

Focus on African American Health in North Carolina



The **2024 Health Disparities Analysis Report** provides a comprehensive overview of health disparities affecting African American communities in the state. This fact sheet highlights key findings from the report and relevant national data to underscore the pressing health challenges faced by African Americans in North Carolina.

Understanding North Carolina African American Communities

African Americans are a vital part of North Carolina's cultural, economic and social fabric. However, the **2024 Health Disparities Analysis Report** from NCDHHS highlights persistent challenges that disproportionately impact Black communities across the state. Understanding these disparities is essential for creating targeted solutions that promote health care access for all and improve overall well-being.

Understanding Unique Health Disparities & Concerns



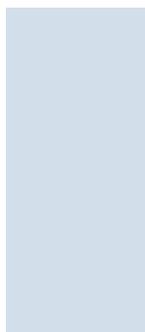
ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

- Cost barriers particularly affect the African American community. In fact, Black Americans in North Carolina are more likely to forgo medical care due to cost concerns compared to their white counterparts.
- A significant portion of African Americans lack health insurance coverage, limiting access to preventive services and timely medical interventions. Among contributing factors, African Americans in North Carolina **face higher unemployment rates and lower wages**, which directly impact access to health care and housing stability.



CHRONIC DISEASES

- African Americans in North Carolina have a lower life expectancy than white residents, largely due to chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, which are leading causes of morbidity and mortality among African Americans in North Carolina.
- Heart disease and stroke mortality rates remain significantly higher among Black North Carolinians.

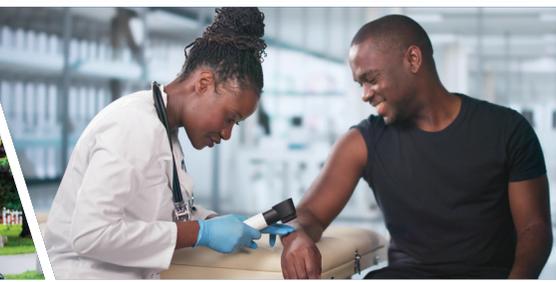


- African Americans have higher rates of diabetes-related complications, including amputations and kidney disease, partly due to barriers in preventive care.
- African American women are **1.4 times more likely** to die from breast cancer than white women, partly due to lower rates of early detection and access to advanced treatments.



MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH

- African American women in North Carolina experience higher rates of pregnancy-related deaths compared to white women, highlighting significant disparities in maternal health outcomes. Moreover, they face a **2.9 times higher maternal mortality rate** than white women, a disparity linked to systemic inequities in maternal health care.
- Infants born to African American mothers have a higher likelihood of preterm birth and low birth within the first year of life, contributing to a **1.7 times higher infant mortality rate** compared to white infants living in the same state.



MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- African Americans are less likely to receive mental health services compared to other racial groups despite experiencing **higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression**, often due to stigma, lack of access, and medical mistrust.
- Disparities exist in substance use treatment access and outcomes, with African Americans facing **higher rates of incarceration for substance-related** offenses rather than receiving appropriate treatment.

- Unemployment and underemployment rates are higher among African Americans, contributing to economic instability and associated health risks.



SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH

- A significant number of African Americans experience food insecurity. Black communities are more likely to live in what are referred to as **food deserts**, leading to limited access to fresh, healthy food options and increased rates of diet-related conditions like obesity and hypertension
- Many African American communities are disproportionately exposed to **poor housing conditions, lead contamination, and environmental hazards**, which contribute to respiratory issues like asthma



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

- African Americans in North Carolina are over twice as likely to live in poverty compared to whites, influencing health outcomes and access to care. As a result, African American communities are disproportionately exposed to **poor housing conditions, lead contamination, and environmental hazards**, which contribute to respiratory issues like asthma.

Building Solutions & Advancing Healthier Opportunities: A Call to Action

Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach involving policy changes, community engagement, and targeted health interventions. NCDHHS is committed to collaborating with stakeholders to implement strategies that promote health access and improve outcomes for African Americans communities across North Carolina. To address these disparities, NCDHHS's Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, along with our community and agency partners, is working on targeted programs to improve health outcomes in African American communities, including:

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CARE

- By expanding Medicaid & health insurance access, we are working to remove financial barriers to care. Medicaid expansion reduces the number of uninsured individuals, enabling more African Americans to receive preventive care, manage chronic conditions, and access necessary medical treatments



- Partnerships with The NC Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (NC CCCP) provides resources and support for managing chronic conditions associated with increased cancer risk. This includes offering tools and guidance to help individuals make informed health decisions, access screenings, and navigate cancer care and treatment effectively. NC CCCP actively seeks to partner with Black-led organizations and trusted community leaders to co-create culturally relevant cancer prevention and control programs.

COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH PROGRAMS THAT FOCUS ON PREVENTIVE CARE, MATERNAL HEALTH, AND CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT.

- NC Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) is a statewide network collaborating with local health departments and community-based organizations to reduce diabetes incidence and mortality among minority populations, focusing on preventive care and chronic disease management.
- Women, Infant, and Community Wellness Section develops and funds programs that protect the health and well-being of women during and beyond their childbearing years, addressing maternal health through services before, during, and after delivery.

ADVANCING POLICIES TO IMPROVE HOUSING, FOOD SECURITY, AND ECONOMIC STABILITY FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES.

- Programs like the NCDHHS Division of Public Health Healthy Communities Program works with local health departments to implement community-based interventions targeting poor nutrition, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and injury prevention, thereby promoting food security and healthier environments.
- Community Health Grant, supported by the North Carolina General Assembly and the Office of Rural Health, ensures access to primary and preventive care for vulnerable, underserved, and medically indigent patients, emphasizing services for uninsured individuals to enhance economic stability.

SUPPORTING BLACK-LED HEALTH INITIATIVES AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT SERVE AS TRUSTED MESSENGERS IN THE COMMUNITY.

- The Minority Health Advisory Council (MHAC), a 15-member council comprising legislators, community leaders, and health professionals, advises on policies and strategies to improve health services' accessibility and delivery for racial and ethnic minority communities.
- HMP (Historically Marginalized Populations) Connections Network is an Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities statewide network focusing on whole-person population health, addressing various health issues, including chronic diseases and behavioral health, particularly within historically marginalized communities.

Want to learn more?

Read the full 2024 Health Disparities Analysis Report: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/2024-health-disparities-analysis-report/download?attachment>



References

- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *Health Disparities Analysis Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/2024-health-disparities-analysis-report/download?attachment>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). *Health of Black or African American Population*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/black-health.htm>.
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *Social Media Toolkit for Community-Based Partners*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/social-media-toolkit-community-based-partners/download?attachment=>.
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Women, Infant, and Community Wellness Section. Retrieved from <https://wicws.dph.ncdhhs.gov>.
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Cancer Prevention and Control Branch. *NC Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (NC CCCP)*. Retrieved from <https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs/chronic-disease-and-injury/cancer-prevention-and-control-branch/nc-comprehensive-cancer-control-program-nc-cccp>.
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. *NCDHHS Services and Partnerships Roster*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/about/department-initiatives/community-and-partner-engagement/ncdhhs-partner-engagement/ncdhhs-services-and-partnerships-roster>.

Together,
we can help reduce
health disparities for all.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Office of Minority Health
and Health Disparities

For More Information, visit

[ncdhhs.gov/divisions/office-minority-health-and-health-disparities](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/office-minority-health-and-health-disparities)

NCDHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider. • 1/2026