# Rising Closure of Pharmacies Leaves Healthcare Gaps in Communities, Especially in Minority Neighbourhoods



Pharmacies, long considered key sources of healthcare and advice in both urban and rural communities, are closing at an increasing rate. Major chains like CVS Health, Walgreens, and Rite Aid, along with independent drugstores, have been reducing the number of stores due to declining prescription reimbursements, rising operational costs, and theft. Over 7,000 pharmacies have shut down in the U.S. since 2019, with more than half being independent.

Closure effects are most pronounced in predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods, which have fewer pharmacies per capita compared to mostly white areas. States like Alaska, Oregon, and New Mexico have the fewest retail pharmacies, according to an Associated Press analysis. Pharmacies in these areas often serve multiple roles, acting as primary healthcare points, especially for those unable to readily access doctors.

The closures have led to "pharmacy deserts" making it difficult for residents, who previously relied on accessible and familiar care, to find new options. Although some chains offer prescription deliveries, this service does not replace the personal interaction with pharmacists. As closures continue, there is increasing discussion about governmental regulation to address the impact on affected communities.