About CityHealth

- CityHealth annually assesses America's 75 largest cities based on its package of 12 upstream, prevention-oriented policy solutions. Cities earn gold, silver, bronze, or no medal in each of the 12 policies. Additionally, CityHealth awards overall medals based on the number of individual medals a city earns. The results of this assessment are published on cityhealth.org.

- When it comes to your health, it matters where you live. Cities are catalysts for change. They accelerate new policy ideas, test and refine solutions, and drive progress because residents rely on their leadership to meet their unique needs.

- CityHealth forms long-term partnerships with cities to work alongside them to help them achieve their policy goals.

- To award medals, the Center for Public Health Law Research at Temple University's Beasley School of Law and other evaluation partners perform policy surveillance, the systematic collection and analysis of laws of public health significance, based on the criteria established for each policy.

2025 Assessment Results

- 51 of 75 cities earned an overall medal (68%).
- Approximately 47.6 million people live in a city that has earned an overall medal—an increase of nearly 4 million people compared to 2024.
- Eight cities rose to the top by earning overall gold medals: Boston, Denver, Chicago, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Portland, San Antonio, and St. Louis—Chicago for the first time, having previously earned a silver medal.

- Ten other cities showed progress by improving their medals in 2025, including five that moved from an overall bronze to an overall silver: Cleveland, Columbus, Louisville, Oakland, and Nashville. And five cities earned an overall bronze medal for the first time: Austin, Cincinnati, Irvine, Phoenix, and Tulsa.

- Overall medals include: eight gold medals, 26 silver medals, and 17 bronze medals. Twenty-four cities did not have strong enough policies to warrant a medal.

- CityHealth awarded 434 individual policy medals (+3%) across all 12 policies, including 175 (+9%) gold medals, 121 (+7%) silver medals, and 138 (-7%) bronze medals.

Policy Movement

- Policies with the highest penetration include:
    1. High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K — 71 medals
    2. Greenspace – 58 medals
    3. Affordable Housing Trusts – 46 medals

- Policies with the lowest penetration (areas for opportunity):
    1. Eco-Friendly Purchasing – 18
    2. Legal Support for Renters – 19
    3. Flavored Tobacco Restrictions – 22

- Areas with the most year-over-year growth:
    1. Smoke-Free Indoor Air – +16%
    2. Greenspace – +5%
    3. Legal Support for Renters – +3%/Complete Streets- +3%

Emerging Trends

- The housing affordability crisis remains top of mind for many mayors and councilmembers and it is reflected in the CityHealth policy package—one-third of the solutions are dedicated to housing.
    - Affordable Housing Trusts saw significant progress this year. Ten cities earned or improved medals in this policy area and trusts allow cities to finance affordable developments, support energy-efficient upgrades, and keep existing housing accessible.
        - Anaheim, California launched the Anaheim Local Housing Trust Fund which plans to support affordable communities, first-time homebuyers, and residents at risk of eviction.
    - Additionally, in April, Los Angeles adopted a tenant right to counsel law following a decade of local advocacy. It will prioritize tenants in high-vulnerability ZIP codes as the program is phased in over the next five to seven years.

Preemption Threat

- Preemption occurs when a higher level of government overrides local authority, often preventing cities from addressing urgent challenges facing their residents.
    - In Texas, for example, the statewide Regulatory Consistency Act sharply restricted local authority over issues ranging from worker protections to tenant evictions. Although the statute, which many are calling the "Death Star" law, is currently being challenged in court, its sweeping scope has already discouraged some cities from pursuing policies tailored to their communities' needs.
- Some cities have attempted to push back through legal challenges or by operating within state limits through temporary pilots, but these strategies rarely offer durable solutions.
- State preemptive threats or actions can hamper cities from responding to urgent community needs, limiting their ability to adopt policies that would otherwise benefit health.

Opportunities in 2026

- Our package of housing policies—Affordable Housing Trusts, Healthy Rental Housing, and Legal Support for Renters—provide three proven strategies for cities to preserve and build affordable housing and keep residents of all income levels in safe, healthy housing.
- Healthy Food Purchasing presents a great opportunity for city leaders to ensure nutritious foods are available in city facilities such as government offices, parks, and schools.
    - At a time when conversations about diet, chronic disease, and misinformation are widespread, municipal purchasing power is a highly visible way for local leaders to promote science-based standards and expand healthy food options citywide.
- Local leaders have been models this year of the highest form of leadership. They have prioritized city needs, represented city values, and maintained and built bipartisan relationships all while navigating competing interests. We will see more of these skills from our local leaders in the new year.

CityHealth's Policy Package

Affordable Housing Trusts

Affordable Housing Trusts are a community-driven way for cities to invest in building and maintaining affordable housing for everyone. These trusts receive public funding to support the preservation and production of affordable housing and increase opportunities for families and individuals to access quality affordable homes.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets policies balance people's needs and safety across all forms of transportation, including walking, biking, public transit, and cars. From street lighting to bike lanes to crosswalks, these policies ensure that all residents have safe, convenient ways of getting around and staying active. All people from all neighborhoods should have access to Complete Streets that help them get where they need to go, live, play, and grow.

Earned Sick Leave

Earned Sick Leave policies require employers to allow employees to take paid time off for illness or injury for themselves or their family members. Done well, these policies can reduce the spread of contagious illnesses, increase employment and income stability, and save cities money in health care costs. Cities that require companies to offer Earned Sick Leave ensure that all employees feel secure in their jobs when they fall ill—and keep communities healthy by stopping the spread of contagious illness.

Eco-Friendly Purchasing

Eco-Friendly Purchasing policies help to limit exposure to toxic chemicals in city-owned buildings. Since cities collectively spend billions of dollars every year purchasing potentially toxic products, prioritizing the city's selection of less harmful products in three categories—cleaning supplies, foodware, and furnishings—means that leaders are able to use the power of city procurement to impact health. When city leaders buy eco-friendly products for city buildings, they make it clear that the health of our communities and our environment is worth protecting.

Flavored Tobacco Restrictions

Flavored Tobacco Restrictions policies prohibit all retailers from selling flavored tobacco products—including flavored e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes—to protect the health of our communities. Prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products can reduce use of these dangerous and addictive products and supports the well-being of everyone—especially young people.

Greenspace

Public greenspaces, from parks to trails to public commons, help families be healthier in body and mind and keep our environment thriving. Greenspace policies can expand

equitable access to parks, increase tree canopy, and reduce pollution. These policies ensure all families, not just a few, have access to public land, nature, and their benefits.

Healthy Food Purchasing

Healthy Food Purchasing policies set standards for the food available for purchase on city property. These policies can help ensure that healthy food options are available in city-owned or controlled places and give city residents food choices that can help them achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Cities that prioritize health in their food purchases increase access to healthy choices—and can use their purchasing power to lead by example.

Healthy Rental Housing

Healthy Rental Housing (also known as "proactive rental inspection") policies have a strong evidence base that shows the link between potential health harms within rental properties and the ability to proactively inspect and remediate these harms. These policies can help detect life-threatening toxins, like mold and asbestos, and have a strong upstream prevention focus that could prevent poor health problems before they start.

High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K

Done right, all children benefit from early childhood education, regardless of family income or ZIP code. CityHealth's assessment of High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K programs evaluates 10 quality benchmarks established by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), which include measures around quality, access, local funding, and data collection. When all families have access to high-quality pre-K, more children have the opportunity to succeed as they begin their educational journeys.

Legal Support for Renters

Renters have legal protections, but few can access those protections when faced with eviction because most don't have the means to obtain legal representation. Legal Support for Renters policies ensure all eligible tenants have access to full legal representation, which substantially improves the likelihood that residents will stay in their homes; or, if they must move, that they will have more time to find new housing and lower their risk of homelessness. These policies also help renters keep their records free from evictions and can help reduce rent debt.

Safer Alcohol Sales

When communities have smart policies and practices around alcohol sales, everyone is safer—and physically and men- tally healthier—by reducing excessive drinking and related violence. Safer Alcohol Sales policies put cities in charge of the location and practices of alcohol retailers. Policies that govern where, when, and how alcohol may be sold in a neighborhood can reduce crime, increase safety, and decrease spending on health care and criminal justice.

Smoke-Free Indoor Air

Cities can put people's health first by ensuring that businesses and other indoor spaces remain free from the smoke and vapor from tobacco (including e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products) and cannabis. Smoke-Free Indoor Air policies protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of tobacco and reduce smokers' consumption of tobacco at the same time. Casinos, gaming venues, multi-unit housing, and bars—or any other public space we enjoy with family and friends—should have clean air to protect everyone's health.