Setting the Stage: The Landscape of Rural America

January 25, 2024
Topeka, Kansas
Food is Medicine Research Action Plan – Midwest Convening
Who We Are

• Nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization based in Topeka.
• Established in 1995 with a multi-year grant by the Kansas Health Foundation.
• Committed to convening meaningful conversations around tough topics related to health.
What Rural Isn’t

Urban, but Smaller

Uniform
How Rural Is Rural?

Source: Kansas Health Institute presentation of KDHE county peer groups by population density.
A Farm Near Dispatch
Rural Definitions

Agreement by census tract across 9 rural definitions

- Mostly non-rural
- Most disagreement
- Mostly rural

Notes: Mostly non-rural includes tracts classified as rural by 1 to 3 rural definitions. Most disagreement includes tracts classified as rural by 4 to 6 rural definitions. Mostly rural includes tracts classified as rural by 7 to 9 rural definitions.
How Far is FAR?

Frontier and Remote (FAR) ZIP Code Areas

FAR level four includes ZIP code areas with majority populations living 60 minutes or more from urban areas of 50,000 or more people; and 45 minutes or more from urban areas of 25,000-49,999 people; and 30 minutes or more from urban areas of 10,000-24,999 people; and 15 minutes or more from urban areas of 2,500-9,999 people. 

Source: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI.
Nonmetro Population Declined in 2010-2020

The period 2010–20 was the first decade of overall nonmetropolitan population decline

Note: The metropolitan status changes for some counties in 2000 and 2010.
Something Changed in 2021

Driven by net migration in 2020-21 and 2021-22, nonmetro areas grew approximately a quarter percent from 2020 to 2022.

But overall natural decrease that began in 2017 accelerated in 2020-21.
Population by Age, Sex and Rurality

Note: The age category 85 years and over is aggregated due to data disclosure. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non-sampling error, and definitions, see <www.census.gov/acs>. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.
Increasing Diversity

Racial and ethnic diversity in rural places is regionally concentrated

Share of racial or ethnic group that lives in a region, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Midwest</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American and Alaska Native</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2020 census
Notes: “Rural” refers to the “nonmetro plus” definition, which includes all nonmetro counties and all tracts classified as RUCA 4 or higher. “Native American” refers to those who self-identify as “American Indian” in the census. Racial population counts include those who selected multiple races.
Diversity in Rural America

Source: Brookings analysis of 2020 U.S. Census data
Indicators as Issues

People in rural areas live 3 fewer years than people in urban areas, with rural areas having higher death rates for heart disease and stroke.

Rural women face higher maternal mortality rates

Rural residents face higher rates of tobacco use, physical inactivity, obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure

Rural populations face greater challenges with mental and behavioral health and have limited access to mental health care.

Rural hospitals are closing or facing the possibility of closing + Increasing shortages of clinicians

Long distances and lack of transportation make it difficult to access emergency, specialty and preventive care.

Rural populations are more likely to be uninsured and have fewer affordable health insurance options than in suburban and urban areas.

Source: Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources & Services Administration, 2022.
Maternity Care

More than 50% of rural counties have no hospital-based obstetrical services.

It’s not just a rural problem: 1 of 3 women in metropolitan or urban areas lives in an OB desert.

Pregnant and parenting people in rural communities have worse outcomes than those living in other areas.

- Rural residents have 9% greater probability of severe maternal morbidity and mortality.
- Rural hospitals report higher rates of postpartum hemorrhage and blood transfusion during labor and delivery than do urban hospitals.
- More than 50% of rural women, compared to 7% of urban women, must travel more than 30 minutes to reach the nearest hospital with obstetric services.
- Extensive travel may contribute to increased risks of infant mortality and pregnancy complications.

Rural women of color are at particular risk.

- American Indian/Native Alaskan and Black women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.
- In the past decade, rural counties with a higher proportion of non-Hispanic Black women were more likely to lose obstetric services than other rural counties.

Source: Martha Hosteller and Sarah Klein, “Restoring Access to Maternity Care in Rural America,” Transforming Care (newsletter), Commonwealth Fund, September 30, 2021, https://doi.org/10.29009/CTG-C-FFD
Hospital Closures: After Pause, Trend Resumes

191 rural hospital closures or conversions since 2005
Rural Health Workforce

Primary Care

MD, DO

- Rural = 52.0/100,000 People
- Urban = 80.5/100,000 People

All Primary Care (MD, DO, NP, PA)

- Rural = 153.3/100,000 People
- Urban = 213.9/100,000 People

Behavioral Health

Note: Rural and urban defined as nonmetropolitan and metropolitan, respectively

Health Insurance Coverage

Kansans Age 0–64 Living in Frontier Counties Most Likely to be Uninsured

Figure 5.5b  Kansans Age 0–64: Uninsured Rate by County Urban-Rural Classification, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Density</th>
<th>Percent Uninsured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Kansans, Age 0-64</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontier</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Densely-Settled Rural</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Urban</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Rural 12.2%
All Urban 9.7%

Note: Uninsured Kansans age 0–64 (not in institutions) = 2,363,952. The uninsured rate for Kansans age 0–64 was calculated by taking the number of uninsured Kansans age 0–64 and dividing by the total number of Kansans age 0–64. Peer groups are designated using the Kansas Department of Health and Environment County Peer Groups by population density.

Source: Kansas Health Institute analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Small Area Health Insurance Estimates.
Building on Rural Assets

Social connectedness

Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic

Innovative models
Opportunities for Authentic Engagement

- Building trust
- Empowering communities
- Supporting community-led solutions