



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Bloomberg American
Health Initiative

Bloomberg American Health Initiative

Annual Report

2023

Bloomberg American Health Initiative

Through education, research, and practice, the Bloomberg American Health Initiative works to tackle critical 21st-century challenges to health in the United States, with the goal of improving health outcomes, advancing equity, and saving lives in five core areas: addiction and overdose, environmental challenges, adolescent health, food systems for health, and violence.

The Bloomberg American Health Initiative develops and scales evidence-based research and programs to inform policies with impact. Established in late 2016 with a \$300 million gift from Bloomberg Philanthropies in honor of the centennial of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Initiative has grown to include hundreds of collaborating organizations, fellows, and projects.

The year 2023 was a year of community-centered growth for the Initiative. This year, we hosted another very successful Bloomberg American Health Summit, welcomed 60 new Bloomberg Fellows, announced several new funding opportunities, and released new high impact projects that will continue to make a difference for years to come. This annual report shares some of these highlights.



KEY 2023 DATA POINTS

TOTAL FELLOWS

329 total, including **278** MPH students, **51** DrPH students, **133** alumni

COURSES

39 courses taken by **over 2,000** students to date

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

566 organizations, including **258** collaborating organizations across **42** states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Mariana Islands

ENDOWED FACULTY

As of December 2023, the Initiative has provided endowment support to **20** Bloomberg Professors of American Health and **eight** Bloomberg Centennial Professors.

FUNDED PROJECTS

Provided funding for **47** projects total, including **32** collaborating organizations, and **eight** public sector partnerships

COMMUNICATIONS

In 2023, the Initiative bolstered its communications activities, launching LinkedIn and Instagram accounts. It added **1,427** new followers across LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter/X, to total **4,778**. The Initiative website also welcomed **152,816** users and had **283,870** total views. Initiative leadership, core and endowed faculty appeared in more than **200** notable media outlets including NPR, the Washington Post, and CNN.

EVENTS

The 2023 Bloomberg American Health Summit was attended in person by **403** people and livestreamed by **1,549** people. Additionally, the Initiative sponsored **17** speaker events.

Addiction & Overdose

CONNECTION

INCREASING ACCESS TO ADDICTION TREATMENT FOR CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE COMMUNITIES

The California Native Connections project, led by Melissa Walls, PhD, MA, Bloomberg Associate Professor of American Health, fosters links between local emergency departments and California's Native community with a goal of increasing access to medication for addiction treatment in counties with the highest opioid overdose mortality rates. In partnership with a group of seven navigators from local emergency departments, the team establishes strong relationships with tribal health organizations and encourages Native community members to access addiction prevention services.

POLICY

RESPONDING TO THE EMERGING THREAT OF XYLAZINE IN MARYLAND

Xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer that enhances and extends the effects of opioids and increases risk for overdose, was detected in 25% of opioid-related deaths in Maryland in 2021. With Initiative funding, Renee M. Johnson, PhD, professor in the Department of Mental Health, and her team worked closely with the Maryland Department of Health to create strong connections between researchers and practitioners to develop educational materials and resources about xylazine for people who use drugs. Their analysis found early evidence that the proportion of individuals who die from an overdose and are xylazine-positive is no longer increasing in Maryland.

CONNECTION

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH FENTANYL TEST STRIP DISTRIBUTION

Susan Sherman, PhD, professor in the Department of Health, Behavior, and Society, and Hoover Adger, MD, MPH, professor of pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, are working to address the opioid crisis in Minnesota. Collaborating with the Steve Rummeler HOPE Network and hospitals in the area, the team is investigating the impact of distributing fentanyl test strip kits to patients with a documented history of substance use.



Fellow Spotlight



Bloomberg Fellow Fatumata Mima Kaba provides support to vulnerable individuals seeking early treatment for substance use disorder at the Boston Public Health Commission. In her role, Fatumata works with local treatment programs to ensure proper implementation and maintenance of operational procedures.



Bloomberg Fellow Jacqueline Hackett serves as deputy chief of staff for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy where she helps to oversee a \$43 billion budget to implement solutions to the overdose epidemic across 19 federal agencies.

Adolescent Health

CONNECTION

ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN THE CHINLE UNIFIED DISTRICT

The Chinle Unified School District in Apache County, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation, serves over 4,000 students, with 98% of them being Native American. Emily Haroz, PhD, associate professor in International Health, has spent years working with the district. With the support of the Initiative, she focused on the development of a unified strategic plan to support social emotional learning and mental health in the Indigenous community. After comprehensive asset mapping, strategic planning meetings, and feedback from all stakeholders, the strategic plan was finalized, laying the groundwork for comprehensive mental health support within the district.

CONNECTION

IMPLEMENTING TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Tamar Mendelson, PhD, professor in the Department of Mental Health piloted the delivery of RAP club, a trauma-informed, evidence-based mental health intervention, at two Baltimore City schools. The project focused on gathering data on the feasibility and acceptability of having school personnel serve as program providers, a key step on the journey to improve access to mental health care for young people in the city.

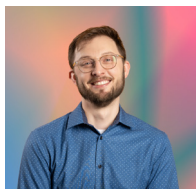
POLICY

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES IMPACTED BY CAREGIVER LOSS

Through an Initiative-funded intergovernmental exchange, Terrinieka Powell, PhD, associate professor in Population, Family, and Reproductive Health at the Bloomberg School, joined the Administration for Children and Families to develop and operationalize a cross-cutting strategy to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families affected by substance use disorders and their related challenges. Powell contributed to a “Dear Colleague” letter about the impact of parent and caregiver loss, a blog about federal resources to support families experiencing caregiver loss due to overdose, COVID-19, homicide, and suicide, and a brief on harm reduction among young adults experiencing homelessness.



Fellow Spotlight



Bloomberg Fellow Anthony Betori is working with Healthy Futures Texas, a reproductive health organization, to support sexual health initiatives and advocacy projects for adolescent health across the state. Betori is currently working on launching a new puberty curriculum called “On My Way” which uses evidence-informed strategies to help 4th to 6th graders in Texas understand their bodies and evolving relationships with others.

Environmental Challenges

RESEARCH

TRACKING THE IMPACT OF POLLUTION: THE HUMAN BODY MAP

With support from the Initiative, Kirsten Koehler, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at the Bloomberg School, and her team built the Human Body Map, an interactive mapping tool that allows users to visualize how contamination impacts all parts of the body and immune system. The tool is being used in various spaces to educate a range of audiences about the long-lasting impacts of contamination on the human body, with specific interest in common contaminants present in various environmental media in the south/southeast region of Los Angeles.



POLICY

PARTNERING WITH THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Through the Initiative's intergovernmental exchange program, Megan Latshaw, PhD, associate teaching professor at the Bloomberg School, worked with the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health to lead senior-level policy discussions around climate and health strategic planning. Her work during the exchange program focused on environmental justice and health equity. Latshaw specifically worked on communicating the revised CDC guidance for state, territorial, local, and tribal health agencies regarding community cancer concerns and cancer risk associated with etiologic factors.



Fellow Spotlight



Bloomberg Fellow Melino Gianotti is working with the University of Washington and the CDC to inform the establishment of a center focused on enhancing public health emergency preparedness in tribal communities in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.



Bloomberg Fellow Miguel Vazquez currently serves as the Health Equity Urban and Regional Planner at the Riverside University Health System in California where he operates at the intersection of urban planning and public health. Vazquez strives to bring about policy, systems, and environmental changes for the 2.5 million people living in Riverside County.

Food Systems for Health

PROGRAM

LAUNCHING A SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Social epidemiology, or “social epi,” is the branch of epidemiology dedicated to understanding how social and economic factors contribute to health and patterns of disease in populations. In 2023, Lori Dean, ScD, and John Jackson, ScD, associate professors in the Department of Epidemiology at the Bloomberg School, developed and launched a social epidemiology certificate program at the Bloomberg School. This program will equip 25 students per year with the tools they need for impactful careers in the social epi field.

POLICY

CREATING A GUIDE TO FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, many local governments realized the need to be better prepared for disruptions to the food system caused by public health crises and other natural and man-made disasters. Roni Neff, associate professor in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at the Bloomberg School, and her team authored a guide to help local governments face this challenge. With support from the Initiative, the researchers disseminated “*Food System Resilience: A Planning Guide for Local Governments*” to local leaders. The team also offered technical assistance, led evaluations, and developed policy translation materials to make sure cities across the country had the tools necessary to support their future populations.

EQUITY

DECREASING BREAST CANCER MORTALITY RATES IN BLACK WOMEN LIVING IN MARYLAND

Black breast cancer patients have the highest breast cancer mortality rates and shortest overall survival compared to other racial/ethnic groups of women in the U.S. Many researchers attribute this disparity to a lack of access to treatment, late diagnosis, insufficient support systems, and systemic racism. Avonne Connor, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology and cancer epidemiologist at the Bloomberg School, found that while only 7% of patients reported being obese at the time of their diagnosis, 54% reported being obese nine years after their diagnosis.

RESEARCH

EVALUATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MEAL-KIT SERVICE AIMED AT MITIGATING DIETARY DISPARITIES

The SouthEats community-led meal-kit service was developed in Washington, D.C. to address barriers to healthy eating and vegetable consumption among middle- and low-income households. The team, led by Roland Thorpe, PhD, professor in the Department of Health, Behavior, and Society at the Bloomberg School, provided customers with raw ingredients to prepare their choice of three meals each week. Unlike other meal kits, SouthEats meals were pre-seasoned, pre-cut, pre-portioned, and required an average of five steps to prepare vs. 15 steps in other meal-kit services. The team found preliminary evidence suggesting that the SouthEats meal-kit service could help reduce the amount of time spent on cooking, reduce feelings of time scarcity, and increase vegetable consumption in the short-term.



Fellow Spotlight



Bloomberg Fellow Amber Canto recently received a High Obesity Program grant from the CDC. Through this grant, Canto will work to address access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity in two rural Wisconsin counties.

Violence

CONNECTION

DEVELOPING GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING FOR JUSTICE-IMPACTED SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Carolyn Sufrin, MD, PhD, associate professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, conducted a comparative evaluation study among intimate partner violence survivors with histories of incarceration. The work was conducted through a partnership with the Initiative, Light to Life, and From Prison Cells to PhD, organizations focused on improving recidivism statistics through education. The results suggest that improving programming for formerly and currently incarcerated women through educational workshops, leadership opportunities, and healing justice-centered discussions, can lead to a reduction in both intimate partner violence and recidivism.

POLICY

ADVOCATING FOR MISSING AND MURDERED BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS

Tiara Willie, Bloomberg Assistant Professor of American Health in the Department of Mental Health at the Bloomberg School, and Kamila Alexander, associate director of PhD and postdoctoral programs at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, brought together civil rights leaders, social justice advocates, and academics to discuss the epidemic of missing and murdered Black women and girls in America. The event concluded with Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ) announcing the introduction of the Brittany Clardy Act. The proposed legislation would establish an Office for Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls within the U.S. Department of Justice.

RESEARCH

IMPLEMENTING SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LATINX IMMIGRANT-ORIGIN YOUTH

Kiara Álvarez, PhD, Bloomberg Professor of American Health, and her colleagues released a study which provided actionable recommendations for suicide prevention programming for immigrant Latinx youth and their caregivers. The research suggests the importance of positive youth development, caregiver-child communication, school-based supports, and neighborhood resources in preventing suicides.



Fellow Spotlight



Bloomberg Fellow Sami Jarrah joined his colleagues at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and the Public Interest Law Center to organize a lawsuit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The lawsuit called on leaders to overturn a nearly three-decade-old precedent that gives the legislature the sole authority to regulate gun ownership throughout the state. Representing gun violence victims, Jarrah continues to advocate for stricter gun policies across Pennsylvania and the country.



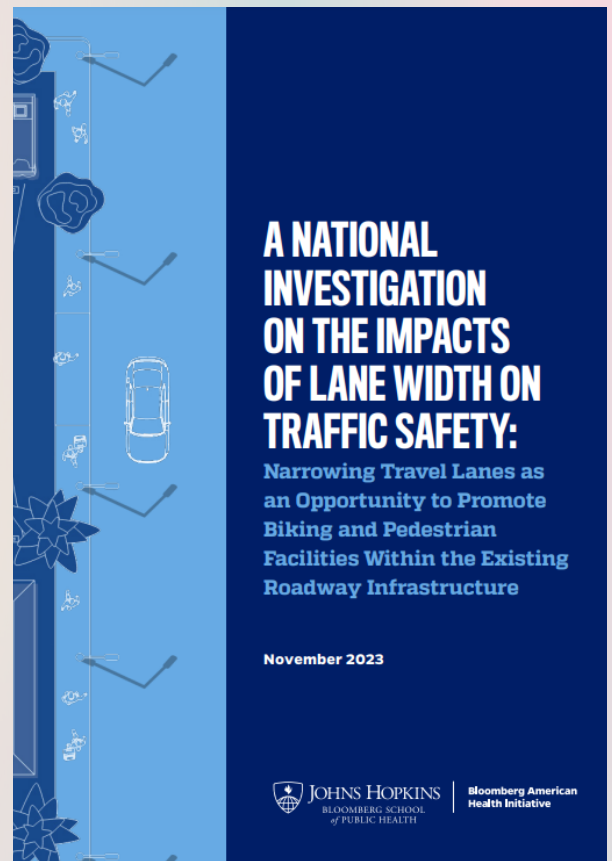
Bloomberg Fellow Sarah Shewbrooks and her team at the Great Plains Tribal Leaders Health Board in South Dakota worked closely with tribal organizations to combat the syphilis epidemic. Together, they focused on ways to improve access to information in areas with increased spread and risk.

A NATIONAL STUDY ON THE IMPACTS OF LANE WIDTH ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

Road traffic collisions are a leading cause of death for people ages 1 to 54 in the U.S. The year 2020 was the deadliest year for pedestrians in 40 years. Pedestrian fatalities, especially in urban areas, have also increased by more than 40% from 2010 to 2018. Lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along with street design, specifically travel lane width, contribute to the high rates of traffic-related fatalities.

With support from the Initiative, researchers at the Bloomberg School found that slightly narrower traffic lanes can improve bike and pedestrian safety.

Local and state departments of transportation have long favored lane widths between 11 and 12 feet for city streets with the assumption that the extra space is safer and can accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. In an analysis of 1,117 street sections in seven U.S. cities, the researchers found that reducing city traffic lane width to 9 feet, especially in traffic lanes with speed limits up to 35 miles per hour, could help reduce traffic-related collisions. The report, “A National Investigation on the Impacts of Lane Width on Traffic Safety,” appeared in 15 media outlets and continues to have a significant impact as state departments of transportation begin to consider narrowing lanes.



Bloomberg American Health Summit

The sixth annual Bloomberg American Health Summit, held in Baltimore from November 6-8, 2023, brought together hundreds of practitioners, policymakers, and experts to engage, plan, and discover how uncommon connections are improving health across the country.



With the theme “The Power of Connection to Advance Public Health,” the Summit featured public health officials, leaders from state and federal health agencies, faculty from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, journalists, and representatives from community organizations speaking about the importance of cross-industry collaboration to create lasting change. Sessions covered strategies for preventing overdose deaths, ways to improve the U.S. food system, solutions to improve the youth criminal justice system, and public health approaches to violence prevention.



Panel discussions at the 2023 Summit shared insights into public health issues facing the nation. Sessions included:

- [Bridging the Gap to Address Food Insecurity](#)
- [Structural Racism and the Environment](#)
- [A Call to Action for Missing and Murdered Black Women](#)
- [Social Media and Teen Gun Violence](#)
- [The Overdose Epidemic in Indigenous Communities](#)
- [How Cities and States are Advancing Food Policy](#)



The 2023 Bloomberg American Health Summit was attended in person by over 400 people and livestreamed by 1,549 people.

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