

2013 RHP 17 Regional Health Assessment

A Community Snapshot: Walker County



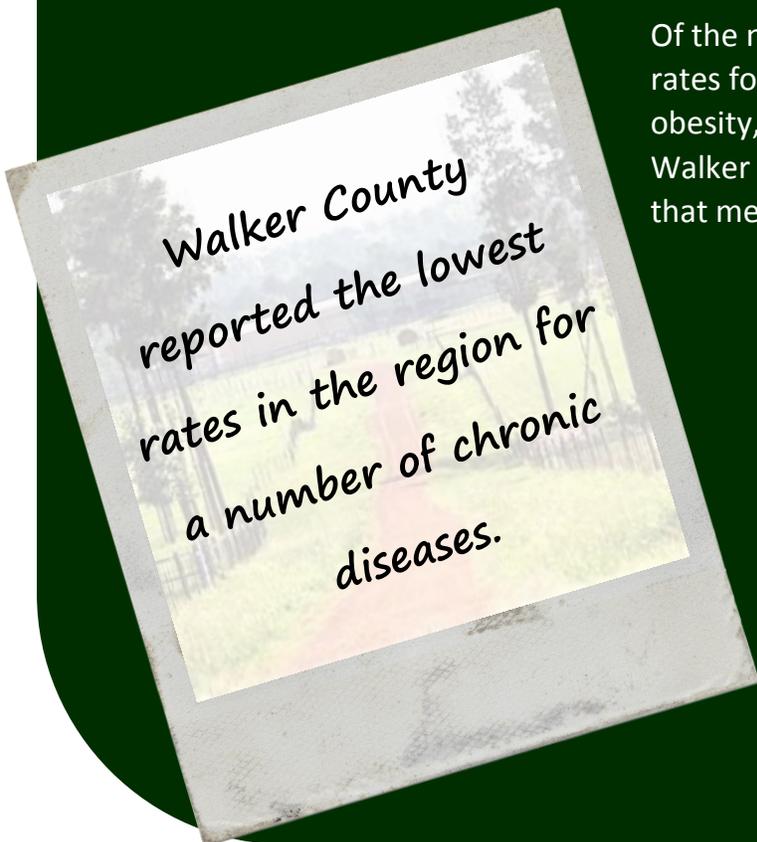
Community Description

Walker County is located just outside of the Houston metropolitan area, and residents describe the community as small and conservative but with access to bigger city amenities. They also said that Walker County is a community that cares about its residents. Community members are seen as friendly and active supporters of local causes. The population of Walker County is growing, specifically among older adults and retirees. Residents emphasized a stable economy, with the main employer being the State of Texas through facilities such as the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and Sam Houston State University.

Obesity & Chronic Disease

An ongoing concern in Walker County is the growing number of people struggling with overweight and obesity and the chronic diseases often linked to these conditions. In addition to overweight/obesity, local residents most frequently reported being diagnosed with hypertension, high cholesterol, arthritis/rheumatism, anxiety, depression, and Type 2 diabetes.

Of the nine counties, Walker County reported the *lowest* rates for a number of chronic diseases including overweight/obesity, hypertension, depression, and anxiety. Additionally, Walker County had the highest proportion of respondents that meet the weekly physical activity recommendations.



Disease/Condition	Washington County
Overweight/Obesity	46.0%
Hypertension	28.2%
High Cholesterol	28.2%
Arthritis/Rheumatism	23.8%
Anxiety	14.4%
Depression	14.2%
Diabetes (Type 2)	9.6%

Top Community Issues

The community survey asked residents about what they perceived to be serious community issues. In Walker County, the top 5 issues that emerged were:

1. Lack of jobs for unskilled workers (61.5%)
2. Poor or inconvenient public transportation (59.7%)
3. Unemployment (53.4%)
4. Risky youth behaviors (such as alcohol or drug abuse, truancy, etc.; 42.6%)
5. Abuse of drugs, including prescription drugs (28.1%)

Community discussion group participants also identified several community issues including:

- ⇒ Lack of adequate roads, water, and mail delivery to support growing population
- ⇒ Lack of affordable housing
- ⇒ Limited incentives for new businesses, thus lack of jobs for local residents
- ⇒ Decline in community engagement and participation
- ⇒ Poverty and racism
- ⇒ Poor school systems
- ⇒ Limited access to local health services

With difficulty finding jobs locally, Walker County residents identified an unmet need for education and employment services.

Survey respondents and discussion group participants both identified lack of local jobs as a key community issue.

Top 5 Unmet Needs

1. Literacy training, GED, or English as a second language (76.0%)
2. Financial assistance for auto, appliance, or home repair; or weatherization (62.5%)
3. Utility assistance (59.1%)
4. Food, meal, and nutrition services (56.0%)
5. Work-related or employment services (53.8%)