Aim: A cross-sectional study was conducted with 1,477 middle school students enrolled in the public school network in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil to assess the prevalence of overweight and obesity. Methods: The sample was determined using a two-stage cluster sampling technique for selecting schools and classes. A posteriori error was estimated. The students were classified as overweight or obese according to the World Health Organization’s 2007 classifications. They were also classified according to age, stage of sexual maturity, socioeconomic class and the presence of abdominal obesity. Results: Overall, 9.3% of the students were overweight and 6.4% were obese; therefore, 15.7% of the students were considered to have excess weight (obesity + overweight), at a 95% confidence interval. Abdominal obesity was found in 12.9% of all students and in 13% of those of normal weight. An association was found between excess weight and age < 14 years (p = 0.030) and abdominal obesity (p = 0.001). Conclusions: Intervention programs should be implemented to prevent and treat obesity in childhood and adolescence. In addition, professionals working with individuals in this age group should be sensitized to this problem. The need to standardize the anthropometric indicators used in the different studies is also emphasized.

Keywords