



Executive Summary

2025-2026 Yellowstone County Community Health Needs Assessment



Prepared by:
Billings Clinic
Intermountain Health St. Vincent Regional Hospital
RiverStone Health
The Rehabilitation Hospital of Montana

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To read the full 2025 – 2026 Yellowstone County Community Health Needs Assessment, please visit www.hbdyc.org/CHNA

A healthy community is defined by more than just the absence of illness or disease. A healthy community is deeply connected to an environment where individuals are supported in making choices that enhance their health and well-being. Healthy communities do not happen by chance. It takes dedicated organizations, community leaders, and community members working together to identify health needs and opportunities that can benefit the health of all ages.

We see these efforts exemplified in Yellowstone County every day, and it demands ongoing commitment. As our community's health leaders, we understand that our greatest impact comes from working collectively. All of us can contribute to community health, through our own behavior and health habits, professions and our advocacy.

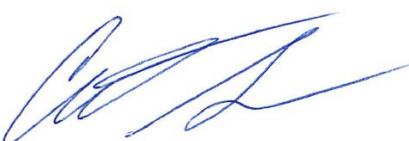
Since 1994, Billings Clinic, Intermountain Health St. Vincent Regional Hospital, and RiverStone Health (collectively known as the Alliance) have partnered to identify and address Yellowstone County's complex health needs.

Recognizing the uniqueness of our community, we have conducted the Yellowstone County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years since 2005. The Rehabilitation Hospital of Montana joined this initiative in 2023.

The CHNA resource provides a comprehensive, data-driven look at our community's overall health and a detailed assessment of the county's health needs, behaviors, and issues. In turn, we use this vital information to identify the top local health priorities and find solutions to help improve the health of all residents.

Our commitment to collaboration remains strong, and we encourage you to participate. By working together and leveraging these insights, we can help build a healthier, more vibrant Yellowstone County for everyone.

Sincerely,



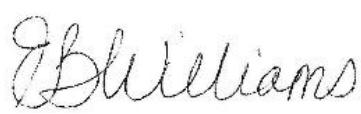
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Yellowstone County Community Health Needs Assessment Process

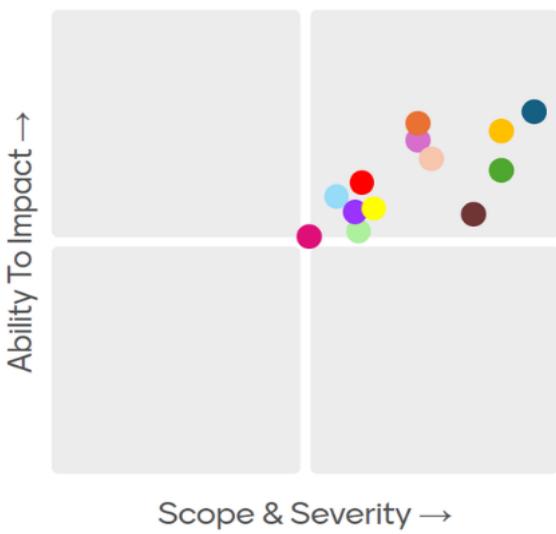
The 2025 – 2026 Yellowstone County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is a collaborative process involving the community, partners, and community stakeholders to plan, promote, and provide input on the needs of the community. The 2025 – 2026 CHNA is a follow-up to similar studies conducted in 2023, 2020, 2017, 2014, 2011, and 2006.

The CHNA follows the Association for Community Health Improvement model from the Community Health Assessment Toolkit. This model is a continuous process centered on the community. Below is a condensed version of the community health improvement, community engagement, and planning process.



Community Forum Prioritization

A public forum was held on November 21, 2025. Attendees were asked to rank community health priorities based on scope and severity, as well as the ability of our community to impact the issue.



Community priorities include:

1. Mental Health
2. Substance Use
3. Housing
4. Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Weight
5. Access to Care
6. Injury and Violence
7. Economic Stability
8. Tobacco Use
9. Heart Disease and Stroke
10. Disabling Conditions
11. Diabetes
12. Cancer
13. Respiratory Diseases

Response

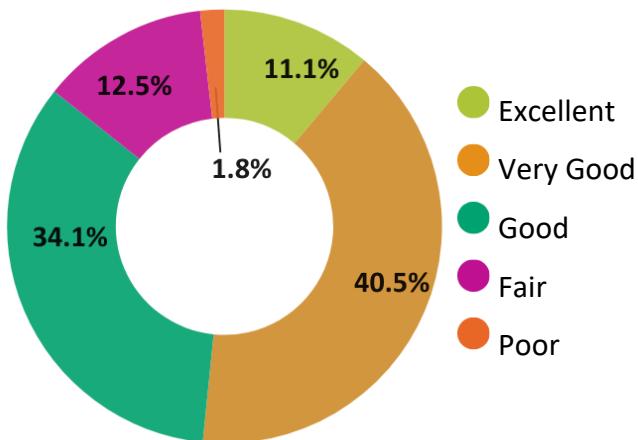
The healthcare Alliance of Billings Clinic, Intermountain Health St. Vincent Regional Hospital, and RiverStone Health will develop a collective implementation plan to address key community needs. This plan will include community stakeholders as part of the Healthy By Design Coalition.

Overall Health Status

Overall health status is a self-reported assessment of a community member's own health and well-being. Encompassing physical, mental, and emotional health, this is a reliable way of measuring the general health and well-being of the community.

Leading causes of death are important to take into consideration when evaluating a community's overall health. Understanding the leading causes of death can help improve future medical care and treatment, health policy development, and prevention efforts.

Overall Health Status

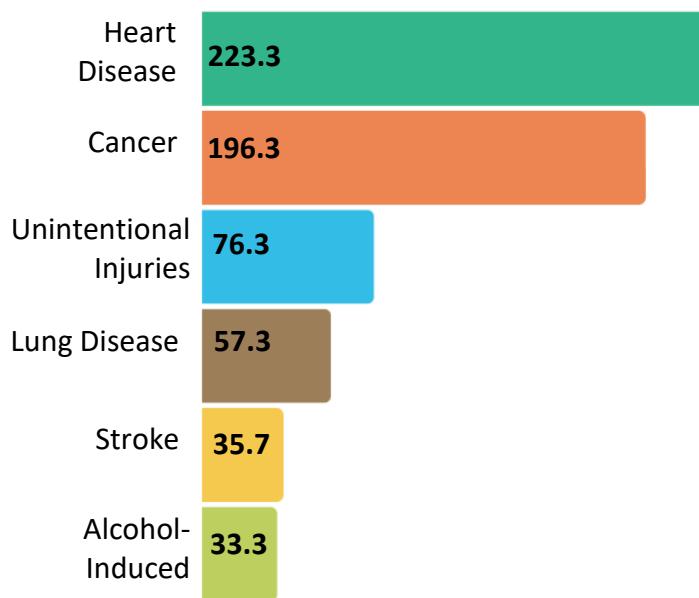


14% of adults believe that their overall health is "fair" or "poor"

The percentage of residents reporting "fair" or "poor" overall health has been decreasing since 2020

Leading Causes of Death

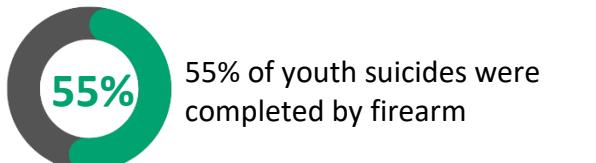
Mortality per 100,000 Population
(Yellowstone County, 2021 – 2023)



Leading Causes of Death for Youth
(Yellowstone County, 2020 – 2024)

34.3 deaths per 100,000 Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death for Yellowstone County youth

Suicide is the leading preventable cause of death for Yellowstone County youth



Sources: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Injury and Violence Data 2020 – 2024; Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Suicide in Montana: Facts, Figures, and Formulas for Prevention, November 2024; Montana Office of Public Instruction, Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey County Level Results 2023, March 2024; Professional Research Consultants, Inc. 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment Report: Yellowstone County, Montana hbdyc.org/CHNA – Published January 2026.

Key Areas of Opportunity

This section highlights key takeaways from the top community health priorities identified by Yellowstone County residents and leaders. Please visit www.hbdyc.org/CHNA to view the complete 2026 CHNA report.

Key Findings

Social Drivers of Health

Social drivers of health (SDOH) are the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, pray, and age that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Examples include:

- Access to care
- Access to nutritious foods
- Access to physical activity opportunities
- Education, job opportunities, and income
- Language and literacy skills
- Polluted air and water
- Racism, discrimination, and violence
- Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods

SDOH also contributes to health disparities. For example, people who lack access to grocery stores with healthy foods are less likely to have good nutrition. That raises their risk of health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity- and even lowers life expectancy relative to people who do have access to healthy foods.

Just promoting healthy choices will not eliminate these and other health disparities. Instead, public health, health care organizations, and their partners in sectors like education, transportation, and housing need to take action to improve the conditions in people's environments. (Source: Healthy People 2030)

Poverty



10% of residents live below the federal poverty level

Housing



36% of adults report they "always, usually, or sometimes" worry about paying their rent or mortgage

Economic Stability



23% of residents do not have cash on hand to cover a \$400 emergency expense without going into debt



Food Insecurity
29% of adults report food insecurity



Access to Care
7% of residents lack health care insurance coverage

“

Social determinants of health are a huge problem in community members maintaining good health or the ability to manage diseases and aging. Areas of our community where income levels are low are grocery store deserts, lack green space and safe areas to participate in outdoor recreation. Housing and food costs have risen. Those on Medicaid who need assistance or nursing care have very few options in the state of Montana as those facilities need to balance their Medicaid patients/residents with private pay patients/residents to break even and pay staff a livable wage. — Health Care Provider

”

Key Findings

Mental Health

Mental health support remains a persistent need in the community. Despite most residents reporting their overall mental health favorably, residents who say their overall mental health is “fair” or “poor” continues to increase over the past two decades.

Mental Health Indicators



26% of residents report experiencing “fair” or “poor” mental health



48% of residents report experiencing symptoms of chronic depression

Suicide



3 in 10 residents report having ever considered attempting suicide

Age-Adjusted Suicide Mortality
(2023 annual average deaths per 100,000 population)



Access To Lethal Means

28% of residents have at least one unlocked firearm in or around their home or vehicle



1 in 4 respondents with children have an unlocked firearm in the home

Social Support

-  Emotional support from friends, family, coworkers, or neighbors is an important way to build resilience, reduce stress, and improve mental health
- 11%** of residents report “seldom” or “never” having enough social and emotional support
- 14%** of residents report often feeling isolated

Access to Care



- 29%** of residents are currently receiving mental health treatment
- 10%** of residents were unable to get mental health services when needed in the past year
- 13%** of youth needed mental health care but could not get it

Activities and Strategies to Address Mental Health

Activities and strategies to address mental health will be determined over the course of the next six months. Following each CHNA, a community process is undertaken to create an improvement plan for Yellowstone County, to be carried forward by the Healthy By Design Coalition. Planning for the next CHIP will occur throughout spring 2026 with several opportunities for community stakeholders to engage in its development.

Key Findings

Substance Use

Substance use can cause higher rates of health complications, hospitalizations, and death. Both unintentional drug-induced and alcohol-induced deaths continue to increase over the past decade for Yellowstone County residents.

Personal Impact



55% of residents' lives have been negatively impacted by substance use (by self or someone else)

Activities and Strategies to Address Substance Use

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Alcohol



21% of residents report engaging in excessive drinking

There were **33.3** alcohol-related deaths per 100,000 residents between 2021 - 2023

15,050 nonfatal emergency department visits between 2020 – 2024 were alcohol-related

Other Substances

There were **272.4** cannabis-related nonfatal emergency department visits per 100,000 residents in 2024



There were **20.2** unintentional overdose deaths per 100,000 residents between 2020 - 2024



71% of key informants in the community identify substance use as a "major problem"



Over 13,000 nonfatal emergency department visits were due to drug use, misuse, and/or drug dependence in 2024

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Workforce shortages are causing lack of availability in care for individuals with substance use disorders. We also have limited transitional housing for individuals going through treatment programs. Without a secure and affordable home, a person can fall back into old ways without the support they need like a stable home. In Montana there are large geographic and transportation barriers since we are a large and rural state. Finally, stigma and discrimination are a barrier for individuals getting care. — Health Care Provider

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Sources: Montana Hospital Discharge Data; Montana Vital Statistics; Professional Research Consultants, Inc. 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment Report: Yellowstone County, Montana hbdyc.org/CHNA – Published January 2026.

Key Findings

Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Weight

Residents are becoming more physically active. The percentage of Yellowstone County residents who are overweight or obese has decreased since 2023. Healthy eating continues to be a challenge and there is room for improvement as more needs to be done to address the cost of fresh produce.

Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity



67% of adults are overweight



34% of adults are obese

Nutrition



25% of residents consume 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily



24% of residents find it “very” or “somewhat” difficult to buy affordable fresh produce



29% of residents report food insecurity

81% of residents living below the federal poverty level report food insecurity

Physical Activity



32% of residents meet physical activity recommendations



3 out of 4 residents made an attempt in the past year to increase activity



5 in 10 children get at least one hour of physical activity per day

“

While Montana and Yellowstone County often draw a group of people who come for the copious outdoor recreation opportunities, the community continues to be part of the national health crisis of obesity. We still have several food deserts even within Billings and certainly in the surrounding areas. Fast food is much cheaper and easier to access than healthy and nutritious food, and we continue to neglect good education around overall health and how nutrition, physical activity and weight are directly related to other health issues and overall quality of life. In short, it is still easier and less expensive financially to be obese and unwell than to live with general overall health. — Community Leader

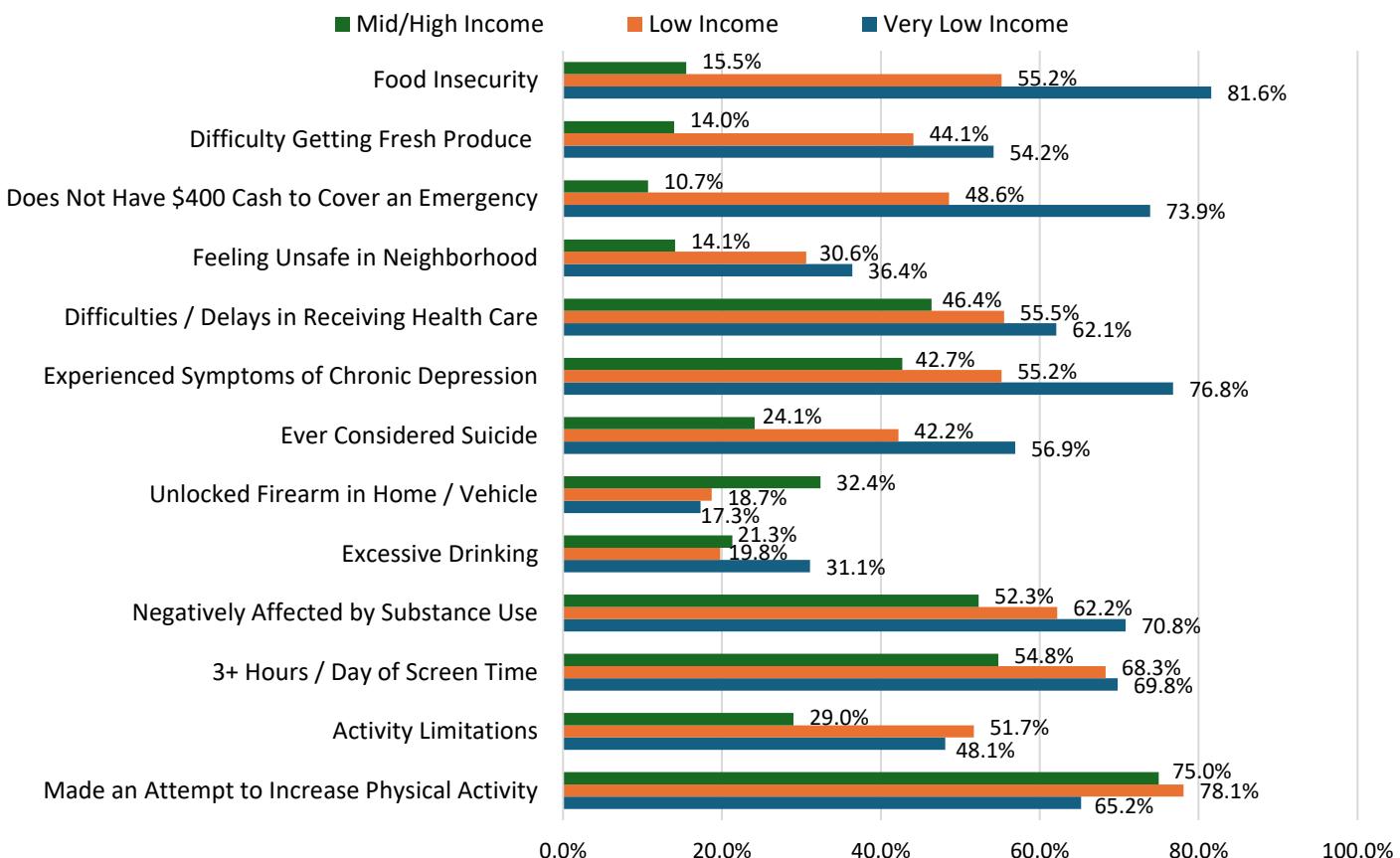
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Activities and Strategies to Address Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Weight

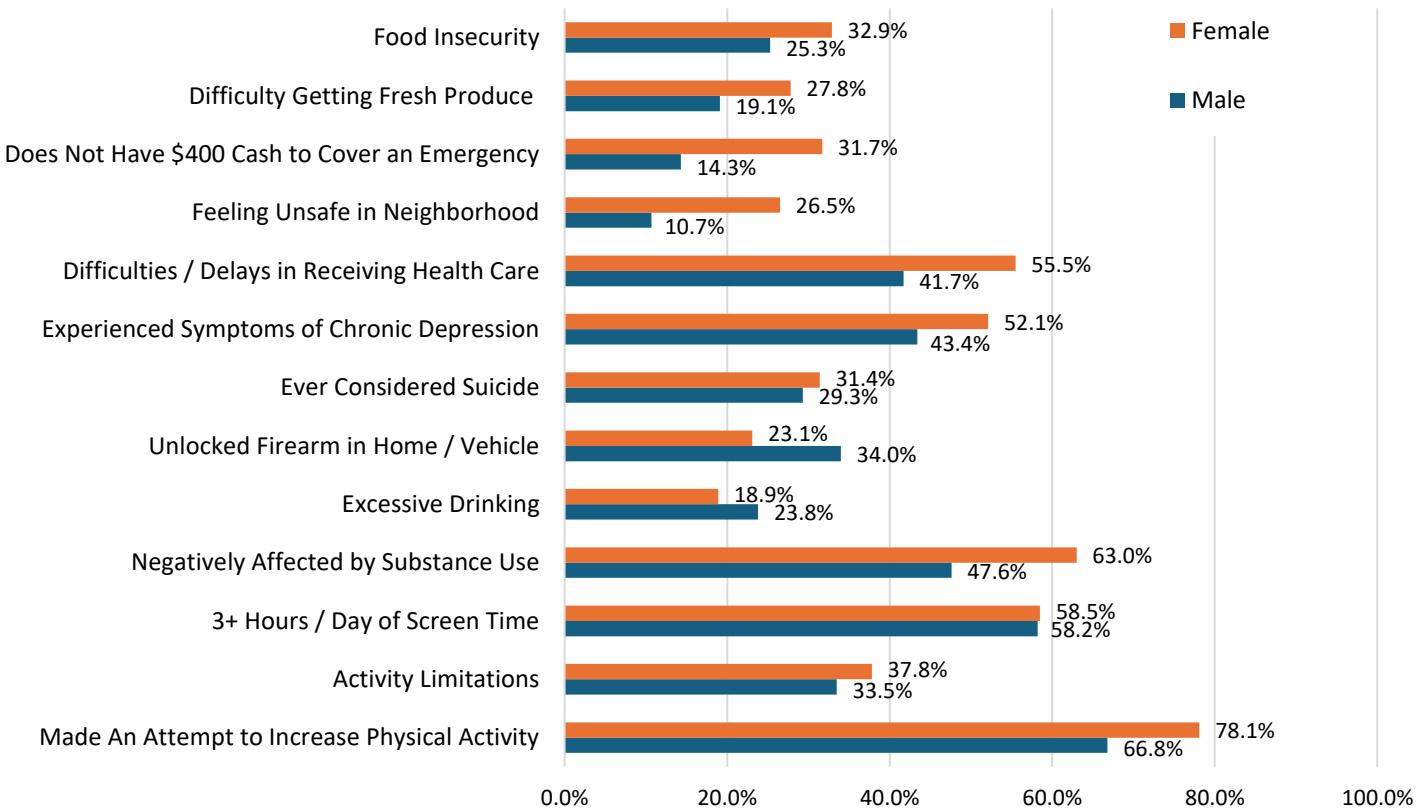
Activities and strategies to address physical activity, nutrition, and weight will be determined over the course of the next six months. Following each CHNA, a community process is undertaken to create an improvement plan for Yellowstone County, to be carried forward by the Healthy By Design Coalition. Planning for the next CHIP will occur throughout spring 2026 with several opportunities for community stakeholders to engage in its development.

Health Disparities: Income, Sex, Age, and Race/Ethnicity

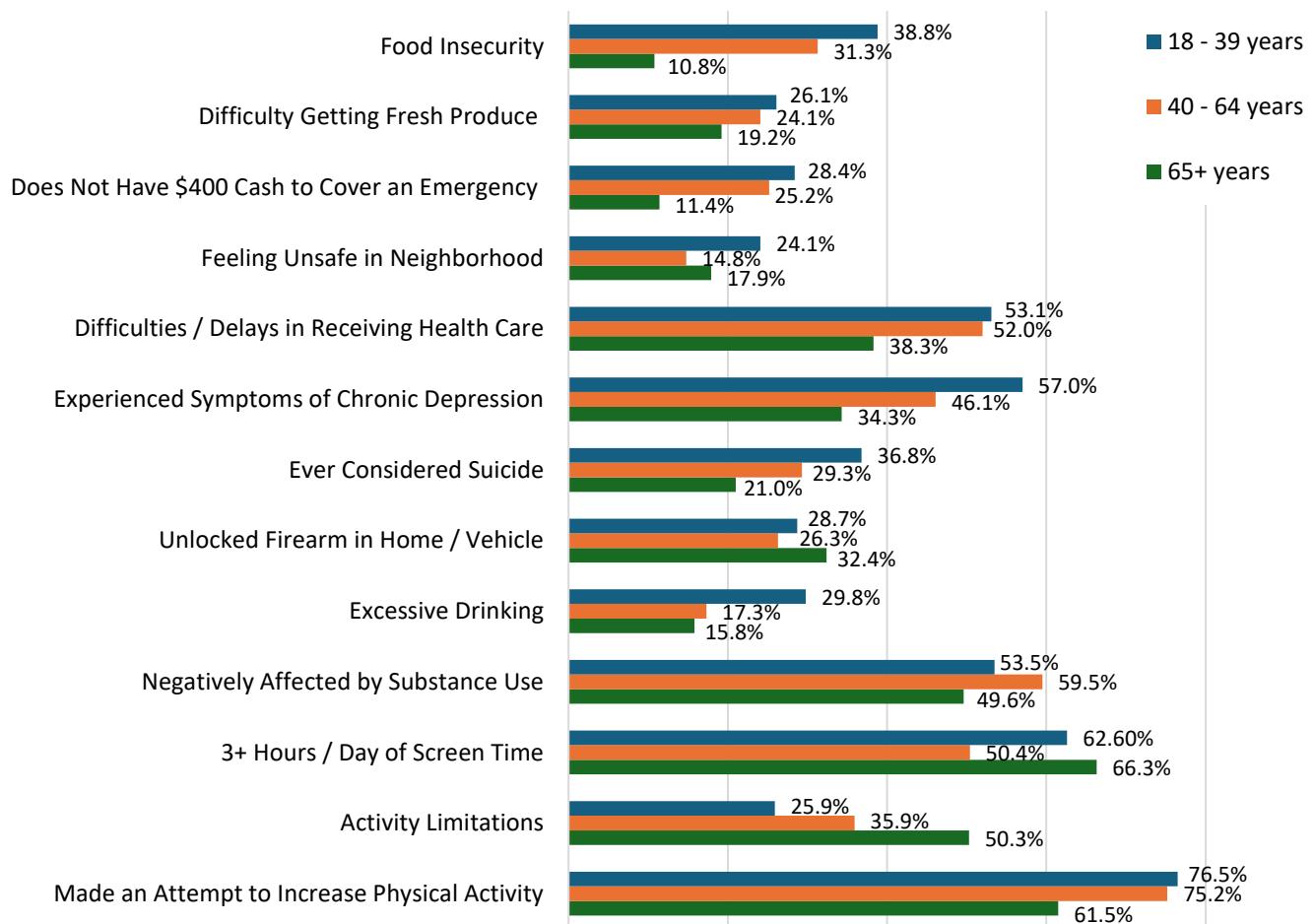
Disparities by Income for Selected Yellowstone County Health Indicators (2026)



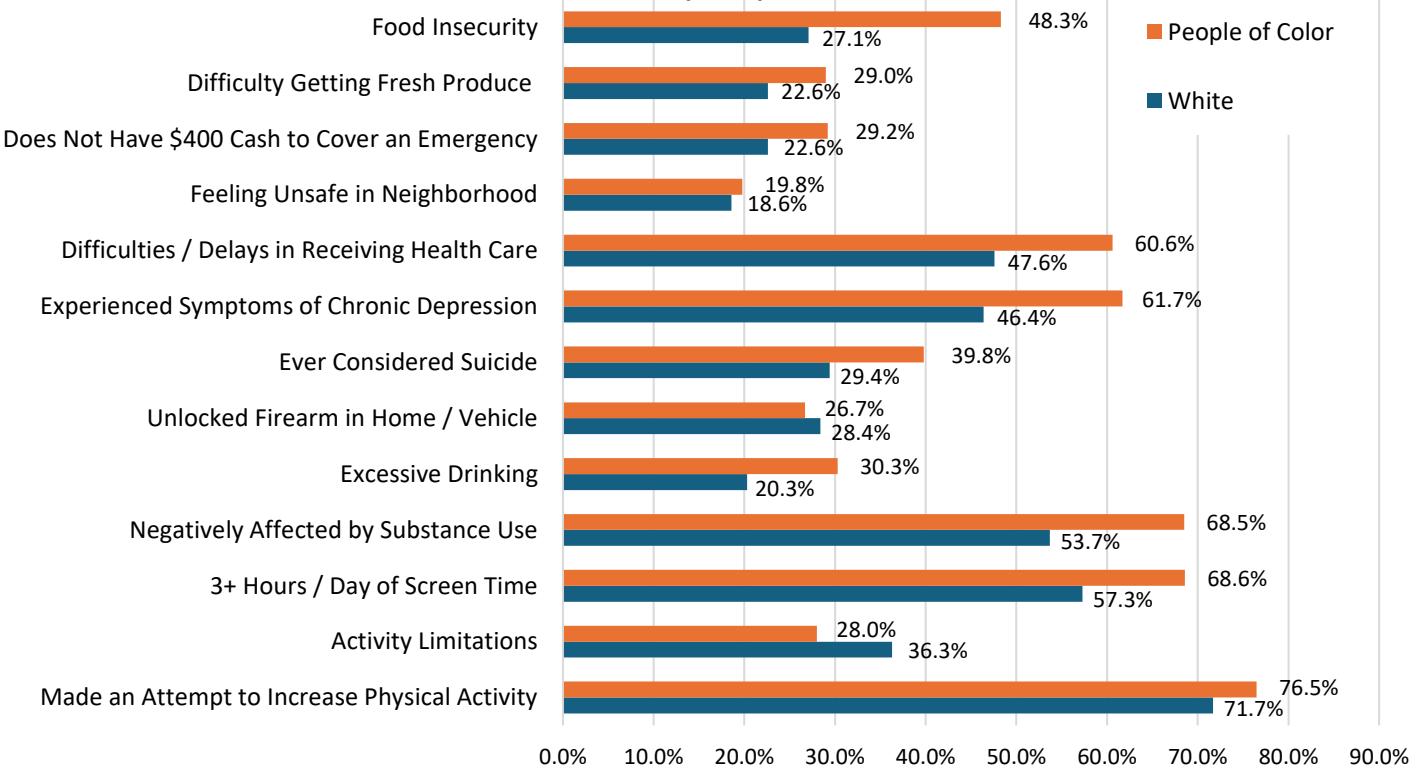
Disparities by Sex for Selected Yellowstone County Health Indicators (2026)



Disparities by Age for Selected Yellowstone County Health Indicators (2026)



Disparities by Race and Ethnicity for Selected Yellowstone County Health Indicators (2026)



Next Steps

Collective Action

Following each CHNA, a community process is undertaken to create an improvement plan for Yellowstone County, to be carried forward by the Healthy By Design Coalition. Our 2023 – 2026 Yellowstone County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is available on the Healthy By Design website. The 2023 – 2026 CHIP addresses the priority areas of healthy weight, access to care, mental health, and substance use through a framework of healthy neighborhoods, healthy connections, healthy investments, and strengthening partnerships. Planning for the next CHIP will occur throughout the spring of 2026 with several opportunities for community stakeholders to engage in its development.

Organizational Action

Following the development of the Yellowstone County CHIP, Billings Clinic, Intermountain Health St. Vincent Regional Hospital, and RiverStone Health will each review the results of the CHNA and select organization-specific priority areas, taking into account the collective community priorities. A hospital-specific Community Health Implementation Strategy is developed to address selected priority needs. RiverStone Health incorporates prioritized strategies into its strategic plan.

For More Information



Visit www.hbdyc.org/CHNA
to learn more



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Thank You

We would like to thank everyone who made the 2026 CHNA one of the most successful reports to date.

CHNA Survey Respondents

CHNA Work Team Members

CHNA Advisory Team Members

Yellowstone County Community Health Workers

Forum Attendees

...and more!

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