



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 23, 2007

CONTACT: CARRIE MCMILLAN
919-539-4624

NC says Yes to Nutritional Labels, No to Junk Food in School

Raleigh, N.C. – According to the latest Public Policy Polling (PPP) survey of North Carolina voters, obesity ranks among their top three public health concerns with Cancer named the most pressing public health issue, followed by obesity and heart disease.

Fifty-four percent of respondents are very concerned about the high rate (24.2% among adults) of obesity in North Carolina, another 34% percent reported being somewhat concerned, while only 12% answered being not very or not at all concerned.

Results were split as to whether or not the North Carolina state government should take action to fight obesity, with 45% supporting involvement and 46% opposed.

However, a large majority, 77%, supported requiring all fast-food and chain restaurants to display nutritional information on menus and menu boards.

And 87% strongly or somewhat approves banning the sale of all junk foods, defined for respondents as high-fat, high-sugar snacks and sugared beverages, from all public school campuses.

“Although North Carolinians are initially reluctant to the idea of state government intervention in the fight against obesity, some specific policy proposals were very popular,” said Carrie McMillan of Public Policy Polling.

PPP surveyed 432 North Carolina voters on July 19. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 4.7%. Other factors, such as refusal to be interviewed and weighting, may introduce additional error that is more difficult to quantify.

Complete results are attached and can be found at www.publicpolicypolling.com.

This survey was a project of Carrie McMillan, a junior History major at North Carolina State University. Carrie is one of two summer interns at Public Policy Polling.

If you have questions about this release or would like an interview regarding this release, please contact Carrie McMillan at (919) 539-4624.

###



Introduction

Public Policy Polling surveyed North Carolina adults on Thursday, July 19 in order to better understand North Carolinians' opinions regarding the growing public health issue of obesity in our state. We cross tabulated the responses to each of the ten questions asked against three key demographic measures: gender, race, and age.

Results

Public Health Concerns

PPP offered respondents a list of current public health concerns in our state, asking which issue respondents found to be most pressing. Of the list of “cancer, heart disease, AIDS, obesity, cigarette smoking, or drug and alcohol abuse,” cancer, obesity, and heart disease made it in the top three concerns with 28, 26 and 20 percent, respectively. Respondents felt less strongly about cigarette smoking, 7%, and drug and alcohol abuse, 9%, with AIDS considered the most pressing issue for only 2% of respondents.

With 24.2 % of North Carolina adults obese, meaning they have a Body Mass Index of 30 or more, our state has the 15th highest rate of obesity in the nation, according to Trust for America's Health. PPP asked about the degree of concern about our state's high rate of obesity. A large majority of North Carolinians, 88%, reported being very concerned or somewhat concerned. Ten percent reported being not very concerned, while only 2% of respondents are not at all concerned about the high rate of obesity in our state.

The results of these two questions were similar across demographics, except for differences by age. Over one-third of young people in North Carolina see obesity as the most pressing public health concern facing our state, with 39% of 18-29 year olds choosing obesity as the most important public health concern. North Carolina has the 11th highest rate of overweight high school students with 12.5% overweight, also according Trust for America's Health, possibly explaining the heightened awareness and concern about obesity in the younger demographic.

Sixty-two percent of 18-29 year olds reported being very concerned about the high rate of obesity in our state. It is not surprising that these respondents show more concern considering their response to the first question. However, compared to the other age brackets, 30-45 year olds, 46-65 year olds, and those over 65, who answered 48%, 55%, 52% respectively, the high level of concern is interesting.

Also, the other health concerns (cancer, heart disease, e.g.) afflict older people more so than younger, increasing the older population's concern. For example, 39% of respondents 65 and older reported cancer as the public health issue of greatest importance, while only 11% of 18-29 year olds answered the same.

None of the 18-29 year olds interviewed believe that AIDS is the most important public health issue in our state, compared to 10% of 30-45. This difference could be a result of age and experience. Perhaps the 30-45 year olds have witnessed a friend or family member affected by AIDS, or more frightening, perhaps the individuals in the 18-29 year olds do not know their risks.

Views of Obesity

PPP asked respondents whether they viewed obesity as a disease, inherited like many other physical ailments, or a result of unhealthy lifestyle and eating habits. PPP also offered the option that obesity is a combination of both factors working in an individual. Half of respondents answered that obesity is a result of lifestyle choices, while only 4% answered that obesity is a disease. PPP found that a large percentage, 45%, of respondents see obesity not as solely a disease or a problem of diet and lifestyle, but a combination of both.

The majority of respondents, 50%, who said that obesity is purely a result of lifestyle choices conflicts with the 59% who answered that “there are some people who cannot help being obese.” One would think that since 50% of respondents answered that obesity is a result of lifestyle choices, then more than 18% would have disagreed with the statement that “there are some people who cannot help being obese.”

All respondents reported that the individual does bear some portion of the responsibility in being obese; the only variation being in degree of responsibility. When asked what amount of responsibility an obese person bears when it comes to being obese, 17% of respondents answered “all,” 63% answered a “great deal,” 18% answered “some,” while no respondents answered “hardly any” or “none.”

Respondents also believe that fast food companies contribute to the issue of obesity in our state. Forty-five percent reported that fast food companies contributed a “great deal,” while 39% answered “some,” with only 16% answering “very little” or “none.”

Government Involvement

PPP asked several questions about state government involvement in the fight against obesity, asking whether the government should get involved and what role it would play if it did. Opinions were split regarding government involvement. Forty-five percent answered that the state government should become involved in combating obesity, while 46% answered that the issue of obesity is an area in which the state government should not get involved.

Although initial response to government involved received mixed opinions, respondents showed more support for suggested government action.

Seventy-seven percent of respondents support requiring all fast-food and chain restaurants to display nutritional information on all menus and menu-boards, an effort recently suggested, and contested, in New York City. Women more strongly support requiring fast-food nutritional information than men. Eighty-four percent of women support compared to 69% of men.

Fifty-six percent of respondents also answered that they would be very likely to consider calorie-count and nutritional information before selecting their meal. Thirty-one percent reported that they would be somewhat likely, with only 4% reporting that they would be not at all likely to consider nutritional information in selecting their meal. More women than men, not surprisingly answered that they would be very likely to consider nutritional information.

Respondents also showed support for banning “the sale of all junk foods, meaning high-fat, high-sugar snacks and sugared beverages on all public school campuses.” Fifty-six percent strongly approved the ban, 31% somewhat approved the ban and only 13% either somewhat or strongly disapproved.

Women more strongly support banning junk foods in schools, with 67% percent of women answering that they strongly approve while 42% of men strongly approving.

Currently, only California, Hawaii, Texas, and West Virginia, have nutritional standards for foods sold in schools that are not part of the federal lunch program, including snacks from vending machines and a la carte cafeterias (Trust for America’s Health).

Conclusion

Overall, these results show North Carolinians concern about obesity, which is justified. The Trust for America’s Health reports that in 2003 North Carolina “spent an estimated \$254 per person on medical costs related to obesity,” ranking 28th in the nation.

The results also show that although North Carolinians are initially reluctant to the idea of state government intervention in the fight against obesity, certain measures, such as the ones proposed could positively affect the health of our state without seeming invasive.

Methodology

Public Policy Polling surveyed 434 likely North Carolina voters on July 19. The sample was chosen by randomly selecting voters from the North Carolina voter file.

Our surveys are conducted using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone technology. The same recorded voice is played to every respondent, who answer questions using their telephone keypad. The standardized voice dramatically reduces the effect of interviewer bias.

The survey responses are weighted to accurately reflect the demographic breakdown of the desired population. The survey has a margin of error of $\pm 4.7\%$. Other factors, such as refusal to be interviewed and weighting, may introduce additional error that is more difficult to quantify. The exact wording of questions can be found on the respective survey results page.

Who We Are

Since 2001 Public Policy Polling (PPP) has provided poll data and expert analysis for the public, opinion leaders and public policy makers in the state of North Carolina. PPP continues to be dedicated to tracking issue trends, campaign match-ups, and approval ratings on key figures in the state. You can find more of our polling data and analysis at our website, www.publicpolicypolling.com.

This survey was a project of Carrie McMillan, a junior History major at North Carolina State University. Carrie is one of two summer interns at Public Policy Polling.



NC Survey Results

Q1 Of the following public health issues, which do you think is most important in North Carolina today? Cancer, heart disease, AIDS, obesity, cigarette smoking, or drug and alcohol abuse? If cancer, press 1 on your key pad now. If heart disease, press 2. If AIDS, press 3. If obesity, press 4. If cigarette smoking, press 5. If drug and alcohol abuse, press 6. If you don't know, press 7.

Cancer.....28% Cigarette Smoking .. 7%
Heart Disease.....20% Drug and Alcohol abuse..... 9%
AIDS 2% Not Sure..... 7%
Obesity.....26%

Q2 24.2 percent of adults in North Carolina are obese. How concerned are you about the high rate obesity and childhood obesity in North Carolina? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned? If you are very concerned, press 1. If somewhat concerned, press 2. If not very concerned, press 3. If not at all concerned, press 4.

Very54% Not Very.....10%
Somewhat.....34% Not at all..... 2%

Q3 Which comes closer to your view about obesity - that obesity is a disease or that obesity is a problem of unhealthy eating and lifestyle habits? Or is obesity a result of both factors? If you think obesity is a disease, press 1. If obesity is a problem of unhealthy eating and lifestyle choices, press 2. If obesity is a combination of both, press 3. If unsure, press 4.

Disease..... 4% Combination of both45%
Lifestyle choices50% Unsure 1%

Q4 In your opinion how much responsibility does the obese person bear when it comes to being obese- all of the responsibility, a great deal of responsibility, some of the responsibility, hardly any, or none at all. If you think the individual bears all of the responsibility, press 1. If a great deal, press 2. If some of the responsibility press 3. If hardly any responsibility, press 4. If none at all, press 5. If you are unsure, press 6.

All.....17% Hardly any..... 0%
Great Deal63% None 0%
Some18% Not sure 1%

Q5 In your opinion are there some people who cannot help being obese? If yes, press 1. If no, press 2. If you are unsure, press 3.

Yes.....59% Unsure23%
No 18%

Q6 In your opinion how much do fast food companies contribute to the epidemic of obesity- a great deal, some, very little, or none? If you think that fast food companies contribute a great deal to the epidemic of obesity, press 1. If some, press 2. If very little, press 3. If none, press 4.

Great Deal.....45% Very Little..... 12%
Some.....39% None 4%

Q7 Some people think that the state government should help fight the public health concern of obesity. Others say this is an area in which the government does not belong. Do you think the state government should become involved in addressing the issue of obesity or is this an area where government does not belong? If you think the state government should become involved, press 1. If the state government should not become involved, press 2. If you are unsure, press 3.

Should become involved.....45% Should not become involved ...46%
Unsure 9%





Q8 Many consumers have no idea how many calories are in their fast-food meal. If fast-food restaurants listed the number of calories in each item, how likely would you be to think about calories when choosing your meal- very likely, somewhat likely, not likely, or not at all likely? If you would be very likely to consider calories when choosing your fast-food meal, press 1. If somewhat likely, press 2. If not likely, press 3. If not at all likely, press 4.

Very likely..... 56% *Not likely* 9%
Somewhat likely 31% *Not at all likely*..... 4%

Q9 Currently, many restaurants and fast food chains provide nutritional information on their website or in pamphlets, but the information is not always readily available to the consumer. Would you support or oppose requiring all fast-food and chain restaurants to display nutritional information on menus and menu-boards? If you support, press 1. If you oppose, press 2.

Support 77% *Oppose* 23%

Q10 California recently banned the sale of all junk foods, meaning high-fat, high-sugar snacks, and sugared beverages on all public school campuses. If NC were to ban the sale of junk foods and sugared beverages in public schools, would you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove. If you strongly approve, press 1. If somewhat approve, press 2. If somewhat disapprove, press 3. If strongly disapprove, press 4. If unsure, press 5.

Strongly approve... 56% *Strongly disapprove* 3%
Somewhat approve..... 31% *Unsure* 1%
Somewhat disapprove 10%

Q11 If you are a woman, press 1, if a man, press 2.

Women 54% *Men*..... 46%

Q12 If you are white, press 1. If African-American, press 2. If Hispanic, press 3. If other, press

White 73% *Other*..... 8%
Black..... 19%

Q13 If you are 18 to 29 years old, press 1. If you are 30 to 45, press 2. If 46 to 65, press 3. If older than 65, press 4.

18-29..... 11% *46-65*..... 47%
30-45..... 16% *Older than 65*..... 26%





Crosstabs

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Most imp. Public Health issue			
Cancer	28%	27%	30%
Heart Disease	20%	18%	24%
AIDS	2%	3%	1%
Obesity	26%	28%	23%
Cigarette Smoking	7%	8%	7%
Drug and Alcohol abuse	9%	9%	9%
Not Sure	7%	7%	7%

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Concern over Obesity in NC			
Very	54%	58%	49%
Somewhat	34%	35%	33%
Not Very	10%	6%	15%
Not at all	2%	1%	3%

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Disease or lifestyle probelm			
Disease	4%	6%	2%
Lifestyle choices	50%	52%	48%
Combination of both	45%	41%	50%
Unsure	1%	2%	0%

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Personal responsibility			
All	17%	19%	16%
Great Deal	63%	57%	70%
Some	18%	21%	13%
Hardly any	0%	-	1%
Not sure	1%	3%	-

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Cannot help being obese			
Yes	59%	58%	61%
No	18%	17%	18%
Unsure	23%	25%	21%

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Responsibility of fast food companies			
Great Deal	45%	46%	45%
Some	39%	44%	32%
Very Little	12%	6%	19%
None	4%	4%	5%

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Should state gov. get involved			
Should become involved	45%	44%	46%
Should not become involved	46%	46%	45%
Unsure	9%	9%	9%

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Think of Calories when choosing a meal?			
Very likely	56%	63%	48%
Somewhat likely	31%	27%	36%
Not likely	9%	8%	10%
Not at all likely	4%	2%	7%





Crosstabs

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Requiring fast food nutritional info?			
Support	77%	84%	69%
Oppose	23%	16%	31%

	Base	Gender	
		Women	Men
Ban sale of junk food in schools			
Strongly approve	56%	67%	42%
Somewhat approve	31%	26%	37%
Somewhat disapprove	10%	4%	16%
Strongly disapprove	3%	2%	4%
Unsure	1%	1%	0%

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Most imp. Public Health issue				
Cancer	28%	32%	19%	19%
Heart Disease	20%	20%	24%	19%
AIDS	2%	2%	5%	-
Obesity	26%	25%	27%	25%
Cigarette Smoking	7%	6%	11%	11%
Drug and Alcohol abuse	9%	10%	5%	14%
Not Sure	7%	6%	8%	11%

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Concern over Obesity in NC				
Very	54%	52%	57%	67%
Somewhat	34%	37%	30%	17%
Not Very	10%	9%	14%	8%
Not at all	2%	2%	-	8%

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Disease or lifestyle probelm				
Disease	4%	4%	5%	3%
Lifestyle choices	50%	52%	43%	42%
Combination of both	45%	43%	49%	56%
Unsure	1%	1%	3%	-

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Personal responsibility				
All	17%	16%	19%	25%
Great Deal	63%	66%	54%	58%
Some	18%	16%	24%	14%
Hardly any	0%	1%	-	-
Not sure	1%	1%	3%	3%

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Cannot help being obese				
Yes	59%	58%	64%	58%
No	18%	21%	-	31%
Unsure	23%	21%	36%	11%

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Responsibility of fast food companies				
Great Deal	45%	44%	56%	31%
Some	39%	39%	31%	53%
Very Little	12%	12%	14%	6%
None	4%	5%	-	11%





Crosstabs

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Should state gov. get involved				
Should become involved	45%	43%	51%	44%
Should not become involved	46%	49%	35%	42%
Unsure	9%	8%	14%	14%

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Think of Calories when choosing a meal?				
Very likely	56%	57%	54%	51%
Somewhat likely	31%	29%	35%	37%
Not likely	9%	8%	11%	11%
Not at all likely	4%	6%	-	-

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Requiring fast food nutritional info?				
Support	77%	77%	76%	75%
Oppose	23%	23%	24%	25%

	Base	Race		
		White	Black	Other
Ban sale of junk food in schools				
Strongly approve	56%	53%	57%	75%
Somewhat approve	31%	34%	27%	14%
Somewhat disapprove	10%	8%	16%	6%
Strongly disapprove	3%	4%	-	6%
Unsure	1%	1%	-	-

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Most imp. Public Health issue					
Cancer	28%	11%	32%	25%	39%
Heart Disease	20%	22%	23%	22%	15%
AIDS	2%	-	10%	1%	1%
Obesity	26%	39%	13%	31%	19%
Cigarette Smoking	7%	15%	9%	5%	8%
Drug and Alcohol abuse	9%	4%	8%	11%	10%
Not Sure	7%	9%	4%	6%	10%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Concern over Obesity in NC					
Very	54%	62%	48%	55%	52%
Somewhat	34%	26%	38%	34%	34%
Not Very	10%	9%	12%	8%	14%
Not at all	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Disease or lifestyle probem					
Disease	4%	12%	-	2%	7%
Lifestyle choices	50%	41%	46%	46%	63%
Combination of both	45%	42%	54%	52%	28%
Unsure	1%	5%	-	0%	2%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Personal reponsibility					
All	17%	26%	15%	14%	20%
Great Deal	63%	45%	71%	67%	59%
Some	18%	23%	14%	18%	18%
Hardly any	0%	4%	-	-	-
Not sure	1%	2%	-	1%	3%





Crosstabs

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Cannot help being obese					
Yes	59%	49%	67%	62%	55%
No	18%	19%	28%	16%	15%
Unsure	23%	32%	5%	22%	31%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Responsibility of fast food companies					
Great Deal	45%	40%	49%	48%	40%
Some	39%	39%	35%	35%	48%
Very Little	12%	17%	13%	12%	8%
None	4%	4%	3%	5%	4%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Should state gov. get involved					
Should become involved	45%	55%	48%	45%	39%
Should not become involved	46%	40%	40%	45%	53%
Unsure	9%	6%	12%	10%	8%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Think of Calories when choosing a meal?					
Very likely	56%	61%	57%	55%	56%
Somewhat likely	31%	20%	29%	33%	33%
Not likely	9%	13%	7%	8%	10%
Not at all likely	4%	6%	7%	4%	2%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Requirinng fast food nutritional info?					
Support	77%	84%	77%	76%	76%
Oppose	23%	16%	23%	24%	24%

	Base	Age			
		18-29	30-45	46-65	Older than 65
Ban sale of junk food in schools					
Strongly approve	56%	42%	64%	55%	58%
Somewhat approve	31%	39%	22%	32%	31%
Somewhat disapprove	10%	17%	5%	11%	8%
Strongly disapprove	3%	2%	9%	3%	1%
Unsure	1%	-	-	0%	2%

