

Illinois Food Deserts Annual Report

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



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Illinois Department of Public Health

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Food Desert Definition

For the purpose of the Illinois Public Act 100-0493,¹ a "food desert" is a location lacking fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthy whole foods, in part due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers markets, or healthy food providers.

Food Desert Mapping

The 2021 Illinois Food Desert Annual Report relied on estimates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Access Research Atlas for 2019 that are based on a 2019 list of supermarkets, the 2010 decennial census, and the 2014-18 American Community Survey. USDA hosts the site² and it is not updated annually. Therefore, the fiscal 2025 Food Desert Annual Report does not have updated maps to share (as was the case since 2022). However, the food access research atlas is interactive, and users can search for a specific ZIP code to see if it is in a food desert (defined below). Visit the Food Access Research Atlas (formerly the Food Desert Locator) at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>. The appendix contains data from the food access research atlas that was previously published in Food Desert annual reports.

Food Deserts

Food deserts are disproportionately found in high-poverty areas. Many factors contribute to causing a food desert, including transportation challenges, availability of convenience foods, income inequality, and business investment risks that contribute to stores not opening in the area.

Food Deserts and Chronic Disease

Healthy diets are recommended to persons diagnosed with chronic diseases. However, living in a food desert limits access to the nutritious foods needed for a healthy diet. Obesity-related cancers account for 40% of all cancers in the U.S. Healthy food consumption is a modifiable factor shown to reduce obesity-related cancer mortality. In a 2023 ecologic cross-sectional

¹ [Illinois General Assembly - Full Text of Public Act 100-0493 \(ilga.gov\)](#)

² [USDA ERS - Food Access Research Atlas](#)

study that included 3,038 counties or county-equivalents the highest food swamp score had a 77% increased odds of high obesity-related cancer mortality.³ An individual's food environment is one of many social determinants of health that contribute to a person's health outcomes. Other social determinants of health, including transportation infrastructure, urban planning, the built environment, and local policies, also contribute to a person's health outcome.⁴

Chronic Disease in Illinois

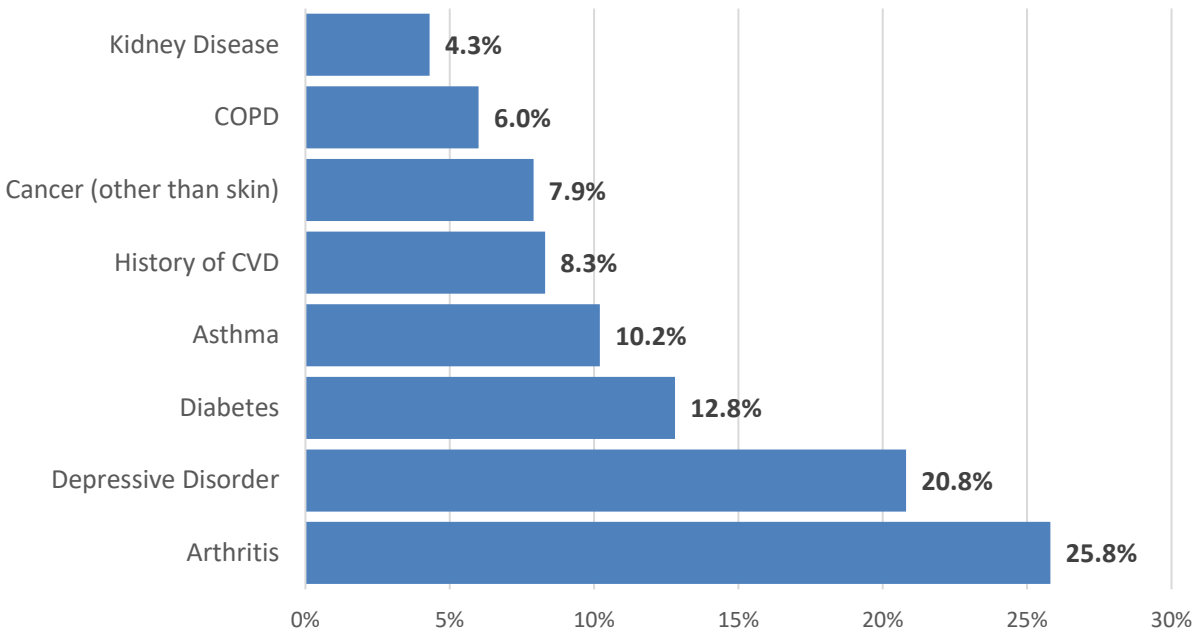
The Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey⁵ (BRFSS) measures the self-reported prevalence of chronic diseases in adults 18 years and older. The conditions include heart disease (heart attack/stroke/angina), current asthma, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), arthritis, depression, and kidney disease. According to 2024 data, 28.1% of adults have one chronic condition and 26.6% have two or more. Arthritis is the most prevalent chronic disease reported (25.8%), followed by depression (20.8%). The BRFSS does not measure food deserts or food insecurity. The BRFSS does measure chronic conditions at the county level through its county-round survey. The Round 5 maps are posted on the IDPH website ([County Level Prevalence Maps \[illinois.gov\]](https://illinois.gov/IDPH/CommunityHealth/ChronicDisease/CountyLevelPrevalenceMaps)). The following figure displays the state's chronic conditions prevalence based on 2024 BRFSS data.

³ Bevel MS, Tsai MH, Parham A, Andrzejak SE, Jones S, Moore JX. Association of Food Deserts and Food Swamps With Obesity-Related Cancer Mortality in the US. *JAMA Oncol.* 2023 Jul 1;9(7):909-916. doi: 10.1001/jamaoncol.2023.0634. PMID: 37140933; PMCID: PMC10160992.

⁴ Ver Ploeg, Michele; Breneman, Vince; Farrigan, Tracey; Hamrick, Karen; Hopkins, David; Kaufman, Phillip; Lin, Biing-Hwan; Nord, Mark; Smith, Travis A.; Williams, Ryan; Kinnison, Kelly; Olander, Carol; Singh, Anita; Tuckermanty, Elizabeth (2009). [Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences: Report to Congress](#) (Report). Administrative Publication Number 036. [USDA. doi:10.22004/AG.ECON.292130.](#)

⁵ [Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(state.il.us\)](https://state.il.us/BRFSS)

Adult Chronic Disease Prevalence, Illinois, 2024



How Illinois is Addressing Food Deserts

In 2024, \$6.4 million in competitive grant funds were made available through the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) for projects to help strengthen the state’s food supply chain. The Office of the Governor announced that federal funds were being used to support farmers and put the state on a path to end food insecurity. The funding will help bring disinvested areas closer to being able to access fresh, nutrient-dense food. Additionally, resources and grant programs related to food deserts and food access can be found at the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (IDCEO), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the University of Illinois Champaign Urbana (UIUC) Extension Office.

Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grants

The purpose of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) program is to build resilience in the middle of the food supply chain, provide more and better markets to small farms and food

businesses, support the development of value-added products for consumers, and ensure fair prices, fair wages, and new and safe job opportunities.

More information on funded projects is available at [Illinois Local Food Infrastructure Grant | infrastructure grant program | Illinois, USA \(illinoislfig.org\)](#)

Illinois Specialty Crop Block Grant

The purpose of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).” The IDOA has been allocated funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) to administer the program. These funds are supporting projects intended to expand the availability of fresh, locally grown produce and strengthen the competitiveness of the state's specialty crop industry. Illinois currently devotes more than 100,000 acres of farmland to growing specialty crops, which produce nearly \$500 million in sales for Illinois farmers.

More information on funded projects is available at [Illinois Specialty Crop Block Grant](#)

Local Food Infrastructure Grant

The Local Food Infrastructure Grant (LFIG) Act created the Local Food Infrastructure Grant Program for the development of local food processing, aggregation and distribution. The LFIG is intended to assist Illinois applicants with purchasing, leasing to own, renting, building, or installation of infrastructure that will increase market access of Illinois agricultural products to Illinois communities. Funding can support value-added processing, livestock processing, milling, dairy, refrigerated vehicles, food hubs, community kitchens and other critical pieces of the local food supply chain.

More information on funded projects is available at [Illinois Local Food Infrastructure Grant](#)

Illinois Grocery Initiative Act

The Grocery Initiative Act became effective on January 1, 2024.⁶ The Act established the Equipment Upgrades and New Stores in Food Deserts programs, administered by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The state has contracted with experts from Western Illinois University and Chicago State University to provide technical assistance to prospective applicants and grantees.

The Equipment Upgrades program provides funds to existing independently-owned stores to invest in energy-efficient refrigeration, HVAC, and lighting equipment. Only existing stores are eligible. Eleven awards for a composite \$1.6 million have been awarded to date. Round two of the program is rolling and open through December 15, 2025.

The New Stores in Food Deserts provides funds to launch new groceries in census tracts meeting the Act's definition of a food desert. Independently owned grocery stores, including for-profit and nonprofit organizations, co-ops, and grocery stores owned by local government units are eligible to apply. DCEO has made eight awards through the first two rounds of the opportunity for a total of \$16.5 million. The Department intends to launch round 3 in the fall of 2025.

More information is available on [DCEO's web site](#).

Farmers Markets

Illinois ranks third in the nation for the number of farmers markets.⁷ Farmers markets offer consumers farm-fresh, affordable, convenient, and healthy products, such as fruits, vegetables, cheese, meats, and more. Farmers' markets serve as integral links between urban, suburban, and rural communities, allowing farmers and their consumers to interact. The

⁶ [Illinois General Assembly - Bill Status for SB0850 \(ilga.gov\)](#)

⁷ [Farmers' Markets \(illinois.gov\)](#)

popularity of farmers' markets continues to rise as more and more consumers discover the joys of shopping for unique ingredients sold directly from the farm and the pleasure of buying familiar products in their freshest possible state.

Local health departments in Illinois regulate farmers markets. IDPH supports farmers market vendors by offering a Farmers Market Food Product Sampling Handler Certificate, which allows food sampling at a farmers market without having to get a separate license from the local health department (applies to samples only).

Find Food Illinois: Community Food Map

Use the Find Food IL map to locate places in a community offering free food or meals. The site is hosted by the UIUC. It allows users to search by ZIP code to find stores and markets that accept SNAP/LINK or Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) coupons. For questions about the Find Food IL Map, its uses, and partnership opportunities, contact eatmovesave@illinois.edu.

Access the map here: [| Eat. Move. Save. | UIUC \(illinois.edu\)](#). Below is an example for Springfield.



USL

Filters Use the filter button to narrow your search to certain types of food resources.

Note: School & Summer Meal Sites will switch to school meal programs only on August 15, 2024.

Search by ZIP

Search by City

Filters

Add/Update Site Info

EN

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The Salvation Army - Springfield

Monday 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Wednesday 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Friday 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

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Catholic Charities - St. John's Breadline

Monday 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Tuesday 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Wednesday 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Thursday 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Friday 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Saturday 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Sunday 10:30 AM - 1:30 PM

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Table of Life Ministries

Friday 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

📍

First Presbyterian Church

Monday -
Tuesday -
Wednesday -
Thursday -
Friday -
Saturday -
Sunday -

📍

Contact Ministries

Monday 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Tuesday 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Wednesday 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Thursday 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

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Faith Ministries International

Saturday 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM

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Fifth Street Renaissance

Monday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Tuesday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Wednesday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Thursday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

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Grace Lutheran Food Pantry

Monday 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Tuesday 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Thursday 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

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Conclusion

Given the multiple factors that affect people's access to healthy and nutritious food, addressing food deserts must include multi-faceted approaches. Strategies include⁸:

- Increasing the availability of healthful, locally sourced foods through:
 - affordable grocery stores
 - affordable markets
 - backyard and community gardens
 - food assistance programs
 - food-buying clubs
- Encouraging healthy dietary habits by providing education and training on food production, preparation, and nutrition.
- Enrolling eligible residents into government nutrition programs.
- Increasing access to local farmers markets.
- Promoting safe and fair farm worker conditions.
- Supporting sustainable agricultural practices that protect the air, water, soil, and habitats.
- Supporting food industry entrepreneurs.
- Celebrating and honoring diverse food cultures.
- Encouraging residents to participate in food system planning.
- Giving residents a say on food-related decisions that government's make.

⁸ [Food deserts: Definition, effects, and solutions \(medicalnewstoday.com\)](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322822)

Appendix

Food desert terminologies defined by USDA Low-income tract definition

The USDA defines a low-income tract as an area with either a poverty rate of 20% or more, a median family income less than 80% of the statewide median family income, or a tract in a metropolitan area with a median family income less than 80% of the surrounding metropolitan area median family income.

Low-income and low-access tract measured at 1 mile and 10 miles definition

According to USDA, a low-income tract with at least 500 people, or 33% of the population, living more than 1 mile (urban areas) or more than 10 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store.

Low-income and low-access tract measured at ½ mile and 10 miles definition

According to USDA, a low-income tract with at least 500 people, or 33% of the population, living more than ½ mile (urban areas) or more than 10 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store.

Low-income and low-access tract measured at 1- and 20-miles definition

According to USDA, a low-income tract with at least 500 people, or 33% of the population, living more than 1 mile (urban areas) or more than 20 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store.

Low-income and low-access tract using vehicle access and at 20 miles definition

A low-income tract in which at least one of the following is true: at least 100 households are located more than ½ mile from the nearest supermarket and have no vehicle access or at least 500 people, or 33% of the population, live more than 20 miles from the nearest supermarket, regardless of vehicle availability.

No vehicle, low access, number of housing units at 10 miles definition

Number of housing units located more than 10 miles from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store without access to a vehicle.

Census Tract Maps, 2019

Figure 1. Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is >1/2 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.

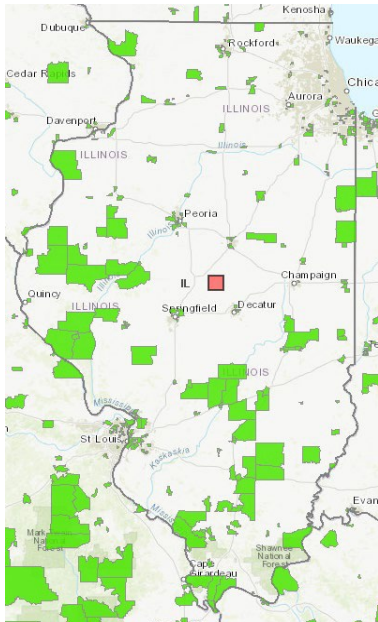


Figure 2. Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is >1/2 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.

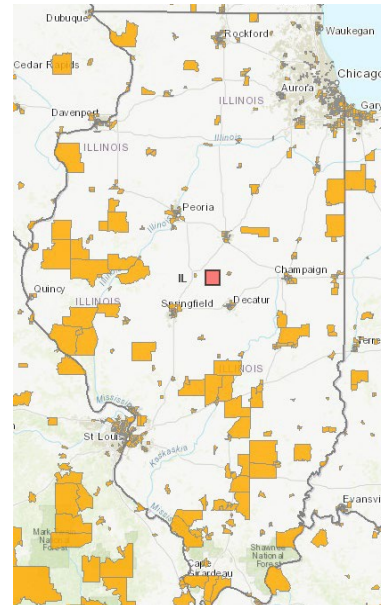


Figure 3. Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is >1 mile (urban) or 20 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.

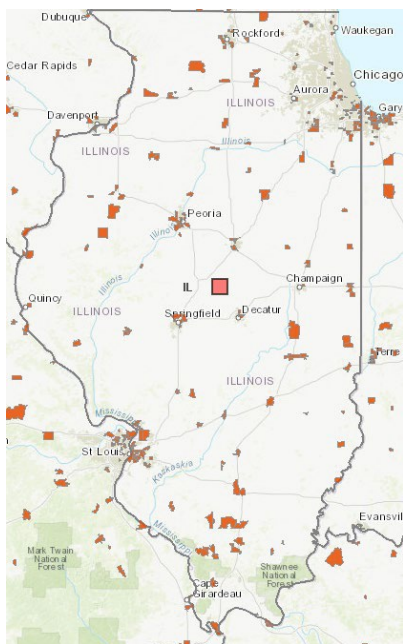
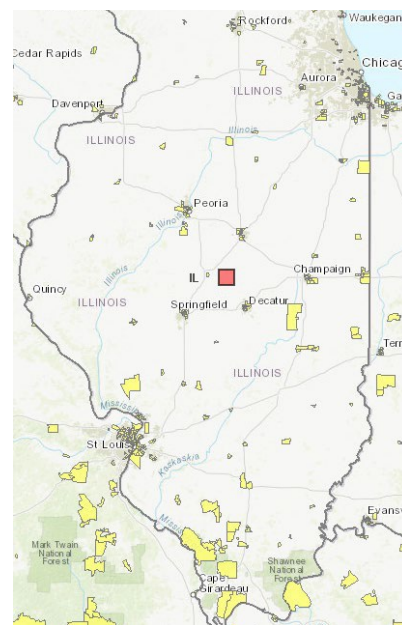


Figure 4. Low-income census tract where more than 100 housing units do not have a vehicle and are >1/2 mile from the nearest supermarket, or a significant number of residents are >20 miles from the nearest supermarket.



County Census Tract Counts by Food Desert Level

All Counties - Total Income and Low-Access Low Tract

All counties	Low-income and low-access tract is measured at 1 mile for urban areas and 10 miles for rural areas.	Low-income and low-access tract measured at 1/2 mile for urban areas and 10 miles for rural areas.	Low-income and low-access tract measured at 1 mile for urban areas and 20 miles for rural areas.	Low-income and low-access tract using vehicle access or low-income and low-access tract measured at 20 miles.
2015				
Total	268	799	236	373
Percent of all census tracts (n=3,123)	8.9%	25.6%	7.6%	11.9%
2019				
Total	318	870	281	424
Percent of all census tracts (n=3,115)	10.2%	27.9%	9.0%	13.6%

Low income and low access tract measured at **x** mile for urban areas and **y** miles for rural areas.

County	1 and 10	Half and 10	1 and 20	Vehicle
Adams	1	7	1	2
Alexander	3	3	2	1
Bond	1	1	1	1
Boone	2	3	2	2
Brown	0	0	0	0
Bureau	1	1	1	0
Calhoun	0	0	0	0
Carroll	1	1	1	0
Cass	0	2	0	0
Champaign	3	18	3	11
Christian	0	5	0	1
Clark	1	1	1	0
Clay	0	1	0	1

Clinton	0	0	0	0
Coles	6	9	5	5
Cook	51	331	51	186
Crawford	1	1	1	1
Cumberland	0	0	0	0
De Witt	0	2	0	0
DeKalb	5	7	5	3
Douglas	1	1	1	1
DuPage	0	12	0	2
Edgar	2	2	2	2
Edwards	1	1	0	0

Low income and low access tract measured at **x** mile for urban areas **and y** miles for rural areas

County	1 and 10	Half and 10	1 and 20	Vehicle
Effingham	2	3	1	0
Fayette	5	5	2	1
Ford	1	2	1	0
Franklin	3	6	2	3
Fulton	2	4	0	1
Gallatin	1	1	0	0
Greene	0	1	0	0
Grundy	1	1	1	0
Hamilton	0	1	0	0
Hancock	3	3	1	0
Hardin	0	0	0	0
Henderson	0	0	0	0
Henry	2	3	2	1
Iroquois	3	3	1	1
Jackson	7	9	5	8
Jasper	1	1	1	1
Jefferson	4	5	2	2
Jersey	0	0	0	1
Jo Daviess	1	1	0	0
Johnson	0	0	0	0
Kane	5	30	5	4
Kankakee	5	10	5	7
Kendall	1	1	1	0
Knox	4	7	4	2
Lake	8	26	8	7

La Salle	5	7	5	4
Lawrence	1	2	1	0
Lee	1	1	1	1
Livingston	2	2	2	1
Logan	0	1	0	1
Macon	4	17	4	10
Macoupin	1	4	0	1
Madison	16	25	16	18
Marion	5	6	4	3
Marshall	0	0	0	0
Mason	2	2	1	0
Massac	1	2	1	1
McDonough	5	6	4	2
McHenry	2	4	2	1
McLean	8	16	7	10
Menard	0	0	0	0
Mercer	1	1	0	0
Monroe	0	0	0	0
Montgomery	4	4	3	3

Low-income and low-access tract measured at **x** mile for urban areas and **y** miles for rural areas.

County	1 and 10	Half and 10	1 and 20	Vehicle
Morgan	5	5	4	2
Moultrie	0	0	0	0
Ogle	2	2	2	0
Peoria	16	25	16	18
Perry	2	2	2	3
Piatt	0	0	0	0
Pike	4	4	1	0
Pope	0	0	0	0
Pulaski	2	2	0	2
Putnam	0	0	0	0
Randolph	1	1	1	1
Richland	0	2	0	0
Rock Island	10	21	10	8
Saline	3	5	3	2
Sangamon	5	24	5	12
Schuyler	1	2	0	0

Scott	0	0	0	0
Shelby	1	2	0	0
St. Clair	20	27	20	19
Stark	0	0	0	0
Stephenson	0	4	0	2
Tazewell	3	7	3	4
Union	1	2	1	1
Vermilion	6	11	6	9
Wabash	1	2	1	0
Warren	1	2	1	0
Washington	0	0	0	0
Wayne	2	4	0	0
White	0	1	0	1
Whiteside	4	5	4	1
Will	16	35	16	9
Williamson	5	5	5	4
Winnebago	11	37	11	12
Woodford	0	0	0	0

Data source: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Food Access Research Atlas, 2019.

Adult Chronic Disease Prevalence, Illinois 2024

Chronic Condition	Estimated Population	Estimated Percentage	95% Confidence Interval	Number of Respondents
Current asthma status ¹	1,005,720	10.2%	9.6%-11.0%	1,215
Told have diabetes	1,263,014	12.8%	12.1%-13.5%	1,664
Told have arthritis	2,546,412	25.8%	24.9%-26.8%	3,444
Told had COPD	592,350	6.0%	5.5%-6.5%	847
Told had skin cancer	473,736	4.8%	4.4%-5.3%	722
Told had any other types of cancer	779,713	7.9%	7.4%-8.5%	1,138
Told had kidney disease	423,467	4.3%	3.9%-4.7%	586
Told had a depressive disorder	2,053,420	20.8%	19.9%-21.8%	2,510
History of CVD ²	814,203	8.3%	7.7%-8.9%	1,218
Chronic health ³				
No Chronic Disease	4,431,711	45.3%	44.2%-46.4%	4,985
1 Chronic Disease	2,749,258	28.1%	27.1%-29.1%	3,353
2+ Chronic Diseases	2,600,715	26.6%	25.6%-27.6%	3,540

Data Source: 2024 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

1. Calculated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevalence for no asthma and former asthma is not displayed.
2. Calculated by IDPH. History of CVD is calculated when the respondent answers yes to any cardiovascular disease history questions.
3. Calculated by IDPH. Chronic health conditions were calculated from heart disease (heart attack/stroke/angina), current asthma, any cancer, COPD, arthritis, depression, and kidney disease questions.

NOTE: The COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, so be aware when comparing or trending years.