



## Overview of Health Disparities & Social/Economic Determinants of Health Related to Chronic Disease

*WhatcomCounts.org - Public Health Indicators*

### Overview

Whatcom County is one of the healthiest places in the nation. Yet, chronic disease is on the rise in Whatcom County. Conditions such as heart disease and diabetes hit some populations harder than others in Whatcom County: people with lower incomes and less education, people who live in rural areas, and racial/ethnic minorities.

For all populations, obesity is a leading indicator of chronic disease, and good nutrition and physical activity prevent it. Being active and eating right are about individual lifestyle choices, but many social, economic and environmental influences impact our ability to make good choices. Where we live, work and play determine the kinds of choices we have, as do social norms, culture and institutions.

### Income-Related Health Disparities

This table demonstrates health disparities that exist among adults in Whatcom County based on level of income.

2007 BRFSS Measure	Whatcom Overall	Under \$20K	\$20K Under \$35K	\$35K-\$50K	Over \$50K
Health Status Fair or Poor	13%	41%	19%	10%	4%
Days of Physical Health Not Good	36%	58%	43%	25%	35%
Days of Mental Health Not Good					
Very <i>satisfied</i> with my life	46%	24%	28%	43%	59%
Very <i>dissatisfied</i> with my life	2%	10%	3%	1%	0%
Health coverage	86%	76%	78%	84%	95%
Diabetes	6%	10%	10%	4%	4%
Obese	26%	36%	27%	28%	23%
Cardiovascular Disease: Angina or coronary artery disease	3%	11%	5%	3%	2%
Hungry in past year but couldn't afford enough food	9%	30%	17%	4%	1%
Current Tobacco Use	18%	36%	25%	18%	11%
Physical Activity in last 30 days	85%	69%	76%	87%	91%
Days per week of moderate activities for at least 10 minutes a time	4.87 days	5.13 days	4.94 days	4.89 days	4.82 days

*Source: 2007 Whatcom County Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey [BRFSS]*

## Other Trends of Note

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### Percent Adults Overweight or Obese

In 2007, 60% of Whatcom County adults were overweight or obese, this is an increase from 2002 when 53% had a BMI in the overweight or obese range and 47% that were in this range in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

#### Health Disparity Highlights

While 26% of adults were classified as obese, the subgroups that were more likely to be in the obese classification include:

- Fair/Poor health status (43%)
- High School or less (29%)
- Reside in rural areas (28%)
- Those whose education only includes some college (30%)
- Employed or self employed (28%)



### Adults with Diabetes

In 2007 the percent of adults age 18 or older who have ever been told by a doctor that they have diabetes was 6 percent compared to 5% in 2002 and 3% in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

#### Health Disparity Highlights

Subgroups that were more likely than others to have been told that they have diabetes include:

- Health status *fair/poor* (17%)
- No children live in household (8%)
- Over age 49 (9%); over age 64 (14%)
- Have health care coverage (7%)
- Retirees (13%)



### Percent Adults who Exercised in the Last Month

In 2007, 85 percent of adults engaged in physical activity of exercise “outside regular activity” in the last 30 days, a decrease from 88% in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

#### Health Disparity Highlights

Those that were *less likely* to have participated in physical activities during the past month include:

- Those who rate their overall health as *fair/poor* (32%)
- Respondents aged 65 and older (19%)
- Those with annual incomes of \$20K to under \$35K (13%)
- Those with annual incomes of less than \$20K (23%)
- Those who have less than a college diploma (15%)



### Percent Adults Eating 5+ Fruits & Vegetable per Day

In 2007, 31 percent of Whatcom County adults at five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, this is a decrease from 35% in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

#### Health Disparity Highlights

While 23% of adults reported eating only one to two servings of vegetables a day, those that were more likely include:

- Men (30%)
- Respondents with a high school education or less (29%)
- Respondents whose education only includes some college (26%)

<sup>1</sup> DOH Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2007

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## Glossary

**Health Disparities:** “Health disparities are differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups in the United States.”

— *National Institutes of Health Strategic Research Plan and Budget to Reduce and Ultimately Eliminate Health Disparities, Vol. 1, Fiscal Years 2002–2006*

**Determinants of Health:** “Many factors combine together to affect the health of individuals and communities. Whether people are healthy or not, is determined by their circumstances and environment. To a large extent, factors such as where we live, the state of our environment, genetics, our income and education level, and our relationships with friends and family all have considerable impacts on health, whereas the more commonly considered factors such as access and use of health care services often have less of an impact.”

— *World Health Organization*

\*Go to [www.unnaturalcauses.org](http://www.unnaturalcauses.org) for more resources and info on what you can do!

This factsheet was compiled in collaboration with the Whatcom County Health Department in February 2009.

Go to [www.WhatcomCounts.org](http://www.WhatcomCounts.org) to learn more.