



HEALTH & WELLNESS

For the 2nd year in a row, the healthiest, happiest city in the US is...



A. Pawlowski
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Pack a swimsuit and head south to reach the nation’s healthiest and happiest city.

For the second year in a row, Naples, Florida, and the nearby communities of Immokalee and Marco Island take the No. 1 spot in the **Gallup-Healthways State of American Well-Being 2016 Community Rankings**, released on Tuesday. The report measures how residents of 189 U.S. cities feel about their physical health, social ties, financial security, community and sense of purpose.

Boulder, Colorado, and Provo-Orem, Utah, are the only other communities that have reached the top spot more than once since the rankings began in 2008.



The happiest, healthiest city in the US is...
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Lose weight like a celebrity: Trainer to the stars reveals how

Naples has “muscled its way past” the other top-ranked metropolitan areas by getting high scores across the board, said Dan Witters, research director of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.

“Naples does a lot of things right,” Witters told TODAY. “[People in] Naples really take care of themselves well.”

Residents there report having good physical health, feeling proud about their community, enjoying good relationships and liking what they do each day.

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You may think that has a lot to do with living in a scenic, affluent beach community, but those factors don't influence the score as much as you'd expect. Income matters, but it doesn't ensure high well-being, Witters said. Plus, the median household income of respondents in the Naples metropolitan statistical area wasn't “off the charts.”

As far as the beachy location, researchers have previously looked at the relationship between living near the coast and well-being, and found it's not nearly as strong as you might think, he added.



Angeliki Jackson / TODAY

The top 10 U.S. communities with the highest well-being are:

1. Naples–Immokalee–Marco Island, Florida
2. Barnstable Town, Massachusetts
3. Santa Cruz–Watsonville, California
4. Honolulu, Hawaii
5. Charlottesville, Virginia
6. North Port–Sarasota–Bradenton, Florida
7. San Luis Obispo–Paso Robles, California
8. Lynchburg, Virginia
9. Hilton Head Island–Bluffton–Beaufort, South Carolina

10. Boulder, Colorado

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At the other end of the spectrum, Fort Smith — located on the border of Arkansas and Oklahoma — was ranked last. The metropolitan area is a “mainstay” in the bottom ten, Witters said.

“Fort Smith, Charleston (West Virginia) and Huntington (West Virginia) are probably your big three as far as jostling for that unhappy spot at the very lowest rung on that ladder,” he noted.

Charleston did not make the rankings this year because Gallup-Healthways wasn't able to obtain enough interviews from residents, so the city wasn't eligible to be included.

Meanwhile, Fort Smith has a very high smoking rate and an obesity rate that's “through the roof” at almost 40 percent, Witters said. The area gets some of the lowest marks in the nation for the number of residents who report they have someone in their life who encourages them to be healthy, or who say they do something interesting every day.

“That's a really big missed opportunity,” Witters said. “Learning and growing is a very important

psychological need.”

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The 10 communities at the bottom of the list are:

- 180. Montgomery, Alabama
- 181. Erie, Pennsylvania
- 182. Beaumont–Port Arthur, Texas
- 183. Chico, California
- 184. Flint, Michigan
- 185. Canton–Massillon, Ohio
- 186. Topeka, Kansas
- 187. Huntington–Ashland, West Virginia–Kentucky–Ohio
- 188. Hickory–Lenoir–Morganton, North Carolina

189. Fort Smith, Arkansas–Oklahoma



New Study Finds Lack of Exercise Is Deadlier Than Obesity

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The most and least stressed cities

Naples had the most mellow, relaxed residents in the nation, while Chico, California, was home to the most worried, anxious and tense population.

But stress can be a “tricky” measure, Witters said.

“In places that have high percentages of professionals, you’ll have a lot more of what’s sometimes called productive stress, where people will carry out otherwise high well-being lives, but will feel the stress most days,” he noted.

So Provo-Orem Utah, and Boulder, Colorado, which are perennial high well-being places, also had the second- and third-highest stress levels in the nation, the report found.

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That’s Boulder, Colorado, where 90 percent of residents say that they always feel safe and secure.

At the other end of the spectrum, Rockford, Illinois, is the city whose residents feel the least safe. Among the big cities, New Orleans and Las Vegas were also ranked low for safety.

Communities big on exercise

Boulder takes the top spot here, too, with 70 percent of its residents getting least 30 minutes of exercise three days a week.

Anchorage, Alaska, also ranked high in this category, which just goes to show you don't need to have year-round outdoor weather to be able to stay fit, Witters noted.

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