



Community Health Needs Assessment

Carbon County Health Department
Montana

2023

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
OVERVIEW	4
METHODOLOGY	5
METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION	5
SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION	5
PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION	5
SAMPLE APPROACH & DESIGN	6
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	6
2023 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	7
INCREASED REACHABILITY	9
CARBON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS	10
AWARENESS OF CCHD PROGRAMS	10
INTEREST IN CCHD PROGRAMS	10
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	11
HEALTH OUTCOMES	11
AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES	13
TRANSPORTATION	14
AFFORDABILITY OF RESOURCES	14
AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES & HEALTH OUTCOMES	15
WORRY & COST OF MEDICAL CARE	16
SEEKING MEDICAL CARE	17
DELAYING MEDICAL CARE	18
HEALTH DEPARTMENT EFFORTS	19
TOP PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS	19
IMPACTS OF COVID	20
IMPACTS OF THE JUNE 2022 FLOODING	20
SUBGROUP ANALYSES	21
MENTAL HEALTH CORRELATES	21
SENIORS WITHIN CARBON COUNTY	23
KEY HEALTH CONCERNS	24
ACCESS TO & AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING	24
ACCESS TO & AFFORDABILITY OF HEALTHCARE	24
MENTAL HEALTH	24
SENIOR CARE	24
CONCLUSION	25
APPENDIX: COMMUNITY SURVEY	26

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following community members that contributed to the development of the following community health needs assessment.

Scott Blain – Carbon County Commissioner
Scott Miller – Carbon County Commissioner
Bill Bullock – Carbon County Commissioner
Emily Beamon – PhD, MA, MPH- Piedmont Research Strategies
Nicholas Coombs – PhD, MSTAT- Piedmont Research Strategies
Maggie Karas – Carbon County Public Information Officer
Dianna LeBrun – Red Lodge Senior Center Director
Denise Metzsch – Carbon County Public Health
Cynnamon Mitzel – Carbon County Public Health
Shala Cullum – Community Volunteer
Samantha Thomas – Community Volunteer
Libby Lane – Community Volunteer
Brenda Martin – Community Volunteer
Erin Awes – The Mental Health Center
Kim Eder – Community Volunteer
Diana Bryant – Community Volunteer
Rebekah Easter – Community Volunteer
Brad Canton – Red Lodge High School Community Service Volunteer Assist

Organizations from Carbon County that assisted in the distribution of the CHA:

Organizations from Bridger, MT

Valley Foods
Family Dollar
Bridger Schools
Valley Senior Center & Patrons

Organizations from Joliet, MT

Joliet Schools
Joliet Post Office
Jane Dough's
Bank of Joliet
Joliet Library
Joliet Foods

Organizations from Belfry, MT

Belfry Senior Center & Patrons
Belfry Schools

Organizations from Boyd, MT

Boyd Senior Center & Patrons

Organizations from Roberts, MT

Roberts School
The Lost Village Saloon
The Chuckwagon
Roberts Post Office

Organizations from Red Lodge, MT

Red Lodge Schools
Red Lodge Senior Center & Patrons
Beartooth Market IGA
Red Lodge Library
Boys & Girls Club
Family Dollar
The Elks Lodge
Beartooth Billings Clinic

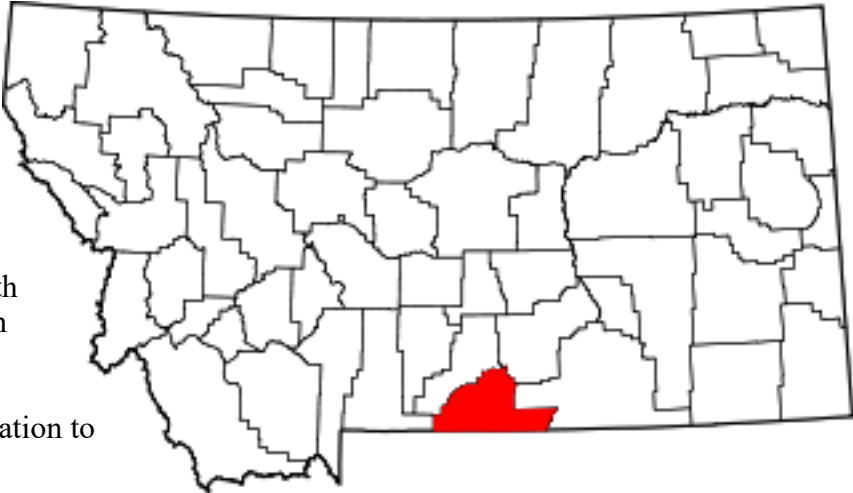
Overview

Considered a frontier county, Carbon County has approximately five residents per square mile, and is located in south central Montana. As of 2022, Carbon County has approximately 11,000 residents across 2,062 square miles. The largest city and county seat is Red Lodge, but the county contains additional incorporated cities including Bearcreek, Bridger, Fromberg, and Joliet.

Geographically, Carbon County comprises much of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness and the Beartooth Mountain range, which is home to Granite Peak, the state's highest elevation (12,807 ft).

Carbon County is governed by three county commissioners: Scott Miller of Bridger, Scott Blain of Joliet, and Bill Bullock of Red Lodge, MT.

Led by the Public Health Director, Erin Cross RN, the Carbon County Health Department (CCHD) aims to promote, improve and protect the health and well-being of the people of Carbon County. To work with individuals, families and the community through a variety of programs, services and education to prevent and control disease and injury.



The following Community Health Needs Assessment was conducted in collaboration with Piedmont Research Strategies, Inc (PRS). Together, this assessment took a “community led, and community driven” approach in interviewing key informants and conducting an online survey of Carbon County residents. The assessment prioritized assessing residents outside of the county seat to obtain a sample was representative as possible.

The following document contains an analysis of population-level primary and secondary data for the Carbon County. For questions about the findings within this report, please contact Erin Cross at ecross@co.carbon.mt.us

Methodology

This assessment incorporates data from multiple sources in order to triangulate the health and concerns of Carbon County residents.

Methods of Data Collection

Data collected within this report was derived from a number of sources: a review of the literature and assessments by leading health organizations within the past two years, key informant interviews with integral members of Carbon County’s community, as well as online and paper surveys of residents.

Secondary Data Collection

The research team reviewed three documents that were published within the past calendar year about the needs and health of Carbon County residents.

The first data source was the “2022 Community Health Needs Assessment” that was administered by the Beartooth Billings Clinic between March 2022 and April 2022. Surveying clinic patrons, this assessment focused on residents’ health needs, access to healthcare services, chronic disease prevention, and mental and behavioral health (n = 149).

Second, the “2022 Housing Assessment” was administered by the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation between December 2021 and January 2022. This survey was administered to a small sample of households within Carbon County and included information on a variety of household characteristics including housing conditions, annual income, mortgage status, ownership/rental status, etc. (n = 331).

The final data source that was reviewed was the “2022 Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults,” administered by the Area 2 Agency on Aging between March 2022 and August 2022. Surveying households in Montana with at least one individual over the age of 55, this survey assessed health, functionality, and quality of life indicators for seniors (n = 850).

Across all three data sources, Carbon County had notable concerns with affordable housing, cost of living, availability of healthcare, and access to mental healthcare. These concepts were our main concerns as we began primary data collection.

Primary Data Collection

Key Informant Interviews

CCHD conducted interviews with residents of Carbon County who represented unique perspectives within the community. These residents represented various locations within the county, included residents who have lived within the area for over a decade, and were able to provide a diverse range of experiences and concerns. The interviews helped further inform both the quantitative and qualitative items included within the subsequent survey.

Survey Instrument

The survey was created using a variety of sources. Some items were taken from the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment conducted by Beartooth Billings Clinic. We also incorporated feedback from key informant interviews to find validated measures related to our specific concerns (i.e. availability of resources, transportation, and affordability). As a result of our interviews, it became apparent that COVID and the 2022 flooding of Carbon County remained large concerns within the community, and were therefore included in qualitative questions at the end of the survey.

Sample Approach & Design

We utilized a number of recruitment techniques to ensure that our sample was as representative as possible of the nearly 11,000 residents of Carbon County. Posting the online link of the survey to social media recruited nearly half of our survey respondents. CCHD also engaged in tabling at various locations within a number of the larger cities within the county (Red Lodge, Bridger, Joliet, Roberts). Residents were also given the option to complete the survey on paper and were provided with a stamped envelope to mail the surveys back to the health department. This also proved a successful method of recruitment, as nearly 60 residents mailed surveys to CCHD. CCHD also utilized ads within the local newspaper, announcements were made on the local television station, as well as the radio station.

These efforts resulted in a total sample of 323 residents over the age of 18. All data collection and data analysis were conducted by PRS.

Sample Characteristics

CCHD and PRS closely evaluated the data for missingness and the overall quality of the data provided. All 323 respondents (residents) provided sufficient, usable data for a majority of the questions on the survey."

All subsequent analyses were conducted to examine if there were differences between those living within Red Lodge, and residents outside of the city. There were no notable differences in results. The sample design and procedures within data collection have likely ensured that this sample is representative of Carbon County, and can therefore likely be generalized to the community as a whole.

On average, residents were approximately 57 years old, 75% of the sample was female, 92% identified as white, 98% as non-Hispanic, 62% were married, 78% were homeowners, 53% had graduated college or graduate school, 64% had children, 17% were considered disabled, and 6% were veterans. See Table 1 for additional details on the sample.

Zip code	Town	N (%)
59007	Bearcreek, MT	4 (1%)
59008	Belfry, MT	9 (3%)
59013	Boyd, MT	5 (2%)
59014	Bridger, MT	13 (4%)
59029	Fromberg, MT	11 (3%)
59041	Joliet, MT	30 (9%)
59044	Laurel, MT	1 (<1%)
59044	Luther, MT	2 (<1%)
59068	Red Lodge, MT	201 (63%)
59070	Roberts, MT	38 (12%)
59071	Roscoe, MT	4 (1%)

2023 Sample Characteristics

Table 1. Demographic Information

Variable		N (%)
Age, mean (min, max)	56.7 (18, 96)	
Age group	<20	2 (1)
	21-30	19 (6)
	31-40	44 (14)
	41-50	55 (17)
	51-60	54 (17)
	61-70	67 (21)
	71-80	61 (19)
	>80	17 (5)
Gender	Female	243 (75.2%)
	Male	75 (23.2%)
	Non-Binary	1 (0.3%)
	Prefer Not to Answer	3 (0.9%)
Race	American Indian / Alaska Native	2 (0.6%)
	Asian	2 (0.6%)
	Black or African American	2 (0.6%)
	White or Caucasian	292 (91.5%)
	Biracial or Multiracial	7 (2.2%)
	Prefer Not to Answer	8 (2.5%)
	Other	6 (1.9%)
	Missing	4 (1.2%)
Hispanic	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	7 (2.2%)
	Not Hispanic, Latino, Spanish Origin	309 (97.8%)
	Missing	7 (2.2%)

Table 1. Demographic Information Continued

Variable		N (%)
Relationship Status	Married	197 (61.6%)
	Widowed	18 (5.6%)
	Divorced	34 (10.6%)
	Cohabiting or Domestic Partnership	25 (7.8%)
	Single, Never Married	38 (11.9%)
	Prefer Not to Answer	8 (2.5%)
	Missing	3 (0.9%)
	Highest Education Completed	11 th Grade
Graduated High School		47 (14.7%)
1 Year of College		36 (11.3%)
2 Years of College		33 (10.3%)
3 Years of College		10 (3.1%)
Graduated from College		93 (29.1%)
Some Graduate School		20 (6.3%)
Completed Graduate School		78 (24.4%)
Disability Status	Missing	3 (0.9%)
	Yes	54 (16.9%)
	No	255 (79.9%)
	Prefer Not to Answer	10 (3.1%)
Do You Have Children	Missing	4 (1.2%)
	Yes	203 (63.6%)
	No	116 (36.4%)
Living Situation	Missing	4 (1.2%)
	Homeowner	252 (78.3%)
	Renting a Home	38 (11.8%)
	Renting an Apartment	16 (5%)
	Other	16 (5%)
Ever Served in the Military	Missing	1 (0.3%)
	Yes	20 (6.3%)
Military Status	No	299 (93.7%)
	On active duty for Reserves/Ntl Guard	2 (0.7%)
	On active duty in the past	18 (5.9%)

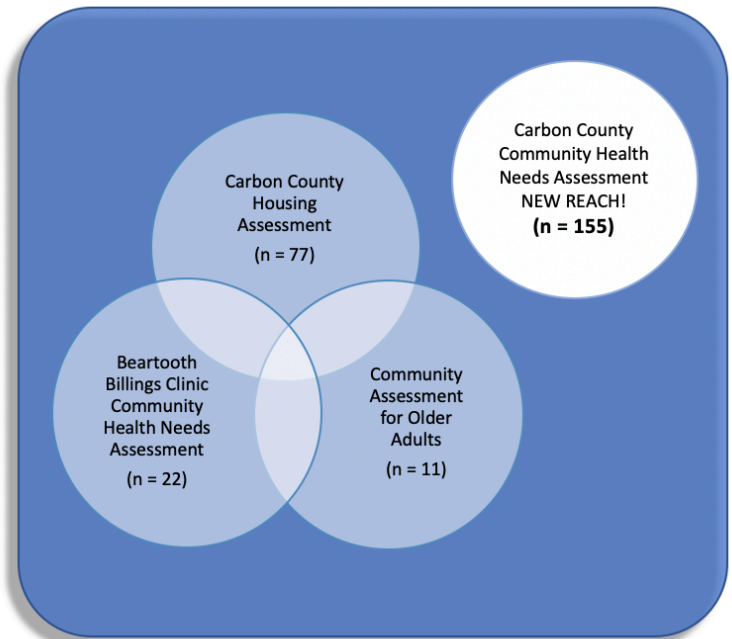
Increased Reachability

Within the survey, we asked respondents to indicate if they had previously completed either the 2022 Beartooth Billings Clinic Community Health Needs Assessment, the 2022 Carbon County Housing Assessment, or the 2022 Community Assessment for Older Adults. The corresponding figure indicates the number of respondents we received who completed any of the prior assessments.

In addition to acquiring a relatively representative sample of Carbon County, CCHD also hoped to reach more remote residents within Carbon County whose voices had not been accounted for in the three

aforementioned assessments. As a result of recruitment efforts and increasing awareness of the 2023 assessment, CCHD was able to obtain 155 “new reaches.” These new reaches had not participated in any of the three assessments, while 64 of them were residents outside of Red Lodge- from more remote locations within the county.

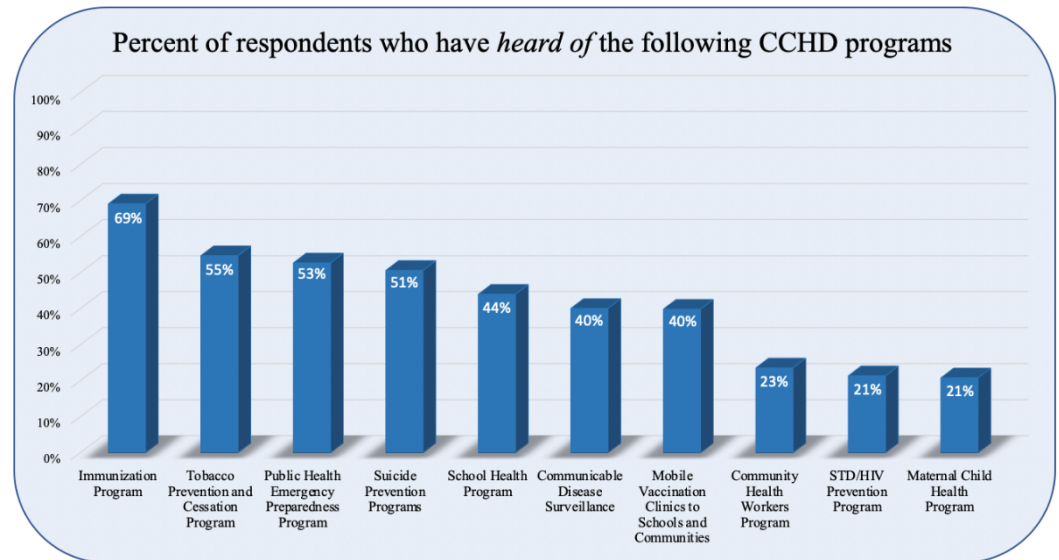
A total of 323 residents completed the CCHD Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which comprises approximately 3% of the total population of Carbon County. Although this seems like a small representation, it is necessary to note that populations of interest for public health (and health systems-research) are often exceedingly large. It is entirely unfeasible to collect information from all subjects in a population, therefore it is important to understand why we take samples from populations to begin with. Despite this, the expansive recruitment efforts of CCHD personnel maximized the representation of this sample of respondents to best reflect the demographic and geographic distribution of residents across Carbon County. This was a feat unmet by previous assessments conducted in the region.



Carbon County Health Department Programs

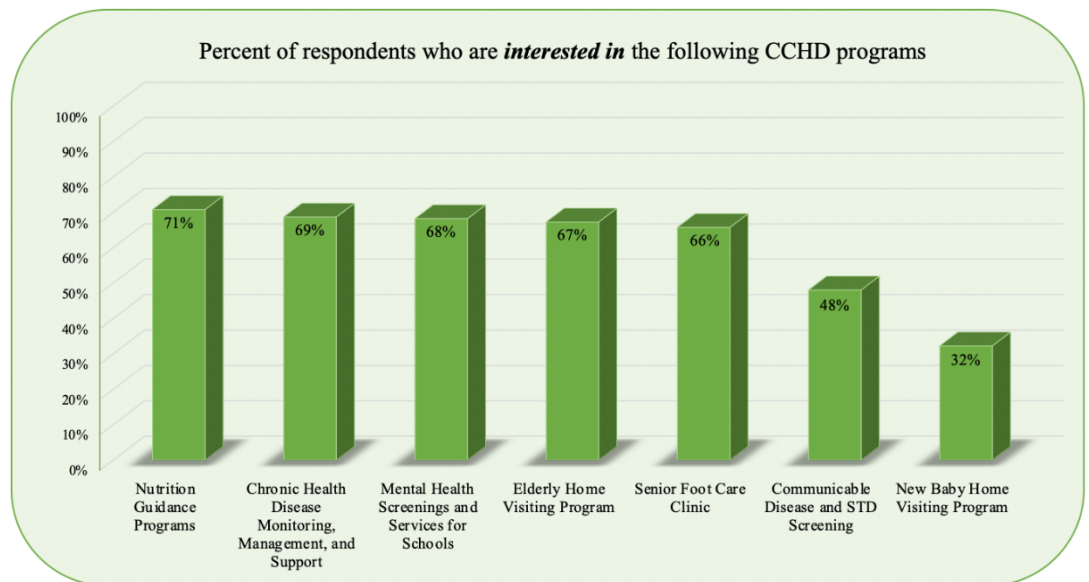
Awareness of CCHD Programs

In order to facilitate beneficial programming for county residents, CCHD must first acknowledge what programs residents are already aware of. We assessed residents' awareness of current CCHD programming. The corresponding graph indicates greatest awareness of immunization clinics, tobacco prevention and cessation, emergency preparedness, and suicide prevention programs.



Interest in CCHD Programs

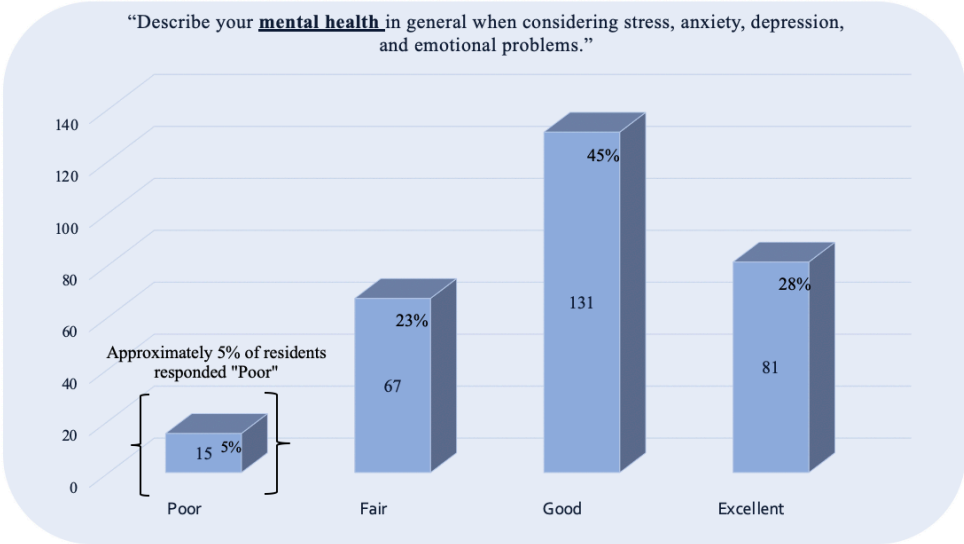
Residents were also asked to indicate their interest in new CCHD programs. Most residents expressed interest in nutrition guidance, chronic health management, mental health support, elderly home visiting, and senior foot care.



Summary of Findings

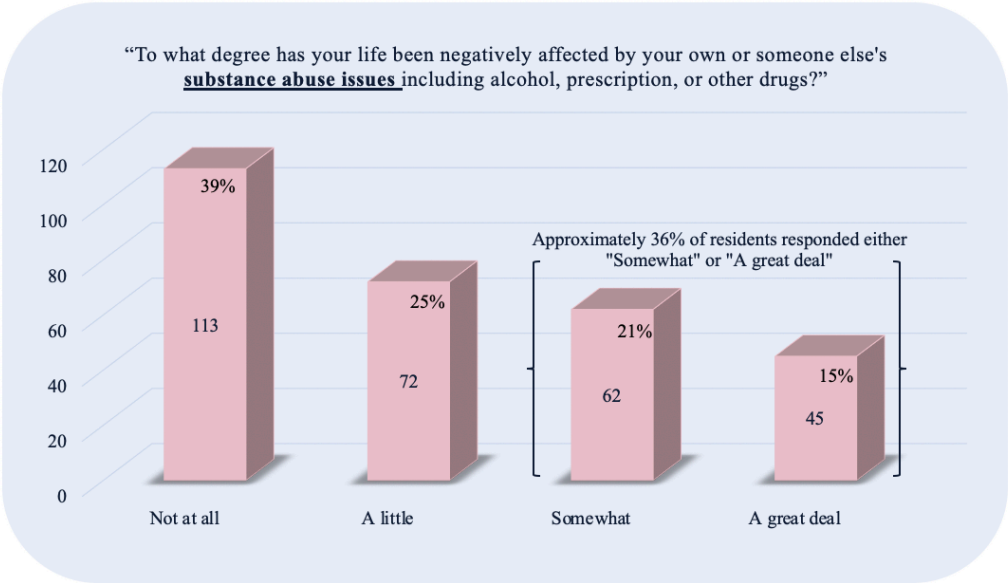
Health Outcomes

The following four health outcomes were duplicated from the 2022 Beartooth Billings Clinic (BBC) Community Health Needs Assessment. These items were used in this 2023 assessment to determine if a broader, community sample (not specifically clinic patrons) would result in comparable measures of mental health, substance abuse concerns, stress, and loneliness/isolation.

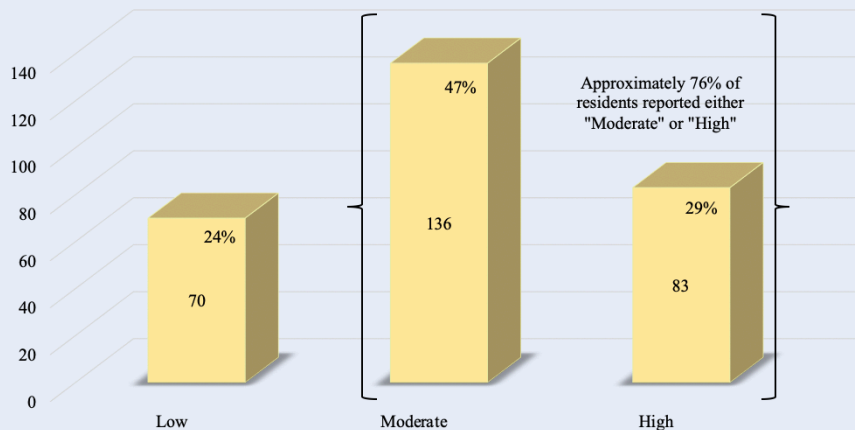


Most Carbon County residents indicated that their mental health (in general) was good to excellent (73%). About 5% reported that their mental health was “poor.” Compared to the BBC report where 82% reported good/excellent, and only 0.7% reported poor.

36% of Carbon County residents indicated that substance abuse issues have negatively impacted their lives either somewhat or a great deal. This is compared to 25% from the BBC report.



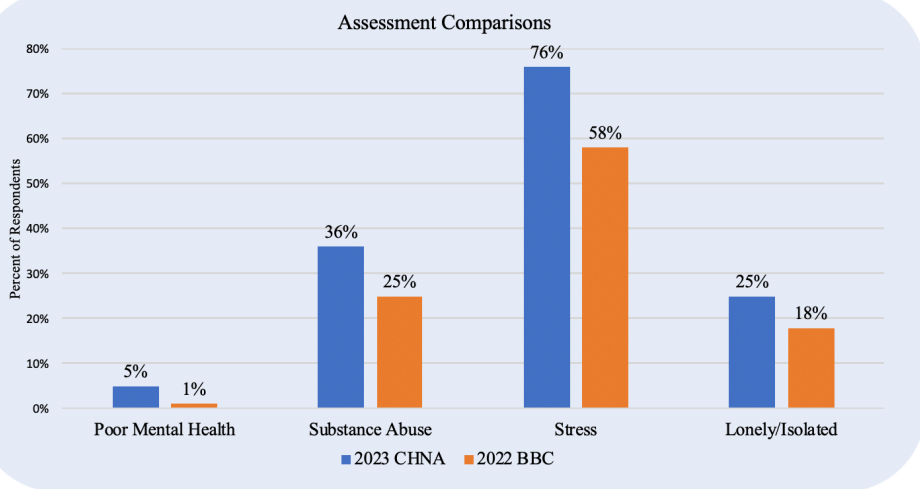
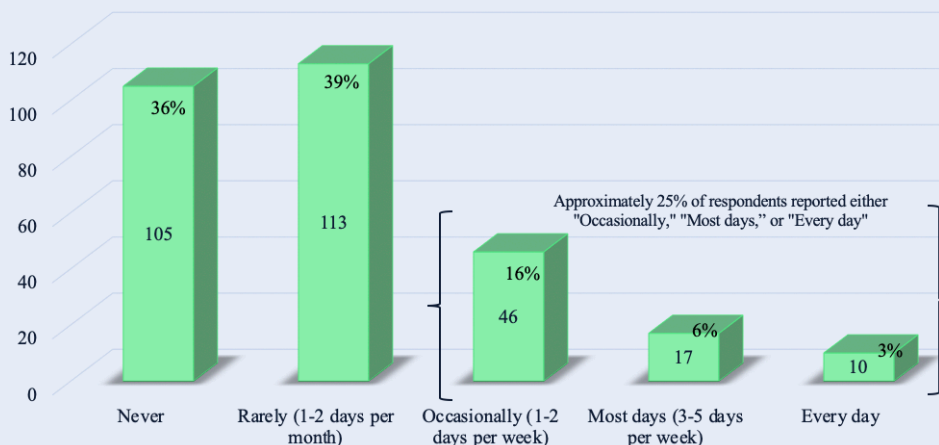
How would you describe your **stress** level over the past year?



76% of residents indicated that they have felt moderate to high levels of stress within the past year. This is compared to the 58% reported in the BBC assessment.

25% of Carbon County residents reported feeling lonely or isolated at least occasionally within the past year. This is in comparison to BBC's 18% from 2022.

How often did you feel **lonely or isolated** in the past year?



The 2023 Carbon County CHNA of county residents and the 2022 BBC Assessment of clinic patrons show the prevalence of our health outcomes among two different samples over two years. It is important to note the change in prevalence given a more representative, county sample (when compared to the clinical sample utilizing services from BBC).

Availability of Resources

Thoroughly reviewing previous assessments, as well as using knowledge gleaned from key informant interviews, Carbon County residents were reporting significant concerns about availability of resources within the community. These concerns run the gamut, including general or specialized medical care, mental health services, or having health insurance. Survey respondents were asked the following questions, where they reported the extent to which they believe availability of resources exists within the county.

Composite scores are often used in surveys to combine similarly characterized questions and generate a more robust indicator of an “overall” construct. Composite scores were calculated for availability, transportation, and affordability and then used to examine how lower levels of each were related to our previous four health variables.

Please indicate the extent to which there is availability of the following in Carbon County.

Question, no. (%)	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	I don't know
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	69 (24)	57 (20)	32 (11)	8 (3)	127 (43)
Availability of preventative health services (e.g., health screenings, flu shots, educational workshops)	15 (5)	49 (17)	118 (40)	81 (28)	30 (10)
Availability of affordable health insurance	69 (24)	51 (17)	66 (22)	14 (5)	93 (32)
Availability of the healthcare you need	20 (7)	76 (26)	109 (38)	68 (23)	17 (6)
Availability of the oral healthcare you need	50 (17)	61 (21)	90 (31)	57 (20)	34 (12)
Availability of the vision care you need	99 (34)	64 (22)	59 (20)	25 (9)	46 (16)
Availability of affordable medications you need	28 (10)	64 (22)	106 (36)	55 (19)	40 (14)

We calculated a total “composite score” using the 7 questions above that assessed availability of resources within Carbon County. As a result, we classified residents as having either “poor,” “fair,” or “good/excellent” overall availability of resources.

Poor Availability
n = 19

Fair Availability
n = 122

Good / Excellent Availability
n = 143

Transportation

Residents were asked to report the extent to which they believed transportation was a problem within Carbon County.

How much of a problem, if at all, have each of the following been for you?

Question, no. (%)	Not a Problem	Minor Problem	Moderate Problem	Major Problem	Not Applicable
Ease of travel by public transportation in your community	67 (23)	33 (11)	27 (9)	35 (12)	129 (44)
Ease of travel by car in your community	217 (74)	48 (16)	17 (6)	5 (2)	5 (2)
Ease of walking in your community	165 (57)	51 (18)	42 (15)	18 (6)	13 (5)
Ease of bicycling in your community	134 (46)	37 (13)	45 (16)	16 (6)	58 (20)
Ease of getting to the paces you usually have to visit	225 (77)	43 (15)	15 (5)	5 (2)	4 (1)
Having safe and affordable transportation available	139 (48)	52 (18)	35 (12)	18 (6)	47 (16)

We calculated a composite score using the 6 questions above. Residents were classified into two groups: Transportation is a Minor/No or a Moderate problem to indicate how burdened they were by different methods of transportation in Carbon County

Transportation is a
Minor /No Problem
(n = 254)

Transportation is a
Moderate Problem
(n = 37)

Affordability of Resources

How much of a problem, if at all, have each of the following been for you?

Question, no. (%)	Not a Problem	Minor Problem	Moderate Problem	Major Problem	Not Applicable
Cost of living in your community	71 (24)	66 (23)	80 (27)	71 (24)	4 (1)
Availability of affordable quality food	59 (20)	71 (24)	90 (31)	69 (24)	3 (1)
Availability of affordable quality housing	95 (33)	20 (7)	36 (13)	113 (39)	24 (8)
Having enough money to meet daily expenses	131 (45)	69 (24)	56 (19)	35 (12)	1 (0)
Having enough money to pay your property taxes	154 (54)	47 (16)	22 (8)	34 (12)	30 (10)
Having housing to suit your needs	180 (62)	41 (14)	20 (7)	43 (15)	8 (3)

Survey respondents were asked the extent to which they believed affordability of resources was a problem within Carbon County. We classified

Affordability is a
Minor/No Problem
(n = 179)

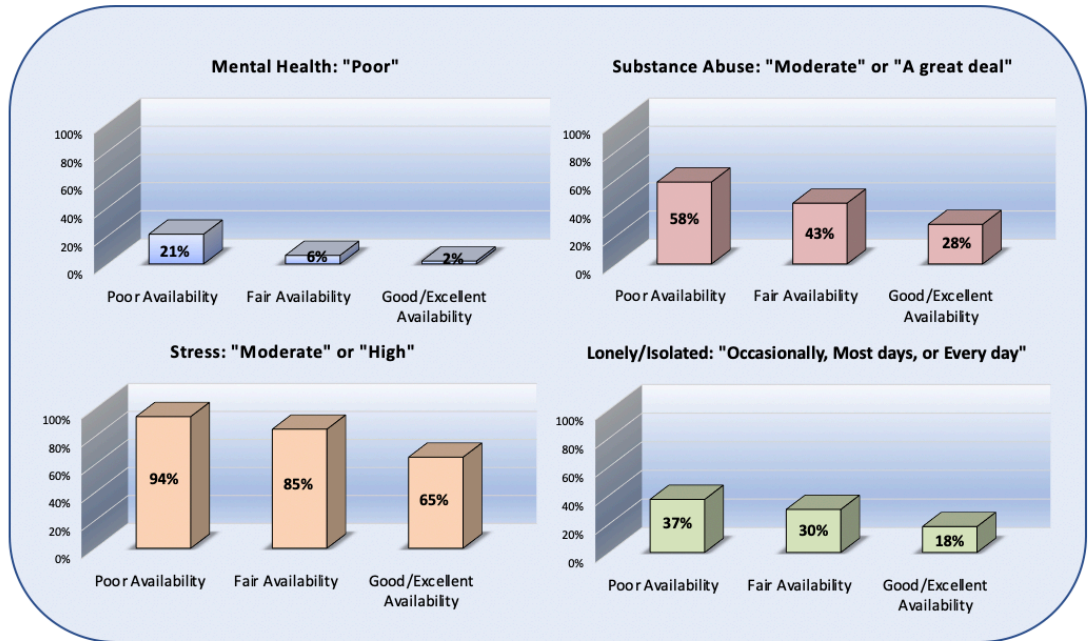
Affordability is a
Moderate Problem
(n = 75)

Affordability is a
Major Problem
(n = 38)

respondents to either Affordability is a Minor/No, Moderate, or Major Problem to indicate how encumbered they were by the affordability of services in Carbon County

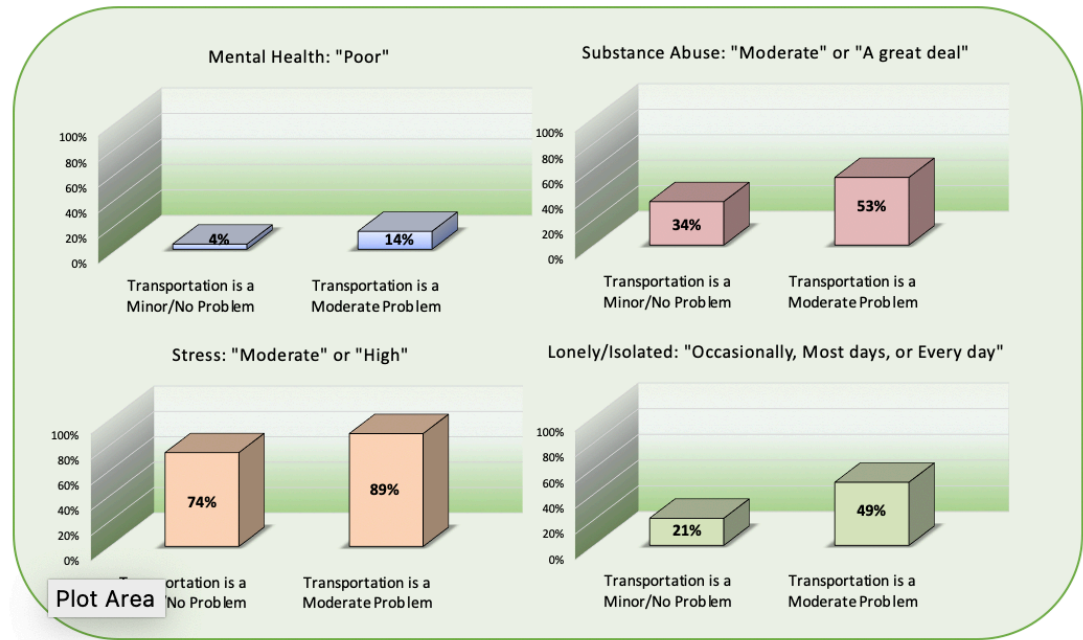
Availability of Resources & Health Outcomes

Of residents reporting poor availability of resources, 21% also reported poor mental health, 58% reported at least moderate concerns with substance abuse, 94% reported at least moderate levels of stress, and 37% reported at least occasional levels of loneliness and isolation.

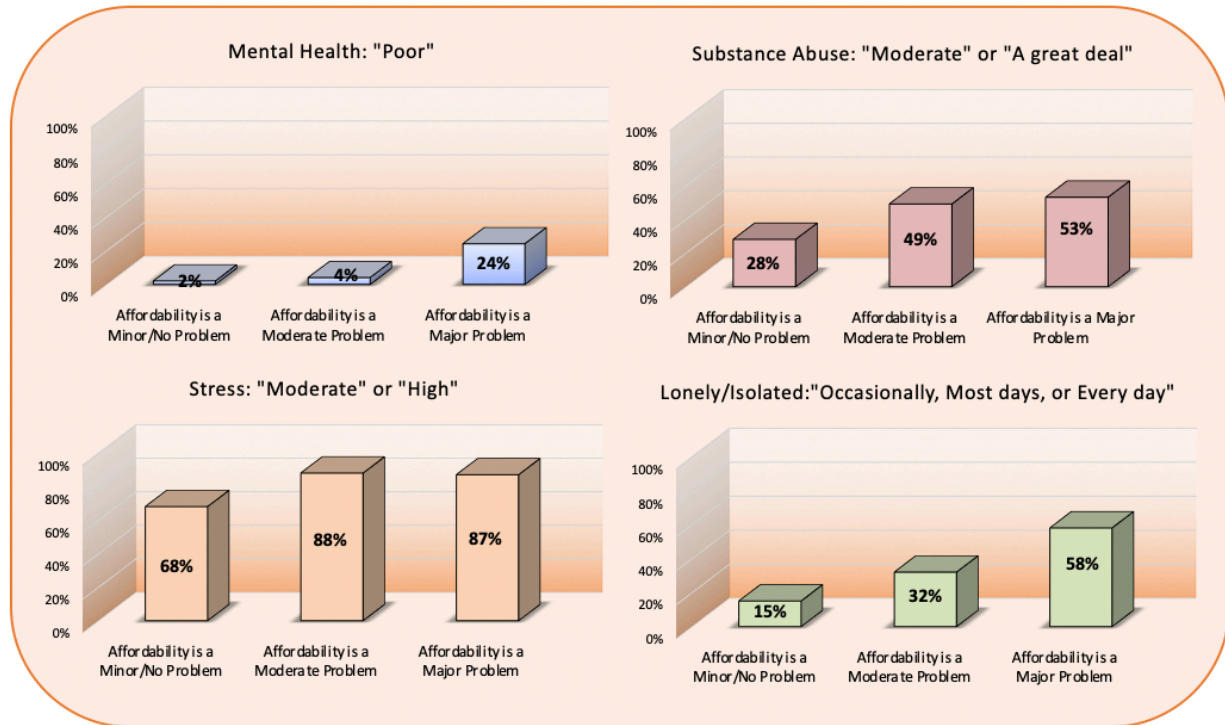


Transportation & Health Outcomes

Among survey respondents who reported that transportation was a moderate problem, 14% reported poor mental health, 53% reported at least moderate concerns about substance abuse, 89% reported at least moderate levels of stress, and 49% reported feeling lonely or isolated at least occasionally each week.



Affordability of Resources & Health Outcomes



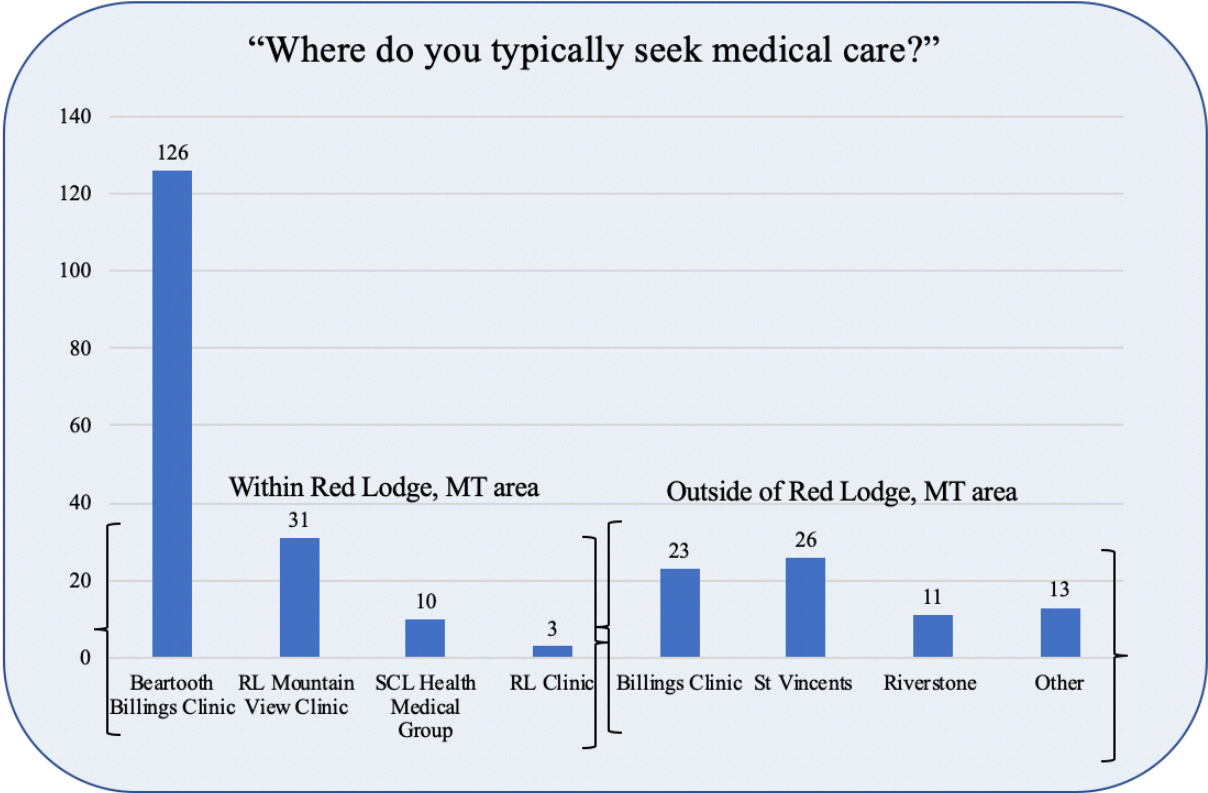
Among residents who reported affordability as a major problem, 24% reported poor mental health, 53% reported at least moderate concerns about substance abuse, 87% reported at least moderate levels of stress, and 58% reported experiencing loneliness and isolation at least occasionally.

Worry & Cost of Medical Care

Since residents of Carbon County have noted significant concerns about affordability and access to medical care, residents were asked to report their levels of worry related to paying medical bills for accidents/illness and for normal medical treatment. Nearly 37% of residents indicated moderate to very worried about paying for medical bills following an illness or accident; 28% reported at least moderate worry related to normal cost of healthcare.

Question, no (%)	Not at all Worried	A Little Worried	Moderately Worried	Very Worried
If you get sick or have an accident, how worried are you that you will be able to pay your medical bills?	96 (33)	88 (30)	57 (20)	50 (17)
How worried are you right now about not being able to pay medical costs for normal healthcare?	133 (46)	77 (27)	46 (16)	34 (12)

Seeking Medical Care



As availability and transportation (to medical appointments) have been consistently noted as major concerns prior to and across this evaluation, residents were asked two items specifically about seeking medical care. Respondents reported if they had a typical location where they seek medical care when they are sick, and at what facility. Among 252 respondents who indicated that yes, they did have a typical location they sought care, 170 residents in Carbon County sought care within the city limits of Red Lodge, MT; 73 residents utilized medical care outside of Red Lodge, MT.

A large percentage of Carbon County residents, particularly those who reside north of Red Lodge, seek healthcare services outside of the county. When needs assessments are conducted out of the largest county hospital (BBC), it is likely going to miss a large contingency of residents. This further justifies the need for more inclusive, county-level assessments when evaluating the needs of the community.

Delaying Medical Care

Have you delayed getting (medical or mental health/psychological) care for any of the following reasons in the past 12 months?	Medical Care	Mental Health / Psychological Care
You couldn't get through on the telephone to make an appointment	24	16
You couldn't get an appointment soon enough	67	31
Once you get to your appointment, you have to wait too long to see the doctor	34	17
The clinic/doctor's office wasn't open when you could get there	27	13
You didn't have transportation	11	6
Couldn't afford to pay	47	36
Preferred to manage yourself	105	57
Didn't think anything could help	51	38
Didn't know how or where to get help	30*	31*
Afraid to ask for help or of what others would think	34	24
Didn't get around to it / didn't bother	54	34
Language barriers	1	0
Personal or family responsibilities	58	36
Professional help not available in the area	60	46
Professional help not available at the time required (e.g., doctor on holidays, inconvenient hours)	43	22

Nearly 78% of residents who completed the survey indicated that they had a designated location they tended to use when seeking medical care. However, residents also noted a number of reasons why they often opted to delay seeking care.

Carbon County residents noted reasons that they have delayed both medical and psychological care (in red above) to include that they would prefer to manage it themselves, they could not get an appointment soon enough, professional help was not available in the area, personal/family responsibilities, they did not get around to it, they did not think anything could help, and they couldn't afford to pay.

While residents appeared to endorse that they were delaying needed care due to lack of availability and lack of affordability, the most endorsed reason for delaying both medical and psychological care was that residents preferred to manage the issue themselves.

Health Department Efforts

Residents were asked to report what they believed the Carbon County Health Department was doing well at the time of the survey (April 2023).

Survey respondents indicated that the CCHD has excelled with their public health outreach programs, promotion of vaccination clinics, and school outreach programs and clinics. Residents noted that the CCHD has had a greater community presence than ever before, they have appreciated increased community engagement, and media outreach to keep the public informed and educated.

Top Public Health Concerns

Residents reported their top public health concerns within Carbon County. These consisted of access and affordability of healthcare, the increasing cost of living, mental health, and care for seniors (key words can be found in the adjacent word cloud).

More specifically, residents noted that access to care included not only primary care, but also specialty care. Within Carbon County, residents reported that they are lacking vision and dental care facilities, as well as care related to specific medical conditions like cancer, obesity, diabetes, asthma, chronic diseases, and nutrition.



Mental health emerged as one of the major concerns among residents in the county. Residents reported significant concerns with stress, anxiety, depression, and suicide. They expressed interest in affordable and accessible mental health care, telehealth, trauma-informed care, as well as substance abuse resources. Carbon County residents indicated that substance use and abuse was a major concern, specifically related to alcohol, marijuana, and methamphetamines. Residents noted an interest in support groups and community support for these issues.

Residents also noted significant concern surrounding the county’s elderly population. Following the recent closure of the last assisted living facility in the county, seniors are now being forced to find new accommodations, or fully relocate outside of Carbon County. Residents reported major concerns surrounding availability of living facilities, affordable food, transportation, hospice care, home health care, and senior programs for those over the age of 60. Additionally, residents expressed a need for respite care for those responsible for caring for this aging population.

Impacts of COVID

As the first community health needs assessment conducted since COVID began in late 2019, the impacts of COVID on the Carbon County community were significant. When asked “In what ways do you feel COVID continues to impact the community of Carbon County,” some residents indicated that they continued to struggle with COVID within the county. Some residents reported feeling “mental and emotional exhaustion,” “loneliness and isolation,” and an overall “lack of support” from their community.

Residents also noted that there was a substantial divide among the community during the height of COVID, but also into 2023. Some residents indicated that there was a lack of acknowledgement of COVID and refusal to use protective coverings. In responding to this question

Among survey responses, residents noted that vulnerable populations (i.e. seniors and the immunocompromised) continue to struggle and have to isolate due to lack of protection among community members.

Residents also indicated that they were still feeling the economic impacts of COVID, noting that they are still paying off debts accrued since the height of the pandemic.

Impacts of the June 2022 Flooding

In June 2022, residents of Carbon County were significantly impacted by a major flood. Residents were displaced, nearly 100 homes flooded, and 8 bridges washed away. The survey asked respondents “To what extent do you think that flooding in Carbon County has influenced your overall physical and mental health?”

After the flood, residents indicated there was an overwhelming amount of support provided across most of the community. Across multiple government and local agencies, churches, volunteer organizations, most residents noted a positive response to flood clean up.

Among responses, residents reported that some community members are still displaced from their homes, and continue to experience economic concerns related to the flood, even a year later. Some residents indicated that they have been “financially ruined,” are unable to afford to live in Carbon County, but cannot afford to move. They also noted feelings of stress, apprehension, worry, fears of future flooding.

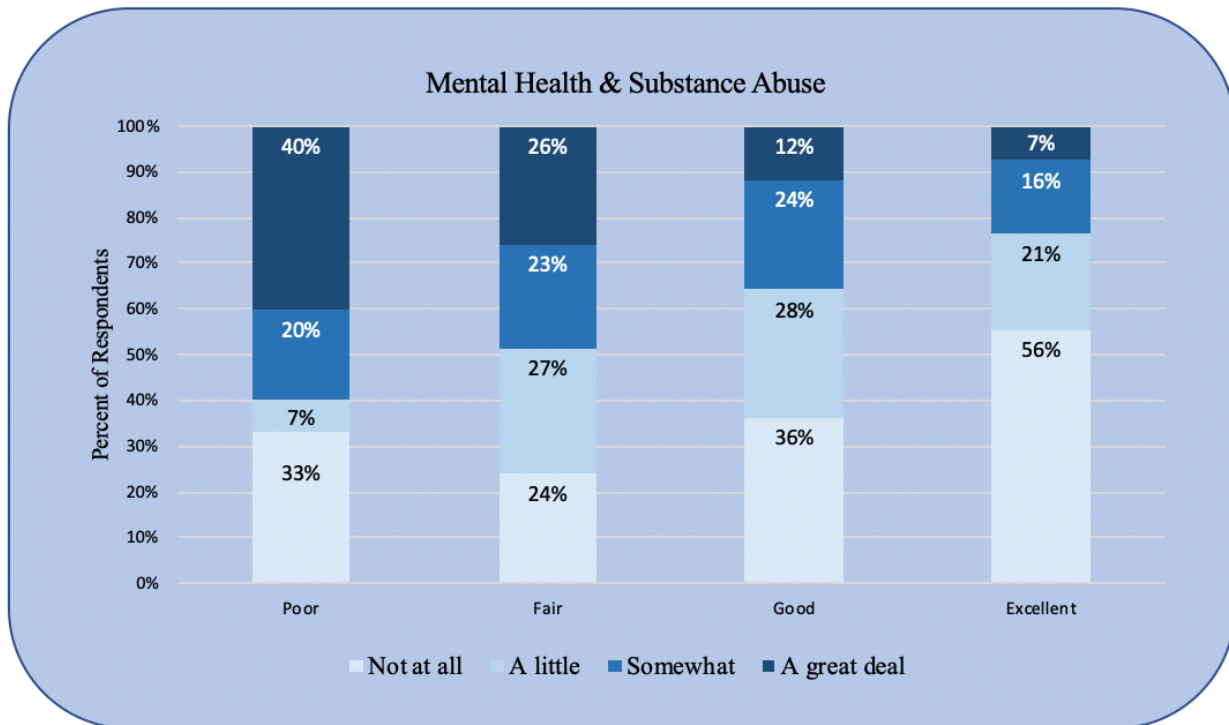
Subgroup Analyses

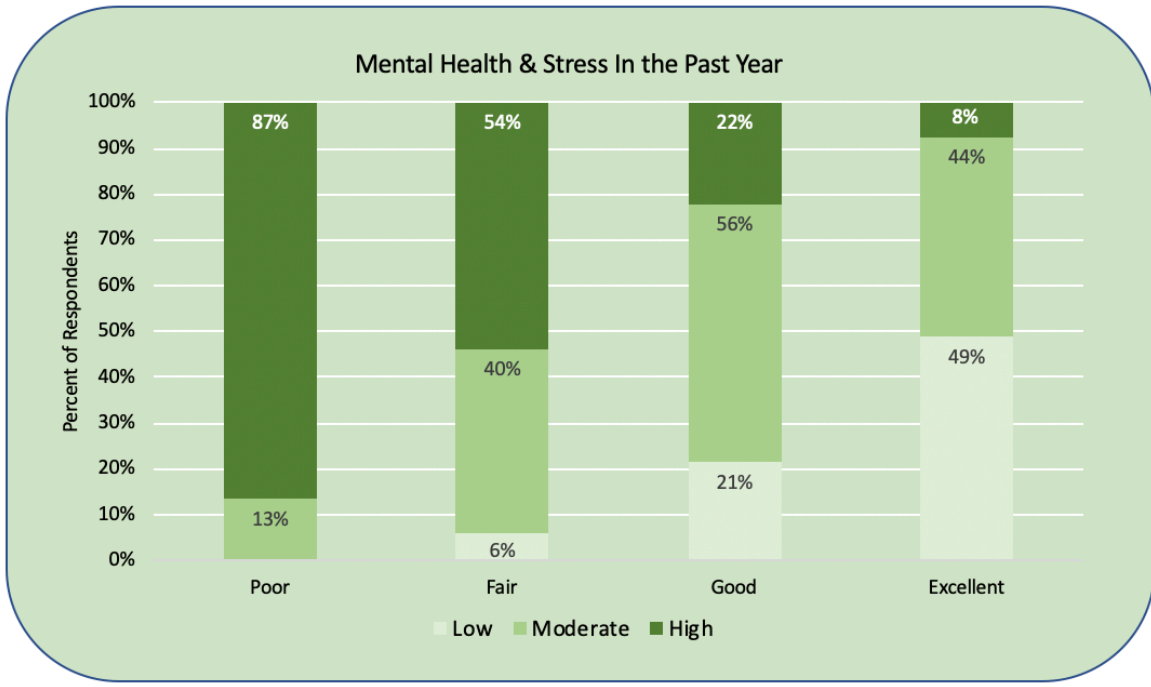
Similar to previous assessments, this report found that mental health & care for the seniors were noted as two of the top concerns within Carbon County.

Mental Health Correlates

We further examined how varying levels of mental health were related to the three additional health variables (substance abuse, stress, and loneliness/isolation).

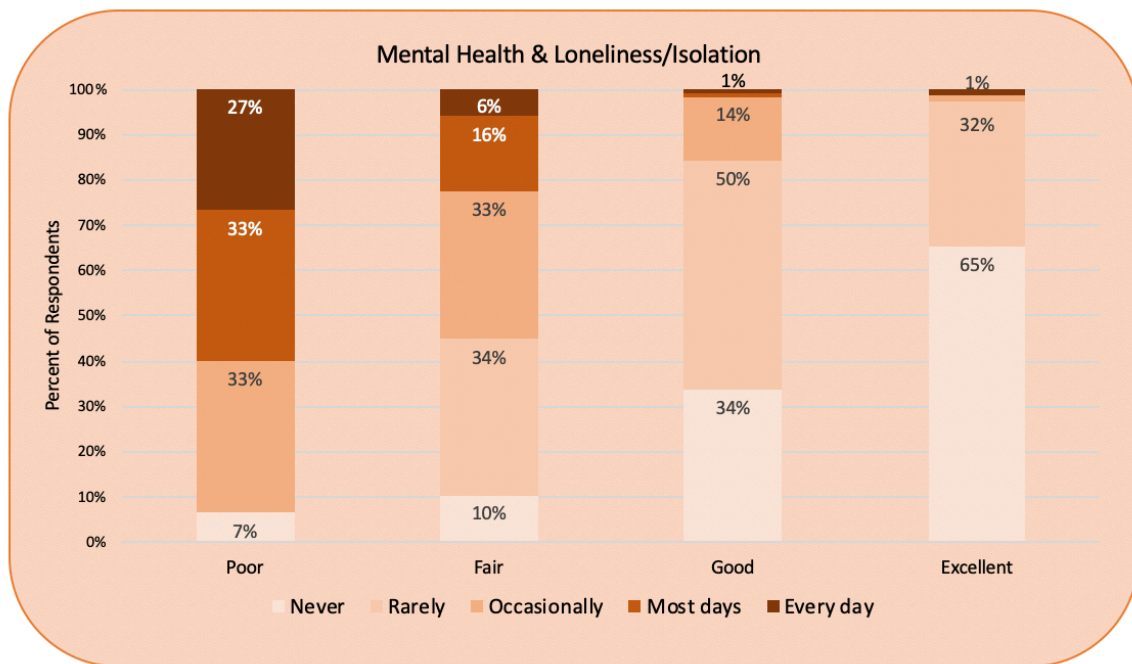
Seen in the figure below, among those with poor mental health, 40% of residents reported that substance abuse was a great concern. As responses to the mental health item improve, we saw decreases in overall concerns about substance abuse. Among residents who reported that their mental health was excellent, only 7% reported that substance abuse was a great concern- while 56% reported no concerns about substance abuse whatsoever.





Examining residents who reported levels of mental health and stress, we see a similar phenomenon (above). Nearly 87% of residents who reported poor mental health, noted “high” levels of stress. As mental health improved, so did levels of high stress.

Similarly, when examining loneliness and isolation (below), among residents reporting poor mental health, 27% reported daily feelings of loneliness and isolation. As mental health improved, these daily feelings dissipated.



Seniors within Carbon County

Since seniors (60+) were also designated as a top priority group, we chose to narrow our results and specifically examine residents over the age of 60. From our original sample of 47% (n = 153) of residents were between the ages of 60 and 96.

When examining data related to health measures of mental health, substance abuse, stress, and loneliness/isolation, seniors had comparable trends, but noted somewhat lower percentages than the overall sample.

Reasons to delay care were most commonly related to managing concerns themselves, lack of transportation, and lack of healthcare in the area.

Top public health concerns within the qualitative responses included availability of affordable housing, availability of affordable healthcare, providing skilled facilities for seniors, improving transportation (to medical care), and mental health and substance use treatment to the community.

Key Health Concerns

Access to & Affordability of Housing

Residents within Carbon County have consistently noted the rising cost of living is not commensurate to living wages. The housing market within the county has also seen a dramatic influx of home rentals (e.g. AirBnb, VRBO) that reallocate housing away from long-term residents and employees within the county, and provide temporary housing to visitors. While there are some housing options, they are often not affordable, and force some residents to fully relocate.

Access to & Affordability of Healthcare

Residents also indicated significant concerns about access to healthcare. Transportation to medical care remains a major concern among Carbon County residents- especially in the winter months, and especially among seniors. While there are services within the county that assist with improving physical access, these resources are often at risk of closing due to lack of consistent funding. Additionally, the lack of specialized care available within the county itself often forces residents to seek specialty care upwards of 60 miles away (in Billings, MT), or not seek care at all.

Mental Health

While residents of Carbon County did not necessarily note significant mental health *problems*, this assessment was not intended to address such issues. As a result, a number of psychological concerns are likely present within the community and have merely gone unreported. Residents may also believe that their concerns are not mental health in nature, which could be attributed to a lack of mental health literacy, or factors like stigma, rugged individualism, and constructs of masculinity that prevent recognition and treatment of mental health symptoms. Further assessment into symptomology, as well as efforts to increase access to care (i.e. increasing telehealth access) may begin to further elucidate the full picture of mental health within the county and how best to address it.

Senior Care

With the closure of the last assisted living facility in Carbon County, many seniors have been forced to relocate and spend their remaining years not being able to age in their place of choosing. Lack of specialized care and transportation also hinders seniors from being able to seek appropriate medical and psychological care.

Conclusion

The 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment was a successful evaluation of the residents of Carbon County at large.

Residents reported significant concerns with mental health, concerns of substance, stress, and loneliness/isolation. These health factors were also related to the availability and affordability of resources within the community, as well as access to transportation. While we cannot necessarily infer causation among these variables, we may be able to improve our health factors by addressing logistics like availability, affordability, and transportation.

Residents expressed interest in a number of the CCHD's potential programming. The CCHD was further supported through residents' qualitative responses, praising the community's response to COVID and natural disasters within the past few years.

Affordable housing, access to affordable medical and psychological care, and providing aid to seniors within Carbon County remain the top concerns across all assessments reviewed thus far. To address these complex concerns, CCHD is prioritizing seeking state and federal funding to facilitate access to necessary care. Through collaborative efforts across Carbon County, the health department aims to strategically address each of these concerns within the next few years.

Appendix: Community Survey

Please tell us about yourself and place a mark in the box that best describes you.

1. Which of the following best describes your gender?
 - Female
 - Male
 - Non-Binary
 - Prefer not to answer
 - Other (please specify) _____

2. What is your age? _____

3. Which of the following best describes your race?
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Black or African American
 - White or Caucasian
 - Biracial or Multiracial
 - Prefer not to answer
 - Other (please specify) _____

4. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?
 - Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin
 - Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin

5. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?
 - Married
 - Widowed
 - Divorced
 - Separated
 - Cohabiting with a significant other or in a domestic partnership
 - Single, never married
 - Prefer not to answer

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Did not attend school <input type="checkbox"/> 1st grade <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd grade <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd grade <input type="checkbox"/> 4th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 5th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 6th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 7th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 8th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 9th grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 10th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 11th grade <input type="checkbox"/> Graduated from high school <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year of college <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years of college <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years of college <input type="checkbox"/> Graduated from college <input type="checkbox"/> Some graduate school <input type="checkbox"/> Completed graduate school
---	---

7. What is your current occupation? _____
8. Do you identify as a person with a disability or other chronic condition?
- Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say
9. Do you have any children? *(There will be a flyer for an assessment regarding the needs of children in Carbon County at the end of this survey)*
- Yes
 - No
10. If you have children, what are their ages? _____
11. What is your zip code? _____
12. In what town do you currently live? _____
13. How long have you lived in Carbon County? _____
14. What is your current living situation?
- Homeowner
 - Renting a Home
 - Renting an Apartment
 - Other (please specify) _____
15. What type of health insurance do you currently have? (select all that apply)
- Medicare
 - Employer Sponsored
 - Health Insurance Marketplace
 - Private Insurance
 - Health Savings Account
 - Medicaid
 - VA/Military
 - Indian Health
 - No Insurance
 - Other (please specify) _____
16. Have you ever served in the United States Armed Forces, Military Reserves, or National Guard?
- Yes
 - No, never served in the military

17. Which best describes your current military status?
- Currently on active duty
 - On active duty in the past, but not now
 - Only on active duty for training in the Reserves or National Guard
 - Never served in the military
18. In 2022, did you complete the Carbon County Housing Assessment?
(This was administered by the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation)
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
19. In 2022, did you complete the Beartooth Billings Clinic Community Health Needs Assessment?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
20. In 2022, did you complete the Community Assessment for Older Adults?
(This was administered by the Area 2 Agency on Aging)
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
21. We have implemented many recruitment methods for this survey. Please let us know how you heard about this survey. *(If a high school student recruited you to take this survey, please note their name here)*
-
22. To what degree has your life been negatively affected by your own or someone else's substance abuse issues including alcohol, prescription, or other drugs?
- Not at all
 - A little
 - Somewhat
 - A great deal
23. Describe your mental health in general when considering stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional problems.
- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Excellent

24. How would you describe your stress level over the past year?

- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Prefer not to answer

25. How often did you feel lonely or isolated in the past year?

- Never
- Rarely (1-2 days per **month**)
- Occasionally (1-2 days per **week**)
- Most days (3-5 days per **week**)
- Every day

26. Please indicate the extent to which there is availability of the following in Carbon County (*place a check mark in the column to indicate your response*)

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	I don't know
Availability of affordable quality mental health care					
Availability of preventative health services (e.g., health screenings, flu shots, educational workshops)					
Availability of affordable health insurance					
Availability of the healthcare you need					
Availability of the oral healthcare you need					
Availability of the vision care you need					
Availability of affordable medications you need					

27. How much of a problem, if at all, have each of the following been for you? (*place a check mark in the column to indicate your response*)

	Not a problem	Minor problem	Moderate problem	Major problem	Not applicable
Ease of travel by public transportation in your community					
Ease of travel by car in your community					
Ease of walking in your community					
Ease of bicycling in your community					
Ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit					
Having safe and affordable transportation available					

28. How much of a problem, if at all, have each of the following been for you? (place a check mark in the column to indicate your response)

	Not a problem	Minor problem	Moderate problem	Major problem	I don't know
Cost of living in your community					
Availability of affordable quality food					
Availability of affordable quality housing					
Having enough money to meet daily expenses					
Having enough money to pay your property taxes					
Having housing to suit your needs					

29. Is there a place that you **USUALLY** go to when you are sick or need advice about your health?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please indicate where you typically seek medical care.

30. Indicate your response by circling yes or no for delaying treatment for medical **and** psychological care.

Have you delayed getting (medical or mental health/psychological) care for any of the following reasons in the past 12 months?	Medical Care	Mental Health / Psychological Care
You couldn't get through on the telephone to make an appointment.	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
You couldn't get an appointment soon enough.	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Once you get to your appointment, you have to wait too long to see the doctor.	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
The clinic/doctor's office wasn't open when you could get there	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
You didn't have transportation	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Couldn't afford to pay	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Preferred to manage yourself	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Didn't think anything could help	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Afraid to ask for help or of what others would think	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Didn't get around to it/didn't bother	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Language barriers	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Personal or family responsibilities	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Professional help not available in the area	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A
Professional help not available at the time required (e.g., doctor on holidays, inconvenient hours)	Yes / No / N/A	Yes / No / N/A

31. Please indicate the extent to which you are worried about the following- either for yourself or someone in your direct household. *(Place a check mark in the column to indicate your response)*

	Not at all worried	A little worried	Moderately worried	Very worried
If you get sick or have an accident, how worried are you that you will be able to pay your medical bills?				
How worried are you right now about not being able to pay medical costs for normal healthcare?				

32. Have you heard of any of the following programs in Carbon County? *(Place a check mark in the column to indicate your response)*

	Yes	No
Maternal Child Health Program <i>(providing education and preventative support and services to mothers and children)</i>		
Immunization Program <i>(helping community members have access to and education about vaccines)</i>		
Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program <i>(helps in preparedness, response, and recovery from natural, technological, and human-caused disasters)</i>		
Community Health Workers Program <i>(workers advocate for, and educate community members in overall health and wellness)</i>		
School Health Program <i>(bringing access to a Registered Nurse, basic health needs, assessments, and education to all of Carbon County's schools)</i>		
Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program <i>(educating about the dangers and consequences of tobacco use)</i>		
STD/HIV Prevention Program <i>(providing education and resources for safer sexual encounters and overall reproductive health promotion)</i>		
Mobile Vaccination Clinics to School and Communities <i>(mobile vaccination clinic to any and all entities in Carbon County)</i>		
Communicable Disease Surveillance <i>(county-wide communicable disease monitoring, investigation, and outbreak investigation and mitigation)</i>		
Suicide Prevention Programs <i>(provides trainings, education and support to schools, individuals, and communities on suicide prevention)</i>		

33. Please indicate your interest in the following programs that are proposed for Carbon County. *(Place a check mark in the column to indicate your response)*

	Not at all interested	Somewhat interested	Moderately interested	Very interested
New Baby Home Visiting Program <i>(offers in home visits to assist/support pregnant women/families with new infants in obtaining needed resources, education, and simple screenings)</i>				
Elderly Home Visiting Program <i>(offers in home visits to assist/support seniors in obtaining needed resources, education, and simple screening)</i>				
Communicable Disease and STD Screening <i>(provides a larger variety of testing and screening services to individuals throughout the county to assist in early detection, preventing the spread of communicable diseases)</i>				
Mental Health Screenings and Services for Schools <i>(provides access to appropriate and timely mental health screenings in schools)</i>				
Senior Foot Care Clinic <i>(provides access to foot care for all seniors, promoting prevention and monitoring for individuals with chronic health conditions)</i>				
Chronic Health Disease Monitoring, Management, and Support <i>(provides education, resources, and support in preventing/managing chronic health diseases)</i>				
Nutrition Guidance Programs <i>(provides access to education, assistance, and resources about nutrition as it relates to living a healthy lifestyle, prevention, or management of chronic diseases)</i>				

If there is another program you are interested in not listed above, please specify:

In order to have a better understanding of Carbon County, please consider providing a few sentences for each of the following items.

34. As a whole, what do you think Carbon County Public Health is doing well?

35. What are some of the top issues (in general) you are most concerned about within Carbon County?

36. What are the top public health issues you are most concerned with within Carbon County?

37. How do you feel that COVID has influenced the health of your community?

38. In what ways do you feel COVID continues to impact the community of Carbon County?

39. To what extent do you think that flooding in Carbon County has influenced your overall physical and mental health?

Thank you for participating in our survey!