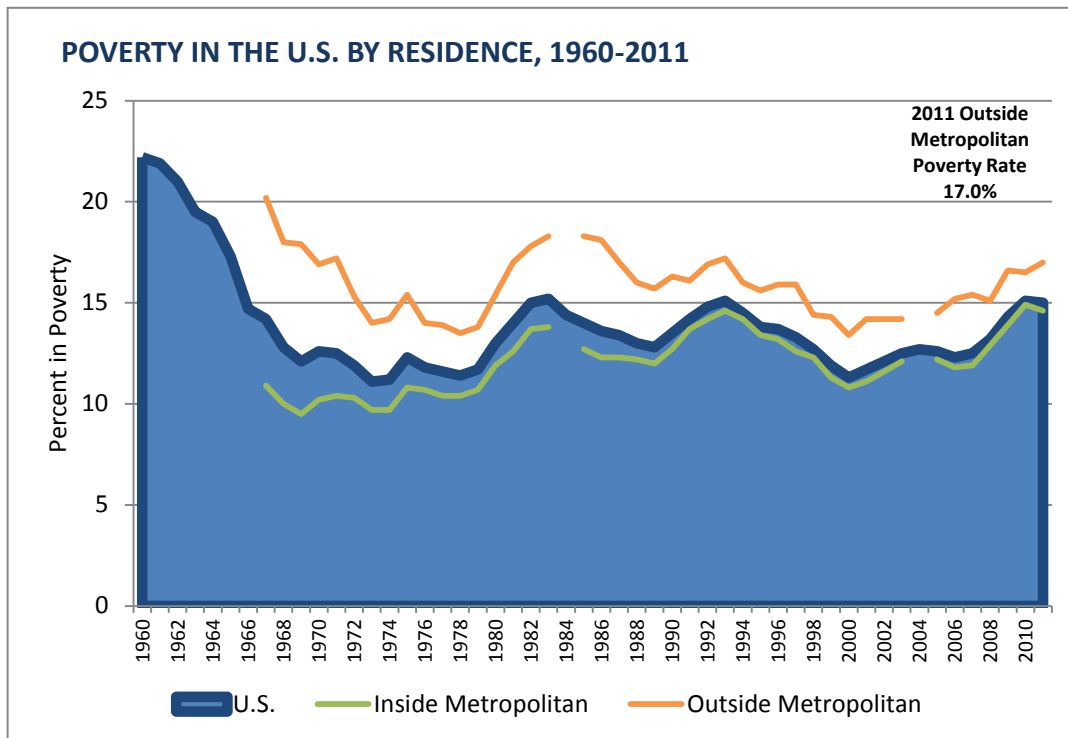


## NUMBER OF RURAL PEOPLE IN POVERTY INCREASES, WHILE NATIONAL RATE REMAINS HIGH

Housing Assistance Council  
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Poverty in rural America continues to be a persistent and often invisible national problem, blighting lives for generations and leaving many regions in a permanent depression. The overall number of Americans living in poverty remains at its highest level in decades. The official poverty rate for 2011, measured by the U.S. Census Bureau, was 15.0 percent. The 2011 poverty rate is statistically unchanged from the 15.1 percent level in 2010. Released today, the U.S. Census Bureau's annual report, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2011*, estimates that 46.2 million people had incomes below the poverty line in 2011, the same number as in 2010.



Source: HAC Tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau Annual Poverty Estimates

The incidence of poverty is greatest in America's rural areas and central cities. The official poverty rate in rural areas, (persons living outside of metropolitan areas), was a full two percentage points higher than the national level at 17.0 percent. The poverty rate outside metro areas was up from 16.5 percent in 2010.<sup>1</sup> Overall, 8 million people outside metropolitan areas had incomes below the poverty line in 2011, up from 7.9 million in 2010.

"The recent economic down-turn is largely responsible for high poverty rates, but some communities in rural America have experienced extremely high levels of poverty for decades," says Moises Loza, Executive Director of the Housing Assistance Council (HAC). Additional HAC research on poverty using data from the 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS), indicate that poverty rates are still stubbornly high among certain populations and areas in rural America – namely minorities and children. The poverty rate among rural minorities is more than twice that of rural white not Hispanics, at 28 percent.

While poverty is high nationally, several rural regions and communities have experienced persistently high poverty rates for long periods of time. Often forgotten or hidden from mainstream America, these areas are isolated geographically, lack resources and economic opportunities, and suffer from decades of disinvestment and double-digit poverty rates. Through analysis of Census data, the Housing Assistance Council has identified 429 counties with poverty rates of 20 percent or more in 1990, 2000, and 2010. The

<sup>1</sup> The outside metropolitan poverty rate change between 2010 and 2011 was not statistically significant according to the Census report.

continued persistence of poverty is most evident within several predominantly rural regions and populations such as Central Appalachia, the Lower Mississippi Delta, the southern Black Belt, the Colonias region along the U.S.-Mexico border, Native American lands, and migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

One highly visible impact of this economic distress can be seen in these areas' poor housing conditions. The incidence of housing units lacking adequate plumbing is more than twice the national rate, and nearly 400,000 households in these regions live in crowded conditions. Additionally, while housing costs are relatively low in many of these communities, more than half of persistent-poverty county renters encounter affordability problems and are considered housing cost burdened.

### **Income and Health Care Coverage in Rural America**

The Census Bureau estimated the national household median income at \$50,054 – a 1.5 percent decline from the 2010 level. Household incomes were highest in metropolitan areas outside of central cities (\$57,277) and lowest outside of metropolitan areas (\$40,527).

Additionally, the Census report indicated that 15.7 percent of Americans were without health insurance in 2011 – down from 16.3 percent in 2010. The 2011 uninsured rate for those living outside of metropolitan areas was 15.4 percent. The Census Bureau estimates that 7.3 million persons outside of metropolitan areas were without health insurance in 2011, down from 7.7 million uninsured in 2010.

### **Download the Census Report on Poverty**

For more information on poverty and income figures download the U.S. Census Bureau's new report: *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States:2011* at, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-243.pdf>

### **Additional HAC Resources on Rural Poverty**

For more information on rural poverty, access HAC's *Rural Research Note: Poverty in Rural America*, [http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/research\\_notes/rrn\\_poverty.pdf](http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/research_notes/rrn_poverty.pdf)

Also download HAC's decennial poverty map poster: <http://www.ruralhome.org/component/content/article/500-poverty-map-2012>

### ***The Housing Assistance Council***

*Founded in 1971 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., the Housing Assistance Council is a national nonprofit corporation dedicated to helping local organizations build affordable homes in rural America by providing below-market financing, technical assistance, research, training, and information services. HAC's programs focus on local solutions, empowerment, reduced dependency, and self-help strategies. HAC is an equal opportunity lender. To learn more about HAC visit [www.ruralhome.org](http://www.ruralhome.org).*