

# Waushara County Community Health Assessment

Public Health Department



230 W. Park Street / PO Box 837

Wautoma, WI 54982

(920) 787-6590 / [public.health@co.waushara.wi.us](mailto:public.health@co.waushara.wi.us)

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# Mission, Vision, and Method Overview

## PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Per WI State Statute, Local Health Departments are required to conduct a Community Health Assessment (CHA) at least once every five years. The purpose of the CHA is to identify and address community health needs. This is completed by collecting and analyzing community health data from a variety of sources. The information presented in the CHA will serve as the basis for the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and steer our future community health initiatives.

## MISSION AND VISION

**MISSION** - Working with the community to promote wellness, improve health and ensure environmental safety.

**VISION** - Leading Waushara County as a trusted resource that promotes healthy families, supportive communities & safe environments.

### CORE VALUES

**Equity:** We work with community members to overcome barriers to health through education, support and encouragement so everyone has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

**Integrity:** We aim to be a trusted and committed resource to our partners and community by being respectful, accountable and confidential.

**Collaboration:** We engage in partnership with community members and agencies for the purpose of promoting, strengthening and protecting health.

**Perseverance:** We are determined to promote the health safety of our community by establishing and fulfilling goals and providing quality, evidence-based services through every challenge.

**Excellence:** We strive to excel in every aspect of Public Health and to provide the highest quality of service through dedicated team members with the determination to succeed.



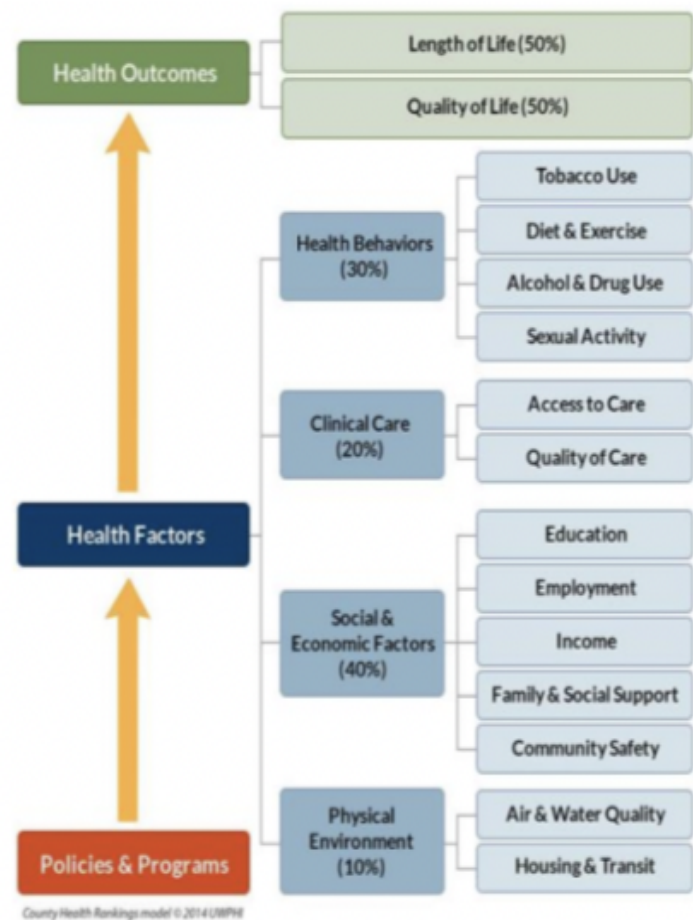
## METHOD OVERVIEW

The 2022 CHA data collection process followed the *Wisconsin Guidebook on Improving the Health of Local Communities*. This framework is built on the *Take Action Cycle* model used by the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. The steps taken for the needs assessment were to Assess Needs & Resources and to Focus on What's Important while emphasizing collaboration and open communication.

The assessment includes both primary and secondary data. Secondary data sources include communicable disease reports, death records, data from local healthcare providers, hospital admission data, and youth risk behavior surveys. Also included are numbers from the County Health Rankings, Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services, and U.S. Census Bureau.

The primary data consists of key informant interviews, community surveys, and focus groups. All information was used to determine the health focus areas.

This assessment will be used to develop the Waushara County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).



# Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to the community members and partners who participated in the 2022 Community Health Assessment survey. They shared their concerns, ideas, and other invaluable information to help improve the health of Waushara County. Also, thank you to UW Madison student, Cameron Russo and MCW student Hanna Gibbons for all your hard work on this important project.

## Timeline

January 2022

- Begin planning for Community Health Assessment
- Begin creating and finalized community survey

February 2022

- Distribution of Survey to partners and community members

March 2022

- Begin Collecting data from local, state and national sources
- Continue distribution of survey through July of 2022

June 2022

- AHEC student from UW Madison, began helping compile data and information using local, state and national sources

July 2022

- AHEC student continues and begins draft of Community Health Assessment

September 2022

- Medical College of Wisconsin student working with PH to complete assessment

October 2022

- Continued working on completing draft of health assessment

November 2022

- Complete final draft of health assessment
- Distribute to community for comments

December 2022

- Present to Waushara County Board of Health

# Who We Are

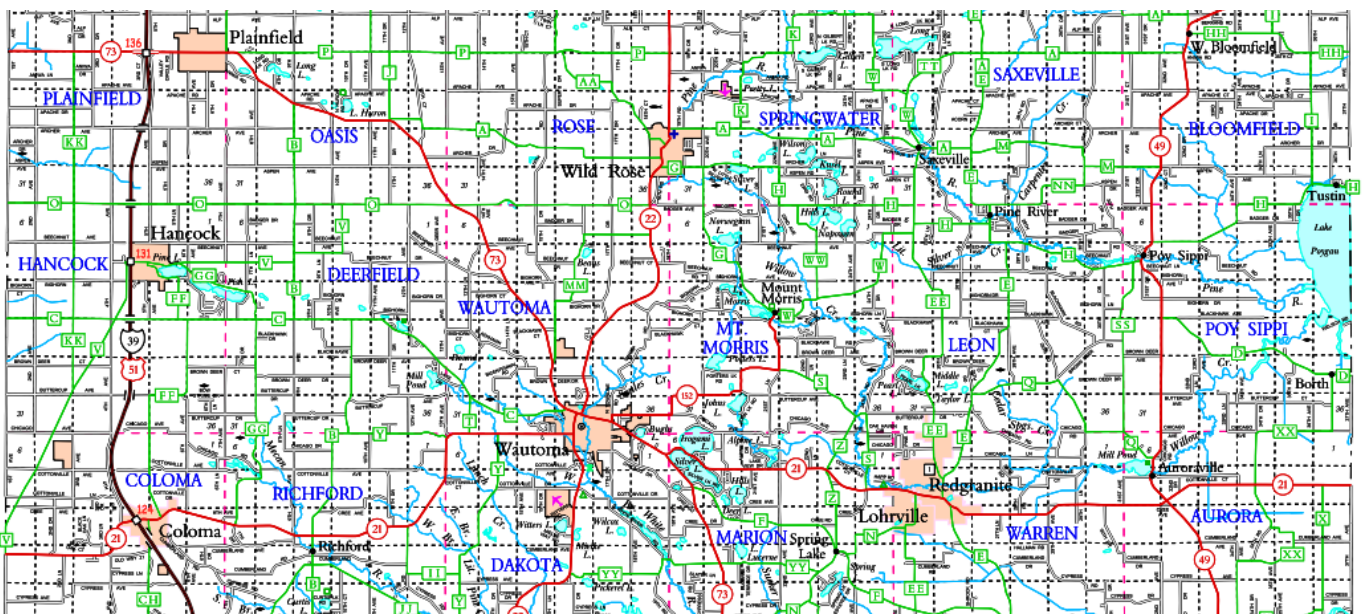
## WAUSHARA COUNTY

Waushara County, located in central Wisconsin, is home to numerous bike routes, boat landings, lakes, ski and snowmobile trails, and hiking paths; offering residents and visitors ample opportunities to explore the outdoors. Many manufacturing businesses are located within the county and it is also home to the Fox Valley Technical College-Wautoma Regional Center, with major program focus areas in welding, truck driving, and nursing. Waushara County has a current population of 24,326 with most residents living in rural areas.

Cities: Berlin (part), Wautoma

Towns: Aurora, Bloomfield, Coloma, Dakota, Deerfield, Hancock, Leon, Marion, Mt. Morris, Oasis, Plainfield, Poy Sippi, Richford, Rose, Saxeville, Springwater, Warren, Wautoma

Villages: Coloma, Hancock, Lohrville, Plainfield, Redgranite, Wild Rose



# Community Health Assessment Data

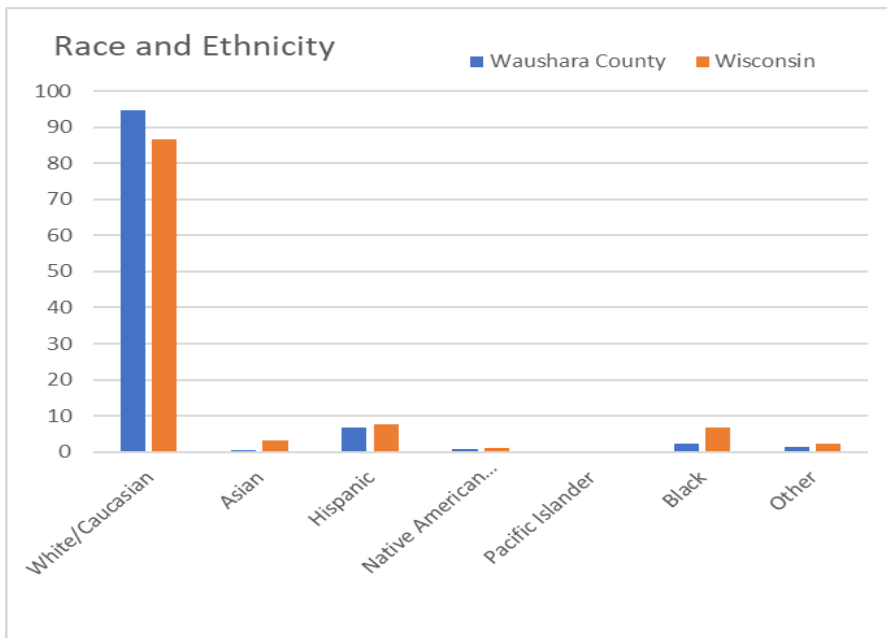
## Demographics

	Total Population	Female	Male	%65 and Older	Rural	Urban
<b>Waushara County</b>	24,326	47.5%	52.5%	25.7%	89.5%	10.5%
<b>Wisconsin</b>	5,832,655	50.2%	49.8%	18.0%	29.8%	70.2%

County Health Rankings 2022

In Waushara County, we are seeing a rise in our residents aged 65 years and older. It has grown from 21.6% in 2016 to 25.7% in 2022. The health needs of the community have shifted as the health concerns regarding aging grow. Therefore, by requiring more focus on chronic disease prevention we can delay the onset of chronic disease and enhance the health of our community.

In addition to the aging population challenges, 89.5% of the county presents itself as rural, resulting in challenges for categories such as transportation and access to care. Compared to the state average of 28% (*County Health Rankings*), 42% of the Waushara County population have a long commute of driving alone. The geographic isolation from many necessary needs such as healthcare results in a burden of extra time and costs that can be difficult to obtain.

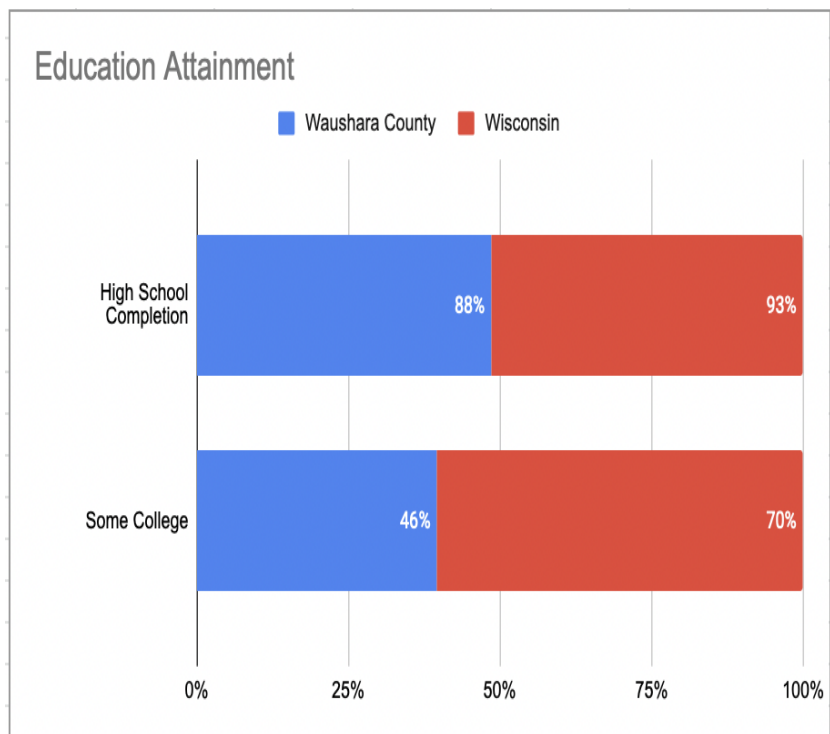


Waushara County has minimal racial and ethnic diversity as displayed by the graph, however, the Amish and Hispanic communities bring a unique culture and diversity to our area. Health disparities that exist for these groups and for

those with low incomes exist for unique reasons. For the Amish, discrepancies in health equity and utilization of the healthcare system are commonly attributed to social causes. Many in the Amish community may not seek certain aspects or all of modern healthcare for religious reasons. This certainly creates a barrier for those within the Amish community who may wish to utilize available healthcare resources. For the Hispanic population, barriers exist primarily due to language as many speak little or no English. Those with low incomes may have difficulties affording the costs of healthcare or accessing the care that is available.

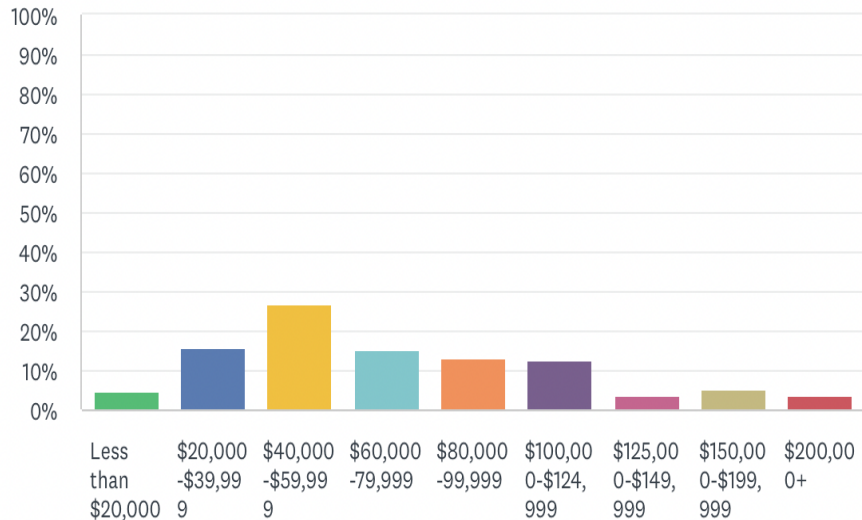
To address these issues the Health Department offers immunizations for the Amish for those that are willing, both in the office and home visits. For the Hispanic population, the Health Department is actively working to change documents and informational forms into Spanish, along with providing staff with an interpreter service. Increasing access to care is an ongoing issue that the health department is seeking to address.

Compared to the Wisconsin state average, Waushara County has a lower number of residents with high school diplomas and less adults with any formal education past high school. It is well understood that adults with higher educational attainment live healthier and longer lives compared to their less educated peers (Zajacova and Lawrence, 2018).



## Income and Poverty

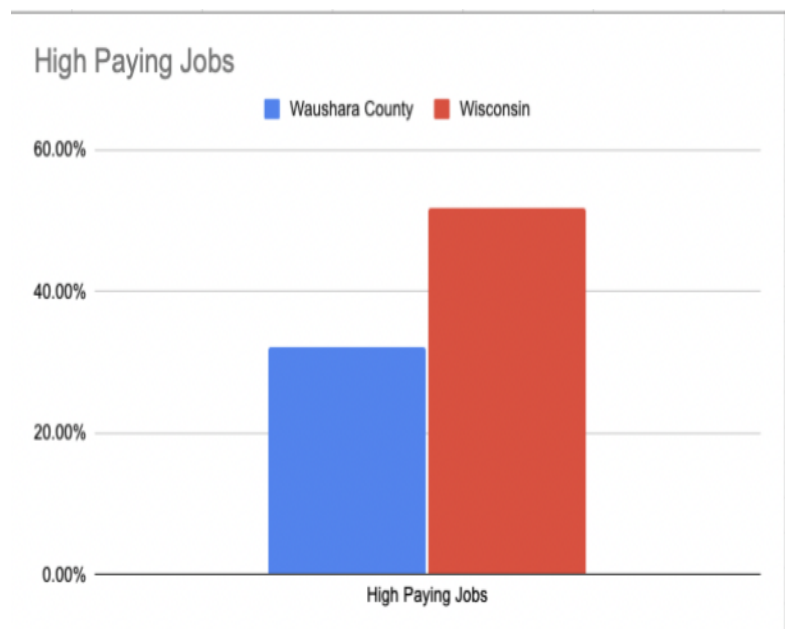
Higher income is related to better health conditions and lower health risks, while lower income means more exposure to health risk factors.



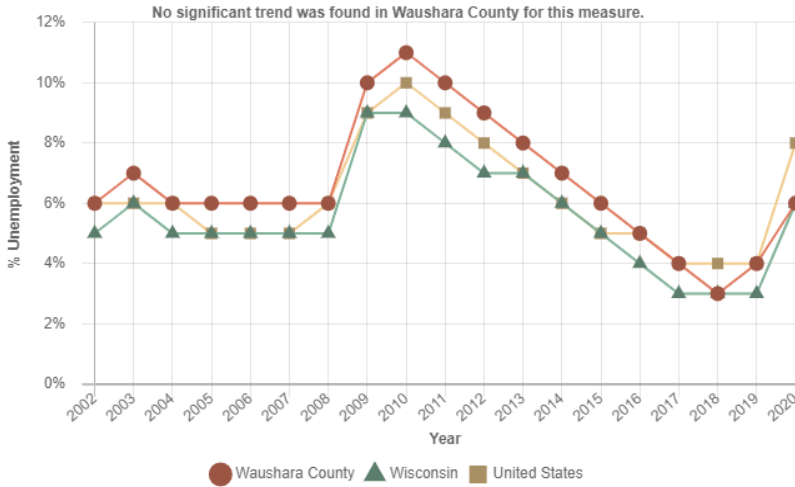
(*International*

*Journal for Equity in Health*). It is not only the level of income that affects the health of a community, but also the distribution of income. The larger the income disparity, the greater the health inequalities will be. In 2020, the median household income in Waushara County was \$58,900 which is \$6,000 lower than the Wisconsin's 2020 average and \$8,621 less than the national average.

The amount of high paying jobs in Waushara County is 19.49% less than the state average. The wage growth value is 0.01 compared to the Wisconsin average value of 0.04. High paying jobs contribute to a greater comfort in living (ex. reliable transportation, secure housing, better health conditions & lower health risks) circumstances and the ability to access basic needs.



### Unemployment in Waushara County, WI County, state and national trends



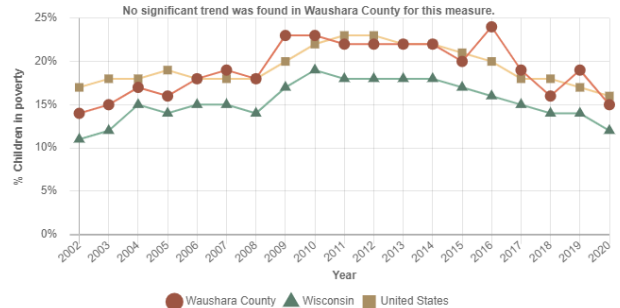
In 2020 the unemployment rate for our county was the same as the state unemployment rate and less than the national average.

### Free and Reduced Lunch

Free and reduced school lunch percentages can

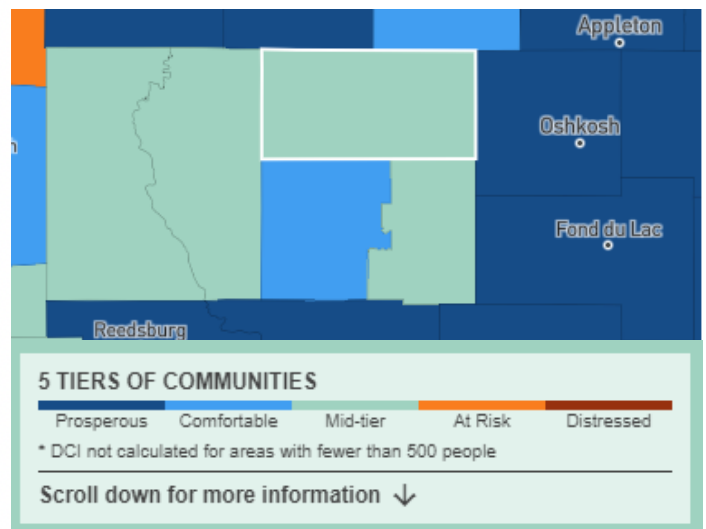
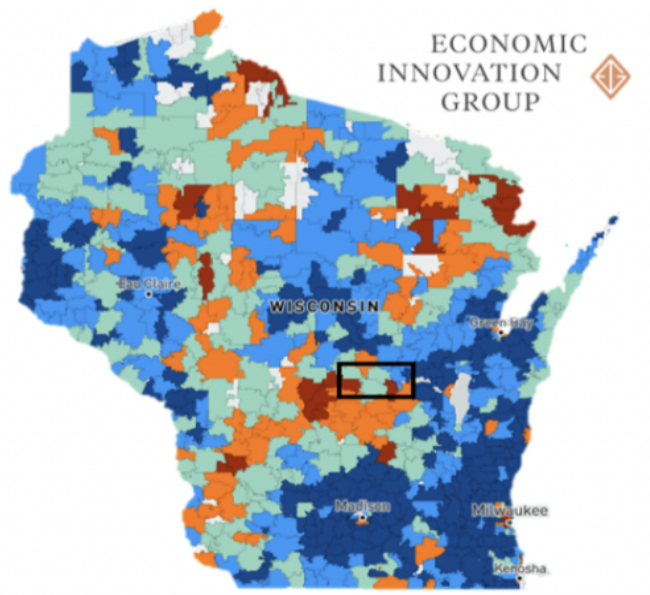
provide information about relative poverty, because of the varying federal poverty thresholds. As of the 2019-2020 School year, 55% of children in Waushara County are eligible for free or reduced lunch compared to the Wisconsin state average of 40%. The actual number of children in poverty in Waushara County is 15%.

### Children in poverty in Waushara County, WI County, state and national trends



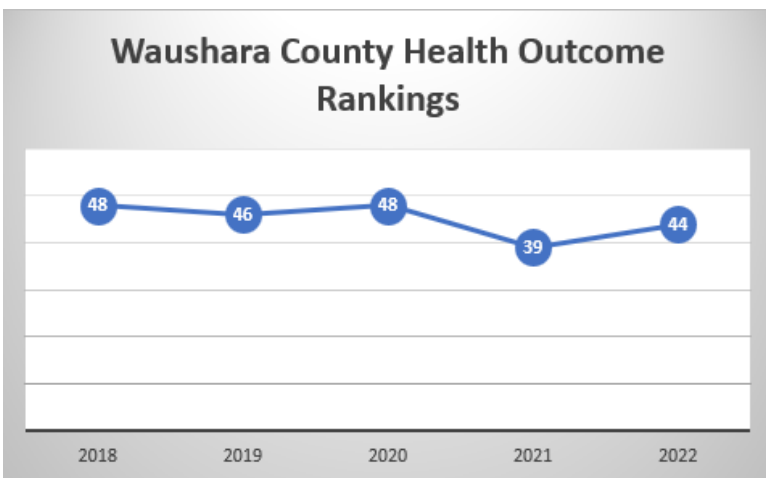
### Distressed Communities Index

The index combines seven measures to present a complete, and multidimensional, picture of economic distress- or prosperity- in U.S. communities (Economic Innovation Group). Much of the data comes from the *American Community Survey and County Business Pattern Data*. This index further illustrates some of the economic challenges facing Waushara County.



As of 2022, Waushara County is rated at a Mid-tier economic distress level. The index numbers are based on the following population measures:

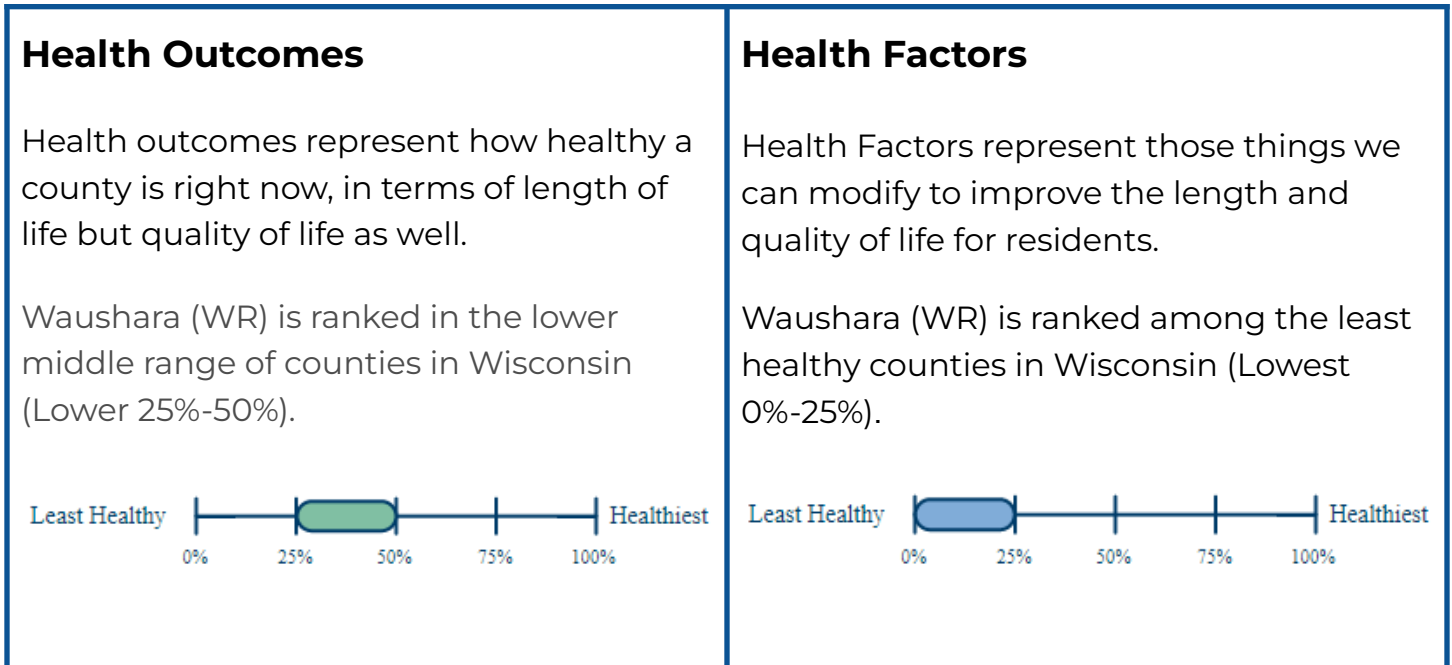
- Percent Without a High School Diploma
- Poverty Rate
- Adult Unemployment Rate
- Percentage of Housing Vacancies
- Median household income
- Change in employment
- Change in number of business establishments



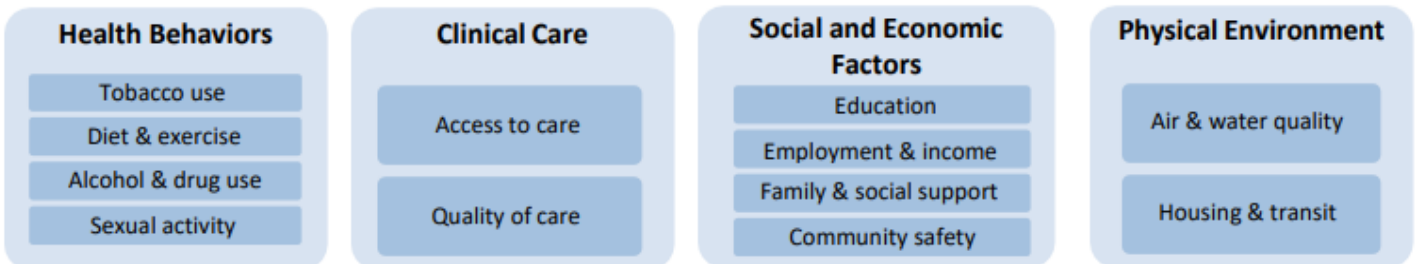
## 2022 County Health Ranking

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute produce County Health Rankings each year. County Health Rankings report the overall health of each county in

Wisconsin. All 72 counties are ranked based on measures of health outcomes and health factors, with the healthiest county being ranked #1. Although we don't want to compare rankings from year to year, using a trend line can give a picture of the health status of our community for the last 5 years. In 2022 Waushara county ranks 44 out of 72. (See Appendix A for the full report)



Health factors represent community conditions that we can change to improve health and opportunity, such as access to quality education, living wage jobs, quality clinical care, nutritious foods, green spaces, and secure and affordable housing. Wisconsin County Health Rankings measure four health factor areas, they are:



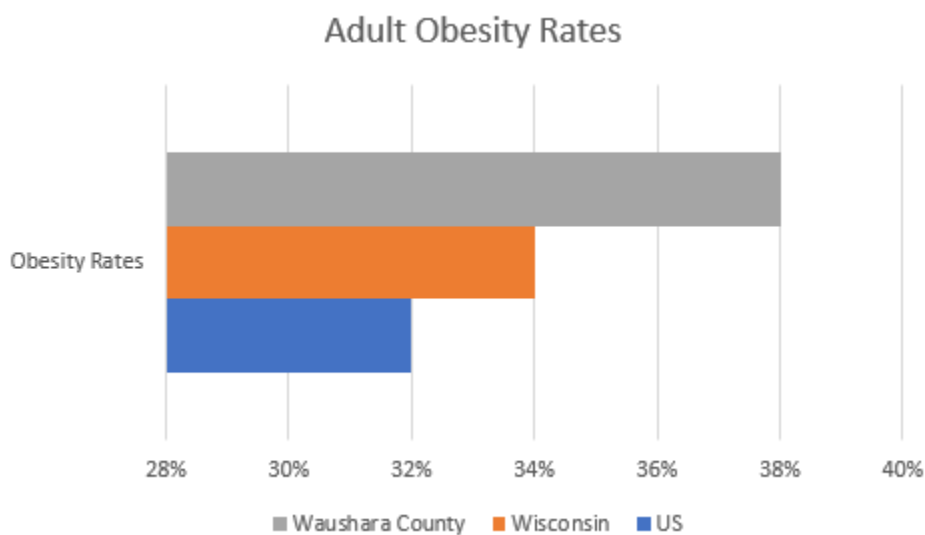
## Overall Health

In 2021 there were 327 deaths in Waushara County. The majority of these deaths can be attributed to chronic disease and unhealthy behaviors.

The top five causes of death were:

1. Heart Disease - 78
2. Cancer - 57
3. Lung Disease - 30
4. Brain (Dementia/Alzheimers) - 9
5. Stroke - 3

It is also important to note that in 2021, there were 6 suicides in Waushara County, which was just slightly higher than our 5 year average of 5 suicides a year.



## Obesity

Waushara County has a higher rate of obesity than both the state and national average. Many factors can contribute to excess weight gain including eating patterns, physical activity levels, and sleep routines. Social determinants of health, genetics and taking certain medications also play a role (CDC,

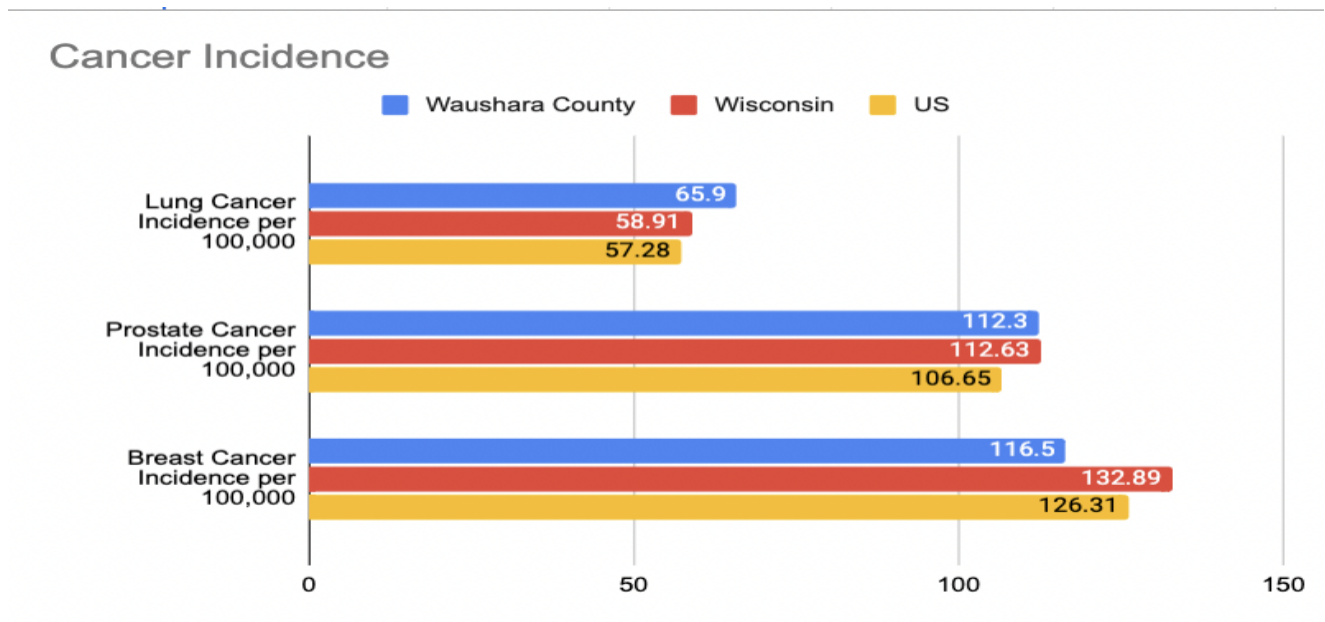
Overweight and Obesity). Social determinants of health are the conditions in which we live, learn, work and play. Healthy choices can be difficult to make and getting enough physical activity is also difficult if these conditions do not support health. In order to combat this growing issue, a positive change must come to all parts of society, especially in areas of policy and environmental change.

## Chronic Disease

Prevention of chronic disease not only assures a strong quality of life, but also results in a decreased economic burden on our health care system. Examples of chronic disease include: cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

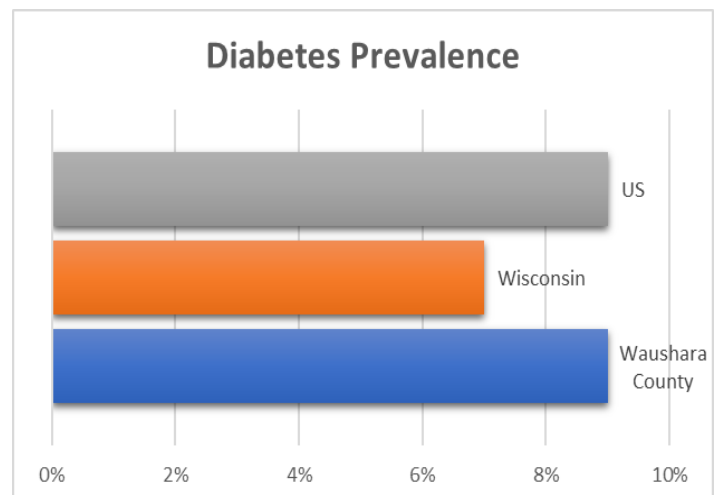
### Cancer

The cancer rates, per 100,000 people for Waushara County, are just below the state average according to the Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative (2014-2018 annual averages). Waushara averages 462 cases while the State of WI averages 469. Of these cases here are the top three cancer diagnosis: Lung Cancer, Prostate Cancer, Breast Cancer.



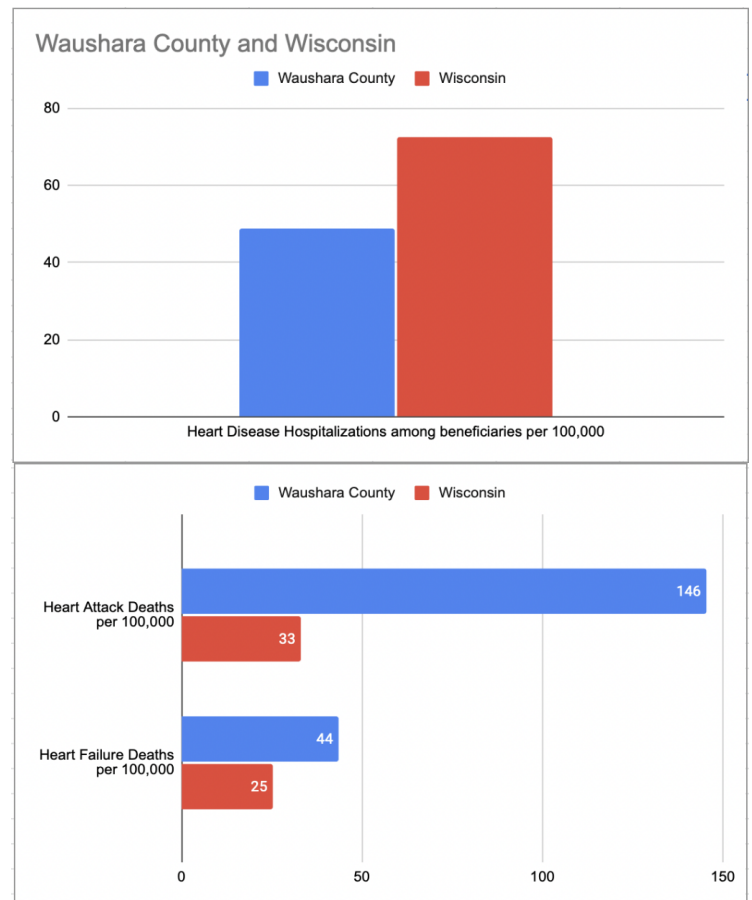
### Diabetes

Diabetes as a chronic disease is a serious and complex condition. When left unchecked, it can lead to a lower quality of life. Nerve damage, heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease, and amputations are all possible if left uncontrolled. These complications can be managed with a healthy diet, avoidance of smoking and alcohol, and incorporation of regular physical activity.



## Heart Disease

Heart Disease has been the leading cause of death in Waushara County. Another way to measure this is by how often residents visit the hospitals for heart issues. While we are less than the average for the state in hospitalizations, we are much higher than the state for heart attack deaths or heart failure deaths.



## Mental Health

Mental health includes emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act and also determines how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices. A person's mental health can change over time, depending on many factors. When the demands placed on a person exceed their resources and coping abilities, their mental health could be impacted. Mental health concerns are common and treatable. (WI Department of Health Services)

In 2021 Waushara county high schools were surveyed, 49% of all students said they had experienced significant problems with anxiety in the past year. 31% reported experiencing prolonged, disruptive sadness, 18% reported they self-harmed without intending to die, 18% considered suicide, and 14% made a plan to commit suicide.

## Communicable Disease

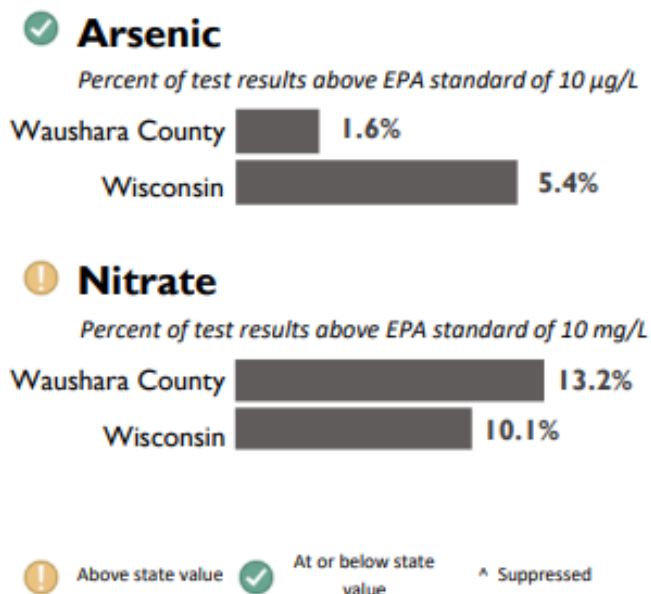
Public Health has an important role in helping to prevent, monitor and control diseases that can spread from person-to-person, these are communicable diseases. These diseases can be from other humans from the air, skin contact, blood and bodily fluids, or from various animal hosts like ticks or mosquitos. In Waushara County the most common communicable disease is Chlamydia. However, as a whole Waushara continues to show high incidents of cases for Lyme Disease, Hepatitis C and Ehrlichiosis as well.

## Environment

### Drinking Water

Waushara county's economy is based on agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. It is important to take note of nitrate levels in water supplies. Sources of nitrates can include: agricultural runoff, municipal and industrial waste water, animal feedlots, and septic tanks.

In Wisconsin, nitrate is one of the most common groundwater contaminants. Monitoring nitrate levels is essential in preventing certain birth defects and the development of Blue Baby syndrome, a condition that limits the blood's ability to carry oxygen.



### Home Hazards

**Carbon Monoxide Poisoning** prevents oxygen from getting to the body, which can damage tissue and even cause death. CO is a toxic gas that cannot be seen or

smelled. Wisconsin state law requires all homes to have a CO detector on every level. In Waushara County the rate of ER visits (per 100,000 people) is 21.8%

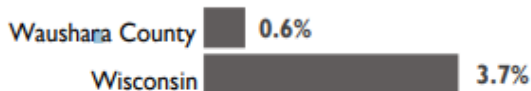
**Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**  
Rate of ER visits per 100,000 people



**Radon**  
Percent of tests with results  $\geq 4$  pCi/L



**Childhood Lead Poisoning**  
Percent of tested children with blood lead  $\geq 5$   $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$



**Above state value** **At or below state value** **Suppressed**

**Radon** is a naturally-occurring radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer. About 1 out of 10 homes in Wisconsin has high radon levels. It can leak into homes through cracks in the foundation. Similar to carbon-monoxide, it cannot be seen or smelled. All homes, new and old, can be affected, and testing is the only way to know if a home has high levels. (Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program). Waushara County and the state of Wisconsin remain comparable with results greater than 4pCi/L.

**Childhood Lead Poisoning** slows growth and development in children, particularly in the brain. It is known to be associated with

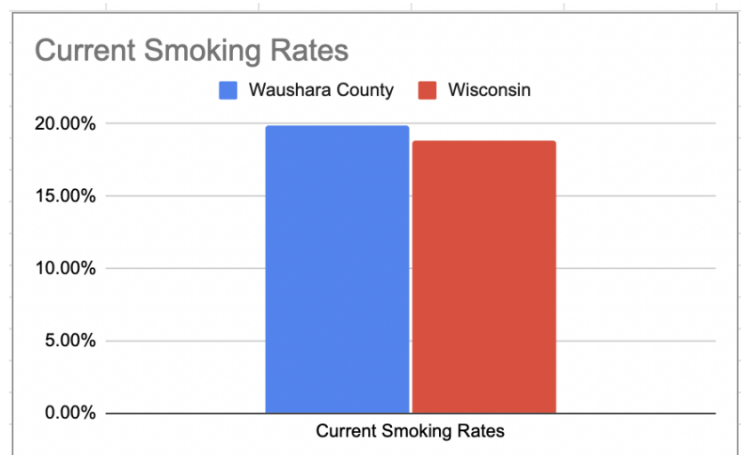
problems later in life such as poor academic outcomes and increased incarceration. In most Wisconsin counties the percentage of children poisoned is low. In Waushara county the percentage is .6%.

(See Appendix B for the full report)

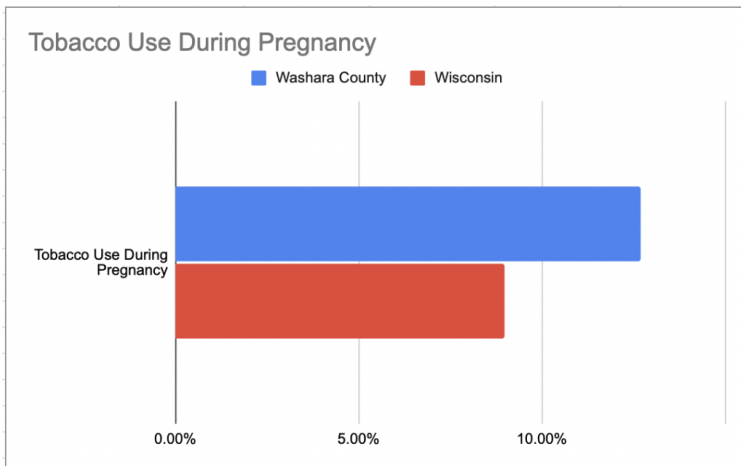
## Other Health Behaviors

### Smoking

Smoking is known to be detrimental to one's health. It can lead to lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Unfortunately

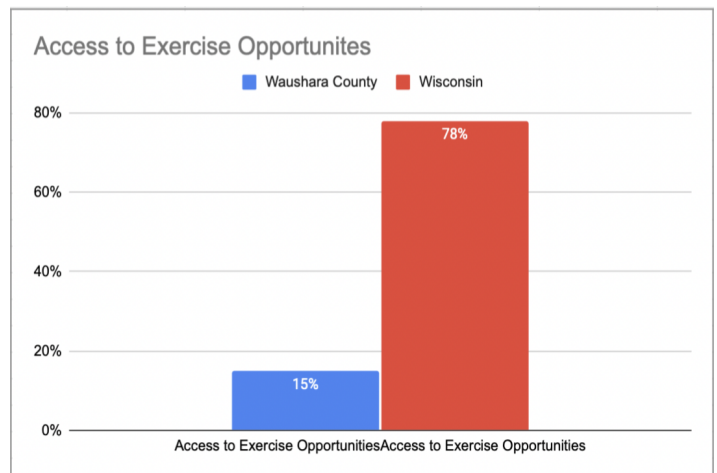


smoking continues to be a problem for Waushara County and the state as a whole. It is an issue for the general population and especially mothers who are pregnant. In Waushara County 12.7% mothers smoked during their pregnancy (*County Health Rankings*)

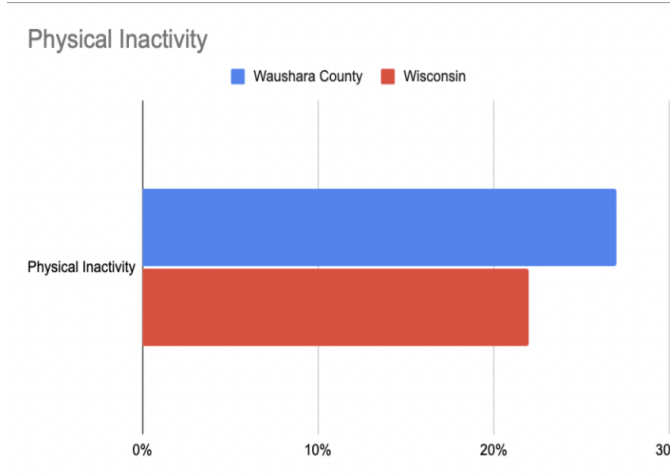


### Physical Inactivity

The ability to be physically active is dependent on access. Waushara County has limited access to exercise opportunities,



in part, because of its rural location. Residents travel long distances to reach exercise facilities and safe places to walk/bike. Another barrier can be the cost of memberships. They also have ample access to nature, however. This does allow for the possibility for higher levels of outdoor physical activity and nature-based play and recreation.

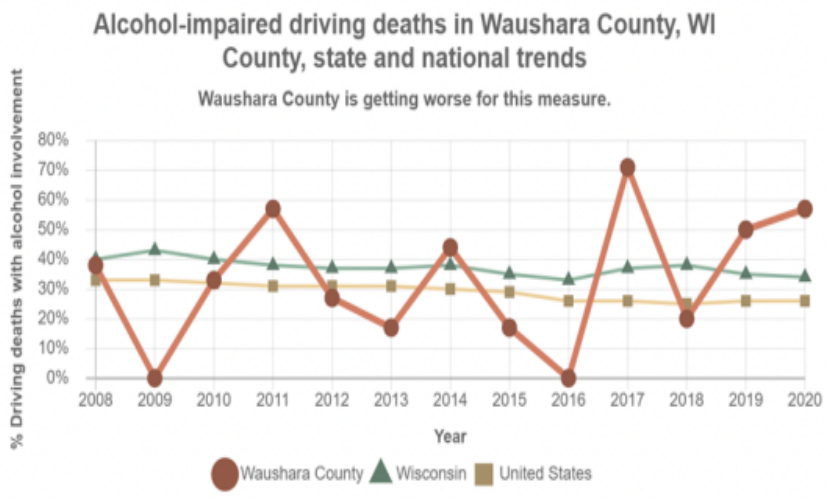


The graph to the left shows the percent of adults in Waushara that are reporting no leisure-time physical activity. A decrease in physical activity can be related to diabetes, heart disease, cancer, obesity and thus cause higher healthcare costs.

# Alcohol and Drugs

Waushara County exemplifies a greater than average alcohol-impaired driving deaths compared to the state and the nation.

Alcohol-impaired driving deaths in Waushara County are about 20% higher than the Wisconsin average. According to the WI Dept of Public Instruction (2021 Waushara County High Schools Survey Results) 25% of students had had a least one drink in the past 30 days and 6% said they had attended school under the influence in the past 12 months.



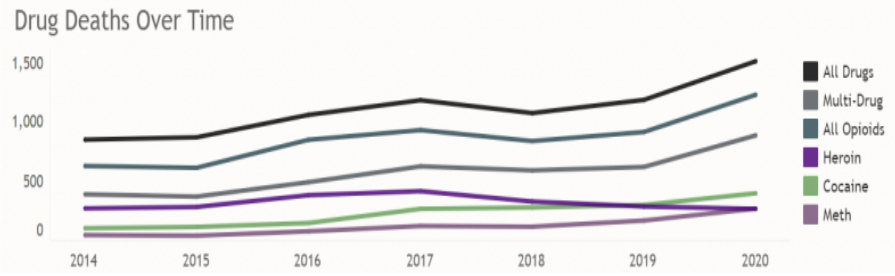
In 2017, there were 295 clients that received individual or group counseling for Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse. There were 9 individuals that were placed in Inpatient Treatment by

Waushara County Human Services an increase of 50% from 2016.

Wisconsin Drug Overdose Death 2014-2020					
All Drugs	Multi-Drug	All Opioids	Heroin	Cocaine	Meth*
9,217	4,802	6,005	2,221	1,593	822

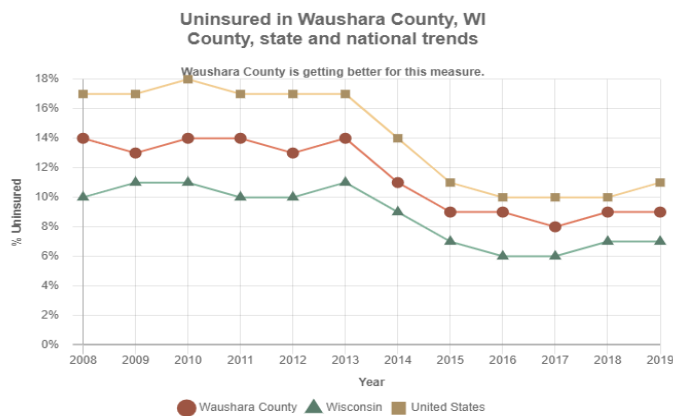
\*Meth includes stimulants other than cocaine.

Waushara County also has a Treatment Court Program, that is an universal approach to unite treatment and the criminal justice system assisting drug offenders to break the cycle of drug use while keeping the treatment costs to a minimum.



## Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare includes many factors such as health insurance, local care options, affordability, transportation and social or cultural barriers. Lack of

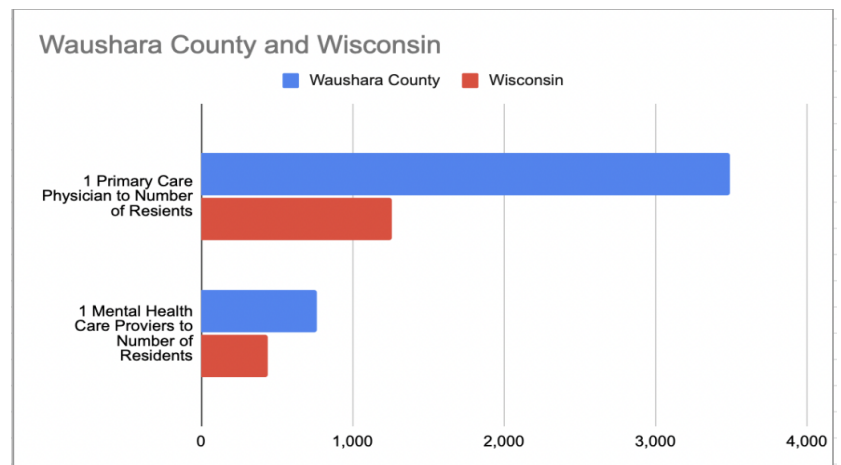


health insurance is a significant barrier to utilizing the healthcare system. Waushara County has consistently had a higher-than-average uninsured rate. As of 2019, in Waushara county 9% of the people under the age of 65 did not have health insurance. This is higher than the state which is at 7%, but lower than the national average of 11%.

## Medical

Access to healthcare also factors in the availability of providers for patients. Compared to the state, Waushara County has had a lower ratio of patients to primary care providers of 3,490:1, whereas the state of WI is 1,260:1.

For mental health the ratio is similar, whereas the more providers are needed. Patients to mental health providers in Waushara is 760:1 and for the state it is 440:1.



## Dental

Oral health is also an essential piece when talking about general health. Risk factors for oral health disease are typically poor oral hygiene, tobacco use and unhealthy diets. The disadvantaged or poor tend to bear a disproportionate share of these diseases. Lack of access to dental care and poor oral health can lead to the increase of oral health disease, from cavities to oral cancer, with even a connection to heart disease. The ratio of patients to dentists in Waushara County is 1,430:1 while the state is only 1,390:1.

## Transportation

Transportation is another barrier regarding access to care. Waushara is primarily a rural county. People in rural communities pay more of their budget, as much as 40%, towards transportation because they have lower incomes and drive more miles than people in urban areas. Transportation is something several partners and agencies including CAP services, Central WI Health Partners, Dept of Aging and Public Health to name a few have been working to address.

## Community Feedback

Waushara County conducted our Community Health Survey from February 2022 through September of 2022. The survey was available online via SurveyMonkey and shared on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. An advertisement through the local newspaper the Waushara Argus, as well as a link on their website. Paper copies in spanish were delivered to St. Joseph's Parish in Wautoma, as well as a spanish survey online advertised through Family Health LaClinica. The survey was also shared with partners via email, along with the county staff members.

There were 222 individuals that responded to the survey. Of those that responded:

- 89% were females
- 98% were white/caucasian
- Top three age groups of respondent's were: 27% 56-65; 19% 36-45; 18% 46-55; 18% 66+
- Majority of respondents (37%) highest level of education was "graduated from a 4-year college, with "some college" being second highest at 23%
- 78% of respondents were married
- The majority of respondents (26%) annual household income (before taxes) was between \$40,000-59,999.
- There were 57% of respondents that stated they utilized healthcare in Waushara County which includes Theda-Care - WildRose, Aurora Health Care or mental health services provided by Waushara County Human Services.

Other questions in the survey asked about the health of the community such as what are the most important factors, the health issues we face, and the top risky behaviors. Here are those results:

When asked ***“What do you feel are the 3 most important factors for a healthy community?”***, these are the top five.

1. Access to healthcare
2. Quality Schools
3. Low Crime Rate
4. Access to mental health care
5. Job Opportunities

When asked ***“What are the 3 most important health issues facing Waushara County Residents?”***, these are the top five.

1. Alcohol & Other Drugs
2. Issues regarding aging
3. Mental Health Issues
4. Obesity
5. Chronic Disease

When asked ***“What are the top 3 risky behaviors in Waushara County?”***, these are the top five.

1. Alcohol & Other Drugs
2. Poor eating habits
3. Physical Inactivity
4. Distracted driving
5. Unsafe Sex

(See Appendix C for the full survey results)

# Identification of Health Priorities

Based on the state and local data review and the community feedback the following health priorities were identified:

- Alcohol and Other Drug Use
- Issues regarding Aging
- Mental Health Issues
- Obesity
- Chronic Disease

Other topics of concern that arose and taken into consideration for the top three priorities:

- Access to Healthcare
- Access to Mental Health Care
- Quality Schools
- Transportation
- Domestic Violence
- Low Crime Rate

Wauhara County Public Health also takes in consideration priorities that will have the largest community impacts, aligns with county and state health priorities, and has the capacity to make an impact within a reasonable amount of time.

After reviewing the community feedback and the data retrieved the top four health priorities identified for Wauhara County are

- Access to Care
- Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse
- Chronic Disease and Physical Activity
- Mental Health

## Next Steps

Waushara County Public Health will work with existing partners and use the information from this Community Health Assessment (CHA) to begin developing the 2023-2027 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The top priority areas will be examined in more detail and by utilizing the evidence based data, work plans, goals and objectives will be determined. The CHIP will drive the work of local public health and REACH Waushara (the community and partners coalition) for the next five years and into the future.

## Limitations

Although this assessment reflects the most recent and best available data for Waushara County, there are some important limitations to note:

- Input from vulnerable populations, like migrant workers, non-english speaking residents, and Amish communities, can be difficult to obtain.
- Data from 2020-2021 may have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Due to limited participation, data from the community survey may not be representative of the entire county.
- Not all of the data retrieved is from the same year.

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## Appendices

Appendix A

[2022 County Health Rankings](#)

Appendix B

[2021 County Environmental Health Profile](#)

Appendix C

[2022 Community Survey Data](#)