

# Meridian

## Community Health Snapshot

December 2018

### Where you live affects your health.

The 2011 and 2018 Community Health Assessments found that while Whatcom County residents are healthy on average, not everyone experiences the same level of good health or access to healthy opportunities. Income, education, and place are some of the well-known factors that contribute to differences in health.

This report describes what we learned in taking a closer look at the relationship between place and health in the Meridian area specifically. It summarizes the public health data available for this geographic community, using school district boundaries, as well as feedback from community members about concerns and strengths they feel are important to their community's health.

The information in this report is a companion to the 2018 Community Health Assessment. While not comprehensive, it gives further information about some of the difference in how health is experienced throughout the county.

Both the countywide 2018 Community Health Assessment and the seven Community Health Snapshots, one for each school district area, contribute to a Community Health Improvement process. This process includes developing a Community Health Improvement Plan that ultimately takes action to change the underlying factors that affect the community's health, make health choices easier, improve access to care, and provide everyone with an equal chance at a healthy life.

### Why School Districts?

Schools can help create a sense of community for many people. We used school districts as community boundaries in these assessments because people often identify their community in connection to schools and school districts. School districts also have clear geographic boundaries, and some school district-level community health data is readily available.



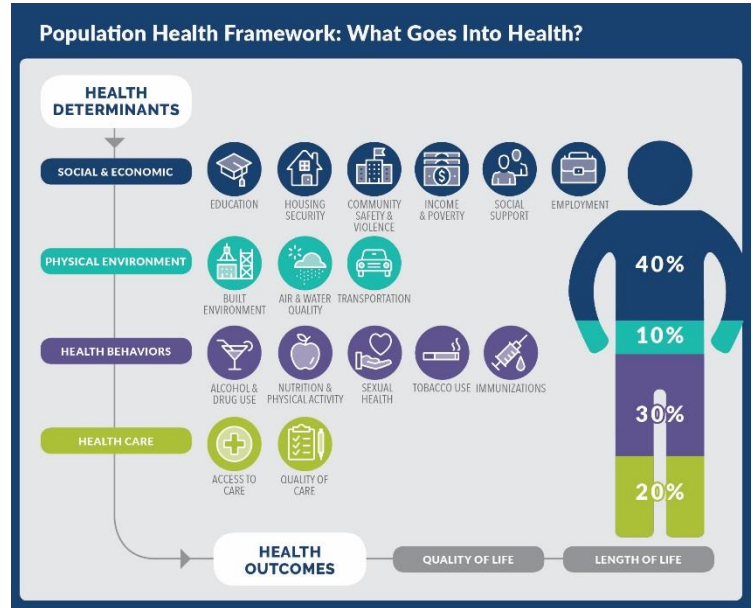
Whatcom County  
**HEALTH**  
Department



## Population Health Framework: What Goes Into Health?

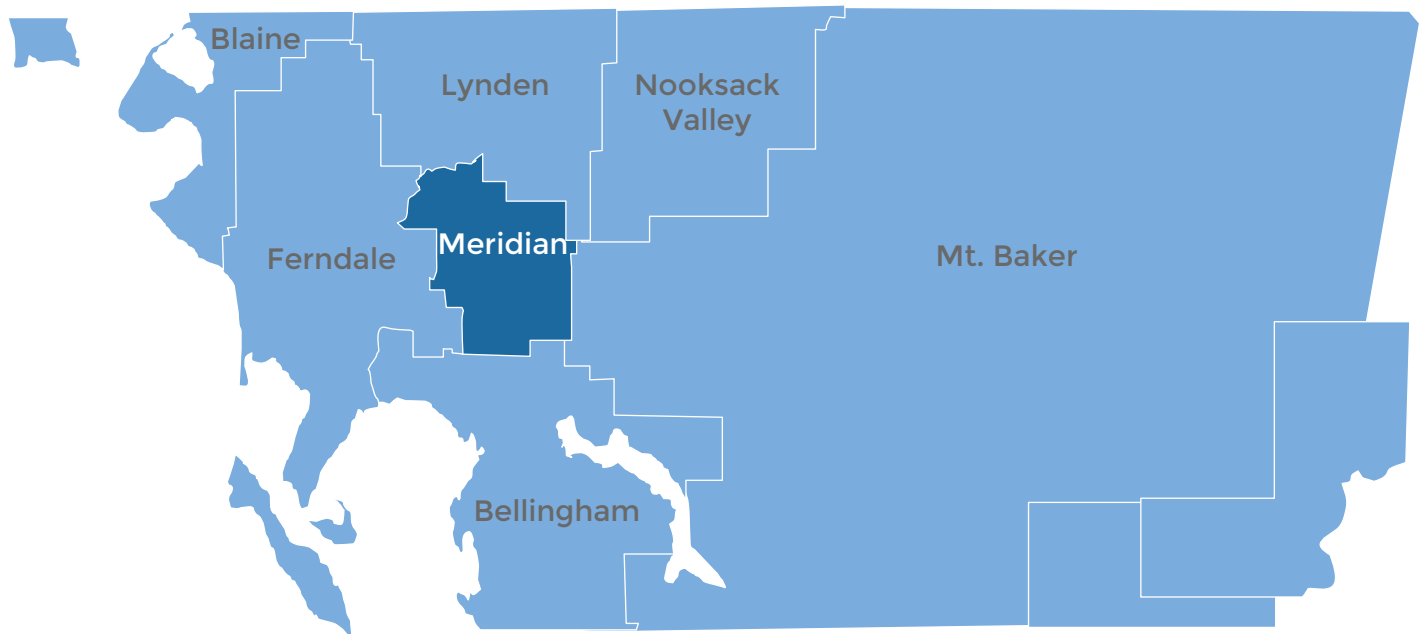
We've used the population health framework shown to the right in our assessment of community health. It demonstrates how health outcomes – the length and health-related quality of one's life – are the result of complex interactions between many factors, or **health determinants**. Health determinants fall into one of four categories: social and economic factors, physical environment, health behaviors, and health care.

*The Population Health Framework is adapted from the County Health Rankings population health model. More information can be obtained at <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/what-and-why-we-rank>*



## Meridian Area Overview

This Meridian Community Health Snapshot includes data and information for the Meridian School district area, an unincorporated area north of Bellingham that includes the community of Laurel. Some residents of the Meridian area identify with Lynden, Bellingham or Ferndale.



## Measuring and Understanding Population Health

The data and information in this report expands on the 2018 Whatcom County Community Health Assessment by providing greater depth of data on how health is experienced in the Meridian area compared with Whatcom County.

### How to Read the Data Tables

Type of Indicators	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Meridian data is <u>not statistically</u> different than Whatcom County	2016	↔	28.48
Data is not available for Meridian	2016	-	80.85
Meridian data is statistically <b>better</b> than Whatcom County	2016	<b>59.63</b>	77.39
Meridian data is statistically <b>worse</b> than Whatcom County	2012-2016	<b>19.50%</b>	16.0%
Meridian data is statistically different than Whatcom County	2012-2016	<b>9.49</b>	11.01
Unable to determine if statistically different than Whatcom County* (Margin of error or confidence intervals not available)	2016	59.54%*	47.82%

### Meridian Area Demographics

Population information assists communities in identifying and meeting current and future health needs, including culturally appropriate and geographically accessible health care and public health services.

Population, 2012-2016	Meridian	Whatcom County
Total Population	9,680	209,729
Age Distribution, 2012-2016	Meridian	Whatcom County
Median Age	<b>44.5</b>	36.8
Under 5 years	5.4%	5.5%
5 to 14 years	9.7%	11.1%
15 to 24 years	9.7%	18.2%
25 to 44 years	21.0%	24.5%
45 to 64 years	30.7%	25.5%
65+	18.7%	15.5%
Gender, 2012-2016	Meridian	Whatcom County
Female	50.8%	50.5%
Male	49.2%	49.5%

Race and Ethnicity	Meridian, 2012-2016	Meridian School District Students, 2015-2016	Whatcom County
African American/Black	1.8%	1.3%	0.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	<b>0.3%</b>	1.1%	2.7%
Asian	<b>1.6%</b>	4.7%	4.0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%
White/Caucasian	82.7%	70.9%	80.1%
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino Ethnicity (any race)	12.1%	18.0%	8.8%
Two or more races	<b>1.1%</b>	3.8%	3.0%

Households, 2012-2016	Meridian	Whatcom County
Number of Households	3,881	81,019
Households with Children (Under 18)	30.0%	27.3%
Speak a Language Other than English-Total	15.0%	12.4%
Veterans Population	8.2%	8.2%
Population with a disability	15.4%	13.6%

## Health Outcomes

Health outcomes result from the interactions between a variety of factors that affect health. Positive health outcomes include not just the absence of disease and premature death, but also include a sense of functioning well mentally, physically, and socially. Understanding the magnitude of premature death, the leading causes of death, and the causes of preventable death is important for prioritizing interventions aimed to prevent and reduce the burden of disease. Quality of life is affected by disease or disability that prevents someone from attaining their full well-being.

<b>Length of Life</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Life expectancy at birth (years)	2016	-	80.85
Unintentional injury death rate per 100,000	2012-2016	↔	28.48
Coronary heart disease death rate per 100,000	2012-2016	↔	77.39
Lung cancer death rate per 100,000	2012-2016	↔	37.05
Stroke death rate per 100,000	2012-2016	↔	37.17
Alcohol-related death rate per 100,000	2012-2016	↔	14.02
Suicide death rate per 100,000	2016	-	13.6
<b>Quality of Life</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Infant low birth weight	2012-2016	↔	5.51%
Adults with depression	2016	-	22.6%
Adults reporting ≥14 days per month of poor mental health	2016	-	13.4%
10th grade students reporting depression (in the last 12 months)	2016	-	32.6%
10th grade students seriously considering suicide (in the last 12 months)	2016	-	18.1%
<b>Leading Causes of Death (rate per 100,000)</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Major cardiovascular diseases	2012-2016	↔	185.81
Malignant neoplasms	2012-2016	↔	154.58
Alzheimer's disease	2012-2016	↔	48.49
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	2012-2016	↔	34.01
Accidents	2012-2016	↔	28.48

## Social & Economic

Social and economic determinants of health include conditions such as poverty, employment, and educational achievement. It is widely acknowledged in public health that these factors affect long-term health both directly and indirectly, through influences on health behaviors, access to resources, and the ability to participate in society.

<b>Community Safety &amp; Violence</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Domestic violence offenses rate per 1,000*	2015	-	6.4
Jail incarceration rates per 100,000 (ages 15-64)*	2014	-	276.3
<b>Education</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County

Children who demonstrate readiness skills for kindergarten in all areas*	2016	38.2%*	47.82%
On-time graduation rate*	2016	76.4%*	76.6%
Postsecondary school enrollment*	2015	65.6%*	59.3%
Adults ages 18-24 enrolled in college or graduate school	2012-2016	↔	58.1%*
<b>Housing Security</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Meridian</b>	<b>Whatcom County</b>
Number of homeless public school students*	2015-2016	38	981
All cost burdened households ( <i>Housing cost is &gt; 30% of income</i> )	2011-2015	-	37.77%
Homeowner vacancy rate	2012-2016	↔	1.4%
Rental vacancy rate	2012-2016	↔	3.6%
Severe housing problems ( <i>1 or more of the following: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen or plumbing</i> )	2009-2013	-	21.0%
<b>Income &amp; Poverty</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Meridian</b>	<b>Whatcom County</b>
Median Household Income	2012-2016	↔	\$54,212
Population living below the poverty level	2012-2016	6.40%	16.0%
Population 18 and under living below poverty level	2012-2016	↔	15.3%
Children eligible for free-reduced lunch per 100 students*	2016-2017	36.3%*	42.8%
Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)*	2016	17.36%*	17.73%
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), per 100 Child Recipients*	2016	5.33*	5.05
Gini Index ( <i>income inequality score ranging from 0-perfect to 1-inequality</i> )	2012-2016	0.4003	.4507
<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Meridian</b>	<b>Whatcom County</b>
Unemployment rate	2012-2016	↔	7.7%
<b>Social Isolation</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Meridian</b>	<b>Whatcom County</b>
Population 65+ living alone	2012-2016	↔	11.5%
Population That Speaks English Less Than "Very Well"	2012-2016	↔	4.7%

## Community Views

What we heard...

### Social Support

- **Residents expressed that the Meridian area is “stuck in the middle”** without services such as a library branch or preschool, though there are church-based services.
- **Meridian is an unincorporated area** between north Bellingham and Lynden, including the community of Laurel. This means community members have limited access to services if they do not have a car and need to leave the area for most services.
- **There are negative stigmas in small communities about reaching out for help**, which may deter individuals from getting help they need.

### Education

- **Culturally-appropriate English language classes** for Spanish speaking individuals is an unmet priority and there are cultural communication gaps.
- **Preschool in the community is a high priority** and area of need for Meridian residents.

## Physical Environment

The physical environment includes both the natural environment (water, air, land) and the built environment (buildings, roads, parks, and other infrastructure). Having access to clean water, clean air, and preventing exposure to environmental toxins are foundational to good health. The built environment influences health by providing or limiting opportunities for healthy living, including access to safe areas to be physically active, access to nutritious foods and safe access to work.

<b>Water &amp; Air Quality</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Population served by Community Water Systems (CWS) as sources of drinking water	2016	-	78%
<b>Built Environment</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Adequate access to locations for physical activity	2010 & 2014	-	87%
Population living within a half a mile of a park	2015	-	53%
<b>Commute</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Driving alone to work	2012-2016	85.5%	74.0%
Commuters biking to work	2012-2016	0.0%	1.5%
Commuters walking to work	2012-2016	1.4%	4.8%

## Community Views

What we heard...

### Transportation

- **Community members state that inadequate transportation** significantly impacts social connections, childcare and healthcare opportunities.

## Health Behaviors

Behaviors such as exercising, eating healthfully, using substances, or getting vaccines are important factors that directly relate to health outcomes. Many public health and health care interventions focus on changing individual behaviors, and data about personal health behaviors can provide cues for developing effective interventions to promote healthy behavior choices.

<b>Alcohol &amp; Drug Use</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Opiate treatment admissions per 100,000	2013-2015	-	349.8
10th grade students who reported drinking and driving (in the last 30 days)	2016	-	4.1%
Binge drinking among 10th grade students (in the last 30 days)	2016	-	9.0%
Marijuana use among 10th grade students (in the last 30 days)	2016	-	16.3%
Clients of State-Funded Alcohol or Drug Services (Age 18+) per 1,000*	2012-2016	10.45*	15.07
<b>Immunizations</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Personal vaccination exemption rate among kindergarten students	2016-2017	2.8%	7.1%
<b>Nutrition &amp; Physical Activity</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
10th grade students eating $\geq 5$ fruits and vegetables per day	2016	-	19.1%
Adults who met aerobic physical activity guidelines	2015	-	62.6%
10th grade students who met aerobic physical activity guidelines	2016	-	22.2%

<b>Sexual Health</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Birth rate per 1,000 population	2012-2016	↔	11.01
Births to School-Age (10-17) Mothers rate per 1,000	2016	-	2.54
Chlamydia incidence rate per 100,000	2016	-	325.5
Gonorrhea incidence rate per 100,000	2016	-	47.9
<b>Tobacco Use</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
Births where the mother smoked during pregnancy	2012-2016	↔	8.87%

## Health Care

Access to quality health care is important to maintaining good health. The supply and accessibility of medical facilities and providers, having health insurance, cultural sensitivity in care, and limitations in insurance coverage all affect health.

<b>Access to Care</b>	Year	Meridian	Whatcom County
First trimester prenatal care	2012-2016	↔	79.94%
Children and youth (≤ 18 years) without health insurance	2012-2016	↔	5.3%
Adults (18-64 years) without health insurance	2012-2016	↔	13.6%

## Community Views

What we heard...

### Access to Care

- **Residents find that mental health services are insufficient** to address problems related to depression, anxiety, and suicidality in youth and adults.

For additional information on this report and other community health assessments go to:  
<http://www.whatcomcounty.us/2929/Community-Health-Assessment>

### For questions contact:

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