

Hamilton County Health Department
Chattanooga, TN

2023 Public Health Survey Summary

This research has been approved by the IRB at UTC, IRB #23-043. Report written by Epidemiology Department at HCHD. Published January 2024.



**Hamilton County
Health Department**

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Introduction

The Hamilton County Health Department administered its first county-wide public health survey to adult residents of Hamilton County (≥ 18 years old), in partnership with the Regional Health Council and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The objective of the survey was to better understand the health issues and concerns of Hamilton County residents.

The survey was administered both online and on paper, in English and in Spanish, from April 3rd to July 24th, 2023. The survey was distributed to residents through various methods, including electronic distribution, in-person events, and mailers to homes in Hamilton County. The survey was estimated to take 10-15 minutes and consisted of 35 questions. There were 3,383 valid survey responses, which represents nearly 1% of the Hamilton County population.

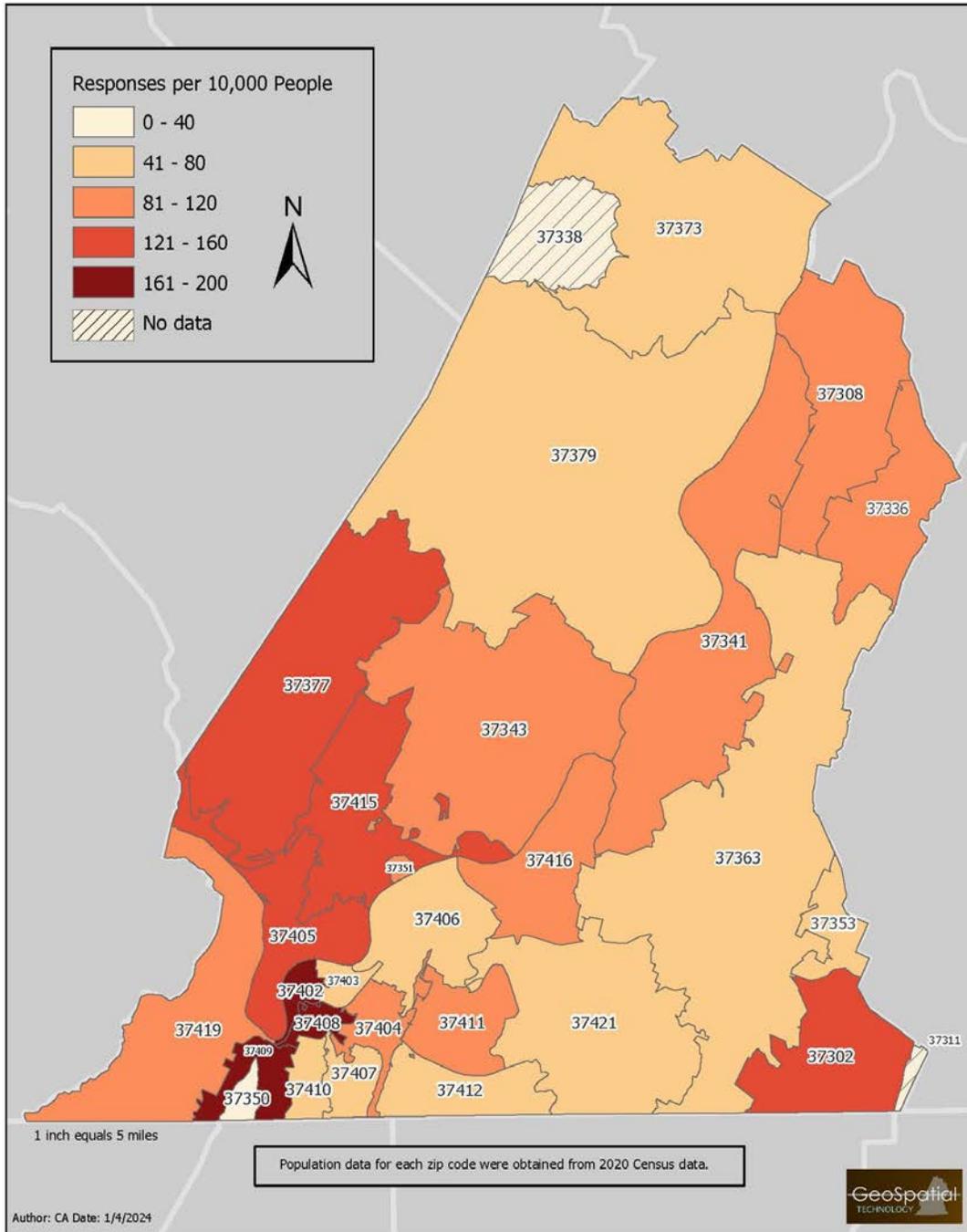


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Where Respondents Live

All zip codes primarily in Hamilton County were represented in survey responses. The highest response rates (surveys per 10,000 people) were from zip codes 37402, 37408, and 37409. The highest number of survey responses by zip code were from 37343 and 37421.

Responses per 10,000 by Zip Code



Demographics of Respondents

Why do demographics matter?

Looking at different details about people, like age, gender, race, and where they live, is important in understanding the health status of diverse populations. Understanding these demographics can be helpful in identifying groups that may experience different health outcomes.

All survey responses combined were mostly from women (64%), married persons (56%), those 65 years old and over (33%), those with a household income > \$50,000 (60.2%), those with a bachelor’s degree or higher (63%), and white persons (75%). In addition, for all survey responses combined, most respondents reported living in Hamilton County 26 years or more (46%) and having no children under the age of 18 (74%). Survey results are also presented by demographic groups to ensure underrepresented group concerns are described.

Top 3 responses for select demographic questions for all surveys combined.

Age	Race	Household Income	Highest Level of Education	Marital Status	How long living in Hamilton County
65 and over (33%)	White (75%)	\$100,000-\$149,000 (18%)	Bachelor’s degree (32%)	Married (56%)	26 years or more (46%)
55-64 (17%)	Black (13%)	\$50,000-\$74,999 (16%)	Graduate degree (31%)	Never married (20%)	1-5 years (15%)
45-54 (16%) /35-44 (16%)	Two or more races (3%)	\$75,000-\$99,999 (13%)	High school diploma or GED (16%)	Divorced (14%)	6-10 years (12%)

Demographics by Race and Ethnicity

Because the majority of responses were from white residents, it is important to also look at the data by race and ethnicity. Black respondents were about the same age as white respondents but had lived in Hamilton County longer. Those respondents identifying as two or more races were younger and had lived in Hamilton County less time than white and black respondents. Black respondents had a lower education level and lower income level compared to white respondents and those identifying as two or more races.

Those respondents indicating Hispanic ethnicity were young (31.7% aged 25-34), had an education level of 28% less than high school, and have lived in Hamilton County a short time (30.1% lived in Hamilton County 1-5 years).

Top demographic responses by race and ethnicity. *

Race/ Ethnicity*	Education level (less than High School)	Age (65+)	Gender (Female)	Income <\$50,000	Lived in Hamilton Co. (>26 years)
White (2,551)	1.1%	35.1%	63.4%	22%	44.5%
Black (454)	6.6%	32.6%	74.7%	50.7%	71.1%
Two or more races (90)	1.1%	23.3%	62.2%	38.9%	36.7%
Hispanic ethnicity (123)	28.4%	6.5%	55.3%	51.2%	6.5%

*Results are not presented for American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, some other race or ethnicity because of the low numbers of responses for these groups. For 210 surveys, the question was left blank or they chose “prefer not to answer.”

Health Insurance & Access to Care

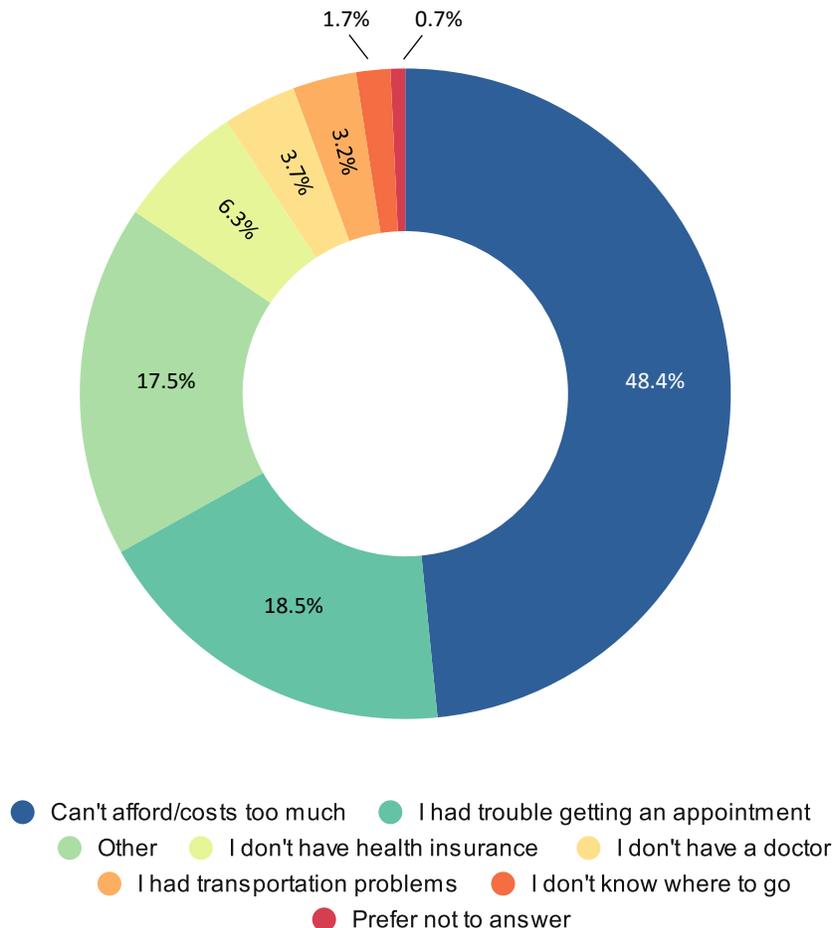
Overall, **95.4%** of respondents *reported having health insurance*.

- Only 63.4% of those identifying as Hispanic have health insurance.

While most people have health insurance, **13.5%** reported *not getting needed medical care in the past 12 months*.

- The age group with the highest proportion of not getting needed medical care was 25-34 years old (22.2%).
- For race/ethnicity, those identifying as two or more races reported the highest proportion of not getting needed medical care (26.7%).
- For all survey responses combined, the primary reason for not getting needed medical care was cost (48.4%), followed by trouble getting an appointment (18.5%).

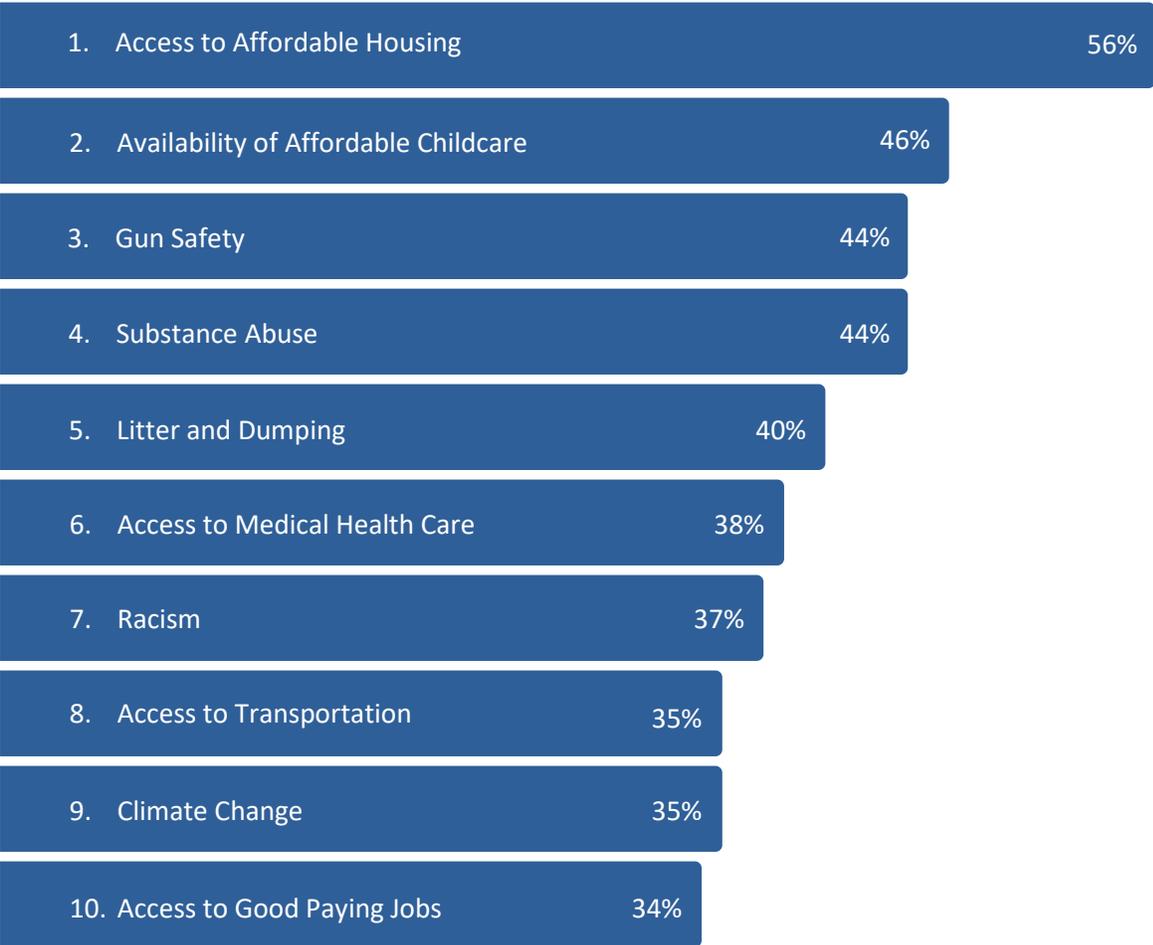
Primary reasons reported for not getting needed medical care.



Major Problems in the Community

In the survey, a *list of 27 issues/concerns* was provided and respondents were asked to indicate if it was “not a problem in my community,” “minor problem in my community,” “major problem in the community,” or “not sure/don’t know.” The top 10 major problems overall are shown below, and the top 10 major problems by income, Black persons, and Hispanic persons are shown on the next page.

Top 10 “Major Problems” Overall.



Major Problems in the Community

Top 10 “Major Problems” by Income, Black Persons, and Hispanic Persons, Ranked.

	Income (<50,000)	Black Persons	Hispanic Persons
1	Access to affordable housing	Access to affordable housing	Gun safety
2	Substance abuse	Gun safety	Substance abuse
3	Availability of affordable childcare	Availability of affordable childcare	Access to affordable housing
4	Litter and dumping	Substance abuse	Bullying in schools
5	Gun safety	Access to good paying jobs	Racism
6	Access to good paying jobs	Violent Crime	Access to mental health care
7	Racism	Racism	Access to good paying jobs
8	Bullying in schools	Litter and dumping	Litter and dumping
9	Access to mental health care	Bullying in schools	Motor vehicle accidents
10	Access to transportation	Access to mental health care	Violent crime

Chronic Diseases

When asked about **chronic diseases and conditions**, high blood pressure (40.4%), high cholesterol (36.2%), and asthma (17%) were the top three diseases reported.

- Black persons had the highest proportion reporting high blood pressure (58.7%).
- Those identifying as two or more races had the highest proportion reporting asthma (32.1%).

Proportion of respondents who answered “yes” to having the following chronic diseases or conditions. Respondents could select more than one.

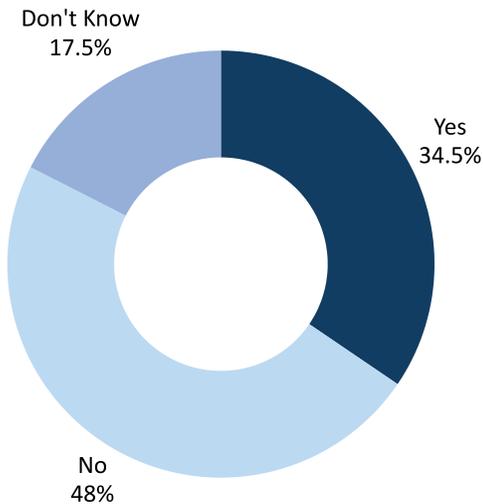
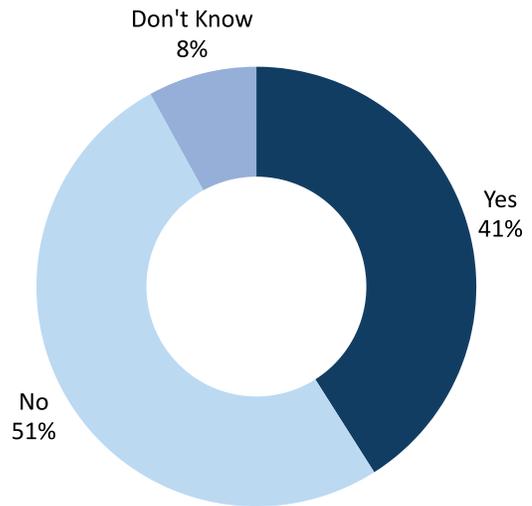
Race/ Ethnicity	High Blood Pressure	High Cholesterol	Asthma	Diabetes type 2	Cancer	Heart disease/heart attack	Stroke	Diabetes type 1
White	38.7%	37%	16.1%	10.7%	13.7%	9.1%	1.8%	1.2%
Black	58.7%	38.4%	19.8%	22.1%	7.7%	6.2%	4.2%	4.8%
Two or more races	29.8%	29.4%	32.1%	17.1%	11.1%	13.4%	2.2%	0.0%
Hispanic ethnicity	20.7%	25%	14.9%	9%	2.5%	5.8%	0.0%	3.4%

Of those with a chronic disease, **92.6% reported having access to medication to keep chronic disease under control.**

- However, those identifying as two or more races had the lowest proportion reporting they have access to medications (86%).
- Only 78.8% of those with a household income less than \$10,000 reported having access to medications to keep chronic disease under control.

Communicable Diseases

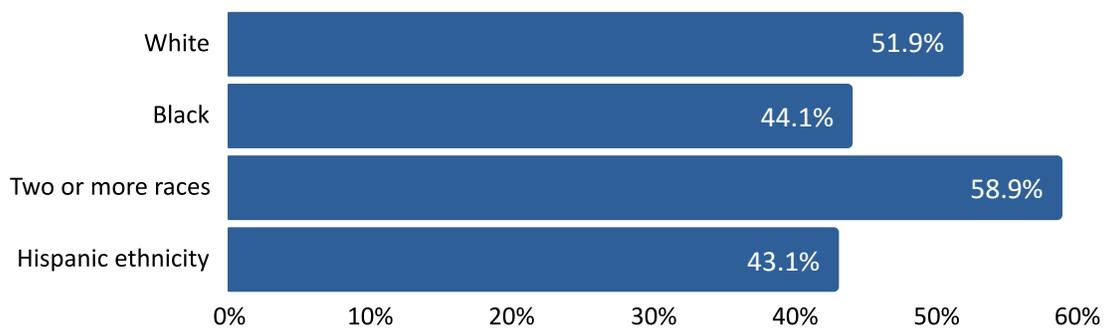
41% of respondents **reported being tested for HIV at some point in their lives.** (right)



34.5% of respondents **reported being tested for Hepatitis C at some point in their lives.** (left)

When asked questions about issues and health concerns that many communities are facing, 51% of respondents answered that COVID-19 was a major or minor problem within the community. Individuals identifying as two or more races reported the highest rate of COVID-19 as a problem (58.9%), compared to other races.

Respondents identifying COVID-19 as a major or minor problem in the community by race and ethnicity.

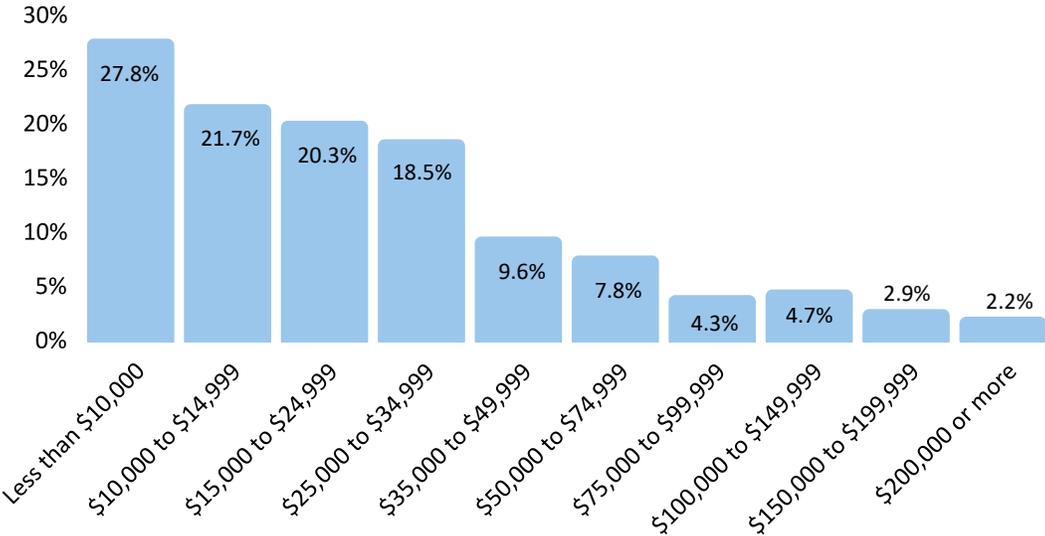


Mental Health

When asked *if they have access to mental health treatment, either online or in person*, 9% of respondents reported they do NOT and 16% responded that they don't know.

- 15.7% of 18-24 year-olds reported not having access, the highest by age group.
- 31.6% of Hispanic persons reported not having access.
- The lower the income, the higher proportion of not having access, with 27.8% of those earning less than \$10,000 not having access.

Proportion of respondents by household income who reported they do NOT have access to mental health treatment, either online or in-person.



When asked *over the last 7 days (1 day or more), how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless*, 42.7% reported at least 1-2 days in the last 7 days.

- 15.6% of those identifying as two or more races reported being bothered 5-7 days, which is more than two times that of white and black respondents at 7.3% and 6.2% respectively.

When asked *over the last 7 days (1 day or more), how often have you been bothered by not being able to stop or control worrying*, 42.6% reported at least 1-2 days in the last 7 days.

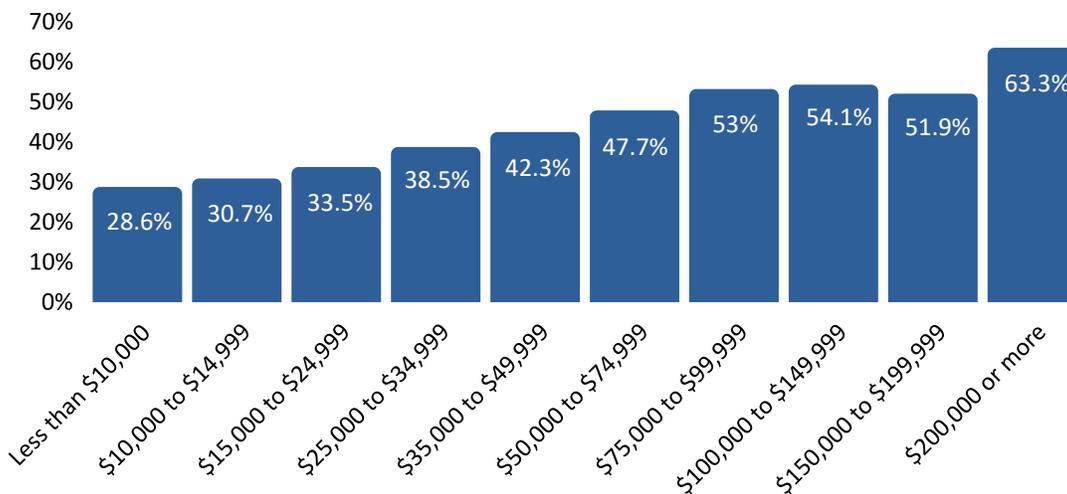
- 14.4% of those identifying as two or more races reported being bothered 5-7 days, which is about two times that of white respondents at 7.3%.

Substance and Tobacco Use

54.6% of respondents **reported drinking alcohol**.

- Of those reporting drinking, the majority drink some days of the week (46.7%) rather than daily (7.9%).
- Of those reporting drinking every day, the highest proportion is in white persons (9.25%).
- In general, the higher the income, the higher the proportion of individuals who drink some days.

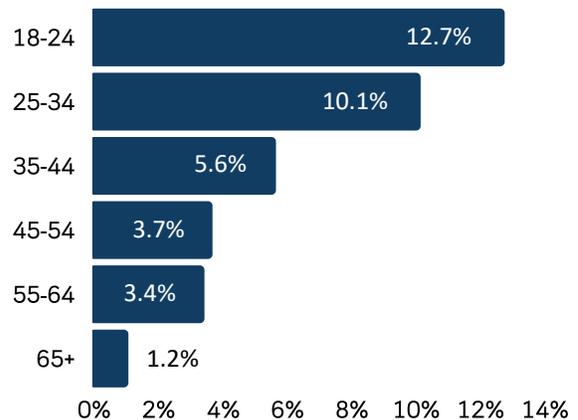
Proportion of respondents reported drinking alcohol some days by income level.



Proportion of respondents by age group reporting vaping/using e-cigarettes.

Overall, 4.3% of respondents **reported vaping or using e-cigarettes**.

- Among age groups, the highest proportion of e-cigarette users is 18-24 years old (12.7%), followed by 25-34 years old (10.1%).

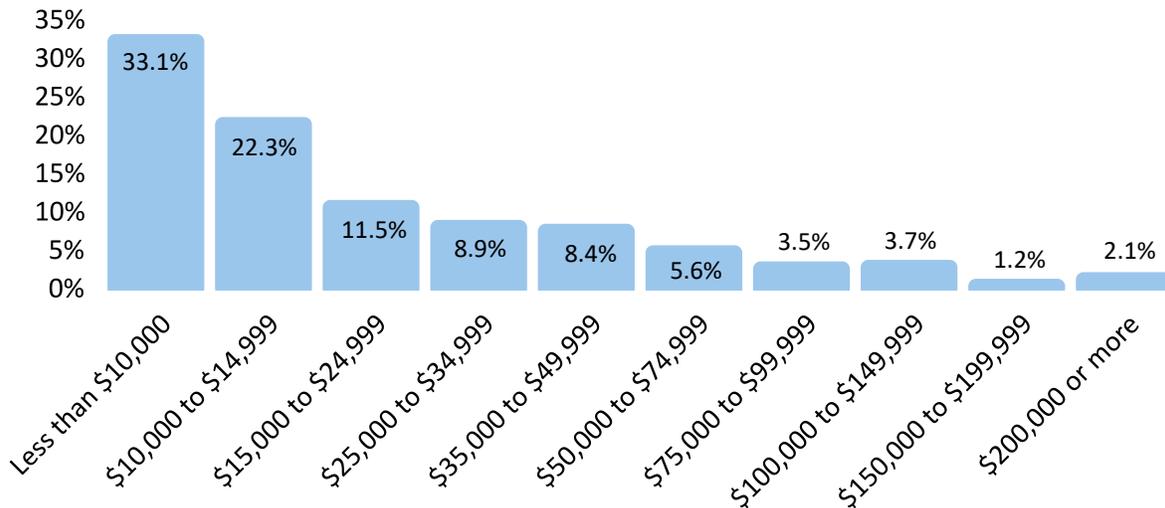


Substance and Tobacco Use

6.8% of respondents *reported smoking cigarettes*.

- Black persons reported the highest smoking rate overall at 13.4%, compared to white persons (5.7%) and those identifying as two or more races (8.9%). The smoking rate among Hispanic persons was 6.6%.
- In contrast to drinking, the higher the income, the lower the smoking rate. The income group with the highest smoking proportion is among those making less than \$10,000 (33.1%).

Proportion of respondents by income level smoking cigarettes every day.



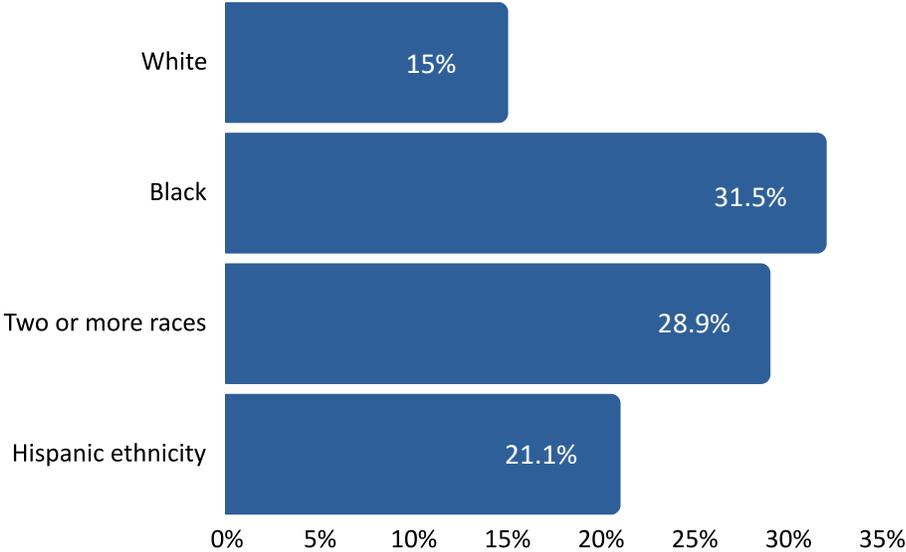
Nutrition

Questions in the survey asked about options for healthy eating and access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

When asked if their **community has sufficient options for healthy eating**, while the majority agreed or strongly agreed, 30% of all respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

By race, only 15% of white respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, but 31.5% of black persons and 28.9% of those identifying as two or more races disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Those disagreeing and strongly disagreeing that their community has sufficient options for healthy eating.



Nutrition

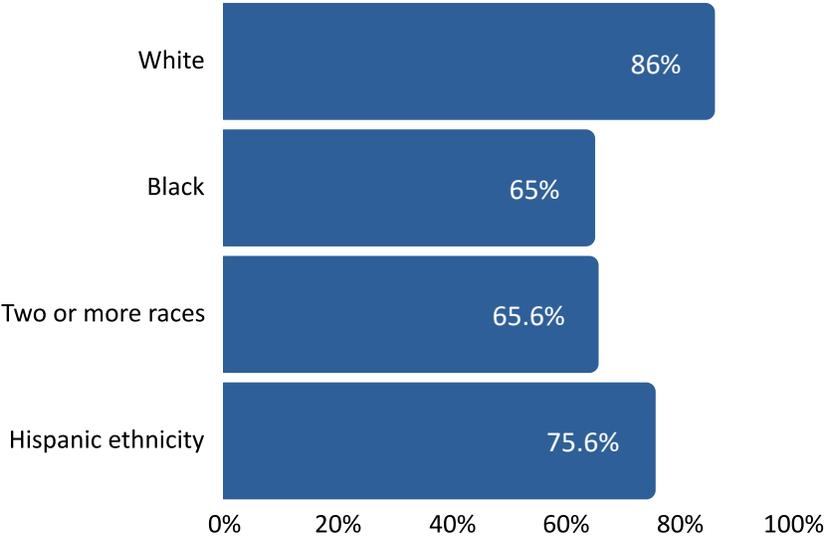
When asked *if they have a grocery store with access to fresh fruits and vegetables within 1/2-mile walking distance or a 10-mile driving distance from home*, 93% of all respondents indicated “yes.”

- However, respondents in two zip codes had more than 30% respond “no”: 37373 and 37406
- The annual household income group with the highest proportion of “no” answers was less than \$10,000 (16.5%).

80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that *it is easy to find fresh produce in their community*.

- While 86% of white persons agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, only 64% of black persons and 65.6% of those identifying as two or more races agreed or strongly agreed.

Proportion of respondents by race/ethnicity agreeing or strongly agreeing that it is easy to find fresh produce in their community.

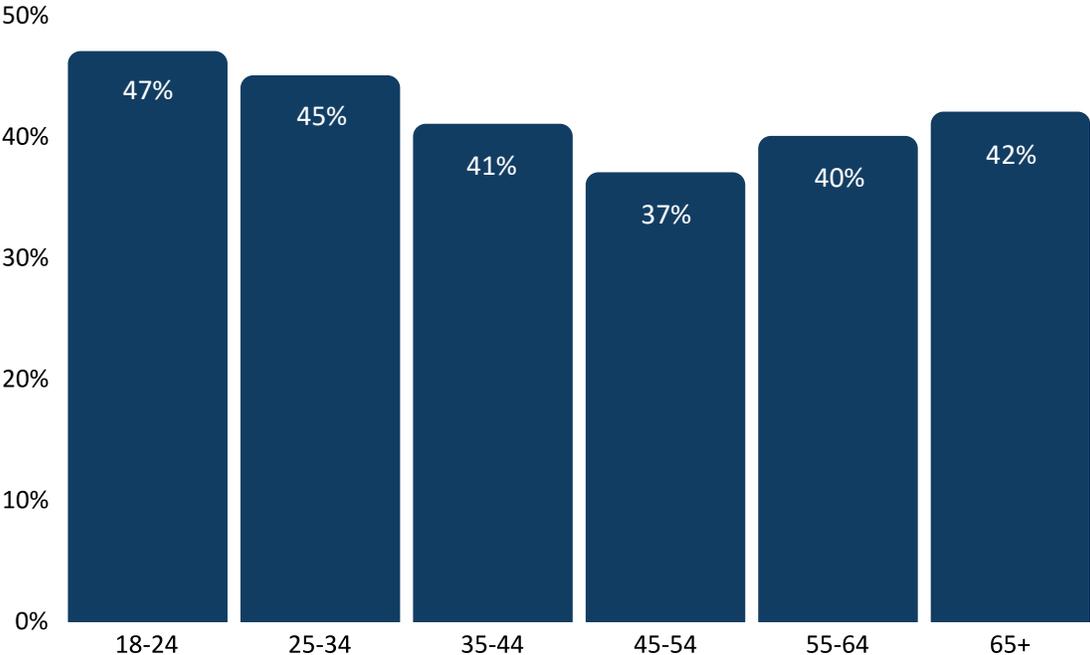


Physical Activity

When asked, *how many minutes per week do you engage in moderate physical activity*, 42% of all respondents reported at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

- 50% of men reported at least 150 minutes compared to 37% of women.
- 47% of 18-24 year-olds reported at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week, while 45-54 year-olds had the lowest proportion at 37%.

Proportion of respondents by age group who engage in moderate physical activity. *

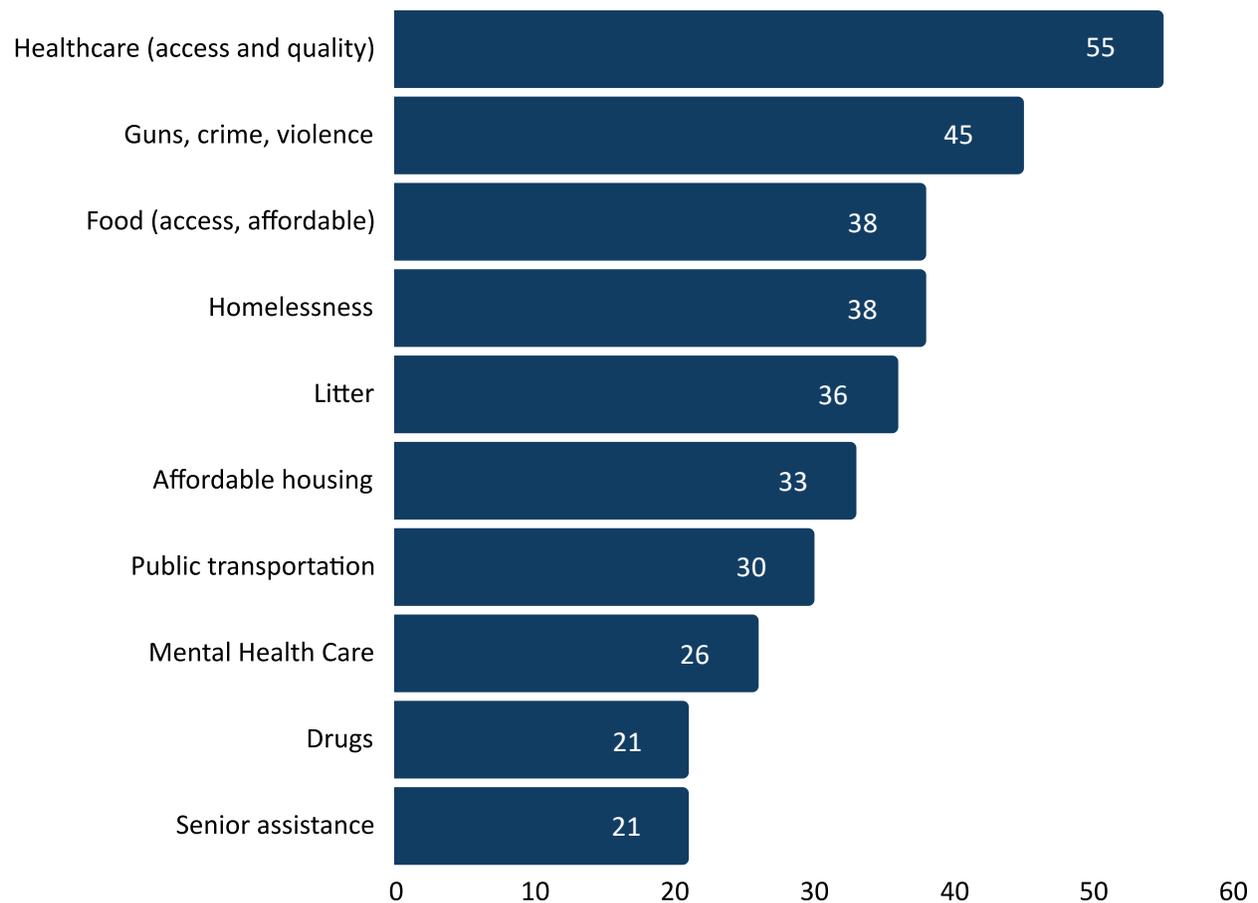


*Note: The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week. Moderate-intensity exercise means you are working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. For example: walking fast, pushing a lawn mower, riding a bicycle, or dancing.

Survey Comments

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to add comments, concerns, or questions that were not addressed by previous questions in the survey. There were 537 comments that were analyzed for themes. The top 10 themes were concerns about:

Top 10 Themes from the Comment Section.



*Note: above data is by number of comments.

Homelessness was not addressed in other parts of the survey, so its appearance in the comments section underscores the importance of this topic in our community and the need to recognize and incorporate the issues into future surveys.

How Will Results be Used?

Results of the 2023 Hamilton County Public Health Survey provide important insights into the health status and concerns of our residents. While we believe the survey was a success, we plan to improve the survey process to best capture the health concerns of our diverse community. In addition, we plan to expand the community health assessment process to include other types of feedback opportunities, ensuring citizen voices are heard across income levels and minority and rural communities.

The key health concerns faced by our community are similar to those prevalent across Tennessee and the country, as we experience an increase in chronic diseases, substance abuse, and mental health issues. These diseases and conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, and depression affect people of color and low-income individuals more, and therefore, should be a focus of intervention efforts. Health data revealed in the survey will help inform the health department's programs and those of our partners in the community. For example, education and outreach can influence changes in physical activity, eating habits, and smoking, to improve health.

It is clear that residents are very concerned about the lack of affordable housing, the lack of affordable child care, gun safety, and substance abuse. Affordable housing and affordable child care help create healthy environments for families, and should be a priority of local agencies and organizations. Gun safety and substance abuse directly impact lives, especially of young persons, and creating safer places to live is a priority in Hamilton County.

Written comments by respondents point to their concern about the homeless. While the Homeless Health Center and other organizations help support the homeless, creation of affordable housing and mental health support can help address this growing issue.

The Health Department would like to recognize the numerous organizations and agencies diligently working together to improve health outcomes for Hamilton County. Distribution of this report to the community at large and our partners is a next step to address the health status and concerns of Hamilton County residents. This report highlights areas that should be future priority areas, and the Hamilton County Health Department will continue to work with partners to move forward on these public health issues.