Measuring life expectancy neighborhood by neighborhood across the United States

Why Do Life Expectancy Data Matter?

Not everyone has the same opportunity to be healthy where they live. Life expectancy data, the average age to which people can expect to live, are a powerful tool to show that people living just a few miles apart may have vastly different opportunities for a long life.

How Will These Data Advance Health?

- Help public health officials, local leaders, and community members locate disparities in life expectancy at birth among population groups
- Start conversations about what is causing these disparities
- Guide decisions on how to improve their community's health

What You Can Do

From small steps you can take right now to larger policy changes, everyone has a role to play and can work together to address life expectancy disparities.

Policymakers

Use these data to better understand disparities and make important decisions about public transportation and grocery stores, requirements for physical activity and healthy foods in schools, community safety, access to health care, and much more.

Public Health or Health Care Workers

Use these data to better inform your community health assessments, which will help you direct limited dollars to the areas most in need.

Community Development Officials

Use these data to help decide which neighborhoods most need investment dollars to fund health clinics, schools, preschools, community centers, and other projects that can help improve health.

Community Members

Use these data to guide conversations about what might be causing life expectancy disparities. Once you understand the root issues, you can talk with each other and your elected officials about what changes you want to see where you live—maybe better public transportation, increased access to healthy food, and affordable housing, or more education and job training opportunities for the neighborhood.

Life expectancy data are based on census tract and death records. Vital records and statistics offices across the nation compile the official death certificates of their residents.
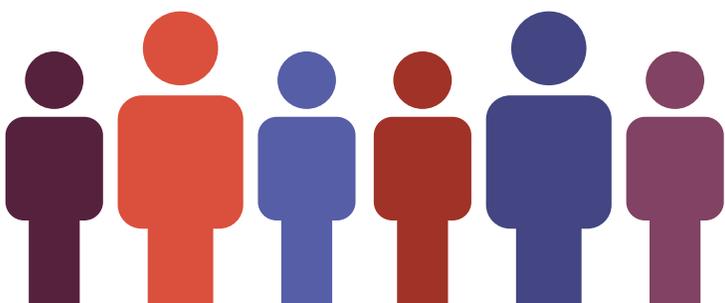
Life Expectancy Data in Action

Did you know Kansas City, Missouri successfully integrated life expectancy goals into their City Council Adopted Business Plan?[1]

A decade ago, public health officials identified an eight-year gap in life expectancy between the city's White and Black populations. Since then, the city has intentionally worked across departments and sectors to address inequities in the length and quality of life by race and place.

Residents and city leaders have joined forces to:

- Consistently renew a health levy property tax to fund public health services and safety net health care;

- Ignite a multiyear effort to transform the city's schools to create a safe learning environment, focusing on avoiding preventable absences due to inequitable school discipline and the burdens of childhood asthma;

- Pass policies on tobacco access, healthy food procurement, opioid abuse prevention, and the built environment;

- Begin measuring social connectedness and isolation in a city-wide, randomized survey;

- Address gun violence in partnership with schools and faith-based organizations through attention to community-level resilience factors; and

- Establish the first city-wide Task Force on Economic Mobility, elevating the importance of wealth equity across the life course and between generations.

[1] Kansas City, Missouri Health Department, http://kcmo.gov/health/.

For More Information:

Explore the County Health Rankings' What Works for Health, a searchable tool which provides evidence-informed policies, programs, systems, and environmental changes that can make a difference locally.

Visit the CDC's Division of Community Health website, which provides examples of communities taking action to improve the health of their residents.

About USALEEP

The United States Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP) is the first public health outcome measure available nationwide at the census tract level—measuring life expectancy at birth for nearly every census tract in the country. Census tracts include an average of 4,000 people who typically have similar characteristics, such as social and economic status.

The United States Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP), is a joint effort of the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

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Neighborhood Life Expectancy Project

For more information visit:
www.naphsis.org/usaleep