

# KENOSHA NEWS

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## A poor diagnosis for Kenosha

### County ranks near bottom in state health study

BY TERRY FLORES  
[tflores@kenoshanews.com](mailto:tflores@kenoshanews.com)

Kenosha County ranks near the bottom when it comes to health outcomes and the factors that determine them, according to a 2008 study by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

This year, Kenosha ranked 61st and 62nd out of 72 counties in health outcomes and determinants, respectively, slipping two places in both categories compared with last year. The most recent findings show a slight, but continued trend downward.

The county ranked 61st in mortality, or a measure of potential years of life lost. In Kenosha County, 6,910 potential years were lost per 100,000 population compared with Ozaukee County, which ranked first with 4,020 years lost per 100,000 population. Ozaukee also was ranked the healthiest county overall in the state.

Among the factors driving down Kenosha County's overall ranking were air quality, car crashes, obesity, sexually transmitted diseases, diabetic care, cigarette smoking and single-parent households. In these areas, the county scored in the bottom 10 percent or lower.

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Frank Matteo, director of the county's Division of Health, said air quality has always been a concern, with the county ranking behind only the city and county of Milwaukee for worst air quality. The county ranked fourth in on-road motor vehicle crashes.

"We have a high-risk population, a lot of motor vehicle crashes; we know we have some bad drivers, (and) a lot of overweight people. Diabetes is high, and our smoking rate is high," he said.

Kenosha ranked 68th in care for diabetics, obesity, sexually transmitted diseases and single-parent households each, meaning only five other counties had a higher percentage of those affected by each factor. The county ranked 66th when it came to cigarette smoking, also a negative health behavior.

Chaz Bartucz, a founding member of Breathe Free Kenosha, said the study's findings came as no surprise to him, given the resistance he has encountered in pushing smoking bans in the city.

"As long as we continue to allow indoor smoking in indoor workplaces, that's a big contributing factor to things like heart disease and lung disease, and the results are expensive to our health care system — \$1.5 billion in the state and \$2 billion in direct costs," he said.

Bartucz said he would like to see Kenosha's health rankings go up, especially in areas of health behaviors, which are preventable.

"We've got to work together as a community, from legislators to educators to the average citizen and parents," he said.

Dr. A. John Capelli, an Aurora family physician, said a community's overall health can be determined by no one factor. Capelli said while doctors and other medical professionals can prescribe medications to treat symptoms and make recommendations to improve people's health, it is ultimately up to individuals to



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embrace a healthier lifestyle.

"When it comes to healthy lifestyles, we fail as a society, as a culture. Look at our obesity, our smoking rates — we have poor lifestyles," he said. "For example, we didn't embrace the (smoking ban) issue. We repelled it. But it's not just one issue. We have to take ownership. It is up to each one of us to be accountable to ourselves and to our families."

On the upside, youth and young women of child-bearing age appear to be responding to education efforts when it comes to quitting smoking, Matteo said. Habits and addictions, can be difficult to overcome, however.

"I think we are making some inroads with the teens where a lot of these issues are having to do with behavior modifications which are very difficult," he said. "If you have programs, whether in school or in health care, or you're telling a group of people, 'You know, you shouldn't do this,' it's very hard because people like to have choices. Tobacco is a real contentious one."

The county has also made strides with programs to reduce lead poisoning and radon, and overall, the county's population ranks among the lowest in exposure to nitrates in water, according to the study.

#### Comments:

There are **3 comments on this topic**

##### ▸ Local Officials Are Apathetic

Toxic Poisoning 11/24 at 06:54

No surprise here! The beaches are reported contaminated, yearly. The busses, very few ride, are massive air polluters. The power plant is reported as one of the worst polluters in the nation. Schools are built on some of the worst toxic land in the nation. Toxic construction dust at the entire Brass can be seen blowing throughout the neighborhoods. Matteo enforces nothing!

##### ▸ Bad Health = Profits

We\_Got\_Rights 11/24 at 08:11

OK, but the Tavern League and the bar owners and Mary Magdalene Moser said that smoking is good for business and without it we'd lose our bars and small businesses. Shouldn't we all be willing to die so that they can carry on their addictions and make a profit out of other's misfortunes? And think of the benefit to the funeral homes - they won't have to wait as long for us to get there. I'm sure that's why People like Alderman Casey so vehemently oppose the smokefree workplace ordinance. Is the community's health really more important than someone's "right" to be addicted to nicotine?

##### ▸ Here They Go Again

Randy 11/24 at 10:39

Kenosha (and Wisconsin) ranks near the top when it comes to paying taxes and at the bottom when it comes to any positive meaningful results from the same.

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Pale, male and gray