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Southern Rural Development Center

Dr. Timothy Slack

Louisiana State University

Dr. Jessica Ulrich-Schad

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Small Towns/Big Trends:

Demographic Insights on Living, Working and Thriving in Rural America

March 18, 2022

Moderated by:

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Interdisciplinary Network
on Rural Population
Health and Aging



National Institute on Aging



Recent Rural Demographic Trends

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Supported by Hatch Multi-State Regional Project W-4001 through joint funding of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S.D.A. and New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station, University of New Hampshire under award number 1013434.

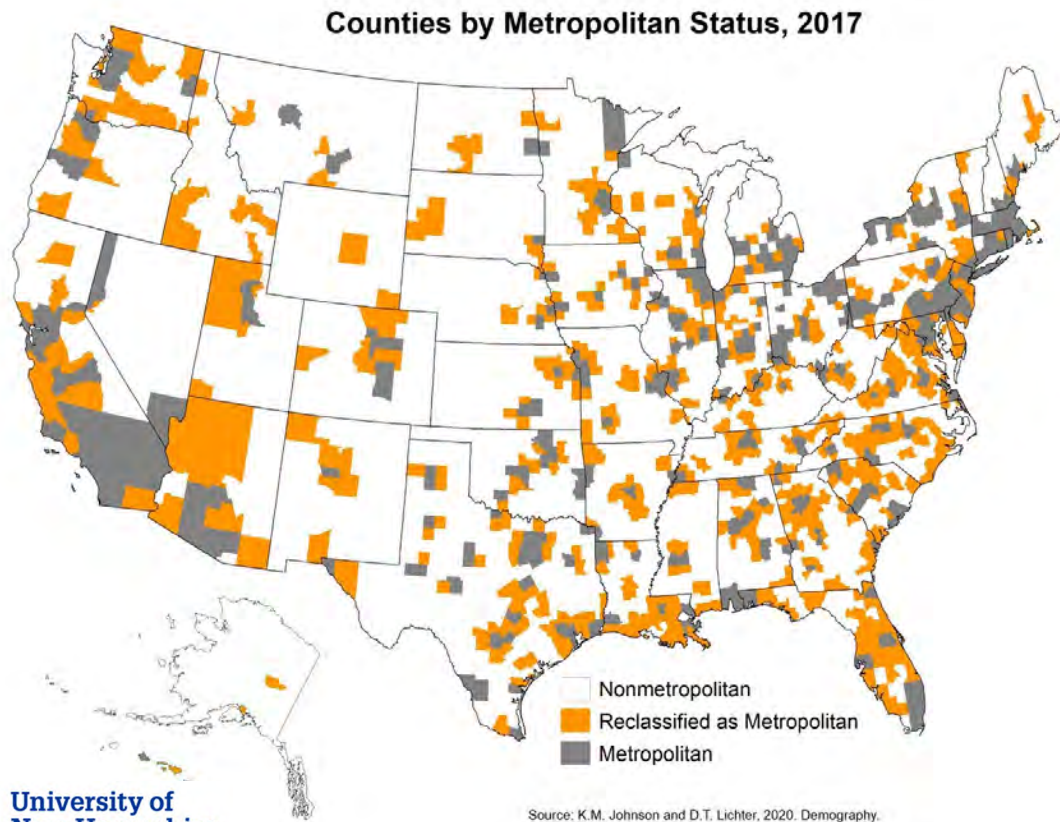


Carsey School of Public Policy

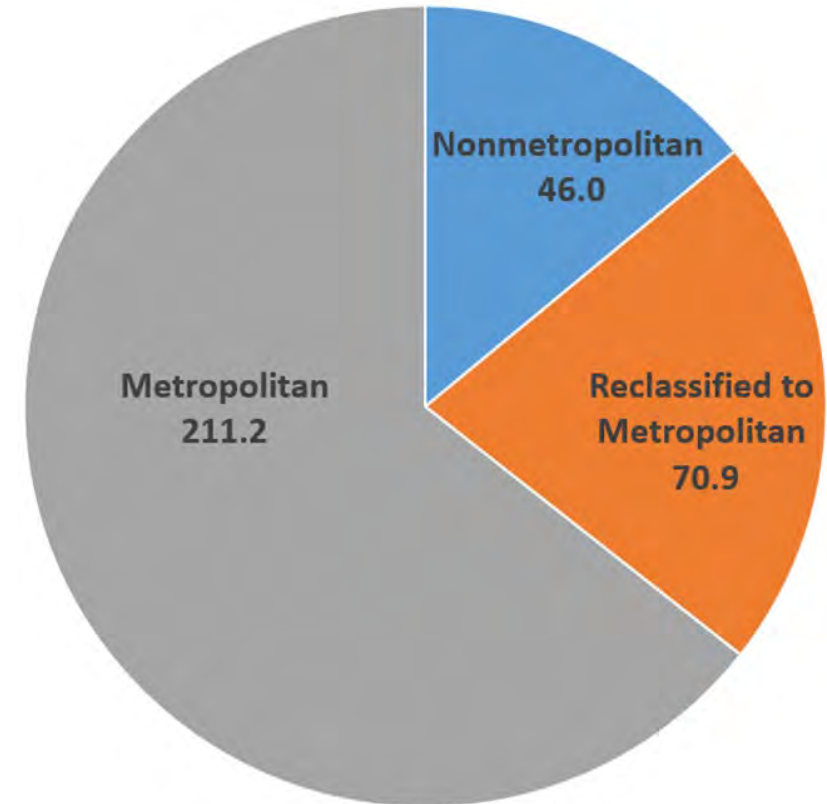


How is Rural America Defined?

- County based OMB metropolitan classification
- 1,976 Nonmetropolitan(rural) counties have 46 million residents and 68% of the U.S. land area
- 1,167 Metropolitan(urban) counties have 285 million residents and 32% of the land area.
- The classification of counties as metro or nonmetro is not static.
- Since 1970, 25% of counties and 22% of population were reclassified
- The metro population was 67% of US total in 1970, now it is 86%.
- **This proportionate growth is entirely due to the reclassification of counties from nonmetropolitan to metropolitan.**



Population by 2013 OMB Metropolitan Classification



2019 Population in Millions

The Great Recession and Its Aftermath Had a Significant Impact on Rural Demographic Trends

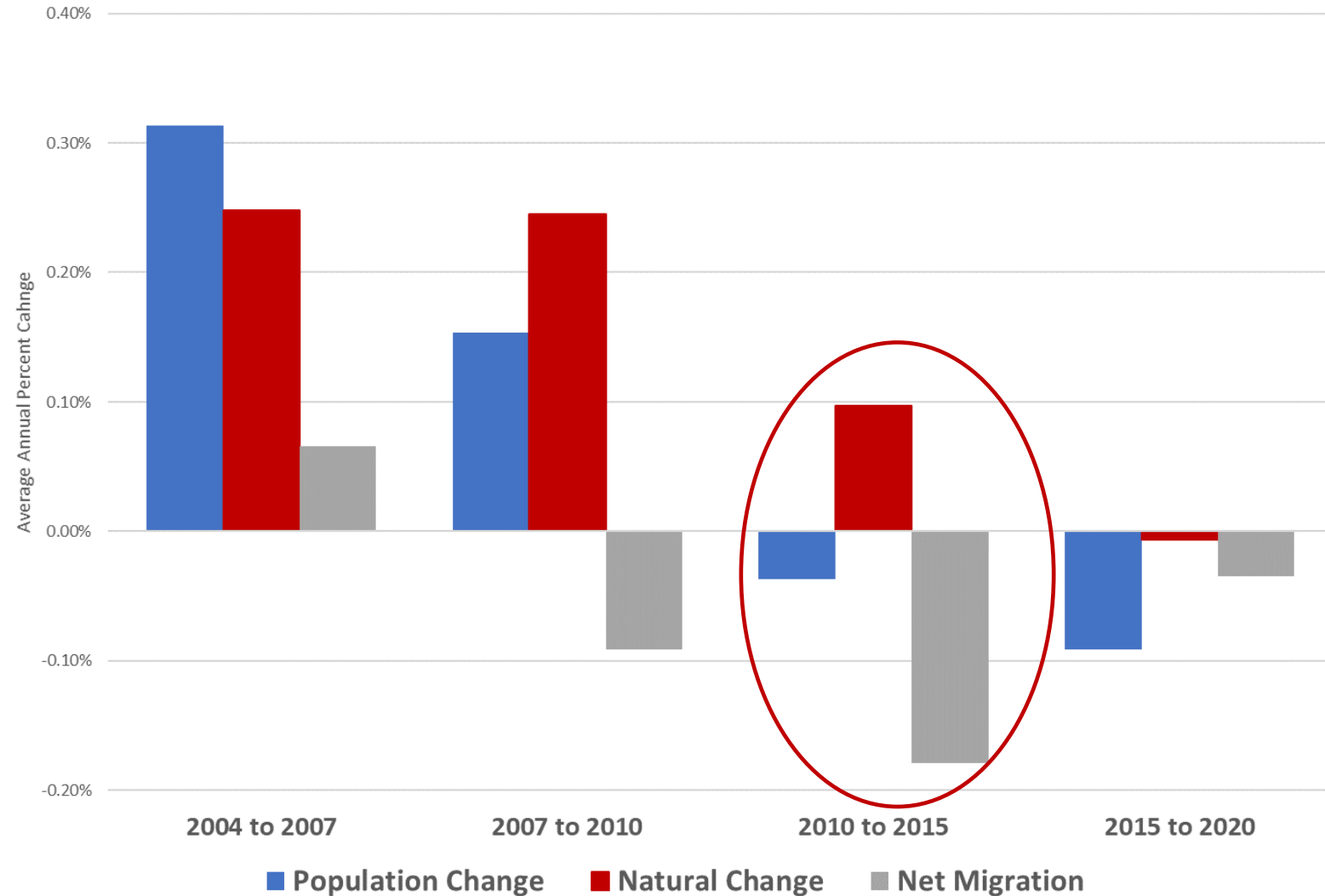
Impact of the Great Recession on U.S.

- Reduced fertility rates to record lows
 - Fewest births in 33 years
- Most deaths in history.
 - Up 16% since 2010
- Domestic migration at record lows
 - People economically “Frozen in Place”
- Immigration diminished

Implications for rural areas

- First overall population loss in history
- Reduced natural increase
- Less migration gain to rural areas
- Less immigration

Nonmetropolitan Demographic Change, 2004 to 2020



Population Loss was Widespread in Rural America, but Some Regions Gained Population

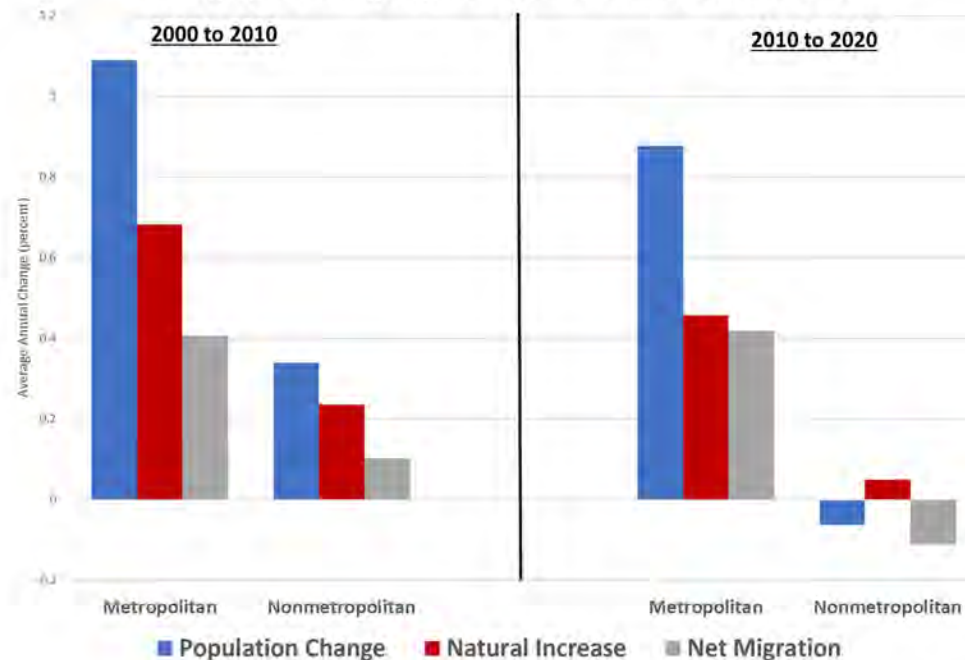
Population loss more widespread in rural areas

- 33% of nonmetro counties had population gains
- 72% of the metro counties had population gains

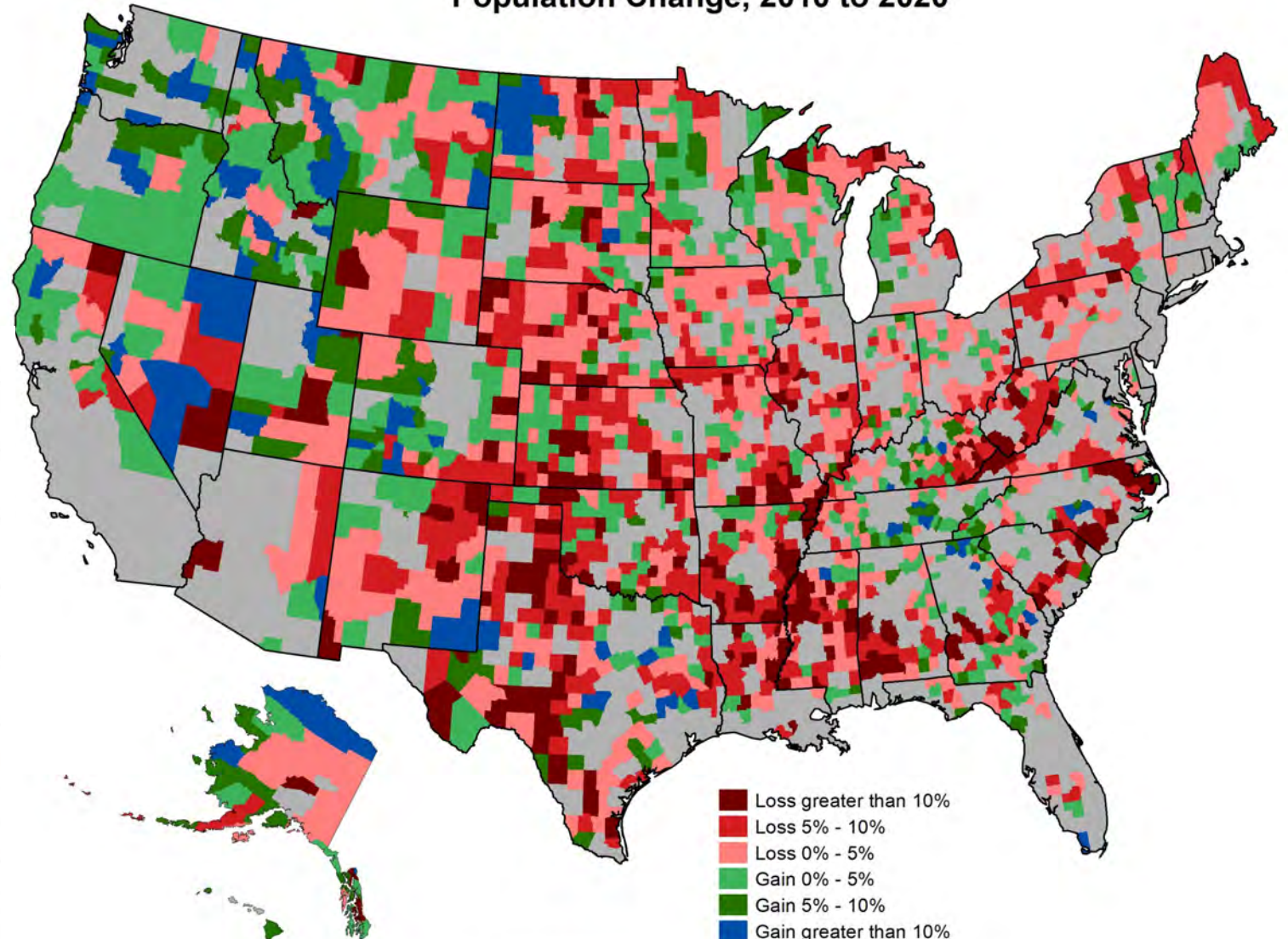
Modest regional variation in rural growth patterns

- 25% of Northeast rural counties grew
- 29% of Midwest rural counties grew
- 26% of Southern rural counties grew
- 63% of Western rural counties grew

Demographic Change by Metropolitan Status, 2000 to 2020



Population Change, 2010 to 2020

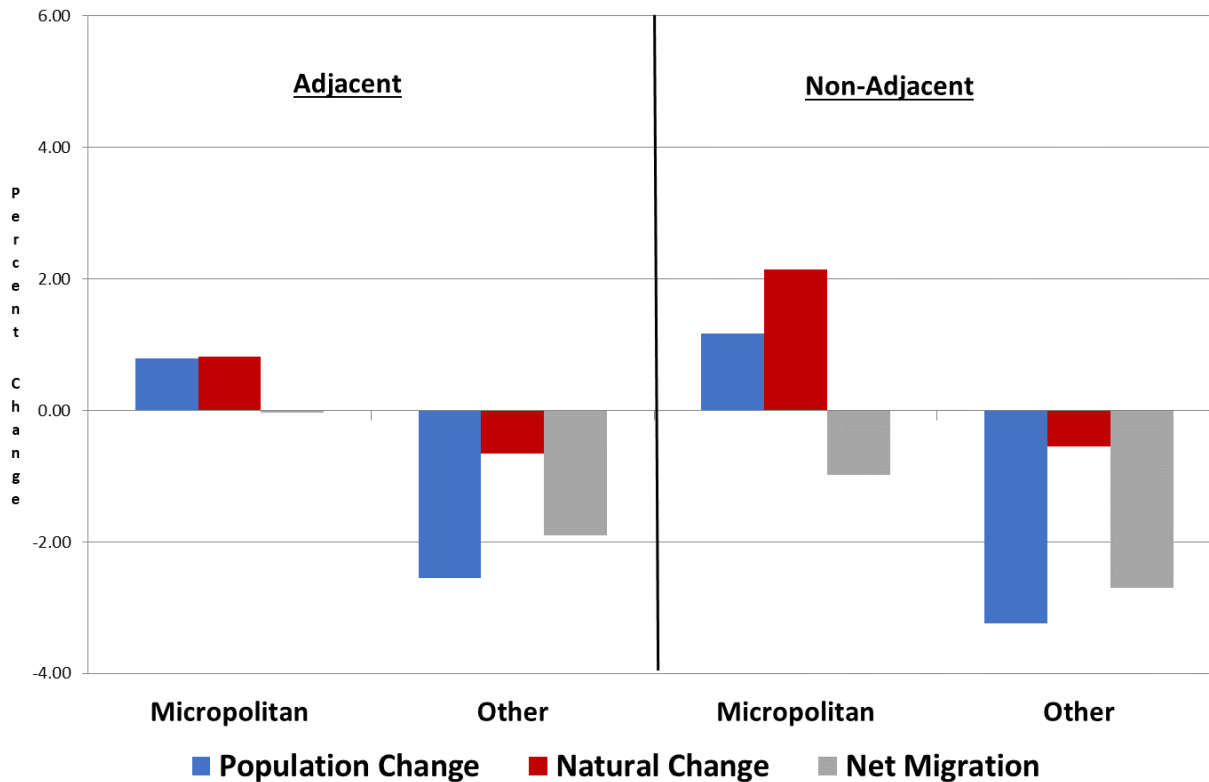


Data: Census 2010, 2020 and Census Population Estimates
USDA ERS, 2013

- Loss greater than 10%
- Loss 5% - 10%
- Loss 0% - 5%
- Gain 0% - 5%
- Gain 5% - 10%
- Gain greater than 10%
- Metropolitan counties

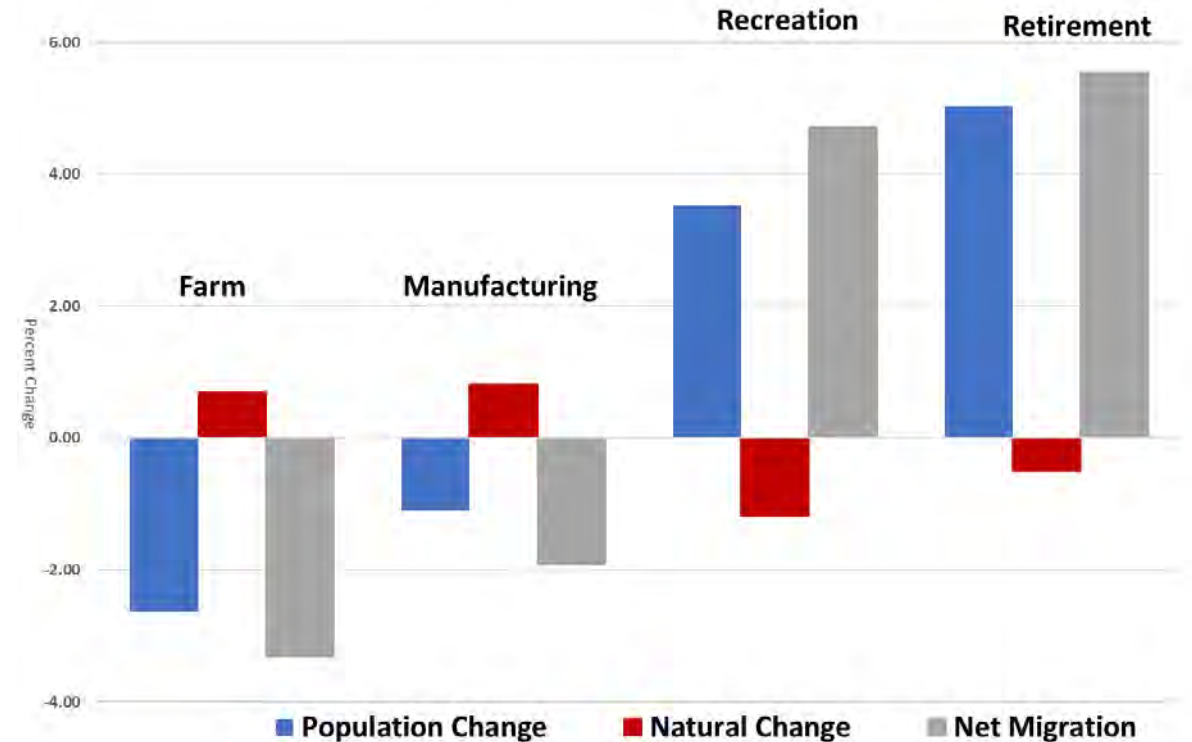
Rural America is not Monolithic-Many Areas Declined, but Some Grew

Nonmetropolitan Demographic Change by Adjacency and Micropolitan Status, 2010 to 2020



- Micropolitan gains because natural increase offset migration loss
- Other counties lost because of outmigration and natural decrease

Nonmetropolitan Demographic Change by Type, 2010-2020

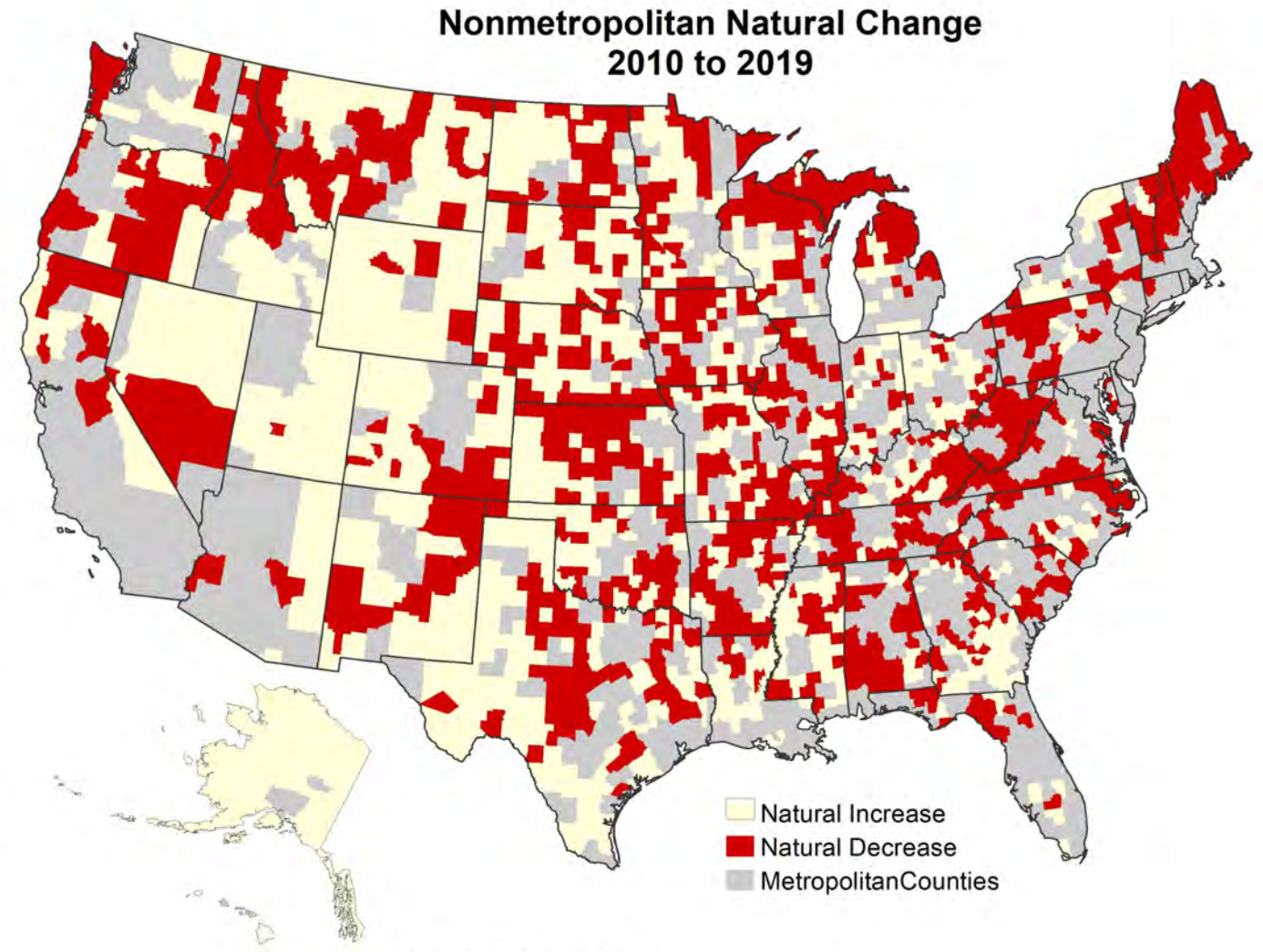
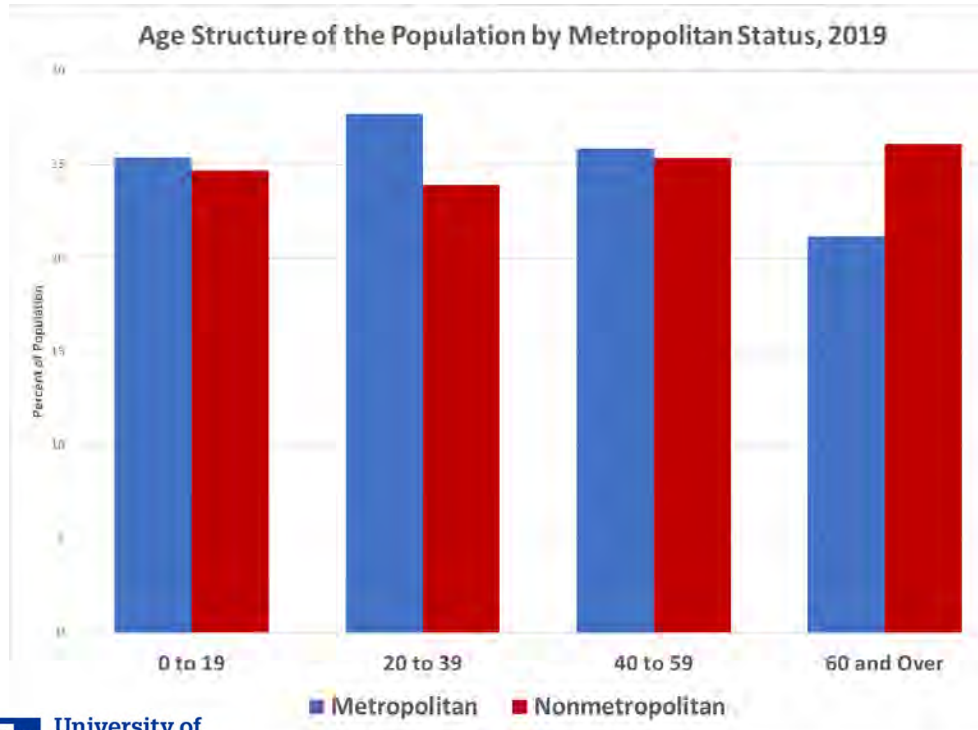


- Farm and Manufacturing loss due to migration loss
- Recreation and Retirement growth due to migration gains

The Rural Population is Significantly Older than the Urban Population

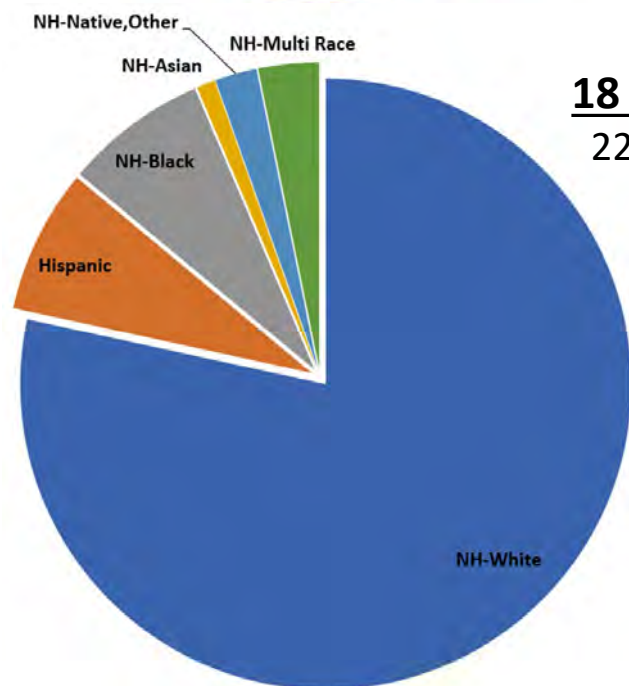
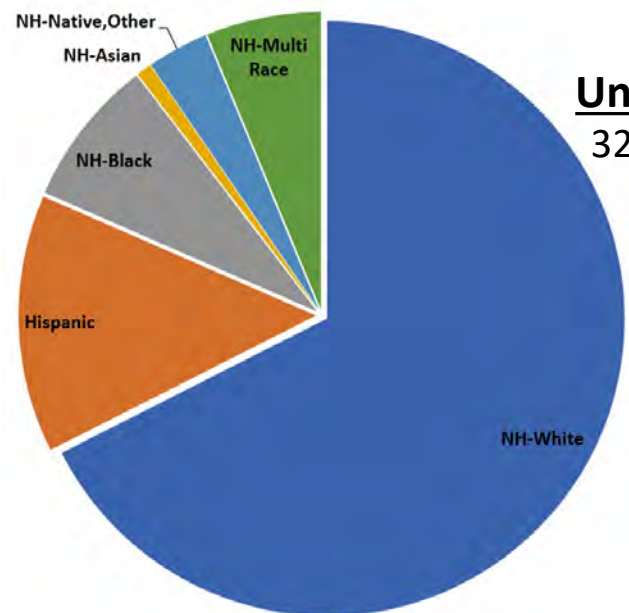
Rural aging has demographic implications

- More rural residents at high mortality risk
- Fewer rural women are of child-bearing age
- Net result: more rural deaths and fewer births
- Deaths exceeded births in 43% of rural counties
- COVID will increase rural natural decrease

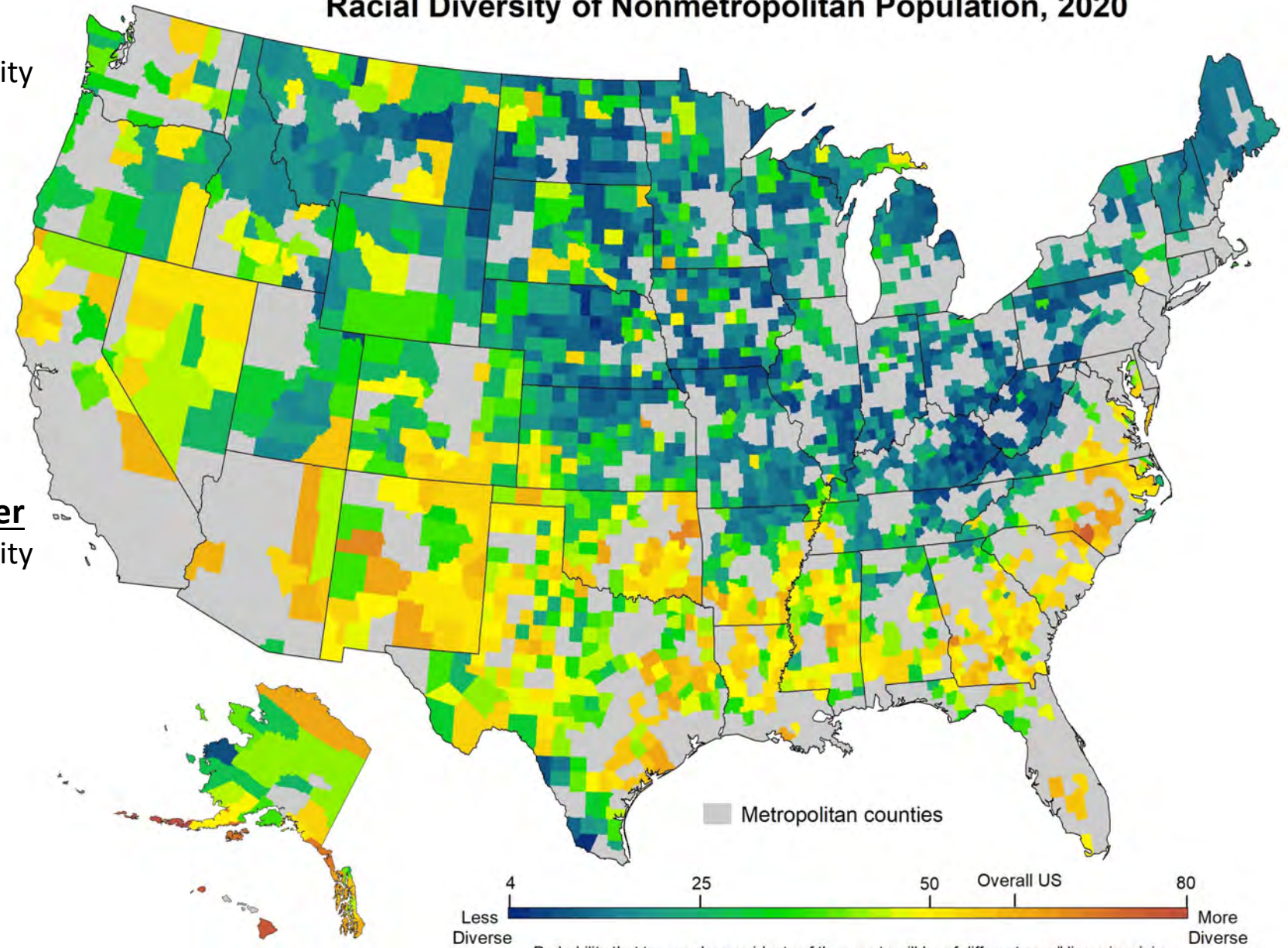


Source: Census Bureau Population Estimates

Diversity is Growing in Rural America, with Children in the Vanguard



Racial Diversity of Nonmetropolitan Population, 2020



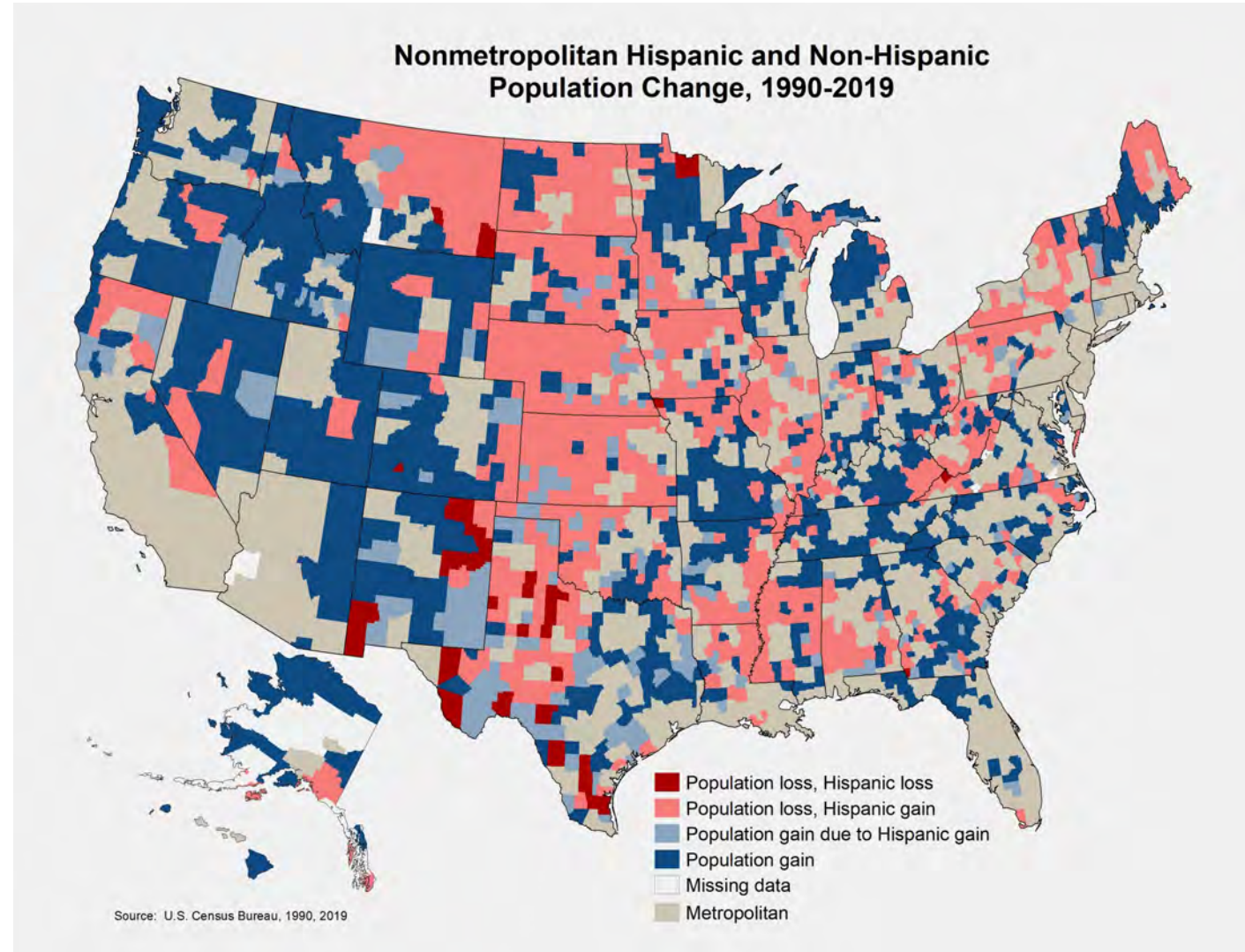
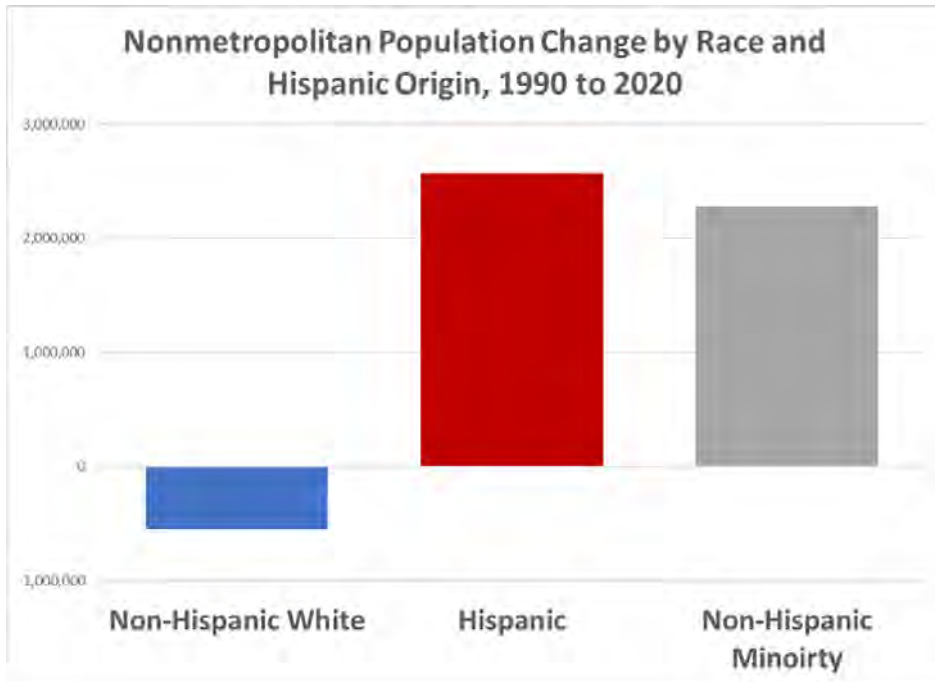
Source: US Census 2020

Minority: U.S. 42%; Metro 46%; Nonmetro 24%

A Growing Minority Population Fueled Long-Term Population Increase in Rural America

Minorities accounted for the entire rural gain 1990-2020

- Hispanics: 9% of pop., gained 2.6m (162%)
- NH Minorities: 15% of pop., gained 2.3m (50%)
- NH Whites: 76% of pop., declined 550,000 (-1.5%)



Rural Population Health in the Context of Drug Overdoses, COVID-19, and Longer-Term Mortality Trends

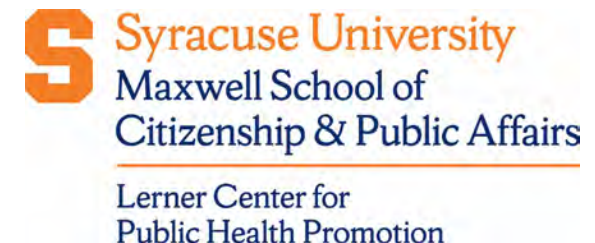
Shannon M. Monnat

Lerner Chair for Public Health Promotion and Lerner Center Director

Associate Professor of Sociology

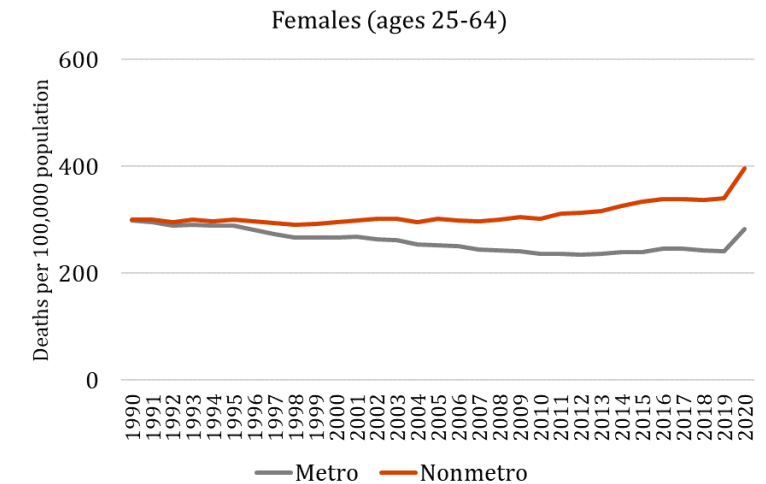
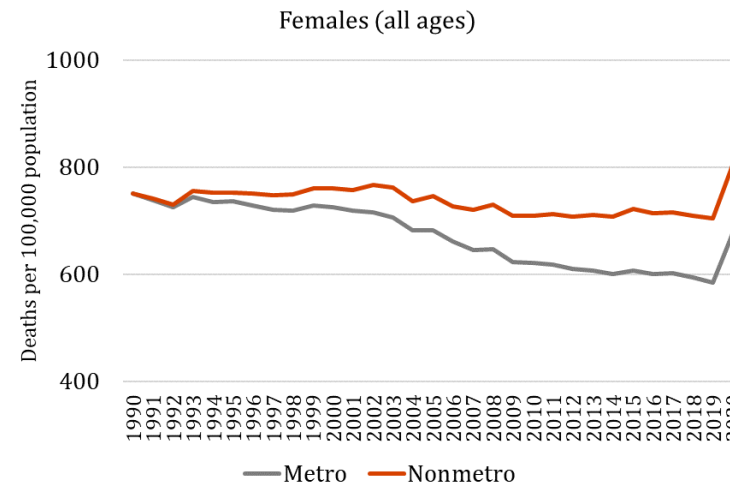
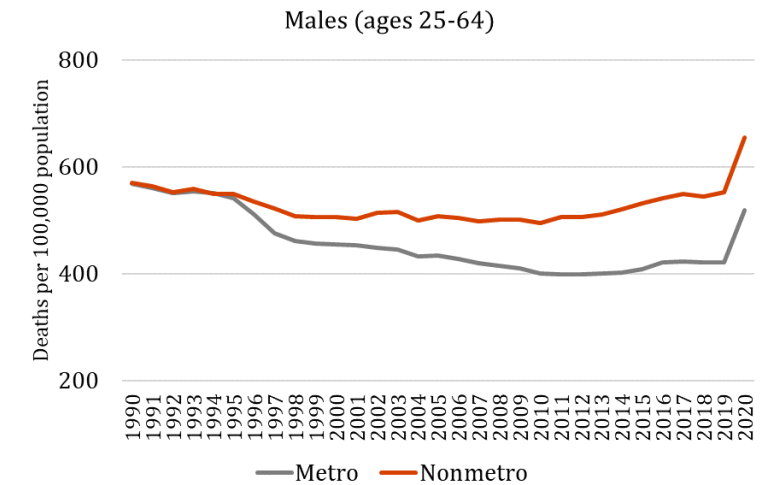
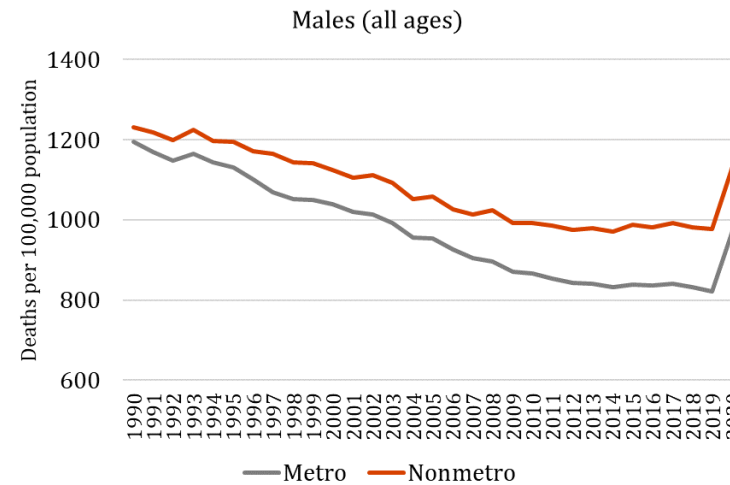
Syracuse University

Acknowledgements: Monnat is supported by the Interdisciplinary Network on Rural Population Health and Aging (National Institute on Aging - R24AG065159), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (U01DA055972); the Center for Aging and Policy Studies at Syracuse University (NIA P30AG66583), the USDA Agricultural Experiment Station Multistate Research Project (W4001), and the Syracuse University Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion



The Rural Mortality Penalty is Wide and Growing

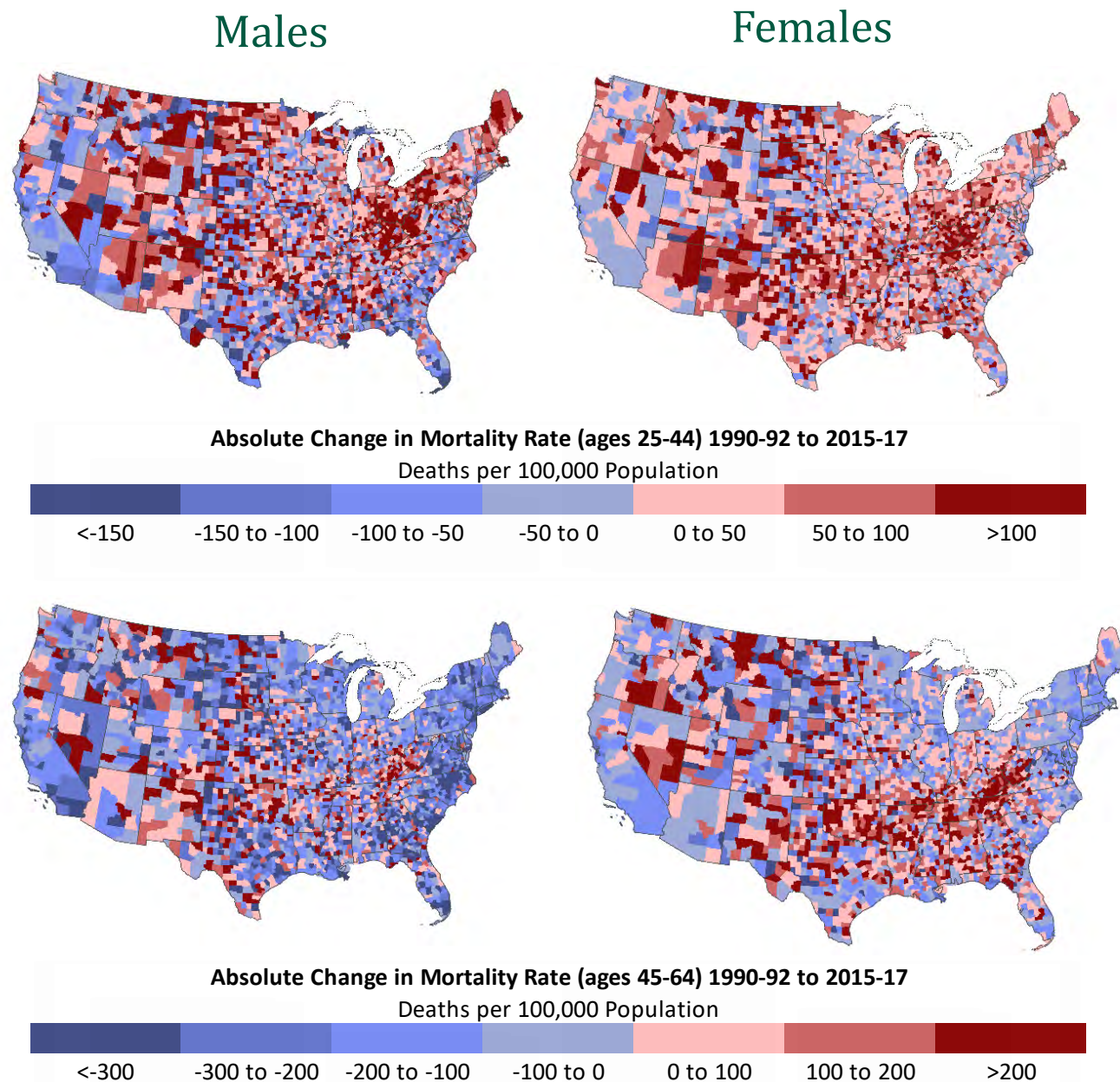
- Mortality rates started to diverge in the 1990s, and the gap has widened over time.
- Driven by larger metro declines and both nonmetro stagnation and increases.
- The increasing gap is driven by working-age adults (ages 25-64). In 2019:
 - Nonmetro male rate was 26% higher than metro male rate.
 - Nonmetro female rate was 40% higher than metro female rate.
- Rural working-age mortality rates were higher in 2020 than they had been in over 40 years for both males and females.



Data Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC WONDER, Underlying Cause of Death Files, 1990-2020; rates are age adjusted

Mortality Changes Have Varied Across the U.S.

- Large declines since 1990s in urban coastal cities;
 - Especially for ages 45-64
- Large increases in America's heartland and other places that were once hubs for secure working-class jobs;
 - Especially for ages 25-44
- Rural America not monolithic
 - Large increases in central Appalachia, New England, Industrial Midwest, Central U.S.
 - More favorable trends in Mid-Atlantic, some parts of the South, Mountain, and Pacific

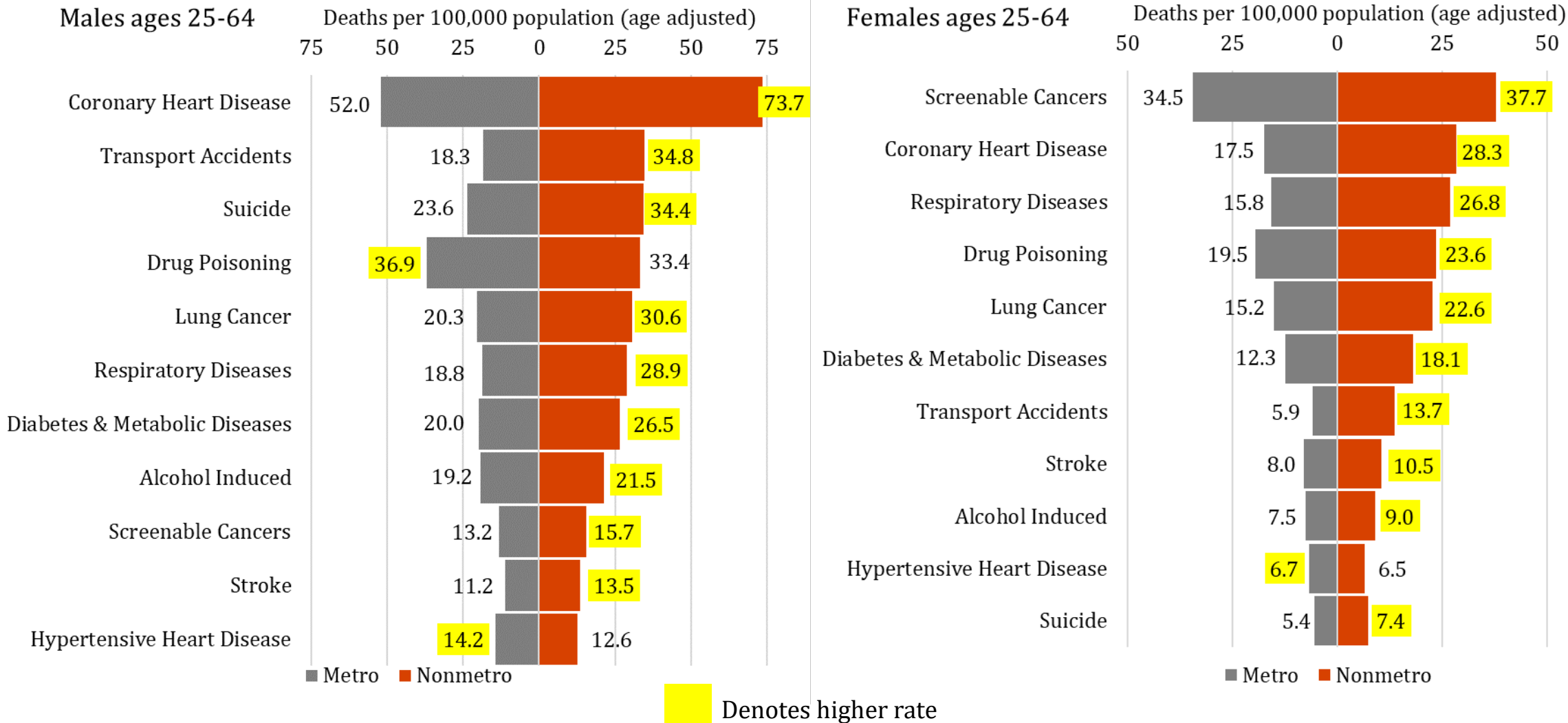


National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. "High and Rising Mortality Rates among Working-Age Adults."

Data Source: National Vital Statistics System. Rates are age adjusted.

Nearly Every Major Cause of Death Contributes to the Rural Mortality Penalty

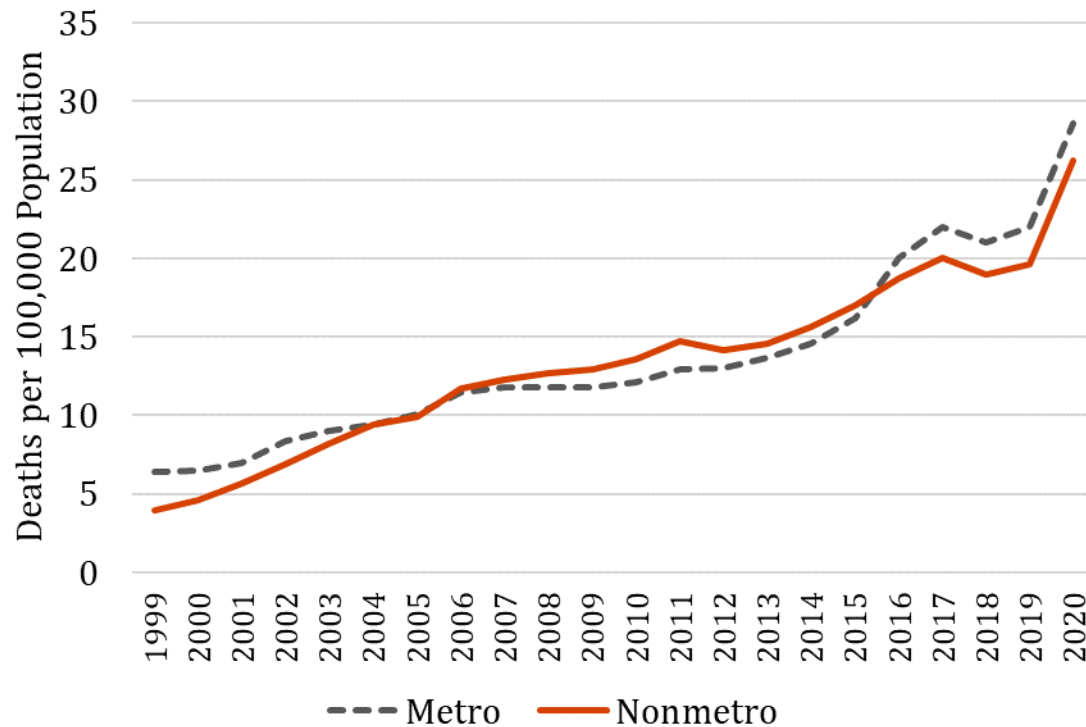
Cause-Specific Mortality Rates in the 2010s (2010-2019) for ages 25-64 by Metro Status and Sex



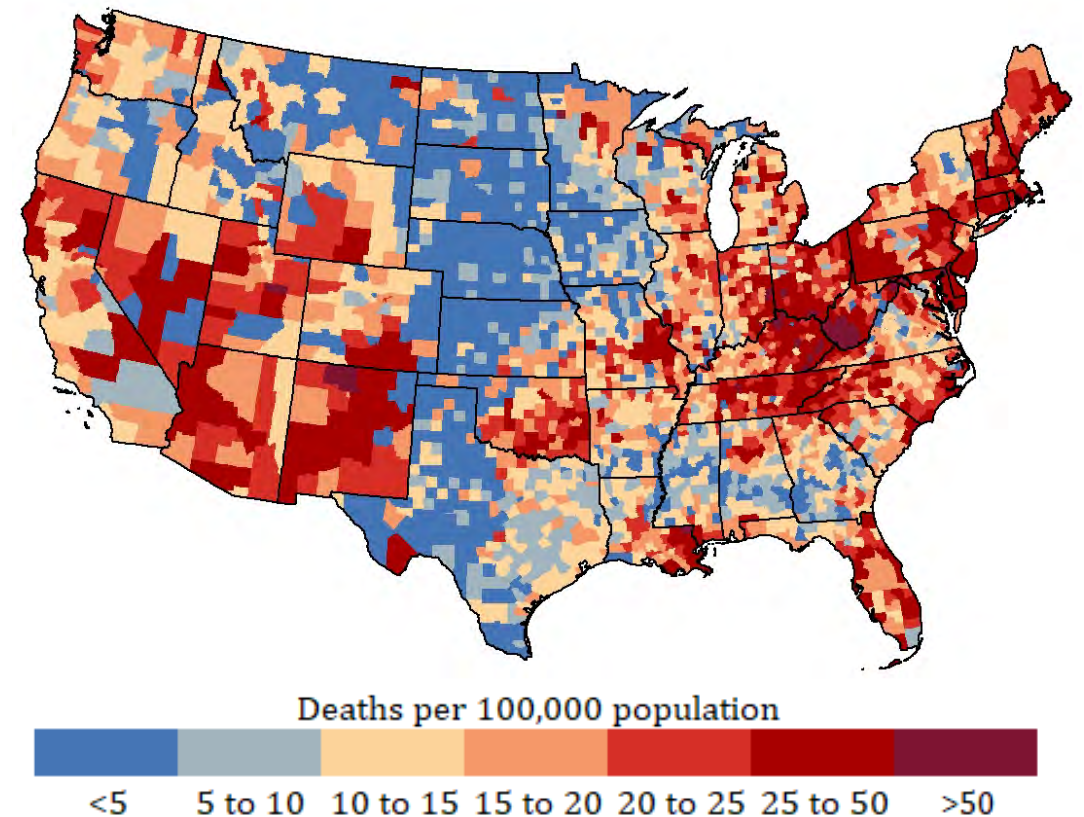
Data Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC WONDER, Underlying Cause of Death Files, 2010-2019

The U.S. Drug Overdose Crisis is Not Disproportionately Rural, but Some Rural Places Have among the Highest Rates in the U.S.

Fatal Drug Overdose Rates by Metro Status

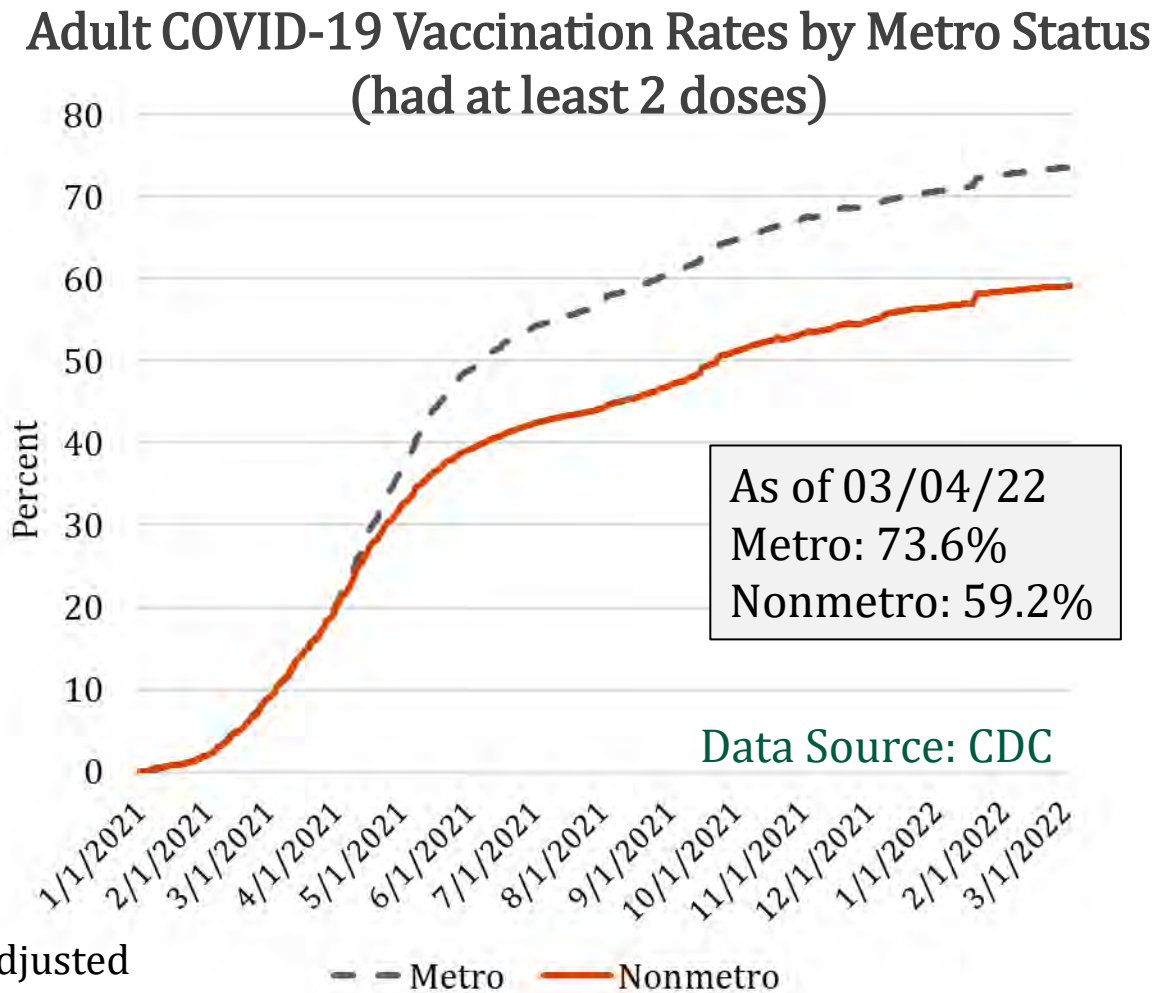
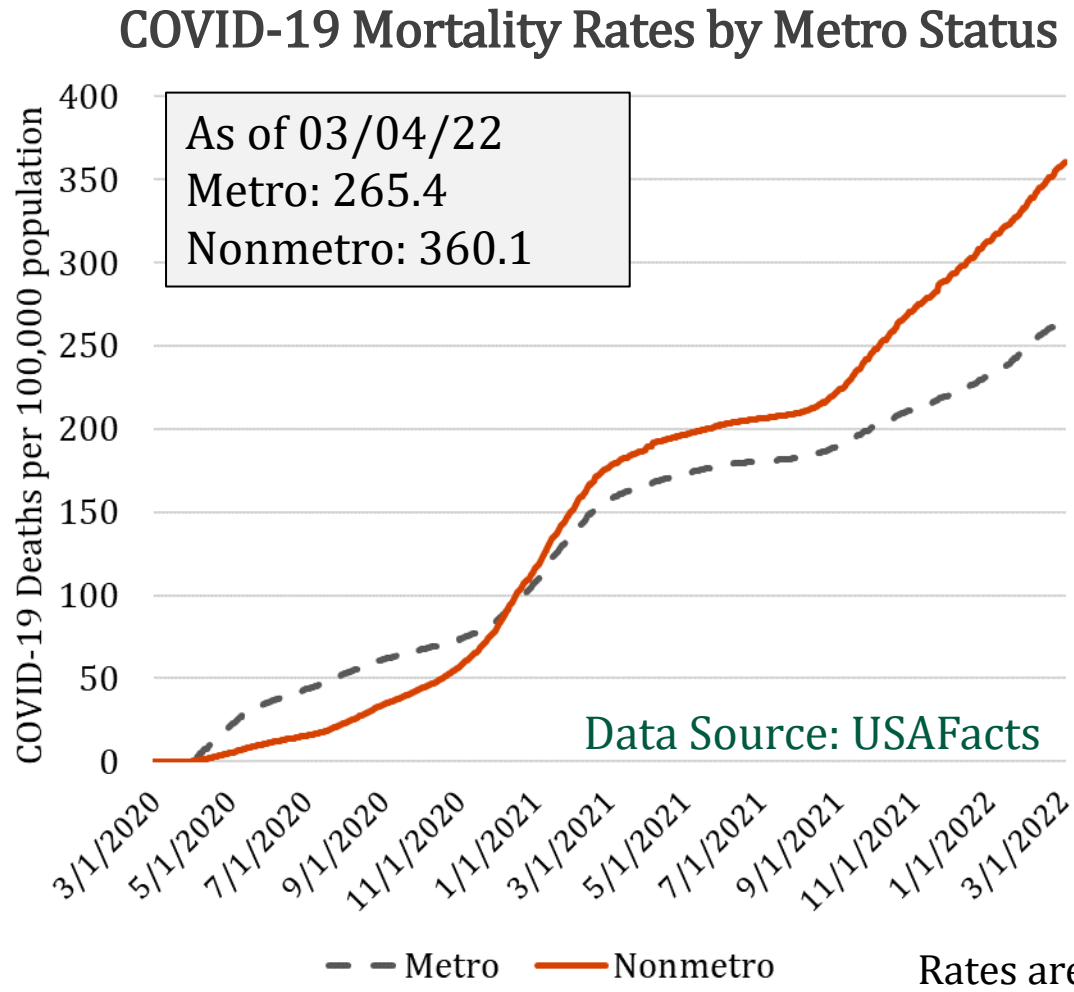


Fatal Drug Overdose Rates, 2011-2020



Data Source: National Vital Statistics System. Rates are age adjusted.

COVID-19 Has Worsened the Existing Rural Mortality Penalty



Sun, Yue, Kent Jason G. Cheng, and Shannon M. Monnat. In Press. "Rural-Urban and Within-Rural Differences in COVID-19 Mortality Rates." *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*.

Sun, Yue and Shannon M. Monnat. 2021. "Rural-Urban and Within-Rural Differences in COVID-19 Vaccination Rates." *The Journal of Rural Health*.

Challenges and Opportunities of an Aging Rural Population

Mildred E. Warner and Xue Zhang

Cornell University



Shifting the Framework:

- An *All Ages* Approach
 - Children, families, singles, older adults
 - Build common vision
- Address differences across the urban - rural divide
- Link Planning, Design and Services

Funding Support from USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (# 2019-68006-29674), Multistate Hatch W4001 by Cornell Ag. Exp. Station, and Engaged Cornell





World Health
Organization

7 Domains of Age-Friendly Communities

■ HOUSING

Affordability and access



They say home is where the heart is—and the same holds true for the Livability Index. Housing is a central component of livability.

■ TRANSPORTATION

Safe and convenient options



How easily and safely we're able to get from one place to another has a major effect on our quality of life.

■ NEIGHBORHOOD

Access to life, work, and play



What makes a neighborhood truly livable? Two important qualities are access and convenience.

■ ENVIRONMENT

Clean air and water



Good communities maintain a clean environment for their residents. Great communities enact policies to improve and protect the environment for generations to come.

■ ENGAGEMENT

Civic and social involvement



A livable community fosters interaction among

■ HEALTH

Prevention, access and quality



Community conditions influence health behaviors.

■ OPPORTUNITY

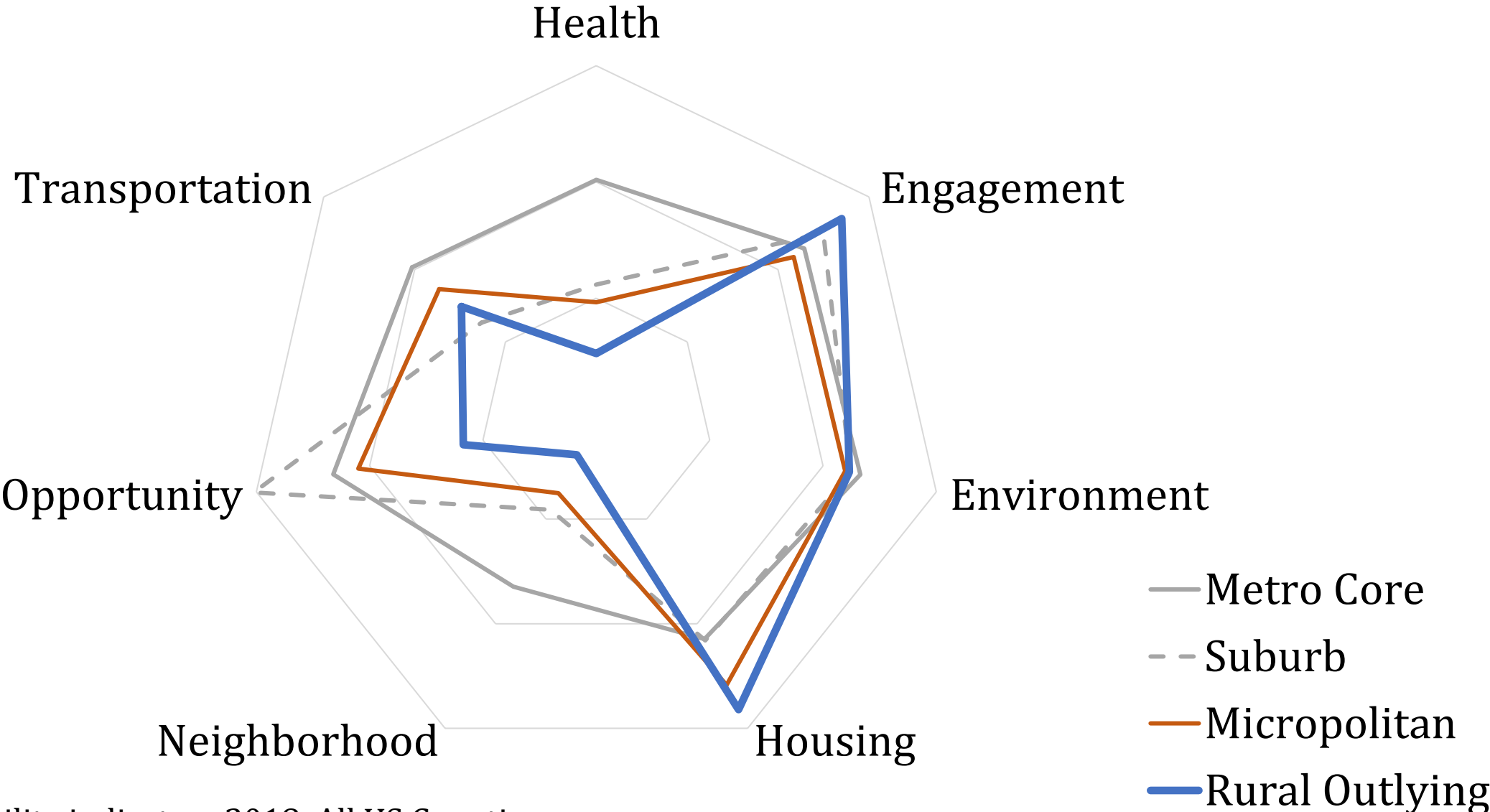
Inclusion and possibilities



America was built on opportunity—and our nation's many thriving communities are no different.

AARP Livability indicators: <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>

Rural counties lag in health, neighborhood, transportation; Lead in engagement

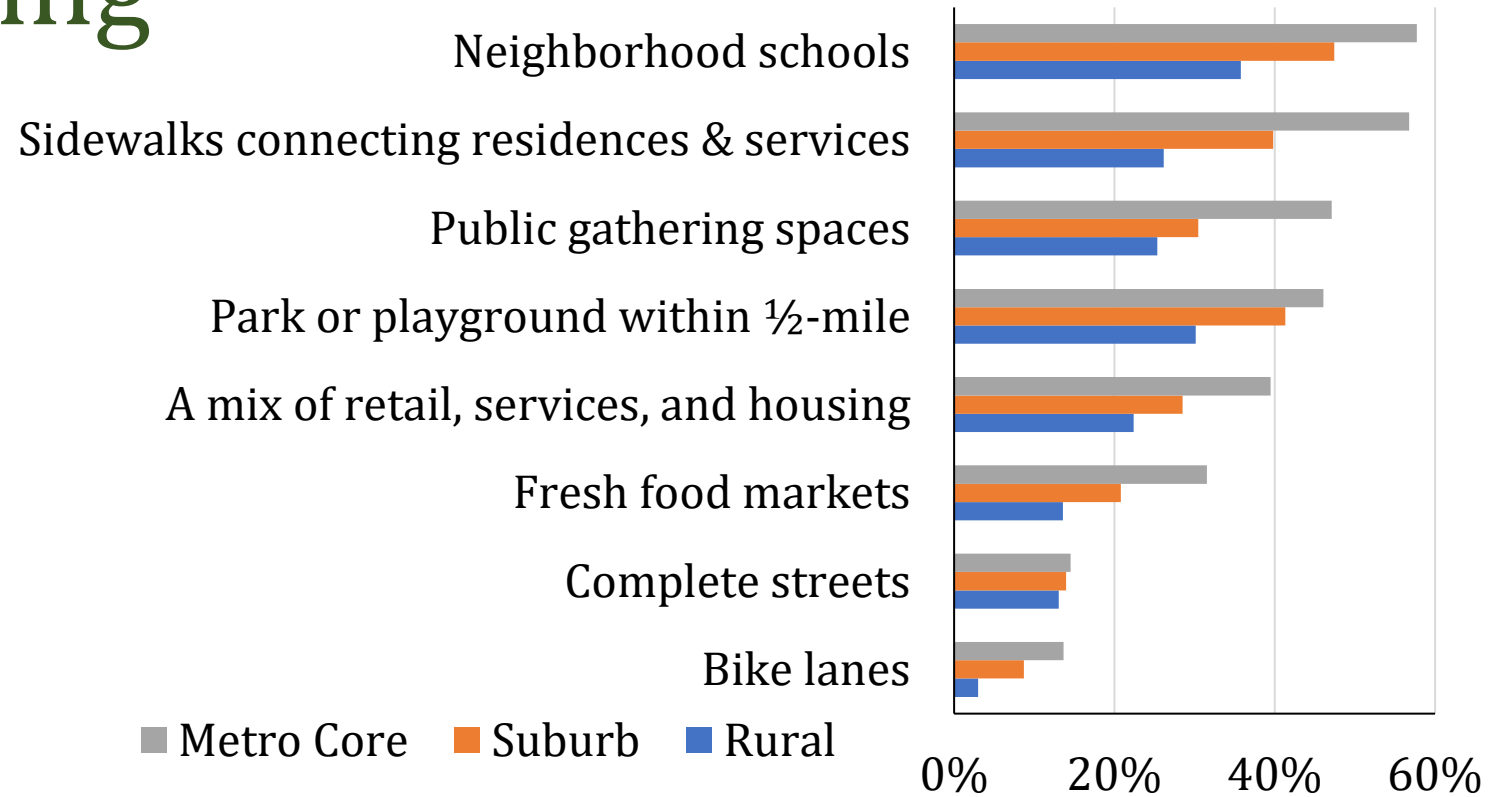


AARP Livability indicators 2018, All US Counties
Zhang, Warner & Wethington, 2020. Can age friendly planning promote equity in community health across the rural-urban divide? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(4): 1275-91.

Age-Friendly Planning

Planning Across Generations Survey
US Cities and Counties
ICMA, 2019

Rural lags in built environment



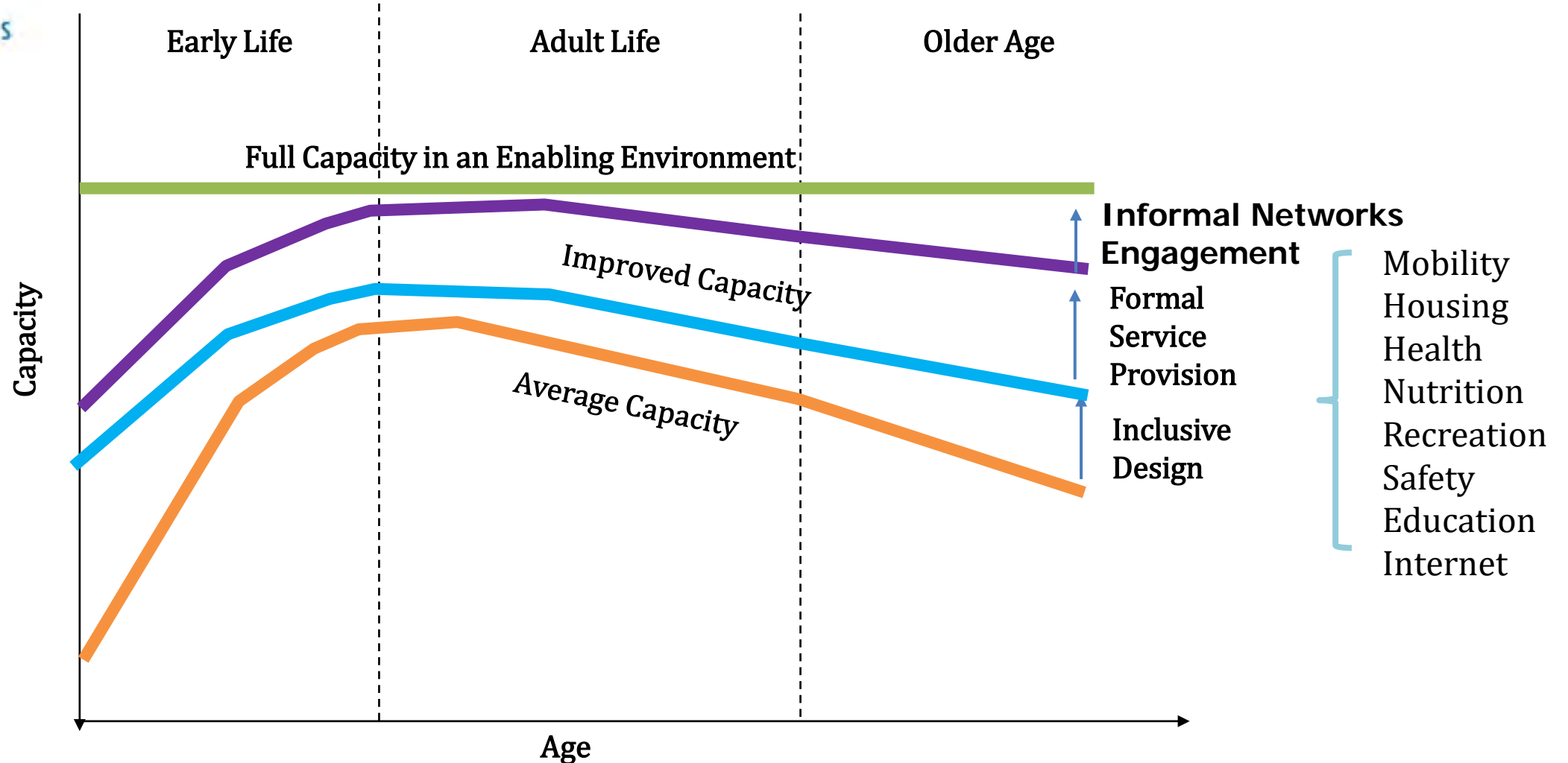
Community Plans - Only half address the needs of children or seniors

Community Plan Addresses the needs of:	Emergency Plan	Transportation Plan	Comprehensive Plan
Families with children	47%	51%	50%
Seniors	57%	69%	53%



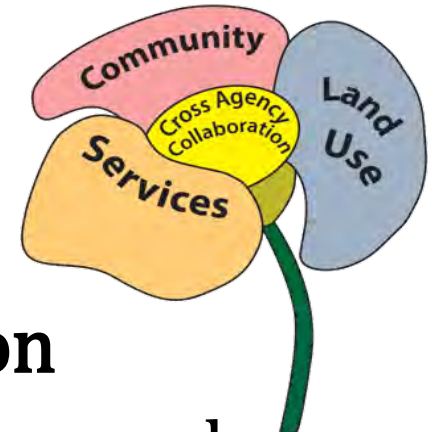
Multi-generational Planning Approach

Design + Services + Engagement



Warner & Zhang 2020. "Healthy Places for Children: the critical role of engagement, common vision and collaboration," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(24), 9277

What Leads to Change?

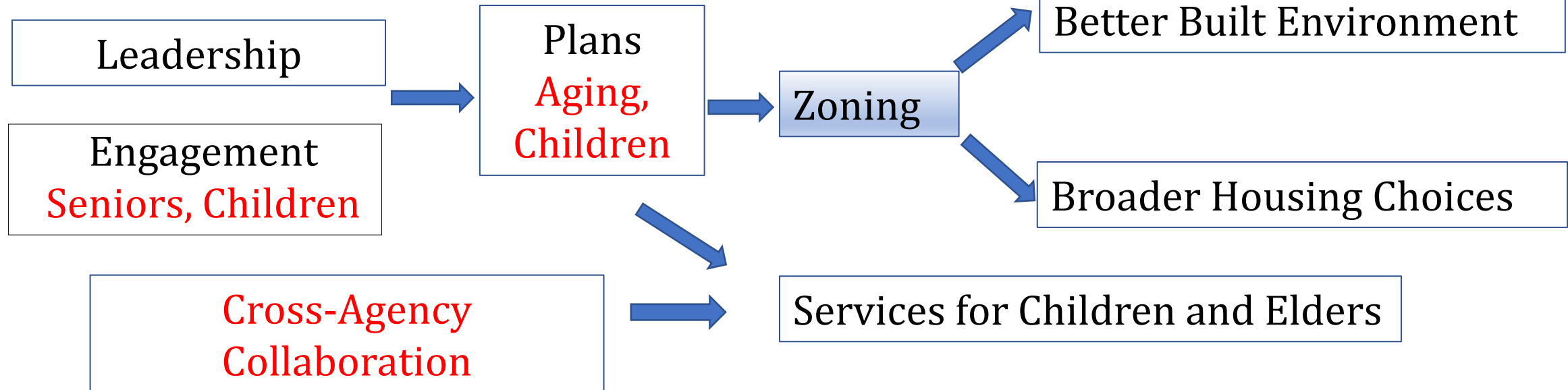


- **Engagement** of seniors and families with children
- **Community Leadership** and **Cross-Agency Collaboration**
- **Planning** – comprehensive planning, zoning and building codes

Local Government Leadership

Institutional Change

Outcomes



Warner & Zhang, 2019. "Planning Communities for All Ages," *Journal of Planning Education and Research*



Poverty and Economic Livelihoods among Rural American Households

Leif Jensen

Distinguished Professor of Rural Sociology and Demography
The Pennsylvania State University

Acknowledgements: Support is provided by the NIA-funded Interdisciplinary Network on Rural Population Health and Aging (R24-AG065159), the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Multistate Research Project #PEN04623 (Accession #1013257), and the Population Research Institute at Pennsylvania State University funded by NICHD (5P2CHD041025-19).

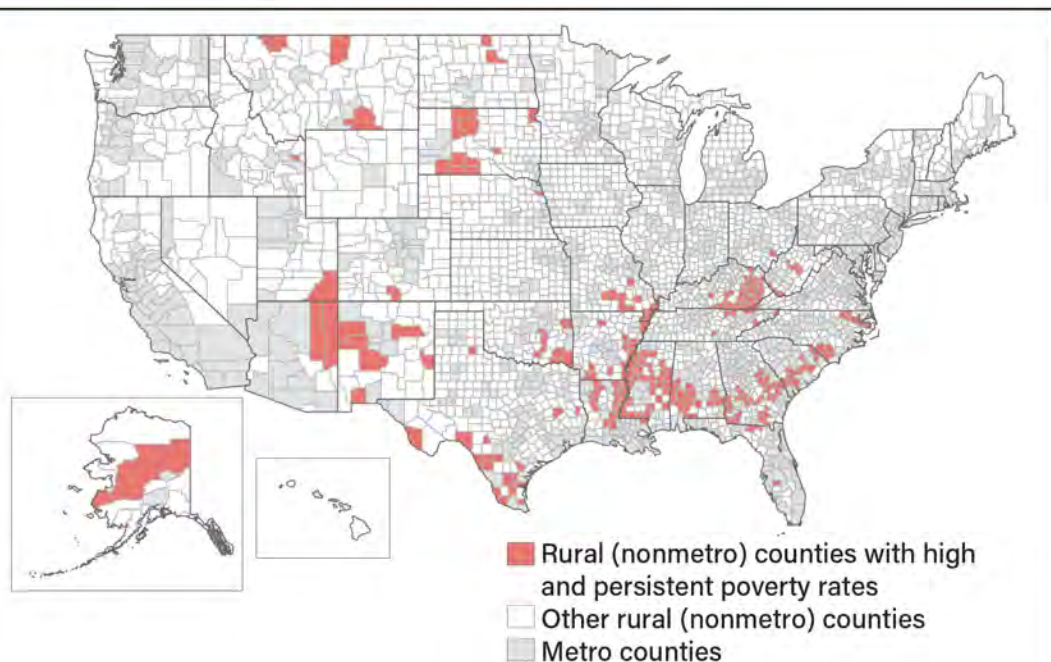


PennState
Population
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Persistent poverty befalls many rural counties

High and persistent poverty rates in U.S. rural counties, 2019

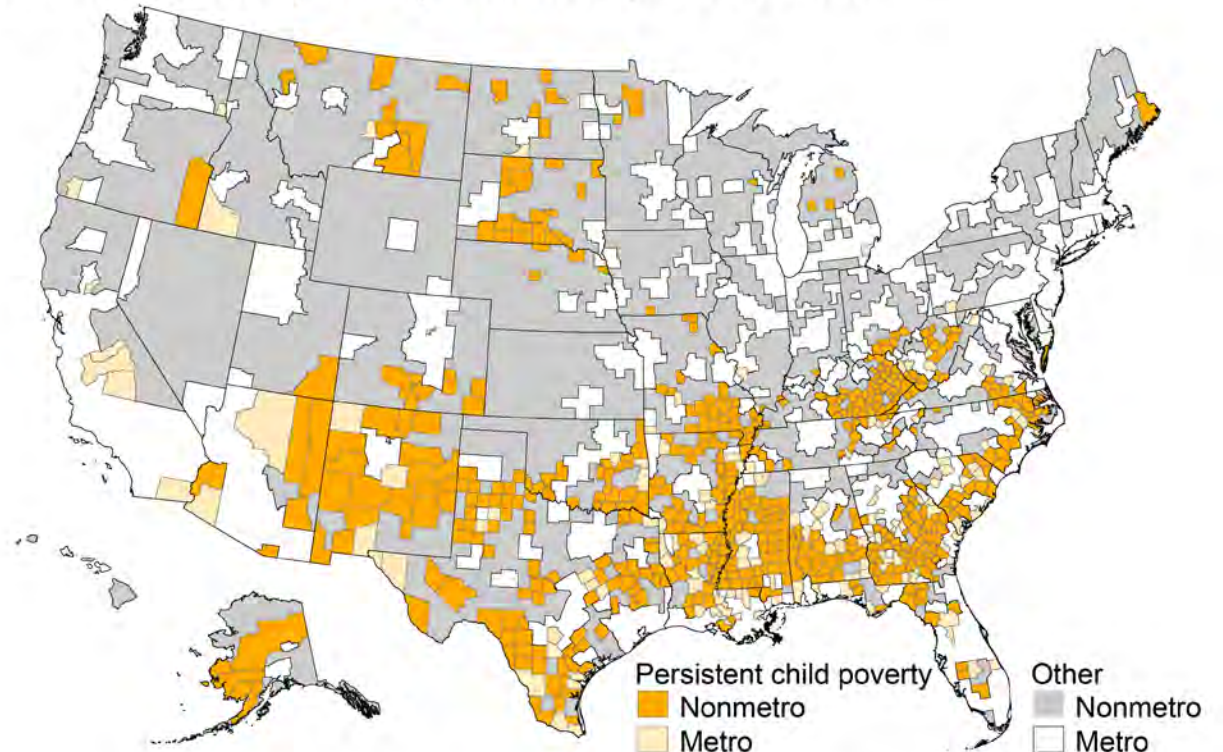
USDA Economic Research Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Notes: High and persistent poverty county = county designated as persistent poverty (over the 30-year period ending with 2007-11) in the USDA, Economic Research Service County Typology Codes 2015 edition and high poverty in the current period (2015-2019). Nonmetro (rural) status determined by 2013 metropolitan area designations from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using 1980, 1990, and 2000 decennial census data and American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2007-2011 and 2015-2019.

Persistent child poverty counties, 2015 edition

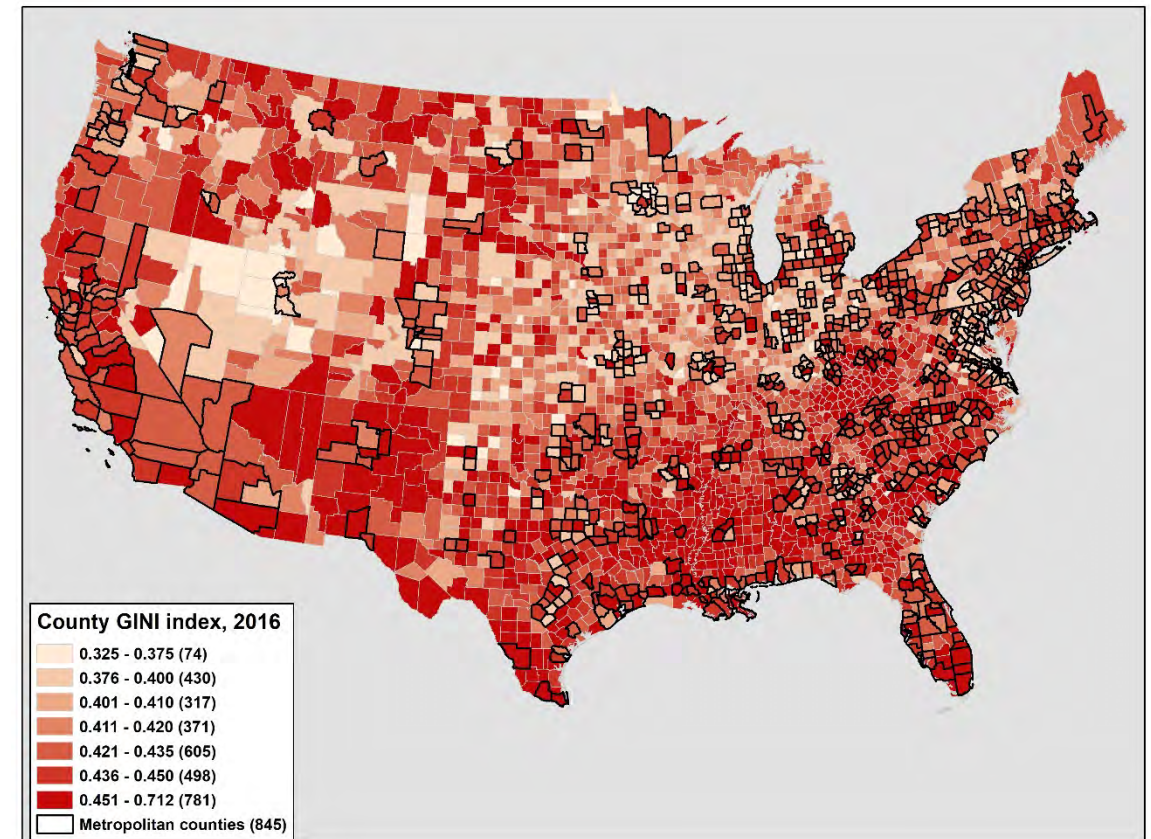
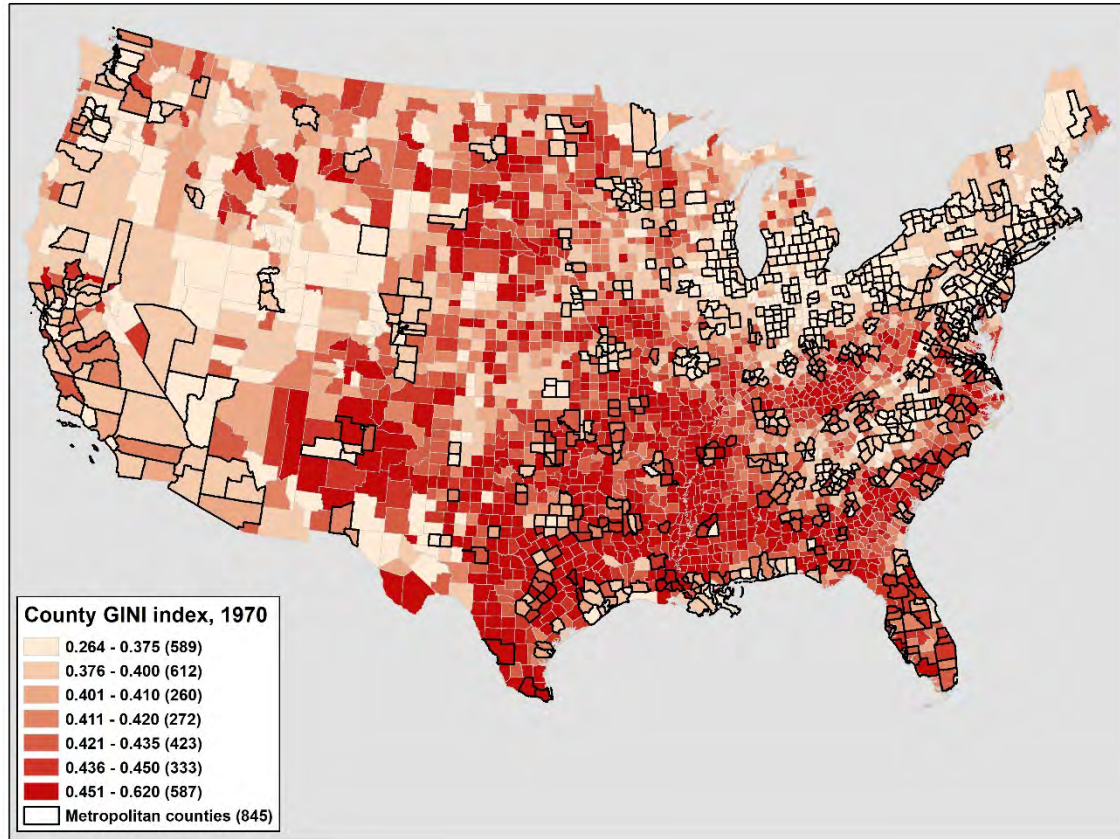


Persistent child poverty counties are those where 20 percent or more of county related children under 18 were poor, measured in the 1980, 1990, 2000 censuses, and the 2007-11 American Community Survey.

Note that county boundaries are drawn for the persistent child poverty counties only.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Census Bureau.

Income inequality grew, 1970-2016

While it remains higher in rural America, the urban increase was greater



See: Thiede, Brian C., Jacqueline Butler, David L. Brown and Leif Jensen. 2020. "Income Inequality Across the Rural-Urban Continuum in the United States, 1970-2016." *Rural Sociology*, 85(4): 899-937.

Underemployment as a rural challenge

What is underemployment?

1) Adequately employed

2) Underemployed

- **Discouraged:** Those who would like to be employed but have given up searching due to discouragement with prospects.
- **Unemployed:** Those who are out of work but are actively searching or are currently on lay-off but expect to be called back.
- **Low-hours:** Those employed less than 35 hours/week only because they cannot find full-time work.
- **Low-income:** Those employed 35+ hours/week for at least 48 weeks in the previous year with earnings at or below 125% of the individual poverty threshold.

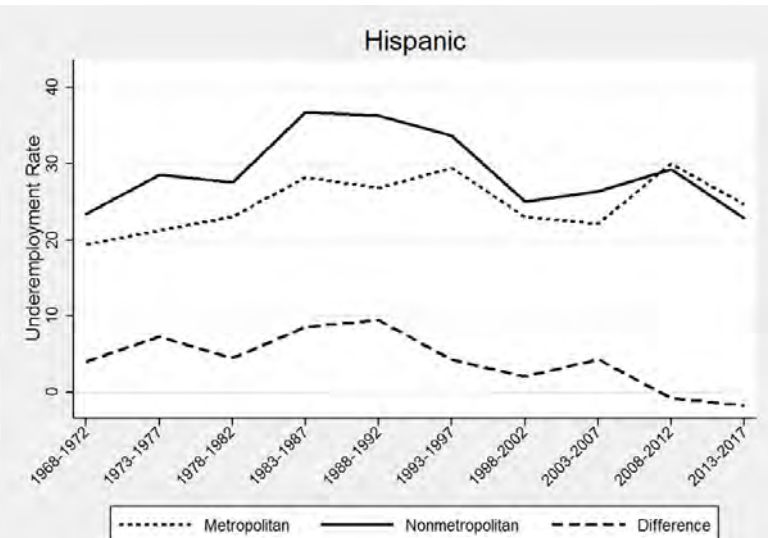
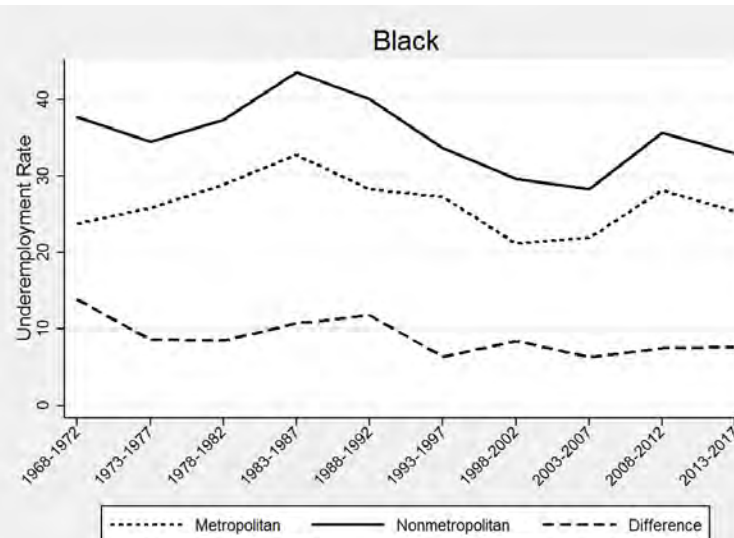
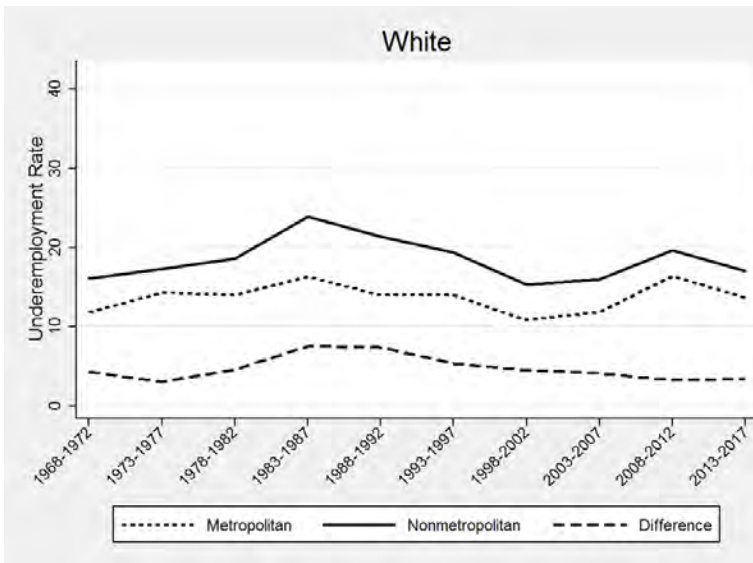
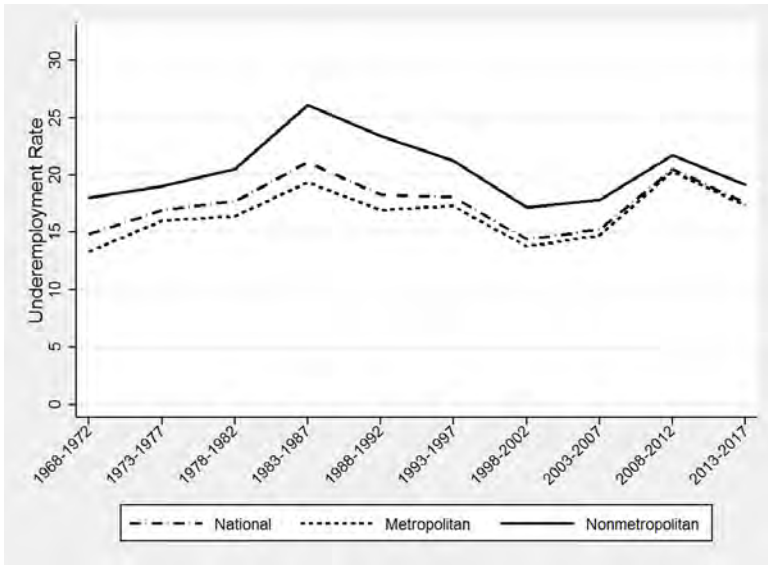
3) (Truly) not in the labor force

Underemployment as a rural challenge

Findings from a 50-year profile

- Underemployment higher in rural areas, but gap has narrowed
- Underemployment is countercyclical
- Whites have much lower rates of underemployment (lower left)
- Rural black workers persistently high underemployment compared to whites and urban blacks
- Hispanic workers have witnessed a residential reversal, with underemployment more pronounced in urban than rural areas

Source: Slack, Tim, Brian C. Thiede, and Leif Jensen. 2020. "Race, Residence, and Underemployment: 50 Years in Comparative Perspective, 1964-2017." *Rural Sociology*, 85(2): 275-315.



Informal work as a rural livelihood strategy

Background on informal work

- Apart from regular jobs, rural households make ends meet in other ways
- From Janet Fitchen's *Poverty in Rural America* (1981)

“There are also important unofficial ways in which people devise substitutes and supplements for employment income and public assistance. They constantly draw on their resources of personal ingenuity and social contacts to obtain small, irregular cash income, goods, and services. The amounts for each transaction might be small ... but it provides extra money now and then....”

- **What is informal work?**
 - Activities that generate cash, or that are done in exchange for other things of value or to reduce expenditures, that are not regulated or taxed by the government.
- **Informal work may be more prevalent in rural areas because:**
 - Lack of good jobs, childcare, services, etc., creating a need for informal alternatives
 - Strong social networks and norms of self-help and reciprocity
 - Access to natural resources needed for some informal activities

A National Survey on Informal Work

- With NSF funding, Jensen, Tickamyer and Slack (2019) studied informal work through a national survey of 1800+ U.S. households
- How we measured informal work
 - After survey questions about formal employment and self-employment, we asked about “additional kinds of work – other than the more formal types of employment we've already discussed – that many people do to make ends meet”
 - Asked about 18 common kinds of informal work:

Grow or produce food products
Home repair or improvement
Repair vehicles, appliances, or other mechanical work
Personal service
Hold or contribute to garage sale/flea market
Reuse/fix things others had discarded
Sell or trade clothes, makeup, scrap metal, etc.
Hunt, fish, or gather from land
Landscaping, snow removal, etc.
Provide blood or blood products (e.g., plasma)
Crafts, collectibles, or sew/do alterations
Other informal work not mentioned
Accounting or computer work
Give lessons (e.g., music, language, sports)
Breed, board, or tend non-farm animals
Clerical work (e.g., typing)
Take in boarders
Bartending or catering
Street vending/roadside sales

Informal work as a rural livelihood strategy

Table 3
Percent engaging in informal work by type and residence.

	Total Sample	Metro	Non-Metro		
			Total	Micro	Non-core
Any informal work	67.0	66.0**	72.1	73.4	70.4
Grow or produce food products	26.4	25.1**	32.5	32.7	32.2
Home repair or improvement	24.0	23.2	27.9	30.2	24.6
Repair vehicles, appliances, or other mechanical work	18.6	17.9	22.0	22.9	20.8
Personal service	17.3	17.4	17.1	18.5	14.9
Hold or contribute to garage sale/flea market	17.2	16.3*	21.4	22.9	19.3
Reuse/fix things others had discarded	17.3	17.0	18.5	18.9	17.8
Sell or trade clothes, makeup, scrap metal, etc.	15.5	14.5**	20.4	23.3	16.1
Hunt, fish, or gather from land	15.0	12.5**	26.8	25.2	29.2
Landscaping, snow removal, etc.	12.7	11.9*	16.9	18.1	15.1
Provide blood or blood products (e.g., plasma)	12.6	12.7	12.3	12.7	11.8
Crafts, collectibles, or sew/do alterations	8.9	8.8	9.2	10.4	7.6
Other informal work not mentioned	8.3	8.4	7.4	8.1	6.4
Accounting or computer work	7.4	7.5	6.7	7.8	5.1
Give lessons (e.g., music, language, sports)	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.8	7.2
Breed, board, or tend non-farm animals	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.7	4.1
Clerical work (e.g., typing)	4.4	4.2	5.4	6.0	4.4
Take in boarders	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.7
Bartending or catering	1.5	1.5	1.9	2.1	1.6
Street vending/roadside sales	1.4	1.3	1.6	2.0	1.1
Number of activities reported					
Mean overall	2.2	2.1**	2.6	2.7	2.4
Mean among those engaged in 1 or more	3.3	3.2*	3.6	3.7	3.4
Maximum	16.0	16.0	15.0	15.0	13.0

* Metro/nonmetro difference significant at $p < .05$.

** Metro/nonmetro difference significant at $p < .01$.

Key findings:

- Informal work is common, especially in rural areas.
- Some types are more common in rural areas.
- People report both economic and non-economic reasons.
- Informal work can help households weather a storm.

Source: Jensen, Leif, Ann R. Tickamyer, and Tim Slack. 2019. "Rural-Urban Variation in Informal Work Activities in the United States." *Journal of Rural Studies*, 68: 276-284.

Public support is critical for rural Americans in need

UNH's Carsey School of Public Policy (2019) reports that:

- “Five key government programs combined – social security, disability benefits, federal and state cash assistance, the EITC, and SNAP – keep 11.5 percent of rural and 7.6 percent of urban residents out of poverty.”
- “Social Security is especially important, without it, poverty would increase by 4.4 percentage points in urban places and by 7.6 percentage points in rural places.”

Source: Carson, Jessica A and Marybeth J. Mattingly. 2019. “The Poverty-Reducing Effect of Five Key Government Programs in Rural and Urban America.” National Issue Brief #142, Carsey School of Public Policy, The University of New Hampshire.

In the same vein, Jennifer Warlick (2017) shows the relative reduction in (SPM) poverty from safety net programs:

Program	Urban	Rural
Social security	33.2	49.6
Refundable tax credits	15.9	14.8
SNAP	9.1	11.4
SSI	7.0	10.8
Housing subsidies	6.5	4.3
UI	4.2	5.0
Child support received	3.0	4.3
School lunch	3.0	3.6
TANF/GA	1.9	2.2
WIC	1.2	2.2

Source: Warlick, Jennifer. “The Safety Net in Rural America.” Pp. 389-415 in Tickamyer, Sherman, and Warlick, Rural Poverty in the United States. New York: Columbia University Press.

Delta Population Change has Implications for Weathering the Future

John J. Green
Director, Southern Rural Development Center

- Understanding variability in population change is important for adaptive approaches to environmental shocks and stressors.
- The Delta Region, rich in agriculture and natural resources, is also plagued by such challenges (e.g., flooding).
- Population shrinkage intensifies challenges with fewer fiscal resources for current and future needs.
- There were differences in population change from 2010 to 2020 in Delta states.
 - Losses and increases in both non-Delta and Delta areas
 - General pattern of less growth/greater loss in the Delta



Figure 1: Delta Region States and Counties

Percent Population Change 2010 to 2020	Non-Delta	Delta
Median	-0.9	-5.7
Minimum	-17.5	-36.4
Maximum	47.6	21.9
Number of Counties	468	252

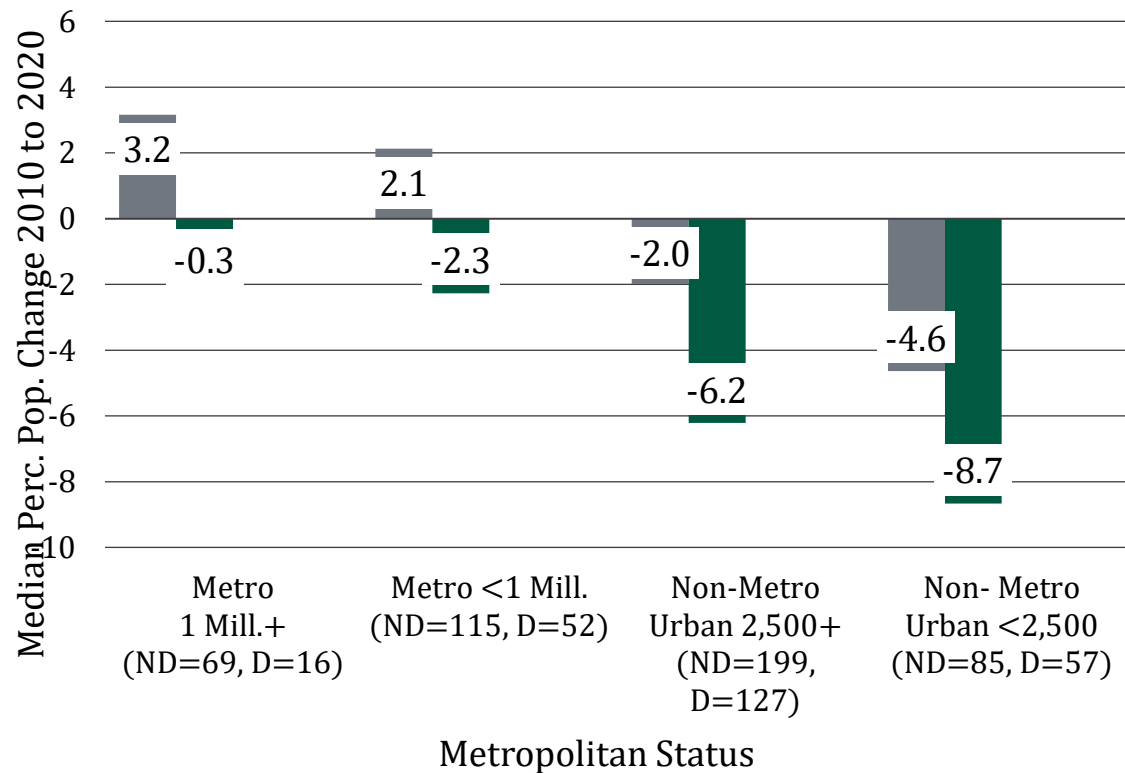


Figure 2: Median County-Level Percent Population Change 2010 to 2020 (*Data Source: Census 2010 and 2020*)

- Median change in metropolitan counties was positive in the non-Delta and negative in the Delta
- Non-metropolitan counties in both areas tended to have decline, yet changes were particularly stark in the Delta

- A substantial share of counties in the Delta experienced domestic net out-migration most of the years between 2010 and 2020
- Most Delta counties (57.6%) did so for 8 or more years

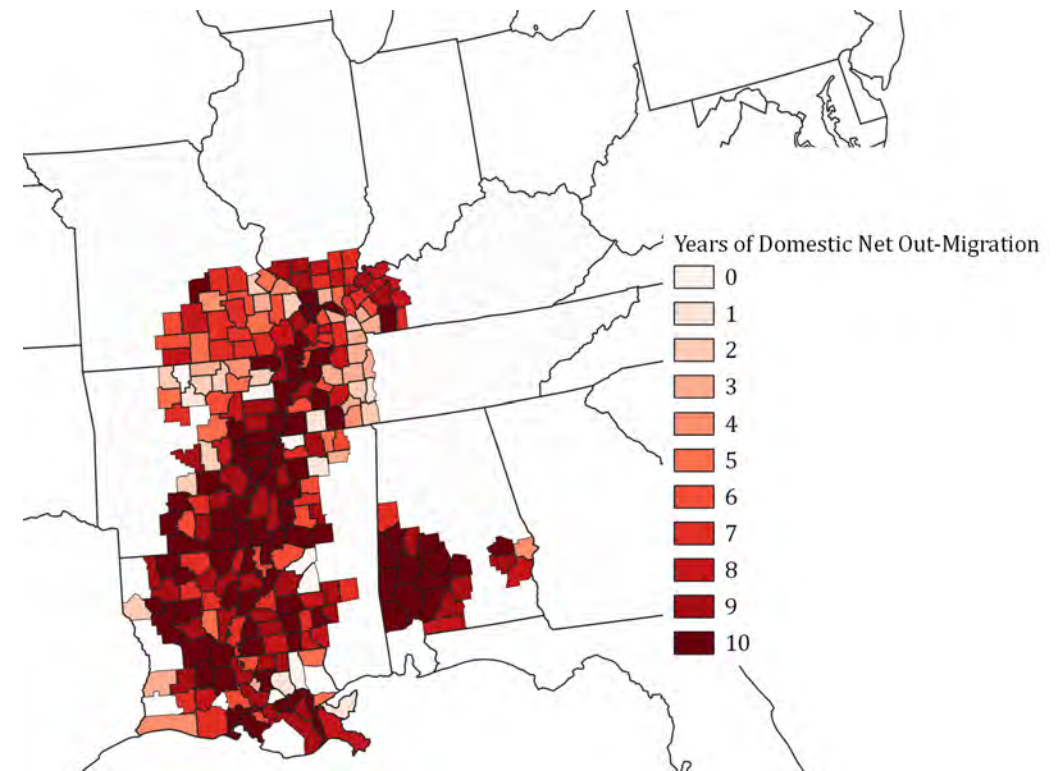


Figure 3: Annual Domestic Net Out-Migration in the Delta, 2010 to 2020 (*Data Source: Census Bureau Pop. Est. V. 2020*)

Regional Challenges Require Regional Solutions

- Better understanding population change is important for community development planning, especially in disaster prone areas.
 - Population shrinkage/depopulation is critical.
 - Example: The fiscal base necessary to support maintenance and improvements of systems originally created for larger populations.
 - Disregarding these issues may lead to further deterioration and exacerbate depopulation across the rural-urban continuum.
- Policy implications include:
 - Considering multi-dimensional population change in making programmatic decisions and addressing fiscal needs
 - ✓ Rural to Urban and
 - ✓ Delta to Non-Delta
 - Using regional approaches that transcend state and rural-urban divides and unite community leaders from across a region

Land Loss is an Immediate Threat to Coastal Louisiana Communities

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The Problem

- Rapid land loss is being driven by **sea level rise** and **subsidence**.
- Louisiana has lost over 2,000 sq. mi. of land since the 1930s.
 - An area roughly the size of Delaware.
- The state is projected to lose over 4,000 sq. mi. more land by 2050.
- Rural and small-town areas are on the front line today, but increasingly a **rural-urban interface issue**.
 - Half (50.5%) the state population and nearly all population growth is in the Coastal Zone.



Fig. 1. Sea Level Rise Projection for 2050

Note: This map shows coastal Louisiana land loss in 2050 with 2 feet of sea level rise, an intermediate-low rise scenario.

Data: NOAA and NASA. *Source:* The Advocate.

The Population Policy Challenge

- Land loss means increasing risk from hurricanes and non-storm flooding.
- Louisiana has a “working coast” of national economic significance.
- Petrochemical industrial complex is disproportionately located in the Coastal Zone, increasing risk of “natech” disasters.
- Paradoxically, transition to low-carbon economy to mitigate climate change poses economic threat to the region.
- Big policy questions around managing resilience, relocation, migration, and economic change.

Population Growth & Natural Hazard Exposure in the Rural Western U.S.

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Population Growth in the West

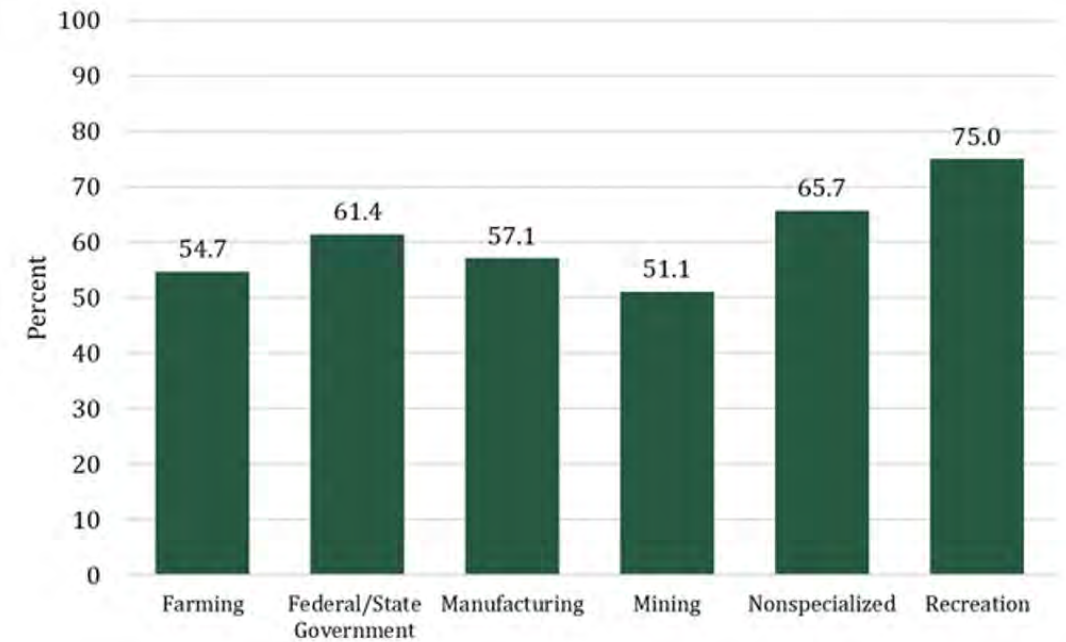
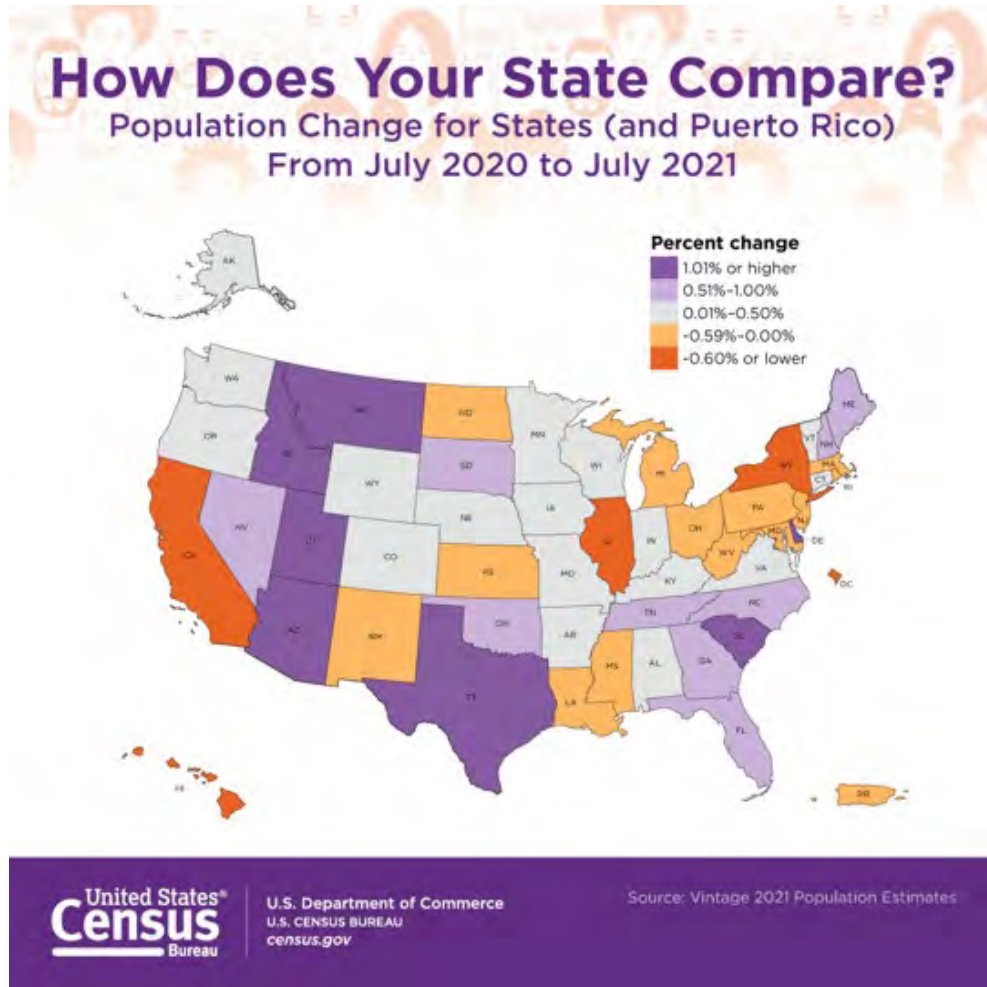


Figure 1. Percentage of Rural Counties in the Western U.S. That Gained Population 2010-2020, by County Economic Type
Data Source: U.S. Census and USDA Economic Research Service

Droughts and Wildfire in the West



Natural Hazards & Migration in Rural U.S. West

- Americans will increasingly live in the driest areas of the country

45%

Projected growth in
Mountain Division
2010-2040



- Americans are increasingly living in high wildfire risk areas

2X

The number of people living in
the wildland-urban interface
1990-2010

