

# Lee County Community Input 2025



Prepared by



In Partnership With





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# Introduction and Overview



**Partner Agencies:** NCH, the Florida Department of Health in Collier County, and Healthcare Network. Survey created and analyzed by the Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida.



**Why:** To assess Lee County residents' perceptions of healthcare and health issues in the county.



**How:** Surveys and promotional materials were available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Survey collection was done via SurveyMonkey and paper surveys.



**When:** January - April 2025



**Outcome:** 133 residents shared their thoughts on health and healthcare in Lee County

**NCH** **healthcare network** **HPC** **HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL OF SOUTHWEST FL** **Florida HEALTH Collier County**

**HEALTH FOCUSED COMMUNITY DRIVEN**

**Your voice matters!  
Take the survey today!**

Please join us by completing a survey about health and healthcare in Collier and Lee Counties. Your feedback will help shape the services offered in your community.

Scan Me  or 

**Your Health. Your Voice.  
Your Future**

**¡Tu voz importa!  
¡Responde la encuesta hoy mismo!**

Únete a nosotros completando una encuesta sobre la salud y la atención médica en los condados de Collier y Lee. Tus comentarios nos ayudarán a mejorar los servicios que se ofrecen en tu comunidad.

Escanea para realizar la encuesta. 

Tu salud. Tu voz. Tu futuro. 

**NCH** **healthcare network** **HPC** **HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL OF SOUTHWEST FL** **Florida HEALTH Collier County**

**HEALTH FOCUSED COMMUNITY DRIVEN**

**Vwa ou enpòtan!  
Pran sondaj la jodia!**

Tanpri ranpli yon sondaj sou sante ak swen sante nan zòn Collier ak Lee. Fidbak ou ap ede fòme sèvis yo ofri nan kominote'w la.

Eskane sa 

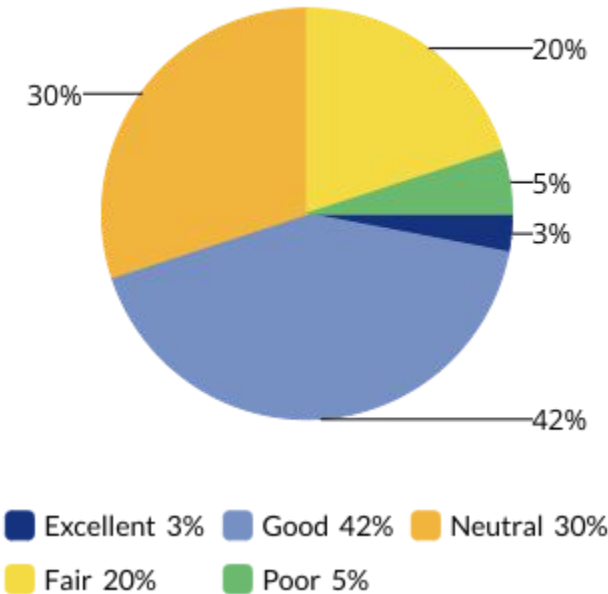
Sante'w, Vwa'w, Avni'w. 



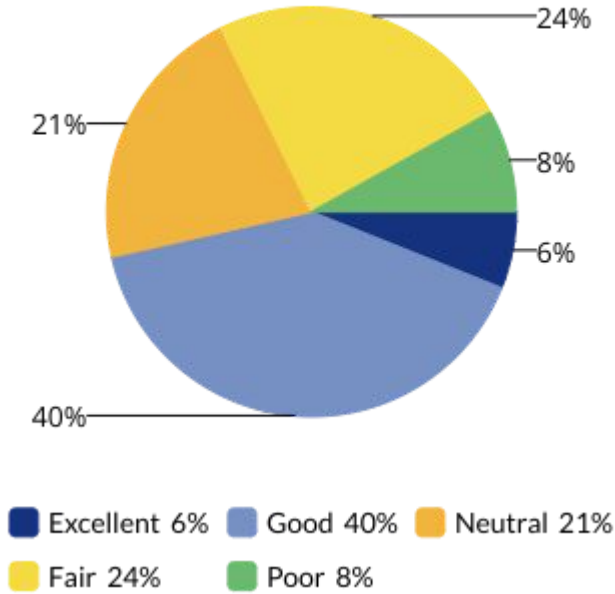
# Community Health Perceptions and Access

When asked, many of the residents believed the general health of the community and the quality of healthcare in the community are **good** (**general health [42%]**, **quality healthcare [40%]**).

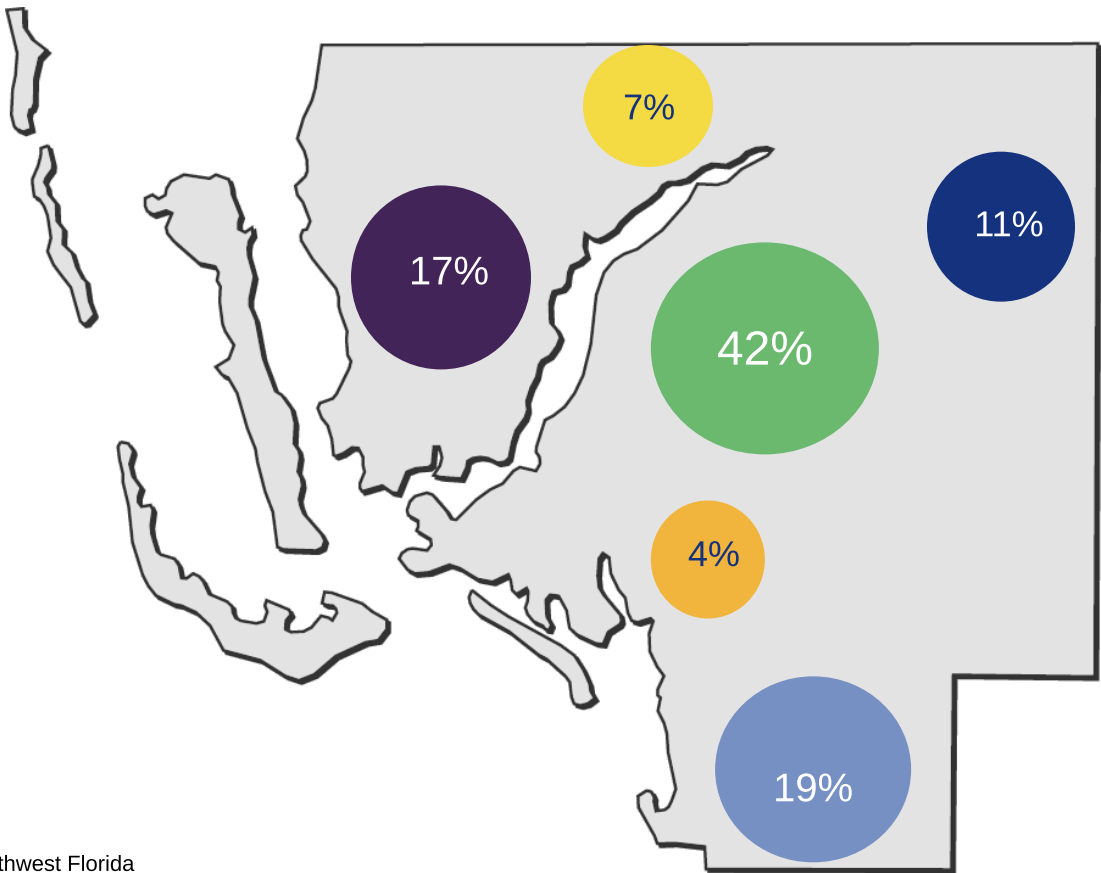
How would you rate the general health of your community?



How would you rate the quality of healthcare in your community?



## Survey Takers by Community

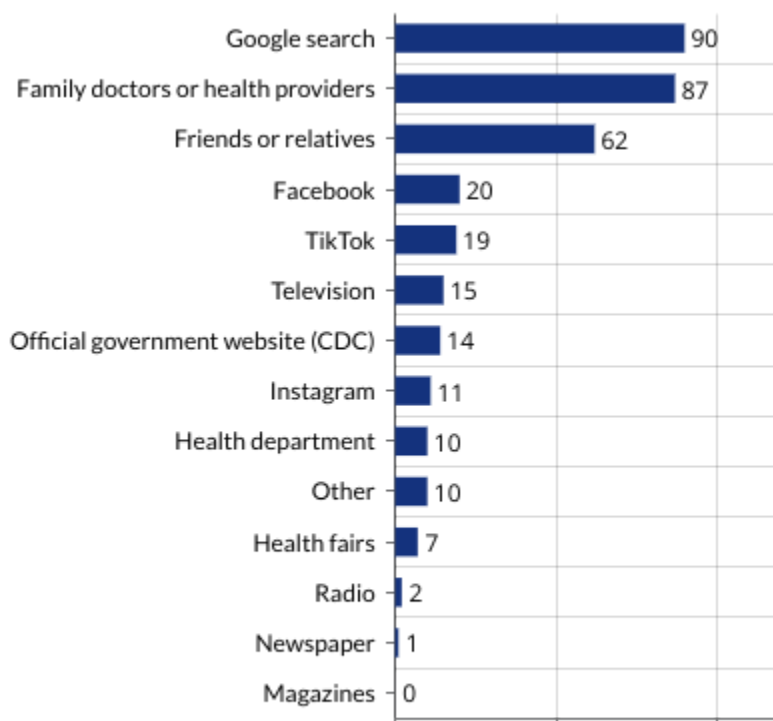


Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida



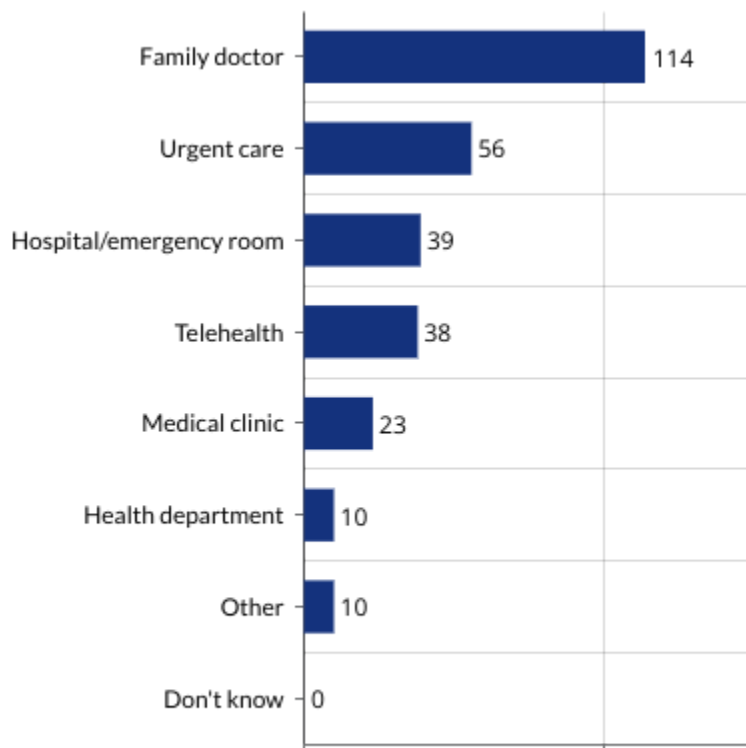
# Community Health Perceptions and Access

## Where do residents go to get health information?



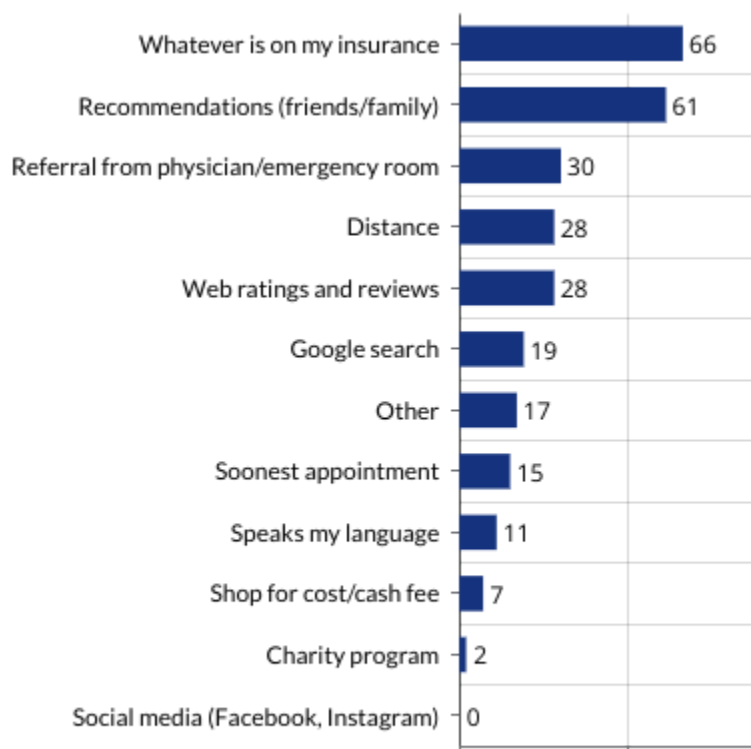
Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Where do residents go to get healthcare?



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## How do you choose your healthcare provider?



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

In Lee County, the most popular sources of health information among residents were Google search (90 responses), health providers (87 responses), and friends or relatives (62 responses).

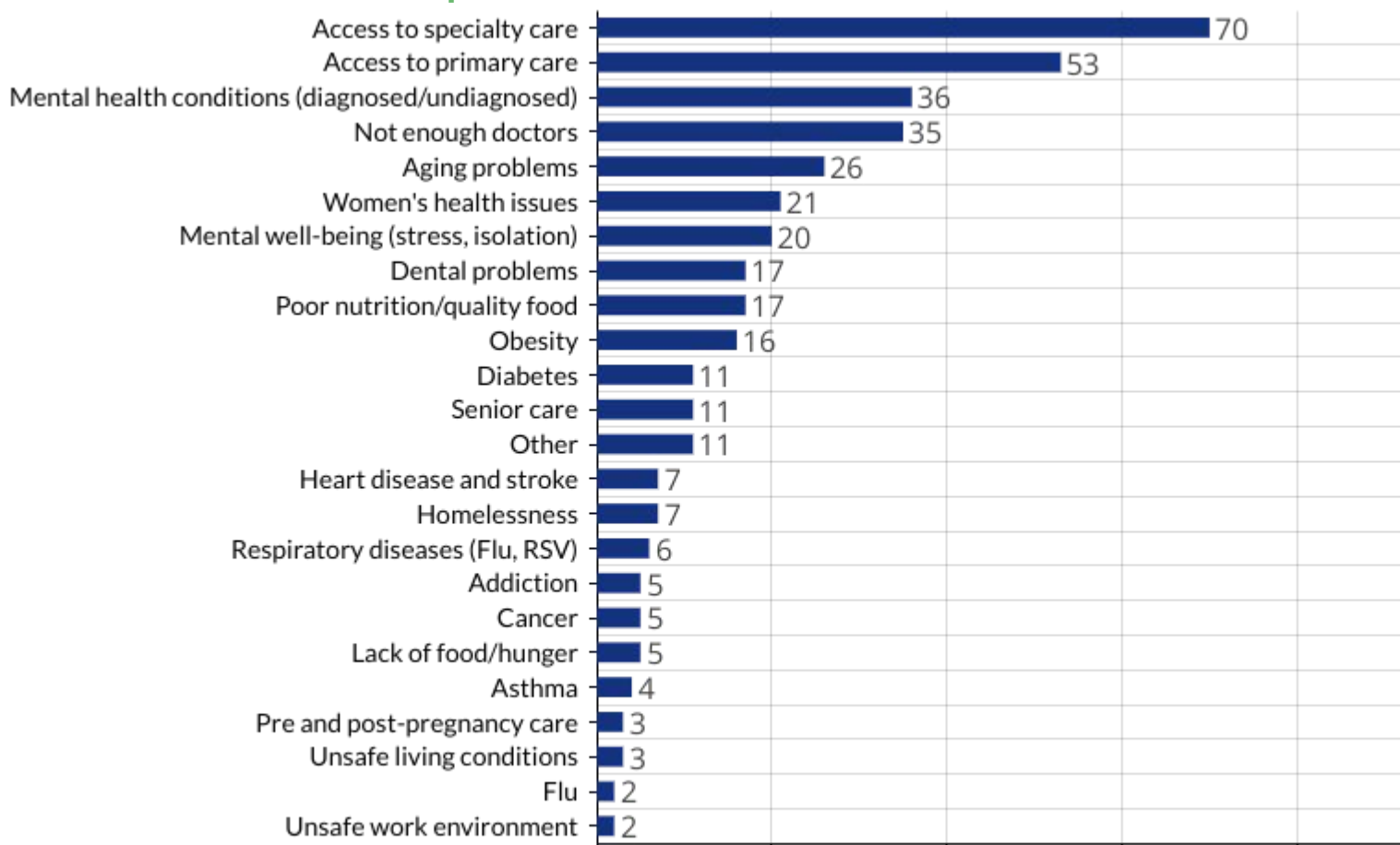
Majority of residents in Lee County go to a family doctor (114 responses) to receive their healthcare, followed by urgent care (56 responses)

Additionally, 88% of residents in Lee County reported having a primary care provider.

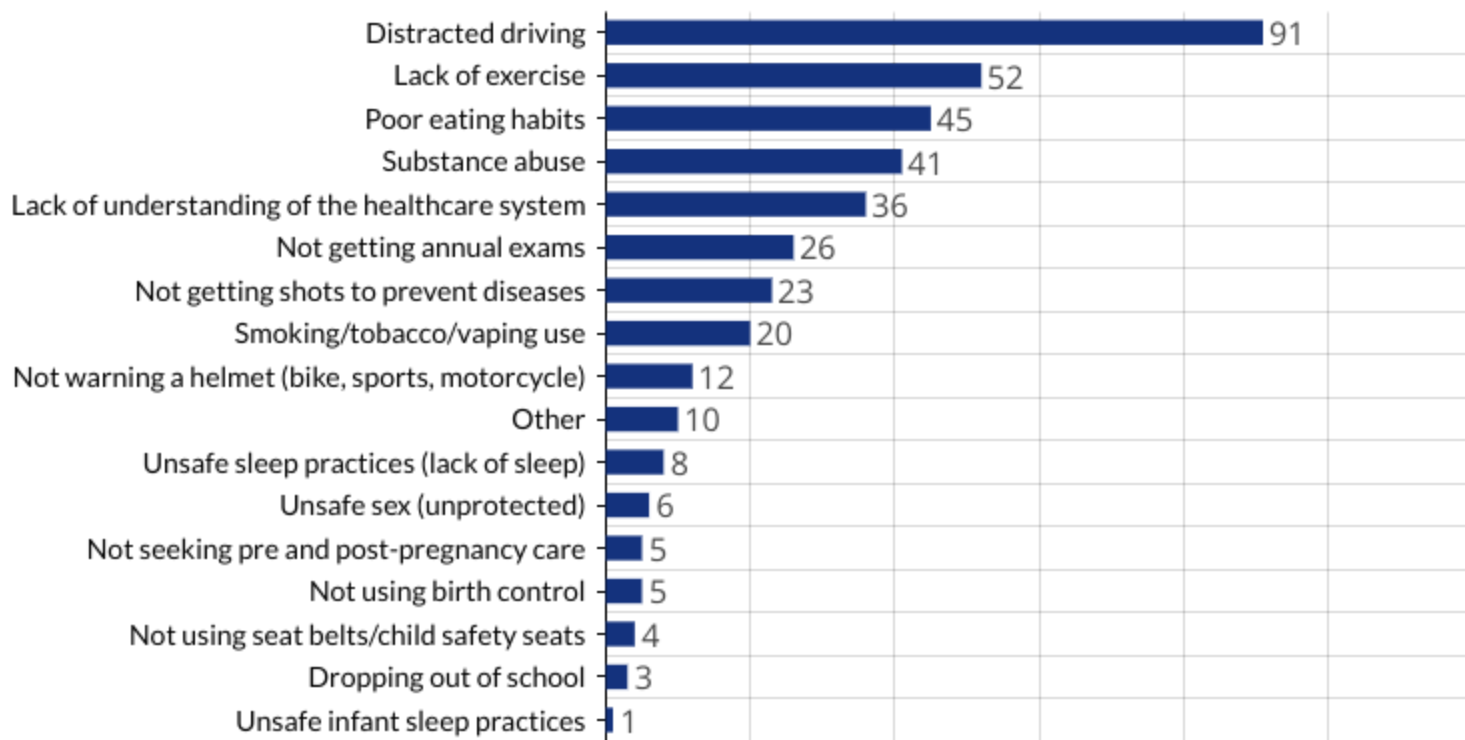
When choosing a healthcare provider, the top reasons cited by residents were whatever is on their insurance (66 responses), recommendations from friends/family (61 responses), and referrals from physicians or emergency rooms (30 responses).

# Key Health Concerns and Risky Behaviors

## What are the three most important health concerns?



## Which of the following are the three most important risky behaviors in your community?

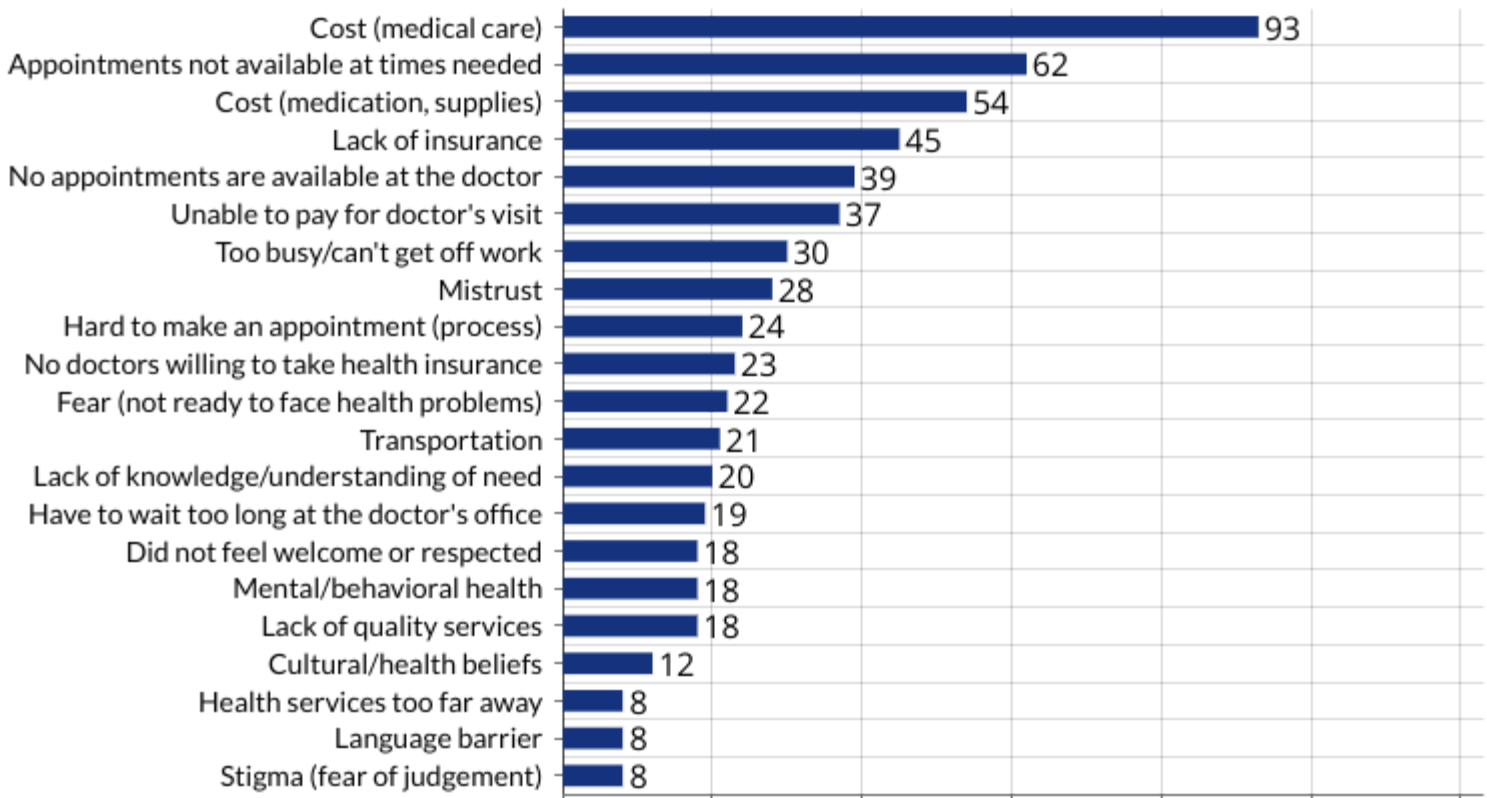


Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

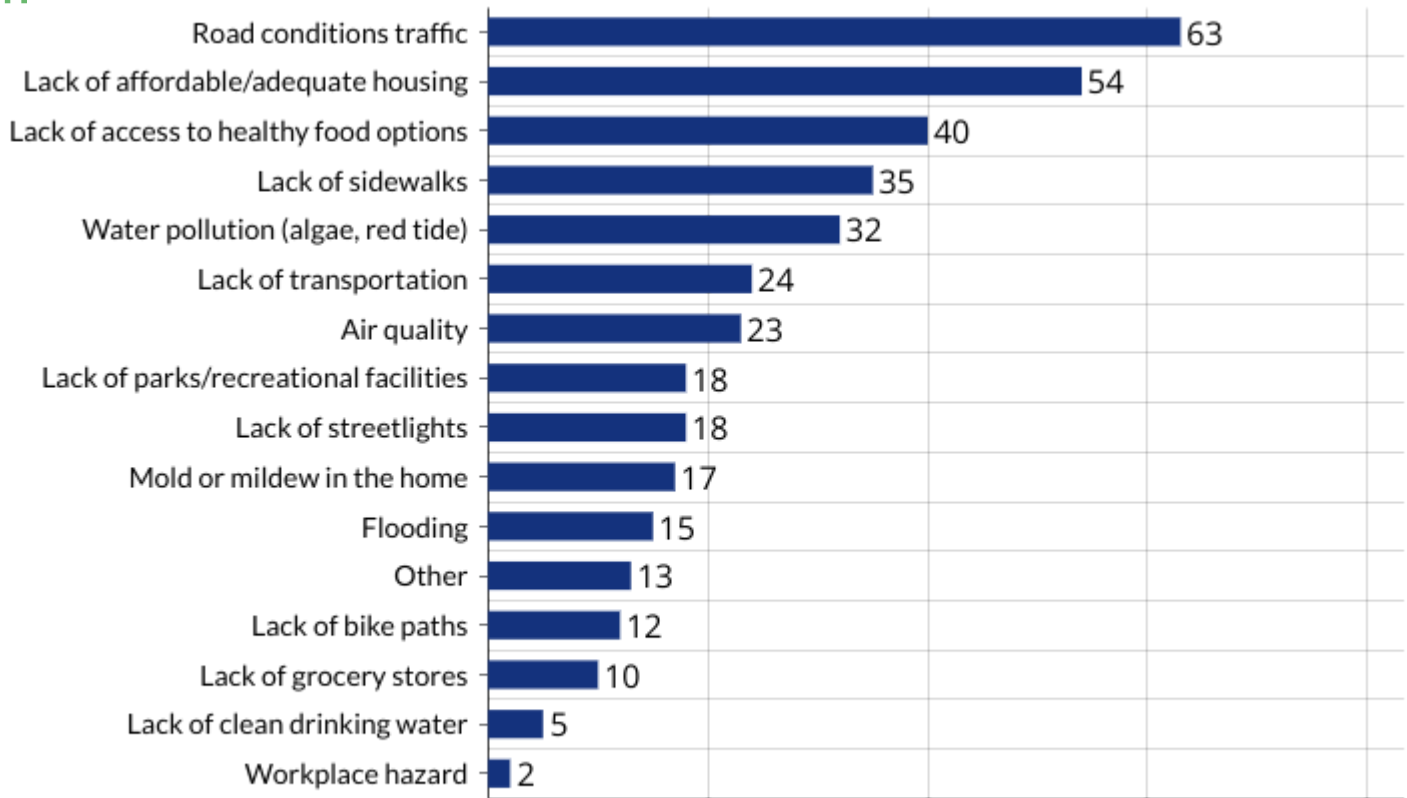


# Barriers to Healthcare and Environmental Factors

What do you think is the main reason that keeps people in your community seeking medical treatment?



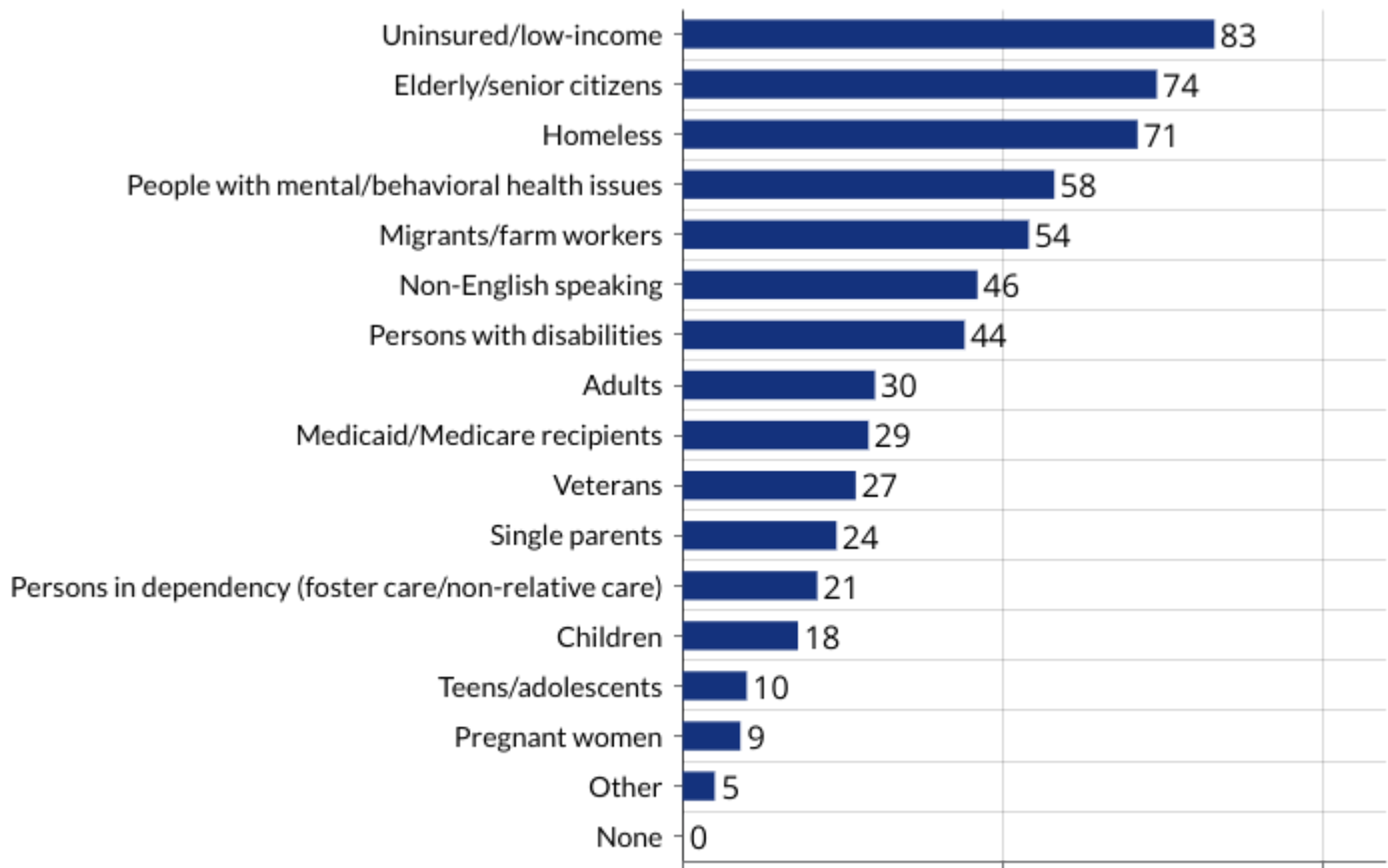
Which environmental factors affect your health, your friends, and/or your family's health?



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

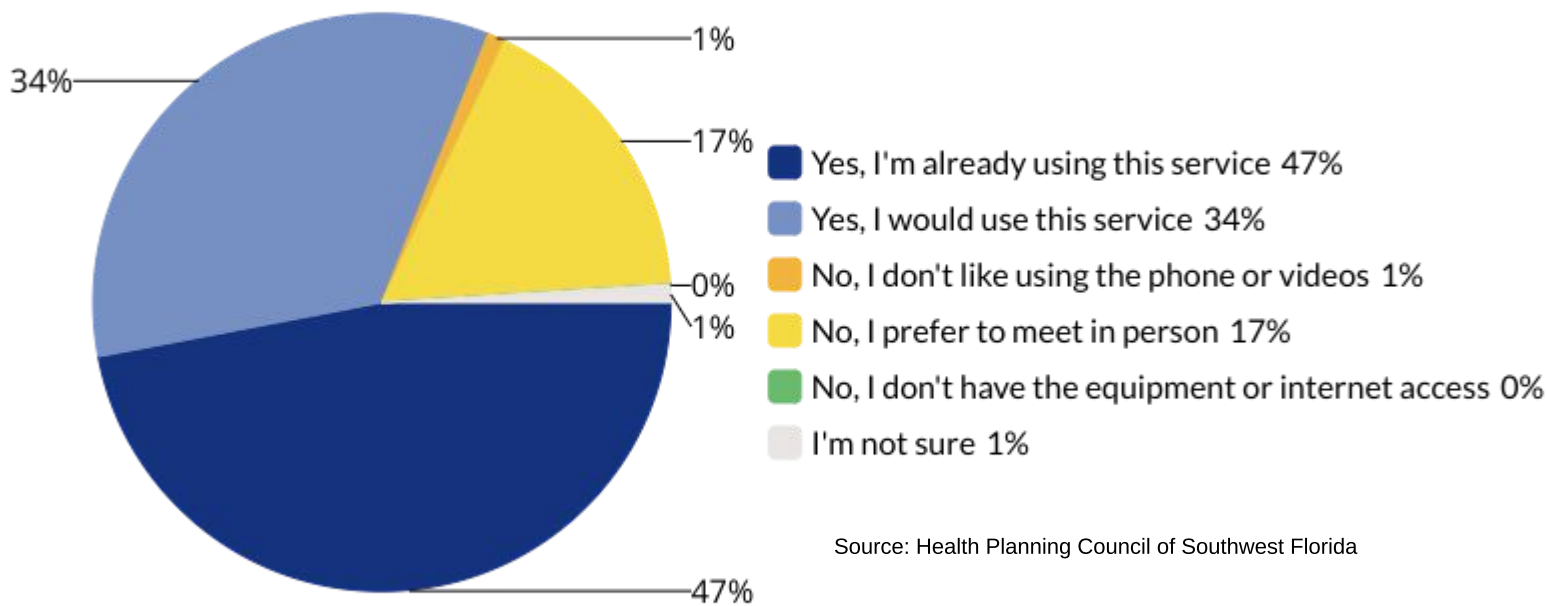
# Healthcare Access Challenges and Service Needs

What types of residents have more difficulty accessing healthcare than others in your community?



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

If telemedicine (medical visits via phone or computer with video) were available, would you or your family/friends use those services?

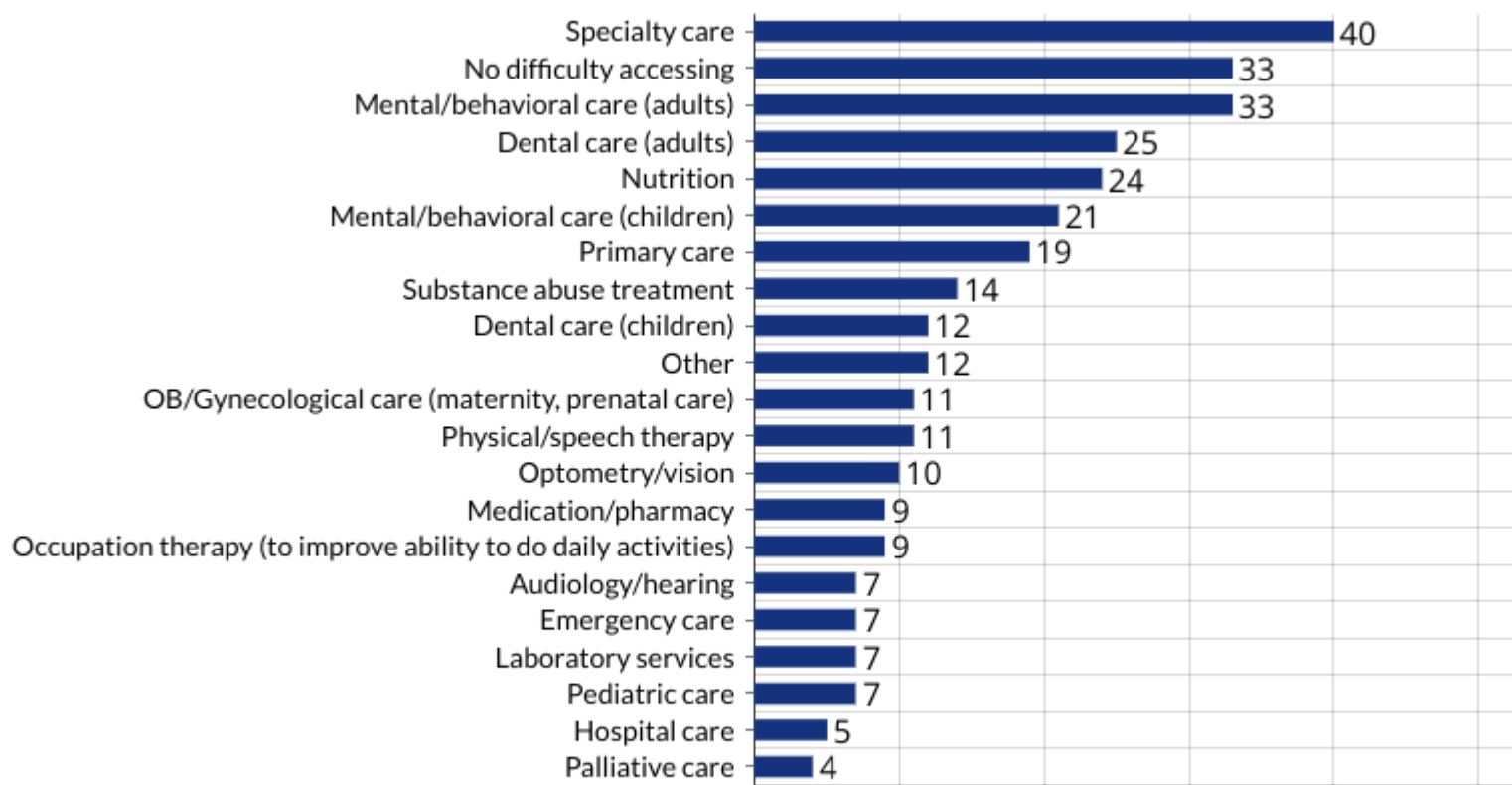


Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

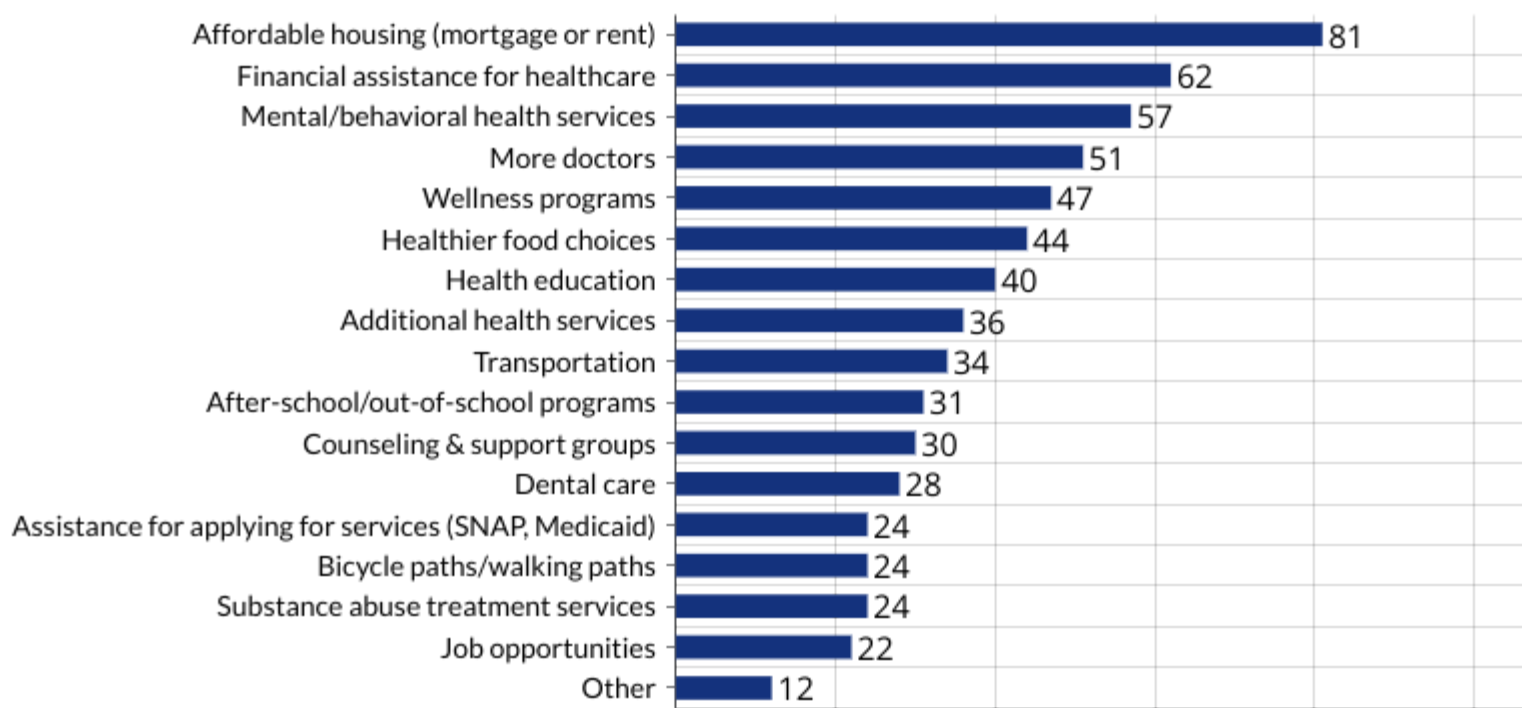


# Healthcare Access Challenges and Service Needs

Are there services that you, your friends, and your family in your community have difficulty accessing?



What does your community need to improve the health of your family, friends, and neighbors?



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Ranking of Community Priorities

As part of the community health survey, participants were asked to prioritize 10 healthcare-related areas. The 10 public health categories were ranked by their order of importance as perceived by Lee County residents. The top five priorities are the primary focus of the local public health system's efforts.

**2025**

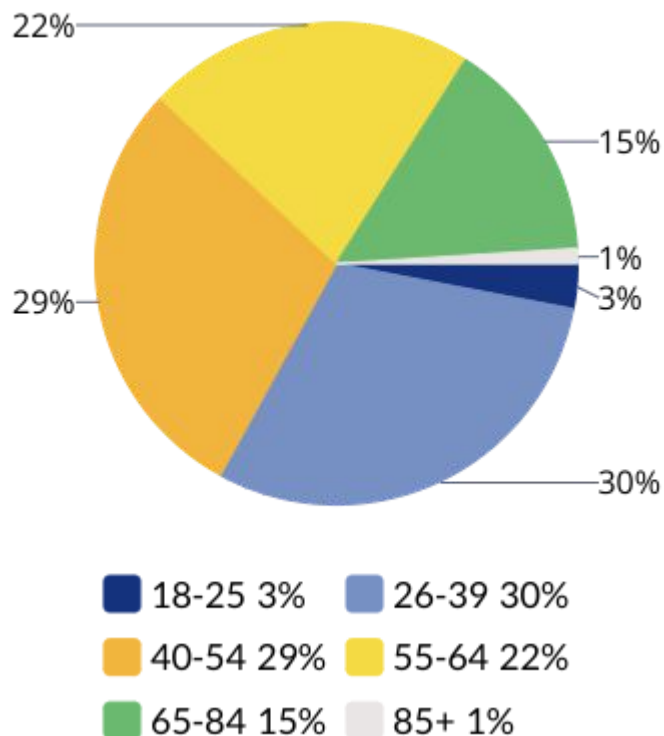


Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida



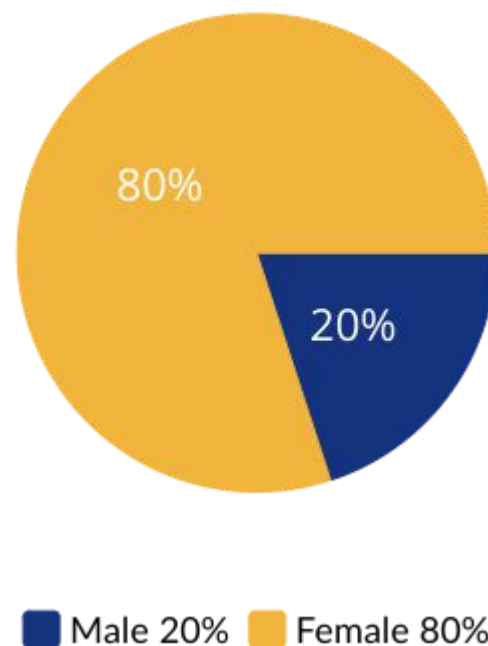
# Demographics

## Age



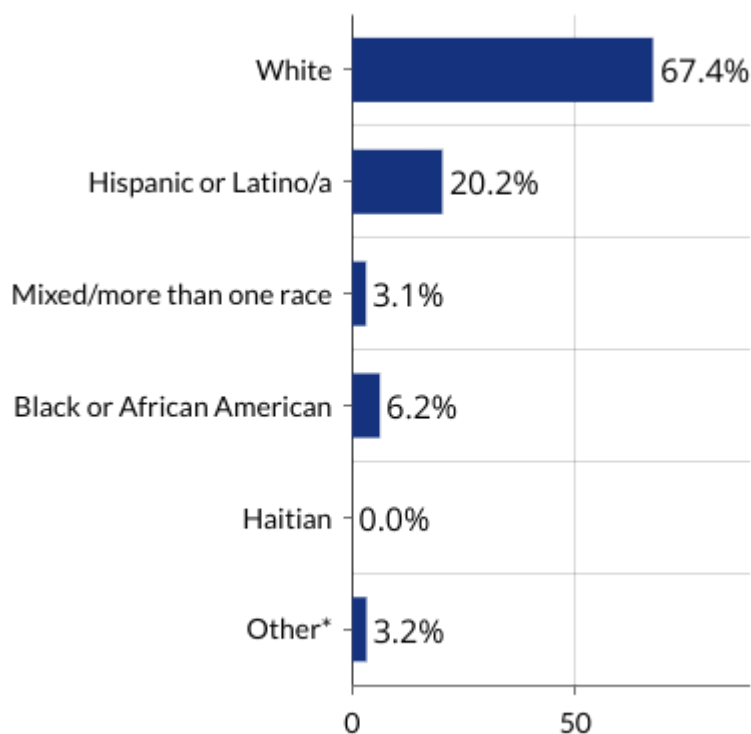
Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Sex



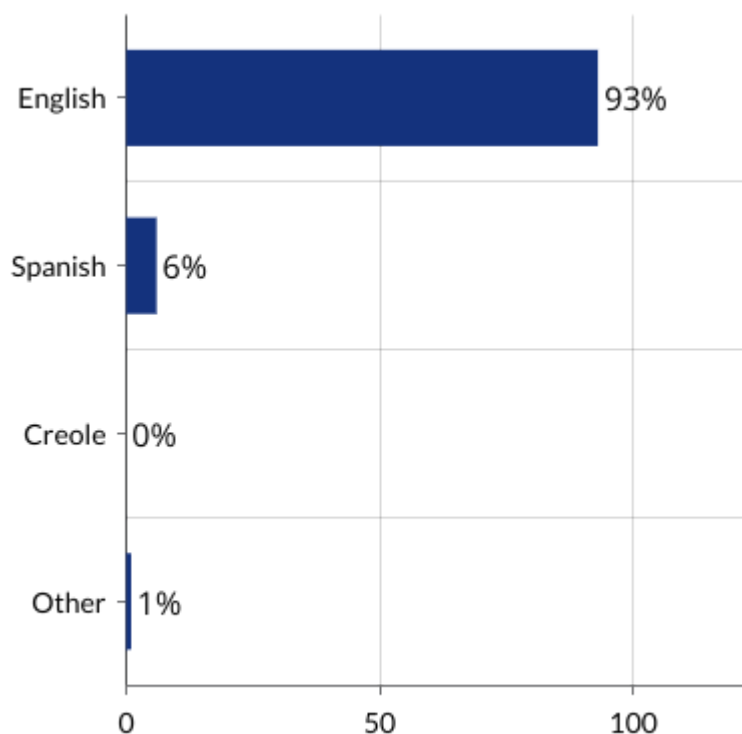
Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Race



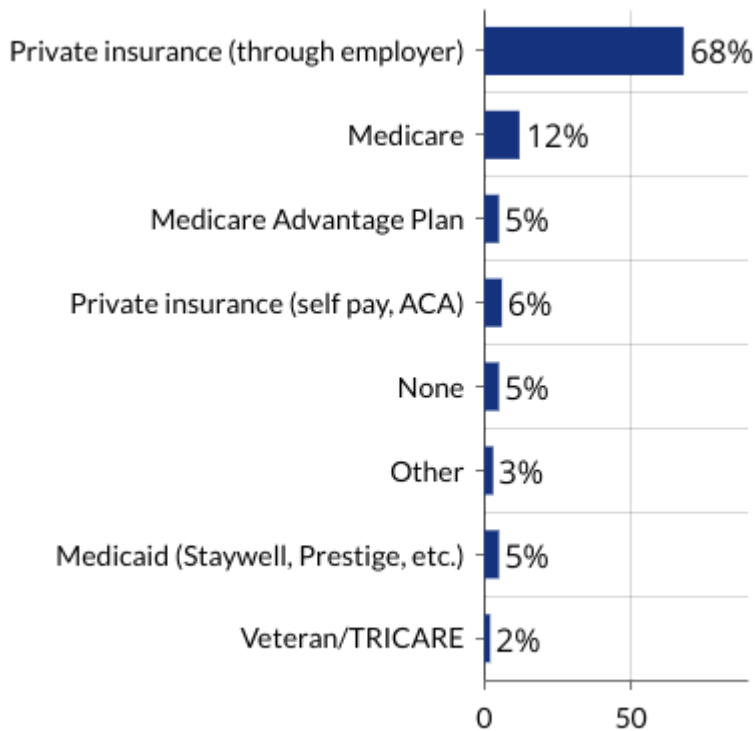
\*Other - American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian

## Primary Language



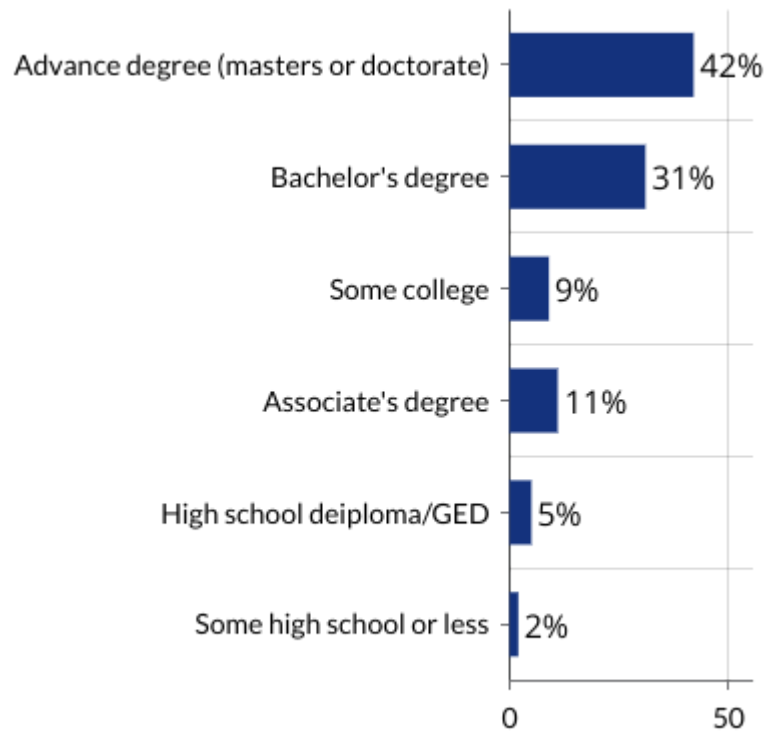
Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Insurance Type



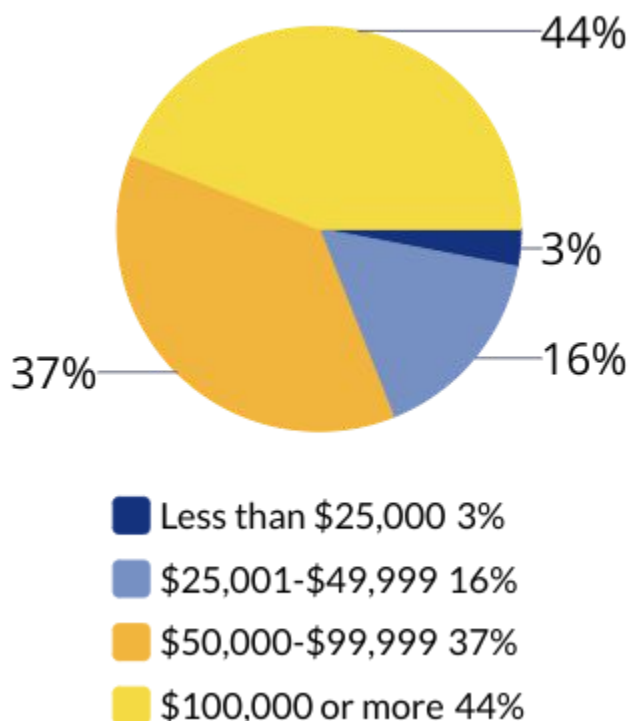
Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Highest Level of Education



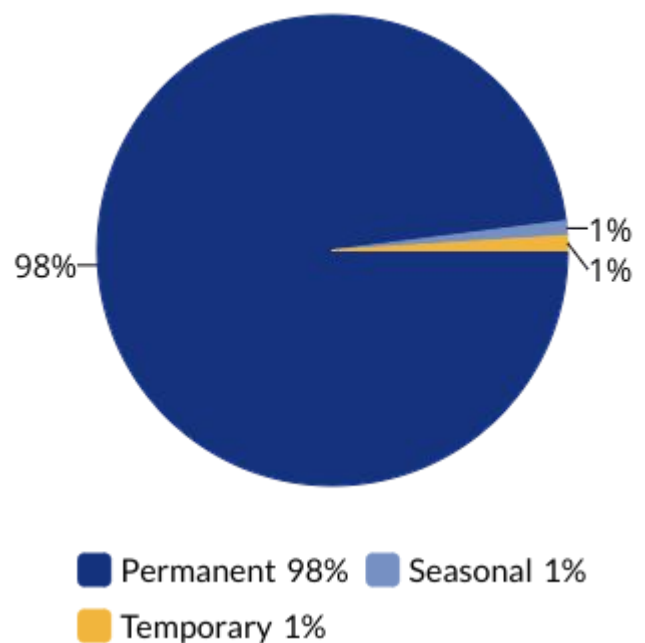
Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Annual Household Income



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Residency Status



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida





Stock photo

A focus group should be conducted to gather additional community feedback regarding health and healthcare in Lee County, as part of the community feedback section of the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida (HPC) designed the focus group questions, which were reviewed and improved by NCH.

In June 2025, a focus group was conducted with a group of Lee County residents via Zoom. Before the focus group began, HPC had the participants fill out a demographic form. A focus group consisting of five individuals participated. The participants' ages ranged from 33 to 69, with four females and one male. All five focus group participants were permanent residents of Lee County residing in different communities in the county (Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres, and North Fort Myers). The majority (80%) of participants identified as white, and 20 percent identified as Hispanic. The demographic questionnaire included a question about annual health insurance status. All participants reported having private insurance, with one participant also having Medicaid. All participants were college-educated, ranging from those with some college experience to those holding either a bachelor's or advanced degree.

The focus group session had a facilitator and a recorder. Before the start of the focus group, a script was read aloud that described the purpose of the focus group, outlined the ground rules, and provided instructions on the process. The focus group started with an icebreaker. The facilitator asked each participant to state their name and how long they had lived in Lee County. The questions that were asked during the focus group consisted of the following:

- General thoughts on health and well-being.
- What are some things in the area that have positively impacted their health or the health of their family?
- The problems or barriers to maintaining good health and well-being.
- Groups of people who need additional services or assistance in improving their health and well-being.
- What is needed to improve the health of the community?

## Overall Perceptions of the Healthcare System

The focus group discussion centered on healthcare access challenges in Lee County, with participants expressing concerns about long wait times for appointments, particularly with specialists, as well as the difficulty in accessing timely medical services. It was highlighted how ERs are overwhelmed by patients who cannot access timely care elsewhere. In contrast, others noted the lack of urgent care facilities and the inconvenience of having to travel to Golisano for specialty services. The group also discussed how recent improvements in healthcare access have been offset by increased demand, making it difficult for residents to receive timely medical care.

## Community Strengths Supporting Health and Healthcare

The group discussed the positive health impacts in the community, with several residents highlighting Lee Health as a key provider offering wellness programs and support for conditions such as diabetes. A participant shared positive experiences with WIC services during pregnancy, while others noted improved access to fresh produce through farmers' markets and enhanced green spaces in parks. The discussion also touched on the benefits of local recreational facilities, such as recreation centers and libraries, with plans for further park improvements being mentioned.



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

## Barriers to Health and Well-being

The group discussed challenges in maintaining health and accessing healthcare, with cost and insurance being significant barriers. The conversation highlighted the importance of finding reliable healthcare providers and the financial burden of healthcare costs, particularly for individuals without adequate insurance coverage.

Focus group participants discussed specific community health challenges, identifying vulnerable groups including older people, low-income individuals, LGBTQ+ community, homeless people, and non-native English speakers who may struggle to navigate healthcare systems. They emphasized the need for improved access to healthcare providers, including doctors and other medical professionals, and highlighted the importance of enhancing communication about available healthcare resources. The discussion concluded with a focus on increasing awareness of existing programs and improving navigation of healthcare systems.

It was identified that there is a need for more hospital beds and additional healthcare facilities, especially in North Fort Myers and Lehigh. The participants highlighted issues with hospital specialization, long distances between facilities, and the high cost of inter-facility transfers, which burden patients with additional expenses. They also emphasized the importance of improving transportation, increasing social services, and expanding the number of social workers, as well as expanding mobile integrated health services to provide care in the community.

## Identified Priorities Needs

We asked participants to list what was needed to improve the community's health. Below are the responses, with the top needs bolded.

- **More healthcare providers/doctors**
- Awareness of available programs/resources
- Increase ways to navigate resources
- **More hospitals in Cape Coral, Lehigh Acres, and North Fort Myers**
- Better access to pediatric urgent care
- Better access to public transportation
- Better interfacility transfers, not being charged because the original facility couldn't help you
- **Increased access to specific services**
- Navigators, to help navigate the system
- Increase in social workers in the hospital
- **More services in the home/community (paramedicine and outreach teams, not concierge)**
- Better care within nursing home facilities
- Increase access to mental health services
- Increase access to affordable dental and vision services

The group discussed and prioritized healthcare needs in Lee County, with more healthcare providers and doctors emerging as the top choice, followed by increased access to specific services, additional hospitals in certain areas, and expanded services within the home community. Participants explained their reasoning, with some focusing on the need for inpatient beds and others emphasizing the importance of outreach and home-based care.

Focus group participants strategized how to attract more doctors and providers to the community, with a participant suggesting programs that offer incentives for long-term commitment. One participant highlighted that physicians are overworked due to heavy patient loads and extensive charting, leading to a lack of work-life balance. This is not primarily about pay, but rather about better incentives and a better quality of life. It was emphasized that there was a need for perks to make the area more appealing. It was noted that doctors are often drawn to higher-paying locations with lower workloads, suggesting that competitive compensation and effective workload management are key factors in attracting and retaining doctors.

It was noted that there is a need for more hospitals and healthcare facilities, particularly in underserved areas. They suggested increasing pressure on zoning boards, spreading facilities across the county rather than concentrating them in Fort Myers, and improving competition among healthcare providers. The conversation also touched on the potential for mobile clinics and community buses to provide healthcare services to those unable to access traditional facilities. Participants expressed concerns about the current state of the healthcare system, including issues with emergency care and patient transportation, and emphasized the importance of restoring public trust in healthcare services.

Participants were asked if they had any additional comments they would like to share about health and well-being in Lee County. A participant stated that there is little faith in receiving good healthcare in the area.



# Community Leader Interviews

The Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida (HPC) conducted four key informant interviews in 2025 with the cooperation of NCH. The purpose of conducting the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of key community leaders on the health and healthcare needs of Lee County residents. These conversations were intended to gather opinions from key individuals who are likely to be knowledgeable about the community and who are influential in shaping the views of others regarding health concerns in the area. The findings provide qualitative insights and reveal factors influencing views and sentiments regarding healthcare services in Lee County. A summary of community leaders' opinions is reported without judging the veracity of their thoughts and opinions.

## Methodology

The steering committee, consisting of NCH and HPC, compiled a list of possible interview subjects. The list included healthcare providers, healthcare consumers, county government officials, and representatives of local businesses and community organizations. HPC staff conducted the interviews over Zoom. The typical interview lasted between twenty-five and forty-five minutes. These interviews were conducted in April of 2025. The interviewees were told that none of their comments would be directly attributed to them but that a list of all participants would be included in this report. All reports were conducted using a standard questionnaire.

## Overall Impression of Health in Lee County

HPC staff asked the interviewees to share their overall impression of health in Lee County, including the services available to meet healthcare needs and the general health of community residents. Listed are the key themes from the responses to this question:

- Overall healthy community
- Needs improvement in mental health
- More healthcare options, not just one large entity
- More physicians
- Long wait times to see specialists
- Underserved are still being underserved
- Women and children need more services
- Increase in physicians moving to concierge
- Have access to healthcare, regardless of insurance status



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida



# Community Leader Interviews

## Most Pressing Health Needs

HPC staff asked the interviewees what they think are the most pressing health needs in Lee County. Many of the identified pressing health needs in Lee County are deeply intertwined, with the core issue being the affordability and accessibility of comprehensive healthcare services, compounded by specific shortages in specialties, pediatric care, and significant logistical challenges related to transportation and affordable housing. Listed are some of the responses from community leaders to this question:

- Increase in negative health behaviors
- Cancer and heart disease
- Access to primary care
- Cost of healthcare
- Access to affordable health insurance
- Access to specialty care
- Large number of uninsured people
- More choices for healthcare
- Access to specialty pediatric care

To follow up, the community leaders were asked for their thoughts on local actions that could help address the health needs they mentioned. Several responses emphasized the importance of community-wide efforts, including multi-agency involvement and collaboration, in effectively addressing health challenges. Specific suggestions included having more places like Family Health Centers where it is a one-stop shop, ensuring people are aware of current systems that are in place to help with the financial burdens of healthcare, establishing safe walking spaces and promoting access to healthy foods, and increasing the availability of Naloxone to combat overdose deaths.

## Important Health Issues by Population

Community leaders were asked to share their thoughts on the most pressing health issues affecting various populations in Lee County. The highlighted populations were children, teens/adolescents, adults, and the elderly.

### *Children:*



- Falling in and out of care
- Obesity
- Not getting vaccinated

### *Teens/adolescents:*



- Behavioral health
- Smoking/vaping issues

### *Adults:*



- Overweight/obesity
- Cost of insurance
- Socioeconomic issues
- Lack of affordable after hours care

### *Elderly:*



- Alzheimer's and dementia
- Lack of care options in and out of home
- Isolation

Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

# Community Leader Interviews

## Critical Challenge Facing Residents and Next Steps

Of all the needs and services discussed throughout the interviews, we asked key informants what they believed was the most critical challenge facing Collier County residents.

- Access to affordable care
- Behavioral health services
- Access to transportation
- Affordability of living
- Lack of primary care
- Specific service shortages (pediatric, specialty care, and maternity care)

After identifying the most critical challenges facing residents, community leaders were asked whether any actions were needed to address these challenges and who they believed should be responsible for implementing them. Key actions include leveraging improved data for decision-making, enhancing community education on available services, and actively recruiting and retaining medical professionals. Additionally, efforts should focus on strengthening the roles of non-profits and improving transportation infrastructure. Responsibility is viewed as shared, necessitating a collective impact model with public-private partnerships to foster a healthier community.

## Interviewed Community Leaders

David Mulicka  
County Commissioner  
**Lee County Commissioner**

Tina Cordell  
Program Manager, Early Steps  
**Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida**

Jorge Quinonez, MD  
Executive Vice President & Chief Medical Officer  
**Family Health Center of Southwest Florida**

Kevin Murphy  
Director of Planning and Performance Management  
**Florida Department of Health in Lee County**



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida





# 2025 Lee County Community Input

Prepared by the Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida, Inc.

Contact:

Phone: 239-433-6700

Email: [Planning@hpcswf.com](mailto:Planning@hpcswf.com)

Website: [Hpcswf.com](http://Hpcswf.com)