



**RURAL**  
MATTERS

# The Condition of Rural Communities

  
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**What words come to mind when I say the word “rural”?**



# By People Who Live in a Rural Community...

A word cloud centered around the word "community". The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern. The largest word is "community" in blue. Other prominent words include "slower pace" in grey, "traditional values" in orange, "tight-knit" in blue, and "boring" in blue. Smaller words include "watch out for each other", "country", "middle of nowhere", "support one another", "low population density", "values", "family", "unsophisticated", "sheltered", "simple", "safe", "everybody knows everybody", "genuine", "laid back", "pastoral", "agricultural", "idyllic", "way of life", and "pastoral".

way of life tight-knit pastoral  
slower pace agricultural idyllic  
watch out for each other genuine laid back  
country community  
middle of nowhere support one another low population density values  
traditional values  
everybody knows everybody  
family unsophisticated sheltered simple  
boring  
safe



# By People Who Don't Live in a Rural Community...

The Waltons  
slower pace  
Mayberry fields  
religious  
resilient wide open  
redneck no taco bell  
livestock  
the sticks backwards grit  
poor boring slow  
farms county fair  
Footloose  
uneducated  
country  
hick idyllic behind the times  
trailer trash  
green space  
outsiders beware  
busy bodies



# Agenda

- Where is “rural” North America?
- What are some of the challenges rural North Americans face?
- What is the spiritual condition of rural North America?
- Why does “rural” matter?



# Where is “rural” North America?

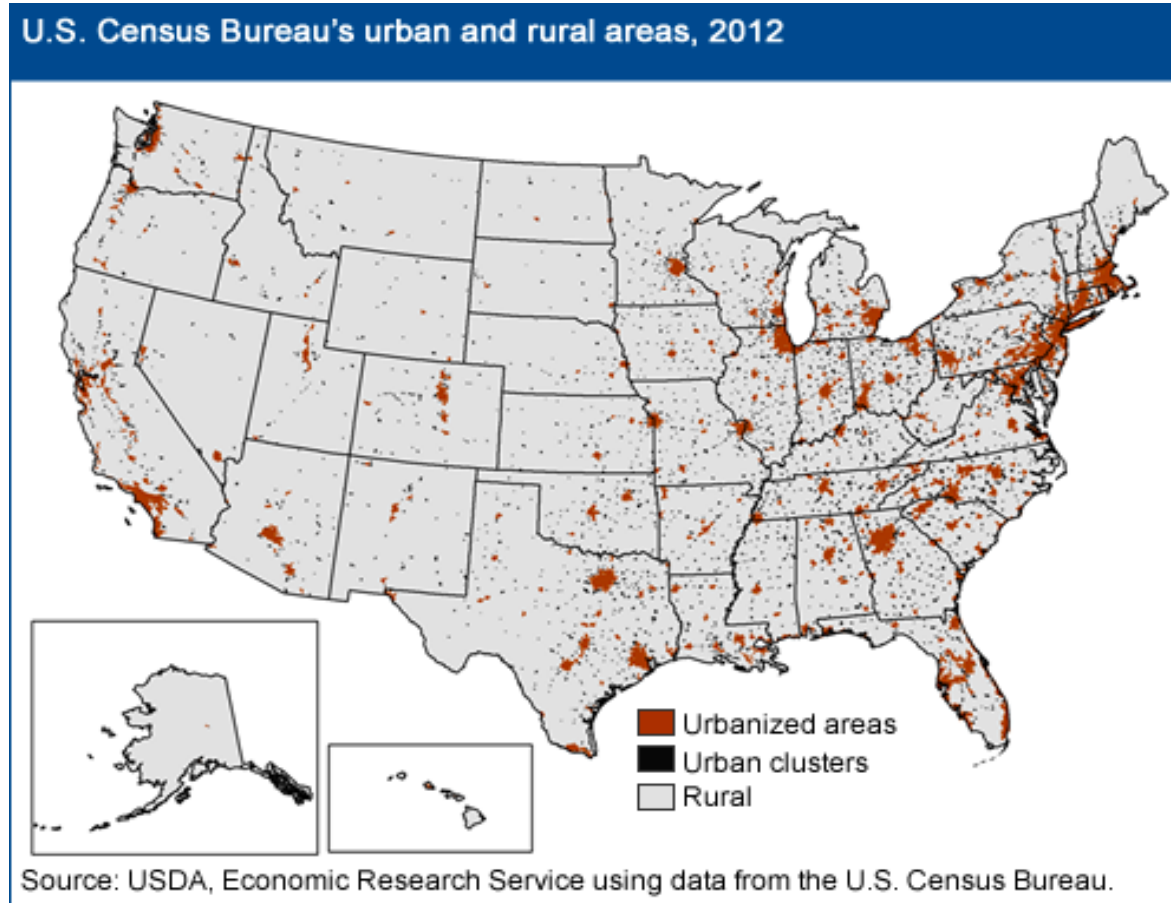
“If you have a Starbucks, you are not rural.”

“If you have a Subway and it is attached to a gas station, you are rural.”

- Shannon O'Dell



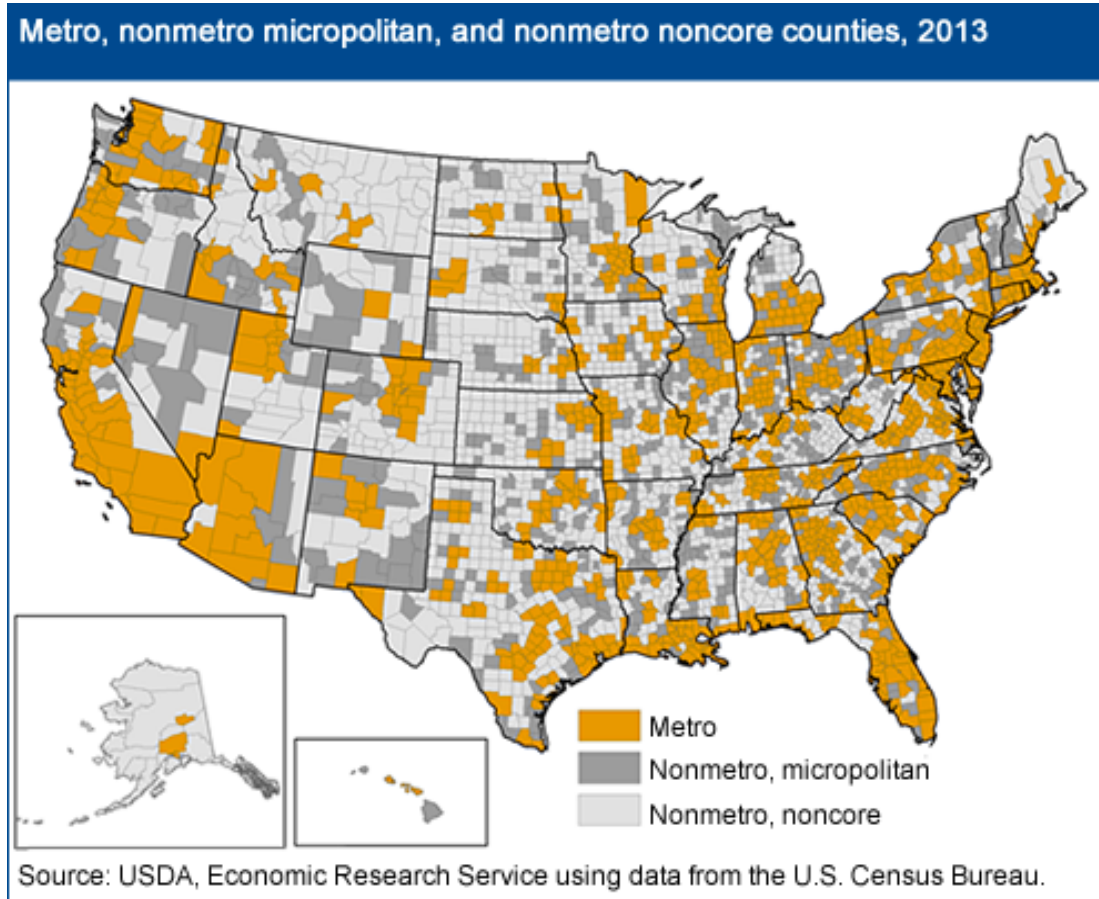
# U.S. Census Bureau



Source:  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx>

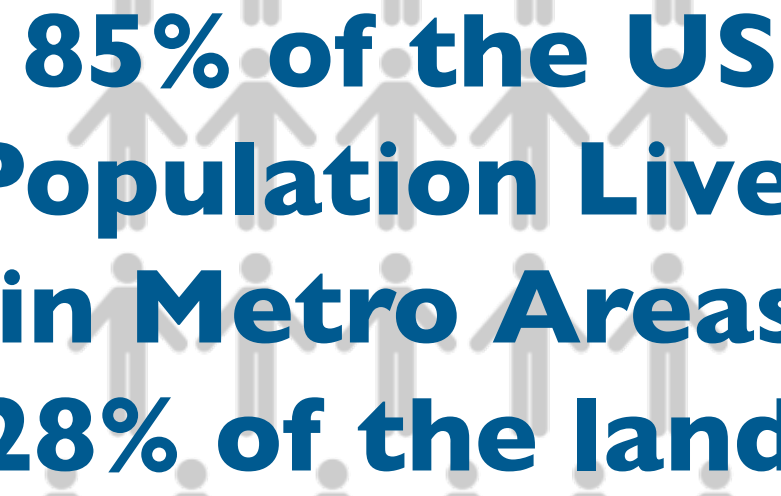


# Office of Management and Budget




Source:

[https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/gils\\_gil-home](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/gils_gil-home)



**85% of the US  
Population Lives  
in Metro Areas  
(28% of the land).**



**15% of the US  
Population Lives in  
Non-Metro Areas  
(72% of the land).**

Source: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx>

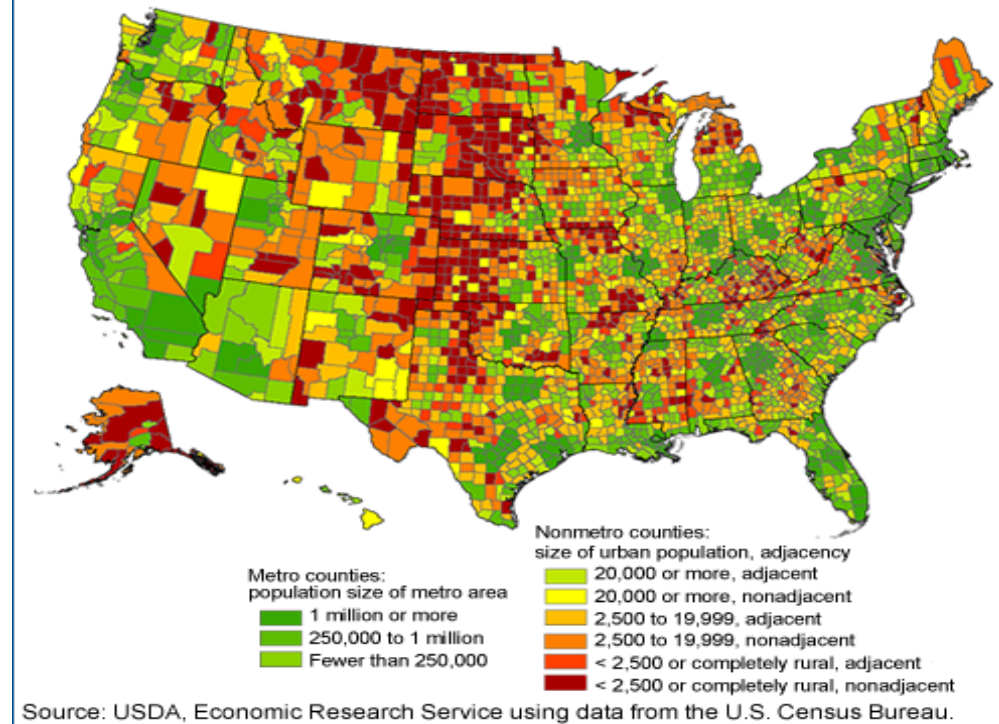


# Economic Research Service of the Department of Agriculture

## 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes

Code	Description
<b>Metro Counties</b>	
1	Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more
2	Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population
3	Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population
<b>Non-metro Counties:</b>	
4	Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area
5	Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area
6	Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent to a metro area
7	Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area
8	Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area
9	Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, not adjacent to a metro area

## 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes



Source: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx>

## **Misconception #1:**

**Rural North America is homogenous in place, people, and thought.**

Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/what-you-dont-know-about-rural-america-3-common-misconcepts.html>

# Carsey Institute

Rural communities fall into one of three categories:

- Remote Isolated Communities
- Scenic Communities
- Re-Migration Rural Communities



## **Takeaway #1:**

**You must understand rural North America one community at a time.**

Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/what-you-dont-know-about-rural-america-3-common-misconcepts.html>





**What are the challenges rural  
North Americans face?**

  
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# Challenges Rural North Americans Face

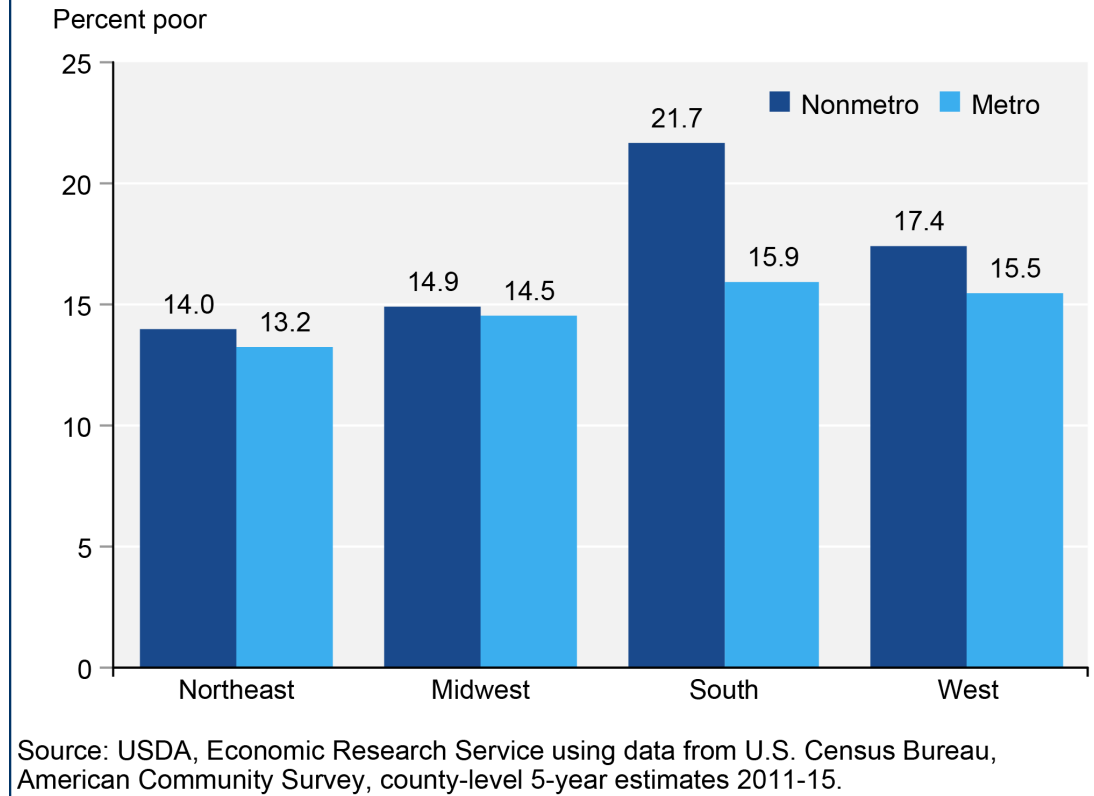
- Changing demographics
- Health issues
- Energy issues
- Declining downtowns/loss of community character
- Limited housing choices
- Limited access to social services

Sources: [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-06/documents/ref\\_herman\\_081612.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-06/documents/ref_herman_081612.pdf) ;  
<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/news/2015/07/rural-social-work.asp>



# Challenges - Poverty

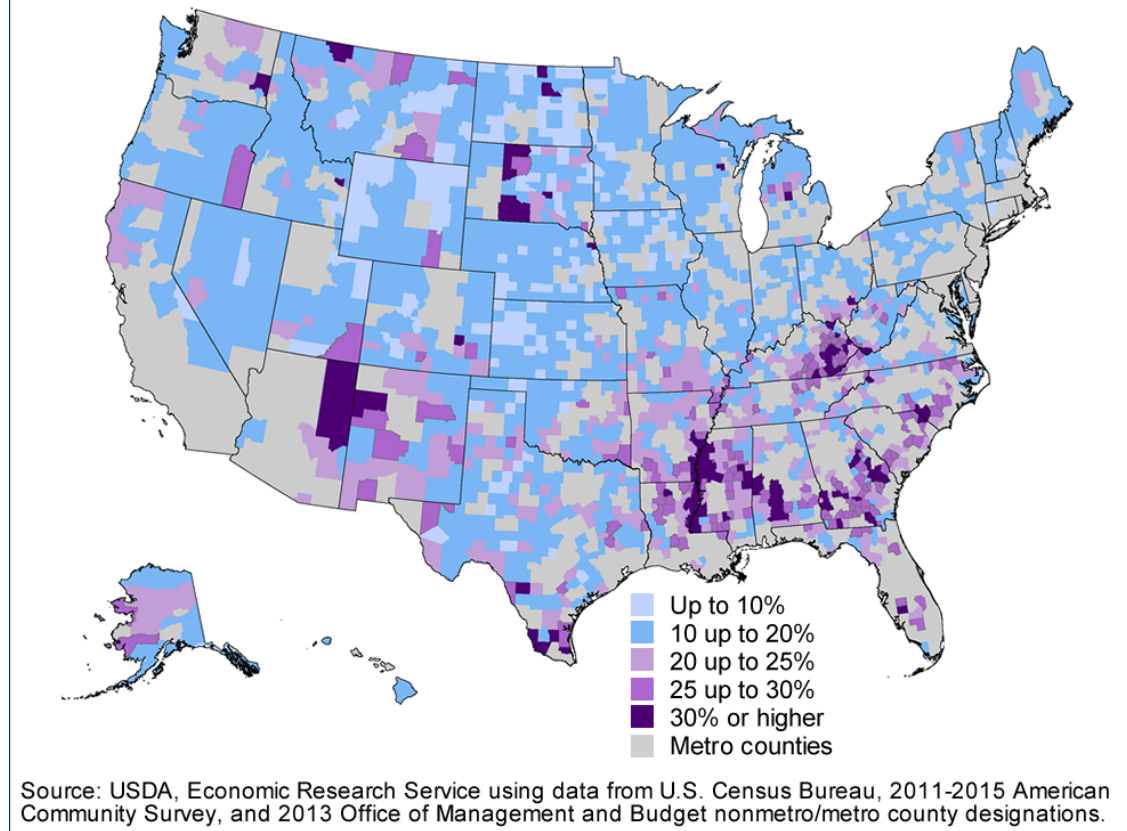
Poverty rates by region and metro/nonmetro status, 2011-2015



Source: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/geography-of-poverty.aspx>

# Challenges (continued)

Nonmetro county poverty rates, 2011-2015 average



Source: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/geography-of-poverty.aspx>

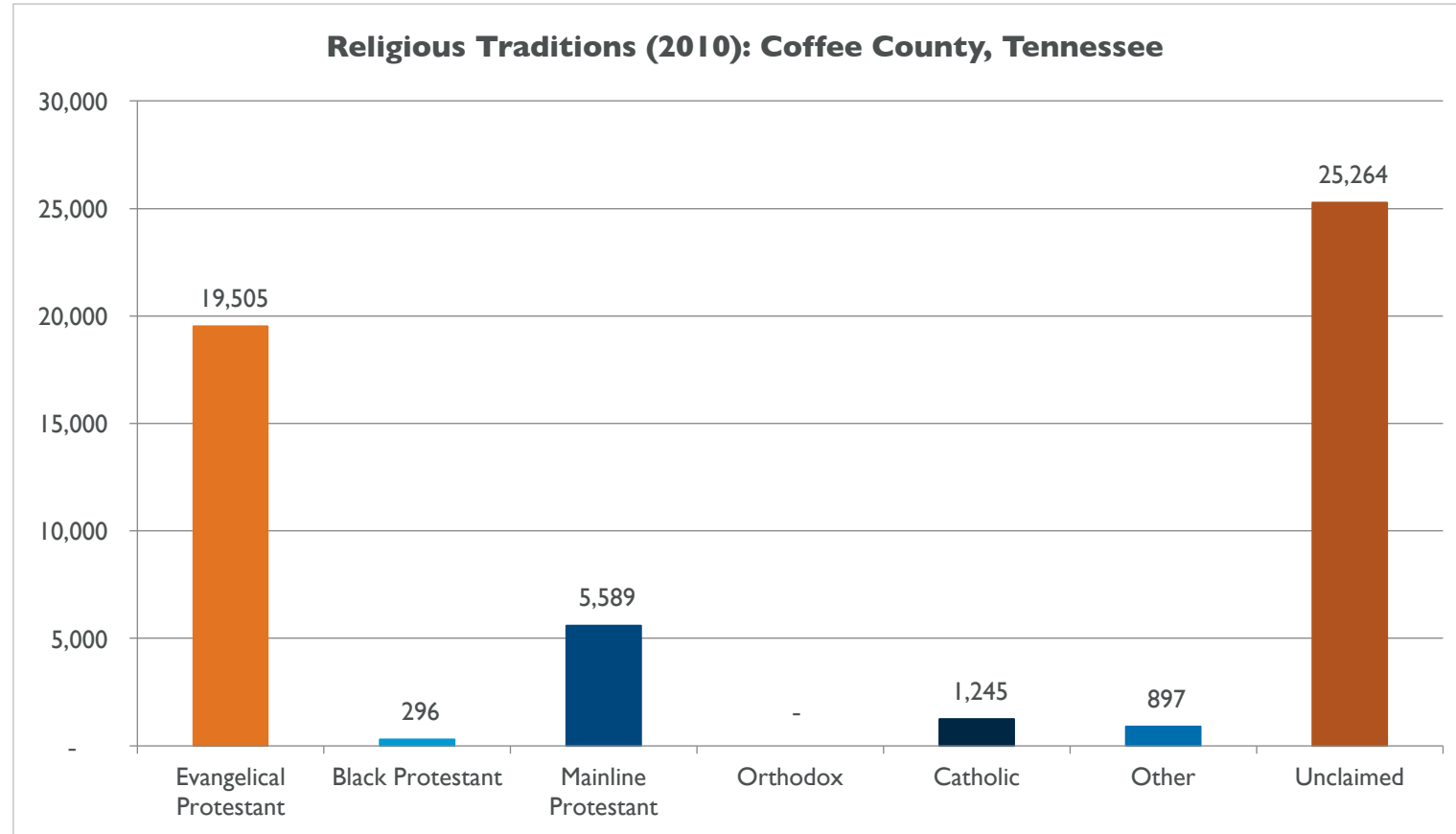


# What is the spiritual condition of rural North America?





# ARDA County Reports



Source:

<http://www.thearda.com/RCMS2010/selectCounty.asp>



## **Misconception #2:**

**Rural North America = God's Country**

Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/what-you-dont-know-about-rural-america-3-common-misconcepti.html>

## **Takeaway #2:**

**The Church in much of rural North America, though still respected, has lost its influence.**

Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/what-you-dont-know-about-rural-america-3-common-misconcepti.html>

## **Misconception #3:**

**Rural America doesn't need another church.**

Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/what-you-dont-know-about-rural-america-3-common-misconcepti.html>

## **Takeaway #3:**

**Life-giving churches are needed in every community in rural North America.**

Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/what-you-dont-know-about-rural-america-3-common-misconcepts.html>



A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape at sunset. The foreground is dominated by a large field of golden-brown corn stalks, some standing and some cut. In the middle ground, a small town or village is visible, featuring several houses with red-tiled roofs and a prominent white church with a tall, pointed steeple. The background consists of rolling green hills under a sky with soft, pink and orange hues from the setting sun.

**Why does  
“rural” matter?**

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GOD'S WORD. EVERY CHILD.



“We often use the phrase for some remote rural area, ‘out-in-the-middle of nowhere.’ No place or no person is unimportant to God and should not be to us if we are obedient to our Master. Every place is some place for someone. Every person is someone to some person.”

“If we are to be faithful to the Great Commission, we have no choice but to be concerned for all people. Therefore, an equal priority must be given not only to reaching the massive cities of our continent, but also the small cities, towns, and countryside populations.”

- George W. Garner





# RURAL MATTERS

**Discussion and Q&A**