

Community Health Report 2025



TRI-COUNTY
COMMUNITY HEALTH
IMPROVEMENT
COALITION

Tri-County Community Health Improvement Coalition



DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Outagamie County
Health and Human Services



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Winnebago County, WI



Ascension



Aurora Health Care®



Children's
Wisconsin

Kids deserve the best.



ThedaCare®



CASA HISPANA INC.



Diverse & Resilient



FOX VALLEY
Data Exchange
Calumet • Outagamie • Winnebago



NEW
HMONG
Our Story. Our Future.



The Connection
N.E.W. MENTAL HEALTH



UNITED WAY
Fox Cities



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Letter To The Community

This report marks the first time that the Tri-County Region of Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties has engaged in a singular process to produce a shared Community Health Needs Assessment. Facing distinctive organizational deadlines, differing regulatory requirements, unique histories with community involvement, and varied experience with tools/models for engaging in this work, our five local public health agencies and four area health systems bravely stepped into the messy work of “starting somewhere”.

Despite the challenges, we agreed on this shared purpose: to improve health and well-being for every individual in our communities. With this focus, we voted to adopt a common, shared tool: Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships 2.0 (MAPP 2.0). We invited community nonprofit agencies to share decision-making power and grow the coalition’s reach and representation, and we completed one cycle of the Needs Assessment/Health Improvement Plan process together.

With the north star of shared purpose and the goal of crossing the finish line together - no matter how “messy” – this report was created to best serve the people and communities of the Tri-County Region. We know this work takes time, and we have just begun to dip our toe into true collaboration – especially with our community partners outside of public health and health systems. It will require deep listening, relationship building, power sharing, and trust. It means working through challenges and designing solutions that work for all.

At a time when the world feels increasingly fragmented, we in the Tri-County Region are coming together. We are choosing to build a coalition of public health, health systems, and community representatives that care about creating a future where every person can thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. In the spirit of this coming together, we make this promise... to invest our time, energy, and resources to keep evolving this collaborative process and building authentic engagement with the community.

The information captured in this report reflects data about community conditions, diverse voices that bring the data to life, and perspectives that help frame the community’s most pressing needs. Next comes the work of responding, as individuals, organizations, and a coalition, through collaboration, alignment, and action.

We invite you to join us. Together, we can take these first steps to “start somewhere” on the road to community health and well-being.

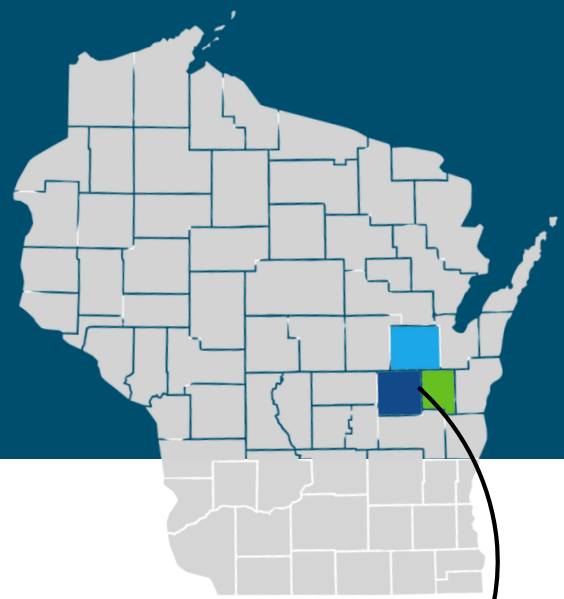
With appreciation and commitment,

Ascension
Aurora Health Care
Calumet County Public Health
Casa Hispana
Children’s Wisconsin
City of Appleton Health Department
City of Menasha Health Department
Diverse and Resilient
Fox Valley Data Exchange
Hmong American Partnership Fox Valley

NEW Hmong Professionals
NEW Mental Health Connection
Outagamie County Public Health
Partnership Community Health Center
People of Progression
Samaritan Fox Valley
ThedaCare
United Way Fox Cities
Winnebago County Public Health
YMCA of the Fox Cities

Who We Are

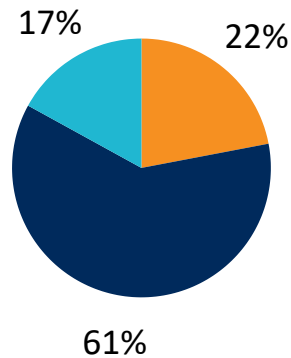
The Tri-County includes Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago counties in Northeast Wisconsin.



Population By Age

Each county has approximately the same population percentages by age.

- Under 18
- 18-64
- 65 and over

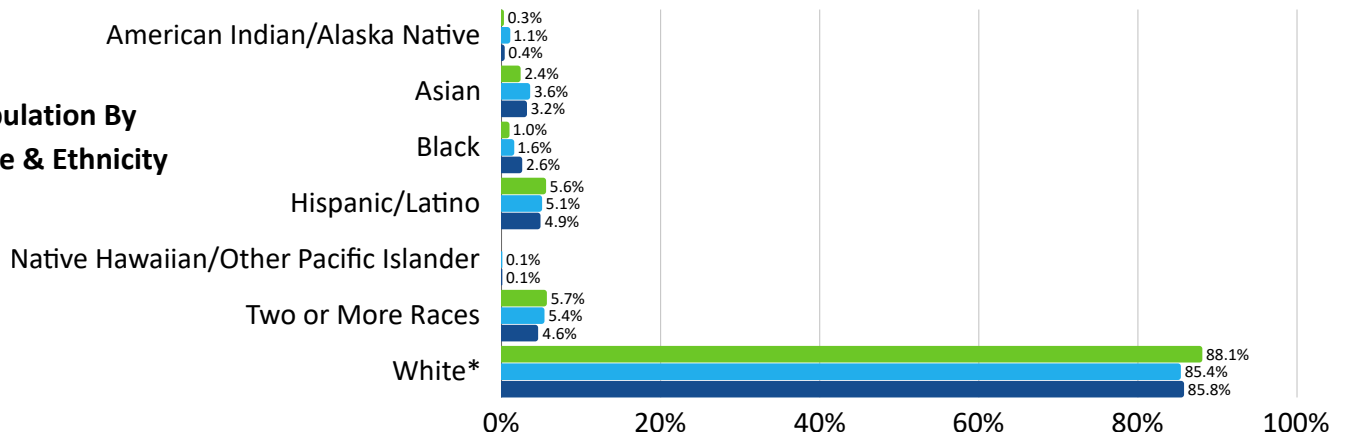


Total Population

Calumet	53,602
Outagamie	195,390
Winnebago	173,307

Population By Race & Ethnicity

● Calumet ● Outagamie ● Winnebago



*Non-Hispanic

(ACS Table B01001, 2023 5-year est.)

Languages Spoken

Calumet

English, Spanish, Hmong

Outagamie

English, Spanish, Hmong, Swahili, Dari, Kinyarwanda, and Lingala

Winnebago

English, Spanish, Swahili, Hmong

(Internal Counts of WIC Translation Services)

Key Takeaways & Our Capacity

Key Takeaways

This report emphasizes a driving force behind differences in health outcomes: wealth inequality. Through rigorous root cause analysis and data exploration, wealth inequality was consistently a dominant factor influencing health outcomes. While other demographic factors - like race or sexuality - also display relationships with health conditions, these characteristics are rarely inherently tied to health. Instead, social systems and power dynamics that privilege certain demographic groups serve to generate differences in health outcomes. In contrast, wealth inherently determines whether an individual has access to food, health care, housing, child care, and more. It dictates whether an individual's basic needs are met, and greater wealth consistently leads to better health outcomes. The narrative in this report seeks to highlight the outsized role wealth plays in accessing the resources and services necessary to lead healthy lives.

There is one component of health that has a notably weaker relationship with wealth: mental well-being. While the stresses of poverty or a lack of shelter can certainly harm an individual's mental health, mental health conditions can afflict anyone. Protective factors like strong interpersonal relationships, a sense of belonging, access to behavioral health care providers, regular physical activity, and adequate sleep can all improve one's mental health status. Mental health conditions can serve as both causes and effects of many of the health conditions listed in this report, and are an essential part of a person's overall well-being.

Our Capacity

A Community Health Assessment serves primarily to do three things: identify the health status of a community, determine the root causes of health conditions, and guide future interventions to improve the health of a community.

As stated above, wealth inequality is the root cause of many health disparities in the Tri-County region. However, Public Health has limited financial resources and minimal political influence to meaningfully address wealth inequality. Currently, both the federal government and the State of Wisconsin have also reduced funding for local grant opportunities. Therefore, the strength of this coalition will not derive from its financial power. Instead, this coalition derives its strength from its ability to coordinate community partner efforts to effect change. It will rely on collective vision, local advocacy, and intentional collaboration. And it may require prioritizing other upstream factors that influence health outcomes.

Technical Note

At the time this document was completed, the federal government shutdown of October-November 2025 had made Census Bureau information, both current and historical, inaccessible. There are some data points we intended to include in this report - for instance, the proportion of the population that is uninsured - that we would typically source from the Census Bureau. Because we had not yet pulled these data at the beginning of the shutdown, we have been obligated to omit them from this report or to seek other sources that may not be as reliable as the Census Bureau. Please visit the Census Bureau website when it is operational again for accurate data.

Vital Conditions Framework

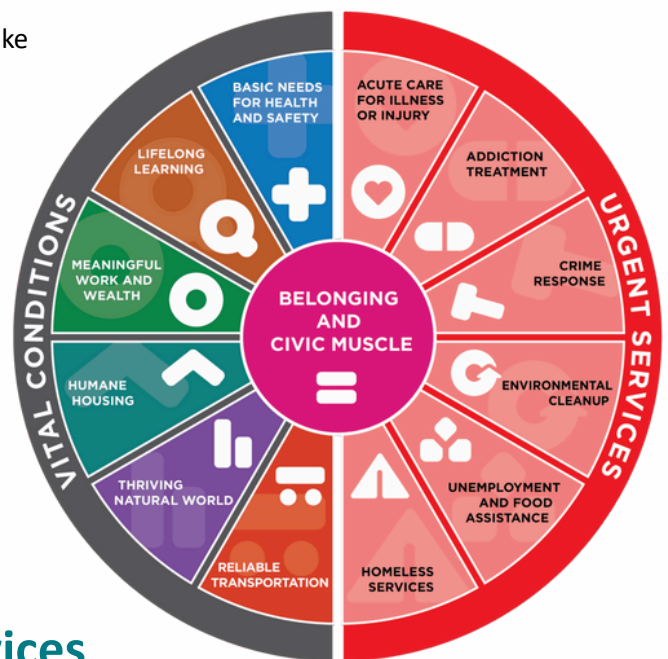
Nearly 500,000 people live in Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties, a region in northeast Wisconsin covering more than 1500 square miles. The Tri-County is rich in resources, including Fortune 500 companies, top-ranking schools and universities, outdoor recreation for every season, and an abundance of arts and culture (New North, Inc.). A few cities in the Tri-County have even been hailed as top places to live in the country.

This document is the inaugural Community Health Needs Assessment for the Tri-County. Previous health assessments were defined by a city or county jurisdiction or a healthcare service area. While programs and services are often restricted by jurisdictional boundaries, many of us cross county lines without even thinking about it. We might have a favorite supper club in Winneconne or Hortonville, or enjoy an afternoon at High Cliff State Park. Our doctor might be in Appleton, our dentist in Neenah, yet we might live in Menasha or Fox Crossing.

Vital Conditions for Health and Well-being

Thriving communities have certain characteristics that make them desirable places to live. These characteristics can be described as Vital Conditions for Health and Well-being.

“Vital conditions are the properties of places and institutions that we all need all the time to reach our full potential. They include physical necessities like food, water, and humane housing, but also include things that are harder to quantify, like a sense of belonging and agency or civic muscle. Investments in these conditions are necessary to create an equitable, thriving future for ourselves and for generations to come” (The Rippel Foundation).



Vital Conditions vs Urgent Services

Urgent services are broadly defined as all of the services that anyone under adversity would need to temporarily regain or restore their health and well-being. These include everything from urgent care clinics to food pantries and homeless shelters. Urgent services are necessary for a safe, healthy, and thriving community (The Rippel Foundation).

Thriving For All

The Tri-County Community Health Improvement Coalition believes we have the resources and capacity for all community members to thrive, no exceptions.

Each vital condition is distinct and indispensable. Together, they form an interdependent system that shapes opportunities for people and places to thrive. If any vital condition is denied or otherwise unfulfilled, serious adversity can accumulate, revealing itself in excess rates of illness, unemployment, housing distress, food insecurity, loneliness, and more.



Belonging & Civic Muscle

Sense of shared community and power to shape a common world



Meaningful Work & Wealth

Rewarding and diverse jobs/careers that provide a reasonable standard of living



Humane Housing

Adequate, affordable living space in the community where we live



Basic Needs for Health & Safety

Access to affordable food, health care, and other necessities



Lifelong Learning

Affordable child care and educational opportunities



Reliable Transportation

Affordable and diverse options to reach community spaces where we live our lives



Thriving Natural World

Sustainable resources, integration with nature, freedom from hazards

Belonging & Civic Muscle



Most people recognize the feeling of belonging or not belonging within a certain group, physical places, and experiences. Belonging is a feeling of happiness, comfort, security, being accepted, and included. Belonging is affected by many factors, making it a challenge to assess. Simply put, you know it when it's there and when it's missing.

Belonging is important because it's a **fundamental human need**, just like food, water, and safety. People are wired to seek **connection and acceptance**.

- For individuals, belonging:
 - Supports mental health by reducing loneliness, anxiety, and depression (CDC).
 - Provides motivation and resilience, since people are more willing to take risks, learn, and persist when they feel supported.
- For groups and organizations, belonging:
 - Increases trust, cooperation, and collaboration.
 - Strengthens retention and engagement in schools, workplaces, and communities.
 - Fosters innovation, because people share more openly when they feel safe and respected.

Belonging is often the result of strong social connections. When people experience meaningful and positive relationships, they feel a sense of inclusion and attachment to their social groups or communities, fulfilling their need for belonging. **Lacking social connection can increase the risk for disease and negative health outcomes** including heart disease, stroke, anxiety, depression, and dementia (Office of the U.S. Surgeon General).

High school student data



1 out of 3 high school students in the Tri-County area said they felt like they didn't belong at school. Students who were:

Food Insecure, Female, LGBT, People of Color, or People with Physical Disabilities

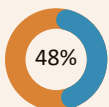
were much more likely to report feeling like they didn't belong.



3 out of 4 high school students don't get emotional support when needed.

(WI DPI YRBS, 2023)

Adult survey data



Less than half of adults in the Tri-County region feel a strong or very strong sense of community belonging.

(Imagine Fox Cities Survey, 2021)



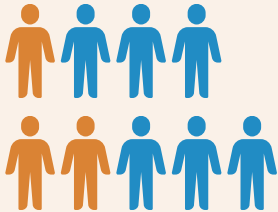
1 out of 5 adults does not get the social and emotional support they need.

(BRFSS, 2023)

Belonging & Civic Muscle



Recent data show that the United States is in a mental health crisis, experienced by people of all ages—but especially by young people. This trend was observed before the COVID-19 pandemic but has been worsened by pandemic-related factors (CDC).



1 out of 4 high school students in the Tri-County area feel persistently sad or hopeless.

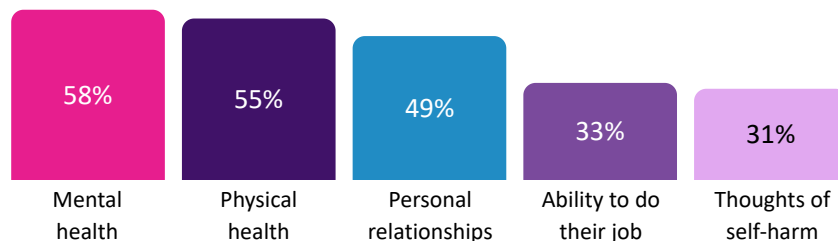
2 out of 5 high school students in the Tri-County area reported problems with anxiety.

(WI DPI YRBS, 2023)

Social connection is a strong predictor of mental health and physical health. People who feel isolated experience higher incidence of anxiety, depression, chronic pain, and thoughts of suicide.



Among the 22% in the US reporting loneliness or isolation, many say it negatively impacts their:



(Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Recommendations, 2023)

People of color and LGBTQ+ community members experience the most isolation and the least amount of acceptance. In order for social connection to be experienced by all, it will require an open-mindedness to achieve a deeper understanding and unconditional positive regard for all human beings.

People of color and LGBTQ+ individuals are more than twice as likely to feel isolated, according to the Mind Your Wellness Survey (MYWS) respondents (2022).

1 in 10 MYWS respondents reported considering suicide in the past year.

- **LGBTQ+ folks are 11 times more likely to have attempted suicide than non-LGBTQ.**
- **People of color are 3 times more likely to have attempted suicide than whites.**

It's essential to recognize that feeling connected and having a sense of belonging are powerful safeguards against suicide and poor mental health.

"Being socially connected is the brain's lifelong passion. It's been baked into our operating system for tens of millions of years." (Dr. Matthew Lieberman, UCLA neuroscientist)

Belonging & Civic Muscle



Civic muscle is about being part of a community and contributing to its vibrancy. It includes things like voting, volunteering, and community voice. How we embrace human rights, injustice, civil discourse, and conflicts are questions to consider in an effort to build civic muscle.

Our community, our health

70% of our health is the result of where we live, learn, work, and play. Everything, from schools and libraries to businesses and banks, road conditions, bike lanes, housing options, grocery stores, recreational opportunities, spiritual offerings, green space, parks, trees, plants, and pollinators, factors into our health.

Our communities (and how well they function) play a much larger role in our health than individual choice.

To improve health, focus on belonging:

Belonging means having a meaningful voice and the opportunity to participate in the design of political, social, and cultural structures that shape one's life — the right to both contribute and make demands upon society and political institutions (Othering & Belonging Institute).

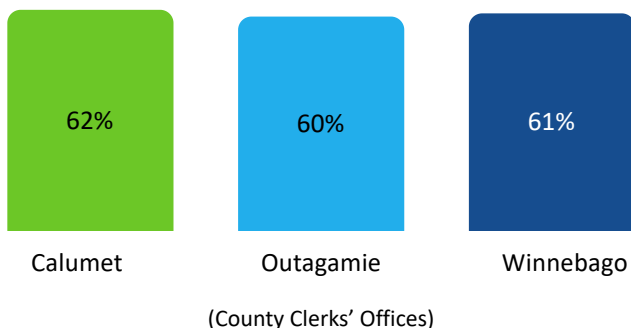
To improve belonging, focus on civic muscle

The people elected to local, state, and federal offices are responsible for making policies that directly affect our health. Policies include clean water and air regulations, Medicaid eligibility, and protections against harmful substances such as tobacco and nicotine products. Elected officials have the power to control the outsized influence of corporations. Without regulations, some corporations have shown their willingness to pollute our environment, make ultra-processed food with little nutritional value, underpay our workers, and lobby to keep it all in place.

These are **Commercial Determinants of Health**, or the ways corporate power shows up in every corner of our lives, from the food we eat to the air we breathe to the policies that govern our communities.

Impacted citizens are often the ones to sound the alarm about calculated corporate strategies that increase profit yet cause harm. Unjust corporate decisions move ahead until enough alarms go off.

Percent of registered voters who voted
in the April 1, 2025 election



Civic participation helps us care for our family, our community, and one another.

Openness to others, to different opinions, to our future, and to have hope is necessary. We can support one another to participate in civic activities, like voting in local, state, and national elections, attending town hall meetings, volunteering for local projects, joining community groups, and speaking out on important issues.

Belonging & Civic Muscle

The Importance of Belonging and Civic Muscle

Do our communities have a strong history of citizen-led action and community engagement? How feasible is it to influence local decisions? Communities where people do not feel valued experience high levels of apathy. Residents and the community itself suffer. People who know their voices will be heard in the process of shaping their community's future make better, healthier choices. People with a strong sense of efficacy, belonging, and social connectedness tend to live healthier, happier lives.

Problem Today: Weak Civic Muscle

A lack of "civic muscle," or the capacity for collective action and community problem-solving, stems from factors like political polarization and hyperpartisanship, decreased trust in institutions, a decline in the number and vibrancy of community organizations, and insufficient civic education and opportunities for dialogue (Roulier).

Lack of Trust

Americans' trust in the federal government, historically respected institutions, education, science, public health, and media is at historic lows (Transparency International).

Systemic Barriers

Indicators around voter turnout, voter suppression, and systemic inequalities can create significant barriers to civic participation.

Apathy

When citizens feel like their voices don't matter, or they lack the time and knowledge to participate effectively, apathy and disengagement can occur.

Corruption

Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development, and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, and social division. It can happen anywhere: businesses, government, the courts, media, sports, financial systems, education, and health care. It can involve anyone: politicians, government officials, public servants, business leaders, or members of the public.

The larger impact of weakened civic muscle is that it creates an opening for a small group to dominate decision-making that can neglect the broader community interests and needs.

Where Do We Go Next?

Opportunities to Improve Belonging & Civic Muscle

- Cultivate community participation and leadership
- Prioritize inclusive community over corporate interests
- Support organizations like People of Progression, Diverse and Resilient, NEW HMong, Casa Hispana, and more
- Support corporate social responsibility
- Build public-private partnerships
- Resist the rise of hate and dismantle systemic oppression and racism

Meaningful Work & Wealth

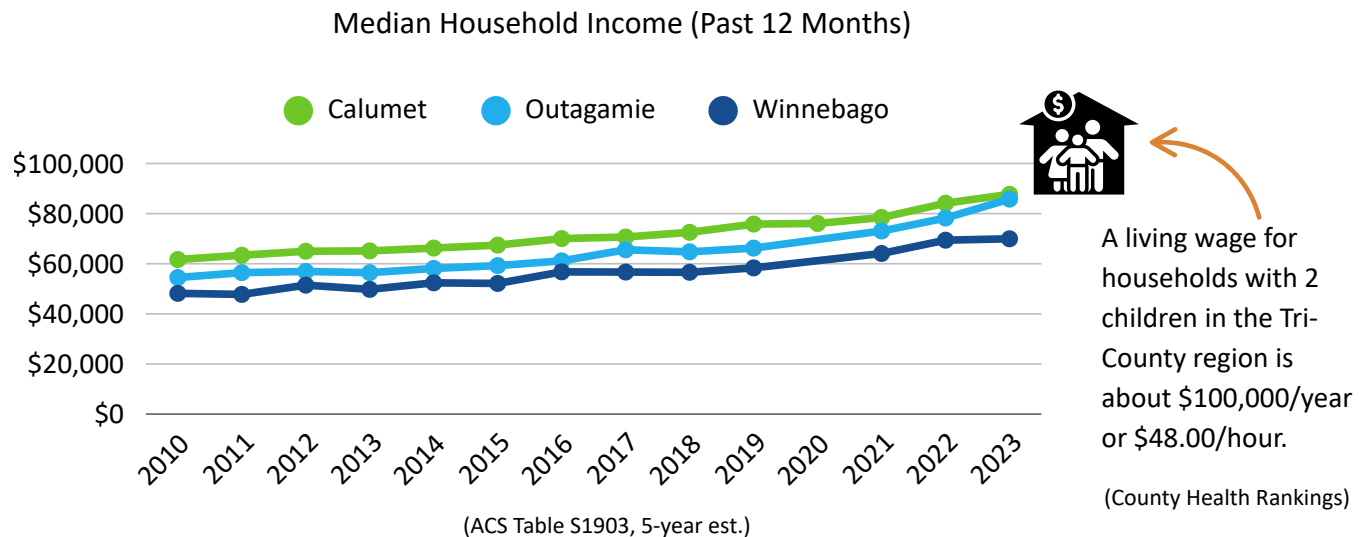


Our lives and self-worth flourish when doing productive, rewarding work. The ability to accumulate adequate wealth shapes the living standards not only for families and communities, but for generations to come.

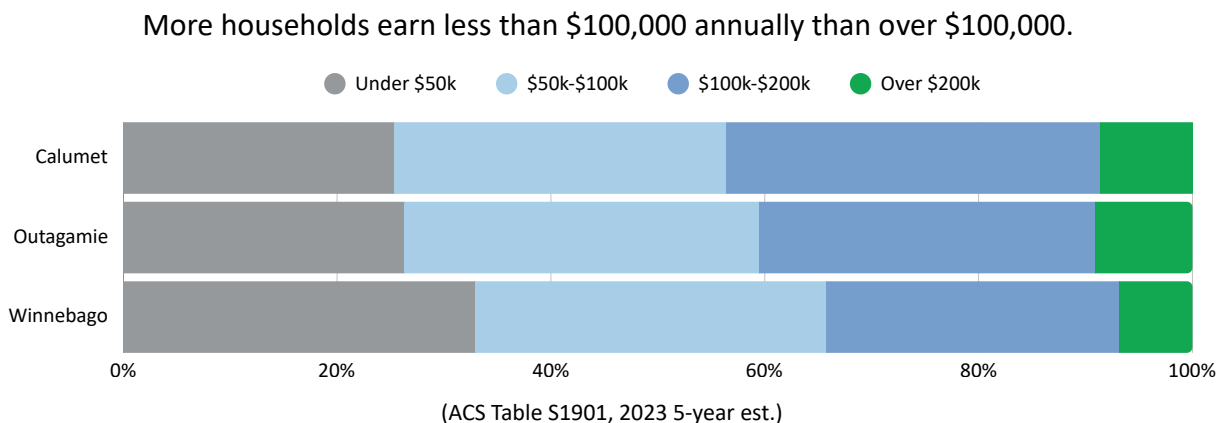
Limited income has a significant impact on access to quality housing, food, transportation, education, and health care. People living with financial strains have:

- Poorer self-reported health
- More stress, increased risk for self-harm, suicide attempts, depression, and anxiety
- Higher rates of chronic and communicable disease













Because income is a significant, well-documented determinant of health, the effects of low income and income inequality are reflected in population health. There has been a significant increase in income inequality in the United States since the 1980s, following deliberate government policies to reduce tax rates and shrink social safety net programs (Avanceña et al.).



Median income is the midpoint of income distribution, where half of all households had an annual income below this amount, and half had annual incomes above it.



Meaningful Work & Wealth

Category	Survival \$	Stability \$
 Housing	\$1,065	\$1,861
 Transportation	\$935	\$1,517
 Childcare	\$1,557	\$1,961
 Food	\$1,293	\$2,078
 Technology	\$116	\$116
 Miscellaneous	\$558	\$822
 Healthcare	\$617	\$688
 Tax Payments	\$627	\$1,351
 Savings	\$0	\$822
 Monthly Total	\$6,768	\$11,216
 Annual Total	\$81,216	\$134,592
 Hourly Wage/Adult	\$20.31	\$33.65

ALICE Households: Essential, Working, Struggling

ALICE is an acronym for:

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

ALICE households are experiencing financial hardship. They earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) yet struggle to afford basic needs. For a growing number of households, financial stability is out of reach, no matter how hard they work.

A comparison of **estimated monthly costs** for **Survival** and **Stability budgets** for a family of four living in the Tri-County with two working adults and two children in childcare illustrates the importance of a living wage.

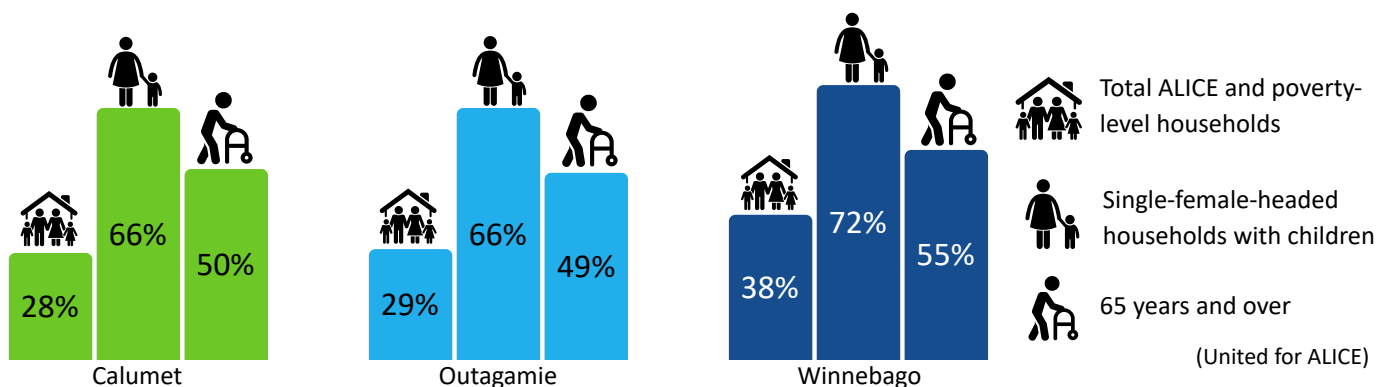
The Survival budget is the minimum cost to live and work in today's economy. The Stability budget shows how more income provides a more financially stable household, including the ability to save for future needs.

Data reports use a standardized set of measurements to quantify the cost of a basic household budget in each county in each state, and to show how many households are struggling to afford it.

United for ALICE has developed measures that provide a comprehensive, unbiased picture of financial hardship. **In the US, 41% of households cannot make ends meet.**

Household budget calculators from United for ALICE Calumet, Outagamie, & Winnebago Counties.

Single-female-headed households with children and people 65 and older are disproportionately ALICE households.



Meaningful Work & Wealth



Income Inequality

The income gap between the rich and everyone else has been growing by every major statistical measure for more than 30 years.

- Low wage earners have not seen wage growth as compared to high wage earners
- White and Asian wages are higher than Black and Latino wages
- Corporations that pay the lowest median wages reward CEOs through stock buy-backs:
 - Lowe's
 - Home Depot
 - Walmart
 - Autozone
 - Target
 - Dollar General
- Women are underrepresented in high-level, highly paid positions and overrepresented in low-paying jobs.
- Women of color and transgender individuals experience higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and other economic hardship (Inequality.org).

“

Working now, highest paying job \$13/hr.

Difficult to get a job because of disability.

”



\$37
2021



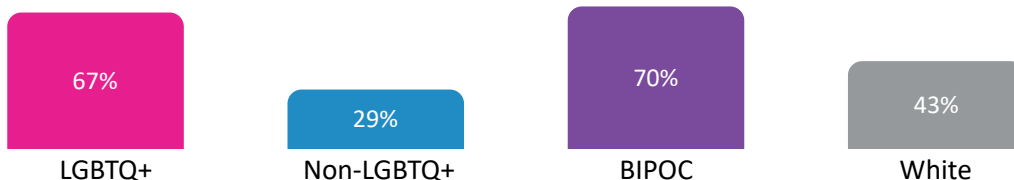
\$48
2023

In the Tri-County, the hourly wage needed to cover basic expenses for 1 adult and 2 children increased by about \$10 over 2 years.

(County Health Rankings)

Tri-County Wage Gaps

Annual Household Income Under \$50,000



(Mind Your Wellness Survey, 2023)

Cuts to vital food and housing programs risk unraveling a tightly linked support structure that strengthens the fabric of our communities.

Across the country, rising food and housing costs are pushing families to the brink—while critical resources are being pulled away. Recent and pending federal cuts to vital nutrition and housing programs threaten to deepen the crisis, undermining not just individual stability but the strength and resilience of entire communities (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).

Meaningful Work & Wealth



How Did We Get Here?

The US system prioritizes capital over labor. Corporate profits flow mostly to shareholders, executives, and investors, while workers' bargaining power and wage growth have been weakened by policy choices and shifts in business norms.

- Since the 1970s, worker productivity in the US has risen, but wages have not kept pace (United for ALICE).
- Unions are in decline. At its peak in 1954, about 33% of workers were in a union, whereas today it's closer to 10%.
- Since the 1980s, corporate governance has emphasized maximizing shareholder value above other goals (Posner).
- The US minimum wage has not kept up with inflation. Today's minimum wage is \$7.25/hour. It should be well above \$20.00/hour (Romero and Whittaker).
- Corporate tax cuts (especially in 2017) have increased after-tax profits.
- Income inequality has skyrocketed. Over the past three decades, America's most affluent families have added to their net worth, while those on the bottom have dipped into "negative wealth," meaning the value of their debts exceeds the value of their assets, according to National Bureau of Economic Research data (Inequality.org).

The Shrinking Middle Class

The share of American adults who live in middle-income households has decreased from 61% in 1971 to 51% in 2023. This downsizing has proceeded slowly but surely for the last fifty years, with each decade ending with fewer adults living in middle-income households than at the beginning of the decade (Kochhar and Sechopoulos).

- Among Americans ages 25 and older in 2022, 52% with a bachelor's degree or higher level of education lived in middle-class households, and another 35% lived in upper-income households.
- Married adults and those in multi-earner households made more progress on the income ladder from 1971-2021.
 - Unmarried men and women were much more likely to be in the lower-income tier in 2021. Unmarried men are less likely than unmarried women to be lower income.
- Despite progress, Black and Hispanic adults trail behind other groups in their economic status.

Where Do We Go Next?

First, we need to understand the connection between wealth and health. Many health outcomes, from life expectancy to infant mortality and obesity, can be linked to economic inequality within a population (Inequality.org). Greater income inequality within a population can negatively impact even the health of the wealthy. This is primarily because greater inequality reduces the sense of shared community, which leads to more mistrust and insecurity for all.

Attributes of a thriving community are evident in policies that support people throughout the lifespan, such as affordable child care, livable wages for caregivers, free and healthy school breakfast and lunches, affordable health insurance, paid family leave, access to post-secondary education, well-paying jobs, and job training programs. Local organizations like LEAVEN Fox Cities, Vida, ADVOCAP, and Goodwill NCW are already helping stabilize local residents' finances and lift them out of poverty.

Humane Housing



Humane Housing is about stable, safe places to live. It's creating communities where people can thrive. Explore the data below to find out where our communities are succeeding and where there is room for improvement.

Many community members are actively seeking help for housing needs.

- Rent has been stable for more than a decade in the Tri-County area.
 - It is difficult for families with children to find affordable vacancies.
 - Renters are more likely to be young, poor, and/or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).
- Home ownership is the best way for families to accumulate wealth in America.
 - The cost of buying a home has risen faster than wages since 2021, after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - This makes existing disparities even worse.
- To solve this crisis, we need to build more housing supply.
 - Single-family zoning regulations and high interest rates make it harder for builders to build new housing, and harder for current homeowners to move out of their home.

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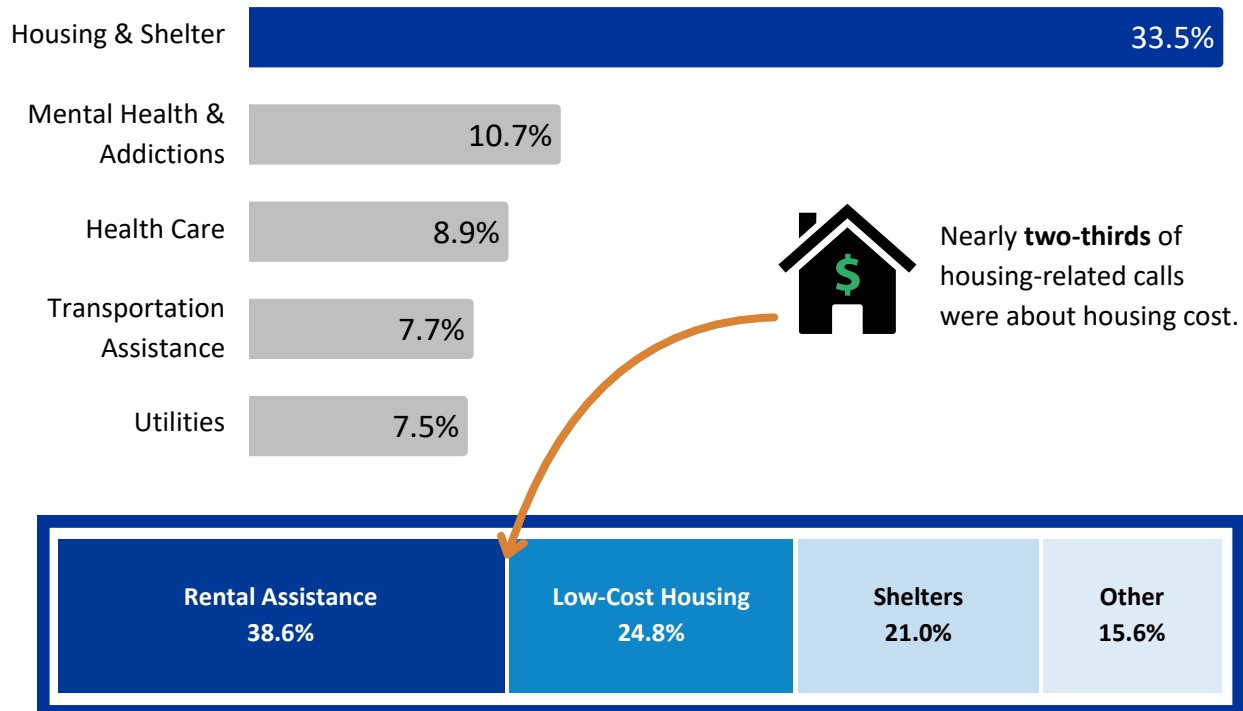
I am very concerned about the lack of affordable housing in this area.

This is a wonderful community...

However, spending even 5 minutes searching for rentals and homes leaves almost nothing relatively affordable.

”

Housing and shelter requests were the **most common topic** for United Way 211 from July 29, 2024, to July 28, 2025.



(211 Counts - Calumet/Outagamie/Winnebago Co. aggregate calls)

Humane Housing



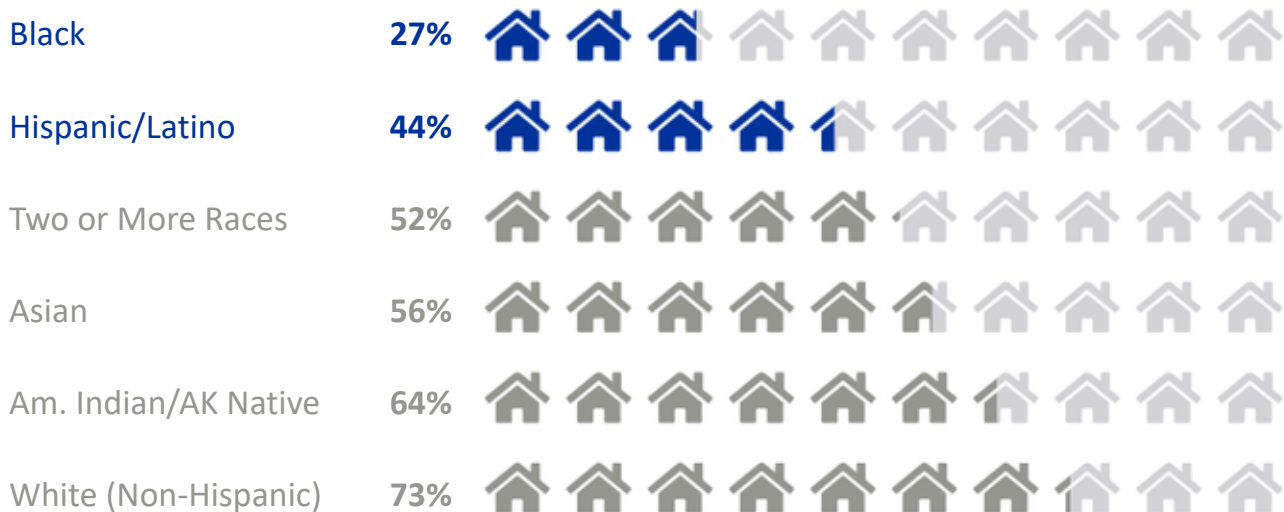
1 out of 3 Renters is spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs versus **1 out of 7 Homeowners**

(ACS Table B25140, 2023 5-year est.)

Housing Cost Burden is a real problem in our community.

- Housing Cost Burden is when a household spends **more than 30%** of their gross annual income on housing costs.
 - Families experiencing Housing Cost Burden are less likely to be able to afford basic needs like food, health care, and child care.
 - Housing Cost Burden is associated with worse physical, mental, and financial health.
- Renters in the Tri-County region are much more likely to experience Housing Cost Burden.
 - This means renters have a harder time saving money to prepare for emergencies or to plan their future.
 - Renters are more likely to be young, poor, and/or BIPOC.

Less than half of **Black and Hispanic/Latino** households own their home.



(ACS Table B25003, 2023 5-year est.)

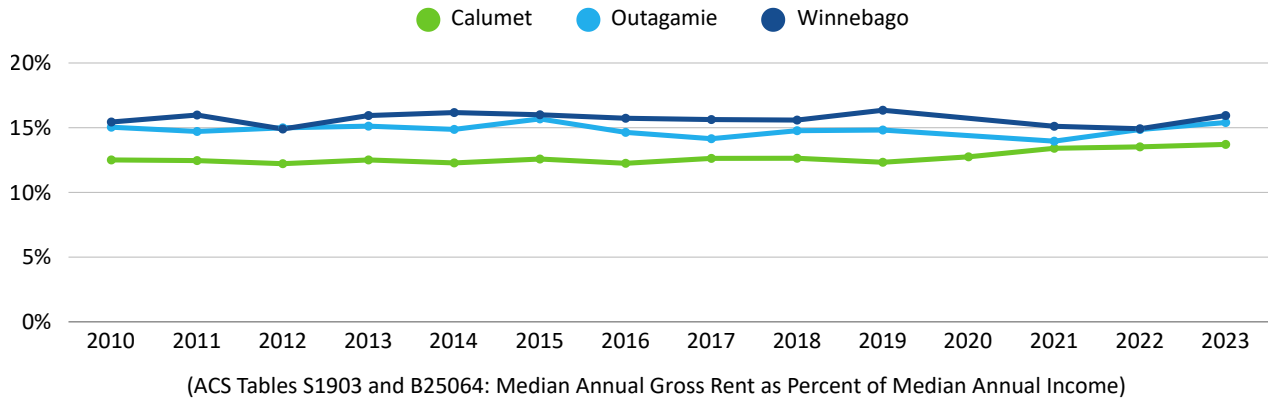


For American families, homes remain their greatest source of wealth (Marohn and Herriges, 65). In the Tri-County area, home ownership doesn't look the same for all groups. 73% of white households own their home, meaning they benefit as their home's value increases. But only **27% of Black** households and **44% of Hispanic/Latino** households own their home. This means these groups are less likely to benefit from rising home values. This isn't unique to this region. After all, "virtually all of the increase in wealth inequality in the United States in the past four decades is accounted for by the increase in the share of capital in housing" (Marohn and Herriges, 100).

Humane Housing



Rent in the Tri-County region has mostly remained **stable** for the past 15 years, relative to incomes.

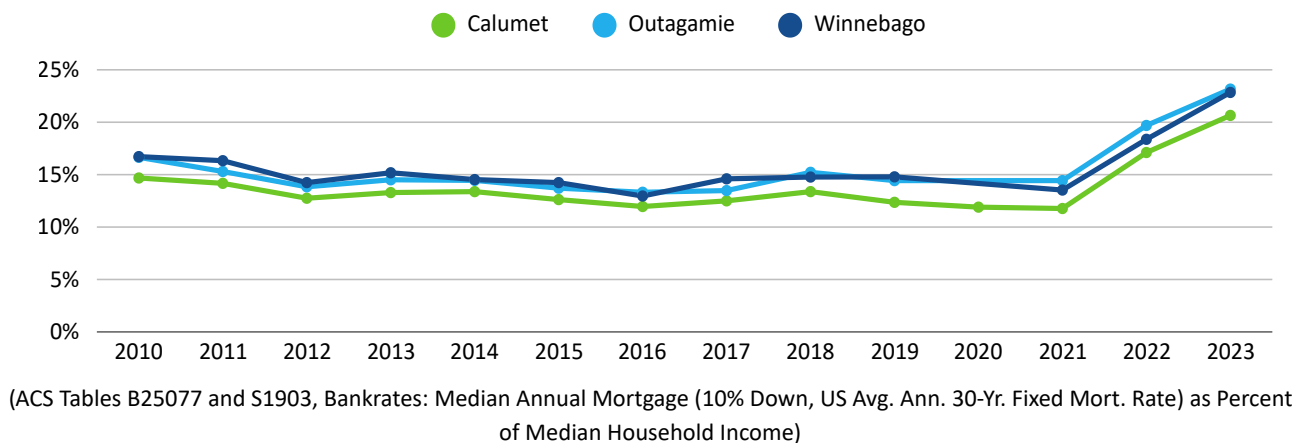


*1-year ACS estimates used for Outagamie/Winnebago Counties to avoid smoothing and better capture recent volatility.



Rent has been affordable for median earners who already have a place to live. However, inflation has made rent harder to afford for minimum wage earners since 2009, when the minimum wage was last raised. It has also become harder to find an apartment due to the low supply. This is especially true for families with children, who struggle to find rental units with adequate space.

Homebuyers have to **pay more** of their income on mortgage costs since 2020.



*1-year ACS estimates used for Outagamie/Winnebago Counties to avoid smoothing and better capture recent volatility.

Homebuyers in the Tri-County area now have to commit more than 20% of their income to mortgage payments alone. This doesn't include property taxes, home insurance, private mortgage insurance, or utilities. Getting closer to 30% means homeowners are more likely to face housing cost burden. **Homeownership is getting harder across the Tri-County region.**



Humane Housing



How Did We Get Here?

Homeownership is one of the most important ways families build intergenerational wealth. Many parents pass homes down to their children to provide stability and financial security. This practice has not been equally available to everyone in the Tri-County region. During Reconstruction, Black residents owned homes and businesses in the Fox Cities. But by 1930, cities like Appleton had become “sundown towns.” These are cities where Black people could neither live nor stay overnight (Vasquez). Authorities used anti-vagrancy laws to make Black people leave the city after work. And places like Oshkosh had a visible Ku Klux Klan presence. Fear of racism and violence drove most Black residents to leave the community (Vasquez). In the 1940s and 1950s, some housing developments added racial covenants. These contracts legally prevented Black people from buying homes (Unvarnished).

It wasn’t until the 1960s that Black residents began moving back to the Tri-County area. In 1968, the National Fair Housing Act was passed to prevent discrimination (Fair Housing Act). Still, many Black residents struggled to purchase homes because of racist lending practices. Today, local community leaders promote equal access to homeownership. But it’s important to understand why inequality persists. We saw on an earlier page that a majority of Black households don’t own their home. Historically, local white families have been able to benefit from homeownership. In contrast, many Black families have been denied this opportunity. They have not been able to build intergenerational wealth via housing. This disparity is systemic and cannot be quickly fixed. It requires intentional, sustained efforts to undo.

New Problem: Housing Supply Shortage

There are not enough homes for sale, and prices have been rising quickly. Private equity and investors make it even harder for real people to buy homes. Investors can afford to pay more for houses, meaning real people have to raise their offer or be outbid. We see investors turning houses in the Tri-County area into short-term rentals like AirBnBs. Or they build a portfolio of long-term rentals, which might be managed by faraway landlords. This funnels wealth outside our community and takes away housing supply from the people who truly need it. In early 2022, the highest offer on one in five homes in America was an investor (Marohn and Herriges, 67). As investors buy more local properties, families may have to either rent or leave the area. But rentals that can accommodate families are also in short supply.

Single-family zoning makes the problem worse. This type of zoning only allows the construction of single-family homes with yards and driveways in large parts of our community. Elder homeowners often have no smaller housing options in their neighborhood. They have to choose between aging in place or losing the relationships they’ve built with their neighbors. Many choose to age in place, which means fewer houses are on the market and home prices go up. And single adults, low-income families, and first-time homebuyers may not want a single-family home with a large yard. But that is the majority of what zoning ordinances allow. Single-family zoning also creates car-dependent neighborhoods that people have to leave in order to live their lives. This is unhealthy for physical, mental, social, and financial health.

Where Do We Go Next?

First, we need to treat housing more as a basic need and less as an investment. Shelters like Pillars and Day by Day should be last-resort options. It’s important to build ample housing supply in walkable neighborhoods that meet residents’ basic needs. We can also question policies that permit short-term rentals to buy up housing supply. And we can acknowledge that inequalities exist and work to combat them.

Basic Needs for Health and Safety



Basic Needs are essential to navigating day-to-day life. The category is large and overlaps with other categories like housing. We need to fulfill our basic needs before we can focus on anything else. Explore the data below to find out where our communities are succeeding and where there is room for improvement.

“

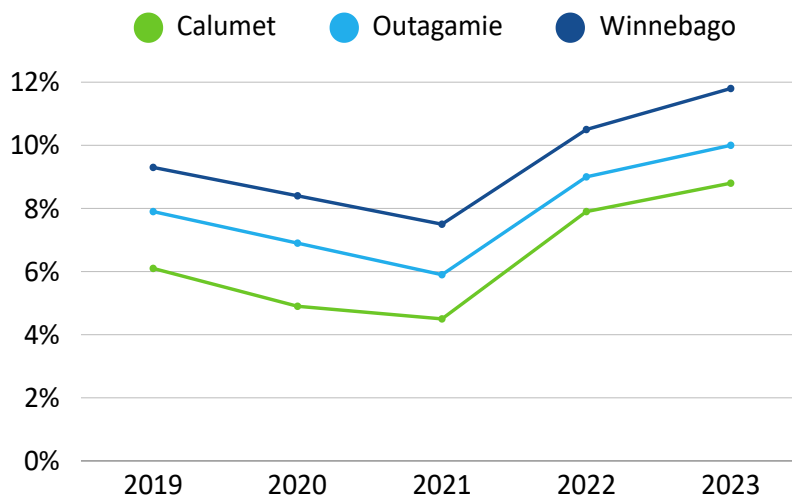
Every time something gets better at work, I lose help for food.

”

Basic needs are getting more expensive as benefits are going away.

- Food insecurity (limited or uncertain access to adequate food) is going up.
 - The cost of food has risen faster than inflation.
 - SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits cover less than they used to.
- Many in our community do not have access to the healthcare they need.
 - Federal program cuts and rising premiums are hurting the lowest earners.
 - Behavioral healthcare is particularly difficult to access.

Food insecurity has been trending up since 2021.



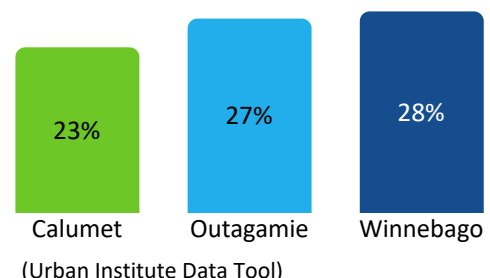
(Feeding America Map the Meal Gap)

- About 10% of the Tri-County population meets Feeding America’s definition of “food insecure,” using USDA data.
- Most people living in poverty are food secure because they have benefits to help them afford food.
- People earning above the poverty line may lose benefits, causing food insecurity.

Food is getting more expensive.

- Food prices rose 11% faster than general inflation from Dec. 2020 to Dec. 2024 (Davidenko and Sweitzer).
- Rising food costs hurt poor families more because they have less discretionary spending to cut.
- SNAP benefits, commonly known as “food stamps,” are not enough to cover food costs for modest meals (Urban Institute Data Tool).

A **modest meal** in the Tri-County costs about **25% above** what **SNAP benefits** cover.

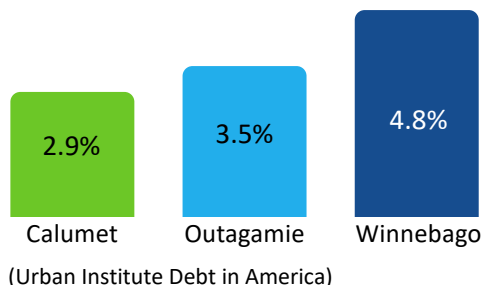


Basic Needs for Health and Safety



Access to care means being able to get medical, dental, and mental health care when it is needed, without too many barriers like cost, distance, or long wait times. It includes having enough providers nearby, affordable services, and insurance or programs that help cover costs.

About 4% of the Tri-County population - or roughly 17,000 residents - are uninsured.



- Non-white residents are more than 3 times as likely as white residents to be uninsured.
- Uninsured Americans are less likely to seek preventative care and often delay necessary medical care.
- Uninsured Americans are more susceptible to emergency medical expenses and debt.

Wisconsin Medicaid

Approximately 1 in 5 Wisconsinites (or 1 million people) receive health care coverage and services through Wisconsin's Medicaid programs. Almost half of Wisconsin Medicaid members are kids. Anyone with a ForwardHealth card has Wisconsin Medicaid, including members of:

- BadgerCare Plus
- Children's Long-Term Support Program
- Family Care Partnership
- Family Planning Only Services
- Family Care
- IRIS
- PACE

Our community members risk losing health insurance coverage.

Many people may lose their health insurance as a result of federal budget changes from the Big Beautiful Bill. The federal budget cuts Medicaid by about \$1 trillion over the next 10 years and other spending that helps people afford health insurance. By cutting Medicaid and Affordable Care Act coverage:

- **276,000 people in WI will lose health insurance.**
 - The Medicaid work requirement will cause an estimated **63,000 in WI to lose BadgerCare.**
 - The expiration of the premium tax credit will cause an estimated **30,000 in WI to lose health insurance** (WI DHS).

“

Even those of us with two incomes and full-time employment struggle to access needed healthcare due to costs, high deductibles, lack of available providers covered in insurance plans, and an inability to leave work to access needed medical appointments.

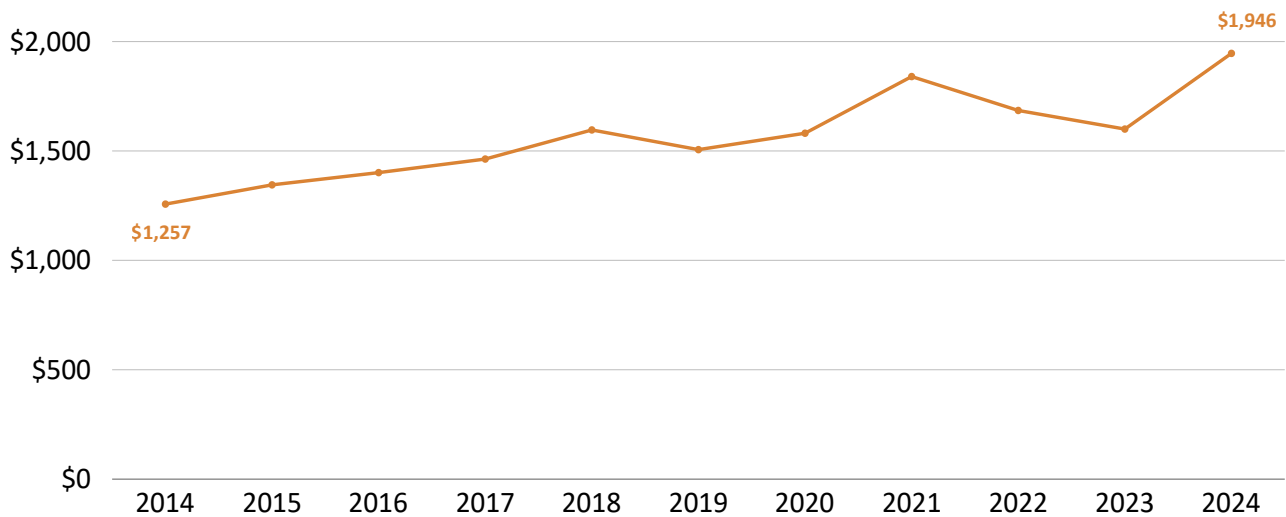
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Basic Needs for Health and Safety



Employer-based health insurance is the most common type of coverage for Tri-County residents. Employees and their employers both contribute to “premiums,” the fixed cost required to maintain insurance coverage. In this model, coverage is tied to an employee’s employment status. Employers often negotiate cheaper plans than individuals could buy on their own in the marketplace. However, this can lead to “job lock,” where employees are unable to freely leave their position because the loss of benefits will be detrimental to their finances and/or health.

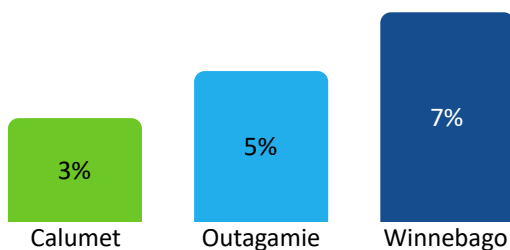
Average annual **employee premiums** for employer-based health insurance in Wisconsin have **increased by 55%** over the past decade.



(Kaiser Family Foundation)

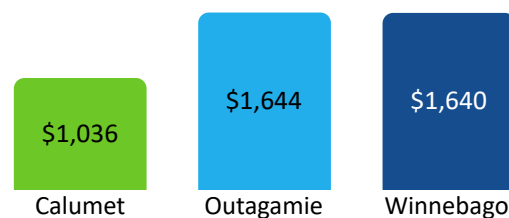
The increase in employee premium contributions **exceeded general inflation**, which rose by only about 32% over the same time period (Bureau of Labor Statistics). This means that health insurance has become more expensive for employed Wisconsin residents. However, because of job lock, employees may have no other viable alternatives. For residents who earn less money, and therefore have less discretionary spending to cut, this causes acute financial pain and may result in choosing between health care and other necessities.

More than 5% of the Tri-County population has medical debt in collections.



(Urban Institute Debt in America)

For residents with medical debt in collections, the median debt is well over \$1,000.



(Urban Institute Debt in America)

Basic Needs for Health and Safety



Demand for behavioral health (mental health and substance use) services has increased in the past three years, but availability isn't keeping up. It's important to encourage help-seeking behavior, which assists in breaking down years of cultural stigma against mental health care. However, if help-seeking behavior is met with waitlists or rejections from providers, people can experience further mental harm.

A lack of mental health care is causing spillover.

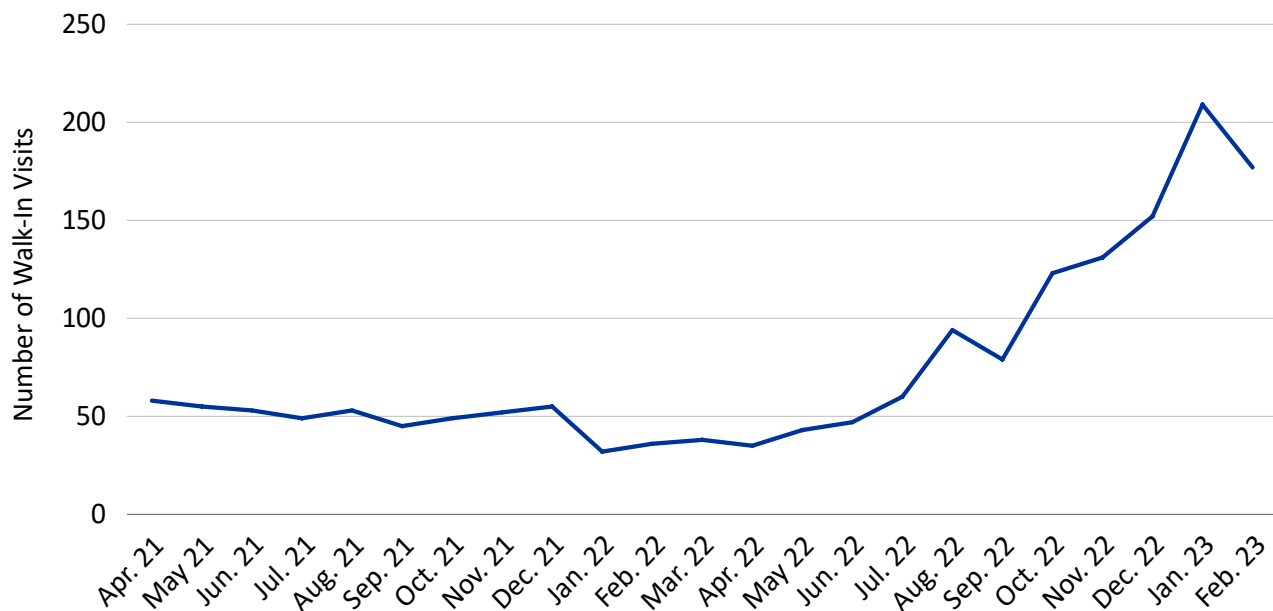
- Mental health-related calls are the second most common type of call to 211 in the Tri-County since January 2022 (211 Counts).
- Mental health provider waitlists have increased across the Tri-County since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Patients sometimes do not feel their cultural needs are met by their mental health care provider, and choose to find a new one or seek help elsewhere.
- Law enforcement agencies, schools, emergency departments, and other entities report having to handle mental health needs for which they are not the best fit.

“

The COVID pandemic really accelerated the mental health care crisis. So many more people needed behavioral health treatment all at once. As a provider, I think it's great we collectively challenged so much of the stigma surrounding mental health help. But the system doesn't have an adequate number of providers to handle the flood. Especially in 2022, I watched waitlist lengths soar in the Fox Valley, and we still are just doing our best to triage. We need more providers, and more diverse providers. The system needs help.

”

Utilization of one local behavioral health walk-in clinic increased substantially beginning in late 2022.



(Mind Your Wellness Survey, 2023)

Basic Needs for Health and Safety



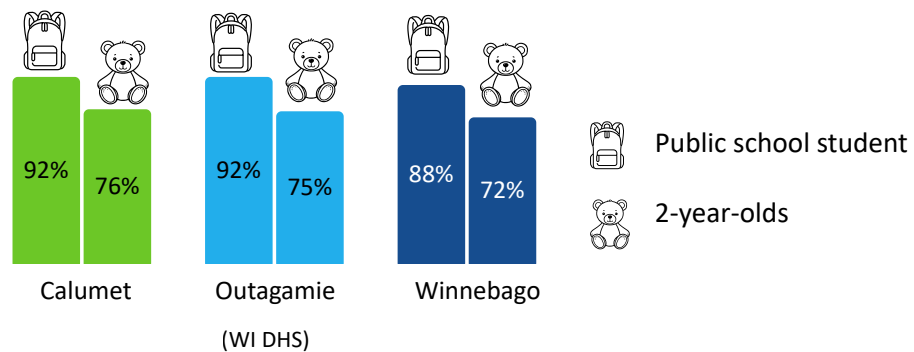
Preventative health care focuses on maintaining good health and preventing diseases before they occur. Prevention is fiscally responsible by preventing diseases before they become severe. Early detection means fewer hospital visits, less expensive treatments, and lower financial burden on individuals and healthcare systems.

Childhood Vaccines

Vaccinating infants is critical because their immune systems are still developing and vulnerable to serious or even fatal vaccine-preventable diseases (CDC).

All three counties have seen a decline in vaccinations that are recommended to be completed by age two. However, most school-age kids are fully immunized, which may be due to parents waiting and/or spacing out infant vaccinations and to Wisconsin school immunization law requirements.

Public school students who met immunization requirements (2023) compared to 2-year-olds fully immunized (2022)



Oral Health and Dental Care

Good oral health reduces cancer risks, improves diabetes control, lowers opioid use, decreases school absences, boosts productivity, and extends life. Untreated oral disease costs the US over \$45 billion annually in lost productivity (CDC).



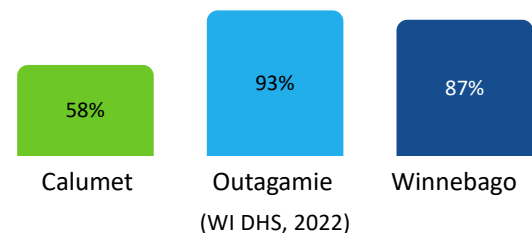
1 out of 3 adults in the Tri-County region did NOT visit the dentist in the past year for routine care (CDC Places, 2022).

Fluoridated Water

Providing optimally fluoridated water to US communities for 1 year **saves \$6.5 billion in dental treatment costs and offers an average return on investment of \$20 for every \$1 spent.**

On average, communities with water fluoridation experience 25% fewer cavities, saving \$32 per person annually by avoiding dental treatment costs and leading to fewer missed work and school days (CDC).

Percent of population on public drinking water who had access to fluoridated water



Basic Needs for Health and Safety



How Did We Get Here?

The 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) greatly reduced uninsured rates in Wisconsin. In 2013, before the ACA took effect, more than 9% of Wisconsinites lacked health insurance (Friedsam). By 2016, only 5.4% of residents were uninsured. The ACA prevents insurers from denying coverage due to pre-existing conditions, provides cost assistance to make insurance more affordable, and allows young adults to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26. According to Governor Tony Evers, 313,579 Wisconsinites bought health insurance through the Affordable Care Act in the most recent enrollment period, the most ever for our state. 88% of those enrollees qualified for premium tax credits that made insurance more affordable.

In the 2010s, then-Governor Scott Walker sought to expand drug testing to FoodShare recipients with no history of drug use. His December 2017 press release stated he “approved a plan to implement drug screenings for able-bodied adults participating in the FoodShare Employment and Training (FSET) program” (Walker). Proponents argued the plan would provide drug treatment services to Wisconsinites in need. However, many FoodShare applicants felt they were being stigmatized as likely drug users due to their low income. Substance use treatment options are important, but linking them to FoodShare implies that benefits recipients make bad choices and “don’t deserve assistance.”

New Problem: Cuts to Existing Programs

Congress has ended the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (SNAP-Ed), effective October 1, 2025 (Ward). SNAP-Ed, known as FoodWise in Wisconsin, provided education about making healthy meals on a budget and preparing various ingredients. The program also provided education about incorporating physical activity into daily life. Wisconsin DHS estimates that, for each dollar spent on FoodWise funding, “\$10 was saved in long-term health care costs” (“Nutrition”). These cuts will impact predominantly low-income residents in the Tri-County area.

At the time of writing, the federal government has been shut down for approximately one month. It would be inappropriate to speculate on its resolution. However, each government shutdown threatens funding for programs like SNAP, which forces local food pantries and Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin to prepare for food shortages for vulnerable community members. This causes undue burden on our local systems. Additionally, ACA premium tax credits are set to expire in 2026, and it is unknown whether Congress will extend the tax credits in the coming weeks. The average ACA tax credit in Wisconsin is more than \$7,900 per year. Because of uncertainty, many Wisconsinites have had to plan for large increases in their insurance premiums, preparing to choose between much higher costs or going without health insurance at all.

Where Do We Go Next?

National-level influences can feel overwhelming. But local organizations like shelters, food pantries, community closets, and free/low-cost clinics work to address basic needs gaps every day. Organizations like Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin and Vivent are experts in this space. We can educate ourselves about national threats to basic needs and how they will impact us locally. We can identify the organizations best positioned to meet the moment. We can promote fundraisers, volunteering, and resource drives to support those organizations. And we can ask vulnerable community members what they need.

Lifelong Learning

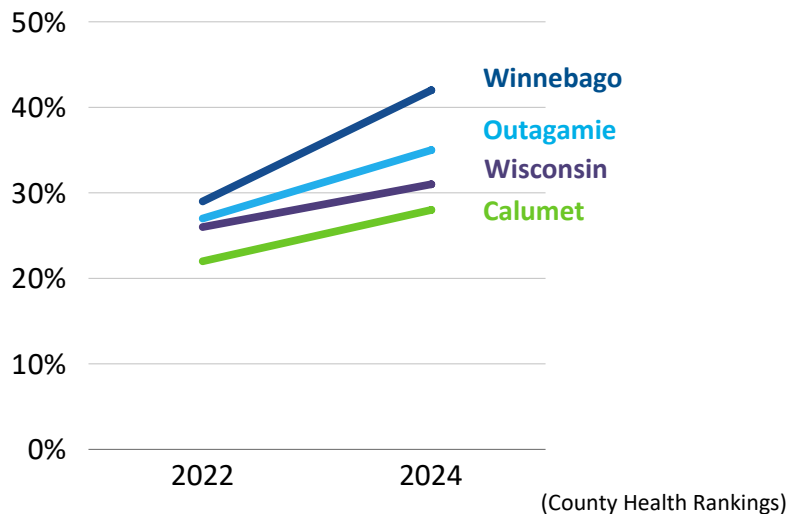


Lifelong learning is about providing a good education for all that ensures everyone, regardless of age, background, or ability, is set up for success, and has opportunities to reach their full potential. Education can launch people into meaningful careers with ongoing opportunities to learn and grow.

Healthy childhood development is a key indicator of future health outcomes.

- Healthy children are more likely to be academically engaged, have higher employment and earnings, and use costly systems less frequently.
- High-quality child care and preschool programs can improve children's health outcomes throughout their lives and generate long-term savings for individuals and society (Guevara).
- Poverty creates significant educational barriers.
- 58% of Wisconsin's high-paying future jobs through 2030 will require a bachelor's or advanced degree (Wisconsin Policy Forum).

The percent of household income needed to pay for child care for 2 kids is rising.



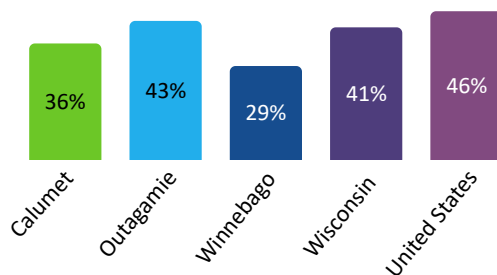
“

I can't afford childcare without two incomes. My husband makes just enough that we don't qualify for assistance.

”

Child care and Pre-K are strategic economic investments.

Preschool enrollment for 3-4 year olds



(ACS Table B14003, 2023 5-year est.)

Decades worth of studies - one strong message:

Kids who attend public preschool programs are better prepared for kindergarten than kids who don't.

- While all kids benefit, poor and disadvantaged kids make the most gains.
- Preschool programs with a well-implemented evidence-based curriculum have the best results (NPR).

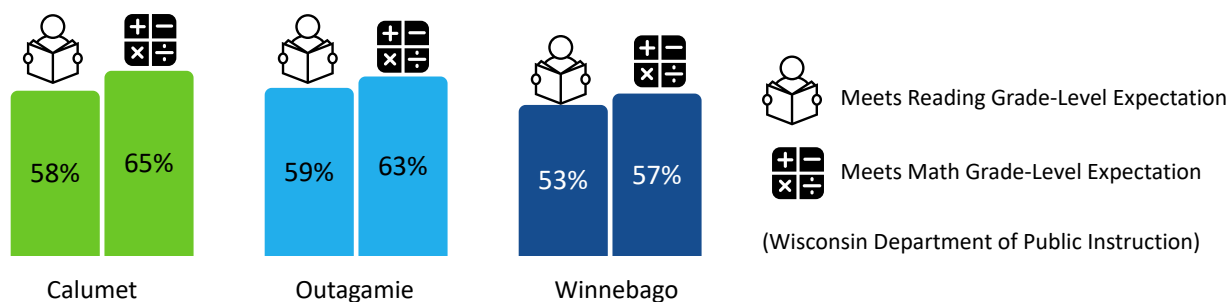
Lifelong Learning



Elementary school is where children learn to read, write, and grasp core concepts in math and science, which are essential for all subsequent learning.

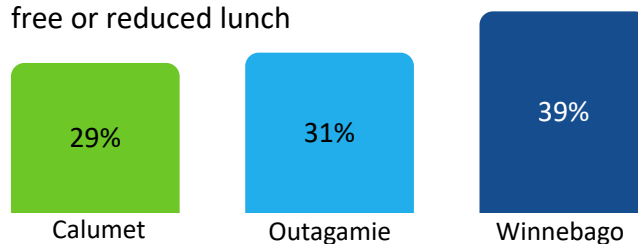
Middle school is a transition period, important for building foundational skills and critical thinking for continued success.

Percent of **students in grades 3-8** who met **grade-level** expectations in **reading and math** for the 2023-24 school year



Poverty creates significant educational barriers by causing stress, affecting health and nutrition, limiting access to essential resources like books and technology, and creating unstable home environments that hinder learning.

Percent of children in public schools **eligible** for free or reduced lunch



(County Health Rankings)

Black and Hispanic/Latino and Asian children are often disproportionately living in poverty.

	Calumet	Outagamie	Winnebago
Black	29%	20%	57%
Hispanic/Latino	19%	27%	29%
Asian	21%	9%	24%
Native American	N/A	15%	1%
White	4%	4%	8%
All	5%	6%	11%

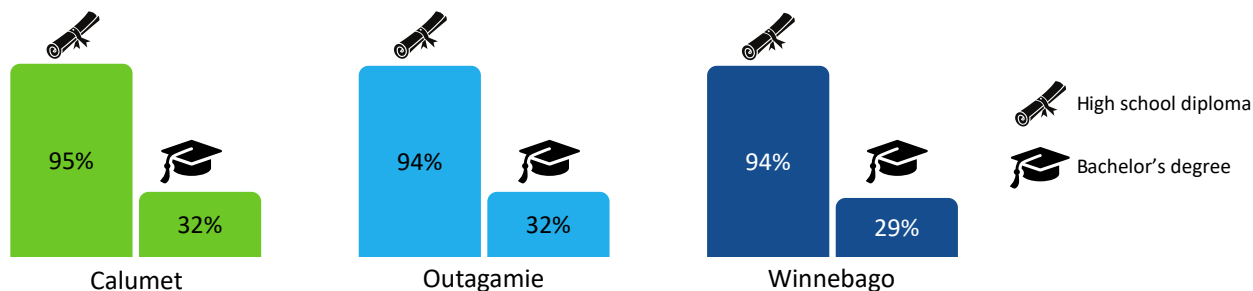
(County Health Rankings)

Lifelong Learning



In the Tri-County area, about 95% of people 25 and older have a high school diploma, compared to about 30% who hold a Bachelor's degree.

Education level of the population 25 and older



(ACS Table B15002, 2022 5-year est.)

Student Loan Debt in Wisconsin

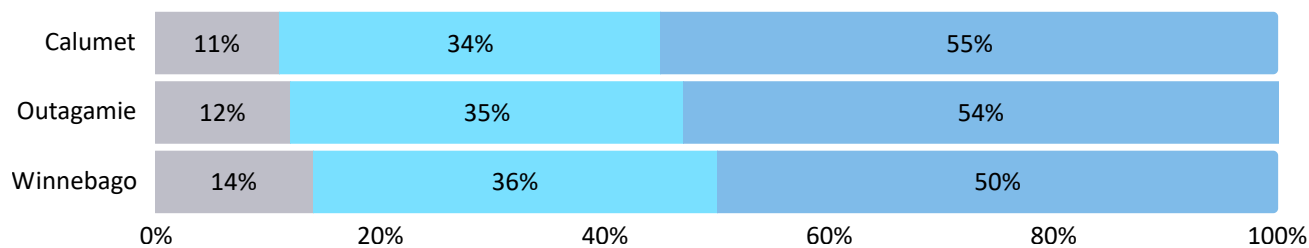
Obtaining post-secondary education can come at a high cost.

- 12.1% of state residents have student loan debt (or 723,500 people).
- 54.4% of them are under the age of 35.
- \$32,619 is the average student loan debt.
- Total student loan debt for WI residents is \$23.6 billion (Education Data Initiative).

Adult Literacy

“Literacy is understanding, evaluating, using, and engaging with written text to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (National Center for Education Statistics).

Estimated percentages of adults (age 16-74) with literacy scores of 1, 2, or 3



(National Center for Education Statistics)

- Level 1 (Poor Skills): Basic sight vocabulary and can read short texts on familiar topics to locate a single piece of information.
- Level 2 (Weak Skills): Can read paragraph-length texts, compare information from the text with what is already known, and draw straightforward inferences.
- Level 3 (Suitable Minimum): Sufficient for managing the requirements of daily life and work in a complex society.

Lifelong Learning



Child Care Crisis: How Did We Get Here?

The early care and education industry is labor-intensive and requires a high level of staffing to ensure children are in a safe, healthy, and developmentally appropriate environment.

Add in higher insurance costs due to increased liability, plus rent, food, supplies, utilities, and more, and a provider's financial resources are stretched thin.

These thin margins prevent child care providers from paying employees competitive wages, resulting in high turnover and staffing shortages that leave classrooms empty. Why not just raise rates? Because families are already struggling to pay the current prices. By raising rates, providers risk having families leave their program because they simply can't afford it, leaving families without the child care they need in order to participate in the workforce and providers without the revenue they need to keep their doors open.

Three Critical Areas:

Access

Many child care providers have unfilled capacity, meaning they're not serving as many children as they're licensed to serve. Statewide, providers report that they are under capacity by 33,000 children. At the same time, half of the providers report having a waitlist. With a lack of staff, child care providers are stuck closing more classrooms and serving fewer children while watching their waitlist continue to grow. This is causing parents, especially women, to leave or not enter the workforce, costing Wisconsin at least \$1.1 billion per year in lost economic productivity, earnings, and revenue.

Workforce

Gaps in access to child care stem directly from staffing shortages. Due to razor-thin margins, Wisconsin child care centers only pay lead teachers an average of \$13.55 per hour. That's 69% less than the average hourly wage of \$28.34 for Wisconsin workers. On top of that, at least half of the child care programs in Wisconsin lack employee health insurance benefits. Unlivable wages combined with a lack of benefits are causing qualified early care and education professionals to leave the field. It's no surprise that half of child care center directors report that keeping staff or filling staff vacancies is "very" or "extremely" challenging. This workforce shortage is the main reason that providers are reducing their capacity and have waitlists. Over half of center directors report that staffing challenges are causing them to serve fewer children and turn families away.

Affordability

The average price of center-based care for one infant is more than \$11,900 per year. That's 16% of the median household income in Wisconsin and equivalent to an academic year at UW-Madison. Unlike college, child care is paid in cash, up-front, at a time when families are just starting. Yet, that price doesn't come close to \$33,715 – the average true cost of care for an infant, and what providers would need to pay their staff fairly and cover all expenses of running their business. And when we are planning for our children's futures, we need to view local resources like Fox Valley Technical College, UW-Oshkosh, and UW-Extension as the important and affordable community assets that they are.

Reliable Transportation



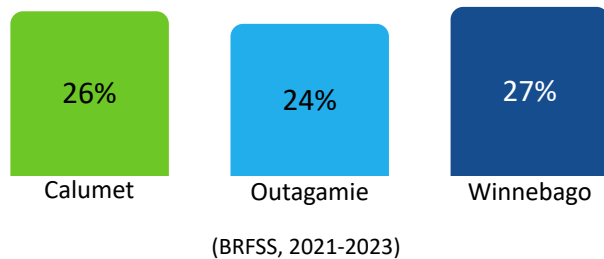
Transportation is about reaching the spaces where we live our lives. It's how we access resources, workplaces, and peers. Explore the data below to find out where our communities are succeeding and where there is room for improvement.

“
If I don't have a car at home, I feel trapped. I wish it were easier to get around by bike or on foot, but I just don't feel safe.
”

Our community feels stuck with only one choice: Driving.

- Active transit is better for our health.
 - Physical activity prevents chronic conditions.
 - Bicycling and walking encourage connection with our community.
 - Time spent outside exercising improves mental health.
- Driving is expensive and has inherent risks.
 - The average Wisconsin driver will spend over \$3,500 per year on gas and car insurance alone.
 - There's one car crash each year for every fifty people in our area.
- We don't have an adequate public transit system.
 - Disinvestment in public transit has made it inconvenient or unusable for many residents' daily lives.
 - Less than one percent of residents regularly use public transit.

More than a quarter of Tri-County residents report **zero exercise** outside of work in the **past 30 days**.



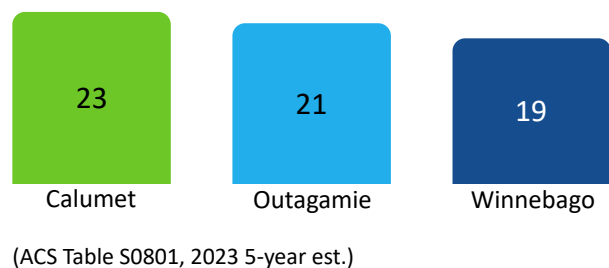
Active transit is a large portion of people's physical activity in many parts of the world. In the Tri-County area, fewer than 3% of all residents walk or bike as a form of transportation (ACS Table S0801, 2023 5-year est.).

In the Tri-County area, more than one-quarter of residents do not participate in any physical activity outside of work. Not even walking. According to the CDC in 2023, more than one-third of all Tri-County residents are considered "inactive" or "insufficiently active" (BRFSS, 2023).

The US Department of Transportation states investment in bicycle and pedestrian spaces "creates opportunities for people to exercise" and "reduces the risk of associated conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and premature death."

Tri-County residents average 40-45 minutes per day driving to and from work. That's a lot of sedentary time.

The average employed Tri-County resident takes **more than 20 minutes to drive to work**.



Reliable Transportation

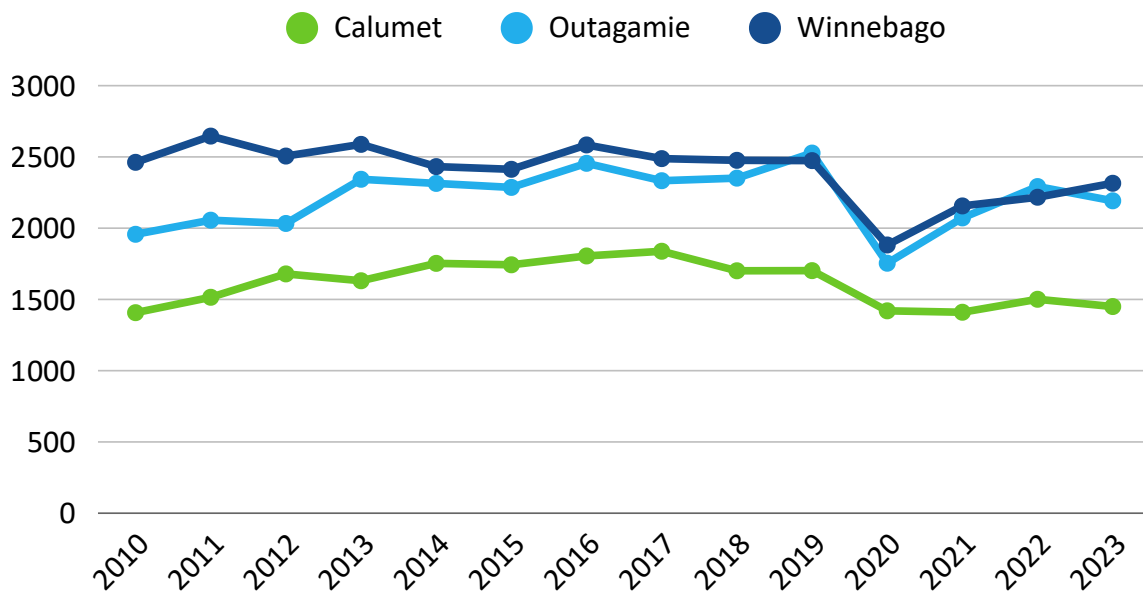


Not only is **active transit** good for our physical health, but it also **provides mental health benefits**. A 2023 comprehensive literature review showed there is an abundance of research suggesting active transit, or “walking and cycling to get to and from places, provides significant benefits in terms of mental health” (Scrivano et al., 19). Being outside and moving helps connect us to our community. It facilitates person-to-person interactions. And it has the potential to reduce stress if it’s in a safe and comfortable space.

Community residents report that **active transit is not always possible here**. One resident notes, “Just because you have a bike lane doesn’t mean it goes anywhere. Sometimes they dump you out right into heavy traffic. There needs to be more thought about where they go.”

Physical barriers between bikes/pedestrians and cars are the gold standard. Bike lanes can be great. But ask yourself this: Would you be comfortable letting your child bike in a bike lane knowing that only a strip of paint separates them from 35 mph traffic? If it’s not safe enough for a child to use, it might not be the best infrastructure.

Annual Count of Car Crashes by County



(WisDOT Community Maps)

Car crashes are common in the Tri-County area. Annually, there is more than 1 car crash for every 50 residents in the Tri-County area. These crashes can sometimes lead to severe injury or death. In every year since 2010, at least five of our neighbors have been killed in car crashes. Crashes are especially dangerous to bicyclists or pedestrians. We have had pedestrians killed by car crashes as recently as September 2025. And deaths of pedestrians hit by cars increased by 48% nationally between 2014 and 2024 (Governors Highway Safety Association).

Reliable Transportation



Car use is almost universal in our community.

- 98% of homeowners have a vehicle.
- 90% of renters have a vehicle.
- Less than one percent of residents use public transportation.

(ACS Tables B25044 & S0801, 2023 5-year est.)

“

This is a must-have car place.

”

Car ownership is expensive.

Expense	Average Annual Cost in WI
Gas	\$1,992
Car Insurance	\$1,664
Licensing Fee	\$85
Repair Costs	\$361
Loan Payments	\$7,068
Total	\$11,170

(Rosenfeld; Horymski)

The average car owner in Wisconsin pays more than \$11,000 annually to drive.

In contrast, the annual cost to a Valley Transit rider in the Fox Cities is \$720. The annual cost to an Oshkosh GO Transit rider is \$480.

On average, it is more than 90% cheaper to ride local public transit than it is to drive.

Still, less than 1% of residents use public transit regularly for transportation.

To overcome **barriers to transit use**, residents report wanting:

“

Our elderly population is growing and many will lose the ability to drive so buses are essential for people to continue to enjoy their lives.

”

- More stops to accommodate a wider geographic area and destinations
- Increased frequency - hourly service is not frequent enough for many residents
- More shelters for riders waiting for the bus
- Service on Sundays

(“Valley Transit: Ridership and Fare Payment Surveys”)



Reliable Transportation



Public Transportation

Valley Transit partners with 9 municipalities, 3 counties, and many other entities to provide diverse transportation services across the Fox Cities area. There are 18 routes. In addition, the VT Connector is a fully accessible shared-ride van service designed to supplement Valley Transit's bus service. In the past few years, Valley Transit has struggled to fill bus driver positions, resulting in a decrease in bus service times and routes.

Greater Oshkosh Transit (GO Transit) offers fixed-route bus service and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit, GO Plus. Fixed-route service is operated directly by the City, while Oshkosh City Cab Company and Cabulance operate GO Plus service through a contract with the City. Additional paratransit services include Senior Dial-A-Ride and Access to Jobs (ATJ). GO Connect is a new Microtransit service linking Oshkosh and Neenah, operated by Oshkosh City Cab and Cabulance.

In Calumet County, public transportation options are limited and are available to those 60 years old and up or people with disabilities. These services are provided through Make the Ride Happen, offered by Lutheran Social Services. The county also provides transportation services to this group of people.

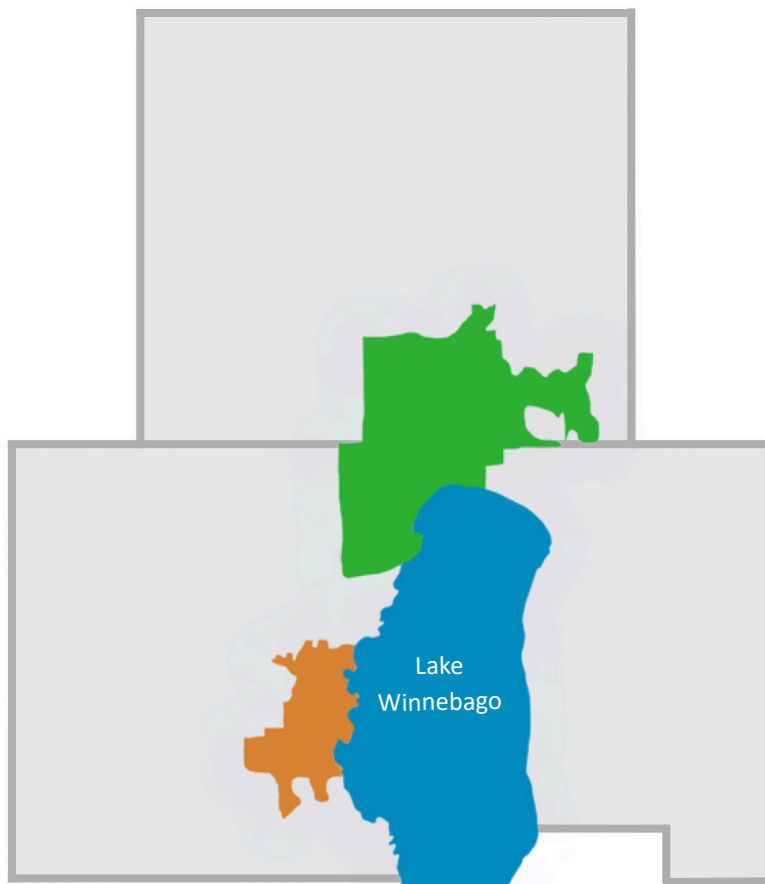
Tri-County Fixed-Route Public Transit Service Map



Valley Transit: Fixed-Route
Service Area (Hourly Service)
M-F 5:45 AM – 6:30 PM
Sat. 7:45 AM – 1:30 PM
Sun. No Service



GO Transit: Fixed-Route
Service Area
(Service Every Half Hour)
M-Sat. 6:15 AM – 6:45 PM
Sun. No Service



Reliable Transportation



How Did We Get Here?

Over the past several decades, transportation infrastructure in our region has evolved in ways that heavily prioritize car travel, often at the expense of active and public transit options.

This trend can trace some of its origins to the Interstate Highway Act of 1956, which encouraged suburban sprawl and the development of car-centric communities. As a result, riding a bike or walking is still stigmatized as a mode of transportation. By 1969, the highway that would eventually become I-41 attained freeway status by eliminating all crossroads. This is especially problematic in areas such as Grand Chute, where the absence of sidewalks under I-41 makes travel unsafe and strenuous for residents without cars who are trying to cross the freeway.

Public transit has also been heavily stigmatized in America. The Tri-County region is not immune to this stigmatization, even though there are dedicated public servants working to provide transportation options to our residents. Transit networks have not had the resources to develop much outside of areas with the highest population density, as is the case in much of the country.

Decline of and Opposition to Alternative Transit Options

Recent developments have further strained transportation access. In September 2025, the Amtrak Thruway I-41 Bus Service between Green Bay and Milwaukee was discontinued, reducing regional connectivity (Wisconsin Department of Transportation). Additionally, since July 2024, Valley Transit bus services have faced cutbacks, ending at 6:00 PM on weekdays and 1:00 PM on Saturdays. According to Ronald McDonald, General Manager of Valley Transit, the biggest problem is a lack of CDL-licensed drivers willing to do the job (Cornelius). Residents in the Valley Transit service area can still use the Valley Transit Connector, a shared-ride service that expands transit outside the scheduled fixed-route bus service. In the Oshkosh area, Oshkosh GO Transit Transportation Director Jim Collins says service cuts are also under consideration (Moore). This could mean hour reductions or even the elimination of Saturday bus services.

Meanwhile, attempts to improve infrastructure for non-car travel, such as the High Cliff Connection project connecting downtown Menasha with High Cliff State Park, have faced resistance to bike lanes and sidewalks in residential areas. This can mean long workarounds that make travel more difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Where Do We Go Next?

Despite these challenges, there are promising opportunities ahead. One major proposal is the exploration of a rail line between Green Bay and Milwaukee, which could reestablish crucial regional connectivity. On a local level, communities have used traffic-calming measures like removing traffic lanes to make room for bicyclists and pedestrians. On streets such as College Avenue in Appleton or Lake Park Road in Menasha, this has created more balanced and accessible streets for all users. Investing in active transit infrastructure, such as protected bike lanes and continuous sidewalks, can also improve safety and accessibility. Promoting CDL training programs and highlighting the benefits of employment at our public transit authorities may help address the ongoing driver shortage.

Thriving Natural World



Access to clean air, safe water, healthy land, and resilient ecosystems is essential for good health. Sometimes, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the homes, buildings, and neighborhoods we live and work in disrupt how our bodies work, causing us to become sick.

Environmental factors can either prevent disease and promote mental health and physical well-being, or contribute to their decline.

- Residents and visitors to the Tri-County region value the parks, trails, green space, and time spent in nature.
- Good water quality is essential as a source of drinking water, supporting agriculture and tourism, and for healthy recreational opportunities.
- Poor air quality can cause respiratory problems, cancer, and mental health issues like anxiety and depression.
- Lead is a naturally occurring metal and is toxic to humans when swallowed or inhaled.
- A changing climate is bringing warmer winters, wetter springs, and more extreme weather events that can lead to serious health issues.

“
*The parks are great...
[it's] open and enjoyable
being on the Fox River or
Winnebago. It's very
scenic.*

Parks & Outdoor Spaces

The Tri-County region is full of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities, including:



- An abundance of city and county parks
- High Cliff State Park and several multi-use trails
- Nature centers and preserves
- Community pools
- A network of lakes and rivers that encompasses the Fox-Wolf River Basin and the Lake Winnebago System

Our region provides ample opportunities for hiking, biking, bird-watching, playing on playgrounds, boating, fishing, kayaking, skiing, snow-shoeing, and more. Our Planning departments and Parks and Recreation departments, along with the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, ensure that parks and trails are maintained and accessible.

Unique attractions to enjoy the outdoors in the Tri-County Area include:

- Children's Farm at Plamann Park
- Menominee Park Zoo
- Courts & playing fields (volleyball, pickleball, soccer)
- Children's playgrounds
- Disc golf courses
- Cave tours
- Fishing piers
- Marinas

Health Benefits of Green Spaces

Improved mood &
mental health

Stress relief

Improved brain
function

Increased social
connectedness

Improved creativity & mindfulness

(Wolf)

Thriving Natural World



Water Quality

Water quality is important for human health, environmental stability, and economic well-being.

Maintaining good water quality prevents illness by minimizing contaminants, supports wildlife and plant life, and underpins industries like agriculture and tourism. Preserving good water quality is an investment in future generations.

Drinking Water

Drinking water quality and safety depend on its source. Sources are either surface water (rivers, lakes, reservoirs) or groundwater (aquifers reached by wells). More than 200,000 people get their drinking water from Lake Winnebago (Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance).

Most tap water is delivered by utilities through public water systems, where it is treated and purified. Private well systems, more common in rural areas, are another way to get drinking water. Wells are not regulated like public systems. Well owners can ensure the safety of their drinking water by conducting regular maintenance and testing annually for bacteria, arsenic, and nitrates.

Drinking Water Threats: Arsenic (As)

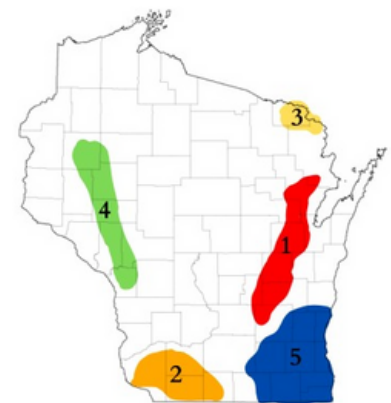
Arsenic can naturally occur in soil and rock formations, but can also come from some types of pesticides, treated wood, and certain foods. Outagamie and Winnebago Counties have naturally occurring arsenic in the groundwater.

Drinking water with high levels of arsenic can cause skin rashes and stomach problems. Arsenic can also increase the risk for certain kinds of cancer. Infants and children are especially sensitive to arsenic, and high levels can affect cognitive development (WI DHS).

Drinking Water Threats: Nitrates (NO_3^-)

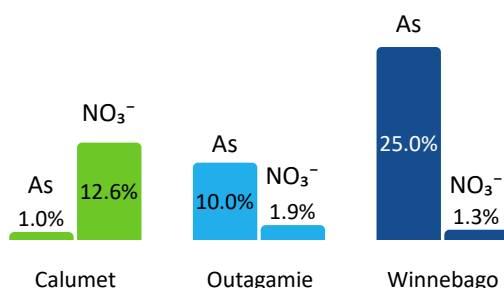
Nitrate naturally occurs in plants and animals and can enter groundwater from fertilizers or animal and human waste. In Wisconsin, nitrate is one of the most common groundwater contaminants.

High nitrate levels are linked with some birth defects. Infants who consume drinking water with high nitrate levels are at risk of blue baby syndrome, a condition that limits the blood's ability to carry oxygen (WI DHS).



Arsenic contamination is most common in northeastern WI, regions 1 & 3 (WI DNR).

Arsenic and Nitrate testing results above EPA standards in Private Wells



Arsenic (As):

Percent of test results above EPA standard of 10 $\mu\text{g/L}$

Nitrate (NO_3^-):

Percent of test results above EPA standard of 10 mg/L
(WI DHS, 2024)

Thriving Natural World



Air Quality

Air pollution is the presence of one or more contaminants in the atmosphere, such as dust, fumes, gas, mist, odor, smoke, or vapor, in quantities and duration that can be injurious to human health.

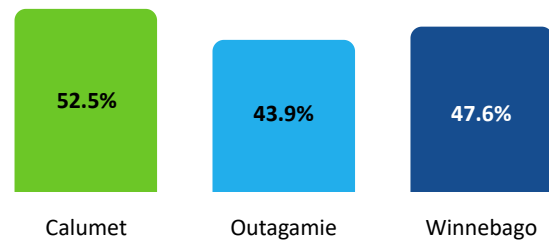
The main pathway of exposure from air pollution is through the respiratory tract. Breathing in these pollutants impacts the lungs, heart, and brain, ultimately leading to disease (WHO).

Indoor Air Quality Threats: Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring gas released from the ground that is radioactive and can cause lung cancer. Radon can leak into homes and other buildings through cracks in the foundation.

Homes both old and new can have unsafe radon levels, and the only way to know if a home has high radon levels is to test for it.

Homes that tested for **Radon equal to or above the EPA standard** of 4 picoCuries/L



(Alpha Energy Labs, 2024)

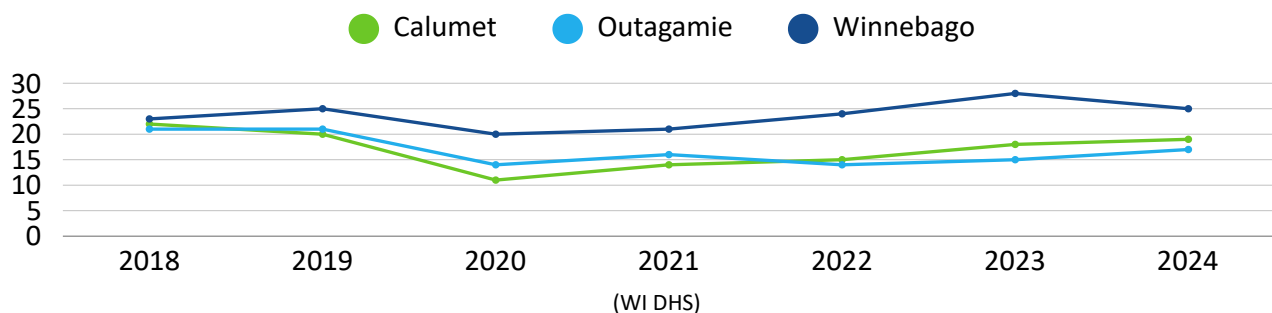
Outdoor Air Quality Threats: Pollution

- Most outdoor air pollution results from human activities, such as smoking, driving petroleum-powered vehicles, industrial operations, and burning wood, natural gas, or coal for electricity and heating and cooling buildings. Pollution can also come from natural sources, such as smoke from wildfires, dust, and dirt.
- Air quality is impacted by warmer temperatures and decreased precipitation, which makes it easier for outdoor air pollutants to form.
- Climate change is increasing temperatures in Wisconsin, lengthening the growing season for pollens and increasing the presence of allergens in the air from trees, grasses, weeds, and mold.

Who's at Risk from Air Pollution?

- People with existing health problems, such as asthma or other lung and heart diseases, are at greater risk of harmful health outcomes from air pollution.
- Children, older adults, pregnant women, and people who live or work outdoors for long periods of time or participate in intense exercise outdoors are more at risk of health issues from air pollution.
- Wildfire smoke can make anyone sick. Even someone healthy can get sick if there is enough smoke in the air.

Rate of **Emergency Department Visits for Asthma** (age-adjusted, per 10,000 people)



Thriving Natural World



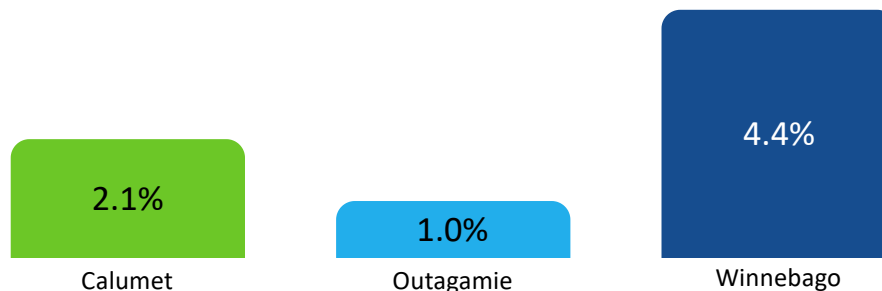
Lead Exposure

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that is toxic to humans when swallowed or inhaled. Lead was used in paint, plumbing materials, ceramics, gasoline, household products, batteries, and cosmetics. Children are most commonly exposed to lead through contact with chips and dust from old lead paint or from swallowing soil contaminated by lead paint, while adults are more likely to be exposed through inhalation of fumes or ingestion of dust or water contaminated by lead.

Childhood Lead Poisoning

No amount of lead exposure is safe for children. Exposure to lead damages the brain, body, and nervous system. Even at low levels, it affects learning capacity, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement. Lead is toxic to everyone, but children under age 6 are at greatest risk for harm because their bodies are still developing. Lead exposure for pregnant women is a particular concern because it can result in exposure to their developing baby (WI DHS).

Children with Lead Poisoning Aged Birth to <6



(WI DHS, 2024)

Note: The % of children is out of the number tested, not the number of total children in the county.

Childhood Lead Testing

In 2021, the CDC lowered the blood lead reference value in children from 5 µg/dL to 3.5 µg/dL. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommends testing for all children at ages 1 and 2 and any child aged 3-5 who hasn't been tested before.

Lead in Water

Lead can enter drinking water when plumbing materials that contain lead corrode, especially where the water has high acidity or low mineral content that corrodes pipes and fixtures. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures. In homes with lead pipes that connect the home to the water main, also known as lead service lines, these pipes are typically the most significant source of lead in the water. Lead pipes are more likely to be found in older cities and homes built before 1986 (EPA).

Thriving Natural World



Changing Climate

Wisconsin is experiencing warmer winters, wetter springs, and more extreme weather events. The impact is wide-ranging; the economy, agriculture, infrastructure, including damage to roads and bridges, migration patterns, water levels, and water quality, ecosystems, and natural habitats (Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts).

Warmer winters result in:

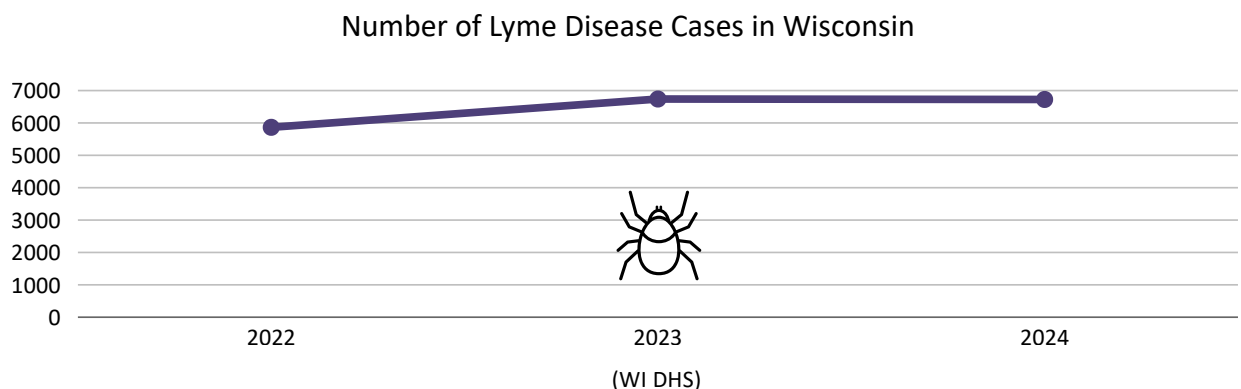
- Shrinking ice cover on lakes and rivers; fewer days with ice cover, and reduced overall thickness of ice (Larsen Converse).
- Reduced snowpack, which means less insulation for trees and other organisms.
 - Warmer temperatures allow pests to overwinter more successfully and migrate.
- Warmer water temperatures that change lake ecology. Cool-water fish like walleye will be found in fewer lakes, and warm-water fish like largemouth bass will be much more common.
- Precipitation shifting from snow to rain or freezing rain, limiting ice fishing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and skiing opportunities, impacting local restaurants, hotels, and taverns that depend on this winter recreation.

Wetter springs and more extreme weather events, specifically heavy rain, result in:

- Damage and reduced access to parks, beaches, lakes, rivers, and other natural resources.
- Flooding, eroding soil and coastlines, washing out roads and bridges, breaking dams, overwhelming sewers and wastewater treatment plants.
- Higher amounts of polluted runoff are impacting water quality, causing greater algae blooms.
- Reduced access to natural resources, limiting camping, hiking, fishing, boating, hunting, sightseeing, and other opportunities that typically draw people to our community.

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is spread by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick and is becoming more common in Wisconsin. 2025 cases have already exceeded 2024 cases, though the year is not yet over. A warmer and wetter climate makes our state a favorable habitat for ticks. Climate change has contributed to the expanded geographic distribution of ticks as well as a longer season of tick activity and potential for Lyme disease transmission (WI DHS).



Thriving Natural World



How Did We Get Here?

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Wisconsin's forests fueled logging booms and paper mills, while wetlands were drained for farms and towns. The Fox River became an engine of industrial growth, but was also contaminated by factory waste. Land was viewed mainly for production, not regeneration.

Minimal regulations, industrial growth, and large-scale farming operations contributed to economic growth. As communities grew, natural areas were replaced with subdivisions, streets, and parking lots, disturbing natural corridors and wetlands.

Ultimately, we are in this situation by prioritizing short-term growth over long-term balance. However, many solutions exist to restore our natural environment. Healing the land, restoring biodiversity, and ensuring people and nature thrive is possible.

Where We Are Today

Many have shifted their views of the natural world from exploitation of resources to protecting resources. Areas once heavily polluted, like the Fox River and our lakes, have undergone cleanup efforts (WI DNR).

The Tri-County region works to protect and celebrate its natural spaces. Parks, trails, and nature preserves provide places for residents to relax, exercise, and connect with the outdoors. These green spaces are vital not only for recreation but also for mental health and community well-being. Many local projects aim to make nature more accessible to everyone—like the High Cliff Connection, which links more neighborhoods to outdoor areas, and the ADRC's outdoor wheelchair program, which helps people with mobility challenges explore local trails.

Despite changing views, new proposals can damage the environment; the region faces pressure from outside states that want to draw water from the Great Lakes (Way). Local leaders and residents have stood strong in protecting this precious resource, ensuring it remains available for future generations.

Where Do We Go Next?

We all share responsibility for protecting our natural environment. Green infrastructure, forest buffers, and restored wetlands help communities adapt while supporting wildlife and recreation. Education and sustainable practices—like reducing plastic waste or planting native gardens—create lasting impact. Even simple acts, such as visiting local parks or walking along the Fox River, remind us why these places matter.

The Tri-County region's story is one of connection—between people and water, past and future, growth and responsibility. By working together and continuing to value our natural resources, we can ensure that the rivers, lakes, and parks that shaped our history will continue to shape our future in positive ways.

Health Behaviors

Health behaviors can be categorized on a spectrum from positive to negative. Positive health behaviors, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and preventative healthcare visits, are associated with reduced risks of chronic diseases. Conversely, negative behaviors, like smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and neglecting regular check-ups, contribute to the prevalence of various health issues.

Although it is undeniable that health can be influenced by individual choices, it is fundamental to understand that physical, social, and cultural environments have an outsized role in the decisions we make (Hook and Markus).

“

“A culture-wide emphasis on personal choice and personal responsibility is harming Americans’ health and well-being.”

(Hook and Markus)

”

The Role of Personal Choices in Health Behaviors

Despite constant calls for people to take responsibility for their health, **Americans die younger and experience more illnesses and injuries than their counterparts in other high-income countries.**

If the **United States spends the most on healthcare per person among developed countries** (Wager), why don’t we have the healthiest population?

“Personal choice” has been used to support a health care system that leaves the United States “alone among rich capitalist nations in not guaranteeing basic universal health coverage” and has allowed food, tobacco, and alcohol industry groups to resist regulation that would limit sales (Hook and Markus).

40% of deaths in the US are caused by chronic “lifestyle” diseases.

More than 70% of adults in the United States report at least one of five unhealthy behaviors associated with chronic health problems: **smoking, drinking excessively, obesity, getting insufficient sleep, and being physically inactive.** At greatest risk for poor health are the 25 million adults, or 12% of the adult population, with three or more such behaviors (America’s Health Rankings).

Improving health requires policies and strategies that make healthy behaviors easy.

The reason Americans die younger and are sicker is because personal responsibility is not the right strategy to improve health. While many chronic diseases and deaths associated with lifestyle are preventable, a more effective approach is to focus on policies that have a broad reach, impacting entire populations.

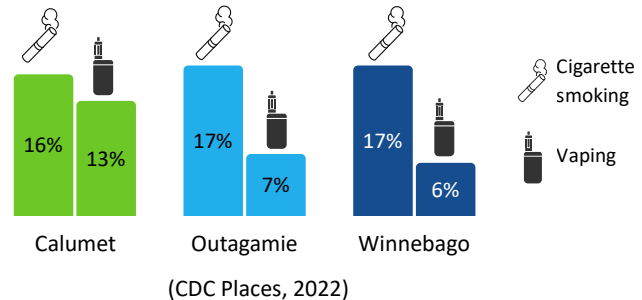
Health Behaviors

Smoking and Vaping

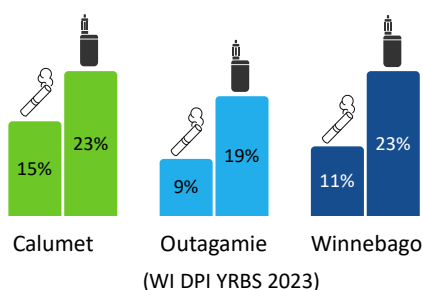
- Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, lung disease, and many types of cancer.
- Tobacco and nicotine disproportionately burden Black, Native/Indigenous, Hispanic, and LGBTQ+ communities, people with low incomes or educational attainment, and people in mental health or substance use treatment (WI DHS).

The word "tobacco" on this page refers to commercial tobacco, not traditional Native American/Indigenous tobacco.

Adult cigarette and vaping rates



High school students who report they have tried smoking cigarettes and vaping



Tobacco Industry Influence in Wisconsin

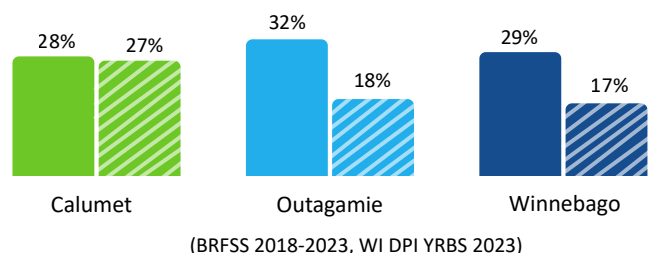
The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting teenagers in its effort to establish lifelong customers.

- Annual tobacco industry marketing expenditures nationwide are \$8.6 billion, with \$161.2 million spent annually in WI.
- Kids are more likely to be influenced to smoke by cigarette marketing than by peer pressure.
- One third of underage experimentation with smoking is attributable to tobacco company advertising (Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids).

Alcohol Use

Binge drinking is consuming 5 or more drinks for males, 4 or more drinks for females in about 2 hours. Underage drinking is a persistent challenge, often with serious consequences including motor vehicle crashes, violence, sexual assault, suicide, poor school performance and increased risk of developing an alcohol use disorder.

Binge drinking among adults; High school students who report they drank in the last 30 days



Bars with solid color: Adults
Bars with lines: High School Students

- Wisconsinites in every age group engaged in more binge drinking than the US median for that age group (WI DHS).
- Wisconsinites ages 25-44 had the highest proportion of binge drinkers.
- Among adults in Wisconsin who binge drink, 25% consume at least 9 drinks per binge-drinking occasion (BRFSS, 2022).

Health Behaviors

Poor Diet

Ultraprocessed foods (UPF) are industrial creations made with little—if any—whole foods and often contain large amounts of added sugar and salt.

Such food now **accounts for nearly 60% of U.S. adults’ calorie consumption. Among American children, that portion is close to 70%.** In other words, ultra-processed food is starting to overwhelm the American diet.

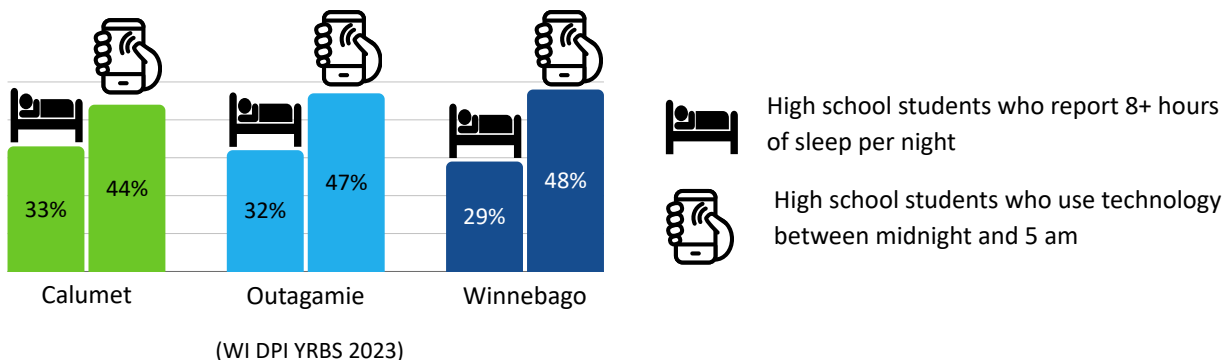
Diets high in UPF increase risk for chronic diseases:

- **Obesity**
- **Type 2 Diabetes**
- **Heart Disease**
- **Cancer** (Berg)

Sleep

Getting adequate sleep is critical for our emotional and physical well-being. The amount of sleep recommended varies by age. Teens between the ages of 13-17 should get 8-10 hours a night, while adults should get at least 7 hours. It is recommended to turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime, to avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening, and to exercise regularly and maintain a healthy diet (CDC).

The more high school students use technology at night, the less likely they are to get 8+ hours of sleep.



Help-Seeking Behaviors

Help-seeking behavior can be defined as a person “searching for or requesting help from others via formal or informal mechanisms” (APA). It can include seeking out mental health services, receiving help from a friend or family member, or utilizing online services such as communities, forums, or chats.

- 85% of Mind Your Wellness Survey respondents (2022) reported feeling comfortable discussing mental health issues with others.
- A majority of the respondents, though, reported seeking help for mental health issues from a friend or family member as opposed to a mental health professional.
- The lower a person’s income, the less aware they appear to be of how to access mental health care and they are more likely to keep their concerns to themselves.

Health Behaviors

Food insecurity frequently indicates low income, insufficient to consistently afford adequate and nutritious food (Healthy People 2030). The table below uses food insecurity data to show how students in our community generally make worse health decisions when they come from low-income households. These students' behaviors don't lead to the financial situation of their households. Instead, these data show how **inadequate systems and financial barriers lead to less healthy behaviors**. Food insecurity is self-reported.

Example of how to read the data table:

- 80% of Calumet County high school students who identified as food insecure wear their seatbelt most of the time or always.
- 88% of Calumet County high school students who did not identify as food insecure wear their seatbelt most of the time or always.

Health Behaviors Broken Down by Food Insecurity

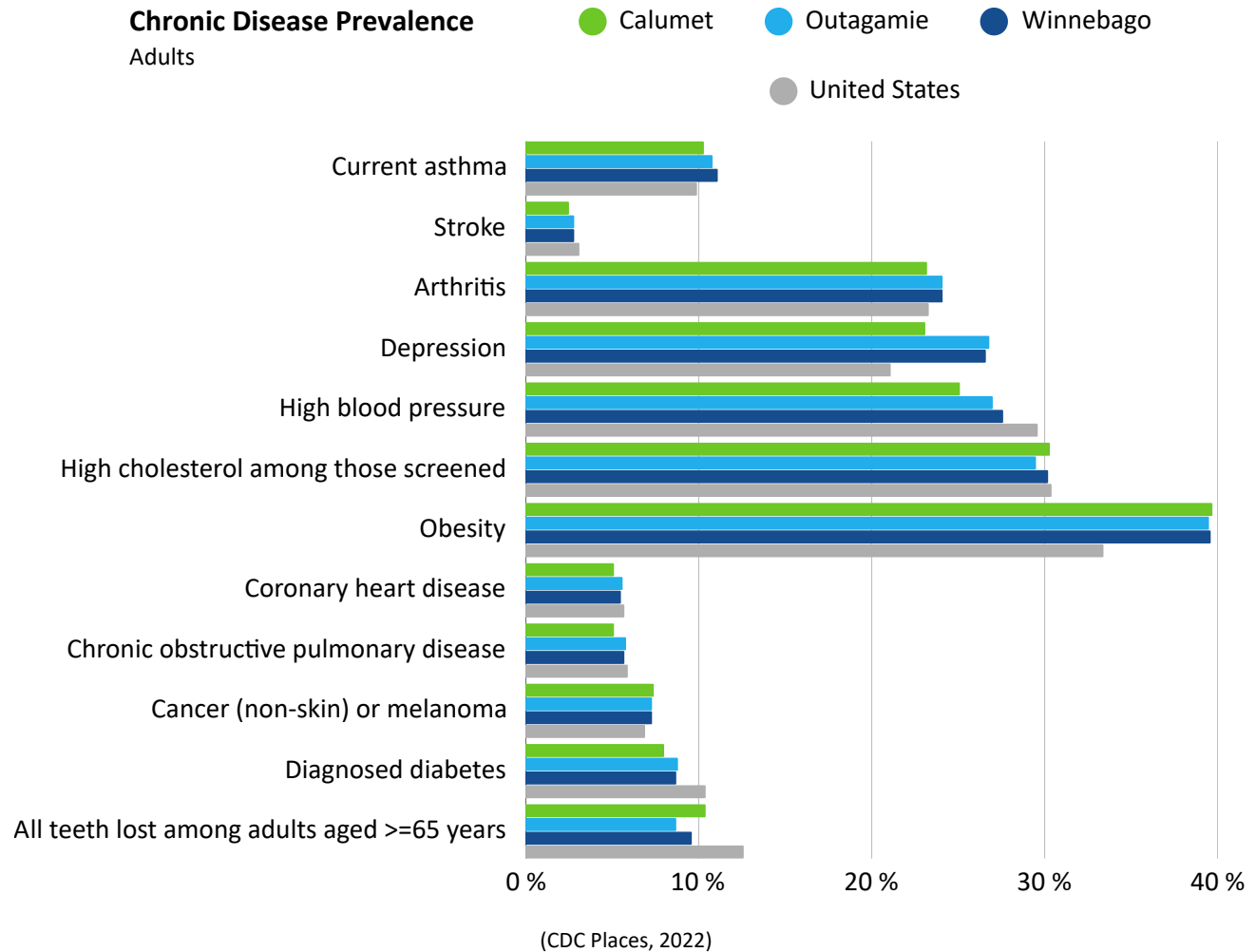
	Calumet High School Students		Outagamie High School Students		Winnebago High School Students	
	Food Insecure	Not Food Insecure	Food Insecure	Not Food Insecure	Food Insecure	Not Food Insecure
Most of the time or always wear a seatbelt	80%	88%	82%	94%	83%	92%
Slept 8 or more hours per night	21%	35%	23%	34%	20%	31%
Used a condom during last sexual intercourse	66%	63%	57%	68%	53%	68%
Rode with a driver who drank	23%	16%	21%	11%	20%	10%
Ever tried cigarettes	24%	13%	17%	7%	20%	8%
Ever tried vaping	34%	20%	30%	16%	38%	19%
Ever misused a prescription pain medicine	17%	5%	14%	5%	14%	5%

(WI DPI YRBS 2023)

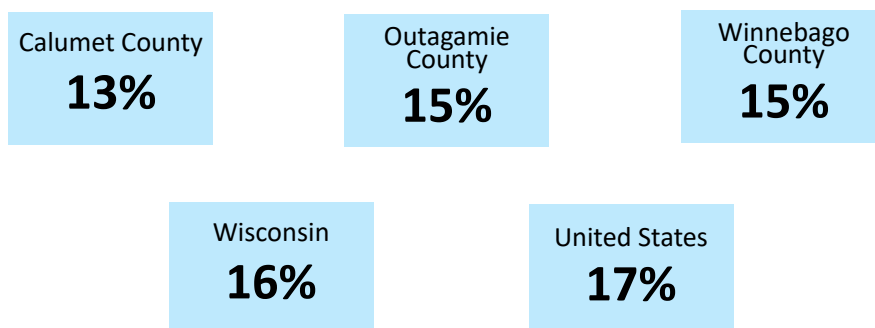
Health Outcomes

Morbidity

The state of being symptomatic or unhealthy for a disease or condition, or the amount of disease within a population.



Percent of Adults Reporting Fair or Poor Health, 2022



(County Health Rankings)

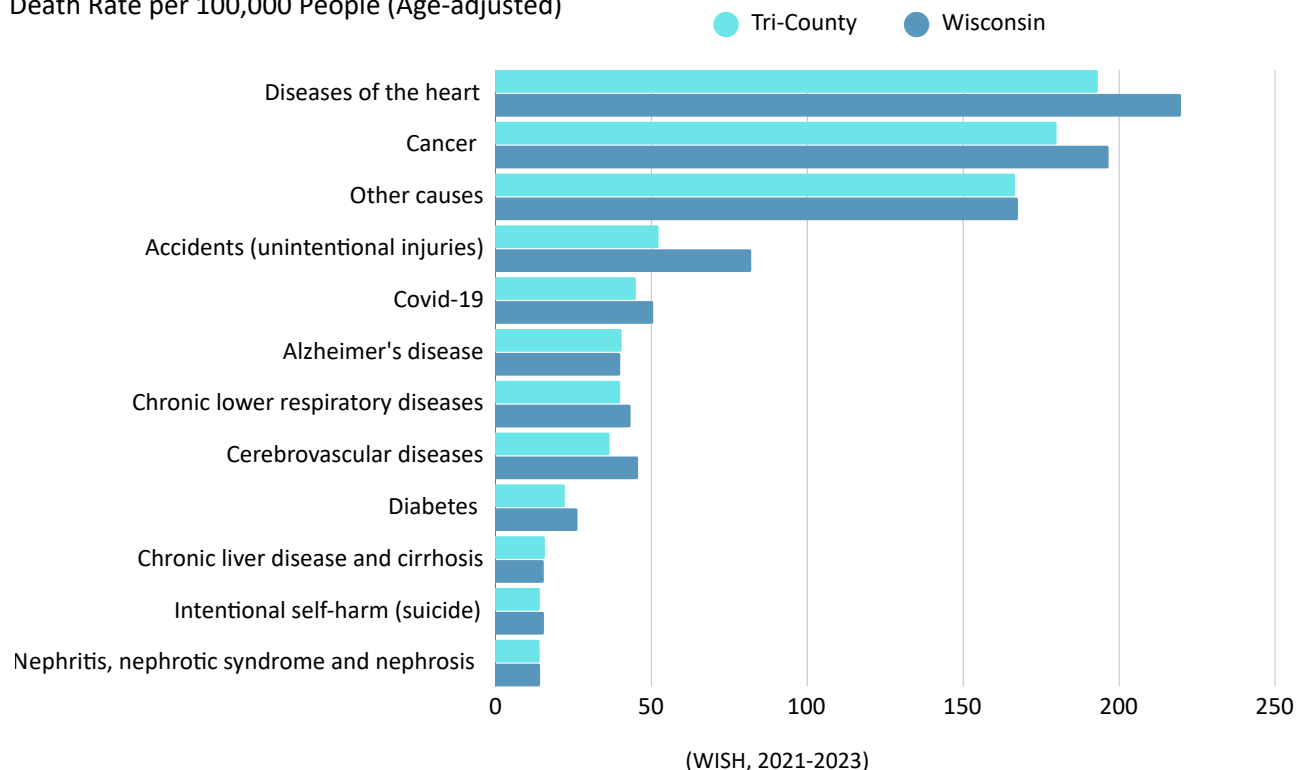
Health Outcomes

Mortality

The measure of the frequency of occurrence of death in a defined population during a specified interval of time.

Top Causes of Death

Death Rate per 100,000 People (Age-adjusted)



Infant Mortality

Number of deaths among children under 1 year of age

Child Mortality

Number of deaths among persons under 20 years of age

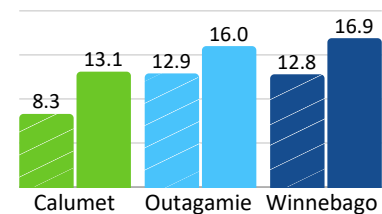
	Deaths per 1,000 Live Births	Deaths per 100,000 Children
Wisconsin	5.5	50
Calumet	2.9	30
Outagamie	3.4	50
Winnebago	4.7	50

(WISH, 2023)

Unintentional Drug Overdose

Deaths and Suicide Deaths

Death Rate per 100,000 People in 2024



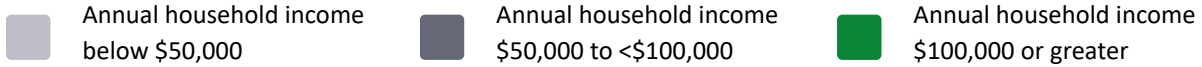
Bars with lines: Unintentional Drug Overdose
Bars solid color: Suicide

For Calumet County, rates are modeled to protect privacy because number is low (1-9)

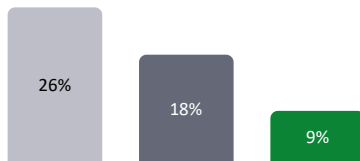
(CDC)

Health Outcomes

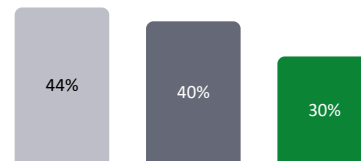
Wealth consistently correlates with the vital conditions for health and well-being. People with greater wealth generally have access to better vital conditions. This leads to better health outcomes overall. The graphs below are data specifically collected from residents of Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties in 2024 (BRFSS 2024). The data show that Tri-County residents in households with annual income above \$100,000 have better health outcomes than those in households with annual income below \$50,000.



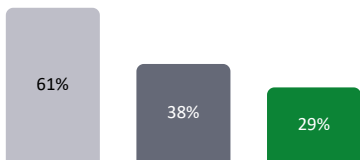
High-income residents are less likely to have ever had diabetes.



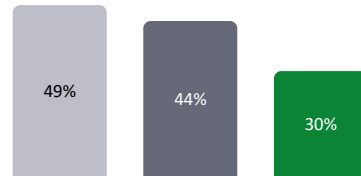
High-income residents are less likely to be obese.



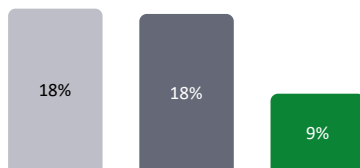
High-income residents are less likely to have ever had any adult teeth removed.



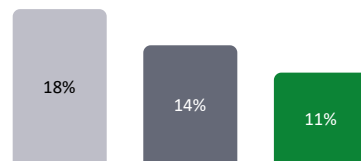
High-income residents are less likely to have developed arthritis.



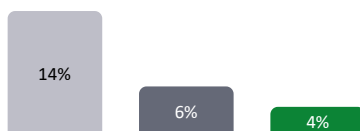
High-income residents are less likely to have ever had melanoma or another cancer.



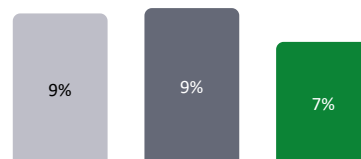
High-income residents are less likely to have ever been diagnosed with asthma.



High-income residents are less likely to have ever had COPD, emphysema, and/or chronic bronchitis.

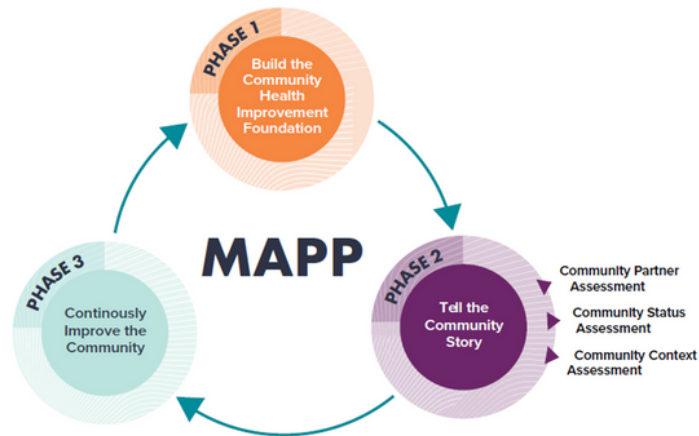


High-income residents are less likely to have ever had angina or coronary heart disease.



Assessment Results - Purpose & Process

MAPP 2.0 is a 3-phase process. The Coalition started with Phase 2; Tell the Community Story, completing 3 different assessments (Sept.-Nov. 2024). The Coalition used the results of these assessments to inform the prioritization process for its Community Health Improvement Plan.



Community Partner Assessment

The Coalition sent a survey to more than 400 community organizations to understand what topics they were working on, where they operated, and whether they might be interested in joining the Coalition's efforts. Roughly 130 organizations responded.

Community Context Assessment

The Coalition analyzed 21 existing reports from community listening sessions and focus groups to understand community members' views on what is influencing their health and well-being. The Coalition looked at the information to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Community Status Assessment

The Coalition compiled existing metrics on vital community conditions, health and well-being behaviors, and health outcomes, a for Winnebago, Calumet, and Outagamie Counties, as well as Wisconsin and the U.S.

Data Triangulation & Data Placemats

Jan. 7-30, 2025: The Coalition held biweekly meetings to discuss findings through a data triangulation process. Topics were based on the Vital Conditions plus health behaviors and health outcomes. "Data placemats" were developed from the 3 assessments for each topic.

Sense-Making & Community Input

The Coalition identified 8 topics to share with community organizations for further discussion and prioritization. Topics were viewed as the most pressing, impactful on other vital conditions, and possible for the Coalition to address. During a day-long, in-person prioritization meeting on Feb. 11, 2025, the Coalition and 30 community organizations narrowed the list of 8 topics down to 3.

Prioritization

Community experts then presented data and context about the remaining 3 topics. With this information the Coalition narrowed its focus to 2 priorities: Mental Health and Belonging & Civic Muscle. These will be the focus of this cycle's Community Health Improvement Plan. The third community priority - Humane Housing - was not selected because community housing experts are already leading an ongoing effort to address this topic area.

Collaboration & Next Steps

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Next steps include identifying the priority health focus areas that will make up the Community Health Improvement Plan. These focus areas will be identified using the provided information found in this Community Health Assessment.

This collaborative process began in earnest in 2022 with representatives from each of the 5 Tri-County Public Health agencies: David DeGrood (Outagamie), Cathy Ellis (Calumet), Claire Holzschuh (Menasha), Heidi Keating (Winnebago), and Chuck Sepers (Appleton). These 5 individuals spent months discussing how to be more respectful of community partners' time, more efficient with organizational resources, and more intentional about aligning plans and programs. The charter they wrote served as the foundation for this work.

With the addition of health care systems and community organizations in 2023, the Tri-County Community Health Improvement Coalition was formed to ensure that everyone in the region has a fair and just opportunity to achieve health and well-being. The health data included in this assessment from Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties will provide the Coalition with information to identify priority health areas that will be focused on during the 3-year community health improvement cycle. Additionally, the coalition identified a vision and mission to follow as a result of the community health assessment process.

Vision: A unified, repeatable community health improvement process – with shared language, learning, plans, and progress.

Mission: To engage diverse community stakeholders to analyze community health, prioritize opportunities, implement evidence-informed strategies, and measure progress toward improving well-being for all.

A standard community health improvement plan typically includes 1 to 3 priority health areas. These health areas are community-focused and are identified during the community health assessment process. Each priority health area will have measurable objectives, strategies, and activities. These measures are important to ensure that the community efforts are having the intended outcome. They also provide ongoing feedback to determine if strategies may need to be altered or changed. This follows the MAPP framework, where planning, implementing, and evaluation are consistently occurring during the 3-year health improvement plan cycle.

Lastly, a key component of the community health improvement plan is the community itself. Community support work will be conducted by the Coalition, local stakeholders, and regional partners over the next 3 years to help the Tri-County Community Health Improvement Coalition improve well-being for all.

THANK YOU

The Coalition extends a big “Thank You” to all of the community organizations that provided input into the prioritization of topics and issues. These organizations have expressed willingness to partner with the Coalition and mobilize their resources to address community needs. The list below is not exhaustive.

ABC for Health, Inc.	Lawrence University
ADVOCAP, Inc.	Local faith-based communities
Apricity	Local libraries
Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin	Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin & Upper Michigan
Boys & Girls Clubs	NAMI Fox Valley, Inc.
Building for Kids Children’s Museum	NeighborWorks Green Bay
Celebrate Diversity Fox Cities	Oneida Nation
Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region	Oshkosh Area Community Pantry
East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Pillars, Inc.
ESTHER Fox Valley	Pointtters Community Initiatives
Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin	Rainbow Alliance Advocacy
Father Carr’s Place 2B	Reach Counseling
Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin	Rogers Behavioral Health
First 5 Fox Valley	Salvation Army
Fox Valley Veterans Council, Inc.	School districts
Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity	Tri-County Dental
Greater Oshkosh Health Neighborhoods, Inc.	Us 2 Behavioral Health Care
Hope Clinic & Care Center	Valley Packaging Industries
Independent Care Health Plan	Vivent Health
JKV Research, LLC	World Relief

Another big “Thank You” to all of the Coalition member organizations and their staff for their commitment to this project and the health of the people they serve:

Ascension	NEW Hmong Professionals
Aurora Health Care	NEW Mental Health Connection
Calumet County Public Health	Outagamie County Public Health
Casa Hispana	Partnership Community Health Center
Children’s Wisconsin	People of Progression
City of Appleton Health Department	Samaritan Fox Valley
City of Menasha Health Department	ThedaCare
Diverse and Resilient	United Way Fox Cities
Fox Valley Data Exchange	Winnebago County Public Health
Hmong American Partnership Fox Valley	YMCA of Fox Cities

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Throughout the document, the text in these graphics represents quotes from Tri-County community members gathered via surveys, listening sessions, and focus groups.

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