
2023 State of the County Health Report

Nash County Health Department

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Top Three Health Priorities

- ❖ **Metabolic Syndrome**
(Focus on Heart Disease, Stroke, Diabetes and Obesity)
- ❖ **Poverty**
(Focus on Access and Low-Income)
- ❖ **Behavioral Health**
(Focus on Substance Use)

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Overview



Nash County was formed in 1777 from the western part of Edgecombe County, NC. The county was named for General Francis Nash (1742-1777), of Hillsborough. General Nash was a soldier who was mortally wounded while fighting under General George Washington at Germantown during the American Revolution. Nash County is located in the northeast section of the state, bounded by Edgecombe, Wilson, Johnston, Franklin and Halifax Counties. The county encompasses a total of 542.71 square miles in area (land and water) with

540.33 square miles in land area. Most of the county is rural in population with the exception of the City of Rocky Mount, which is located in both Nash and Edgecombe counties. The county has eleven municipalities within five quadrants that include: (1) County Seat (Nashville); (2) Eastern Area (Rocky Mount and Sharpburg); (3) Northern Area (Dortches, Castalia, Red Oak and Whitakers); (4) Southern Area (Middlesex and Bailey); and (5) Western Area (Momeyer and Spring Hope).

Nash County Health Department is governed by the Consolidated Human Services Board, which is comprised of twenty appointed members. The Nash County Consolidated Human Services Board has five vacancies currently.

Consolidated Human Services Board Members

Dr. Mike Johnson, O.D.
Board Chairman

Dr. Mark Abel
Pat Adams
Dorothy Battle
Dr. Tony Coats
Dan Cone
Bert Daniel
Mickey League

Yvonne Moore
Jeanette Pittman
Mike Stocks
Dr. Doris Knight Thorne
Sarah Thurman
Dr. Chandra Meachem Tucker
Danny Tyson

The State of the County Health Report (SOTCH) is a supplementary annual report to the 2021 Nash County Community Health Assessment. It highlights the current data of the county's leading health concerns and well-being of Nash County residents. The report includes current demographics, leading causes of death, the County's top three health priorities and the efforts to address these issues. It provides an update on the health of Nash County residents to serve as a resource for grant writing, local policies, budgets, program planning and implementation.

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Community Partners/Social Determinants of Health

Through program planning, Nash County Health Department is collaborating with county officials and policy-makers to align policies and interventions to improve health equity and a healthier built environment. This work helps reduce health disparities and improve health and well-being for all people. Nash County Health Department participates in a myriad of programs and workgroups to address the underlying causes that contribute to Social Determinants of Health.

Workgroups include:

- Healthy Kids Collaborative
- Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC)
- Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LIICC)
- Nash and Edgecombe Council of Community Services (CCS)
- Nash County Child Fatality Task Force
- Nash County Community Collaborative for Child Mental Health and Substance Use
- Nash County Community Child Prevention Team
- Nash County Local Emergency Preparedness Committee (LEPC)
- NEW Council Meeting
- Nurse Family Partnership Community Advisory Board
- Region 8 Network for HIV Prevention and Care
- Twin Counties Partnership for Healthier Communities
- UNC Health Nash OB Community Roundtable

Social Determinants of Health



Figure 1- Social Determinants of Health ¹

Social Determinants of Health
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Healthy People 2030

Nash County Demographics

2023 Population²

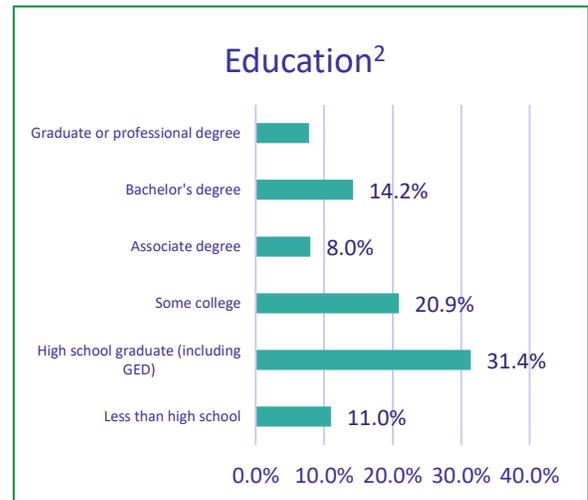
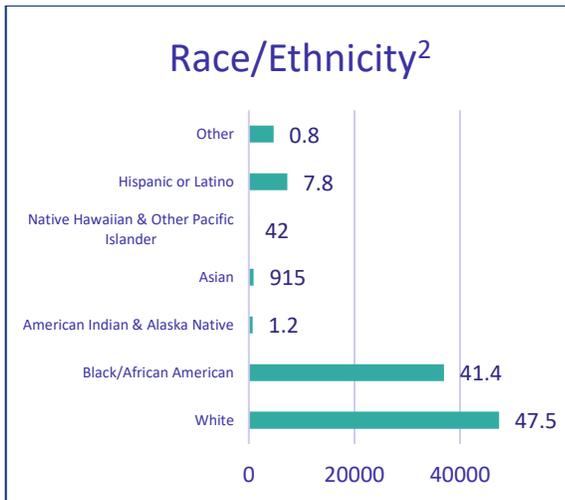
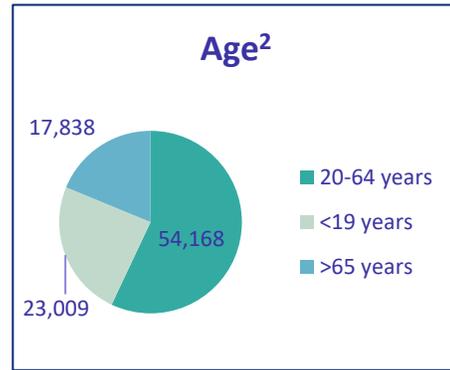
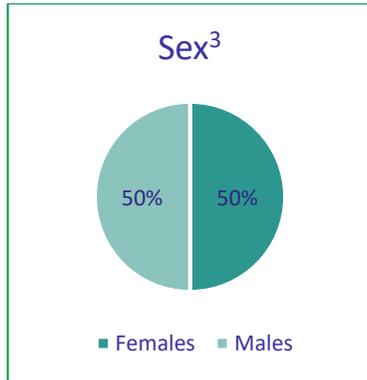
94,970

**Disabled Population in
Nash County²**

13.0%

**Median Household
Income²**

\$54,175



Poverty²

12.4%

Unemployment⁴

6.3%

Uninsured⁴

13%

Households²

43,154

| Rank | Cause of Death (based on 2019 data) | # Of Deaths | Percentage |
|--|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Diseases of heart | 249 | 22.0 |
| 2 | Cancer | 220 | 19.5 |
| 3 | Cerebrovascular diseases | 78 | 6.9 |
| 4 | Diabetes Mellitus | 53 | 4.7 |
| 5 | Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases | 51 | 4.5 |
| 6 | Alzheimer's Disease | 41 | 3.6 |
| 7 | All Other Unintentional Injuries | 35 | 3.1 |
| 8 | Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome & Nephrosis | 28 | 2.5 |
| 9 | Influenza and Pneumonia | 25 | 2.2 |
| 10 | Motor Vehicle Injuries | 24 | 2.1 |
| | All other causes (not listed above) | 327 | 28.9 |
| Total Deaths in Nash County by All Causes | | 1131 | 100.0 |

Table 1- Causes of Death in Nash County⁵

Health Priorities

In 2021, Nash County Health Department and community partners selected county-specific priorities during the Community Health Assessment process. The three chosen priorities include:

- ❖ Metabolic Syndrome (Focus on Heart Disease, Stroke, Diabetes and Obesity)
- ❖ Poverty (Focus on Access and Low-income)
- ❖ Behavioral Health (Focus on Substance use)

Approximately 32 stakeholders participated in two meetings in late October 2021 and early November 2021 in a health prioritization process. As a result, stakeholders agreed to adopt the selected priorities to address over the next three years (2021-2023) to improve community health outcomes with existing and new resources. In a follow-up meeting, the stakeholders identified programs and established objectives for each priority to show progress toward turning the community curve for better health outcomes.

Priority 1: Metabolic Syndrome

Metabolic syndrome is a group of conditions that can cause coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and other serious health problems. In Nash County, heart disease ranked #1 as the leading cause of death among chronic and infectious diseases. Following heart disease, other chronic health conditions such as cancer ranked #2, cerebrovascular disease (stroke) ranked #3, and diabetes ranked #4. Also, being overweight and obese among children and adults increases the risk of these chronic health conditions. Both overweight and obesity are generally defined by BMI ranges that are associated with an increased likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems. (Table 2: shows how BMI is used to classify weight status for adults⁶). Establishing access to healthy foods and physical activity is an objective for Nash County to reduce barriers many residents face for prevention and controlling Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, certain cancers, and stroke. Through partnerships, Nash County Health Department, Down East Partnership for Children, and Harrison Family YMCA agreed to establish health and wellness programs that include:

Table 2. Classification of Weight Status by BMI for Adults⁶

| Body Mass Index (BMI) | Weight Status |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Below 18.5 | Underweight |
| 18.5 to 24.9 | Healthy Weight |
| 25.0 to 29.9 | Overweight |
| 30.0 or higher | Obese |

Diabetes Awareness Program- A community education program hosted by Nash County Health Department and Harrison Family YMCA at least two times a year to increase citizens access to diabetes prevention services.

Progress:

- ❖ Program was paused in 2022 due to staff changes. Therefore, no progress was made with this program in 2023.
- ❖ However, Nash County Health Department hopes to continue this program and partnership in the future.

Faithful Families Program- A church-based program lead by Down East Partnership for Children to encourage healthy eating and physical activity in communities for children and adults.

Progress:

- ❖ There were 2,301 families impacted from this program in 2023.
- ❖ 88% of program graduates in 2023 showed improvement in making healthy food choices.

Harrison Family YMCA Wellness Program- The YMCA hosted wellness programs to increase citizens' access to physical activity and wellness opportunities.

Progress:

- ❖ **Blood pressure Self-Monitoring program-** an evidence-based program that offers personalized support to help participants develop the habit of routinely self-monitoring blood pressure, provides tips for maintaining cardiovascular health and provides nutrition education. It's a four-month program with a Healthy Heart Ambassador. Participants are required to take their own blood pressure at least twice a month, attend two consultations a month with the Healthy Heart Ambassador, and attend monthly nutrition education seminars. There were six participants who completed the program. Three of the six completed an evaluation with 100% of them stating that they made progress towards health and well-being goals as a result of participating in BPSM. A challenge was that interest and participation decreased over time.
- ❖ **Enhance Fitness Program-** there were 13 registered participants, 11 attended, and there was an average attendance of ~4 per session
- ❖ **Walk with Ease Program-** no additional follow up information regarding this program

Healthy Communities Program- A health promotion program established by Nash County Health Department to increase citizens' access to health and wellness opportunities through education and policy system changes.

Progress:

- ❖ Participated in 10+ community events/health fairs educating our citizens on various health topics.
- ❖ Hosted two sessions on Heart Health to inform our citizens about heart disease.
- ❖ Shared various health topics through our county social media platform to inform our citizens about healthy living tips.
- ❖ Challenges: We had some staff turnover that limited our ability to attend and participate in the community as much as we used to.

Priority 2: Poverty

The North Carolina Department of Commerce annually ranks the State's 100 counties based on economic wellbeing and assigns each a Tier designation. The 40 most distressed counties are designated as Tier 1, the next 40 as Tier 2, and the 20 least distressed as Tier 3. Nash County has been assigned a Tier 1 designation for 2021.⁷ County Tiers are calculated using four factors:

- Average unemployment rate
- Median household income
- Percentage growth in population
- Adjusted property tax base per capita

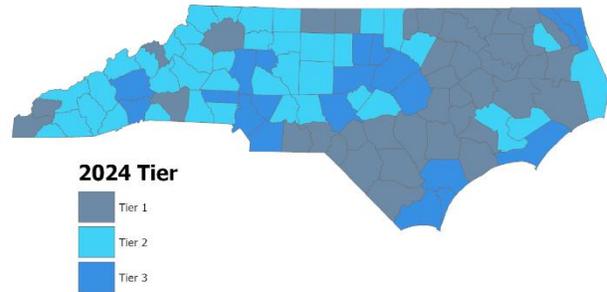


Figure 2- County Distress Rankings for North Carolina⁷

The term poverty refers to the state or condition in which people or communities lack the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Historically, adopting poverty in the context of improving finances has not been a priority for Nash County Health Department, but we strive to enhance affordable services for citizens' access. Data indicates that poverty-stricken people and families may go without proper housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical attention. As a result, Nash County community health partners agreed to improve equitable program opportunities and services for citizens to address conditions and causes of poverty to increase self-sufficiency over the next three years (2021-2023). The program includes:

Cooperative Extension Financial Literacy Program- A Nash County Cooperative Extension Financial Literacy Program established to teach citizens skills in financial planning for achieving financial freedom.

Progress:

- ❖ No progress reported for this program.

Gardening & Nutrition Support Program- An established community-based garden program by Down East Partnership for Children to increase healthy food access in low-income communities.

Progress:

- ❖ There were 650 impacted by access to community gardens at the Rocky Mount Housing Authority.

-
- ❖ DEPC worked with the Rocky Mount Housing Authority to incorporate healthy eating information in regular mailings to residents, that provide education about the produce grown in NC and their community garden.

Harrison Family YMCA Food Box Program- The Harrison Family YMCA established a healthy food box program to increase citizens' access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income communities.

Progress:

- ❖ Distributed 610 food boxes in 2023.
- ❖ Got 28,207 pounds of food donated by organizations outside of YMCA in 2023.
- ❖ Challenges: Making sure there's enough perishable and donated goods from the community to last each week and having people willing to volunteer hours to assist with transporting boxes.

Ripe Revival Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Mobile Market- Ripe Revival is a nonprofit program established to provide fresh healthy food opportunities for citizens regardless of income through Mobile Market buses. This program is a pay-what-you-can grocery store and serves many counties in Eastern NC that are considered to be food deserts. Below is the data for Nash County only.

Progress:

- ❖ Served 2573 individuals in 2023 at 73 different Mobile Market events across the county which included 9764.68 pounds of produce and 2156 pounds of grocery/protein.
- ❖ Worked toward establishing community partnerships to expand healthy food access opportunities

Nash County Senior Services Wellness Programs- Established programs hosted by Nash County Senior Center to increase citizens', age 60 and older, access to physical activity and wellness opportunities.

Progress:

- ❖ A total of 1,210 members at the Nash Senior Center and a total of 550 at the Southern Nash Senior Center.
- ❖ A total of 1,143 participants between both senior center locations attended classes/workshops, fitness/exercise, health education, nutrition, and health screenings.

❖ Participants Using Individual services:

Home Delivered & Frozen Meals-85

CSA Boxes- 75

Transportation- 22

Project Lifesaver- 32

Family Caregiver- 62

Priority 3: Behavioral Health

In Nash County, Heroin and/or Fentanyl contributed to the leading causes of drug overdose deaths between 2012-2021.⁸ Cocaine and alcohol use have also shown a steady increase among residents.⁸ Behavioral health with a focus on substance use was chosen as a priority by the Nash County Community Health Assessment stakeholders because citizens reported a need for access to substance use education and prevention services. Also, Community Health Assessment data from 497 (16.02%) survey respondents cited substance abuse, including drugs and alcohol, as one of the top qualities of life issues faced in Nash County. As a result, partners of the 2021 Community Health Need Assessment agreed to establish programs and services to increase citizens' access to substance abuse education, prevention, and treatment services. Programs include:

Empowering Youth & Families Program (EYFP)- A Nash County Cooperative Extension Program established to provide opioid prevention education for youth and their caregivers.

Progress:

- ❖ No progress was reported for this program.

Coalition for Addiction Recovery Education (C.A.R.E.) Substance Use Programs-

C.A.R.E. is a partnership of various county agencies, hospitals, organizations, and businesses to provide education, prevention assistance, and resources for individuals who struggle with addiction. In addition, the coalition strives toward bridging community gaps in services to leverage healthy equity among citizens.

Progress:

- ❖ No progress was reported for this program.

Tobacco Prevention Program- A Nash County Health Department program coordinated in community and school sites to educate youth about the dangers of tobacco use, e-cigarettes and vaping.

Progress:

-
- ❖ Meet with staff at the Freewill Baptist Children’s Home to inform them about the Catch My Breath curriculum and to see if they would be interested if we implement the program at their site.
 - ❖ Meet with local Boys and Girls staff to inform them about the Catch My Breath curriculum and to see if they would be interested if we implement the program at their site.
 - ❖ Various social media messages were posted to increase awareness about the danger of e-cigarettes and tobacco use.
 - ❖ Challenges: Due to staff turnover we were limited to outreach and various programming opportunities.

New, Paused, or Discontinued Initiatives

Back to School After Hours Vaccination Clinic (new)

In August and September 2023, the Nash County Health Department created a new initiative to have an after-hours walk-in immunization clinic for back-to-school vaccinations on Tuesday nights from 5-7pm. This gave parents in our community a chance to get their child's vaccinations up to date before school started back or to get caught up on missed vaccinations after the school year starts.

Pet Connection Center (new)

In August of 2023 a new Pet Connection Center was opened on 3600 Eastern Avenue in Rocky Mount, NC. This facility was initially funded through a \$1.5 million grant from the estate of the late Rocky Mount physician Dr. Nancy Shaw and ended up costing \$2.7 million in total to build. It is 9,600 square foot and at maximum capacity can hold 65 dogs and 65 cats.

Opioid Settlement Plans (new)

In December of 2023, Nash County introduced a new Assistant County Manager, Tia Foula, who will oversee the opioid settlement plans. She will be creating and overseeing an action plan for the county by engaging with the community and stakeholders. This plan will continue to develop and we are excited to see what new programs and projects will emerge.

Lifelong Improvement through Fitness Together- LIFT (new)

NC Cooperative Extension created an 8-week strength-based training program for aging adults that meets twice a week. This program is available three times a year at the Nash County Agriculture Center & the Southern Nash Senior Center. So far, a total of 117 participants have completed the program and 100% have shown improvements in physical activity and confidence.

MED Instead of MEDS (new)

NC Cooperative Extension created a 5-week nutrition behavior change and food demonstration program offered twice a year in Nash County. 262 participants have completed this program & 100% of participants have stated that they made at least one healthy behavioral change.

Diabetes Awareness Program (paused)

In June of 2023 our Diabetes Awareness program coordinator retired and left the county which caused our diabetes program to be put on pause. The position has not been filled and we are unsure as to whether or not this program will continue.

Integrated Targeted Testing Services (paused)

In December of 2022 our Integrated Targeted Testing Services (ITTS) technician left the county and the ITTS coordinator retired in June of 2023 which caused our ITTS program to be shifted under the Lab Supervisor from Health Education. The program is currently adjusting under new management and creating new relationships with community partners.

Postnatal Newborn Home Visiting (ended)

In 2023 our Postnatal Newborn Home Visiting program ended due to home visiting restrictions during COVID. This program would send one of the Health Department nurses to a new mom's home to check on mom and the baby. This program was a great benefit to new mom's as they could ask questions and get checked without having to make an appointment at the clinic.

Emerging Issues

DSS Child Welfare

In 2023, Nash County Department of Social Services (DSS) went under investigation from the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services (NCDHHS) after two children died in two years under the care of Nash County DSS. New management was hired as well as receiving an enhanced plan to correct previous actions.

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Thank you to all of our Community Partners who work every day to improve the health of our community!

Get Involved with our Community Health Assessment Process and Activities!

Community Health is about improving the health and lives of all persons in Nash County. We are always open to new ideas, feedback and assistance from citizens who want to make a healthier Nash County where families can live, play and have a healthy quality of life.

For more information about the Community Health Assessment process, call Nash County Health Department at 252-459-9819.

Electronic copies of this document are located at <https://nashcountync.gov/377/County-Health-Reports>



Updated: 05/2024