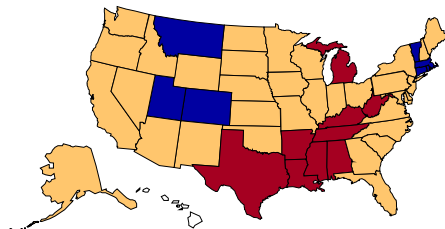


Risk of Overweight and Obesity in Alabama, Results From the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System,¹ Alabama 2004

During the past 20 years there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States. In 1985 only a few states were participating in CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and providing obesity data. In 1991, four states had obesity prevalence rates of 15–19 percent and no states had rates at or above 20 percent. In 2004, seven states had obesity prevalence rates of 15–19 percent; 33 states had rates of 20–24 percent; and 9 states had rates more than 25 percent (no data for one state).

Obesity Trends* Among U.S. Adults BRFSS, 2004

(*BMI ≥ 30 , or ~ 30 lbs overweight for 5' 4" person)



Legend: No Data, <10%, 10%–14%, 15%–19%, 20%–24%, $\geq 25\%$

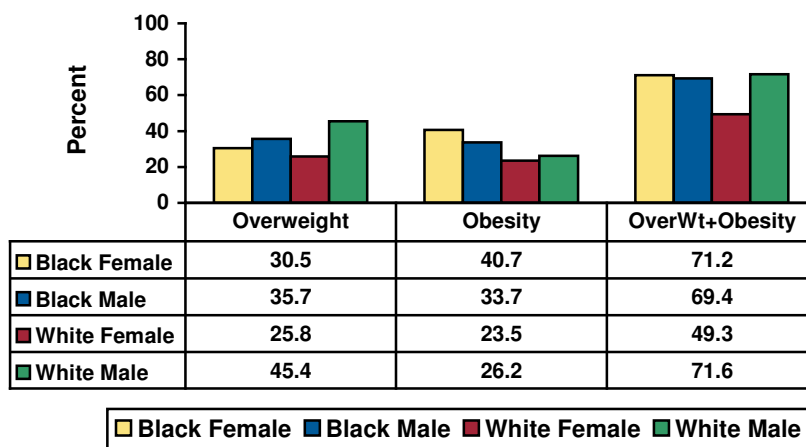
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, CDC.



According to 2004 weighted data from the BRFSS, in Alabama the risk of being overweight is greatest for White males (45.4%). The risk of obesity is greatest for Black females (40.7%) (see Figure 1). When overweight and obesity are combined into one category (a BMI greater than 24), White females have the lowest risk of being overweight or obese (49.3 percent).

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), the world's largest telephone survey, tracks health risks in the United States to improve the health of the American people. By the early 1980s, scientific research clearly showed that personal health behaviors played a major role in premature morbidity and mortality, so CDC developed a standard core questionnaire for states to use to provide data that could be compared across states. By 1994, all states, the District of Columbia, and three territories were participating in the BRFSS.

Figure 1. Risk of Overweight and Obesity by Race and Sex, BRFSS Weighted Percentages, Alabama 2004



In order to study regional differences, data were grouped into four sections of the state to be compatible with other published ADPH geographical analyses 1) North rural, 2) South rural 3) Black Belt and 4) Metropolitan Statistical Area.² According to BRFSS weighted data, the risk of a BMI 25 or higher is greater in the Black Belt region of Alabama. Seventy-eight percent of respondents in the Black Belt reported a BMI 25 or higher (Figure 2 reverse side).

Figure 2. Risk of Overweight by Area of State, BRFSS Weighted Percentages, Alabama 2004

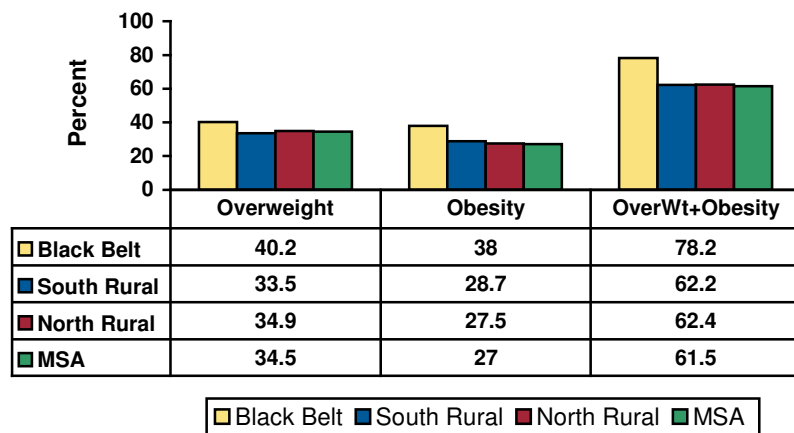
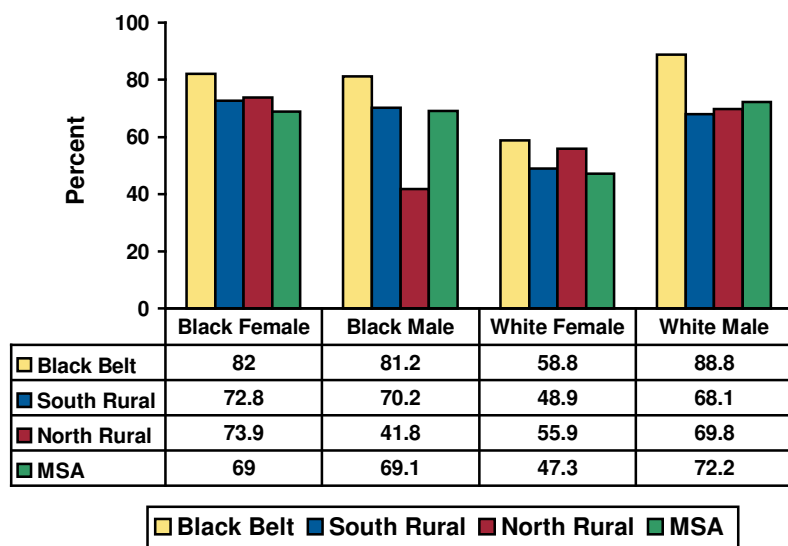


Figure 3. Risk of Overweight and Obesity by Area of State, Race and Sex, BRFSS Weighted Percentages, Alabama 2004

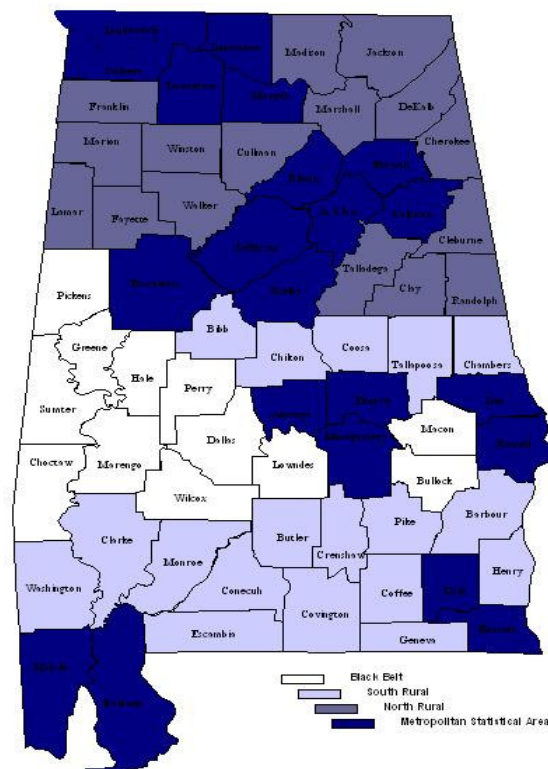


Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health Obesity Task Force Data Group, Kathryn Chapman, DrPA, Director, Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease (BHPCD). Data provided by Jesse Pevar, MSPH, BRFSS Coordinator, BHPCD.

According to 2004 weighted data from the BRFSS, the risk of a BMI greater than 25 is highest for White males in the Black Belt region of Alabama. For Black males, risk appears to be lower in the North Rural region. Extreme regional findings for males may be influenced by the small number of respondents. For White and Black females, the risk of a BMI greater than 25 varies little by region (see Figure 3).

BRFSS overweight and obesity data are derived from self-reported height and weight information collected from a random sample of Alabamians aged 18 and older surveyed by telephone. Overweight is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 25 to 29. Obese is defined as a BMI greater than 30. The data are weighted to ensure a representative sample of the state. In 2004, 3,595 Alabamians participated.

Regions of the State



¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/about.htm>. Found March 20, 2006.

² Chapman, K. *Alabama Chartbook of Regional Disparities in Mortality*. Alabama Department of Public Health. Center for Health Statistics.