

Special Issue of *The Milbank Quarterly*
How Policy Contexts Impact Population Health in the United States
(manuscript submission deadline Nov 1, 2026)

Federal, state, and local policies in areas such as employment, environment, housing, immigration, tobacco, firearms, alcohol and drugs, social safety nets, and criminal justice affect population health, whether directly or indirectly. At the same time, the U.S. policy landscape has been shifting at the federal, state, and local levels with potentially profound consequences for population health.

In partnership with the Center for Aging and Policy Studies and Center for Policy Research at Syracuse University, *The Milbank Quarterly* will publish a special issue to advance knowledge on the connections between policies and population health in a changing U.S. context. The special issue seeks empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions on the topic. Of particular interest are papers that link changes and variation in policy contexts to health outcomes, identify mechanisms linking policies to outcomes, or propose new ways to measure and conceptualize policy contexts for health research.

Potential topics of papers for the special issue include, but are not limited to:

State and Local Policy Variation

- Effects of divergent state policy contexts on life expectancy and mortality trends.
- How state- or local-level health and other policies shape geographic disparities in health.
- Local governance innovations or preemptions and their impacts on health outcomes.

Structural Determinants of Health

- State and federal housing, labor, or family policies as determinants of population health.
- The role of criminal justice and policing policies in shaping health disparities.
- How policies exacerbate or attenuate the population health impacts of economic downturns.

Populations and Inequalities

- Policy effects on health outcomes across the rural–urban continuum.
- Immigration policies and immigrant health and wellbeing.
- Race-, ethnicity-, gender-, and class-specific impacts of policies on health.

Policy Change and Polarization

- Consequences of partisan polarization for population health trends and disparities.
- Long-term, historical analyses of major policy shifts and their effects on population health.
- Case studies of different states' policy choices and resulting population health outcomes.

Data, Methods, and Measurement

- Advances in measuring federal, state, or local policy contexts for health research.
- Comparative assessments of policy indices and their validity for population health research.
- Approaches for capturing life course exposures to policies.

Key Dates

- June 10, 2026: the journal's [website](#) will begin accepting submissions to the special issue. [See author instructions](#). Select the special issue on the last page of the submission.
- November 1, 2026: deadline to submit manuscripts to the special issue
- June 10, 2026 to June 2027: manuscripts will under the journal's standard peer-review process.
- Accepted manuscripts will be published online before the special issue is finalized.
- November 2027: special issue published

The guest editors for the special issue are Jennifer Karas Montez, Shannon Monnat, and Emily Wiemers.

