



*Enlightened*  
SOLUTIONS

# **EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN RURAL AND SEMI- RURAL AREAS**

**Building Inclusive  
Communities Outside the  
Urban Core**

# BETHANY STUDENIC

Co-Founder and Managing Director

## Education

- Licensed Attorney
- Licensed Social Worker
- Masters in Social Work & Social Administration/Organizational Change

## Experience

- Co-Founder of Enlightened Solutions
- Of Counsel with Sobel, Wade, and Mapley
- Senior Policy Analyst for Police Reform in Cleveland
- Lobbyist, Fundraiser
- Direct Practice with youth, survivors, and school systems



# CHINENYE NKEMERE

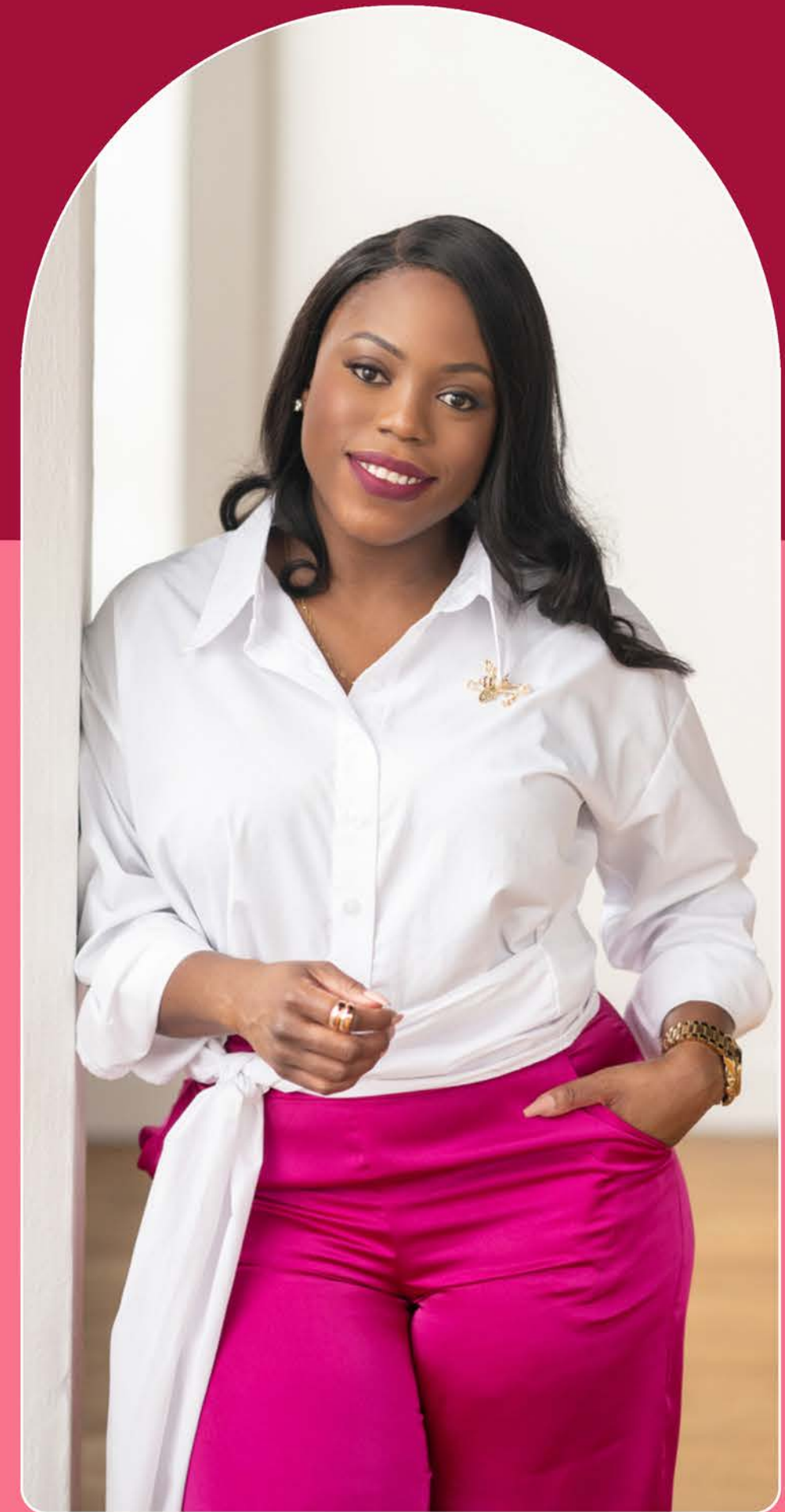
Co-Founder and Director of Strategy

## Education

- Bachelors in Political Science, African Studies and African American Studies

## Experience

- Co-Founder of Enlightened Solutions
- Crisis Management, Organizational Development Professional
- Police Reform Community Engagement Specialist
- Urban Planning and Development Professional
- Teach for America Educator



## WHO WE ARE

Enlightened Solutions is a 501(c)(3) social enterprise and social advocacy think tank.

## WHAT WE DO

We complete independent research, support marginalized individuals navigating complex systems, and create strategies to help both nonprofit and corporate spheres create inclusive organizations.



# OUR AGENDA

## GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

The Current Landscape + Opportunities Ahead

1

## SUPPORTING DIVERSE POPULATIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Activity: Asset Mapping

2

## RURAL AND SEMI RURAL DIVERSITY

Broad and Inclusive Terms

3

## ECONOMIC EDGE

Legacy + The Economic Case for Rural Based Inclusion

4

## APPLICATION

Bold Solutions for a Rural Renaissance

5



# THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

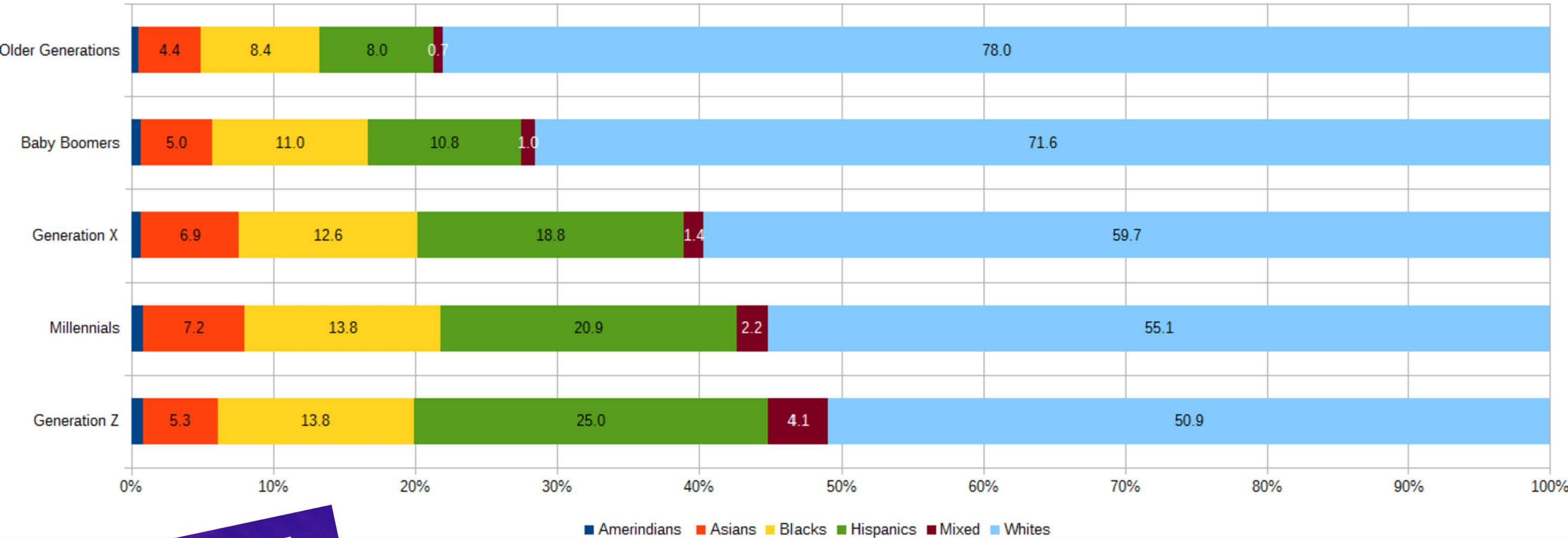
**Generational Differences? *Unique Perspectives.***

Understanding demographic, social, economic,  
and cultural shifts at work.



# Ethnic Composition of Demographic Cohorts of the United States in 2018

Brookings Institution (2019)



RACE X AGE

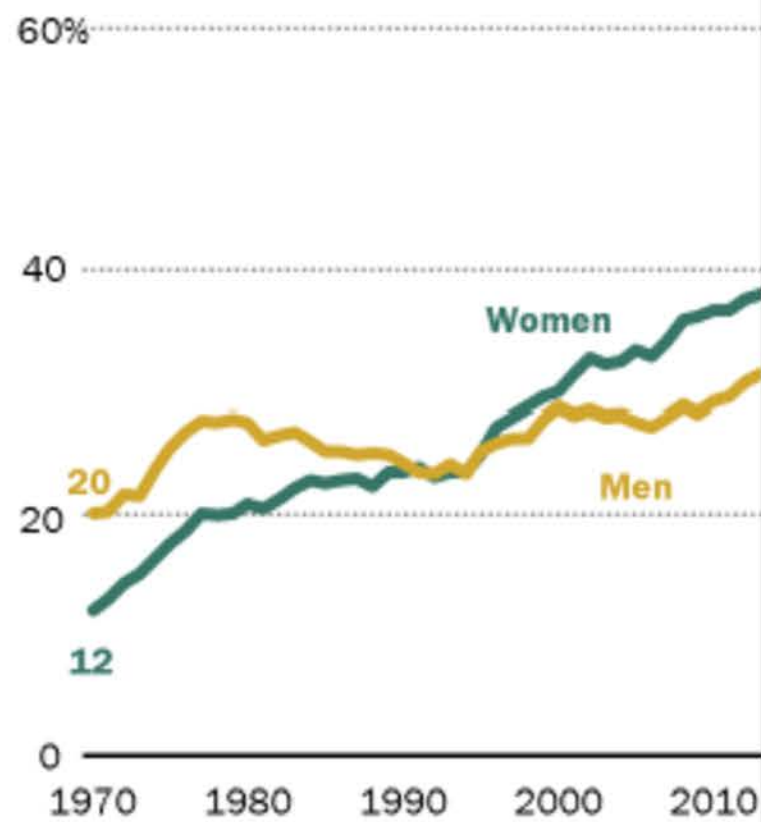
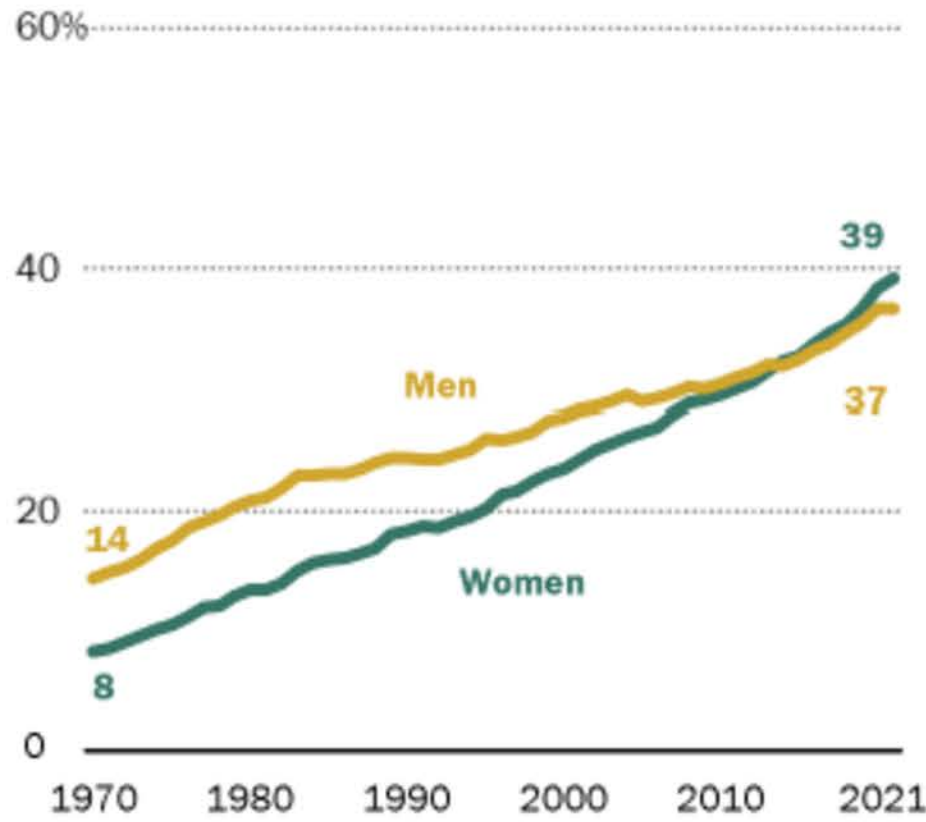
## GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

America has become increasingly diverse with each generation. For Americans under 18, there is no racial majority in America. By 2045, there will be no racial majority in the U.S.



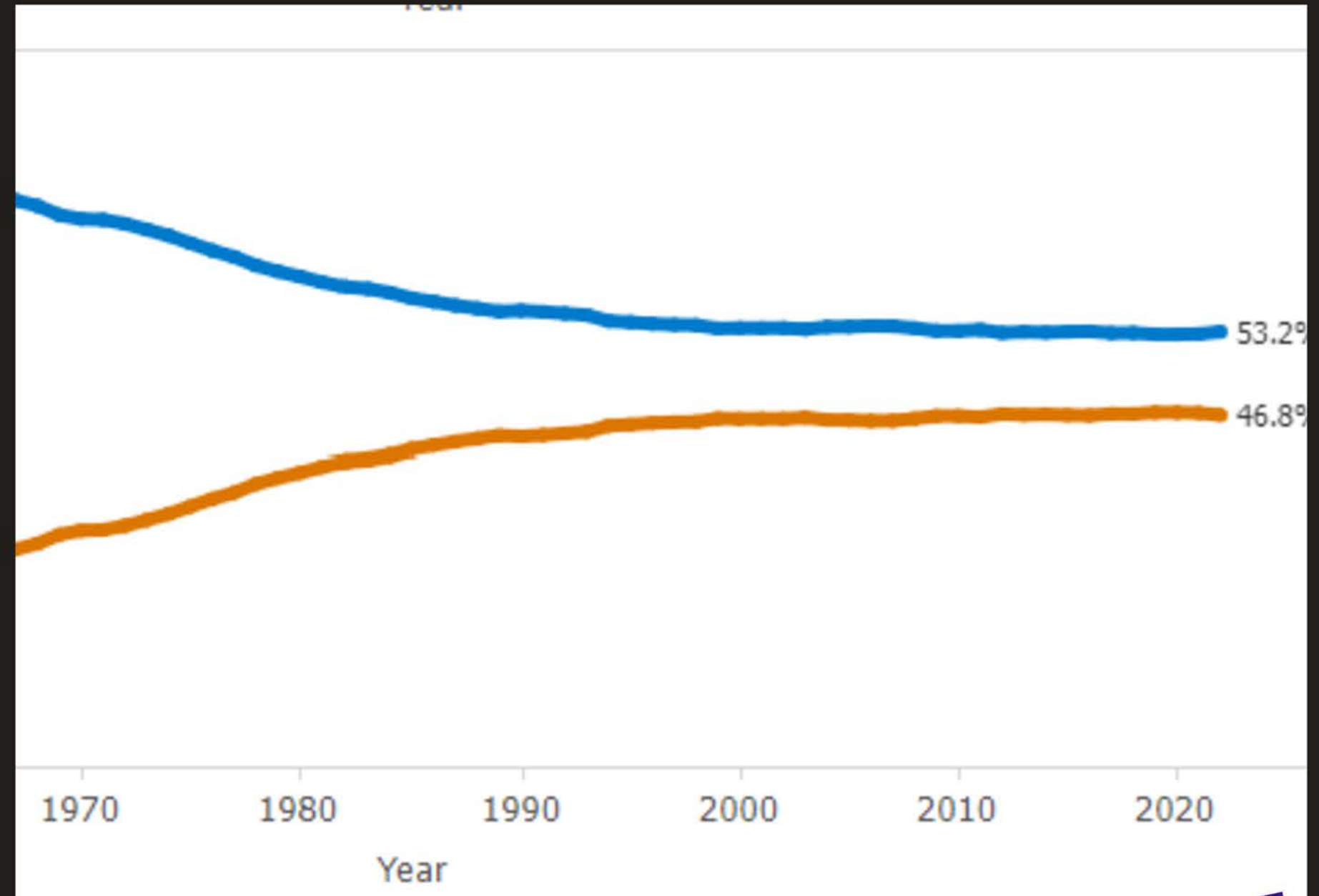
## Women in the U.S. are outpacing men in college graduation

% of adults ages 25 and older with a bachelor's degree    % of adults ages 25 to 34 with a bachelor's degree



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



# GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

GENDER

Women now engage in the labor force at rates comparable to their male peers, and they have surpassed men in terms of college graduation rates. This trend is even **more pronounced among Black Women and Latinas** when considering educational achievements and skill acquisition.

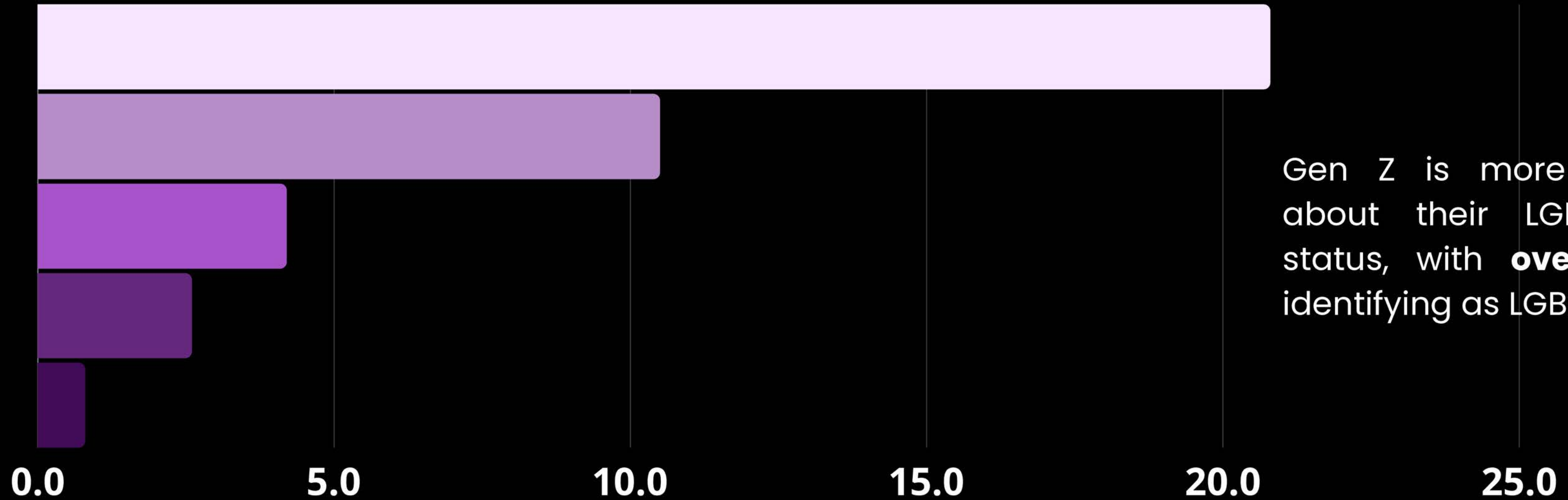




# GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

SEXUALITY

Gen Z Millennials Gen X Baby Boomers Silent Generation



Gen Z is more open about their LGBTQIA+ status, with **over 20%** identifying as LGBTQIA+

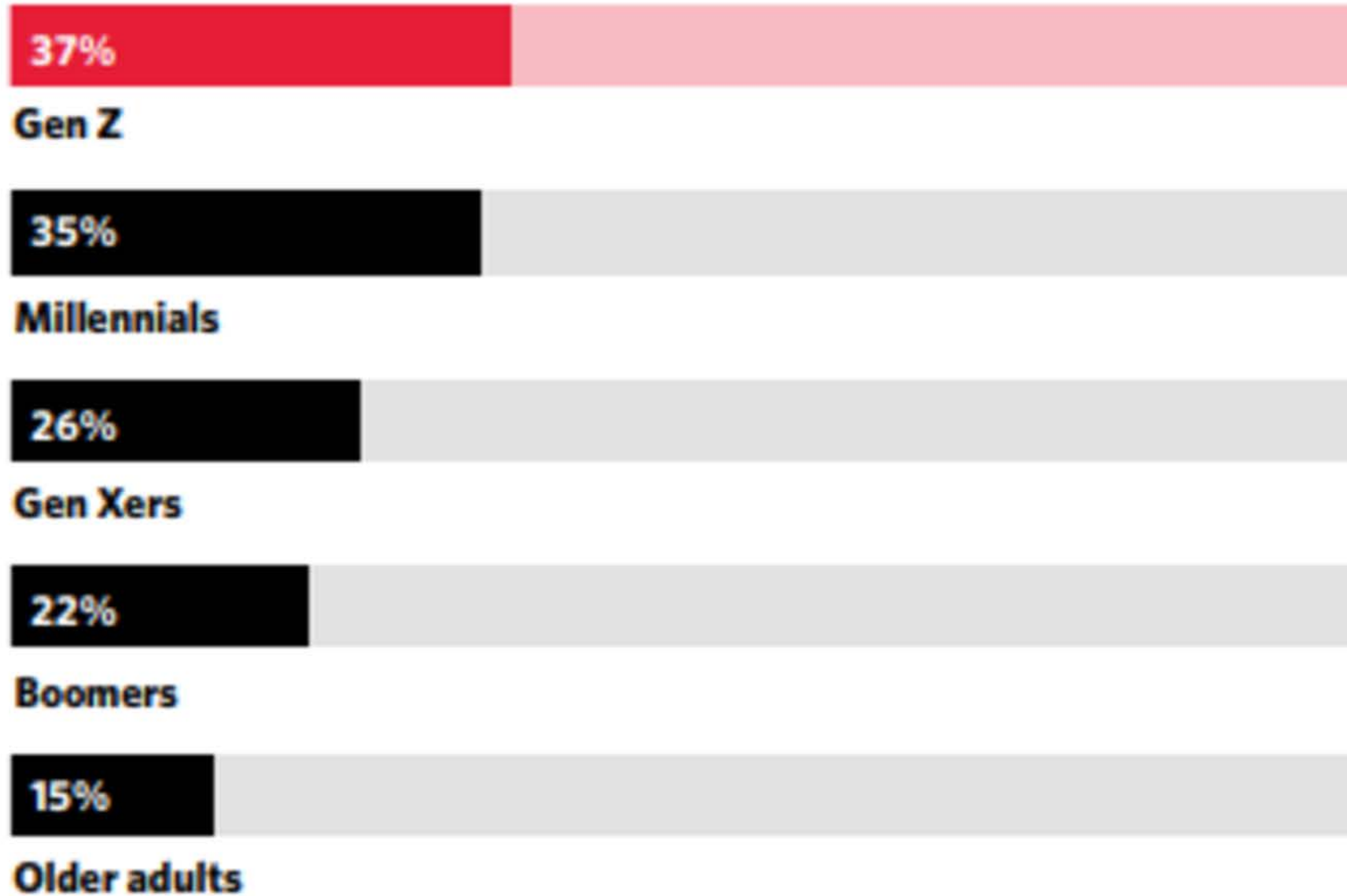
Americans Who Self-Identified as LGBTQ in 2021 by Generation



## GEN Z SEEKING HELP

### MORE LIKELY TO RECEIVE OR HAVE RECEIVED TREATMENT OR THERAPY

% reporting receiving help from a psychologist or other mental health professional



# GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Younger generations are more likely to seek mental health support, to receive mental health diagnoses, and to **request accommodations** at work

MENTAL  
HEALTH

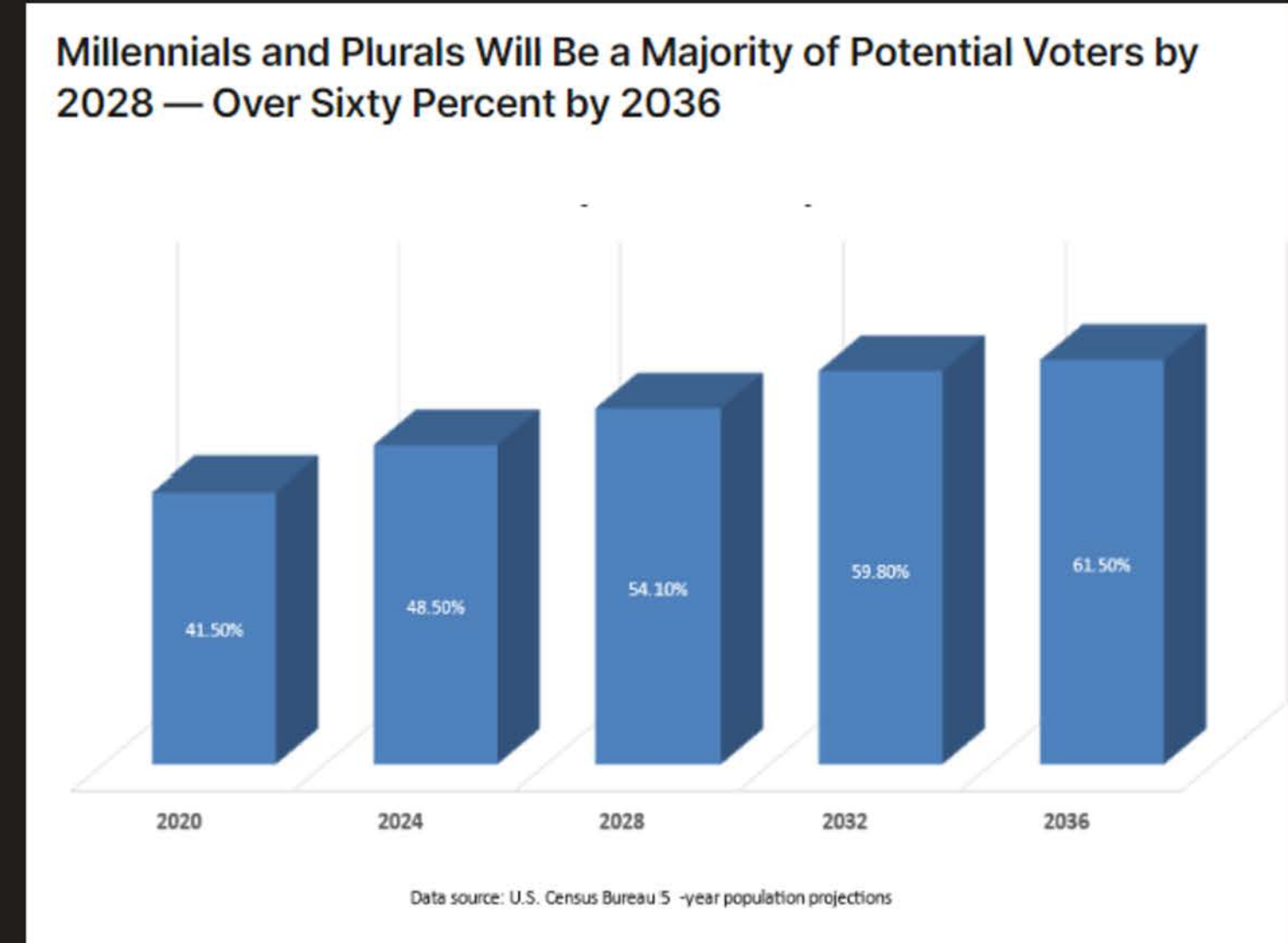
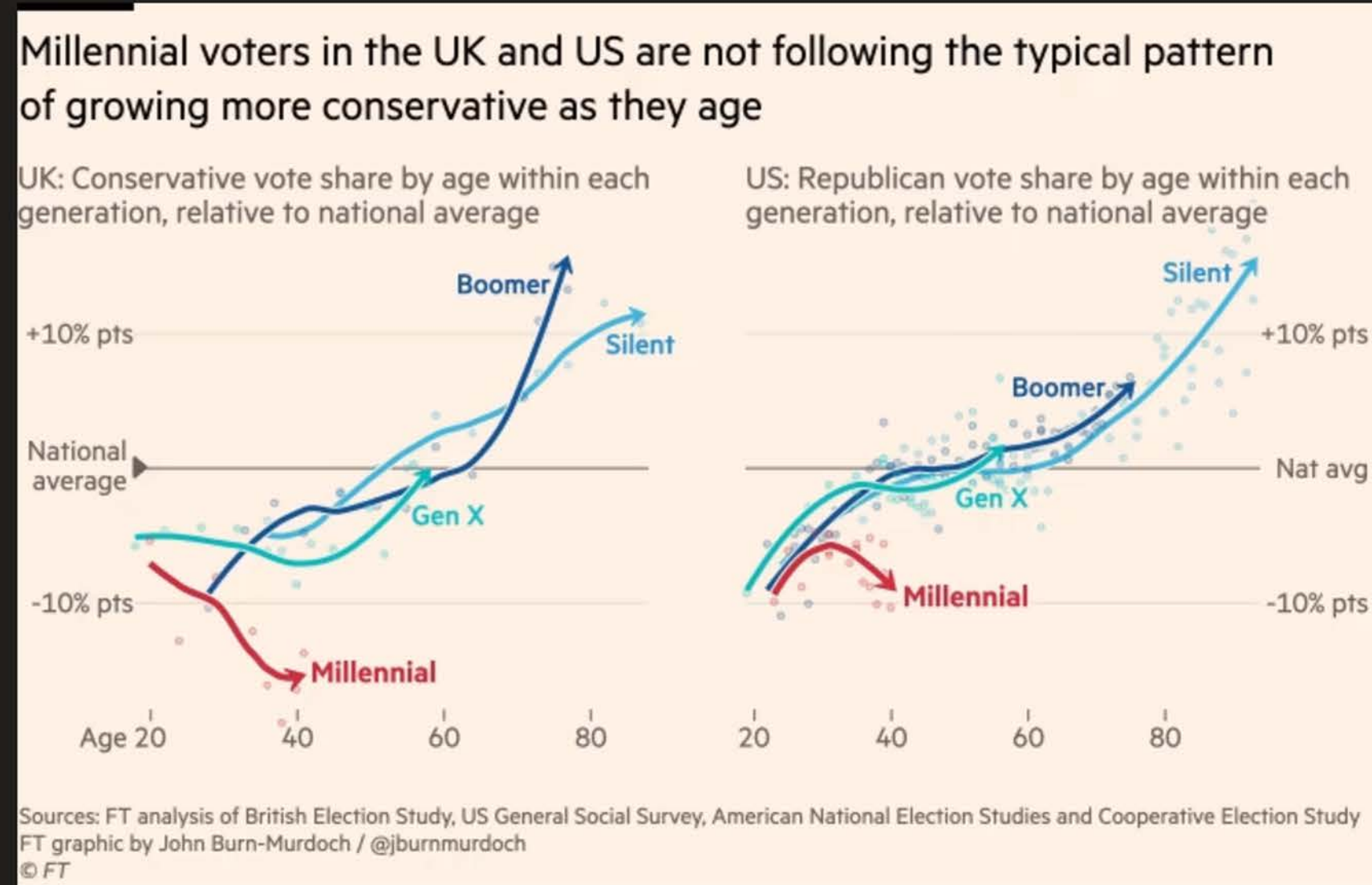


# GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

VOTERS

## Moral and Ethical Shifts | Key Economic Indicators

Long-held political patterns are no longer reliable as young people shift to a focus on **inclusion for all**.



# THE FUTURE IS DIVERSE

As the market of consumers and talent shifts, companies and teams that mirror the populace significantly outpace their competitors.

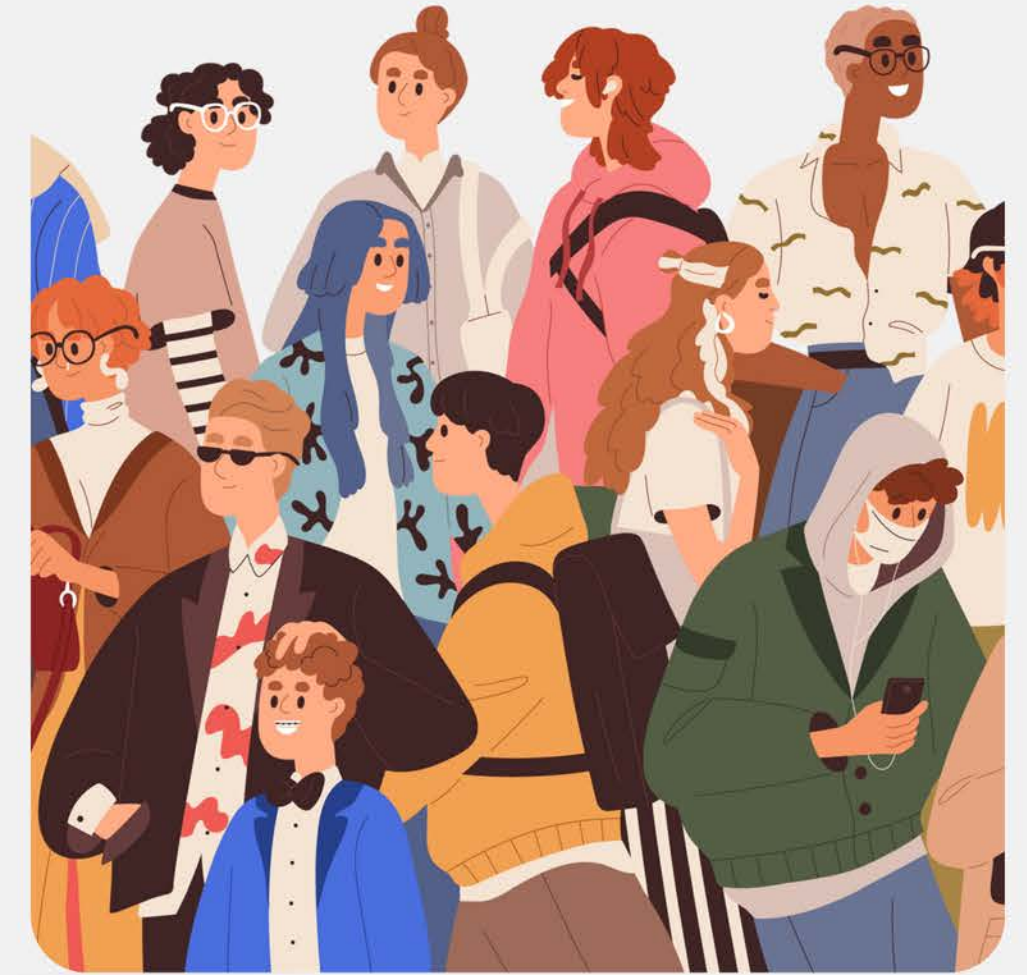
DEI is an essential protective factor for organizations **seeking to survive fundamental economic shifts** as consumers become more conscious and workers become more invested in equity.



83%

of Gen Z candidates say that a company's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is important when choosing an employer.

♡ 5K   🔗 5K   👤 5K



73%

of Gen Z only buy from brands they believe in, and 70% say they try to purchase products from companies they consider ethical.

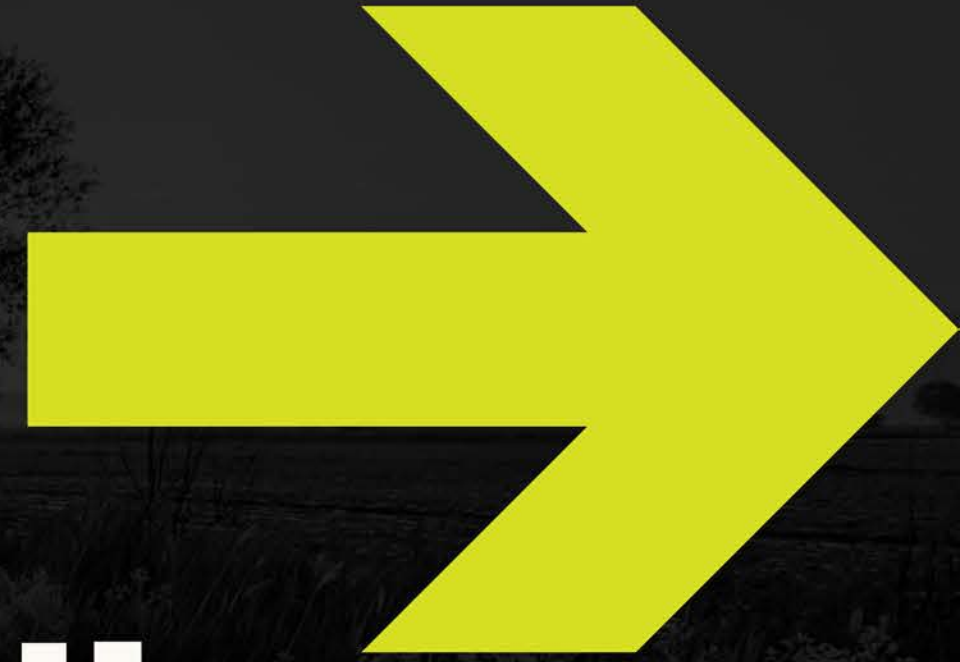
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**OPPORTUNITY  
AHEAD**



O P P O R T U N I T I E S A H E A D . . . . .



**Millennials and Gen Z are the torchbearers of a **NEW ERA.****

OPPORTUNITY

AHEAD



O P P O R T U N I T I E S   A H E A D   . . . .



# Millennials and Gen Z are the torchbearers of a **NEW ERA.**

Seeking stability, **Millennials and Gen Z** are confronted by challenges:

- **Wage gaps**
- **Racial and equity disparities,**
- **Student loan burdens**
- **Big city housing shortages,** and
- **Climate and environmental sustainability.**

In their quest for a brighter future, they are carving a path that not only defines their destinies but also influences the course of our world.



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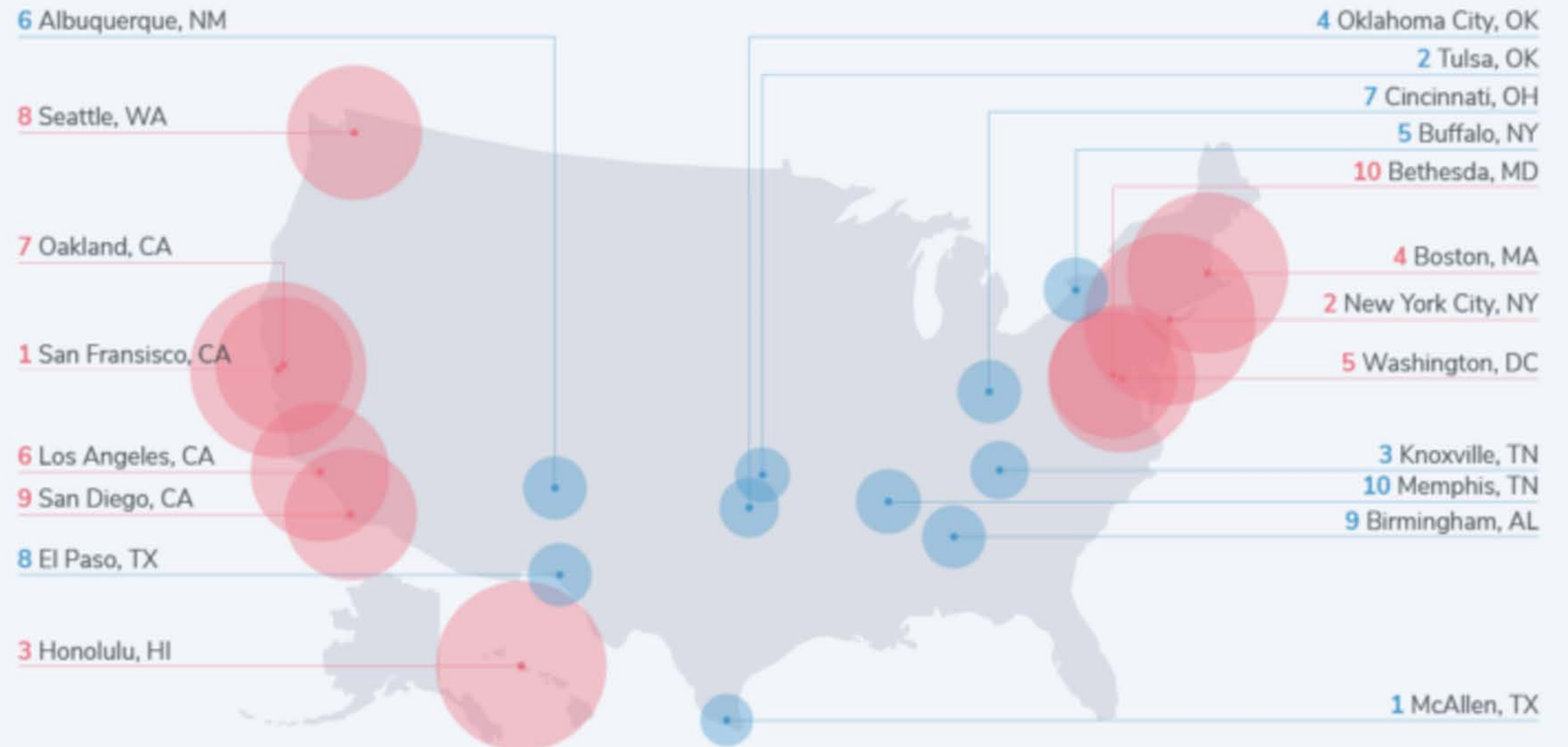
# Cost of Living on the **Urban** Coasts

- Skyrocketing housing and rent costs
- Poor or inadequate stock
- Overall higher cost of living
- Transportations costs

Young adults face tough career and social choices, with financial constraints often limiting their personal and professional growth in cities.

## Top 10 Cities with the **Lowest (& Highest)** Cost of Living in 2022

We analyzed living costs of the 75 most populous metropolitan areas in the United States. We sourced population numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau. The data points that were added together to calculate the cost of living in each metropolitan area are rent, transportation, groceries, and utilities.



# POP CULTURE + THE RURAL RENAISSANCE

- Growing desire to **escape the complexities of modern life**
- Need to reconnect with **nature**
- Embracing self-sufficiency for a more balanced and meaningful existence.



New Gardeners	Millennials	Generation Z
18.3 Million	65% Increase	44% Increase

## The Rise of the Homesteading Lifestyle Among Millennials

Jane Marsh - August 3, 2020



# POP CULTURE + THE RURAL RENAISSANCE

Midwestern / semi-rural areas have emerged as **pop-culture hotspots**.

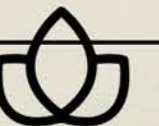
- Driven by queer artists, Black and Latino culture shifters, and women.
- Gen Z relocating to smaller towns and liberal-leaning communities
- Rejection of Millennials moving to the Coasts
- Broader movement toward sustainability, "American" and holistic living.



# ASSET MAPPING

## Identifying Community Assets

This asset mapping activity is designed to identify existing community assets that support diverse populations,



## Institutions

Schools  
Universities  
Hospitals  
Libraries  
Social Service  
Agencies  
Nonprofits  
Museums  
Foundations

## Individuals

Community Leaders  
Trusted Voices  
Elected Officials  
Business Leaders  
Community  
Advocates  
Nonprofit/Civic  
Leaders

## Physical Space

Gardens  
Parks  
Playgrounds  
Bike Paths  
Meeting Centers  
Shelters  
Community Spaces

**Disabled + Neurodivergent**





# RURAL AND SEMI- RURAL DIVERSITY

Defining Diversity in Broad and Inclusive Terms





# What is Diversity?

Rural and semi-rural areas have diversity that is **underleveraged** and **under-recognized**.

**Diversity is any differences within humans on which humans divide/differentiate themselves.**

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- LGBTQIA+ Status
- Neurodivergence
- Physical Ability
- Religion
- Socio-Economic Status (Class)
- Age



# Rural Diversity: Race

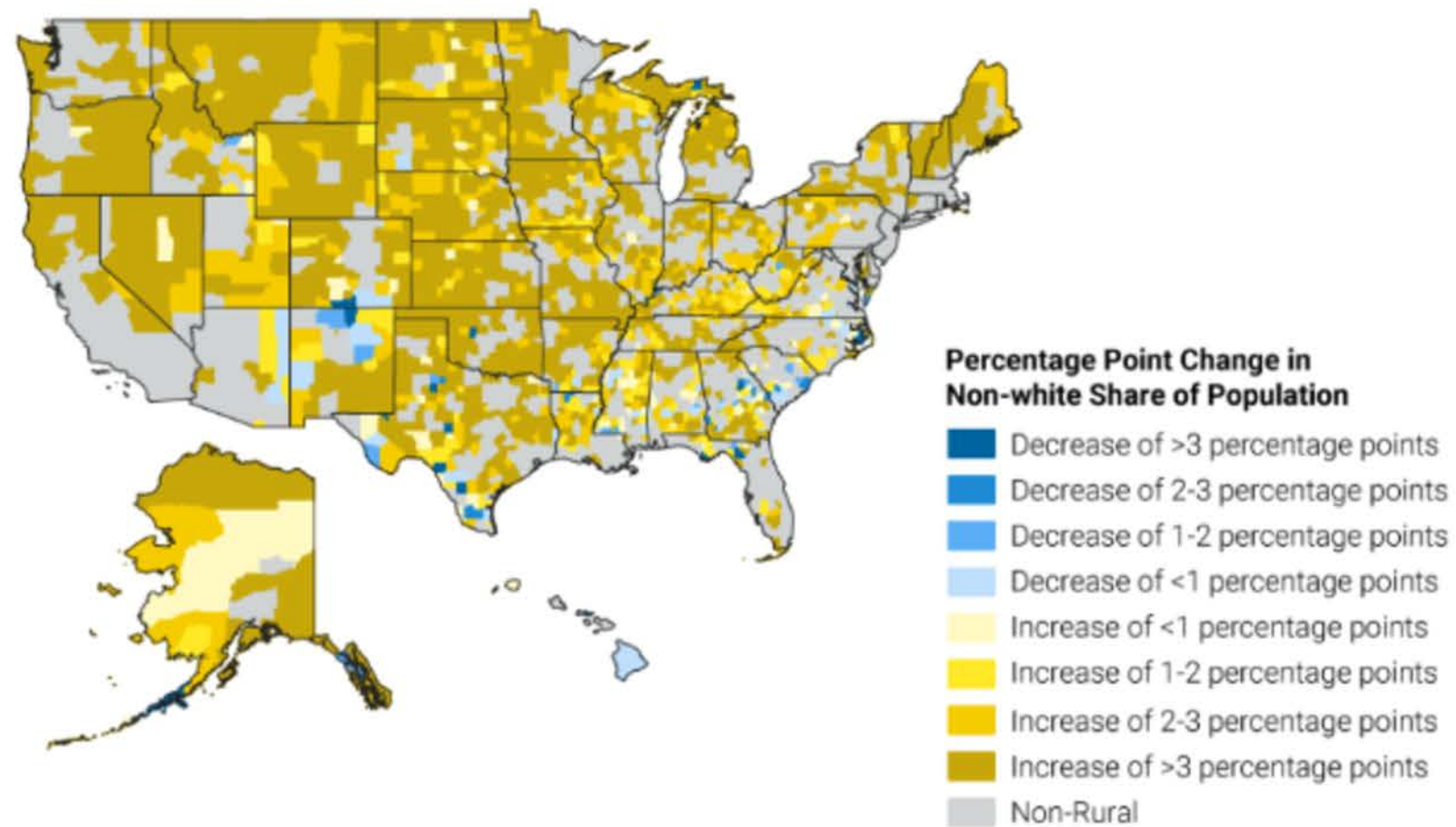




# 1. Rural America became more racially and ethnically diverse over the last decade

Contrary to the dominant narratives that use “rural” as a synonym for “white,” 24% of rural Americans were people of color in 2020.<sup>[2]</sup> While rural America is still less diverse than the nation as a whole (42.2% people of color), it is diversifying as well: The median rural county saw its population of color increase by 3.5 percentage points between 2010 and 2020 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Change in Rural Population of Color, 2010-2020



Source: Brookings analysis of 2010 and 2020 Census data.

# Rural Diversity: Race

22% of rural populations are racially/ethnically diverse.

Rural America is growing ethnically and racially more diverse.



# RURAL DIVERSITY= RACE

## Lower Wages

Lower earnings and higher poverty rates than urban/suburban counterparts

## Isolation

More isolation and less opportunity to build support networks

## Poorer Healthcare

Poorer healthcare outcomes than white counterparts and urban non-white counterparts

## Arrest and Violence

Higher arrest rates than urban core (148 arrests per 1,000 in rural areas versus 94 per 1,000 in urban areas).



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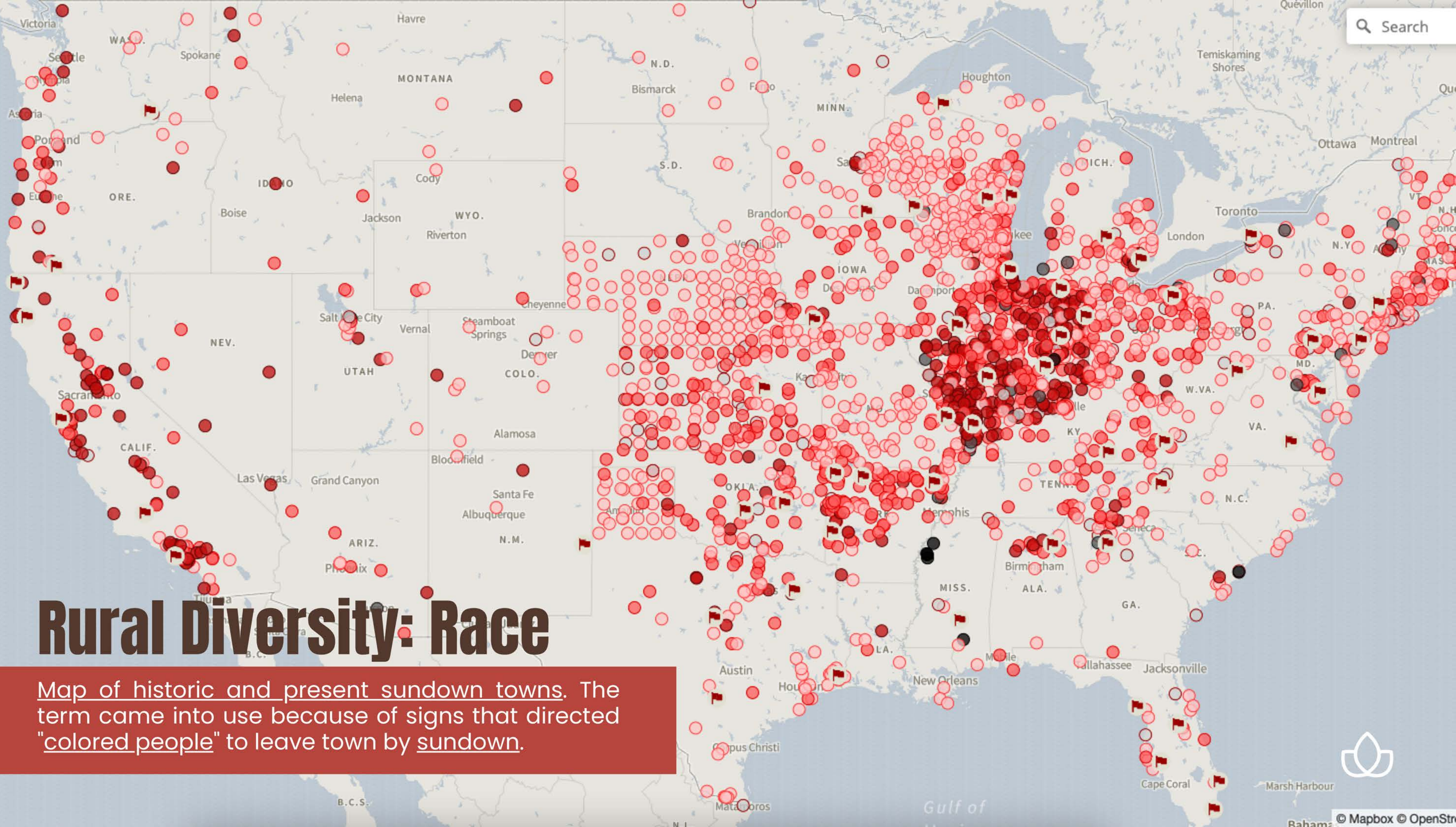
*A HIDDEN DIMENSION of  
AMERICAN RACISM*

**NEGROES DRIVEN AWAY.**  
Last one Leaves Decatur,  
owing to Threats Made.

, Ind., July 13.—The  
Decatur, Ind. His  
go a mob of fifty me  
groes who were then  
ame. Since that  
negro race  
that a

WHITES  
ONLY WITHIN CITY  
AFTER  
DARK

**What region has the HIGHEST CONCENTRATION  
of sundown towns?**



# Rural Diversity: Race

Map of historic and present sundown towns. The term came into use because of signs that directed "colored people" to leave town by sundown.



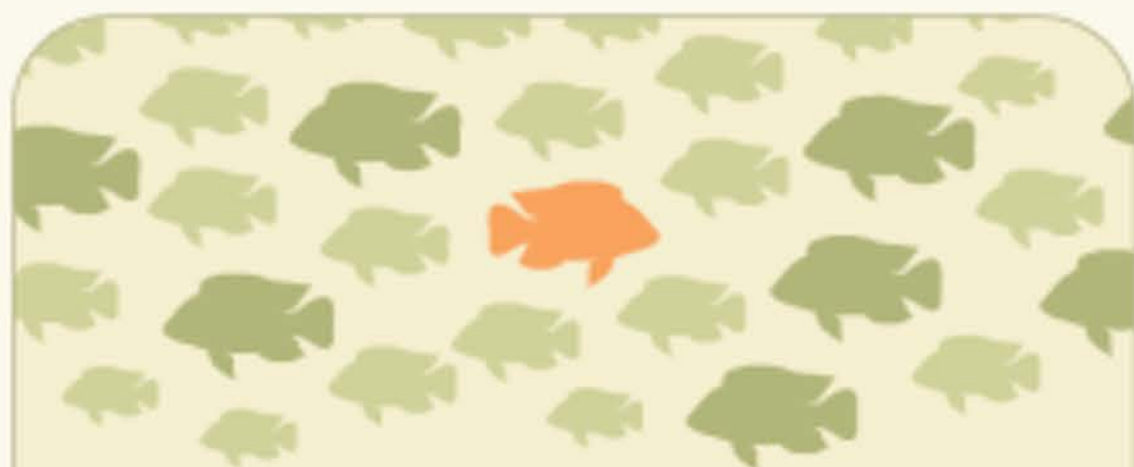
A graphic on the left side of the slide consisting of several overlapping, fan-shaped segments in the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The segments are arranged in a way that they appear to radiate from a point on the left edge.

# **Rural Diversity: LGBTQ+**





## STRENGTHS, STRUCTURES, AND CHALLENGES: HOW RURAL LIFE AMPLIFIES THE IMPACT OF ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION



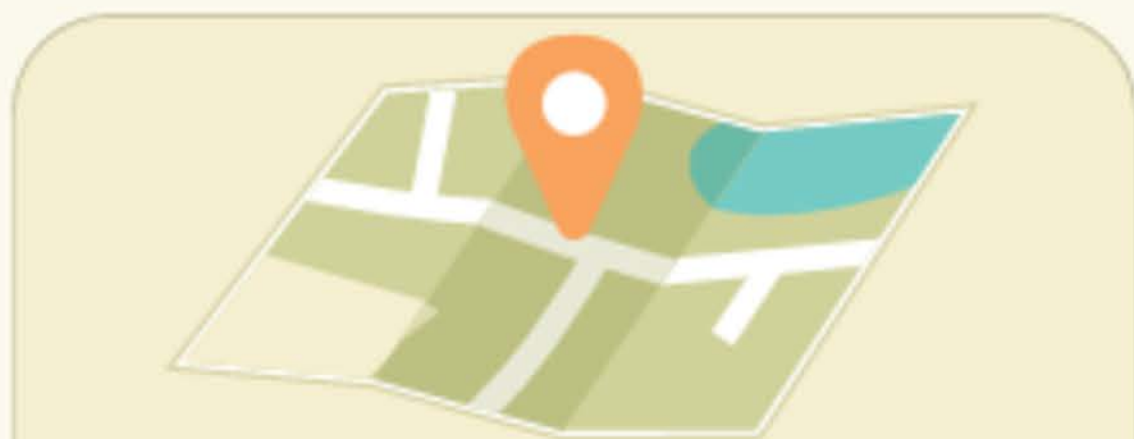
### INCREASED VISIBILITY

Fewer people in rural communities means any difference is more noticeable.



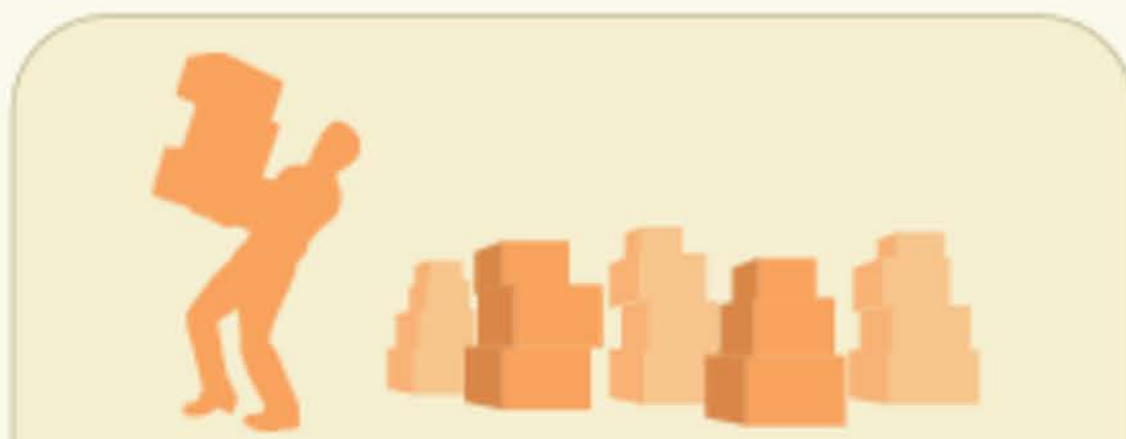
### RIPPLE EFFECTS

When communities are tightly interwoven, rejection and acceptance in one area of life (such as church) can ripple over into others (such as work or school).



### FEWER ALTERNATIVES

In the face of discrimination, the already limited number of rural service providers can be limited even further.



### LESS SUPPORT STRUCTURE

More social and geographic isolation means less ability to find supportive resources, build supportive community, and endure challenges or discrimination.

### IMPACTING MANY AREAS OF LIFE:



Family, Faith, & Community



Education



Employment & Economic Security



Housing & Homelessness



Public Places & Businesses

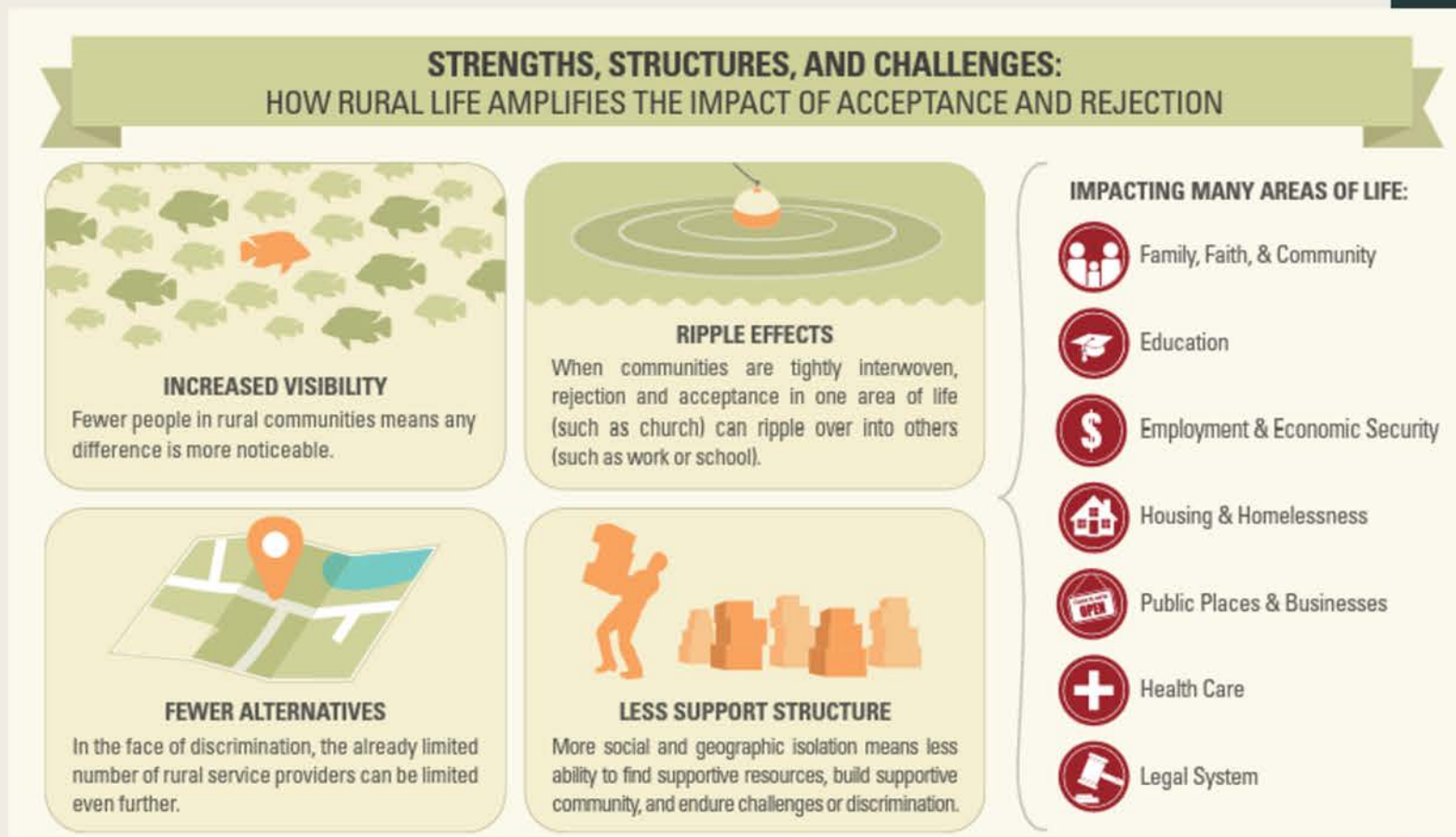


Health Care



Legal System

# Rural Diversity: LGBTQIA+



## Compulsory Hiding

Rural LGBTQIA+ folks face harsher consequences for being “out”



## Isolation and Lack of Support

Higher rates of homelessness, some shelters ban LGBTQIA people



## Poorer Healthcare

Less access to gender affirming and competent healthcare. Higher rates of depression



## Violence

Higher rates of violence and hate crimes



# RURAL DIVERSITY: LGBTQIA+

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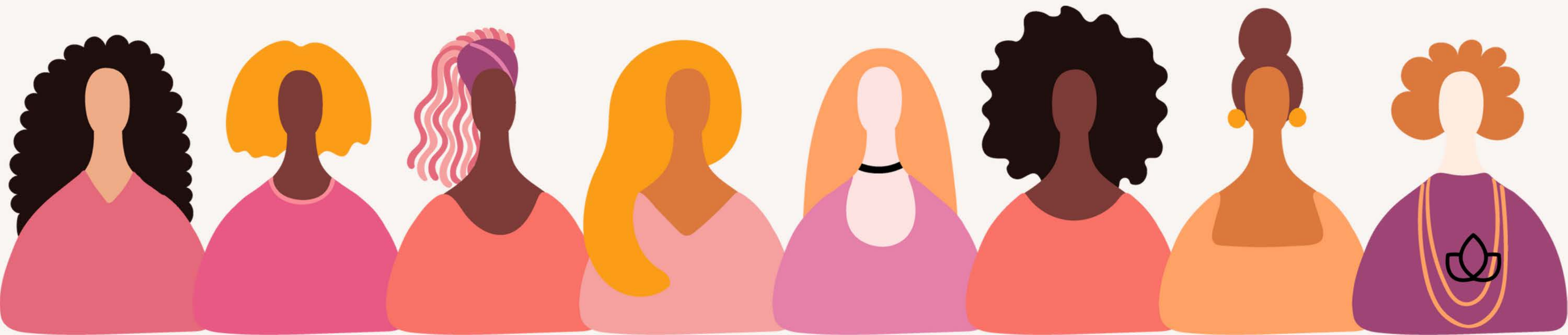
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# Rural Diversity: Gender

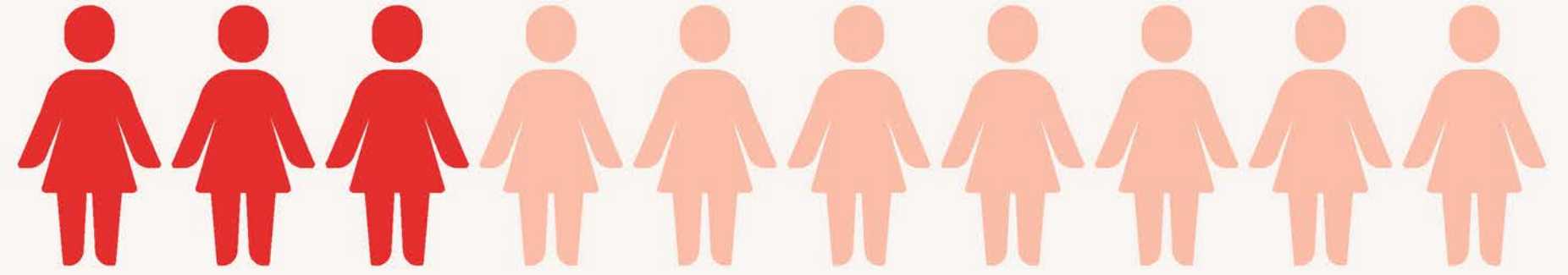


# RURAL DIVERSITY: GENDER

Women make up just **over HALF** the **population**, but many **disparities** are **more pronounced** in rural areas.

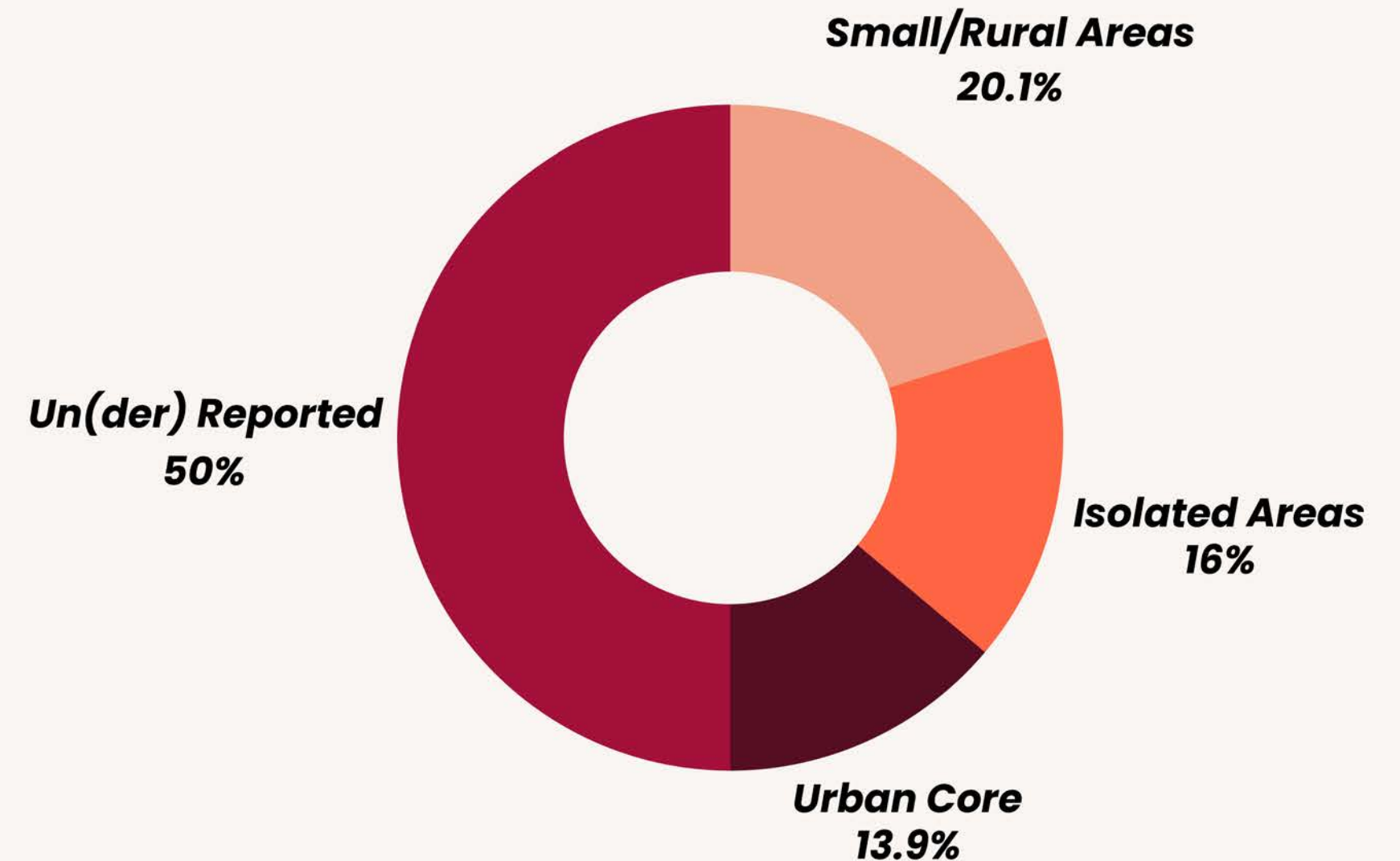
Rural women reported **significantly higher severity of physical abuse** than their urban counterparts.

The mean distance to the nearest IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) resource was **three times greater** for women living in rural/semi-rural areas than women living in the urban core.



About 3 in 10 women in rural areas **report** Intimate Partner Violence

## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE





# RURAL DIVERSITY: GENDER

## Violence

Higher rates of domestic violence. Higher rates of child marriage.

## Poorer Healthcare

Lower life expectancy, higher infant and maternal mortality rates

## Isolation and Lack of Support

Less access to shelters, women's programs, women's education

## Large Wage Gap

Rural women earn less than their urban counterparts (.64 cents on the dollar for white men, compared with .80 on the dollar for women in urban/suburban areas)



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# **ASSET MAPPING**

## **Identifying Community Assets**

This asset mapping activity is designed to identify existing community assets that support diverse populations,



# Women

## Local Economy

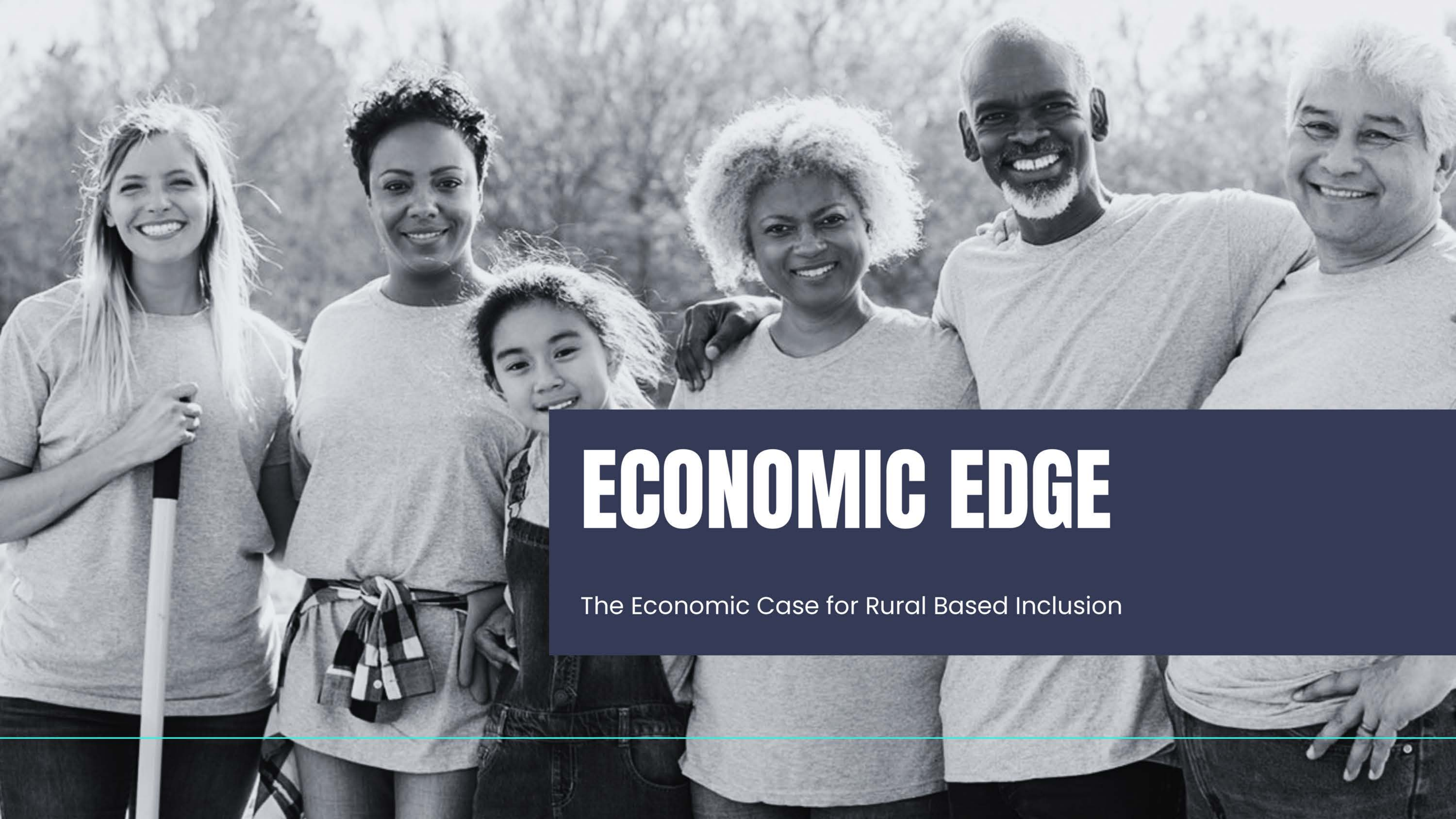
Job Opportunities  
Chamber of Commerce  
Professional  
Associations  
Business Loans  
Entrepreneurship  
Support  
Investors  
Shops and Stores  
Housing

## Associations

Advocacy Groups  
Meetup Groups  
Care Networks  
Social Gatherings  
Local Online Groups

## Programs

Shelter Programs  
Awareness  
Campaigns  
Networking Groups  
Social Support  
Programs  
Housing Connections  
Food Banks



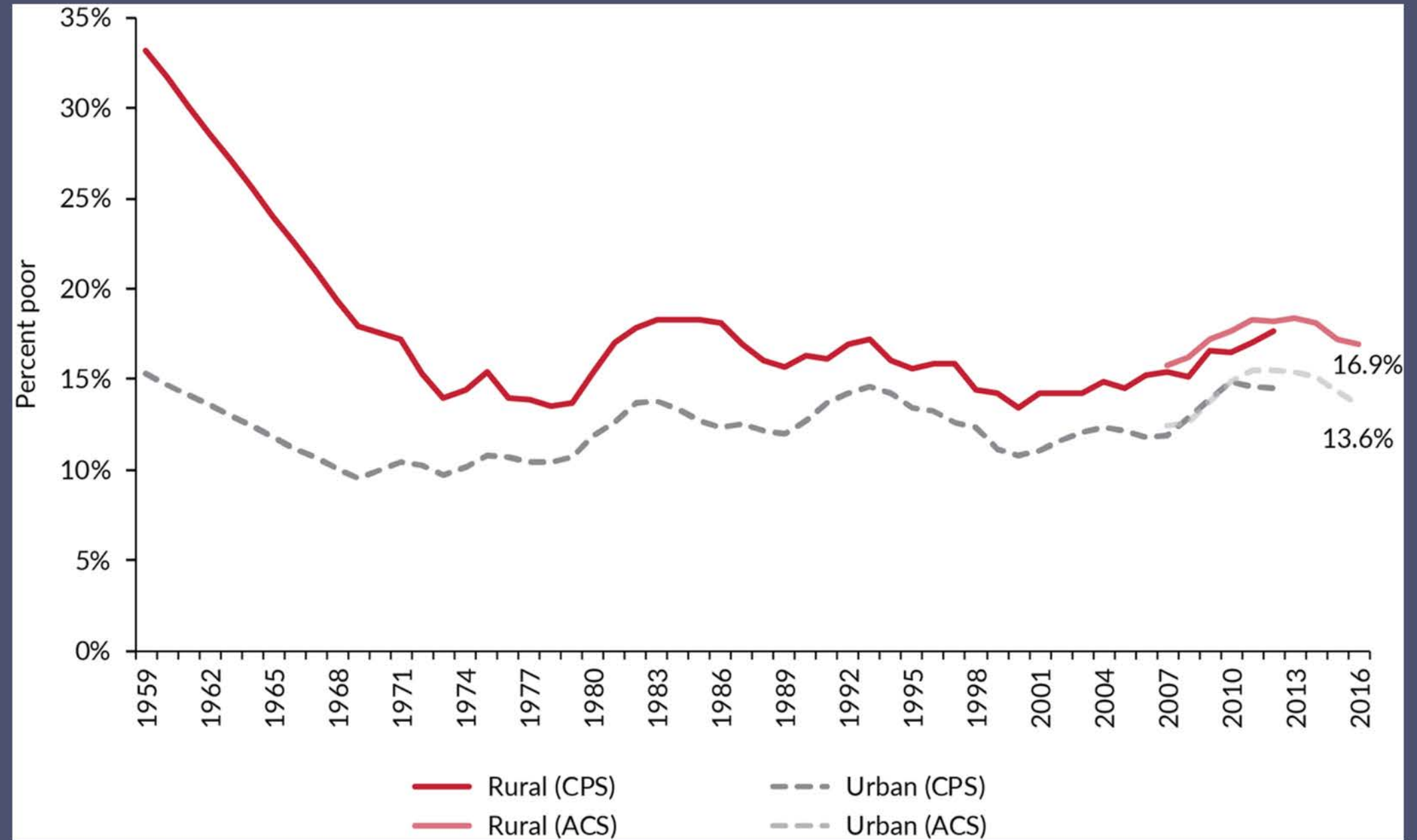
# ECONOMIC EDGE

The Economic Case for Rural Based Inclusion

# RURAL INVESTMENT IS AN EQUITY ISSUE

Rural populations are more likely to live in poverty.

Support in rural areas is significantly smaller and less accessible and the nonprofit sector is three times smaller in the rural US on a per capita basis than it is in urban areas.



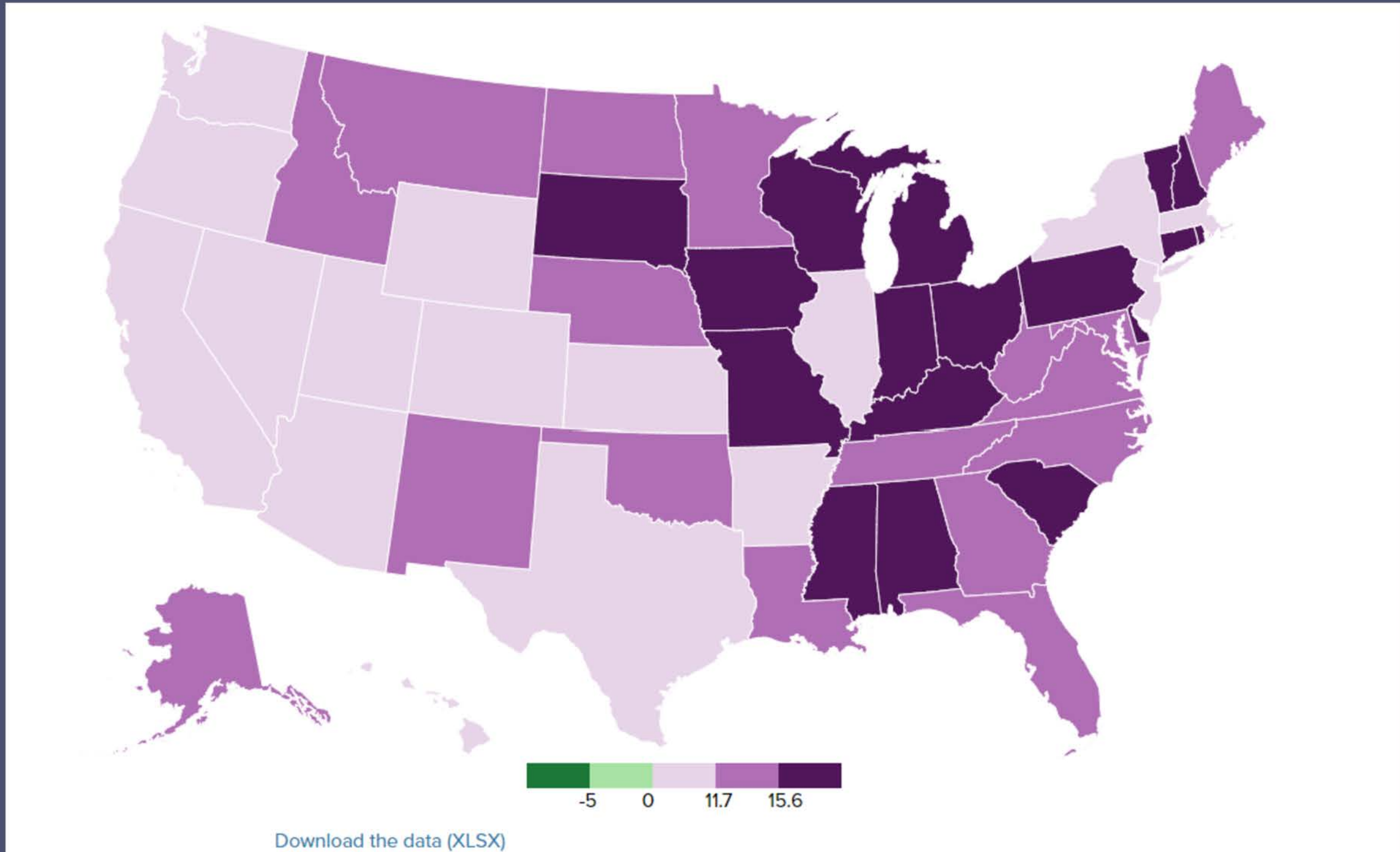


# BRAIN DRAIN

Rural and semi-rural areas have been experiencing brain drain.

Highly skilled and/or educated folks born in rural settings are leaving at disproportionate rates.

This leads to a lower value tax base.



## Gross Brain Drain 2017

U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee

Loss of highly-educated individuals in rural areas

# INCLUSION LIVES ON



Rural and semi-rural areas that prioritize attracting and retaining highly educated, younger, working people have more resilient and productive tax bases.





# Application

Bold Solutions for a Rural Renaissance

# Rural Solutions

The programs that are developed in urban and suburban areas are not always transferrable to rural life.

## City of Wooster Fixed Route Transit



Monday - Saturday  
7am - 9pm



Time	Stop	Location
:01	1	Spink & Nold
:02	2	Discount Drug Beall & Bowma
:04	3	Babcock Circle
:07	4	Williamsburg Appartments
:08	5	Save-A-Lot
:11	6	College Hill
:13	7	Spruce Hill Apts.

The City of Wooster has one bus route

## RTA RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM



Cleveland RTA map

# Rural Solutions

Rural leaders should consider innovative solutions that are **practical for their region** and the people they serve

COMMUNITY

## 'Don't Despair Repair' program helps rural Maine commuters

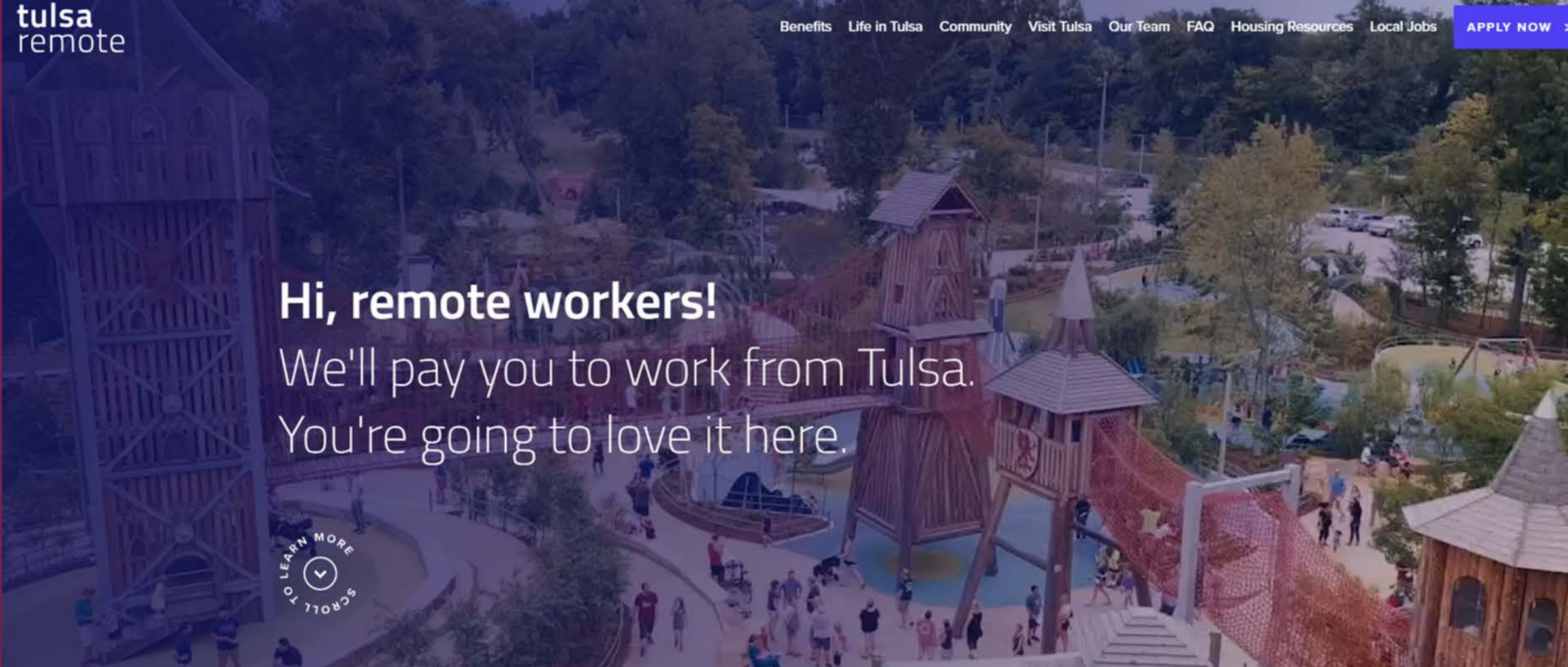
—  
Members of the United Way in Franklin County started the program and hope to raise funds to help more drivers.

NEWS

## TEXAS NONPROFIT HELPS LOW-INCOME VEHICLE OWNERS AFFORD AUTO REPAIRS

By Manuel Tellez • January 24, 2023

# Rise of Remote Work



Hi, remote workers!

We'll pay you to work from Tulsa.  
You're going to love it here.



In late 2018, a program called Tulsa Remote was launched as a way to attract remote workers. The program offered \$10,000, along with an impressive suite of community benefits, to those who would move there for a year.

**It was a bold, creative experiment that wound up paying off—literally. Propelled by office closures and the rise of remote work, the program has now attracted more than 1,600 people.**

According to a recent report by the Economic Innovation Group, the program delivered \$62 million in new local earnings in 2021. That's \$62 million in new income being infused into Tulsa's local economy—buying coffee, meals, cars, furniture, houses—and paying local taxes, too.

**\$62 Million**  
in new earnings

# Rural Solutions

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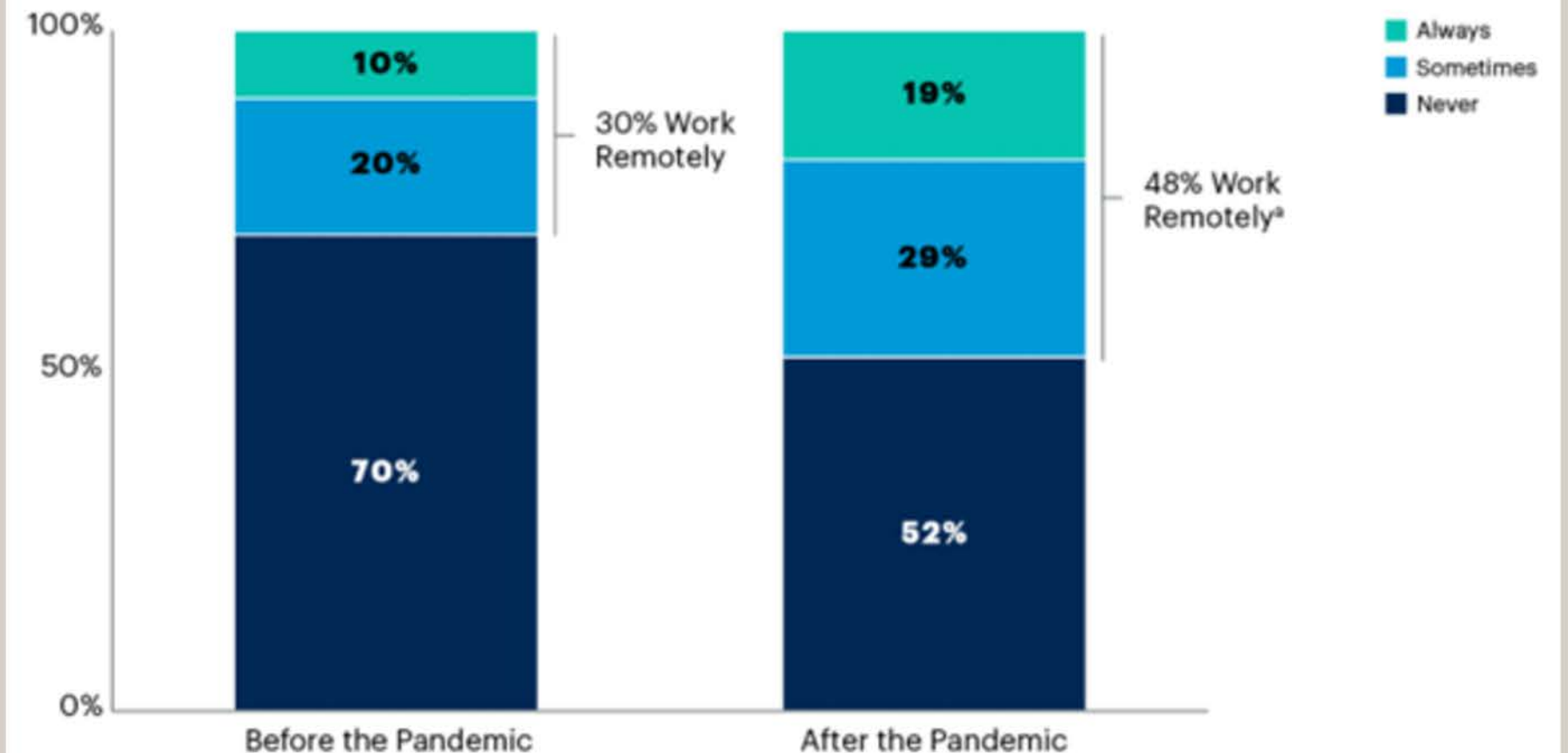
Attract **remote workers** by ensuring they have necessary infrastructure to support work and life balance

## USDA is Investing in Rural Broadband

USDA has been investing in rural telecommunications infrastructure for decades. Hundreds of millions of dollars are annually available in the RUS programs both by loans and grants all to support modern broadband e-Connectivity in rural communities.

In 2018, USDA introduced the ReConnect Program, which has invested over \$1 billion to date to expand high-speed broadband infrastructure in unserved rural areas and tribal lands.

**Projected Percentage of Employees Working Remotely, Before and After the Pandemic**



# Rural Solutions

Investing in programs that improve conditions for women and other minority groups



## 1 | Expand access to prenatal care and clinicians.

[Kearny County Hospital](#), Lakin, Kansas, launched its [Pioneer Baby program](#) in 2015 with [Kansas University School of Medicine–Wichita](#) to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes by reducing complications, premature births, low or extremely high birthweight and cesarean sections while increasing breastfeeding rates.

The program offers participants the [Becoming a Mom](#) prenatal curriculum, a virtual breastfeeding network, a breastfeeding walk-in clinic and a diabetes-prevention program. Kearny's outreach clinic is staffed by a perinatologist one day a month who sees high-risk obstetric patients and offers recommendations on perinatal care. Kearny also has focused on quantitative blood-loss initiatives, OB hemorrhage risk assessment, timely treatment for hypertension and preeclampsia and participates in a neonatal abstinence syndrome program.

Increased resources for the program were paid for in part by funding from the [Children's Miracle Network](#). Meanwhile, the hospital has increased its number of delivering providers from four to seven, increased nurse training and expanded its prenatal curriculum. These and other efforts helped the hospital steadily increase the number of births per year from 286 in 2020 to 339 births last year while reducing the primary C-section rate from 13.6% to 13.0% during that period.



## 3 | Make telehealth services easier to access.

A [2021 study](#) found that women who live in remote areas of the U.S. could benefit from telehealth, which would reduce the number of in-person visits needed for prenatal care and increase access to care. The study suggests that expanding prenatal telehealth appointments could help women in remote areas better adhere to the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' recommendation of 12-14 prenatal care appointments](#) for those with low-risk pregnancies.



# Rural Solutions

Efforts and programs to center traditionally marginalized groups



NEWS

## Grassroots Wooster Pride Rally: 'We know people of every flag lives in Wayne County'



**Bryce Buyakie**  
The Daily Record

Published 8:57 p.m. ET June 24, 2022



WOOSTER – [Pride flags of all stripes](#) fluttered in the breeze Friday evening as children wrote "Happy Pride Month" and "LGBTQA" on the ground in multicolored chalk.

Amanda Stock stood in the shade and watched as people flooded the Christmas Run Park playground and pavilion area in the first few minutes of the city's first [Pride Rally](#) celebrating the local LGBTQ community.



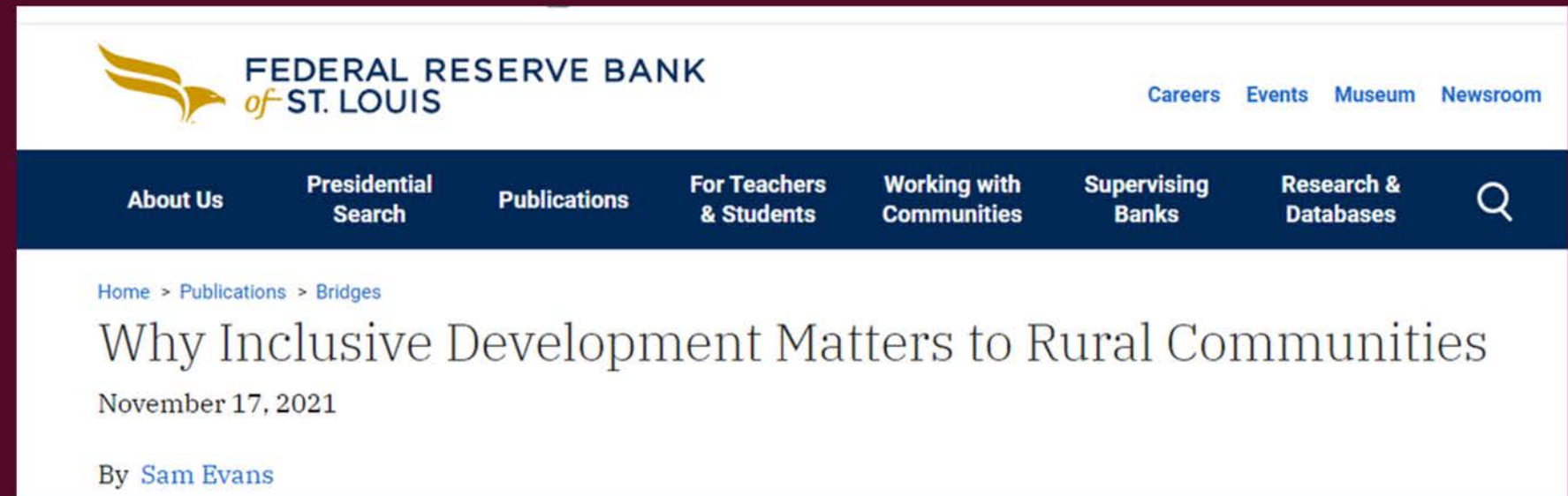
Pride Rally. She heard about it before it took place, and she was excited to see what it was all about.

**EQUITY AND  
INCLUSION SHOULD  
BE A DAILY FOCUS IN  
ALL INDUSTRIES.**



# The Future is Diverse

Communities that prioritize inclusion are better prepared for the shifting demographics and values on the horizon



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## Why Inclusive Development Matters to Rural Communities

November 17, 2021

By [Sam Evans](#)



## Rural rising: Economic development strategies for America's heartland

March 30, 2022 | Article

## Valuing rural minority communities: Inclusive growth, broadband, and leadership

Candid conversations on structural racism have encouraged social scientists to recast issues of race, place, and inequality by adopting a new racial equity view.





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@WorkEnlightened | hello@enlightened-solutions.com

