

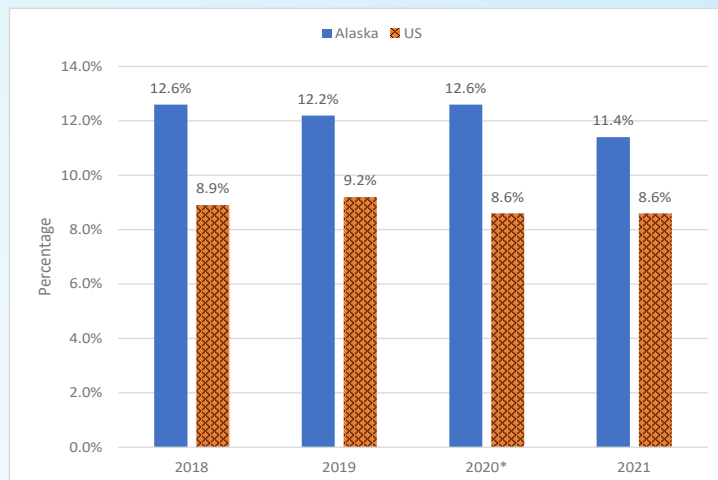
# HEALTHCARE

## INDICATOR 5: Percentage of population without health insurance

### Story Behind the Baseline

Without access to coverage for healthcare services, which include behavioral health in all geographic areas, there is an increased risk of Alaska's population having poor physical and mental health outcomes. A common goal across the healthcare industry is for all Alaskans to have adequate health insurance and access to healthcare services. In 2021, 11.4% of Alaskans were uninsured compared to 8.6% nationally. Even with access to health insurance, barriers continue to exist in receiving services statewide. There are often long wait times for the first appointment for a new patient, and many primary care providers have stopped accepting new patients on

Medicare or Medicaid. Extended wait times often lead to a patient not accessing care or seeking care in a more expensive setting, such as an emergency room, or they recover from the acute illness without being examined or receiving a diagnosis. The location of services in Alaska also presents a barrier as air travel is often necessary in order to seek proper healthcare. Telehealth appointments can offer a range of necessary services; however, barriers such as the type of



**Population: Alaska and U.S.**

**Data Source:**

- [United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S2701](#)
- [United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement Table H-01](#)

**\*Note:**

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, American Community Survey data for this indicator were not released for 2020. Estimates are substituted with Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data, and are similar, but not directly comparable to other years.

services offered and available technology limit telehealth capacity.

## What Works?

Alaskans must be healthy if the state is to thrive. When a population is healthy, more people attend work and school, participate in their communities, engage in traditional cultural practices, and care for their families. Uninsured rates decreased between 2013 and 2018 following the introduction of the Affordable Care Act. Among states, Alaska had the eighth highest proportion of uninsured people in 2021. In many states across the nation, state health departments have partnered with federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) and rural health clinics (RHCs). These facilities can be accessed by patients with or without insurance and offer a sliding scale fee schedule to those without health insurance.

### Sources:

- [United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S2701](#)
- [United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement Table H-01v](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau American Current Population Survey](#)
- [Alaska Medicaid Dashboard](#)
- [Healthy Alaskans](#)
- [Alaska Healthcare Transformation Project](#)
- [Alaska Medicaid Redesign](#)

## HEALTHCARE

### INDICATOR 6: Rate of non-fatal fall injuries (rate per 100,000; ages 65+)

#### Story Behind the Baseline

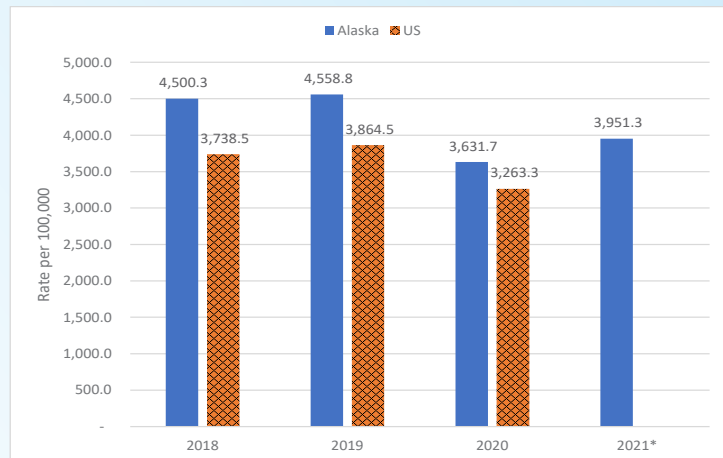
Among Alaska residents ages 65 and over, falls are the leading cause of serious injury and loss of independence. Falls are also the most common cause of traumatic brain injury and are an especially serious risk for older adults.

When an older adult sustains a serious traumatic brain injury in a fall, the injury may result in long-term cognitive changes, reduced ability to function, and changes in emotional health. In addition to traumatic brain injury, falls can cause broken bones, including wrist, arm, ankle, and hip fractures. Many people who fall, even if they are not injured, become afraid of falling. This fear may cause a person to cut down on their regular everyday activities. When a person is less active, they become weaker and increase their chances of falling.

Risk factors for falls in older adults include lower body weakness, vitamin D deficiency, difficulties with walking and balance, vision problems, environmental hazards such as ice, uneven steps, clutter that can be tripped over, and the use of drugs and alcohol.

#### What Works?

Regardless of age group, higher percentages of older adults who reported no physical activity in the past month or reported difficulty with one or more functional characteristics (difficulty



**Population: Alaska and U.S. (Ages 65+)**

#### Data Sources:

- [Alaska Division of Public Health, Health Analytics and Vital Records Section](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC WISQARS](#)

#### Data Source Contact:

- Research Unit, Health Analytics and Vital Records;  
Division of Public Health, Department of Health  
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#### \*Note:

- U.S. data not available at the time of publication.

walking up or down stairs, dressing and bathing, and performing errands alone) reported falls and fall-related injuries. These risk factors are frequently modifiable, suggesting that regardless of age, many falls might be prevented. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created the Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries (STEADI) initiative. STEADI offers tools and resources for healthcare providers to screen their older patients for fall risk, assess modifiable fall risk factors, and to intervene with evidence-based fall prevention interventions. These include medication management, vision screening, home modifications, referral to effective, community-based fall prevention programs, and referral to physical therapists who can address problems with gait, strength, and balance.

There are several evidence-based fall prevention programs that can be implemented by community-based organizations to decrease the number of falls experienced by older Alaskans. Currently, the Alaska Division of Senior and Disabilities Services administers funds allocated through the Older Americans Act. These funds are designated for the implementation of evidence-based fall prevention activities specifically for older adults, as well as fall prevention programs implemented by the Division of Public Health.

As the proportion of older adults living in the United States continues to grow, so too will the number of falls and fall-related injuries; however, many of these falls are preventable. To help keep older adults living independently and injury-free, reducing fall risk and fall-related injuries is essential.

**Sources:**

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System \(WISQARS\)](#)
- Ambrose AF, Paul G, Hausdorff JM. Risk Factors for Falls Among Older Adults: A Review of the Literature. *Maturitas* 2013; 75:51–61.
- Vellas BJ, Wayne SJ, Romero LJ, Baumgartner RN, Garry PJ. Fear of Falling and Restriction of Mobility in Elderly Fallers. *Age and Aging* 1997;26:189–193.
- [CDC Home and Recreational Safety Preventing Falls: A Guide to Implementing Effective Community Based Fall Prevention Programs](#)