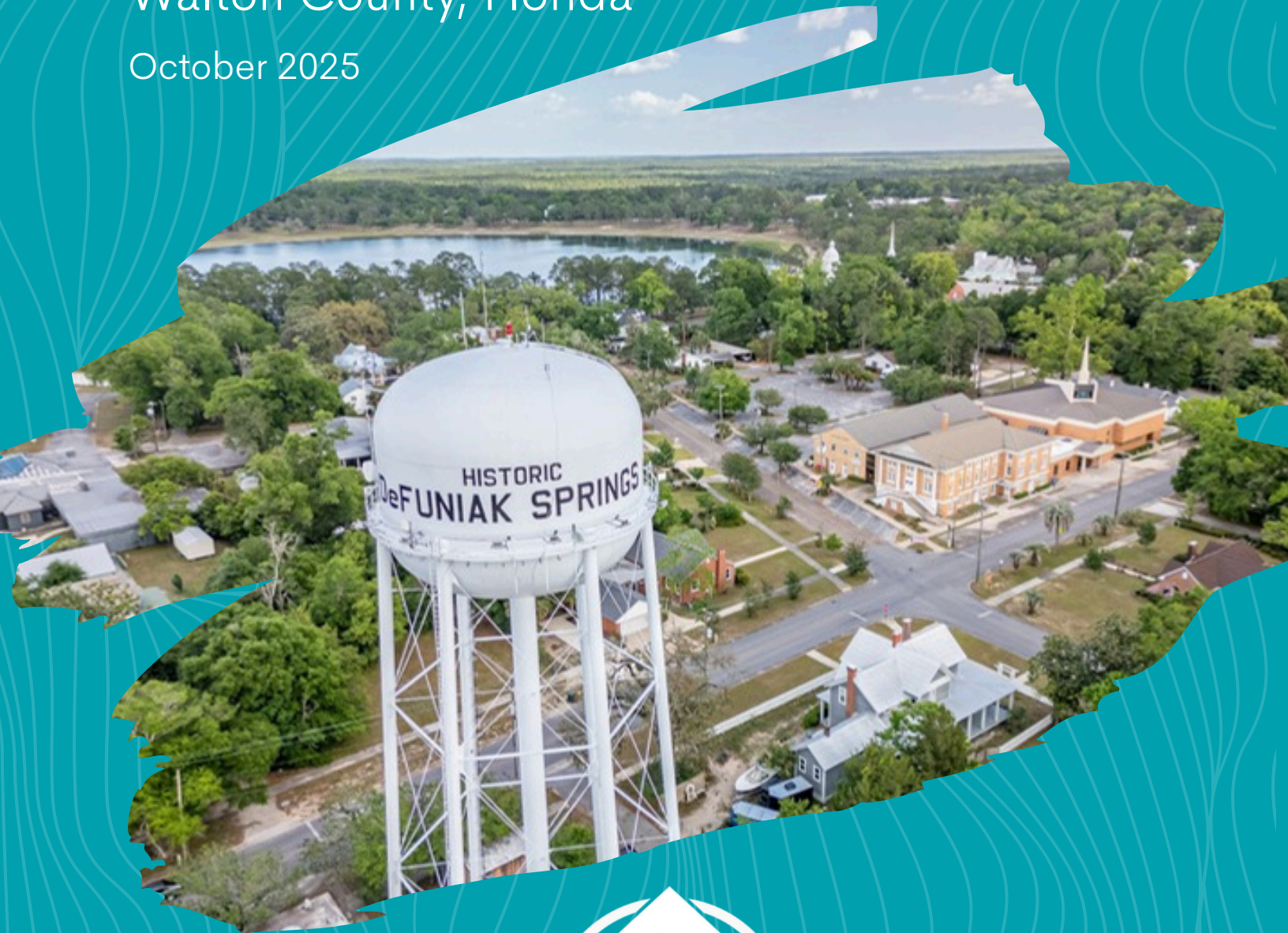


# 2025 COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Walton County, Florida

October 2025



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# WELCOME TO WALTON COUNTY!

To truly enhance the well-being of our community, we must first grasp the challenges we encounter alongside the resources at our disposal. This report highlights critical health issues by gathering and analyzing relevant data from the past year. Our comprehensive approach follows a national model and involves collaboration with numerous community partners and hundreds of residents who deeply care about our shared future.

The Florida Department of Health in Walton County is perfectly positioned to lead this assessment because of our passion and expertise in community health improvement. We dedicate our time and resources for several heartfelt reasons. This assessment is not just a key part of our strategic plan to boost health; it also inspires and equips our partners, medical providers, non-profits, local governments, and many others to take meaningful action. We create this assessment to strengthen the Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership's health improvement plan, aligning our partners' efforts and nurturing collaboration as we work together to advance our community's health.

The Community Health Assessment draws from data and insights collected from four evaluations under the national Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) 2.0 framework. Our dedicated staff then synthesized all the gathered information to identify the eight most pressing health issues facing Walton County.

Having spent many years in public health, I truly appreciate the significant role the Community Health Assessment plays in pinpointing the health challenges that affect our residents and creating a better environment for our visitors. Beyond spotlighting urgent issues, the assessment offers a wonderful opportunity to harness the strengths of our diverse partners and stakeholders, allowing us to come together to address these challenges and improve health outcomes for everyone in our community.



*Holly B. Holt*

**Holly B. Holt, RN, BSN, MSM**

Health Officer

Florida Department of Health Walton County





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conducting a Community Health Assessment (CHA) helps our public health department and community better understand the community's health needs, design programs, inform policy-makers, support local community-based organizations, and advocate for funding to address those needs to improve public health. We partnered with our community to understand health needs, gaps, and existing community strengths. We identified 30 local leaders across 14 different fields. We also conducted focus groups around the county and aimed to include diverse age groups, racial groups, and socioeconomic groups.

We conducted several data collection activities, including:

- 21 community leader interviews
- Community survey in English and Spanish
- Health indicators from state and national sources

We will use this information to develop our Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and continue collaborating with our dedicated community partners to improve both health and health outcomes. You can read more about the work that is already in progress, as well as next steps at the end of this report.

## Key Findings & Crosscutting Themes

- 1** Expand access to health services, including medical care and mental health services, prioritizing expecting mothers, babies, and residents that are considered ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).
- 2** Support social and mental health by tackling social isolation, depression, stress, bullying, and illicit substance use as well as alcohol use.
- 3** Improve housing and living conditions by supporting efforts to address housing affordability, physical housing conditions, and the ability to live independently for individuals with disabilities and older adults.
- 4** Support economic stability of residents by strengthening safety net programs, expanding access to affordable healthy food options, and partnering to address systemic issues such as employment opportunities and childcare options.
- 5** Improve public infrastructure that connects communities to resources that support healthy living and public safety.

# ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

What is a CHA? A community health assessment (CHA) is a process of systematic data collection about a defined community to understand important health needs, uncover public health gaps, and highlight existing strengths and community assets.

Conducting a CHA helps our community better understand what health issues need to be addressed and design programs to address those needs to improve public health. The CHA report will support the Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership (WCHIP) as we distribute resources, seek program funding, and inform policymakers. We included our community in this CHA because we wanted to hear directly from our residents about their health needs and assets.

## Important Acronyms

**ADT** = Assessment Design Team

**CCA** = Community Context Assessment

**CDC** = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**CH[N]A** = Community Health [Needs] Assessment

**CHI** = Community Health Improvement

**CHIP** = Community Health Improvement Plan

**CPA** = Community Partner Assessment

**CSA** = Community Status Assessment

**DOH** = Department of Health

**FLHealthCHARTS** = Florida Health Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set

**FYSAS** = Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey

**HRSA** = Health Resources and Services Administration

**LHD** = Local Health Department

**LPHS** = Local Public Health System

**LPHSA** = Local Public Health Systems Assessment

**MAPP** = Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships

**NACCHO** = National Association of County and City Health Officials

**PHAB** = Public Health Accreditation Board

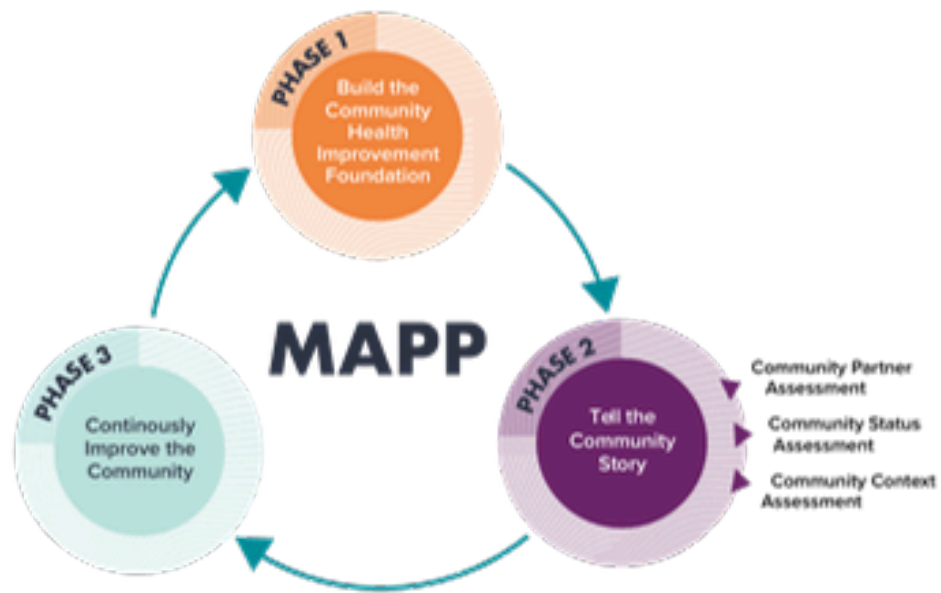
**WCHIP** = Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership



# METHODOLOGY

Our CHA consisted of several data collection and analysis activities. We included both primary data, which we collected directly for this report, and secondary data, which is data that has already been collected, that we gathered and analyzed. When people think about data, they often think about numbers and statistics. However, numbers only tell part of the story. Numbers help us understand the amounts or quantities, but we also want to know about the quality and the context of the information. That's why we collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data for this CHA. Hearing community members' insights about specific questions and themes during interviews and focus groups helps us understand how or why community health indicators impact individuals and families.

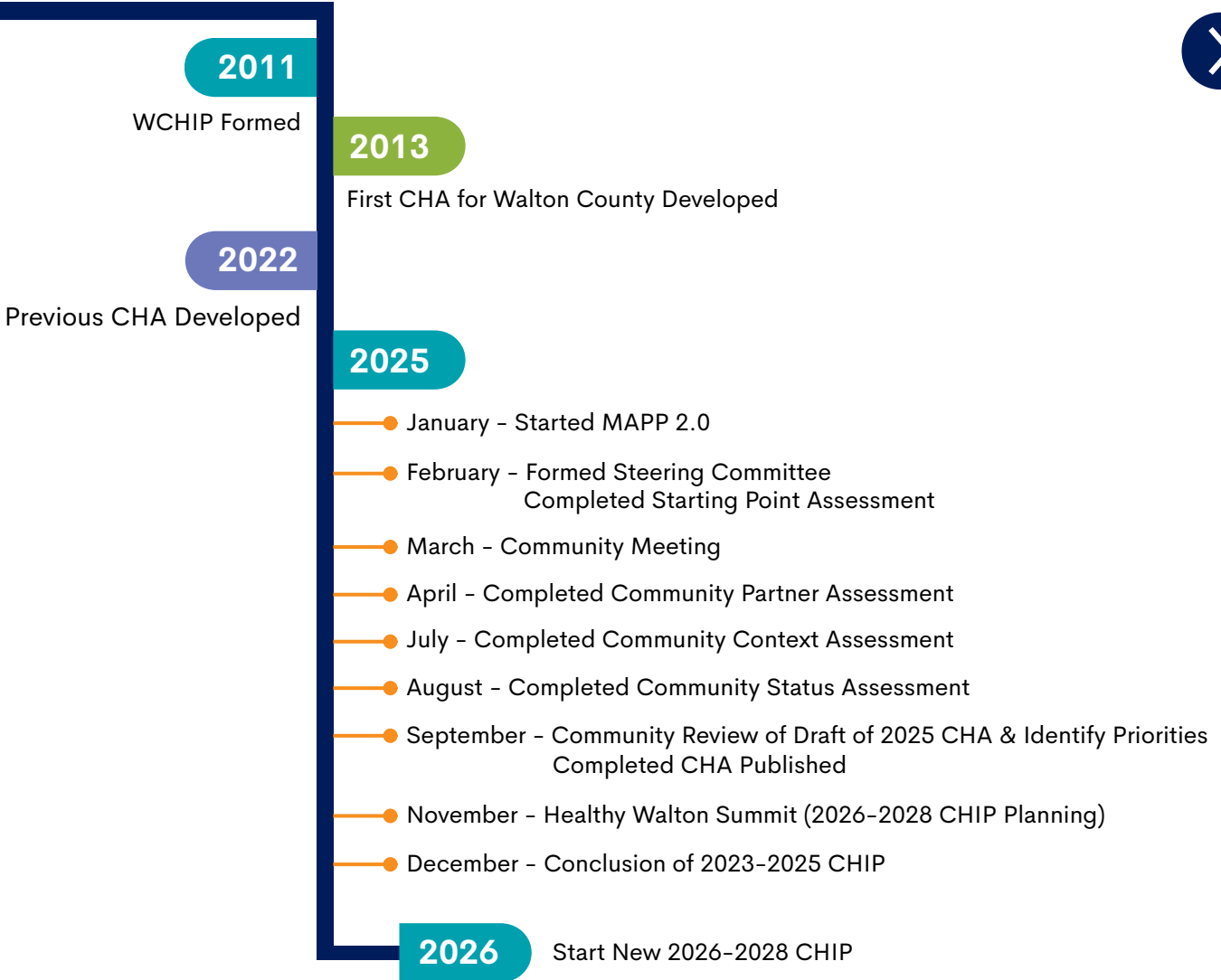
WCHIP currently uses the MAPP 2.0 framework to inform the CHA and CHIP process.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) began the process of developing the MAPP 2.0 framework. MAPP 2.0 enables communities to identify health priorities, develop effective strategies, and mobilize partnerships to improve community health outcomes, empowering communities to create solutions for the well-being of their populations.



## Definition of Community

For the purposes of this assessment, the community is defined as all those who work, live, or play in Walton County.

# Timeline



INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT ASSESSMENT

STATUS ASSESSMENT

PARTNER ASSESSMENT

CONCLUSION



## Quantitative Data

Percentages, ratios, counts, and other number-based indicators from state and national data sets, and the community survey, which tell the story of our community's health.



## Qualitative Data

Consists of community member insights gathered through interviews and focus groups. This helps us understand how community health indicators affect individuals and families.





# SOURCES OF DATA FOR THIS REPORT

## Health Indicators

We compiled a list of indicators that are available from the state of Florida and other data sources like the U.S. Census Bureau. We then decided which indicators were most relevant to Walton County. Due to Walton County's relatively small population, some of the state-level indicators may not be very meaningful for us, so we found other ways to report these numbers. We also compared our data to different regions in our county, such as Santa Rosa Beach, Freeport, DeFuniak Springs, and Paxton.

## Community Interviews

The WCHIP Steering Committee reached out to 25 community leaders and conducted community leader interviews with 19 of those individuals as part of the Community Health Assessment process. Interviewees came from a variety of backgrounds, including health care providers, local business owners, elected officials, leaders in nonprofits, and many more, which provided a wide range of perspectives and views of and from the community.

## Community Survey

The WCHIP Steering Committee developed a community survey to hear directly from Walton County residents about the health needs that are most important to them and the local resources they know about. The team advertised the survey widely at community events, with local businesses and organizations, through social media—including on their Facebook page, at health fairs, and through word of mouth. Respondents were offered the choice to select multiple responses for many of the questions. The survey was offered in English and Spanish. We received 315 responses to the survey. We also had various responses from across the county, indicating a good distribution of information from a variety of locations. A copy of the survey questions can be found in the appendix of this report.

## How to Use the Data

After we collected and analyzed the data, we used our findings to create this report. More details about data collection and analysis can be found in the appendix. Community-reported data and indicators from state and national data sources can be found in subsequent sections of this assessment.

# SOME NOTES ABOUT THE DATA



## What do we mean by “per 100,000”?

In the data tables, you’ll see numbers reported as “per 100,000.” The “rate per 100,000” is used to compare data across populations of different sizes. For example, by using this standardized rate, we can compare disease or injury rates between Walton County and another county that is much larger, or compare Walton County to Florida as a whole. The use of standardized rates ensures that population comparisons are fair and accurate.

## How is the “rate per 100,000” calculated?

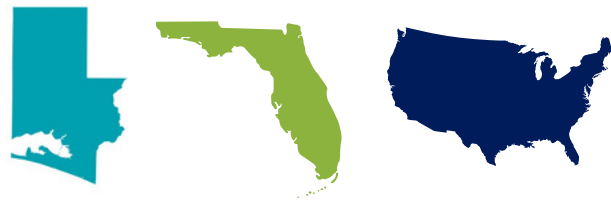
The rate per 100,000 is calculated by dividing the number of incidences (e.g., deaths) by the total population, then multiplying by 100,000. What about a smaller county with fewer than 100,000 people, like ours? In a smaller county, the rate per 100,000 can be useful to compare with other counties. However, fewer cases within small counties can make estimates harder to interpret. When looking at rates, it is important to consider the question, context, nature of the data, and specific population characteristics.

## What does age-adjusted mean?

Age-adjustment is used to compare rates across different populations or within the same population but over time when the ages of people in the group may have changed. This is important because age can be associated with injury rates (e.g., teens or young adults for car accidents or older adults for falls) or disease risk. By adjusting for age, we can make better comparisons and remove any inaccuracies caused by differences in age distributions.

## How do you determine the comparisons between Walton County, Florida, and the United States?

In the data tables in this report, you’ll see a column comparing our county to the state or nation. We use the icons depicted below to easily determine if the data is county, state, or national. If there is no icon, it is inferred to be county-level data.





# NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

Where applicable, this document will include national benchmarks and goals from Healthy People 2030 to illustrate Walton County's position in relation to specific health indicators compared to the national 2030 goals. This comparison is depicted using the graphic to the right. Whenever this graphic is shown, it indicates that there is a Healthy People 2030 target for that measurement<sup>2</sup>.



## What is Healthy People 2030?

Healthy People identifies public health priorities to guide individuals, organizations, and communities across the United States in improving health and well-being. Healthy People 2030, the initiative's fifth edition, builds on the knowledge gained over the past four decades.



For more information about Healthy People 2030 or to explore objectives, data, evidence-based practices, and more, scan the QR code to the right with your phone.



**"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."**

-World Health Organization

# COMMUNITY DRIVERS OF HEALTH



**Good health is more than just going to the doctor or not being sick.** Our health is shaped by our community, where we live, the types of food we can eat, the availability of living wage jobs, access to safe places for recreation and exercise, and many other factors. These factors form our needs, which include immediate needs like housing and food; and community drivers of health, which are the community-wide conditions that influence where and how we work, live, learn, and play. Not having access to any one of these drivers could greatly impact a community's ability to be healthy. Addressing gaps in these drivers is essential for a healthy, thriving community.

## Think Upstream!

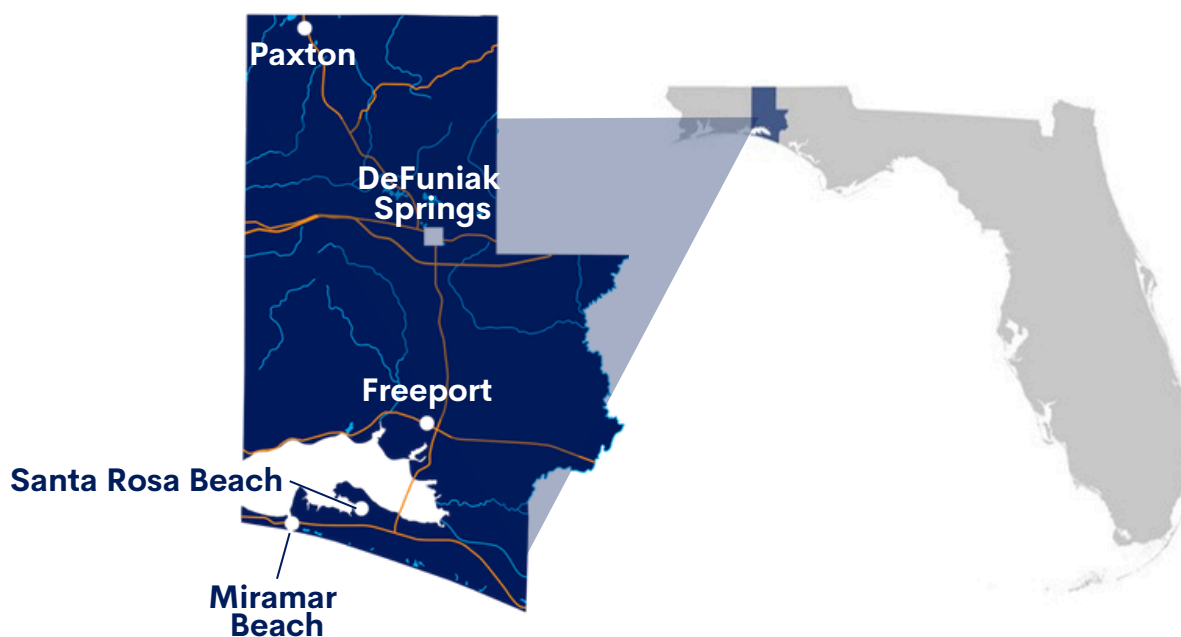
The concept of "upstream" thinking in health emphasizes proactive measures to prevent illness and injury by addressing the root causes and community-level drivers of health, such as living conditions, income, and education. Rather than focusing solely on treatment and disease management after problems arise, upstream approaches advocate for interventions that promote healthier communities from the start. **When we think and act upstream, we create a healthier and safer world.**



## WHO ARE WE?

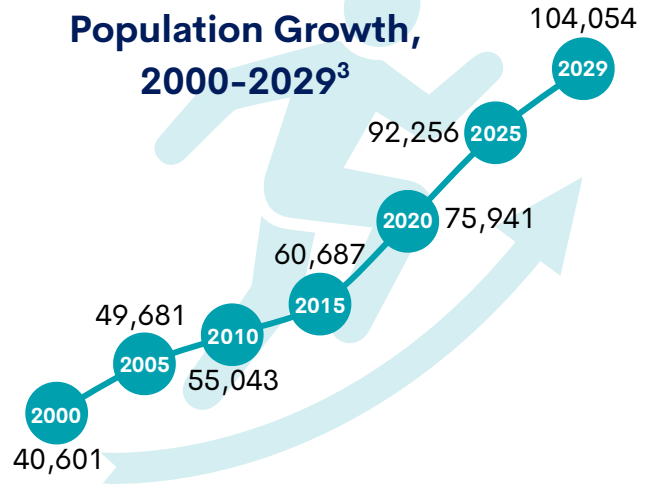
Nestled in the Florida Panhandle, Walton County stands out for its breathtaking scenery, featuring beautiful beaches along the Gulf of Mexico, tranquil coastal dune lakes, and lush pine forests teeming with wildlife. Spanning 1,238 square miles, Walton County is bordered by Holmes County to the north, Bay County to the east, and Okaloosa County to the west, with the Gulf of Mexico forming its southern boundary, featuring 26 miles of stunning coastline. The picturesque Choctawhatchee River meanders through the county, enhancing its natural beauty.

Historically, Walton County was inhabited by Native American tribes such as the Creek and Choctaw, who thrived on its rich natural resources. With a growing population of approximately 91,000 residents, Walton County boasts several distinct communities. The county seat, DeFuniak Springs, is celebrated for its historic architecture and a unique, perfectly circular spring-fed lake at the town's center. The northern region is more rural, characterized by natural landscapes and quaint towns such as Paxton. Central Walton County offers a harmonious blend of suburban and natural settings, with rapidly developing communities like Freeport. The southern part is famous for its gorgeous beaches and resort towns, including Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach, and Seaside, providing easy access to major thoroughfares and vibrant coastal attractions. Walton County also includes a portion of Eglin Air Force Base, which plays a vital role in the region's economy and lifestyles.



Walton County is comprised of an estimated 92,256 individuals as of 2025, with an annual population growth of 3.3%<sup>3</sup>. If this population growth continues, an additional 3,000 residents will move to Walton County each year. Though most of this increase is new residents from outside the state, the number of resident live births has also been steadily increasing, with the most recent data showing nearly 1,000 live births annually. Walton County includes several special populations such as civilian veterans (11.3%), foreign-born persons (8.1%), persons with disabilities (12.7%), and adults over the age of 60 years (24.9%)<sup>3</sup>. In 2023, Walton County had 5,170,700 visitors, with the vast majority vacationing in South Walton<sup>36</sup>.

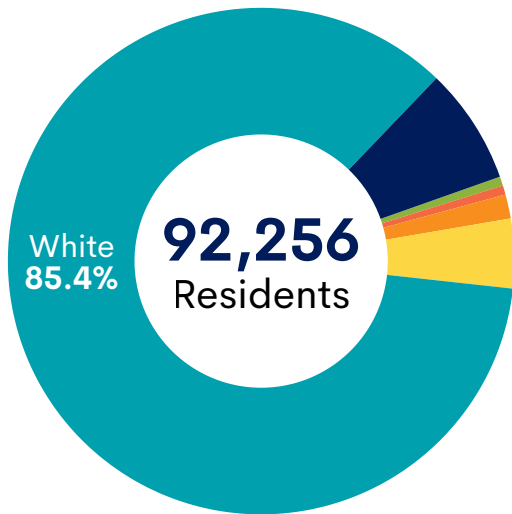
### Population Growth, 2000-2029<sup>3</sup>



### Resident Live Births, 2023 Rate Per 1,000 Births<sup>4,5</sup>



### Population by Race, 2025<sup>3</sup>



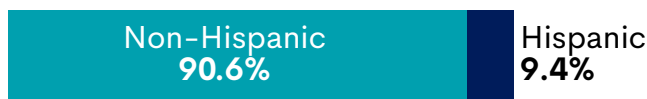
- Two or More Races - 7.4%
- American Indian or Alaskan Native - 0.6%
- Asian - 0.6%
- Some Other Race - 1.5%
- Black - 4.4%

### Population by Household Type, 2023<sup>3</sup>



- Married Couples - 62.9%
- Non-Family - 15.7%
- Female Householder - 13.6%
- Male Householder - 7.8%

### Population by Ethnicity, 2025<sup>3</sup>





The following are key populations that have been identified through the different assessments conducted within this MAPP 2.0 cycle as priorities:

### 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 are one of the fastest-growing demographics. A special subgroup of older adults to consider is veterans.

### People Experiencing OR At-risk of Poverty

Living in poverty creates barriers to achieving optimal health. People experiencing poverty are less likely to have the education needed to earn a higher income. Examples include limited access to health services, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, and other necessities for living a healthy life. (More details on pg. 50)

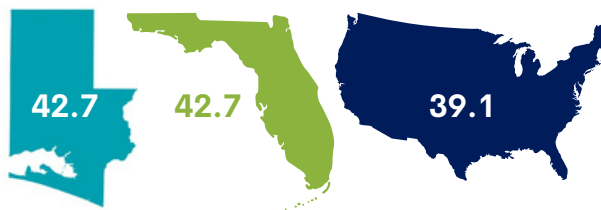
### People with Disabilities

People with disabilities often face unique health challenges. They may experience higher rates of chronic conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, partly due to barriers in accessing healthcare services and preventive care.

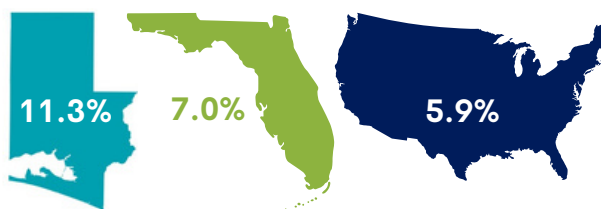
### Rural Communities

People in rural areas generally live farther from healthcare facilities and other resources than those in urban areas. Walton County is a medically underserved community with some parts classified as rural.

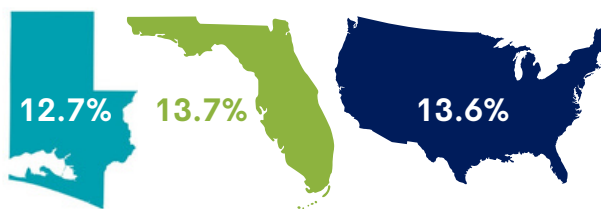
#### Median Age, 2024<sup>3</sup>



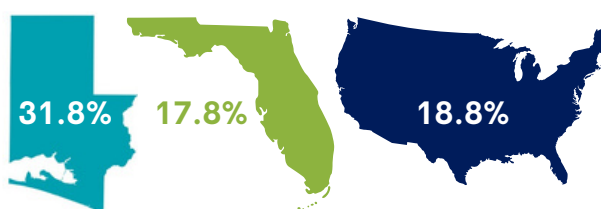
#### Veteran Population, 2024<sup>3</sup>



#### Disability Status, 2024<sup>3</sup>

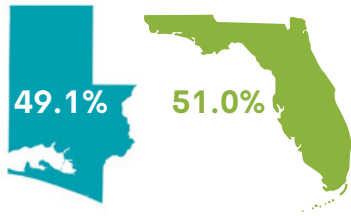


#### Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren, 2024<sup>3</sup>





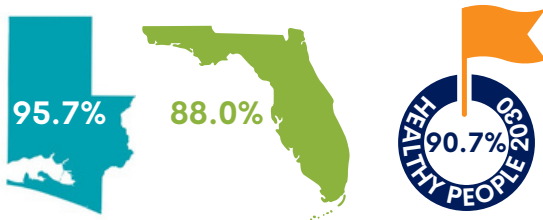
### Kindergarten Readiness, 2024<sup>6</sup>



In 2024, the percentage of students that are considered "ready" when entering kindergarten in Walton County was 49.1%, compared to Florida at 51%.

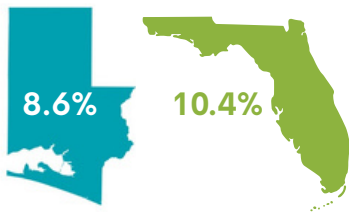
**Note:** This is the percentage of kindergarten students who score 690+ on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy.

### High School Graduation Rate, 2022-2023<sup>7</sup>



In 2025, Walton County School District ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 67 counties in the State of Florida based on students' test scores on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) and End of Course (EOC) exams.

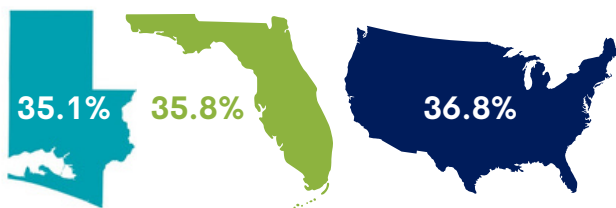
### Individuals With No High School Diploma (Aged 25 Years and Older), 2023<sup>3</sup>



### Languages Spoken at Home, Population 5 Years and Over, 2023<sup>3</sup>

- 1 English Only (91.3%)
- 2 Spanish (5.5%)
- 3 Other Indo-European Languages (2.7%)
- 4 Other Languages (0.5%)

### Population with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 25 Years and Older, 2024<sup>3</sup>



### EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

#### Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast

Voluntary Pre-kindergarten  
Application Assistance  
850-833-3627 | [www.elc-ec.org](http://www.elc-ec.org)

#### Emerald Coast Technical College

GED Preparation; English for Speakers of Other Languages  
850-892-1240 | [www.ectc.edu](http://www.ectc.edu)



# COMMUNITY CONTEXT ASSESSMENT



# OVERVIEW

The Community Context Assessment (CCS) within the MAPP 2.0 framework aims to understand the intricate dynamics that define a community's identity and values. This process involves engaging with residents to gather insight into what makes their community unique and vibrant. This assessment was completed using two primary data methods: community leader interviews and a community survey. By exploring these perspectives, the CCS reveals the community's core strengths and assets, providing a foundation for future initiatives.

## Assets & Strengths

We asked individuals to share what they thought were the greatest assets and strengths of Walton County. Interview and survey data showed these as the top five:

1. Churches and religious organizations
2. Low crime and safe neighborhoods
3. Good place to raise children with quality education
4. Dedicated local non-profit organizations
5. Safe places to be active in our natural resources

## Resources & Community Supports

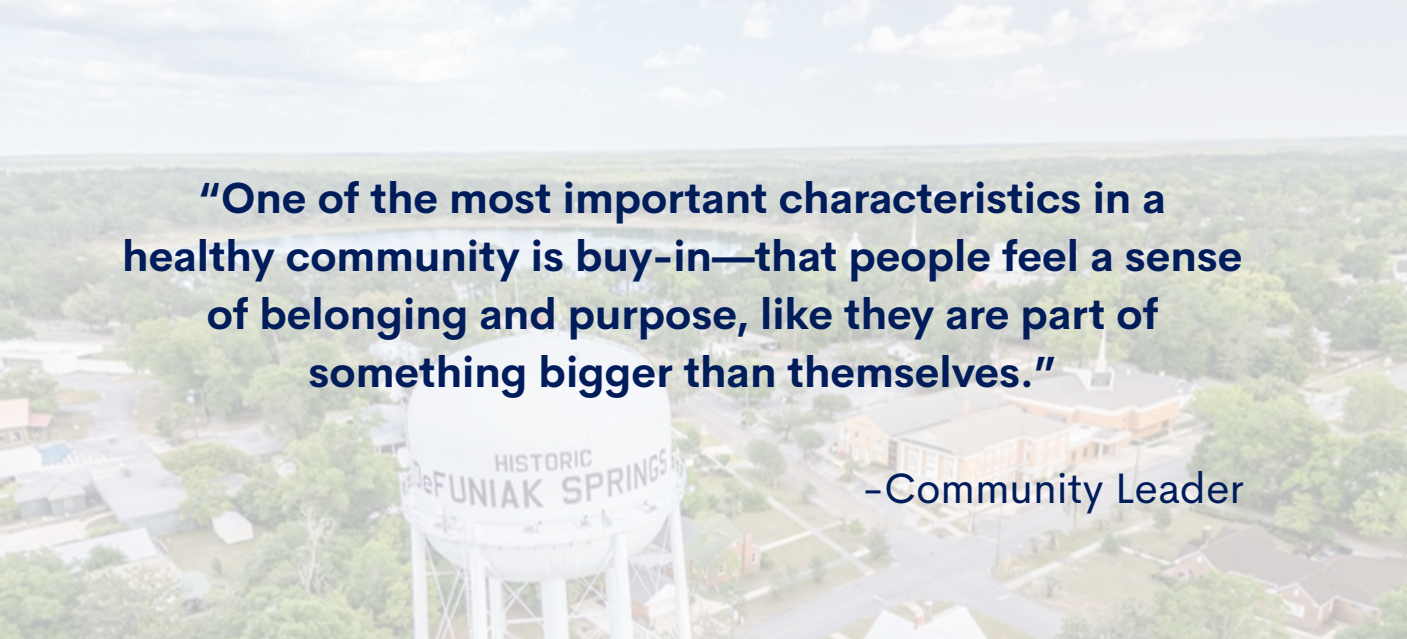
Resources and support within a community are vital to community health and resilience. Creating a space where individuals and organizations can come together to address common challenges and uplift one another is key. Local faith-based organizations were identified as being a great resource for community engagement, providing collaboration among non-profit organizations, local government, businesses, and families.



## Community-Identified Needs & Challenges

The main community-identified health needs centered on five key topics. We selected these by analyzing the data and comparing the findings across interviews and survey responses. In the next section, Community Status Assessment, we show quantitative data in the form of community health indicators alongside the key community-identified health needs mentioned above. We compare some of the data for Walton County with the State of Florida and/or the United States.

1. **Access to Health Services:** Challenges include access to medical care and mental health services.
2. **Social and Mental Health:** Social isolation, mental health challenges, and the impact of drug and alcohol use across different demographics, including youth and adults.
3. **Housing and Living Conditions:** Issues such as affordable and healthy housing, housing conditions, and the ability to live independently, especially for older adults.
4. **Employment and Economic Stability:** The need for dependable jobs with livable wages and the high cost of childcare are affecting economic security.
5. **Public Infrastructure and Safety:** The current infrastructure is not meeting the needs of the growing population.



**"One of the most important characteristics in a healthy community is buy-in—that people feel a sense of belonging and purpose, like they are part of something bigger than themselves."**

-Community Leader

# COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEWS

The WCHIP Steering Committee reached out to 25 community leaders and conducted interviews with 21 of those individuals as part of the Community Health Assessment process. We chose community leaders because they represent and can speak for a larger community, offering insights that reflect the needs and concerns of many. Interviewees came from a variety of backgrounds, such as health care providers, local business owners, elected officials, leaders in nonprofits, and many more, which provided a wide range of perspectives and views of and from the community. Quotes from the interviews conducted are included throughout the CHA.

## Interview Response Trends

In exploring the essence of a thriving community, we turn to the insights of local leaders who have shared their invaluable perspectives on what constitutes a healthy community. Their reflections provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay between community strengths and challenges, offering a roadmap for fostering environments where individuals and families can flourish. Some trends that were repeatedly discussed in multiple interviews were:

1. Access to quality health care is vital for a healthy community.
2. Health is more than health care, and respondents highlighted that the general cost of living in Walton County is high and impacts the ability of families to be healthy.
3. Our community is rich in community partners willing to go above and beyond in helping their neighbors in need.
4. Though we have dedicated partners doing good work, there are worries about not having enough resources and funding to support all the various needs in our community.
5. With the exponential growth of Walton County, public infrastructure fails to keep up with the needs.
6. Safety-net programs are vital to ensure residents experiencing an emergency, such as risk of homelessness or a mental health crisis, have resources and a safe place to go.
7. Affordable childcare options are still limited in some parts of our community.
8. Overall, there is a lack of a shared vision and collective goals amongst local governments that work toward a healthier Walton County.



# COMMUNITY SURVEY

The WCHIP Steering Committee developed a community survey to hear directly from Walton County residents about the health needs that are most important to them and which local resources they already know about. The team advertised the survey widely at community events, with local businesses and organizations, through social media—including on their Facebook page, at health fairs, and through word of mouth. Respondents were offered the choice to select multiple responses for many of the questions. The survey was offered in both English and Spanish. We received 315 responses to the survey. We also had various responses from across the county, meaning we had a good distribution of information from a variety of locations. A copy of the survey questions can be found in the appendix of this report.

## What makes a healthy community?

Key factors for a healthy community identified from the survey include:

1. Access to quality health care
2. Availability of affordable and healthy food
3. Affordable housing
4. Low crime rates and safe neighborhoods
5. A clean environment

## Environmental and Safety Issues

1. Quality of roadways and sharing the road (between motor vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians)
2. Access to power and water during weather-related events
3. Drinking water quality, quantity, and systems
4. Contaminated soil or bodies of water (such as lakes, shorelines, wetlands, and streams), septic and sewage quality, quantity, and systems
5. Housing conditions: indoor air quality, pests, mold/moisture

## Social and Economic Issues

1. Affordable and healthy housing
2. Dependable jobs with livable wages
3. Drug/alcohol use
4. Lack of accessibility for people with disabilities (like physical, communication, and transportation access)
5. Social isolation





## Local Adults and Seniors' Challenges

1. Affordable housing while living on a fixed income
2. Access to medical care
3. Managing chronic health problems
4. Social isolation/loneliness
5. Access to services to live independently (also known as 'aging in place')

## Local Youth Challenges

1. Drug, tobacco, and alcohol use
2. Bullying
3. Unhealthy or unstable home life
4. Access to job opportunities and/or training
5. Access to mental health care

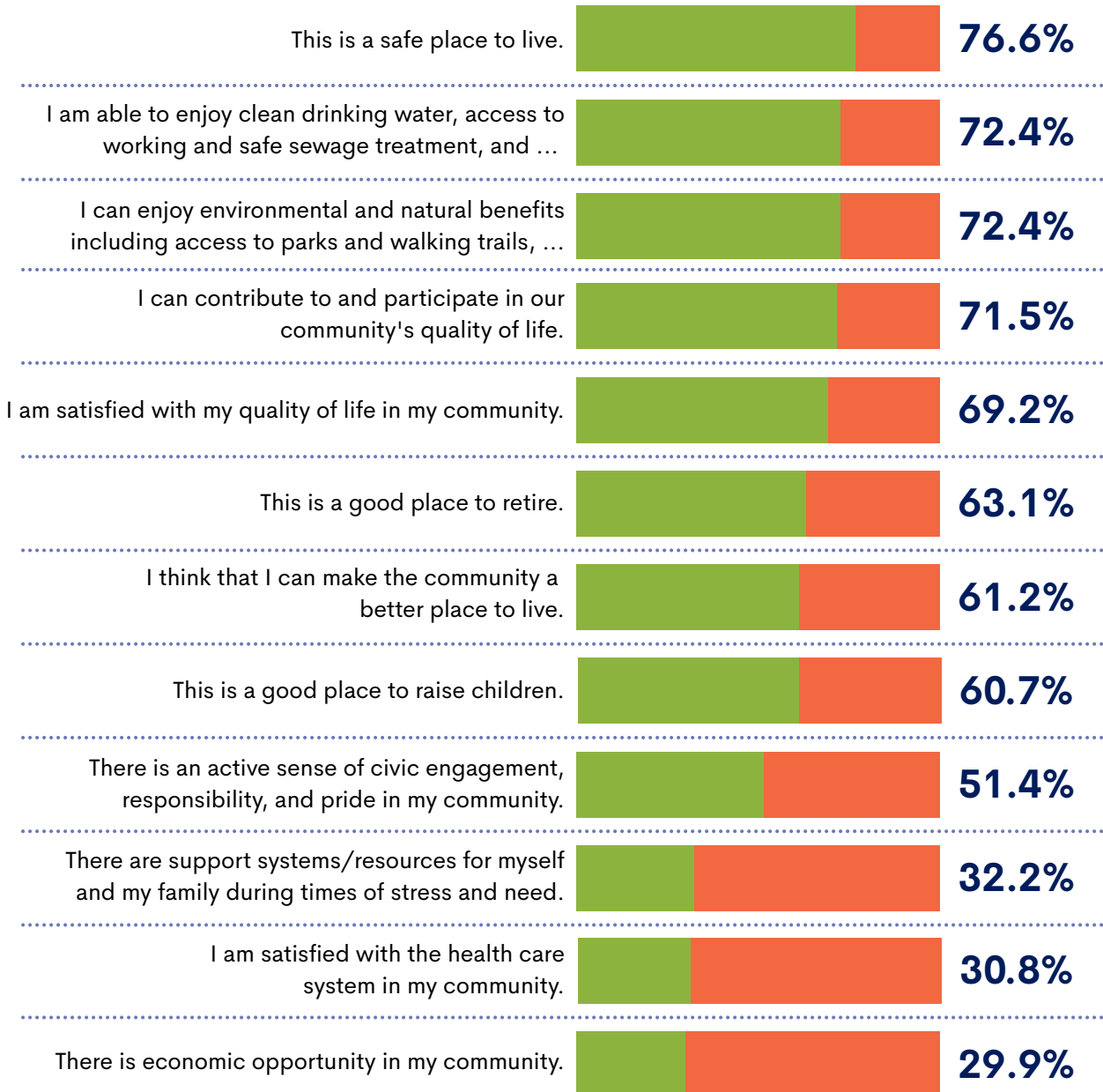
## Local Parents/Caregivers' Challenges

1. Affordable housing
2. High cost of childcare
3. Access to medical care for children
4. Access to mental health care for children
5. Transportation to activities and/or appointments

## Medical or Physical Health Issues

1. Access to medical and behavioral healthcare
2. Mental health (depression, anxiety, stress, bipolar disorder)
3. Drug and alcohol use
4. Age-related conditions (Alzheimer's, arthritis, hearing or vision loss, mobility, falls)
5. Cancer

The community survey asked respondents to rank the following statements based on how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The lowest-ranked statements were: "There is economic opportunity in my community", "I am satisfied with the health care system in my community", and "There are support systems/resources for myself and my family during times of stress and need".



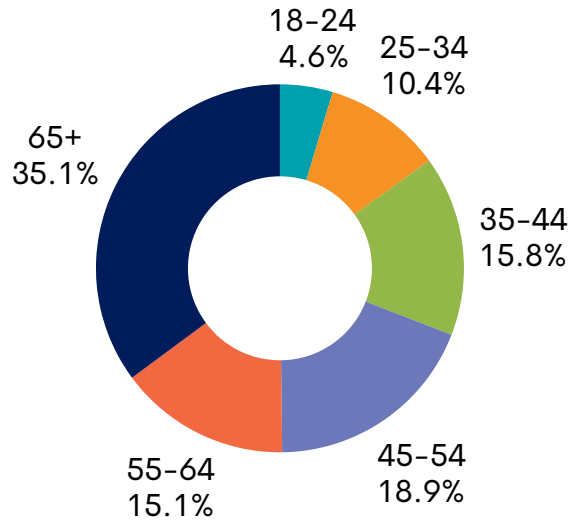
# COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS



## Percentage of Respondents by Community They Live In or Closest To

Argyle	1.16%
DeFuniak Springs	34.36%
Paxton	10.42%
Santa Rosa Beach	11.97%
Mossy Head	4.25%
Liberty	3.09%
Darlington	2.70%
Ponce de Leon	1.93%
Red Bay	0.39%
Freeport	16.22%
Miramar Beach	2.70%
Flowersview	0.39%
Gaskin	1.54%
Glendale	2.70%
New Harmony	1.16%
Douglass Crossroads	0.39%
Eucheeanna	1.54%
Choctaw Beach	0.77%
Bruce	1.16%
Point Washington	0.77%

## Percentage of Respondents by Age



## Percentage of Respondents by Employment Status

Disabled/Unable to Work	7.34%
Employed Full-Time	40.54%
Employed Part-Time	10.81%
Homemaker	7.34%
Veteran	4.25%
Retired	30.12%
Seasonal Worker	0.77%
Student	3.47%
Self-Employed	3.86%
Unemployed	2.32%



# COMMUNITY STATUS ASSESSMENT

# OVERVIEW

The Community Status Assessment (CSA) serves as a foundational step in understanding the health dynamics and needs of a community. This comprehensive evaluation provides valuable insights into the current health status, quality of life, and health issues that exist within the community. By analyzing key health indicators, the assessment identifies both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, guiding public health planning and resource allocation. This process not only informs stakeholders but also engages the community in collaborative efforts to enhance health outcomes and promote well-being. Through this thorough assessment, we lay the groundwork for targeted interventions and sustainable health initiatives that resonate with the unique characteristics and needs of the community.

The CSA will have six sections based on the findings of the Community Context Assessment (CCA). The first section will highlight general health indicators that are important to continuously track. The other five sections are based on the CCA and will cover:

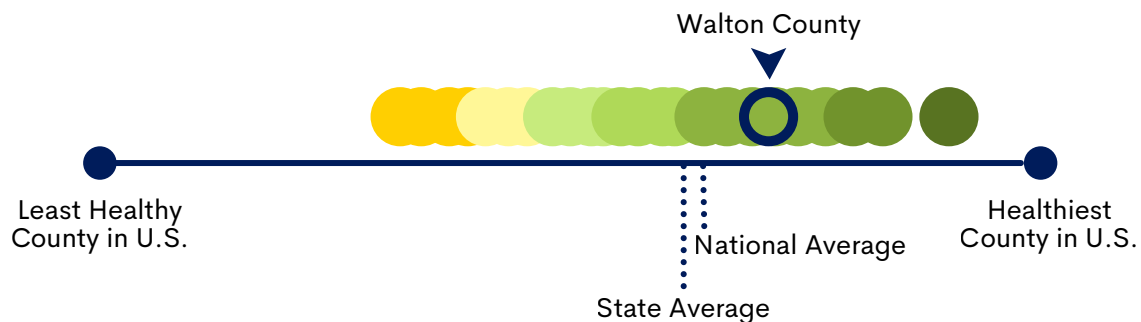
- Access to Health Services
- Social and Mental Health Issues
- Housing and Living Conditions
- Employment and Economic Stability
- Public Infrastructure and Safety

# GENERAL HEALTH INDICATORS

Understanding the health of a community involves examining various general health indicators that provide a foundational overview of well-being. In Walton County, analyzing the leading causes of death such as heart disease, cancer, and respiratory ailments, alongside other health metrics, reveals crucial insights into the population's overall health status. By assessing these indicators, we can identify prevalent health challenges and opportunities for improvement. This section will focus on these key health metrics to construct a comprehensive picture of the community's health landscape.

## How Does Walton County's Health Rank Against Other Counties?

Walton County is faring better than the average county in Florida for *Population Health and Well-being*, and better than the average county in the nation<sup>8</sup>. Population health and well-being are something we create as a society, not something an individual can obtain in a clinic or be responsible for alone. Health is more than an absence of disease and pain; health is the ability to thrive. Well-being covers both the quality of life and the ability of people and communities to contribute to the world. Population health involves optimal physical, mental, spiritual, and social well-being.

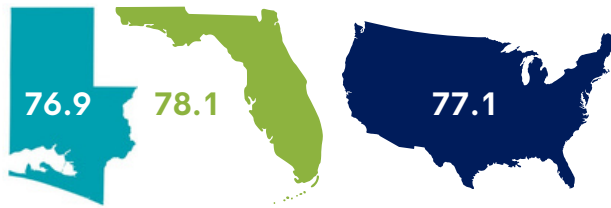


## Premature Death, 2020-2022 Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>8</sup>



The premature death rate is the number is the sum of years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population. This means Walton County residents lived shorter lives compared to the State and Nation during this timeframe.

## Average Life Expectancy, 2021-2023<sup>9</sup>



Walton County residents are living roughly a year less than others throughout the state. In Walton County, male residents live almost an average of five years shorter than females.

## Leading Causes of Death, 2019-2023<sup>9</sup>

### WALTON



- 1 Malignant Neoplasm (Cancer) - Pg. 28
- 2 Heart Diseases - Pg. 30
- 3 Unintentional Injury - Pg. 35
- 4 Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease - Pg. 32
- 5 COVID-19
- 6 Alzheimer's Disease - Pg. 41
- 7 Cerebrovascular Disease (Stroke) - Pg. 30
- 8 Diabetes Mellitus - Pg. 31
- 9 Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome and Nephrosis - Pg. 31
- 10 Suicide - Pg. 44

### FLORIDA



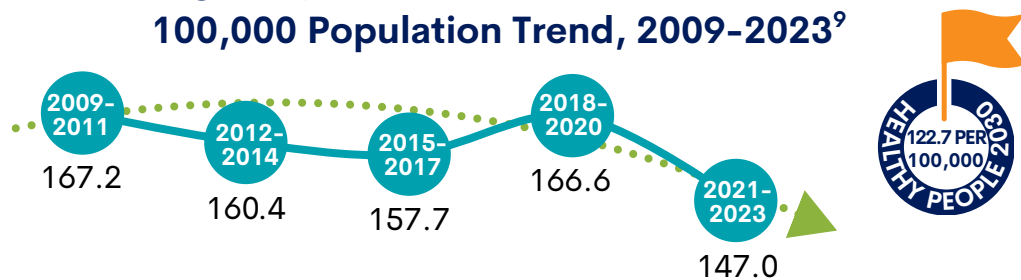
- 1 Heart Diseases
- 2 Malignant Neoplasm (Cancer)
- 3 Unintentional Injury
- 4 Cerebrovascular Diseases (Stroke)
- 5 COVID-19
- 6 Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
- 7 Diabetes Mellitus
- 8 Alzheimer's Disease
- 9 Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis
- 10 Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome and Nephrosis



# CANCER

Cancer continues to be the leading cause of death for Walton County, underscoring the criticality of addressing the contributing factors. In 2023, the age-adjusted rate (per 100,000 population) of deaths from cancer in Walton County was 147.5 compared to Florida at 133.4<sup>9</sup>. A significant concern is tobacco use, which remains a prevalent risk factor, exacerbating the incidence of various cancers within the community. Encouragingly, increased cancer screenings present a promising opportunity for early detection and prevention, potentially reducing mortality rates. Early detection through regular screenings is crucial, as it often results in better treatment outcomes and increases survival chances. By understanding the relationship between lifestyle choices, such as tobacco consumption and cancer prevalence, we can implement targeted interventions to improve public health outcomes.

## Age-Adjusted Cancer Death Rate Per 100,000 Population Trend, 2009-2023<sup>9</sup>

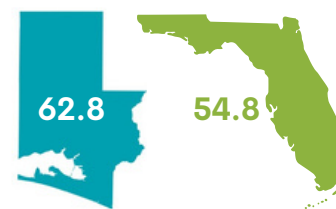


## Most Common Cancers Causing Death in Walton County, 2023<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Trachea, Bronchus & Lung Cancers
- 2 Pancreas Cancer
- 3 Colon Cancer
- 4 Breast Cancer
- 5 Prostate Cancer

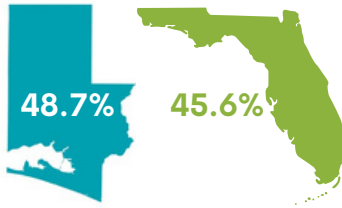
**Note:** It is important to highlight that breast cancer is significantly more common in females, while prostate cancer is a sex-specific condition exclusively affecting males.

## Deaths from Tobacco-Related Cancers, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



In 2023, the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 of deaths from tobacco-related cancers in Walton County was 62.8 compared to Florida at 54.8.

## Advanced Stage Cancer Diagnoses, 2022<sup>10</sup>



In 2022, the percentage of cancer cases at advanced stage when diagnosed in Walton County was 48.7%, compared to Florida at 45.6%. That means that nearly half of our residents that had cancer were already in an advanced stage when they got the diagnosis.

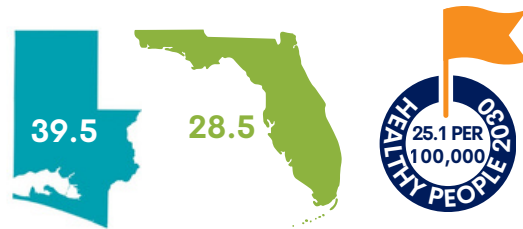
## Lung Cancer Screening Recommendations<sup>11</sup>

The American Cancer Society recommends yearly screening for lung cancer with a low-dose CT (LDCT) scan for people aged 50 to 80 years who:

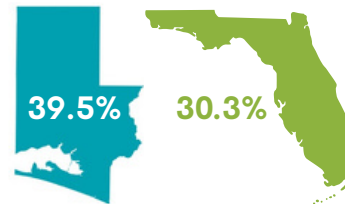
1. Smoke or used to smoke **AND**
2. Have at least a 20 pack-year history of smoking

A pack-year is equal to smoking 1 pack (or about 20 cigarettes) per day for a year. For example, a person could have a 20 pack-year history by smoking 1-pack-a-day for 20 years, or by smoking 2-packs-a-day for 10 years.

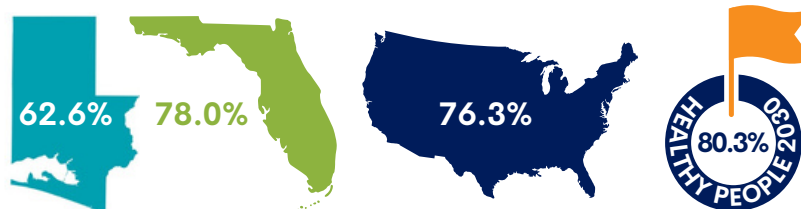
## Deaths From Lung Cancer, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



## Advanced Stage Female Breast Cancer Diagnoses, 2022<sup>10</sup>



## Women Who Had a Mammogram in the Past Two Years (Aged 50-74 Years), 2022<sup>8</sup>



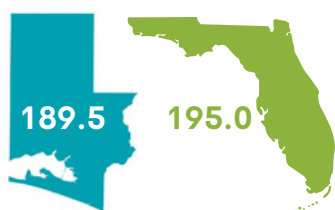
In 2022, 62.6% of women that were age 50 to 74 had a mammogram in the past two years, compared to Florida at 78.2% and the United States at 76.3%.



# HEART DISEASES & STROKE

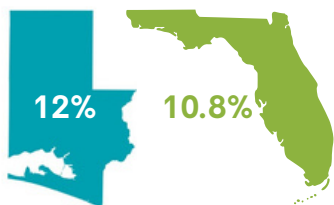
Heart disease is the second leading cause of death in Walton County, with stroke ranking seventh, underscoring the need for increased awareness and preventive measures. Regular healthcare visits and screenings can help identify risk factors such as hypertension, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity, diabetes, inactivity, and family history. Early detection through ongoing monitoring allows individuals to manage their health proactively, reduce risks, and improve quality of life.

## Deaths from Major Cardiovascular Diseases, 2023 Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



Although Walton County residents are overall less likely to die from major cardiovascular disease compared to the state's average, Walton County males (229.4) are much more likely to die from a major cardiovascular disease compared to their female counterpart (152.6).

## Adults Who Have Ever Been Told They Had Coronary Heart Disease, Heart Attack or Stroke, 2022<sup>12</sup>

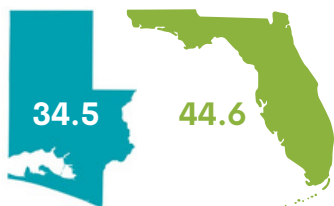


Walton County residents that have a high school diploma/GED (15.1%) or less (16.8%) are nearly twice as likely to have been told they have coronary heart disease or have had a heart attack or stroke than residents that have more than a high school education (7.9%).

## Heart Health Screening Recommendations<sup>13</sup>

The American Heart Association advises starting heart health screenings at age 20, including blood pressure and cholesterol checks. More frequent tests may be necessary for those with cardiovascular conditions or a history of heart-related events. Individuals with risk factors or a family history of cardiovascular disease may also require stricter screening.

## Deaths from Stroke, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



Though Walton County residents are less likely to die from a stroke compared to the state's average, Walton County females (36.9) are more likely to die from a stroke compared to their male counterpart (30.9).

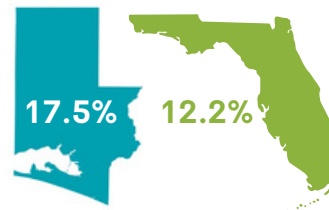
# DIABETES, NEPHRITIS, NEPHROTIC SYNDROME & NEPHROSIS

Diabetes is the eighth leading cause of death in Walton County, presenting serious health challenges. It can lead to complications like heart disease and kidney issues, including nephritis and nephrotic syndrome, which are the ninth leading cause of death. Key risk factors include obesity, inactivity, family history, and poor diet. Prevention focuses on lifestyle changes, such as a balanced diet, regular exercise, and blood sugar monitoring, to reduce the risk of diabetes and related kidney conditions. Understanding these factors can improve overall health.

## Diabetes Screening Recommendations<sup>14</sup>

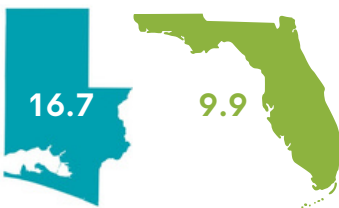
The U.S. Prevention Services Task Force recommends screening for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes in adults aged 35 to 70 years who are overweight or obese. It is also recommended that all adults in the above age category be screened, regardless of weight, and suggests earlier screening for those with risk factors such as family history, physical inactivity, or high blood pressure.

## Adults Who Have Ever Been Told They Had Diabetes, 2022<sup>12</sup>



In 2022, 17.5% adults in Walton County had been told they had diabetes, compared to 12.2% statewide. Walton County adults with less than a high school education (46.6%) are much more likely to have been told they had diabetes, compared to those with a high school diploma/ GED (11.2%) or a higher education level (13.9%).

## Deaths From Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome and Nephrosis, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



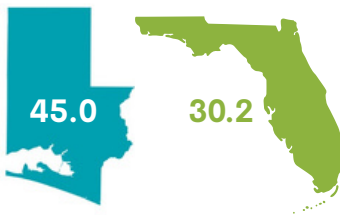
In 2023, the age-adjusted rate (per 100,000 population) of deaths from nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis in Walton County was 16.7, compared to Florida at 9.9.



# CHRONIC LOWER RESPIRATORY DISEASE

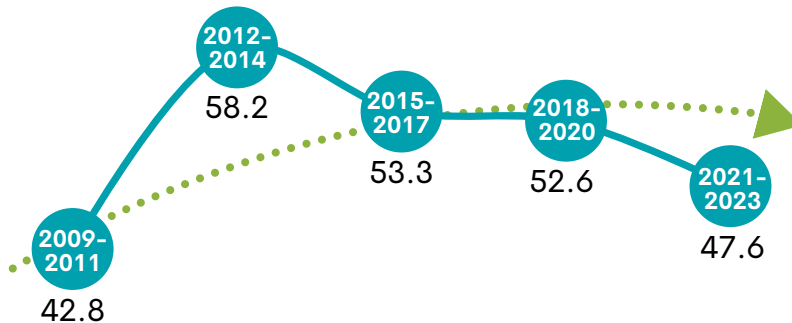
Chronic lower respiratory disease (CLRD), including COPD, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis, is a major public health concern, ranking as the fourth leading cause of death in Walton County. Key risk factors include smoking, air pollution, occupational hazards, genetic predispositions, and previous respiratory infections. Effective prevention strategies involve smoking cessation programs, improving air quality, and encouraging regular medical check-ups for early detection.

## Deaths From CLRD, 2023 Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>

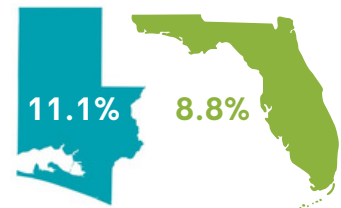


In 2023, the age-adjusted rate (per 100,000 population) of deaths from chronic lower respiratory disease in Walton County was 45.0, compared to Florida at 30.2. Walton County females (54.0) are more likely to die from CLRD compared to their male counterparts (33.6).

## Age-Adjusted CLRD Death Rate Per 100,000 Population Trend, 2009-2023<sup>9</sup>



## Adults (Ages 18-44) Who Currently Have Asthma, 2022<sup>12</sup>



## Local Public Health Policy Highlight

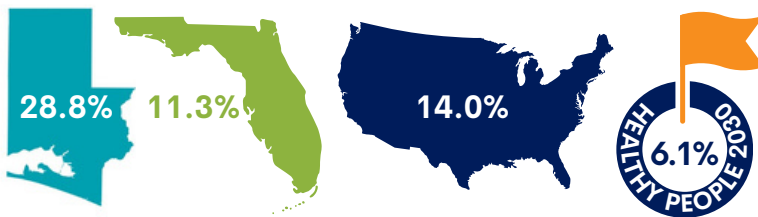
### DeFuniak Springs Parks Tobacco-Free Parks Ordinance

On September 23, 2024, the DeFuniak Springs City Council passed an ordinance to make all city parks tobacco-free, banning both smoking and vaping. Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) and the Walton County Prevention Coalition collaborated with the City's Tree and Beautification Board to present recommendations to the Council, emphasizing the public health advantages of tobacco-free environments, especially for children.

# TOBACCO USE & HEALTH

Tobacco use poses significant health risks and is a major contributor to various serious health conditions. It can lead to complications like heart disease and respiratory issues, which are among the leading causes of death. Key risk factors of tobacco use include an increased likelihood of developing chronic illnesses such as cancer, respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular problems. Prevention focuses on avoiding tobacco products, adopting a smoke-free lifestyle, and seeking support to quit smoking. Understanding the detrimental effects of tobacco use is crucial for improving overall health and reducing the risk of associated diseases.

## Adults Who Are Current Smokers, 2022<sup>12</sup>

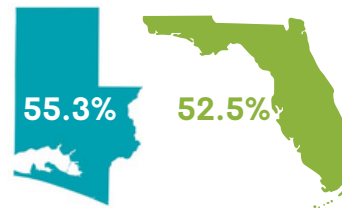


In 2022, 28.8% adults in Walton County were current smokers, compared to 11.3% statewide and 14.0% nationwide.

### Florida Counties With the Highest Percentage of Current Smokers<sup>12</sup>

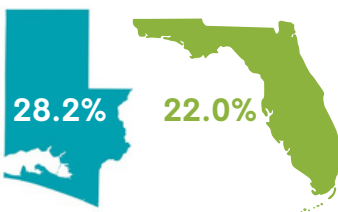
- 1 Liberty County (34.6%)
- 2 Holmes County (31.2%)
- 3 Walton County (28.8%)
- 4 Jackson County (26.8%)
- 5 Bay & Gilchrist Counties (24.7%)

### Adult Current Smokers Who Tried to Quit Smoking at Least Once in the Past Year, 2022<sup>12</sup>



In 2022, 28.8% adults in Walton County that were current smokers tried to quit smoking at least once in the past year, compared to 52.5% statewide.

## Students Who Have Ever Tried Cigarettes, Cigars, Hookah, Electronic Vapor Products, Flavored Cigarettes or Flavored Cigars, 2024<sup>15</sup>



In 2024, 28.2% of the Students in Walton County have tried cigarettes, cigars, hookah, electronic vapor products, flavored cigarettes or flavored cigars, compared to 22.0% statewide.



# CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

**Florida Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program** simplifies access to essential breast and cervical cancer screenings. Women who qualify can obtain screenings either for free or at a low cost, provided they meet the program's eligibility criteria, which include being at least 40 years of age, having limited or no health insurance, and adhering to the program's income guidelines. For more information, call 850-892-8015.

**MyGulfCare Program** at Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast provides residents with help to manage chronic health conditions by providing personalized education and assistance to ensure the highest possible quality of life. Qualifying conditions for the program are chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, heart failure, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. For more information, call 850-278-3546.

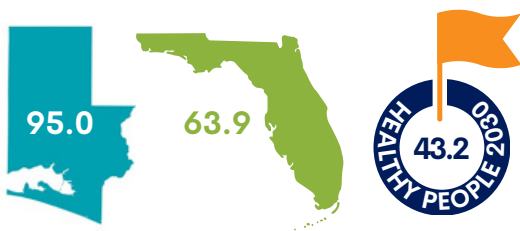
**West Florida Area Health Education Center and Tobacco Free Florida** offer free tobacco cessation services, including nicotine replacement therapy and local classes. The cessation programs are led by trained specialists who guide participants through the quitting process. They help identify triggers and withdrawal symptoms and brainstorm healthy coping mechanisms. Cessation groups are hosted at local public community centers, libraries, and hospitals. For more information, call 850-682-2521 or visit [www.westfloridaahec.org](http://www.westfloridaahec.org).



# UNINTENTIONAL INJURY

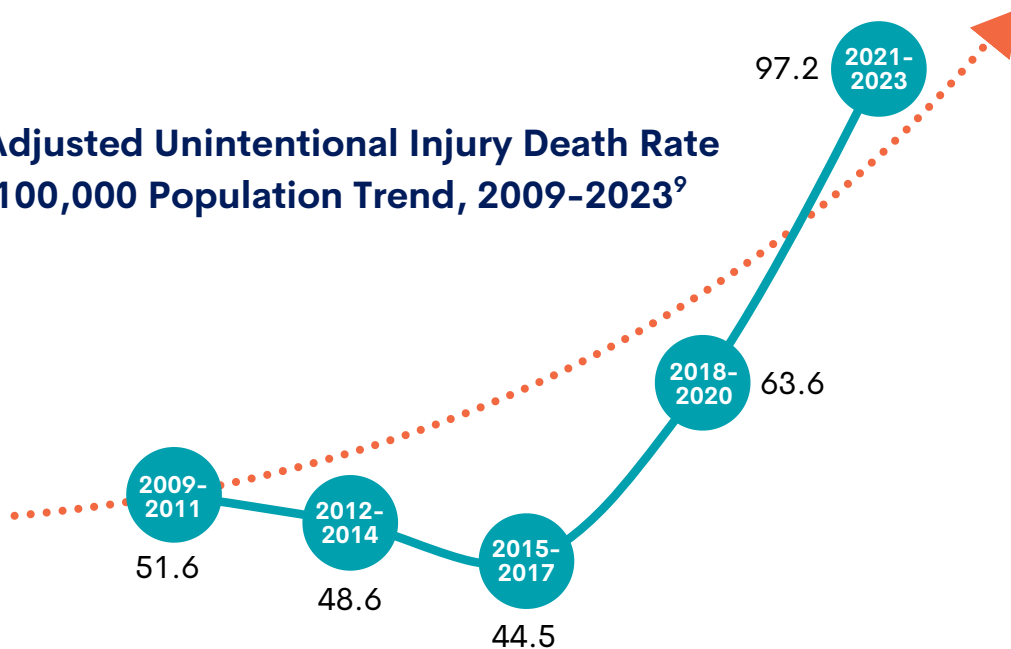
Unintentional injuries, ranking as the third leading cause of death in Walton County, involve a variety of accidents that happen without any deliberate intent to harm. The most common types of these injuries in Walton County are poisoning by drugs and biological substances (pg. 49), motor vehicle accidents (pg. 55), falls, and drowning and submersion. Unlike intentional injuries, which stem from deliberate actions, unintentional injuries are often preventable through proactive measures. Implementing safety practices such as wearing seatbelts, installing handrails, and securely storing hazardous substances can significantly reduce the risk of such accidents. By understanding the causes and adopting preventive strategies, communities can work towards minimizing the impact of unintentional injuries and promoting a safer environment for all residents.

## Deaths From Unintentional Injury, 2023 Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



In 2023, the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population of deaths from unintentional injury in Walton County was 95.0, compared to Florida at 63.9. Walton County males (116.7) are more likely to die from an unintentional injury compared to their female counterparts (71.9).

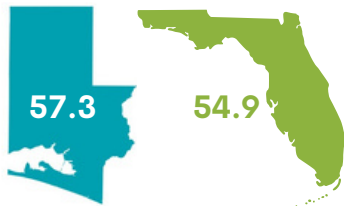
## Age-Adjusted Unintentional Injury Death Rate Per 100,000 Population Trend, 2009-2023<sup>9</sup>



# INFECTIOUS DISEASE

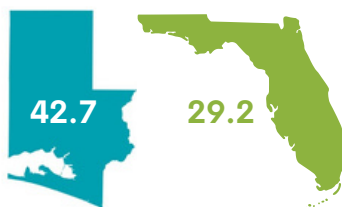
Infectious diseases like influenza, tuberculosis, and malaria pose a global threat. Effective prevention strategies, such as handwashing and sanitation, are crucial to reduce transmission. Communities can decrease infection rates by practicing responsible antibiotic use and maintaining proper hygiene. In Walton County, bacterial STIs, particularly syphilis, have surged since 2019, occurring at twice the statewide rate, with untreated cases leading to severe complications. While HIV rates remain low, rising bacterial STIs may increase HIV transmission risk. Included are just some of the notable datapoints.

## Hepatitis C Diagnoses that are Chronic Infections, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>16</sup>



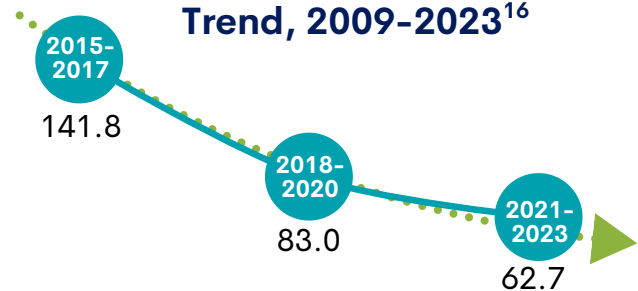
In 2023, the rate (per 100,000 population) of hepatitis C diagnoses that are considered a chronic infection, including perinatal, was 57.3, compared to Florida at 54.9.

## Rabies, Possible Exposure, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>19</sup>



In 2023, the rate per 100,000 of possible human exposures to rabies in Walton County was 42.7, compared to Florida at 29.2. Exposure is typically due to an animal bite from an animal of unknown status.

## Hepatitis C Diagnoses that are Chronic Infections, Rate Per 100,000 Population Trend, 2009-2023<sup>16</sup>

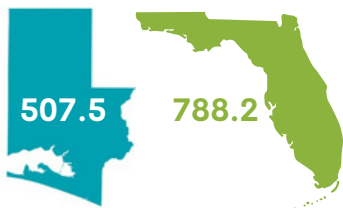


## Campylobacteriosis Diagnoses, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>20</sup>



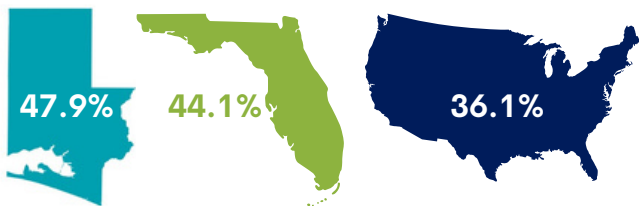
In 2023, Walton County had a campylobacteriosis diagnosis rate of 39 per 100,000, higher than Florida's 20.8. Most infections result from consuming raw or undercooked poultry or contamination from these foods.

## Bacterial STI Diagnoses, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>17</sup>



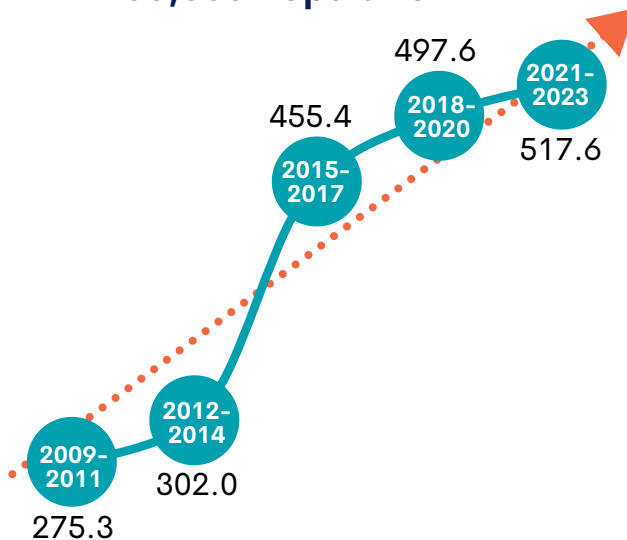
In 2023, the rate per 100,000 of bacterial sexually transmitted infections (STIs) diagnoses in Walton County (507.5) was significantly lower than the statewide average (788.2). Bacterial STDs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis.

## Adults Who Have Ever Been Tested For HIV, 2022<sup>12</sup>



In 2022, 47.9% adults in Walton County have been tested at least once for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), compared to 44.1% statewide.

## Bacterial STI Diagnoses, 2009-2023 Trend Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>17</sup>

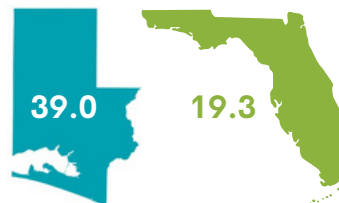


## HIV Screening Recommendations<sup>21</sup>

CDC advises that all individuals aged 13 to 64 should be tested for HIV *at least once* as part of routine healthcare. All pregnant women should be tested for HIV as part of prenatal care to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Individuals who are at higher risk for HIV should be tested at least annually. This includes:

- Men who have sex with men (MSM).
- Individuals with multiple sexual partners.
- Those who have sex with partners whose HIV status is unknown.
- People who inject drugs and share

## Infectious Syphilis Diagnoses, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>18</sup>

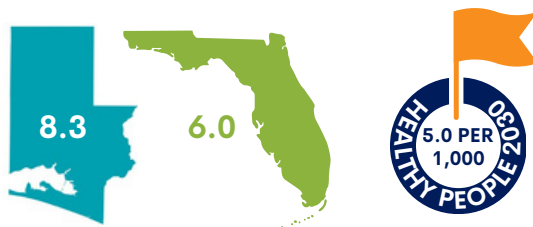


In 2023, the rate per 100,000 of infectious syphilis diagnoses in Walton County (39.0) was much higher compared to the statewide average (19.3). Infectious syphilis is the stage in which the disease can be easily spread through primary chancres or mucous patches.

# HEALTH ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

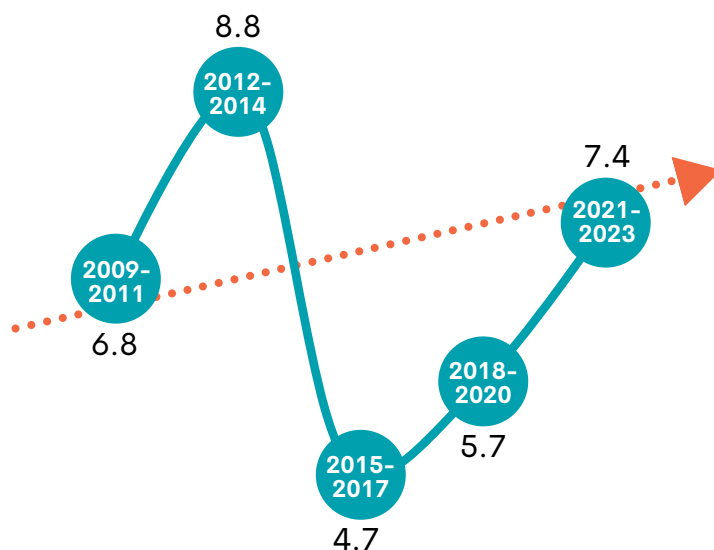
Health across the lifespan refers to the well-being of individuals from infancy to old age. Understanding health trajectories is vital for identifying critical intervention periods. Early data on infant nutrition and adult lifestyle choices show their long-term impacts on health. Analyzing health data across life stages allows for tailored strategies that improve quality of life and reduce healthcare costs by promoting preventive care and early intervention.

## Infant Mortality, 2023, Rate Per 1,000 Live Births<sup>9</sup>



In 2023, the rate per 1,000 of live births that died within the first 364 days of life in Walton County was 8.3, compared to Florida at 6.0.

## Infant Mortality, Rate Per 1,000 Live Births Trend, 2009-2023<sup>9</sup>



## Leading Causes of Death, Age Less Than 1-Year, 2014-2023<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Perinatal Period Conditions  
Congenital Malformations,  
Deformations and  
Chromosomal Abnormalities
- 2 Unintentional Injury



The Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties is a program dedicated to the health and wellbeing of local pregnant women, infants, fathers, and their families. The services in Walton County are provided by trained professionals known as Healthy Start Care Coordinators at the Florida Department of Health in Walton County. For more information, call 850-892-8015.

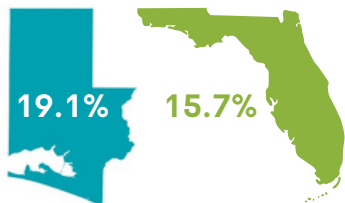
## Leading Causes of Death, Ages 2-9, 2014-2023<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Motor Vehicle Accidents
- 2 Drowning and Submersion

## Leading Causes of Death, Age 10-19, 2014-2023<sup>9</sup>

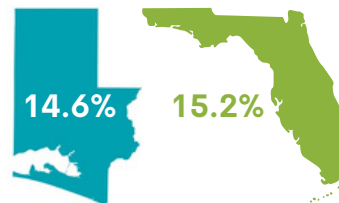
- 1 Suicide
- 2 Motor Vehicle Accidents

## Middle School Students Who Are Obese, 2024<sup>15</sup>



In 2024, in Walton County, 19.1% of middle school students were considered obese, compared to 15.7% statewide.

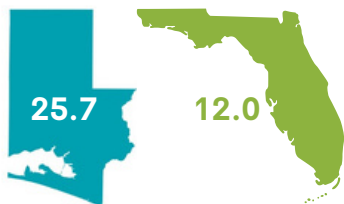
## High School Students Who Are Obese, 2022<sup>15</sup>



In 2024, in Walton County, 14.6% of high school students were considered obese, compared to 15.2% statewide.

**Note:** For children, obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) at the 95th percentile or higher. Percentiles indicate an individual's position relative to the reference population and are commonly used to assess children's growth patterns.

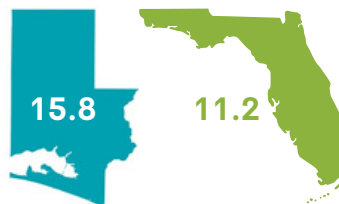
## Births by Mothers' Age, Age 15-19, 2024, Per 1,000 Female Population<sup>22</sup>



In 2023, the rate (per 1,000 female population) for births by mothers in Walton County that were age 15 to 19 was 22.9, compared to the statewide rate of 12.8. The rate of repeat births in Walton County for this age range was also higher than the statewide rate. Teen girls ages 15 to 19 in Walton County are twice as likely to have a baby than their counterparts statewide.

**Note:** Babies born to teenage mothers face increased risks of preterm delivery, low birth weight, and neonatal mortality. Adolescents may avoid prenatal care due to fear or embarrassment, causing increased low birth weight rates.

## Repeat Births by Mothers' Age, Age 15-19, 2024, Per 1,000 Female Population<sup>22</sup>



### Leading Causes of Death, Ages 20-45, 2023<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Unintentional Poisoning by Drugs and Biological Substances
- 2 Suicide
- 3 Motor Vehicle Accidents

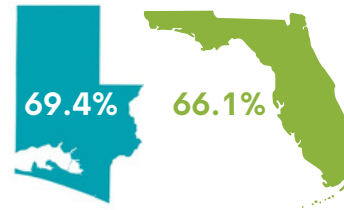
### Leading Causes of Death, Ages 45-64, 2023<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Malignant Neoplasm (Cancer)
- 2 Heart Diseases
- 3 Unintentional Poisoning by Drugs and Biological Substances

### Leading Causes of Death, Age 65 and Older, 2023<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Malignant Neoplasm (Cancer)
- 2 Heart Diseases
- 3 Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease

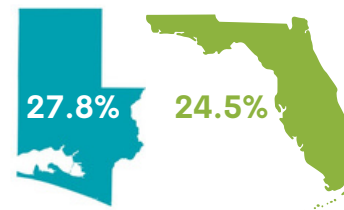
### Adults Who Are Overweight or Obese, 2022<sup>12</sup>



In 2022, in Walton County, 69.4% of adults were considered overweight or obese, compared to 66.1% statewide.

**Note:** For adults, overweight is considered a body mass index (BMI) of 25 to less than 30. Obesity is a BMI of 30 or more. BMI is one potential health indicator. It should be considered with other factors when assessing an individual's health. If you have questions about your BMI, talk with your health care provider.

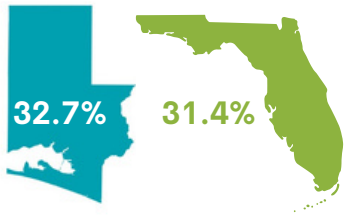
### Adults Who Are Sedentary, 2022<sup>12</sup>



In 2022, in Walton County, 27.8% of adults were considered to have a sedentary lifestyle, compared to 24.5% statewide.

**Note:** An inactive lifestyle means long hours sitting or lying down with little physical activity outside of your sleeping schedule. Sedentary hours also don't need to be consecutive to impact your health. Adults need at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week, such as 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Adults also need 2 days of muscle-strengthening activity each week. High amounts of sedentary behavior and low levels of physical activity have been linked to a variety of chronic diseases.

### Disability Status, Age 65 & Older, 2023<sup>3</sup>



In 2023, 32.7% of Walton County residents aged 65 and older had at least one disability, compared to 31.4% statewide.



**"The people of the community are by far our greatest resources. Lots of people retire here after very impressive careers. They share their time and talent with us and other community organizations as volunteers."**

-Community Leader

### Ambulatory Disability, Age 65 & Older<sup>3</sup>



### Cognitive Disability, Age 65 & Older<sup>3</sup>



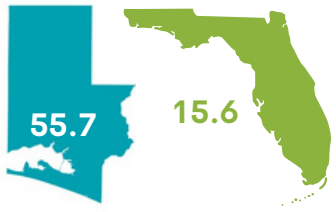
### Hearing Disability, Age 65 & Older<sup>3</sup>



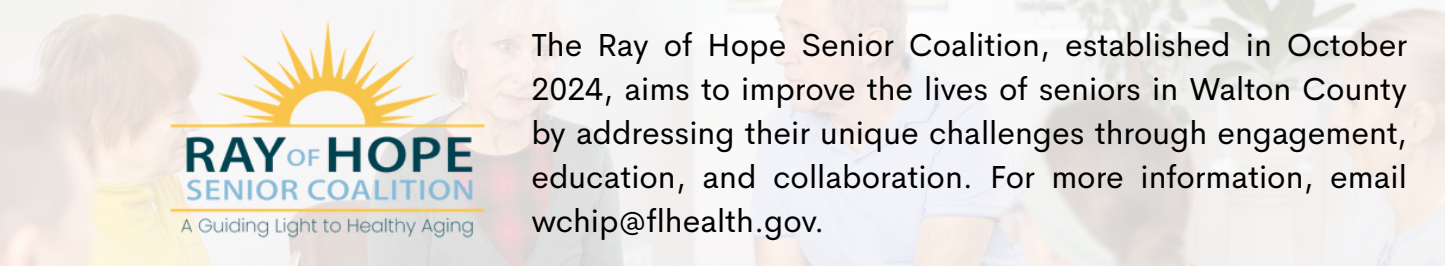
### Vision Disability, Age 65 & Older<sup>3</sup>



### Deaths from Alzheimer's Disease, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



In 2023, the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population of deaths from Alzheimer's disease in Walton County was 55.7, compared to Florida at 15.6. Walton County females (61.3) are more likely to die from Alzheimer's disease compared to their male counterparts (47.3).



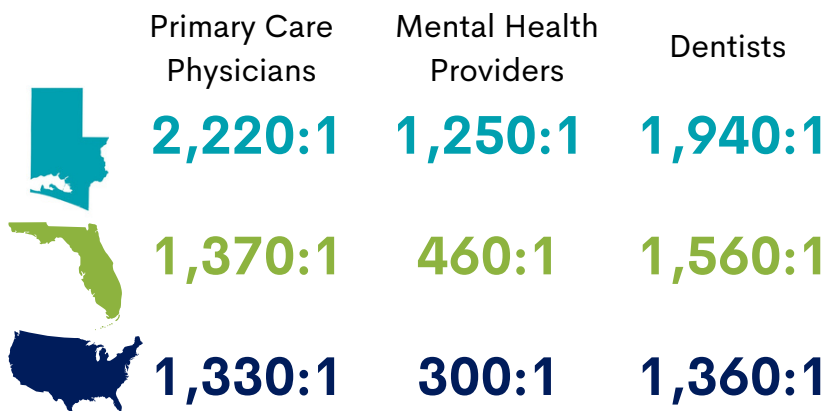
The Ray of Hope Senior Coalition, established in October 2024, aims to improve the lives of seniors in Walton County by addressing their unique challenges through engagement, education, and collaboration. For more information, email [wchip@flhealth.gov](mailto:wchip@flhealth.gov).



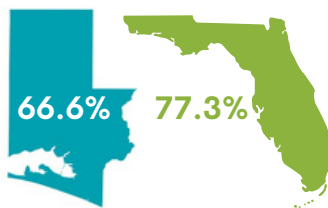
# ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Access to healthcare services is a cornerstone for fostering a healthy community. It ensures that individuals can receive timely medical attention, preventive care, and health education, which are essential for maintaining overall well-being. When communities have reliable access to healthcare, it reduces the prevalence of diseases, lowers mortality rates, and promotes a higher quality of life. Moreover, health services contribute to economic stability by keeping the population healthy and productive. In essence, a robust healthcare system not only supports individual health but also strengthens the social and economic fabric of the entire community.

## Health Care Provider Ratios Per Resident, 2025<sup>8</sup>

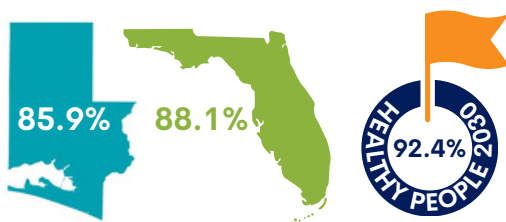


## Adults Who Had a Medical Checkup in the Past Year, 2022<sup>12</sup>



In 2022, 66.6% of Walton County adults had a medical checkup in the past year.

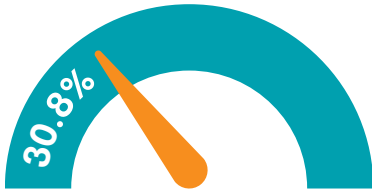
## Non-Institutionalized Civilians With Health Insurance, 2023<sup>3</sup>



In 2023, 85.9% of Walton County non-institutionalized residents had some type of health insurance, compared to 88.1% statewide.

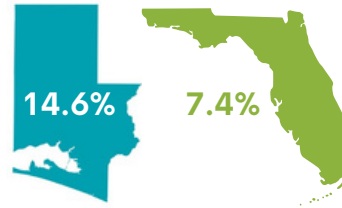
**"As the CEO of an organization, it would be close to impossible to improve healthcare in our area without being closely connected to the community."**

-Community Leader



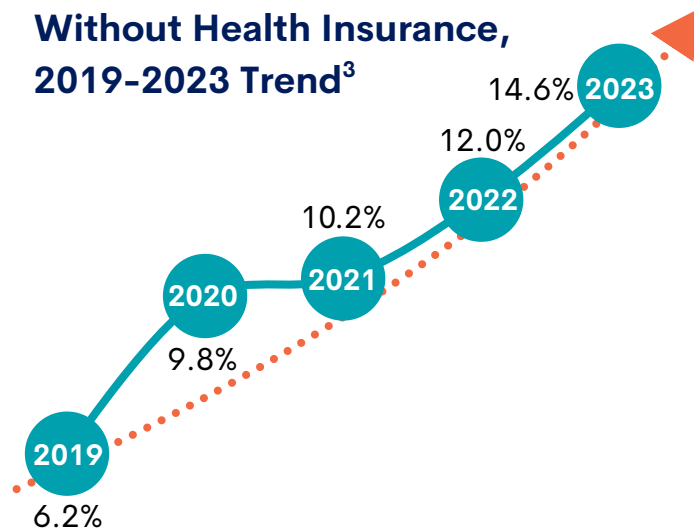
Only **30.8%** of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement they were **satisfied with the health care system in my community.**

### Children (Aged 0-18 years) Without Health Insurance, 2023<sup>3</sup>



In 2023, 14.6% of Walton County children did not have health insurance coverage.

### Children (Aged 0-18 years) Without Health Insurance, 2019-2023 Trend<sup>3</sup>



### FSU | FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY

In 2024, the Emerald Coast Family Medicine Residency Program started with six residents providing primary care alongside Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital and Walton Community Health Center. An additional six residents joined in 2025, and by 2026, the program will have 18 residents, improving primary care access in Walton County.

## Health Care Resources in Walton County

#### Hospitals:

Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital Emerald Coast  
North Walton Doctors Hospital

#### Federally Qualified Health Centers:

Walton Community Health Center  
Pancare of Florida

#### Free Clinics:

Point Washington Medical Clinic

#### Community Mental Health Provider:

Lakeview Center of Walton County

#### Emergency Medical Services & Fire Rescue:

Walton County Fire Rescue  
South Walton Fire District  
DeFuniak Springs Fire Department

#### Mobile Integrated Health:

Walton County Fire Rescue

#### Dental Clinics:

Walton Community Health Center  
LECOM Dental School



# SOCIAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Addressing social and mental health issues is essential for creating a resilient community. Prioritizing mental health fosters supportive environments, reduces stigma, and improves quality of life. Comprehensive mental health services are crucial for lowering disorder rates and equipping individuals to handle challenges. By nurturing mental well-being, communities enhance individual lives and build a stronger, cohesive society.

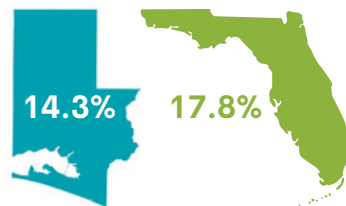
## Deaths From Suicide, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



In 2023, the age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population of deaths from suicide in Walton County was 26.4, compared to Florida at 14.1. Walton County males (40.1) are much more likely to die from a suicide compared to their female counterparts (12.9).

Firearms were the most common mechanism for suicide deaths, while drug poisoning was the most common mechanism for non-fatal intentional self-harm injuries.

## Adults Who Have Ever Been Told They Had a Depressive Disorder, 2022<sup>12</sup>



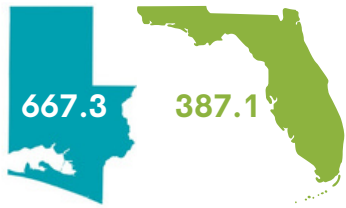
In 2022, in Walton County, 14.3% of adults reported that they have been told they had a depressive disorder. Walton County females are twice as likely to have been told they had a depressive disorder (21.3%) compared to their male counterparts (7.2%). Also, individuals with less than a high school education in Walton County are much more likely to have been told they had a depressive disorder (27.2%) compared to individuals with more than a high school education (9.1%).



If you need emotional support, reach out to the national mental health hotline: 988. Whether you're facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns, or just need someone to talk to, caring counselors are available to talk now by **calling 9-8-8** or **texting 9-8-8**.

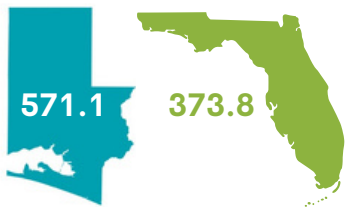
You are not alone.

### Children in Foster Care (Aged 5-11 Years), 2024, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>23</sup>



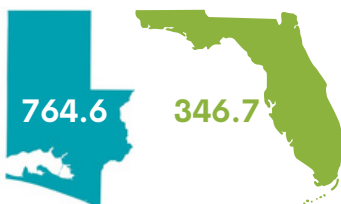
In 2024, the rate per 100,000 of children in foster care (aged 5-11 years) in Walton County was 667.3 compared to Florida at 387.1.

### Children in Foster Care (Aged 12-17 Years), 2024, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>23</sup>

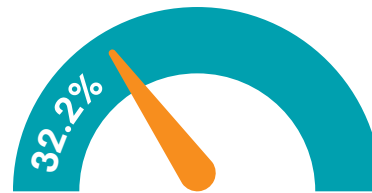


In 2024, the rate per 100,000 of children in foster care (aged 12-17 years) in Walton County was 571.1 compared to Florida at 373.8.

### Children Experiencing Child Abuse (Aged 5-11 Years), 2024, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>23</sup>

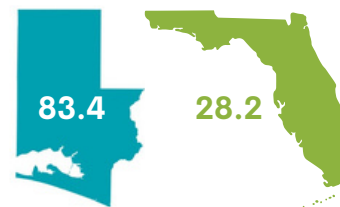


In 2024, the rate per 100,000 of children experiencing child abuse (aged 5-11 years) in Walton County was 764.6 compared to Florida at 346.7.



Only 32.2% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that **there are support systems/resources for myself and my family during times of stress and need.**

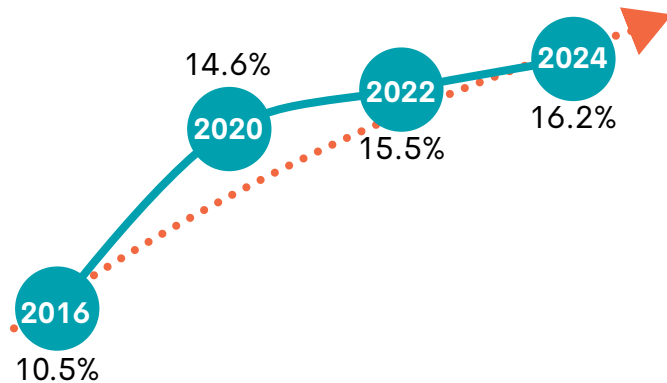
### Children Experiencing Sexual Violence (Aged 5-11 Years), 2024, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>23</sup>



In 2024, the rate per 100,000 of children experiencing sexual violence (aged 5-11 Years) in Walton County was 83.4 compared to Florida at 28.2.



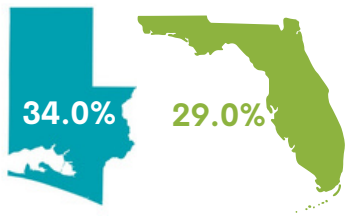
## Students Who, in the Past Year, Did Something to Purposely Hurt Themselves Without Wanting to Die, 2019-2023 Trend<sup>24</sup>



If you need emotional support, reach out to the national mental health hotline: 988. Whether you're facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns, or just need someone to talk to, caring counselors are available to talk now by **calling 9-8-8** or **texting 9-8-8**.

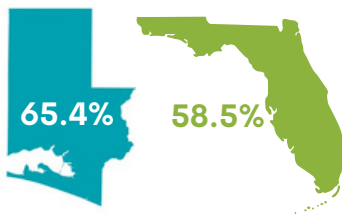
You are not alone.

## Students Who Have Ever Been the Victim of Cyber-Bullying, 2024<sup>24</sup>



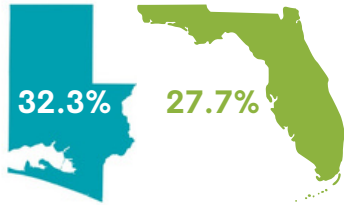
In 2024, 34.0% of students in Walton County reported that have been a victim of cyber-bullying, compared to 29.0% statewide. Female students (40.5%) in Walton County are more likely to experience cyber-bullying compared to their male counterpart (27.7%).

## Students Who Have Been Taunted, Teased, Experienced Name-Calling or Been Excluded or Ignored by Others in a Mean Way, 2024<sup>24</sup>



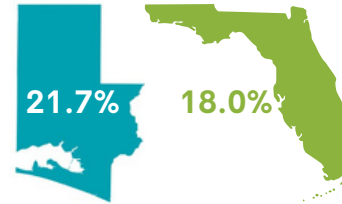
In 2024, 65.4% of students in Walton County reported they have been taunted, teased, experienced name-calling or been excluded or ignored by others in a mean way, compared to 58.5% statewide. Female students (70.5%) in Walton County are more likely to experience cyber-bullying compared to their male counterpart (60.4%).

## High School Students Who Experienced Mental Illness in Their Household, 2024<sup>24</sup>



In 2024, 32.3% of the high school students in Walton County had experienced someone in their household having mental illness, compared to 27.7% statewide.

## High School Students Who Have Experienced at Least One Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), 2024<sup>24</sup>

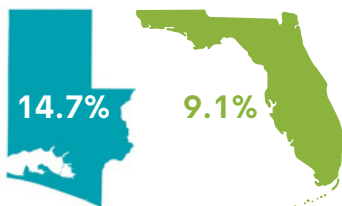


In 2024, 21.7% of the high school students in Walton County had experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), compared to 18% statewide.

### What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

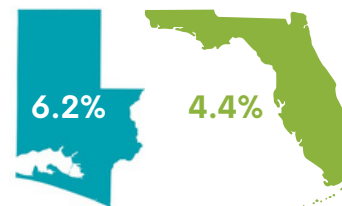
Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events occurring before age 18, including various forms of abuse and household challenges like domestic violence and parental separation. ACEs can have lasting effects on physical and mental health, correlating with increased risks of chronic health issues, mental illness, and substance abuse in adulthood. Understanding ACEs is essential for creating interventions that mitigate their impact, emphasizing the need for early support and community awareness to help individuals overcome these challenges.

## High School Students Who Have Ever Blacked Out, 2024<sup>24</sup>



In 2024, 14.7% of the High School Students in Walton County have experienced a "blacked out" from alcohol consumption, compared to 9.1% statewide.

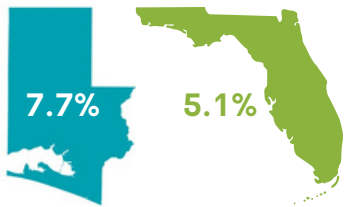
## Students Who Engaged in Binge Drinking, 2024<sup>24</sup>



In 2024, 6.2% of the students in Walton County have engaged in binge drinking, compared to 4.4% statewide.

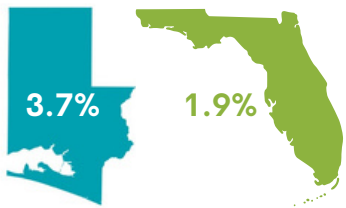
# SUBSTANCE USE

Addressing substance use is crucial for fostering a resilient community, as it significantly impacts overall well-being and interpersonal interactions. By prioritizing substance use issues, communities can provide support, reduce stigma, and improve quality of life. Comprehensive prevention and treatment services are essential to lessen substance-related health problems and equip individuals with necessary resources. Focusing on substance use and health enhances individual lives and strengthens societal cohesion.



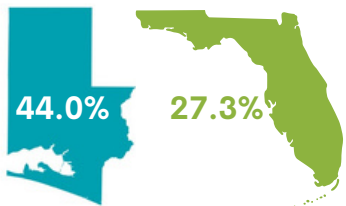
## High School Students Who First Smoked Marijuana at Age 13 or Younger, 2024<sup>24</sup>

In 2024, 7.7% of the high school students in Walton County stated that they first smoked marijuana at age 13 or younger, compared to 5.1% statewide.



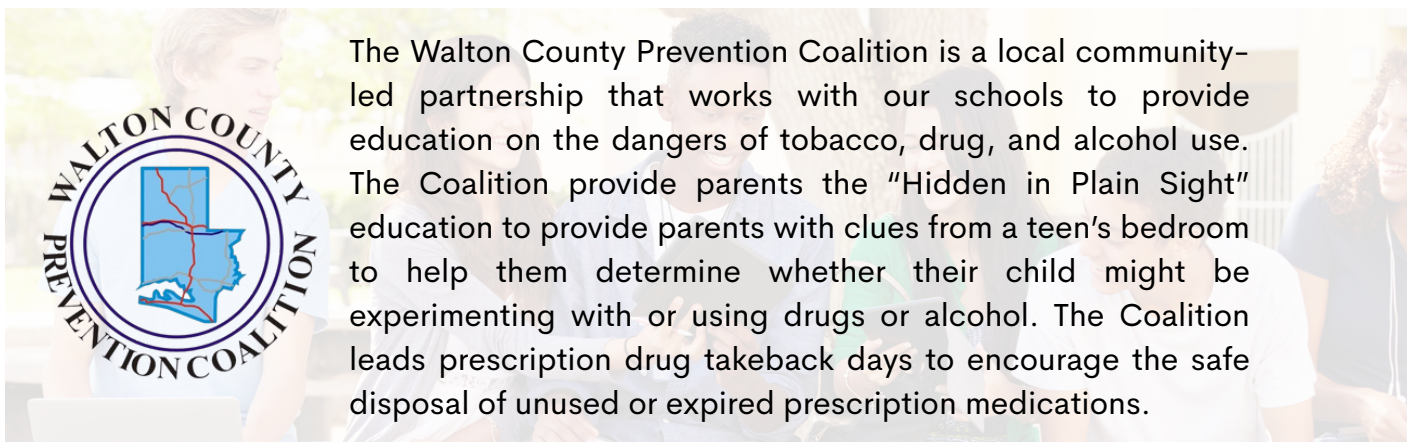
## High School Students Who Have Ever Used Synthetic Marijuana<sup>24</sup>

In 2024, 3.7% of the high school students in Walton County stated that they have used synthetic marijuana, compared to 1.9% statewide.



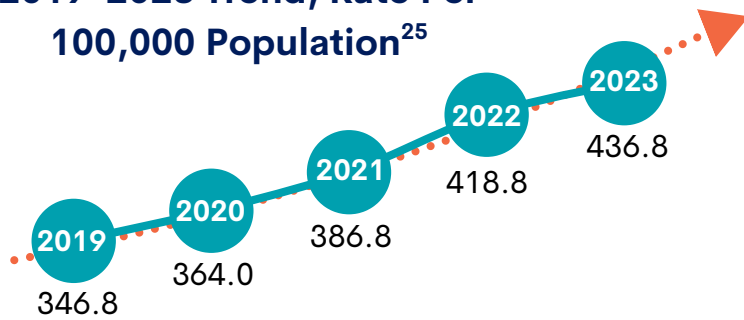
## High School Students Who Have Heard of Delta-8 THC or Delta-10 THC, 2024<sup>24</sup>

In 2024, 44% of the high school students in Walton County have heard of Delta-8 THC or Delta-10 THC, compared to 27.3% statewide.



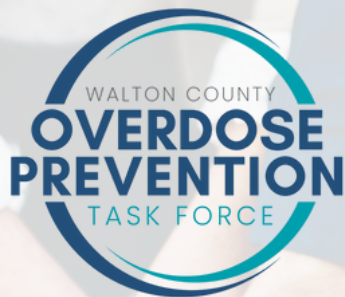
The Walton County Prevention Coalition is a local community-led partnership that works with our schools to provide education on the dangers of tobacco, drug, and alcohol use. The Coalition provide parents the "Hidden in Plain Sight" education to provide parents with clues from a teen's bedroom to help them determine whether their child might be experimenting with or using drugs or alcohol. The Coalition leads prescription drug takeback days to encourage the safe disposal of unused or expired prescription medications.

## Annual Drug Arrests, 2019-2023 Trend, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>25</sup>



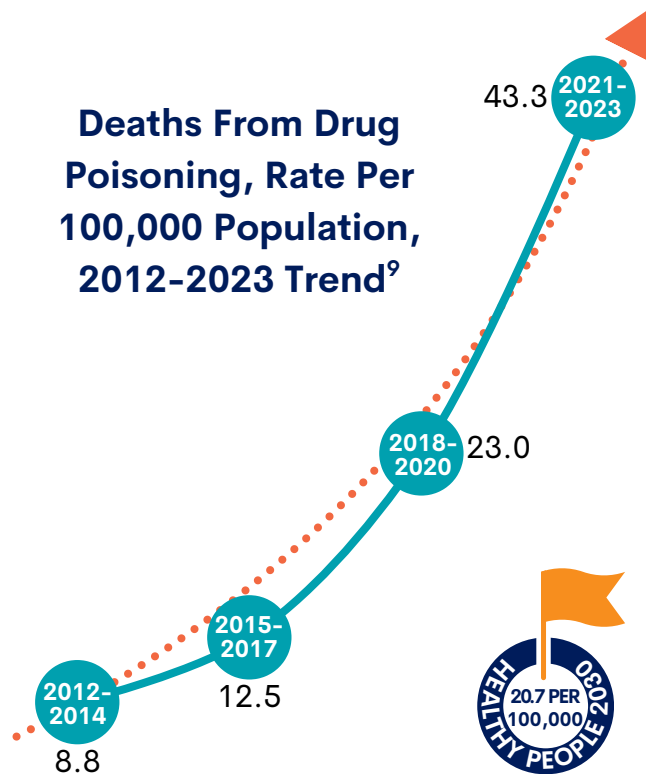
# 79%

of emergency department (ED) visits from non-fatal intentional self-harm injuries due to drug poisoning in Walton County were children under the age of 18 years old.



In November 2024, the Walton County Overdose Prevention Task Force was formed to reduce overdoses through education, prevention, and intervention services. As part of the Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership (WCHIP), it focuses on evidence-based practices such as Naloxone distribution and training, medication-assisted treatment, overdose response support, community prevention programs, and mental health first aid training.

## Deaths From Drug Poisoning, Rate Per 100,000 Population, 2012-2023 Trend<sup>9</sup>



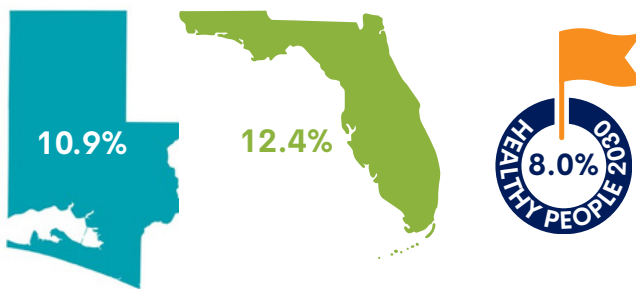
Find free naloxone kits near you by scanning the QR code with your phone. Having naloxone can help prevent an opioid overdose and save someone's life.



# EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMIC STABILITY

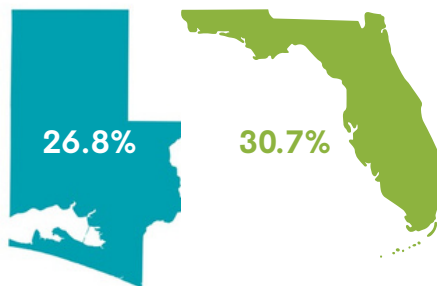
Employment and economic stability are vital contributors to individual and community health. When people have access to steady employment and financial resources, they are better positioned to meet their basic needs, access healthcare, and maintain healthy lifestyles. Economic stability supports long-term planning, reduces stress, and enables individuals to participate more fully in their communities. Employment also fosters a sense of purpose and connection, which can positively influence mental and emotional well-being. Promoting opportunities for stable work and financial security helps build stronger, healthier communities overall.

## Individuals Living in Poverty, 2023<sup>3</sup>

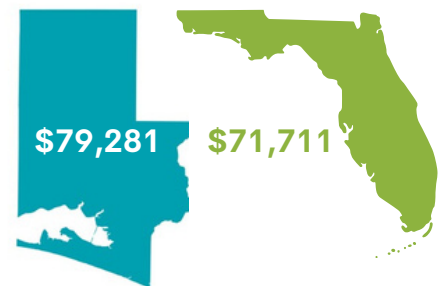


Only **29.9%** of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement **there is economic opportunity in my community.**

## Individuals Below 200% of Poverty Level, 2023<sup>3</sup>



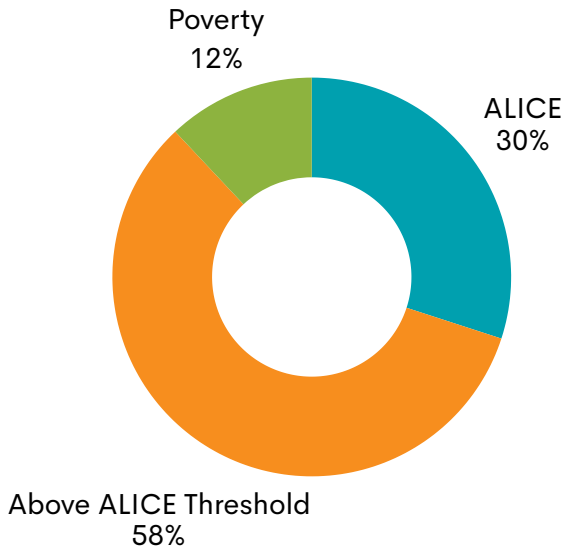
## Median Household Income, 2023<sup>3</sup>



**Note:** The Federal Poverty Level is a measure used to determine eligibility for various government assistance programs. The guidelines are updated annually and are based on household size. Here are the key figures for 2025:

- Individual: \$15,650 annually (\$1,304.17 monthly)
- Family of 2: \$21,150 annually (\$1,762.50 monthly)
- Family of 4: \$32,150 annually (\$2,679.17 monthly)

## ALICE in Walton County, 2023<sup>26</sup>

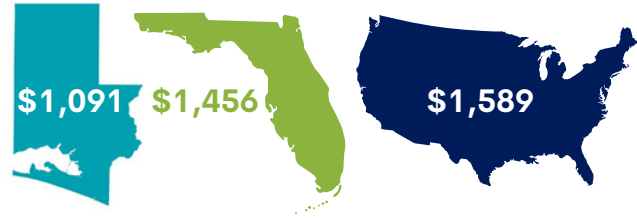


### What is ALICE?

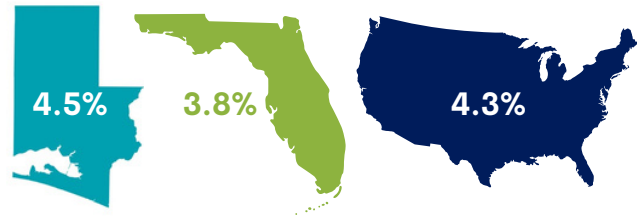
**ALICE** is an acronym that stands for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed. It is a term that is used to describe individuals and families who are above the federal poverty level but are still experiencing financial hardship. Despite current employment, those who are ALICE often cannot afford basic living expenses such as housing, food, health care, and other basic necessities.

**Note:** The number of ALICE households in Walton County varies by county subdivision, with DeFuniak Springs having the highest percentage of households below the ALICE threshold. The majority of ALICE families are single-parent households with children.

## Average Weekly Wages, Q1 of 2025<sup>27</sup>



## Unemployment Rate, August 2025<sup>27</sup>



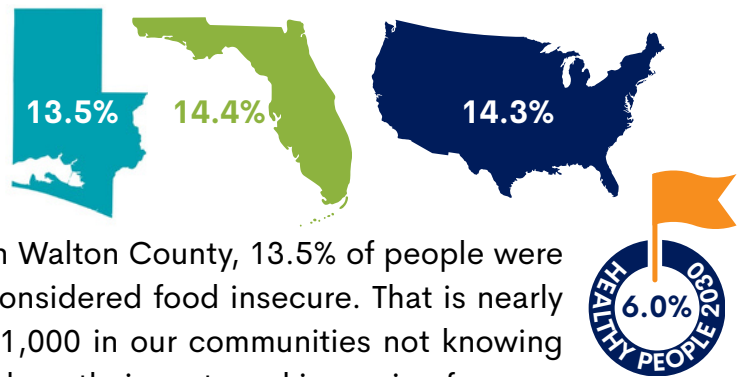
## Most Popular Job Industries in Walton County, 2024<sup>27</sup>

Industry	Average Annual Wage	
	Walton	Florida
1 Leisure and Hospitality	\$39,172	\$37,261
2 Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$45,330	\$61,291
3 Professional & Business Services	\$76,364	\$87,036
4 Government	\$64,172	\$71,045
5 Construction	\$63,723	\$70,271

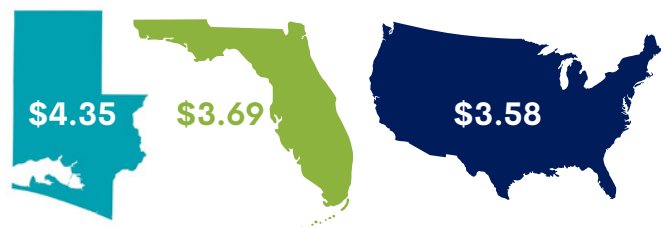
## What is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity is when a household lacks consistent access to enough food because of limited money and resources—often linked to income, costs, healthcare access, community conditions, and barriers to opportunity. People most at-risk for food insecurity are children, households with low incomes, immigrant communities, people with disabilities, people in rural areas, older adults, people who are formerly incarcerated, and single-parent households.

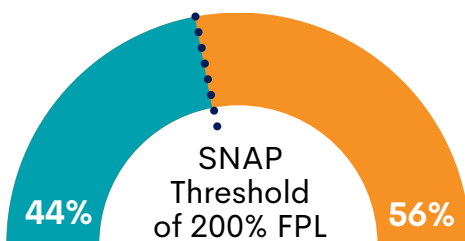
## Food Insecurity Rate, 2023<sup>28</sup>



## Average Meal Cost, 2023<sup>28</sup>



## Estimated Program Eligibility Among Food Insecure People in Walton County<sup>28</sup>



In Walton County, 56% of individuals that are considered food insecure do not qualify for food assistance through the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Program.

## Percent of Students of Public Schools Eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch, 2024<sup>29</sup>

	WALTON	FLORIDA
Pre-Kindergarten	42.3%	60.6%
Kindergarten	56.7%	55.4%
Elementary	55.0%	53.8%
Middle School	50.5%	50.5%

In 2024, the public schools in Walton County with the highest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch included Maude Saunders Elementary School at 83%, Mossy Head Elementary School at 84%, Walton Academy at 79%, WISE Center at 76%, and Walton Middle School also at 76%.

**“Too many local families struggle to provide basic necessities for living. They live paycheck-to-paycheck, and even an unexpected small emergency could majorly disrupt their ability to feed their children.”**

-Community Leader

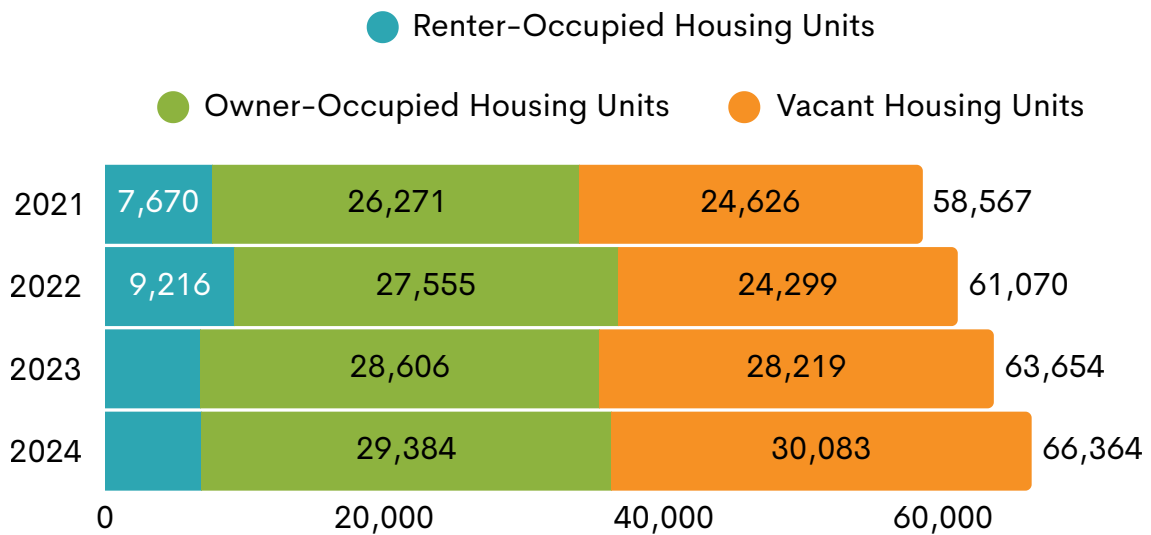
### Cost of Childcare, 2024<sup>30</sup>

TYPE OF CHILDCARE	WALTON	FLORIDA
Median cost of <i>infant center-based</i> childcare	\$11,534	\$11,651
<i>Infant center-based</i> childcare price as share of median family income	11.3%	13.4%
Median cost of <i>infant home-based</i> childcare	\$8,881	\$9,783
<i>Infant home-based</i> childcare price as share of median family income	8.7%	11.3%
Median cost of <i>toddler center-based</i> childcare	\$9,804	\$9,422
<i>Toddler center-based</i> childcare price as share of median family income	9.6%	11.1%
Median cost of <i>toddler home-based</i> childcare	\$8,074	\$8,516
<i>Toddler home-based</i> childcare price as share of median family income	7.9%	9.7%
Median cost of <i>preschool center-based</i> childcare	\$9,227	\$8,739
<i>Preschool center-based</i> childcare price as share of median family income	9.0%	10.3%
Median cost of <i>preschool home-based</i> childcare	\$7,990	\$8,154
<i>Preschool home-based</i> childcare price as share of median family income	7.8%	9.3%
Median cost of <i>school-age center-based</i> childcare	\$8,650	\$6,716
<i>School-age center-based</i> childcare price as share of median family income	8.5%	7.9%

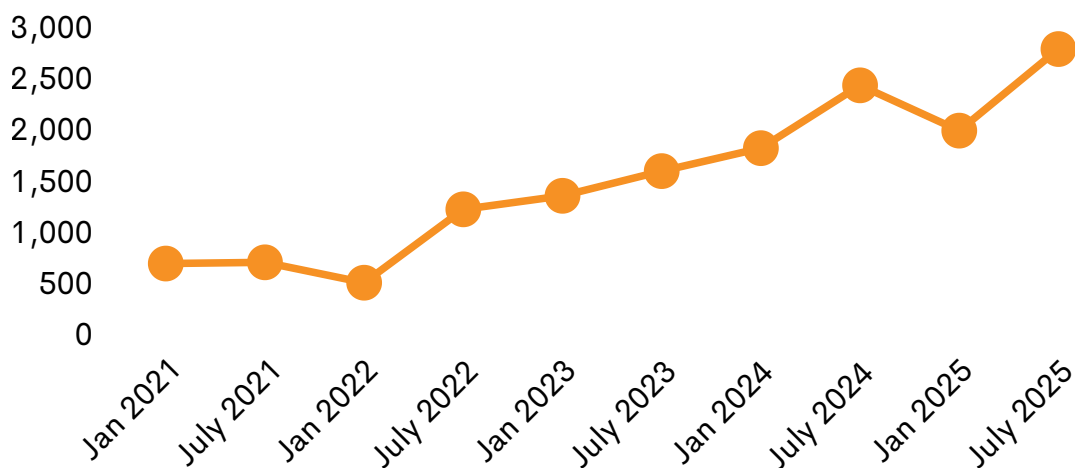
# HOUSING & LIVING CONDITIONS

A stable and supportive living environment is a key building block for good health. When individuals and families have access to housing that meets their needs, it creates a strong foundation for personal and community well-being. Quality housing contributes to a sense of security, supports healthy routines, and encourages long-term stability. It also plays a role in other factors like education, employment, and social support—all of which drive health. Fostering healthy living conditions helps strengthen the overall resilience and wellness of a community.

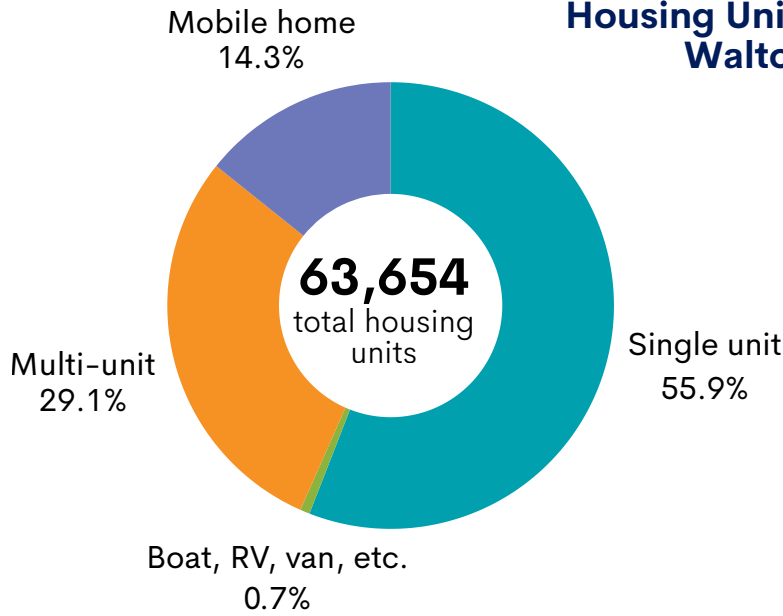
## Estimated Number of Housing Units in Walton County, 2021-2024<sup>3</sup>



## Housing Inventory: Active Listing Count, Walton County, 2021-2025<sup>37</sup>



### Housing Units, Types of Structures, Walton County, 2024<sup>3</sup>



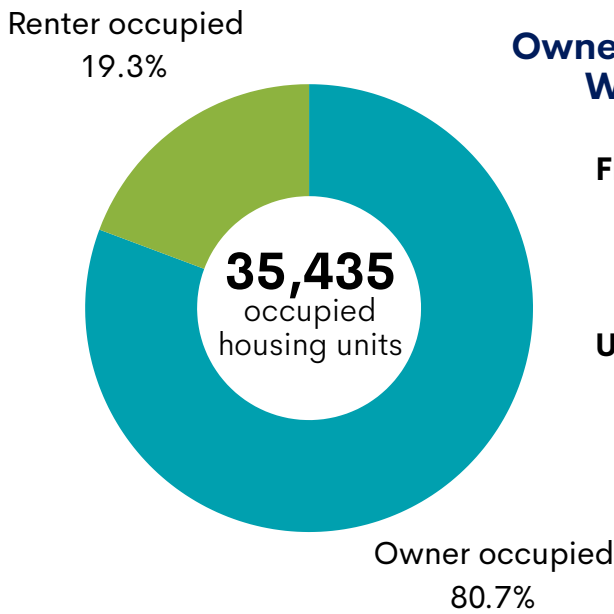
#### Florida:

- Single unit: 61.4%
- Multi-unit: 30.5%
- Mobile home: 7.9%
- Boat, RV, van, etc.: 0.2%

#### United States

- Single unit: 67.4%
- Multi-unit: 26.9%
- Mobile home: 5.5%
- Boat, RV, van, etc.: 0.1%

### Ownership of Occupied Units, Walton County, 2024<sup>3</sup>



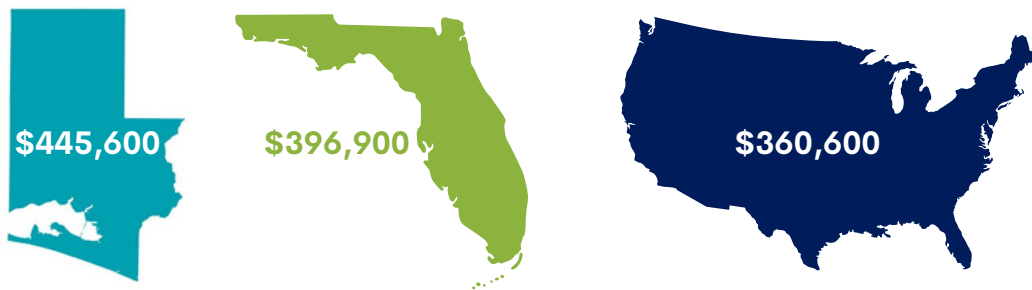
#### Florida:

- Renter occupied: 31.9%
- Owner occupied: 68.1%

#### United States

- Renter occupied: 34.8%
- Owner occupied: 65.2%

### Median Value (Dollars) of Owner-Occupied Housing Units, 2024<sup>3</sup>

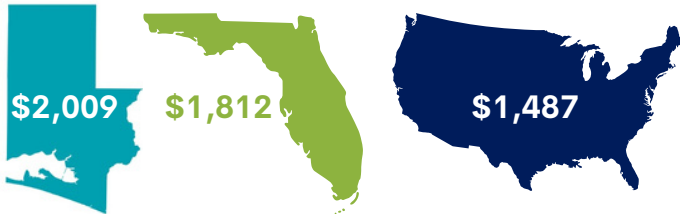


## Mortgage Status of Owner-Occupied Units, Walton County, 2024<sup>3</sup>

**58.8%**  
With Mortgage

**41.2%**  
Without Mortgage

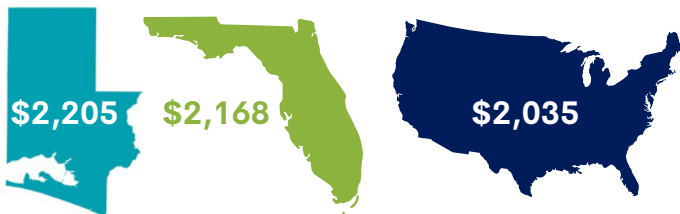
### Median (Dollars) for Occupied Units Paying Rent, 2024<sup>3</sup>



**67.7%**

of renters in Walton County pay 30% or more of their household income on housing costs.

### Median (Dollars) Monthly Owner Costs for Housing Units with a Mortgage, 2024<sup>3</sup>



**36.0%**

of owners that have mortgage in Walton County pay 30% or more of their household income on housing costs.

### Median (Dollars) Monthly Owner Costs for Housing Units without a Mortgage, 2024<sup>3</sup>



**14.0%**

of owners without a mortgage in Walton County pay 30% or more of their household income on housing costs.

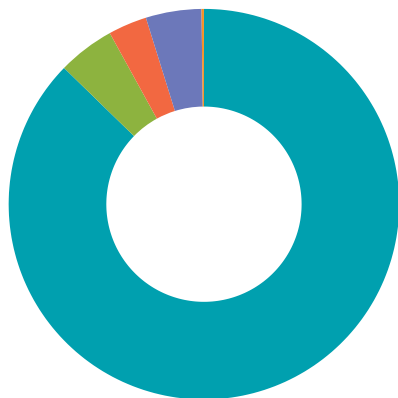
When 30% or more of household income is allocated to housing, it typically crosses the threshold measured to create financial strain and limit a family's ability to cover other essential expenses. This high percentage reduces disposable income, making it challenging to save for emergencies, retirement, or invest in education. It can also increase stress levels and impact overall well-being, as families may struggle to afford necessities like food, healthcare, and transportation. Furthermore, in the long term, consistently spending such a significant portion of income on housing can hinder financial growth and stability, trapping families in a cycle of economic vulnerability.

**“We need a homeless shelter, cold weather shelters, transitional housing, and more resources to support individuals and families facing homelessness in Walton County.”**

-Community Leader

When 30% or more of household income is allocated to housing, it typically crosses the threshold measured to create financial strain and limit a family’s ability to cover other essential expenses. This high percentage reduces disposable income, making it challenging to save for emergencies, retirement, or invest in education. It can also increase stress levels and impact overall well-being, as families may struggle to afford necessities like food, healthcare, and transportation. Furthermore, in the long term, consistently spending such a significant portion of income on housing can hinder financial growth and stability, trapping families in a cycle of economic vulnerability.

### Geographical Mobility in the Past Year, Walton County, 2023<sup>3</sup>



- Same house year ago (87.2%)
- From same county (4.7%)
- From different county (3.2%)
- From different state (4.6%)
- From abroad (0.2%)

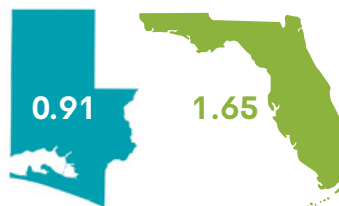
**12.8%**

of residents in Walton County moved since the previous year<sup>3</sup>.

**63**

individuals were identified as homeless during the 2025 Point-in-Time Count that was completed by the Okaloosa Walton Continuum of Care<sup>38</sup>.

### Personal Bankruptcy Filing Rate, Per 1,000 Population, 2025<sup>3</sup>



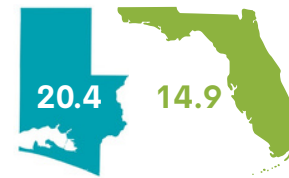
# PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & SAFETY

Public infrastructure and community safety are essential components of a healthy and thriving community. Well-planned infrastructure—such as transportation systems, utilities, public spaces, and communication networks—supports daily life, promotes physical activity, and enhances access to essential services. A strong sense of safety within neighborhoods encourages social connection, outdoor engagement, and overall well-being. Together, these elements create environments where individuals and families can live, work, and grow in ways that support long-term health and quality of life.

## Motor Vehicle Crashes in Walton County, 2023-2024<sup>31</sup>

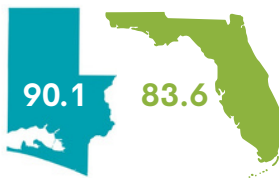
Type of Crash	2023	2024
All Crashes	1,600	1,557
Total Fatalities From All Crashes	21	26
Total Injuries From All Crashes	1,049	1,079
Bicycle Crashes	25	31
Bicycle Fatalities	2	1
Motorcycle Crashes	45	48
Motorcycle Fatalities	4	3
Pedestrian Crashes	21	25
Pedestrian Fatalities	3	3
Hit and Run Crashes	292	296
Hit and Run Fatalities	3	2
Hit in Run Injuries	53	61

## Deaths from Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>9</sup>



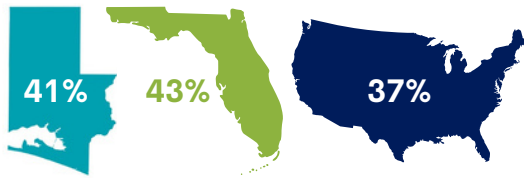
In 2023, the age-adjusted rate (per 100,000 population) of deaths from motor vehicle traffic crashes in Walton County was 20.4, compared to Florida at 14.9.

## Hospitalizations from Motor Vehicle Accidents, 2024, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>32</sup>



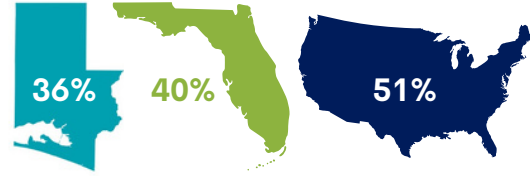
In 2024, the age-adjusted rate (per 100,000 population) of hospitalizations from motor vehicle traffic crashes in Walton County was 90.1, compared to Florida at 83.6.

## Long Commute for Individuals Driving Alone to Work, 2019-2023<sup>8</sup>



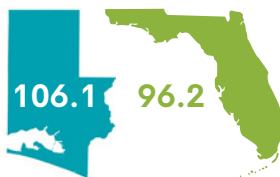
**Definition:** Among workers who commute in their car alone, this is the percentage that commute more than 30 minutes.

## Access to Parks, 2024<sup>39</sup>



**Definition:** Percentage of the population living within a half mile of a park.

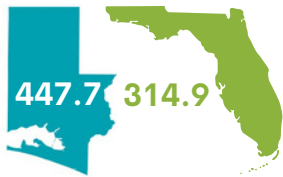
## Burglary Crimes, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>33</sup>



In 2023, the rate per 100,000 of burglary crimes in Walton County was 106.1, compared to Florida at 96.2.

**Definition:** Burglary is unlawful entry into a building or other structure with the intent to commit a felony or theft. For crime reporting purposes, if there is apparent unlawful entry but the offender did not complete the act, it is still reported as a burglary.

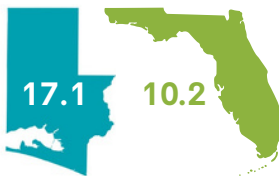
## Domestic Violence Offenses, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>34</sup>



In 2023, the rate per 100,000 of domestic violence offenses in Walton County was 447.7, compared to Florida at 314.9.

**Definition:** Domestic violence is any criminal homicide, manslaughter, rape (includes forcible sodomy), fondling, aggravated assault, aggravated stalking, simple assault, threat/intimidation, or simple stalking of one family or household member by another family or household member.

## Forcible Sex Offenses, 2023, Rate Per 100,000 Population<sup>35</sup>



In 2023, the rate per 100,000 of forcible sex offenses in Walton County was 17.1 compared to Florida at 10.2.

**Definition:** Any sexual act or attempt involving force is classified as a forcible sex offense regardless of the age of the victim or the relationship of the victim to the offender.

# COMMUNITY PARTNER ASSESSMENT

# OVERVIEW

The 2025 Community Partner Assessment (CPA) survey, built on the MAPP 2.0 framework, replaces the previous Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA) by WCHIP. It evaluates community partners' roles in health and well-being beyond the 10 Essential Public Health Services, making it relevant to a wider audience. Conducted via SurveyMonkey from March 24 to April 21, 2025, the survey received 30 responses from 25 diverse organizations in Walton County.

## Summary of Findings:

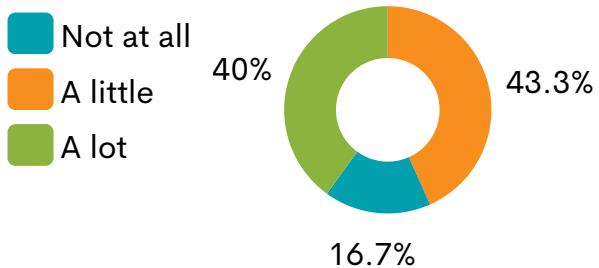
- Nearly all organizations engage in community-led decision-making and health improvement.
- Key reasons for joining partnerships: effective program delivery, improved communication, and community initiatives.
- Shared resources include staff time, relationship-building, policy skills, social media, and meeting spaces.
- Focus areas include healthcare access and quality, economic stability, and education.
- Common categories of work: family well-being, housing, education, and public health.
- Public health focus areas: community engagement, partnerships, communication, and education.
- Many organizations conduct needs assessments.
- Organizations have skills in assessments, interviewing, and survey design/analysis.

## Areas of Focus

Organizations were asked how much they focus on a variety of topics, including: economic stability, education access and services, healthcare access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social community context. The most regularly focused topic area was economic stability, followed by healthcare access. The least focused on topic was neighborhood and built environment. More information on the next page.

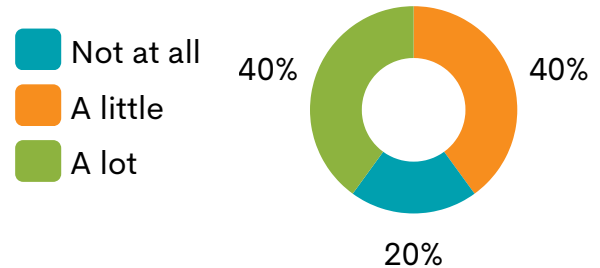


## Economic Stability



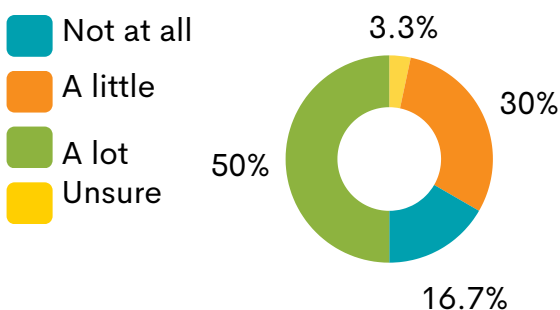
The connection between people's financial resources and their health. This includes issues such as: poverty, employment, food security, and housing stability.

## Education Access & Services



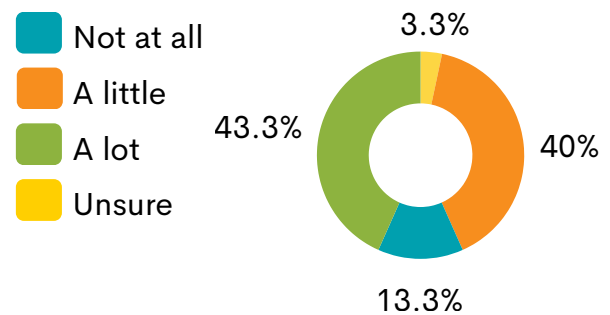
The link between education and health includes high school graduation, overall educational attainment, language and literacy, and early childhood education and development.

## Healthcare Access & Quality



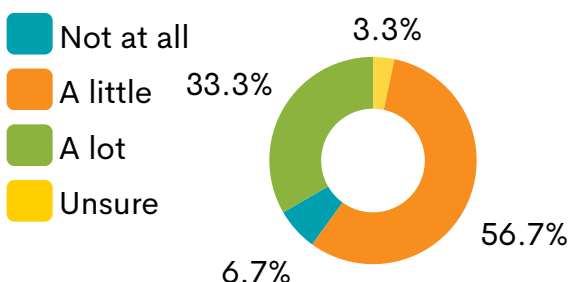
The relationship between access to health services and personal health encompasses issues like healthcare access, primary care availability, health insurance coverage, and health literacy.

## Social & Community Context



People's living, learning, working, and playing contexts related to their health and well-being includes factors like community cohesion, workplace conditions, violence, and incarceration.

## Neighborhood & Built Environment

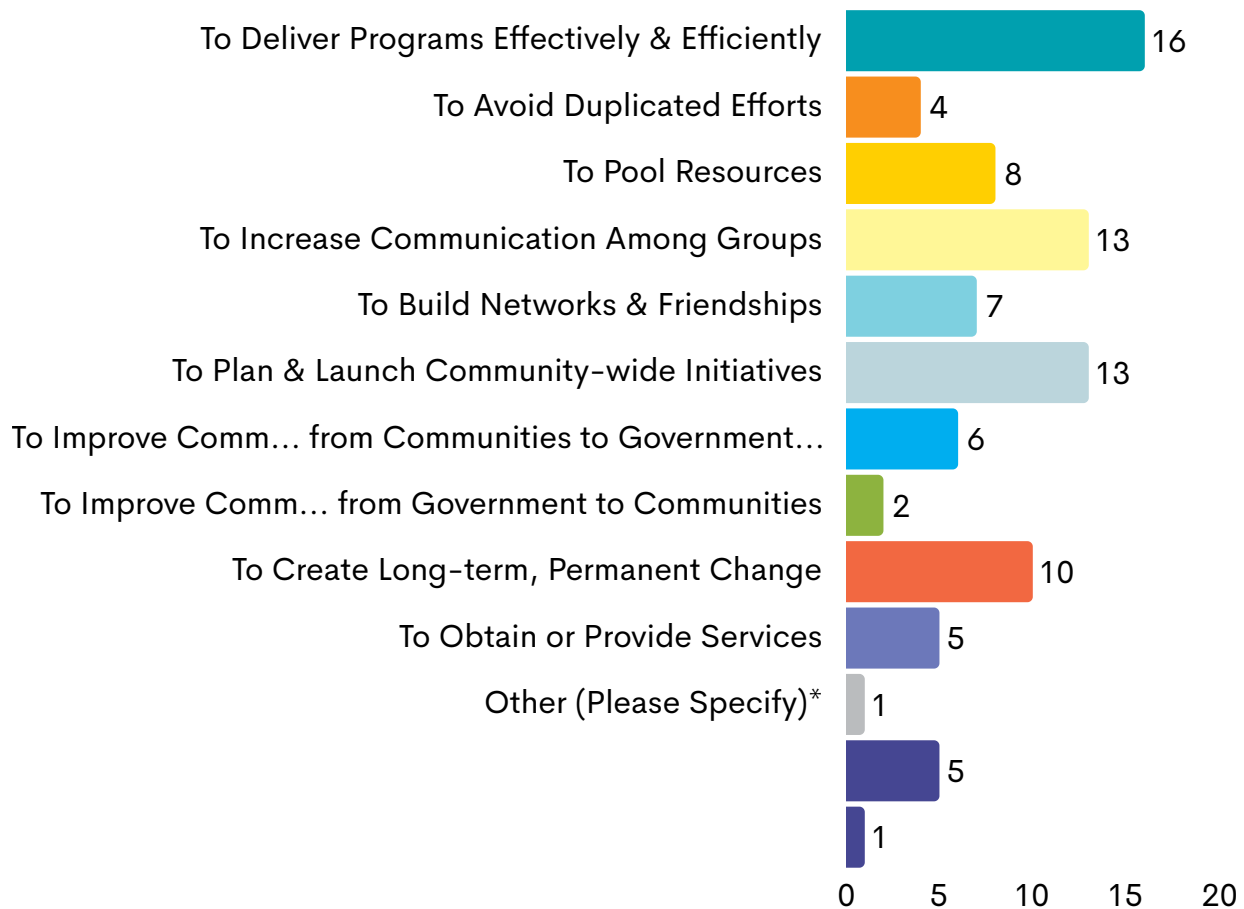


The interplay between a person's living conditions—such as housing, neighborhood, and environment—and their health includes factors like housing quality, transportation access, availability of healthy foods, and air and water quality.

# COLLABORATION & RESOURCES

Nearly all organizations noted previous participation in community-led decision-making processes around policies, actions, or programs (20), with the same number stating that they have participated in a community health improvement process before (20). Organizations were asked to select their top three reasons why they were interested in joining WCHIP; the most prevalent responses were to deliver programs effectively and efficiently (16), to increase communication among groups (13), and to plan and launch community-wide initiatives (13). No respondents selected *“to break down stereotypes”* or *“to revitalize low energy of groups who are trying to do too much alone”*.

## Top Three Interests in Joining a Community Health Partnership:



\*One respondent specified *“to help those that need help”* was an interest in joining a Community Health Partnership.



# ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES

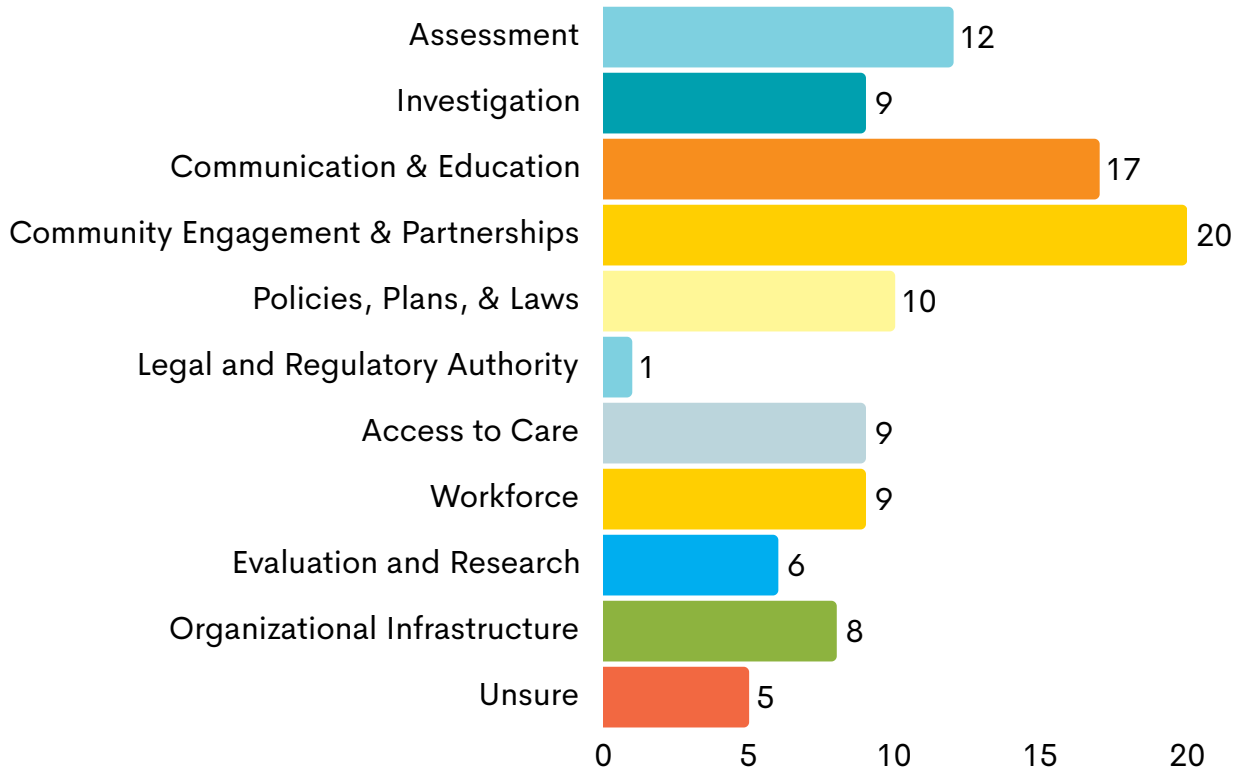
The next series of questions partners were asked related to their ability to support activities that align with the 10 Essential Public Health Services. The 10 Essential Public Health Services describe the framework of public health activities that communities should utilize to promote the health of all people. These services are:

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

The chart on the next page depicts how regularly organizations work on the 10 Essential Services of Public Health. The most prevalent areas were Community Engagement and Partnerships (19) and Communication and Education (17). Organizations' ways of engaging with the community often come in the form of surveys, social media, presentations, and community forums or events. Many of the HMAc partners have conducted needs assessments, such as basic needs, community health, and neighborhood assessments (13), and nine of those partners can share or are already sharing that information with the MAPP collaborative. HMAc organizations also share a wide range of skill sets that can help further the work of the CHIP, such as assessments (11), interviewing (8), and survey design/analysis (8).



## 10 Essential Public Health Services:

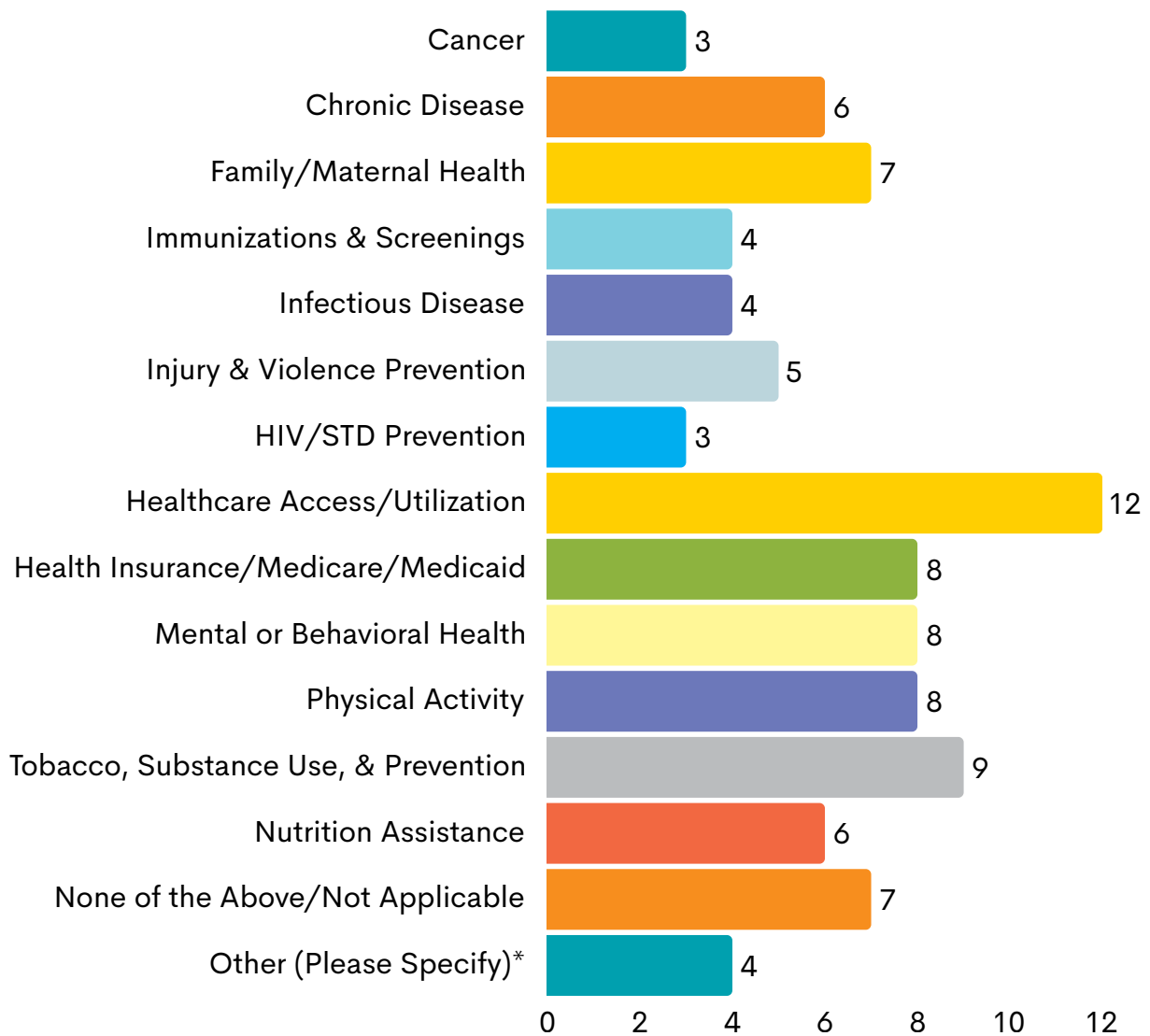


Respondents also identified the following as core competencies or strengths of their organization:

- Assessing factors that lead to preterm births, low birthweight, along with infant and maternal mortality rates
- Team member engagement
- Supporting individuals in recovery
- Highly skilled and compassionate nursing and aide staff
- Providing meals to seniors in a social setting
- Implementing community initiatives
- A team approach to patient, family care, and support to include social worker and chaplain services
- Case management
- Highly focused on educating the public on available (free or insurance covered) home health services of ALL types
- Teaching, empowering, and mentoring fathers in skills that benefit their families
- Fostering spiritual renewal

Partners were also asked which health topics they work on. Similarly to the categories question, all health topics are covered by the organizations. The most predominant health topics covered are health access/utilization (12), tobacco, substance, and prevention (9), health insurance/Medicaid/Medicare (8), mental or behavioral health (8), and physical activity (8).

### Health Topics that Organizations Work On:

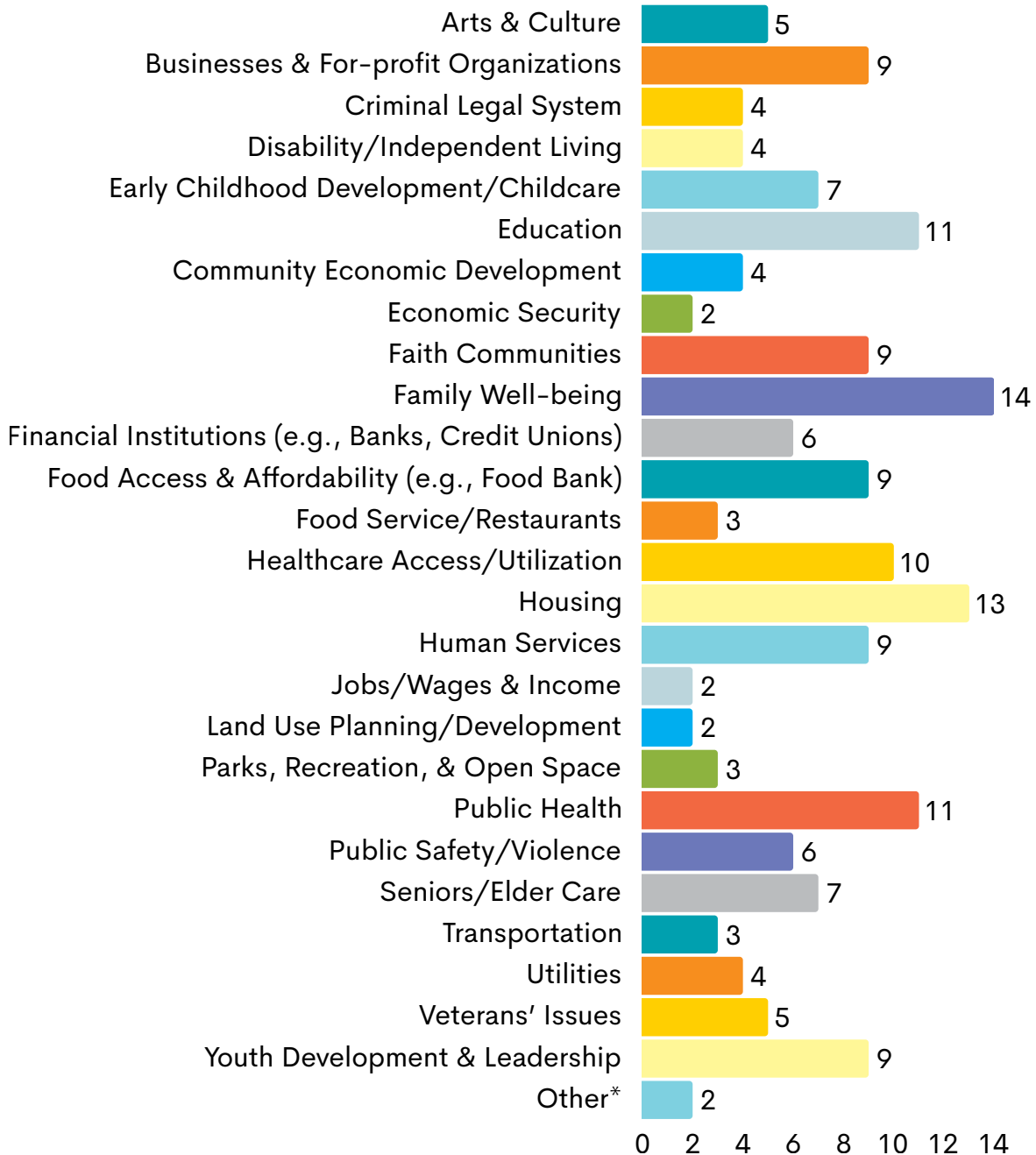


\*Respondents specified "housing for all", "nutrition", "referrals to the appropriate agencies for all of the above but does not provide direct client assistance other than screenings through the Coordinated Entry System", and "safe sleep spaces" were being worked on by their organizations.



When asked what categories organizations work on or with, there was representation within each category listed with the highest being: family well-being (14), housing (13), education (11), and public health (11).

### Specific Community Issues Worked on by Organizations:



\*Respondents specified "natural and environmental areas in state parks" and "law Enforcement agencies and school resource officers" were being worked on by their organizations.

# CONCLUSION

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## CHA Steering Committee

Jill Breslawski  
*UF IFAS Extension Office*

Doris Bontrager  
*Florida Department of Health in Walton County*

Kay Brady  
*Community Resident*

Bryan Callahan  
*Walton County Prevention Coalition*

Bridget Crawford  
*Walton County Sheriff's Office*

Catie Feeney  
*Walton County Emergency Management*

Linsey Hall  
*Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast*

Holly Holt  
*Florida Department of Health in Walton County*

Tracy Leitner  
*Walton Community Health Center*

Dianne McManus  
*Homelessness and Housing Alliance*

Emily Proctor  
*Caring and Sharing of South Walton*

Jennifer Van Dyke  
*West Florida Area Health Education Center*

Kyle Merritt  
*Northwest Florida Health Council*

## Assessment Design Team

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*Community Status Assessment Co-Lead*

Patrick Gillespie

*Community Status Assessment Co-Lead*

Brandi Hunt

*MAPP 2.0 Co-Facilitator*

*Community Partner Assessment Lead*

Ryan Mims

*MAPP 2.0 Facilitator*

*Community Context Assessment Co-Lead*

Grace Roberts

*Public Health Volunteer*

Kendra Wood

*Community Context Assessment Co-Lead*

## WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WCHIP OR HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT?

We're here help! Whether you have questions or need support, reach out to us at [WCHIP@flhealth.gov](mailto:WCHIP@flhealth.gov), or give us a call at 850-401-6338 to chat with a member of the DOH-Walton Community Health Strategy and Planning Team. We also invite you to join the Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership Facebook group, where you can connect with fellow members and share exciting updates about your organization. Don't miss out on the opportunity to be part of this dynamic partnership!



## Community Leader Interviews

Shane Abbott,  
State Representative & Owner  
*The Prescription Place*

Donna Johns, Chair  
Walton County Board of County  
Commissioners

Koby Townsend, City Manager  
*City of DeFuniak Springs*

Ann Sexton, Mayor  
*City of Paxton*

Trey Abshier, President and CEO  
*Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast*

Laura Tiu, Executive Director  
*Walton County UF IFAS Extension*

Susan Bakalo, Manager  
*Life Enrichment Senior Center*

Uriah Matthews, Executive Director  
*Walton County Economic Development  
Alliance*

Rufino Toribio-Ramirez, Owner  
*Fajitas Mexican Restaurant*

Tammy Register, Associate Pastor  
*Solid Rock Community Church*

Russell Hughes, Superintendent  
Walton County School District

Carly Barnes, Executive Director  
*Caring and Sharing of South Walton*

Ross Sheffield, Fire Chief  
*DeFuniak Springs Fire Department*

Robert Carden, Director of Pharmacy  
*North Walton Doctors Hospital*

Samantha Graves, Senior Planner  
*City of Freeport*

Joel Paul, Jr., Executive Director  
*Tri County Community Council, Inc.*

Caitlin Cerise, Director  
*Walton County Public Library System*

Jeff Goldberg, Director  
*Walton County Emergency  
Management*

Gabrielle Hamilton,  
Director of Operations  
*Walton Area Chamber of Commerce*

Dawn Martin, Owner  
*Percipity Web Design*

Liz Pemberton, Food Ministry Lead  
*Cornerstone Church*

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## Special Thanks to our Dedicated Community Partners!



A Bed 4 Me Foundation  
AARP Florida  
Alzheimer's Association  
Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast  
Banyan Treatment Center  
BeGenerous, Inc.  
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast  
CareerSource Okaloosa | Walton  
Caring & Sharing of South Walton  
Caring & Sharing of Walton County, Inc.  
Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida  
CenterWell Home Health  
CIL of Northwest Florida  
City of DeFuniak Springs  
City of Freeport  
City of Paxton  
Children's Volunteer Health Network  
Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County  
DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency  
Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast  
Emerald Coast Council on Aging  
Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center  
Emerald Coast Technical College  
Emerald Coast Hospice  
Feeding the Gulf Coast  
Florida Department of Children and Families  
Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County  
Florida Department of Health in Walton County  
Florida Springs Wellness & Recovery Center  
Freedom Life Compass, Inc.  
FSU Emerald Coast Family Medicine Residency Program  
Gulf Coast Sexual Assault Program

Habitat for Humanity of Walton County  
 Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa & Walton Counties  
 Homelessness and Housing Alliance  
 Lakeview Center of Walton County  
 Legal Services of North Florida  
 Life Enrichment Center  
 Main Street DeFuniak Springs  
 Matrix Community Outreach Center  
 New Life Church  
 North Walton Doctors Hospital  
 Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging  
 Northwest Florida Health Council  
 Northwest Florida Health Network  
 Pancare of Florida  
 Planted Path Emotional Wellness  
 Point Washington Medical Clinic  
 Shelter House of Northwest Florida  
 South Walton Fire District  
 Tri-County Community Council  
 UF/IFAS Extension Office - Walton County  
 United Way Emerald Coast  
 Walton Community Health Center  
 Walton County Board of County Commissioners  
 Walton County Economic Development Alliance  
 Walton County Emergency Management  
 Walton County Fire Rescue  
 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's Office  
 West Florida Area Health Education Center

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# REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>National Association of County and City Health Officials. (2025). Mobilizing for action through planning and partnerships. <https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/mapp>
- <sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2025). Healthy people 2030. <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople>
- <sup>3</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). Walton County, Florida. <https://data.census.gov>
- <sup>4</sup>Florida Department of Health. (2023). Resident live births. <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov>
- <sup>5</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). National vital statistics system. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/index.html>
- <sup>6</sup>Florida Department of Education. (2024). School readiness at kindergarten entry. <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov>
- <sup>7</sup>Florida Department of Education. (2023). High school graduation rate. <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov>
- <sup>8</sup>County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2022). Walton County population health and well-being. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>
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