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Changing Rural Demographics

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Summary: Following are statistics related to the demographics of rural communities in the United States.¹ While demographics cover a wide range of considerations, for purposes of this review, the following categories were focused on: Overall Population Changes, Age, Gender, Education, Income/Employment, Race/Ethnicity, and Health. Within these categories are various facts collected from reputable sources.

This review is not comprehensive, but rather is meant to provide a broad overview of changing rural demographics. A comprehensive, interactive map on rural demographics can be accessed here: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>. This map uses the following definition for “nonmetro,” which is from the Office of Management and Budget: “outside the boundaries of metro areas and have no urban areas with 50,000 residents or more.”²

Data specific to Oklahoma was obtained by finding the average for all counties with fewer than 50,000 residents. This information was collected from the data set for the Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America, available here: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america/download-the-data.aspx>.

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau, Office of Management and Budget, USDA’s Economic Research Service, and the USDA Business and Industry Loan Program all have different definitions of “rural”, which are accessible at <http://ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-definitions.aspx>.

² “Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America.” U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america/documentation.aspx#nonmet2010>.

Overall Population Changes

- The top 15 most rural states in order from most rural to less rural are: Vermont, Wyoming, Maine, Montana, Mississippi, South Dakota, West Virginia, Arkansas, North Dakota, Kentucky, Iowa, Alaska, Oklahoma, New Hampshire, and Alabama.³
- The number of people living in nonmetropolitan (nonmetro) counties now stands at 46.2 million-- 15 percent of U.S. residents spread across 72 percent of the land area of the United States. Between April 2010 and July 2012, nonmetro counties declined in total population by 44,000 people, a -0.09 percent drop according to the most recent release of annual county population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.⁴
- In 2000, the percentage of the population considered 'rural' ranges from 20.5 percent - 62.9 percent depending on the definition used.⁵
- In 2000, the percentage of land considered "rural" ranges from 74.6 percent – 99 percent depending on the definition used.⁶
- In 2010, 28.8 percent of Americans can be found either in an unincorporated area or in a city of between 2,500 and 50,000 residents.⁷

Age

- In 2000, the following breakdowns in age were found: under 18 = 26 percent; 19-64 = 61 percent; 65 and older = 13percent.⁸
- In Oklahoma, the following breakdowns apply in nonmetro counties (data from 2010): under 18 = average 24.26 percent; 65 and older = average 16.73 percent.⁹

³ Bishop, Bill. "How Rural are the States?" The Daily Yonder. April 3, 2012. Available at: <http://www.dailyyonder.com/how-rural-are-states/2012/04/02/3847>.

⁴ Cromartie, John. "Population Patterns: Rural Trends Changing." The Daily Yonder. May 23, 2013. Available at: <http://www.dailyyonder.com/nonmetro-population-decreasing-nationwide/2013/05/16/5931>.

⁵ "Rural Definitions." U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Available at: <http://ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-definitions.aspx>.

⁶ Id.

⁷ See Note 2, supra.

⁸ See Note 4, supra.

⁹ Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America. U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>

Sex

- In 2009, an estimated 27.2 million women aged 18 and older lived in rural areas, representing 22.8 percent of all women.¹⁰
- In Oklahoma, an average of 10.73 percent of rural households had a female head between 2007 and 2011.¹¹
- In the US overall, 13.89 percent of farms had woman operators in 2007.¹²
- In Oklahoma, 12.73 percent of farms had woman operators in 2007.¹³

Education

- In 2000, the following statistics applied to rural communities generally: not completing high school = about 21 percent; high school only = about 35 percent; some college = about 20 percent; college degree or higher = about 24 percent.¹⁴
- In 2004, the percentages of school-age children in rural areas with a mother or father whose highest educational attainment was a high school diploma (33 and 36 percent, respectively) were higher than the comparable percentages for children in cities (26 and 24 percent, respectively) and suburbs (25 and 24 percent respectively).¹⁵
- In 2003–04, a larger percentage of public school students in rural areas (10 percent) attended very small schools (schools with fewer than 200 students) than public school students in towns (3 percent), suburbs (1 percent), or cities (1 percent).¹⁶
- Rural women were slightly more likely than urban women to have a high school degree or higher (87.3 versus 85.5 percent, respectively). However, urban women were more likely than rural women to have a college degree or higher (28.9 versus 22.5 percent, respectively).¹⁷
- In Oklahoma from 2007 – 2011: average of 17.51 percent of people in rural communities had less than a high school education; average of 37.95 percent had achieved a high

¹⁰ “Rural and Urban Women.” Women’s Health USA 2011. Available at: <http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov/whusa11/popchar/pages/103ruw.html>.

¹¹ See note 9, supra.

¹² Id.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ See Note 5, supra.

¹⁵ “Status of Education in Rural America.” National Center for Education Statistics. Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/ruraled/hl_demographics.asp.

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ See Note 10, supra.

school diploma or equivalent only; average of 28.08 percent had completed some college credit; and average 16.46 percent had achieved a college degree or more.¹⁸

- In the United States overall between 2007 – 2011 (metro and nonmetro counties combined): average 14.61 percent had less than a high school education; average of 28.64 percent had achieved a high school diploma or equivalent only; average of 28.55 percent had completed some college credit; and average of 28.20 percent had achieved a college degree or more.¹⁹

Income/Employment

Income

- In 2000, the average household income for rural communities was about \$50k; near poverty = about 9 percent; below poverty = about 12 percent; and deep poverty = about 5 percent. About 26 percent were near poverty or worse).²⁰
- In 2004, the percentage of children living in poverty or below 185 percent of the poverty threshold in rural areas (35 percent) was smaller than that in towns (46 percent) or cities (47 percent), but larger than that in suburban areas (28 percent).²¹
- Just over 2 percent of people living in rural communities do not have complete plumbing.²²
- According to Federal Communications Commission data, 95 percent of all U.S. households could have an in-home broadband Internet connection (with the capacity to download 4 megabytes of data or more per second) if they choose to subscribe. The 5 percent of households that do not have access to such service largely reside in rural areas. Roughly 30 percent of rural households with access still do not have broadband meeting current technology standards, although some of these households have broadband available at slower speeds.²³
- In 2011, the U.S. median household income was \$50,502, compared to \$38,750 in Oklahoma.²⁴
- From 2007 – 2011, the average per capita income for the U.S. was \$27,915, compared to \$20,628 in Oklahoma.²⁵

¹⁸ See Note 9, supra.

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ See Note 5, supra.

²¹ See Note 15, supra.

²² See Note 5, supra.

²³ Stenberg, Peter. "Rural Internet at a Crossroads." Amber Waves, a publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. July 1, 2013. Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2013-july/rural-internet-at-a-crossroads.aspx>.

²⁴ See Note 9, supra.

- The U.S. percentage of people of all ages living in poverty was 15.90 percent in 2011, compared to 18.80 percent in rural Oklahoma.²⁶
- The number of people under 18 years old living in poverty was 22.5 percent in the U.S. in 2011, compared to 26.68 percent in rural Oklahoma.²⁷

Employment

- About 4.5 percent of people living in rural communities work in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining industries.²⁸ About 9 percent travel half an hour or more to get to work.²⁹
- Based on data from USDA’s Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS), almost 18 percent of U.S. farm households, on average, reported earning income from operating a separate nonfarm business over 1996-2010.³⁰
- In 2007, 1.06 percent of all U.S. farms reported income from agritourism; 0.82 percent of farms in rural communities in Oklahoma reported income from agritourism.³¹
- From 2007-2011, 1.88 percent of people in the U.S. were employed in agriculture, compared to 11.71 percent in rural Oklahoma.³²
- From 2007-2011, 10.77 percent of people in the U.S. were employed in manufacturing, compared to 9.55 percent in rural Oklahoma.³³
- The unemployment rate in the U.S. in 2012 was 8.1 percent, compared to 5.02 percent in rural Oklahoma.³⁴

Race/Ethnicity

- In 2000, about 7 percent of people living in rural communities were black; under 2 percent were American Indian, and about 6 percent were Hispanic.³⁵
- In 2010, in the United States overall: 2.92 percent multiple race; 16.35 percent Hispanic;

²⁵ Id.

²⁶ See Note 9, supra.

²⁷ Id.

²⁸ See Note 5, supra.

²⁹ Id.

³⁰ Vogel, Stephen. “The Importance of Farmer-Owned Non-Farm Businesses in the Rural Economy.” Amber Waves, a publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. April 1, 2013. Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2013-april/the-importance-of-farmer-owned-nonfarm-businesses-in-the-rural-economy.aspx>.

³¹ See Note 9, supra.

³² Id.

³³ Id.

³⁴ Id.

³⁵ See Note 5, supra.

0.73 percent Native American; 4.69 percent Asian; 12.21 percent black; and 63.75 percent white. From 2007-2001, 12.81 percent were foreign born and 8.98 percent were non-English speaking households.³⁶

- In 2010, in rural Oklahoma: 5.48 percent multiple race; 7.90 percent Hispanic; 10.69 percent Native American; 0.42 percent Asian; 2.87 percent black, and 73.25 percent white. From 2007-2011, 3.03 percent were foreign-born and 3.15 percent were non-English speaking households.³⁷

Health

- Between 2003 and 2006, 32 percent of men and 34 percent of women were considered obese, nationwide.³⁸
- Men and women living in urban areas were more likely to participate in regular exercise than persons in rural areas in 2004 — 2006. Thirty percent of urban women exercised regularly, compared with 26 percent of rural women. For men, the rates were 33 percent and 27 percent, respectively.³⁹
- Women and men living in rural areas are more likely to smoke than those living in urban areas. In 2004 — 2006, 24 percent of rural women smoked, compared with 17 percent of urban women. The comparable figures for men were 28 percent and 22 percent, respectively.⁴⁰
- Nonmetro counties account for nine of the 10 counties where female life expectancies declined by the greatest amount. In male life expectancy, rural counties made up seven of the 10 worst counties.⁴¹
- Only three nonmetro counties are listed in the top counties for *gains* in life-expectancy. For male life expectancies, no rural counties made the top 10.⁴²
- Only about ten percent of physicians practice in rural America despite the fact that nearly one-fourth of the population lives in these areas.⁴³
- There are 60 dentists per 100,000 population in urban areas versus 40 per 100,000 in

³⁶ See Note 9, supra.

³⁷ Id.

³⁸ “Healthy People 2010 – Women’s and Men’s Health: A Comparison of Select Indicators.” Office on Women’s Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/federal-reports/healthy-people/preventive-behavior.cfm>.

³⁹ Id.

⁴⁰ Id.

⁴¹ Marema, Tim and Poynter, Shawn. “Change in Life Expectancy in Rural America.” The Daily Yonder. July 16, 2013. Available at: <http://www.dailyyonder.com/life-expectancy-rural-america/2013/07/16/6624>.

⁴² Id.

⁴³ “What’s Different About Rural Healthcare?” National Rural Health Association. Available at: <http://www.ruralhealthweb.org/go/left/about-rural-health/what-s-different-about-rural-health-care>.

rural areas.⁴⁴

- Cerebrovascular disease was reportedly 1.45 percent higher in non-Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) than in MSAs.⁴⁵
- Hypertension was also higher in rural than urban areas (101.3 per 1,000 individuals in MSAs and 128.8 per 1,000 individuals in non-MSAs.)⁴⁶
- Twenty percent of nonmetropolitan counties lack mental health services versus five percent of metropolitan counties. In 1999, 87 percent of the 1,669 Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas in the United States were in non-metropolitan counties and home to over 30 million people.⁴⁷
- The suicide rate among rural men is significantly higher than in urban areas, particularly among adult men and children. The suicide rate among rural women is escalating rapidly and is approaching that of men.⁴⁸
- Medicare payments to rural hospitals and physicians are dramatically less than those to their urban counterparts for equivalent services. This correlates closely with the fact that more than 470 rural hospitals have closed in the past 25 years.⁴⁹



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⁴⁴ Id.

⁴⁵ See Note 43, *supra*.

⁴⁶ Id.

⁴⁷ Id.

⁴⁸ Id.

⁴⁹ Id.