

Does Your State Face Rural Area Provider Shortages?

On average, rural areas have four times fewer specialists per capita than urban areas. Rural communities also have a fewer number of primary care providers (PCPs) than urban communities, although the discrepancy is not as great. Surprisingly, the majority of both rural and urban counties are wholly designated primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).

Disclaimer: The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 60 million people—or 15% of the U.S. population—live in rural areas. The census uses census-level tracts to estimate rural populations, whereas this table relies on county-level data. Using this larger and less precise geographic unit shows fewer Americans in living rural counties (27M). Hence, our analysis of provider shortages is based on a subset of all rural residents.

States	Percent of Population Living in a Rural County	Specialists per 100,000 Population		PCPs per 100,000 Population		Percent of Counties that are Wholly Designated Primary Care HPSAs	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
National Average	9%	36	147	44	77	54%	67%
Alabama	15%	23	130	40	77	41%	69%
Alaska	28%	35	151	76	84	32%	100%
Arizona	2%	28	100	35	50	75%	82%
Arkansas	30%	33	159	48	82	67%	50%
California	1%	45	122	52	80	87%	100%
Colorado	7%	59	152	62	79	71%	65%
Connecticut	0%	N/A	212	N/A	105	N/A	100%
Delaware	0%	N/A	148	N/A	73	N/A	100%
District of Columbia	0%	N/A	296	N/A	173	N/A	100%
Florida	2%	17	136	23	68	44%	94%
Georgia	12%	30	114	42	73	49%	45%
Hawaii	0%	N/A	164	N/A	94	N/A	100%
Idaho	21%	43	112	48	62	68%	81%
Illinois	7%	35	142	39	53	60%	67%
Indiana	15%	23	135	35	76	46%	49%
Iowa	31%	20	147	37	71	47%	76%
Kansas	18%	22	163	48	78	76%	83%
Kentucky	33%	46	164	45	82	46%	44%
Louisiana	11%	23	197	44	84	48%	56%
Maine	32%	85	200	78	104	100%	83%
Maryland	3%	111	168	53	103	40%	79%
Massachusetts	0%	106	219	64	93	0%	100%
Michigan	11%	46	135	40	85	81%	86%
Minnesota	16%	35	143	64	103	64%	56%
Mississippi	36%	28	162	33	68	25%	52%
Missouri	18%	22	172	29	79	68%	72%
Montana	36%	38	171	59	84	57%	78%

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		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Nebraska	21%	11	183	57	93	49%	65%
Nevada	3%	23	111	44	57	33%	75%
New Hampshire	9%	103	193	73	89	100%	100%
New Jersey	0%	N/A	176	N/A	92	N/A	67%
New Mexico	13%	55	149	65	82	21%	57%
New York	3%	79	182	54	82	85%	82%
North Carolina	10%	40	167	42	78	76%	75%
North Dakota	41%	26	208	45	110	33%	71%
Ohio	7%	25	149	34	75	39%	63%
Oklahoma	21%	21	129	29	62	82%	96%
Oregon	6%	63	146	70	93	71%	89%
Pennsylvania	5%	52	143	42	85	89%	85%
Rhode Island	0%	N/A	244	N/A	110	N/A	60%
South Carolina	8%	26	150	37	74	40%	84%
South Dakota	40%	42	193	53	94	42%	55%
Tennessee	14%	24	169	37	85	61%	61%
Texas	7%	21	107	31	61	29%	46%
Utah	8%	33	111	38	59	65%	92%
Vermont	46%	133	297	94	149	89%	80%
Virginia	10%	39	159	44	86	27%	33%
Washington	2%	33	127	60	57	70%	90%
West Virginia	28%	29	177	34	93	65%	75%
Wisconsin	16%	41	180	61	88	77%	73%
Wyoming	47%	84	118	67	62	56%	80%

To learn more about rural healthcare value, visit: <http://www.healthcarevaluehub.org/Rural-Health>

Notes:

- (1) Shaded rows denote rural states, defined here as those in which at least 10 percent of the population lives in a rural county. We used Rural-Urban Continuum codes 6-9 for this designation.
- (2) Provider counts represent the number of non-federally employed MDs practicing in rural and non-rural environments in 2015. They do not include other types of providers such as DOs, nurse practitioners or MDs employed by the federal government. Primary care physicians (PCPs) include MDs working in general family medicine, general practice, general internal medicine and general pediatrics. Subspecialties within these areas are included in the specialist count.
- (3) A geographic area is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area in 2016 if the following criteria are met:
 - (a) The area is a rational area for the delivery of primary medical services.
 - (b) One of the following conditions prevails within the area:
 - (1) The area has a population to full-time-equivalent primary care physician ratio of at least 3,500:1.
 - (2) The area has a population to full-time-equivalent primary care physician ratio of less than 3,500:1 but greater than 3,000:1 and has unusually high needs for primary care services or insufficient capacity of existing primary care providers.
 - (c) Primary medical care professionals in contiguous areas are overutilized, excessively distant or inaccessible to the population of the area under consideration.