



State of North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Services

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Northeastern counties lead NC in rates of overweight and obesity

Raleigh – The N.C. Division of Public Health today released rankings of the state's counties and regions by the percentage of residents who are either overweight or obese. The new rankings provide local health officials with information they can use to identify areas of success and concern as they work to reduce rates of obesity in their communities

The two regions that ranked the highest are both located in the northeastern part of the state. The Franklin, Nash, Wilson region led the counties with a combined overweight and obesity rate of almost 74 percent. The Bertie, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Northampton, Warren region followed closely behind with a rate of 72.6 percent. The state average was 62.6 percent. The county with the lowest rate of overweight and obesity was Orange County at 51.6 percent.

"But, that's not particularly good news," said Cathy Thomas, head of the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch. "This means that even in a county with an obesity rate that is 11 percent lower than the state average, one out of every two residents is likely to be either overweight or obese and at increased risk for several obesity-related chronic conditions. Regardless of where a county falls in the rankings, all the counties of North Carolina still face an uphill battle in reversing the rising rates of obesity in the state."

The rankings were determined by using responses to the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), which asked residents about their height and weight. These figures were then used to calculate each person's Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is a number calculated from a person's weight and height that serves as a reliable indicator of body fat and can be used to classify weight status in adults.

The rankings are a companion piece to the *Eat Smart, Move More County Profiles*, which were released in August. The County Profiles highlight the successes and needs of each county in the state in the area of obesity prevention. The rankings can be used in conjunction with the County Profiles to demonstrate the need for increased funding and community support for obesity prevention efforts at the county level.

The rankings also list the counties and regions by the percentage of residents who eat five or more fruits and vegetables per day, and the percentage who meet physical activity requirements. The Bertie, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Northampton, Warren region, which had the second highest obesity rate, had the lowest percentage of residents reporting they met the recommended physical activity requirements (31 percent).

Both the county rankings and the County Profiles support Eat Smart, Move More...North Carolina, a statewide movement that seeks to reverse the rising tide of obesity and chronic disease among North Carolinians by helping them to eat smart, move more and achieve a healthy weight. You can download a copy of either document on the Eat Smart, Move More website at www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com.



The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a random telephone survey of state residents aged 18 and older in households with telephones. BRFSS was initially developed in the early 1980s by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in collaboration with state health departments and is currently conducted in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three United States territories. For more information, visit CDC's BRFSS website at <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>

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