



East Carolina[®]
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**Challenges to local health department –
media engagement for health
promotion:**
The North Carolina County Health Rankings as
a Case Example

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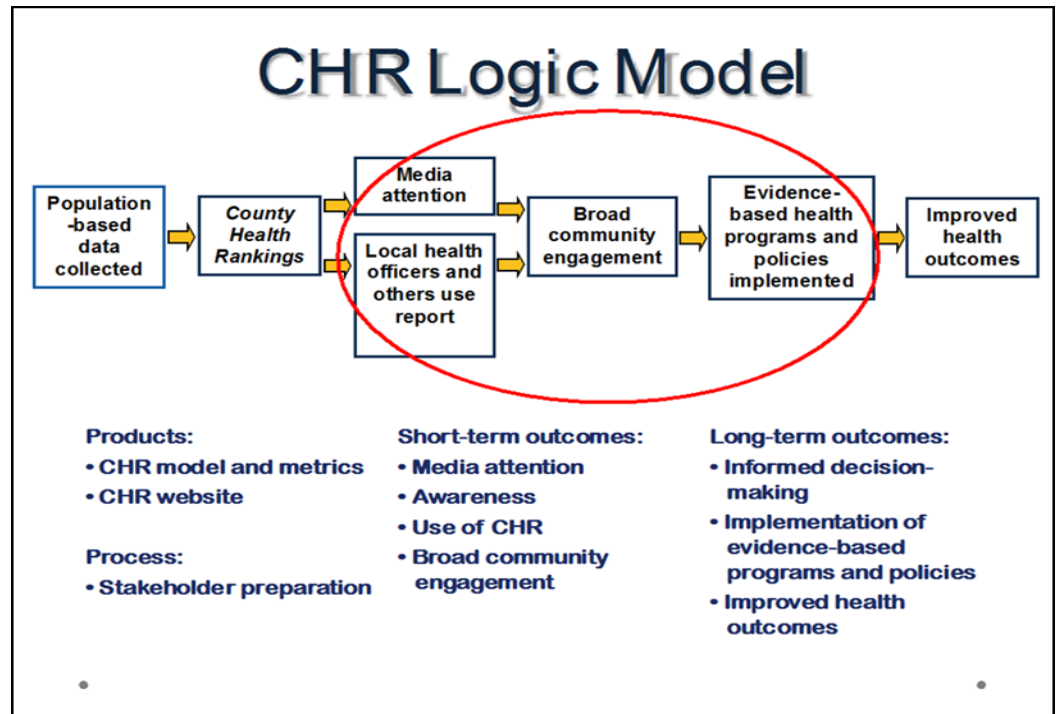
County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

- Produced by the Wisconsin Population Institute – **funded by RWJF**
- Create a rank for every county in the US
- Rank based on health outcome measures
- Rank based on health factors
- Counties ranked within states only



Goals of the Study

- Assess use and impact of the Rankings in North Carolina
- Describe the context and processes that shape that impact
 - **Describe the media context**



Challenges

Our results show that partnering with traditional media in community health improvement can be constrained in the following ways:

- Existence of media scarce counties
- Media, rather than public health practitioners, may shape the message
- LHD's may lack capacity

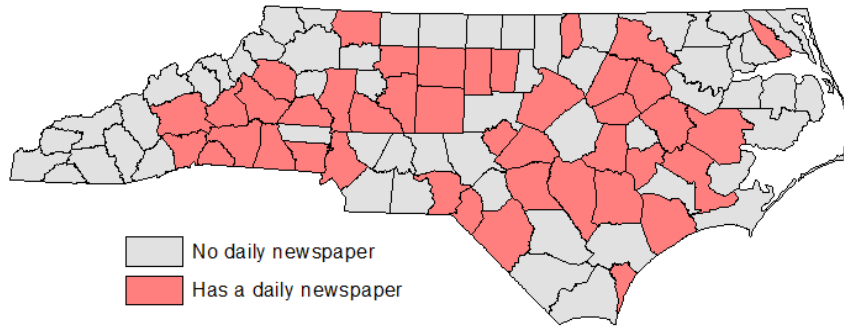
Methods

Mixed Method Approach

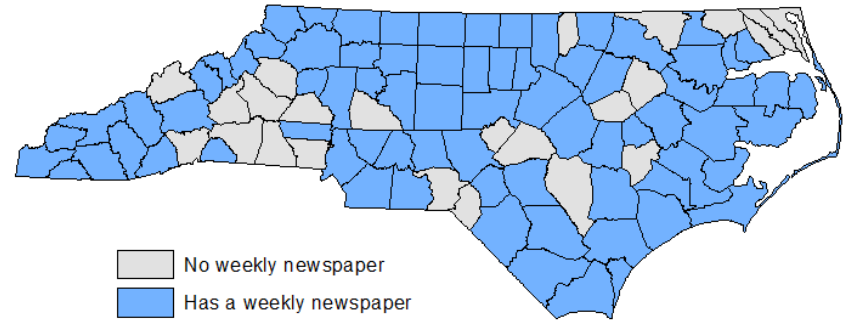
- **Survey of all 85 local health jurisdictions in North Carolina**
 - Qualtrics survey
 - Response rate 65 % (n= 55)
 - Questions about use of CHR, characteristics of the LHD, staff capacity and collaborations with media
- **Media Analysis**
 - Geographical analysis of media environment in NC counties
 - Content analysis of news stories on the Rankings in NC in 2012 and 2013
- **Case Study Interviews with Local Health Departments**

Geography of Media Environment

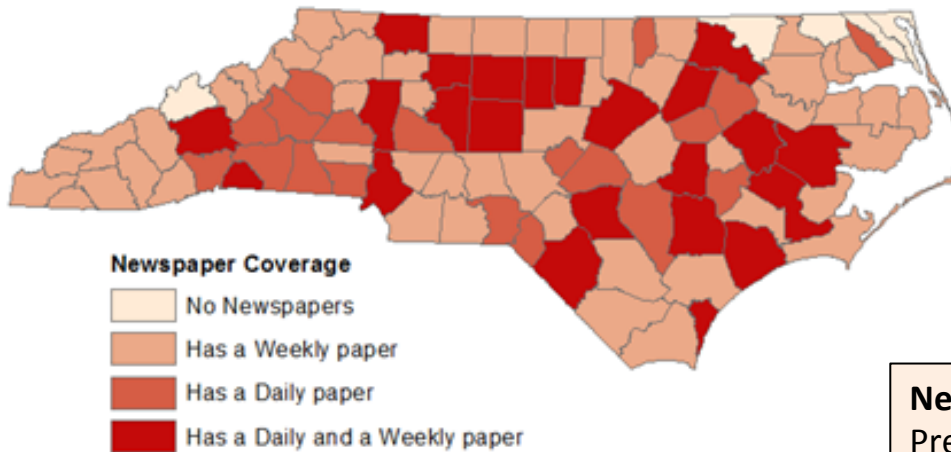
Counties with Daily Newspaper



Counties with Weekly Newspaper



Overall Newspaper Environment

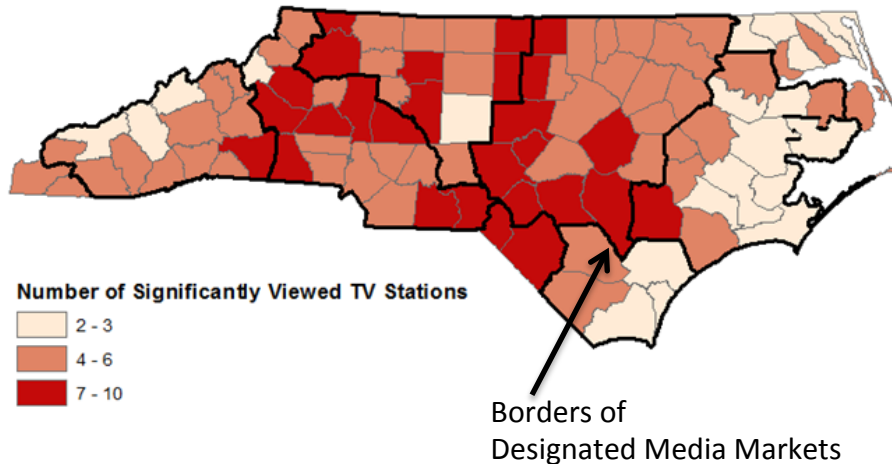


- 23 Counties have both a daily and a weekly newspaper
- 19 Counties have a daily newspaper
- 53 Counties have a weekly newspaper
- 5 Counties have no newspaper

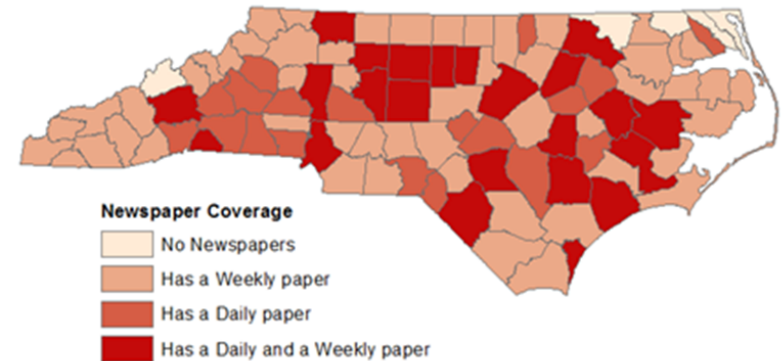
Newspaper coverage – measured as the number of NC Press Association newspapers in the county (daily or weekly)

Geography of Media Environment

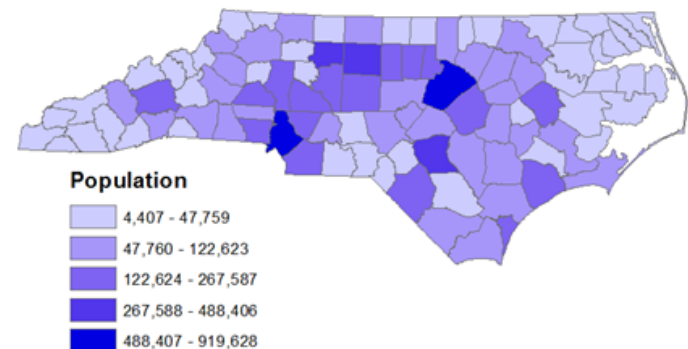
Number of TV Stations with Significant Viewership



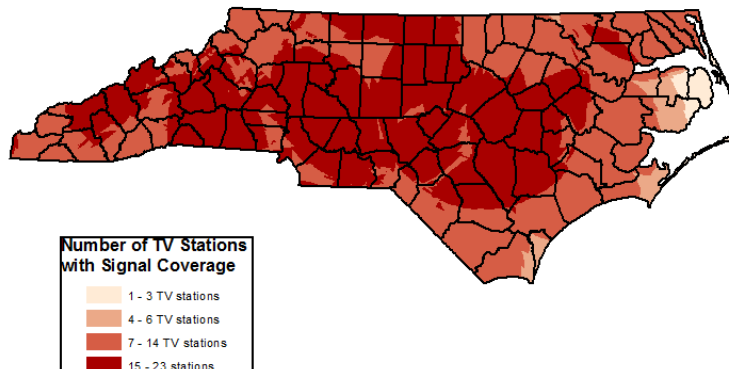
Overall Newspaper Environment



Population



Number of TV Stations with Overlapping Signal Coverage



Media Content Analysis

How were the County Health Rankings portrayed by traditional media? (newspapers, TV)

- Examined news stories on CHR in NC from Jan 1, 2012 – May 1, 2013
- 120 news stories (Newspaper and TV)
- Stories identified from SRDS – a news reporting service

What we looked for:

- What counties were mentioned in the stories?
- Were the counties mentioned in a positive or negative way?
- Was a health director interviewed?
- Did the story focus on a poorly ranked county or a highly ranked county?
- What was the frame (theme) of the story?

Media Content Analysis

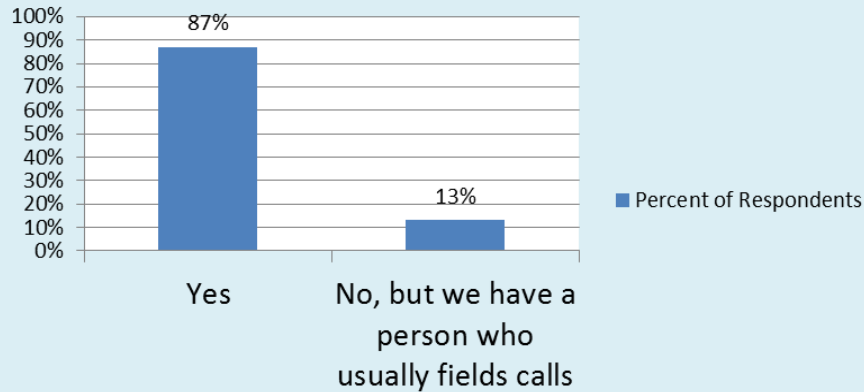
- 3 dominant frames emerged:
 - Health accountability
 - Individual behavior, rather than social determinants
 - *Horse-race* reporting
 - Emphasis on competition by rank
 - Practice engagement
 - Limited practice involvement in crafting the message

Local Health Department Use of CHR

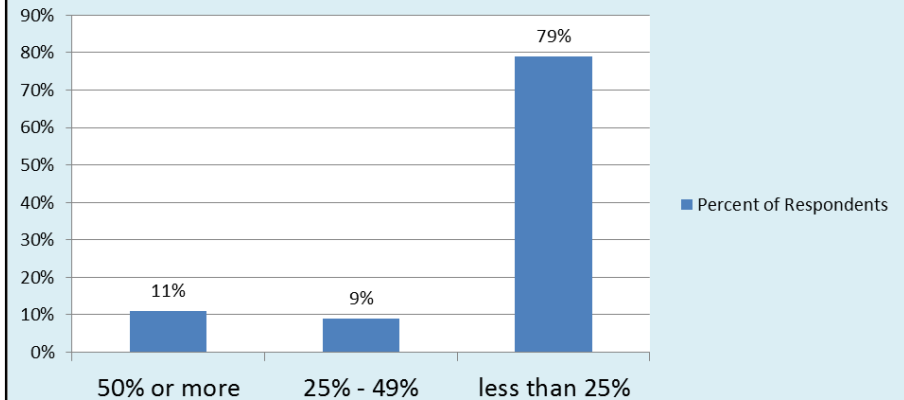
- 38% of LHDs attempted to engage media in understanding and using the Rankings;
- 40% of participating LHDs issued a press release; and
- 36% gave interviews to local media.
- Attempts to engage the media around the Rankings were very (26%) or somewhat (37%) successful.
- LHDs reported not receiving any or much attention from policy makers (66%) or the general public (80%).

Local Health Department Capacity

Does your LHD have a media staff person?

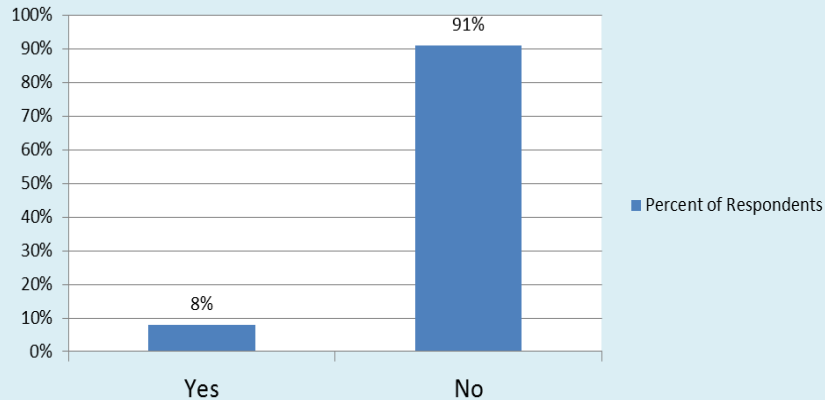


What percent of the media staff person's time is devoted to media relations?

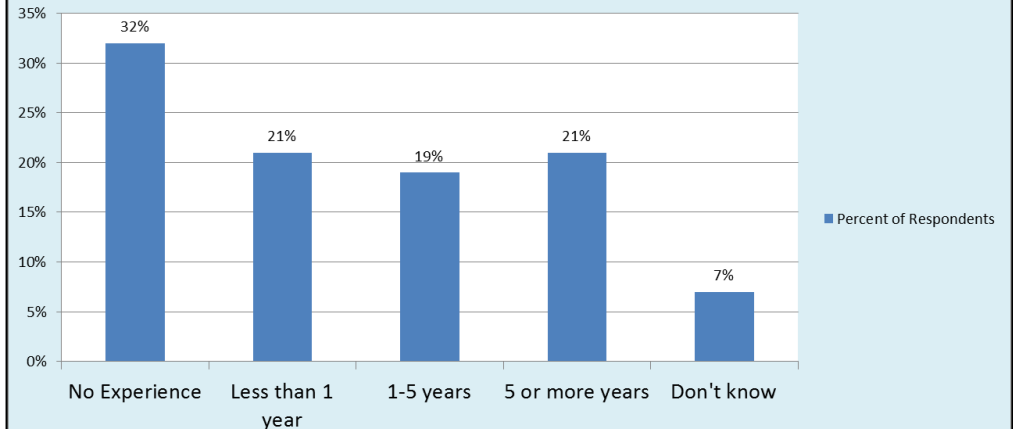


Local Health Department Capacity

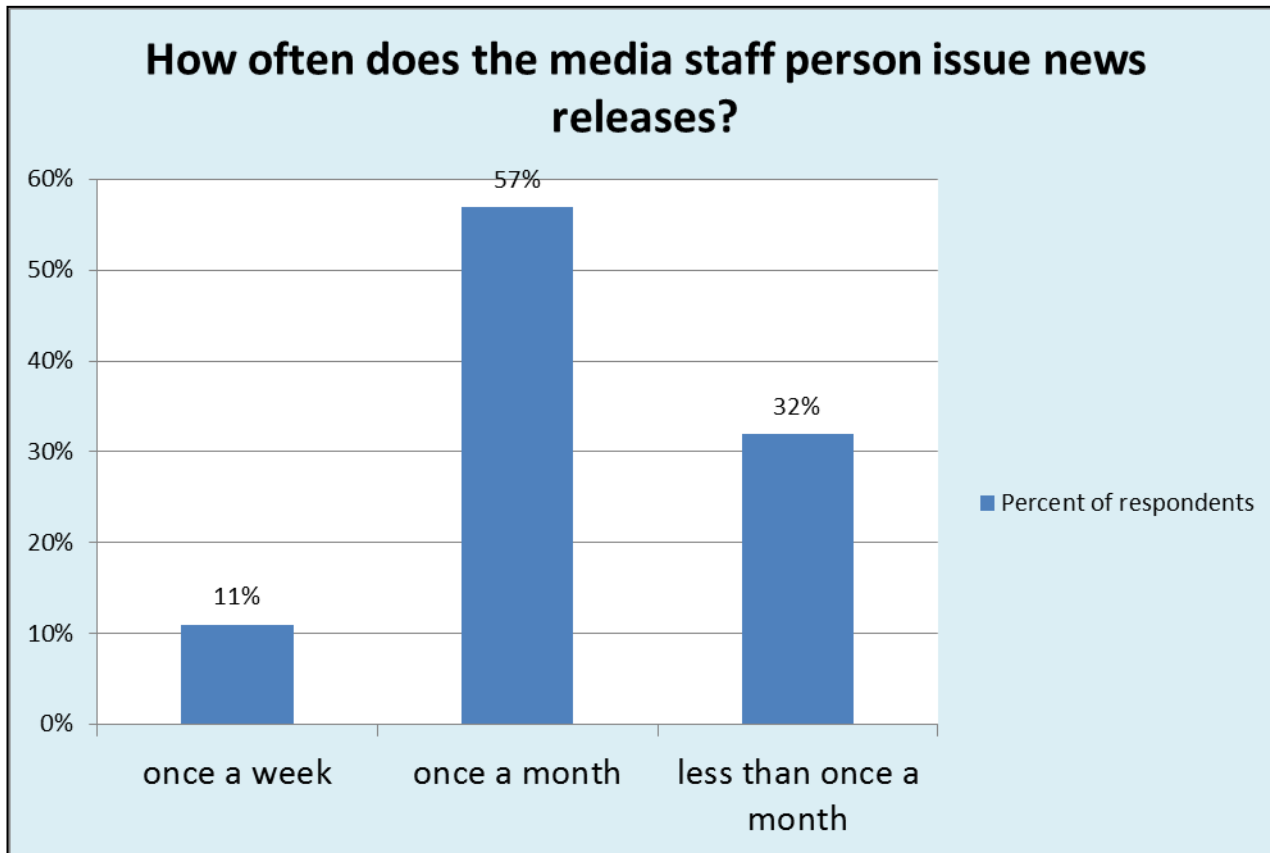
Does the media staff person have a degree in mass communications or a related field?



What level of experience with the media did this person have when they were hired?



Local Health Department Capacity



Implications for Practice

- Engaging the media is difficult even under the best of circumstances
- Local health department media specialists are not prepared to interact effectively with the media
- Local health department staff need training on how to frame social determinants of health messaging
- County Health Rankings have not provoked a media response necessary to achieving a community dialog on social determinants of health

Future Research

Need a better understanding of:

1. Why County Health Rankings are not used to engage the media more often
2. How to improve local health departments' ability to engage the media
3. How to provide effective media/communications training beyond "Press Release 101"
4. What public health stories are the media telling and why
5. How to improve the ability to tell community health improvement stories through the lens of social determinants of health

Thank You!

