



AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

2019 POLICY ASSESSMENT

BACKGROUND

CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, helps cities achieve better results for their residents by advancing a menu of proven policies that improve people's day-to-day quality of life, well-being, and health. These policies are based in research, backed by qualified experts, and shown to have bipartisan support in a major U.S. jurisdiction, making them rich opportunities for cities to pursue.

CityHealth is releasing its 2019 ratings of the nation's 40 largest cities, to show how they stack up when it comes to policymaking shown to improve people's health and quality of life. Localities are assessed according to the strength and number of the policies they have in place.

KEY FINDINGS: Overall Medals

For the last three years, CityHealth has annually scored cities on their progress in adopting nine key policies that advance health and well-being, using gold, silver, and bronze medals. Cities' overall medal results are based on the combined quality and quantity of policies in place in each category. We found that some cities are making real progress across our nine policy recommendations. **In 2019, eight cities receive overall gold medals: Dallas, San Antonio, San Francisco, and Seattle moved to gold, joining Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.**

Six additional cities across the country improved their overall medal scores. Atlanta and Denver moved from bronze to silver; and Detroit, Fort Worth, Las Vegas, and Tucson moved from no medal status to bronze.

OVERALL RESULTS

Out of the nation's 40 largest cities, there were:



cities earned

35

new individual
policy medals
this year



impacting
more than

22

million lives

For the first time, three-quarters (30/40) of the cities earned an overall medal. Just two years ago, in 2017, fewer than half (19/40) received an overall medal. While some cities are making great strides, others still have work to do: 10 cities still don't have strong enough policies to warrant an overall medal. For CityHealth, every unearned gold medal represents an opportunity to use policy as a lever to improve people's quality of life and well-being, and to help communities thrive.

KEY FINDINGS: Policy Medals

There were significant gains in individual policy areas since last year. Altogether, cities earned 35 new individual policy medals this year, showing real momentum across the nation and impacting more than 22 million lives. From Atlanta's new smoke-free indoor air policy to passing an earned sick leave law in San Antonio, cities are making a concerted effort to leverage evidence-based policymaking in order to advance the health and quality of life of their residents.

Our analysis focuses on nine policy areas, listed below. Cities were assigned a gold, silver, bronze, or no medal, depending on the strength of their policies. For a full description of how we awarded medals for each policy, please see our separate methodology document, located at cityhealth.org/research.



Affordable Housing

Inclusionary zoning is an affordable housing policy tool that requires developers to set aside a portion of housing units for low- and moderate-income residents. Affordable housing promotes diverse, inclusive neighborhoods and positive mental health, reduces crowding and exposure to environmental hazards, and frees up resources for individuals to pay for other critical needs.

CityHealth's assessment of affordable housing policies looks at cities' inclusionary zoning policies, which are planning ordinances that require that a certain share of new residences be affordable to those with low to moderate incomes. We analyzed the size of developments covered by the law, what percentage of units must be made affordable, and whether the program is evaluated for effectiveness.

The state of inclusionary zoning in big U.S. cities

Thirteen of 40 cities received a medal for inclusionary zoning policies, including **3 gold**, **6 silver**, and **4 bronze**.



Complete Streets

Complete streets policies prioritize safety by incorporating the needs of all forms of transportation, from walking, to biking, to driving or taking the bus. These policies expand economic growth, improve individuals' health, and can save lives.

Our medal criteria for cities' complete streets policies are based on whether they require compliance, explicitly accommodate all ages, abilities, and modes of transportation, and whether the city assigns an agency to oversee implementation.

The state of complete streets policies in big U.S. cities

Thirty-six of 40 cities received a medal for complete streets policies, with **29 gold**, and **7 silver**. No city earned **bronze**. Charlotte, Louisville, Milwaukee, Portland, San Antonio, Seattle, and Tucson adopted new complete streets policies, each earning a gold medal.



Earned Sick Leave

Earned sick leave policies reduce the spread of contagious illnesses, increase employment and income stability, and save cities money in health care costs.

CityHealth rated the quality of earned sick leave policies, based on how many family members and what size employers are covered by the law, as well as the number of hours of leave employees can earn.

The state of earned sick leave laws in big U.S. cities

Twenty-three of 40 cities received a medal for earned sick leave laws, including **5 gold**, **6 silver**, and **12 bronze**. Dallas, Detroit, Las Vegas, and San Antonio passed new earned sick leave laws.



Food Safety

Policies that require food establishments to publicly post food safety inspection grades empower consumers, reduce food-borne illness, and save on health care costs.

CityHealth found that strong policies in this area include routine inspections of food establishments, assignment of a rating, and public posting of those grades outside of the restaurants.

The state of food safety ratings policies in big U.S. cities

Fifteen of 40 cities received a medal for restaurant inspection ratings policies, including **12 gold** and **3 silver**.



Safer Alcohol Sales

Policies that address a high density of alcohol outlets can reduce crime, increase safety and reduce spending on health care and criminal justice costs.

Zoning alcohol outlets can be an effective means to improve public safety, yet not all cities have the authority to do so.

The state of safer alcohol sales in big U.S. cities

Sixteen out of 40 cities received a medal for safer alcohol sales policies, including 8 gold and 8 silver.



Healthy Food Procurement

Policies that ensure food sold and served in city buildings meets basic nutritional standards can provide more residents with affordable and healthy food choices and may reduce some of the high medical costs associated with obesity.

Cities with strong healthy food procurement policies set and apply nutrition standards to all foods served and sold on city property.

The state of healthy procurement policies in big U.S. cities

Nineteen out of 40 cities received a medal for their healthy food procurement policies, including 9 gold, 6 silver, and 4 bronze. Austin, Denver, San Antonio, and Seattle added new healthy food standards, boosting their medal scores.



Smoke-Free Indoor Air

These policies protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of tobacco – which is the largest preventable cause of death – and reduce smokers' consumption of tobacco at the same time.

The strongest policies ban indoor use of tobacco products in the most locations – such as workplaces and public spaces – while not exempting places like bars, restaurants, or any other public places.

The state of smoke-free indoor air policies in big U.S. cities

Thirty-seven out of 40 cities received a medal for smoke-free indoor air laws, including 21 gold, 14 silver, and 2 bronze.

Atlanta passed a new law, earning it a gold medal, and Las Vegas advanced to silver.



High-Quality, Accessible Pre-Kindergarten

High-quality Pre-Kindergarten improves children's school readiness and success. Long-term benefits include higher high school graduation rates, lower rates of crime and teen pregnancy, higher lifetime earnings, and better health outcomes.

In partnership with the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), CityHealth assessed the availability of high-quality Pre-K in large cities against research-based benchmarks that identify the minimum policies necessary for effective programs. CityHealth's medals applied NIEER's benchmarks, along with an assessment of the enrollment of 4-year-olds in the city's Pre-K programs.

The state of high-quality, accessible Pre-K in big U.S. cities

Thirty-four out of 40 cities received a medal for high-quality, accessible Pre-K, including 12 gold, 4 silver, and 18 bronze.

Albuquerque, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Oklahoma City, and San Francisco all earned new gold medals. Portland increased to silver.



Tobacco 21

Policies that raise the minimum legal age for the sale of tobacco to 21 reduce the number of young people using these products, which greatly reduces their risk for addiction and disease.

It should be noted that not all cities have the authority to control the purchasing age for tobacco. In order to achieve gold status, cities must include combustible cigarettes as well as e-cigarettes and vapor products. We awarded a gold medal in cases where state or local law raised the age of purchase to 21.

The state of Tobacco 21 policies in big U.S. cities




Twenty-five out of 40 cities received a gold medal for their Tobacco 21 policies. Austin, Baltimore, Dallas, Denver, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Seattle, Tucson, and Virginia Beach each earned a new gold medal in 2019 for new Tobacco 21 policies.

OUR METHODS

Big cities in the U.S. face a confluence of modern challenges, from the obesity epidemic, to the academic achievement gap; and are pioneering policy innovations to respond to those issues. The CityHealth package is not intended to be an exhaustive list to solve every pressing local problem; instead, we selected nine policies that met our specific criteria of being: 1) largely under city jurisdiction, 2) backed by evidence, 3) pragmatic, including indications of bipartisan support.

CityHealth's 40-city assessment combined the input of national experts to determine the "gold standard" for each policy with innovative legal analysis by The Center for Public Health Law Research at Temple University's Beasley School of Law. Based on the laws in place, we identified which elements are necessary for the best quality policy (gold), a good policy (silver), and a passable policy (bronze). Cities with no policy, or a policy that did not meet our minimum requirements, received no medal. This analysis notes instances where municipalities are preempted from passing policies by the state.

We then analyzed the cities' total performance and awarded overall medals accordingly:

-  **GOLD:** the city received five or more gold medals across each of the nine policies.
-  **SILVER:** the city received five or more gold or silver medals across each of the nine policies.
-  **BRONZE:** the city received four or more gold, silver, or bronze medals across each of the nine policies.

NEXT STEPS

CityHealth's goal is that all city leaders will use this assessment as a tool to work together and move toward the gold standard for each policy. CityHealth provides these data as an accountability framework, and gives residents, policy-makers, and community leaders the tools to drive health improvements in their cities.

We invite inquiries from city officials, community leaders, and others interested in advancing policies to make their communities more vibrant, prosperous places to live. CityHealth offers support in the form of technical assistance, grants to local organizations, and connections

10 CITIES WITH IMPROVED OVERALL MEDAL STATUS from 2018 to 2019



Atlanta
Dallas
Denver
Detroit
Fort Worth
Las Vegas
San Antonio
San Francisco
Seattle
Tucson

"Public health is all about upstream, and so we try to look at policies that we can work with elected leaders to pass that can prevent some of the downstream problems that we see in San Antonio. Some big problems we have are heart disease, cigarettes, diabetes, and so we are constantly looking for what policy changes can we make that will decrease the number of people who have these chronic conditions. That was why we were really excited about the CityHealth framework that looked at those different policies that we could implement to really move the needle not just in San Antonio, but across the nation."



— Colleen Bridger, MPH, PhD,
San Antonio Assistant City Manager

to other successful cities as a way to help every city get to gold. We will assess cities again in 2020, with plans to work with experts, city leaders, and community groups to update and expand the CityHealth policy package in 2021.

We invite city leaders to engage with us at cityhealth.org/join-us.



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presents the 2019 ratings of how the nation's 40 largest cities fare in nine policy areas that have a proven impact on people's well-being and quality of life.

To learn more about how your city performed, visit cityhealth.org

CITYHEALTH, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, works to advance a package of evidence-based policy solutions that will help millions of people live longer, better lives in vibrant, prosperous communities. CityHealth regularly evaluates cities on the number and strength of their policies. <http://www.cityhealth.org/>

	2019 OVERALL MEDAL	AFFORDABLE HOUSING	COMPLETE STREETS	EARNED SICK LEAVE	FOOD SAFETY	HEALTHY FOOD PROCUREMENT	HIGH-QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE PRE-K	SAFER ALCOHOL SALES	SMOKE-FREE INDOOR AIR	TOBACCO 21
Albuquerque										
Atlanta										
Austin										
Baltimore										
Boston										
Charlotte										
Chicago										
Columbus										
Dallas										
Denver										
Detroit										
El Paso										
Ft. Worth										
Fresno										
Houston										
Indianapolis										
Jacksonville										
Kansas City										
Las Vegas										
Long Beach										
Los Angeles										
Louisville										
Memphis										
Mesa										
Milwaukee										
Nashville										
New York										
Oklahoma City										
Philadelphia										
Phoenix										
Portland										
Sacramento										
San Antonio										
San Diego										
San Francisco										
San Jose										
Seattle										
Tucson										
Virginia Beach										
Washington, D.C.										

= city improved overall medal status since 2018.