



Need & Access to Health Care

Newsletter | January 2025 | Edition 24

100% Community Survey Results: Health Care in Doña Ana County

How have we changed in the last five years, and how can we improve?

In our [October 2020 Newsletter](#), we introduced the 100% Community Survey, launched in 2019 by the [Doña Ana County Resilience Leaders](#), to assess access to essential services in the county. This dedicated coalition works to reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma, and social adversity. Guided by the 100% Community framework developed by the [Anna Age Eight Institute](#), vital family services are divided into two categories: surviving and thriving.

- **Surviving services** meet fundamental human needs, including safe housing, nutritious food, medical care, behavioral health support, and reliable transportation.
- **Thriving services** promote community resilience and well-being, encompassing parental support, early childhood education, youth mentorship, community schools, and job training.

Last year, we conducted the 100% Community Survey again to understand how community needs have shifted since 2019. This newsletter focuses on the essential surviving services: medical, dental, and mental health care.

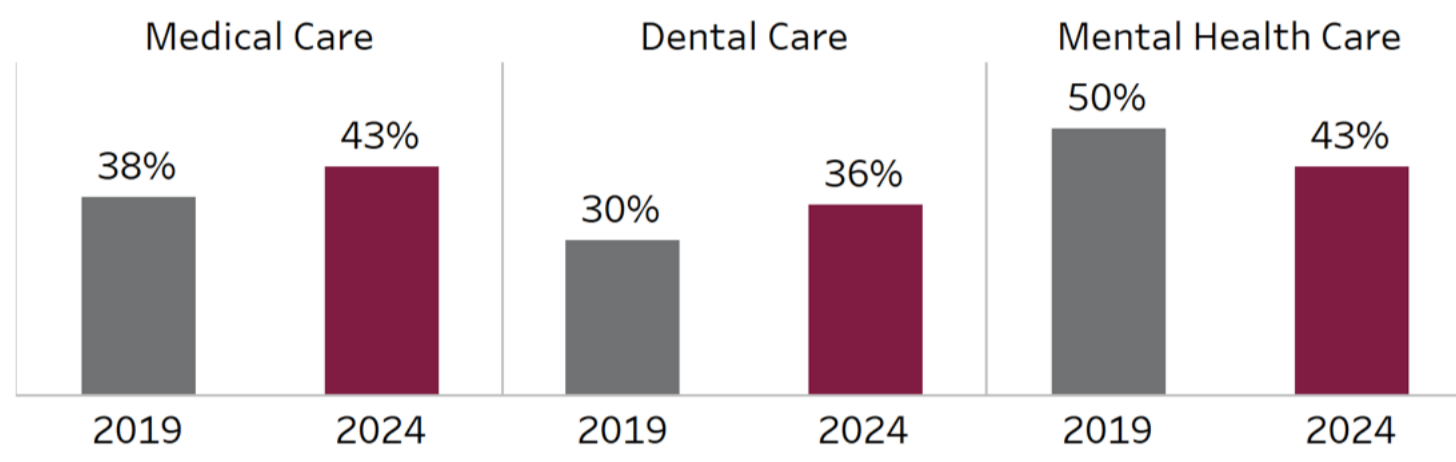
[Click here to explore the 100% Community Survey results for health care services](#)

The Growing Need and Barriers to Health Care Access

The latest 100% Community Survey results reveal important shifts in the community's access to essential health services. The need for medical care has remained steady, with 88% of respondents reporting a need in 2024, compared to 89% in 2019. However, among those reporting a need for medical care, the percentage experiencing difficulties accessing care rose from 38% to 43%.

Although the need for mental and behavioral health care services in the county rose significantly between 2019 and 2024 (35% compared to 48% respectively), for those in need, difficulty accessing mental health services decreased substantially (43% in 2024, down from 50% in 2019). For dental care, while the overall need decreased slightly from 87% in 2019 to 81% in 2024, access issues grew from 30% to 36%.

Percentage of respondents in Doña Ana County who had difficulties obtaining a service among those who needed it by year



Examining the distribution of these results is also crucial, as access difficulties vary among groups facing systemic barriers. Among respondents who reported needing medical care services, 64% of respondents with a child attending Hatch Valley Public Schools reported difficulties accessing care compared to rates below 50% in other local school districts. Respondents living in Tribal communities reported a 64% rate of difficulty accessing medical care, significantly higher than the 39% reported by those living outside Tribal communities. Lastly, approximately half of the respondents with limited or no English proficiency reported challenges in accessing dental care (51%) compared to 33% who spoke English well/very well. These findings highlight persistent and growing barriers to health care access, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to ensure equitable access to essential services.

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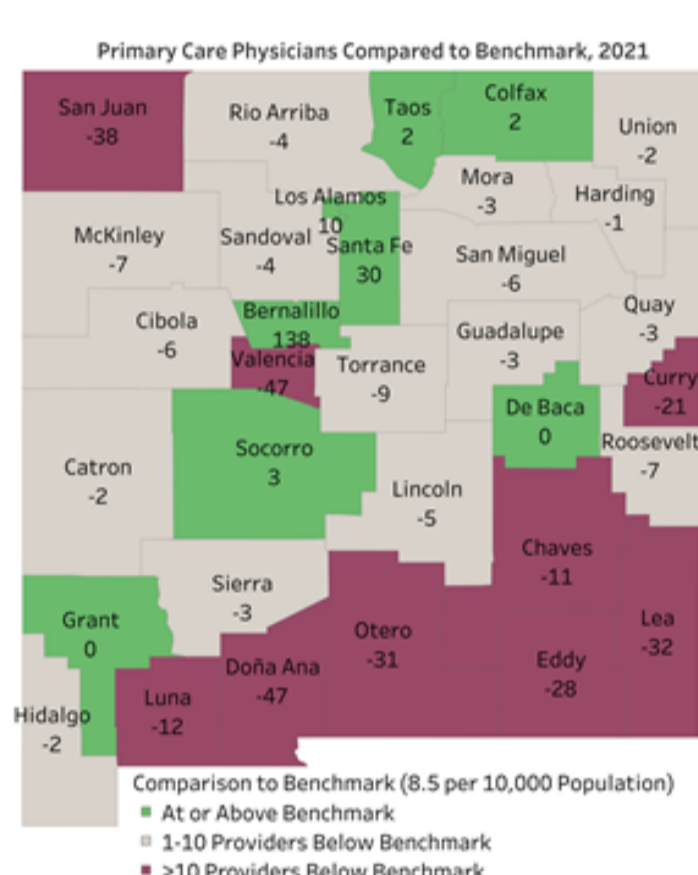
The primary barriers to health care remain unchanged: long wait times for appointments, high costs (including co-pays), and a shortage of quality providers in the area. Additional obstacles included limited insurance coverage and inconvenient appointment times for medical and dental care. For those seeking mental health services, the lack of available providers in the county remains a significant challenge.

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Health Care Workforce Gaps

New Mexico faces a critical shortage of health care providers, worsened by uneven distribution across its counties. While the national benchmark recommends 8.5 primary care physicians or providers per 10,000 residents, only seven of New Mexico's 33 counties met this standard in 2021 (1)(2).

Southern regions and counties like San Juan, Valencia, and Curry are particularly affected, with Valencia and Doña Ana counties each short by 47 physicians. While places like Bernalillo County exceed the benchmark by 138 physicians.



These disparities create stark contrasts in access to care, with rural residents often enduring long commutes to reach hospitals, clinics, or essential services like pharmacies and labs (3). Even with an even distribution of professionals, the state would still fall short of meeting overall demand. The shortage is even more severe in mental health services, where understaffing limits facility operations (4). Additionally, the lack of culturally competent therapists further hinders care in this diverse state, leaving many—especially people of color—struggling to find providers who understand their unique needs.

Although health care education programs have increased enrollment, the number of graduates remains insufficient, and many choose not to practice in New Mexico due to limited job opportunities and poor infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Challenges such as lower pay, heavy workloads, and fewer resources make these roles less attractive (5).

Efforts and Recommendations for Improvement

The New Mexico Legislature has taken steps to address workforce shortages by allocating nearly \$200 million to scholarships, endowments, financial aid, and tens of millions for loan forgiveness to retain health care graduates (6). In 2024, Think New Mexico proposed reforms, including revising medical malpractice laws, creating tax incentives for health care workers, raising Medicaid reimbursement rates, expanding health care Career and Technical Education (CTE) in high schools, and recruiting more international medical graduates (7). They also suggested establishing a \$2 billion permanent health care fund from the state's oil and gas surplus to ensure long-term funding for these initiatives. These efforts aim to improve health care access, address provider shortages, and better serve rural and underserved areas.

By prioritizing these measures, New Mexico can take meaningful steps toward improving access to quality health care, addressing workforce shortages, and ensuring that all residents—particularly those in rural and underserved areas—have the necessary care.

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Final Thoughts

Over the past five years, the demand for medical, dental, and mental health care services in Doña Ana County has remained persistently high, with many residents still facing significant challenges in accessing them. While these barriers are not insurmountable, the growing need and difficulties in obtaining care have created obstacles for countless individuals. Ensuring children grow up in supportive, nurturing environments depends on reliable access to services that meet their essential needs. Prioritizing improvements in health care access is vital to fostering a healthier, more resilient community in Doña Ana County. NMSU's [Anna Age Eight Institute](#) is supporting initiatives statewide to prioritize these improvements. Along with the [Resilience Leaders](#), there is a workgroup sector dedicated to health care to ensure the community is surviving and thriving. To get involved, join the Resilience Leaders monthly meeting, held on the last Friday of each month.

Stay tuned for our next newsletter, where we will delve into additional services highlighted in the 100% Community Survey.

- Sources:
- (1) [Lack of both healthcare workers and infrastructure hurting New Mexicans' access to medical care](#)
 - (2) [New Mexico Gaps in Healthcare Workforce](#)
 - (3) [New Mexico's rural and frontier areas are in desperate need of health care professionals](#)
 - (4) [Some mental health issues on the rise in New Mexico](#)
 - (5) [New Mexico State Workers On How the Staffing Crisis Costs Us All](#)
 - (6) [Lack of both healthcare workers and infrastructure hurting New Mexicans' access to medical care](#)
 - (7) [Health Care Worker Shortage](#)