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# U.S. Rural Demographic and Economic Trends

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\* The views expressed are those of the presenter and may not be attributed to USDA or the Economic Research Service.

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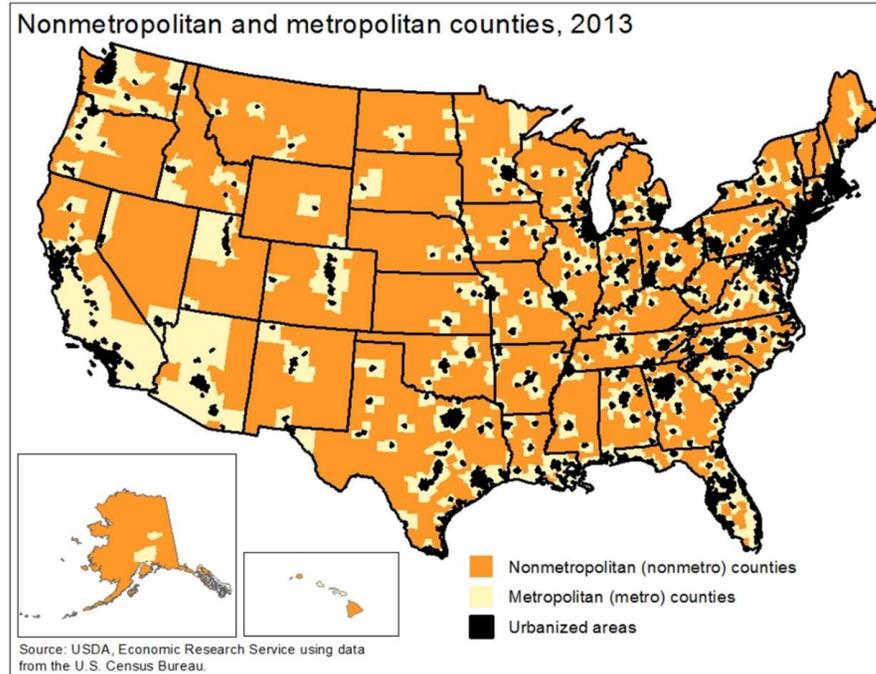




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# What is “Rural”?

We treat “rural” as synonymous with “nonmetro” – outside of areas within or with strong commuting ties to a large urban center ( $\geq 50,000$ )



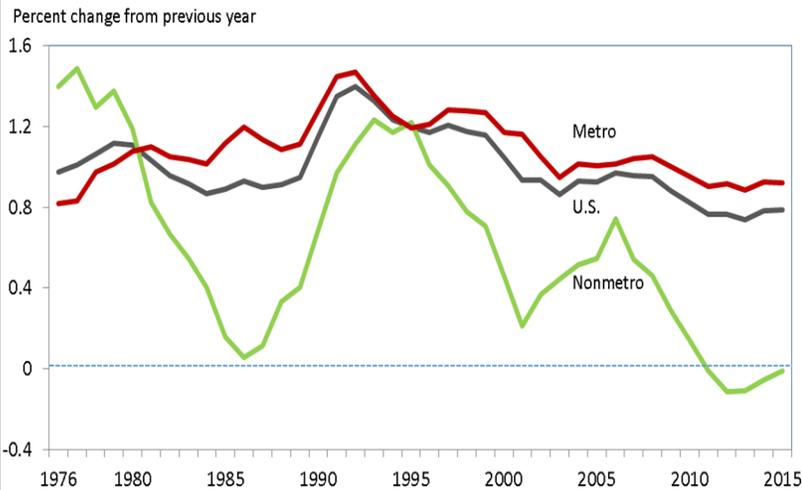


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# Recent Declines in Rural Population

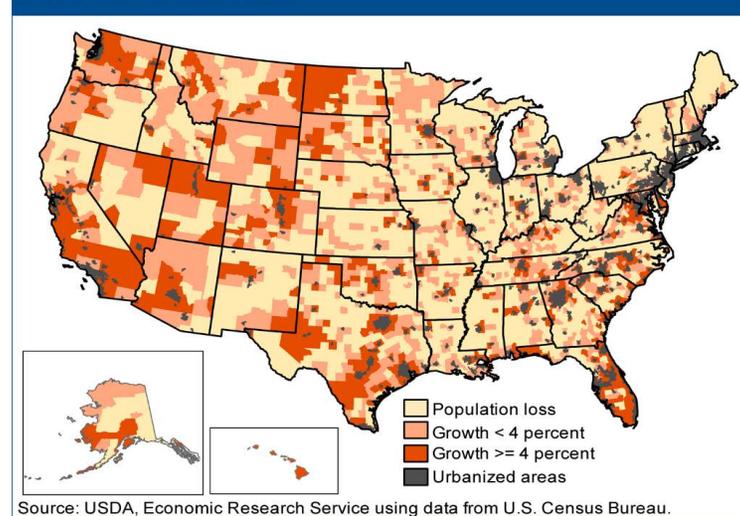
The rural population declined for the first time during 2010-15

Population change by metro/nonmetro status, 1976-2015



Note: Metro status changes for some counties in 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010.  
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Population change, 2010-15



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Census Bureau.

- Significant declines occurred in parts of the South, especially in agricultural and rural manufacturing areas.
- Growth occurred in other parts – especially near growing urban areas and in recreation/retirement areas.

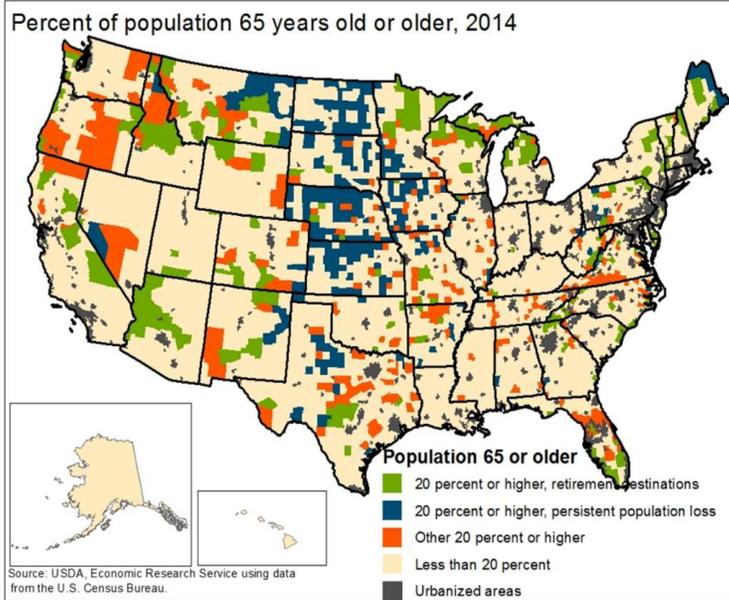




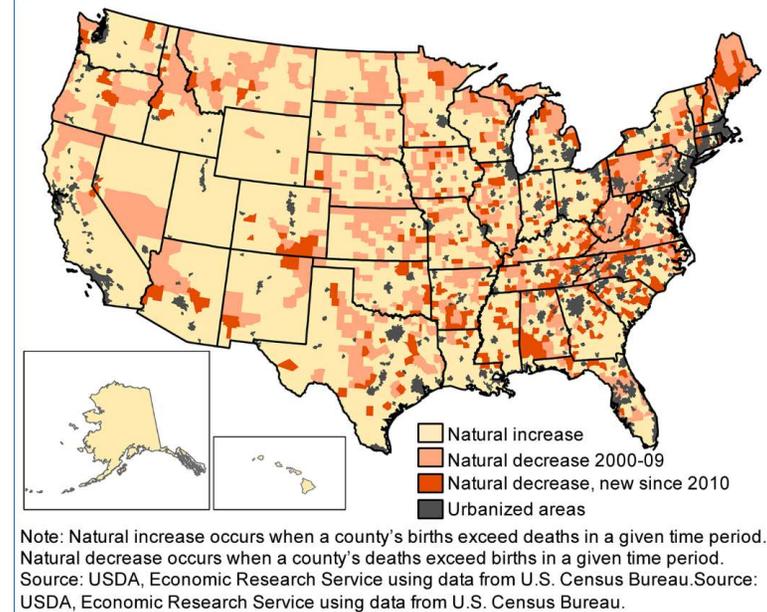
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# Aging of the Rural Population

Rural population loss is due to net outmigration and aging of the rural population, especially outside of retirement destination areas.



Natural decrease counties, before and after 2010



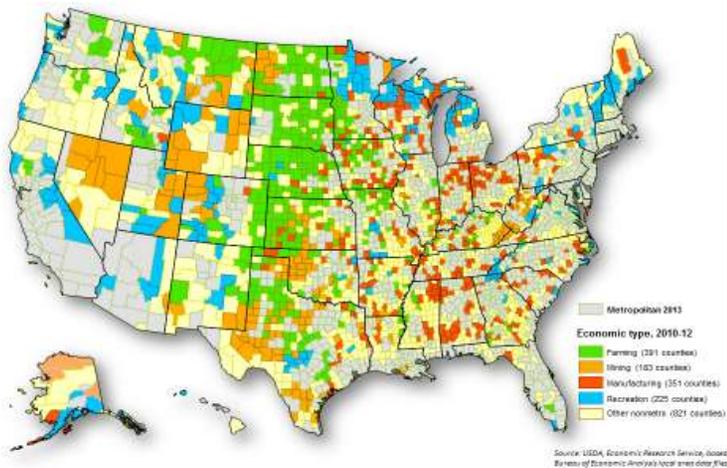
As a result of aging of the population and outmigration of young people, rural areas with natural decrease in population (deaths > births) are expanding.



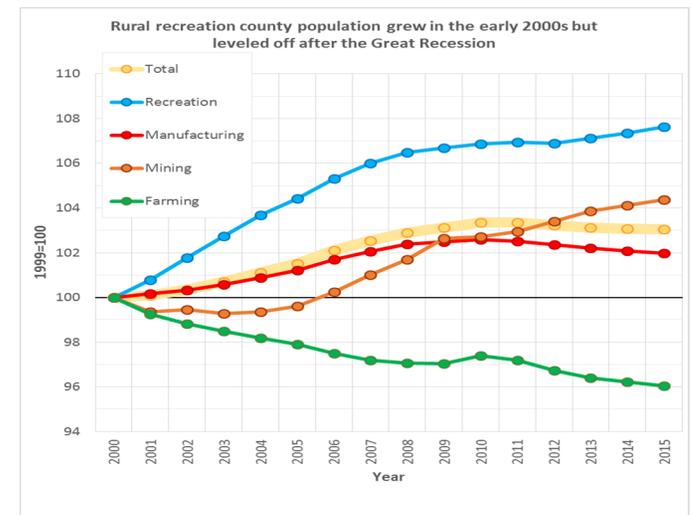


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Rural areas differ in their economic specializations – farming, mining, manufacturing, recreation, government-dependence, and non-specialized. Much of the rural South is dependent on manufacturing, government, or is non-specialized.



# Demographic Trends Affected by Industry Specialization



Nationally, rural recreation and mining counties have had the most population growth since the Great Recession, while population declined in farming and manufacturing counties.



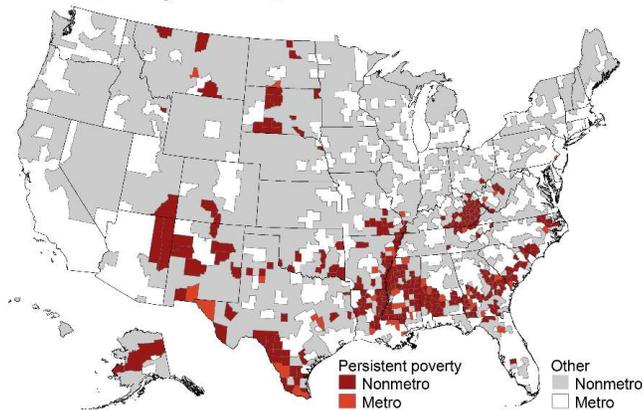


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# Poverty Levels and Trends Vary Across Regions and by Industry Specialization

Most persistent poverty counties – with 20% or more in poverty since 1980 – are in the South.

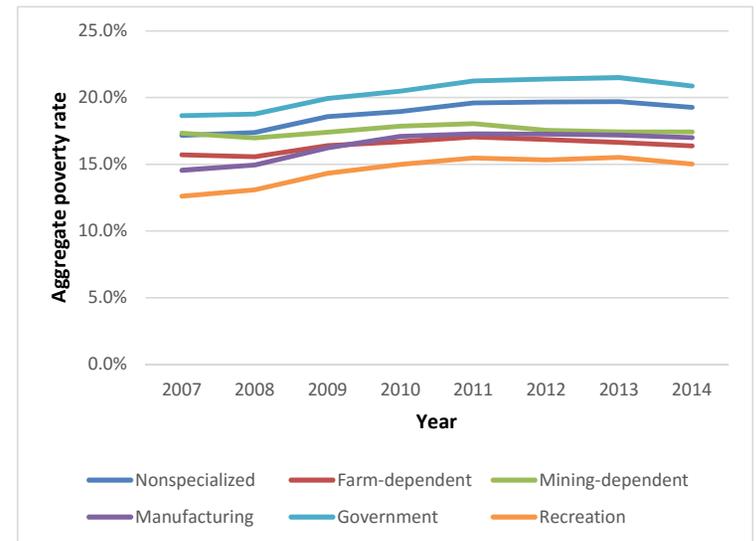
Persistent poverty counties, 2015 edition



Persistent poverty counties are those where 20 percent or more of county residents were poor, measured by the 1980, 1990, 2000 censuses, and the 2007-11 American Community Survey.

Note that county boundaries are drawn for the persistent poverty counties only.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Census Bureau.



Nationally, poverty rates grew in all rural county types during and after the Great Recession, but have begun to decline. Poverty rates are lowest in recreation counties and declined the most in mining counties.





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# Questions?

- Contact: John Pender ([jpender@ers.usda.gov](mailto:jpender@ers.usda.gov))

# Thank You!

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