

# Key Facts in Rural Health

Spring 2007

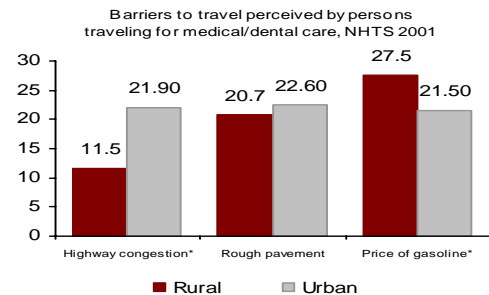
## Mode of Travel and Actual Distance Traveled For Medical or Dental Care By Rural and Urban Residents

The cost and difficulty associated with travel for medical or dental care may serve as a barrier for rural populations. However, nationally representative estimates of the actual travel burden of rural residents, measures of both distance traveled and time spent on the trip, have not previously been available. This study takes advantage of a highly detailed, nationally representative survey of travel conducted by the US Department of Transportation, the 2001 National Household Travel Survey.

### Key Findings

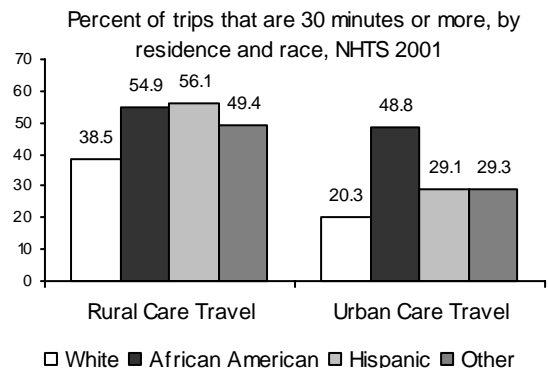
#### National travel patterns for medical/dental care:

- Americans made an estimated 5.9 billion trips for medical/dental care in 2001.
- Nearly all trips were made in a personal vehicle, a car (59.5%), van (15.4%), SUV (10.7%) or pickup truck.
- Only 2.7% of travelers used public transportation for care, while 2.7% walked and 0.7% fell into an “other” category.
- About a quarter of travelers reported that the price of gasoline, rough pavement, or highway congestion were “very much” or “severe” problems for them.
  - More rural (27.5%) than urban (21.5%) residents were concerned about the price of gasoline.



#### Average distance and time for medical/dental travel:

- Across the whole US, the average distance traveled for medical/dental care was 10.2 miles.
  - Rural trips averaged 17.5 miles, versus 8.3 miles for urban residents. Distance traveled did not differ by race.
- Nationwide, the average trip for medical/dental care took 22.0 minutes.
  - Rural trips averaged 27.2 minutes, versus 20.7 minutes for urban residents.
  - African Americans spent more time in travel than whites (29.1 versus 20.6 minutes); other minorities did not differ.
  - Families earning less than \$20,000 per year traveled an average of 24.8 minutes, versus 19.0 minutes among those earning \$70,000 or more per year.



A full copy of the report can be obtained from the SC Rural Health Research Center at <http://rhr.sph.sc.edu>



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