

# State of the Community's Health

Alleghany County | 2023



*Caring for Our Community*

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**Sharing the State of the Community’s Health**

Copies of this report may be found at [www.apphealthcare.com](http://www.apphealthcare.com). The report will be presented to community leaders and groups during different events. To learn more, follow us on Facebook at [AppHealthCare](https://www.facebook.com/AppHealthCare), log on to our website, and check your local radio and newspapers. To request more information or to schedule a presentation of this information for your group, call our Alleghany County Health Center at 336.372.5641 or email [info@apphealth.com](mailto:info@apphealth.com).

## Overview and Demographics

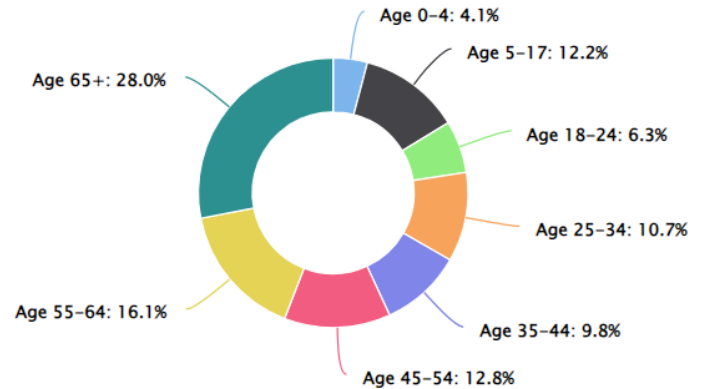
In North Carolina, each local health department conducts a [Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#) every four years. AppHealthCare published the CHA in January 2022. During the years between community health assessments, health departments submit a **State of the County's Health (SOTCH) report**. In Alleghany County, this report includes a summary of demographics, health indicators, and main causes of death. This report also contains updates on the community's top three health priorities, action plan projects, local initiatives and emerging trends.

## Demographic Snapshot

All figures detailed below and on the following page were generated by University of Missouri's Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems (CARES), and serves as a tool with the most current data sites available. Data reflect 2020 census data, American Community Survey data, and other consistent sources.

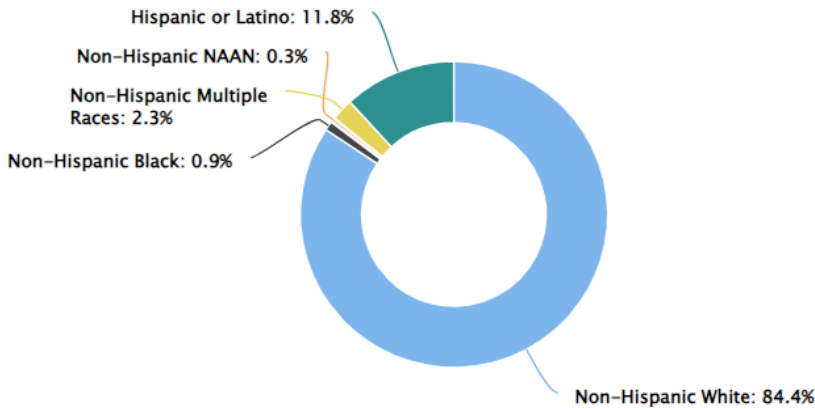
Total Population by Age Groups, Total

Alleghany County, NC



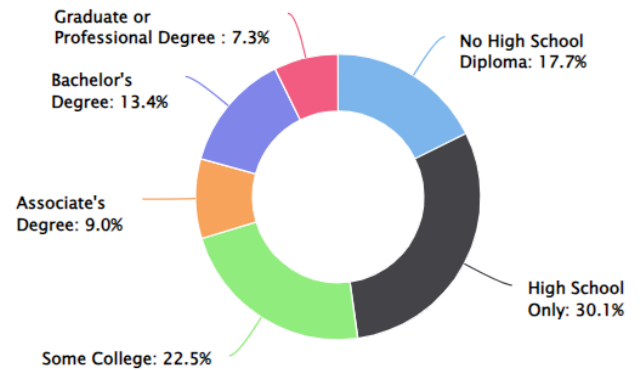
Population by Combined Race and Ethnicity

Alleghany County, NC



Attainment – Overview

Alleghany County, NC

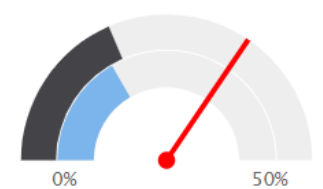
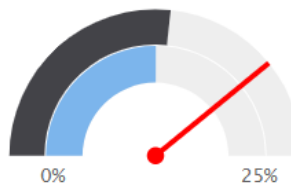
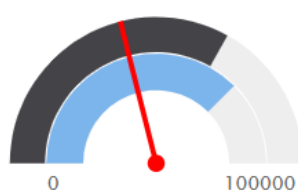
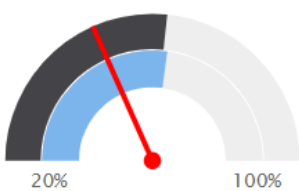


Labor Force Participation Rate

Median Household Income

Population in Poverty, Percent

Population < Age 18 in Poverty, Percent



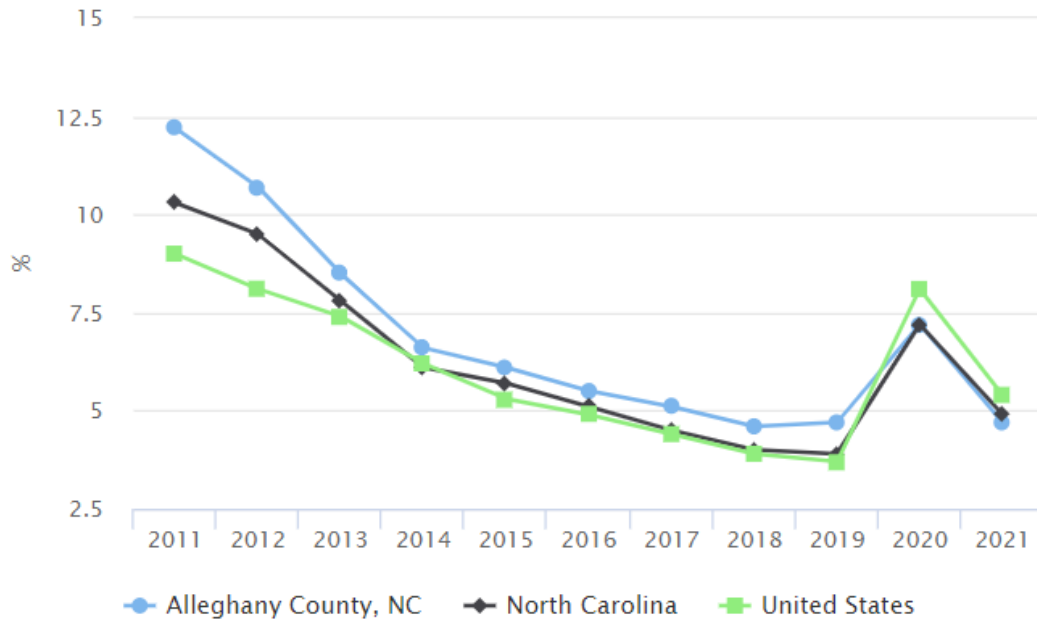
● Alleghany County, NC (49.37%)  
 ● North Carolina (62.58%)  
 ● United States (63.47%)

● Alleghany County, NC (\$42,115)  
 ● North Carolina (\$66,186)  
 ● United States (\$75,149)

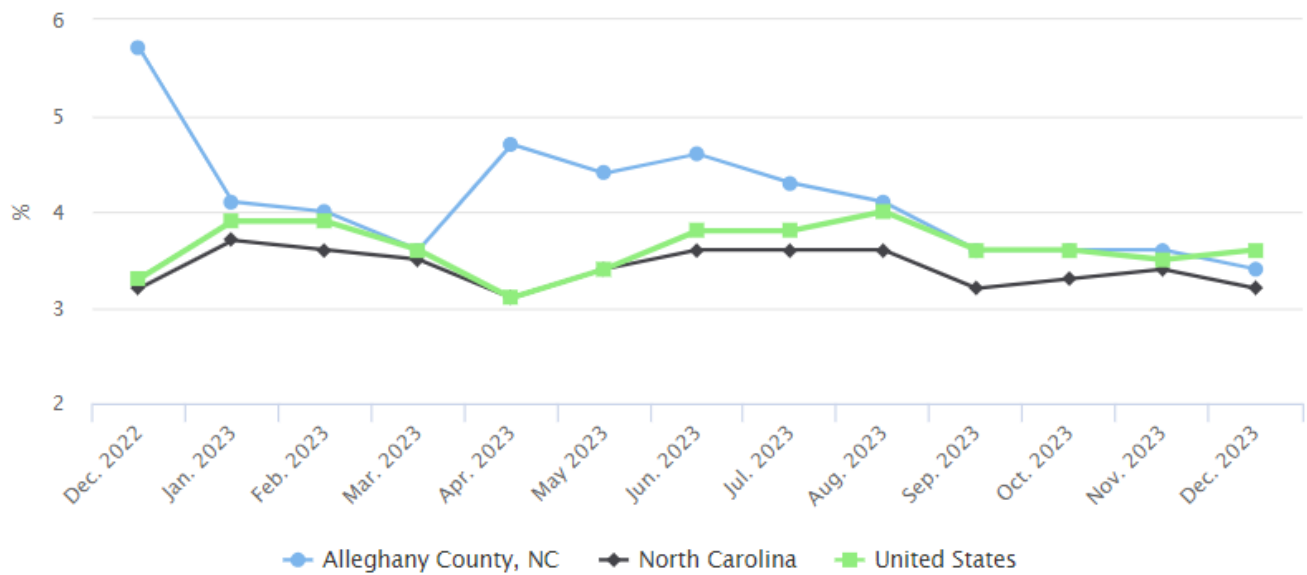
● Alleghany County, NC (19.55%)  
 ● North Carolina (13.33%)  
 ● United States (12.53%)

● Alleghany County, NC (34.49%)  
 ● North Carolina (18.49%)  
 ● United States (16.66%)

Average Annual Unemployment Rate, 2011–2021



Average Monthly Unemployment Rate, December 2022 – December 2023



**Leading Causes of Death**

(North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, 2019)

- 1. Cancer
- 2. Diseases of the Heart
- 3. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases

**Leading Risk Factors**

- Tobacco Use
- Lack of Physical Activity
- Poor Nutrition



## About Public Health: Reaching for Health Equity and Resilience

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AppHealthCare is committed to making sure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.<sup>1</sup> In order to reach this vision of health equity, AppHealthCare is working to eliminate health disparities—differences in health outcomes among groups of people—that are created by social, economic, and environmental conditions. These conditions lead to behaviors such as smoking, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise, which affect our health.

## Public Health Priorities

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The Alleghany Wellness Coalition, which focuses on improving programs, strategies, services, or policies that build on strengths and meet the priority health and emerging needs of Alleghany County, selected the public health priorities in August 2021. These priorities were chosen based on the 2020 Alleghany County Community Health Assessment. The public health priorities identified for Alleghany County include mental and behavioral health, family and social support, substance use and misuse prevention. To get involved with Alleghany Wellness Coalition and participate in future conversations related to health priorities, please reach out to Karina Romero, Health Promotion Program Manager, at [karina.romero@apphealth.com](mailto:karina.romero@apphealth.com).



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<sup>1</sup>Image source: <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/what-makes-us-healthy-vs-what-we-spend-on-being-healthy/>  
<https://healthequity.sfsu.edu/>

## Health Priority: Mental and Behavioral Health

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### Update to Local Community Objectives

#### *Gatekeeper Training*

AppHealthCare recently realigned grant strategies to further focus resources toward mental health based on conversations with and feedback from community partners. AppHealthCare is partnering with two contractors to work with local organizations to establish policies and/or programs to address suicide prevention. Additionally, these contractors work with organizations and community members to provide gatekeeper training for suicide prevention. The goal of this effort is to equip individuals in a variety of settings to know what to do in situations where someone may be at risk for suicide.

Gatekeeper training offerings in 2023 included Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), safeTALK and adult Mental Health First Aid. A training open to the county was held in November of 2023 with 20 attendees. There were several agencies represented such as Western Youth Network, Alleghany Rescue Squad, Children's Center of Northwest North Carolina, faith organizations and other community members. The goal is to begin integrating these training options into several different populations with our partner agencies being the connector.

#### *Our State, Our Wellbeing Initiative*

Carolina Across 100 and UNC Suicide Prevention Institute are partnering with 15 communities from every part of North Carolina to address mental health challenges and prevent suicides through the [Our State, Our Wellbeing Initiative](#). The [selected teams](#) are composed of health providers, government agencies, educational institutions, faith-based groups, and civic and nonprofit organizations from 24 counties across the state. Alleghany County secured this opportunity in August of 2023.

Over the next 12 months, Carolina Across 100 and the UNC Suicide Prevention Institute will facilitate a cohort of cross-sector community collaboratives focused on implementing strategies to prevent suicide and suicidal ideation and improve resources available for mental and behavioral health. Participating communities will engage a broad array of organizations, including local government agencies, school systems, institutions of higher education, healthcare providers as well as faith- and community-based organizations. They will work together to identify community needs and target populations, align existing resources and programs, and develop plans to implement evidence-based prevention strategies. The Suicide Prevention Institute will provide participating communities with expertise in selecting the proven interventions that best suit their communities, and then help implement those interventions in an effective and sustainable way.

#### *Unity in the Community: Linking Lives in Alleghany County*

The Unity in the Community event took place on April 15th, 2023 from 1:00-5:00 pm at Crouse Park. The focus for this event was mental health awareness, including suicide awareness and prevention. Event planners sought to break down barriers and stigma for those needing help and to bring people together in a way that encourages unity and generates kindness and compassion for our community. The event involved an interactive setting where vendors provided information in a creative way that engaged attendees, especially children. This event was spearheaded by Lynda Simmons (Community Matters) and was sponsored by Alleghany Lives: Suicide Awareness Coalition, Alleghany Wellness Coalition and VAYA.

Planners seek to hold this event annually. The second Unity in the Community event is scheduled for June 8th, 2024, with the possibility of mini-events throughout the month of May to commemorate Mental Health Awareness month. To learn more, please reach out to Lynda Simmons at [communitymatters.lyndasimmons@gmail.com](mailto:communitymatters.lyndasimmons@gmail.com).

## Health Priority: Family & Social Support

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### Update to Local Community Objectives

#### *Family-Based Intervention: Positive Parenting Program*

Allegheny County practitioners continue to implement positive parenting strategies in hopes of reducing serious negative childhood outcomes. Healthy children equal healthy adults later in life. In 2023, the Triple P Team focused on building the capacity of existing practitioners and identifying new practitioners to train. Additionally, the team worked on making the program accessible to families in need in Allegheny County. As of the end of 2023, Triple P is available through **five** agencies in Allegheny County. These agencies include: AppHealthCare, Allegheny Pregnancy Care Center, BROC Headstart Gap Civil Center, Children’s Center of NWNC, and the Allegheny Partnership for Children. Based on Client Satisfaction Questionnaires received, improved child behavior and decreased parent stress are being reported. The Triple P Team is working with partners and practitioners to consistently collect this data to ensure that an important feedback loop is sustained.

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## Health Priority: Substance Use and Misuse Prevention

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### Update to Local Community Objectives

#### *Opioid Settlement*

In July 2021, Attorney General Josh Stein announced a historic \$26 billion agreement that will help bring desperately needed resources to communities harmed by the opioid epidemic. The agreement resolves litigation over the role of four companies in creating and fueling the opioid epidemic. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the State and local governments directs how opioid settlement funds are distributed and used in our state. To maximize funds flowing to North Carolina communities on the front lines of the opioid epidemic, the MOA allocates 15 percent of settlement funds to the State and sends the remaining 85 percent to NC's 100 counties and 17 municipalities.

The overdose death rate in Alleghany County was 9 out of 100,000 people in 2020. This represents 1 person in Alleghany who died from overdose in that year. For every death, there are more non-fatal overdoses. While we are not able to capture all opioid overdoses, emergency department visits for overdoses are one way to measure the number of overdoses happening. The overdose emergency department visit rate in Alleghany County was 90 out of 100,000 people in 2020, where there is a population of just over 11,000. The number increased from 2020 to 2023, where 134.7 out of 100,000 people visited the emergency department for overdoses in Alleghany County in 2023.

Another indicator of the impacts of substance use at a community level is the percent of children in foster care due to parental substance use. In 2018, 15.4% of children in foster care in Alleghany County were in foster care due to a parent's substance use (n=8). In 2021, the number of children in foster care in Alleghany County due to a parent's substance use increased to 32.6% of all children in foster care in Alleghany County (n=15). Alleghany's rate of children in foster care due to parental substance use has remained lower than the overall state trends, but regardless remains prevalent in the community.

In November 2022, Alleghany County agencies and partners initiated a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) action planning process in which focus areas were determined for the next four years. In February 2023, the Alleghany County Commissioners approved the utilization of \$108,178 to fund one-year pilot projects based on Exhibit A strategies in the MOA. In alignment with guidelines set by the North Carolina Attorney General's Office and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Alleghany County considered funding agencies to implement the following Exhibit A strategies:

1. Collaborative strategic planning
2. Evidence-based addiction treatment
3. Recovery support services
4. Recovery housing support
5. Employment-related services
6. Early intervention
7. Naloxone distribution
8. Post-overdose response team
9. Syringe Service Program
10. Criminal justice diversion programs
11. Addiction treatment for incarcerated persons
12. Reentry programs



Priority was given to projects that align with the top 5 focus areas determined through RBA action planning: 1) Harm reduction, 2) Connections to care, 3) Treatment, 4) Support for people in treatment and recovery, 5) Prevention.

For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Allegheny County authorized use of opioid settlement funds by AppHealthCare for the purchase of a mobile health bus. Additionally, funds will be used for further collaborative strategic planning to ensure a strong foundation for future investments.

### *Peer Support Specialists*

In 2019, AppHealthCare hired two, part-time, Peer Support Specialists (PSS) then through the Community Linkages to Care grant and the Vital Strategies opioid settlement matching grant, were able to add an additional (full-time) PSS to serve the district. There are one fulltime and one ½ part time PSS that work across the district. The PSSs work as advocates for those struggling with substance use disorder by relating on a personal level through lived experience to promote trust among the people they serve. The PSSs work to serve the community through education, prevention measures, harm reduction, training, connecting individuals to care, working with justice-involved individuals, and helping with environmental and policy change work.

Current PSS initiatives are being captured and evaluated using a combination of pre- and post-test comparisons and follow up with program participants and agencies, as well as maintenance of data logs. The following are measures that are in place and have been tracked since February 2019 (when the NC CPSS program started):

- Board of Health resolution to support comprehensive strategies to address the opioid epidemic
- Total number of individuals served by NC Peer Support Specialists (PSS) across Allegheny, Ashe, and Watauga Counties: **724**
- Total syringes returned: **48,020** (1,620 of those in Allegheny)
- Total naloxone kits distributed **2,772** (220 Allegheny)
- Number of unique justice-involved persons served: **158** (24 in Allegheny)
- Number of justice-involved people and their families or loved ones educated on harm reduction strategies before release, including (but not limited to) training on how to recognize an overdose, how to administer naloxone, and how to prevent an overdose: **150**
- Number of justice-involved individuals reporting overdose reversals: **51**
- Percent of justice-involved individuals who are given access to naloxone upon release: **100% are offered - approximately 40% receive kits**
- Number of Narcan/Naloxone trainings in business and agencies: **13** (including ASU, community organizations, businesses, churches), **440 kits distributed to 150 participants**
- Number of average contacts with each individual served: **9**
- Number of individuals connected to medical, social services, emergency housing, transportation, food, treatment, behavioral health: **478**
- Number of naloxone kits distributed through PORT = **117** (Ashe only)
- Number of overdose reversals reported through PORT = **45** (Ashe Only)

### *Post-Overdose Response Team*

Community collaboration is a key component of this strategy to provide direct service to community members who have experienced an opioid overdose. AppHealthCare's PSSs are called onto the location of the overdose or to the hospital to intervene with patients and family to provide support and resources. Initial conversations have begun with Allegheny Health (hospital) regarding the creation of a post-overdose response team. In the

interim, peer support staff have been able to work with Emergency Medical Services to distribute and train on use of naloxone.

## Emerging Issues Since Last CHA

### Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

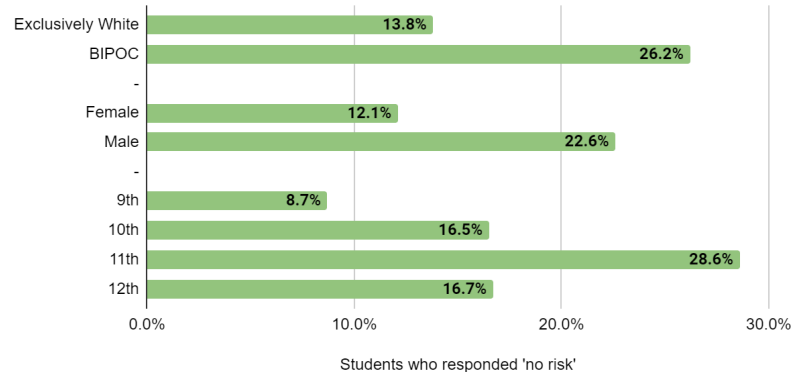
AppHealthCare works with the Alleghany School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to disseminate the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) on a biennial basis, with 2023 being the most recent dissemination. The 2023 survey included a new question asking about use of Delta 8 and Delta 10, a newer cannabis-derived substance of concern discussed during SHAC meetings.

Questions included in the survey related to Delta 8/10 include:

- “During the past 30 days have you used Delta 8 or Delta 10?” **7.4% of AHS students reported using Delta 8/10 during the past 30 days.**
- “How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways if they smoke Delta 8 or Delta 10?” **17.6% of AHS students reported that they believe that smoking Delta 8/10 poses no risk to harming them physically or in other ways.**

How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically or in other ways if they smoke Delta 8 or Delta 10?

High School



Recent SHAC meetings have also included discussions around students and healthy relationships. In the YRBS, the following related questions are asked:

- “During the past 12 months, how many times did someone you were dating or going out with force you to do sexual things that you did not want to do? (Count such things as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.)” **5.7% of AHS students reported that they were forced to do sexual things by someone they were dating.**
- “During the past 12 months, how many times did someone you were dating or going out with physically hurt you on purpose? (Count such things as being hit, slammed into something, or injured with an object or weapon.)” **6.8% of AHS students reported that they were physically hurt on purpose by someone they were dating.**

AppHealthCare continues to monitor data trends related to health concerns brought up by school staff and community partners in hopes of contributing to positive change in these areas.