



## **Risk Factors for Severe Illness from COVID-19 Updated January 26, 2021**

Beginning Jan. 26, 2021, NCDHHS will no longer provide updated information about risk factors for severe illness in reported COVID-19 cases and deaths. This information is obtained through case investigations and is often not available at this point in the pandemic due to widespread community transmission and redeployment of public health resources to support vaccination efforts.

### **Risk Factors and COVID-19**

People who are over the age of 65 and people of any age who have certain underlying health conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. These conditions include chronic lung disease, cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, and immunosuppressive conditions, including cancer treatment, smoking, and other immune disorders.

These underlying health conditions identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were cross referenced with NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) data sources to identify the percent of North Carolinians with higher risk for serious illness. There are limitations to this analysis. The NCDHHS data sources do not contain every underlying health condition identified by the CDC, and the definitions of the specific health condition may not align exactly.

Read more about the [CDC's guidance on persons at risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#)

### **What percent of North Carolinians are at higher risk for a severe illness from COVID-19?**

An estimated **70.4%** of adults in North Carolina are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 based on being 65 or older, having at least one of the underlying health conditions, or both. These data are from the NC State Center for Health Statistics [Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System](#) (BRFSS) for 2019, which is the most recently available year of data.



### **What percent of people in North Carolina had one of these underlying health conditions?**

An estimated **64.7% of people in North Carolina** has one of the underlying health conditions included in the CDC's guidance on people at high risk for a severe illness from COVID-19. An estimated **52% of people in North Carolina** who died in 2018, the most recent complete year with data available, had one of these underlying health conditions.

These underlying health conditions include chronic lung disease, cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, and immunosuppressive conditions, including cancer treatment, smoking, and other immune disorders.

Data on underlying health conditions in North Carolina’s population are from the NC State Center for Health Statistics BRFSS for 2019, which is the most recently available year of data. Data on underlying health conditions in North Carolina deaths are from the NC State Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics.



