



County Health Rankings: General Messages for Counties Ranking High, Medium and Low for Overall Health

The following messages offer a few suggested key points for how you may want to discuss your county's rankings. They are not meant to be all-inclusive or prescriptive. Counties should determine for themselves what to emphasize in their communications.

Low-Ranking Counties

- [Your county] ranked low on overall health—[insert here, e.g., 63 out of 65]—compared to other counties in the state. Overall health is measured by death and illness rates in the county.
- The *County Health Rankings* also show how [your county] ranks on individual factors that influence its overall health ranking. For example, [your county] does have some strengths in the area(s) of [note here], where it ranked [insert here, e.g., 13 out of 65]. The *Rankings* also indicate that [your county] is at-risk for poor health when it comes to [insert here, e.g., social and economic factors that affect health, such as poverty rates and unemployment], where it ranked [insert here, e.g., 50 out of 65].
- This report is important because it helps us identify factors that are making it difficult for residents to maintain a healthy lifestyle and understand how we compare to other counties in the state. With this knowledge, we can take steps to improve the health of our residents.
- [Your county] needs to do more to [insert here, e.g., improve clinical care, such as increasing how many people are screened for diabetes and reducing length of hospital stays.
- We've known for some time that our county faces challenges, and this report gives us information we can use to work with community leaders to invest in programs and policy changes that improve health in [your county].
- In addition to community leaders, consider how to include residents of our community in the discussions about what can be done to make [your county] a healthier place to live, learn, work and play.
- The *Rankings* show us which of our neighboring counties we might learn from to improve the health of our community. Consulting with health officials in counties that ranked higher in certain areas will help us learn about strategies they have found to be successful.
- One of the first steps we must take as a community is to come together to talk about what this report means to us. This report provides a broad snapshot of our community's health. Together, we need to create a higher resolution picture to better understand the factors that are making us unhealthy. We also need to determine who is willing to take action and what resources we need to make that happen.
- The *Rankings* can prompt us to think about who might be the "champion" for change in our community. Is there someone who can speak publicly about why our ranking is



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unacceptable and be effective in mobilizing the community around these issues? [See the Wyandotte County, Kansas, story where the mayor served this role].

- This is an opportunity to make people aware of [insert here any programs or policies that are already under discussion or have been implemented to address areas outlined in the *County Health Rankings*]. It also allows us to [insert here updates on outcomes for previously implemented programs or requests for assistance in supporting policies or programs that are under development].

Mid-Range Counties

- [Your county] ranked about average/in the middle on overall health—[33 out of 65]—compared with other counties in the state. Overall health is measured by death and illness rates in the county.
- The *County Health Rankings* also show how [your county] ranks on individual factors that influence its overall health ranking. For example, [your county] does have some strengths in the area(s) of [note here], where it ranked [insert here, e.g., 13 out of 65]. The *Rankings* also indicate that [your county] is at-risk for poor health when it comes to [insert here, e.g., social and economic factors that affect health, such as poverty rates and unemployment], where it ranked [insert here, e.g., 50 out of 65].
- [Your county] needs to do more to [insert here, e.g., improve clinical care, such as increasing how many people are screened for diabetes and reducing length of hospital stays].
- This report is important because it helps us identify factors that are making our residents unhealthy and understand how we compare to other counties in the state. With this knowledge, we can take steps to improve the health of our residents.
- This report shows us where we are doing well and sheds light on what more we can be doing to help residents lead healthier lives. We can use this report to celebrate our successes and mobilize community leaders to invest in programs and policy changes that will improve health in [your county].
- In addition to community leaders, consider how to include residents of our community in the discussions about what can be done to make [your county] a healthier place to live, learn, work and play.
- One of the first steps we must take as a community is to bring people together to talk about what this report means to us. This report provides a broad snapshot of our community's health. Together, we need to create a high resolution picture to better understand the factors that are making us unhealthy. We also need to talk about who is willing to take action and what resources we need to make that happen.
- The *Rankings* show us which of our neighboring counties we might learn from to improve the health of our community—consulting with health officials in healthier counties will help us learn about strategies they have found to be successful. We can also reach out to less healthy counties to provide insights into programs and policies that have worked well in our community.



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- This is an opportunity to make people aware of [insert here any programs or policies that are already under discussion or have been implemented to address areas outlined in the *County Health Rankings*]. It also allows us to [insert here updates on outcomes for previously implemented programs or requests for assistance in supporting policies or programs that are under development].

High-Ranking Counties

- [Your county] ranked high on overall health—[e.g., 2 out of 65]—compared to all counties in the state. Overall health is measured by death and illness rates in the county.
- The *County Health Rankings* also show how [your county] ranks on individual factors that influence its overall health ranking. For example, [your county] does have some strengths in the area(s) of [note here], where it ranked [insert here, e.g., 1 out of 65]. The *Rankings* also indicate that [your county] is at-risk for poor health when it comes to [insert here, e.g., environmental factors that affect health, such as air pollution], where it ranked [insert here, e.g., 50 out of 65].
- While we ranked high overall, this report helps us identify areas where we need to do more to [insert here, e.g., educate residents about the risks of binge drinking, improve air quality, etc.].
- Even though we ranked among the best in the state for some factors [e.g., lowest rates of obesity], these rates are far from ideal and do not meet the goals we have set for our county.
- This report is important because it helps us identify factors that are making our residents unhealthy and understand how we compare to other counties in the state. With this knowledge, we can take steps to improve health.
- We can use this report to mobilize community leaders to take action and invest in programs and policy changes that will improve health in [your county].
- In addition to community leaders, consider how to include residents of our community in the discussions about what can be done to make [your county] a healthier place to live, learn, work and play.
- The *Rankings* show us what we can learn from our neighboring counties that will help improve the health of our community.

Other suggested strategies for high-ranking counties:

- As a high-ranking county, also consider what has worked well in your community that you can share with other counties.
- Use the report to celebrate successful initiatives and partnerships in your community. For example, if high-school graduation rates are high, enroll the school superintendents in promoting the report and discussing what has been done and needs to continue to sustain the success.



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- Identify specific policies and programs that have been implemented in your community and show how these have led to healthy outcomes. It is important to communicate how the healthy outcomes resulted from community investments in many of the health factor areas.