

2025 DURHAM COUNTY

State of the County Health
Report



Partnership for a
Healthy Durham



Public Health



DukeHealth

DURHAM COUNTY TOP HEALTH PRIORITIES

Affordable Housing

Access to Healthcare and Health Insurance

Community Safety & Well-Being

Mental Health

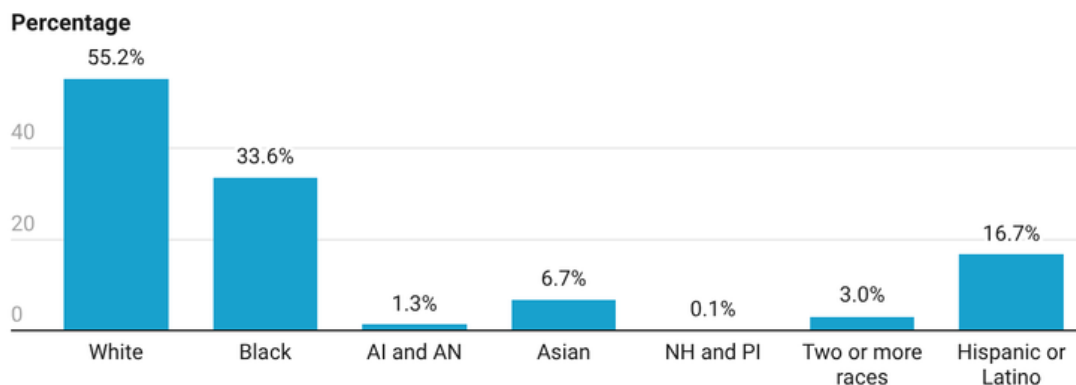
Physical Activity, Nutrition, & Food Access

DURHAM COUNTY POPULATION: 343,628

**MEDIAN
HOUSEHOLD
INCOME \$82,316**

**11.3% OF THE
POPULATION IN
POVERTY**

Population by Race and Ethnicity, Durham County 2024



AI=American Indian, AN= Alaskan Native, NH= Native Hawaiian, PI= Pacific Islander

Chart: DCoDPH • Source: Census • Created with Datawrapper

NEW INITIATIVES & EMERGING ISSUES

New Initiatives

City and County Launch Initiative to Reduce Homelessness

The City of Durham and Durham County launched a new collaborative initiative with Community Solutions and the national Built for Zero network to strengthen the community's response to homelessness. The effort began with a strategic planning process informed by listening sessions held in July 2025 with individuals with lived experience, service providers, community groups, and local leaders. A diverse leadership team spanning healthcare, housing, nonprofits, and government will develop recommendations for City and County officials by year's end. The initiative is jointly funded by the City, County, Duke University, and the AJ Fletcher Foundation.

Investment in Hayti Reborn – Justice Movement

Durham County approved a \$500,000 contract with the Hayti Reborn – Justice Movement (HR-JM) to support community-based strategies aimed at interrupting cycles of violence and improving well-being in marginalized communities. HR-JM works as an umbrella organization, coordinating with partners to build a unified framework connecting community members, social justice organizations, and criminal justice agencies. The effort focuses on addressing root causes of community violence and supporting justice-involved individuals and their families countywide. Funding is included in the FY 2025–26 (July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026) Community Intervention Support Service budget.

City Strengthens Tenant Protections Through Housing Code Amendment

The Durham City Council unanimously approved an amendment to the city's housing code to better protect tenants from unsafe living conditions on October 20, 2025. Led by students from Riverside High School, the amendment prohibits landlords from collecting rent on properties deemed "imminently dangerous to health or safety." This policy aims to improve housing stability and advance public health by addressing unsafe living environments.

Emerging Issues

Durham County Food Security Grants

In 2025, Durham County distributed \$400,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds to 26 local organizations to strengthen community food security. Funded projects included emergency food distribution, nutrition education, community gardens, and infrastructure improvements to support long-term food access.

Community Response During Federal Government Shutdown. During the October–November 2025 federal government shutdown, many families experienced a lapse in SNAP benefits. Local organizations quickly mobilized through the Food Security Network to coordinate resources, share information, and ensure residents knew where to access food. These efforts led to the County publishing a new [community food resources webpage](#) to support residents during future disruptions.

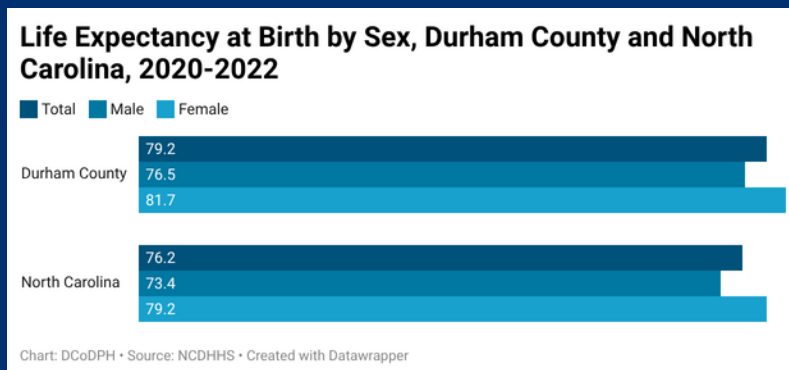
Measles Exposure Confirmed in Durham County

In February 2026, health officials confirmed a measles exposure in Durham County and encouraged anyone who may have been exposed to verify their vaccination status and monitor for symptoms over 21 days. Measles is highly contagious, remaining airborne and infectious for up to two hours after an infected person leaves an area. Individuals born after 1957 should have received at least one dose of the MMR vaccine, while those vaccinated between 1957 and 1968 may need confirmation of immunity. Anyone experiencing symptoms was advised to contact a healthcare provider before seeking care.

LIFE EXPECTANCY, LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH, & INFANT MORTALITY

Life Expectancy

Total life expectancy in Durham County has slightly decreased from 80 years in 2018–2020 to 79.2 years in 2020–2022. This decline mirrors broader national trends. Women continue to have higher life expectancy than men, a pattern consistent across state and national data. When examining race and ethnicity, Asian and Hispanic/Latino populations maintain the highest life expectancies nationally, statewide, and within Durham County. Despite the recent decline, Durham County's overall life expectancy remains higher than the North Carolina state average, indicating relatively strong health outcomes compared to other counties.



Life Expectancy by Race and Ethnicity 2021-2023, Durham County and North Carolina

Report Area	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
Durham County, NC	81.6	75.0	94.3	89.0
North Carolina	76.5	72.5	86.9	85.9
United States	78	73	87	81

Table: Durham County Public Health • Source: NC Data Portal • Created with Datawrapper

Leading Causes of Death

Cancer and heart disease were the top drivers of mortality, accounting for 21.7% (475 deaths) and 18.8% (410 deaths) of all deaths, respectively. Unintentional injuries (5.2%), cerebrovascular disease (4.3%), chronic lower respiratory disease (4.0%), Alzheimer's disease (3.7%), diabetes (2.9%), and kidney disease (2.3%) followed; homicide and motor-vehicle injuries each represented 1.7% of deaths. In total, Durham recorded 2,185 deaths, with "all other causes" comprising 33.7% of mortality.

Infant Mortality

Infant mortality refers to the death of a baby before reaching one year of age. This rate is a critical indicator of the overall health of a community. In Durham County, the infant mortality rate remained steady from 2018–2022 to 2019–2023 and continues to be lower than the statewide average. The leading causes of infant mortality in North Carolina during 2018–2022 were low birthweight, birth defects, and maternal complications of pregnancy. Alarming, Black or African American infants experience mortality rates nearly four times higher than Non-Hispanic White infants. These differences are influenced by factors that impact health, such as limited access to health insurance and other barriers to care.

CHANGES IN DATA: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

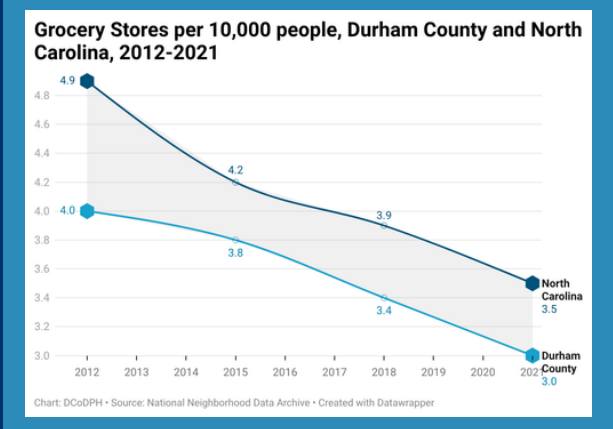
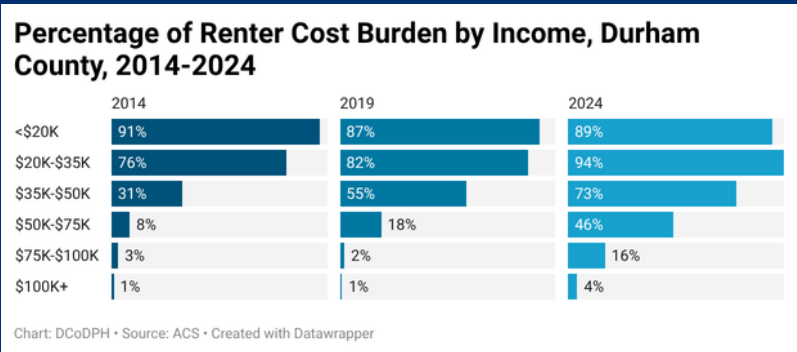
Healthy NC 2030 Indicator: Severe Housing Problem
Desired Result: Improve Housing Quality 2030 Goal: 14%

All people in Durham County, particularly those who are experiencing disadvantage due to rising costs and lack of high quality affordable housing, live in safe, accessible housing.

Affordable housing continues to be the top health priority in Durham County, as it was in the 2017 and 2020 Community Health Assessment processes. High housing costs can make it harder for people to afford basic needs like food, medical care, and transportation. Tracking these trends helps identify where residents may be experiencing financial strain and supports planning for efforts that improve housing affordability and stability.

In 2023, nearly half of renters in Durham County spent more than 30% of their income on housing, which is considered cost-burdened. This is a gradual improvement from 53.5% in 2013 and 51.6% in 2018. Among homeowners with mortgages, the percentage of cost-burdened households fell from 28.5% in 2013 to 21.3% in 2023. Renters remain more likely than homeowners to face housing cost strain, partly because renters often have lower household incomes and face rising rental costs without the financial stability of fixed mortgage rates. Limited affordable rental options and income growth that does not keep up with housing prices contribute to these patterns.

One important aspect of housing quality is how close residents live to resources that support their health, such as grocery stores. Access to grocery stores has declined in both Durham County and North Carolina. In Durham, the number of grocery stores per 10,000 residents dropped from 4.0 in 2012 to 3.0 in 2021. Statewide, the number fell from 4.9 to 3.5 during the same period. Durham stayed below the state average throughout these years. This decline may reflect changes in the retail market and population growth outpacing new store openings. Fewer grocery stores can increase travel time and costs for residents, limit access to fresh foods, and contribute to food insecurity.



PROGRESS

In 2019, Durham voters approved a \$95 million federally funded housing bond, which launched the Forever Home Durham initiative. The program has exceeded several of its original goals. One major goal was to move 1,700 unhoused individuals into permanent housing; so far, more than 2,000 people have been housed. Forever Home Durham has also helped stabilize more than 4,700 households, surpassing its initial goal of 3,000. The initiative also continues work to expand homeownership opportunities and support local contracting.

Durham County has contributed \$1 million to the Durham Affordable Housing Loan Fund and is working with partners to expand it. For every \$1 million in public funds, the program leverages \$3 million in private investment. Plans include expanding the fund countywide, adding a gap-financing option, and allowing participation from for-profit developers. Developers seeking bridge or gap financing can contact the fund manager, Self-Help, at MultifamilyLoans@self-help.org.

The Partnership for a Healthy Durham Health and Housing Committee hosted a Health and Housing Summit in May 2025. More than 60 participants from various organizations met to discuss how data and technology can help improve housing conditions and health. The committee also sponsored five Habitat for Humanity participants to complete home repair training through Home Repair Labs.

CHANGES IN DATA: ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH INSURANCE

Healthy NC 2030Indicator: Uninsured Desired Result: Decreased Uninsured Population

2030 Goal:8% Healthy NC 2030Indicator: Primary Care Workforce Desired Result: Increase the primary care workforce 2030 Goal: 100counties1:1,500

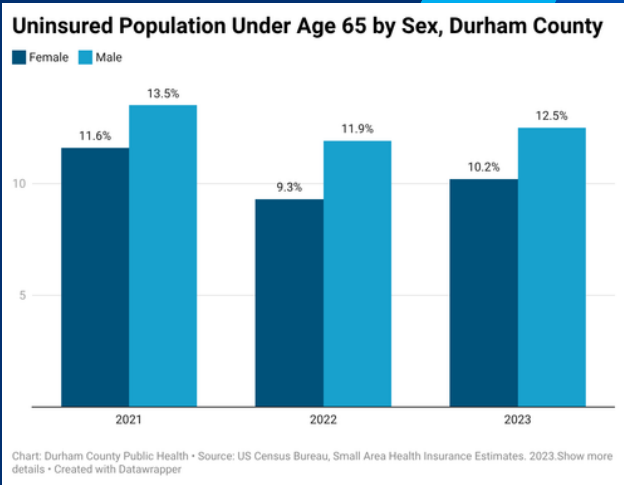
Uninsured and underinsured people in Durham County have access to quality healthcare coverage and have an established primary care home equipped to address health-related social needs.

Access to healthcare and health insurance was identified as the second highest health priority again in the 2023 Community Health Assessment process. Access to quality healthcare is essential for maintaining good health, preventing and managing disease, and supporting health for all across the community. For most people, health care is accessed through health insurance, which means those without coverage face greater challenges getting the care they need. Without insurance, preventive services and routine treatment become harder to obtain, increasing the likelihood of delayed care and more serious health issues. Preventive care is both less costly to the individual and healthcare system, and far less harmful than relying on emergency care, making consistent access to coverage a key factor in improving overall health and well-being.

Overall, uninsured rates have declined across all racial and ethnic groups from 2019 to 2023, reflecting broader efforts to expand coverage and improve access to care. However, important differences remain. Hispanic and Latine residents continue to experience the highest uninsured rates. Barriers to health insurance access include eligibility limitations, unaffordable premiums and deductibles, and information that is often difficult to navigate. Gender differences are also visible: from 2021 to 2023, men consistently had higher uninsured rates than women, a trend that aligns with state and national patterns. These differences emphasize the need for culturally and linguistically responsive outreach, expanded enrollment support, and strategies that reduce barriers to health coverage.

Uninsured Population by Race and Ethnicity, Durham County 2019-2023					
Population Group	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Black (Non-Hispanic)	13.60%	13.41%	12.57%	10.93%	10.54%
Hispanic (All Races)	30.32%	26.79%	28.73%	27.35%	26.72%
White (Non-Hispanic)	10.41%	10.03%	9.41%	8.20%	8.06%

Created with Datawrapper



PROGRESS

The Partnership for a Healthy Durham Access to Care committee shifted its focus to safety net clinics, following significant changes from the federal level, to ensure that those who lost Medicaid eligibility were aware of other healthcare options. They also held networking opportunities for service providers to discuss their needs and how they could collaborate to meet the needs of the community. In addition, the committee focused on sharing health related information with the community in plain language. They distributed a revamped version of brochure of the healthcare resources for uninsured and underinsured brochure and COVID-19 vaccine fact sheet to people throughout Durham.

Bull City Strong, a health literacy program, in partnership with LATIN-19, trained 15 Community Health Workers (CHWs) in 2025 with a reach of over 597 people throughout Durham. Bull City Strong also collaboratively hosted a two-day CHW networking event, providing learning and connection opportunities for those who attended. Duke Health provided \$79 million in financial assistance to patients in Durham County in 2025. These funds go towards providing eligible care at a discount or without charge to patients who qualify by having financial hardship that wouldn't allow them to pay or not having health insurance. Duke physicians also donate primary, emergency and specialty care to uninsured patients through Project Access.

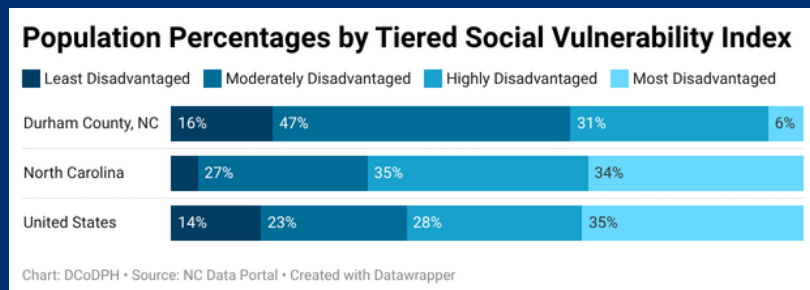
CHANGES IN DATA: COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

Healthy NC 2030 Indicator: Adverse Childhood Experiences
Desired Result: Childhood Wellbeing
2030 Goal: 18%

Community Safety and Well-Being was identified as the third top health priority in the 2023 Durham County Community Health Assessment. This is a new priority, replacing poverty from previous assessments. While violent crime is one part of Community Safety and Well-Being, the topic also includes issues such as traffic and pedestrian safety and creating environments that support mental well-being and social connection. According to County Health Rankings, community safety includes efforts that build support systems for individuals and families and prevent violence and injuries.

Durham County's population is distributed differently across levels of socioeconomic disadvantage compared to North Carolina and the United States. Nearly six percent of Durham residents live in the most disadvantaged areas, compared to about one-third of residents statewide and nationally. This indicates that Durham has fewer neighborhoods facing the highest levels of hardship than the state or nation. At the same time, Durham has a much larger share of residents—about 47 percent—living in moderately disadvantaged areas. Durham also has a higher proportion of residents in the least disadvantaged category. Together, these patterns show that while severe hardship is less common, many residents still live in areas experiencing moderate levels of challenge.

Property crime in Durham County has shown an overall decrease in recent years. Burglary declined from 1,359 cases in 2023 to 1,178 in 2025. Motor vehicle theft also dropped sharply, from 1,885 to 1,491 during the same period. Larceny remains the most frequent property crime, but the number of incidents fell slightly from 8,207 in 2024 to 8,142 in 2025 after previously increasing.



Property Crime, Durham County				
Property Crimes	3-Year average	2023	2024	2025
Burglary	1,277	1,359	1,293	1,178
Larceny	7,982	7,597	8,207	8,142
Motor Vehicle Theft	1,705	1,885	1,738	1,491

Table: DCoDPH • Source: City of Durham • Created with Datawrapper

PROGRESS

Bull City Future Fund – Youth Violence Grants- In June 2025, the City of Durham announced that fifteen local nonprofits received more than \$300,000 from the Bull City Future Fund to support youth violence prevention. The fund, launched in August 2024, focuses on strengthening nonprofit capacity and aims to raise \$1 million to reach about 5,000 young people across Durham.

The City of Durham also established the Office of Survivor Care within the Community Safety Department to provide direct support to individuals and families affected by gun violence. Services include short-term therapy, survivor support, and case coordination. All services are free and confidential.

The City of Durham and Durham County have launched the first phase of a joint Violence Reduction Plan, beginning with a public strategy and learning session on December 17 at the Durham County Public Library featuring nationally recognized expert Thomas Abt. Over the next six months, this series of educational sessions—open to all community members—will bring in practitioners from across the country to help shape a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy aimed at reducing violence in Durham.

CHANGES IN DATA: MENTAL HEALTH

Healthy NC Indicator: Suicide Rate

Desired Result: Improve Access and treatment of mental health needs

Target: 11.1 per 100,000

All people in Durham County have access to quality and affordable mental health services and social emotional support.

Mental health was identified as the fourth top health priority again in the 2023 Community Health Assessment. According to the Cleveland Clinic, mental health is more than the absence of illness — it includes overall well-being and the ability to function and thrive.

Data from 2019–2023 show that Durham County’s self-harm death rate has remained below the North Carolina average. Durham saw a noticeable increase in 2021, reaching 12.2 deaths per 100,000 residents, similar to the statewide trend. The rate then dropped to 8.1 in 2022 before rising slightly to 9.5 in 2023. Statewide, the rate increased steadily from 13.0 in 2019 to 15.1 in 2022 and stayed the same in 2023. While Durham’s rates remain lower overall, the 2021 spike shows the importance of continued suicide-prevention efforts and strong mental health supports.

Access to mental health providers plays an important role in community well-being. Durham County has a much higher number of providers than the state and national averages — 806 providers per 100,000 residents compared with 329 in North Carolina and 337 nationwide. This indicates strong local capacity, though some residents may still face barriers such as cost, insurance limitations, or long wait times.

Deaths by Self-Harm per 100,000

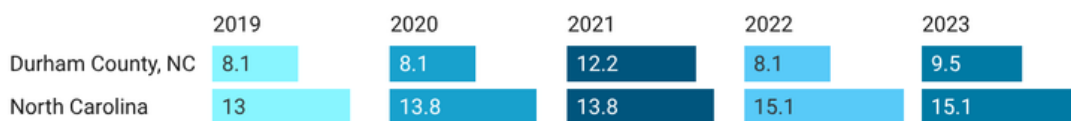


Chart: DCoDPH • Source: North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics • Created with Datawrapper

PROGRESS

The Partnership for a Healthy Durham Mental Health Committee updated its Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being Resources [brochure](#), now available in English and Spanish. The committee also hosted a series of trainings, including the Community Resiliency Model, Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, and hands-free CPR. The committee also continues to host quarterly Mindful Meetups, offering a supportive space for those who care for the well-being of others. One recent activity involved creating kindness rocks and placing them along a StoryWalk path to promote encouragement and connection.

In 2025, the Opioid Settlement initiative strengthened Durham’s response to substance use by advancing the Collaborative Strategic Planning process and using settlement funds to expand high-impact services. Following a strong year of naloxone distribution and partnerships with more than 20 community organizations, the initiative hired two community paramedics to provide rapid post-overdose follow-up, administer buprenorphine for withdrawal, and connect individuals and families to treatment and resources. Peer support was also expanded through Recovery Innovations to help residents navigate care and stay engaged in recovery. These efforts were reinforced by growing collaboration among healthcare and community partners and by improved data tracking through the new dashboard.

Access to Mental Health Providers, 2025

Report Area	Total Population (2020)	Number of Facilities	Number of Providers	Providers, Rate per 100,000 Population
Durham County, NC	324,833.00	326.00	2,619.00	806.26
North Carolina	10,439,388.00	6,064.00	34,342.00	328.97
United States	334,735,155.00	159,037.00	1,128,296.00	337.07

Table: DCoCPH • Source: NC Data Portal • Created with Datawrapper

CHANGES IN DATA: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NUTRITION, AND FOOD ACCESS

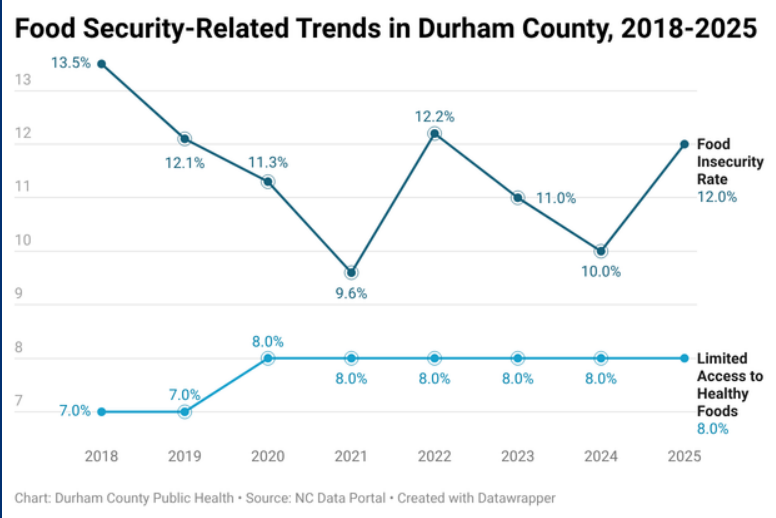
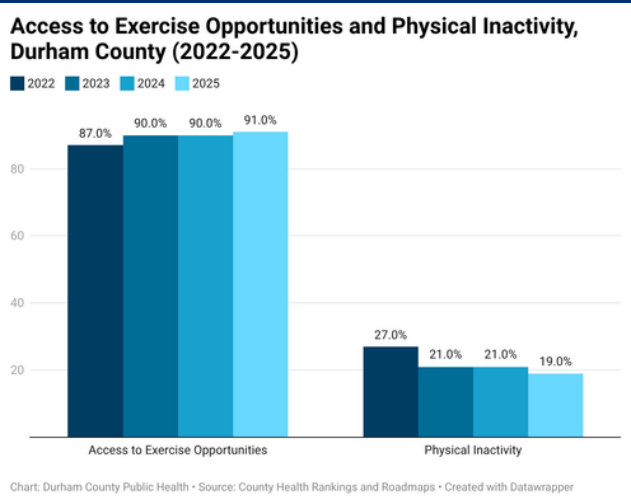
Healthy NC Indicator: Access to exercise opportunities
Desired Result: Increase physical activities Target:92%
Healthy NC Indicator: Limited access to healthy food
Desired Result: Improve access to healthy food Target:5%

All people in Durham County, particularly those at or below median income level, have access to affordable, healthy, and familiar food, and safe and accessible environments for physical activity

Physical activity, nutrition, and food access has been a top health priority in Durham County for more than a decade. Regular exercise is linked to many positive health outcomes, and communities with safe, accessible places to be active tend to have lower rates of obesity and other chronic conditions. Limited access to healthy foods is also associated with higher rates of conditions such as obesity and type II diabetes.

Durham County continues to make environmental changes that can support healthy behaviors. Access to exercise opportunities increased by four percent between 2022 and 2025. However, overall physical activity decreased by eight percent during the same period. Expanding infrastructure for physical activity may help support higher activity levels in the future.

Food access trends show a mixed picture. Food insecurity declined steadily from 2018 to 2021 and reached its lowest point during the pandemic, but increased sharply in 2022 and has remained higher through 2025. SNAP participation decreased before rising during 2020–2021 and then leveling off in recent years. Grocery store availability, measured as stores per 100,000 residents, also declined, with a noticeable drop starting in 2022. These shifts suggest that while food insecurity improved earlier in the decade, recent years have brought new challenges related to food access and affordability.



PROGRESS

The Partnership Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Food Access (PANFA) Committee continues to work on projects that support healthier environments in Durham. They have installed Playscapes in five locations across the county, offering colorful, engaging spaces where children and families can be physically active. PANFA also supported a Food System Tour organized by Duke Health, Congregations in Action, Cooperative Extension, and PANFA partners to help residents learn how Durham’s food distribution system works.

PANFA also collaborated with Bike Durham, the City of Durham Transportation Department, and the Durham County Department of Public Health to host Move-A-Bull City Open Streets on Sunday, October 5, 2025. This was Durham’s largest open-streets event, temporarily closing 1.2 miles of downtown to car traffic so people could walk, bike, roll, dance, and enjoy activities in the street. More than 2,000 people attended the family-friendly celebration.