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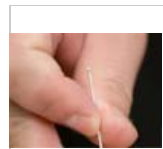
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Boone, Warren fare well in health rankings

BY PEGGY O'FARRELL • POFARRELL@ENQUIRER.COM • FEBRUARY 17, 2010

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Boone County is Kentucky's healthiest county, according to a new report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute.



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Greater Cincinnati didn't fare as well in Ohio's rankings. Warren County ranked fifth statewide for overall best health, the highest of any of the four metropolitan counties, while Hamilton County ranked 69th among the state's 88 counties.

Delaware County, just north of Columbus, ranked highest in the state.

The report, released today, ranks counties in all 50 states by a variety of health measures, including life expectancy, disease incidence, tobacco use, obesity, health-care access and quality of care, rates of sexually transmitted diseases, drunk-driving rates, availability of healthy foods, education and income.

- [See results for each Ohio county](#)
- [See results for each Kentucky county](#)
- [Download Ohio county health report \(PDF\)](#)
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Rankings varied widely by county across a number of categories, but overall, wealthier suburban counties tended to rank higher than lower-income urban counties.

"Income is a very important factor in health status," said Bridget Booske, lead author of the report and senior scientist at the Population Health Institute. "Even among

communities with very similar income levels, you'll see differences in their health behaviors. If you could increase every income, you could do a lot, but you couldn't do it all."

Even highly ranked communities ranked near the bottom in some categories:

- Boone County ranked first in Kentucky for overall health, but 101st out of 120 counties for physical environment, which looked at factors like air quality, availability of parks and walking trails, access to healthy foods and the number of liquor stores per capita.

WHERE WE RANK

A new report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute ranks counties in each state according to a variety of health measures. Here's how Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky counties ranked:

NORTHERN KENTUCKY (out of 120 counties)

Health outcomes (including premature deaths, hospitalizations, disease)

Boone: 1
Campbell: 32
Kenton: 30

Mortality

Boone: 2
Campbell: 42
Kenton: 41

Health behaviors (including tobacco use, safe sex practices, diet and exercise)

Boone: 3
Campbell: 9
Kenton: 15

Clinical care:

Boone: 4
Campbell: 6
Kenton: 3

Social and economic factors (including education, employment, income)

Boone: 1 (tied with Oldham and Woodford counties)
Campbell: 6
Kenton: 18

GREATER CINCINNATI (out of 88 counties)

Health outcomes

Butler: 50
Clermont: 32
Hamilton: 69
Warren: 5

Mortality

Butler: 41
Clermont: 32
Hamilton: 65
Warren: 3

Health behaviors

• Hamilton County ranked 69th for overall health in Ohio, but third in the state for clinical care, which looked at how readily accessible hospitals and physicians' offices are, as well as the quality of health-care in the community.

Hamilton County Health Commissioner Tim Ingram said the county ranked in line with Cuyahoga and Montgomery counties - homes to Cleveland and Dayton, respectively, for overall health outcomes. In urban areas, the population tends to be older, sicker and poorer, which is reflected in health data.

"In older, urban counties, we face a lot of the same challenges," Ingram said. "We have special populations here, and we have a lot of health disparities, like infant mortality, that we know exist."

Rankings like those released today help public health officials know where to focus their efforts, said Steve Katkowsky, director of the Northern Kentucky Health Department. It serves Boone, Campbell, Grant and Kenton counties.

"If you're No. 1 in a category, it ain't broke, so don't fix it," he said. "If you're not No. 1, then you need to look at what can we do to make all of our counties healthier?"

Northern Kentucky, like many regions, still has serious health issues that need to be addressed, Katkowsky said, including high rates of tobacco use and high incidence of cancer and heart disease.

Booske said she hoped the report would serve as a call to action for lower-ranked communities.

"We want people to say, 'Let's look at this. Why are our premature death rates so high? What can we do?'" she said.

Hamilton County Public Health is already using the information on which the county rankings are based, Ingram said, with efforts aimed at reducing premature birth and infant mortality in the county, and initiatives aimed at improving access to healthy foods and spaces for physical activity.

"With those projects going on, it'll be interesting to see where we rank in another three to five years," he said.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., funds a variety of initiatives aimed at improving Americans' health and health-care delivery.

Butler: 48
Clermont: 33
Hamilton: 39
Warren: 3

Clinical care

Butler: 19
Clermont: 16
Hamilton: 3
Warren: 2

Social and economic factors

Butler: 23
Clermont: 19
Hamilton: 65
Warren: 3

Learn more at www.countyhealthrankings.org

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