



# 2024

## *State of the County Health (SOTCH) Report Pender County, North Carolina*

The 2024 State of the County Health (SOTCH) Report serves as an update on the current health status of Pender County residents. The SOTCH provides health information that is intended to augment the 2022 Community Health Assessment (CHA). The CHA is conducted every four years and includes a more comprehensive analysis of the overall health status of the county. The main priorities identified from the 2022 Community Health Assessment were:

- 1- Heart Health**
- 2- Substance Use**
- 3- Access to Care**

This report demonstrates progress made in the last year as it relates to these health priorities, recent health statistics, new initiatives and emerging issues that may impact the health status of residents in Pender County. The 2022 CHA and previous SOTCH reports may be found at the county libraries, the health department, or online at: <https://pendercountync.gov/196/Health-Department>



*Building a Healthier Tomorrow...*

**Pender County Health Department**

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# PENDER COUNTY SNAPSHOT



**68,521**

POPULATION (2023 EST.)

13.8%

EST. PERCENT CHANGE OF POPULATION (2020-2023 CENSUS)

41.8

MEDIAN AGE (2019-2023)

PERCENT UNDER 6 YEARS OLD



POPULATION AGE BREAKDOWN

PERCENT OVER 65 YEARS AND OLDER



PERCENT UNDER 18 YEARS OLD

22.5%

**75,400**

POPULATION PROJECTION 2030

**86,921**

POPULATION PROJECTION 2040

83.0% WHITE

12.5% AFRICAN AMERICAN

8.8% HISPANIC/LATINO

POPULATION THAT ARE VETERANS (2019-2023)

4,715

49.6% FEMALE

50.4% MALE

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME 2019-2023

\$76,838

11.4% POPULATION LIVING BELOW POVERTY

15.5% UNDER AGE 18 (2022)

\$38,296

PER CAPITA INCOME (2019-2023)

**75.7**

AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (2021-2023)

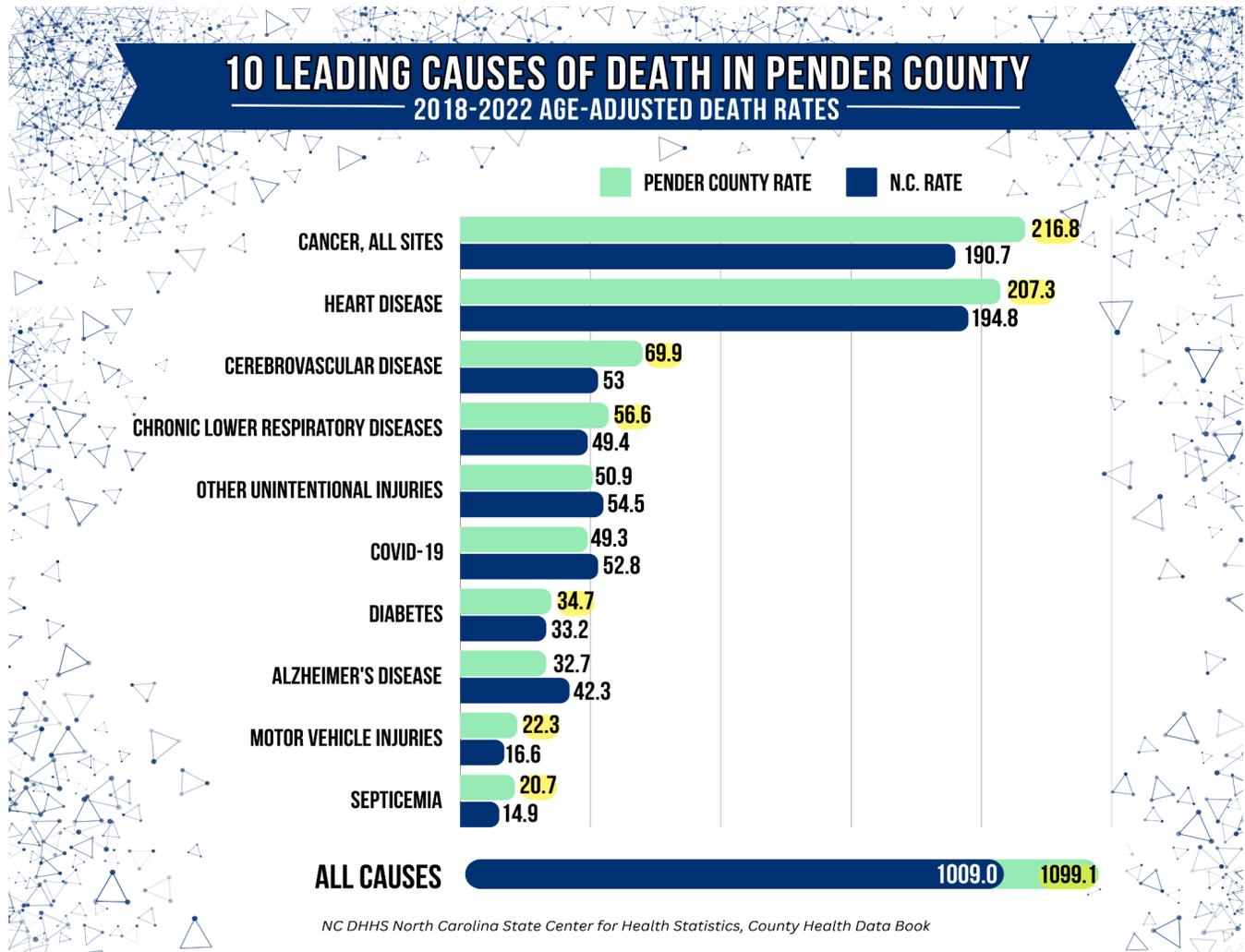
U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 Quick Facts, N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, Office of State Budget and Management

## Maternal and Child Health

According to the latest data from the N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, the birth rate for teens ages 15-19 years old living in Pender County was 13.6 compared to the State rate of 16.2. (2023). Twenty percent of pregnant women had less than a high school education while 37% had a college or post-graduate degree (2022). Four percent of women smoked during their pregnancy compared to a state rate of 6.5% (2022). Nearly 83% of mothers chose to breastfeed at the time of hospital discharge (2022). About 66% of women sought prenatal care in the first trimester (2022). Only 2.1% of pregnant women received no prenatal care prior to delivery compared to the state rate of 4.6% (2022). Women receiving early prenatal care have lower rates for poor pregnancy outcomes such as low birth weight and infant death.

The most current data available on the health of Pender County children (2019-2023) revealed an infant mortality rate of 4.6% compared to the state rate of 6.8%. The child death rate dropped to 44.5% with 32 child deaths, ages 0-17 years, during the same four-year period. Nearly half of these deaths were due to perinatal conditions and birth defects.

Poverty is one of the most important long-term factors impacting a child's health and development. The percentage of children less than 18 years of age living in poverty rose over the last year to nearly 18%. Many of these children live in households that experience food insecurity (2021-2022).



The highlighted death rates for Pender County are greater than the state rates over a 4-year average (2018-2022). The overall death rate for the county exceeds the state rate. Many of these causes of death are preventable. Our prevention efforts face many challenges when trying to promote healthy lifestyles through physical activity, healthy nutrition, injury prevention and avoidance of tobacco and other substances. Access to care and the lack of health care providers can have negative consequences in one's overall health status. Progress on many health improvement activities are listed in this document. Residents must assess their own personal choices and behaviors and how their decisions could have a negative effect on their health outcomes.

Access to care means timely use of comprehensive, quality health care services that promote and maintain health; prevent and manage diseases; and reduce unnecessary disability and premature death. Health care access remains a concern in Pender County which is designated as a "provider shortage area." In 2019, there were 4.1 dentists per 10,000 residents compared to the state rate of 5.0 per 10,000 population. In addition, the rate for medical providers was much lower: 2.7 primary care providers compared to a state rate of 8.0 per 10,000 population.

From 2021-2023, the average life expectancy for Pender County residents at birth decreased to 75.8 years of age. Life expectancy for women was lower at 78.1 years compared to 73.6 years for men. Aside from gender, disparities are also found among African Americans with an average life expectancy of 69.8 years compared to 76 years for whites. During this time frame, the COVID-19 pandemic was taking place. The lives lost to this virus affected life expectancy for the county, state, country and world.

## *Changes in Data for 2024*

The leading causes of death in Pender County for 2015-2019 as noted in the 2022 CHA compared to more recent data from 2018-2022 revealed few changes in the first five of ten leading causes of death. The rates were higher than the state rates. COVID-19 became the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death during this time. Deaths due to diabetes, Alzheimer's Disease and others completed the list. Suicide was not in the top ten causes of death yet remains an area of focus.

# Tracking Progress of Pender County Health Priorities

## Heart Health

Increase public awareness and promote opportunities for increasing physical activity and nutrition.



**Eight Healthy Heart Tips**



**National "Wear Red Day"**

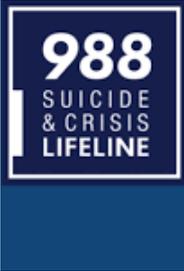


**Healthy Heart Walk**

## Progress

- ✓ On-going collaboration with *Pender County Parks and Recreation* to promote activities held at county parks
- ✓ On-going promotion of physical activity programs, community events, and opportunities across the county, via brochures, local newspapers, social media (Facebook, health department and county websites)
- ✓ Partnered with community libraries by setting up educational tables to promote Eight Healthy Heart Tips
- ✓ Conducted Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) classes at the health department to provide education and prevention of heart disease
- ✓ Promotion of various nutritional programs to health care providers and community partners through Lunch and Learn events
- ✓ Facebook page posts on events that promote physical activity and good nutrition
- ✓ Promotion of *National Nutrition Month* through bulletin board displays and social media with focus on a heart healthy diet
- ✓ Partnered with Parks & Rec to promote "Year of the Trail" (Healthy Heart Walk)
- ✓ Raised awareness for American Heart Month by participating in "Wear Red Day"

# Tracking Progress of Pender County Health Priorities

Substance Use	Progress
<p>Identify available resources for mental health and substance use prevention and increase awareness among Pender County residents.</p> <hr/>  <div> <p><b>1-800-QUIT-NOW</b> 1 - 8 0 0 - 7 8 4 - 8 6 6 9</p> </div> <div> <p><b>Se Habla Español</b> 1-800-Déjelo-Ya</p> </div> <p><a href="http://www.quitlinenc.com">www.quitlinenc.com</a></p>   <div> <p><b>24/7 free and confidential support</b></p> <p><b>CALL OR TEXT: 988</b></p> <p><b>CHAT: 988LIFELINE.ORG</b></p> </div>  <p><b>Opioid Overdose Resources:</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.pendercountync.gov/1810/Opioid-Resources">https://www.pendercountync.gov/1810/Opioid-Resources</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ On-going promotion of Quitline NC via community events, brochures, and social media.</li> <li>✓ On-going multi-disciplinary <i>Substance Use Prevention Partnership</i> meetings and action planning/implementation to target mental health and substance use prevention efforts             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regular assessment of state and local data on unintentional poisoning, drug overdose deaths, opioid prescribing rates, and current interventions</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Continued participation in state and regional activities for the promotion of smoke-free/tobacco-free policies</li> <li>✓ On-going promotion of <i>988 Suicide &amp; Crisis Lifeline</i></li> <li>✓ Current standing order for Naloxone Kit onsite and staff trained to administer</li> <li>✓ Website, Facebook, and Billboard up-to-date postings on Opioid Epidemic</li> <li>✓ Promotion of county-wide “Drug Take Back Day” events and locations</li> <li>✓ Promotion of <i>Integrated Family Services Mobile Crisis</i> team with patients and community</li> <li>✓ On-going referrals to/promotion of Coastal Horizons Substance Use Prevention Programs via brochures, flyers, community events, social media, and website</li> <li>✓ Continues to maintain an up-to-date Resource Guide of mental health providers in Pender County for community members</li> <li>✓ Opioid Prevention Planning Committee</li> <li>✓ Promotion of International Overdose Awareness Day</li> <li>✓ Provided all county employees with educational materials on overdose prevention</li> </ul>



**Red Ribbon Week**  
**“Be Kind To Your Mind. Live Drug Free”**

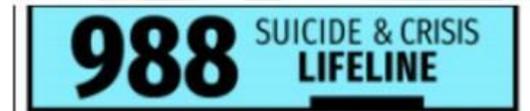
- ✓ Monthly Reproductive Life Planning Education Classes at Pender County Department of Social Services that includes the topic of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
- ✓ Shared Naloxone Kits with Local Law Enforcement and Pender County Schools
- ✓ Offered and taught CATCH My Breath Program to Pender County 6th grade students
- ✓ Partnered with Pender Parks and Rec with Summer Camp program offered Candy VS Medicine



**Candy VS Medicine**

**Community Outreach/Education**

**Pender County Billboard Designs-Hampstead, NC**



**Medication Disposal Event**

# Tracking Progress of Pender County Health Priorities

## Access to Care

Identify available resources for cancer screenings and provide the community with educational outreach events/programs to promote awareness.



**Health Screenings at Burgaw Fire Department**



**Blood Pressure checks at Share the Table**



**"Fall Prevention" Event**



**Middle District Missionary Baptist Association - Flu Clinic**

## Progress

- ✓ Monthly promotions to increase awareness in the prevention of many types of cancers
- ✓ Educational displays created and set up at all county departments
- ✓ Facebook posts to promote awareness of many types of cancers
- ✓ Billboard designs displayed in the county to promote cancer screening awareness
- ✓ Promotion of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program to allow uninsured, low-income women the opportunity for breast and cervical screenings
- ✓ Partnered with Share the Table providing resources and free blood pressure checks
- ✓ Raised awareness for Breast Cancer by wearing pink
- ✓ Implementation of the CATCH My Breath program to decrease risk of teens engaging in tobacco and e-cigarette use
- ✓ Partnered with Pender Adult Services and offered Fall Prevention resources and education.
- ✓ Partnered with Willard Community Center by providing resources and education to the attendees at the Community Resource Fair
- ✓ Partnered with Burgaw Lions Club and offered free health screenings to the community at Burgaw Fire Department
- ✓ Hosted Back to School Immunization Clinics and Community Flu Clinics
- ✓ Hosted Car Seat Check Up Event with WIC Department
- ✓ Partnered with Pender County Schools for Back to School events offering appointments for Child Physical

# New Initiatives

**Opioid Prevention Planning Committee** - The Pender County Sheriff's Office began the DARE program in the public schools for grades 5 and 7. The County Opioid Settlement is funding this program along with the implementation of a new Post Overdose Response Team (PORT) led by Coastal Horizons. The team partners with first responders to identify those at risk of overdose or who have experienced a recent overdose. They will remain in contact with individuals, encouraging them to participate in substance use treatment services.

**Health and Human Services Facility** - Groundbreaking for the new facility took place in November, 2024, with a projected completion date of August, 2026. Space was projected to allow for growth to the year 2040.

**Health Department Strategic Plan** - Staff is working on a new strategic plan for the years 2025-2030. A facilitator will assist staff to evaluate the health department's mission and vision as staff consider improving the health status of Pender County residents.



## *Emerging Issues*

**Aging Population** - Data from 2020-2023, noted that the estimated change in population in the county increased 13.8%. Pender County has been identified as one of the fastest growing counties in N.C. This growth presents many challenges for disease prevention and health promotion related to chronic diseases, higher rates of cancer and heart disease, stroke, obesity, injuries, economic disparity, isolation and Alzheimer's Disease. Increased collaboration is needed among stakeholders to respond to the prevention of multi-morbidity factors.

Adults aged 85 and older will experience the fastest growth in the state over the next 20 years. Over 80% of adults over the age of 65 years live with one or more chronic illnesses, with 34% of this population living with a disability. North Carolina had the 14th highest food insecurity in older adults in 2020. Such data emphasizes the need to implement programs and activities to help this population experience ways to improve their health and well-being.

**Avian Flu H5N1 (Bird Flu)**- Avian Flu has been detected worldwide. Outbreaks have occurred in the United States among wild birds, poultry and dairy cows. There have been several cases in humans yet the virus has been considered low risk in the general population. Individuals that are regularly exposed to potentially infected animals or contaminated surfaces and fluids are at a moderate to high risk for illness.

Currently, there has been no evidence of human-to-human spread of the virus. There are no FDA-authorized or approved vaccines to prevent those exposed to the virus. The prevalence of H5N1 infections among animals in close contact with humans increases the opportunities for virus mutation that could lead to infections among humans.

Public Health and the CDC must continue to monitor how this virus is transmitted as well as any future novel viruses to avoid a pandemic.

## *Want to do something? Get involved.*

Community members can get involved by participating on the Advisory Board of Health, attending meetings, forums, community coalitions and outreach events. The next Community Health Assessment will occur in 2026. Join us in our efforts to help support your family, friends, and neighbors as we work on "Building a Healthier Tomorrow."