

# SUMMARY OF STATE-SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN THE US 2020/2021

## NORTH CAROLINA

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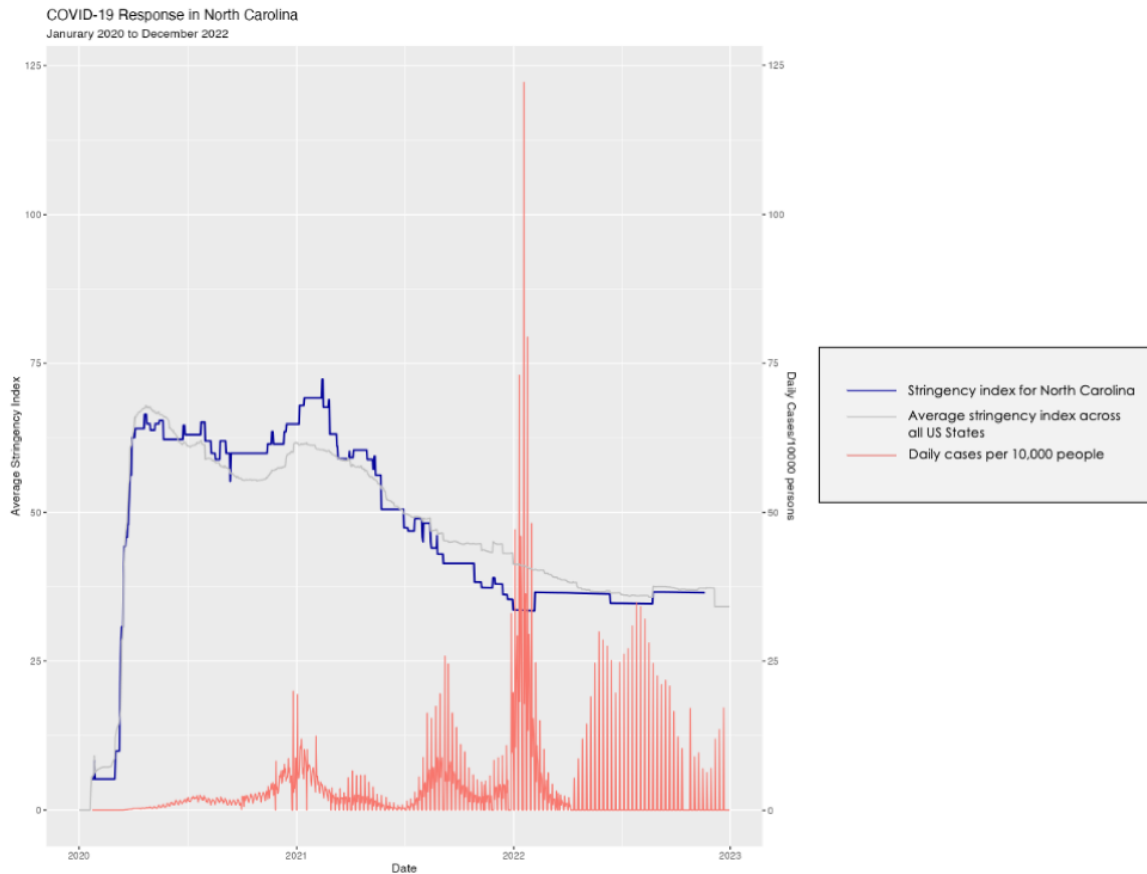
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# Table of Contents

North Carolina Summary and Graphic.....	3
Closure and Containment .....	4
Economic Response .....	9
Public Health Response.....	11
Vaccine Policies.....	15

# North Carolina

## Summary of Government Response to COVID-19



**COVID-19 Response in North Carolina:** Using the OxCGRT Stringency Index for North Carolina (blue) and the average OxCGRT Stringency Index across all US states, the above shows the overall government response to COVID-19 in North Carolina in comparison to the average US state response from January 2020 to December 2022. This also displays the number of daily cases per 10,000 people in North Carolina (red).

### Summary

North Carolina first responded on March 10, 2020, following its first case on March 2, 2020 and death on March 25, 2020. The first policies enacted were issued by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services recommending workplace closures, cancellation of public events, and stay-at-home guidance (represented as C2, C3, and C6 indicators in OxCGRT data).

## Closure and Containment

*The indicators for closure and containment are measured on an ordinal scale and encompass government responses that required or recommended temporary closures of institutions, limitations on travel, and restrictions of gatherings or events. The measurement of these indicators included a binary flag that indicated the geographic scope of the government responses coded. Differentiated policies, or policies that were specifically directed at those vaccinated or unvaccinated, are indicated when flagged as 'Vaccinated' or 'Non-Vaccinated'.*

### C1: School closures

*C1 records closings of schools and universities and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend closing or all schools open with alterations resulting in significant differences compared to non-Covid-19 operations), 2 (require closing only some levels or categories, e.g., just high school, or just public schools), or 3 (require closing all levels).*

First school closure policies became active on March 16, 2020, in the form of North Carolina Executive Order No. 117 which ordered all public schools to close through March 30, 2020. Beginning March 23, 2020, public and private universities began closing campuses and transitioning courses to remote instruction. North Carolina Executive Order No. 120 became effective March 25, 2020, and extended school closures for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. During the summer months in 2020, the State Board of Education approved the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's plan to reopen schools for the 2020-2021 school year.

Additionally, North Carolina Governor Cooper and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services announced operational requirements for K-12 public schools including social distancing, face coverings, and screening. On July 17, 2020, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services released guidance for institutions of higher education which included recommendations for operations with particular focus on reducing the spread of COVID-19 among shared housing and dormitories. North Carolina universities began their fall semester in August using hybrid teaching methods for online and in-person instruction. In September, North Carolina Governor Cooper announced K-12 schools may reopen at full capacity with COVID-19 safety measures October 5, 2020. This remained active throughout November and December until the holiday break. All schools were to begin instruction again on January 19, 2021, however, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education delayed in-person instruction until February 22, 2021, due to high COVID-19 infection rates in Mecklenburg County. On March 10, 2021, state superintendent of public instruction and state government leaders announced legislation to reopen schools across the state for daily in-person instruction with recommended COVID-19 safety measures. This policy remained active for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. At the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year,

North Carolina Governor signed Senate Bill 654 on August 30, 2021, allowing North Carolina schools to shift to remote learning if necessary due to a COVID-19 emergency. On September 2, 2021, a district spokesperson announced all students at North Iredell High, Central Elementary and East Iredell, West Iredell and Lakeshore middle schools are now learning remotely and will return September 13, 2021. On Sep 13, "Nantahala School, a K-12 public school in the Macon County Schools system, announced" that it would be implementing virtual learning from Tuesday, Sept. 14 through Friday, Sept. 24 due to the effects of COVID-19. All schools returned to normal operations on October 27, 2021, and remained open until present.

## **C2: Workplace closures**

*C2 records closings of workplaces and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend closing or recommend work from home or all businesses open with alterations resulting in significant differences compared to non-Covid-19 operations), 2 (require closing or work from home for some sectors or categories of workers), or 3 (require closing or work from home for all-but-essential workplaces, e.g., grocery stores, doctors).*

First business closure policies were active on March 10, 2020 in the form of recommendations issued by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services suggesting businesses use teleworking technologies to the greatest extent possible. On March 17, 2020, North Carolina Executive Order No. 118 ordered closure of bars and limited food and beverage services to carry-out, drive-through, and delivery. North Carolina Executive Order No. 120, implemented on March 25, 2020, required further closures of entertainment facilities, as well as personal care and grooming businesses. Targeted policies were implemented in Mecklenburg County the following day, March 26, 2020, which subjected all non-essential businesses to closure until April 29, 2020. Region-wide policies remained in place until February 26, 2021, when North Carolina Executive Order No. 195 eased restrictions on certain businesses allowing previously closed businesses to reopen with required altered operations such as social distancing, disinfecting measures, and mask requirements. Capacity restrictions on businesses were further relaxed by North Carolina Executive Order No. 204 on March 26, 2021, however altered operations remained in effect. All capacity restrictions and operational changes were lifted on May 14, 2021.

## **C3: Cancel public events**

*C3 records cancelling public events and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend cancelling), or 2 (require cancelling).*

First public event cancellation policies were active on March 10, 2020, in the form of recommendations issued by the North Carolina Department of

Health and Human Services stating organisers of mass gathering events that primarily draw high-risk persons, including those that attract older adults, should consider cancelling or postponing these events. A 'Stay-at-home' Order was implemented in Mecklenburg County on March 26, 2020. This targeted policy prohibited all events until April 29, 2020. On May 8, 2020, the stringency of region-wide policies increased, requiring large venues, arenas, and stadiums to close under North Carolina Executive Order No. 138, also known as Phase 1. This continued until the state entered Phase 2 on May 22, 2020, which allowed large venues, arenas, and stadiums to open with altered operation requirements and capacity constraints. All social distancing guidelines, capacity constraints, and required operation alterations were lifted on May 24, 2021.

#### **C4: Restrictions on gatherings**

*C4 records limits on gathering and is measured as 0 (no restrictions), 1 (restrictions on very large gatherings where the limit is above 1000 people), 2 (restrictions on gatherings between 101-1000 people), 3 (restrictions on gatherings between 11-100 people), or 4 (restrictions on gatherings of 10 people or less).*

The first restriction on gathering was active on March 16, 2020, and restricted gatherings of more than 100 people. On March 25, 2020, North Carolina Executive Order No. 120 restricted gatherings of more than 50 people. Several days later, North Carolina Order No. 121 ordered gatherings to be restricted to 10 people. Executive Order 138, active May 8, 2020, maintains that though small outdoor gatherings will be allowed in Phase 1, gatherings of more than 10 people generally are still prohibited. Starting May 22, 2020, North Carolina moved into Phase 2 which limited gatherings to no more than 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors. This policy was extended on July 17, 2020, and then on August 7, 2020, limiting gatherings to 10 people. Phase 2 restrictions were intended to remain active until September 11, 2020, however, on September 4, 2020, North Carolina moved into Phase 2.5 which limited gatherings to 25 people. North Carolina moved into Phase 3, on September 30, 2020, which limited gatherings indoors to 25 people and outdoor to 50 people. This policy remained active until November 13, 2020, when North Carolina Governor Cooper announced Executive Order No. 176 which limited gatherings to 10 or less people in efforts to reduce COVID-19 metrics. This limitation on gatherings remained active until December 4, 2020, and North Carolina Executive Order No. 181 reinstated gathering restrictions which limited gatherings to 10 people indoors and 50 people outdoors until January 8, 2021. Restrictions were extended on January 8, 2021, and then again on January 29, 2021. These policies remained active until February 26, 2021, when the limit on indoor gatherings was increased from 10 to 25 people under North Carolina Executive Order No. 195. The restrictions on gatherings were further eased allowing gatherings up to 50 people indoors

and 100 people outdoors on March 26, 2020. On May 14, 2021, North Carolina Executive Order No. 215 lifted all restrictions on gatherings. No further restrictions were implemented until present.

### **C5: Public transport closures**

*C5 records the closing of public transport and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend closing or significantly reduce volume/route/means of transport available), or 2 (require closing or prohibit most citizens from using it).*

The first public transport closure policies were active on March 16, 2020, when Greensboro Transit Authority began a reduction in the service schedule in response to COVID-19. Following the closures in Greensboro, Charlotte Area Transit System announced service reductions of 50% and Asheville Redefines Transit began service reductions on March 25, 2020. Starting March 30, 2020, GoDurham, GoRaleigh, GoTriangle and GoCary began reducing operating routes less frequently to reduce unessential travel. Public transport remained open with reductions in operating routes, mask requirements, social distancing, and sanitization measures until May 10, 2021, when previously suspended operations became active with the exception of the R-Line in Raleigh which remained closed. All public transport closures ended on June 13, 2022.

### **C6: Stay-at-home requirements**

*C6 records orders to "shelter-in-place" and otherwise confine to the home and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend not leaving house), 2 (require not leaving house with exceptions for daily exercise, grocery shopping, and 'essential' trips), or 3 (require not leaving house with minimal exceptions, e.g., allowed to leave once a week, or only one person can leave at a time, etc).*

The first stay-at-home order was active on March 10, 2020 and recommended that high risk individuals should avoid large gatherings. Pitt County declared a stay-at-home order on Wednesday March 25, applying to unincorporated areas of the County, with residents ordered to stay-at-home unless providing or accessing essential services. On March 30, 2020, residents were ordered to stay-at-home for 30 days under North Carolina Executive Order No. 121. This stay-at-home order was extended on April 23, 2020, until May 8, 2020, when North Carolina Executive Order No. 138 allowed people to leave their homes for commercial activity at any business that is open and recommends social distancing and other measures to reduce transmission. Only recommendations to stay-at-home were active until December 11, 2020, when a modified stay-at-home order was implemented in response to rapid increase in COVID-19 cases. This order required residents to remain at home between the hours of 22:00 to 5:00. This remained active until February 26, 2021, when the modified stay-at-home

order was lifted. Following this policy, North Carolina advised stay-at-home recommendations on a county basis. The North Carolina County Alert System advised counties in high-risk areas to limit leaving homes unless fully vaccinated. No further stay-at-home measures were made.

### **C7: Restrictions on internal movement**

*C7 records restrictions on internal movement between states and is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommend not to travel between states), or 2 (internal movement restrictions in place).*

The first travel restrictions were active on March 20, 2020, in Dare County. These restricted non-property owners from entering the county and issued a stay-at-home order for all citizens except essential employees. On March 30th, 2020, the state of North Carolina issued a stay-at-home order for citizens to restrict movement to essential activities. April 23, 2020, the state stay-at-home order ended, this allowed for citizens to move around without restrictions. However, Durham County Extended their stay-at-home until May 15th, 2020. June 26th the State recommended for vulnerable groups and individuals to restrict movement and work from home. Phase 3 of reopening of North Carolina contained restrictions of internal movement and this ended November 13, 2020, allowing the state to fully open. On Jan 6, 2021, the North Carolina State department of Health and human services enacted a curfew from 10 pm - 5am that ended February 28, 2021. North Carolina residents were also encouraged to work from home. There were state recommendations to stay-at-home and work from home, these were lifted July 5th, 2021.

### **C8: International travel controls**

*C8 records restrictions on international travel for foreign travellers (not citizens) and is measured as 0 (no restrictions), 1 (screening arrivals), 2 (quarantine arrivals from some or all regions), 3 (ban arrivals from some regions), or 4 (ban on all regions or total border closure).*

No international travel restrictions for foreign travellers were implemented in North Carolina throughout the observed period.



## Economic Response

*The indicators for economic policies measured the policies that provided economic support from the state government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic indicators recorded at the subnational level in the US were E1 and E2, which are measured on an ordinal scale without a flag indicating the geographic scope.*

### **E1: Income support**

*E1 records if the government is providing direct cash payments to people who lose their jobs or cannot work and is measured as 0 (no income support), 1 (government is replacing less than 50% of lost salary or if a flat sum, that is less than 50% median salary), or 2 (government is replacing 50% or more of lost salary or if a flat sum, that is greater than 50% median salary).*

On March 17, 2020, the Governor signed Executive Order 118 which makes state unemployment benefits more widely available, covering all who have had their hours of employment reduced or eliminated. On August 5, 2020, the North Carolina Support Services Program provides, among other services, a "one-time COVID-19 relief payment to help supplement lost wages or the inability to look for work while in isolation/quarantine (\$400 for individuals and \$800 for families), to be used on basic living expenses". This program is funded through the federal CARES Act, but the program and its corresponding policies are through the state of North Carolina.

On January 27, 2021, Governor Cooper issued Executive Order no. 191 on, which extends assistance for North Carolinians at risk of eviction and extends processes to expedite payment of unemployment insurance claims. The North Carolina Department of HHS continues the COVID-19 Support Services program provides assistance such as home-delivered meals and groceries, financial relief payments, COVID-related supplies, transportation to medical or vaccine appointments and medication delivery to individuals in 29 of the 55 counties served by the Community Health Worker program. The Support Services program helped people who need support to be able to quarantine or isolate due to COVID-19. This program will continue until available funds have been spent.

On February 11, 2021, individuals and families on food stamps (participants of Food and Nutrition Services) can now order their groceries through Instacart.com or the Instacart mobile app. NCDHHS hopes to promote social distancing and decrease barriers to healthy food (due to transportation issues or physical impairment) with this change. Rent assistance in North Carolina was being provided by funds from the CDC Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Eviction (HOPE) program. As of February 15, 2021, HOPE program is not accepting new applications. Financial relief to help with living expenses, home delivered groceries or meals, transportation, medication delivery, COVID-19 PPE, and connection to primary care are offered through the North Carolina DHHS Support

Services Program. This program is for people who are asked to stay home from work due to COVID-19.

On February 19, 2021, The NC Dept of Health and Human Services and NC Dept of Public Instruction began issuing additional benefits through the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program. These benefits will be received over several days for those who already have an EBT card for Food and Nutrition Services or P-EBT benefits. The P-EBT program helps families purchase food for children whose access to free and reduced-price meals at school has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On February 18, 2021, nearly \$27 million in grants had been awarded to 34 municipal and county governments in North Carolina in response to the adverse economic and public health impacts of COVID-19. In addition to public utilities and rent assistance, the funds also provided public facilities support with broadband, communications, and the rehabilitation of buildings as well as financial assistance to small businesses with fewer than 100 employees and micro-enterprises with no more than five employees.

## **E2: Debt/contract relief**

*E2 records if the government is freezing financial obligations for households (e.g., stopping loan repayments, preventing services like water from stopping, or banning evictions) and is measured as 0 (no debt/contract relief), 1 (narrow relief, specific to one kind of contract), or 2 (broad debt/contract relief).*

On March 31, 2020, Governor Cooper issued Executive Order No. 124. Here, all Utility Service Providers are prohibited from shutting-off residential customer's utilities due to non-payment during the State of Emergency. Later signed on May 30, 2020, Executive Order No. 142 extends the provisions of the previous order until July 29, 2020, and urges utility reconnection when relevant. On July 29, 2020, the North Carolina Utilities Commission announced that all jurisdictional public utilities may resume customer disconnections due to non-payment for bills first rendered on or after September 1, 2020. It should be noted that not all resumed such practices – namely Charlotte Water and Raleigh Water. Additionally, Executive Order No. 124 implemented an effective immediate eviction moratorium where no residential or commercial tenants could be evicted.

On August 25, 2020, Governor Cooper announced an allocated \$175 million to assist rent and utility payments for residents. The money was distributed across three new programs targeting:

- Eviction Prevention and Utility Payments disbursed via the North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency or the NCORR.
- Crisis Response and Housing Stability
- Local government funding

On September 22, 2020, Governor Cooper announced a \$40 million Relief Program for eligible small businesses to help offset fixed costs like rent,

mortgage interests and utility bills. To qualify, businesses needed to apply and prove that they were closed from April 1 through July 31, 2020. All assistance was distributed through a first come, first serve method. There were no indications of added funding for either of the assistance programs once the initial funds were distributed.

Enacted on January 31, 2021, EO191 extended EO171 and EO184 until March 31, 2021. As an added note, EO171 continued the eviction moratorium, and EO184 instated processes to expedite payment of unemployment insurance claims.

On February 4, 2021, Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds for immediate needs and investing state resources were allocated to help North Carolina communities rebuild as the state turned the corner on the pandemic. The federal appropriation totalled more than \$4 billion for North Carolina.

Rent and utility assistance in North Carolina was provided by funds from the CDC Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Eviction (HOPE) program. The HOPE program began on October 15, 2020. The program provided rent and utility assistance for up to six months, so those who applied in October 2020 are covered until March 2021. As of February 15, 2021, the HOPE program had stopped accepting new applications.

On March 11, 2021, Governor Cooper signed House relief Bill 196 into law. The bill was an act to make modifications to COVID-19 relief legislation and provide additional appropriations for the expenditure of federal COVID-19 pandemic relief funds. This was followed by an extension to the state-wide moratorium on evictions until June 30, 2021. Past this date, there was no further debt or contract relief for any businesses or households.

## Public Health Responses

*The public health response indicators recorded health system responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The indicators recorded at the subnational level in the US were H1, H2, H3, H6, H7, and H8. The geographic scope of these policies was marked by an ordinal flag for indicators H1, H6, and H8. Differentiated policies, or policies that were specifically directed at those vaccinated or unvaccinated, are indicated when flagged as 'Vaccinated' or 'Non-Vaccinated' for indicators H6 and H8.*

### H1: Public information campaigns

*H1 records the presence of public info campaigns and is measured as 0 (no Covid-19 public information campaign), 1 (public officials urging caution about Covid-19), or 2 (coordinated public information campaign, e.g., across traditional and social media).*

The first public information came on March 11, 2020, as North Carolina Department of Health and Human Resources community engagement

resources for public health officials. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Resources added a COVID-19 hotline for residents and encouraged residents to stay-at-home and slow the spread through social media platforms, such as Twitter. In April 2020, NC.gov launched a COVID-19 response webpage with COVID-19 resources and information. Coordinated campaigns and the North Carolina COVID-19 website remains active until present.

## **H2: Testing policy**

*H2 records government policy on who has access to testing and is measured as 0 (no testing policy), 1 (only those who both have symptoms AND meet specific criteria, e.g., key workers, admitted to hospital, encountered a known case, returned from overseas), 2 (testing of anyone showing Covid-19 symptoms), or 3 (open public testing, e.g., "drive through" testing available to asymptomatic people).*

On March 3, 2020, the Governor's Task Force announced that state laboratories are now able to test for COVID, however testing is limited to symptomatic individuals seeking medical attention. On May 15, 2020, the testing policy allowed anyone clinicians that think they may have had close contact with an infected person, regardless of symptoms; people who have underlying health conditions; members of "historically marginalized populations"; people who live or have contact in "high-risk settings"; health-care workers and first responders; and employees who work in places like where social distancing is more difficult. Approximately 300 temporary testing sites were deployed in July 2020 for any symptomatic individuals to be tested. On October 27, 2021, testing became generally available. Public testing remains open in North Carolina.

## **H3: Contact tracing**

*H3 records government policy on contact tracing after a positive diagnosis and is measured as 0 (no contact tracing), 1 (limited contact tracing; not done for all cases), or 2 (comprehensive contact tracing; done for all identified cases).*

The first date that there was evidence of contract tracing was on April 23, 2020. Initial contact tracing efforts were described as 250 people across local health departments. On June 4, 2020, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services launched new initiatives to expand COVID-19 testing and contact tracing across the state. Limited contact tracing efforts continued throughout the remainder of 2020, and by February 13, 2021, there were more than 2,000 full-time and part-time staff supporting contact tracing efforts. This increase in staffing allowed for comprehensive contact tracing. However, in August of 2021 the number of available contact tracers decreased which limited the coverage of contact tracing throughout the state. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Service

increased contact tracing efforts in February of 2022 and provided comprehensive contact tracing metrics. Comprehensive contact tracing remains present on the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services website.

## **H6: Facial Coverings**

*H6 records policies on the use of facial coverings outside the home and is measured as 0 (no policy), 1 (recommended mask wearing), 2 (required in some specified shared/public spaces outside the home with other people present, or some situations when social distancing not possible), 3 (required in all shared/public spaces outside the home with other people present or all situations when social distancing not possible), or 4 (required outside the home at all times regardless of location or presence of other people).*

On April 20, 2020, Durham County began requiring mask wearing in any public and private spaces. While on May 8, 2020, North Carolina Executive Order No. 138 encouraged mask wearing, Durham County continued to mandate the use of masks in public and private spaces. On May 22, 2020, North Carolina Executive Order No. 141 mandated that all workers in personal care, grooming, and tattoo businesses are required to wear face coverings when they are within six feet of another person. In addition to Durham County, the city of Raleigh began requiring masks to be worn in public and private spaces effective June 19, 2020. The following day, Boone County began requiring masks in public indoor spaces. On June 24, 2020, North Carolina Governor Cooper announced a state-wide requirement for facial coverings to be worn at all times outside the home. This was the first mask policy mandated on a region-wide level. This remained active until February 15, 2021, when masks remained to be worn in all public indoor settings and outdoors when social distancing was not feasible. On April 30, 2021, masks were still required indoors but became no longer required in outdoor settings. Effective May 14, 2021, North Carolina Executive Order No. 215 eased COVID-19 restrictions, including masking policy for vaccinated individuals. However, masks are still required by all in childcare, healthcare, and transportation settings and recommended in large venues. Unvaccinated individuals were recommended to continue wearing masks in all settings. This differentiated policy remained in place until July 29, 2021, when North Carolina Executive Order No. 224 recommended, but did not require mask wearing for unvaccinated individuals at all times and vaccinated individuals indoors. While masks were no longer required state-wide, on August 13, 2021, Guilford County and the city of Raleigh began an indoor mask policy for all people, regardless of vaccination status. Following this policy, face coverings became mandatory in indoor public places, business, or establishments within the City of Charlotte and the unincorporated areas of Mecklenburg County, regardless of vaccination status on August 18, 2021. As of September 26, 2021, North Carolina did not have a state-wide mask mandate. However, some counties and cities

maintained local mask mandates. With the emergence of the Omicron variant, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services recommended on February 21, 2022, that everyone wear a mask when in indoor public spaces, regardless of vaccination status. On July 11, 2022, only unvaccinated individuals were recommended to wear masks in public settings. This recommendation remains to be active until present.

## **H7: Vaccination policy**

*H7 records policies for vaccine delivery for different groups 0 (no availability), 1 (availability for ONE of following: key workers/clinically vulnerable groups that are non elderly/ elderly groups), 2 (availability for TWO of following: key workers/clinically vulnerable groups that are non elderly/elderly groups), 3 (availability for ALL of following: key workers/clinically vulnerable groups that are non-elderly/elderly groups), 4 (availability for all three plus partial additional availability for select broad groups/ages), or 5 (universal availability).*

On December 15, 2020, North Carolina began a vaccination plan allowing healthcare workers and long-term care residents to receive vaccination. Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were available in North Carolina, however, due to limited numbers of available vaccines, a choice of the type of vaccine was not readily available. Adults 65 and older became eligible to receive vaccination on January 14, 2021. On February 18, 2021, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services was notified by the federal government of continued delays in some shipments and deliveries of COVID-19 vaccine this week due to severe weather. Childcare workers and K-12 staff became eligible for vaccination on February 24, 2021. Beginning on March 31, 2021, additional essential workers and people living in other congregate settings such as student dormitories will be eligible for vaccination. On April 7, 2021, North Carolina Oklahoma expanded their vaccination efforts to include individuals 16 and older. Pfizer was authorized for use on individuals 16 and older, Moderna was authorized for use on individuals 18 and older, and Johnson and Johnson was authorized for use on individuals 18 and older. On July 12, 2021, everyone 12 and older became eligible for vaccination, regardless of immigration status. Pfizer became approved for ages 12 and older, and Moderna and Johnson and Johnson remained approved for ages 18 and older. North Carolina residents who are moderately to severely immunocompromised became eligible for an additional dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine on August 16, 2021, to better protect themselves from COVID-19. As of January 3, 2022, universal vaccine availability remained for people aged 12 or older, and booster doses were highly encouraged due to rising COVID-19 metrics. On July 22, 2022, COVID-19 vaccines were authorized for everyone 6 months and older, and no further vaccine related policies have been implemented.

## **H8: Protection of elderly people**

*H8 records policies for protecting elderly people (as defined locally) in Long Term Care Facilities and/or the community and home setting. This is measured as 0 (no measures), 1 (recommended isolation, hygiene, and visitor restriction measures in LTCFs and/or elderly people to stay-at-home), 2 (narrow restrictions for isolation, hygiene in LTCFs, some limitations on external visitors and/or restrictions protecting elderly people at home), or 3 (extensive restrictions for isolation and hygiene in LTCFs, all non-essential external visitors prohibited, and/or all elderly people required to stay-at-home and not leave the home with minimal exceptions, and receive no external visitors).*

The first policy to protect elderly persons was active on March 10, 2020 and urged people over the age of 65 to avoid large gatherings. On March 30, 2020, all North Carolina residents, including elderly people, were required to stay-at-home for 30 days. Executive Order No. 152 active on July 24, 2020, restricted all visitors and non-essential healthcare personnel from nursing homes and skilled-nursing facilities, except for certain compassionate-care situations, including end-of-life situations. Communal dining and group activities also remained restricted. On Sept 4, The Department of Health and Human Services enacted Secretarial Order No. 3 "Visitation for Nursing Homes" allowing for outdoor visitation at nursing homes or skilled-nursing facilities that meet several public health requirements. These policies remained active until March 12, 2021, when the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services updated its visitation guidance for long-term care facilities to allow for in-person, indoor or outdoor, visitation in most circumstances. No further protections have been taken for elderly beyond COVID-19 guidance for long-term care facilities.

## **Vaccine Policies**

*The vaccine indicators record vaccination policies regarding the distribution of vaccines and vaccine mandates. This is recorded as V1-V4 and includes a state's prioritisation list, eligible groups, cost of vaccination to the individual, and the presence of a vaccine mandate. These indicators do not include a flag for geographic scope.*

### **V1: Vaccine Prioritisation**

*V1 records the ranked position for different groups within a state's prioritisation plan when vaccines resources were too scarce for universal availability. Groups are ranked on an ordinal scale, the number represents the rank of prioritisation, and equal-ranked categories share the same number.*

The groups initially prioritised were healthcare workers and long-term care staff and residents in the plan first published October 16, 2020. This plan was

further specified on December 30, 2020, to include immunocompromised individuals, adults 65 years and older, frontline essential workers, people living in congregate settings, and all other people 16 years or older. Vaccine availability shifted from prioritised to universal on April 7, 2021.

## **V2: Vaccine Availability**

*V2 records when categories of people – regardless of their position in a prioritised rollout plan – receive vaccines. This is measured as 0 (vaccines are not being made available to this category) or 1 (vaccines are being made available to this category).*

Vaccine administration began on December 15, 2020, with healthcare workers and long-term care facility staff and residents. The expansion of availability then included adults age 65 and older on January 14, 2021, childcare workers and teachers on February 24, 2021, essential workers on March 3, 2021, individuals 16-64 years old with one or more high-risk medical conditions on March 17, 2021, and anyone 16 years and older on April 7, 2021. On July 12, 2021, availability expanded to 12 and older. On July 22, 2022, vaccine availability expanded to ages 6 months and older.

## **V3: Vaccine Financial Support**

All vaccines were government-funded at the federal-level across the US.

## **V4: Mandatory Vaccination**

*V4 measures the existence of a requirement to be vaccinated and is measured as 0 (no requirement to be vaccinated) or 1 (requirement to be vaccinated).*

On July 27, 2021, North Carolina's Health Department announced that staff and volunteers in state-run health care facilities would be required to be vaccinated by September 30, 2021.

On September 1, 2021, the governor of North Carolina mandated that state employees be vaccinated.