

Monroe County Community Health Assessment

2024-2029



Updated September 2024



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Executive Summary

In 2024, through the Community Health Assessment-Community Improvement Plan Initiative, the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County launched a comprehensive effort to better understand the health needs of the community and develop strategies to address these needs. This assessment is part of an ongoing initiative to ensure that programs, policies, and services are responsive to the evolving needs of Monroe County residents. The community health assessment (CHA) informs the development of a community health improvement plan (CHIP), which will outline specific actions aimed at improving health outcomes over the next several years. This collaborative, community-driven process is guided by several overarching goals, including:

1. Completing a thorough assessment of Monroe County's health status, identifying the county's strengths and challenges in creating a healthy environment for all residents.
2. Developing a community health improvement plan to serve as a strategic blueprint for enhancing public health and well-being.
3. Engaging community partners, organizations, and residents to build a shared vision of health and identify opportunities for collective action.
4. Maintaining the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County's status as a nationally accredited health department.

The 2024 community health assessment provides a snapshot of the current health status of Monroe County residents, examining both health-related challenges and the broader social and environmental context that influences these outcomes.

Methods

The CHA employed a collaborative and participatory approach, focusing on a wide range of social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health. The Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP 2.0) framework was used to guide the assessment, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of health priorities within the community. The assessment incorporated three main components:

Community Partner Assessment (CPA): Evaluating the capacity of local organizations and stakeholders to support public health initiatives.

Community Status Assessment (CSA): Utilizing quantitative data to assess the overall health and well-being of Monroe County residents, including access to health care, mental health, and chronic disease prevalence.

Community Context Assessment (CCA): Conducting qualitative research through focus groups and key informant interviews to explore community strengths, challenges, and the forces of change that shape the local health environment.

These combined methods provided a holistic view of the current health landscape in Monroe County, highlighting both systemic challenges and potential opportunities for growth.

Priority Focus Areas

Based on the identified health concerns and input from community members and stakeholders, three primary focus areas have been established for Monroe County's health improvement efforts. These priority areas will guide future initiatives to address the most pressing challenges impacting the health and well-being of residents:

1. Access to Health Care

Limited access to affordable healthcare services emerged as a major concern for Monroe County residents. Addressing the barriers to accessing medical, dental, and mental health care—such as high costs, the availability of providers, and transportation challenges—is essential for improving health outcomes. Strategies to expand access to care, particularly for underserved populations, will be central to the community's health improvement plan.

2. Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Mental health services and substance abuse treatment are critical priorities for the county. Suicide prevention, substance abuse treatment, and the need for more comprehensive mental health services were identified as urgent issues. Gaps in available services, coupled with the growing prevalence of substance abuse, highlight the need for expanded treatment options and better coordination between mental health providers and community organizations.

3. Community Safety

Community safety concerns, including bicyclist and pedestrian safety, water safety, and human trafficking, were highlighted as critical issues. Improving infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, enhancing water safety education, and addressing vulnerabilities related to human trafficking will be important for ensuring the physical safety and security of Monroe County residents. These initiatives will help foster a safer environment for both residents and visitors.

Next Steps

The insights gained from this assessment will inform the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which will outline actionable steps to address the county's most pressing health concerns. Focus areas will include expanding access to health care, enhancing mental health services, improving community safety, and addressing social and economic barriers of health such as housing and economic stability. Community partners and stakeholders will continue to play a central role in implementing these strategies and working together to improve health outcomes across Monroe County.

Abbreviations

ACS – American Community Survey

AH – A.H. of Monroe County, Inc.

CCA – Community Context Assessment

CHA – Community Health Assessment

CHI – Community Health of South Florida, Inc.

CHIP – Community Health Improvement Plan

CIL – Center for Independent Living

CPA – Community Partner Assessment

CSA – Community Status Assessment

DOH-Monroe – Florida Department of Health in Monroe County

FKOC – Florida Keys Outreach Coalition

FL Health CHARTS – Florida Health Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set

GCC – Guidance/Care Center, Inc.

KOTS – Key West Overnight Temporary Shelter

KWDOT – Key West Department of Transportation

MAPP – Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships

MAPP 2.0 – Updated version of the MAPP framework

NACCHO – National Association of County and City Health Officials

SOS Foundation – Star of the Sea Foundation

UF/IFAS – University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

VA – Veterans Affairs

Acknowledgements

The Florida Department of Health in Monroe County and the CHA development team extend their deepest gratitude to all the community partners who contributed to the success of this comprehensive assessment. The commitment of a wide range of organizations, including healthcare providers, social service agencies, educational institutions, and governmental bodies, was crucial in gathering critical data that accurately reflects the health needs of Monroe County's residents. These partners provided invaluable insights, resources, and on-the-ground expertise that ensured the CHA is representative of the real-world challenges and opportunities within the community. A special thank you to The Health Council of South Florida for playing a pivotal role in completing the CHA, particularly for facilitating the kick-off meeting and two key assessments – the Community Partners Assessment and the Community Context Assessment – as well as the prioritization setting meeting.

Community Partners

- A.H. of Monroe County, Inc.
- Alliance for Aging
- Billy Davis & Associates
- Cayo del Mar and Douglass Square Apartments
- Center for Independent Living of the Keys, Keys Advocacy Center
- Choose Health – Partnership for a Healthier Florida Keys
- City of Key West - Planning Department
- City of Key West - Key West Transit
- City of Key West - Multimodal Transportation
- City of Marathon
- Coastlove
- College of the Florida Keys
- Community Health of South Florida, Inc. (CHI)
- Cornerstone Resource Alliance
- Domestic Abuse Shelter
- Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe
- Epilepsy Alliance Florida
- Florida Department of Children & Families
- Florida Department of Health in Monroe County – Employees
- Florida International University/ Keys Kids Swim
- Florida Keys AHEC
- Florida Keys Healthy Start Coalition
- Florida Keys Mosquito Control District
- Florida Keys Outreach Coalition
- Florida Keys Urgent Care
- Florida Keys Volunteer Center
- Guidance/Care Center
- Health Council of South Florida
- Housing Authority of the City of Key West
- Island Radio 107
- The John Jones Navigation Center
- Keller Williams Key West Compass Realty
- Key Bridge
- Key West Police Department
- Key West Sunrise Rotary
- Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden
- Keys Energy
- Keys Health Ready Coalition
- Keys Talk Radio
- Keys to Be the Change
- Keys Weekly
- Leadership Monroe County
- Lower Keys Medical Center
- Lower Keys Medical Center - DePoo
- Mariners Hospital and Fishermen's Hospital
- Monroe Association for ReMARCable Citizens
- Monroe County Board of County Commissioners
- Monroe County – Special Needs Registry
- Monroe County – Veterans Affairs
- Monroe County Coalition
- Monroe County Libraries
- Monroe County Parks and Beaches
- Monroe County School District
- Monroe County Sheriff's Office
- Mount Sinai Medical Center
- Parce Real Estate
- Rural Health Network of Monroe County
- Southernmost Coast Early Steps Program, Easter Seals Florida
- Star of the Sea Foundation
- Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Miami Health System
- The Good Health Clinic
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations
- UF/IFAS Extension Monroe County
- United Way of Collier and the Keys
- US1 Radio
- Weow 92.7
- Wesley House
- WLRN
- Womankind

Methodology

MAPP 2.0 Process Overview

The Florida Department of Health in Monroe County structured the Community Health Assessment (CHA) using the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP 2.0) framework, a nationally recognized, community-driven process designed to enhance public health outcomes through strategic planning. The MAPP 2.0 process is organized into three key phases: Building the Community Health Improvement Foundation (Phase 1), Telling the Community Story (Phase 2), and Continuously Improving the Community (Phase 3). A summary of these phases is provided in Figure 1.

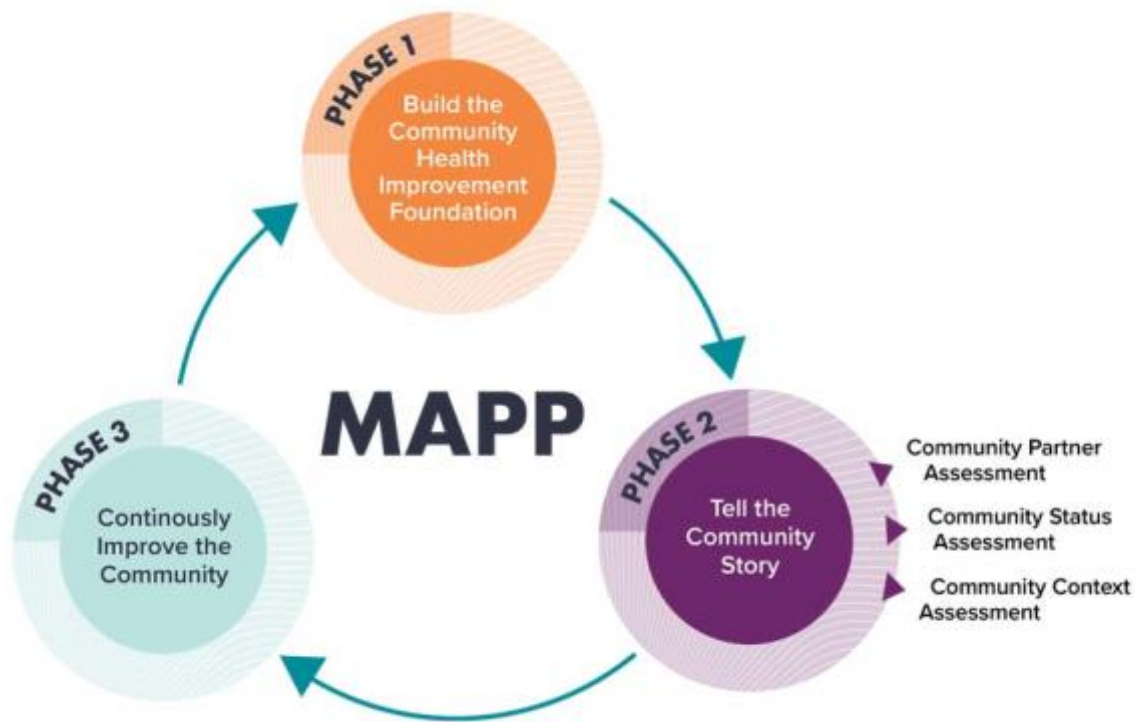


Figure 1 Summary diagram of MAPP 2.0 process (Source: NACCHO MAPP 2.0 User's Handbook)

Phase Descriptions

Building the Community Health Improvement Foundation (Phase 1)

Engaged community partners, local officials, and residents to establish a shared vision and lay the groundwork for the Community Health Assessment (CHA), ensuring collaboration and inclusivity.

Telling the Community Story (Phase 2)

Gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the health status and needs of Monroe County through three key assessments:

- **Community Partner Assessment (CPA):** Assessed the capacity and contributions of local organizations to support health improvement.
- **Community Status Assessment (CSA):** Collected quantitative data through surveys and public records to evaluate health conditions and quality of life.
- **Community Context Assessment (CCA):** Conducted focus groups and interviews to gain qualitative insights into social and environmental factors affecting health.

Continuously Improving the Community (Phase 3)

Developed and implemented the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), guided by findings from the CHA to address prioritized health issues through coordinated, data-driven strategies.

By following the MAPP 2.0 process, the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County ensures that the CHA remains both participatory and data-driven, with continuous community engagement fostering the development of sustainable, community-centered solutions.

Partner Engagement Throughout the MAPP 2.0 Process

The success of the Monroe County Community Health Assessment (CHA) was driven by active and diverse partner participation, adhering to the principles of the MAPP 2.0 framework. Partners played a key role at every stage, from planning and data collection to analysis and priority setting, ensuring a comprehensive and community-centered approach to public health improvement.

Phase 1: Building the Community Health Improvement Foundation

Partners helped identify stakeholders, set goals, and establish a shared vision to guide the CHA, laying a solid foundation for subsequent phases.

Phase 2: Telling the Community Story

Leveraging their expertise, partners supported data collection for the **Community Partner Assessment (CPA)**, **Community Status Assessment (CSA)**, and **Community Context Assessment (CCA)**. This included providing resources, facilitating quantitative and qualitative data gathering, and identifying strengths and gaps within the health system.

Phase 3: Continuously Improving the Community

The findings from the assessments guided the development of the **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**. Partners were integral to refining strategies, aligning initiatives with community needs, and shaping actionable health priorities.

Contributions to the CHA Process

Partners included healthcare organizations, social service agencies, local government, law enforcement, and other stakeholders. Their contributions were essential in:

- **Supporting Data Collection and Engagement:** Providing resources for surveys, focus groups, and interviews to ensure diverse community representation and comprehensive data gathering.
- **Identifying Strengths and Challenges:** Offering insights into community assets (e.g., mental health resources) and challenges (e.g., access to healthcare services), which facilitated a balanced understanding of local health priorities.
- **Shaping Strategic Priorities:** Actively contributing to the development of CHIP goals and objectives, addressing key issues like healthcare access and mental health support.
- **Ensuring Inclusive Participation:** Efforts to engage diverse populations included providing materials in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole and leveraging virtual platforms to enhance accessibility and participation.

This collaborative and inclusive approach ensured that both the CHA and CHIP were reflective of Monroe County's diverse needs, promoting data-driven, community-focused health interventions.

Community Profile

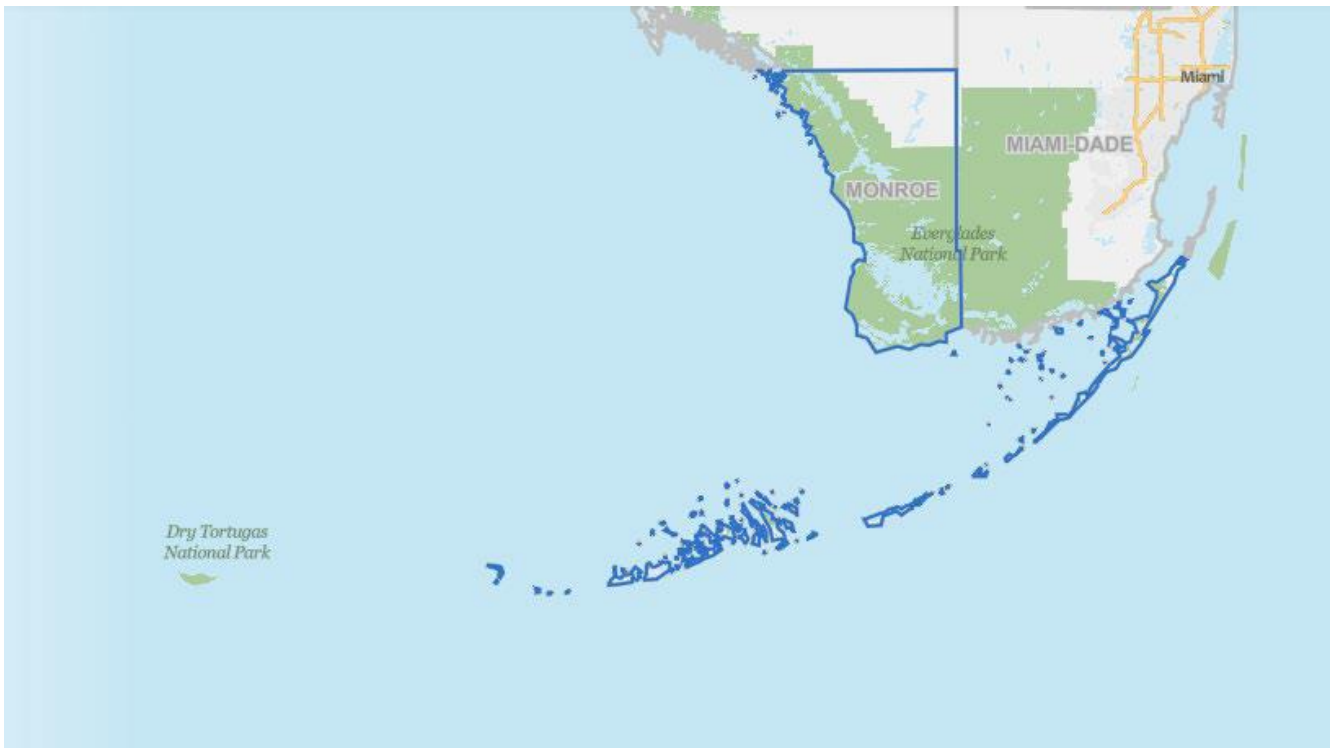


Figure 2 Monroe County, FL

Monroe County, Florida's southernmost county, has a unique demographic profile shaped by its geography and population distribution. With Key West as its county seat, Monroe County is composed of both the islands of the Florida Keys and a portion of the mainland. Despite the mainland accounting for 87% of the county's land area, it is largely uninhabited due to its location within the Everglades National Park. Consequently, over 99% of the county's residents live in the Florida Keys, a coral cay archipelago that sits between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. This island-based population structure, coupled with Monroe County's proximity to the Caribbean, results in distinct demographic characteristics. At its nearest point, the southern part of Key West is just 90 miles (145 km) from Cuba, making it the closest point in the United States to the island nation.

The following sections provide a detailed overview of the population served by the health department, according to the 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 5-Year American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates, focusing on key aspects such as **population size, age distribution, gender breakdown, racial and ethnic composition, and languages spoken at home**. This

demographic profile helps inform a better understanding of the health needs and priorities within the county.

Monroe County Demographics

Population

- Total Population: Monroe County has a population of 82,044.
- Median Age: Monroe County has a median age of 48.3 years, which is higher than the Florida statewide median age of 42.4 years.

Age Distribution

- Under 18 years: Monroe County - 15.7% | Florida - 19.6%
- 18 to 34 years: Monroe County - 15.8% | Florida - 18.7%
- 35 to 54 years: Monroe County - 26.4% | Florida - 24.9%
- 55 to 64 years: Monroe County - 16.8% | Florida - 13.5%
- 65 years and over: Monroe County - 25.2% | Florida - 20.9%

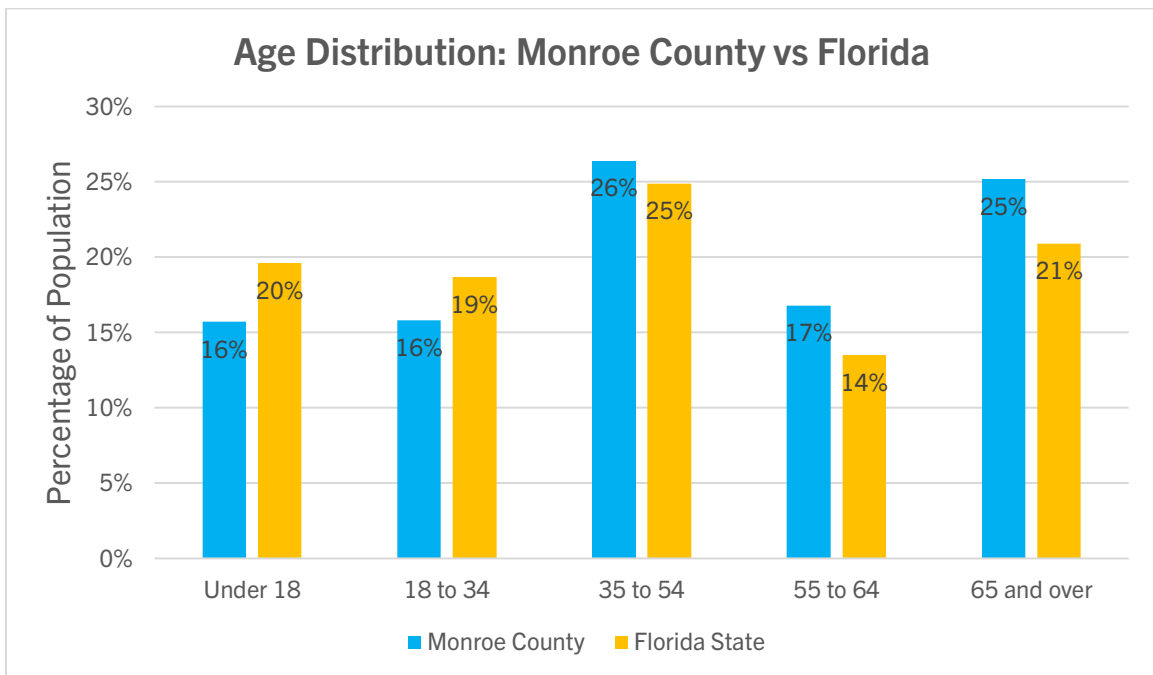


Table 1 Age Distribution Monroe County vs Florida (Source: 2022 ACS)

Gender Breakdown

- Male: 42,677 (representing 52% of the population)
- Female: 39,367 (representing 48% of the population)

Racial and Ethnic Composition

Category	Population
White	62,079 individuals (75.7%)
Black or African American	5,716 individuals (7.0%)
American Indian and Alaska Native	49 individuals (0.1%)
Asian	893 individuals (1.1%)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	136 individuals (0.2%)
Some Other Race	2,721 individuals (3.3%)
Two or More Races	10,450 individuals (12.7%)
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	21,068 individuals (25.7%)

Table 2 Population by race and ethnic origin (Source: 2022 ACS)

Overall, most of Monroe County’s population identifies as White alone (75.7%). A sizable portion identifies as Hispanic or Latino of any race (25.7%).

Languages Spoken at Home

languages spoken at home in Monroe County (total population 5 years and over):

Speak only English: 78.5% (61,456)

Speak a language other than English: 21.5% (16,870)

- Spanish: 16.9% (13,231)
- Other Indo-European languages: 4.0% (3,143)
- Asian and Pacific Island languages: 0.6% (440)
- Other languages: 0.1% (56)

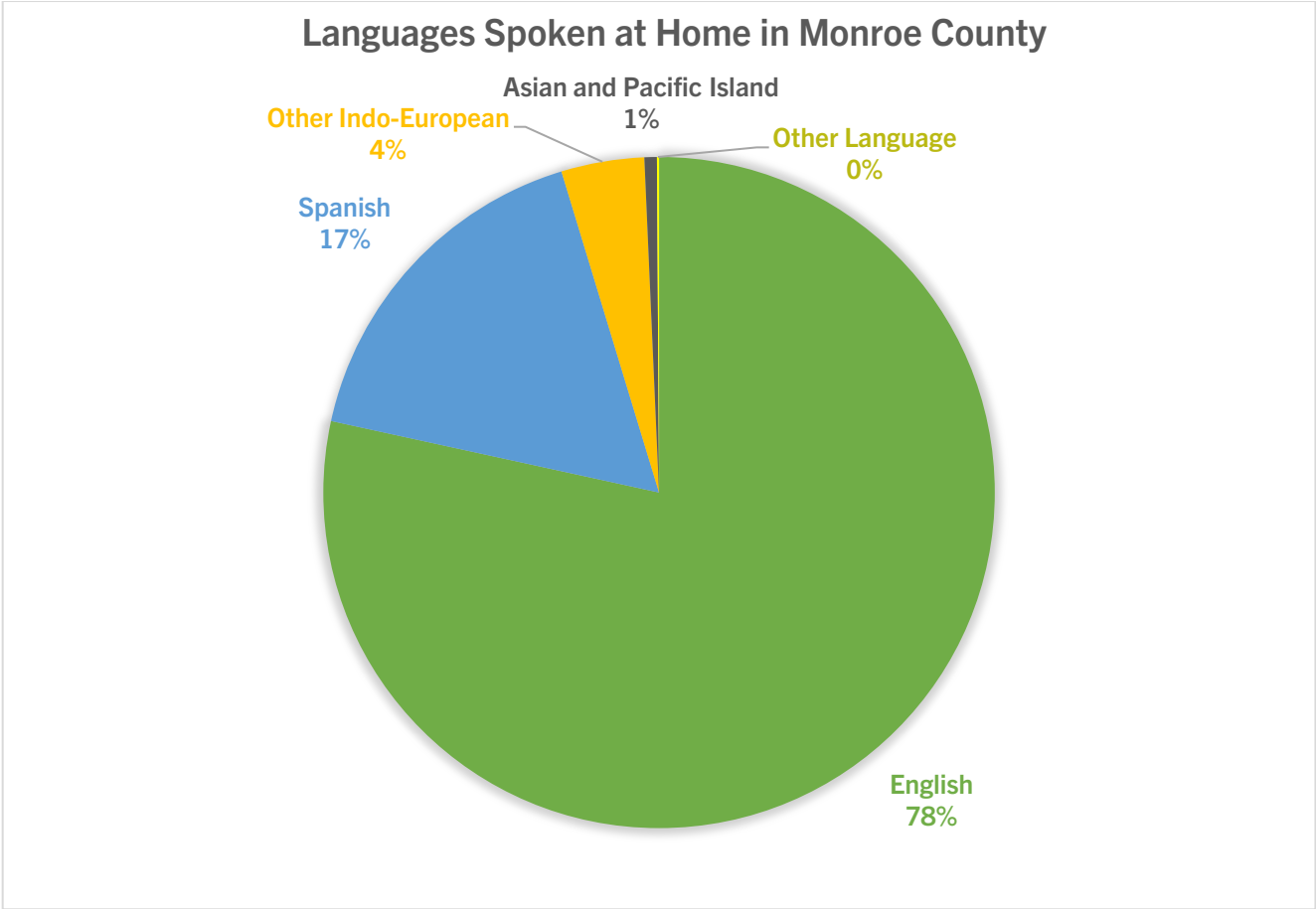


Table 3 Languages Spoken at Home in Monroe County (Source: 2022 ACS)

Health Challenges: Health Status and Health Behaviors

The Monroe County community faces several key health challenges related to both health status and health behaviors. These challenges vary significantly between subpopulations and geographic areas, reflecting the diverse needs and differences within the county.

Health Perceptions

In 2022, statewide data from FL Health Charts indicated that 17.4% of adults across Florida rated their overall health as "fair" or "poor" and 82.6% rated their health as "good" to "excellent." This sentiment was evenly split between genders, with 17.3% of men and 17.5% of women reporting fair or poor health.

Although Monroe County data for 2022 was unavailable, the 2024 Well-being Survey for Monroe County provides insight into local health perceptions. In Monroe County, 16% of residents reported their health as "fair" or "poor," with 13% rating their health as "fair" and 3% as "poor." When broken down by gender, 16% of females and 17% of males in Monroe County reported fair or poor health.

When examining health perceptions based on age, data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) in 2022 reveals the following:

- Ages 18-44: 84% of Monroe County adults rated their health as "good" to "excellent," compared to 85% of adults in Florida.
- Ages 45-64: 70% of Monroe County adults reported positive health, whereas 77% of Floridians in this age group rated their health similarly.
- Ages 65 and older: 68% of Monroe County adults rated their health as "good" to "excellent," slightly higher than the 66% of Florida adults.

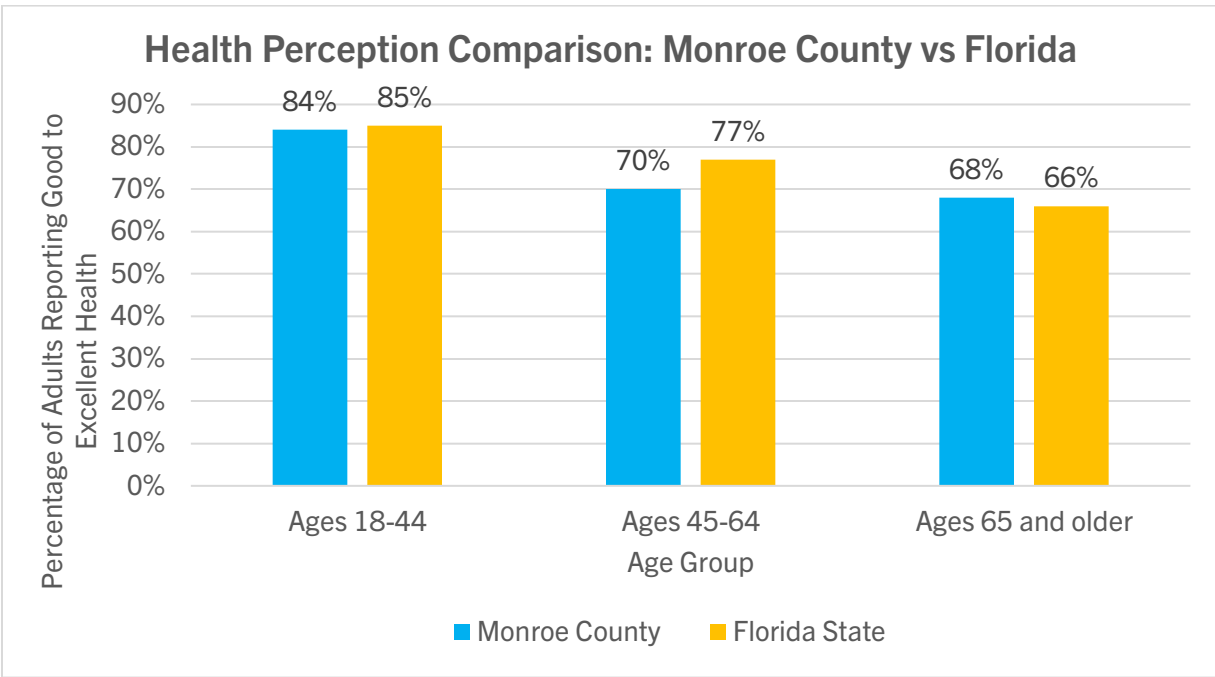


Table 4 Health Perception Comparison, Monroe County vs. Florida (BRFSS, 2022)

These figures indicate that while Monroe County residents in the younger and older age brackets have similar or slightly better perceptions of their health compared to statewide averages, those in the middle age group (45-64) report notably lower perceptions of their health compared to their Florida counterparts.

Health Status

Chronic Disease and Mortality Rates

Hypertension

The 2022 mortality rate from hypertension in Monroe County was 7.9 per 100,000, which is lower than the Florida average of 9.7 per 100,000. However, high blood pressure remains prevalent, particularly among residents over 45 years old, with 33% reporting the condition. The rate escalates to 50% among those over 65. Access to regular primary care services, especially in rural areas like the Lower Keys, is limited, complicating management, and contributing to increased risks of heart disease and stroke.

Heart Disease

Monroe County's heart disease mortality rate is 117.8 per 100,000, notably lower than the Florida average of 146.9 per 100,000. However, heart disease remains a critical issue,

particularly in low-income communities where access to healthcare, nutritious food, and preventive services is limited. Geographic isolation in areas like Stock Island and Big Pine Key further complicates timely access to cardiovascular care, particularly for older adults.

Diabetes

In 2022, 16% of adults aged 65 and older in Monroe County were diagnosed with diabetes, compared to 11% statewide. Despite the county's diabetes mortality rate being lower than Florida's (Monroe: 14.6 per 100,000 vs. Florida: 22.3 per 100,000), diabetes prevalence remains a significant health challenge, particularly in lower-income and rural areas with limited access to diabetes management resources.

Chronic Liver Disease

The county's mortality rate from chronic liver disease is 14.6 per 100,000, exceeding the Florida average of 12.9 per 100,000. The higher rate of chronic liver disease, particularly related to alcohol use, signals a need for more robust substance abuse prevention and liver health programs, especially in areas like Key West where substance use disorders are more pronounced.

Cancer

Monroe County's age-adjusted cancer mortality rate stands at 114.6 per 100,000, below the statewide rate of 138.8 per 100,000. Nevertheless, skin cancer prevalence is higher due to the outdoor lifestyle and sun exposure, particularly in the Middle and Lower Keys, where access to preventive resources is limited. Barriers to accessing specialized cancer care, especially for low-income residents, often result in delayed diagnosis and treatment.

Communicable Disease

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

- Monroe County reported a rate of 375 cases of bacterial STDs per 100,000 population, with the following breakdown:
 - Chlamydia: 218 cases per 100,000 (lower than the state rate).
 - Gonorrhea: 86 cases per 100,000 (lower than the state rate).

-
- Syphilis (all stages): 71 cases per 100,000, which aligns with the state rate.

HIV and AIDS

- The county recorded 20 new HIV diagnoses per 100,000 population, slightly higher than the state rate.
- The death rate from HIV/AIDS is also higher than the statewide average at 3.4 per 100,000 population, which is higher than the Florida state rate of 2.5 per 100,000

Hepatitis

- Chronic Hepatitis C: The rate in Monroe is 81.2 per 100,000, significantly higher than the state rate of 56.1.
- Hepatitis B among Pregnant Women: Monroe County's rate stands at 23.4 per 100,000, over twice the state rate of 10.6.

Tuberculosis

- The rate of tuberculosis cases in Monroe County is 7 per 100,000, which is higher than the state rate of 2.4.

Other Infections

- Legionellosis and Vibriosis: Rates are notably higher in Monroe (7.2 per 100,000 for both) compared to state averages (2.4 for Legionellosis and 1.4 for Vibriosis).

Dengue Fever

- The rate of Dengue Fever in 2023 was 4.7 per 100,000, higher than the state rate of 3.5 per 100,000.

Immunizations

- Immunization Levels for 7th Graders: The immunization rate in Monroe County is high, with 94.8% of students entering seventh grade being immunized, slightly exceeding the Florida average of 94.3%.

Health Behaviors

Health behaviors influence the overall well-being of Monroe County residents. Despite **72%** of respondents rating the county as a healthy place to live, behaviors like alcohol and tobacco use contribute to public health challenges.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health in Monroe County

In Monroe County, there are significant gaps in mental health services, particularly for children and adolescents. The county lacks dedicated mental health facilities for those under 18 experiencing severe crises, and there are limited treatment options for teenagers dealing with substance use disorders. The shortage of mental health providers is evident in the data from FLHealthCharts: in 2022, Monroe County had only 3.1 child and adolescent psychiatric beds per 100,000 population, indicating a lack of available resources for younger individuals needing care.

The suicide rate in Monroe County stands at 22.2 per 100,000, which is significantly higher than the statewide rate of 17.2 per 100,000, with middle-aged men being particularly affected. Additionally, access to care for mental health is challenging due to a shortage of providers, especially in the Lower Keys, resulting in long wait times and the necessity for many residents to travel for treatment.

Youth Substance Use

Youth substance use in Monroe County is a growing concern, particularly regarding binge drinking and vaping. According to the 2022 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS):

- **Binge Drinking:** 8% of Monroe County students reported binge drinking, significantly higher than the statewide average of 5.6%. Breakdown by sex shows 8.1% of males and 7.9% of females engaging in binge drinking, surpassing the state averages of 5.1% and 6.1%, respectively.
- **Vaping:** 62.9% of students reported using electronic vapor products, compared to 60.8% statewide. High school students reported a particularly high rate at 74.1%, compared to the state average of 59.3%. Middle school students reported similar vaping rates to the state average at 48.8%.

-
- Gender Breakdown: Vaping is prevalent among both male and female students, with 57.5% of males and 64.2% of females in Monroe County using electronic vapor products, both higher than the statewide rates.

Broader Substance Abuse Issues

Substance abuse remains a critical public health issue in Monroe County. The mortality rate from substance abuse-related causes was 35.1 per 100,000 in 2022, higher than the Florida average of 29.0 per 100,000. Opioid-related deaths are a major contributing factor. The lack of local recovery facilities presents a barrier to accessing care, often forcing individuals to seek treatment outside the county or forgo it entirely.

Adult Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol consumption among adults in Monroe County is notably high, with varied drinking patterns:

- 55% report no weekly alcohol consumption.
- 25% drink 1-2 times per week.
- 9% drink 3-4 times weekly.
- 10% consume alcohol 5 or more times weekly.

The local lifestyle and tourism culture contribute to these drinking patterns. However, they also raise health concerns, such as increased risks for liver disease, accidents, and mental health issues.

Adult Binge Drinking

In 2022, 20.8% of adults in Monroe County reported binge drinking, notably higher than the Florida state average of 17.7%. This trend is more prevalent among male adults and contributes to health risks like alcohol-related injuries, substance use disorders, and chronic diseases. Addressing these issues will require alcohol prevention programs and harm reduction strategies.

Lifestyle and Health Behavior Factors

Physical Activity

Physical activity is generally high in Monroe County, with 29% of respondents exercising 5 or more times weekly. However, 15% do not exercise at all, and 23% face limitations due to long-term health problems or disabilities. Public health initiatives to promote physical activity could improve health outcomes, particularly for those with disabilities or chronic conditions.

Diet and Nutrition

The obesity rate in Florida is 37.6%, reflecting similar trends in Monroe County. Limited access to nutritious food in rural areas contributes to obesity and related health issues. Preventive services, such as regular screenings and vaccinations, face challenges, particularly for low-income and elderly residents.

Preventive Health Behaviors

Only 65% of eligible women received mammograms in Monroe County, compared to 72% statewide. Similarly, flu vaccination rates for adults 65 and older in Monroe are 59%, below the state rate of 65%. Geographic and income-related barriers to care significantly contribute to lower rates of preventive health services.

Summary of Key Findings

Monroe County faces significant health challenges, including high rates of hypertension, diabetes, substance abuse, mental health issues, and limited access to care. Elevated rates of youth binge drinking and vaping further underscore the need for targeted prevention efforts. While Monroe has positive health behaviors overall, disparities in chronic disease management and preventive care access highlight areas for improvement.

Social and Economic Barriers in Monroe County



Figure 3 The Five Social and economic barriers of Health Source: CDC

The social and environmental conditions in which people live, work, and play greatly influence overall health and life outcomes. The social and economic challenges in Monroe County create significant differences in health outcomes. Economic stability, healthcare access, housing, and environmental factors are among the most pressing issues that impact the well-being of residents.

Economic Stability

Economic challenges are central to many of the issues in Monroe County. According to FLHealthCharts in 2022, despite a higher-than-average median household income of \$80,111, 11.7% of residents live below the poverty line, and housing affordability remains a major concern. 41.5% of households are cost-burdened, meaning they spend over 30% of their income on housing, making it difficult to afford other necessities such as healthcare and healthy food. High living costs combined with lower wages in certain sectors contribute to financial insecurity

for many residents, particularly for essential workers who struggle to find affordable housing. While housing affordability is a critical concern in Monroe County, the prioritization process focuses on areas where the health department can have a direct impact. Therefore, while economic challenges like housing are acknowledged, they fall outside the scope of direct public health interventions.

Education Access and Quality

Education is a key determinant of future economic stability and health outcomes. In Monroe County, approximately 92.2% of residents have a high school diploma or higher, slightly above the state average of 89.3%. A well-educated population is more likely to access jobs with health-promoting benefits such as health insurance and paid leave. However, lower educational attainment among some populations perpetuates cycles of poverty and limits access to such benefits, compounding health and financial disparities.

Health Care Access and Quality

Access to quality healthcare is one of the most critical barriers faced by Monroe County residents. Approximately 15.4% of the population is uninsured, higher than the state average of 12.3%. The cost of medical, dental, and mental health care is a critical issue across the county, with residents frequently citing high co-pays, prescription costs, and out-of-pocket expenses as barriers to receiving adequate treatment. The financial strain is more pronounced in lower-income subpopulations, who often forgo preventive or ongoing care due to affordability issues. This disproportionately affects residents in the Upper and Lower Keys, where the cost of living is already high, exacerbating healthcare inaccessibility.

The county also suffers from a shortage of healthcare providers, particularly in mental health services. Geographic isolation, especially in the Florida Keys, exacerbates this issue as residents often need to travel long distances for specialized care, with some reportedly paying up to \$300 for a trip to Miami for medical appointments. Additionally, there is a lack of transportation options for traveling to medical appointments. Addressing healthcare shortages and expanding access, especially for low-income residents and seniors, is crucial for improving overall health outcomes, including mental health and substance use treatment.

Neighborhood and Built Environment

The physical environment of Monroe County plays a significant role in shaping health outcomes. The county's unique geography exposes it to environmental risks such as hurricanes, flooding, and poor water quality. These events cause physical damage and pose health risks through

contamination of water supplies. Focus group participants noted that king tides and flooding often leave behind harmful residue, leading to illness from waterborne contaminants. Additionally, poor water quality in oceans and canals affects not only health but also local ecosystems and recreational activities.

Monroe County is particularly vulnerable to flooding, with over 54% of residents identifying it as their top environmental concern. The county also ranks among the top 10 in Florida for drowning deaths and hospitalizations related to near-drowning incidents. These risks are exacerbated by a lack of adequate public awareness and education on environmental hazards and water safety. In addition to environmental risks, Monroe County's limited infrastructure for walking, biking, and public transportation creates barriers to mobility. Geographic isolation means many residents must travel long distances for specialized services, and the lack of transportation disproportionately affects low-income, elderly, and disabled residents. Efforts to improve walkable infrastructure and transportation options are critical to addressing these disparities.

Social and Community Context

Social connections and community engagement are protective factors that can buffer the effects of adversity and stress. In Monroe County, the close-knit nature of many communities fosters strong social support networks, but there are still gaps in resources for underserved populations. For instance, the lack of affordable housing and access to mental health services can exacerbate feelings of isolation, especially for low-income residents and seniors. Creating opportunities for community engagement and strengthening social networks can help alleviate some of these challenges.

2022 Comparison of Socioeconomic and Health Indicators: Monroe County vs. Florida

Socioeconomic and Health Indicators	Monroe County	Florida
Median Household Income	\$80,111	\$67,917
Unemployment Rate (2023)	1.9%	2.9%
Overall Poverty Rate	11.7%	12.9%
High School Diploma or Higher	92.2%	89.3%
Disability Rate	10.8%	13.5%
Uninsured Rate	15.4%	12.3%
Occupied households with monthly housing costs of 30% or more of household income	41.5%	35%

Table 5 FLHealthCharts 2022 and 2023

Key Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement

Addressing the social and economic factors impacting health in Monroe County presents both challenges and strategic opportunities for improvement. While the county benefits from relatively high-income levels and educational attainment, disparities exist in healthcare access, mental health services, and substance use treatment. Although housing affordability is a concern, the health department’s efforts will focus on addressing actionable health priorities, such as improving access to healthcare, enhancing mental health and substance use services, and fostering safer, healthier communities.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Prioritization

The Florida Department of Health in Monroe County (FDOH-Monroe), alongside its Community Health Assessment (CHA) partners, implemented a comprehensive data collection strategy. This approach combined both quantitative and qualitative methods to develop a thorough understanding of the health and quality of life in Monroe County. Three key assessments—the Community Status Assessment (CSA), Community Partner Assessment (CPA), and Community Context Assessment (CCA)—provided a holistic view of the county’s health needs and challenges.

Findings from Three Community Assessments

1. Community Status Assessment (CSA)

Data Collection Process: The CSA used quantitative data from the Well-being Survey, conducted from November 2023 to May 2024, gathering 1,097 valid responses. These responses were collected in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, facilitated through community partners such as Keys Weekly, the City of Key West, and other local organizations.

Key Findings:

- **Healthcare Access:** 55% of respondents cited difficulties in accessing healthcare, primarily due to cost, availability of services, and transportation issues.
- **Mental Health:** 33% of participants reported concerns related to mental health, such as depression and anxiety.
- **Community Safety:** Issues around pedestrian and bicyclist safety were mentioned by 23%, alongside the need for water safety and drowning prevention.
- **Housing and Substance Abuse:** 73% identified a lack of affordable housing as a critical issue, while 55% and 41% named alcohol and drug abuse as major concerns.

The CSA findings align closely with broader community themes, such as healthcare access, mental health, community safety, housing affordability, and substance use.

2. Community Partner Assessment (CPA)

Purpose and Data Collection: The CPA sought to evaluate the capacity and strengths of 30 local organizations involved in the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Data was collected between March and May 2024, focusing on both quantitative and qualitative insights from healthcare providers, non-profits, and social service agencies.

Key Insights:

- **Strengths:** A strong level of community engagement and collaboration was identified, with numerous partners actively addressing healthcare access and mental health needs.
- **Challenges:** Key barriers to service delivery included resource limitations, language difficulties, and low public awareness, particularly affecting underserved groups like low-income residents and non-English speakers.

The CPA's findings support the need for enhancing the community's strong organizational networks while improving resource accessibility and public communication.

3. Community Context Assessment (CCA)

Approach and Data Collection: The CCA employed qualitative data methods, including focus groups and interviews held in May and June 2024. These sessions engaged 29 residents across three groups, aiming to capture perspectives on the community's strengths, built environment, and influencing factors.

Key Themes:

- **Community Cohesion:** Monroe County has strong collaborative efforts and a tight-knit community atmosphere.
- **Service Barriers:** Barriers to accessing services were identified, especially among non-English speakers and individuals with limited technological literacy. Concerns about the physical environment, like road conditions and housing safety, were also noted.
- **Forces of Change:** Economic stability, tourism's influence, and environmental challenges, such as flooding and rising temperatures, were highlighted as significant factors impacting health and safety.

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- Mental health issues emerged as a major concern, with 33% of respondents citing conditions such as depression and anxiety.
 - Substance abuse remains a significant issue, particularly alcohol and drug abuse, with 55% reporting alcohol abuse and 41% identifying drug abuse as prevalent community problems.
 - Gaps in mental health services and substance abuse treatment programs were highlighted, suggesting a need for more comprehensive support.

Community Safety

- 23% of respondents indicated safety concerns, especially related to pedestrians and cyclists, emphasizing the need for improved infrastructure.
- Water safety and drowning prevention were identified as important issues, considering Monroe County's geography.
- Human trafficking is also a concern, given the proximity to Miami-Dade County.

Environmental Health and Safety

- Environmental issues such as flooding, road infrastructure, and water quality in oceans and canals are notable, reflecting the unique vulnerabilities of Monroe County.
- The built environment poses safety challenges, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

Social and Economic Factors

- 73% identified the lack of affordable housing as a major problem, linking it to economic pressures such as unemployment and poverty.
- 47% cited homelessness as a concern, further impacting health differences.
- Access to affordable childcare and employment opportunities was also noted as a challenge.

Communication and Awareness

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- A lack of awareness about available health and social services was consistently reported, with a call for better communication, particularly in mental health and housing support.
 - Enhancing community outreach and education is necessary to improve residents' knowledge of existing resources.

Criteria for Prioritization

During the prioritization process, community partners evaluated key health issues using specific criteria to ensure that the most pressing concerns were selected for the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Below is a description of each criterion considered:

- **Relevance to Community Members:** This criterion examines the importance of the issue to the community. Partners consider how well the issue resonates with residents and stakeholders and whether it aligns with their concerns and needs, particularly focusing on health differences and social inequities.
- **Magnitude/Severity of the Issue:** Partners assess the scope and impact of the issue. This includes determining how widespread and severe the problem is, along with its consequences for public health and overall community well-being.
- **Urgency to Solve the Issue:** The focus here is on timeliness and actionability. Partners discuss the immediacy of the problem and whether there is a pressing need to address it quickly to prevent further negative outcomes.
- **Impact on Economically, Medically, and Socially At-Risk Communities:** This criterion considers how the issue affects disadvantaged populations, including those impacted by poverty, housing instability, or healthcare access issues. The goal is to prioritize issues that have a significant effect on at-risk groups.
- **Availability and Feasibility of Solutions:** Evaluates the practicality of addressing the issue. Partners discuss whether there are evidence-based solutions or interventions available and how feasible it is to implement them within the community.
- **Trend of the Issue Over Time:** Considers the long-term trajectory of the problem. Are current strategies working to improve the situation, or is the issue worsening? This helps determine whether more focused efforts are needed.

- **Alignment with Organizational Plans, Funding, Staffing, and Buy-in:** Partners consider how well the issue aligns with the capacity of the Florida Department of Health in Monroe County and other community partners. This includes evaluating whether resources, staff, and funding are available to effectively address the problem.
- **Opportunity for Measurable Outcomes:** Focuses on whether addressing the issue will result in measurable improvements. Are there existing data systems to track progress, and is the issue amenable to change through targeted interventions?
- **Social, Political, Historical, and Cultural Context:** Lastly, partners consider the broader context surrounding the issue, such as community values, historical precedents, and political implications. This ensures that selected priorities align with the social fabric and cultural dynamics of Monroe County.

Criteria	Description
Relevance to Community Members	How important is the issue to the community? Does it resonate with the concerns raised by residents and stakeholders?
Magnitude/Severity of the Issue	How widespread and severe is the issue? What is the impact on public health and well-being in the community?
Urgency to Solve the Issue	How time-sensitive is the issue? Does it require immediate action to prevent worsening conditions or outcomes?
Impact on Socioeconomically Affected Communities	How does the issue affect underserved populations, including those impacted by poverty, housing, or other disparities?
Availability and Feasibility of Solutions	Are there practical, evidence-based solutions available? Can these solutions be implemented with the current resources?
Trending Health Concerns	Are issues such as mental health or access to healthcare becoming more prevalent? Are there new developments or data?
Availability of Resources (Time, Funding, Staffing, Equipment)	Can the Florida Department of Health or its partners directly address the issue with available resources?
Opportunity for Upstream Strategies	Are there opportunities to address the root causes of the issue rather than just the symptoms?
Social, Political, Historical, and Cultural Context	How does the issue align with the social, political, historical, and cultural context of the community?

Table 6 Criteria for Identifying Community Health Priorities in Monroe County

Steps in the Prioritization Process

The prioritization process was a collaborative effort designed to identify the key health priorities for Monroe County's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Here is an overview of the steps taken:

1. **Data Triangulation:** After gathering information through three key assessments—Community Status Assessment (CSA), Community Partner Assessment (CPA), and Community Context Assessment (CCA)—the Health Council of South Florida (HCSF) and Florida Department of Health in Monroe County (FDOH-Monroe) reviewed the data to identify cross-cutting themes. These themes included health care access, chronic disease prevention, community safety, mental health and substance abuse, and socioeconomic factors.

Issue	CPA	CCA	CSA
Accessibility for people with disabilities		X	X
Flooding/water quality		X	X
Food availability	X		X
Health care access and chronic diseases	X	X	X
Lack of housing/housing conditions	X	X	X
Substance abuse/mental health	X	X	X
Community safety (pedestrian/bicyclist/driver safety, water safety/drowning prevention, and human trafficking)	X	X	X
Road conditions		X	X
Transportation	X	X	

Table 7 Final list of challenges in Monroe County, derived from data collected across all assessments.

2. **Prioritization Meeting:** The findings from the assessments were presented to community partners during a virtual meeting held on August 8, 2024. This meeting included 30 representatives from various organizations, such as health care providers, law enforcement, educational institutions, and non-profit agencies.

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3. **Discussion and Voting on Priorities:** The partners discussed the key themes and their feasibility, considering the urgency and importance of the issues to the community. Attendees also evaluated FDOH-Monroe’s capacity to address these issues directly. There was an opportunity for partners to volunteer for initiatives outside the department’s scope. Following the discussion, partners anonymously voted on three priorities for the upcoming CHIP cycle:
 - Access to health care/chronic disease prevention
 - Mental health/substance abuse
 - Community safety, including pedestrian and bicycle safety, water safety, and human trafficking
 4. **Goal-Setting Meetings:** After finalizing the priorities, goal-setting meetings were held on August 16, 2024, for each of the selected priorities. These meetings aimed to refine goals, objectives, and strategies based on the input from partners and subject matter experts. Attendees discussed action steps, outcomes, and specific targets for each priority, including interventions and policies aimed at improving health outcomes in Monroe County.
 5. **Partner Contributions and Input:** Throughout the process, partners shared their expertise and feedback, suggesting areas where focus should shift from increasing the number of providers to enhancing the utilization of existing services. They also emphasized community awareness, resource sharing, and the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate services to better serve the population.

The prioritization process was inclusive and collaborative, ensuring that community voices were heard and that the resulting CHIP reflected both pressing needs and actionable solutions.

Community Health Priorities in Monroe County

The Monroe County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) aims to address the most pressing health issues identified through a collaborative effort among community partners, healthcare providers, local government, and residents. The plan is data-driven, considering both immediate and long-term health needs. Through this extensive collaboration, key health priorities were identified to guide efforts and resources.

The process involved the review of quantitative and qualitative data, active engagement with community stakeholders, and the assessment of available resources to determine feasible strategies. (See Figure 6: The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership for a visual representation of the varying levels of community involvement in decision-making.) The resulting CHIP focuses on targeted interventions to improve health outcomes and address the most critical gaps and challenges identified. This section outlines the health priorities and specific challenges that must be addressed to enhance the overall well-being of Monroe County residents.



Figure 5 The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

CHIP Health Priorities

Three critical health priorities were determined through the community health assessment process for Monroe County:

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1. **Access to Healthcare**
 2. **Mental Health and Substance Abuse**
 3. **Community Safety**

These priorities highlight urgent challenges requiring a community-driven, comprehensive approach to effectively address health differences, safety concerns, and overall quality of life.

1. Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare remains a significant concern for Monroe County, particularly for low-income and rural populations. Barriers to accessing care include the prohibitive cost of services, limited availability of comprehensive and preventive healthcare, and transportation challenges. The shortage of healthcare providers, particularly primary care physicians and specialists, forces many residents to travel long distances for care, further exacerbating these challenges.

Efforts to address healthcare access will focus on enhancing affordability, increasing the availability of care providers, improving transportation options, and leveraging telehealth services to bridge existing gaps.

2. Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Mental health and substance abuse are identified as critical health concerns in Monroe County. Contributing factors such as the high cost of living, economic instability, and housing insecurity lead to increased mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and chronic stress. Substance abuse, especially involving alcohol and opioids, remains a significant challenge, with data indicating high rates of alcohol and drug-related issues.

To combat these issues, efforts will be directed at expanding mental health and substance abuse services, raising awareness of available resources, and implementing targeted interventions that address both prevention and treatment.

3. Community Safety

Community safety is a top priority, with concerns centered on pedestrian and bicyclist safety, water safety, and human trafficking. The geography of Monroe County, with its extensive waterways, presents unique safety challenges, emphasizing the need for drowning prevention. As a popular tourist destination, Monroe County also faces increased risks related to traffic safety and human trafficking.

Efforts to enhance community safety will focus on improving road infrastructure, promoting water safety, and increasing public education on safety issues. Addressing these safety concerns will involve both local enforcement and broader community awareness initiatives.

Summary

Data from the Community Health Assessment (CHA) will inform the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for the 2024-2029 cycle. The CHIP aims to address pressing health issues identified through a collaborative effort involving community partners, healthcare providers, local government, and residents. This data-driven plan considers both immediate and long-term health needs, identifying key health priorities to guide community efforts and resource allocation.

The CHA reveals significant health challenges in Monroe County, such as higher mortality rates from suicide, drowning, liver disease, atherosclerosis, HIV, nutritional deficiencies, viral hepatitis, and various cancers. Despite these challenges, Monroe County shows better health outcomes in several areas compared to Florida and the broader United States, providing a solid foundation for improvement.

In summary, the CHA highlights critical themes related to access to care, affordability, long wait times, and the limited availability of specialty resources—issues that may contribute to higher mortality rates. The CHIP will respond to the three key health priorities:

1. **Access to Healthcare:** Focused on reducing barriers such as high service costs and transportation challenges, particularly for low-income and rural populations.
2. **Mental Health and Substance Abuse:** Acknowledging the significant impact of economic instability and housing insecurity, with targeted efforts to expand services and raise awareness.

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3. **Community Safety:** Addressing safety concerns for pedestrians, cyclists, and water users, while implementing initiatives for drowning prevention and traffic safety.

In the coming months and years, the Florida Department of Health in Monroe (FDOH-Monroe) is committed to collaborating with community stakeholders to address these critical health-related issues. Residents are encouraged to contact the Health Department to learn more or become involved in the CHIP process.

Collaborative Strengths and Community Resources

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) were shaped by the collaborative efforts of many organizations throughout Monroe County. These partners, deeply rooted in the community, not only offered technical expertise but also embodied the warmth and openness that makes Monroe County special. As one focus group participant noted, “There’s a warmth and an openness here as a whole that makes people empathic and supportive of each other.”

A key strength of this partnership is the cultural diversity of the community. With a growing population of immigrants and English-language-learning (ELL) residents, the range of perspectives has been enriched, enhancing the approach to health and wellness across the county. The community’s tightly knit organizations work together with remarkable cohesion, which has allowed for efficient outreach and the pooling of resources to serve residents effectively.

Partners have been instrumental in ensuring the availability of critical resources, particularly in healthcare and human services. These organizations are deeply knowledgeable about the services available to the community, contributing to the continuous efforts of outreach and support. An essential tool in this work is the community resource guide, developed by the United Way and available at www.keyshelp.org. This guide, which is updated regularly, provides comprehensive information about all community services across Monroe County and is available in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Through this collaborative network, Monroe County is well-equipped to address its most pressing health challenges and to support the well-being of its residents.

Appendices

Appendix A

MAPP 2.0 Assessments

The Florida Department of Health in Monroe County is pleased to share the results of the community kickoff meeting, Community Health Assessment Reports, and the prioritization setting meeting for 2024:

- [Kickoff Meeting](#)
- [Community Partners Assessment](#)
- [Community Context Assessment](#)
- [Community Status Assessment](#)
- [Prioritization Setting Meeting](#)