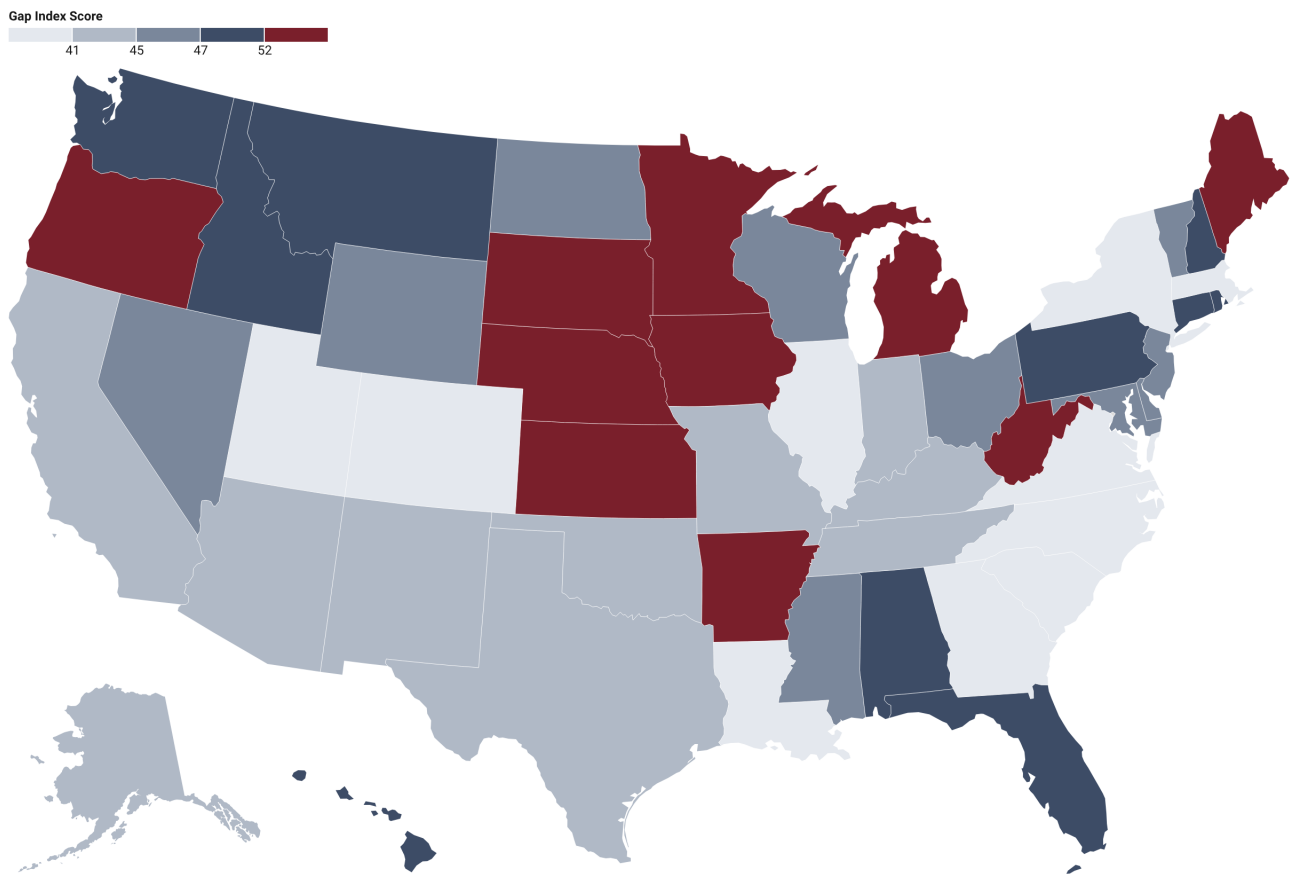


The Gap Index

Where the Emergency Safety Net Is Thinnest — All 50 States Ranked

A Zeroth Responder Report



Seven of the ten widest-gap states sit in the country's interior. The exceptions — Maine, West Virginia, and Oregon — are part of why this is hard to explain.

Alabama

13 / 50

50.22

GAP INDEX SCORE

19

hospitals at immediate risk

Alabama's ranking is affected by both past and future: eight rural hospitals have closed outright since 2005, and 19 more are at immediate risk. Its EMS workforce is among the thinnest measured, at 71.6 EMTs and paramedics per 100,000 residents.

Volunteer Dependence	17 / 50
EMS Staffing	12 / 50
Police Staffing	42 / 50
Destination Risk	6 / 50
Demand Pressure	34 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	59.3%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	71.6
Officers per 1,000	2.25
Hospitals at immediate risk	19
Residents 65+	17.8%

Alaska

37 / 50

42.23

GAP INDEX SCORE

60.8%

volunteer firefighters

Alaska's exposure is geographic, not demographic. It has the youngest population in the country — 13.8% aged 65 or older — but 60.8% of its firefighters are volunteers, covering the largest and most remote service area of any state.

Volunteer Dependence	18 / 50
EMS Staffing	21 / 50
Police Staffing	17 / 50
Destination Risk	15 / 50
Demand Pressure	49 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	60.8%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	84.1
Officers per 1,000	1.71
Hospitals at immediate risk	1
Residents 65+	13.8%

Arizona

34 / 50

43.82

GAP INDEX SCORE

1.58

officers per 1,000

Arizona is the least volunteer-dependent state in the interior West — only 14% of its firefighters are volunteers. Its pressure comes from elsewhere: an aging population, thin EMS staffing, and among the ten lowest officer-per-resident rates in the country.

Volunteer Dependence	48 / 50
EMS Staffing	18 / 50
Police Staffing	8 / 50
Destination Risk	18 / 50
Demand Pressure	21 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	14.0%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	80.9
Officers per 1,000	1.58
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	18.9%

Arkansas

8 / 50

53.73

GAP INDEX SCORE

67.9%

volunteer firefighters

Arkansas is exposed across the board rather than at any single point. Nearly 68% of its firefighters are volunteers, its EMS staffing ranks among the thinnest in the country, and 12 rural hospitals are at immediate risk of closing.

Volunteer Dependence	12 / 50
EMS Staffing	14 / 50
Police Staffing	24 / 50
Destination Risk	14 / 50
Demand Pressure	31 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	67.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	73.5
Officers per 1,000	1.83
Hospitals at immediate risk	12
Residents 65+	17.6%

California

36 / 50

42.97

GAP INDEX SCORE

10

rural hospital closures since 2005

California's rural share is the smallest in the nation at 5.8%, which holds its overall position down. But ten rural hospitals have closed since 2005 — among the highest counts anywhere — and five more are at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	47 / 50
EMS Staffing	9 / 50
Police Staffing	14 / 50
Destination Risk	17 / 50
Demand Pressure	36 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	17.7%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	68.8
Officers per 1,000	1.68
Hospitals at immediate risk	5
Residents 65+	15.7%

Colorado

43 / 50

38.5

GAP INDEX SCORE

No

rural hospital closures since 2005

Colorado sits low on the index largely because its population is young and its rural hospitals have held. No closures since 2005, two at risk, and 15.6% of residents aged 65 or older — well below the national middle.

Volunteer Dependence	41 / 50
EMS Staffing	25 / 50
Police Staffing	11 / 50
Destination Risk	40 / 50
Demand Pressure	46 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	36.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	86.0
Officers per 1,000	1.60
Hospitals at immediate risk	2
Residents 65+	15.6%

Connecticut

12 / 50

50.6

GAP INDEX SCORE

65.5%

volunteer firefighters

Connecticut is an unusual case: a densely settled state with a heavily volunteer fire service. Two-thirds of its firefighters are volunteers, and 2.4% of residents are 85 or older — among the highest shares in the country.

Volunteer Dependence	21 / 50
EMS Staffing	27 / 50
Police Staffing	23 / 50
Destination Risk	36 / 50
Demand Pressure	6 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	65.5%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	86.5
Officers per 1,000	1.76
Hospitals at immediate risk	2
Residents 65+	18.5%

Delaware

28 / 50

45.53

GAP INDEX SCORE

86.1%

volunteer firefighters

Delaware relies on volunteers more heavily than almost any state — 86.1% of its firefighters — while recording no rural hospital closures and none currently at risk. Its gap is a staffing question, not a distance one.

Volunteer Dependence	6 / 50
EMS Staffing	48 / 50
Police Staffing	16 / 50
Destination Risk	45 / 50
Demand Pressure	9 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	86.1%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	121.7
Officers per 1,000	1.70
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	20.6%

Florida

14 / 50

50.04

GAP INDEX SCORE

2.6%

of residents aged 85+

Florida has the second-highest demand pressure in the country — 21.3% aged 65 or older, 2.6% aged 85 or older — paired with the fourth-thinnest measured EMS workforce and the lowest volunteer firefighter share of any state at 9.2%.

Volunteer Dependence	49 / 50
EMS Staffing	4 / 50
Police Staffing	25 / 50
Destination Risk	22 / 50
Demand Pressure	2 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	9.2%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	55.5
Officers per 1,000	1.86
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	21.3%

Georgia

48 / 50

35.72

GAP INDEX SCORE

12

hospitals at immediate risk

Georgia's hospital picture is among the worst in the Southeast: eight rural hospitals closed outright since 2005, one more reduced to urgent care, and 12 at immediate risk. Its population is comparatively young, which holds the overall score down.

Volunteer Dependence	44 / 50
EMS Staffing	22 / 50
Police Staffing	28 / 50
Destination Risk	19 / 50
Demand Pressure	47 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	23.3%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	84.1
Officers per 1,000	1.96
Hospitals at immediate risk	12
Residents 65+	15.0%

Hawaii

17 / 50

48.95

GAP INDEX SCORE

48.9

EMTs and paramedics per 100,000

Hawaii has the thinnest measured EMS workforce in the country — 48.9 EMTs and paramedics per 100,000 residents — and the highest share of residents aged 85 or older at 2.8%. Its rural hospitals have held, but the staffing margin is the narrowest anywhere.

Volunteer Dependence	50 / 50
EMS Staffing	1 / 50
Police Staffing	15 / 50
Destination Risk	45 / 50
Demand Pressure	1 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	3.6%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	48.9
Officers per 1,000	1.69
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	20.5%

Idaho

15 / 50

49.76

GAP INDEX SCORE

1.38

officers per 1,000

Idaho has the third-lowest officer staffing in the country at 1.38 per 1,000 residents, alongside thin EMS coverage at 60.1 per 100,000. Its rural hospitals have held so far — no closures since 2005, one at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	29 / 50
EMS Staffing	5 / 50
Police Staffing	3 / 50
Destination Risk	42 / 50
Demand Pressure	43 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	48.6%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	60.1
Officers per 1,000	1.38
Hospitals at immediate risk	1
Residents 65+	17.0%

Illinois

44 / 50

38.43

GAP INDEX SCORE

8

hospitals at immediate risk

Illinois has the resources of a large state and the exposure of a rural one in places. Two rural hospitals have closed outright and two more reduced service since 2005, with eight now at immediate risk — concentrated well outside Chicago.

Volunteer Dependence	39 / 50
EMS Staffing	29 / 50
Police Staffing	44 / 50
Destination Risk	24 / 50
Demand Pressure	27 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	43.0%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	92.2
Officers per 1,000	2.29
Hospitals at immediate risk	8
Residents 65+	17.0%

Indiana

35 / 50

43.22

GAP INDEX SCORE

8

hospitals at immediate risk

Indiana is the most evenly balanced state on the index. It ranks between 25th and 35th on all five dimensions — no acute weakness, no particular strength, and a gap that is moderate everywhere rather than severe anywhere.

Volunteer Dependence	25 / 50
EMS Staffing	35 / 50
Police Staffing	26 / 50
Destination Risk	26 / 50
Demand Pressure	33 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	55.7%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	98.1
Officers per 1,000	1.86
Hospitals at immediate risk	8
Residents 65+	16.8%

Iowa

6 / 50

56.34

GAP INDEX SCORE

77.3%

volunteer firefighters

Iowa is one of only three states ranking in the top ten on three separate dimensions. More than 77% of its firefighters are volunteers, its officer-per-resident rate is among the lowest in the country, and 18.1% of residents are 65 or older.

Volunteer Dependence	7 / 50
EMS Staffing	19 / 50
Police Staffing	10 / 50
Destination Risk	33 / 50
Demand Pressure	8 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	77.3%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	82.8
Officers per 1,000	1.58
Hospitals at immediate risk	2
Residents 65+	18.1%

Kansas

1 / 50

64.32

GAP INDEX SCORE

28

hospitals at immediate risk

Kansas ranks first overall, and the reason is specific: 28 rural hospitals are at immediate risk of closing, more than any other state, against a rural population of roughly 800,000. On workforce measures it sits near the national middle.

Volunteer Dependence	35 / 50
EMS Staffing	24 / 50
Police Staffing	34 / 50
Destination Risk	1 / 50
Demand Pressure	26 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	45.4%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	85.3
Officers per 1,000	2.06
Hospitals at immediate risk	28
Residents 65+	17.0%

Kentucky

31 / 50

44.77

GAP INDEX SCORE

63.1%

volunteer firefighters

Kentucky's fire service runs on volunteers — 63.1% of its firefighters — across a state that is 41.3% rural. Four rural hospitals have closed since 2005, and its measured EMS staffing sits below the national middle.

Volunteer Dependence	16 / 50
EMS Staffing	37 / 50
Police Staffing	18 / 50
Destination Risk	32 / 50
Demand Pressure	38 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	63.1%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	99.2
Officers per 1,000	1.71
Hospitals at immediate risk	2
Residents 65+	17.3%

Louisiana

49 / 50

35.35

GAP INDEX SCORE

11

hospitals at immediate risk

Louisiana has the second-highest officer-per-resident rate in the country at 2.69 per 1,000. Its pressure lies elsewhere: three rural hospitals closed since 2005 and 11 more at immediate risk, in a state that is 28.5% rural.

Volunteer Dependence	32 / 50
EMS Staffing	32 / 50
Police Staffing	49 / 50
Destination Risk	13 / 50
Demand Pressure	39 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	47.3%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	97.2
Officers per 1,000	2.69
Hospitals at immediate risk	11
Residents 65+	16.7%

Maine

2 / 50

58.85

GAP INDEX SCORE

22.4%

of residents aged 65+

Maine is one of only three states ranking in the top ten on three separate dimensions. It is 61.4% rural, 81.4% of its firefighters are volunteers, and 22.4% of residents are 65 or older — the highest share in the country.

Volunteer Dependence	3 / 50
EMS Staffing	44 / 50
Police Staffing	4 / 50
Destination Risk	21 / 50
Demand Pressure	3 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	81.4%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	111.7
Officers per 1,000	1.50
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	22.4%

Maryland

24 / 50

46.18

GAP INDEX SCORE

1.55

officers per 1,000

Maryland has among the lowest officer-per-resident rates in the country at 1.55 per 1,000, and 61.9% of its firefighters are volunteers. Its rural hospitals have largely held — one facility reduced to urgent care since 2005, none at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	24 / 50
EMS Staffing	23 / 50
Police Staffing	5 / 50
Destination Risk	44 / 50
Demand Pressure	32 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	61.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	84.8
Officers per 1,000	1.55
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	16.7%

Massachusetts

50 / 50

32.45

GAP INDEX SCORE

Zero

rural hospital closures

Massachusetts records the lowest structural gap of the fifty states. No rural hospital has closed since 2005 and none is currently at risk. Where exposure exists it is demographic — 2.2% of residents are 85 or older.

Volunteer Dependence	45 / 50
EMS Staffing	28 / 50
Police Staffing	47 / 50
Destination Risk	45 / 50
Demand Pressure	16 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	25.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	89.6
Officers per 1,000	2.38
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	17.9%

Michigan

10 / 50

52.29

GAP INDEX SCORE

68.9

EMTs and paramedics per 100,000

Michigan pairs thin measured EMS staffing — 68.9 per 100,000, among the ten lowest in the country — with a rural hospital record that is heavier than its urban profile suggests: three closed outright since 2005, two more reduced to urgent care, three at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	23 / 50
EMS Staffing	10 / 50
Police Staffing	13 / 50
Destination Risk	34 / 50
Demand Pressure	17 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	57.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	68.9
Officers per 1,000	1.65
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	18.6%

Minnesota

7 / 50

55.83

GAP INDEX SCORE

76.7%

volunteer firefighters

Minnesota is quietly exposed. More than three-quarters of its firefighters are volunteers, it has among the lowest officer-per-resident rates in the country, and six rural hospitals have closed outright since 2005.

Volunteer Dependence	11 / 50
EMS Staffing	20 / 50
Police Staffing	7 / 50
Destination Risk	20 / 50
Demand Pressure	23 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	76.7%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	83.2
Officers per 1,000	1.57
Hospitals at immediate risk	4
Residents 65+	17.3%

Mississippi

25 / 50

45.88

GAP INDEX SCORE

25

hospitals at immediate risk

Mississippi has the highest officer-per-resident rate in the country at 2.73 per 1,000 — and 25 rural hospitals at immediate risk of closing, among the highest. It is 53.7% rural, and 64% of its firefighters are volunteers.

Volunteer Dependence	13 / 50
EMS Staffing	25 / 50
Police Staffing	50 / 50
Destination Risk	5 / 50
Demand Pressure	41 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	64.0%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	86.0
Officers per 1,000	2.73
Hospitals at immediate risk	25
Residents 65+	17.2%

Missouri

33 / 50

44.56

GAP INDEX SCORE

11

hospitals at immediate risk

Missouri has lost nine rural hospitals outright since 2005 with a tenth reduced to urgent care, and 11 more are at immediate risk. Its officer staffing and EMS coverage both sit below the national middle.

Volunteer Dependence	31 / 50
EMS Staffing	33 / 50
Police Staffing	39 / 50
Destination Risk	8 / 50
Demand Pressure	24 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	46.7%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	97.3
Officers per 1,000	2.16
Hospitals at immediate risk	11
Residents 65+	17.9%

Montana

16 / 50

49.74

GAP INDEX SCORE

78.7%

volunteer firefighters

Montana is 46.6% rural with 78.7% of its firefighters serving as volunteers. Its rural hospitals have held so far — no closures since 2005 — but three are at immediate risk, and 20.1% of residents are 65 or older.

Volunteer Dependence	5 / 50
EMS Staffing	39 / 50
Police Staffing	27 / 50
Destination Risk	30 / 50
Demand Pressure	18 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	78.7%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	101.3
Officers per 1,000	1.89
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	20.1%

Nebraska

5 / 50

56.8

GAP INDEX SCORE

51.0

EMTs and paramedics per 100,000

Nebraska has the second-thinnest measured EMS workforce in the country — 51 EMTs and paramedics per 100,000 residents. Nearly 60% of its firefighters are volunteers, and its officer-per-resident rate sits below the national middle.

Volunteer Dependence	22 / 50
EMS Staffing	2 / 50
Police Staffing	19 / 50
Destination Risk	16 / 50
Demand Pressure	29 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	59.5%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	51.0
Officers per 1,000	1.73
Hospitals at immediate risk	2
Residents 65+	16.7%

Nevada

22 / 50

46.96

GAP INDEX SCORE

2nd-highest

destination risk in the country

Nevada looks urban on paper — 5.9% rural, only 18.5% volunteer firefighters — but its small rural population of roughly 180,000 carries two hospital closures since 2005 and one facility at immediate risk. Per capita, that is the second-highest destination risk in the country.

Volunteer Dependence	46 / 50
EMS Staffing	16 / 50
Police Staffing	22 / 50
Destination Risk	2 / 50
Demand Pressure	45 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	18.5%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	75.6
Officers per 1,000	1.74
Hospitals at immediate risk	1
Residents 65+	17.0%

New Hampshire

20 / 50

47.65

GAP INDEX SCORE

66.3%

volunteer firefighters

New Hampshire is 41.7% rural with two-thirds of its firefighters serving as volunteers, and 20.1% of residents aged 65 or older. Its rural hospitals have held — no closures since 2005, one at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	14 / 50
EMS Staffing	38 / 50
Police Staffing	20 / 50
Destination Risk	43 / 50
Demand Pressure	11 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	66.3%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	101.0
Officers per 1,000	1.74
Hospitals at immediate risk	1
Residents 65+	20.1%

New Jersey

26 / 50

45.86

GAP INDEX SCORE

70.9%

volunteer firefighters

New Jersey is among the least rural states in the country at 6.2%, yet 70.9% of its firefighters are volunteers — one of the highest rates anywhere. Its measured EMS staffing is thin at 69.8 per 100,000.

Volunteer Dependence	19 / 50
EMS Staffing	11 / 50
Police Staffing	43 / 50
Destination Risk	38 / 50
Demand Pressure	25 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	70.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	69.8
Officers per 1,000	2.28
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	17.2%

New Mexico

39 / 50

40.62

GAP INDEX SCORE

19.3%

of residents aged 65+

New Mexico's pressure is demographic and geographic at once: 19.3% of residents are 65 or older, the state is 25.5% rural, and one rural hospital has already been reduced to urgent care with two more at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	34 / 50
EMS Staffing	34 / 50
Police Staffing	38 / 50
Destination Risk	31 / 50
Demand Pressure	14 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	46.3%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	97.4
Officers per 1,000	2.15
Hospitals at immediate risk	2
Residents 65+	19.3%

New York

46 / 50

36.36

GAP INDEX SCORE

15

hospitals at immediate risk

New York has one of the highest officer-per-resident rates in the country at 2.67 per 1,000, but 15 rural hospitals are at immediate risk of closing. More than half its firefighters, 52.5%, are volunteers.

Volunteer Dependence	33 / 50
EMS Staffing	41 / 50
Police Staffing	48 / 50
Destination Risk	23 / 50
Demand Pressure	12 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	52.5%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	104.7
Officers per 1,000	2.67
Hospitals at immediate risk	15
Residents 65+	17.9%

North Carolina

41 / 50

40.34

GAP INDEX SCORE

11

rural hospital closures since 2005

North Carolina has lost 11 rural hospitals outright since 2005, second only to Texas, with one more reduced to urgent care. Its measured EMS staffing is comparatively strong, at 110.2 per 100,000.

Volunteer Dependence	20 / 50
EMS Staffing	43 / 50
Police Staffing	31 / 50
Destination Risk	25 / 50
Demand Pressure	35 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	59.7%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	110.2
Officers per 1,000	2.00
Hospitals at immediate risk	5
Residents 65+	17.2%

North Dakota

21 / 50

47.2

GAP INDEX SCORE

75.8%

volunteer firefighters

North Dakota has the second-highest measured EMS staffing in the country at 122.6 per 100,000, alongside one of the heaviest volunteer fire dependencies at 75.8%. Three rural hospitals are at immediate risk in a state that is 39% rural.

Volunteer Dependence	10 / 50
EMS Staffing	49 / 50
Police Staffing	33 / 50
Destination Risk	7 / 50
Demand Pressure	22 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	75.8%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	122.6
Officers per 1,000	2.04
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	16.5%

Ohio

29 / 50

45.45

GAP INDEX SCORE

77.0

EMTs and paramedics per 100,000

Ohio's measured EMS staffing is thin at 77 per 100,000, and half its fire-fighters are volunteers. Two rural hospitals have closed outright since 2005 with a third reduced to urgent care, and three more are at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	30 / 50
EMS Staffing	17 / 50
Police Staffing	29 / 50
Destination Risk	39 / 50
Demand Pressure	20 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	51.0%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	77.0
Officers per 1,000	1.97
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	18.3%

Oklahoma

32 / 50

44.61

GAP INDEX SCORE

18

hospitals at immediate risk

Oklahoma has lost eight rural hospitals outright since 2005, with two more reduced to urgent care, and 18 are at immediate risk. It is 35.4% rural, and its population is comparatively young — which holds the overall score down.

Volunteer Dependence	26 / 50
EMS Staffing	31 / 50
Police Staffing	46 / 50
Destination Risk	3 / 50
Demand Pressure	44 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	50.8%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	97.0
Officers per 1,000	2.34
Hospitals at immediate risk	18
Residents 65+	16.3%

Oregon

9 / 50

53.06

GAP INDEX SCORE

1.18

officers per 1,000

Oregon has the second-lowest officer-per-resident rate in the country at 1.18 per 1,000, well below the national middle. Its rural hospitals have held — no closures since 2005 — but 19.1% of residents are 65 or older.

Volunteer Dependence	37 / 50
EMS Staffing	15 / 50
Police Staffing	2 / 50
Destination Risk	37 / 50
Demand Pressure	13 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	46.2%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	74.4
Officers per 1,000	1.18
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	19.1%

Pennsylvania

19 / 50

48.3

GAP INDEX SCORE

81.6%

volunteer firefighters

Pennsylvania has one of the most volunteer-dependent fire services in the country — 81.6% — alongside the fourth-highest demand pressure, with 19.5% of residents aged 65 or older and 2.4% aged 85 or older. Nine rural hospitals are at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	9 / 50
EMS Staffing	47 / 50
Police Staffing	32 / 50
Destination Risk	27 / 50
Demand Pressure	4 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	81.6%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	114.2
Officers per 1,000	2.03
Hospitals at immediate risk	9
Residents 65+	19.5%

Rhode Island

18 / 50

48.45

GAP INDEX SCORE

52.9

EMTs and paramedics per 100,000

Rhode Island has the third-thinnest measured EMS workforce in the country at 52.9 per 100,000, and 2.2% of residents are 85 or older. Its rural hospitals have held — no closures since 2005, none at immediate risk.

Volunteer Dependence	43 / 50
EMS Staffing	3 / 50
Police Staffing	21 / 50
Destination Risk	45 / 50
Demand Pressure	10 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	36.2%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	52.9
Officers per 1,000	1.74
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	18.7%

South Carolina

47 / 50

35.76

GAP INDEX SCORE

4

rural hospital closures since 2005

South Carolina's measured EMS staffing is comparatively strong at 112.4 per 100,000, and its officer-per-resident rate is above the national middle. Four rural hospitals have closed outright since 2005 in a state that is 32.1% rural.

Volunteer Dependence	27 / 50
EMS Staffing	45 / 50
Police Staffing	45 / 50
Destination Risk	28 / 50
Demand Pressure	28 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	50.7%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	112.4
Officers per 1,000	2.32
Hospitals at immediate risk	2
Residents 65+	18.9%

South Dakota

3 / 50

57.24

GAP INDEX SCORE

82.9%

volunteer firefighters

South Dakota is 42.8% rural with 82.9% of its firefighters serving as volunteers — the fourth-highest share in the country. Three rural hospitals have closed since 2005 and three more are at immediate risk, against a rural population of roughly 380,000.

Volunteer Dependence	4 / 50
EMS Staffing	30 / 50
Police Staffing	37 / 50
Destination Risk	4 / 50
Demand Pressure	19 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	82.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	94.1
Officers per 1,000	2.14
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	18.0%

Tennessee

40 / 50

40.6

GAP INDEX SCORE

12

hospitals at immediate risk

Tennessee has lost 14 rural hospitals to closure or reduced service since 2005 — 10 outright, four cut to urgent care — and 12 more are at immediate risk. Its officer-per-resident rate is above the national middle at 2.14 per 1,000.

Volunteer Dependence	28 / 50
EMS Staffing	40 / 50
Police Staffing	36 / 50
Destination Risk	10 / 50
Demand Pressure	42 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	47.8%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	103.5
Officers per 1,000	2.14
Hospitals at immediate risk	12
Residents 65+	17.1%

Texas

38 / 50

41.17

GAP INDEX SCORE

24

rural hospital closures since 2005

Texas has lost 24 rural hospitals outright since 2005 — the highest count in the country — with 26 more at immediate risk. Its rural population is large enough that per capita the exposure is moderate, but the absolute numbers are without parallel.

Volunteer Dependence	42 / 50
EMS Staffing	8 / 50
Police Staffing	30 / 50
Destination Risk	9 / 50
Demand Pressure	48 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	34.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	66.8
Officers per 1,000	1.99
Hospitals at immediate risk	26
Residents 65+	13.4%

Utah

45 / 50

38.21

GAP INDEX SCORE

11.9%

of residents aged 65+

Utah has the youngest population profile in the country by one measure — 11.9% aged 65 or older, the lowest anywhere. Its rural hospitals have held with no closures since 2005 and none at risk. The gap here is a workforce question: 63.3 EMTs and paramedics per 100,000.

Volunteer Dependence	38 / 50
EMS Staffing	7 / 50
Police Staffing	6 / 50
Destination Risk	45 / 50
Demand Pressure	50 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	47.0%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	63.3
Officers per 1,000	1.55
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	11.9%

Vermont

23 / 50

46.23

GAP INDEX SCORE

89.5%

volunteer firefighters

Vermont has the most volunteer-dependent fire service in the country — 89.5% — and is the most rural state at 64.9%. It also records the highest measured EMS staffing anywhere, 152 per 100,000, though that figure represents 790 people in absolute terms.

Volunteer Dependence	1 / 50
EMS Staffing	50 / 50
Police Staffing	9 / 50
Destination Risk	45 / 50
Demand Pressure	5 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	89.5%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	152.0
Officers per 1,000	1.58
Hospitals at immediate risk	0
Residents 65+	21.4%

Virginia

42 / 50

38.91

GAP INDEX SCORE

72.6

EMTs and paramedics per 100,000

Virginia's measured EMS staffing is thin at 72.6 per 100,000, and 45.3% of its firefighters are volunteers. One rural hospital has closed since 2005 with three more at immediate risk, in a state that is 24.4% rural.

Volunteer Dependence	36 / 50
EMS Staffing	13 / 50
Police Staffing	41 / 50
Destination Risk	41 / 50
Demand Pressure	40 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	45.3%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	72.6
Officers per 1,000	2.25
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	16.7%

Washington

11 / 50

51.83

GAP INDEX SCORE

1.14

officers per 1,000

Washington has the lowest officer-per-resident rate in the country at 1.14 per 1,000, and thin measured EMS staffing at 63.1 per 100,000. Six rural hospitals are at immediate risk in a state that is 16.6% rural.

Volunteer Dependence	40 / 50
EMS Staffing	6 / 50
Police Staffing	1 / 50
Destination Risk	29 / 50
Demand Pressure	37 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	40.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	63.1
Officers per 1,000	1.14
Hospitals at immediate risk	6
Residents 65+	16.6%

West Virginia

4 / 50

56.93

GAP INDEX SCORE

85.9%

volunteer firefighters

West Virginia is the third-most volunteer-dependent state in the country at 85.9%, and the third-most rural at 55.4%. More than a fifth of residents — 21% — are 65 or older, and three rural hospitals have closed outright since 2005.

Volunteer Dependence	2 / 50
EMS Staffing	46 / 50
Police Staffing	12 / 50
Destination Risk	12 / 50
Demand Pressure	7 / 50

Volunteer firefighters	85.9%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	112.7
Officers per 1,000	1.64
Hospitals at immediate risk	6
Residents 65+	21.0%

Wisconsin

30 / 50

45.11

GAP INDEX SCORE

68.5%

volunteer firefighters

Wisconsin is 32.9% rural with 68.5% of its firefighters serving as volunteers, and 18.5% of residents aged 65 or older. Six rural hospitals are at immediate risk, though only one has closed since 2005.

Volunteer Dependence	15 / 50
EMS Staffing	36 / 50
Police Staffing	35 / 50
Destination Risk	35 / 50
Demand Pressure	15 / 50
Volunteer firefighters	68.5%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	99.1
Officers per 1,000	2.06
Hospitals at immediate risk	6
Residents 65+	18.5%

Wyoming

27 / 50

45.72

GAP INDEX SCORE

76.6%

volunteer firefighters

Wyoming is 38% rural with 76.6% of its firefighters serving as volunteers. Its rural hospitals have held so far — no closures since 2005 — but three are at immediate risk against a rural population of roughly 220,000.

Volunteer Dependence	8 / 50
EMS Staffing	42 / 50
Police Staffing	40 / 50
Destination Risk	11 / 50
Demand Pressure	30 / 50
Volunteer firefighters	76.6%
EMTs & paramedics per 100,000	107.0
Officers per 1,000	2.23
Hospitals at immediate risk	3
Residents 65+	18.5%

Full Rankings — All 50 States (Rank 1 = widest gap)

1	Kansas	64.32	26	New Jersey	45.86
2	Maine	58.85	27	Wyoming	45.72
3	South Dakota	57.24	28	Delaware	45.53
4	West Virginia	56.93	29	Ohio	45.45
5	Nebraska	56.8	30	Wisconsin	45.11
6	Iowa	56.34	31	Kentucky	44.77
7	Minnesota	55.83	32	Oklahoma	44.61
8	Arkansas	53.73	33	Missouri	44.56
9	Oregon	53.06	34	Arizona	43.82
10	Michigan	52.29	35	Indiana	43.22
11	Washington	51.83	36	California	42.97
12	Connecticut	50.6	37	Alaska	42.23
13	Alabama	50.22	38	Texas	41.17
14	Florida	50.04	39	New Mexico	40.62
15	Idaho	49.76	40	Tennessee	40.6
16	Montana	49.74	41	North Carolina	40.34
17	Hawaii	48.95	42	Virginia	38.91
18	Rhode Island	48.45	43	Colorado	38.5
19	Pennsylvania	48.3	44	Illinois	38.43
20	New Hampshire	47.65	45	Utah	38.21
21	North Dakota	47.2	46	New York	36.36
22	Nevada	46.96	47	South Carolina	35.76
23	Vermont	46.23	48	Georgia	35.72
24	Maryland	46.18	49	Louisiana	35.35
25	Mississippi	45.88	50	Massachusetts	32.45

WHAT THIS MEANS

Kansas has the widest gap in the country almost entirely because of one thing: more hospitals at immediate risk of closing than any other state. On the other four dimensions it ranks mid-pack or better. Its neighbor Iowa is the reverse — sound on hospitals, thin on volunteers, staffing, and demand. Same tier, opposite causes.

The gap isn't one shortfall, it's five — and they don't overlap neatly. Your state's overall rank matters less than which dimension it's thin on.

WHERE THIS CAME FROM

We're writing a book called *The Zeroth Responder*. The argument: three independent forces — an aging population, tightening budgets, and systems in decline — are converging to widen the gap between calling 911 and help arriving. This brief measures the gap. The book is about navigating it.

ONE THING BEFORE YOU GO

Hit reply and tell us your city. We're mapping where this hits hardest.

The Gap Index scores all 50 states on five weighted dimensions: destination risk — rural hospital closures and at-risk facilities (25%); EMS staffing (20%); fire-service volunteer dependency (20%); demand pressure from population aging (20%); and police staffing (15%). Full methodology and underlying data: [\[URL\]](#)