

KEY FINDINGS

Obesity Prevention Public Opinion Survey, Jamaica

AUGUST 2019

OVERVIEW

A new public opinion survey conducted by the **Heart Foundation of Jamaica** and Vital Strategies found that Jamaicans are concerned about obesity-related non-communicable diseases like diabetes and heart disease and agree that a policy requiring clear front of package warning labels on unhealthy foods is necessary. The study was conducted in three survey waves, one prior to the “*Are You Drinking Yourself Sick*” mass media campaign launch in 2017, the second one immediately after the conclusion of the first two phases in 2018, and the third one after phases three and four of the campaign between April and July 2019. The surveys measured changes in public knowledge, attitudes, policy support and behaviors over time.

According to the World Health Organization, **78%** of all deaths (nearly 4 in 5) in Jamaica are caused by Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)¹

Findings from the Global School-based Student Health Survey (2017) show that obesity is increasing for both boys and girls (13-15), almost doubling for boys².

9.9% (girls) 10.3% (boys)

METHODOLOGY DETAILS:

Nationally representative, cross-sectional household surveys were conducted by Hope Caribbean. The first survey was conducted in November 2017 (N = 1500), the second one in June- July 2018 (N = 1571), and the third one in April- May 2019 (N = 1500). All surveys were conducted with adults aged 18 – 55 years. The study used a stratified multistage sampling approach to identify households. For the purposes of this survey, within each household, the “last birthday” method was used to identify a single respondent among multiple eligible respondents. Key findings of the third survey are provided below.

KEY FINDINGS:

Jamaicans are concerned about the harmful effects of unhealthy foods and drinks on their health and children’s health

Approximately two-thirds **63%** of Jamaicans are concerned about the ill-effects on their health and their children’s health

87% of these persons intend to reduce consumption.

Increasing, strong public support for policies and government action on obesity: front-of-package labelling

- 1 • More than half **55%** of the respondents agreed that it takes too much time to interpret the nutrition facts panel.
- 2 • 8 out of 10 **82%** of Jamaicans strongly agree on the policy requiring clear warning labels on the front of food and beverage packages to warn consumers when products are high in sugar, salt or fats as a way of reducing obesity in Jamaica.
- 3 • 9 out of 10 Jamaicans **92%** support front-of-package warning labels on food and drinks as part of the government’s plan to promote a healthier diet in Jamaica.
- 4 • 9 in 10 Jamaicans **87%** strongly agreed to support government efforts to increase children’s access to healthy foods and drinks.

REFERENCES:

1. World Health Organization. (2017). Regional Mortality Estimates 2000-2015. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/estimates/en/index1.html
2. National Council on Drug Abuse. (2017). Global School-Based Student Health Survey.