

THE RURAL EDUCATION
AND
TECHNOLOGY
INITIATIVE of AMERICA



THE TODAY FOUNDATION

BACKGROUND

More than, 3,700 K-12 schools in the U.S, of which 79% located in rural and small towns, lack access to high quality academic coursework, effective teachers and quality job-related internship programs that could be delivered by sophisticated, well- integrated technology systems. Additionally, the E-rate program that provides affordable internet connectivity to schools and libraries must be preserved and expanded.

While reading and math achievement and graduation rates remain relatively stable, poverty, brain drain and a higher death rate hinder economic growth and community stability in rural vs urban America.

Nationally renowned companies that can boost local economies often overlook rural areas due to a shrinking workforce that does not have the skills and expertise required by today's information and knowledge economy. This can be remedied by developing regionally situated education/ technology hubs that offer quality online academic and workforce programs. Until actuated, Rural America faces an education and technology crisis!

PURPOSE

To prepare Kindergarten-12th grade English Learners, immigrant and migrant students, living in rural areas, with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure 21st c college and career opportunities by offering **access** to STEAM and Workforce prep programs using state of the art technology systems.

ISSUES

Lawmakers who represent rural areas are concerned that The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB) 2002 or (ESSA) 2015 did not take into account challenges rural schools, and their nine million students face daily.

A new report from the [Census Bureau](#) addresses some of these issues with its release of a numbers-driven, county-level glimpse into America's urban-rural divide.

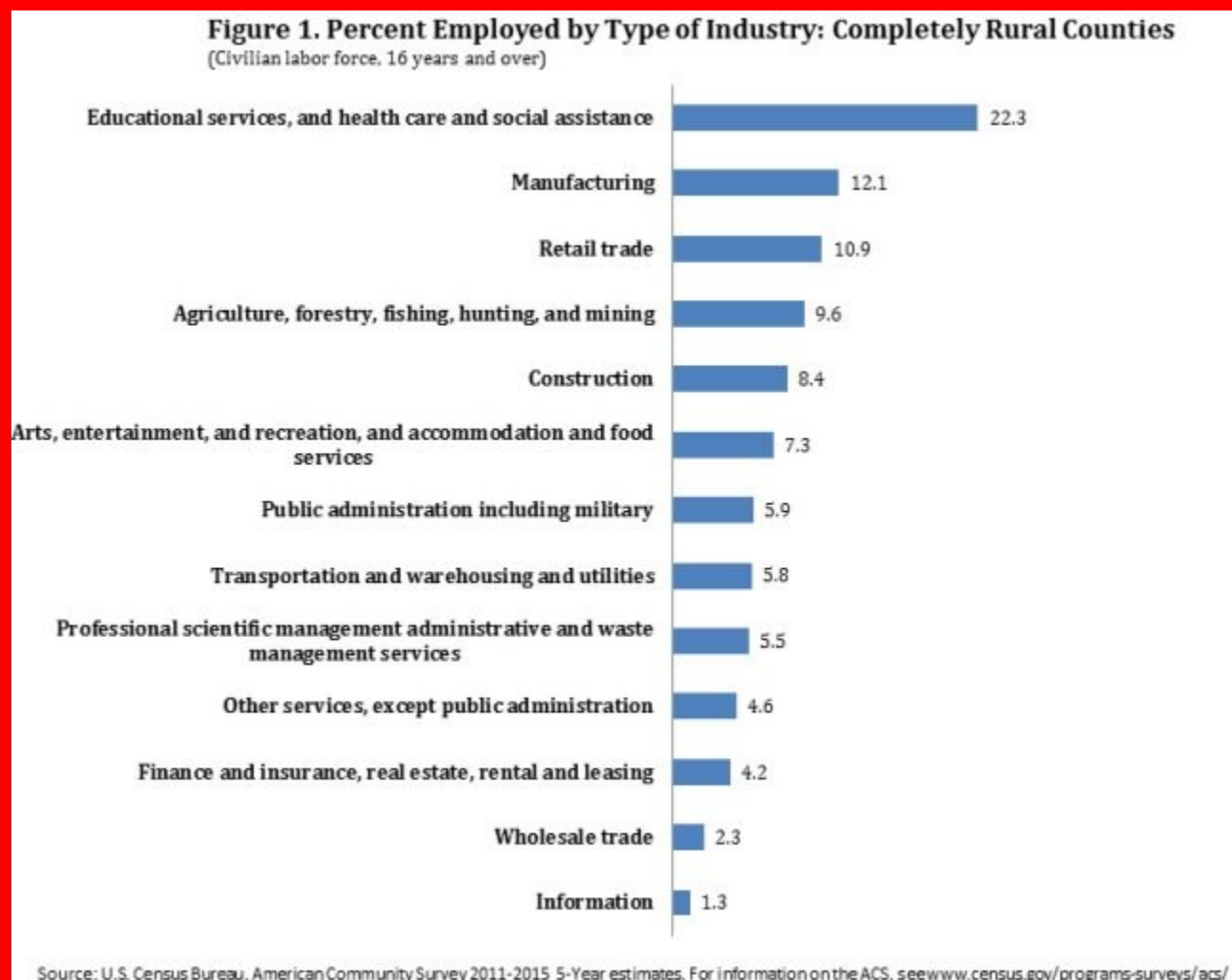
The latest American Community Survey (2011 and 2015) illustrates: 47 million adults and 13.4 million children under the age of 18 lived in counties outside of America's major metropolitan regions. Fewer than 1 in 5 or 19.5% in rural communities earned a bachelor's degree as opposed to 29% of America's urban dwellers and fewer than 1 out of every 5 citizens was a resident of rural America, although such regions cover "97 percent of the nation's land area."

In 1910, more than 54 percent of the country lived in a rural area. But with job growth in city centers continually outpacing other parts of the country, Americans – particularly those just starting out in their careers – have flocked to urban areas. Consequently, the current median urban adult is six years younger than his rural counterpart: 45 years old vs 51.

"When looking at the populations of both rural and urban America, we find a distribution with two peaks, baby boomers in their 50s and 60s forming one, and 'millennials' in their late teens and 20s forming the second," "While there are more people in the millennial generation in urban areas, baby boomers form the higher peak in rural areas." Census statistics.2015

Income Distribution

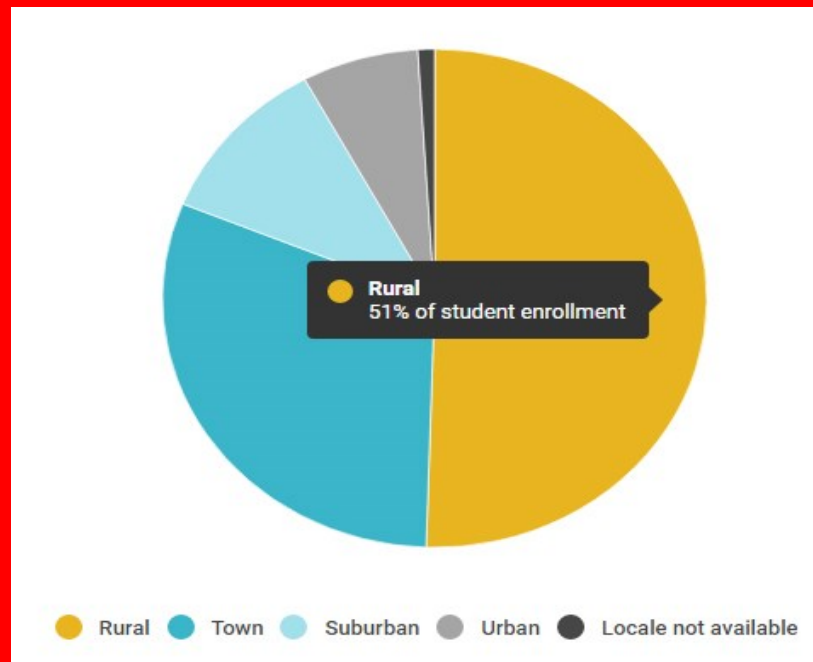
City dwellers earned nearly \$54,300 in median household income each year, about \$2,000 more than their rural counterparts. And rural employment was more skewed toward goods production, with more than 20 percent of workers in manufacturing or construction fields.



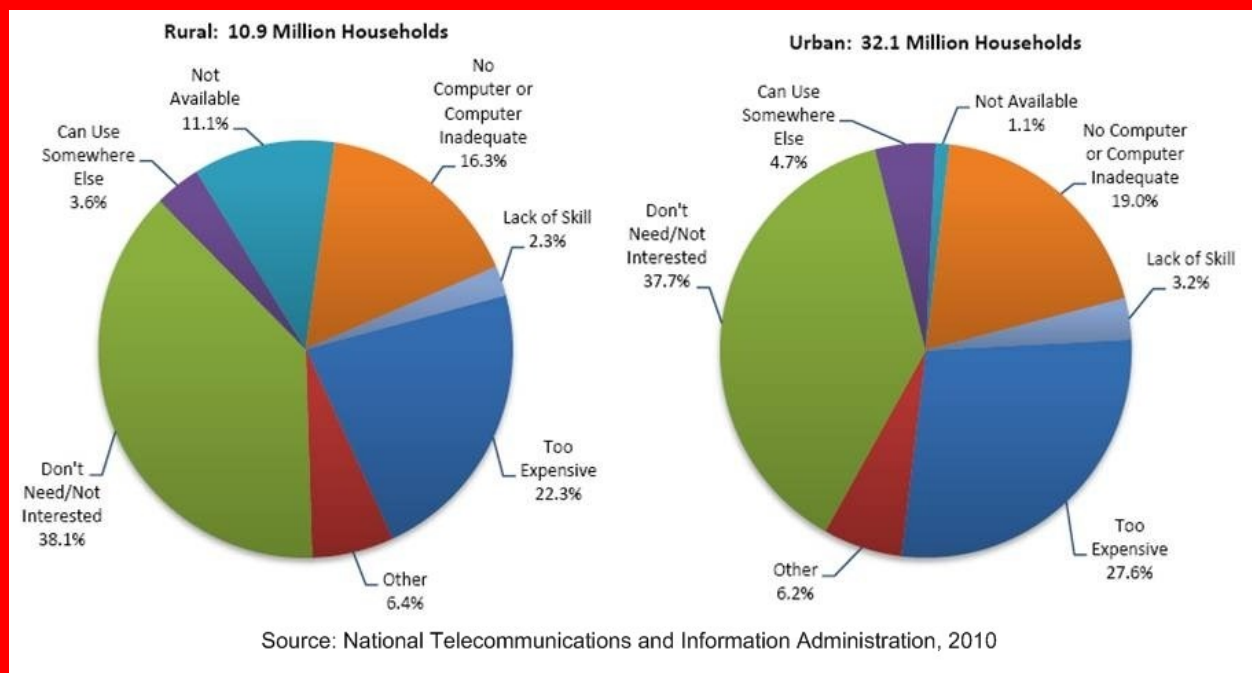
More than a fifth of rural employees work in educational services, health care and social assistance positions. Another 12.1 percent work in manufacturing. Source: Census Bureau

Education Distribution

Direct comparison between rural and urban K-12 education in America



Technology Access



[Source: U.S. Census Bureau]

Rural Education Challenges

While rural LEAs face many of the same obstacles confronting urban districts (such as high rates of childhood poverty, difficulty recruiting and retaining effective teachers and administrators, and limited access to quality health care), these challenges frequently are exacerbated by the remoteness and small size of rural districts.

Rural schools and LEAs are often at a distinct disadvantage compared to their urban and suburban counterparts for several reasons including;

Grant competitions; large districts have dedicated grant-writing staff, rural districts lack personnel with the knowledge and experience to complete complex grant applications;

Rural districts lack access to reliable broadband internet access, causing additional difficulties in applying for grants, providing classroom instruction, and administering programs;

Rural schools are often the only locations where students are able to get online, making completion of assignments and research difficult;

Fewer career options and apprenticeship opportunities;

Inability to attract, train, and retain teachers and principals in communities with fewer amenities than urban and suburban areas;

Tax base susceptible to fluctuations due to changes in local and regional economic conditions;

Inability to offer advanced courses or training that better prepare students for college and relevant careers.

Rural Variability

Adding to these challenges is the reality that each rural community is distinct. There are vast contrasts between and among rural communities in different states, and even within states.

Communities in Appalachian West Virginia are very different from those in the Nevada desert. Circumstances in the mountains of western Colorado vary greatly from those in the plains of the eastern part of the state. Some rural communities are among the poorest in the nation, while others lack sufficient workers to fill the available jobs. Rural communities occupy every point on the boom-and-bust cycle. “Rural” is not a monolith but a compilation of thousands of unique communities and circumstances.

Source: **US Department of Education, The Rural Education Report (2018).**

Education Solutions

'The Rural Education Report', issued by the US Department of Education (2018) highlighted several areas that can be resolved not only by the department's effort to prioritize rural education in America, but also other **agencies**, companies, and **community collaborations** which focus specifically on how to best prepare students with the knowledge and skills that match workforce demands using a vehicle or means to access these services.

Efforts include: developing efficient technology systems or hubs to provide easy access to courses, professional development, and meaningful, relevant job skills training that entice corporations to establish and maintain a presence in rural America.

"Increase access to educational choice for students in rural communities."

"Expand access to rigorous computer science, technology and academic coursework for underrepresented students such as racial, ethnic minorities, and women in rural communities".

"Utilize technology for educational purposes in communities served by rural local educational agencies and areas identified as lacking sufficient access to such tools and resources."

"Develop and promote innovative strategies to increase the number of students who have access to effective educators, administrators, school leaders, mentors, internship programs and apprenticeships in schools and communities served by rural local educational agencies."

Call to Action Report published by the US Department of Agriculture recommends:

Achieve e-Connectivity for Rural America by establishing executive leadership provided by the U.S. Department of Education and other agencies to expand e-connectivity across rural America and advance educational opportunities for students and families in rural communities.

THE RURAL EDUCATION and TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE OF AMERICA

The Rural Education and Technology Initiative advances solutions recommended by the US Department of Education, Labor, Agriculture, Housing and Health and Human Services by

Secure funding from multiple government agencies and private sources to develop technology infrastructure in 50 state' rural areas.

Connect effective online academic, language and Workforce training programs within rural schools and districts for Els, immigrant and migrant students and families using sophisticated technology systems at affordable rates.

Develop Rural Technology infrastructure plans and strategies that ensure rural students have access to proven academic programs which match current 21st c. workforce demands through easy to use, reliable and stable technology systems.

Build awareness and demand by coordinating a Rural Education Initiative of America effort among various diverse constituencies at the state, district and local community level, targeting the key decision-makers.

Develop and execute an effective communication strategy, including social media to highlight rural education needs, challenges, progress and solutions.

Connect the plan to funds to decision-makers to programs and most important students.

