

ABSTRACT

The health status of the Appalachian population has been a longstanding concern, driven by factors such as geographic isolation, economic disparities, limited healthcare access, and cultural influences. This study explores the health disparities among younger generations (3rd, 4th, and 5th) of Appalachians in Urban Cincinnati, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative insights from focus groups and interviews with quantitative data from the dataset. Our mixed-methods study with 167 young Appalachian participants in Urban Cincinnati revealed a nearly equal gender split and identified a high incidence of chronic diseases (38%) and mental health issues (45%). Significant findings include 60% having health insurance and reliable transportation, yet 55% reported poor air quality. Focus group discussions highlighted barriers to healthcare access, insurance complexities, and the lasting impacts of environmental incidents, with a particular focus on the socio-economic and navigational challenges in accessing care.

INTRODUCTION:

- Historically, this region has been challenged by health disparities, influenced by economic, geographic, and cultural barriers.
- Migration patterns have seen many Appalachians relocating to urban centers, seeking better opportunities but carrying with them their traditional health beliefs and practices, such as the use of folk medicine and a community-centric healthcare approach.
- The Appalachian region is marked by its rugged terrain and rich cultural heritage, stretching from southern New York through central Alabama.
- The younger generations of Appalachians, particularly those residing in urban environments like Cincinnati, find themselves navigating the intersection of their heritage and contemporary challenges.
- While previous research, notably by Hutson et al. (2007), has shed light on health disparities within the Appalachian community through community-based approaches, the specific impacts on younger generations remain less understood.
- Our study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the health-related beliefs, behaviors, and disparities among the third, fourth, and fifth generations of urban Appalachians.

METHODS:

Mixed-Methods Approach: Utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding.

Data Collection: Primary quantitative data sourced from the Urban Appalachian Community Coalition (UACC), featuring responses from 167 individuals.

Qualitative Data Collection: Engaged participants through focus groups(3) and interviews with key informants (2) to enrich the study with personal narratives and experiences.

Data Preparation: Undertook extensive data cleaning and preparation processes to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the analysis.

Data Analysis Tools: Used R version 4.3.3 and SAS for rigorous statistical analysis, complemented by NVivo for qualitative content analysis for a holistic understanding of health disparities.

RESULTS:

Figure 1: Chart reveals 38% report chronic diseases and 45% face mental health issues, highlighting dual health challenges within the community.

Figure 2: 60% have health insurance, indicating healthcare access; 40% uninsured, underscoring the need for broader insurance coverage.

Figure 3: Shows 60% have reliable transportation, while 40% do not, emphasizing the necessity for improved transportation solutions for healthcare access.

Figure 4: 55% perceive poor air quality, signaling environmental health concerns and the need for targeted interventions to enhance air quality, insurance, underscoring the importance of insurance in healthcare-seeking behaviors.

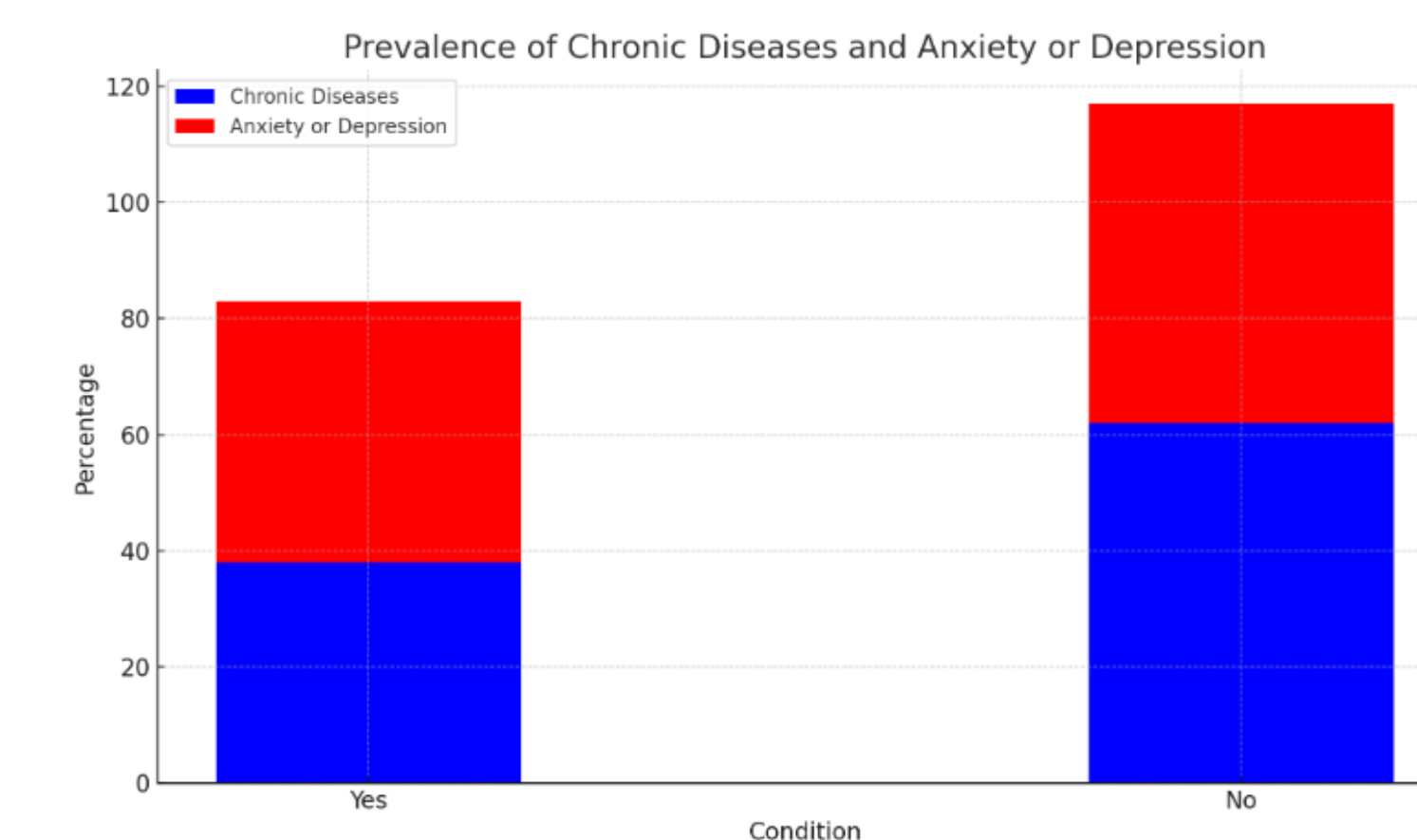


Figure 1

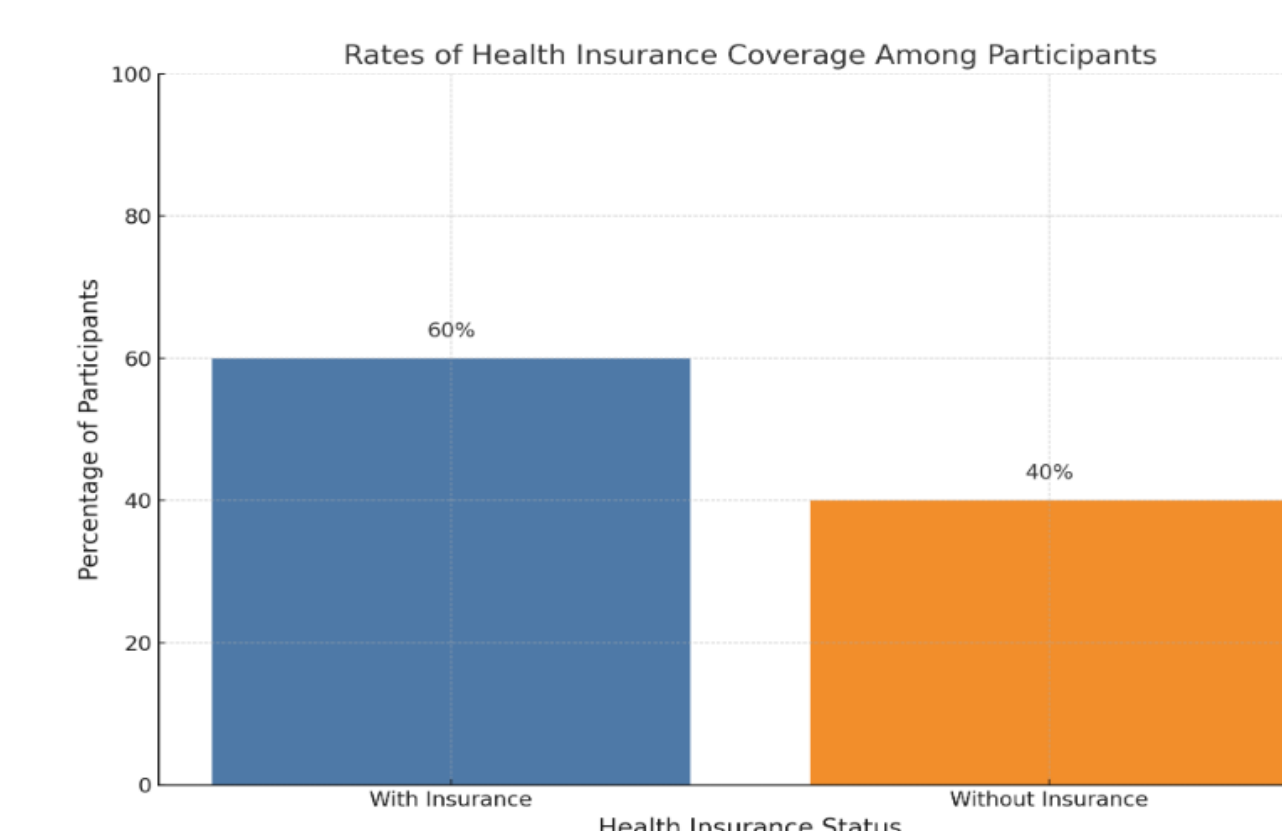


Figure 2

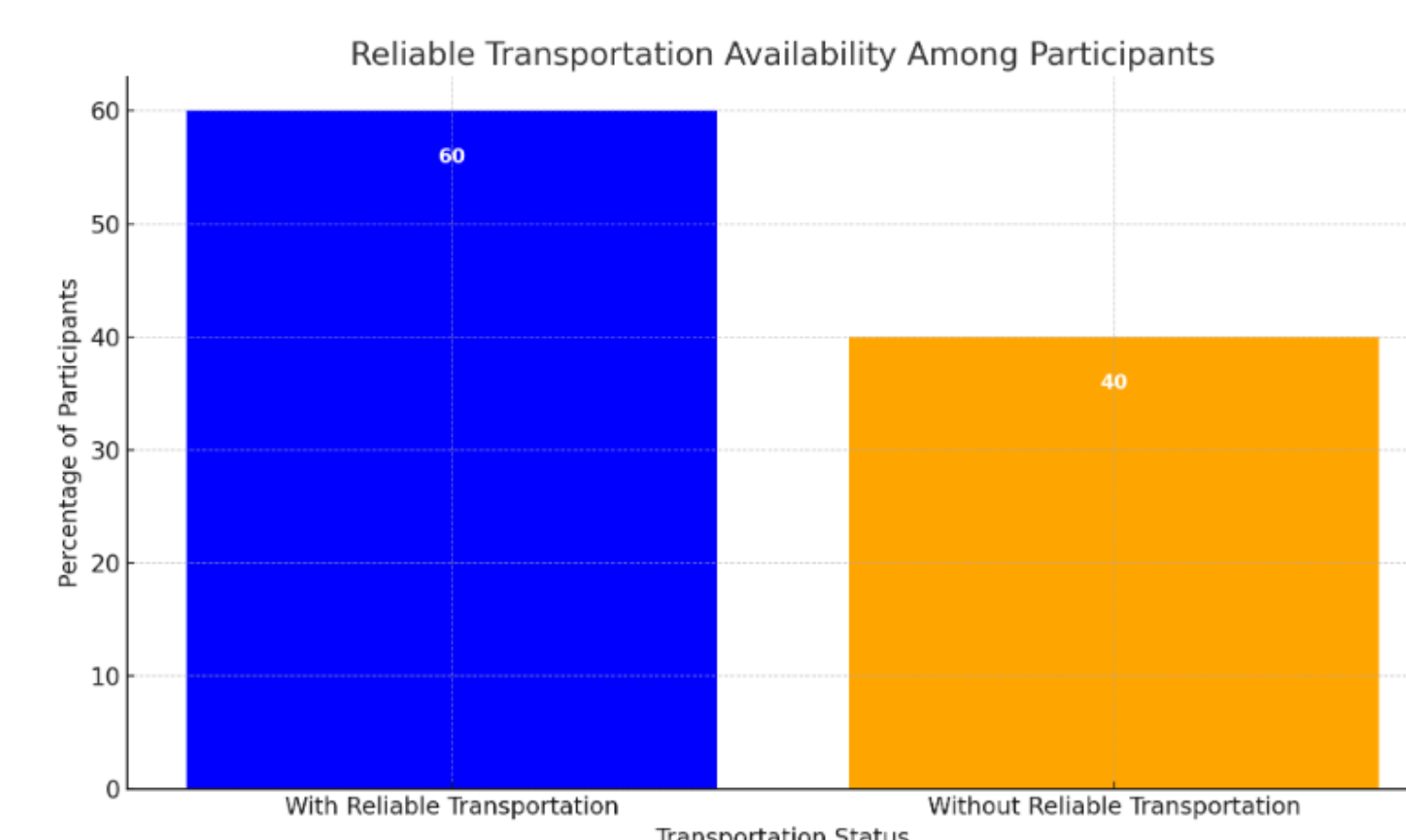


Figure 3

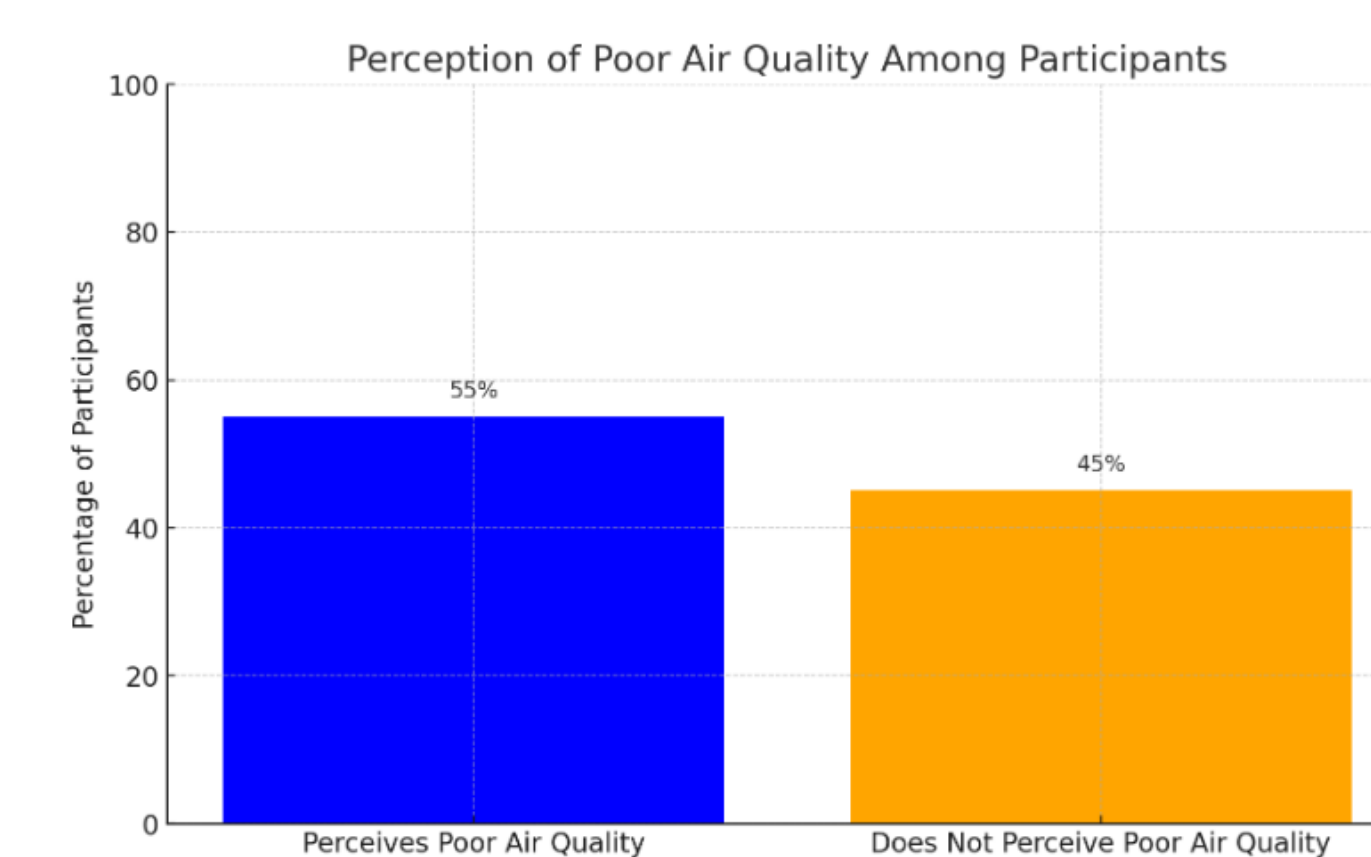


Figure 4

FOCUS GROUP:

Theme 1: Barriers to Accessing Healthcare

Theme 2: Limited Preventive Health Services and Education

Theme 3: Complex Medical Insurance and Services

Theme 4: Navigational Challenges in Healthcare Access

Theme 5: The Lethal Delay

Theme 6: Health Professionals Are Not Always Listening

CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS:

Addressing Health Disparities in Young Appalachians

Transportation Solutions: Develop community-based programs to enhance healthcare access, including partnerships for subsidized transportation and shuttle services.

Healthcare Navigation and Insurance Literacy: Launch educational initiatives to simplify the healthcare system and improve insurance understanding, ensuring informed health decisions.

Integrated Health Services: Expand access to mental health and chronic disease management through mobile clinics, telehealth, and community workshops tailored to both physical and mental well-being.

Environmental Health Initiatives: Collaborate with organizations to improve air quality, control pollution, and educate on environmental health risks.

Public Health Campaigns: Design campaigns focusing on preventive measures, disease awareness, and regular screenings, tailored to the community's cultural context.

Community Networks and Policy Advocacy: Foster support networks and engage in policy advocacy to address underlying social determinants.

FUTURE WORK:

- Enhance sample size
- Expand geographic scope
- Establish feedback mechanism

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Figure 5 displaying a word cloud for focus group