



## Jackson County Department of Public Health

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2022-14  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 16, 2022

### HEALTH DEPARTMENT RELEASES COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

The Jackson County Department of Public Health worked with local community agencies and members to complete the 2021 Community Health Assessment (CHA). The CHA is the foundation for improving and promoting the health of community members, and its role is to identify factors that affect the health of a population and determine the availability of resources within the community to adequately address these factors. The CHA is a year-long process that leads to a full report of the community's health.

The CHA compares the most recent health trends of Jackson County to the region and the state. Jackson County's top three leading causes of death (cancer, heart disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease) are right in line with our region and the state.

There are key data points that lead to the selection of three health priorities, which are healthy eating/physical activity, substance use prevention, and mental health. In Jackson County, 28% of adults are at a healthy weight, with 23% meeting the physical activity recommendations of 150 minutes or more per week. Less than 6% of residents are meeting the nutrition standards of 5 or more servings of fruits/vegetables per day.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death for Americans age 1 – 44 years. This includes opioid overdoses and unintentional poisonings, as well as unintentional drownings, motor vehicle crashes and falls. Suicide is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for the same age group and numbers continue to rise. In Jackson County, WNC region and the state, unintentional injury mortality rates have increased significantly since the early 2000s. Jackson County's current rate (54.8) is now higher than the WNC region (50.7) and the state (39.3). Further, males continue to die from unintentional injuries more often than females, though the large gap between the two has started to close.

Unintentional Poisoning mortality continues to be higher in Jackson County at a rate of 24 per 100,000 people, compared to the WNC region (23) and the state (19). According to the NC Department of Health and Human Services, commonly prescribed opioid prescriptions (oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine) were the leading causes of opioid-involved overdoses historically. However, heroin, fentanyl, and fentanyl analogues are involved in the majority of these deaths now. A wide variety of demographics and both urban and rural communities are experiencing an increase in overdose deaths, though the most commonly affected people are white or American Indian, male, and 25 to 48 years old (from Injury Free NC). A compelling data point regarding the increase in opioid-involved overdoses is the number of community naloxone reversals. In Jackson County in 2018 there were 8 reversals, while in 2020 there were



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65. This is a rate of 148 per 100,000. For perspective, the WNC region has a rate of 71 and the state has a rate of 31 per 100,000.

Jackson County residents, and the WNC region, continue to report a decline in receiving social/emotional support when needed. In 2012, 82% of Jackson County residents and 81% of WNC residents reported they always/usually get the needed social/emotional support. Those numbers changed to 66% in Jackson County and 70% in WNC in 2021. Further, the percentage of folks reporting 7 or more poor mental health days in the past month has increased significantly in both Jackson County (20%) and WNC (22%). Both percentages were under 15% in 2012. In Jackson County, 12% of the population's typical day is extremely or very stressful. This is lower than the WNC rate (13%) and the United States rate (16%). Despite these rates, 84% of Jackson County residents and 87% of WNC residents are confident in their ability to manage stress. Additionally, 74% of Jackson County residents are able to stay hopeful in difficult times. Sadly, Jackson County has the highest percentage of residents (12%) in WNC that have considered suicide in the past year. The WNC average is 8%. Dissatisfaction with life has doubled in both Jackson County and WNC since 2012, with rates at 5% for both in 2012, and rates at 10% in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted mental health and put a strain on the limited resources in our area.

On a positive note, the heart disease mortality rate in Jackson County has decreased significantly since the early 2000s from 200 to 149 per 100,000 people during the 2015-2019 time period. Further, unintentional motor vehicle injury mortality rates have improved in Jackson County, the WNC region and the state. During the 2002-2006 time period, Jackson had a rate of 19% and then during the 2015-2019 time period, Jackson had an improved rate of 14%. In comparison, during the most recent time period analyzed, the WNC region average was 13%, and the state average was 15%.

Other issues to watch in our community include the COVID-19 pandemic, health equity, poverty and chronic disease rates.

The next step is developing Community Health Improvement Plans to address the three priorities, and the CHA Facilitator is seeking passionate, dedicated individuals to serve on community action teams. If interested, please contact Janelle Messer, Health Education Supervisor, at 828-587-8238 or [janellemesser@jacksonnc.org](mailto:janellemesser@jacksonnc.org). The full Community Health Assessment can be viewed on the Health Department's webpage <http://health.jacksonnc.org/community-health-data>.

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