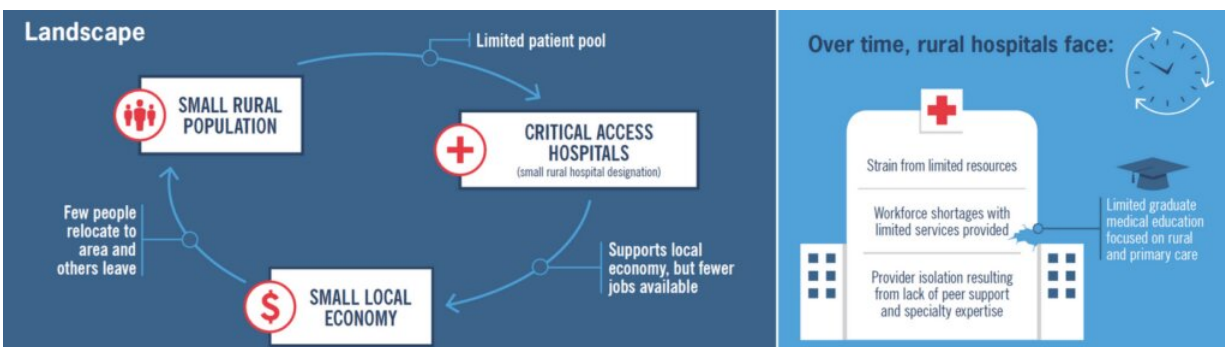


New poll shows rural health may be powerful issue in 2020 election

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A vast majority of Americans, both Democrats and Republicans, consider access to health care in rural communities an important issue. Additionally, three in five voters think it is so important, they would vote for a candidate in the 2020 election who prioritized rural health in the campaign. These are encouraging findings from a new poll released by the Bipartisan Policy Center and the American Heart Association.

Survey results will be discussed during an event today to launch BPC's new Rural Health Task Force, co-chaired by former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle and former Sen. Olympia Snowe. The task force will produce policy recommendations to help improve the [health](#) and [health care](#) of the 60 million Americans living in [rural communities](#).

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show those living in rural areas are at a greater risk of dying from heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic lower respiratory disease. These communities also face alarming rates of hospital closures, health care worker shortages, and geographic challenges to getting timely care compared to those living in urban areas.

"We are pleased to see that our poll shows rural health is an issue of concern for rural, urban, and suburban Americans, and transcends political parties," said Daschle. "Rural health has never been a top tier issue on the campaign trail. However, these findings show that it could be a powerful topic in the 2020 election. It should prompt every candidate and policymaker to address the challenges of rural health and take action."

"Geography should never be an impediment to quality health care," said Snowe. "We need to provide rural communities with the innovation and technology necessary to create a health care system that better serves all rural Americans."

The survey, conducted by Morning Consult, polled nearly 2,000 registered voters online, including an additional 200 interviews with rural adults in each of the following states that will play an important role in the 2020 election: Iowa, North Carolina, and Texas.

Among the findings:

- Ninety-two percent of Democratic voters and 93 percent of Republican voters agree that access to health care in rural communities is important; and three in five voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate in the 2020 election who prioritized access to health care in rural America.
- More than half of rural voters (54 percent) say access to medical

specialists, such as cardiologists or oncologists, is a problem in their local community compared to 33 percent of voters in non-[rural areas](#), and more than one-quarter (27 percent), say it is difficult to access behavioral health professionals, compared to 16 percent of non-rural voters.

- Forty-seven percent of rural voters agree quality health care is a challenge in their community compared to 34 percent of non-rural voters.
- Rural voters are more likely than urban and suburban voters to agree that availability of appointments (56 vs. 50 percent) and the distance to receive care (50 vs. 37 percent) are barriers.
- One in five rural voters in Texas say it is difficult to access hospitals, urgent care facilities, primary care physicians, and medical specialists in their local community. Since 2010, 17 hospitals have closed in Texas.
- One in three rural adults in North Carolina and 46 percent in Iowa agree that access to medical specialists and quality health care are problems in their communities.
- Rural adults in Iowa, North Carolina, and Texas felt most comfortable using information technologies to reach their doctor or to receive medical care remotely, and half of rural adults in Texas said they are likely to use a mobile app if it were available to them.

"Timely access to quality care can mean the difference between life and death for someone suffering from a major cardiac event or stroke," said Eduardo Sanchez, chief medical officer for prevention at the American Heart Association. "Together with BPC, the American Heart Association is working to bring attention to the critical need to overcome obstacles to care faced by rural communities nationwide."

"Addressing the barriers to delivering high-quality health care to rural communities is long overdue," said Walter Panzirer, a trustee of the

Helmsley Charitable Trust. "It's time to give rural health care the national attention it deserves."

Over the next year, BPC's rural health [task force](#) will build on BPC's 2018 report, "[Reinventing Rural Health Care: A Case Study of Seven Upper Midwest States](#)." The report identified key areas for reform that could apply nationally to all rural communities: 1) allow rural communities to adjust their own health care services to better fit the community's needs, 2) create appropriate payment models and value-based care programs that account for low patient volumes, and a reliance on Medicare and Medicaid, 3) build and retain the rural workforce, and 4) expand telemedicine services.

More information: Reinventing Rural Health Care: A Case Study of Seven Upper Midwest States: [bipartisanpolicy.org/library/r ... g-rural-health-care/](http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/r...g-rural-health-care/)

Provided by American Heart Association

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