

# LC 8: Hamilton County Environmental Health



HAMILTON COUNTY  
**PUBLIC HEALTH**

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT



# Hamilton County Public Health Department's Mission

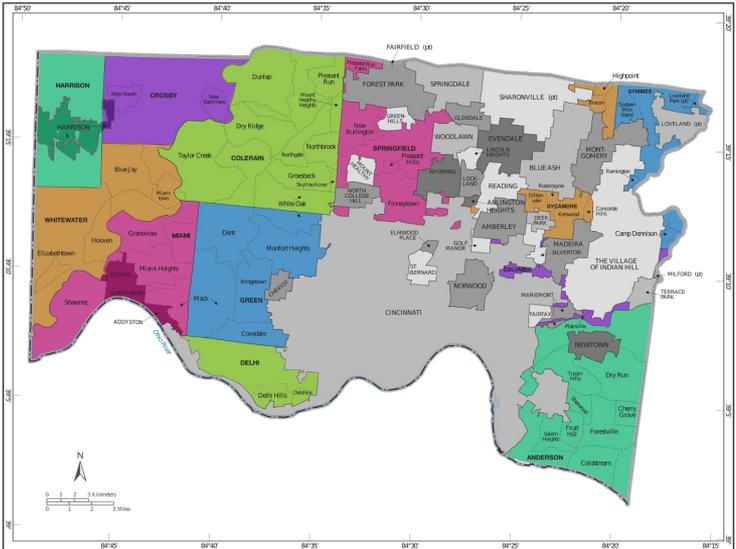
Mission: Hamilton County Public Health educates, serves and protects our community for a healthier future.

Demographics: In 2021, Hamilton county had a population of 826,139 people



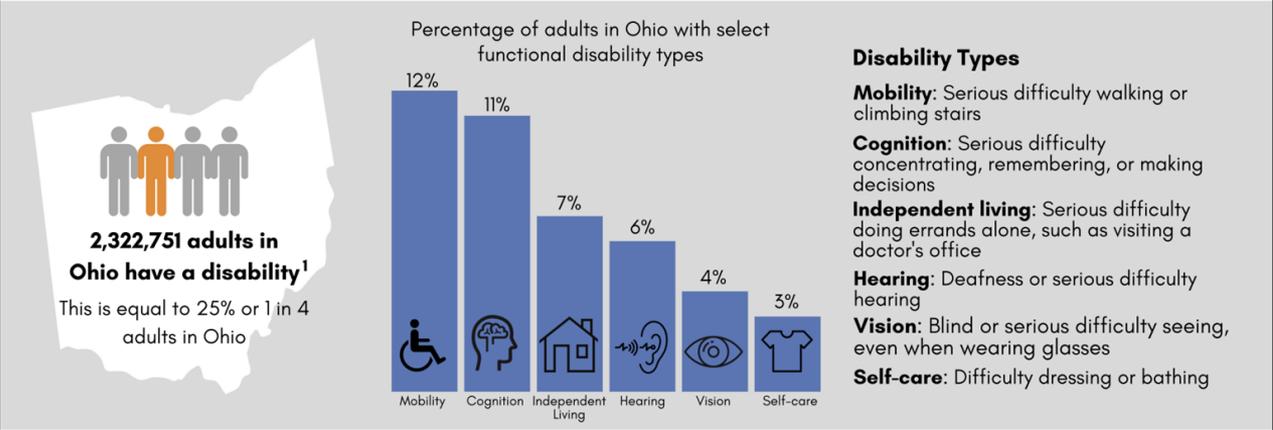
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# Social Determinant of Health: Mobility

- There are an estimated 54,000 individuals with an ambulatory disability, which is the most common type of disability in Ohio.
- CDC data projects that this number is even higher, at over 90,000 individuals.
- In 2022, Hamilton County had an elderly population (65+) of more than 140,000 individuals (16.8%).
- Ohioans spend \$35 billion annually on disability healthcare (37% of healthcare spending), equating to roughly \$17,732 per person annually.



# Overview

According to WalkScore, Cincinnati scores below average on walkability and transit, and significantly below average in terms of bikeability. In addition, many technically “walkable” areas downtown can be dangerous to walk in, and transit reliability can be poor.

Better urban planning taking into account environmental factors and the changing climate will impact public health in Hamilton County for the better.



# Relevance (to health of Cincinnati)

Disasters often wreak havoc on buildings and homes. Current reports from the National Centers for Environmental Information predict that the 40% increase in rainfall in the city of Cincinnati could cause the Ohio River to surge 25% in the next 30 years. This affects all citizens, but especially those with mobility and accessibility needs. By advocating for funds from the local, state, and federal government, Hamilton County can not only help rebuild after disasters, but also proactively protect our community by constructing environmentally conscious and more structurally sound infrastructure. Overall, climate change is affecting all communities, including Hamilton County, and it is critical to protect all citizens and the environment.

In disasters, disadvantaged individuals with less access to resources are most likely to use public health services. Because of challenges with access to healthcare and other social determinants, these individuals are also more likely to have more complicated health needs including mobility issues.

The City of Cincinnati created a plan to address climate change, called Green Cincinnati. One of the main components of this plan includes initiatives to decrease emissions from transportation. Cincinnati is looking to shift its transportation to be more people-focused, sustainable, and accessible.

# Where Support is Needed for this Issue

To help mitigate the devastating effects of climate change on disasters and emergencies, we need to ensure that our community is as prepared as possible to help all citizens. One aspect of this is ensuring that our infrastructure is up-to-date and accessible. The Cincinnati city government can generate more support for a more eco-friendly and user-friendly transportation system, so the city can do its part in combating climate change, while also ensuring that its citizens are able to utilize the emergency relief supplies and shelters provided by Hamilton County Health Department and its community partners.



# Next Steps

## Two major avenues of support:

- Consider providing funding for rideshare apps such as Uber and Lyft which provide specially-equipped vehicles for those in neighborhoods not well serviced by current public transportation infrastructure
- The public health department could also serve as a government advocate to improve sidewalks, ramps, and handrails, which would reduce risk of injury for those with mobility disadvantages.

## Potential grants:

- After the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was passed in December 2021, FEMA expanded the **Resources for Climate Resilience Program**. This program aims to reduce the vulnerability of communities to environmental disasters.
- As these disasters have been increasing in frequency due to the effects of climate change FEMA also offers a post-disaster **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program**. This program aims to help communities “rebuild in a way that reduces or mitigates future disaster losses. Grant funding is available to increase a community’s preparedness in advance of climate-related extreme weather events, improving their ability to recover.”
- In addition, FEMA also offers a **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Program**. This program also “aims to categorically shift the federal focus away from reactive disaster spending and toward research-supported, proactive investment in community resilience.”