



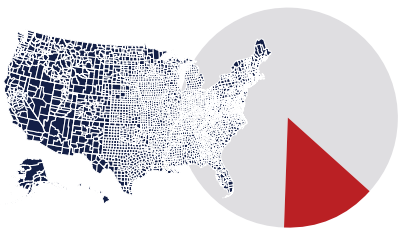
DRIVING RURAL PROSPERITY: THE STATE OF RURAL AMERICA

Tate Bennett | August 27, 2025

CURRENT RURAL ECONOMIES PRESENT FUTURE POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

ABOUT
42

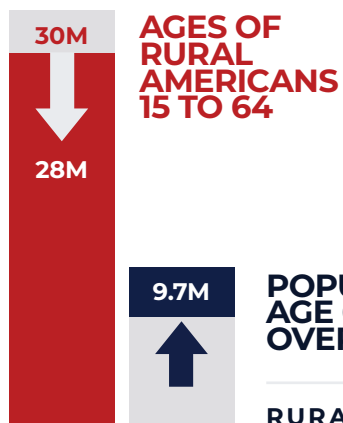
MILLION people live in rural counties, comprising **14%** of the U.S. population.



Working-Age Populations Shrink While Older Populations Grow in Rural America:

Between **2010** and **2023**, the number of rural Americans between the ages of 15 and 64 decreased from more than 30 million to about 28 million, while the population age 65 and over grew from 7.4 million to 9.7 million.

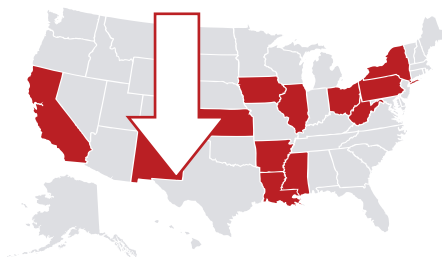
This is indicative of a shrinking working-age population that must support child and older populations.



STATES THAT SAW THE MOST DECLINE IN RURAL POPULATION, 2020-2024

RANK	STATE	NON-METRO POPULATION CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
1	ILLINOIS	-31,963	-2.0%
2	MISSISSIPPI	-25,503	-1.7%
3	LOUISIANA	-21,113	-2.9%
4	WEST VIRGINIA	-20,395	-2.9%
5	NEW YORK	-16,495	-1.2%
6	CALIFORNIA	-15,846	-1.8%
7	PENNSYLVANIA	-14,923	-0.8%
8	OHIO	-10,568	-0.5%
9	KANSAS	-9,907	-1.1%
10	IOWA	-9,490	-0.8%
11	NEW MEXICO	-8,342	-1.2%
12	ARKANSAS	-7,185	-0.6%

Between 2020 and 2024, the top eight states that saw the **most decline in rural counties** were **Illinois, Mississippi, Louisiana, West Virginia, New York, California, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.**



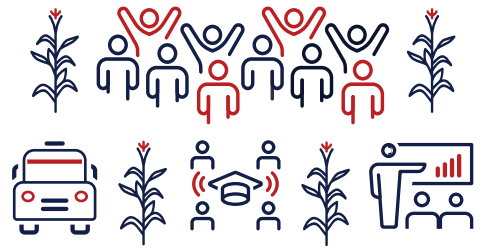
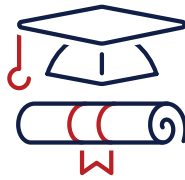
RURAL EMPLOYMENT recovered to **pre-pandemic levels** from 2022 to 2023.



MAJOR EMPLOYERS, like automakers, telecommunications companies, food manufacturers, appliance manufacturers have left rural America over the past few years.

NATIONALLY,
1 in 5

students or nearly 10 million public school students attended rural schools in the fall 2022.



IN 2021,
21%

of rural residents aged 25 or higher had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to **35% in metro areas.**



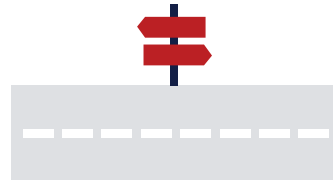
RURAL SCHOOLS OFTEN FACE MORE CHALLENGES with respect to transportation costs, teacher recruitment and retention, and broadband.

HOSPITAL CLOSURES:

According to the GAO, **101 (4%) of rural hospitals closed** between 2013-2020.



20
MILES FOR
INPATIENT CARE



40
MILES FOR LESS
COMMON SERVICES

When rural hospitals close, **rural patients must travel longer distances** for the same services— about **20 miles** more for inpatient care, and **40 miles** more for less common services like drug abuse treatment.

VETERANS:

In recent years, **1/3 of veterans** enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) **lived in rural America.**

They often face unique barriers to addressing mental health care such as staffing and transportation.



MATERNAL CARE:

More than half of rural counties lack hospital-based obstetric services. By 2030, the OB/GYN anticipated supply is expected to meet only about **50% of the demand in rural areas.** Pregnancy-related and postpartum **death rates are also higher in rural areas.**



AFPI REMAINS COMMITTED TO RESTORING PROSPERITY ACROSS RURAL AMERICA.