America’s Health Rankings Annual Report: Americans Less Sedentary; Rising Drug Deaths, Obesity Pose Challenges

- **In 2015, Hawaii ranks No. 1 as healthiest state; Louisiana is least healthy**
- **Decreases in smoking and sedentary behavior signal important health strides**
- **Rising rates of drug deaths – including illegal and prescription drug abuse – diabetes, obesity and children in poverty threaten nation’s health**
- **United Health Foundation to publish new reports in 2016 to offer more information to help improve public health**

MINNETONKA, Minn. (Dec. 10, 2015) – Americans are making meaningful progress on key health metrics including smoking less and leading less sedentary lifestyles, but rising rates of drug deaths, obesity, diabetes and children in poverty signal serious challenges, according to United Health Foundation’s 26th America’s Health Rankings® Annual Report: A Call to Action for Individuals & Their Communities.

United Health Foundation produces the America’s Health Rankings Annual Report to provide actionable, data-driven insights that stakeholders can use to effect change in a state or nationally.

**Success, realized: less smoking and sedentary lifestyles**

This year’s America’s Health Rankings Annual Report reveals promising signs of progress:

- Smoking rates decreased 5 percent in the last year alone, from 19 to 18.1 percent of adults, and have declined 39 percent since 1990.
• Rates of sedentary behavior, or adults who reported no physical activity in the last 30 days, declined 11 percent from 25.3 percent to 22.6 percent of adults.
• Preventable hospitalizations declined 8 percent, from 62.9 to 57.6 discharges per 1,000 Medicare beneficiaries.
• Longer-term trends reveal cardiovascular deaths and infant mortality continue on a steady decline.

“This year’s America’s Health Rankings Annual Report reveals many encouraging gains in our nation’s health while showing clearly there is much more we as a country must do to maximize our health potential,” said Reed Tuckson, M.D., external senior medical adviser to United Health Foundation. “This report is a call to action to make disease prevention a key component of our culture. We want to ensure everybody – no matter what state they call home – is empowered to make healthy decisions for themselves, their families and their communities.”

Amid successes, serious challenges remain: drug deaths, obesity, diabetes

Despite encouraging gains, this year’s report presents a sobering reminder that there is still more work to be done.

• Drug deaths – including deaths from illegal drug use and prescription drug abuse – jumped 4 percent over the last year, from 13 to 13.5 deaths per 100,000 people.
• Self-reported obesity continues to rise, affecting 29.6 percent, a 2.5-fold increase since 1990 when just 11.6 percent of the population was obese.
• Self-reported diabetes also is increasing, affecting 10 percent of the population on average.
• Children living in poverty increased 6 percent, from 19.9 percent to 21.1 percent of children under 18 years of age.
• Improvements in premature death rates – or years of life lost before age 75 – has slowed considerably since the report’s inception 26 years ago – a stark reminder of the persistent challenges to the nation’s health.

“Too many Americans today are developing chronic illnesses due to their lifestyle choices. The nation can and must work together to fight obesity, diabetes and other serious chronic conditions, and to amplify support for the nation’s most vulnerable populations through innovative community-based programs and solutions,” said Rhonda Randall, D.O., senior adviser to United Health Foundation and chief medical officer of UnitedHealthcare Retiree Solutions.

State rankings in 2015: Hawaii ranks 1; Louisiana least healthy

Top Five: In 2015, Hawaii again takes the title of healthiest state for the 4th time, followed by Vermont (2) and Massachusetts (3). Minnesota and New Hampshire moved back into the top five this year, ranking fourth and fifth, respectively.
Bottom Five: Louisiana ranked 50th this year, moving Mississippi to 49th. Arkansas (48), West Virginia (47) and Alabama (46) complete the list of the five least healthy states.

To see the national and state rankings in detail, visit [www.americashealthrankings.org](http://www.americashealthrankings.org).

**United Health Foundation to publish new reports in 2016 to provide additional insights to stakeholders**

In 2016, United Health Foundation will introduce a new suite of reports and year-round information on key health behaviors, conditions and populations to amplify stakeholders’ efforts as they work to effect change across states and communities. This will include:

- **New reports on selected populations.** America’s Health Rankings will expand its publication of reports on select populations. In addition to the *America’s Health Rankings Annual Report* and *America’s Health Rankings Senior Report*, America’s Health Rankings will issue new annual reports on the health of mothers and children, and the health of the nation’s veterans.

- **New spotlight reports on key public health topics.** America’s Health Rankings will issue several “spotlight” reports over the course of the year focused on important markers of the nation’s health, such as substance abuse, prevention, healthy lifestyles and mental health.

**About America’s Health Rankings Annual Report**

*America’s Health Rankings Annual Report* is the longest-running report of its kind. It is published by United Health Foundation in partnership with the American Public Health Association. For 26 years, the *America’s Health Rankings Annual Report* has provided an analysis of national health on a state-by-state basis by evaluating a historical and comprehensive set of health, environmental and socioeconomic data to determine national health benchmarks and state rankings. The *America’s Health Rankings Annual Report* employs a unique methodology, developed and annually reviewed and overseen by a Scientific Advisory Committee of leading public health scholars. For more information, visit [www.americashealthrankings.org](http://www.americashealthrankings.org).

The data in the report come from well-recognized outside sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Medical Association, FBI, Dartmouth Atlas Project, U.S. Department of Education and Census Bureau.

**About United Health Foundation**

Through collaboration with community partners, grants and outreach efforts, United Health Foundation works to improve our health system, build a diverse and dynamic health workforce and enhance the well-being of local communities. United Health Foundation was established by UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH) in 1999 as a not-for-profit, private foundation dedicated to improving health and health care. To date, United Health Foundation has committed more than
$285 million to programs and communities around the world. We invite you to learn more at www.unitedhealthfoundation.org

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