

# COMMUNITY THEMES & STRENGTHS



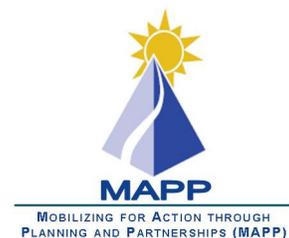
## *Mobilizing for Action through Planning & Partnerships* (MAPP)

### Assessment 2

Polk County, Florida  
Released October 2011



Polk Health Care Alliance  
[www.polkhealthcarealliance.com](http://www.polkhealthcarealliance.com)



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# Community Themes and Strengths

## INTRODUCTION

In the spring and summer of 2010, the Community Themes and Strengths assessment was conducted by the Polk Health Care Alliance, in conjunction with the Polk County Health Department, to assess the assets and needs of Polk County. The Community Themes and Strengths assessment was the second phase conducted of a four part "Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership" (MAPP) process. The overall results of the MAPP assessment will be used to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP will serve as the strategic plan to improve the health and quality of life for residents of Polk County.

## METHODS:

An advisory committee made up of several community organizations was convened to provide guidance for this assessment. The committee met four times over the course of three months and decided to collect data through surveys, focus groups and key informant interviews. Data was collected from a number of different organization leaders and participants throughout Polk County.

### Questions Asked:

- What is important to our community?
- How is quality of life perceived?
- What assets do we have that can be used to improve community health?

## OVERVIEW OF SURVEY:

Paper and online surveys were used to obtain feedback from the residents of Polk County. Adults, ages 18 and older who are full or part time residents or visitors of Polk County, were eligible to complete the survey. The survey contained 16 questions about the quality of life in Polk County and 13 demographic items. The survey questions came from surveys used previously in MAPP assessments within the state. The survey was then revised by the advisory committee and piloted in the health department clinics.

Survey questions were written at a fourth grade reading level to encourage participation across all education levels. During pilot testing, time to complete the survey averaged 15 minutes. Both the paper and online surveys were made available in English, Spanish and Creole.

Paper surveys were e-mailed out to a variety of different organizations in Polk County. The organizations printed the surveys and distributed them among their clients. Participating organizations included WIC, a hurricane expo, the Boys and Girls Club, health department clinics, privately-run free clinics, Healthy Start, and Catholic Charities.

A total of 2,702 surveys  
were completed

- Paper: 1,384
- Online: 1,318

An online version of the survey was also created using Opinionmeter® and the link was e-mailed to various different e-mail listserv lists throughout the county. The link for the online survey was also made available on the health department's website and was advertised in the local paper.

Results from the paper and online surveys were combined into one dataset. The paper survey responses were scanned using Opinionmeter® and Remark® software. The survey data presented in this report was analyzed by Opinionmeter® software.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS:

Sex	Respondents	Polk County
<b>Female</b>	81.2%	50.6%
<b>Male</b>	16.2%	49.4%
<b>Missing</b>	2.6%	N/A

Age	Respondents	Polk County
<b>18-24</b>	12.7%	6.1%*
<b>25-34</b>	22.9%	13.5%
<b>35-44</b>	17.9%	12.9%
<b>45-54</b>	20.8%	12.7%
<b>55-64</b>	19.8%	10.9%
<b>65-80</b>	6 %	12.5%
<b>81 +</b>	0.2%	4.9%
<b>Missing</b>	1.9%	N/A

\*this number only represents the 20-24 age groups

Language	Respondents	Polk County
<b>English</b>	87%	82.8%
<b>Spanish</b>	10%	13.5%
<b>Creole</b>	0.5%	1.2%
<b>Other</b>	1%	N/A
<b>Missing</b>	1.4%	N/A

Respondent demographics are with county-wide data for comparison.

### **Sex:**

*The genders of the participants were predominately female; this is typical in most surveys. Many of the online surveys were completed by health department employees or other social service employees who are mostly female. Also, many of the organizations have predominately female clients. This may explain the over-representation of females.*

### **Age:**

*Ages 18 to 64 were slightly over-represented, while ages 65 and older were under-represented. Fewer 65 and older people use the services which distributed the surveys than other age group. They are less likely to be actively employed and were less likely to receive the online survey. However, within the 18-64 age groups, the ages are fairly well divided.*

### **Language:**

*The respondents' predominate language spoken was a good representation of Polk County residents as a*

Education	Respondents	Polk County
Less than High School	10.8%	N/A <sup>§</sup>
High school diploma or GED	31.3%	74.8%
College degree or higher	50.3%	14.9%
Other	5.4%	N/A
Missing	2.2%	N/A

<sup>§</sup> Polk County estimates did not report “less than high school”

Household Income	Respondents	Polk County
Less than \$15,000	20.2%	12.6%
\$15,000-\$24,000	12.1%	12.8%
\$25,000-\$34,999	10%	12.8%
\$35,000-\$49,999	12.6%	17.1%
\$50,000-\$74,999	15.6%	20.4%
\$75,000 or more	16.7%	24.2
Don't Know	8.6%	N/A
Missing	4.8%	N/A

### ***Educational Attainment:***

*There was an over-representation of participants with college degrees or higher. This was most-likely due to the large number of health organization employees that took the online survey.*

### ***Household Income:***

*Household income levels were fairly well distributed. All income levels had at least 10% representation. There was some over-representation of people making less than 15,000 and some under-representation of people making \$50,000 and over. Many of the paper surveys came from the health department clinics, free clinics and WIC, all of which would be less likely to have high incomes.*

Race	Respondents	Polk County
<b>African American/ Black</b>	16.1%	14.4%
<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>	15.9%	16.2% <sup>†</sup>
<b>Caucasian / White</b>	59.6%	82.2%
<b>Asian/ Pacific Islander</b>	1.6%	1.6%
<b>Native American</b>	0.8%	0.5%
<b>Other</b>	1.4%	
<b>More than one</b>	2.6%	1.3%
<b>Missing</b>	2.1%	N/A

<sup>†</sup> Respondents were able to select more than one category, so total will not equal 100%

Resident Status	Respondents
<b>Full time Resident</b>	92.5%
<b>Seasonal Resident</b>	2.3%
<b>Visitor</b>	2.7%
<b>Missing</b>	2.5%

***Race:***

*The participants' race closely reflected the racial makeup of Polk County residents.*

***Resident Status:***

*Most participants were full time residents of Polk County.*

**OTHER NOTABLE SURVEY-PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS**

Most participants were not married/single (42%), followed by being married (39%) and living with a partner (16%). A quarter of the participants said that they get their health care information from their medical provider, followed by their employer (16%), and by their family (13%). About a third of participants receive health care through Medicaid (32%), followed by private health insurance (24%) and cash/no health insurance (21%).

Source: Polk County estimates came from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey

**SURVEY RESULTS:**

The following sections display the survey results. Some questions allowed multiple responses and no questions were required. Therefore for some questions, the percentages will not equal 100, and the number of respondents may vary by question.

## WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY COMMUNITY?

*Survey Question: What do you think are the three most important things that make a community healthy and improve your quality of life?*

Rank	Response Choices <sup>±</sup>	Percent
1	Good jobs and healthy economy	37.9%
2	Access to health services (e.g., specialist referrals, counseling, medications)	33.6%
3	Access to health insurance	30.3%
4	Low crime / safe neighborhoods	24.5%
5	Affordable living (e.g., housing and utilities)	22.9%
6	Good schools	21.0%
7	Access to healthy and affordable foods	19.4%
8	Strong families	19.0%
9	Clean environment	18.8%
10	Acceptance of different kinds of people	18.1%

<sup>±</sup> to see the full results and stratification, please see Appendix A

These are the top 10 responses for all survey participants.

When stratified by age or gender good jobs and a healthy economy remained the number one answer.

## GREATEST HEALTH PROBLEMS

*Survey Question: What do you think are the three greatest “health problems” in Polk County?*

60% of key informants also cited obesity and diabetes as a major health problem that they see in their community

Rank	Response Choices <sup>±</sup>	Percent
1	Overweight and obesity	42.2%
2	Chronic diseases (e.g., cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, etc.)	37.3%
3	Mental health/substance abuse issues	29.7%
4	Child abuse / neglect	28.3%
5	Teenage pregnancy	23.7%
6	Homelessness	22.7%
7	Aging issues (e.g., arthritis, hearing/vision loss)	15.8%
8	Domestic violence	14.7%
9	Dental problems	14.5%
10	HIV / AIDS	12.1%

<sup>±</sup> to see the full results and stratification, please see Appendix A

**ASSESSMENT RESULTS: GREATEST RISKY BEHAVIORS**

*Survey Question: What do you think are the three most important risky behaviors and safety issues in Polk County?*

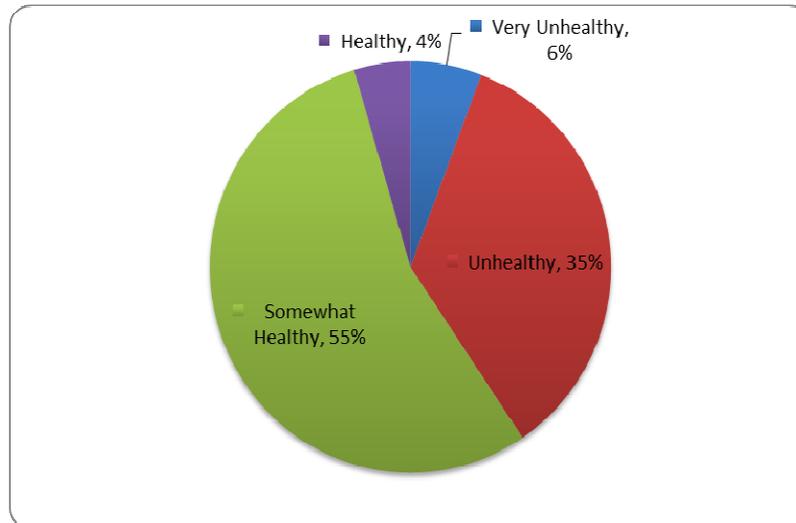
Rank	Response Choices <sup>±</sup>	Percent
1	Drug abuse	48.3%
2	Gangs and juvenile violence	30.6%
3	Alcohol abuse	27.3%
4	Dropping out of school	27.0%
5	Unsafe / unprotected sex	26.3%
6	Being overweight	24.7%
7	Poor eating habits	18.2%
8	Not being physically active	16.2%
9	Access to firearms by children	16.0%
10	Not using seat belts & child safety seats, helmets	16.0%

Drug abuse remained the number one answer, even when stratified by age or gender.

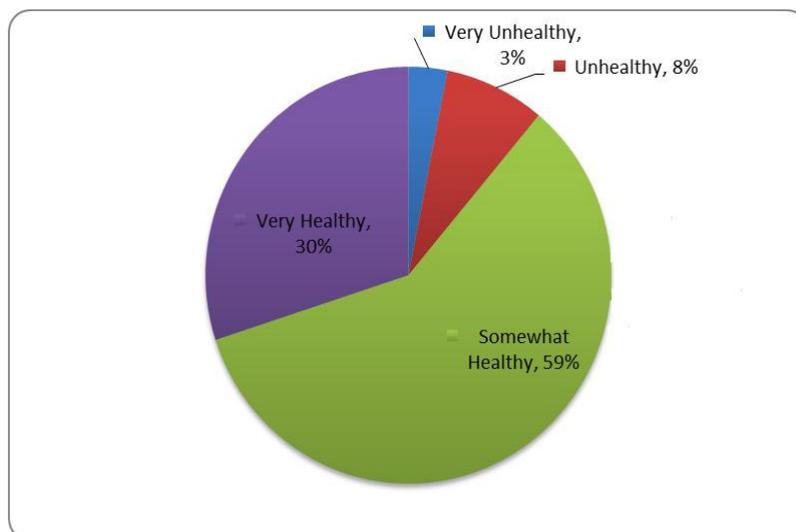
<sup>±</sup> to see the full results and stratification, please see Appendix A

## PERCEPTION OF HEALTH

### How would you Rate the Health of Polk County?



### How would you Rate your Health?



A large discrepancy exists between the perceived health of participants when compared to the overall health of Polk County. While nearly 90% of participants rated their own health as healthy, only 60% felt that the County is healthy. Survey participants tend to be more educated and thus have better health which may reflect these findings. However, people tend to overestimate their health which is another explanation.

### AREAS IDENTIFIED AS STRENGTHS

The following are areas that were found to be strengths of Polk County based on quality of life questions on the survey.

Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don' t Know
My family and I can get the basic health care services we need in Polk County.	<b>1768</b> (65.4%)	455 (16.8%)	372 (13.8%)	72 (2.7%)
My family and I can get the specialty health care services we need in Polk County.	<b>1334</b> (49.4%)	605 (22.4%)	567 (20.9%)	157 (5.8%)
Polk County is a good place to raise children.	<b>1162</b> (43%)	969 (35.9%)	431 (16%)	106 (3.9%)
Polk County is a good place to grow old.	<b>1145</b> (42.4%)	950 (35.2%)	461 (17%)	106 (3.9%)
Most everyone in Polk County has equal access to the following: libraries, parks, pools, playgrounds, community centers, etc.	<b>1824</b> (67.5%)	443 (16.4%)	345 (12.8%)	66 (2.4%)
Most community groups work well together to provide services to the people who need them.	<b>1121</b> (41.5%)	942 (34.9%)	328 (12.1%)	273 (10.1%)

**N=2702**

### AREAS IDENTIFIED AS WEAKNESSES

Less than 10% of survey participants agreed that job opportunities are good in Polk County. This remained constant across all age groups and was the only area in which the majority of people disagreed

Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don' t Know
Job opportunities are good in Polk County.	209 (7.7%)	763 (28.2%)	<b>1582</b> (58.5%)	96 (3.6%)

**N=2702**

## FOCUS GROUPS

Six focus groups were arranged with community partners throughout Polk County. Participating organizations included Polk Works, the Polk County School Board, The University of South Florida Polytechnic- Lakeland Campus, and the Lake Wales Literacy Coalition. The residents represented included people from job placement centers, school board members and college students.

Focus group participants varied in what they felt made a healthy community. The most frequent theme that arose was lack of job opportunities. Quality jobs, safe neighborhoods, affordable health foods, access to health care and a clean environment were answers that received the highest mention.

Overall, focus group participants found that Polk County's parks, trails and lakes are strengths of living here that should be capitalized on. Some participants also mentioned 211 as a potential strength that should be utilized more fully. Drug use was frequently mentioned throughout the focus groups as both a problem within the community and a common "risk taking behavior". Drug use is mentioned more frequently in focus groups than in any other forum as a weakness of the county, in particular, prescription drug abuse. This is an area where there is consensus that Polk County should prioritize as an area to be addressed.

The issue mentioned most frequently during the focus groups was disorganization in services in Polk County. There were frequent concerns with long wait lists, endless cycles of automated telephone systems and lack of clear directions. In almost every group, the need for one central source of information was discussed. Many saw 211 as a good starting point that could be expanded to a web-based directory as well (see Appendix B for a listing of all themes).

Six focus groups  
were completed:

# of men: 10

# of women: 35

## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

In addition to surveys and focus groups, 10 key informant interviews were also completed. The participants of these interviews were leaders of organizations that work closely with Polk County residents on a daily basis. The organizations represented were free clinics, mental health facilities, an Alzheimer's organization, religious service organizations and public schools.

Ten interviews were conducted with health care providers and community leaders. The interview participants were asked questions about their community and the organization that they work for. Many of the answers reflect the sentiment of the survey participants.

The majority of key informants cited obesity and diabetes as the most common health issue seen within the community. Other issues that were discussed included drug abuse and heart disease. These answers were consistent with responses from both the focus groups and surveys.

10 key informants from

- Mental health organizations
- Free clinics
- Umbrella organizations that fund programs

When the participants were asked what they believed prevented residents from getting necessary health care (besides lack of insurance), almost half of the participants cited a lack of transportation as a reason. Many participants noted that certain areas of Polk County do not have sufficient bus coverage, making it difficult or impossible for some residents to attend appointments.

The key informants had a variety of ideas about what services are needed in the area. The most frequent answer was more free clinics. Other suggestions included exercise or healthy eating promotion programs which would reward residents for participating in healthy activities such as eating healthy, exercising or losing weight. Another suggestion was to create more opportunities for residents to participate in healthier activities. Examples of this include building better sidewalks and more bike paths (see Appendix C for a listing of all themes).

## DISCUSSION

Overall, there was agreement among all groups of Polk County residents on what the largest issues are to be addressed. An overwhelming majority of participants expressed their frustration with the lack of job opportunities in Polk County; nearly 60% of survey respondents noted that job opportunities are poor in Polk County. Better quality jobs was the number one answer to the key informant interview question "What are the top 2-3 issues in our County that we should address to improve the health of our residents?". Difficulty in finding a job was a frequent comment during the focus groups.

Other similarities in responses were seen between the survey participants, key informants, and focus group members. Many responded that the largest problems they see within their community are obesity, or diseases caused by obesity such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and drug abuse. There was overall agreement that Polk County has good natural resources and is an ideal geographic location. Most people felt that Polk County is a good place to raise children and that Polk County has good people residing here.

In both the key informant interviews and in focus groups, many participants were dissatisfied with the current transit system and frustrated by the lack of a "central port of information". It was suggested numerous times that a system be created where all government services could be accessed by going to one place or calling one phone number.

Overall, Polk County with its "small town community feel" but proximity to larger urban areas has many strengths and a good quality of life. With a concerted effort to create not only more jobs, but a wider range of career opportunities, many of the other issues highlighted during this assessment likely would be mitigated. This is consistent with the recent Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings which ranked education, economics, and employment as highly important to having a healthy community. Better employment opportunities could be an important strategy to improve the health of Polk County and further improve the quality of life of Polk residents.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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