

Hospital Markets in North Carolina *at a glance*

A snapshot of hospital market structure, concentration, and ownership across the state — and how they've changed since 2000. This analysis reflects data available through May 2026.

In North Carolina, the percentage of hospitals owned by a system rose from 55% in 2000 to 84% in 2026.

WHAT THIS ANALYSIS COVERS

This analysis focuses on the state's 118 general short-term acute care (GSAC) hospitals — the facilities where most privately insured, Medicare, and Medicaid patients receive inpatient care, and where market concentration most directly affects the prices employers and workers pay. Each hospital's market is defined via a 30-minute travel radius around that facility. Within it, we measure concentration using the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) — a standard antitrust metric calculated as the sum of the squared market shares of the owners in a market. HHI ranges from 0 (many small hospitals, low concentration) to 10,000 (a monopoly market, which has a single owner). Our hospital-centric HHI is a consistent analytical proxy for market concentration, not a legally defined antitrust market.

● **GSAC Hospitals (118)** ● VA / Military ● Psychiatric / Behavioral ● Rehabilitation ● Children's Specialty

Market Concentration

North Carolina's hospital markets have become substantially more concentrated since 2000, with average hospital market HHI rising from 5,453 to 6,273, an increase of 820 points. Since 2000, every hospital has had an HHI above 1,800, the threshold the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Department of Justice (DOJ) consider “highly concentrated.” The number of monopoly hospitals increased from 22 to 25. Over the period, 10 hospitals closed and 9 opened, a net loss of 1 hospital. Fifty-four transactions reshaped ownership. Thirteen of those transactions (24%) were “Red Zone” mergers. A Red Zone merger raises at least one merging hospital's market HHI by over 100 points to above 1,800, which DOJ and FTC guidelines presume is likely to raise prices.

2000 | 119 hospitals overall

2026 | 118 hospitals overall



CONCENTRATION SCALE (IN HHI)

● **Low** (<1,000 HHI) ● **Moderate** (1,000 to <1,800) ● **High** (1,800 to <5,000) ● **Higher** (5,000 to <10,000) ● **Monopoly** (10,000 HHI)

Explore the data yourself

Our tool has three components. **The Market Explorer** tracks how hospital market concentration has evolved from 2000 to May 2026, drawing on ownership data from the AHA's Annual Survey, validated against state health department filings, SEC disclosures, and public reporting. **The Closures Explorer** tracks hospital closures and openings nationwide, each year since 2000. **The Forecast Lab** uses that same data to model how a proposed merger, closure, or opening would reshape a hospital market as it stood in 2026 — it models the scenarios you specify and does not identify potential mergers.

Note on the data: The tool uses a first-of-its-kind database that we built from scratch. We have done our best to gather and validate the data; however, if you notice an error (e.g., a hospital's name, a merger year) or if you have questions about our methodology, please notify us at HealthCareAffordabilityLab@yale.edu.

Health Care
Affordability Lab
at Yale

Explore Market Concentration at
Markets.HealthCareAffordabilityLab.org



QR code to NC Hospitals

Hospital Markets in North Carolina

October 2026

Key Stats

SYSTEM OWNERSHIP

55% → 84%

66/119 → 99/118 part of system

AVG HHI INCREASE

+820

5,453 → 6,273

RED ZONE TRANSACTIONS

13 of 54

24% in Red Zone

INDEPENDENT HOSPITALS

53 → 19

only 19 remain

Independents Give Way to Systems

The share of North Carolina hospitals owned by a multi-hospital system rose sharply from 55% to 84% between 2000 and 2026, and the number of independent hospitals moved from 53 to 19. The largest operators are Atrium Health (18 hospitals) and Novant Health (16), followed by Duke LifePoint Healthcare (10).

2000 | 119 hospitals overall

66 in 20 systems 53 independents



2026 | 118 hospitals overall

99 in 17 systems 19 independents

North Carolina's Largest Systems

Seventeen systems own 99 of North Carolina's 118 hospitals; Atrium Health and Novant Health lead.

SYSTEM	HOSPITALS IN STATE	AVERAGE MARKET HHI	HOSPITALS WITH CONCENTRATION ABOVE 1,800 HHI
Atrium Health	18	5,320	18 of 18
Novant Health	16	6,411	16 of 16
Duke LifePoint Healthcare	10	5,973	10 of 10
ECU Health	9	8,126	9 of 9
UNC Health	9	5,004	9 of 9

Average market HHI reflects the mean HHI across each system's hospitals within the state. HHI is calculated within a 30-minute travel radius of each facility. National hospital data typically lags by one to two years for new openings and recent ownership changes, so figures for 2024–2026 are preliminary and may not yet reflect all recent activity.

Transactions Reshape Ownership

North Carolina recorded 54 transactions since 2000. Thirteen of them (24%) qualified as “Red Zone” mergers. Alongside 10 closures, this led average market HHI to rise 820 points, from 5,453 to 6,273.

