



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eau Claire County ranked 33rd in Health Outcomes in the State

Eau Claire, WI, March 13, 2019– The annual *County Health Rankings* were released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

Eau Claire County ranked 33rd out of 72 counties for health outcomes and 13th for health factors, according to the annual rankings. This is very similar to our ranking in 2018. The rankings look at a broad range of factors that impact health including health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors and physical environment. The *Rankings* are available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.



Key Findings from 2019 County Health Rankings for Eau Claire County

Areas of Strength:

- Eau Claire County continues to see low rates of uninsured residents.
- Our county has a high ratio of healthcare, mental health and dental providers per person. These providers do often provide services to individuals who aren't Eau Claire County residents.
- Positive screening rates for breast cancer and flu vaccinations indicate a strong healthcare system in our county.
- Teen birth rate continues to be lower than the state. Our county does see differences by racial/ethnic groups. The teen birth rate for Eau Claire County Hispanic and Black teens is triple the rate of White teens.
- Other areas of strength are the unemployment rate and the number of adults that are college educated.

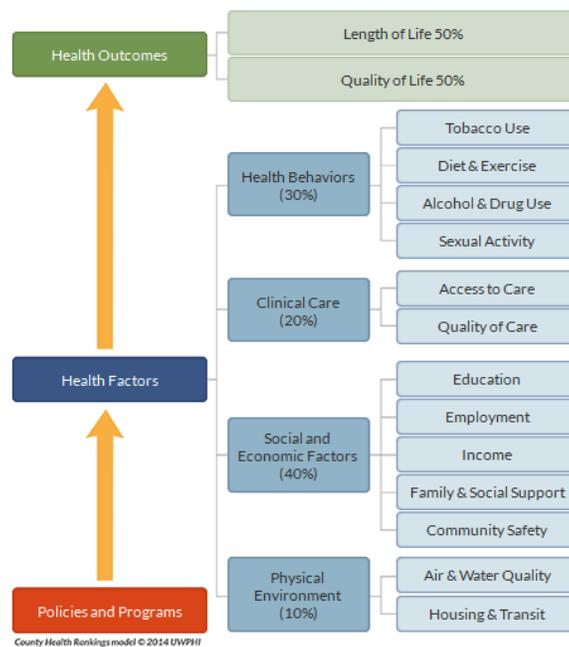
Areas for Improvement:

- Early (premature) deaths have increased for Eau Claire County. Causes may be related to the drug overdose epidemic, suicide and alcohol-impaired driving deaths.
- Eau Claire County ranks 69th out of 72 counties for preventable hospital stays. This trend is getting worse for our county. This may represent a tendency of patients to overuse hospitals as a main source of care, rather than their primary clinical care for things like asthma and diabetes.
- Eau Claire County is seeing an increase in the number of sexually transmitted infections. This reflects the upward trend that is happening nationwide.
- Eau Claire County ranks 67th out of 72 counties for income inequality. This means a wide gap between those most affluent and least affluent exists in our community.

- 13% of Eau Claire County residents have a severe housing burden. This means they are spending 50% or more of their household income on housing.

The *Rankings* have become an important tool for communities that want to improve health for all. Eau Claire County has many initiatives underway to improve health for residents. To learn more, visit Eau Claire Healthy Communities' website: www.ehealthycommunities.org.

Please see the attached press release related to the 2019 County Health Rankings. This was released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Rankings are based on the model below, The Rankings emphasize that many factors, if improved, can help make communities healthier places to live, learn, work and play.



New Rankings Show Healthiest and Least Healthy Counties in Wisconsin

Report Explores the Impact of Severe Housing Cost Burden on Residents

Princeton, N.J. and Madison, Wis.—Ozaukee County ranks healthiest in Wisconsin and Menominee County is the least healthy county in the state, according to the annual County Health Rankings, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The Rankings are available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

An easy-to-use snapshot that compares counties within states, the Rankings show that where you live influences how well and how long you live. Housing is part of the foundation for living long and well. High housing costs can force some families to live in unsafe or overcrowded housing or even into homelessness. This year's Rankings State Reports show stark differences across and within counties in the opportunity to afford a home, especially for those with low incomes and people of color. This year's analyses show that a lack of opportunity for a safe, secure, and affordable home is tied to poor health.

The Rankings State Reports call attention to key drivers in health such as severe housing cost burden and its connection to other factors like children in poverty. Among Wisconsin's children living in poverty, 49 percent were living in a household that spends more than half of its income on housing. High housing costs make it difficult for families to afford other essentials that contribute to good health, such as healthy food, medicine, or transportation to work or school. Looking at differences by place and race offers a more complete picture of health. In Wisconsin, 13 percent of households spend more than half of their income on housing costs but when we look by race—even deeper differences emerge with households headed by Black residents most burdened by severe housing costs at 28 percent compared to White resident households at 11 percent. County by county, severe housing cost burden ranges from 7 percent to 19 percent of households.

"This year's report clearly shows the linkage between quality, affordable housing and health. Policies such as the expansion of Medicaid not only expand access to health care, but can link people with resources to keep them healthy, such as safe housing," said Julie Willems Van Dijk, deputy secretary, Department of Health Services.

"These Rankings continue to frame the importance of focusing on factors that may not be traditionally seen as impacting health. Social determinants such as healthy housing, income, and education are crucial to influencing how healthy we are as a state. The shared understanding and collective voice that public health organizations across the state have about Rankings and these factors are key to establish better health outcomes," shared Wisconsin Public Health Association President and Eau Claire City-County Health Department Health Director Lieske Giese.

According to the 2019 Rankings, the five healthiest counties in Wisconsin, starting with the most healthy, are Ozaukee County, followed by Washington County, St. Croix County, Waukesha County, and Calumet County. The five counties in the poorest health, starting with the least healthy, are Menominee County, Milwaukee County, Sawyer County, Forest County, and Vilas County.

"Our homes are inextricably tied to our health," said Richard Besser, MD, RWJF president and CEO. "It's unacceptable that so many individuals and families face barriers to health because of what they have to spend on housing. This leaves them with fewer dollars to keep their families healthy. Imagine the stress



and pain that come with unplanned moves. We are all healthier and stronger together when everyone has access to safe and affordable housing, regardless of the color of their skin or how much money they make.”

In addition to the county-level data, the Rankings also features What Works for Health, a database of more than 400 evidence-informed strategies to support local changemakers as they take steps toward expanding opportunities. Each strategy is rated for its evidence of effectiveness and likely impact on health disparities. The Take Action Center also provides valuable guidance for communities who want to move with data to action.

“All communities have the potential to be places where everyone enjoys full and equal opportunity. But the data show that’s not happening in most communities yet. Children of color face a greater likelihood of growing up in poverty, and low-income families struggle to pay rent and get enough to eat,” said Sheri Johnson, PhD, acting director of County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. “It is time to do the difficult work of coming together to undo policies and practices that create barriers to opportunity. The Rankings can help communities ground these important conversations in data, evidence, guidance, and stories about challenges and success.”

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 45 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working alongside others to build a national Culture of Health that provides everyone in America a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

The [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu) advances health and well-being for all by developing and evaluating interventions and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels. The Institute works across the full spectrum of factors that contribute to health. A focal point for health and health care dialogue within the University of Wisconsin-Madison and beyond, and a convener of stakeholders, the Institute promotes an exchange of expertise between those in academia and those in the policy and practice arena. The Institute leads the work on the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps and the RWJF Culture of Health Prize. For more information, visit <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu>