

Why Ranks Change

Ranks can improve or worsen for one or more reasons:

Your county

experienced health gains or losses

Change in a rank can be due to actual change in the underlying measures that comprise the summary rank.

Other counties

experienced health gains or losses

A rank may also improve or worsen not due to change in your own county's measures, but rather because of changes in counties ranked just above or below your county within the state.

Random variation in measures

Since all measures have some variation (which is why we report error margins), a fluctuation in county rank may be caused by random variation in the measures that comprise the rank.

Changes in ranked measures or their methods

Ranks can be influenced by the introduction of new measures or a change in the methods for current measures.

In order to better understand why your county's rank may have changed from the previous year, the best place to start is by examining the individual measures that comprise the rank. When examining each of these underlying components, it is helpful to explore the following:

Your county's measures over time

Are measure values increasing, decreasing, or staying the same? For instance, take a look at the trend graph for your county's premature death estimate. Is premature death in your county increasing, decreasing, or staying the same? How does your county's trend compare to the state or national trend? Looking more closely at changes over time in your county's underlying measures can help you better understand your county's progress and potential influence on the change in your rank.

Error margins associated with your county's estimates

Another thing to consider is the error associated with the measures comprising the rank. Year-to-year, even if your county's true rate does not change, there will be some fluctuation in the measure due to random variation. For instance, it is possible to see substantial change in your county's premature death rate from the previous year, but if the rate is within the margin of error for the previous year's premature death rate, the change may be partially or almost completely due to random fluctuation in measures from year-to-year. Counties with smaller populations are particularly susceptible to this variation.

You can contact us through the "get help" button on the website with any specific questions regarding why your county's rank changed.