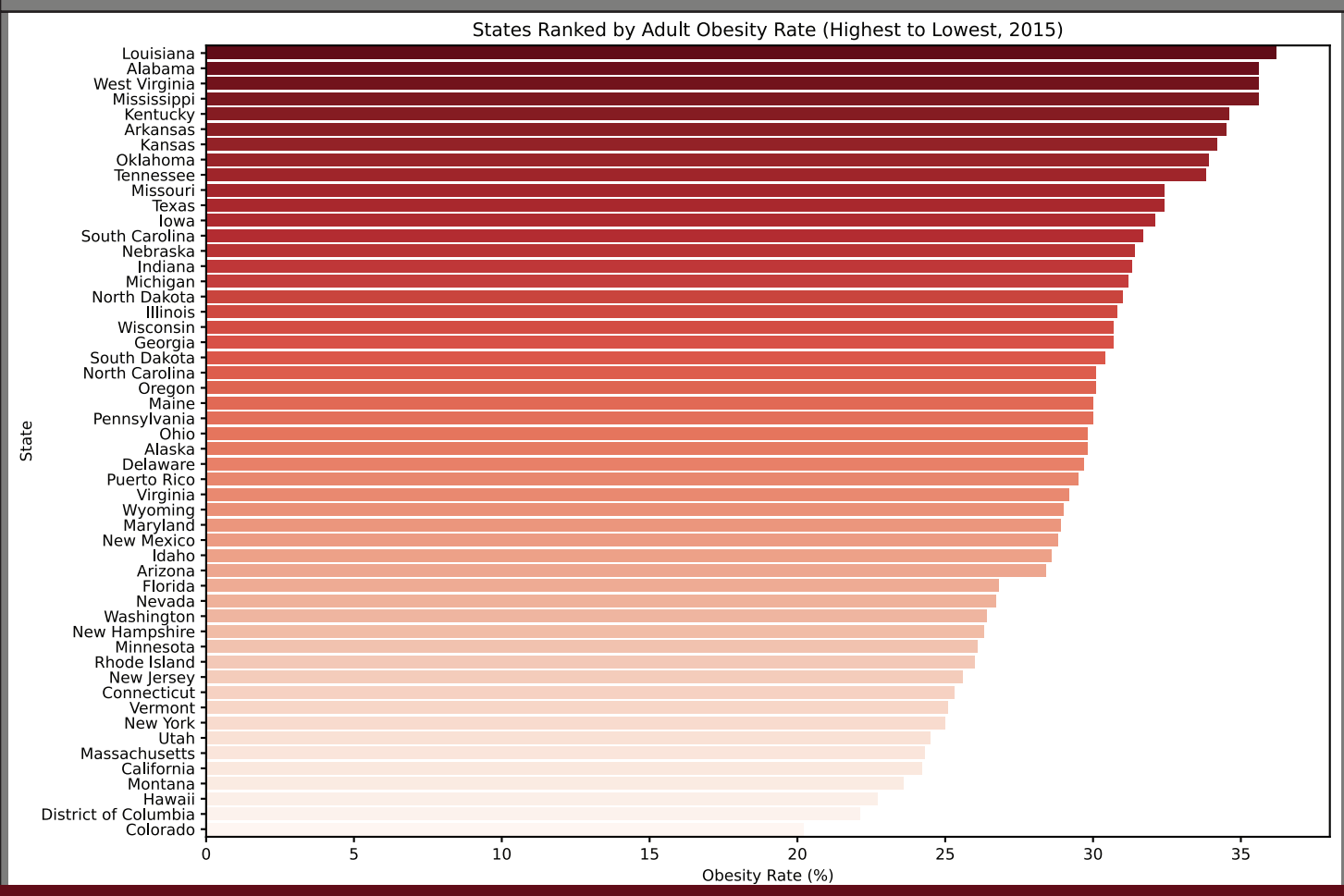
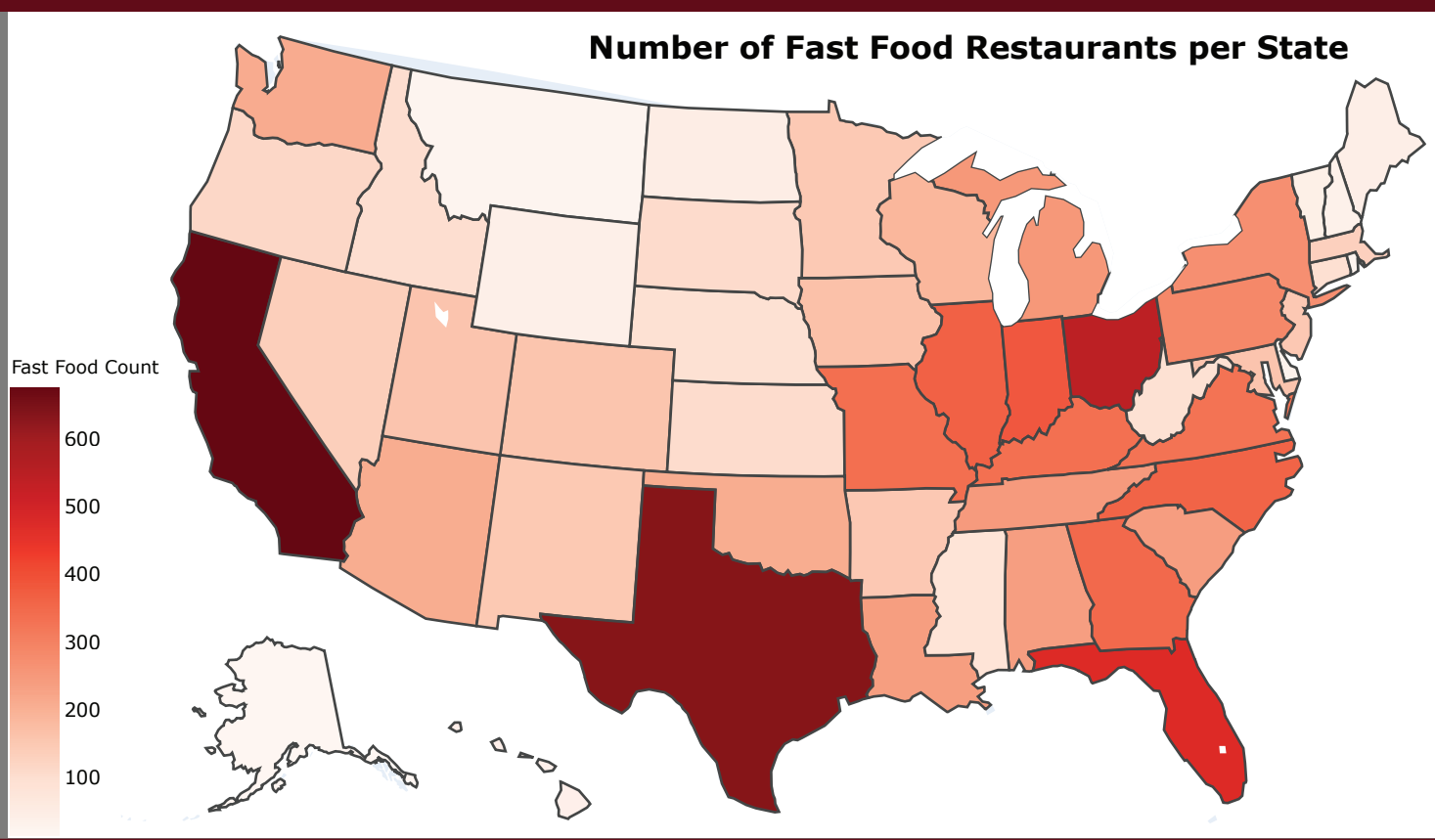
The Geography of Obesity in America

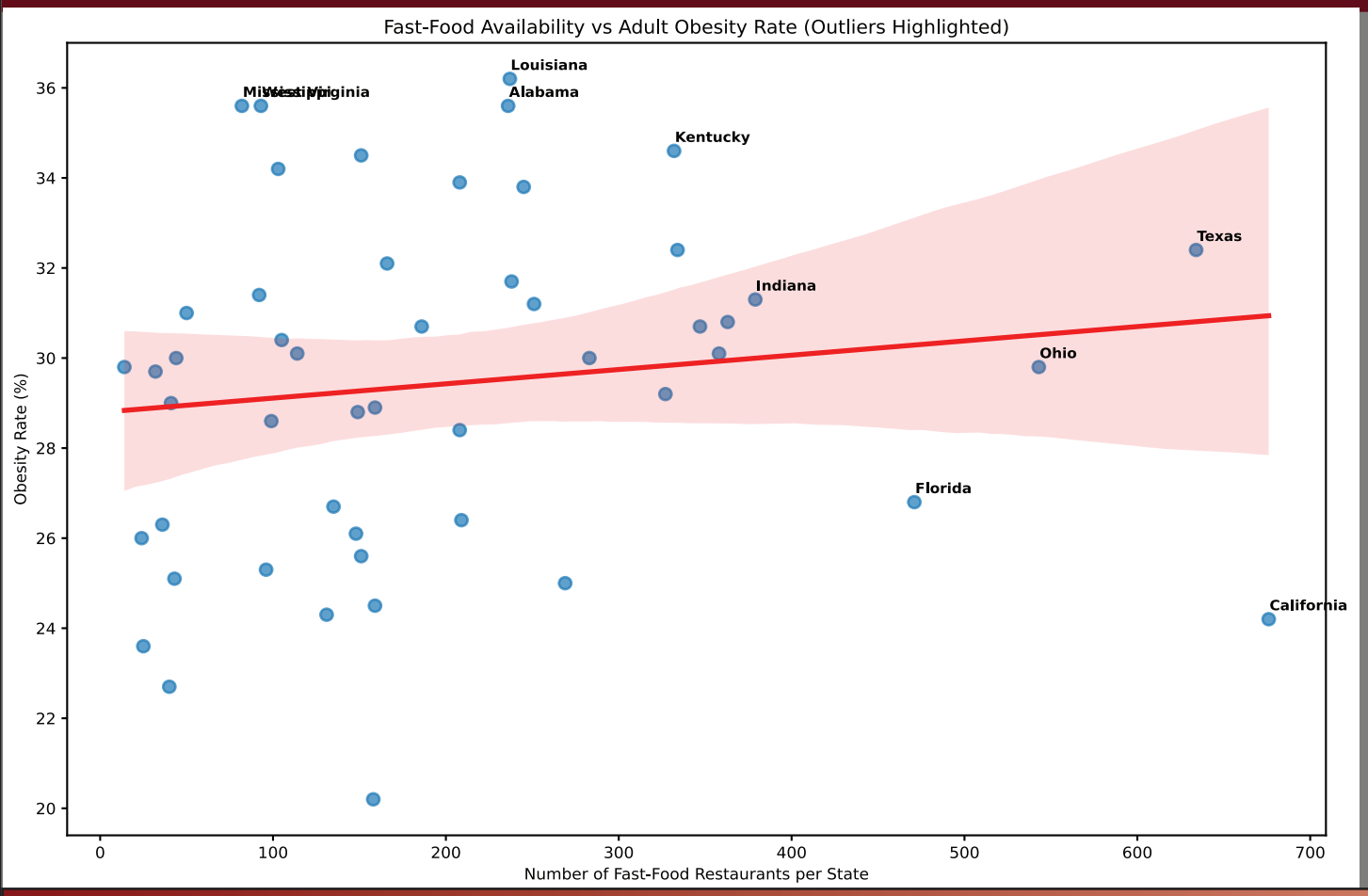
Understanding regional obesity patterns and the role of fast-food availability



The comparison of U.S. obesity patterns with fast-food availability begins by highlighting clear regional differences in adult obesity. The ranked bar chart shows that obesity rates are highest in many Southern and Appalachian states and lowest across much of the West and Northeast. These contrasts reflect a mix of social, economic, and environmental factors that shape health outcomes at the regional level. Together, these differences help frame the maps and scatterplot that follow, showing how geographic health patterns emerge even before considering restaurant access. By establishing this baseline, the chart provides a starting point for understanding how other variables may interact with these existing regional trends.

Fast-food restaurants are most concentrated in large, urbanized states such as California, Texas, Florida, and New York. This pattern reflects population size, tourism, and urban density rather than underlying health conditions. Although fast-food availability is widespread across the United States, its geographic distribution does not align with the regions that experience the highest obesity rates.





Correlation Coefficient: 0.13

The scatter plot reveals a very weak positive correlation between the number of fast-food restaurants in a state and its adult obesity rate. While there is a slight upward trend, the wide dispersion of points and several prominent outliers show that states with high obesity do not necessarily have more fast-food locations. This suggests that obesity is shaped by deeper socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental factors rather than fast-food availability alone.

CDC. Adult Obesity Prevalence by State (2015).
Datafiniti. Fast Food Restaurants Dataset (2018).

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