

# Santa Cruz County ranked eighth healthiest in California

SANTA CRUZ -- Santa Cruz County is a pretty healthy place but still has room to improve.

That's what area health officials said after Santa Cruz County placed in the top 10 in California in the first-ever county-by-county health rankings released Wednesday.

Santa Cruz ranked eighth. Marin County was first and Del Norte County ranked last at 56th. Two counties were not ranked.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health produced the rankings, using 28 factors, to give people a way to see how healthy their county is, compare it with others and find ways to improve.

Santa Cruz rated No. 2 for healthy behavior with fewer adult smokers and obese adults. It scored better than average for clinical care factors such as use of hospice and social and economic factors such as college degrees.

It rated 37th for physical environment, largely due to alcohol availability, and average scores on access to healthy food.

Poki Namkung, county health officer since 2005, is pleased overall but questioned data on healthy food and air quality. She said Santa Cruz County was ranked second for access to healthy food by the UCLA Center for Health Policy in 2008.

Her concerns include binge drinking, the teen birth rate, which is high in Watsonville, and the high school graduation rate, which is lower among Latinos compared to white and Asian students.

Santa Cruz County has more liquor stores per 10,000 people than San Mateo, Monterey and Santa Clara, its three neighbors. The city of Santa Cruz, despite distance requirements, has twice as many clubs and alcohol purveyors compared to others of similar size, Santa Cruz Mayor Mike Rotkin said.

Rotkin pushed for new rules and higher fees to pay for police to monitor high-risk alcohol establishments downtown.

"It's hard to not allow any more liquor outlets," he said. "People come here to have fun. We are a college town."

Rotkin sees the healthy food issue as one of affordability.

"Our community has better food selection than anywhere in the country," he said. "We're a low-income county. It's about whether we can afford the food."

Go for Health Collaborative sponsored by United Way of Santa Cruz County will get \$360,000 over four years from the Johnson Foundation to improve access to healthy food and exercise in Watsonville, which has a higher percentage of overweight children and adults than the rest of the county.

The collaborative is working with young people to recommend new bike lanes, support fruit stands at schools and encourage corner stores to stock more fruits and vegetables.

"When it comes to fresh fruits and vegetables, cost is a big barrier," said Mary Lou Goeke, who heads United Way. "I'm excited about Michelle Obama's Let's Move' initiative. It looks a lot like Go for Health."

# Snapshot 2010: Santa Cruz

	Santa Cruz County	Error Margin	Target Value*	California	Rank (of 56)
Health Outcomes					8
Mortality					6
Premature death	5,199	4,895-5,504	5,199	6,196	
Morbidity					7
Poor or fair health	16%	12-22%	11%	18%	
Poor physical health days	3.0	2.3-3.7	2.7	3.6	
Poor mental health days	3.6	2.6-4.5	2.8	3.6	
Low birthweight	5.4%	5.1-5.7%	5.3%	6.6%	
Health Factors					8
Health Behaviors					2
Adult smoking	11%	7-16%	10%	15%	
Adult obesity	18%	14-22%	19%	23%	
Binge drinking	14%	10-20%	13%	15%	
Motor vehicle crash death rate	11	10-13	8	12	
Chlamydia rate	260		110	389	
Teen birth rate	32	30-33	22	41	
Clinical Care					19
Uninsured adults	22%	20-24%	15%	21%	

Primary care provider rate	150		157	116	
Preventable hospital stays	52	49-54	45	62	
Diabetic screening	78%	76-81%	84%	76%	
Hospice use	36%	33-41%	36%	28%	
Social & Economic Factors					14
High school graduation	81%		90%	69%	
College degrees	38%	36-39%	38%	29%	
Unemployment	7%	7-8%	5%	7%	
Children in poverty	14%	12-17%	11%	17%	
Income inequality	46		41	47	
Inadequate social support	19%	14-25%	15%	26%	
Single-parent households	9%	8-10%	7%	10%	
Violent crime rate	462		263	527	
Physical Environment					37
Air pollution-particulate matter days	15		0	13	
Air pollution-ozone days	0		0	37	
Access to healthy foods	50%		62%	46%	
Liquor store density	1.2		0.3	0.9	

\* 90th percentile, i.e., only 10% are better

Note: Blank values reflect unreliable or missing data