

2009 Regional Top 100 counties in the Midwest to live by The Progressive Farmer magazine.

Dickinson County has been listed as one of the best places to live in rural America by The Progressive Farmer magazine. Each year, the magazine ranks the top 100 counties by region and the top 20 counties overall.

Dickinson County came in at number 85 on the 2009 Midwest list.

Rankings are based on the price of homes, spending habits, access to healthcare, crime rate, and opportunity for leisure activities.

"We're the only county in Michigan on the list, so we're pretty proud of that," said Bruce Orttenberger of the Dickinson Area Partnership. According to Orttenberger, the lists are geared toward baby boomers who might be looking to relocate to a rural area.

"We're always getting inquiries about the area, and maybe our ranking will increase the interest," he continued.

However, Dickinson County did not rate as well in the job growth category as many other counties did.

Although the county currently has the relatively high unemployment rate of 9.7 percent, Orttenberger pointed out that it has been consistently lower than Michigan's overall unemployment rate.

"I don't look at numbers, I look at rankings," he said. "Even though our rate has gone up, we're still the third lowest in the Upper Peninsula."

"There have been a few bumps in the road, but we're holding our own," said Orttenberger.

Information taken from an article in the Iron Mountain Daily News.

How To Read These Statistics on the Best 100 Counties

COUNTY STATS

The data for the specified county.

TOP 500 AVG.

The average data for the top 500 counties on our list, for comparison purposes.

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The average total income for all wage earners.

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SPENDING

The average total spending for a household, which includes mortgage and consumer debt payments.

SPENDING TO INCOME RATIO

The average total spending for a household, which includes mortgage and consumer debt payments, against average household income. These ratios were used to rank counties by cost of living.

COUNTY SALES TAX

Combined state and county sales tax; there may also be city sales tax in individual communities.

AVERAGE HOME PRICE

Includes all single-family homes, condominiums, townhomes. Not available for all counties on our list.

STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO

The number of students for every one teacher; also called classroom size.

COLLEGE BOUND PERCENTAGE

The percentage of high school graduates who enter undergraduate education.

PERSONAL CRIME

Risk of incidence based on FBI crime data. Personal crimes are crimes committed directly against an individual,

such as assault. The national average is 100; 200 would be twice the average risk and 50 would be half the average risk.

PROPERTY CRIME

Risk of incidence based on FBI crime data. Property crimes are crimes dealing with possessions, such as theft. The national average is 100; 200 would be twice the average risk and 50 would be half the average risk.

TOTAL CRIME

Total risk taking both personal and property crimes into account.

HEALTH DENSITY

A measure of the number of health resources per thousand within the county borders.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

Based on the EPA air quality rating. 100 is the national average pollution level, 200 would be twice the average level and 50 would be half the average level.

ANNUAL RAINFALL

Average yearly precipitation, including snowfall, in inches.

MAXIMUM/MINIMUM TEMPERATURES

The maximum temperature is the average high in this county in July. The minimum temperature is the average low in January.

LEISURE INDEX

A measure of the number of leisure resources per thousand within the county borders (restaurants/bars, museums, theaters, golf courses, etc.).

Dickinson County, Michigan

Major cities in Dickinson County: Iron Mountain, Kingsford, Norway, Channing, Felch, Foster City , Loretto, Merriman, Quinnesec, Randville, Sagola, Vulcan, Waucedah

RANK: 85 Midwest 2009 study

POPULATION: 27,755

POPULATION DENSITY: 35.81 per square mile

	COUNTY STATS	TOP 500 AVG.
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	56,637	62,056
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SPENDING	41,381	45,526
COUNTY SALES TAX	6%	5.89%
AVERAGE HOME PRICE	58,000	149,097
JOB GROWTH	-360	2320
POVERTY PERCENTAGE	11.3%	12.73%
AVERAGE PARCEL SIZE	55.013	270.61

	COUNTY STATS	TOP 500 AVG.
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO	17.79	14.59
COLLEGE BOUND PERCENTAGE	73.85%	61.52%
COLLEGE EDUCATION PERCENTAGE	24.65%	27.26%

	COUNTY STATS	TOP 500 AVG.
PERSONAL CRIME	42	40
PROPERTY CRIME	40	53
TOTAL CRIME	39	50

	COUNTY STATS	TOP 500 AVG.
HEALTH DENSITY	0.61	0.61

	COUNTY STATS	TOP 500 AVG.
AIR QUALITY INDEX	79	93
ANNUAL RAINFALL (INCHES)	29.91	38.1
MINIMUM JANUARY TEMPERATURE (AVG.)	-0.09	19.2
MAXIMUM JULY TEMPERATURE (AVG.)	78.37	86.95

	COUNTY STATS	TOP 500 AVG.
LEISURE INDEX	4.47	2.95

How We Did the ranking in 2009

All statistics—including the population density and tract size numbers here and the full stat sheets on our web site—are researched and provided by OnBoard Informatics, a real estate research firm. The Progressive Farmer compiles a list of rural counties based on certain criteria: home and land prices, crime rates, environment, education, economic factors, access to health care and others. Counties are first ranked using a proprietary formula based on these statistics,