

rural new york minute

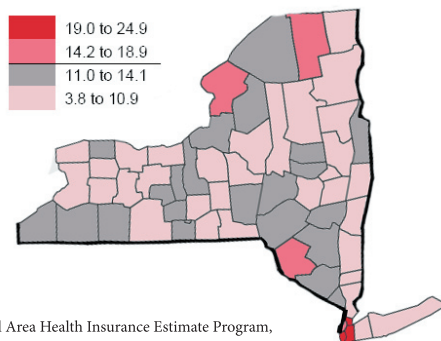
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Health Care Access in Rural NY: It's not just about having health insurance

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Having affordable and accessible health care is an issue that most people consider critical in influencing their overall well-being and quality of life.¹ In 2000, about 14% of New York State residents had no health insurance coverage.² At the county level, this ranges from a low of 6.9% in Saratoga County, to a high of 22.4% in Bronx County (see Figure 1). Since 2000, the percent uninsured has remained fairly stable at the state-level, and is estimated to be 13.5% by the latest data available for 2005.³

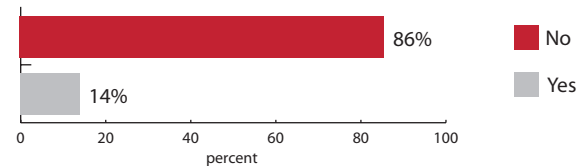
Figure 1: Percent without health insurance coverage by county (NYS average = 14%)



However, in rural areas of New York State, even those individuals with health insurance coverage may face limited options for accessing health care services due to the lack of specialists, adequate clinics and hospitals, or doctors who accept Medicare or Medicaid.

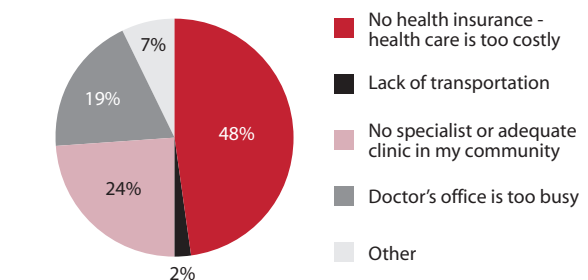
In the 2007 Empire State Poll, an annual survey conducted by Cornell University, rural New Yorkers over the age of 18 were asked about their health care coverage and access. While having some type of health insurance usually allows most people to seek physician care when they need to at fairly low co-pays, 14% of those surveyed indicated that in the past 12 months there had been at least one occasion when they had needed to see a doctor but couldn't.

Figure 2: In the past 12 months, was there an occasion when you needed to see a doctor but could not?



While 48% of respondents reported that lack of health insurance kept them from seeing a doctor when they needed to, other factors were also important. Other reasons, such as the lack of a local specialist or adequate clinic or hospital and local doctor's offices being overwhelmed with patients, accounted for 43% of respondents not able to see a doctor when they needed to.

Figure 3: Why could you not see a doctor?



Health insurance coverage, or lack thereof, continues to be a pressing matter for a large percentage of New York State residents. In rural areas of the state, however, the *availability* of adequate, quality care clearly continues to present another set of challenges. Initiatives such as the expansion of rural health networks, developing statewide health care coverage, increasing high-speed internet access, addressing service reimbursement issues for rural providers, etc., are among several of the identified priorities that emerged from the Rural Health section of the Rural Vision Project, a collaborative effort between Cornell University and the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources (NYS LCRR). (For more information on the Rural Vision Project, see <http://hosts.cce.cornell.edu/rnyi/>.) ♦

¹ In a CBS News/New York Times poll, February 23-February 27, 2007

² Small Area Health Insurance Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

³ DeNavas-Walt C, Proctor BD, and Lee CH. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-231, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2006.