

HEALTH

Coronavirus Pandemic

Coronavirus infections and deaths reached new highs in New Hampshire during the winter of 2021-2022. Between the fourth quarter of 2021 and first quarter of 2022, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported 183,000 cases and 973 deaths in New Hampshire, compared to 76,000 cases and 799 deaths over the previous winter. The Omicron variant of COVID-19, which became the dominant variant of the virus in late 2021, was more contagious, but also less deadly, than previous variants of the COVID-19 virus.¹

Cases and deaths during the second and third quarters of 2022 were slightly higher than in 2021, reflecting higher transmissibility of the virus, as well as a reduction in measures to stop the spread of the virus. While deaths increased from 121 in the third quarter of 2022 to 149 in the fourth quarter, there was not a surge in infections and deaths during the fourth quarter of 2022, as there had been during 2020 and 2021. While the pandemic is not over, 2022 had fewer deaths than 2021, and for most

New Hampshire residents, allowed a return to most pre-pandemic behaviors.

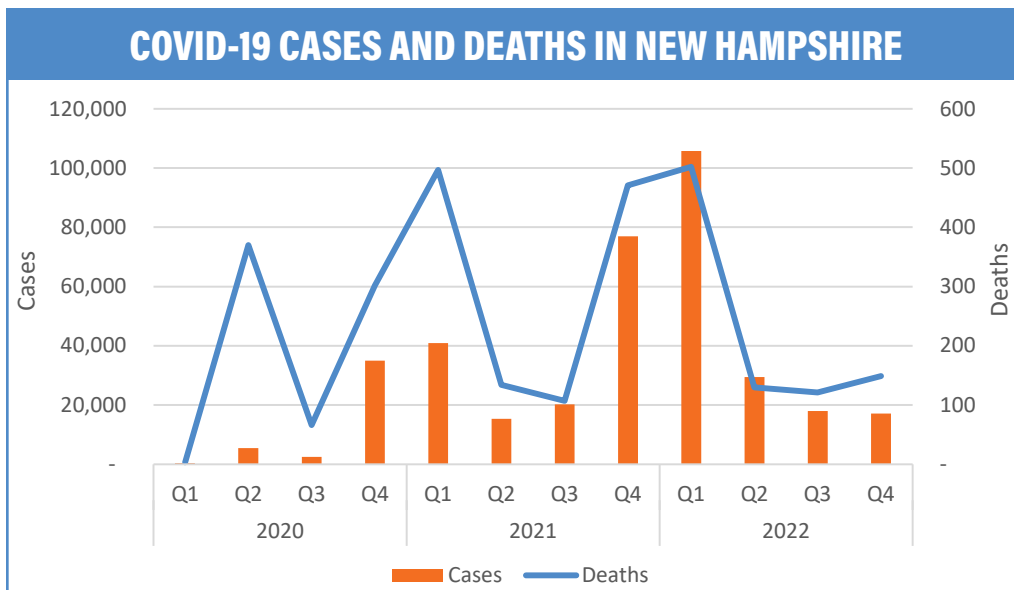
While COVID put a much smaller strain on New Hampshire’s hospitals during the fourth quarter of 2022, other respiratory infections have been prevalent. A high number of cases of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), a respiratory infection that can be serious for young children, filled pediatric hospitals to capacity.² Two winters of COVID-avoidance measures meant many young children were not exposed to other, more common illnesses, and were exposed to them for the first time in 2022, compressing three years’ worth of cases into one year.³

Healthiest State in the U.S.

The United Health Foundation, which ranks all 50 states on a number of health-related measures, rated New Hampshire as the healthiest state in the U.S. in 2022. While UHF declined to officially rank states in 2020 and 2021, during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic, New Hampshire received

the highest overall state score in 2020 and 2021 as well. Other New England states were also rated highly; the top four states in 2022 were all in New England, and Maine, ranked 12th, was the lowest rated New England state.

New Hampshire was rated highly on economic factors associated with health, including relatively



Source: U.S. Centers For Disease Control and Prevention

1 Beth Blauer, "Comparing Cases, Deaths, and Hospitalizations Indicates Omicron Less Deadly," Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/pandemic-data-initiative/data-outlook/comparing-cases-deaths-and-hospitalizations-indicates-omicron-less-deadly>
 2 Paul Cuno-Booth, "A surge of RSV infections is straining capacity at N.H. hospitals," New Hampshire Public Radio, December 2, 2022. <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2022-12-02/a-surge-of-rsv-infections-is-straining-capacity-at-n-h-hospitals>
 3 Vanessa Romo, "RSV is surging. Here's what to watch for and answers about treatment options," NPR, November 2, 2022. <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/02/1133040571/rsv-questions-answers-treatment-options>

low rates of unemployment, poverty, income inequality and food insecurity. New Hampshire was also highly rated on clinical care, with a low percentage of uninsured residents and relatively high access to medical professionals. While access to primary care providers was rated 5th overall, access to mental health care (15th) and dental care (19th) providers was lower, although still above average.

New Hampshire lawmakers passed a bill in 2022 providing preventative dental benefits to Medicaid recipients, although only 16 percent of dentists in the state currently accept Medicaid.⁴ Unless more providers begin to accept Medicaid, access to dental providers will remain limited for New Hampshire's 80,000 Medicaid recipients. Dental care providers that accept Medicare can be particularly difficult to find in many rural areas of the state. To increase availability of care in rural areas, a dental residency program was created, beginning in September 2022, to bring recently graduated dentists to rural parts of New Hampshire for a one-year advanced graduate program specializing in rural dental care.⁵

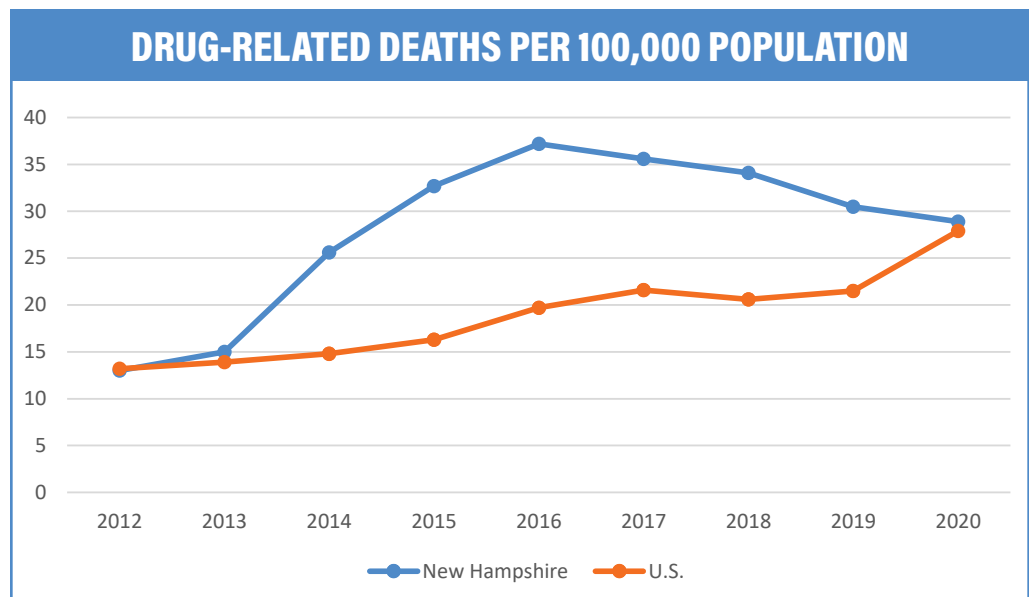
Drug-related death rates in New Hampshire declined between 2016 and 2020 (rankings for this metric use data from two years prior, so the 2022 ranking is based on the drug-related death rate for 2020), but the improvement in New Hampshire's ranking in 2022 appears to be primarily attributable to increasing drug death rates throughout the rest of the U.S., rather than a large decline in New Hampshire. Nationwide, the coronavirus pandemic indirectly led to an increase in drug-related deaths, particularly opioids. Several factors contributed to this increase: reduced access to interventions and increased levels of stress due to isolation and loss of mental health support.⁷ Changes to patterns of drug use and the types and purity of drugs were also a factor,⁸ as fentanyl has become increasingly prevalent, and is being combined with a greater number of other drugs, including cocaine and methamphetamines.⁹

Preliminary data suggest that drug-related death rates in New Hampshire increased again in 2021 and 2022. New Hampshire's Department of Health

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Opioid Crisis

The United Health Foundation ranked New Hampshire 29th in the U.S. in drug-related deaths in 2022. This was a large improvement; New Hampshire ranked 40th the previous year, and as recently as 2018, had ranked 49th in this measure, with opioids responsible for the majority of drug-related deaths.⁶



Source: United Health Foundation

4 Annmarie Timmins, "State can't deliver new dental benefits to adults on Medicaid without more dentists," New Hampshire Bulletin, August 5, 2022. <https://newhampshirebulletin.com/2022/08/05/state-cant-deliver-new-dental-benefits-to-adults-on-medicaid-without-more-dentists/>

5 Alli Fam, "NH residency program to bring dentists to rural areas," Valley News, August 8, 2022. <https://www.vnews.com/New-dental-residency-program-to-bring-dentists-to-rural-health-centers-in-N-H-47527976>

6 2018 ranking was based on drug-related death rates from 2014 through 2016.

7 Rina Ghose, Amir M. Forati, and John R. Mantsch, "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Opioid Overdose Deaths: a Spatiotemporal Analysis," Journal of Urban Health, April 2022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8856931/>

8 Idib.

9 New Hampshire Drug Monitoring Initiative, October 2022 Report, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt476/files/documents2/dmi-october2022.pdf>

and Human Services reported a preliminary drug-related death rate of 30.9 deaths per 100,000 population in 2021, compared to 30.3 deaths in 2020. Through September, the number of drug-related deaths in 2022 exceeded the number of deaths over the first nine months of 2021, suggesting a further increase in drug-related deaths.

Health Insurance

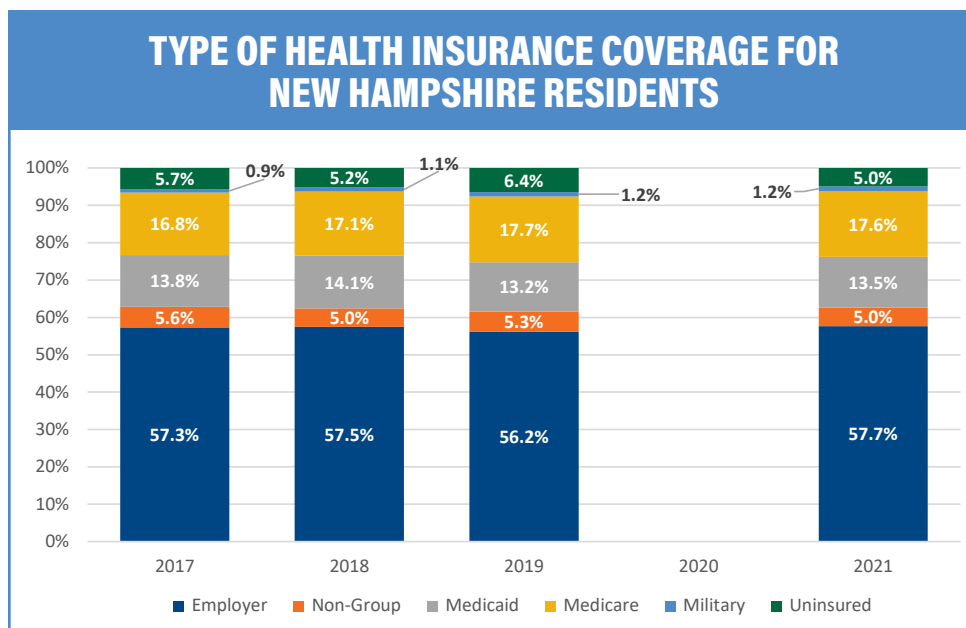
The Kaiser Family Foundation estimated that 5.0 percent of New Hampshire residents were uninsured in 2021, the lowest percentage ever recorded in the state. The percentage of uninsured New Hampshire residents increased in 2019 for the first time since 2014 the Affordable Care Act (ACA) established insurance marketplaces and subsidies for low-income residents in 2014. This followed a nationwide trend which saw uninsured rates increase slightly in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) did not publish estimates of uninsured residents for 2020, due to pandemic-related challenges.

Several acts of federal legislation passed in response to the coronavirus pandemic likely contributed to increased health insurance coverage in New Hampshire. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), passed in March 2020, required Medicaid programs to keep recipients continuously enrolled through the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency (as of January 2023, the public health emergency was

still in effect).¹⁰ Medicaid enrollment, offering health insurance to those with limited income, had declined nationally in the two years prior to the pandemic, before increasing during the pandemic. In New Hampshire, Medicaid coverage increased from 13.2 percent in 2019 to 13.5 percent in 2021.

The American Recue Plan Act (ARPA), passed in March 2021, included additional funding for ACA health insurance subsidies. Subsidies had previously been available for those with in income 400 percent of the poverty line or below; ARPA increased this threshold, making a larger percentage of U.S. residents eligible for subsidized health insurance policies.¹¹ For individuals who were already eligible for financial assistance, existing subsidies were increased. ARPA also offered subsidies to individuals with an employment-based group health plan who, after either a layoff or reduction in hours, opted for COBRA continuation coverage.¹²

– Greg David



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

10 Jennifer Tolbert and Meghana Ammula, "10 Things to Know About the Unwinding of the Medicaid Continuous Enrollment Provision," Kaiser Family Foundation, January 11, 2023. <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-the-unwinding-of-the-medicaid-continuous-enrollment-requirement/>

11 Matthew Rae et al., How the American Rescue Plan Act Affects Subsidies for Marketplace Shoppers and People Who Are Uninsured, Kaiser Family Foundation, March 25, 2021. <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/how-the-american-rescue-plan-act-affects-subsidies-for-marketplace-shoppers-and-people-who-are-uninsured/>

12 U.S. Department of Labor, FAQs About COBRA Premium Assistance Under the American Rescue Plan of 2021. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/EBSA/about-ebbsa/our-activities/resource-center/faqs/cobra-premium-assistance-under-arp.pdf>

HOSPITAL INSURANCE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
HOSPITAL INSURANCE					
Original Medicare	250,636	251,956	243,068	240,172	
Medicare Advantage & Other Health Plans	30,354	38,222	55,666	67,394	
	280,990	290,178	298,734	307,566	
PRESCRIPTION DRUG (Medicare Part D)					
Prescription Drug Plans	160,943	163,105	162,971	161,729	
Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug	23,910	31,454	40,242	51,411	
Yearly Aged and Disabled Enrollment					
Aged Total	233,852	243,236	252,381	262,000	
Disabled Total	47,138	46,941	46,353	45,567	
Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Last Update 11/16/2022					

MEDICAID INSURANCE	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Medicaid Enrollees	206,997	204,458	200,850	193,363	210,094
Federal Share, Medicaid Expenditures (Millions)	\$4,715.1	\$4,616.2	\$4,742.9	\$3,892.9	\$7,217.8
New Hampshire Share, Medicaid Expenditures (Millions)	\$2,435.2	\$2,523.4	\$2,707.0	\$2,687.8	\$4,143.1
Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Last Update 11/16/2022					

MEDICARE UTILIZATION	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES (Medicare)					
Total Persons With Utilization*					
New Hampshire	10,812	10,745	10,162	9,235	7,549
United States	1,802,182	1,763,018	1,703,381	1,622,835	1,467,350
Covered Admissions Per 1,000 Original Medicare Part A Enrollees					
New Hampshire	59	58	55	52	55
United States	66	65	62	60	41
Covered Days of Care Per 1,000 Original Medicare Part A Enrollees					
New Hampshire	1,436	1,392	1,339	1,247	1,453
United States	1,693	1,623	1,559	1,475	1,057
Program Payments Per Covered Day					
New Hampshire	481	486	490	493	534
United States	446	459	471	489	551
*Utilization expresses the number of services used per year or per number of persons eligible for the services					

MEDICARE UTILIZATION (continued...)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
SHORT STAY HOSPITALS (Medicare)					
Total Persons With Utilization*					
New Hampshire	33,631	34,043	33,472	31,590	26,674
United States	6,219,873	6,217,622	6,079,501	5,904,483	5,089,330
Discharges Per 1,000 Original Medicare Part A Enrollees					
New Hampshire	204	206	202	199	165
United States	258	258	252	246	210
Covered Days of Care Per 1,000 Original Medicare Part A Enrollees					
New Hampshire	950	975	985	962	833
United States	1,242	1,225	1,197	1,164	1,064
Program Payments Per Covered Day					
New Hampshire	2,561	2,624	2,683	2,809	2,859
United States	2,433	2,507	2,603	2,726	2,858
<i>Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Last Update 11/16/2022</i>					
<i>*Utilization expresses the number of services used per year or per number of persons eligible for the services</i>					

RELATED SERVICES	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
HOSPICES (Medicare)					
Total Persons With Utilization*					
New Hampshire	6,029	6,397	6,783	7,164	7,464
United States	1,429,862	1,495,384	1,553,637	1,612,018	1,717,193
Covered Days of Care Per 1,000 Original Medicare Part A Enrollees					
New Hampshire	1,346	1,454	1,503	1,682	1,707
United States	1,810	1,858	1,936	2,026	2,079
Program Payments Per Covered Day					
New Hampshire	\$175	\$176	\$176	\$178	\$178
United States	\$167	\$169	\$169	\$171	\$175
<i>*Utilization expresses the number of services used per year or per number of persons eligible for the services</i>					

HOME HEALTH AGENCIES (Medicare)					
Total Persons With Utilization					
New Hampshire	22,355	22,155	22,300	21,531	20,053
United States	3,444,206	3,385,968	3,358,470	3,274,563	3,048,115
Service Visits Per 1,000 Original Medicare Enrollees					
New Hampshire	2,260	2,259	2,207	2,146	1,868
United States	2,849	2,754	2,731	2,640	2,265
Total Service Visits					
New Hampshire	564,158	566,260	555,981	521,512	448,747
United States	108,148,530	104,648,562	103,769,954	100,038,606	84,024,970
Program Payments Per Service Visit					
New Hampshire	\$176	\$179	\$185	\$190	\$206
United States	\$167	\$170	\$173	\$178	\$203
<i>Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Last Update 11/16/2022</i>					

OTHER HEALTH MEASURES	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Obesity (Percent of adult population)	26.6	28.1	29.6	31.8	29.9
Physical Inactivity (Percent of adult population)	19.3	23.9	21.5	21.7	19.3
Diabetes (Percent of adult population)	9	8.4	10.3	9.2	8.8
Frequent Mental Distress ¹	12.7	12	13.8	13.9	13.7
Frequent Physical Distress ²	11.9	11.9	11.3	13	10.2
<i>Source: United Health Foundation. Last Update 11/16/2022</i>					
¹ Percentage of adults who reported their mental health was not good 14 or more days in the past 30 days					
² Percentage of adults who reported their physical health was not good 14 or more days in the past 30 days					

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Employer	57.3%	57.5%	56.2%	N/A	57.7%
Non-Group	5.6%	5.0%	5.3%	N/A	5.0%
Medicaid	13.8%	14.1%	13.2%	N/A	13.5%
Medicare ³	16.8%	17.1%	17.7%	N/A	17.6%
Military	0.9%	1.1%	1.2%	N/A	1.2%
Uninsured	5.7%	5.2%	6.4%	N/A	5.0%
<i>Source: Kaiser Family Foundation. Last Update 11/16/2022</i>					
³ The percentage of people with Medicare excludes those who report having both Medicare and Medicaid coverage.					
Prepared by: New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau					
www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi (603) 228-4124					