



Black River Health

Community Health Needs Assessment

2025 – 2027

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About Black River Health

Black River Health (BRH) is the embodiment of healthcare excellence in Jackson County. We are the result of the combination of Black River Memorial Hospital, a critical access hospital, and Krohn Clinic, both located in the rural community of Black River Falls, Wisconsin. Our journey together ultimately began in 1963 when the Krohn Clinic organization donated its hospital to the community, leading to the formation of Black River Memorial Hospital in 1966. Our unified commitment ensures exceptional, patient-centered care that adapts to our community's changing needs. Together, we are building a future where high-quality healthcare is accessible to all, fostering a healthier, thriving community.

To learn more about BRH, visit our [website](#).

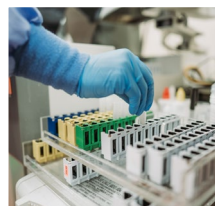
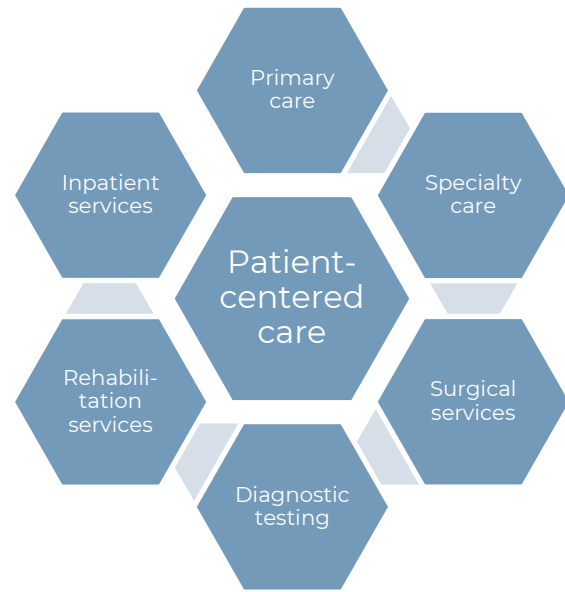
Our Mission

BRH's mission is to provide *“outstanding and comprehensive healthcare for you and your family, delivered locally with compassion”*. Through our core values of compassion, integrity, collaboration, respect, innovation, and growth, we strive to provide exceptional care close to home, growing alongside our communities with compassion, connection, and a commitment to sustainability.



Our Services

BRH provides an extensive array of inpatient and outpatient services, including acute inpatient services, swing bed services, emergency medicine, laboratory, diagnostic imaging, surgical services, wound care, infusion services, sleep medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, respiratory therapy, retail pharmacy, and home and respiratory equipment. Our outpatient clinics provide access to primary care services, behavioral health, medical specialties, and surgical specialties. Our staff consists of a mix of primary care and specialty providers.

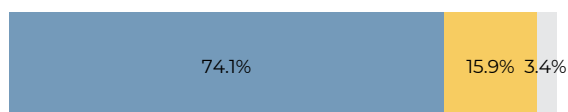


Our Community

BRH's primary service area predominately consists of Black River Falls, Wisconsin, and its surrounding communities, almost all of which are located within Jackson County, Wisconsin. BRH also provides healthcare services to the patients in the surrounding communities of Neillsville, Melrose, and Blair, among others.

Origin of BRH's patients

■ PSA ■ SSA ■ Outside of service area

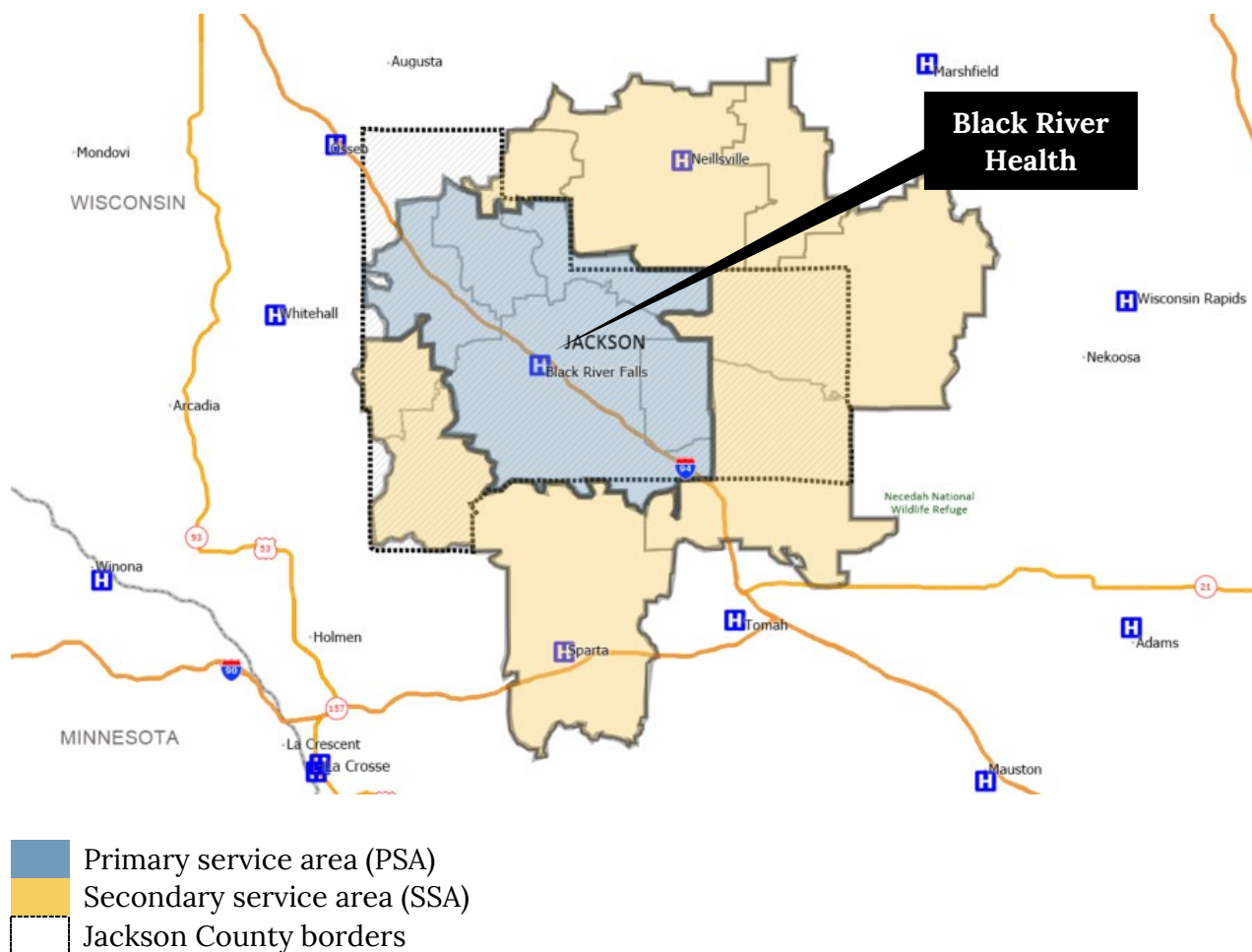


Primary service area

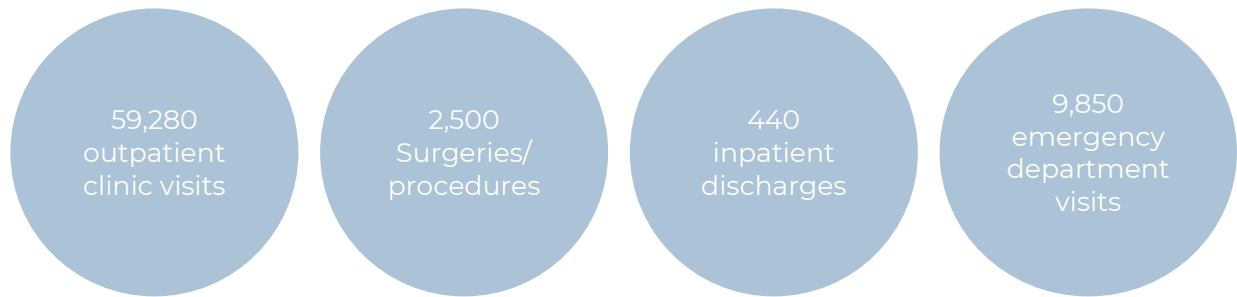
54615 (Black River Falls)	54754 (Merrillan)
54635 (Hixton)	54611 (Alma Center)
54643 (Millston)	

Secondary service area

54456 (Neillsville)	54642 (Melrose)
54666 (Warrens)	54616 (Blair)
54466 (Pittsville)	54659 (Taylor)
54746 (Humbird)	



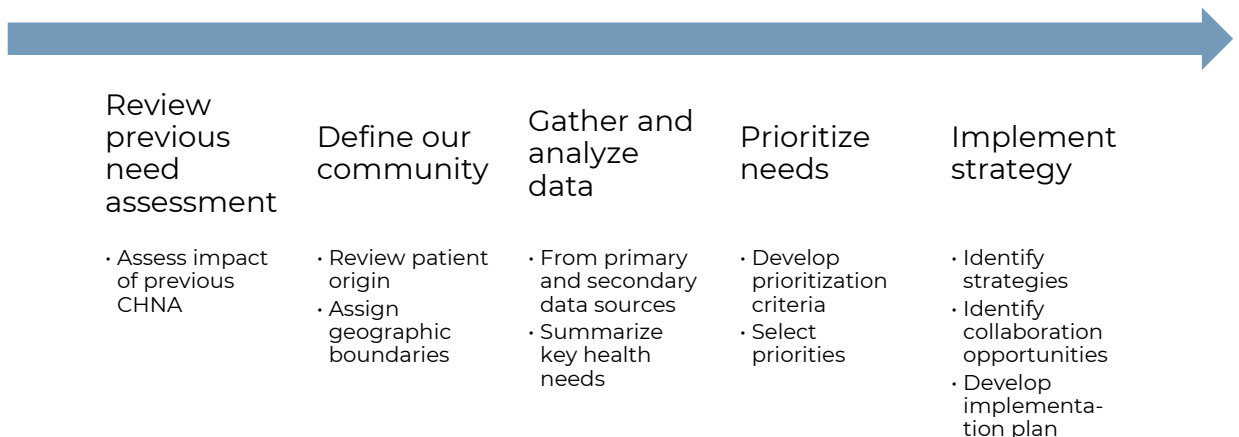
In 2024, our hospital and clinics served approximately:



Methodology

Our Process

Every three years, BRH conducts a community health needs assessment (“CHNA”) to identify unmet health needs in the primary service area based on population trends, health indicators, socio-economic factors, and leading causes of death. BRH engaged Wipfli, an independent audit, tax, and advisory firm, to facilitate development of the CHNA. Wipfli utilized the following process to analyze the health needs of the community and develop the priorities of the needs assessment:



This process was overseen by BRH’s leadership team based on their knowledge of and role within the community, as well as the relevant skills and qualifications to execute the steps of the CHNA process.

The process used to complete this community health needs assessment is in full compliance with section 501(r)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This needs assessment was approved by the BRH Board of Directors on November 24th, 2025.

Data Collection

Information was collected from multiple sources to identify unmet health and health-related needs within the community. Information was summarized into key themes, which served as the basis of the community's unmet health and health-related needs.

PRIMARY DATA

Primary data represents information that was collected first-hand from stakeholders within BRH's community. This data was collected to validate secondary data findings as they pertain to the service area, identify issues that were not represented in the secondary data, and understand what specific subgroups of the community may face additional challenges or disparities.

Interviews were conducted from April 2025 – May 2025 with people who represent the broad interests, experiences, and needs of the community, particularly persons who represent the medically underserved and vulnerable populations. A complete list of the interview participants can be found in the Acknowledgments.

The interviews were designed to solicit feedback from community members pertaining to the following topics:

- ▶ Significant health care issues or needs
- ▶ Social, behavioral, and environmental factors that contribute to health needs
- ▶ Barriers to care within the community
- ▶ Vulnerable populations who experience disparities
- ▶ Suggestions or ideas to address the community's needs

- ▶ Potential resources/ infrastructure to support health, social, behavioral, or environmental needs
- ▶ Areas for collaboration to address health needs

SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data was collected from statistical data sources available from local, regional, state, and national organizations. The secondary data provides a profile of the demographic, social, economic, and health-related characteristics of the community.

Sources of secondary data that were collected include:

- ▶ ESRI Business Information Solutions
- ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- ▶ American Community Survey
- ▶ U.S. Census
- ▶ County Health Rankings
- ▶ Healthiest Communities
- ▶ Medicare.gov
- ▶ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- ▶ Health Resources and Services Administration
- ▶ Wisconsin State Department of Health Services
- ▶ Great Rivers 2-1-1

Prioritization of Community Needs

Once the primary and secondary data were gathered, the information was collectively analyzed to identify key themes that represented the unmet health and health-related needs within the community. The BRH leadership team and Board of Directors collectively evaluated the unmet health needs and supporting data to determine which needs would be prioritized to be addressed by BRH over the next three years. The following criteria were utilized to define unmet needs and determine areas of focus:

Scope

- How many individuals are touched by this issue?

Significance

- How significantly does the issue impact those touched by it?

Impact

- How much of an impact can BRH have on addressing this issue?

Limitations

BRH, in collaboration with Wipfli, has engaged in an extensive process to develop a CHNA that is rooted in the most detailed information available at the time of the writing of this report. However, BRH recognizes that the responses reflected in the interviews represent the opinions of the respondents and may not reflect the actual needs of the community. While every effort was made to recruit a set of holistic and representative perspectives, this needs assessment is limited as the perspectives and opinions of these participants may not be fully representative of those in the service area.

Additionally, county-level data is featured in this report when more local data pertaining to the service area was not available. The extent to which local needs vary from Jackson County, Wisconsin, or state and national trends cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty.

BRH's emphasis on recruiting a set of broad perspectives for stakeholders and using local or regional data when available to determine the demographic, social, economic, and health-related needs of the community demonstrates our commitment to understanding and meeting the needs of our service area.

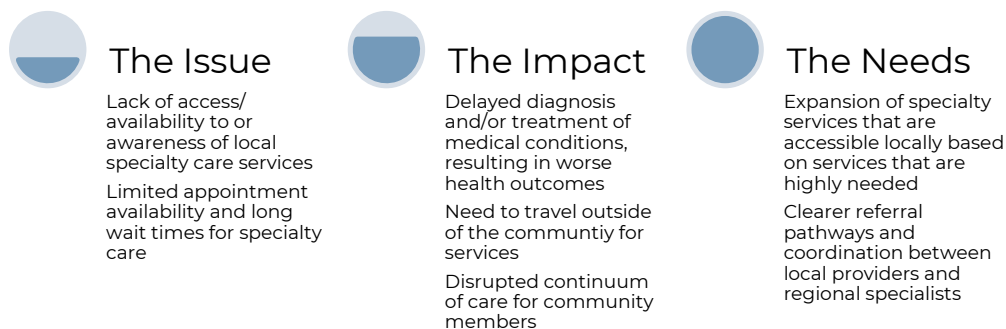
Community Health Priorities

The 2025 community health priorities, in no particular order, are:



Additional context regarding the selection of these health needs as priorities for BRH is provided below:

Access to Specialty Care



Access to specialty care is a major concern for the community, with about 80% of stakeholders interviewed reporting it as a top need. Residents often have to travel to other cities like Eau Claire, La Crosse, Rochester, or Tomah for services such as cardiology, oncology, dialysis, rheumatology, dermatology, neurology, and orthopedics. This travel is especially challenging for elderly and low-income individuals who may not have access to reliable transportation. Long wait times and limited appointment slots for visiting specialists lead to delayed diagnoses and treatments, which can worsen health outcomes over time. In addition, lack of local access to services results in patients establishing healthcare relationships outside the community, reducing the utilization of healthcare services locally and disrupting the continuum of care for patients. An analysis of the supply and demand of key specialty services shows notable provider shortages in several specialties, reinforcing the need for expanded specialty services locally.

Healthcare Access and Affordability



The Issue

Escalating cost of living and poverty rates within Jackson County
Lack of knowledge or support to navigate insurance options and lack of affordable insurance options
Limited public transportation options



The Impact

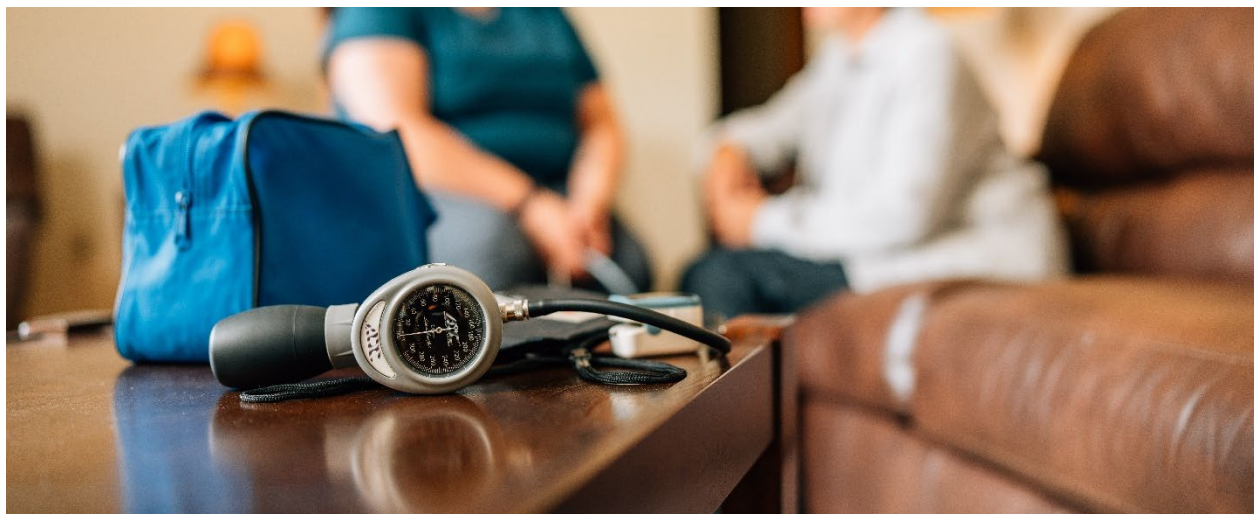
Avoidance of healthcare services due to unknown costs or lack of transportation, resulting in worse health outcomes
Reliance on the emergency department for non-emergent issues



The Needs

Resources to connect residents with financial assistance program and insurance options.
A county-wide, rural resident-inclusive transportation solution

While population-based metrics indicate that access to primary care services is better in Jackson County relative to state and national benchmarks, factors outside of BRH's control may be impacting residents' ability to access care. In particular, cost of care and transportation are two of the biggest barriers to accessing healthcare in the community. About 90% of stakeholders interviewed said cost is a leading issue, with many residents delaying or avoiding treatment because of concern over the high cost of care, the lack of insurance, or struggles with paying the high cost of deductibles under many insurance plans. While Jackson County is one of the poorest regions in Wisconsin, middle-class families also often fall through the cracks. These families may have higher household incomes that impede the ability to qualify for assistance, but may also have unaffordable health insurance plans whose deductibles and premiums render healthcare unaffordable. There is also a lack of community awareness surrounding financial assistance programs that are available to help make healthcare more affordable for community members. Transportation is another major barrier, especially for rural, elderly, and low-income residents. Public transit is nearly non-existent beyond downtown Black River Falls: options can be costly, require advance scheduling, or are not available 24/7. Some residents call emergency services for non-emergency medical transportation, which strains resources.



Mental Health and Substance Abuse



The Issue

Limited access to behavioral health providers and treatment options across the continuum of care
Widespread use of alcohol, methamphetamine, opioids, and THC
Stigma around seeking care/treatment



The Impact

High prevalence of mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and suicidality
Cyclical drug use and inability to break the cycle
Strain on emergency and healthcare systems



The Needs

More licensed therapists, AODA counselors, and psychiatrists to alleviate access barriers
Improved coordination to manage crisis cases and follow-up care
Detox, addiction medicine, safe sobering spaces, and withdrawal management services offered locally
Outreach, education, and prevention efforts

Mental health and substance abuse are two of the most pressing health needs, cited by 90% of stakeholders interviewed. Stakeholders report that there is a severe shortage of local mental health professionals, with long wait times (up to 6–9 months) for outpatient services and few options locally for inpatient psychiatric care. Adolescents are especially impacted, with rising rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide reported amongst Jackson County’s youth. Poor mental health is closely linked to substance abuse, family instability, homelessness, and unemployment. Substance use—including alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamine, opioids, and THC—is widespread, especially among youth and young adults. A lack of local detox and addiction treatment programs often requires community members to leave the community to access these services, which is often not possible due to transportation and cost barriers. Data shows opioid deaths in Jackson County have more than doubled since 2022 and are much higher than the state average. Excessive drinking rates are also higher than the national average. The community needs more licensed therapists, addiction counselors, and better coordination between healthcare, public health, law enforcement, and social services to manage crisis cases and follow-up care.

Other Identified Needs

The following health needs were also identified throughout the community health need assessment process. BRH will continue to engage in and support community partnerships with other organizations within the community with expertise in these areas.

SENIOR CARE AND DEMENTIA SERVICES

Senior care and dementia services are an increasingly important need as BRH's community continues to age. Limited access to senior housing and wrap-around services, as well as caregiver burnout, were issues frequently mentioned by stakeholders. While organizations such as InterFaith Volunteer Caregivers offer some relief through services like grocery delivery and transportation, these resources are not enough to meet the growing need. BRH remains committed to supporting seniors across its service area and will continue to evaluate social determinants of health for senior patients and connect seniors to wrap-around services within the community to support healthy and independent living. As the service area continues to age, BRH will also explore expanding services to support aging of the population base through the lens of the services it currently offers, while continuing to support partnerships with other community organizations to support the delivery of wrap-around services to seniors.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Stakeholders raised concerns about a growing lack of affordable housing and rising homelessness, affecting families and youth in particular. Hidden homelessness — such as couch surfing — is increasingly common, highlighting the urgent need for safe and stable housing solutions. Substandard living conditions and a surge of uninhabitable homes following the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened the issue.

CHILDCARE

Stakeholders described the Black River Falls area as a “childcare desert,” with limited access to affordable, quality childcare that is significantly impacting workforce participation. While new childcare center initiatives show some progress, the shortage has led to some children being placed in unsafe caregiving situations, raising concerns about abuse and neglect.

DENTAL AND ORAL HEALTH

Stakeholders described region as a “dental health desert,” citing a severe shortage of dental providers, long wait times for appointments — sometimes years — and limited access for individuals on programs such as Medicaid, as few providers accept such programs and cost and travel barriers make dental and oral care inaccessible for many low-income families. A lack of oral health literacy further contributes to poor preventive care and delayed treatment.

Addressing Priorities

Strategies to address the unmet health-related needs prioritized by BRH will be defined through a community health improvement plan (“CHIP”), which is a specific plan that outlines strategies or actions that can be taken to improve priority areas and track progress over time. The CHIP defines specific actions by taking the following into account:

Strategic Objectives

- What overarching goals is BRH seeking to achieve to address these issues?

Impact

- What impact will achieving these goals have on community health?

Tactics

- What specific strategies or tactics will BRH explore to achieve its goals?

Resources

- What resources can BRH commit to address these issues?

Partnerships

- What community organizations can BRH collaborate with to improve health outcomes?

While quantitative data collected during CHNA provides valuable insights into population-level trends, it does not always align with the lived experiences of our rural community. These discrepancies may stem from limited data collection in sparsely populated areas, underreporting, or unique local factors—such as geographic isolation, access barriers, or cultural norms—that are not captured through standard metrics. BRH recognizes the need to further investigate and understand the nuances within the persistent disparities in health outcomes that members of our community experience. Seeking to understand the gaps between the metrics utilized to define community health and the lived experience of our community is critical to ensure that health improvement strategies are responsive to the realities faced by those most affected.

References and Acknowledgments

Primary Data Sources

This report was made possible through the contribution of the following organizations, who participated in the community input process of this needs assessment. We thank each of these organizations for their willingness to volunteer their time to participate in this process and represent the needs of our community:

- ▶ BRH
- ▶ Black River Falls School District
- ▶ Black River Falls City Government
- ▶ Black River Falls Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Black River Falls Fire and Rescue
- ▶ Jackson County Department of Health and Human Services
- ▶ Jackson County Sheriff's Department
- ▶ Jackson County Government
- ▶ Jackson County Public Health
- ▶ Ho-Chunk Nation
- ▶ Lincoln School District
- ▶ Melrose-Mindoro School District
- ▶ Lunda Community Center
- ▶ Co-op Credit Union
- ▶ InterFaith Caregivers

Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data was collected from the following sources:

- ▶ ESRI Business Information Solutions
- ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- ▶ American Community Survey
- ▶ U.S. Census
- ▶ County Health Rankings
- ▶ Healthiest Communities
- ▶ Medicare.gov
- ▶ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- ▶ Health Resources and Services Administration
- ▶ Wisconsin State Department of Health Services
- ▶ Great Rivers 2-1-1

Consulting Expertise

Wipfli, a nationally certified audit, tax, and advisory firm, assisted BRH with all stages of this assessment, including collection and analysis of primary and secondary data, identification of community health needs, facilitation of the prioritization process, and compilation of the needs assessment report.

Evaluation of Previous Community Health Improvement Plan (2023 - 2025)

Previous CHNA Priorities

BRH conducts a CHNA every three years as part of our ongoing efforts to address our community's most significant health needs. Our previous CHNA identified the following prioritization areas:

- ▶ Mental health suicide and self-harm prevention
- ▶ Mental health access
- ▶ Healthcare access, availability, and affordability

Impact Evaluation

The following summarizes BRH's effort in carrying out the previous CHNA's improvement plan for the identified priorities:

Mental health suicide and self-harm prevention

- Continued to provide on-demand emergent behavioral health services through telehealth in the emergency department, including necessary referrals to inpatient psychiatric care when required.
- Enhanced the referral process for patients presenting with mental health crises in the emergency department to ensure appropriate follow-up with behavioral health providers and effective collaboration with primary care providers for comprehensive patient care.
- Ongoing participation in the Jackson County Crisis Collaboration Team to continue strengthening community efforts in improving crisis response and mental health support.
- Successfully hosted Mental Wellness Walk-A-Thons in partnership with local organizations in 2023 and 2024, aimed at promoting mental health support and showcasing local resources available to the community.
- Supported local community events through guest speakers, financial contributions, in-kind donations, and educational materials, all contributing to increased attendance and impact.
- Actively maintained and promoted the BRH website's mental health resources, including a guided mental health journal and comprehensive service information, to provide ongoing support and education.

Mental health access

- Expanded offerings to include both in-office telehealth rooms and off-site telehealth options, ensuring greater accessibility for patients.
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist has been integrated into the BRH behavioral health practice to provide comprehensive care.
- Optimized provider scheduling, increasing overall efficiency and access to behavioral health services for our patients.
- Collaborated with area school districts to assess the need for school-based mental health services. A comprehensive needs assessment was completed, and a preliminary plan was developed for both telehealth and onsite services. Implementation is targeted for 2025.
- Continued offering on-demand telehealth behavioral health support within the emergency department, including timely assessments and referrals for inpatient psychiatric care when needed.
- Enhanced promotion of the financial assistance program through targeted patient outreach and community communication efforts. Policy updates broadened eligibility criteria based on income, improving access to care. External agencies received training on the revised policy to improve community alignment and awareness.

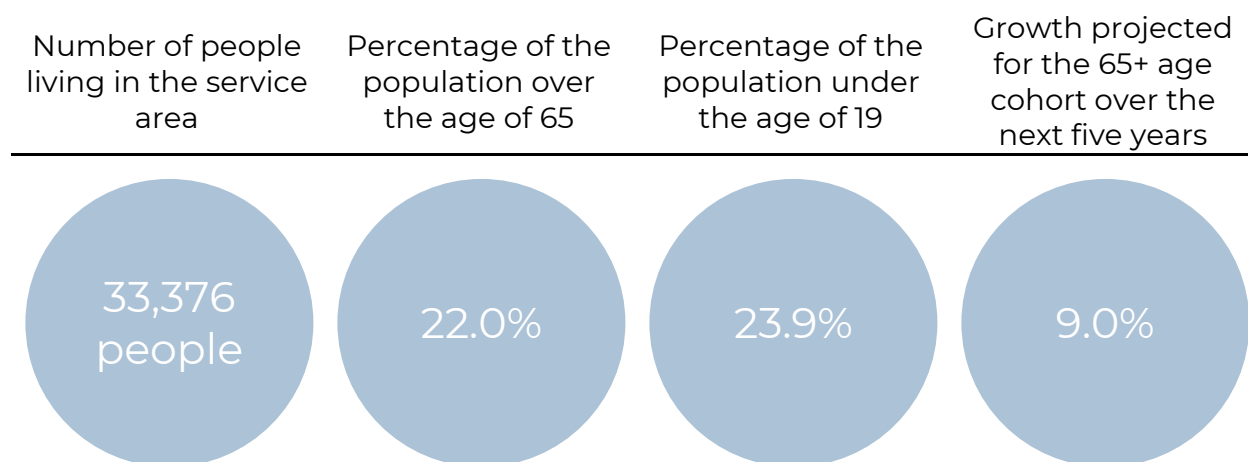
Healthcare access, affordability, and availability

- Maintained robust telehealth offerings to ensure access to specialty services, including acute mental health care. Plans are underway to expand telehealth capabilities to include tele-stroke and tele-ICU services, further enhancing access to critical and time-sensitive care.
- Refined engagement with the 340B Drug Pricing Program to maximize cost savings. Savings are reinvested to offset operational costs and support the expansion of essential healthcare services, improving overall access and affordability for patients.
- Successfully launched a collaborative electronic ICU model, established a local oncology service line, and continued ongoing development of the orthopedic service line, all in efforts to enhance local access to higher-acuity specialty service lines.
- Formalized the formation of Black River Health, a strategic collaboration between Black River Memorial Hospital and Krohn Clinic. This partnership is focused on delivering coordinated, comprehensive care across the continuum, improving access, and building responsive service lines tailored to local needs.

Community Profile

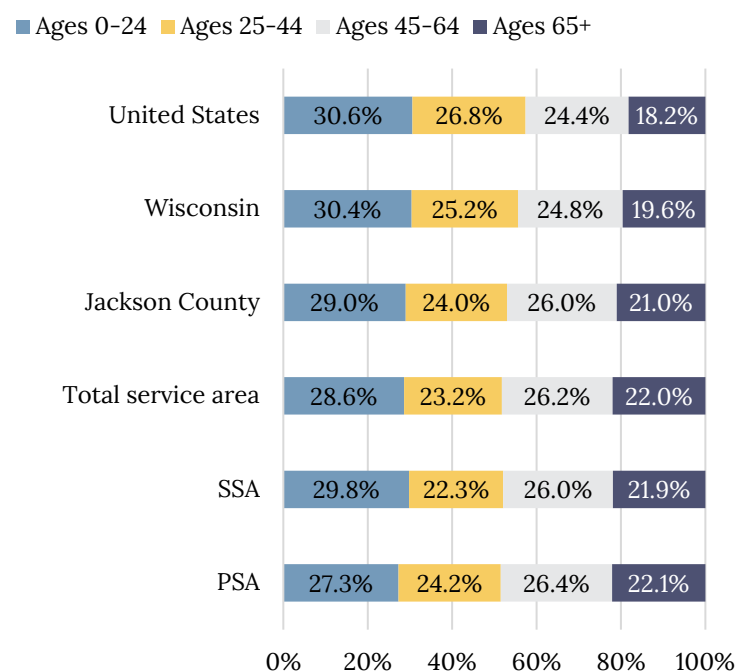
Demographic Indicators

COMMUNITY PROFILE AT-A-GLANCE



The estimated population of BRH's service area is 33,376 people, with population projections estimating that BRH's service area will remain relatively stagnant over the next five years. The fastest growing segment of BRH's service area is projected to be the 75 and older age cohort, which is projected to grow by 13.4% over the next five years. An aging population typically requires more resources to support the community due to a higher prevalence of chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Population distribution by major age cohort



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2024

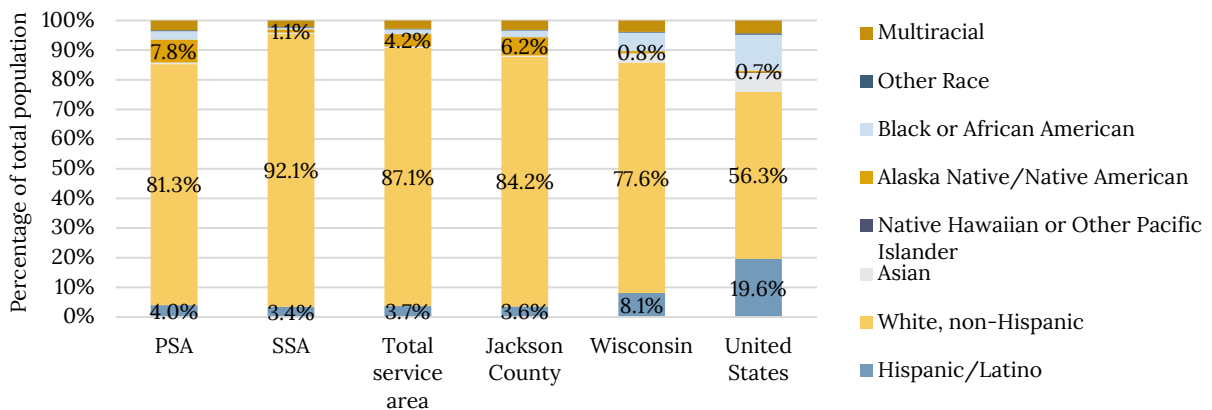
	2024 Population					2029 Population				
	PSA	SSA	Total service area	Jackson County	Wisconsin	PSA	SSA	Total service area	Jackson County	Wisconsin
Number of People										
Under 19 years old	3,544	4,448	7,992	5,139	1,405,481	3,313	4,209	7,522	4,885	1,344,513
20 - 24 years old	716	836	1,552	980	404,106	797	838	1,635	1,048	399,610
25 - 34 years old	1,799	1,914	3,713	2,427	740,354	1,806	1,909	3,715	2,435	745,485
35 - 44 years old	1,985	2,050	4,035	2,634	757,701	2,034	2,069	4,103	2,717	758,821
45 - 64 years old	4,116	4,623	8,739	5,477	1,473,517	3,868	4,320	8,188	5,160	1,419,172
65 - 74 years old	1,969	2,175	4,144	2,534	677,395	2,080	2,294	4,374	2,657	723,774
Over 75 years old	1,491	1,710	3,201	1,891	486,720	1,703	1,927	3,630	2,173	592,722
Total	15,620	17,756	33,376	21,082	5,945,274	15,601	17,566	33,167	21,075	5,984,097
% of Total Population										
Under 19 years old	22.7%	25.1%	23.9%	24.4%	23.6%	21.2%	24.0%	22.7%	23.2%	22.5%
20 - 24 years old	4.6%	4.7%	4.7%	4.6%	6.8%	5.1%	4.8%	4.9%	5.0%	6.7%
25 - 34 years old	11.5%	10.8%	11.1%	11.5%	12.5%	11.6%	10.9%	11.2%	11.6%	12.5%
35 - 44 years old	12.7%	11.5%	12.1%	12.5%	12.7%	13.0%	11.8%	12.4%	12.9%	12.7%
45 - 64 years old	26.4%	26.0%	26.2%	26.0%	24.8%	24.8%	24.6%	24.7%	24.5%	23.7%
65 - 74 years old	12.6%	12.2%	12.4%	12.0%	11.4%	13.3%	13.1%	13.2%	12.6%	12.1%
Over 75 years old	9.5%	9.7%	9.6%	9.0%	8.2%	11.0%	10.8%	10.9%	10.2%	9.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. Research has shown that racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience disparities that impact health outcomes. These disparities can be attributed to a range of factors, including differences in access to healthcare, educational and economic opportunities, exposure to environmental hazards, and experiences of discrimination and racism. BRH's service area is predominantly white, with a small percentage of the overall population consisting of the Native American population. The service area maintains a slightly less diverse racial distribution than Jackson County, although both of these areas are less diverse than the state of Wisconsin and nationally.

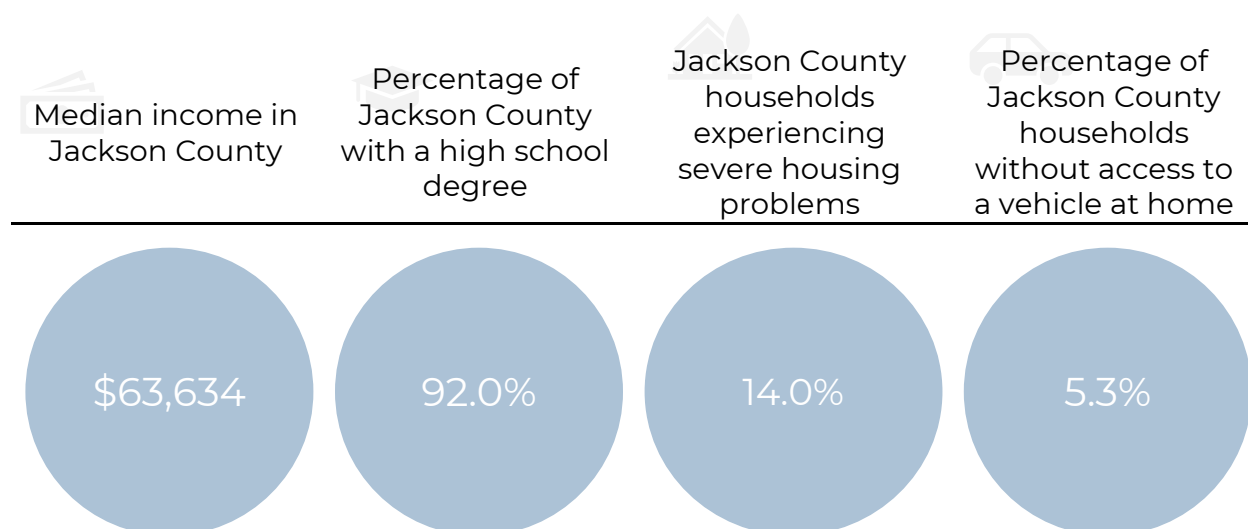
Population distribution by race/ethnicity category



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2024

Socioeconomic Indicators

COMMUNITY PROFILE AT-A-GLANCE



INCOME AND POVERTY

Research has consistently shown that individuals and families with lower incomes are more likely to experience a range of health problems. These individuals may also face greater challenges in accessing healthcare services, obtaining healthy food options, and living in safe and stable environments, all of which can negatively impact health outcomes. Thus, household income is an important metric that can influence a range of factors that contribute to individual and population health outcomes.

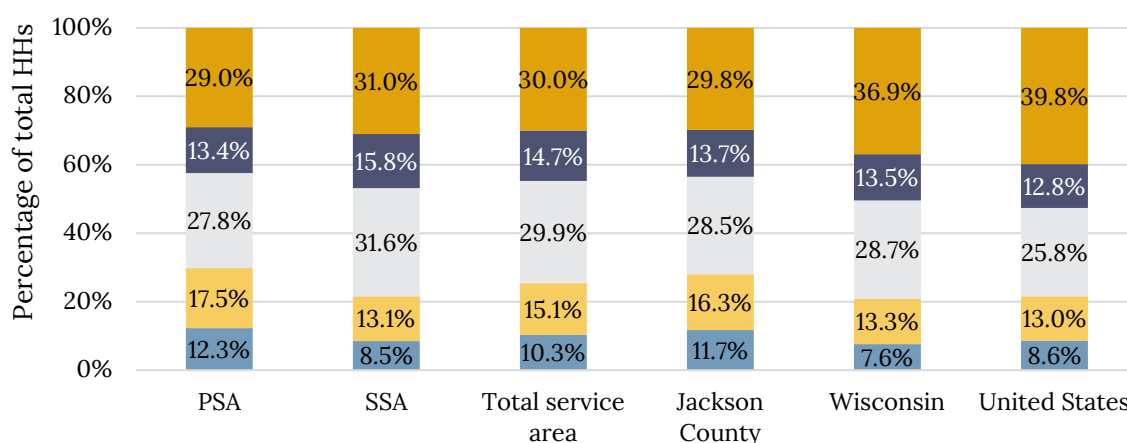
Income data was analyzed for the service area and Jackson County and compared to state and national benchmarks. The most recent data indicates that poverty levels in Jackson County are higher than the state of Wisconsin. Income data indicates that the median household (HH) income, average HH income, and per capita income for Jackson County are markedly lower than the state, with a higher percentage of households falling in the under \$75,000 cohort. Jackson County also exhibits higher rates of income inequality compared to state benchmarks, indicating greater disparities between poor and wealthy constituents.

	Jackson County	Wisconsin
2024		
Median HH Income	\$64,300	\$71,100
Average HH Income	\$86,100	\$101,100
Per Capita Income	\$33,500	\$42,300
2029		
Median HH Income	\$72,600	\$85,900
Average HH Income	\$96,300	\$116,100
Per Capita Income	\$37,700	\$49,300

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions

Household income by income cohort

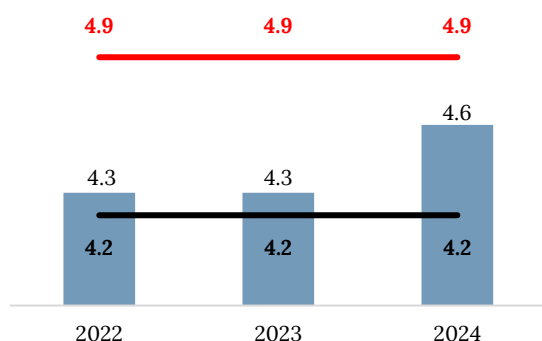
■ Under \$15,000 ■ \$15,000 - \$34,999 ■ \$35,000 - \$74,999 ■ \$75,000 - \$99,999 ■ \$100,000 and Greater



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2024

Income inequality ratio

■ Jackson County ■ Wisconsin
— United States

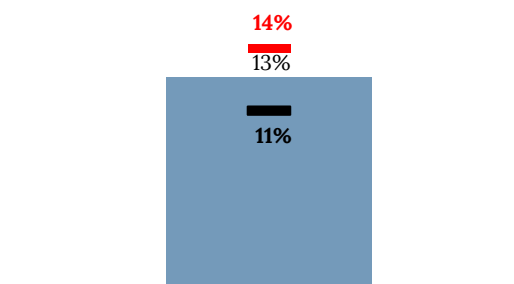


Source: County Health Rankings

Metric: Ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to income at the 20th percentile.

Poverty rate

■ Jackson County ■ Wisconsin
— United States

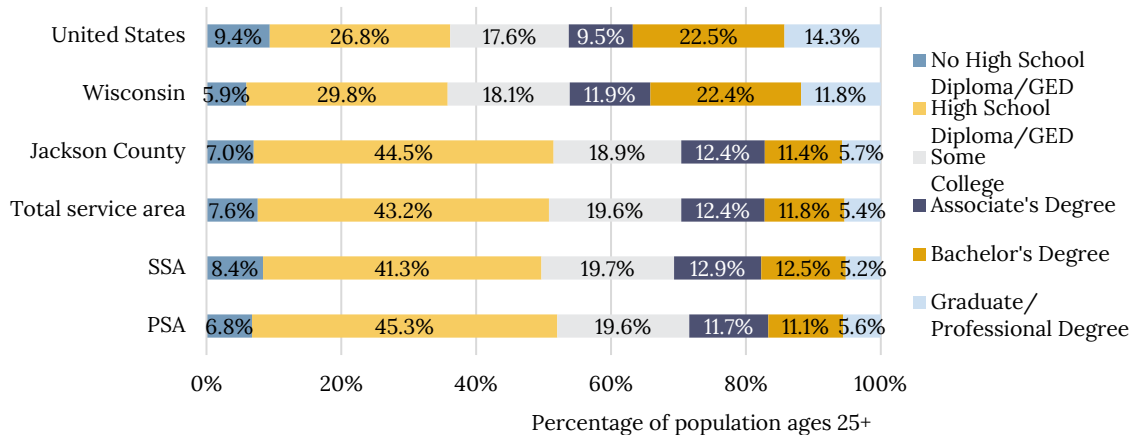


Source: Healthiest Communities, 2022

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is another socioeconomic variable that plays a significant role in community health given its association with household income and poverty levels. Educational attainment data indicates that BRH's service area population and Jackson County's population generally attains lower educational levels compared to state and national benchmarks, with approximately 7.6% of the total service area population lacking a high school diploma/GED and only about 29.6% of the population earning a degree of higher education (Associate's or higher).

Educational attainment by degree type



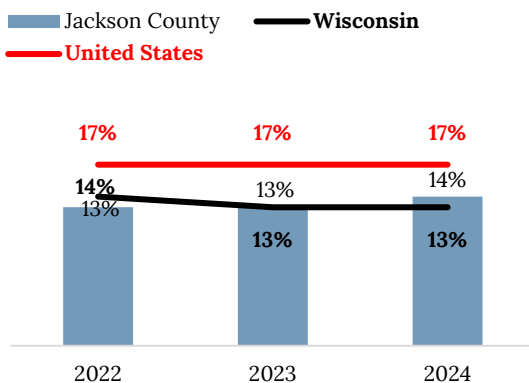
Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2024

AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Housing is an important socioeconomic determinant of community health. Access to affordable housing increases the availability of financial resources to pay for other things, such as healthcare, transportation, and food.

Housing in Jackson County is generally more affordable relative to state benchmarks: the average home value for a home in Jackson County is approximately \$294,119, while the average home value for a home in the state of Wisconsin is \$346,449. However, housing costs are still a significant burden on the 12.0% of households in Jackson County that spend 50.0% or more of their income on housing.

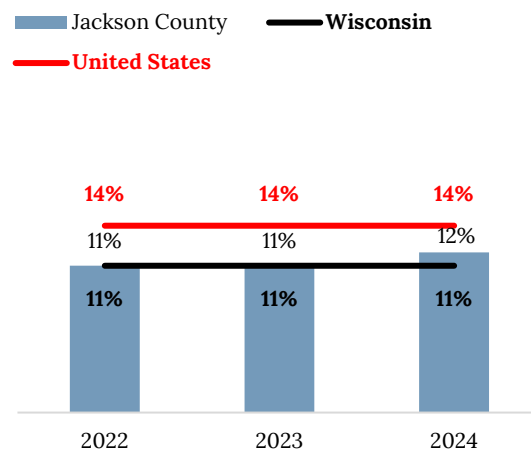
Percent of households experiencing severe housing problems



Source: County Health Rankings

Metric: Percentage of households with at least 1 of 4 housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities.

Housing cost burden



Source: County Health Rankings

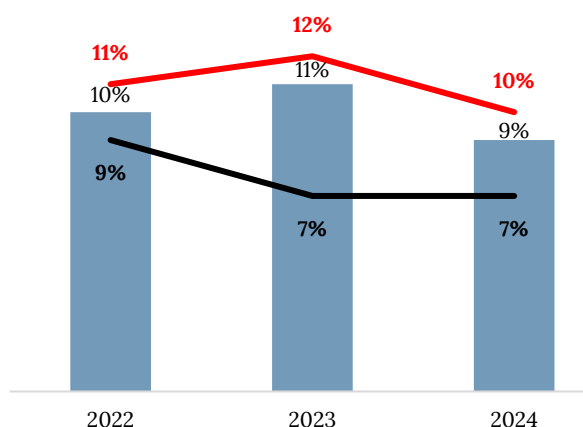
Metric: Percentage of households that spend 50% or more of their household income on housing.

FOOD SECURITY

Access to healthy food options and consuming healthy foods are essential components of a healthy lifestyle, with greater access associated with more positive health outcomes. In Jackson County, approximately 9.0% of the population base lacks adequate access to food, which is slightly higher than state benchmarks. However, many people who reside in rural regions lack access to or the means to purchase and consume healthy food options, particularly those who are in poverty. In Jackson County, 12.0% of the population are both low-income and also do not live close to a grocery store, which lead to health problems like obesity or being underweight, diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases.

Food insecurity rate

■ Jackson County — Wisconsin — United States

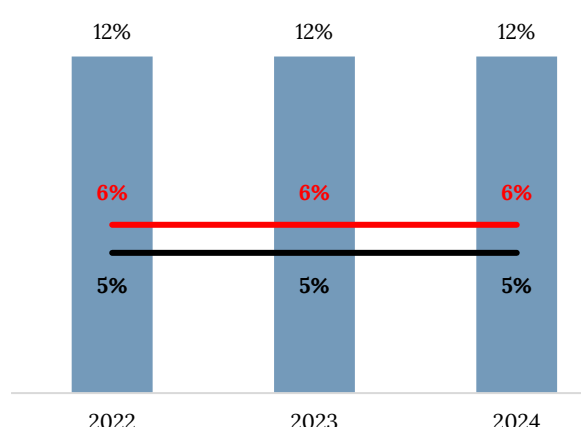


Source: County Health Rankings

Metric: Percentage of population who lack adequate access to food.

Limited access to healthy foods

■ Jackson County — Wisconsin — United States



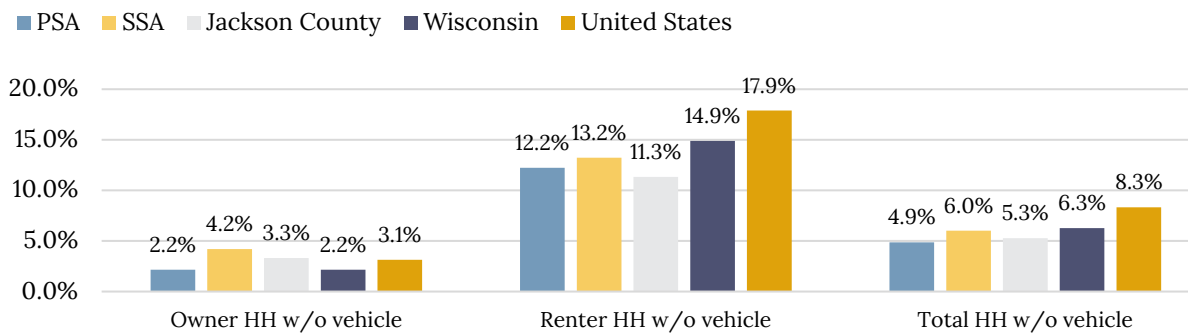
Source: County Health Rankings

Metric: Percentage of population who are low-income and do not live close to a grocery store.

TRANSPORTATION

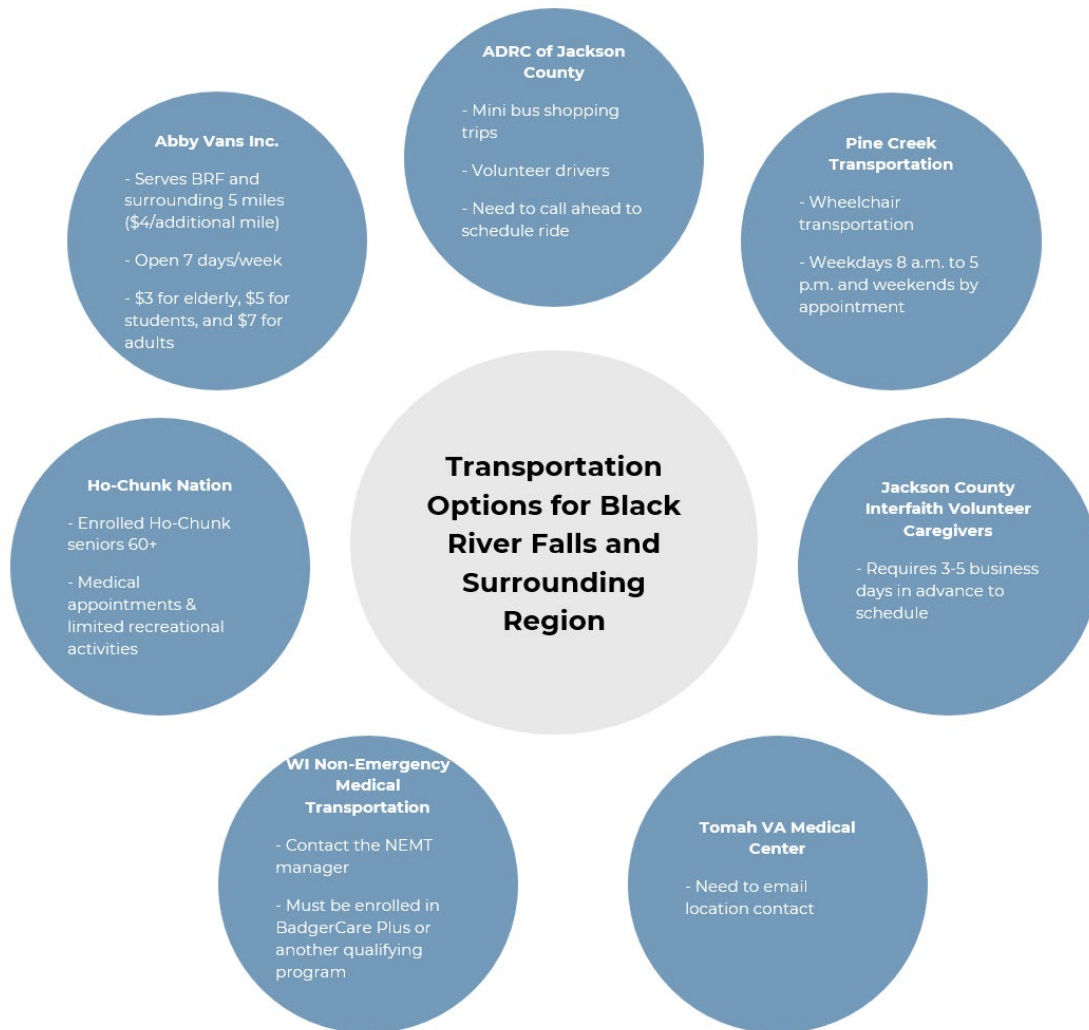
Transportation is reported by stakeholders interviewed as a major barrier to accessing healthcare. Without reliable access to transportation, community members may experience barriers in regularly accessing or utilizing healthcare services, be limited in the availability of healthy food options, or may miss work or school, which impacts income and education outcomes. Approximately 4.9% of HHs within BRH's PSA do not have access to a vehicle, which is a lower percentage of the population compared to county, state, and national benchmarks. Households without access to a vehicle tend to be subject to disproportionate burdens on health outcomes.

Percent of households with no vehicle



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2024

For households that lack access to a vehicle, there are several private, non-profit, and governmental transportation options in Black River Falls and the surrounding region. The options vary in costs, availability of services, requirements or qualifications of eligibility for services, and geographic range of scope.



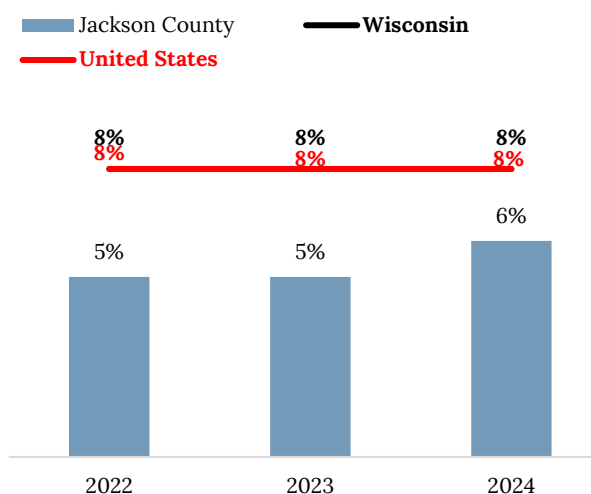
Source: Abby Vans Inc., ADRC of Jackson County, Pine Creek Transportation Services, Interfaith Volunteers, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Health and Disease Indicators

BIRTH OUTCOMES

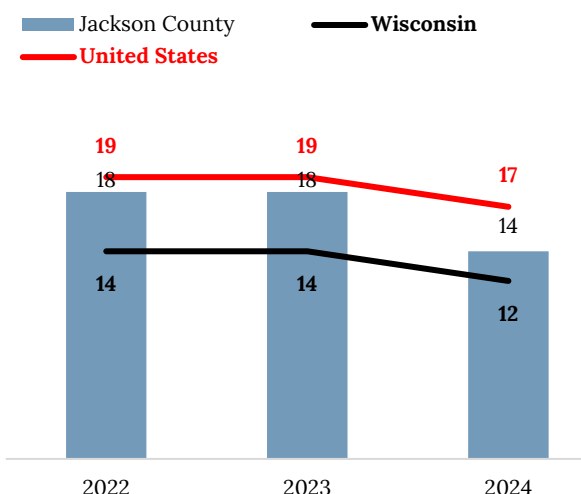
Newborn birthweights are a strong predictor of newborn health and survival. Rates of low birthweight in a community are often associated with poor maternal health outcomes. Low birthweights can lead to higher rates of fetal mortality, stunted growth, impaired cognitive developments, and chronic disease in later life. Low birthweight percentages in Jackson County increased slightly since 2022 to 6.0% of births, but have historically not exceeded state and national benchmarks. Similarly, the rate of teen births has declined since 2022, but remains slightly higher than state benchmarks.

Percent of total births with low birthweight



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Percentage of live births with low birthweight (< 2,500 grams).

Number of teen births per 1,000 females



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Number of births per 1,000 female population ages 15-19.

TOP CAUSES OF MORTALITY

Knowing a community's top causes of mortality is essential in assessing health needs because it helps identify the most significant health issues affecting the community, which can guide health promotion efforts and prioritize public health initiatives.

The leading causes of death in Jackson County have historically been acute myocardial infarction (i.e. heart attack), several forms of chronic ischemic heart disease, and accidental poisoning and exposure to noxious substances.

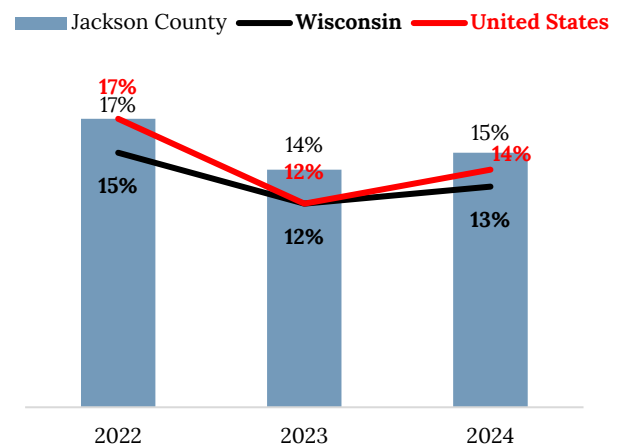
Rank	2021		2022		2023	
	Cause of Death	Rate	Cause of Death	Rate	Cause of Death	Rate
1	All Other Diseases	106.8	All Other Diseases	123.6	All Other Diseases	106.0
2	Acute Myocardial Infarction	53.9	All Other Forms of Chronic Ischemic Heart Disease	71.3	Accidental Poisoning and Exposure to Noxious Substances	71.2
3	Other Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	53.8	Accidental Poisoning and Exposure to Noxious Substances	46.2	All Other Forms of Chronic Ischemic Heart Disease	54.0
4	All Other Forms of Chronic Ischemic Heart Disease	53.4	Acute Myocardial Infarction	39.6	Acute Myocardial Infarction	52.1
5	Other and Unspecified Infections and Parasitic Diseases and Their Sequelae	52.3	All Other Forms of Heart Disease	37.5	Diabetes Mellitus	43.4

Source: Wisconsin State Department of Health Services
Metric: Age-adjusted mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 population).

POPULATION HEALTH AND CHRONIC DISEASE

Physical health can be impacted by a multitude of factors including age, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic indicators, physical activity, and chronic disease. Data from County Health Rankings indicates that adults in Jackson County have been feeling slightly better about their self-reported health status since 2022. The percentage of adults that report poor or fair health in Jackson County is on par with national benchmarks, yet slightly higher than state benchmarks.

Percent of adults reporting poor or fair health

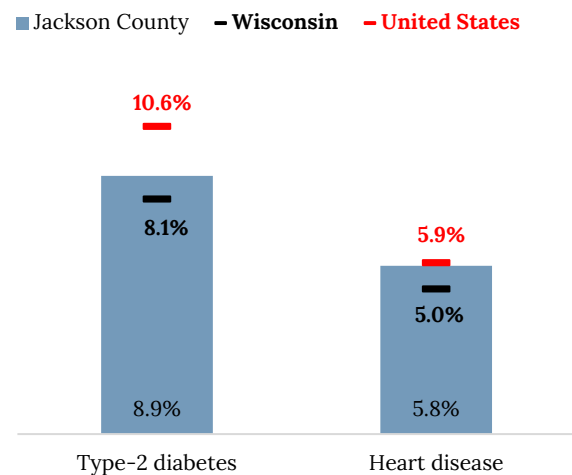


Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Percentage of adults reporting fair or poor health (age-adjusted).

Chronic disease can also have a profound impact on communities and physical health outcomes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, chronic disease is one of the most preventable leading causes of death in the USA, typically resulting from a combination of genetic, lifestyle, and environmental factors. Over time, exposure to risk factors increases the likelihood of developing chronic disease, which disproportionately impacts the elderly.

Chronic diseases, such as type-2 diabetes and heart disease, affect a higher percentage of Jackson County's population relative to the entire state's population. Approximately 8.9% of Jackson County's population is diagnosed with type-2 diabetes and 5.8% of the population is diagnosed with heart disease.

Percent of adults with diagnosed chronic disease

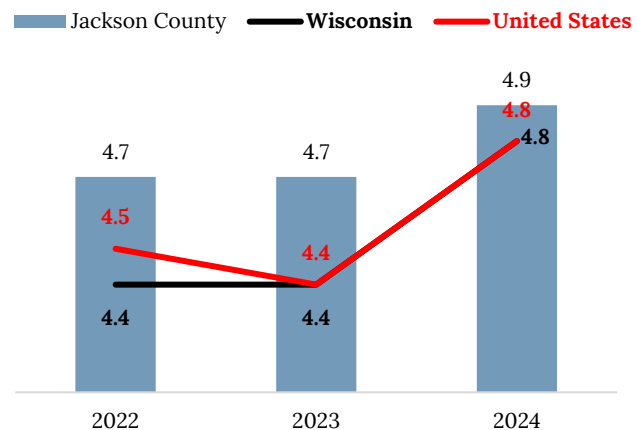


Source: Healthiest Communities, 2022
Metric: Percentage of adults who are diagnosed with type-2 diabetes or heart disease.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

The rising prevalence of mental health and substance abuse issues is of growing concern in rural communities across the country, who often disproportionately lack access to mental health services such as therapy, counseling, substance use treatment, and medication management. Mental health can have far-reaching effects on individuals, families, and communities, impacting physical health, social relationships, productivity, and community safety. Communities that lack access to mental health services often exhibit poorer mental health outcomes and higher rates of associated behaviors, such as alcohol or drug use and suicide.

Average number of mentally unhealthy days reported in the past month

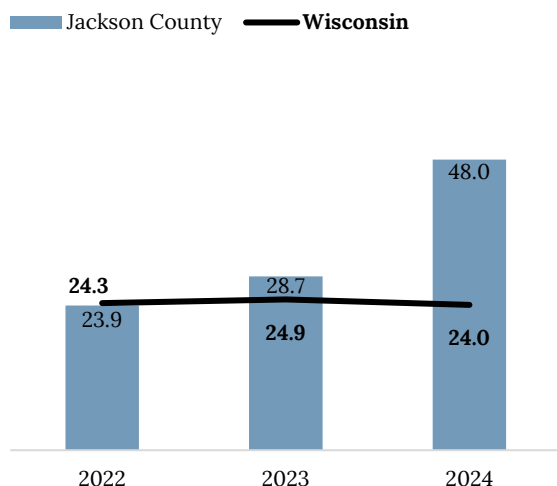


Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Average number of mentally unhealthy days reported by adults in the past month

Mental health outcomes in Jackson County, the state of Wisconsin, and across the nation have generally worsened since 2022, with the average adult in Jackson County experiencing about 4.9 mentally unhealthy days in a month-long period. According to County Health Rankings, the suicide rate reported for 2024 in Jackson County (21 deaths

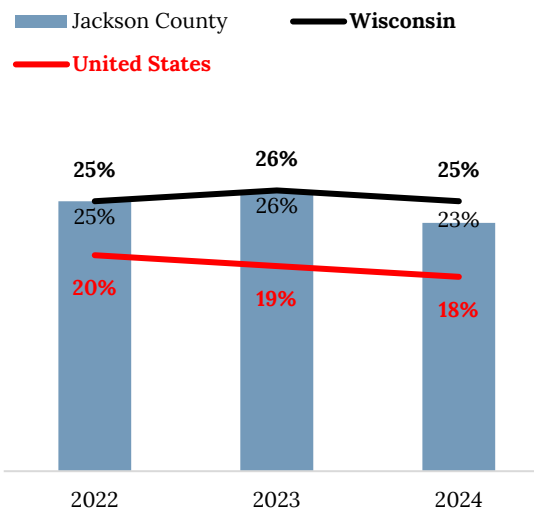
per 100,000 population) were notably higher than state (15 deaths per 100,000 population) and national (14 deaths per 100,000 population) benchmarks. Worsening mental health outcomes have also been observed alongside an increase in opioid deaths within Jackson County since 2022. Additionally, while rates of binge drinking amongst adults in the county have slightly declined, rates overall remain elevated compared to national benchmarks.

Number of opioid deaths per 100,000 population



Source: Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Metric: Rate of opioid deaths per 100,000 population.

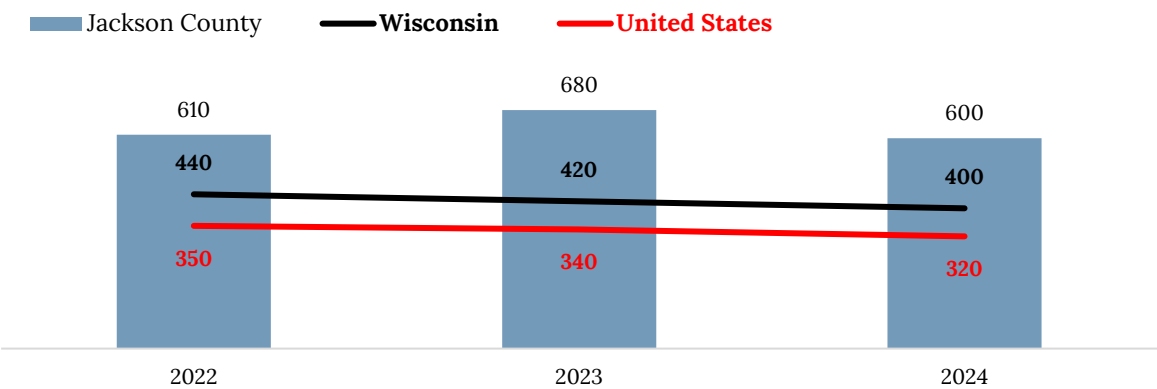
Percent of adults who report binge or heavy drinking



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Percentage of adults reporting binge drinking or heavy drinking (age-adjusted).

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, Jackson County is designated as a low-income population health professional shortage area (“HPSA”) for mental health care, which indicates that there is a shortage of mental health providers within the county to meet the needs of the low-income population base. The ratio of people per mental health providers in Jackson County is much greater than state and national benchmarks – twice the national benchmark in 2023 – indicative of a provider shortage within this region. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (“SAMHSA”), there are two substance use and mental health facilities within Jackson County, Wisconsin. These facilities, which are located Black River Falls, offer outpatient services and accept Medicaid insurance. According to Medicare.gov, there are two psychiatrists within a 25-mile radius of Black River Falls, Wisconsin: one in Neillsville and one in Whitehall, and only two clinical psychologists / therapists: one in Black River Falls and one in Neillsville. This indicates that mental health providers are relatively inaccessible for people in the service area.

Number of people per mental health provider



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Ratio of population to mental health providers.

Preventative Health and Wellness Indicators

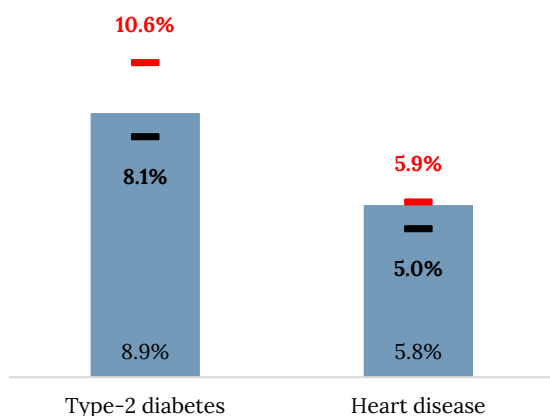
PREVENTIVE HEALTH

Preventive health behaviors, such as getting annual checkups and recommended vaccinations and preventive health screenings, play an important role in maintaining and strengthening community health by promoting the early detection and prevention of diseases, reducing unnecessary healthcare utilization and costs, promoting healthy behaviors, and improving population health.

Overall, preventive health behaviors amongst adults who live in Jackson County generally fall below state benchmarks and above national benchmarks. According to the 2022 Healthiest Communities report, approximately 69.8% of Jackson County adults report to have had a recent preventive care visit, which is slightly lower than state and national benchmarks of 71.9% and 72.3%, respectively. The ratio of population to primary care physicians in Jackson County is less than both state and national benchmarks, which indicates overall better access to physicians in the county relative to state and national benchmarks.

Percent of adults that engage in routine preventive care

■ Jackson County — Wisconsin — United States

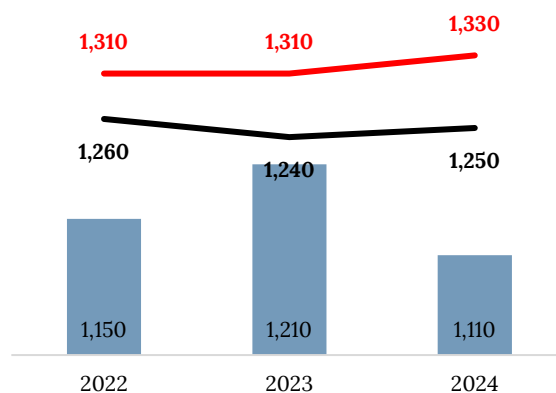


Source: County Health Rankings, 2024

Metric: Mammography screening denotes percentage of female Medicare enrollees ages 65-74 that received an annual mammography screening. Flu vaccination rate denotes percentage of fee-for-service (FFS) Medicare enrollees that had an annual flu vaccination.

Number of people per primary care physician

■ Jackson County — Wisconsin — United States



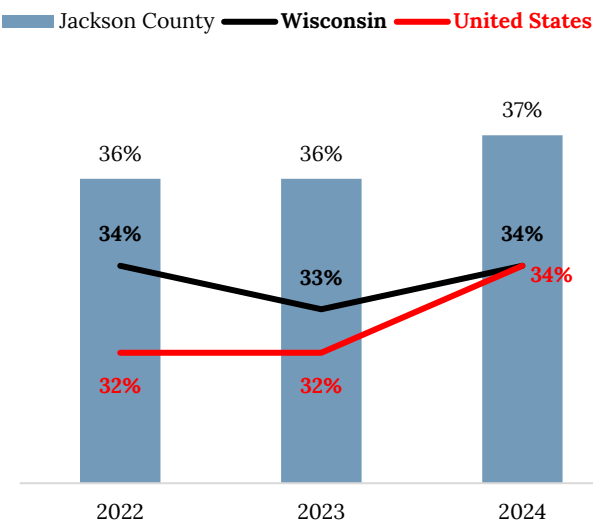
Source: County Health Rankings

Metric: Ratio of population to primary care physicians.

ADULT OBESITY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

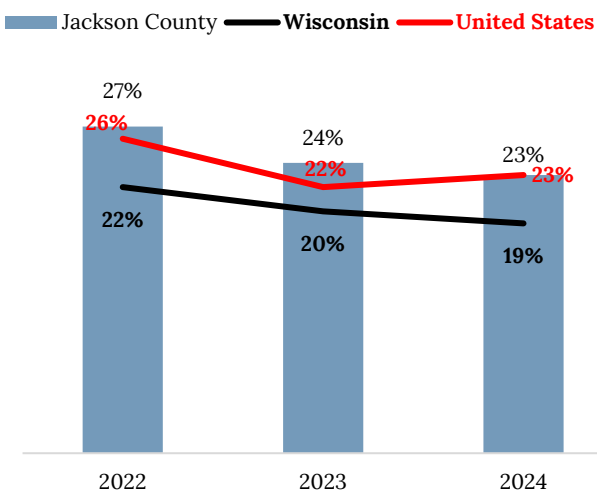
Many chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer are largely preventable through lifestyle changes and early detection. By promoting healthy habits, such as regular exercise, healthy eating and screenings for early detection of diseases, communities can reduce the incidence and burden of these chronic diseases in their populations. When compared to Wisconsin, adults in Jackson County generally exhibit higher rates of physical inactivity and obesity. However, rates of physical inactivity amongst adults in Jackson County have declined since 2022, which is a positive trend that indicates changing health-promoting behaviors.

Adult obesity rate



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Percentage of the adult population (age 20 and older) that reports a body mass index ("BMI") greater than or equal to 30 kg/m2.

Percent of adults who are physically inactive



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Percentage of adults age 20 and over reporting no leisure-time physical activity.

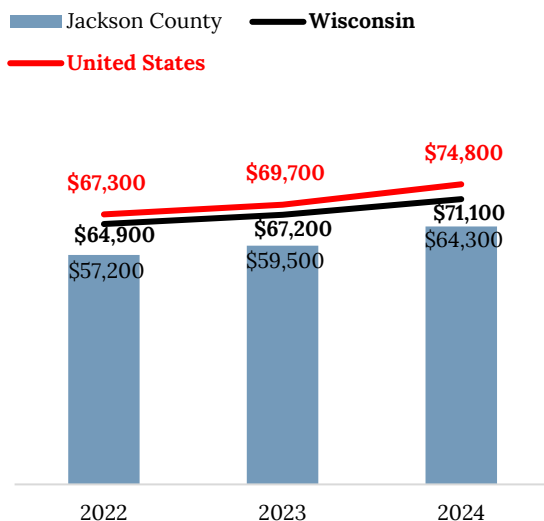
Accessibility of Care Indicators

INSURANCE AND COST OF CARE

The cost of healthcare can be a major barrier that patients experience when trying to access healthcare services. Delaying medical care due to the cost of care can have numerous repercussions such as worsening medical conditions, chronic health problems, reduced quality of life, and increased healthcare costs in the long run. Data reflects that the socioeconomic environment of Jackson County is less affluent compared to state and national benchmarks. The poverty rate in Jackson County (13%) is higher than the state (11%), and residents within the county earn a lower median household income compared to residents statewide and nationally. Communities with lower socioeconomic statuses tend to experience challenges in affording some or all basic needs for well-being such as nutrition, housing, and healthcare.

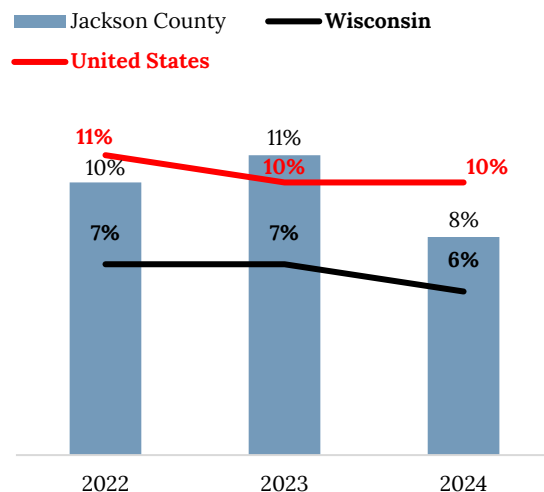
Individuals without health insurance often forego care due to high costs, which can lead to a higher prevalence of chronic disease and poorer health outcomes. The uninsured rate in Jackson County has ranged between 8.0% - 11.0% since 2022, which is slightly higher than state benchmarks. Rates of uninsured children in Jackson County (9%) were approximately double the state (4%) and national (5%) rates in 2023.

Median household income



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: The income where half of households in a county earn more and half of households earn less.

Percent of population without health insurance



Source: County Health Rankings
Metric: Percentage of population under age 65 without health insurance.

BRH, as a not-for-profit charitable hospital, offers emergency and non-elective healthcare to all individuals no matter the ability to pay. BRH also employs a “patient financial advocate” that is dedicated to assisting and supporting patients in navigating insurance options and paying for healthcare services. BRH offers a wide breadth of financial assistance resources, options, and programs such as payment plans, community care write-offs, and sliding fee schedules in an effort to accommodate each patient’s financial means. [BRH’s financial assistance web page](#) exhibits the financial assistance options and resources available.

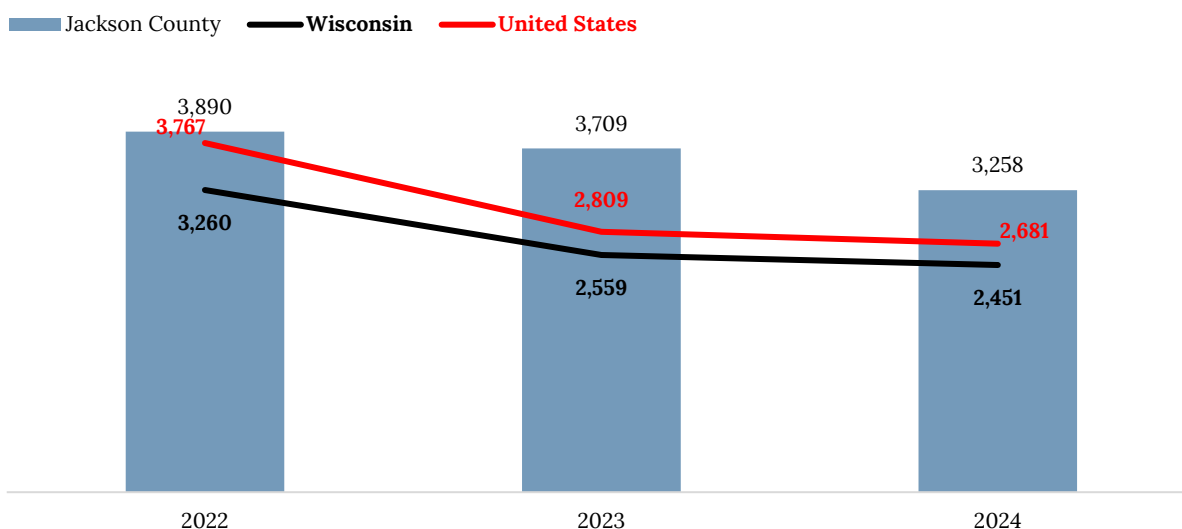
Great Rivers 2-1-1, a social services organization in the state of Wisconsin, provides a broad scope of services ranging from basic needs, addiction services, crisis support, resources for groups such as children and families, senior citizens, and adults with disabilities, as well as resources to connect individuals with their respective community support services and resources. The [Great Rivers 2-1-1 Wisconsin web page](#) offers state and region-specific resources and services available for those in need.

PREVENTABLE HOSPITAL STAYS

Preventable hospital stays are hospital visits for conditions like asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, or infections that could have been managed with regular doctor visits, medications, or lifestyle changes. High rates of preventable hospital stays indicate that members of the community might not be seeking or receiving necessary preventive care, or that primary and preventive care services are inaccessible to the community.

The rate of preventable hospital stays for Jackson County declined between 2022 and 2024; however, rates observed in 2024 (3,258 preventable stays per 100,000 Medicare enrollees) continue to exceed both state and national benchmarks.

Number of preventable hospital stays per 100,000 Medicare enrollees



Source: County Health Rankings

Metric: Rate of hospital stays for ambulatory care-sensitive conditions per 100,000 Medicare enrollees.

PROVIDER ACCESSIBILITY

Having enough providers to support a community's needs is essential in maintaining access to healthcare services. Communities that lack access can be characterized by lower utilization of healthcare services and poorer health outcomes. There are 1,110 people per primary care physician in Jackson County, which indicates better access to physicians in the county relative to state and national benchmarks. Jackson County has a shortage of dentists relative to state and national benchmarks, as there are 1,600 people per dentist in Jackson County compared to 1,360 people per dentist statewide and nationally.

People per primary care physician in Jackson County



Lower than state benchmark
Lower than national benchmark

Source: County Health Rankings, 2024

People per dentist in Jackson County



Higher than state benchmark
Higher than national benchmark

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, Jackson County is a designated low-income population health professional shortage area ("HPSA") for primary care, which indicates that there is an insufficient number of primary care providers in Jackson County to provide healthcare services for its low-income population.

Access to specialty providers is also limited in Jackson County. According to Medicare.gov, the following data represents the types of specialty providers unavailable within a 25-mile radius of Black River Falls, Wisconsin:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Addiction medicine | ▪ Gynecological oncology | ▪ Peripheral vascular disease |
| ▪ Allergy/immunology | ▪ Interventional pain management | ▪ Pulmonary Disease |
| ▪ Anesthesiology | ▪ Maxillofacial surgery | ▪ Plastic surgery |
| ▪ Cardiac surgery | ▪ Medical toxicology | ▪ Qualified speech language pathologist |
| ▪ Certified clinical nurse specialist | ▪ Neuropsychiatry | ▪ Rheumatology |
| ▪ Critical care (intensivists) | ▪ Neurosurgery | ▪ Sleep medicine |
| ▪ Dentist | ▪ Nuclear medicine | ▪ Sports medicine |
| ▪ Dermatology | ▪ Occupational therapy | ▪ Surgical oncology |
| ▪ Epileptologist | ▪ Pain management | ▪ Thoracic surgery |
| ▪ Gastroenterology | ▪ Pediatric medicine | ▪ Urology |
| ▪ Geriatric psychiatry | | ▪ Vascular surgery |

Existing Healthcare and Community Resources in Jackson County, Wisconsin

Medical Providers

Name	Address	Phone	Description of services
Black River Memorial Hospital	711 West Adams Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-5361	Primary care, behavioral health, specialty services (orthopedics, gastroenterology, ophthalmology, urology), hospital services, inpatient services
Krohn Clinic	610 West Adams Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-4311	Primary care, general surgery, specialty services (podiatry, sports medicine), outreach subspecialty care, occupational health, acute care
Ho-Chunk Health Care Center	N6520 Lumberjack Guy Road Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-9851	Primary care, acute care, specialty services (prenatal care, podiatry)
Footprints in Time Midwifery & Family Clinic	502 Main Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-2003	Primary care, obstetrics/gynecology, midwifery

Dental Providers

Name	Address	Phone	Description of services
Black River Falls Dental Center	N6571 Lumberjack Guy Road Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 670-0400	Dental services

Ho-Chunk Health Care Center	N6520 Lumberjack Guy Road Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-9851	Dental services
Black River Falls Community Dental	716 W Adams Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-9409	Dental services
Black River Falls Family Dentistry	N6625 County Road A Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-3100	Dental services

Vision Providers

Name	Address	Phone	Description of services
Gundersen Eye Clinic Black River Falls	601 W Adams Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-9451	Optometry services
Art of Optometry	127 Main Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-3111	Optometry services
Ho-Chunk Health Care Center	N6520 Lumberjack Guy Road Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-9851	Optometry services
Foster Primary Eye Care LTD	2 E Main Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-4876	Optometry services
Walmart Vision & Glasses	611 WI-54 Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-1592	Optometry services

Mental Health Providers

Name	Address	Phone	Description of services
Black River Healthcare Clinic	711 West Adams Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-3355	Mental health and substance abuse treatment
Krohn Clinic	610 West Adams Street Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-4311	Mental health treatment
Northwest Journey Black River Falls	N6643 County Road A Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-1100	Mental health treatment
Ho-Chunk Health Care Center	N6520 Lumberjack Guy Road Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-9851	Mental health treatment
Brad Garson Growth & Counseling Services	54 N 1 st Street Black River Falls, 54615	(715) 284-0361	Mental health treatment
West Central Wisconsin Behavioral Health Clinic	206 S Roosevelt Plaza Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-2831	Mental health treatment
Family & Children's Center	421 County Road R Black River Falls, WI 54615	(608) 396-6398	Mental health and substance abuse treatment, case management
Jackson County Health & Human Services	421 County Road R, Black River Falls, WI 54615	(715) 284-4301	Mental health treatment



This report was completed in compliance with the IRS requirements described in section 501(r)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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