

South Africa

Health systems



Economic classification: **Upper Middle Income**

Health systems summary

South Africa has co-existing public and private health care systems that results in unequal and inequitable healthcare access among its population. The public system - provided for by the government - is made up of public clinics and hospitals accessible to all. Most services are free at point of service within the public system, including primary healthcare services. The public system, however, is chronically underfunded and understaffed. The private system, on the other hand, delivers high quality care but is financially out of reach for the majority of the population who do not have health insurance. The private system has a disproportionate amount of funding and healthcare professionals considering it only covers only 16% of the population.

South Africa is currently discussing the implementation of a National Health Insurance scheme that will reduce inequities in healthcare access between different socioeconomic groups.

Indicators

Where is the country's government in the journey towards defining 'Obesity as a disease'?	No
Where is the country's healthcare provider in the journey towards defining 'Obesity as a disease'?	Some progress
Is there specialist training available dedicated to the training of health professionals to prevent, diagnose, treat and manage obesity?	Not known
Have any taxes or subsidies been put in place to protect/assist/inform the population around obesity?	Yes
Are there adequate numbers of trained health professionals in specialties relevant to obesity in urban areas?	Some progress
Are there adequate numbers of trained health professionals in specialties relevant to obesity in rural areas?	No
Are there any obesity-specific recommendations or guidelines published for adults?	Not known
Are there any obesity-specific recommendations or guidelines published for children?	Yes
In practice, how is obesity treatment largely funded?	Not known

Perceived barriers to treatment

Lack of political will,
interest and action

Economic crisis

Fragmented or failing
health system

Lack of training for
healthcare
professionals

Summary of stakeholder feedback

The stakeholder reported although there is awareness of the extent of the obesity challenge in South Africa, there is a lack of political will to address it systematically.

The public health system - that covers the bulk of the population - is considered to be poor in terms of obesity prevention and treatment. There is a lack of healthcare professionals to treat obesity in both urban and rural areas, but widespread staff shortages throughout the health system mean that increasing the number of specialist obesity professionals is not a priority.

Compared to the public system, provision in the private sector is advanced. Private insurers appear to cover some treatments and the insurer Discovery Health was noted to have particularly good coverage. However, as such a small percentage of the population have private insurance coverage, it appears that obesity treatment is generally paid for out of pocket.

Based on interviews/survey returns from 1 stakeholder

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