

Close the Coverage Gap to Reduce Medical Debt

About 100 million people in the U.S. — 41% of adults — have some form of health care debt.¹

Non-expansion states have some of the highest levels of medical debt.

- 12 North Carolina counties have the highest levels of medical debt, ranking NC 3rd behind Texas and Georgia.²
- Greene and Lenoir rank 2nd and 3rd among counties nationally with the highest percentages of medical debt with uninsured rates of 16.6% and 12.5%, respectively. Anson county ranks 5th.³
- Adults in non-expansion states were 1.5 times more likely to owe medical debt than those in expansion states.²
- Compared to North Carolina, only five states have a higher share of residents with medical debt on their credit reports.¹

Medical debt is a leading cause of bankruptcy.

- Nearly 70% of all bankruptcies were tied to medical issues. Either because of high costs for care or time out of work.⁴
- An estimated 530,000 families turn to bankruptcy each year because of medical issues and bills.⁴
- Two-thirds of people who file for bankruptcy cite medical issues as a key contributing factor.⁴

Medical debt is associated with other health risks.

- Medical debt is a risk factor for worsening food and housing insecurity.⁵
- People with disabilities, previous hospitalizations, and no health care coverage are more likely to acquire medical debt.⁵

Sources

1. Pattani A. (2022). "Medical Bills Can Shatter Lives. North Carolina May Act to 'De-Weaponize' That Debt." Kaiser Health News. Retrieved from: <https://khn.org/news/article/medical-bills-can-shatter-lives-north-carolina-may-act-to-de-weaponize-that-debt/>
2. Little J. (2022). "New Report Offers Another Compelling Reason for States to Expand Medicaid." Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families. Retrieved from: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2022/08/05/new-report-offers-another-compelling-reason-for-states-to-expand-medicaid/>
3. Blavin F, Braga B, Gangopadhyaya A. (2022). "Which County Characteristics Predict Medical Debt?" Urban Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Which%20County%20Characteristics%20Predict%20Medical%20Debt.pdf>
4. Konish L. (2019). "This is the real reason most Americans file for bankruptcy." CNBC. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/02/11/this-is-the-real-reason-most-americans-file-for-bankruptcy.html>
5. Physician's Briefing Staff. (2022). "Medical Debt Tied to Worsening of Food, Housing Insecurity." Greensboro News and Record. Retrieved from: https://greensboro.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/medical-debt-tied-to-worsening-of-food-housing-insecurity/article_13aa887c-fc28-51a0-943e-80b575537bab.html