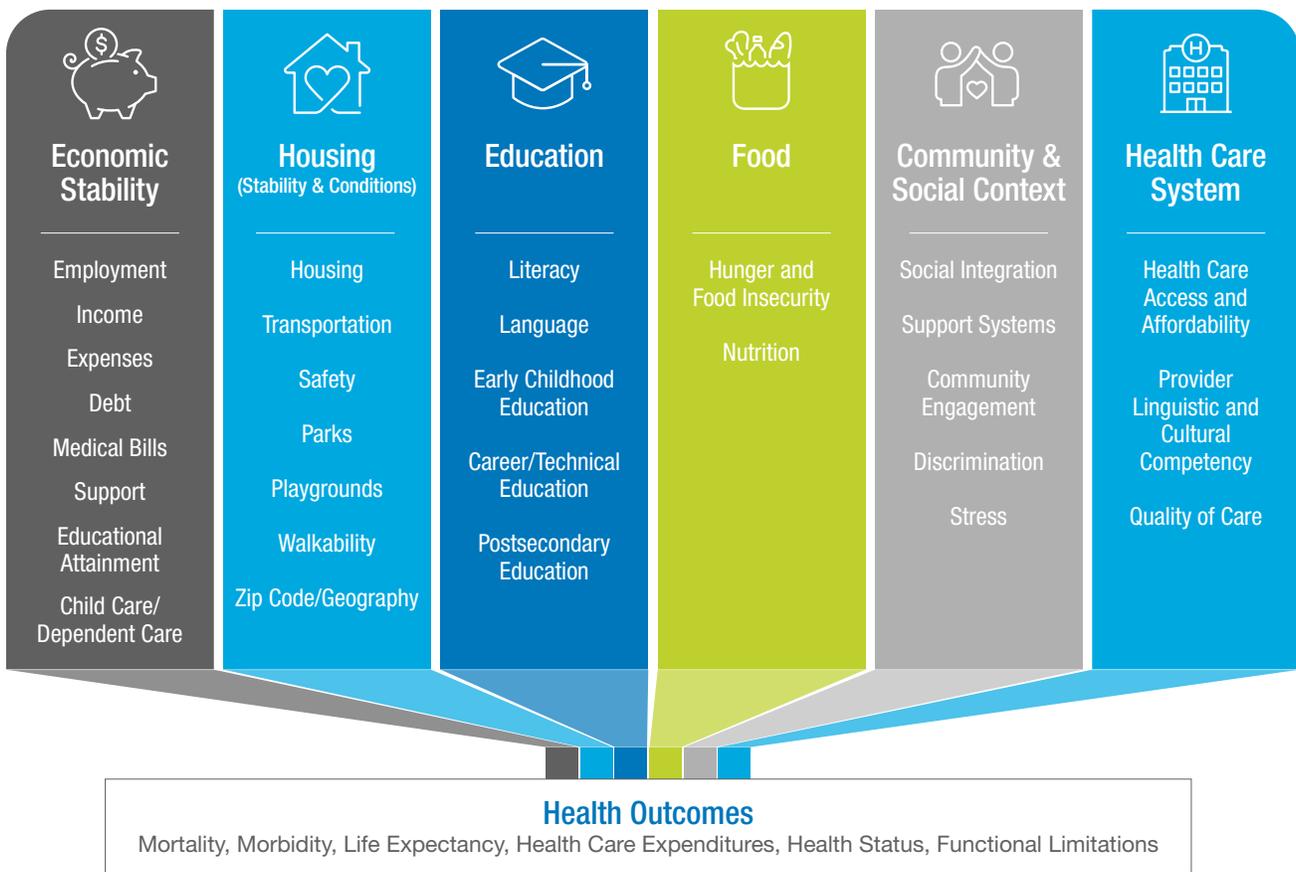




# Wood River Valley Community Health Needs Assessment Executive Summary

St. Luke's Wood River Valley 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) provides a comprehensive evaluation of residents' most important health needs in the Wood River Valley region and surrounding areas, specifically Blaine County. Identifying and addressing these needs is essential to improving population health, enhancing patient care and lowering health care costs. Our approach utilized a social determinants of health framework to determine the top priorities of our service area.



Source: Braveman, P.A., Kumanyika, S., Fielding, J., et al. (2011). Health disparities and health equity: the issue is justice. American Journal of Public Health.

We rank and score these health needs by analyzing a broad range of data, including:

- Interviews, focus groups and survey responses from community members, ensuring we had representation from medically under-resourced, low-income and minority populations.
- National, state and local health indicators collected from governmental and other authoritative sources.
- Input from community leaders.

## Prioritized Community Health Needs in Blaine County

The 2023 CHNA helps us better understand the most current, significant health challenges facing our community. In collaboration with community partners, St. Luke's will deploy resources to meet the following long-term community health objectives:

- Address high-priority health needs with a focus on prevention.
- Expand access to appropriate St. Luke's and community-based services.
- Coordinate and integrate clinical patient care and community health strategies.
- Advance health equity by addressing social determinants of health and reducing health disparities.

*The following health needs were prioritized as the top health needs for our service area:*

### Access to Health-Related Services – Including Language and Cultural Barriers

Community members reported several difficulties accessing health care and oral health care: long waits for appointments, trouble paying for services, language and cultural differences, and lack of insurance coverage or not enough coverage. These challenges are even more difficult for people relying on Medicaid or Medicare, and for immigrants without access to insurance and non-native English speakers who require language support. In fact, many individuals report difficulties accessing services due to language barriers and fear of mistreatment due to their immigration status. Difficulty accessing health care can lead people to neglect their health, especially preventative health, resulting in more negative outcomes and higher future medical costs.

Hispanic/Latino populations in the Wood River Valley are disproportionately uninsured when compared to the state; 47.9% of the uninsured in Blaine County identify as Hispanic/Latino.

### Mental Health and Well-Being – Including Suicide and Substance Misuse

Many residents, including youth, worry about access to affordable mental health care and substance misuse treatment in the region. A lack of these services can lead to worsening mental health outcomes.

Blaine County has just 247 mental health providers per 100,000 residents; the state average is 308 providers per 100,000 residents. In addition, Idaho consistently ranks high among states with the highest suicide mortality rates (22.4 per 100,000). Community members have high levels of concern regarding their community's response to overall mental health issues, ability to seek treatments, and suicide and mental health in special populations such as veterans and youth. A focus on community-based initiatives that prevent negative mental health outcomes and promote positive experiences would be valuable for communities such as ours, where provider shortages are a noticeable barrier.

### Cost of Living – Including Housing, Caregiving and Early Learning

Community members were severely concerned about the costs of housing, child care and education in the region. Due to rapid growth and limited housing, residents report that it is increasingly difficult to get into and pay for housing. Many also struggle to obtain and pay for child care and early learning services. These and other expenses can put households at an increased risk of financial instability.

Most survey respondents ranked housing costs (associated with both renting and ownership) as their top concern, followed by access to quality, affordable food, low wages and a lack of support for low-income households.

Caregiver wages and availability were commonly mentioned as challenges facing residents of the region. The Wood River Valley Early Learning Collaborative found that the region's cost of living presents a serious burden, both for families that struggle to afford child care and service providers who struggle to offer affordable child care and pay workers a living wage while running a sustainable business. This "affordability gap" hits low-income families especially hard.

Blaine County also saw an upward spike in food insecurity after 2019, putting it above the state percentage for the first time in the available data. Looking at youth (0-17 years of age) food insecurity specifically, the county saw an even sharper increase, which may be tied to higher-than-average rates of infant poverty in the region.

### Next Steps

Visit [stlukesonline.org](http://stlukesonline.org) to view the complete St. Luke's Wood River Valley CHNA, which provides an in-depth look at our community's health and how we can make improvements. St. Luke's will collaborate with the individuals, leaders and organizations in our community to develop and execute plans to address the significant community health needs identified in the assessment.