

West Suburban Community Health Network (CHNA) 18 Community Needs Assessment – Needham Supplement

The Town of Needham participated in a community health assessment which included Brookline, Dedham, Dover, Needham, Newton, Waltham, Wellesley, Weston and Westwood. Led by a team from the Needham Public Health Department, 24 interviews were conducted with residents and professionals in Needham, yielding rich information about the health of Needham residents.

Overall, Needham compares extremely favorably with the other communities in CHNA 18 and with the state of Massachusetts with respect to community health status.

	Population (2005)	Median Income (2000)	% Below Poverty Line (2000)	% of children getting free or reduced price lunch (2010-11)	Population per square mile (2011)
Needham	28,445	\$88,079	2.5%	5.4%	2,303
CHNA 18	309,560	N/A	4.5%	N/A	2,783
Massachusetts	6,436,940	N/A	9.3%	34.2%	839

Summary Data

General Health Status

Needham has lower rates of mortality, diabetes, smoking, hypertension and adult and child obesity, teen births and motor vehicle-related ER visits than the State, and lower rates of HIV/AIDS than the state and the other CHNA 18 communities.

Demographics

Needham has a higher percentage of White residents, a lower percentage of Black and Hispanic residents and an equal percentage of Asian residents as CHNA 18 and the State of Massachusetts

Needham has a greater percentage of both older people and young people than do other towns in CHNA 18 and the State. It also has among the highest percentages of the “old (over 80) of all Massachusetts communities.

Community Strengths

The most important community strengths identified:

- Community involvement,
- Strong government infrastructure
- Strong collaborations.

Top Health Concerns

- Mental Health (especially depression/anxiety, substance abuse and academic stress)
- Financial Strain
- Too much stress on success,
- Transportation barriers
- Lack of social connectedness

Spotlight Health Issue: Mental Health

The majority (88%) of those interviewed specified mental health as a top concern, as well as the pressure that goes along with living in an affluent community (71%). Several expressed that mental health was an issue in all age groups with one respondent expressing that “mental health issues throughout the community for the young, middle age and elderly seem to be at very high levels.” Another respondent described that the “pressure to be perfect, “Type A” lifestyle in Needham” was a contributing factor.

Other issues included a lack of public transportation (33%) and a growing problem with substance abuse (33%). Several respondents expressed that “...there are still many people who get themselves isolated and lonely” and others that focused on the fact that “[there is a] huge drug and alcohol problem and lack of monitoring [in Needham youth]”.

Select Qualitative Data

- Suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among high school students are lower Needham than in CHNA 18 and the state of Massachusetts.
- A smaller percentage of high school students in Needham (61% in 2005) reported having a teacher or adult to consult with about problems in school as compared to Massachusetts as a whole (92%), suggesting opportunities for intervention.
- 4.5% of Needham adults report experience more than 15 days of poor mental health in a month, as compared to close to nine percent of adults in Massachusetts.
- Needham has a lower percentage of hospitalizations for substance abuse or opioid use than Massachusetts as a whole.
- While the percentage of unemployed Needham residents has doubled since, it still remains substantially lower than the state.

Selected Interview Comments

- “People think, oh how could anyone possibly have a financial need in this community? But many people do, for many different reasons.”
- “I think there is a very strong community spirit here.”
- “Needham citizens of all ages are always willing to volunteer.”
- “Everything is on the exterior wonderful, but if you look closely there are issues with drug abuse, depression, and suicide. Everyone is so separated because of large yards, open spaces – it really seems like an ideal community feeling, but that only allows people the ability to hide problems.”
- “Great leadership at all levels and great collaboration.”
- “There is very limited public transportation. This especially affects seniors, people with disabilities and probably teenagers too.”

Additional Needham-Specific Data

Question 1: What are the top three issues affecting the quality of life in Needham?

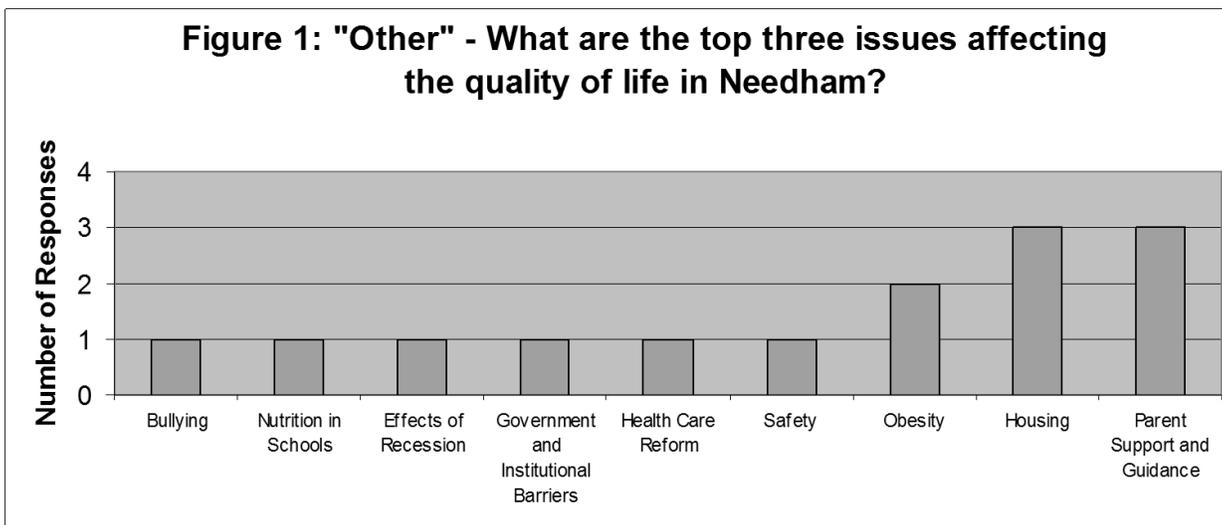
Issue Category	Number of Responses (% of 24 Total Respondents)
Access to Health Care	5 (20.8%)
Affluent Community Issues	7 (29.2%)
Lack of communication	4 (16.7%)
Mental Health	21 (87.5%)
Senior Services	5 (20.8%)
Pressure to be Perfect	10 (41.7%)
Substance Abuse	8 (33.3%)
Lack of Public Transportation	8 (33.3%)
Other	14 (58.3%)

24 interviewed; 82 responses given to Question 1; Average of 3.4 per person

Access to Health Care: Cost (2), Underinsured (1), Primary Care Shortage (1), Non-Specific (1)

Lack of Communication: In regards to available resources in Needham

Mental Health: Depression (2), Stress (3), Suicide (6), Social Isolation (2), Non-Specific (8)



24 interviewed

14 responses categorized as 'Other'