
**RHP 17 REGIONAL
HEALTH ASSESSMENT
2013**

**SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT:
WASHINGTON COUNTY**

PREPARED BY:

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

TEXAS A&M HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

SCHOOL OF RURAL PUBLIC HEALTH

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RHP 17 REGIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The 2013 Regional Health Assessment, conducted by the Center for Community Health Development (CCHD) at the Texas A&M Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health (SRPH), covers the nine-county region of south-central Texas consisting of Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Leon, Madison, Montgomery, Robertson, Walker, and Washington Counties. The *Executive Report* provides comprehensive descriptions of methodology, as well as regional findings. The supplemental reports are intended to provide specific regional and county-level data.

This report presents the health status assessment findings for Washington County. Most data and comparisons given will be compared to the Brazos Valley region (the seven counties comprising the Brazos Valley), the state, or the nation. For specific regional-level data, please refer to the regional *Executive Report*. Unless otherwise noted, the data presented are for Washington County respondents.

FINDINGS

Community Discussion Groups

Eight community discussion groups (CDGs) were conducted in Washington County with 107 total participants. Those participating represented the diversity of the County's population; attendees were 43.8 percent male and 56.3 percent female, and 67 percent White/Caucasian, 20.5 percent Black/African American, and 9.8 percent Hispanic/Latino. These discussion groups were conducted in March and April 2013. Four audiences were targeted to attend these open meetings to provide a forum for community members to discuss various issues, challenges, and resources in their community related to health: key community leaders, health care providers, social service providers, and the general public (i.e., residents) of Washington County. Discussion groups were held at several donated locations throughout Washington County, including:

- Brenham Housing Authority,
- Washington County Fairgrounds,
- Washington County Chamber of Commerce,
- The Cannery Kitchen,
- Faith Mission,
- St. Joseph Family Medicine in Brenham,
- Scott & White Hospital-Brenham, and
- The Brenham Clinic.

Community

Discussion group participants described Washington County as a laid back, conservative community that is a great, safe place to live. The generosity of community members and the beautiful natural scenery were often mentioned as attractive community features. Participants said that local residents are friendly and share a sense of community based on local history and family values. Community discussion participants also emphasized that the community is growing, and with this growth, Washington County is becoming more diverse. This growth is bringing larger populations of younger and older residents, long-term families as well as new transplants, and increased proportions of racial/ethnic minorities to the community.

Residents attributed the area's stable economy to supportive local businesses and strong leadership. They also said that residents have good communication networks and are proactive in planning to meet future needs in areas such as health care, transportation, and the economy.

Community Issues & Challenges

Access to health care, in particular specialty care, was a major concern among Washington County discussion group participants. Residents expressed alarm that the area lacked mental health care, dental care, and health-related services for the growing older adult population. Without adequate services located in the community, many residents are forced to travel outside the county for care. Limited public transportation options compound these difficulties. Mirroring concerns raised in other Brazos Valley communities, Washington County residents said they did not have access to reliable public transportation. There are no bus or taxi services available locally, and the older adult population is specifically affected by the lack of transportation options. This limitation can make accessing services outside the county impossible for some residents, and with the limited resources located in Washington County, community members without private transportation are unable to access necessary care.

In addition, residents indicated that the community does not have many affordable recreation activities for youth or adults. Participants said some parts of the county do not feature places to be physically active, like parks or community centers. The lack of recreational opportunities, especially for youth, was said to contribute to youth risk behaviors such as substance abuse and property crime. Other social issues including poverty, lack of jobs, and access to affordable housing were also mentioned during discussion groups.

Finally, discussion group participants frequently mentioned infrastructure as a community issue. They said that some areas of town had not experienced growth, while others have been overcome with new businesses and were now overcrowded. Residents also cited traffic concerns during rush hour as a city planning issue related to infrastructure.

Resources

Washington County residents noted several community resources and local social service providers. Faith Mission, senior centers, and the Boys and Girls Club were specifically cited as valuable assets to the community. Residents also mentioned local businesses as a resource providing jobs and giving back to the community. Overall, discussion group participants said that businesses, churches, and local leadership work well together in the interest of what was best for the county. This collaboration has resulted in community improvement efforts related to economic development, countywide communication channels, and joint planning for community outreach activities.

Blinn College, Prairie View A&M University, and other local schools were frequently identified as a resource by discussion group participants. Participants said the ample amount of education opportunities available in the area contributed to the stable economy and local job opportunities. Other economic resources included local parks, the county fair and rodeos, and the leadership from the economic development board.

Residents agreed that local clinics, home health agencies, and the acute care hospital were resources to the community. They were appreciative that primary care is available locally for community members, meaning many residents do not have to travel far to see a physician.

Household Survey

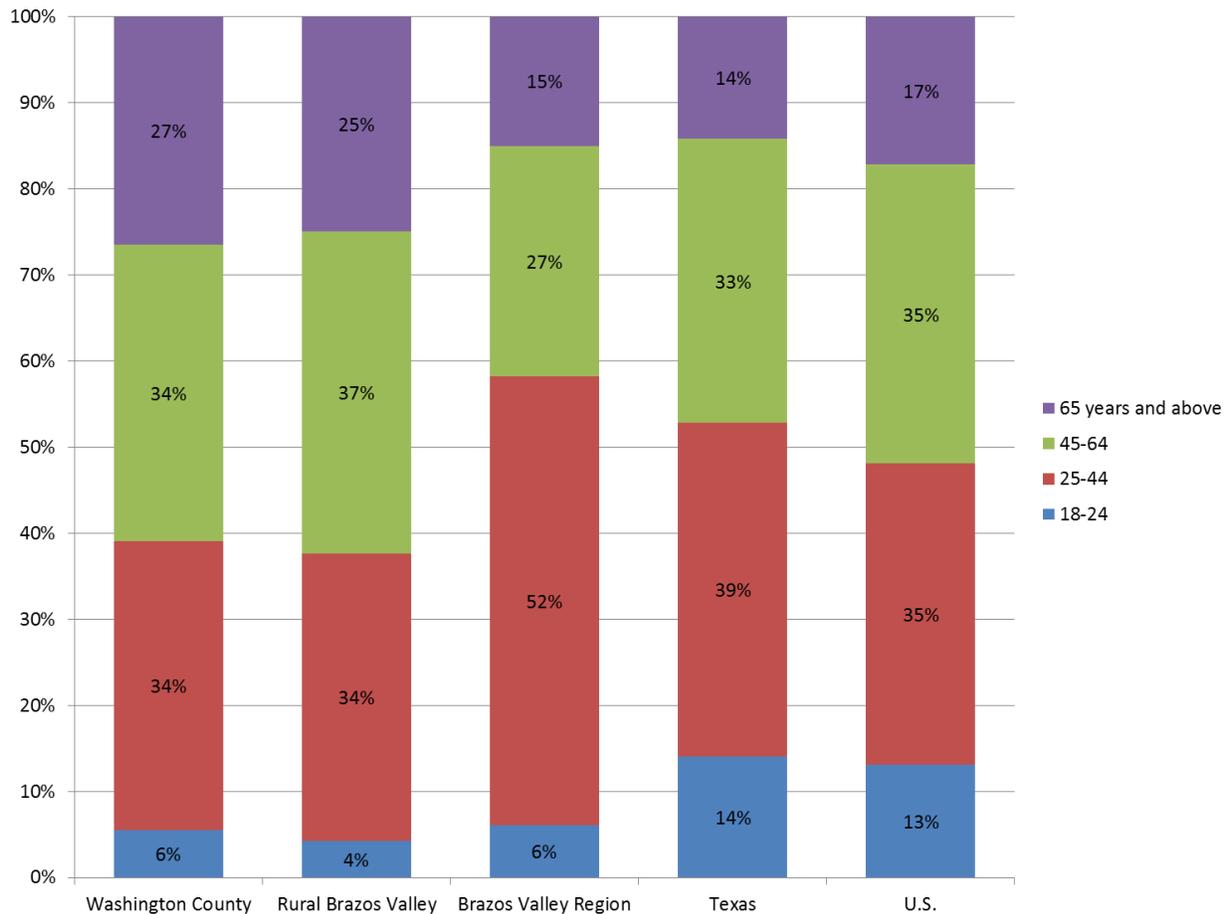
The household survey was developed and pilot tested by the Survey Committee (see Regional Report for more details). As typical in survey research, those who actually responded to the survey disproportionately represented older residents, Caucasians, and those more educated and affluent. To balance some of this bias, the analysis for this report was performed on scientifically weighted data by weighting the responses to match the age and gender distribution by county based on current Census estimates. Even with the weighting, however, we also know by comparison to Census estimates that the current sample under-represents low-income residents. This should be considered when interpreting the results; the survey analysis likely indicates a more positive reflection of the community than actually exists. Regardless, the data provides us a useful snapshot of what residents are currently experiencing. This survey was used to collect comprehensive information regarding factors affecting health status from a random sample of RHP 17 residents, with 566 surveys completed in Washington County. What follows are the results from those Washington County surveys.

Demographics

Age and Gender

The mean age of survey respondents from Washington County was 51.1 years. Washington County has a population age similar to other counties across the Brazos Valley. Compared to Texas and the U.S., Washington County has a smaller proportion of young adults and a larger proportion of adults 65 years and older. Figure 1 illustrates the age distribution for Washington County compared to the rural Brazos Valley counties, the Brazos Valley region, Texas, and the U.S.

Figure 1. Age distribution of Washington County, rural Brazos Valley counties, Brazos Valley region, Texas, and U.S.¹



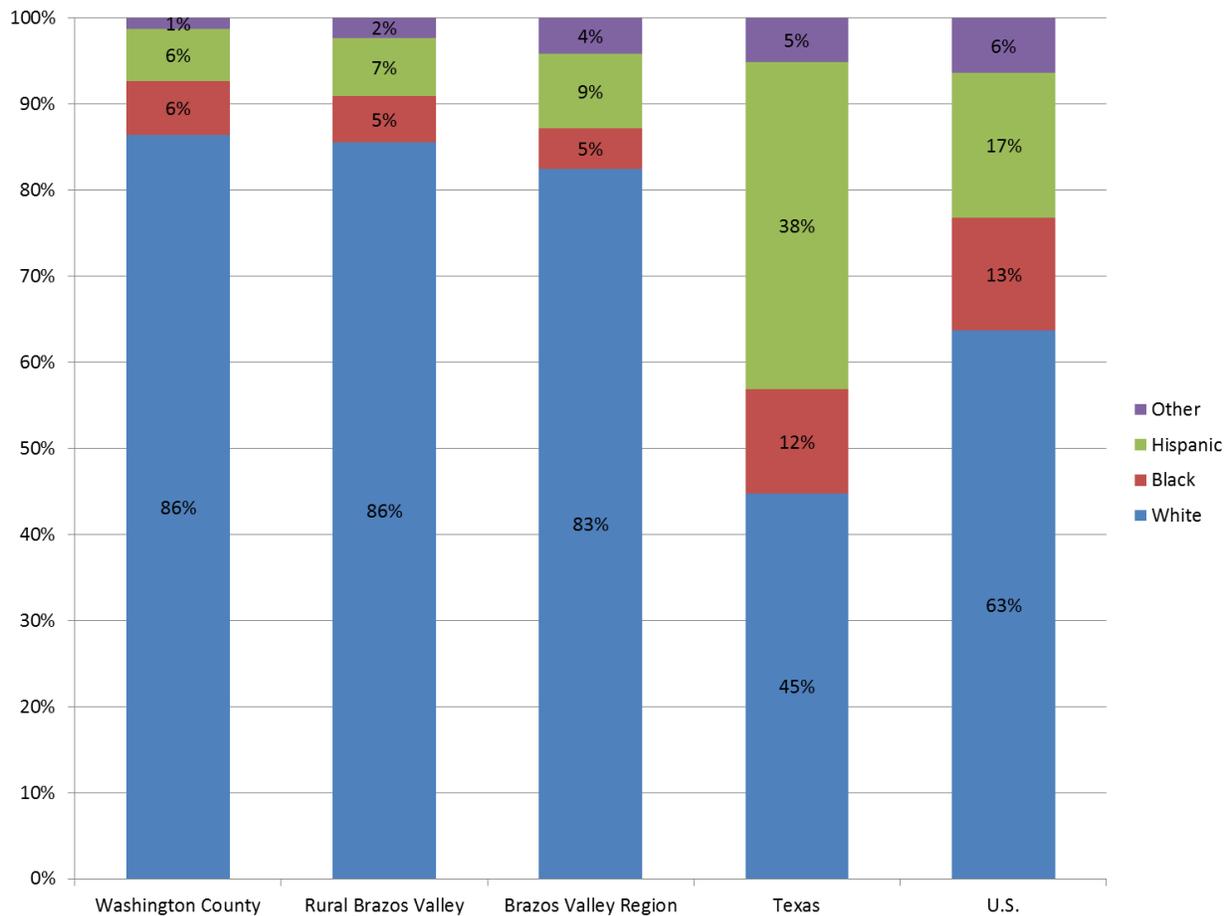
Race and Ethnicity

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the racial or ethnic group they felt best described them. A majority of Washington County survey respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian (86.4%), 6.3 percent indicated Black/African American, and 6 percent

¹ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>

indicated Hispanic/Latino. Other respondents identified themselves as Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American, and as more than one race. Because of these relatively small numbers, these last three categories were combined into a single group called “All Other Races” for the purpose of analysis (total of 1.3%). Comparing these figures to 2011 Census estimates indicates that minority groups are slightly underrepresented in this survey sample. Figure 2 shows the racial/ethnic distribution of Washington County survey respondents compared to the rural Brazos Valley counties, the Brazos Valley Region, Texas, and the U.S.

Figure 2. Racial/ethnic distribution of Washington County, rural Brazos Valley counties, the Brazos Valley region, Texas and U.S.²



Marital Status

The majority of Washington County survey respondents reported being married (77.3%); 6.7 percent reported their marital status as single (never married); 7.7 percent reported being separated or divorced; six percent were widowed; and 2.3 percent indicated they were unmarried, living with a partner. In comparison, 49.6 percent of Texas residents and 48.3 percent of U.S. residents are married; a third (31.4% in Texas and 32.5% in the U.S.) of residents

² <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>

are single, while 13.7 percent of Texas residents and 13.2 percent of U.S. residents are separated or divorced. The remaining proportion of residents in Texas and the U.S. are widowed (5.2% and 6%, respectively).

Household Composition

The mean household size for Washington County survey participants was 2.8 persons, a decrease from the previous assessment (3.1 persons). The average household size is 2.8 persons for Texas and 2.6 persons for the U.S. Among respondents, 41.6 percent reported having children under 18 years of age living in their household. Statewide, 61.1 percent of households do not have children, and nationally, 64.4 percent of households are childless.

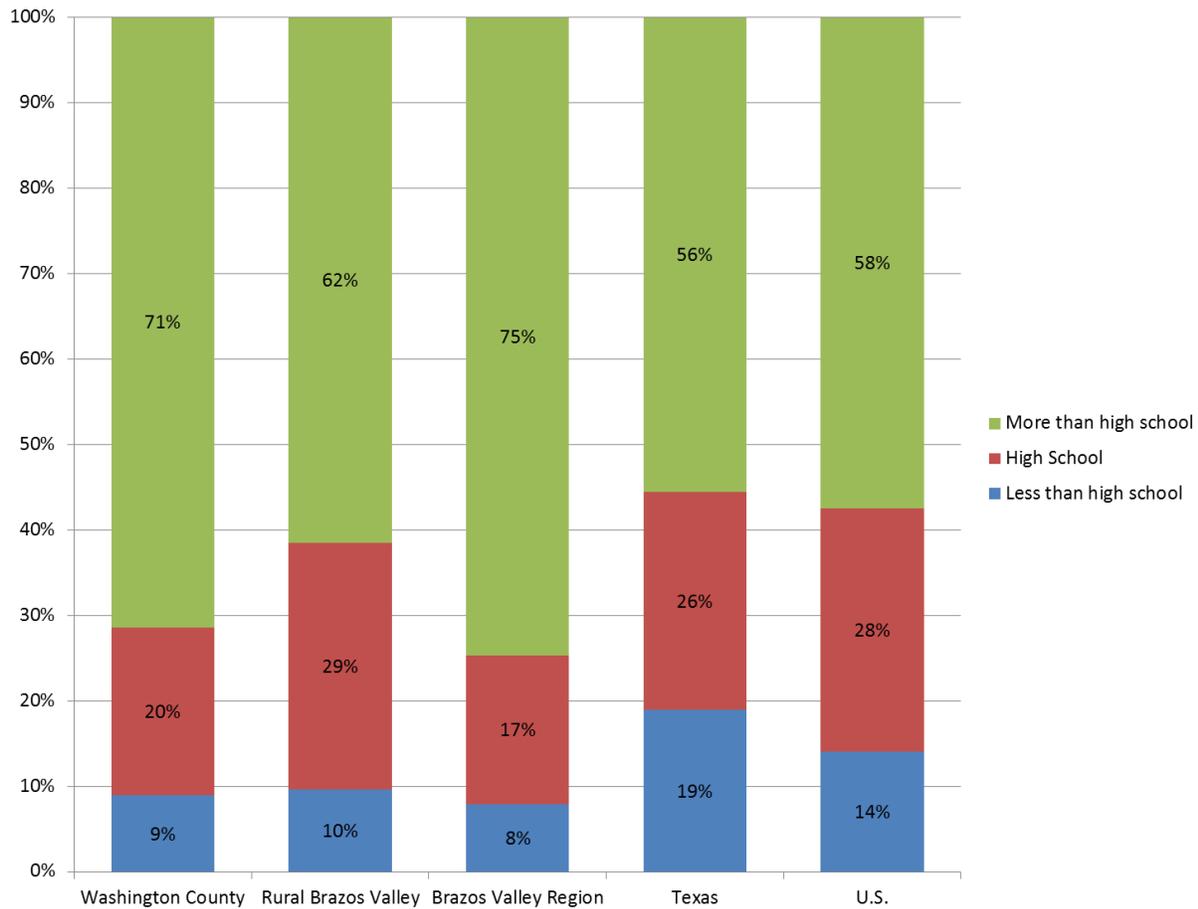
This survey asked respondents how many people in their household earned wages that contributed to their household income. In response, 13.4 percent reported that **no one** living in the household was contributing to the household income, which reflects many of the concerns heard in the discussion groups about lack of job opportunities in the county. Approximately one-third of respondents said that one person contributed all of the household income (34%), 49.5 percent said two people contributed to the household income, and 2.8 percent said three people contributed.

Education

Education is an important social factor that influences health status. The mean years of education attained by survey respondents in Washington County is 14.3, the equivalent of a high school diploma plus over two years of college. Among survey participants, 8.9 percent reported not completing high school, while 19.7 percent received their high school diploma, and 71.3 percent proceeded to complete at least some college credit. Given the presence of Blinn College in Washington County, it is not surprising that the majority of residents have continued their education past high school. In comparison, 19.6 percent of Texans over the age of 25 did not complete high school, and nationally, this figure is 14.6 percent³. Figure 3 presents a comparison of educational attainment for Washington County, the rural Brazos Valley counties, the Brazos Valley region, Texas, and the U.S.

³ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>

Figure 3. Educational attainment of survey respondents in Washington County, rural Brazos Valley counties, Brazos Valley region, Texas, and U.S.⁴



Employment

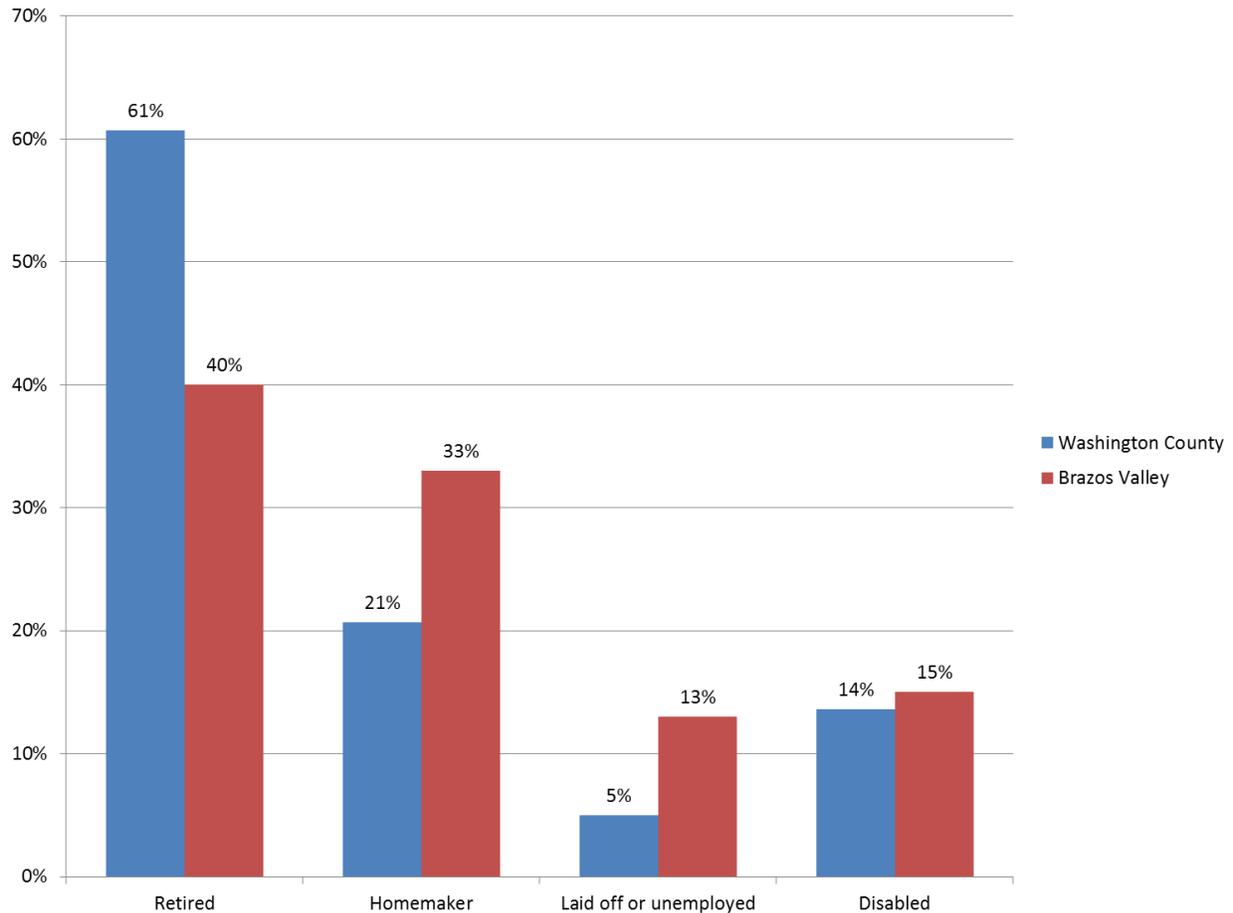
Among Washington County survey respondents, 60.5 percent reported they were currently employed. Of those who were employed, the vast majority said they only had one employer (85.2%), 11.4 percent said they had two employers, and another 3.4 percent reported three or more employers.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for the State of Texas was 6.5 percent in May 2013. Locally, the Texas Workforce Commission reports that the unemployment rate for Washington County in May 2013 was five percent. May 2013 rates were used to provide a more accurate comparison to the survey data, collected between February and July.

⁴ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>

Of the survey respondents who reported they were not currently employed, 60.7 percent said they were retired, 20.7 percent said they were full-time homemakers, 13.6 percent were disabled and unable to work, and five percent were laid off or unemployed. Figure 4 illustrates the responses of Washington County residents who were not currently employed.

Figure 4. Percentage of responses regarding work situation if not currently employed



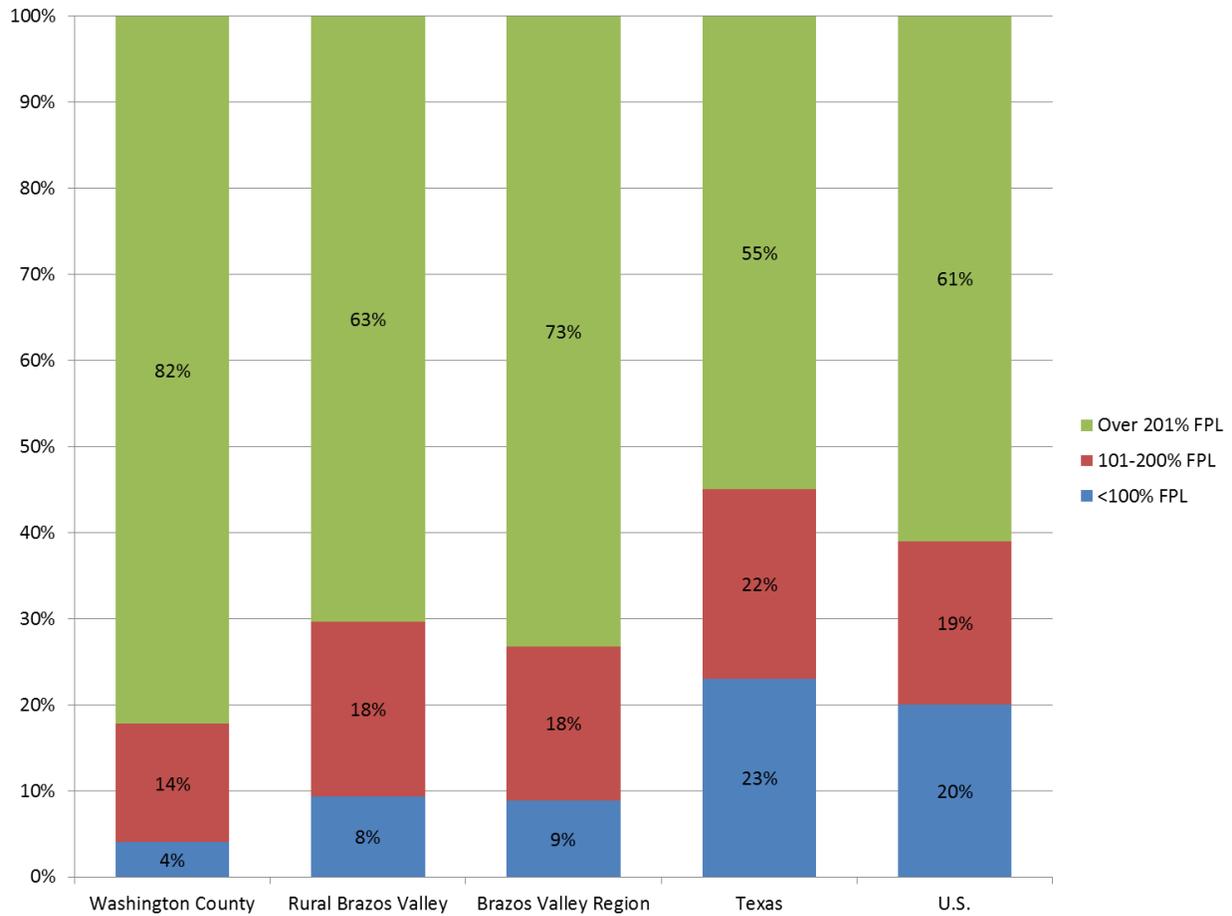
Household Income

Among survey respondents in Washington County, the median household income was \$73,432 for 2012, which is higher than Census estimates for Texas (\$50,920) and the U.S. (\$52,762). This is not unusual for a sample survey, as the low-income residents are often less likely to be reached or to agree to complete a survey.

The Federal Poverty Guidelines set the federal poverty level (FPL) for 2012 at \$23,050 for a family of four. Among the survey respondents, four percent reported incomes at or below FPL, with another 13.8 percent between 100 and 200 percent FPL, which is generally considered low-income. The rate of poverty and low income for Washington County residents is substantially lower than the U.S. (20% and 19%, respectively). Figure 5 compares the poverty

status for Washington County survey respondents to the rural Brazos Valley counties, the Brazos Valley region, Texas, and the U.S.

Figure 5. Poverty status for survey respondents in Washington County, rural Brazos Valley counties, Brazos Valley region, Texas, and U.S.⁵



Military Service

With a growing number of veterans and their unique health needs, the Survey Committee thought it wise to ask about military service. Among survey respondents, 10.4 percent of survey respondents from Washington County reported ever having served in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, while 1.8 percent who completed the survey identified themselves as currently being active duty in the military. Of Washington County residents who reported having served in the U.S. Armed Forces, 41.2 percent reported serving in an active duty war zone. There are 1,618,413 veterans in Texas, representing approximately six percent of the population.

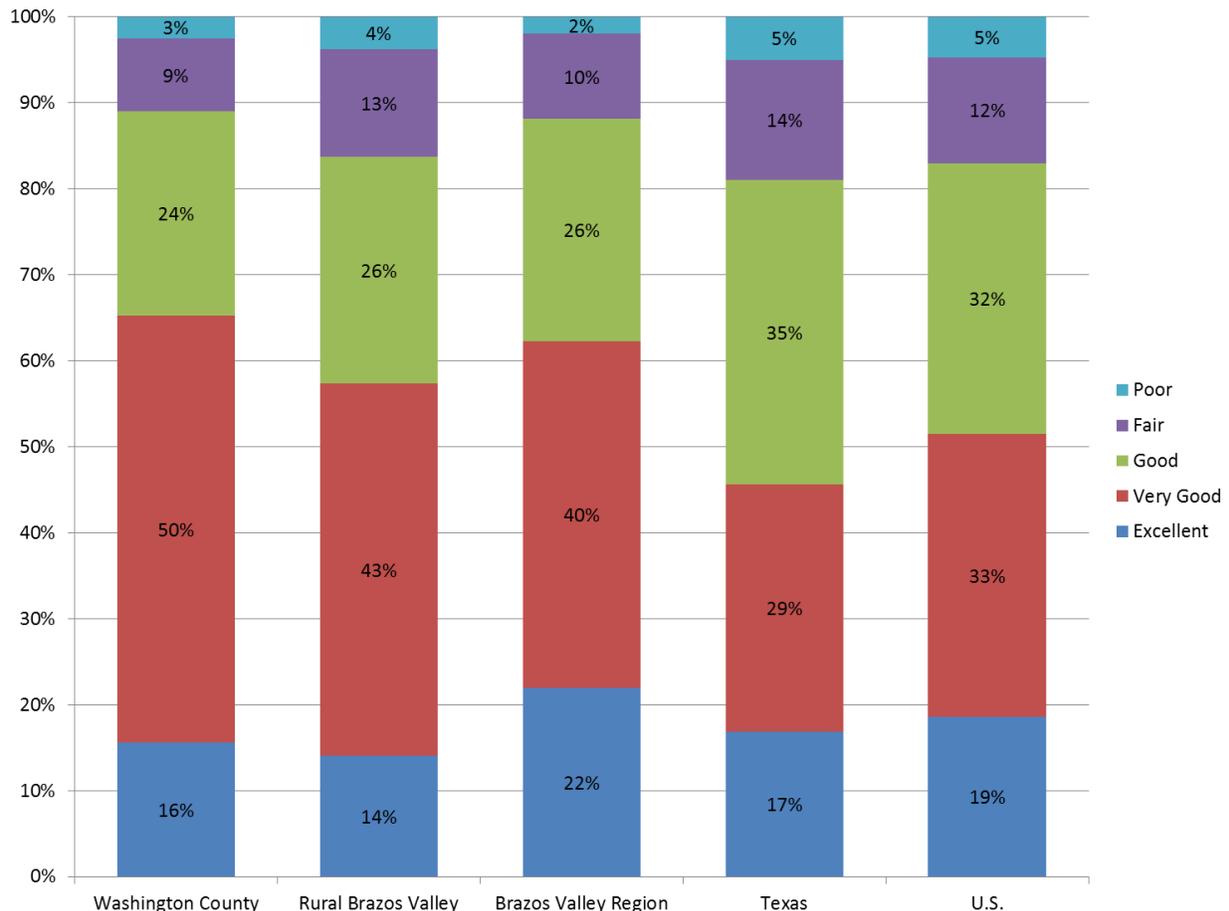
⁵ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>

Health Status

The first four questions in the survey are taken from the Health Related Quality of Life scale developed and tested by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These are simple but powerful indicators of functional health status and its impact on daily life.

The first question simply asked respondents to rate their health; the possible responses were *excellent*, *very good*, *good*, *fair*, and *poor*. In Washington County, 15.6 percent of respondents indicated their health was *excellent*, and 49.6 percent said their health was *very good*. In contrast, 8.5 percent indicated their health was *fair*, and 2.5 percent said their health was *poor*. In comparison to 2010 health assessment respondents, the proportion reporting their health as *excellent* or *very good* is greater. Figure 6 compares self-reported health status for Washington County to the rural Brazos Valley counties, the Brazos Valley region, Texas, and the U.S.

Figure 6. Self-reported health status in Washington County, rural Brazos Valley counties, Brazos Valley region, Texas, and U.S.⁶



⁶ <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=HS&yr=2011&qkey=8001&state=UB>

The second question asked how many days of the past 30 days was the respondent's physical health not good. Among Washington County respondents, the mean number of poor physical health days was 3.8, which is slightly higher than the region (3.6). Approximately one-quarter of respondents (24.8%) reported between one and five days of poor physical health in the past month. Experiencing more than 10 days of poor physical health was reported by 10.8 percent of Washington County respondents. In contrast, 63.3 percent of Texans reported no days of poor physical health, with a 19.5 percent reporting between more than five days of poor physical health each month.

Similar to the previous question, the next question asked how many days of the past 30 days was the respondent's mental health not good. Among Washington County respondents, the mean number of poor mental health days was 2.8, which is slightly less than the region (3.4). Nineteen percent of respondents reported between one and five days of poor mental health in the past month and 8.3 percent indicated more than 10 days of poor mental health. In addition, 15.9 percent report having been diagnosed with depression and 17.2 percent with anxiety. The self-reported depression rates are higher than the overall depression rates for Texas (8.6%). Among Texans, 66.3 percent reported no days of poor mental health, and 14.4 percent reported experiencing between one and five days of poor mental health. These numbers are cause for concern given the persistent lack of mental health services available in the region, which was expressed in almost all of the Washington County community discussion groups.

Feelings of anxiety and depression are also important indicators of residents' mental health. Table 1 shows common problems that residents reported bothering them over the past two weeks.

Table 1. Common mental health problems among Washington County survey respondents

Type of Mental Health Problem	Percentage of Washington County Respondents	Percentage of Brazos County Respondents	Percentage of Brazos Valley Region Respondents
Worrying too much about different things	33.2%	44.9%	41.7%
Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	31.2%	44.2%	42.2%
Trouble Relaxing	30.8%	43.2%	41.6%
Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	28.0%	38.7%	37.2%
Not being able to stop or control worrying	24.5%	31.1%	31.1%
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	21.5%	25.4%	23.7%
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	20.4%	25.1%	25.1%
Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	12.7%	24.7%	25.8%
Being so restless that it is hard to sit still	12.1%	21.2%	19.7%

The fourth question in this set sought to understand the extent to which physical and mental health limited one’s daily activities. It asked respondents how many days of the past 30 days did poor physical or mental health keep them from their usual activities. In Washington County, the mean number of days in which usual activities were limited by poor physical or mental health was 2.3, which is slightly lower than the regional mean. Nearly one in four respondents reported some interruption of their usual activities, with 14.5 indicating between one and five days, two percent reporting six to 10 days, and 7.4 percent reporting more than 10 days. In comparison, 27.7 percent of Texans reported between one and five days of limited activities and 12.2 percent reported five or more days of limited activities due to poor physical or mental health.

Many residents reported being limited in their activities due to an impairment and/or health problem. Commonly reported issues are listed in Table 2. Participants could identify more than one impairment; therefore, percentages here represent percentages of the total number of *responses* instead of the percentage of respondents who reported the impairment.

Table 2. Major impairments or mental health problems among Washington County responses

Major Impairment or Health Problem	Percentage of Washington County Responses
Arthritis/rheumatism	17.7%
Back or Neck problem	16.3%
Cardiovascular issues (heart problems, hypertension, high blood pressure)	14.1%
Limited use of arm or leg	9.9%
Diabetes	8.5%
Fractures, bone/joint injury	7.8%

The most commonly reported impairments or health problems were related to arthritis and rheumatism problems, representing 17.7 percent of the responses, followed by back or neck problems (16.3%) and limited use of arm or leg (9.9%). A substantial portion of responses were also related to diabetes (8.5%), fractures, bone/joint injury (7.8%), and hypertension/high blood pressure (5.7%).

For the given impairments and health problems, the duration of having limited activities varied among survey respondents. Most survey participants (70.1%) did not experience pain that impacted their daily activities during the past 30 days. Of those who did experience pain that impacted activity during the past 30 days, 13.8 percent reported pain for between one and five days, five percent had pain between six to 10 days, and 11.2 percent reported more than 10 days of pain. One in four participants (27.3%) reported their daily activities were limited for less than one year. Daily activities were reported as limited for one to five years by two in five respondents (41.6%). Another 11.7 percent reported limitations for the past six to 10 years and 19.4 percent had limitations to their daily activities for more than 10 years.

In the final question about residents' overall health, respondents listed a range days in the past month that they got a sufficient amount of sleep and felt very healthy and full of energy. More than one-fourth of participants (27.5%) reported that they felt as if they had enough rest or sleep every night of the past 30 days. Most participants (35.1%) reported not feeling rested between one and five days in the past month, 13.7 percent reported the same for between six to 10 days, and 10.7 percent reported not having enough rest or sleep for between 11 and 15 days. Nearly one in seven participants (13%) reported not feeling rested for at least half of the days for the past month.

Over one third of participants (37.8%) reporting feeling healthy and full of energy for at least 21 days of the past month and one in four participants (27.7%) reported feeling good for 11 to 20 days of the past month. Disturbingly, 18.3 percent did not feel very healthy and full of energy

for at least one third of the month, and an additional 16.3 percent reported never feeling healthy or full of energy.

Risk Factors

Several sets of survey questions asked about health behaviors or characteristics that often place individuals at greater risk of disease or injury. The risk factors of interest are those that individuals can sometimes control or manage to prevent development of related illnesses or complications.

Obesity

Being overweight or obese increases an individual's risk for developing many chronic diseases and other conditions such as depression and chronic pain. The way that overweight and obesity is typically assessed is through the calculation of the body mass index (BMI), which is a simple ratio of weight to height (kg/m^2). This measure does not account for individual variations in bone mass or muscle mass, but are a good general indicator of weight status for the population.

The National Institutes of Health have published the following guidelines:

- Underweight = BMI score < 18.5
- Normal weight = BMI score between 18.5 – 24.9
- Overweight = BMI score between 25 – 29.9
- Obese = BMI score between 30 and 34.9
- Morbidly Obese = BMI score \geq 35

In Washington County, only 27.4 percent of residents were assessed to be at a normal weight for their height. The majority of survey respondents were overweight or obese; over one-third were overweight (38.4%), nearly one in four was obese (22.3%), and alarmingly, 11.6 percent were morbidly obese. Given the number and types of conditions that are related to obesity, these statistics are cause for concern in Washington County.

Nutrition

Nutrition is an important aspect of achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and overall health. Accordingly, the survey asked questions about individuals' grocery shopping and eating habits.

In Washington County, 77.4 percent of residents do their grocery shopping within 10 miles of the community where they live; this is higher than the 76.8 percent reported in Brazos Valley. The mean distance Washington County residents travel to buy groceries is 7.8 miles, compared to the regional average of 8.9 miles for other residents in the Brazos Valley.

Concerns about the economy have a pronounced impact on residents' overall nutrition. Across Washington County, 6.2 percent of respondents said that *sometimes* or *often*, the food they bought did not last and they did not have money to get more, and 4.4 percent reported not being able to afford to eat completely meals *sometimes* or *often*. More than four percent (4.4%) reported eating less than they should because there was not enough money for food, while 2.2 percent reported skipping meals because of financial concerns. These rates were lower than the rates reported for other Brazos Valley communities.

Approximately two percent (2.3%) of Washington County residents reported receiving food from a food pantry or food bank in the past six months. However, nearly five percent (4.7%) of the region's rural residents are served by food pantries or food banks.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is also a key aspect of maintaining a healthy weight and good health. The National Institutes of Health recommend 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity each week, in addition to engaging in strengthening exercises twice weekly. Across Washington County, only 22.9 percent of respondents meet this recommendation, while 14.2 percent reported they rarely do any physical activity. These rates are substantially lower than the rates found across the Brazos Valley.

The survey also sought to assess Washington County residents' sedentary time. In a seven day period, respondents reported sitting an average of 312 minutes (5.2 hours) on *weekdays* and 285 minutes (4.75 hours) on *weekends*. Overall, Washington County residents reported sitting 90 minutes less per week on average compared to the region.

In addition to obesity, nutrition, and physical activity, several other behavioral risk factors are key determinants of subsequent health and safety issues.

Cigarette Smoking

Only 8.3 percent of Washington County survey respondents report being a current smoker, which is drastically lower than the State of Texas (19.2%) and the U.S. (19.3%). Of current smokers, only 8.8 percent of respondents smoked more than a pack of cigarettes a day. In addition, few Washington County residents (4.9%) reported using other tobacco products, including chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip.

Substance Use and Abuse

When asked about their alcohol consumption habits, half of Washington County survey respondents (50%) reported that they do not drink alcohol in a typical week. One third of respondents (33.7%) said that they typically consume one to five alcoholic drinks in a week. Eight percent of respondents reported having driven after drinking at least two drinks in the past month, which is a higher proportion than the rest of the region.

In the past 30 days (2%) and in the past year (2.5%), few Washington County residents reported using prescription medications for nonmedical reasons or not as prescribed. Reported rates of consumption of marijuana and other illegal drugs were less than one percent across the county.

Chronic Diseases and Conditions

Survey respondents were asked to report if they had ever been diagnosed with a list of chronic diseases/condition by a health care provider. The six most frequently reported conditions for Washington County survey respondents were:

1) Hypertension (high blood pressure)	37.7%
2) High Cholesterol	35.2%
3) Obesity/overweight	25.8%
4) Arthritis/rheumatism	24.4%
5) Anxiety	17.2%
6) Depression	15.9%

Only 25.8 percent of respondents reported being told by a health care professional that they were overweight or obese, yet when calculating BMI from reported heights and weights of respondents who had not been diagnosed as such, 64 percent of respondents are overweight or obese. Forty-four percent of undiagnosed respondents were overweight, 15 percent were obese, and 5.2 percent were morbidly obese. This raises serious concern regarding doctor patient communication with respect to health weight, overweight and obesity.

These disease rates are not surprising given the proportion of obesity and older adults in Washington County. Table 3 provides the rates of several commonly reported chronic conditions, with comparisons to the region and the U.S.

Table 3. Chronic condition rates for Washington County, the Brazos Valley region, and the U.S.

Disease/Condition	Washington County	Brazos Valley	U.S. ^{7,8,9}
Anxiety	17.2%	23.7%	17%
Arthritis/Rheumatism	24.4%	19.9%	22%
Asthma	9.6%	17.3%	13%
Cancer (all kinds)	10.1%	6.0%	8%
Congestive Heart Failure	2.8%	2.9%	2%
Depression	15.9%	24.6%	12%
Diabetes (type 2)	11.2%	8.4%	9%
Emphysema/COPD	3.9%	5.5%	2%
High Cholesterol	35.2%	30.3%	13%
Hypertension	37.7%	33.9%	24%
Overweight/ Obesity ¹⁰	72.3%	64.5%	62%
Stroke	2.0%	1.8%	3%

Preventive Screenings

The survey also collected information regarding individuals' participation in recommended preventive screenings. Figure 7 summarizes information regarding those who meet general preventive health guidelines.

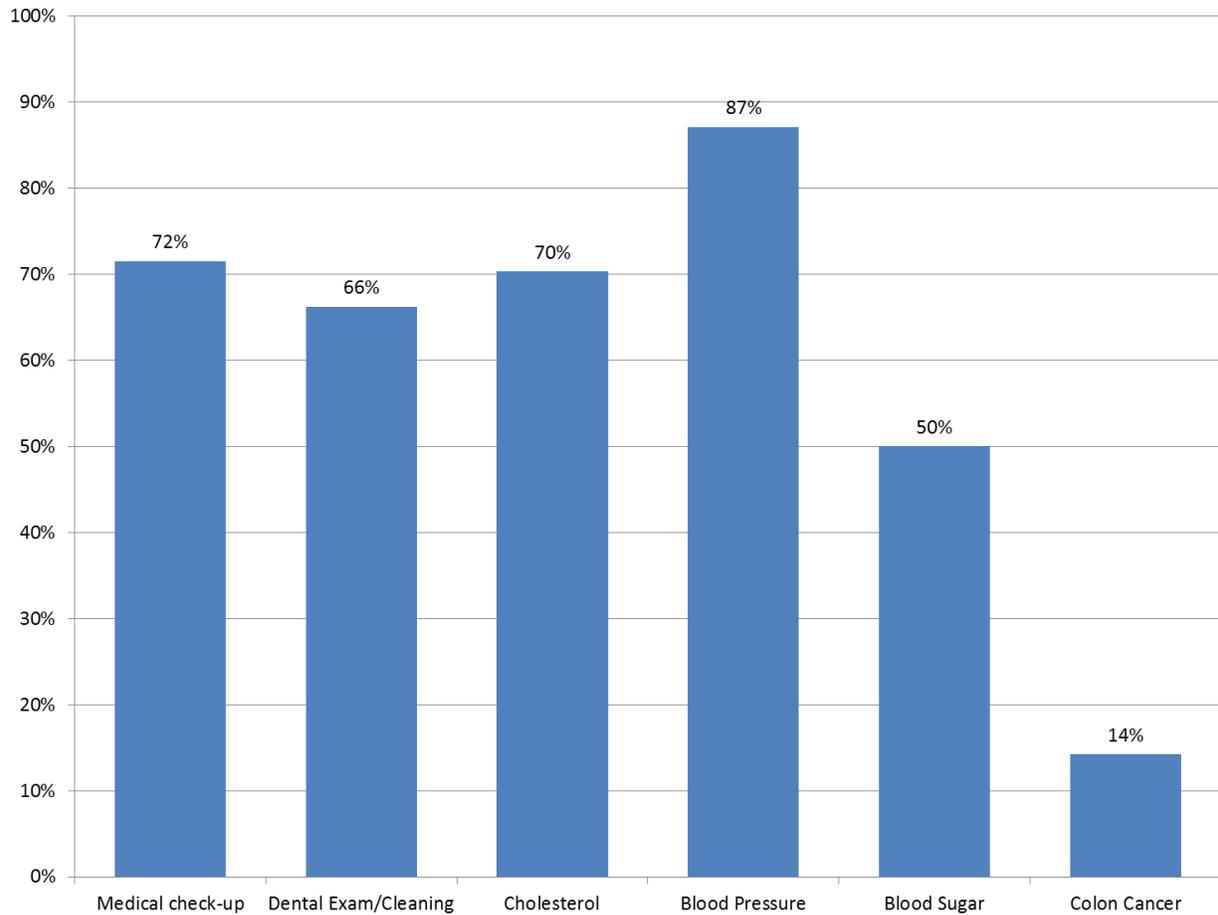
⁷ http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_242.pdf.

⁸ <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db92.pdf>

⁹ http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/NCVDSS_DTM/LocationSummary.aspx?state=United+States

¹⁰ Overweight/obesity percentages reported in Table 3 are calculated from reported height and weight of survey participants NOT the percentage who reported being diagnosed by a health care professional.

Figure 7. Percent of survey respondents meeting preventive guidelines in Washington County



For women, a test for cervical cancer (“Pap test”) is recommended every three years beginning at 21 years of age. In Washington County, only 48.8 percent of women report having had a pap test in the past year, and 30.2 percent indicated their last pap test between one and three years ago. Additionally, 12.7 percent reported having had their last pap test more than five years ago. Among survey respondents 40 years of age and older, more than two-thirds (68.1%) reported having had the recommended yearly mammogram during the past year.

Health Insurance

The *Healthy People 2020* goal for health insurance was that by 2020, every resident would have some type of health insurance. The 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act¹¹ was intended to advance this goal, but currently, many residents are still uninsured. Eighteen percent of Americans under the age of 65 lack health insurance¹², and Texas ranks last among the 50 states in access to care, with a 24 percent overall uninsurance rate¹³.

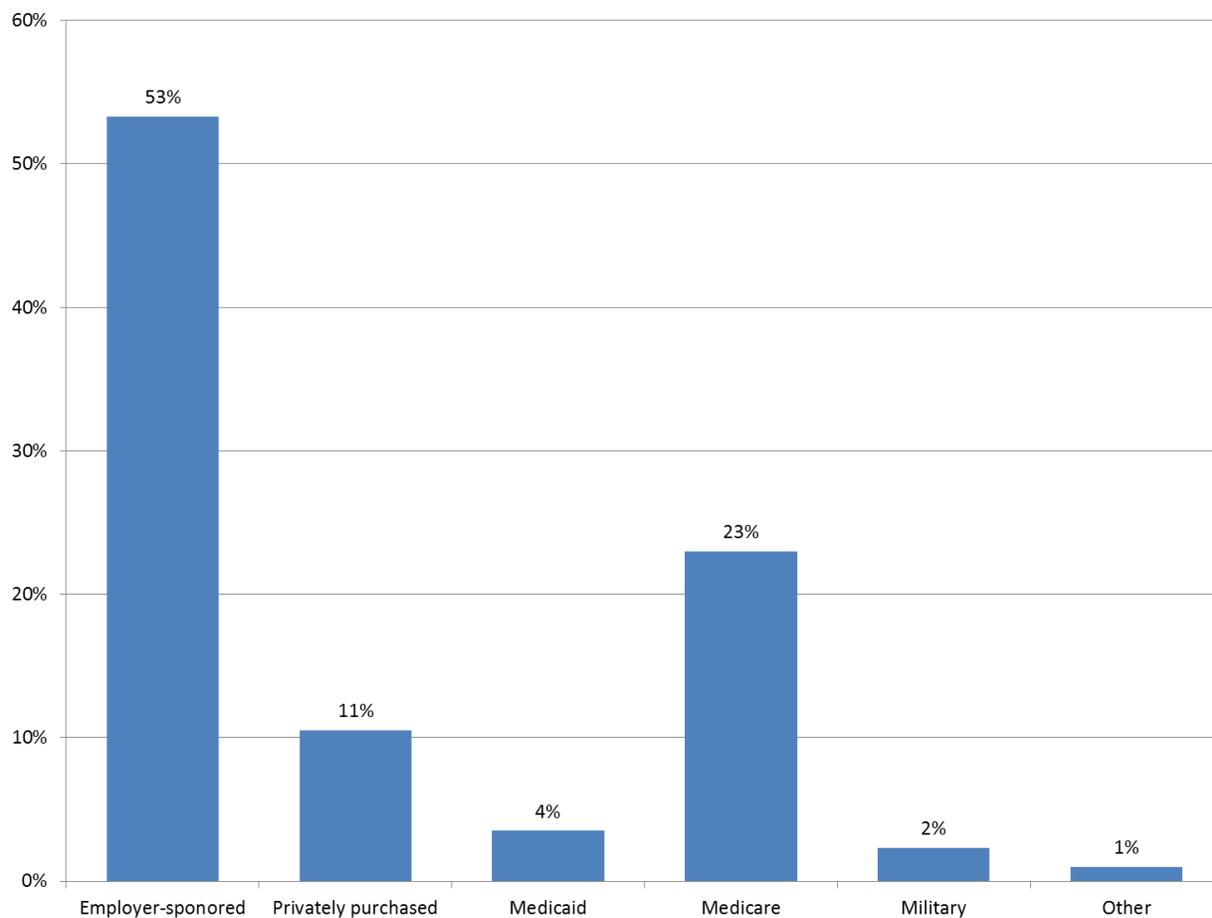
¹¹ *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (HR 3590) signed into law on March 22, 2010

¹² <http://kff.org/state-category/health-coverage-uninsured/>

¹³ <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/total-population/>

The survey question “What type of health insurance do you have?” allowed for multiple response options to be selected. Among Washington County survey respondents, 5.8 percent reported not having health insurance of any kind, which is substantially lower than that of the region (10.1%). In addition, the survey responses indicated that only 4.9 percent of residents had been uninsured at least one month in the past three years. Figure 8 displays the types of health insurance coverage in Washington County.

Figure 8. Health insurance coverage in Washington County¹⁴



As illustrated in Figure 8, 53.3 percent of survey respondents reported being covered by a health insurance plan through a current or former employer or union. Relatively small proportions of the population report other sources of coverage.

Health Resources and Medical Home

¹⁴ Note that the percentages add up to more than 100 percent because some individuals are covered by more than one plan.

Issues with access to health care go deeper than whether one is covered by health insurance or not. The availability of providers and services and the ability to get to those services also influence access.

In Washington County, 40.8 percent of respondents rated their access to health care as *excellent*, in comparison to 42.8 percent of respondents throughout the Brazos Valley.

Outpatient Care

In terms of having a regular place for care, more than four out of five Washington County respondents (84.5%) reported having a provider that they considered their regular health care provider. Although some did not indicate having a regular health care provider, 90.5 percent reported a private doctor's office or clinic as the place where they usually go for medical care. For outpatient care, 4.2 percent said a community health center, 0.3 percent said an urgent care clinic, 1.1 percent said a Veteran Affairs clinic, and 0.2 percent named the emergency room of a hospital as a place they usually go for medical care. Of those respondents without health insurance, the number of respondents having a regular place for outpatient care dropped to 68.2 percent. Nationwide, 53 percent of uninsured adults had no usual source of care¹⁵.

Health care utilization

During the past 12 months, Washington County residents accessed a range of venues for their own health care. A majority of residents (83.6%) reported using a doctor's office or clinic for their health care. In the same timeframe, 10.9 percent respondents reported visiting a hospital emergency room for their own medical care. The most common reason given for visiting an ER was having an injury or being very sick (9.8%).

The survey also asked about residents' health literacy and preparation for medical visits. Among Washington County respondents, only 22.2 percent *fairly often, very often, or always* prepare a list of questions for their health care provider. However, most residents appear to communicate well with their health care providers, asking questions about medications and treatment, and discussing personal problems (see Table 4).

¹⁵ <http://kff.org/health-reform/fact-sheet/the-uninsured-and-the-difference-health-insurance/>

Table 4. Communication with health care providers among Brazos County respondents

Behavior	Never/ Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often/ Very Often/Always
Ask questions about medications	13.1%	25.7%	61.3%
Ask questions about treatment	11.8%	22.9%	65.3%
Discuss personal problems	22.0%	27.5%	32.5%
Prepare a list of questions	43.7%	34.1%	22.2%

Delayed Care

With numerous barriers that inhibit access to care, the survey asked respondents about occasions in which they delay seeking the care they need. Specified reasons for delaying care included cost, not being able to miss work, and not having transportation. In Washington County, almost one-third of respondents (30.1%) reported delaying seeing their health care provider, and 26.1 percent put off obtaining dental care. Similar to other rural Brazos Valley counties, 7.9 percent of Washington County respondents indicated that they had experienced times when they had to choose between buying food, paying rent or bills, and paying for medications.

Caregiving

Many residents of Washington County act as caregivers, providing regular care or assistance to a friend or family member at home who has a long-term health problem or disability. During the past month, 11.9 percent of residents reported providing care for at least one person. This percentage mirrors the regional average.

A majority of the people being cared for was aged 65 or older (77.8%); 16.3 percent of respondents reported caring for someone between the ages of 45 and 64. Less than five percent of respondents (3.6%) reported caregiving for a child between the ages of one and 17. Across the region, 58.9 percent reported caring for a parent or a spouse. Among the other most commonly reported relationships listed between caregiver and the person they cared for were caring for a parent-in-law (13.7%), other relative (9.4%), or an individual who was not a related (8.3%).

The survey also asked caregivers how many hours they provided care weekly, how long they had provided care, which areas in which the person they care for most requires help, and how much difficulty they faced in caregiving. More than five out of six (87.8%) caregivers in Washington County reported providing care between one and two days (1-47 hours) per week. Five percent of respondents care for someone between three and six days and 5.5 percent care for someone for seven days per week. Over three-quarters of participants had cared for someone for less than five years (50.7% reported one to five years; 32% reported less than one year) and less than five percent of caregivers reported caring for someone for more than 20

years. Caregivers most commonly reported the person they care for needing assistance with mobility (33.3%), with taking care of themselves (24.6%), or because of learning, memory or confusion problems (20.3%).

Across the region, survey participants reported on caregiving’s impact on personal finances, time, family, work, relationships, creating stress and health problems. Table 5 displays the reported impact of caregiving on the life of Brazos County resident caregivers.

Table 5. Reported difficulties associated with caregiving

Difficulties associated with caregiving	A lot	Some	A little
Affects family relationships	15.0%	25.2%	59.8%
Creates/aggravates health problems	8.4%	18.3%	73.3%
Creates stress	21.1%	38.2%	40.7%
Financial burden	20.1%	16.4%	63.5%
Interferes with work	10.3%	25.4%	64.3%
Not enough time for family	10.0%	21.8%	68.1%
Not enough time for self	17.6%	29.9%	52.5%
Other difficulty	31.9%	8.8%	59.2%

Transportation

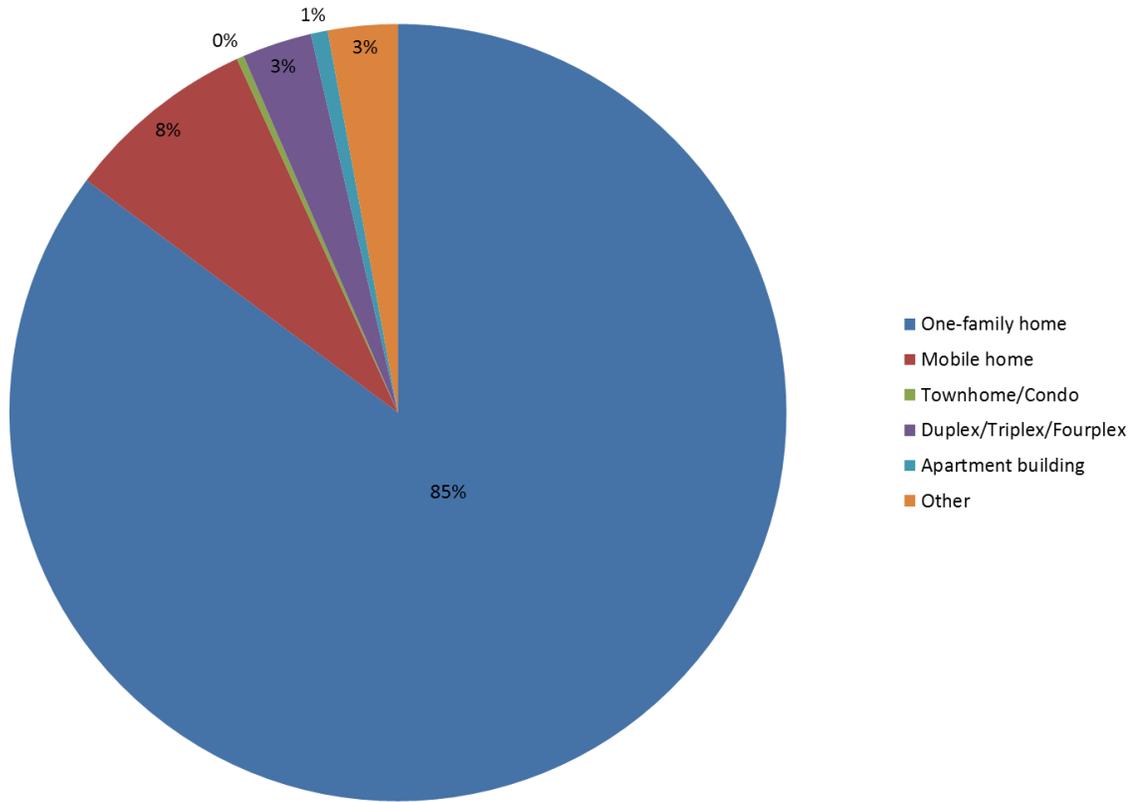
Transportation continues to pose a formidable challenge for all segments of the population and can be a significant barrier when it comes to accessing health care and related services. This issue was mentioned in every community discussion group, regardless of community sector represented.

Even with the concentration of health resources in Brenham, the average distance Washington County respondents reported traveling for medical care was 22.3 minutes. Among Washington County survey respondents, the median travel distance to medical care was 7 miles, and median travel time was 15 minutes. For dental care, the median distance was also 7 miles, and travel time was 12 minutes. To fill a prescription, the median distance was 5 miles, and travel time was 10 minutes.

Housing

For the first time, the 2013 survey asked residents about the condition of their housing. Respondents across Washington County reported primarily living in a one-family home (85.2%) or a mobile home (8%). Figure 9 illustrates housing situation for Washington County survey respondents.

Figure 9. Types of housing in Washington County



Residents reported their buildings' estimated ages, as well as how long they had lived there. Most residents (37.3%) lived in a building built before 1980. Half of Washington County residents (50%) have lived in their current home for less than 10 years. When asked if their residence had experienced a severe problem in the past 12 months, survey respondents listed a range of issues that are shown in Table 6. Across the county, the most reported problem with residents' homes was related to plumbing, heating/cooling, or electricity (going more than 24 hours without service), as well as issues with mice, rats, or cockroaches.

Table 6. Severe housing problems reported in Washington County

Housing problems	Percentage of Washington County Respondents
Plumbing, heating/cooling, electricity	14.3%
Mice, rats, or cockroaches	13.3%
Broken plaster or peeling paint (interior)	9.1%
Roof problems (such as holes, leaks, or sagging)	8.5%
Broken windows	4.5%
Mold	3.0%
Holes in the floor	1.9%

Community Services

Discussion regarding the health of a community should never be limited to only medical services or health insurance. Numerous social and community issues impact health, and various organizations exist in the community to address these issues.

The current survey included a set of questions asking about individuals' need for and utilization of a broad range of services with response options of *did not need*, *needed and used*, and *needed but did not use*. Although the survey did not gather information on the reasons why people did not get the services they needed, information about needs is still useful.

The top five community services needed (this included *needed and used* and *needed but did not use*) as reported by survey respondents were:

- 1) Medical specialty care (29.1%)
- 2) Financial assistance or welfare (9.3%)
- 3) Work-related or employment services for finding work or job training (6.9%)
- 4) Home health care/hospice/homemaker services (6.3%)
- 5) Financial assistance for auto, appliance, or home repair/weatherization (6.2%)

While identifying needs is important, examining gaps in service delivery when people do not get the needed services is also critical. These data offer a snapshot of the top 10 unmet needs in Washington County. Table 7 summarizes the data of those who needed a service, but could not get it.

Table 7. Unmet needs in Washington County

Service Category	Percent Who Needed and <u>DID NOT</u> Get
Utility assistance	76.5%
Food, meal, and nutrition services (such as Meals-On-Wheels)	75.0%
Affordable after school or summer day programs for children	66.7%
Information and referral services (such as 211)	66.7%
Financial assistance for auto, appliance, or home repair; or weatherization	61.9%

Community Characteristics

Specific community characteristics can influence perceptions of safety and the likelihood for community members to engage in activities outside their home. Washington County respondents varied in their perception in how closely their fellow community members shared their values. Almost two-thirds (62.8%) of Washington County residents felt that their community had shared values. Out of the Brazos Valley Region, Washington County residents reported the highest level of trust among fellow community members. Table 8 summarizes these perceived characteristics of Washington County, listing the percentage of respondents who reported *agree* or *strongly agree* with each statement.

Table 8. Washington County community characteristics

Community Characteristics	Percentage of Washington County Respondents
People are willing to help their neighbors	93.1%
Most people can be trusted in the community	82.9%
This is a close knit community	82.2%
Neighbors would help someone who fell	80.1%
Many people are physically active in local neighborhoods	60.5%
Problems in neighborhoods make it hard to go outside and walk	23.3%
People are concerned they will be a victim of crime if they walk/bike in their neighborhood	7.3%

Community Issues

Survey respondents were asked to rate the severity of a list of community issues, on a scale ranging from *not at all a problem* to a *very serious problem*. In Washington County, the top 10 issues rated a *serious problem* or *very serious problem* were as follows:

- 1) Poor or inconvenient public transportation (46.3%)
- 2) Alcohol abuse (41.4%)
- 3) Illegal drugs (37.5%)
- 4) Risky youth behaviors such as alcohol or drug use, truancy, etc. (35.6%)
- 5) Teen pregnancy (29.7%)
- 6) Lack of jobs for unskilled workers (27.3%)
- 7) Unemployment (18.7%)
- 8) Poverty (18.4%)
- 9) Property crime (such as fraud, burglary, vandalism, etc.) (15.8%)
- 10) Access to mental health services (12.3%)

Community Advice

Community discussion group participants were asked to offer advice for anyone attempting to address issues in Washington County. The following recommendations were offered in most of the discussions:

- **Get to know the community, its history, and its values.** Washington County residents said that outsiders should get involved in the community before attempting to address an issue.
Learn about Washington County's history, values, and local dynamics in order to ensure that your program is off to a good start.
- **Establish relationships and earn trust.** Discussion group participants said trust is critical to success within Washington County. Get to know people, ask for input, and prove that you want to make a positive impact on the community.
- **Bring in resources, collaborate with others, and leverage existing resources if possible.** In order for new programs or services to be successful, participants suggested bringing in resources or services that are needed within the area. Try to collaborate with others if possible and leverage existing resources in order to maximize the local impact.
- **Use a variety of methods to communicate.** In order to reach local stakeholders, discussion group participants recommended communicating through churches, word of mouth and local media outlets like newspapers and radio stations.

Regional analysis yielded a set of key findings that are presented in the regional Executive Report. It is important to understand that the data contained in this supplemental report should be considered as a whole; that is, the statistics should be interpreted with the insights offered by the community discussion groups. These reports are intended to be utilized for planning and resource development to benefit all members of the community.