



Executive Summary

With an aim to understand the unique health needs of our community, the 2008 Community Health Status Report describes and measures the health of Huron County residents. A social determinants of health framework is used to examine the influence social and economic factors have on various health issues of public health importance. A summary of the major findings of the report is provided below.

Sociodemographics

- Huron County is one of Ontario's most rural communities, with 60% of the population living in non-urban areas.
- Median and average household income is lower in Huron County than the province; however, there is a lower incidence of low income due to a lower cost of living.
- Almost one in five persons are employed in agriculture and other resource-based industries, which results in seasonal unemployment.
- Only half as many individuals report having university-level education compared to the province; yet a higher percentage has pursued trades certificates/diplomas.
- Huron County residents report a strong sense of belonging to their community.

Behavioural Risk Factors

- Almost one in five Huron County adults reported being a current smoker in 2006. While tobacco use prevalence has remained constant over the past few years, the percentage of smoke-free homes has increased significantly.
- More than half of Huron County adults consume alcohol in a high risk manner, which is similar to the province. Youth, however, are significantly more likely to binge drink than other youth in Ontario.
- In 2005, over a quarter of Huron County residents were classified as active and just under half reported consuming the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables.
- Also in 2005, 23% of Huron County adults were classified as obese, which was significantly higher than the province.

- Huron County residents reported lower stress levels than the province.

Mortality

- Between 2000 and 2003, there was a range of 574 to 628 deaths per year in Huron County.
- All cause, age-standardized mortality rates are similar for Huron County and Ontario.
- The leading causes of death in Huron County are ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease (stroke) and lung cancer. These are also the leading causes of death in Ontario.
- Mortality due to land transport occurrences was significantly higher for both Huron County males and females than the province. Suicide mortality among Huron County males was also significantly higher than Ontario males.
- Ischemic heart disease and land transport occurrences are the leading causes of premature mortality in Huron County.

Morbidity

- Between 2002 and 2006, there was a range of 6,251 to 7,129 hospitalizations in Huron County per year.
- All cause, age-standardized hospitalization rates have decreased during this time period; however, Huron County hospitalization rates remain higher than the province.
- Leading causes of hospitalization in Huron County are diseases of the circulatory system, diseases of the digestive system and factors influencing health status/contact with health services. Hospitalizations due to pregnancy and childbirth were lower than the province.
- Hospitalization rates were significantly higher for most diseases and injuries in Huron County than Ontario; this includes hospitalizations due to land transport

occurrences, attempted suicide and accidental falls for both sexes and chronic diseases such as breast cancer and prostate cancer.

Chronic Health Conditions

- In 2005, 75% of Huron County residents reported having at least one long-term chronic condition diagnosed by a health professional. Prevalence of chronic conditions increased with decreasing income. Arthritis/rheumatism was the most common self-reported chronic health condition in Huron County, followed by high blood pressure.
- Between 1995 and 2004, there was an average of 337 new cancer cases diagnosed per year and 162 deaths per year.
- Among Huron County males, prostate cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer, while breast cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer among females. Lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer death for both sexes.
- All cause cancer incidence and mortality rates do not differ significantly from the province.

Reproductive Health

- Huron County has younger first time mothers than the province.
- Between 2000 and 2004, there was an average of 561 births per year and 640 pregnancies per year in Huron County.
- Teenage pregnancy and abortion rates are significantly lower in Huron County than Ontario.
- Huron County birth outcomes are similar to the province.

Unintentional Injuries and Injury Prevention

- In 2005, there were over 10,000 emergency room (ER) visits for unintentional injuries in Huron County. Youth aged 10-19 years old had the highest rate of ER visits.
- Age-standardized hospitalization and mortality rates for all unintentional injuries are higher in Huron County than the province.
- In 2005, Huron County children aged 0-9 years and adults over the age of 75 years had the

Several themes emerge from this report which identify the key determinants of health for Huron County residents – the physical environment, rural sociodemographics, and limited access to health services. While other factors make important contributions to the health of our community, these three determinants were identified by health unit staff as instrumental in understanding and describing the unique health outcomes experienced by Huron County residents. Recognizing and addressing the barriers and resources associated with these determinants of health in planning and service delivery will help ensure the provision of accessible, effective programs for Huron County residents.

highest rate of ER visits for injuries caused by falls. Youth aged 10-19 years had the highest rate of ER visits for injuries caused by land transport occurrences.

- Over 200 ER visits were made in 2005 for injuries that occurred on a farm. Fewer than 3% of all Huron County farm operators reported having been injured in 2001.
- In a 2003 survey, over 80% of Huron County adults reported they wear a seat belt “all of the time” when they drive, while 74% of households with a child aged 4-7 years reported that the child usually travels in booster seat and always in the back of the car.
- Less than 15% of Huron County residents aged 12 years and older who reported bicycle use reported that they always wear a helmet, which was significantly lower than the province.

Communicable Disease

- Campylobacteriosis, influenza and chlamydia were the most commonly reported diseases in Huron County, accounting for 50% of all reportable diseases between 1995 and 2005.
- Huron County age-standardized chlamydia incidence rates are significantly lower than the province; however, rates have been increasing over time.
- Huron County campylobacteriosis and cryptosporidiosis incidence rates are significantly higher than Ontario.

Environmental Health

- Over a third of Huron County households reported receiving their tap water from a private well in 2006. Only 16% of these households reported testing their water for bacteria at least three times a year as recommended by the health unit. The majority of well water samples submitted for testing came back safe.
- Due to transboundary air pollution, Huron-Perth was issued 12 smog advisories spanning 27 days in 2007. It was estimated that there will be 60 premature deaths due to smog in Huron County in 2008.

Oral Health

- Half of Huron County adults rated their dental health as excellent or very good when compared to others their age in 2006. Self-reported oral health improved with increasing household income level.
- In 2005, just over 40% of Huron County residents reported that they usually visit the dentist more than once a year for dental check-ups. Almost 20% reported only visiting the dentist for emergency care.
- Half of Huron County residents reported having dental insurance that covered all or part of their dental expenses in 2005, which was significantly lower than the province.