

## General Health Status and Quality of Life

Life expectancy at birth is the average number of years a person born in 2013 would live if the current age specific death rates remained unchanged over that person’s lifetime. Hamilton County residents are expected to live an average of 77.4 years, an increase of 0.2 years from 2007 (77.2 years). The life expectancy of African Americans in Hamilton County is 73.4 years, which is 4.5 years less than the average life expectancy of whites in Hamilton County (77.9 years).

**Table 5. General Health Status Indicators of Hamilton County and other Metropolitan Counties**

	Hamilton	Tennessee	U.S.	Davidson	Knox	Shelby
<b>Death Rate*</b>	799.2	1178.6	731.9	828.3	833	870.2
<b>Life Expectancy (2013)</b>	77.4	76.4	78.8	77.0	77.4	75.6

\* 2011-2013 Age-adjusted mortality per 100,000 population. U.S. mortality rate is for 2013.  
Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Division of Policy, Planning and Assessment, CDC

## Defining Quality of Life

Quality of life (QOL) is a term that refers to the “overall sense of well-being when applied to an individual” and a “supportive environment when applied to a community.”<sup>vii</sup>

### Overall Well Being

Two QOL measures from the BRFSS that refer to an “overall sense of well-being” are overall health status and disability status. An estimated 21% of Hamilton County adults rated their own health as “fair” or “poor” and 23% indicated they were limited in activities because of physical, mental, or emotional problems. These findings parallel state data. Local and state residents were more likely to report fair or poor health and activity limitations than the national median.

**Table 6. Self-Reported Health Status 2011-2013 BRFSS**

	Hamilton County	Tennessee	U.S. Median
<b>Fair or poor health</b>	21%	22%	17%
<b>Limited in any way because of physical, mental, or emotional problems</b>	23%	25%	21%

Sources: 2011-2013 BRFSS, Tennessee Department of Health, Division of Health Statistics, CDC

### Supportive Environment

A 2010 survey of 1,000 Hamilton County adults provides some insight as to the relative importance of factors which help create a “supportive environment when applied to a community.” The Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies State of the Chattanooga Region Survey asked 1,000 local residents to rate the importance of 13 factors in determining their quality of life in the Chattanooga Area. Of the 13 factors, “safety from crime” and “quality health care and hospitals,” were the most important, with 9 out of ten respondents rating each as “very important.” The survey also points to the importance of quality

schools, good jobs, clean air and streets, strong neighborhoods, a strong religious community, parks and recreational opportunities, and other factors as detailed below.<sup>viii</sup>

**Table 7. Determining Quality of Life: Percent Rating “Very Important” in Determining Quality of Life in the Chattanooga Area**

	<b>“Very Important”</b>
Safety from crime	91%
Quality health care and hospitals	90%
Quality schools	83%
Availability of jobs that pay a living wage	83%
Clean air	82%
Clean streets and neighborhoods	80%
Affordability of housing	75%
A place where people of all backgrounds are welcome	70%
A strong religious community	63%
A strong sense of community	61%
Parks and other outdoor recreational opportunities	59%
Short commuting time	44%
Arts and cultural opportunities	42%

Source: Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies, 2010 State of the Chattanooga Region Survey

### *Importance of Health Issues*

In 2013, the Community Health Services Division of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department conducted a Health and Wellness Survey of 1,661 area residents. The survey was administered online and paper copies were available at community health clinics in Hamilton County. In the survey, respondents reviewed a list of 12 health problems and selected the three that they believed were the most important health problems facing Hamilton County.<sup>ix</sup>

- Of the twelve health issues listed, obesity was perceived as the biggest health problem facing Hamilton County overall. Over half of respondents (55%) selected obesity among the top public health problems, with violent crime (39%), and drug abuse (38%) rounding out the top three.
- Health priorities shifted when comparing by race/ethnicity. Among white respondents, obesity (61%), drug abuse (42%), and violent crime (30%) were most often selected among the top three public health issues. While obesity ranked in the top three among black respondents (40%), violent crime ranked higher (45%). Approximately one-third of black respondents also believed STDs (36%), teenage pregnancy (33%), drug abuse (31%), and diabetes (31%) were among the top local public health problems. Among Latinos, the top ranking health issues were obesity (49%), drug abuse (41%), violent crime (29%), and STDs (29%).

**Table 8. Perceived Top Health Problems in Hamilton County**

	(% Ranking Among Top 3)			
	All	White	Black	Latino
<b>Obesity</b>	55%	61%	40%	49%
<b>Violent crime</b>	39%	36%	45%	29%
<b>Drug abuse</b>	38%	42%	31%	41%
<b>Heart disease and stroke</b>	28%	30%	25%	16%
<b>Diabetes</b>	25%	23%	29%	21%
<b>Teenage pregnancy</b>	24%	21%	33%	24%
<b>Tobacco use</b>	22%	23%	19%	28%
<b>Cancer</b>	21%	21%	20%	16%
<b>STDs</b>	17%	10%	36%	29%
<b>Respiratory Disease</b>	12%	13%	9%	15%
<b>Aging problems</b>	7%	8%	2%	9%
<b>Infant mortality</b>	6%	7%	4%	13%

Source: Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department, Hamilton County Health and Wellness Survey (2013)

## Access to Health Care and Coverage

### Health Insurance Status

Access to health care coverage encourages individuals to seek and obtain continuous and preventative health care. Persons without health coverage are less likely to seek timely medical care and are more likely to have hospitalizations and emergency department visits.<sup>x</sup>

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 44,000 (15%) of Hamilton County residents under age 65 did not have health insurance in 2013. Note that these figures pre-date the implementation of the mandatory coverage provision of the Affordable Care Act. Among working age adults (ages 18 to 64), 19% did not have health insurance. Residents under age 65 living at or below 138% of poverty were more likely to be uninsured (27%) than those living between 138% and 400% of poverty (17%).<sup>xi</sup>

**Table 9. The Uninsured – As a Share of the Non-elderly Population and by Poverty Levels, 2013**

	Hamilton County		Tennessee
	Number Uninsured	% Uninsured	% Uninsured
<b>Age Group</b>			
Under 65 Years	43,983	15.4%	16.2%
18-64 Years	40,309	18.9%	20.1%
Under 19 Years	4,117	5.4%	6.0%
<b>Poverty Status</b>			
<= 138% FPL	19,579	26.8%	27.1%
<=200% FPL	27,209	26.1%	26.0%
138% to 400% FPL	19,753	16.5%	16.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates