



Characteristics of Rural and Urban U.S. Hospitals Based on Obstetric Services

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Key Findings

- Rural and urban hospitals that provide obstetric services differ substantially by hospital structure, size, and location.
- Among rural hospitals, those hospitals that have stopped providing obstetric care tend to be smaller and more likely to be located in remote rural areas or in majority Black rural counties.
- Across all hospital types (rural and urban with obstetric service and rural that stopped providing obstetric services), about 1 in 5 hospital county residents are women of reproductive age, who could need obstetric services at some point.

Purpose

This infographic provides a snapshot of characteristics of rural and urban hospitals in the United States that provide obstetric services, as well as rural hospitals that recently closed their obstetric units. We used American Hospital Association (AHA) Annual Survey data from 2010-2018 to describe U.S. hospitals, based on obstetric provision status.

Overview

We found that hospital infrastructure for pregnancy and childbirth care differs by geography. Rural and urban hospitals that provide obstetric services differ substantially in terms of size, capacity, and location. Additionally, among rural hospitals, those hospitals that have stopped providing obstetric care are smaller and more likely to be located in remote rural areas or in majority Black rural counties. These differences have implications for access to safe maternity care for rural and urban residents, and for rural residents of communities that have recently lost obstetric services.

Key Characteristics of Rural and Urban Hospitals with Obstetric Services and Rural Hospitals without Obstetric Services

	Urban	Rural		
	With OB (n=1,883)	With OB (n=987)	Lost OB (n=154)	Total Rural (n=1,141)
<i>Hospital characteristics (2018 or most recent year available)</i>				
Critical Access Hospitals	3.5%	39.6%	53.3%	41.5%
Government owned	13.4%	29.7%	27.3%	29.4%
Hospital system member	80.1%	56.2%	63.0%	57.1%
Median annual inpatient visits	50,790	7,580	3,990	6,860
Median annual births (2018 or last year of OB services)	1,250	280	120	250
<i>Hospital county characteristics (2018)</i>				
Median percent of county residents that are women of reproductive age	23.1%	20.2%	19.4%	20.1%
Percent in counties with majority non-Hispanic Black residents	2.0%	1.8%	2.9%	2.1%
Percent in counties with majority Hispanic residents	4.9%	3.2%	1.3%	3.0%
Percent in counties with majority Indigenous residents	0%	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%
Percent of hospitals located in rural noncore counties	—	40.7%	62.3%	51.2%

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