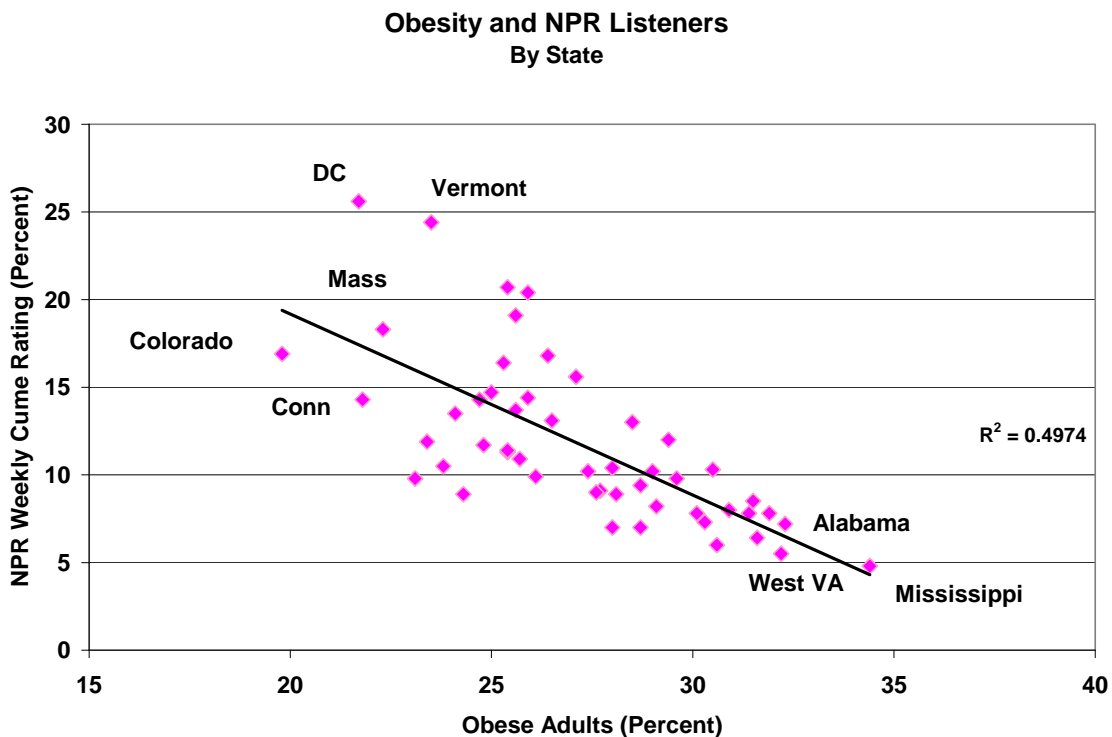# Obesity and NPR Listeners

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has just released a major report titled F As In Fat: How Obesity Threatens American's Future.

Broken out by state, the most obese population is found in Mississippi, in contrast to the leanest population – Colorado.

Nothing surprising in those findings, but the ranking by state reminded me of another recent report. Last fall Ben Robins used Arbitron data to break out the reach of NPR stations by state.

Here's a simple chart that relates the two sets of data:

Obesity and NPR Listeners
By State

Only 19.8 percent of the Colorado population is obese. NPR stations reach nearly 17 percent of Colorado's population.

34.4 percent of Mississippi's population is obese. NPR stations reach less than 5 percent.

This state-wide level of analysis is rough – imagine if Arbitron gave us the Body Mass Index of each respondent, along with their demographics. But there is a profound point to be made here.

The point is that <u>education</u> is the best predictor of the NPR lifestyle.

In fact, education is the confounding variable here; the states with the lowest level of education have the highest rates of obesity.

If we did a chart of smoking by state, it would come out the same.

The NPR audience is distinguished by its values and lifestyles, including a set of socially responsible behaviors involving life-long learning, health and fitness.

I like to tell this story: Back in the 1980's when we started doing EARS testing for public radio, the hotel conference rooms were set up with ash trays on one side of the room for smokers. I was standing there with Bruce Fohr of FMR, watching the respondents arrive for the testing. The non-smoking side filled up. No one sat on the smoking side, until we asked the hotel staff to pull the ash trays.

George Bailey
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