

New Data Source Available - County Health Rankings

County Health Rankings is a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. This first-of-its-kind project, measures the health of individual counties in all fifty states, using a standard set of measures. As stated by the University of Wisconsin researchers, "Where we live matters to our health. The health of a community depends on many different factors including quality of health care, individual behavior, education and jobs, and the environment."

The report ranks Michigan counties according to their summary measures of Health Outcomes and health factors. Health outcomes are simply: mortality (length of life) and morbidity (quality of life). Health factors are derived from four main categories: Health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors and physical environment.

Results for Michigan counties and the rest of the nation became available in March 2010. Counties are compared to other counties within the same state and in Michigan's case are ranked from 1 to 82, with 1 being the highest ranked. Midland County fared well with a ranking of 23rd in health outcomes and 9th in health factors.

Unfortunately, some of our neighboring counties, Clare, Gladwin and Saginaw and Genesee, scored in the bottom ten in both health outcomes and health factors.

While the measures and data sources used by the researchers are far from perfect, this project does offer useful information to stakeholders and provides a common yardstick for county health to be measured and compared. National funding is in place to continue this project for two additional years.

Further information is available at: www.countyhealthrankings.org/michigan.