

# Study Shows St. Johns is Healthiest County in Florida While Nearby Duval Ranks in Bottom Half

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Photo by DARON DEAN. A young surfer takes advantage of the waves rolling in north of the St. Johns County Fishing Pier in St. Augustine Beach on Thursday evening, October 22, 2015

The healthiest county in Florida is St. Johns, while Duval lags significantly.

That's according to a study released Wednesday measuring the overall health in almost every county in the United States. The report breaks down the numbers into two categories: health factors and health outcomes. Both lists show St. Johns County is the healthiest in Florida.

The health factors list is based on health behaviors, clinical care, the physical environment and social and economic factors in the county, while the health outcomes list is weighted equally on the length and quality of life for residents, according to the report.

The data show a stark contrast between the counties in Northeast Florida where Clay and Nassau counties rank sixth and 10th respectively in health outcomes and 11th and sixth

in health factors, according to the report.

Meanwhile, Duval County ranks 48th out of 67 counties in health outcomes and 35th in health factors.

Baker County also ranks in the bottom half of the state as 50th in health outcomes and 46th in health factors, according to the report.

The report was released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin and uses variables such as access to health care, health behaviors and social factors like a county's unemployment rate.

"Health is a result of the conditions in which we live, work, and play" said Kelli Wells, director of the Florida Department of Health in Duval. "The rankings data is most valuable to us in terms of the community actions they inspire."

The study includes air pollution, drinking water violations and the length of a commute as part of factors that make up a county's physical environment and it's the only category where Duval and St. Johns counties rank near each other. According to the report, Duval ranks 58th in the state and St. Johns ranks 55th.

St. Johns ranks first in the state in quality of life and social and economic factors and is second in length of life as well as clinical care.

Duval ranks 49th in quality of life, 35th in social and economic factors, 48th in length of life and 11th in clinical care.

Officials in Duval are working to update their Community Health Improvement Plan and hope to complete the document by May and implement the changes beginning in July, according to the Department of Health.

“Jacksonville citizens deserve a community that encourages and supports healthy living,” said Mayor Lenny Curry in a statement. “It is my commitment, as mayor, to lead and support efforts and create conditions that contribute to the health and well-being of residents throughout Jacksonville.”

The study included adult smoking, adult obesity, physical inactivity, sexually transmitted infections and teen births as part of the factors in the health behaviors category, where St. Johns ranked fifth in the state and Duval ranked 38th, according to the report.