2025

VAN WERT COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

PREPARED FOR

Van Wert County General Health District

PREPARED BY

OHIO UNIVERSITY

Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service

FOREWORD FROM HEALTH COMMISSIONER

The Van Wert County General Health District is proud to present the *2025 Community Health Assessment (CHA),* a comprehensive look at the health status, strengths, and challenges of the residents we serve. This assessment reflects months of collaboration, data analysis, and community engagement, and it stands as a testament to our shared commitment to understanding—and improving—the health of Van Wert County.

A strong public health system begins with listening. Throughout this process, we partnered with local organizations, health care providers, schools, businesses, and residents to ensure that the voices and lived experiences of our community shaped every page of this report. The CHA highlights not only measurable health indicators but also the social and environmental factors that influence well-being across our county.

The findings in this assessment guide our priorities, inform our strategies, and help us allocate resources where they can make the greatest impact. They also serve as the foundation for our Community Health Improvement Plan, which will translate data into action through targeted, collaborative initiatives.

I am grateful to our staff, partners, and community members for contributing their time, expertise, and perspectives. Your dedication strengthens our ability to respond to emerging needs, support healthier environments, and build a future where every resident can thrive.

Together, we will continue advancing the health of Van Wert County with transparency, purpose, and a shared vision for a healthier tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Dr. Daryl LaMont Dowdy
Health Commissioner
Van Wert County General Health District

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Project Management, Data Collection, Analysis, and Report Development

Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service collected secondary data, administered the survey, analyzed the results, and developed this report. Tammy S. Kahrig, Ph.D., Senior Research Manager, was responsible for directing the project and was the lead author of the report. Katarina Kroutel, M.P.H. candidate, Research Assistant 2, assisted with each stage of the project. Hong Ji, Ph.D., Research Associate 2, analyzed survey data. Camryn McGlumphy, Voinovich Scholar, analyzed qualitative data and provided other technical assistance for the project. Susi Martinez, M.P.H., Impact Analyst, assisted with writing the report. Sharon Hatfield, M.S.J. & M.F.A., Research Associate 2, provided editorial guidance. Lindsey Siegrist, Senior Project Manager–Creative Design, completed the graphic design.

Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service partners with communities, agencies, and businesses to increase capacity, develop leaders, and improve the quality of life for Ohioans.

Written Comments

Individuals are encouraged to submit written comments, questions, or other feedback about the Community Health Assessment (CHA) report to the Van Wert County Health Commissioner at ddowdy@vanwertcountyhealth.org. Please make sure to include details about what you are commenting on and if possible, a page number to the appropriate section of the document.

Community Health Assessment Leaders and Partners

- Daryl Dowdy, Van Wert County General Health District
- Kathy Will, Van Wert County General Health District
- Britt Menchhofer, Van Wert County General Health District
- Andrea Shafer, Van Wert County General Health District
- Paula Stabler, OhioHealth Van Wert Hospital
- Anne Dunn, Tri County ADAMHS Board
- Jeff Snyder, Lincolnview Local Schools
- Mark Bagley, Van Wert City Schools
- Matt Dubé, Crestview Local Schools
- Molly Shepherd Spieles, Westwood Behavioral Health Center

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 7

Van Wert County Overview 7

Purpose and Geographic Scope of the Van Wert County Community Health Needs Assessment. 10

Alignment with Ohio Revised Code and Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) Standards. 11

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS 12

Collection of Primary and Secondary Data 12

Data Analysis. 13

Race/Ethnicity Categories 13

Limitations 14

FINDINGS 15

ADULT HEALTH SUMMARY: COMPARISONS WITH BENCHMARKS. 15

YOUTH HEALTH SUMMARY: COMPARISONS WITH BENCHMARKS 20

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HEALTH 21

Adults' Perceptions 21

Youth Perceptions 24

CHRONIC DISEASES 25

Leading Causes of Death 25

Trends in Chronic Disease Mortality 2021–2025 28

Chronic Disease Prevalence 32

Cancer Profile 34

HEALTH CARE ACCESS, UTILIZATION, AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE 36

Health Care Providers. 36

Health Insurance Coverage 38

Routine Care 40

Preventive Medicine 42

WOMEN'S HEALTH. 46

MEN'S HEALTH. 47

WEIGHT STATUS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND NUTRITION 49
Weight Status 49
Physical Activity 53
Nutrition 57
MENTAL HEALTH 59
Adult Mental Health 59
Youth Mental Health 65
SUBSTANCE USE 67
Adult Tobacco Use 67
Youth Perceptions of Vaping 68
Adult Alcohol and Other Drug Use 70
Youth Perceptions of Alcohol Use 73
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS 76
MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH 72
SOCIAL CONDITIONS 79
Social Drivers of Health (SDOH): Why They Matter 79
Economic Conditions 80
Access to Healthy Foods and Food Insecurity 83
Neighborhood and Built Environment 85
Transportation 87
Education Access and Quality 87
Health Care Access and Quality 88
Place and Health: Social Vulnerability Index and Its Impact on Health 88
Climate and Health 91
Social and Community Context 92
COMMUNITY CONTEXT 95
Community Context Assessment 95
Community Strengths 95
Assets in the Built Environment 95
Forces of Change 96
Adults' Perceptions of Van Wert County Community 98
Changes Residents Would Like to See 98
Community Improvement Initiatives 100

Youth Perceptions of Van Wert County Community. 101
Changes Youth Would Like to See 101
SIGNIFICANT HEALTH NEEDS. 104
Health Needs and Opportunities 104
Mental Health 104
Chronic Disease: Diabetes 104
Chronic Disease: Heart Disease 105
Cancer Burden and Screening Gaps 105
Weight Status, Physical Activity, and Nutrition. 105
Substance Use 106
Access to Health Care 106
Social Needs 107
Prioritization of Health Needs. 107
Potential Resources to Address Needs 108

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Demographic Profile of the 2025 Van Wert County Community Health Survey Respondents 109
APPENDIX B: Demographic Profile of Participants in Youth Listening Sessions 113
APPENDIX D: Van Wert County Resources to Address Health Needs 114
REFERENCES 118

INTRODUCTION

Van Wert County Overview

Van Wert County is located in the northwestern part of Ohio, bordering Indiana on the western side of the county. Van Wert's total population is 28,931. The county is primarily rural, with just over one percent of the county's 410 square miles deemed to be urban. Details are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Van Wert County Residents

AGE	RACE/ETHNICITY	LANGUAGES SPOKEN
0–5 years, 6.1% Under 18 years, 23.2% 65 and over, 19.5% Median age: 41.6	White alone, 92.7% Black or African American alone, <1% American Indian and Alaska Native alone, <1% Asian alone, <1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone, <1% Two or More Races, 4.2% Hispanic or Latino, 3.8%	English, 91.7% Spanish, 1.4% Other Indo-European Languages, 1.3% Asian and Pacific Island Languages, 0.2%
Male, 49.8% Female, 50.2%	Median household income, $67,917 Persons in poverty, 9.0% Employment rate, 61.6%	With a disability, under age 65, 14.3%

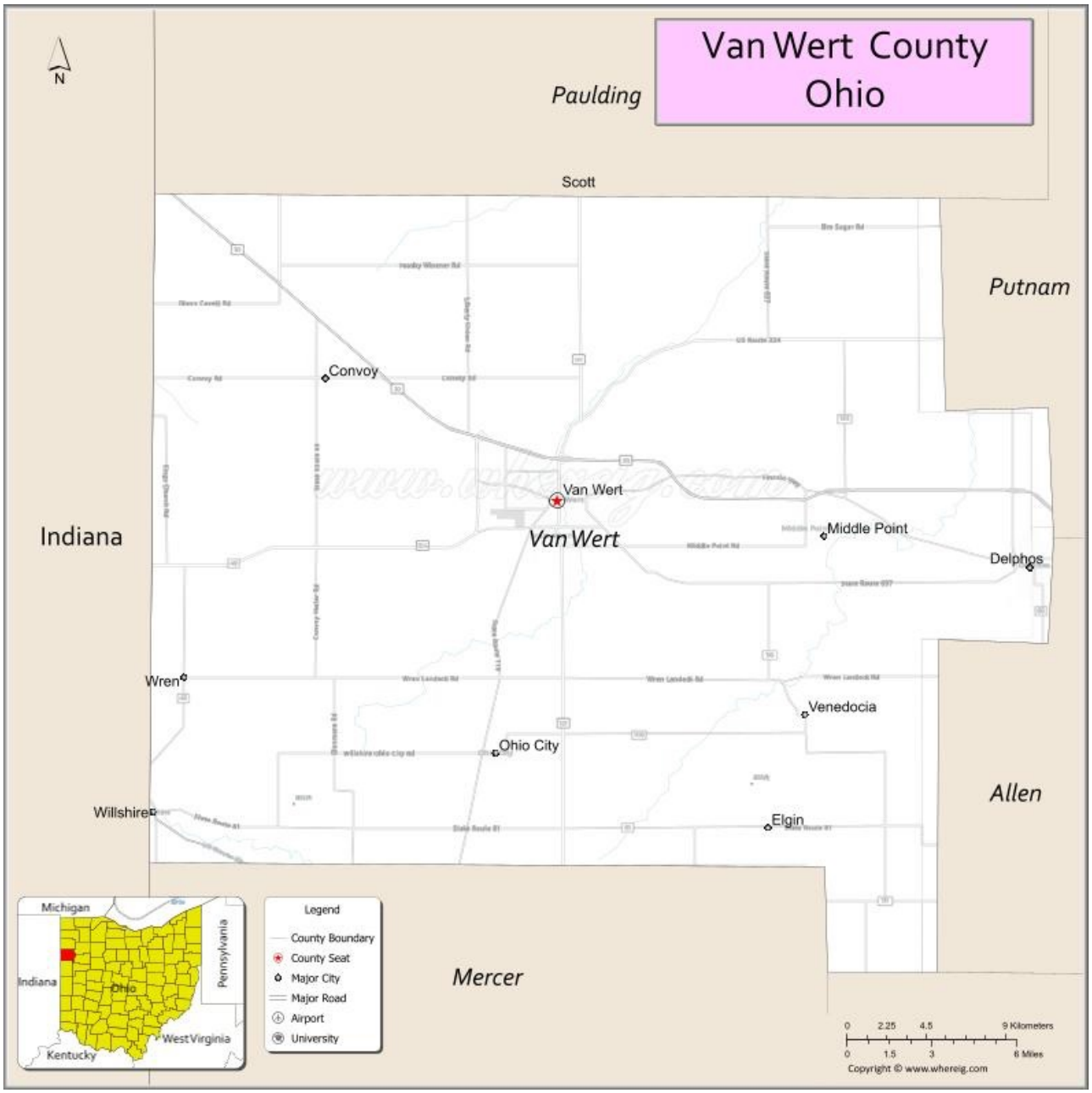
VETERANS	EDUCATION (population 25 years and older)	FAMILIES & LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
6.5%	High school graduate or higher, 43.8% Some college, no degree, 19.9% Associate's degree, 13.3% Bachelor's degree, 11.5% Graduate or professional degree, 5.6%	Households: 11,549 Persons per household: 3.03

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Van Wert County, Ohio: Profile*, accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/profile/Van_Wert_County,_Ohio?g=050XX00US39161.*

Table 2. Communities in Van Wert County by Population Size (Largest Population to Smallest)

COMMUNITY	ZIP CODE
Van Wert	45891
Delphos (partly in Allen County)	45893
Convoy	45832
Ohio City	45874
Wilshire	45898
Middle Point	45863
Venedocia	45894
Scott (partly in Paulding County)	45886
Wren	45899
Elgin	45838

Source: "Van Wert County, Ohio Zip Codes," Worldpopulationreview.com, 2024. https://worldpopulationreview.com/zips/ohio/van-wert-county.

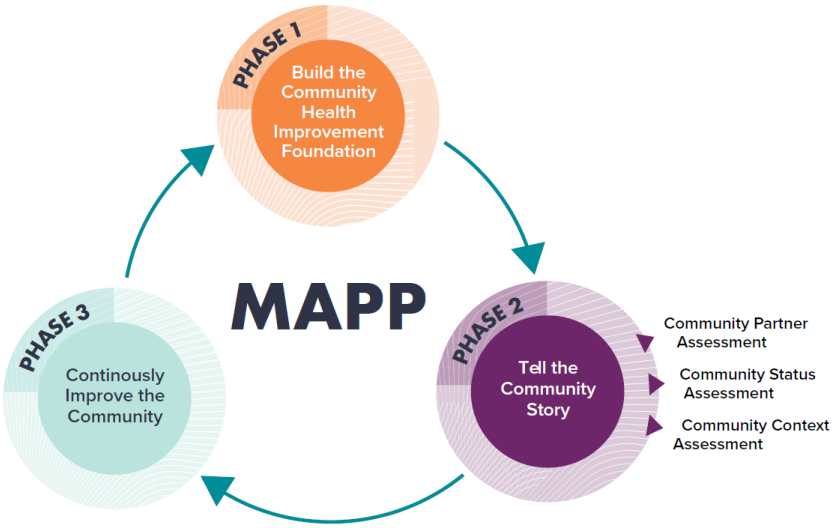

Van Wert County Ohio
N
Paulding
Scott
Putnam
Indiana
Allen
Mercer
Convoy
Van Wert
Van Wert
Middle Point
Delphos
Wren
Venedocia
Ohio City
Willshire
Elgin
Michigan
Indiana
Ohio
Pennsylvania
West Virginia
Kentucky
Legend
County Boundary
County Seat
Major City
Major Road
Airport
University
0 2.25 4.5 9 Kilometers
0 1.5 3 6 Miles
Copyright © www.whereig.com

Purpose and Geographic Scope of the Van Wert County Community Health Needs Assessment

In 2025, the Van Wert County Health District partnered with the Van Wert County Health Collaborative and other community organizations to launch a community driven needs assessment focused on improving the health of all county residents. The Health Collaborative—made up of representatives from social service agencies, health care organizations, public health, schools, faith based groups, behavioral health providers, local government, and law enforcement—meets quarterly to share insights, align resources, and strengthen coordination across sectors.

Following the National Association of County & City Health Officials' model, *Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships* (MAPP 2.0)[1] depicted below, the health department, with support of its partners, initiated an assessment of the health and well-being of the county's residents, including sub-populations within the community. The purpose of this community health needs assessment (CHA) was to identify the top population health needs and health inequities in the community served by the Van Wert County Health Department. The department enlisted professionals from Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service to facilitate this assessment.

Figure 1. Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP 2.0) Process



The *2025 Van Wert County Community Health Assessment (CHA)* will guide the development of a systematic Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to collaboratively improve health in Van Wert County over the next three years. The health issues identified in this CHA will help to guide the health department's prioritization of policies, strategies, and interventions as well as its combined efforts with other Health Collaborative organizations that share a mission to improve health.

Alignment with Ohio Revised Code and Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) Standards

Ohio Revised Code[2] requires that local health departments carry out public health services and capabilities set by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). The PHAB standards for accreditation require that health departments assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets (Domain 1) and that they develop and implement community health improvement strategies collaboratively (Domain 5).[3] Van Wert County Health Department adhered to the PHAB standards in the development of the Community Health Assessment, in accordance with Ohio Revised Code.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

Collection of Primary and Secondary Data

To gain an understanding of Van Wert County residents' health and well-being across all sub-populations within the community, Ohio University researchers employed a mixed-methods approach utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. They conducted the following assessments in accordance with the National Association of County & City Health Officials' model, *Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP 2.0):*

1. **Community Status Assessment:** An assessment to gather quantitative data on the status of the community, including demographics, health behaviors, health outcomes, contributing factors (e.g., social determinants of health), and health inequities. This assessment included:

a. **The collection of existing secondary data from multiple sources**. Sources of data included, but were not limited to, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Ohio Department of Health, County Health Rankings, the ADAMHS Board, organizations, and other sources of state, county, and local data.

b. **A Community Health Needs Assessment Survey for adults aged 18 and over living in Van Wert County, which included core questions taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System as well as customized questions developed by the health department.** The Community Health Assessment Survey was administered June through October 2025 and was available in both paper and online formats in English as well as Spanish. Health department staff and members of the Health Collaborative coalition promoted the survey through in-person events (e.g., the county fair), outreach to specific populations, posting of fliers throughout the community, announcements through local media, and postings on social media. The resulting convenience sample included 427 respondents. Although the sample was not a random sample, based on the census figure of 22,195 Van Wert County adults aged 18 or older,[4] the power analysis indicates a credibility interval of approximately 95 percent with a corresponding five percentage point margin of error for this sample size.

c. **Youth Listening Sessions with high school students at each of the four high schools in the county.** Superintendents assisted with arranging the listening sessions with Ohio University,

and each building principal facilitated student recruitment and parental approval for youth participation. The discussion questions were adapted from the Ohio Youth Environments Survey (OHYES), which measures the prevalence of the behaviors and experiences that pose a risk to youth wellness. The discussion gathered information on Van Wert County youth's perceptions of health issues most impacting youth; smoking and vaping; substance use (including alcohol); bullying and mental health; and community.

2. Community Context Assessment: A qualitative tool to gather information from community members with lived experience and expertise on community strengths and assets; physical assets and resources in the built environment; and forces of change (i.e., social, economic, political, environmental, or other trends, factors, or events) affecting community health. The Community Context Assessment was conducted with the Health Collaborative in February 2026.

Data Analysis

Raw data from the adult Community Health Survey were carefully examined to remove any responses that were not eligible (e.g., responses from individuals not residing in Van Wert County, invalid responses, etc.). Ohio University researchers analyzed all survey data using tools such as Excel and Statistical Product and Service Solutions 27.0 (SPSS). They calculated descriptive statistics for each variable presented in this report. Open-ended questions were analyzed by using qualitative analysis emergent coding techniques.

Youth listening sessions were audio recorded, and the audio files were converted to written transcripts with Otter.ai software. Transcripts were carefully reviewed for verification and edited as needed to create accurate written documentation of the listening sessions. The transcripts were analyzed by using qualitative analysis emergent coding techniques.

Race/Ethnicity Categories

This report uses distinct, non-overlapping race and ethnicity categories to support consistent data interpretation. Respondents who identified solely as White/Caucasian and not as Hispanic are included in the "White" category. Due to small sample sizes among several racial and ethnic groups in the CHA survey, the category "People of Color" combines respondents who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, multiracial, or Hispanic/Latino/a/x.

Limitations

As with all community health needs assessments, it is important to consider the findings with respect to all possible limitations. One limitation was the number of respondents to the adult Community Health Survey and the number of students included in the youth listening sessions.

The respondents to the adult Community Health Survey were 77.7 percent female, though census data indicate that females comprise around 50.2 percent of the population in the county. However, research indicates that women tend to have higher response rates in various types of surveys including online, mail, and telephone surveys. This trend has been observed across different demographic groups and survey topics. In addition, the survey respondents differ modestly from the adult population in the county with respondents being somewhat older and more educated and possibly having higher household incomes. See Appendix A for additional details on survey respondents.

The youth listening sessions were limited to students in grades 9–12 who were recruited to participate by their high school principal and whose parents or guardians granted approval for participation. Four listening sessions were held. Thus, the data in this report may not provide a complete understanding of the health status of Van Wert County youth. Additional information on youth listening session participants is located in Appendix B.

Many sources of secondary data were used in this report to provide a fuller picture of the health status of the adult and youth population. It is important to note that different data sources may use different ways of measuring similar variables. There may also be differences in time frames for the data due to varied data collection schedules or time lags between the time of data collection to data availability.

Finally, caution should be used when interpreting subgroup results, as the margin of error for any subgroup is higher than that of the overall survey.

FINDINGS

ADULT HEALTH SUMMARY: COMPARISONS WITH BENCHMARKS

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF HEALTH	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Rated general health as good, very good, or excellent	**86.3%**	81.0%	81.3%	N/A
Rated general health as fair or poor	**13.7%**	19.1%	18.9%	N/A
Average number of days that physical health was not good (in the past 30 days)	**4.5**	4.3	3.9	N/A

HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND UTILIZATION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Adults without health insurance	**4.1%[5]**	6.6%5	8.8%5	N/A
Adults who visited a doctor for a routine checkup in the past year	**84.2%**	79.8%	79.2%	N/A
Adults who visited a dentist in the past year	**74%**	64.4%	65.9%	N/A

WEIGHT STATUS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Underweight (BMI of 18.5 or less)	**0.8%**	2.3%	2%	N/A
Healthy weight (BMI of 18.5 to less than 25)	**20.5%**	27.7%	29.5%	N/A
Overweight (BMI of 25 to less than 30)	**29.0%**	33.1%	34.3%	N/A
Obesity (BMI of 30 or greater)	**49.7%**	36.9%	34.2%	36.0%
No leisure-time physical activity in the past week	**16.3%**	22.2%	21.8%	21.8%

LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH: AGE ADJUSTED DEATH RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Heart Diseases	**194.6**	186.0	(82.2 coronary heart disease only)	(71.1 coronary heart disease only)
Cancer (Malignant Neoplasms)	**164.3**	157.1	141.8	122.7
Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)	**62.3**	68.7	62.3	43.2
COVID-19	**55.6**	41.2	N/A	N/A
Diabetes	**40.2**	26.1	N/A	N/A
Cerebrovascular Diseases	**39.9**	47.0	(39.0 stroke only)	(33.4 stroke only)
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	**31.0**	41.1	(92.1 COPD only)	(107.2 COPD only)
Alzheimer's Disease	**28.0**	31.2	N/A	N/A
Influenza and Pneumonia	**14.8**	12.1	N/A	N/A
Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	**9.5**	15.1	N/A	N/A
Essential (Primary) Hypertension and Hypertensive Renal Disease	**7.8**	9.5	N/A	N/A
Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis	**6.5**	13.2	13.0	10.9
Septicemia	**5.1**	12.7	N/A	N/A
Intentional Self-Harm (Suicide)	**5.1**	14.7	14.1	12.8
Nutritional Deficiencies	**4.6**	6.2	N/A	N/A

MENTAL HEALTH	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Mental health status not good (14+ days in the last month)	20%	19%	16%	N/A
Average number of poor mental health days (in the past 30 days)	6.0	6.1	5.1	N/A
Death Rate due to Suicide[4]	5.1	14.7	14.1[3]	12.8

CHRONIC DISEASE PREVALENCE	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Ever been diagnosed with high blood pressure	**50.9%**	37.2%	34%	41.9%
Ever been diagnosed with high blood cholesterol	**42.6%**	37.4%	36.9%	N/A
Ever been diagnosed with arthritis	**38.1%**	32.1%	27.3%	N/A
Ever been diagnosed with diabetes (outside of pregnancy)	**20.1%**	13.1%	12%	N/A
Ever been diagnosed with cancer	**18%**	15.3%	14.7%	N/A
Ever been diagnosed with asthma	**14.9%**	16.9%	16.2%	N/A
Ever been diagnosed with pre-diabetes or borderline diabetes	**12.1%**	2.0%	2.3%	N/A
Ever been diagnosed with angina or coronary heart disease	**9%**	5.2%	4.4%	N/A
Ever been told they had a stroke	**3.8%**	4.3%	3.4%	N/A
Ever been diagnosed with COPD	**3.5%**	8.1%	6.5%	N/A
Ever been told they had a heart attack (myocardial infarction)	**3.5%**	5.2%	4.5%	N/A

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS PER 100,000 POPULATION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Chlamydia incidence rate[7]	**184.6**	415.9	492.2	N/A
Gonorrhea incidence rate[8]	**17.4**	145.0	179.5	N/A
HIV infection rate[9]	**0**	7.7	N/A	N/A
Syphilis prevalence rate[10]	**3.5**	36.9	15.8	4.6
Hepatitis C rate[11]	**27.9**	59.4	1.5	0.1

PREVENTIVE CARE: IMMUNIZATIONS	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
MMS (measles) vaccine in lifetime	**74.5%**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tetanus booster (TD/Tdap) in the past 10 years	**67%**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chickenpox vaccine in lifetime	**53.2%**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Seasonal flu vaccine in the past year	**48.5%**	N/A	45.2%	70.0%
Had a pneumonia vaccine in lifetime	**43%**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pertussis vaccine in the past 10 years	**32.3%**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in lifetime	**18.4%**	N/A	N/A	N/A

PREVENTIVE CARE: SCREENINGS	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Had a cervical cancer screening in past three years (age 21–65)	**70.4%**	77.4%	77.7%	79.2%
Had a mammogram in the past two years (age 40 and older)	**53.3%**	69.9%	72.2%	80.3%
Had a PSA test within the past two years (age 40 and over)	**55.6%** (past three years)	32%	31.8%	N/A
Had a digital rectal exam within the past five years	**55.6%**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colorectal cancer screening in lifetime (age 50–75)	**48.6%**	73.5%*	71.1%*	72.8%*

SUBSTANCE USE	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[3]
Currently smoke cigarettes	**10.3%**	14.1%	11.5%	6.1%
Smoked in the past but do not currently smoke	**24.6%**	26.8%	25.9%	N/A
Currently use e-cigarettes or other vaping products	**7.3%**	9%	8%	N/A
Adults who binge drink	**22.2%**	16.2%	15.5%	22.7%
Age-adjusted unintentional drug overdose death rate (per 100,000 population)[4]	**27.7**	39	31.3	20.7
Use medical or recreational marijuana every day or some days	**9.3%**	N/A	23.4%	6.8%

**BRFSS and Healthy People 2030 uses age 45–75 for colorectal cancer screening, while the age groups for the CHA survey were 10-year intervals, with ages 40–79 being used for this question. Due to the differences in the measures for the CHA and BRFSS, the comparisons between the county and Ohio and U.S. adults should be interpreted with caution.*

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.

Source 3: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Browse Objectives," Healthy People 2030, *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives.*

Source 4: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

Source 5: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States (Table S2701), *accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table?q=S2701:+Selected+Characteristics+of+Health+Insurance+Coverage+in+the+United+States&g=040XX00US39_050XX00US39161&y=2024&d=ACS+5-Year+Estimates+Subject+Tables.*

Source 6: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Van Wert, Ohio, *accessed January 9, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/ohio/van-wert?year=2025.*

Source 7: Ohio Department of Health, "Chlamydia: Five Year Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/chlamydia-five-year-report.

Source 8: Ohio Department of Health, "Gonorrhea: Five-Year Report," Ohio Department of Health, *n.d., accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/gonorrhea-five-year-report.*

Source 9: Ohio Department of Health, "Ohio HIV Surveillance Data Tables," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/hiv-aids-surveillance-program/resources/ohio-hiv-surveillance-data-tables.

Source 10: Ohio Department of Health, "Total Syphilis: Five-Year Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/total-syphilis-five-year-report.

Source 11: Ohio Department of Health, "Hepatitis C: Five Year Status Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/viral-hepatitis/data-statistics/hcv-5yr-report.

YOUTH HEALTH SUMMARY: COMPARISONS WITH BENCHMARKS

HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND UTILIZATION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[1]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[2]
Students with Medicaid who Visited a Primary Care Physician (past school year)	**74.8%**	71.1%	N/A	N/A
Students with Medicaid who visited a Dentist in the last school year	**38.4%**	41.8%	73.2%	80.3%

MENTAL HEALTH	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[3]	OHIO 2024[4]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[2]
Felt sad or hopeless almost everyday for two weeks or more in a row in the past year	**28.0% or higher**	28.0%	N/A	N/A

SUBSTANCE USE	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[3]	OHIO 2024[4]	U.S. 2024[2]	HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 TARGET[2]
Currently use e-cigarettes or other vaping products	**15-20%**	9.0%	13.1%	10.5%
Drank alcohol in the past month	**10-20%**	8.7%	6.8%	4.8%

Source 1: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Ohio Healthy Students Profiles," Ohio Department of Education, *n.d., accessed January 15, 2026, https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports/School-Wellness/Healthy-Students-Profiles.*

Source 2: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Browse Objectives," Healthy People 2030, *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives.*

Source 3: Van Wert County Youth Listening Sessions, (N=25)

Source 4: Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey (OHYES!), "OHYES! Entire State Report 2023–2024," *Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, 2024, accessed January 25, 2026, https://youthsurveys.ohio.gov/reports-and-insights/ohyes-reports/2023-2024/ohyes-entire-state-report-2023-2024.*

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HEALTH

Adults' Perceptions

Van Wert County adults self-reported their overall health status on a scale from excellent to poor. As shown in Table 3, compared to data at the state and national level, county adults reported a slightly higher overall health status as "good, very good, or excellent" at 86.3 percent. However, the average number of days with poor physical health (4.5 days) for Van Wert County adults was slightly above the Ohio and U.S. averages.

Overall health status of Van Wert County residents varied by income level and race/ethnicity. Only 10 percent of individuals with household incomes of $35,000 or more rated their health as fair or poor, compared with nearly a third (32.5%) of those with incomes less than $35,000. Similarly, only seven percent of persons of color rated their health as fair or poor, compared with fourteen percent of white residents.

Table 3. Van Wert County Adults' Overall Health Status

HEALTH STATUS	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
Rated General Health as Good, Very Good, or Excellent	86.3%	81.0%	81.3%
Rated General Health as Very Good or Excellent	43.5%	44.9%	46.7%
Rated General Health as Fair or Poor	13.7%	19.1%	18.9%
Poor Physical Health: Average Number of Days Physical Health Was Not Good in the Past Month[3]	4.5	4.3	3.9

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 423)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC*, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

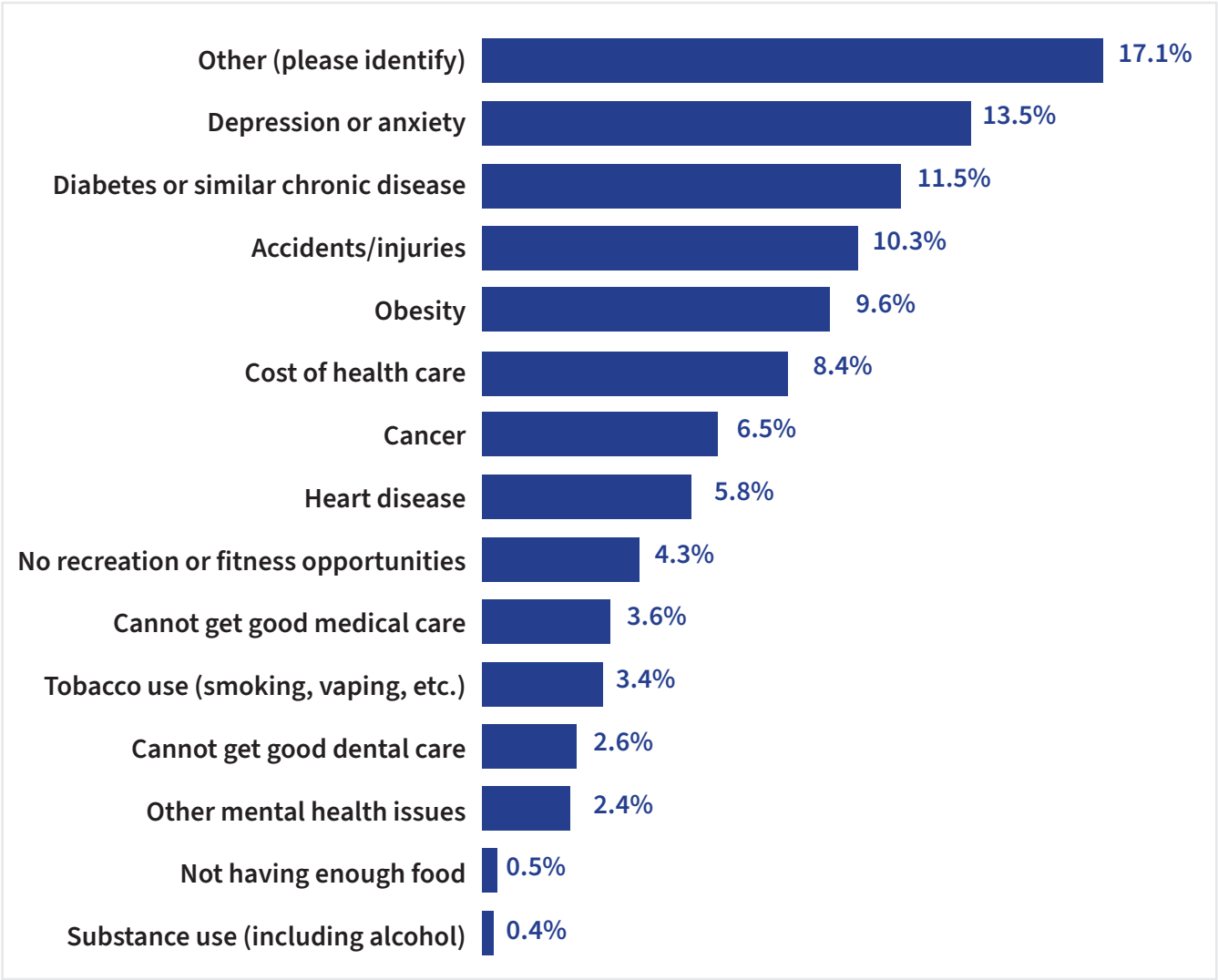
Source 3: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Van Wert, Ohio, *accessed January 9, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/ohio/van-wert?year=2025.*

Van Wert County adults were asked to report the most important health concern impacting their family or household (Figure 2). The greatest percentage of respondents (17.1%) indicated that health concerns other than those listed in the survey's predefined options were most important, including living with conditions such as arthritis; concerns with water quality; challenges of being a caretaker for a family member; and experiencing dietary issues, among others. Depression or anxiety was the next most commonly reported health concern among

13.5 percent of respondents, followed by diabetes or chronic diseases (11.5%), and accidents/injuries (10.3%). Between five and 10 percent of respondents reported obesity, health care costs, cancer, and heart disease as top concerns in their household. A smaller proportion of respondents identified issues such as a lack of recreation or fitness opportunities (4.3%) and other mental health issues (2.4%) as their most important health concern.

Figure 2. Top Concerns Affecting Van Wert County Adults and Their Households

Van Wert County adults most frequently selected "Other" health concerns (17.1%), followed by high-priority issues such as depression/anxiety (13.5%), chronic diseases like diabetes (11.5%), accidents/injuries (10.3%), and obesity (9.6%).

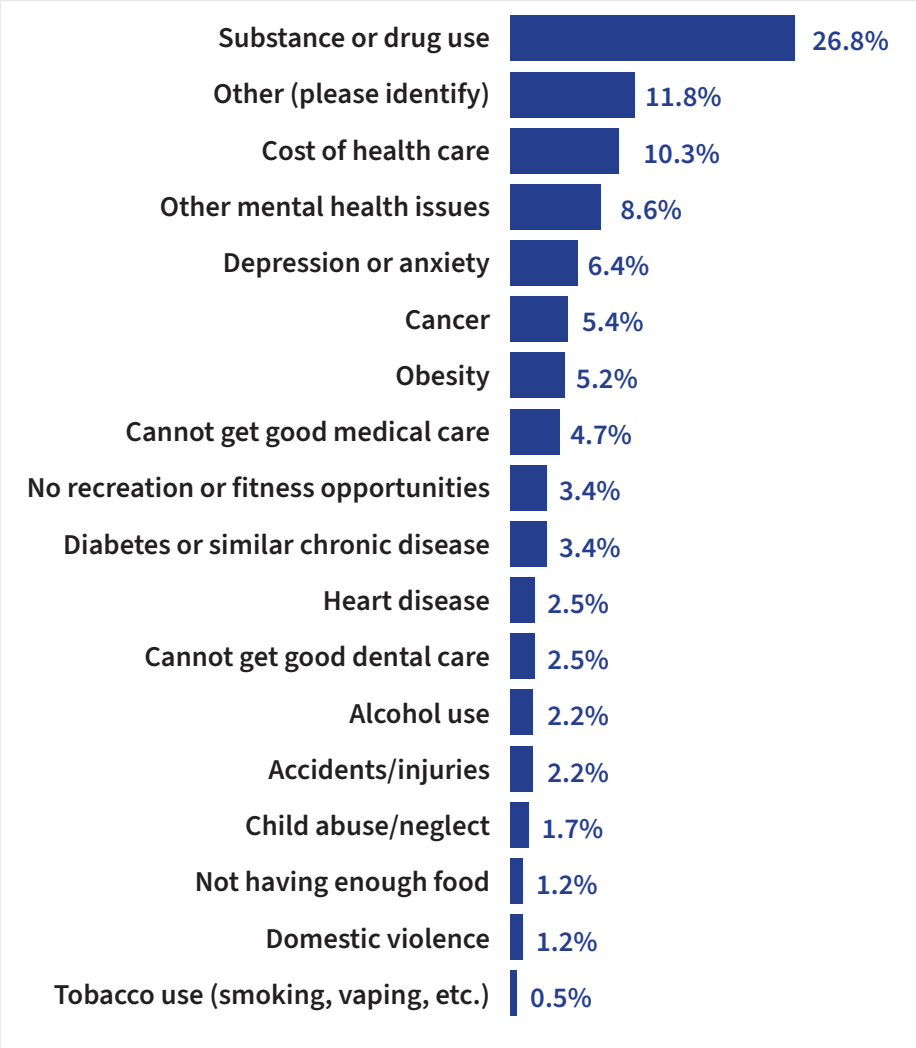


Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 416)

When asked about community health concerns in Van Wert County, over a quarter of respondents (26.8%) identified substance or drug use as the most serious community health concern (Figure 3). About one in 10 respondents (10.3%) also highlighted health care costs as the leading community health concern, while several adults (4.7%) similarly identified the ability to receive good medical care as a community challenge. Mental health issues were reported as a top concern among 8.6 percent of respondents, followed by depression or anxiety (6.4%), cancer (5.4%), and obesity (5.2%). The "other" identified leading community health concerns, reported by 11.8 percent of respondents, included homelessness, lack of affordable housing and transportation, and the possibility of losing medical benefits, among others.

Figure 3. Leading Community Health Concerns Reported by Van Wert County Adults

Van Wert County adults most commonly identified substance or drug use (26.8%) as the most serious community health concern, followed by "Other" concerns (11.8%), the cost of health care (10.3%), and other mental health issues (8.6%).



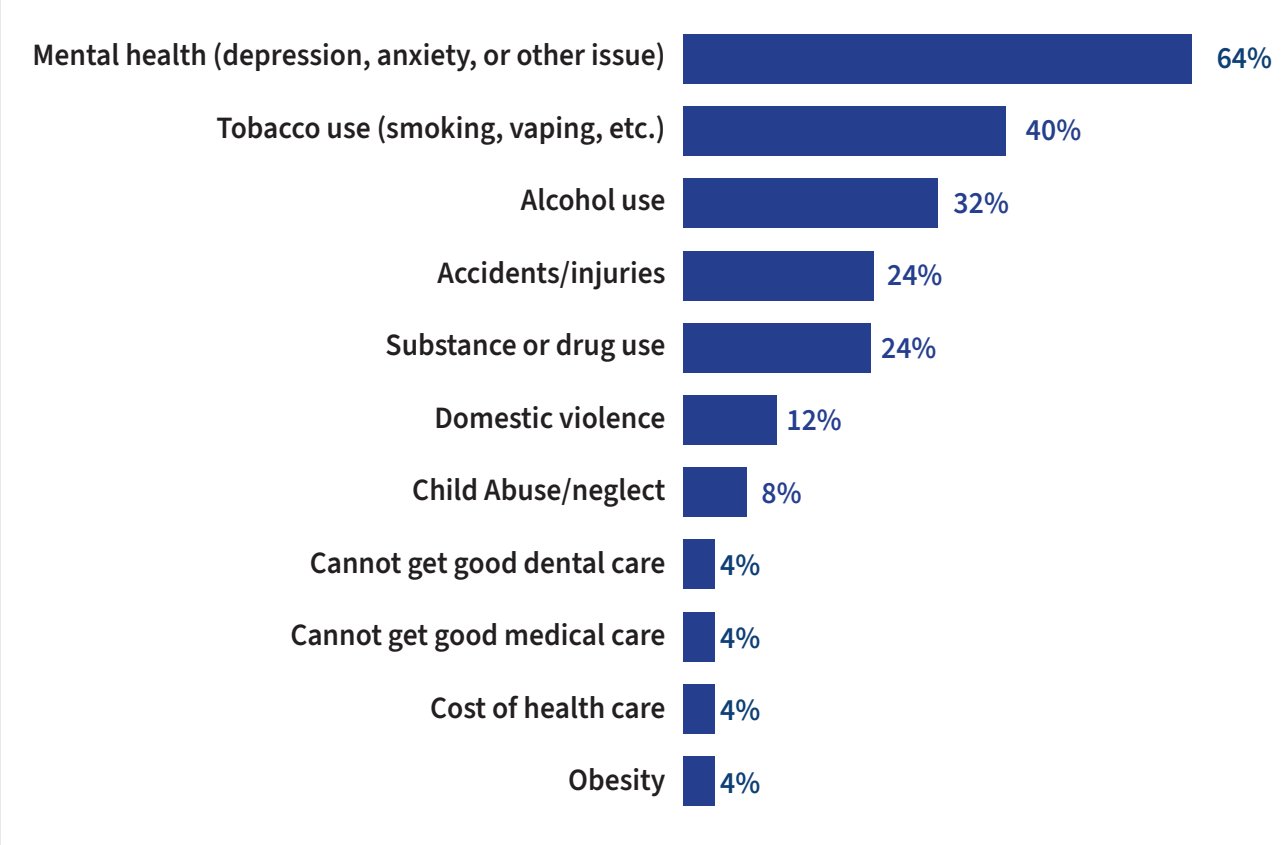
Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 407)

Youth Perceptions

Van Wert County high school students who participated in youth listening sessions were asked to report the most important health concern impacting their family or household (Figure 4). The leading concern was mental health (64%), followed by tobacco use (40%), and other concerns.

Figure 4. Top Health Concerns Affecting Van Wert County Youth

Van Wert County high school students identified mental health concerns as the most significant health issue impacting high school students, far surpassing all other concerns.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 Youth Listening Sessions, (n = 25)

CHRONIC DISEASES

Leading Causes of Death

Van Wert County's age adjusted death rates (per 100,000 population) from 2021 to 2025 are generally similar to or higher than Ohio's rates for many leading causes of death (Table 4). The county has notably higher rates for heart disease than the state (194.6 vs. 186.0), cancer (164.3 vs. 157.1), COVID-19 (55.6 vs. 41.2), diabetes (40.2 vs. 26.1), and influenza/pneumonia (14.8 vs. 12.1). Ohio, however, exceeds Van Wert County in several other areas, including cerebrovascular diseases (47.0 vs. 39.9), chronic lower respiratory diseases (41.1 vs. 31.0), kidney-related diseases (15.1 vs. 9.5), chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (13.2 vs. 6.5), septicemia (12.7 vs. 5.1), and intentional self-harm (14.7 vs. 5.1). Though Van Wert County shows higher mortality in some major chronic diseases, Ohio shows higher rates in other conditions, particularly those related to kidney disease, respiratory issues, liver disease, and suicide.

In addition to these overall trends, meaningful differences emerge when examining leading causes of death by sex. Among women, the leading causes and age adjusted death rates (per 100,000 population) are: cancer (145.8) and heart disease (131.5) as the top two, followed by COVID 19 (51.7), cerebrovascular diseases (35.6), Alzheimer's disease (30.4), diabetes (25.9), chronic lower respiratory diseases (24.0), accidents (19.9), essential (primary) hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (8.4), and chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (5.6). Among men, heart disease (274.8) leads by a wide margin, followed by cancer (194.2), accidents (97.5), diabetes (59.4), COVID 19 (54.2), cerebrovascular diseases (42.9), chronic lower respiratory diseases (28.8), Alzheimer's disease (19.3), kidney diseases (11.2), and influenza and pneumonia (7.1). Overall, men exhibit substantially higher mortality than women for most shared causes—particularly heart disease, cancer, accidents, diabetes, and COVID 19—while women rank relatively higher in Alzheimer's disease and chronic liver disease.

Heart diseases, cancer, and accidents have remained the top three leading causes of death for Van Wert County residents since the last CHA in 2022. The introduction of COVID-19 and an increase in diabetes moved cerebrovascular disease and chronic lower respiratory diseases out of the top five causes of death.

Table 4. Leading Causes of Death: Van Wert County Residents Compared to Ohio Residents

CAUSE OF DEATH (Age-Adjusted Rate per 100,000 Population)	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO
Heart Diseases	194.6	186.0
Cancer (Malignant Neoplasms)	164.3	157.1
Accidents (Unintentional Drug Overdose or Other Poisoning, Falls, Motor Vehicle Accidents, etc.)	62.3	68.7
COVID-19	55.6	41.2
Diabetes	40.2	26.1
Cerebrovascular Diseases	39.9	47.0
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	31.0	41.1
Alzheimer's Disease	28.0	31.2
Influenza and Pneumonia	14.8	12.1
Kidney Diseases (Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis)	9.5	15.1
Essential (Primary) Hypertension and Hypertensive Renal Disease	7.8	9.5
Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis	6.5	13.2
Septicemia	5.1	12.7
Intentional Self-Harm (Suicide)	5.1	14.7
Nutritional Deficiencies	4.6	6.2

Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

VAN WERT COUNTY WOMEN

Leading Causes of Death and Age-Adjusted Death Rate per 100,000 Population, 2021-2015

1. Cancer (145.8)
2. Heart Diseases (131.5)
3. COVID-19 (51.7)
4. Cerebrovascular Diseases (35.6)
5. Alzheimer's Disease (30.4)
6. Diabetes (25.9)
7. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases (24.0)
8. Accidents (Unintentional Drug Overdose or Other Poisoning, Falls, Motor Vehicle Accidents, etc.) (19.9)
9. Essential (primary) Hypertension and Hypertensive Renal Disease (8.4)
10. Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis (5.6)

VAN WERT COUNTY MEN

Leading Causes of Death and Age-Adjusted Death Rate per 100,000 Population, 2021-2015

1. Heart Diseases (274.8)
2. Cancer (194.2)
3. Accidents (Unintentional Drug Overdose or Other Poisoning, Falls, Motor Vehicle Accidents, etc.) (97.5)
4. Diabetes (59.4)
5. COVID-19 (54.2)
6. Cerebrovascular Diseases (42.9)
7. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases (28.8)
8. Alzheimer's Disease (19.3)
9. Kidney Diseases (11.2)
10. Influenza and Pneumonia (7.1)

Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

Trends in Chronic Disease Mortality 2021–2025

Overall chronic disease mortality in Van Wert County shows a mix of stable and shifting patterns between 2021 and 2025. Heart disease and cancer remain the leading causes of death, with heart disease fluctuating but staying consistently high, while cancer drops sharply in 2022 and then stabilizes (Figure 5). Cerebrovascular disease peaks in 2022–2023 before declining, whereas Alzheimer's disease remains mostly steady with an increase in 2025 (Figure 6).

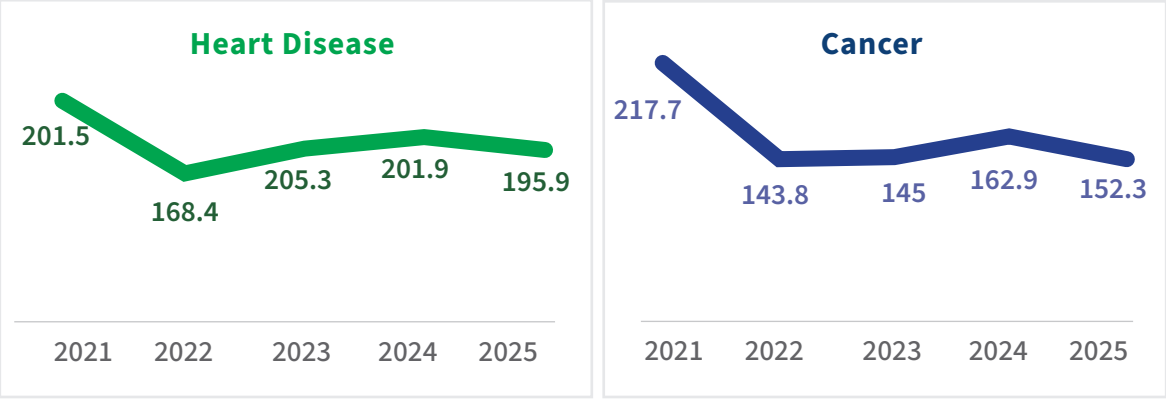
Accidental deaths vary widely year to year, including a notable spike in 2022 (Figure 7). Influenza and pneumonia rates show an unusual pattern, dropping to zero in 2023–2024 before rising sharply in 2025 (Figure 7).

Trends for diabetes and chronic lower respiratory diseases (Figure 8) indicate growing concern for metabolic and respiratory health. Diabetes mortality rises steadily, particularly between 2023 and 2025, marking one of the most significant increases among the chronic conditions examined. Chronic lower respiratory disease rates also fluctuate, with a sharp rise in 2024 followed by a decline in 2025, though rates remain elevated compared to earlier years.

Overall, these figures show that while some chronic disease mortality rates in Van Wert County are stabilizing or declining, several areas—especially diabetes, influenza/pneumonia, and Alzheimer's disease—are demonstrating upward trends that may warrant targeted public health intervention.

Figure 5. Trends in Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Van Wert County Residents 2021–2025: Cancer and Heart Disease

From 2021 to 2025, Van Wert County's age-adjusted death rates (per 100,000 population) for heart disease and cancer fall sharply from 2021 to 2022 and then fluctuate modestly.

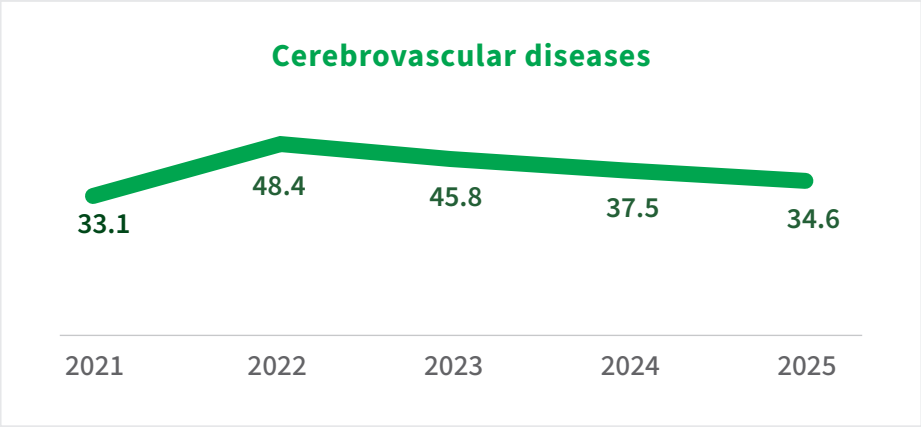


Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

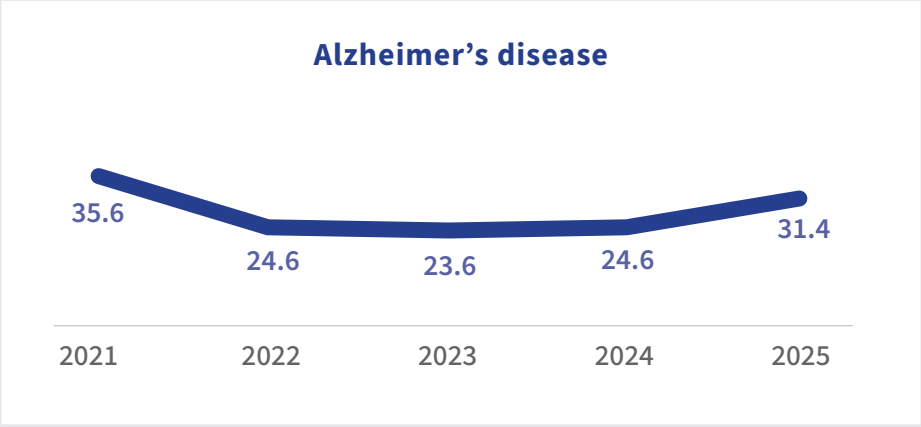
Heart disease is responsible for about 1 in every 5 female deaths in the U.S. Only about half (56%) of U.S. women recognize that heart disease is their number one killer.

Figure 6. Trends in Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Van Wert County Residents 2021–2025: Cerebrovascular Diseases and Alzheimer's Disease

Age-adjusted death rates (per 100,000 population) for cerebrovascular disease decline after peaking in 2022–2023,



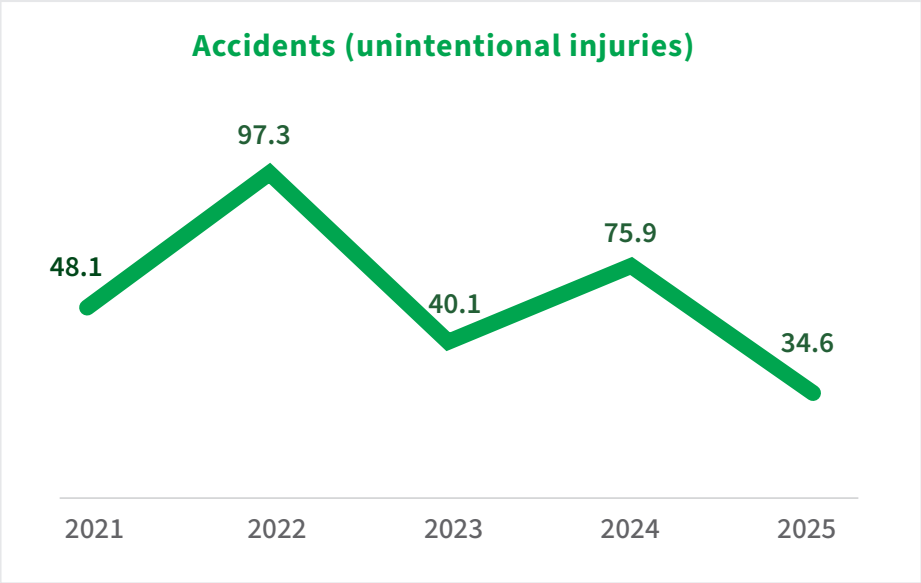
while Alzheimer's disease rates remain relatively stable with a slight increase by 2025.



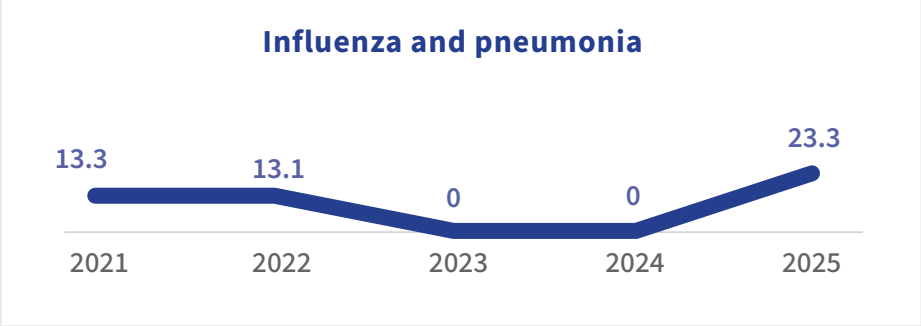
Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

Figure 7. Trends in Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Van Wert County Residents 2021–2025: Accidents, Influenza and Pneumonia

From 2021 to 2025, age-adjusted death rates (per 100,000 population) for unintentional injuries in Van Wert County fluctuate sharply, peaking in 2022.



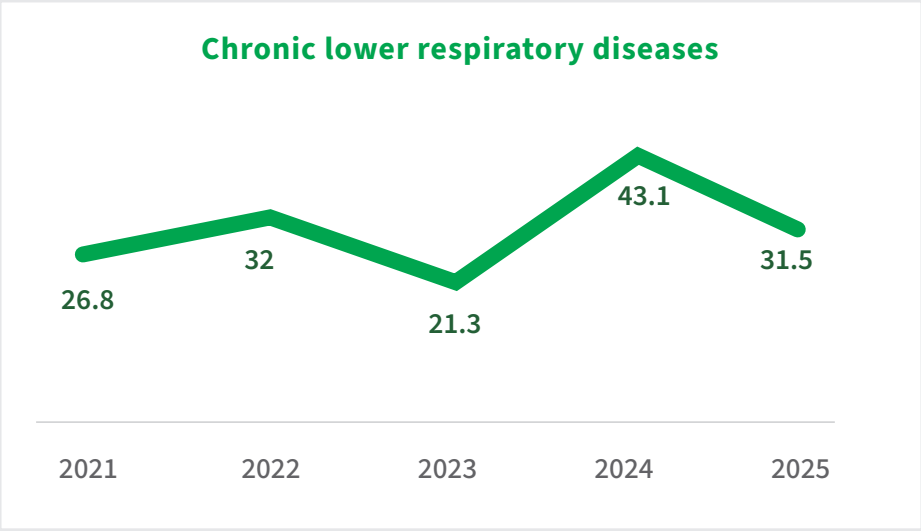
Influenza and pneumonia deaths remained consistently low but show a sharp increase in 2025.



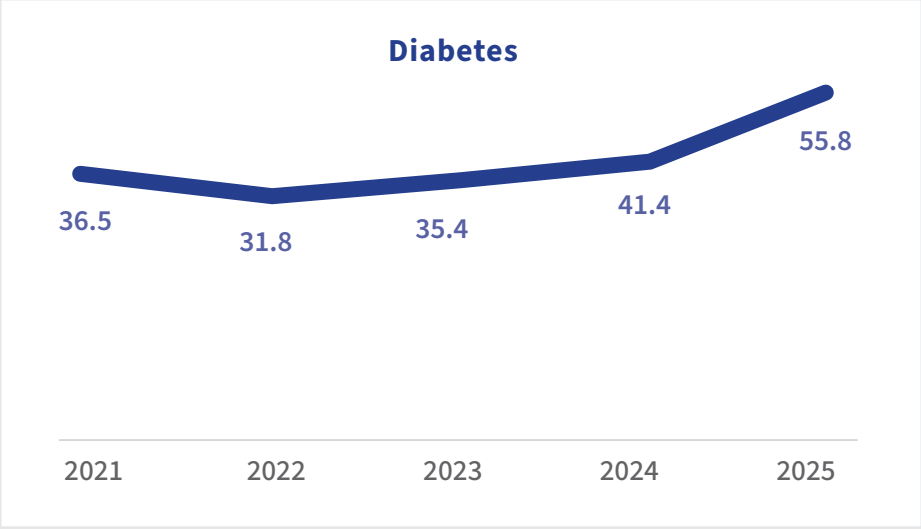
Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

Figure 8. Trends in Age-Adjusted Death Rates for Van Wert County Residents 2021-2025: Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases and Diabetes

From 2021 to 2025, age-adjusted death rates (per 100,000 population) for chronic lower respiratory diseases in Van Wert County show a dip in 2023 followed by a sharp rise through 2024 and 2025,



while diabetes mortality increases steadily across the five-years



Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

Chronic Disease Prevalence

As shown in Table 5, Van Wert County adults demonstrate higher self reported rates than both Ohio and the U.S. for several cardiometabolic conditions—especially high blood pressure (50.9%), high cholesterol (42.6%), arthritis (38.1%), diabetes (20.1%), cancer (18.0%), prediabetes (12.1%), and angina/coronary heart disease (9.0%). Van Wert County adults report lower rates for asthma (14.9%), COPD (3.5%), and heart attack (3.5%). Stroke (3.8%) is below Ohio but slightly above the U.S. average.

Table 5. Chronic Health Conditions Reported by Van Wert County Adults Compared to Ohio and U.S.

EVER BEEN TOLD THEY HAVE	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
High Blood Pressure	50.9%	37.2%	34.0%
High Blood Cholesterol	42.6%	37.4%	36.9%
Arthritis	38.1%	32.5%	27.3%
Diabetes (Outside of Pregnancy)	20.1%	13.1%	12.0%
Cancer	18%	15.3%	14.7%
Asthma	14.9%	16.9%	16.2%
Pre-Diabetes or Borderline Diabetes	12.1%	2.0%	2.3%
Angina or Coronary Heart Disease	9%	5.2%	4.4%
Stroke	3.8%	4.3%	3.4%
COPD	3.5%	8.1%	6.5%
Heart Attack (Myocardial Infarction)	3.5%	5.2%	4.5%

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 289)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC*, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

Eighteen percent of Van Wert County adults have ever been diagnosed with cancer. Among residents who have had cancer, the most common cancer diagnoses reported were breast (30.8%), melanoma and other skin conditions (19.2%), and cervical, endometrial, or ovarian cancers (9.6%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Type of Cancer Diagnosis Reported by Van Wert County Adults

TYPE OF CANCER	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025*
Breast	30.8%
Melanoma and Other Skin Conditions	19.2%
Cervical, Endometrial, or Ovarian	9.6%
Pancreatic	5.8%
Kidney	5.8%
Colon	3.8%
Prostate	3.8%
Leukemia	3.8%
Lung	3.8%
Lymphoma	1.9%
Brain	1.9%
Oral	1.9%
Thyroid	1.9%

Source: Van Wert County
**Diagnoses percentages are among respondents who reported any type of cancer diagnosis.*

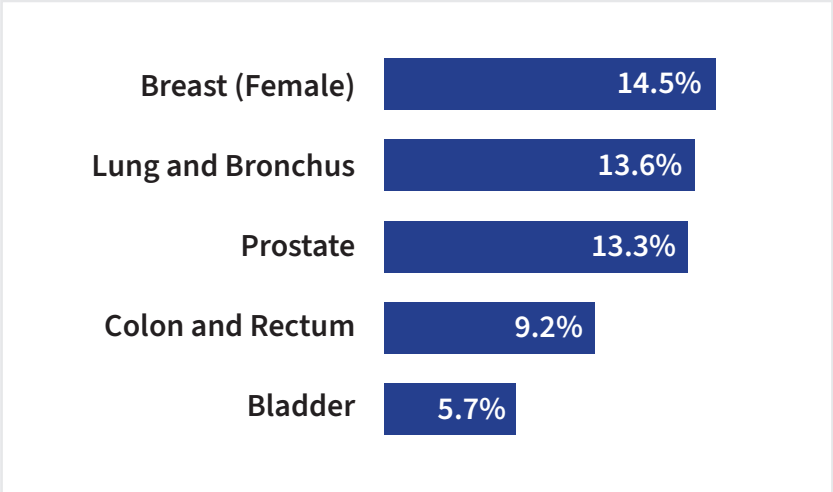
A smaller portion of Van Wert County residents reported other health conditions diagnosed by a physician. These conditions included: other cardiovascular issues (n = 9), kidney issues (n = 3), and thyroid conditions (n = 2). Single responses for other health conditions included polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), ADHD, anxiety, dental issues, and neuromuscular disease, among others.

Cancer Profile[7]

From 2018 to 2022, an average of 167 new invasive cancer cases and 71 cancer deaths occurred each year among Van Wert County residents. During this period, the overall age-adjusted cancer incidence rate was 427.3 per 100,000 population, which was lower than the Ohio rate of 471.1 and slightly lower than the U.S. rate of 444.6. Cancer incidence rates were higher among males than females locally, reflecting the same pattern observed at the state and national levels. Cancer incidence rates were higher for white persons (417.2) than black individuals (373.5) in the county, similar to the state and national pattern.

In contrast to incidence, the county's age-adjusted cancer mortality rate was 171.0 per 100,000, exceeding both the Ohio rate (161.1) and the U.S. rate (146.0). Similar to incidence, males experienced higher cancer mortality than females in the county, Ohio, and nationally.

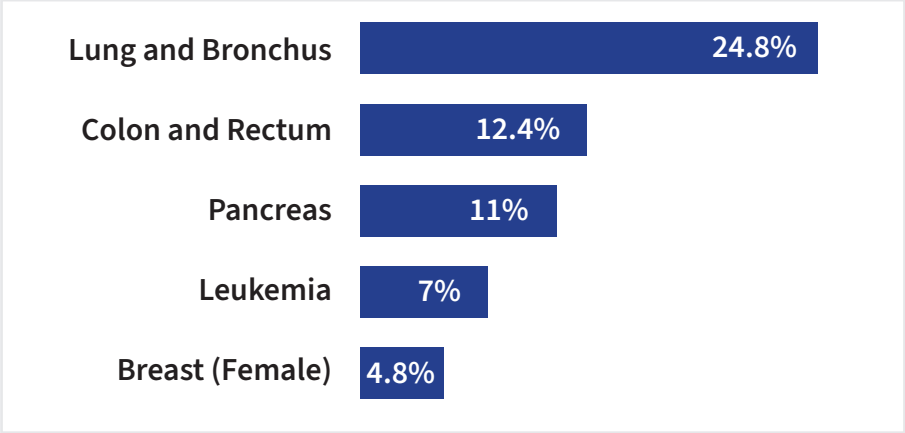
Figure 9. Percentage of New Invasive Cancer Cases by Site/Type for the Top Five Cancers in Van Wert County, 2018-2022



Source: Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System: Van Wert County Profile*, accessed January 29, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/ohio-cancer-incidence-surveillance-system/countyprofiles/van-wert-county.*

Within this same period, female breast cancer was the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Van Wert County, accounting for 14.5 percent of new cases (Figure 9). Lung and bronchus cancer (13.6%), prostate cancer (13.3%), colon and rectum cancer (9.2%), and bladder cancer (5.7%) were also leading cancers. Together, these top five cancers accounted for 56 percent of all new cancer diagnoses during this period.

Figure 10. Percentage of Cancer Deaths by Site/Type for the Top Five Cancers in Van Wert County, 2018-2022



Source: Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System: Van Wert County Profile*, accessed January 29, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/ohio-cancer-incidence-surveillance-system/countyprofiles/van-wert-county.*

As shown in Figure 10, lung and bronchus cancer was the leading cause of cancer death, representing 24.8 percent of all cancer mortality in the county. Other leading causes of cancer death included colon and rectum cancer (12.4%), pancreatic cancer (11.0%), leukemia (7.0%), and female breast cancer (4.8%). Collectively, these five cancers made up 60 percent of all cancer deaths among county residents.

Cancer incidence rates in Van Wert County fluctuated from 2013 to 2022, with a decline observed in 2020. Cancer mortality rates also varied year to year, which is common for small populations; however, Ohio experienced a 12 percent decline in mortality over the same period.

For several major cancer types, Van Wert County's incidence rates were slightly lower than Ohio's, yet fairly comparable to national rates. Breast cancer incidence was 123.4 per 100,000 (vs. 133.0 in Ohio), lung and bronchus cancer was 52.8 (vs. 63.3 in Ohio), and prostate cancer was 109.3 (vs. 120.7 in Ohio). Colon and rectum cancer incidence in Van Wert was higher than in Ohio (42.6 vs. 38.2) and higher than in the U.S. (36.4).

DID YOU KNOW?

- Tobacco use is associated with 12 types of cancer. Nearly one-third of all cancer deaths could be prevented by eliminating tobacco use.
- Overweight and obesity are associated with at least 13 types of cancer. Nearly one-fifth of cancer deaths could be prevented by adopting healthy eating and active living practices.

Source: Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System: Van Wert County Profile, accessed January 29, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/ohio-cancer-incidence-surveillance-system/countyprofiles/van-wert-county.

HEALTH CARE ACCESS, UTILIZATION, AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

Health Care Providers

Van Wert County is federally designated as a primary medical care, mental health, and dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). As shown in Table 7, the ratio of patients to providers is significantly higher than that of the state or the nation, indicating a need for additional providers.

Table 7. Ratio of Population to Health Care Providers: Van Wert County Compared to Ohio and U.S.

PROVIDER TYPE	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025	OHIO 2025	U.S. 2025
Primary Care Physicians	2,400:1	1,300:1	1,310:1
Other Primary Care Providers (e.g., Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants)	930:1	640:1	680:1
Mental Health Providers	630:1	270:1	290:1
Dentists	2,210:1	1,520:1	1,340:1

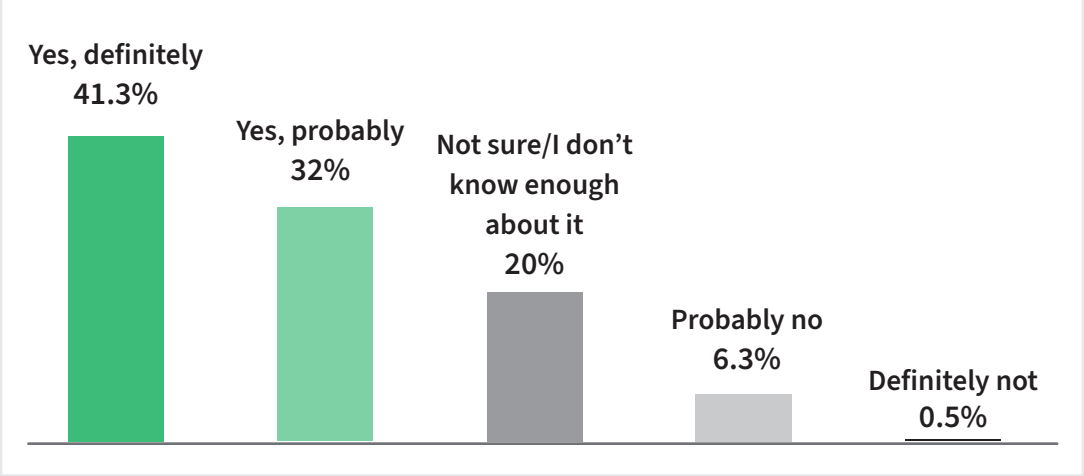
Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Van Wert, Ohio*, accessed January 9, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/ohio/van-wert?year=2025.*

In addition to the identified need for an increase in the number of health care providers in the county, Van Wert County residents would like to see community health worker positions added to the network of care available in the county, as is common in other parts of the state. The majority of Van Wert County adults (73.3%) agreed that having a Community Health Worker (CHW) available to provide health education, connect residents to health care resources, and support wellness would benefit their communities (Figure 11). It is also notable that one-fifth

of adults reported not knowing enough about CHWs, which underscores an opportunity for the county to share information on this type of health care support. If a CHW were available, about half of Van Wert adults would prefer to connect with a CHW via in-person meetings (50.8%) and/or phone conversations (50.3%) (Figure 12). Almost half of respondents (46.8%) would also prefer a virtual appointment, such as over Zoom or FaceTime, or at community workshops or events (41.5%). Although a smaller portion of adults prefer home visits (19.3%), these responses highlight the wide range of service delivery methods Van Wert adults are interested in having if a CHW were available.

Figure 11. Van Wert County Adult Interest in Having a Community Health Worker

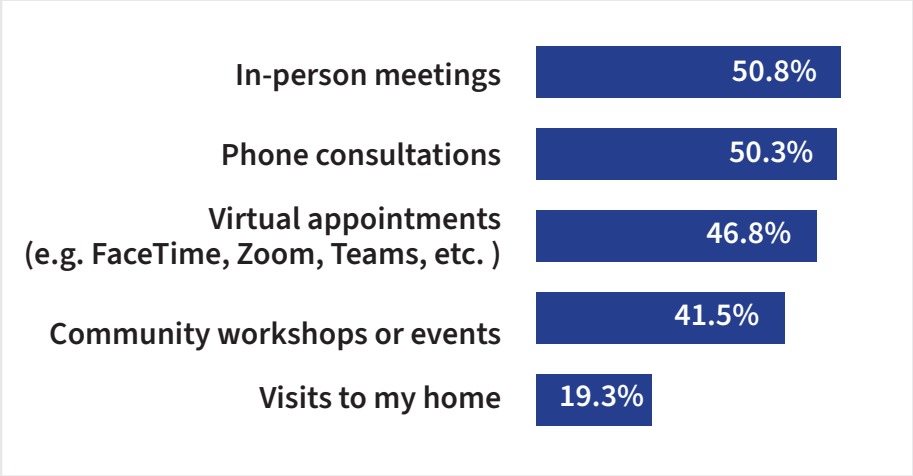
Do you believe your community would benefit from having a Community Health Worker to provide health education, connect residents to health care resources, and support wellness?



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 416)

Figure 12. Preferred Service Delivery Methods from a Community Health Worker in Van Wert County

Nearly half of Van Wert residents would prefer to connect with a Community Health Worker via in-person meetings (50.8%), phone consultations (50.3%), and virtual appointments (46.8%).



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 400)

Health Insurance Coverage

Health insurance coverage in Van Wert County is strong for both adults and children, with rates exceeding those of Ohio and the U.S. (Table 8). In 2024, 95.9 percent of adults and 97.1 percent of children had health insurance—higher than the state and national averages. The county's uninsured rates (4.1% for adults and 2.9% for children) are correspondingly lower than those seen across Ohio and the U.S.

Still, many residents are impacted by lack of coverage. Despite the county's comparatively strong insurance rates, an estimated 2,070 adults and 202 children in Van Wert County were without health insurance in 2024.

Table 8. Van Wert County Residents' Insurance Status Compared to Ohio and U.S.

INSURANCE STATUS	VAN WERT COUNTY 2024	OHIO 2024	U.S. 2024
Adults with Health Insurance	95.9%	93.4%	91.2%
Adults without Health Insurance	4.1%	6.6%	8.8%
Children with Health Insurance	97.1%	95.1%	94.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States *(Table S2701), accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table?q=S2701:+Selected+Characteristics+of+Health+Insurance+Coverage+in+the+United+States&g=040XX00US39_050XX00US39161&y=2024&d=ACS+5-Year+Estimates+Subject+Tables.*

Uninsured rates across Van Wert County's adult population are lower than those seen at both the state and national levels for nearly every demographic group (Table 9). Still, adults with less education than a high school diploma, individuals facing unemployment, and those living in poverty are uninsured at higher rates than other adults in the county.

Table 9. Uninsured Adults by Demographic Variables: Van Wert County Compared to Ohio and U.S.

INSURANCE STATUS	VAN WERT COUNTY 2024	OHIO 2024	U.S. 2024
White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino	4.0%	93.4%	91.2%
Persons of Color	4.1%	5.5%	8.8%
Hispanic or Latino (of Any Race)	3.6%	15.8%	17.3%
Unemployed	11.4%	21.3%	24.7%
Persons Living in Poverty	4.6%	8.8%	12.3%
Less than High School Graduate	12.2%	16.1%	21.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States (Table S2701), *accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table?q=S2701:+Selected+Characteristics+of+Health+Insurance+Coverage+in+the+United+States&g=040XX00US39_050XX00US39161&y=2024&d=ACS+5-Year+Estimates+Subject+Tables.*

Routine Care

Van Wert County adults report strong engagement with preventive care (Table 10). In 2025, 84.2 percent had a routine checkup in the past year—4.4 points above Ohio (79.8%) and 5.0 points above the U.S. (79.2%). Similarly, 74 percent of adults visited a dentist in the past year, outpacing Ohio by 9.6 points (64.4%) and the U.S. by 8.1 points (65.9%). Among students with Medicaid, preventive care patterns show a more mixed picture. Nearly three quarters (74.8%) visited a primary care physician during the past school year, exceeding the Ohio rate of 71.1 percent. However, dental utilization remains lower: 38.4 percent of Medicaid enrolled students had a dental care visit, 3.4 points below Ohio (41.8%), with national data unavailable. Overall, adult utilization is a county strength, while improving access to dental care for Medicaid-enrolled students remains an opportunity.

Table 10. Van Wert County Adults' Health Care Utilization Compared to Ohio and U.S.

UTILIZATION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
Adults Who Have Had a Routine Checkup (in Past Year)	84.2%	79.8%	79.2%
Adults Who Visited a Dentist (for Any Reason in Past Year)	4.1%	6.6%	8.8%
Students with Medicaid who Visited a Primary Care Physician (past school year) [3]	74.8%	71.1%	n/a
Students with Medicaid who had a Dental Care Visit (past school year)[3]	65.9%	41.8%	n/a

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 424); Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 415)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.

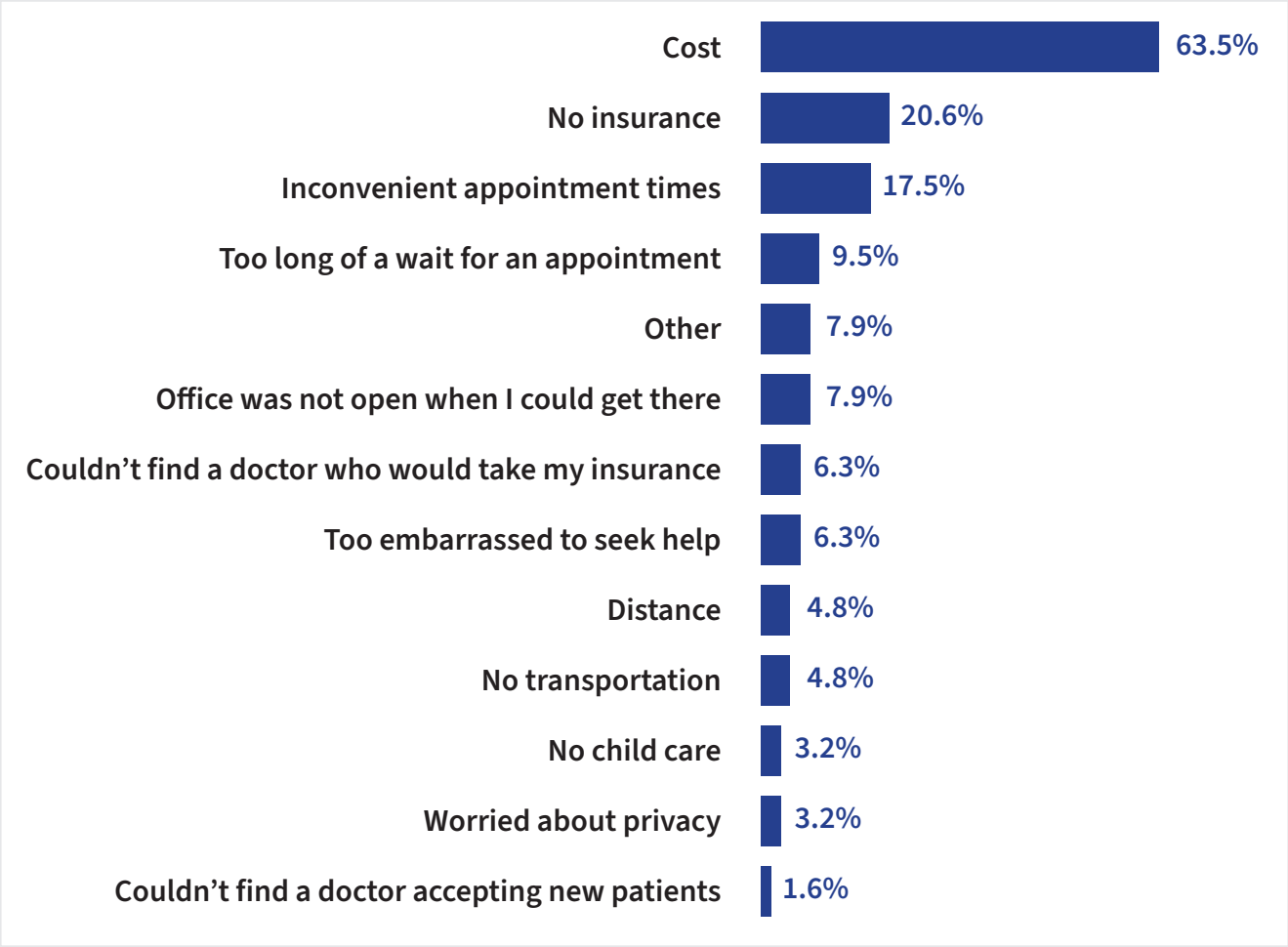
Source 3: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Ohio Healthy Students Profiles," Ohio Department of Education, *n.d., accessed January 15, 2026, https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports/School-Wellness/Healthy-Students-Profiles.*

Reasons for Not Receiving Care

Although most Van Wert County adults report having had a routine checkup, about one in six (15.6%) indicated they needed medical care in the past year but did not receive it. Access challenges varied by household income: 19.7 percent of adults with annual incomes below $35,000 reported needing care but not obtaining it, compared with 14.6 percent of those with incomes of $35,000 or more. Disparities were also evident by race and ethnicity. Nearly one-third (30.8%) of people of color reported unmet medical needs, compared with 15.0 percent of White/Caucasian residents. As shown in Figure 13, the most common barrier to receiving needed care was cost, cited by 63.5 of respondents.

Figure 13. Reasons for Not Receiving Needed Medical Care

Among respondents who did not receive needed medical care, cost was the most frequently reported reason for not receiving care (63.5%), followed by lack of insurance (30.6%) and other access-related barriers.

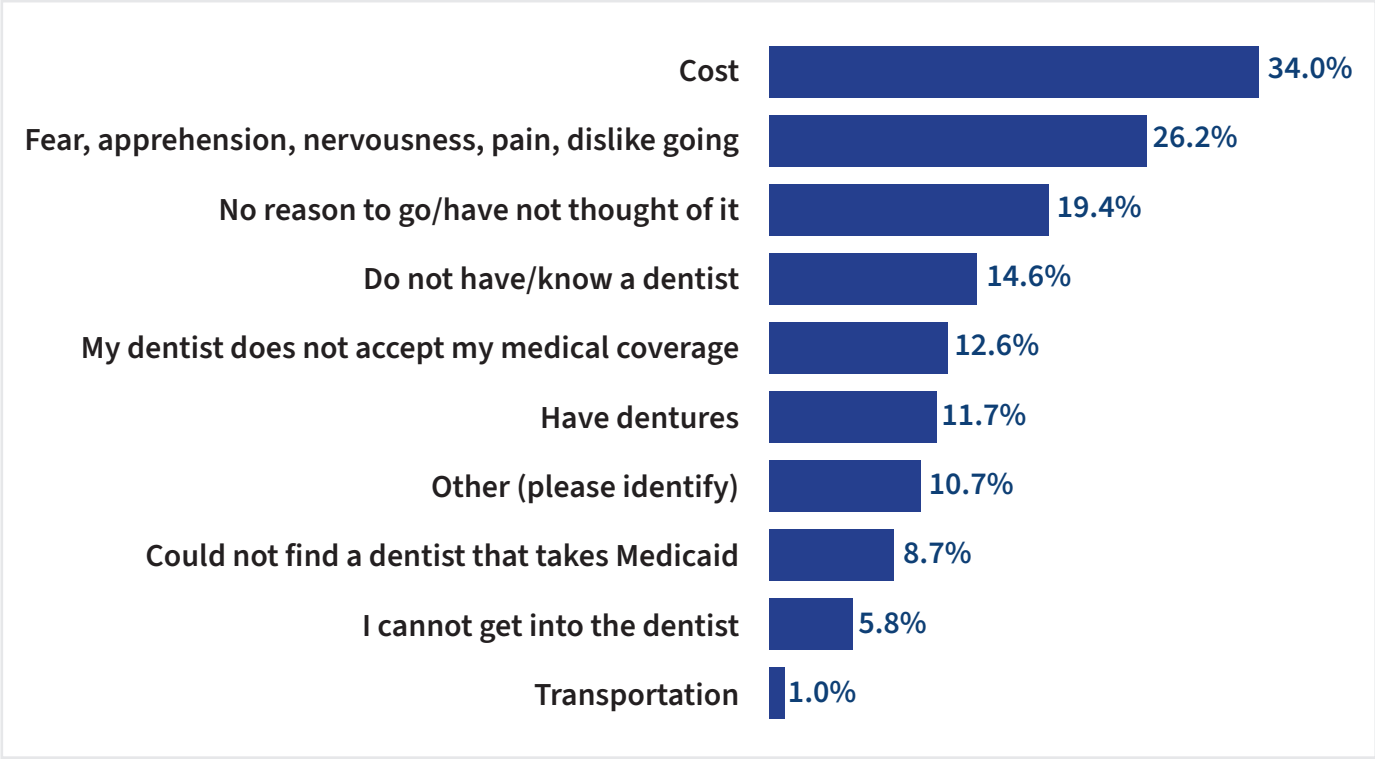


Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 63)

As seen in Figure 14, among Van Wert County adults who did not visit a dentist in the past year, cost also emerged as the most frequent obstacle (34%), while many also reported fear or discomfort with dental visits (26.2%) or feeling they did not need care (19.4%). Other issues—such as not having a dentist, insurance not being accepted, or difficulty finding a Medicaid provider—were also noted, pointing to a range of financial, emotional, and access-related challenges. In households making at least $35,000, 77.2 percent of adults attended at least one dental visit in the past 12 months. However, only 56.9 percent of adults with less than $35,000 in household income attended a dental visit in the past year, which highlights prohibitive costs to accessing dental care.

Figure 14. Reasons for Not Receiving Dental Care among Van Wert County Adults

Cost was the leading barrier to receiving dental care (34%), followed by fear or discomfort (26.2), lack of perceived need (19.4%), and not having a dentist (14.6%).



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 107)

Preventive Medicine

Preventive medicine plays a central role in reducing chronic disease risk, preventing infectious disease transmission, and improving long-term health outcomes for Van Wert County residents.

The following section summarizes current trends in infectious disease mortality, immunization uptake, and preventive screening behaviors.

Infectious Disease Mortality

Mortality due to infectious diseases—including influenza, pneumonia, and COVID 19—remains higher in Van Wert County compared to statewide averages (Table 11). Between 2021 and 2025, the county's influenza and pneumonia death rate (14.8 per 100,000) exceeded the Ohio average (12.1 per 100,000). The county's COVID 19 mortality rate (55.6 per 100,000) also surpassed the statewide rate of 41.2 per 100,000. The mortality rates due to influenza, pneumonia, and COVID-19 were higher for Van Wert County males than females in the county.

These differences suggest potential gaps in vaccination coverage, chronic disease burden, health care access, and early treatment utilization that may warrant further investigation and intervention.

Table 11. Rate of Infectious Diseases per 100,000 Population 2021-2025: Van Wert County Adults Compared to Ohio

INFECTIOUS DISEASE	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO
Influenza and Pneumonia Death Rate	14.8	12.1
COVID-19 Death Rate	55.6	41.2

Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

Adult Immunization Rates

Adult immunization rates vary across vaccine types, with higher uptake for long-established vaccines and lower uptake for immunizations introduced more recently or recommended for narrower age groups (Table 12). For example, measles (MMR) vaccination rates were 74.5 percent, tetanus boosters 67.0 percent, and chickenpox vaccination 53.2 percent. However, newer or adult-optional vaccines had notably lower rates, such as pertussis (32.3%) and HPV (18.4%).

The seasonal flu vaccine—critical given above average influenza mortality—was received by less than half of adults (48.5%). When asked specifically about reasons why residents have not received a flu vaccine in the past 12 months, most respondents reported that they do not need a flu shot (35.6%). The second most common reasons for not getting a flu shot included respondents noting they get sick from the vaccine (22.6%) and believing that the flu shot does not work (20.2%). Challenges with time (10.1%), religious beliefs (5.3%), and cost (2.4%) prevented residents from receiving a flu shot in the last 12 months. Among households with income greater than $35,000, four percent of adults reported not receiving any of the seven vaccines in Table 12. Among adults with household income less than $35,000, 8.6 percent reported not receiving these vaccines.

Table 12. Immunization Rates for Van Wert County Adults

IMMUNIZATION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025
MMS (measles) vaccine in your lifetime	74.5%
Tetanus booster (TD/Tdap) in the past 10 years	67.0%
Chickenpox vaccine in your lifetime	53.2%
Seasonal flu vaccine with the past 12 months	48.5%
Pneumonia vaccine in your lifetime	43.0%
Pertussis vaccine in the past 10 years	32.3%
Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in your lifetime	18.4%

Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 412)

Among Van Wert residents who reported receiving a vaccine (ranging from the past 12 months to in their lifetime), the majority of survey respondents (63.7%) received a vaccine at a doctor's office and 54.3 percent received a vaccine at a health department. Over a quarter of respondents (27.7%) received a vaccine at a pharmacy, and one-fifth (20.2%) received a vaccine in the workplace. Although a smaller proportion, residents also received vaccines at a hospital (11.9%), school (8.3%), and senior community center (1.1%). These findings highlight the importance of providing a wide range of locations and types of providers for residents to access vaccinations across Van Wert County.

Child Immunization Rates

Among Van Wert County adults with at least one child under the age of 18, most (87.8%) reported that their child or children had received all recommended immunizations for their age. Among adults who did not vaccinate their child(ren), the most frequently cited reasons included beliefs that vaccines are harmful (41.2%) or unnecessary (35.3%), personal beliefs (35.3%), religious beliefs (29.4%), and concern about vaccine-related illness (17.6%).

Preventive Screening Behaviors

The CHA results reveal mixed performance in preventive screenings (Table 13). A majority of adults (86%) had cholesterol checked within the last five years, comparable to state (86.6%) and national (87.0%) levels. However, colorectal cancer screening lags significantly behind statewide and national benchmarks. Only 54.3 percent of Van Wert adults met colorectal screening recommendations—nearly 20 percentage points below both the Ohio (73.5%) and U.S. (71.1%) rates.

Because the CHA survey and the state and national survey used different age group parameters, results should be interpreted cautiously. Still, the magnitude of difference suggests an important opportunity to increase screening access, provider recommendations, and public awareness regarding colon cancer prevention.

Table 13. Preventive Screening Rates for Van Wert County Adults Compared to Ohio and U.S.

UTILIZATION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
Colorectal Cancer Screening	54.3%	79.8%	79.2%
Blood Cholesterol Checked within the Last 5 Years	73.5%*	71.1%*	8.8%

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 291); Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 413)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, *n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

**BRFSS uses age 45–75 for colorectal cancer screening, while the age groups for the CHA survey were 10-year intervals, with ages 40–79 being used for this question. Due to the differences in the measures for the CHA and BRFSS, the comparisons between the county and Ohio and U.S. adults should be interpreted with extreme caution.*

Disparities in Cancer Screenings Uptake

A recent national study of cancer screening test use found significant disparities across sociodemographic groups and indicators of health care access. Individuals less likely to receive recommended breast, cervical, or colorectal cancer screenings include:

- Adults who are uninsured
- Adults without a usual source of care
- Adults who have lived in the U.S. for a shorter duration
- Asian adults
- American Indian and Alaska Native adults
- Hispanic adults
- Adults with lower socioeconomic status
- Adults with lower educational attainment

Source: Susan A. Sabatino et al., "Up-to-Date Breast, Cervical, and Colorectal Cancer Screening Test Use in the United States, 2021," Preventing Chronic Disease 20 (2023): 230071, https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd20.230071.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Women's health indicators in Van Wert County highlight notable gaps in preventive care (Table 14). Cervical cancer screening rates among women ages 21–65 (70.4%) fall below both the Ohio (77.4%) and U.S. averages (77.7%). The disparity is even larger for mammography, with only 53.3 percent of women age 40+ receiving a mammogram in the past two years, compared to 69.9 percent in Ohio and 72.2 percent nationally. These lower screening rates suggest barriers to access, awareness, or utilization of preventive services.

From 2018 to 2022, women in Van Wert County experienced 397.4 new cancer cases per 100,000, slightly lower than the state rate of 444.8. However, cancer mortality was higher locally, with 151 deaths per 100,000 women, compared to 137.8 statewide. This pattern may indicate later detection or challenges in treatment access.

Breast cancer was the leading cancer diagnosis among women during this period (14.5% of cases) and the fifth-leading cause of cancer death, accounting for 4.8 percent of cancer mortality locally. Increasing participation in recommended screenings could help reduce both incidence and mortality through earlier detection.

Table 14. Screenings for Breast and Cervical Cancer: Van Wert County Women Compared to Ohio and U.S.

SCREENING	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
Cervical Cancer Screening: in Past 3 Years: Age 21–65	70.4%	77.4%	77.7%
Mammogram in Past 2 Years: Age 40+	53.3%	69.9%	72.2%

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 246)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, *n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

MEN'S HEALTH

Men's health indicators in Van Wert County show notable differences compared to state and national trends (Table 15). Screening rates for prostate cancer are relatively strong locally: 42.8 percent of men aged 40+ reported having a PSA test within the past three years, higher than both Ohio (32.0%) and the U.S. (31.8%). However, these results should be interpreted cautiously due to the small number of survey responses. Among men aged 55–69, 55.6 percent reported having a digital rectal exam within the past five years, though no state or national comparison data are available.

Cancer remains a significant concern for men in Van Wert County. From 2018 to 2022, the cancer mortality rate for men was 199.4 per 100,000, higher than both Ohio (194.2) and the U.S. (173.2). During the same period, the cancer incidence rate was 468.5 per 100,000, lower than the statewide rate of 513.0, but still reflective of substantial disease burden. Prostate cancer accounted for 13.3 percent of male cancer cases and was the county's third most common cancer among men. As in Ohio and nationally, male cancer incidence in Van Wert County exceeds female rates.

Overall, many men participate in recommended screenings, but elevated mortality suggests ongoing challenges related to early detection, access to care, and chronic disease risk that continue to impact men's health outcomes.

Table 15. Screenings for Prostate and Rectal Cancer: Van Wert County Men Compared to Ohio and U.S. Men

SCREENING	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
Men Aged 40+ Who Have Had a PSA Test within the Past 2 Years	42.8% (Within the Past 3 Years)	32.0%	31.8%
Men Aged 55–69 Who Have Had a Digital Rectal Exam within the Past 5 Years	55.6%	n/a	n/a

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 17)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC*, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

NOTE: Due to fewer than 10 responses to the above questions, results may not be accurate for Van Wert County males.

WEIGHT STATUS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND NUTRITION

Weight Status

Weight status continues to be an area of concern for adults in the county. Nearly half of surveyed adults (49.7%) fall into the obese category, a proportion significantly higher than both the Ohio (36.9%) and U.S. (34.2%) averages (Table 16). Additionally, 29.0% of adults are overweight, meaning almost four in five residents have a BMI above the healthy range. Only 20.5 percent of adults fall within the healthy weight category, well below statewide and national levels.

Weight status among Van Wert County adults varies by household income and, to a lesser extent, by race and ethnicity. Obesity is more prevalent among adults with household incomes below $35,000, with 62.1 percent experiencing obesity compared to 46.0 percent of those with incomes of $35,000 or more. Obesity rates are relatively similar across racial and ethnic groups: 46.2 percent of people of color are experiencing obesity, compared with 50.0 percent of White/ Caucasian adults.

Table 16. Weight Status of Van Wert County Adults Compared to Ohio and U.S.
Van Wert County Men Compared to Ohio and U.S. Men

WEIGHT STATUS	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
Underweight	0.8%	32.0%	77.7%
Healthy Weight	20.5%	27.7%	29.5%
Overweight	29.0%	33.1%	34.3%
Obesity	49.7%	36.9%	34.2%

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 386)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, *n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

Body Mass Index (BMI Measurements)

- Body Mass Index (BMI) is a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters. A high BMI can be an indicator of high body fat.
- BMI does not measure body fat directly, but BMI is moderately correlated with more direct measures of body fat. Furthermore, BMI appears to be as strongly correlated with various metabolic and disease outcomes as other more direct measures of body fatness.

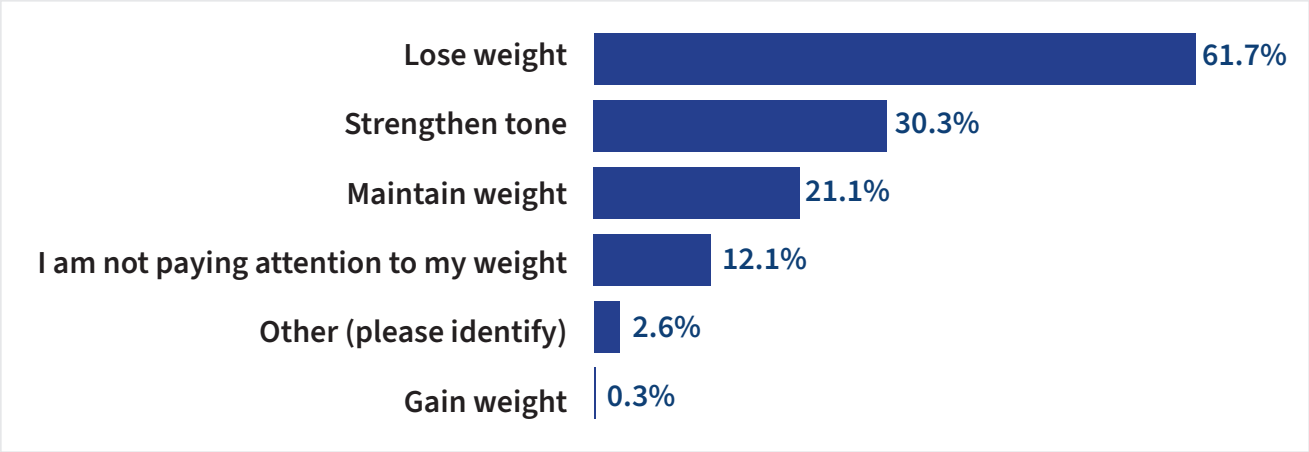
BMI	WEIGHT STATUS
Less than 18.5	Underweight
Healthy Weight	18.5 to less than 25
Overweight	25 to less than 30
Obesity	30 or greater
Class 1 Obesity	30 to less than 35
Class 2 Obesity	35 to less than 40
Class 3 Obesity	40 or greater

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Adult BMI Categories," March 19, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/bmi/adult-calculator/bmi-categories.html.

Survey responses indicate a strong interest among Van Wert County adults in managing their weight and improving their overall health. As shown in Figure 15, most adults reported having at least one weight related goal, with the majority aiming to lose weight (61.7%), strengthen and tone (30.3%), or maintain their current weight (21.1%). Figure 16 further illustrates the actions residents are taking to reach these goals. The most commonly reported behaviors in the past 30 days included drinking more water, reducing calories or fat intake, and exercising. While some individuals engaged in medically guided approaches—such as prescribed weight loss programs or medications—others reported less effective or potentially harmful practices. Together, these findings demonstrate both a high level of motivation and a need for continued support to ensure that residents adopt safe, sustainable, and effective weight management strategies.

Figure 15. Weight-Related Goals Reported by Adult Survey Respondents

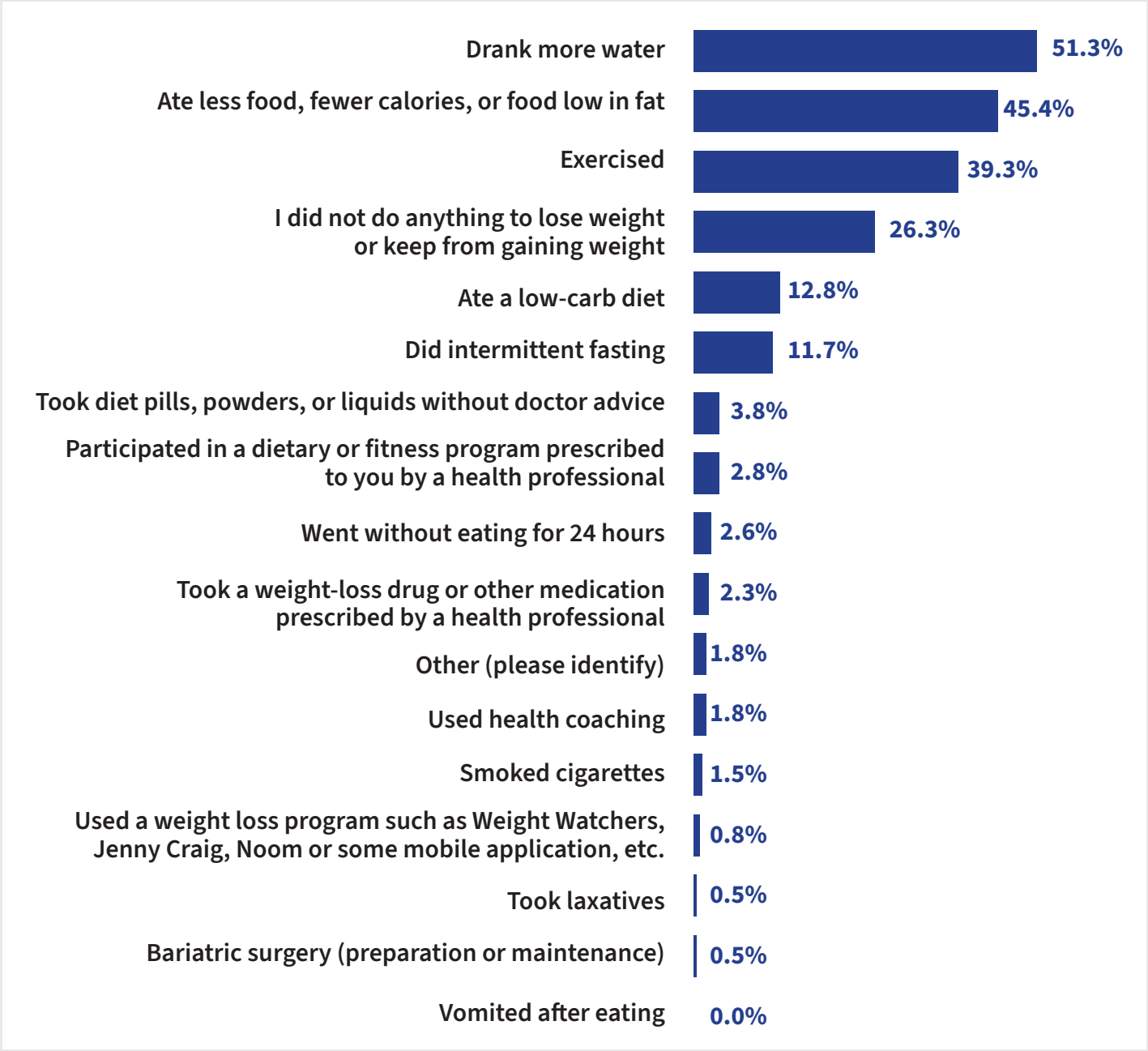
Most respondents reported trying to lose weight (61.7%), with fewer focusing on strengthening and toning (30.3%), maintaining weight (21.1%), or other goals.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 389)

Figure 16. Top 10 Self-Reported Weight Loss and Weight Maintenance Behaviors in the Past 30 Days

During the past 30 days, drinking more water (51.3%), eating fewer calories or lower-fat foods (45.4%), and exercising were (39.3%) the most frequently reported behaviors used to lose weight or prevent weight gain.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 392)

Additional weight management behaviors that were reported too infrequently to appear on the graph in Figure 16 included health coaching, cigarette smoking, participation in commercial weight loss programs, bariatric surgery preparation or maintenance, and laxative use.

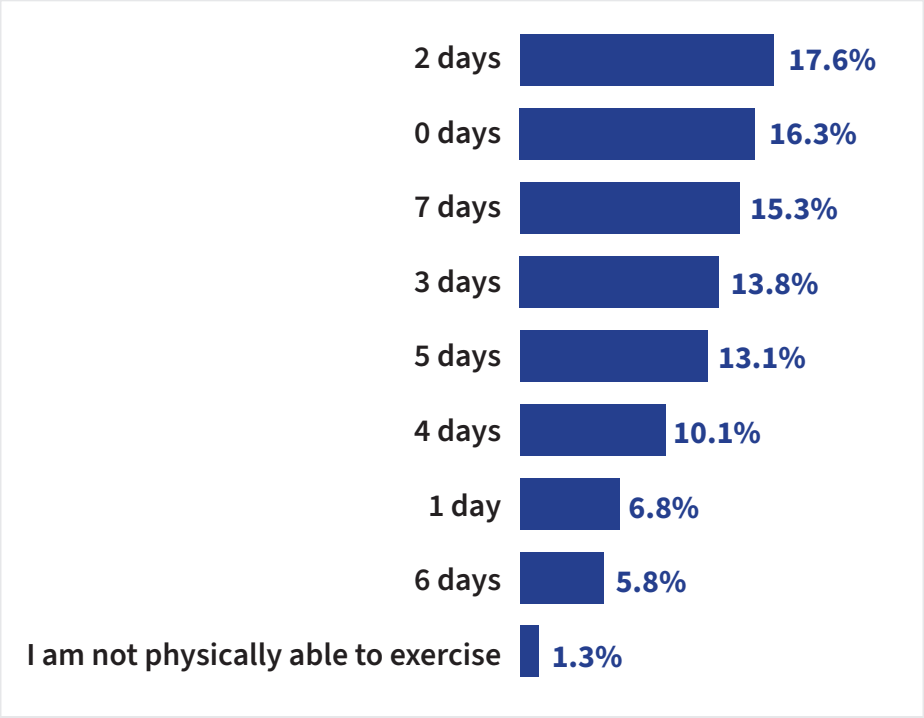
Physical Activity

Adult Physical Activity

Van Wert County adults reported a wide range of physical activity levels in the past week, with the largest shares reporting two days (17.6%), zero days (16.3%), and seven days (15.3%) of activity (Figure 17). A few (1%) indicated they were unable to exercise. Physical activity varied by income and race/ethnicity. Among adults with household incomes ≥ $35,000, 37 percent reported exercising at least 30 minutes on five or more days per week, compared with 27.5 percent among those earning < $35,000. Differences also appeared by race and ethnicity: 33.8 percent of White adults reported exercising on five or more days per week, compared with 53.8 percent of people of color.

Figure 17. Van Wert County Adults' Frequency of Physical Activity in the Past Week

The majority (82.4%) of Van Wert County adults report engaging in some type of exercise or physical activity on one more days, while 16.3% report no exercise.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 398)

Table 17 compares Van Wert County adults' physical activity with state and national data. As shown in the table, 16.3% of Van Wert adults reported no physical activity in the past seven days, which is lower than both Ohio (22.2%) and the U.S. (21.8%). This suggests that adults in Van Wert County are less likely to report complete inactivity relative to broader population benchmarks.

Table 17. Physical Activity Reported by Van Wert County Adults Compared to Ohio and U.S.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	VAN WERT COUNTY[1]	OHIO[2]	U.S.[2]
No Exercise or Physical Activity in the Past 7 Days	16.3%	32.0%	77.7%

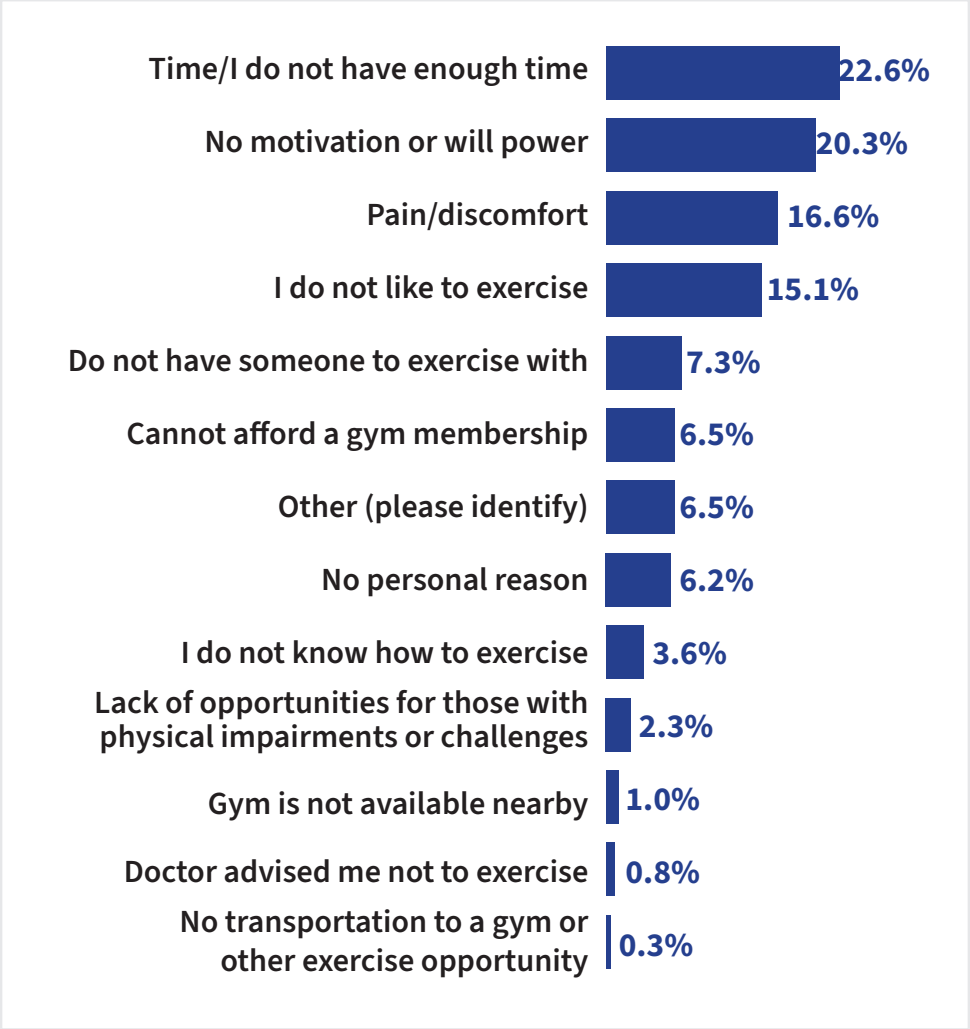
Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 398)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, *n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

The personal and practical challenges influencing Van Wert County adults' activity levels are shown in Figure 18. The most frequently reported barriers to exercising were lack of time (22.6%), no motivation or willpower (20.3%), and pain or discomfort (16.6%). Additionally, 15.1% of adults stated they simply do not like to exercise. Financial and environmental barriers—such as inability to afford a gym membership (6.5%) or lack of nearby facilities (1.0%)—were reported less frequently but still affect portions of the population. Notably, 37.9% of respondents selected "I do exercise," highlighting that although many adults experience barriers, a substantial share continue to engage in physical activity despite them.

Figure 18. Van Wert County Adults Reasons for Not Exercising

Van Wert County adults' primary reasons for not exercising include not having enough time (22.6%) and lack of motivation (20.3%).



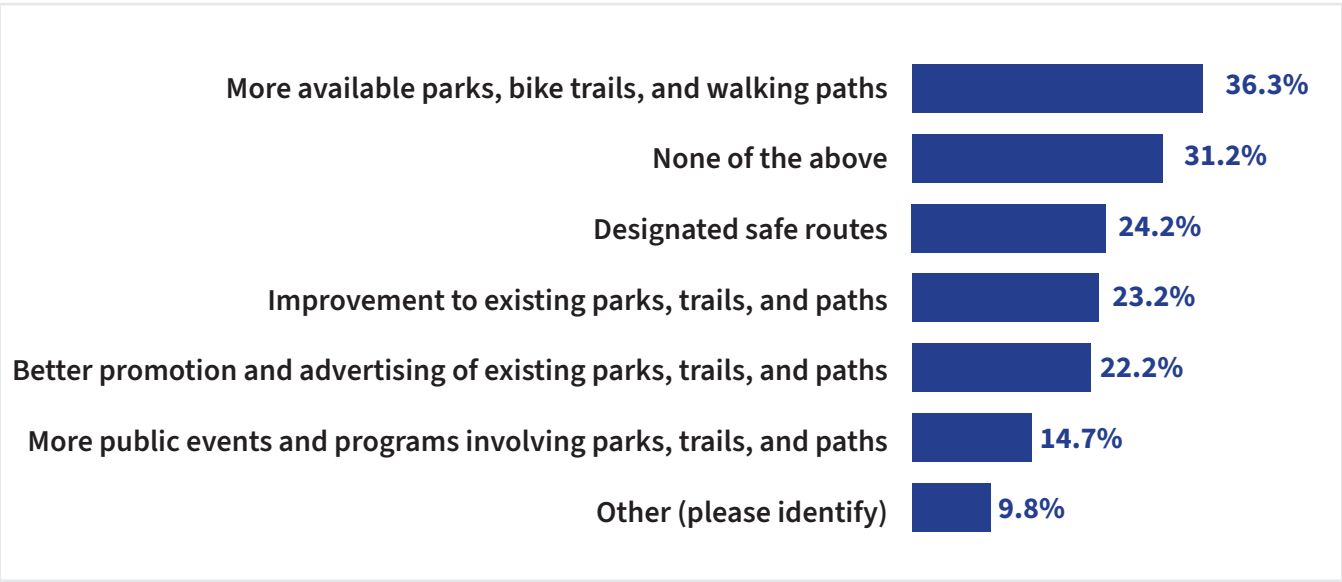
Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 385)

The Van Wert County CHA Survey also asked adults to reflect on ways in which community parks, bike trails, and walking paths could help support physical activity (Figure 19). Over one-third (36.3%) of adults suggested making parks, bike trails, and walking paths more available. Specific recommendations to do so included increasing the number and quality of public sidewalks (e.g., resurfacing), as walkability was described as very low throughout the county; extending bike trails, particularly on the east side of the county; and making bike paths more accessible. Among

adults recommending improvements to existing parks, bike trails, and walking paths (23.2%), notable suggestions for supporting increased physical activity included increasing the number of benches, trees and shade (which would particularly help in the summer), and garbage bins and water stations along paths.

Figure 19. Suggested Environmental Improvements for Increase in Physical Activity

Over one-third of Van Wert residents (36.3%) would use community parks, bike trails, and walking paths if more were available. Nearly a quarter (24.2%) would increase use with more designated safe routes.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 388)

Youth Physical Activity

In youth listening sessions, most Van Wert County high school students described their peers as very active, with many students pointing to school sports as the central driver of their activity levels. One high school student pointed out that some students also get physical activity simply by walking to and from school. Another student mentioned that they often see kids at the Y after school "jogging on the treadmill or, like, physically, like, lifting weights."

A few students also reflected on how school size influenced participation in activities. One high school student explained that because the school is small, "everybody is involved in everything." Another student noted that they get regular physical activity from working at home on their family farm.

At the same time, some students acknowledged barriers to being active. One student noted that some activities require financial resources—"to get into a gym you need to buy a membership, which not everyone can do"—while another described limited local options for youth, explaining that outside of school, "there's nowhere to go besides, like, Walmart."

Nutrition

Adult Nutrition

As shown in Table 18, most Van Wert County adults reported consuming fewer than the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables. While 67.0 percent consumed only one to two servings per day, 27.5 percent ate three to four servings, and just 1.8 percent reported eating five or more servings. A small portion (3.8%) reported eating no fruits or vegetables at all.

Table 18. Average Servings of Fruits and Vegetables Per Day Reported by Van Wert County Adults

AVERAGE SERVINGS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES PER DAY	VAN WERT COUNTY
Zero Servings Per Day	3.8%
1–2 Servings Per Day	67.0%
3–4 Servings Per Day	27.5%
5 or More Servings Per Day	1.8%

Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 397)

The 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that adults incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their diets as part of healthy eating patterns, including 1.5–2 cup equivalents of fruit and 2–3 cup equivalents of vegetables each day. When examining fruit and vegetable intake by household income and race/ethnicity, only a small proportion of Van Wert County adults meet these recommendations. Among adults with household incomes of $35,000 or more, 9.4 percent consume four or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, compared with just 2.9 percent of those with incomes below $35,000. Intake also varies by race and

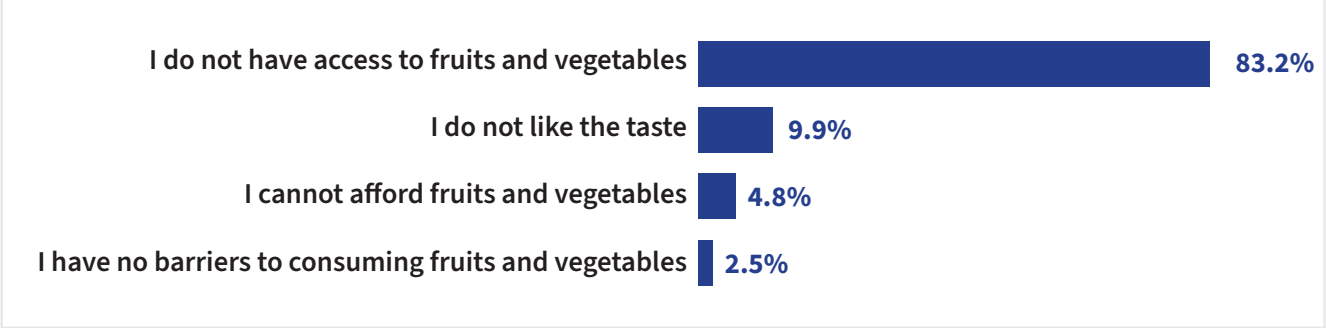
ethnicity: only 7.2 percent of White/Caucasian adults meet this benchmark, compared with 30.8 percent of people of color.

Numerous studies suggest that increased consumption of fruits and vegetables is generally associated with a lower risk of obesity.[11] Moreover, research indicates that consuming fruits and vegetables is associated with reduced risk of mortality from major diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes.[12]

As indicated in Figure 20, a number of factors influence Van Wert County adults' consumption of fruits and vegetables. Although 83.2 percent of residents indicated they had no barriers to eating fruits and vegetables, several challenges still exist for others. The most commonly cited barriers included affordability (9.9%), disliking the taste (4.8%), and lack of access (2.5%). Additional reasons, each reported by fewer than one percent of respondents, reflect practical issues such as not knowing how to prepare fruits and vegetables, nearby stores not selling them, preparation time, health or medical restrictions, and produce spoiling too quickly. Together, the data from Table 19 and Figure 20 indicate that most residents experience few obstacles, but those who do face cost, access, taste, and preparation related challenges and may be more likely to have lower daily intake.

Figure 20. Top Four Barriers to Fruit and Vegetable Consumption (Remaining Reasons <1%)

Most Van Wert County adults reported no barriers to consuming fruits and vegetables, while smaller proportions cited cost, taste, or lack of access as obstacles.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 393)

Youth Nutrition

In listening sessions with Van Wert County high school students, nutrition was consistently identified as an area where youth struggle, with individual students openly acknowledging their own habits. One student admitted, *"I've got a really bad diet, but I blame it on being a teenager."* Van Wert County youth estimate that they and most of their peers consume one serving of

fruits and vegetables per day. They cited the types of foods available to them, with one student explaining that they eat *"a lot of fast food, just snacks,"* and another commenting that "school lunches don't feel too nutritious." Some also observed how external factors shape choices, such as the student who said unhealthy foods *"have been pushed more into the younger audience… everywhere."*

Students also identified clear barriers to eating well. One explained that healthier foods *"cost more money, and it's just easier to grab unhealthier things,"* while another described how a rushed morning means *"you just have to grab something and go,"* leaving little time for a nutritious option. Another student pointed to social norms, saying that "*eating unhealthy is socially acceptable… going to McDonald's."* Taken together, these individual reflections suggest that although Van Wert County high school students recognize the importance of good nutrition, many feel that convenience, cost, and culture consistently steer them toward less healthy choices.

MENTAL HEALTH

Adult Mental Health

Van Wert County adults report mental health challenges at levels similar to Ohio but somewhat higher than the U.S. overall (see Table 19). One in five Van Wert County adults (20%) experienced 14 or more poor mental health days in the past month, slightly above Ohio (19%) and notably above the national rate (16%). Adults in Van Wert also averaged six poor mental health days in the past 30 days, which closely aligns with Ohio (6.1 days) but exceeds the U.S. average of 5.1 days. Feelings of frequent loneliness affect 34 percent of Van Wert adults, matching Ohio and falling just above the national rate of 33 percent.

Table 19. Van Wert County Adults Mental Health Status Compared to Ohio and U.S.

CONDITION	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025	OHIO 2025	U.S. 2025
Mental Health Status Not Good: 14+ Days in the Last Month	20%	32.0%	77.7%
Average Number of Poor Mental Health Days in the Past 30 Days)	6.0%	6.1%	5.1%
Frequent Feelings of Loneliness	34%	34%	33%

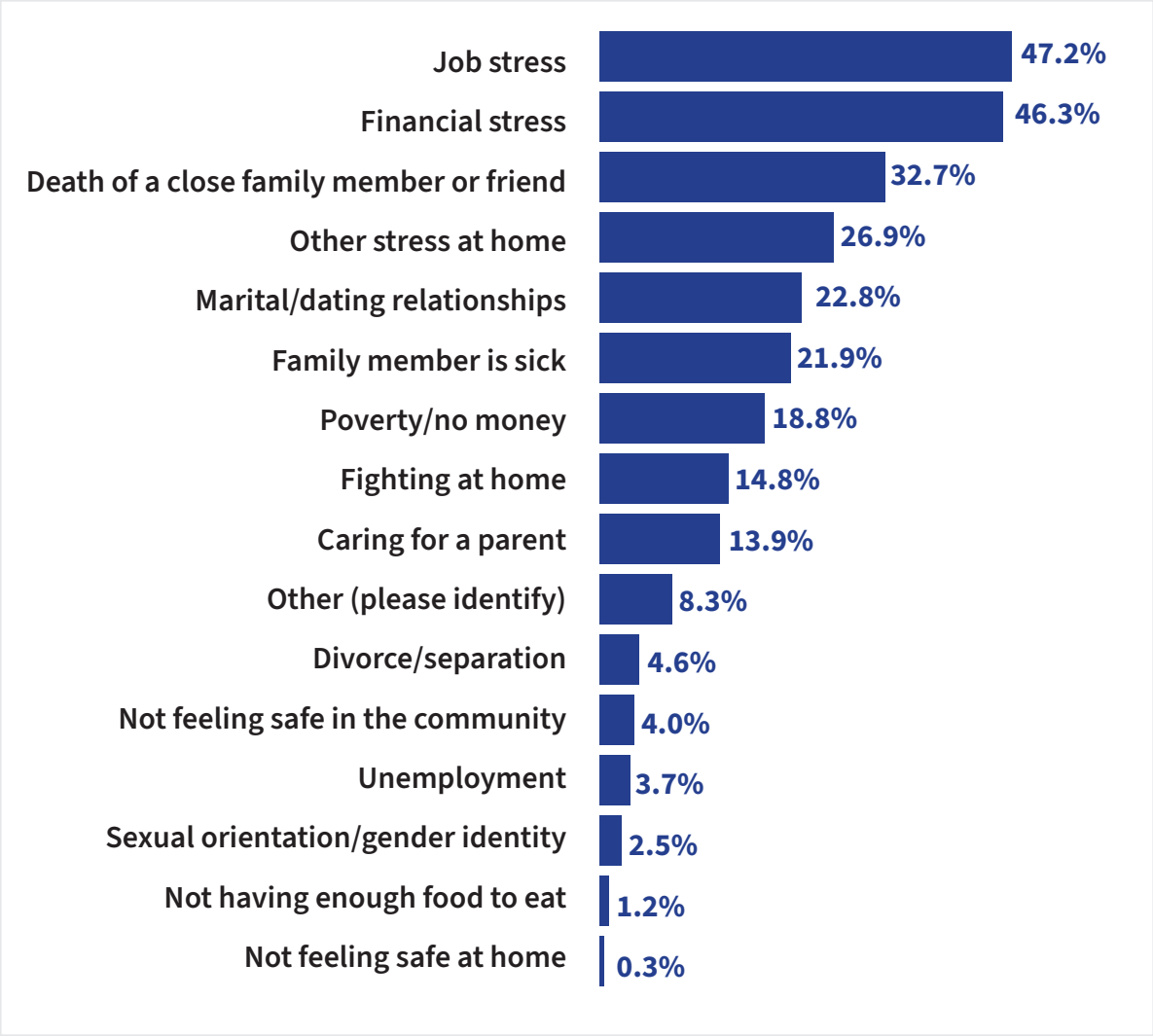
Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Van Wert, Ohio*, accessed January 9, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/ohio/van-wert?year=2025.*

Stressors Influencing Adults' Mental Health

Stress plays a substantial role in the mental wellbeing of Van Wert County adults. Nearly half of survey respondents reported job stress (47.2%) and financial stress (46.3%) as causes of stress, anxiety, or depression in their lives (Figure 21). The death of a close family member or friend was also a common stressor, affecting nearly one-third of adults (32.7%). Other homebased stressors—including household conflict, relationship challenges, and caring for a parent—were also frequently cited.

Figure 21. Van Wert County Residents' Leading Causes of Stress, Anxiety, or Depression

Almost half of adults in the county reported job stress (47.2%) and financial stress (46.3%) as the leading causes of stress, anxiety, or depression.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 324)

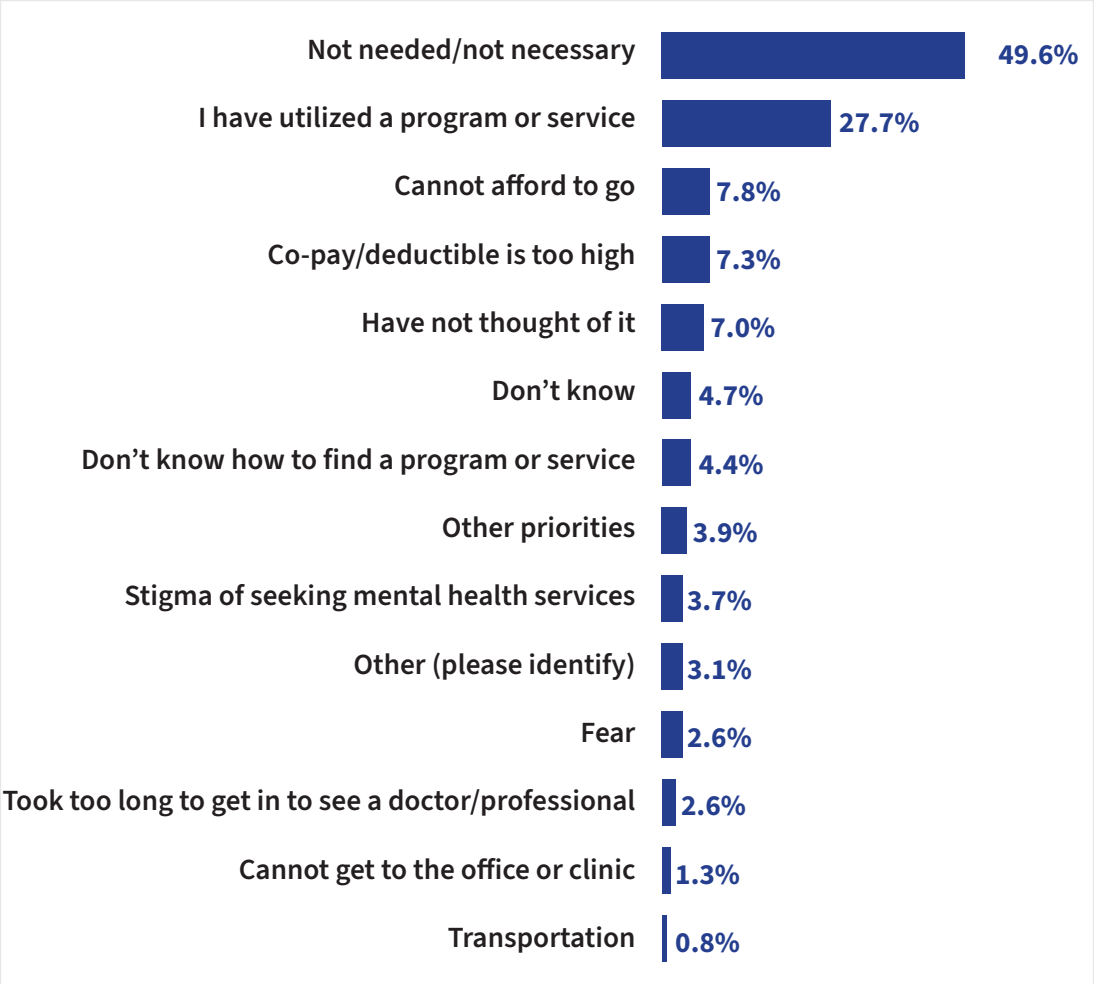
Utilization of Mental Health Services and Barriers to Care

Nearly half (49.6%) of Van Wert County adults reported they have not needed mental health services, while more than one in four (27.5%) adults indicated they have used a mental health program or service (Figure 22). Among those who did not use services, financial barriers were the most frequently reported challenge, with many adults (7.8%) stating that they could not afford mental health services, and many others (7.3%) noting that their insurance co-pay or deductible was too high. Other adults noted that they had not thought about seeking support

(7%), did not know how to find a mental health provider (4.4%), or faced stigma (3.7%) or fear (2.6%) related to seeking care.

Figure 22. Van Wert County Adults' Reasons for Not Using a Program/Service for Depression or Anxiety

Nearly half (49.6%) of Van Wert County adults reported they did not need to use a program or service to help with anxiety, depression, or other emotional problems.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 383)

Suicide and Community Response

In the past year, nearly six percent (5.8%) of adults in Van Wert County seriously considered

attempting suicide, up from four percent in the *2022 Van Wert County Community Health Assessment.* Among those individuals, some (2%) reported making a plan or attempting suicide one or more times. Despite these concerning indicators, Van Wert County's age adjusted suicide death rate between 2021 and 2025 (5.1 per 100,000) was significantly lower than the statewide rate (14.7 per 100,000). As seen in Table 20, males in both Van Wert County and Ohio continue to experience substantially higher suicide death rates than females.

It is also notable that the rates of Van Wert adults who seriously considered attempting suicide greatly differed by household income level. Among adults with household income greater than $35,000, 4.2 percent seriously considered attempting suicide; meanwhile, 18.8 percent of adults with household income of less than $35,000 seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months. These findings suggest that income and related socioeconomic issues may be risk factors for suicide. Targeted interventions for at-risk populations can be effective as suicide prevention strategies.

Table 20. Suicide Death Rates 2021–2025: Van Wert County Residents Compared to Ohio

POPULATION (Age-Adjusted Rate Per 100,000 Population)	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO
Male	20.5	24.3
Female	4.2	5.7
Total Death Suicide Rate	5.1	14.7

Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Mortality, 2021-2025," as of December 8, 2025, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/mortality. Note that data for 2024 and 2025 are preliminary.

Suicide in Ohio[13]

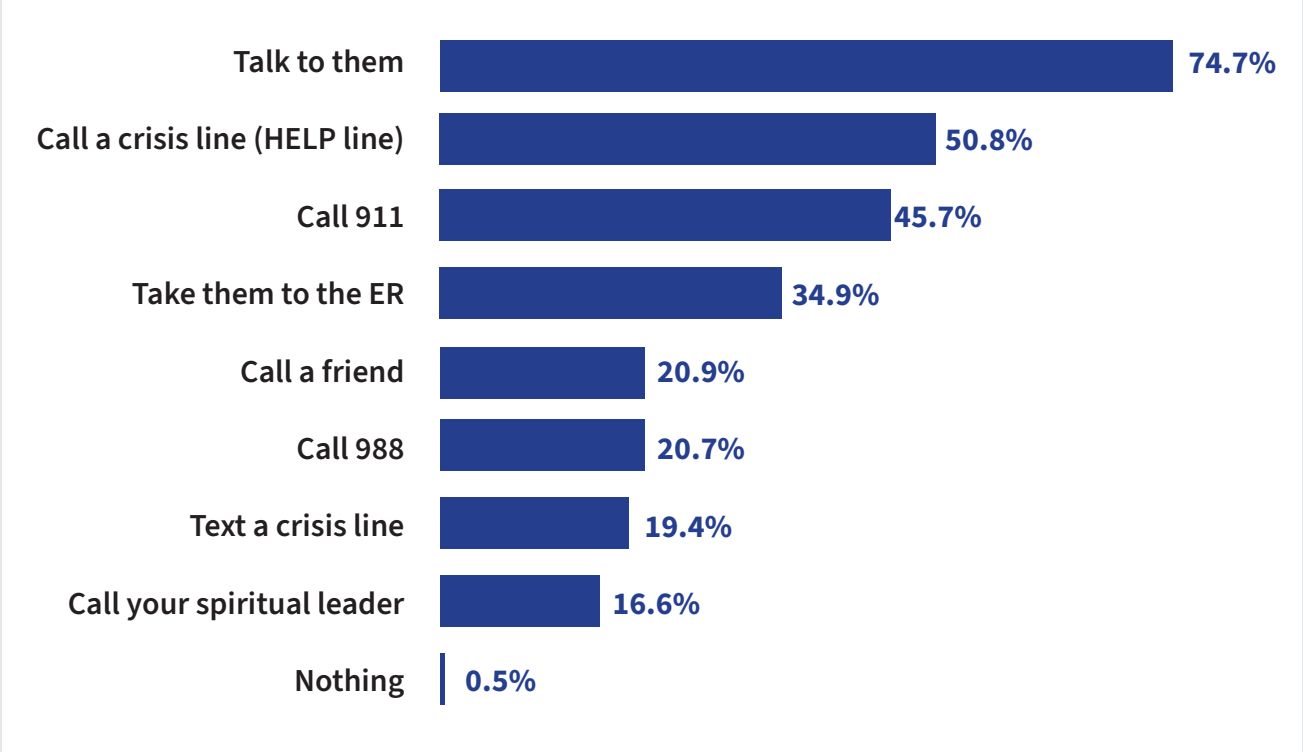
In Ohio, approximately five people die by suicide every day. These preventable deaths have a tremendous impact on Ohio families and communities. The rate of suicide has climbed over the past decade, both in Ohio and nationally.

The National Institute of Mental Health[14] and other national and state resources[15] emphasize the importance of asking directly about suicidal thoughts and taking immediate steps to ensure safety. Encouragingly, survey results show that most adults in Van Wert County would take action if they believed someone was suicidal (Figure 23). Nearly three quarters (74.6%) indicated they would talk directly with the person, and many would call a crisis line, involve a friend, contact 911, or take the individual to the emergency department. Fewer than one percent of adults reported they would take no action.

These findings illustrate a strong community willingness to intervene and support individuals in crisis, representing a key protective factor for suicide prevention in the county.

Figure 23. Reported Responses to Knowing Someone Who Is Suicidal among Van Wert County Adults

Most respondents reported they would directly intervene or contact emergency/crisis services if they knew someone was suicidal.



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 392)

Youth Mental Health

Across listening session discussions in Van Wert County, high school students identified mental health—especially stress, anxiety, and depression—as the most pressing issue affecting themselves and their peers. Many felt that the statewide estimate of youth feeling sad or hopeless (about one in four) reflects what they see in their own schools.[16]

Stressors Influencing Mental Health

Changing Friendships, Peer Pressure, and Isolation

Van Wert County youth repeatedly described adolescence as a period filled with shifting friendships, uncertainty, and pressure to fit in. Many said these changes can feel overwhelming. One high school student explained, *"It's just a lot of things are changing, just different…and you don't know how to react, so you just don't feel good."* Youth noted that feeling left out, drifting friendships, or not having a group can lead to sadness, anxiety, or loneliness.

Social Media

Van Wert County youth consistently pointed to phones and social media as powerful forces affecting their mental health. They described constant comparison to others, fear of missing out, addictive scrolling, and less in-person connection. One student explained, *"I feel like people, when they're with their phones, they always compare themselves to someone online, and then they think they're not as worth as much as they are, because this person has nicer things than them."* As one student stated, *"You just keep scrolling for hours…and you miss an entire afternoon you could've been hanging out with friends."* Another student noted, *"People are just disconnected from the world…only communicating through text."* Social media was described as both isolating and emotionally draining.

Academic Pressures and School Demands

Some Van Wert County youth described school workload, difficulty transitioning from middle school to high school (e.g., longer class periods), and limited downtime as additional sources of stress. One student explained his school year as *"kind of stressful, a lot of classes, and a lot of heavy grades."*

Bullying

Across Van Wert County schools, youth described bullying as present but varying significantly by school and age group. Although youth debated how common bullying is, they agreed that when

it does occur, it can have a significant effect on mental health, contributing to anxiety, sadness, or feeling isolated.

Students consistently emphasized that emotional and verbal bullying are far more common than physical aggression, and many shared that physical bullying largely declines after elementary and middle school. In high school, students said harmful interactions typically take the form of teasing, name-calling, exclusion, and rumors, with one student explaining, *"You're just getting teased a lot… maybe they're just messing around, but it doesn't feel good to get teased over and over and over again."*

Because bullying has shifted away from physical aggression, many youth view emotional and verbal bullying as less serious and often consider it a normal part of social interactions, with one student describing it as *"just overall kids nowadays."* Online interactions—through social media or messaging—can amplify the problem; posts or comments may be intended or framed as funny but are still hurtful. One student noted, *"They come through as a joke, but it actually is harmful, but [the sender and others] just think it's a joke."*

Youth expressed a range of perspectives on how adults should address bullying, emphasizing the need for consistent and meaningful action rather than repeated warnings. Many students felt that adults—particularly in school settings—should intervene more promptly and enforce clearer consequences when they observe harmful behavior, including verbal and online bullying. As one student noted, *"I've only ever seen a teacher do something about it, if the kid directly says something to them."* Another student echoed this sentiment that adults should be more observant and proactive, stating *"they should just, like be more perceptive and like, see what's happening to these kids, and like try to fix what's going on."*

Students also highlighted the importance of handling situations discreetly, explaining that when adults confront bullying too publicly, it can unintentionally lead to more teasing or retaliation. Several youth stressed that adults should strive to be safe, approachable, and trusted people to talk to, with some noting that their schools already support this by having students identify trusted adults each quarter. Finally, students emphasized that adults should remember that those who bully may also need support, describing the behavior as sometimes stemming from personal struggles and expressing that addressing these underlying issues is part of effectively reducing bullying.

Female students are more likely than male students to experience bullying, both on school property and electronically. LGBTQ+ students are more likely than cisgender and heterosexual students to experience bullying, both on school property and electronically.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "About Bullying," Youth Violence Prevention, accessed February 7, 2026, https://www/cdc.gov/youth-violence/about/about-bullying.html.

SUBSTANCE USE

Adult Tobacco Use

On average, Van Wert County adults smoke cigarettes at a lower rate (10.3%) than at the state and national level (Table 21). Though Van Wert County adults similarly reported using e-cigarettes or other vaping products at a lower rate (7.3%) than at the state and national level, this rate differs greatly at the household income level and by race/ethnicity. Among households making $35,000 or more, 5.2 percent of adults reported using e-cigarettes or other vaping products. However, this rate increases to 18.8 percent among adults in households with an income less than $35,000. Nearly a quarter (23.1%) of Van Wert County people of color are current smokers, compared to 9.9% of White/Caucasian adults in the county.

Table 21. Van Wert County Adults' Tobacco Use Compared to Ohio and U.S.

TOBACCO USE	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025[1]	OHIO 2024[2]	U.S. 2024[2]
Currently Smoke Cigarettes	20%	32.0%	77.7%
Smoked in the Past but Do Not Currently Smoke	24.6%	26.8%	25.9%
Currently Use E-Cigarettes or Other Vaping Products	7.3%	34%	33%

Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 398)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, *n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.*

Smoking is the number one risk factor for lung cancer. In the U.S., smoking is linked to about 80% to 90% of lung cancer deaths.[17] Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of disease, death, and disability in the United States.[18]

Youth Perceptions of Vaping

Across listening sessions with Van Wert County high school students, vaping consistently surfaced as one of the most pressing concerns facing youth. Students described it as both prevalent and pervasive, noting that official statistics often fail to capture the true extent of the problem. Youth across the Van Wert County listening sessions generally estimated that somewhere between 10 percent and 20 percent of high school students vape, with most students clustering around the 15 percent range.

As one student explained, *"Some surveys say it's only 6 percent, but honestly, it's more like 15 or 20 percent. People lie on those surveys because they're scared they'll get in trouble."* Another student emphasized how visible the behavior has become, remarking that *"you just walk into a bathroom and you'll find at least one person in there that has a vape on them."* Youth also pointed out that vaping is not limited to high school: *"A fifth grader got busted [for vaping],"* one student recalled, noting that use starts early.

Students across schools described how easy it is to obtain vaping products, with access being one of the driving factors behind widespread youth use. Several mentioned that local retailers rarely enforce age restrictions. As one student put it, *"Half the gas stations around here don't ID you. You can just walk in."* Others highlighted informal supply chains among teens: *"Some don't even get them from adults—it's other kids getting it from somewhere and handing it off."* With multiple vape shops and nearly all gas stations carrying products, as one teen summarized, *"It's everywhere."*

When discussing why youth vape, students repeatedly connected the behavior to stress, mental health, curiosity, and the desire to fit in. Many described vaping as a coping mechanism, with one student explaining that *"a lot of people vape as an escape."* Another added, *"For depression or anxiety—they use it because they need an outlet and that's what they found."* Peer influence also plays a major role, as one student said plainly: *"They want to fit in."* Beyond

peers, adults also shape youth attitudes toward vaping. Multiple students described seeing family members or other adults vaping openly, even around children. As one recounted, *"I was trick-or-treating and saw dads vaping while walking with their kids. It's just normal now."* Another stated, *"Sometimes it's like, if all of their family is doing it, then they might feel like, 'Oh, my mom, my dad, my brother, my sister, my aunt, my uncle, they're all doing it, so I should do it too."* The normalization of vaping—by both youth and adults—left many teens believing that experimentation feels almost inevitable. For many youth, experimentation leads to addiction. As one student explained, *"Once they get into it, that addiction starts to kick in and then [there's] nowhere to go."*

Students also emphasized that current school policies are not effectively curbing vaping. They described confiscation and signage as insufficient deterrents. One student said bluntly, *"If you take it away, they'll just get another one."* Others highlighted the limitations of enforcement tools like vape detectors, which can be triggered by perfume, or the difficulty of identifying who is vaping when multiple students are gathered in a bathroom. As another student put it, *"As soon as you put up a restriction, someone finds a way around it."* Because of this, many youth expressed skepticism that assemblies or educational campaigns would have meaningful impact. As one student noted, *"Telling us 'don't vape' won't work. We're teenagers—we think, 'That's 20 years away.'"*

In addition to nicotine vaping, students raised concerns about marijuana vaping, noting its increasing visibility and distinct odor throughout the community. One student explained, *"When I'm on a run, I smell it all the time."* Others mentioned that vape cartridges containing THC are used both in and outside of school. As one student stated, *"They have vapes with weed in them also, so [vaping and marijuana use] are just kind of combined at this point."* Students recognized that the legalization of marijuana for adults has increased its presence in the community, and some saw this as influencing youth access and perceptions.

Despite these concerns, students also expressed a sense of frustration and resignation about how difficult the issue is to address. Several pointed out that vaping is deeply tied to broader social and environmental conditions, including mental health struggles, peer culture, adult behavior, and the local retail landscape. One student summarized the challenge by saying, *"It starts at home…and in the community."* Another added, "You're killing yourself doing it—I don't understand it." Yet even with this awareness, youth acknowledged that interventions focused solely on rules or warnings are unlikely to shift behavior meaningfully.

Taken together, the voices of Van Wert County youth describe a community in which vaping is common, accessible, normalized, and intertwined with broader mental health and social

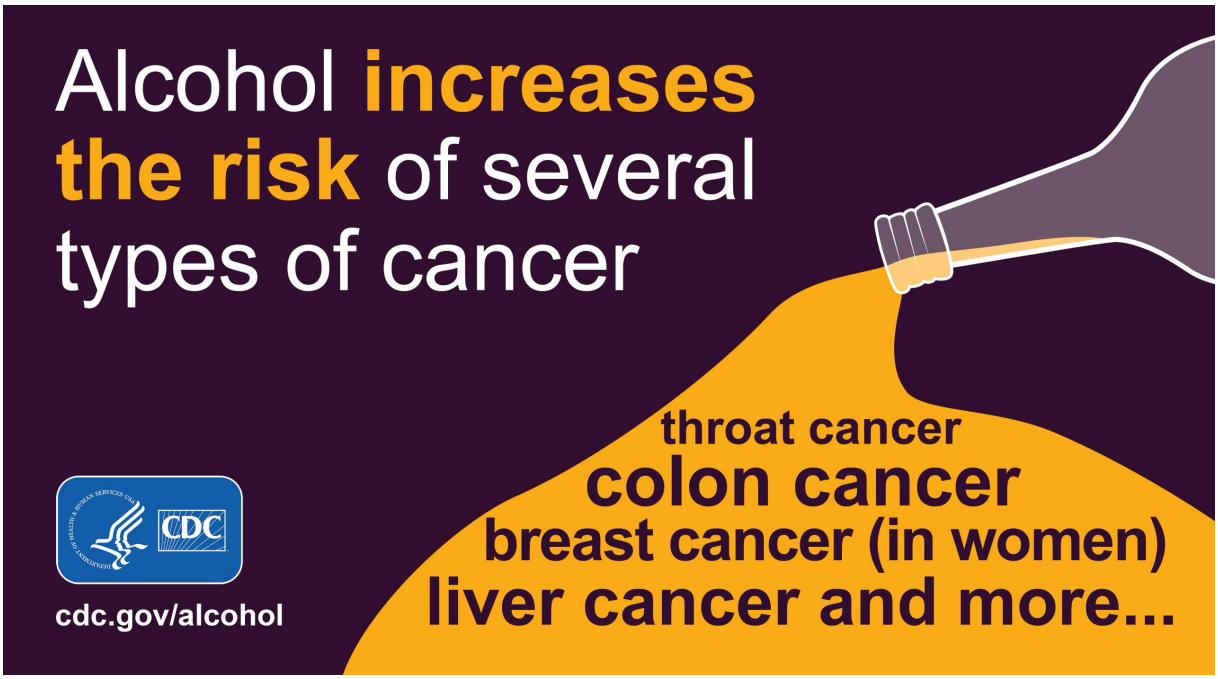
pressures. They see it as a complex problem requiring more than enforcement or education—one that will demand attention to the environments and relationships that shape young people's daily lives.

According to the CDC, youth are more likely to use tobacco products if they: have a parent who uses these products, have lower socioeconomic status, including lower income or education, or do poorly in school.[19]

Adult Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol and other drug use continues to present public health concerns for adults in Van Wert County. In 2025, 22.2 percent of adults reported binge drinking, a rate substantially higher than both the Ohio average (16.2%) and the national estimate (15.5%) (Table 22). This suggests that excessive alcohol consumption remains more common locally compared to broader populations.

In contrast, marijuana use appears less prevalent in Van Wert County. Just 9.3 percent of adults reported using medical or recreational marijuana either daily or on some days—far lower than the national average of 23.4 percent. (Comparable data for Ohio is not available.)



Patterns of substance-related harm also show mixed results. The age-adjusted unintentional drug overdose death rate in Van Wert County was 27.7 deaths per 100,000 population (2020–2023). Although this is lower than both the Ohio rate (39.0) and the U.S. rate (31.3), it still places Van Wert County in the mid-range compared to its neighboring counties—higher than Paulding (16.9), Mercer (13.1), and Auglaize (14.8), but below Allen County (38.1). (See Figure 24).

Despite relatively low levels of drug use reported in the community, concern about substance use remains high among residents. Although fewer than one percent of adults identified substance use as the most important issue affecting themselves or their households, over one-quarter (26.8%) selected it as the most important health concern impacting the wider Van Wert County community.

Table 22. Van Wert County Residents' Alcohol and Drug Use Compared to Ohio and U.S.

SUBSTANCE USE MEASURE	VAN WERT COUNTY 2025	OHIO 2024	U.S. 2024
Adults Who Binge Drink	22.2%[1]	16.2%[2]	15.5%[2]
Use Medical or Recreational Marijuana Every Day or Some Days	9.3%[1]	n/a	23.4%[3]
Age-Adjusted Unintentional Drug Overdose Death Rate (per 100,000 Population, 2020–2023)[4]	27.7	39.0	31.3

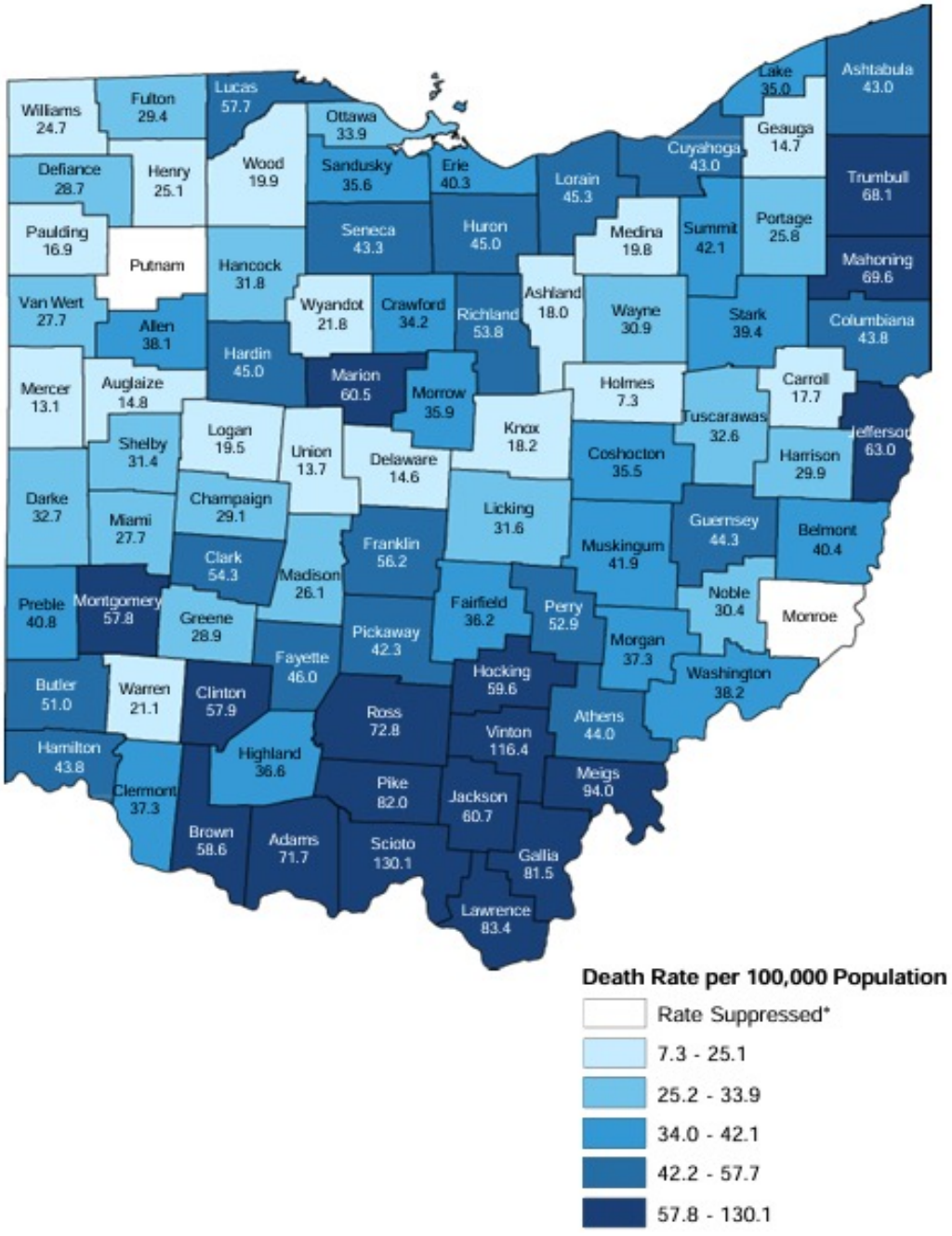
Source 1: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 383), (n = 398)

Source 2: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data," CDC, n.d., accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/.

Source 3: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Annual National Report, accessed January 9, 2026, https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt56287/2024-nsduh-annual-national-report.pdf.

Source 4: Ohio Department of Health, 2023 Unintentional Drug Overdose Annual Report, accessed January 9, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/80a5af5b-23d0-4753-9e9b-27fbfebc59f3/2023+Unintentional+Drug+Overdose+Annual+Report_FINAL.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_JQGCH4S04P41206HNUKVF31000-80a5af5b-23d0-4753-9e9b-27fbfebc59f3-pEeSGNX.

Figure 24. Average-Adjusted Rate of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths by County, Ohio, 2020–2023



Source: Ohio Department of Health, 2023 Unintentional Drug Overdose Annual Report, accessed January 9, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/80a5af5b-23d0-4753-9e9b-27fbfebc59f3/2023+Unintentional+Drug+Overdose+Annual+Report_FINAL.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_JQGCH4S04P41206HNUKVF31000-80a5af5b-23d0-4753-9e9b-27fbfebc59f3-pEeSGNX.

Youth Perceptions of Alcohol Use

High school students across Van Wert County described underage drinking as common, though less visible in school settings compared to vaping. Students emphasized that alcohol use typically occurs at parties, on weekends, or within family environments—not in hallways or bathrooms. Reflecting on how her awareness of drinking changed over time, one senior shared, *"I didn't even realize…how many people actually do drink in high school…It's definitely bigger than adults might think."* Another student distinguished where it occurs, noting, *"People don't drink at school…it's still a problem, just not like in the school."*

When asked how prevalent drinking is, younger students or those from certain schools perceived low rates of alcohol use, while others believed alcohol use was much more widespread—often higher than the statewide figure of nine percent of youth having at least one drink in the past 30 days.[20] One student put it bluntly, "*I'd say like, 15–16 percent,"* while another offered, *"I think 15 to maybe like 20 percent."*

High school students reported that exposure to alcohol through adults, enticing marketing, and peer environments contribute to underage drinking behaviors. As one student observed, "*A lot of kids are seeing their parents do it,"* while another noted, *"Some parents…buy their kids alcohol" to seem "cool."* A third student added that drinking is shaped by advertising, flavored products, and packaging that makes drinking seem attractive and carefree, explaining, *"They've made alcohol tastier…they'll put it with lemonade so it tastes better,"* and that marketing *"puts a fun twist around it."* Another noted, "*You can't watch hardly anything on TV without seeing advertisements for alcohol."* Several also emphasized social motives—curiosity, inclusion, and parties: *"It's mostly like parties…kids see someone else drink, their friends, and then they want to drink too."* Another student explained, *"Some people see it as having fun, like 'Oh, I'm just gonna drink a bit so then, like, I can enjoy this more'. It gets rid of like, some of your emotions."*

Finally, several students contrasted alcohol and vaping in terms of visibility, prevention, and enforcement. Drinking, they explained, mostly occurs outside of school and in occasional episodes, while vaping is common in daily school life. Students also felt that compared with vaping, alcohol receives far less prevention attention at school. *"It's definitely the least talked about,"* one student said, pointing out the contrast with vaping posters and enforcement: *"There's posters for vaping…I don't think there's anything for drinking."* Overall, students felt that both behaviors are widespread, but vaping dominates daily school life and alcohol remains more normalized in social and family spheres—and, in students' eyes, less acknowledged and discussed by adults.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Van Wert County's 2024 sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates remain well below state and national levels across all major reportable infections (Table 23). Chlamydia (184.6 per 100,000) and gonorrhea (17.4 per 100,000) occur at substantially lower rates than in Ohio and the U.S., while HIV had no new cases reported. Syphilis (3.5 per 100,000) and hepatitis C (27.9 per 100,000) also remain comparatively low. Multi year trends from 2020 to 2024 (Figures 25–27) show declining chlamydia and gonorrhea rates locally, with occasional fluctuations in syphilis but overall low burden. Altogether, the data suggest Van Wert County experiences significantly lower STI incidence than statewide and national patterns.

Table 23. Sexually Transmitted Infections for Van Wert County, Ohio, and U.S., 2020-2024

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION RATE (Per 100,000 Population)	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO	U.S.
Chlamydia Incidence Rate[1]	184.6	415.9	492.2
Gonorrhea Incidence Rate[2]	17.4	145.0	179.5
HIV Infection Rate[3]	0.0	7.7	n/a
Syphilis Prevalence Rate[4]	3.5	36.9	15.8
Hepatitis C Prevalence Rate[5]	27.9	59.4	1.5

Source 1: Ohio Department of Health, "Chlamydia: Five Year Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/chlamydia-five-year-report.

Source 2: Ohio Department of Health, "Gonorrhea: Five-Year Report," Ohio Department of Health, n.d., accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/gonorrhea-five-year-report.

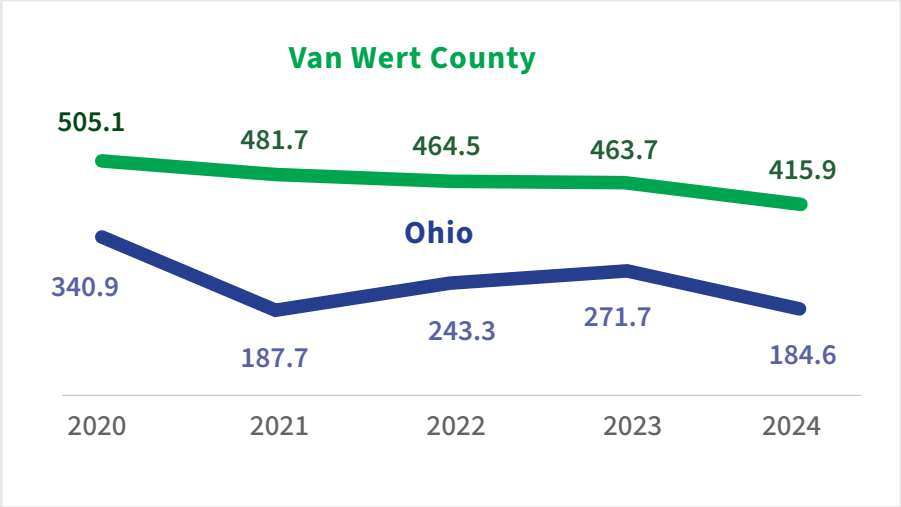
Source 3: Ohio Department of Health, "Ohio HIV Surveillance Data Tables," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/hiv-aids-surveillance-program/resources/ohio-hiv-surveillance-data-tables.

Source 4: Ohio Department of Health, "Total Syphilis: Five-Year Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/total-syphilis-five-year-report.

Source 5: Ohio Department of Health, "Hepatitis C: Five Year Status Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/viral-hepatitis/data-statistics/hcv-5yr-report.

Figure 25. Chlamydia Annualized Disease Rates per 100,000 for Van Wert County and Ohio, 2020-2024

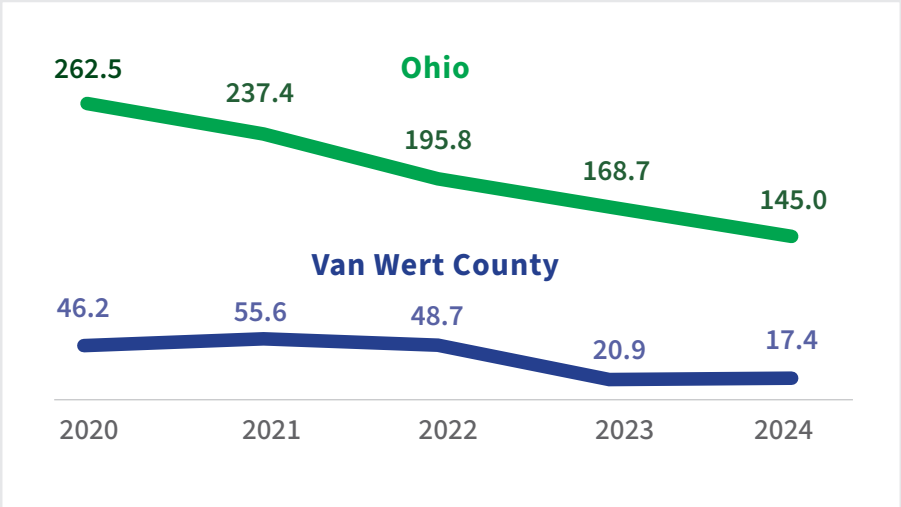
Van Wert County's chlamydia rates were consistently well below the Ohio statewide rates from 2020 to 2024, with both showing an overall decline over the five-year period.



Source: Ohio Department of Health, "Chlamydia: Five Year Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/chlamydia-five-year-report.

Figure 26. Gonorrhea Annualized Disease Rates per 100,000 for Van Wert County and Ohio, 2020–2024

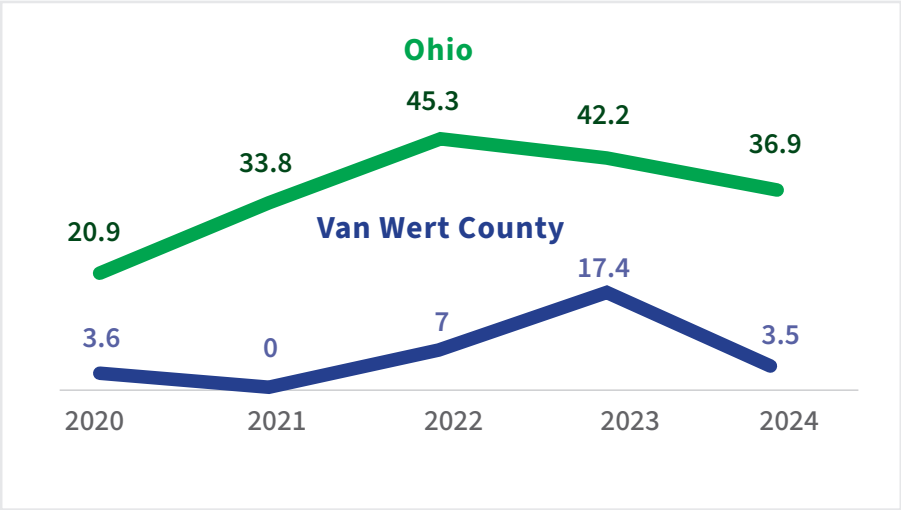
Van Wert County's gonorrhea rates remained far below the statewide rates throughout 2020–2024, with both the county and Ohio showing steady declines over the period.



Source: Ohio Department of Health, "Gonorrhea: Five-Year Report," Ohio Department of Health, n.d., accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/gonorrhea-five-year-report.

Figure 27. Syphilis Annualized Disease Rates per 100,000 for Van Wert County and Ohio 2020–2024

Although Van Wert County saw some fluctuations—including a brief increase in 2023—its syphilis rates remained minimal overall, especially when contrasted with Ohio's much higher and more variable rates.



Source: Ohio Department of Health, "Total Syphilis: Five-Year Report," accessed January 14, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sti-surveillance/resources/total-syphilis-five-year-report.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Birth outcomes in Van Wert County have remained generally stable from 2022 to 2025, with total annual births averaging about 325 per year (Table 24).

Birthweight patterns show some fluctuation. High-birth-weight births increased overall across the period, while low-birth-weight births ranged from 13 to 28, peaking in 2025. Normal-birth-weight infants remained the majority each year, though this category declined slightly in 2025. Very low- birth-weight births were only recorded in 2025 (five infants). Details appear in Table 24.

Teen births continue to be uncommon. No births occurred to mothers under age 15, and births to mothers ages 15–17 were only reported in 2025. Births among mothers ages 18–19 ranged from seven to 13 annually (Table 25).

Preterm birth rates varied from 8.5 percent to 13.6 percent, with the highest rate in 2022 and more stable rates in subsequent years. Term births remained the large majority (Table 26).

In 2023, Van Wert County's infant mortality rate was 7.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, slightly above the Ohio rate of 7.1 (Figure 28).

Table 24. Van Wert County Birth Weight Category 2022-2025

BIRTH WEIGHT CATEGORY	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Births	323	339	312	327
High Birth Weight	29	37	22	36
Low Birth Weight (<2,500 grams)	21	13	23	28
Normal Birth Weight (>2,500 grams)	270	285	266	258
Very Low Birth Weight (<1,500 grams)	n/a	n/a	n/a	5

Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Birth Comprehensive, 2022–2025," as of February 3, 2026, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/ohio_births?visualize=true.

Table 25. Van Wert County Mothers' Age Group Category over 2022-2025

TEEN BIRTHS (MOTHERS' AGE GROUP)	2022	2023	2024	2025
Less Than 15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
15 to 17	n/a	n/a	n/a	6
18 to 19	7	13	11	13

Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Birth Comprehensive, 2022–2025," as of February 3, 2026, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/ohio_births?visualize=true.

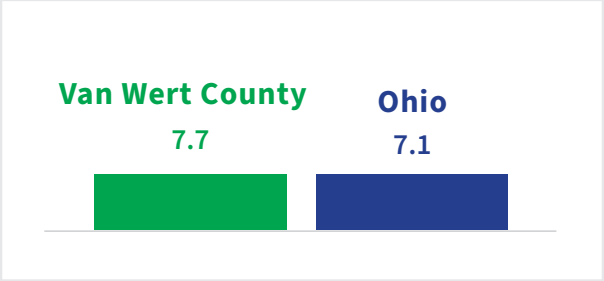
Table 26. Van Wert County Births over 2022-2025

PRETERM BIRTHS	2022	2023	2024	2025
Preterm (<37 weeks gestation) Total	44	29	33	36
Preterm (<37 weeks gestation) Percent	13.6%	8.5%	10.6%	11%
Full-Term	279	310	279	291

Source: Ohio Department of Health, DataOhio Portal, "Birth Comprehensive, 2022–2025," as of February 3, 2026, https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/ohio_births?visualize=true.

Figure 28. Infant Mortality Rates in Van Wert County and Ohio (2019-2023)

Infant mortality rates (per 1,000 live births) appear higher in Van Wert County than in Ohio overall from 2019 to 2023; however, rates based on fewer than 20 infant deaths should be interpreted with caution.



Source: Ohio Department of Children and Youth, 2023 Infant Mortality Annual Report, accessed February 11, 2026, https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/v1738772002/childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/Annual%20Reports%2022-23/2023_Infant_Mortality_Annual_Report.pdf.

Disparities in Infant Mortality in Ohio

A new Groundwork Ohio report shows that infant mortality remains a major concern in Ohio, with racial disparities widening. In 2022, Ohio's overall infant mortality rate was 7.1 per 1,000 births. For white infants, the rate was 5.7, consistently below state and national averages, while the rate for Black infants reached 13.4 per 1,000 births, making Black babies 2.4 times more likely to die than white babies—an increase from a 2.2 disparity in 2012. The report concludes that progress in Ohio has stagnated, even as other states have improved, and calls for a renewed focus on outcomes for Ohio's mothers and babies, emphasizing the need for stronger, measurable action.

Source: Health Policy Institute of Ohio. "Report: Wide racial disparities in infant mortality persist in Ohio." Health Policy News, September 20, 2024. https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/health-policy-news/2024/09/20/report-wide-racial-disparities-in-infant-mortality-persist-in-ohio.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Social Drivers of Health (SDOH): Why They Matter

Social drivers of health (also known as social determinants of health) are the everyday conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, play, and age. These conditions—such as access to safe housing, reliable transportation, quality education, nutritious foods, and supportive social connections—have a major impact on health, well being, and quality of life.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services[21] and the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services[22] assert that social drivers of health play a major role in shaping a wide range of health outcomes—from chronic disease risk to life expectancy. For example, individuals without access to safe housing, reliable transportation, healthy foods, and supportive social networks face higher risks of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. Similarly, people living in poverty may face challenges such as unstable housing, fewer job opportunities, or limited educational pathways. These challenges increase stress and reduce access to essential resources required for long-term health, contributing to higher rates of chronic disease and shorter life expectancy.

The social drivers of health framework reminds us that "place matters." The following section includes information on a range of social factors that impact the health and well-being of the residents of Van Wert County.

Source: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Social Determinants of Health, *Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed February 11, 2026, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health.*

Economic Conditions

Van Wert County shows signs of strong economic stability overall. The unemployment rate of 3.4 percent, which is lower than both Ohio and U.S. averages, suggests that many residents who want to work are able to find job opportunities (Table 27).

At the same time, income levels in the county remain below state and national benchmarks. Van Wert County's per capita income ($34,583) and mean household income ($82,591) both fall short of Ohio and U.S. averages. This pattern is common among rural counties, where limited industry diversity and structural barriers can affect wages and long-term economic opportunity[23].

Poverty indicators show that Van Wert County compares favorably with state and national rates, with 9 percent of individuals, 9.2 percent of children, and 7.6 percent of families living below the federal poverty line (Table 28). Although these percentages are relatively low, each number represents individuals and families who may be struggling to meet basic needs. Economic hardship can affect nearly every aspect of daily life—such as access to nutritious food, safe housing, transportation, steady employment, and health care—and is a key social determinant of overall health and well being.

The data also show meaningful differences in poverty rates across racial and ethnic groups. Though White residents experience a poverty rate of 8.5 percent, several minority groups face significantly higher levels (Table 29). Poverty affects 42.9 percent of American Indian residents, 19 percent of Asian residents, and 17.7 percent of individuals of Hispanic or Latino origin. These disparities reflect broader statewide and national patterns and underscore that not all community members benefit equally from the county's overall economic stability.

Table 27. Employment and Income of Van Wert County Residents Compared to Ohio and U.S.

MEASURE	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO	U.S.
Unemployment Rate	3.4%	4.8%	5.2%
Per Capita Income (Total Income of the Region Divided by the Population)	$34,583	$40,552	$44,673
Mean Household Income	$82,591	$96,990	$113,530

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Economic Characteristics (Table DP03), accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP03?q=DP03:+Selected+Economic+Characteristics.

Table 28. Poverty Status of Van Wert County Residents Compared to Ohio and U.S.

POPULATION	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO	U.S.
People Living below Poverty Level	9.0%	13.3%	12.5%
Children Living below Poverty Level	9.2%	17.8%	16.1%
Families Living below Poverty Level	7.6%	9.3%	8.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Economic Characteristics (Table DP03), accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP03?q=DP03:+Selected+Economic+Characteristics.

Table 29. Poverty by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin of Van Wert County Residents Compared to Ohio and U.S.

POPULATION	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO	U.S.
White	8.5%	10.5%	9.7%
Black or African American	9.0%	26.6%	21.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	42.9%	23.7%	21.1%
Asian	19.0%	11.9%	9.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	n/a	28.8%	16.8&
Two or More Races	16.3%	19.7%	14.6%
Hispanic or Latino Origin (of Any Race)	17.7%	21.2%	16.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months *(Table S1701), accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table?q=S1701:+Poverty+Status+in+the+Past+12+Months&g=010XX00US_040XX00US39_050XX00US39161&y=2024&d=ACS+5-Year+Estimates+Subject+Tables.*

Economic Stressors Impacting Residents

Most respondents (84.7%) reported experiencing no stressors related to basic needs or social drivers of health in the past year. Among those who did experience stressors, the most frequently reported challenge was having to choose between paying bills and buying food (8.1%). Other notable stressors included job loss or pay cuts (4.4%), concerns about losing housing despite currently having a place to live (3.9%), and worry about running out of food before having money to buy more (3.6%). Reported stressors in the past 12 months differed by household income level for Van Wert residents. Among households with income greater than $35,000, only 1.1 percent of adults reported being worried that food would run out before they could get more; however, 15.4 percent of adults with household income below $35,000 reported food running out as a stressor. This large disparity may point to challenges with food affordability and access for lower income residents. Additionally, it is notable that a greater proportion of households with income over $35,000 (35.9%) reported they are worried about losing their current housing in the future, compared to 25.8 percent of households with income less than $35,000.

Smaller proportions of respondents reported difficulty affording necessities such as clothing (2.8%) or prescription medications (2.5%), as well as barriers related to transportation (2.5%), gas for their car (2.5%), and threats of utility shutoffs (2.2%). Less commonly reported stressors included not having a steady place to live (1.9%), inability to afford regular trash pickup (0.8%), septic system repairs (0.6%), diapers (0.6%), or access to clean drinking water (0.3%). These findings suggest that the majority of residents did not encounter basic needs-related stress, but a subset continues to face challenges tied to financial strain, job stability, transportation, and housing security.

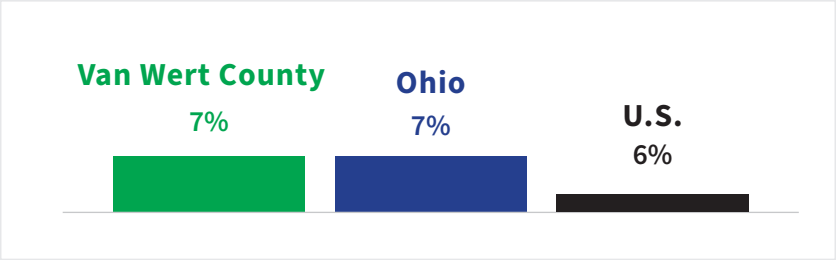
Although less than 10 percent (8.7%) of all Van Wert respondents reported that they needed help meeting general daily needs in the past 30 days, there is a large disparity by household income level. Over one-fifth of households (22.1%) making less than $35,000 reported needing help to meet basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter, while 6.3 percent of households making over $35,000 reported needing assistance to meet basic needs.

Access to Healthy Foods and Food Insecurity

Van Wert County residents' access to healthy foods appears to be similar to that of Ohio and U.S. residents. As shown in Figure 29, limited access to healthy foods—defined as the percentage of the population who are low-income and do not live close to a grocery store—is experienced by seven percent of Van Wert County residents, which is the same as Ohio and slightly higher than the rate for the U.S. (6%). Though food insecurity rates in Van Wert County are lower than at the Ohio and U.S. levels, it is still notable that nearly 16 percent of children are experiencing food insecurity in the county (Table 30). Moreover, almost one in four children (23%) are considered food insecure but are likely ineligible for assistance. As seen in Figure 30, a large proportion (42%) of food insecure individuals in Van Wert County do not qualify for SNAP benefits.

Figure 29. Limited Access to Healthy Foods: Van Wert County, Ohio, and the U.S.

The percentage of Van Wert County residents who are low-income and do not live close to a grocery store is similar to state and national rates.



Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Van Wert County, Ohio, *2025 data, accessed February 3, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/ohio/van-wert?year=2025.*

Table 30. Food Insecurity among Van Wert County Residents Compared to Ohio and U.S.

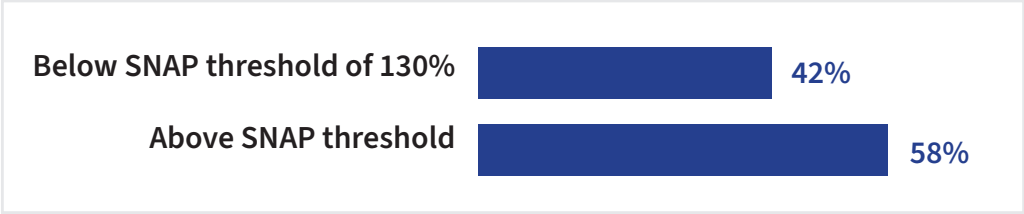
POPULATION	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO	U.S.
Food Insecurity Rate[1]	13.2%	14.3%	14.3%
Child Food Insecurity Rate[1]	15.9%	20.1%	19.2%
Food Insecure Children Likely Ineligible for Assistance[1]	23.0%	28.0%	32.0%
Households Receiving SNAP Benefits[2]	7.5%	12.5%	12.1%

Source 1: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap: Van Wert County, Ohio, *accessed February 3, 2026, https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/ohio/county/van-wert.*

Source 2: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Economic Characteristics (Table DP03), accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP03?q=DP03:+Selected+Economic+Characteristics.

Figure 30. Food Insecurity in Van Wert County

Estimated progam eligibility among food insecure people in Van Wert County, Ohio



Food Insecure Population in Van Wert County, Ohio:
3,820

Average Meal Cost in Van Wert County, Ohio:
$2.95

Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap: Van Wert County, Ohio*, accessed February 3, 2026, https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/ohio/county/van-wert.*

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Housing

The neighborhoods and conditions people live in have a major impact on their health and well-being.[24] The majority (81%) of Van Wert County residents are homeowners, with a small proportion (8%) considered severely housing burdened. This means that eight percent of households pay more than half of their income on housing costs. Homelessness continues to be a prevalent issue across Ohio, with a smaller proportion of Van Wert residents experiencing homelessness than at the state level. Please note that the number of people experiencing homelessness in Table 31 reflects a single-day, point-in-time count in Van Wert County and across Ohio, which is a smaller count than the overall number of individuals experiencing homelessness not captured in the one-day count.[25]

Table 31. Housing Conditions for Van Wert County Residents Compared to Ohio and U.S.

CONDITION	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO	U.S.
Home Ownership[1]	81%	67%	65%
Households Spending 50% or More of Household Income on Housing[1]	8%	12%	15%
Severe Housing Problems[1] (Experienced at Least 1 of 4 Housing Problems: Overcrowding, High Housing Costs, Lack of Kitchen Facilities, or Lack of Plumbing Facilities)	9%	13%	17%
Number of People Unhoused[2]	43	3,626	n/a

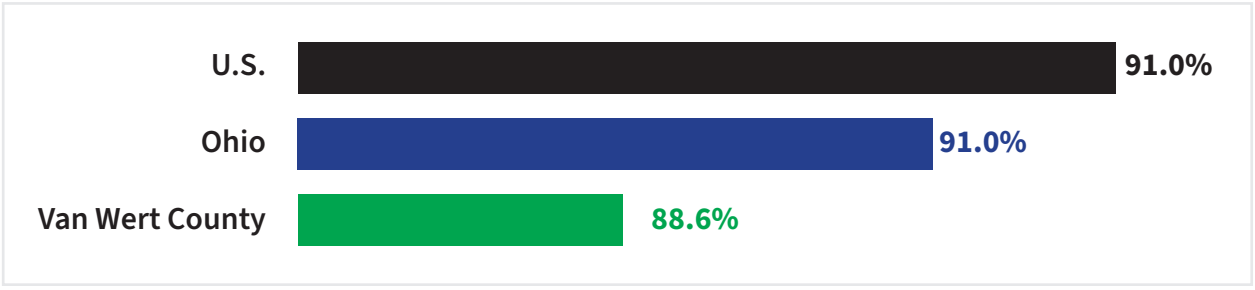
Source 1: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Van Wert County, Ohio, *2025 data, accessed February 3, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/ohio/van-wert?year=2025.*

Source 2: Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), HIC and PIT Count Resources, *accessed February 3, 2026, https://cohhio.org/ohio-boscoc/hic-and-pit/.*

Internet Access

Internet access has been linked to better health outcomes.[26] A majority of Van Wert residents (88.6%) reported having internet access in their homes, which is slightly below the Ohio and U.S. levels (Figure 31).

Figure 31. Households with Broadband Internet: Van Wert County, Ohio, and U.S.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States (Table DP02), *accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table?q=DP02:+Selected+Social+Characteristics+in+the+United+States&g=010XX00US_00XX00US39_050XX00US39161&y=2024&d=ACS+5-Year+Estimates+Data+Profiles.*

Access to Exercise Opportunities and Parks

Proximity to exercise spaces, such as parks and recreation facilities, has been linked to an increase in physical activity levels.[27] Regular physical activity has a wide array of health benefits including weight control, muscle and bone strengthening, improved mental health and mood, and improved life expectancy.[28] As shown in Table 32, Van Wert County residents have less access to exercise opportunities (65%) and parks (32%) than residents in Ohio (84% and 47%, respectively) and the U.S. (84% and 51%, respectively).

Table 32. Van Wert County Community Conditions Compared to Ohio and U.S.

COMMUNITY CONDITION	VAN WERT COUNTY	OHIO	U.S.
Access to Exercise Opportunities (Percentage of Individuals Who Live Reasonably Close to a Park or Recreational Facility)	65%	84%	84%
Access to Parks (People Living within a Half Mile of a Publicly Accessible Park)	32%	47%	51%

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Van Wert County, Ohio, *2025 data, accessed February 3, 2026, https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/ohio/van-wert?year=2025.*

Transportation

The majority (96.4%) of Van Wert County residents report having vehicles available to them for transportation compared to Ohio residents (92.6%) or U.S. residents (91.6%).[29] Still, approximately 415 residents in the county have no vehicles available, which limits their ability to access employment, health care, and other resources needed for daily living. The expansion of Allen County Regional Transit Authority services to Van Wert County in January 2026 marked a significant improvement in addressing transportation needs in the county.[30]

Education Access and Quality

People with higher levels of education are more likely to be healthier and live longer.[31] In Van Wert County, educational indicators show a mixed picture compared to statewide measures. The county's four year high school graduation rate is strong (93%), exceeding the Ohio rate (87%), and the county has a higher percentage of adults (94%) with a high school degree or equivalent than the state (92%).[32] However, educational attainment beyond high school among adults ages 25 and older is lower: only 17.1 percent of Van Wert County residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 31.5 percent across the state.[33]

Health Care Access and Quality

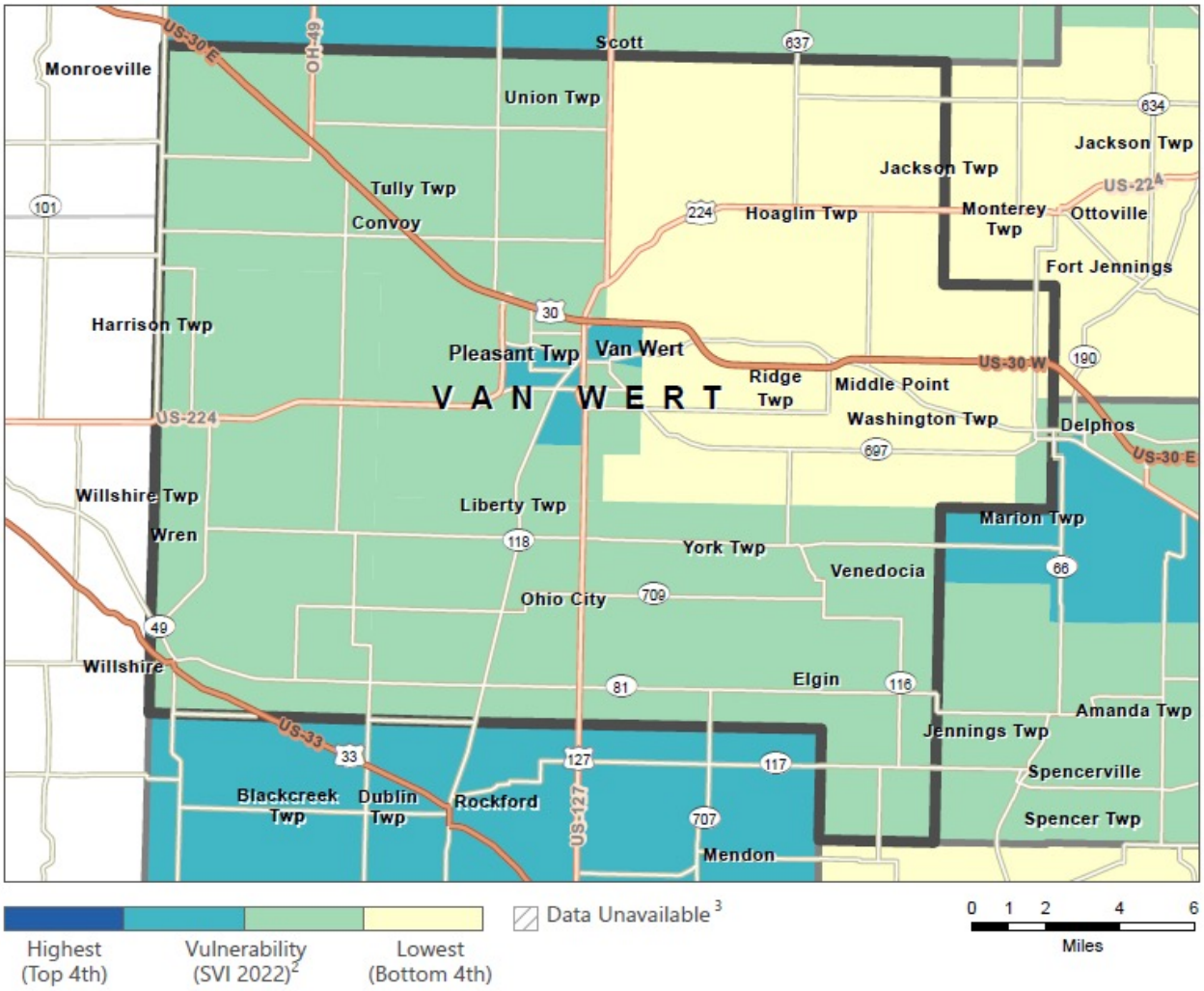
As previously discussed, Van Wert County is federally designated as a primary medical care, mental health, and dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).[34] The ratio of patients to providers is significantly higher than that of the state or the nation, indicating a significant need for additional providers.

Place and Health: Social Vulnerability Index and Its Impact on Health[35]

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry created the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to identify and measure communities experiencing social vulnerability, a term that refers to a community's capacity to prepare for and respond to natural or human-caused disasters or disease outbreaks. SVI is measured at the American Community Survey (ACS) census tract level. Based on the 2022 SVI analysis, central Van Wert County has a higher overall social vulnerability score, compared to the lowest overall score in the northeastern part of the county (Figure 32). Figure 33 provides a breakdown of SVI scores by socioeconomic status, household characteristics, racial and ethnic minority status, and housing type/transportation.

Communities with higher SVI scores are often linked to unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, higher rates of chronic diseases, lower access to health care, and worse mental health outcomes.[36]

Figure 32. Van Wert County Overall Social Vulnerability



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Social Vulnerability Index." Place and Health - Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program (GRASP), October 22, 2024. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/index.html.

Figure 33. Van Wert County SVI Themes

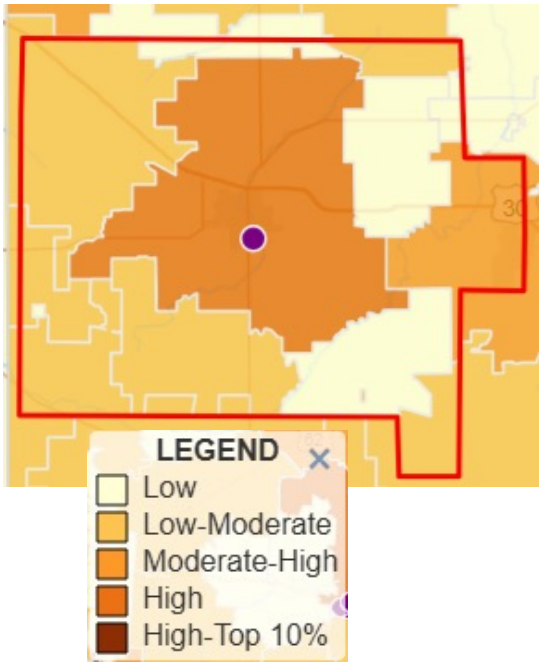
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Social Vulnerability Index." Place and Health - Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program (GRASP), October 22, 2024. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/index.html.

Climate and Health[37]

Extreme heat can lead to heat stroke, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, dehydration, and death. Anyone can be at risk, but some are more vulnerable, including pregnant women, people with heart or lung conditions, young children, older adults, athletes, and outdoor workers. This county profile, from the CDC's Health and Health Data Tracker, provides specific information on its vulnerable populations.

The Heat and Health Index (HHI) is a national tool that incorporates historical temperature, heat-related illness, and community characteristics data at the ZIP code level to identify areas most likely to experience negative health outcomes from heat and help communities prepare for heat in a changing climate. Each ZIP code has a single ranking for the overall HHI and rankings for individual components so that users can make informed decisions to prepare for and prevent the negative health impacts from heat in their communities.

The map below shows where people in Van Wert County are most likely to feel the impacts of heat. The map also shows the location of the location of the hospital that is a critical resource for use during an extreme heat event.



The communities most likely to feel the impacts of heat based on their overall Health and Heat Index (HHI) rank (darker color) includes:

1. Van Wert (80.3%)
2. Washington Township/Delphos (58.5%)
3. Elgin (48.7%)
4. Wilshire (41%)

For example, Van Wert's HHI ranking signifies that 80.3% of zip code tabulation areas (ZCTA) in the nation are likely less vulnerable to the impacts of heat than Van Wert and that 19.7% of ZCTAs in the nation are likely more vulnerable to the impacts of heat.

Factors used to determine the Heat and Health Index include: historical heat and health burden, sensitivity to heat based on health conditions, sociodemographic factors, and the natural and built environment.

Social and Community Context

Relationships and interactions with family, friends, co workers, and the broader community play a critical role in shaping health and overall well being. Research from the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion highlights that social and community environments influence a wide range of health outcomes across the lifespan.[38] Both childhood traumatic experiences—known as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)—and recent stressful life events can significantly affect health behaviors, chronic disease risk, and long-term life opportunities.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Extensive research on ACEs has shown lasting effects on health and life opportunities, such as increased risk to brain development, immune system, chronic diseases, education, job potential, poverty, and depression, among others.[39] Both community factors, such as living in under-resourced neighborhoods, and toxic stress from traumatic conditions or relationships contribute to children experiencing ACEs. As the number of ACEs increases, the risk for negative outcomes later in life increases.

Nearly half of Van Wert County adults (49.1%) reported experiencing at least one ACE before age 18. The most frequently reported ACEs included:

- Having parents who were separated or divorced (22.7%)
- Living with someone with a drinking problem or alcoholism (21.9%)
- Living with someone who had depression or another mental illness (21.9%)

Additional ACEs reported by adults in the county included:

- Being sworn at, insulted, or demeaned by an adult in the home (15.7%)
- Losing a parent through abandonment or death (9.9%)
- Living with someone who used illegal drugs or misused prescription medication (9.7%)
- Feeling unloved or not considered special by family members (9.1%)
- Being touched sexually by someone at least five years older (9.1%)
- Witnessing adults in the home physically harm each other (8.1%)
- Being physically hurt by an adult in the home (not including spanking) (7.3%)

- Lack of family support or closeness (7.3%)
- Living with someone who was incarcerated (5.7%)
- Being pressured to touch someone sexually (4.4%)
- Not having enough to eat, wearing dirty clothes, or lacking protection (4.4%)
- Having parents who were not married (3.1%)
- Being forced to have sex by someone at least five years older (2.9%)

Recent Events and Experiences

More than half of Van Wert County adults (56.7%) reported experiencing at least one significant event or challenge within the past 12 months (Table 33). These experiences can influence stress levels, financial stability, social connectedness, and health.

Table 33. Events and Challenges Experienced by Van Wert County Adults in the Past 12 Months

EVENT OR CHALLENGE EXPERIENCED	PERCENTAGE
Death of a family member or close friend	24.9%
My health declined	13.6%
I had bills I could not pay	13.1%
I was a caregiver	12.3%
I moved to a new address	11.8%
Someone close to me had a problem with drinking or drugs	7.2%
Someone in my household lost their job/had their hours at work reduced	5.9%
I or a close family member experienced a pregnancy loss (miscarriage, stillbirth, etc.)	4.3%
I had someone experiencing homelessness living with me and/or sleeping on my couch	2.9%
My family was at risk for losing their home	1.9%
I was homeless	1.3%
I had no access to clean drinking water	0.3%
A family member or loved one was deported or I was concerned about being deported	0.3%

Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA, (n = 374)

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Community Context Assessment

In February 2026, the Van Wert County Health Department met with their community partners in the Health Collaborative and completed a comprehensive Community Context Assessment. The intent of this meeting was to better understand Van Wert County's strengths, challenges, assets, and culture as well as forces of change that impact health and well-being. The results are provided below.

Community Strengths

Members of the Van Wert County Health Collaborative overwhelmingly described people as the county's greatest strength. Participants emphasized a strong sense of unity among local organizations, noting a shift away from siloed efforts toward a collaborative, community minded culture. Many expressed pride in the compassion, generosity, and responsiveness of residents—illustrated by personal stories of community members stepping up during times of crisis. This shared commitment to caring for one another was seen as a defining feature of life in Van Wert County.

Assets in the Built Environment

The built environment is defined as the human-made surroundings that influence overall community health.[40]

BUILT ENVIRONMENT ELEMENTS	DETAILS
Green Spaces and Recreation	Well-maintained parks; significant investment over past 20 years; expanding trail system connecting the city; free outdoor spaces accessible to all.
Community Infrastructure	New public transportation through RTA Lima; libraries in Van Wert and surrounding communities; ongoing improvements to sidewalks, water, and sewer; infrastructure quality varies across the county.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT ELEMENTS	DETAILS
Services for Older Adults	Classes and programs through the Area Agency on Aging that support physical activity and social engagement.
Youth-Friendly Infrastructure & Programs	Parks and recreation spaces for youth; some summer programs; growing emphasis on involving youth in planning activities; need for improved sidewalk and bus stop access.
Safety-Related Infrastructure	Efforts to improve traffic and pedestrian safety; community discussion on sidewalk repair and maintenance; slow adoption of new safety designs.
Housing-Related Assets	Active efforts to address aging housing, rental conditions, and lead issues; community discussion of establishing a housing commissioner.
Cultural Resources	Performing arts center; civic theater; movie theater; historical museum and library—unique strengths for a rural county.
Schools	Caring teachers; supportive administrators; innovative programs.

Forces of Change

Forces of change include the trends, factors, and events that can affect the community and the local public health system.[41]

FORCE OF CHANGE	THREATS POSED
Economic & Development Pressures	New data centers expected to bring an influx of construction workers and long-term employees and will strain housing, schools, lodging, and infrastructure; increased demand for health care and social services.
Health Care System Capacity	Shortage of health care providers; increased demand expected with population growth; older adults more affected; lingering burnout post COVID.

FORCE OF CHANGE	THREATS POSED
Funding & Policy Instability	Unpredictable federal/state funding creates uncertainty for essential health and social service organizations; difficult application processes; local needs not always aligned with state priorities; “middle of the pack” status on health indicators reduces competitiveness for grants. Instability disproportionately impacts low- to moderate-income residents who rely on support from these organizations.
Political Climate	National and state political tensions increasing polarization among residents and impact trust in public health and community acceptance of public health guidance.
Housing Challenges	Limited housing supply; many rentals in poor condition or overpriced; aging housing stock with issues like mold and lead; concerns that data center workforce will worsen shortages; rental property owners not consistently held to standards; calls for a housing commissioner; housing identified as a more pressing issue than neighborhood safety. Additionally, seniors in rent to own trailer parks face rising lot rents, repair burdens, and housing insecurity.
Environmental & Climate Impacts	Drought causing shallow wells to run dry; wildlife behavior shifting; long-term effects of wind turbines still emerging.
Post COVID Social & Health Shifts	Increased social isolation due to reduced social engagement; rising behavioral health concerns; declining childhood vaccination rates; delayed care during the pandemic; ongoing need to rebuild trust in public health; telehealth expansion a positive shift.
Demographic and Economic Trends	Increasing cost of living pressures, especially rising lot rents placing additional strain on older adults and others living on fixed incomes.

Adults' Perceptions of Van Wert County Community

When asked to identify what changes would most improve the health and well-being of people who live in the county, Van Wert County adult survey respondents described many needs. Using qualitative data analysis techniques, researchers coded each response into categories that emerged from the written responses. The themes are summarized below.

Changes Residents Would Like to See

Health Care Access and Affordability

Residents' priorities center around affordability and access—to care, healthy food, safe and active environments, and reliable ways to get around—along with a strong desire for connection and opportunities that make daily life healthier and more livable. At the top of the list are health care access and affordability. Many describe care as too expensive, too far, or too difficult to enter because of insurance acceptance and wait times. A typical comment captures the blend of cost and access: *"Less expensive health care and availability of more medical personnel."*

Recreation and Fitness Opportunities

Closely behind, Van Wert County adults want more (and more affordable) ways to be active—parks, trails, sidewalks, and community spaces. They talk about improving what already exists (shade, water stations, safety features) and adding low cost indoor options: *"Make current paths more shaded and add trash bins/water stations,"* and *"Being able to go to a facility to exercise that lower income can afford."* The through line is affordability; residents explicitly ask for *"an affordable community center that offers recreational programs…not only encourages exercise but promotes socialization and togetherness."*

Substance Use in the Community

Substance use is the third major concern, with residents asking for treatment access, prevention for young people, and visible accountability. The sentiment appears bluntly in several responses: *"Crack down on the druggies in this town,"* paired with calls for help and prevention: *"Drug treatment,"* and *"Helping with substance abuse in the teenage population."* Others emphasize follow up and recovery supports after overdoses so people don't fall through the cracks.

Community Safety and Cleanliness

A safer, cleaner environment also matters. Under community safety and cleanliness, residents want routine clean ups and attention to nuisance properties, paired with better lighting and park oversight. One respondent's list is typical: *"…community clean up to haul junk away, old cars…the town is horrible to drive through,"* while another asked for *"our parks patrolled more closely…there is a lot of troubling activity."*

Access to Healthy Food

Access to healthy food cuts across income levels. People want more farmers' markets and community gardens and lower prices for fresh produce—especially for those who earn just over program thresholds: *"Cheaper, healthy foods. Everything that is good food is too expensive to buy,"* alongside *"More locally grown foods or farmer's markets…community gardens."*

Education

Residents also highlight education—both practical health education and navigation of local resources. Several call for skill building and service awareness: *"Education about services and better access to those services,"* and *"Mental health education in schools."* A few point to combating misinformation so residents can make evidence-based choices.

Public Transportation

A very pragmatic barrier is transportation. Without a car—or when mobility is limited—people struggle to reach clinics, pharmacies, groceries, and even evening events: *"Public transportation would be a great addition to the community,"* and *"Transportation in Delphos—none in the evenings or on weekends; would like to do more in Van Wert but can't get to Senior Citizens Center in Van Wert even though I pay Van Wert County taxes."*

Stronger Sense of Community

Many respondents ask for a stronger sense of community. They want neighbors looking out for each other, compassion, and shared purpose: *"Community unity and harmony, helping each other not only in times of need,"* and *"Encouraging [programs] to get neighbors to be concerned for each other—help out and watch out."*

More Entertainment Options

Quality of life also includes "more to do"—cultural events, restaurants, and shops. One resident put it simply: *"Better streets, restaurants and variety of shops, more cultural events like having symphony at the Niswonger,"* while others connected amenities to walkability and vibrancy.

Cost of Living

Economic pressures revolve around cost of living and housing. People ask for help with utilities and everyday costs—especially for those "just above the line"—and for more affordable, safe places to live. Typical requests include: *"Aid for the ones out working and need help…right above the 'income line'…"* and *"Higher wages and lower housing costs, more housing options that are reasonably priced."* Others call out homelessness directly: *"Homes for the homeless."*

Youth Activities, Prevention, and Education

Residents also want youth activities, prevention, and education: safe places after school, recreation, and prevention supports. One comment ties it together: *"More activities for children/teens,"* while another asks for accountability and pro social engagement: *"Possible more community service projects/jobs to help with the youth getting into trouble."*

Mental Health Supports

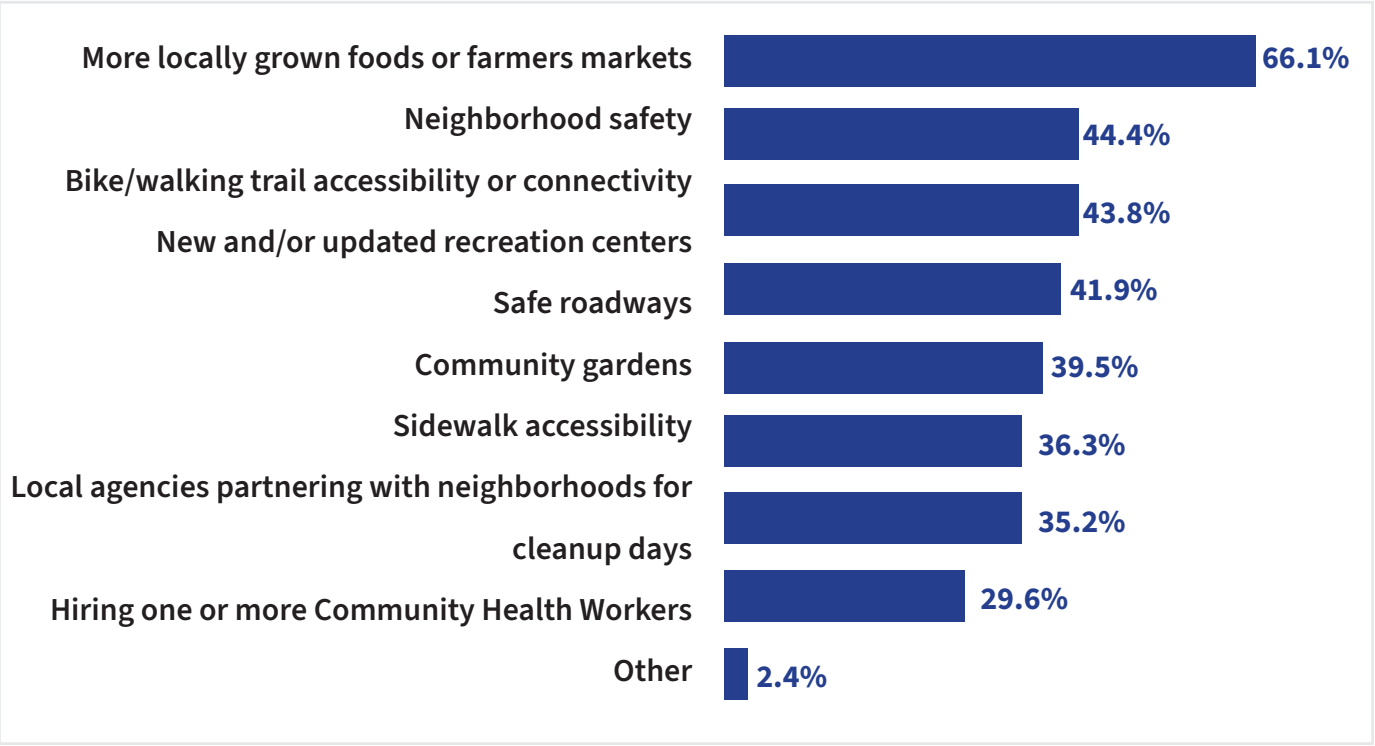
Finally, though mental health is embedded throughout, several explicitly called for mental health support and community connection. They emphasize access and stigma: *"Easy and cheap health care and no fear of seeking help,"* with others asking for outreach and peer connected resources to make it easier to take the first step.

In summary, Van Wert County adults are asking for affordable, accessible care, safe/active environments, reliable ways to get to services, and stronger social fabric. The biggest barriers they describe are costs (care, utilities, food), transportation, provider availability/acceptance (Medicaid, dental, specialty), and limited low-cost places to be active—especially for youth and lower income households.

Community Improvement Initiatives

Van Wert County adults express support for a number of community improvement initiatives. As shown in Figure 34, more locally grown foods or farmers markets, safety initiatives, or recreation-related initiatives garner the most support.

Figure 34. Van Wert County Adults' Support for Community Improvement Initiatives



Source: Van Wert County 2025 CHA Survey, (n = 372)

Youth Perceptions of Van Wert County Community

Across four listening sessions with high school students in Van Wert County, youth described clear and consistent ideas for how their community could better support them. Their suggestions centered on access to safe activities, stronger mental and emotional health supports, and more understanding from adults.

Changes Youth Would Like to See

More Places for Youth to Go

Youth consistently shared that Van Wert County lacks accessible, welcoming places for teens to spend time. One young person noted that *"we have nowhere to go besides, like, Walmart,"* while another added that the *"Dollar General or the mall"* are among the only options available. *"We just don't have any like fun stuff,"* another student asserted. Others echoed this concern, noting that the community needs more recreational options—such as putt putt, go karts, or additional fun activities—to give teens healthier, more enjoyable outlets close to home. Some also

described existing spaces as uninviting, with one youth explaining that *"the skate park is always filled with, like, high schoolers [who] just hang around there…and it leads to people [especially younger kids] not wanting to go to our parks anymore because they've just like taken over."*

Affordable and Accessible Recreation and Wellness Spaces

In addition to wanting more activities, youth stressed that cost often limits access to the resources that do exist. One student stated that *"healthy activities cost more… not everyone can afford a gym membership,"* while another pointed out that *"the Y membership is expensive."* They envisioned a free or low-cost recreation and wellness space where all young people could gather without financial barriers. As one youth described, there should be *"a place like the Y…but make it so everyone can go, you don't have to pay, you don't have to sign up."* Several also imagined integrating mental health and nutrition supports into such a center, with one student suggesting that *"you could go there and get mental health help…maybe even food counseling, like this is where you can eat."*

Better Mental Health Support

Youth expressed a strong desire for mental health resources that are accessible, personal, and available outside the school day. Some spoke about the importance of having consistent, in person support rather than relying on hotlines or one-time presentations. One student said they wished there were *"someone there all the time…a place you can go, not just during the school day,"* while another emphasized that adults should focus on preventing problems by addressing *"whatever is causing the stress or anxiety"* before situations escalate.

Adult Understanding Toward Youth

Across the Van Wert County listening sessions, high school students described a gap between what most adults intend and what youth actually need: to be heard first, believed, and met with empathy before advice or correction. Students contrasted quick fixes with the steadier work of attentive listening. As one youth noted, *"I think sometimes listening is a good thing. I know like my mom specifically, she's just really quick to give a solution, and doesn't really always like listen to what I'm saying."* When they do open up, high school students want adults to treat their words as credible rather than exaggerated or performative. As another youth stated, *"You want them to believe you, instead of like them playing it off as a joke or like they don't believe you…You want them to actually believe you and believe the words you say instead of…just push it aside."* Youth also mentioned that they would like to see adults put more of an effort into understanding youth today. One person mentioned that adults *"don't quite understand…like growing up with, like, all the technologies and stuff, like it's different than when their parents were in school."* They

expressed a clear desire for adults to be more present, proactive, and engaged—taking concerns seriously the first time and demonstrating sincere commitment to supporting youth.

A Kinder, More Supportive Peer Culture

Youth also spoke about the need to improve the broader social climate among their peers. Several noted that teasing or hurtful comments are common and often overlooked. One student reflected that *"everyone does teasing…it's not really frowned upon,"* suggesting that verbal harm has become normalized. They expressed hope for a community where adults intervene more consistently and compassionately, supporting both the person being harmed and the person causing harm.

Opportunities for Youth Voice and Influence

Some youth described ways that speaking up can make a difference, even if only in personal contexts. One young person shared that after urging their father to stop using tobacco—having lost a grandparent to related health issues—their father eventually quit, saying, *"I asked him if he could stop…and I haven't seen him do it since."* They mentioned that youth should speak up to help their peers modify health behaviors negatively impacting health. As one student stated, youth should *"try and put a word in, or just do something that would strike something inside of [a peer] that, like, maybe it's not for the best."* At the same time, many noted that creating change at the county level feels much harder for young people to accomplish alone.

Strengths Youth Experience within Schools

Despite the challenges described, youth emphasized that they do feel a sense of community in their schools. Many spoke positively about sports, clubs, and activities that help them build relationships and feel supported. As one student put it, participating in these activities *"helps you build a community of people you can trust."* These experiences highlight the kinds of supportive environments youth hope to see expanded beyond school and throughout the wider community.

SIGNIFICANT HEALTH NEEDS

Health Needs and Opportunities

Analyzing information gathered from multiple sources for this assessment—including the CHA survey for adults, youth listening sessions, and existing data from state and national sources—researchers identified the following significant health needs. Factors used to determine the significant health needs included: comparisons of county data to state and national benchmark data; the magnitude or severity of the problem based on the numbers of persons impacted; disparities in community members affected; and the importance of the issue to community members.

Mental Health

- One in five Van Wert County adults (20%) experienced 14 or more poor mental health days in the past month, slightly above Ohio (19%) and notably above the national rate (16%).
- Youth overwhelmingly (64%) cited mental health as their number one concern.
- Mental health (depression/anxiety) appears to be among adults' top concerns (13.5%).
- The county's mental health provider ratio of 630:1 compared to 270:1 for Ohio and 290:1 for the U.S. indicates a substantial lack of providers to address needs.

Chronic Disease: Diabetes

- Van Wert County's death rate due to diabetes for 2021–2025 was 40.2 per 100,000, notably higher than the state's rate of 26.1 per 100,000.
- Diabetes mortality increased steadily across the five-year period from 36.5 per 100,000 in 2021 to 55.8 per 100,000 in 2025.
- Self-reported incidence rates for diabetes and pre-diabetes combined for Van Wert County (32.2%) are double the state's incidence rates (15.1%).
- 11.5% of Van Wert County adults identified diabetes or a similar chronic disease as the top health concern impacting them and their families or households.

Chronic Disease: Heart Disease

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death. Mortality due to heart disease for Van Wert County for 2021–2025 was 194.6 per 100,000 population compared to 186.0 for Ohio.
- The death rate for heart disease remained somewhat stable over the five-year period.
- Self-reported incidence rates for high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and angina or coronary heart disease are higher than the state's.
- 5.8% of Van Wert County adults identified heart disease as the top health concern impacting them and their families or households.

Cancer Burden and Screening Gaps

- Though the overall death rates due to cancer for Van Wert County adults (164.3 per 100,000) for 2021–2025 were similar to Ohio's rates (157.1) and the cancer mortality rate fell sharply across the five-year period (from 217.7 per 100,000 in 2021 to 152.3 per 100,000 in 2025), many adults are still impacted.
- The cancer incidence rate for colon and rectum cancer is higher for Van Wert County adults (42.6 per 100,000) compared to Ohio (38.2 per 100,000).
- Screening rates for cancer for Van Wert County adults appear lower than the state's for colorectal cancer screening (54.3% Van Wert County; 73.5% Ohio); breast cancer screening/mammogram (53.3% Van Wert County; 69.9% Ohio); and cervical cancer screening (70.4% Van Wert County; 77.4% Ohio).

Weight Status, Physical Activity, and Nutrition

- The percentage of Van Wert County adults experiencing obesity (49.7%) is higher than the state average of 36.9%.
- 9.6% of Van Wert County adults identified obesity as the top health concern impacting them and their families or households.
- Access to exercise opportunities is lower than the state average (65% Van Wert County; 84% Ohio). Van Wert County adults want more (and more affordable) ways to be active—parks, trails, sidewalks, and community spaces.

- Both adults and youth report low daily intake of fruits and vegetables. The majority of adults (67%) report having only one or two servings per day, while youth estimate that they and their peers have only one serving per day.
- Access to healthy foods was frequently mentioned by adults as a need in the community.

Substance Use

- The rate of binge drinking among Van Wert County adults is higher than the state average (22.2% Van Wert County; 16.2% Ohio). Van Wert County youth report that the prevalence of drinking is higher than adults realize.
- Van Wert County youth estimate that somewhere between 10% and 20% of high school students vape. They report widespread vaping of both nicotine and marijuana.
- 26.8% of Van Wert County adults identified substance or drug use as the most serious health concern impacting their community.
- 40% of Van Wert County youth identified vaping as the most serious health issue affecting them and their peers.

Access to Health Care

- Van Wert County is federally designated as a primary medical care, mental health, and dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). The ratio of patients to providers is significantly higher than that of the state or the nation, indicating a need for additional providers.
- Van Wert County adults identified changes in health care access and affordability as the number one thing that would most improve the health and well-being of people who live in the county.
- One in six adults (15.6%) reported needing medical care in the past year but not receiving it. However, when looking at household income level, 19.7% of adults with a household income of less than $35,000 reported needing medical care and not receiving it in the past 12 months, compared to 14.6% of adults with household income of $35,000 or more. Disparities were also evident by race and ethnicity. Nearly one-third (30.8%) of people of color reported unmet medical needs, compared with 14.9 percent of White/Caucasian residents. Cost was the primary obstacle to receiving care (cited by 63.5%).

Social Needs

- Although food insecurity rates in Van Wert County are lower than at the Ohio and U.S. levels, it is still notable that nearly 16% of children are experiencing food insecurity in the county. Moreover, almost one in four children (23%) are considered food insecure but are likely ineligible for assistance. A large proportion (42%) of food insecure individuals in Van Wert do not qualify for SNAP benefits.
- Over one-fifth of households (22.1%) making less than $35,000 reported needing help to meet basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter, while 6.3% of households making over $35,000 reported needing assistance to meet basic needs.
- Many adults in Van Wert County emphasized that rising living costs are placing significant strain on low-income residents. They expressed a need for greater support with utilities and everyday expenses—particularly for individuals who fall "just above the line" for assistance programs—as well as an increased supply of affordable, safe housing options.

Prioritization of Health Needs

Health department staff and other members of the Health Collaborative convened in February 2026 to review the key findings from both the primary and secondary data collection efforts. After discussing these findings, members of the Health Collaborative were guided—per NACCHO's MAPP framework—to reflect on several criteria before selecting the top three health priorities that could be addressed in the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). They were asked to consider:

- Relevance of the issue to community members;
- Magnitude/severity of the issue;
- Impact of the issue on community members affected by inequities;
- Availability and feasibility of solutions and strategies to address the issue and organizations willing to take the lead in addressing the issue; and
- Availability of resources (time, funding, staffing, equipment) to address the issue.

The Health Collaborative members confidentially ranked the key health issues on paper. The votes were compiled by calculating the percentage of votes for each issue at each priority level. The top three priority areas identified as possible areas of focus for the 2026–2029 Van Wert

County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) are:

- Mental health
- Housing and other social needs; and
- Access to healthy foods or substance use

Health Collaborative members will confirm which issues are to be addressed when meetings for the CHIP begin.

Potential Resources to Address Needs

After voting on priority issues, Health Collaborative members discussed potential resources to address these needs (see Appendix C).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Demographic Profile of the 2025 Van Wert County Community Health Survey Respondents

VARIABLE	2025 ADULT SURVEY SAMPLE	VAN WERT COUNTY CENSUS 2019-2023 (5-YEAR ESTIMATE)
Age		
18–29	9.4%	4.8% (19-25 years)
30–39	16.7%	5.6% (26-34 years)
40–49	19.5%	6.9% (35-44 years)
50–59	16.4%	6.9% (45-54 years)
60–69	20.4%	7.9% (55-64 years)
70–79	13.8%	6.6% (65-74 years)
80 years or older	3.8%	4.5% (75 years+)
Gender		
Male	22.1%	49.8%
Female	77.7%	50.2%
Prefer not to say	<1.0%	N/A

VARIABLE	2025 ADULT SURVEY SAMPLE	VAN WERT COUNTY CENSUS 2019-2023 (5-YEAR ESTIMATE)
Race/Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	95.0%	92.7%
Black or African American	1.4%	<1.0%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1.0%	<1.0%
Asian	<1.0%	<1.0%
Two or More Races	1.7%	4.2%
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	<1.0%	3.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	<1.0%
Marital Status		
Married	65.6%	53.2%
Divorced	10.8%	13.1%
Separated	1.4%	<1.0%
Widowed	7.1%	6.1%
Single	11.1%	26.8%
A Member of an Unmarried Couple	4.0%	N/A

VARIABLE	2025 ADULT SURVEY SAMPLE	VAN WERT COUNTY CENSUS 2019-2023 (5-YEAR ESTIMATE)
Education		
Less than High School Diploma	<1.0%	5.9%
High School Graduate	27.8%	43.8%
Completed Some College or Technical School But Did Not Earn a Degree	18.9%	19.9%
Earned Associate's Degree	16.7%	13.3%
Earned Bachelor's Degree	21.0%	11.5%
Earned Master's Degree or Higher	14.9%	5.6%
Household Income		
Less than $10,000	<1.0%	3.2%
$10,000 – $34,999	17.3%	16.9%
$35,000 – $49,999	13.7%	13.0%
$50,000 – $99,999	34.5%	38.5%
$100,000 – $149,999	18.2%	17.1%
$150,000 – $199,999	7.6%	7.8%
$200,000 or more	4.3%	3.4%
Don't know	3.5%	N/A

ZIP CODE	ADULT SURVEY SAMPLE
45832	11.9%
45891	69.1%
45874	5.9%
45863	5.2%
45898	3.3%
45894	3.0%
45886	<1.0%
45899	<1.0%

APPENDIX B: Demographic Profile of Participants in Youth Listening Sessions

In fall 2025, four listening sessions were conducted with high school students at three Van Wert County high schools.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	25
School Grade	
9th	32%
10th	20%
11th	20%
12th	28%
Age	
14 years old	20%
15 years old	20%
16 years old	20%
17 years old	28%
18 years old or older	12%
Sex	
Male	80%
Female	20%
Race/Ethnicity	
White (non-Hispanic)	96%
Black or African American (non-Hispanic)	4%

APPENDIX C: Van Wert County Resources to Address Health Needs

Key resources to address the community health needs will be sourced from the following Van Wert County organizations that include private, non-profit, and public sector organizations and programs as well as informal coalitions:

Adriel

Angel Intervention Services & Angel Sober Living

Anytime Fitness

Autism Support Squad of Northwest Ohio University

Area Agency on Aging

Celebrate Recovery

CERT

Challenged Higher Drop-In Center

Community Health Professionals

Cooper Farms – Employee Health Services

Cooperative Ministries

Council on Rural Services

Crestview Local Schools

Crisis Care

Delphos City Schools

Dr. Aaron Laturner

EMA

everyBodies Therapeutic Massage

Everyday Renewal Therapeutic Massage

Family & Children First Council

Family Health Care of Northwest Ohio

First United Methodist Church Outreach Ministry

Foundations Behavioral Health Services

Fountain Park Home Care

Fuerst Family Chiropractic

GenX Training Studio

Good Earth Health Food Store

GreenZone Integrative Coaching

Habitat for Humanity of Paulding-Van Wert

Haven of Hope

Help Me Grow Home Visiting

Homestead Assisted Living and Memory

Hughes Chiropractic

Intensity Fitness LLC

Karla's Kupboard

Lincolnview Community Center

Lincolnview Local Schools

Love INC

MAV Youth Mentoring

Mercer Residential Services

Momentum Counseling and Consultation

Monark ABA

NEXTSTEP

Northwestern Ohio Community Action Commission (NOCAC)

Northwest State Community College – Van Wert Campus

Nygren Chiropractic

Off the Streets Van Wert County

Ohio State Highway Patrol

OhioHealth Physician Services

OhioHealth Van Wert Hospital

PLC Health Clinic & Langdyn House

Reed Chiropractic

Ridgeview Behavioral Hospital

Rural HEALTH Connect

Serenity Solutions, LLC

Stay Another Day Alliance

The Brumback Library

The Marsh Foundation

Tri County ADAMHS Board

United for Sobriety

United Way of Van Wert County

Van Wert Area Economic Development

Van Wert City Schools

Van Wert Counseling

Van Wert County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Van Wert County Council on Aging

Van Wert County Early Intervention

Van Wert County Foundation

Van Wert County General Health District

Van Wert County Health Collaborative

Van Wert County Housing Coalition

Van Wert County Job & Family Services

Van Wert County Sheriff

Van Wert County Veterans Services

Van Wert County WIC

Van Wert Family Physicians

Van Wert Manor

Van Wert Massotherapy and Salt Cave on Central

Van Wert Police Department

Van Wert Works

Vancrest

Vantage Career Center

Via Wellness, LLC

West Ohio Food Bank

Westwood Behavioral Health Center

Woodland Grove Recovery Center

YMCA of Van Wert County

REFERENCES

[1] NACCHO, "Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) – NACCHO," Naccho.org, 2015, https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/mapp.

[2] "Section 3709.22 - Ohio Revised Code | Ohio Laws," n.d., Codes.ohio.gov, accessed July 18, 2024, https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-3709.22.

[3] Public Health Accreditation Board, "Standards & Measures for Initial Accreditation," n.d., https://phaboard.org/wp-content/uploads/Standards-Measures-Initial-Accreditation-Version-2022.pdf.

[4] U.S. Census Bureau, *ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates* (ACSDP5Y2024.DP05). American Community Survey 2024: ACS 5 Year Estimates Data Profiles, accessed May 11, 2025, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2024.DP05?g=010XX00US_040XX00US39_050XX00US39161&y=2024&d=ACS+5-Year+Estimates+Data+Profiles.

[5] Rolf Becker, "Gender and Survey Participation: An Event History Analysis of the Gender Effects of Survey Participation in a Probability-Based Multi-Wave Panel Study with a Sequential Mixed-Mode Design," *Methods, Data, Analyses* 16, no. 1: 3–32, https://doi.org/10.12758/mda.2021.08.

[6] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "About Women and Heart Disease," Heart Disease, April 29, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/about/women-and-heart-disease.html.

[7] Ohio Department of Health, *Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System: Van Wert County Profile,* accessed January 29, 2026, https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/ohio-cancer-incidence-surveillance-system/countyprofiles/van-wert-county.

[8] Health Resources & Services Administration, "Data.hrsa.gov Home Page," Hrsa.gov, 2018, https://data.hrsa.gov/.

[9] U.S. Census Bureau, *ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States (Table S2701),* accessed February 3, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table?q=S2701:+Selected+Characteristics+of+Health+Insurance+Coverage+in+the+United+States&g=040XX00US39_050XX00US39161&y=2024&d=ACS+5-Year+Estimates+Subject+Tables.

[10] Dietary Guidelines for Americans, "Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025 and Online Materials | Dietary Guidelines for Americans," www.dietaryguidelines.gov, December 2020, https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/resources/2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-online-materials.

[11] Oliver T. Mytton, Kelechi Nnoaham, Helen Eyles, Peter Scarborough, and Cliona Ni Mhurchu, "Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Increased Vegetable and Fruit Consumption on Body Weight and Energy Intake," *BMC Public Health* 14, no. 1 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-886.

[12] Kirsten Brandt, "Vegetables and Fruit in the Prevention of Chronic Age-Related Diseases," January 2016, https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-801816-3.00050-9.

[13] Health Policy Institute of Ohio, "Data Snapshot: Suicide in Ohio," Healthpolicyohio.org, 2024, https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/our-work/publications/suicide-in-ohio.

[14] National Institute of Mental Health. *5 Action Steps to Help Someone Having Thoughts of Suicide,* revised 2024, https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/5-action-steps-to-help-someone-having-thoughts-of-suicide.

[15] 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, *Help Someone Else,* n.d., https://988lifeline.org/help-someone-else/; Ohio Department of Behavioral Health. S*uicide Prevention Toolkit*. n.d. https://dbh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs-and-services/suicide-prevention-toolkit; Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention. *The Myths & Facts of Youth Suicide.* n.d. https://suicideprevention.nv.gov/Youth/Myths/.

[16] Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey (OHYES!), *Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey (OHYES!): Entire State Report for 2023–2024,* 2024, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, https://youthsurveys.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/

gov/c880ef8a-d873-472b-97e6-20c9c6ce70f8/All+OHYES%21+2023-2024.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.

[17] CDC, "Lung Cancer Risk Factors," Lung Cancer, April 30, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/lung-cancer/risk-factors/index.html.

[18] CDC, "About Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking," Smoking and Tobacco Use, September 17, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/about/index.html.

[19] CDC, "Youth and Tobacco Use," Smoking and Tobacco Use, October 17, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/php/data-statistics/youth-data-tobacco/index.html.

[20] Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey (OHYES!), *Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey (OHYES!): Entire State Report for 2023–2024.*

[21] Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, *Social Determinants of Health,* Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed February 11, 2026, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health.

[22] Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Social Drivers of Health and Health Related Social Needs,* accessed February 11, 2026, https://www.cms.gov/priorities/innovation/key-concepts/social-drivers-health-and-health-related-social-needs.

[23] Gloria Guzman, Kirby G. Posey, Alemayehu Bishaw, and Craig Benson, *Differences in Income Growth Across U.S. Counties,* America Counts: Stories, U.S. Census Bureau, December 6, 2018, accessed February 11, 2026, https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/12/differences-in-income-growth-across-united-states-counties.html.

[24] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, *Neighborhood and Built Environment,* Healthy People 2030, accessed February 11, 2026, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/neighborhood-and-built-environment.

[25] Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), *HIC and PIT Count Resources,* accessed February 3, 2026, https://cohhio.org/ohio-boscoc/hic-and-pit/.

[26] Federal Communications Commission, *Studies and Data Analytics on Broadband and Health,* accessed February 20, 2026, https://www.fcc.gov/health/sdoh/studies-and-data-analytics.

[27] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Parks, Recreation, and Green Spaces,* Active People, Healthy Nation, accessed February 11, 2026, https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/activepeoplehealthynation/everyone-can-be-involved/parks-recreation-and-green-spaces.html.

[28] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *"Physical Activity and Your Weight and Health," Healthy Weight and Growth,* last modified December 27, 2023, https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/physical-activity/index.html.

[29] U.S. Census Bureau, *ACS 5 Year Estimates: Selected Housing Characteristics (Table DP04),* accessed February 3, 2026.

[30] Todd Cummins, "Allen County RTA Expands Service to Van Wert County Starting Jan. 19," Hometown Stations (WLIO), accessed February 11, 2026, https://www.hometownstations.com/news/van_wert_county/allen-county-rta-expands-service-to-van-wert-county-starting-jan-19/article_190941ad-6786-46d4-9368-dd189b48cdc0.html.

[31] Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. *"US College Graduates Live an Average of 11 Years Longer Than Those Who Never Finish High School."* News release, January 23, 2025. https://www.healthdata.org/news-events/newsroom/news-releases/us-college-graduates-live-average-11-years-longer-those-who.

[32] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, *Van Wert County, Ohio,* 2025 data.

[33] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, *Van Wert County, Ohio,* 2025 data.

[34] Health Resources & Services Administration, "Data.hrsa.gov Home Page," Hrsa.gov. 2018, https://data.hrsa.gov/.

[35] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Social Vulnerability Index," Place and Health - Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program (GRASP), October 22, 2024, https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/index.html.

[36] Jasmine Cassy Mah, Jodie Lynn Penwarden, Henrique Pott, Olga Theou, and Melissa Kathryn Andrew, "Social Vulnerability Indices: A Scoping Review," *BMC Public Health 23,* no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16097-6; Clyde W. Yancy and Sadiya S. Khan, "Social Vulnerability and Poor Health Outcomes," *JAMA Cardiology 9,* no. 8 (2024): 701, https://doi.org/10.1001/jamacardio.2024.1298.

[37] CDC, "Heat and Health Tracker," n.d., Ephtracking.cdc.gov, https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/Applications/heatTracker/.

[38] Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Social and Community Context – Healthy People 2030," *Healthy People 2030,* accessed February 19, 2026, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/social-and-community-context.

[39] CDC, "About Adverse Childhood Experiences," Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), September 30, 2025, https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html.

[40] National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), *Community Context Assessment (MAPP 2.0),* Washington, DC: NACCHO, 2023.

[41] National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), *Community Context Assessment.*