

## Mass. Ranks 6<sup>th</sup> Healthiest for Seniors

### Q: Is Massachusetts a healthy state for seniors?

**A:** Yes. According to a new national study, Massachusetts ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation as healthiest for seniors. Vermont came in 1<sup>st</sup>, and New Hampshire 2<sup>nd</sup>. Connecticut ranked 10<sup>th</sup>, Maine 11<sup>th</sup>, and Rhode Island 14<sup>th</sup>. According to the United Health Foundation's "America's Health Rankings<sup>®</sup> Senior Report," the New England states were one of the healthiest regions in the nation. The least healthiest states were Louisiana (50), Mississippi (49), Kentucky (48), Arkansas (47) and Oklahoma (46).

The Foundation's report is a comprehensive analysis of senior population health across 35 measures of elder health. Researchers evaluate a historical and comprehensive set of health, environmental and socioeconomic data to determine national health benchmarks and state rankings. The Report shows positive trends nationwide for senior health, especially for measures that look at whether seniors are getting the right care in a setting of their choice.

Key findings include:

- Preventable hospitalizations dropped 8.6% to 59.3% of discharges in 2015.
- More seniors are spending their last days in the setting they prefer. Hospice care increased to 50.6% of decedents aged 65 and older, while hospital deaths decreased to 22.8% of decedents.
- The number of home health care workers increased 9.3% compared to last year, as home care became an increasingly accessible option for today's seniors.
- 62.8% of seniors took the flu vaccine this year, a 4.5% increase over last year.
- 85% of Massachusetts Medicare beneficiaries aged 65 to 75 with diabetes had a blood lipids test—the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate in the nation.
- Seniors in the report they are feeling better: a 4.8% increase in self-reported high health status to 41.8%. But 58.2% of seniors say they are not feeling better.

The United Health Foundation study found there are challenges remaining in Massachusetts:

- Physical inactivity rates increased in 2015. One-third of seniors did not engage in any physical activity or exercise outside of work—a 15.3% increase in inactivity over last year.
- 37.6% of seniors have four or more chronic conditions;
- 26.7% of Massachusetts seniors are obese;
- 8.7% of seniors smoke;
- 16.1% of seniors have had all of their teeth removed due to tooth decay or gum disease.
- Per capita community support spending for seniors that helps older adults stay in their homes, has fallen by 23.9% over the past two years.

Our strong points in Massachusetts included:

- we rank 5<sup>th</sup> in dental visits among people age 65+
  - we rank 6<sup>th</sup> in home delivered meals to elders living in poverty
  - we rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in community-support dollars spent on people age 65+ in poverty
  - we rank 2<sup>nd</sup> in elders involved with diabetes management.
  - we rank 5<sup>th</sup> in the number of people 60+ in poverty receiving food stamp benefits.
  - hip fractures dropped 17% from 6.5 to 5.4 hospitalizations per 1000 Medicare members
- On the negative side in Massachusetts:
- we rank 8<sup>th</sup> in the number of elders who are considered obese.
  - we rank 6<sup>th</sup> in food insecurity among elders.
  - we ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in hospitalizations for hip fractures per 1,000 Medicare population
  - smoking increased 14% from 8.4% to 9.6% of adults aged 65+.
  - physical inactivity increased 27% from 26.1% to 33.1% of adults aged 65+.

"Progress in key metrics such as preventable hospitalizations and hospice care show that more seniors are aging comfortably and receiving preferred types of support," a medical adviser to United Health Foundation said.

To see the state Rankings in full, visit:

[www.americashealthrankings.org/senior](http://www.americashealthrankings.org/senior)

## **Strengths**

## **Challenges**

- High prevalence of chronic drinking
- Low volunteerism
- High percentage of hospital deaths

- See more at: <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/Senior/MA#sthash.RSjL6SUS.dpuf>

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- “We are excited to be making progress toward strong, personalized care for all seniors and look forward to seeing continued momentum in this area.”

## **About America’s Health Rankings Senior Report**

The America’s Health Rankings Senior Report and the America’s Health Rankings Report are designed to identify health opportunities in communities as well as multistakeholder, multidisciplinary approaches to improving the health of the population. Through its programs and grants, United Health Foundation puts a spotlight on the health of America while promoting evidence-based solutions and means to improve it. To learn more about America’s Health Rankings — and to get information on how to help improve community health — visit [www.americashealthrankings.org](http://www.americashealthrankings.org).