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Study ranks environmental health of WI counties

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Surprising -- and not so surprising -- results on a study of the environmental health of Wisconsin's counties. Researchers collected publicly available data on air and water quality, and the "built environment" -- that is, exposure to lead based paint in older housing -- to come up with the rankings on the state's 72 counties. Not surprisingly, Jessica Athens at the UW Public Health Institute says the top ranked counties were all in northern Wisconsin: Bayfield, Sawyer, Menominee, Vilas and Iron counties were the top five.

But perhaps the real shocker in this study is the rankings for Dane County: 64th in air quality, last in water quality and 14th in the built environment, for a ranking of dead last overall. "Part of that is, we're trying to find publicly available data that we can easily use, so that others can replicate our methods," says Athens. "There are things that we're not capturing." In fact, Athens says [the study](#) demonstrates that we need to have better data available to fully evaluate environmental health in Wisconsin.