

## **Executive Summary**

### **Assessment Overview**

Live Healthy Lane conducted a comprehensive community health assessment using the MAPP framework, consisting of three parts: Community Status Assessment (CSA), Community Context Assessment (CCA), and Community Partner Assessment (CPA). The assessment was guided by a vision of Lane County as a welcoming community where systems work for everyone and all people have what they need to thrive.

### **Population Demographics**

Lane County is Oregon's 4th largest county by population, with a majority white population (83.5%) and growing racial and ethnic diversity. About 17% of adults report having a disability, approximately 10% of youth identify as transgender or non-binary, and 25% of youth identify as LGBTQA+.

### **Health Status**

While 84% of adults report good to excellent overall health, concerning trends include declining life expectancy (now 3 years lower than 20 years ago), increasing preterm birth rates (8% to 9.4%), rising adult asthma rates, and increasing congenital syphilis cases. Youth mental health remains a significant concern, with 35% reporting fair to poor mental health and 15% reporting suicidal ideation in 2022. Substance use patterns show stable alcohol use, declining cigarette smoking but stable overall tobacco use, and significantly increased adult cannabis use (20% to 31%).

### **Health Disparities**

Significant disparities exist by race, ethnicity, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status. Youth with marginalized gender and sexual orientation identities report higher rates of poor mental and emotional health. Working-age adults from Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Black, Latine, Asian, and Indigenous communities experience higher median years of potential life lost compared to the county overall. Black/African American and American Indian/Alaska Native communities have the highest syphilis rates.

### **Structural Barriers**

Oregon and Lane County's history of racist exclusion policies continues to create barriers today, particularly evident in homeownership disparities. White residents own homes at 62.1% compared to rates ranging from 34.3% to 48.5% for other racial and ethnic groups. About one-third of respondents report that Lane County does not feel safe, with people holding marginalized identities experiencing higher rates of discrimination.

### **Climate Change Impacts**

Climate change significantly affects health in Lane County. Smoke and ice/snowstorms have impacted most residents in the past two years, with smoke affecting the physical and mental health of 60% or more of those exposed. Climate change is expected to exacerbate existing inequities, particularly for already marginalized populations.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Effects**

About two-thirds of residents reported COVID-19 infection, with disproportionate impacts on people with multiple marginalized identities. Approximately 30% of those infected experienced symptoms lasting three months or longer, with 80% reporting impacts on daily life. The pandemic worsened mental health, created ongoing academic challenges for students, and increased reluctance to engage in public life, while also creating opportunities for creative problem-solving.

### **Health Care Access**

Despite previous gains through Medicaid expansion, health care access has declined in recent years. Mental health care remains particularly difficult to access, with 26% of youth reporting unmet mental health needs in 2022. Barriers include lack of primary and specialty care providers,

long wait times, distance to care (especially in rural areas), and lack of trauma-informed and culturally responsive care. The 2023 closure of Eugene's only emergency department further reduced access.

### **Social Determinants of Health**

Housing affordability is a critical issue, with 56% of renters paying more than 30% of income for housing and over 10,000 people meeting the HUD definition of homeless in 2023. Only 5-7% of fair-market housing is accessible for people with disabilities. The high cost of living affects most residents, with a family of four needing \$124,152 annually to meet basic needs, while median household income is \$84,068. Food insecurity affects 15% of the population. Childcare access is limited (26% of children under 5 lack access) and expensive (median annual cost of \$17,298 for toddler care). Transportation barriers exist for those without personal vehicles, as the built environment prioritizes car ownership.

### **Education and Economic Inequities**

High school graduation rates are lowest among students with disabilities (60%), students experiencing houselessness (51%), and American Indian/Alaska Native students (69%). An individual with no children would need to work 1.5 full-time minimum wage jobs to meet basic needs. About 16% of residents lived in poverty in 2022.

### **Community Assets**

Lane County's strengths include abundant natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities, strong sense of community and desire to work together, access to cultural amenities and local foods, and genuine commitment to achieving health equity. Almost half of survey respondents volunteer to improve their community, and 70% of registered voters participated in the 2022 general election. Among organizations, 99% engage in community partnerships and 60% use an equity lens for decisions.

### **Identified Priority Issues**

The assessment identified eight key issues: inability to meet basic needs due to stagnant incomes, affordable housing crisis and rising houselessness, declining health care access, youth mental health struggles, inequitable climate change impacts, COVID-19 pandemic challenges and opportunities, community desire to work together for health equity, and ongoing impacts of historical exclusion and discrimination affecting Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQA+ individuals, people with disabilities, and immigrant communities.

## **Biggest Gaps in Service and Barriers to Care**

### **Provider Shortages**

Lack of primary care and specialty care providers creates significant access barriers, with long wait times for appointments being a major challenge across the county.

### **Geographic Access Barriers**

Residents in rural communities face substantial distance needed to travel for care. The 2023 closure of the only emergency department in Eugene means many people must travel further for emergency care or require costly ambulance rides.

### **Mental Health Care Access**

Mental health care remains out of reach for many residents. In 2022, 26% of 8th and 11th graders reported having unmet mental health needs, with particularly high rates among Black or African American students (31.8%), transgender and/or non-binary students (44.2%), and LGBQA+ students (41.8%).

### **Cultural and Trauma-Informed Care Gaps**

There is a lack of trauma-informed and culturally responsive care throughout the health care system.

### **Cost Barriers**

While rates of people not seeking health care due to cost declined overall by 2021 compared to 2013, rates remain high for those living in poverty (18%) and those with a disability (21%).

### **Overall Access Decline**

Despite previous gains through Medicaid expansion that increased routine check-ups from 50% in 2013 to 70% in 2021, health care access has deteriorated over the past few years. Geographic variation in access persists, and with many federal programs in flux, this trend may worsen.

## **The Unique Needs of the Community**

### **Youth Mental Health Crisis**

Lane County faces a continuing decline in youth mental health, with 35% of youth reporting fair to poor mental health, 34% reporting symptoms of depression, and 15% reporting suicidal ideation in 2022. This represents an ongoing trend identified in the previous 2020 assessment.

### **Climate Change Vulnerability**

The community experiences significant and inequitable impacts from climate change and extreme weather events. Smoke and ice/snowstorms have affected most residents in the past two years, with smoke impacting the physical and mental health of 60% or more of those exposed. Wildfires affected 23% and extreme heat affected 42% of residents, with varying rates across different parts of the county.

### **Long COVID Impacts**

Approximately 30% of people who had COVID-19 reported symptoms lasting three months or longer, with about 80% indicating these symptoms impacted their daily lives.

### **Safety and Discrimination Concerns**

About one-third of respondents disagree that Lane County is a safe place to live, with nearly half of respondents with two or more marginalized identities feeling unsafe. Hate crimes, bigotry, white supremacy, and homophobia were cited as reasons the county doesn't feel safe for everyone. People in different parts of the county experience varying levels of safety based on their identities.

### **Historical Exclusion Impacts**

The community must address ongoing impacts of Oregon and Lane County's history of racist exclusion policies, including property covenants that prevented non-white homeownership from the 1880s until 1968. These historical barriers continue to create wealth disparities, with white homeownership at 62.1% compared to 34.3%-48.5% for other racial and ethnic groups.

### **High Cost of Living Relative to Income**

A family of four needs \$124,152 annually to meet basic needs in 2024, while median household income is only \$84,068. An individual with no children would need to work 1.5 full-time minimum wage jobs just to meet basic needs.

### **Severe Housing Crisis**

The county faces particularly acute housing challenges, with 56% of renters paying more than 30% of income for housing and over 10,000 people meeting the HUD definition of homeless in 2023. Only 5-7% of fair-market housing is accessible for people with disabilities.

### **Childcare Access and Affordability**

In 2022, 26% of children under 5 lacked access to childcare, with median annual costs for toddler care (\$17,298) exceeding some college tuitions.

### **Rural Community Barriers**

Rural residents face compounded barriers including greater distances to health care, less access to public transportation, fewer safe walking areas, and limited emergency services following the Eugene emergency department closure.

### **Educational Equity Gaps**

Students with disabilities (60% graduation rate), students experiencing houselessness (51% graduation rate), and American Indian/Alaska Native students (69% graduation rate) have significantly lower high school graduation rates compared to the overall rate of 78%.

### **Community Desire for Collaborative Solutions**

Despite significant challenges, residents express a strong desire to work together creatively to solve problems and achieve health equity, with almost half volunteering to improve their community and 70% voting in the 2022 general election.

## **Strengths of the Community**

### **Natural Environment and Recreation**

The county features abundant and diverse natural beauty accessible in every part of the county, from the ocean to forests to mountains, with extensive outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Community Connection and Collaboration**

Residents care about each other and want to work together to find creative solutions that benefit the whole community. There is a strong sense of living in a small community while still having access to big-city amenities such as libraries, cultural events, educational opportunities, and good restaurants.

### **Local Food and Culture**

The community has farmers markets, craft markets, local artists, and abundant local healthy foods.

### **Commitment to Health Equity**

There is a genuine desire to achieve health equity throughout Lane County, with residents expressing a strong sense of responsibility for taking care of each other and working collaboratively to solve complex problems.

### **Civic Engagement**

Almost half of survey respondents reported volunteering in the past year to improve their community, and almost 70% of registered voters participated in the 2022 general election.

### **Organizational Partnerships and Equity Focus**

Among organizations, 99% engage the community and develop partnerships as part of their work, 60% use an equity lens for programmatic and policy decisions, and almost 30% have developed organizational equity statements.

### **COVID-19 Problem-Solving**

The pandemic created opportunities for creative problem-solving to address long-standing issues faced by marginalized community members, such as providing stimulus support that allowed people to pay rent and reduce economic worries.

### **Health Care Progress**

Despite recent declines, the community made significant gains over the past decade through Medicaid expansion, with routine check-ups increasing from 50% in 2013 to 70% in 2021, and inequities in check-up rates between groups significantly lessening since 2014.

### **Housing Perception Improvement**

The percent of survey respondents who perceive that access to housing has gotten worse decreased from 91% in 2018 to 83% in 2024, suggesting some progress despite ongoing challenges.