



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## National study ranks Vermont as “the nation’s healthiest state”

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For more information: [www.americashealthrankings.org](http://www.americashealthrankings.org)

MONTPELIER – For the fourth year in a row, Vermont ranked No. 1 as the nation’s healthiest state in a study by the United Health Foundation, Gov. Peter Shumlin and Health Commissioner Harry Chen announced today. Among the top indicators, the state has the lowest rate of infectious disease, as well as the second lowest rates of violent crime, low birthweight babies, and premature deaths. High school graduation rates in Vermont are second highest in the country.

“This is great news once again for Vermont, proving that our state remains the best place to live, raise your family, work and play,” Gov. Shumlin said. He said the state’s commitment to public health, a clean environment, quality education and access to health care continue to ensure Vermonters live in the healthiest state.

According to the report, economics play a role in the rankings. The five highest-ranked states report a higher median household income (\$51,862 to \$65,880) than the five lowest-ranked states (\$37,881 to \$43,939). And healthier states report a healthier job climate (unemployment rates range between 5.4 percent and 7.3 percent of the population in the top five ranked states, compared with between 7.8 to 10.5 percent of residents in the bottom five ranked states, UHF said).

Challenges exist, even for the healthiest states. Among those – a moderate prevalence of binge drinking (Vermont ranked 27th), and a higher rate of cancer deaths (Vermont ranked 28th). And like other states, Vermont faces threats like the EEE virus, which left two dead this summer, and the current outbreak of pertussis (also known as whooping cough).

“Vermont’s continued ranking as the healthiest state is a great measure of the success of public health,” said Chen. “This is a time to celebrate our collective efforts to protect and promote the best health for everyone. But there’s no time to rest – there are challenges ahead.”

Highlights from the report included:

- Vermont ranked third best in the categories of access to health insurance and public health funding
- fourth best for number of primary physicians and low percentage of adults with diabetes
- fifth best for adults NOT living a sedentary lifestyle
- seventh for cleaner air and preventable hospitalizations
- Challenges included the number of poor mental health days (19th) and occupations deaths (20th)
- Reflecting national trends, smoking is down in Vermont, while the obesity rate has climbed

According to the America’s Health Rankings report, Hawaii is ranked second, followed by New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Minnesota. The five least healthy states are South Carolina (46), West Virginia (47), Arkansas (48), and Mississippi and Louisiana, which tied for the 49th slot. States that showed the most substantial improvement in rankings include: New Jersey (moving up nine slots), Maryland (five slots), and Alabama, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Rhode Island (three slots).

According to the United Health Foundation, the data come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Medical Association, FBI, Dartmouth Atlas Project, U.S. Department of Education and Census Bureau. This is the 23rd year the report has been issued.

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