

Assessing Regional Differences in Health Care Utilization and Social Determinants of Health at the Sub-County Level

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Purpose

- Of all counties in New Jersey (NJ), Atlantic County (AC) has among the highest rates of substance abuse, diabetes, obesity, and asthma based on data from the NJ Department of Health¹.
- This project sought to evaluate regional differences in healthcare utilization, perceived needs, and other social determinants of health (SDoH) via survey and health screening of those underserved within AC.

Methods

- Survey (English and Spanish) and health screening were administered at existing food distribution events held by the AC Sheriff's Office at three locations within AC on seven dates during 8-weeks between October and December 2023.
- The 68-question survey collected SDoH information, zip code, and healthcare needs.

Results

- Survey (n=127) and screening data (n=91) analyzed regionally by zip code and divided into two groups: rural (n=44) and urban (n=59), using heat mapping (Figure 1). Proportion completed in Spanish for urban vs rural: 11% (n=44) vs 34% (n=59), p=0.01.

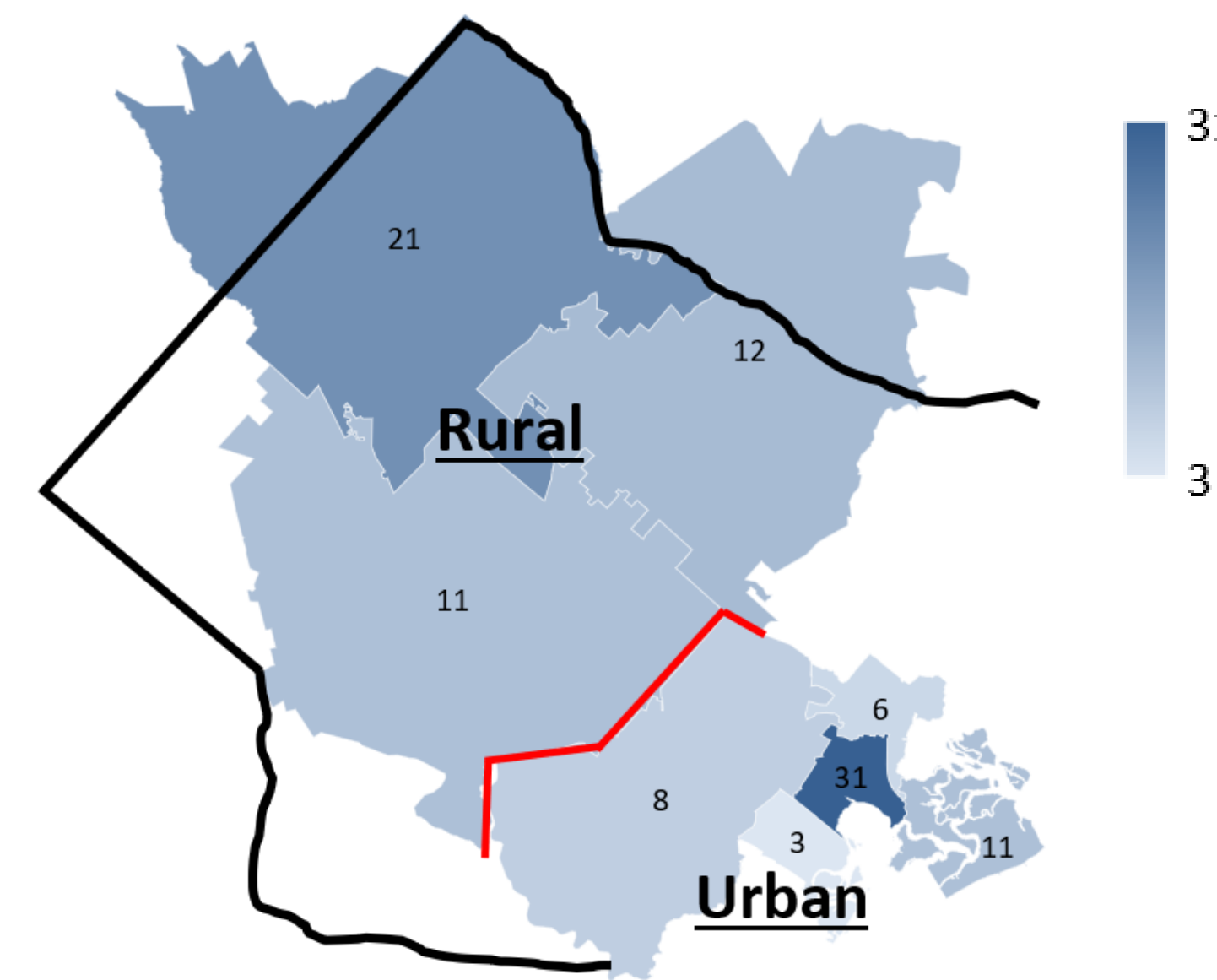


Figure 1. Heat map of AC (black border) rural and urban subgroups by zip code (divided by red line)

Discussion

- This project demonstrates the value of sub-county level data. Quantitative measures isolate focused needs of local communities and provide potential directions for actionable change.
- This project may guide existing programs to focus on the needs expressed by the community.
- As mobile health clinics and telemedicine utilization increase in the post-COVID milieu, further research is needed to make federal and state spending more efficient and provide the greatest benefit to communities in need.

Conclusion

- At the sub-county level, significant differences in SDoH may exist among underserved communities. Quantifying these differences can help to refine future service efforts and bring resources to the greatest need at a more specific level than what has previously been provided.

Acknowledgements

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References

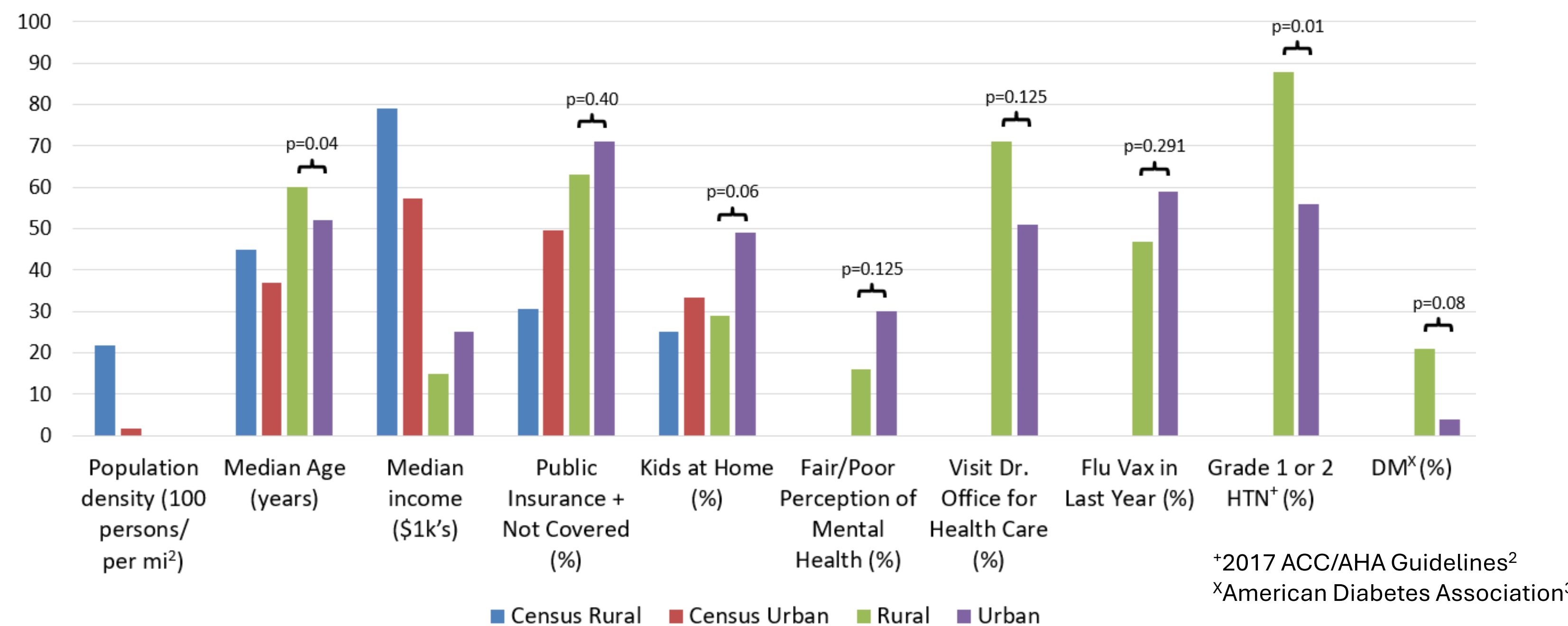


Figure 2. Key regional differences in health perceptions, utilization, and social determinants of health.