



Pennsylvania  
Department of Health

6/23/25

# The State of Rural Health in Pennsylvania

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Secretary of Health

Central Pennsylvania Regional Rural Health Summit

# Outline

1. Review Department of Health (DOH) roles
2. Explore health indicators for participating counties and compare them to PA
3. Review themes from community health needs assessments done by health systems in the region
4. Discuss DOH's work to improve rural health in PA

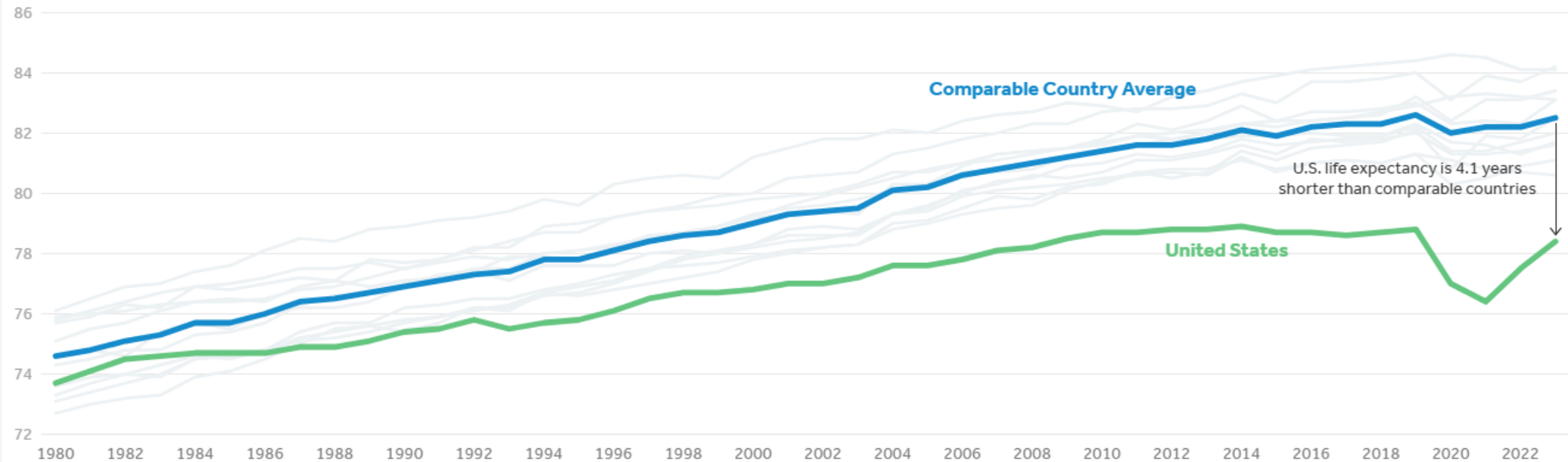
# Roles of DOH

- Study the distribution and causes of disease (epidemiology)
- Educate the public on healthy behaviors and disease prevention
- Prevent and respond to outbreaks and health emergencies
- Provide limited clinical services (e.g., state health centers)
- Assure safe delivery of quality health care (e.g., regulations)
- Coordinate emergency medical services (EMS)
- Provide Vital Records services (birth, death and fetal)
- Direct Medical Marijuana Program



# Life Expectancy: US vs. comparable countries

Life expectancy at birth, in years, 1980-2023



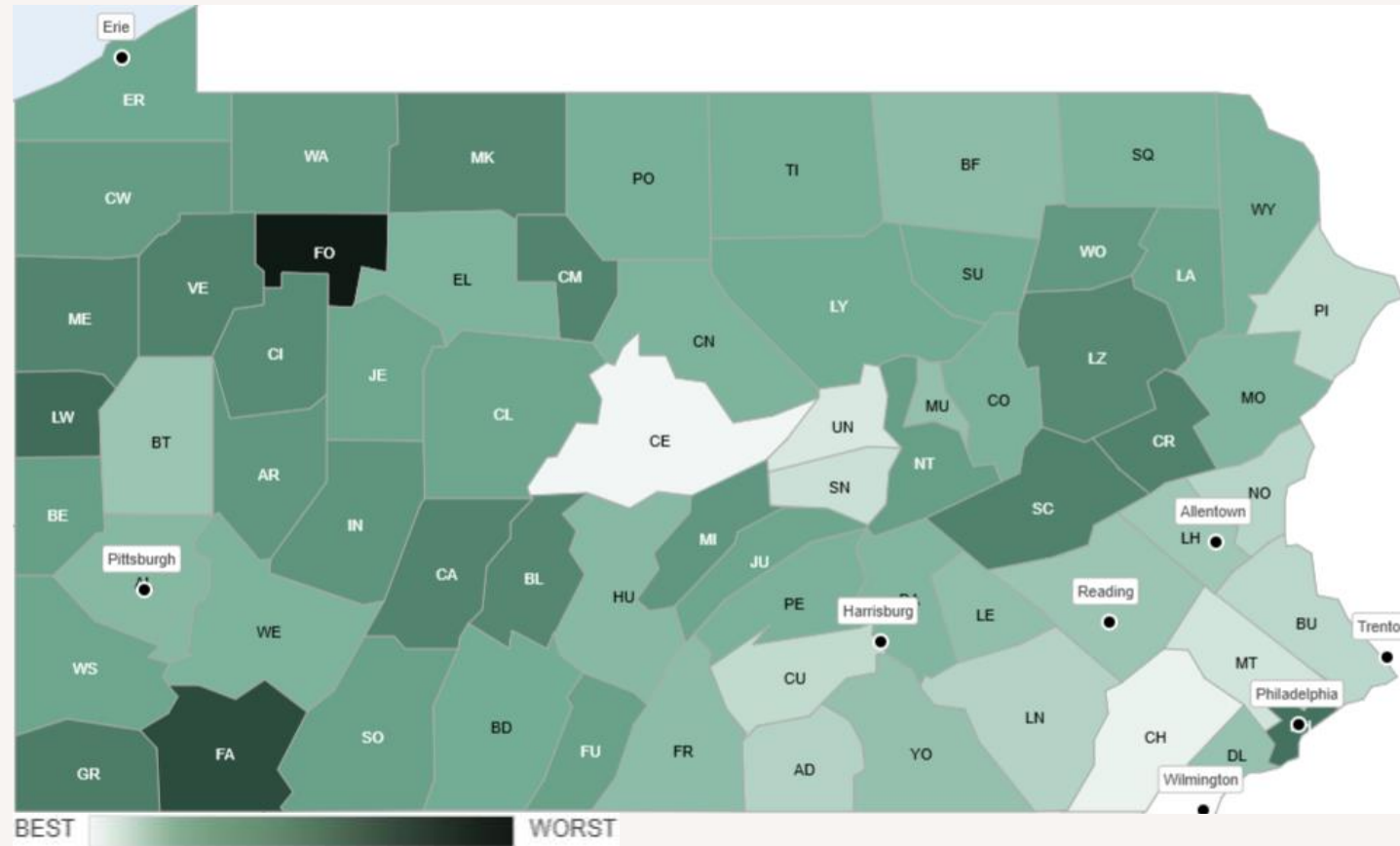
Notes: Comparable countries include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.K. 2023 U.K. life expectancy data is only for England and Wales. See Methods [section](#) of "How does U.S. life expectancy compare to other countries?"

Source: KFF analysis of [CDC](#), [OECD](#), [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), [German Federal Statistical Office](#), [Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare](#), [Statistics Canada](#), and [U.K. Office for National Statistics](#) data • [Get the data](#) • [PNG](#)

Peterson-KFF  
**Health System Tracker**



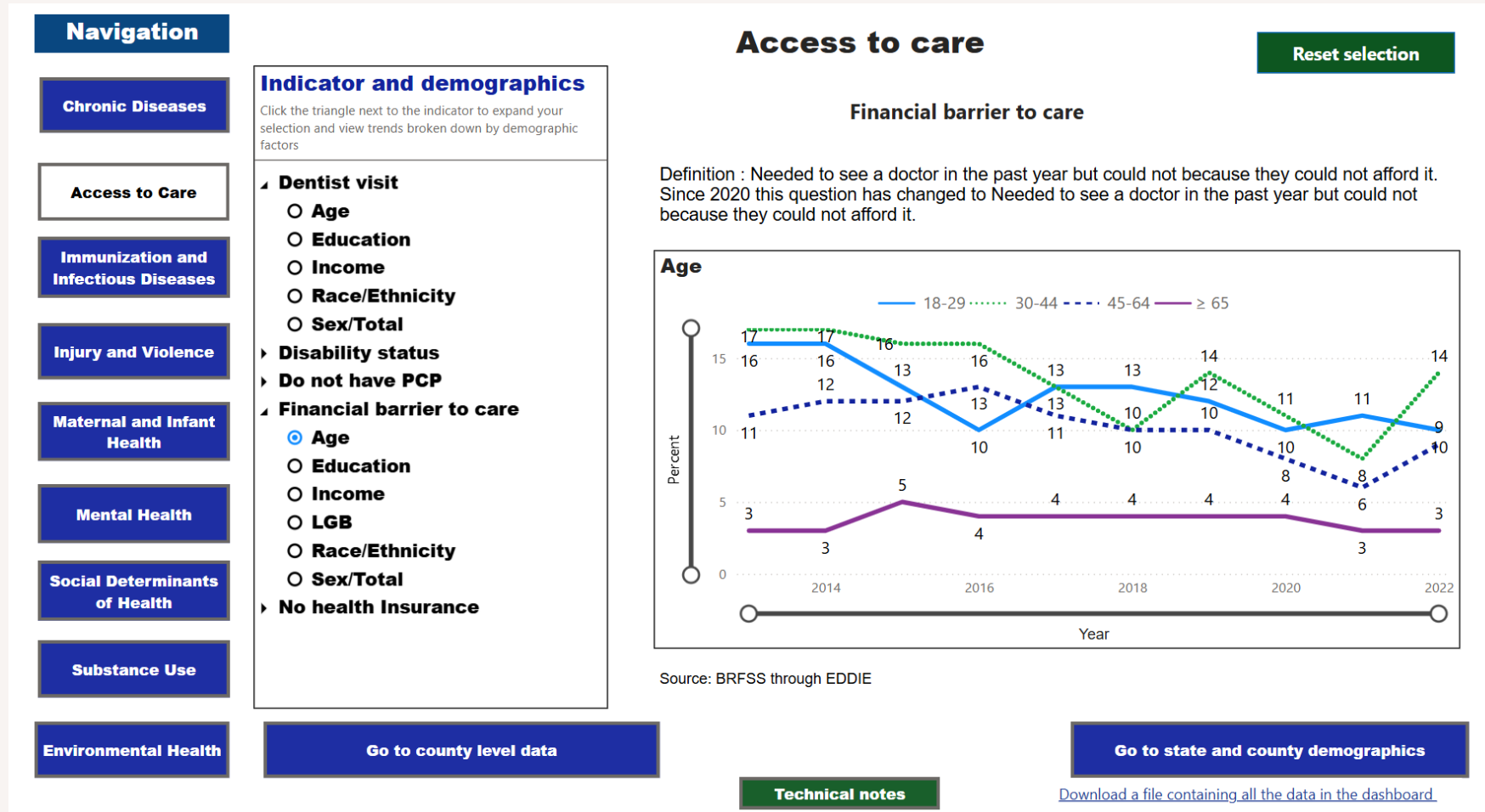
# Life expectancy varies greatly across PA



Average life expectancy in PA = 76.9 years (2020-22)

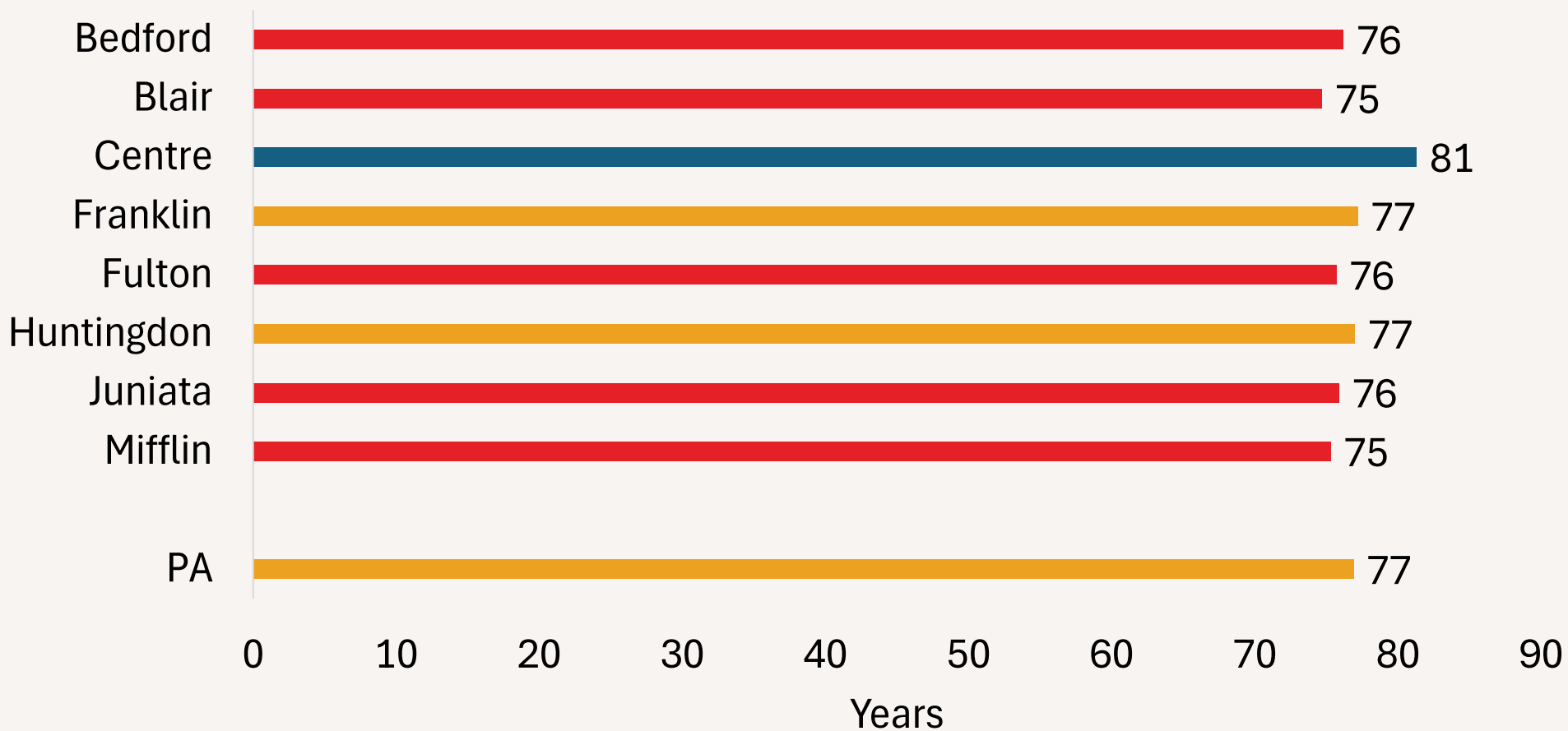


# State Health Assessment (SHA) gives us a picture of health across PA



# Regional Health Indicators

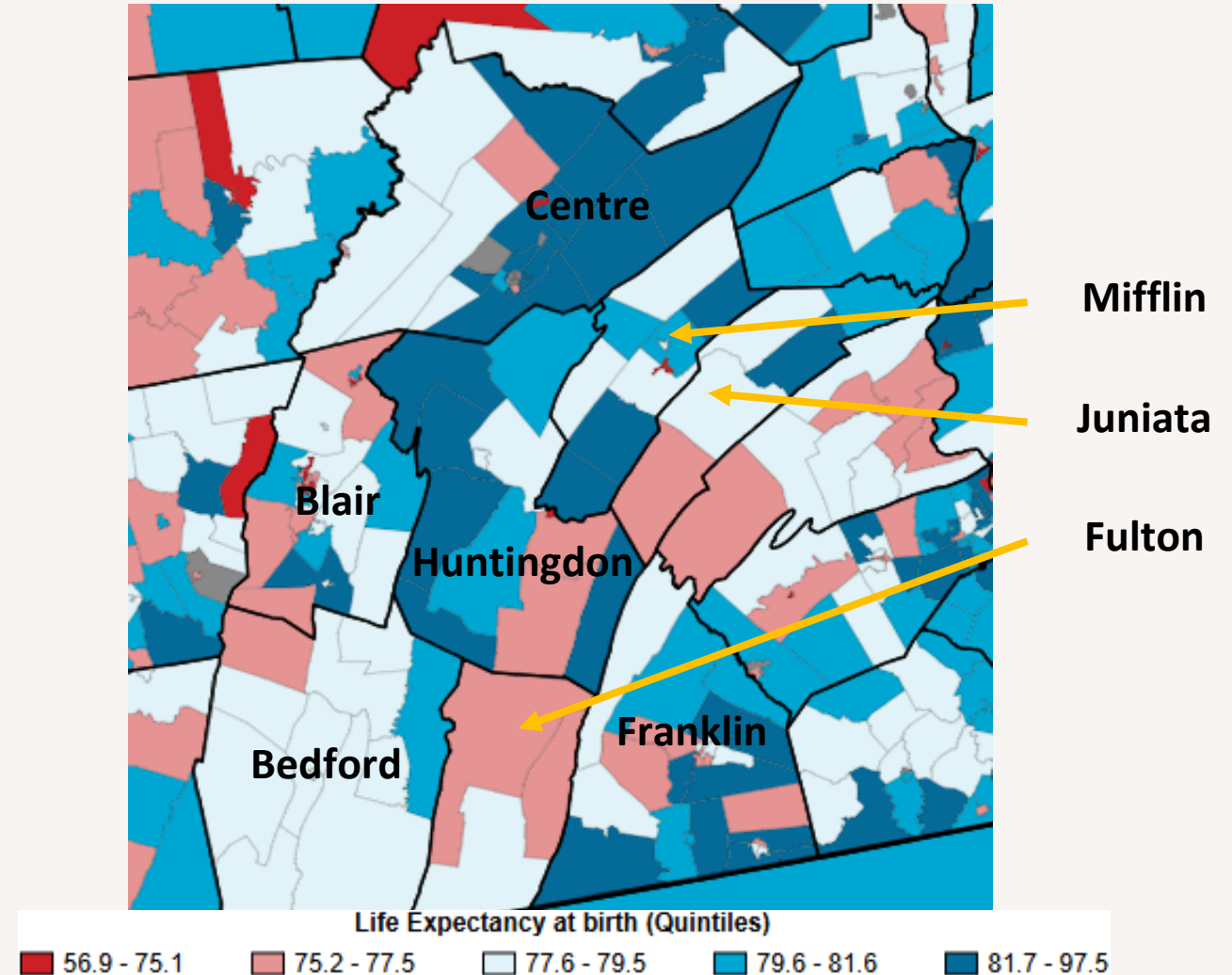
# Life expectancy in this region varies by 6 years



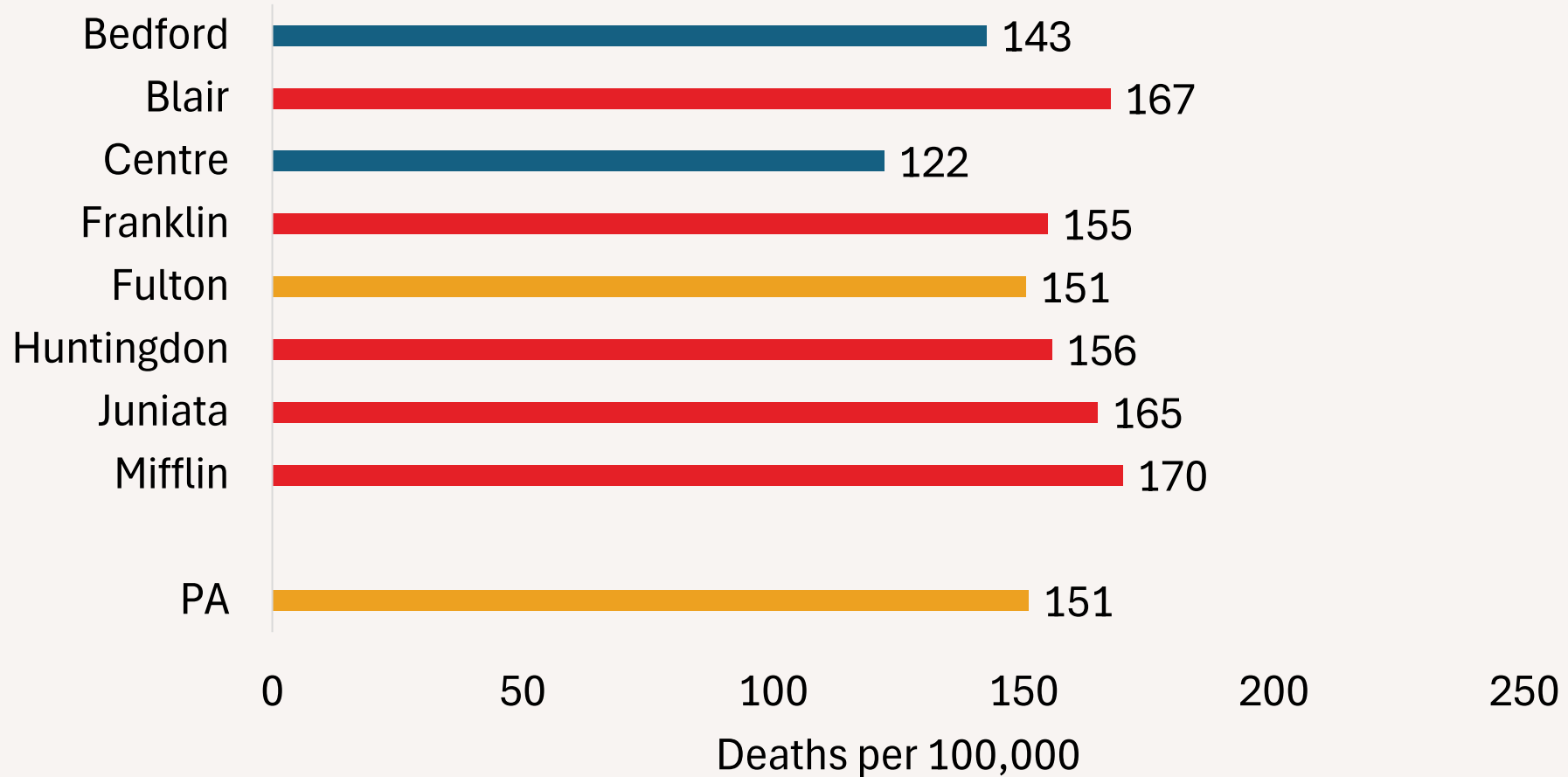


# Differences by census tract more pronounced

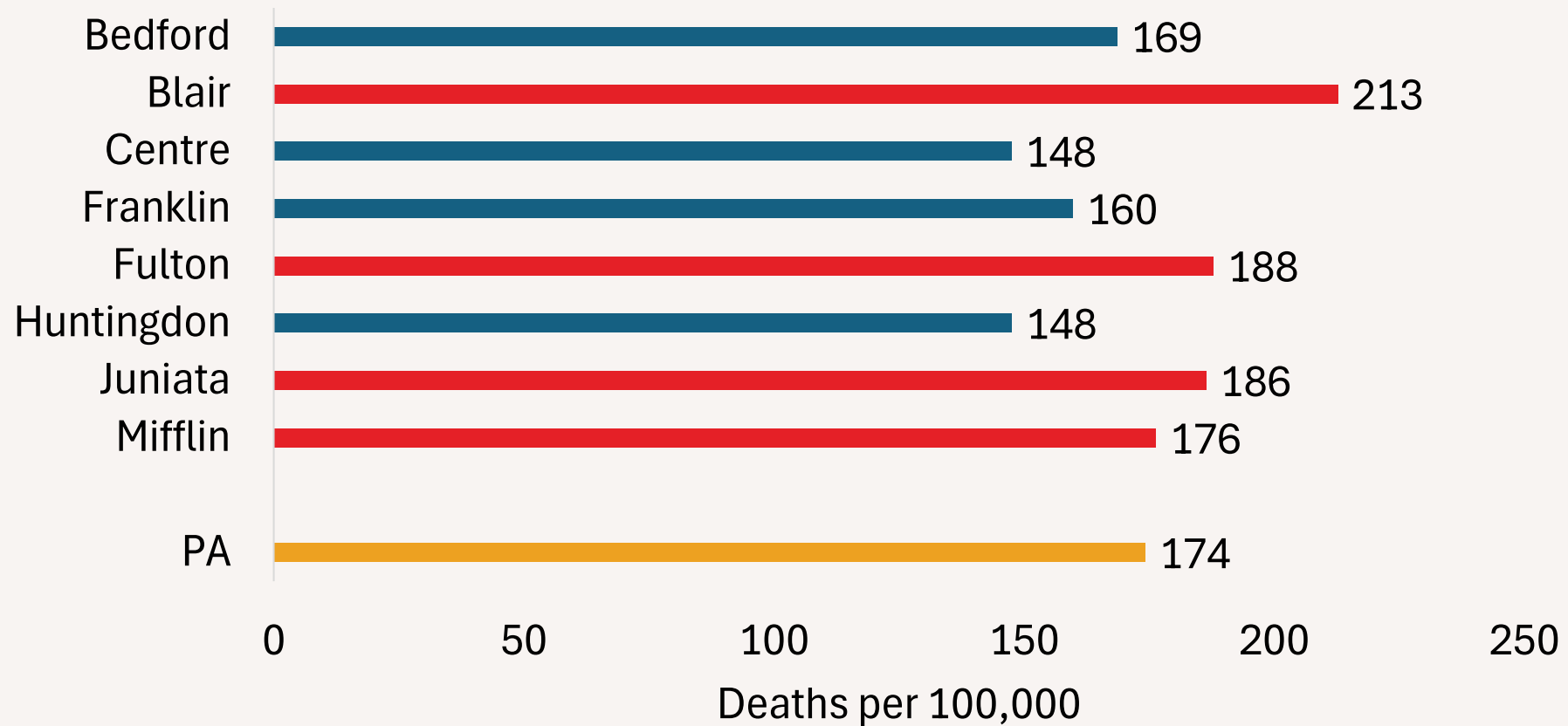
LE by census tract  
ranges 72–89 years



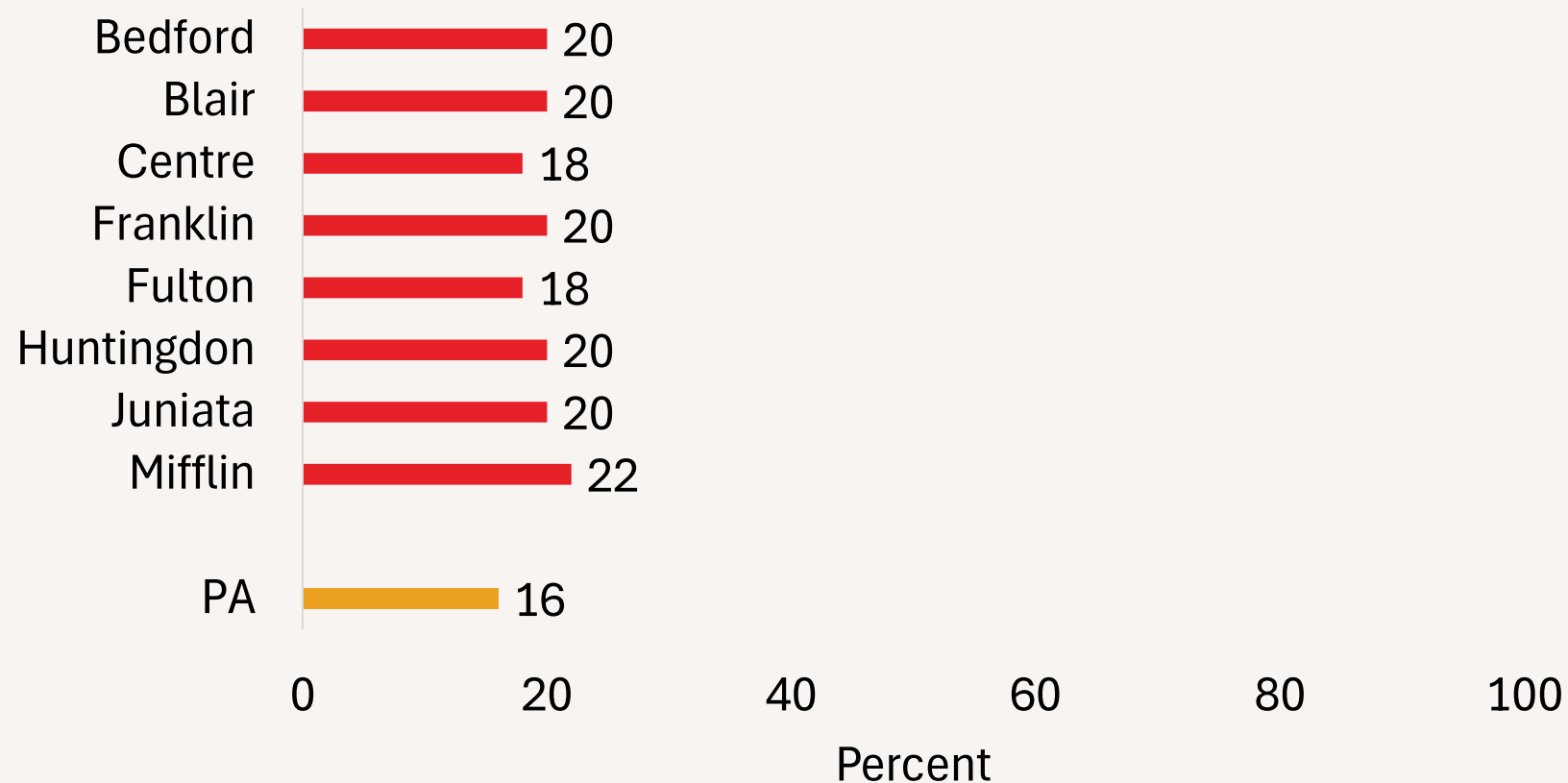
# Cancer deaths per 100,000 people, 2019–2023



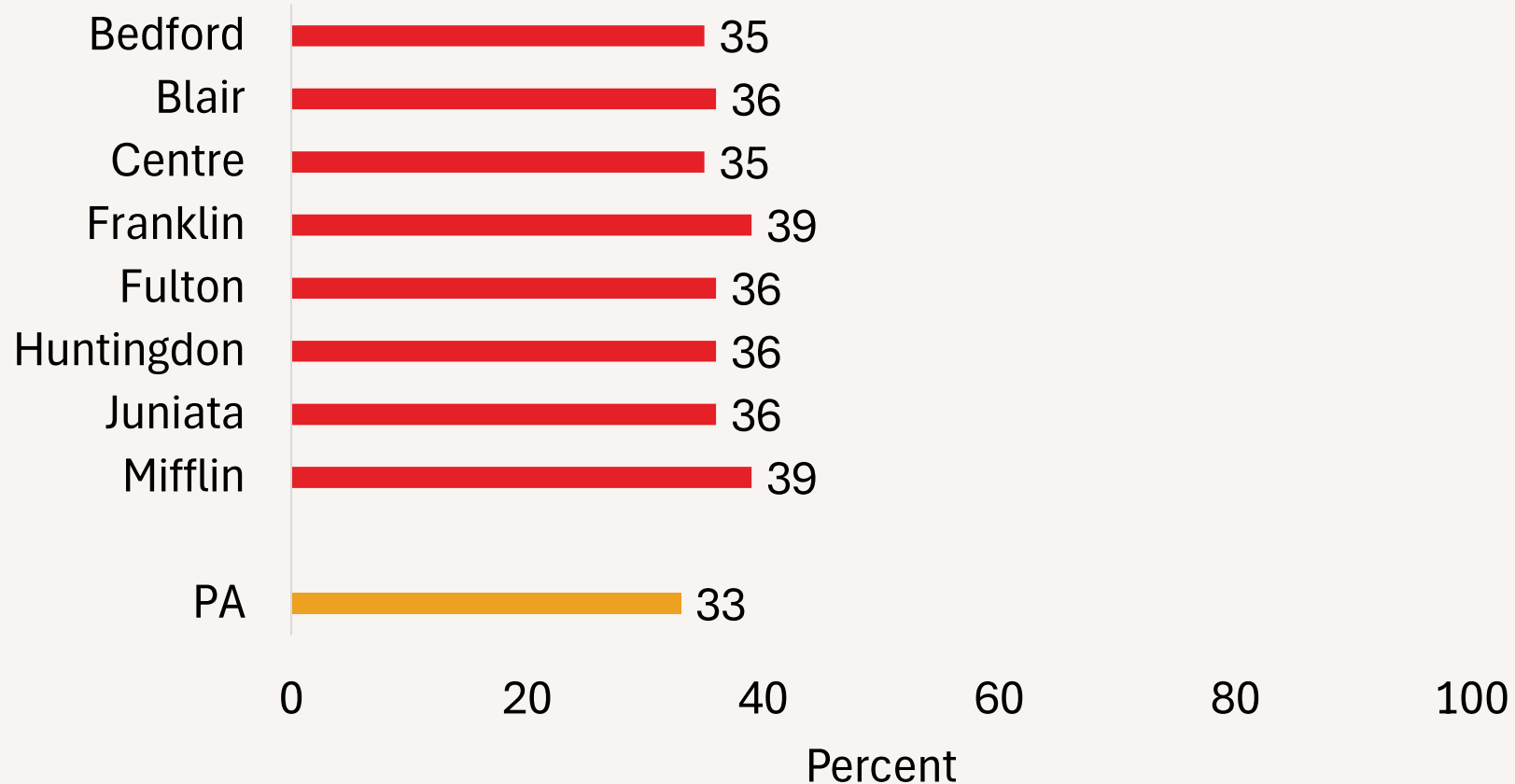
# Cardiovascular deaths per 100,000 people, 2019–2023



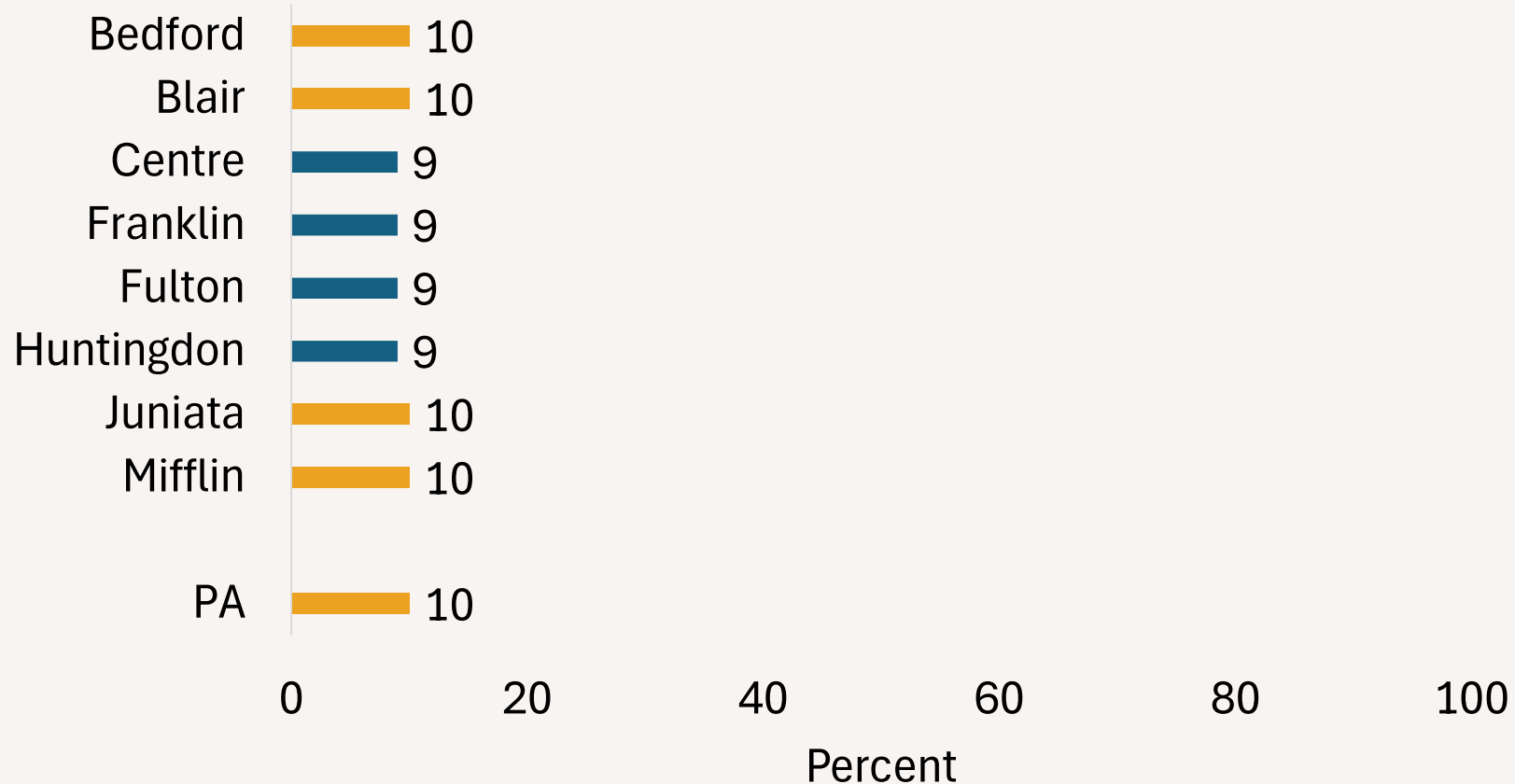
# Cigarette smoking prevalence among adults, 2022



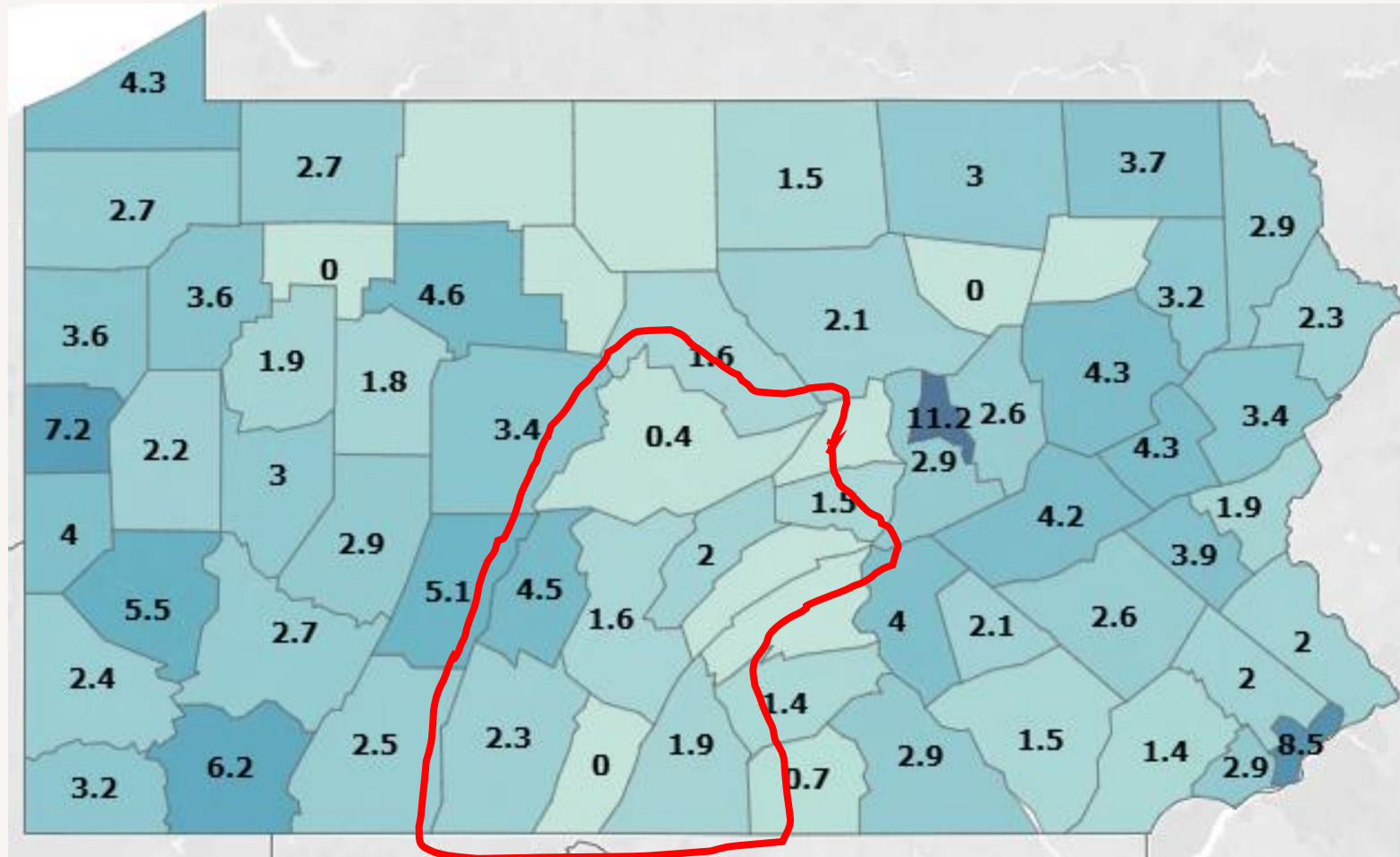
# Obesity prevalence among adults, 2022



# Diabetes prevalence among adults, 2022



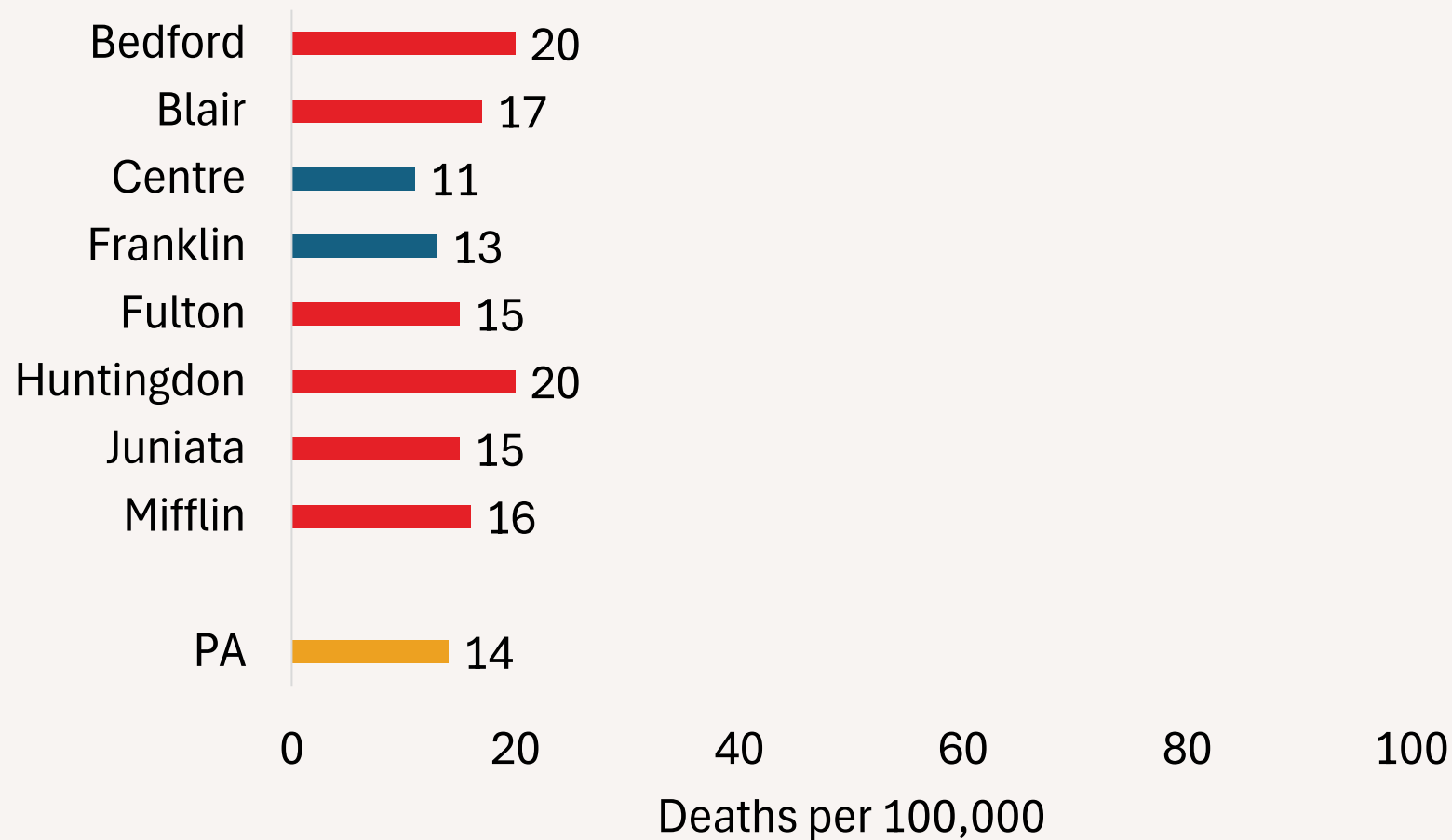
# Drug overdose deaths per 10,000 people, 2023



PA average:  
3.6 deaths per  
10,000 people

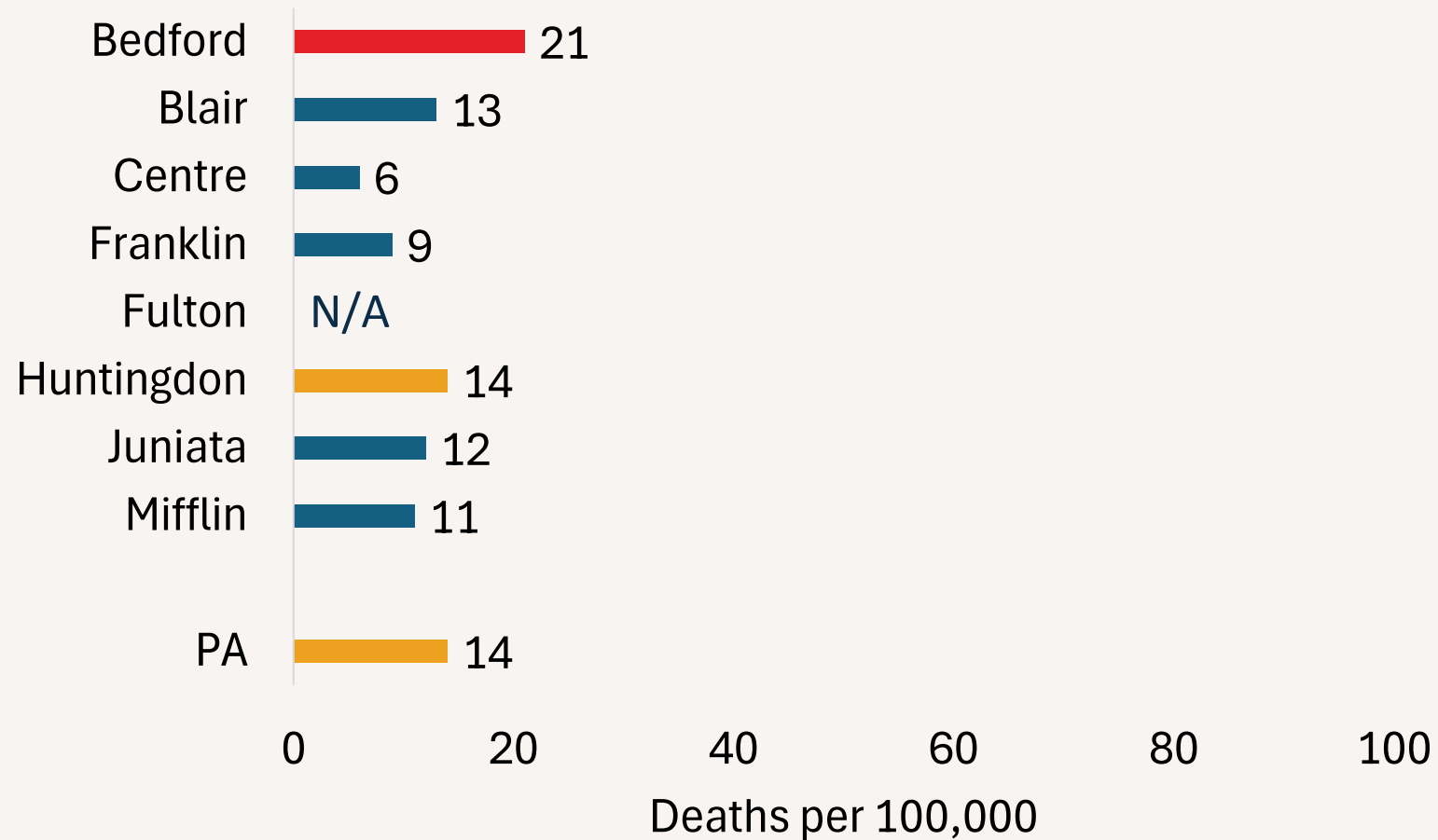


# Suicides per 100,000 people, 2018–2022

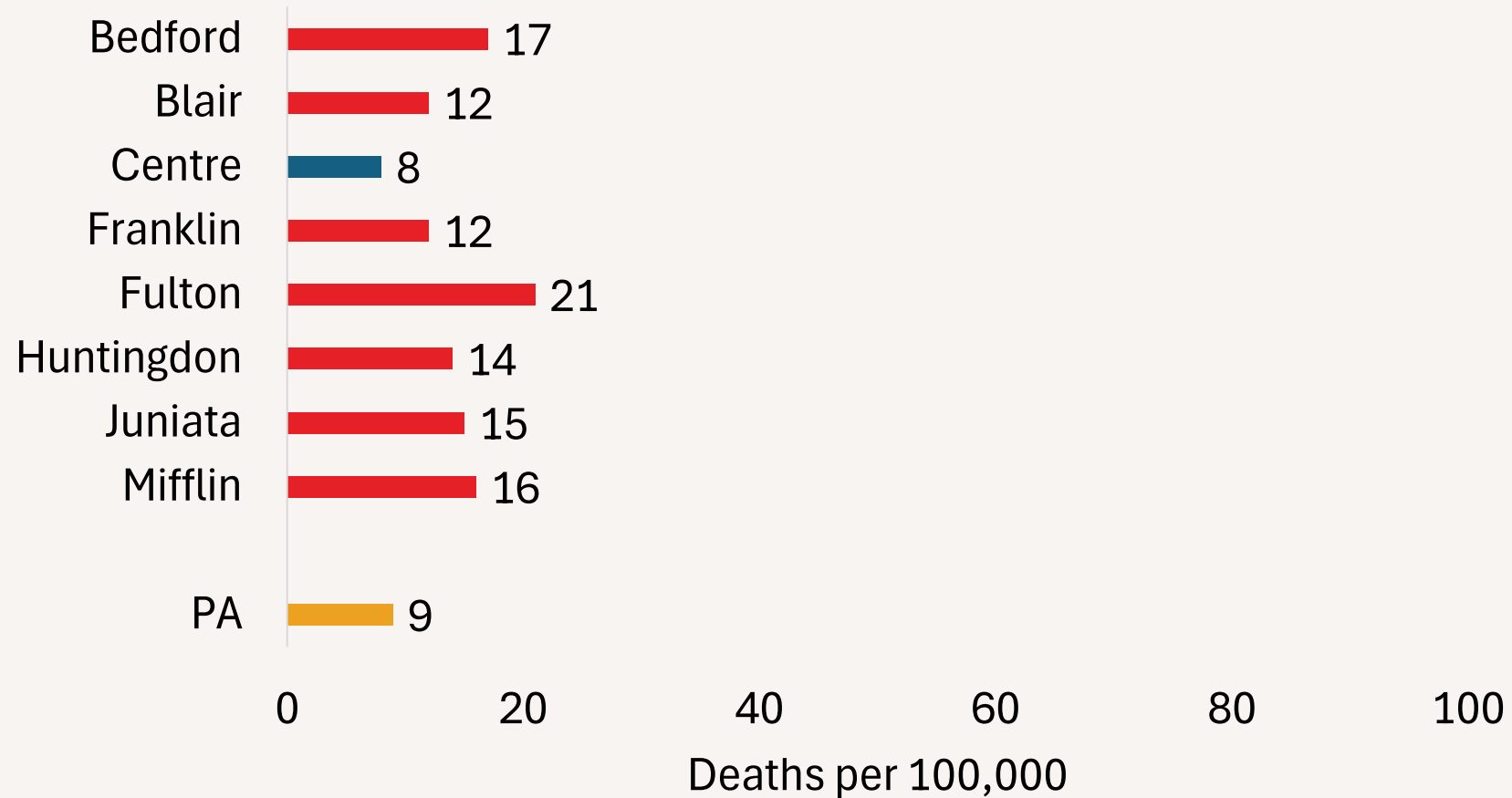




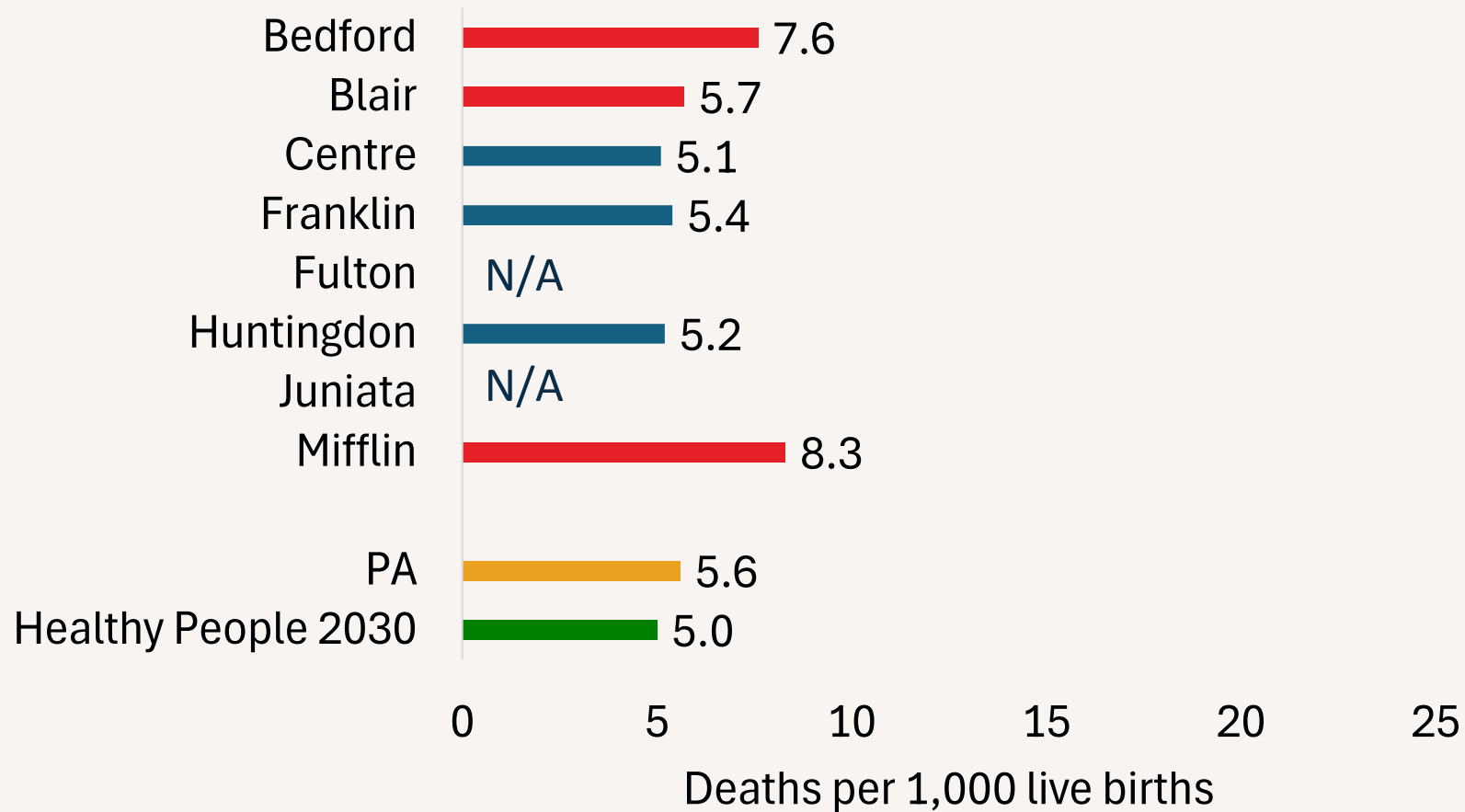
# Firearm deaths per 100,000 people, 2018–2022



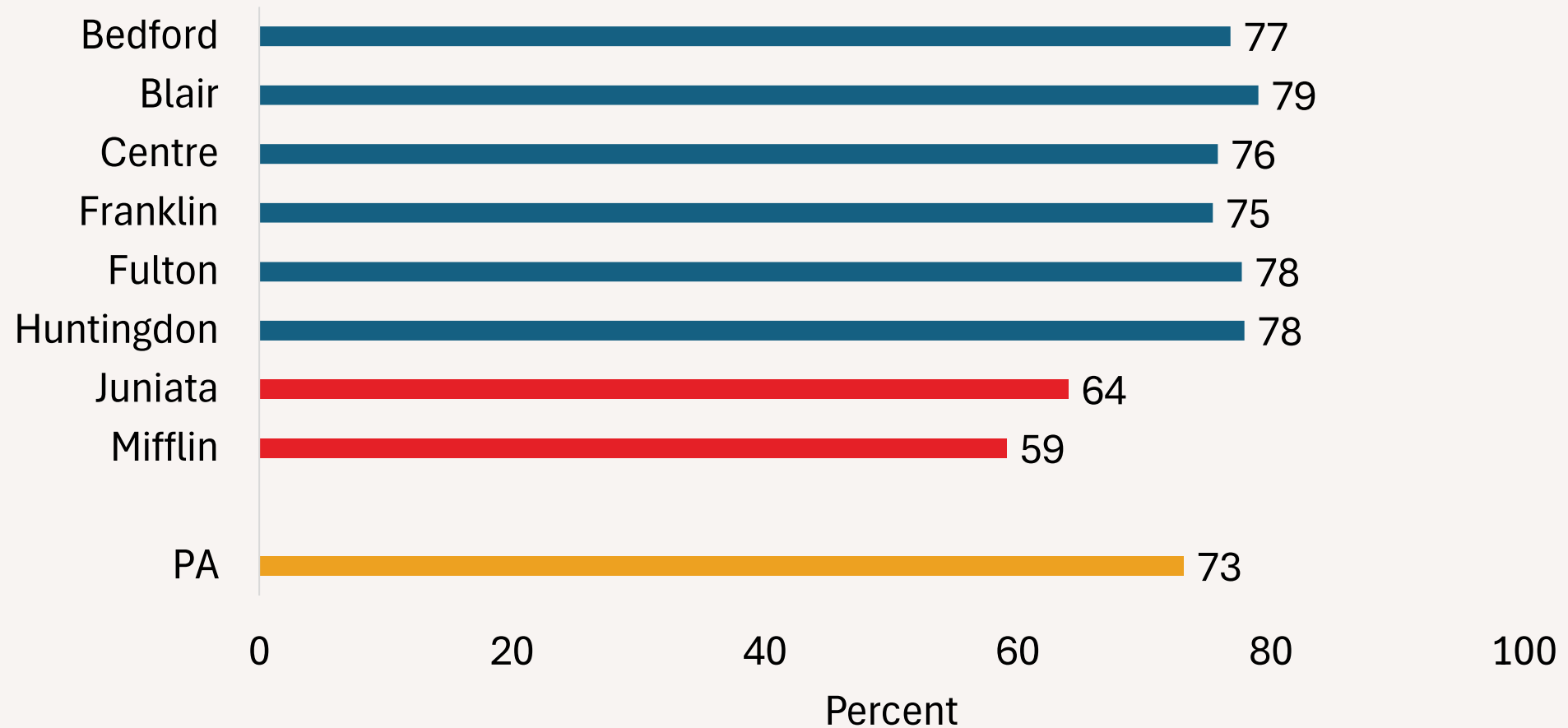
# Motor vehicle crash deaths per 100,000 people, 2016–2022



# Infant deaths per 1,000 live births, 2019–2023

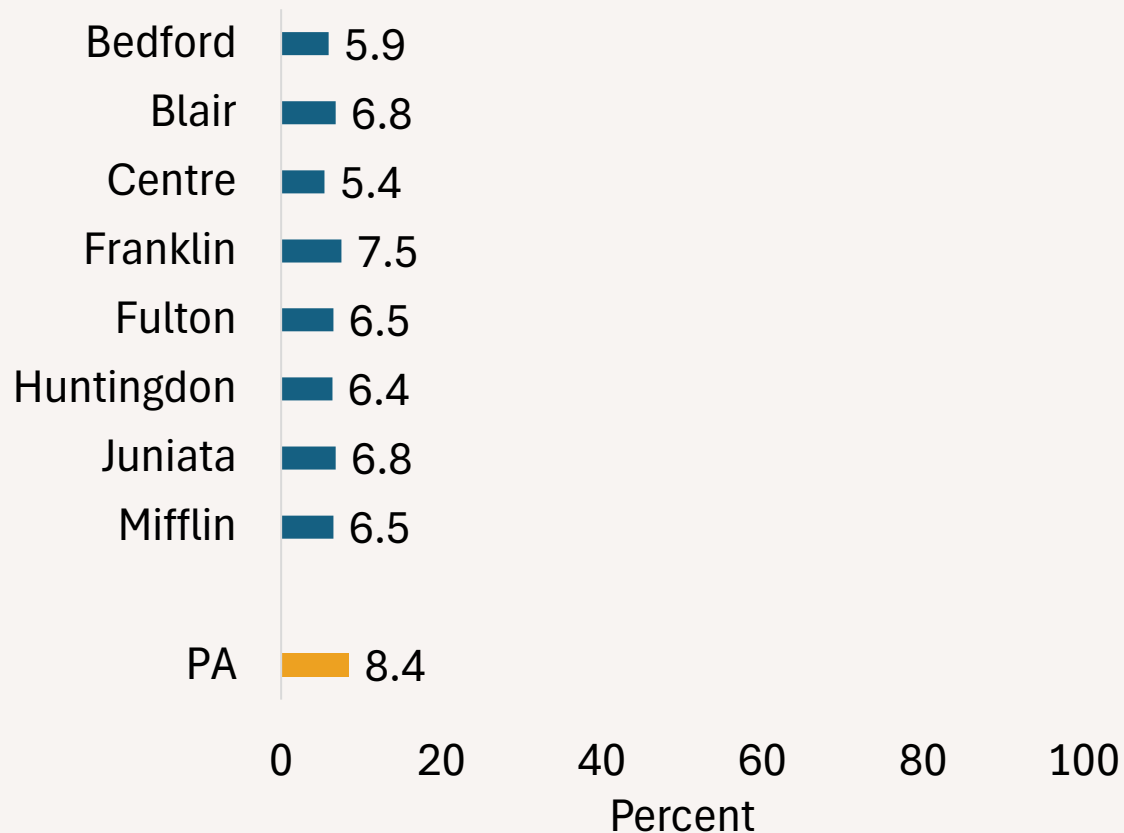


# Prenatal care in 1<sup>st</sup> trimester, 2019–2023

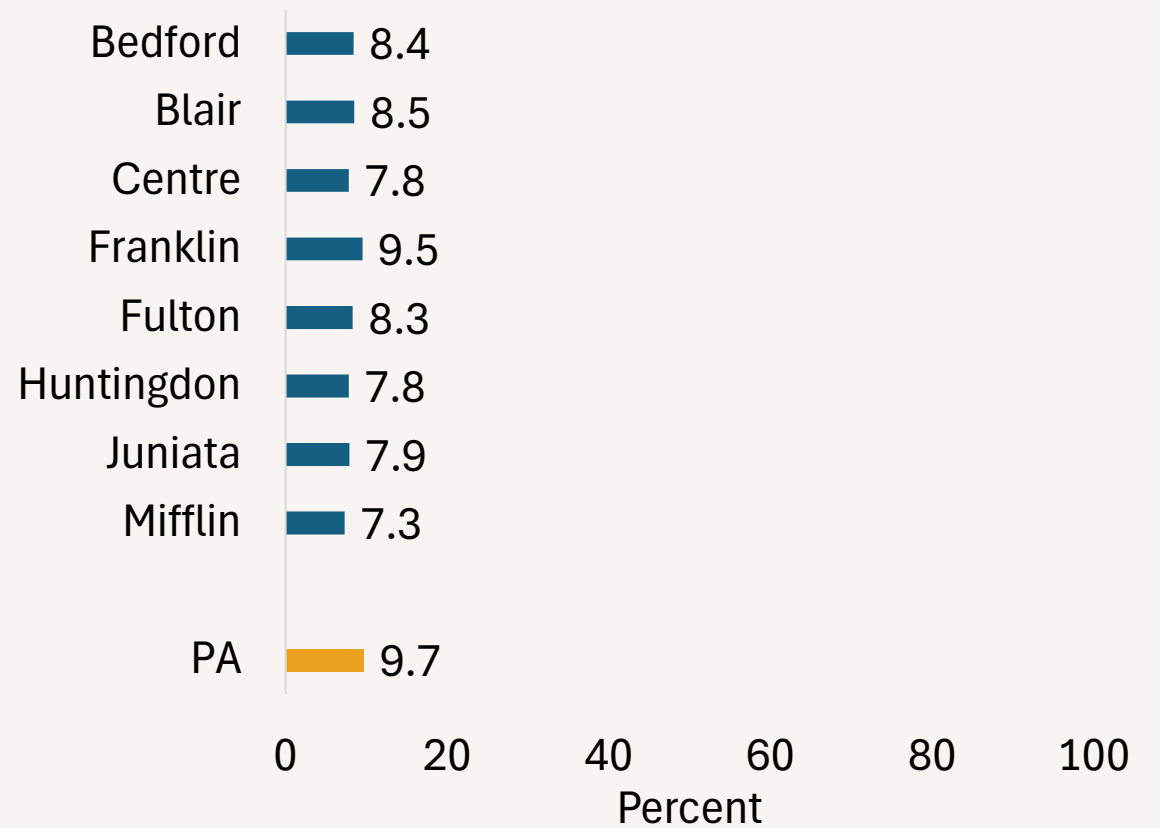


# Birth statistics, 2019–2023

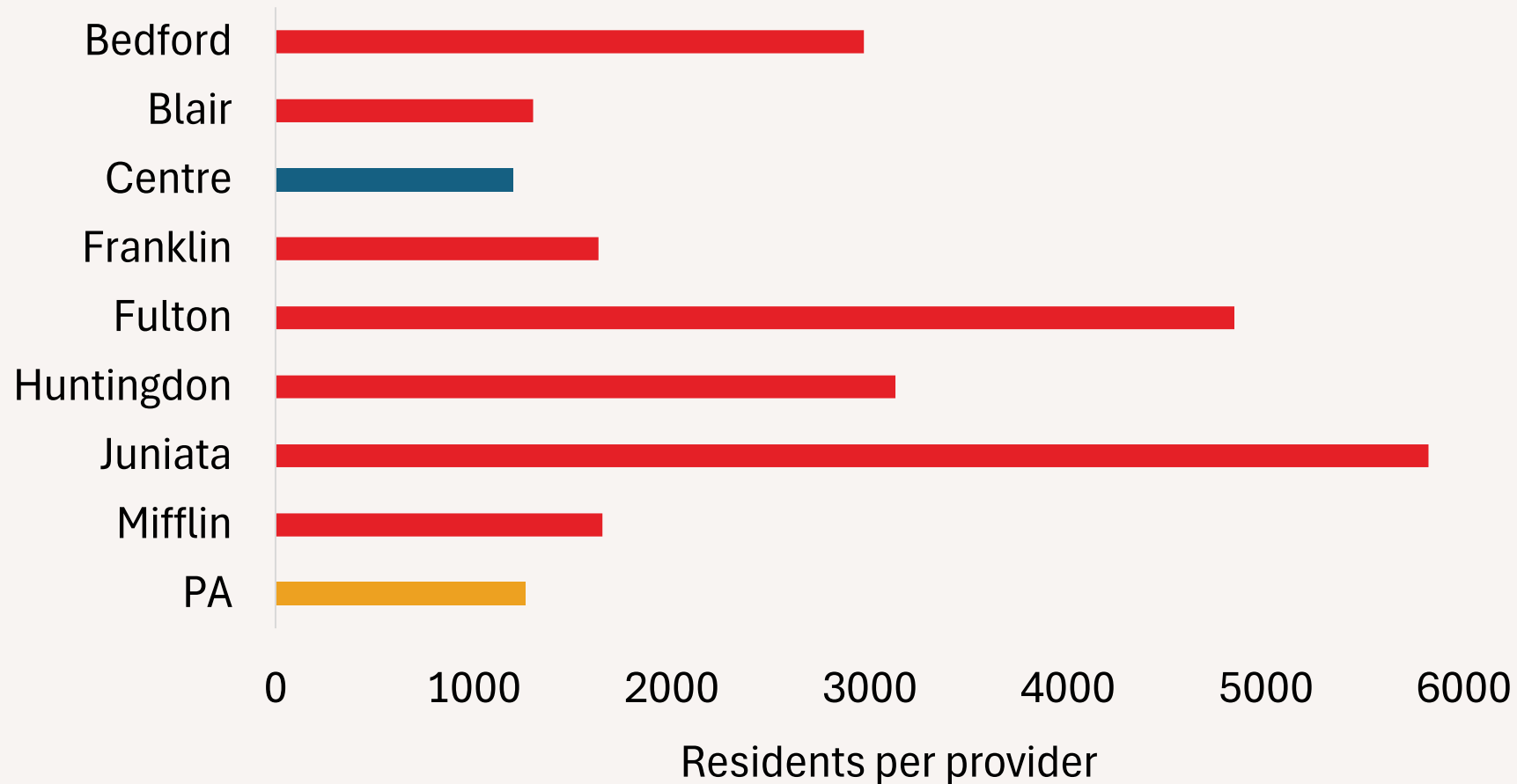
## Low birth weight



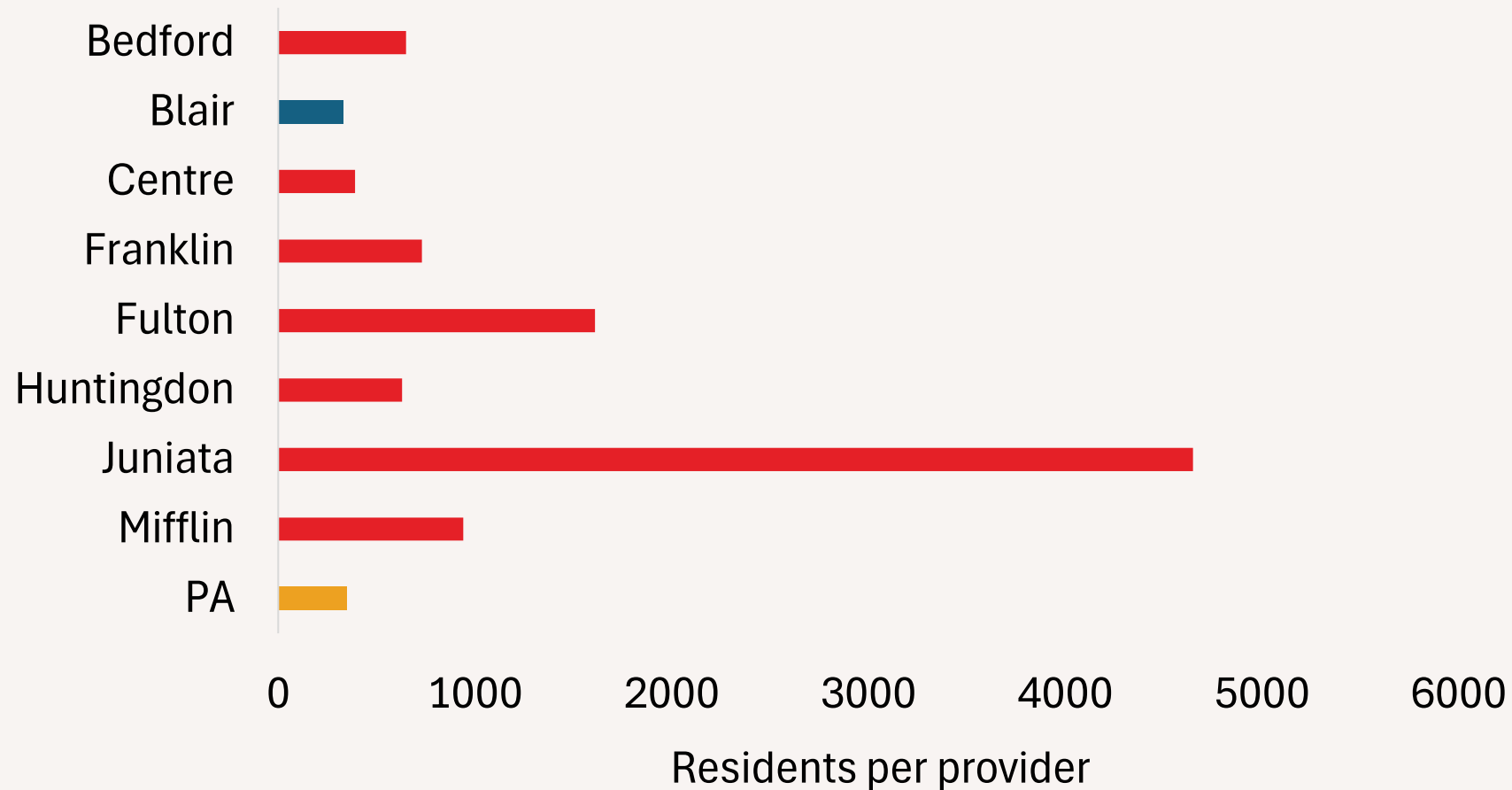
## Preterm birth



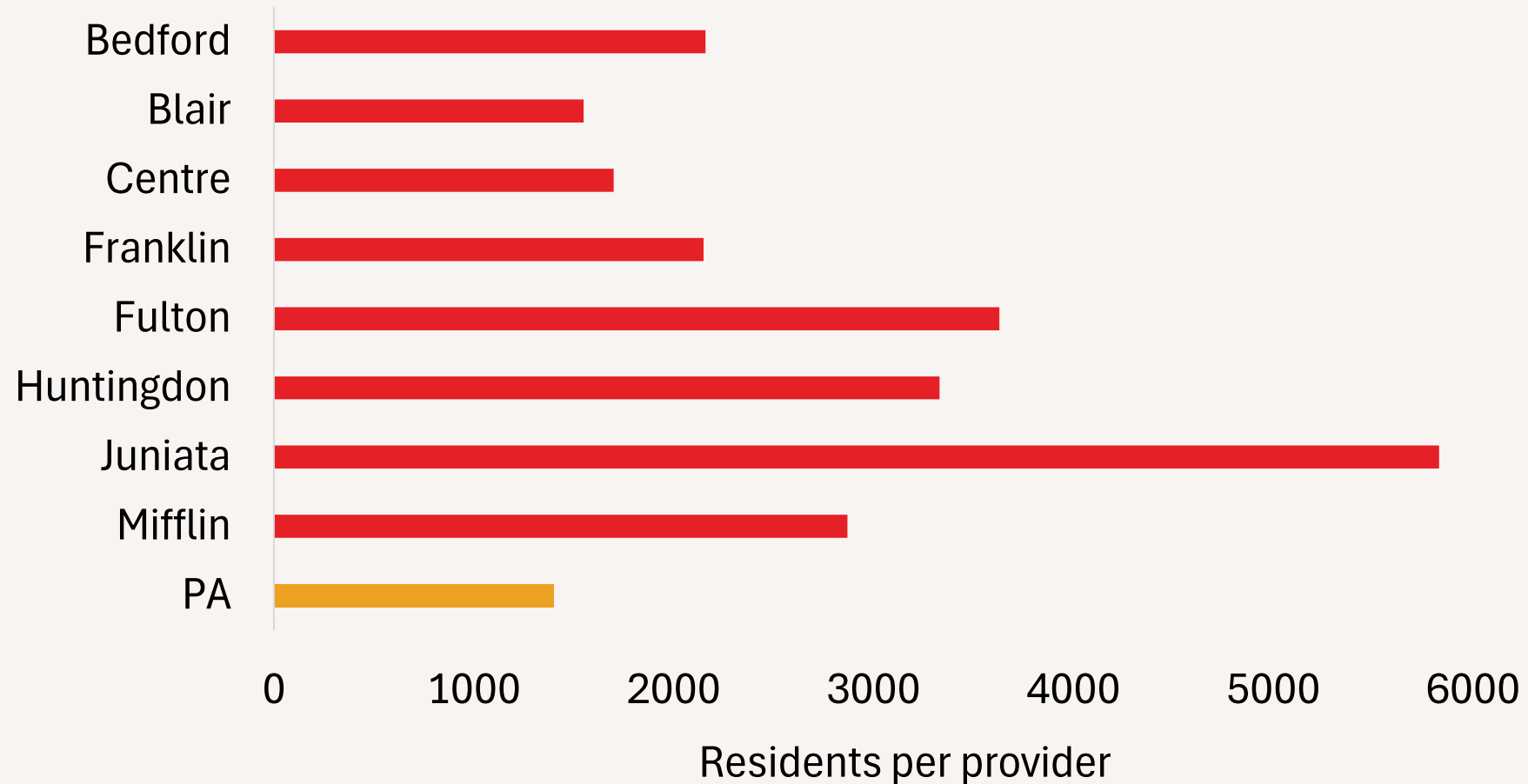
# Resident to primary care provider ratio, 2021



# Resident to behavioral health provider ratio, 2024



# Resident to dentist ratio, 2022





# Key takeaways from health indicators



# Community health needs assessments

Health System	Community Health Priorities	Year
Conemaugh Nason Medical Center	Promoting healthy lifestyle; <b>alcohol/substance abuse</b> ; <b>mental health</b> ; smoking, tobacco, and e-cigarettes/vaping; poverty; youth connections	<a href="#"><u>2022</u></a>
Fulton County Medical Center	<b>Access to care</b> ; <b>drug and alcohol abuse</b> ; healthy behaviors; <b>mental health</b> ; poverty; senior housing, assisted living, and housing; transportation	<a href="#"><u>2022</u></a>
Geisinger Lewistown	<b>Access to care, behavioral health, chronic disease prevention and management</b>	<a href="#"><u>2024</u></a>
Mount Nittany Health	<b>Chronic disease, behavioral health and substance use disorders</b>	<a href="#"><u>2022</u></a>
Penn Highlands Huntingdon & State College	<b>Access to care, behavioral health, chronic diseases/conditions</b>	<a href="#"><u>2024</u></a>
Penn Highlands Tyrone	<b>Access to care, behavioral health, chronic diseases/conditions</b>	<a href="#"><u>2024</u></a>
UPMC Altoona & Bedford	<b>Chronic disease management, behavioral health, access to care</b> , prevention and community-wide healthy living	<a href="#"><u>2022</u></a>
WellSpan Chambersburg & Waynesboro	Care for all, <b>mental well-being</b> , healthy communities, and social determinants of health	<a href="#"><u>2022</u></a>



# Rural health challenges in PA

Workforce

Financial  
models

EMS

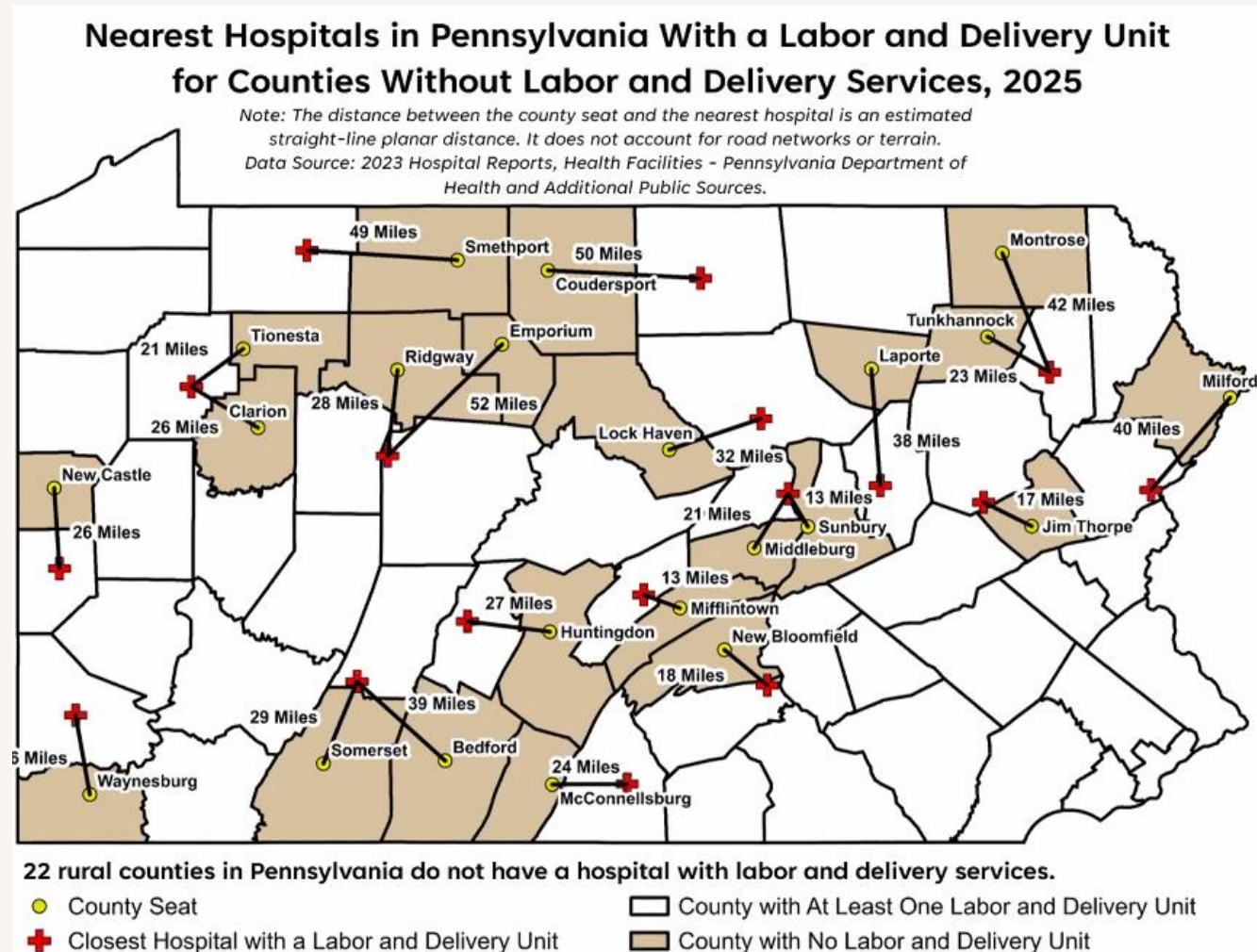
Opioid  
epidemic

Behavioral  
health

Distance to  
care



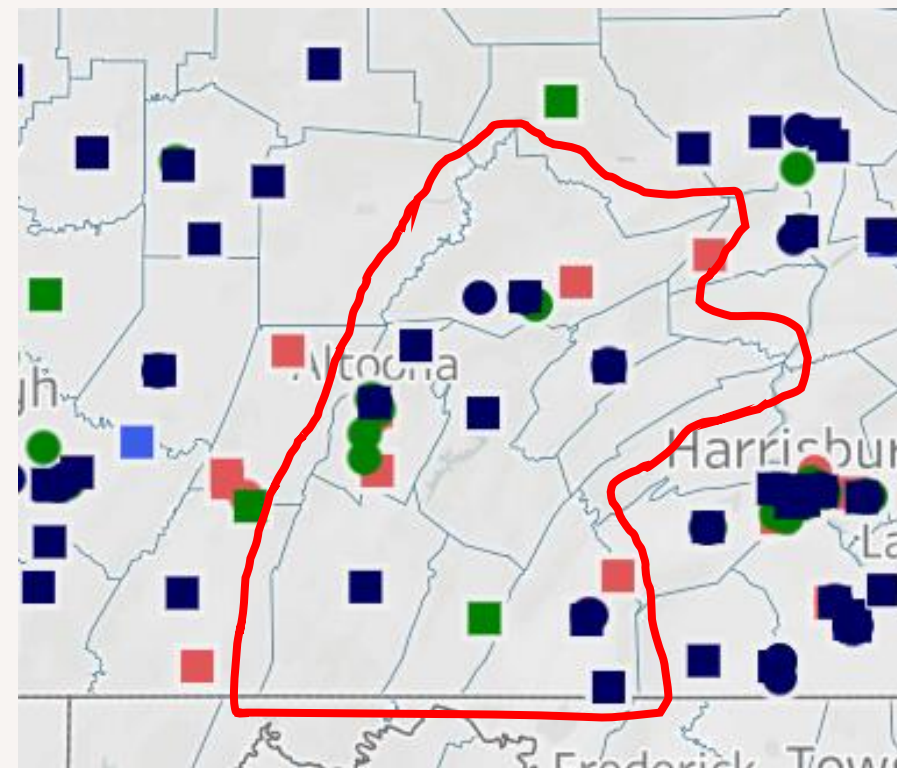
# Maternity Care Deserts Scattered Across PA





# Addressing rural health needs in PA

- DOH Primary Care Office
- EMS workforce
- Hospital regulations and flexibilities
- Regional rural health care summits
- Work with RHRCA on payment models



## Ownership Type

- Health System
- Independent
- Investor Owned
- State Owned

## Facility Type

- ASC
- Hospital



# Mobile Clinics



# State Health Centers

- **Bedford County:** 130 Vondersmith Ave., Suite A, Bedford, PA, 15522
- **Blair County:** 615 Howard Ave., Suite 101, Altoona, PA, 16601
- **Centre County:** 246 West Hamilton Ave., State College, PA, 16801
- **Franklin County:** 375 Floral Ave., Suite 101, Chambersburg, PA, 17201
- **Fulton County:** 182 Buchanan Trail, Suite 160, McConnellsburg, PA, 17233
- **Huntingdon County:** 6311 Margy Drive, Suite 1, Huntingdon, PA, 16652
- **Juniata County:** 809 Market St., Port Royal, PA, 17082
- **Mifflin County:** 21 S. Brown St., Suite 2A, Lewistown, PA, 17044



# DOH Resources

- [County health profiles](#)
- [Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange \(EDDIE\)](#)
- [Health statistics home page](#)
- [Health facility annual surveys](#)
- [State Health Assessment \(SHA\)](#) and [dashboard](#)
- [State Health Improvement Plan \(SHIP\)](#) and [dashboard](#)





# Conclusions

- Health indicators vary significantly compared to state average for 8 counties
- DOH plays critical role in advancing health across Commonwealth
- DOH efforts to improve rural health include
  - Workforce initiatives
  - Improving maternal and child health
  - Modernizing and improving flexibility in health care regulations
- Takes all of us working together to develop effective and lasting solutions

# Thank you



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