

Update on County Health Rankings Nash County, 2014

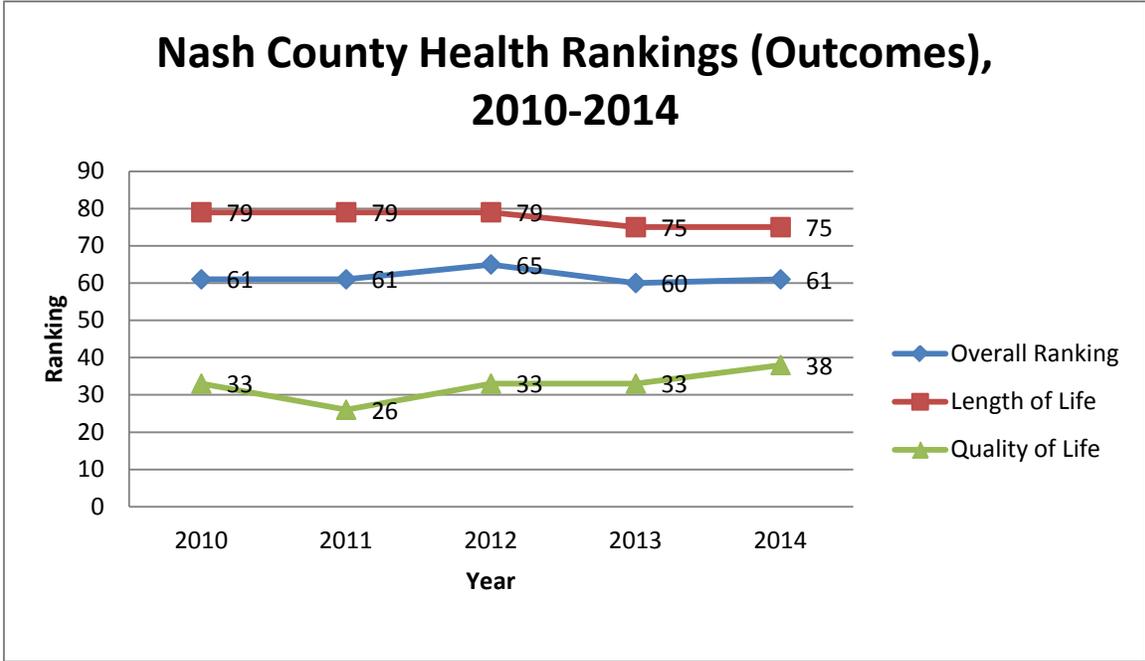


The *County Health Rankings*, published annually by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, rank the health of nearly every county in the nation and help counties understand what influences how healthy residents are and how long they will live. This means taking into account not just health outcomes, but also factors that influence those outcomes, like poverty levels, the physical environment, and practiced health behaviors. The 2014 update shows both successes and continued challenges for Nash County. Note that a ranking of 1st is considered best (healthiest) and 100th worst (unhealthiest).

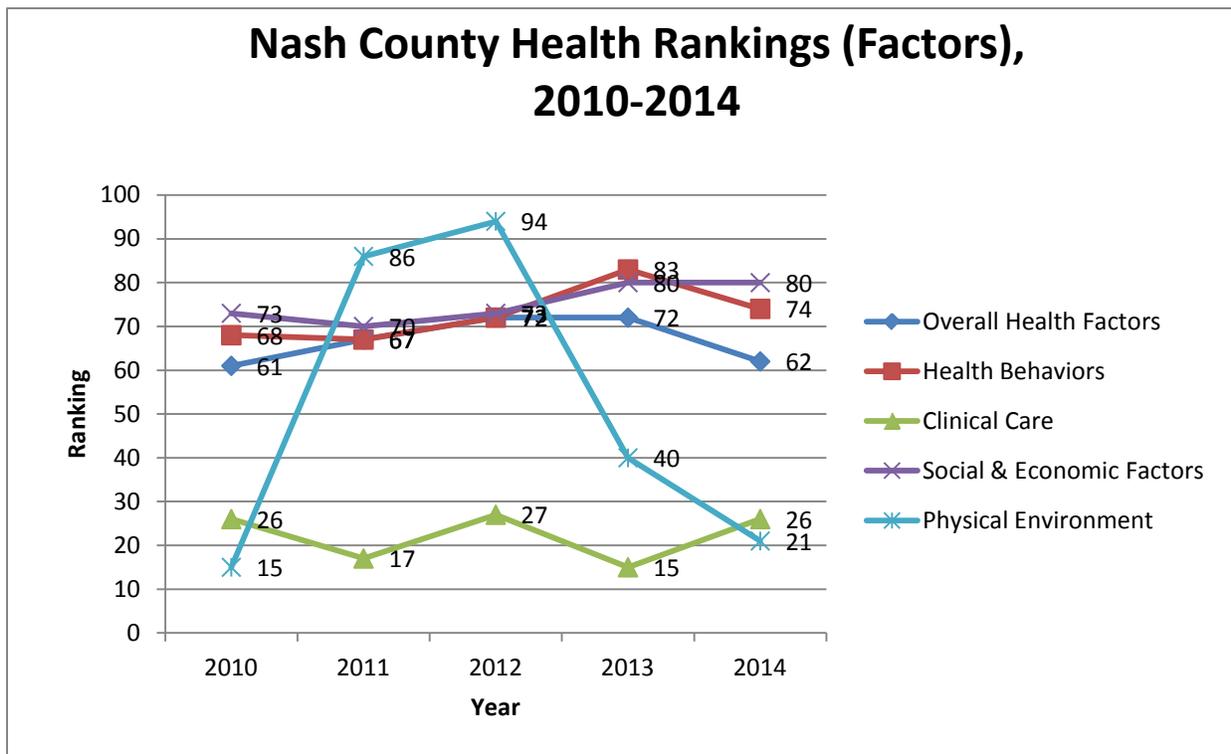
Our Length of Life ranking of 75th remained unchanged from 2013, but our Quality of Life ranking decreased to 38th. As in past years, the differences in these two rankings demonstrate a serious issue in Nash County- for reasons not totally understood, the number of Nash County citizens dying prematurely far outpaces diagnosed disease rates and people’s perceptions of their own health. Therefore, as a county, we may need to look closer at issues such as disease screening, timely treatment, health education, and access to care.

Overall, Nash County was ranked 61st among all North Carolina counties in 2014. This is consistent with our rank of 60th in 2013.

The “healthiest” counties in NC in 2014 were Wake, Watauga, Orange, Union, and Camden. The “unhealthiest” counties were Columbus, Halifax, Scotland, Robeson, and Vance.



In factors that affect health, Nash County improved from 72nd to 62nd. However, we still remain in the bottom half of counties in NC for this ranking which indicates that not only do our citizens not practice healthy behaviors, but that our overall environment and infrastructure in Nash County may not be as conducive to living healthy as it could be. On a positive note, Clinical Care was ranked highly in Nash County at 26th, indicating a wealth of medical resources in the county. Also, the ranking for Physical Environment in 2014 was 21st, a continuing improvement over rankings of 40th, 86th and 94th in previous years. However, Nash County citizens are continuing to struggle with practicing poor health behaviors (74th) and having a poor socioeconomic environment (80th); rankings for both of these indicators have been rising over the years and are pulling our overall health rankings down.



It is important to remember that *County Health Rankings* are not necessarily the best way to track improvement over time because they are based on broad measures and, in order to be valid for counties of all sizes, many of the measures are based on multiple years of data. Therefore, local data should take precedence and it should be understood that initiatives to change health factors and outcomes take many years to show impact and results. Likewise, year-to-year fluctuations most likely do not represent true changes to health status. Regardless of their limitations, however, the *County Health Rankings* help show where Nash County is in relation to other NC counties and present information in a way that is easy for most citizens to understand. The *Rankings* demonstrate that, in terms of health, Nash County has much to be proud of, but also faces a number of challenges that need to be overcome for us to have healthy citizens and a supportive, healthy environment.