

State of the County Health Report: Wilkes County 2017

Wilkes County Health Department
Promoting health and preventing disease in our community.



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For more information, please contact us at:

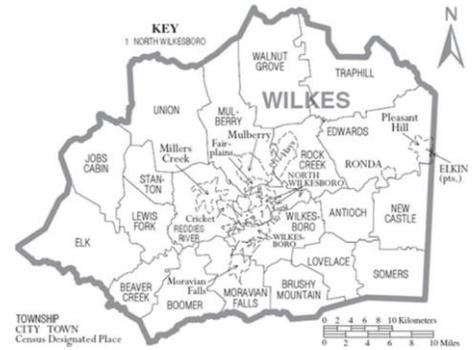


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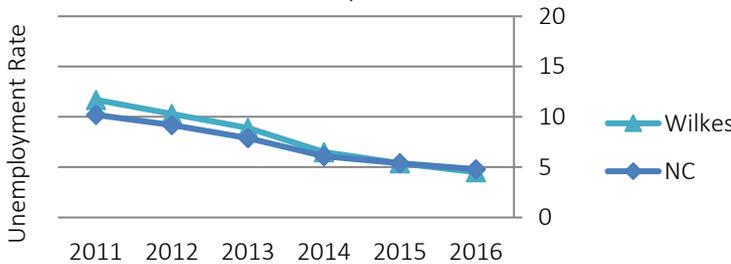
Overview and Demographics

In North Carolina, the state requires each local health department to conduct a [Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#) every four years for accreditation and as part of its consolidated contract. During the years between community health assessments, health departments submit an abbreviated **State of the County's Health (SOTCH) report**. In Wilkes County, this report consists of an overview of demographics, health indicators, and leading causes of morbidity and mortality. This report also contains various updates on the community's top four health priorities, action plan projects, local initiatives and emerging trends.

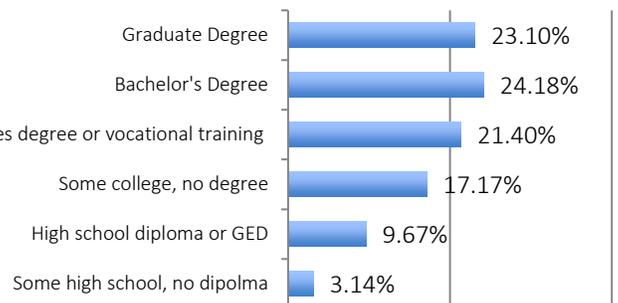


Wilkes County Demographics Snap Shot Total Population 68,740 (US Census, 2016 Estimates)

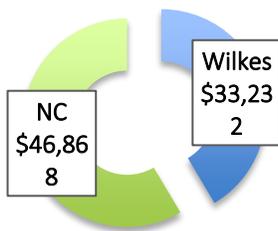
Unemployment (NC Department of Commerce, 2011-2016)



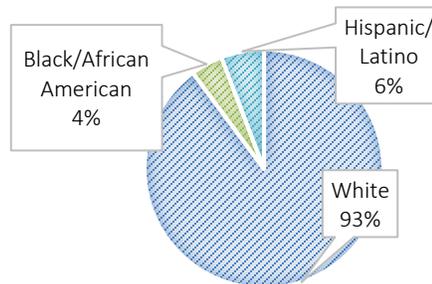
Educational Attainment (CHA 2015/2016)



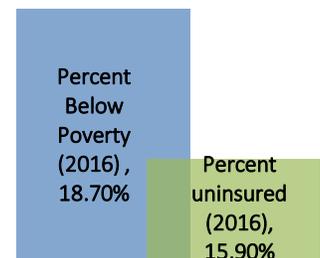
Median Household Income (US Census, 2015)



Race Distribution (US Census, 2016)



Poverty & the Uninsured (US Census)



Leading Causes of Death (North Carolina County Health Data Book, 2018)

1. Diseases of the Heart
2. Cerebrovascular Disease
3. Cancer
4. Diabetes Mellitus
5. Pneumonia and Influenza

Leading Risk Factors

- Poor Nutrition
- Lack of Physical Activity
- Tobacco Use

Sharing the State of Health

Copies of this report may be found at <http://www.wilkeshealth.com/>.
The report will be presented to community leaders and groups throughout 2018. To request additional information or to schedule a presentation of this information for your group, call Rachel Willard at 336.651.7449 or email at rwillard@wilkescounty.net.

Public Health Prevention at Work

The Wilkes County Health Department protects and improves community wellbeing by preventing disease, illness and injury, and improving social, economic and environmental factors that are essential to our health. As the local



champions for public health, we are in the business of prevention, rather than treatment, and serving the whole community, rather than individuals. By preventing disease, promoting good health and creating environments that help people stay healthy, public health saves money and improves everyone's quality of life.¹

The Wilkes County Health Department works closely with health care providers,

businesses, public agencies, government and the media to examine the ways in which our community's resources and needs are interconnected. By strengthening these connections between community partners, we are improving community health through a holistic model that acknowledges all needs of a person—the whole person. Seeing health through the lens of the whole person means addressing all of a person's health-related needs, from physical and behavioral health services to education, nutrition, and social services. Caring for the whole person is successful when community partners have strong connections between their systems, which enables people to use resources effectively and improve their health outcomes.

Community based prevention is at work for all of our school-aged children in Wilkes County. Wilkes County Schools was awarded a grant to implement the "Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child" model to strengthen a unified approach by all community partners to learning and health. Schools, health agencies, parents, and communities are working toward a common goal of supporting the health and academic achievement of students. "By working together, we can ensure that every young person in every school in our community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged."²

Community based prevention enables us to tackle the root causes of health disparities and find solutions that will promote health throughout a person's entire life. Many health disparities begin early in life with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being.³ These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the imprisonment of a parent. Initiatives such as Triple P, Lemonade for Life, and the Community Resiliency Model are successful at addressing these challenges because they address the whole person in the context of our relationships and local environment.

¹ https://www.apha.org/~media/files/pdf/topics/aca/apha_prevfundbrief_june2012.ashx

² http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/wsc/pdf/wsc_fact_sheet_508c.pdf

³ http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Brief-adverse-childhood-experiences_FINAL.pdf

Health Priority #1: Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Local Community Objectives

1. By June 30, 2018, increase the number of adults who report that their health is good, very good, or excellent by 5%.
2. By June 30, 2018, decrease the number of ED admissions to Wilkes Regional Medical Center for mental health or substance abuse diagnoses by 2%.
3. By June 30, 2018, reduce the percentage of high school students who report alcohol use one or more of the past 30 days by 2%.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Action Plan Progress

Project Lazarus continues to work with local pharmacies to encourage permanent drug take back lock boxes. This year no new drop off locations have been added. However, Millers Creek Pharmacy is considering adding one. The community has helped with the promotion of permanent drop box locations by distributing educational flyers. Project Lazarus Youth Coalition also placed billboards and flyers throughout the county on safely locking and securing your medicines. During the past year roughly 320 lock boxes have been distributed to families throughout the county. Project Lazarus partnered with Two Rivers Cinema and North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church to show *The Anonymous People* to educate the community on recovery. Project Lazarus in partnership with the Health Department also hosted a prescriber training. Project Lazarus' Community Coalition has gained momentum throughout the community. The group has hosted monthly meetings throughout the community to reduce stigma and educate residents on resources, drop boxes, treatment options, and other issues affecting persons who misuse substances.



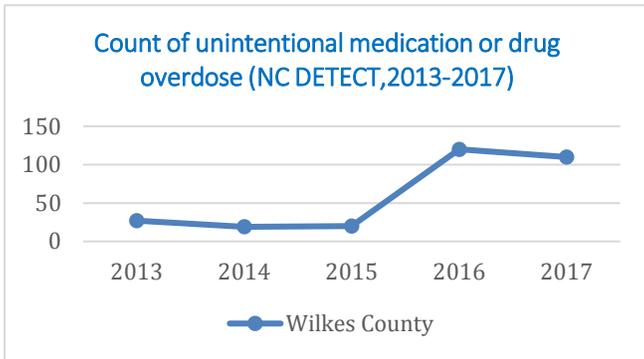
Wilkes County Health Department and co-applicant Wilkes Community Health Center received a HRSA Access Increases to Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (AIMS) grant to increase behavioral health to primary care patients. These funds will allow patients to receive counseling services for mental health and substance abuse. The AIMS funding has also allowed a part time health educator to be hired, to increase education and awareness around substance abuse in Wilkes County.

This year several agencies have partnered together and hosted 13 drug take back events across the county. Through these take backs, we have collected over 800 lbs of unused medicines.

The mental health task force, continues to meet monthly. The task force works to identify gaps in service in Wilkes County.

Multiple community organizations continued to offer Mental Health First Aid and Darkness to Light trainings throughout the year.

Change in Data: According to NC Region 3 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, in 2016 76.1% of the residents reported having good, very good, or excellent health compared to 76.2% in 2015 and 78.4% in 2014. Due to upgrades and improvements in Wilkes Medical Center’s data platform, NC DETECT was able to capture more complete and accurate diagnosis codes. From the upgrades a huge increase was seen in unintentional overdoses from 2015 (20 cases) to 2017 (110 cases). With these improvements we also saw an increase in heroin overdoses.



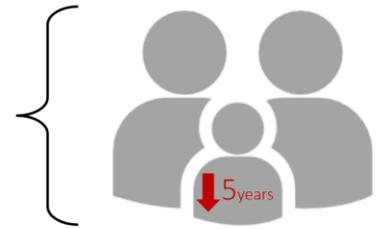
Health Priority #2: Obesity and Chronic Disease

Local Community Objective

1. By June 30, 2017, decrease the number of children and adults who are overweight or obese by 2%.
2. By June 30, 2018, reduce the number of children or adults who are pre-diabetic by 1%.
3. By June 30, 2018, reduce the rate of cardiovascular disease mortality from 166.4 to 164.0.

Chronic Disease in Wilkes

For the first time in history, the current generation of children may have shorter life expectancies than their parents by 5 years¹



62% of all causes of death in Wilkes County are due to preventable chronic disease²

¹Olshansky et al., A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century, NEJM. ²NC SCHS, 2009-2013

Obesity and Chronic Disease Action Plan Progress:

Wilkes County has worked on multiple initiatives in the past year to help reduce chronic disease and obesity in our community. The health department has completed four cohorts of Brenner FIT families. Sixty seven families have completed the program, and can now make healthier decisions that impact their family’s nutrition, physical activity and quality time. The health department completed its fourth season of providing Market Bucks to families in need. This year the health department reached 596 families and provided \$5,000 worth of produce to them. Through a Women’s Circle Grant, the health department was able to provide 10 mammograms to women in need. Through another Women’s Circle Grant we were able to provide four cooking classes to the public and reached roughly 100 people. The Diabetes and Nutrition Center also provided a cooking class to the Women’s Circle group and reached about 50 women.



In 2015 the Wilkes Health Action Team (WHAT) was awarded the Healthy People, Healthy Carolinas Grant through the Duke Endowment. During the course of 2017 the WHAT steering committee and partners have made tremendous progress. The Duke Endowment funds have helped implement SPARK in all 13 elementary schools.

The WHAT group has also created a Work Well Wilkes Employee Wellness task force, which awarded 8 mini grants to local agencies who participate in the Work Well Wilkes group. The WHAT group has also hired a Faithful Families Coordinator to work with our faith community. So far the Faithful Families Coordinator has worked with 3 churches, with more interested in starting. The grant has helped five additional child care center sites become Shape NC sites. The grant also allowed for the Health Department to expand the Brenner Fit Academy Program to meet families where they are in the Mt. View area.

The Health Foundation and the Town of North Wilkesboro were one of the six nationwide awardees for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Raising Places Grant. Raising Places is designed to engage residents and local leaders in creating healthy, “child centered” communities through a nine month interactive process that includes a series of learning labs. The core team has been trained on Human-Centered Design, which focuses on involving the whole community to design and test solutions. The team has decided to work on improving housing, transportation, and access to fresh fruits and vegetables for children in North Wilkesboro.



The Town of North Wilkesboro has developed and implemented a new downtown masterplan. The plan includes streetscaping, four way stops, and created a more inviting atmosphere for pedestrians and cyclist.

Wilkes County Schools continues to offer free breakfast and lunch to all elementary and middle school students through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program. Wilkes County Schools partnered with the Health Department and SafeKids to host Walk to School Day in 3 Elementary Schools and Bike to School Day with 5 schools. Through a Department of Transportation grant 4th graders at Mulberry, Traphill, Roaring River, and Mt. View were fitted and received free bike helmets.

The Partnership for Children’s Preschool Physical Activity and Nutrition Team to help address childhood obesity in child care centers has been hard at work this year. Currently nine of the child care centers are Shape NC sites. Some of the childcare centers also offer the Be Active program. The Partnership also hosted a pop up market this growing season at one of its centers. The Partnership also offered grocery store tours to parents to help them make healthier choices while shopping.



Changes in Data:

More children in grades K-8 in Wilkes County Schools are considered to be in the Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ) for body composition. In School Yea 16/17 59% of Girls and 59% of boys were in the HFZ compared to 60% of girls and 59% of boys who were in the HFZ in 2016, and 58% of girls and 57% of boys in 2015. Based on our Market Buck program surveys, 73% of families who participated stated that they did increase their fruit and vegetable consumption during the market season compared to 58% in 2016, 40% in 2015 and 38% in 2014.

Recent Data Changes	2015		2016	
	LHD Region 3	NC	LHD Region 3	NC
Adults with a BMI greater than 25 (reported overweight or obese) <i>(Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2014 & 2015)</i>	69.6	65.8	67.7	66.8
Adults reported no physical activity within the last month <i>(Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2014 & 2015)</i>	27.7	26.2	27	23.3

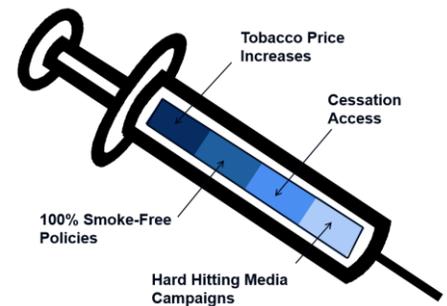
Recent Data Changes	2012		2015	
	Wilkes	NC	Wilkes	NC
Children ages 2-4 who are obese <i>(NC-NPASS, 2012)</i>	19.7%	14.5%	14.6%	14.0%

Health Priority #3: Tobacco and Smoking

Local Community Objectives:

1. By June 30, 2018, increase the number of 100% tobacco free grounds policies, practice, and environmental changes to support prevention of tobacco use for youth and adults from 1 to 3.
2. By June 30, 2018, increase the number of Wilkes County residents who utilize the NC Quitline by 5%.

“Tobacco Control Vaccine”



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs*. 2014

Tobacco and Smoking Action Plan Progress

In the Spring, Wilkes County Health Department staff attended a 5A’s training in Boone. The health department also invited the school based health center mental health providers, local dentist, and other local providers to attend the training. Wilkes County trained 13 new staff and providers, with the goal of increasing utilization of the Quitline NC fax referral form in the clinic.

QuitNow NC is a resource that provides free counseling to individuals who want to quit using tobacco. It is promoted in various methods through partnerships with local healthcare providers who can refer patients who are interested that can receive a call from a trained quit-coach.

The Wilkes County Health Department supports tobacco prevention through promotion of Quitline NC (1.800.QUITNOW) while also providing community services in tobacco prevention and cessation. We also support workplaces, governments, realtors, and others in exploring the benefits of adopting practices that support others in quitting while protecting many from secondhand smoke.

In 2017, North Wilkesboro Housing Authority adopted a smoke-free policy that will go in effect January 1, 2018. North Wilkesboro Housing Authority implemented a smoke free building rule, that does not allow patrons to smokes within 25 ft of any building. The complex also set up designated smoking areas.

Changes in Data: From January-October 190 residents have utilized the NC Quitline. In 2016, 190 Wilkes County residents utilized the Quitline compared to 125 residents in 2015 (Quitline NC Reports). Wilkes County also increased the number of multi-unit housing complexes who are smoke free from 5 to 6.

New Initiatives and Emerging Trends

New Initiative: Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)

Wilkes County Health Department and the co-applicant nonprofit board, Wilkes Community Health Center, became a public entity federally qualified health center (FQHC) on January 1, 2017. This new federal designation provided more opportunities in 2017 to serve the public across the county. This new designation will take advantage of resources and raise accountability to provide high quality, customer oriented care. The designation includes continued focus on primary health care access, increased preventive dental care for children and adults, integrated behavioral healthcare through the Access Increases for Mental Health and Substance Abuse (AIMS) Grant for primary care clients, access to low cost medications, and improved support services for transportation and chronic disease management services. The agency will use input from the new patient-majority board, Partners in Public Health, to continue improving services provided in the community.

Wilkes Community Health Center has also brought quality improvement measures into the health department. A newly formed Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance FQHC team has formed, as well as performance improvement teams, to improve patient satisfaction and patient-centered medical home efforts.

New Initiative: Watch for Me NC

Watch for Me NC is a comprehensive program, run by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in partnership with local communities, aimed at reducing the number of pedestrians and bicyclists hit and injured in crashes with vehicles. The Town of North Wilkesboro is an active partner with NCDOT to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in Wilkes County.



Growing Initiative: Improving Community Outcomes for Maternal and Child Health

The North Carolina General Assembly budgeted funds for local health departments to carry out evidence-based strategies that are proven to lower infant mortality rates, improve birth outcomes, and improve the overall health status of children ages birth to five. AppHealthCare (Alleghany, Ashe, and Watauga), Avery, and Wilkes Counties have been awarded this funding for three years, 2016-2019. However, with legislative changes the grant was shortened to 2 years, with an application into the state for renewed funding for another two years, 2018-2020. Based on community input, evidence-based strategies include the Positive Parenting Program, Long Acting Reversible Contraception and Reproductive Justice, and Tobacco Prevention and Cessation.

Here is what we can do...



Practice safe prescription medication use by taking correctly, storing securely, disposing properly, and never sharing.

Health begins where we live, learn, work and play. Take action in building our neighborhood to be safe and healthy.



Being healthy takes a community. Attend a Mental Health First Aid training and join local community groups that work to support mental health systems.

Your opportunity for health starts long before you need medical care. Sign up for your local Women, Infant & Children (WIC) program through your local health department.



The opportunity for health begins in our families, neighborhoods, schools and jobs. Participate in local bike and walk safety programs to and from school. Being healthy takes a community.

Your neighborhood or job shouldn't be hazardous to your health. Support tobacco free living.



Health starts—long before illness—in our homes, schools and jobs. Investing in our mothers and children is investing in our future.

Live active, eat local vegetables and fruits.



All citizens have the opportunity to make the choices that allow them to live a long, healthy life.³ Support local policies for sidewalks and bike lanes.