

Executive Summary

The report is based on self-administered surveys collected from Union County adults (ages 19+) between September and November 2021, with questions modeled after the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

Key Findings

Health Care Access

- 7% of Union County adults were without health care coverage
- 53% had a routine checkup in the past year
- 54% went outside Union County for health care services
- 68% of adults ages 65+ had received a pneumonia vaccination
- 54% of adults 50+ had a colonoscopy/sigmoidoscopy in the past five years

Women's and Men's Health

- 56% of women over 40 had a mammogram in the past year
- 54% of men had a digital rectal exam in their lifetime
- 69% of adults visited a dentist in the past year

Health Behaviors

- 52% of adults rated their health as excellent or very good
- 65% were overweight or obese
- 6% were current smokers, 24% were former smokers
- 46% had at least one alcoholic drink in the past month
- 10% used recreational marijuana in the past month
- 3% considered attempting suicide

Chronic Disease

- 6% had survived a heart attack and 5% had survived a stroke
- 34% had high blood cholesterol and 34% had high blood pressure
- 14% had been diagnosed with cancer
- 16% had been diagnosed with asthma
- 10% had been diagnosed with diabetes
- 49% were limited in some way by physical, mental, or emotional problems

Social Conditions

- 6% experienced more than one food insecurity issue in the past year
- 20% had experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- 11% reported air quality as the top environmental health concern

Prioritized Health Needs

Through a structured prioritization process, the Community Benefit Subcommittee identified three priority health needs:

1. Chronic Disease
2. Social Determinants of Health
3. Mental/Behavioral Health

The report serves as a foundation for Grande Ronde Hospital and community partners to develop strategies and action plans to improve the health of Union County residents.

Biggest Gaps in Service

Major Healthcare Service Gaps in Union County

Access to Specialty Care

- 54% of adults went outside Union County for health care services
- 47% sought specialty care outside the county
- The primary reason cited (47%) was "need care that they cannot get locally"

Local Healthcare Access Barriers

- 21% reported difficulty getting appointments
- 14% indicated their doctor would not take their insurance
- 13% needed care in the past 12 months but couldn't get it
- Wait times were a significant issue, with 39% citing "too long of a wait for an appointment" as a reason for not getting medical care

Mental Health Services

- Limited mental health resources were evident, with residents reporting barriers to mental health treatment:
 - 5% were embarrassed about seeking mental health services
 - 4% feared treatment
 - 4% didn't know where to get care
 - 3% couldn't get appointments soon enough

Dental Care

- 23% of those seeking care outside the county did so for dental services
- 22% cited cost as the main reason for not visiting a dentist

Geographic Disparities

- Residents traveled to Boise (41%), Walla Walla (28%), Portland (16%), and Tri-Cities (12%) for healthcare
- Transportation issues affected 7% of adults needing services

Economic Barriers

- Residents with incomes under \$25,000 faced more significant barriers across nearly all healthcare metrics
- 26% of adults cited cost as a barrier to seeing a doctor or healthcare provider

These gaps highlight challenges with local specialty care availability, appointment access, insurance acceptance, and affordability, particularly affecting those with lower incomes. The data suggests a need for expanded local specialty services, improved mental health access, and addressing the economic barriers to healthcare.

Greatest Barriers to Care

Primary Barriers to Health Care in Union County

Cost and Insurance Issues

- Cost was cited by 26% of adults as a barrier to seeing a doctor
- 14% reported their doctor would not take their insurance
- 22% cited cost as the primary reason for not visiting a dentist
- For those needing care but unable to get it, 21% cited "cost/no insurance" as the reason

Access and Availability Challenges

- 21% reported difficulty getting appointments
- 39% cited "too long of a wait for an appointment" as a reason for not getting needed medical care
- 15% reported providers don't take their insurance
- Only 45% had one person they considered their personal doctor (with 30% having no personal doctor)

Transportation and Geographic Barriers

- 54% of adults went outside Union County for health care services
- 7% experienced transportation issues when needing services, including:
 - No car (3%)
 - Could not afford gas (2%)

- Limited or no public transportation (2%)
- Disability issues (2%)

Work-Related Barriers

- 5% reported they could not get time off work
- 5% cited inconvenient healthcare hours

Social and Psychological Barriers

- 15% were too embarrassed to seek help
- 8% did not trust or believe doctors
- 4% were frightened of procedures or doctors
- 4% worried healthcare providers might find something wrong

COVID-19 Impact

- 5% cited COVID-19 as a barrier to seeing a doctor
- 8% reported COVID-19 prevented them from getting needed medical care

The report shows these barriers disproportionately affected those with lower incomes (under \$25,000), creating significant health disparities for economically vulnerable populations in Union County.

The Unique Needs of the Community

Rural Healthcare Access Challenges

- 54% of residents traveled outside the county for healthcare services
- Limited specialty care access, requiring travel to Boise (41%), Walla Walla (28%), and Portland (16%)
- Transportation barriers affect 7% of the population, particularly significant in a rural county covering over 2,039 square miles

Economic Vulnerability

- 13.6% of residents lived below the poverty line
- Those with incomes under \$25,000 showed consistently worse health outcomes across nearly all metrics
- 6% experienced multiple food insecurity issues in the past year

Environmental Factors

- 11% cited air quality as their top environmental health concern
- Higher rates of chronic lower respiratory diseases compared to state and national averages
- The mortality rate for chronic lower respiratory disease (51 per 100,000) was significantly higher than Oregon (36) and U.S. (38) rates

Aging Population Needs

- The county has a higher proportion of older adults than state averages
- 49% of adults reported being limited by physical, mental, or emotional problems
- Higher rates of heart disease mortality (157 per 100,000) compared to Oregon (131) and U.S. (165) rates

Mental Health Resources

- 25% of adults rated their mental health as not good on four or more days in the previous month
- 17% reported they or a family member were diagnosed with anxiety or emotional problems
- 20% had experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Community Development Priorities

- Residents expressed strong support for:
 - More locally grown food/farmers markets (61%)
 - Improved bike/walking trail accessibility (55%)

- Enhanced neighborhood safety (45%)
- Community partnerships for healthier, low-cost food options (44%)

Chronic Disease Management

- Higher cancer mortality rates (155 per 100,000) compared to Oregon (147) and U.S. (146)
- 65% of adults were overweight or obese
- 34% had high blood pressure and 34% had high blood cholesterol

What the Hospital or CCO is Doing Well

1. Established a Community Benefit Sub-Committee that has been in existence for eight years
2. Created a Community Health Needs Assessment Task Force with approximately 20 organizations
3. Developed a process for tracking the impact of priority action steps from previous assessments
4. Engaged community partners in defining the scope of the assessment
5. Made the assessment publicly available for feedback

Strengths of the Community

Education Levels

- 92.7% of adults 25 years and over had a high school diploma or higher, which exceeds both the Oregon (91%) and national (88%) averages
- 24.5% of adults had at least a bachelor's degree

Social Cohesion and Support

- Strong presence of membership associations (16.3 per 10,000 population compared to Oregon's 10.2)
- Lower violent crime rates (137 per 100,000) compared to Oregon (249) and U.S. (386) averages

Environmental Quality

- Better air quality than state and national averages (6.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ of fine particulate matter compared to 6.4 in Oregon and 7.2 nationally)
- No reported drinking water violations

Health Behaviors and Outcomes

- Better than state average for tobacco use (6% current smokers compared to Oregon's 13% and U.S. 16%)
- Lower rates of sexually transmitted infections (324.2 chlamydia cases per 100,000 compared to Oregon's 464.0)
- Improvement in some health metrics since previous assessments, such as fewer adults rating their health as fair or poor (10% in 2021 compared to 14% in 2018)

Healthcare Access

- 93% of adults had health insurance coverage, which is better than state (91%) and national (89%) averages
- 69% of adults visited a dentist in the past year, which is slightly better than state (68%) and national (67%) averages

Community Engagement

- Strong interest in community improvement initiatives:
 - 61% support more locally grown food or farmers markets
 - 55% support bike/walking trail accessibility

- 45% support neighborhood safety initiatives
- 40% support community gardens

Housing and Economic Factors

- Lower percentage of households with housing problems (16%) compared to the state average (19%)
- Lower income inequality (ratio of 4.3 between highest and lowest income quintiles) compared to Oregon (4.6) and U.S. (4.9)

Priorities

1. Chronic Disease

- This includes addressing conditions like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory diseases
- The data showed significant issues with 34% of adults having high blood pressure, 34% having high blood cholesterol, and 29% being obese

2. Social Determinants of Health

- Focusing on factors like economic stability, housing, food security, and transportation
- The assessment found 6% of adults experienced multiple food insecurity issues and 13.6% of residents lived below the poverty line

3. Mental/Behavioral Health

- Addressing mental health concerns, substance use, and related issues
- The data indicated 25% of adults rated their mental health as not good on four or more days in the previous month