

Press Release



Pandemic Lockdowns and Obesity Rates: A Case Study of Florida and California

PAULINA ENCK | OCTOBER 26, 2023

In a new insight, Health Care Policy Analyst Jackson Hammond provides a case study focused on the pandemic closure policies of California and Florida and their potential impacts on the states' obesity rates and related health measures during that period.

Key points:

- California and Florida took very different approaches to pandemic closure policy, as measured by the Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker's stringency index score – which measures the robustness of governments' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic – with California averaging a more stringent 55.77 in 2020 while Florida averaged a 43.17 that year.
- In 2020, California had a historically high increase in its obesity rate of 15.3 percent, while Florida experienced a more modest 5.2 percent increase after fully opening most businesses by October 2020; in 2021, when California allowed businesses and activities to resume more broadly and averaged a stringency index score of 43.17, it saw an 8.7 percent decrease in its obesity rate.
- While Florida and California's disparate outcomes in resident health do not suggest that specific facility closures alone are responsible for changes in the overweight and obese population, policymakers should consider such information to ensure policies intended to protect public health do not inadvertently harm it.

[Read the analysis](#)