



California's Marin County ranked #1 with the healthiest men in America

By Mary Holman | April 22, 2012

Marin County is a star when it comes to life expectancy in America, based on a new national study. According to a twenty-year study and data published Thursday, the average life expectancy of men living in Marin County is higher than in any other county in the United States. Rising in tandem with men, the study reported that Marin women now have the second-highest life expectancy in the nation for women.

Marin County is just north of San Francisco, across the Golden Gate Bridge. Residents have ample access to outdoor activities, farmer's markets, fresh air, healthy eating and plenty of jogging and hiking trails. It's also a mecca for mountain bikers, and home to some of the first inventors of mountain bikes like Fischer. Mountain biking and running are popular along with road racing in western Marin where teams of road cyclists can be spotted on weekends.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, a health research center at the University of Washington in Seattle, has studied the county-by-county estimates of life expectancy in the United States ever since 1989. According to researchers, the life expectancy of both men and women in Marin increased significantly between 1989 and 2009. Data showed the most dramatic increase in life expectancy rates for Marin men. Their numbers soared from 74.6 years to 81.6 years while life expectancy rates for Marin women also grew from 79.7 years to 85.1 years.

Marin women had the second highest lifespan, as the Naples, Florida area of Collier County, a haven for retired midwesterners, was ranked number 1 on the list. The study found wide variations in life expectancy around the U.S. Lifespans in 2009 ranged from 66.1 to 81.6 years for men, and 73.5 to 85.8 years for women. Women's life expectancy, however, has actually declined slightly over the past 20 years, a legacy of lifestyle trends like smoking and morbid obesity that women have adopted. In Marin, women are more likely to run and participate in races like the famed Dipsea Race over Mount Tamalpais, held each June since 1911.

This study coincides with another report commissioned by the Marin Community Foundation and released in January of this year. That report, "A Portrait of Marin," found wide disparities in life expectancy within Marin County, with highly educated, wealthy residents living significantly longer than poorly educated, low income residents. But even in the low-income Canal area, Marin residents are still beating national averages, as they live an average of 80.5 years.

A third report by the state of California, which examines overall measures of health such as obesity, cancer rates, binge drinking, and diabetes, also highlighted Marin County this week. Marin has been rated the healthiest county in California based on those health measures for the past three years. Marin's only shortfall was in the area of binge drinking, which marred their overall high scores.

