



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health Unit

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH- Linda Beers, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH PROMOTION &
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March 31, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Essex County ranks among the healthiest in New York State

Elizabethtown, N.Y.- The 2023 County Health Rankings, released this week, reveal that Essex County is ranked among the healthiest counties in New York State (NYS). Essex County places 14 out of 62 counties when examining health factors, and 15 out of 62 counties when considering health outcomes. This is an improvement in standings from 2022, where the county ranked 13th and 19th, respectively. According to the 2023 rankings, the five healthiest counties in NYS, starting with most healthy, are Putnam followed by Saratoga, Nassau, Tompkins and Rockland counties.

A collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, the *Rankings* help us understand a pattern of factors that influence how long and how well we live. Researchers used five measures to assess the level of overall health or “health outcomes” by county: the rate of people dying before age 75; the percentage of people who reported being in fair or poor health; the number of days people reported being in poor physical health; number of days in poor mental health; and the rate of low-birth weight infants. Researchers then looked at “factors” that affect people’s health within four categories: health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. They include things like smoking, obesity, binge drinking, access to primary care providers, rates of high school graduation, unemployment rates, and number of children living in poverty.

“The Rankings demonstrate that health happens where we live, learn, work and play. And much of what influences how healthy we are and how long we live is influenced not only by what within the doctor’s office as clinical care but also by our behaviors and our social and environmental surroundings,” noted Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for the Essex County Health Department (ECHD). “People, no matter where they live, should have the best possible opportunity to be healthy.”

“The struggle for social, environmental, and economic security is shared across many communities,” said Jessica Darney Buehler, Director of Health Planning & Promotion for ECHD. “We use local data to drive public health interventions. In Essex County, adult smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, excessive drinking, and alcohol-impaired driving death rates are all higher than NYS averages. This data informs strategies that we undertake with community based partners to help our families live well,” Buehler stated.

This year, the Rankings introduced the connection between civic health and thriving people and places. Civic health reflects the opportunities people have to participate in their communities – through civic infrastructure (e.g. schools, parks, libraries, policies) and civic engagement (e.g. voting, advocacy, volunteering). “Essex County residents turn out to vote at about the same rate as NYS



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overall, but we're a few points lower than the national average of 67.9%," stated Beers. "We have a much lower participation rate in the decennial census, where only 42.6% of Essex County residents responded, compared to 65.2% nationally."

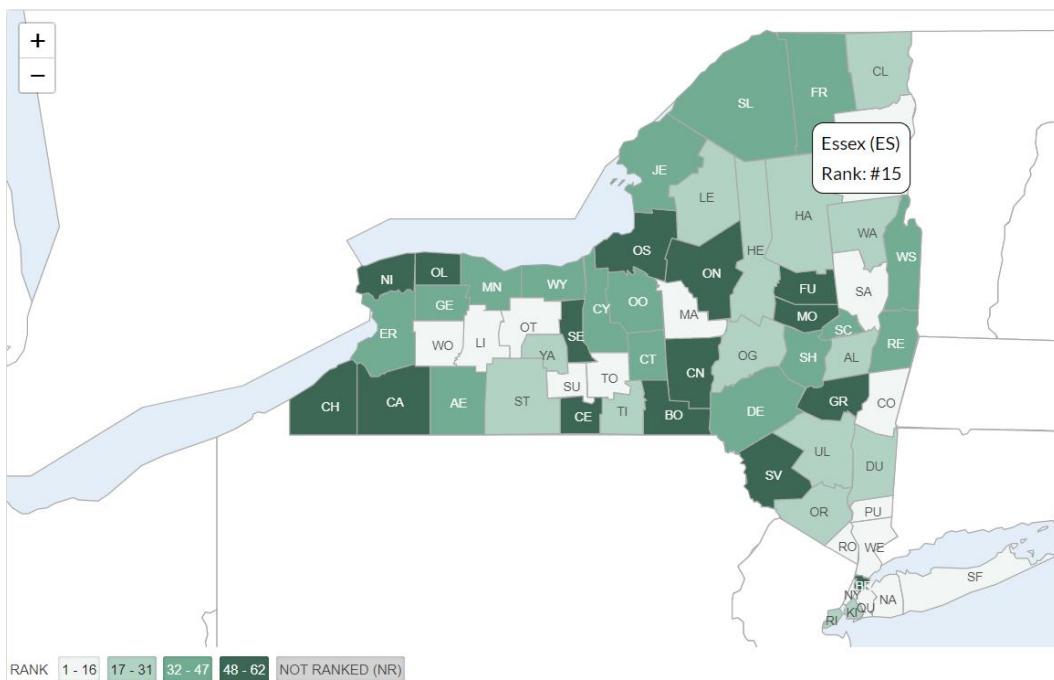
According to the *Rankings* research, voting influences the health of our communities and studies show that communities with higher voter turnout tend to also have better self-reported general health, fewer chronic health conditions, a lower mortality rate, and less depression. Census participation is important because census results influence the distribution of power through government representation and the allocation of billions of federal dollars for infrastructure and community health programs like SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, and Head Start.

Beers highlighted county leadership as a strength for the communities in Essex County. "At the health department in particular, we have strong support from our Board of Supervisors and community leaders who take action and invest in programs and policy changes that make Essex County a healthier place to live. Public health gains are a collective success and we credit our solid partnerships and shared initiatives with our ranking among the healthiest counties in the state."

For more information about the County Health Rankings, visit <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>.

To learn about the programs and initiatives of the Essex County Health Department, go to <https://essexcountyny.gov/Health/>.

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Pictured above: The 2023 County Health Rankings for NYS. Essex County ranks 15 out of 62 counties for overall health outcomes. The county ranked 19 in 2022.