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Vermont city is healthiest in U.S., CDC says

- Story Highlights
- Vermont's largest city is tops among U.S. metropolitan areas in exercise
- Burlington is also among the lowest in obesity, diabetes and illness
- The average age in Burlington, Vermont, is 37

(AP) -- What's the healthiest city in America? It appears to be Burlington, Vermont.

Vermont's largest city is tops among U.S. metropolitan areas by having the largest proportion of people -- 92 percent -- who say they are in good or great health.

It's also among the best in exercise and among the lowest in obesity, diabetes and other measures of ill health, according to a recent report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This New England city of 40,000, on the shores of [Lake Champlain](#), is in some ways similar to the unhealthiest city -- Huntington, West Virginia. Both are out-of-the-way college towns with populations that are overwhelmingly white people of English, German or Irish ancestry.

But there the similarities end:

-- Burlington is younger, with an average age of 37, compared to 40 in Huntington, according to the Census Bureau.

-- Burlington is better off financially, with 8 percent living at the federal poverty level, compared to 19 percent in Huntington.

-- It's much more educated, with nearly 40 percent of area residents having at least a college bachelor's degree. Only 15 percent in the Huntington area do.

The cultures are significantly different, too. Bicycling, hiking, skiing and other exercises are common in [Burlington](#). Neighborhood groups commonly focus on improving parks, working in community gardens and repairing and improving sidewalks.

"There's this norm of a lot of activity," said Chris Finley, Vermont's deputy health commissioner, who works in Burlington.

And though college staples like pizza are common, healthier foods are also popular. Grass-fed beef is offered in finer restaurants, vegan options are plentiful, and the lone downtown supermarket is run by a co-op successful in selling bulk rice and other healthy choices to low-income residents.

Burlington is helped by the presence of IBM and other employers offering more generous health benefits and corporate wellness programs than companies in Huntington, some experts suggested.

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