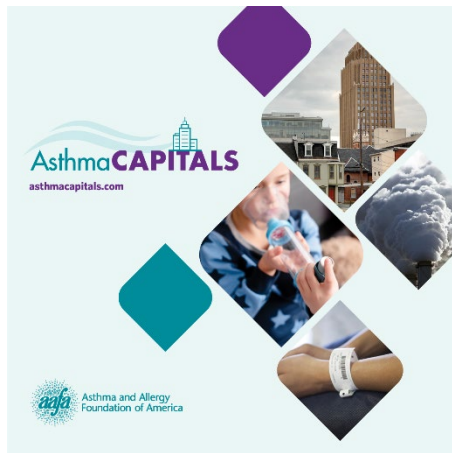


Press Release

## AAFA's 2021 Asthma Capitals™ Report Lists Most Challenging Cities to Live in the U.S. With Asthma

*Allentown, Pennsylvania takes the top spot for 2021; report emphasizes impact of COVID-19, climate change, and racial inequity on Americans with asthma*



Washington D.C., May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 — Today, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) rolled out its [2021 Asthma Capitals™](#) report. The report coincides with World Asthma Day, part of National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month. AAFA's Asthma Capitals™ report analyzes data from the 100 largest cities in the United States to determine its ranking. Allentown, Pennsylvania takes the top spot as the most challenging place to live for asthma in the 2021 report.

The ranking is based on three criteria: asthma prevalence, emergency department visits for asthma, and deaths due to asthma. The report also highlights risk factors including poverty, air pollution, access to specialists, pollen counts, medicine use, smoking policies, and the rate of uninsured

residents in an area. AAFA previously identified existing “Asthma Belts” which continue to have a grip on the eastern half of the nation, however two western cities – Tucson, Arizona and Fresno, California, are also listed in the top 20 cities for this year’s report.

The top 20 Asthma Capitals™ for 2021 are:

- |                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Allentown, Pennsylvania    | 11. Worcester, Massachusetts   |
| 2. Baltimore, Maryland        | 12. Springfield, Massachusetts |
| 3. Richmond, Virginia         | 13. Columbus, Ohio             |
| 4. Milwaukee, Wisconsin       | 14. Birmingham, Alabama        |
| 5. New Haven, Connecticut     | 15. Detroit, Michigan          |
| 6. Cleveland, Ohio            | 16. Louisville, Kentucky       |
| 7. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | 17. Hartford, Connecticut      |
| 8. Dayton, Ohio               | 18. Boston, Massachusetts      |
| 9. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma    | 19. Fresno, California         |
| 10. Tucson, Arizona           | 20. Greensboro, North Carolina |

To see the complete, 100-city list visit [asthmacapitals.com](https://asthmacapitals.com).

“AAFA produces the Asthma Capitals report and similar research to help improve the lives of the estimated 25 million Americans living with asthma. It’s important to highlight areas which deserve our urgent attention and collective action. This includes the pressing need to develop more programs and policies that will effectively help us reduce stark disparities in asthma based on race, gender, income and where people live,” said Kenneth Mendez, CEO and president of AAFA. “This report also supports the need for climate action. Air pollution, extreme weather patterns, and natural disasters fueled by climate change continue to have a worsening impact on Americans living in certain communities. This is not only a critical area of investigation, but signals exactly where work needs to be done for those with the greatest needs.”

The report also calls attention to the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in determining the rankings. This includes some changes in health outcomes and risk factors like pollen exposure, medicine use, and emergency room visits. In 2020, fewer people experienced pollen allergies due to COVID-19 restrictions, recommendations to stay indoors, and other preventative measures like mask wearing. As a result, use of long-term asthma medicines were also down along with fewer people heading to hospital emergency rooms for asthma.

“The pandemic, economic recession, climate crisis, and racial injustice all had a significant impact on the asthma community in 2020. Despite some varying factors, asthma remains a serious public health threat with an average of 10 people dying each day. At AAFA, we reiterate that’s 10 too many. Most of these tragedies are preventable,” said Melanie Carver, chief mission officer at AAFA. “Stakeholders, policy makers, health officials, communities and individuals around the nation can use this information to join us in our mission to save lives.”

The 2021 Asthma Capitals™ report is an independent research project of AAFA made possible in part by support from the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association (PCMA) Foundation.

For the latest AAFA news and resources go to [aafa.org](https://aafa.org).

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**About the research**

AAFA publishes the Asthma Capitals™ report to raise awareness about the nationwide impacts of asthma. The report analyzes data from across the continental United States and ranks the 100 largest cities where it is challenging to live with asthma. The report ranks cities by the most critical of health outcomes – asthma prevalence, emergency department visits due to asthma attacks, and asthma mortality. The outcomes are not weighted equally. The report also examines asthma risk factors that influence the outcomes.

**About AAFA**

Founded in 1953, AAFA is the oldest and largest non-profit patient organization dedicated to saving lives and reducing the burden of disease for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions through research, education, advocacy and support. AAFA offers extensive support for individuals and families affected by asthma and allergic diseases, such as food allergies and atopic dermatitis (eczema). Through its online patient support communities, network of local chapters and affiliated support groups, AAFA empowers patients and their families by providing practical, evidence-based information and community programs and services. AAFA is the only asthma and allergy patient advocacy group that is certified to meet the standards of excellence set by the National Health Council. For more information, visit [www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org).