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## **Iowa County in Middle of the Pack in Wisconsin Health Rankings** **Annual rankings show where Wisconsin counties do well or can improve**

PRINCETON, N.J. and MADISON, Wis. — Iowa County ranks in the middle of the pack for health in the state, according to the annual *County Health Rankings* released today by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The *Rankings* are available at [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org).

*“In 2014, we began Healthy Iowa County Initiative which is a campaign led by the Iowa County Health Department. This initiative includes many healthcare disciplines, businesses and community members. Our mission is to improve health behaviors and outcomes for Iowa County residents. We invite our communities interested in joining this initiative to contact us at (608) 930-9870”, states Jenny Pritchett, Iowa County Health Officer.*

The *Rankings* are an easy-to-use snapshot comparing the health of nearly every county in the nation. The local-level data allows each state to see how its counties compare on 30 factors that influence health, including education, housing, violent crime, jobs, diet, and exercise.

According to the 2015 *Rankings*, the five healthiest counties in Wisconsin, starting with the most healthy, are Ozaukee, followed by Pepin, Calumet, Florence, and Kewaunee. The five counties in the poorest health, starting with the least healthy, are Menominee, Milwaukee, Forest, Washburn, and Rusk.

“Since the *County Health Rankings* began in Wisconsin more than a decade ago, we’ve seen them serve as a rallying point for change,” said Karen Timberlake, director of UWPHI in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. “Communities are using the *Rankings* to inform their priorities as they work to improve health for all their residents.”

Iowa County ranks in the top half for health outcomes (29) and health factors (24). Iowa ranks in the top quarter of Wisconsin counties for social and economic factors (13) and physical environment (14), and near the middle for health behaviors (33). Iowa County ranks in the bottom half for clinical care (49).

Nationally, this year’s *Rankings* show that the healthiest counties in each state have higher college attendance, fewer preventable hospital stays, and better access to parks and gyms than the least healthy counties. The least healthy counties in each state have more

smokers, more teen births, and more alcohol-related car crash deaths. This year's *Rankings* also look at the links between income levels, income distribution, and health.

The *Rankings* also reveal the following:

- Premature death rates are dropping, with 60 percent of the nation's counties seeing declines. But for many counties, these rates are not improving – 40 percent of counties are not making progress in reducing premature death.
- One out of four children in the U.S. lives in poverty. Child poverty rates are more than twice as high in the least healthy counties in each state than in the healthiest counties.
- Violent crime rates are highest in the South. Violent crime rates, which affect health, well-being, and stress levels, are particularly high in the Southwest, Southeast, and Mississippi Delta regions.
- Having a job influences health. Unemployment rates are 1.5 times higher in the least healthy counties in each state than in the healthiest counties. During the recession, counties in the West, Southeast, and Rust Belt regions of the U.S. were hit hardest by growing unemployment. Many, but not all, of these counties have seen their unemployment rates drop since the recession ended in 2010.

“The *County Health Rankings* have helped galvanize communities across the nation to improve health,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, RWJF president and CEO. “Solutions and innovation are coming from places as diverse as rural Williamson, West Virginia in the heart of Appalachia to urban New Orleans who are engaging business, public health, education, parents, and young people to build a culture of health.”

The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program offers data, tools, and resources to help communities throughout their journey to build a culture of health. Also part of the program is the [RWJF Culture of Health Prize](#) which honors communities that are working together to build a healthier, more vibrant community.

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### **About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

For more than 40 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve the health and health care of all Americans. We are striving to build a national culture of health that will enable all Americans to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For

more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](http://www.rwjf.org/facebook).

### **About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute**

The [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](http://www.rwjf.org) advances health and well-being for all by developing and evaluating interventions and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels. The Institute works across the full spectrum of factors that contribute to health. A focal point for health and health care dialogue within the University of Wisconsin-Madison and beyond, and a convener of stakeholders, the Institute promotes an exchange of expertise between those in academia and those in the policy and practice arena. The Institute leads the work on the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* and manages the *RWJF Culture of Health Prize*. For more information, visit <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu>.