

Study: Georgia tax-friendly, not health-friendly for retirees

By Nedra Rhone
nrhone@ajc.com

According to a recent study, Georgia is a so-so place to retire.

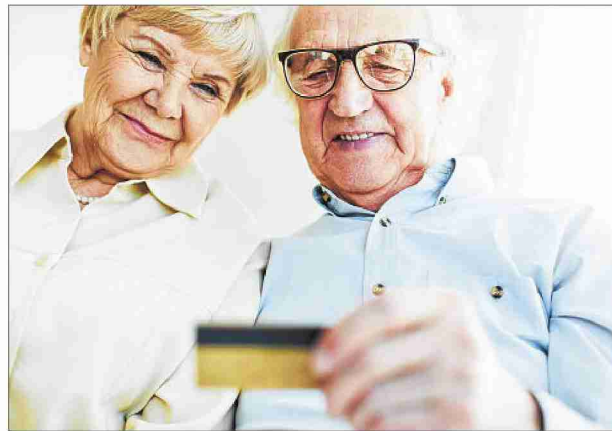
In WalletHub's annual survey of the Best and Worst states to retire, Georgia ranked number 20 overall, placing the state somewhere in the middle of the pack.

The top five states to retire are Florida, Wyoming, South Dakota, South Carolina and Colorado. The worst states to retire are Rhode Island, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Connecticut and Vermont.

Georgia is also one of the five states with the lowest percentage of the population age 65 or older. States like Florida, Maine and West Virginia have the highest percentages of the 65 and older set.

While it is not bad to be in the top 20, Georgia ranked dismally low (44) compared to other states when it comes to health care for retirees. On the other hand, the state came in at 12 for its affordability rank.

That's not too surprising considering that Kiplinger recently rated Georgia as one of the most tax-friendly states for retirees.



A recent study shows some positives and negatives for folks thinking about retiring in Georgia. WalletHub's annual rankings put the state 20th overall. SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

According to at least one expert quoted in the survey, one of the biggest mistakes retirees make is not factoring in a state's income tax rate and tax base before making a decision to move there.

Of course, health concerns aren't limited to the quality of health care, but also the impact health care can have on your finances as you age. Retirees nationwide are worried about how their health and health care costs may change their retirement plans.

A healthy 65-year-old married couple can expect annual health-care expenses of \$6,999, according to a 2015 study by

HealthView Services. That would grow to \$14,530 annually by the time the couple reaches 85, the study says. With dwindling pensions that offer steady income, that could represent a huge chunk of savings for many retirees, says Travis Chance, president and founder of CFG Wealth Management, LLC and CFG Insurance Planning based in Statesboro.

"There's no doubt that medical expenses can add up for retirees," he says. "That's why everyone needs to keep those costs in mind when they are investing and saving for retirement."

So financially, Georgia is a winner for retirees, as long as they stay healthy.

