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In Rural America, Older Adult Vaccination Rates were Higher in Counties with More Aging and Disability Services

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Aging and disability services (ADS) played an important role for older adults in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout. ADS share information, provide transportation, and serve as vaccination sites, which can be particularly important in rural communities where older adults must travel further to access the vaccine. In a recent [peer-reviewed publication](#), we used data from the National Neighborhood Data Archive (NaNDA) and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to show that rural counties with higher ADS density had higher older adult vaccination rates. Specifically, the average vaccination rate among adults aged 65 and above was 71.7% among counties with the lowest ADS density (those in the first quintile), while it was 75.8% among those with the highest ADS density (5th quintile). This difference was statistically significant and remained even after controlling for sociodemographic, health care, and political ideology differences between counties. Because of the high risk of COVID-19 mortality and hospitalization for older adults and the large shares of older adults in rural areas, rural county governments should invest in supporting and expanding older adult services to facilitate vaccination.

About the Authors

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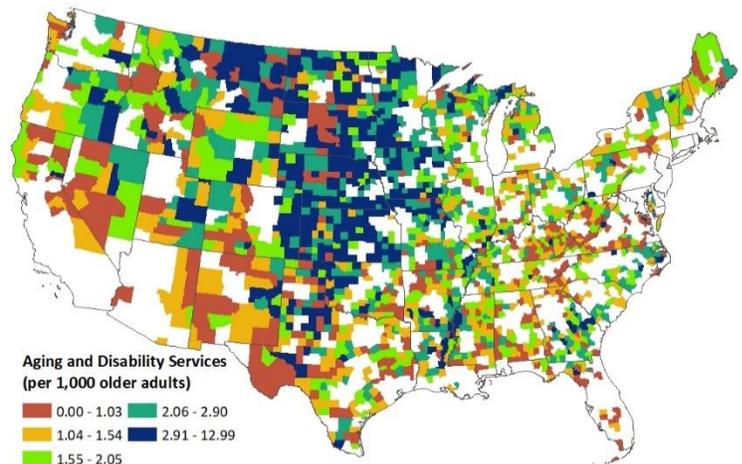


Figure 1. Aging and Disability Services per 1,000 Older Adults by County, 2017

Data Source: NaNDA. Notes: This map presents rural counties only. Aging and disability services include senior centers, adult day care centers, disability support groups, non-medical home care and homemaker services, nursing care, and continuing care and assisted living facilities.

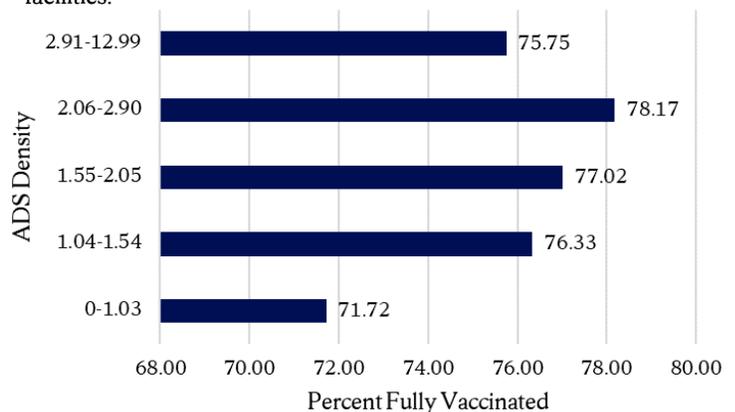


Figure 2. Average COVID-19 Vaccination Rates for Adults Aged 65+ by Quintiles of ADS Density

Data Source: NaNDA and CDC; Notes: N=1,929 rural counties. Rates are unadjusted. Vaccination rates are current as of March 1, 2022. Fully vaccinated refers to people who have had at least two Pfizer or Moderna shots or one Johnson & Johnson shot.