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Beaufort County Is Healthiest in South Carolina; Marlboro County Is Least Healthy,
According to New Rankings

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Annual Rankings Show Where South Carolina Counties Do Well and Opportunities for Improvement

Beaufort County ranks healthiest in South Carolina and Marlboro County is the least healthy county in the state, according to the sixth annual *County Health Rankings*, released today by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI). The *Rankings* are available at www.countyhealthrankings.org. For the sixth year, the South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health (IMPH) is serving as the state lead in sharing the *Rankings*.

“Where we live matters to our health and significant differences exist between the healthiest and least healthy counties in South Carolina,” said Dr. Lee Pearson, director of operations at IMPH. “The *Rankings* use factors that communities can do something about; they are a tool to bring people together to positively impact health where they live, learn, work and play.”

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 South Carolina, starting with most healthy, are Beaufort, followed by York, Charleston, Greenville and Dorchester. The five counties in the poorest health, starting with least healthy, are Marlboro, Marion, Lee, Dillon and Darlington.

“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; they are engaging business, public health, education, parents and young people to build a Culture of Health.”

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. The least healthy counties in each state have more smokers, more teen births and more alcohol related car crash deaths. This report also looks at distribution in income and the links between income levels and health.

The *Rankings* also revealed the following national trends:

- 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 unhealthiest 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 highest 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 as they are in the healthiest counties. During the recession, counties in the West, Southeast and rust belt region of the U.S. were hit hardest by growing unemployment. Many, but not at all, of these counties have seen their unemployment rates drop since the recession ended in 2010.

“In the six years since the *County Health Rankings* began, we’ve seen them serve as a rallying point for change,” said Bridget Catlin, PhD, MHSA, co-director of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. “Communities are using the *Rankings* to inform their priorities as they work 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.

On April 8, 2015, IMPH, in conjunction with several partners including the [South Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants \(SCAPA\)](#), will host the “A How-To for South Carolina PA’s: Communities & Practices Join the Obesity Fight” videoconference. Supported by the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, this educational event will discuss several topics including the 2015 *County Health Rankings*, the [South Carolina SScale Down Initiative](#) and

the Let's GO 5-2-1-0! Childhood Obesity Toolkit. To register for the event please click [here](#).

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. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

The [University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute](#) 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>.

About the South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health

IMPH is an independent entity serving as a neutral convener around the important health issues in our state. IMPH also serves as a provider of evidence-based information to inform health policy decisions.

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