



2022 Community Health Assessment Walton County, Florida

LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

To effectively improve the health of our community, we must first understand the challenges we face and the assets that exist. This report prioritizes those health issues by collecting and evaluating relevant data over the past year. This extensive process is based on a national model and involved dozens of community partners and hundreds of residents.

The Florida Department of Health in Walton County is uniquely positioned to lead this assessment because of our expertise in community health improvement. We devote time and resources for a variety of reasons. This assessment is not only an important part to our own strategic approach to improve health, but it also informs and empowers our partners, medical providers, non-profits, local governments, and many more to take action. In addition, we produce this assessment to support the Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership's health improvement plan, which organizes our partners' actions and creates synergy in improving our community's health.

The Community Health Assessment draws on data and information gathered from four assessments recommended under the national Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) framework. All of the information gathered from the assessments was then synthesized by our staff to determine the eight top health issues for Walton County.

Having worked in the field of public health for many years, I know what an important role the Community Health Assessment plays in identifying the health challenges facing our residents and in creating a better environment for our visitors. Besides showcasing the pressing issues, the assessment also affords us the opportunity to draw upon the strengths of our many partners and stakeholders, allowing us to collaboratively address these issues and improve health outcomes.

In healthy regard,

Holly B. Holt

Holly B. Holt, RN, BSN, MSM
Health Officer & Administrator
Florida Department of Health in Walton County



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INTRODUCTION

The Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership (WCHIP) formed in 2011 to bring a broad-base of stakeholders together to improve the health of Walton County residents. Over the past decade, WCHIP has grown to nearly 50 partners. WCHIP focuses its efforts on tackling root causes to health issues with policy, system, and environmental improvement strategies. WCHIP's key responsibilities are to:

- Provide a common agenda;
- Establish shared measurements, fosters mutually reinforcing activities;
- Encourage continued communication; and
- Build strong community support across multiple sectors including health, business, education, faith, non-profit, government, and civic partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted our community and world in ways we never anticipated. Partners recognized that never has our community needed a coordinated approach to community health improvements more, so the team continued to work diligently using virtual platforms to move the work forward. The pandemic has highlighted health inequities and calls the community to collectively work on the community's health with an equity-focused lens.

Every three years, community organizations in Walton County work collaboratively on a two-step process to understand and respond to health problems within our community. The first phase of this process involves identifying local health issues and resources through a Community Health Assessment (CHA). Community partners engaged with the public to determine what are the perceived health issues for Walton County.

Throughout this assessment, **Walton County** data will be depicted in **teal**, statewide **Florida** data in **orange**, and **United States** data in **green**, when applicable.

You will also find quotes from key informants that were interviewed to add local perspective to some of the topics discussed throughout this assessment.

The next phase, which will launch in early 2023, will outline the actions that the community will take to improve the health status of residents through the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

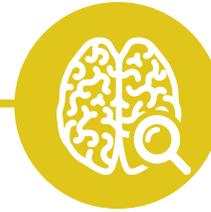
WCHIP's vision is to elevate the health of Walton County.

REPORT CONCLUSIONS



Most Important Health Issues

- Cancer (lung, breast, cervical, colorectal, and prostate)
- Heart disease
- Alzheimer's disease
- Unintentional injuries (motor vehicle accidents)
- Vaccine hesitancy
- Mental health disorders



Most Concerning Unhealthy Behaviors

- Substance use
- Tobacco use
- Not seeing a doctor or dentist routinely
- Being at an unhealthy weight
- Texting/using cell phone while driving



Top Barriers to Healthy Living

- Access to care, including primary care, specialty health care, and mental health services
- Access to housing options
- Transportation
- Access to healthy food options
- Cost of medications
- Low literacy
- Adverse childhood events



Areas of Opportunity

- Improving the built environment (parks, walkability, roads, etc.)
- Increasing population gives opportunity to build thriving communities
- Partnering to tackle root causes and complex issues
- Leadership development and training

OVERALL METHODOLOGY

A Collaborative Approach

In Spring 2022, as primary data collection for the 2022 Community Health Assessment was ongoing, DOH-Walton staff prepared to structure the Assessment report. They consulted with partners from non-profit, hospital and government sectors on the strengths and weaknesses of their last Community Health Assessment from 2019.

Data Sources

The Community Health Assessment report draws from many different data sources, both numerical (for example, disease rates) and narrative (for example, focus groups), to present a comprehensive picture of health in Walton County. The report synthesizes official data reported to DOH-Walton and the Florida Department of Health from hospitals and other organizations, self-reported survey data and information about how the community perceives health issues. DOH-Walton is the local repository of public health data and partners with state and national public health organizations on data collection and analysis. Integrating all of these different data sources provides a more comprehensive picture of population health than any one source on its own. Data collection and analysis were completed in August 2022, and the final report was released in November 2022.

In Summer 2022, DOH-Walton worked with community partners to conduct a community survey (386 responses), interviews with 20 community leaders knowledgeable about health, and one health care focus group. In order to draw statistically valid conclusions about the population of Walton County, the survey called for a sample size of at least 383 respondents*. The community survey asked respondents to choose the most important health problems in Walton County and indicate their satisfaction with current efforts to address

these issues. The interviews and focus group provided a more in-depth understanding of how Walton County adults perceive health problems and potential solutions.

This report utilizes national benchmarks when they are available.

**For these surveys, significance is set at a 95% confidence level, which means that if a survey were conducted 100 times, it would produce the same results at least 95 times.*

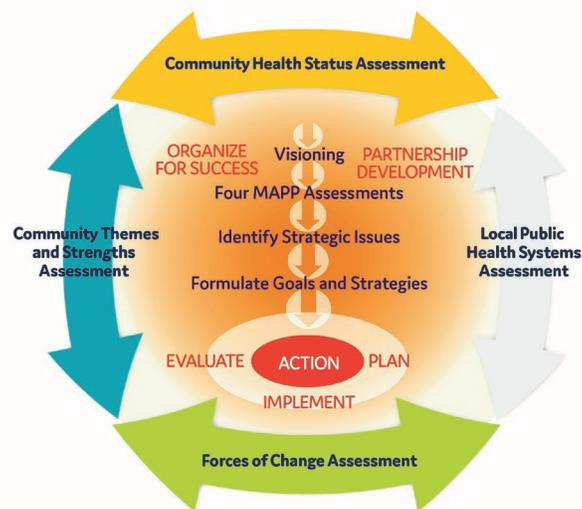
Timeline



2022 Community Health Assessment
November 2022

MAPP

Mobilizing for Action through
Planning and Partnerships



MAPP Framework¹

To develop the CHA, we used the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model. The MAPP framework is made up of four assessments that help identify public health issues in our community:

1. **Community Health Status Assessment:** Investigates health outcomes and quality of life at a detailed level. Health issues are identified and highlighted by gathering data for a variety of indicators and analyzing differences across time periods, among population subgroups, or with peer, state, or national data.
2. **Community Themes and Strengths Assessment:** Examines health issues Walton County residents feel are important and the assets the community possesses to address those issues.
3. **Forces of Change Assessment:** The impact of forces, such as legislation and technology, that affect the context of the community are evaluated.
4. **Local Public Health System Assessment:** Comprehensively examines organizations from across multiple sectors and their contribution to the public's health.

The next steps after the production of this CHA is for the community to identify the most critical issues that must be addressed for Walton County to achieve its vision. After identifying a list of strategic issues, broader goals addressing these issues are created and specific strategies to meet these goals are developed. Strategies are planned, implemented, and evaluated in a continuous cycle which celebrates successes and adapts to new will be included in the 2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan.

DRIVERS OF HEALTH

Despite spending more per person on health care than any other developed nation, the United States continues to see poorer health outcomes and greater differences in health across communities. Public health research indicates that factors other than health care contribute to these differences. Global and national health authorities including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognize that external factors such as education and income drive health. These factors are sometimes called the social determinants of health. These social determinants of health strongly influence health behaviors, access to clinical care, and even our genes and biology. DOH-Walton refers to them as drivers of health. The drivers of health can be broken down into four categories: socioeconomic factors, physical environment, health behaviors and health care.^{3,4} There are marked differences in drivers of health along racial and ethnic lines, and these differences can contribute to poor health outcomes among minority populations.⁵ In this report, these “health disparities” (differences in health by race, income, education or other factors) are marked with a disparities symbol (right). Genetic factors are not included in this analysis, since they are not modifiable community-level drivers of health.

An example of this is the influence of access to healthy foods on chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Some defined geographic areas in Walton County have limited access to healthy foods. Those same areas have lower life expectancy. Due to their environment and neighborhood, they have less opportunity to make healthy eating choices.

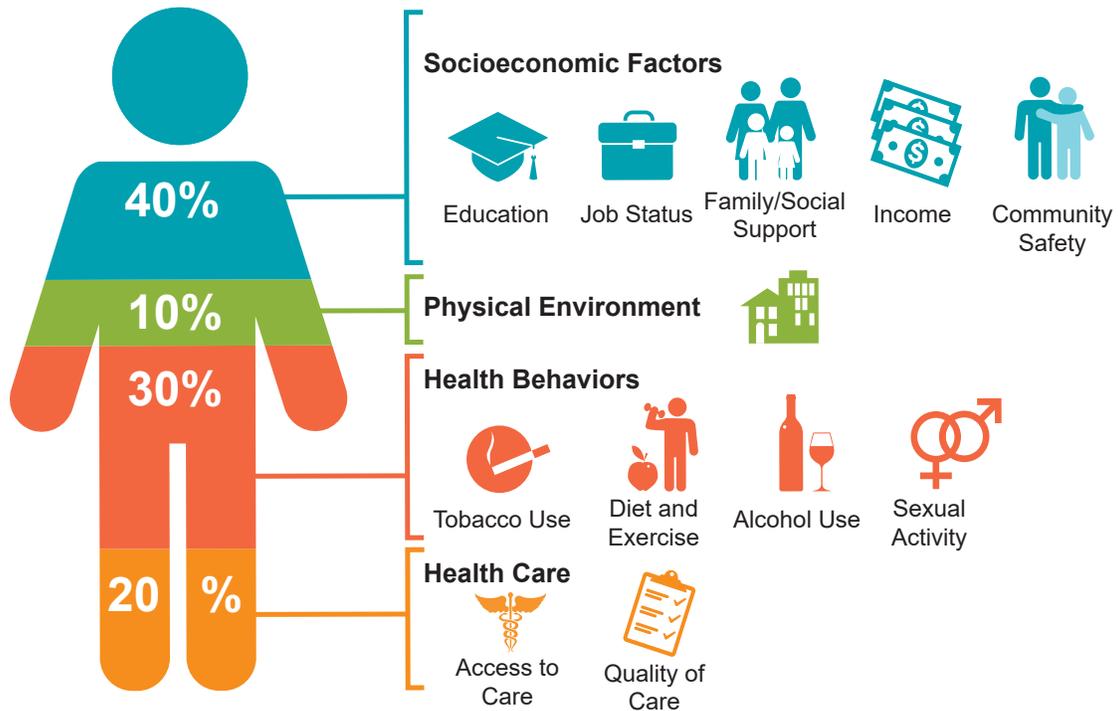
Policy is a critical tool for changing environments. Policy is any action or inaction the government takes or chooses not to take that seeks to address problems or issues. The goal is to create a systematic approach through informed policy changes by local government, thereby addressing a root cause of health inequities.

Our income, education, housing and transportation create opportunities or barriers to health.



Healthy choices should be convenient choices for everyone in Walton County.

FACTORS THAT DRIVE OUR HEALTH⁷



Health begins where you live, learn, work and play. All Walton County residents should have the opportunity to make the choices that allow them to live a long, healthy life, regardless of their income, education, ethnic background or abilities. It is important to work toward raising the bar for all so that everyone can have the opportunity to make healthy choices.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The population of Northwest Florida is distinctive from the rest of Florida. Our racial and ethnic composition, age, demographics, income, educational attainment, military presence, and occupation distinguish our community from typical Florida communities. All of these factors collectively impact the health of community residents. This assessment is intended to present who we are as a community, including the influence of socioeconomic and demographic variables on our health.

Based on 2021 census estimates, approximately 80,069 individuals reside in Walton County, an increase of nearly 46% since 2010². The average resident is 44 years old, and 20% of the population is over the age of 65. The population of Walton County is 84% White alone, 5% Black alone, 1% Asian, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 4% two or more races². Hispanic or Latino individuals of any race make up 7% of Walton County's population. The median annual household income for Walton County residents is \$67,690 with 13.9% of families are living in poverty. 95% of residents age 25 and over have attained a high school diploma or higher, and 24% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately 17% of Walton County residents live with a disability.

Certain populations tend to experience adverse health outcomes or have different health needs based on demographics. Key populations that can be at risk and should be monitored include the following:

Older Adults

Tracking the population of older adults is important because this population has unique health needs, which should be considered separately from other age groups. Walton County's older adults is one of the fastest growing demographics.

People Experiencing Poverty or At-Risk

Living in poverty creates barriers for achieving optimal health. People experiencing poverty are less likely to have the education needed to earn higher income. Examples include limited access to health services, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, and other necessities to living a healthy life.

People with Disabilities⁹

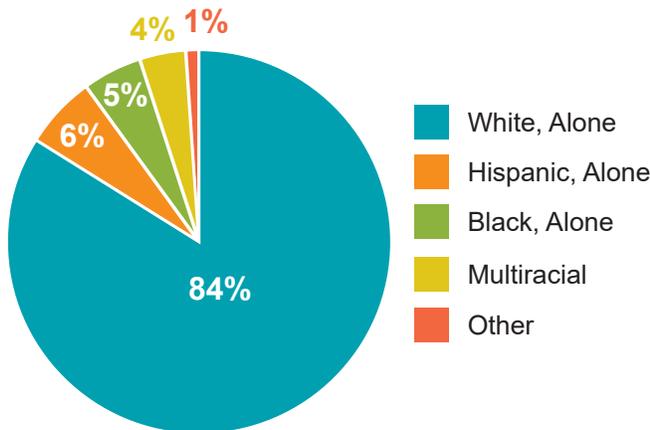
Until recently, people with disabilities have been overlooked in public health surveys, data analyses, and health reports. Emerging data indicate that individuals with disabilities experience health disparities in health behaviors, clinical preventive services, and chronic conditions. Walton County has a higher percentage of individuals with disability status, compared to Florida and the United States.

Population

From 2020 to 2021, Walton County is the **SEVENTH** fastest growing county in the United States³. This rapid growth could have implications to building a healthy community. The need for the local public system to be strategic and forward thinking based on trends is vital. Without proper planning, infrastructure could be strained, health care access could be limited, and the financial burdens for families could become more unmanageable.

In this decade, Walton County should reach a population estimate of 100,000.⁴

Population Estimate by Race & Ethnicity²



When examining projections for the next decade, Hispanic residents are the fastest growing demographic.⁴

80,069 Population Estimate

Walton County, Florida¹

46% Increase in Population Since 2010

Walton County, Florida²

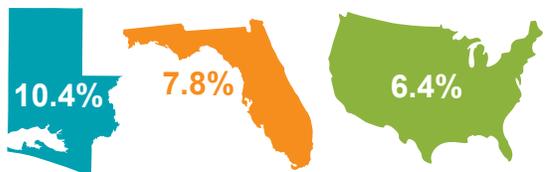
Median Age²



Disability Status²



Veteran Population²



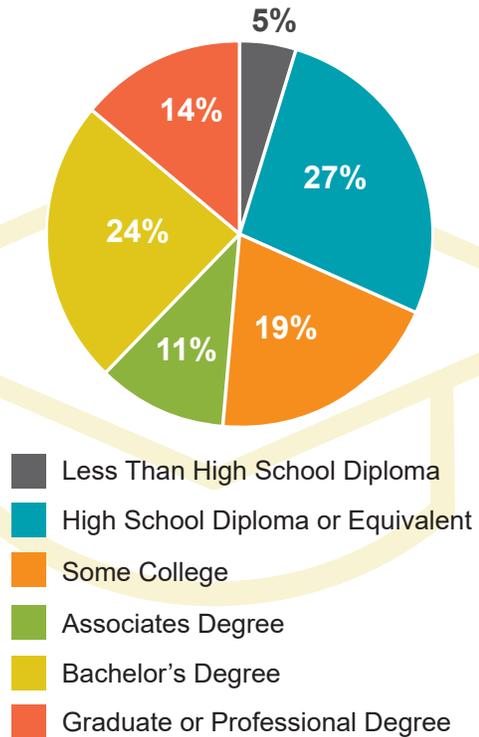
Foreign-Born Population²



Education

Individuals with more education are more likely to have jobs, higher incomes, health insurance and engage in more health-promoting behaviors. Education, along with income, are the greatest predictors of a person's health status.³ Income and education tend to correlate with health outcomes in the same way, for example, high rates of chronic disease are correlated with low income and low education. Education and health influence each other – higher education outcomes tend to translate to better health outcomes, but children also need to be healthy before they can learn and succeed.

Education Attainment²

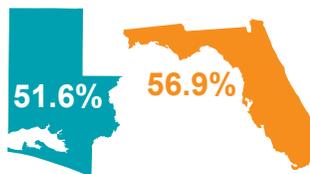


High School Graduation Rate⁶



High school graduation rates have been steadily improving since 2001.⁶

Kindergarten Readiness^{*5}



Students that are disadvantaged and are eligible for free and reduced price meals are less likely to graduate high school than those that are not disadvantaged.²

**The percentage of kindergarten students who score 500+ on the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener.*

Community Resources for education include:

- Walton County School District
- Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast
- Emerald Coast Technical College
- Northwest Florida State College
- Walton County Public Library System
- Tri-County Head Start

Income & Employment

People with higher income tend to live longer, healthier lives. Greater income generally allows for better access to medical care, nutritious food, safe neighborhoods, opportunities for physical activity and high-quality education.⁷

“The characteristic of a healthy community is a good job workforce where everyone is working to pay their bills.”

-Key Informant

Economic security enables families to cover basic needs such as housing, education, childcare, food, and medical care. Each of these needs has demonstrated ties to health. However, economic security is not equally accessible to all people. When a single household expense consumes the majority of a paycheck, it becomes difficult to meet competing needs and can force households into tough decisions like choosing between quality childcare, paying rent, and purchasing nutritious food. Individuals, households, and communities deserve the opportunity to meet basic needs with dignity.

What do residents think about the local economy?²⁴



3.0

Satisfaction Level
for the Overall Economy
in Walton County



**The hourly wage needed to cover basic household expenses plus all relevant taxes for a household of one adult and two children.*

Median Household Income²



Unemployment Rate⁹



**As of August 2022*

Top Local Industries⁹

1. Construction
2. Accommodation & Food Service
3. Retail Trade
4. Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services
5. Health Care and Social Assistance

Community Resources for employment include:

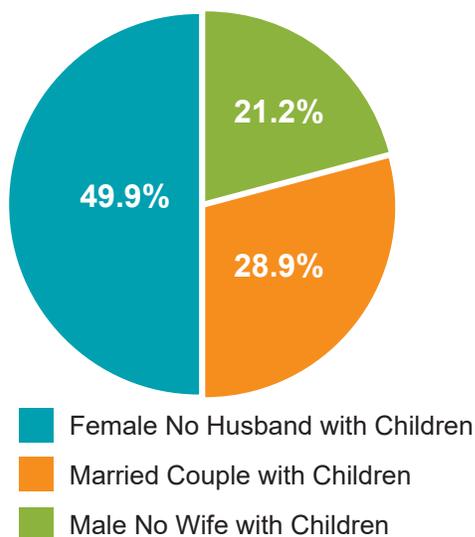
- CareerSource Okaloosa | Walton
- Florida Department of Education Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Poverty

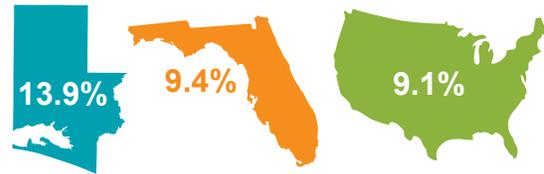
Poverty is a root cause of many poor health outcomes.¹⁰ Research shows that poverty influences health behaviors in many ways, such as by limiting access to healthy foods and safe neighborhoods for playing, exercise and social interaction.⁹ The interaction between socioeconomic status and health is mutually influential and complex, with effects that can accumulate over generations.¹¹

Single-parent households are those where one parent raises a child or children. Among these households, children may have a greater chance of having an unmet health need as well as emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Poverty Among Families with Children²



Families Living in Poverty²



Single-mothers living in poverty are at greater risk for cardiovascular health problems and stroke.¹²

On the Brink of Crisis¹³

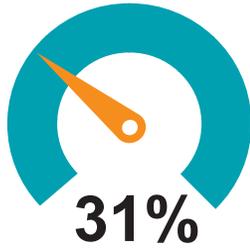
ALICE[®] refers to the population in our communities that are *Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed*. ALICE represents hard-working households who live paycheck to paycheck; reduced hours, a family emergency, or unexpected expense can be catastrophic. **Nearly 32% of all families in Walton County are ALICE.** This is in addition of the 14% of families currently living in poverty. These are our neighbors, our daycare teachers, grocery store associates, hotel clerks, home health aides, and more. They are absolutely essential to our community's success. ALICE households were already on the brink of financial crisis before the pandemic and now, they need help more than ever before.

“Our community’s greatest resources are non-profits that assist households in crisis.”
-Key Informant

Community resources for poverty include:

- Caring and Sharing of South Walton
- Caring of Sharing of North Walton
- Walton County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
- The Matrix Community Outreach Center
- Tri-County Community Council

What do residents think about affordable housing?²⁴



identified access to affordable and accessible housing as an important feature **in a Healthy Community**

Cost of Living Index¹⁴



Walton County is much more expensive to live in than other communities across the county. The leading expense burden for most families is housing.



17% of household have at least 1 of the following 4 housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities.²



Adults living in unaffordable housing are more likely to report fair or poor health than other adults.²

Community resources for housing include:

- Walton County Housing Agency
- Homelessness and Housing Alliance
- Walton County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee

Housing

Housing affordability and quality both influence health in important ways. Unaffordable housing is typically defined as housing expenses that are more than 30% of household income.¹⁶ Affordable housing leaves people more resources for other needs such as medical care and food.¹⁶ The stress of unaffordable housing costs can negatively impact health.¹⁶ Safe, quality housing minimizes exposure to pollutants, pests, allergens and toxic chemicals that can lead to health problems, such as infections and asthma.¹⁶

“There is too little affordable housing being constructed to address the issue of real estate values hurting the middle and low income.”

-Key Informant

\$390,200

Median Housing Value

Walton County, Florida²

\$1,390

Median Rent

Walton County, Florida₂

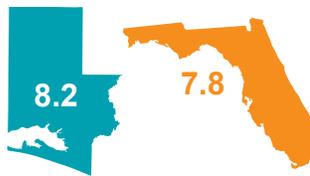
Physical Environment

The environment refers to the places, both natural and man-made, where people live, work and play. Exposures to environmental factors, including chemicals, microbes and physical forces, can profoundly influence an individual's health. Human health is affected by environmental issues such as availability of affordable housing, air and water quality, and exposure to toxic chemicals. Walton County, Florida has 1,037.7 square miles of land area and is the 12th largest county in Florida by total area.

Air Quality⁸

Air pollution from traffic, coal-fired power plants, and other industrial sources can have a negative effect on human health. Particle pollution, also called particulate matter (PM), is made up of tiny particles of solids or liquids such as dust or smoke that are in the air. Very small particles (called PM 2.5 because they are 2.5 microns or less in width) are dangerous because they can get into the deepest parts of a person's lungs or even into their blood. Particle pollution has been linked to eye, lung and throat irritation; trouble breathing; and lung cancer.

Air Pollution, Average Density of Fine Particulate Matter Per Cubic Meter⁸



Long-term exposure to fine particulate matter increases premature death risk among people age 65 and older.⁸

Water Quality⁸

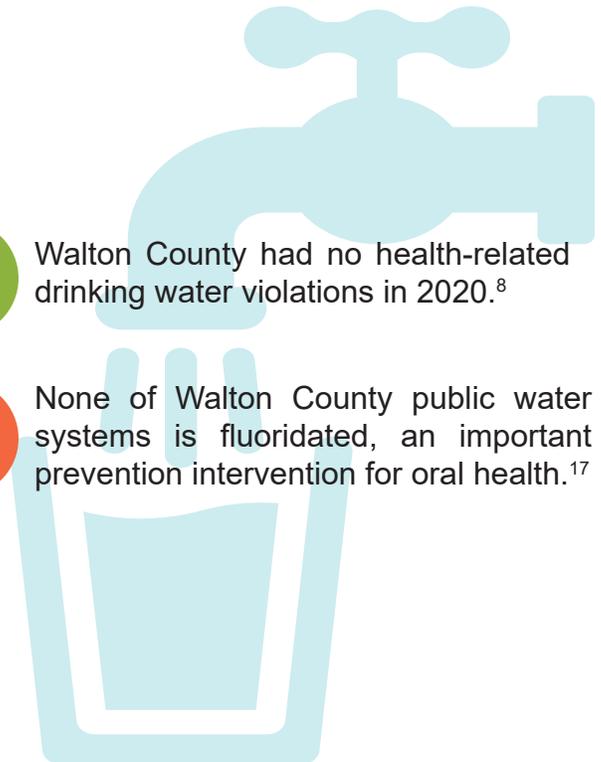
Ensuring the safety of drinking water is important to prevent illness, birth defects, and death. Other health problems have been associated with contaminated water, including nausea, lung and skin irritation, cancer, kidney, liver, and nervous system damage. An increase in drinking water violations has also been shown to increase health care expenditures.



Walton County had no health-related drinking water violations in 2020.⁸



None of Walton County public water systems is fluoridated, an important prevention intervention for oral health.¹⁷



Transportation⁸

Transportation affects health in several ways: providing access to needed resources and services; affecting time and opportunity for physical activity; pollution; and motor vehicle-related injuries and deaths. A lack of efficient alternatives to automobile travel disproportionately affects vulnerable populations such as the poor, the elderly, children and people who have disabilities by limiting access to jobs, health care, social interaction and healthy foods.¹⁵ Longer

“Our county needs to look into public transportation and to improve pedestrian and bike trails to interconnect major hubs such as grocery stores, schools, and government services.”

-Key Informant



The City of Freeport is developing a Pedestrian Master Plan to support walkability for residents.

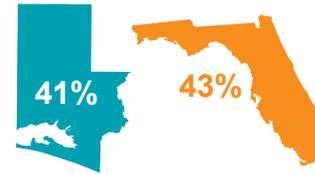
Natural Disasters

While living in and visiting Florida offers many benefits and advantages, it is important to keep in mind severe weather hazards and potential threats. Every family and business should have predefined emergency plans and always keep an emergency supply kit ready and stocked. From outbreaks of communicable diseases to various safety hazards within the home, natural disasters may have harmful, long-term consequences to the health and well-being of the people in the affected areas.

Community resources for transportation include:

- Walton County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
- Okaloosa Walton Medical Reserve Corps

Workers Driving Alone With a Long Commute^{*8}



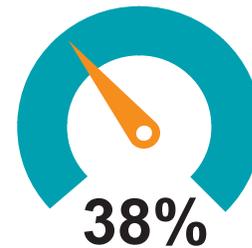
**A commute longer than 30 minutes.*

Community resources for transportation include:

- GoWal Public Transit
- Tri-County Community Council

210
Square Miles in a Flood Hazard Area
Walton County, Florida¹⁵

What do residents think about disaster preparedness?²⁴



identified their family was not prepared for a disaster

COMMUNITY HEALTH STATUS ASSESSMENT



COMMUNITY HEALTH STATUS⁸

To measure health within a community by looking at the social determinants of health, access to and quality of health care, and personal health behaviors, the County Health Ranking and Roadmaps was developed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The framework, shown below, illustrates the strong influence that *Health Factors* and *Health Outcomes* have on illness and death. *Health Factors* are the things that can be modified to improve the length and quality of life for community members. *Health Outcomes* represent the overall health of a county, reflecting the physical and mental well-being of residents measured by length of life and quality of life. *Health Outcomes* are predictors of how healthy our communities can be in the future. Policies and programs, such as smoking ordinances or a diabetes prevention program hosted by a hospital or health department, can improve *Health Factors*, and thus lead to lower rates of disease and better *Health Outcomes*. The County Health Rankings are based on a model of population health that emphasizes the many factors that, if improved, can help make communities healthier places to live, learn, work and play.

This CHA looks first at causes of death, disease and disability in our community, then the Health Outcomes to understand those causes. Then Health Factors that could be changed to improve our health and have an impact on Health Outcomes are presented. The Health Outcomes and Health Factors provide a snapshot of our community health status.

Methodology

Members from the WCHIP Steering Committee gathered in February 2022 to form a subcommittee for this assessment. Data is gathered from a variety of publicly available state and national database resources, as well as local organization databases. When available, data is broken down based on race, ethnicity, gender, and zip code. The data was compiled into a preliminary report that was reviewed in June 2022. The draft of the Community Health Status Assessment was presented to the WCHIP Steering Committee for approval in October 2022. Throughout the MAPP process, community assessments are completed using a health equity frame. Through this frame, WCHIP members aim to identify, address decisions and situations that have led to health inequities among individuals and populations living in Walton County. Community involvement is essential to the success of the MAPP process. WCHIP intends to share the results of the CHSA, along with the other three assessments, with the community at the 2022 Healthy Walton Summit in November 2022.

Information Gaps

Even though this assessment is comprehensive, it cannot measure all health aspects in the community or adequately represent all populations. As for the content, this report was designed to provide a broad overview of the overall health of Walton County. However, there are a great number of health issues that are not specifically addressed.

10 YEARS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT



The Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership has been actively working on bettering the health of Walton County residents since 2012. WCHIP brings together over 40 different organizations to strategically plan activities to address local health issues. Through policies, systems, and environmental changes, WCHIP has made some made strides in elevating the health of Walton County. This can be illustrated by the County Health Rankings. Walton County has made improvements in rankings, especially for Health Outcomes. Both of which the assessment with explore. A summary of the last 10 years of County Health Rankings can be found below.

County Health Rankings, Walton County, 2013-2022⁸

County Rankings (of Florida's 67 Counties)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Health Outcomes (Length of Life and Quality of Life)	41	46	38	34	32	29	17	20	20	19
Health Factors (Health Behaviors, Clinical Care, Social & Economic Factors, and Physical Environment)	25	29	32	30	38	36	37	35	31	24



HEALTH OUTCOMES⁸

Ultimately, the job of public health is to improve how long our residents live and the quality of life our residents experience throughout their lives. Health Outcomes represent how healthy a county is right now. They reflect the physical and mental well-being of residents within a community through measures representing not only the length of life but quality of life as well.

Health Outcomes are influenced by the many factors that influence health, from the quality of medical care received to the availability of good jobs, clean water, and affordable housing. These health factors are influenced by programs and policies in place at the local, state, and federal levels. By looking at data related to Health Outcomes, we can get a glimpse at whether health improvement programs in a county are working. For example, a non-smoking ordinance in restaurants might impact smoking rates and ultimately lead to longer lives.

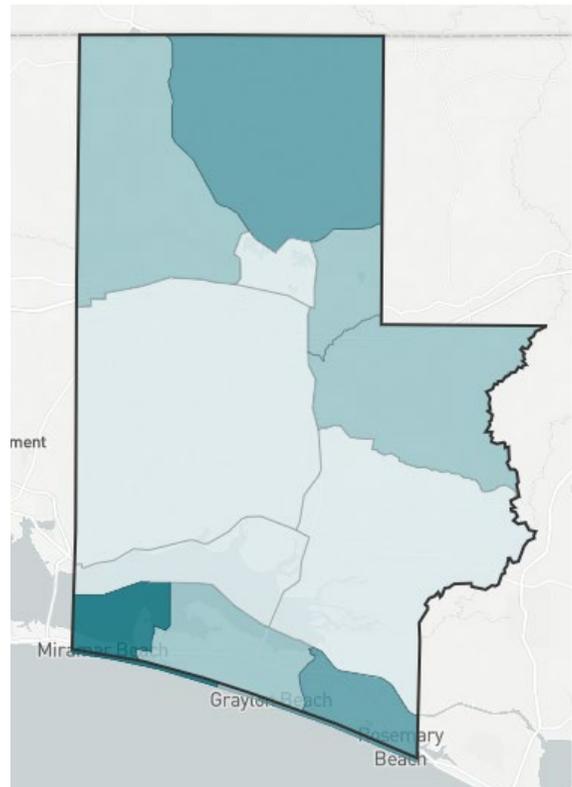
There are significant differences in health outcomes according to where we live, how much money we make, our race and ethnicity, and other characteristics. It is important to dig into the data to understand where and why health outcomes differ across a county, how a variety of health factors combine to influence these outcomes, and how our policies and programs are supporting—or restricting—opportunities for health for all.

One key measure of the health of our community is life expectancy, which tells us how long a typical resident is expected to live when they are born. Communities that have more opportunities for health will generally have a longer life expectancy. Life expectancy by census tract is visualized in the map to the right.

19th Ranking of Florida's 67 Counties

Walton County, Florida¹⁵

Life Expectancy By Census Tract¹⁵



Years	
72.2 - <76.5	
76.5 - <81.3	
81.3 - <85.3	
85.3	



There is nearly a 13 year difference in the census tract with the highest life expectancy and the lowest in Walton County.¹⁵

Leading Causes of Death¹⁵

Out of the top ten leading causes of death in Walton County, eight are chronic diseases largely caused by poor health habits and lifestyle choices, such as poor diet, lack of exercise, and tobacco use. Health is influenced by conditions where we live and the ability and means to access healthy food, good schools, affordable housing, and jobs. Unfortunately, significant gaps in life expectancy persist across many United States cities, towns, ZIP codes and neighborhoods. In Walton County, there are numerous zip codes that have higher rates of poverty and lower life expectancy: 32433, 32464, 32435, 32455, 32539, and 32567.

	Walton	Florida
1	Cancer	Heart Disease
2	Heart Disease	Cancer
3	Unintentional Injury	COVID-19
4	COVID-19	Unintentional Injury
5	Alzheimer's Disease	Stroke
6	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
7	Stroke	Diabetes
8	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome & Nephrosis	Alzheimer's Disease
9	Diabetes	Chronic Liver Disease & Cirrhosis
10	Chronic Liver Disease & Cirrhosis	Influenza & Pneumonia



- Nearly 50% of all cancer deaths from 2018 to 2020 were related to tobacco use.¹⁵
- Out of the 35 females that died from breast cancer from 2018 to 2020, 94% of them were White residents.¹⁵
- Out of the residents that died by suicide from 2018 to 2020, 82% were White male residents.¹⁵
- Male residents are nearly twice as likely to die from unintentional injury (83.1 per 100,000) compared to female residents (43.1 per 100,000).¹⁵
- Female residents are over twice as likely to die from Alzheimer's disease (68.9 per 100,000) compared to male residents (31.2 per 100,000).¹⁵
- Black residents are twice as likely to die from colorectal cancer (31.9 per 100,000) compared to White residents (13.0 per 100,000).¹⁵

Quality of Life¹⁵

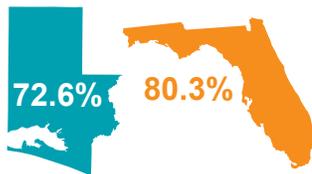
Examining quality of life can tell us a lot about how people perceive their health – whether they feel healthy and satisfied. When communities have higher rates of those who do not feel healthy, it can influence other factors of health including mortality rates, unemployment, poverty, and the percentage of adults who did not complete high school.

Getting this sense of the physical and mental health of a community can also bring to light inequities and help monitor trends, as well as identify risk factors and policies to address those risk factors.

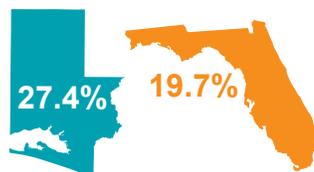
In the Quality of Life area of the County Health Rankings we look at:

- Birth outcomes, showing rates of babies born at low birthweight.
- Health-related quality of life metrics, looking at how residents rated overall health, physical healthy, and mental health.

Percentage of Adults who Said Their Overall Health was “Good” to “Excellent”¹⁵



Percentage of Adults Said Their Overall Health was “Fair” or “Poor”¹⁵



What do residents think about their Quality of Life?²⁴



3.3

Satisfaction Level

for Quality of Life in Walton County



3.4

Satisfaction Level

for Walton County being a Good Place to Raise Children



3.3

Satisfaction Level

for Walton County being a Good to Grow Old

“Now, quality of life encompasses all kinds of thing. Everything from having parks to having places to go eat supper to movies to go see to bowling and things like that.”

-Key Informant

HEALTH FACTORS¹⁵

There are many things that influence how well and how long we live. Everything from our education to our environments impact our health. Health Factors represent those things we can modify to improve the length and quality of life for residents. They are predictors of how healthy our communities can be in the future.

There is no one factor that dictates the overall health of an individual or community. A combination of multiple modifiable factors, from clean air and water to stable and affordable housing, need to be considered to ensure community health for all. The County Health Rankings illuminate those opportunities for improvement by ranking the health of nearly every county in the nation across four Health Factors:

- Health Behaviors, providing rates of alcohol and drug use, diet and exercise, sexual activity, and tobacco use.
- Clinical Care, showing the details of access to and quality of health care.
- Social and Economic Factors, rating education, employment, income, family and social support, and community safety. (Explored in previous section)
- Physical Environment, measuring air and water quality as well as housing and transit. (Explored in previous section)

24th Ranking of Florida's 67 Counties

Walton County, Florida¹⁵

Health Behaviors¹⁵

Health behaviors are actions individuals take that affect their health. They include actions that lead to improved health, such as eating well and being physically active, and actions that increase one's risk of disease, such as smoking, excessive alcohol intake, and risky sexual behavior.

In the United States, many of the leading causes of death and disease are attributed to unhealthy behaviors. For example, poor nutrition and low levels of physical activity are associated with higher risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. Tobacco use is associated with heart disease, cancer, and poor pregnancy outcomes if the mother smokes during pregnancy. Excessive alcohol use is associated with injuries, certain types of cancers, and cirrhosis.

It is important to consider that not everyone has the means and opportunity to make healthy decisions. Policies and programs put in place have marginalized some population groups and communities, keeping them from the supports and resources necessary to thrive. Addressing health behaviors requires strategies to encourage individuals to engage in healthy behaviors, as well as ensuring that they can access nutritious food, safe spaces to be physically active, and supports to make healthy choices.

Access to Care

Access to comprehensive, quality health care services is important for promoting and maintaining health; preventing and managing disease; reducing unnecessary hospitalization, disability and premature death; and helping ensure that all Walton County residents have the opportunity to be healthy. Access to care impacts overall physical, social and mental health status, and quality of life.

Potential barriers to health services include high cost of care; inadequate insurance or no insurance; lack of services; and lack of care that meets patients' social, cultural and linguistic needs. One measure of access to care is medical debt.

“Right not the most important issue is lack of a hospital within 45 minutes of northern parts of Walton County and the strains that is putting on our emergency services.”

2,060:1

Ratio of Residents to a Primary Care Physician⁸

2,070:1

Ratio of Residents to a Dentist⁸

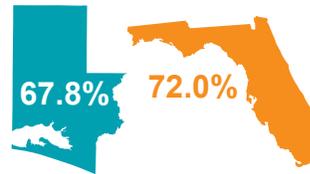


White residents of Walton County are more likely to have any type of health insurance compared to Black and Hispanic residents.¹⁵

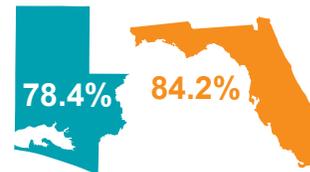


The emergency department in North Walton County has been closed since Spring 2022.

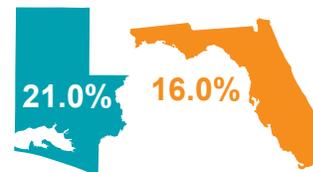
Adults who have a Personal Doctor¹⁵



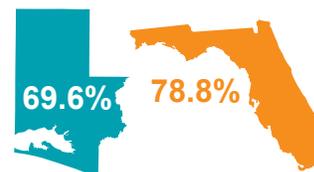
Adults with Any Type of Health Care Insurance Coverage¹⁵



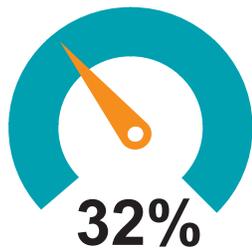
Adults who Could Not See a Doctor in the Past Year Due to Cost¹⁵



Adults who had a Medical Checkup in the Past Year¹⁵



What do residents think about access to health care?²⁴



32%
identified access to care as a
Major Problem



3.0
Satisfaction Level
for access to basic health care



2.4
Satisfaction Level
for access to specialty care



The University of Florida is establishing a family medicine residency program in Walton County to assist in recruiting primary care physicians locally.



Residents with annual incomes under \$25,000 are less likely to see a doctor due to cost (35%) compared to those with incomes between \$25,999 to \$49,999 (24%) and those with incomes \$50,000 and higher (7%).¹⁵

“It’s difficult for people in our community to travel many hours to specialists, which means many are lacking and going without the care they need.”

-Key Informant



Hispanic residents are much more likely to have no health care insurance (37%), compared to Non-Hispanic White (80%) and Non-Hispanic Black (99%) residents.¹⁵

Community resources for access to care include:

- Walton Community Health Center
- PanCare Health
- Lakeview Center of Walton County
- Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast
- Point Washington Medical Clinic
- 211 Northwest Florida
- Community Paramedicine Program

Active & Healthy Living

The Trust for Public Land uses a half-mile as the standard for defining a location as “close” to a park. Most people can walk a half-mile in ten minutes. Within Walton County, 19.2% of residents live within a ten-minute walk to a park.¹⁵ An individual’s ability to be physically active is shaped by both physical resources such as parks and greenways, but also by their social and cultural environment. A culture that promotes being active enhances social support among community members for physical activity, increases feelings of safety and promotes active transportation.

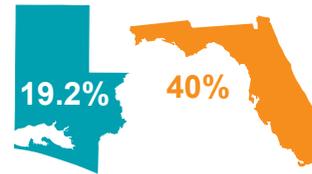
Nutrition

Good nutrition is essential for good health. The availability of healthy, affordable foods contributes to a person’s diet and affects their risk of related chronic diseases. Poor nutrition contributes to many of the top causes of death, including diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Access to healthy foods is affected by numerous factors, such as socioeconomic status, cooking knowledge, family and community culture, food environment, and availability of transportation.

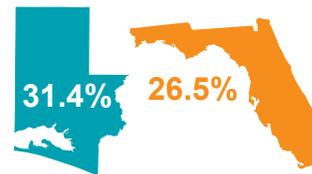
Obesity

Obesity is a risk factor for many of the leading causes of death, chronic diseases and poor mental health. Overweight and obese statuses are defined using body mass index (BMI). While not a perfect measure, a high BMI can indicate a person is overweight or obese. Children who are obese are more likely to become adults who are obese.

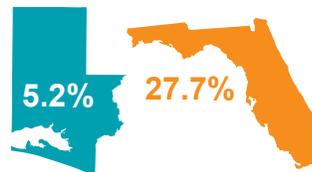
Residents Living Within a 1/2 Mile of a Park¹⁵



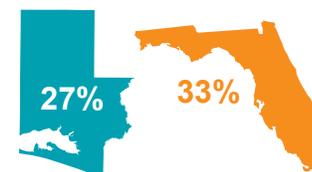
Adults who are Sedentary¹⁵



Population that Live Within a 1/2 Mile of Healthy Food Source¹⁵



Adults at a Healthy Weight¹⁵



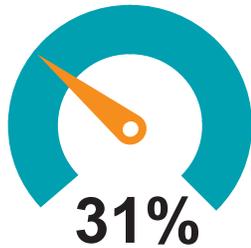
Community resources for active and health living include:

- Local Parks and Recreation
- Main Street DeFuniak Springs Farmers Market
- Walton County WIC
- Walton County UF/IFAS Extension Office
- Local Community Gardens
- Little Food Pantries
- Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida



The City of DeFuniak Springs is developing a Master Parks Plan to improve local parks and trails.

What do residents think about Healthy Living?²⁴



identified access to quality healthcare and wellness programs as an important feature in a Healthy Community



3.1

Satisfaction Level

for access to parks, libraries, pools, playgrounds, and community centers



3.5

Satisfaction Level

for access to fresh fruit and vegetables

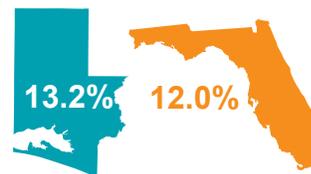
“When we develop new neighborhoods they should all come with sidewalks, and bike paths and parks.”

-Key Informant

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity refers to the inability to afford nutritionally adequate and safe foods. Food insecurity may be influenced by a number of factors, including income, employment, neighborhood conditions, race/ethnicity and disability. The risk for food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available. Adults and children who are food insecure may be at an increased risk for a variety of negative health outcomes such as obesity and chronic disease. During episodes of food insecurity, dietary variety tends to decrease and consumption of high-calorie foods tends to increase. U.S. adults living in food-insecure households consume fewer weekly servings of fruits, vegetables, and dairy and lower levels of micronutrients, including the B complex vitamins, magnesium, iron, zinc and calcium. These dietary patterns are linked to the development of chronic disease, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. A number of studies have found associations between food insecurity and obesity among children and women (but not men), though results among children have been inconsistent.

Food Insecurity Rate¹⁸



The Healthy Walton Gardens initiative is working to establish more community gardens in public spaces such as parks, schools, and government offices.



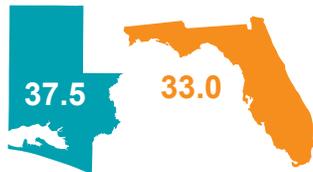
Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases are illnesses caused by germs (such as bacteria, viruses and fungi) that enter the body, multiply and cause an infection. Some infectious diseases are contagious, that is, spread from one person to another, while others can be spread through air, water, food or soil. Still others can be spread by insects or animals.

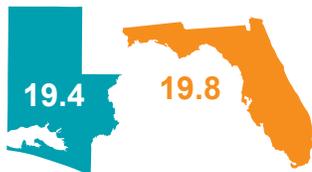
Enteric Diseases

Gastrointestinal (GI) infections that can cause fever, stomach ache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and headache. These GI infections are usually caused by certain bacteria and viruses.

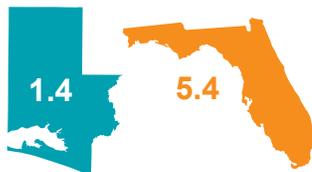
Salmonellosis Cases, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



Campylobacteriosis Cases, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



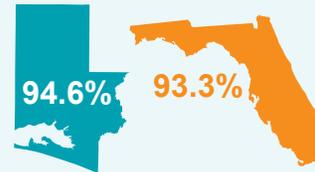
Shigellosis Cases, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



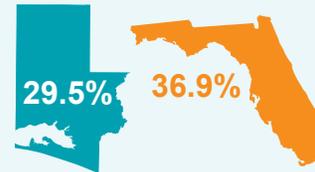
Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Certain dangerous diseases, like polio and smallpox, can be prevented with vaccinations.

Kindergarten Students who are Immunized¹⁵



Adults who Received a Flu Shot in the Past Year¹⁵



Community resources for infectious diseases include:

- OASIS Florida
- Florida Department of Health in Walton County



Religious Exemptions

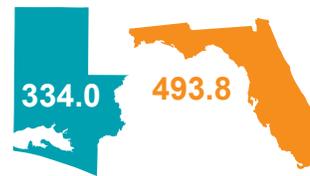
Unvaccinated children are at increased risk of vaccine-preventable diseases like mumps, pertussis, and varicella. Communities with a higher proportion of religious exemptions (REs) to vaccination are at increased risk of vaccine-preventable disease transmission.

In Census Tract 9506.02 in Southeast Walton County, Florida, 31.69% of children age 4-18 has been issued a religious exemption. This census tract is one of highest in Florida with the percentage of religious exemptions. This increases the risk of a vaccine-preventable outbreak for this area.

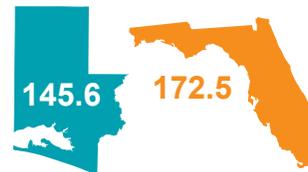
Sexually Transmitted Infections

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI) in North America and is one of the major causes of tubal infertility, ectopic pregnancy, pelvic inflammatory disease, and chronic pelvic pain. STIs are associated with a significantly increased risk of morbidity and mortality, including increased risk of cervical cancer, infertility, and premature death.

Chlamydia Cases, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



Gonorrhea Cases, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



Infectious Syphilis Cases, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



Out of the 22 new HIV cases in 2019-2021, 64% were male and 36% were female.¹⁵

22

New HIV Diagnoses in 2019-2021

Walton County, Florida¹⁵

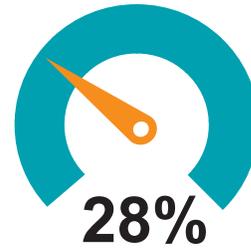
Injury

The most common types of fatal injuries are poisoning, motor vehicle accidents and falls. Recent increases in poisonings are driven mainly by drug overdose, which is covered in-depth in the Substance Use section of this report.



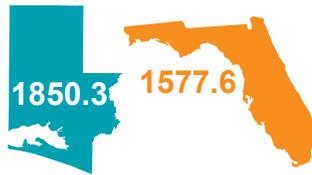
The Walton County Community Traffic Safety Team is working on improving some of the unsafe roads and highways.

What do residents think about driving safety?²⁴

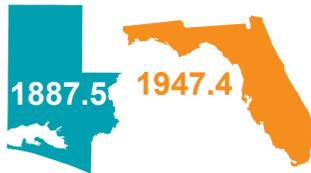


28% identified texting and driving as a **Top Unhealthy Behavior**

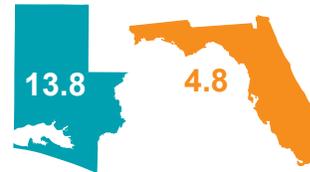
Motor Vehicle Crashes, Rate Per 100,000¹⁹



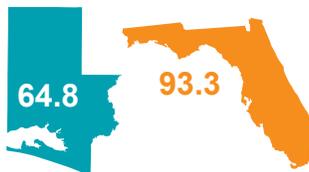
Emergency Department Visits for Fall-Related Injuries, Rate Per 100,000²⁰



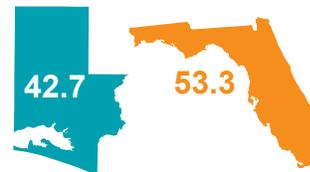
Emergency Department Visits for Drowning-Related Injuries, Rate Per 100,000²⁰



Hospitalizations for Poisoning-Related Injuries, Rate Per 100,000²⁰



Emergency Department Visits for Intentional Self-Harm Injury, Rate Per 100,000²⁰



Community resources for injuries, crime, and violence include:

- West Florida Area Health Education Center
- Walton Okaloosa Council on Aging
- Walton County Sheriff's Office
- City of DeFuniak Springs Police
- Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center

Crime & Violence

Crime and violence are also drivers of health. Exposure to crime and violence in one's community can lead to premature death, non-fatal injuries and negative long-term health outcomes. Children and adolescents exposed to violence are at risk for poor long-term behavioral and mental health outcomes, regardless of whether they are victims, direct witnesses, or hear about the crime from others. Low-income neighborhoods are more likely to be affected by crime than high-income neighborhoods.

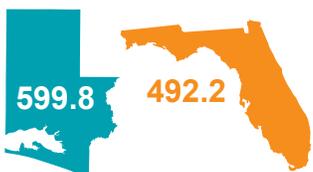
Crime is a social determinant of health. Research has shown that risks associated with juvenile arrests are cognitive deficits, low school involvement, living in poverty, or being runaway or homeless. Monitoring arrest rates can help increase public safety and reduce juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention and treatment services that strengthen families and improve lives of troubled youth.

Index Crimes*, Rate Per 100,000²¹



**Includes murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft.*

Domestic Violence Offenses, Rate Per 100,000²¹



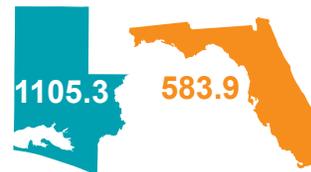
**Includes out-of-state arrests of Florida residents.*

What do residents think about crime and safety?

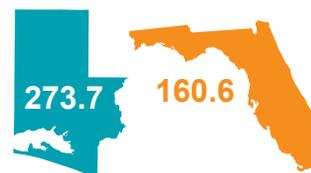


identified low crime and safe neighborhoods as an important feature in a Healthy Community

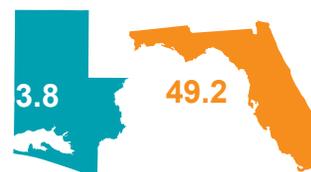
Children Experiencing Abuse (Aged 5-11 Years), Rate Per 100,000²¹



Youths Arrested*, Rate Per 100,000²¹



Forcible Sex Offenses, Rate Per 100,000²¹



Mental Health

Mental health includes emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how a person handles stress, relates to others and whether they make healthy choices. Mental illnesses such as depression and schizophrenia are diagnosable conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior. Mental illnesses may be occasional or long-lasting (chronic). Mental and physical health are equally important to overall health. Mental illness, especially depression, is a risk factor for many physical health problems and chronic diseases such as stroke, diabetes and heart disease. Similarly, chronic conditions are also a risk factor for mental illness.

Factors contributing to a person's risk for mental illness include:

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as trauma or a history of abuse
- Chronic medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes
- Biological factors including genetics or chemical imbalances in the brain
- Alcohol and recreational drug use
- Having few friends, feeling lonely or isolated

1,240:1
Ratio of Residents to a
Mental Health Provider⁸

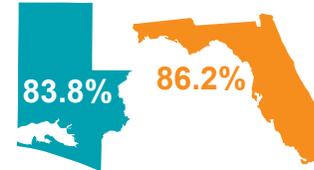


2.6

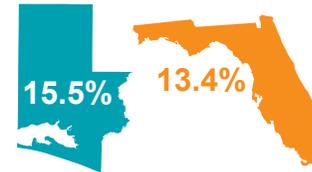
Satisfaction Level²⁴

for access to behavioral health
and/or counseling services

Adults With Good Mental¹⁵



Students who, in the Past Year, did Something to Purposely Hurt Themselves without Wanting to Die²²



Female students were over twice more likely to have done something to purposely hurt themselves (23.1%), compared to male students (8.2%).²²

Community resources for mental health and substance use includes:

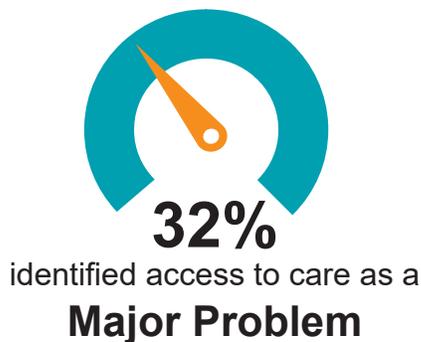
- Walton Community Health Center
- Lakeview Center of Walton County
- Walton County Prevention Coalition
- Women United
- Mental Health Association of Okaloosa & Walton Counties

Substance Use

Substance use disorders occur when the habitual use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school or home. Addiction is the most severe form of substance use disorder. Addiction is a complex, relapsing disease that affects both the brain and the body. It can be chronic, which means it can persist over a long period of time, require ongoing medical attention and limit the activities of daily living. If left untreated, it damages families, relationships, schools, workplaces and neighborhoods.¹⁶¹ Risky use of drugs or alcohol can change the brain in ways that make it very hard to quit, even for those who want to do so, and can lead to a substance use disorder. Substance use disorders can be prevented, treated and managed by health care professionals in combination with family or peer support.

From the Community Survey, respondents identified substance use as a higher concern than alcohol use and tobacco use.

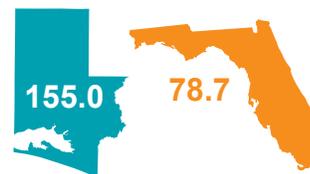
What do residents think about access to substance use?



Annual Drug Arrests, Rate Per 100,000²¹



Juvenile Drug Arrests, Rate Per 100,000²¹



350 Emergency Medical Service Responses to a Suspected Drug Overdose in 2021

Walton County, Florida¹⁵

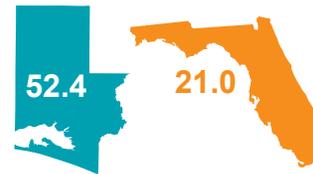
10 Residents Died of a Drug Overdose in 2021

Walton County, Florida¹⁵

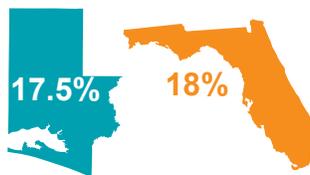
Alcohol Use

Drinking too much can harm your health. Excessive alcohol use led to more than 140,000 deaths and 3.6 million years of potential life lost (YPLL) each year in the United States from 2015 – 2019, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 26 years.¹ Further, excessive drinking was responsible for 1 in 10 deaths among working-age adults aged 20-64 years.² The economic costs of excessive alcohol consumption in 2010 were estimated at \$249 billion, or \$2.05 a drink.³

Alcohol Confirmed Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes, Rate Per 100,000¹⁹



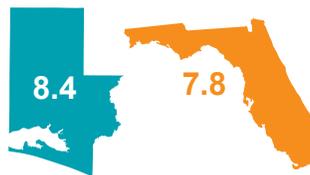
Adults who Engage in Heavy or Binge Drinking¹⁵



Alcohol Confirmed Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Fatalities, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



Deaths From Alcoholic Liver Disease, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵



Males are three times more likely to die of alcoholic liver disease (12.8 per 100,000) compared to females (4.1 per 100,000).¹⁵

Community resources for alcohol and tobacco use include:

- West Florida Area Health Education Center
- Walton County Prevention Coalition
- Local Alcoholics Anonymous

Tobacco Use

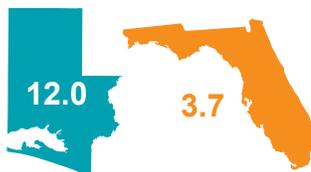
Tobacco use includes smoking combustible products such as cigarettes, cigarillos and cigars. Tobacco products also include hookahs and smokeless tobacco. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) classifies electronic cigarettes and vapor products as tobacco products as well.

Smoking combustible tobacco products is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., accounting for one in five deaths. It leads to disease and disability and harms nearly every organ of the body. Every year, \$170 billion is spent in the U.S. on direct medical care due to smoking. Productivity losses from smoking are estimated at \$156 billion.⁶² Nearly nine out of ten cigarette smokers first try cigarettes before age 18.⁶² The tobacco industry spends billions of dollars each year on marketing cigarettes.



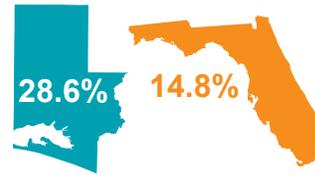
Residents without a high school diploma are most likely to smoke cigarettes (44.1%) compared to residents with a high school diploma (28.8%) and residents with more than a high school education (23.2%).¹⁵

Mothers Who Smoked During Pregnancy, Rate Per 100,000¹⁵

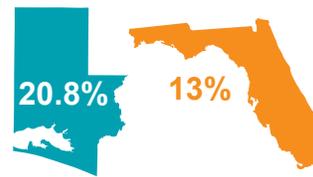


The rate of mothers that smoked during pregnancy has been trending downward for Walton County since 2017.

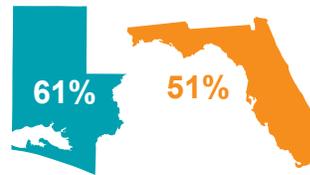
Adults who are Current Smokers¹⁵



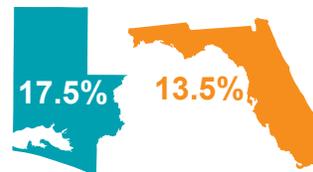
Students who Live in a Home that Allows Tobacco Use²²



Students who were Taught About Tobacco in their Classes During this School Year²²



Students who Used Cigarettes, Cigars, Smokeless Tobacco, Hookah, or Electronic Vapor Products in the Past 30 Days²²



Maternal & Child Health

Maternal health is defined as the health of mothers during pregnancy, childbirth and in the postpartum period. It is heavily dependent on a woman's health before pregnancy. Child health is the health of children from birth through adolescence with a focus on the health of children under age five. Maternal and child health are considered important public health indicators for a community, because the well-being of mothers, infants and children determines the health of the next generation and can help predict future public health challenges.

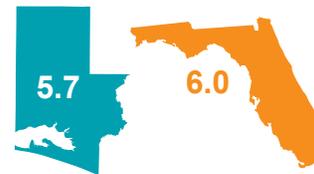
The health outcomes described in this section vary by race, income and other factors. At the national level, racial differences in adequate prenatal care, low birth weight, prematurity, and fetal and infant mortality are driven by many factors. Black mothers are less likely than white mothers to receive adequate prenatal care, and Black infants are at a higher risk of low birth weight and prematurity, all of which increase the risk for infant death. Low birth weight has been associated with several community-level factors, including poverty, unemployment, residential instability, and crime, that tend to disproportionately affect racial minority populations. Chronic diseases associated with increased risk for pregnancy complications are more prevalent and less well-controlled in Black women, and Black women are more likely than white women to receive obstetric care in hospitals that provide lower quality of care.

“A healthy community starts with a healthy family.”

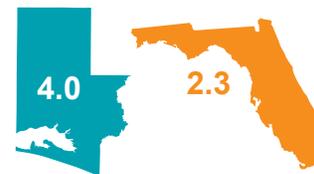
-Key Informant



Infant Mortality Rate, Rate Per 1,000 Live Births¹⁵

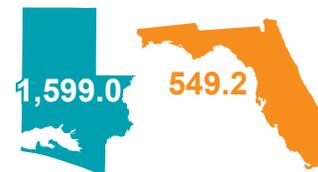


Births to Mothers Age 18 Years or Younger, Rate Per 1,000 Live Births¹⁵



Hispanic females age 18 years and younger are twice more likely to have a baby (8.4 per 1,000 live births) compared their non-Hispanic counterparts (3.5 per 1,000 live births).¹⁵

Children in Foster Care (Age 0-17), Rate Per 100,000²³



Walton County has a higher percentage of births with adequate prenatal care (73%) based on Kotelchuck Index compared to statewide (67%).¹⁵

Community resources for maternal and child health include:

- Florida Department of Health in Walton County
- Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast
- Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties
- Pregnancy Resource Center
- Florida Department of Children and Families | Circuit 1

Aging in Walton County

The increase in the number of older adults in the United States is unprecedented. In 2019, 54 million US adults were 65 or older, representing 16% of the population—or more than 1 in every 7 Americans.² Nearly 1 in 4 older adults are members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

By 2040, the number of older adults is expected to reach 80.8 million.² By 2060, it will reach 94.7 million, and older adults will make up nearly 25% of the US population.²

Aging increases the risk of chronic diseases such as dementias, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, and cancer. These are the nation's leading drivers of illness, disability, death, and health care costs. The risk of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias increases with age, and these conditions are most common in adults 65 and older.

Top Three Leading Causes of Death for Individuals Aged 65 and older¹⁵:

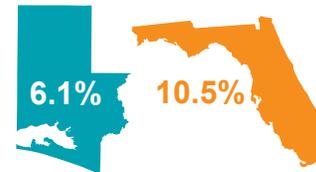
1. Heart Disease
2. Cancer
3. Alzheimer's Disease



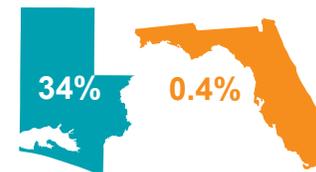
Walton County is a member of the Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.

20.1% Residents Over the Age of 65 Years Walton County, Florida²

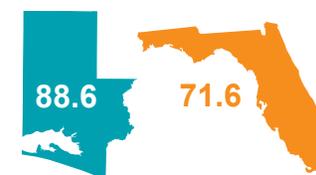
Population with Incomes Below 100% of Poverty, Aged 65 and Older²



Population Living More Than Ten Miles From the Nearest Supermarket, Aged 65 Years and Older¹⁵



Non-fatal Motor Vehicle Traffic Injuries Resulting in Hospitalization, Aged 65 and Older Rate Per 100,000²⁰



Community resources for older adult health include:

- Walton Okaloosa Council on Aging
- Walton County Senior Life Enrichment Centers
- Coastal Seniors of South Walton
- Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging
- West Florida Area Health Education Center

COMMUNITY THEMES & STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT



COMMUNITY THEMES & STRENGTHS

The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment is a vital part of a community health improvement process. During this phase, community thoughts, opinions, concerns, and solutions are gathered – anything that provides insight into the issues the community feels are important. Feedback about the quality of life in the community and community assets is also gathered. The information gathered during this phase will feed into the Identify Strategic Issues phase of the MAPP process.

In Summer 2022, DOH-Walton worked with community partners to conduct a community survey (386 responses), interviews with 20 community leaders knowledgeable about health, and one health care focus group.

Key Informants

Tony Anderson, Walton County Board of County Commissioners
Ann Sexton, City of Paxton
Bob Campbell, City of DeFuniak Springs
Russell Hughes, Walton County School District
Bill Barrett, Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast
Laura Tiu, UF/IFAS Extension Office - Walton County
Sgt. Mark Wendal, Walton County Sheriff's Office
Cory Godwin, Walton County Jail
Susan Bakalo, Life Enrichment Senior Center
Bill Imfeld, Walton County Economic Development Alliance
Gabrielle Kilgore, Walton Area Chamber of Commerce
Shakisha McDonald, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast
Carly Barnes, Caring and Sharing of South Walton
Chelsea Blaich, Main Street DeFuniak Springs
Caitlin Cerise, Walton County Public Library System
Travis Digges, City of Freeport Parks and Recreation Department
Samantha Graves, City of Freeport Planning and Zoning Department
Joel Paul, Jr., Tri-County Community Council, Inc.
Steve Vergara, Trinity Fellowship Church

Focus Group

Walton Community Health Center Board of Directors

Major Findings

Most Important Factors in a Healthy Community

1. Affordable and accessible housing
2. Access to quality healthcare and wellness programs
3. Low crime and safe neighborhoods
4. Clean environment (water, air, etc.)
5. Quality education
6. Good employment and entrepreneurship opportunities
7. Community services for vulnerable populations (older adults, individuals with disabilities, homeless, etc.)
8. Access to mental healthcare

Greatest Perceived Health Issues in Walton County

1. Limited access to healthcare and wellness programs
2. Limited community services for vulnerable populations (older adults, individuals with disabilities, homeless, etc.)
3. Limited access to mental healthcare
4. Cost of medications
5. Homelessness
6. Lack of health insurance
7. Limited access to healthy food options
8. Motor vehicle accidents

Top Perceived Personal Behaviors Affecting the Health of Walton County Residents

1. Drug use
2. Not seeing a doctor or dentist routinely
3. Being at an unhealthy weight
4. Texting/using cell phone while driving
5. Alcohol use
6. Lack of exercise
7. Poor eating habits
8. Tobacco use

FORCES OF CHANGE ASSESSMENT





FORCES OF CHANGE

Forces of Change (FoC) assessment identifies known or likely major contextual elements that could support, bolster, hinder, or even negate taking action on key strategic assessment was conducted in Summer 2022 with the CHA Steering Committee. The committee identified forces that could affect the 2023-2025 in either a positive or negative way. The summary of the findings can be found on the next page.

Forces (Trends, Events, and Factors)	Threats	Opportunities
Decreasing income stability due to economy trends (Inflation, gas prices, housing, medical costs, food, transportation)	People might not afford medications, routine health care, or healthy food choices, housing, etc.	Partnerships with health care, non-profits, and local governments; The need of interventions such as establishing more community gardens or encourage at-home growing.
Lack of housing options (Affordable, workforce, rental, etc.)	Increased homelessness and families living in unsafe conditions	Multifamily/generational living together
Population Growth	Lack of services, infrastructure, lack of housing, overcrowding of schools	Increase in local economy, Increase in tax base
Lack of substance use treatment centers and mental health counselors	Increase in accidental overdose deaths, drug use, and crime rates	Access of telehealth services, 988
Temporary closure of local emergency department	Residents have to travel an extra 30 minutes to receive emergency care; First responders have to spend extra time on each incident; Increased ambulance expenses	EMS Home Visits; Better collaboration with first responders
Increasing populations with limited English proficiency	Limited services provided in preferred language	Cultural diversity; Partnerships focusing on literacy
Rural setting, mixed-rural	Limited transportation, long drives for primary and specialty healthcare, work, etc, healthcare with limited operating hours, mixture of rural and developing urban settings/cultures	Beautiful lands, parks, farms, etc
Proximity to coast	Hurricanes, flooding, increased population that are not included in resident estimates	Tourism taxes
Ending of COVID-19 funding	Removing people from public assistance (housing, etc.), impacts on testing, vaccine availability	Highlighting the importance of the local public health system and the need for adequate funding
The hiring crisis, especially for public sector and non-profits	People living jobs, limited pool of applicants, positions/ programs being closed and ended	Ensuring that resources are being used responsibly and strategically
Increasing travel	Increase likelihood of travel-related infectious diseases	Cultural experiences; Vacations for mental health
Increasing community involvement to address issues	N/A	Working together and not against each other

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM ASSESSMENT



LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

The Local Public Health Systems Assessment (LPHSA) was conducted in March 2022 virtually via a survey to a sampling of 20 local public health practitioners and community partners. The survey used the 10 Essential Public Health Services (EPHS) framework for public health. Participants of the LPHSA scored each of the sub-elements of the EPHS based on if the local public health system is caring out the EPHS and to what extent, from “No” to “Optimal.” The sub-element scores were then averaged to determine the overall score for the EPHS. The following is the results form the LPHSA:

Top 3 Local Strengthsⁱ

(Highest Scoring Sub-Elements)

- 87.4** Collaborate and facilitate data sharing with partners, including multi-sector partners. (EPHS #1)
- 87.2** Build relationships with payers and healthcare providers, including the sharing of data across partners to foster health and well-being. (EPHS #7)
- 87.2** Conduct enforcement activities that may include, but are not limited to sanitary codes, especially in the food industry; full protection of drinking water supplies; and timely follow-up on hazards, preventable injuries, and exposure-related diseases identified in occupational and community settings. (EPHS #6)

Top 3 Areas of Improvement

(Lowest Scoring Sub-Elements)

- 68.4** Foster leadership skills at all levels. (EPHS #8)
- 70.6** Build a pipeline of future public health practitioners. (EPHS #8)
- 75.8** Build a culturally competent public health workforce and leadership that reflects the community and practices cultural humility. (EPHS #8)

ⁱ The two highest scoring sub-elements were not included due to their scopes being related to licensing the healthcare workforce, which is a statewide service with little local influence.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE	WEIGHTED SCORE	LEVEL
#1: Assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets.	85.1	Optimal
#2: Investigate, diagnose, and address health problems and hazards affecting the population.	82.4	Optimal
#3: Communicate effectively to inform and educate people about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it.	80.0	Optimal
#4: Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships to improve health.	84.5	Optimal
#5: Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact health	80.6	Optimal
#6: Utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public's health	87.9	Optimal
#7: Assure an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be healthy	84.0	Optimal
#8: Build and support a diverse and skilled public health workforce	75.6	Significant
#9: Improve and innovate public health functions through ongoing evaluation, research, and continuous quality improvement	79.3	Significant
#10: Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health	81.4	Optimal

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THANK YOU!

The Florida Department of Health in Walton County (DOH-Walton) thanks the following individuals and organizations for their invaluable contributions to this assessment. This assessment would not be possible without your dedication to the health of our communities.

CHA Leadership Team

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OUR PARTNERS

90 Works
A Bed 4 Me Foundation
Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast
BeGenerous, Inc.
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast
CareerSource Okaloosa | Walton
Caring and Sharing of South Walton
Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida
CenterWell Home Health
Chautauqua Rehabilitation and Nursing Center
Center for Independent Living
City of DeFuniak Springs
City of Freeport
Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County
Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast
Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center
Emerald Coast Regional Council
Emerald Coast Technical College
Florida Department of Children and Families | Circuit 1
Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County
Florida Department of Health in Walton County
Habitat for Humanity of Walton County
Healthmark Regional Medical Center
Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties
Homelessness and Housing Alliance
Hope Medical Clinic
Humana
Lakeview Center of Walton County
Main Street DeFuniak Springs
Matrix Community Outreach Center
Mental Health Association of Okaloosa-Walton
Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging
OASIS Florida
Okaloosa Walton Medical Health Association
Pancare of Florida
Point Washington Medical Clinic
Regency Hospice
Shelter House of Northwest Florida
Tri-County Community Council
UF/IFAS Extension Office - Walton County
United Way Emerald Coast
VITAS
Walton Community Health Center
Walton County Baptist Association
Walton County Board of County Commissioners
Walton County Emergency Management
Walton County Housing Agency
Walton County Public Library System
Walton County Prevention Coalition
Walton County School District
Walton County Sheriff's Office
Walton County Tax Collector
Walton Okaloosa Council on Aging
West Florida Area Health Education Center

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ELEVATING THE HEALTH OF WALTON COUNTY

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CREATING A HEALTHY WALTON!**

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Email us for more information:**

WCHIP@FLHEALTH.GOV

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