

WYANDOTTE COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT 2022 ABRIDGED REPORT



*Conducted by the Unified Government of Wyandotte County / Kansas City, KS
Public Health Department. Published on May 18, 2023*

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INTRODUCTION

This is an abridged version of the Community Health Assessment report. You can view the full report at wycokck.org/health.

CHA: Understanding the data

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) is a comprehensive tool that helps us understand the health status of a community. The CHA collects information from a variety of both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are collected first-hand from community members through surveys, focus groups and community forums. Secondary data are collected from publicly available data sources such as the Census American Community Survey and the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, among others.

CHIP: Addressing community health priorities

Data and feedback collected from the CHA informs the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The 5-year CHIP establishes shared community goals and strategies—and is used by the community, including government agencies and local organizations, to align resources, increase coordination, and collaboratively implement policies and programs that improve health outcomes.

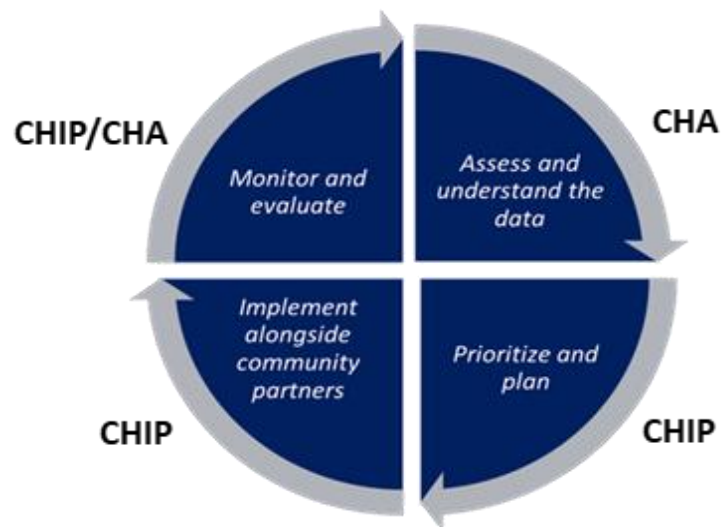


Figure: CHA/CHIP Cycle

Top Health Concerns Identified in the 2022 CHA

In the first two questions of the Community Concerns Survey, respondents were asked to choose from a list of potential answers:

1. The three areas they believe are the biggest health concerns in Wyandotte County
2. The three biggest barriers to health for Wyandotte County residents.

The following report will include a deeper dive into the themes that occurred in the Community Health Assessment data collection process most frequently. The topics below were most frequently cited as the greatest health concerns or barriers to health by community members:

- Community Violence
- Health care access
- Employment and income
- Affordable housing or homelessness
- Drug Misuse
- Mental Health and suicide
- Chronic disease
- Poor nutrition or obesity

The health department has harnessed the expertise of its staff to create reports on these health topics, including a description of the topic, its connection to public health, relevant statistics, and evidence-based strategies for how to combat the issue.

Racism is a Public Health Crisis

Racism is a public health crisis that must be addressed if we hope to better the health and prosperity of all community members. But what does it mean to acknowledge that racism is a public health crisis? We look to definitions to support our understanding of what this means:

- **Racism** happens when social and institutional power is combined with race prejudice. It is a system of advantage for those who are considered white, and of oppression for those who are not considered white (Racial Equity Institute, 2018)
- **Public Health** is the practice of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private communities, and individuals ([CDC](#))
- **Crises** are unstable or crucial situations that require decision making and action to be mitigated.

By referring to these definitions, one can see how the health department has an obligation to mitigate the harms of racism. We must actively dismantle racist systems that have led to disproportionately poorer health outcomes for Black residents of Wyandotte County who die at higher rates than white residents of:

- Chronic conditions (heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes)
- Infectious diseases (COVID, influenza, etc.)
- Unintentional injuries and violence
- Infant and maternal health complications

These poorer health outcomes and higher loss of life are due to the creation of systems during urban development that were purposely beneficial to white people and disparaging towards Black people. Those systems included redlining (the designation of areas inhabited by people of color as hazardous) and other intentionally racist housing policies that kept Black adults from

owning or renting homes in white neighborhoods, where economic development and community resources were primarily concentrated.

The impacts of this racial segregation on home ownership, poverty, and wealth distribution are still present today when comparing neighborhoods in eastern Wyandotte County (redlined) with neighborhoods developed by J.C. Nichols, like Prairie Village (not redlined). Homeownership is the most common way individuals and families accumulate new wealth in the United States because of the ability to build equity and pass it down through generations (Schuetz, 2020).

Throughout the 20th century, Black families experienced:

- Decreased access to mortgages & home renovation loans.
- Relegation to undesirable neighborhoods, leading to lower property values, and
- Reduced investment in housing stock, education, the built environment, and economic activity.

The local systems we've built since then have continued to marginalize Black and other residents of color for the sake of favoring white health and wellbeing. As a result, today in Wyandotte County, Black adults are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty or near poverty compared to white adults, and health and socio-economic data continue to tell the story of disparity and inequity:

- The infant mortality rate for Black infants is 2.4 times higher than whites
- Food insecurity impacts 25% of Black residents while only affecting 10% of white residents
- Unequal health insurance coverage due to a health care system that is largely employer based and the resistance to expand Medicaid at the state level
 - 15.7% of Black residents are uninsured, compared to 6.4% of white residents
- Lower income and slower income growth for Black community members than white community members
 - White residents of Wyandotte County have a median household income of \$64,037 and Black residents have a median household income of \$42,584.
- Educational attainment and opportunities that are far greater for white community members than our community members of color due to segregation due to redlining and perpetuated by inequities in school punishment due to race, underdiagnosis and treatment of learning disabilities. In Wyandotte County,
 - 23.4% of non-Hispanic white residents 25+ have a bachelor's degree, vs
 - 16.3% of non-Hispanic Black residents 25+ have a bachelor's degree, and
 - 8.6% of Hispanic or Latino residents 25+ have a bachelor's degree.

The effects of systemic racism are cumulative, and its presence in education, employment, housing, healthcare, and the insurance industry have compounded to lead to worse health outcomes for communities of color. You will find *Spotlights on Racism* throughout this report that serve as explanations for how racism and the perpetuation of discriminatory systems have contributed to disproportionately poorer health outcomes for Wyandotte Community members who are Black, Hispanic, or otherwise marginalized. Only by recognizing and actively dismantling racist systems can the public health system attempt to achieve health equity for the community members of Wyandotte County.

WYANDOTTE COUNTY DATA

Demographics of Wyandotte County

The tables and maps below detail demographic information about the County, such as age, race, ethnicity, income, education, language, disability, and health insurance status.

Age Demographics

Category	Total estimate	% Male	% Female
Total Population	167,046	50.8%	49.2%
Under 5 years old	12,575	7.5%	7.3%
5 to 9 years	12,133	7.3%	5.9%
10 to 14 years	13,887	8.3%	7.8%
15 to 24 years	22,650	13.6%	13.5%
25 to 34 years	22,894	13.7%	14.1%
35 to 44 years	22,782	13.6%	13.3%
45 to 54 years	18,496	11.1%	10.9%
55 to 64 years	19,684	11.8%	12.2%
65 to 74 years	13,917	8.3%	8.8%
75 to 84 years	6,284	3.7%	4.7%
85 years and over	1,744	1.0%	1.4%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Zip Code Demographics

Zip Code	Total Population	Zip Code	Total Population
66012	10,321	66105	2,283
66101	12,410	66106	23,817
66102	30,874	66109	27,507
66103	13,471	66111	10,600
66104	26,683	66112	12,868

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Race Demographics

Category	Population	Percent
Total population	169,245	100%
White	73,721	43.6%
Black or African American	34,589	20.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,917	1.1%
Asian	7,705	4.6%
Some Other Race	25,643	15.2%
Two or more races	24,236	14.3%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census

Ethnicity Demographics

Category	Estimate	Percent
Total population	167,046	100%
Hispanic or Latino	51,370	30.8%
Not Hispanic or Latino, white alone	65,074	39.0%
Not Hispanic or Latino, Black alone	31,638	18.9%
Not Hispanic or Latino, American Indian alone	486	0.3%
Not Hispanic or Latino, Asian alone	8,911	5.3%
Not Hispanic or Latino, Some other race, alone	393	0.2%
Not Hispanic or Latino, Two or more races alone	9,174	5.5%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Median Household Income

All Wyandotte County Households	\$55,605
By Race/Ethnicity of Householder	Median Household Income (dollars)
White, alone	\$64,037
Black or African American, alone	\$42,584
American Indian and Alaska Native, alone	\$73,750
Asian, alone	\$82,286
Some other race	\$52,050
Two or more races	\$59,108
Hispanic or Latino	\$53,124

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Poverty Status

Category	Count below poverty level	% below poverty level
Overall below poverty level	26,224	15.9%
By Race/Ethnicity		
White	10,560	14.9%
Black or African American	7,161	22.7%
Some other race	4,190	16.3%
Two or more races	3,447	13.4%
Hispanic or Latino	7,748	15.1%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Language Spoken at Home

Language spoken in population 5 years or older.	Estimate	Percent	% that speak English less than "very well"
Only English	107,852	69.8%	
Spanish	38,839	25.1%	43.3%
Asian/Pacific Island	5,660	3.7%	42.5%
Other languages	2120	1.4%	30.8%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Educational Attainment

Category	Total	Total Percent
Population 25 years of age and older	105,801	100%
Less than 9th grade	10,664	10.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	8,747	8.3%
High school graduate	34,474	32.6%
Some college, no degree	22,402	21.2%
Associate degree	6,942	6.6%
Bachelor's degree	14,739	13.9%
Graduate or professional degree	7,833	7.4%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity

Category	% high school grad or higher	% bachelor's degree or higher
White alone	92.4%	30.6%
Black alone	89.8%	18.6%
Asian alone	66.0%	18.2%
Some other race	52.1%	6.9%
Two or more races	76.1%	12.5%
Hispanic or Latino	56.4%	7.7%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Disability Status

Total civilian population	Estimated Number of people with a disability	Percent of population with a disability
By race/ethnicity		
White alone	11,015	17.1%
Black alone	5,607	17.7%
Some other race	2,538	9.8%
Two or more races	2,775	10.8%
Hispanic or Latino	4,280	8.3%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Insurance Status

Total civilian, noninstitutionalized population	Estimated uninsured	Percent uninsured
Total civilian, noninstitutionalized population	30,852	18.6%
By race/ethnicity		
White alone	4,142	6.4%
Black alone	4,957	15.7%
Some other race	10,254	39.8%
Two or more races	6,890	26.8%
Hispanic or Latino	18,600	36.2%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Overview of Wyandotte County Health Status

Every year, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation compares the health status of each county by looking at health outcomes and factors of every county in the United States. The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program provides data, evidence, and guidance to build awareness of the multiple factors that influence health and support leaders in growing community power to improve health equity.

Based on the County Health Rankings data, Wyandotte County's health is poor and ranks 102 out of 105 for overall health outcomes and last in the state for health factors.

Health Outcomes

Health outcomes represent how healthy a county is currently in terms of length and quality of life. The table below shows how outcomes are measured in County Health Rankings and compares Wyandotte County to Kansas and the United States overall.

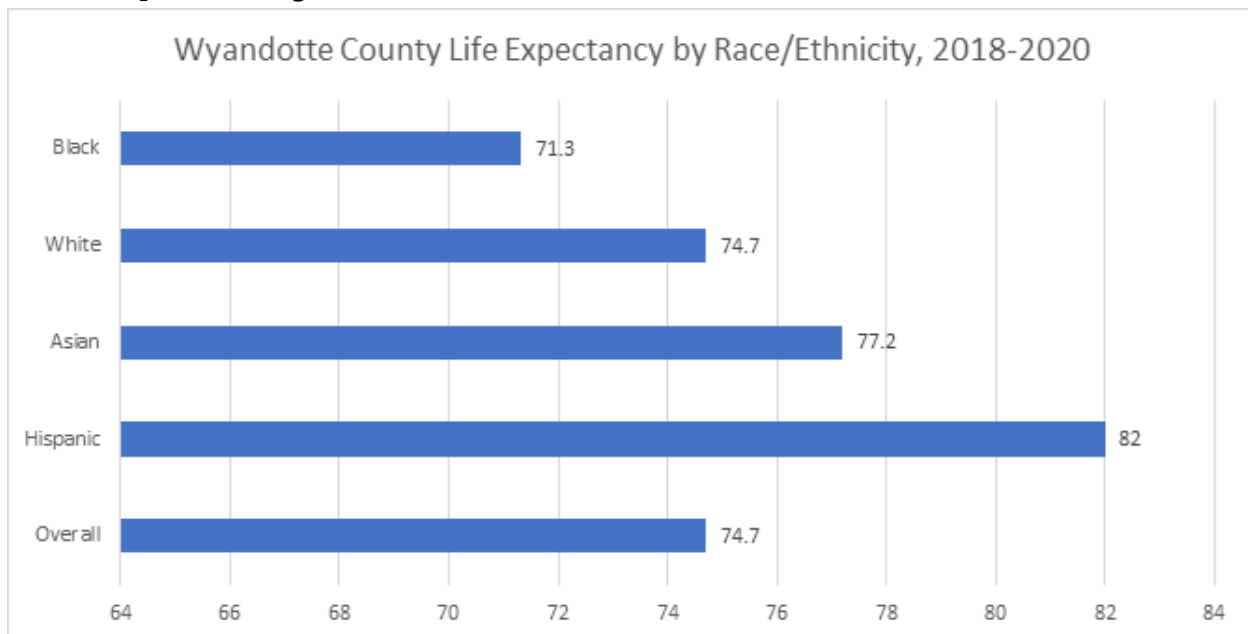
County Health Ranking Metric	Wyandotte	Kansas	US
Premature death (Years of potential life lost)	10,600	7,500	7,300
Poor or fair health (% of adults reporting fair/poor health)	25%	17%	17%
Average # of physically unhealthy days in last 30 days	4.3	3.6	3.9
Average # of mentally unhealthy days in last 30 days	4.4	4.5	4.5
Percent of live births with low birthweight	9%	7%	8%
Child mortality (# of deaths under age 18 per 100,000)	80	50	50
Infant mortality (# of deaths per 1,000 live births)	8	6	6

Health Factors

According to County Health Rankings, health factors are “things we can modify to improve the length and quality of life for residents.” Health factors include things like exercise, substance use, and family planning. Wyandotte County ranked last in Kansas for health factors that would promote healthy communities. The table below summarizes some of the metrics used to determine this ranking.

County Health Ranking Metric	Wyandotte	Kansas	US
% of adults who currently smoke	20%	17%	16%
% of adults that report a BMI > 30 kg/m2	40%	36%	32%
% of adults reporting no leisure-time physical activity	39%	27%	26%
Teen births per 1,000 female population ages 15-19	44	22	19
% of population who lack adequate access to foods)	14%	12%	11%

Life Expectancy



Causes of Death

The leading causes of death in Wyandotte County are largely chronic diseases, influenced by a variety of behavioral, environmental, and socioeconomic factors.

Leading Causes of Death in Wyandotte County, 2020

Rank	Cause of Death	Rate per 100,000
1	Heart disease	199.1
2	Cancer	186.4
3	COVID-19	128.3
4	All other accidents	55.1
5	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	44.8
6	Stroke	38.1
7	Homicide	33.9
8	Alzheimer's Disease	25.4
9	Diabetes	25.4
10	Pneumonia and influenza	19.4

Source: Kansas Information for Communities

Years of Potential Life Lost (Early Death)

Finally, an important way to measure the overall health status and quality of life of a community is to look at how many people die earlier than they theoretically should. The most common way to measure premature death in a community is by determining the Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL). YPLL shows the number of years a person would have lived if they had not died prematurely. This number is calculated by taking the number of years someone was expected to live (in this calculation 75 years) and subtracting the age they were when they died. This number is then added for every premature death in a community and displayed as a rate per 100,000 people



Leading Causes of YPLL, Wyandotte County, 2018-2020

Cause of YPLL	Age-Adjusted YPLL, Wyandotte County	Age-Adjusted YPLL, Kansas
Unintentional injuries	1,584.0	1,198.7
Cancer	1,521.7	1,176.7
Heart disease	1,214.9	899.4
Homicide	1,074.0	264.9
Suicide	708.8	673.8
Traffic injuries	617.8	460.5
Chronic lower respiratory disease	308.6	199.2
Diabetes	220.4	201.3
Stroke	207.7	149.9
Kidney disease	130.9	79.2

CHA METHODOLOGY

The Community Concerns Survey

The Community Concerns Survey was developed by the UGPHD CHA team in consultation with the Health Equity Task Force. Survey questions were informed by CHA questions validated across other jurisdictions across the Kansas City Metropolitan Area. The survey asked respondents to report perceived top health concerns and barriers to health, experiences accessing health care, personal behaviors, the built environment, and their demographics. The survey was sent out by ETC Institute and open for response from Mid-July 2022 through September 2022. The options for response were to either fill out the paper survey and return it to ETC Institute via mail or use the provided link to fill out the survey online. There was an option to take the survey in Spanish online or on paper, and there was a phone number for interpretation for any other languages. The survey was sent to approximately 7,000 households across all residential zip codes. In smaller zip codes, more surveys were sent out in order to secure an appropriate sample to allow for cross-zip code comparisons. In total, 1,150 completed surveys were collected.

Community Forums

The community forums were conducted in various locations intended to be highly accessible for many people across the county. The locations were as follows:

- USD 500 Central Office
- Piper Creek Elementary School
- South Branch Library
- Bonner Springs Community Center
- Quindaro Community Center
- Virtual online format

Over 50 community members attended the community forums across various locations. Each forum was approximately 90 minutes, and the same facilitation guide was used every time. The forums were facilitated by two health department staff members. The format of the forum questions was a mix of multiple choice and open-ended in order to stimulate conversation over a broad range of health issues. The facilitator guide is included in Appendix B.

Focus Groups

The health department hosted 14 focus groups ranging from 1 to 10 people to understand community health concerns on a deeper level, by creating safe spaces where the anecdotes and nuanced lived experiences of specific groups of community members could be shared. To ensure that those who have some of the quietest voices in the community were heard, the health department worked closely with community partner organizations to recruit participants and to

host focus groups in places where community members were already meeting. The community partners included:

- COPE
- Frank Williams
- Our Spot KC
- Shepherd's Center
- Juntos

To compensate the participants for their time and knowledge, they were provided \$50 Visa gift cards. The question guides for the focus groups were administered by health department employees who could certify the receipt of trauma informed care training. Each focus group was approximately 60 minutes and were convened in common community locations such as the Health Department, partner offices, or the library. Our partner organizations were offered the opportunity to facilitate their clients' focus groups if that made them more comfortable.

Local Public Health System Assessment

The health department contracted with Wichita State University (WSU) to assist in planning and facilitating the Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA). The health department convened the LPHSA in Memorial Hall over two half days with lunch and breakfast provided (one meal on each day). The 141 people who were invited represented 75 organizations and Unified Government departments serving Wyandotte County community members. WSU asked questions and prompted conversation to understand how well the local public health system completed the following activities:

- Assess and monitor population health
- Investigate, diagnose, and address health hazards and root causes
- Communicate effectively to inform and educate
- Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships
- Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws
- Utilize legal and regulatory actions
- Enable equitable access
- Build a diverse and skilled workforce
- Improve and innovate through evaluation, research, and QI
- Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health

TOP HEALTH ISSUES

Violence in Wyandotte County

Key Takeaways

- Violence was the number one health concern according to the Community Concerns Survey—62% of survey respondents selected it.
- Divestment of resources from schools, neighborhoods, and businesses and the concentration of poverty in communities of color have contributed to disproportionate rates of violence.
- Violence occurs at higher rates in Wyandotte County than any other county in Kansas, and men under the age of 44 are most at risk of dying from violence.

What is Violence?

Violence occurs in several forms and can happen at any level. Common forms of violence include community violence, which occurs between unrelated people and intimate partner violence, which occurs between people who are well-acquainted with each other ([National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2021](#)). Both forms of violence can manifest via physical, emotional, or sexual abuse ([National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2021](#)).

Violence is a Public Health Issue

Violence leads to shortened life, reduced quality of life, and strains social wellbeing. Injuries caused by violence may incur large medical costs and deaths from violence can impact family members of victims by making them more likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and substance abuse ([Boyle, 2022; Zinzow et. al, 2009](#)). Additionally, experiencing violence is a risk factor for committing violence at a later date ([National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2020](#)). Many of the same factors that lead to poor health outcomes in the realms of disease and life expectancy also contribute to the presence of violence. These factors may include socioeconomic status, disinvestment in the built environment, median household income, racism and are referred to as social determinants of health ([CDC, 2022](#))

Violence in Wyandotte County

Overall, from 2018 to 2020, homicide was the 9th leading cause of death for Wyandotte County, compared to the 17th leading cause of death in the state of Kansas. The Community Concerns Survey for the 2017 Community Health Assessment revealed violence as a top health concern of Wyandotte County and the Community Concerns Survey of 2022 indicates that it is still a top concern five years later. 62% of Wyandotte County residents who responded to the 2022

concerns survey that said violence was one of their top three biggest health concerns. Additionally, 56% of respondents reported that they feel extremely safe or very safe in their neighborhoods during the day; 8% reported feeling only slightly safe or not safe at all. During the nighttime, community members reported feeling less safe. Only 40% of residents said they feel very safe or extremely safe in their neighborhoods at night. Nearly a quarter (23%) reported feeling only slightly safe or not safe at all.

Violence, crime, and homicide most frequently occur between the ages between 15 and 24. Homicide is the leading cause of death for Wyandotte County residents between the ages of 15 and 44. Homicide and violence rates drop slightly after age 24 and drop precipitously after the age of 44. According to the Kansas Communities that Care survey, in 2022, 26.3% of students reported that crime and/or drug selling was a characteristic of their community. This was much higher than the overall state of Kansas, which was only 15.3%. Wyandotte County Youth have consistently reported crime and/or drug selling in their communities at higher rates than Kansas overall since 2018. These statistics signal that many violence prevention efforts should target youth to keep them safe and guide them into a stable adulthood.

Spotlight on Racism

A closer look at the cause of death rankings that is stratified by race shows that homicide is a burden disproportionately carried by Wyandotte's communities of color.

Homicide Cause of death ranking by race, ethnicity from 2016-2020

Race, Ethnicity	Cause of Death Ranking
White, non-Hispanic	18th
Black, non-Hispanic	5th
Hispanic or Latino	4th

Source: Kansas Information for Communities

In Wyandotte County, Black youth are dying from homicide at a much higher rate than white or Hispanic youth. Black youth are especially vulnerable to violence, with rates of homicide for 15-24 from 2016-2020 that are quintuple the rates for non-Hispanic white youth (82.2 vs. 15.7). The Hispanic youth homicide rate for that time (62.7 per 100,000) was also higher than the non-Hispanic white youth rate.

Legacy of Redlining: Violence occurs most heavily in the eastern portion of Wyandotte County and the zip codes with the highest homicide rates correlate with the neighborhoods that were redlined in the 20th century. For example, based off [Kansas Information for Communities](#) and the ACS 5-year Estimates from 2015-2019, the homicide rates in 66101 and 66104, zip codes with neighborhoods that were designated as 'Declining' or 'Hazardous', were 43 and 34 per 100,000 respectively.

5 Year Rate of Homicide by Age from 2016-2020 (Rates per 100,000)

	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+
5-Year Rate	57.5	37.6	19.3	3.9

Source: Kansas Information for Communities

Drug Misuse in Wyandotte County

Key Takeaways

- In the Community Concerns Survey, community members identified drug misuse as the second highest health concern in Wyandotte County.
- There is an ongoing nationwide overdose death crisis. Drug overdose deaths in Kansas and across the U.S. have increased significantly over the past few decades, with notable increases in recent years. In 2021, the U.S. surpassed 100,000 overdose deaths in a 12-month span for the first time in history ([Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#)). This is nearly 29x higher than the average annual overdose deaths during the 1980s ([CDC WONDER](#)). In Kansas, overdose deaths more than doubled from 2017 to 2021 ([KDHE Overdose Data Dashboard](#)).
- It will take policy changes, expanded resources, and reduced stigma to increase access to recovery for substance use disorders and reduce overdose deaths and other harms related to substance use.

What is Drug Misuse?

Drug misuse is the use of illegal drugs and/or prescription drugs in a manner other than as directed by a doctor. This can include using drugs in greater amounts or more often than the body is capable of absorbing ([CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2021](#)).

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is “a disease that affects a person's brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medicine” ([Mayo Clinic](#)). SUD is the preferred term over the commonly used “addiction” because it reflects that this is a brain disease. Genetic and environmental factors can increase risk for SUD, which leads to permanent changes in the brain, preventing people from easily quitting substance use. Recovery from SUD takes time and social and community support. On average, it takes 5 to 8 times entering a treatment program or recovery space for recovery from opioid use disorder to last long term.

People who die of an overdose don't have the chance to reach recovery. It is critically important that we curb the overdose crisis and the dramatic increase in overdose deaths in recent years.

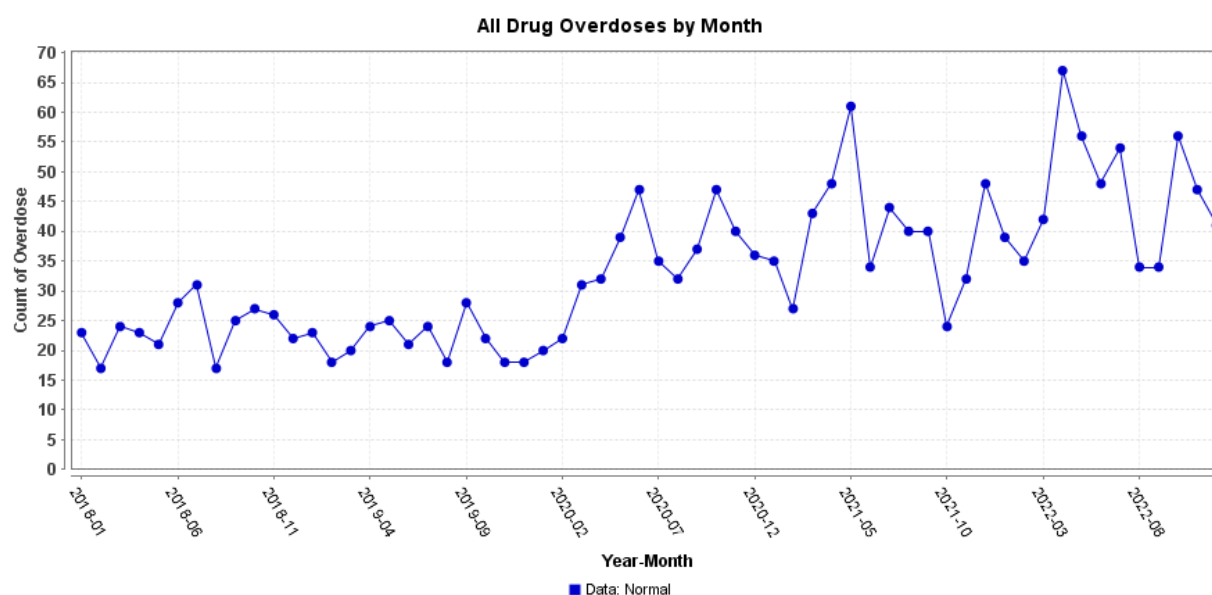
SUD is a Public Health Issue

In the United States, **187 people die every day from an opioid overdose** ([CDC](#)), and the number of drug overdose deaths increased by nearly 30% from 2019 to 2020. Nearly 75% of the 91,799 drug overdose deaths in 2020 involved an opioid. From 2019 to 2020, there were significant changes in opioid-involved death rates ([CDC, 2022](#)): Opioid-involved death rates increased by 38%, prescription opioid-involved death rates increased by 17%, and synthetic opioid-involved death rates (excluding methadone) increased by 56%. ([CDC, 2022](#))

Fentanyl is used as a prescription medication for moderate to severe pain is up to 50x stronger than heroin and 100x stronger than morphine. It is increasingly used in the supply of illicit drugs, increasing the risk of opioid overdoses.

SUD in Wyandotte County

In April and October of 2022, the UGPHD received emergency alerts from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) due to spikes in emergency room visits from opioid overdoses. The graph below shows how Wyandotte County overdoses have continued to increase since 2018. Wyandotte County (similar to the rest of the U.S.) saw a dramatic spike in early 2020, around the time when the COVID-19 pandemic affected the United States.



Source: [CDC Essence Database](#)

The Community Concerns survey revealed that drug misuse is the second most common health concern in Wyandotte County—39% of community respondents included in their top 3 health concerns.

Spotlight on Racism

Racist systems have directly contributed to substance use. Anti-Black systems have led to Black community members' higher rates of houselessness, chronic disease, and community violence. These act as both contributors to the risk of SUD and barriers to seeking recovery. Significantly more white residents of Wyandotte County have health insurance, while **many residents of color remain uninsured**. When people do not have insurance or are under insured, **it is much more challenging to access substance use treatment**. A lack of insurance also prevents care of side effects of SUD, like Hepatitis C or wound and abscess care.

According to local police data, in 2022, 35% of Black Wyandotte County community members who experienced opioid overdose died, whereas 17% of white community members died from overdose. In the cases of overdoses from someone who is Black, 911 was not called 28% of the time. This could be a result of the lack of trust in first responders by communities of color, and by people who use drugs. Providing public education and advocating for political change to legalize a Good Samaritan Law (see description in Evidence-Based Strategies table) could change these outcomes.

Mental Health, Including Suicide

Key Takeaways

- People in Wyandotte County ranked mental health including suicide as the third highest health concern in the CHA.
- Most respondents indicated they either have a mental illness or have someone in their household with a mental illness.
- “Stressors” like systemic racism, violence, financial hardships, trauma, and the COVID-19 pandemic have negative impacts on community members’ mental health.
- In Wyandotte County, suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24, and the 10th leading cause of death for men ([KIC Death Statistics, 2018-2020](#)).
- In Wyandotte County, suicide death rates are similar to that of Kansas overall. However, hospital admissions due to suicidal ideation are 60.3% higher than in Kansas.

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is a state of complete emotional, psychological and social wellbeing ([National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health, 2022](#)). Mental health can mean being able to cope with everyday stress, maintain meaningful relationships, and work productively. It is important to note **mental health can fluctuate over time** based on numerous factors and life stressors ([CDC, 2022](#)). Mental health stressors are anything that can impact mental health like not making enough money to pay for a bill, caring for a sick relative, or dealing with a chronic disease.

Mental illnesses can be diagnosed by a doctor or health professional, and involve significant changes in thinking, emotions or behavior which disrupt everyday life (American Psychological Association, 2023). Common mental health conditions include depression, ADHD, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, and more ([NAMI](#)). Risk factors for mental illnesses are complex and can involve a combination of genetics, trauma, and other environmental factors such as poverty and violence ([CDC, 2022](#)). Additionally, mental illness is one of several risk factors that can increase the likelihood of suicidal thoughts or attempts ([Akkas & Corr, 2022](#)). Factors that contribute to suicide risk are complex, and risk factors can include bullying, barriers to health care, isolation, community violence, discrimination, and more ([CDC, 2022](#)). Having suicidal thoughts or attempting suicide is a clear signal that someone needs immediate help. Connections to family or community supports and easy access to responsive mental health care can decrease suicidal thoughts and behaviors ([CDC, 2022](#)).

Mental Health is a Public Health Issue

Mental health conditions are very common—1 in 5 adults experience anxiety and depression each year in the US ([CDC, 2022](#)). Mental illnesses can occur at the same time as chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease, which can make it difficult for a person to manage the conditions ([Mental Health America, 2022](#)).

Gaps in our mental health care system leave behind a **substantial number of people needing care**. According to Mental Health America (2022), about 57% of US adults with a

mental illness didn't seek support or treatment in the last year— and about 20% of those didn't seek care due to cost or limited insurance. Kansas ranks last and second to last out of all states for mental illness and access to care among adults and youth, respectively ([Mental Health America, 2022](#)). This means that there is high demand for mental health care services yet low access and opportunities to meet that demand, leaving unaddressed conditions that can lead to decreased quality of life, and sometimes, premature loss of life due to suicide.

In Wyandotte County, the suicide death rate is 19.2 per 100,000 people, similar to the rate in Kansas overall, 20 per 100,000 people ([KDHE, 2011-2021](#)). In Wyandotte County, the **hospital admissions due to suicidal ideation** are 60.3% higher than in Kansas overall (629.9 and 392.9 per 100,000 people, respectively) ([KDHE, 2016-2021](#)).

Mental Health in Wyandotte County

Improving mental health and preventing suicides are key priorities for those who live in Wyandotte County; 38% of survey respondents said mental health and suicide are a **top three health concern for our community**. 31% of people selected **mental health resources** as the top resource their community needs to be healthy. About 75% reported they or someone in their household had been told by a doctor or health professional they had a mental health condition, most commonly anxiety or depression. Additionally, of those surveyed, 13% said lack of social support (e.g., having friends, neighbors, family to count on) is a **top three health barrier** for those who live in our community. Social support is relevant to mental health because when people feel connected to others and to their community, they support one another and want the best for where they live. Of those surveyed in Wyandotte County, the majority (77% of people), said they had people to count on in case of an emergency. Additionally, more than half of people surveyed (66%), said they were part of a group of people who share similar attitudes and beliefs.

Mental health is important at every life stage, especially during transitional periods such as adolescence. Yet, according to the ([Kansas Communities that Care Survey, 2022](#)), about 40% of Wyandotte County youth reported feeling so sad or hopeless that it disrupted some of their usual everyday activities. There are many risk factors that contribute to young people thinking about suicide. Poor mental health is connected to other forms of injury and violence—those who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying, or sexual violence have a higher suicide risk. Additionally, youth that identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQIA+) have higher rates of suicidal thoughts and behavior compared to their peers. In Wyandotte County, of those surveyed through the CHA, 10% reported someone in their household identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer.

Spotlight on Racism

Experiences of trauma and systemic racism can also negatively impact mental health. 15% of respondents (and 27% of Black respondents) reported feeling emotionally upset as result of how they were treated based on their race in the past 30 days and about 64% of individuals said racism “*sometimes*”, “*usually*” or “*always*” impacts their daily life. These examples of individual and community level stressors coupled with limited access to mental health care can create barriers that make it difficult for people to navigate life and experience good mental health.

Chronic Diseases

Key Takeaways

- Residents in Wyandotte County ranked chronic diseases the fourth leading health concern in the county.
- Of the households surveyed, 61% have high blood pressure, 48% have high cholesterol, 44% are overweight or obese, 31% have diabetes, and 12% have heart disease.
- Many factors can contribute to chronic diseases. Reducing smoking, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use can all reduce chronic diseases.
- Access to affordable health care and a built environment that promotes healthy behaviors are needed for preventing and managing chronic diseases.

What are Chronic Diseases?

Chronic diseases are illnesses that last one year or longer; require ongoing medical care, attention, and management; and can limit the activities of daily living and quality of life. Examples of chronic diseases include diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, cancer, kidney disease, and some lung diseases like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma. Typically, chronic diseases progressively worsen over time, and they often do not have a cure.

Chronic Diseases are a Public Health Issue

Chronic diseases are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC, 2023](#)), 60% of adults in the U.S. have a chronic disease, and 40% have two or more chronic diseases. Chronic diseases are leading drivers of the nation's healthcare costs; \$216 billion per year spent on heart disease and stroke, \$327 billion spent on diabetes, and \$305 billion spent on arthritis. Many chronic diseases are preventable. Altering individual behaviors and environmental factors (smoking or other tobacco use, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use) can prevent chronic diseases.

Chronic Diseases in Wyandotte County

Chronic diseases are a leading health concern in Wyandotte County. In the 2022 Community Concerns Survey, 32% of Wyandotte County residents surveyed identified chronic diseases as one of their top three biggest health concerns in their community, placing it as the fourth ranking health concern in the survey. In addition, many of the residents surveyed reported that they had been diagnosed with a chronic disease or someone in their household had been diagnosed.

According to [Kansas Health Matters data](#), many of the leading causes of death in Wyandotte County are chronic diseases and mortality rates due to chronic diseases are higher than the overall rate in the state of Kansas. Chronic diseases are also a significant source of hospitalizations for Wyandotte County residents ([Kansas Health Matters](#)). Both are shown below for 2018 to 2020)

Chronic disease	Wyandotte age-adjusted mortality rate per 100,000	Kansas age-adjusted rate per 100,000
Heart disease	185.2	162.0
Cancer	167.9	151.4
COPD	52.9	47.1
Cerebrovascular disease	46.2	35.2
Diabetes	26.1	25.0
Nephritis/kidney diseases	24.3	14.8

Chronic disease	Wyandotte hospital admission rate per 10,000	Kansas hospital admission rate per 10,000
Heart disease	198.5	111.9
Congestive heart failure	51.8	24.1
Diabetes	29.0	16.5
COPD	17.6	9.8
Stroke	17.5	11.6
Asthma	8.5	3.0

Spotlight on Racism

Disparities exist between races in nearly every chronic disease in Wyandotte County residents. The data below demonstrates that Black community members died at higher rates of almost all chronic diseases than non-Hispanic white community members. Many chronic diseases can be managed or even prevented by early detection and preventative activities like regular doctor visits, exercise, and nutritious diets. Affordable access to health care is essential for the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases. Huge racial disparities exist in Wyandotte County residents' ability to access health care, safe places to exercise, and healthy food, leading to higher mortality from chronic disease in Black community members.

Chronic disease	White, non-Hispanic rate per 100,000	Black non-Hispanic rate per 100,000
Heart disease	179.0	190.5
Cancer	144.5	155.2
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	63.6	32.7
Stroke	32.1	47.8
Diabetes	19.1	33.6
Kidney disease	14.7	31.9

Source: [Kansas Information for Communities](#)

Obesity & Poor Nutrition

Key Takeaways

- Obesity and poor nutrition are the fifth top health concern for Wyandotte County residents.
- In 2020, obesity rates in the County were higher than in Kansas and the United States, at 46.1% and with almost a five percent increase since 2018.
- Obesity and access to healthy food interact at individual, relationship, and community levels and impacts our health and how we interact with our built environment.

What is Obesity?

Obesity is a complex health issue that is influenced by many factors. Health behaviors like eating and physical activity patterns, genetics, and even the built environment, which provides varying access to healthy food, healthcare, housing, jobs, and physical activity opportunities, can impact obesity prevalence in a community.

Obesity a Public Health Issue

Obesity is associated with several severe health conditions, including type 2 diabetes mellitus, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and is linked to higher rates of certain types of cancer. Obesity is also an independent risk factor for hypoxia, sleep apnea, hernia, arthritis, and heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in Wyandotte County ([Wellman, Nancy S., and Barbara Friedberg, 2002](#)). The frequency of physical activity is a contributing factor to obesity; the CDC recommends that adults get 20 - 40 minutes each day or 150 minutes every week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking or dancing, and strengthening activities, like lifting weights or doing push-ups, at least 2 days each week ([U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018](#)). In addition to maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active can reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression, managing or lowering your risk of chronic conditions, and can even prevent some cancers ([HHS, 2023](#)).

Obesity and its contributing factors in Wyandotte County

Since 2018 the percentage of adults with obesity in Wyandotte County has increased to 46.1% in 2020; this is higher than the national obesity percentage of 31.9% ([CDC Places, 2020](#)) and the state obesity percentage of 36% ([BRFSS, 2021](#)). In addition, Wyandotte County contains six of the state's ten census tracts with the highest obesity rates ([CDC Places, 2020](#)).

Figure: Obesity rates in Wyandotte County, Kansas, and the United States

Obesity Rates



Source: CDC Places Data

A nutritious diet can reduce the chances of an individual becoming obese and developing other chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers ([Lee-Kwan et al.](#)). Overall, 92% of Kansans do not consume the recommended daily amount of vegetables, and 90% do not consume the recommended amount of fruit ([Kansas Action Guide on Fruits and Vegetables, CDC 2018](#)).

Of the Wyandotte County households surveyed in the community concerns survey, 18% reported having enough food but usually did not have fresh fruit or vegetables, and 7% reported that there was not enough food in their home sometimes or often. Of those households that did not have food most of the time, 79% reported that it was due to cost, and 18% said they did not have transportation.

According to CDC data, 32.3% of Wyandotte County residents reported no leisure-time physical activity, which is almost 11% more when compared with the United States overall, 23.5%. In addition, only 16.4% of Wyandotte County adults reported getting the recommended amount of aerobic and/or strengthening physical activity ([Kansas Department of Health and Environment](#)).

The built environment is key in how often residents are physically active. When residents were asked what made walking in the county challenging, 74% reported obstructed, unsafe, or missing sidewalks. Having a sidewalk that is in good repair makes it more likely that community members will use it. One study found that 43% of people reporting a place to walk were significantly more likely to meet current regular physical activity recommendations than those reporting no place to walk ([Powell, Kenneth E et al., 2003](#)). However, having a place to walk is not exclusively about having access to a sidewalk; perceptions of the social environment (e.g., the quality of the city and public services, maintenance of public spaces and resources, the perceived and actual safety of a neighborhood, and housing quality) are also important ([Ingram, Maia et al., 2017](#)).

Spotlight on Racism

Eating fresh vegetables and fruit is not just a personal preference; land use and economic development policies, food systems and retailers, and many other factors have created systematic inequities that disproportionately impact people of color. In Wyandotte County, Black residents are two and a half times more likely than their white counterparts to be food insecure ([Feeding America, 2020](#)). In the County, almost 27% of residents live more than one mile away from a grocery store and there are census tracts, specifically those in the Northeast area ([U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016](#)). Low access to grocery stores is strongly correlated with rates of obesity and other health conditions that come with it. People who live further away and do not have reliable transportation options are less likely to eat healthy foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables.

Health Care Access

Key Takeaways

- In the 2022 community concerns survey, 48% of Wyandotte County residents identified healthcare access as one of the top three barriers to health.
- In Wyandotte County, 18.6% of residents are uninsured (2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates).
- Wyandotte County is ranked as one of the least healthy counties in Kansas ([County Health Rankings](#)).
- Individuals without health insurance are less likely to have a primary care provider and may not be able to afford the health care services and medications they need.
- Many factors can impact access to healthcare including transportation, health insurance coverage, and geographic location.

What is Health Care Access?

Health care access is the ability to obtain services to prevent, diagnose, treat, and manage disease. About 1 in 10 people in the United States do not get the health care services they need. This can be due to many factors including transportation, health insurance coverage, and geographic location. Individuals without health insurance are less likely to have a primary care provider and may not be able to afford the health care services and medications they need. Without access to a primary care provider, the chances of receiving specialist referrals are much smaller, resulting in health problems going untreated ([OASH, 2023](#)).

Healthcare Access is a Public Health Issue

Barriers to healthcare are a major public health concern because without access to care, community members are not able to receive essential medical care. According to CDC Vital Signs, about 25% of adults aged 18-64 reported being uninsured for at least part of the previous 12 months. These adults were 7 times less likely to seek medical care due to cost compared with those with continuous insurance. According to this same survey, more than 40% of adults this age without health insurance had high blood pressure, asthma, or diabetes and did not seek out care due to cost ([CDC, 2022](#)).

Healthcare Access in Wyandotte County

In the 2022 Community Concerns Survey, 48% of Wyandotte County residents identified healthcare access as one of the top three barriers to health—this was the most chosen barrier to health. In addition, 8% of respondents reported having difficulty getting care from a general practitioner or primary care doctor and 7% reported having difficulty getting care from specialists.

The percentage of Wyandotte adults without health insurance is 24.5%, the fifth highest of Kansas counties. This is concerning when paired with the fact that the county is ranked as one of the least healthy counties in Kansas. Lack of insurance is a huge barrier for obtaining many essential health screenings. The rate of colon cancer screening in Wyandotte (66.5%) is the

lowest of the five urban counties in Kansas. The rate of those ages 50-74 receiving a mammogram in the last 2 years (70.4%) is in the top quarter of Kansas counties. Yet all counties in Kansas are below the US national average of 78.6%, showing that Kansas lags behind in this indicator ([Kansas Health Matters, 2020](#)).

The primary care provider rate (e.g. nurse practitioners, physicians assistants, excluding physicians) is trending positive, and is in the top half of Kansas counties ([Kansas Health Matters, 2021 data](#)). Wyandotte has a much higher share of residents on public health insurance (e.g. Medicaid, Medicare) than private health insurance (e.g. through an employer or union) compared to other urban Kansas counties. The percentage of residents with only public health insurance is 12% higher Wyandotte than the average of Kansas urban counties. This makes it more critical that Wyandotte residents fully understand benefits of their public health insurance options, and that public health insurance options are communicated effectively, with appropriate assistance provided for enrollment and navigating benefits.

The number of preventable hospital stays among those on Medicare is trending down, however Wyandotte remains in the top quarter of Kansas counties (WY: 4,060/100,000 vs KS: 2,578/100,000).

Spotlight on Racism

An important predictor of the overall health of a community is the infant mortality rate. Wyandotte County's Black infant mortality rate is more than twice that of White residents at 12 vs. 5 per year per 1,000 live births ([H.E.A.T Report, 2016](#)). Access to quality prenatal care can help ensure that expectant mothers have the care they need for a healthy delivery. In Wyandotte County, rates of preterm and low birth weight births are highest in the predominantly Black areas.

Another factor which contributes to barriers to health care access is transportation. According to the [Health Equity Action Transformation \(H.E.A.T\) Report](#), about 75% of patients of two large health care systems in Wyandotte County, Children's Mercy Hospital and the University of Kansas Medical Center, reside within a 10-minute drive of both health systems emergency departments. However, a large percentage of these households lack access to transportation.

Employment and Income

Key Takeaways

- Employment and income are two of the most important social determinants of health.
- Black residents continue to face more discrimination and barriers to employment, and have lower household incomes, than other residents.
- To improve Wyandotte County's longstanding health challenges, community stakeholders can work to increase access to living wage jobs.

What is Household Income and Unemployment?

Most household income in the United States comes from wages, making increasing access to living wage jobs an important strategy to improve community health. Living wages allow for community members to afford safe housing, transportation, healthy foods, opportunities for their children, leisure activities, and savings for emergencies and retirement. People looking for work but unable to find something satisfactory, can be unemployed, underemployed, marginally attached workers, involuntary part-time workers, or discouraged workers ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). Safety nets and financial assistance programs can also be a critical portion of a household's monthly income. Increasing the amount or dependability of services like affordable child-care provided through employer or government, food assistance (pantries, kitchens), and utility assistance helps make income go further.

Communities thrive when it is easier for people to find and keep a living wage job. The unemployment rate is the most cited measurement of lack of employment. It measures the percentage of unemployed people over 16 who have searched for a job in the last 4 weeks. ([FRED | St. Louis Fed](#)). Unemployment is a problem that includes both lack of available jobs, and a mismatch between the skills needed for the jobs and the skills available in the labor force.

Employment and Income are Public Health Issues

Lack of income and lack of employment have negative impacts on health. Both issues fall within a category called the "social determinants of health," which are non-medical factors that influence health ([CDC](#)). In the County Health Rankings, unemployment and income made up 20% of the contributions to overall health, equal to the contributions of all the following: adult smoking, adult obesity, food environment, physical inactivity, and access to exercise opportunities ([Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)). Additionally, health insurance is often tied to employment status, which means that a lack of employment could mean a lack of health insurance, creating additional barriers to accessing healthcare.

Research shows that individuals with higher incomes consistently experience better health outcomes than individuals with low incomes and those living in poverty ([AAFP](#)). Poverty concentrates in certain areas, often over prolonged periods of time ([Healthy People 2030](#)). People living in impoverished communities have less access to stable housing, healthy foods, and safe neighborhoods. Poverty also limits access to educational and employment opportunities, one of the reasons it can have a cyclical effect and transmit across generations.

During periods of unemployment, individuals are likely to feel severe economic and mental stress ([Kansas Health Matters](#)). Those who are unemployed report feeling depressed, anxious, having low self-esteem, demoralized, worried, and in physical pain. These and other factors contribute to higher levels of high-blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, heart disease, and arthritis in unemployed persons ([Healthy People 2030](#)). Because health coverage in the United States is often tied to employment, those without employment may struggle with lack of access to healthcare ([Kansas Health Matters](#)). This presents a strong case for increasing access to living wage jobs to increase household income to improve public health.

Employment and Income in Wyandotte County

The community concerns survey (2022) and other data highlight employment and income as critical public health focus areas in Wyandotte County. In the resident survey, 44% of residents indicated employment and income as one of the top three barriers to health. Only lack of access to healthcare (48%) rated higher.

Households in Wyandotte County have less income than Kansas households: WYCO median (middle) income is \$52,366 compared to \$64,521 for Kansas ([U.S. Census](#)). And Wyandotte County has a higher unemployment rate compared to Kansas: 3.4% vs. 2.8% ([FRED - St. Louis Federal Reserve](#)). Wyandotte County households are some of the most burdened by childcare costs in the State. Wyandotte residents pay 29% of median household income to cover childcare costs ([County Health Rankings, 2020 & 2021 data](#)). This is important because affordable childcare helps parents, especially women, stay employed.

Spotlight on Racism

Low household income and unemployment are not spread equally across Wyandotte County. Historical redlining and perpetuated patterns of disinvestment have led to census tracts that are predominantly populated by communities of color to be worse off than other census tracts in the county. Thirteen census tracts have an unemployment rate of over 10%. The lowest income households are also concentrated in eastern Wyandotte County.

Black residents continue to face significant barriers to employment because of interpersonal and institutional racism (e.g. hiring bias, informal mentoring and networking opportunities that exclude Black employees, insufficient training and development, under-resourced communities and educational systems) ([U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)). The impact of racism on Black employment and income is a public health crisis and attempts to raise Black household income will have a disproportionately positive impact on our community's health.

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity, 2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates

Race/Ethnicity category	Median Household Income
All races/ethnicities	\$55,605
White alone	\$65,866
Black alone	\$42,584
American Indian/Alaska Native alone	\$73,750
Asian alone	\$82,286
Hispanic or Latino	\$53,124

Data source: [Median Income in the Past 12 Months – US Census](#)

Affordable Housing

Key Takeaways

- 18,000+ of the 60,000 Wyandotte County households are considered cost burdened.
- The lack of affordable housing is linked to negative health outcomes.
- Life expectancy for unhoused people is shortened by approximately 30 years versus people who are housed.
- Many households cannot afford more than \$200 per month in rent.
- To combat this issue, programs, policies, and investment are needed locally as well as at the state and federal levels.

What is Affordable Housing?

Housing is generally defined as affordable if the occupant is paying 30 percent or less of their gross income for housing and utilities ([HUD, 2011](#)). For a renter in Wyandotte County, this means the mortgage or rent paid to a landlord, money paid to BPU for electricity and water, and money paid to Atmos or Kansas Gas Service for natural gas. For example, a renter with a gross income of \$40,000 per year would need to pay less than \$12,000 or, \$1,000 per month, in total housing costs (rent, electric, water, and gas) for their housing to be considered affordable.

Affordable Housing is a Public Health Issue

The lack of affordable housing is linked to negative health outcomes for individuals and families. When housing is unaffordable, an outsized share of income goes toward housing, leaving less money for other necessities. People experiencing housing insecurity (frequent moving, falling behind on rent, couch surfing, or undergoing eviction or foreclosure) have higher rates of depression, hypertension, heart disease, undernutrition, higher health care costs, less access to health care, and prescription non-adherence ([Harvard](#)) ([American Journal of Public Health](#)) ([Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)). In addition, housing insecurity among youth has been linked to increased risks of teen pregnancy, early drug use, and depression (Health Affairs).

Quality housing, though harder to define, is important to health as well. Living in homes with mold, lead, non-working appliances, structural issues, no heating or cooling, or other serious health and safety hazards can increase the risk for many negative health outcomes such as poor child development, lung diseases, and cancer ([Harvard](#)). About 50% of homes in several Wyandotte County Census Tracts lack heating and are at risk of lead.

When the unaffordability of housing digresses to homelessness, it can result in preventable death. Studies in various cities around the United States have shown life expectancy for unhoused people to be anywhere between 43 and 54 years ([National Health Care for Homeless Council](#)), whereas the national life expectancy is 80. Persons experiencing homelessness lack everyday necessities and are more susceptible to cold injuries (like frostbite), cardio-respiratory diseases, tuberculosis, skin diseases, nutritional deficiencies, sleep deprivation, mental illness, physical and sexual assault, drug dependency, and HIV/AIDS, and other health issues ([University of Washington](#)). In addition, the difficulty getting rest, maintaining medications, eating well, and staying clean and warm prolong and exacerbate illnesses.

Affordable Housing Data in Wyandotte County

Rental costs increased 7% in the Kansas City area between the 3rd Quarter 2021 and 3rd Quarter 2022, further exacerbating the issue. During this same time period, evictions have also increased by 59%. ([HUD](#)) According to the Community Concerns survey, nearly a quarter (23%) of residents worry about paying monthly expenses such as rent/mortgage and utilities:

How often in the past 12 months were you worried or stressed about having enough money to pay your regular monthly expenses (including rent/mortgage, electricity, water, etc.)?	Percent
Never	29%
Rarely	20%
Sometimes	26%
Usually	10%
Always	13%

Government programs exist to ease the housing issues, but they, too, are overburdened. The Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority has allocated 1,655 Section 8 Housing Vouchers from the Department of Housing and Urban Development ([HUD](#)). The most recent publicly available data (November 2022) shows that only 1,100 of those vouchers are currently being utilized, which equates to 33% of the vouchers being returned to the housing authority due to tenant inability to find landlords that will accept the vouchers. That same data from 2022 shows there are also 900 people on the voucher waiting list with a processing backlog of four years. ([KCKHA](#))

In summary, there are tens of thousands of Wyandotte County residents who cannot find housing that is affordable to them and are, therefore, cost burdened. As a result, these residents have less money each month for things like food, heat, health care, transportation, education, and entertainment, and are subject to negative health implications, including homelessness and the risk of preventable death.

Spotlight on Racism

The effects that structural racism have had on housing in Wyandotte County have been well documented. The HEAT Report details how the legacy of redlining is still affecting Black Wyandotte County residents today. Areas that were purposefully neglected for overtly racist reasons in the first half of the 20th century continue to see neglect and disinvestment today. ([HEAT, 2021](#)). Recent data shows that these trends still hold today. 31.2% of Black Wyandotte County renters are extremely cost-burdened compared to 17.2% of white Wyandotte County renters. ([HUD CHAS 2015-2019](#)) Census Tracts with high concentrations of poor housing conditions, such as increased lead exposure and lack of heating, tend to also have high concentrations of Black residents. Land Bank lots are also extremely concentrated in areas with large Black populations as a result of historical redlining.

Conclusion

The publication of this Community Health Assessment represents a lot of capacity building and hard work undertaken by a committed public health team. UGPHD's epidemiologists and data scientists have driven the methodology of this CHA, and we hope this rich report will drive collective public health work in Wyandotte County.

It is no secret that many in our community members face barriers in accessing a livable wage, healthcare, housing, and other basic needs. These needs make traditional public health programming ineffective unless paired with upstream work. We intend to use this information to improve programming while also changing policies, systems, and environments that can have broad impacts on health outcomes.

This CHA also identified areas that require our renewed attention as we move into our next CHIP – namely racism, mental health, and substance use, among others. Our community has struggled in these areas for decades, but the COVID-19 pandemic showed us they require greater attention, commitment, and collective action than they've received in the past. We commit to ensuring these areas are prioritized and given the attention they need in coming years and our future CHIP.

To prompt next steps on this work, we have compiled a list of evidence-based interventions that can address the issues our community members identified in the CHA (see list of interventions below and in the full CHA report). These are just some of the possible interventions to consider as we dive into this work.

Thank you for your continued partnership. We look forward to working alongside you in pursuit of a healthier Wyandotte.

Evidence Based Interventions

The following two pages contain some interventions that have support from the scientific community to address the health concerns and barriers discussed in this report.

Topic	Strategy	Description	Source
Community Violence	Kinship foster care for children in the welfare system	An out of home arrangement for full time care by relatives when child is removed from home due to safety concerns. This strategy is likely to decrease disparities.	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Community Violence	Mentoring Programs	Connect at-risk youth with caring adults who can provide advice and skill growth. This strategy can reduce delinquent behavior, aggression, and drug use and is likely to decrease disparities.	CDC County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Community Violence	Early childhood home visiting programs	Regularly visiting at-risk parents with young children to support and engage in training surrounding child health, development, and care based on families' needs can reduce child maltreatment and intimate partner violence. It is likely to reduce disparities.	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Substance Misuse	9-1-1 Good Samaritan Law	Good Samaritan Law specifically protects witnesses who call 911 for an overdose from being prosecuted for possession of drugs or paraphernalia. This encourages people to seek emergency medical services for someone as soon as possible to reduce the number of deadly overdoses.	The Good Samaritan Law: How It Helps Prevent Fatal Drug Overdoses
Substance Misuse	Access to Fentanyl Testing Strips (FTS)	Fentanyl test strips allow people who use drugs to more safely consume substances that may be laced with fentanyl. Users can take a small sample of their drugs and test them for the presence of fentanyl.	What Are Fentanyl Test Strips? Here's How They Help Prevent Drug Overdoses
Substance Misuse	Syringe Access Programs	Syringe Access Programs (SAPs) are community-based programs that provide a controlled space for people who use drugs to access sterile syringes, injection equipment and Narcan, along with education on safe use. SAPs decrease incidence of HIV and Hepatitis C amongst people who use drugs.	Harm Reduction Centers
Mental Health	Integrating Behavioral Health Care into Primary Care	Integrating depression screening and treatment into primary care has been scientifically supported to improve depression symptoms for adolescents, adults, and older patients. It has also shown to improve patients' adherence to treatment.	County Health Rankings and Roadmaps
Mental Health	Comprehensive Mental Health Crisis Response System	A local mental health crisis response system can provide levels of care to those in need. Includes 988 calls that connect people to local services; local mobile crisis teams that support those in; and a third arm can provide a referral or transfer to a short-term stabilization program.	Comprehensive Mental Health Crisis Response System - NAMI
Mental Health	Home-Based Depression Screening and Management for Older Adults	Depression care screening and management at home for older adults are effective in improving short-term depression outcomes among older adults.	Home-Based Depression Screening and Management for Older Adults - CPSTE
Chronic Disease	Engaging Community Health Workers in Chronic Disease Intervention	Engaging community health workers (CHWs) to prevent cardiovascular disease and diabetes for patients at increased risk can improve blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar, and can reduce morbidity and mortality related to these chronic diseases.	Healthy People 2030 health.gov
Chronic Disease	Affordable Tobacco Cessation Therapy	Reducing out-of-pocket costs for tobacco cessation therapy increases access to and use of cessation treatment and thus, increases quit rates.	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Chronic Disease	Competitive Pricing for Healthy Foods	Competitive pricing strategies assign a higher cost to unhealthy foods and a lower price to healthier, more nutritious foods and are scientifically supported to increase sales of healthy foods and increase healthier food consumption	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Obesity and Food Access	Increasing access to farmers markets	Support multiple vendor markets where producers sell goods such as fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, dairy items, and prepared foods directly to consumers	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Obesity and Food Access	Community-wide physical activity campaigns	Engage a variety of partners in a highly visible, multi-component effort to increase physical activity, often with efforts to address cardiovascular disease risk factors	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Obesity and Food Access	Complete Streets & streetscape design initiatives	Enhance streetscapes with greater sidewalk coverage and walkway connectivity, street crossing safety features, traffic calming measures, and other design elements	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Health Care Access	Enhancing Use of Preventive Services Among Older Adults	Focusing on gaps in the use of preventive services among older adults by creating a report which provides state and national self-reported data for adults aged 65 and older who aren't getting recommended services.	Healthy People 2030 health.gov
Health Care Access	Interventions Engaging Community Health Workers – Breast Cancer	Interventions that engage community health workers to increase screening mammograms can increase use of screening services and improve access to screening services by reducing structural barriers. They can enhance health equity.	Healthy People 2030 health.gov
Health Care Access	One-on-One Education for Clients – Breast Cancer	Utilizing an array of health professionals and volunteers to provide one-on-one education may increase breast cancer screening	Healthy People 2030 health.gov
Income and Jobs	Transitional and subsidized jobs	Establish time-limited, subsidized, paid jobs to help individuals with barriers to employment transition to unsubsidized employment.	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Income and Jobs	Summer youth employment program	Provide short-term employment opportunities for youth, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Income and Jobs	Childcare subsidies	Provide financial assistance to working parents, or parents attending school, to pay for childcare	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
Affordable Housing	HOME Investment Partnership Program	Providing grants to states and localities to build, buy, or rehabilitate affordable housing for households with low incomes to rent or purchase these homes at a lower cost could increase access to affordable and quality housing, with the potential to decrease disparities.	County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Urban Institute
Affordable Housing	Tenants' right to counsel	Providing free access to an attorney to those facing eviction, regardless of income, can improve the rates of dismissals of eviction filings because, with legal assistance, landlords and tenants are able to come to agreements that allow tenants to remain in their homes.	Civil Right to Counsel KCUR 89.3 - NPR in Kansas City
Affordable Housing	Community Land Trusts	Using a non-profit organization to purchase land to lease to residents with low and middle incomes to live in can lower monthly mortgage payments, increase housing stability, and decrease racial disparities in housing.	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

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Community Partners

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- Wyandotte County Health Equity Task Force
- Alive and Thrive
- Community Health Council of Wyandotte County
- El Centro
- Frank Williams Center
- Juntos
- Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools
- Piper School District
- Kansas Housing Authority
- City of Bonner Springs
- Kim Wilson Housing
- Our Spot KC
- Vibrant Health
- Wyandotte Economic Development Council
- Wyandotte Health Foundation

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This is an abridged version of the Community Health Assessment report. You can view the full report at wycokck.org/health.

Wyandotte County Community Health Assessment 2022 Abridged Report

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