

2023 North Country Community Health Survey of Adult Residents

(Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence Counties, New York)

Experiences, Behaviors, and Perceptions Related to: Your Experiences with Health Care in the North Country

- Primary Care
- Dental Care
- Health Insurance Coverage
- Health Screenings
- Challenges and Difficulties Accessing Health Care Locally
- Familiarity Where to Find Needed Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicide Prevention Services
- Utilization of Suicide Prevention Services

Your Health

- Assessment of Personal Physical, Mental, and Dental Health
- Diagnosed Chronic Health Conditions

Your Substance Use

- Use of Cigarettes, E-cigarettes or Vaping Products, Recreational Marijuana
- Use of Alcohol
- Household Affected by Opiate Abuse or Addiction

Your Lifestyle

- Difficulty in Arranging Transportation
- Satisfaction with Access in One's Community – Safe Places to Exercise, and Available Healthy Foods

Prepared on behalf of the
North Country Health Compass Partners
Watertown, New York
June 2023



Prepared by the
Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization
Watertown, New York



Table of Contents

Section 1 – Introduction and Description of the Study.....	4
Section 2 – Topline Summary of Study Results.....	5
Section 3 – Detailed Study Findings.....	7
3.1 – Your Experiences with Health Care in the North Country.....	7
3.1.1 Your Experiences with Primary Care (Figure 1).....	7
3.1.2 Your Dental Care (Figure 2).....	7
3.1.3 Your Health Insurance Coverage (Figure 3).....	7
3.1.4 Your Health Screenings (Figure 4).....	8
3.1.5 Your Challenges and Difficulties Accessing Health Care Locally (Figure 5).....	8
3.1.6 Your Familiarity Where to Find Needed Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicide Prevention Services (Figure 6).....	9
3.1.7 Your Utilization of Suicide Prevention Services (Figure 7).....	9
3.2 – Your Health.....	9
3.2.1 Your Assessment of Your Personal Physical, Mental, and Dental Health (Figure 8).....	9
3.2.2 Your Diagnosed Chronic Health Conditions (Figure 9).....	10
3.3 – Your Substance Use.....	10
3.3.1 Your Use of Cigarettes, Vaping Products, Recreational Marijuana (Figure 10).....	10
3.3.2 Your Use of Alcohol (Figure 11).....	11
3.3.3 Your Household Affected by Opiate Abuse or Addiction (Figure 12).....	11
3.4 – Your Lifestyle.....	11
3.4.1 Your Difficulty in Arranging Transportation (Figure 13).....	11
3.4.2 Your Satisfaction with Access in Your Community – Safe Places to Exercise, and Available Healthy Foods (Figure 14).....	12
Section 4 – Study Methodology.....	12
Section 5 – Study Appendices (each provided as separate documents).....	12
Appendix I – Regional and County-specific Trend Analyses (2016-2023)	
Appendix II – Regional and County-specific 2023 Cross-tabulations	
Appendix III – The 2023 North Country Community Health Survey Instrument	
Table of Tables (used in both of Appendices I & II)	
Your Experiences with Health Care in the North Country	
Table 1 – Do you have one person or medical office that you think of as your personal doctor or health care provider?	
Table 2 – When you go to the doctor, how often do you feel that you and your values are respected?	
Table 3 – How long has it been since you last visited a dentist or a dental clinic for a routine cleaning?	
Table 4 – Which of the following describes your health insurance?	
Table 5 – Have you had a colorectal cancer screening within the past 10 years? (<i>among all participants</i>)	
Table 6 – Have you had a colorectal cancer screening within the past 10 years? (<i>only among those age 45-75</i>)	
Table 7 – Have you had a mammogram within the past 2 years? (<i>among all participants</i>)	
Table 8 – Have you had a mammogram within the past 2 years? (<i>only among females, age 18+</i>)	
Table 9 – Have you had a mammogram within the past 2 years? (<i>only among females, age 45-75</i>)	
Table 10 – SUMMARY - Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving health care services locally in the past 12 months? (includes seven various types of health care services, each studied individually)	
Table 11 – Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving dental or oral health services locally in the past 12 months?	

- Table 12 – Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving **primary care services** locally in the past 12 months?
- Table 13 – Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving **optometry and eye care services** locally in the past 12 months?
- Table 14 – Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving **behavioral and mental health services** locally in the past 12 months?
- Table 15 – Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving **women’s health or OB-GYN services** locally in the past 12 months?
- Table 16 – Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving **pediatric, child, and adolescent health services** locally in the past 12 months?
- Table 17 – Have you experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving **substance abuse or addiction services** locally in the past 12 months?
- Table 18 – If yes, what was the one largest challenge you experienced in receiving health care services locally?
- Table 19 – If you were to need them, do you know where you can find **mental health services**?
- Table 20 – If you were to need them, do you know where you can find **substance use services**?
- Table 21 – If you were to need them, do you know where you can find **suicide prevention services**?
- Table 22 – In the past year have you referred somebody to suicide prevention resources, or accessed them yourself?

Your Health

- Table 23 – How would you rate your **physical** health?
- Table 24 – How would you rate your **mental** health?
- Table 25 – How would you rate your **dental** health?
- Table 26 – **SUMMARY** - Have you ever been diagnosed with the following eight chronic health conditions or illnesses?
- Table 27 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **high blood pressure**?
- Table 28 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **obesity**?
- Table 29 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **any mental health condition**?
- Table 30 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **pre-diabetes**?
- Table 31 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **diabetes**?
- Table 32 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **cancer**?
- Table 33 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **heart disease**?
- Table 34 – Have you ever been diagnosed with **COPD**?

Your Substance Use

- Table 35 – Which of the following best describes your use of cigarettes?
- Table 36 – Which of the following best describes your use of e-cigarettes or other electronic vaping products?
- Table 37 – Which of the following best describes your current use of recreational marijuana?
- Table 38 – How frequently do you have any kind of drink containing alcohol?
- Table 39 – Within the past year, has anyone in your household been personally affected by opiate abuse or addiction?

Your Lifestyle

- Table 40 – When you need to go somewhere that you can only reach by automobile, how often do you have difficulty arranging transportation?
- Table 41 – How would you rate your family's access to places where you can walk and exercise, either indoors or outdoors?
- Table 42 – How would you rate your family's access to healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables?

Demographics of Participants – The Nature of These County-Specific Samples

- Table 43 – Gender, Age, Educational Attainment, Household Income, Military Affiliation, Household Composition, Disability Status, Orientation, and Race/Ethnicity of Study Participants

Contact Information

Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization

Mr. Pat Fontana, Deputy Director
Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization
120 Washington Street, Suite 230
Watertown, NY 13601
Phone: (315) 755-2020
Email: fontana@fdrhpo.org
Website: www.fdrhpo.org

Section 1 – Introduction and Description of the Study:

The Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO, www.fdrhpo.org) and the North Country Health Compass Partners (<https://fdrhpo.org/population-health/>) typically complete an adult community health survey in Northern New York State annually to better understand the current health and health care situations and monitor any changes in health care and health habits among North Country residents of Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties, New York. This study has been completed in the summer of each of the past eight years, 2016 through 2023.

This study was designed with the following three primary goals, essentially these goals are reasons why community healthcare leadership would benefit from collecting this type of survey data – *what can be accomplished with the data?*

Community Health Study Goal #1

Planning – There is a goal to collect current health-related attitude and behavior information via surveying local adult residents to provide data that will be useful to health professionals to best make data-driven decisions about future health-related goals, objectives, programs, services, initiatives, interventions, promotions, and/or potential policies in Northern New York. In summary, the collected data will provide current measurements of public opinion and behavior to help *support and plan future activities* for the *North Country Health Compass Partners* and the *Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization*.

Community Health Study Goal #2

Education – There is a goal to collect current health-related attitude and behavior information via surveying local adult residents to provide data that will be useful to Northern New York health professionals to best demonstrate and explain local residents' opinions regarding potential future health-related policy and/or law changes in the region. In summary, the collected data will provide current measurements of public opinion and behavior to *educate* and *assist* local leaders, decision-makers, and elected officials *make data-driven health-related policy decisions in the future*. The data assists healthcare experts in shedding light upon local decision-maker questions such as “What does the public think about this possible health-related change in policy or law in their community?”

Community Health Study Goal #3

Evaluation – There is a goal that involves using the adult survey data to allow for evaluation of the impact of past initiatives and activities provided by the *North Country Health Compass Partners* and the *Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization*. Previous similar health-related surveys were completed in Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties in each of 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Comparison of the current (2023) survey results to these earlier survey results with identification of any statistically significant trends is useful to health professionals to attempt to *identify which initiatives have been most effective, most successful*. Essentially this goal is to answer the questions: “Have Northern New York health planning groups been successful in attaining their goals as outlined in their work plans?” and “Has there been any impact among the local population?”

This study, as with almost any other survey study, also has additional potential outcomes for the *participants* that could be effective and beneficial. The process of participating in an interview or survey could result in either or both of the following two outcomes, essentially these outcomes are also reasons why an organization would benefit from collecting this type of survey data.

Community Health Study Participant Outcome #1

Awareness – the conversation that transpires when an interview occurs on the phone or in person, or a survey is completed online, a conversation that is focused on health-related topics, very likely provides educational information to participants that they were not already aware of – the survey process *educates* the participants regarding health issues.

Community Health Study Participant Outcome #2

Engagement – By virtue of the consideration of their views and behaviors regarding health and healthcare issues via completing a survey, participants have at a minimum cerebrally engaged in the health-related topic, and potentially, could become more likely to actually become further actively engaged in *North Country Health Compass Partners* and *Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization* activities, initiatives, and goals, and possibly become more engaged in improving their personal health.

This report and its appendices are a summary and explanation of the findings of the 2023 North Country community health survey. When possible, comparisons of the current results are made to the results of previous community health surveys completed in the region between 2016 and 2022 (Appendix I). Additionally, the current 2023 results are cross-tabulated by several possible demographic explanatory factors (Appendix II). The survey instrument used in this study was developed through the collective efforts of the evaluation specialists at the *Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization*, together with representatives of the partners in *North Country Health Compass Partners*. The survey included approximately forty health-related items (survey questions) organized in four separate sections of the interview, as well as approximately ten demographic variables. Copies of the script and survey instrument are attached as Appendix III. The four specific health-

related topics, or sets of health-related survey question sections, that have been studied in 2023 and are reported in the remainder of this document are shown to the right. The survey study in 2023 included 1,472 adult residents of the North Country (502 from Jefferson County, 476 from Lewis County, and 494 from St. Lawrence County). All interviews were completed in June of 2023 using mixed-mode methods: live-interviewer telephone calling, intercept sampling, and online nonprobability panel sampling.

Your Experiences with Healthcare

- Primary Care
- Dental Care
- Health Insurance Coverage
- Health Screenings
- Challenges and Difficulties Accessing Health Care Locally
- Familiarity Where to Find Needed Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicide Prevention Services
- Utilization of Suicide Prevention Services

Your Health

- Assessment of Personal Physical, Mental, and Dental Health
- Diagnosed Chronic Health Conditions

Your Substance Use

- Use of Cigarettes, E-cigarettes or Vaping Products, Recreational Marijuana
- Use of Alcohol
- Household Affected by Opiate Abuse or Addiction

Your Substance Use

- Difficulty in Arranging Transportation
- Satisfaction with Access in One’s Community – Safe Places to Exercise, and Available Healthv Foods

Section 2 – Topline Summary of Study Results:

Your Experiences with Health Care

2.1.1 Experiences with Primary Care – A large majority of North Country adult residents (84%) have one person or medical office that they think of as their personal doctor or health care provider, a rate that has recently increased. However, recently residents are becoming less satisfied that when they go to the doctor, they feel that they and their values are *always* respected. The rate of *always* decreased from 75% in 2016 to a current rate of only 52%. (Tables 1-2)

2.1.2 Dental Care – A majority of North Country residents have visited a dentist or a dental clinic for a routine cleaning “within the past year” (58%), however, this rate of visiting a dentist has decreased statistically significantly in the North Country (was 71% in 2018). (Table 3)

2.1.3 Health Insurance Coverage – A small minority of 4% of adults in the North Country in 2023 report to not currently have health insurance coverage. Uninsured rates have not changed statistically significantly in the North Country between 2016 and 2023. (Table 4)

2.1.4 Health Screenings – Among adults *aged 45-75*, approximately three-fourths in the North Country in 2023 (74%) report to have had a colonoscopy or other colorectal cancer screening in the past 10 years, which is significantly increased from 66% in the North Country when first measured in 2022. Among *female participants aged 50-75*, a large majority (about three-fourths) in the North Country in 2023 report to have had a mammogram in the past 2 years, a rate that has remained very consistent since 2018. (Tables 5-9)

2.1.5 Challenges and Difficulties Accessing Health Care Locally – Approximately one-in-five adult residents in the North Country in 2023 have experienced challenges or difficulties in the past 12 months in locally receiving each of dental or oral health services, primary care services, or optometry and eye care services. Participants who reported experiencing challenges or difficulties in receiving at least one type of health care locally in the past 12 months were further asked *what is the largest challenge to receiving this health care locally?* The most common response by far was “long wait time” (40% in 2023, a dramatic and significant increase from only 28% in 2022). (Tables 10-18)

2.1.6 Familiarity Where to Find Needed Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicide Prevention Services – A large majority of North Country residents report that they are aware of where to access mental health services if needed (73%), substance services if needed (67%), and suicide prevention services if needed (71%). (Tables 19-21)

2.1.7 Utilization of Suicide Prevention Services – Approximately one-in-nine North Country residents (11%) in 2019 reported that in the past year they had referred somebody to suicide prevention resources, or accessed the resources themselves. This rate has decreased significantly in the North Country to a current 2023 rate of 7%. (Table 22)

Your Health

2.2.1

Assessment of Personal Physical, Mental, and Dental Health – North Country residents in 2023 continue the recent trend of less optimism regarding their personal physical, mental, and dental health. Most noticeably, only 48% rate their mental health as “Excellent or Very Good” in 2023, a significant decrease from 60% found in 2018. (Tables 23-25)

2.2.2

Diagnosed Chronic Health Conditions – Currently approximately three-in-five North Country residents (61%) in 2023 have been diagnosed with at least one of eight studied chronic health conditions, which is not significantly different from 59% found in the region in 2022. About one-third of residents in the North Country in 2023 have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (34% in the North Country). This rate has increased significantly and dramatically from a low of only 22% found in the region in 2018. More than one-quarter of residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with obesity (27% in 2023, not changed significantly from 25% found in 2022), and approximately one-in-five residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with a mental health condition (21% in the North Country in 2023). The rate of mental health condition diagnoses in the North Country has increased tremendously from 8% in 2018 and 10% in 2019 to the current 21% rate. (Tables 26-34)

Your Substance Use

2.3.1

Use of Cigarettes, E-cigarettes or Vaping Products, Recreational Marijuana – Approximately one-in-seven adults in the North Country in 2023 describe their cigarette use status as “current users” (14%), one-in-eleven adults describe their e-cigarette use status as “current users” (9%), and one-in-five adults (21%) currently use recreational marijuana *at least rarely*. (Tables 35-37)

2.3.2

Use of Alcohol – The rate of “frequent alcohol consumption” (defined as consumption three or more times per week) increased in the period after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, however, this frequent alcohol consumption in the North Country has subsequently subsided. The rate of “3+ incidences of alcohol consumption per week” was 14% in 2017, and increased significantly to 21% in 2020, and has steadily continued to decrease since then to the current 2023 rate of only 11%. (Table 38)

2.3.3

Household Affected by Opiate Abuse or Addiction – About one-in-twenty-five North Country residents (4%) report that within the past year, someone in their household has been personally affected by opiate abuse or addiction. (Table 39)

Your Lifestyle

2.4.1

Difficulty in Arranging Transportation – A large majority of North Country residents report that when they need to go somewhere that can only be reached by automobile, they “never” have difficulty arranging transportation (75% in the North Country in 2023), a rate that has increased significantly from 67% found in the region in 2022. (Table 40)

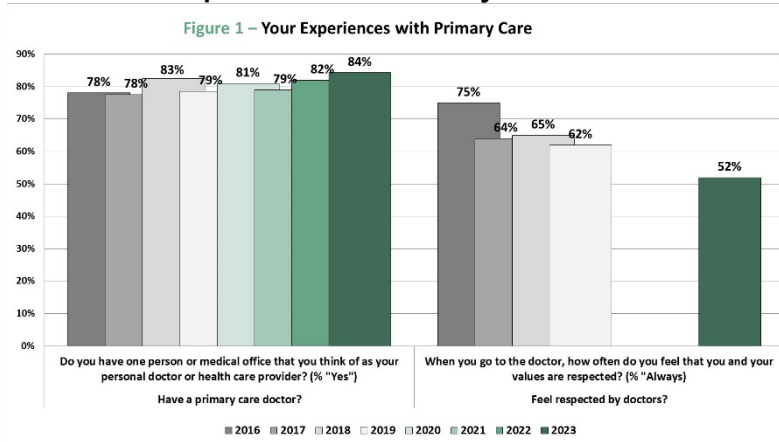
2.4.2

Satisfaction with Access in One’s Community – Safe Places to Exercise, and Available Healthy Foods – North Country residents in 2023 continue to be more satisfied than not with the availability of their family’s access to places where they can walk and exercise, either indoors or outdoors (“Very Available” rate of 58% in the North Country), however, this rate has decreased significantly in the past six years (the 2018 “Very Available” rate was 65% in the North Country). Similarly, residents also continue to indicate satisfaction with the availability of their family’s access to healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables, with a “Very Available” rate of 67% in the North Country in 2023. (Tables 41-42)

Section 3 – Detailed Study Findings:

3.1 Your Experiences with Health Care in the North Country

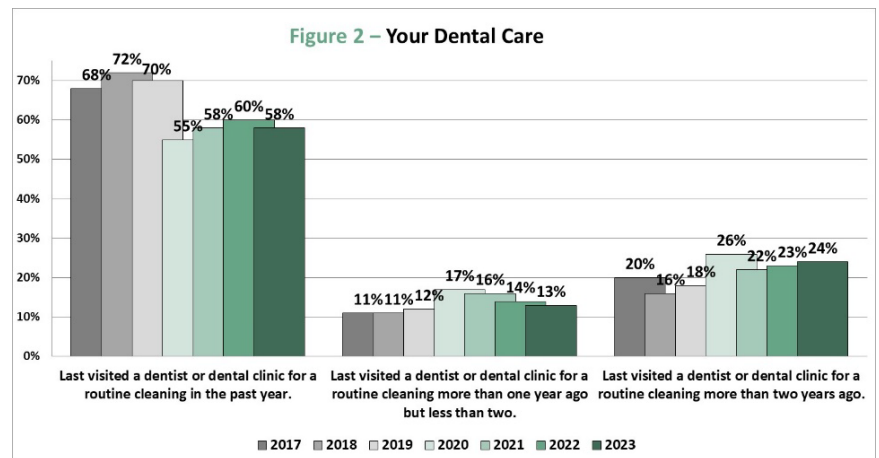
3.1.1 Your Experiences with Primary Care



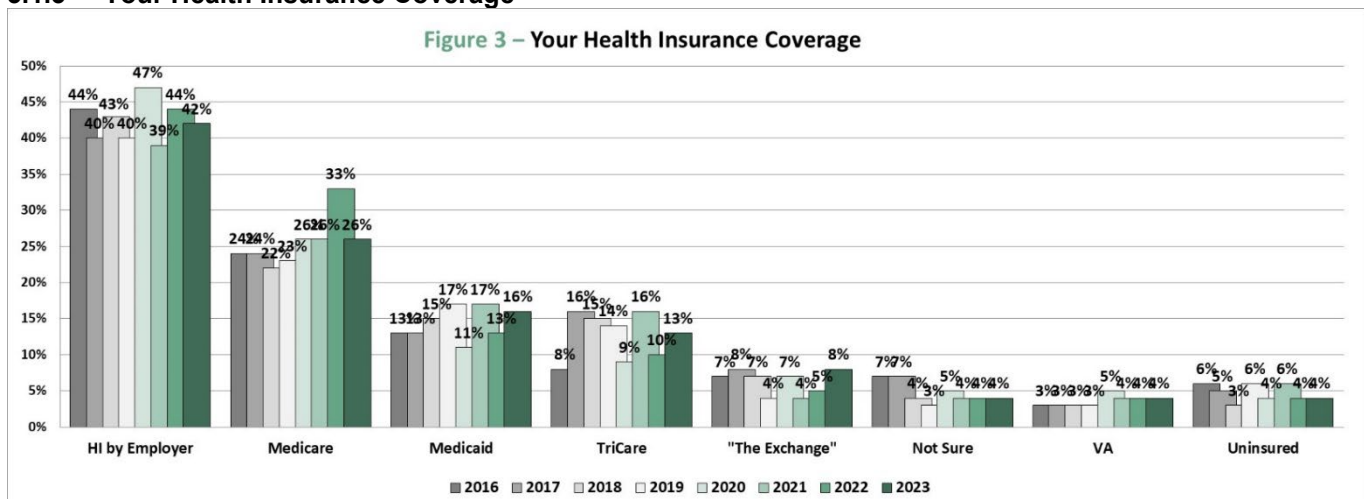
A large majority of North Country residents in 2023 have one person or medical office that they think of as their personal doctor or health care provider (84% in the North Country). The rate of indicating having one person or medical office that they think of as their personal doctor or health care provider has increased statistically significantly overall in the North Country region since first measured at 78% in 2016. A majority of North Country residents in 2023 (52%) indicate that when they go to the doctor, they feel that they and their values are *always* respected, however, this rate is significantly and dramatically lower than the 75% *always* rate that was found when first studied in the region in 2016. (Tables 1-2)

3.1.2 Your Dental Care

A majority of North Country residents in 2023 have visited a dentist or a dental clinic for a routine cleaning “within the past year” (58%), while approximately seven-in-ten local residents visited a dentist or a dental clinic for a routine cleaning “within the past two years” (71% in the North Country). Alarming, approximately 24% of residents report that it has been “more than two years” since they have visited a dentist for a routine cleaning. The rate of visiting a dentist or a dental clinic for a routine cleaning “within the past year” has decreased statistically significantly in the North Country between 2019 and 2023, potentially due to the coronavirus pandemic (rate was 70% in 2019, and is currently only 58%). (Table 3)

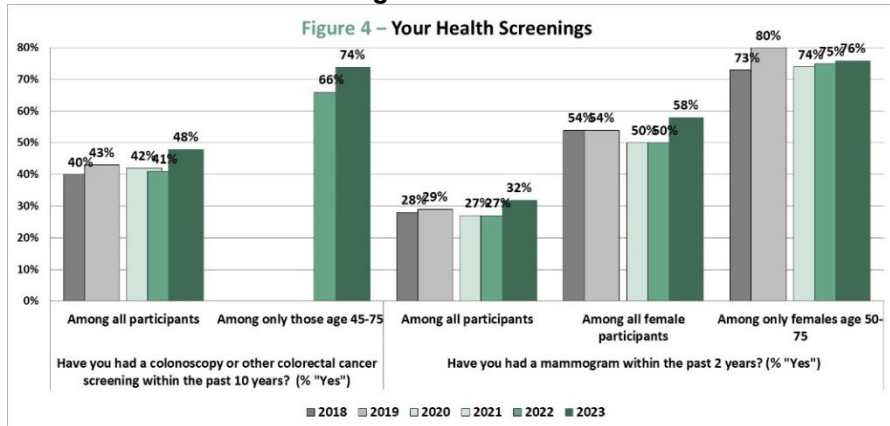


3.1.3 Your Health Insurance Coverage



A small minority of 4% of adults in the North Country in 2023 report to not currently have health insurance coverage. Uninsured rates have not changed statistically significantly in the North Country between 2016 and 2023 (2016 results were 6% uninsured). The most commonly cited health insurance coverages continue to be “health insurance through an employer, including the military (Tri Care insured) as an employer” (approximately 55% in 2023, was 54% in 2022, 54% in 2020, and 52% in 2016), and “Medicare” (approximately 26% in 2023, was 26% in 2021, and 24% in 2016). (Table 4)

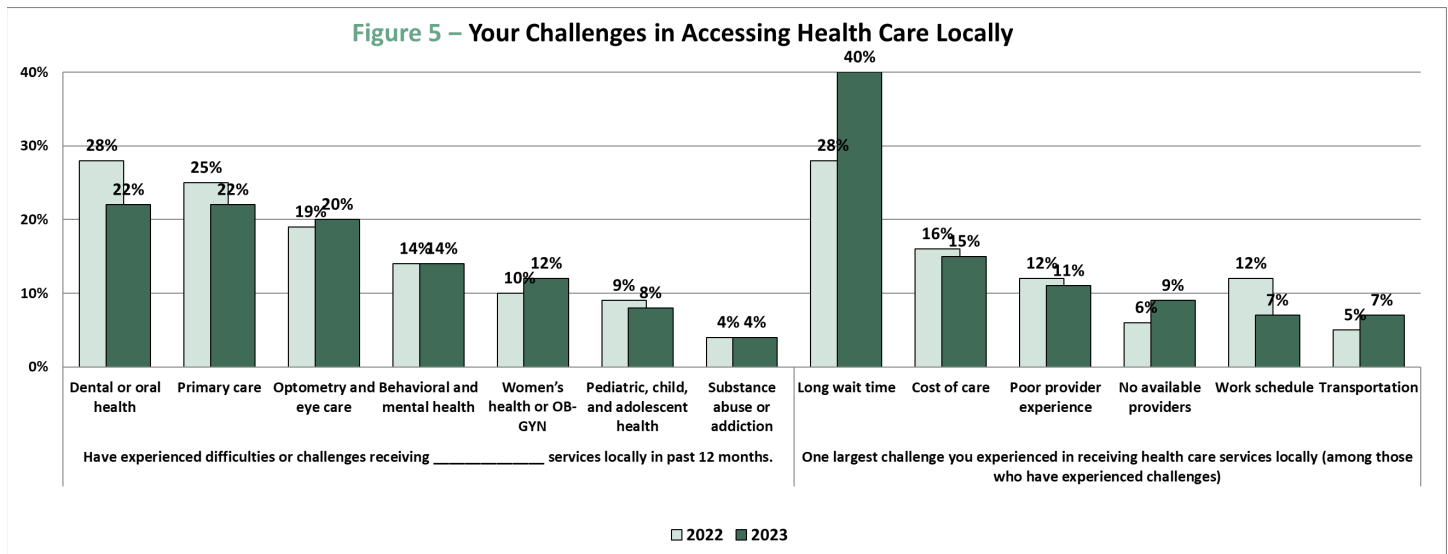
3.1.4 Your Health Screenings



A minority of adults in the North Country in 2023 report to have had a colonoscopy or other colorectal cancer screening in the past 10 years (48%). The rate of having a colonoscopy in the past 10 years has increased statistically significantly on a region-wide basis in the North Country between 2018 and 2023 (2018 results were 40% in the North Country). Among adults aged 45-75, approximately three-fourths in the North Country in 2023 (74%) report to have had a colonoscopy or other colorectal cancer screening in the past 10 years (significantly increased from 66% in the North

Country when first measured in 2022). Approximately one-third of adults in the North Country (including both males and females combined) in 2023 report to have had a mammogram in the past 2 years (32%). Among female participants aged 18 or older, a majority in the North Country in 2023 report to have had a mammogram in the past 2 years (58% in 2023, significantly increased from only 50% among females found in each of 2021 and 2022). Among female participants aged 50-75, a large majority (about three-fourths) in the North Country in 2023 report to have had a mammogram in the past 2 years (76% in the North Country). The rate of having a mammogram in the past 2 years among females aged 50-75 has not changed statistically significantly on a region-wide basis between 2018 and 2023 (2018 results were 73% in the North Country). (Tables 5-9)

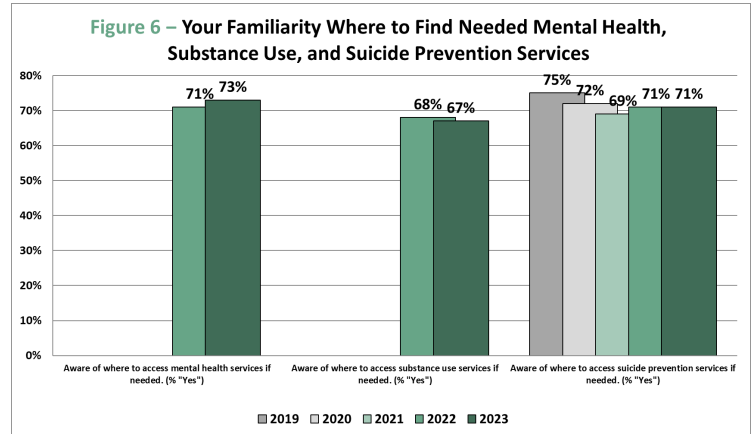
3.1.5 Your Challenges and Difficulties Accessing Health Care Locally



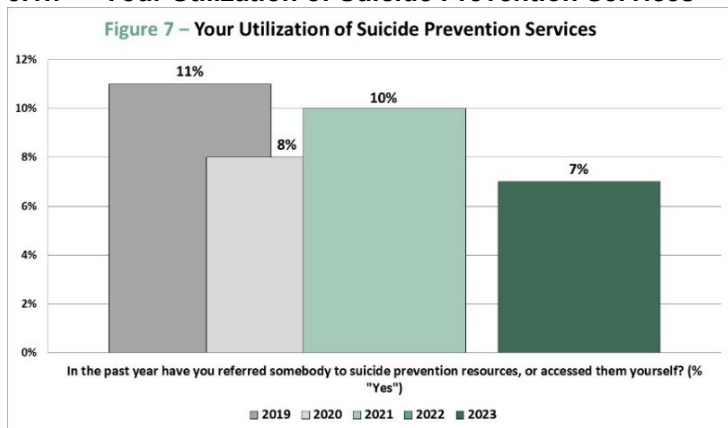
Approximately one-in-five adult residents in the North Country in 2023 (22%) have experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving dental or oral health services locally in the past 12 months (significantly decreased from 28% found in the region in 2022). Similarly, about one-fifth of residents in the North Country have experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving primary care services locally in the past 12 months (22%, significantly decreased from 25% in 2022). Approximately one-in-five residents in the North Country (20%) have experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving optometry and eye care services locally in the past 12 months (not significantly changed from 19% in 2022). Approximately one-in-seven residents in the North Country have experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving behavioral and mental health locally in the past 12 months (14% in each of 2022 and 2023). Approximately one-eighth of residents in the North Country (12%) have experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving women's health or OB-GYN services locally in the past 12 months (not significantly changed from 10% in 2022). It is least common that residents in the North Country have experienced challenges or difficulties in receiving pediatric, child, and adolescent health locally in the past 12 months (only 8% in the North Country), and in receiving substance abuse or addiction services locally in the past 12 months (only 4% have had difficulty in 2023). Participants who reported experiencing challenges or difficulties in receiving at least one type of health care locally in the past 12 months were further asked *what is the largest challenge to receiving this health care locally?* The most common response by far was "long wait time" (40% in 2023, a dramatic and significant increase from only 28% in 2022), followed by "cost of care" (15% in 2023, unchanged from 16% in 2022). (Tables 10-18)

3.1.6 Your Familiarity Where to Find Needed Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicide Prevention Services

A large majority of North Country residents report that they are aware of where to access mental health services if needed (73% in the North Country in 2023, not changed significantly from 71% in 2022). Similarly, a large majority of North Country residents report that they are aware of where to access substance services if needed (67% in the North Country in 2023, not changed significantly from 68% in 2022). Finally, a large majority of North Country residents continue to report that they are aware of where to access suicide prevention services if needed (71% in the North Country in 2023). The rate of awareness of suicide prevention services has not changed significantly recently (rate was 72% in 2020), however, the rate has decreased from the prepandemic rate found in the region in 2019 (75%). (Tables 19-21)



3.1.7 Your Utilization of Suicide Prevention Services

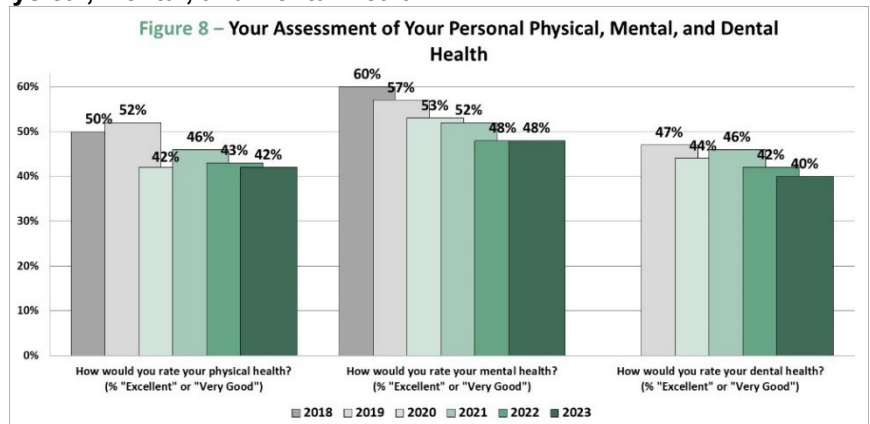


Approximately one-in-nine North Country residents (11%) in 2019 reported that in the past year they had referred somebody to suicide prevention resources, or accessed the resources themselves. This rate has decreased significantly in the region to a current 2023 rate of 7%. (Table 22).

3.2 Your Health

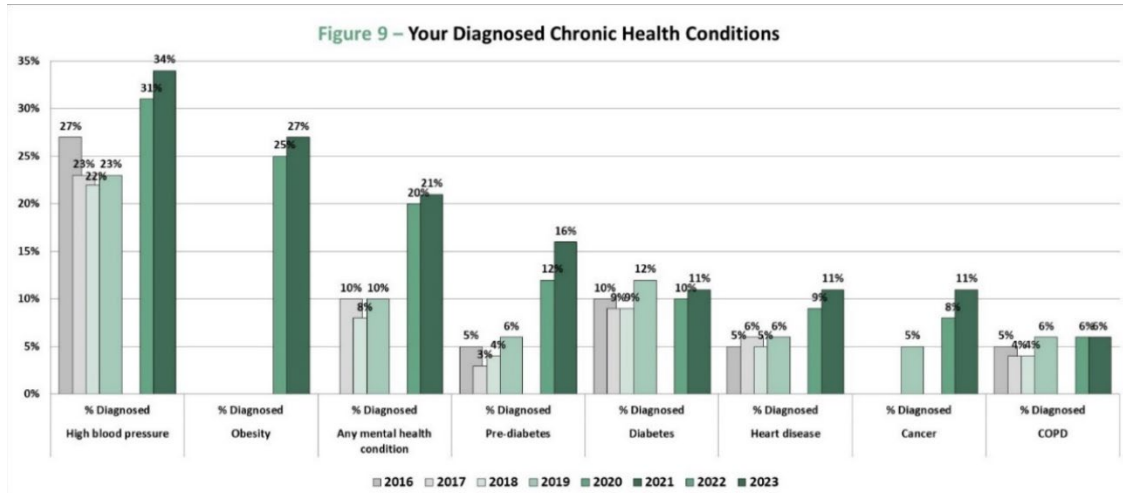
3.2.1 Your Assessment of Your Personal Physical, Mental, and Dental Health

North Country residents in 2023 continue to be somewhat optimistic about their personal physical health with 42% rating their physical health as “Excellent or Very Good”. Only 5% of adults in the region in 2023 rate their physical health as “Poor”. However, optimism about one’s physical health decreased significantly in the region in 2020 when compared to results in earlier pre-pandemic years of study (2019 results for “Excellent or Very Good” were 52%, while the rate dropped to 42% in 2020), and have not returned to the more positive levels before the pandemic. One of the largest changes discovered in the North Country in recent years relates to mental health. North Country residents continue to be somewhat optimistic in 2023 about their personal mental health with almost one-half (48%) rating their mental health as “Excellent or Very Good”. However, the strength of optimism about one’s mental health has decreased significantly and dramatically in the region in 2022 and 2023 when compared to results in earlier years of study (2018 results for “Excellent or Very Good” were 60% in the North Country). Interestingly, only 3% of adults in the region currently rate their mental health as “Poor”. North Country residents are somewhat optimistic in 2023 about their personal dental health with 40% rating their dental health as “Excellent or Very Good”, however, these results have become significantly less positive than were found in the region in 2019 (when results for “Excellent or Very Good” were 47% in the North Country). Only 8% of adults in the region in 2023 rate their dental health as “Poor” (also was 8% in each of 2020, 2021, and 2022). (Tables 23-25)



3.2.2 Your Diagnosed Chronic Health Conditions

Currently approximately three-in-five North Country residents (61%) in 2023 have been diagnosed with at least one of eight chronic health conditions that were investigated in this study (the eight conditions are cited in Figure 9). This 61% is not significantly different from 59% found in the region in 2022. About one-third of residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (34% in the North Country). This rate has increased significantly and dramatically from a low



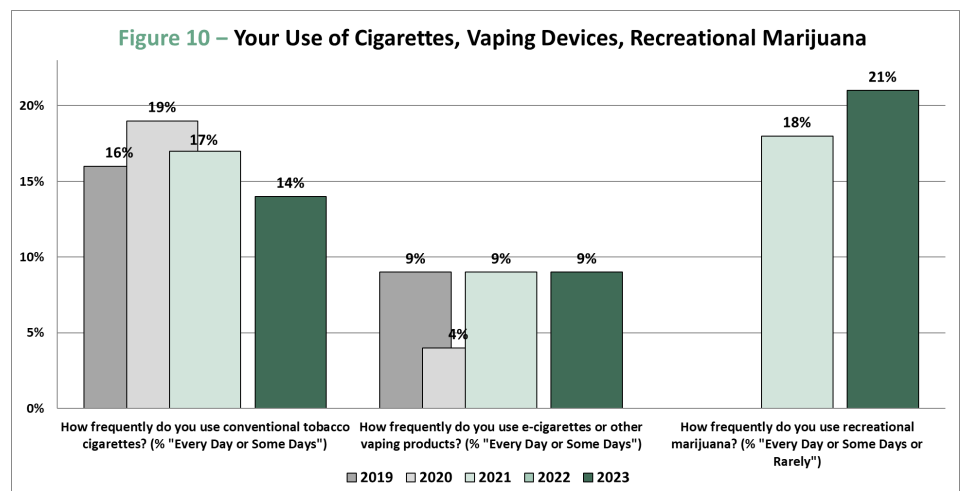
of only 22% found in the region in 2018. More than one-quarter of residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with obesity (27% in 2023, not changed significantly from 25% found in 2022). Approximately one-in-five residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with a mental health condition (21% in the North Country in 2023). This rate has increased significantly and dramatically from only 8% found in the region in 2018 and 10% in 2019. A clear change in frequency of diagnose mental health conditions has emerged since the global coronavirus pandemic of 2020-2022. Approximately one-in-six residents in the North Country in 2023 have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes (16%). Again, this rate has increased significantly and dramatically from only 3% found in the region in 2017. Approximately one-ninth of adult residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with diabetes (11% in 2023), however, this rate has not changed significantly from diabetes rates reported in earlier years of study (was 10% in the North Country in 2016). The rate of reporting heart disease diagnoses among local residents has doubled from 5%-6% reported in each of 2016-2019 to the current 2023 reported rate of 11%. Approximately one-in-nine residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with cancer (11% in the North Country in 2023, significantly increased from only 5% in 2019). A small portion of adult residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with COPD (6% in the North Country in 2023). The rate has not changed significantly from 4%-6% found in the region in each previously studied year. (Tables 26-34)

of only 22% found in the region in 2018. More than one-quarter of residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with obesity (27% in 2023, not changed significantly from 25% found in 2022). Approximately one-in-five residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with a mental health condition (21% in the North Country in 2023). This rate has increased significantly and dramatically from only 8% found in the region in 2018 and 10% in 2019. A clear change in frequency of diagnose mental health conditions has emerged since the global coronavirus pandemic of 2020-2022. Approximately one-in-six residents in the North Country in 2023 have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes (16%). Again, this rate has increased significantly and dramatically from only 3% found in the region in 2017. Approximately one-ninth of adult residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with diabetes (11% in 2023), however, this rate has not changed significantly from diabetes rates reported in earlier years of study (was 10% in the North Country in 2016). The rate of reporting heart disease diagnoses among local residents has doubled from 5%-6% reported in each of 2016-2019 to the current 2023 reported rate of 11%. Approximately one-in-nine residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with cancer (11% in the North Country in 2023, significantly increased from only 5% in 2019). A small portion of adult residents in the North Country have been diagnosed with COPD (6% in the North Country in 2023). The rate has not changed significantly from 4%-6% found in the region in each previously studied year. (Tables 26-34)

3.3 Your Substance Use

3.3.1 Your Use of Cigarettes, Vaping Products, Recreational Marijuana

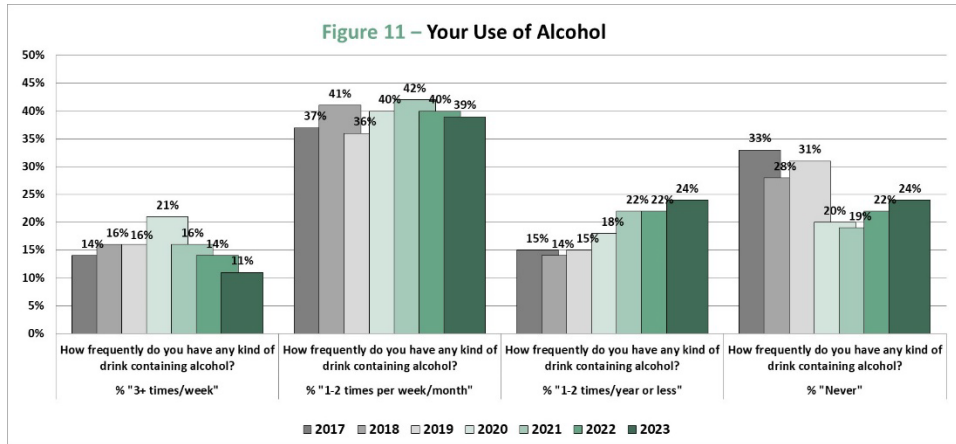
Approximately one-in-seven adults in the North Country in 2023 describe their cigarette use status as “current users” (rate of conventional cigarette use “Every Day or Some Days” is 14% in the North Country). The rate of being a current cigarette smoker has decreased statistically significantly in the North Country between 2019 and 2023 (2019 results were 19% in the North Country). Approximately one-in-eleven adults in the North Country in 2023 describe their e-cigarette use status as “current users” (rate of e-cigarette use “Every Day or Some Days” is 9% in the North Country). This rate has not changed statistically significantly in the North Country between 2019 and 2023 (2019 results were also 9% use vaping products in the North Country). Approximately one-in-five adults in the North Country in 2023 currently use recreational marijuana *at least rarely* (rate is 21% in the North Country, increased from 18% when last studied in 2021). The rate of using recreational marijuana “every day” is about one-in-fifteen participants (2023 rate is 7% in the North Country, significantly increased from only 4% found in 2021). (Tables 35-37)



Approximately one-in-seven adults in the North Country in 2023 describe their cigarette use status as “current users” (rate of conventional cigarette use “Every Day or Some Days” is 14% in the North Country). The rate of being a current cigarette smoker has decreased statistically significantly in the North Country between 2019 and 2023 (2019 results were 19% in the North Country). Approximately one-in-eleven adults in the North Country in 2023 describe their e-cigarette use status as “current users” (rate of e-cigarette use “Every Day or Some Days” is 9% in the North Country). This rate has not changed statistically significantly in the North Country between 2019 and 2023 (2019 results were also 9% use vaping products in the North Country). Approximately one-in-five adults in the North Country in 2023 currently use recreational marijuana *at least rarely* (rate is 21% in the North Country, increased from 18% when last studied in 2021). The rate of using recreational marijuana “every day” is about one-in-fifteen participants (2023 rate is 7% in the North Country, significantly increased from only 4% found in 2021). (Tables 35-37)

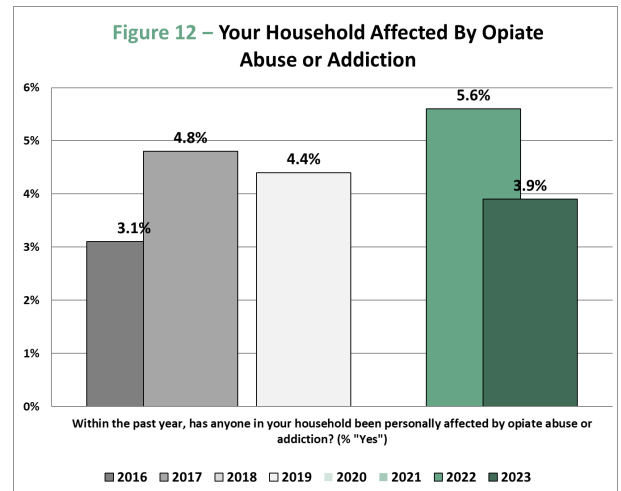
3.3.2 Your Use of Alcohol

If one was to define alcohol use as “use at all, more than “never”, then North Country residents have clearly increased alcohol consumption recently. The rate of responding “never use alcohol” decreased dramatically from 31% in the region in 2019 to only 20% in 2020, and has remained between 19%-24% each of the four studied years between 2020 and 2023. However, if one was to investigate the rates of “frequent alcohol consumption” (defined as consumption three or more times per week), the same increase occurred as the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in 2020, however, this frequent alcohol consumption in the North Country has subsequently subsided. For example, the rate of “3+ incidences of alcohol consumption per week” was 14% in 2017, and increased significantly to 21% in 2020, and has steadily continued to decrease to the current 2023 rate of only 11%. (Table 38)



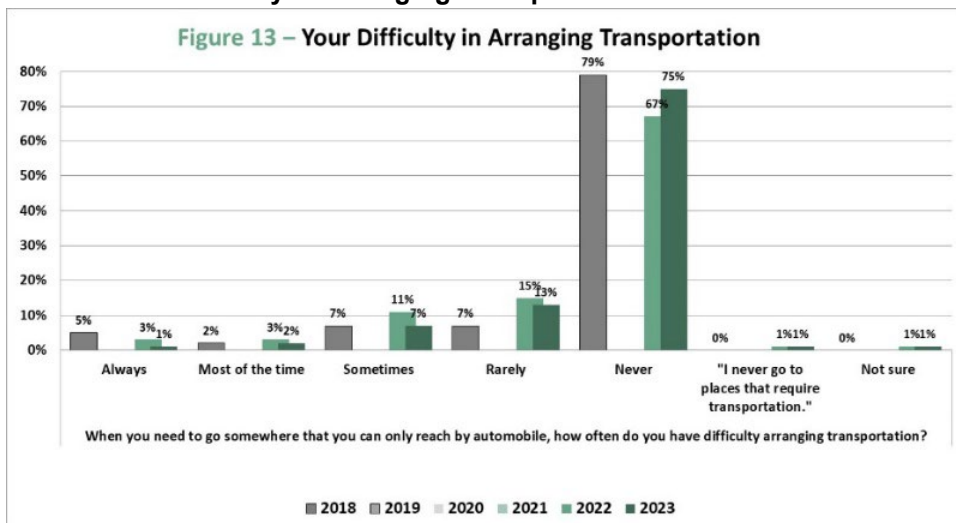
3.3.3 Your Household Affected by Opiate Abuse or Addiction

About one-in-twenty-five North Country residents (4%) report that within the past year, someone in their household has been personally affected by opiate abuse or addiction. This rate has increased significantly from only 3% found in the region in 2016. (Table 39)



3.4 Your Lifestyle

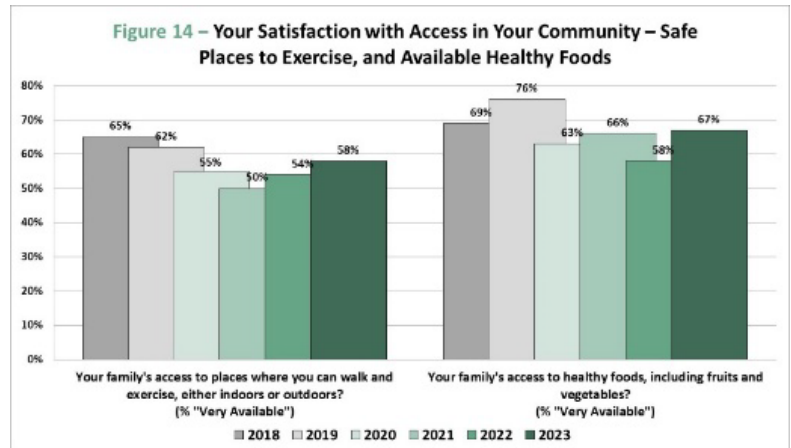
3.4.1 Your Difficulty in Arranging Transportation



A large majority of North Country residents report that when they need to go somewhere that can only be reached by automobile, they “never” have difficulty arranging transportation (75% in the North Country in 2023), and this rate has increased significantly from 67% found in the region in 2022. (Table 40)

3.4.2 Your Satisfaction with Access in Your Community – Safe Places to Exercise, and Available Healthy Foods

North Country residents in 2023 continue to be more satisfied than not with the availability of their family's access to places where they can walk and exercise, either indoors or outdoors (“Very Available” rate of 58% in the North Country), however, this rate has decreased significantly in the past six years (the 2018 “Very Available” rate was 65% in the North Country). A noticeable change, or recovery, has happened in the past three years post-pandemic where the “Very Available” rate has increased from only 50% in 2021 to the current 2023 rate of 58%. Only approximately 4% of participants in 2023 indicate that they believe that this availability is “Not At All Available”. North Country residents in 2023 also continue to express satisfaction with the availability of their family's access to healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables (“Very Available” rate of 67% in the North Country in 2023). Less than 1% of participants in 2023 indicate that they believe that this type of healthy food access is “Not At All Available”. However, there has been a recent significant decrease in responding “Very Available” since the COVID-19 pandemic and the “Very Available” rate has not yet fully recovered. Between 2019 and 2022 this rate decreased from 76% to the current 58%, therefore, the current 67% rate is not fully back to prepandemic levels. One possible and likely factor that could also be impacting the perceived availability of healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables in 2023 is the recent high inflation rates and associated increase in costs of food. (Tables 41-42)



Section 4 – Study Methodology:

The American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) is the leading public opinion professional association in the world. The AAPOR Transparency Initiative (TI) suggests that all public opinion research and polling firms utilize best practices in the industry in both data collection methodology and data analytics techniques. The methodology used in this study of health-related issues in Northern New York State included a mixed-mode sampling methodology using a combination of live interviewer telephone interviews of residents on cell phones and landlines, intercept-sampling of the difficult-to-access subpopulation of the military affiliated at Fort Drum, as well as random nonprobability panel email invitation of residents to complete the survey online. All interviews were completed between May 15 and June 10, 2023. To adjust for sampling nonresponse error, the data were weighted within county for gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, household composition, and military affiliation. The data were calibrated for sampling modality, and finally weights were trimmed to minimize the design effect, generating a final design effect for the study of 1.8. After all data compilation, cleansing, transforming, weighting, calibrating, and trimming the overall approximate margin of error for this study when analyzing results for the entire region-wide sample of 1,472 participants is $\pm 2.7\%$. When investigating study results for subgroups (such as results for only females, or only those who are uninsured, or only those who reside in Jefferson County, etc.) the margin of error is greater than $\pm 2.7\%$ due to smaller within-subgroup sample sizes. With sample sizes of approximately 500 residents per county in this study, county-specific margins of error are approximately $\pm 4.7\%$. The margin error is a measurement of random error, error due to simply the random chance of sampling. When surveying humans there are other potential sources of error, sources of error in addition to random error (which is the only error encompassed by the margin of error). Response error, nonresponse error, process error, bias in sample selection, bias in question-phrasing, lack of clarity in question-phrasing, social desirability bias, acquiescence bias, satisficing, and undercoverage are common sources of other-than-random error. Methods that should be, and have been in this study, employed to minimize these other sources of error include: maximum effort to select the sample randomly, piloting and testing of utilized survey questions, extensive training of all data collectors (interviewers), thorough cleansing of data, calibration of data, and application of post-stratification algorithms to the resulting sampled data.

Section 5 – Study Appendices:

Appendix I – Regional and County-specific Trend Analyses (2016-2023)

Most of the survey questions that have been used in the 2023 North Country Community Health Survey have also been used in earlier years of surveying in the three represented counties. To determine attitude and behavior changes over time in the North Country, and potentially evaluate effectiveness in approaching regional health care goals, results for 2016 through 2023 are provided in both tabular and time series line graph formats in Appendix I. Statistical tests of significance have been completed and reported to determine which trends are, and are not, statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Appendix II – Regional and County-specific 2023 Cross-tabulations

The results for the 2023 North Country Community Health Survey have been cross-tabulated, or partitioned, by each of: county, gender, age, education level, race/ethnicity, military affiliation, household composition (have 1+ child in the home), identification as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, identification as disabled, household income level, health insurance status/type, as well as by many other health attitude and experience factors. Further, all of these investigations are completed and included both as one large region-wide group, as well as for each of the three county-specific subgroups. To summarize, this appendix includes 41 different survey questions, with 60 separate subgroups analyzed for each of the 41 survey questions. These analyses are completed for each of the four following groups: region-wide; Jefferson County specific; Lewis County specific; and St. Lawrence County specific. Therefore, there are $41 \times 60 \times 4 = 9,840$ different response distributions in Appendix II. With a typical response-option set of approximately three-to-four choices (i.e. “Yes-No-Not sure”, or “Excellent-Very Good-Good-Fair-Poor-Not Sure”, that indicates that there are over 40,000 individual statistics (percentages) reported in Appendix II. Recall that these cross-tabulations are only for year 2023! These cross-tabulation results are provided to allow the reader to dig deeper and determine any variables or factors that may be significantly associated with levels or results for the measured health-related items in this study. Response distribution percentages (weighted) and sample sizes (unweighted) are reported for each studied subgroup in tabular format in Appendix II. Statistical tests of significance have been completed and reported to determine which subgroup comparisons (or, associations, or, correlations) are, and are not, statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Appendix III – The 2023 North Country Community Health Survey Instrument

Readers may observe the precise survey instrument script and language that has been utilized in this study in Appendix III.