



Individual Health

Objective:

Increase the number of healthy years that residents live

What is happening in King County?

Over the course of their lives, most people experience periods of both good health--usually for the majority of their lives--and poor health. "Years of Healthy Life" (YHL) is the number of years the average King County resident born today can expect to live in good health. For example, the average King County resident born between 2006 and 2010 could expect to live 81.4 years, 73.5 of which would be spent in good health and 7.9 of which would be spent in poor health.

Both total life expectancy and YHL are lowest for residents in the South Region, and the average number and percent of expected years lived in poor health is also greatest for that group. Women have a higher life expectancy than men in King County, but they also average more years in poor health than men do. In other words, where people live and their gender contribute to disparities in total life expectancy and the number of years that they will live in good versus poor health.

What role does King County play?

King County strives to increase healthy years through health protection, health promotion and providing high quality medical care and other services for people in need. Major activities include advocating for strong policies, leading or supporting community partnerships, regulation, educating the public about ways to be healthy, and providing clinical care to children and adults in need. Recently, King County has played a strong role to plan for improved access to affordable, appropriate, and quality health care services through developing strategies and systems in our community to assure that our community will benefit from health care reform. King County is also developing and providing information, tools, and strategies to enable individuals and communities to identify and make healthy choices, and working to improve our communities through policies and systems that prevent obesity and tobacco use as leading causes of death and poor health.

Examples of King County activities that can be expected to affect YHL are:

- Promoting regulation of the use of artificial trans fat, which causes heart disease, in restaurants;
- Working with schools in southeast Seattle and South King County to promote physical activity and healthy nutrition in youth;
- Ensuring that tobacco retailers do not sell to underage youth;
- Ensuring access to recommended vaccines against communicable diseases for all King County children;

- Inspecting restaurants for compliance with sanitary standards;
- Maintaining a health care safety net of Public Health and community clinics for children and adults who need clinical care; and
- Expanding health insurance and access to needed services for all low-income children through the King County Children's Health Initiative and low-income adults by developing a more integrated and cost-effective system of care.

What else influences these indicators?

Many factors affect life expectancy and years of healthy life. Disease and injuries result in shortened life span (death) and in diminished quality of life (disability). Diseases and injuries in turn are affected by health-related behaviors or choices, access to medical care, and more fundamentally, by genetics and the social and physical environments found in King County.

Behaviors that significantly affect disease and injury rates include tobacco use, alcohol and other substance misuse, physical inactivity, eating unhealthy foods, and unsafe sexual activity. Physical environmental conditions include air and water quality and the built environment (parks, streets, sidewalks, housing). Social environmental conditions include social support, stress, income, education, and racial discrimination.

What can you do?

[Understand Causes of Good and Poor Health \(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention\)](#)

[Become Active in Efforts to Make our Community Healthy](#)

[Learn more about King County initiatives to improve our health care system](#)

Related Links

[King County Community Health Indicators: Years of Healthy Life](#)

[Public Health-Seattle & King County](#)

[Health of King County](#)

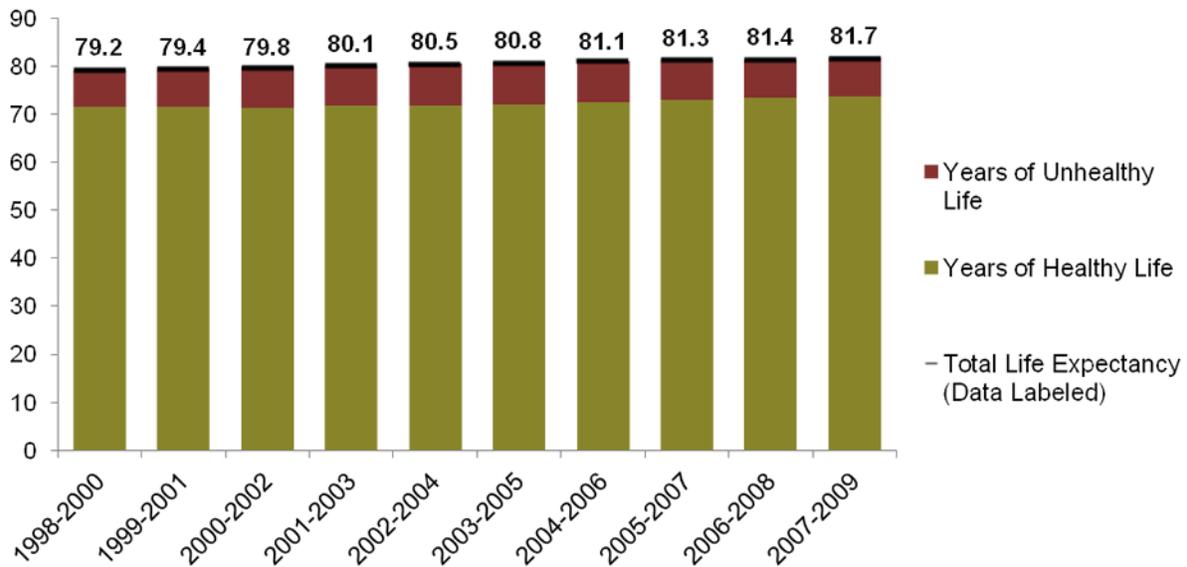
[Communities Count](#)

Technical Notes

1. Data from Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, deaths by statistical files, Washington State Department of Health; prepared by: Assessment, Policy Development and Evaluation Unit, Public Health- Seattle & King County, 9/2012. Data is latest available for all charts and includes different time periods due to data availability.
2. The Years of Healthy Life (YHL) calculations assume that a newborn will experience the current death rates and years of healthy life of today's population throughout her life. YHL are based on 3 year rolling averages.

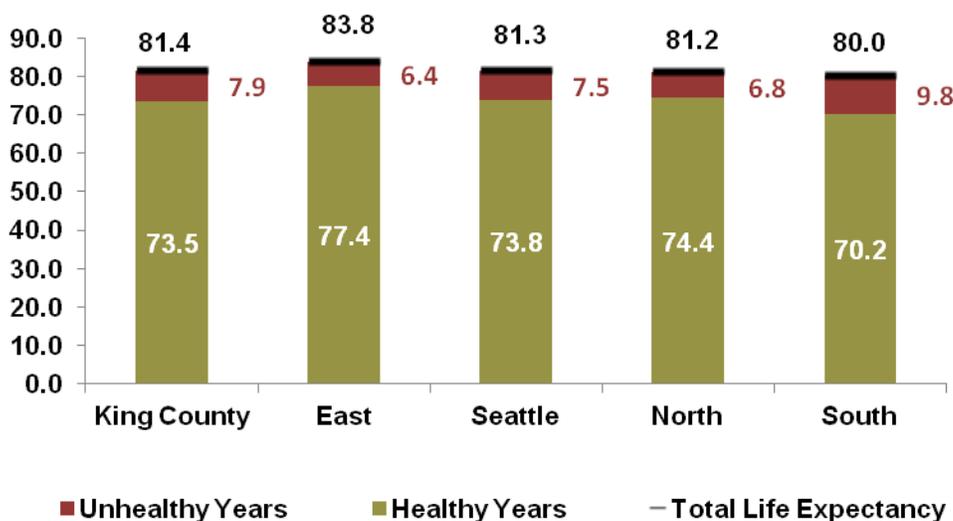
Charts and Maps

King County Life Expectancy and Years of Healthy Life (3 year rolling averages)



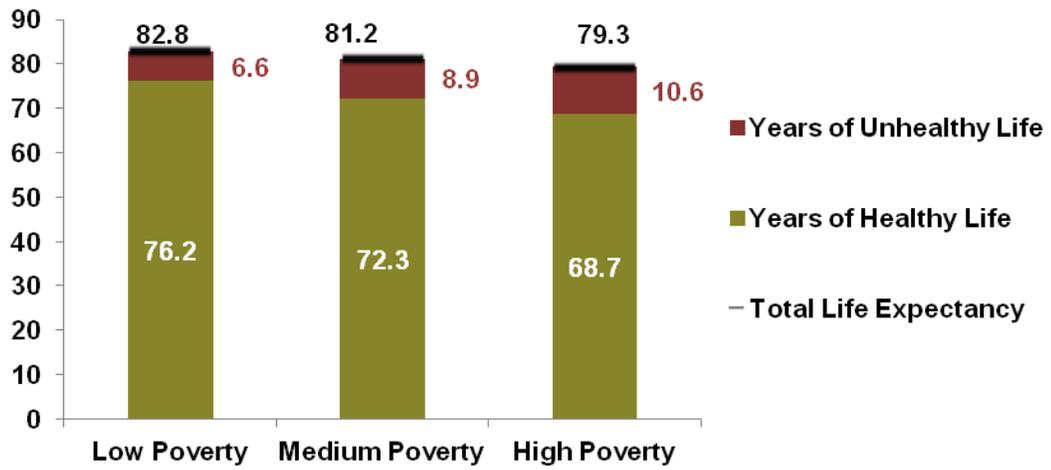
Data Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics; Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Washington State Department of Health.

Average Life Expectancy, Years of Healthy Life for years 2006-2010



Data Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics; Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Washington State Department of Health.

Life Expectancy and Years of Healthy Life by Neighborhood Poverty (2005-2009 five year average)



Data Source: Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics; Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Washington State Department of Health.