

Lee County Community Health Assessment, Executive Summary 2025



Prepared by



In Partnership With



Introduction

In an effort to improve the health of the residents of Lee County, a collaborative partnership was formed between NCH, the Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida, Inc. (HPC), also known as the CHA Steering Committee, for the purpose of conducting a needs assessment for use by the listed partners and other community stakeholders in Lee County. The Steering Committee held monthly meetings throughout the project to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of this health needs assessment.

HPC reviewed numerous data sources and received feedback from the Steering Committee, as well as from members of the community through surveys, questionnaires, interviews with community leaders, and a focus group. This needs assessment comprises demographic, socioeconomic, and health status information that will be used to identify areas where targeted interventions and policy changes are likely to have the most significant impact. Once community needs are identified through quantitative data analysis of demographic, socioeconomic, and health status information, as well as community surveys, focus groups, and interviews, the strategic process and community health improvement planning can begin.



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

Community Survey 133 Residents Completed

Ranking of Priorities

1. Access to care
2. Chronic disease
3. Mental health
4. Alcohol and drug use
5. Health of older adults
6. Disabilities
7. Dental health
8. Obesity
9. Communicable disease
10. Unintentional injuries

Top Health Concerns

1. Access to specialty care
2. Access to primary care
3. Mental health conditions
4. Not enough doctors
5. Aging problems
6. Women's health issues
7. Mental well-being
8. Dental problems
9. Poor nutrition/quality food
10. Obesity

Top Health Needs

1. Affordable housing
2. Financial assistance for healthcare
3. Mental/behavioral health services
4. More doctors
5. Wellness programs
6. Healthier food choices
7. Health education
8. Additional health services
9. Transportation
10. After-school/out-of-school programs

Focus Group

Improvements needed

1. More healthcare providers/doctors
2. More hospitals
3. Increase access to specific services
4. More services in the home/community

Community Leader Interviews

Critical challenges

1. Increase in negative health behaviors
2. Access to primary care
3. Cost of healthcare
4. More choices for healthcare
5. Access to specialty adult and pediatric care

Population

- Lee County's population increased by 167,063, or more than 25 percent, from 656,466 in 2014 to a total of 823,529 by 2023.
- The median age increased in Lee County by 3.1 years between 2013 and 2023 (46 to 49.1).
- While Hispanics constituted 18 percent of the population in Lee in 2009, by 2023 the proportion increased to more than 34 percent.
- Lee County consistently has a lower percentage of population that speaks English less than very well when compared to Florida (2022, 10.0% Lee, 11.9% Florida).
- In 2023, of households that speak languages other than English, 76.1 percent spoke Spanish.



Source: Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida

Additional details and data sources can be found in the Lee County Health Need Assessment

Drivers of Health

- In 2023, 49 percent of Lee County students were deemed ready when they entered kindergarten, which is lower than the state of Florida (51%).
- In 2024, Lee County students passed the Florida Standards English Language Arts Assessment (FSA) at lower rates than the state average (48% Lee, 55% Florida).
- Between 2013 and 2023, Lee County consistently had a slightly lower high school graduation rate than the state average (85.1% Lee, 88.0% Florida, 2023).
- Between 2015 and 2023, the percentage of the population in Lee County over the age of 25 who did not have at least a high school diploma declined from 13 percent to 9.1 percent.
- 13.7 percent of members of the general public in Lee County have a disability; this is slightly higher than the Florida average of 13.5 percent.
- The median household income in Lee County for 2023 is slightly higher than the Florida average (\$73,099 vs. \$71,711).
- In 2023, 12.1 percent of Lee County residents lived in poverty, compared to 12.4 percent for the state.
- In 2023, Lee County had a slightly higher percentage of children living in poverty than the state average (17.1% Lee, 16.9% Florida). The percentage of children living in poverty in Lee County decreased significantly in the ten years between 2014 and 2023 (27.0% 2014, 17.1% 2023).
- In 2023, 25.9 percent of owner-occupied households in Lee County were paying more than 30 percent of their household income for housing, compared to 26.1 percent for the state of Florida.
- The percentage of households that rent and pay more than 30 percent of their income in rent increased significantly between 2017 and 2023 (52% 2017, 59% 2023).

Additional details and data sources can be found in the Lee County Health Need Assessment

Settings and Systems

- Lee County has been designated as a Medically Underserved Area (MUA) for its low-income and migrant farmworker populations.
- Between 2014 and 2023, Lee County consistently had fewer hospital beds per 100,000 people than the state average (265.7 Lee, 304.5 Florida, 2023).
- Throughout the past decade, Lee County had significantly fewer nursing home beds per population than the average for the State of Florida (257.7 Lee, 366.3 Florida, 2023).
- It is estimated that in 2022, 17.1 percent of Lee County residents under the age of 65 were without insurance (Florida average was 13.9%).
- In 2023, for the population under 19 years of age in Lee County, 9.2 percent were uninsured compared with 7.5 percent in Florida.
- Lee County Residents made 243,981 visits to hospitals in 2023 that did not result in an inpatient admission. Private insurance was the number one payer source, representing 29.1 percent of the visits; Medicaid was second with 28.6 percent.
- Lee County residents consistently have fewer emergency department visits per 100,000 than the state average. The rates follow similar trends to those of the state.
- After several years of falling, the food insecurity rate for Lee County and Florida increased between 2021 and 2022. The rate for Lee County is similar to the state rate (12.7% Lee, 13.2% Florida, 2022).
- Despite having a higher percentage of workers who work from home, Lee County workers have a slightly higher average travel time to work than the state average (29.6 Lee, 28.5 Florida, 2023).
- Lee County has a lower-than-average rate for all crimes and domestic violence when compared to the State of Florida as a whole. The three most common categories of crimes in Lee County are domestic violence, larceny, and burglary.

Additional details and data sources can be found in the Lee County Health Need Assessment

Health Behaviors

- The percentage of high school students in Lee County who reported consuming alcohol in the past 30 days has decreased significantly over the past 10 years (23.5% 2016 to 15.5% 2022).
- The percentage of high school students in Lee County who reported cigarette use in the past 30 days has significantly decreased in the past decade (5.0% 2016, 0.4% 2022).
- The percentage of middle and high school students in Lee County who reported vaping nicotine in the past 30 days decreased between 2020 and 2022 (12.0% 2020, 8.6% 2022). It is also below the state average.
- From 2016 to 2022, the percentage of middle and high school students in Collier County who reported using marijuana or hashish decreased (11.8% in 2016, 8.5% 2022).
- More people in Lee County died from unintentional injuries than from any other fatal injuries in 2020. The 85 and older age group had the highest number of unintentional injury fatalities.
- The top three fatal injury mechanisms for Lee County in 2023 were poisonings, falls, and firearms. Poisoning includes drug overdoses.
- The leading cause of fatal injury in Lee County varies by age. For those who are younger, suffocation or motor vehicle traffic is most likely to cause a fatal injury; for those who are 25-64, drug poisoning or an overdose is the most frequent cause of fatal injury. For Lee County residents who are over the age of 65, falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries.

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Health Behaviors

- There was a significant increase in the death rate from unintentional injuries from 2014 to 2022 (40.7 2014, 85.2 2022); however, there was a large decline from 2022 to 2023 (85.2 2022, 66.7 2023).
- Prior to 2018, Lee County had a significantly higher rate of deaths from unintentional falls than the state average. Since 2018, the rate has been similar to the state average (12.1 Lee, 11.8 Florida, 2023).
- Lee County consistently had a lower rate of motor vehicle crashes compared to the Florida average between 2014 and 2020. However, since 2021, the rate for Lee County has risen and has been higher than the state average (1876.3 Lee, 1742 Florida, 2023).
- Compared to other Florida counties for the years 2021-2023, Lee County has a higher rate for births to mothers ages 15-19 than the state average (16.0 Lee, 13.2 Florida); however, that rate has been improving.
- Lee County is in the worst quartile for the state for births with 1st trimester prenatal care (with a rate of 66.0% compared to 71.7% for Florida). The trends for prenatal care in Lee County have been negative, with fewer receiving early or adequate prenatal care.
- The maternal death rate for Lee County is lower than the state rate (17.8 Lee, 24.2 Florida, 2021-2023); however, the trend has been negative.
- The infant mortality rate in Lee County is similar to the state average (6.2 Lee, 6.0 Florida, 2023).
- From 2014 to 2023, there was a decrease in preventable emergency room visits from dental conditions in Lee County (864.4 2019, 512.8 2023).

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Health Conditions

- Between 2017 and 2023, Lee County consistently exceeded the Florida average for life expectancy (80.7 Lee, 78.6 Florida, 2023).
- Cancer, heart disease, and unintentional injury are the top three leading causes of death in 2023 for Lee County.
- From 2012 to 2021, Lee County experienced an increase in the rate of new cases of cancer.
- Since 2014, in Lee County, the overall cancer death rate has decreased.
- The most common types of cancer in Lee County were female breast and prostate cancer. However, lung cancer was the deadliest among those diagnosed with cancer.
- Over the past 10 years the overall death rate from heart disease in Lee County has decreased. Lee County's heart disease death rate is less than the Florida average from (105.2 Lee, 135.6 Florida, 2023).
- Lee County has seen a slight increase in the death rate from strokes between 2014 and 2023; however, there was a decrease from 2022 to 2023. Lee County has a lower death rate from stroke than the state average (26.3 Lee, 44.6 Florida, 2023).
- The death rate from Alzheimer's Disease in Lee County is slightly lower than the state average (13.2 Lee, 15.6 Florida, 2023). It has fallen since 2019 when it hit a high of 18.2 in Lee County.
- Lee County has a lower percentage of seniors with a disability status in every category when compared to the Florida average.
- Over the past decade, Lee County generally had a similar or higher rate of suicide than the average for the state, however, in 2023, the rate for Lee County was lower than the state average (13.2 Lee, 14.1 Florida).
- Bacterial STDs in both Lee County and Florida increased between 2014 and 2023. The rate of bacterial STDs for Lee County is lower than the state average (583.1 Lee, 788.2 Florida, 2023).

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