

*Kevin Austin, Chairman of Board  
David Moxley, Vice Chairman  
Cliff Collins, Commissioner  
Marion Welborn, Commissioner  
Frank Zachary, Commissioner*



*Ed Powell, County Attorney  
Lisa Hughes, County Manager  
Tanya Gentry, Clerk to the Board*

## **COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT**

### **June 2, 2023**

#### ***Holcomb House***

If you haven't been in downtown Yadkinville this week, you may be missing it! The roof has been removed from the Holcomb House, the windows boarded and it has been readied to move. Lynn McCrary with McCrary Movers told me yesterday that they plan to move it Sunday.

#### ***Partners Behavior Health Opioid Grant***

Partners Behavioral Health awarded the County a \$90,980 grant which exceeded the amount applied for. In addition to the kits and items we submitted, they are now allowing us to use the remaining funds to purchase 100 single dose overdose kits to be used by law enforcement and 150 doses of nasal Narcan that can be used by EMS. They sent me a contract amendment through DocuSign that expanded the items purchased. A copy of the amendment is in Exhibit A.

Also, to note, Marie Walters has been hired as the Opioid Action Coordinator and starts next week in this position. Her office will be located in the Veterans' Center on Jackson Street.

#### ***Hwy 601 Sewer Expansion***

We had received a request to expand sewer 1200' feet on Hwy 601. Michael Goliber with DMP has spoken with Town Manager Mike Koser about the project. The County will contract with DMP for the engineering work and Goliber will provide a Task Order and an estimated construction cost next week. Once we have the cost estimates, Brock will complete the form necessary to utilize some of the funds allocated by the State in this year's State budget for Yadkin County. Former Representative Lee Zachary secured \$1,000,000 for the County to use for water and sewer projects. We are hoping that there will be adequate funds to also expand sewer down Rocky Branch Road.

#### ***Aging Planning Committee***

Yadkin County will receive an increase of \$6,889 in Home Community Care Block Grant for aging services for FY2024, for a total amount of \$308,193. This money goes directly to YVEDDI for congregate meals, home-delivered meals and senior center operations and New Horizons for Levels 2 & 3 in-home care. YVEDDI requested \$221,982 and New

Horizons requested \$86,211. The County provides the 10% cash match for YVEDDI and an additional \$38,591 for home delivered meals. Being that New Horizons' in-home services are for-profit, we bid those services out every 2 years and they provide their own match.

### **Strategic Planning**

The NCACC offers multiple services to counties at no cost. One of those services is the facilitation of creating a strategic plan. Yadkin County does not currently have a strategic plan. I am working with NCACC staff members Amy Cannon (former Cumberland County Manager) and Neil Emory to prepare at least 2 sessions with the Board to create a strategic plan for the County. If you will please, look at your calendars and let me know 2-3 days that will work best for you to participate in these sessions. Also, if there are specific areas you would like for them to address, please let me know.

### **NC Rural Center's Road Show**

The NC Rural Center is hitting the road this summer by visiting 12 rural counties to listen and learn more about the forces shaping communities. They will be in Wilkes County on July 26, 2-4pm. It is a free event, but registration is required. Please let me know if you would like to attend.

The Rural Center has also received a publication "Forces Driving Change in Rural North Carolina" and a copy of it is attached in Exhibit B.

### **Upcoming Dates**

**June 7 & 8**, the NCACC will host another Opioid Summit in Durham County. Chris Bolden, Brock Hall, Marie Walters and I are attending.

The NCACC District meeting for our area is **Thursday, June 22** in Wilkes County. Please let Tanya or me know if you would like to attend. The meeting is 5-7pm in the Agricultural Center.

The NC City/County Managers' Conference will be **June 22-24** in Wilmington, NC.

The NACo Conference is **July 21 -24, 2023** in Austin, Texas. For the Commissioners' registered, the hotel check-in is July 20 and check-out July 25.

The NCACC Annual Conference is scheduled for **August 24-26** in Raleigh, NC. Registration is now open, so please let Tanya or me know as soon as possible if you would like for us to register you.

EXHIBIT A

**AMENDMENT TO  
CONTRACT  
BETWEEN**

**PARTNERS HEALTH MANAGEMENT  
Area Authority/LME-MCO  
AND  
COUNTY OF YADKIN  
A PROVIDER OF MH/DD/SA SERVICES**

**THIS CONTRACT AMENDMENT** is made between Partners Health Management, Area Authority/LME-MCO (herein known as the "LME"), and **County of Yadkin** (herein known as the "Provider"), operating under the laws of North Carolina. By means of this Contract, the Local Management Entity is establishing a relationship with Provider(s) who are reimbursed for activities and/or services as listed below.

This Contract is effective **July 1, 2022** through **June 30, 2023**

The purpose of this Amendment is to:  
Adjust funding details in Attachment A.  
Please refer to Attachment A for details.

All other stipulations and conditions of the original contract, to include attachments as amended, will remain binding and in effect for the length of this contract, unless otherwise properly amended, terminated or renewed.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Parties have caused this Contract to be executed in multiple copies, each of which shall be deemed an original, as the act of said Party; and each Party will retain a fully executed copy. Each individual signing below warrants he/she is duly authorized by the Party to sign this Contract and to bind the Party to the terms and conditions of this Contract.

**Provider Name:** County of Yadkin

**Address:** 217 E. Willow Street PO Box 220 Yadkinville, NC 27055

**Phone:** 336-849-7900

**Provider's Federal ID:** 56-6000352

DocuSigned by:  
Lisa Hughes

6/1/2023 | 3:24 PM EDT

---

**PROVIDER AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

Lisa Hughes

County Manager

---

**PRINTED NAME**

**TITLE**

**Partners Health Management**  
901 S. New Hope Road  
Gastonia, NC 28054

DocuSigned by:

W. Rhett Melton

6/1/2023 | 9:28 PM EDT

---

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**DATE**

**Per G.S. 159-28, this instrument has been pre-audited in the manner required by the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act.**

DocuSigned by:

Susan Davis Lackey

6/1/2023 | 8:46 AM EDT

---

**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**DATE**

**Attachment A**  
**REIMBURSEMENT SCHEDULE FOR SERVICES**

**COUNTY OF YADKIN**

**Funding Term: Effective May 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023**

**1. Services to be Provided:** Yadkin County has been awarded \$90,980 in Opioid Abatement Funding to purchase items needed for Harm Reduction Kits. The Harm Reduction Kits will be assembled by County staff and will be distributed to the public as needed by first responders and public health officials to include but not limited to Yadkin County Human Services, Yadkin County Emergency Services, Yadkin County Sheriff's Office, Yadkinville Police Department, Jonesville Police Department, Boonville Police Department, East Bend Police Department, and other appropriate entities. Items purchased for the kits may include Fentanyl test strips, Grainger drawstring poly bags, First Aid kits, Deterra Drug Disposal Pouches, and Narcan Nasal Spray. **In addition to the items mentioned above, Yadkin County will also purchase 100 Single Dose Opioid Overdose kits for use by Law Enforcement agencies, as well as 150 doses of the 4 mg Nasal Narcan Spray for distribution to the community by EMS.**

Invoices should include receipts or documentation for the purchase of items needed for the project.

A report describing utilization of these funds is due with the final invoice/receipts by **July 5, 2023**, and should be sent to [nonucr@partnersbhm.org](mailto:nonucr@partnersbhm.org)

**2. Reimbursement: The maximum amount to be reimbursed for term above is \$90,980.00.** Partners Health Management will pay contract provider upon receipt of an appropriate invoice and backup documentation (as applicable and required as noted above). Invoices are normally processed within thirty days of receipt.

**3. Submission of Invoices:** The Provider shall submit the monthly invoice no later than 30 days after services has occurred.

**4. Funding Source:** Allocation 23-PA-41 = \$90,980.00

- **MAIL INVOICES TO:** **Partners Health Management**  
**901 S. New Hope Road**  
**Gastonia, NC 28054**  
**Attn: Finance – NonUCR Billing**  
**Email: [nonucr@partnersbhm.org](mailto:nonucr@partnersbhm.org)**

It is understood and agreed by Provider that any agreements by LME to pay any amounts to Provider on any basis other than fee-for-service, are applicable solely to the contract period, and that such payments shall not obligate LME to fund Provider in a manner other than on a fee-for-services basis in this Contract or any future Contracts

# FORCES DRIVING CHANGE IN RURAL NORTH CAROLINA



# FORCES DRIVING CHANGE IN RURAL NORTH CAROLINA



# THE DRIVERS: OUR PEOPLE, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR BUSINESSES



The North Carolina Rural Center builds economic strength in rural North Carolina. To continue that mission today and to continue to refine our work, we've identified major drivers of modern rural life. These drivers influence our **people**, our **communities**, and our **businesses**. They challenge growth in rural North Carolina, even as our rural communities now thankfully have unprecedented assets and opportunities to address longstanding problems.

Drivers of our **people** include the education levels of rural North Carolinians, the health care of our residents, the growing diversity of our communities, and a reticence to always embrace everyone.

Our **communities** are driven by the quality, cost, and availability of infrastructure; the increased exposure to the effects of natural disasters; and informed leadership with the capacity to handle new realities.

Rural **businesses** tend to be smaller than those in urban and suburban markets. They need more access to capital and markets, and connections to small business resources.

Underlying all of this in all of our communities are changes - positive and negative - resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. We are all rebuilding in some way right now, putting us at a critical point in the effort to revive sometimes forgotten places. Understanding these drivers will help all of us focus on the work ahead in rural North Carolina.





## PEOPLE

Education for Tomorrow's Labor Market .....	6
Rural Healthcare Inequities and Social Determinants of Health .....	8
A Rural North Carolina for Everyone .....	10



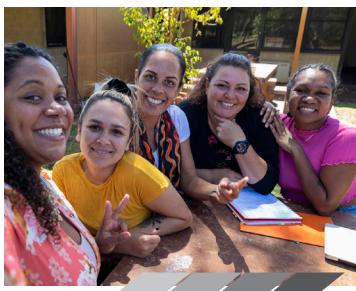
## OUR COMMUNITY

Sustainable Leadership and Community Collaboration.....	12
Safe, Modern, and Affordable Infrastructure.....	14
Weather and Climate Resiliency .....	16



## BUSINESS

Small Business Support .....	18
------------------------------	----



## COVID-19 RECOVERY

Long-term Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural People and Places .....	20
--	----



# EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW'S LABOR MARKET

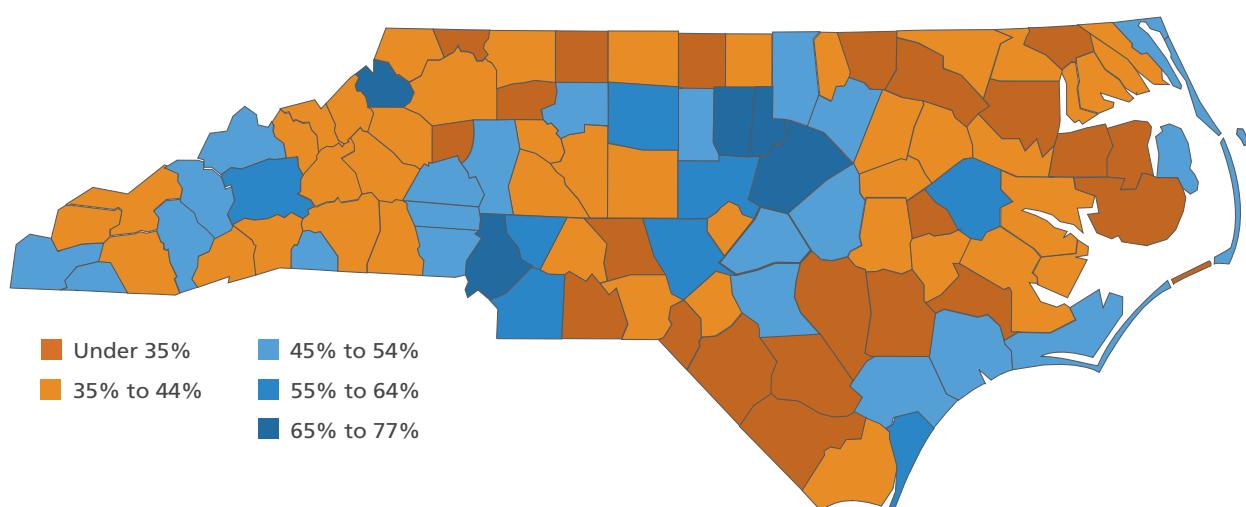
This driver addresses education and training for rural workers of all ages to move them into and retain them in the rural workforce through a commitment to continuous learning.

North Carolina's attractiveness to business continues to generate a growing economy overall. But as the demand for workers grows, especially those with higher levels of formal education attainment, employers struggle to find enough talent to fill their jobs and rural communities struggle to retain and attract employers with these needs. Not only this, but rural North Carolina has a smaller proportion of working-age population compared to suburban and urban communities, meaning educating the existing workforce is all the more important.

---

## POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT: 2020

*Percentage of Adults (25-44 Years) with a Postsecondary Degree or Credential*





## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- Only 41 percent of North Carolina rural county adults (25-44 years old) have a postsecondary degree or credential. This is compared to 51 percent of suburban and 66 percent of urban county adults (map at left).<sup>1</sup>
- Workers with a bachelor's degree earn 65 percent more per week than workers with a high school education level. Workers with a bachelor's degree are 77 percent less likely to be unemployed than those with only a high-school education.<sup>2</sup>
- North Carolina spends on average \$9,958 per K-12 student, approximately \$3,500 less than the national average.<sup>3</sup>
- 74 percent of rural small business owners in the U.S. reported struggling to find job candidates with the right education, skills, or training for the job.<sup>4</sup>

### NORTH CAROLINA ADULTS WITH A POSTSECONDARY DEGREE OR CREDENTIAL

**41%**

IN RURAL COUNTIES

**51%**

IN SUBURBAN COUNTIES

**66%**

IN URBAN COUNTIES

**74%**

**OF RURAL SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS**  
REPORTED STRUGGLING TO FIND JOB CANDIDATES  
WITH THE RIGHT EDUCATION, SKILLS, OR TRAINING  
FOR THE JOB.





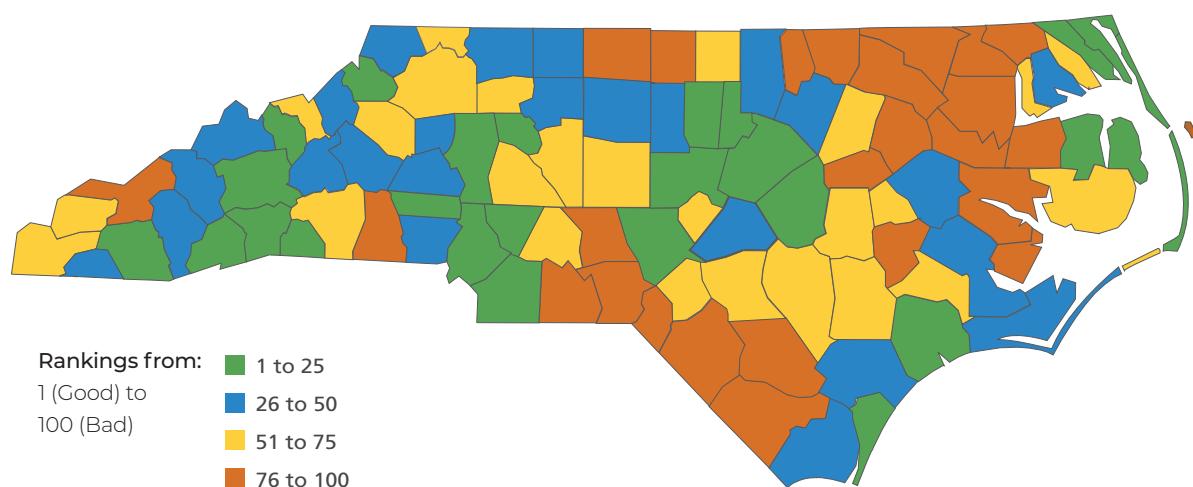
# RURAL HEALTHCARE INEQUITIES & SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

This driver focuses not only on healthcare access and the healthcare workforce, but also social determinants of health including substance use, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and more.

Nationwide, rural communities struggle with the health of their residents, and North Carolina is no exception. Consistently, our rural counties have worse health outcomes, such as length and quality of life, when compared to urban counties. Disparities in rural North Carolina regarding healthcare, such as fewer healthcare providers and less access to affordable health insurance, contribute to the negative health outcomes in rural counties. Other social determinants of health - housing, food insecurity, social isolation, substance use - present additional barriers to positive health outcomes.

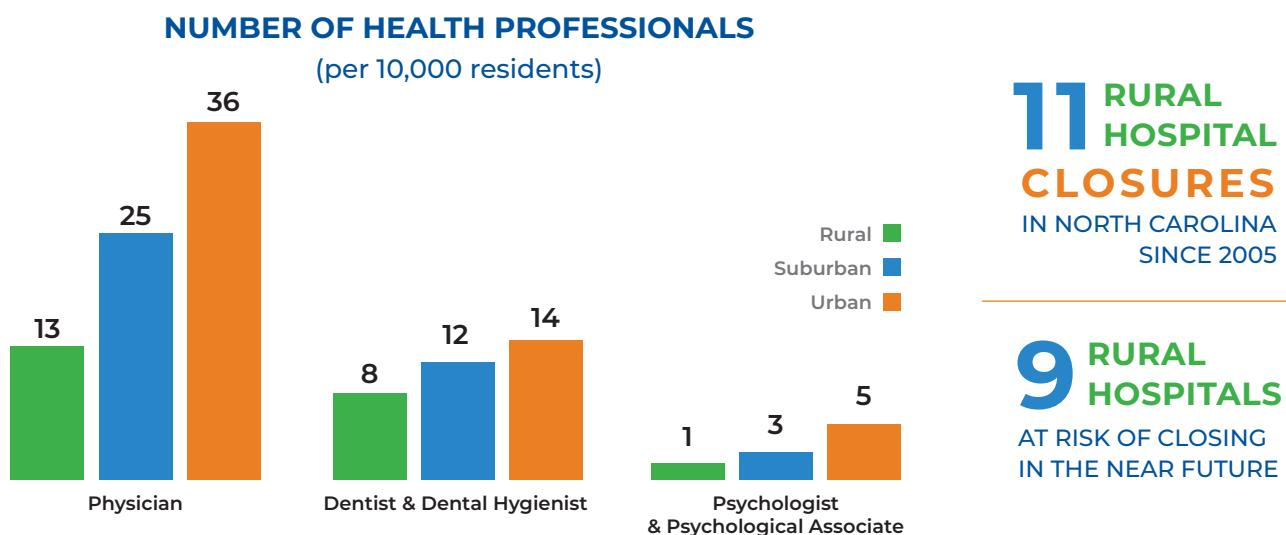
---

## COUNTY HEALTH OUTCOMES RANKINGS: 2022



## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- When North Carolina counties are ranked on health outcomes for their residents (length and quality of life), rural counties disproportionately receive lower rankings (map at left).<sup>5</sup>
- 11 rural hospitals in North Carolina have closed since 2005.<sup>6</sup> Nine are at risk of closing in the near future.<sup>7</sup>
- There are substantially fewer health professionals practicing in North Carolina's rural counties than others (chart below).<sup>8</sup>
- Rural residents are 40 percent more likely to fall into the health insurance coverage gap than other state residents. There are 14 counties with uninsured rates over 20 percent. All are rural.<sup>9</sup>
- Nationally, 87 percent of food insecure counties are rural, despite rural counties only making up 63 percent of all counties in the US.<sup>10</sup>
- In 2021, the drug overdose death rate per 100,000 people was substantially higher in rural North Carolina counties (47 people) than in suburban (41 people) and urban counties (29 people).<sup>11</sup>
- The top five counties with the highest rates of gun-related homicides and gun-related suicides in North Carolina are all rural.<sup>12</sup>





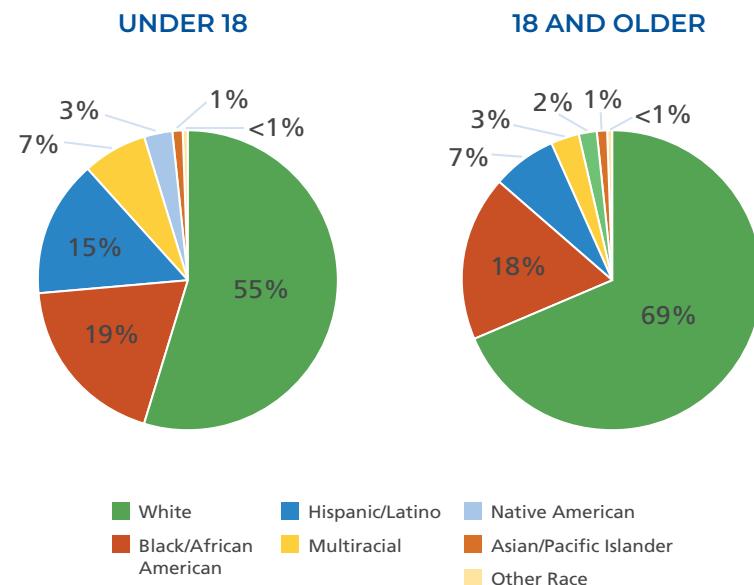
# A RURAL NORTH CAROLINA FOR EVERYONE

This driver speaks to the demographic changes and growing diversity in our communities, and the need to produce communities where all rural people can thrive.

Just like the rest of North Carolina, rural communities are rapidly changing. Recent trends suggest that our rural counties are becoming more diverse places racially, ethnically, and culturally. While our communities are becoming more diverse, data shows that people of color, and other groups, often face challenges in rural places that keep them from thriving. Additionally, data trends suggest rural areas are aging, and providing adequate care, services, and opportunities to an aging population produces its own challenges.

---

## RURAL RACE/ETHNICITY: 2020



RURAL  
NORTH CAROLINA  
RESIDENTS

**UNDER 18**  
ARE INCREASINGLY  
DIVERSE.

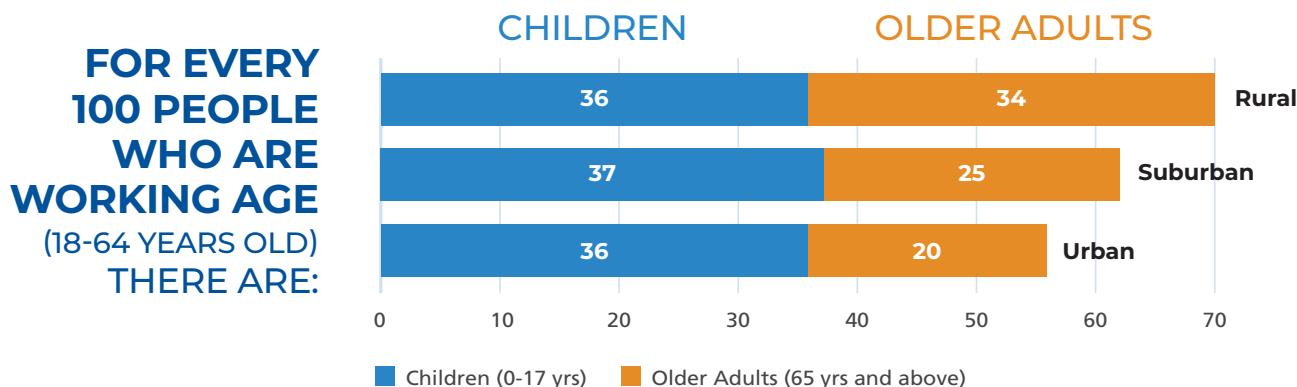
THE GREATEST  
INCREASE:  
HISPANIC/LATINO  
**UP 8%**  
MULTIRACIAL  
**UP 4%**

## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- Rural North Carolina residents under 18 years old are increasingly diverse, indicating rural communities will continue to become more racially and ethnically diverse in the future (charts left and below).<sup>13</sup>
- The greatest growth in the rural under 18 population is found in the Hispanic/Latino (from 7 percent to 15 percent) and Multiracial (from 3 percent to 7 percent) categories.<sup>14</sup>
- Of the 25 most economically distressed counties in North Carolina (all rural), as measured by the N.C. Department of Commerce annual tier rankings,<sup>16</sup> 16 are majority people of color. People of color make up more than 40 percent of the population of an additional eight counties in the lowest tier.<sup>15</sup>
- The poverty rate for people of color in rural North Carolina is consistently higher than that for white rural residents.<sup>16</sup>
- In rural counties, there are 34 older adults (65 years and older) to every 100 working age adults (18-64 years old). The number is only 25 in suburban and 20 in urban counties (chart below).<sup>17</sup>
- The gender wage gap in the U.S. is highest in rural areas, with rural women overall earning 76 cents to every dollar rural men earn. The wage gap is highest among rural women of color, especially Black and Hispanic women, who earn only 56 cents to every dollar rural white men earn.<sup>18</sup>

---

### NON-WORKING AGE TO WORKING AGE POPULATION RATIO: 2020

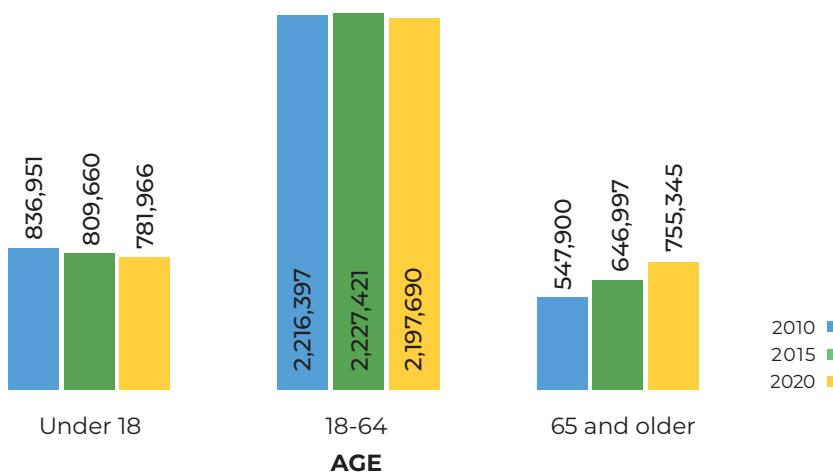


# SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

This driver addresses leadership development and the importance of bridging differences in civic priorities in our communities.

Every community needs effective leadership to identify needs and propose solutions. Rural North Carolina is filled with people who have had great success in advocating for their communities. However, recent trends suggest that leadership in rural communities may be aging as large swaths of young adults leave and the older adult population grows. Retaining young rural people in their communities and building them up as leaders is vital. Tomorrow's leaders will need to leverage community resources and advocate for community collaboration with both rural and urban partners, which has been shown to be successful in growing rural economies and populations.

## RURAL POPULATION CHANGE: 2010-2020



RURAL  
NORTH CAROLINA  
POPULATION  
  
65 YEARS AND  
OLDER  
**GROWING**  
  
UNDER 18 YEARS  
**DECLINING**

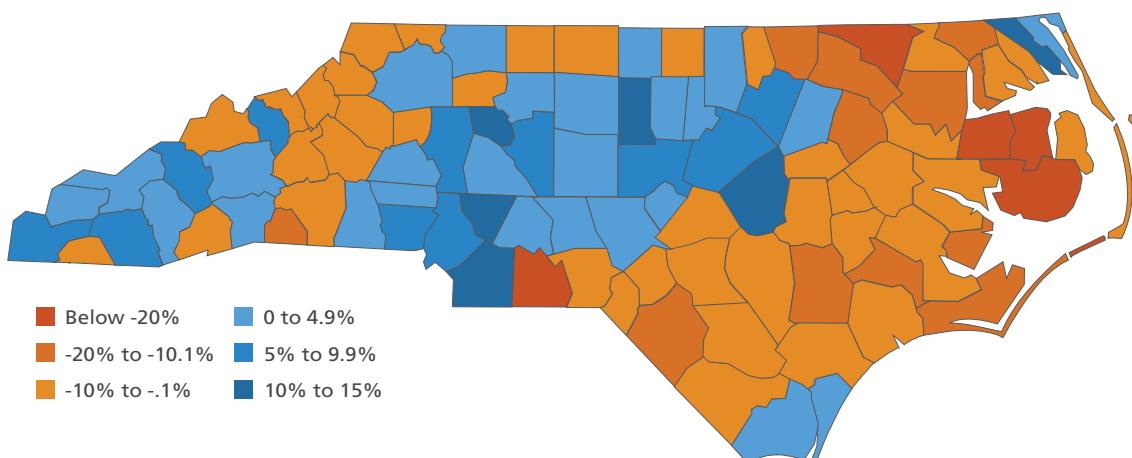


## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- The rural North Carolina population is aging due to a growing number of older people (65 years and older) and a declining number of children (under 18 years old) (graph at left).<sup>19</sup>
- Recent population trends show that the number of young adults (18-29 years old) are falling in rural North Carolina counties and growing in urban and suburban counties (map below).<sup>20</sup>
- Research shows that rural counties connected to a specialized regional industry (life sciences, banking, finance, etc.) experience greater economic and population growth than non-connected rural counties.<sup>21</sup>
- Economic improvement is commonly observed in both urban and rural counties when they collaborate in specialized regional industries.<sup>22</sup>

---

### POPULATION CHANGE FOR YOUNG ADULTS (18-29 YEARS OLD): 2017-2021

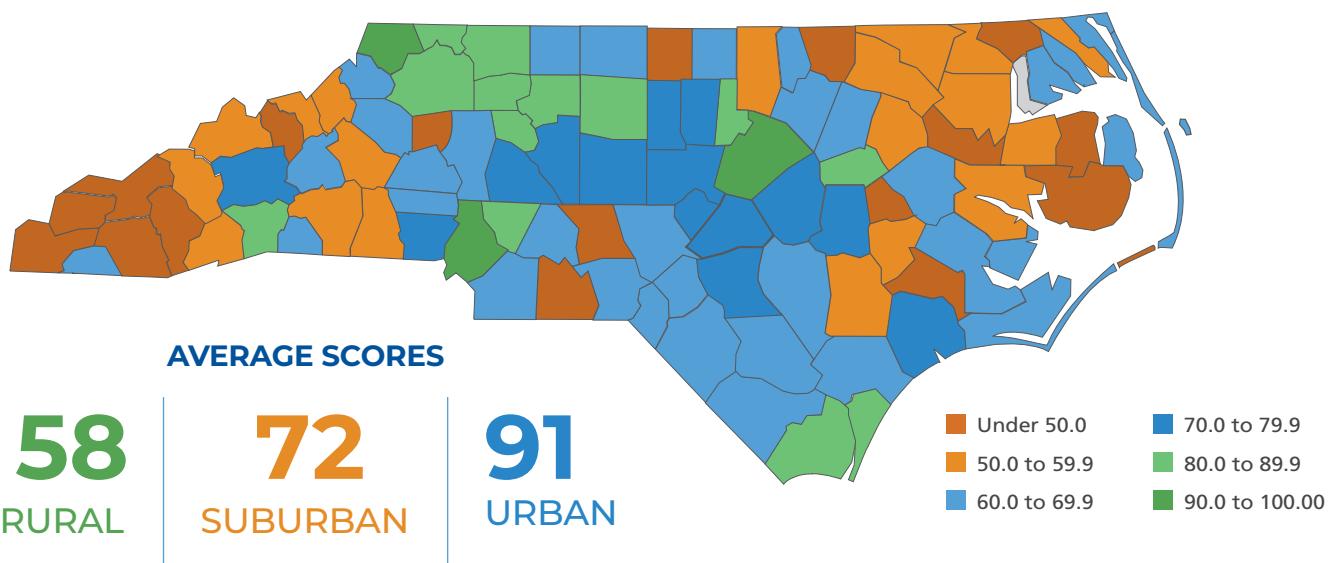


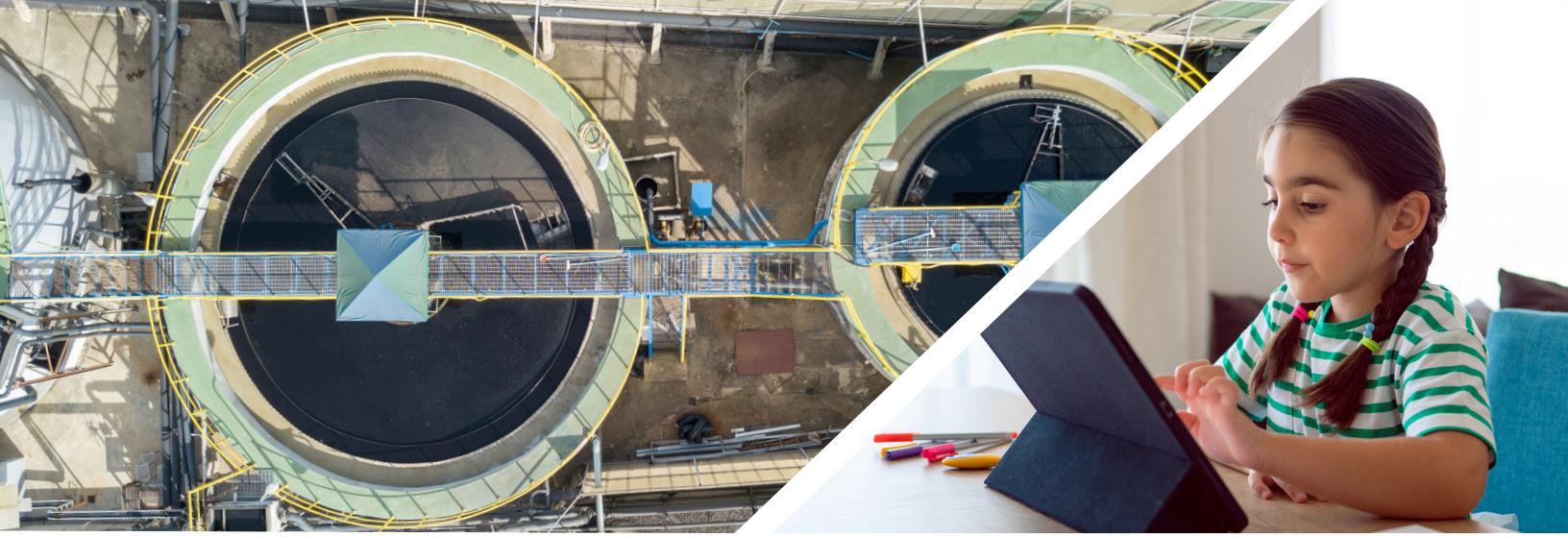
# SAFE, MODERN, AND AFFORDABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

This driver addresses infrastructure issues in our rural communities, including broadband access, aging water and wastewater systems, lack of affordable housing, and many others.

Thriving communities must be connected to the outside world, both physically and digitally. Unfortunately, the infrastructure systems in many of our rural communities desperately need investment. These communities lack quality affordable housing; reliable, affordable high-speed internet service; and dependable water and wastewater systems. Infrastructure limitations slow economic growth and development, and strong communities require safe, modern, and affordable infrastructure. Despite needing the most when it comes to infrastructure, rural communities often lack the capacity to fund and sustain infrastructure development and/or repair projects.

## BROADBAND AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY INDEX: 2019





## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- Compared to urban communities, rural communities across the nation tend to have less capacity to apply for infrastructure funding and manage long-term infrastructure projects.<sup>23</sup>
- The availability and quality of high-speed broadband is lower in rural North Carolina communities (map at left).<sup>24</sup>
- In rural counties, 47 percent of renters and 20 percent of homeowners are cost-burdened, meaning they spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs.<sup>25</sup>
- In 2017, it was estimated that statewide water system repairs would cost \$10-\$15 billion and wastewater system repairs would cost \$7-\$11 billion over the next 20 years.<sup>26</sup>

---

**47% OF RENTERS**  
**20% OF HOMEOWNERS**  
in rural North Carolina are cost-burdened with housing.

**\$10-15 BILLION**  
ESTIMATED COST OF WATER SYSTEM REPAIRS FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS.

**\$7-11 BILLION**  
ESTIMATED COST OF WASTEWATER SYSTEM REPAIRS FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS.

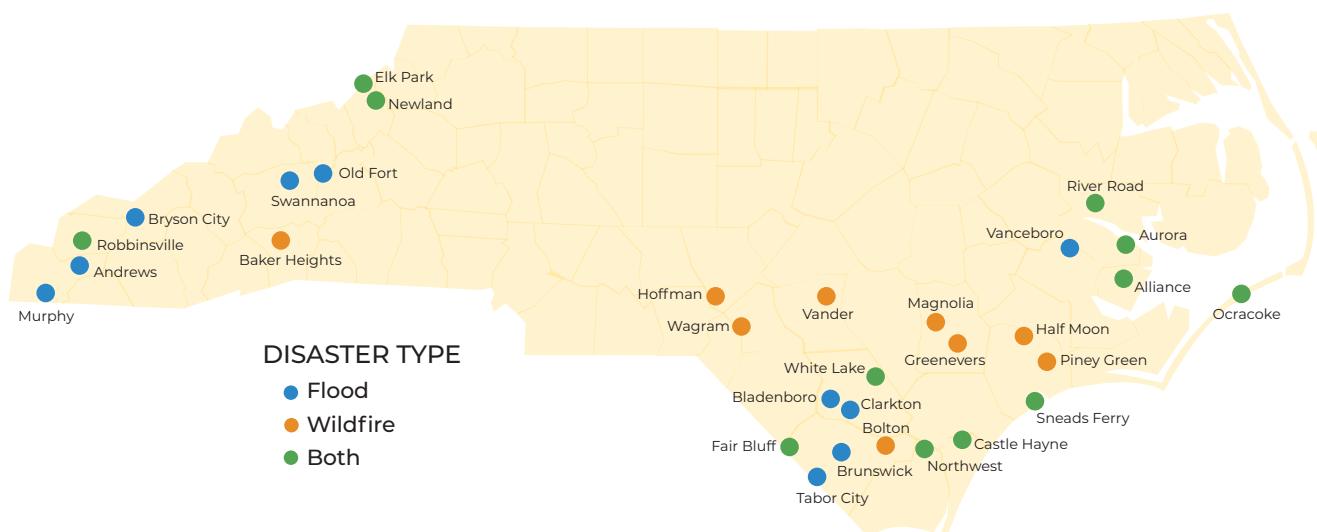


# WEATHER AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

This driver speaks to the urgency of addressing vulnerability to adverse weather events in our communities, including disaster recovery and resiliency from hurricanes and other natural disasters, the erosion of the North Carolina coastline, and the impact of coastal changes on tourism-based economies.

In North Carolina, some of our most rural locations are susceptible to extreme weather and natural disasters, putting these communities at risk. Rural areas often lack disaster-resilient infrastructure and when natural disasters strike they can struggle to recover - sometimes even forcing people to abandon their homes and migrate elsewhere. This puts stress on the people who live there, stress on our rural communities, and stress on the tourism industry vital to many of our rural economies.

## SMALL COMMUNITIES WITH THE GREATEST RESILIENCY CHALLENGES





## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- 31 communities in North Carolina, all with less than 15,000 people, are at extreme risk of flood or wildfire (top 25 percent nationally) while also ranking in the bottom 25 percent nationally in ability to build resilient infrastructure (map at left).<sup>27</sup>
- In 2015, 122,000 North Carolinians were at risk of coastal flooding. An additional 44,000 people could be at risk of coastal flooding in 2050 due to rising sea levels.<sup>28</sup>
- Severe weather such as hurricanes and floods disproportionately harm rural areas due to limited capacity and resources to recover quickly and prepare for future storms.<sup>29</sup>
- Beach erosion is associated with declines in tourism and tourist satisfaction.<sup>30</sup>
- In 2021, 45 million people visited North Carolina and spent \$28.9 billion.<sup>31</sup>
- While most tourists surveyed in the Outer Banks were unlikely to change their trips due to possible climate change effects, 13 percent were likely to change their trips and 32 percent were undecided.<sup>32</sup>

---

IN 2020

**1,300**

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES ON OUR COASTS WERE AT RISK OF CHRONIC FLOODING.

BY 2045,

**15,600**

PROPERTIES, VALUED AT APPROXIMATELY \$4 BILLION, WILL BE AT RISK.<sup>33</sup>

SPENDING BY NON-LOCAL TOURISTS IS EXPECTED TO DECREASE

**16%** PER YEAR UP TO 2030

DUE TO SEA-LEVEL RISE ON OUR COASTS.<sup>34</sup>

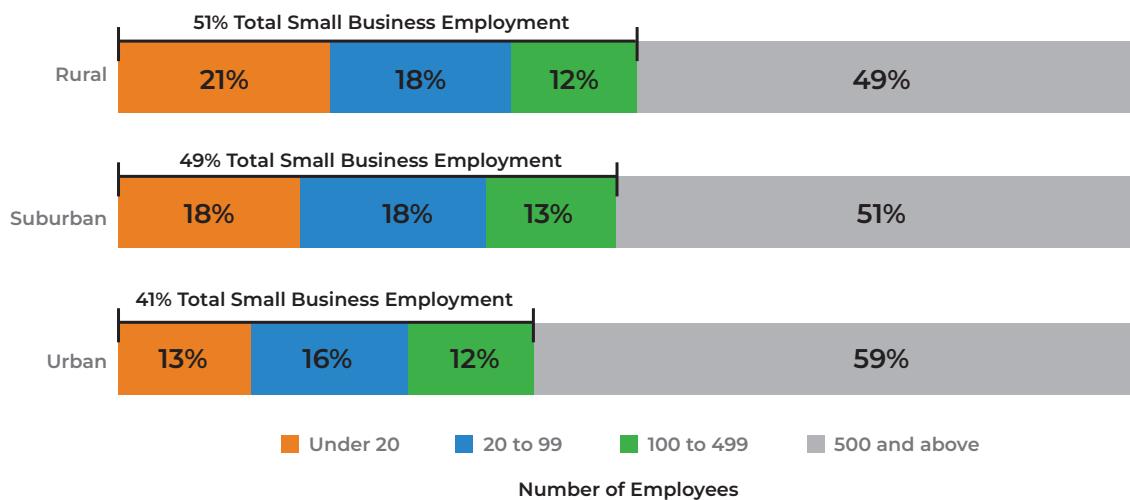


# SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

This driver speaks to the importance of small businesses in our rural communities and the need to channel resources to support them.

Small businesses (fewer than 500 employees) are a vital part of the North Carolina economy, but especially to the economy of our rural communities. In our rural places, small businesses create vital jobs and provide economic anchors, attracting and retaining revenue for the community. The importance of small businesses to our rural communities cannot be overstated, as small businesses account for a greater share of employment and employment growth in rural North Carolina than the rest of the state. Unfortunately, many small businesses struggle in rural communities due to challenges in obtaining financing, finding qualified workers, and connecting to the digital environment.

## PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY BUSINESS SIZE



**99.6%**  
OF BUSINESSES IN  
NORTH CAROLINA  
**HAVE FEWER THAN**  
**500 EMPLOYEES**

**98%**  
OF NORTH CAROLINA **NET JOBS CREATED**  
**FROM 2019 TO 2020 WERE ADDED BY**  
**SMALL BUSINESSES.**  
(38,572 NET NEW JOBS)

## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- In rural North Carolina counties, 51 percent of all workers are employed by businesses with fewer than 500 employees, compared to 49 percent in suburban counties and 41 percent in urban counties (graph at left).<sup>35</sup>
- 38,572 North Carolina jobs were created from 2019 to 2020, and 98 percent of these jobs were created by small businesses.<sup>36</sup>
- 99.6 percent of businesses in North Carolina have fewer than 500 employees.<sup>37</sup>
- 74 percent of all businesses in rural counties have 50 employees or fewer, compared to 72 percent in suburban counties and 70 percent in urban counties.<sup>38</sup>
- North Carolina's small business growth rate (27 percent) outpaced the national small business growth rate (20 percent) from 1994 to 2018.<sup>39</sup>
- In 2019, small businesses exported \$6.1 billion worth of goods, or about 20 percent of North Carolina's total global exports.<sup>40</sup>
- 40 percent of rural small business owners in the U.S. report struggling to access capital and instead use personal savings for their business.<sup>41</sup>
- 56 percent of national rural small businesses do not have good access to digital technology and almost 21 percent do not have high-speed broadband connections.<sup>42</sup>

Small businesses  
accounted for **20%**

of all North Carolina global exports  
in 2019, exporting goods worth

**\$6**  
**BILLION.**





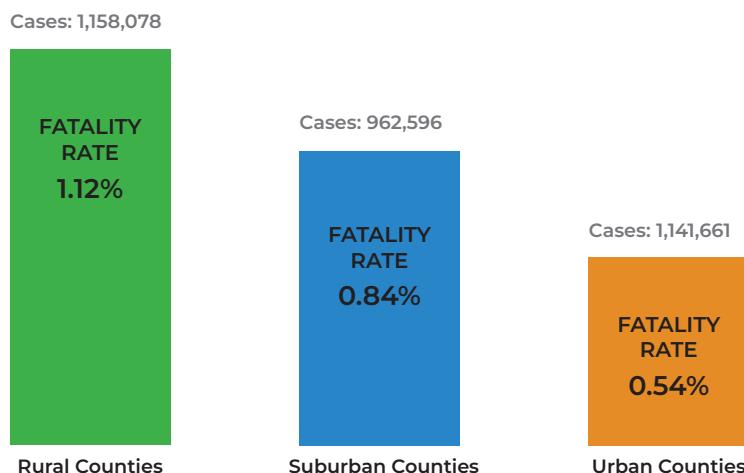
# LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON RURAL PEOPLE

This driver addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural people and places.

COVID-19 has affected all communities and people in some way or another. Rural communities, as is often the case, were hit hardest by the challenges resulting from COVID-19. An already strained healthcare system was pushed, education suffered, and small businesses struggled to remain open. Rural communities across North Carolina have banded together to counteract these challenges, and progress has been made. Employment has started to rebound, taxable sales have increased and some communities have even started to see population growth. Still, the long-term impact of COVID-19 is evolving, and there will continue to be new challenges and opportunities for our rural communities.

---

## CASE FATALITY RATE: 2022



**NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS  
EARNINGS DROPPED  
16% TO 19%**

EARNINGS DECREASE WAS ESPECIALLY PRONOUNCED FOR SMALL BUSINESSES OWNED BY PEOPLE OF COLOR

## FUNDAMENTAL FACTS:

- As of November 2022, the COVID-19 case fatality rate for rural North Carolina counties (1.12 percent) was twice as high as the rate in urban counties (0.54 percent) (chart at left).<sup>43</sup>
- Statewide, almost all reading and math standardized test scores are worse than pre-pandemic scores, but they have started to improve.<sup>44</sup>
- College undergraduate enrollment nationally was declining pre-pandemic, but an accelerated decline in enrollment occurred from 2020 to 2021 due to COVID-19.<sup>45</sup>
- National small business earnings dropped between 16 percent and 19 percent, but the earnings decrease was especially pronounced for small businesses owned by people of color.<sup>46</sup>
- Across the U.S., the cost of some infrastructure projects has increased to between 20 percent and 30 percent in just a year due to increased inflation brought about in part by COVID-19, along with other factors.<sup>47</sup>
- For the first time in a decade, rural America saw a population increase from 2020 to 2021, at least partially due to relocations brought about by COVID-19.<sup>48</sup>
- COVID-19 had a strong negative impact on rural employment, but employment numbers have largely recovered to pre-pandemic levels in rural North Carolina.<sup>49</sup>

## FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A DECADE

RURAL AMERICA SAW A POPULATION INCREASE FROM 2020 TO 2021,

AT LEAST PARTIALLY DUE TO RELOCATIONS BROUGHT ABOUT BY COVID-19.



## SOURCES

1. myFutureNC - 2022 County Attainment Profiles
2. Bureau of Labor Statistics - <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/unemployment-earnings-education.htm>
3. NC Rural Health Association - 2022 North Carolina Rural Health Snapshot
4. SCORE - Infographic: Rural Entrepreneurship
5. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin County Health Rankings
6. The UNC Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research - Rural Hospital Closures
7. Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform - Rural Hospitals at Risk of Closing
8. The UNC Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research - Healthcare Workforce Data
9. Care4Carolina Fact Sheets
10. Feeding America - 2022 Mind the Meal Gap Report
11. NC Dept. of Health and Human Services - Opioid and Substance Use Action Plan Data Dashboard
12. North Carolina Against Gun Violence
13. 2020 Decennial Census
14. 2020 Decennial Census
15. NC Department of Commerce County Tier Designations
16. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
17. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
18. American Progress - Gender Wage Gap Among Rural Workers (April, 2018)
19. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
20. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
21. McFarland, C. (2019). Strengthening Intra-regional Connectivity: Implications for Bridging the Urban–Rural Divide. *State and Local Government Review*, 51(4), 259–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X20922297>
22. McFarland, C. (2019). Strengthening Intra-regional Connectivity: Implications for Bridging the Urban–Rural Divide. *State and Local Government Review*, 51(4), 259–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X20922297>
23. Headwaters Economics - Rural Capacity Map
24. NC Dept. of Information Technology - Broadband Availability and Quality Index (2019)
25. North Carolina Housing Coalition - 2021 County Profiles
26. NC Department of Environmental Quality - Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan
27. Headwaters Economics - Rural Capacity Map
28. States at Risk - North Carolina
29. UNC Carolina Demography - Climate change and rural NC (March, 2022)
30. Arabadzhyan, A., Figini, P., García, C., González M. M., Yen E. Lam-González, Y. E., & León C. J., (2020): Climate change, coastal tourism, and impact chains – a literature review. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(16), 2233-2268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1825351>
31. NC Department of Commerce - 2022 Tourism Facts
32. Seekamp, E., Jurjonas, M., & Bitsura-Meszaros, K. (2019). Influences on coastal tourism demand and substitution behaviors from climate change impacts and hazard recovery responses. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(5), 629-648. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1599005>
33. Environmental Defense Fund - Climate Costs Will Mount Across North Carolina's Economy (2020)
34. Bipartisan Policy Center (2019)
35. US Census of Small Businesses (data collected in 2019)
36. Small Business Administration - 2021 North Carolina Small Business Profile
37. Small Business Administration - 2021 North Carolina Small Business Profile
38. US Census 2020 County Business Patterns
39. Small Business Administration - 2021 North Carolina Small Business Profile
40. Small Business Administration - 2021 North Carolina Small Business Profile
41. SCORE - Infographic: Rural Entrepreneurship
42. SCORE - Infographic: Rural Entrepreneurship
43. USA Facts - North Carolina Coronavirus Cases and Deaths
44. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction - NC Students Make Gains in 2021-22 from Last Year's COVID Drop, Growth Rebounds
45. National Student Clearinghouse
46. Small Business Administration - The Impacts of COVID-19 on Racial Disparities in Small Business Earnings
47. US News - Inflation Taking Bite Out of New Infrastructure Projects
48. Kenneth Johnson (University of New Hampshire) - Recent Data Suggest Rural America is Growing Again After a Decade of Population Loss
49. NC Department of Commerce - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages





[NCRURALCENTER.ORG](http://NCRURALCENTER.ORG)

