

2022

Cleveland County Community Health Data

HEALTHY TOGETHER CLEVELAND

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September 30, 2022



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Executive Summary

Atrium Health received grant funding through The Duke Endowment's Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas program to establish a coalition in Cleveland County to increase access to quality healthcare services and address the social and economic factors which impact the health of the community. The **Healthy Together Cleveland** (formerly LEAD Health) coalition was established with a diverse steering committee composed of representatives from Atrium Health, Cleveland County Health Department, HealthCare Foundation of Cleveland County, Cleveland County Schools, City of Shelby, non-profit sector, faith sector, and community residents who have a desire to invest in a healthier Cleveland County. Healthy Together Cleveland is conducting research and community engagement efforts to gather feedback to identify priority focus areas that will guide the coalition's work moving forward. Based on the identified community priority areas of focus, work groups will be established to develop and execute action plans.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) County Health Rankings reports have shown that Cleveland County has ranked among the least healthy counties in North Carolina since 2011. Healthy Together Cleveland is utilizing the County Health Rankings and the most recent Community Health Assessment to guide their efforts in identifying priorities to improve healthcare in the County.

A Community Health Assessment (CHA) is conducted every four years by the Cleveland County Health Department in collaboration with representatives from other community agencies. The purpose of the CHA is to identify factors that affect the health and well-being of a community. These factors are determined through a comprehensive analysis of primary data collected in a community survey and through focus groups as well as secondary data from local, regional, state, and national sources.



The current CHA for Cleveland County was completed in 2019. Key findings from the 2019 CHA include:

Chronic health conditions continue to drive the leading causes of death in the county.

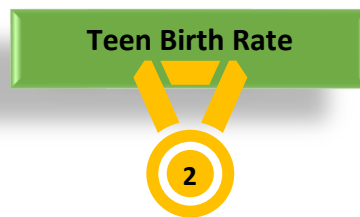
Mental health issues are major concerns of county residents with many reporting actual diagnoses of anxiety and depression.

Substance abuse is still a major health issue in the county with tobacco and vaping using electronic cigarettes as well as marijuana use among students a primary concern and an ongoing concern about opioid use among adult residents.

Data identifies resources to promote healthy food choices and increased levels of physical activity available in the county and survey responses indicate a concern with learning more about nutrition, weight management, and physical activity options.

Teen pregnancies have decreased over a ten-year period in the county but still remain a concern based on the number of teen births and the need for comprehensive reproductive health and safety education.

As part of the 2019 CHA, a community survey was published in September 2019 to gather feedback from county residents to identify key health priorities. A total of 765 responses were processed and tallied. The top health priorities identified from this process were the following:



Overview of Health in Cleveland County

Community Health Assessment Overview

In Cleveland County, the 2019 Community Health Assessment (CHA) was led by the Cleveland County Health Department in collaboration with representatives from community agencies and community members. Oversight for the 2019 CHA was provided by a Core Committee composed of individuals from across Cleveland County with expertise in data analysis and strategic planning. Additional guidance was provided by the Board of Health for Cleveland County and the Board of Directors for the Alliance for Health.

Cleveland County's 2019 CHA process followed the recommendations for a community assessment published by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health in 2015. Participants in the 2019 process focused on a socio-ecological model for survey development and data collection to result in a comprehensive illustration of community needs.

The CHA utilized 21 health indicators outlined in the *Healthy North Carolina 2030: A Path Toward Health* report. These indicators are used in measuring North Carolina's progress toward a healthier population. This framework was adopted for use in determining priorities for Cleveland County.

The top priorities identified directly related to health issues were:

- 1) **tobacco use**
- 2) **teen birth rate**
- 3) **limited access to healthy food**

2030 Health Indicators for Cleveland County	
Ranking	Indicator
1	Individuals Living at or below 200% Federal Poverty Level
2	Adverse Childhood Experiences
3	Tobacco Use
4	Teen Birth Rate
5	Severe Housing Problems
6	Third Grade Reading Proficiency
7	Limited Access to Healthy Food
8	Primary Care Clinicians
9	Early Prenatal Care
10	Uninsured
11	Unemployment
12	Drug Overdose Deaths
13	Infant Mortality
14	Access to Exercise Opportunities
15	Suicide Rate
16	Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Consumption
17	HIV Diagnosis
18	Incarceration Rate
19	Short-Term Suspension
20	Life Expectancy
21	Excessive Drinking

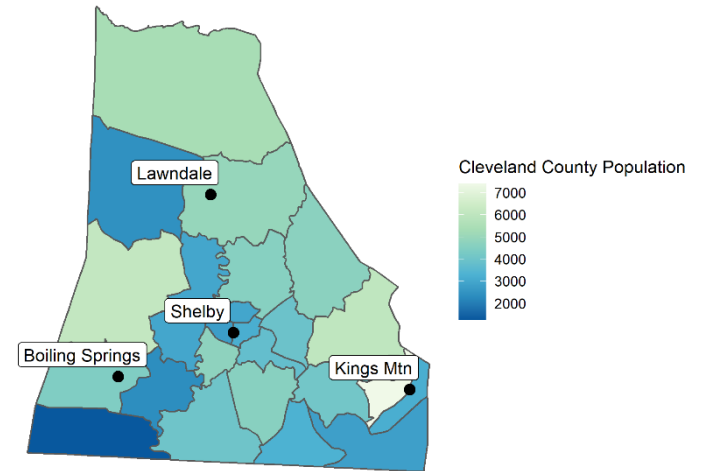
Community Demographics

Cleveland County lies on the southwestern boarder of North Carolina, located approximately 42 miles from Charlotte. The county is considered a rural county and is designated as a Tier 1 Economically Disadvantaged county despite its proximity to more prosperous metropolitan areas.

Shelby, the largest city, serves as the county seat and is also where most of the services for the county are concentrated. Kings Mountain is the second largest municipality with thirteen smaller municipalities: Belwood, Boiling Springs, Casar, Earl, Fallston, Grover, Kingstown, Lawndale, Lattimore, Mooresboro, Patterson Springs, Polkville, and Waco.

The population of Cleveland County is heavily centered in the city of Shelby, which is home to approximately 20,000 of the County's nearly 100,000 residents.

Cleveland County Population



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

2020 Population Estimates, Cleveland County and North Carolina

	Cleveland County	North Carolina
Total Population	99,519	10,439,388
% Change in Population (2010 – 2020)	1.5% ↑	9.5% ↑
Median Age	41.9	39.4
Median Household Income	\$43,512	\$61,972
% in Poverty	19.1%	13.4%
% Uninsured	11.4%	10.4%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census

Over 10 million people live in North Carolina, while Cleveland County has a total population of 99,519.

In comparison to North Carolina, Cleveland County has had a much slower growth in population over the past 10 years and has a lower median household income.

Peer County Comparison

The State Center for Health Statistics establishes a “Peer County” listing for all counties of North Carolina based on 5 indicators. The indicators include population size, individuals living below poverty level, population under 18 years of age, population 65 years and older, and population density.

Peer counties established for Cleveland County include Edgecombe, Lenoir, Rutherford, Watauga, and Wilson. The table below provides a comparison of population estimates for the state of North Carolina, Cleveland County, and all peer counties.

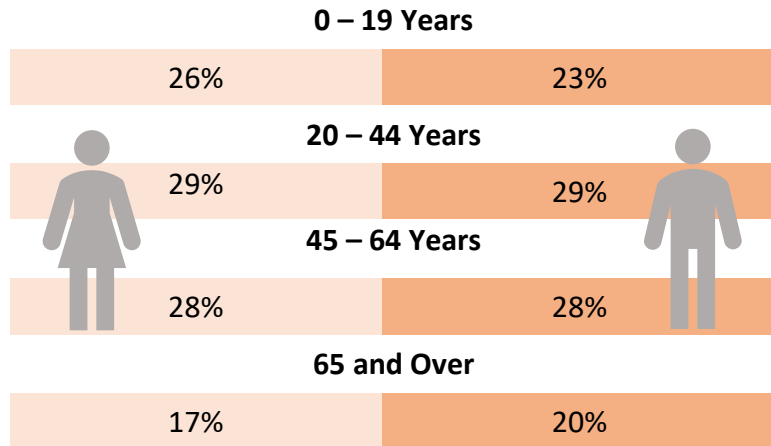
Peer County Population Estimates Comparison							
	North Carolina	Cleveland County	Edgecombe County	Lenoir County	Rutherford County	Watauga County	Wilson County
Total Population	10,439,388	99,519	48,900	55,122	64,444	54,086	78,784
% Change in Population (2010 – 2020)	9.5% ▲	1.5% ▲	13.5% ▼	7.4% ▼	5.0% ▼	5.9% ▲	3.0% ▼
Median Age	39.4	41.9	41.7	42.3	45.2	32.7	41.3
Median Household Income	\$61,972	\$43,512	\$40,489	\$39,923	\$43,183	\$46,453	\$47,201
% in Poverty	13.4%	19.1%	22.3%	22.0%	17.8%	24.5%	19.1%
% Uninsured	10.4%	11.4%	10.4%	11.2%	12.9%	10.1%	16.4%

Source: US Census Data

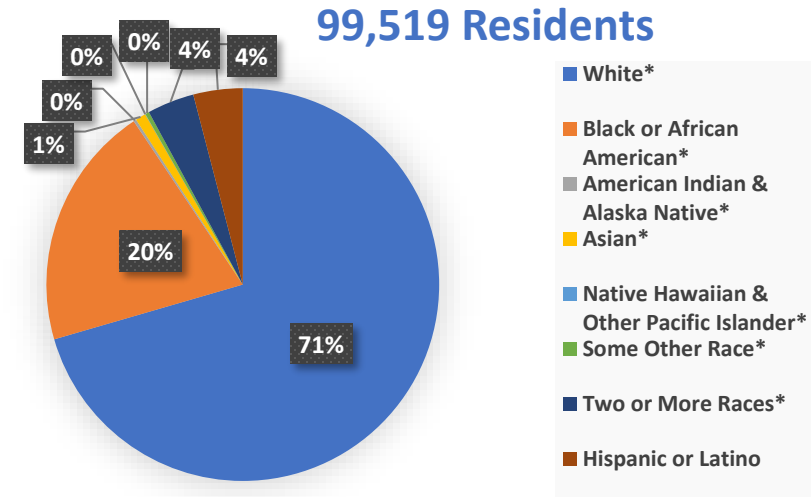


2020 Cleveland County Population Estimates Snapshot

Population by Age and Gender

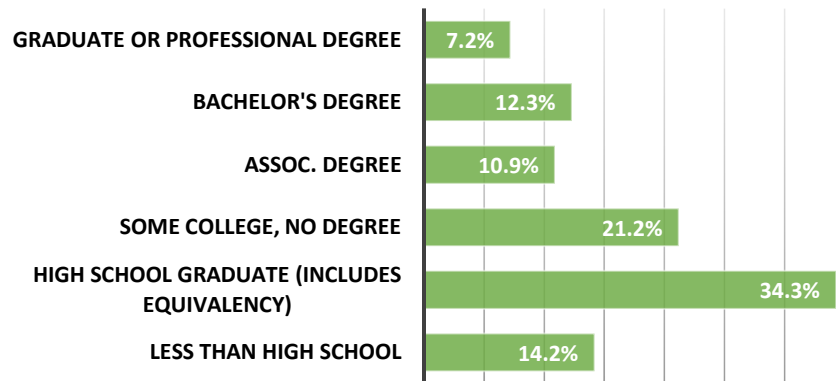


Population by Race and Ethnicity



*non-Hispanic or Latino

Population by Educational Attainment (25 Years & Over)



Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual has completed.

In Cleveland County, 19.5% of the population 25 years and older have a Bachelor's Degree or Higher which is less than the 32.0% for the state of North Carolina.



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable populations, defined as those at greater risk of poor health status and healthcare access, experience significant disparities in life expectancy, access to and use of healthcare services, morbidity, and mortality.

Vulnerable populations may include children, persons who are poor, individuals with disabilities, uninsured populations, persons suffering from homelessness, the elderly and frail, or other special populations in need.

Vulnerable Population Groups		
By Age	Number of Residents	% Of Total Population
Under 5 Years	5,576	5.7%
5 – 19 Years	18,564	18.2%
65 Years and Older	18,083	18.2%
Other Characteristics	Number of Residents	% Of Total Population
Unemployed	3,315	4.2%
Uninsured	11,163	11.4%
Living in Poverty	18,306	19.1%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Cleveland County Residents with Disabilities by Disability Type



9.2% or 8,443 residents experience ambulatory difficulties.



3.5% or 3,422 residents experience vision difficulties.



5.3% or 4,828 residents experience cognitive difficulties.



4.7% or 4,537 residents experience hearing difficulties.

Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Social Determinants of Health

At every stage of life, health is determined by complex interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment, and individual behavior. The social conditions people face each day can have a greater impact on their health and life expectancy than the health care they receive. Cleveland County is a Tier-One Economically Disadvantaged County (most distressed) based on unemployment, median income, population growth, and property taxes, and is ranked 66 out of 100 in Social and Economic Factors in the 2022 County Health Ranking.

Select Social Determinants of Health Characteristics		
	Cleveland County	North Carolina
< High School Degree	14.1%	11.6%
Limited English-Speaking Households	0.4%	2.2%
Median Income	\$43,512	\$61,972
Poverty Rate	19.1%	13.4%
Unemployment	7.4%	5.4%
Uninsured	11.4%	10.7%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	31.6%	34.3%
Paying >30% of Income on Housing	26.0%	27.0%
Households Without a Vehicle	7.2%	5.6%
Crowded Households (>1 Person /Room)	3.1%	2.2%
Low Access to Healthy Food	6.0%	8.0%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2022 County Health Rankings Data

The table to the left shows characteristics commonly associated with social determinants of health for both Cleveland County and North Carolina. Some notable comparisons:

- **Poverty Rate** is 6% higher in Cleveland County than North Carolina overall.
- **Unemployment** is 2% higher in Cleveland County.
- Although the **median income** in Cleveland County is about \$18,000 lower than North Carolina overall, fewer households are **spending more than 30% of their income on housing** in Cleveland County and fewer homes are **renter occupied**.

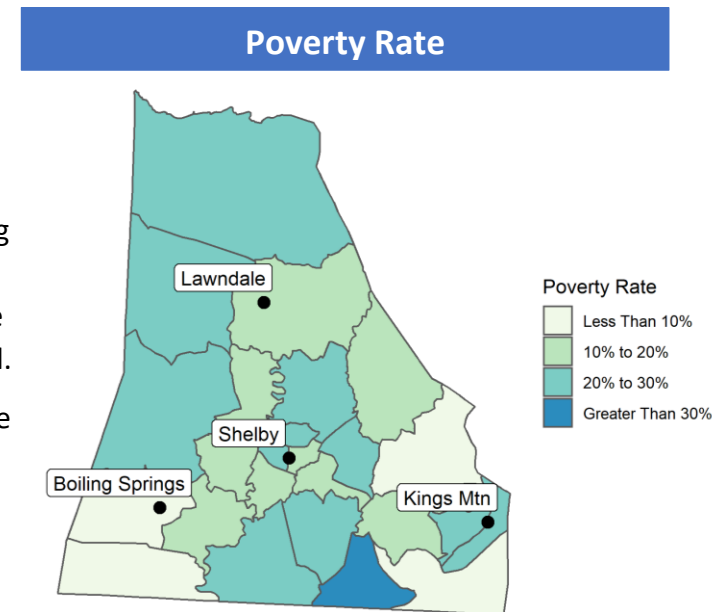
Poverty

The US Census Bureau utilizes a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The poverty threshold for a family of 4 (two children, two adults) is \$27,479 (2021 thresholds).

In Cleveland County, 18,306 people (19.1%) are living below the poverty threshold according to the 2020 American Community Survey, compared to 14% of the state (around 1.4 million people). However, the poverty levels are not uniform across the county or its residents. See Appendix I for a full comparison of demographics for the population below the poverty level.

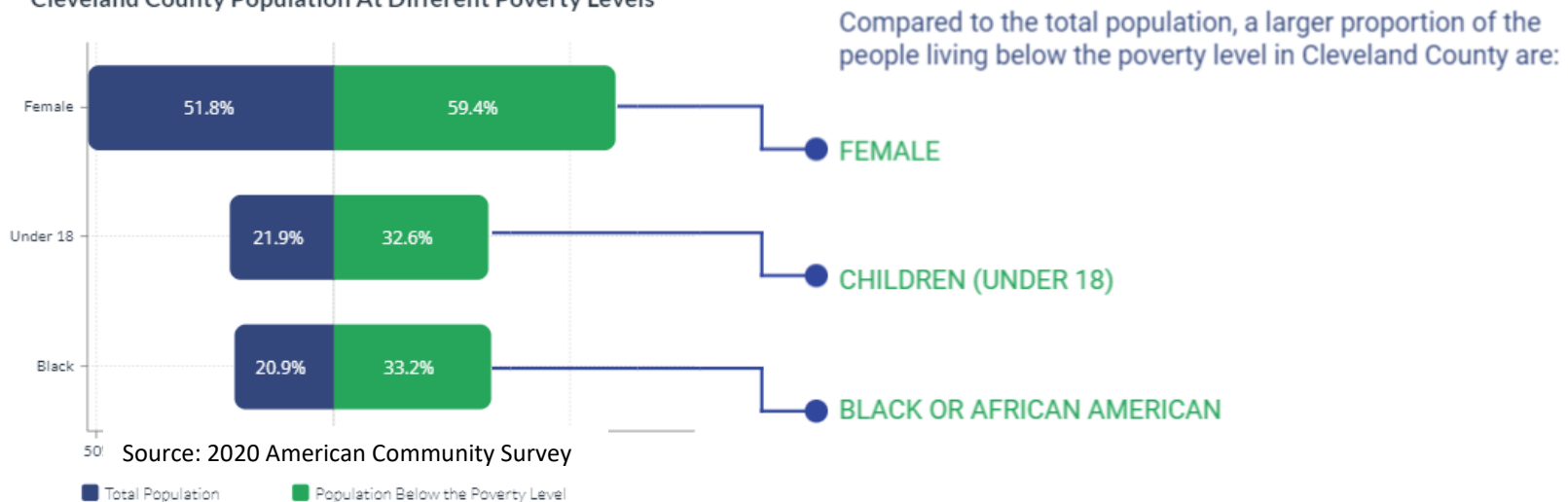
Across census tracts, poverty rates ranged from 4.2% (around 1 in 25 people living below the poverty level) to 35.1% (more than 1 in 3 people living below the poverty level).

Certain demographic groups were also overrepresented in the population living below the poverty level:



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Cleveland County Population At Different Poverty Levels



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

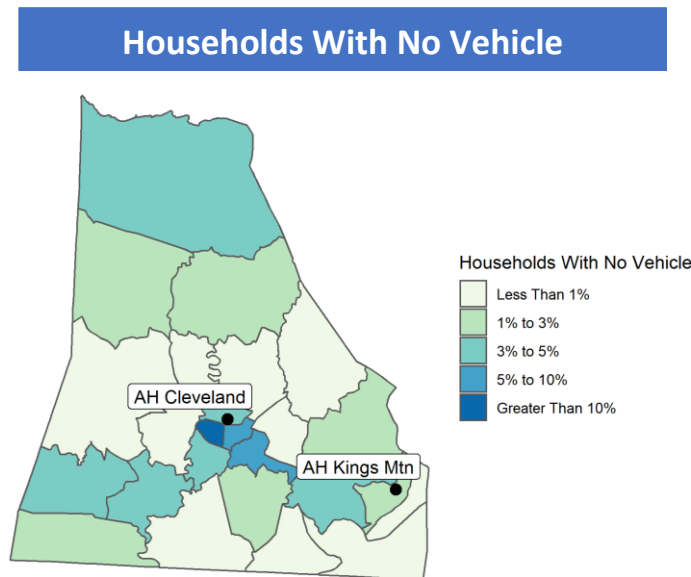
Vehicle Access

Transportation issues include lack of vehicle access, inadequate infrastructure, long distances, lengthy times to reach needed services, transportation costs, and adverse policies that affect travel.

Adequate and reliable transportation services are fundamental to healthy communities. Transportation issues can affect a person's access to health care services. These issues may result in missed or delayed health care appointments, increased health expenditures, and overall poorer health outcomes.

In Cleveland County, 2,598 (7.2%) households do not have access to a vehicle, compared to 223,909 (5.6%) households statewide. There are limited public transportation options available in the county and households with no access to a vehicle may struggle to access health care services.

There are 2 hospitals in Cleveland County, which are located in the cities of Shelby and Kings Mountain (as shown in the map below). A majority of the primary care practices in the county are also located in Shelby and Kings Mountain, except a Kintegra Health clinic in Fallston. Also, programs that offer free services to support low-income patients are often in the larger cities in surrounding counties and require further travel.



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

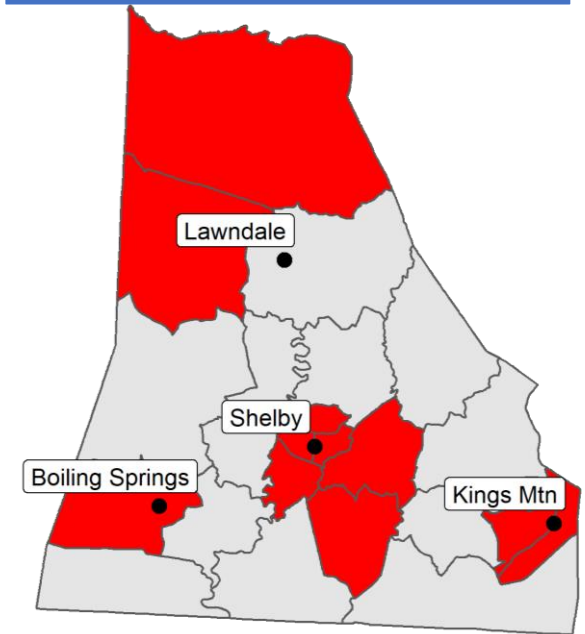
Food Insecurity

Per the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), **food insecurity** is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is a critical social determinant of health that relates closely to other economic factors as well as many health conditions and health outcomes.

According to the 2020 Feeding America *Map the Meal Gap* study, in Cleveland County, approximately 15,350 people are food insecure (15.7% of the population). Around 1 in 5 people who are food insecure have an income that is too high to qualify for SNAP and other food assistance programs. In North Carolina, more than 1.2 million people are food insecure, or around 12% of the state's population.

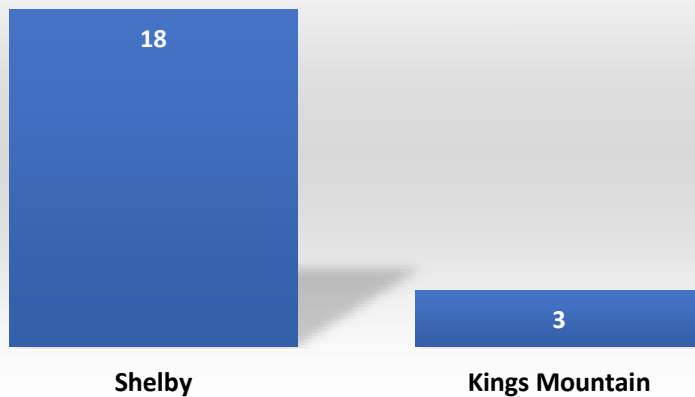
Many factors can impact a person's ability to get access to healthy food, including physical distance. Low access to healthy food is defined as living more than half a mile from a grocery store in an urban area or more than 10 miles from a grocery store in a rural area. The map on the right shows census tracts with significant populations with low access to healthy food.

Low Access to Healthy Food



Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas

Grocery Stores in Cleveland County

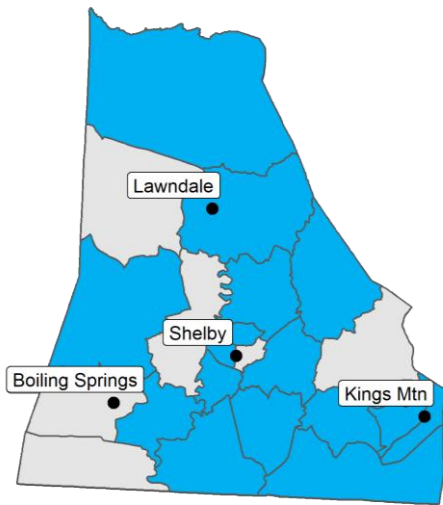


Based on a search of all grocery stores in Cleveland County, results show that all grocery stores are either located in Shelby or Kings Mountain. Of the 21 total grocery stores in the county, 18 are located in Shelby.

This count of grocery stores includes major chains, small grocery stores, and markets that sell fresh produce.

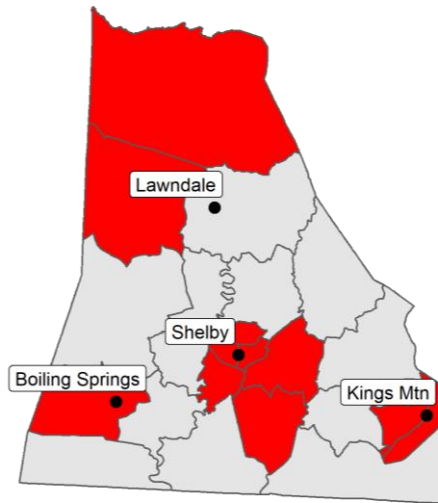
Putting it All Together

Many social determinants of health can combine or compound one another. For example, several areas in Cleveland County are considered **food deserts**. Food deserts are defined as **low-income** neighborhoods with **low access to supermarkets** and **low vehicle access**. The maps below represent these three determinants, using USDA definitions, individually. The **food deserts** in Cleveland County are tracts where all three conditions are met.



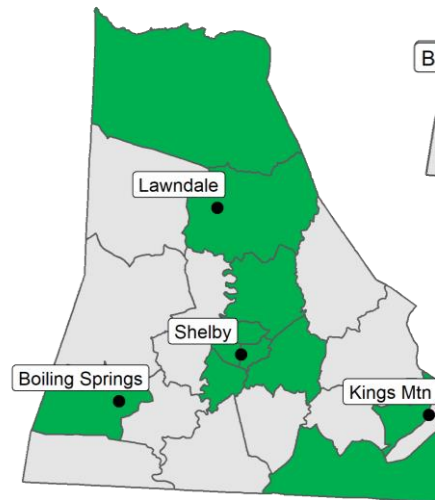
The USDA Food Access Research Atlas defines a low-income tract as one with a poverty rate of greater than 20%, a median income of less than 80% of the statewide median, or, if the tract is in a metropolitan area, a median income of less than 80% of the metropolitan area.

Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas



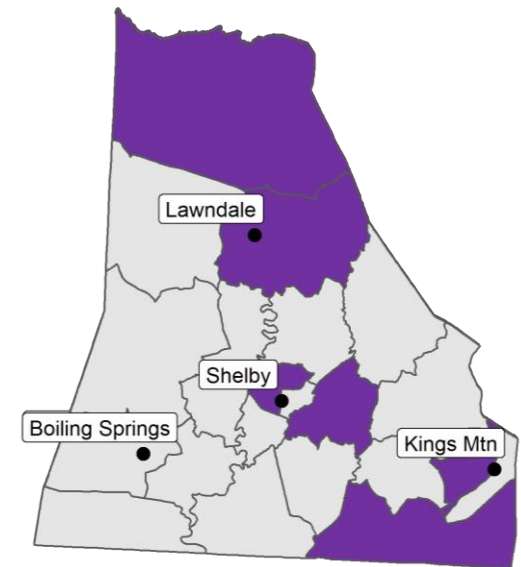
In the low food access tracts, at least 500 people or at least 33% of the tract population that lives more than half a mile or more than ten miles from a supermarket or grocery store.

Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas



Low vehicle access tracts are those with more than 100 households without access to a vehicle.

Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas



Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas

Health Issues & Chronic Disease Prevention

Quality of Life

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (CHR&R) is a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute which is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The CHR&R program provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples to build awareness of the multiple factors that influence health and support leaders in growing community power to improve health equity.

Per the 2022 CHR&R, Cleveland County is ranked among the least healthy counties in North Carolina in terms of health outcomes. Cleveland County ranked 83rd out of the 100 counties in North Carolina.

In the CHR&R, Quality of Life is a health outcome that is measured by poor or fair health, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, and low birthweight. In Cleveland County, nearly 1 in 4 residents self-reported their health as poor or fair. This is slightly more than the state of North Carolina.

Residents Who Report Poor or Fair Health

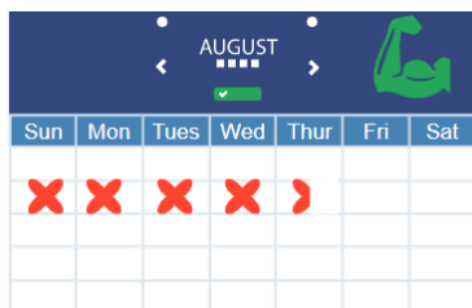


Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) in Cleveland County

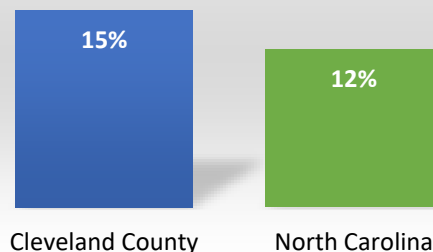


Just under 1 in 5 (18%) in North Carolina

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings Data



Population with >14 Poor Health Days Monthly



In 2019, 17% of Cleveland County residents reported more than 14 poor mental health days per month, and 15% reported more than 14 days of poor physical health. Cleveland County residents also reported an average of 5 poor mental health days per month, compared to 4.4 days statewide, and an average of 4.5 poor physical health days compared to 3.7 statewide.

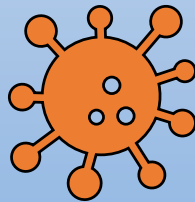
Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings Data

Leading Causes of Death

Between 2015 and 2019 there were a reported 6,186 deaths in Cleveland County. Chronic conditions, such as cancer, heart disease, chronic lower respiratory disease, cerebrovascular disease, and Alzheimer’s account for 55% of the total reported deaths. Of the total fatalities, 8% were injury deaths (homicide, suicide, motor vehicle deaths, and other unintentional injuries).

Leading Causes of Death 2015-2019	
Cleveland County	North Carolina
1. Heart Disease	1. All Cancers
2. All Cancers	2. Heart Disease
3. Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	3. Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
4. Cerebrovascular Disease	4. Cerebrovascular Disease
5. Alzheimer’s	5. Alzheimer’s

Source: NCDHHS 2019 Vital Statistics



In Cleveland County, for the years of 2014-2018, the age range with the highest number of deaths reported was 65 to 84 years of age.

The leading cause of death for this age range was cancer – all sites, closely followed by diseases of the heart.

Leading Causes of Death in Cleveland County (2014-2018)

Age Range	Rank	Cause of Death	Number of Deaths
0 – 19 Years	1	Conditions originating in the perinatal period	24
	2	Congenital anomalies (birth defects)	12
	3	Motor vehicle injuries	12
	4	Other unintentional injuries	8
Total Deaths (all causes)			79
20 – 39 Years	1	Motor vehicle injuries	35
	2	Other unintentional injuries	34
	3	Suicide	23
	4	Diseases of the heart	18
Total Deaths (all causes)			206
40 – 64 Years	1	Cancer – all sites	345
	2	Diseases of the heart	293
	3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	88
	4	Diabetes	79
Total Deaths (all causes)			1,416

Source: State Center for Health Statistics, North Carolina County Health Data Book 2020

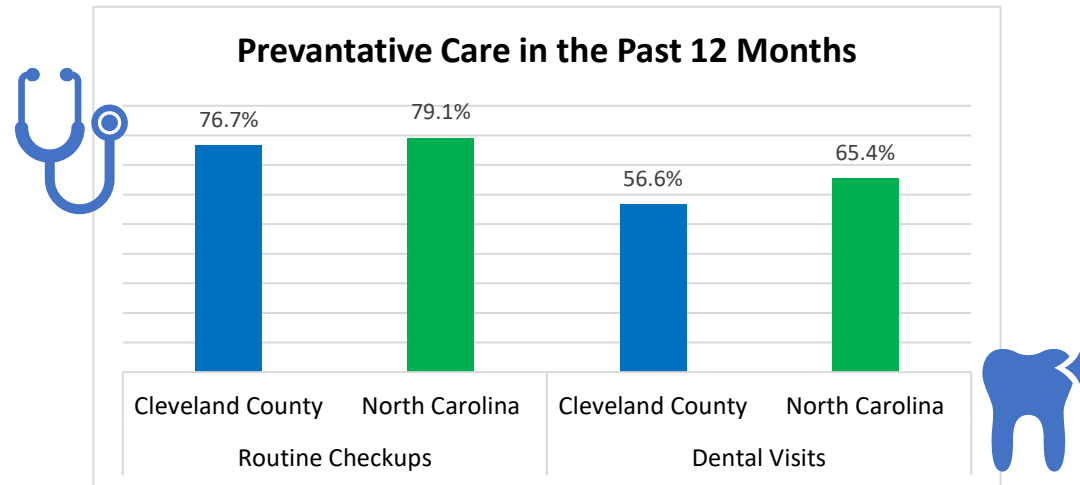
Leading Causes of Death for Elderly Population in Cleveland County (2014-2018)

Age Range	Rank	Cause of Death	Number of Deaths
65 – 84 Years	1	Cancer – all sites	695
	2	Diseases of the heart	588
	3	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	234
	4	Cerebrovascular disease	158
Total Deaths (all causes)			2,849
85+ Years	1	Diseases of the heart	361
	2	Cancer – all sites	166
	3	Alzheimer’s Disease	160
	4	Cerebrovascular disease	104
Total Deaths (all causes)			1,576

Source: State Center for Health Statistics, North Carolina County Health Data Book 2020

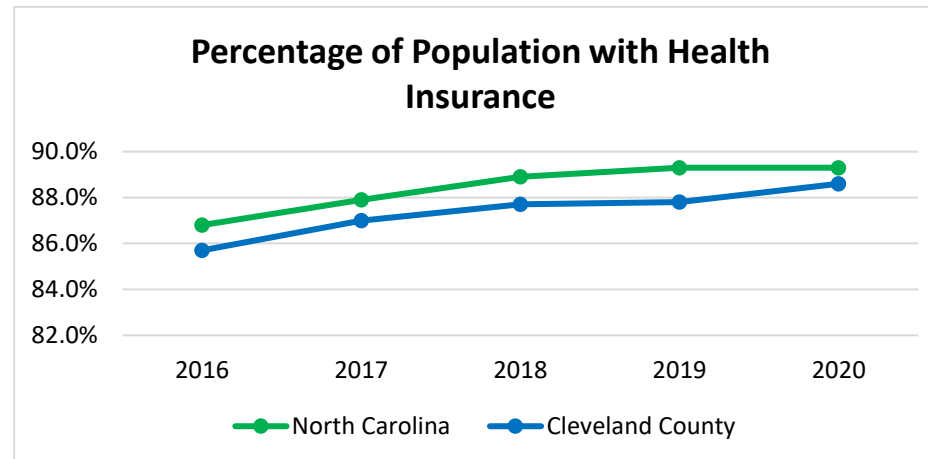
Preventative Care

Routine, or preventative, care is a critical part of maintaining overall health. In Cleveland County, 76.7% of residents had a routine checkup and 56.6% had a dental visit in the past 12 months. This is slightly less than the state's rate for routine checkups and dental visits.



Source: CDC PLACES Local Data for Better Health and BRFSS

Health insurance coverage has improved across the county over the last few years; however, Cleveland County still has a lower percentage of population with health insurance than the state.



Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

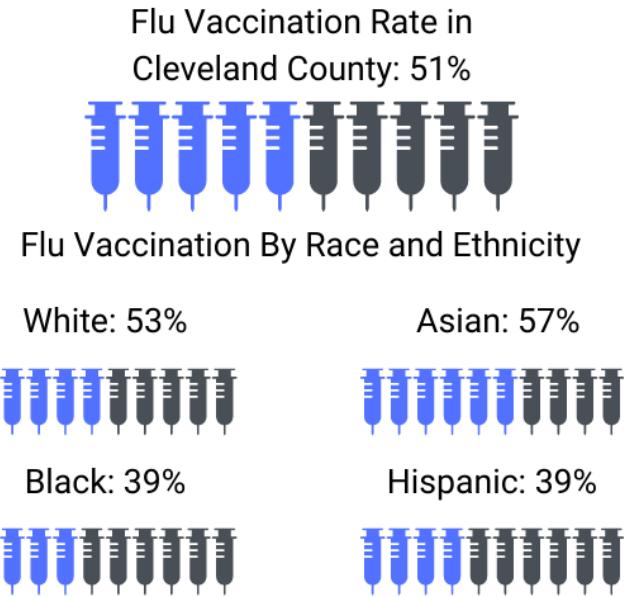
Preventative care helps detect or prevent serious diseases and medical problems before they can become major. Annual checkups, immunizations, and flu shots, as well as certain tests and screenings, are a few examples of important preventative care. Cleveland County has an overall flu vaccination rate of 51%, which is slightly more than half of the total population.



Core Preventative Care for Cleveland County Older Adults



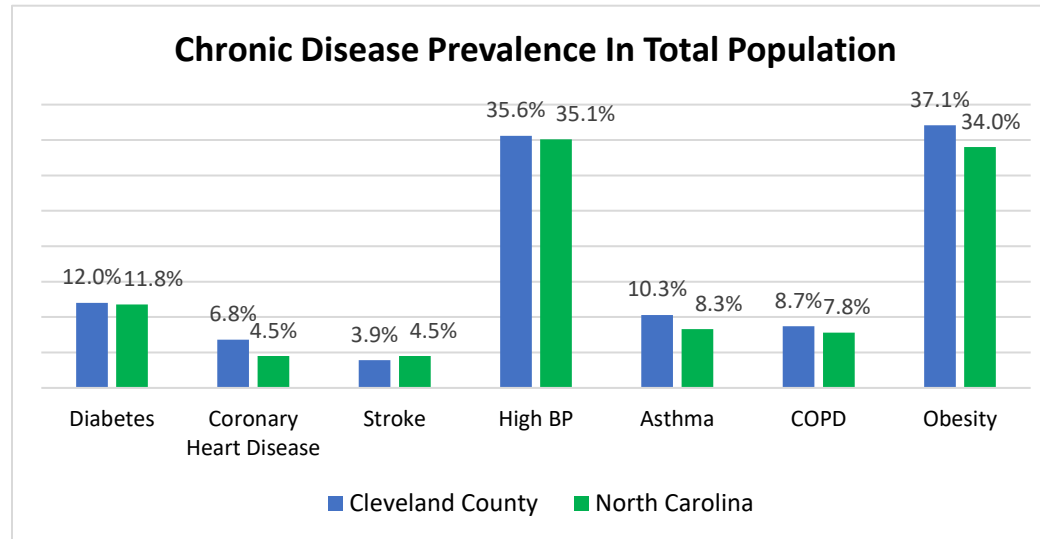
Source: CDC PLACES: Local Data for Better Health



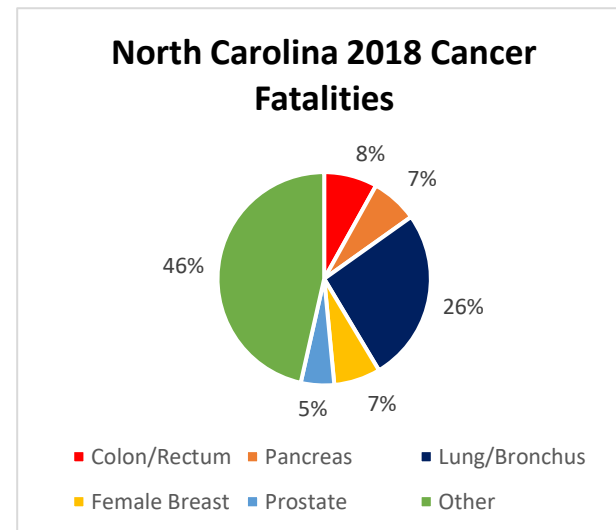
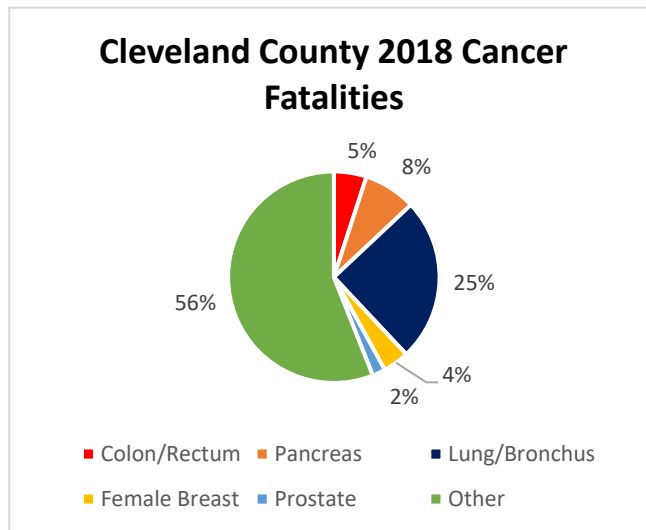
Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings Data

Chronic Disease

Chronic conditions can diminish the quality of life due to disability, dependence on medication, and high costs of medical care. In Cleveland County, high blood pressure is the most prevalent chronic disease.

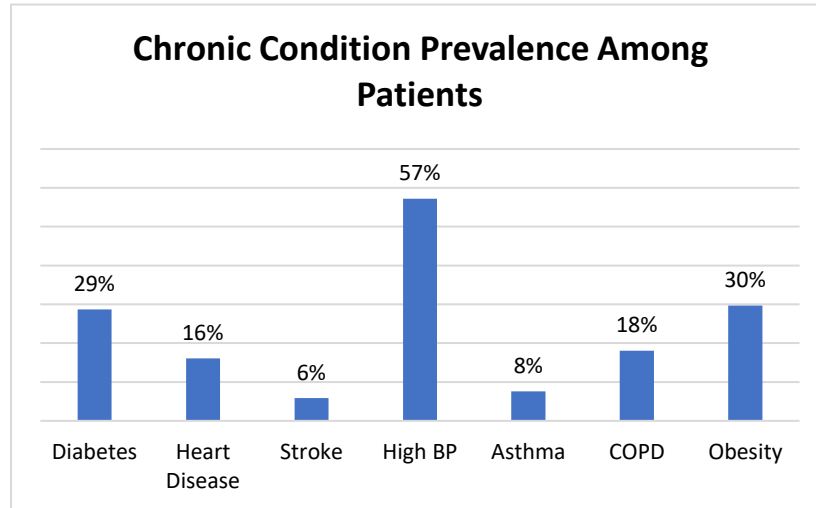


Source: CDC PLACES Local Data for Better Health and BRFSS

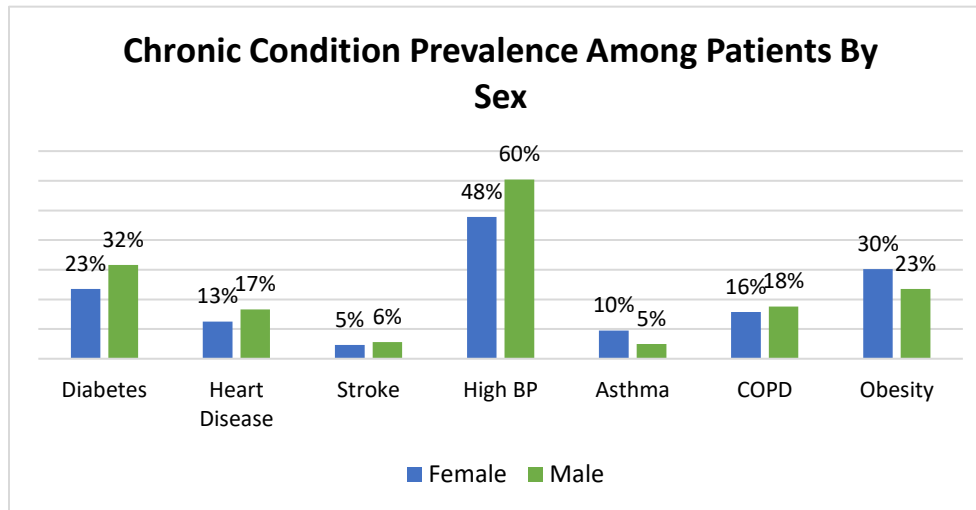


Source: NC State Center for Health Statistics Cancer Profiles

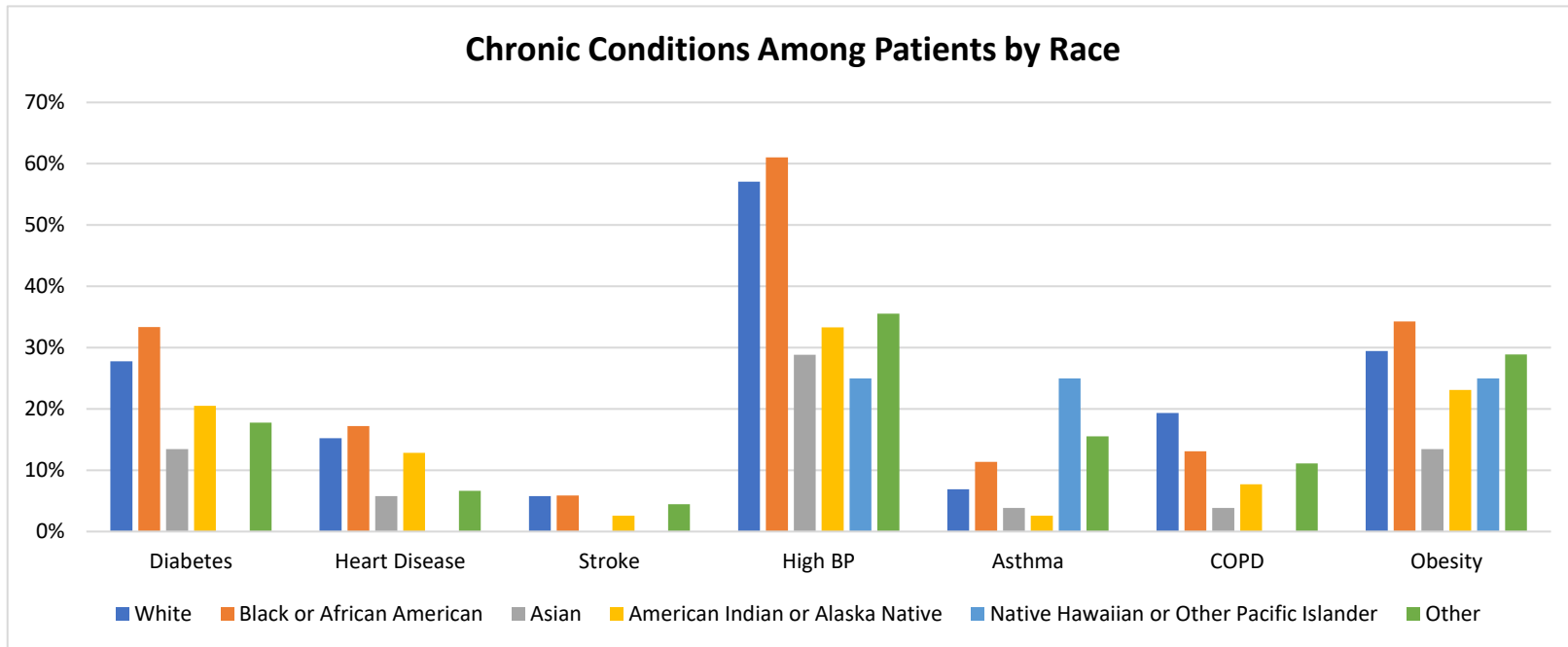
According to hospitalization data for all patients treated at Atrium Health’s Cleveland County hospitals, 75% of Cleveland County patients treated at either one of the two facilities between 2018 and 2021 have or had at least one of the following conditions: Diabetes, Heart Failure or Non-Ischemic Heart Disease, Stroke, Hypertension, Asthma, COPD, and Obesity. The charts below demonstrate the percentage of patients who have or had any history of these conditions overall, by race, and by sex.



Source: Atrium Health EMR



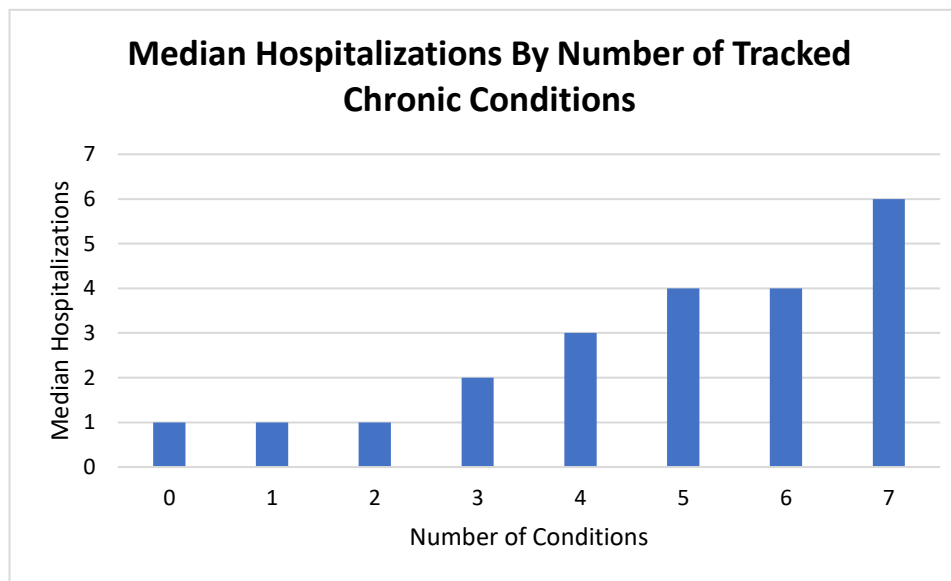
Source: Atrium Health EMR



Source: Atrium Health EMR

Patients with a greater number of conditions also had a higher median number of hospitalizations.




For example, people with 0, 1, or 2 of the 7 conditions had a median of 1 hospitalization while people with 5 of the 7 conditions had a median of 4 and people with 7 had a median of 6 hospitalizations.






21 Source: Atrium Health EMR

Risk Factors

Healthy behaviors are critical to long-term health. Per the 2022 County Health Rankings, Cleveland County ranks 77th out of the 100 counties in North Carolina for healthy behaviors. This ranking considers factors such as substance use (smoking, excessive drinking), nutrition and exercise, and sexual activity (STD transmissions, teen births).

Nutrition			
	Category	Cleveland County	North Carolina
	Food Environment Index	7.0	6.6
	Lack of Access to Healthy Food	6%	8%
	Food Insecurity	15.7%	12%

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings and Feeding America Map the Meal Gap

Exercise			
	Category	Cleveland County	North Carolina
	No Leisure Time Physical Activity	30%	26%
	Access to Exercise Opportunities	50%	68%
	Adult Obesity	37.1%	34.0%

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings (Data is Self-Reported)

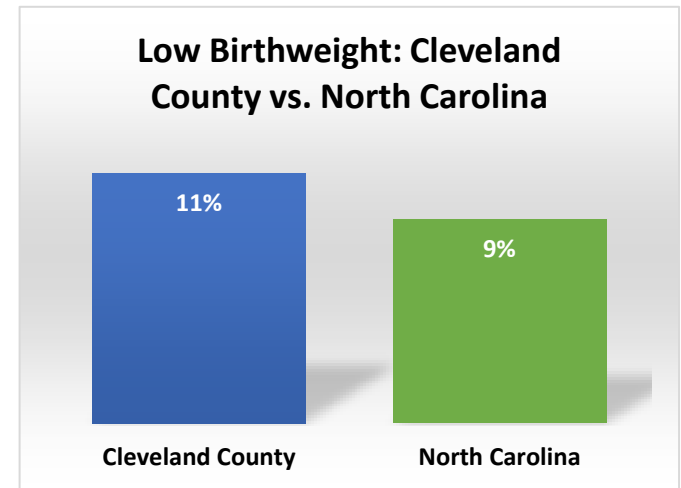
DEFINITIONS:

- **Food Environment Index** – This measure includes access to healthy foods by considering the distance an individual lives from a grocery store or supermarket, locations for health food purchases in most communities, and the inability to access healthy food because of cost barriers.
- **Lack of Access to Healthy Food** – This measures the percentage of the population that is low income and does not live close to a grocery store.
- **Food Insecurity** – This measure estimates the percentages of the population who did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year.

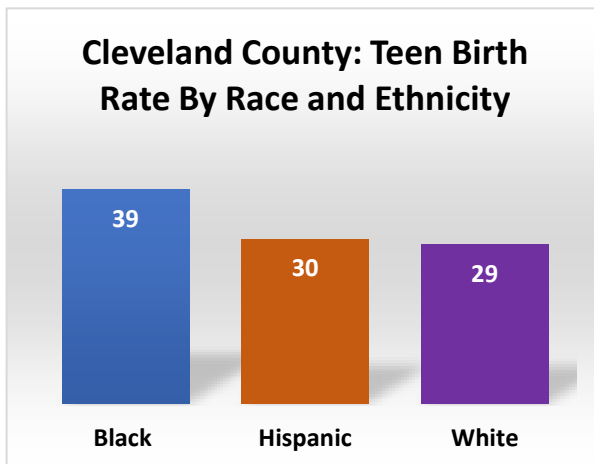
Maternal and Child Health

Health at birth can be a critical factor in long term health. For example, babies with low birthweight have increased risk of death or developing long term chronic conditions. In Cleveland County, 11% of infants were born with low birthweight which is slightly higher than the 9% reported for the state. Although the frequency of infants born with low birthweight in Cleveland County is not much higher than the state level, there are major disparities across races. Of the babies born in Cleveland County in 2019, 17% of Black infants were born with low birthweight compared to 9% of White infants and 8% of Hispanic infants.

Teen births are also a major concern in Cleveland County. Although teen birth rates have been decreasing, they are still far above the state level. The County Health Assessment identified teen births as the number two priority.



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings Data



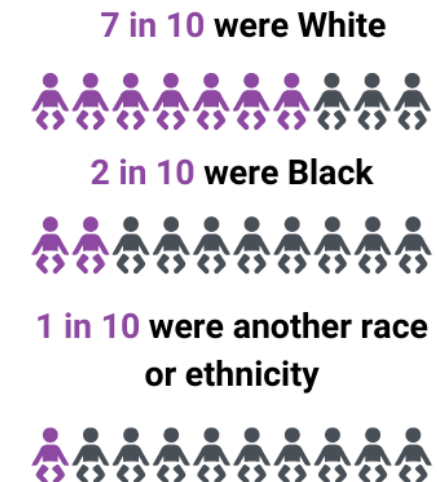
Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings Data

Births per 1000 Teens



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022 County Health Rankings

Of the babies born in Cleveland County in 2019



Source: NCDHHS 2019 Live Birth Data

Appendices

Appendix I: Cleveland County Demographics for Those Below the Poverty Level & Uninsured

Cleveland County Demographics for Those Below the Poverty Level		
	% Of Cleveland County Population	% Of Cleveland County Population Living Below Poverty Level
SEX		
Male	48.2%	40.6%
Female	51.8%	59.4%
AGE		
Under 18	21.9%	32.6%
18 to 24 years	8.0%	7.6%
25 to 34 years	11.9%	12.4%
35 to 44 years	11.3%	9.6%
45 to 54 years	14.0%	12.2%
55 to 64 years	14.3%	11.4%
65 and Over	18.7%	14.3%
RACE AND ETHNICITY		
White	74.0%	67.8%
Black or African American	20.8%	25.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2%	0.0%
Asian	1.0%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.0%
Mixed/Other	3.8%	6.8%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	3.7%	6.6%

Cleveland County Demographics for The Uninsured		
	% Of Cleveland County Population	% Of Cleveland County Uninsured Population
SEX		
Male	48.3%	52.2%
Female	51.7%	47.8%
AGE		
Under 19	23.2%	11.1%
19 to 25 years	9.3%	12.9%
26 to 34 years	10.3%	25.0%
35 to 44 years	11.1%	16.0%
45 to 54 years	13.7%	20.1%
55 to 64 years	14.0%	14.0%
65 and Over	18.4%	0.9%
RACE AND ETHNICITY		
White	73.9%	61.8%
Black or African American	20.9%	33.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2%	0.0%
Asian	1.0%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%
Mixed/Other	3.8%	4.3%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	3.7%	5.1%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey