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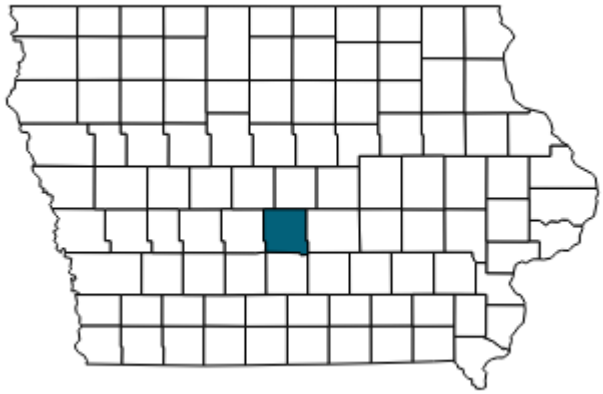
HHS System Snapshot

Polk County

Population	**516,185**
Life Expectancy	**77.7 years**
County Classification	**Metro**

State of Iowa	
Population	3,241,488
Life Expectancy	78.2 years

(Population: (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024); Life Expectancy: County Health Rankings 2025 Edition, 2021-2023)



Access to Care

Part of the county is a **shortage** area for **Primary Care Physicians**
(HPSA Find, 2026)

Part of the county is a **shortage** area for **Dental Care Providers**
(HPSA Find, 2026)

Access to care includes the ability to navigate the health care system, find care locally, and pay for services. When someone lacks one or more of these abilities, disparities may emerge.

Mental Health

4.7 poor mental health days per month

Iowa avg: 4.7 days/mo.
(County Health Rankings 2025 Edition, 2022)

Poor mental health is linked to **smoking, physical inactivity, housing and food insecurity, and poor sleep**. Disorders like **depression and anxiety** can affect people's ability to take part in healthy behaviors.

Part of the county is a **shortage** area for **Mental Health Care Providers.** (HPSA Find, 2026)

Iowa has fewer mental health providers than the national average. Access to mental health providers **varies widely** across the state.

Addictive Disorders

21.3% of adults report binge drinking

Iowa avg: 22.5%
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, PLACES, 2023)

Alcohol is the most commonly misused substance in Iowa. **Iowa's alcohol use rates** for almost every demographic **are among the highest in the nation.**

4,071 county residents received substance use treatment in SFY25; 20,198 total patients admitted in Iowa (Iowa HHS, Behavioral Health, December 2025)

Substance use disorders involve misuse of one or more substances and may lead to social, physical, mental, and public health problems. Drug use rates in Iowa are similar to the rest of the nation.

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Social, Economic and Environmental Factors

Economic Stability & Income

Economic stability is the connection between the financial resources people have and their physical and mental health. People living in poverty are at greater risk for mental illness and chronic diseases.



11.5%

live below the rate of poverty

Iowa avg:11.1%

(U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2023)



117,971

are enrolled in Medicaid

(Iowa HHS, Medicaid, June 2025)

Housing & Transportation

Cost-burden, spending more than 30% of income on housing costs, is the most common housing problem in Iowa. Unstable, unsafe, unhealthy or unaffordable housing can harm a person's health, while transportation problems can delay care, be costly, and worsen health outcomes.



26.1%

of households spend 30% or more on housing

Iowa avg: 23.4%

(U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2023)



5.8%

of households do not have a vehicle

Iowa avg: 5.4%

(U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2023)

Healthy Behaviors and Outcomes

Active Living & Healthy Eating

Being overweight or obese can lead to serious health issues like heart disease, diabetes, stroke, depression, and some cancers. A lack of consistent access to healthy food can lead to chronic diseases, obesity, or developmental problems.



36.9%

of adults have an unhealthy body weight (BMI of 30.0 or higher);

Iowa avg: 37.9%

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, PLACES, 2023)



56,970

Individuals experiencing food insecurity

(Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2023)

Cancer

Many unhealthy behaviors linked to cancer can be prevented such as excessive drinking, using tobacco products, physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and ultraviolet light exposure. Cancer screening tests can detect cancer early, making treatment easier and improving survival.



490.6

county incidence rate for cancer (*per 100,000 people)

Iowa avg: 491.8

(National Cancer Institute, State Cancer Profiles, 2017-2021)



158.9

county death rate from cancer (*per 100,000 people)

Iowa avg: 149.6

(National Cancer Institute, State Cancer Profiles, 2018-2022)