



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

**Population Health Institute**

*Translating Research for Policy and Practice*



**School of Medicine  
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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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## **Wisconsin residents living longer but not feeling better Report sounds alarm about long-term social trends**

Madison, Wis. - A new report by researchers at the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute says the state's progress in achieving longer and healthier lives for its citizens is a very mixed bag.

The 2013 *Wisconsin Health Trends: Progress Report* reveals that while the overall mortality trends for all age groups in Wisconsin have improved over the past decade, more people are reporting being in poor health. And, while important health indicators like teen births and excessive drinking among adults have decreased over the last decade, the 10-year trends for all socio-economic factors – including unemployment, violent crime rates and the high-school dropout rate – are getting worse.

This new report not only looks at trends in overall health but also examines health outcomes and health factors for different subsets of Wisconsin's population, finding that not all groups have shared in improvement in key indicators of health.

For example, while men are still more likely than women to smoke, overall smoking rates for both men and women have been on the decline over the last 10 years, with male rates of smoking showing a faster decrease. However, the prevalence of adult smoking is increasing among African-Americans while decreasing among other racial and ethnic groups, widening the gap in smoking rates between members of different racial and ethnic groups.

“If we want an accurate picture of how healthy we are as a state, we have to look beneath the averages to see where the opportunities to be healthy may not be the same for everyone in Wisconsin,” said Karen Timberlake, director of the UW Population Health Institute. “This report helps us understand whether we are on the right track or headed in the wrong direction when it comes to how long and how well people live, and it helps us see that the way we answer that question for some may not be the way it is answered for all.”



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Examples of gaps in health outcomes and the factors that influence health among Wisconsin residents include the following:

- Nearly three out of ten African-Americans reported they are in poor or fair health (a 70% increase over the past ten years) compared to just over one in ten whites.
- The percentage of children in poverty is increasing in all types of communities but is much higher for those living in urban counties compared to those living in rural, non-urban and suburban counties.

Many of the health trends Wisconsin is experiencing, if left unaddressed, will lead to poorer health outcomes and greater gaps in the future. Efforts to improve health in Wisconsin must consider the full array of factors that influence how long and how well we live, and must begin by examining the circumstances that produce longer, healthier lives for some of the state's residents but not others.

The UW Population Health Institute produces the *Wisconsin Health Trends: Progress Report* to track opportunities to improve Wisconsin's health and make progress towards the goal of becoming the healthiest state in the nation, with less disparity. The 19 health indicators presented in the report support the work of public health professionals, policymakers and concerned citizens who are interested in assessing long-term and recent trends in leading health indicators. Wisconsin's greatest opportunities for health improvement may be recognized through targeted interventions that are likely to decrease health disparities.

For a complete listing of these indicators, to read the full report, or to see disparities by important population subgroups, visit the UW Population Health Institute website at <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu>.

The UW Population Health Institute advances health and well-being for all by developing and promoting evidence-based approaches to health improvement through policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels.