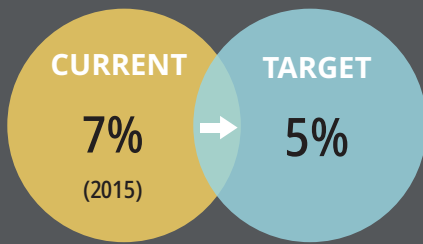


HEALTH INDICATOR 8: LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

DESIRED RESULT: IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS



DEFINITION

Percent of people who are low-income that are not in close proximity to a grocery store

DETAILS

For metropolitan communities, living close to a grocery store is defined as being less than a mile from a store; in rural areas, the threshold proximity is 10 miles from a grocery store

NC LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD (2015)

7% of population

2030 TARGET

5% of population

RANGE AMONG NC COUNTIES

0 - 35%

RANK AMONG STATES

Tied for 26th*

DATA SOURCE

County Health Rankings and Roadmaps - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

STATE PLANS WITH SIMILAR INDICATORS

Not Applicable

*Rank of 1st for state with least limitations in access to healthy foods

Rationale for Selection:

Food is a basic building block of health that affects weight, blood pressure, and countless other health outcomes. Access to healthy foods is strongly influenced by where someone lives. People in rural or underserved areas of North Carolina are particularly affected by lack of access to stores where they can purchase ingredients for healthy meals.

Context

Good nutrition is an essential factor in individuals' mental and physical health. However, in many communities, affordable and nutritious food is not easily accessible. In some areas, fast food and convenience stores abound yet access to supermarkets is limited.⁶² While individuals' food choices are important, food choices are constrained by what is available.⁶³ Limited access to healthy foods has been linked to obesity, cardiovascular conditions, nutritional deficiencies, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease.^{64,65} Obesity and obesity-related conditions are now the second leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States.⁶⁶

"Limited access to healthy foods has been linked to obesity, cardiovascular conditions, nutritional deficiencies, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease."

Areas with populations of individuals who have limited access to healthy foods are considered to be "food deserts." In North Carolina, there are more than 340 food deserts, affecting more than half a million residents in the state.⁶⁷ Although persons living in food deserts may still have access to small food retailers such as corner or convenience stores, the food sold by these stores rarely meets nutritional needs.⁶⁸ Additionally, farmers' markets or other farm stands may be helpful supplementary sources of healthy food, but their limited offerings, higher prices, and short operating hours may limit benefits to low-income communities.⁶⁵ As such, this measure only includes proximity to grocery stores and supermarkets, which has been linked to increasing access to healthy foods.⁶⁹

Disparities

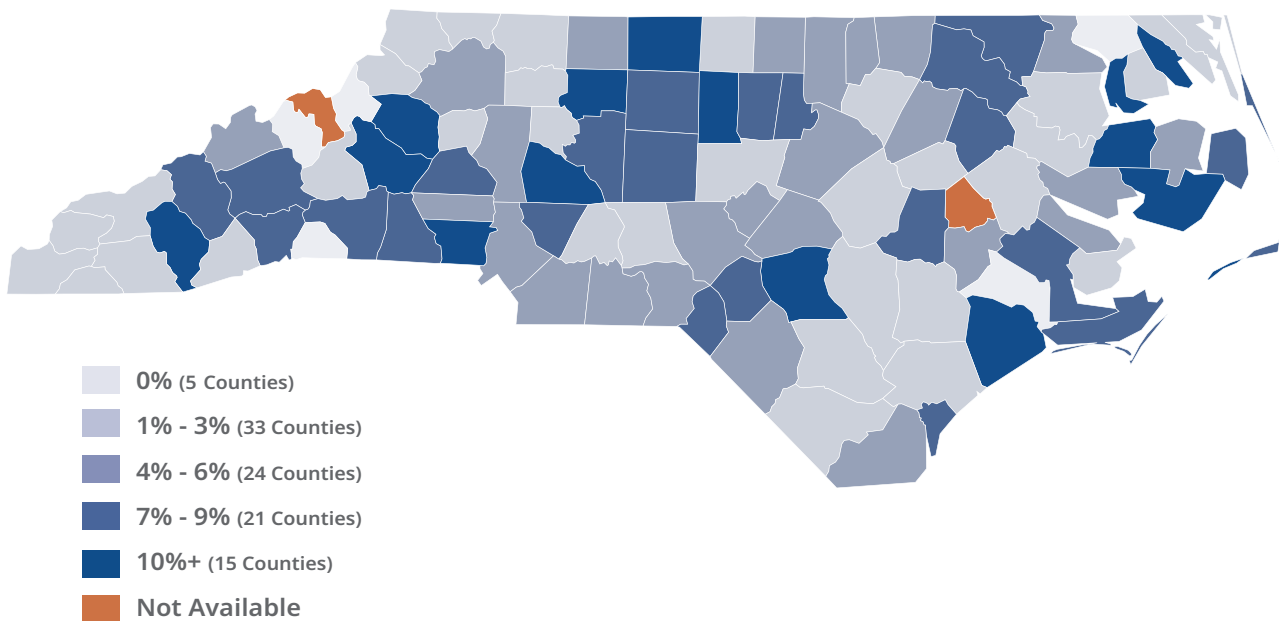
Race and income influence access to healthy food and likelihood of living in a food desert. Low-income neighborhoods and those with large minority populations are less likely to have supermarkets or other grocery stores, and the available stores often have more limited healthy options and may have higher prices than their counterparts in wealthier communities.^{70,71}

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FIGURE 16

Percent of People with Limited Access to Healthy Foods in North Carolina Counties, 2015



County Health Rankings & Roadmaps; <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/north-carolina/2019/measure/factors/83/data>

2030 Target and Potential for Change

The HNC 2030 group reviewed data across several years and projected a future level to develop a target for access to affordable food. The HNC 2030 group chose 5% as the target for the percent of the population that is low-income who are not in close proximity to a grocery store. The percent of the low-income population facing lack of access to grocery stores has remained static at 7% for the last 5 years after decreasing from 10% from 2006 to 2010. This target would bend the curve and be a meaningful step toward ensuring that all North Carolinians have access to healthy foods, regardless of income level.

Levers for Change

- Increase technological support for SNAP/ EBT payments at food retailers
- Expand transit options in rural and low-income communities
- Support tax-incentive programs designed to encourage grocery stores and farmers markets to move into food deserts
- Support nonprofit grocery stores working to meet the needs of residents of food deserts
- Support school-based meal programs
- Increase access to healthy foods in childcare, schools, churches, workplaces and other community-based settings