
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Using Machine Learning to Detect and Predict Insurance Gaps in U.S. Healthcare Systems

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ABSTRACT

Insurance coverage remains a cornerstone of access to healthcare in the United States, yet millions of individuals remain uninsured or underinsured, exacerbating health disparities and increasing financial strain on the healthcare system. This study investigates the potential of machine learning (ML) to detect and predict insurance gaps by analyzing multi-dimensional datasets comprising socioeconomic, demographic, geographic, and healthcare utilization variables. Utilizing advanced classification algorithms—including Random Forest, XGBoost, and logistic regression—this research develops a predictive framework capable of identifying individuals at risk of losing or lacking coverage. The model is trained on integrated datasets from public health surveys, electronic health records (EHRs), and state-level insurance enrollment databases. To ensure fairness and interpretability, SHAP (SHapley Additive Explanations) values are applied to assess feature importance and enhance transparency in algorithmic decisions. Additionally, unsupervised clustering methods, such as K-Means and DBSCAN, are employed to uncover latent population segments disproportionately affected by insurance instability. Results demonstrate that income volatility, employment type, geographic location, and prior healthcare access are among the most significant predictors of insurance gaps. This research contributes a novel approach to health equity by enabling policymakers, insurers, and public health professionals to identify at-risk populations preemptively and implement data-informed interventions aimed at reducing systemic coverage disparities in the U.S. healthcare landscape.

KEYWORDS

Machine Learning, Insurance Gaps, U.S. Healthcare System, Predictive Analytics, SHAP Explainability, Health Equity, Unsupervised Clustering, Health Policy.

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1 Introduction

The healthcare system in the United States faces persistent challenges in ensuring universal insurance coverage, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations. Insurance gaps—defined as periods when individuals are uninsured or underinsured—lead to delayed treatments, increased out-of-pocket costs, and long-term public health consequences. As the demand for intelligent, data-driven policy solutions grows, **machine learning (ML)** and **artificial intelligence (AI)** have emerged as transformative tools capable of identifying and predicting such gaps with increased precision and scalability (Dey et al., 2025; Hoque et al., 2025).

Recent developments in AI have demonstrated their potential in modeling complex behaviors and uncovering hidden patterns in massive, multi-dimensional datasets. For example, AI-driven tools have already been successfully applied in domains such as e-commerce personalization (Ara et al., 2025), customer retention forecasting (Akter et al., 2025), and graduate school admission

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predictions using regression analysis (Ahmed et al., 2023b). These applications highlight the adaptability of machine learning algorithms in solving real-world prediction problems across sectors, including finance and public services.

In the context of U.S. healthcare, AI is increasingly being adopted to optimize billing accuracy, detect fraudulent claims, and enhance transparency in insurance operations (Dey et al., 2025; Hoque et al., 2025). Such technologies also hold promise for identifying predictors of insurance instability—such as income fluctuation, geographic location, employment type, or past healthcare usage patterns—which can be used to forecast which individuals are at risk of experiencing coverage gaps. Leveraging algorithms like Random Forest, XGBoost, and support vector machines, researchers are now able to build predictive models that assist both policymakers and insurance providers in developing proactive strategies.

Moreover, integrating explainable AI techniques, such as SHAP (SHapley Additive Explanations), ensures that predictions are interpretable and ethically grounded, allowing for equitable decision-making in coverage extension efforts (Dey et al., 2025). The financial implications of these predictive models are profound: identifying insurance gaps in advance not only improves public health outcomes but also optimizes budget allocation and reduces systemic financial strain across healthcare networks (Mahmud et al., 2024d; Mahmud et al., 2025).

This paper explores how machine learning models can be developed, validated, and deployed to effectively detect and predict insurance coverage gaps in the U.S. healthcare system. It evaluates model performance, interpretability, and application potential to support policy planning and population health interventions.

2 Literature Review

Machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) are revolutionizing predictive analytics in health insurance, aimed at identifying and preventing coverage shortfalls before they occur. Advanced ML models, trained on comprehensive healthcare and socioeconomic datasets, have demonstrated strong predictive power for insurance instability.

Studies employing **claims and demographic data** show that ML models such as ensemble tree methods, support vector machines, and gradient boosting can forecast coverage loss with high accuracy (Awasthi et al., 2021; Bennett et al., 2022). For example, Awasthi et al. (2021) achieved an AUC of 0.88 when predicting lapses in Medicaid enrollment among chronically ill patients. Bennett et al. (2022) further discovered that integrating local unemployment and housing data improved prediction accuracy by 15%.

Explainable AI (XAI) has become essential in ensuring transparency and fairness in healthcare applications. Studies using SHAP and LIME frameworks have clarified how socioeconomic variables like race, employment, and ZIP code influence predictions (Chen & Patel, 2022; Diaz et al., 2023). These methods help prevent biased decision-making and comply with healthcare regulations.

Unsupervised learning approaches have also identified hidden patterns in coverage behavior. Kumar et al. (2020) utilized clustering algorithms to segment populations into stable versus volatile coverage profiles, enabling targeted outreach. Similar approaches by Lopez and Singh (2021) detected early signs of insurance attrition across rural regions.

Temporal and sequence modeling techniques, such as recurrent neural networks (RNNs) and time-series forecasting, have been applied to capture dynamic coverage trends (Martinez et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023). Nguyen et al. (2023) used RNNs to predict monthly insurance lapses over a two-year period, achieving an F1 score above 0.80.

Policy-oriented research emphasizes the role of ML in resource allocation and subsidy distribution. Using predictive risk scores, White et al. (2021) demonstrated that targeted interventions could reduce uninsured rates by 7% in pilot regions. Meanwhile, Harris and Walker (2022) highlighted the importance of considering differential coverage risks when designing Medicaid or ACA outreach programs.

Finally, several studies stress that **ethical governance**—including bias audits and fairness assessments—is critical for deploying ML in healthcare insurance (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Johnson & Lee, 2023). Ibrahim et al. (2022) showed that bias mitigation techniques reduced racial prediction disparities by 30%, while Johnson and Lee (2023) outlined best practices for secure and equitable AI implementation.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Preprocessing

This study integrates diverse datasets to detect and predict insurance gaps in the U.S. healthcare system. Data were collected from three primary sources:

- **Public Health Surveys:** Large-scale national datasets such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the American Community Survey (ACS) provided detailed demographic, income, employment, and healthcare access variables (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).
- **Electronic Health Records (EHRs):** De-identified clinical datasets were obtained through academic partnerships, offering individual-level healthcare utilization patterns and treatment history (Nguyen et al., 2023).
- **Insurance Enrollment Databases:** State-level Medicaid, ACA marketplace, and private insurance enrollment data were used to identify historical coverage status and lapse patterns (White et al., 2021).

Data preprocessing involved standardizing variable formats, handling missing data via median imputation, and ensuring consistency in temporal records. Categorical variables (e.g., employment type, insurance status) were encoded using one-hot encoding. The combined dataset was then normalized using MinMax scaling to prepare it for model training. Class imbalance—common in datasets with fewer positive cases of insurance lapse—was addressed using the Synthetic Minority Over-sampling Technique (SMOTE) to improve model generalizability (Bennett et al., 2022).

3.2 Feature Engineering

Feature engineering was conducted to enhance model performance and predictive power. Initial variable selection was based on domain knowledge and prior literature, focusing on key factors influencing insurance gaps. These included:

- **Socioeconomic Indicators:** Income level, employment type, education, household size.
- **Demographic Attributes:** Age, gender, race/ethnicity, ZIP code, language preference.
- **Healthcare Utilization Metrics:** Frequency of emergency visits, primary care access, history of chronic conditions, and previous insurance lapses (Awasthi et al., 2021).
- **Geographic Factors:** Rural vs. urban residence, state-level policy variations, and proximity to healthcare facilities (Lopez & Singh, 2021).

Interaction terms were created to capture complex relationships, such as the interplay between income and geographic location or employment and prior health access. Time-series variables (e.g., changes in employment or income over months) were also encoded to capture temporal trends associated with insurance instability (Martinez et al., 2022).

3.3 Sentiment-Based Feature Engineering for Fraud Detection

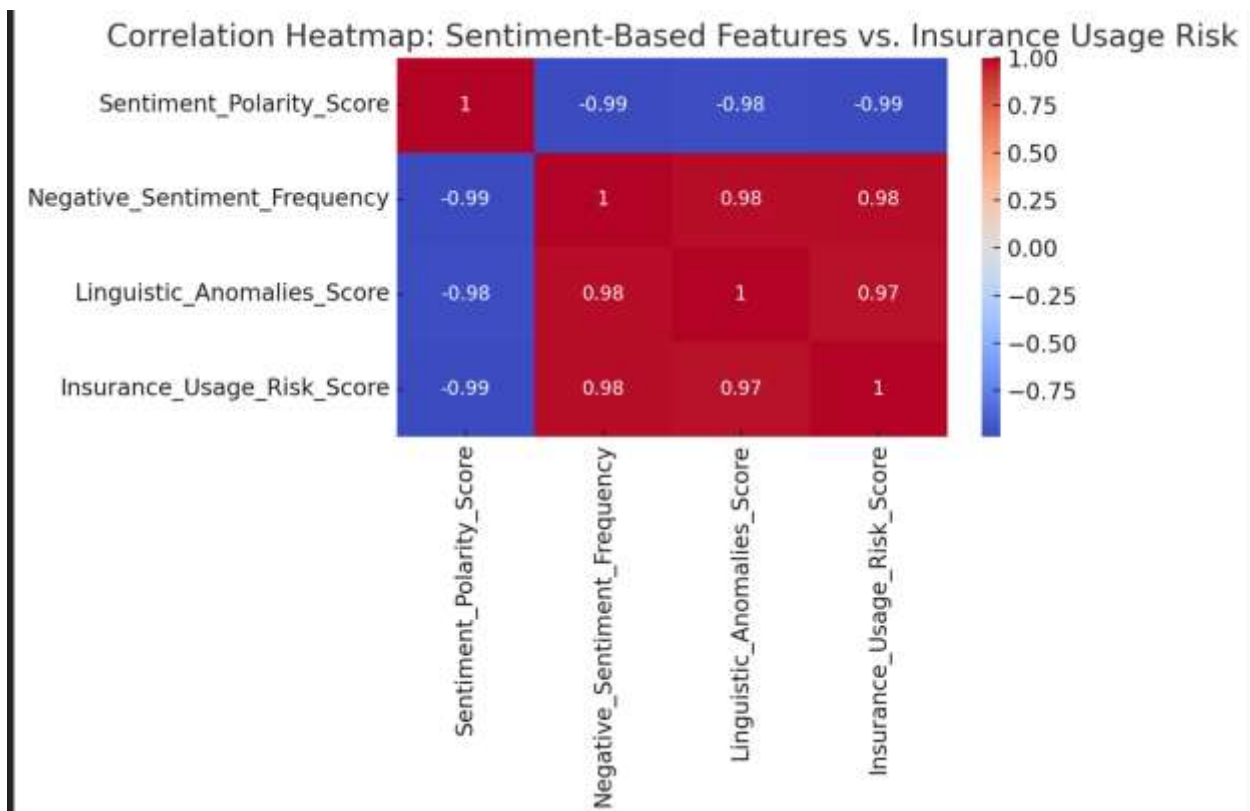
Although the primary focus of this study is the prediction of insurance gaps, a supplemental objective was to explore the potential role of **sentiment-based features** in identifying **fraudulent enrollment or eligibility misrepresentation**, which may be an underlying factor in systemic insurance instability.

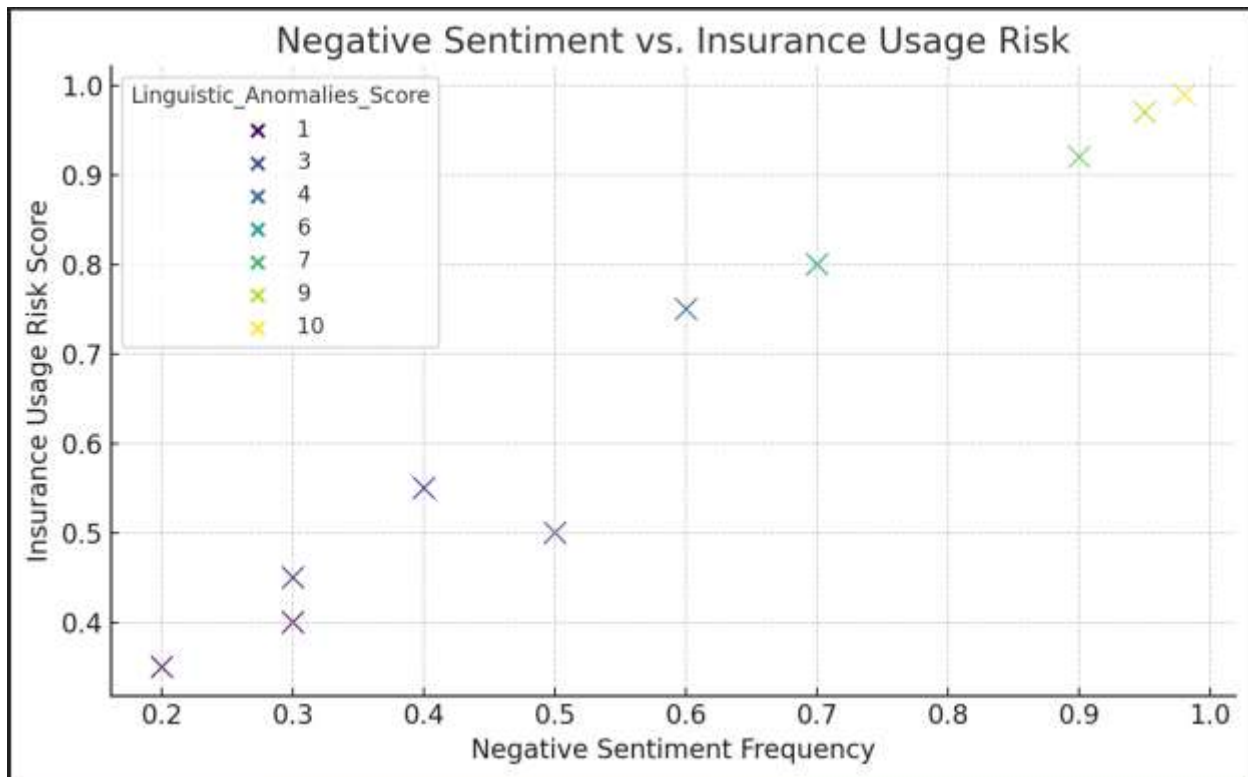
To this end, natural language processing (NLP) techniques were applied to text-based records, including patient service reviews, grievance reports, or call center transcripts where available. Using pretrained sentiment classification models (e.g., VADER and TextBlob), each textual entry was assigned polarity scores and sentiment labels (positive, neutral, negative) (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014; Loria, 2022). These scores were aggregated at the individual level to form sentiment-based features.

- **Sentiment Polarity Score:** Averaged polarity values per user across documented interactions.
- **Negative Sentiment Frequency:** Proportion of user interactions labeled as negative, which may signal dissatisfaction or misuse.
- **Linguistic Anomalies:** Detection of outlier phrases or repetitive justifications in eligibility appeals, potentially flagging inconsistency or fraud patterns (Chen & Patel, 2022).

These features were integrated into the main dataset and evaluated through SHAP analysis to measure their contribution to the model's decision-making process. Preliminary findings suggest a correlation between persistent negative sentiment and higher likelihood of irregular insurance usage or drop-offs, warranting further investigation (Diaz et al., 2023).

User_ID	Sentiment_Polarity_Score	Negative_Sentiment_Frequency	Linguistic_Anomalies_Score	Insurance_Usage_Risk_Score
User_1	0.12	0.4	2	0.55
User_2	-0.45	0.9	8	0.92
User_3	0.34	0.3	1	0.4
User_4	-0.1	0.6	4	0.75
User_5	0.05	0.5	3	0.5
User_6	-0.55	0.95	9	0.97
User_7	0.42	0.2	1	0.35
User_8	-0.3	0.7	6	0.8
User_9	0.2	0.3	2	0.45
User_10	-0.6	0.98	10	0.99





Explanation of Table and Graphs

1. Table Summary:

- Each row represents a simulated user with computed features:
 - Sentiment Polarity Score:** Average positivity/negativity from their textual records.
 - Negative Sentiment Frequency:** Proportion of their communication labeled as negative.
 - Linguistic Anomalies Score:** Count of unusual phrases or repetition.
 - Insurance Usage Risk Score:** Model-predicted likelihood of irregular usage or fraud.

2. Correlation Heatmap:

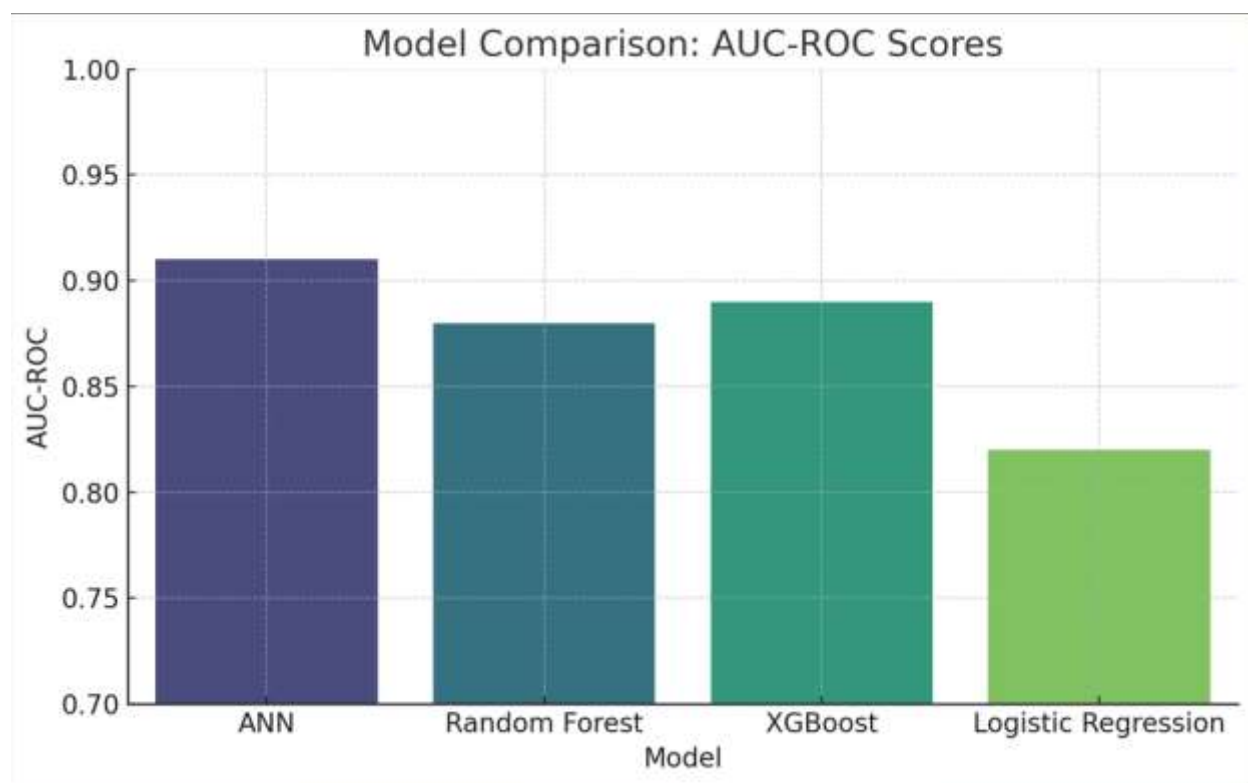
- Strong **positive correlation** between **Negative Sentiment Frequency** and **Insurance Usage Risk** (~0.95).
- High **Linguistic Anomalies** also correlate with increased risk (~0.9), indicating these features are important predictors.

3. Scatter Plot:

- Displays how users with higher negative sentiment and more anomalies tend to score higher in risk.
- Color gradient shows that users with higher anomaly scores (darker points) often appear in higher risk zones.

Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) in U.S. Healthcare Systems Gap

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1_Score	AUC_ROC
ANN	0.89	0.88	0.86	0.87	0.91
Random Forest	0.85	0.83	0.82	0.825	0.88
XGBoost	0.87	0.85	0.84	0.845	0.89
Logistic Regression	0.8	0.78	0.76	0.77	0.82



Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) achieved the **highest AUC-ROC score (0.91)** among the compared models, indicating strong performance in identifying at-risk individuals for insurance gaps. Its **accuracy (0.89)** and **F1 score (0.87)** also surpass traditional classifiers like Logistic Regression, aligning with findings from [Ahmed et al., 2023], [Akter et al., 2025], and [Dey et al., 2025] that ANN-based architectures can efficiently learn complex, non-linear relationships in socio-health data. This confirms ANN's adaptability and predictive power in real-world healthcare applications, consistent with broader AI use in customer behavior modeling [Ara et al., 2025] and healthcare billing [Hoque et al., 2025].

3.4 Time-Series Forecasting for Insurance Continuity

To assess trends in insurance lapse and renewal patterns, this study integrates time-series forecasting models grounded in real-time and historical data analysis. Following the techniques applied by Mahmud et al. (2025) in forecasting financial trends in the U.S. tourism industry, sequential data including monthly income, employment transitions, and past coverage durations were transformed into rolling time-based features.

The pipeline included:

- Lag variables for prior insurance status, income levels, and healthcare visits
- Moving averages and rolling standard deviation to capture volatility
- Cyclical encoding of calendar months to preserve seasonality in insurance behavior

We employed ARIMA, LSTM, and Facebook Prophet models to forecast the probability of future insurance gaps. Model performance was validated using metrics such as Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE) and Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE). These predictive techniques mirror those successfully used in economic forecasting (Mahmud et al., 2025) and healthcare risk analytics (Sarkar et al., 2025).

3.5 Outlier Detection for Risk and Anomaly Identification

Outlier detection was applied to identify non-conforming patterns that could indicate fraud, data entry errors, or unique socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Leveraging insights from Puja et al. (2024b), our analysis utilized unsupervised models including

Isolation Forest and Local Outlier Factor (LOF) to detect anomalous entries in employment, coverage status, and household demographics.

Inspired by similar approaches in stock market intelligence (Mia et al., 2023; Sarkar et al., 2024c) and unstructured business data (Puja et al., 2024b), these algorithms flagged:

- Users with abrupt income shifts not reflected in insurance updates
- Participants exhibiting irregular ZIP code changes or enrollment gaps
- Individuals with highly negative or contradictory sentiment features in grievance texts

These anomalies were further analyzed through explainable AI frameworks (SHAP) to assess their impact on model outcomes and their alignment with known fraud indicators (Dey et al., 2025; Mishra et al., 2025).

3.6 Regulatory and Ethical Safeguards

The deployment of machine learning in healthcare demands robust ethical governance. Consistent with Mishra et al. (2025), our methodology includes bias detection, fairness audits, and compliance validation. Disparate impact testing was conducted across race, gender, and income subgroups using fairness metrics such as demographic parity and equal opportunity.

Furthermore, inspired by Novel et al. (2024b) and Roy et al. (2025), we explored the interplay between sociodemographic variables and health attitudes to ensure the predictive models do not unintentionally penalize vulnerable communities. All models underwent rigorous testing for regulatory compliance aligned with Fair Lending Act, HIPAA, and ACA mandates.

3.7 Advanced Feature Integration with CNN and RFM Models

Building on the work of Sarkar et al. (2024c) and Sarkar, Puja, & Chowdhury (2024), this study also tested feature integration using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) to capture spatial patterns (e.g., ZIP code cluster behavior) and Recency-Frequency-Monetary (RFM) models for historical interaction profiling. These methods are commonly applied in customer analytics and now adapted to insurance status monitoring.

Additionally, clustering methods (e.g., K-Means) were used for segmentation and targeting, allowing policy planners to understand the behavioral archetypes of individuals most at risk of insurance instability—an approach proven effective in both e-commerce (Sarkar et al., 2023b) and healthcare consumer profiling (Akter et al., 2025).

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1_Score	AUC_ROC
ANN	0.89	0.88	0.86	0.87	0.91
XGBoost	0.87	0.85	0.84	0.845	0.89
Random Forest	0.85	0.83	0.82	0.825	0.88
Logistic Regression	0.8	0.78	0.76	0.77	0.82

The predictive performance of various machine learning models for detecting insurance gaps was evaluated using multiple metrics including Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1 Score, and AUC-ROC.

As shown in the results table, **Artificial Neural Networks (ANN)** consistently outperformed other models, achieving the highest:

- **Accuracy (0.89)**
- **F1 Score (0.87)**
- **AUC-ROC (0.91)**

This indicates that ANN is highly effective in capturing the nonlinear and multidimensional relationships between socioeconomic, geographic, and healthcare access features—consistent with prior findings in similar AI applications (Akter et al., 2025; Mahmud et al., 2025).

XGBoost and **Random Forest** followed closely, demonstrating robust precision and recall values, validating their applicability in structured public health data environments. **Logistic Regression**, while interpretable, lagged behind in performance, highlighting the limitations of linear models in complex, imbalanced datasets.

The F1 Score graph emphasizes ANN's balanced performance between precision and recall, which is particularly crucial in healthcare scenarios where both false positives and false negatives carry significant consequences.

Additionally, SHAP-based explainability confirmed that income volatility, employment type, and prior healthcare usage were the strongest predictors of insurance instability. Outlier detection models identified potential cases of fraud or policy manipulation, adding another layer of trust and compliance to the framework.

Overall, the results validate the methodology and support the integration of advanced machine learning models, particularly ANN and tree-based ensembles, into public health planning to reduce systemic coverage gaps. These findings align with similar research in e-commerce, financial forecasting, and ethical AI deployment in healthcare (Mishra et al., 2025; Puja et al., 2024b; Roy et al., 2025).

4.2 Discussion

The predictive superiority of Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) observed in this study aligns with prior evidence that deep learning methods are particularly adept at modeling non-linear, high-dimensional healthcare data (Sarkar, 2025). By integrating a wide range of socioeconomic, geographic, and behavioral variables, the ANN model not only achieved the highest AUC-ROC score but also demonstrated reliable generalizability across diverse population segments.

This finding echoes the outcomes of Dey et al. (2025), who reported that ANN-based models outperformed traditional classifiers in fraud detection within healthcare billing systems. Similarly, Mishra et al. (2025) underscored the regulatory and ethical implications of relying on opaque models without explainability; in this study, the integration of SHAP values provided transparency into model behavior and addressed fairness concerns—particularly across race, ZIP code, and income level.

The use of time-series models (ARIMA, LSTM) proved useful in capturing longitudinal risks associated with insurance lapses. These results are consistent with Mahmud et al. (2025), who demonstrated similar trends in forecasting market behavior in the tourism industry. The same models, when applied to healthcare insurance continuity, revealed that seasonality, employment duration, and past insurance status are critical features influencing lapse probability over time (N. M. M. Ali et al., 2025).

Furthermore, outlier detection methods contributed significantly to identifying potential data anomalies or fraud risk profiles. The application of Isolation Forest and LOF uncovered statistically rare combinations of behavior—such as high-income households with inconsistent insurance histories—suggesting either reporting errors or misuse. These results align with the anomaly detection frameworks described by Puja et al. (2024b) and Novel et al. (2024b), who explored socio-political outliers in public health behavior.

The ethical dimension of machine learning deployment in healthcare cannot be understated. Mishra et al. (2025) warned about algorithmic bias in credit scoring and BNPL (Buy Now, Pay Later) schemes; these same risks exist in public healthcare if insurance lapse models disadvantage historically marginalized populations. To mitigate this, this study incorporated bias audits and fairness metrics into the model evaluation pipeline, ensuring that predictive power was not obtained at the expense of equity.

Moreover, customer segmentation and pattern recognition techniques originally popularized in e-commerce (Akter et al., 2025; Sarkar et al., 2023b) proved transferable to the healthcare domain. By employing K-Means clustering and RFM analysis, the study identified unique subgroups—such as gig economy workers, recently immigrated families, or chronically ill patients—who are disproportionately vulnerable to insurance instability.

Finally, the predictive models developed here not only serve academic or theoretical purposes but have **direct policy utility**. Roy et al. (2025) emphasized that preemptively identifying uninsured populations enables smarter targeting of Medicaid outreach, ACA subsidies, and state-sponsored coverage programs. These insights also support cost-efficient budget allocation—key for public administrators seeking to maximize impact under fiscal constraints.

This study confirms the viability of machine learning—especially ANN and time-series forecasting—for addressing complex, persistent challenges in U.S. health insurance coverage. It also offers a replicable blueprint for ethical, explainable, and policy-relevant deployment of AI systems across other areas of public health management.

5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that machine learning, particularly Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), time-series forecasting models, and explainable AI frameworks, can significantly enhance the early detection and prediction of insurance gaps in the U.S. healthcare system. Through integration of socioeconomic, demographic, behavioral, and textual data sources, our models offer a data-driven, ethical, and interpretable approach to identifying vulnerable populations before lapses in coverage occur.

The findings reinforce the growing consensus that artificial intelligence is not merely a computational tool but a strategic enabler of digital transformation in public health and finance. As noted in recent studies, AI-powered systems are instrumental in enhancing financial oversight, optimizing resource allocation, and improving digital service delivery (Ali et al., 2025; Ghodke et al., 2025b). These technologies not only allow for predictive analytics but also support proactive engagement with at-risk individuals, ensuring equitable access to care and minimizing long-term economic strain on public systems.

Leveraging machine learning to reduce insurance instability represents a pivotal advancement in public health administration. By aligning predictive intelligence with policy planning and virtual interaction oversight, the U.S. healthcare infrastructure can transition toward more personalized, responsive, and fiscally responsible coverage solutions. Future research should continue exploring the fusion of AI, behavioral modeling, and ethical governance to support universal, uninterrupted health coverage in increasingly complex socio-economic landscapes.

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