

Health Behaviors & Preventive Health Practices Among Mecklenburg County Residents



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Introduction

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a random telephone survey of state residents aged 18 and older in households with telephones. BRFSS was initially developed in the early 1980s by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in collaboration with state health departments and is currently conducted in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three United States territories. Through BRFSS, information is collected in a routine, standardized manner on a variety of health behaviors and preventive health practices related to the leading causes of death and disability.

Since 1999 the North Carolina BRFSS has been operated by the State Center for Health Statistics. The surveys are administered in the Telephone Interviewing Laboratory of the Center, which conducted 6, 205 interviews in 2001 for the state of North Carolina. For the first time last year the State Center for Health Statistics oversampled ten of the most populous counties in North Carolina (Mecklenburg, to produce long-sought local-level BRFSS estimates. A total of 431 surveys were completed for Mecklenburg County.

National data for this report was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC provides a standard core questionnaire for all states to use. However, some questions were developed on the state level and were only asked of North Carolina residents, therefore, there was no national data obtained for these questions.

The current report uses data primarily for the year 2001 unless otherwise notated. Local data are weighted and projected to *521,205 Mecklenburg County residents 18 years of age or older. Topics included in this report are: health status, health care access, asthma, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, immunization, nutrition, weight control, blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking and alcohol consumption. Information concerning disability, cancer screening, HIV/AIDS, oral health, substance abuse, family planning, and sexual assault/physical violence is also available on request.

For more detailed information, visit the North Carolina State for Health Statistics website, <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/healthstats/brfss/2001/meck/topics.html> or contact the Mecklenburg County Epidemiology Program at 704-353-0543.

Strengths and Limitations

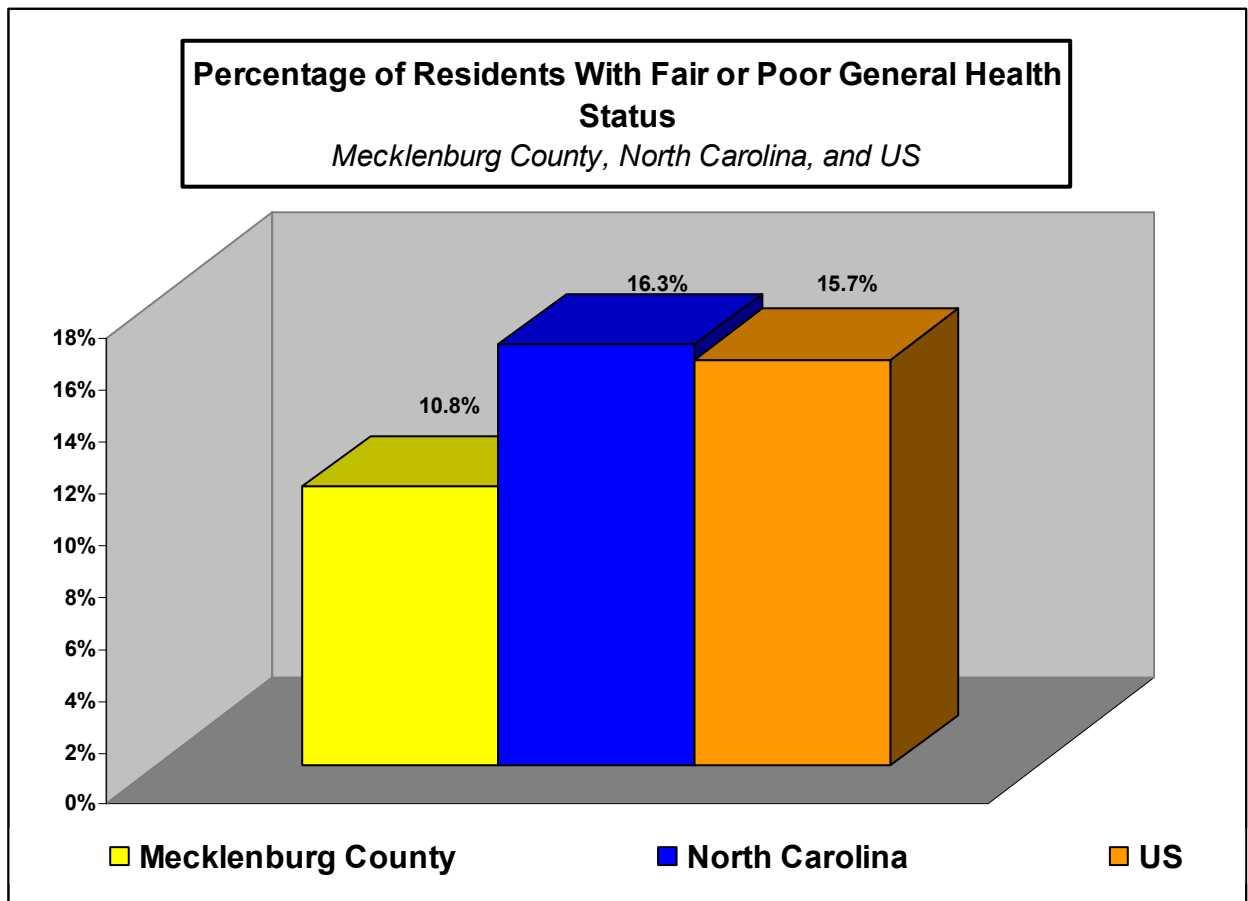
The BRFSS methodology has been used and evaluated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and participating states since 1984. The content of the survey questions, questionnaire design, data collection procedures, interviewing techniques, and editing procedures have been carefully developed to improve data quality and lessen the potential for bias. Data collection is ongoing and each year new annual results become available. Limitations include lack of coverage of persons who live in households without a telephone and data that is collected is self-reported by respondents.

General Health Status

The concept of health-related quality of life refers to a person or group's perceived physical and mental health over time. Physicians have often used health-related quality of life to measure the effects of chronic illness in their patients in order to better understand how an illness interferes with a person's day-to-day life. On average, Americans said they feel unhealthy (physically or mentally) about 5 days per month.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Approximately 11% (56,290 persons) of Mecklenburg County residents consider their health status to be fair or poor.
- ◆ A little over seven percent of adults (37,005 persons) reported that their physical health was not good for eight days or more out of the previous 30 days.
- ◆ Ten percent of residents (52,120 persons) reported that their mental health was not good for eight days or more out of the previous 30 days.
- ◆ Approximately four percent (20,326 persons) reported that because of their poor physical or mental health, their usual activities were impaired for eight days or more.



Health Care Access

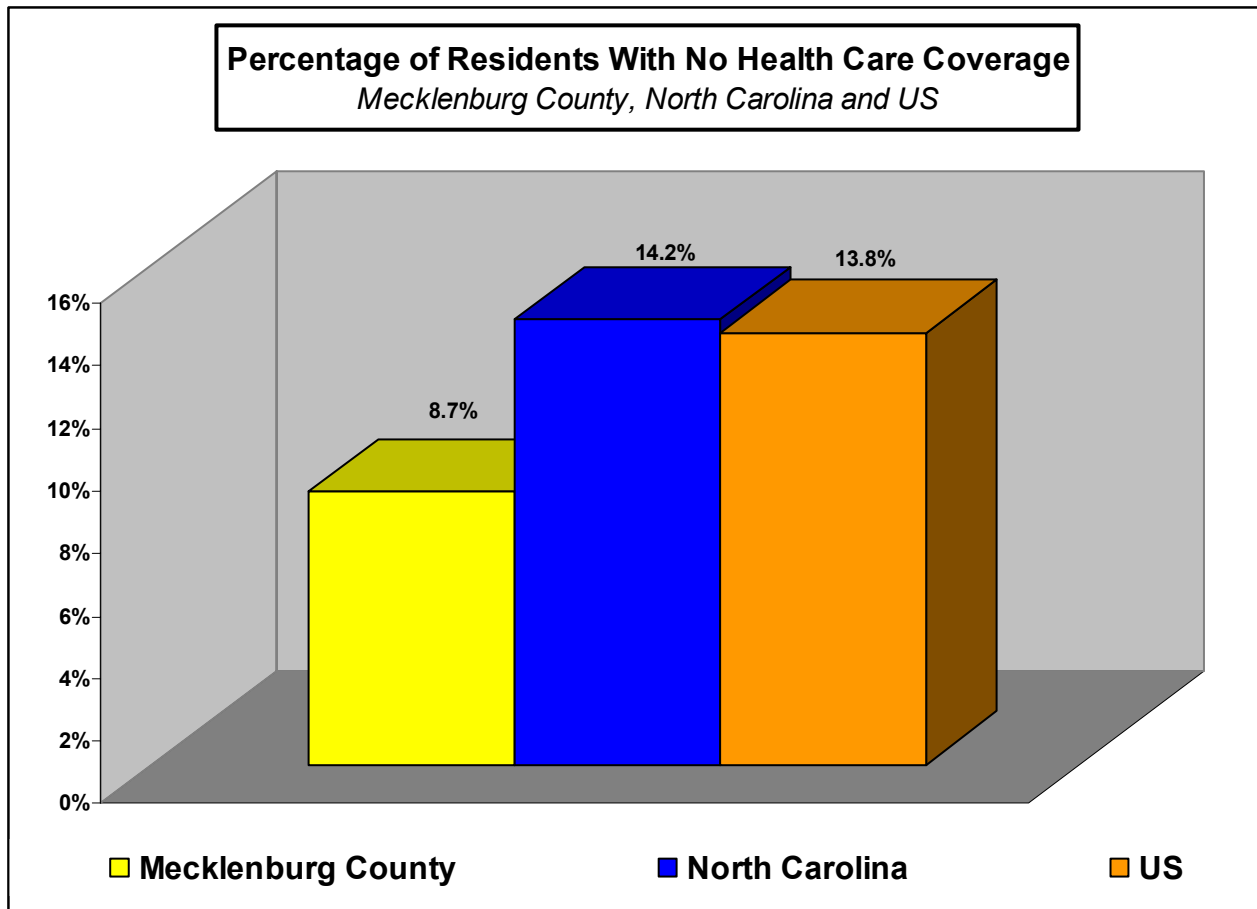
Lack of health care coverage is a major barrier to accessing health care. In 1999 , approximately 16% of US residents did not have health insurance.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Almost one-tenth of residents (45,345 persons) do not have some form of health care coverage, including health insurance, prepaid plans such as HMO's or government plans such as Medicare.
- ◆ Over seventeen percent of residents (91,210 persons) report not having one person they think of as their personal doctor or health care provider.

Healthy Carolinians 2010 Objectives:

- ◆ Increase the percentage of persons with health insurance to 100% (Mecklenburg, 91.3%).
- ◆ Increase the percentage of persons of adults with specific source of ongoing care to 96% (Mecklenburg, 82.5%).



Arthritis

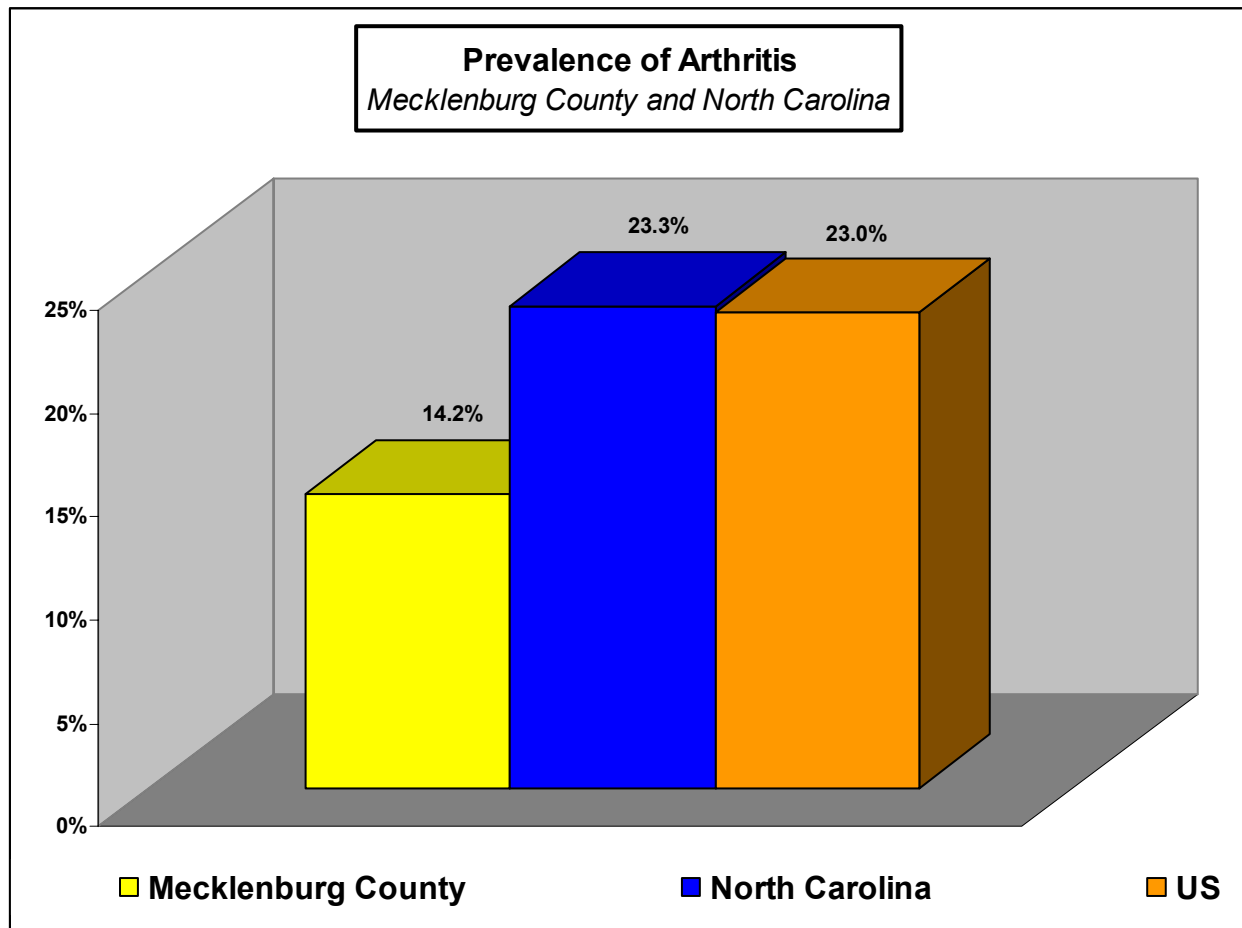
Arthritis and related conditions affect nearly 43 million Americans, or about one of every six people, making it one of the most prevalent diseases in the United States. By 2020, as the baby boom generation ages, an estimated 60 million Americans will be affected by arthritis.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Almost a third of Mecklenburg residents (164,700 persons) have had pain, aching, stiffness or swelling in or around a joint, but only about 14 % (74,011 persons) have been diagnosed with arthritis.
- ◆ Of those who reported having pain, aching, and stiffness around a joint, over a fifth (41,696 persons) are now limited in any way in any activities.

Healthy People 2010 Objective:

- ◆ Reduce the percentage of adults with chronic joint symptoms with an activity limitation to 21% (Mecklenburg, 22.4%).

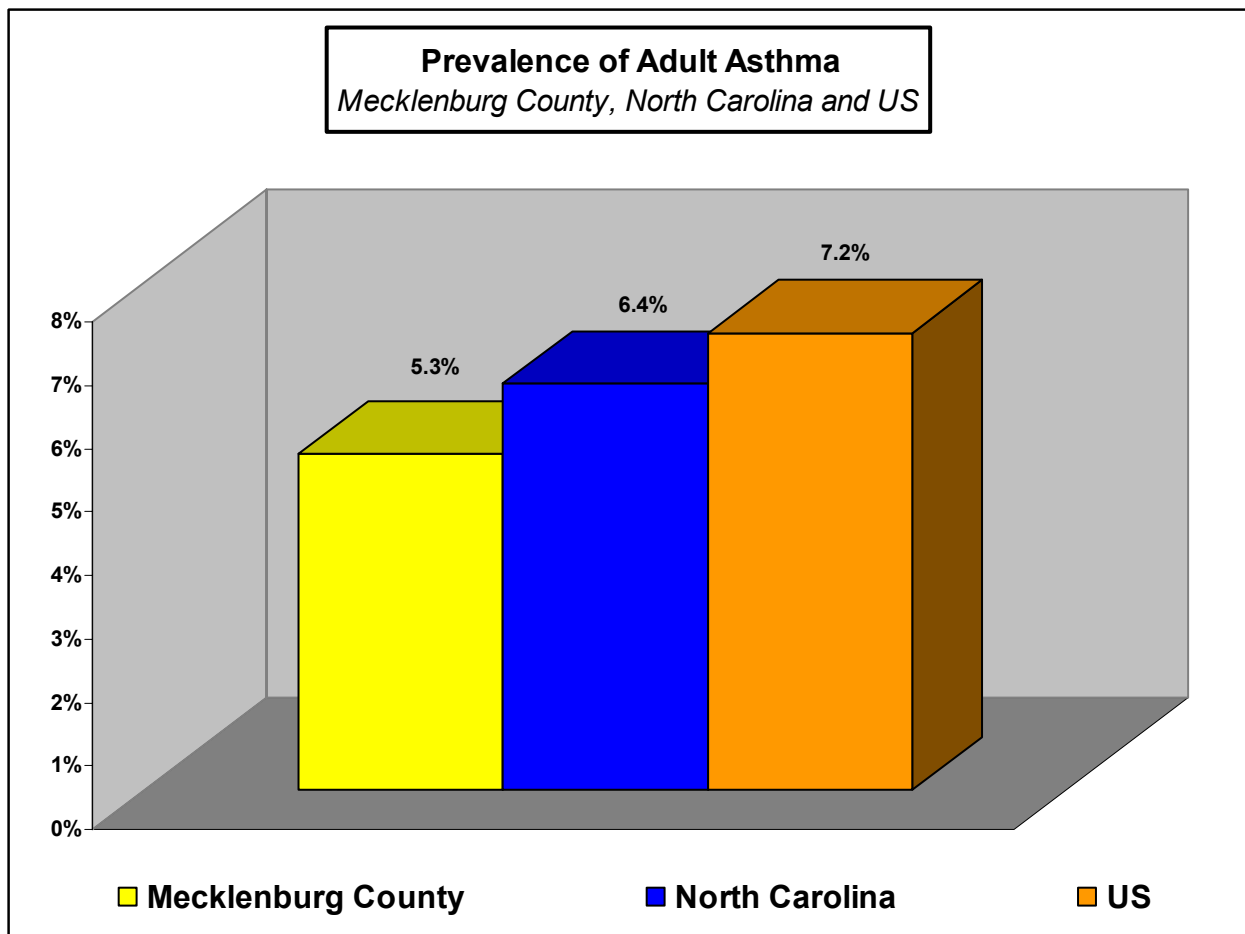


Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disease that has been increasing in prevalence since 1980. As of the year 2000, asthma has affected roughly 10 million adults in the US. Between 400,00 and 500,000 persons are hospitalized each year because of asthma.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Over seven percent of Mecklenburg residents (37,526 persons) have ever been told by a doctor they had asthma.
- ◆ Over five percent of adults still have asthma (27,624 persons).

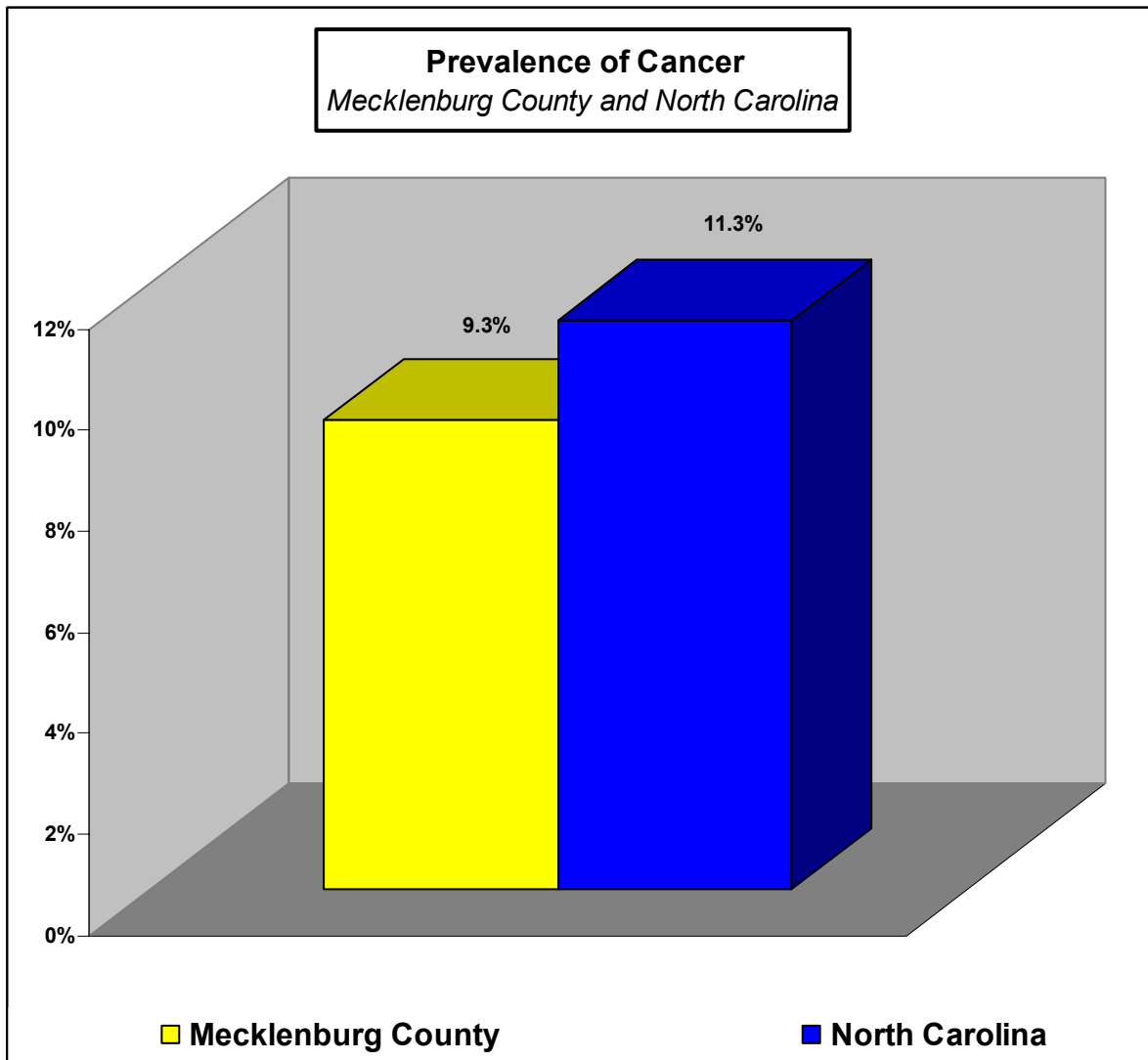


Cancer

Nearly one out of every two American men and one out of every three American women will have some type of cancer in their lifetime. In 2002, half a million Americans will die of cancer and about 1.3 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Almost one tenth of adult residents aged 40 years old and older have been told by a health professional that they have cancer.

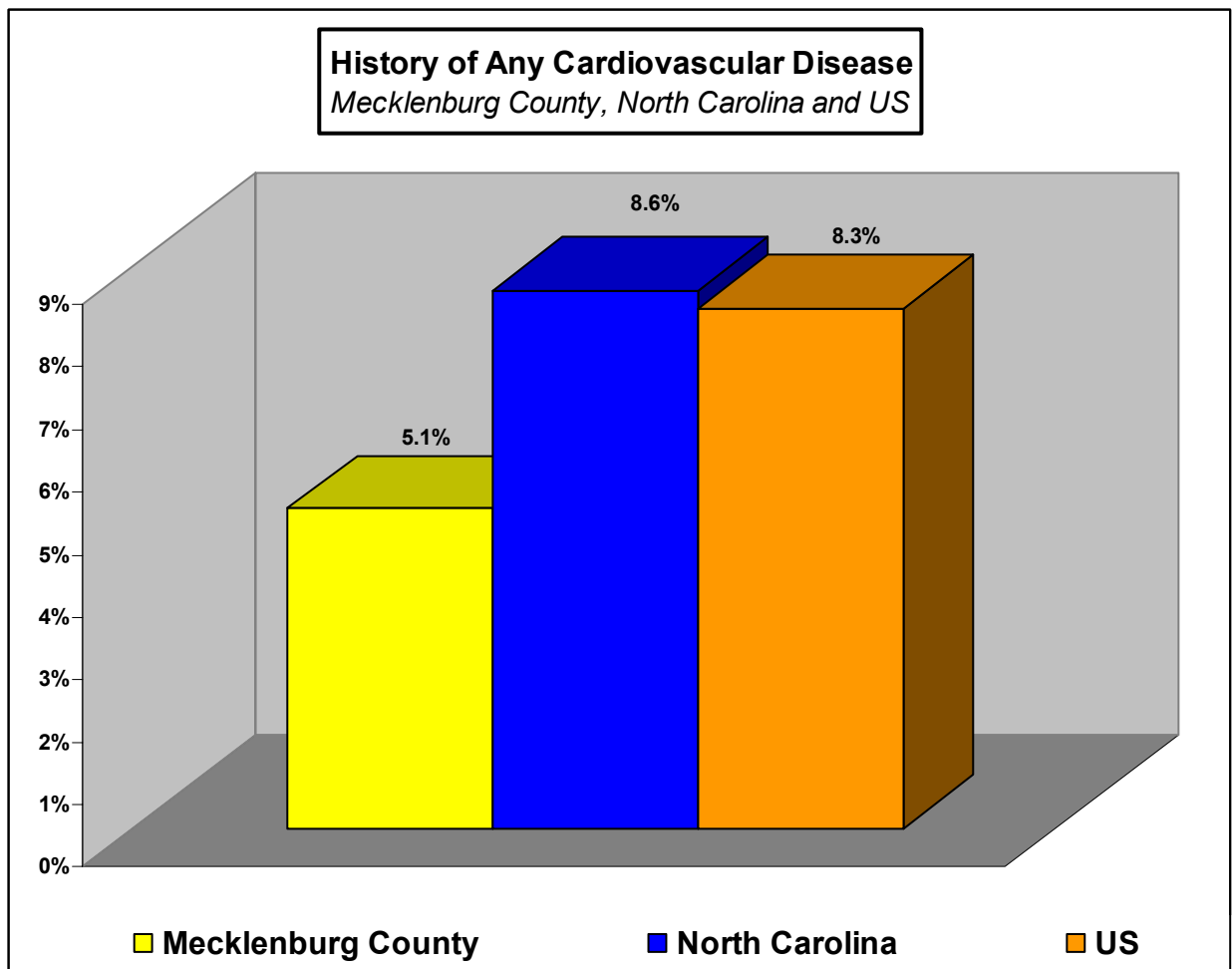


Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), principally heart disease and stroke, is the nation's leading killer for both men and women among all racial and ethnic groups. More than 960,000 Americans die of CVD each year, accounting for more than 40% of all deaths. About 58 million Americans (almost one-fourth of the nation's population) live with some form of cardiovascular disease.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ More than five percent of residents (26,581 persons) have had any history of CVD (heart attack, coronary heart disease or stroke residents).



Diabetes

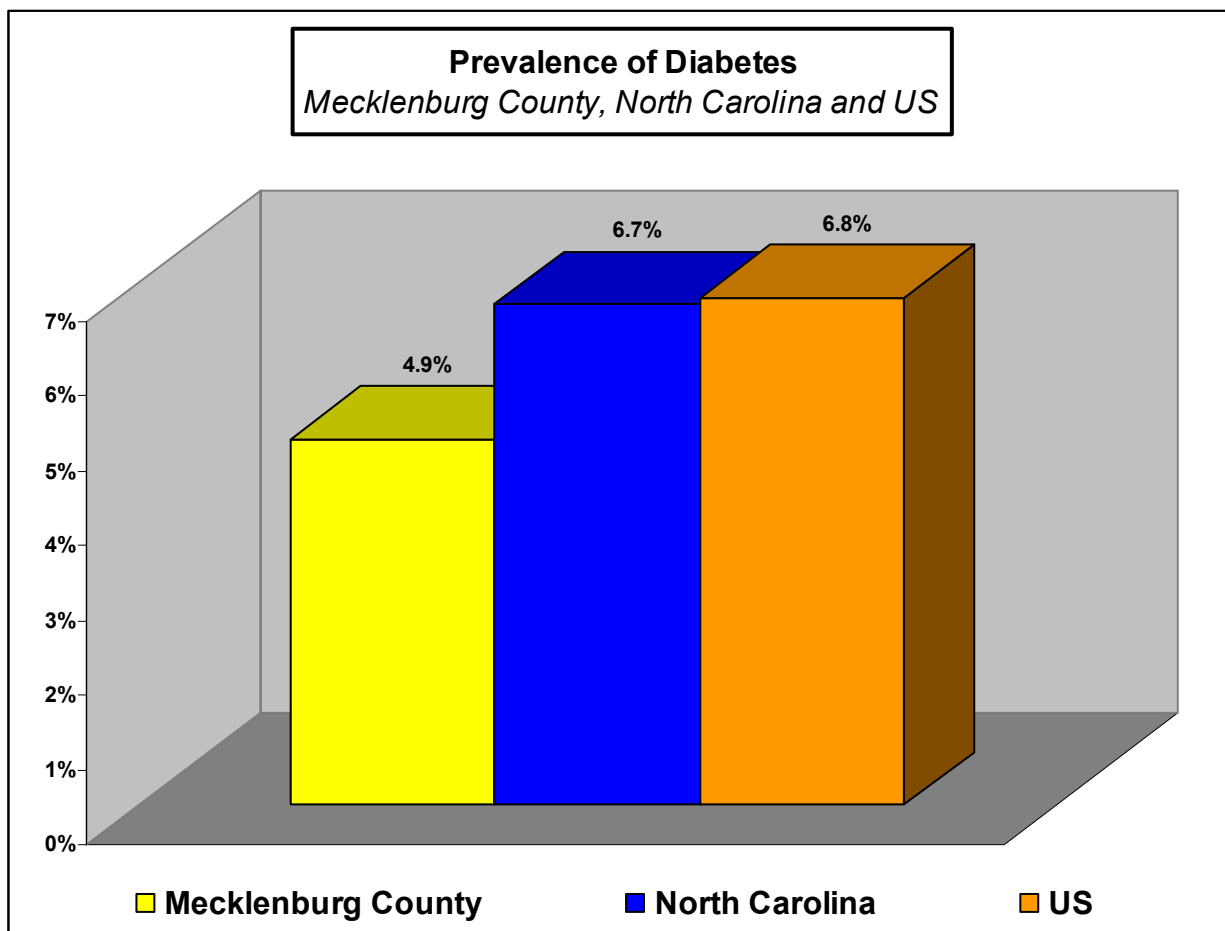
Diabetes is a serious, costly disease that is on the rise. Seventeen million Americans have diabetes, and over 200,000 people die each year of related complications. Diabetes can cause heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure, leg and foot amputations, pregnancy complications, and deaths related to flu and pneumonia. Particularly at risk are the 5.9 million Americans who are unaware that they have the disease.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Nearly five percent of Mecklenburg County residents (25,539 persons) have been told they have diabetes.

Healthy People 2010 Objective:

- ◆ Increase the percentage of adults (age 20+) with diabetes whose condition has been diagnosed to 80%.



Physical Activity

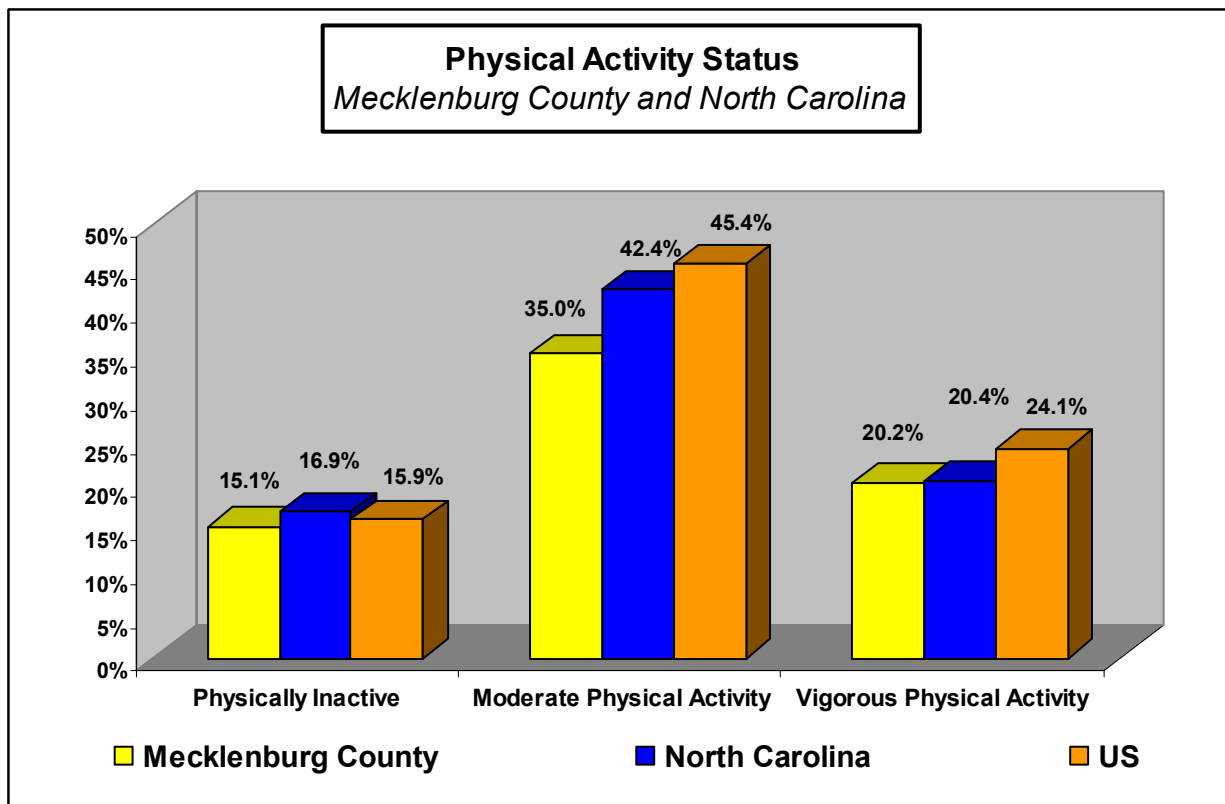
Research has shown that regular physical activity can reduce premature mortality from cardiovascular disease, hypertension, colon cancer and diabetes. More than 60% of American adults are not regularly physically active and approximately 25% of adults are not active at all.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Almost 80% of Mecklenburg County residents (411,230 persons) stated they have participated in physical activities or exercise such as running, calisthenics, golf, gardening or walking for exercise in the past 30 days.
- ◆ Over a third of adult residents (182,421 persons) participate in moderate physical activity (activity for 30 or more minutes per day, five or more days per week or vigorous activity for 20 or more minutes per day, three or more days per week).
- ◆ One fifth of adult residents (105,283 persons) participate in vigorous physical activity (activity for 20 or more minutes per day, three or more days per week.).

Healthy People 2010 Objectives:

- ◆ Reduce the percentage of adults who report no physical activity or exercise to 20% (Mecklenburg, 15.1%).
- ◆ Increase the percentage of adults who engage in vigorous physical activity to 30% (Mecklenburg, 20.2%).

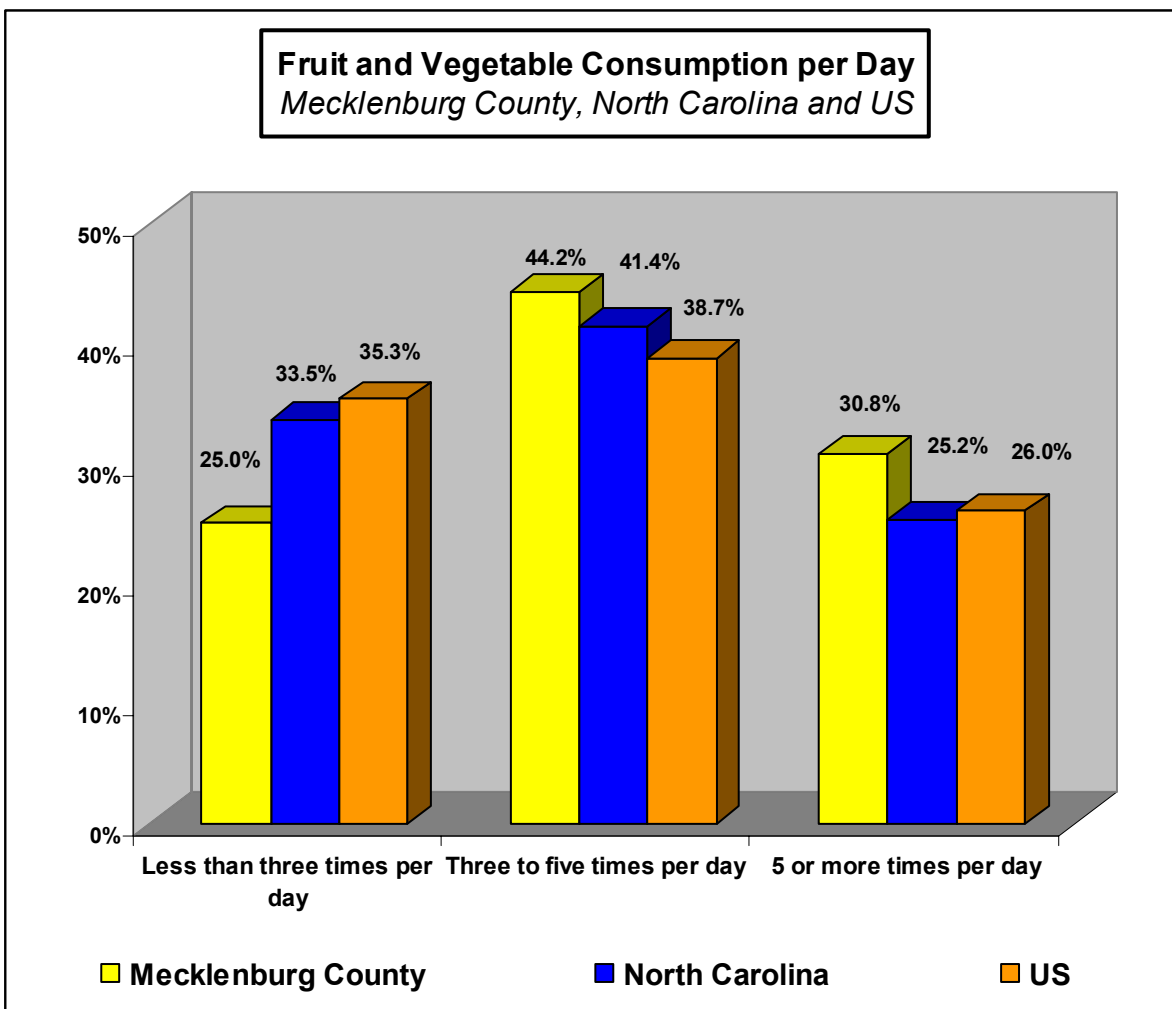


Nutrition

In 1991, the 5 A Day for Better Health Program was established to inform Americans that eating fruits and vegetables can improve their health and may reduce the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases. Since the inception of the program the percentage of Americans who know they should eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day has increased nearly fivefold—from 8 to 36 percent.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ A little over 30% of Mecklenburg County residents eat fruits and vegetables a day five or more times per day (160,531 persons).
- ◆ A quarter of residents eat fruits and vegetables less than three times per day.



Weight Control

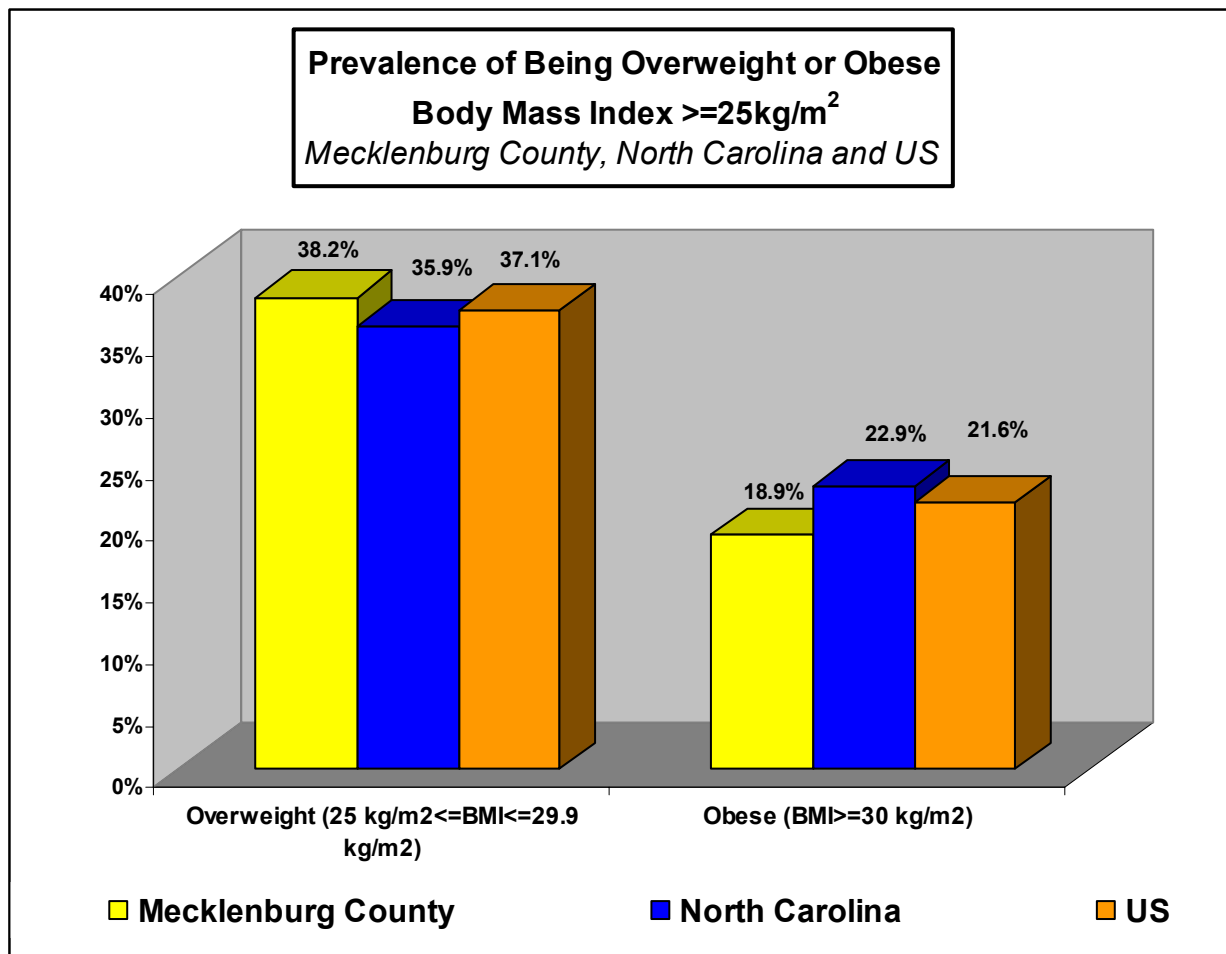
In the United States, obesity has risen at an epidemic rate during the past 20 years. One of the national health objectives for the year 2010 is to reduce the prevalence of obesity among adults to less than 15%, but research indicates that the situation is worsening rather than improving.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Over half of all Mecklenburg County residents are either overweight or obese (BMI greater than 24.9) (297,608 persons).
- ◆ Approximately 19% of residents are obese (BMI greater than 29.9).

Healthy People 2010 Objectives:

- ◆ Reduce the percentage of adults who are obese to 15% (Mecklenburg, 18.9%).

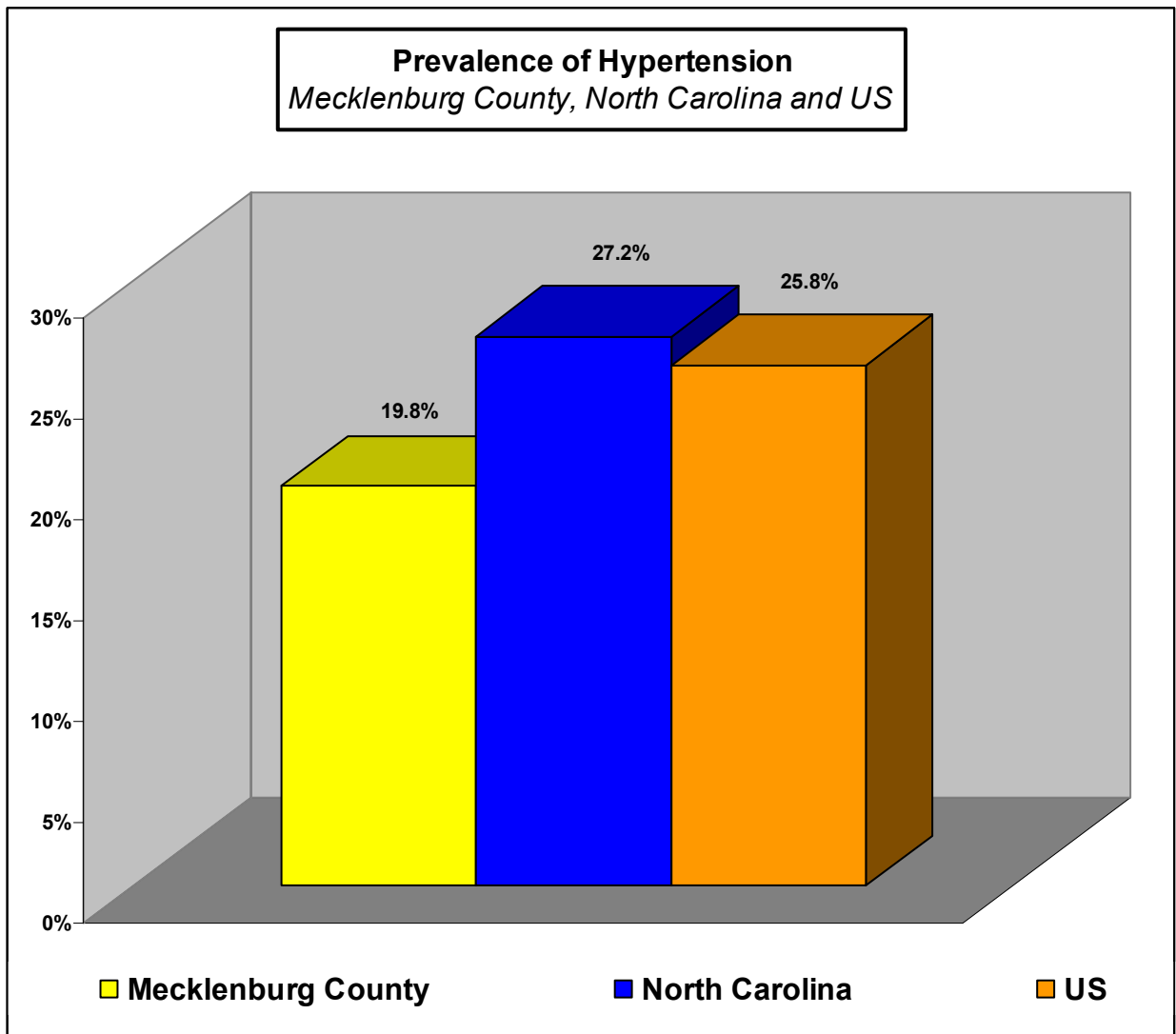


Blood Pressure

High blood pressure increases the risk for all cardiovascular diseases. About a fourth of all Americans have high blood pressure, and among those with hypertension almost a third are not aware of their condition.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Approximately one fifth of Mecklenburg County residents (103,199 persons) have been told by health professional that they have high blood pressure.
- ◆ Of those who have been told they have high blood pressure, over a fourth (31,272 persons) are not taking medication.



Cholesterol

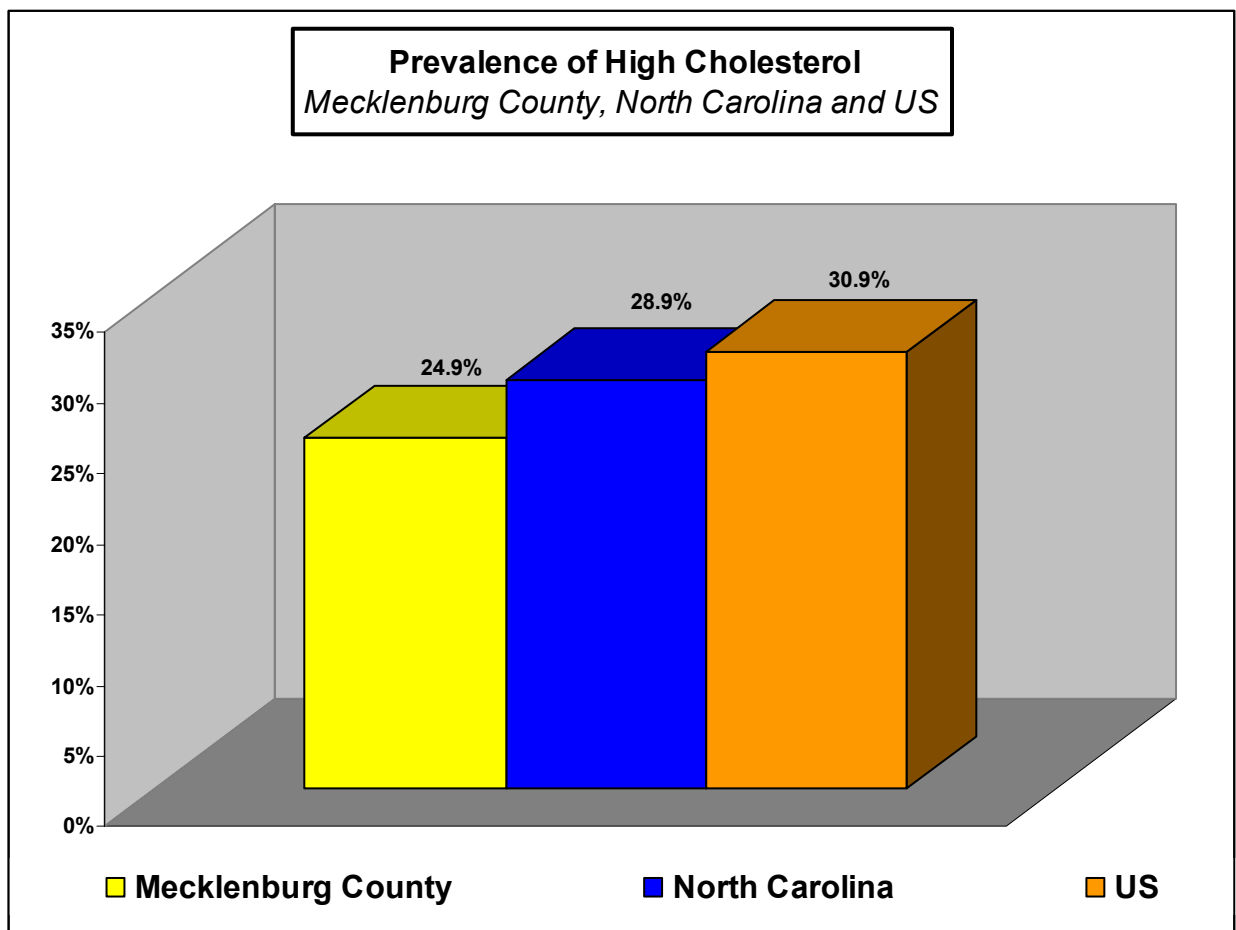
High blood cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States. In May 2001, the National Cholesterol Education Program recommends that adults aged >20 years have their cholesterol checked at least once every 5 years.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ More than three quarters of Mecklenburg County residents (403,412 persons) have had their blood cholesterol checked.
- ◆ Over one fifth of residents (114,320 persons) have been told by a health care professional that their blood cholesterol is high.

Healthy People 2010 Objective:

- ◆ Increase the percentage of adults who had their blood cholesterol checked in the past five years to 80% (Mecklenburg, 77.4%).



Immunization

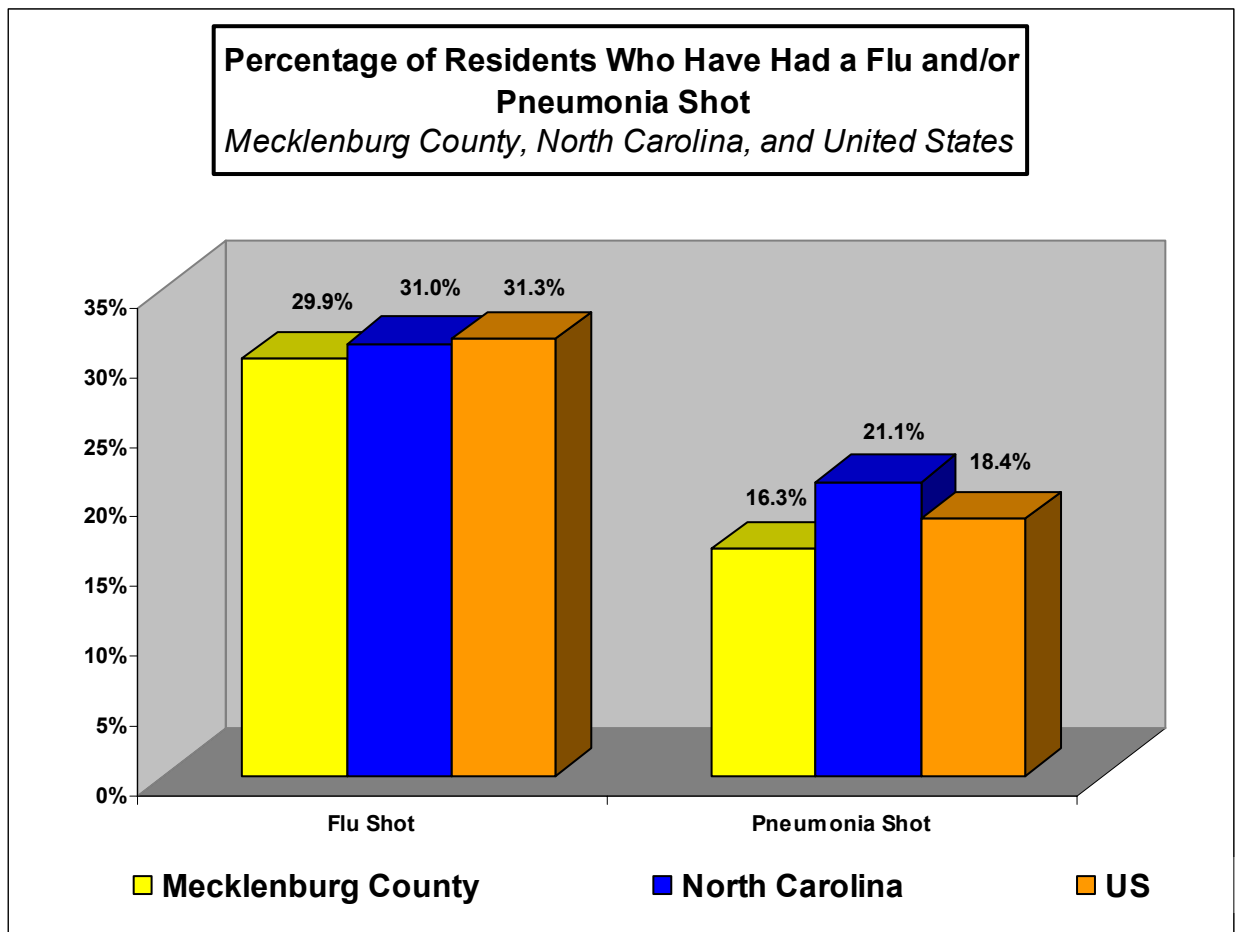
Each year approximately 60,000 deaths occur in the US because of influenza or pneumonia, especially among adults aged 65 years or older. Much of the illness and death caused each year from influenza and pneumonia can be prevented by immunizations.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Almost 30% of Mecklenburg residents (155,840 persons) have had a flu shot in the past year.
- ◆ Almost a fifth of residents (84,956 persons) have had a pneumonia shot or pneumococcal vaccine.

Healthy People 2010 Objectives:

- ◆ Increase percentage of non-institutionalized adults with annual flu vaccine to 90% (Mecklenburg, 29.9%).



Smoking

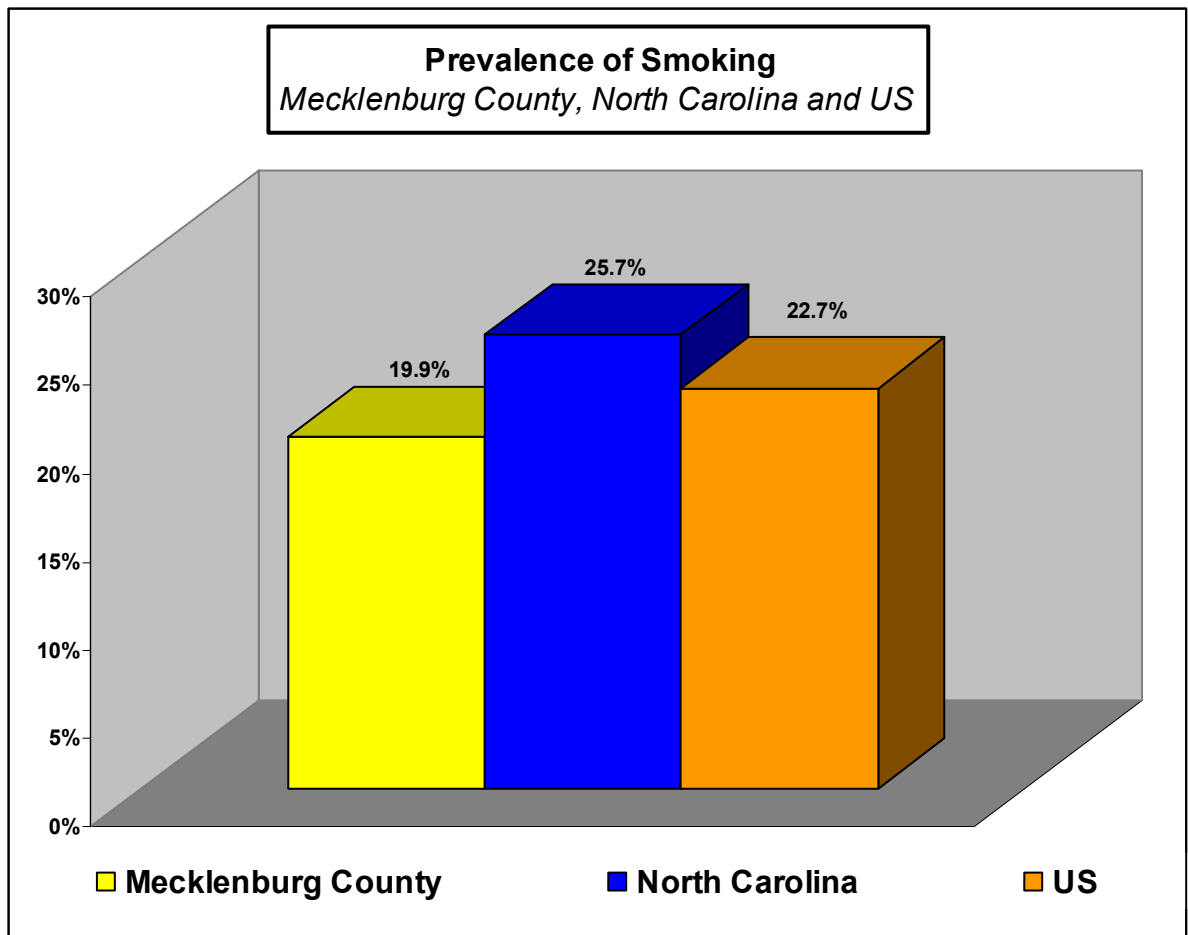
Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death in the United States. Approximately one fourth of Americans smoke and the number of youth that are smoking is increasing.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Almost one fifth of Mecklenburg adult residents currently smoke (103,719 residents).
- ◆ Of those who currently smoke, over 60% (62,544 persons) have stopped smoking for one day or longer because they were trying to quit.

Healthy People 2010 Objectives:

- ◆ Reduce cigarette smoking by adults to 12% (Mecklenburg, 19.9%).



Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol use is a factor in approximately half of all deaths from motor vehicle crashes and long-term alcohol misuse has been associated with liver disease, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and neurological damage. In the year 2000 over half of all Americans over the age of 18 have had a drink in the past 12 months and almost a third of those who drank have participated at least once in binge drinking.

Mecklenburg County:

- ◆ Over half of Mecklenburg residents (290,311 persons) reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.
- ◆ Approximately five percent of residents (25,539 residents) participate in heavy drinking (males having 3 or more drinks/day and females having 2 drinks or more per day).
- ◆ More than ten percent reported having five or more drinks on one or more occasions (binge drinking) in the past 30 days.

Healthy People 2010 Objectives:

- ◆ Reduce the percentage of adults who have engaged in binge drinking in the past month to 6% (Mecklenburg, 10.5%).

