

Media Relations

Carsey Institute: Rural Population Growth Slowing, But Diversity Accelerating

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DURHAM, N.H. – Population growth in rural America slowed in the first 10 years of the 21st century, with rural areas growing by just 2.2 million -- barely half the growth during the 1990s. During the same period, the diversity of the rural population accelerated, according to new research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

"Rural population growth slowed primarily because of fewer people moving to rural areas after 2000. During the 1990s, migration accounted for nearly two-thirds of the entire rural population gain. After 2000, it accounted for less than one-half of the gain. Rural counties gained 2.7 million residents from migration during the 1990s, but only about 1.0 million between 2000 and 2010," says Kenneth Johnson, senior demographer at the Carsey Institute and professor of sociology at UNH.

The key research findings are as follows:



- The rural population grew by just 2.2 million between 2000 and 2010; a gain barely half as great as that during the 1990s.
- Rural growth diminished because migration slowed; rural counties only gained 1 million net migrants from 2000 to 2010 compared with 2.7 million in the 1990s.
- Rural population gains were largest in high-amenity counties – those with natural amenities, recreational opportunities, or quality of life advantages – as well just beyond the metropolitan fringe.
- Population growth was particularly slow in farming and mining counties and sharply reduced in rural manufacturing counties.
- Diversity accelerated in rural America, with racial and ethnic minorities accounting for 83 percent of rural population growth between 2000 and 2010.
- Children are in the vanguard of the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of rural America in the 21st century.

Johnson says any analysis of recent demographic trends in rural America must recognize the growing impact of minority populations.


Between 2000 and 2010, the minority population, which included everyone other than non-Hispanic whites, accounted for 82.7 percent of rural population gain, even though minorities represented just 21 percent of the rural population. The minority population grew by 1.8 million (21.3 percent) during the decade compared with a gain of just 382,000 (.95 percent) among the much more numerous non-Hispanic white population. Hispanics accounted for most of the growth in the minority population.


"Thus, while rural America remains less diverse than urban America, minority growth now accounts for most rural population increase, just as it does in urban areas," Johnson says.


This growing racial and ethnic diversity is being fueled by children. Nearly 600 counties in the nation have more minority than white children – so-called "majority-minority" counties – and another 300 are near majority-minority, with between 40 and 50 percent minority youth populations. Of these, 356 majority-minority youth counties are in rural America as are 178 of the near majority-minority counties. These rural majority-minority counties are concentrated in the Mississippi Delta, the Rio Grande region, the Southeast, and in the Northern Great Plains.

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"Young people clearly are a harbinger of future racial-ethnic change and diversity in rural America, as deaths among the older largely white population are replaced disproportionately by minority births," Johnson says.

The complete Carsey Institute report about this research is available at <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/CarseySearch/search.php?id=185>.

The Carsey Institute conducts policy research on vulnerable children, youth, and families and on sustainable community development. The institute gives policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. For more information about the Carsey Institute, go to www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

PHOTO

Kenneth Johnson, senior demographer at the Carsey Institute and professor of sociology at UNH http://www.unh.edu/news/img/ken_johnson.jpg

GRAPHICS

Nonmetropolitan population change, 2000 to 2010

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/carsey/ruralpopchange2.tif>

Credit: Ken Johnson/Carsey Institute

Nonmetropolitan minority population distribution, 2010

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/carsey/ruralpopchange5.tif>

Credit: Ken Johnson/Carsey Institute

Nonmetropolitan minority child population concentration, 2010

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/carsey/ruralpopchange9.tif>

Credit: Ken Johnson/Carsey Institute

-30-

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