

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Why do we need a report card on health and health disparities in Wisconsin?**

*Public and private sector policy makers are making decisions every day regarding programs and policies that affect health in the state, from medical care to public health to socioeconomic status. Knowing how healthy the population is overall and for specific subpopulations can be useful in resource allocation decisions for health improvement. In addition, this information is intended to be useful in developing the second five year plan for the Wisconsin Partnership Program as well as the State Health Plan for 2020.*

- **Why does Wisconsin receive two separate grades for health and health disparity instead of one overall grade?**

*This Report Card grades Wisconsin separately on health and health disparity in order to assess the state's progress towards achieving two of the goals outlined by the Healthiest Wisconsin 2010 state health plan: to protect and promote health for all, and eliminate health disparities. Wisconsin's health grade of B- is based on the average health of its residents and, therefore, is dominated by the health of the majority population. Even if Wisconsin were to receive a grade of A for health, it could still be performing poorly in terms of health disparities and have numerous population subgroups in need of improved health. For these reasons, health and health disparity were assessed separately in this report.*

- **How does Wisconsin compare to other states for health and health disparity?**

*Sixteen states receive better grades than Wisconsin for overall health, including the neighboring states of Minnesota (B) and Iowa (B). Other states performing better than Wisconsin in terms of health include Massachusetts, New York, and New Hampshire. States receiving the same grade as Wisconsin for health (B-) include California, Nebraska, and New Jersey.*

*Twenty states receive better grades than Wisconsin for health disparity, including again Iowa (B) and Minnesota (B-). Massachusetts, New York, California, and Kansas are among the states with better health disparity grades than Wisconsin, while sixteen other states share Wisconsin's health disparity grade of D.*

- **How can Wisconsin receive a health disparity grade of D if it receives a grade similar to or better than over half of the other states?**

*Because the goal is to eliminate health disparities, the life stage grades for health disparity were graded against an absolute scale of no disparities rather than being graded relative to the performance of other states on health disparities. Since all states are struggling with health disparities, no state currently earns higher than a B for health disparity within any life stage.*

- **How does this Report Card relate to other recent reports on state health?**

*Every fall, the [United Health Foundation](#) publishes "America's Health Rankings", ranking the health of the 50 states. However, the focus of this report is almost entirely on health, not health disparities. Other recent rankings from the federal [Agency for Health Research and Quality](#) and from the [Commonwealth Fund](#) report primarily on the quality of the States' health care systems (e.g., hospitals, doctors, home health care) and not on the overall health outcomes of the population and subpopulations.*



- **If our health care in Wisconsin ranks #1 in the nation, why aren't our health and health disparity grades better?**

*The quality of health care is only one factor in being healthy. Those with no access to health care don't experience this quality, and health is also determined by individual behaviors and social factors like income, education, and social relationships. This mismatch suggests that improving access to health care as well as public health approaches may need a higher priority in our state.*

- **How were the subgroups included in the report selected?**

*The population subgroups graded in the Report Card were selected to illustrate the variety of characteristics, or domains, across which health disparities exist. A total of four domains were selected for inclusion in the Report Card: gender, education, urbanization of county, and race/ethnicity. This list does not cover all of the disparity domains reflected in the Healthy People 2010 goal to eliminate health disparities, such as income, disability, and sexual orientation, because comparable and reliable data on populations defined by those important characteristics were not readily available.*

**Gender:** *Although some differences in health between males and females may be due to biological differences between the sexes, other gender differences in health represent inequities – or differences in health that are unfair or unjust. For example, homicide rates are higher for men and depression is more common among women.*

**Education:** *The domain of education was included in the Report Card as an illustration of socioeconomic disparities in health. Educational attainment was examined for adults 25 years of age and older, but this same descriptor is not applicable for children who are currently in school. Therefore, the domain of education was not included for children and young adults. For infants, the education of the mother was used for this domain.*

**Urbanization:** *Where someone lives can have an impact on their health, so the domain of urbanization was included to illustrate differences in health based on the physical and social environment. Urbanization is a measure of the degree of urban, or city-like, character of the county in which a person lives.*

**Race/ethnicity:** *Health disparities between racial and ethnic groups exist in Wisconsin and across the entire United States. For this Report Card, health is assessed for five racial/ethnic groups, with all groups other than Hispanic/Latino representing non-Hispanic ethnicity. Racial and ethnic groups with a substantial population in Wisconsin but for whom reliable data were not available for a particular measure are noted in the Report Card with a grade of "I" representing "incomplete" data.*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** [www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi](http://www.pophealth.wisc.edu/uwphi).

