

2024 COMMUNITY STATUS REPORT

Updated September 2024



Overview

At least every five years, local health departments are tasked with conducting a health assessment of their residents. **Washington County and our partners are continuously gathering data to inform the programs and services we provide.**

When conducted, our community health assessment tells the story, at a point in time, of the different factors impacting the health of residents in Washington County.

These **factors include our environment, education, housing, transportation, social circles, and more.** The Washington County health assessment is completed roughly every three years to align efforts and timing with the community health needs assessments conducted by larger health systems within the county.

This report includes key primary and secondary data points on top factors impacting health. The full health data profiles, which make up our dynamic Community Health Assessment, can be found on our [website](#).

The profiles look at data across time and by different groupings to better understand how a topic might influence resident health. These are updated as new data becomes available. **This information, along with qualitative data from the community and our many partners, will be used to inform broader health improvement efforts.**

The county anticipates collecting and sharing additional qualitative information in fall 2024.

Adult Health Survey

In 2019, Washington County Public Health & Environment conducted the Adult Health Survey. Respondents, labeled as the Washington County Convenience Sample, are predominantly between the ages of 18-34; have high school or some college education; and are less than or equal to 200% of the federal poverty line.

COVID-19 Impact Survey

In 2022, Washington County Public Health & Environment conducted a COVID-19 Impact Survey to learn about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the physical and mental well-being of Washington County residents. The results are being used to identify health concerns of adults in Washington County.

People and Places

Washington County, established in 1849 as one of Minnesota's nine original counties, is located on the eastern edge of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. **It is the fifth largest county by population in Minnesota.** The total population in Washington County as of 2020 was **267,568**, consisting of **4.7% of the state's population.**

Population in Washington County has been at a steady incline over the last ten years. From 2010 to 2020, the county's **population increased from 238,136 to 267,568.** The county's population is projected to grow by an additional 27% by 2040.

Additionally, the county's population is getting older and more racially and ethnically diverse. In Washington County, **7% of the population was born in another country.** The top country of origin is India, followed by Mexico and Laos.

The population of people 65 and older is projected to grow by nearly 50% between 2020 and 2030.

Planning for the changing housing, transportation, and healthcare needs of an aging population, along with addressing racial disparities, is key to promoting a high quality of life for Washington County residents in the coming years.



36% of Washington County's convenience sample respondents indicated they **often or sometimes worry about food running out** before they have the money to buy more (within the past year).



The current **unemployment rate** in Washington County is **2.9%.**



The **median household income** for Washington County residents is **\$100,569.** It has increased over the last five years.

More than **40% of households** in the county have an **income of \$100,000 or more.**



12.9% of the population in Washington County is **below the 200% federal poverty level.**



18% of Washington County homeowners are cost-burdened (spending more than 30% of income on housing).

40% of renters are cost-burdened.

Washington County: Featured Health Data



**Overall Health, Mortality,
and Chronic Disease**



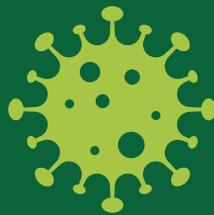
**Nutrition and
Physical Activity**



**Mental Health and
Well-Being**



Substance Use



Infectious Disease



**Maternal and
Child Health**



**Healthcare Capacity
and Access**



**Injury and
Violence**



**Environmental
Conditions**

Overall Health, Mortality, and Chronic Disease

Washington County Public Health & Environment monitors data that addresses concerns about overall health, chronic illness, and mortality in our county to inform how we can create healthier communities.

Overall health and wellness are achieved holistically. Health focuses not only on physical well-being, but also emotional and social well-being. By addressing health holistically, we can improve all areas of health.



In 2019, **8.8%** of Washington County adults (random sample) reported **fair or poor health** and **25.8%** in the convenience sample reported **fair or poor health**.

In 2022, **5.1%** of Washington County adults (random sample) reported **fair or poor health** and **21.2%** in the convenience sample reported **fair or poor health**.



Between 2019 and 2022, **25-37% of adults** in Washington County reported having **high cholesterol** and **hypertension**.



In 2021, the **top three leading causes of death** in Washington County were **cancer, heart disease, and COVID-19**.



In 2022, the **top chronic health conditions** for those living 200% below the federal poverty line were **depression, anxiety, high cholesterol, and other mental health conditions**.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Equitable access to nutritious, culturally appropriate foods and physical activity are an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Lack of access to nutritious foods and physical inactivity are major contributors to chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, which disproportionately impact low-income communities and racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Chronic disease prevention is a team effort. Communities, workplaces, schools, and early childhood programs play an important role in supporting healthy habits. Washington County Public Health & Environment supports community efforts to encourage healthy eating and active living in a variety of settings.



About **1 in 3 adults** eats the **recommended servings of vegetables** each day. Almost 1 in 2 adults consumes one or more sugar-sweetened beverages a day.



When looking at Washington County's convenience sample respondents, about **34% haven't engaged in any exercise in 30 days**.



Four percent of households in Washington County **receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits**.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act, and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Poor mental health is a risk factor for mental illness and can be a burden on the general population.



In 2020, **suicide** was found to be the 12th leading cause of death in the United States and **was the 10th leading cause of death in Washington County.**



In Washington County, **9.4% of adults** report having **14 or more poor mental health days within the past 30 days.** However, convenience sample respondents in Washington County reported frequent mental distress more than **twice as high at 24.7%.**



In 2019, among the residents who needed care for mental health issues, **34% delayed care due to cost or lack of insurance** and 14% delayed due to other reasons.



In 2022, approximately **1 in 4 female students** and **around 1 in 8 male students** were bothered by **feeling down, depressed, or hopeless** in the two weeks prior to taking the Minnesota Student Survey.

Substance Use

Substance use refers to the excessive use of substances including alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, opioids, and other drugs in a manner that is harmful to health and well-being. While the opioid epidemic has deeply impacted the state and nation, so has harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. Preventable harms include more than just deaths. Hospitalizations, injuries, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), among others, are all examples of preventable harms that are related to the opioid epidemic and substance use. Factors behind inequities in substance use behaviors and outcomes may include the experience of institutional racial biases, the effect of racism-related stressors on the mental and physical health of people of color, and the conscious and unconscious biases that shape how people of color are treated, including by healthcare professionals.

10X

In 2021, American Indian Minnesotans were **ten times as likely to die from a drug overdose** as white Minnesotans.

3X

Black Minnesotans were **more than three times as likely to die from a drug overdose** as white Minnesotans.

36
per year

In 2020, 2021, and 2022, there was **an average of 36 drug overdose deaths per year** among Washington County residents. In recent years, **overdose deaths have been driven by opioids** (especially synthetic opioids like fentanyl), followed by psychostimulants like methamphetamine.

Infectious Disease

Reporting cases of infectious diseases and related conditions is a vital step in controlling and preventing the spread of communicable disease. By law, a number of infectious diseases must be reported to the Minnesota Department of Health.

Washington County Public Health & Environment monitors the occurrence of infectious diseases, develops strategies for preventing and controlling disease, and puts those strategies into action.



In 2021, there were **617 cases of chlamydia** and **151 cases of gonorrhea**.



In 2021, **chlamydia accounted for 45% of all reportable infectious disease cases** in Washington County. More than 70 reportable diseases were tracked in 2022.



The **vaccine coverage rate for two-year-olds receiving the full primary series was 70.4% in 2022**, below the national Healthy People goal of 90% (HP2030), but higher than the Minnesota state average of 63.3%.

Maternal and Child Health

Washington County Public Health & Environment works to achieve positive birth outcomes primarily through family home visiting and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Key strategies include ensuring that women receive prenatal care beginning in the first trimester and encouraging healthy behaviors during pregnancy.



From 2017 to 2021, **87-89% of women in the first trimester received prenatal care** in Washington County.

From 2017 to 2021, **premature live births increased from 8% to 10%** in Washington County.



From 2017 to 2021, **smoking rates of pregnant women decreased from 5% to 2%** in Washington County.



From 2016 to 2020, **birth rates per 1,000 population decreased from 11.3 to 10** in Washington County.



Minnesota's **rate of maternal mortality** in 2019 was **8.9 per 100,000 live births**.



Comparing live births and maternal mortality by race, **American Indian and Black mothers face higher rates of maternal mortality** although they make up less than 15% of live births together in Minnesota.

Healthcare Capacity and Access

Access to comprehensive, quality healthcare services is important for promoting and maintaining health, preventing and managing disease, reducing unnecessary disabilities and premature deaths, and achieving health equity.

When people cannot afford to pay for insurance or other healthcare costs, they are less likely to get the care they need.



In both 2019 and 2022, **2% of adults** in Washington County were **uninsured**.



In 2019, **87% of adults saw their healthcare provider** in Washington County.



In 2019, **21% of adults** found it **difficult to pay for health insurance** in Washington County.



In 2019, **7% of adults skipped a dose of medication** in Washington County because they **could not afford it**.

Injury and Violence

Injury can have physical, emotional, and financial impacts on individuals, families, and society. The consequences can be substantial, resulting in short- and long-term disability. Injuries also place an enormous burden on hospital emergency departments and trauma care systems, accounting for approximately one-third of all emergency department visits and eight percent of all hospital stays (World Health Organization, 2021).



From 2017 to 2022, the percent of fatalities from alcohol-related crashes was around 30%. Washington County **alcohol-related crashes that resulted in fatalities stayed between 20 to 30%**.



In 2021, Washington County had a **child maltreatment rate of 11.9**, which is **significantly lower than the state rate** at 24.2.



Between 2018 and 2020, Washington County had **lower rates of hospitalizations** for carbon monoxide poisoning at 0.3 per 100,000; COPD rates of hospitalization at 7.5 per 100,000; asthma hospitalization rates at 2.2 per 10,000; and heart attack hospitalization rates at 23.1 per 100,000.

Environmental Conditions

Environmental conditions refers to having a healthy and safe environment that enhances a person's quality of life. Environmental conditions that impact health might include surface and drinking water, air quality, changing weather conditions, and natural/built infrastructure. Access to environmental services and amenities can increase health and overall life satisfaction.

Climate change poses a great threat to our ecosystem and human health. The Metropolitan Council, in coordination with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Climatology Office, published information explaining the confidence in specific climate projections for the Twin Cities metropolitan area through 2099. According to the projections, we will continue to see warmer winters and extreme rainfall. This may have a negative impact on human health, including respiratory and heart diseases, pest-related diseases, water- and food-borne illnesses, and injuries and deaths.

One hundred percent of Washington County's drinking water comes from groundwater, making it one of the county's most valuable resources. However, the county faces unique challenges with its water. There are areas where groundwater in the county has contaminants above the established health risk limits in several aquifers, most notably perfluoro-alkyl substances (PFAS) and trichloroethylene (TCE). Current scientific research suggests that exposure to certain PFAS and TCE may lead to adverse health outcomes. However, research is still ongoing to determine how different levels of exposure to these substances can lead to health effects.

Minnesota Department of Health has identified four Special Well and Boring Construction Areas (SWCA) to inform the public of potential health risks in areas of groundwater contamination.



In 2023, there were **76 properties** that **tested positive for radon**.



In 2022, there was a **5.9% year over year increase in municipal solid waste**. The combined **recycling and organics rate for the county was 51%**.



In Washington County, the **drinking water sources of 18 cities and townships** currently **have PFAS above MDH guidance levels**.



While Minnesota has gotten warmer and wetter since 1895, the most dramatic changes have come in the past several decades.

According to the DNR, **average temperatures in Minnesota have warmed by nearly 3°F since 1895**. At the same time, the state has experienced increases in precipitation, getting **an average of 3.4 inches wetter**.



The state has issued well advisories for **1,695 private wells for PFAS** and **351 private wells for TCE**.