



Children *and* Family
Research Center

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



Obesity Prevalence Among US Children and Adolescents Investigated for Maltreatment

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Child abuse and obesity

- 1 in 6 youth obese
- 1 in 58 abused or neglected
- Obese adults report higher rates of sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, and psychological abuse than nonobese adults
- Emerging data shows correlation between child abuse and obesity in childhood
 - Schneiderman et al. 2011
 - Knutson et al. 2010
 - Steele & Buchi 2008



Purpose

- Lacking data on all forms of child abuse
- Lacking national data
- 1. Estimate the prevalence of obesity for children ages 2 through 17 years of age investigated for child abuse and neglect in the US
- 2. Compare rates to national peers
- 3. Examine sex- and age-specific associations between obesity:
 1. Race/ethnicity
 2. Abuse and neglect type
 3. Investigation case characteristics



Methods

National Survey of Child and Adolescent Wellbeing (2010)

- Closed investigations from Feb 2008 to April 2009
- Substantiated and unsubstantiated
- Open and closed cases following investigation
- 2 to 17 year olds with valid weight data (N=2948; 10% missing)

Measures

- **Obesity**
 - $\geq 95^{\text{th}}$ percentile of weight-for-age CDC growth chart
 - Caregiver report



Measures continued

- **Abuse and neglect**

- Most serious type reported (neglect; physical abuse; sexual abuse; other)

- **Case characteristics**

- Family material hardship
- History of investigations

- **Substantiation**

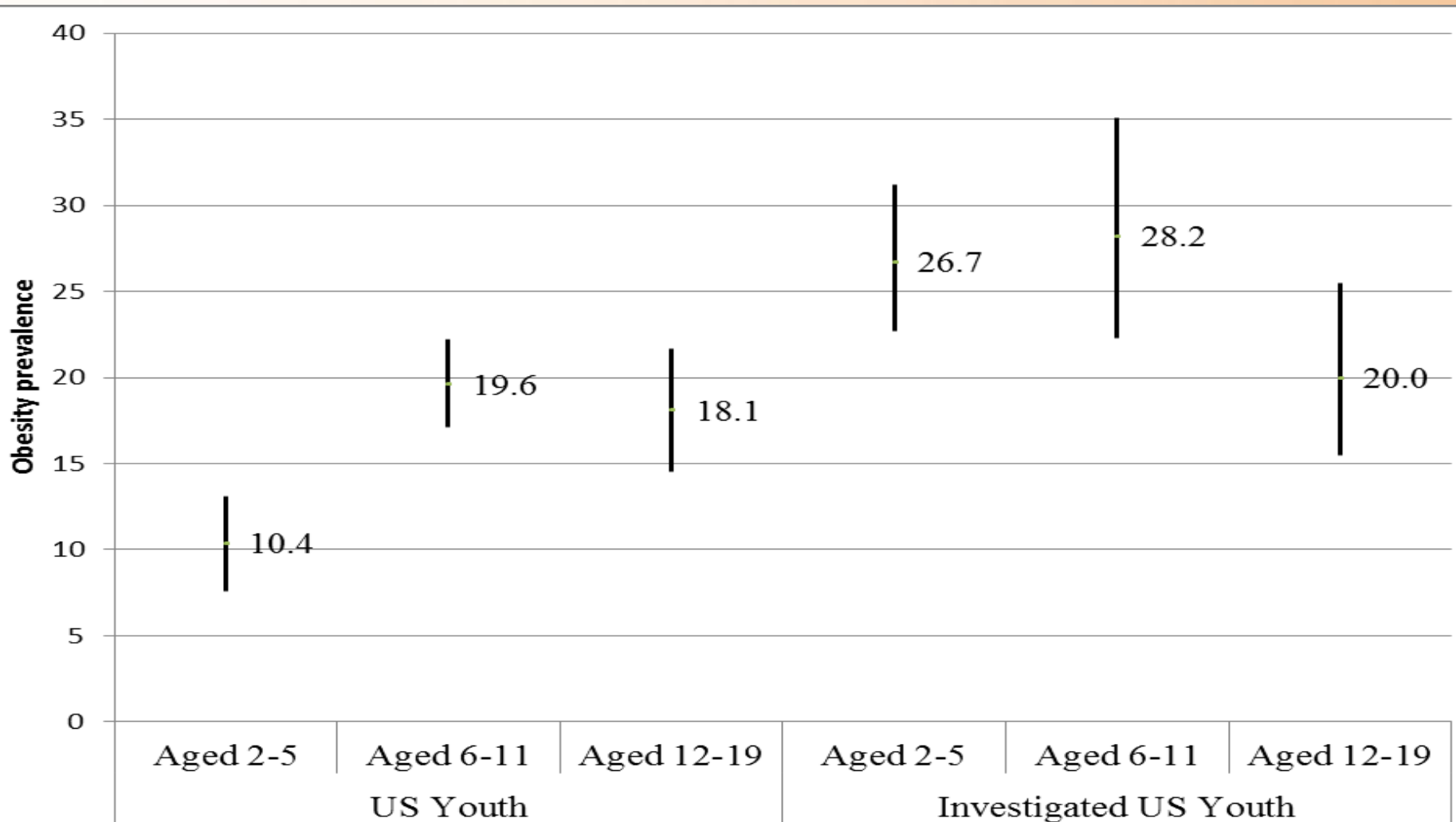
Analysis

- Sex specific models by developmental age
 - 2-5; 6-10; 11-17



Results

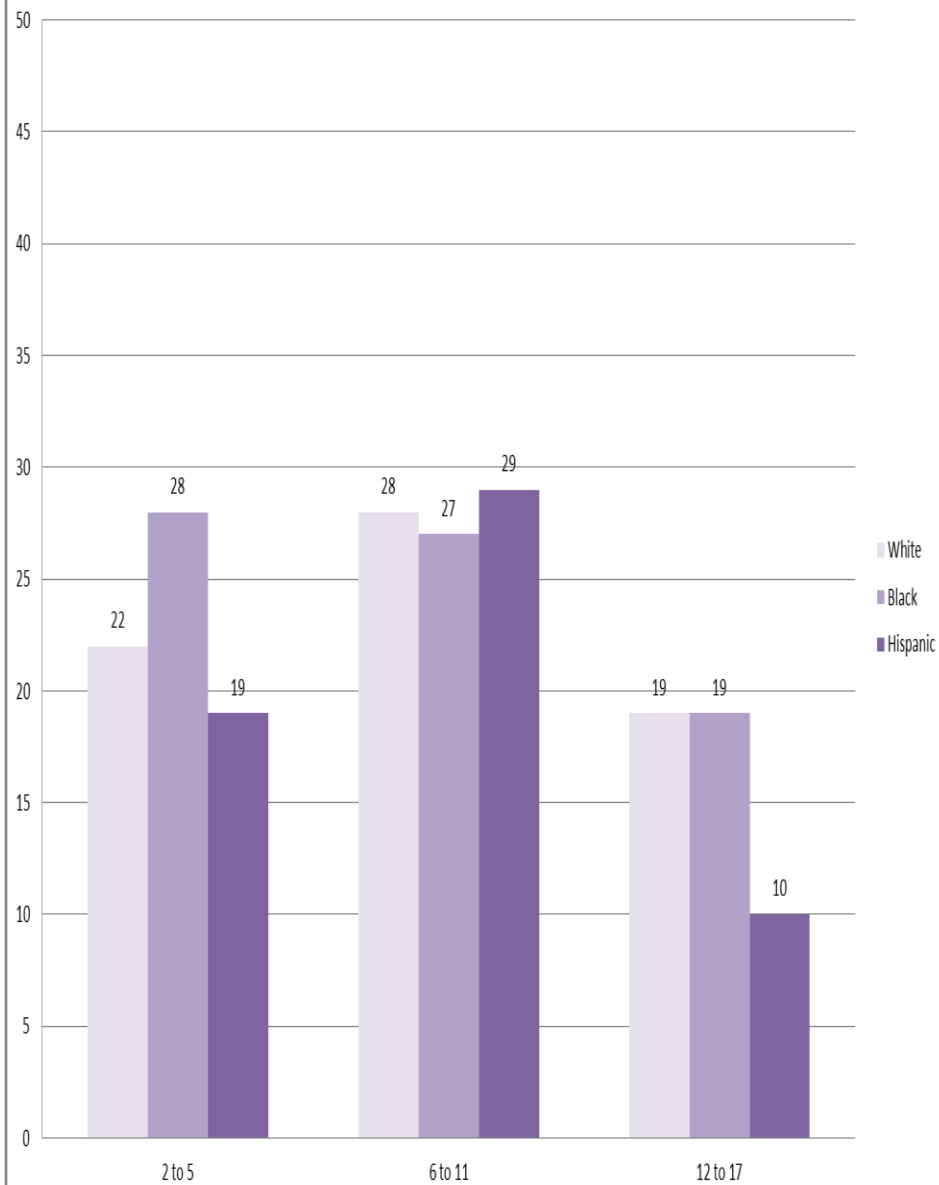
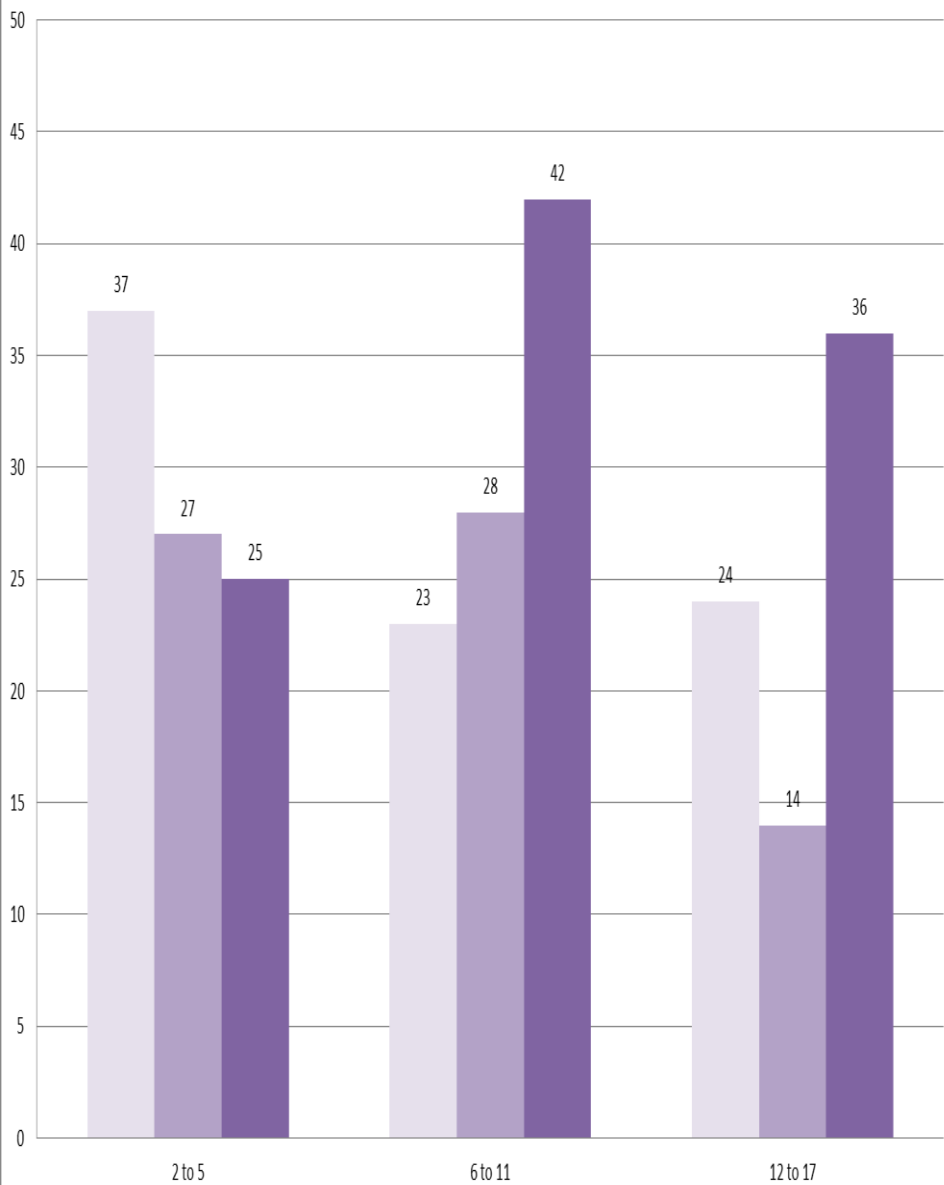
25.4% obese compared to 17% of national peers





Prevalence of Obesity for Investigated Boys

Prevalence of Obesity for Investigated Girls





Results

Girls 2-5 with sexual abuse allegation 3.54 OR

Boys 12-17 with physical abuse allegation .24 OR

Girls 12-17 with history of investigation 3.97 OR



Conclusions

Concerns:

- High rates of obesity in preschool age children
- Higher rates of obesity for boys than girls
- Different racial/ethnic profiles

Limitations:

- Caregiver estimates of weight
- Weight-for-age instead of BMI
- Maltreatment measure
- No comparison group of non-abused children

Implications for the future



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