

# Key Findings

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Whatcom County's 2018 *Community Health Assessment* contains data and information about the health and well-being of Whatcom County residents. Key findings were compiled with input from the Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board, Healthy Whatcom team, and select staff within the Whatcom County Health Department. The findings are not priorities, but instead represent issues, themes, and concerns that stood out upon reviewing the assessment.

**While there is much to celebrate about the health of this community, there is also much room for improvement.**

- 01** Overall, people in Whatcom County continue to be generally healthy, and the county as a whole compares favorably to Washington State on several health indicators.
- 02** Disparities in health by income, gender, age, or race and ethnicity are evident. Indicators of health are worse across multiple data points for youth who are English Language Learners and for youth and adults who are low-income, homeless, or people of color. Qualitative data also shows that these disparities are felt by community members.
- 03** Whatcom County can be a difficult place to be financially stable. Poverty, stable housing, and living wage incomes are not improving over time, and these conditions affect health and quality of life.
- 04** Whatcom County continues to experience an opiate crisis. Recently expanded treatment options are at capacity, and additional treatment options are needed.
- 05** Youth alcohol, drug, and cigarette use have significantly decreased since the last assessment.
- 06** Indicators of community safety and violence show that Whatcom County is experiencing higher rates of incarceration and child maltreatment than WA State.
- 07** Adult and youth mental health indicators reflect an increase in poor mental health and disparities between genders for suicide and depression. Mental health care continues to be a need.
- 08** The incidence of chlamydia and gonorrhea in Whatcom has increased since the last assessment but remain below WA State rates. The highest rates of these sexually-transmitted diseases are found among youth.
- 09** Whatcom County's older population is growing, and the number of people 65 and older who live alone has increased since the last assessment.
- 10** Qualitative data demonstrates that navigating the complexity of different systems is challenging, and there is a desire for creative solutions to improve coordination and integrated access to services.
- 11** Nutrition and physical activity indicators show a decrease in youth fruit and vegetable consumption while physical activity and obesity have remained steady since the last assessment.
- 12** Community members feel that access to healthy foods and safe places to walk, bike, and recreate vary based on geography, income, and race or ethnicity.