



Washtenaw County Health Department

For Immediate Release

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Washtenaw County has the most doctors in the state. But it's not the healthiest county. *County Health Rankings show improved equity is needed.*

YPSILANTI, Mich., March 14, 2018 – Washtenaw County has the most primary care doctors, dentists and mental health providers per capita in Michigan, according to the 2018 [County Health Rankings](#) released today. We also have the lowest smoking rate and the most physically active adults in the state. Yet, in terms of length of life and quality of life, we only ranked as the fourth healthiest county in Michigan. That's because not everyone has the same access to the wealth of opportunities in our community.

“Washtenaw County has wonderful opportunities for achieving a healthy life, however those opportunities are not available for all who live here,” says Jessie Kimbrough Marshall, MD, MPH, medical director for the Washtenaw County Health Department. “Our county ranked 81st out of 83 Michigan counties in terms of economic inequality. We also have a high percentage of households who are experiencing severe housing problems. Differences in the social, economic, and physical environment across Washtenaw County can help explain the differences in quality of life and health that we see among our residents.”

According to the County Health Rankings, black babies in Washtenaw County are twice as likely to be born at a low birth weight as white babies. Black children are also nearly six times more likely, and Hispanic children nearly three times more likely, to grow up in poverty than their white peers. The [Washtenaw County Opportunity Index](#) shows that there is a nine year difference in life expectancy between Ann Arbor's 48104 zip code and Ypsilanti's 48198 zip code.

In order to end these health inequities, we must focus on more than just individual health care and behaviors. One in seven Washtenaw County residents are food insecure, according to the rankings. The county was ranked in the bottom for air pollution and violent crime rate. These are issues that must be fixed systemically.

Washtenaw County, in partnership with The City of Ann Arbor, has recently [launched](#) a new equity initiative: “One Community: Advancing Racial Equity in Ann Arbor & Washtenaw County.” This new initiative is intended to provide government leadership and employees with the tools needed to create a just and equitable community for all Washtenaw County residents.

The Washtenaw County Health Department is working to bring more [community voices](#) into the health assessment and planning processes. The department has partnered with community leaders from six communities identified as facing severe health inequities within the county.

“We won't be a truly healthy community until everyone in our county has the opportunity to live their healthiest life, regardless of race, income, or zip code,” says Jimena Loveluck, MSW, deputy health officer at the Washtenaw County Health Department.

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The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, are available online at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

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The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org> or call 734-544-6700.

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