



# 2021 COMPASS NOW

NAVIGATING TOWARD STRONGER COMMUNITIES



## How is your community faring?

Houston County



# Acknowledgments

COMPASS Now 2021 would like to acknowledge and offer much gratitude to the following people and organizations for their time, commitment and expertise in the creation of this report.

## **Chair**

Kayleigh Day, MPH, CHES – Monroe County Health Department

## **Coordination**

Liz Evans – Great Rivers United Way

## **Consultation & Writing - Community Health Solutions**

Stephen A. Horan, PhD, President

Theresa G. Laine, MS, Senior Consultant

Sherrina Gibson, Manager

Leah Horan, Project Support Staff

## **Design & Layout**

Dan Howard – Gundersen St. Joseph's Hospital and Clinics

## **Steering Committee**

Barb Barczak – Trempealeau County Health Department

Pauline Byom – Mayo Clinic Health System

Jessie Cunningham – Memorial Healthcare

Jacquie Cutts – La Crosse County Health Department

Kayleigh Day – Monroe County Health Department

Liz Evans – Great Rivers United Way

Danny Hale – Vernon Memorial Healthcare

Sarah Havens – Gundersen Health System

Dan Howard – Gundersen St. Joseph's Hospital and Clinics

Nathan Hundt – APTIV, Inc.

Beth Johnson – Vernon County Health Department

Amy Kleiber – Vernon County Health Department

April Loeffler – Buffalo County Health Department

Heather Myhre – Houston County Public Health

Heidi Odegaard – Mayo Clinic Health System

Mickey Rice – Buffalo County Health Department

Jen Rombalski – La Crosse County Health Department

Cindy Shireman – Mayo Clinic Health System

Audrey Staggemeyer – Houston County Public Health

Shelly Teadt – Couleecap

Amanda Westphal – Gundersen Health System

Mary Kay Wolf – Great Rivers United Way

Susan Zimmerman – Gundersen Tri-County Hospital and Clinics

## **Survey Team**

Jacquie Cutts, Kayleigh Day, Liz Evans, Sarah Havens, Dan Howard, Nathan Hundt, Lizz Stanish, Shelly Teadt, Susan Zimmerman

## **Key Informant Interview Team**

Ryan Anderson, Tori Brake, Jessica Brost, Brenna Daily, Liz Evans, Bailee Golisch, Chloe Harmsen, Mitchell Jaeger, Jamie Johnson, Brooke Mikla, KJ Newkirk, Hannah Shimanek, Lorinda Volzer. In consultation with Dr. Gary Gilmore.

## **Financial Contributors**

Great Rivers United Way

Gundersen Health System

Gundersen St. Joseph's Hospital and Clinics

Gundersen Tri-County Hospital and Clinics

Houston County Public Health

La Crosse Community Foundation

La Crosse County Health Department

Mayo Clinic Health System – La Crosse

Mayo Clinic Health System – Sparta

Monroe County Health Department

Tomah Health

Trempealeau County Health Department

Vernon County Health Department

Vernon Memorial Healthcare

## **Additional Support**

Lori Arndt, Kaila Baer, Katie Berkedal, Teri Booth, Teaghan Carter, Becky Kilen, Catherine Kolkmeier, Danielle Krozel, Brittany Kuschel, Katie Lelonek, Gabrielle Lentz, Julie Nelson, Heidi Odegaard, Barb Oehninger Shepherd, Adrienne Olson, Emily Olson, Lindsey Purl, Nikki Rindal, Lindsay Rooyakkers, Katie Rubin, Sara Rugg Jackson, Katie Sparks, Curt Teff, Michelle Vitse, Abby Waters, Anna Yesbeck, Judi Zabel, Jackie Zimmermann

## **Other Thanks**

Thank you to the residents of Buffalo, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties in Wisconsin and Houston County in Minnesota for completing the Random Household Survey in July and August of 2020 and the Convenience Survey in October and November of 2020; your responses laid the foundation of the assessment.

Additionally, thank you to all of the key informants who gave interviews for lending your thoughts and voices to an otherwise quantitative process during November and December of 2020.

Finally, thank you to everyone that was able to attend and participate in the county Stakeholder meetings. Your assistance in identifying and prioritizing the top needs of the region and counties involved in this process will help drive positive change throughout the region and assist many area residents. The following is a list of organizations that participated in the Stakeholder meetings in the region and is not inclusive of all of the representatives from the organizations that participated in this process:

## List of Organizations that Participated in Community Stakeholder Meetings

AJ Falkers Counseling and Consulting Services	La Farge School District
American Red Cross	Lifestyle Fitness
APTIV, Inc.	Lokens Sawmill Inn & Suites
Arcadia Ambulance Service	Mayo Clinic Health System
Arcadia Middle School	Mayo Clinic Health System Sparta Family Medicine Clinic
Arrow Behavioral Health	MiEnergy Cooperative
At Home Care of Western Wisconsin	Mobile Meals
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the 7 Rivers Region	Monroe County Department of Human Services
Blair-Taylor High School	Monroe County Government
Bridges Health	Monroe County Health Department
Buffalo County Health Department	Monroe County Justice Programs
Caledonia Area Public Schools	Neighbor for Neighbor
Center for Special Children-LFMC	Neighbors in Action
Children's Museum of La Crosse	Next Chapter La Crosse
Cia Siab, Inc.	Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton School District
City of Caledonia	Optum
City of Fountain City	Pilgrims Pride Arcadia Wisconsin
City of Hillsboro	Royal Bank
City of La Crosse	Royal Credit Union
Community & Economic Development Associates	Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center
Co-op Credit Union	Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin
Coulee Region RSVP	Semcac
Coulecap, Inc.	SmoothToe
Cross of Christ Lutheran Church	Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce
Crossing Rivers Health	Sparta Area School District
ESB Bank	Sparta Free Library
Families First of Monroe County, Inc.	Spring Grove School District
Family & Children's Center	St. John's Alma
Flocks Guardians Inc.	St. Michael's Assisted Living
Great Rivers HUB	State of Wisconsin, Department of Military Affairs
Great Rivers United Way	The Parenting Place
Gundersen Health System	The Salvation Army of La Crosse County
Gundersen Medical Foundation	Tomah Area School District
Gundersen St. Joseph's Hospital and Clinics	Tomah Chamber and Visitors Center
Gundersen Tri-County Hospital and Clinics	Tomah Health
Hale Fire/First Responders	Tomah Police Department
Hamilton Community School	Tomah VA Medical Center
Hillsboro School District	Trempealeau County
Hillsboro Sentry-Enterprise	Trempealeau County Board
Houston County	Trempealeau County Department of Human Services
Houston County Economic Development Authority	Trempealeau County Health Department
Houston County Public Health & Human Services	Tri-County Communications Cooperative
Houston Public Schools	Triple Brook Farms, Inc
Inclusa	University of Wisconsin Extension
Independence Public Library	UW-Madison
Independence School District	UW-Madison Division of Extension Monroe County
Independent Living Resources	UW-Madison Extension
Kwik Trip	VARC, Inc. Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center
La Crescent Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism	Vernon County
La Crescent Montessori & STEM School	Vernon County Emergency Management
La Crescent-Hokah Public Schools	Vernon County Health Department
La Crosse Community Foundation	Vernon Electric Coop
La Crosse County	Vernon Memorial Healthcare
La Crosse County Health Department	Western Wisconsin Women's Business Center
La Crosse County Historical Society	Wisconsin State Legislature
La Crosse County Human Services	Workforce Connections, Inc.
La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium	Xcel Energy
La Crosse Milling Company	YWCA La Crosse

# Table of Contents

## Section 1: Introduction

Purpose of the Study	1
Adjusting to COVID-19	2
Study Methods and Data Sources	2
Limitations of this Report	5
Bridging the Compass Now 2018 and 2021 Reports	6

## Section 2: Study Results: How is Houston County Faring?

### The Six-County Region 7

Demographic Profile	8
Summary of County Health Rankings	13

### Length and Quality of Life 14

Community Indicators	15
Community Insights	17

### Health Behaviors and Concerns 19

Community Indicators	20
Community Insights	21

### Health Care 23

Community Indicators	24
Community Insights	26

### Social and Economic Factors 30

Community Indicators	31
Community Insights	33

### Physical Environment and Safety 38

Community Indicators	39
Community Insights	39

## Section 3: Community Insight on Priority Needs and Ideas for Solutions

Meeting with Community Stakeholders from Houston County	43
Priority Needs	44
Ideas for Solutions	44

## Appendix

Appendix A. Data Sources	45
Appendix B. List of Community Indicators and Community Survey Topics	46

# List of Exhibits

## Introduction

- Exhibit 1.1 - The Study Region
- Exhibit 1.2 - The County Health Rankings Model
- Exhibit 1.3 - Profile of Community Survey Respondents from Houston County

## Study Results: How is Houston County Faring?

### The Six-County Region

- Exhibit 2.1 - 2020 Demographic Profile of the Region
- Exhibit 2.2 - Population Estimates and Projections
- Exhibit 2.3 - Total Population by County
- Exhibit 2.4 - Total Population by Census Tract
- Exhibit 2.5 - Child Population by Census Tract
- Exhibit 2.6 - Older Adult Population by Census Tract
- Exhibit 2.7 - Minority Population by Census Tract
- Exhibit 2.8 - Households with Income below Poverty by Census Tract
- Exhibit 2.9 - County Health Rankings Summary for 2020

### Length & Quality of Life

- Exhibit 2.10 - County Health Rankings for Length and Quality of Life
- Exhibit 2.11 - 2018 Leading Causes of Death
- Exhibit 2.12 - 2018 Maternal and Infant Health
- Exhibit 2.13 - Ratings of Community Life in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.14 - Ratings of Educational Opportunities in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.15 - Concerns about Issues Related to Community Life

### Health Behaviors & Concerns

- Exhibit 2.16 - County Health Rankings for Health Behaviors
- Exhibit 2.17 - Ratings of Personal Health in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.18 - Concerns about Health Issues in Houston County

### Health Care

- Exhibit 2.19 - County Health Rankings for Clinical Care
- Exhibit 2.20 - 2018 Cancer Screening Rates
- Exhibit 2.21 - Self-Reported Health Coverage in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.22 - Ratings of Health Care Access & Affordability in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.23 - Health Care Sources and Obstacles for Adults in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.24 - Dental Visits and Obstacles for Adults in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.25 - Health Care and Dental Visits for Children in Houston County

### Social & Economic Factors

- Exhibit 2.26 - County Health Rankings for Social and Economic Factors
- Exhibit 2.27 - 2018 Low-Income Households
- Exhibit 2.28 - Reported Child Services Cases
- Exhibit 2.29 - Caring for Vulnerable Persons in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.30 - Concerns about Vulnerable Persons in the Community
- Exhibit 2.31 - Community Supports for Vulnerable Persons
- Exhibit 2.32 - Concerns about Meeting Household Needs
- Exhibit 2.33 - Concerns about Access to Healthy Food
- Exhibit 2.34 - Concerns about Economic Issues in the Community
- Exhibit 2.35 - Ratings of Community Supports for Economic Stability

## Physical Environment & Safety

- Exhibit 2.36 - County Health Rankings for the Physical Environment
- Exhibit 2.37 - Rating of Overall Community Safety in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.38 - Concerns about Community Safety in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.39 - Responsiveness of Public Safety Agencies in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.40 - Preparedness for Emergency Events in Houston County
- Exhibit 2.41 - Concerns about Public Spaces in Houston County

## Community Insight on Priority Needs and Ideas for Solutions

- Exhibit 3.1 - Priority Needs Identified by Houston County Community Stakeholders
- Exhibit 3.2 - Ideas for Solutions Submitted by Houston County Community Stakeholders

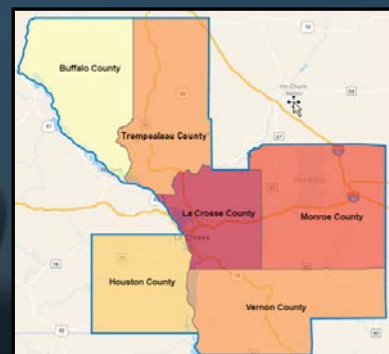
# Introduction

Compass Now is a joint effort of Great Rivers United Way, area healthcare organizations, and county health departments to improve the quality of life for everyone in the community. This introductory section outlines the purpose and additional elements of the study framework. Section 2 of the report provides detailed analysis of community indicators and insights gathered for this study.

## Purpose of the Study

This report is the latest in a series of Compass Now needs assessments and reports published since 1995. In response to these reports, Great Rivers United Way has focused its funding system to more closely reflect identified community needs. In addition, a wide array of community organizations have used report findings to shape their own priorities and support grant requests.

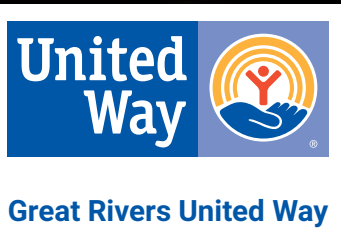
The purpose of this Compass Now 2021 report is to provide an updated assessment of community needs that can be used to inform community action strategies by stakeholders across the region. The Compass Now 2021 study is focused on communities within a six-county region including Buffalo, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties in Wisconsin, and Houston County in Minnesota. Reports are available for the six-county region and for each county within the region. This report describes needs within Houston County.



### 2020 Population Estimate

Buffalo	13,534
Houston	19,527
La Crosse	120,515
Monroe	46,889
Trempealeau	30,097
Vernon	31,029
<b>Region</b>	<b>261,591</b>

Exhibit 1.1 - The Study Region. Source: CHS analysis of population estimates published by ESRI. See Appendix A for details.



If you find the contents of this report useful, please consider supporting our work by making a financial contribution to Great Rivers United Way at [greatriversunitedway.org](http://greatriversunitedway.org)

**DONATE NOW**

## Adjusting to COVID-19

The Compass Now study described in this report was conducted during 2020, and consequently affected by disruptions caused by COVID-19. These disruptions required two primary adjustments to the study.

- One adjustment involved postponement of a planned set of community meetings. The original study plan envisioned a series of community meetings in 2020 to gather insight about needs and action ideas from local stakeholders. Because of social distancing requirements, the community meetings were postponed to 2021.
- A second adjustment involved the process for surveying community members. The original study plan was to conduct a random household survey with community members across the region, supplemented by a 'convenience survey' and set of interviews with community members who might be under-represented in the random household survey. The convenience survey and interviews would have been conducted in community settings convenient to the prospective respondents. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, the convenience surveys had to be conducted electronically, and the group interviews with community members could not be conducted in public spaces. As a result, we expect that some community members who could have participated in a face-to-face meeting were not able to participate in an electronic format.

## Study Methods and Data Sources

The study was conducted under the direction of Great Rivers United Way, with technical support from a contracted consultant (Community Health Solutions). The study was guided by a *Compass Now Steering Committee* comprised of stakeholders from public health, health care, and other community sectors. The Steering Committee members provided guidance on the study scope and methods, including the adjustments made in response to COVID-19. The Steering Committee members also provided liaisons to engage community organizations in promoting participation in the convenience survey conducted for the study.

The study methods included analysis of community indicators from various sources, and community insights provided by respondents to a random household survey and a supplemental convenience survey. The study methods are summarized below, with more details provided in [Appendix A](#).

### Community Demographics

A community demographic profile can provide insight about the size and distribution of the population in terms of health-sensitive attributes such as age, sex/gender, race, ethnicity, and income. Community demographics were analyzed and mapped using data and software from ESRI, a commercial provider of community data.

### County Health Rankings

[The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program](#) is a collaboration between the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and the [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](#). The goals of the program are to:

- Build awareness of the multiple factors that influence health.
- Provide a reliable, sustainable source of local data and evidence to communities to help them identify opportunities to improve their health.
- Engage and activate local leaders from many sectors in creating sustainable community change.
- Connect and empower community leaders working to improve health.

As illustrated in *Exhibit 1.2*, the County Health Rankings are based on a model of community health that emphasizes the many factors that influence how long and how well we live. The Rankings use more than 30 measures that help communities understand how healthy their residents are today (health outcomes) and what will impact their health in the future (health factors).

## Additional Community Indicators

Indicators from the County Health Rankings are supplemented with additional indicators from sources in the local region. These supplemental indicators include:

- Leading causes of death
- Maternal and infant health indicators
- Prevalence of mental health conditions and treatment gaps
- Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households
- Child services cases.

The indicators are provided in several sections of the report, along with notes on specific data sources.

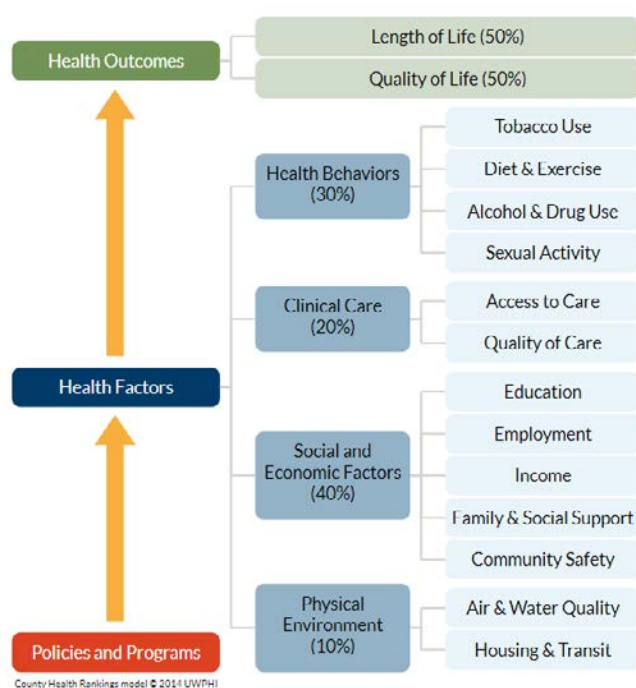


Exhibit 1.2 - The County Health Rankings Model

Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. *County Health Rankings*. Retrieved in December 2020 from <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

## Random Household Survey

A random household survey (RHS) of community residents was conducted in July-September of 2020. The survey was mailed to 6,000 randomly selected households using a sampling strategy designed to produce a target number of at least 100 survey responses from each of the six counties. In addition, within each county the mail-out was designed to over-sample from census tracts with relatively low income to help assure that lower-income community residents were represented. Great Rivers United Way staff and volunteers entered the survey data into a Qualtrics survey portal provided by Community Health Solutions.

## Convenience Survey

A supplemental convenience survey (CS) was conducted in October-November 2020. The purpose of the CS was to generate additional survey responses from populations that may have been under-represented in the RHS. The CS was primarily conducted using mixed methods, and respondents could either complete their survey online or submit a paper copy of their survey response. Great Rivers United Way staff and volunteers entered paper survey responses into a Qualtrics survey portal provided by Community Health Solutions.

A profile of RHS and CS respondents from Houston County is provided in Exhibit 1.3. As shown in the second column of the exhibit, a total of 97 RHS respondents returned their surveys, for a response rate of 10%. Compared to population estimates for Houston County, the RHS responses included a higher percentage of older adults than the population as a whole, and skewed toward respondents self-identifying as female and of White race. The household income profile for RHS respondents had more representation at lower income levels. These differences between the RHS respondents and the overall population should be considered when evaluating the survey results presented throughout the report.

**Exhibit 1.3** also provides a profile of 97 Houston County Residents who responded to the CS respondents. Compared to the RHS, the CS yielded higher proportional representation of adults 30-64 and female residents. The CS results are presented alongside the RHS results throughout the report to provide a multi-method profile of survey responses. The household income profile for CS respondents had more representation at income levels under \$50,000. The two surveys were not combined because they are based on two fundamentally different sampling strategies.

## Exhibit 1.3 Profile of Community Survey Respondents from Houston County

Indicator	Random Household Survey (RHS) Respondents	Convenience Survey (CS) Respondents	Regional Population Estimates
Total	97	53	15,512 (age 18+)
Age			
18-29	3%	6%	17%
30-44	7%	32%	21%
45-64	35%	53%	35%
65+	55%	9%	27%
Sex or Gender			
Female	74%	94%	50%
Male	24%	2%	50%
Self-Identified	2%	2%	--
Prefer not to answer	<1%	2%	--
Race			
American Indian	<1%	<1%	0%
Asian	<1%	2%	1%
Black / African American	<1%	2%	1%
Other race	<1%	<1%	0%
Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	0%
Two or more races	<1%	2%	2%
White	100%	94%	97%
Ethnicity (Residents of Hispanic and Hmong ethnicity are also counted in the Race category.)			
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	1%	2%	1%
Hmong origin	<1%	<1%	--
Household Income			
Less than \$15,000	4%	4%	7%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	13%	2%	8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	10%	2%	8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	24%	13%	15%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19%	23%	22%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	17%	26%	13%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10%	23%	17%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1%	8%	5%
\$200,000 and over	2%	0%	3%
Housing Type			
Owner-occupied	90%	91%	80%
Renter	3%	9%	20%
Other arrangement	7%	0%	--

Note: The age profile is for county residents age 18+. Profiles for sex or gender, race and ethnicity, household income, and housing type are for all age groups in the county. Source: CHS analysis of population estimates published by ESRI. [See Appendix A for details.](#)

## Limitations of this Report

This Compass Now 2021 report is intended to inform community action strategies by stakeholders across the region. The data presented within the report comes from multiple sources, each with its own set of limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results.

### Scope of Community Indicators

Section 2 of the report provides a series of exhibits showing various community indicators along with community insights from survey responses. The report was not designed to include every possible indicator of community health and well-being, partly because some of the data sources tapped for the 2018 Compass Now report are no longer available. The report does present a core set of community indicators that can be helpful for planning community improvement strategies. We encourage readers to use this report as a starting point, and go beyond the report to seek additional data and information that can help you plan and implement effective strategies for community improvement. Some data indicators contained in prior reports were not available, updated or deemed valid for this report.

### County Health Rankings

The County Health Rankings are developed from multiple data sources with varying levels of reliability, and some of these data sources are several years old. Consequently, the rankings and indicators do not provide precise and definitive evidence on where one county stands compared to another. However, in most cases the rankings and indicators are reliable enough to illustrate general community strengths and areas of concern, and they can be helpful for informing efforts to improve community health and well-being.

### Random Household Survey

The RHS was randomized by mailing address in an effort to give every household in the region an equal chance of receiving and completing the survey. The survey mailout to 6,000 households was stratified by county to assure that every jurisdiction would be represented. Within each county the survey was designed to over-sample from census tracts with relatively low income so that this population could be represented as well. As outlined in *Exhibit 1.3*, the RHS responses were significantly skewed toward older residents, and skewed to a lesser extent toward whites and lower income households. Consequently, we cannot say that the survey results are exactly representative of each county and the region as a whole. As a general guide, it is reasonable to assume the percent estimates in the regional RHS results are probably accurate within a margin of error of plus or minus 5%. At the county level, it is reasonable to assume the results are probably accurate within a margin of error of plus or minus 10%.

### Convenience Survey

The purpose of the CS was to generate additional survey responses from populations that may have been under-represented in the RHS. The CS was primarily conducted using mixed methods, and respondents could either complete their survey online or submit a paper copy of their survey response.

Because the CS was not randomized across the region, it cannot meet the same standards of statistical significance as the RHS. In considering the CS results, it will be helpful to know the results are significantly skewed toward adults under age 45 and women, and skewed to a lesser extent toward minority populations and middle-income households. As noted earlier, the CS results are presented alongside the RHS results throughout the report to provide a multi-method profile of survey responses. The two surveys were not combined because they are based on two fundamentally different sampling strategies.

### Respondent Perceptions.

Both the RHS and CS asked respondents to share their insights about a wide range of factors at the individual, household, and community level. Many of the survey questions rely on respondent perceptions of community concerns and community supports. Perceptions are subjective and based on the unique experience of each individual respondent. A respondent's perception of a community issue reflects their reality, but might not reflect the actual situation in the community.

## Bridging the Compass Now 2018 and 2021 Reports

The Compass Now 2021 study and report were framed and designed to provide continuity with the 2018 Compass Now Report where it was feasible and advisable to do so. For example, the main topics in Section 2 (Length and Quality of Life, Health Behaviors, etc.) reflect the main topics in the 2018 Compass Now report with a few minor exceptions. The designs for the 2020 RHS and CS were also crafted to reflect the 2018 approach, with some adjustments for sampling and refinement of survey questions. And like the 2018 report, Compass Now 2021 relies heavily on the County Health Rankings from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. However, some of the community data sources used in 2018 were not available in a usable format for the 2021 report.

Although there is general continuity of structure between the 2018 and 2021 reports, caution should be used when comparing the results. One consideration is most of the community indicators in the 2021 report are several years old, and the same was true for the 2018 report. This problem of 'data lag' is a challenge not only for the Compass Now study series, but also for every community needs assessment that relies on secondary sources of data. Consequently, it is not possible to measure improvement on community indicators from 2018 to 2021 in a relevant and reliable way.

Another methodological consideration is the degree of comparability between the random household survey results from the 2018 and 2021 reports. One consideration is the 2018 and 2021 survey results were generated by two different survey populations that likely had some overlap but cannot be reliably compared. A second consideration is that much has changed in the community environment since 2018, including but not limited to the effects of the pandemic. As general guidance, it is best to view the survey results from 2018 and 2021 as two snapshots of different populations within the same communities.

As a final consideration, this report is not intended as a scorecard on the relative health and well-being of one county compared to another. Throughout the report we provide county-level indicators on a number of community issues. However, these indicators are not structured to support reliable comparisons between counties. To illustrate this point, although the County Health Rankings do provide a relative ordering of counties on various indicators, in many cases the differences in ranking are not based on statistically significant differences in the underlying data used to generate the rankings. Beyond statistics, each county has its own unique set of factors that influence the health and well-being of the population. We recommend focusing on how to sustain strengths and address challenges within each county rather than comparing counties in scorecard fashion.





# How is Houston County Faring?

This section summarizes data on how Houston County region is faring today. The data include community health indicators from various sources, and community insights from the random household survey (RHS) and the convenience survey (CS).

## The Six-County Region

The six-county region is diverse in terms of population size, selected demographic indicators, and overall health rankings. This section provides a demographic overview of the region and a summary of County Health Rankings for the region.

## Section Outline

### **The Six-County Region**

Demographic Profile  
Summary of County Health Rankings

### **Length and Quality of Life**

Community Indicators  
Community Insights

### **Health Behaviors and Concerns**

Community Indicators  
Community Insights

### **Health Care**

Community Indicators  
Community Insights

### **Social and Economic Factors**

Community Indicators  
Community Insights

### **Physical Environment and Safety**

Community Indicators  
Community Insights



## Demographic Profile

As shown in *Exhibit 2.1*, the six-county region is home to an estimated 261,591 residents. Within the Houston County (HO) population of 19,527, an estimated 21% are children age 0-17, and an estimated 21% are adults age 65+. About four percent of the population is classified as minority, and about 15% of households have annual income below \$25,000.

### Exhibit 2.1 2020 Demographic Profile of the Region

Indicator	BU	HO	LC	MO	TR	VE	REGIONAL TOTAL
2020 Total Population	13,534	19,527	120,515	46,889	30,097	31,029	261,591
<b>Age</b>							
Age 0-17	19%	21%	21%	24%	22%	24%	22%
Age 18-29	12%	13%	21%	14%	13%	13%	17%
Age 30-44	16%	17%	17%	18%	18%	16%	17%
Age 45-64	29%	28%	24%	27%	28%	27%	26%
Age 65+	23%	21%	17%	18%	19%	21%	18%
<b>Sex or Gender</b>							
Female Population	49%	50%	51%	49%	49%	50%	50%
Male Population	51%	50%	49%	51%	51%	50%	50%
<b>Race</b>							
American Indian/ Alaska Native Population	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Asian Population	1%	1%	5%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Black/African American Population	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Other Race Population	1%	0%	0%	2%	7%	1%	2%
Pacific Islander Population	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Population of Two or More Races	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
White Population	96%	97%	91%	91%	90%	97%	92%
<b>Ethnicity (Residents of Hispanic ethnicity are also counted in the Race category.)</b>							
Hispanic Population	2%	1%	2%	5%	10%	2%	3%
<b>Household Income</b>							
Household Income less than \$15,000	8%	7%	8%	9%	8%	12%	9%
Household Income \$15,000-\$24,999	10%	8%	8%	8%	9%	11%	9%
Household Income \$25,000-\$34,999	8%	8%	11%	8%	10%	9%	10%
Household Income \$35,000-\$49,999	13%	15%	14%	15%	14%	14%	14%
Household Income \$50,000-\$74,999	23%	22%	18%	20%	20%	20%	19%
Household Income \$75,000-\$99,999	15%	13%	13%	17%	15%	14%	14%
Household Income \$100,000-\$149,999	14%	17%	17%	15%	15%	14%	16%
Household Income \$150,000-\$199,999	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%	5%
Household Income \$200,000 or greater	3%	3%	5%	3%	3%	4%	4%
<b>Housing Type</b>							
Owner Occupied Housing Units	75%	80%	61%	70%	71%	77%	68%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	25%	20%	39%	30%	29%	23%	32%

Source: CHS analysis of population estimates published by ESRI. [See Appendix A for details.](#)

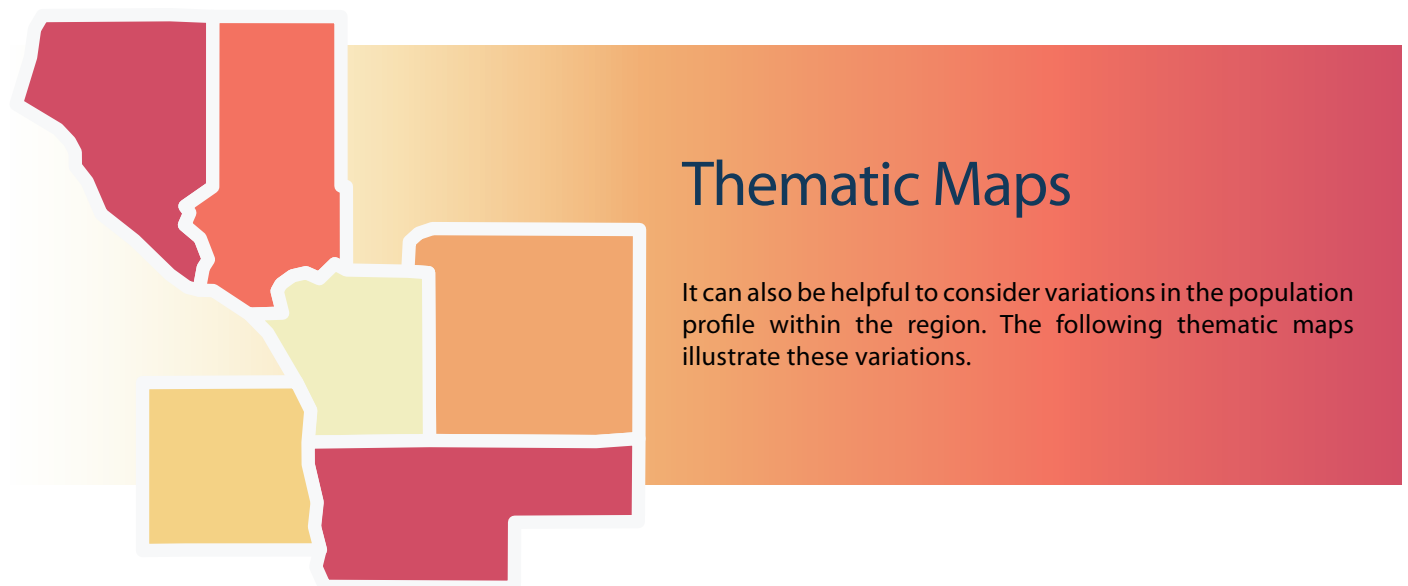


*Exhibit 2.2* provides a closer look at the Houston County population by age. Within the county population of 19,527 there are an estimated 4,057 children age 0-17, and 4,154 adults age 65+. Looking ahead to 2025, overall population growth for Houston County is projected to be 1%, with the most substantial growth (18%) projected for the older-adult population.

## Exhibit 2.2 Population Estimates and Projections

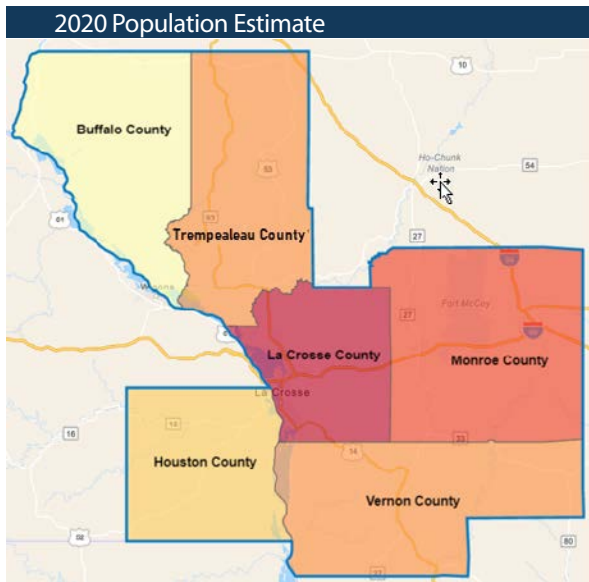
Indicator	BU	HO	LC	MO	TR	VE	REGIONAL TOTAL
<b>Total Population Growth</b>							
2020 Total Population	13,534	19,527	120,515	46,889	30,097	31,029	261,591
2025 Total Population	13,465	19,720	123,404	47,982	30,754	31,802	267,127
2020-2025 % Change- Total Population	-1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>Children Age 0-17</b>							
2020 Population Age 0-17	2,645	4,051	23,734	11,361	6,740	7,468	55,999
2025 Population Age 0-17	2,673	4,159	24,300	11,780	6,957	7,715	57,584
2020-2025 % Change- Population Age 0-17	1%	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%
<b>Adults Age 65+</b>							
2020 Population Age 65+	3,062	4,154	20,725	8,298	5,733	6,402	48,347
2025 Population Age 65+	3,580	4,884	24,113	9,647	6,712	7,578	56,514
2020-2025 % Change- Population Age 65+	17%	18%	16%	16%	17%	18%	17%

Source: CHS analysis of population estimates published by ESRI. [See Appendix A for details.](#)

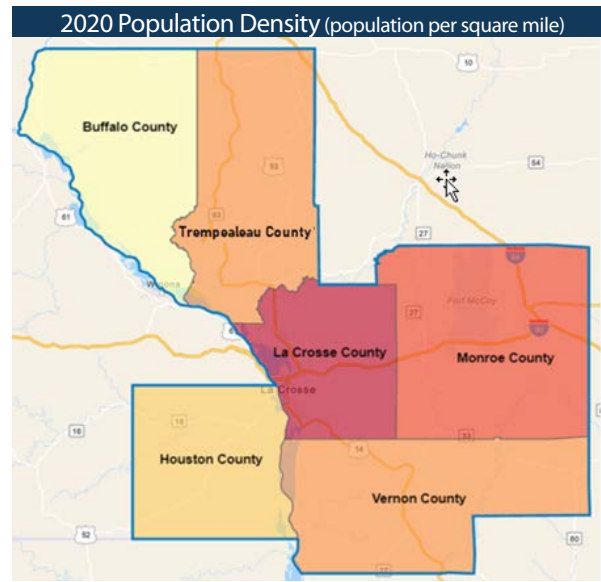


## Exhibit 2.3 Total Population by County

**Population by County.** Exhibit 2.3 shows how the six counties vary in estimated population size from a high of 120,515 in La Crosse County, to a low of 13,534 in Buffalo County.



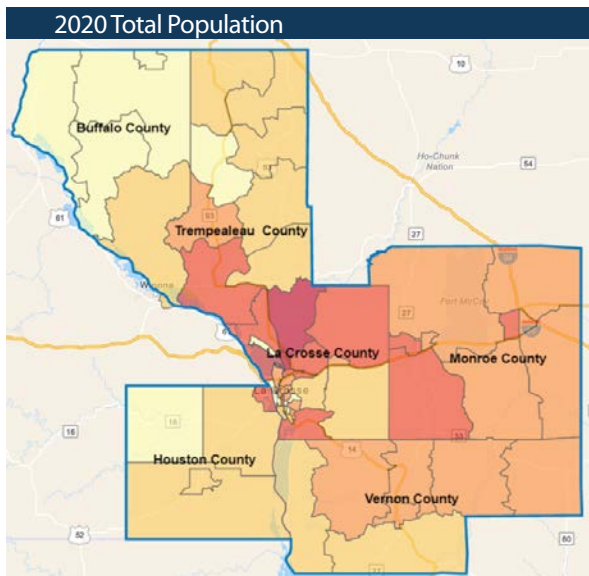
Buffalo	13,534
Houston	19,527
La Crosse	120,515
Monroe	46,889
Trempealeau	30,097
Vernon	31,029
Region	261,591



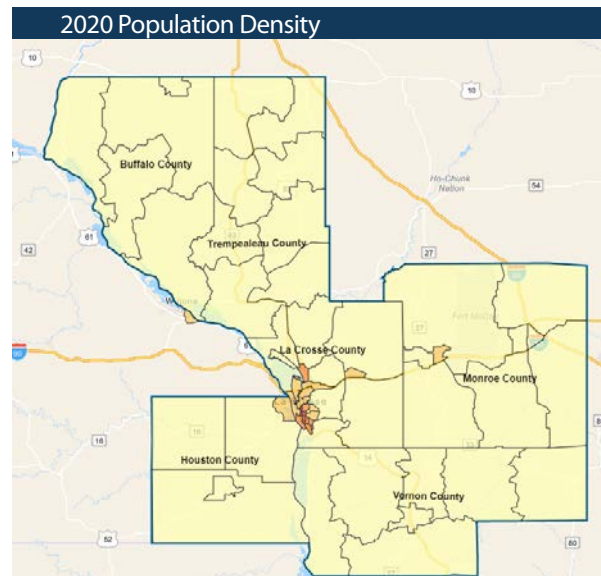
20.2 - 27.7	46.6 - 159.4
27.8 - 37.2	159.5 - 266.8
37.3 - 46.5	

## Exhibit 2.4 Total Population by Census Tract

**Population by Census Tract.** Exhibit 2.4 provides a closer look at the estimated population by census tract, with most of the larger census tracts located in the central part of the region.



1,982 - 3,065	5,385 - 8,728
3,066 - 4,181	8,729 - 10,598
4,182 - 5,384	

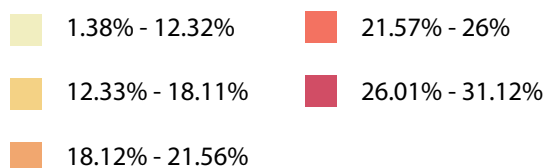
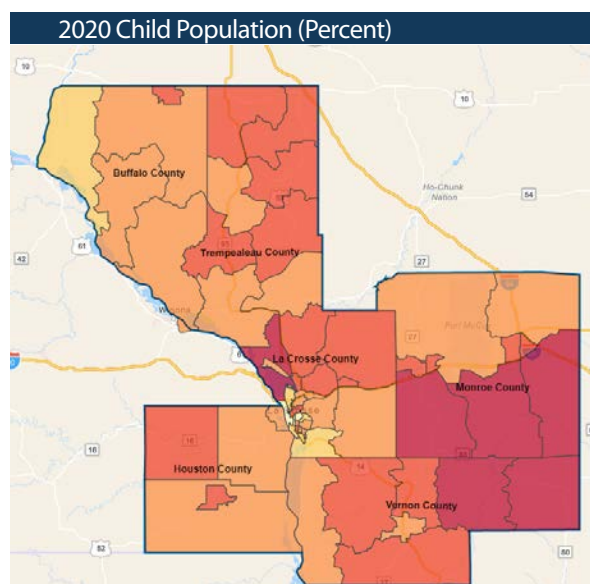
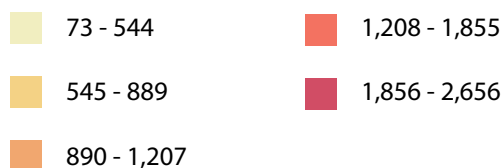
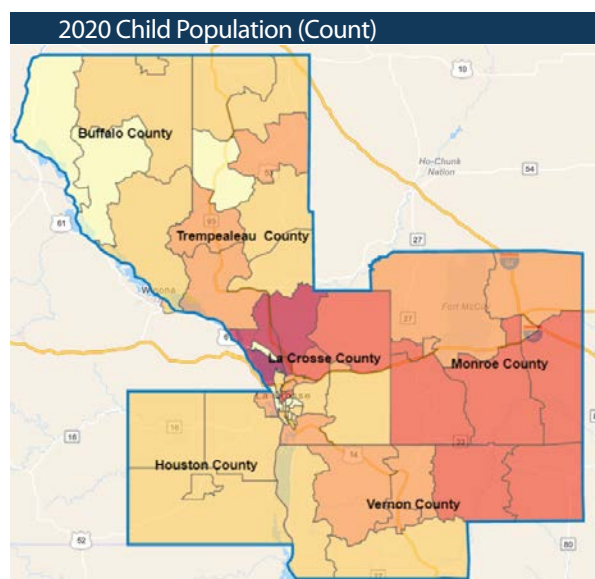


12.1 - 754.6	5,486.5 - 7,711.6
754.7 - 2,662.4	7,711.7 - 8,591.1
2,662.5 - 5,486.4	

Source: CHS analysis of population estimates published by ESRI. See [Appendix A](#) for details.

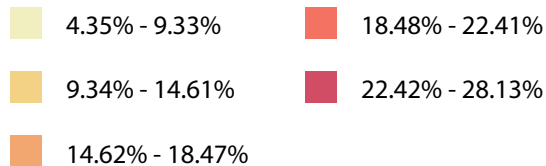
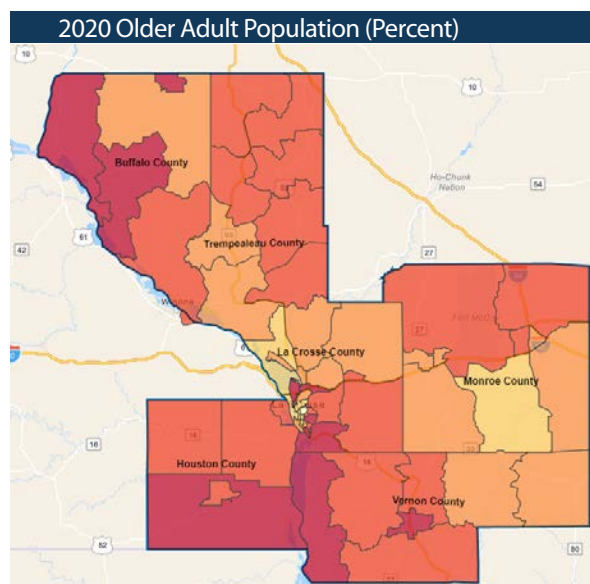
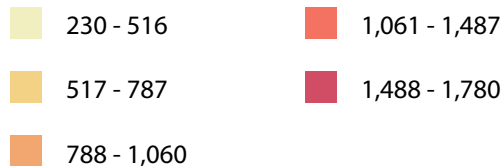
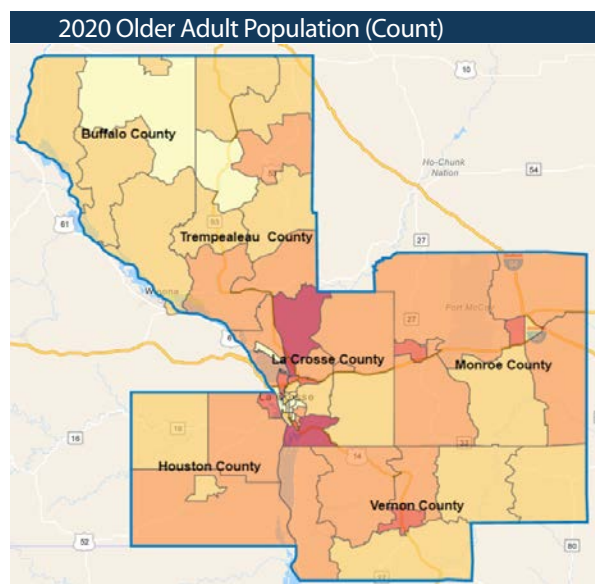
## Exhibit 2.5 Child Population by Census Tract

**Child Population.** *Exhibit 2.5* shows the estimated distribution of the child population, with higher numbers of children in census tracts located in the central and eastern part of the region.



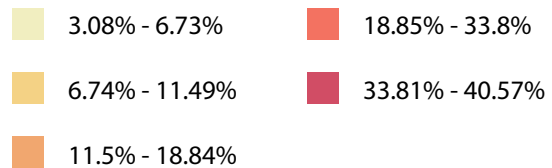
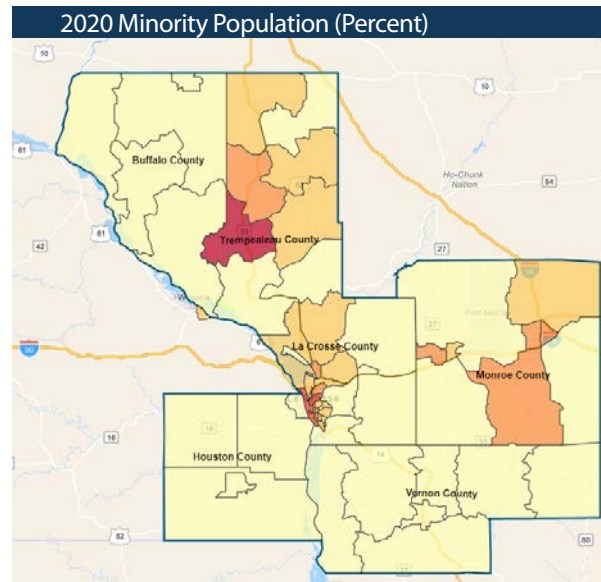
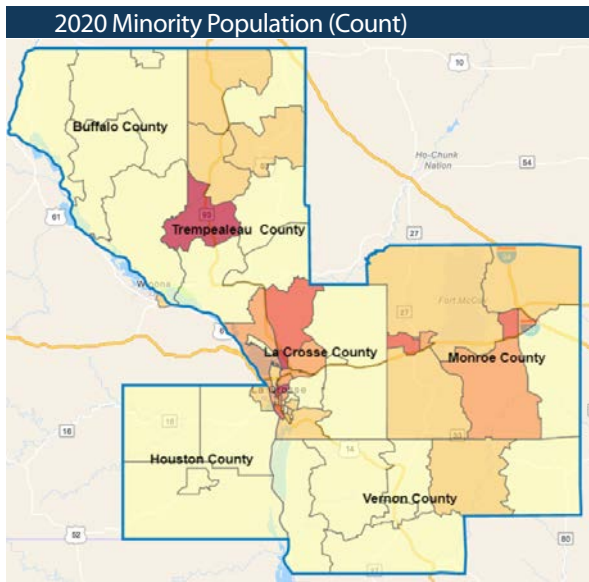
## Exhibit 2.6 Older Adult Population by Census Tract

**Older Adult Population.** *Exhibit 2.6* shows the estimated distribution of the older adult population, with higher numbers in La Crosse County and selected census tracts in Monroe County and Vernon County.



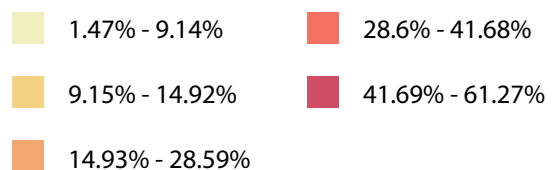
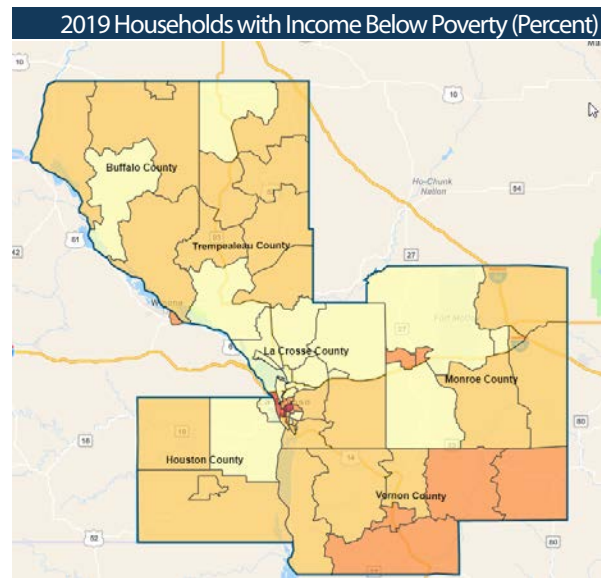
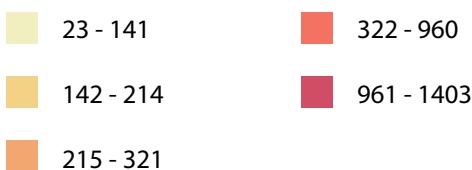
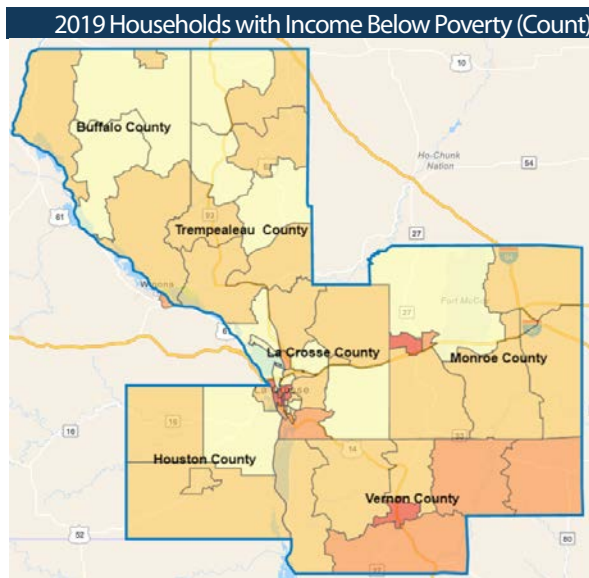
## Exhibit 2.7 Minority Population by Census Tract

**Minority Population.** Exhibit 2.7 shows the estimated distribution of the minority population, with higher numbers within census tracts located in Trempealeau County, La Crosse County, and Monroe County.



## Exhibit 2.8 Households with Income below Poverty by Census Tract

**Low-Income Households.** Exhibit 2.8 shows the estimated distribution of households within poverty, with higher numbers within census tracts located in La Crosse County, Monroe County, and Vernon County.



Source: CHS analysis of population estimates published by ESRI. See [Appendix A](#) for details.



## Summary of County Health Rankings

*Exhibit 2.9* provides a profile of the [County Health Rankings](#) for Houston County (HU) and the rest of the six-county region. Within the exhibit, the Wisconsin counties are ranked among all 72 counties in the state. Houston County is ranked among all 87 counties in Minnesota. The top half of the exhibit shows where each county ranks on the indicators shown. Green shading indicates a ranking in the 1st (best) quartile, with blue, yellow, and red shading indicating the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quartile. The bottom part of the exhibit shows trends for the six counties.

As shown in the upper part of the exhibit, Houston County ranks in the 1st and 2nd quartile on measures of health outcomes, length of life, quality of life, health factors, health behaviors, clinical care, and social & economic factors. Houston County ranks in 4th quartile on measures of physical environment. The rankings and trends are explored in more detail in the following pages.

### Exhibit 2.9 County Health Rankings Summary for 2020

	BU	HO*	LC	MO	TR	VE
Health Outcomes	25	11	28	49	50	18
Length of Life	22	12	30	55	51	18
Quality of Life	32	14	38	39	45	23
Health Factors	17	14	4	39	26	49
Health Behaviors	8	8	13	62	28	34
Clinical Care	43	6	1	27	47	60
Social & Economic Factors	28	32	7	34	18	36
Physical Environment	24	70	16	53	47	61
Ranking Key: <span style="background-color: #d9ead3;"> </span> 1st (best) quartile <span style="background-color: #cfe2f3;"> </span> 2nd quartile <span style="background-color: #fce4d6;"> </span> 3rd quartile <span style="background-color: #f4cccc;"> </span> 4th quartile						
Note: *Houston County is ranked among all Minnesota counties.						
Length of Life						
Premature death	B	B	--	B	B	B
Health Behaviors						
Adult obesity	--	W	W	W	W	W
Physical inactivity	W	W	W	--	--	--
Alcohol-impaired driving deaths	--	B	--	--	W	W
Sexually transmitted infections	W	--	W	W	--	W
Clinical Care						
Uninsured	B	B	B	B	B	B
Primary care physicians	W	B	--	--	--	B
Dentists	B	B	B	B	B	B
Preventable hospital stays	--	--	--	B	B	B
Mammography screening	B	--	B	B	B	B
Flu vaccinations	--	--	--	B	B	--
Social & Economic Factors						
Unemployment	--	--	--	--	--	--
Children in poverty	W	--	--	W	W	W
Violent crime	--	--	B	--	--	--
Physical Environment						
Air pollution – particulate matter	B	B	B	B	B	B
Trend Key: <span style="background-color: #d9ead3;"> </span> B Getting better <span style="background-color: #f4cccc;"> </span> -- No trend <span style="background-color: #f4cccc;"> </span> W Getting worse						
Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. <i>County Health Rankings</i> .						
Retrieved in December 2020 from <a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org">http://www.countyhealthrankings.org</a>						

# Length and Quality of Life

Measures of **length of life** in a community indicate whether people are dying too early and prompts exploration to look at what's driving premature deaths. Measures of **quality of life** indicate how people feel about their health and well-being at a given point in time. This section describes selected community indicators and community insights about length and quality of life.

United  
Way



Great Rivers United Way

If you find the contents of this report useful, please consider supporting our work by making a financial contribution to Great Rivers United Way at [greatriversunitedway.org](https://greatriversunitedway.org)

**DONATE NOW**



## Community Indicators

Community indicators presented below include County Health Rankings, leading causes of death, and maternal and infant health indicators.

**County Health Rankings.** Exhibit 2.10 shows the County Health Rankings for length and quality of life. As shown, Houston County ranks in the first quartile on the length of life and quality of life measures. The length and quality of life rankings are based on the indicators shown in the exhibit. Focusing on trends, Houston County is improving on the premature death measure.

### Exhibit 2.10 County Health Rankings for Length and Quality of Life

	BU	HO*	LC	MO	TR	VE	MN*	WI
Rankings								
Length of Life Rank	22	12	30	55	51	18	--	--
Quality of Life Rank	32	14	38	39	45	23	--	--
Ranking Key:	<div></div> 1st (best) quartile	<div></div> 2nd quartile	<div></div> 3rd quartile		<div></div> 4th quartile			
Indicators								
Premature death** (2016-18)	5,900	4,500	6,100	6,900	6,800	5,700	5,300	6,400
Poor or fair health (2017)	13%	11%	12%	13%	13%	14%	12%	17%
Poor physical health days (2017)	3.4	3	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.7	2.9	3.9
Poor mental health days (2017)	3.6	3.1	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.1	4
Low birthweight (2012-2018)	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%	5%	7%	7%
Selected Trends								
Premature death rate	B	B	--	B	B	B	--	--
Trend Key:	<div>B</div> Getting better	<div>--</div> No trend		<div>W</div> Getting worse				
<p>*Note: Houston County is ranked among all Minnesota counties. Other counties are ranked among all Wisconsin counties. **Premature death is defined as years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population (age-adjusted).</p> <p>Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. <i>County Health Rankings</i>.</p> <p>Retrieved in December 2020 from <a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org">http://www.countyhealthrankings.org</a></p>								



**Leading Causes of Death.** To further explore **mortality** in the region, *Exhibit 2.11* shows the leading causes of death as of 2018. As shown, heart disease and malignant neoplasms were the leading causes of death in Houston County. Other leading causes were Alzheimer's Disease, cerebrovascular diseases, accidents (unintentional injuries), and chronic lower respiratory diseases.

## Exhibit 2.11 2018 Leading Causes of Death in Houston County

	BU	HO	LC	MO	TR	VE	REGION	MN	WI
<b>Counts-Total Deaths by All Causes</b>									
Total Deaths	130	202	1,043	443	297	294	2,409	44,715	53,680
<b>Counts-Total Deaths by Leading Causes</b>									
Heart Disease	31	53	199	87	69	69	508	8,398	12,053
Malignant Neoplasms	23	44	210	100	58	64	499	9,906	11,454
Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)	9	9	85	16	17	9	145	2,786	3,776
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	10	6	67	27	10	23	143	2,353	2,865
Cerebrovascular Diseases	9	10	54	25	18	21	137	2,268	2,549
Alzheimer's Disease	X	15	59	14	10	15	113	2,435	2,452
<b>Rates-Age Adjusted Per 100,000 Population</b>									
Total Deaths	643.1	633.3	672.2	773	744.7	668.1	N/A	647.5	727
Heart Diseases	139.7	131.5	122.9	144.8	149.3	164.1	N/A	118.1	158.6
Malignant Neoplasms	103.3	139.8	135.0	168.5	147.7	147.1	N/A	149.9	152.2
Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)	61.6	47.0	61.1	31.2	26.9	50.6	N/A	43.1	57.3
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	46.8	29	43.5	45.5	49.1	24.8	N/A	36.0	38
Cerebrovascular Diseases	46	29.6	32.2	43.4	45.5	41.5	N/A	33.1	33.6
Alzheimer's Disease	X	22.3	34.7	25.1	30.6	23.4	N/A	30.5	31.8

Source: 2018 Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data query system, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/index.htm>, Mortality Module, accessed 12/9/2020 and 2018 Minnesota Department of Health County Health Tables accessed 12/9/2020.

Note on Cell Suppression and Cells with Counts of Zero: An "X" indicates a value that is less than 5 (but more than 0) and has been suppressed to protect confidentiality.



**Maternal and Infant Health.** Maternal and infant health measures can also provide insight about community quality of life. As shown in *Exhibit 2.12*, there were 183 births in Houston County in 2018. Of these, five (3%) were low-weight births, compared to 8% for Wisconsin as a whole. There were no infant deaths in Houston County during 2018. It is important to note that infant deaths can fluctuate significantly, and one year of data is insufficient to support definitive conclusions about infant mortality rates.

## Exhibit 2.12 2018 Maternal and Infant Health in Houston County

	BU	HO	LC	MO	TR	VE	REGION	MN	WI
<b>Total Births</b>									
Total Births	136	183	1,176	608	428	401	2,932	67,341	64,143
<b>Low Weight Births</b>									
Total Low Weight Births	6	5	68	40	34	25	178	3,469	4,953
As pct. of Total Births	4%	3%	6%	7%	8%	6%	6%	4%	8%
<b>Infant Deaths</b>									
Infant Deaths	0	0	5	6	5	X	16	341	389
Infant Death Rate per 1,000 Live Births	0	0	4.3	9.9	11.7	5.5	5.5	4.7	6.1

Source: 2018 Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics, Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data query system, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/index.htm>, Mortality Module, accessed 12/9/2020 and 2018 Minnesota Department of Health County Health Tables accessed 12/9/2020.

Note on Cell Suppression and Cells with Counts of Zero: An "X" indicates a value that is less than 5 (but more than 0) and has been suppressed to protect confidentiality.



## Community Insights

Community survey respondents were invited to rate various aspects of community life. These ratings can provide insights about the quality of community life in its various dimensions.

**Ratings of Community Life.** *Exhibit 2.13* shows ratings of selected aspects of community life on a scale from poor to excellent. The most positive ratings (good or excellent) were provided for Houston County as a place to live, and for opportunities to volunteer in the community. (As additional context, 58% of RHS respondents and 75% of CS respondents reported they or family members volunteer). The most negative ratings (poor or fair) were for opportunities for youth interests and positive activities, the community as a place where all people are treated respectfully, and as a place where people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds are included in decision making.

**Exhibit 2.13 Ratings of Community Life in Houston County**

Topic/Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	No Opinion	Total
<b>a. Rating of your community as a place to live</b>						
RHS	0%	7%	47%	45%	N/A	97
CS	0%	11%	64%	25%	N/A	53
<b>b. Your community as a place that meets your family's recreational needs (Fine arts, outdoor activities, etc.)</b>						
RHS	2%	35%	47%	13%	3%	95
CS	19%	26%	38%	17%	0%	53
<b>c. Opportunities for youth to explore interests and participate in positive activities.</b>						
RHS	7%	30%	36%	11%	15%	97
CS	25%	26%	36%	11%	2%	53
<b>d. Opportunities to volunteer in your community.</b>						
RHS	2%	11%	58%	19%	9%	96
CS	8%	34%	34%	25%	0%	53
<b>e. Your community as a place where all people are treated respectfully, regardless of their race, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, income level, disability, or age.</b>						
RHS	6%	24%	47%	18%	5%	97
CS	38%	36%	17%	9%	0%	53
<b>f. Your community as a place where people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds are included in decision-making.</b>						
RHS	14%	23%	31%	9%	23%	97
CS	51%	25%	13%	8%	4%	53



**Ratings of Educational Opportunities.** *Exhibit 2.14* provides a closer view of ratings of educational opportunities. The most positive ratings (good or excellent) were for the community as a place that meets the family's educational needs, availability of early education opportunities, and the quality of K-12 education. The most negative ratings (poor or fair) were for opportunities to obtain additional knowledge or skills, and the availability of community resources to learn new skills or hobbies.

### Exhibit 2.14 Ratings of Educational Opportunities in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	No Opinion	Total
<b>a. Your community as a place that meets your family's educational needs</b>						
RHS	2%	9%	45%	24%	20%	96
CS	8%	25%	51%	13%	4%	53
<b>b. The availability of early education opportunities in your community (e.g., play groups, Head Start, 4 year old kindergarten)</b>						
RHS	1%	7%	39%	30%	23%	96
CS	4%	25%	28%	28%	15%	53
<b>c. The quality of education grades K -12 in your community</b>						
RHS	2%	5%	48%	28%	17%	96
CS	4%	19%	55%	19%	4%	53
<b>d. Opportunities to gain additional knowledge or skills (tuition reimbursement, conferences, skills training courses, classes)</b>						
RHS	14%	17%	30%	10%	29%	96
CS	34%	34%	15%	6%	11%	53
<b>e. The availability of community resources to learn new skills or hobbies (e.g., woodworking, photography, computers)</b>						
RHS	13%	28%	30%	14%	16%	96
CS	28%	34%	28%	8%	2%	53



**Concerns about Community Life.** *Exhibit 2.15* shows ratings of concern about selected issues related to community life. The ratings were mixed, but substantial numbers of Houston County respondents expressed concern about racism, school bullying, cyber bullying, and discrimination.

### Exhibit 2.15 Concerns about Issues Related to Community Life in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
<b>a. Racism</b>						
RHS	29%	34%	18%	14%	5%	96
CS	9%	15%	25%	49%	2%	53
<b>b. School bullying</b>						
RHS	4%	19%	31%	32%	14%	96
CS	2%	15%	40%	40%	4%	53
<b>c. Cyber bullying</b>						
RHS	7%	18%	31%	28%	16%	96
CS	4%	17%	38%	37%	4%	52
<b>d. Discrimination</b>						
RHS	19%	33%	21%	15%	13%	96
CS	9%	19%	28%	42%	2%	53



## Health Behaviors and Concerns

Health behaviors are actions individuals take that affect their health, such as eating well, being physically active, avoiding smoking, excessive alcohol intake, and risky sexual behavior. This section describes community indicators and community insights about health behaviors and related concerns.

United  
Way



Great Rivers United Way

If you find the contents of this report useful, please consider supporting our work by making a financial contribution to Great Rivers United Way at [greatriversunitedway.org](https://greatriversunitedway.org)

**DONATE NOW**



## Community Indicators

**County Health Rankings.** Exhibit 2.16 shows the County Health Rankings related to health behaviors. As shown, Houston County ranked in the 1st quartile for health behaviors. Recent trends are worsening in Houston County for obesity and physical activity; yet is improving for alcohol-impaired driving deaths.

### Exhibit 2.16 County Health Rankings for Health Behaviors

	BU	HO*	LC	MO	TR	VE	MN*	WI
Rankings								
Health Behaviors Rank	8	8	13	62	28	34	--	--
Ranking Key:	<div></div> 1st (best) quartile	<div></div> 2nd quartile	<div></div> 3rd quartile	<div></div> 4th quartile				
Indicators								
Adult smoking (2017)	16%	14%	15%	16%	15%	17%	15%	16%
Adult obesity (2016)	25%	29%	27%	38%	30%	32%	28%	31%
Food environment index (2017)	8.4	8.9	8.1	8.3	9.2	8.2	8.8	8.8
Physical inactivity (2016)	26%	24%	23%	23%	24%	18%	20%	21%
Access to exercise opportunities (2019)	67%	97%	89%	65%	82%	66%	87%	85%
Excessive drinking (2017)	24%	21%	27%	25%	26%	24%	22%	24%
Alcohol-impaired driving deaths (2014-18)	31%	0%	30%	32%	42%	50%	30%	36%
Sexually transmitted infections (2017)	265.8	225.1	414.3	271.8	332.5	208.1	422.1	478.6
Teen births (2012-2018)	10	9	8	22	22	8	14	17
Selected Trends								
Adult obesity	--	W	W	W	W	W		
Physical inactivity	W	W	W	--	--	--		
Alcohol-impaired driving deaths	--	B	--	--	W	W		
Sexually transmitted infections	W	--	W	W	--	W		
Trend Key:	<div>B</div> Getting better	<div>--</div> No trend		<div>W</div> Getting worse				
<div>*Note: Houston County is ranked among all Minnesota counties. Other counties are ranked among all Wisconsin counties.</div> <div>Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. <i>County Health Rankings</i>.</div> <div>Retrieved in December 2020 from <a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org">http://www.countyhealthrankings.org</a></div>								



## Community Insights

Community survey respondents were asked to rate their personal health and identify concerns about health issues in the community.

**Ratings of Personal Health.** *Exhibit 2.17* shows that among RHS respondents from Houston County, 24% rated their personal health as fair or poor, 12% rated their overall mental health as fair or poor, and 20% rated their overall dental health as fair or poor. CS respondents had a notably higher percentage of fair or poor ratings for mental health.

### Exhibit 2.17 Ratings of Personal Health in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
a. Your overall health.					
RHS	0%	24%	57%	19%	95
CS	4%	30%	49%	17%	53
b. Your overall mental health.					
RHS	1%	11%	68%	20%	94
CS	6%	40%	43%	11%	53
c. Your overall dental health.					
RHS	6%	14%	54%	26%	95
CS	4%	25%	40%	31%	52



**Concerns about Health Issues.** Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of concern about selected health issues in the community. As shown in *Exhibit 2.18*, the majority of survey respondents from Houston County indicated they were moderately or very concerned about mental health, mental health stigma, alcohol use, obesity, prescription drug misuse, suicide, tobacco use, e-cigarettes & vaping, and illegal drug use.

### Exhibit 2.18 Concerns about Health Issues in the Community

Topic/Survey		Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
a. Mental health							
RHS		16%	18%	34%	24%	8%	95
CS		6%	17%	37%	40%	0%	52
b. Mental health stigma							
RHS		18%	23%	29%	21%	9%	96
CS		6%	19%	27%	48%	0%	52
c. Alcohol use							
RHS		15%	24%	38%	21%	3%	96
CS		11%	9%	32%	43%	4%	53
d. Obesity							
RHS		17%	18%	42%	21%	3%	96
CS		8%	19%	50%	21%	2%	52
e. Prescription drug misuse							
RHS		18%	21%	27%	23%	11%	96
CS		17%	40%	30%	8%	6%	53
f. Suicide							
RHS		16%	24%	30%	23%	8%	93
CS		8%	29%	31%	31%	0%	51
g. Tobacco use							
RHS		18%	31%	27%	17%	7%	96
CS		12%	37%	19%	27%	6%	52
h. E-cigarette use/Vaping							
RHS		14%	25%	28%	19%	15%	96
CS		8%	44%	17%	25%	6%	52
i. Illegal drug use							
RHS		10%	14%	29%	42%	5%	96
CS		2%	17%	46%	31%	4%	52

## Health Care

Access to affordable, quality, and timely health care can help prevent diseases and detect issues sooner, enabling individuals to live longer, healthier lives. This section describes selected community indicators and community insights about access to health care.



United  
Way



Great Rivers United Way

If you find the contents of this report useful, please consider supporting our work by making a financial contribution to Great Rivers United Way at [greatriversunitedway.org](https://greatriversunitedway.org)

**DONATE NOW**



## Community Indicators

Community indicators presented below include County Health Rankings, cancer screening rates, and indicators of mental health needs.

**County Health Rankings.** *Exhibit 2.19* shows the County Health Rankings for clinical care. As shown, Houston County ranks in the 1st quartile on this measure. Trends indicate that Houston County is improving on multiple indicators of clinical care.

Exhibit 2.19 County Health Rankings for Clinical Care

	BU	HO*	LC	MO	TR	VE	MN*	WI
Rankings								
Clinical Care Rank	43	6	1	27	47	60	--	--
Ranking Key:	1st (best) quartile		2nd quartile		3rd quartile		4th quartile	
Indicators								
Uninsured (2017)	7%	5%	5%	8%	8%	11%	5%	6%
Primary care physicians (2017)	6,580:1	1,440:1	720:1	1,570:1	3,680:1	960:1	1,120:1	1,270:1
Dentists (2018)	820:1	2,060:1	1,080:1	1,590:1	3,270:1	2,570:1	1,390:1	1,460:1
Mental health providers (2019)	6,560:1	4,640:1	320: 1	670:01	1,960:1	700: 1	400: 1	490: 1
Preventable hospital stays (2017)	3,931	3,895	2,962	2,825	2,998	3,194	6,015	3,940
Mammography screening (2017)	54%	57%	62%	56%	54%	44%	46%	50%
Flu vaccinations (2017)	51%	57%	59%	42%	46%	35%	50%	52%
Selected Trends								
Uninsured	B	B	B	B	B	B	--	--
Primary care physicians	W	B	--	--	--	B	--	--
Dentists	B	B	B	B	B	B	--	--
Preventable hospital stays	--	--	--	B	B	B	--	--
Mammography screening	B	--	B	B	B	B	--	--
Flu vaccinations	--	--	--	B	B	--	--	--
Trend Key:	B Getting better		-- No trend		W Getting worse			
*Note: Houston County is ranked among all Minnesota counties. Other counties are ranked among all Wisconsin counties.								
Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. <i>County Health Rankings</i> .								
Retrieved in December 2020 from <a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org">http://www.countyhealthrankings.org</a>								



**Cancer Screening Rates.** Exhibit 2.20 shows selected cancer screening rates for each county within the region. Screening rates in Houston County ranged from 82%-88%. Houston County had higher screening rates for all selected cancers than Region Total and Wisconsin for breast cancer screening and cervical cancer screening.

Screening rate definitions follow:

- **Breast Cancer:** The percentage of women aged 50-74, who receive primary care from a Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality (WCHQ) member health system and had a minimum of one breast cancer screening test during the two-year measurement period.
- **Cervical Cancer Measure:** The percentage of adults aged 21-29 who had a minimum of one cervical cancer screening (cytology) test during the 3-year measurement period; and aged 30-64 who had a minimum of one cytology test during the 2-year measurement period or one screening cytology test and an HPV test within the last 5 years.
- **Colorectal Cancer Measure:** The percentage of adults aged 50-75, who receive primary care from a WCHQ member health system and received a screening for colorectal cancer. This could include a colonoscopy in the past ten years, a CT colonography or flexible sigmoidoscopy in the past five years, or a stool test within the last year.

Exhibit 2.20 2018 Cancer Screening Rates

	BU	HO	LC	MO	TR	VE	REGION	MN	WI
Rates									
Breast Cancer Screening	76%	85%	87%	82%	79%	81%	84%	N/A	79%
Cervical Cancer Screening	70%	88%	89%	82%	80%	86%	85%	N/A	80%
Colorectal Cancer Screening	69%	82%	81%	76%	73%	76%	78%	N/A	83%

Source: [2019 and 2020 Health Disparities Report](#), Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality



## Community Insights

**Self-Reported Health Coverage.** Survey respondents were asked to provide information on health coverage for their household. As shown in *Exhibit 2.21*, 94% of survey respondents from Houston County reported all members of their household have health coverage. Among RHS respondents, the leading types of health coverage were Medicare, private insurance and employer-based insurance. Among CS respondents, the majority reported employer-based insurance, private insurance, followed by Medicare and Medicaid.

### Exhibit 2.21 Self-Reported Health Coverage in Houston County

Do all members of your household have health coverage?

Topic/Survey	Yes, all members have health coverage	No, one or more members do not have health coverage	Total
RHS	94%	6%	95
CS	94%	6%	53

Do any members of your household have the following types of health insurance? (check all that apply)

Type	RHS	CS
Medicare	39%	10%
Private Insurance	29%	21%
Employer Based Insurance	23%	54%
Other	5%	3%
Medicaid (Badger Care/Medical Assistance)	4%	10%
Not Applicable-No one in my household has health insurance	0%	1%



**Ratings of Health Care Access and Affordability.** Survey respondents were asked to rate their ability to access and afford health services including healthcare, mental health care, and dental care. As shown in *Exhibit 2.22*, the large majority of survey respondents from Houston County rated their access and ability to afford services as good to excellent. However, sizable percentages reported poor or fair ratings for access and affordability. Focusing on the RHS results, the percent of respondents reporting poor or fair ability to pay for services was 24% for healthcare, 31% for mental health care, and 31% for dental care. For CS respondents the percent reporting poor or fair ability to pay for services was 37% for healthcare, 47% for mental health care, and 37% for dental care.

### Exhibit 2.22 Ratings of Health Care Access and Affordability in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
a. Your access to healthcare.					
RHS	0%	7%	47%	45%	95
CS	4%	6%	38%	53%	53
b. Your ability to pay for healthcare.					
RHS	5%	19%	43%	33%	95
CS	11%	26%	42%	21%	53
c. Your access to mental health care.					
RHS	4%	13%	57%	26%	95
CS	15%	28%	34%	23%	53
d. Your ability to pay for mental health care.					
RHS	7%	24%	41%	27%	95
CS	19%	28%	40%	13%	53

## Exhibit 2.22 Ratings of Health Care Access and Affordability (cont.)

Topic/Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
e. Your access to dental care.					
RHS	4%	9%	41%	45%	95
CS	6%	6%	36%	53%	53
f. Your ability to pay for dental care.					
RHS	7%	24%	39%	29%	95
CS	11%	26%	40%	23%	53



**Health Care Sources and Obstacles for Adults.** Survey respondents were asked to identify their usual source of health care and any obstacles to receiving health care. As shown in Exhibit 2.23, the most commonly cited sources of care were clinics, doctor's offices, and urgent care centers. The most common obstacles to receiving services were affordability and scheduling.

## Exhibit 2.23 Health Care Sources and Obstacles for Adults in Houston County

### Usual Source of Health Care for Adults

Provider Source	RHS	CS
Clinic	37%	32%
Doctor's Office	28%	23%
Urgent Care	16%	17%
Hospital Emergency Room	9%	8%
Internet	4%	9%
Express Care in a grocery or drug store	3%	7%
I do not have a place that I go most often	2%	2%
VA Medical Center	1%	1%
VA Outpatient Clinic	1%	1%
Free Clinic	0%	1%

### Obstacles to Health Care for Adults

In the last 12 months, was there any time when you needed to see a doctor or other health care provider but did not because of any of the following reasons? (check all that apply)	RHS	CS
Could not afford the cost	7%	21%
Could not schedule the appointment at a convenient time	7%	21%
Did not have insurance	0%	5%
I could not get childcare	0%	3%
Did not have transportation	0%	2%
There was a language barrier	0%	0%
None of the above	86%	48%



**Dental Visits and Obstacles for Adults.** Survey respondents were asked to identify their most recent dental appointment and any obstacles to dental care. As shown in *Exhibit 2.24*, a large majority of respondents from Houston County said they had a dental visit within the past year. Six percent of RHS respondents and 13 percent of CS respondents reported it had been five or more years since their most recent dental visit. The most commonly reported obstacles to dental care were affordability, insurance and scheduling.

## Exhibit 2.24 Dental Visits and Obstacles for Adults in Houston County

### Most Recent Dental Visit for Adults

How long has it been since you have seen a dentist for any reason?	RHS	CS
Within the past year	71%	72%
Within the past 2 years	10%	9%
Within the past 5 years	7%	6%
5 or more years	6%	13%
Don't know	5%	0%
Total	96	53

### Obstacles to Dental Care for Adults

In the last 12 months, was there any time when you needed to see a dentist but did not because of any of the following reasons? (check all that apply)	RHS	CS
Could not afford the cost	12%	17%
Did not have insurance	7%	2%
Could not schedule the appointment at a convenient time	6%	8%
Did not have transportation	0%	3%
I could not get childcare	0%	3%
There was a language barrier	0%	0%
None of the above apply to me	76%	67%



**Health Care and Dental Visits for Children.** Survey respondents with children in the home were asked to identify a usual source of health care, along with time since the dental visit. As shown in *Exhibit 2.25*, the most commonly reported sources of health care were doctor's offices, clinics, and urgent care. The large majority reported their children had a dental visit within the past year, with less than fifteen percent reporting two or more years since the last dental visit.

## Exhibit 2.25 Health Care and Dental Visits for Children in Houston County

### Usual Source of Health Care for Children

Provider Source	RHS	CS
Doctor's Office	37%	32%
Clinic	32%	32%
Urgent Care	21%	17%
Express Care in a grocery or drug store	5%	8%
Hospital Emergency Room	5%	12%
Free Clinic	0%	0%
Internet	0%	0%
We do not have a place that we go most often	0%	0%

### Most Recent Dental Visit for Children

How long has it been since any minor children in the household saw a dentist for any reason?	RHS	CS
Within the past year	88%	86%
Within the past 2 years	0%	7%
Within the past 5 years	13%	7%
5 or more years	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%
Total	8	28

## Social and Economic Factors

Social and economic factors, such as income, education, employment, and social supports can significantly affect community health and quality of life. This section describes selected community indicators and community insights related to social and economic factors.



Great Rivers United Way

If you find the contents of this report useful, please consider supporting our work by making a financial contribution to Great Rivers United Way at [greatriversunitedway.org](http://greatriversunitedway.org)

**DONATE NOW**



## Community Indicators

Community indicators presented below include County Health Rankings, low-income households, and child services cases.

**County Health Rankings.** Exhibit 2.26 shows the County Health Rankings for social and economic factors. As shown, Houston County ranks in the second quartile statewide. In considering these indicators it is important to note the social and economic indicators shown do not reflect the disruptions caused by COVID-19 in 2020.

### Exhibit 2.26 County Health Rankings for Social and Economic Factors

	BU	HO*	LC	MO	TR	VE	MN*	WI
Rankings								
Social & Economic Factors Rank	28	32	7	34	18	36	--	--
Ranking Key:	<div></div> 1st (best) quartile	<div></div> 2nd quartile	<div></div> 3rd quartile	<div></div> 4th quartile				
Indicators								
High school graduation (years vary)	97%	96%**	93%	95%	95%	96%	83%	89%
Some college (2014-2018)	62%	73%	79%	63%	58%	56%	75%	69%
Unemployment (2018)	3.4%	2.9%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	3.0%
Children in poverty (2018)	13%	9%	9%	20%	11%	21%	12%	14%
Income inequality (2014-2018)	3.9	3.8	4	3.7	3.9	4.4	4.3	4.3
Children in single-parent households (2014-18)	23%	22%	24%	29%	27%	18%	28%	32%
Social associations (2017)	8.4	14.5	13.7	9.4	12.9	13	13	11.6
Violent crime (2014 & 2016)	55	53	138	140	61	59	236	298
Injury deaths (2014-2018)	64	76	83	62	79	58	65	80
Selected Trends								
Unemployment	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Children in poverty	W	--	--	W	W	W	--	--
Violent crime	--	--	B	--	--	--	--	--
Trend Key:	<div>B</div> Getting better	<div>--</div> No trend		<div>W</div> Getting worse				
<div>*Note: Houston County is ranked among all Minnesota counties. Other counties are ranked among all Wisconsin counties.</div> <div>**High school graduation rate for Houston was calculated to excluded the Minnesota Virtual Learning Academy.</div> <div>Source: <a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org">University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings</a>. Retrieved in December 2020 from <a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org">http://www.countyhealthrankings.org</a> and <a href="#">Minnesota Report Card</a> accessed March 2020.</div>								



**Low-Income Households.** Household income is a fundamental indicator of health opportunity. As shown in *Exhibit 2.27*, in 2018 there were an estimated 736 households in Houston County with income at or below poverty. Another important indicator is the number of ALICE households. ALICE® is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and provides a new way of defining and understanding the struggles of households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to afford basic necessities. In 2018, there were an estimated 1,800 households in Houston County that could be classified as meeting the ALICE criteria.

**Exhibit 2.27 2018 Low-Income Households**

	BU	HO	LC	MO	TR	VE	REGION	MN	WI
Total Households	5,713	8,181	47,924	17,772	11,936	12,080	103,606	2,185,117	2,359,857
<b>Households in Poverty</b>									
Households at or Below Poverty	571	736	5,272	1,955	1,074	1,812	11,420	218,512	259,584
Percent Households at or Below Poverty	10%	9%	11%	11%	9%	15%	11%	10%	11%
<b>ALICE Households</b>									
ALICE Households	1,200	1,800	12,460	3,554	2,865	2,899	24,778	546,279	542,767
Percent ALICE Households	21%	22%	26%	20%	24%	24%	24%	25%	23%

Source: [United for ALICE https://www.unitedforalice.org/national-overview](https://www.unitedforalice.org/national-overview) Accessed November 2020.



**Child Services Cases.** Child abuse and neglect cases are another indicator of community health and well-being. As shown in *Exhibit 2.28*, in 2018 there were 296 maltreatment reports made to Child Protective Services (CPS) in Houston County, with 96 unique alleged victims and one unique determined victim. There were also 40 out-of-home placements in Houston County. Houston County had lower rates of determined maltreatment victims and out of home placements than Minnesota as a whole.

**Exhibit 2.28 2019 Reported Child Services Cases**

	HO*	MN*
CPS Maltreatment Reports Received	296	86,144
<b>Alleged and Unique Determined Victims</b>		
Unique Alleged Victims	96	38,872
Unique Determined Victims	1	7,588
Determined Victims Rate per 1,000 children	0.2	5.8
<b>Out of Home Placements</b>		
Out of Home Placements	40	16,488
Out of Home Placements Rate per 1,000 children	9.6	12.7

\* Data for the Wisconsin localities in the Great Rivers Region were not included in this report as definitions for these child services in Minnesota may vary from Wisconsin definitions. Source: [2018 Minnesota Maltreatment and Out-of-home Care and Permanency Reports](#)



## Community Insights

**Caring for Vulnerable Persons.** Survey respondents were asked if they care for individuals who are aging or have a disability, and to share their insights about community supports for these vulnerable populations. As shown in *Exhibit 2.29*, 15% of RHS respondents from Houston County reported they care for an individual that is aging, and 8% reported they help care for an individual with a disability. For CS respondents, 26% help care for an individual that is aging, and 17% help care for an individual with a disability.

### Exhibit 2.29 Caring for Vulnerable Persons in Houston County

Do you currently help care for an individual that is aging?

Survey	Yes	No	Total
RHS	15%	85%	93
CS	26%	74%	53

Do you currently help care for an individual that has a disability?

Survey	Yes	No	Total
RHS	8%	92%	90
CS	17%	83%	53



**Concerns about Vulnerable Persons.** As shown in *Exhibit 2.30*, half of all survey respondents said they are moderately or very concerned about factors affecting vulnerable persons in the community, including child abuse, domestic abuse, elder abuse, and sexual abuse or violence.

### Exhibit 2.30 Concerns about Vulnerable Persons in the Community

Topic/Survey	Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
a. Child abuse						
RHS	11%	22%	32%	28%	6%	96
CS	6%	25%	42%	23%	6%	53
b. Domestic abuse						
RHS	11%	23%	28%	31%	6%	96
CS	6%	25%	45%	19%	6%	53
c. Elder abuse						
RHS	19%	24%	23%	28%	6%	96
CS	11%	36%	36%	13%	4%	53
d. Sexual abuse or sexual violence						
RHS	12%	25%	27%	29%	6%	95
CS	6%	31%	35%	22%	6%	51



**Community Supports for Vulnerable Persons.** As shown in *Exhibit 2.31*, the majority of RHS respondents from Houston County gave a good or excellent rating for the community as a place that meets the overall needs of children. The ratings were less favorable (fair or poor) for supports to prevent abuse or neglect of children and seniors, support for elderly persons and people with disabilities, and support for victims of abuse and neglect.

## Exhibit 2.31 Community Supports for Vulnerable Persons in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
a. Your community as a place that meets the overall needs of children					
RHS	1%	18%	73%	8%	84
CS	8%	27%	55%	10%	84
b. Efforts to prevent abuse or neglect of children					
RHS	1%	37%	51%	11%	75
CS	22%	42%	36%	0%	45
c. Your community as a place that meets the overall needs of elderly persons (for example access to transportation, social outlets)					
RHS	9%	29%	51%	10%	86
CS	17%	44%	35%	4%	48
d. Efforts to prevent abuse or neglect of seniors.					
RHS	1%	30%	58%	11%	71
CS	21%	36%	43%	0%	42
e. The availability of resources to help persons age in place					
RHS	12%	32%	48%	7%	81
CS	27%	50%	18%	5%	44
f. Your community as a place that meets the overall needs of persons with disabilities					
RHS	4%	31%	58%	7%	81
CS	27%	25%	38%	10%	48
g. Efforts to prevent abuse or neglect of persons with disabilities					
RHS	5%	26%	58%	12%	66
CS	13%	45%	33%	10%	40
h. The availability of services that meet the overall needs of community members who are victims of abuse or neglect					
RHS	2%	38%	53%	8%	64
CS	16%	48%	30%	7%	44



**Concerns about Meeting Household Needs.** Survey respondents were asked to rate their concerns about meeting household needs related to food, housing, clothing, taxes, utilities, childcare, and legal assistance. As shown in *Exhibit 2.32*, the majority of respondents from Houston County reported no concern or little concern about meeting basic household needs. Focusing on RHS respondents, the percentage reporting being moderately or very concerned ranged from about 4% to 15% across the factors listed. The percent of CS respondents who are moderately or very concerned ranged higher, from 2% to 32% across the factors listed. The highest level of concern among CS respondents was ability to pay for education beyond high school.

## Exhibit 2.32 Concerns about Meeting Household Needs in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
a. Your ability to meet your household's basic needs for food, housing, clothing.						
RHS	76%	16%	6%	1%	1%	94
CS	60%	32%	2%	6%	0%	53
b. Your ability to pay for rent/ mortgage for your household						
RHS	71%	17%	5%	1%	5%	94
CS	62%	28%	4%	4%	2%	53
c. Your ability to pay for utility bills, property tax, and other housing related expenses						
RHS	67%	20%	9%	2%	2%	94
CS	62%	26%	6%	6%	0%	53
d. The availability of resources to help you budget your money						
RHS	67%	14%	5%	1%	13%	94
CS	70%	15%	11%	0%	4%	53
e. Your ability to pay for education beyond high school for you and/or your family						
RHS	44%	12%	9%	6%	30%	94
CS	42%	17%	13%	19%	9%	53
f. Your ability to pay for your own vehicle (including gas, insurance, and maintenance)						
RHS	65%	26%	3%	3%	3%	94
CS	66%	21%	11%	2%	0%	53
g. Your ability to pay for legal assistance						
RHS	57%	26%	3%	6%	7%	94
CS	47%	23%	13%	9%	8%	53
h. Your ability to pay for childcare, if needed						
RHS	49%	8%	2%	3%	38%	92
CS	49%	13%	9%	6%	23%	53
i. Your ability to access housing						
RHS	63%	15%	3%	1%	17%	93
CS	64%	19%	0%	2%	15%	53
j. Your ability to access childcare, if needed						
RHS	47%	9%	5%	2%	37%	92
CS	42%	19%	13%	4%	23%	53



**Concerns about Access to Healthy Food.** Survey respondents were asked to describe their access to healthy food. As shown in *Exhibit 2.33*, the large majority of respondents from Houston County rated their access and ability to pay for healthy food as good or excellent. Focusing on ability to pay for food, 18% of RHS respondents and 27% of CS respondents rated their ability to pay for healthy food as poor or fair. Also, 10% of RHS respondents and 15% of CS respondents reported running out of money to get more food either sometimes, occasionally, or often.

### Exhibit 2.33 Concerns about Access to Healthy Food in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
a. Your access to healthy food.					
RHS	1%	5%	42%	52%	95
CS	2%	8%	51%	40%	53
b. Your ability to pay for healthy food.					
RHS	2%	16%	48%	34%	95
CS	4%	23%	40%	34%	53
How true is the following statement about food for your household? "Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more."					
Topic/Survey	Often true	Occasionally true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Never true	Total
RHS	1%	2%	7%	89%	95
CS	2%	0%	13%	85%	53



**Concerns about Economic Issues.** Survey respondents were asked to rate their concerns about economic issues in the community. As shown in *Exhibit 2.34*, 8% or more of RHS and CS respondents reported they are moderately or very concerned about excessive personal debt, gambling, risk of job loss, risk of foreclosure and bankruptcy, poverty, hunger, and homelessness in the community.

### Exhibit 2.34 Concerns about Economic Issues in the Community

Topic/Survey	Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
a. Excessive personal debt						
RHS	24%	24%	17%	11%	24%	92
CS	19%	23%	36%	13%	9%	53
b. Gambling (in-person or online)						
RHS	42%	18%	9%	2%	29%	93
CS	45%	30%	6%	2%	17%	53
c. Risk of foreclosure or bankruptcy						
RHS	32%	22%	17%	6%	23%	93
CS	25%	40%	21%	4%	11%	53
d. Risk of job loss						
RHS	26%	17%	28%	15%	14%	93
CS	6%	30%	38%	19%	8%	53

## Exhibit 2.34 Concerns about Economic Issues in the Community (cont.)

Topic/Survey		Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
e. Poverty							
	RHS	22%	26%	30%	16%	6%	93
	CS	6%	36%	34%	23%	2%	53
f. Hunger							
	RHS	23%	31%	18%	22%	6%	93
	CS	6%	36%	30%	26%	2%	53
g. Homelessness							
	RHS	35%	28%	11%	18%	8%	93
	CS	15%	51%	23%	8%	4%	53



**Ratings of Community Supports for Economic Stability.** Survey respondents were asked to rate various community supports for economic stability. As shown in *Exhibit 2.35*, at least one third of survey respondents gave poor or fair ratings for availability of living wage jobs, safe and affordable housing, services for people who need extra help, accessibility and convenience of public transportation, and efforts to reduce poverty. Efforts to reduce hunger also received poor or fair ratings from 26% of RHS respondents and 44% of CS respondents.

## Exhibit 2.35 Ratings of Community Supports for Economic Stability

Topic/Survey		Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	No Opinion	Total
a. The availability of jobs with wages that offer a livable wage							
	RHS	23%	47%	24%	0%	5%	94
	CS	35%	48%	13%	0%	4%	52
b. The availability of safe, affordable housing							
	RHS	15%	38%	36%	6%	4%	94
	CS	23%	48%	19%	2%	8%	52
c. The availability of services for people who may need extra help (government, nonprofit services)							
	RHS	4%	32%	44%	6%	13%	93
	CS	12%	44%	29%	6%	10%	52
d. The accessibility of public transportation							
	RHS	33%	30%	18%	10%	9%	93
	CS	52%	21%	15%	6%	6%	52
e. The convenience of public transportation							
	RHS	36%	27%	16%	9%	13%	94
	CS	60%	19%	12%	4%	6%	52
f. Efforts to reduce poverty in your community							
	RHS	17%	26%	26%	5%	26%	93
	CS	31%	46%	10%	0%	13%	52
g. Efforts to reduce hunger in your community							
	RHS	3%	23%	49%	14%	11%	94
	CS	6%	38%	35%	17%	4%	52

# Physical Environment and Safety

Physical environment and community safety affect length and quality of life. The physical environment includes the spaces where individuals live, learn, work, and play. People interact with their physical environment through the air they breathe, water they drink, houses they live in, and the transportation they access to travel to work and school. This section describes selected community indicators and community insights about the physical environment and safety in the region.

**United  
Way**



**Great Rivers United Way**

If you find the contents of this report useful, please consider supporting our work by making a financial contribution to Great Rivers United Way at [greatriversunitedway.org](https://greatriversunitedway.org)

**DONATE NOW**



## Community Indicators

**County Health Rankings.** *Exhibit 2.36* shows the County Health Rankings for the physical environment. As shown, Houston County ranks in the fourth quartile statewide on the physical environment measure. Focusing on selected trends, Houston County is improving on the air pollution measure.

### Exhibit 2.36 County Health Rankings for the Physical Environment

	BU	HO*	LC	MO	TR	VE	MN*	WI
Rankings								
Physical Environment Rank	24	70	16	53	47	61	--	--
Ranking Key:	<div></div> 1st (best) quartile	<div></div> 2nd quartile	<div></div> 3rd quartile		<div></div> 4th quartile			
Indicators								
Air pollution - particulate matter (2014)	8.2	8.7	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.7	6.9	8.6
Drinking water violations (2018)	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Severe housing problems (2012-2016)	14%	11%	13%	14%	11%	15%	13%	14%
Driving alone to work (2014-2018)	78%	81%	81%	81%	80%	79%	78%	81%
Long commute - driving alone (2014-2018)	40%	30%	16%	26%	32%	38%	31%	27%
Selected Trends								
Air pollution – particulate matter	B	B	B	B	B	B	--	--
Trend Key:	<div>B</div> Getting better	-- No trend	<div>W</div> Getting worse					
<p>*Note: Houston County is ranked among all Minnesota counties. Other counties are ranked among all Wisconsin counties.</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings.</a></p> <p>Retrieved in December 2020 from <a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org">http://www.countyhealthrankings.org</a></p>								



## Community Insights

Survey respondents were asked to share their insights about various aspects of the physical environment and safety within their communities.

**Rating of Overall Community Safety.** As shown in *Exhibit 2.37*, the large majority of survey respondents from Houston County rated overall community safety as good or excellent. Nine percent of RHS respondents and eight percent of CS respondents rated overall community safety as poor or fair.

### Exhibit 2.37 Rating of Overall Community Safety in Houston County

Rating of Overall Community Safety					
Survey	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
RHS	0%	9%	62%	29%	97
CS	0%	8%	64%	28%	53



**Concerns about Community Safety.** Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of concern about a list of community safety issues. As shown in *Exhibit 2.38*, at least half of the respondents from Houston County said they were moderately or very concerned about school safety, cyber security, and disease outbreak. A substantial percent of respondents also expressed concern about criminal activity, community response to flood, hazardous material incidents, and water safety.

## Exhibit 2.38 Concerns about Community Safety in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
a. School safety						
RHS	27%	22%	28%	22%	1%	96
CS	15%	42%	26%	15%	2%	53
b. Cyber security (e.g., identity theft)						
RHS	11%	26%	31%	27%	5%	95
CS	11%	45%	30%	13%	0%	53
c. Criminal activity						
RHS	17%	39%	28%	15%	1%	95
CS	15%	53%	25%	8%	0%	53
d. Community response to flood						
RHS	41%	25%	18%	9%	6%	93
CS	36%	34%	15%	5%	10%	52
e. Disease outbreak						
RHS	18%	26%	29%	26%	1%	96
CS	8%	26%	28%	38%	0%	53
f. Hazardous materials incident						
RHS	41%	29%	16%	8%	5%	96
CS	43%	32%	13%	4%	7%	53
g. Terrorist activity						
RHS	57%	28%	4%	2%	8%	96
CS	68%	26%	4%	0%	2%	53
h. Tap water safety						
RHS	41%	20%	18%	16%	5%	95
CS	32%	36%	17%	13%	2%	53
i. Well water safety						
RHS	35%	20%	22%	16%	7%	96
CS	36%	15%	23%	15%	11%	53



**Responsiveness of Public Safety Agencies.** Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of concern about responsiveness of EMS, law enforcement, and the fire department. As shown in *Exhibit 2.39*, a majority of respondents from Houston County reported no concern or little concern about responsiveness. Between 19% and 39% reported being moderately or very concerned about responsiveness.

### Exhibit 2.39 Responsiveness of Public Safety Agencies in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
a. Responsiveness of Emergency Medical Services (EMS)						
RHS	51%	19%	16%	13%	2%	95
CS	40%	32%	15%	11%	2%	53
b. Responsiveness of law enforcement						
RHS	42%	24%	18%	15%	2%	96
CS	29%	31%	33%	6%	2%	52
c. Responsiveness of fire department						
RHS	52%	23%	9%	15%	1%	96
CS	55%	25%	15%	4%	2%	53



**Preparedness for Emergency Events.** Survey respondents were asked to share their insights about personal preparedness for emergency events. As shown in *Exhibit 2.40*, at least 43% of respondents from Houston County said they were not prepared or a little prepared for a household fire, flood, power outage, natural disaster, pandemic, or loss of job.

### Exhibit 2.40 Preparedness for Emergency Events in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Not Prepared	A Little Prepared	Moderately Prepared	Very Prepared	Total
a. Household fire					
RHS	5%	38%	45%	12%	94
CS	21%	45%	26%	8%	53
b. Flood					
RHS	5%	38%	45%	12%	94
CS	21%	45%	26%	8%	53
c. Power outage longer than 24 hours					
RHS	19%	32%	35%	13%	93
CS	28%	45%	17%	9%	53
d. Natural disaster (such as ice storm, tornado, snowstorm)					
RHS	19%	32%	35%	13%	95
CS	28%	45%	17%	9%	52
e. Pandemic/epidemic					
RHS	13%	38%	37%	13%	95
CS	17%	30%	42%	11%	53
f. Loss of job					
RHS	21%	23%	24%	32%	87
CS	36%	36%	17%	11%	53



**Concerns about Public Spaces.** Survey respondents were asked to share their insights about factors affecting the quality of public spaces. As shown in *Exhibit 2.41*, about 8% to 29% of respondents said they were moderately concerned or very concerned about loose animals, sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic, and street lighting.

## Exhibit 2.41 Concerns about Public Spaces in Houston County

Topic/Survey	Not Concerned	A Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Very Concerned	No Opinion	Total
a. Loose animals						
RHS	49%	31%	8%	9%	2%	96
CS	64%	26%	6%	2%	2%	53
b. Sidewalks in poor condition						
RHS	38%	33%	14%	8%	7%	95
CS	55%	30%	9%	6%	0%	53
c. Lack of sidewalks						
RHS	49%	29%	7%	7%	6%	95
CS	45%	23%	17%	11%	4%	53
d. Inadequate crosswalks						
RHS	58%	23%	10%	6%	2%	96
CS	58%	17%	15%	8%	2%	53
e. Motor vehicle traffic						
RHS	54%	22%	14%	8%	2%	96
CS	53%	19%	25%	4%	0%	53
f. Not enough traffic lights/stop signs						
RHS	71%	13%	8%	4%	4%	96
CS	70%	19%	4%	6%	2%	53
g. Street lighting						
RHS	71%	13%	8%	4%	4%	95
CS	70%	19%	4%	6%	2%	53

# Community Insight on Priority Needs and Ideas for Solutions

Sections 1 and 2 of this report provide a comprehensive analysis of community needs based on community indicators and community survey responses. This section provides supplemental insight based on a meeting with community stakeholders and a follow-up survey on priority needs.

## Meeting with Community Stakeholders

Great Rivers United Way collaborated with local partners to organize a series of virtual meetings with community stakeholders from each of the six counties in the study region. The purpose of the meetings was to gather additional insight about priority needs and action ideas from a local perspective.

The community stakeholder meeting with Houston County was held on February 10, 2021. The invited participants included representatives from local business, education, government, health and human services, and nonprofit agencies. A total of 34 individuals participated in the meeting. The meeting was facilitated virtually so that participants could attend while maintaining social distancing for the pandemic.

- Prior to the meeting, each participant was provided with a draft copy of the Introduction and Sections 1 and 2 of this report.
- During the meeting, participants were invited to share their insights about pressing community needs as viewed from their perspective.
- The meeting participants were also invited to complete a post-meeting survey to prioritize among the areas of need identified at the meeting event.

The results of the meeting and follow-up survey are summarized below. In reviewing the results, please note they are only a starting point for identifying priority needs and creative solutions. In the coming months, community stakeholders from Houston County can continue to identify needs and develop solutions based on additional insights from community members.



**Great Rivers United Way**

If you find the contents of this report useful, please consider supporting our work by making a financial contribution to Great Rivers United Way at [greatriversunitedway.org](https://greatriversunitedway.org)

**DONATE NOW**



## Priority Needs Identified by Community Stakeholders (Houston County)

**Exhibit 3.1** provides a summary of priority needs identified by Houston County Community Stakeholders. The first column shows pressing areas of need identified by the participants during the meeting event. The second column shows the priority rankings of need based on results from a follow-up survey of meeting participants.

### Exhibit 3.1 Priority Needs Identified by Houston County Community Stakeholders

1. Mental Health - Access, Stigma, Providers, School Supports
2. Safe, Affordable Housing
3. Access to Well-Paying Jobs
4. Cost of Healthcare - Physical, Mental, and Dental
5. Substance Use
6. Childcare Availability and Affordability
7. Economic Growth, Development, and Worker Shortage

Source: The 34 participants in the community stakeholder meeting were invited to prioritize the areas of need identified during the meeting via a post-meeting survey. Fifteen participants responded. Items are ranked 1-7 based on the mean priority score for each area of need.

As shown in **Exhibit 3.1**, the list includes needs related to mental health, access to health care, social and economic factors, quality of life, and physical environment and safety. These issues are reflected in the community indicators and survey results presented in **Section 2** of the report. We encourage community stakeholders to review **Section 2** for additional insight and context on the issues.



## Ideas for Solutions Submitted by Community Stakeholders

As part of the follow-up survey participants were invited to share ideas for solutions to the top community needs identified at the stakeholder meeting. Twelve participants responded with sixteen ideas as listed in *Exhibit 3.2*. The results reflect the connections between access to health care, socio-economic challenges, and community development. Also, each of the ideas listed would require creative collaboration across organizations and sectors.

### Exhibit 3.2 Ideas for Solutions Submitted by Houston County Community Stakeholders

- Mental health would be improved if our state and local leaders considered the full ramifications of their policy decisions and made decisions based on science and comprehensive health rather than politics.
- Mental health would be improved if we encouraged people to stop treating words as if they're acts of violence.
- Stop focusing on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Constantly labeling people is destructive and counterproductive, and I say this as a person who falls into one of those minority groups.
- I think we need to talk about mental health more in our community.
- More prevention in schools and support for people using in our community.
- Events and locations that promote physical activity and belonging.
- Mental health promotional information.
- Education is a key component for any solution. It is a community effort for all fronts.
- Invite the state to a meeting - how to increase support for local mental health providers; create process to promote already existing resources for mental health
- The mental health and substance abuse really go hand in hand. If we establish a county-based mental health hotline or teletherapy service, we might be able to make a dent in both. If a person is cited for substance abuse, the mental health treatment would be part of the ticket, so to speak.
- Identify affordable programs that provide mental health services, and share with the community through schools, churches, and other organizations.
- More programs to help certify and ENCOURAGE childcare providers. Ways to supplement childcare (in addition to what's already there) and the providers to make the job a well-paying job that may draw more quality candidates
- Consider a housing & development component to address rental/housing inspections.

- Mental health is such an issue, but a tough one to address; likely needs a comprehensive plan that encompasses school and community.
- Pursuing grant options from SAMHSA (or State) and partner with other neighboring communities/counties to create a community pilot project of traveling case workers, social workers, behavior technicians for short term support. This navigation program will help link families to County resources, health care/mental health care, substance treatment etc. they would go into schools to help provide support, resources/bridge the gaps. Follow a wraparound model including team meetings. Work with parents on resources for job skills and other like supports. Work with the City to develop more affordable housing (LaCrescent has many community goals including affordable housing - \$350,000 is not affordable!) Developing a healthy community will draw in more families and individuals who might be willing to open licensed childcare options.
- Big Brother/Big Sister or mentor program for youth

Note: The 34 participants in the community stakeholder meeting were invited to respond to this item in their own words. There were twelve responses with sixteen ideas as listed above.

## Appendix A - Data Sources

### Community Demographics

Community Health Solutions analysis of demographic estimates (2020) and population projections (2025) from ESRI.

### County Health Rankings

University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute. *County Health Rankings*. Retrieved in December 2020 from <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>  
[Full Rankings for Wisconsin](#)  
[Full Rankings for Minnesota](#)  
[County Health Rankings Model](#)  
[Measure Definitions and Data Sources](#)

[Houston County Minnesota High School Graduation Rates were obtained from the Minnesota Report Card.](#)

### Leading Causes of Death

2018 Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics. Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data query system, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/index.htm>, Mortality Module, accessed 12/9/2020 and [2018 Minnesota Department of Health County Health Tables](#) accessed 12/9/2020.

### Maternal and Infant Health

2018 Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics. Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data query system, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/index.htm>, Low Birth Weight and Infant Mortality Modules, accessed 12/9/2020; and [2018 Minnesota Department of Health County Health Tables](#) accessed 12/9/2020.

### Cancer Screening Rates

[2019 and 2020 Health Disparities Report](#). Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality

### Mental Health Prevalence and Treatment Gap

[2019 Wisconsin Mental Health and Substance Use Needs Assessment](#). Wisconsin Department of Health Services-Division of Care and Treatment Services.

### Low-income Households

United for ALICE <https://www.unitedforalice.org/national-overview> accessed November 2020.

### Reported Child Services Cases

[2019 Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect and Report](#)  
[2019 Wisconsin Out-Of-Home Care Report](#)

CPS Referrals and Child Abuse Cases for Minnesota were not included in this report as definitions for cases and referrals in Minnesota may vary from Wisconsin definitions. For more information on Minnesota Maltreatment data, visit <https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/edocs/child-protection-foster-care-adoption/>

### Random Household Survey

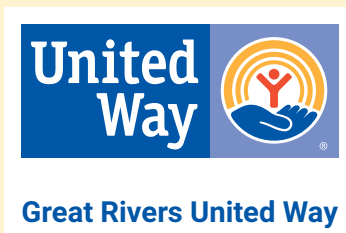
Community Health Solutions analysis of survey responses submitted by community residents in July-September 2020.

### Convenience Survey

Community Health Solutions analysis of survey responses submitted by community residents in October-November 2020.

## Appendix B - List of Community Indicators and Community Survey Topics

Focus	Community Indicators	Community Survey Topics
The Six-County Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population by county</li> <li>• Total population by census tract</li> <li>• Child population by census tract</li> <li>• Older adult population by census tract</li> <li>• Minority population by census tract</li> <li>• Households with income below poverty by census tract</li> <li>• County Health Rankings summary for 2020</li> <li>• Trends in selected County Health Rankings measures</li> </ul>	N/A
Length and Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of Life Rank</li> <li>• Quality of Life Rank</li> <li>• Premature death</li> <li>• Poor or fair health status</li> <li>• Poor physical health days</li> <li>• Poor mental health days</li> <li>• Low birthweight</li> <li>• Leading causes of death</li> <li>• Maternal and infant health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratings of community life</li> <li>• Ratings of community educational opportunities</li> <li>• Concerns about community life</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> </ul>
Health Behaviors and Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Behaviors Rank</li> <li>• Adult smoking</li> <li>• Adult obesity</li> <li>• Food environment</li> <li>• Physical inactivity</li> <li>• Access to exercise opportunities</li> <li>• Excessive drinking</li> <li>• Alcohol-impaired driving deaths</li> <li>• Sexually transmitted infections</li> <li>• Teen births</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratings of personal health status</li> <li>• Concerns about health issues in the community</li> </ul>
Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical Care Rank</li> <li>• Uninsured</li> <li>• Primary care physicians</li> <li>• Dentists</li> <li>• Mental health providers</li> <li>• Preventable hospital stays</li> <li>• Mammography screening</li> <li>• Flu vaccinations</li> <li>• Cancer screening rates</li> <li>• Mental health prevalence and treatment gap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported health coverage</li> <li>• Health care access and affordability</li> <li>• Health care sources and obstacles for adults</li> <li>• Dental visits and obstacles for adults</li> <li>• Health care and dental visits for children</li> </ul>
Social & Economic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social &amp; Economic Factors Rank</li> <li>• High school graduation rate</li> <li>• Adults age 25+ with some college</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Children in poverty</li> <li>• Income inequality</li> <li>• Children in single-parent households</li> <li>• Social associations</li> <li>• Violent crime</li> <li>• Injury deaths</li> <li>• Low-income households</li> <li>• Child Services Cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for vulnerable persons in the community</li> <li>• Concerns about vulnerable persons in the community</li> <li>• Community supports for vulnerable persons</li> <li>• Concerns about meeting household needs</li> <li>• Concerns about access to healthy food</li> <li>• Concerns about economic issues in the community</li> <li>• Services and supports for economic stability</li> </ul>
Physical Environment and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Environment Rank</li> <li>• Air pollution – particulate matter</li> <li>• Drinking violations</li> <li>• Severe housing problems</li> <li>• Driving alone to work</li> <li>• Long commute-driving alone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rating of overall community safety</li> <li>• Concerns about safety-related issues in the community</li> <li>• Responsiveness of public safety agencies</li> <li>• Level of preparedness for emergencies</li> <li>• Concerns about Public Spaces</li> </ul>



1855 E. Main St., Onalaska, WI 54650

☎ (608) 796-1400 📠 (608) 796-1410 ✉ [info@gruw.org](mailto:info@gruw.org)

[compassnow.org](http://compassnow.org)