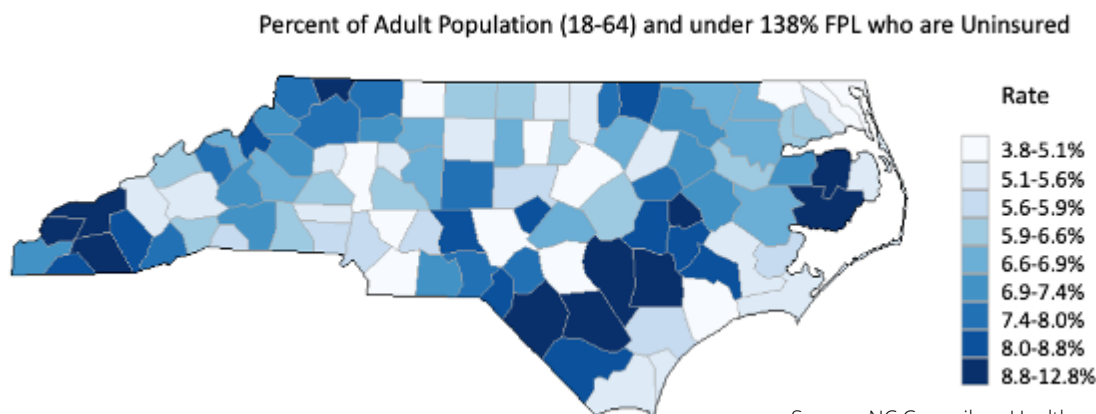


Close the Coverage Gap to Improve Rural Health

Rural residents are 40% more likely to fall in the health insurance coverage gap.¹



Source: NC Council on Healthcare Coverage, 2020

Rural residents stand to benefit most from closing the coverage gap.

- There are 14 counties in NC where over 20% of workers are uninsured. All 14 of these counties are rural.²
- In 2019, 18% of rural residents in NC lived in poverty, compared to 12% of urban residents. Closing the gap has been linked with increased financial stability among low-income adults.^{3,4}
- Rural areas have higher rates of substance use, suicide, injury, and preventable hospitalizations—all of which have shown to improve as a result of closing the gap.^{5,6,7}

Closing the gap improves rural hospital finances.

- States that have already closed their coverage gap have seen a 62% decrease in likelihood of rural hospitals closing.⁸
- There are currently six rural hospitals in NC considered at high risk of closure.¹
- Closing the only hospital in a county leads to a decrease of about \$1,300 in per capita income.¹

Closing the gap increases access to healthcare in rural areas.

- Closing the gap has been associated with greater use of community health centers and increased behavioral health staff in rural areas.⁹
- In states that closed their coverage gap, rural clinics scored better on quality metrics and were able to provide more frequent and consistent care.¹⁰

Sources

1. North Carolina Council on Healthcare Coverage. (2020). "North Carolina Council on Healthcare Coverage: First Council Meeting." Retrieved from: <https://healthpolicy.duke.edu/sites/default/files/2020-12/NC%20Council%20on%20Health%20Care%20Coverage%20-%20Meeting%201%20Compiled%20Slides.pdf>
2. Alker J, Corcoran A. (2021). "A Profile of North Carolina's Low-Wage Uninsured Workers." *Georgetown University Center for Children and Families*. Retrieved from: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NC-Low-Wage-Workers-UPDATE.pdf>
3. Rural Health Information Hub. (2020). "North Carolina." Retrieved from: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/states/north-carolina>
4. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2020). "The Far-Reaching Benefits of the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid Expansion." Retrieved from: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/chart-book-the-far-reaching-benefits-of-the-affordable-care-acts-medicaid-expansion>
5. North Carolina Justice Center. (2018). "Medicaid Expansion for Rural Communities in North Carolina." Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MEDICAID-EXPANSION-Rural-Communities-2018-Updated.pdf>
6. Austin AE, Naumann RB, Short NA. (2021). "Association Between Medicaid Expansion and Suicide Mortality Among Nonelderly US Adults." *American J of Epidemiology*, 190(9): 1760-1769.
7. Guth M, Garfield R, Rudowitz R. (2020). "The Effects of Medicaid Expansion Under the ACA: Studies from January 2014 to January 2020." *KFF*. Retrieved from: <https://www.kff.org/report-section/the-effects-of-medicaid-expansion-under-the-aca-updated-findings-from-a-literature-review-report/>
8. The Chartis Center for Rural Health. (2020). "The Rural Health Safety Net Under Pressure: Rural Hospital Vulnerability." Retrieved from: https://www.chartis.com/forum/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CCRH_Vulnerability-Research_FINAL-02.14.20.pdf
9. Hoadley J, Alker J, Holmes M. (2018). "Health Insurance Coverage in Small Towns and Rural America: The Role of Medicaid Expansion." *Georgetown University Center for Children and Families*. Retrieved from: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2018/09/25/health-insurance-coverage-in-small-towns-and-rural-america-the-role-of-medicaid-expansion/#heading-4>
10. MACPAC. (2021). "Medicaid and Rural Health." Retrieved from: <https://www.macpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Medicaid-and-Rural-Health.pdf>