

PRESS RELEASE

Brazil hosts national roundtable to advance action on obesity as part of global initiative

Multi-stakeholder roundtable identifies key challenges and opportunities to strengthen obesity prevention and care in Brazil

London / Brasília, 16/06/2026 – A national multi-stakeholder roundtable convened by the World Obesity Federation, with support from the Secretariat of Primary Healthcare of the Ministry of Health, Associação Brasileira para o Estudo da Obesidade (ABESO), Instituto Cordial, Vozes do Advocacy, Desiderata, Obesidade Brasil and ACT Promoção da Saúde, has brought together key experts to advance action on obesity in Brazil, highlighting the need for coordinated, multisectoral approaches to prevention and care.

Held on 11 June 2025 in Brasília, the roundtable convened over 40 representatives, including state actors– such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Agriculture, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger and others – civil society, academia, UN agencies including WHO and UNICEF, healthcare professionals, and people with lived experience of obesity, to examine current challenges and priorities for addressing obesity in Brazil.

The roundtable forms part of the MAPPS (Management and Advocacy for Providers, Patients and Systems) programme, a global initiative led by the World Obesity Federation. The programme examines how different systems, including national health systems, are responding to obesity and identifies opportunities to strengthen policy, care and prevention.

Brazil has been selected as one of six “deep dive” focus countries for in-depth collaborative work as part of this global effort – reflecting the country’s rapidly growing obesity burden and its internationally recognised record of progressive public health policy. Brazil is also one of the frontrunner countries committed to implementing the World Health Organization’s *Acceleration Plan to Stop Obesity*.

From policy to practice: strengthening Brazil's response to obesity

The roundtable took place in the context of Brazil’s growing obesity burden and a rapidly evolving policy landscape. Surveillance data from the *Vigitel* survey indicate that over 25% of Brazilian adults were living with obesity in 2024, more than doubling since 2006, with 62.6% living with overweight or obesity. Data from the Food and Nutrition Surveillance System (SISVAN), which collects measurements in primary healthcare, also show a high, and increasing, prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents. In 2024, 29.8% of measured children aged 5-9 years and 31.9% of measured adolescents aged 10-19

years were living with overweight or obesity, compared to 24.2% and 17.6% respectively in 2008.

High BMI now surpasses high blood pressure as the leading health risk factor in Brazil, accounting for over 130,000 deaths in 2023. The economic cost is also substantial: the total direct and indirect cost of overweight and obesity was estimated at US\$38.7 billion in 2020 – equivalent to 2.15% of GDP – and is projected to rise sharply in the coming decades.

Brazil has demonstrated a strong commitment to progressive public health policy, including internationally recognised dietary guidelines, mandatory front-of-package nutrition labelling, a national childhood obesity strategy (PROTEJA), and new regulations limiting ultra-processed foods in school meals. Most recently, the government launched the Viva Mais Brasil strategy to invest in health promotion and prevention, and a selective tax on sugary drinks is due to come into effect in 2027.

Participants explored how Brazil can build on this momentum to further strengthen prevention, improve equitable access to care, and address the broader determinants of obesity – including food systems, commercial influences, and social inequities.

Key challenges and priorities identified

Discussions during the roundtable highlighted several priority areas for action in Brazil, including:

Coordinating obesity action across different sectors and levels of government:

Strengthen intersectoral obesity strategies, including mechanisms for monitoring and social participation, and creating opportunities for meaningful engagement with people living with obesity to ensure their experiences inform decision-making processes.

Strengthening the regulatory environments that support healthy living: Accelerate progress in the regulation of food marketing (particularly marketing directed at children and adolescents), expand access to healthy foods through family farming and community-based initiatives in underserved areas, regulate usage of social media to reduce the screentime of children and adolescents, and implement fiscal measures that would make healthier food more affordable.

Improving health system readiness and person-centred care: *Increase the capacity of healthcare professionals to prevent, diagnose and treat obesity, including by addressing weight stigma and promoting person-centred approaches to care, and establishing integrated obesity care pathways with multidisciplinary management.*

Addressing stigma and reframing obesity as a chronic condition: *Expand education and public awareness initiatives to help change public narratives around obesity, reduce prejudice and barriers to accessing care, and ultimately encourage the recognition of obesity as a chronic, complex and multifactorial condition.*

Prioritising equitable access and at-risk populations, and encouraging community-level engagement: *Improve mechanisms to collect population data to identify at-risk populations and*

support local planning, recognise structural factors, including racism, discrimination and other forms of social exclusion, as important considerations in obesity prevention and care, and encourage the participation of people living with obesity in community organisations, councils and other social representation mechanisms.

Informing national and global action

Insights from the roundtable will inform a forthcoming national MAPPS report on Brazil, to be published early next year. Findings will also contribute to global reports and national advocacy efforts.

These outputs will feed into global policy discussions in the lead-up to the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in 2027, supporting efforts to ensure obesity is recognised and addressed within global health agendas.

Quotes

Bruno Halpern, Vice-President/President-Elect, ABESO / World Obesity Federation, said:

"Obesity is one of the defining health challenges of our time, affecting over one billion people worldwide and reshaping the disease burden in every region. Brazil reflects this global picture acutely - we have seen prevalence more than double in less than two decades, and we are now facing a situation where high BMI is the leading health risk factor in the country. But Brazil also has something many countries do not: a universal public health system, a progressive nutrition policy, and a genuine political will to act. This MAPPS roundtable is about turning that foundation into coordinated, equitable action - ensuring that people living with obesity in Brazil can access the care they need and deserve, regardless of where they live or their means."

Fabio Trujilho, President of ABESO and FLASO and Board of Trustees member of WOF, said:

"Brazil occupies a unique position at this historic moment: we are a country recognised for its progressive public health policies, yet we face an obesity epidemic growing faster than our capacity to respond. As President of ABESO and FLASO, and as a participant in the WHO's technical meetings in Geneva, I can say with confidence that the world is watching Brazil — both for our potential to lead regionally and for the urgency of the challenge we face. PAHO recognises Brazil as a strategic actor in Latin America, and this roundtable demonstrates that we are prepared to act at the level that responsibility demands. We can no longer treat obesity as an individual issue: it is a chronic, multifactorial and stigmatised disease that requires collective, cross-sectoral responses, sustainably funded within the public health system."

Johanna Ralston, CEO, World Obesity Federation, said:

"Brazil is a country that combines a progressive tradition of public health leadership with an increasingly urgent obesity challenge. This roundtable brings together the voices needed to

translate that commitment into concrete action – strengthening how obesity is prevented, treated and managed within Brazil’s health system and across sectors. World Obesity is proud to support this work as part of the MAPPS II initiative, contributing to a shared global effort to ensure obesity is addressed within Universal Health Coverage.”

Kelly Poliany de Souza Alves, Ministry of Health, said:

“Muito importante destacar o arranjo de governança intersetorial que o Brasil possui no campo da segurança alimentar e nutricional. Sendo a alimentação um dos fatores de risco e proteção essenciais para a prevenção e para o cuidado da obesidade, ter essa governança que reúne hoje 24 ministérios é importante para que possamos incidir em políticas públicas que façam diferença no cotidiano da vida das pessoas. Uma outra questão importante mais relacionada ao tratamento é a governança interfederativa do nosso sistema único de saúde. É importantíssimo termos espaços de articulação e pactuação entre o governo federal, os estados e os municípios para que o nosso sistema de saúde consiga ter estratégias e financiamento adequado para garantir serviços e tratamento para as pessoas que vivem com obesidade.”

Guilherme Nafalski, Instituto Cordial - Brazilian Panel on Obesity Coordinator, said:

"Brazil is a global benchmark in the fight against hunger. As a WHO-designated frontrunner country for obesity control, we have the opportunity to bring together complementary perspectives within a comprehensive and integrated approach. Rather than framing prevention and treatment as competing priorities, we should recognize them as mutually reinforcing pillars of a truly person-centered strategy, capable of reducing both the prevalence and the incidence of obesity."

Renata Couto, Desiderata - Executive Director, said:

“The MAPPSS II Roundtable was especially important for bringing together a diverse group, including researchers, healthcare professionals, government and civil society representatives, and people living with obesity, for a debate that connected science, policy, and lived experience. The discussions reinforced that addressing obesity without tackling inequality is incomplete: populations in greater vulnerability face overlapping layers of exclusion in access to healthcare and public policies. Weight stigma is structural – present in services, equipment, and narratives that ignore people’s life contexts. The Desiderata Institute reaffirms its commitment to preventing and controlling childhood and adolescent obesity, recognizing that protecting youth health requires removing concrete barriers. The recommendations from this event must now be converted into concrete actions and public policies that reach those who need them most – with equity, active listening, and accountability.”

Paula Johns, ACT Promoção da Saúde- Co-Founder and Director, said:

“Se há uma mensagem fundamental, é que precisamos abandonar o falso dilema entre prevenção e tratamento da obesidade. A resposta está no ‘e’, não no ‘ou’: é preciso prevenir e tratar, simultaneamente. O Brasil já conta bases sólidas para avançar nessa agenda, como o SUS, o Guia Alimentar para a População Brasileira e políticas estruturantes como o Programa Nacional de Alimentar Escolar e a nova Cesta Básica, que oferecem referências importantes para o mundo. O próximo passo é garantir que essas políticas cheguem efetivamente à população, ampliando o acesso ao cuidado e promovendo ambientes alimentares e cidades

mais saudáveis. Para isso, a participação da sociedade civil é fundamental, tanto para impulsionar o aprimoramento das políticas, incorporar a experiência das pessoas que vivem com obesidade e enfrentar a influência desproporcional de interesses comerciais que frequentemente dificultam o avanço de medidas regulatórias essenciais, como por exemplo para os ultraprocessados."

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The roundtable was held on 11 June 2025 in Brasília, Brazil.
- The event was convened by the World Obesity Federation, with support from the Secretariat of Primary Healthcare of the Ministry of Health, Associação Brasileira para o Estudo da Obesidade (ABESO), Instituto Cordial, Vozes do Advocacy, Desiderata, Obesidade Brasil and ACT Promoção da Saúde.
- The roundtable forms part of the MAPPS (Management and Advocacy for Providers, Patients and Systems) programme, a global initiative assessing how obesity is addressed within health systems, public health and policy responses.
- Six “deep dive” countries have been selected for in-depth collaborative work under MAPPS II: Brazil, China, India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Spain.
- A national report on Brazil will be published in early 2027, with findings contributing to global advocacy efforts ahead of the 2027 UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage.
- Further details on MAPPS and related outputs will be made available in due course.

About World Obesity Federation

The World Obesity Federation (World Obesity) is the only global organisation focused exclusively on obesity. World Obesity represents stakeholders in high-, medium- and low-income countries, including experts, advocates, people with lived experience and healthcare professionals. It works with global partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO), to drive action across prevention, treatment and care.

World Obesity Federation strongly encourages journalists and editors to use people-first language and respectful imagery when reporting on obesity and overweight.

Access to images:

The World Obesity Federation Image Bank is a gallery of free-to-use images that are accurate, non-biased and respectful. Visit: www.worldobesity.org/resources/image-bank