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Making a Difference Means Knowing the Difference

Norton County
Community Assessment Report
August 2018

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## Primary Health Concerns and Needs – Executive Summary

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Across all questions and responses, the following were the **primary health concerns/needs** for Norton County:

### **A need for better access to health care in Norton.**

Good access to health care was most important to respondents in creating a healthy community. Health care family practice providers were in the top 3 greatest needs for community health for 34% of respondents. Most respondents (83%) left Norton for at least some of their health care services.

### **Improvement needed in the availability of mental/behavioral healthcare.**

Forty-eight percent (48%) of those rating their confidence in mental health services chose “not confident” (31%) or “not at all confident” (17%). Mental and behavioral health was considered by respondents the third greatest impact on community health. Assistance with addiction falls under the purview of mental/behavioral health. Abusing illegal drugs was the behavior respondents considered to contribute most to community health issues, and drug use/abuse (prescription or illegal) was mentioned in most questions where respondents could write in responses.

### **Cost of care is a barrier.**

Affordable health care was considered the greatest need for community health by respondents overall, with 72% putting it in the top three needs. Fourteen percent (14%) of respondents found the cost of care to be less outside of Norton compared to 4% that considered the cost of care to be less in Norton.

### **Specialists appointments and services are in short supply locally, if at all.**

Seeing the specialist(s) they needed was the top reason that respondents received care outside of Norton county (71%). Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents considered health care specialists one of the top three greatest needs for community health.

### **Quality of care in Norton is an issue for nearly half of respondents.**

A subset of respondents noted a lack of confidence in the care they would receive from services in Norton. Forty percent (40%) of respondents seeking health care outside of Norton indicated they do so because they receive a higher quality of care. In rating confidence in services, the four health care services (separated by age groups) were below the top ten out of 21 services.

### **There is concern about health care organization leadership in Norton.**

This came up in open ended responses as it was not specifically targeted in survey questions.

### **The community is impacted by health issues due to aging.**

Fifty percent (50%) of respondents indicated this as in the top 3 greatest impacts on community health. Nursing homes had the third lowest average confidence rating.

### **Cancer was the condition listed as having the greatest impact on community health.**

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents put this in the top 3 greatest impacts on community health.

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## Specific Key Findings

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- The majority of respondents were women (79.1%).
- More respondents were either 50-64 (32%) years old or 35-49 years old (29%) than other age groups.
- 99.1% of respondents were white.
- Household income level was equally distributed among respondents.
- About a third (34%) of respondents were parents with children in the home under the age of 18.
- Respondents reported using health insurance (88%) to pay for their healthcare more than any other method.
- Top three sources of health information reported: doctors/health professionals, internet, and family or friends.
- Top three factors reported as most important in creating a healthy community: good access to health care, good schools, and good jobs/strong economy.
- Top three conditions reported as having the greatest overall impact on community health: cancer, health issues due to aging, and mental/behavioral health.
- Top three behaviors reported as contributing most to community health issues: abusing illegal drugs, not being physically active, and eating poorly.
- Top three reported greatest needs regarding health in the community: affordable health care, health care family practice providers, continuity of care.
- Overall, respondents thought that both as a community and a county overall, Norton County is between a “healthy” and “neither healthy nor unhealthy” place to live.
- The majority of respondents received services both inside of and outside of Norton County in the last two years.
  - Top three reasons to seek care in Norton county: convenience, familiarity with providers, and health insurance that works in Norton County.
  - Top three reasons to seek care outside of Norton county: to see a specialist, because they receive a higher quality of care, and preferring to see another provider outside of Norton county.
- Respondents were most confident in receiving quality care using Norton county pharmacies, dentists, and eye doctors, and least confident in receiving quality care using Norton county mental health services, business/financial/administrative services, and nursing homes.
- When asked for suggestions regarding improving health care in their community, the following themes emerged:
  - More care providers they feel they can trust and be respected by.
  - A lack of confidence in the quality of care they will receive in Norton county.
  - Better access to specialists locally.
  - Dissatisfaction with required payment before health care services.
  - Concerns about health care organization leadership in Norton.
  - Improve wait times and services included in emergency care.
  - Provide further education on healthy behaviors and managing health conditions.

## Process Overview

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Wichita State University Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE) was contracted by the Norton County Hospital to conduct a community assessment of Norton County on health and related issues.

CARE identified a number of surveys used in other communities, some by hospitals, to assess issues related to health. Questions from these surveys, which are available for public use, were used to create a customized survey for Norton County. Following approval of the survey by representatives of the Norton County Hospital, CARE secured Institutional Review Board approval from WSU for protection of human subjects. CARE then programed the survey in the Qualtrics online surveying platform and provided the link and an electronic version for printing to Norton County representatives for distribution. Surveys were collected between May 2<sup>nd</sup> and June 19<sup>th</sup> 2018. Paper surveys were mailed by Norton County Hospital to CARE.

Three hundred eighty (380) online surveys and 35 paper surveys were collected for a total of 415 surveys overall. Sixty-one (61) online surveys were removed because no questions were answered except whether the respondent consented to participate. The remaining 354 surveys were analyzed for this report.

NOTE: A community forum was held following the compilation of a preliminary report of findings from the survey in order for community members to provide input regarding their reactions to the results. At the forum, CARE researchers presented the results and gathered feedback regarding what seemed accurate, what seemed inconsistent with participants' experiences/perceptions, and other comments that would be helpful to Norton County Hospital as it moves forward with their planning process. The themed responses from participants at the community forum follow the survey results below and unedited notes from the forum are also included at the end of this report.

## Respondent Demographics

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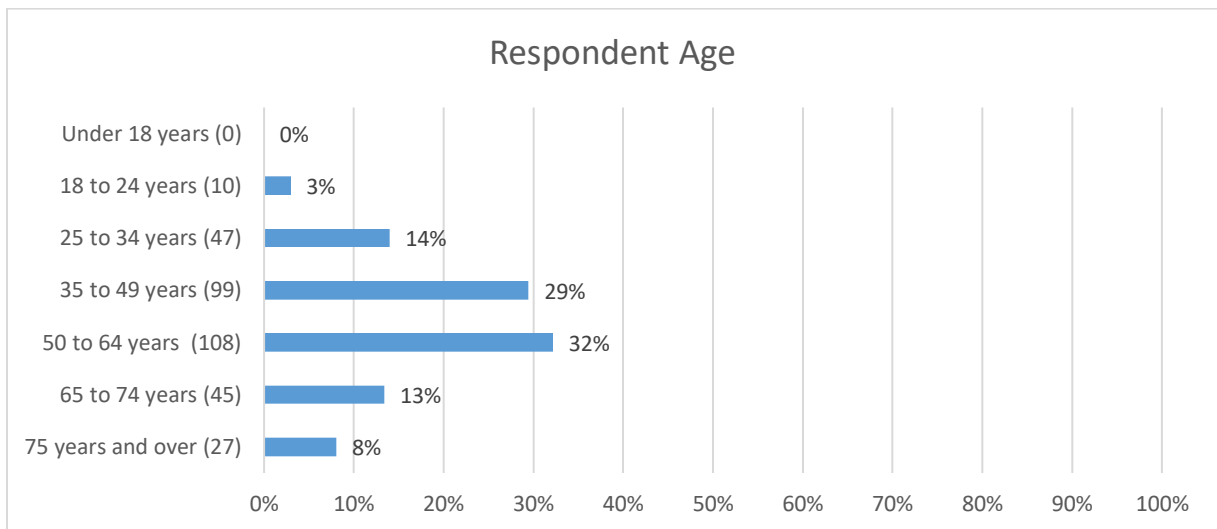
*Note: Total number of respondents is indicated in parentheses (#). Percentages on questions that allow multiple selections (top three or select all that apply) indicate the percentage of total respondents that selected that choice, therefore the total of all percentages will be higher than 100% on those questions.*

### 1. What is your gender identity?

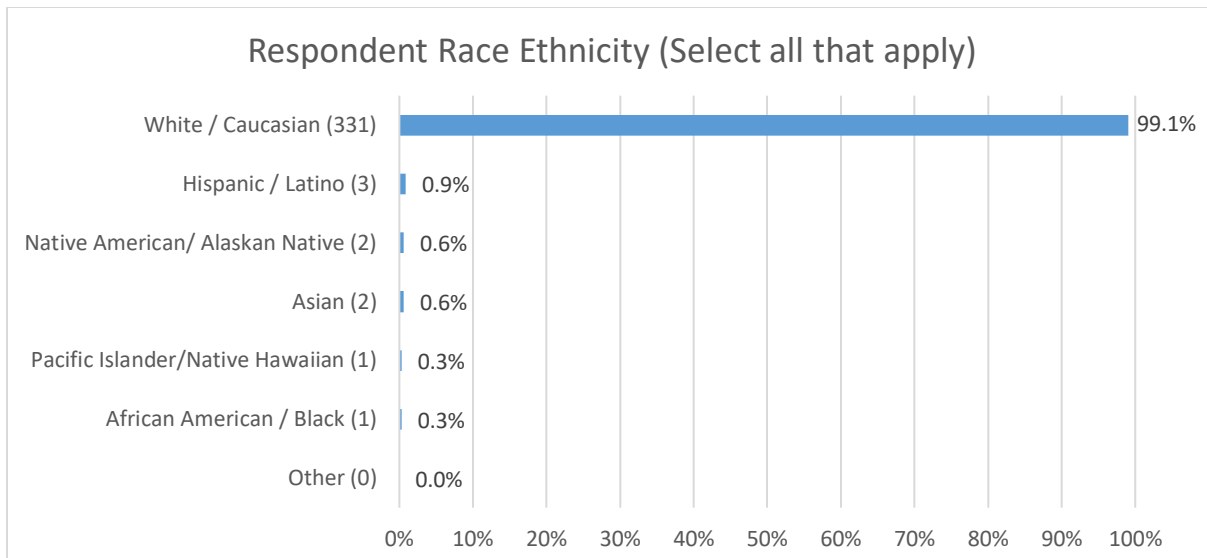
Woman	Man	Non-Binary	Other
79.1% (257)	20.6% (67)	0%	0.3% (1)

*Note: The one respondent selecting other did so in order to object to the choices offered.*

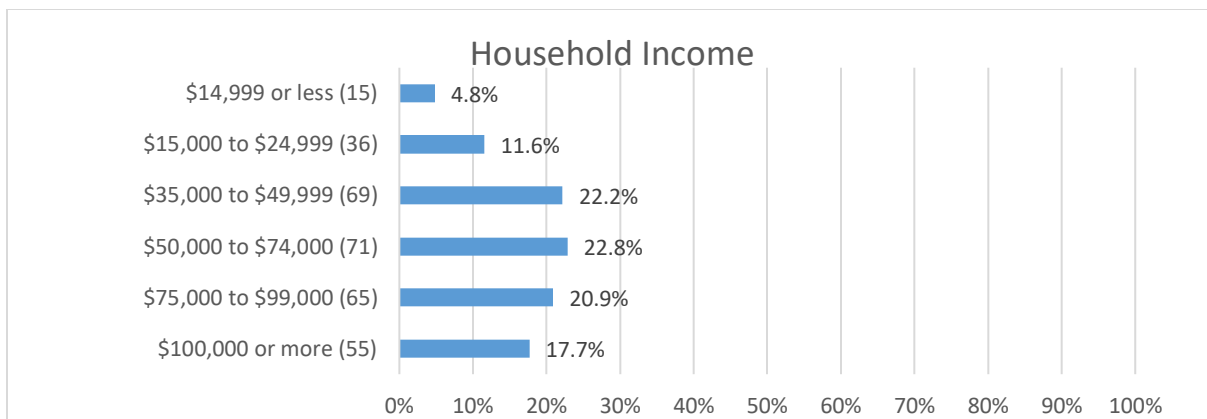
### 2. What is your age?



**3. Racial/Ethnic group you identify with: Please select all that apply.**



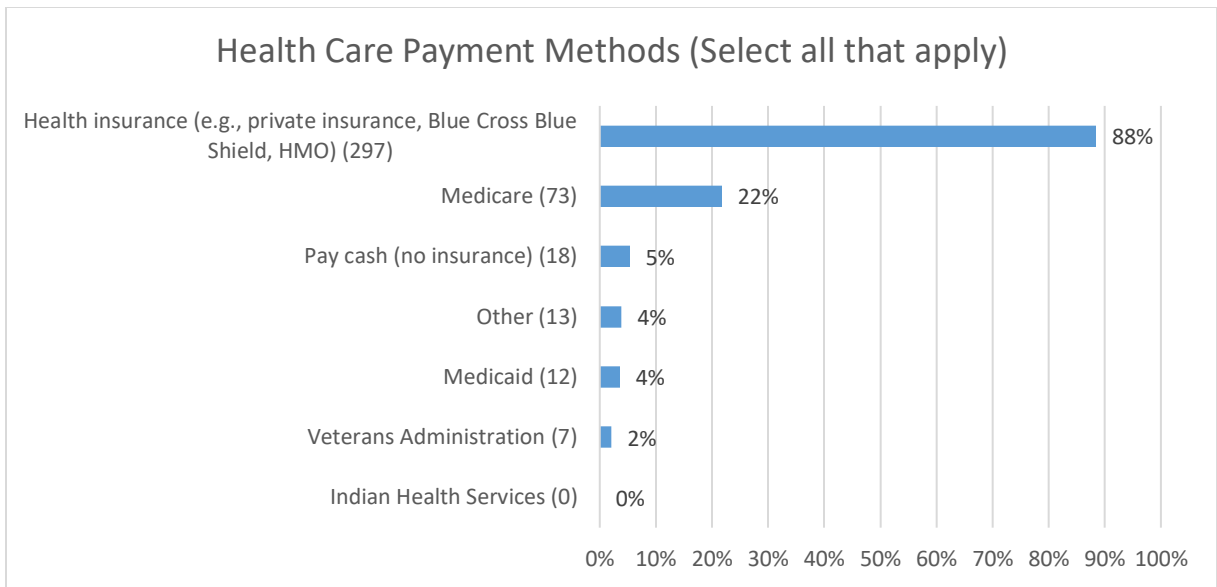
**4. Household income:**



**5. Are you a parent who currently has children in the home under the age of 18?**

Yes	No
34% (113)	66% (224)

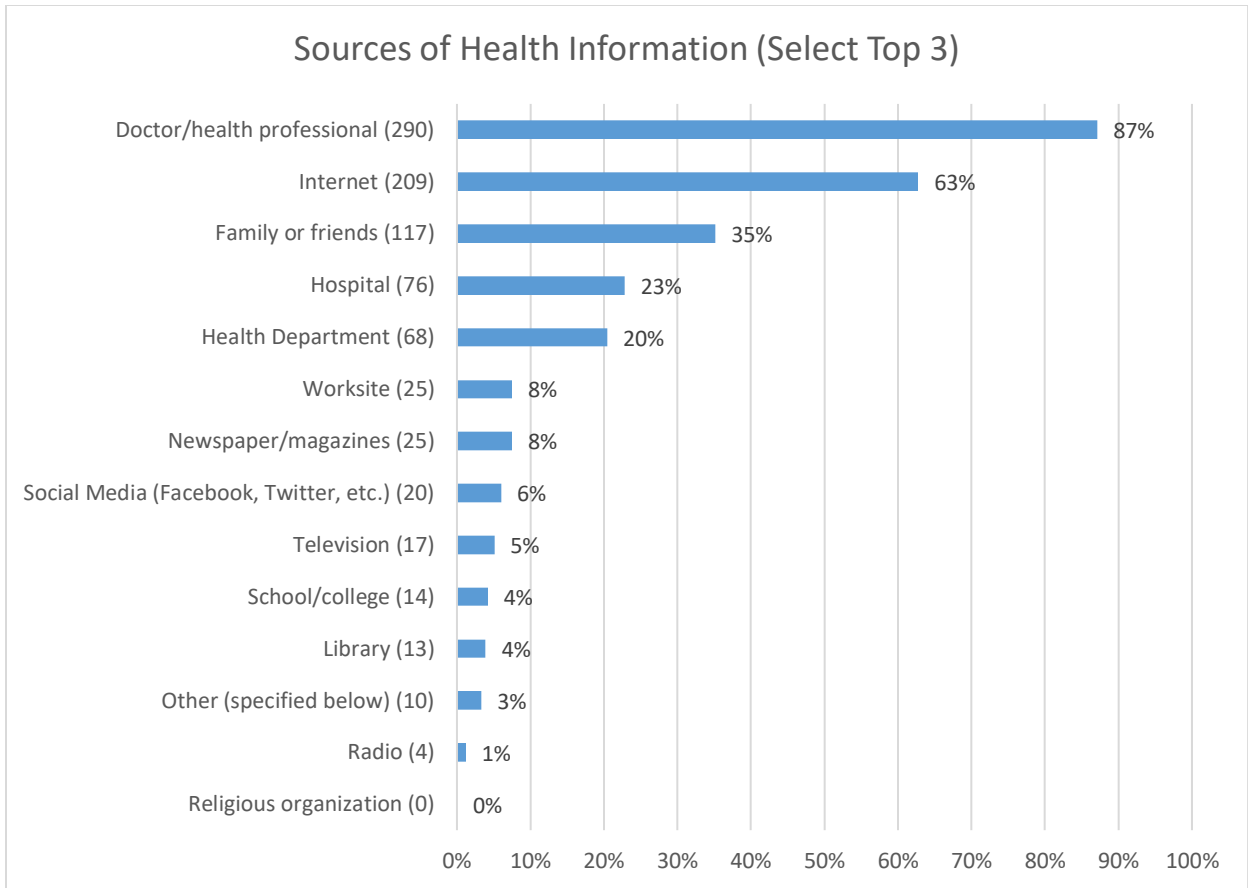
6. How do you pay for your health care? Please select all that apply.



**Other:**

Medi-share (2); Tricare (2); AARP supp; Blue Cross Blue Shield; God's word (Holy Bible) - health to all our flesh, marrow to our bones; Humana; Member of a health cost-sharing ministry; Out of pocket/high deductibles; Pay cash copayment.

7. Where do you and your family get more of your health information? Select your TOP THREE choices.



**Other:**

BCBS newsletters; Chiropractor; Continuing education; God's word (Holy Bible); Government vetted websites; Health journals/publications; Insurance company; Pharmacist; Reading Professional Literature; RNs that I work with on a weekly basis.



**8. Zip code where you live:**

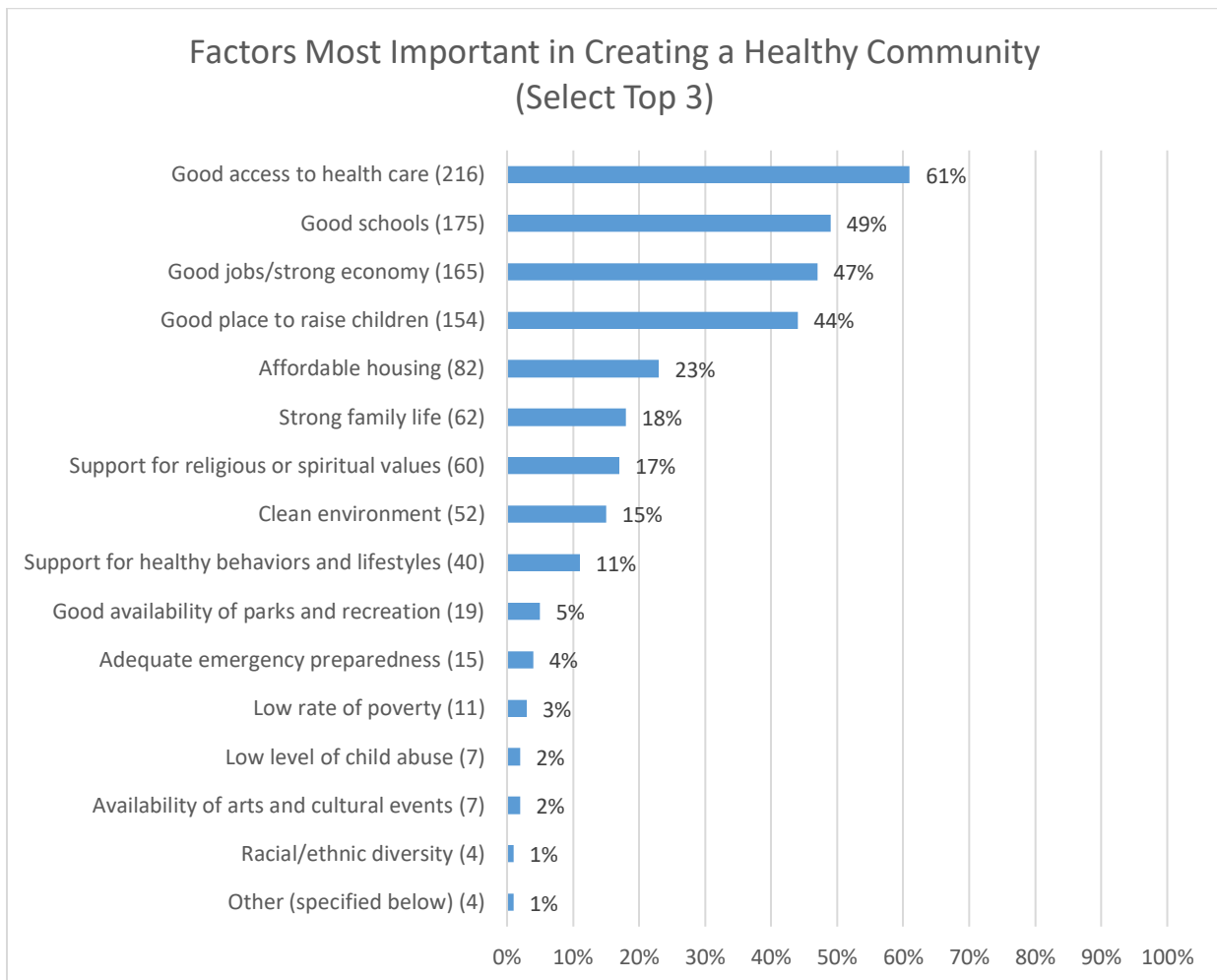
Zip code	Location	Percent
67654	Norton, KS	75.9% (245)
67645	Lenora, KS	8.4% (27)
67622	Almena, KS	5.0% (16)
67646	Logan, KS	2.5% (8)
67629	Clayton, KS	1.5% (5)
67653	Norcatour, KS	1.2% (4)
67664	Prairie View, KS	0.9% (3)
68654	Polk, NE	0.9% (3)
67661	Phillipsburg, KS	0.6% (2)

**One respondent was represented from each of the following zip codes:** 57644, 67554, 67635, 67643, 67647, 67651, 67659, 67749, 67754, 68926

## Survey Results

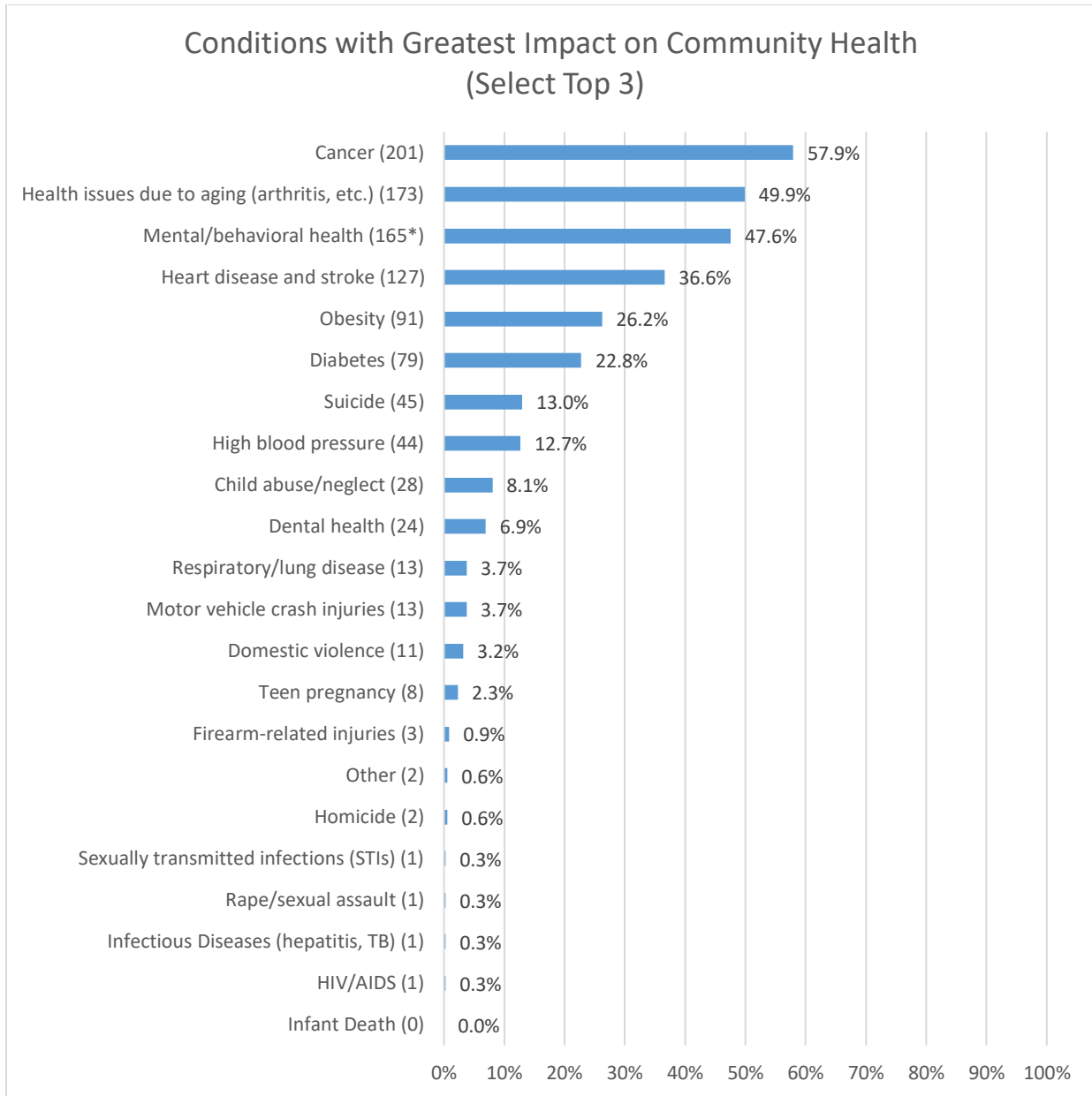
*Note: Total number of respondents is indicated in parentheses (#). Percentages on questions that allow multiple selections (top three or select all that apply) indicate the percentage of total respondents that selected that choice, therefore the total of all percentages will be higher than 100% on those questions.*

### 9. From the following list, please select the **TOP THREE** factors that you believe are most important in creating a healthy community:



**Other:** Clean pure water, fresh fruits and vegetables; adequate amount of child care options; clean air/water; can see the stars at night; little traffic; small town life; neighborhoods of people with same values; strong moral culture; strong/pervasive sense of godly values - dependence on God/integrity

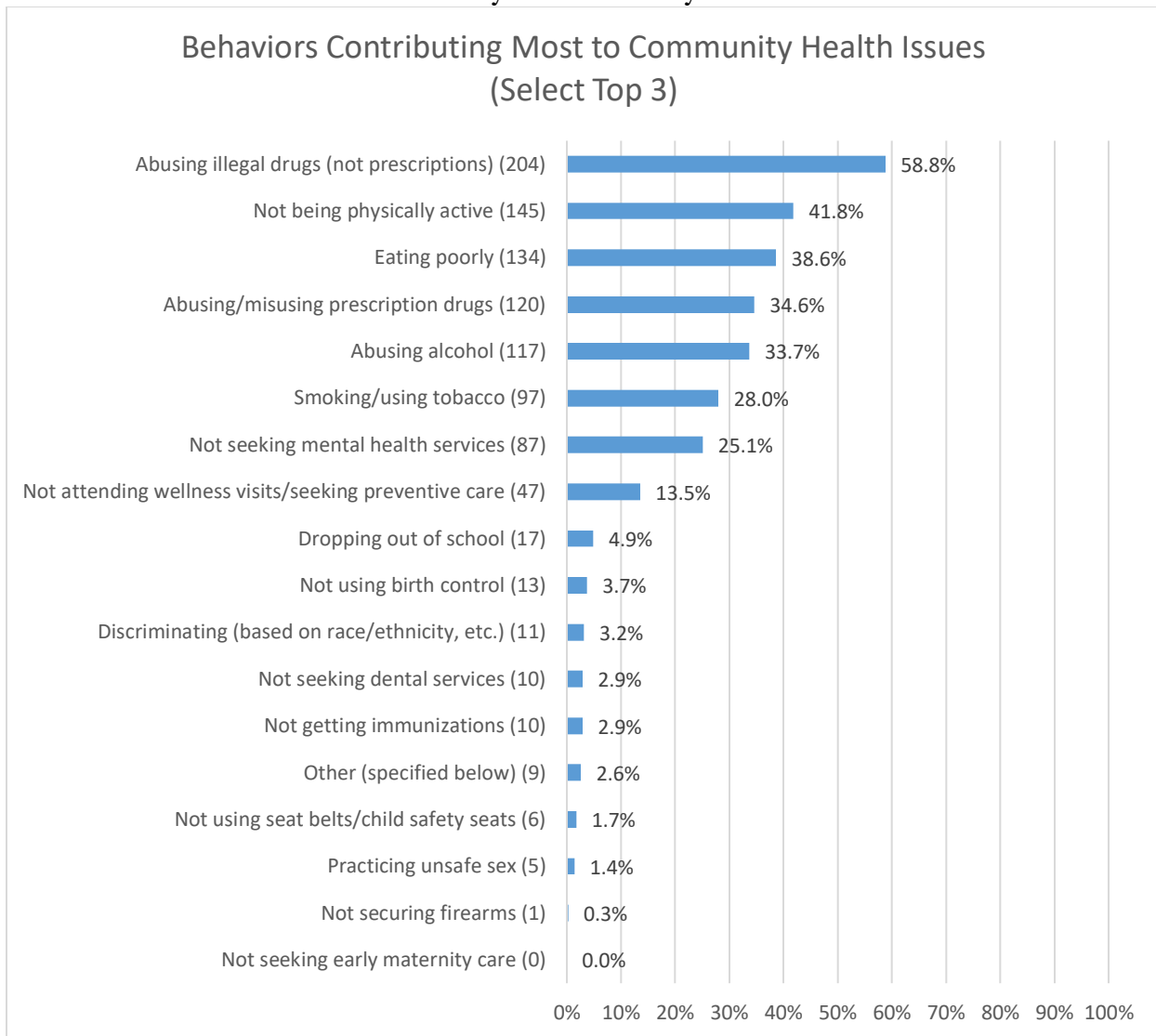
10. From the following list, please select the **TOP THREE** conditions that you believe have the greatest overall impact on your community’s health:



*\*16 respondents wrote in a response regarding drug use/abuse in the “Other” category. As a condition, drug use/abuse falls under “behavioral health,” so those responses were added to the “mental/behavioral health” category.*

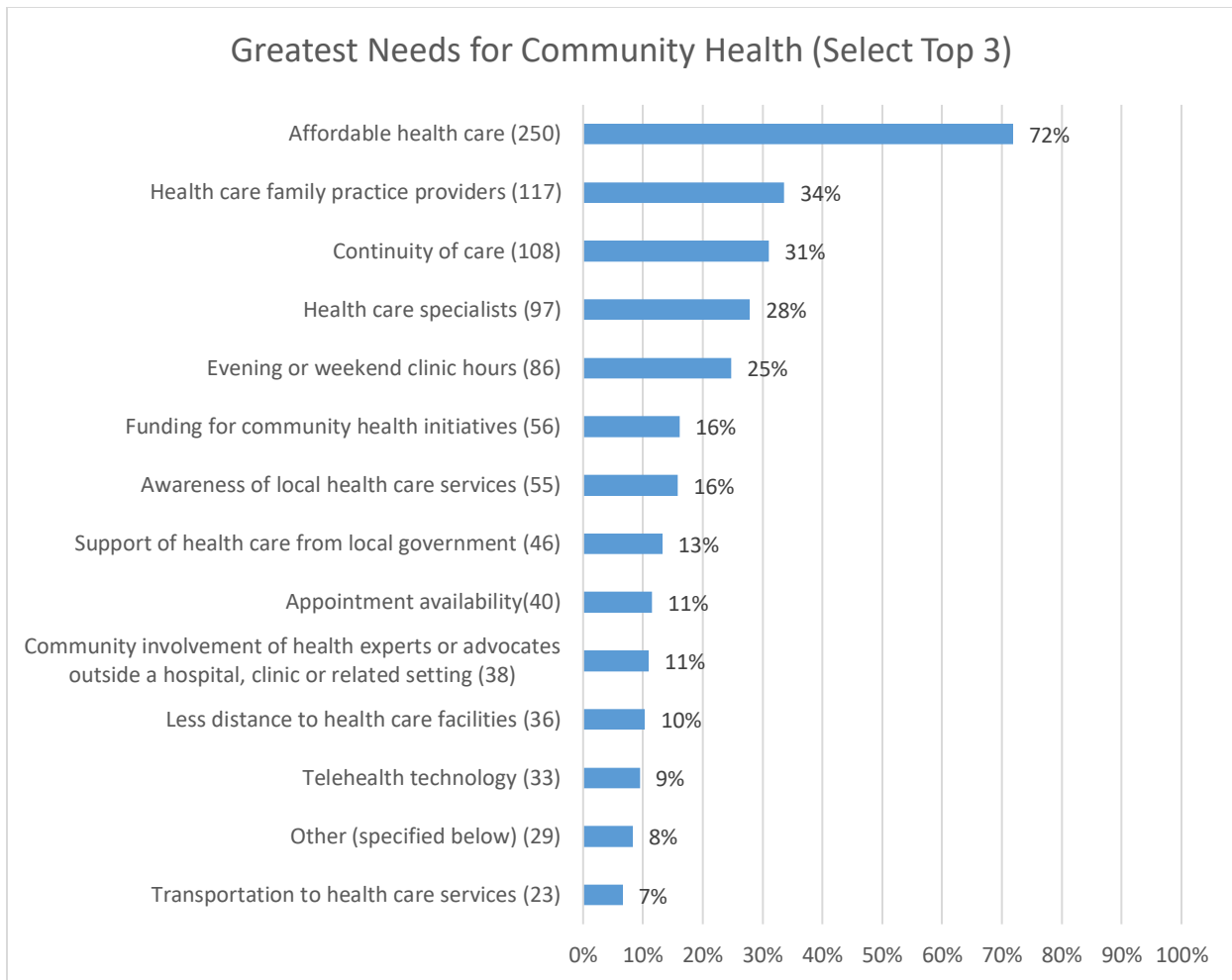
**Other:** unwed parent; inadequate/non-existent pain relief; illegal drug use [counted with drug use/abuse in the write-in addition to the mental/behavioral health category], sedentary lifestyles, poor eating habits.

**11. From the following list, please select the TOP THREE behaviors that you believe contribute most to health issues in your community:**



**Other:** aging; disrespect of the elder population; good doctors and nurses!; lack of access to good mental health care; lack of honesty & trust between patients & healthcare professionals; lack of parenting skills; no local access to needed mental health services; poverty; very poor produce.

12. From the following list, please select what you believe to be the TOP THREE greatest needs regarding health in your community:



**Other:** quality health care (5); availability of mental health services (4); cost of health care (4); alternative care options (2); access to needed pain medication; awareness of and (individual) motivation to actively engage in healthful pursuits/activities; Crisis Detox at the hospital; economics; education for teens about self-care; encourage athletic activity; having more procedures & tests done locally; prescription costs; doing tests before making diagnoses; “quit playing politics with the doctors”; telemedicine.

13. Please complete the following statement: I think my community in Norton County is a \_\_\_\_\_ place to live.

Very Healthy (5)	Healthy (4)	Neither Healthy nor Unhealthy (3)	Unhealthy (2)	Very Unhealthy (1)	Average
3% (12)	50% (173)	36% (126)	10% (34)	1% (2)	3.46

14. Please complete the following statement: I think Norton County overall is a \_\_\_\_\_ place to live.

Very Healthy (5)	Healthy (4)	Neither Healthy nor Unhealthy (3)	Unhealthy (2)	Very Unhealthy (1)	Average
2% (7)	50% (172)	35% (122)	12% (42)	1% (2)	3.41

15. I have received health care services at the Norton County Health Department in the last two years.

Yes	No	Do Not Know
66% (231)	31% (109)	3% (9)

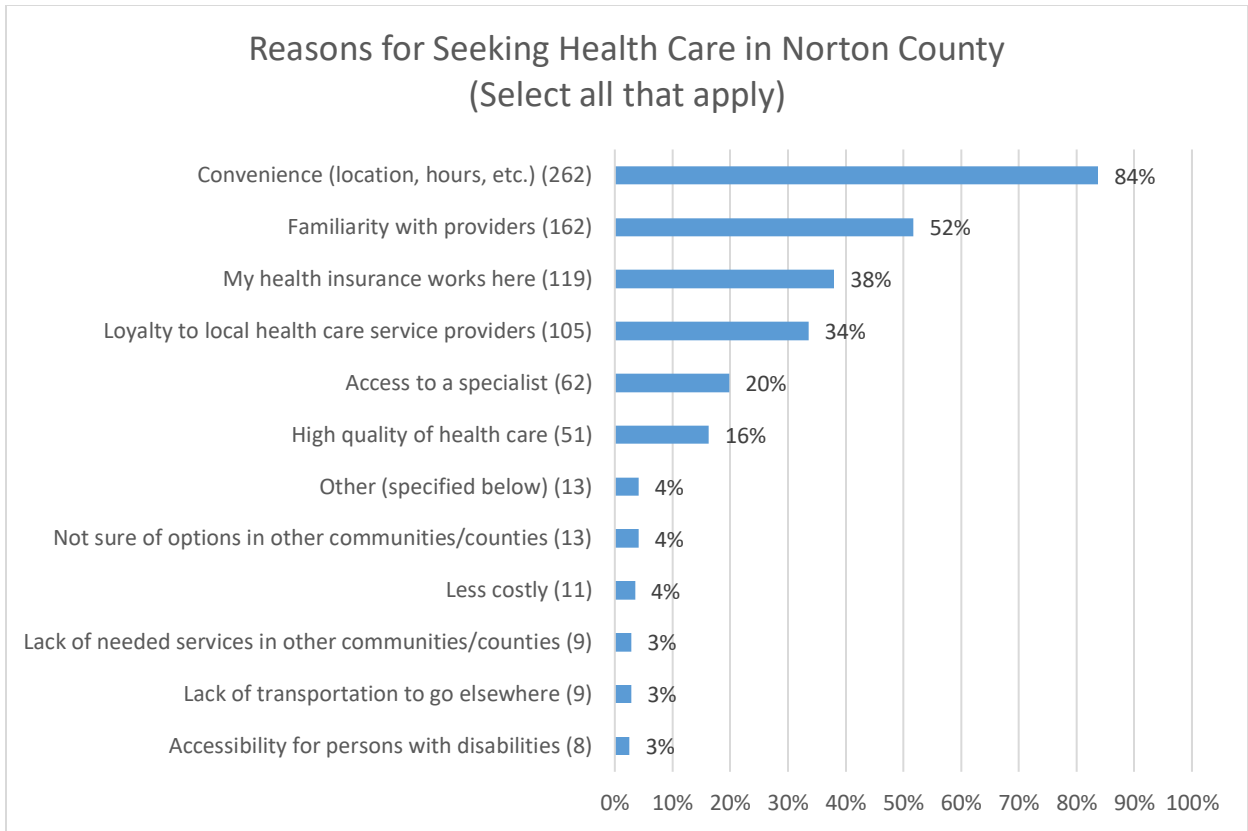
16. I have received health care services at the Norton County Hospital and/or Norton Medical Clinic in the last two years.

Yes	No	Do Not Know
92% (321)	7.7% (27)	0.3% (1)

17. I have gone outside of Norton County to receive health care services in the last two years.

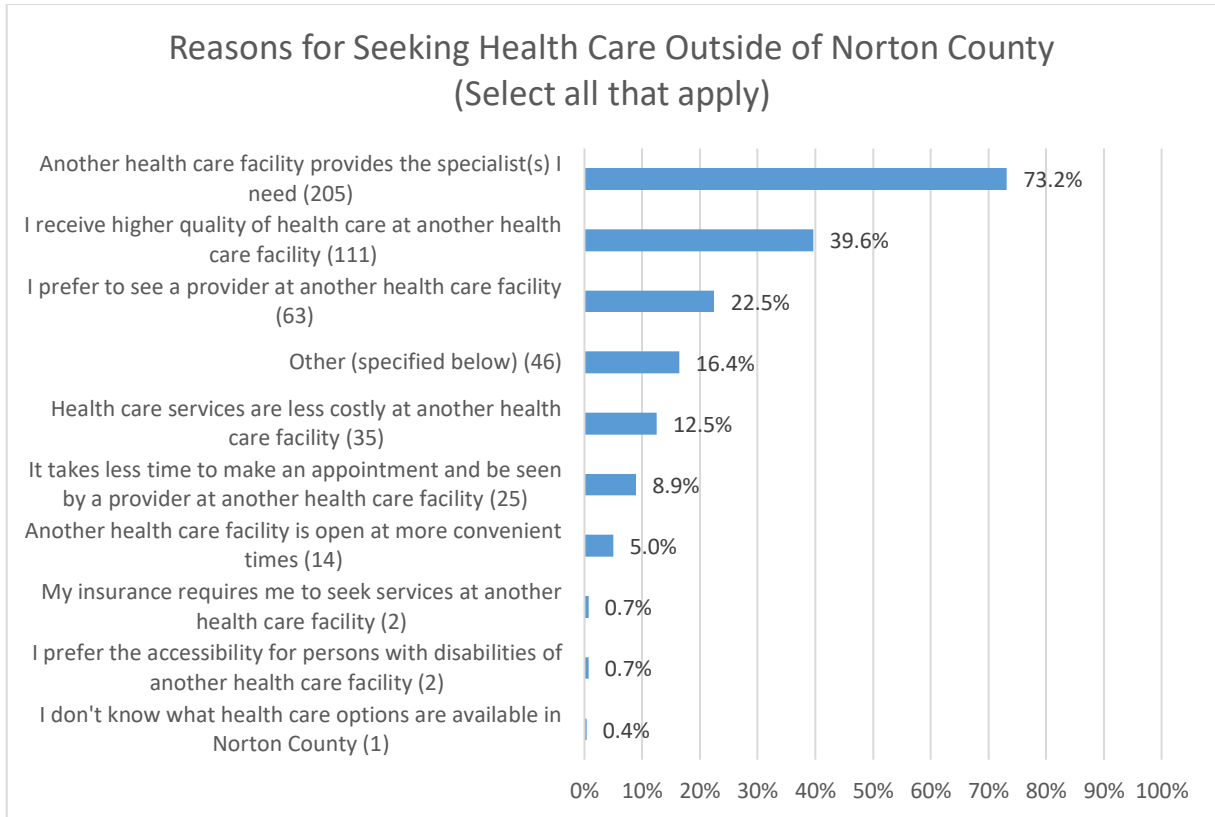
Yes	No	Do Not Know
82.5% (288)	17.5% (61)	0%

**18. Please tell us what contributed to you seeking health care services in Norton County. Please select all that apply. (If respondent answered yes to question 15 or 16.)**



**Other:** condition was easy to treat (2); didn't have a choice (2); didn't have time to go elsewhere (2); emergency (2); do not like new Norton doctors – uncaring and rushed, rude to the elderly; services not available; specialists come here; upset with last provider in different community.

19. Please tell us what contributed to you seeking health care services at another health care facility outside of Norton County. Please select all that apply. (If respondent answered yes to question 17.)



*\*Other responses fell into this category and were added there*

**Other:** availability of needed service (10); privacy/confidentiality (5); concerns with demeanor of Norton staff (5); not having to pay upfront (3); lived outside of Norton at time of service (3); closer to home (2); leadership “plays politics” with nurses and doctors; cancer treatment; chiropractic/massage therapy; VA hospital.



20. How confident are you that you will receive quality care in Norton County from the following services?

	Not at all Confident	Not Confident	Neither Confident or Not Confident	Confident	Extremely Confident	Average
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
<b>Ambulance services (n=325)</b>	5% (17)	11% (35)	23% (74)	46% (151)	15% (48)	<b>3.55</b>
<b>Chiropractors (n=285)</b>	6% (18)	7% (19)	28% (80)	46% (131)	13% (37)	<b>3.53</b>
<b>Dentists (n=325)</b>	3% (11)	5% (16)	14% (44)	37% (120)	41% (134)	<b>4.08</b>
<b>Eye Doctors (n=312)</b>	2% (6)	6% (19)	12% (38)	43% (135)	37% (114)	<b>4.06</b>
<b>Home Health services (n=264)</b>	4% (10)	4% (11)	31% (82)	44% (117)	17% (44)	<b>3.66</b>
<b>Hospice services (n=245)</b>	3% (8)	7% (16)	39% (95)	36% (89)	15% (37)	<b>3.53</b>
<b>Mental health services (n=278)</b>	17% (48)	31% (85)	31% (87)	19% (53)	2% (5)	<b>2.58</b>
<b>Nursing homes (n=283)</b>	9% (26)	18% (52)	32% (90)	34% (97)	6% (18)	<b>3.10</b>
<b>Pharmacies (n=334)</b>	1% (4)	2% (8)	7% (24)	48% (160)	41% (138)	<b>4.26</b>
<b>Primary care (clinic services) (n=331)</b>	8% (26)	11% (38)	18% (59)	47% (154)	16% (54)	<b>3.52</b>
<b>Public Health Department (n=314)</b>	3% (8)	2% (6)	22% (68)	54% (170)	20% (62)	<b>3.87</b>
<b>Inpatient services (hospital stays) (n=311)</b>	9% (29)	15% (46)	26% (82)	36% (113)	13% (41)	<b>3.29</b>
<b>Outpatient services (hospital lab, x-ray, rehab/therapy, etc.) (n=330)</b>	3% (10)	9% (31)	13% (42)	55% (183)	19% (64)	<b>3.79</b>
<b>Specialty services at hospital (i.e., orthopedic, dermatology, cardiology, etc.) (n=303)</b>	8% (23)	12% (37)	27% (81)	40% (120)	14% (42)	<b>3.40</b>
<b>Business, financial and administrative services (hospital) (n=322)</b>	15% (49)	17% (54)	25% (82)	35% (114)	7% (23)	<b>3.02</b>

(Question 13 Continued)

	Not at all Confident	Not Confident	Neither Confident or Not Confident	Confident	Extremely Confident	Average
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
<b>Emergency services (hospital) (n=321)</b>	8% (26)	13% (42)	24% (76)	43% (138)	12% (39)	<b>3.38</b>
<b>Labor and Delivery services (hospital) (n=203)</b>	12% (24)	15% (31)	31% (63)	34% (70)	7% (15)	<b>3.10</b>
<b>Health care services for infants and children (under 10 years of age) (n=222)</b>	9% (21)	14% (32)	29% (65)	39% (86)	8% (18)	<b>3.22</b>
<b>Health care services for teens and adolescents (ages 10-17) (n=229)</b>	6% (13)	12% (28)	30% (68)	45% (103)	7% (17)	<b>3.36</b>
<b>Health care services for adults (ages 18-65) (n=306)</b>	8% (23)	9% (28)	25% (76)	48% (147)	10% (32)	<b>3.45</b>
<b>Health care services for senior adults (ages 65 and older) (n=294)</b>	8% (24)	15% (44)	24% (72)	40% (119)	12% (35)	<b>3.33</b>

**Ranked Service Confidence (Average (1-5) from above in parenthesis)**

1. Pharmacies (4.26)
2. Dentists (4.08)
3. Eye Doctors (4.06)
4. Public Health Department (3.87)
5. Outpatient services (hospital lab, x-ray, rehab/therapy, etc.) (3.79)
6. Home Health services (3.66)
7. Ambulance services (3.55)
8. Hospice services (3.53)
9. Chiropractors (3.53)
10. Primary care (clinic services) (3.52)
11. Health care services for adults (ages 18-65) (3.45)
12. Specialty services at hospital (i.e., orthopedic, dermatology, cardiology, etc.) (3.40)
13. Emergency services (hospital) (3.38)
14. Health care services for teens and adolescents (ages 10-17) (3.36)
15. Health care services for senior adults (ages 65 and older) (3.33)
16. Inpatient services (hospital stays) (3.29)
17. Health care services for infants and children (under 10 years of age) (3.22)
18. Labor and Delivery services (hospital) (3.10)
19. Nursing homes (3.10)
20. Business, financial and administrative services (hospital) (3.02)
21. Mental health services (2.58)

**21. What other comments or suggestions do you have to improve health care in your specific community or in Norton County as a whole? (n=145)**

The following themes emerged from the 145 responses, listed in order of frequency. Most responses covered multiple topics.

**1. More care providers that respect respondents and can be trusted.**

Respondents noted a high rate of turnover, as well as concerns with the care they receive. Among concerns were that providers seemed rushed and did not listen, and that sufficient care was not received as a result.

**2. A lack of confidence and positive experiences with current patient care.**

This included but was not limited to providers, also including care received from support staff such as CNAs and office staff. Respondents cited misdiagnosis/repeated visits for same issue, long wait times for appointments and in the office, lack of respectful treatment by staff, and provider lack of knowledge of care they needed.

**3. Better access to specialists locally.**

Respondents noted a lack of specialists available locally, and when they are in the area having difficulty getting an appointment.

**4. Dissatisfaction with required payment before service.**

Respondents noted that they have recently had to start paying before receiving care, with many indicating that the practice prioritizes money over providing care to people. Some respondents noted receiving collections notices despite arranging payment.

**5. Concern about health care organization leadership in Norton.**

This included mentions of leadership turnover as well as general concerns with management and priorities.

**6. Emergency care services could be improved.**

Feedback about emergency care included long wait times as well as limitations on what emergency services were available without going out of town.

**7. A need for further health education.**

Respondents mentioned a variety of health topics they thought the community could benefit from, including promoting healthy behaviors (diet, exercise, preventative care, etc.) and help managing health conditions (diabetes, chronic illnesses, etc.).

## Community Forum Input

CARE staff met with approximately 30 Norton county community members at the Prairie Land Electric Cooperative in Norton county to present survey results and capture stakeholder reactions in a community forum format. After the presentation of results, participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What resonates or seems most accurate about the results?
2. Is there anything that seems inconsistent with your perception of your community?
3. What seems most important from these findings?
4. Anything else the hospital needs to know/consider for planning purposes?

## Emerging Themes

The discussion followed a natural course and did not correspond closely with the questions. Therefore, results are presented by topic instead of by question. The following themes emerged:

### **1. Survey results likely influenced by current community circumstances.**

Participants suspected that survey results may have been influenced by recent community experiences. For example, they were not surprised to see access to care and affordable health care ranked as highly-important issues because new policies were recently implemented that require individuals to pay for health care services ahead of time. Continuity of care was also ranked highly as a community need, which may have been influenced by the recent announcement that a well-known physician was leaving. Respondents suggested the reason cancer was ranked as having the greatest impact on community health may be due to the “small-town” nature of Norton county. “When someone has cancer, you hear about it and people are personally impacted. Maybe people are over-estimating the incidence.” Finally, participants suggested that the reason illegal drug use was ranked so high as a problem in the survey may be related to a recent police forum where illegal drug use was the main topic.

### **2. Mistrust of services related to provider transience and ambiguous medical costs.**

Respondents thought that one reason survey results indicated a lack of trust/confidence in providers may be due to the increasing impermanence among health care providers. One community member stated, “Gone are the days when [providers] graduate and stay in one place for 50 years.” They noted that older individuals are used to providers staying longer than they do now and they want consistency in their health care. One community member suggested that providers not staying as long is the “new normal” and not necessarily a bad thing, but that people (especially older individuals) see it as unhealthy or bad. Another area of concern was the lack of transparency regarding health care costs. Participants want an accurate estimate of medical costs before receiving services and are frustrated when “bills end up being much higher than initially thought.” One member suggested that having accurate information about health services and costs “reinforces patient responsibility” to seek and comply with medical care.

### **3. Need to reframe thinking and messages about health care in Norton county.**

Participants stressed the importance of how health care-related information is presented to the public. One member was surprised that mental health services were rated so low by survey respondents, “I am confident in medical providers and staff. Maybe we’re just not getting the right info about services out there.” Another suggested “we need to focus on the positive, not the negative. How do we communicate things in a more positive frame?” Participants noted that people report wanting more opportunities for health education, but that no one shows up when it is offered. They also expressed disappointment that so few people attended the presentation/discussion meeting and felt it was important to find ways to encourage community engagement. Finally, respondents suggested that Norton should consider how the community is becoming “more of a mobile society” when planning for the future.

## **Unedited Forum Notes**

The following are notes in their original form as recorded during the forum, organized by question. The notes were visible on flipcharts so participants could correct any misunderstandings or misstatements. None of the participants corrected these notes.

### **Question 1: What resonates or sounds most accurate about the results?**

- Surprised that mental health services were rated so low; I am confident in medical providers and staff. Maybe we're just not getting the right info about services out there.
- Not surprised that access to care/ability to pay were highly ranked as issues
- Cancer being ranked as top issue – may be due to small community. When someone has cancer, you hear about it and people are personally impacted. Maybe people are over-estimating the incidence.
- Health care providers are more transient these days than they used to be. “Gone are the days when they graduate med school and stay in one place for 50 years.”
  - Older respondents are used to providers staying longer than they do now
  - Even though it is the new normal and not necessarily bad that providers don't stay as long, people see it as unhealthy or bad
- Affordable care being the #1 reported need- would probably be that way anywhere

### **Question 2: Anything that seems inconsistent with your perception of your community?**

- Knowing someone diagnosed with cancer → increases education and awareness for self
- People say they want more health education, but no one shows up when it's offered

### **Question 3: What seems most important from these findings?**

- People want consistency (providers, services, cost)
- Cost of services – bills end up being much higher than initially thought. Want accurate estimate of cost. Why does a urinalysis cost \$400?
- Cost of procedure “depends”; having accurate info reinforces patient responsibility (to be informed/educate self, comply with doctor orders, seek preventative care and treatment when needed). People don't like not knowing the cost.
- Recently had a police forum where the main topic was illegal drug use, so I am not surprised illegal drug use ranked so high as a problem

### **Question 4: Anything else the hospital needs to know/consider for planning purposes?**

- Thinking is influenced by circumstances. Norton county recently found out about a known doctor leaving and a new pre-pay for services policy implemented, so responses may be given in that context
- Need to focus on the positive, not the negative; how do we communicate things in a more positive frame?
- More of a mobile society- Norton should consider this in planning
- Disappointed so few came to meeting

## About the Community Engagement Institute

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**Wichita State University's Community Engagement Institute** is dedicated to improving the health of Kansans through leadership development, research and evaluation, organizational capacity building, community collaboration, and public health and behavioral health initiatives. The Community Engagement Institute maintains six Centers with skilled staff that work directly with community coalitions, nonprofits, government entities, health and human services organizations, and support groups. The Centers are:

- Center for Applied Research and Evaluation
- Center for Behavioral Health Initiatives
- Center for Leadership Development
- Center for Organizational Development and Collaboration
- Center for Public Health Initiatives
- IMPact Center

Want to know more about this report? Contact (**Dr. Tara Gregory**) at ([tara.gregory@wichita.edu](mailto:tara.gregory@wichita.edu))