

# Researcher calls for more resources to bring regular mammograms to rural Texans

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A University of Texas at Arlington researcher has taken a closer look at why certain groups of Texans aren't getting valuable health care screenings.

A team led by Zhaoli Liu, an assistant professor in the College of Nursing and Health Innovation with a focus on cancer health disparities, found that women who live in rural Texas, particularly those of a minority background, were less likely to get routine mammograms when compared to their urban counter parts.

The findings are [published](#) in the journal *Geriatric Nursing*.

Using Texas Medicare data, the team examined the cases of nearly 115,000 women and found that mammography rates were lower among rural Hispanic, Black and [white women](#). Dr. Liu and her team focused on mammograms because of how vital they are in saving lives.

"Mammograms are one of the most significant factors in early detection of breast cancer," she said. "It is a well-established practice and evidence of its benefits are well established."

Despite that, only a fraction of women in the study received regular mammograms every two years, the frequency considered best for maximizing cancer detection. At the 10-year follow up, only about 20% of Hispanic women, 33% of non-Hispanic Black women and 38% of non-Hispanic white women living in [rural areas](#) regularly had mammograms.

Liu explained that a major barrier is lack of insurance. Additionally, many women do not have a primary care provider or access to medical facilities. She noted that Texas has experienced the most rural hospital closures of any state in the country, which may be a potential contributing factor. These are critical issues, as not getting regular mammograms could lead to the development of [cancer](#) that would

otherwise be caught early and treated.

"A lot of breast cancers develop in between screenings. If people only get screened once or twice, they are not getting the full benefits," she said.

Liu said work can be done to help raise these percentages, including establishing local programs that bring mammogram screenings to rural locations to help improve steady access. In the meanwhile, future studies are planned to identify how to bridge the gaps preventing rural populations from receiving potentially life-saving screenings.

**More information:** Zhaoli Liu et al, Rural racial disparities and barriers in mammography utilization among Medicare beneficiaries in Texas: A longitudinal study, *Geriatric Nursing* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.gerinurse.2023.10.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2023.10.019)

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