For Immediate Release

September 10, 2018

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Life Expectancy Estimates Available by Neighborhood in Kansas
Census Tract-Level Data can help leaders, advocates, residents create healthier communities

TOPEKA – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s (KDHE) Office of Vital Statistics, Bureau of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics, has partnered with the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) to produce life expectancy estimates in each census tract in the United States. Six years of data was used, through 2015, for the calculations of this indicator. Kansas-specific geographic health statistics.

“These census tract-level life expectancy estimates—based on state death records and population estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census—have previously been unavailable nationwide,” said Lou Saadi, Ph.D., State Registrar and Director of the KDHE Bureau of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics. “Access to estimates like these helps public health experts quantify how people living just a few miles apart can have vastly different opportunities for a long life. With this kind of information, community leaders can examine the factors that may be influencing differences in longevity—such as access to health care, safe and affordable housing, educational opportunities and other factors that impact the health of community members—and target solutions more effectively.”

In Kansas, the dataset includes “life expectancy at birth” estimates for 723 Kansas Census Tracts. Life expectancy at birth ranges from 62.5 years in Census Tract 041800 (in Wyandotte County) to 89.7 years in Census Tract 962600 (in Gray County).

Although county-, city-, and ZIP code-level data have provided similar information, they often don’t tell the full story as neighborhoods right next to each other—located within the same ZIP code, city or county—can provide drastically different opportunities for health and well-being. Census tract-level
data offer information on a much smaller and targeted group of people making it easier to create a more complete picture of health at a local level. Census tracts cover an average of 4,000 people who typically have similar characteristics, such as social and economic status. Data available at this very granular level can help to more effectively target efforts to remove the barriers standing in the way of health and opportunity.

Hospitals, for example, can use the data to help create community health assessment plans that will identify areas most in need. Community development financial institutions can use these data to help decide which neighborhoods most need their investment dollars to fund health clinics, schools and other projects. Community members can use the data to guide conversations about what is causing life expectancy disparities in their neighborhood and what changes they want to address those challenges, such as better public transportation, access to healthy food or job training opportunities.

For more information on the United States Small-Area Life Expectancy Project (USALEEP) and to access life expectancy estimates for your neighborhood, please visit www.naphsis.org/usaleep and http://kic.kdheks.gov/LifeExptncy.html#top. The County Health Rankings’ What Works for Health is a searchable tool that provides evidence-informed policies, programs, systems and environmental changes that can make a difference locally. CDC’s Division of Community Health website also provides examples of communities taking action to improve the health of their residents.

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