WNCHEALTHYIMPACT

Data Interpretation Terms & Definitions

Terms	Definition
Age-Adjusted Rates	Age-adjustment is a statistical manipulation usually performed by the professionals responsible for collecting and cataloging health data, such as the staff of the NC State Center for Health Statistics (NC SCHS). Age-adjustment is preferred for comparing most health data from one population or community to another. It allows for the comparison of rates of age-related health events between communities with different age structures.
Change (as) percent difference	While it is possible to describe difference or change by the simple subtraction of a smaller number from a larger number, the result often is inadequate for describing the scope or significance of the difference or change. Converting the amount of difference or change to a percent takes into account the relative size of the numbers that are changing in a way that simple subtraction does not, makes it easier to grasp the meaning of change.
Comparator	A tool used for comparing something (usually a number, percent or rate) with a similar thing or with a standard measure.
Confidence Interval	A range of values used to describe the margin of error around an estimate (typically 95%).
Data Limitations	Some data may have inherent limitations, due to the sample size, its geographic focus, or its being out-of-date. This data will be accompanied by a warning about its limitations.
Error	Measurement **error** is the difference between a measured value of quantity and its true value. In statistics, an error is not a "mistake". Variability is an inherent part of the measurement process.

	*There is some error associated with every health data source.
Five-Year Aggregates	Data is often aggregated when rates are calculated based on a small number of events or a small population. The average rate over a 5-year period will produce a smaller confidence interval and a more stable rate. *Data is sometimes available for single years.
Indicator(s)	Measures/Number data that quantify a condition of well-being for an entire geographic population.
Mean	The average obtained by adding two or more quantities and dividing by the number of quantities.
Median	The middle value of a set of numbers, arranged in order small to large. The median is not affected by extreme data values or outliers.
Morbidity	Measures that quantify any departure, subjective or objective, from a state of physiological or psychological wellbeing. In practice, morbidity encompasses, disease, injury and disability. Measure of morbidity frequency characterize the number of persons in a population who become ill (incidence) or are ill at a given time (prevalence).
• **Incidence**	New cases of a condition during a defined time interval/persons at risk of developing the condition over that time interval.
• **Prevalence**	Total (new & old) existing cases of a disease at a specified time/people in the defined population at that time.
Mortality Rate (Death Rate)	Specific type of incidence rate. Number of deaths in the population during stated time period/persons at risk of dying during time period.
P-Value	A measure of how likely it is that a difference in rates occurred by chance alone. A very small p-value means that the calculated difference in rates was very unlikely to have occurred by chance. Common to see p-value < 0.05.
Primary Data	Data that you create (e.g. community listening sessions, survey data collected via phone, and online key informant survey data).

Proportions	A ratio in which the numerator, x, is included in the denominator, y. Proportions are often multiplied by 100 and reported as a percent.
Public Health Data Sources	What are they? • National, state, local health data sets • Surveillance data • Health-related surveys • Administrative (registries) • Vital Statistics (birth/death certificates) • Outbreak investigations • Research • US Census
Qualitative Data	Descriptive data that can be observed but not measured. It is often referred to as "story" data.
Quantitative Data	Any type of data that can be expressed as a number. It is often referred to as "numbers" data.
Rank	Ranking is a process of ordering items from 1st to last, best to worst, most important to least important. A strict ranking system does not allow items to be considered equal.
Rate	Often a proportion, with an added dimension of time. Measures the frequency at which a health event occurs during a period of time and represents the burden of disease or health-related outcome during a specific time period.
Ratio	Any fraction obtained by dividing one quantity by another, such as x, the numerator, divided by y, the denominator, or x/y.
Regional arithmetic mean	*See definition for **mean**. Regional arithmetic mean was created in order to develop a representative regional composite figure from 16 separate county measures. Calculated by summing the available individual county measures and dividing by the number of counties providing those measures.
Secondary Data	Data that exists (e.g. data pulled from publicly available sources – census or NC SCHS).

Suppressed Data	Data that does not meet minimum reporting requirements, includes missing data or unstable rates is often suppressed and replaced with n/a.
Weighted Data	Data are considered weighted when data are collected from survey respondents and are adjusted to represent the demographics of the population from which the sample was drawn.