



2017 Minnesota Statewide Health Assessment: A Brief Overview

Full Statewide Health Assessment: [2017 Minnesota Statewide Health Assessment](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/sha.html)
(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/sha.html)

Discussion Guide: [2017 Minnesota Statewide Health Assessment Discussions](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/shadiscussions.html)
(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/shadiscussions.html)

The World Health Organization calls health, “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Health is a resource for our everyday lives. If we are healthy, we can engage with our family and friends, attend school, go to work, play, and actively participate in society. Health is something we shape together.

In late 2017, the Minnesota Department of Health and the Healthy Minnesota Partnership published the *2017 Minnesota Statewide Health Assessment*. The assessment documents that on average, Minnesota does well overall when it comes to health, economic opportunity, and civic engagement. The averages, however, mask a number of stark inequities affecting health in everything from education to employment, rates of home ownership and incarceration.

The assessment raises and answers the questions:

- Who is healthy? Who is not?
- What conditions shape health for different populations in Minnesota?
- What do we have—and what do we need—to assure that all people in Minnesota can enjoy healthy lives and healthy communities?

The assessment clarifies how factors like economic opportunity, living conditions, and social connections shape health in Minnesota communities. The assessment includes information about:

- **People:** Who lives in Minnesota?
- **Opportunity:** Opportunities for education, income, housing and transportation shape health
- **Belonging:** Social inclusion/exclusion and social connections shape health throughout life
- **Nature:** Interactions with the natural environment shape the health of people and nature

People

In 2015, 5,485,238 people lived in Minnesota. Nearly 73 percent (4 million) live in urban areas, about 11 percent (over 600,000) live in or near large towns, roughly 7 percent (nearly 390,000) live in or near small towns, and about 8 percent (more than 434,000) live in more remote rural areas.

Minnesota's total population may grow to nearly 6.8 million by 2070. By 2035—for the first time in our state's history—we will have more adults over age 65 than children.

The percent of Minnesota's population comprised of people of color (self-identifying as one or more races other than white and/or Latino) will likely grow to 25 percent by 2035.

Communities across Minnesota have many concerns in common. For example:

- Young children face a growing rate of poverty.
- Aging populations challenge our capacity to adapt to the growing needs of our elderly, while still attending to the needs of young people.
- Increasing racial and ethnic diversity in every Minnesota region requires us to confront discrimination and assert our values of equity and opportunity for all.

As Minnesota’s population grows and changes, we need to harness the strengths of our commitment to and shared vision for a Minnesota where everyone can thrive.

Opportunity

Opportunity means having the chance to experience success at every stage of life, from early childhood through old age. The conditions that constrain or expand our available choices shape our opportunities to make a life for ourselves, and to improve our lives and our children’s lives. Children especially need good nutrition, stable housing, and positive life experiences to grow healthy and strong.

Whether we can earn a living, own property, and determine the course of our own life are important for our health. What schools we can go to, what jobs are open to us, and what kind of food is available to us likewise shape our overall well-being. Whether our jobs offer benefits like health insurance and paid leave affects our ability to manage the demands of family and work and still care for our health. Living in families and communities that face constant economic stress can cause changes to our brains and bodies that show up as health problems. A key finding of this assessment is that entire populations in Minnesota do not have many key opportunities to shape a healthy life, with serious social, economic, and health implications for the state as a whole.



Issues of opportunity and health described in the statewide health assessment include:

- Education
- Income
- Employment and benefits
- Housing
- Transportation

Opportunity Discussion Questions

1. As described here, in what ways has OPPORTUNITY had a positive impact on your health or allowed you to thrive?
2. As described here, how does OPPORTUNITY reflect your own experience or the experiences of people in your community?
3. What does this way of understanding health mean for your community?
4. What opportunities to strengthen conditions for health does this raise for you?
5. What existing groups or partnerships might you want to connect with or join?

Nature

How we understand and feel about nature, how we treat our surroundings, and our access to natural spaces are shaped by our families, jobs, culture, and society. People with wide-ranging interests and values have very different ideas about what it means to own land, how nature should be used (or not), who is responsible for assuring access to clean air and water, and how to reconcile the many complex issues and competing interests involving nature. Some view nature as “here for our use; others see nature as a means to physical activity and recreation. Still others, especially American Indians in Minnesota, see nature as sacred and define it by relationships other than those of ownership.



The way we design our cities, homes, and workplaces shapes our interactions with nature and determines who can access a healthy natural environment and who cannot. Children especially are vulnerable to the loss of play in nature and to the effects of pollution. Being mindful of our actions and interactions with nature—whether they remove us from the natural environment, create inequities in access to water and land, or threaten the quality of our surroundings—is essential to assure our health.

Issues of nature and health described in the statewide health assessment include:

- Climate
- Air quality
- Water
- Outdoor recreation
- Food

Nature Discussion Questions

1. As described here, in what ways has NATURE had a positive impact on your health or allowed you to thrive?
2. As described here, how does NATURE reflect your own experience or the experiences of people in your community?
3. What does this way of understanding health mean for your community?
4. What opportunities to strengthen conditions for health does this raise for you?
5. What existing groups or partnerships might you want to connect with or join?

Belonging

When a population or community belongs, they can lift up their voices and help shape the conditions in the community that affect their lives and their health. But when our voices are silenced or ignored, when we are denied full participation in society, we suffer more than stigma. We suffer from higher rates of injury, addiction, abuse, joblessness, homelessness, incarceration, trauma, depression, disease, disability, and death. Healthy, positive relationships and lifelong inclusion in society interact to prevent disease, disability, injury, and premature death: they also create a high quality of life.



Belonging and inclusion determine how we interact with each other individually, in our families, in the community, and in society. Forming relationships and learning to be part of families and communities are critical in early childhood. Children find their own place in society through their experiences and relationships in their families and communities. Belonging improves the nature of our relationships, expands our access to resources, improves our resilience, and increases our opportunities for educational and economic success. We are social creatures, and for us belonging creates meaning, purpose, and hope for the future.

Issues of belonging and health described in the statewide health assessment include:

- Racism and infant mortality
- Early life experience
- Incarceration
- Homelessness
- Isolation
- Sexuality
- Physical and sexual violence
- Belonging in school
- Deaths of despair and disconnection
- The health care system

Belonging Discussion Questions

1. As described here, in what ways has BELONGING had a positive impact on your health or allowed you to thrive?
2. As described here, how does BELONGING reflect your own experience or the experiences of people in your community?
3. What does this way of understanding health mean for your community?
4. What opportunities to strengthen conditions for health does this raise for you?
5. What existing groups or partnerships might you want to connect with or join?

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