

Ferry County Community Health Needs Assessment

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Introduction

The Ferry County Community Health Needs Assessment process includes quantitative community survey analysis and qualitative analysis from focus groups and key informant interviews with community members and community leaders representing Ferry County.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to share the needs and priorities of Ferry County. These included:

- Emerging issues facing Ferry County
- What residents have to say about barriers and assets affecting health
- Health behaviors and outcomes

Methods

Methods included to compile this report were:

- Community survey
- Community focus groups
- Community leader key-informant interviews

Limitations

This report highlights data from a county wide survey, focus groups, and community leader key-informant interviews. Survey results were collected through a convenience sample and are not representative of the entire county due to how, where, and from whom survey data was collected. Focus group and key informant interviews do not represent the entire county due to the small sample size.

Community Survey Results

Overview

Northeast Tri County Health District (NETCHD) and the Spokane Regional Health District Data Center administered the Ferry County Community Health Needs Assessment survey during the spring of 2022. The purpose of the survey was to provide insight into the health needs in the community and identify areas of focus for potential community health improvement projects and programs. Through a convenience sample and with support from community partners, NETCHD collected 142 responses during the spring of 2022. The survey focused on quality of life and health behaviors and outcomes. The health behaviors and outcomes section were divided into three areas:

- Citizen satisfaction
- Social and work support
- Health outcomes

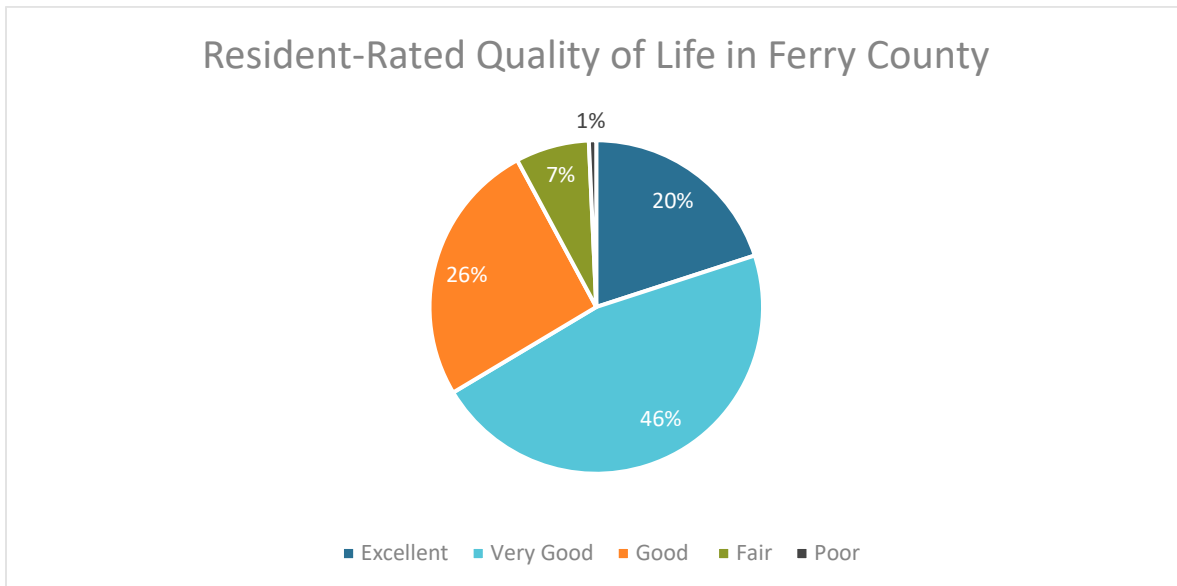
This report describes the results of the health behaviors and outcomes section of the survey.

Experience as a Citizen in Ferry County

Survey respondents answered several questions regarding their experiences as citizens of Ferry County. Participants were asked to rate their overall quality of life and satisfaction with services, as well as identify the most important issue facing the area in which they live.

Quality of Life

Individuals were asked: “How would you rate the quality of life in the county you live in?” For all respondents living in Ferry County, 66% rated the quality of life in Ferry County as excellent or very good.

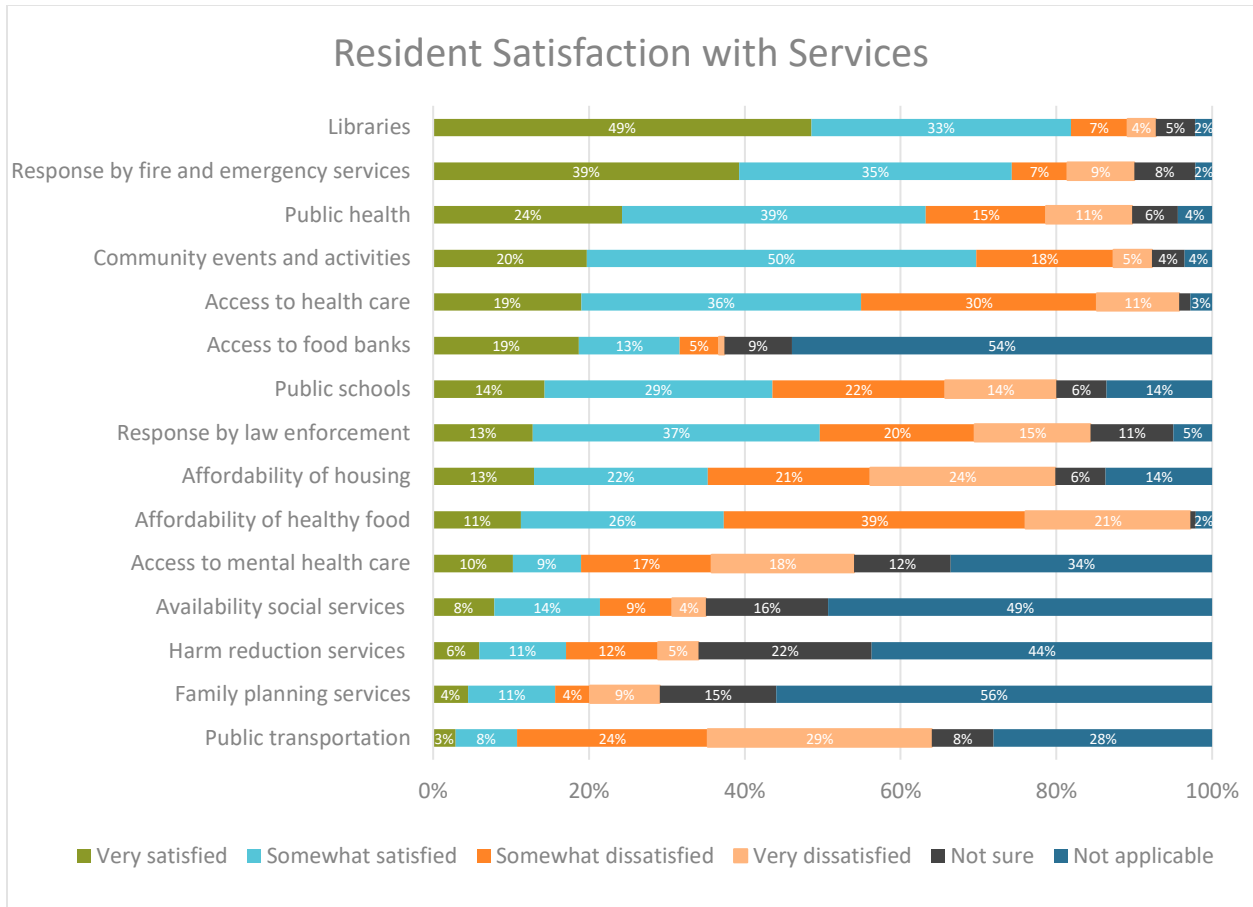


Quality of life rating differed between groups. For instance, for those respondents reporting an annual household income \$50,000 or above in Ferry County¹, 69% rated quality of life as excellent or very good compared to 62% for those making below \$50,000. Among all respondents who reported their quality of life, 66% rated quality of life as excellent or very good and 34% rated their quality of life as good, fair, or poor.

Satisfaction with Services

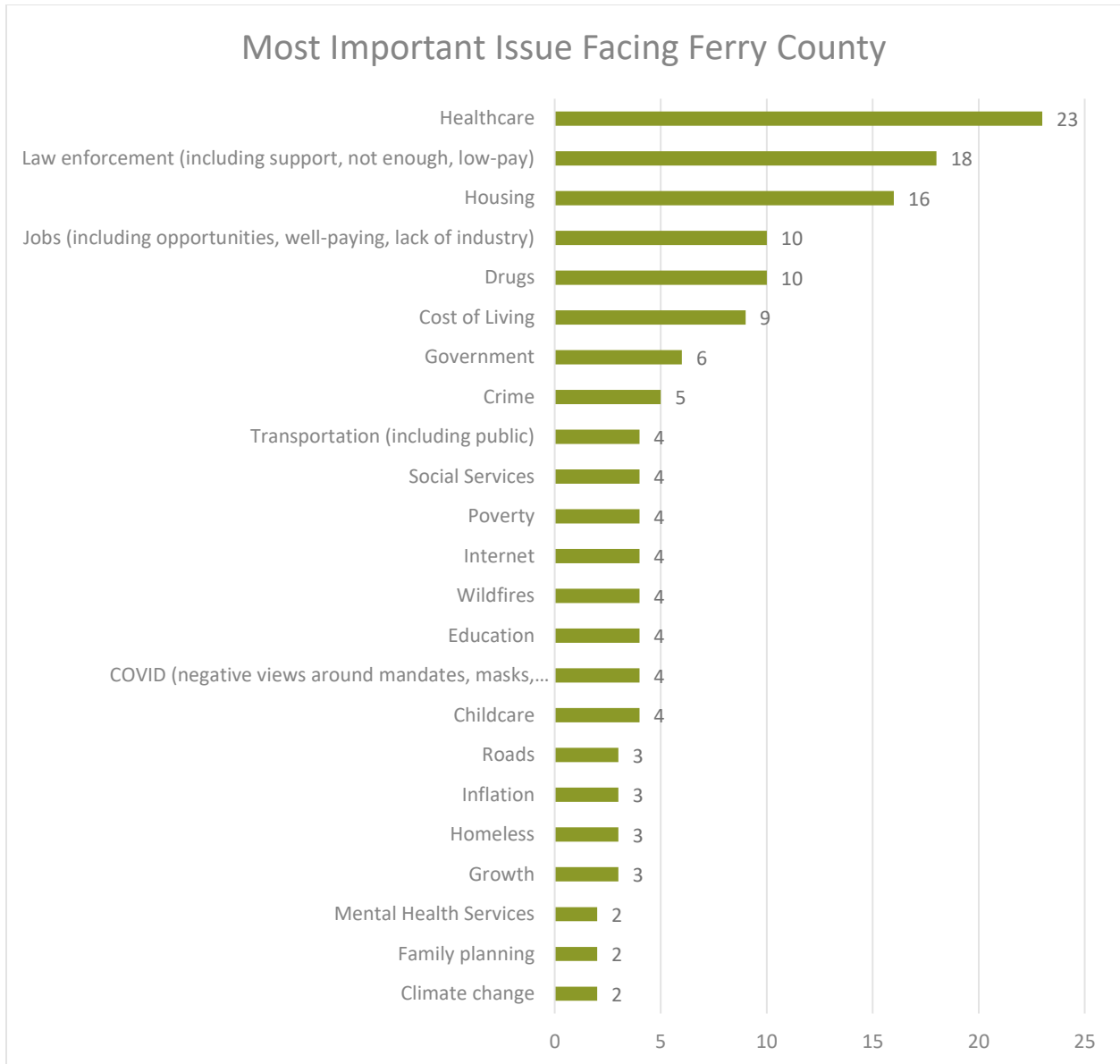
Individuals were asked to describe their level of satisfaction with several services in Ferry County. Among all respondents in Ferry County, *Libraries* received the highest satisfaction rating with 82% reporting they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the service. Among all respondents the second highest satisfaction levels were *Response by Fire and Emergency Services*, with 74% reporting they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. (Note, due to rounding, not all tables equal 100%).

¹ The estimated median household income for Ferry County in 2021 (2021 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$45,907. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Most Important Issue in Ferry County

To understand which issues were important to residents of Ferry County, the survey included the question, “What is the most important issue facing the area you live in today?” Responses to this open-ended question were categorized into major themes. The most frequently cited issues were “healthcare” and “Law enforcement” Respondents also identified housing, jobs, and drugs as top issues.



Social and Work Support in Ferry County

Survey respondents answered questions about their community services in Ferry County. Participants were asked to describe transportation and the stability of their housing situation.

Transportation

The survey included the question, “How do you usually get around to go to work, school, run errands, shop, etc.?” Of all respondents for Ferry County, 92% said they drive their own vehicle. Few respondents reported other modes of transportation, with 3% getting rides from friends or family, 5% stating they walk and 0% stating they use community transportation.

Housing stability

Housing stability was measured by the question, “How do you feel about your current housing situation?” For all respondents, 66% said their housing situation was very stable and secure while 10% said their housing situation was very unstable and insecure or fairly unstable and insecure.

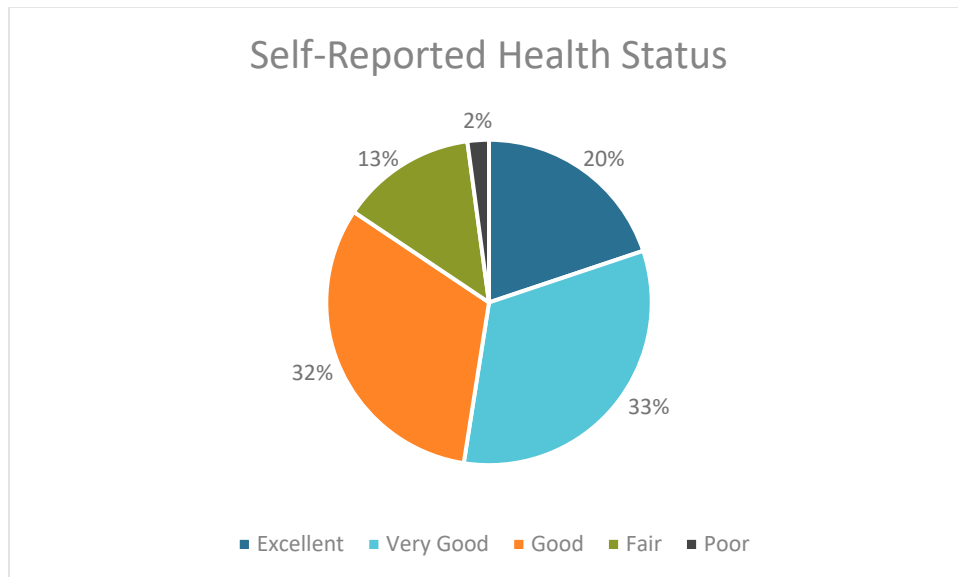
Housing Stability	Ferry County
Very stable and secure	66%
Fairly stable and secure	21%
Not sure	2%
Fairly unstable and insecure	8%
Very unstable and insecure	2%

Resident Health in Ferry County

Survey respondents answered questions about their health including general health, access and use of health services, health behaviors, and mental health. The following is a description of survey responses.

General Health

Individuals were asked to rate their general health on a scale from excellent to poor. For all respondents, 53% rated their general health as excellent or very good while 15% rated their health as fair or poor.



Personal Doctor and Doctor Visits

Individuals were asked if they had one person they consider their personal doctor or health care provider. For all respondents, 54% said they had only one and 17% said they did not have a personal doctor or health care provider.

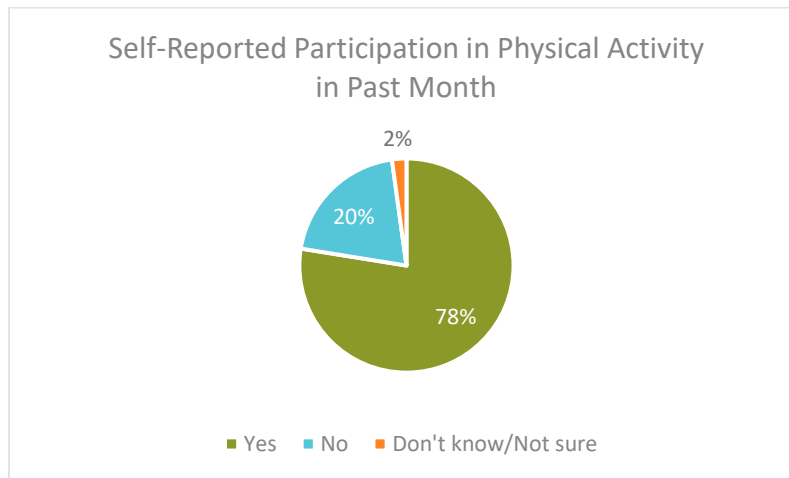
Personal Doctor or Health Care Provider	Ferry County
Yes, only one	54%
More than one	27%
No	17%
Don't know/ not sure	1%

Survey respondents were also asked if they seek medical care when they need it. For all respondents, 61% said they do seek care when they need it and 31% said they probably would but feel hesitant.

Seeking Medical Care	Ferry County
Yes, I will seek medical care	61%
Probably, but I feel hesitant	31%
No, I do not trust the doctors or medical system	6%
I do not seek medical care	2%

Physical Activity

Respondents were asked if they had participated in any physical activities in the past month outside of their job. For all respondents, 78% said they had participated in physical activities.



Mental Health

Individuals were asked two questions about mental health and treatment. Individuals were asked: "Thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?" For all respondents, the average number of days with poor mental health was 4.7 days. Among those who reported having an income of \$50,000 or above in Ferry County, the average number of days of poor mental health was 3.9 days, while those with income below \$50,000 reported an average of 6.4 days of poor mental health.

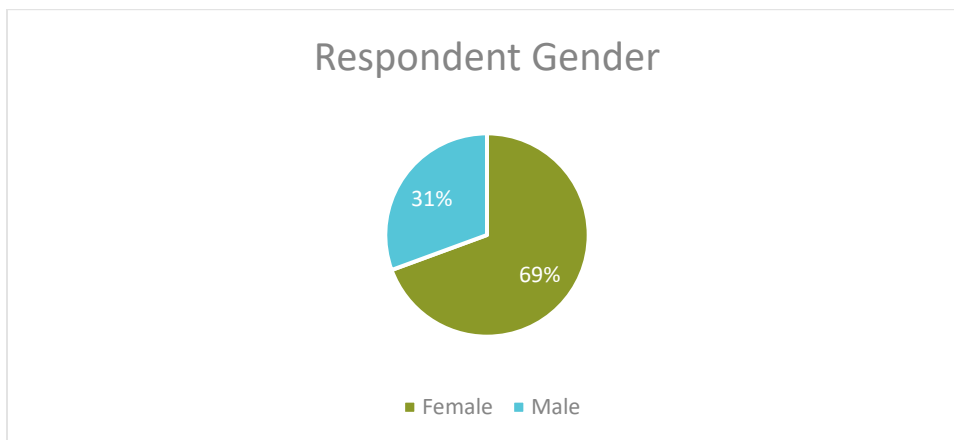
Finally, individuals were asked: "If you felt you needed mental health treatment or counseling but did not receive any, why not?" Respondents were asked to select all appropriate responses from a list

provided. The top reasons individuals did not receive treatment or counseling were that they did not need treatment, they did not know where to get services, and concern that information would be kept confidential. Most respondents stated they did not need treatment. The following table displays the number of respondents for each option.

Reason No Mental Health Treatment	Number of Individuals Selecting this Option
I did not need treatment.	86
I did not know where to get services.	19
I was concerned that information I gave the counselor might not be kept confidential.	18
I could not afford the cost	15
Some other reason or reasons.	11
I was concerned that getting mental health treatment or counseling might cause my family, neighbors, or community to have a negative opinion of me.	9
My health insurance does not pay enough for mental health treatment or counseling.	9
I was concerned that I might have to take medication.	6
My health insurance does not cover any mental health treatment or counseling.	5
I did not have adequate transportation to get to mental health or counseling appointments	4
I was concerned that getting mental health treatment or counseling might have a negative effect on my job.	3
I do not believe treatment or counseling is effective.	3
I was concerned that I might be committed to a psychiatric hospital.	3

Respondent Demographics

The survey had 142 respondents. The average age of all respondents was 57 years old. Respondents were 69% female and 31% male. 92% percent of respondents were white, all other race categories made up 8% of respondents. 33% of respondent’s annual household income was below \$50,000.



Race	Percent
White	92%
Black or African American	0%
Asian	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%
Multi-racial	3%
Some other race	0%
Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino/a	1%

Annual Household Income	Percent
Less than \$20,000	6%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	7%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	7%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	11%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	16%
\$100,000 or more	13%
Prefer not to say	16%

Community Focus Groups

Overview

In support of the Ferry County Community Health Needs Assessment, the Northeast Tri County Health District conducted six focus groups between August and December of 2022. The purpose of the focus groups was to engage community members in a discussion about top health issues that impact community health, as well as identify priorities in the community. Focus group participants were first asked to individually identify the top issue facing Ferry County, then they reviewed community survey data and discussed the results, including what information was missing. After reviewing the data, facilitators asked focus group participants to identify the top three issues most important to the community’s health.

Thirty-eight community members from the communities of Republic, Curlew, Orient, and Inchelium, Washington participated in the focus groups. There was one focus group held in Inchelium; one focus group held in Curlew; and two focus groups were held in Republic and Orient, respectively. Participants were recruited through local clinics and service organizations.

The focus groups were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Spokane Regional Health District Data Center staff utilized the Grounded Theory technique for analysis of the transcripts. Principles of Grounded Theory include initial (open) coding, memo-ing and focus (selective) coding. Data Center staff separated themes into three categories:

- Most important issue facing the community
- Barriers and assets impacting community health
- Most important priority facing the community's health

Most Important Issue Facing the Community

Focus group participants individually responded to the question, *"What is the most important issue facing Ferry County today?"* and reviewed data collected through the community survey. They reflected on how the data collected mirrored the issues in their community experiences and what was missing from the community experience. Among all respondents, the most common issues identified were transportation; substance abuse & treatment; housing; healthcare; law enforcement; retaining workforce; education & communication of services; and tribal-county relations.

Transportation

Transportation speaks to the distance residents must travel, and its associated costs, for services and medical care. Access to vehicles for such travel varies by household. Transportation in Ferry County also touches on the quality and quantity of roads in the county. Many residents live in places where roads are poor quality and/or require all wheel drive vehicles to access remote property. Many residents lack the means to travel reliably. Many had feelings that transportation services for medical purposes were often abused for non-medical needs in order to travel into areas with services.

Substance Abuse & Treatment

Substance Use relates to the concerns of illegal drug use by residents and the lack of suitable treatment service options within the county. Residents report a sense that drug addiction is both a drag on the community but also acts as a "magnet" that attracts more people and the same sorts of behavior. This perception is closely tied to the sense that there is a lack of law enforcement / law enforcement presence many places in the county.

Housing

Housing concerns in Ferry County primarily center around the shortage of housing available for people looking to move into the area. Other housing concerns are related to the homeless community, the living conditions of people on properties not suitable or meant for those living there (squatters or living out of multiple RVs on a property), and the methods in which would-be residents gather information about housing. Housing that is available is often in the form of rentals and would-be landlords have inconsistent ways of communicating availability of a rental. Word-of-mouth in the immediate area seems to be the most common form of advertising availability.

Healthcare

Healthcare services are scarce in Ferry County. Transportation is required to access many services and the burden of the costs and multiple trips to access the care are a deterrent to seeking proper care. There is a lack of a connection from local healthcare providers to larger health systems. There is a sense that this leads to delays in transferring patients needing higher level care into larger systems. There is also concern for the timeliness of urgent and emergency care in the area due to the distance required to travel into larger cities outside Ferry County.

Law Enforcement

Residents perceive a lack of law enforcement in several parts of the county. This sense is partially due to the rural nature of many communities and the response time necessary for proper authorities to arrive.

It seems that few communities within the county have enough local law enforcement, if any at all. There is perception that this lack of law enforcement presence encourages more issues related to drug use and other illegal activity. Commonly mentioned topics were the burning of garbage and questionable living situations / usages of property.

Retaining Workforce

Respondents felt that many of the services in demand in Ferry County are lacking because it is difficult to retain or attract the necessary workforce for the positions. Workforce needs are also heavily associated with housing - or the lack thereof. Those interested in moving to the area often have no living options close enough to the available work. Beyond housing, suitable childcare remains a top barrier keeping people from relocating to Ferry County and a force pushing families out of the county (or out of the workforce).

Education & Communication of Services

There is a sense that residents of Ferry County are not aware of the various services available to them - and that if they are aware, they likely do not fully understand how the service works (likely because they have not utilized it yet (emergency services)). When residents do know about them, there is a sense that the services are not necessarily easy to navigate or access. There is a desire for a more centralized source of information and services, for example a comprehensive webpage, and knowledgeable people to contact with questions.

Tribe – County Relations

Respondents mentioned challenges with coordination between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (the Tribal Government) and Ferry County. There is a respect for tribal sovereignty but also an apparent inability for the county (or its cities & towns) and tribal government to govern cooperatively.

Barriers and Assets Impacting Community Health

Throughout the focus group discussions, participants identified several barriers impacting their community’s health. Participants also identified some assets that could be utilized to improve the community’s health, although assets were not provided in all themed areas. The following table describes these barriers and assets when suggested.

	Barriers	Assets
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many residents live in areas with poor roads (4x4 required) and/or poorly/ unmarked roads/ driveways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMS Transportation is available Rural Resources
Substance abuse & treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited job opportunities in remote areas - resort to lifestyle involving drugs No local services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northeast Tri-County Health District - Syringe Services Program Naloxone availability
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many with rentals available do not have access to internet, so communicating rental 	

	availability and location is a challenge	
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurances with copays deter visits • Long response time for emergencies (roads & distance) • NEW Alliance Counseling Services may be overwhelmed with demand for counseling. • Poor cell service/ internet access • Common challenge in recruiting new providers is lack of housing 	
Law enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of staff for timely responses • Lack of visible presence, especially in outlying communities like Orient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Resources coordination for DV victims
Retaining workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program preschools are "maxed out" • Limited housing for people looking to move into county 	
Education & communication of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many have poor cell service/ no internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulletin boards around town • New county website • Churches as places to share information
Tribal – county relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Mutual Aid Agreements between tribal and county EMS for patient transportation • Tribal and county policies and bylaws don't align for court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Heath, Ferry County Commissioner is familiar with tribal systems

Top Issues Impacting Community Health

After reviewing and discussing the data from the community survey, focus group participants were asked to identify and prioritize the top three issues impacting their community's health. Responses could be the same as their individual responses at the beginning of the meeting, but the group had to come to a consensus around the top three issues with a vote. The top issues among all the eight focus groups varied, but housing and transportation were mentioned most frequently. Below are all the priorities identified with the top three priorities listed one through three (number one with the highest number of votes and number three with the lowest number of votes). Bulleted priorities were identified as important, however were not voted into the top three.

Curlew

1. Equitable resource & grant sharing across county
2. Mental health
3. Community paramedicine program (mobile integrated health)

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- *Equitable access and community group engagement*
- *Road sign 911 accessibility*
- *Family planning*
- *Access to healthcare and telemedicine*
- *Internet access*

Orient A

1. Lack of transportation to towns for all services and needs
2. Local clinic
3. Lack of industry
 - *Lack of housing*
 - *Hand up vs hand out*
 - *Substance abuse*

Orient B

1. Drug abuse (meth and heroin especially)
2. Lack of law enforcement in the area
3. Access to urgent care regionally
 - *Health code compliance*
 - *Lack of local health care*
 - *Restrictions on landlords and landlord/tenant issues*

Republic A

1. Home health & para health
2. Transportation (non-medically necessary)
3. Childcare
 - *Long term care*
 - *Housing*
 - *Access to affordable healthy food*
 - *Preventative health screenings & education*
 - *Lack of local health care specialists*
 - *Access to mental health*
 - *Access to substance use treatment*
 - *Activities for seniors*

Republic B

1. Lack of mental health providers
2. Housing for workforce
3. Substance abuse
 - *Childcare*
 - *Transportation*
 - *Low income and transitional housing*
 - *Mental health and insurance issues*
 - *Technology and internet access (including access to devices)*
 - *Increased security and law enforcement in community and organizations (i.e. hospital)*
 - *Family planning services*
 - *Community communication*

- *Support for existing social services*
- *Job security*

Inchelium

1. Transportation (and roads)
 2. Housing
 3. Drug/alcohol abuse response by EMS, mental health & support for all ages, community support & involvement, and youth services
- *Integrating services and service providers holistically using a shared vision*
 - *County and tribal collaboration (including state, federal, community, etc.)*
 - *Mutual aid agreements*
 - *Lack of broadband*
 - *Access to services*

Public Health Advisory Board Interviews

The NETCHD Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) strives to balance expertise, career experience, and consumer experience in areas that impact public health with three memberships offered to each Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties, and one membership offered to each federally recognized tribe in the tri county region: Colville Confederated Tribes, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, and Spokane Tribe of Indians. The PHAB provides key input to the NETCHD Board of Health (BOH) on issues that affect the health and wellbeing of citizens and/or environmental factors within the jurisdiction of NETCHD. Given the breadth of knowledge and experience held by the PHAB, the members representing Ferry County were interviewed together to provide their individual and collective perspectives on the information gained through the six focus groups held in Ferry County.

Most Important Issue Facing the Community

Priority Issues in the Community	Discussion
Substance use & treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about recovery options available • Need support for recovery programs – 12 step programs and others • Other basic needs need to be met before progress can be made in recovery
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to recruit law enforcement, educators, healthcare workers without adequate housing • Need for multi-unit housing
Mistrust in healthcare & public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of trust in the health district • Hesitance to engage in the healthcare system • Pandemic caused mistrust
Broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to internet is limited in the area • Lack of access to telemedicine

Barriers

- Lack of law enforcement to address drug issues in the area
- Lack of housing to support work force – potential miners
- Mistrust in healthcare
- Mistrust in public health post Covid-19
- Lack of reliable internet

Assets

- Reconfiguring library for telehealth services
- Resource center in LRCHC lobby for personal education on health issues
- Possible E911 grant
- Potential outreach through churches to community
- Proactive communication about services

Secondary Community Data Indicators

In addition to primary data collection, secondary data was collected for Ferry County in a separate report. The Ferry County Indicators Summary provides data demonstrating the health status of Ferry County residents and some individual risk behaviors that contribute to health outcomes. The indicators in this report are used to monitor the population's health. The Ferry County Indicators Summary demonstrates changes within Ferry County over time and, when available, make comparisons between Ferry County, Washington State, and the United States. Additionally, lower socioeconomic status is often associated with poorer health outcomes. When available and appropriate, health indicators were analyzed by age, sex, race, education, and income to identify disparities. This report provides the community and local agencies with information on health issues and affected populations. The information may help direct health and social interventions to areas of greatest need and build support for health policies, as well as educate the public, community organizations, and policymakers on the community's health and well-being. The full report can be found at countyhealthinsights.org/county/Ferry.

The worst performing indicators are below:

- Preschool Immunization
- Illicit Drug Use (Youth)
- Vaping (Youth)
- General Health (Adult)
- Flu Shot (Adult)
- Marijuana Use (Youth)
- Maternal Smoking
- Smokers (Adult)
- Mammogram
- Depression (Youth)
- Food Insecurity (youth)
- Teen Immunization

Key Findings

Through primary and secondary data collection methods the top issues are displayed below. Across all community collected data and secondary data, housing and substance use were identified as top issues.

Most Important Issue (Survey)	Top Issues Impacting Community's Health (Focus Groups)	PHAB (Interviews)	Health Indicators (Worst Performing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care • Law Enforcement (more support, not enough officers, low pay) • Housing (affordability and availability) • Substance Use • Jobs (including opportunities, lack of well-paying, lack of industry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Substance abuse & treatment • Housing • Healthcare • Law enforcement • Retaining workforce • Education & communication of services • Tribal – county relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance use & treatment • Housing • Mistrust in healthcare & public health • Broadband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool Immunization • Illicit Drug Use (Youth) • Vaping (Youth) • General Health (Adult) • Flu Shot (Adult) • Marijuana Use (Youth) • Maternal Smoking • Smokers (Adult) • Mammogram • Depression (Youth) • Food Insecurity (youth) • Teen Immunization

Next Steps

Findings from this report will be used to develop goals and strategies to improve the health and well-being of residents in Ferry County. Northeast Tri County Health District will work with organizations in the Healthy Ferry County Coalition to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for Ferry County. Performance measures and data collection methods will be used to track progress.