



Navigating Risk in the Sea of Change

The Shifting Landscape of Rural Healthcare

Challenges, Strategies, and Opportunities

Disclaimers

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Presenter(s)

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Please refer to the Presenters' Bios available on the table and online for more information

Objectives



**IDENTIFY AND UNDERSTAND
KEY CHALLENGES IN RURAL
HEALTHCARE**



**IDENTIFY AND EXAMINE
OPPORTUNITIES AND
STRATEGIES FOR
ENHANCING ACCESS,
QUALITY, IMPROVEMENT
AND ADVOCACY**



**PREPARE FOR FUTURE
TRENDS AND RESILIENCE IN
RURAL HEALTHCARE**



Rural Health Defined

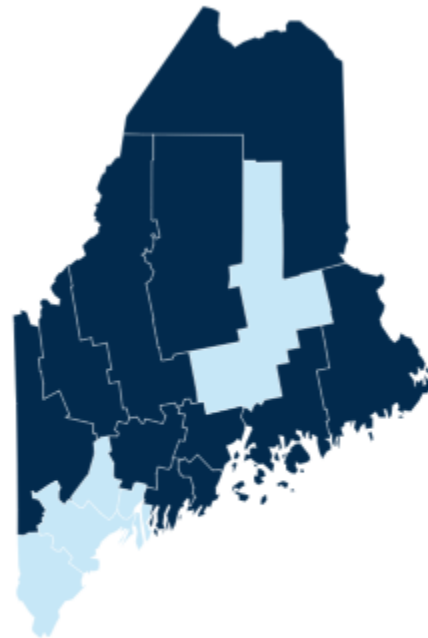
- Definition
- Urban v. Rural
 - Population, geographic based and housing market
- Who is defining Rural
 - Census Bureau
 - Rural Health Information Hub
 - Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
 - National Rural Health Association (NRHA)
- USA Census – 1 in 5 people live in a rural area

Let's look at New England



Maine

Maine Nonmetro Population



Metro Nonmetro

1,366,949

Estimated population

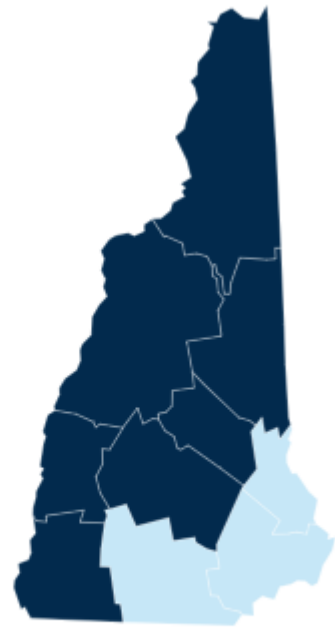
549,861 (40.2%)

People living in nonmetro
areas

Source: [U.S. Census ACS 2022 5-year estimate](#)

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Nonmetro Population



Metro Nonmetro

1,379,610

Estimated population

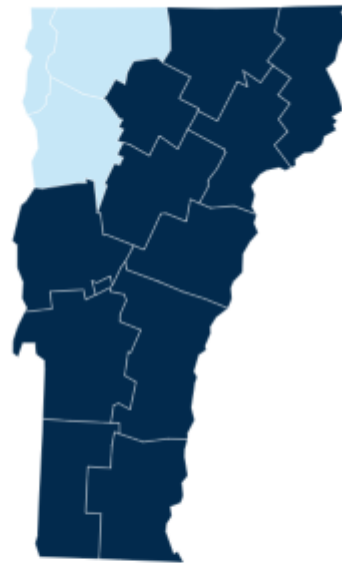
510,743 (37.0%)

People living in nonmetro
areas

Source: [U.S. Census ACS 2022 5-year estimate](#)

Vermont

Vermont Nonmetro Population



Metro Nonmetro

643,816

Estimated population

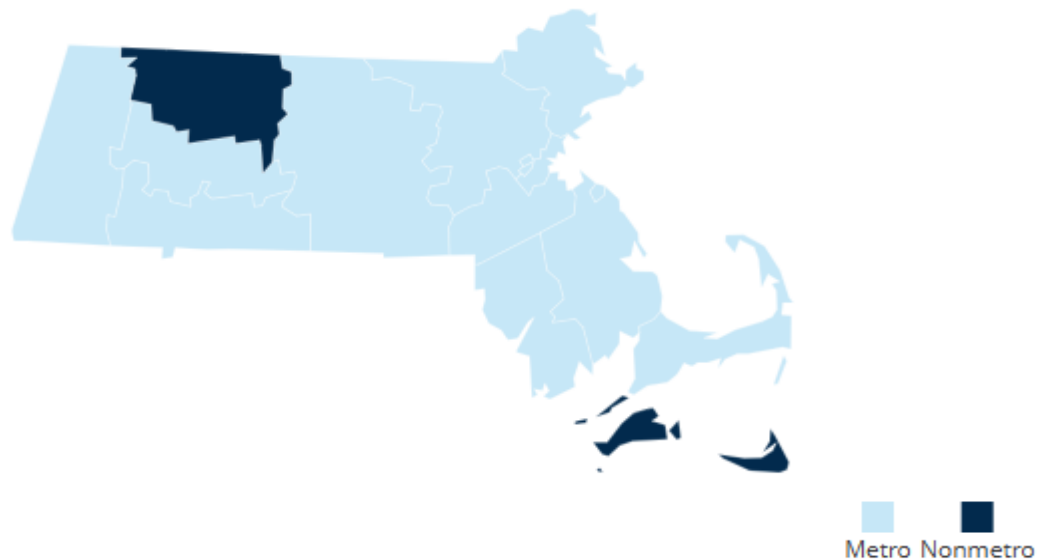
418,071 (64.9%)

People living in nonmetro
areas

Source: [U.S. Census ACS 2022 5-year estimate](#)

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Nonmetro Population

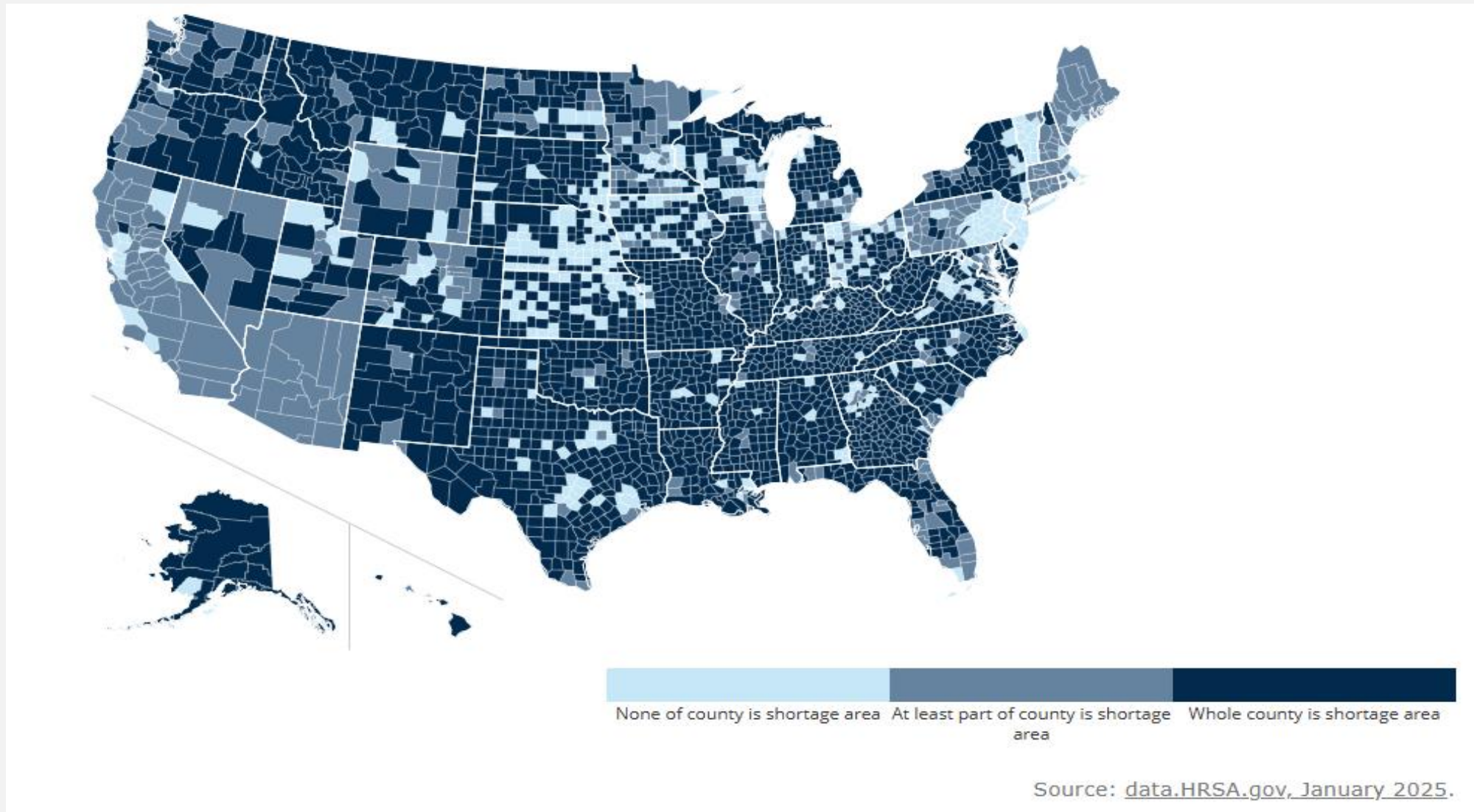


6,984,205
Estimated population

105,588 (1.5%)
People living in nonmetro areas

Source: [U.S. Census ACS 2022 5-year estimate](#)

Health Professional Shortage – Country Wide



Challenges of Rural Healthcare

- Access to Care
- Workforce Shortages
- Financial Pressures, Payments, and Funding
- Healthcare Disparities

Impacted Services and Closures

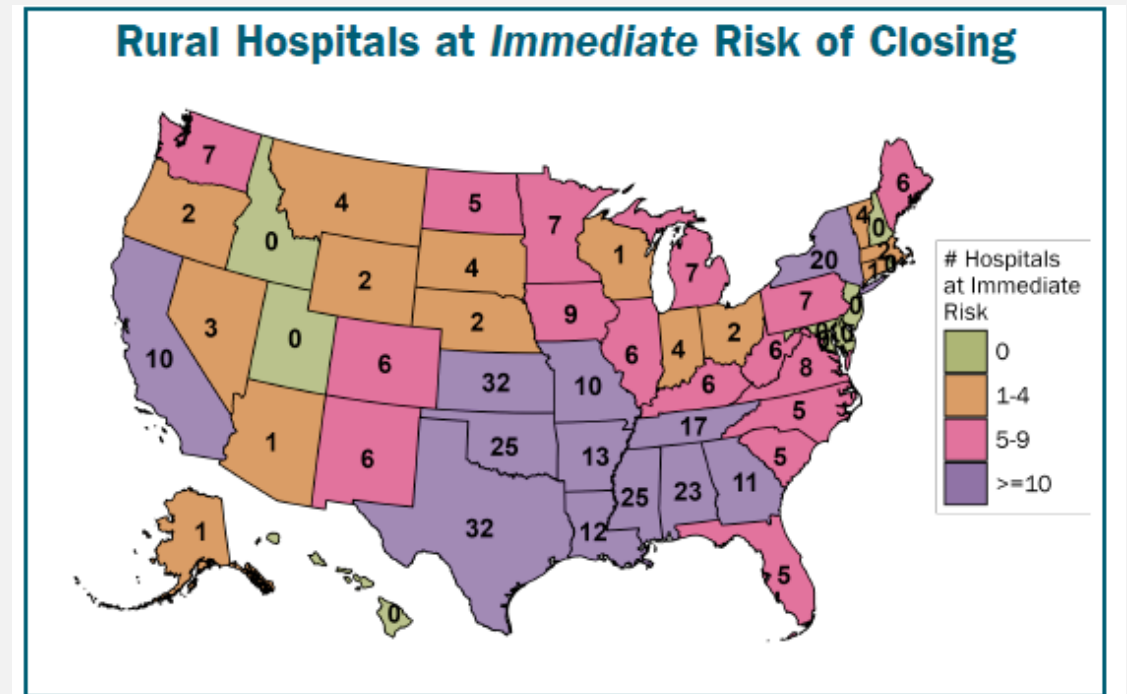
- Hospitals
- Long Term Care
- Home Care Services
- EMS / Ambulance

How Are Our Patients Impacted?

- Delayed Treatment
- Lack of Services / Healthcare Providers
- Wait Times
- Increased Travel
- Lack of Transportation

Hospitals at Risk of Closing

- Center for Healthcare Quality & Payment Reform put out an article in November of 2024 outlining rural hospitals and their risk of closing.



Risk Management



Opportunities and Strategies

- Telemedicine
- Mobile Health Clinics
- Partnerships / Collaboration Agreements
- Strengthen Emergency Services
- Transportation
- Hospital at Home Programs

Building Resilience

- Encourage rural facilities to diversify funding, explore partnerships, and invest in workforce training.
- Discuss the importance of flexible, adaptive systems that can respond to changing patient needs and market forces.
- Strategies for managing staff burnout and retaining healthcare professionals in rural areas.

Advocacy

- Share your rural health stories
- Rural Health Policy Congress
- Government Affairs (national and local)
- Rural Health Coalitions

The NRHA website has great resources, reports and tools to help you, your organization and your areas voice be heard.

[Get Involved with NRHA Advocacy](#)

Preparing for the Future



Areas to Look at

- Federal Funding / Grants
- Rural Focused Programs
- Aging Populations
- Technology
- Value Based Care

The Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies (RMOMS) Program

Challenge: Many rural hospitals have closed their labor and delivery units due to financial constraints or low birth rates.

Solution: RMOMS improves maternal health by integrating obstetric services across regional networks, utilizing telehealth for prenatal care, and training local healthcare providers.

States: Minnesota, Missouri, W Virginia, S Dakota, Utah, Maine, Arkansas, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Kansas, Arizona

Community Paramedicine

- Focused on Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)
- Expanding roles
- Primary and Preventative Care Focused

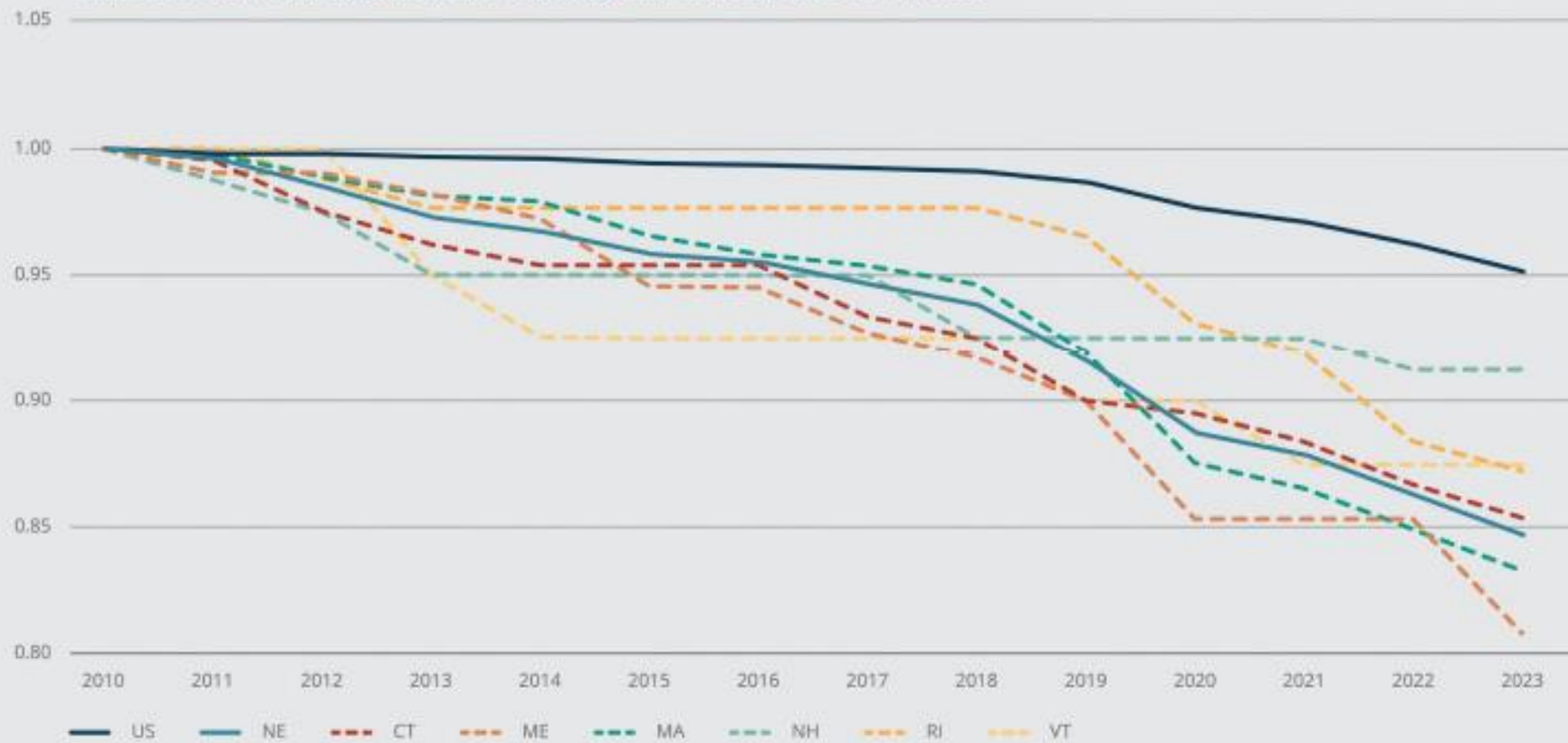
Toolkit available - [Community Paramedicine Toolkit](#)

Aging Populations and LTC

- Older Populations – growing at a rapid rate
- New England – Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont are the oldest states
- Number of nursing homes – falling fast in New England
- 2010-2023 # of homes decreased by 15% and regional based has seen a loss of more than 150 nursing facilities
- Aging in place
- Resource: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston - [Nursing Home Closures in New England: Impact on Long-term Care, Labor Markets](#)

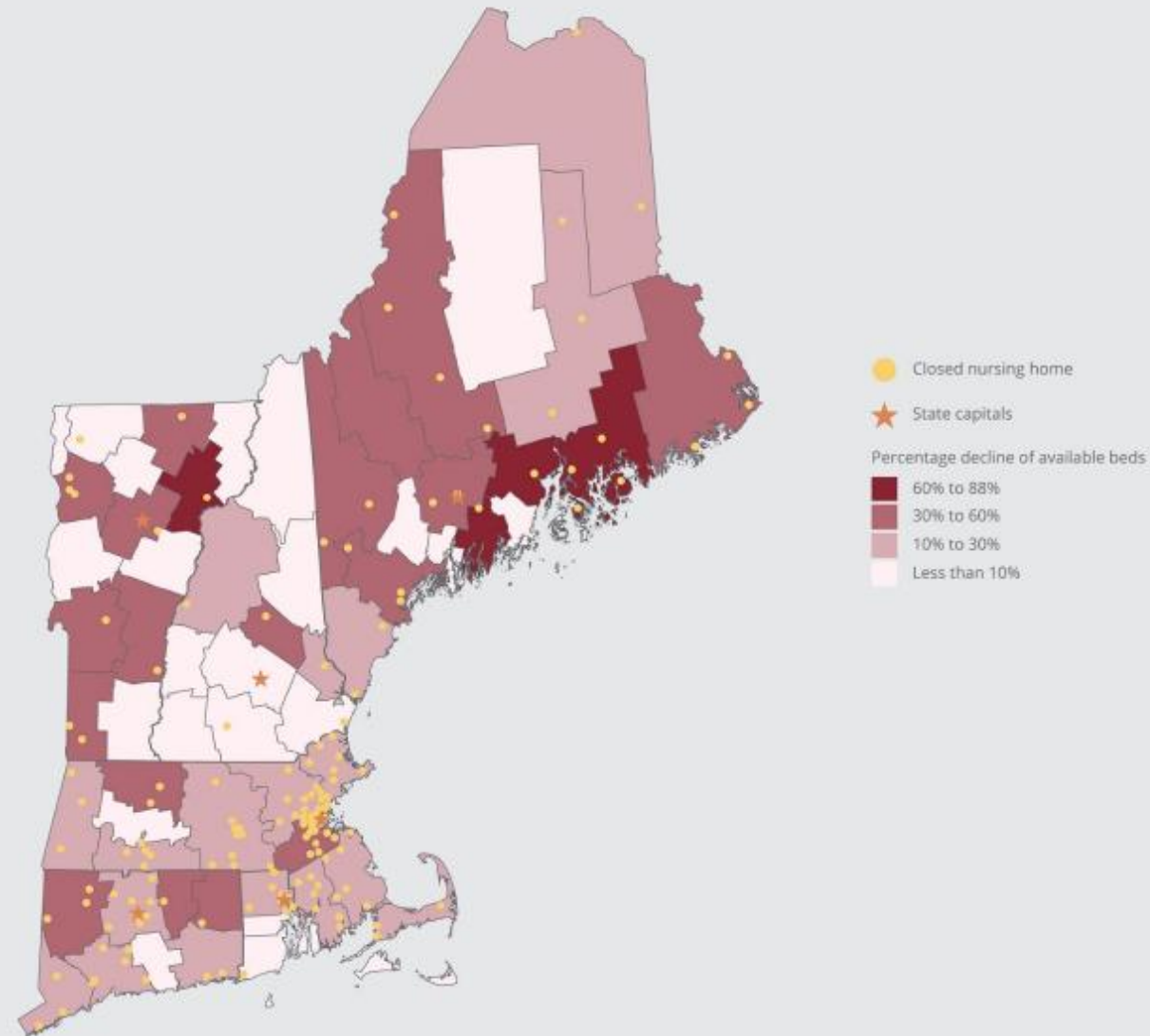
Figure 1: Number of Nursing Homes, Indexed to Fiscal Year 2010

United States, New England, and New England states, FY:2010–FY:2023



Source(s): Author's calculations from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Quality, Certification & Oversight Reports, fiscal years 2010 through 2023.

Figure 2: Nursing Home Closures since FY:2011
New England states, to January 2024



Source(s): Author's calculations from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Quality, Certification & Oversight Reports, fiscal year 2011 through January 2024.

Strategic



In the News



Image: stock image

Positive News

MaineHealth lands grant for rural maternal healthcare

A total of \$4 million dollars will be awarded over a four-year period to strengthen rural maternity healthcare through a telehealth program.

The Future Of Healthcare: Three Shifts That Demand Action



By [Derek Streat](#), Forbes Councils Member.

for [Forbes Technology Council](#), COUNCIL POST | Membership (fee-based)

Apr 02, 2025, 08:00am EDT

Hospital Closures

Maine hospital to shutter after ‘immense’ financial pressure

Brewer, Maine-based Northern Light Health plans to close Northern Light Inland Hospital in Waterville and its associated services and clinics in May.

Nine Maine hospitals have closed or announced plans to close their birthing units in the past decade. The closures have hit rural areas particularly hard.

Hospital / Service Closures

Steward to close an 'essential' Stoughton hospital in April

New England Sinai Hospital was deemed essential by the Department of Public Health, but the hospital submitted a plan of maintained service to allow the closure.



NEWS » HEALTH CARE

UVM Health Network Announces Service Cuts, Blames Regulators

The cuts include the closure of an inpatient mental health unit and a gradual 50-bed reduction at the University of Vermont Medical Center.

Health Disparities

Rural communities need support to decrease health disparities and improve access to care, say researchers

by American College of Physicians



Summary and Key Takeaways

- Challenges
- Impacted Services and Patients
- Opportunities
- Strategies
- Preparing for the Future



Questions/Discussion

A great question
doesn't simply inform...
it enlightens.



LF LEADERSHIP FREAK

Resources

- Rural Health Information Hub - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/>
- Maine Rural Health Research Center - <https://mrhrc.org/>
- Health Resources & Services Administration – Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) <https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health>
- National Rural Health Association - <https://www.ruralhealth.us/>
- Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies (RMOMS) Program - <https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/grants/rural-community/rmoms>
- Community Paramedicine - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/community-paramedicine>