Childhood Obesity and the National School Lunch Program

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Research Questions

My research compares the childhood obesity rates in the years 2011 and 2013. Between these years, policy in the National School Lunch Program has changed to improve the obesity pandemic.
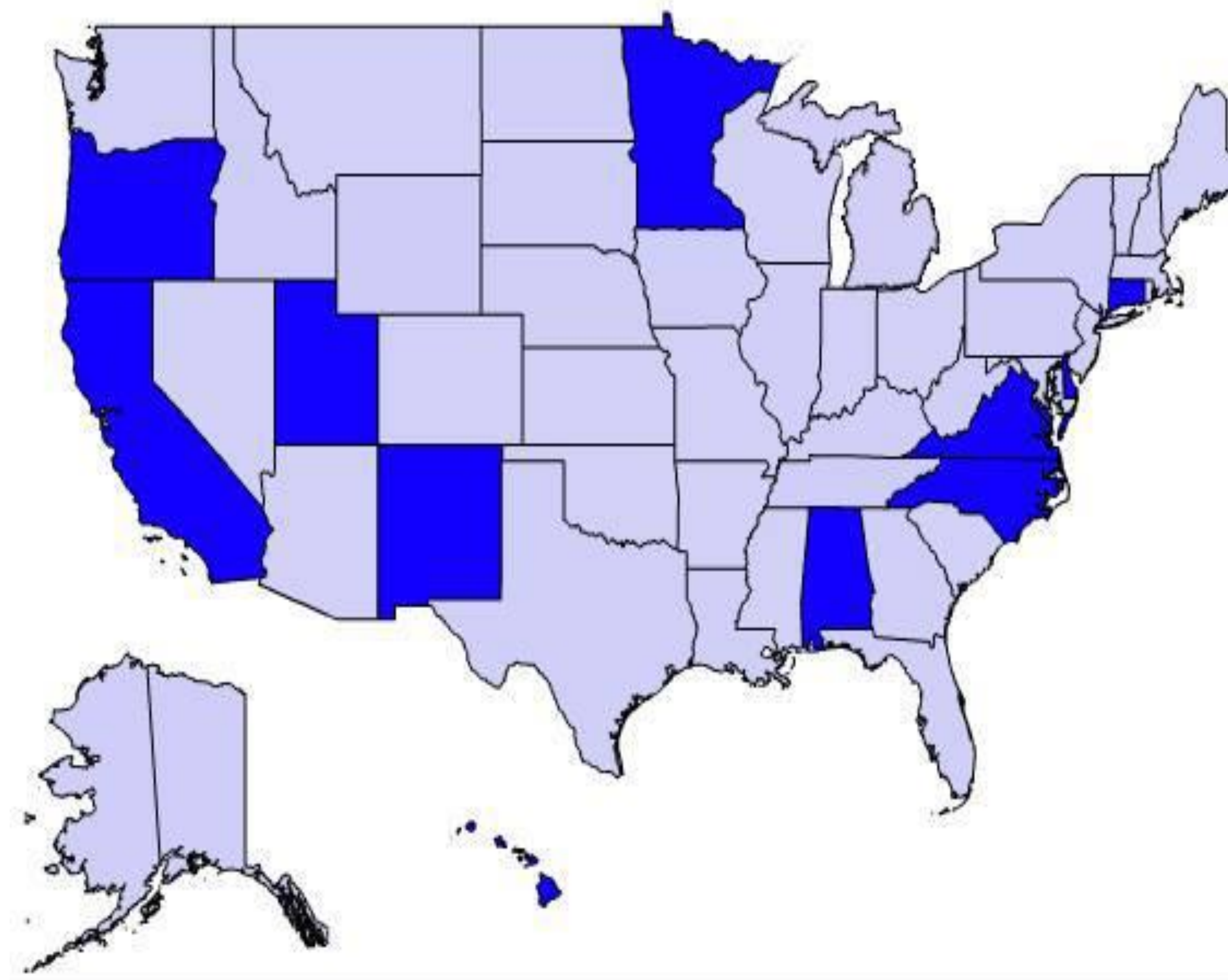
- Has the policy change improved children's health?
- What other factors affect the obesity rates?

Method

To verify health improvement, specific data from each state was collected for the years 2011 and 2013. These years show data one year prior and one year after policy change. Obesity levels were observed for students between 10-17 years of age, socioeconomic status (SES), race, program eligibility and state level policies.

Using this information, I aim to demonstrate that the new NSLP has been effective in its aims to fight childhood obesity.

Change in Obesity from 2011 to 2013

* Dark States - Decreased obesity rates
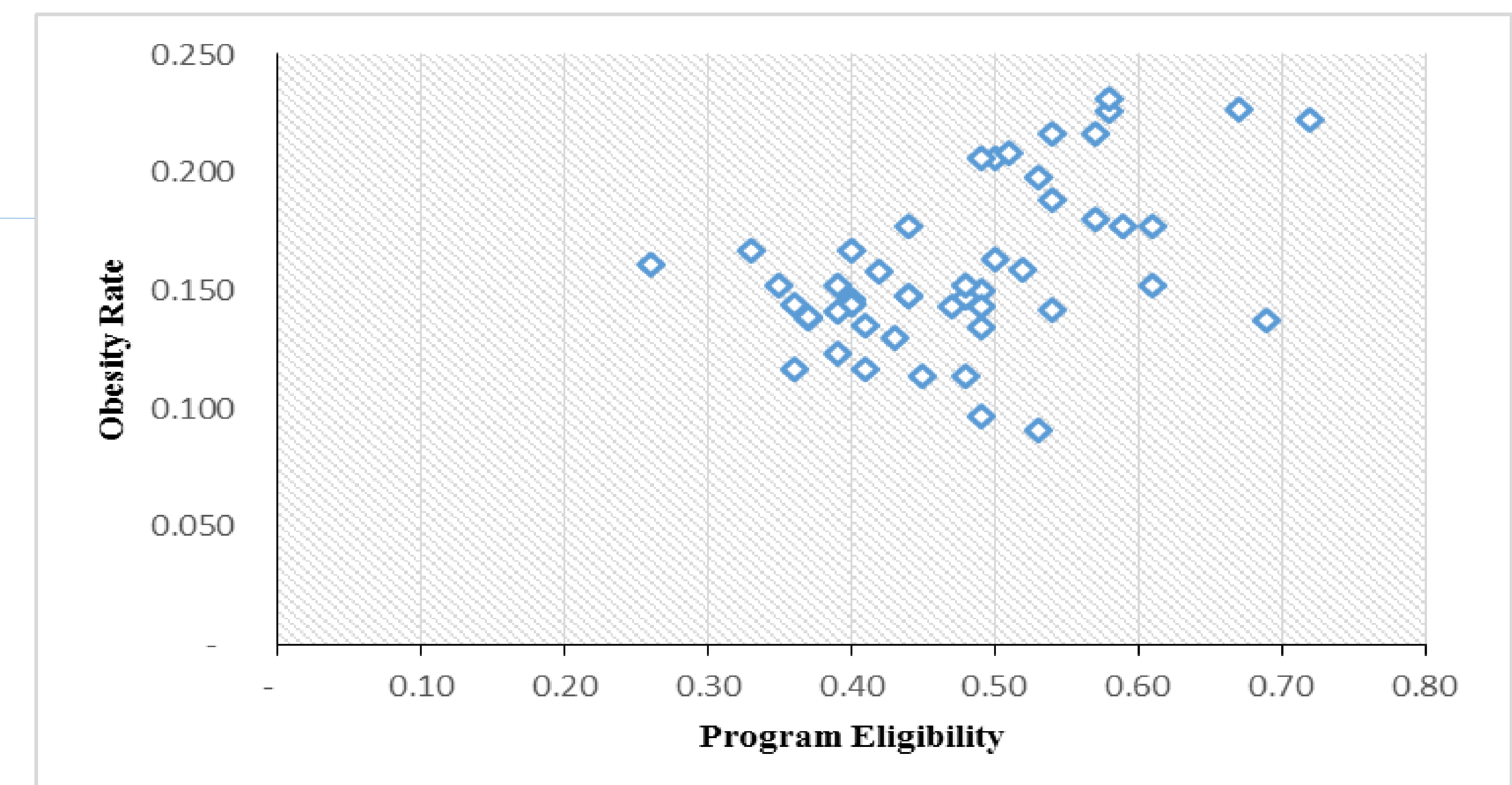* Light States – Increased obesity rates

Findings

- States with higher SES had better health overall
- As a nation, the childhood obesity continued to rise across the states, despite the policy change
- 11 states have improved since the new policy.
- Since the new policy allowed more students to enroll in the program, the correlation between obesity and financial need is demonstrated.

Conclusion

The research shows that the policy changes have not decreased childhood obesity. The research does verify that school lunches are not the only factor that affect a child's health. It is the combination of income and state need that effect the nation's obesity rate. If the obesity rates continue to rise, then the new standard alone will be proven ineffective.

Participation in the NSLP v. Obesity in 2013

Acknowledgements