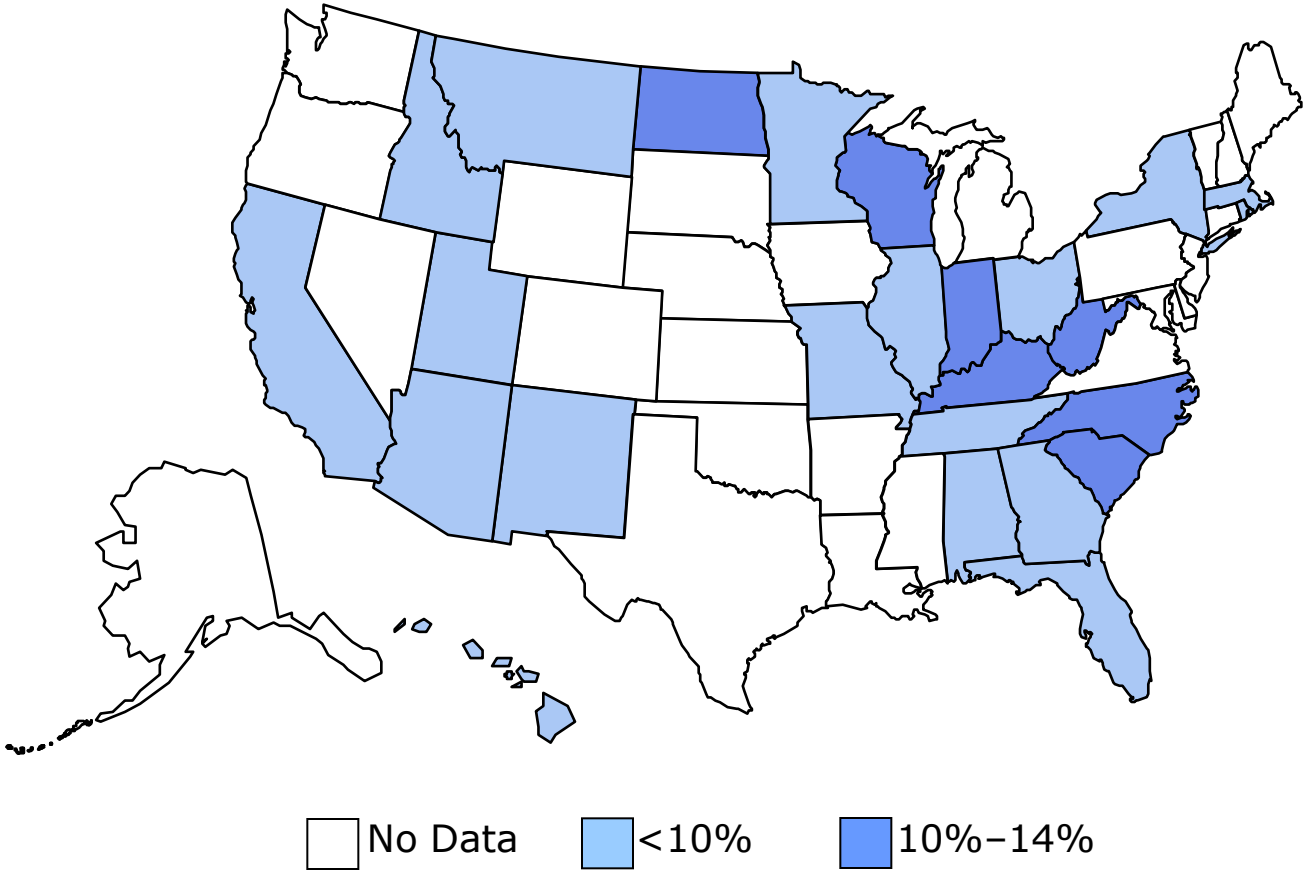

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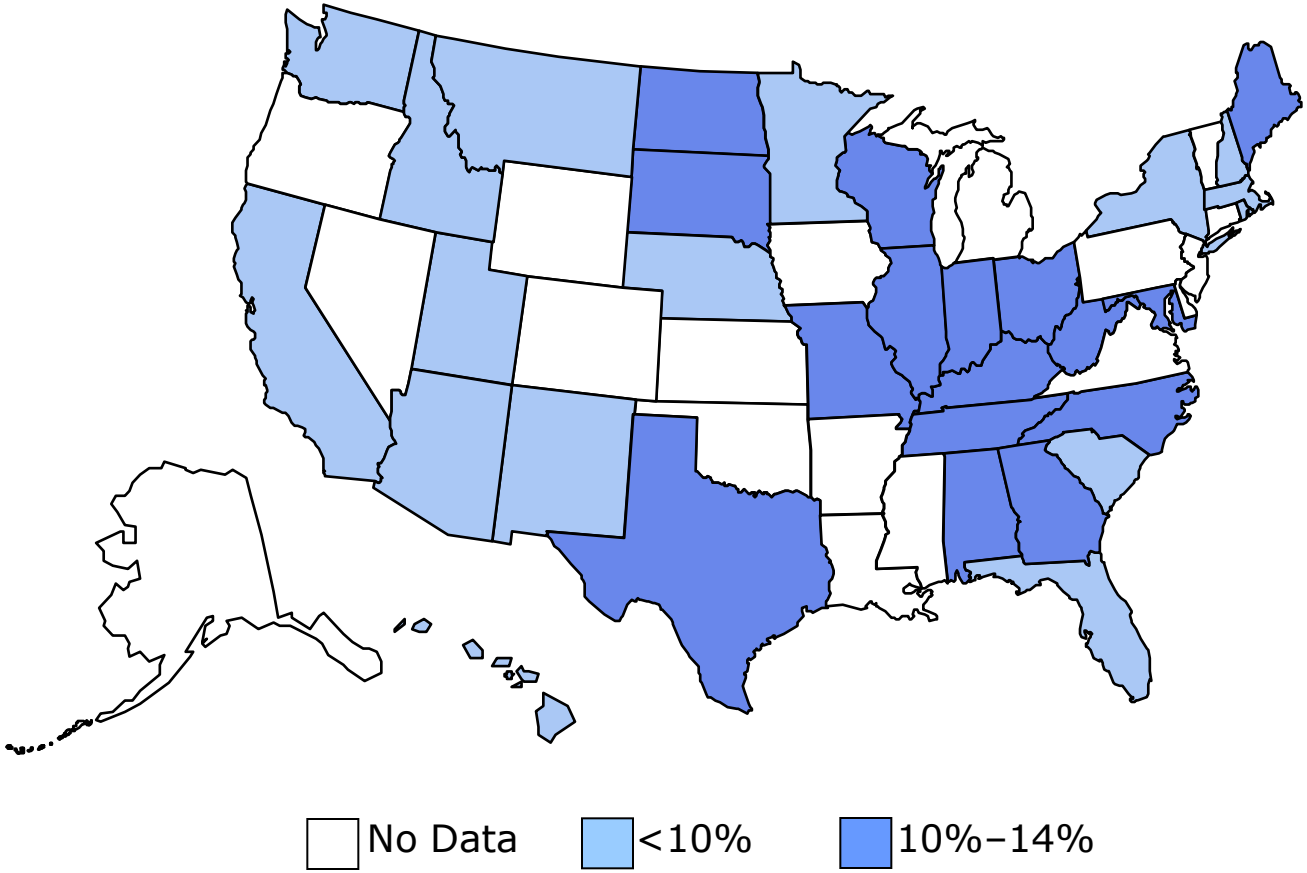

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Obesity trends among U.S. adults: 1988

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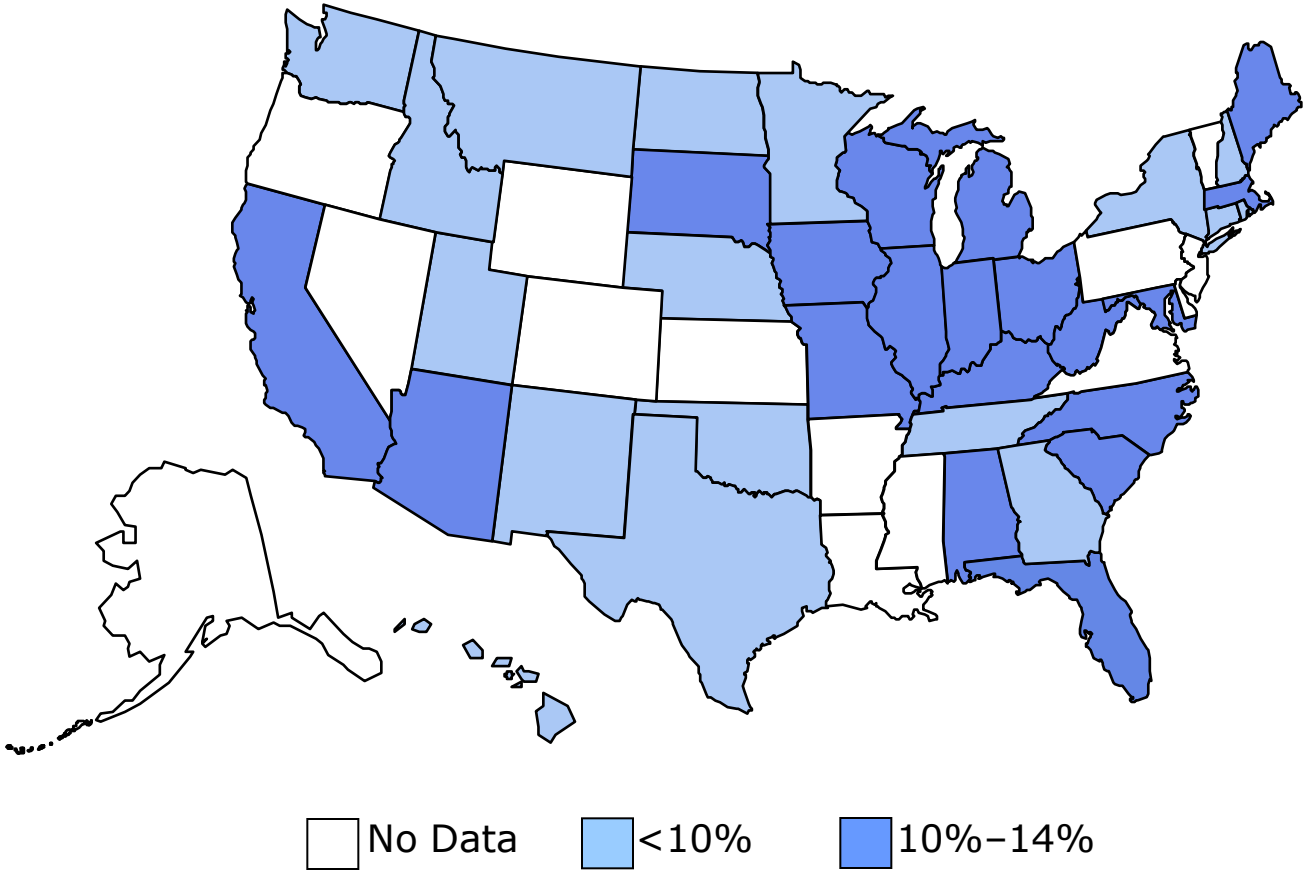

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Obesity trends among U.S. adults: 1989

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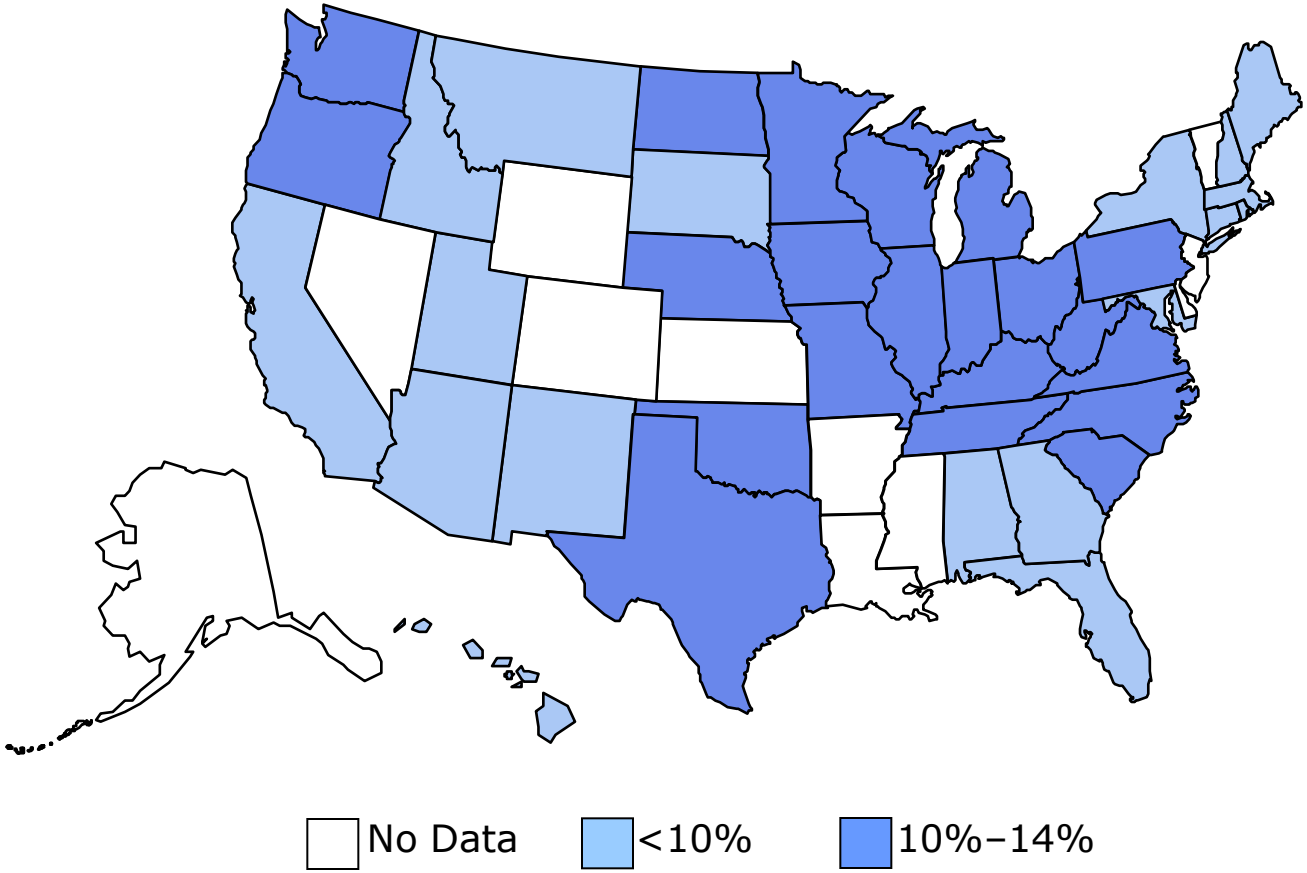

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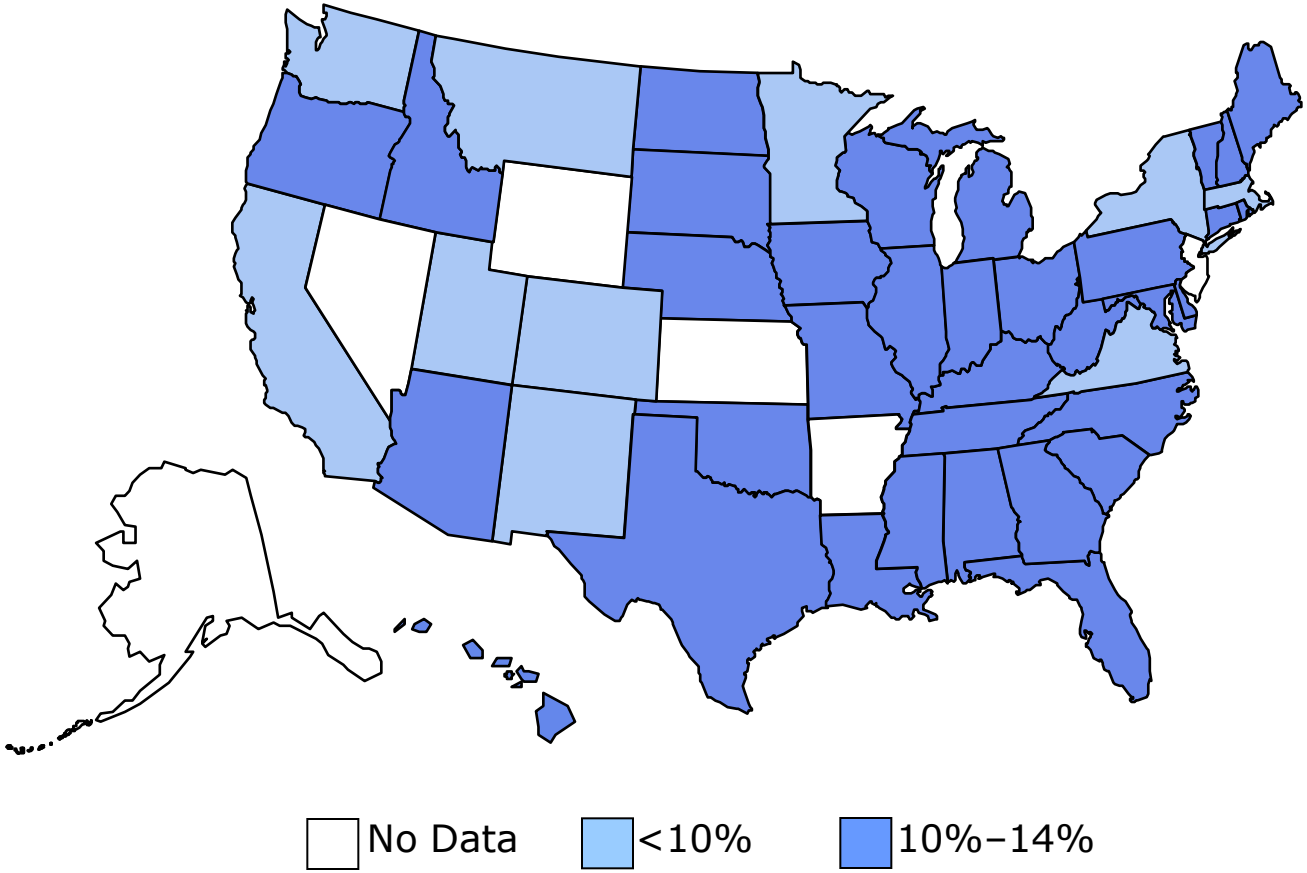

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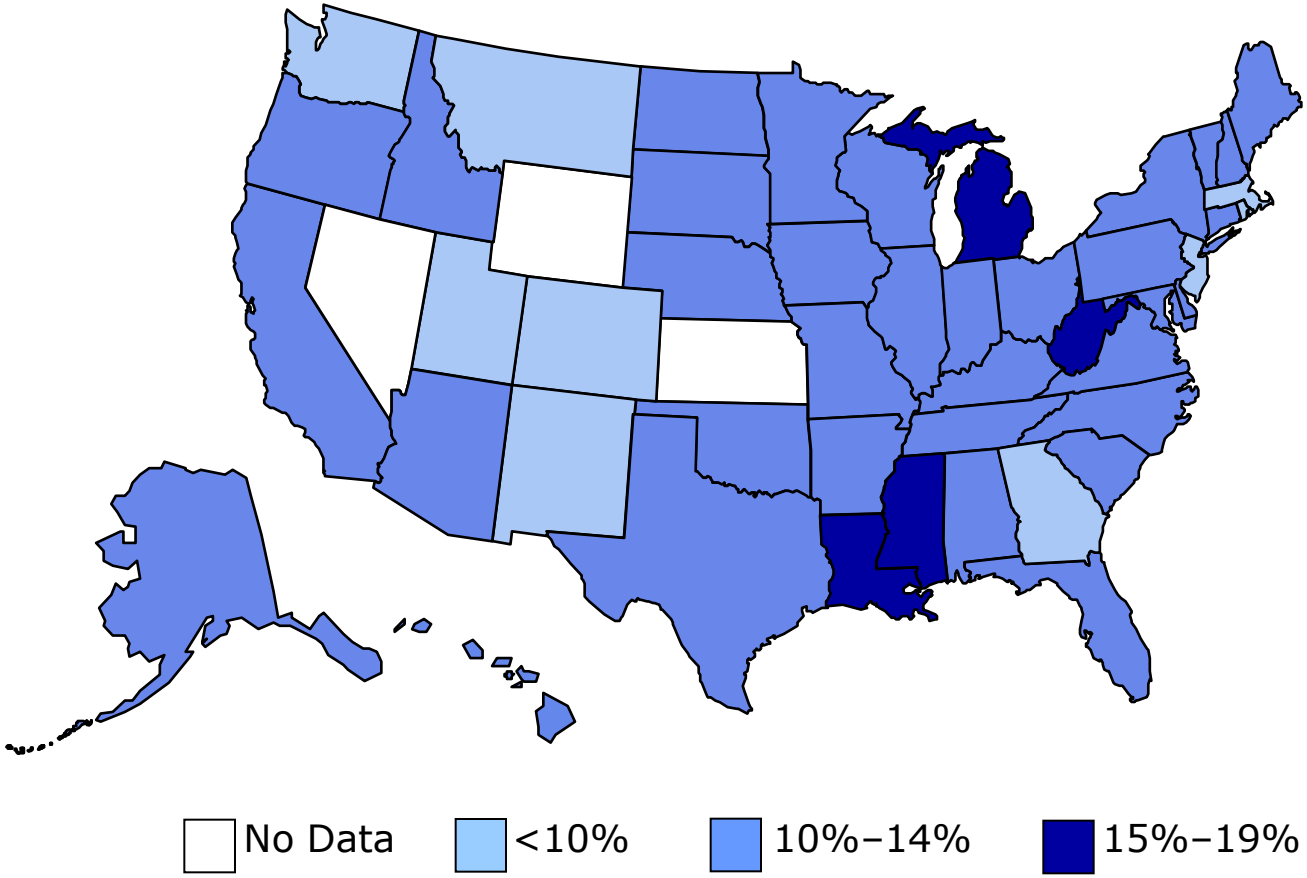

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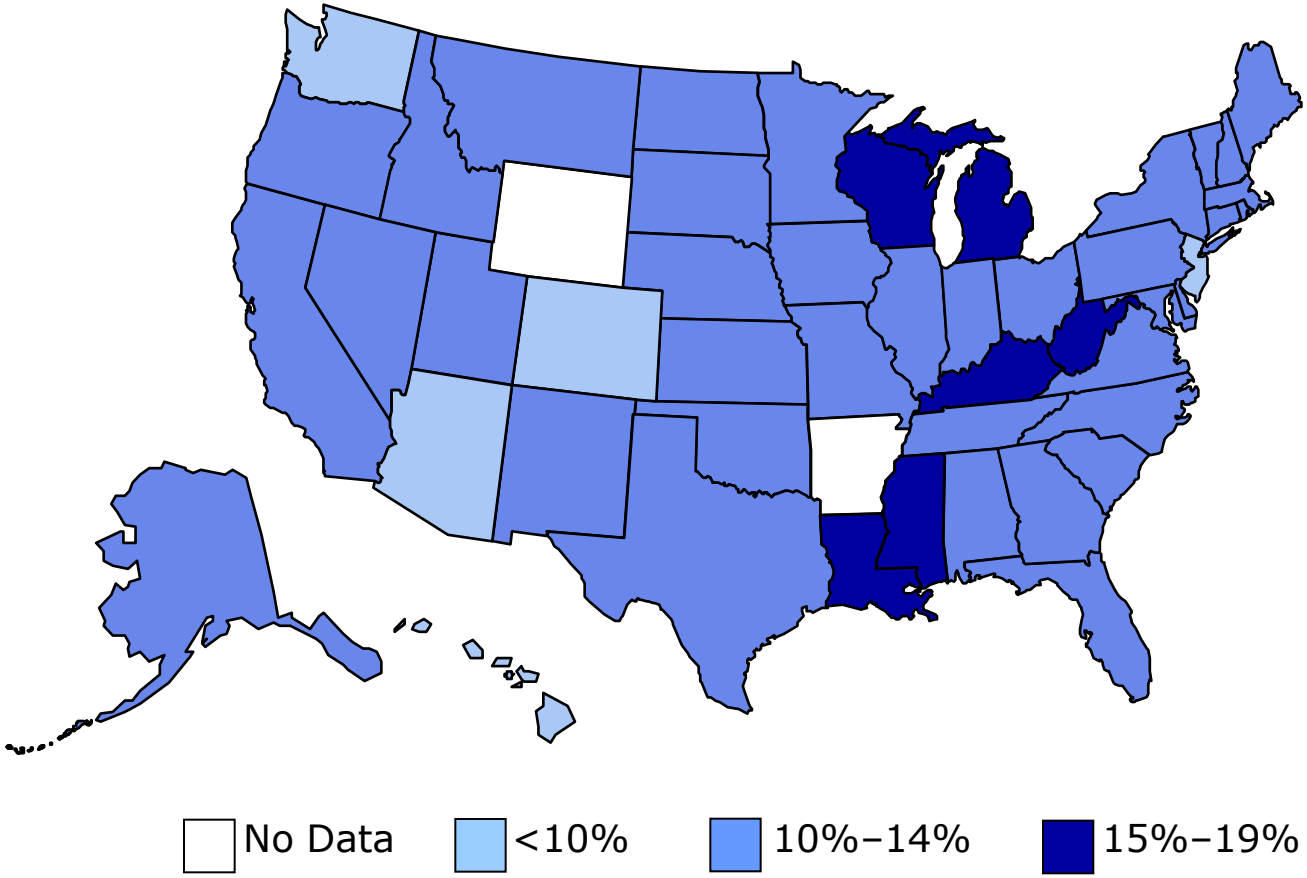

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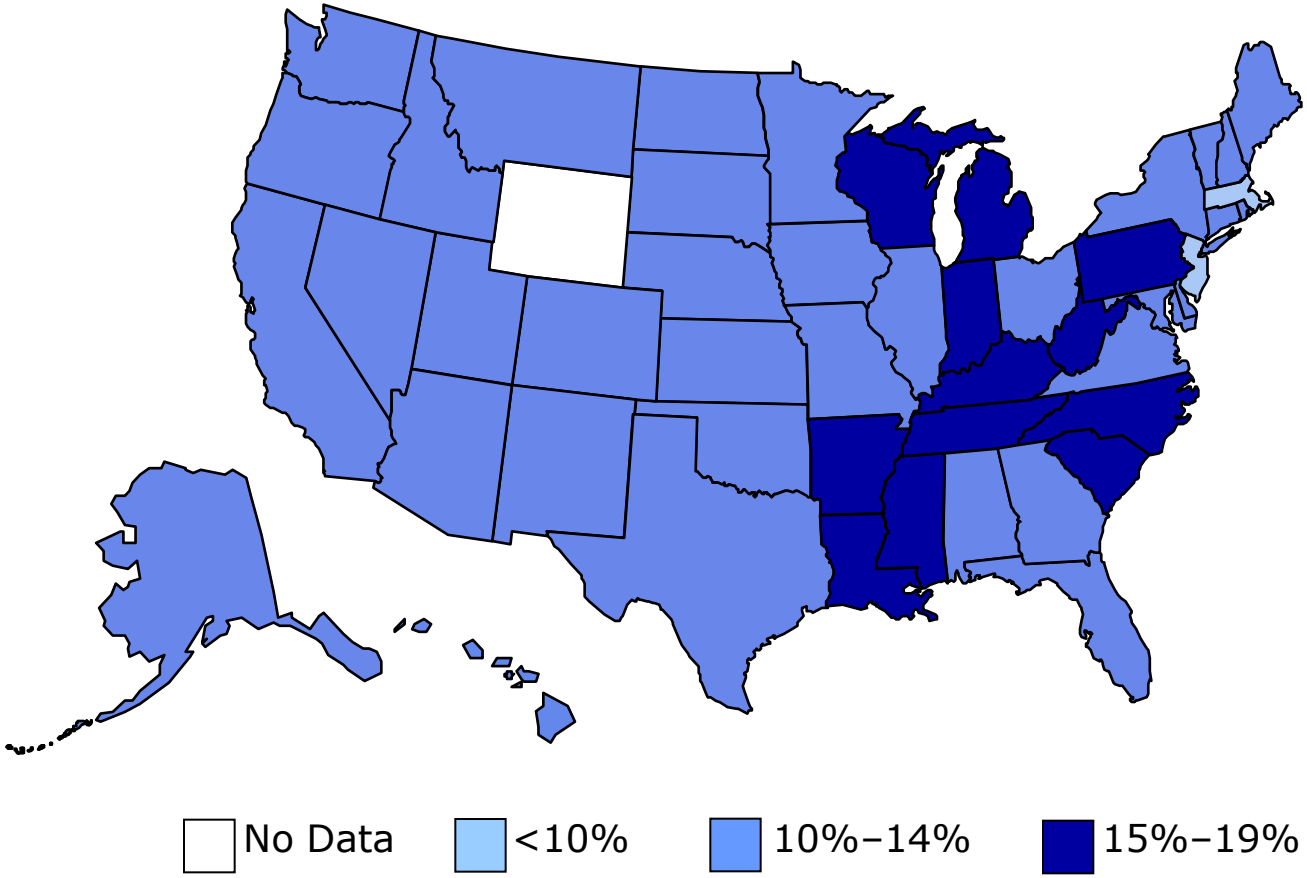

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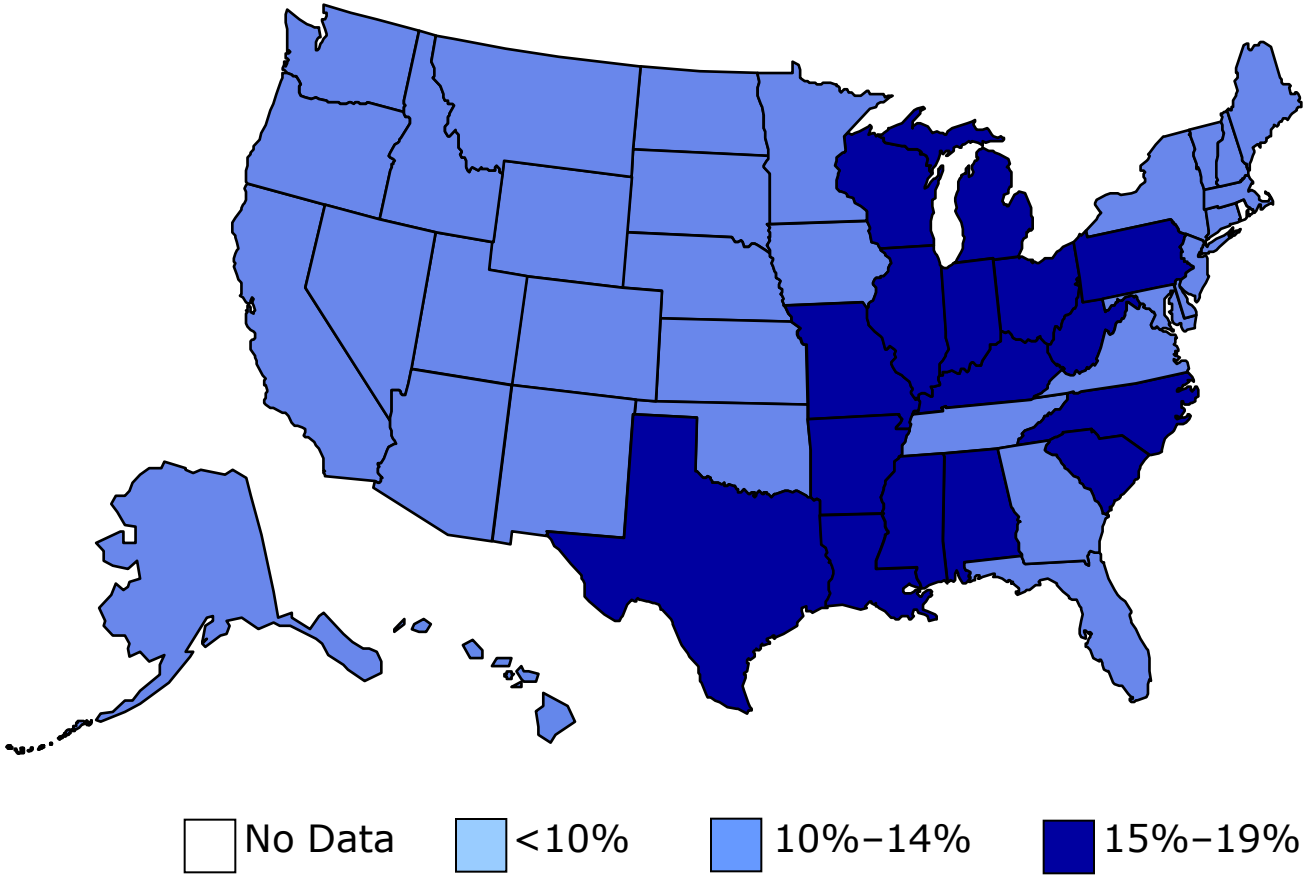

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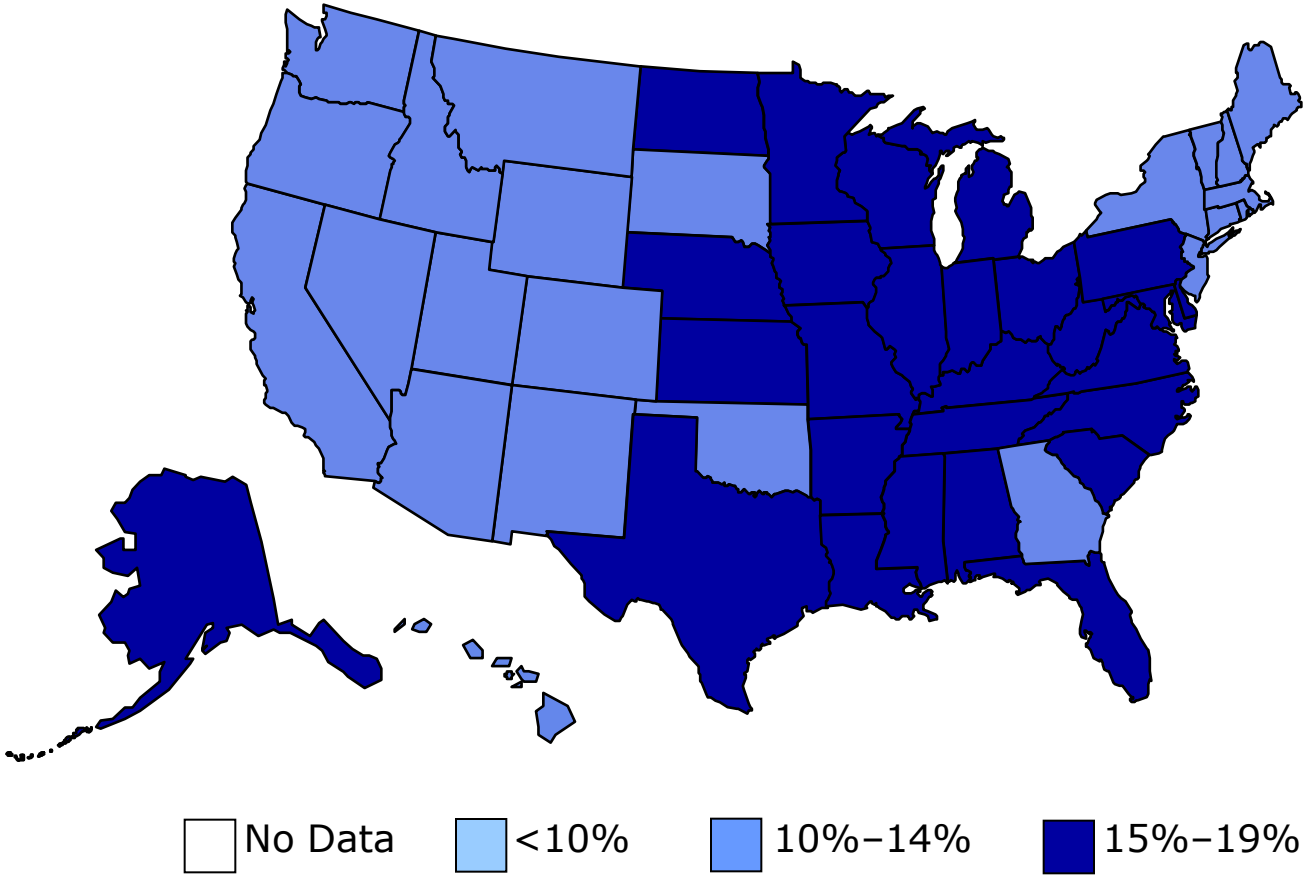

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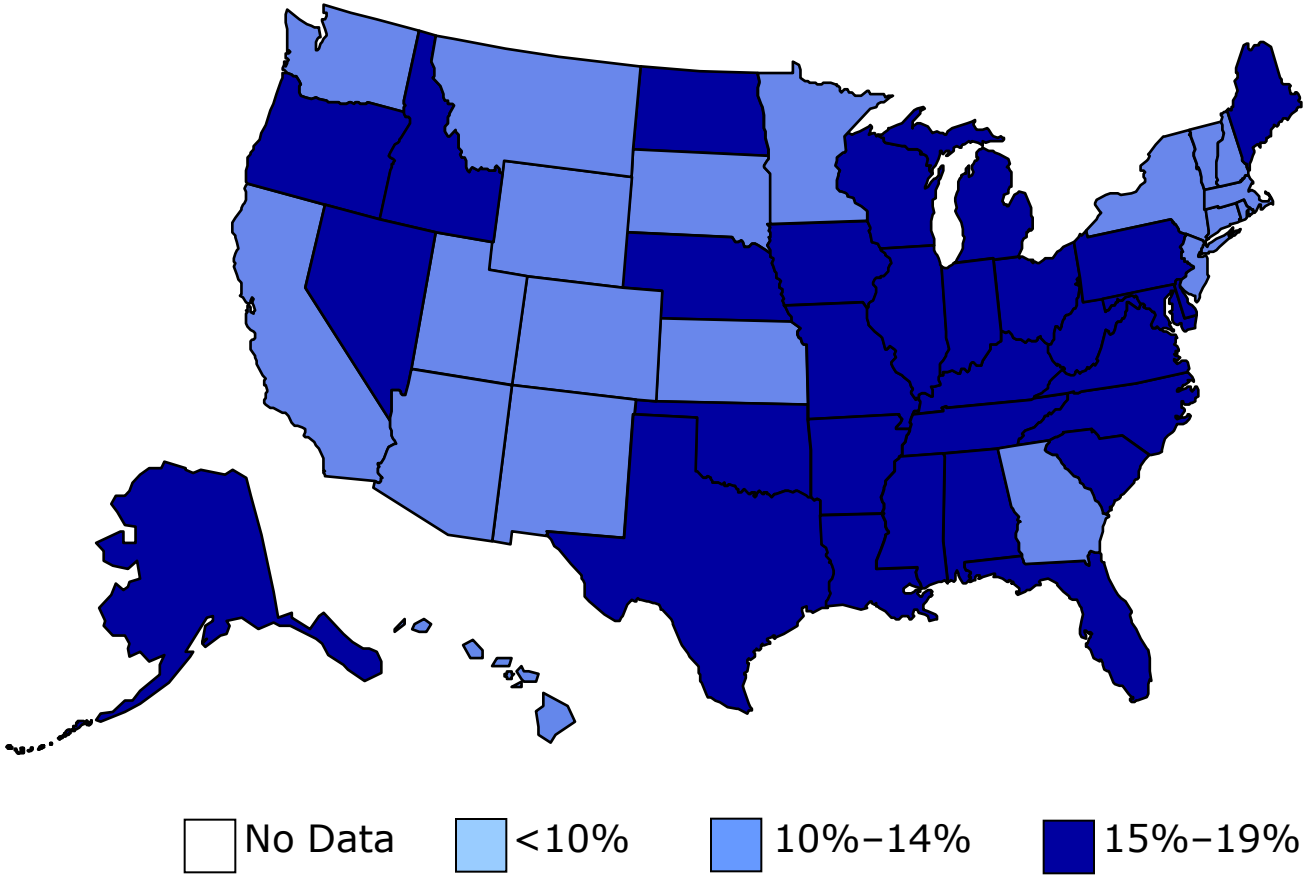

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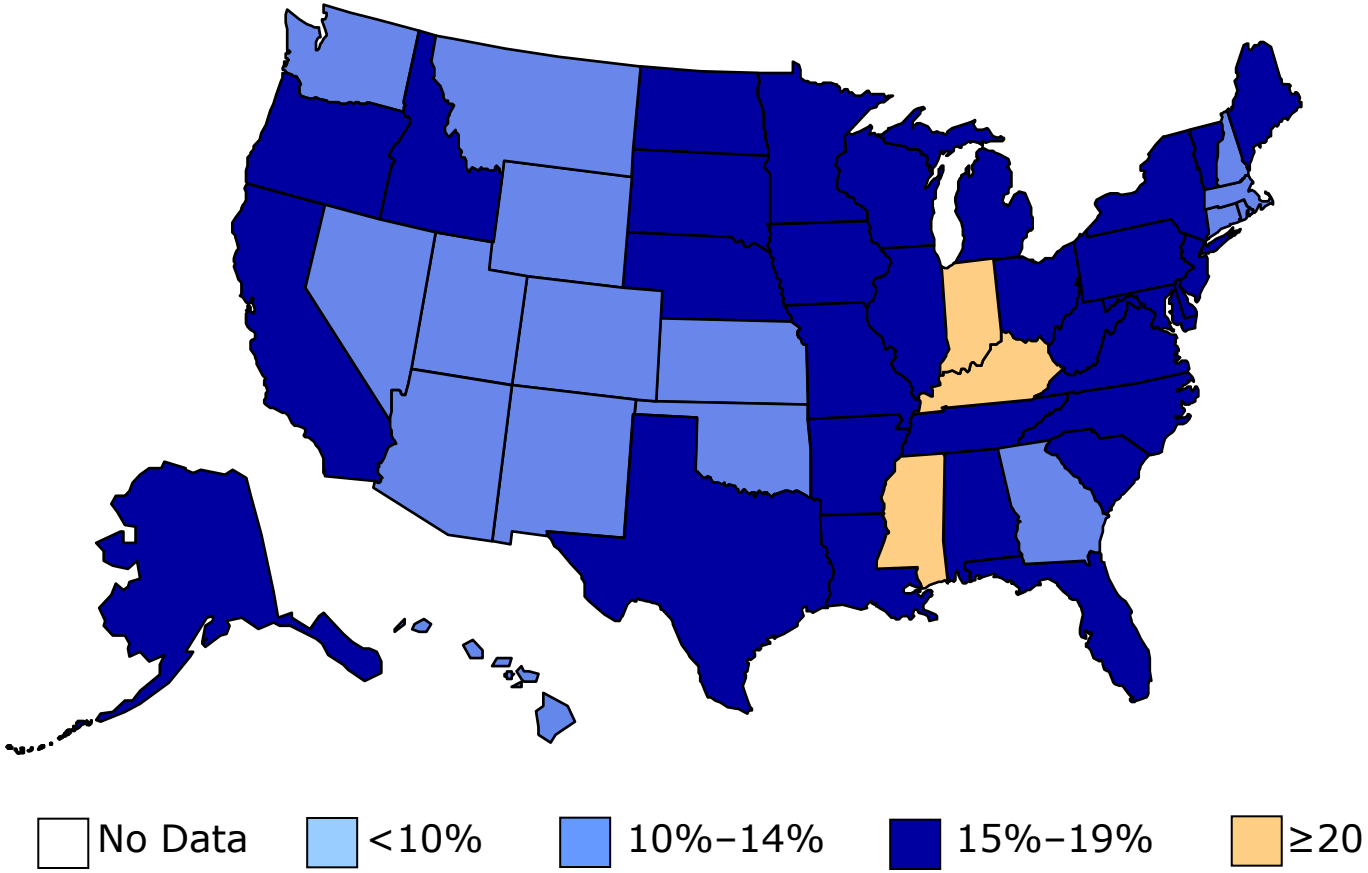

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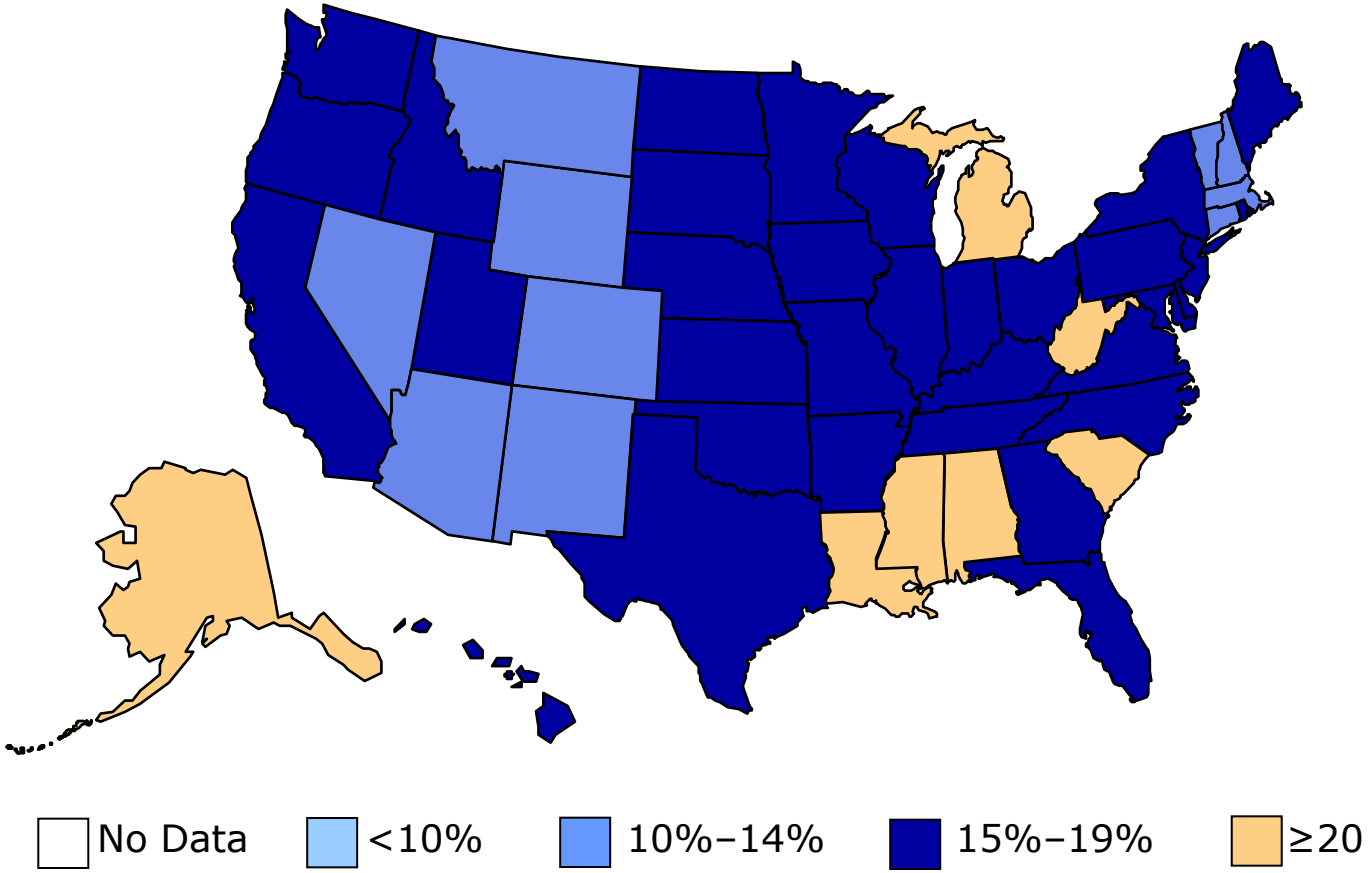

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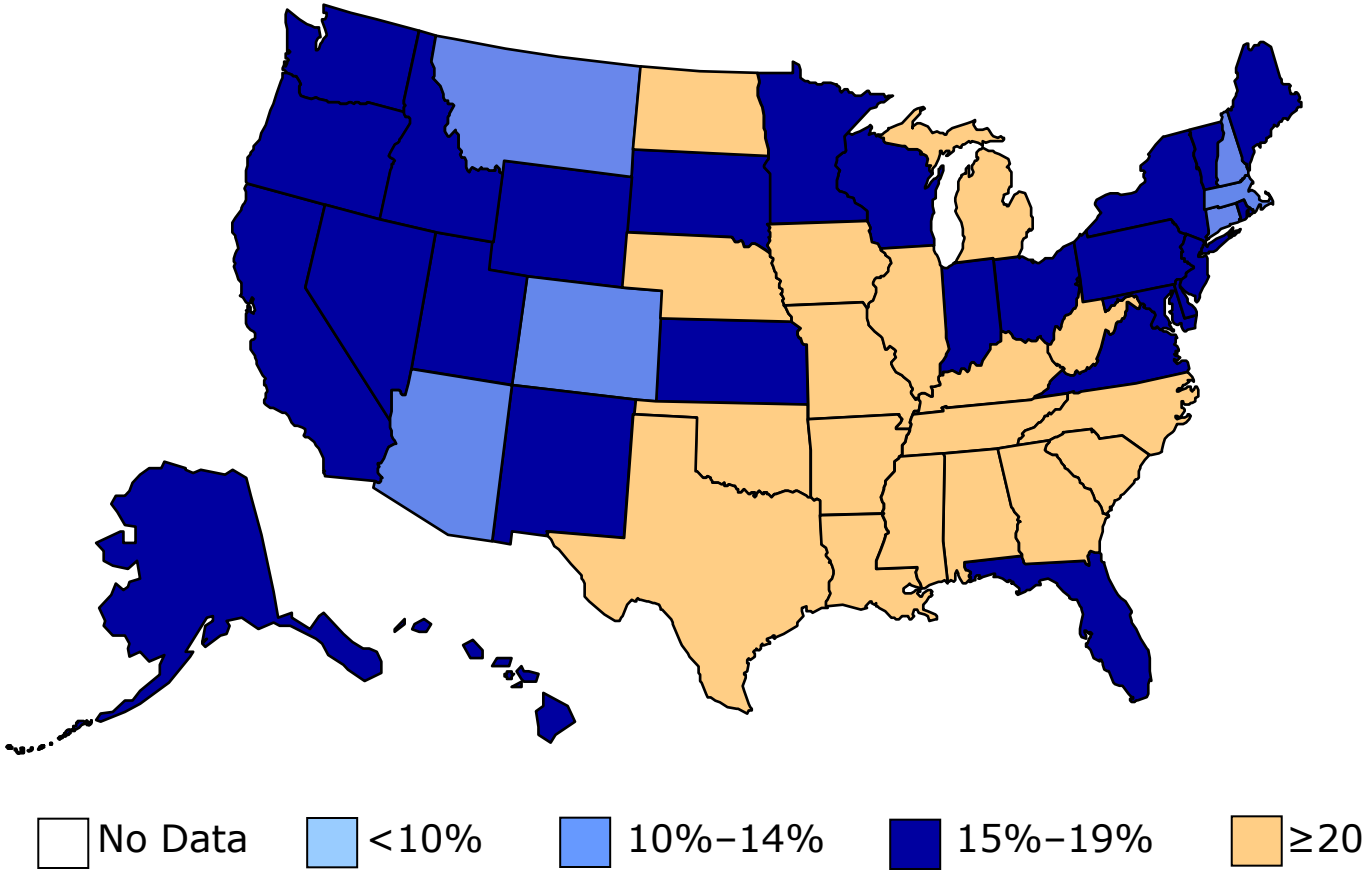

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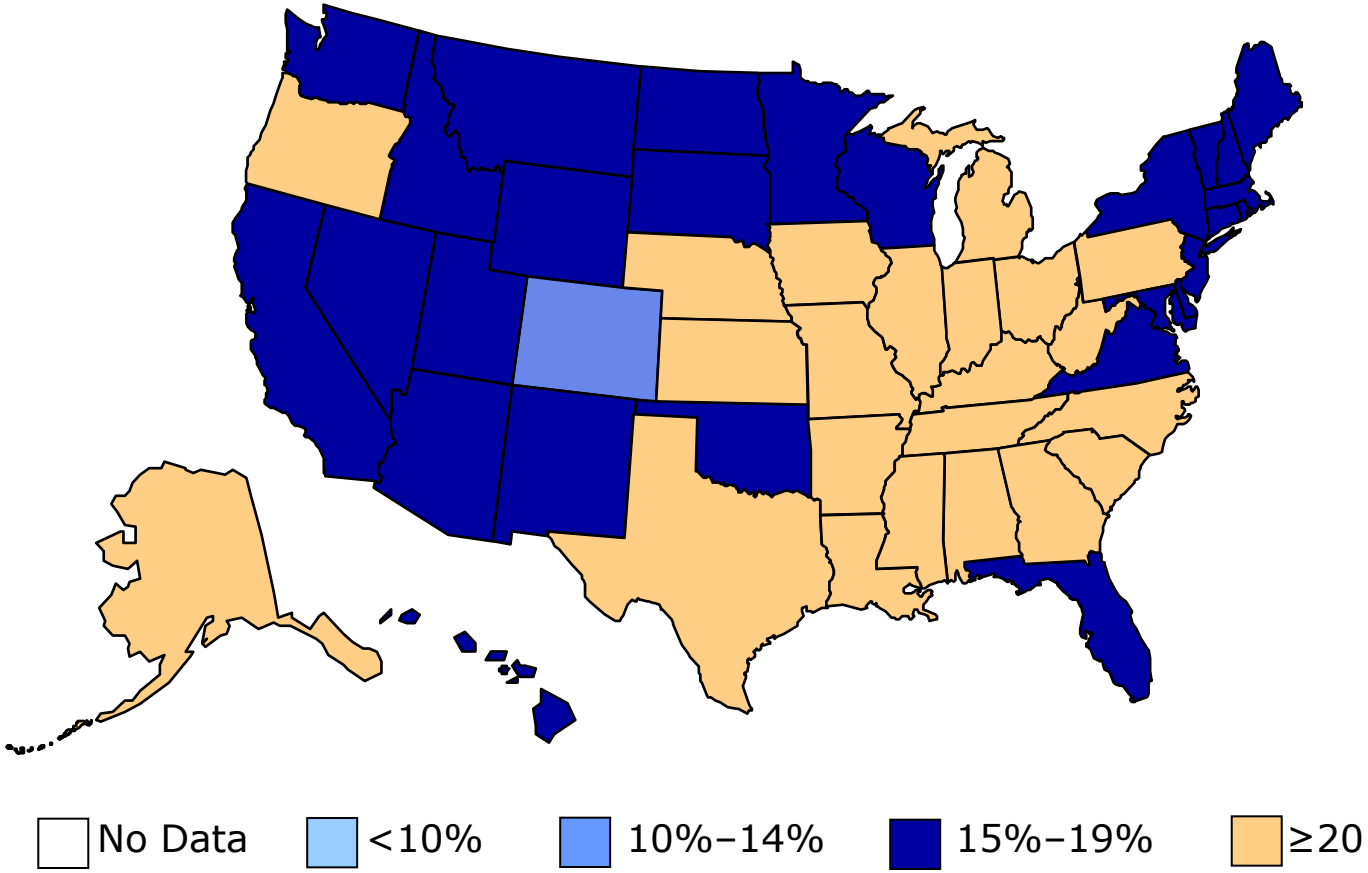

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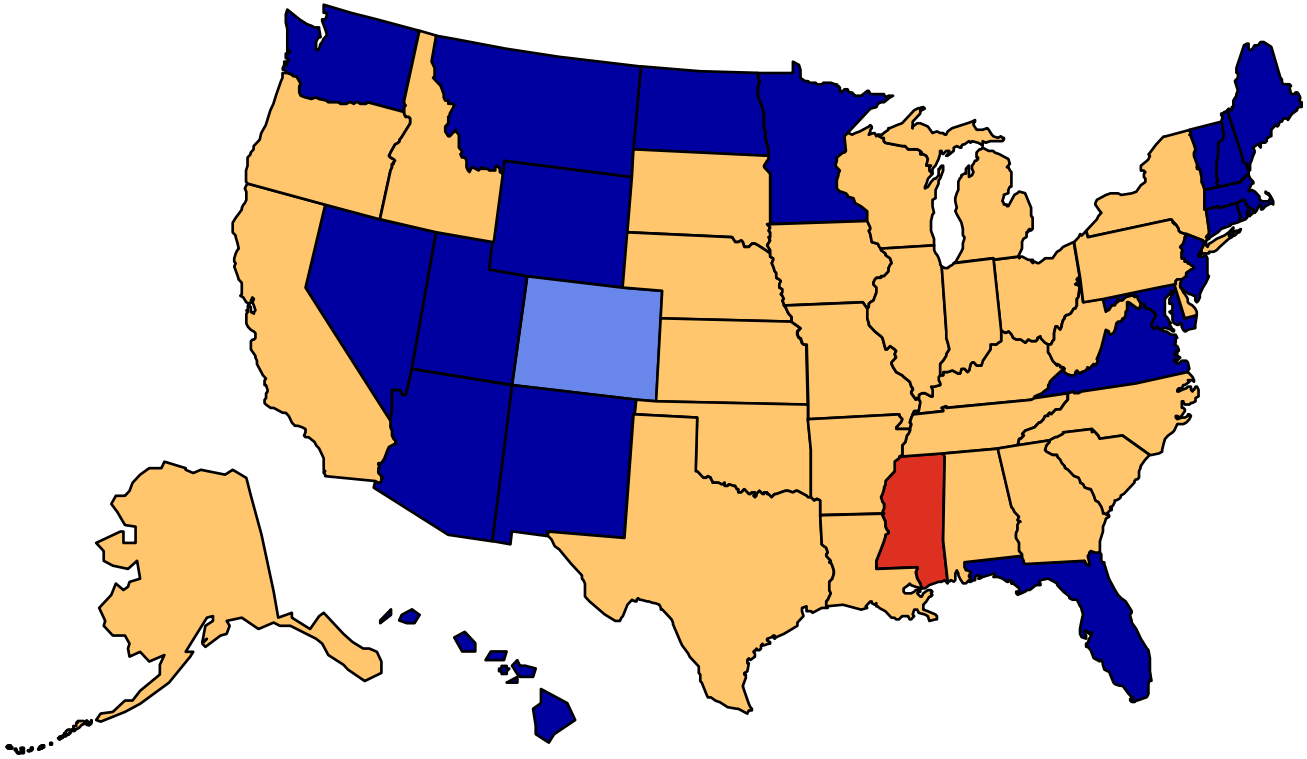

No Data | <10% | 10%–14% | 15%–19% | 20%–24% | ≥25%

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Obesity trends among U.S. adults: 2002

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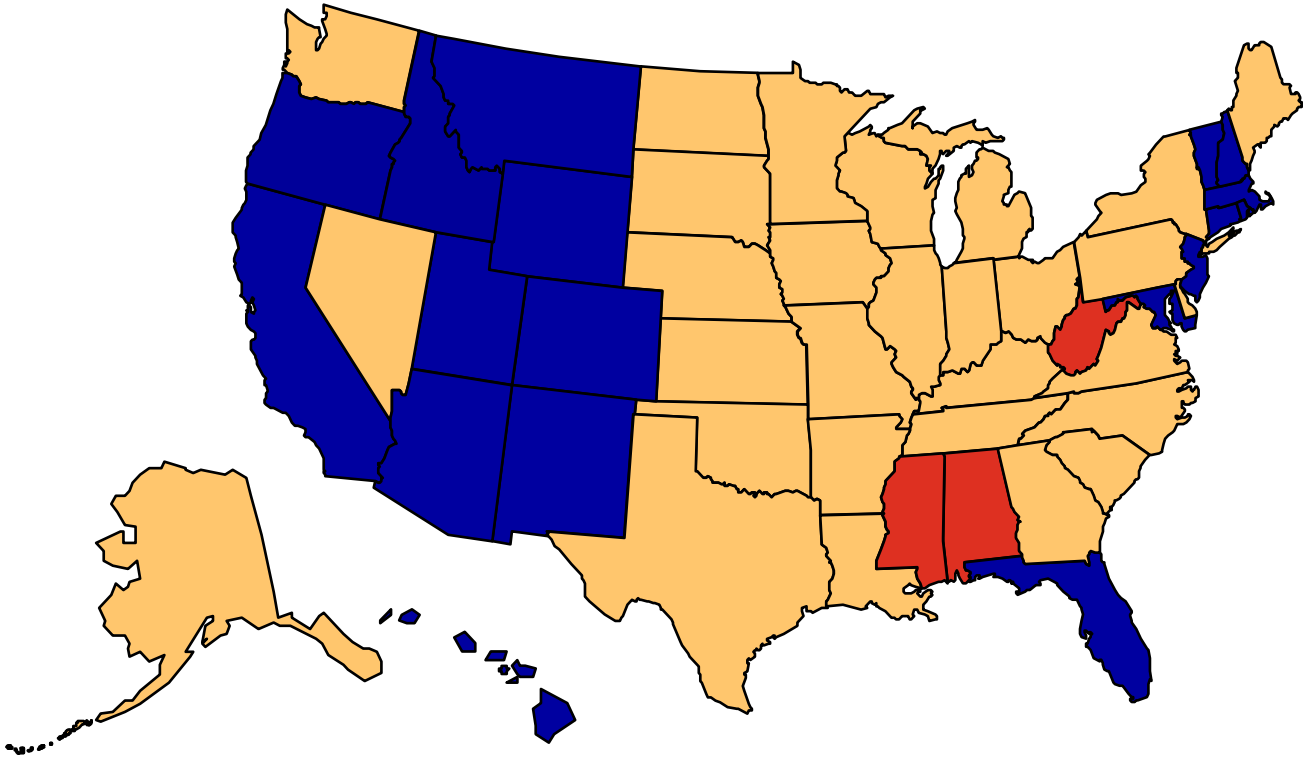

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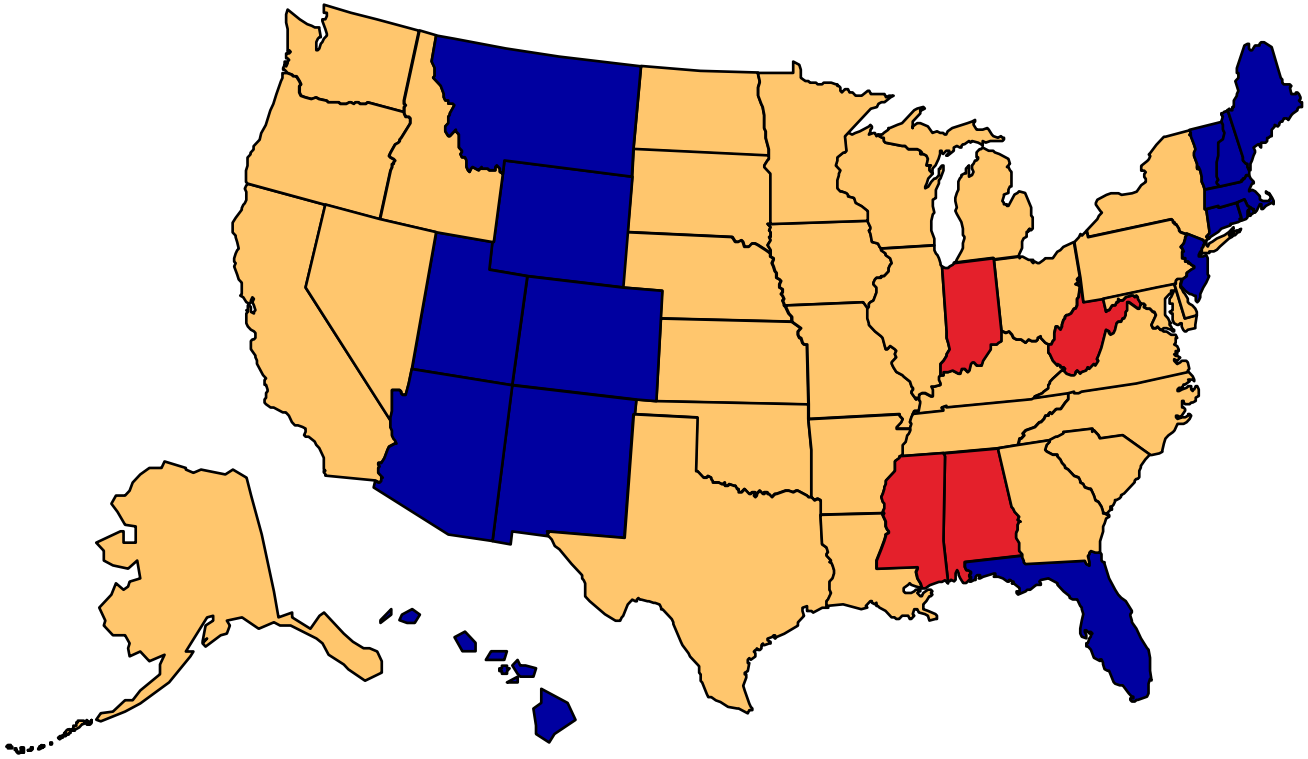

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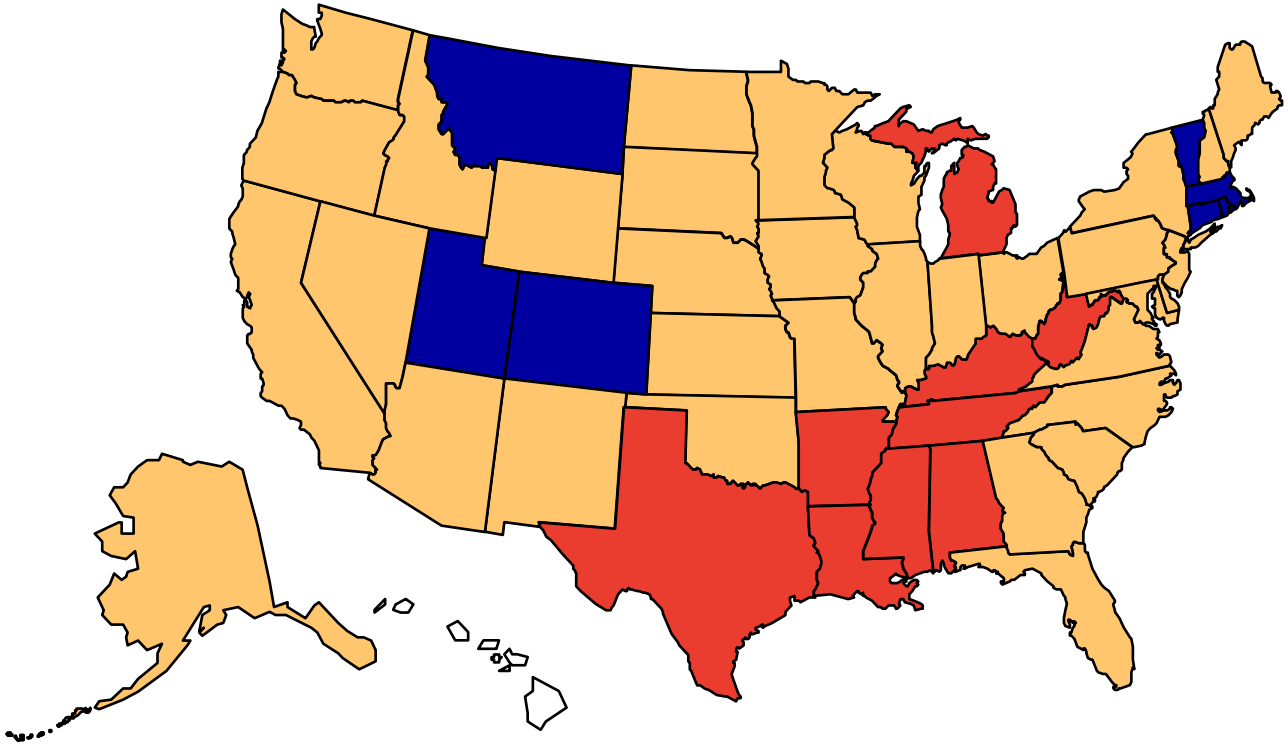

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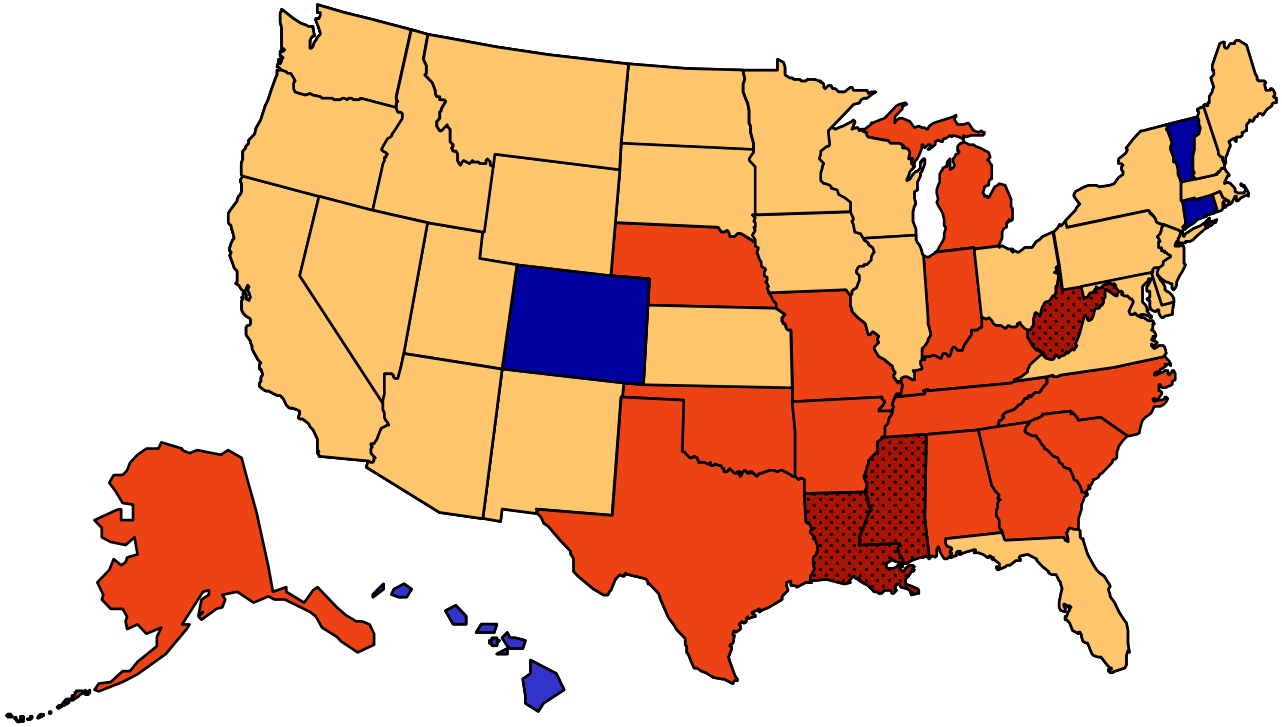


(Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, CDC, 2004)

Safe Routes to School programs are part of the solution…

- …to increase physical activity
- …to improve unsafe walking and biking conditions
- …to improve poor air quality by reducing vehicle emissions

Elements of Safe Routes to School programs

- Education
- Encouragement
- Enforcement
- Engineering
- Evaluation

Education

- Teaches safety skills
- Creates safety awareness
- Fosters life-long safety habits

Education strategies can often begin right away

Who needs educational messages?

1. Children
2. Parents
3. Neighbors

Encouragement

- Increases popularity of walking and biking
- Is an easy way to start SRTS programs
- Emphasizes fun of walking and biking

Encouragement programs

1. Events
2. Walking school buses
3. Mileage clubs
4. Contests
5. Park and walk sites
6. Route map promotion

2. Walking school buses and bicycle trains

Enforcement

- Increases awareness of pedestrians and bicyclists
- Improves driver behavior
- Helps children follow traffic rules
- Decreases parent perceptions of danger

Community and school efforts

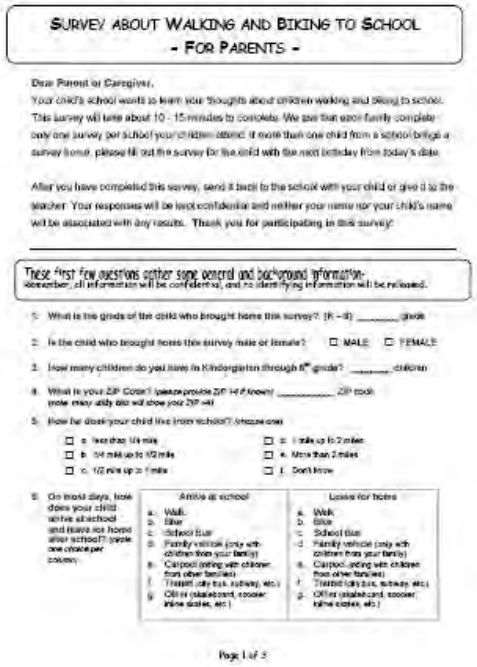
- Safety patrol
- Crossing guards
- Neighborhood speed watch programs
- Role models

Engineering

- Creates safer settings for walking and biking
- Can influence the way people behave

Focus on low cost, easy to implement solutions

Evaluation



SURVEY ABOUT WALKING AND BIKING TO SCHOOL
- FOR PARENTS -

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Your child's school wants to learn your thoughts about children walking and biking to school. This survey will take about 10 - 15 minutes to complete. We ask that each family complete only one survey per school your children attend. If more than one child from a school brings a survey home, please fill out the survey for the child with the next birthday from today's date.

After you have completed this survey, send it back to the school with your child or give it to the teacher. Your responses will be kept confidential and neither your name nor your child's name will be associated with any results. Thank you for participating in this survey!

These first few questions gather some general and background information.
Remember, all information will be confidential, and no identifying information will be released.

1. What is the grade of the child who brought home this survey? (K – 8) _____ grade
2. Is the child who brought home this survey male or female? ☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE
3. How many children do you have in Kindergarten through 8th grade? _____ children
4. What is your ZIP Code? (please provide ZIP if it known) _____ ZIP code
   (note: many utility bills will show your ZIP code)
5. How far does your child live from school? (choose one)
   - ☐ a. less than 1/4 mile
   - ☐ b. 1/4 mile up to 1/2 mile
   - ☐ c. 1/2 mile up to 1 mile
   - ☐ d. 1 mile up to 2 miles
   - ☐ e. More than 2 miles
   - ☐ f. Don't know
6. On most days, how does your child arrive at school and leave for home after school? (pick one choice per column)

Arrive at school	Leave for home
a. Walk	a. Walk
b. Bike	b. Bike
c. School bus	c. School bus
d. Family vehicle (only with children from your family)	d. Family vehicle (only with children from your family)
e. Carpool (riding with children from other families)	e. Carpool (riding with children from other families)
f. Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)	f. Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)
g. Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)	g. Other (skateboard, scooter, inline skates, etc.)

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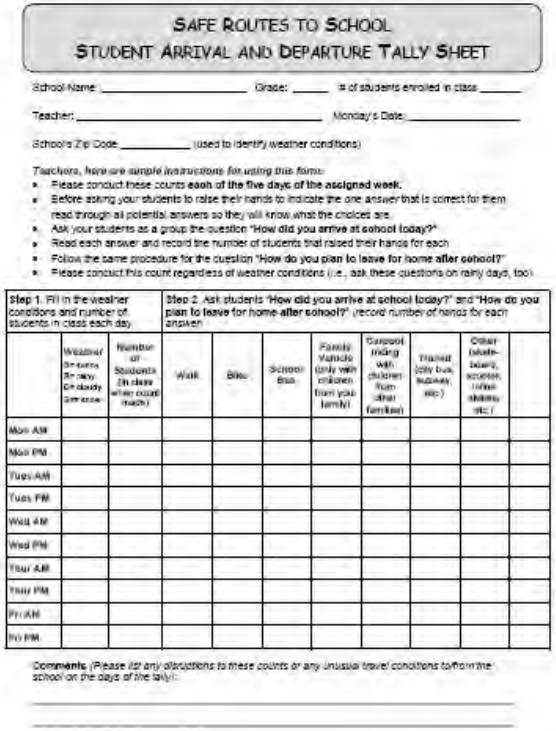


SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TALLY SHEET

School Name: _____ Grade: _____ # of students enrolled in class: _____

Teacher: _____ Monday's Date: _____

School's Zip Code: _____ (used to identify weather conditions)

Teachers, here are simple instructions for using this form:

- Please conduct these counts **each of the five days of the assigned week.**
- Before asking your students to raise their hands to indicate the one answer that is correct for them read through all potential answers so they will know what the choices are.
- Ask your students as a group the question "How did you arrive at school today?"
- Read each answer and record the number of students that raised their hands for each
- Follow the same procedure for the question "How do you plan to leave for home after school?"
- Please conduct this count regardless of weather conditions (i.e., ask these questions on rainy days, too)

Step 1. Fill in the weather conditions and number of students in class each day.			Step 2. Ask students "How did you arrive at school today?" and "How do you plan to leave for home after school?" (record number of hands for each answer)							
	Weather (Sunny, Rainy, Cloudy, Snowy)	Number of Students (in class when count made)	Walk	Bike	School Bus	Family Vehicle (only with children from your family)	Carpool (riding with children from other families)	Transit (city bus, subway, etc.)	Other (skate-board, scooter, inline skates, etc.)	
Mon AM										
Mon PM										
Tues AM										
Tues PM										
Wed AM										
Wed PM										
Thur AM										
Thur PM										
Fri AM										
Fri PM										

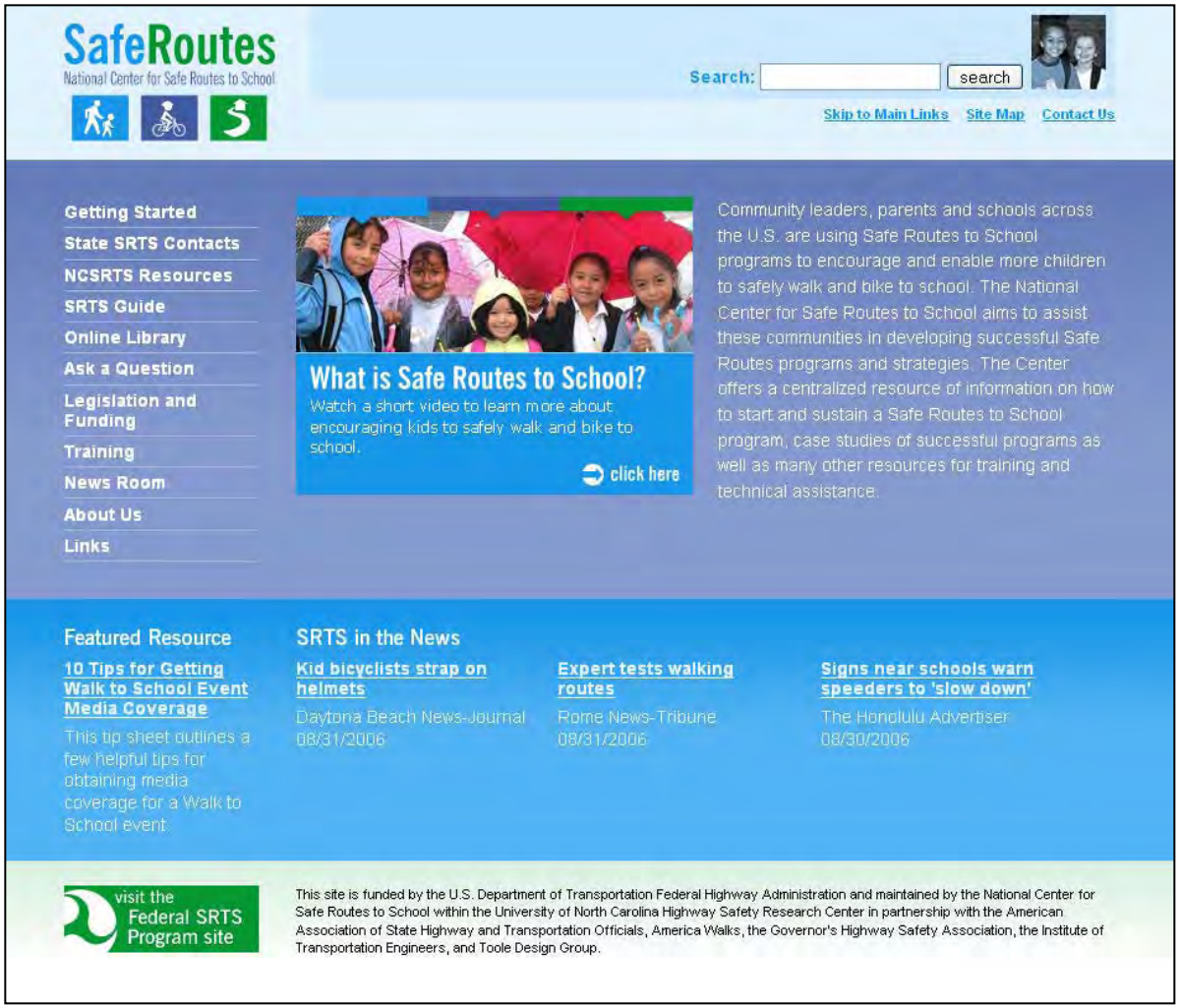
Comments (Please list any disruptions to these counts or any unusual travel conditions to/from the school on the days of the tally):

_____

_____

Is the program making a difference?

Safe Routes to School goals

- Where it's safe, get kids walking and biking
- Where it's not safe, make it safe

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