



## **Risk Factors for Severe Illness from COVID-19 Updated December 1, 2020**

### **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, severe 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 **51.1%** 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 2018, which is the most recently available year of data.



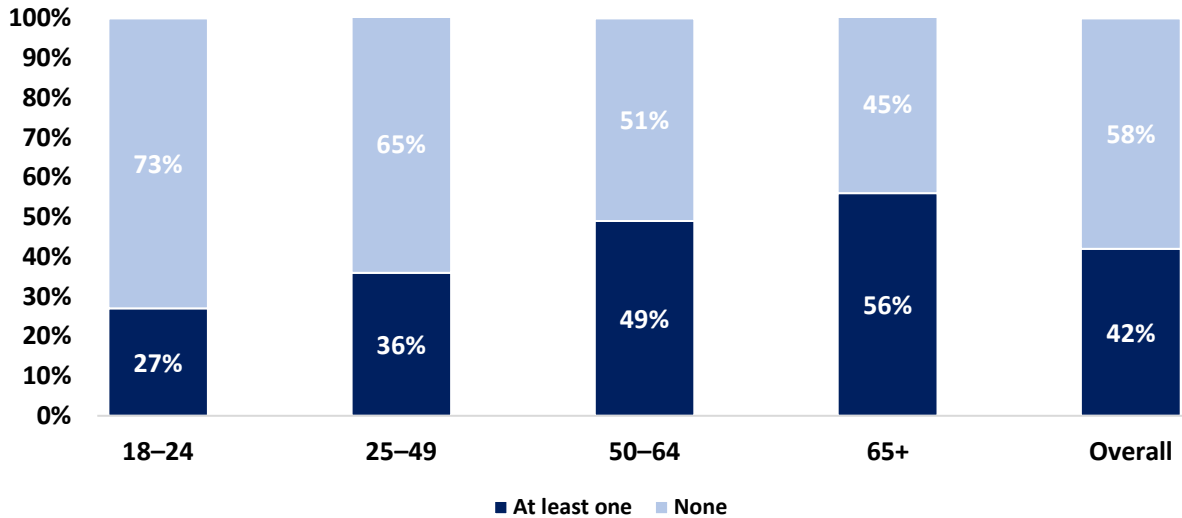
### **What percent of people in North Carolina had one of these underlying health conditions?**

An estimated **42% 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.

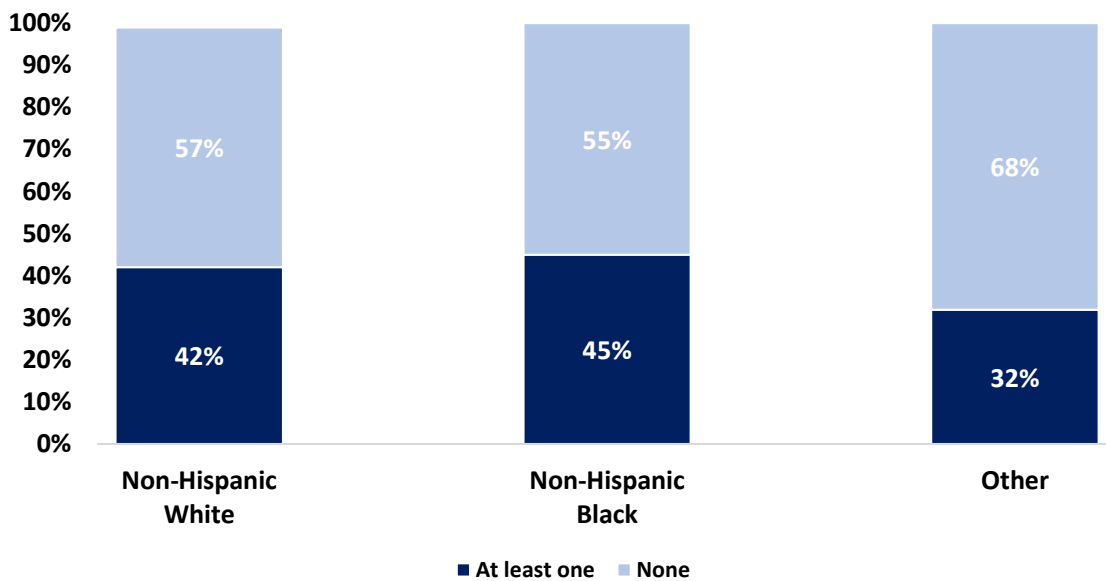
These underlying health conditions include chronic lung disease, cardiovascular disease, severe obesity, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, and immunosuppressive conditions, including cancer treatment, smoking, and other immune disorders.

Data on underlying health conditions in North Carolina’s population are from the NC State Center for Health Statistics BRFSS for 2018, 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.

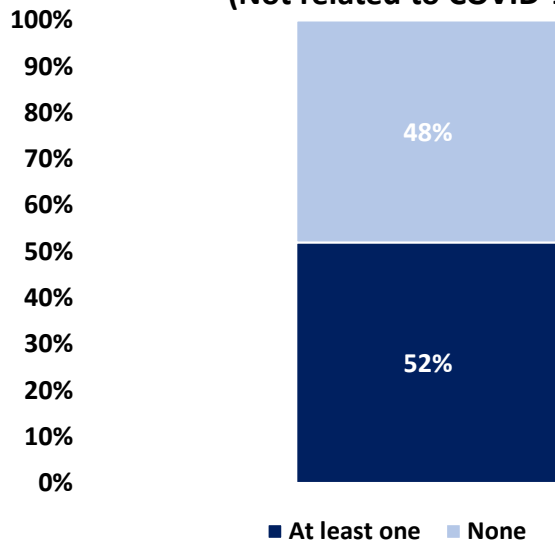
**Underlying health conditions in North Carolinians by age — 2018**



**Underlying health conditions in North Carolinians by race/ethnicity**



**Percent of NC deaths with an underlying health condition — 2018  
(Not related to COVID-19)**



**What percent of COVID-19 cases and deaths also have an underlying health condition?**

The following portion of this report will be updated weekly on Tuesdays by 4 p.m. This portion of the report was last updated December 1, 2020.

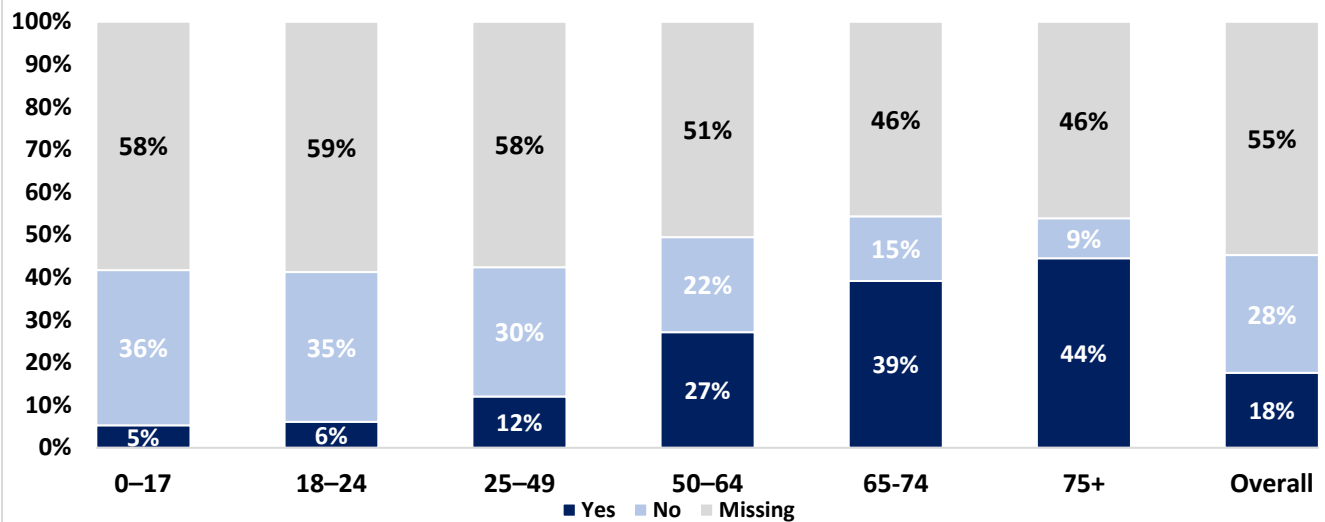
These graphs show the percent of COVID-19 cases and deaths with at least one underlying health condition. Percentage of COVID-19 cases and deaths in persons over 65 is updated daily on the [NC COVID-19 Cases Data Dashboard](#).

Data about underlying health conditions in COVID-19 cases are obtained through case investigations, which take time. Local Health Departments contact each person that has tested positive for COVID-19 to gather this data. Information about the presence or absence of specific health conditions will become more complete as case investigations are completed and information is entered into the North Carolina COVID-19 Surveillance System (NC COVID), but this information will not be available for all cases. Therefore, data are not yet available for every case or death.

Starting September 25, 2020, NCDHHS began reporting on two new measures on the NC COVID-19 Dashboard: 1. Antigen-positive cases and deaths, and 2. Antigen tests completed. This change was made in accordance with [recently updated case classification guidelines from the CDC](#).

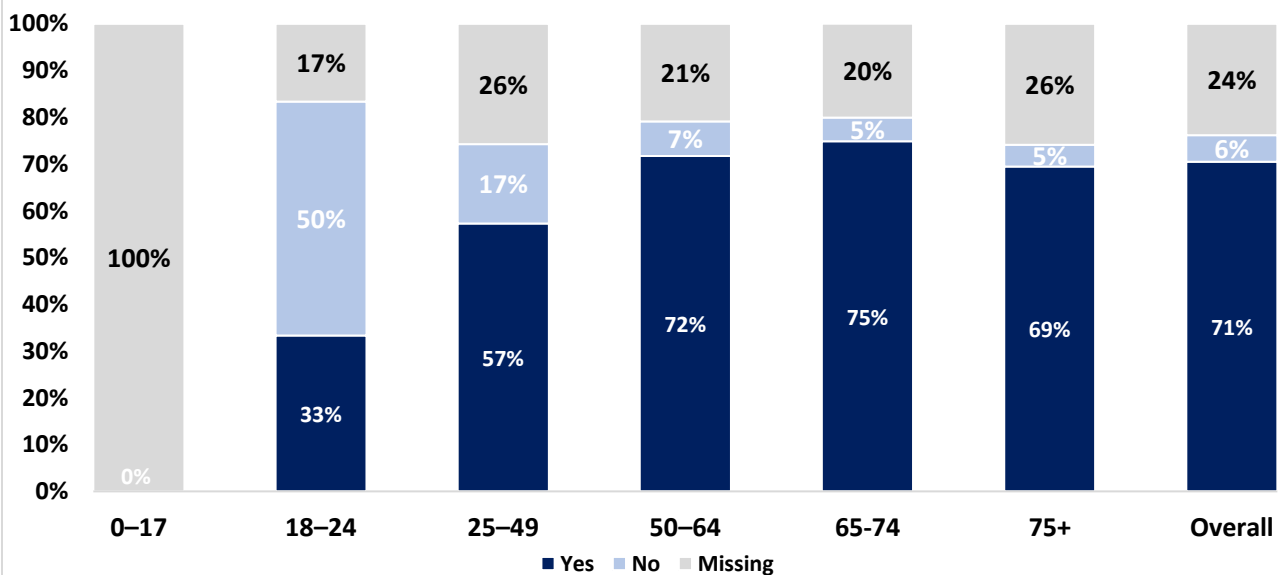
With this reporting change, cases now reflect individuals with a positive molecular (PCR) or positive antigen test result from the NC State Laboratory of Public Health, a reporting hospital, a reporting provider, or a commercial lab. COVID-19 deaths include individuals who have had a positive molecular (PCR) or positive antigen test for COVID-19, who died without fully recovering from COVID-19, and who had no alternative cause of death identified. Deaths are reported by hospitals and clinicians directly to the local or state health departments. For more information about antigen positive case data, visit the NCDHHS [Antigen Positive Cases Data: FAQ](#).

**Percent of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases with at least one high-risk underlying health conditions, by age — December 1, 2020**

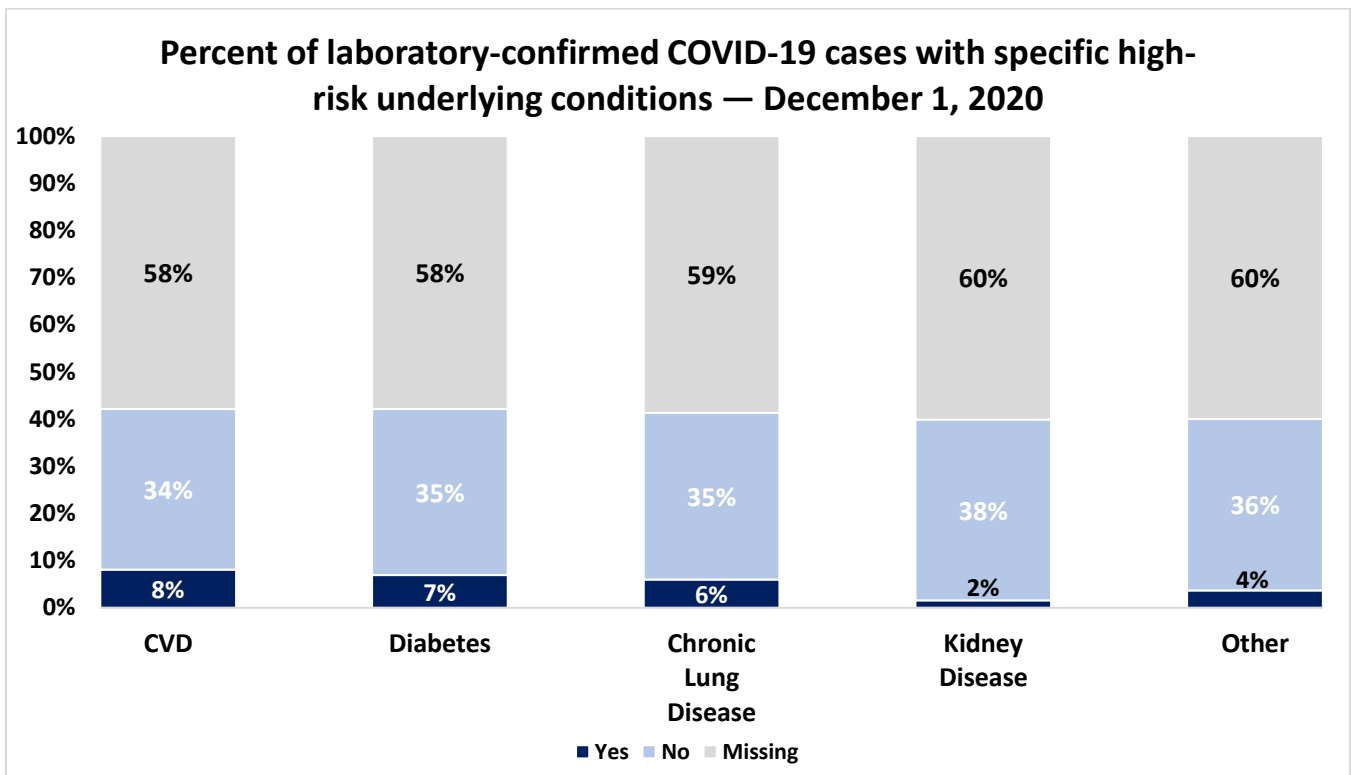


This includes total North Carolina positive COVID-19 cases, from date of first COVID-19 case on March 2, 2020. Cases reflect individuals with a positive molecular (PCR) or positive antigen test result from the NC State Laboratory of Public Health, a reporting hospital, a reporting provider, or a commercial lab.

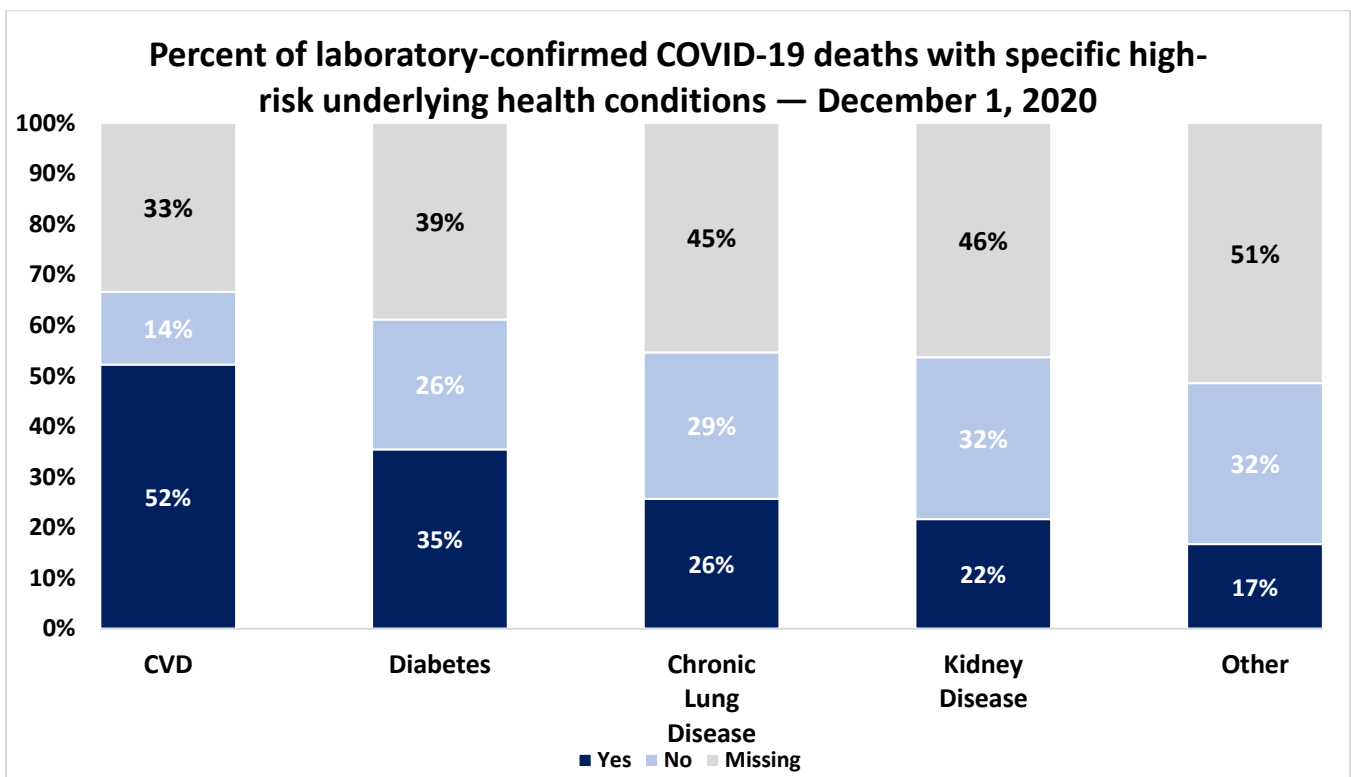
**Percent of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 deaths with at least one high-risk underlying health condition, by age — December 1, 2020**



82% of deaths are among people 65 or older. Deaths reflect deaths in persons who have had a positive molecular (PCR) or positive antigen test for COVID-19, who died without fully recovering from COVID-19, and who had no alternative cause of death identified. Deaths are reported by hospitals and clinicians directly to the local or state health departments.



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