

# Patterns of Social Well-Being in Minnesota

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## Introduction

The poster describes a study of the link between county structure and social well-being in Minnesota. This study is a work in progress. The index was initially calculated in 1990 and again in 2007.

The study uses an index of 11 indicators (listed below) to determine the social well-being of the residents of each of Minnesota's 87 counties.

## Indicators Used for Index:

- 1. Cirrhosis Death Rate per 10,000**  
(Range: 0 to 4.41; Mean: 0.69)
- 2. Influenza and Pneumonia Death Rate per 1,000**  
(Range: 0 to 16.69; Mean: 2.63)
- 3. Suicide Rate per 10,000**  
(Range: 0 to 4.52; Mean: 1.09)
- 4. Death Rate per 1,000**  
(Range: 3.73 to 17.69; Mean: 9.64)
- 5. Infant Death Rate per 1,000 live births**  
(Range: 0 to 23.4; Mean: 6.04)
- 6. Median Family Income**  
(Range: \$35,500 to \$74,576; Mean: 47,807)
- 7. Percent of Families above Poverty**  
(Range: 82.4% to 97.1%; Mean: 90.9%)
- 8. Percent of Female-Headed Households**  
(Range: 0 to 16.69; Mean: 2.63)
- 9. Percent of Housing with Complete Plumbing**  
(Range: 82.5% to 97.1%; Mean: 97.12%)
- 10. Percent of Children Living with Two Parents**  
(Range: 66.1% to 88.7%; Mean: 80.8%)
- 11. Percent of People over Age 25 with a B.A./B.S. Degree or Higher**  
(Range: 10% to 39.1%; Mean: 17.7%)

### Sources for Data Collection

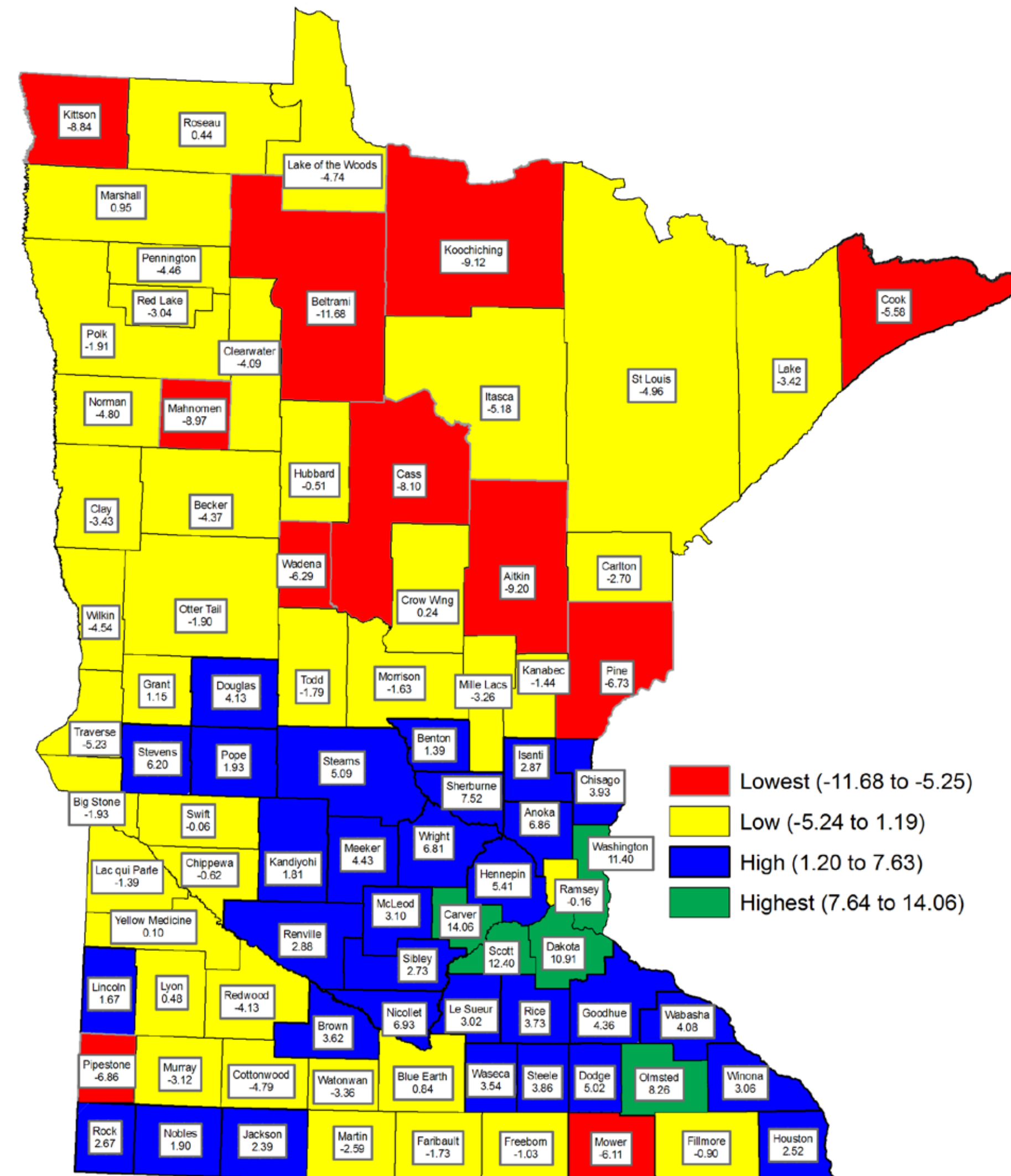
Minnesota Center for Health Statistics  
Minnesota Department of Administration  
Minnesota Department of Health  
State Demographic Center  
U.S. Census Bureau

## Social Inequality "Made in USA"

*"America is the most unequal society in the industrialized West. The richest 20 percent of Americans earn nine times more than the poorest 20 percent; a scale of inequality half as great again as in Japan, Germany and France. The country boasts some three million millionaires, and the richest 1 percent of the population holds 38 percent of its wealth, a concentration more marked than in any comparable country."*

— W. Hutton,  
The Guardian, April 28, 2002

## General Index of Social Well-Being for Minnesota Counties



The Index of Social Well-Being constructed by this research summarizes in single scores for each one of the 87 Minnesota counties the various levels of relative well-being. The scores range from a low of -11.68 to a high of +14.06. Negative scores on the index denote severe limitations of communities in achieving basic levels of social well-being. Positive scores indicate better social conditions.

## Research findings

- Counties have substantial differences in their relative levels of social well-being.
- The majority of the counties (51 out of 87) are in categories of low and lowest in their scores of social well-being.
- Five urban-metropolitan counties (Carver, Scott, Washington, Dakota and Olmsted) received the highest scores of well-being, ranging from 8.26 to 14.06
- The second-highest scores (from 1.39 to 7.52) correspond to 31 counties located in the center and southern areas of the state.
- Counties with the lowest scores (-2.5 to -11.68) were mostly rural and agriculturally dependent.
- Counties that are part of or adjacent to Minneapolis and urban communities of the Twin Cities captured the second highest scores: (Sherburne (7.52), Nicollet (6.93), Anoka (6.86) and Hennepin (5.41).

## Conclusions

- The uneven distribution of resources is threatening the well-being of residents of smaller and rural counties, which face great challenges in providing the services that promote better living conditions.
- The disparity between the highest five counties and the lowest five offers major challenges to the state in areas such as family income, educational achievement and infant mortality rate. These conditions may also reflect access to services, health insurance capacity and other factors related to social development.
- The index emphasizes the importance of several social and economic dimensions when evaluating development. It suggests that the concept, planning and implementation of development should be intrinsically connected with the general well-being of the population.
- Although growth is an essential component of development, under certain conditions of inequality in organization, resources and political power, economic growth may also function as a hidden force of uneven development across counties and communities.
- Although limited to 11 social and economic indicators, the index can also be used as a research and educational tool in counties and communities dealing with local development. Despite the absence of other indicators that may also measure important aspects of quality of life, this index could also be utilized in monitoring present conditions of social development in Minnesota counties.
- Social scientists, specifically those in the areas of education, health and social welfare, face the challenge of exploring further this landscape of inequality to determine areas that need improvement and envision strategies to achieve that.

## County Inequality "Made in Minnesota"

*"Major concentration of resources and political power in urban counties has reduced the capability of small counties and rural communities to provide services and improve their quality of life. Unequal growth between urban-metro centers and rural areas strongly suggests that the 'trickle-down' process has failed to bring relief and social development to rural counties and their communities."*

— Dario Menanteau-Horta,  
Social Well-Being and Development, 1993