Primary care physicians are defined as those practicing in family/general practice (FP/GP), general internal medicine (GIM), and general pediatrics (Gen Ped).

In 2011, there were 552 active primary care physicians in North Dakota. Of these physicians, 338 (61.2%) practiced in urban areas, 99 (17.9%) in large rural areas, 44 (8.0%) in small rural areas, and 71 (12.9%) in isolated rural areas. There are 214 primary care physicians in all rural areas combined, which represents 38.8% of all primary care physicians in North Dakota.

- There are over twice as many patients per primary care physician in small/isolated rural areas compared to urban areas.
- The largest absolute difference is for small/isolated rural versus urban family physicians per population (1,013).

GIM and Gen Ped primary care physicians are more likely to practice in urban areas (72%) than FP/GP physicians (54%).

By far, FP/GP primary care physicians are more likely to be practicing in isolated rural areas than are GIM and Gen Ped physicians.
Primary care physicians in small/isolated rural areas are older than elsewhere.

The highest mean ages for primary care physicians are in small/isolated rural areas of northeast and southwest North Dakota.

Primary care physicians average the youngest in northeast North Dakota (46.5) urban areas (i.e., Grand Forks).

Conclusions

- Nearly two-thirds (61%) of North Dakota’s primary care physicians practice in urban areas.
- Family Practice/General Practice physicians are relatively more likely to work in small/isolated rural areas.
- Primary care physicians in small and isolated rural areas are older, especially in small isolated rural areas of the northeast and southwest portions of North Dakota.

Data

The physician data are from the 2011 American Medical Association physician master file. Urban, large rural, small rural, and isolated rural are defined using Rural-Urban Community Areas (RUCA). (http://depts.washington.edu/uwruca/)

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