



Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

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WASHINGTON COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HEALTH PROFILE (2008)

Note: To view the actual data, refer to Washington County data tables. For the most part, unless mentioned otherwise, data for Washington County are compared with the seven DHHS Districts, not compared with all other Maine counties. Statements with an "*" indicate these statistics are different from the state rate, but the differences may not be statistically significant.

SIZE

- With 33,288 (2006 estimates), Washington County comprises 2.5% of Maine's population and
- 8.3% of Maine's square mileage.

DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE

- Washington County has the highest percentage of people 65 and older (17.4% vs. ME=14.1% vs. US=12.4%),
- And, has one of the highest median ages (42.7; vs. ME =41.1; vs. US=36.4).

RACE/ETHNICITY

- With 2,105 racial minorities, as counted by the census, Washington County has 6.2% racial minorities, making it the Maine county with the highest proportion of racial minorities (Maine = 3.3% and Cumberland = 5%).
- 3,369 Passamaquoddy Tribal members are listed in the Tribe's census, with about 2/3 at Pleasant Point and 1/3 at Indian Township.

- There are an estimated several thousand migrant workers who work in Washington County every year.
- In several ways, Washington County's minority population appears to be undercounted.

SOCIOECONOMIC

- Washington County has the lowest median annual household income in the state (\$29,087 vs. ME = \$41,287 and US = \$44,334),
- The highest percent of families living in poverty in the state (17.4% vs. ME=11.3% and US=11.5%),
- The highest percentage of children receiving free or reduced lunch in the state (55.5% vs. ME=36.4% and US=17.5%), and
- The 2nd highest rate of adults with lifetime educational attainment less than a high school diploma (20.1% vs. ME=14.6% and US=9.4%).

OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS

- In the 2000 Census, Washington County had the lowest proportion in the state of households headed by a single-parent with children <18 years old,
- The highest (along with Aroostook) percent of households comprised of a person 65 or older living alone (13.1%), and
- The highest proportion of kids and adults >5 with a disability (27%, vs. ME=20%).
- Civilian Veterans make up 18.4% (4,790 people) of Washington County population, one of the highest in the state and higher than the state average of 15.9% and 12.7% in the US (2000 Census)

MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH

- Infant mortality in Washington County is lower than the state average and has declined in the past 15 years.*
- Rates of pregnant women receiving early prenatal care is lower than the state average and has remained nearly unchanged in the last 10 years.
- Teen birth rates are higher than the state average though have been declining similar to the state rate of decline over the past 10-15 years.*

HEALTH AND WELLNESS INDICATORS

- Teen smoking rates in Washington County are the 2nd highest in the state (15.6% vs. ME=13.8% vs. US=23%).

- Over the past 7 years teen smoking rates in Washington County have consistently been among the highest in the state, though there has been a slight decrease during this time (was 18.5% in 2000).
- Adult smoking rates are highest in the state* (28.6% vs. ME=21 vs. US=20.1).
- Adult overweight/obesity rates are the highest in the state* (68% vs. ME=60.2% vs. US=61.6%).
- The percent of adults who eat few fruits and vegetables in Washington County is similar to state and US rates (72.5% vs. ME=71.4% vs. US=75.6%).
- The percent of adults with little exercise is higher in Washington County relative to state and US rates (32.9% vs. ME=20.3% vs. US=22.6%).
- Washington County has the highest proportion of people reporting fair or poor health status* (21.7% vs. ME=13.6 vs. US=14.7).

CHRONIC DISEASE INDICATORS (ALL AGE-ADJUSTED)

ALL CANCERS

- Overall cancer incidence in Washington County is the highest in the state.
- In the last 10 years overall cancer incidence increased more in Washington County than statewide. This was especially true for men, and was in contrast to the statewide rate for men, which remained unchanged.
- Overall cancer death rates are the highest in the state.
- In the last 10 years overall cancer death rates increased in Washington County among both men and women, while they went down statewide.

LUNG CANCER

- Lung cancer incidence rates highest in the state. This rate is about 3 times the rate of the lowest state rate in the country (Utah), even when adjusting for differences in the age of the populations.
- In the last 10 years lung cancer incidence increased in Washington County and in Maine, whereas it stayed about the same in Maine.
- Lung cancer death rates are the highest in the state.
- In the last 10 years lung cancer death rates went up among both men and women in Washington County, especially among women; yet statewide rates went down in men and rose very slightly in women.

COLON CANCER

- Colon cancer incidence rates the highest in the state.
- In the last 10 years colon cancer incidence rates increased for women in Washington County, whereas they declined for women statewide.
- Colon cancer death rates the highest in the state.
- Colon cancer death rates are declining in both Washington County and Maine over the past 10 years.
- Colonoscopy rates (50+ years old) the lowest in the state.
- Staging at diagnosis of colon cancer about the state average.**

BREAST CANCER

- Breast cancer incidence rates are lower than the state average and has been decreasing slightly along with the state rates the past 10 years.
- Breast cancer death rates are the highest in the state*, and Washington County's death rates have been increasing slightly the past 10 years, while Maine's rates have been decreasing.
- Mammogram rates higher than the state average.*
- Staging at diagnosis of breast cancer about the state average.**

PROSTATE CANCER

- Prostate cancer incidence rates are about the state average, but have been increasing in Washington County the past 10 years, while statewide they have been decreasing.
- Prostate cancer death rates are about the state average, and have been decreasing slightly over the past 10 years, like the state rate.
- Staging at diagnosis of prostate cancer about the state average.**

OTHER

- Pap Smear rates about the state average.

Summary of Cancer Data

Incidence and deaths from lung and colon cancer rates in Washington County are significantly higher than state and national averages. Colonoscopy rates are low. Over the past 10 years, cancer incidence increased in Washington County at a slightly higher rate than the state. Cancer death rates in Washington County have increased over the past 10 years, while they have decreased statewide. This increase appears primarily driven by increases in deaths due to lung cancer. Both lung and colon cancer have significant causative factors in tobacco, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and obesity. Therefore, perhaps related to these cancer statistics is the finding that tobacco, overweight/obesity, and related indicators are worse in Washington County than the state average.

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

- Cardiovascular disease death rates are the highest in the state, though over the past 20 years the rates are decreasing as are the state rates.
- Stroke hospitalizations are about the state average*, and the rates the past 10 years are decreasing, as have the state rates.
- Acute MI hospitalizations are above the state average and over the past 10 years have increased in Washington County, whereas the state rates have decreased. This increase in Washington County rates appears to be driven by an increase in MI hospitalizations in women.
- High blood pressure rates are the highest in the state.*
- High cholesterol rates are the highest in the state.*

DIABETES

- Diabetes rates higher than the state average*, and the rates have increased in Washington County over the past 10 years at a higher rate than the state rate.
- Diabetes hospitalizations at or below the state average*, and over the past 10 years these rates are decreasing in Washington County, as they are in Maine.
- HbA1C rates are about the state average, and over the past 10 years this rate has not changed much, as is the case with the state rate.
- For Downeast District, diabetes management course about the same average.

ASTHMA

- Adult asthma rates second highest in the state, and this rate may have increased slightly, whereas it has stayed the same statewide.*

- Asthma ER visit rates are the highest in the state, and over the past 6 years this has increased, and increased at a higher rate than the state rate.

ORAL HEALTH

- Adults with dental visit in past year 2nd lowest in the state.*

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)

- ED visits for CO poisoning the lowest in the state.
- % of homes with a CO detector is about the same or slightly higher than the state rate (40% vs. 35%).

LEAD POISONING

- High rates of pre-1950 housing (high-risk for lead paint)
- Lead screening rates are higher in Washington County than the state rate: 77% vs. 47% among one-year olds; and 45% vs. 22% among two-year olds.
- The number of children identified 2005-2006 in Washington County with lead poisoning was too low (<6) to provide a meaningful rate.

RADON

- A US EPA survey in 1988-1989 found Washington County household radon levels to be the second lowest of counties in the state, with only 15% of homes sampled having high levels, compared with the highest of 52% in Oxford.
- The % of homes in Washington County tested for radon is lower than the state rate - 13% vs. 24%, data from 2006

OTHER CATEGORIES OF HEALTH ISSUES

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

- Childhood immunization rates for Downeast/Aroostook combined Districts are second highest in the state.
- Adults 65+ with flu vaccine 2nd lowest in the state.*

- Adults 65+ with pneumonia vaccine about the state average.
- Chlamydia, late diagnosis of HIV, Lyme, and Salmonella all appear low relative to state average.

INJURIES

- Motor vehicle death rates are the highest in the state and appear to have come down at a slightly higher rate than the statewide rate.
- Hip fracture hospitalizations for those 65+ are about the state average, though over the 10 years the rate in Washington County has gone up, primarily driven by rate in men.
- Reported rapes are about the state average.
- Domestic assaults reported to the police are below the state average.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Adults with frequent mental distress lower or same as state average.*
- Adults with symptoms of depression higher than state average.*
- Suicide deaths higher than state average*, and this rate over the past 15 years has declined a bit, similar to state declines.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Adolescent alcohol use, binge drinking, and prescription drug abuse are all about the state average. Alcohol use and binge drinking have stayed about the same over the past 6 years.
- Adult binge drinking is a bit higher or the same as the state average.*
- Substance abuse admissions have increased by almost 150% in the past 10 years and account for 7% of the statewide substance abuse admissions, although Washington County only accounts for 2.5% of the population.
- Adolescents in Washington County are more likely to report that the cultural norms are more favorable to drug use, that there is a perceived easy availability of drugs, and there is an early initiation of drug use. (<http://www.maine.gov/maineosa/survey/home.php>)
- Prescription narcotics are the most common illegal drug seized by law enforcement officials in Washington County, and the drugs seized here account for 7% of the drugs seized statewide.
- Several sources cite Washington County as having a challenge with opioid abuse, including a high accidental death rate due to oxycodone. (http://maine.gov/dhhs/osa//pubs/data/2007/CESN_Report_Aug_2007.doc)

- (<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/osa/pubs/osa/2003/drugreport.pdf>)

ACCESS TO CARE

- Population to Physician Ratio lower than the state average, and has declined (improved) over the past 20 years to a fourth of the proportion in 1980, though statewide it has only been reduced by half.
- Adults without health insurance higher than state average.*

COMPARISON OF WASHINGTON COUNTY WITH 26 PEER COUNTIES

[<http://www.communityhealth.hhs.gov/HomePage.aspx>]

(Based on population, poverty, age, and frontier status; none in New England, mostly in the South and Midwest)

- Life expectancy in Washington County (75.6) is among the highest from its peer counties (73.5-75.7), but lower than the median for all counties (76.5).
- The percent of the population reporting health status being fair or poor in Washington County is among the lowest (20.6%) compared with peer counties (20.5-30.1%), but higher than the median for all counties (17.1%).
- Washington County rates very favorably compared with peer counties on a number of maternal child health indicators such as infant mortality, low birth weight, premature births, teen births, and early prenatal care. Births to unmarried women are relatively large compared with peer counties.
- Washington County rates poorly compared with peer counties in death rates due to breast, colon, and lung cancer as well as stroke.

IMPORTANT CAVEATS

- * These statistics are different from the state rate but may not be statistically significant
- ** A significant percent of cancer diagnoses in Washington County do not have stage of diagnosis noted, so staging data may not be reliable.
- *** In most cases (unless otherwise stated) rankings of Washington County (such as “highest in the state”) is a comparison of Washington County with the 8 multi-county districts, not a comparison with every county. Therefore, in some cases, it is possible that another county may have a higher or lower ranking.