Region A is located at the southwestern tip of North Carolina (NC) and comprises seven, primarily rural counties—Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain. In 2020, the **total population** was 202,774.[1] Between 2017-2021, the **median household income** in Region A* was lower than the state's median ($48,354 vs $60,516). In 2020, the **median age** in Region A* was 47 years, greater than in the state (39 years).

This page highlights indicators specific to opioids and opioid use disorder (OUD) in the counties noted above.

Overdose Deaths, Overall and Within Non-Metropolitan Areas

Rate of unintentional overdose deaths due to any drug, per 100,000 residents[†]
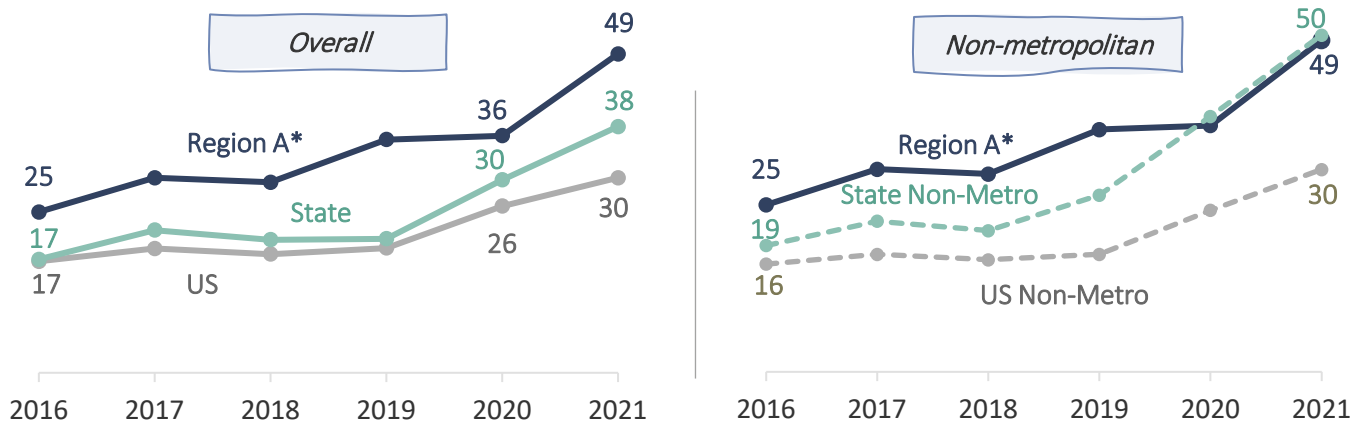
Region A has historically experienced a higher rate of drug overdose (OD) deaths than the state and the US overall. **Starting in 2020, the drug OD death rate in non-metropolitan areas of the state began to converge with that of Region A*.** In 2021, 75% of OD deaths in the US involved opioids.[2]

Overdose Deaths & Overdose ED Visits

Geography	Rate of unintentional OD deaths due to any drug (per 100k)[†]		Rate of emergency department visits with a drug OD diagnosis (per 100k; Crude)	
	2021 Rate	Pct. Change (2016-2021)	2021 Rate	Pct. Change (2016-2021)
Region A overall*	49	98%	119	76%
Cherokee	66	165%	259	166%
Clay	62	70%	140	76%
Swain	49	601%	134	64%
Jackson	48	26%	107	-17%
Macon	45	119%	100	84%
Haywood	43	102%	59	107%
Graham	36	203%	18	-35%
NC	36	85%	150	42%
Metro	35	105%	N/R	N/R
Non-Metro	50	166%	N/R	N/R
US	30	75%	N/R	N/R
Metro	30	73%	N/R	N/R
Non-Metro	30	88%	N/R	N/R

The region's rate of OD deaths has typically been higher than the state's rate, while emergency department visits due to a drug OD has typically been lower. **This highlights a potential gap in access to emergency care in the region related to drug overdoses.**

This page highlights sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics associated with higher risk of unfavorable opioid-related outcomes, as well as indicators related to mental health.
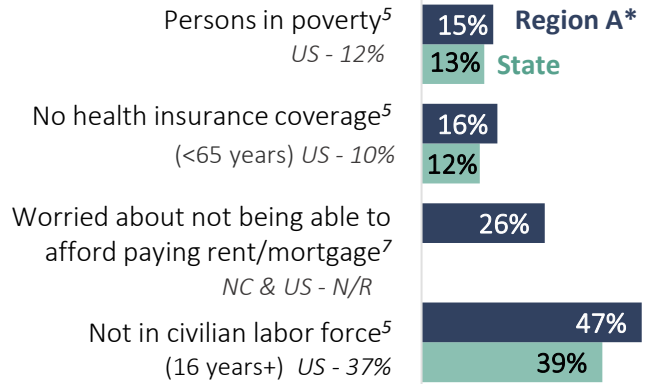
Sociodemographic Risk Factors

77% of Region A* residents live in a rural area (34% in NC; 20% in US).[4]

1 in 2 Region A* residents are male (same in NC and US).[5]

Region A

85% / State 62%

27% / 33%
25-49 years[6]
US - 33%

5% / 2%
American[5] Indian/Alaska Native
US - 1%

White, not Hispanic/ Latino[5]
US - 59%

11% / 9%
With a disability[5] (<65 years)
US - 9%
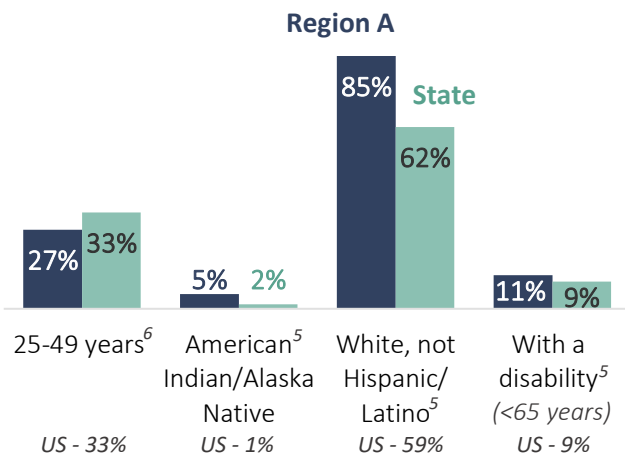
Socioeconomic Risk Factors

Persons in poverty[5] — **Region A*** 15%, **State** 13%
US - 12%

No health insurance coverage[5] 16% / 12%
(<65 years) US - 10%

Worried about not being able to afford paying rent/mortgage[7] 26%
NC & US - N/R

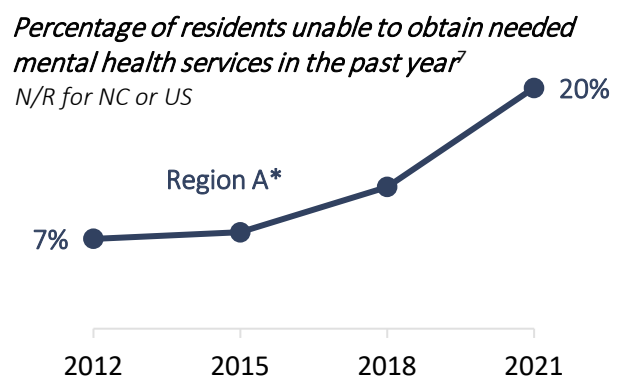Not in civilian labor force[5] 47% / 39%
(16 years+) US - 37%

There is an average of **44 senior adults per 100 working-age people** in Region A* (26 per 100 in NC and US).[6]

The large older population is a driver of **lower labor force participation** and likely **increases household financial stress**. It may also **increase the supply of prescription opioid pills** in the region due to the higher prevalence of chronic pain conditions among older adults.

Mental Health

72% of Region A* residents *always* or *usually* received needed **social/emotional support** (N/R for NC or US).[7]

23% of Region A* residents reported **8+ days of poor mental health in past month** (N/R for NC or US).[7]

Percentage of residents unable to obtain needed mental health services in the past year[7]
N/R for NC or US

Region A*
7% (2012) — (2015) — (2018) — 20% (2021)

2012   2015   2018   2021

While most people in Region A* *always* or *usually* received needed social/emotional support, about 3 in 10 residents did not. Moreover, nearly 1 in 4 residents in the region reported a high number of poor mental health days. The percentage of county residents who did not receive needed mental health services has been rising. **This highlights the need for an increase in various types of support across the region**.

*Region A figures are extrapolated from county population data and county rates/percentages.