

Pocahontas County



2023

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Community Health Needs Assessment & Health Improvement Plan

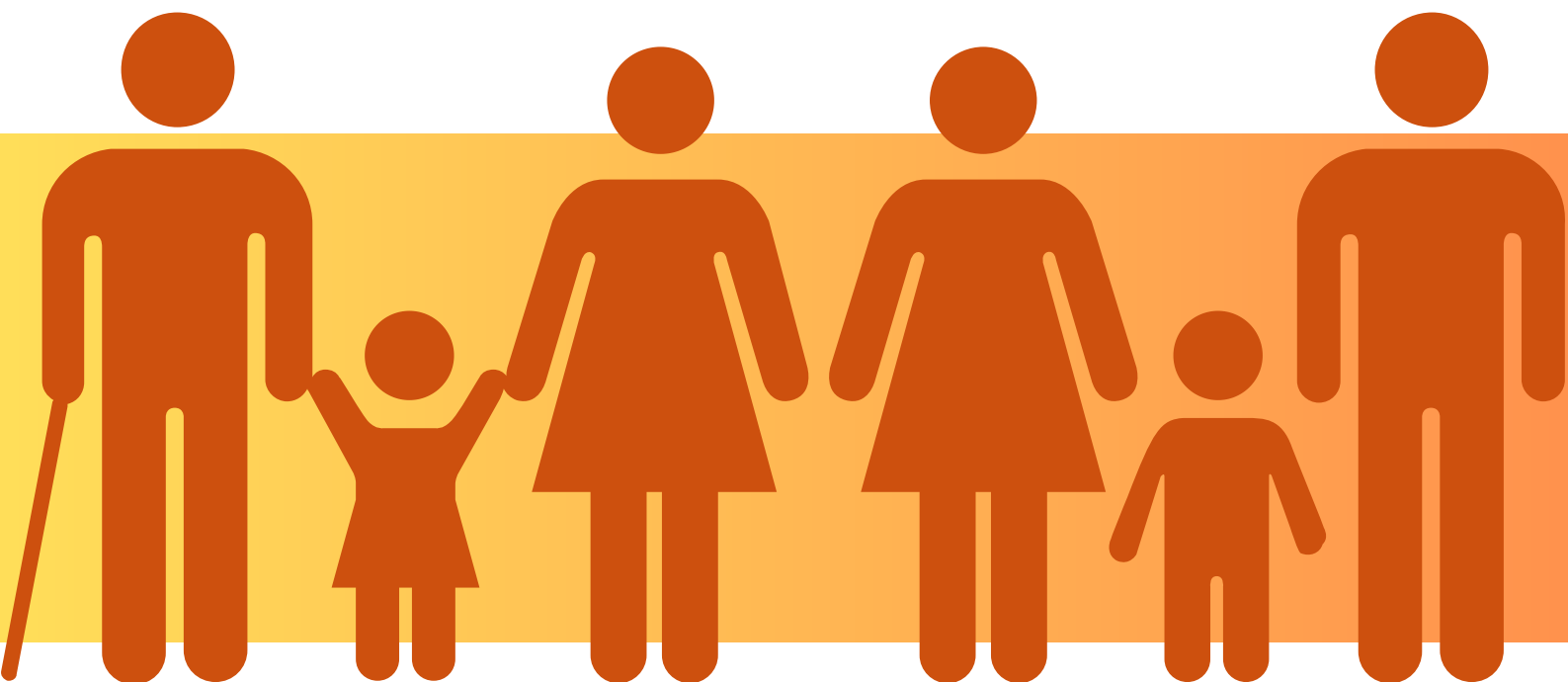


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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is to identify the most important factors impacting health in the community and to develop strategies that build on existing strengths and address opportunities for improvement. The CHNA and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) inform statewide planning with the goal of health improvement for all Iowans.

The data process consisted of primary and secondary data collected from a variety of sources by the Pocahontas County Public Health CHNA committee. The survey data was used to bring together community stakeholders to discuss the common themes identified in the survey. Throughout this time secondary data was gathered and analyzed from a variety of local, state, and federal resources to assist with questions and narrow down community needs.

The CHNA process and digital community survey was announced and launched via local newspapers, the county website, agency's social media platforms, and a variety of local community email distribution lists. The survey was also available in paper format. The survey was available for four weeks and received 121 responses (digital and paper).

The information gathered from the primary and secondary data sources showed three main areas of need:

- Access to Behavioral Health Services
- Access to Dental Health Services
- Healthy Living (Physical Activity, Nutrition, Healthy Eating & Obesity)

The areas will be targeted with the Community's Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

In moving forward, the data and comments included in this report elaborate on the community's major needs and will give the reader a snapshot into issues in the community. This assessment will be used to create the health improvement plan that outlines strategies to meet the community's needs. The health improvement plan will be a living document which will be revised over the next five years to track progress on strategies and emerging opportunities.

Community Served

Community Definition

For the Community Health Needs Assessment, we define the community as Pocahontas County residents, the primary recipients of medical care and social services.

Race & Ethnicity

Pocahontas County's 2020 population is predominately white, but in comparison with 2010 Census the minority populations is increasing (ISU Extension Indicators).

Population

According to the 2020 Census, Pocahontas County serves as a home to 7,078 residents. Since 2010, Pocahontas County's population decreased by 3.17% while the state's population increased by 4.73% (ISU Extension Indicators).

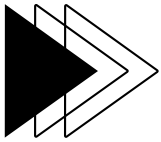
Age

In comparison with the state of Iowa, Pocahontas' younger population is lower (17 or younger) and the older population (65 and older) is higher. According to the 2020 census, 65+ comprised 24.0% of Pocahontas County while the state's 65+ was 18.0% (ISU Extension Indicators).

County Health Rankings

Pocahontas County is ranked the 63rd healthiest county in the state of Iowa. This ranking considers factors such as life expectancy and quality of life (County Health Rankings).

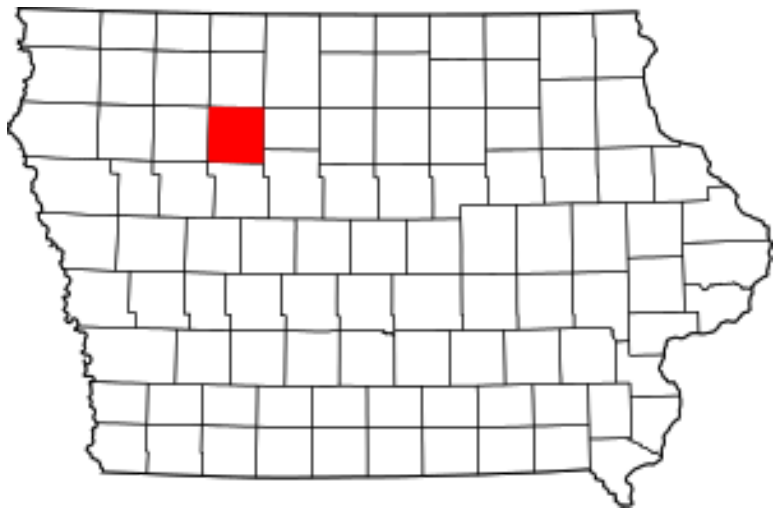
Physical Environment



Geography & Outdoor Environment

Pocahontas County is located in Northwest Iowa occupying 579 square miles; 577.7 square miles of land area and 1.4 square miles of water area. The nine communities of Pocahontas County are Fonda, Gilmore City, Havelock, Laurens, Palmer, Plover, Pocahontas (county seat), Rolfe, and Varina. The townships of Pocahontas county are Bellville, Cedar, Center, Colfax, Cummins, Des Moines, Dover, Garfield, Grand, Lake, Lincoln, Lizard, Marshall, Powhatan, Roosevelt, Sherman, and Swan Lake.

Pocahontas County has several family friendly locations for residents and visitors to enjoy. Each of the nine communities in Pocahontas County feature beautiful parks with something unique to offer.



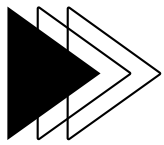
Many communities offer recreational areas with campgrounds, swimming pools, walking trails, and golf courses. The Three Rivers Trail is mostly a rural trail that runs 40 miles and is named for the three rivers it crosses.

The statue of the Indian Princess, Pocahontas, stands 25 feet tall and welcomes visitors and residents to town on the eastern edge of Pocahontas on Highway 3.



Image from: <https://pocahontasiowa.com/>

Physical Environment

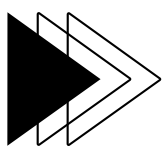


Housing

The median home value in Pocahontas County from 2017–2021 was \$83,900 with the median rent costing residents an average of \$659 a month during the same time frame (ISU Extension Indicators). In 2021, there were a total of 3,678 housing units. Of this total, 2,477 were owner-occupied, 644 were renter occupied, and 577 were vacant. In Pocahontas County, a majority of owner-occupied housing is of 1-unit structures. For renter-occupied housing, there is more housing of 1-unit structures than any other type. Seasonally vacant housing units were 4.3% of all vacant units (ISU Extension Indicators).

In Pocahontas County, 11.3% of homeowners and 34.3% of renters spent more than 30% of their household income on monthly owner or renter costs (ISU Extension Indicators).

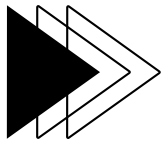
There are several agencies that serve Pocahontas County including Fort Dodge Housing Authority and the Section 8 HUD Voucher Office that provides support to residents who qualify for low-income housing. The affordability and availability of these homes is limited.



Transportation

The majority of residents in Pocahontas County rely on personal vehicles for transportation throughout the community. In 2020, 77.5% of Pocahontas County workers reported driving alone, with only 9.38% carpooling to work (Data USA). Public transportation options are limited throughout the county. The most commonly used service is MIDAS Regional Transit, a regional system that is owned and run by MIDAS Council of Governments. It is an affordable transportation option that is available for anyone and is utilized by the elderly and those with disabilities. MIDAS and Pocahontas Community Hospital partner to provide transportation to the hospital, Pocahontas, and Laurens Clinics at no cost.

Social & Economic Factors



Education

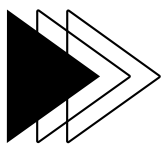
In Pocahontas County, 89.5% of persons aged 25 years or older are a high school graduate or higher. Of those, 17.1% have a bachelor's degree or higher. There is a 11% school dropout rate compared to Iowa at 7% and the US at 11% (Town Charts).



Image from: <https://pocahontascounty.iowa.gov/economic-development/community/residential-info/schools/>

Pocahontas County has three school districts, located in Pocahontas and Laurens. Pocahontas Area Community School District serves children preschool through 12th grade, Pocahontas Catholic School serves children Kindergarten through 5th grade, and Laurens serves children Kindergarten through 5th grade.

The Northwest Career Academy, located at the Laurens-Marathon Community School, is a joint venture between Iowa Central Community College (ICCC) and the Laurens-Marathon Community School, offering career and technical training in the areas of Welding and Industrial Machining.



Workforce & Industry

Pocahontas County has a variety of businesses and industries, providing career opportunities for residents. According to Data USA, the largest industries in Pocahontas County are:

- Manufacturing (555 people)
- Health Care & Social Assistance (422 people)
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (394 people)

Like other Midwest regions, Pocahontas County is linked to farm and agriculture-related industries. Producers primarily grow corn and soybeans, while raising cattle, poultry, and hogs.

Social & Economic Factors

Unemployment

In 2020, Pocahontas County unemployment rate was 3.1% and the state rate was 4.2%, while the national average was 5.4% (County Health Rankings).

Income

From 2017–2021, the median household income was \$56,350. Statewide, the average income for the same time period was \$65,429 (ISU Extension Indicators). Pocahontas County has a lower distribution of the population making over \$100,000 or more per year compared to Iowa but slightly higher than the state in multiple categories ranging from \$15,000 to \$99,000 per year (ISU Extension Indicators).

Poverty

Poverty is determined by family size and composition and compared to a set of federal guidelines that are updated yearly. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold than that family and every individual in it is considered to be living in poverty. From 2017–2021, 10.2% of Pocahontas County is under the poverty line compared to the state at 11% (ISU Extension Indicators).

Social & Economic Factors

Food Insecurity

Food Insecurity is the percentage of the population who did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year. Pocahontas County rate was 7.6% compared to Iowa at 7.3% (Feeding America). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines two levels of food insecurity for households: low food secure and very low food secure.

Food and family assistance programs available to Iowa households and families referred to as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Family Investment Program (FIP); the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Free and Reduced School Meals Program.

Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc provides an emergency food service for families in crisis, providing a 3-to-5-day food supply. Other food programs available to registered families once a week.

Mobile Food Pantry is sponsored by Food Bank of Iowa. They serve communities that lack adequate access to food assistance programs. Schedule for Pocahontas County Mobile Food Pantry can be found at Food Bank of Iowa: (<http://www.foodbankiowa.org/Programs/MobilePanttries.aspx>).



Health Factors

Life Expectancy

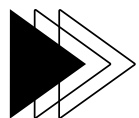
The average life expectancy for Pocahontas County residents is 77.4 years with Iowa's life expectancy being 78.7 years (ISU Extension Indicators). Heart disease and cancer was the leading cause of death for 2021 (Iowa Public Health Tracking Portal).

Years of Life Expectancy				
Life Expectancy	Pocahontas County		Iowa	
	2015-2017	2018-2020	2015-2017	2018-2020
	78.6	77.4	79.5	78.7
Data Source: ISU Extension Indicators				

Obesity

Pocahontas County's obesity rates are 37% for adults (18 years and older) with the state's percentage being 36.4% (City-Data.com). Obesity increases the risk of developing high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease and several types of cancer.

Health Factors



Behavioral Health

Mental health conditions and mental disorders affect people regardless of age, social and economic background, or racial and ethnic group. Some Iowans struggle to find mental health care. In 2022, the ratio of population to mental health providers for the state was 530:1 compared to the national average of 340:1 (County Health Rankings)



Dental Health

According to 2021 County Health Rankings data, Pocahontas County had one dentist for every 1,770 people with the state average being 1,430 people (County Health Rankings). Providing dental care for uninsured or underinsured individuals is a concern locally, as well as nationwide. Medicaid reimbursement has not kept up with the cost of care, thereby forcing many providers to no longer accept Medicaid as a payer.

I-Smile, for pregnant women, kids, and school-aged children, is a statewide program that connects Iowans with dental, medical, and community resources to ensure a lifetime of health and wellness. I-Smile Silver is oral health for Iowa Seniors. Older Iowans (age 60 and older) access oral health services and maintain overall health (IDPH.iowa.gov). Pocahontas County subcontracts to provide preventative care to children, including dental screenings, interactive patient education, and fluoride varnishes. These services are available during monthly WIC clinics, as well as at preschool clinic.



Medical Health

In 2020, the ratio of population to primary care physicians for Pocahontas County was one per 3,300 people. The state of Iowa average being 1,360 people per one physician. The national average being 1,310 (County Health Rankings).

Pocahontas County has one hospital. Pocahontas Community Hospital is a city-owned, 25-bed, critical access hospital. According to Iowa Health Fact Book in 2022, there was a total of 2 Physicians, 1 Physician Assistant, and 3 Advanced Practice Nurses. Pocahontas County has two medical clinics located in Pocahontas and Laurens.

Survey Process

The community survey launched on September 12, 2023 and remained open until October 12, 2023. The survey could be completed electronically or paper copies filled out and submitted. Flyers were distributed throughout the community by staff and community partners with a QR code for residents to conveniently scan and fill out the survey electronically. Paper copies of the survey were given to older population to complete. The surveys were left at a variety of local businesses, including the grocery store, libraries, churches, schools and retail locations.

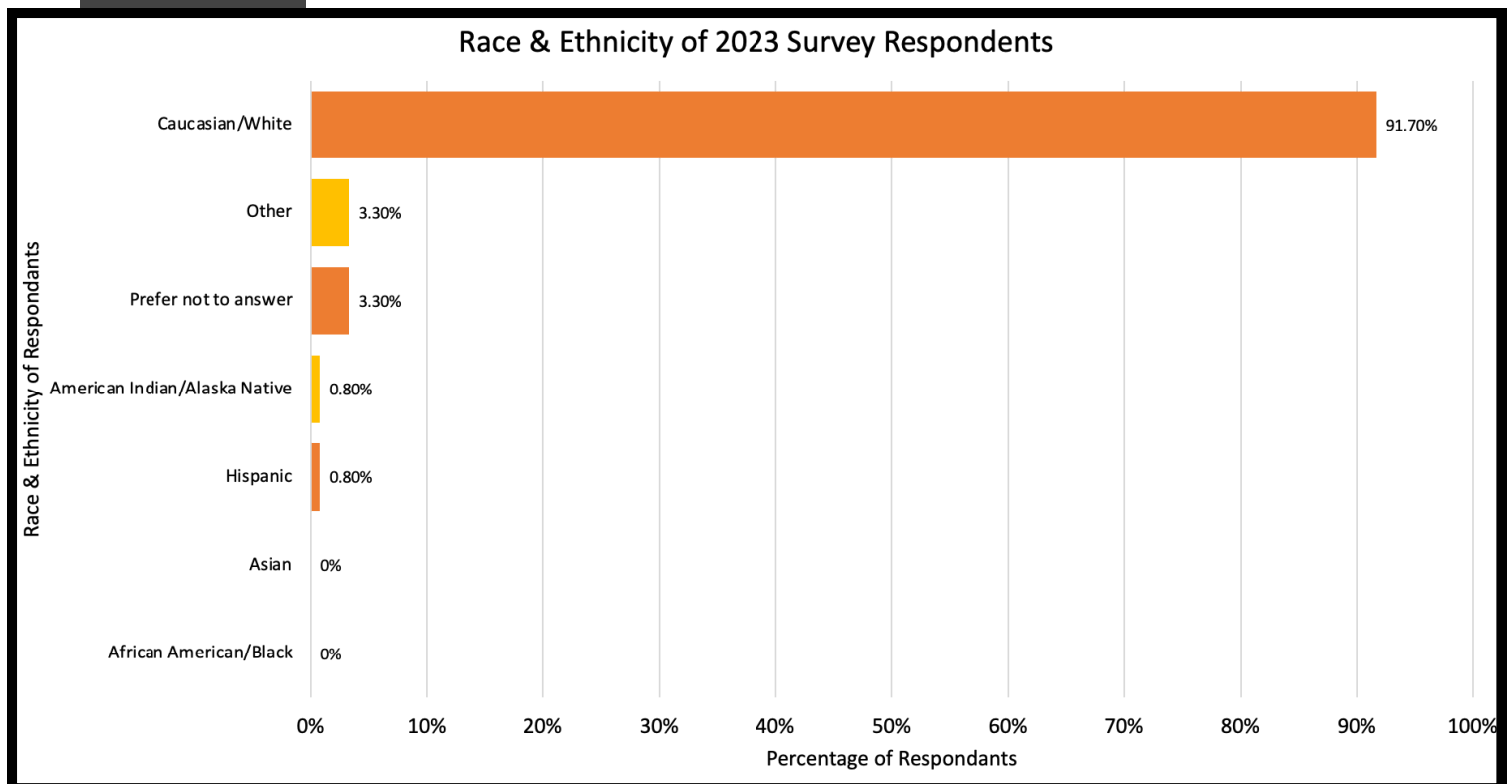
The survey was initially promoted in all the county's newspapers with a press release. The survey was promoted on the social media posts.

The survey included 36 questions covering a variety of topics that impact our community's health and wellness. We had 111 electronic surveys completed and an additional 10 paper copies returned for a total of 121 respondents.

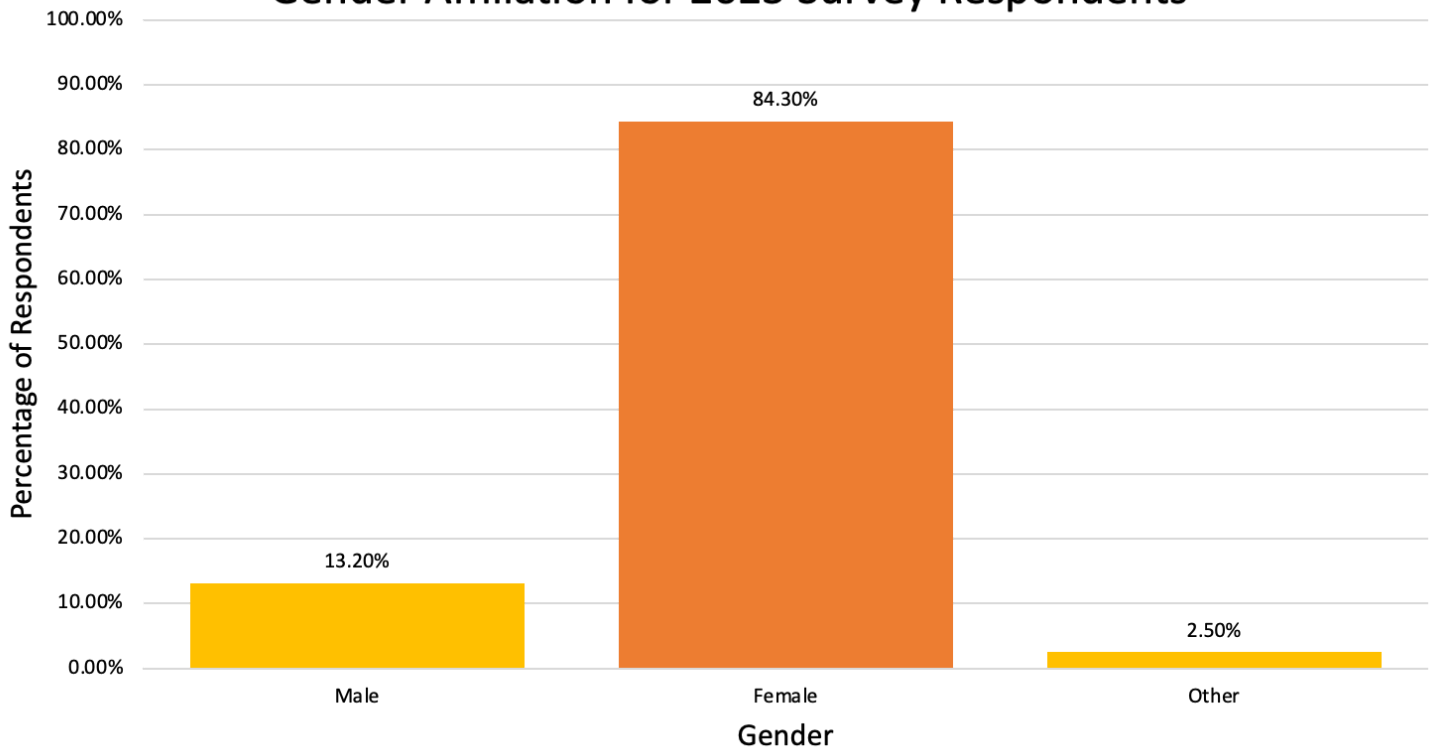
At the conclusion of the survey, the Pocahontas County Public Health CHNA committee reviewed the results and selected three main focus areas based off community responses: Access to Behavioral Health Services, Access to Dental Health Services, and Healthy Living.

Survey Data

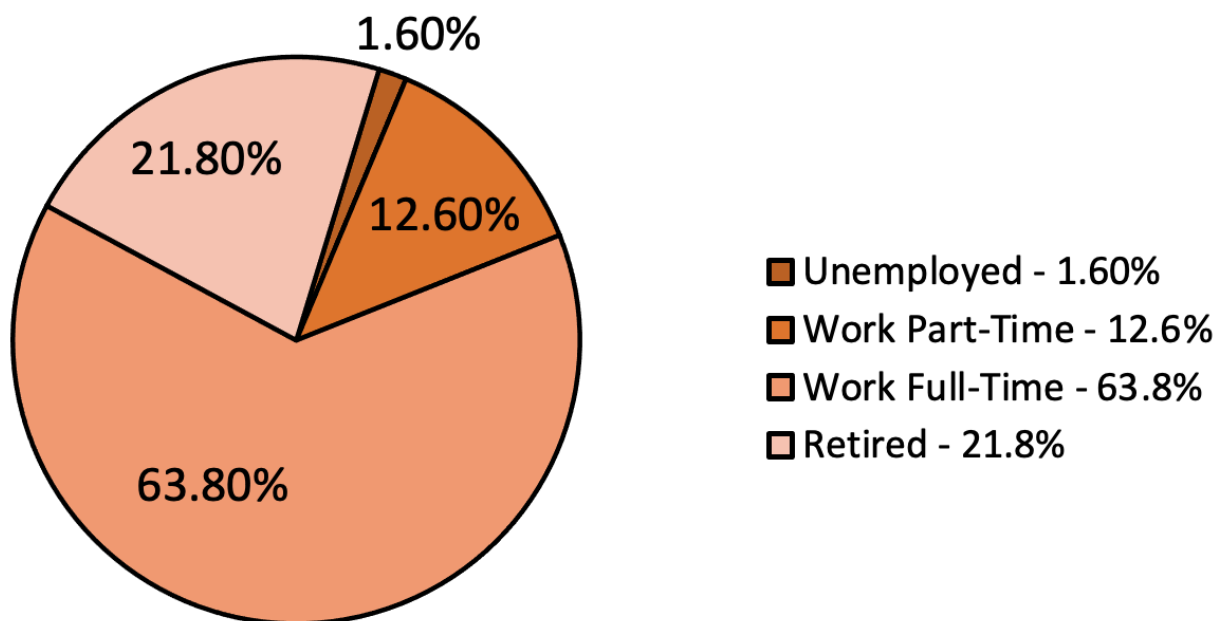
121 individuals completed the 2023 Community Needs Assessment (CHNA) Survey. Of the respondents, 91% identified themselves as Pocahontas County residents, 84.3% female, 91.7% Caucasian/White, 63.8% work full-time, and 34.7% had a Bachelor's Degree.



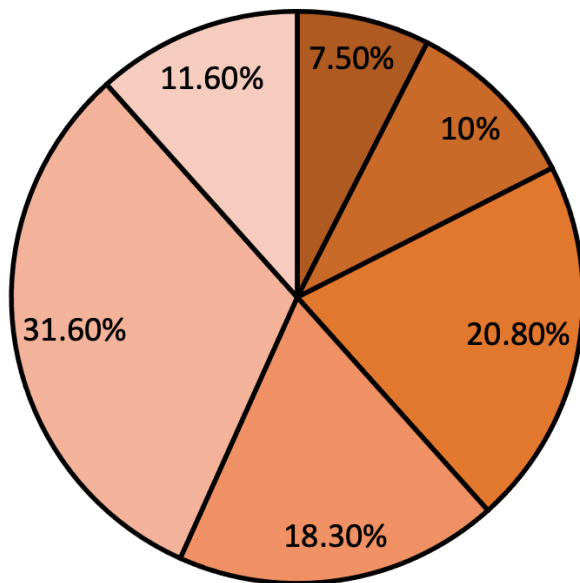
Gender Affiliation for 2023 Survey Respondents



Employment Status of 2023 Survey Respondents

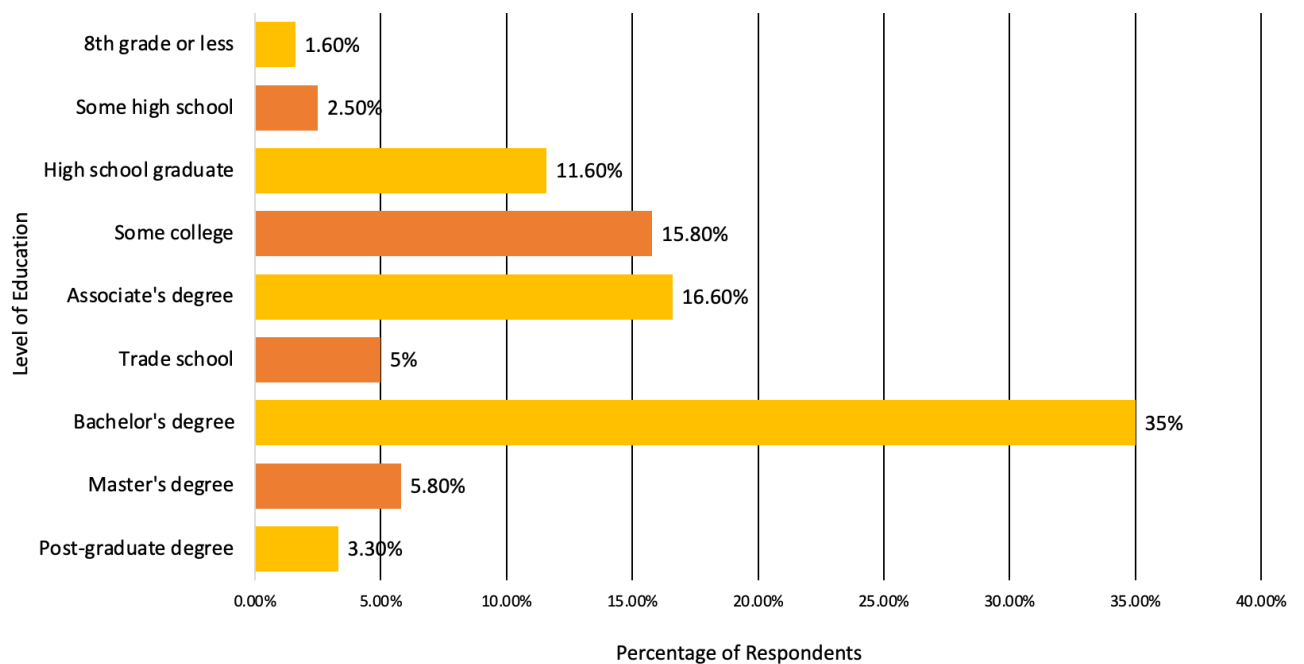


Household Income of 2023 Survey Respondents

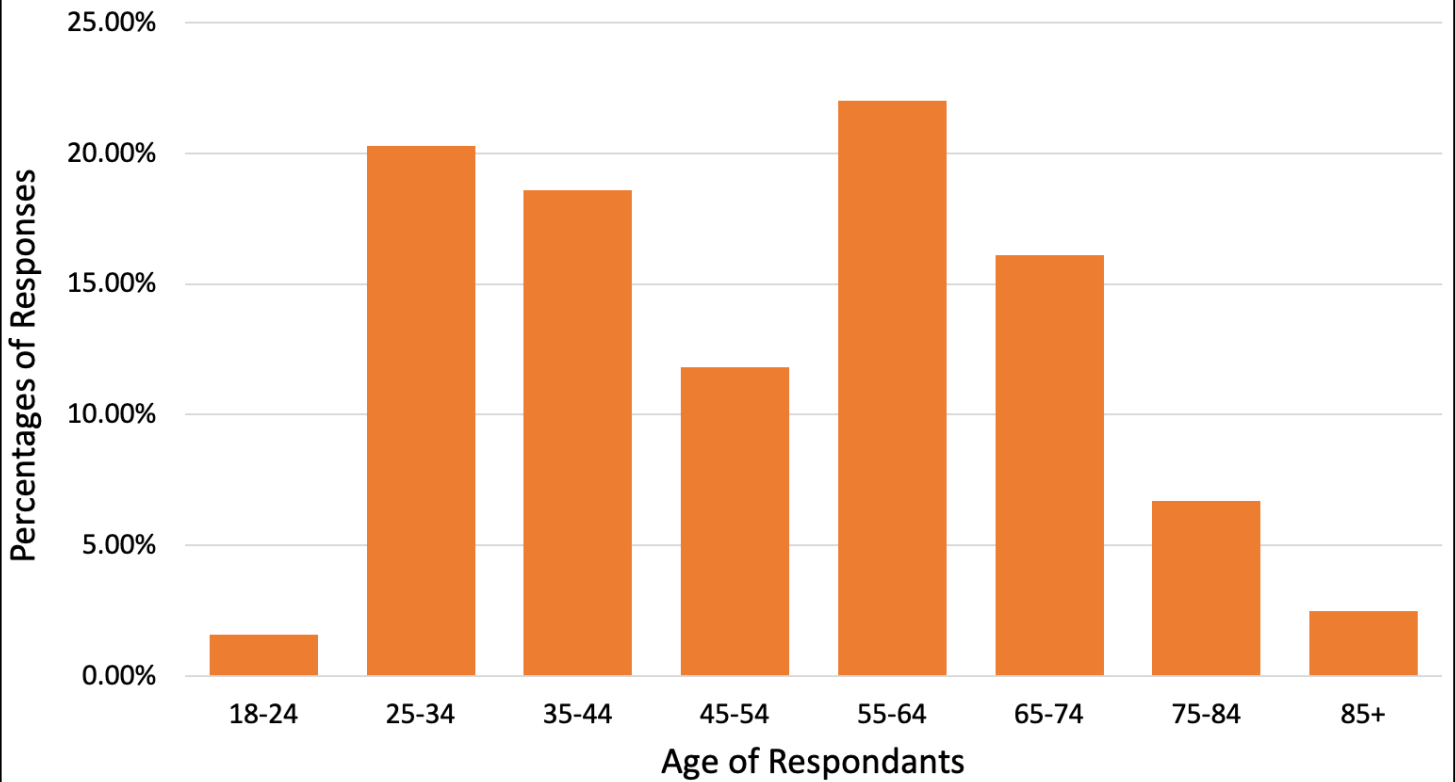


- Less than \$25,000 - 7.5%
- \$25,000 - \$50,000 - 10%
- \$50,000 - \$75,000 - 20.8%
- \$75,000 - \$100,000 - 18.3%
- Over \$100,000 - 31.6%
- Prefer not to answer - 11.6%

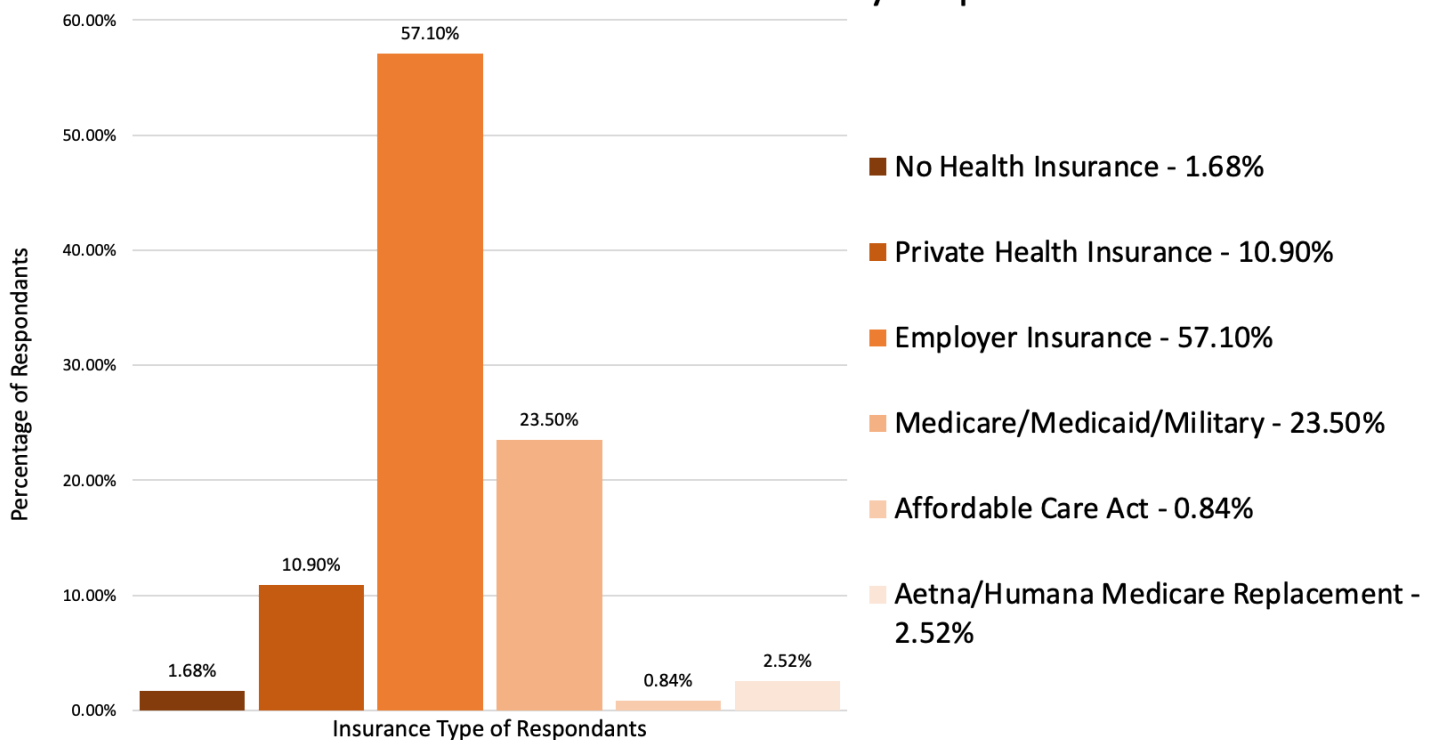
Education Attainment of 2023 Survey Respondents



Age of 2023 Survey Respondents



Insurance Status of 2023 Survey Respondents



Health Improvement Plan

The Health Improvement plan was developed as a result of the needs identified on the Community Health Needs Assessment and from the responses from the Pocahontas County Public Health CHNA Committee. The Health Improvement Plan addresses access to mental health services, access to dental health, and healthy living such as physical activity, nutrition, healthy eating, and obesity.

Pocahontas County Health Need #1 - Mental Health

Goal: Pocahontas County children, adolescents, and adults will experience improved mental health and well-being.

Objective: Partner with multidisciplinary community coalitions focused on mental health and well-being that meet at least quarterly through 2028.

Strategies

- Facilitate four Joint Provider meetings per year
- Facilitate conversations between schools and Pocahontas County resource providers around youth mental health needs & gaps; initiate plans to address gaps and support schools
- Increase the number of faith-based community members (pastors, youth, group leaders) who participate in the community coalitions

Objective: Reduce stigma of and normalize treatment of mental health by releasing at least 12 coordinated messages on mental health education and resources on various media platforms by 2028.

Strategies

- Work with community partners to promote 988 Suicide & Crisis Line via social media and PSAs
- Work with Pocahontas County Schools and other community partners to support mental health in youth
- Maintain up-to-date information on mental health providers in the County's Resource Book

Pocahontas County Health Need #2- Dental Health

Goal: Pocahontas County children, adolescents, and adults will experience improved dental health education.

Objective: Pocahontas County will provide education on oral health care to increase awareness of good oral hygiene habits to residents of the county by 2028.

Strategies

- Offer I-Smile screenings and fluoride varnish through Public Health
- Partner with I-Smile Senior to provide screenings for the older population
- Provide education in the Pocahontas County Schools that focuses on oral care like proper teeth brushing and flossing for young children
- Post dental health information at least quarterly on Pocahontas County Public Health social media site
- Collaborate with local dental care providers to better understand pain points and educate Public Health staff on good oral health care to teach to the population served

Objective: Increase awareness of fluoride levels in drinking water and highlight the benefits to oral health to the residents of the county by 2028

Strategies

- Research the fluoride levels in surrounding communities' drinking water to show comparison with Pocahontas' levels
- Educate the public on the importance of fluoride in drinking water for oral health
- Post educational information on social media regarding water fluoridation and preventing tooth decay
- Collaborate with local dentists and city officials to increase the understanding of the benefits of water fluoridation

Pocahontas County Health Need #3- Healthy Living (Physical Activity, Nutrition, Healthy Eating, & Obesity)

Goal: Educate Pocahontas County residents on healthy living habits

Objective: Increase awareness of eating healthy and being physically active to the residents of Pocahontas County by 2028

Strategies

- Research 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count program and educate children and families on healthy eating and active living approaches
- Evaluate existing initiatives or messaging aimed at limiting screen time to reduce sedentary behaviors
- Work with community partners to promote involvement in Healthiest State Annual Walk throughout Pocahontas County
- Coordinate messaging on the health benefits of physical activity and eating healthy and will use various media platforms to promote the messages
- Promote and support local farmer's markets to increase awareness and access to fresh fruits and vegetables
- Partner with local organizations to increase nutrition education, counseling, and service referrals

Objective: Encourage the development and promote the use of trails, Disc Golf, and community parks in Pocahontas County by 2028

Strategies

- Work with community partners to promote construction of recreational trails throughout the county
- Collaborate with community partners to research grant funds available to construct recreational trails and disc golf courses

Conclusion

The results of the CHNA identified existing and new areas of health needs in Pocahontas County. The Health Improvement plan will play an important role over the next five years working to improve the health of the residents of Pocahontas County. Some of the areas identified and resulting strategies are in alignment with other local agencies.

*The report can be viewed on our web page <https://pocahontascounty.iowa.gov/public-health/>



Image from: <https://www.pokychamber.com/community>

About Pocahontas County Public Health:

The Pocahontas County Public Health office provides public health education, resources, and services to Pocahontas County. The public health office receives federal, state, and county funding to support these programs and services. July 1, 2023 the Pocahontas County Public Health and Pocahontas County Home Care Aide Agency combined and all employees became public health employees. The following services are provided by Pocahontas County Public Health:

- Home Health Care
- Skilled Nursing
- Family Foundations
- Immunizations & Flu Clinics
- TB Monitoring & Follow-Up
- Lifeline Medical Alert
- Emergency Preparedness
- Child Safety Checks
- Environmental Health Services
- Homemaker Services
- Home Health Aides
- Communicable Disease Follow-Up & Prevention
- Maternal & Child Health
- DME Loan Closet
- WIC Clinics & Dental Screenings
- Health Promotion
- DNA Testing

Information and referrals to community services is also provided. Pocahontas County Public Health works actively with county emergency management, county decision and policy makers, and other community partners to strengthen public health preparedness in the event of a natural disaster or act of terrorism.

The Pocahontas County Board of Health consists of 7 board members and is appointed by the Pocahontas County Board of Supervisors.

Pocahontas County Public Health complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Contact Information

Pocahontas County Public Health

21 Third Ave NE

Pocahontas, IA 50574

Phone: (712)335-4142

Fax: (712)335-3581

Website: <https://pocahontascounty.iowa.gov/public-health/>

Mission Statement:

Pocahontas County Public Health will strive to apply public health knowledge to prevent, promote, and protect the health of the individuals and the entire community, serving all ages and income levels.

Vision Statement: We exist to ensure that people in our community have equitable opportunities and resources to lead healthier, more fulfilling, and longer lives.



Image from: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=352376843358930&set=pb.100057598503098.-2207520000&type=3>

References

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Image from: <https://kicdam.com/news/170071-pocahontas-county-sheriff-talks-need-for-new-jail/>