

January 28, 2014

OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT IN ALACHUA COUNTY

For Tammy and Kourtney

Florida Department of Health
Alachua County

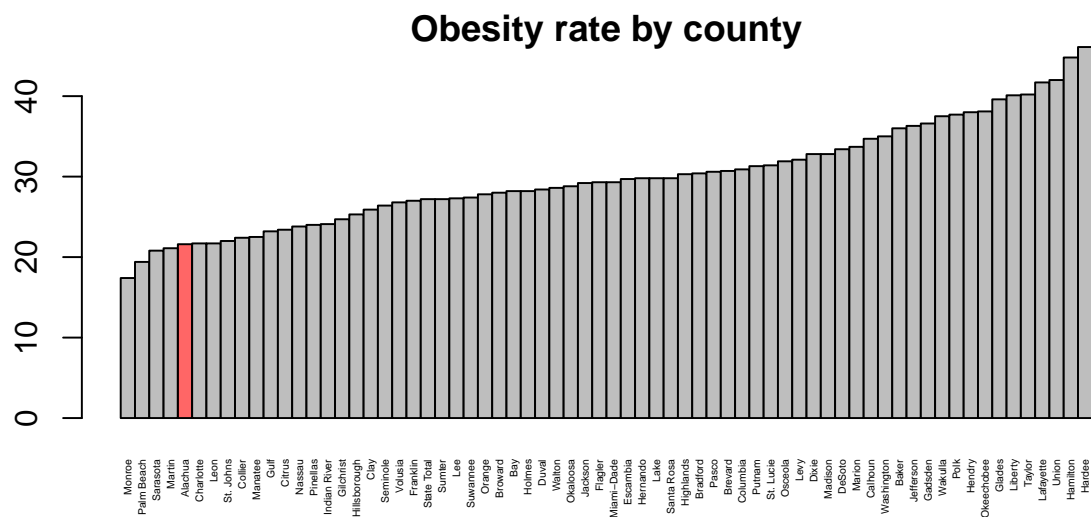
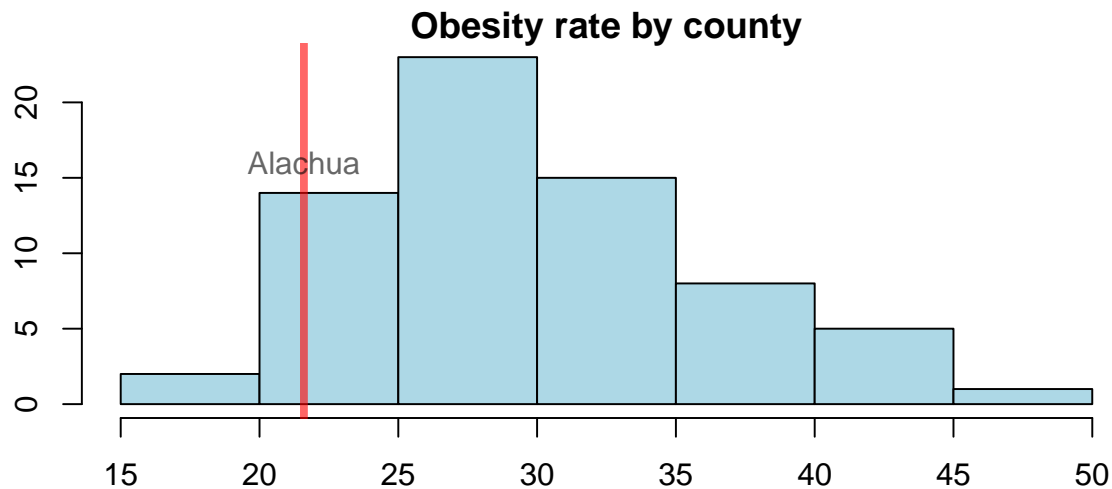
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Summary

Population-level data suggest that Alachua is outperforming Florida in regards to achieving the goals of Healthiest Weight Florida. But it is worth taking note of two worrying trends in the realm to racial disparities and youth obesity.

General trends

As of 2010, Alachua has the fifth lowest adult obesity rate among Florida's 68 counties. At 21.6%, that puts us nearly four percentage points lower than the State average (25.2%) and less than half the rate of the worst-performing county (Hardee). Only Monroe, Palm Beach, Sarasota and Martin counties have lower rates.

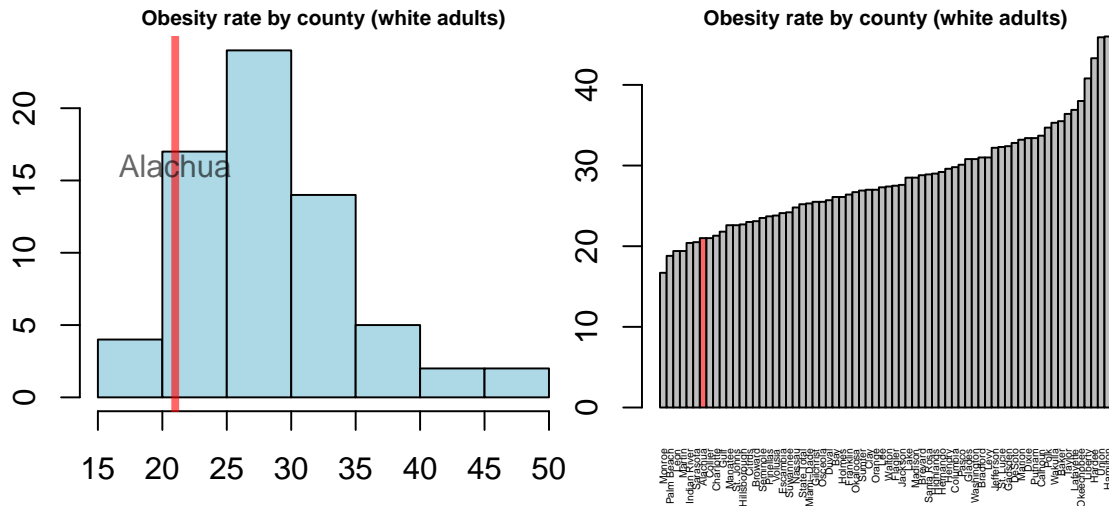


Obesity by race

Alachua's good performance on obesity masks troubling inequalities between blacks and whites.

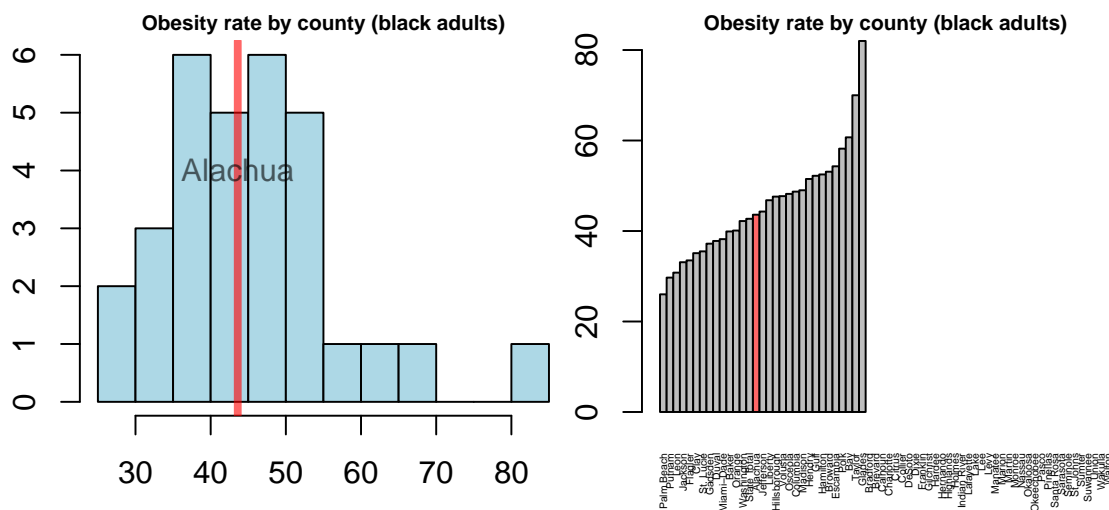
Adult obesity rate among whites

At 21%, Alachua's adult obesity rate among whites is among the best in the State.



Adult obesity rate among blacks

As of 2010, Alachua's adult obesity rate among blacks was 43.6%. Race-specific obesity rates are unavailable for 37 counties. But among those counties on whom data are available, Alachua

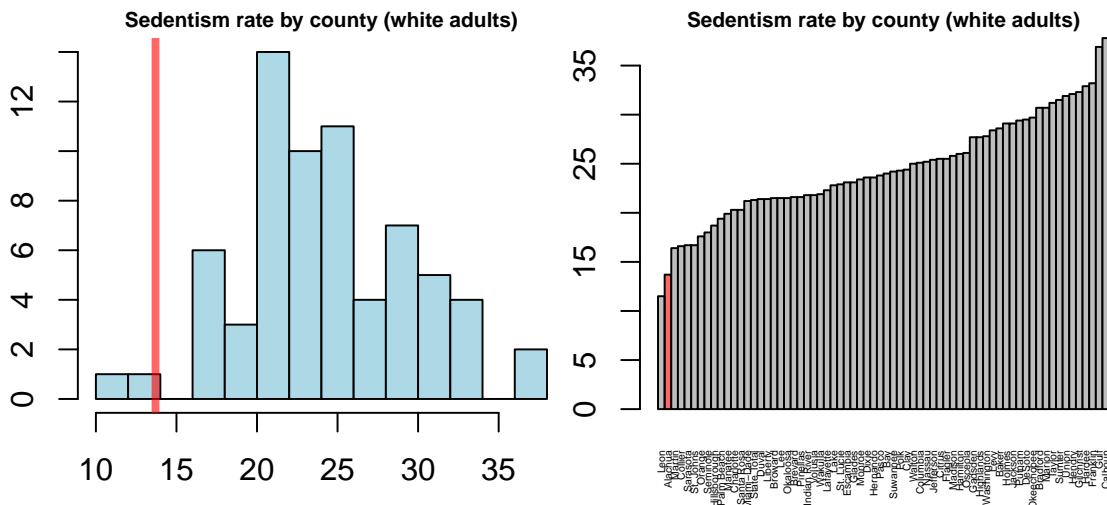


Why the discrepancy?

Sedentism may explain part of Alachua's racial disparities regarding obesity.

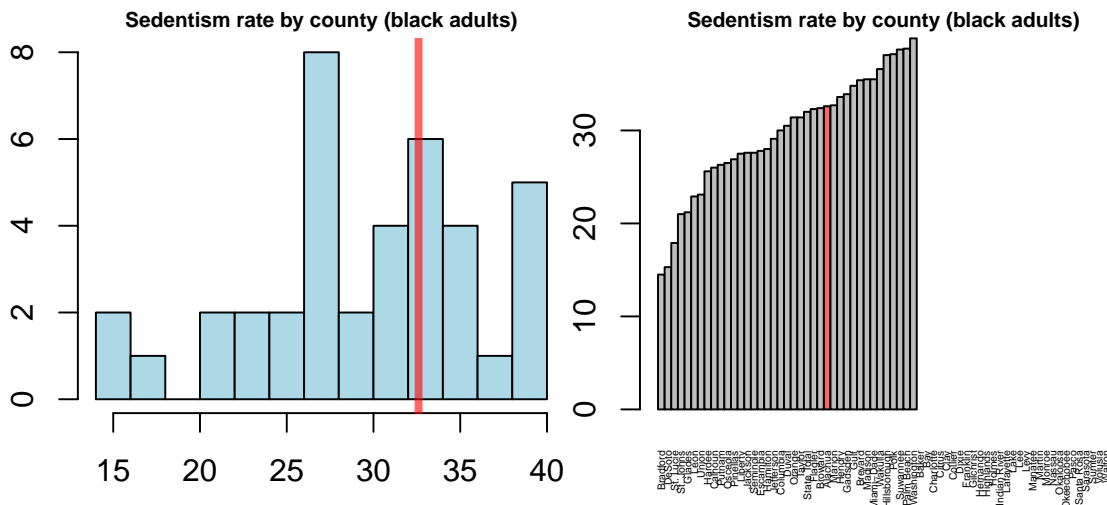
Sedentarism among whites

Among whites, Alachua has the 2nd lowest sedentism rate in the State (2007 data).



Sedentarism among blacks

Among blacks, however, Alachua is outperformed by at least 25 other counties in regards to sedentism.

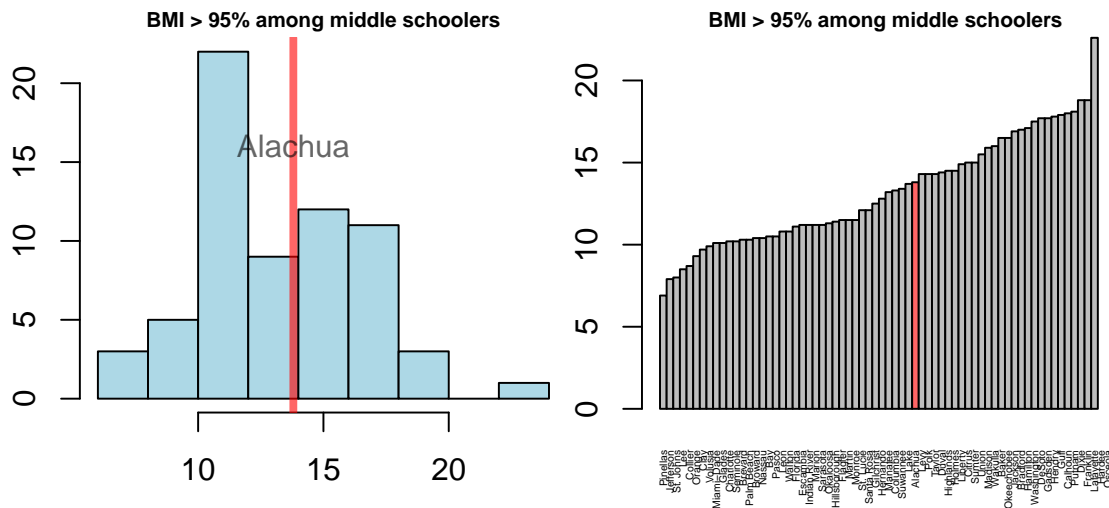


What about children?

Compared to our generally good adult obesity rates, Alachua is doing relatively poorly in the realm of child obesity.

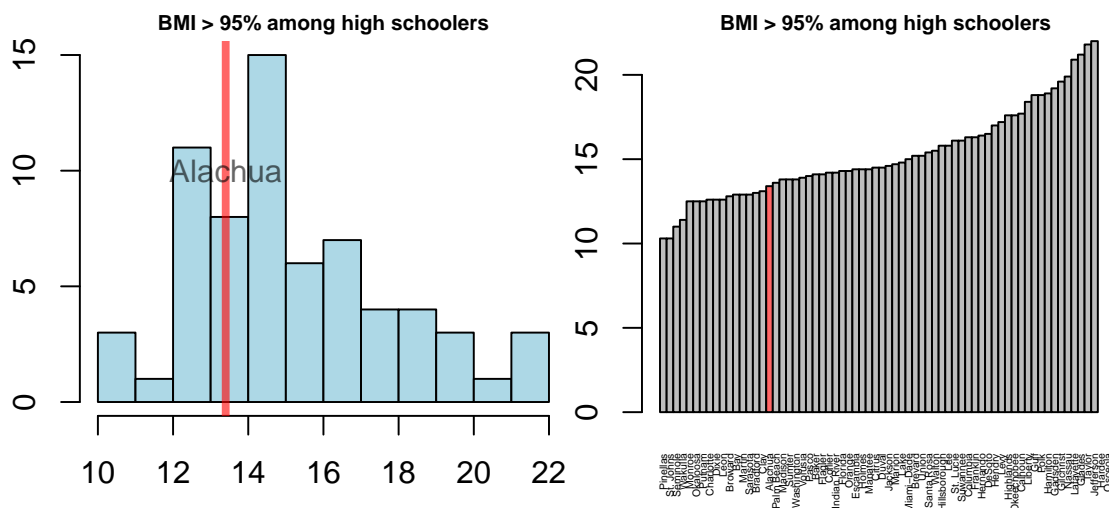
Obesity among middle-schoolers

As of 2012, Alachua's percentage of middle-schoolers with a BMI for age greater than the 95th percentile was 13.8%. That's more than 2.5% greater than the Florida average, and puts us in 38th in the State.



Obesity among high-schoolers

13.4% of Alachua high-schoolers have a BMI greater than the 95th percentile, slightly better than the Florida average of 14.3%. For this measure, Alachua is ranked 17th in the State.



Conclusion

Age: a blessing and a curse Alachua likely appears to be doing well in the fight against obesity for the same reason we appear to be doing poorly in the fight against STDs: our unique population. The presence of the University drastically affects our scores on many measures, and rates should be standardized for age to better assess true performance.

Race and inequality In Florida, as in the rest of the United States, blacks have a greater prevalence of obesity than whites. But this disparity is greater in Alachua, where, on average, whites are **less** obese than whites in the rest of Florida, and blacks are **more** obese than blacks in the rest of Florida. This should be of particular concern.

Troubling trends among youth It appears that, relative to the rest of the State, Alachua performs worse at younger age groups. This is of particular concern for the future-oriented goals of the Healthiest Weight initiative.

Where do we stand on data access?

I've requested (and should soon be getting) the complete health screening data for the last few years from the SBAC. This will allow us to better understand disparities among youth to target initiatives appropriately. It will also allow us to better understand current trends.

I'm meeting with the SBAC chef on Friday (Moss Crutchfield) in order to obtain further data on the types of programs currently active in schools and their implementation dates. Of particular interest is "differential implementation," which will allow us to parse out the effectiveness of school initiatives (in order to advise their suitability on a larger school).