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Mental Health & Cancer Top Residents' Health Concerns, Analysis Finds Residents also worried about heart disease/stroke, obesity, and women's health

Results pulled from updated analysis of ongoing survey that solicits feedback about health perceptions

HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. (May 10, 2024) – A new analysis revealed Suffolk and Nassau County residents' top community health concerns are mental health and cancer, respectively. Last year, mental health prevailed as both counties' biggest concern.

These results are the product of an analysis of community health data collected by the [Long Island Health Collaborative](#) (LIHC). The data were collected January through December 2023 using the [Community Health Assessment Survey \(English Version\)](#) and [Spanish version](#), an ongoing survey that collects primary data about Long Islanders' health concerns for themselves and their communities. The data is used by hospitals, county health departments, community-based organizations and other social and health services providers to offer programs that best meet the needs of local communities.

In Nassau County, heart disease/stroke and mental health issues followed cancer as residents' secondary and tertiary issues of most concern. In Suffolk County, residents are secondarily concerned about cancer, followed by drug/alcohol abuse.

When asked **what are the biggest ongoing health concerns for yourself**, mental health depression/suicide topped the list for Suffolk for the second year in a row, while heart disease/stroke topped the list for Nassau. The previous year's analysis revealed obesity/weight loss issues as Nassau's top concern for individuals' health.

When asked **which is MOST needed to improve the health of your community**, mental health services primarily topped the list for Suffolk, followed by healthier food choices. Nassau County indicated clean air and water as their top need, and mental health services as a close secondary need. Another need indicated by both counties is drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

When asked **what health screenings or education/information services are needed in your community**, Suffolk residents said mental health/depression screening, while Nassau residents said blood pressure screening. In last year's analysis, mental health services ranked first for both counties.

It is not surprising that Long Island communities are concerned about cancer and mental health. New York State's [Community Health Indicator Reports](#) show that in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the all cancer incidence rate per 100,000 of the population is higher than the state rate.

Epidemiologists and mental health providers have noted a marked increase in the incidence of depression, anxiety, and suicide since the pandemic began in 2020. Especially hard hit are teens and young adults. According to [data](#) from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), in 2021 more than a third (37%) of high school students reported they experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released data in February of 2023 that shows nearly 3 in 5 (57%) U.S. teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless in 2021.

Many mental health issues persist and become chronic. As is the case with other chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and many cancers, good lifestyle habits, such as proper [nutrition](#) and adequate [physical activity](#), help individuals better manage their chronic conditions. Unhealthy diets and lack of exercise are modifiable risk factors. This is why the Long Island Health Collaborative and its partners support access to affordable and nutritious foods and encourage residents of all ages to walk. Numerous studies support the physical and mental health benefits of walking. The LIHC's public awareness campaign – [Live Better](#) – promotes the importance of nutrition and physical activity to better manage and/or prevent chronic diseases.

Individuals are encouraged to complete the Community Health Assessment Survey [online](#). To date, about 15,000 individual surveys have been collected and analyzed since 2013. These analyses offer a window into this region's healthcare landscape.

“Our data analyses are excellent resources for researchers, grant writers, physicians and anyone involved in providing healthcare and social services,” said Janine Logan, director of the Long Island Health Collaborative, “but a member of the general ‘population’ can get a sense of the burden of disease in their communities by viewing the zip code level data. A healthier community leads to a more robust local economic infrastructure and prosperity. Health is the undervalued connector.”

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About the Long Island Health Collaborative

The [Long Island Health Collaborative](#) is a partnership of Long Island's hospitals, county health departments, physicians, health providers, community-based social and human service organizations, academic institutions, health plans, local government, and the business sector, all engaged in improving the health of Long Islanders with a focus on the reduction of chronic diseases. The LIHC initiative is overseen by the [Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council](#), the association that advocates for Long Island's hospitals.