Trapped

The Realities of Rural Poverty

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Real World Solutions for Systems Change

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Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. helps local, state, and federal agencies in their work to improve health and human service systems of care. We offer technical assistance, training, system/program development, resource development/dissemination, research and evaluation.

We'd love to talk about how we can help you!

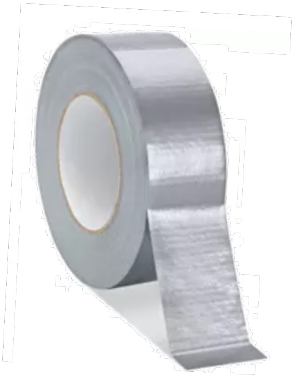
Please join my list for an occasional column on homelessness and housing.

Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Describe at least 2 outcomes associated with rural poverty
2. Name 4 demographic factors specific to rural poverty
3. Discuss 3 bridges out of poverty

Getting Started: What Does Rural Poverty Mean To You?



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Rural Poverty

What is *rural*?

You'll know it when you *don't* see it

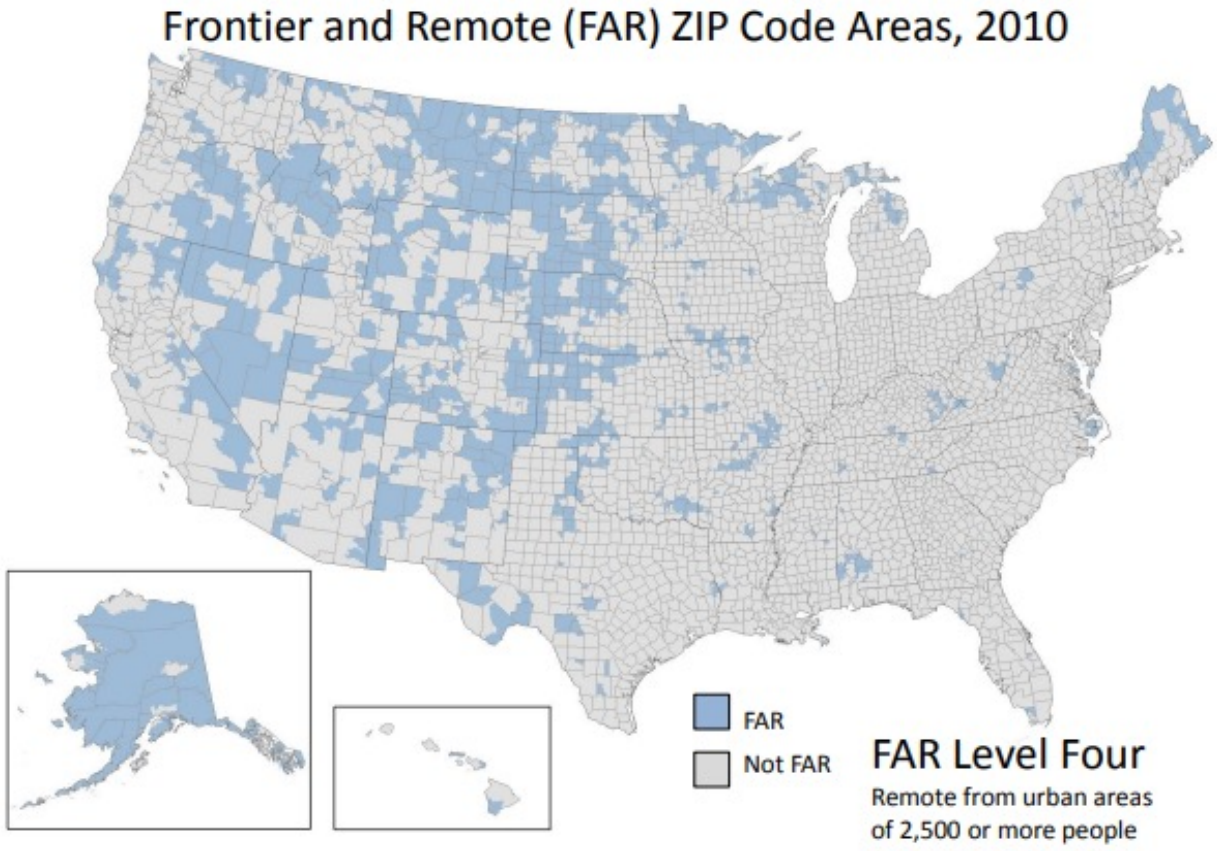
How Rural is Your Community?

- How long does it take to drive to the nearest large community?
- What is your population density?
- What about windshield time between clients?
- How close is the nearest hospital or treatment center?

Rural Realities

- Urban areas make up just 3% of the entire land mass of the United States, but are home to more than 80% of the population[1]
- 97% of the land mass is rural, but home to just 19.3% of the population[1]
- The *frontier* is the most remote and sparsely populated part of the country, covering approximately 46% of the land mass, and serving as home to 2.3 million people[2]

Frontier and Remove America



FAR Level 4:
ZIP code areas at least:

- 60 minutes from population centers of 50,000 or more
- 45 minutes from population centers of 25,000-49,999 people
- 30 minutes from population centers of 10,000-24,999
- 15 minutes from population centers of 2,500 – 9,999

Risk Factors Common in Rural Areas

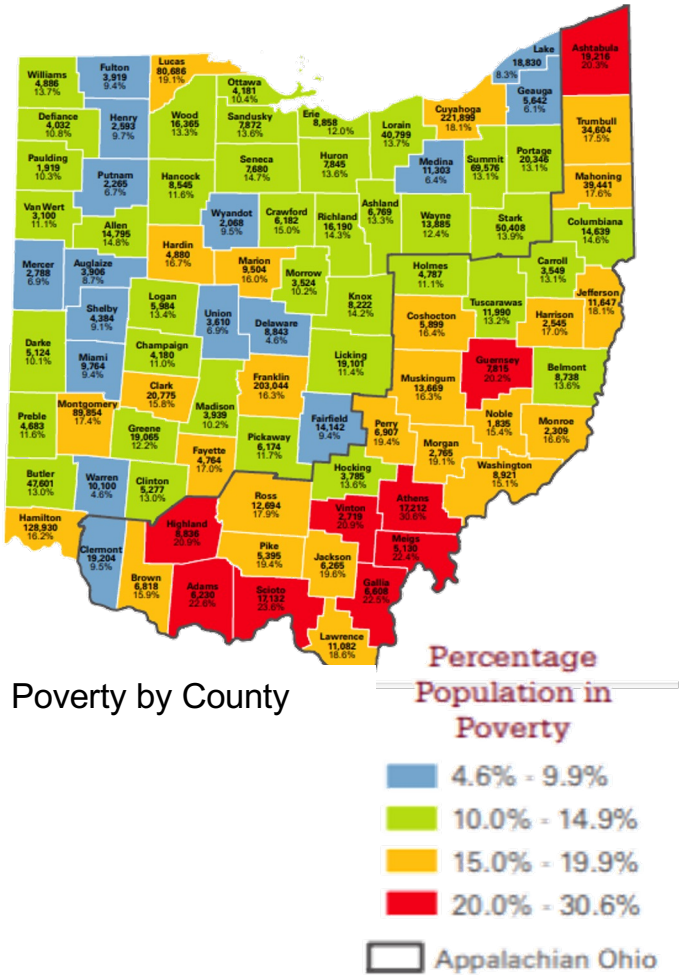
Many rural areas have high concentrations of poverty. This results in:

- Poor housing with limited access to rentals
- Lack of access to healthcare, including primary and behavioral healthcare
- Poor educational attainment status
- Un- and under-employment due to lack of job opportunities
- Social isolation
- Easy and early access to substances

Poverty in Ohio

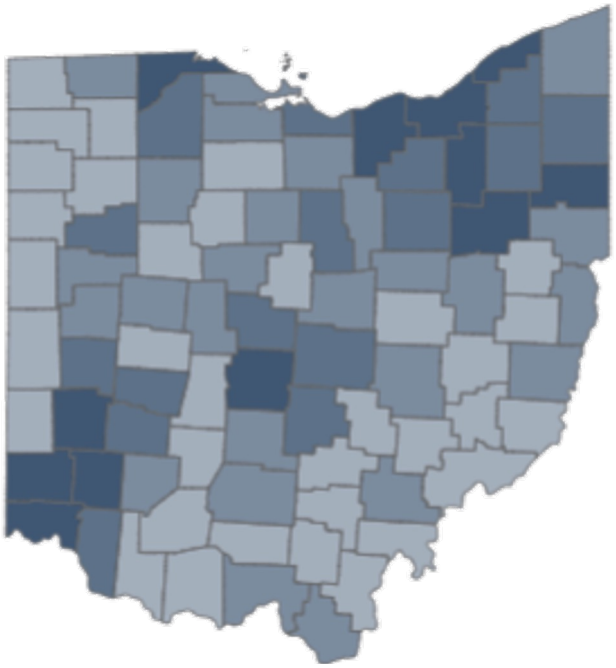
- In 2020, data showed that 1,579,000 people in Ohio were poor – that was 13.9 percent of the state's population, a rate slightly higher than the national rate of 13.1 percent.
- About 9.7 percent of Ohio families were poor, as compared to 9.3 percent of American families.
- **15.8 percent of the people in urban places (densely populated areas of 2,500 or more) were poor, compared with 10.0 percent in rural areas (farms and smaller places).**
- 48 of Ohio's 88 counties had poverty rates below the national average of 14.1 percent; 40 were above the average (averages based on the 2014-2018 five-year dataset).
- Adams, Athens, Gallia, Meigs and Scioto had the highest poverty rates, ranging from 22.4 to 30.6 percent – all are Appalachian (five-year averages).

Poverty in Ohio by County



Poverty by County

Poverty varies by county, but 17.0 percent of the people in Appalachian Ohio, a band of 32 counties stretching across the eastern and southern regions of the state, were living in poverty.



Population Density by County 2020 Census

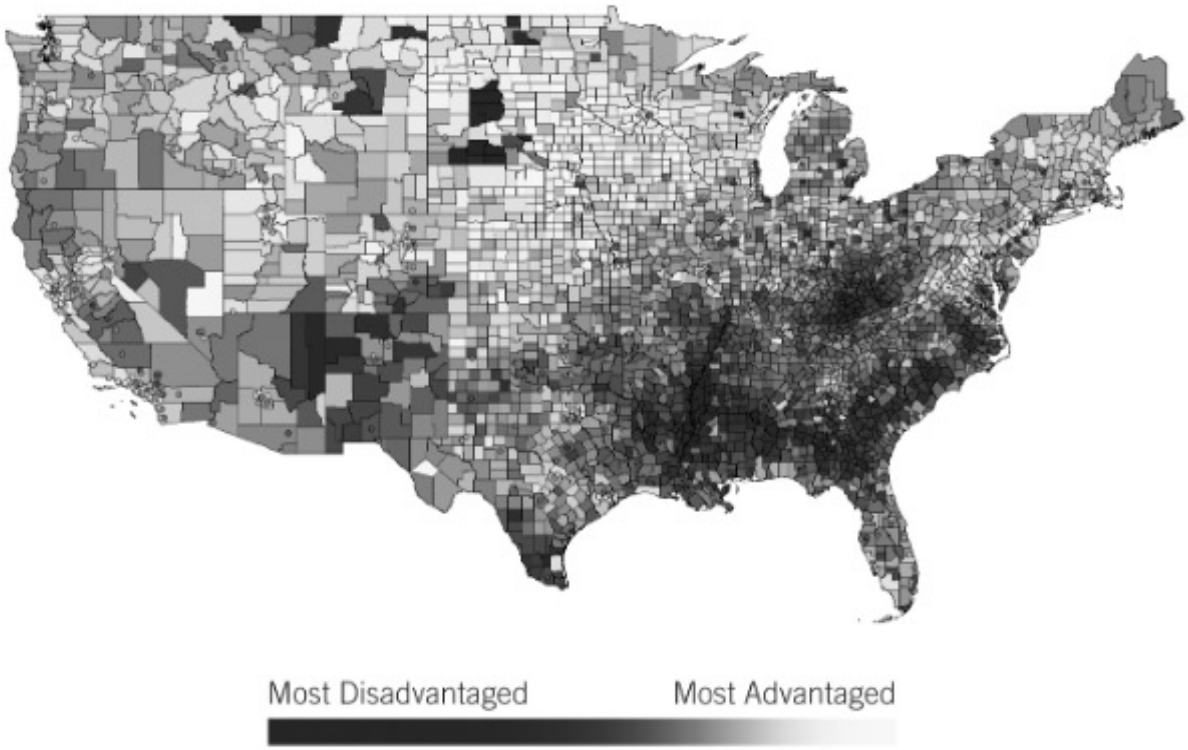
Rising Rents and Stagnant Wages in Ohio

- In Ohio, 444,768 (28%) of renter households are living on extremely low incomes[1]
- There is a shortage of 267,382 units of rental housing that is affordable and available for extremely low-income renters[1]
- $39,702 is the annual household income needed to afford a 2-bedroom rental unit at HUD's Fair Market Rent[1]
- 70% of extremely low-income renters have a severe cost burden (paying more than 50% of their income for rent) [1]
- Ohio renters are spending more on rent. Adjusted for inflation, median gross rent in Ohio increased by 10% from $788 per month in 2012 to $870 per month in 2021. For recent movers—who typically pay more in rent—the increase over this period is even greater (+18%), from $799 per month in 2012 to $942 in 2021. Rent is currently higher than in any year on record other than 2021, when adjusted for inflation.[2]
- Household incomes are declining, and poverty rates are rising in Ohio. After a period of improvement from 2011 to 2019, the median household income in Ohio has fallen for two years in a row. By 2021 the annual median was a little over $62,000.[3]

Income is Just Part of a Bigger Picture

- *The Injustice of Place* (Edin, K., Shaefer, H., and Nelson, Timothy), 2021 built a more nuanced way to measure community disadvantage based on the data infrastructure.
- Traditional income-based measures need to be combined with other markers, including health, face, ethnicity, income, life expectancy, infant mortality rate, education to achieve a nuanced look at poverty
- The Index of Deep Disadvantage
  - Reflects traditional poverty indicators (official poverty rate and the rate of deep poverty – or those with incomes below half of the poverty line
  - Two health markers (low birth rate and life expectancy
  - The rate of intergenerational mobility for children who grew up in low-income households

The Injustice of Place: The Most Disadvantaged Places



Source: The Injustice of Place. Page 5.

- The majority of the most disadvantaged places were rural.
- At the top of the list were communities of Black and Hispanic Americans
- Places with large Native American Populations comprised 19 of the top 200 counties
- In addition to Native American communities the most disadvantaged places are found in 3 regions: Appalachia, South Texas and the southern Cotton Belt that runs across 7 states

The Enduring Legacy of Poverty

- *Where* someone grows up significantly impacts life outcomes.
- The Index of Deep Disadvantage looks at well-being, which combines income-based and health-based indicators.
- The rural areas defined as the most disadvantaged places demonstrated a glaring divide between a small group of “haves” and a large class of “have-nots”. People in these places are often exploited by a single industry.

Inequality

- Inequality between the “haves” and “have nots” is predicated on the availability of cheap, exploitable labor
- This is especially pervasive in the most disadvantaged places
- There are deep historic roots of current inequalities, dating back to the time following emancipation
- Indicators used in *The Injustice of Place* reflect three dimensions:
  - Cyclical measures that vary with the economy (poverty, deep poverty)
  - Cumulative measures reflecting the ways long-term exposure to disadvantage shapes outcomes over time
  - Structural measures that reflect how the labor market offers opportunities