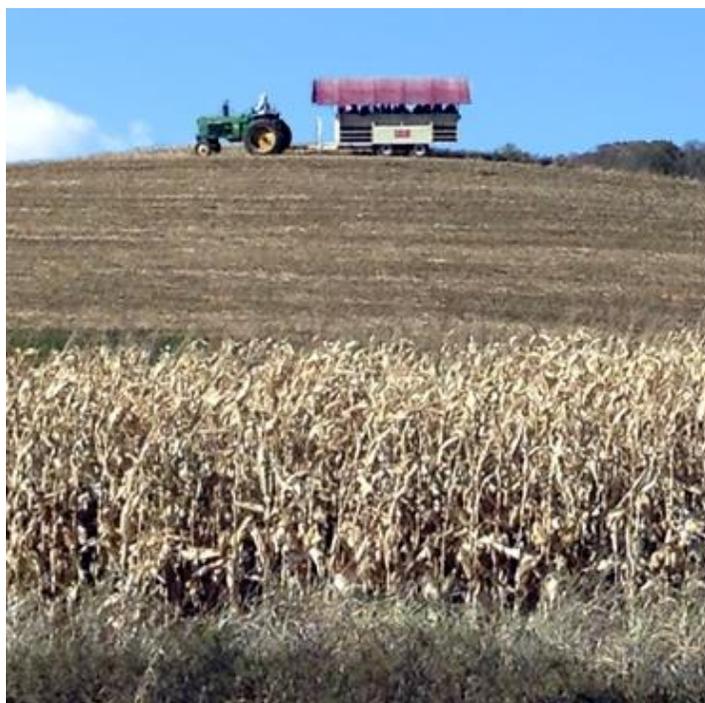
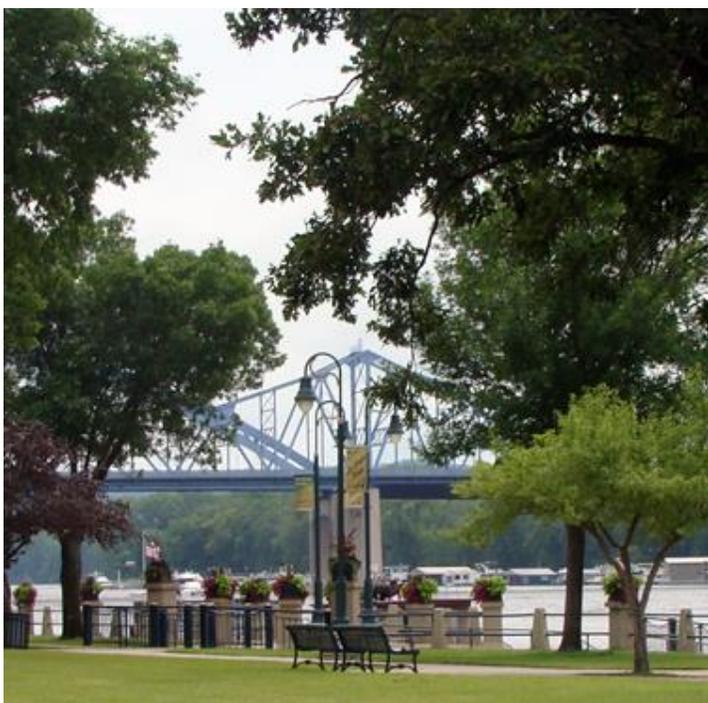


La Crosse County



La Crosse County Health Department Community Health Assessment

Executive Summary

2016

MAKING THE HEALTHY CHOICE TOGETHER

"Protect, promote and improve the health of all people to enhance the quality of life."

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Community Health Assessment

Executive Summary

The goal of every local health department is to improve the health of all residents in their jurisdiction. In La Crosse County, this is very evident by our mission to “Protect, promote and improve the health of all people to enhance the quality of life.”

One of the statutory requirements of all local health departments is to complete a Community Health Assessment (CHA). Health departments use the CHA to inform the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which serves as a guide for the future efforts to improve the health of a community. The CHIP is a collaborative effort between the health department and members of the community.

Since the summer of 2015, the La Crosse County Health Department (LCHD) has been compiling data about the health of La Crosse County residents. The data summarized in this executive report originates from several sources and includes both primary and secondary data.

After careful consideration of the many tools available for completing a CHA and CHIP, the LCHD decided to utilize the Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards (WALHDAB) Wisconsin Guidebook on Improving the Health of Local Communities¹ as a framework to guide the CHA process.

The first phase of the CHA process involved an analysis of secondary data sources suggested in the WALHDAB core data set. These suggestions included sources such as:

- CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- County Health Rankings
- US Census Bureau
- Wisconsin DHS Public Health Profiles

Along with the WALHDAB core data set, the LCHD utilized the Great Rivers United Way COMPASS NOW 2015² report which included a survey of area residents.

In the second phase of data collection, the LCHD concluded that there was a need for additional data regarding underrepresented populations. The LCHD conducted ten key-informant interviews with representatives from several groups including:

- Aging/Elderly/Disabled
- Homeless/Poor
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ)
- Minorities: African American, Hispanic, Hmong, Native American
- Veterans
- Youth

The final phase of data collection transpired through three community forums held in January 2016. Two of the forums focused on La Crosse’s rural population in the Town of Farmington and the Town of Greenfield. The final location was the Myrick Park Center in the City of La Crosse. Residents voiced their opinions and concerns over health issues.

This executive summary serves as an overview of the LCHD CHA. The document utilizes a number of the Healthy People 2020 Leading Health Indicators³ and Healthiest Wisconsin 2020⁴ Health Focus Area Profiles as a guide to organize sections into 11 Health Focus Areas. The following page defines each of the health focus areas that are detailed throughout the rest of the document.

Health Focus Area Definitions

The following definitions are from Healthy People 2020: www.healthypeople.gov.

Access to Health Services

Access to health services is the ability to gain entry into the health care system, access a location where needed services are provided, and find a trusted provider. This topic examines availability, cost, and insurance coverage as factors in access.

Environmental Quality

Environmental quality includes both the natural and the built environment. Environmental hazards include things such as air and water pollution, secondhand smoke, lead and other toxins, and allergens.

Injury & Violence

Injuries and violence can be intentional or unintentional, and include things such as motor vehicle crashes, homicide, domestic and school violence, neglect, suicides, and unintentional drug poisoning.

Maternal, Infant, & Child Health

This topic examines the health conditions, behaviors, and systems that affect the quality of life for women, infants, and children. It includes identifying risk factors such as diabetes, hypertension, and depression to prevent future problems.

Mental Health

Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and cope with challenges.

Nutrition, Physical Activity, & Obesity

Nutrition, physical activity, and obesity are three topics that are critical in improving the health of all people. A healthy diet and regular physical activity contribute to the ability to maintain a healthy weight.

Oral Health

The focus in oral health is the prevention of oral disease such as cavities, gum disease, oral and facial pain, and mouth and throat cancers. Good oral health is essential to maintain overall health.

Reproductive & Sexual Health

Reproductive and sexual health for both men and women focuses on things such as preventing unintended and adolescent pregnancies, detecting and treating diseases, and decreasing infertility.

Social Determinants

Social determinants are a range of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to individual and population health. These are things such as education, stable employment, and safe homes and neighborhoods.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse involves drugs, alcohol, or both. This area focuses on destructive social conditions, including things such as family disruption, financial problems, domestic violence, child abuse, and crime.

Tobacco

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. Tobacco use includes smoking any form of tobacco, smokeless tobacco and vaporizers. This category also includes the effects of secondhand and third-hand smoke.

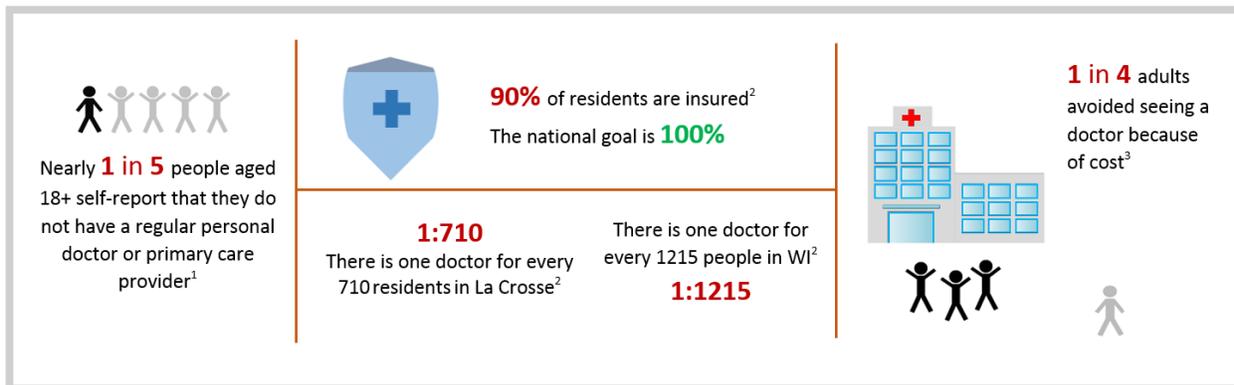
Health Focus Areas

Access to Health Services

Access to comprehensive, quality health care services is essential for the achievement of health equity and increased quality of life for everyone. Regular and reliable access to health services can be beneficial in many ways including:

- Preventing disease and disability
- Detection and treatment of health conditions
- Increased quality of life
- Reduced likelihood of premature death
- Increased live expectancy

With several high quality health care systems in La Crosse County, 64% of COMPASS respondents rated overall access to health care as excellent. The key-informant interviews and community forums echoed that sentiment, with many citing the health care systems as great assets to La Crosse residents. However, the cost of health care surfaced as a major theme in several interviews as well as the forums. One resident commented that it is great that so many people in La Crosse have insurance, but if they can't afford the deductible and co-insurance costs the statistic is misleading.



Environmental Quality

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines environment, as it relates to health, as “all the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person, and all the related behaviors.” Environmental health consists of preventing or controlling disease, injury, and disability related to the interactions between people and their environment.

The environment consists of both the natural environment and the built environment. Natural environmental concerns such as poor air and water quality can lead to cancers, asthma, gastrointestinal illness, and a range of other problems. The built environment, such as schools, parks, and transportation systems can also affect health. For example, bicycling as a primary mode of transportation can increase physical activity as well as reduce pollution and motor vehicle accidents.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

²<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/wisconsin/2015/rankings/la-crosse/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

³<http://www.greatriversunitedway.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/compass-now-survey-in-depth-analysis-2015.pdf>

COMPASS respondents rated the natural environment as an area of need. In one area specifically, safe bike routes to school, nearly 40% of respondents rated La Crosse as poor or fair. In both the key informant interviews and the community forums, participants viewed the environment as an overall strength of La Crosse. Several forum participants noted that radon and lead are still concerns and that La Crosse must continue work to preserve the environment.



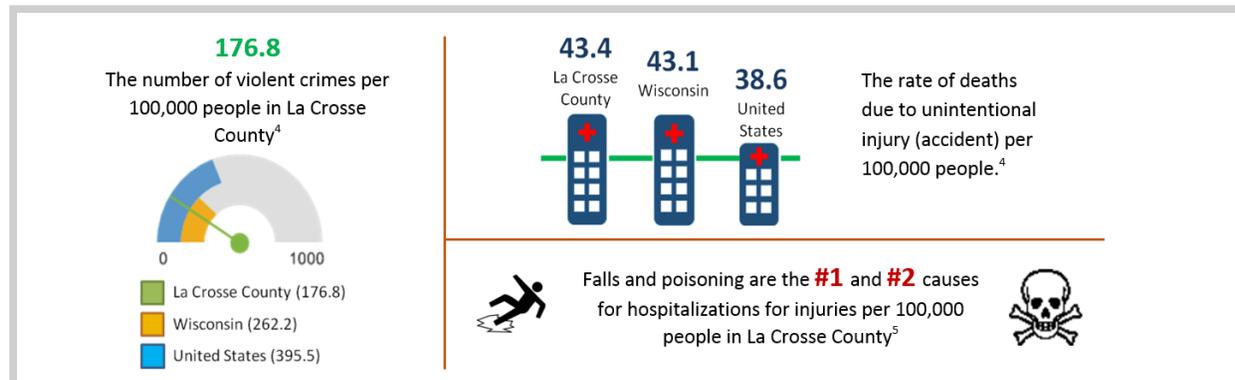
Injury and Violence

Injuries and violence seem commonplace in society. Often, these incidences are accepted as accidents, acts of fate, or just a part of life. However, most of the events that lead to injury, disability, or death are not only predictable, they are preventable.

Events such as motor vehicle crashes and physical assaults can cause unintentional and violence-related injuries. These can happen anywhere at any time and can have serious, painful, and debilitating physical and emotional health consequences including:

- Hospitalization
- Brain injury
- Poor mental health
- Disability
- Premature death

In the COMPASS survey, almost 75% of people rated La Crosse as good or excellent at preventing abuse or neglect. Nearly 80% rated efforts to prevent crime as good or excellent.



¹La Crosse County Health Department

²<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/wisconsin/2015/rankings/la-crosse/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

³<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/radon/index.htm>

⁴<http://www.communitycommons.org/>

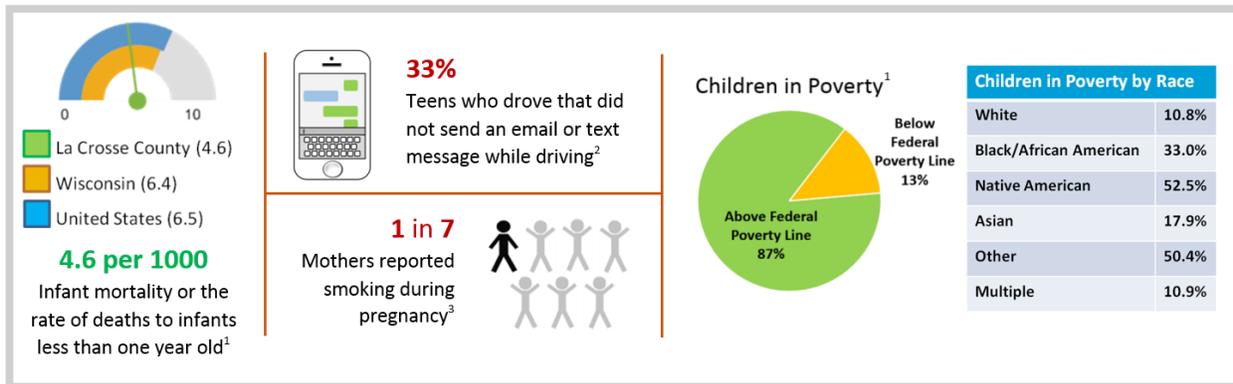
⁵<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/injury-hosp/index.htm>

Maternal, Infant, and Child Health

The United States places a strong emphasis in improving the well-being of mothers, infants, and children, and this continues to be a cornerstone of public health. Their well-being will determine the health of the next generation, and can also help to predict the future challenges facing families, communities, and the health care system.

According to the Healthy People 2020 leading health indicators, in the United States more than 80% of women will become pregnant and give birth to one or more children. From these, almost one third will experience some complications which could include problems such as depression, gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and cesarean delivery. While still rare, the rate of death during pregnancy has declined very little over the last 20 years.

In the key-informant interviews, support for parents and families surfaced as a theme when discussing the health of children. Some mentioned that the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is a good resource available to families.



Mental Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Mental Health is “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” Without achieving mental health, one cannot hope to achieve overall health.

Mental health and physical health are intricately linked to one another. Evidence shows that mental health disorders, especially depression, are strongly associated with the risk for chronic diseases and other physical conditions. Chronic disease can also intensify mental health problems, thus creating a cycle of poor health. Despite the lack of mental health data available for our community, our state, and even our nation, many people view mental health a top area of need in the Great Rivers Region.

Recently, mental health has gained heightened awareness around the world. That awareness is also evident in La Crosse. While 93% of COMPASS respondents rated their overall mental health as good or excellent, mental health emerged as one of the top concerns in two of the

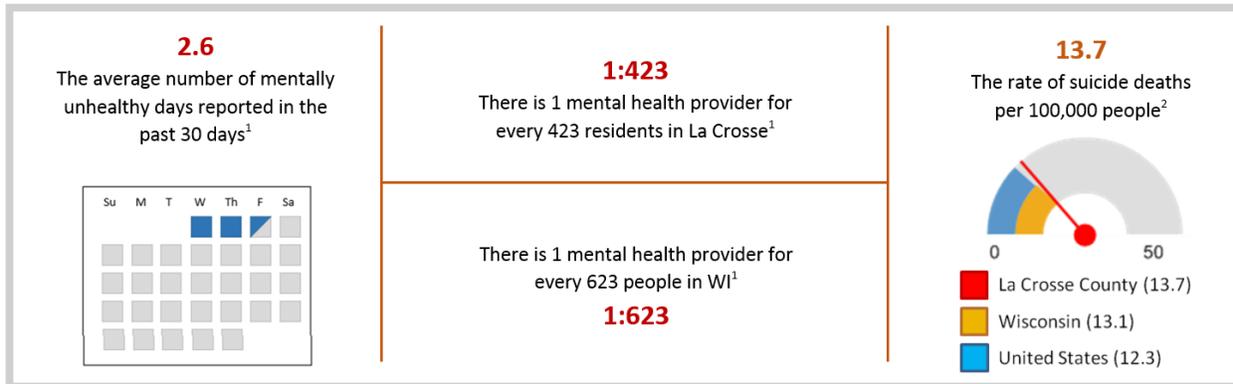
¹<http://www.communitycommons.org/>

²2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. La Crosse County.

³<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/wisconsin/2015/rankings/la-crosse/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

community health forums. Many participants cited a lack of providers, difficulty accessing services, long wait times, and continued stigma that surrounds mental illness.

In the key-informant interviews, mental health emerged as a significant concern for a majority of representatives. Each found unique ways that mental health affected their represented population. One stated that mental health is “the biggest epidemic in the entire population.” Others cited barriers to obtaining mental health care and links to substance abuse as concerns.

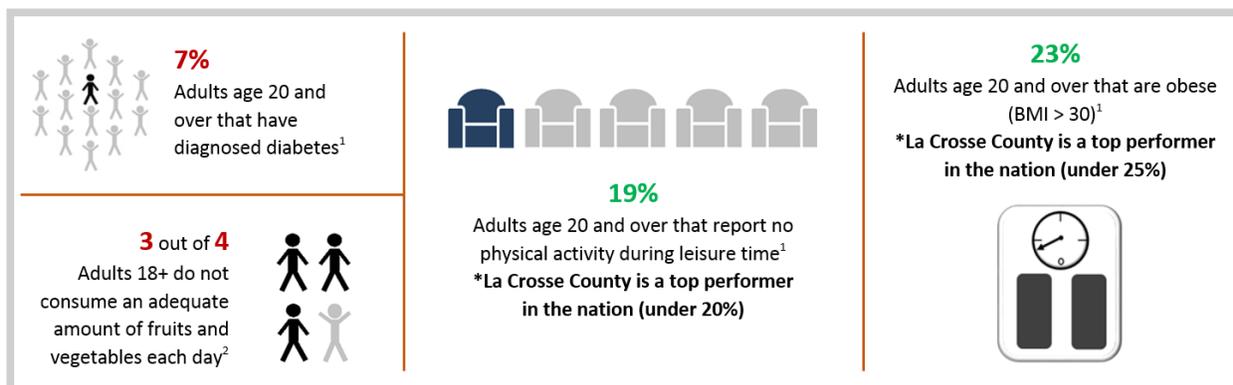


Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity

Good nutrition, physical activity, and a healthy body weight are essential parts of a person’s overall health and well-being. Each of these are paramount to managing health conditions so they do not worsen over time. The impact of a healthy diet and physical activity on overall health cannot be understated. Together, a healthy diet and regular physical activity can help to:

- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke
- Reduce the risk of some cancers
- Strengthen muscles, bones, and joints
- Improve mood and energy level

According to data from the County Health Rankings,¹ La Crosse County is one of the top performers in the nation with regard to obesity levels and physical inactivity. Yet, in the community health forums, nutrition, physical activity, and obesity rose to the top of the list of health concerns facing residents. Several cited the ability to access and pay for healthy food choices and options for physical activity as particular needs.



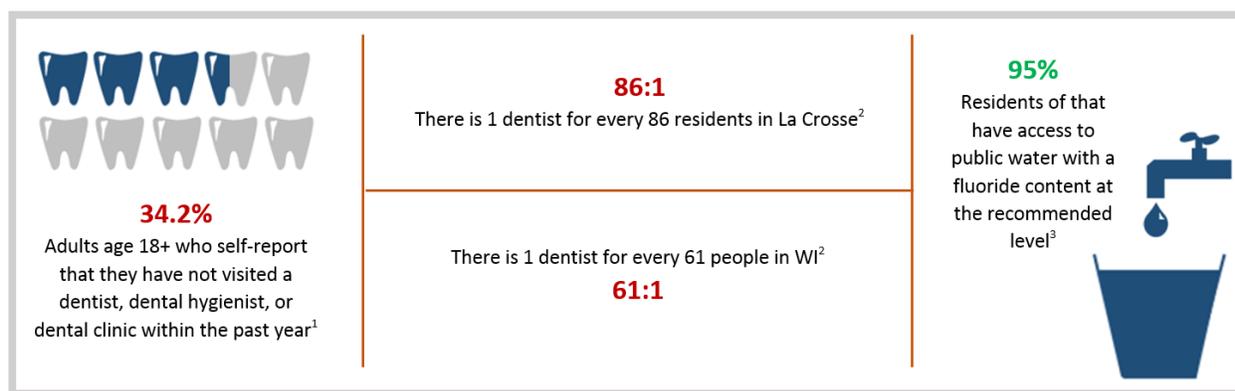
¹<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/wisconsin/2015/rankings/la-crosse/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

²<http://www.communitycommons.org/>

Oral Health

Oral health is an essential part of maintaining overall health. Good oral health is what allows a person to speak, smile, taste, touch, chew, and swallow. In addition, it also allows a person to make facial expressions to show feelings and emotions, which is a key component to communication. Poor oral health can have serious consequences including painful, disabling, and costly oral diseases. Not only that, evidence has linked oral health problems to chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Poor oral health is also associated with premature births and low birth weight in pregnant women.

The COMPASS NOW 2015 report listed oral health as an area of need for our community. This was also the case during the key-informant interviews, where all representatives listed oral health as a significant concern. Several cited lack of dental insurance coverage as an issue, stating that many dentists do not accept new patients on medical assistance. Community forum respondents also mentioned cost as a major barrier to oral health.



Reproductive and Sexual Health

Reproductive and sexual health can have a very strong impact on improving the overall health and quality of life of a community. It can also have a considerable impact on health costs.

According to Healthy People 2020, reproductive and sexual health services can:

- Prevent unintended pregnancies
- Prevent adolescent pregnancies
- Provide prenatal care
- Detect health conditions early
- Detect and treat sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Slow the transmission of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Decrease infertility rates
- Identify intimate partner violence
- Provide substance abuse referrals
- Advise on nutrition and activity

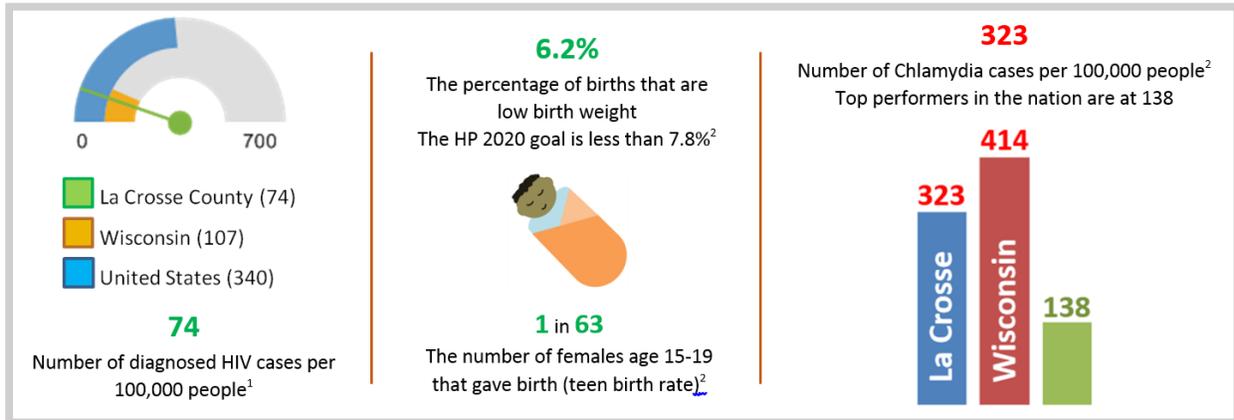
Social, economic, and behavioral factors can all influence reproductive and sexual health. Social factors such as age, education level, and income can play a big role in care. This topic is also important for both men and women. In addition, there is still a stigma that surrounds those that seek assistance for reproductive and sexual care, especially with regard to HIV. Because of these potential barriers, reproductive and sexual health is an area where health disparities are a major concern. Although this topic is a focus area in Healthy People 2020 and

¹<http://www.communitycommons.org/>

²<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/wisconsin/2015/rankings/la-crosse/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

³<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/P0/P00103.pdf>

Healthiest Wisconsin 2020, it did not arise as an area of top concern in the community forums and key-informant interviews.



Social Determinants

According to Healthy People 2020, social determinants are “A range of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors [that] contribute to individual and population health.” Social determinants are things such as access to parks and a safe environment, education, discrimination and bullying, and neighborhood location. Social determinants are a part of the reason for the inequality in health status between members within a community, and those inequalities are widely considered avoidable.

Although social determinants was not a separate category in the COMPASS NOW 2015 report nor in the key-informant interviews, the components were intertwined in many of the questions and topics in each. For example, the COMPASS report added bullying as a community health concern, and asked people about the quality and availability of education. In the community forums, one participant mentioned that social determinants are a major co-factor in obtaining optimal health and quality of life. Participants felt that social determinants have an influence on all other health factors. Within the key-informant interviews, a major theme that arose was inadequate jobs and livable income, which leads to inequalities in things such as access to services and safe, affordable housing.



¹<http://www.communitycommons.org/>

²<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/wisconsin/2015/rankings/la-crosse/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

³<http://www.greatriversunitedway.org/our-work/community-needs-assessment/>

Substance Abuse

Prescription and illegal drug abuse, as well as alcohol abuse or misuse, are concerns both locally and nationally. Substance abuse has many destructive consequences including family disruption, financial problems, lost productivity, and crime. It can also lead to a number of negative personal and public health outcomes such as:

- Cardiovascular conditions
- Pregnancy complications
- Teenage pregnancy
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)
- Domestic violence
- Child abuse
- Motor vehicle crashes
- Homicide
- Suicide

In the COMPASS NOW 2015 survey, La Crosse County residents ranked illegal drug use as the top issue in the community. Alcohol use ranked second and prescription drug misuse was the fourth ranked issue. Community forum participants also felt strongly about substance abuse and ranked it as the second biggest issue in our community. Some participants noted a lack of treatment options and others mentioned a culture that promotes alcohol use.

During the key informant interviews, nearly all of the representatives indicated that substance abuse is a significant issue. One representative stated that substance use and mental health were “directly connected,” and several others implied that there is a link between the mental health and substance abuse needs in La Crosse. Another noted that alcohol use within the La Crosse bars is seen by many as a form of social networking or a way for people to meet, and that contributes to the higher rates of alcohol use in La Crosse.



Tobacco Use

Of all of the health focus areas, tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), tobacco use causes more deaths in the United States than HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined.

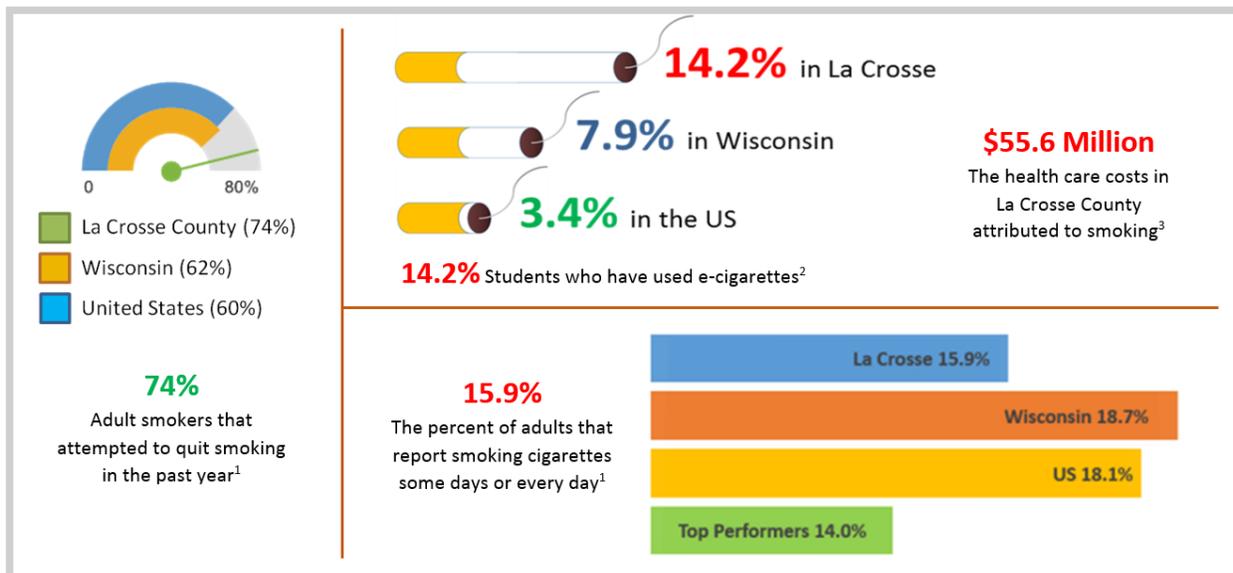
¹<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/wisconsin/2015/rankings/la-crosse/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>

Cigarettes, chewing tobacco, cigars, pipes, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco presentations all introduce hazardous chemicals into the body. In addition, second and third hand smoke can harm even those that do not use tobacco but are exposed to the smoke or residual chemicals.

Tobacco use in any form causes very serious diseases and health problems including:

- Cancer of the lungs, bladder, kidney, pancreas, mouth, and throat
- Heart disease and stroke
- Lung diseases such as emphysema, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD)
- Pregnancy complications including preterm birth, low birth weight, and birth defects
- Gum disease
- Vision problems

With the passing for the Wisconsin smoke free law in 2010, tobacco use may have fallen off the radar for many people. COMPASS NOW 2015 respondents ranked tobacco as the 13th health issue out of 18 categories. One forum attendee stated that teen smoking is still a major concern, and with the introduction of e-cigarettes in our area, tobacco is seeing a resurgence in the younger population.



Key-Informant Interview and Community Forum Data Summary

In total, the La Crosse County Health Department interviewed ten community representatives and heard the opinions of over 60 county residents in three community forums. Nearly all participants noted that La Crosse has many positive qualities, with themes such as abundance of resources, natural beauty, and a community that works well together. However, several concerns did arise. In the key-informant interviews, poverty, low income, and housing concerns arose as top themes. Forum participants rated nutrition, physical activity, and obesity as a top concern, followed by mental health, substance abuse, and the environment.

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