

HEALTH EQUITY IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY

2020



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Winnebago County
Health Department**

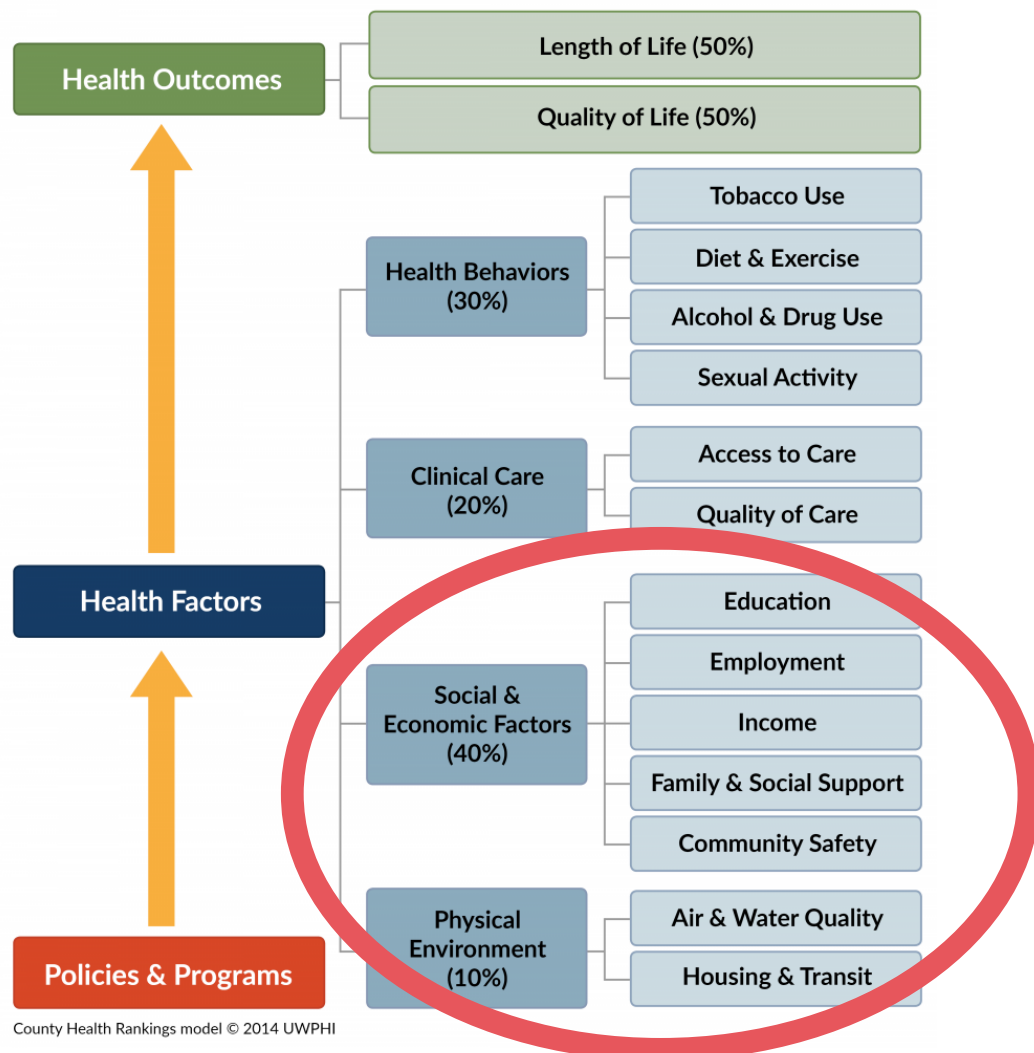
Definitions

- **Equity:** The just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper and reach their full potential. Everyone gets what they need, recognizing that each person has a unique experience and starts from a unique place.
- **Health:** A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1948).
- **Health disparities:** Differences in health status and mortality rates across population groups. By itself, disparity does not address the chain of events that produce it.
- **Health equity:** Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty and discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.
- **Health inequities:** Differences in population health status and mortality rates that are systemic, avoidable, unfair, and unjust. These differences follow the larger patterns of inequality that exist in society.
- **Institutional bias:** Policies, practices, and procedures that work to the benefit of members of the dominant group at the detriment of members of the non-dominant groups.
- **Race:** A social construct utilized throughout history to assign value and give rights to human beings.
- **Racism:** A system of advantage based on race that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities and undermines the realization of the full potential of the whole society through the waste of human resources.
- **Root causes of health inequity:** Underlying social inequalities that create different living conditions.
- **Social determinants of health:** Conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that influence health, such as your zip code, income, education, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- **Structural racism:** A system in which public policies, institutional practices, economic decisions, cultural representations, and other norms work to keep people of color from having equal access to opportunity, information, resources, and power.

WHAT IMPACTS HEALTH?

Our health is determined in large part by access to social and economic opportunities like where we live and how much money we make; the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schools; the safety of our neighborhoods; and the cleanliness of our water, food, and air. For some individuals and groups in our community, the essential elements for a healthy life are readily available, while others face barriers to health because opportunities are significantly limited. **No one's health should be compromised because of who they are or where they live.**

50%
of health outcomes
are determined by social,
economic, & environmental
factors

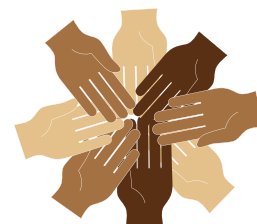


WHY HEALTH EQUITY MATTERS

Across Winnebago County there are **significant differences** in health outcomes from one zip code to the next and among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

Health inequities emerge when some individuals and groups gain more than others from having consistently better access to opportunities and resources over the course of their lives and the generations before them. For example, people of color and those living in poverty have consistently faced barriers to opportunity and good health due to a history of unfair laws, policies, and practices.

Differences in opportunity do not arise on their own or because of the actions of individuals alone. Often, they are the result of policies and practices at many levels that have created barriers to good health, such as residential segregation, unfair bank lending practices, school funding based on property taxes, and discriminatory policing and prison sentencing. The collective effect is that a fair and just opportunity to live a long and healthy life does not exist for everyone.



Data show there are fewer opportunities and resources for health among groups that have been historically marginalized, including people of color, people living in poverty, people with physical and mental disabilities, people who identify as LGBTQ, and women.

Increasing opportunities for individuals and groups facing the greatest disparities in our community will make our entire community healthier. **When everyone has the opportunity to live their healthiest lives, we are all better off.**

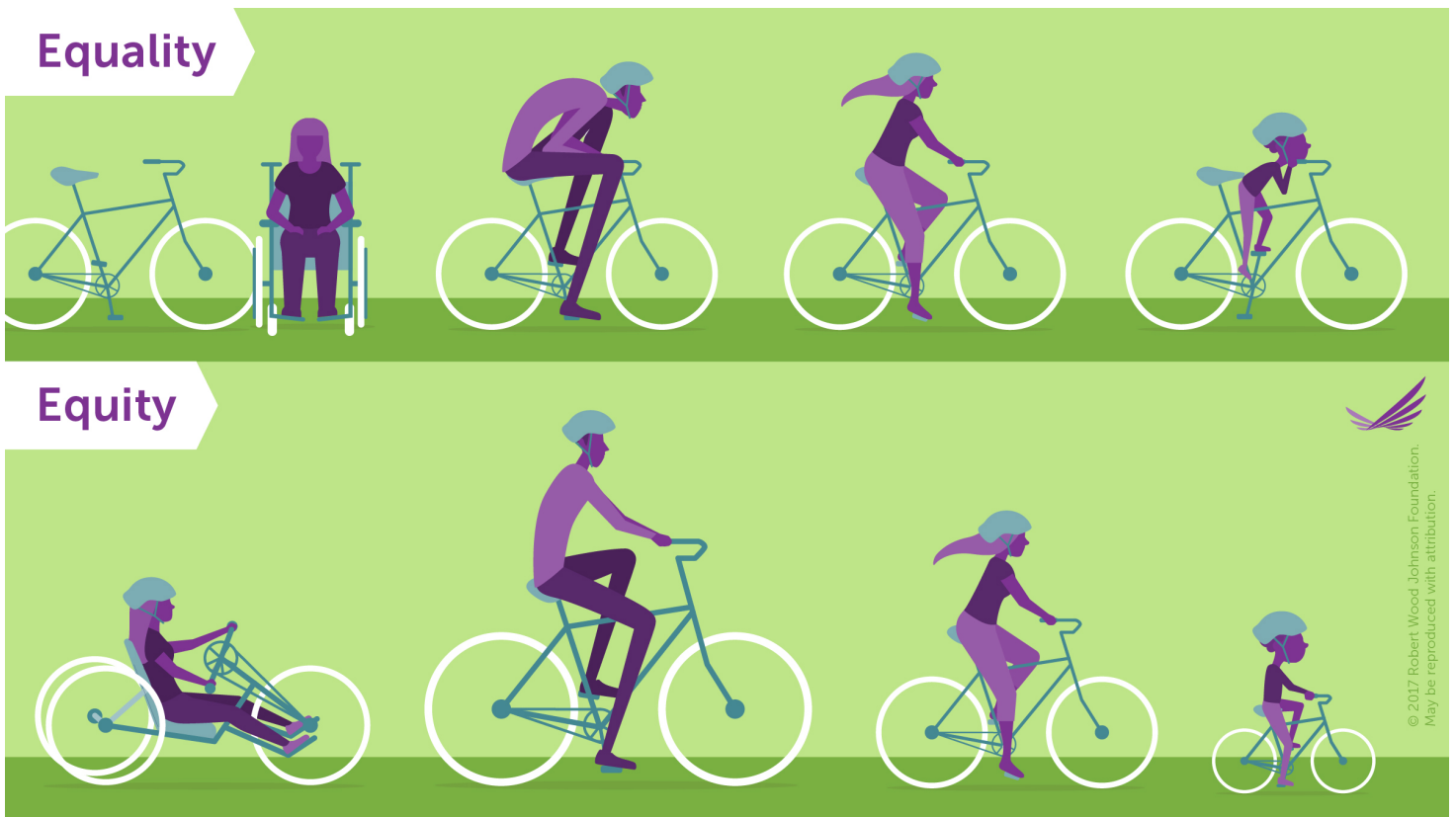
This report explores data* on differences in health outcomes and determinants of health in Winnebago County that can help us identify where action is needed to advance equity in our communities.

**All data is for Winnebago County unless alone otherwise noted.*

health equity



everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible



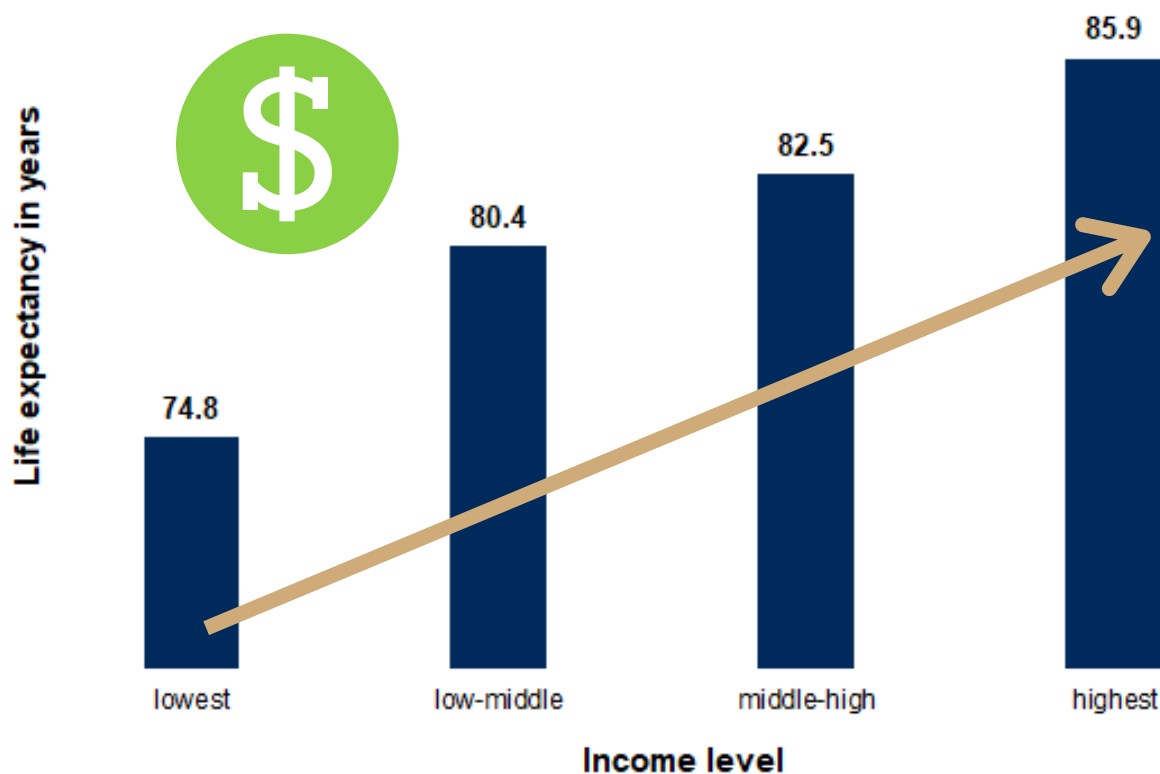
equity requires finding solutions that work for varying needs - a one size fits all approach does not always work well for everyone

How much money you make impacts how long you'll live

Evidence shows a strong relationship between income and life expectancy, the average years a person can expect to live. A higher income increases people's ability to access the essential elements needed for a healthy life such as safe living conditions, healthy foods, quality healthcare, and education. Income inequality is increasingly linked to disparities in life expectancy, and the U.S. has some of the worst income-based disparities in the world.

The graph below shows male life expectancy increases as income increases in Winnebago County. Males with the lowest income level are, on average, **dying 11 years earlier** than males with the highest income level.

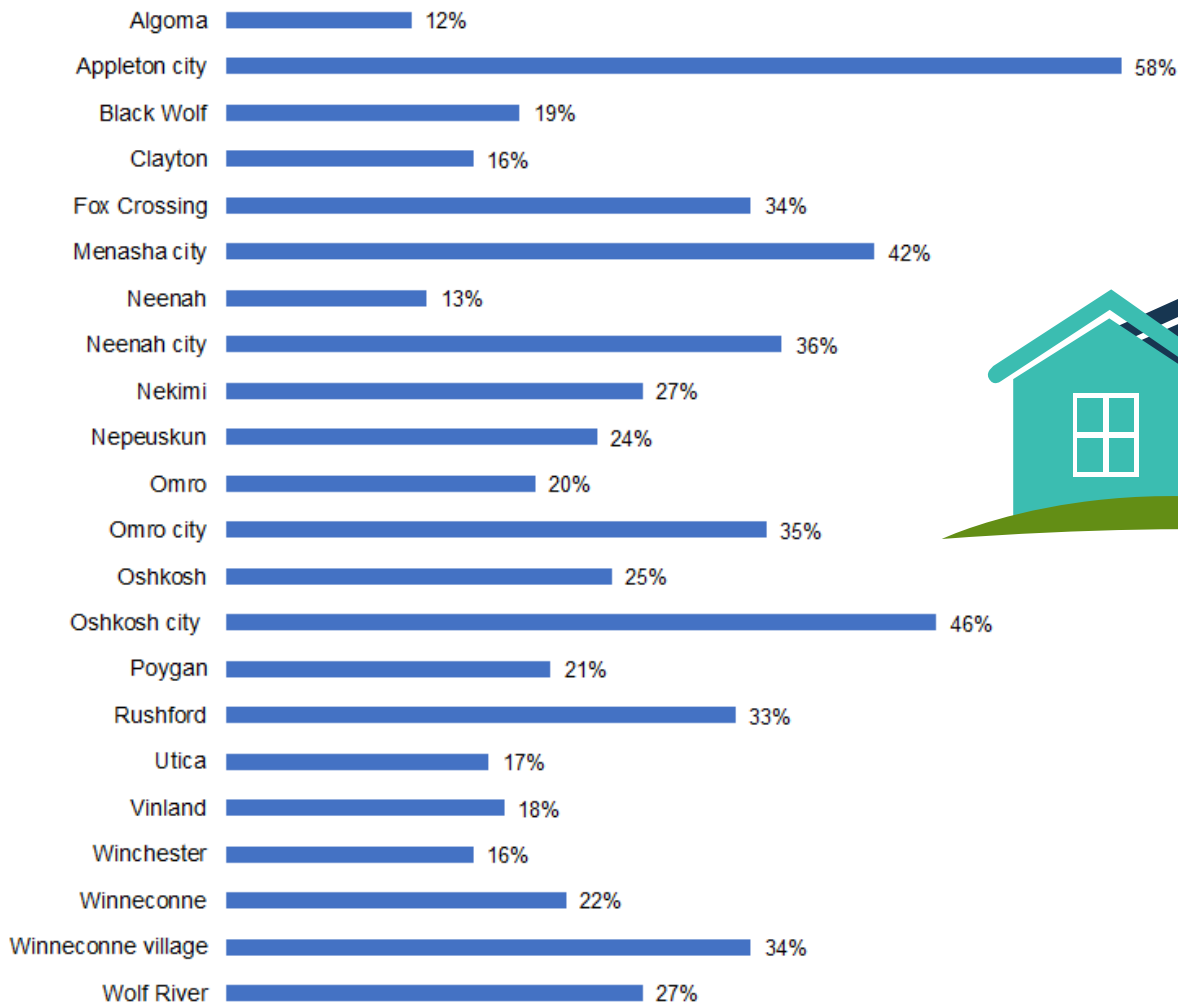
Male life expectancy increases as income level increases



The percent of households facing financial hardship vary by municipality

ALICE is an acronym for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed - and describes households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county. The ALICE Threshold is the average income that a household needs to afford the basic necessities including housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a smartphone in Winnebago County. Combined, the number of ALICE and poverty households equals the total population struggling to afford basic needs.

In Winnebago County overall, 21% of households are ALICE households and 11% of households are living in poverty. Combined, ALICE and poverty households total 32%, which means nearly **1 in 3 households are struggling to afford basic necessities**. The figure below shows the percentage of ALICE households and poverty households across the different municipalities within the county. *(The percentages shown are only for those households that lie within Winnebago County - 707 households in City of Appleton and 6578 in City of Menasha.)*



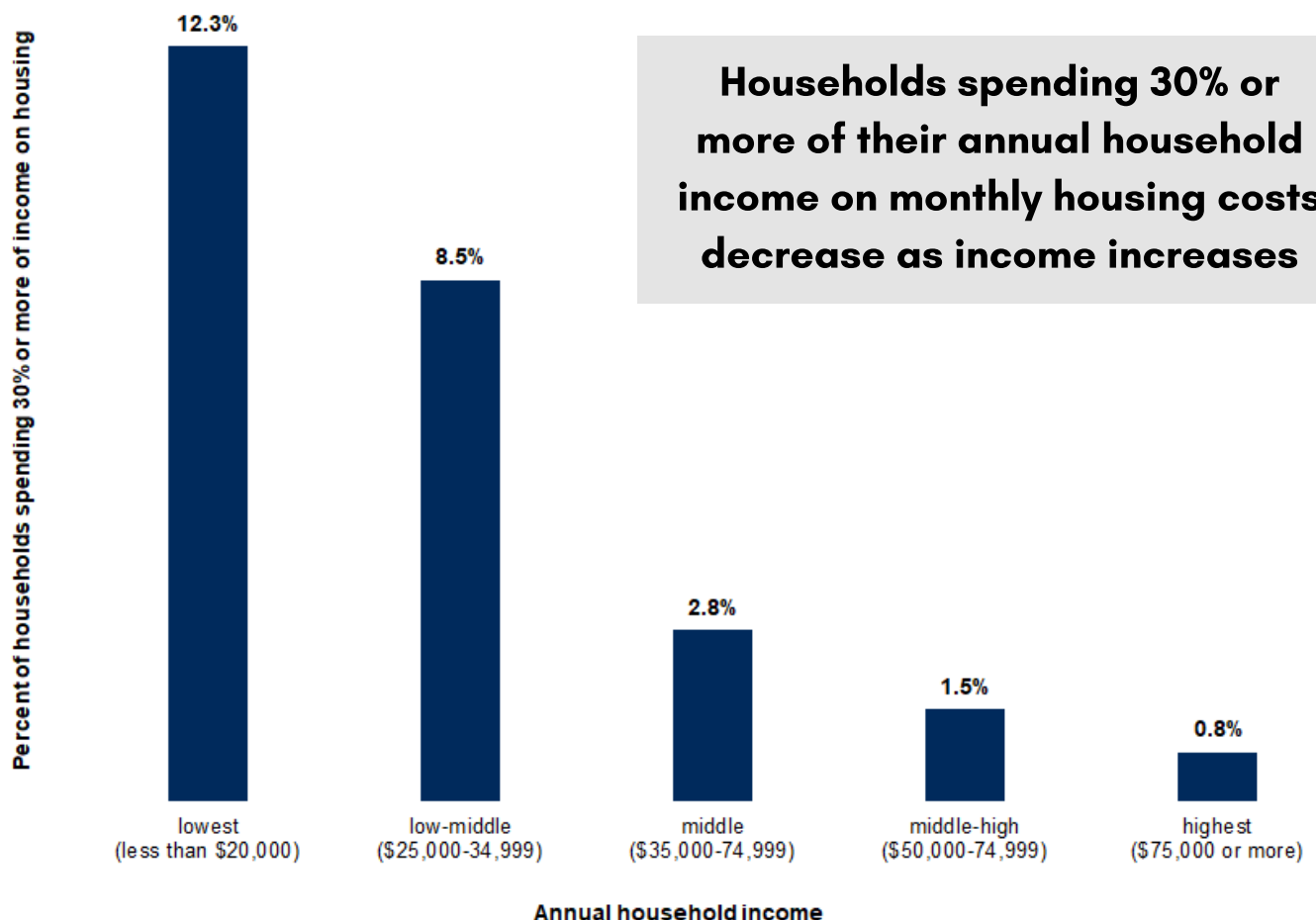
Percent of ALICE & Poverty Households

Data: ALICE Report, 2016

Housing affordability impacts health outcomes

Housing is essential to health as it fulfills a basic human need for shelter; however, the cost of housing also impacts health. The federal government considers housing to be affordable if a family spends no more than 30 percent of its income on housing costs, including utilities. A lack of affordable housing can limit people's ability to meet other basic needs and force them to make difficult choices between paying for rent, utilities, food, transportation, prescription medications, healthcare, etc. Unaffordable housing often causes financial strain which has been linked to negative health outcomes including anxiety, depression, toxic stress, malnutrition, diabetes, and many other chronic conditions.

The graph below shows among households in Winnebago County, the **households with the lowest income are 12 times more likely to be paying 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs** than households with the highest income. The availability of affordable housing shapes people's choices about where they live, often leaving families with lower incomes in low-quality housing in neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty and crime, and fewer health promoting resources such as parks, walking/biking paths, social activities, etc.

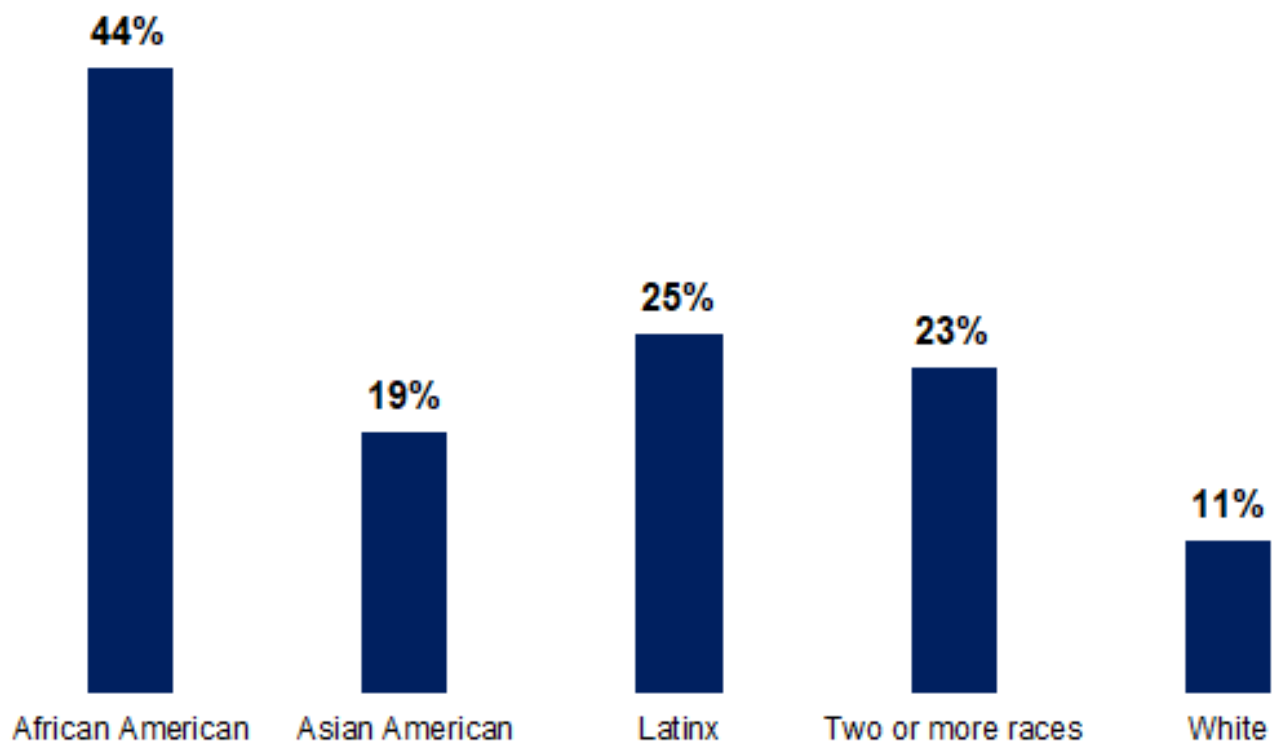


Poverty rates differ by race & ethnicity

A long history of discrimination and structural racism has contributed to the wealth gap among people in America. Race-based unfair treatment built into institutions, policies, and practices - such as residential segregation in impoverished neighborhoods, discrimination in bank lending to residents of largely minority neighborhoods, unfair hiring practices, and discriminatory policing and sentencing practices - continues to play a major role in wealth inequality between people of color and white people in the United States as well as locally within Winnebago County.

The graph below shows differences in the poverty rate by racial and ethnic groups in Winnebago County. Overall in Winnebago County, white people are less impacted by poverty than people of color.

Poverty rates by race/ethnicity

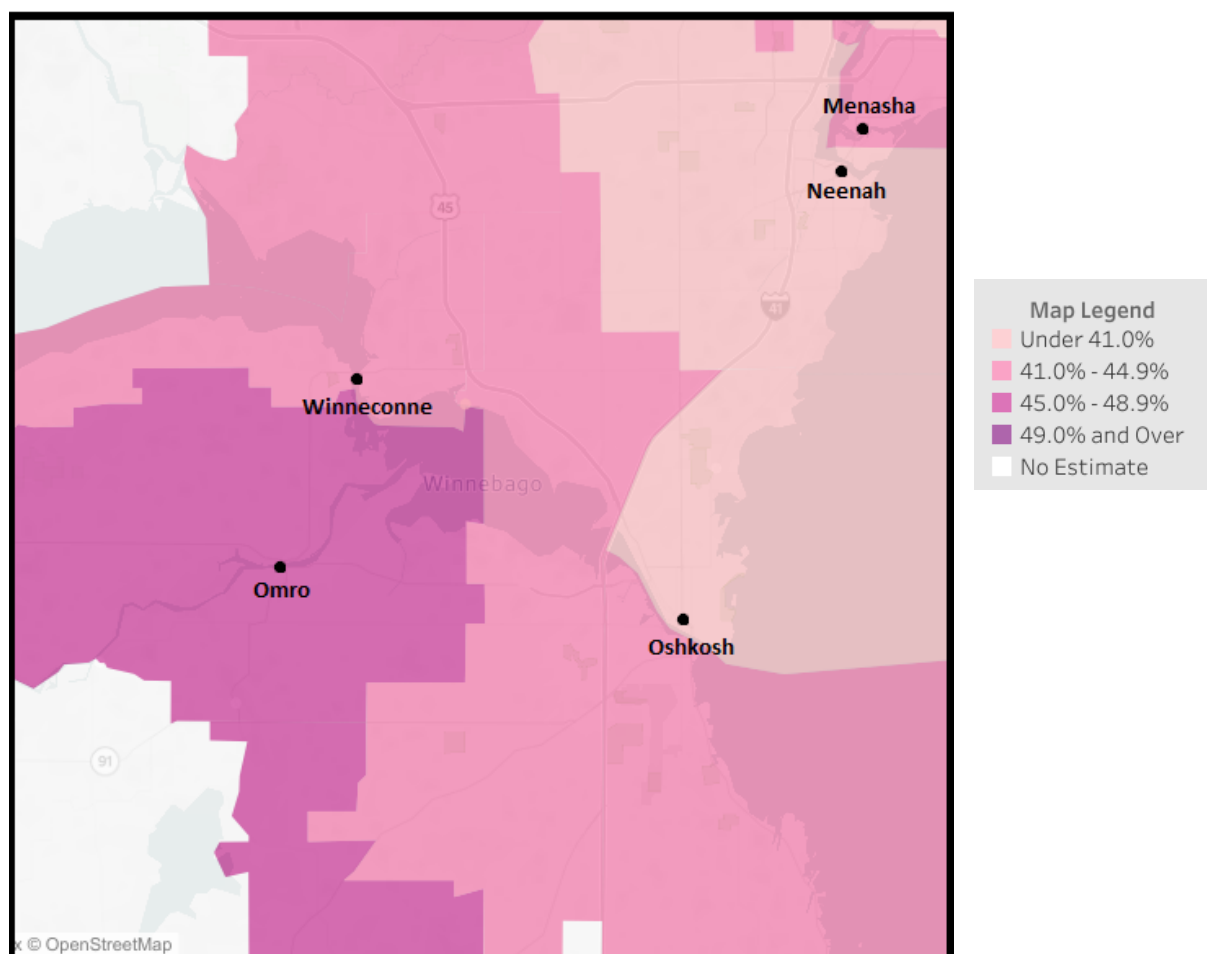


Obesity rates by zip code: Place matters

Obesity rates vary across Winnebago County and within communities. **Neighborhood conditions play a big part in our ability to maintain a healthy weight.** Some neighborhoods have great options for healthy living - like easily accessible parks, recreation opportunities, and places to buy or grow healthy foods. Other neighborhoods have limited transportation and housing options, a lack of job opportunities, few or no places to buy affordable, healthy food, and few safe places to be physically active. Where we live has a big impact on our opportunities to maintain a healthy weight, and the choices we make about our health depend upon the options we have available to us.

The map below shows the obesity rates in Winnebago County by zip code. The darker shaded areas represent higher obesity rates compared to the lighter shaded areas which represent lower obesity rates. No color means there is no estimate based on available data for that area.

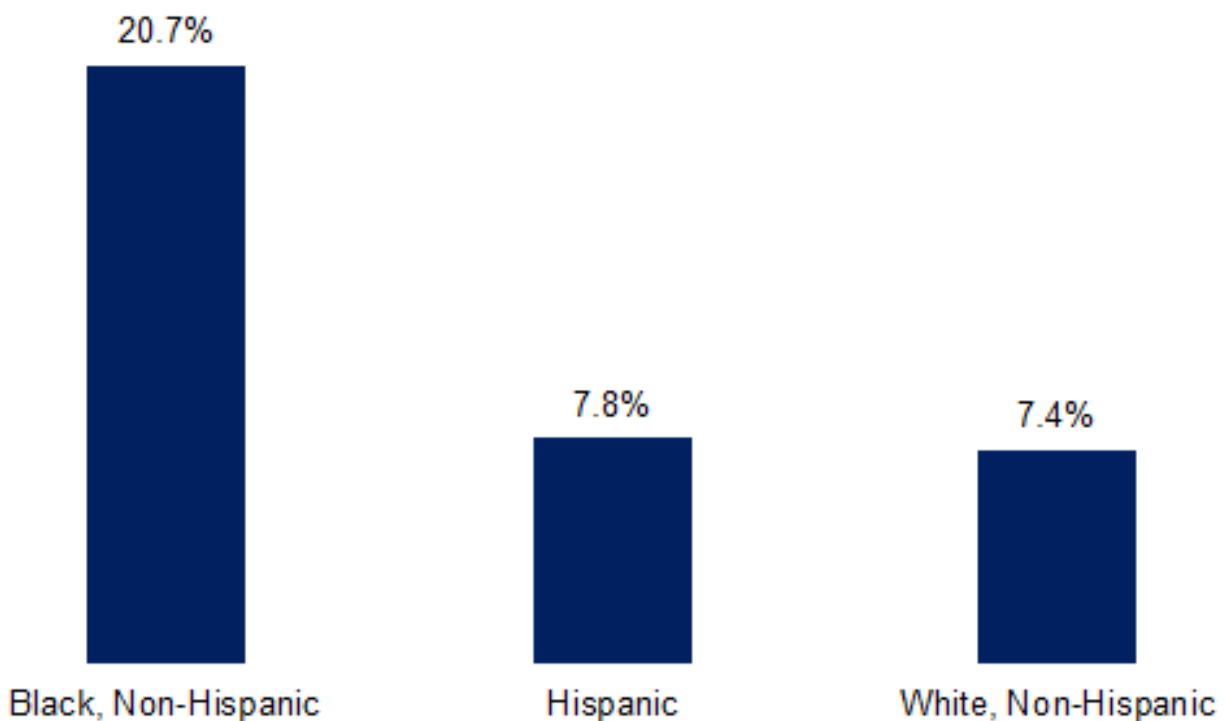
Obesity rates by zip code



Birth outcomes differ by race & ethnicity

Certain health conditions, social and economic factors, and behaviors can increase the risk of mothers having low birth weight babies. Low birth weight babies are those that weigh less than five pounds eight ounces at time of birth. Some low birth weight babies grow up to be healthy children and adults, while others may develop serious health problems that require treatment and result in lasting negative impacts. The graph below shows Black mothers have the highest percentage of low birth weight babies in Winnebago County. **This significant racial disparity can be attributed to social determinants** like income, racism, toxic stress, and lack of access to healthcare, resources, and opportunities.

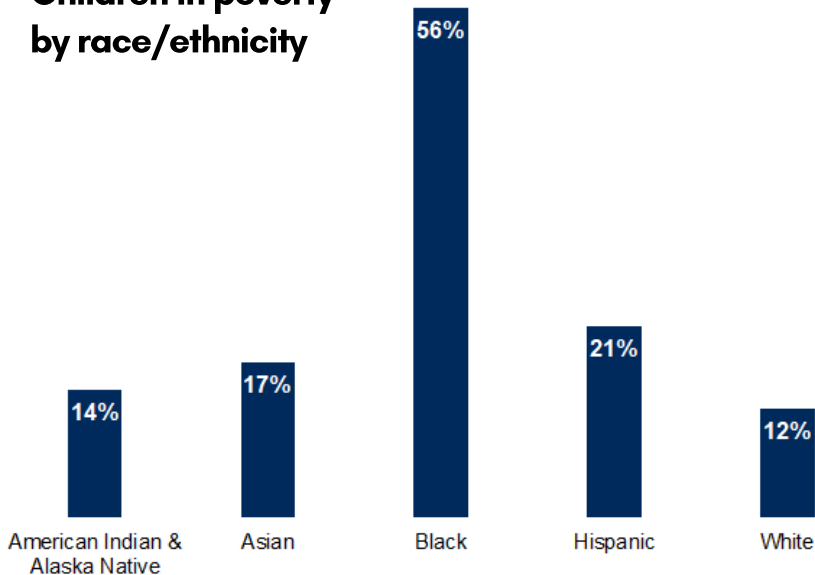
Percent of low birth weight babies by mother's race/ethnicity in 2018



Inequities impact children

While poverty impacts people at all ages, children living in poverty may experience lasting effects on academic achievement, health, and income into adulthood. Children in poverty have an increased risk of injuries from accidents and physical abuse and are susceptible to more frequent and severe health issues such as asthma, obesity, diabetes, ADHD, behavior disorders, cavities, and anxiety.

Children in poverty by race/ethnicity

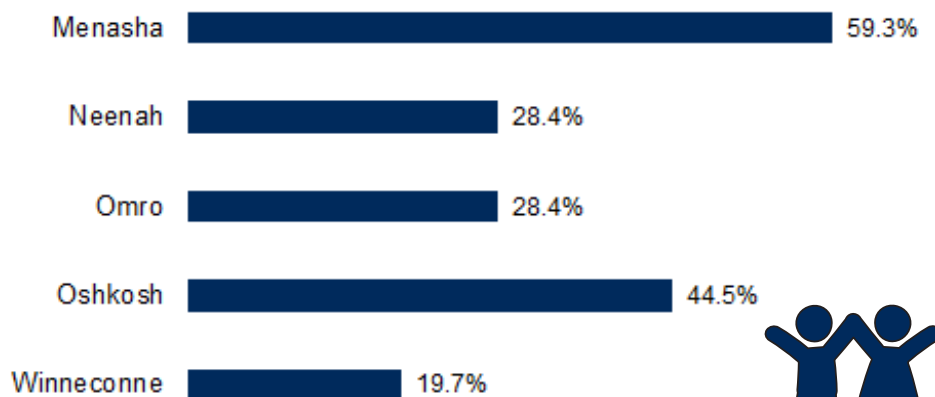


The graph to the left shows significant differences in the percentage of children living in poverty by racial and ethnic groups in Winnebago County, which can be linked to unequal access to opportunities and resources.

Data: County Health Rankings, 2020

The graph to the right shows the percentage of elementary students in Winnebago County school districts who are considered economically disadvantaged and therefore eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Economic disadvantage varies by place among elementary students



So what can we do?

Moving toward equity: We're all in this together

Disparities among one group impact our entire community. We need to work together and strengthen our community by expanding opportunities to be healthy. When people make decisions about their health – or the health of their children – **their choices depend on the options available.**

Thriving, healthy communities are rooted in the determinants of equity. The roots of the tree below are the conditions all of us need to reach our full potential and be as healthy as possible. Creating these conditions can reduce gaps in health outcomes and make our entire community healthier. Investing in individuals and groups facing the greatest disparities in our community will **ultimately benefit everyone in Winnebago County.**



Everyone should have the opportunity to be healthy, live up to their full potential, and participate fully in society.

healthy society = healthy people





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Health Equity at Winnebago County Health Department

One of the most important things health departments can do to help those facing disparities stay healthy is to promote health equity so everyone has access to the opportunities and resources they need to lead a healthy life — no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they make.

WCHD has an internal Health Equity Team focused on building equity into the infrastructure of our organization and creating an internal culture that supports health equity. We are prioritizing health equity by focusing our efforts to remove barriers and create opportunities so all people can be as healthy as possible.

WCHD Health Equity Team's Vision

Health outcomes for residents in Winnebago County will not be determined by social identity or socially determined group status such as, but not limited to, ability, gender identity, geography, income, or race.

We can't do this work alone. Join us!

We need to work together as a community to advocate for policies and programs that will increase opportunities and reduce inequities in Winnebago County.

Resources

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<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/index.htm>
- Wisconsin Health Atlas. Obesity by Place. <https://www.wihealthatlas.org/obesity/place>

Questions? Contact us!

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