



**Macomb County Health Department
Risk for Unhealthy Weight in Macomb County**

The conditions in which Macomb County residents live, learn, work and play contribute to their overall health status. The major leading causes of poor quality of life and half of premature deaths are caused by cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and type 2 diabetes.¹ According to County Health Rankings, obesity affects 32% of Macomb County adults, and being overweight affects another 35%. An unhealthy weight is ranked as a contributing risk factor for the leading causes of death for Macomb residents.

The adoption of health-threatening behavior contributing to an unhealthy weight such as poor diet, and physical inactivity is a response to material deprivation and stress experiences from social determinants of health (SDOH).¹ The risk for unhealthy weight is higher among those whose lives are negatively impacted by economic instability, lower levels of education, influenced by unhealthy social cohesion, healthcare access, and built environment.²

USDA’s National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey, found that children from obese-child households tend to live in a more disadvantaged environment compared with children from nonobese-child households. Their parents were more likely to be unmarried, less educated, unemployed, and obese themselves. According to the USDA Economic Research Services, adult academic achievement impacted families likelihood to consume more or less healthier food options.

Several SDOH indicators can increase the risk of acquiring an unhealthy weight. However, a major factor contributing to economic stability is socioeconomic status. The prevalence of obesity and being overweight impacts all residents across varying income levels. Throughout Michigan, the Self-Sufficiency Standard shows that incomes well above the federal measure of poverty are still far below what is necessary to meet families’ basic needs.”³

Table 1 Self Sufficiency Standard for Macomb County Michigan

County	One Adult	One Adult One Preschooler	One Adult One Preschooler One School- age	Two Adults One Preschooler One School- age
Macomb	\$22,342	\$42,631	\$51,410	\$59,937

Data Source: *Macomb Self Sufficiency Standard for Michigan 2015

While the Self-Sufficiency Standard addresses more variables than poverty guidelines regarding cost of living, there are other costs not considered such as higher education, credit card debt, and the cost of student loans repayment interest. Other considerations not accounted for in traditional living standard analysis would be time spent working more than one job, disabilities and comorbidities causing extensive out of pocket cost. For example, if a parent has just a minimum wage job, they will need to work 110 hours per week, or 2.7 minimum wage jobs, to meet the family’s basic needs in metro detroit cities.³

In order for families to increase income capacity, achieving a higher degree and higher expenditures result. Half of young adults obtaining a higher education degree will take on student loan debt and struggle to repay loans.⁴ According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 65% of occupations in the American economy will require education beyond high school. However, the U.S. Census estimates that only 33% of American adults currently possess a bachelor’s degree or higher. As indicated in Table 2, 65% of residents make less than the median income of \$36,358. Macomb County has a 23% rate of residents acquiring a bachelor’s



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degree or higher.⁵ Increased education develops economic wellbeing and increased opportunities to tend to health and wellness. Time however to do these things and prioritizing healthy options must also be present.

Table 3 demonstrates an increase in obesity with increased income. According to the Healthy People 2020 National Health Interview Survey as education level increased as did people meeting physical activity guidelines. The same document shows adults not achieving recommended consumption of vegetables and high rates of obesity. Access to affordable healthy food and the time to prepare healthy meals can be a barrier for adults. Despite a higher income category, unhealthy weight is occurring among all income brackets.

Table 2 Earning/ Education

Degree earned	% Macomb residents	Median income	Poverty guidelines income bracket	% obesity
Less than highschool/none	11%	\$21,000	\$10,000-19,999	11.3%
Highschool degree	30%	\$29,767	\$20,000-34,999	17.4%
Some college/associates	24%/11%	\$36,358	\$35,000-49,999	15.9%
Bachelor's degree	16%	\$52,102	\$50,000-74,999	17.6%
Masters or other	7%	\$75,000\$	\$75,000+	34.5%

Data source: *Macomb County BRFSS/ 2018 Town charts

The 2015 Macomb County BRFSS, indicates greater household incomes were less likely to rate their health as fair or poor.⁶ As summarized in Table 3, of the twenty percent of Macomb County adults that reported their health as fair, a majority were within the \$35,000 or less Median income earning range.

Tables 3 General health status regarding income

% of respondents per	Health status	Median income earned
60.7%	poor/fair health	<\$35,000 annually

Data Source: *BRFS 2015 General Health Status

Residents are less likely to reach the physical activity recommendation of 150 minutes per week and eat the USDA recommended diet when expenses for cost of living exceed income earned.

Suggestion for intervention may include incorporating more categories within the Self sufficiency Standard and poverty guidelines that cost residents their income. Enhancing access to jobs that pay at least self-sufficient wages and have career potential. Advocating for public policies such as living/minimum wage policies, paid leave, and equitable access to education. In addition to increasing income opportunities and reducing costs, increasing opportunities for financial literacy in early life education and for adults will be beneficial.



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