

COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING RATES CONTINUE TO FALL BEHIND IN FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTERS SERVING MAJORITY HISPANIC OR MAJORITY BLACK PATIENTS

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Introduction: National data suggest that racial and ethnic disparities in colorectal cancer (CRC) screening are decreasing, reflecting success of equity-driven initiatives across the United States. However, there is a paucity of data on CRC screening trends in low-income and underinsured populations such as those at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). To evaluate national progress towards equity in this setting, we assessed FQHC CRC screening rates by race/ethnicity.

Methods: Using Uniform Data System (2014-2022) data, we assessed annual CRC screening rates at FQHCs for patients ages 50-74, and stratified FQHCs by majority race/ethnicity group served (racial/ethnic group with highest proportion of patients). We modeled CRC screening rate trends by race/ethnicity group over the study period using linear regression, and then used the Chow test to assess for significant differences in trends between groups.

Results: In 2022 there were 1,281 FQHCs and 7,016,181 patients eligible for CRC screening. The overall median FQHC CRC screening rate was 30.0% in 2014 and 41.2% in 2022 (Figure). Median CRC screening rates in 2022 were highest in FQHCs serving majority non-Hispanic White (NHW) patients (n=601 FQHCs; 44.0% screening rate), followed by majority Hispanic FQHCs (n=399, 39.9%) and majority non-Hispanic Black (NHB) FQHCs (n=225, 36.4%) (Table). Median overall CRC screening rates at majority NHB FQHCs were significantly lower than in majority NHW FQHCs over the entire study period; these differences were significant every year except 2015 (Figure). From 2014 to 2022, overall CRC screening rates increased 1.29% annually. Majority NHW FQHCs had a significantly higher annual screening rate increase compared to the overall increase (1.75% vs 1.29% per year; $p<0.01$, Chow test). Majority NHB FQHCs had a significantly lower annual increase compared to majority NHW FQHCs (0.98% vs 1.75% per year; $p<0.01$) but did not significantly differ from overall FQHCs (0.98% vs 1.29% per year; $p=0.14$). Majority Hispanic FQHCs had a significantly lower annual screening rate increase relative to overall FQHCs (0.82% vs 1.29% per year; $p<0.01$) and majority NHW FQHCs (0.82% vs 1.75% per year; $p<0.01$); this did not significantly differ from majority NHB FQHCs (0.82% vs 0.98% per year; $p=0.54$).

Discussion: In safety-net settings, CRC screening rates improved only modestly from 2014 to 2022, and increases varied by majority race/ethnicity served. Majority NHB and majority Hispanic FQHCs had significantly lower screening rates than majority NHW FQHCs. Furthermore, screening rates at majority NHB FQHCs and majority Hispanic FQHCs improved significantly slower than in majority NHW FQHCs. Our findings support a need for continued efforts to address persistent disparities in FQHCs despite ongoing national efforts to close these gaps.

Figure. (A) Annual median colorectal cancer screening rates in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) from 2014 to 2022 by majority race/ethnicity group served. (B) Difference in median colorectal cancer screening rates in FQHCs serving majority non-Hispanic White patients versus FQHCs serving majority non-Hispanic Black patients and majority Hispanic patients, respectively.

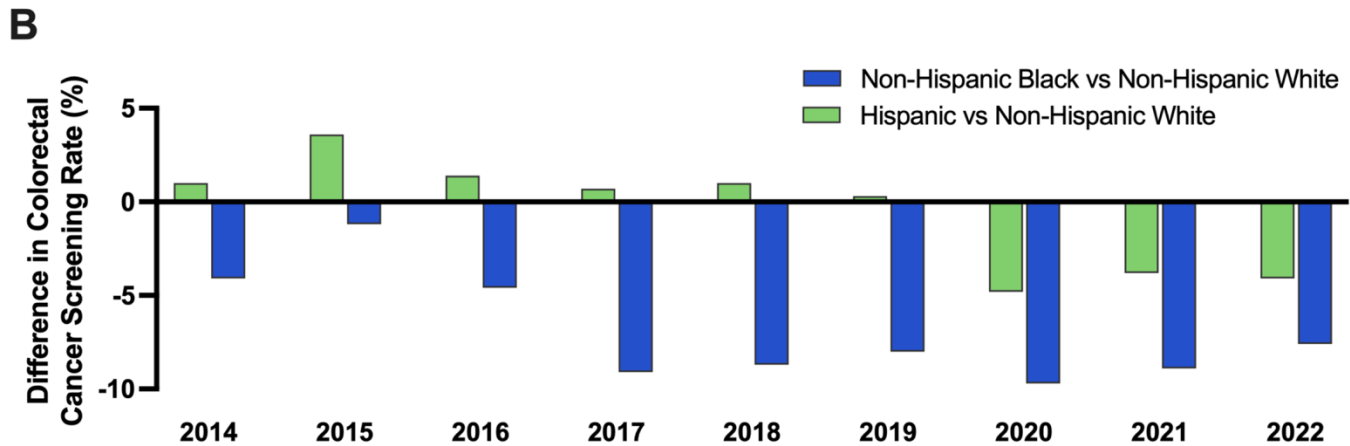
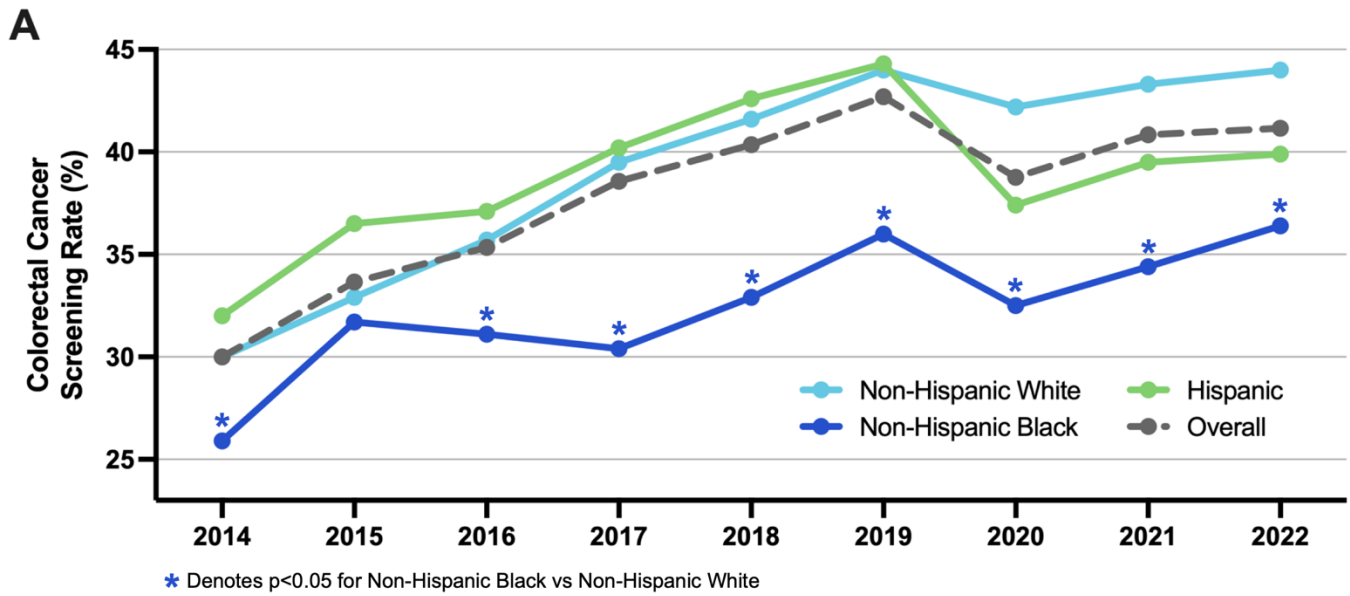


Table. Median Colorectal Cancer (CRC) Screening Rates in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) from 2014 to 2022 by majority race/ethnicity served.

Year	Majority Non-Hispanic White FQHCs			Majority Hispanic FQHCs			Majority Non-Hispanic Black FQHCs		
	N	CRC Screening Rate (%)	Interquartile Range	N	CRC Screening Rate (%)	Interquartile Range	N	CRC Screening Rate (%)	Interquartile Range
2014	587	30.0	18.7 – 42.1	313	32.0	20.0 – 42.9	234	25.9	13.6 – 38.8
2015	625	32.9	21.3 – 46.6	340	36.5	24.1 – 48.5	254	31.7	19.0 – 45.7
2016	621	35.7	24.4 – 48.9	348	37.1	26.5 – 49.0	251	31.1	20.0 – 44.7
2017	629	39.5	27.1 – 51.4	351	40.2	29.5 – 51.7	243	30.4	21.1 – 44.1
2018	615	41.6	30.8 – 52.4	361	42.6	32.0 – 53.4	233	32.9	24.3 – 46.9
2019	625	44.0	32.0 – 54.5	376	44.3	32.9 – 55.1	233	36.0	28.1 – 49.0
2020	633	42.2	29.9 – 52.2	369	37.4	27.2 – 47.5	227	32.5	23.8 – 44.9
2021	618	43.3	31.4 – 52.8	378	39.5	29.8 – 49.8	232	34.4	23.2 – 45.9
2022	601	44.0	32.2 – 53.9	399	39.9	30.2 – 49.5	225	36.4	25.3 – 47.0

Majority Non-Hispanic White, majority Non-Hispanic Black, and majority Hispanic FQHCs defined based on the race/ethnicity group with the largest proportion among all patients served at each FQHC.