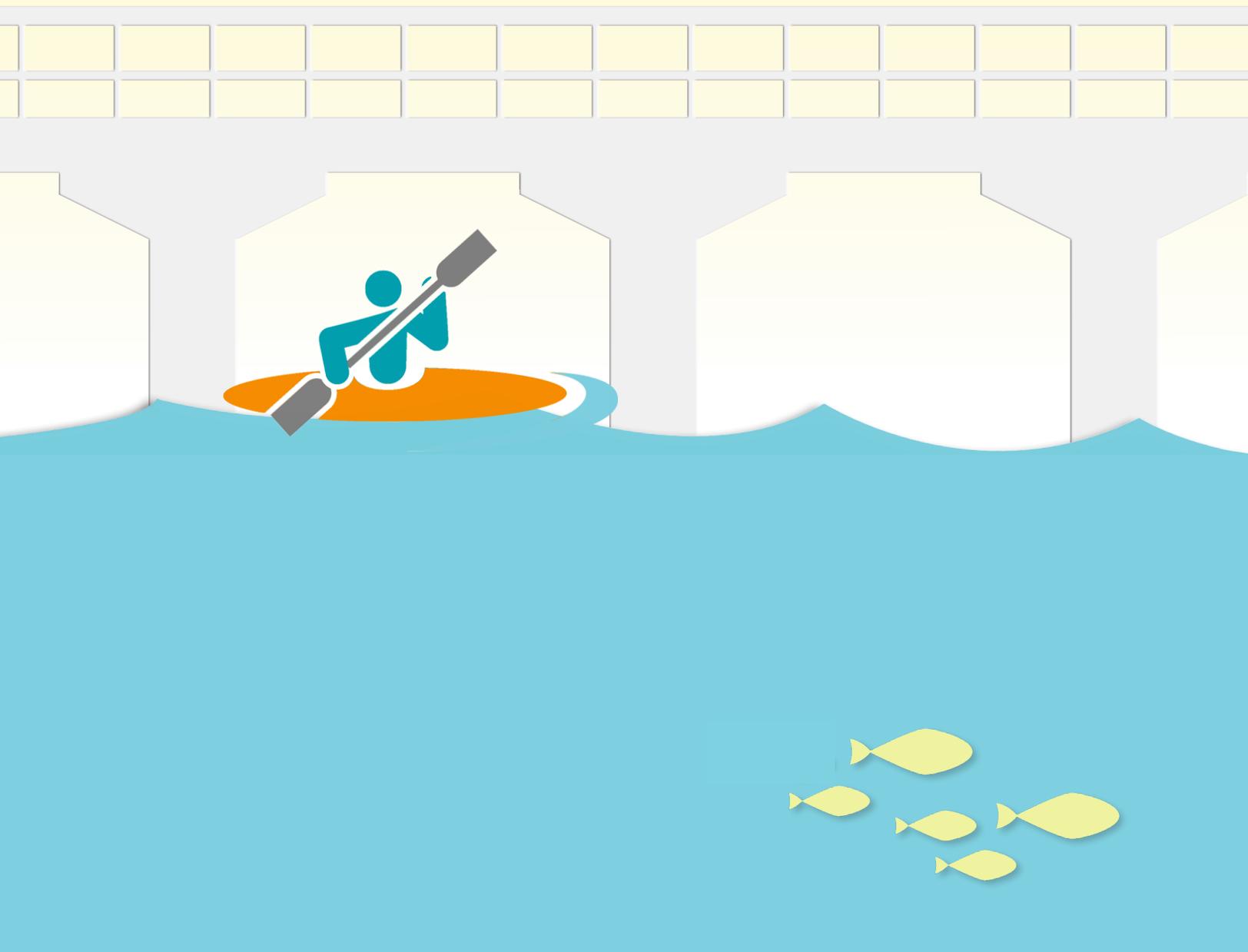


# OKALOOSA COUNTY

## Community Health Assessment

### 2022



# Letter to the Community

The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) is pleased to present the 2022 Community Health Assessment (CHA). The mission of DOH-Okaloosa is to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in our community through state, county and community efforts. This assessment prioritizes data collected and evaluated over the past year, and includes information on the health of our community, in addition to other factors that impact health.

The 2022 CHA identifies disparities influencing individual's and group's health status. These disparities include economic and social conditions, as well as individual risk conditions such as behavioral factors or genetics influencing the risk for disease or injury.

The 2022 CHA represents data collected from area agencies and partners, identifying the community's strengths and challenges, prioritizing health issues. The 2022 CHA is a foundation for the creation of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP follows a strategic methodology to address the identified health priorities in the CHA by aligning our goals with those of our community partners, medical providers, and local government agencies.

The CHA not only presents challenges for us as a community, but the CHA also allows the opportunity to work collaboratively towards solutions that result in lasting and meaningful change. DOH-Okaloosa is committed to working alongside our partners to improve the wellness, health, and quality of life for Okaloosa County residents and visitors.

I'd like to give a special thank you to Dr. Karen Chapman, the former Director and Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County. Dr. Chapman's vision for the community will always be everlasting.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth "Beth" Smith, MSN, RN  
Health Officer



# 2022 Okaloosa County Community Health Assessment

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## Introduction

The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) produces a Community Health Assessment (CHA) every three to five years. The CHA tells the story of public health in Okaloosa County. It shares the wonderful things about our community and the ways we can improve. We all have a role to play in making Okaloosa County a healthier place to live, learn, work and play! As you read the CHA, think about how you can become involved.

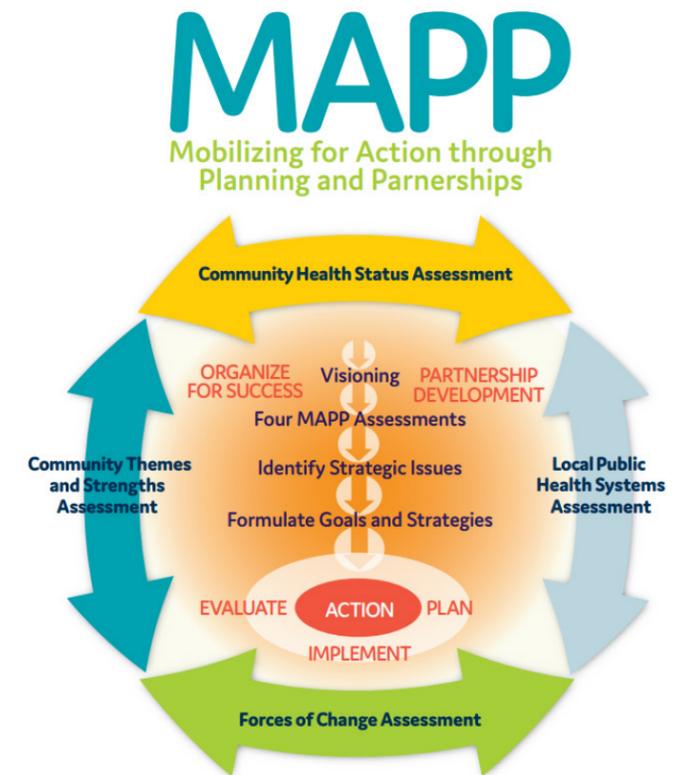
### MAPP Assessments

To develop the CHA, we used the **Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model**. According to the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), MAPP is “a community-driven strategic planning process for improving community health. Facilitated by public health leaders, this framework helps communities apply strategic thinking to prioritize public health issues and identify resources to address them.” MAPP is not an agency-focused assessment process; rather, it is an interactive process that can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately the performance of local public health systems.” The MAPP model is made up of four assessments that help identify public health issues in our community:

#### Community Health Status Assessment

**Assessment** | This explains the health standing of our community. It helped us identify our key community health problems by reviewing data about health conditions, quality of life and risk factors in the community.<sup>1</sup> Data was collected from a variety of sources. Please see the sources listing located on page 32 to review the references used in this document. Note: additional sources were reviewed during this assessment to assess their importance. However, the sources listed are those that were chosen to be included in this document by members of the CHA Leadership Team and Internal Core Support Team.

**Community Themes and Strengths Assessment** | The data collected in this assessment helped us learn what issues are important to our community, how the quality of life is seen in our community and what resources our community has that can be used to improve health.<sup>1</sup> Information was collected via 6 focus groups, 12 in-depth interviews and 832 survey participants. Efforts were made to seek responses from a wide variety of community leaders and general residents. Participants also include residents from every geographical area of Okaloosa County.



**Local Public Health System Assessment** | This data collected in the assessment helped us learn: how well public health services are being provided to our community and the performance and abilities of our community health system.<sup>1</sup> An email and video providing an introduction to the assessment were developed to inform participants about the purpose and importance of the survey. The survey was developed in SurveyMonkey and then distributed to a listing of over 100 members of the public health system in Okaloosa County. Participants were asked to watch the video overview and then complete the survey. 25 participants completed the survey in an average of 28 minutes.

**Forces of Change Assessment** | Information collected for this assessment helped us learn what is happening or could happen that affects the health of our community and what dangers or opportunities are exposed by these occurrences.<sup>1</sup> A meeting of the CHA Leadership Team was convened on September 8, 2021. Members discussed the forces of change including the trends, factors and events that may impact Okaloosa County. A follow-up survey developed in SurveyMonkey was distributed for those who were unable attend, receiving a total of 7 responses. Responses given in the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment's focus groups, interviews and survey were also included. The CHA Leadership Team reviewed the final Forces of Change Assessment to ensure agreement on forces, opportunities and threats.

Complete details and additional data collected for each assessment can be requested by emailing the DOH-Okaloosa Community Health Improvement Planning staff at HealthyOkaloosa@flhealth.gov.

After the MAPP assessments were completed in December 2021, DOH-Okaloosa created the 2022 CHA document in partnership with the CHA Leadership Team and Internal Core Support Team. The CHA was then edited by various community partners. Afterward, the document was reviewed by the public through online feedback. The responses provided by the community shaped the final CHA document.

**Health Issue Prioritization Process**

It would be impossible to tackle all health issues mentioned in the CHA at the same time and attain measurable improvement. Addressing a small number of health issues in a coordinated, rigorous manner is more effective than uncoordinated efforts aimed at multiple problems. Identifying a few priorities will allow our community to concentrate limited resources to achieve the greatest impact on what is most important. The CHA Leadership Team and Internal Core Support Team received a detailed presentation on the draft 2022 Okaloosa County CHA and criteria for consideration included magnitude of the problem and existence of health disparities. Following this, participants completed a survey via SurveyMonkey to select the top health issue(s) they felt were most important based on the data. These health issues were reviewed by the CHA Leadership Team and categorized into focus areas which include: Healthy Moms & Babies, Healthy Children, Healthy Adults, Healthy Behaviors, Healthy Places, and Healthy Communities.

**Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**

Using this CHA as a guide, we will create the 2022-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP will include plans to address some of the top health issues chosen.

The plans outlined in the CHIP serve as a guide to address the issues, in partnership with a group of caring people from community organizations. Together we form the CHIP teams chosen by the community, selected from the priority areas. The CHIP teams will work to improve health in Okaloosa County over the next three years. To join a CHIP team or learn more about their work, please email HealthyOkaloosa@flhealth.gov.

**Data Overview**

**Why does the CHA include information on education and income?** Higher education and incomes impact health in many ways. People with higher incomes have the opportunity to make healthy choices because they are more likely to live in safe homes and neighborhoods, have access to healthy foods and safe places to exercise, and have resources to deal with stressful life events. Those who are working and still struggling to pay the rent can't always make healthy choices because they don't have as many resources. Families who are struggling to get by are also more likely to face more overall stress and have less resources to deal with stressful events. Chronic stress creates higher levels of harmful hormones, which can increase the risk of many diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.<sup>2,3</sup> So, it makes sense that groups of people with more education and higher incomes generally have better health and live longer than those with lower incomes. Groups of people with the lowest incomes tend to have the worst health and die younger.<sup>2</sup>

**Why are the statistics broken down by population groups?** By comparing, we can see where we are doing well and where we can improve. It is helpful to look at how healthy people in Okaloosa County are, as a group, compared to people in the rest of Florida or in the whole United States. These comparisons cannot be applied to individual people, only to groups of people. For example, men might be twice as likely to die of accidental poisoning than women, but that does not mean a specific man is twice as likely to die from poisoning than his sister.



The graphic on the left shows the group of men have a 25% chance of being orange, not that one man has a 25% chance of being orange.



**What are rates?** Rates are a way to compare between groups of different sizes. Let's say 1,000 fish were born and 100 of those fish died. Fifty of the fish who died had stripes, and 50 had spots. These numbers would make us think striped and spotted fish die at the same rate. But, what if 80% of the fish born had stripes and 20% had spots? Then we would expect that if 100 fish had died, 80 would have stripes and 20 would have spots. Rates help us see the number of fish who die in relation to the number of fish born.

<b>Fish Born</b>	▶	<b>Fish Died</b>	=	<b>Death Rate</b>
800 Striped		50 Striped		50 of 800 = 6% (1 out of every 16)
200 Spotted		50 Spotted		50 of 200 = 25% (1 out of every 4)
1,000 Total		100 Total		100 of 1,000 = 10% (1 out of every 10)

# Drivers of Health

**Health begins where you live, learn, work and play.** All Okaloosa 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 Okaloosans so everyone can have the opportunity to make healthy choices.

**What is a health disparity?** A disparity is when different groups of people have very different levels of health for no obvious reason. For example, it is important to know if people in one part of our county are sicker than people in the rest of the county. We would want to figure out what is going on and identify opportunities for better health.<sup>4</sup>

**What is health equity?** Achieving health equity is important! According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we are seeing across the nation that “gaps in health are large, persistent and increasing—many of them caused by barriers set up at all levels of our society. After all, it’s hard to be healthy without access to good jobs and schools and, safe, affordable homes. Health equity means increasing opportunities for everyone to live the healthiest life possible, no matter who we are, where we live, or how much money we make.”<sup>5</sup> Achieving health equity in Okaloosa requires us to value everyone and eliminate disparities.



The United States spends more money per person on health care than any other developed nation. But, we continue to have poorer health outcomes and greater differences in health across geographical areas and population groups.



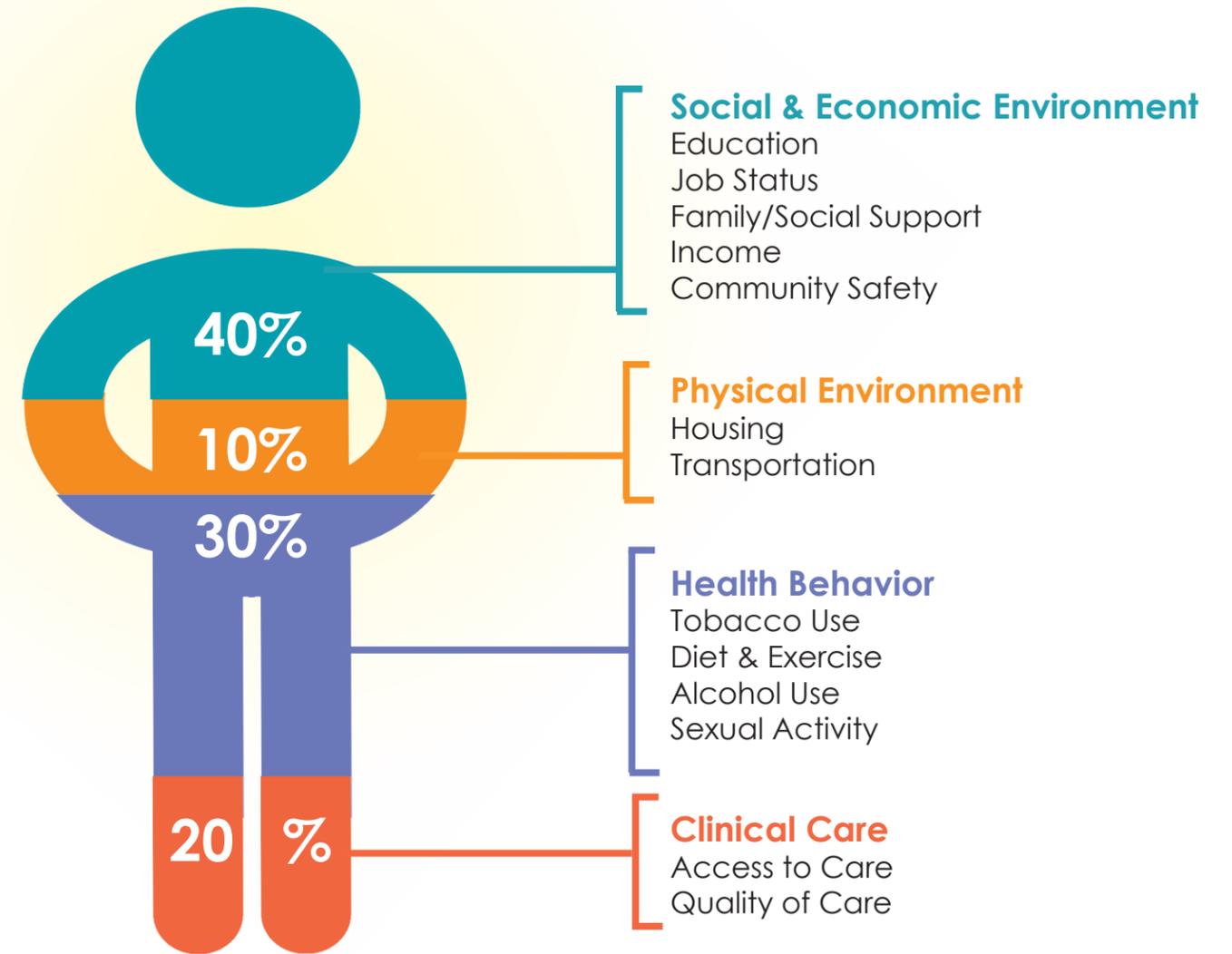
We cannot take a “one-size-fits-all” approach and should instead look at individual needs. The graphic above represents this importance. A person who uses a wheelchair likely needs a ramp, not a step-stool. By addressing individual needs, everyone is able to reach an orange in the tree.



In October 2021, the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County received funding to work toward achieving health equity in our county.

## Factors that Drive Our Health

According to research, there are four broad factors (other than genetics) that impact our health. These are called the “drivers of health” or the social determinants of health. These factors are listed below, along with an approximate percentage of how much impact they have on our health.<sup>6</sup>



### Social & Economic Environment

- Education
- Job Status
- Family/Social Support
- Income
- Community Safety

### Physical Environment

- Housing
- Transportation

### Health Behavior

- Tobacco Use
- Diet & Exercise
- Alcohol Use
- Sexual Activity

### Clinical Care

- Access to Care
- Quality of Care

## Symbol Key



These symbols are used to highlight positives and negatives in our communities.

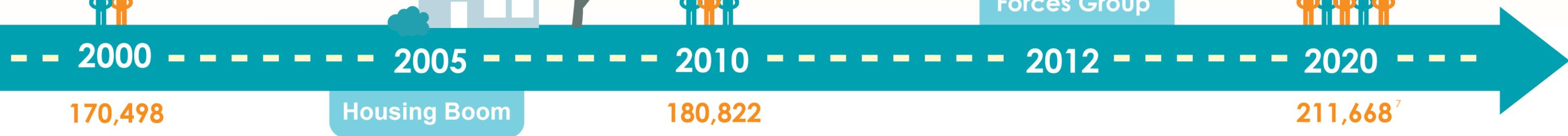


This “Did You Know?” symbol is used to highlight facts and important data points..

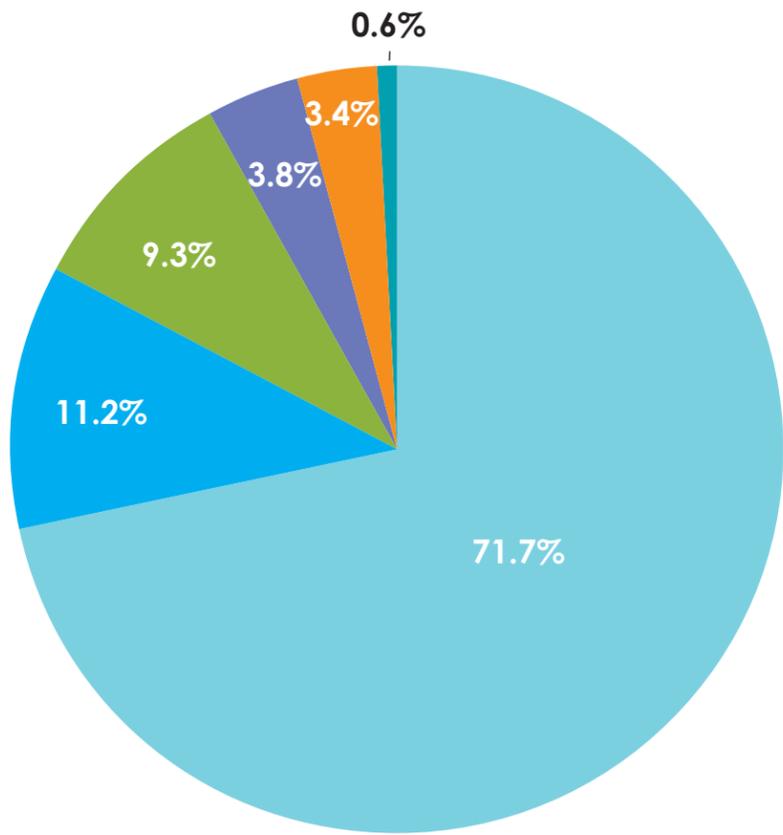


This symbol is used throughout the CHA to highlight disparities, or areas that need improvement. We focus on the issues that need improvement so we can work together on solutions!

# Community Profile



Population, by Race<sup>7</sup>



- White
- Two or More Races
- Black
- Other
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- American Indian

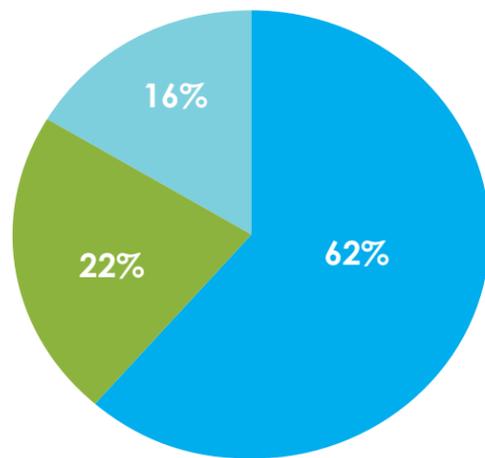


If current trends continue, Okaloosa County is estimated to have a population of 223,161 in 2030 and 236,005 in 2040!<sup>8</sup>

Population, by Ethnicity<sup>7</sup>

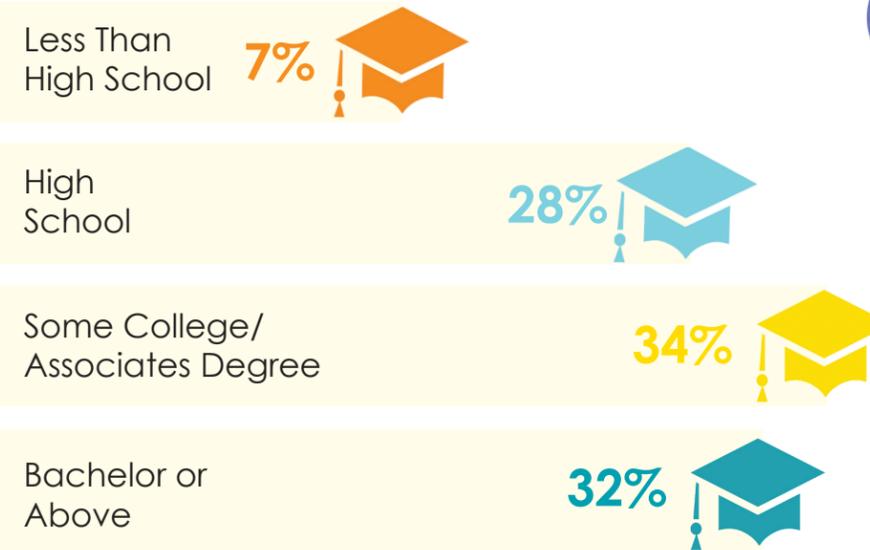


Population, by Age<sup>7</sup>



- 65+ years old
- 18-64 years old
- Under 18 years old

Educational Attainment<sup>7</sup>



21% of Okaloosa's Black male students do not graduate high school compared to 11% of White male students.<sup>9</sup>

According to County Health Rankings, "better educated individuals live longer, healthier lives" than those with less education, and their children are more likely to thrive. This is true even when factors like income are taken into account."<sup>10</sup>



Okaloosa County Public Schools rank among the top four in the State of Florida.<sup>11</sup>

Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, and 7th Special Forces add both economic and cultural benefits to Okaloosa County.

83% of residents are satisfied with the quality of life in Okaloosa County.

81% of residents believe people can contribute to and participate in the community's quality of life.

12% of Okaloosans speak a language other than English at home. 9% are foreign born.<sup>7</sup>

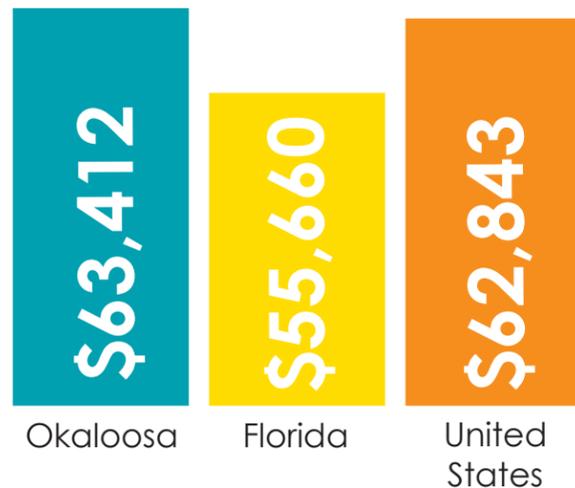


94% of Okaloosans have a computer.<sup>7</sup>

87% of Okaloosans have a broadband Internet subscription.<sup>7</sup>

## Median Household Income<sup>7</sup>

Household - According to the US Census Bureau, a single housing unit and all of the people that live in it.



**Despite Okaloosa's high median household income, disparities still exist.** The list below shows the median household income earned by different racial and ethnic groups.<sup>7</sup>

Asian	\$76,190
Two or More Races	\$74,587
White	\$66,581
Black or African American	\$56,178
Hispanic or Latino	\$49,182
Native American	\$47,814

## OKALOOSA OPINIONS Income

"It's cheap to purchase fast food, unhealthy foods, but so expensive to purchase healthy [foods]. That's difficult for low income families." - Mary Esther resident

In Okaloosa County, **21% of renters are considered severely cost burdened.** This means that their rent price takes up over 50% of their household income.<sup>12</sup>



**39%** of Okaloosa households led by moms with children under the age of 18 are living in poverty.<sup>7</sup>

## Okaloosa County Living Wage Breakdown<sup>13</sup>

Yearly Costs	Single Adult	Family (2 Adults + 2 Children)
Food	\$3,177	\$9,305
Child care	\$-	\$15,378
Medical	\$2,792	\$9,249
Housing	\$10,720	\$12,681
Transportation	\$5,113	\$13,896
Civic	\$1,811	\$4,127
Other	\$2,875	\$6,216
Taxes	\$4,294	\$11,486
<b>Annual Income</b>	<b>\$30,782</b>	<b>\$41,170 (per adult)</b>
<b>Living Hourly Wage</b>	<b>\$14.80</b>	<b>\$19.79 (per adult)</b>

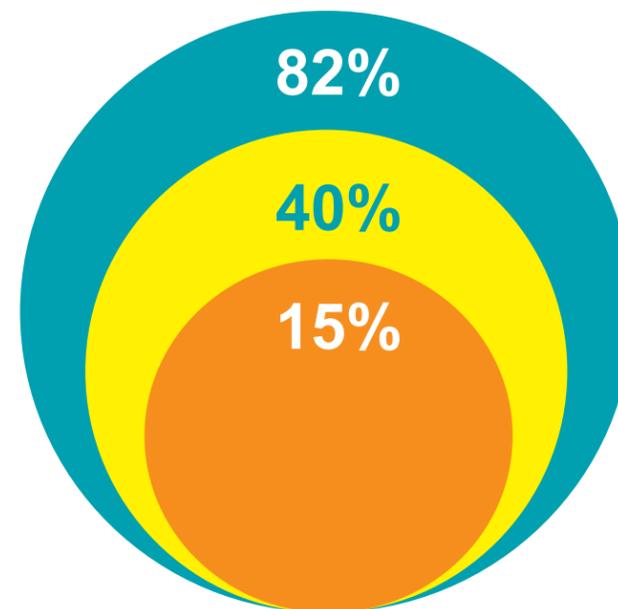


Through federal CARES Act funding, Okaloosa County offered a local grant program to aid businesses, nonprofits, and individuals during COVID-19.<sup>15</sup>

## Access to Care

### Health Insurance Coverage<sup>7</sup>

- Private Coverage
- Public Coverage (Medicaid/Medicare)
- Uninsured



\*People can have more than one type of coverage and as a result, these numbers will add to more than 100%.

### Provider Availability<sup>7</sup>

Provider Type	# of Residents Per Each Provider	Goal
Family Doctor	1,260	1,030
Dentist	1,210	1,240
Mental Health	620	290

Okaloosa County meets the goal for number of providers per resident for dentists, but **does not meet the goal for family doctors and mental health providers.**

## Emergency Medical Response<sup>16</sup>



**Hospital**  
Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, North Okaloosa Medical Center, and Twin Cities Hospital.



**Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Station**  
Ground transportation to stabilize and move patients from accident scenes to healthcare facilities.



**Air Medical Services Station**  
Air transportation to stabilize and move patients from accident scenes to healthcare facilities.

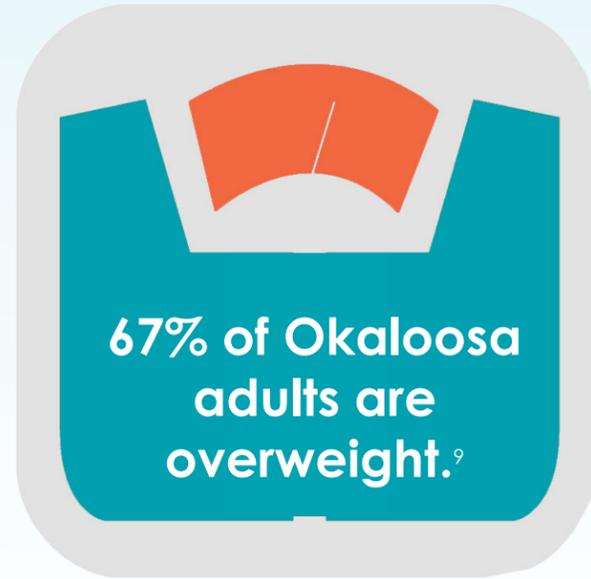


**Advanced Life Support (ALS) Fire Station**  
Basic life support (BLS) fire stations are available throughout the County.



41% of residents are not satisfied with the healthcare system in Okaloosa County.<sup>17</sup>

# Active & Healthy Living



**12%** of adults in Okaloosa County have been told they have diabetes.<sup>9</sup>



**8%** of adults in Okaloosa County have been told they have pre-diabetes.<sup>9</sup>

**77%** of adults in Okaloosa County with diabetes have had diabetes self-management education.<sup>9</sup>

## OKALOOSA OPINIONS Healthy Living

**39%** of residents ranked obesity as one of the top 3 health issues in Okaloosa County.<sup>17</sup>

“Okaloosa has access to **community parks, recreational centers, and areas for physical activity.**” - Mary Esther resident

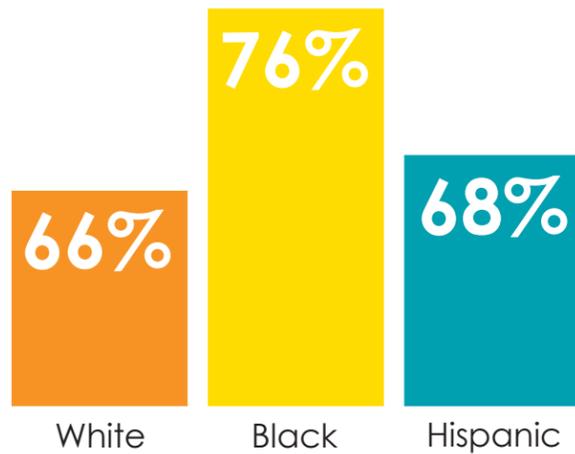
### The Costs of Obesity<sup>19</sup>

Healthcare costs for adults who are obese are **nearly \$1,900 higher** than adults who have a healthy weight.

Adult obesity accounts for nearly **\$173 billion in yearly medical expenses** in the United States.

Obesity-related healthcare costs are greatest for people aged 60 and older.

### Okaloosa Residents Overweight by Race/Ethnicity<sup>9</sup>



### Students who are Physically Active for At Least An Hour Per Day<sup>9</sup>



12% of Okaloosa adults report having poor physical health on 14 or more of the past 30 days. This is an increase of 21% from 2007.<sup>9</sup>

**33%** of residents ranked overeating or poor eating habits as a top 3 risky behavior.<sup>17</sup>

The average commute time (time it takes to get to work) is 24 minutes, leaving less time for physical activity.<sup>9</sup>

In 2021, the City of Crestview opened a new skate park. The park provides an opportunity for children and adults to exercise.<sup>21</sup>





Only 18%

of Okaloosa adults eat the recommended 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.<sup>9</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fewer than 1 in 10 adults and youth eat enough fruits and vegetables.<sup>20</sup>

**Nearly half** of all elementary students in Okaloosa County come from families who do not make enough money to pay for their school lunches.<sup>9</sup>



Okaloosa County is home to approximately **481 farms, each averaging approximately 97 acres.**<sup>23</sup>

There are **multiple community farmers markets in Okaloosa County.** These sites provide fruits, vegetables, and other products for sale directly to the public.<sup>24</sup>

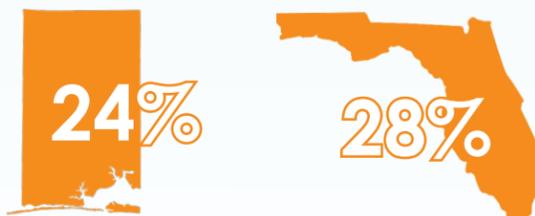


**89% of Okaloosan mothers initiate breastfeeding.**<sup>9</sup> According to Dr. Ruth Petersen of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "breastfeeding provides unmatched health benefits for babies and mothers. It is the clinical gold standard for infant feeding and nutrition, with breast milk uniquely tailored to meet the health needs of a growing baby."<sup>22</sup>

Percentage of residents who live within a 1/2 mile of a healthy food source:<sup>9</sup>



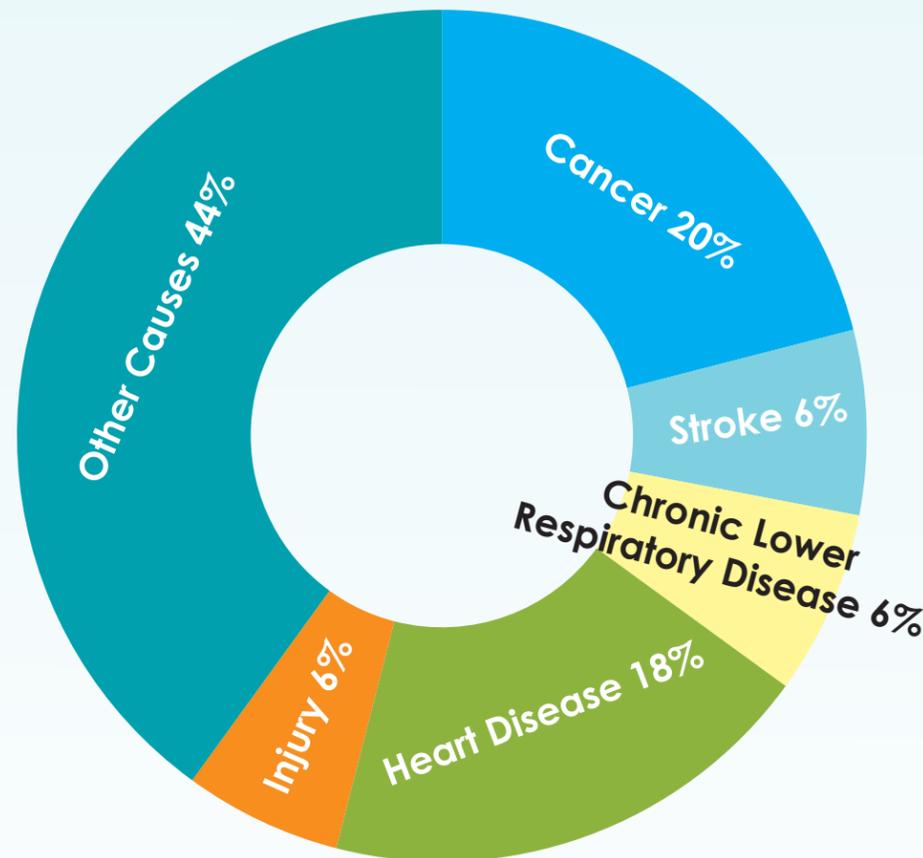
Percentage of residents who live within a 1/2 mile of a fast food restaurant:<sup>9</sup>



12% of Okaloosa County residents are food insecure.<sup>9</sup> Food insecurity is when someone does not have consistent access to enough food for a healthy and active life.<sup>25</sup>

# Chronic Disease

## Leading Causes of Death<sup>9</sup>



Okaloosans who make less than \$25,000 per year are **more than twice as likely to have a heart attack** than those who make \$25,000 or more per year.<sup>9</sup>



Over 1,000 Okaloosans died from 2018 to 2020 due to heart disease. Men are **51% more likely to die of heart disease** than women.<sup>9</sup>



Six in ten adults in the United States have a chronic disease. These diseases are often caused by behaviors like tobacco use, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and excessive alcohol use.<sup>26</sup>

## Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the leading type of cancer death in Okaloosa County, followed by colorectal, pancreatic, and breast cancers. Lung cancer deaths have increased 39% from 2019 to 2020.<sup>9</sup>

Cigarette smoking is the number one risk factor for lung cancer. In the United States, smoking causes 9 out of 10 lung cancer deaths.<sup>27</sup>

The Healthy People 2030 goal is for only 5% of adults to be cigarette smokers.<sup>28</sup> However, **19% of Okaloosa adults smoke**, as compared to 15% of all Florida residents.<sup>84</sup>



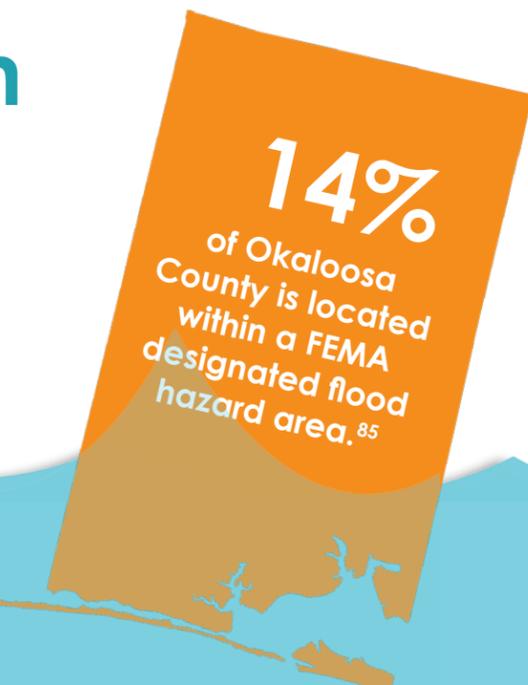
Black men are **more likely** to be diagnosed with and die from prostate cancer than White men.<sup>9</sup>

# Environmental Health

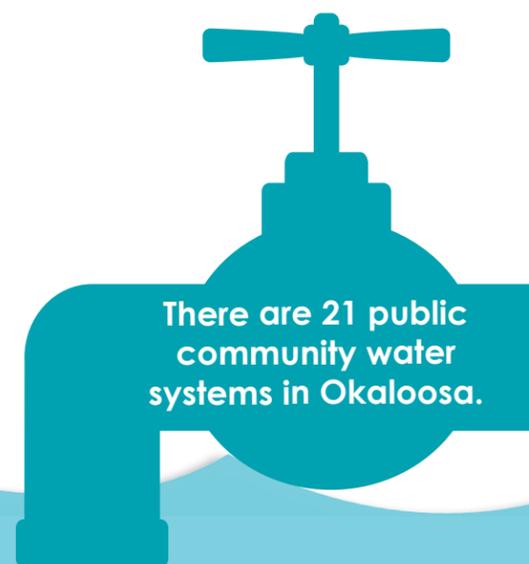
## OKALOOSA OPINIONS Environment

Residents selected these issues as the **top 5 most important environmental health problems:**

1. Flooding/drainage problems
2. Littering/illegal dumping
3. Mosquitoes
4. Loss of green space
5. Release of untreated sewage



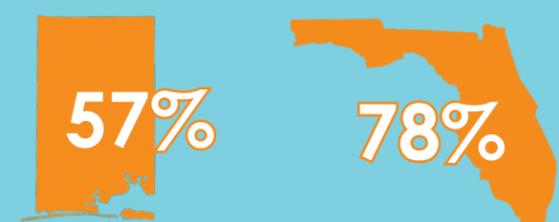
According to the CDC, "drinking fluoridated water keeps teeth strong and reduces cavities (also called tooth decay) by about 25% in children and adults. By preventing cavities, community water fluoridation has been shown to save money."<sup>33</sup>



There are 21 public community water systems in Okaloosa.

Only 5 of these water systems are optimally fluoridated.<sup>34</sup>

Percentage of residents receiving optimally fluoridated water:<sup>9</sup>



In 2021, Erase the Trace Okaloosa placed "borrow bins" on beaches in Destin and Fort Walton Beach. The bins are used for trash pick-up and donating used, reusable items like beach chairs or toys.<sup>30</sup>



Okaloosa County recycled over 90 million pounds of materials in 2020. This includes residential, commercial, metal, and yard waste recycling.<sup>31</sup>



### Homes & Health

34% of homes in Okaloosa are over 40 years old.<sup>35</sup> Almost 600 Okaloosa homes lack complete kitchen facilities.<sup>9</sup> 10% of Okaloosans live within 500 feet of a busy roadway.<sup>35</sup> **Research shows that where we live impacts our health!** According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "healthy homes promote good physical and mental health."<sup>36</sup> Factors like the structural and safety aspects of the building, water quality, chemicals, and the presence of mold in the homes we live in can be major influences on our wellbeing.<sup>37</sup>



Okaloosa County's artificial reef program creates opportunities for fishing, diving, and snorkeling. Sites include everything from concrete piles to large shipwrecks!<sup>38</sup>



# Infectious Disease

## 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.<sup>39</sup>

Bacteria	How Do You Get It? <sup>39</sup>
Salmonella	Undercooked eggs, poultry or meat; exposure to animal feces
Campylobacter	Undercooked poultry, unpasteurized milk; exposure to animal feces
Shigella	Contact with fecal matter from an infected person



Okaloosa ranks as one of the **top five counties in Florida** for the rate of GI infections per 100,000 population.<sup>9</sup>



Okaloosa County has a **significantly higher rate of campylobacteriosis, salmonellosis, and shigella** than Florida as a whole. In the 2020 to 2021 reporting year, salmonellosis was the GI infection most commonly reported to the Health Department.<sup>9</sup>

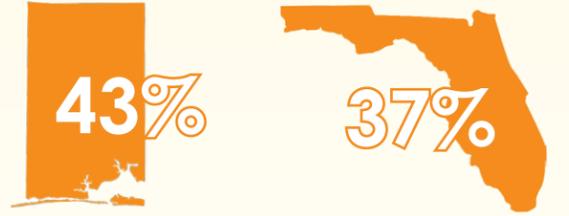
## Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Certain dangerous diseases, like polio and smallpox, can be prevented with vaccinations.<sup>44</sup>

Percentage of kindergarten students who are immunized:<sup>9</sup>



Percentage of adults who received a flu shot within the past year:<sup>9</sup>

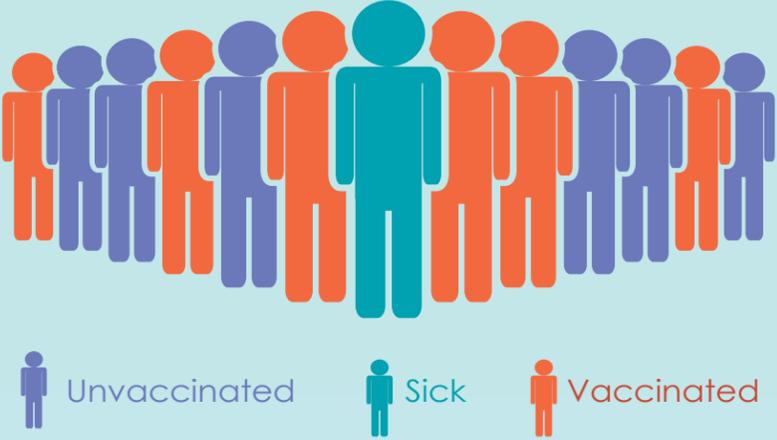


Approximately **42,000 adults and 300 children die each year** in the United States from vaccine-preventable diseases. Communities with pockets of unvaccinated populations are at an increased risk of outbreaks.<sup>46</sup>

## Herd Immunity<sup>45</sup>

Herd immunity, also known as community immunity, is when a large portion of the community is protected from a disease (through vaccination and/or prior illness), making the spread of the disease unlikely.

Even those who have not been able to be vaccinated, such as infants or persons with weakened immune systems, receive some protection through herd immunity.



## Vector-Borne Diseases

Animals can spread certain diseases to humans.<sup>40</sup>

Mosquito-borne diseases are spread when an infected mosquito bites a human.<sup>41</sup>

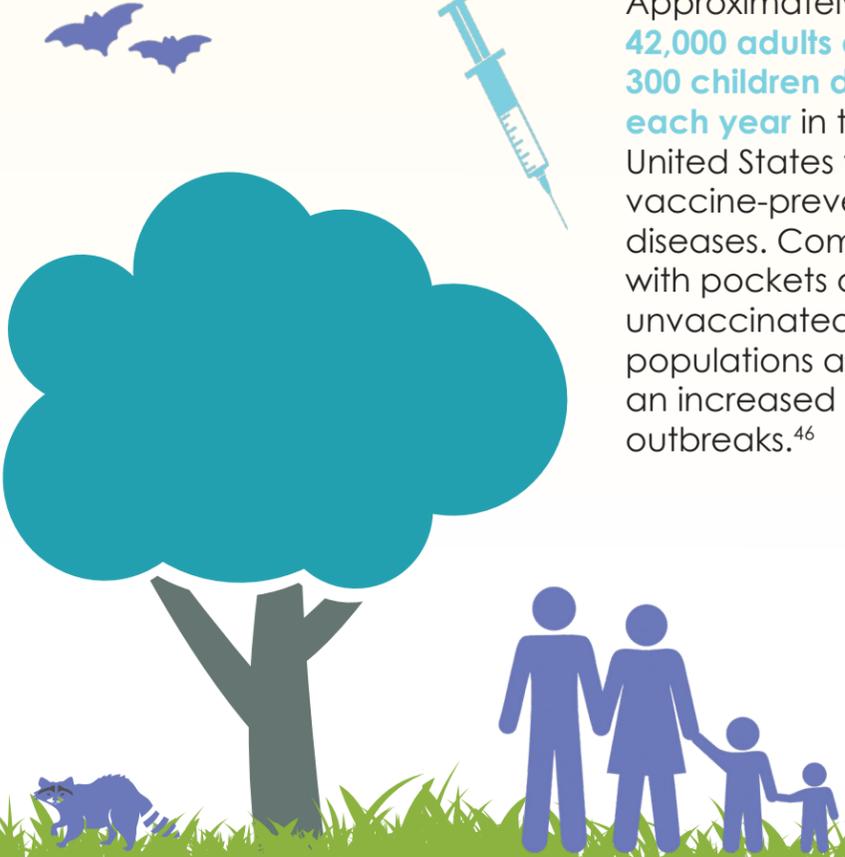
There are **three important mosquito-borne diseases that occur in Florida:**

- Eastern equine encephalitis
- St. Louis encephalitis
- West Nile fever/encephalitis<sup>9</sup>

## Animal Bites & Rabies

In Florida, it's required by law to report animal bites to the Health Department. If needed, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is given to prevent the nearly 100% fatal disease. **Okaloosa County had 1,169 cases of animal bites in 2020.** From those cases, PEP was recommended for 77 Okaloosans.<sup>42</sup>

The wild animals considered **high-risk for carrying rabies include raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes.** Pets can also get rabies from exposure to infected wild animals. Nearly all pets who get rabies are not up-to-date on their vaccinations.<sup>43</sup>



The percentage of children aged 4 to 18-years-old with **religious exemptions to vaccinations is over 13% in some areas of Fort Walton Beach, Destin and Okaloosa Island.** The overall number of exemptions increased by 64% from 2016 to 2021!<sup>9</sup>



According to research, children whose parents refuse or delay vaccinations are more likely to live in a suburban household and have a college-educated, White mother.<sup>47</sup>

## COVID-19

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2.<sup>48</sup>



December 2019  
1st Symptoms of Index SARS-CoV-2 Case

March 2020  
Florida DOH Announces 1st Positive Case

March 2020  
1st Positive Case in Okaloosa

March 2020  
1st Okaloosa Testing Clinic

December 2020  
1st Okaloosa Vaccination Clinic

April 2021  
Florida DOH Announces 1st Delta Detection

December 2021  
Florida DOH Announces 1st Omicron Detection<sup>49</sup>

From 2020 to 2021, a total of **62,073 Floridians lost their lives to COVID-19**. Nationally, 796,010 residents have died due to COVID-19.<sup>50</sup>

According to research, **more than 140,000 children in the United States lost a parent or other primary caregiver to COVID-19**.<sup>52</sup>



**55%** of Okaloosans aged 5-years-old and up are vaccinated against COVID.<sup>51</sup>



In 2020, **COVID-19 contributed to an overall drop in life expectancy in the United States by 1.5 years**. On average, non-Hispanic White people saw a 1.2 year reduction in life expectancy while non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic people lost three years.<sup>54</sup>



The **most common symptoms** of COVID-19 include:

- Cough
- Fever or chills
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle or body aches
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell<sup>53</sup>

## OKALOOSA OPINIONS COVID-19

**35%** of residents ranked COVID-19 as one of the top 3 health issues in Okaloosa County.<sup>17</sup>

## Sexual Health

### Bacterial Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) in Okaloosa<sup>9</sup>



### STD

### Okaloosa Facts<sup>9</sup>

#### Gonorrhea



**Black residents are 7 times more likely to become infected than White residents**

#### Syphilis



**The rate of total cases in Okaloosa has been steadily increasing since 2015**

#### Chlamydia



**Okaloosa ranks 14th out of 67 counties for highest number of infections**

## HIV

HIV is both treatable and preventable! People living with HIV can live long and healthy lives with treatment.<sup>55</sup> In Okaloosa County, the **rate of people with HIV is significantly lower** than other counties in Florida.<sup>9</sup>

The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to be tested.<sup>54</sup> The CDC recommends that everyone have an HIV test in their lifetime. 52% of Okaloosans have been tested.<sup>9</sup>



HIV can impact anyone, regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, or age. But, disparities do exist.<sup>56</sup> In Okaloosa County, Black residents are more likely to become diagnosed with HIV than White residents.<sup>9</sup>



The Okaloosa County School District offers the Teenage Parenting Program (TAPP) to help teen parents receive their high school diploma by providing childcare resources, transportation assistance, and parenting classes. In 2021, 5 students were enrolled in TAPP.<sup>32</sup>



From 2018 to 2020, **61 babies were born to teen moms** (ages 0-17) in Okaloosa County. The number of babies born to teen moms has decreased 55% from 2015 to 2020.<sup>9</sup>

41% of teen moms who gave birth from 2018 to 2020 did not receive adequate prenatal care.<sup>9</sup>

From 2018 to 2020, **9% of teen moms smoked during pregnancy**, as compared to 13% in 2014 to 2016.<sup>9</sup>

# Substance Use & Mental Health

## OKALOOSA OPINIONS Addiction

54% of residents ranked street opioids/fentanyl as one of the top 3 risky behaviors in Okaloosa County.<sup>17</sup>

**“We’ve got [to] take the stigma out of it, and we can’t shame people.** Addiction is just another illness. It’s not to be shamed, it’s to be helped.” – Fort Walton Beach resident

38% of residents ranked drug overdoses as one of the top 3 health issues in Okaloosa County.<sup>17</sup>



The rate of unintentional poisoning deaths (most commonly due to overdoses or excessive use to drugs) in Okaloosa has jumped from 6 per 100,000 in 2011-2013 to 28 per 100,000 in 2018-2020.<sup>9</sup>

In Okaloosa County, the top substances the Florida Poison Control Center Network receives calls about are **alcohol and benzodiazepines.**<sup>57</sup>



23% of Okaloosa men and 15% of Okaloosa women say they engage in binge drinking. Adults aged 18 to 44-years-old are more likely to binge drink than those 45-years-old and up.<sup>9</sup>

In 2019, **over 2,000** drug-related arrests were made in Okaloosa County.<sup>9</sup>



Florida ranks 40th out of 50 states for access to mental health care.<sup>59</sup>



In 2020, **nearly 2,000 Okaloosans** were hospitalized due to mental disorders.<sup>9</sup>

**88% of Okaloosa adults** report having good mental health. This is higher than the overall state average of 86%.<sup>9</sup>



Percentage of Okaloosa high school students who report being driven in a car by someone under the influence.<sup>60</sup>



In 2021, the State of Florida announced \$12 million in funding to expand mental health services for first responders. The goal of the funding is to decrease the number of suicides and strengthen responders ability to cope with traumatic situations.<sup>61</sup>



In 2020, the total number of drug-related deaths in Florida increased by 17%! Of those deaths, opioid-related deaths increased by 28%.<sup>58</sup>

### In Florida, these drugs caused the most deaths during 2020:<sup>58</sup>

- Fentanyl
- Cocaine
- Alcohol
- Methamphetamine
- Benzodiazepines
- Morphine
- Fentanyl Analogs

### Okaloosa Adults Whose Poor Mental or Physical Health Kept Them From Doing Usual Activities on 14 or More of the Past 30 Days?



### Suicide

Suicides in Okaloosa have been higher than Florida overall since 2001. In the past 10 years, 381 Okaloosans died by suicide. Of those who died by suicide, 78% were male and 90% were White.<sup>9</sup>

Suicide also impacts children and teens. 16% of high school students in Florida reported seriously considering attempting suicide in the past year. 43% of female high school students in Florida felt sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row.<sup>62</sup>



# Injury & Violence

Age Group	Leading Cause of Unintentional Injury Death in Okaloosa County <sup>2</sup>	
Less than 1		Suffocation, due to unsafe sleep practices
1-14		Drowning
15-64		Poisoning, most commonly due to overdose or excessive use of drugs
65+		Falls

In 2020, the Okaloosa County Beach Safety team **conducted 31 water rescues** and provided first aid to 161 individuals.<sup>63</sup>

 Okaloosa County Beach Safety provided drowning prevention education to over 500,000 beach-goers in 2020.<sup>63</sup>



In 2001, the rate of violent crimes in Okaloosa County was 139% lower than Florida on average. As of 2020, the rate of violent crimes in Okaloosa is now only 19% lower than Florida.<sup>9</sup>



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In 2020, 583 youth were arrested in Okaloosa County. Okaloosa's youth arrest rate is 49% higher than Florida's overall rate.<sup>9</sup>



Shelter House offers a 24/7 domestic violence hotline and an emergency shelter where victims of domestic violence can stay for up to eight weeks.<sup>65</sup>

In 2020, the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center served 580 children. This was a 30% decrease from last year, potentially due to COVID-19. Children were out of the public eye and away from safe adults.<sup>66</sup>

Percentage of unintentional fatal injuries caused by poisoning, most commonly due to overdose or excessive use of drugs:<sup>9</sup>



From 2018 to 2020, over 17,000 visits were made by Okaloosans to emergency rooms due to an unintentional fall injury.<sup>9</sup>

**12% of Okaloosans aged 65+ had a fall-related injury within the past year.** This is higher than the state average of 10%.<sup>9</sup>



Over 4,000 instances of domestic violence occurred in Okaloosa from 2018 to 2020. This is 30% higher than the state of Florida as a whole.<sup>9</sup>



## Pedestrian Injury Deaths

Seven states, including Florida, account for **more than half of all pedestrian deaths.**<sup>64</sup>

Florida had the **second highest number of pedestrian fatalities** per 100,000 population in the United States in 2019, up one spot from 2018.<sup>64</sup>

From 2018 to 2020, **4 bicyclists and 18 pedestrians were killed** in Okaloosa County by motor vehicles.<sup>9</sup>

## Violence Against Children

**Over 15,000 children aged 5 to 11-years-old are abused** in Florida each year.<sup>9</sup>

Okaloosa children aged 5 to 11-years-old are **49% more likely to experience child abuse** than other children of the same age in Florida.<sup>9</sup>

The rate of Okaloosa children aged 5 to 11-years-old who have **experienced sexual violence is 34% higher** than other children of the same age in Florida.<sup>9</sup>



# Social Health

The word "homeless" often makes people think of middle-aged men who are living on the streets, struggling with mental health or substance problems. The truth is that these stereotypes only represent a small percentage of Florida's homeless population. **Homelessness can impact many different types of people** including families, people who are employed, veterans, and older adults.<sup>67</sup>



**606** students

in the Okaloosa County School District experienced homelessness during the 2020-2021 school year. Of those students:<sup>32</sup>

- 428** are sharing housing or "doubling up"
- 47** are living in emergency or transitional shelters
- 98** are living in hotels or motels
- 33** are living in cars, parks or campgrounds
- 38** are unaccompanied youth



There are approximately **1,400 children in out-of-home care in the Circuit 1 Area** (Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties). This includes foster care, group care, etc.<sup>69</sup>

## OKALOOSA OPINIONS Social Support

**69%** of residents feel that there is a sense of community responsibility and that residents are proud to live in Okaloosa County.<sup>17</sup>

**"Offer more safe places for children to stay after school, all the way through middle school. It's very hard for a single parent to find safe after school programs for middle schoolers and a lot of them just aren't safe at home by themselves."** - Niceville resident



**United Way Emerald Coast served over 26,000 clients** in 2020-2021. This includes 733 students who received after school care and/or tutoring, 2,113 individuals who received access to affordable healthcare, and safe shelter for 177 individuals.<sup>68</sup>

# Older Adult Health



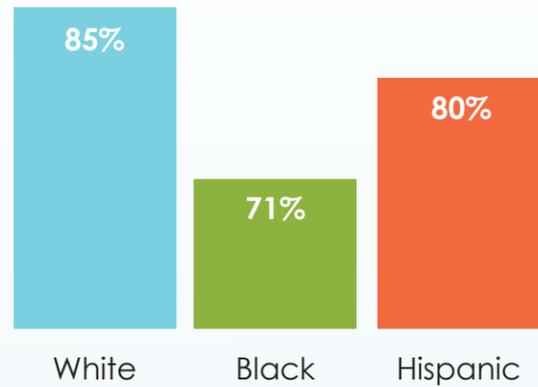
**72%** of residents believe Okaloosa County is a good place to grow old.<sup>17</sup>

**39%** percent of older adults in Okaloosa County live with a disability, higher than the state average of 33%.<sup>9</sup>

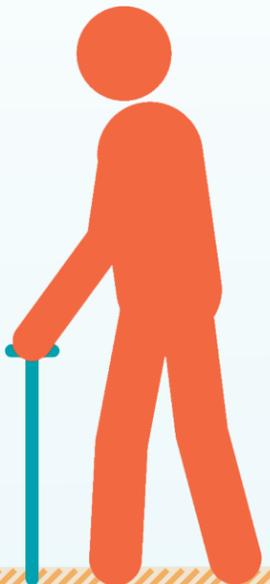


**28%** of Okaloosa older adults live alone.<sup>9</sup> Older people in the United States are more likely to live alone than elsewhere in the world.<sup>71</sup>

### Okaloosa Older Adults Reporting Good to Excellent Health Status<sup>9</sup>



Floridians life expectancy overall is 79.4 years. Okaloosans die three years earlier on average, with a life expectancy of 76.8 years. Some census tracts in Okaloosa, such as the Wright area of Fort Walton Beach, have **life expectancies as low as 73-years-old.**<sup>9</sup>

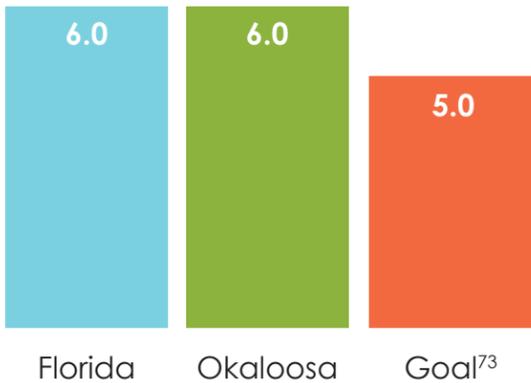


Volunteers from the Okaloosa-Walton Medical Reserve Corps offer emergency preparedness services to Okaloosa and Walton residents through the Lean on Me program. The **program works to ensure that vulnerable populations, such as older adults, are prepared for storms or other emergencies.** As of 2021, the group has served 169 clients.<sup>70</sup>

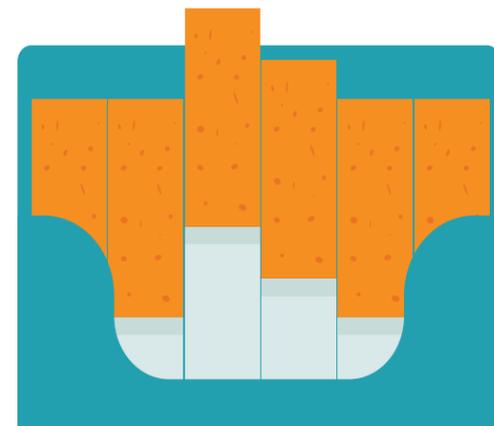
The Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging, Elder Services of Okaloosa County, and the Walton-Okaloosa Council on Aging **provide services and support for older adults in Okaloosa County.** This includes meal delivery programs, home and respite care, case management and more!<sup>72</sup>

# Maternal & Child Health

## Infant Mortality Rate Per 1,000 Births<sup>9</sup>

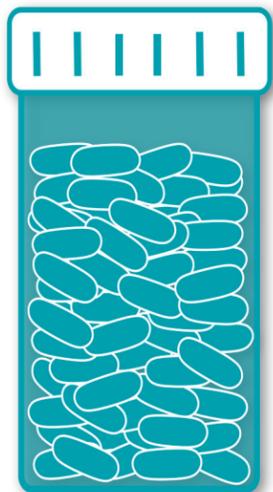


Black babies born in Okaloosa County are over twice as likely to die before their first birthday than White babies.<sup>9</sup>



## Smoking During Pregnancy

Pregnant women in Okaloosa County are **twice as likely to smoke** than all other pregnant women in Florida.<sup>9</sup> Moms who smoke during pregnancy are at a greater risk of having babies with a low birth weight and/or preterm delivery than those who do not smoke.<sup>75</sup>



## Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)

is a drug withdrawal syndrome that occurs among infants after exposure to opioids during pregnancy. NAS can cause tremors, feeding difficulties and temperature instability in infants.<sup>74</sup> Over the past three years, 84 babies were born with NAS in Okaloosa County.<sup>9</sup>

Florida ranks 35th out of 50 states in overall child well-being.<sup>77</sup>

Okaloosa ranks 8th out of 67 counties in overall child well-being.<sup>77</sup>

7% of Okaloosa children do not have health insurance.<sup>9</sup>



The leading cause of death for Okaloosa children aged 1 to 17-years-old is unintentional injury.<sup>9</sup>



Okaloosa youth are **significantly more likely to be arrested for a drug offense** than other youth in Florida. These arrests include the possession or sale of illegal drugs. Research shows that the risk factors associated with juvenile drug arrests include low school involvement, living in poverty, or experiencing homelessness.<sup>9</sup>

## ACEs<sup>60</sup>

ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences, are traumatic events that happen before a child turns 18-years-old.

ACEs include trauma like emotional abuse, sexual abuse, mental illness in the household, and physical neglect.

Okaloosa high school students average 2.2 ACEs. **26.8% of Okaloosa high school students have been exposed to at least four ACEs.**

ACEs have been linked to many negative health and behavior outcomes like substance abuse, chronic disease, and financial difficulties. According to the 2020 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, Okaloosa youth with four or more ACEs:

- Report substance abuse rates that are substantially higher than other students
- Are about twice as likely to report symptoms of depression than other students

## Pregnancy & Health

In 2020, **29% of Okaloosa County mothers did not receive adequate prenatal care** during their pregnancy.<sup>9</sup>

According to research, babies of moms who had prenatal care have a 38% lower risk of having a low birth weight and a 37% lower risk of having a preterm birth.<sup>76</sup>

## Child Care

Child care is out of reach for many Florida workers. The **average cost of infant care in the state is \$9,238 per year.** That's \$770 per month! Infant care costs 107% more per year than in-state tuition for four-year public college.<sup>78</sup>

The Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast provides assistance to families who are income eligible. They coordinate access to affordable, quality child care and community resources like housing and food.<sup>79</sup>



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## Appendix A

**Turkey Creek Nature Trail** offers a space for recreational activities like walking, kayaking, and tubing in Niceville.<sup>80</sup>

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\*For the specific date ranges or metrics used to collect the asterisked data, please contact HealthyOkaloosa@flhealth.gov or 850-344-0662. Thank you!

# MAPP Assessments

## Appendix B

**Main Street in Downtown Crestview** offers shops, restaurants, and other services for residents and visitors.<sup>81</sup>



# Forces of Change

Conducted: September 8, 2021

Forces (Trends, Events, Factors)	Opportunities	Threats
<b>Political</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governmental bodies</li> <li>Funding</li> <li>Changing community leaders</li> </ul>	Increasing focus on substance abuse and mental health; Local government engaged in public health; New leadership	No control over budgetary changes; Politics impact public health decisions; Governmental mistrust; Political divide
<b>Economic</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business growth &amp; development</li> <li>Military</li> <li>Employment</li> </ul>	Local growth and development; Military brings high-paying jobs to area; Low unemployment rate	Wealth and wage gaps among residents; Limited professional diversity; Low-paying jobs
<b>Social</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racism &amp; intolerance</li> <li>Faith-based network</li> <li>Educational system</li> <li>Crime</li> <li>Transportation</li> </ul>	Strong faith-based network and educational system; Limited entertainment for youth and adults; Active volunteer networks	Increased crime and violence; Public transportation system disagreements; Limited healthy food options
<b>Technology</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connectivity issues</li> <li>Telehealth</li> <li>Telework</li> <li>Social media</li> </ul>	COVID-19 increased telehealth and telework options; Opportunity to use social media to connect	Certain areas of county have limited Internet access, fewer resources; False information being spread
<b>Geography &amp; Environment</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural areas</li> <li>Population split between North and South Okaloosa</li> <li>Housing &amp; construction</li> <li>Coastal location</li> <li>Global warming</li> </ul>	Tourism and snowbirds bring funding to area; Need for outreach in rural areas; Opportunity to improve way-finding; Need for increased tourist education; Need for sidewalks and/or bicycle lanes	Traffic visibility concerns; Roadway wear and tear and increased traffic from tourism; Increases in crashes and injuries; Coastal location brings weather events (i.e. hurricanes, flooding); Military land coverage reduces housing areas
<b>Health</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disease &amp; illness</li> <li>Substance use</li> <li>COVID-19</li> <li>Mental health</li> <li>Physical health</li> </ul>	Youth resiliency needed; Need for mental health promotion; Increased awareness of nicotine harms; Beaches and parks provide exercise options	COVID-19; Governmental and medical provider mistrust; Global travel; Substance use; Mental health concerns; Tourist injuries and deaths; Medical care options
<b>Demographics</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aging population</li> <li>Global travel</li> <li>Increasing population</li> <li>Increasing diversity</li> </ul>	Governmental focus on addressing public health concerns; Increasing focus on health equity	Long-term planning needed for aging population; Lack of community resources

# Community Themes & Strengths

## Key Informant Interviews & Focus Groups

Conducted: August 5, 2021 - December 22, 2021

As part of the Community Themes & Strengths Assessment, 12 in-depth interviews and 6 focus groups were conducted. Participants raised issues that mirrored those shared in the Health Survey and Forces of Change Assessment.

## Health Survey

Conducted: July 8, 2021 - October 29, 2021

Top Five Health Issues	Top Five Issues Affecting Wellness & Quality of Life
Mental Health Problems	Lack of Safe, Affordable Housing
Obesity	Too Many Low Paying, Entry-Level Jobs
Drug Overdoses	Lack of Affordable Childcare
COVID-19	Lack of Planning for Needs of Aging/Disabled Populations
Motor Vehicle Crash Injuries	Lack of Sidewalks
Top Five Environmental Health Problems	Top Five Most Important Risky Behaviors
Flooding/Drainage Problems	Street Opioids/Fentanyl Use
Littering/Illegal Dumping	Texting/Cellphone Use While Driving
Mosquitoes	Alcohol Use
Loss of Green Space	Poor Eating Habits
Release of Untreated Sewage	Not Getting "Shots" to Prevent Disease

## Community Rankings

45% of residents rated Okaloosa as a healthy community.

83% of Okaloosans are satisfied with the quality of life in the county.

59% of residents are satisfied with the health care system in Okaloosa County.

82% of residents think Okaloosa County is a good place to raise children.

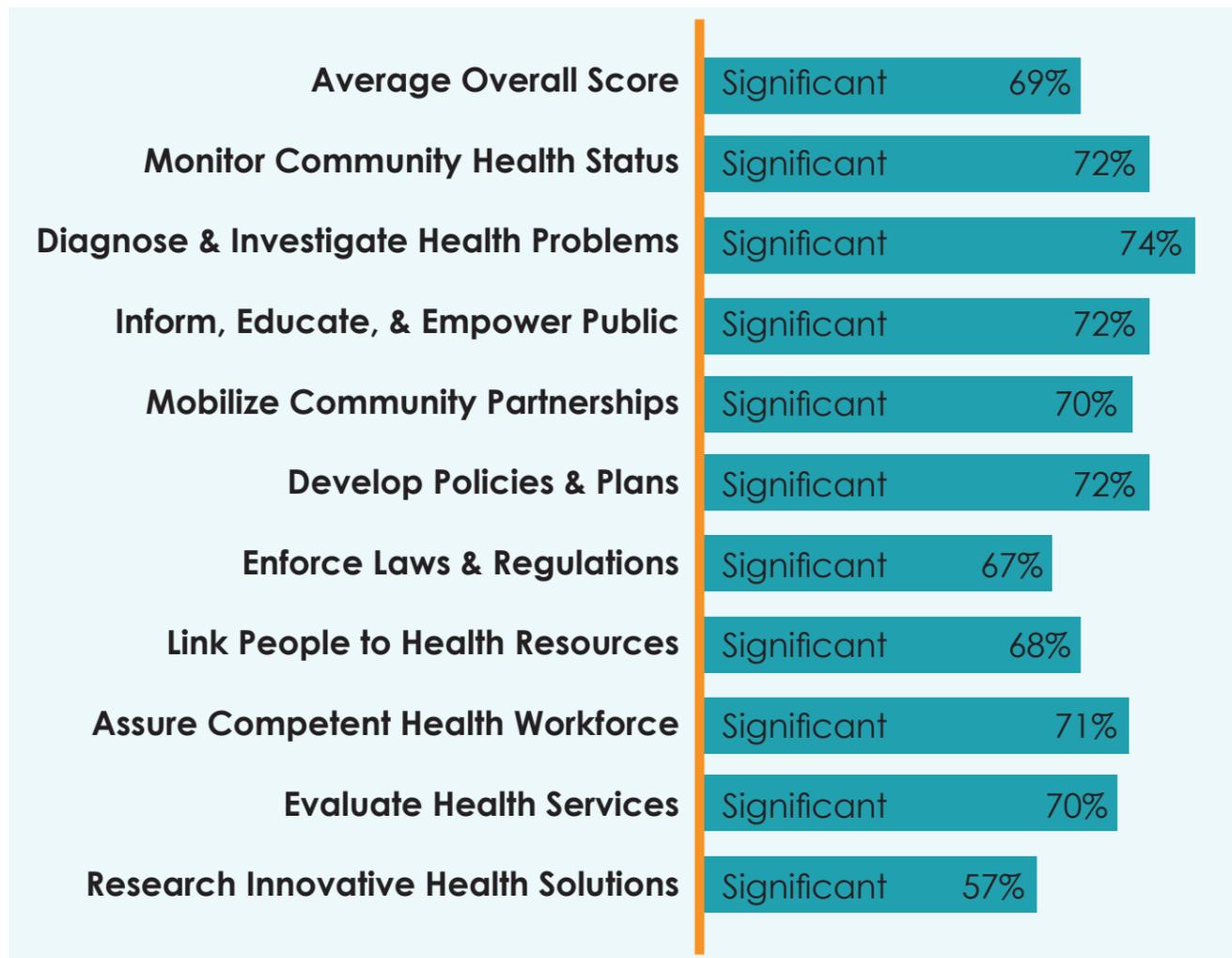
93% of Okaloosans believe there are faith community and church support networks for individuals and families.

69% of Okaloosans are satisfied with the level of mutual trust and respect between community partners.

# Local Public Health System

## Average Essential Public Health Service Self-Assessment Scores

Conducted: July 26, 2021 - August 31, 2021



### Strongest Performance

ES 2: Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems and Health Hazards.....74%  
 This Essential Public Health Service centers around identifying and monitoring health threats, investigating and responding to public health threats and emergencies, and laboratory support for investigating health threats.

### Weakest Performance

ES 10: Research for New Insights & Innovate Solutions to Health Problems.....57%  
 This Essential Public Health Service centers around fostering innovation, linking with institutions of higher learning and/or research, and the capacity to initiate or participate in research.

# Community Health Status

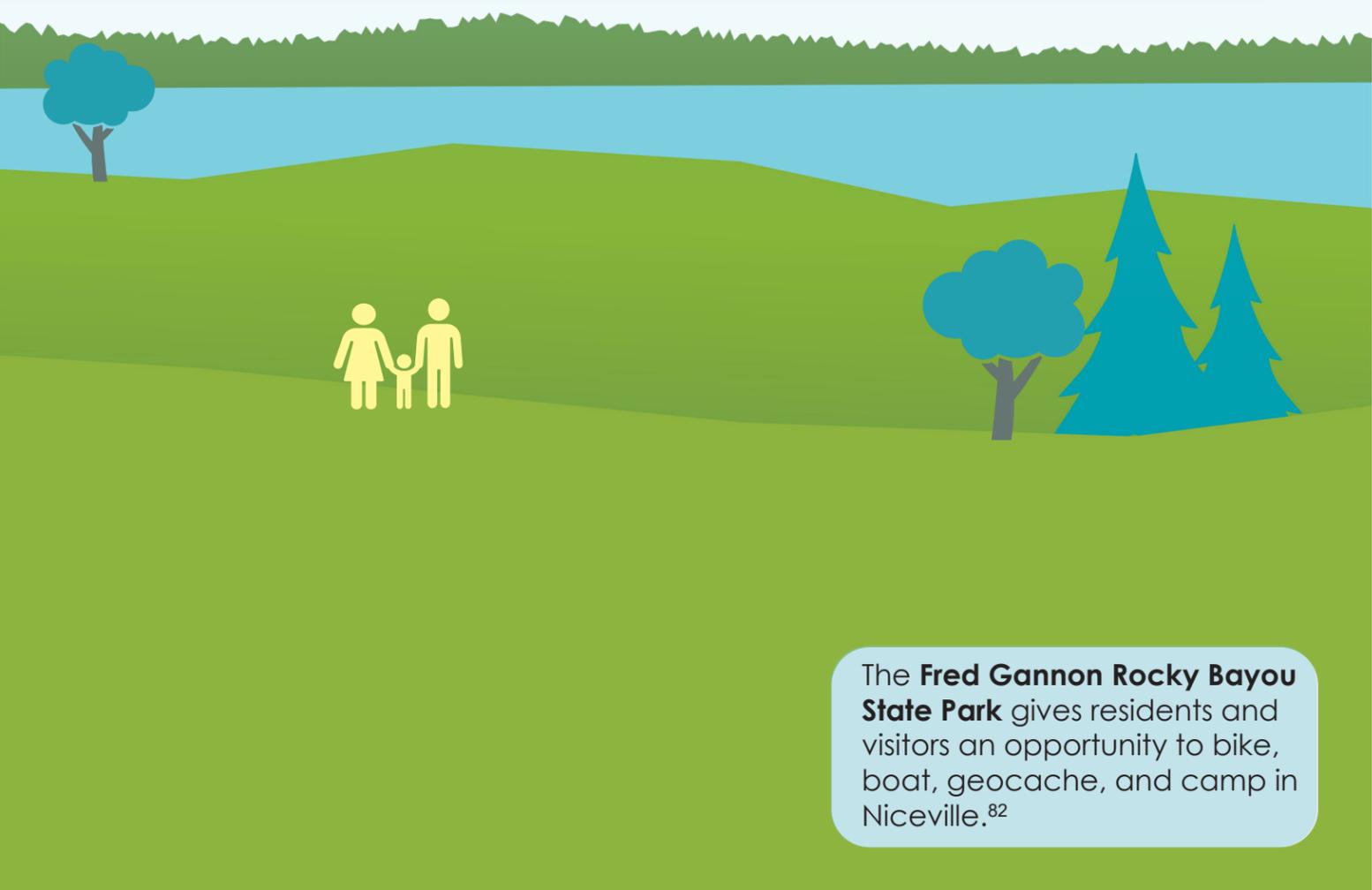
Conducted: January 4, 2021 - December 27, 2021

**Community Health Status Assessment data was collected from a wide variety of sources. Please see the reference list located on page 32 for some of the sources examined.**

The Community Health Status Assessment was reviewed by the Okaloosa County Community Health Assessment (CHA) Leadership Team and the DOH-Okaloosa Internal Core Support Team in February 2022. Members were provided a draft of the 2022 CHA document and a survey to record any comments or edits. The comments and edits were then incorporated into the final version of the 2022 CHA. The final data included in the document was determined by DOH-Okaloosa staff members based on the guidance of the teams.

# Acknowledgments

## Appendix C



The **Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park** gives residents and visitors an opportunity to bike, boat, geocache, and camp in Niceville.<sup>82</sup>

## Acknowledgments

The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County thanks the following individuals and organizations for their invaluable contributions to this report.

### CHA Leadership Team

Aaron Murray, Northwest Florida State College  
Anthony Sawyer, 90Works, Inc.  
April Sawyer, Okaloosa County  
Ardelle Bush, Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties  
Bonnie Barlow, Bridgeway Center, Inc.  
Dana Crupi, Early Learning Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties  
Danielle Holley, City of Niceville  
David Triana, United for a Good Cause  
Lieutenant Demeika McClendon, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office  
Major Erin Archer, Hurlburt Field  
Lida Fratangelo, North Okaloosa Medical Center  
Teri Schroeder, Okaloosa County School District  
Jennifer Clark, Okaloosa County School District  
Sandra Wilson, Crestview Chamber of Commerce  
Sargent Jessica Trimboli, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office  
Sargent Joseph Gordon, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office  
Kelly Jasen, United Way Emerald Coast  
Melanie Sinclair, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center  
Michelle Burns, Career Source of Okaloosa and Walton Counties  
Nichole DeVito, City of Destin  
Robyn Burnett, Okaloosa County NAACP  
Sarah Yelverton, Homelessness & Housing Alliance of Okaloosa and Walton Counties  
William Stone, First Judicial Court of Florida

### DOH-Okaloosa Internal Core Support Team

Allison McDaniel	Elizabeth "Beth" Smith	Petra Maddens
Amanda Colwell	Jennifer Wilhelm	Susan Wagner
Amy Miller	Katherine "Kat" Beedie	Sydney Harper
Carissa Hickok	Katie Scott	Trisha Dall
DeeDranae "Dee" Cole	Lynn Wadsworth	

### Focus Groups

Destin Chamber of Commerce  
DOH-Okaloosa Staff (3)  
Healthy Okaloosa Faith-Based, Childcare, and Worksites Partners  
Okaloosa County Anti-Drug Coalition

## Northwest Florida State College Survey Partnership

Dr. Beth Norton, Professor of Nursing  
 Dr. Teresa Ryan, Professor of Nursing  
 Sarah Bolton  
 Nikita Clark  
 Brittany Fahn  
 Ashlyn Samels  
 Elizabeth Vandenbemden  
 Jacquelyn Chappell  
 Brittany Clark  
 Zoraida De Jesus  
 Kestraunda Kelly  
 Jamie Lawrenz  
 Daniel Shepard  
 Sarah Wagner  
 Jennifer Holland  
 Carolina Ramos  
 Layla Tarpley

## Key Informant Interviews

Ardelle Bush, Healthy Start of Okaloosa and Walton Counties  
 Bonnie Barlow, Bridgeway Center, Inc. CAO/HRO  
 Chairwoman Carolyn Ketchel, Okaloosa County Board of Commissioners  
 Commissioner Mel Ponder, Okaloosa County Board of Commissioners  
 Dr. Melinda Bowers, University of West Florida Emerald Coast  
 Lance Johnson, City of Destin  
 Superintendent Marcus Chambers, Okaloosa County School District  
 Mayor J. B. Whitten, City of Crestview  
 Patrick Maddox, Okaloosa County Public Safety  
 Shane Moody, Destin Chamber of Commerce  
 Sheriff Eric Aden, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office  
 Ted Corcoran, Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce

## Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Groups

Drug Endangered Children and Communities  
 Preventing Injuries  
 Reducing Infant Mortality

## Priority Areas

The priority areas and sub-topics listed below were finalized by the CHA Leadership Team during a meeting held via Microsoft Teams on May 5, 2022. CHIP groups will be developed based on these six chosen areas during the Okaloosa Health Summit September 2022.

Healthy Moms & Babies	Healthy Children	Healthy Adults
Breastfeeding	Access to After School Programs	Domestic Violence
Infant Mortality	Access to Childcare	Falls
Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome	ACEs	Living Wage Disparities
Prenatal Care	Drowning	Older Adult Health
Safe Sleep	Graduation Disparities	
Tobacco Use	Teen Pregnancy	
	Vaping	
	Violence Against Children (Physical, Emotional, and Mental Abuse; Sexual Violence; Dating Violence)	
Healthy Behaviors	Healthy Places	Healthy Communities
Alcohol & Drug Use	Access to Housing	Access to Healthcare
Nutrition	Age of Homes & Schools	Animal Bites & Rabies
Overweight & Obesity	Flooding & Drainage Issues	Areas/Zip Codes with High Rates of Health Issues
Physical Activity	Fluoridated Water	Homelessness
Sexual Health & STDs	Littering & Illegal Dumping	Injuries
Tobacco Use	Population Growth	Mental Health
Vaccinations & Herd Immunity	Rent Costs	Social Support
		Suicides



The John T. Brooks Bridge, located over the **Santa Rosa Sound**, connects the City of Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island.<sup>83</sup>



**Florida**  
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**Okaloosa County**

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