

Breaking the Cycle: How Exercise Access Transforms the Poverty-Obesity Connection

- A Public Health Intervention Analysis Based on Nationwide Data
- A Report for Policy Makers and Public Health Officials

**Poverty and obesity are closely linked across U.S. states.
Structural factors like environment, access, and resources drive this connection.
Effective solutions must address these systemic causes.**

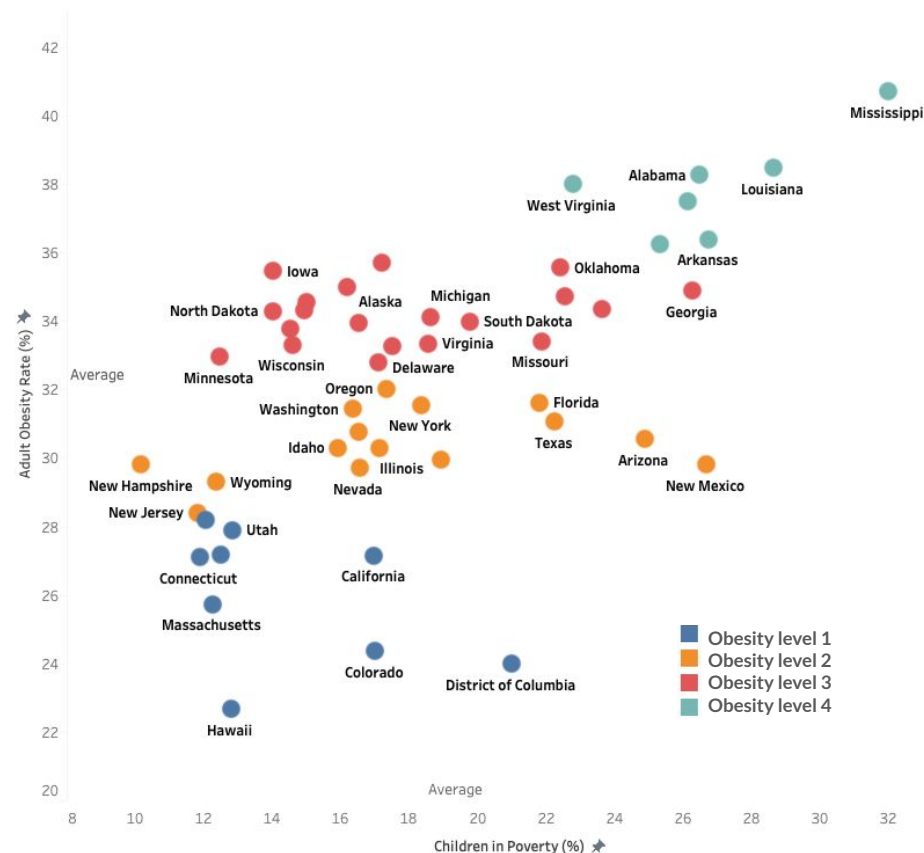
Celine Zheng



Poverty-Obesity Connection

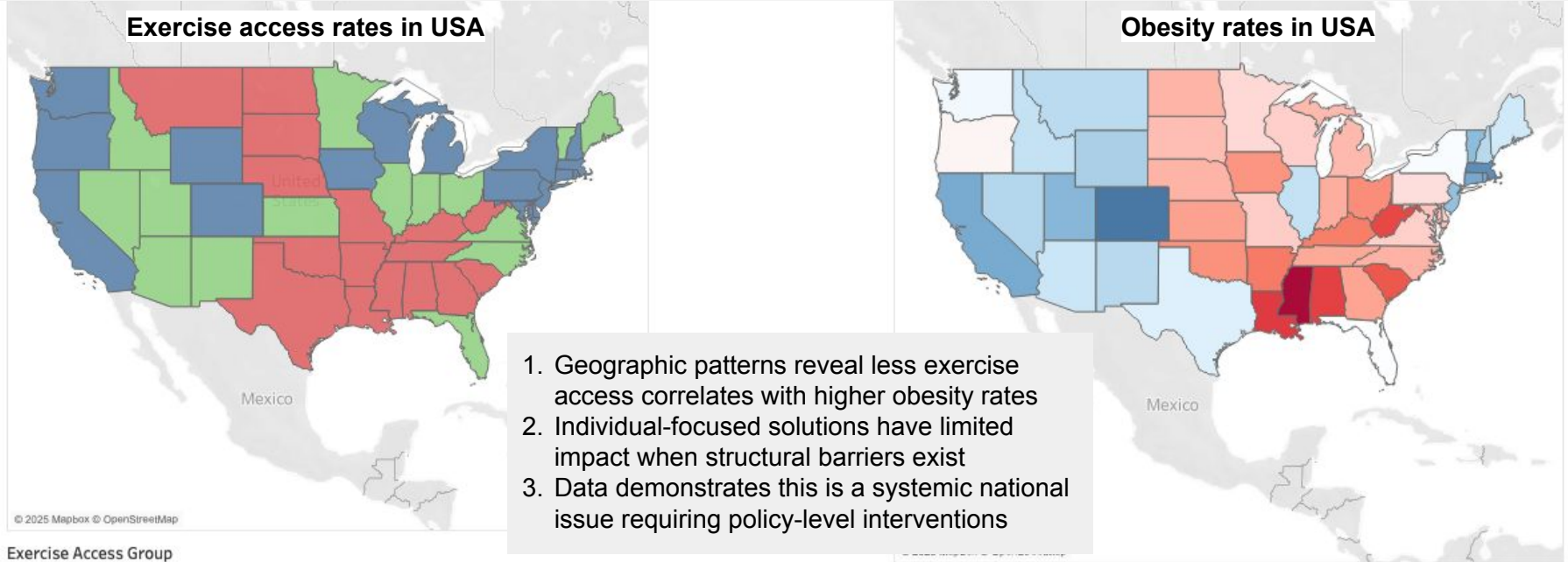
- Our data reveals a clear correlation between child poverty and adult obesity rates across all 50 states
- Southern states like Mississippi and Louisiana show the highest rates of both indicators
- This pattern suggests structural factors beyond individual choice
- The clustering of states by obesity levels highlights regional trends that require targeted policy interventions

States with Higher Child Poverty Show Higher Adult Obesity Rates



A Nationwide Challenge

Exercise Access Gaps Mirror Obesity Patterns Across America



Exercise Access Group

■ High accessibility (>70%)
■ Low accessibility (<60%)

■ medium accessibility (60-70%)

Avg. adult obesity % Adults with Obesity

22.67 40.70

High accessibility: >70% of the population has access to places for physical activity

Medium accessibility: 60-70% of the population has access to places for physical activity

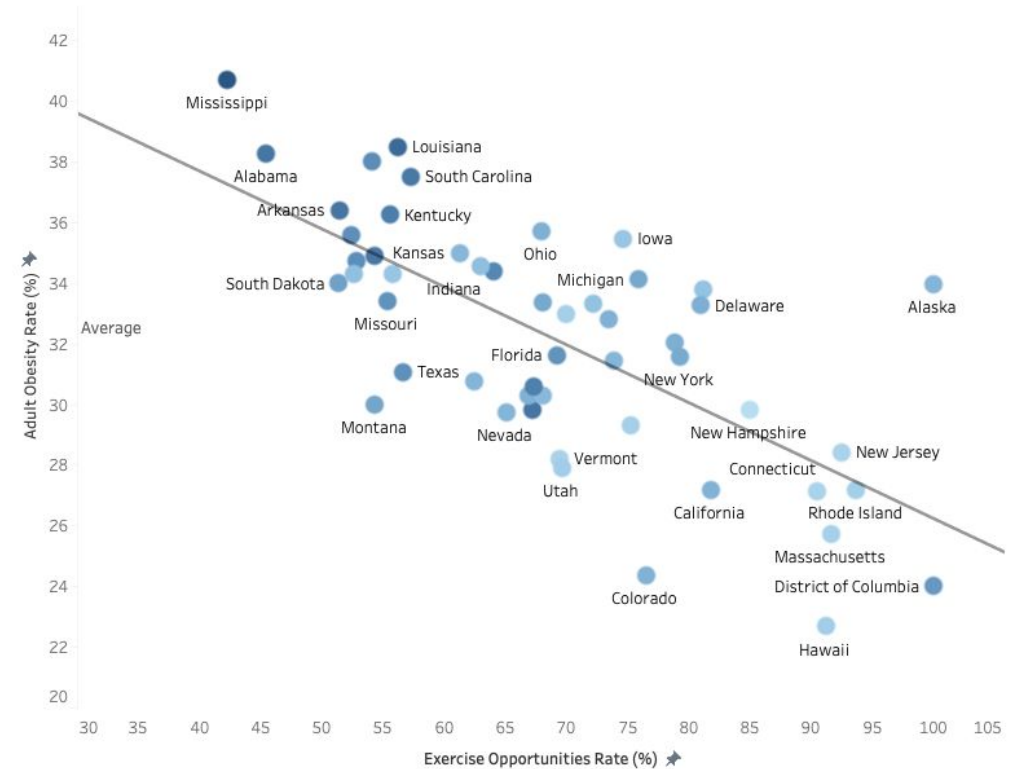
Low accessibility: <60% of the population has access to places for physical activity

* % With Access to Exercise Opportunities: Percentage of the population with access to places for physical activity

Exercise Access – Intervention Point

- Communities with better exercise access show lower obesity rates regardless of income level
- Clear negative correlation shown between exercise access and obesity rates across all states
- Physical infrastructure may have more impact
- Data suggests targeted investment in exercise facilities could break the poverty-obesity cycle

Better Access to Exercise Opportunities Linked to Lower Obesity Rates



Children in Poverty (%)

10.18

31.99

Dataset & Conclusion



1. County Health Rankings database provides standardized health metrics across all U.S. counties and states
2. Data collected through CDC surveys, census reports, and state health departments
3. Limitations: Data represents county-level averages and may not capture neighborhood variations

National data & documentation

2025 Annual Data Release

NATIONAL DATA	TREND DATA
2025 County Health Release National Data	2025 CHR CSV Trends Data
2025 CHR CSV Analytic Data	2025 CHR SAS Trends Data
2025 CHR SAS Analytic Data	2025 CHR Trends Data Documentation
2025 CHR CSV/SAS Analytic Data Documentation	
2025 Data Dictionary (PDF)	
2025 Data Dictionary (XLSX)	
2025 Comparability Across States	
2025 Technical Document	

Next Steps:

- Identify counties with high poverty but lower obesity rates for best practices
- Analyze cost-effectiveness of exercise infrastructure investments

Call to Action:

- Policymakers: Allocate funding for exercise facilities in high-poverty areas
- Urban planners: Integrate accessible recreation spaces in community development
- Public health officials: Partner with community organizations to activate existing spaces

Data Sources: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/rankings-data-documentation>