

# Perspectives

On Poverty, Policy, & Place

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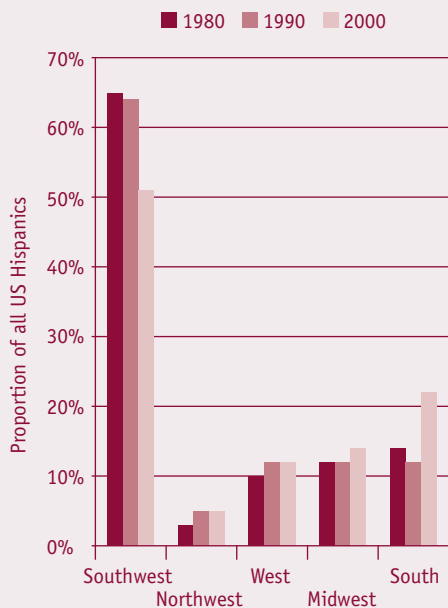
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The Newsletter of the  
**RUPRI Rural Poverty  
Research Center**

## FAST FACT

### Regional Distribution of Nonmetro U.S. Hispanic Population, 1980–2000



**Source:** William Kandel and John Cromartie, *New Patterns of Hispanic Settlement in Rural America*, Rural Development Research Report No. RDRR99, May 2004.

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Crowley and coauthors trace the migration patterns beyond the Southwest of Mexican immigrants, finding that they fare better economically in other regions of the country, although their nonmetro poverty rates are still higher than metro rates.

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### New Report Outlines Available Data for Rural Research

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Bylines—Each article in the newsletter features the byline “based on research by...”, which signifies that the article, while written by our editorial staff, has been reviewed and approved by the original researcher. With this approach, we hope to disseminate research to a broad audience in a format that is accessible, reliable, and accurate.

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## Using the Tax Code as Social Policy in Rural America

Based on research by Alan Berube

As tightening budgets in Washington force further cuts in spending programs, and as policymakers look to new ways to advance social programs, attention turns to the tax system as a potential support for low- to middle-income working families. As Alan Berube in his recent paper commissioned by the Rural Policy Research Institute points out, the federal tax code has played an increasingly important role in supporting low-income rural families.<sup>1</sup>

### The Federal Tax System as a Source of Support for Low-Income Families

The federal tax system has almost always functioned as more than just a revenue collector to support national spending. Since the early twentieth century, the income tax code has, through targeted deductions and credits, promoted certain activities by reducing tax bills for families and corporations. Perhaps the most well-known of these programs is the mortgage deduction that millions of homeowners take each year.

The various deductions can either lower a family’s tax bill directly dollar for dollar (known as a *tax credit*) or they can lower the amount of income subject to tax (known as a *tax deduction*). The benefits of deductions largely bypass low- and moderate-income families, who have low (or no) taxable income. Tax credits, on the other hand, are more likely to offer some relief. The credits most valuable to these families are typically *refundable*, meaning that if the size of the credit for which a family qualifies exceeds its total tax liability, they may receive the excess portion in the form of a tax refund.

Several tax credits provide particular value to low- and middle-income working families. These include the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and its cousin the Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC) for lower-income families; the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC); education credits such as the Hope Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit; and the Saver’s Credit, which encourages low-income families to contribute to retirement accounts by offering federal matching amounts (see Table 1 for a description of these credits).

**Alan Berube** is a fellow at the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, and a former policy advisor in community development at the U.S. Treasury Department.

1. Alan Berube, “The Tax Code as Social Policy in Rural America,” forthcoming in *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Poverty*.

## Tax Credits and Rural Families

Rural families may be poised to derive more benefit from certain tax credits than urban families. Consider the EITC. In 2002, between 20% and 22% of rural tax filers claimed the credit, compared with 16% in metro areas. The average value of the EITC was also higher in rural areas—\$1,790 in nonmetro areas compared with \$1,766 in metro areas in 2003. Map 1 shows the distribution of EITC filers nationwide. In a nearly contiguous stretch of southern rural counties, at least 30% of residents receive an EITC, roughly double the national rate. Communities along the southwestern border and those in heavily Native American areas of the West also show above-average EITC claims.

Further, credits such as the EITC and the ACTC that direct the bulk of their benefits to low- and moderate-income families appear to provide particular help to small towns and rural areas. On the other hand, credits such as the CTC and education credits, which predominantly support middle-class families, do not provide disproportionate advantage to rural areas. In fact, the percentage of filers claiming the CTC did not differ across metro and nonmetro areas in 2002.

Several characteristics of rural families and places contribute to their tendency to benefit more from tax credits. First, more rural households are eligible for tax credits like the EITC given their lower average incomes. Of course, rural areas also boast lower costs of living, but the tax code does not take that factor into account in determining tax bills.

Second, although more rural families than urban own their own homes, lower average home values in rural areas make deductions for home mortgage interest and property taxes less valuable, and lead more rural families to claim the standard deduction. In this context, tax credits, rather than deductions, are a more viable way to help rural families.

In other cases, however, credits may be less valuable to rural families than to their metro counterparts. The Saver's Credit, for instance, may be less helpful given the apparent lower retirement savings in rural areas, as indicated by the smaller number of families reporting interest or dividend income and the higher poverty rates among the elderly. Similarly, education credits may be less beneficial to rural families, given their lower enrollment rates in postsecondary education. Still, these credits remain small

compared with those from which rural families derive considerable value, such as the EITC and ACTC.

## Farm Subsidies vs. Tax Credits

The fact that the federal government provides significant financial assistance to rural families and communities through the tax code has gone largely unnoticed to date. In part, this owes to the significant attention paid to more “traditional” expenditures in these areas via, among other programs, USDA farm subsidies. Analysis of the respective size of the EITC and these programs suggests, however, that for many counties and states, working family credits make a potentially larger economic contribution to family and community well-being.

Rural areas actually depend less on agriculture and more on low-wage work in the service and other low-paid industries, making wage-based credits such as the EITC increasingly important. In 96% of South Carolina's counties, for example, EITC claims exceeded USDA subsidies. Farm subsidies contributed \$126 million in 2003 while the EITC delivered nearly \$770 million to lower-income filers in the state that year.

Even in Montana, where statewide farm subsidies provide \$3 for every \$1 in EITC claimed, in 17 of Montana's 56 counties (14 of them predominantly nonmetro counties) families received more in the EITC than from the subsidy program. Lake County, just north of Missoula, benefited from \$1.1 million in farm subsidies in 2003 and \$4.2 million in EITC claims.

Unfortunately, no data exist to assess the impact of other tax programs, although back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest that the ACTC may boost refunds for EITC recipients by 40%.<sup>2</sup> Other working family credits also increase the financial value of the tax code for rural areas.

Beyond initial magnitude, it is difficult to estimate the true economic effects of tax credits relative to agriculture subsidies. EITC dollars, for example, are likely spread more widely but in smaller amounts than USDA expenditures in rural areas. Also, much of the EITC-related spending occurs in a short span, when families receive

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2. Unlike the Child Tax Credit, which is not a fully refundable credit, the ACTC provides a refundable credit equal to 15% of low-income families' earnings in excess of \$11,000, up to \$1,000 per child. Estimates are based on the Office of Management and Budget's projections for income maintenance outlays for the EITC and CTC in 2005. Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2006 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005).

their tax refund, rather than throughout the year. On the other hand, that lump-sum spending can also have a more concentrated economic impact in several sectors, such as housing and retail.

### Policy and Research Implications

The tax code is clearly a crucial social policy vehicle for low-income families in rural America, and rural leaders should pay closer attention to its power and potential to assist families and communities. To aid policymakers in their decisions, research should examine in more detail the spatial distribution of recipients of various credits in rural areas and the size of the benefits claimed. A few studies have done this with the EITC, and new IRS data should expand the number of credits that can be investigated in greater geographic detail.<sup>3</sup> Such studies could also point to current gaps in participation. Researchers,

for example, might compare EITC claim rates with rates of other credits, such as the ACTC, to identify places where receipt is lower than might be expected. Further work is also needed on the economic dynamics in rural areas. Case studies, for example, could reveal the spending patterns of families that receive tax credits in different types of rural areas.

To encourage greater use of existing tax credits and deductions, efforts should be made to inform rural families of their availability and help them to file for the credits. Several urban areas have launched successful awareness and filing programs. Rural programs can draw from these efforts, although leaders must recognize that the situation on the ground differs in rural areas than in urban areas, with its dense concentrations of eligible families and stronger community capacity. Rural families are much more dispersed and rural communities may not have the manpower to launch tax preparation programs. In addition, the changing face of rural America poses some complications for programs. The rapidly growing

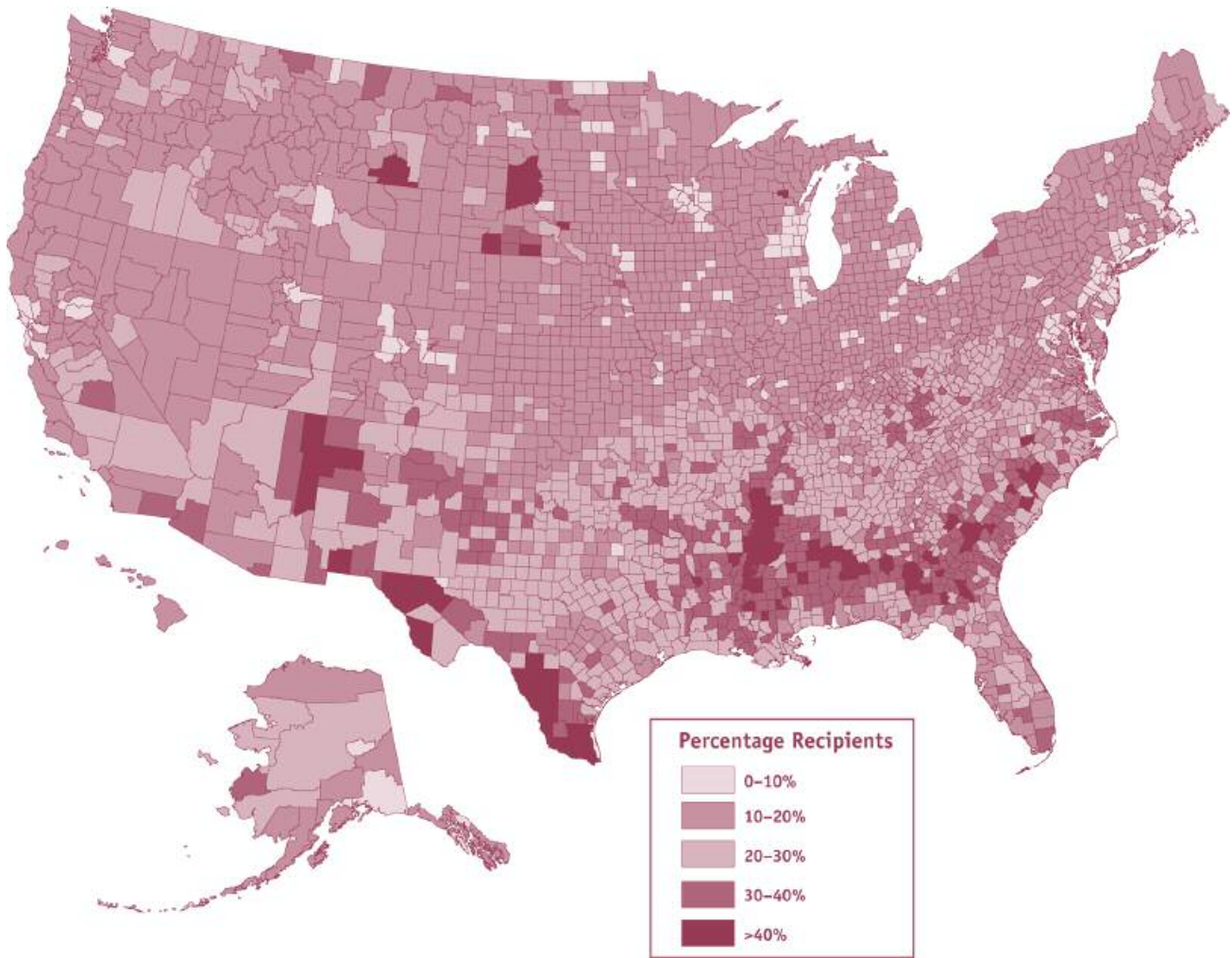
3. For studies on the EITC, see Berube and Thacher Tiffany, "The State of Low-Wage Workers: How the EITC Benefits Urban and Rural Communities in the 50 States" (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004).

Table 1.  
Summary of Working Family Tax Credits

Credit	Eligible Taxpayers	Size of Credit	Refundable?	Cost, 2005 (\$ billions)
<b>Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)</b>	Families with children and income up to \$37,000; childless workers up to \$12,000	Up to \$4,400; average \$1,800	Yes	39.0 (approx. 34.0 refundable)
<b>Child Tax Credit (CTC)</b>	Families with children and income over \$11,000, under \$110,000	Up to \$1,000 per child	Partially	46.6 (approx. 17.0 refundable)
<b>Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)</b>	Families with paid care expenses for children under age 13	20%–35% of expenses up to \$3,000 per child (2 max)	No	3.0
<b>Hope and Lifetime Learning Credits</b>	Parents or students with postsecondary educational expenses	Hope: up to \$1,500; Lifetime: 20% of expenses up to \$10,000	No	5.2
<b>Saver's Credit</b>	Taxpayers with incomes under \$50,000 who make contribution to IRA, 401(k), etc.	10%–50% of contribution up to \$2,000	No	1.7

Source: Author's analysis of IRS and JCT publications.

Map 1.  
EITC Recipients as a Percentage of Total Returns by County, Tax Year 2003



Source: Brookings Institution analysis of IRS data.

Latino population in rural areas and the higher rates of self-employment may affect participation rates. Latino immigration status can complicate eligibility for some programs but not others. The self-employed also face more complex eligibility requirements.

Efforts to convert nonrefundable credits to refundable credits have met stiff resistance in Congress. The current administration believes that those who pay a larger share of the overall federal income tax should benefit more. Therefore, future extensions of benefits to low-income families, who often pay no federal income tax, are less likely. In addition, error rates in EITC filing have caught policymakers' attention, which may have dampened enthusiasm for creating new refundable credits or expanding existing ones.

Most of the current reforms under consideration seek large reductions in tax rates in exchange for severe reductions in tax expenditures. Even if lower-income taxpayers continue to be exempted from paying federal income taxes under a reformed system, proposed reforms may nevertheless reduce the size of, or restrict the eligibility for, refundable credits similar to the EITC or ACTC.

States, on the other hand, can boost investments in their rural families through state income tax credits. Several states have recently enacted or expanded their own versions of the federal EITC, and such credits have enjoyed bipartisan support in both boom times and lean times. Therefore, efforts to enact state-level versions of working family credits represent a strong opportunity for rural leaders to bolster the economic health of their local communities. **RPRC**

# Economic Benefits to Mexicans of Emigrating beyond U.S. Gateway Communities

Based on research by Martha L. Crowley, Daniel T. Lichter, and Zhenchao Qian

Historically, Mexicans in the United States have been concentrated in border cities in the Southwest, most often working in the low-wage, low-skill labor market. However, since the 1990s, many Mexican families, especially recent immigrants, have settled in the Midwest and South, often in rural places. In their RPRC working paper “Beyond Gateway Cities: Economic Restructuring and Poverty among Mexican Families and Children,” Martha Crowley, Daniel Lichter, and Zhenchao Qian find that, although immigrants remain at much greater risk for poverty than do U.S.-born Mexicans, this risk is dramatically reduced in regions outside the Southwest. Yet, regardless of the region of the country where they choose to live, Mexicans’ risk of poverty remains roughly one-third higher in nonmetropolitan than in metropolitan areas.

**Mexican families living outside the Southwest have lower rates of poverty than would be expected given their demographic or economic background characteristics.**

## Study Data and Design

Using nationally representative data from the 1990 and 2000 Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples (IPUMS) from working-age householders and children (nonmarried, aged 17 or younger), the authors examine changes in the spatial distribution of Mexicans between 1990 and 2000, and investigate economic resources and vulnerabilities among native-born and immigrant Mexicans in the

Southwest, Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, and West. These include personal and family attributes, acculturation, education, and work effort. Special attention is paid to the industries in which Mexican householders work. The authors then evaluate the effect of region, employment, and immigrant status, net of economic resources and vulnerabilities, for Mexicans’ odds of poverty.

## Dispersion of Mexican Workers in the United States

Between 1990 and 2000, the Mexican share of the working-age householder population increased from 4.1% to 5.5% overall, with much of the change resulting from immigrants, whose population share rose by more than 75%. Mexicans’ share of households doubled in the Northeast, Midwest, and West and tripled in the Southeast, while rising by only about 17% in the

Southwest. Moreover, the share of Mexicans residing in the Southwest dropped from 83% in 1990 to 75% in 2000. Much of the increase in the Mexican population outside the Southwest is attributable to the increasing numbers of immigrants settling in new destinations, often in nonmetro areas of the Midwest and Southeast, where Mexican immigrant population shares rose by 80% and 180%, respectively.

Economic and political factors have simultaneously pushed Mexicans out of the metropolitan Southwest and drawn them to areas where industrial shifts have created a growing demand for cheap labor. Meat and poultry processing, for example, have undergone substantial changes in recent years, with a shift away from job specialization to routine, low-skill manufacturing. Many plants have also left urban, unionized areas for nonmetro areas where production and labor costs are lower. Further, high turnover in the industry keeps job demand high. Mexicans have also been drawn to new destinations

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for jobs in other nondurable manufacturing industries (including oil, timber, furniture, carpeting, and textiles), but have also found opportunities in construction and the service sector.

### **Risk of Poverty among U.S.-born Mexicans and Foreign-born Mexican Immigrants**

Overall, U.S.-born Mexicans fare better socially and economically than foreign-born Mexicans. Compared with U.S.-born Mexicans, poverty rates among recent immigrants are three times higher. However, with time in the United States, the odds of poverty decline by about 16% for each additional five years lived in the United States.

Notwithstanding these differences, for both groups the odds of poverty are lower outside the Southwest—reduced by 13% in the Northeast, 33% in the Midwest, 24% in the Southeast, and 20% in the West. Some of this regional variation is explained by personal and family factors. For example, married-couple families and those with fewer children (the least likely to be in poverty relative to single mothers with three or more children) tend to settle outside the Southwest.

Surprisingly, although human capital and acculturation factors explain some of the differences in poverty between immigrant and U.S.-born Mexicans, they do not explain any of the regional variation. In other words, Mexican families living outside the Southwest have lower rates of poverty than would be expected given their demographic or economic background characteristics.

Clearly, the growth of jobs outside the Southwest has provided Mexican families with low-skill, low-wage work opportunities that were likely unavailable in their places of origin, especially among immigrants. And the industrial sector exerts a strong influence over Mexicans' odds of poverty. Relative to those in high-wage industries (and controlling for other economic resources and vulnerabilities), Mexicans in agriculture, low-wage service, and temporary industries are more than twice as likely to be poor. However, those in construction and nondurable

manufacturing (including meat processing)—industries, it is argued, that draw Mexicans to nontraditional settlement destinations—are only about one-third more likely to be in poverty relative to those in high-wage industries.

### **Nonmetro Poverty Risk Is Higher**

These economic returns to living outside the Southwest are mitigated by living in nonmetropolitan locales. Indeed, immigrants living in nonmetro areas have rates of poverty exceeding those of both their U.S.-born and their metropolitan counterparts. Mexican immigrants in nonmetro areas are typically young, poorly educated, and poorly paid, all of which increases the risk of poverty, especially in rural communities with rapidly growing Latino populations.

### **Implications**

Although Mexican immigrants who move beyond the Southwest appear to be faring better than their counterparts in the southwestern gateway communities, their economic security is certainly not guaranteed. Mexican families still face high poverty rates by contemporary standards, and economic and cultural incorporation has proceeded unevenly in their new destinations. Clearly, local communities, especially nonmetro communities, will be challenged by the unanticipated social and material needs of Mexican newcomers. Education, for example—a key to upward mobility—must address the need for bilingual services.

Communities should strive to learn from one another in managing the growth and cultural change. The USDA recently funded a three-year study of industrial restructuring and community response in the Shenandoah Valley, which will identify best practices for communities challenged by an influx of new residents. Communities should also tap into the network of service providers, serving as a connector between the different organizations supporting new populations. A centralized source of information on housing, laws and legal rights, temporary aid, and bilingual classes could be a productive result of such

**Mexican immigrants living in nonmetro areas have rates of poverty exceeding those of both their U.S.-born and their metropolitan counterparts.**

collaboration. Finally, attention must be paid to the effects on the educational systems in these communities. Communities may be unable to shoulder the new fiscal and budgetary demands of an influx of students with a variety of needs. Without supporting these new students, test scores could fall, further threatening funding in some states.

New Mexican residents, of course, have benefited nonmetropolitan communities in many ways, including arresting long-term population declines, bolstering labor supply in low-skill markets, and providing new tax dollars and new markets for consumer spending. Although challenges remain, communities can ultimately benefit from their new members. **RPRC**

## The Effectiveness of Job Growth in Lowering Poverty in Persistent Poverty Counties

Based on research by Mark Partridge and Dan Rickman

Rural areas that have endured persistent poverty over generations are some of the most vulnerable areas in the country.<sup>1</sup> These areas typically have less job growth, lower employment rates, and are often surrounded by areas with equally high poverty. Their residents are also much more likely to have less education; the population is more likely to be African American, Hispanic, or Native American; and households are more likely to be headed by single mothers. Given these both place-based and person-based characteristics, how should policymakers respond to persistent poverty?

Mark Partridge and Dan Rickman, in their RPRC working paper “Persistent Pockets of Extreme American Poverty: People or Place Based?” use Census 2000 data from roughly 3,000 counties to explore whether antipoverty strategies that seek to improve individual characteristics, such as education and training, or those that foster economic development are a more effective method of lowering poverty in persistently poor rural areas.

**Persistent poverty counties respond much more dramatically to job growth than non-persistent poverty counties, controlling for other factors that affect poverty, and they also respond more quickly to changes in their underlying economic conditions.**

### Job Growth’s Effects in Persistent Poverty Counties

Partridge and Rickman find clear evidence that persistent poverty counties respond much more dramatically to job growth than non-persistent poverty counties, controlling for other factors that affect poverty. For every percentage point increase in the five-year job growth rate, the poverty rate falls about three times as much in persistent poverty counties as in other counties. One possible reason for these significant differences, the authors suggest, is that job growth in persistent poverty counties is much less likely to attract migrants or commuters, who might displace more disadvantaged workers. Another reason may be that residents of poor counties are less likely to migrate to other counties and have fewer commuting options.

Partridge and Rickman find, too, that persistent poverty counties respond more quickly to changes in their underlying economic conditions. This suggests that it is not the inability to respond to economic changes that leads to persistent poverty, but rather the persistence of the underlying determinants of poverty, such as a less-educated population or a higher share of female-headed house-

1. A persistent poverty county is one that has had poverty rates exceeding 20% in each of the last four decennial censuses (1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000).

holds. Both types of counties also respond to their neighbors' economic standing in similar ways. A one percentage point increase in neighboring county poverty rates is associated with about a 0.10 percentage point rise in the home county's poverty rate for both persistent and non-persistent poverty counties. This suggests that changes in poverty rates in one county have relatively large spillover effects in neighboring counties.

### Effective Economic Development

It is clear from the findings that place-based economic development programs that successfully stimulate employment can have considerable impact on poverty in these persistently struggling counties. But what type of economic development should policymakers target? Should they work, for example, to increase the variety of industry, focus on getting discouraged workers back into the workforce, or encourage residents to migrate to better jobs?

The authors' findings suggest that job growth had an indirect effect on poverty reduction, which occurred through raising the share of the working-age population that is employed. In particular, their findings suggest that reemploying discouraged workers was an important factor in the decline in poverty. These counties appear to generally suffer from a "shortage" of jobs that is not

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reflected in the official unemployment rate, which only counts those who are actively seeking work. Conversely, because poor households are less mobile, person-based policies such as encouraging disadvantaged households to relocate to communities with better job opportunities may lead to disappointing results.

Particularly encouraging is the fact that employment growth has greater effects among the very poor in persistent poverty counties (those living below 50% of the

**Particularly encouraging is the fact that employment growth has greater effects among the very poor in persistent poverty counties (those living below 50% of the poverty line).**

poverty line). Finally, refuting the notion that persistent poverty counties are "poverty traps," the authors find fairly uniform effects of job growth across a wide range of counties, regardless of their characteristics. Job growth, for example, was equally effective in counties that relied on primary goods or manufacturing, those that had historically tight labor markets, and those that had different educational compositions. This suggests that economic development policies can reduce poverty in a wide

range of persistently poor counties, and policies do not necessarily have to be targeted to particular persistent poverty counties.

In short, even though persistent poverty counties have characteristics that increase their risk of poverty, including both individual and place-based factors, poverty rates respond more rapidly and with greater intensity to job growth in these counties than in non-persistent poverty counties. Providing nearby access to employment appears to be an effective antipoverty strategy in persistent poverty counties with a wide range of characteristics. These findings suggest that effective place-based policies may greatly increase the effectiveness of person-based policies. **RPRC**

## New Report Outlines Available Data for Rural Research

In contrast to urban areas, we know little definitively of the need for or use of social services in rural areas. One reason for this gap in knowledge is a lack of suitable data. In an effort to close this gap, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation developed an inventory of available databases that researchers can use to study the accessibility and use of selected human services in rural areas. DHHS contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., to conduct the study. With input from rural experts, the inventory is focused on three services believed to be especially important to rural families: work supports for low-income families, substance abuse treatment and counseling, and child welfare services.

### Available Databases for Rural Research on Human Service Use

The inventory describes databases that can be used for rural research. These databases have rigorous and well-defined sampling or data collection methods and instruments, include ongoing studies or multiple waves of data collection, are in the public domain and accessible for research, and are supported by codebooks and other published documentation. On the basis of these criteria, the inventory includes 20 federal and nonfederal data sources suitable for rural research on the three topics (see Table 1). A selection of these data sets includes:

- The Survey of Income and Program Participation, which can be used to study participation in work support programs and services, including job training, job subsidies, and transportation assistance.
- The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997 panel), which can be used to examine training, government assistance programs, and alcohol and drug use patterns for African American and Hispanic populations in rural areas.
- The Alcohol and Drug Services Study, which has information on nearly 500 treatment facilities in nonmetro counties, offering rich descriptive information on rural substance abuse treatment needs and services.
- The National Educational Longitudinal Study, which has information on rates of smoking and alcohol and drug use for students in rural schools. It is possible to correlate measures of use with

school, community, and family factors to explore risk factors and prevention options.

- The Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect, which can be used to construct detailed case studies of child and family experiences in the child welfare systems in rural areas.

State administrative data are another source of potentially valuable information. Data on child care assistance, for example, are available from several states' administrative data systems (e.g., Iowa, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming). Data on participation in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services are also available, as are child welfare data. Some states also collect data on substance abuse treatment. The value of many state data sets is the geographic identifier, which allows researchers to pinpoint place when analyzing service use patterns. Working with administrative data requires the cooperation of state agencies, assurances that confidentiality will be maintained, and data handling expertise.

### Research Gaps in Selected Rural Human Service Topics

Many important aspects of the three chosen topics simply have not been studied in rural settings. There are no existing studies, for example, that estimate the prevalence or incidence of child maltreatment in rural areas. Although useful descriptive studies exist, more rigorous study is needed on the access to and operation, use, and effectiveness of child welfare services in rural areas. Similarly, the effects of work supports have not been systematically examined in rural areas. Although there are several rigorous welfare reform studies, it is often impossible to isolate effects of particular services and to examine individual program components—for example, employment services and work incentives—in work support packages. Also, more information on access to work supports is needed. Little is known about access to and participation in WIA services in rural areas. More information also is needed on transportation and child care services supporting working parents.

Our understanding of substance abuse treatment is equally challenged. Although several excellent studies have documented prevalence and incidence of substance abuse in rural areas, very little empirical work has been done on treatment and prevention services. For example, what are the effects of the known disparities in rural treatment resources on access to treatment and treatment effective-

Table 1.  
Selected Federal and Nonfederal Data Sources Suitable for Rural Research

Data Source	Primary Focal Topic	Other Focal Topics Included		
		Work Supports	Substance Abuse	Child Welfare
Current Population Survey (CPS)	Work Supports			
National Household Travel Survey	Work Supports			
National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY)	Work Supports		X	
National Survey of America's Families (NSAF)	Work Supports			X
Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)	Work Supports			X
Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)	Work Supports			X
Alcohol and Drug Services Study	Substance Abuse			
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System	Substance Abuse			
Monitoring the Future	Substance Abuse	X		X
National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS)	Substance Abuse			
National Survey on Drug Use and Health	Substance Abuse			
National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services	Substance Abuse			
Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS)	Substance Abuse			
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	Substance Abuse			
Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)	Child Welfare			
Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN)	Child Welfare			
Multi-State Foster Care Data Archive	Child Welfare			
National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)	Child Welfare			
National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS)	Child Welfare			
National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being	Child Welfare			

Source: Reprinted from *Rural Research Needs and Data Sources for Selected Human Services Topics*, vol 2. (Washington: DHHS, ASPE, August 2005), p. 26.

ness? Do rural treatment programs, although long distances from home for many, have shorter wait lists, or are caseloads smaller even though program staff have less specialized training? Do rural families have greater

personal and family supports to aid recovery, leading to different effects of program treatment in rural areas? Experimental studies of both treatment and prevention impacts are needed. ►

## Moving Forward

Although these existing data sources are a start for the research community, much more is needed. The DHHS report offers several suggestions for improving data, including:

- adding rural sites to program evaluations; over-sampling rural sites and populations;
  - reporting findings on rural areas in national and regional studies;
  - making better use of existing rural classification systems in poverty and human service research
- to better capture the complexity of rural-urban differences;
  - disclosing rural definitions and classifications used in studies to allow analysts to more accurately interpret findings and synthesize findings across studies; and
  - providing detailed descriptions of rural samples and descriptive and demographic information on rural study sites to ensure that small, region-specific rural studies are more generalizable. **RPRC**

The full report, *Rural Research Needs and Data Sources for Selected Human Services Topics*, vols. 1 and 2, is available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/05/rural-data/>

The report offers detailed information, by topic, on the 20 national surveys and 60 state administrative data sets available for rural research.

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