

## KEY FINDINGS

### Obesity Prevention Public Opinion Survey, Jamaica

#### OVERVIEW

A new public opinion survey conducted for *the Heart Foundation of Jamaica* and *Vital Strategies* by Hope Caribbean, found that Jamaicans are concerned about chronic diseases, particularly diabetes and childhood obesity. The study was conducted in two survey waves, a baseline survey prior to the “Are You Drinking Yourself Sick” mass media campaign launch and the other immediately after its conclusion. 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)<sup>1</sup>. Recent findings from the Global School Health Survey (2017) show that obesity is increasing for both boys and girls (13-15), almost doubling for boys<sup>2</sup>.

#### METHODOLOGY DETAILS:

Nationally representative, cross-sectional household surveys were conducted by Hope Caribbean. The first survey (baseline) was conducted in November 2017 (N = 1500 adults) and the second (post campaign), in June - July 2018 (N = 1571 adults). Both 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:

##### ***Increasing, strong public support for government action on obesity***

- 83% of the respondents strongly support policies on provision of healthy food and beverages in schools. Over three quarters (78%) of respondents support prohibiting the sale of unhealthy food and drinks in school.
- 71% of Jamaicans support the imposition of a tax on sugary drinks, compared to 64% in the baseline survey.
- 8 in 10 persons (81%) also agree that the tax revenue should be spent on programs to reduce obesity, especially among children.
- 91% of respondents agree that there should be clear warning labels on the front of food and beverage packages to warn consumers when products are high in sugar, salt or fats.

##### ***Obesity-related diseases such as hypertension and diabetes and cancer are the top health concerns for Jamaicans***

- 52% of the adults have had thoughts about the health harms of consuming sugary drinks over the past three months.
- Approximately two-thirds (67%) are concerned about the ill-effects on their health and 86% of the persons intend to reduce consumption.

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### ***Jamaicans are increasingly concerned about the harms of sugary drinks***

- Nearly 9 out of 10 (87%) of Jamaicans agree that sugary drinks are a major contributor to obesity in Jamaica.
- Approximately 8 out of 10 (78%) respondents are concerned about the effects of sugary drinks on their children's health and 9 out of 10 (88%) of the parents also indicate an intention to reduce the consumption of sugary drinks among the children.

### ***Parents worried about children's access to unhealthy food and drinks in schools***

- 7 out of 10 (69% in the post campaign vs. 54% in the baseline) people who in the past three months were exposed to the campaign attributed negative health impact to sugary drinks consumption. This also reflected in their choices, as significantly more respondents reported that they now drink less sugary drinks (68%) as compared to their consumption three months ago.
- The study depicted that children had a higher access to sugary drinks at school as compared to homes or other places outside home. Over half (54%) of respondents agreed that children had most of these drinks at school.

#### **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](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/estimates/en/index1.html)
2. National Council on Drug Abuse. Global School-Based Student Health Survey (2017). Retrieved from [http://www.who.int/ncds/surveillance/gshs/Jamaica\\_2017\\_GSHS\\_FS.pdf?ua=1&ua=1](http://www.who.int/ncds/surveillance/gshs/Jamaica_2017_GSHS_FS.pdf?ua=1&ua=1)