



# Health & Democracy Index

Dawn M. Hunter • 09-21-2021  
Director, Southeastern Region



# Overview



Project background



Index development




Goals



Walkthrough of website



Next steps



# Why is a public health lawyer working on the Health & Democracy Index?

[Resources](#)[News & Insights](#)[Events & Webinars](#)[Projects & Initiatives](#)[About Us](#)[How We Can Help](#)[Connect With Us](#)[COVID-19](#)[Social and Community Context](#)[Civic Engagement and Voting](#)

## More than a Vote: Civic Engagement and Health Amid COVID-19

June 12, 2020

by [Dawn Hunter](#)





## **Health metrics associated with civic engagement or voting**

- Self-rated health & mental health
- Self-reported chronic health condition
- Self-reported disability preventing work
- Disability status
- Use of healthcare services
- Health risk behaviors like smoking
- Life expectancy & mortality rates
- Income level
- Education level
- Neighborhood safety

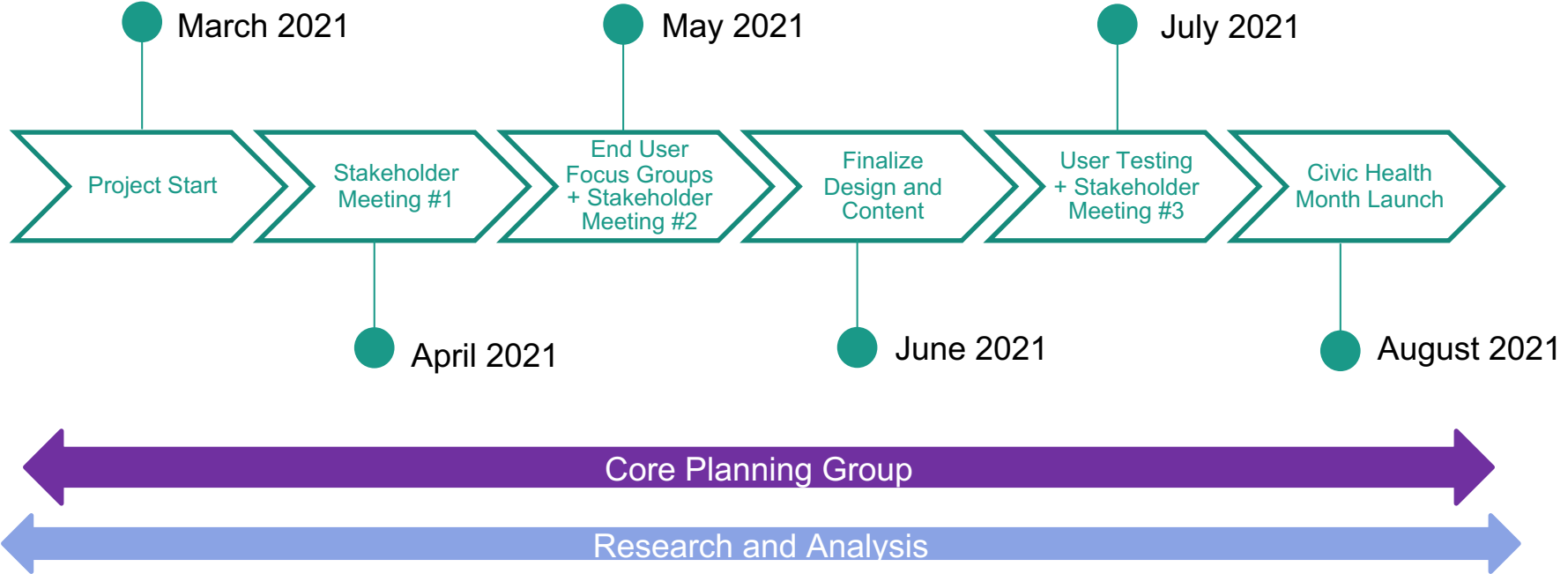




## State health metrics sorted by Cost of Voting (averages)

	Voter Turnout 2020 General Election	Self-Rated Health - Good or Better	Poor Mental Health Days in Last 30 Days	Adults Receiving Disability Benefits	Uninsured	Active Physicians Per Capita	Chronic Disease Prevalence	Premature Mortality (YPPL)	Infant Mortality Rate	Poverty
Top 15 States	71.7%	84.7%	4.15	4.34%	10.27%	305.70	8.85%	6588	5.43	10.38%
<b>US Average</b>	<b>66.8%</b>	<b>82.7%</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>277.8</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>7350</b>	<b>5.67</b>	<b>12.2%</b>
Bottom 15 States	64.0%	80.7%	4.71	5.95%	15.04%	238.56	11.49%	8901	6.52	13.46%

# Index Development





# Goals

Illustrate and describe the connections between voting rights/access and population health as broadly defined across the social determinants of health.

Show evidence of the health impacts of inequities in access to the ballot.

Build public understanding and commitment to inclusive civic participation by expanding the narrative about voting to include the impact on our collective health.

Support public health professionals in their roles in promoting access to the ballot as necessary to advancing health equity and population health.

Strengthen relationships across policy sectors and with others advocating for expanded access to the ballot by contributing a health and health equity analysis.

Identify policies and demonstrate practical ways to expand access to the ballot and improve population health as a public health imperative.

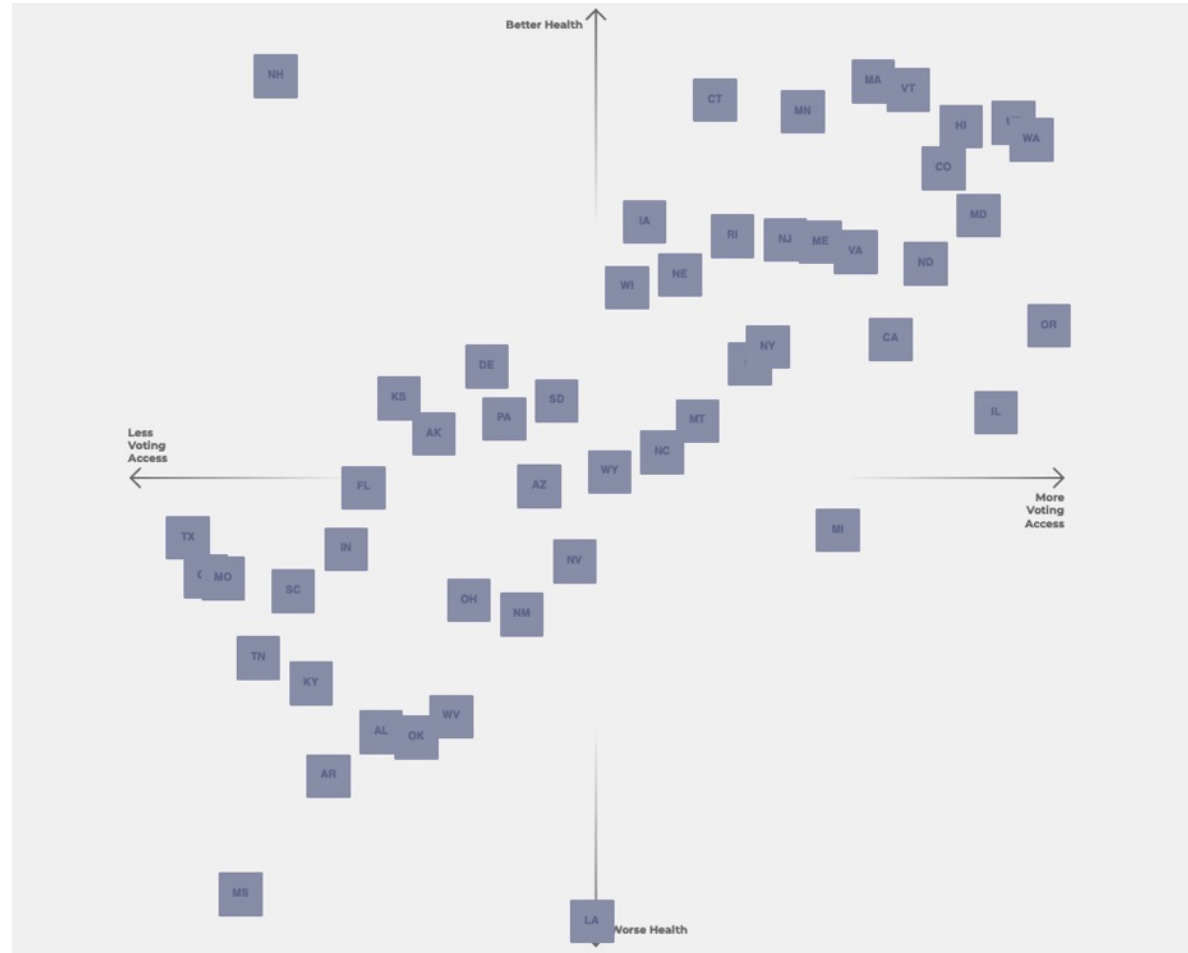
Aid and support mobilization to defend and broaden voting rights.

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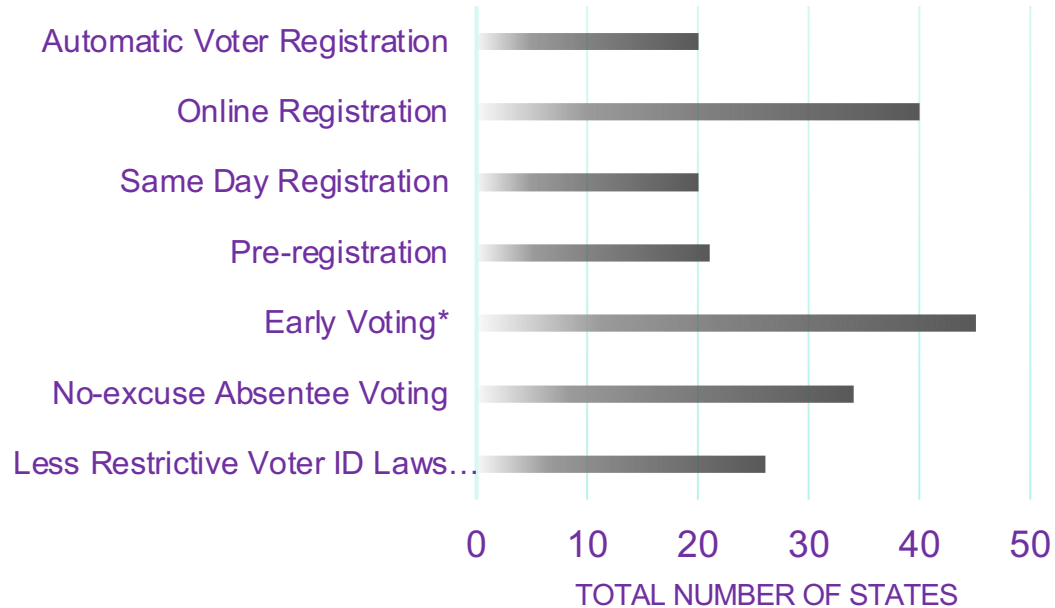
# Health & Democracy Index Walkthrough

## Two Core Components

- Cost of Voting Index
- Measures of Health Status (12)
- Default plot view is Overall Health



# What supports electoral participation?



\*early voting laws vary significantly across the states





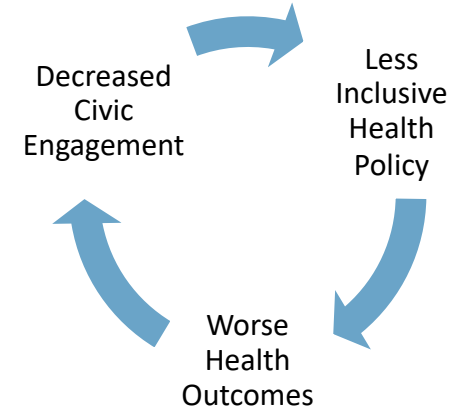
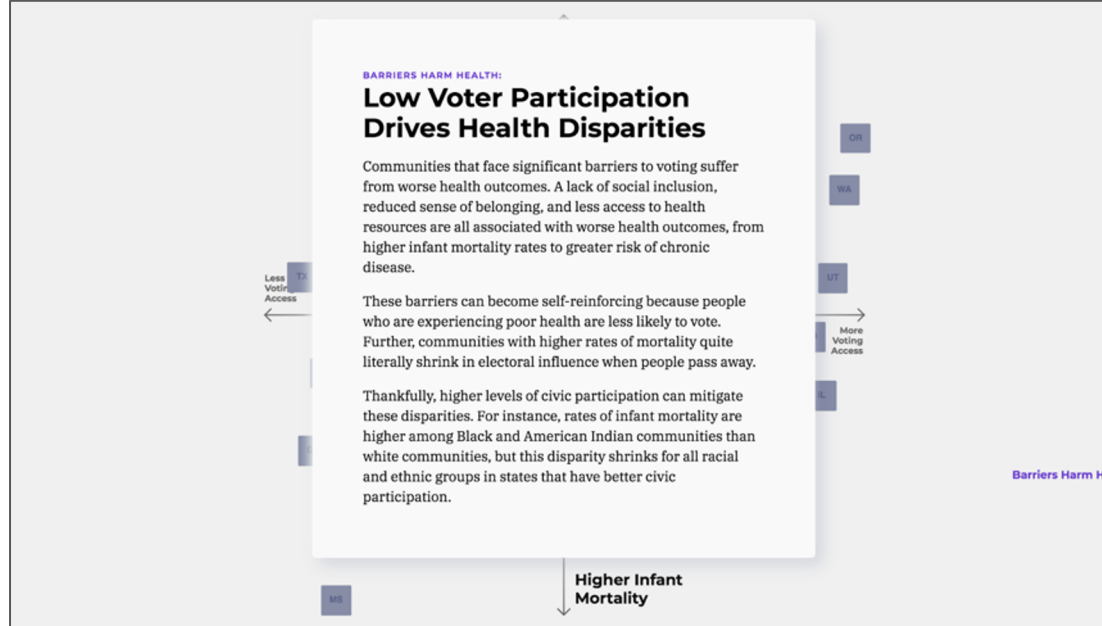


# Interactive Voting Policy Picker

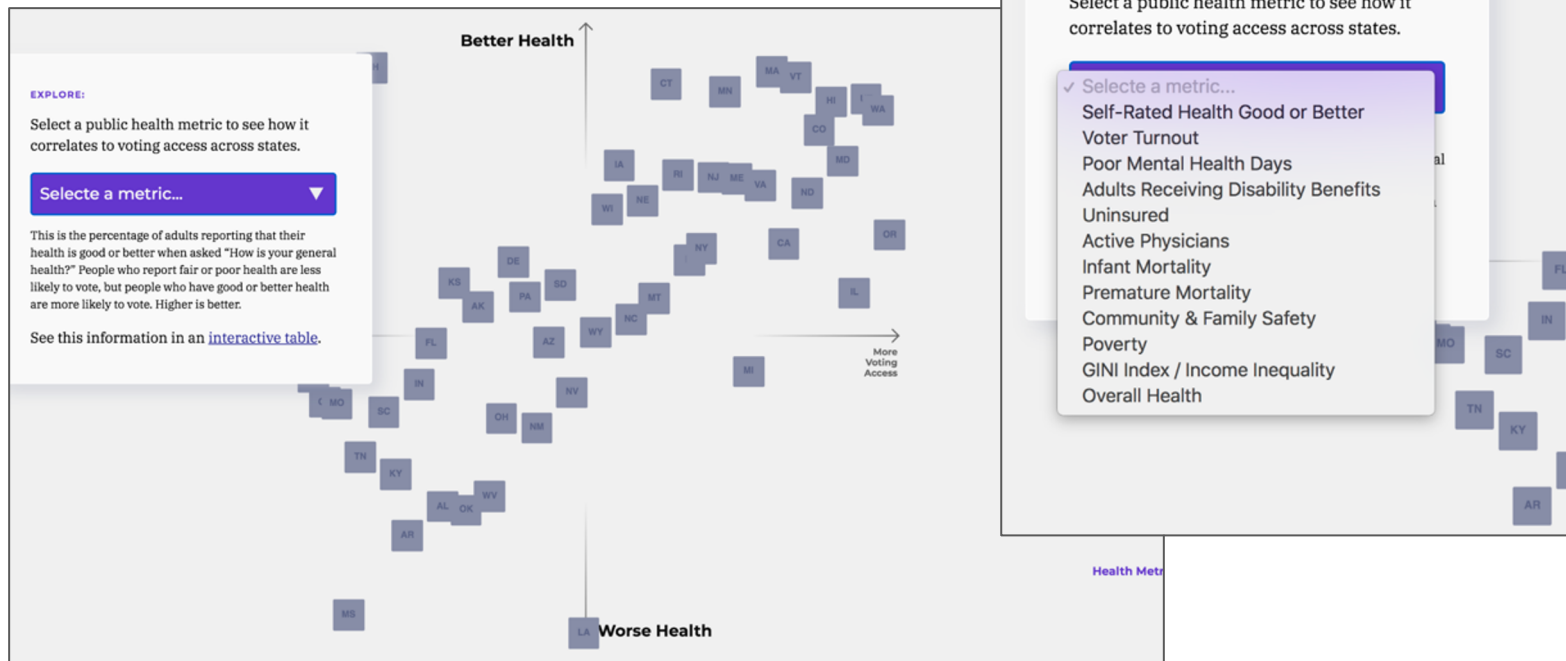


- Inclusive Registration
- Vote at Home
- Restrictive Voter ID
- Voting Rights Restoration

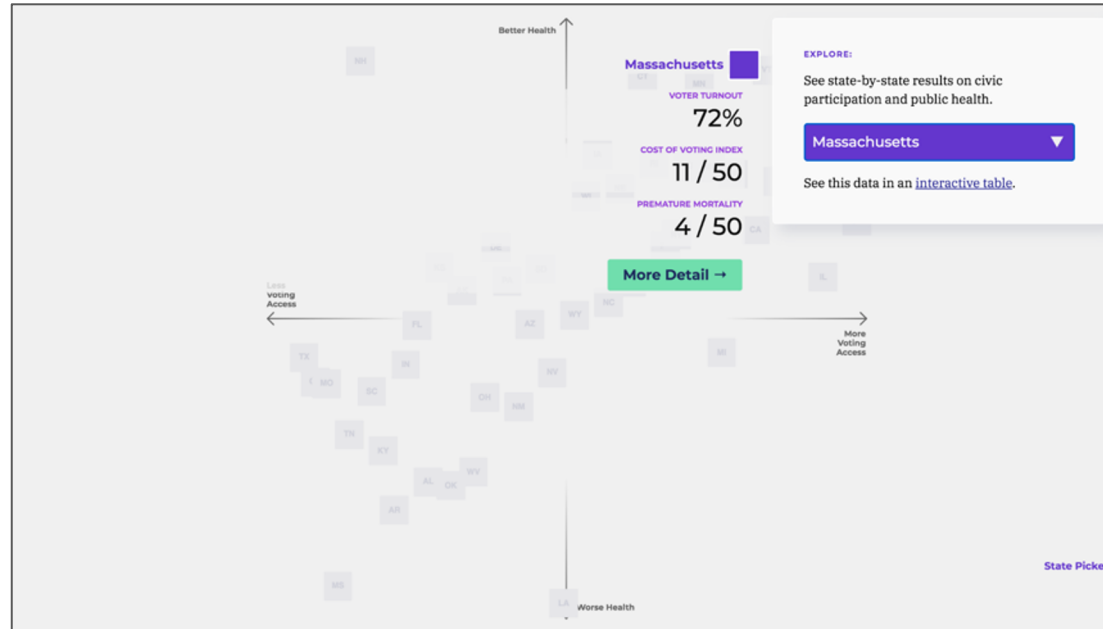
# Low Voter Participation Drives Health Disparities



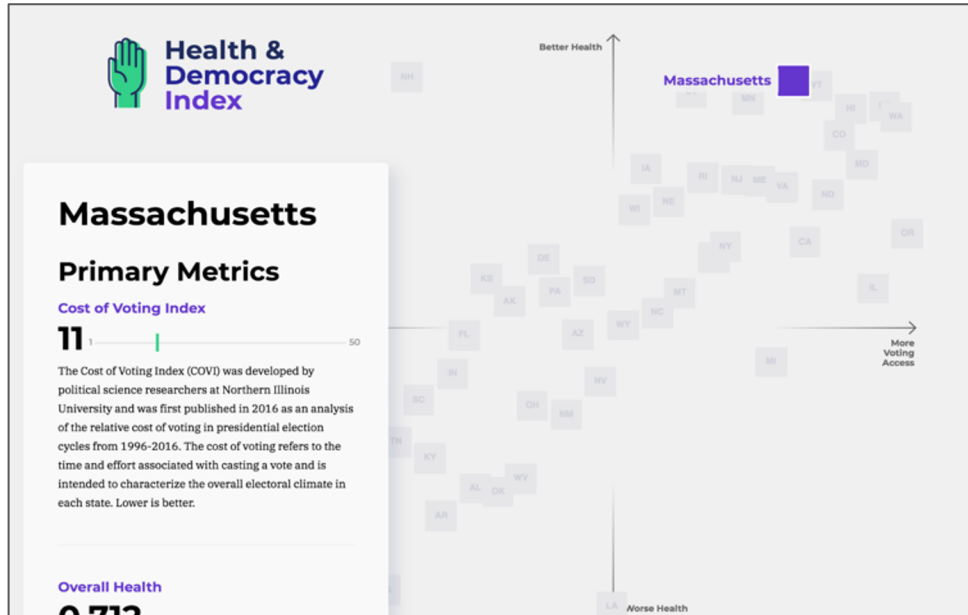
# Explore the data through metrics



## Explore the data through state picker: two views



## State landing page (second view) Example: Massachusetts



Includes:

- Primary metrics – Cost of Voting Index and Overall Health
- Voting policies
- Civic participation (turnout and registration)
- All of the health metrics

## State detail - Massachusetts

### Health

Self-Rated Health Good or Better

87%

76

87

This is the percentage of adults reporting that their health is good or better when asked “How is your general health?” People who report fair or poor health are less likely to vote, but people who have good or better health are more likely to vote. Higher is better.

Health measure

Scale

Definition

## Methods, limitations, and references



### Methods

This analysis compares 12 public health indicators and voter turnout to the Cost of Voting Index for U.S. states for the 2020 general election. All indicators and measures were selected based on an analysis of published literature linking civic participation and health.

### Civic Participation

#### Cost of Voting in the American States: 2020

The Cost of Voting Index (COVI) was developed by political science researchers at Northern Illinois

- Explanation of the Cost of Voting Index
- Definitions for all health metrics and why they matter
- Data sources
- Limitations
- References and resources

# Interactive data table

	Voting Rights				Cost of Voting Index	Overall Health	Self-rated Health Good or Better	Voter Registration	Voter Turnout	Adults Receiving Disability Benefits	Poor Mental Health Days	Uninsured	Active Physicians	Infant Mortality	Premature Mortality	GINI Index / Income Inequality	Community & Family Safety	Poverty
	Inclusive Registration	Restrictive Voter ID	Vote at Home	Voting Rights Restoration														
<b><u>Alabama</u></b>	No	Yes	No	No	39	-0.59	63%	68%	79	5.4	8	15.2	217.1	6.94	48	0.474	43	15.9
<b><u>Alaska</u></b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	36	0.007	69%	74.2%	85	3.9	2.8	10.4	276.9	6.25	33	0.438	49	9.1
<b><u>Arizona</u></b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	30	-0.098	66%	76.4%	82	4.5	3.7	16	242	5.71	26	0.459	37	12.4
<b><u>Arkansas</u></b>	No	Yes	No	No	42	-0.678	56%	62%	76	5.4	7.9	14.7	207.6	7.51	44	0.475	50	16.3
<b><u>California</u></b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	10	0.196	69%	69.4%	82	3.8	2.7	13	279.6	4.21	2	0.487	20	11.4
<b><u>Colorado</u></b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	7	0.538	76%	71.3%	86	4	2.8	12.9	285.7	4.75	10	0.455	19	9.5
<b><u>Connecticut</u></b>	Yes	No	No	No	20	0.675	72%	73.3%	86	3.8	3.9	9.2	352.1	4.2	5	0.502	6	10.4
<b><u>Delaware</u></b>	No	No	No	No	33	0.142	71%	75.1%	82	4.3	4.9	11.8	284.6	5.93	37	0.451	25	11.1
<b><u>Florida</u></b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	40	-0.101	72%	67.1%	82	4.4	4.5	18.1	265.2	6.04	28	0.481	32	12.3





# About the Index

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# Next steps

## What's next?



More research!



More data!



Calls to action!



# Thank you!

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**The Network**  
for Public Health Law



Jessica Barba Brown, Senior Advisor • 09.21.2021  
[www.healthydemocracyhealthypeople.org](http://www.healthydemocracyhealthypeople.org)



# Healthy Democracy Healthy People Initiative

- Started in 2020 as VoteSAFE Public Health and We Can Vote to ensure 2020 elections were safe, secure, and successful
- Deepened connections in our fields and highlighted new opportunities to work together
- With increasing threat of COVID-19 variants, along with continued barriers to voting, the need to bring health and voting experts together to provide options for full democratic participation continues
- Voting and civic engagement is nonpartisan



# Health is a complex system

*Health is a complex system or set of systems that intersect and influence one another.*

*To advance health equity we need to develop the power to influence the systems that create healthy communities, the social and political determinants of health.*

*To assure health we must build our collective capacity to act = power*

## Three Practices Strengthen “Capacity to Act”/Power



- **Organize People: Strengthen the capacity of community:** Align efforts and strengthen relationships across organizations to promote access to the ballot for everyone.
- **Organize narrative, knowledge, data:** Collectively promote the understanding of the relationship of health to civic engagement, inclusion and social cohesion.
- **Organize Resources/policies and how systems and places work:** Assure systems and resources of support for civic and electoral system participation.



## Our Research

States with more voting access and greater civic participation have better health outcomes



### Health & Democracy Index

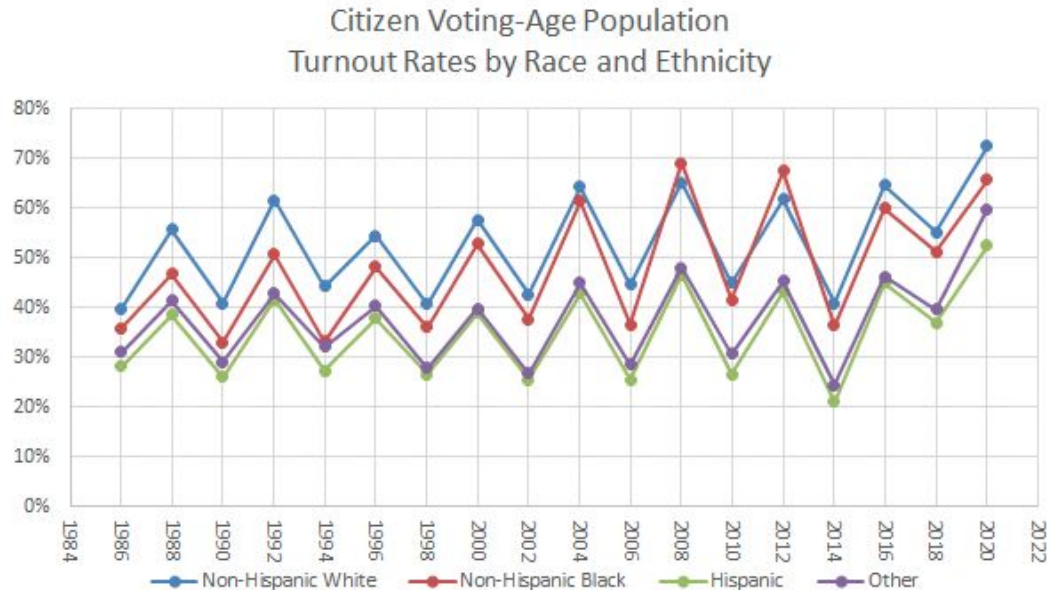
When communities vote they influence policy decisions that have a big effect on their health.

This [analysis](#) compares 11 public health indicators and 2 civic participation measures across 50 states and Washington, DC.

SCROLL DOWN



# Disparities in civic participation and health equity



Source: US Elections  
Project / Current  
Population Survey



## Opportunities for Action

- ***Strengthen democratic systems***—Embrace the imperative to address structural racism and promote policies that assure and encourage civic and voter participation
- ***Promote the understanding*** of critical connections between healthy democracy and healthy people
- ***Build and leverage your influence*** to impact policies through your national and local organizations and your professional and personal roles
- ***Encourage voter registration*** in all services you provide or influence - clinical and social services, grants—WIC, SNAP, patient history and education, etc
- ***Conduct research and data analysis***—include civic engagement in data sets i.e. Healthy People 2030, BRFSS and strengthen analysis
- ***Promote policies that expand access to the ballot box*** i.e. no-excuse mail and early voting, automatic voter registration (AVR)-Medicaid

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**“Voting is basically the ball game. It’s the most important public health intervention any of us can do.”**

**- Dr. Georges Benjamin, APHA**

# Advancing Health Equity through Civic Engagement: A Trauma Surgeon's Experience

Christopher S. Davis, MD, MPH, FACS  
Assistant Professor of Surgery  
and the Institute for Health and Equity  
2021 Virtual Public Health Law Conference  
September 21, 2021

# No Financial Disclosures

# Personal/Professional Background

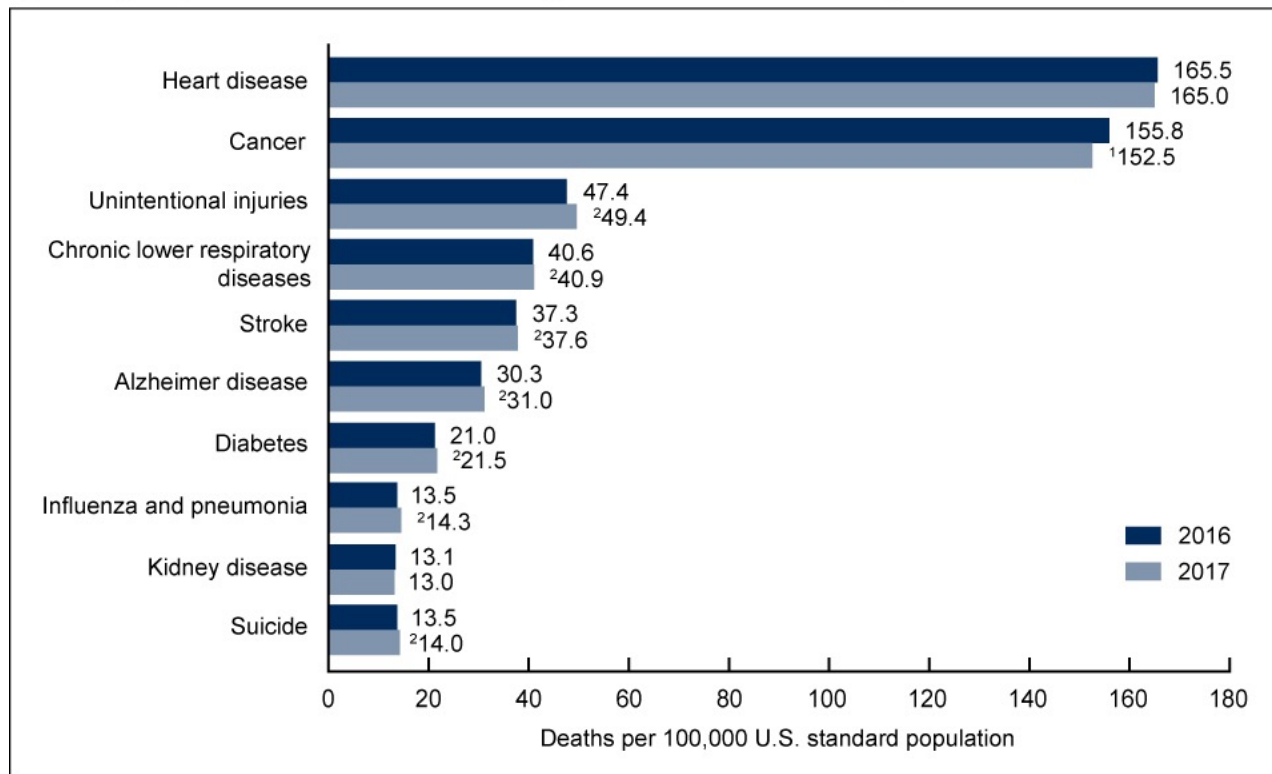
- Grew up in Denver
- Undergraduate studies at University of Colorado – Boulder
- Medical school in Cincinnati
- Surgery residency training in Chicago
  - MPH from University of Illinois at Chicago
- Trauma/Acute Care Surgeon in Milwaukee
  - Chair Injury Prevention Committee

# What is a Trauma/Acute Care Surgeon?





Figure 4. Age-adjusted death rates for the 10 leading causes of death: United States, 2016 and 2017



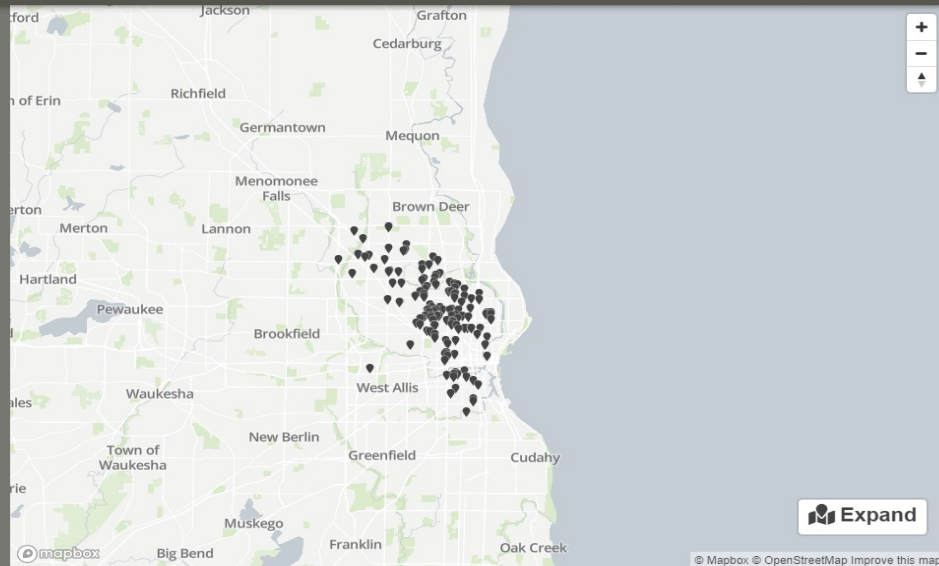
<sup>1</sup>Statistically significant decrease in age-adjusted death rate from 2016 to 2017 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>2</sup>Statistically significant increase in age-adjusted death rate from 2016 to 2017 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

NOTES: A total of 2,813,503 resident deaths were registered in the United States in 2017. The 10 leading causes accounted for 74.0% of all deaths in the United States in 2017. Causes of death are ranked according to number of deaths. Rankings for 2016 data are not shown. Data table for Figure 4 includes the number of deaths for leading causes. Access data table for Figure 4 at: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db328\\_tables-508.pdf#4](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db328_tables-508.pdf#4).

SOURCE: NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

There have been  
**140 homicides** in 2021.  
This is **7 more** than last year at this date.



## Homicide victims

The Journal Sentinel is tracking homicides in Milwaukee to memorialize the victims and better understand deadly violence in the city. The tracker is updated as regularly as possible.

Anyone with information about these homicide cases can call Milwaukee police at (414) 935-7360. Callers can remain anonymous.

Help us remember homicide victims: Please email photos to [jsmetro@jrn.com](mailto:jsmetro@jrn.com) with the victim's name, as well as your name and contact information so a reporter or editor can follow up.

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) criteria for homicides is used by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and law enforcement agencies for consistent comparisons between years. [LEARN MORE](#)



**SAVE A LIFE**

# **STOP THE BLEED® Course**

## **American College of Surgeons**

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Version 2



State of Wisconsin  
2017 - 2018 LEGISLATURE

LRB-5493/1  
CMH:amn

## 2017 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 111

*Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That* the Wisconsin State Legislature hereby recognizes the Stop the Bleed campaign, establishes March 31, 2018, as Wisconsin Trauma Awareness Day, and encourages all Wisconsin citizens to participate in the initiative and learn more about the importance of bleeding-control measures.

## About Us



1 Million 2 Million 3.5 Million Masks



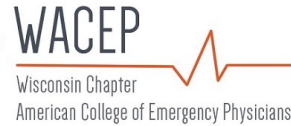






# VOTE SAFE WISCONSIN

2020



# GET VACCINATED!

