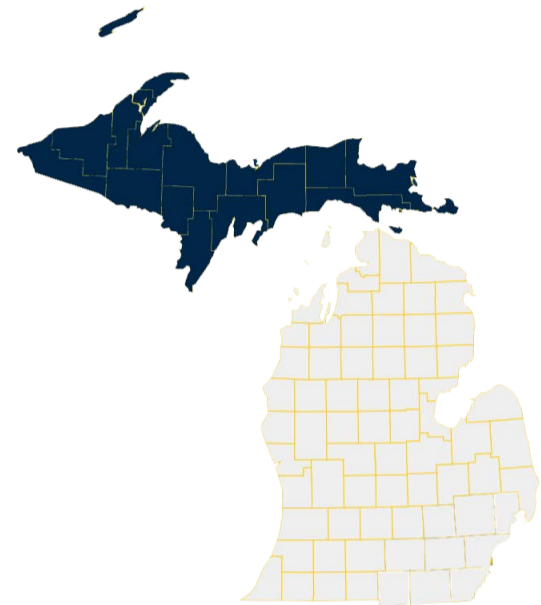## Michigan Poverty & Well-being Map: Upper Peninsula

The Upper Peninsula region includes: Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, and Schoolcraft counties. Learn more about the map at poverty.umich.edu.

Aging Population and Health Care Challenges

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Michigan has one of the oldest populations in the country, with several counties having a median age of 50 or older. This is particularly pronounced in the Upper Peninsula region, where the proportion of people over 65 has grown substantially as the birthrate has fallen and younger people have opted to move to places with better economic opportunities. In 2019, about 21.6% of the region's population was over the age of 65, a 23% increase from 2011 and nearly 5 percentage points higher than the state overall (16.8%).[1] This demographic shift means that healthcare infrastructure must be a priority in the region.

Aging populations come with a host of challenges for health care. Older adults are more likely to live with chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and hypertension. An estimated 90% of older adults experience a chronic health condition that requires specific medical care.[2] The Upper Peninsula's current health care landscape is ill-equipped to address the increasing healthcare needs of the region. Providing care in the rural areas where patient to physician ratios are high as they are in Menominee County (3,280:1) and Ontonagon County (5,800:1) poses a challenge.[3]

The onset of COVID-19 challenged health care providers to innovate how they serve vulnerable and older populations. These innovations – properly funded, applied, and expanded – can help to fill the gap in access to health care in the Upper Peninsula region. Expansion of and increased exposure to telehealth during the pandemic means that more people, even patients over 65, are willing to use telehealth services than they would pre-pandemic.[4] Telehealth requires broadband infrastructure throughout the region or designated access points with digital resources for virtual care, such as schools, libraries, and social service providers. Similarly, pop-up rural clinics or mobile clinics can come to patients and require less infrastructure than standalone medical facilities. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has funding streams designed to modernize public health infrastructure and reduce health inequality. Health departments in the region can collaborate and partner with major health systems in the area, such as the UP Health System, to implement these interventions effectively.

County	Patient to Primary Care Physicians Ratio
Ontonagon	5,800:1
Menominee	3,280:1
Iron	1,590:1
Chippewa	1,560:1
Houghton	1,510:1
Mackinac	1,350:1
Delta	1,330:1
Alger	1,300:1
Gogebic	1,260:1
Michigan	*1,270:1*
Dickinson	1,150:1
Schoolcraft	1,150:1
Baraga	1,040:1
Marquette	920:1
Luce	900:1
Keweenaw*	--

* Measure unavailable due to lack of or unreliable data.

References

[1] U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table A01001.

[2] Rural Health Information Hub. "Demographic Changes and Aging Population – Rhihub Aging in Place Toolkit." Accessed March 21, 2022. https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/aging/1/demographics.

[3] University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. "County Health Rankings and Road Maps: Michigan, 2021." Accessed March 21, 2022. https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/michigan/2021/measure/factors/4/data.

[4] Cordina, Jenny, Levin, Eric, and Stein, George. "COVID-19 Consumer Healthcare Insights: What 2021 may hold." (McKinsey and Company, 2021) https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/covid-19-consumer-healthcare-insights-what-2021-may-hold.

[5] University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. "County Health Rankings and Road Maps: Michigan, 2021." Accessed March 21, 2022. https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/michigan/2021/measure/factors/4/data.