

# Key Facts in Rural Health

July 2016

## Vulnerable Rural Counties: The Changing Rural Landscape, 2000-2010

In 2008, the U.S. experienced its worst recession since the Great Depression, particularly affecting rural America. The South Carolina Rural Health Research Center used county-level data to examine rural demographic changes over the last decade.

*Most counties experienced increased levels of poverty between 2000-2010. Rural counties were disproportionately affected.*

- Nearly one-third (31.7%) of all rural counties had 20% or more of their population living in poverty by 2010, versus 15.3% of urban counties.
- Poverty was regionally concentrated in the South by 2010, with 44.9% of all counties having 20% or more in poverty.

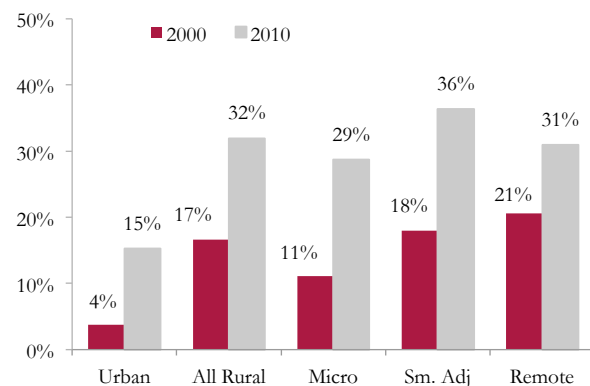
*Rural counties experienced a growth in the 65 and older population while losing children.*

- Few urban counties have 20% or more of their population aged 65 or older (2% in 2000, 3% in 2010). By 2010, 40% of remote rural counties experienced a concentration of older residents.
- Rural counties experienced an overall 4% decline in children (age 18 years or less) as a proportion of the population between 2000 and 2010. Within rural counties, declines in the ranged from -2% in micropolitan counties to -9% in remote rural counties.

*Rural counties gained in racial/ethnic diversity*

- The proportion of counties with majority non-white populations (that is 50% or more non-white residents) increased from 8% to 12% for urban counties and from 8% to 10% in rural counties. The West (16%) and South (16%) had the highest proportion of counties in which white residents were in the minority.

**Proportion of counties with >20% of residents living in poverty, by rurality, 2000–2010**



**Proportion of counties with >20% of residents age 65 years or older, by rurality, 2000 - 2010**

