



Enlightened
SOLUTIONS

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN RURAL AND SEMI-RURAL AREAS

**Building Inclusive
Communities Outside the
Urban Core**





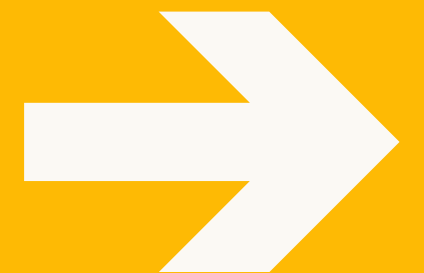
AGENDA

1 History & Landscape

2 Defining Diversity

3 Economic Edge

4 Application



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
- 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

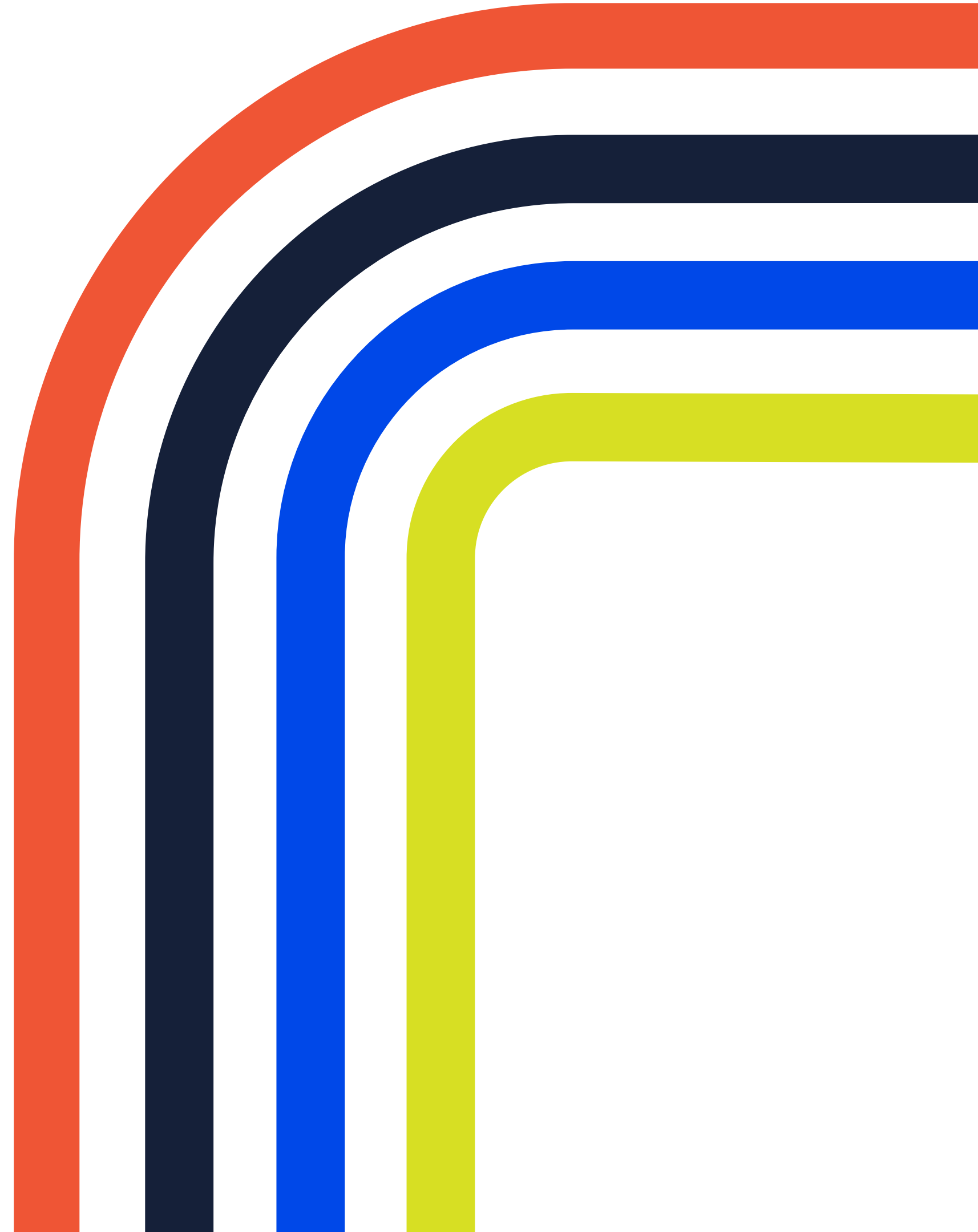


WHO WE ARE

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 Focus Areas



Individuals

We support individuals navigating exclusionary systems in the workplace.



Organizations

We work with organizations interested in investing in a more equitable workforce through innovative solutions and change-making.



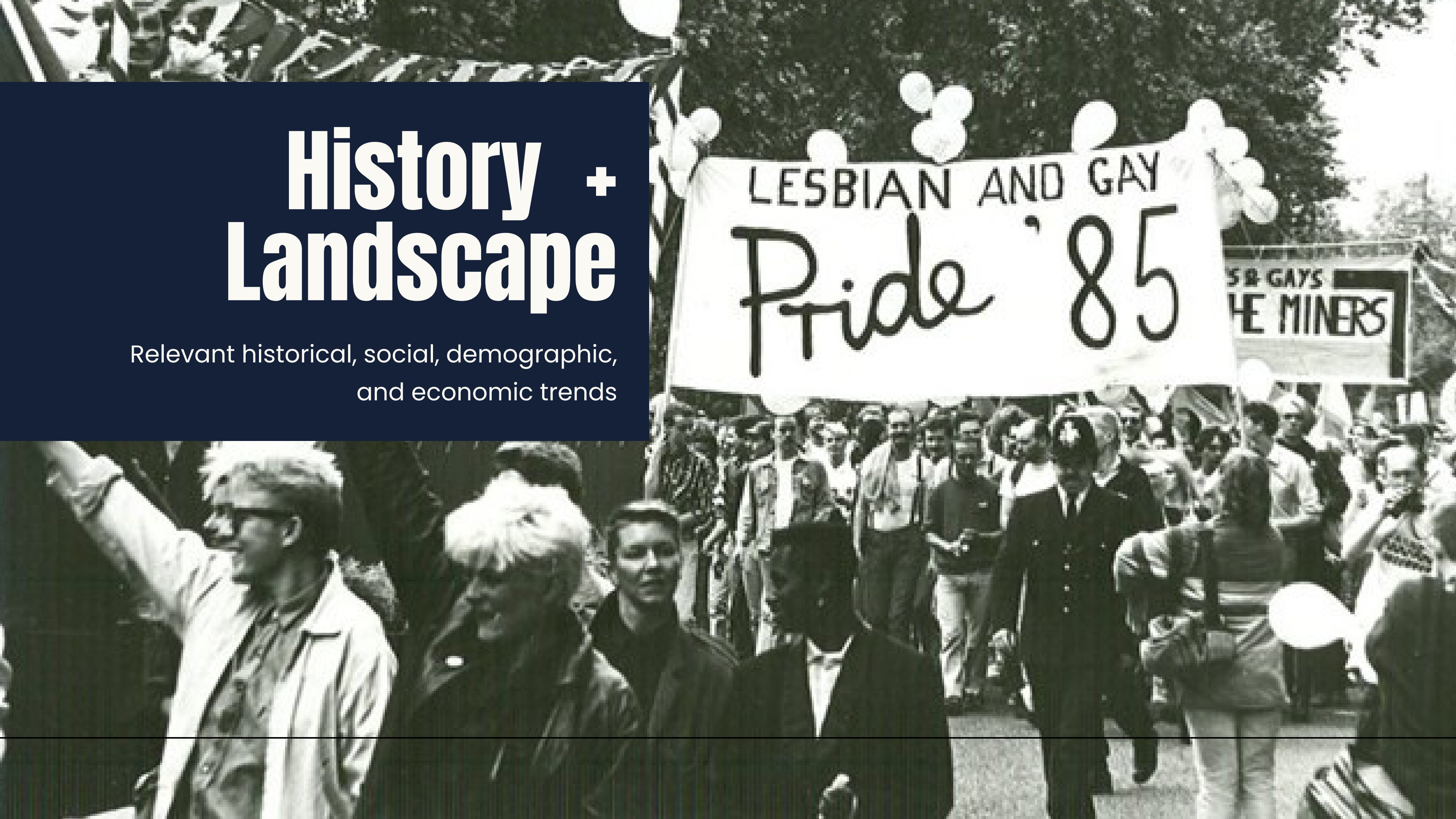
Research

Conduct research to enhance our understanding of living as a person with diverse identities.



History + Landscape

Relevant historical, social, demographic,
and economic trends



HISTORY

CIVIL RIGHTS PROTECTIONS ARE EVOLVING

The fight for civil rights has been a long battle, with legal protections being somewhat new in comparison to bodies of law like property rights or contracts

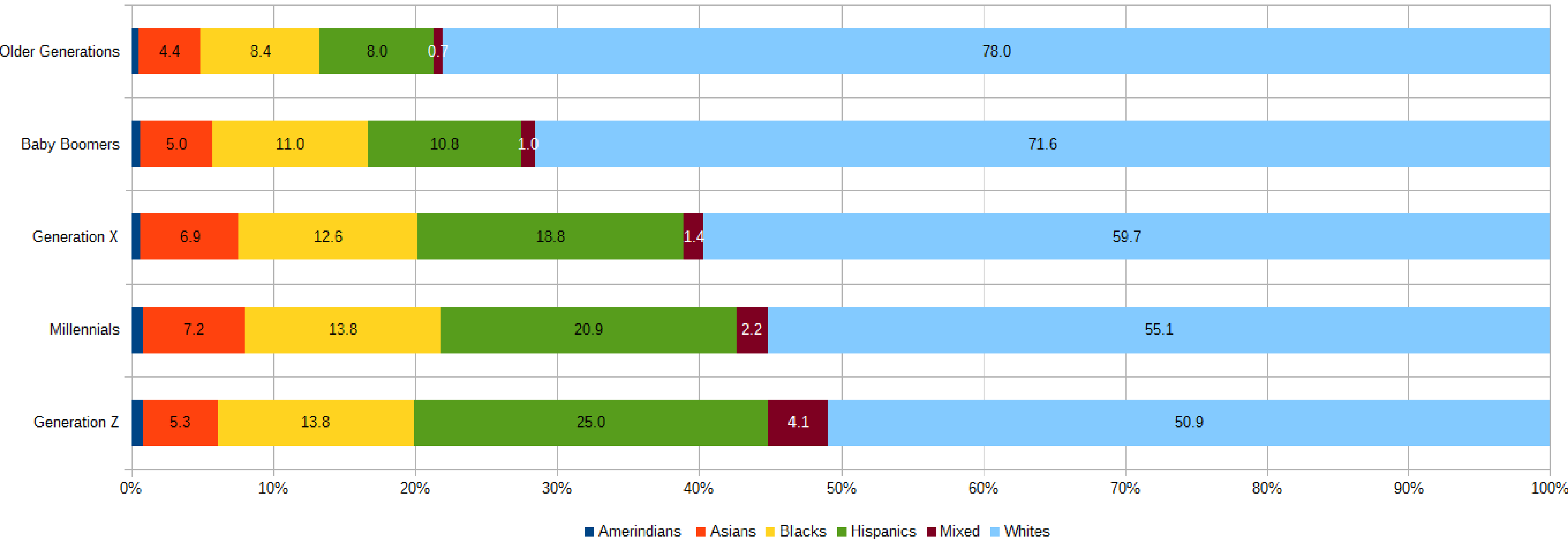
HR AND DEI AS A PROFESSIONAL FIELD

HR, founded in 1900, included employee relations, while Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work started in the 1960s. No single credentialing body exists for DEI or HR roles.



Ethnic Composition of Demographic Cohorts of the United States in 2018

Brookings Institution (2019)



RACE X AGE

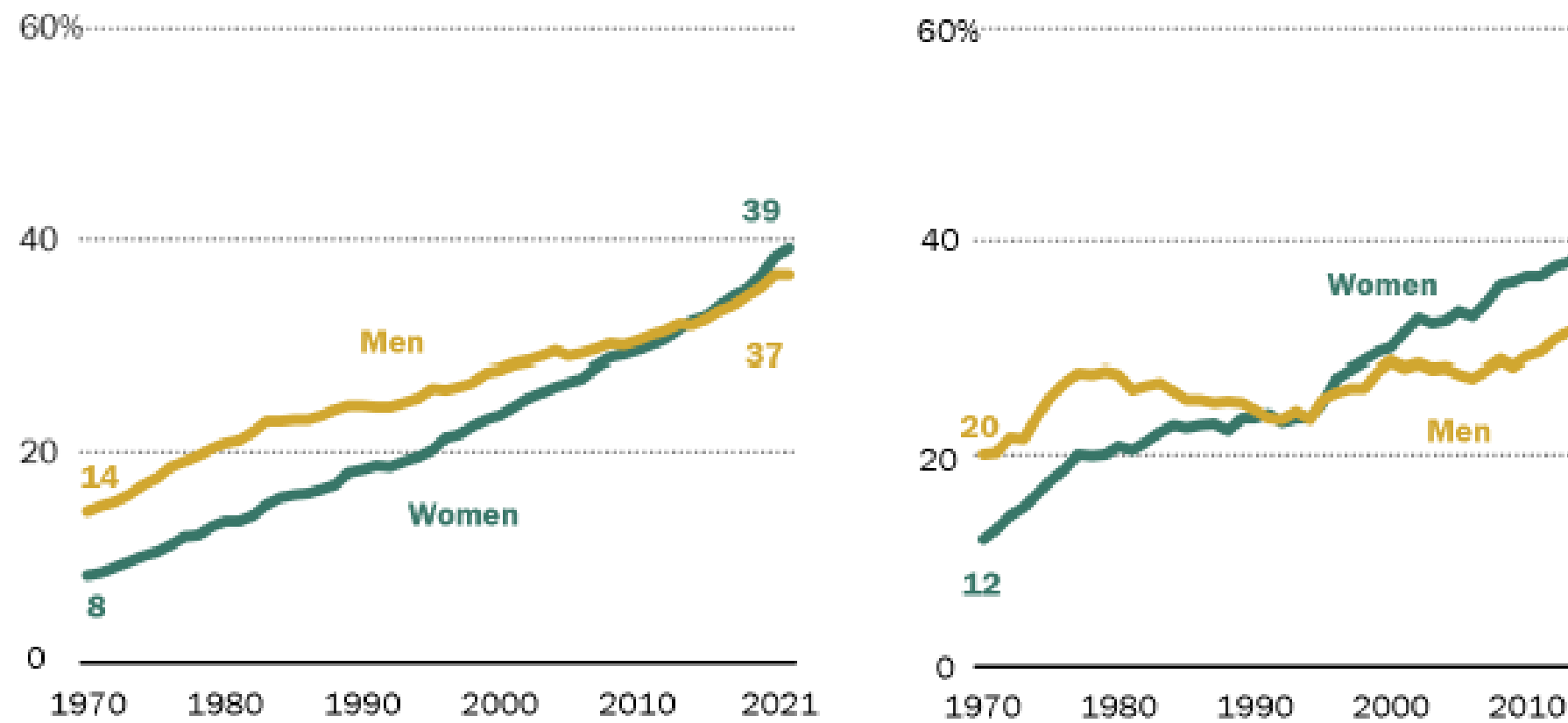
GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

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.



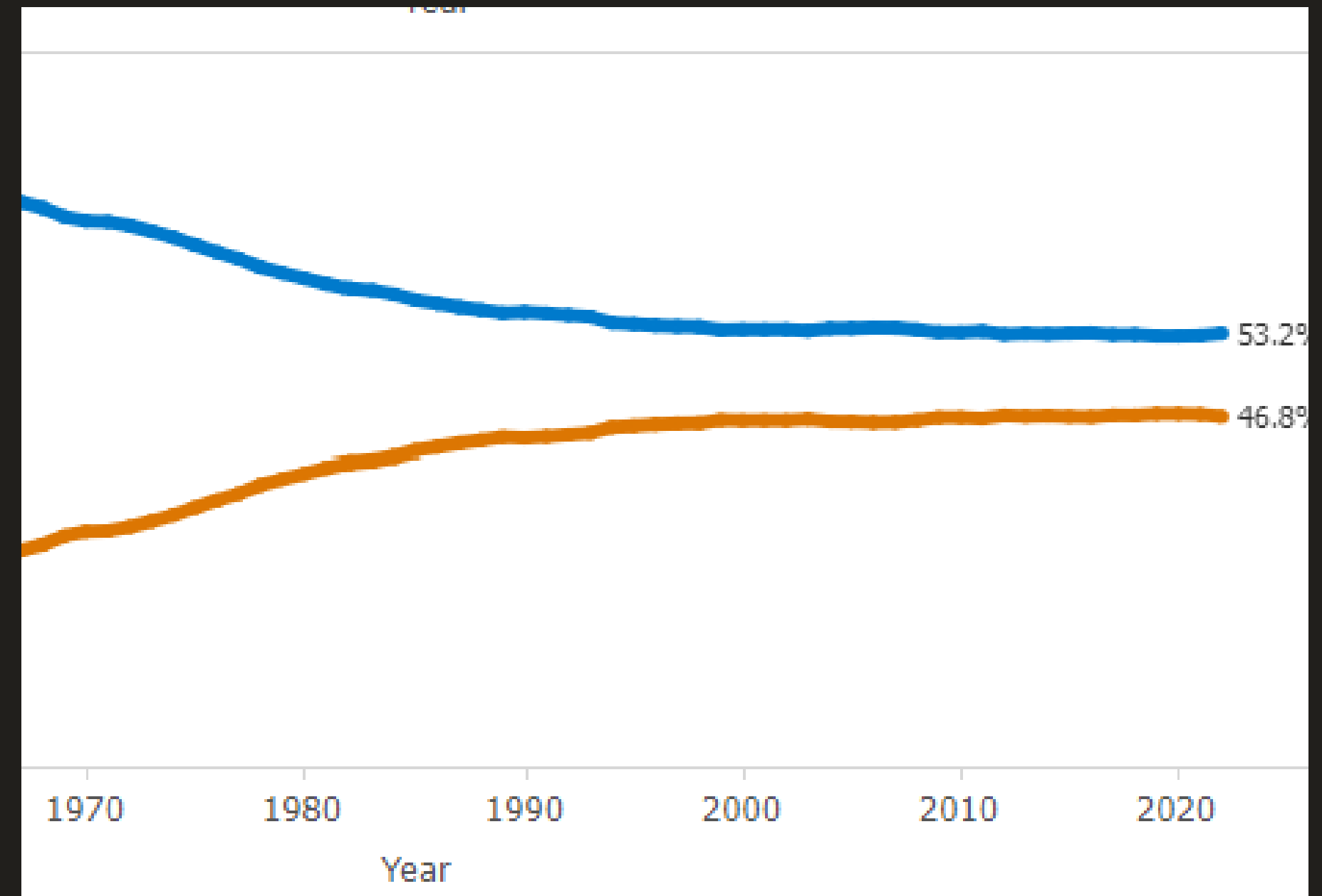
Women in the U.S. are outpacing men in college graduation

% 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



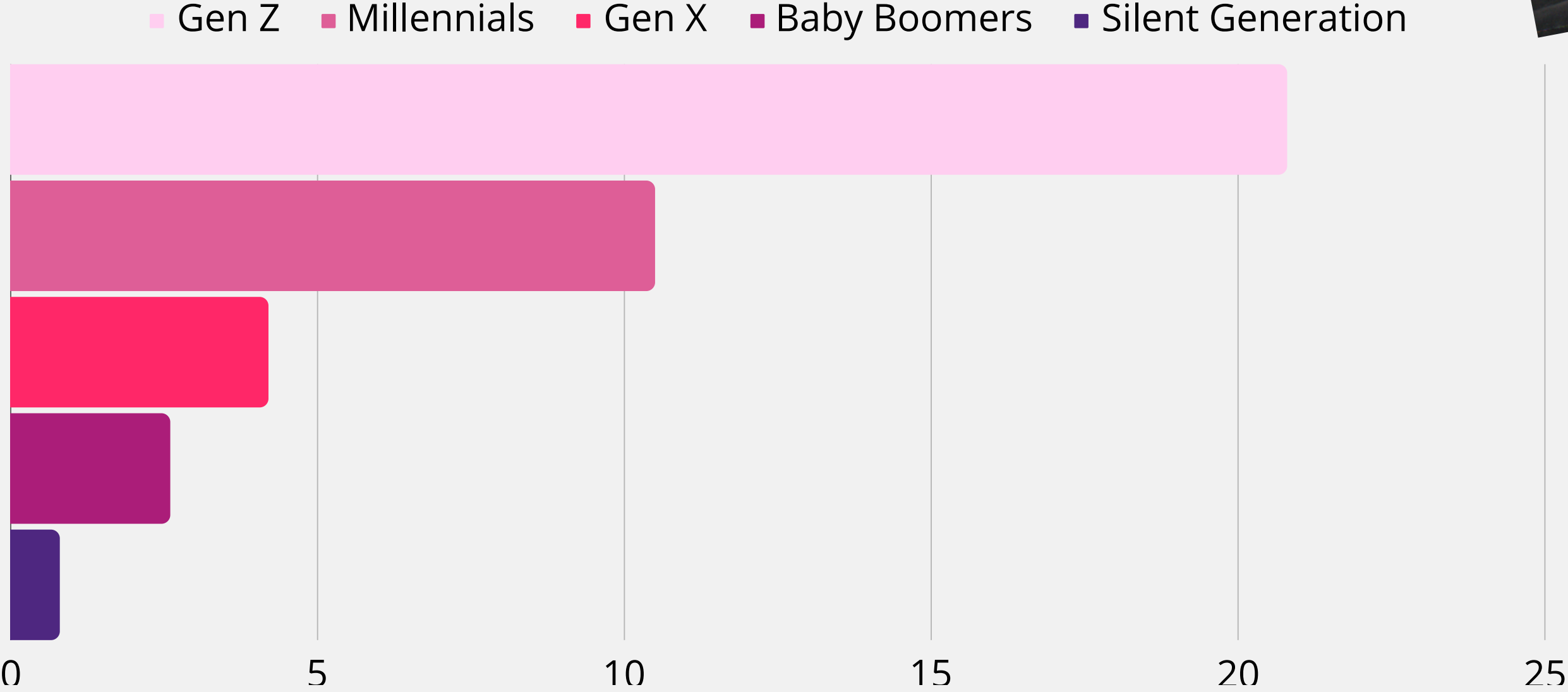
GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

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



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

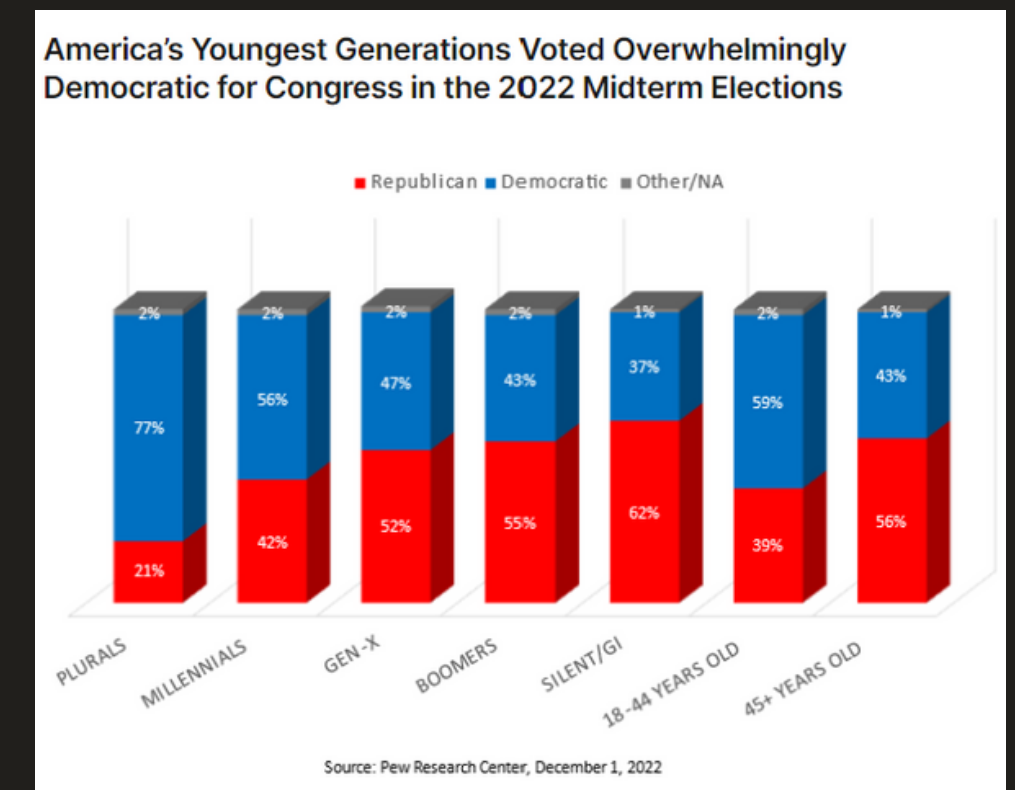
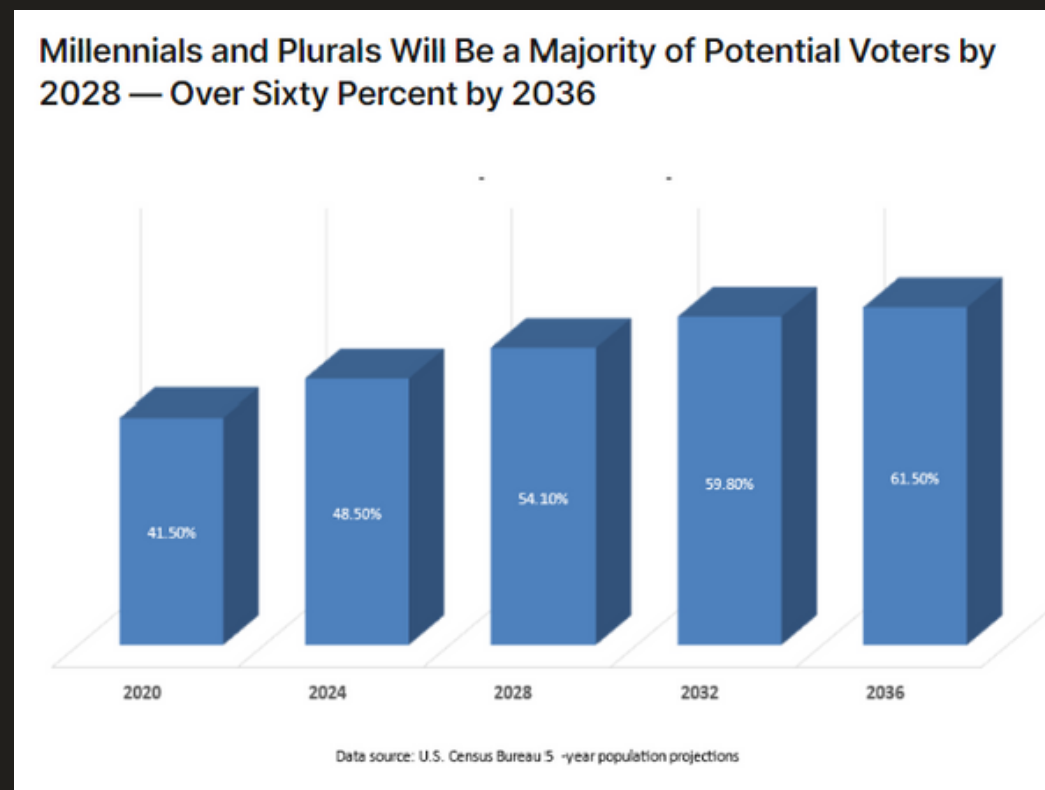
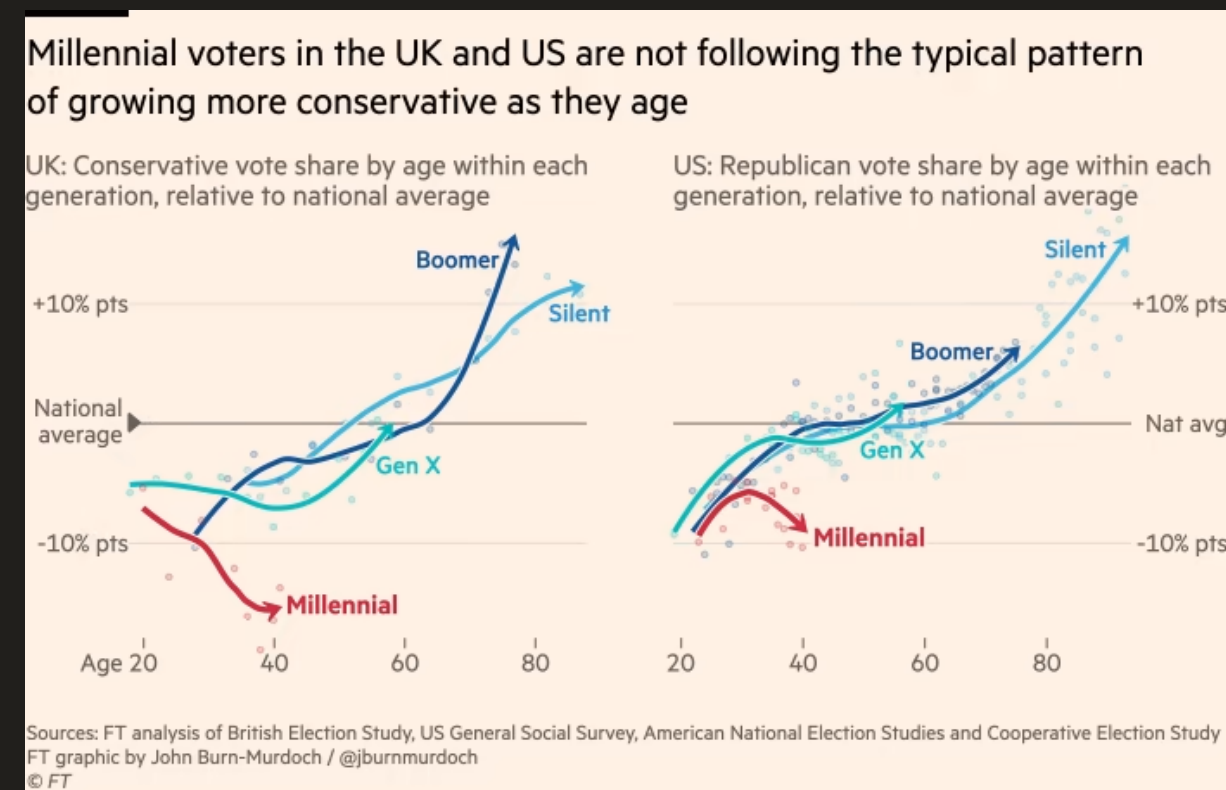
Americans Who Self-Identified as LGBTQ in 2021 by Generation



Key Economic Indicators

Moral and Ethical Shifts

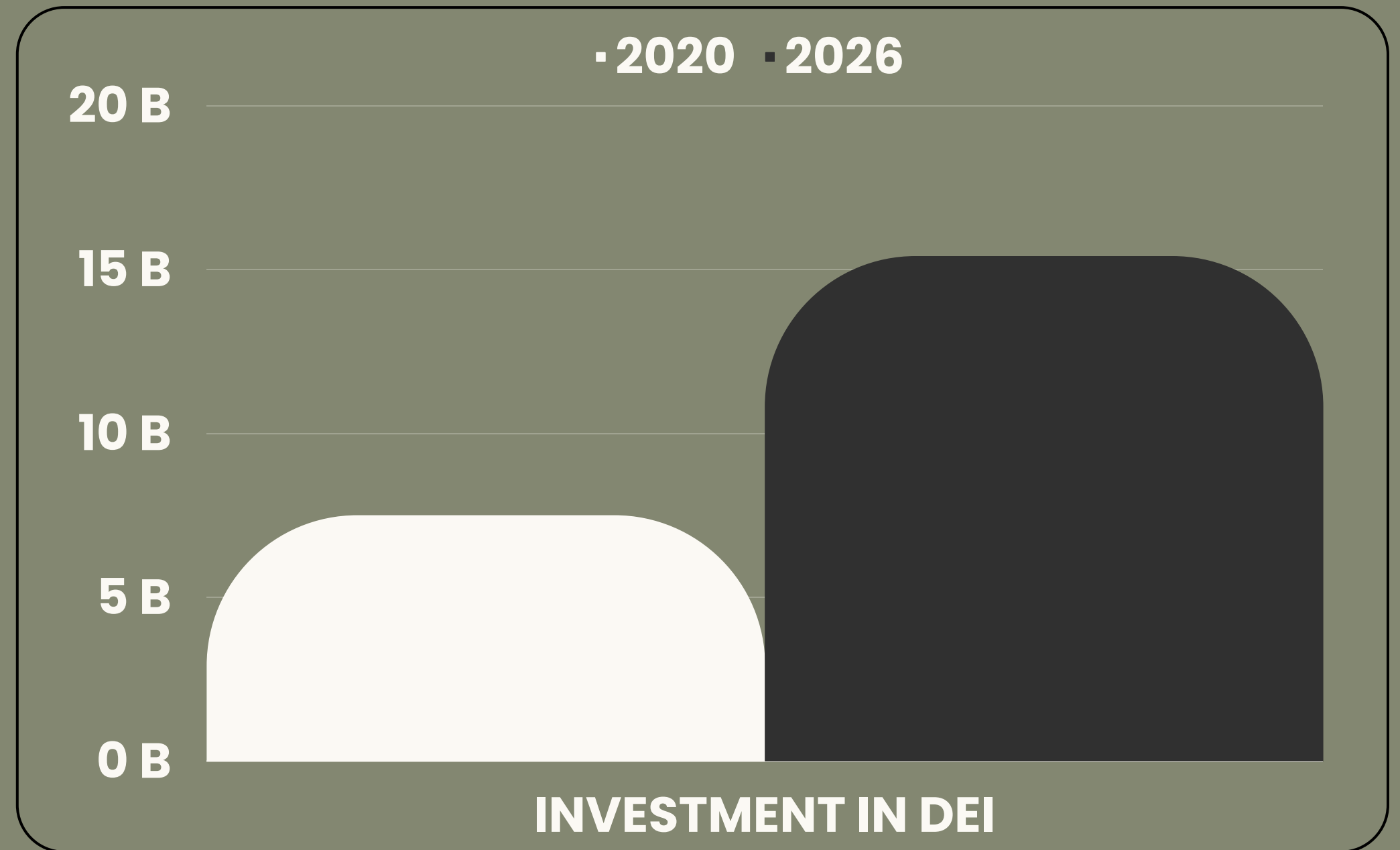
The focus on equity and inclusion is increasing in talent attraction and sales. Long-held political patterns are no longer reliable as young people shift to a focus on inclusion for all.



FORTUNE 500 INVESTMENT

In 2020, the global market for DEI—that is, dollars spent by companies on DEI-related efforts such as employee resource groups (ERGs)—was estimated at \$7.5 billion and is projected to more than double to \$15.4 billion by 2026.

McKinsey & Company.



Business Solution



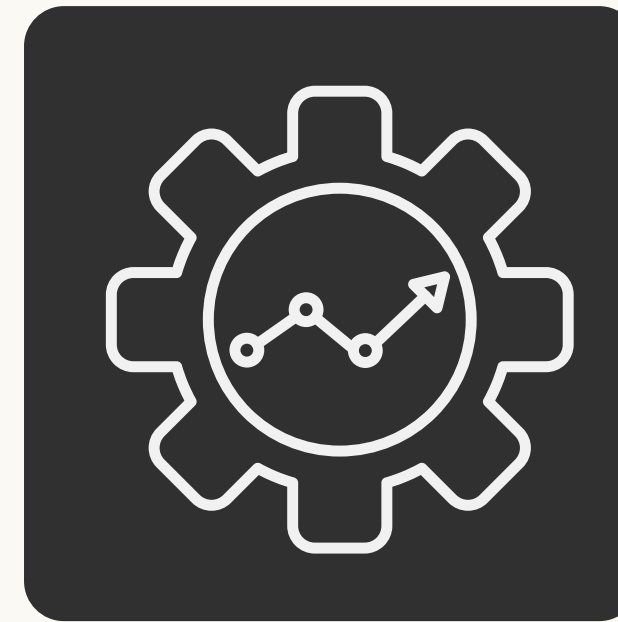
36%

Organizations in the top quartile for ethnic diversity have a +36% likelihood of financial outperformance.



2.5x

Diverse companies earn 2.5x higher cash flow per employee.



35%

Inclusive teams are over 35% more productive.



87%

Diverse teams make better decisions 87% of the time.



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.

♡ 5K 🔗 5K 👤 5K





STEVEN PINKER

ENLIGHTENMENT NOW

THE CASE FOR
REASON, SCIENCE,
HUMANISM,
AND PROGRESS

ENLIGHTENMENT NOW

Steven Pinker, a cognitive psychologist at Harvard University, posits that humanism and progress is inevitable, when we view human progress on a global, historical scale

“

THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION OF WHICH WAS THE GREATEST ERA FOR CULTURE; THE ANSWER HAS TO BE TODAY, UNTIL IT IS SUPERSEDED BY TOMORROW.

IT IS IN THE NATURE OF PROGRESS THAT IT ERASES ITS TRACKS, AND ITS CHAMPIONS FIXATE ON THE REMAINING INJUSTICES AND FORGET HOW FAR WE HAVE COME.

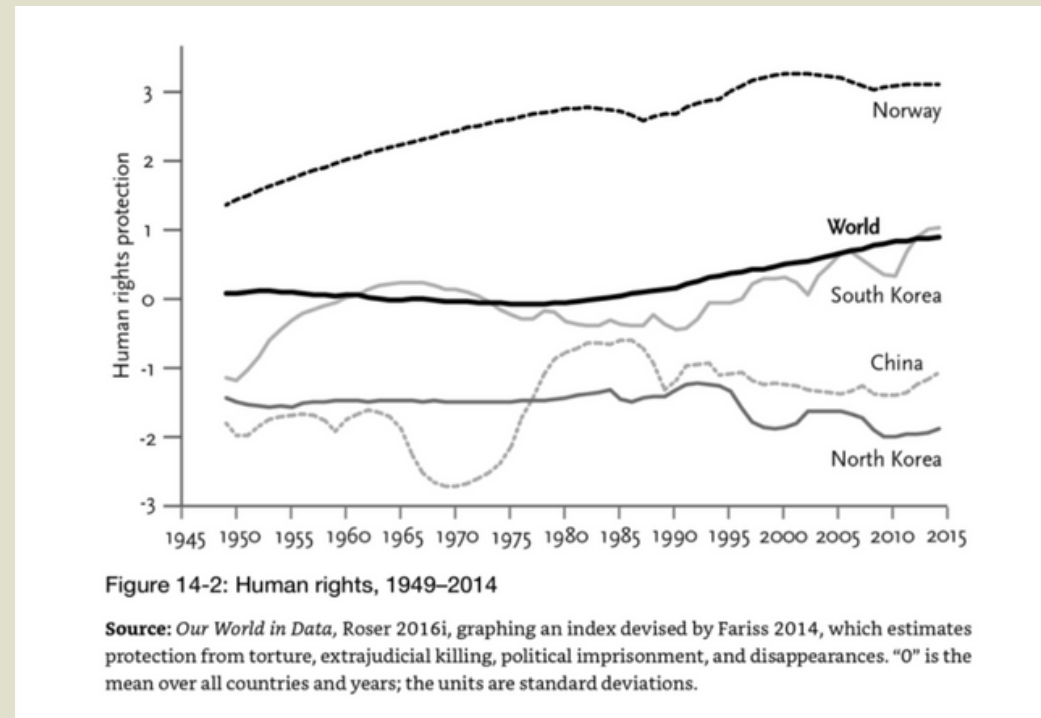
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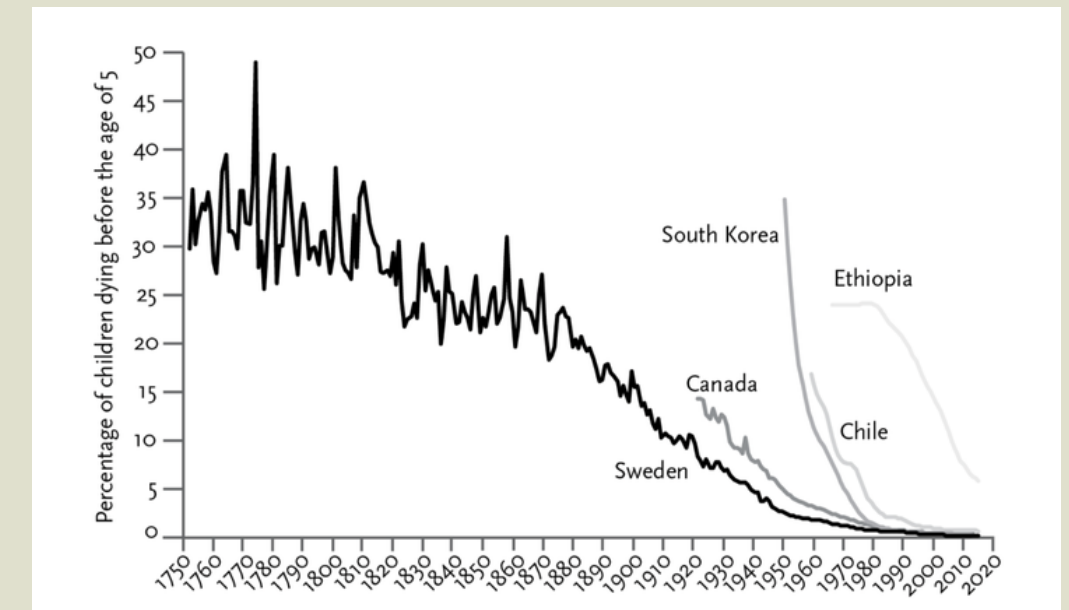
ENLIGHTENMENT NOW

Measures of progress include
(among many others):

- Reduction in infant and maternal death
- Life expectancy increases
- Undernourishment rate decrease
- World Income Distribution
- Poverty
- Genocide Deaths
- Human Rights
- Women's Literacy



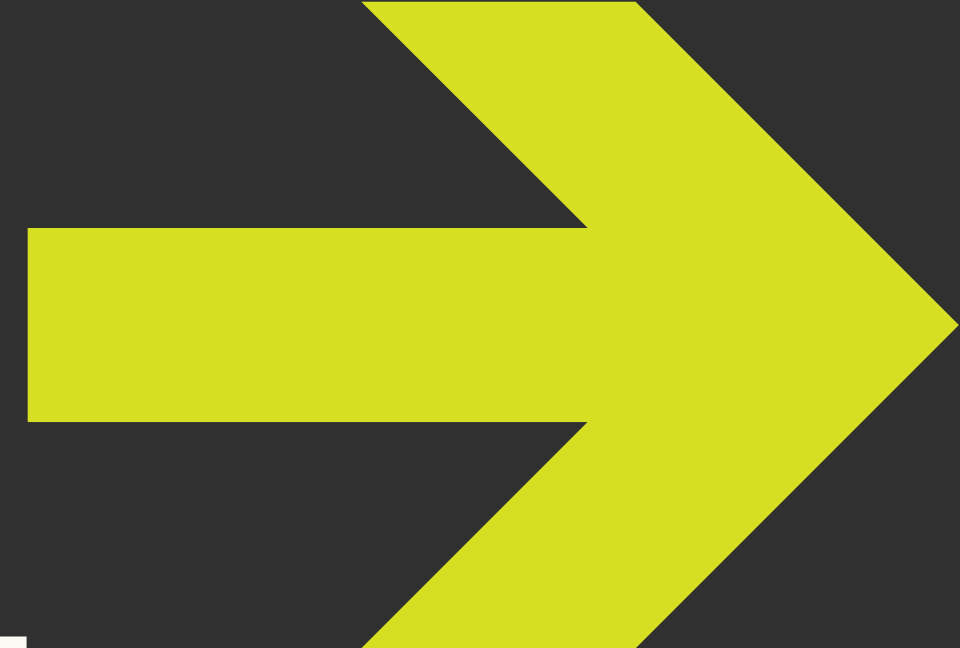
Human Rights have greater protection worldwide



Maternal and Infant Mortality is at its lowest rate ever



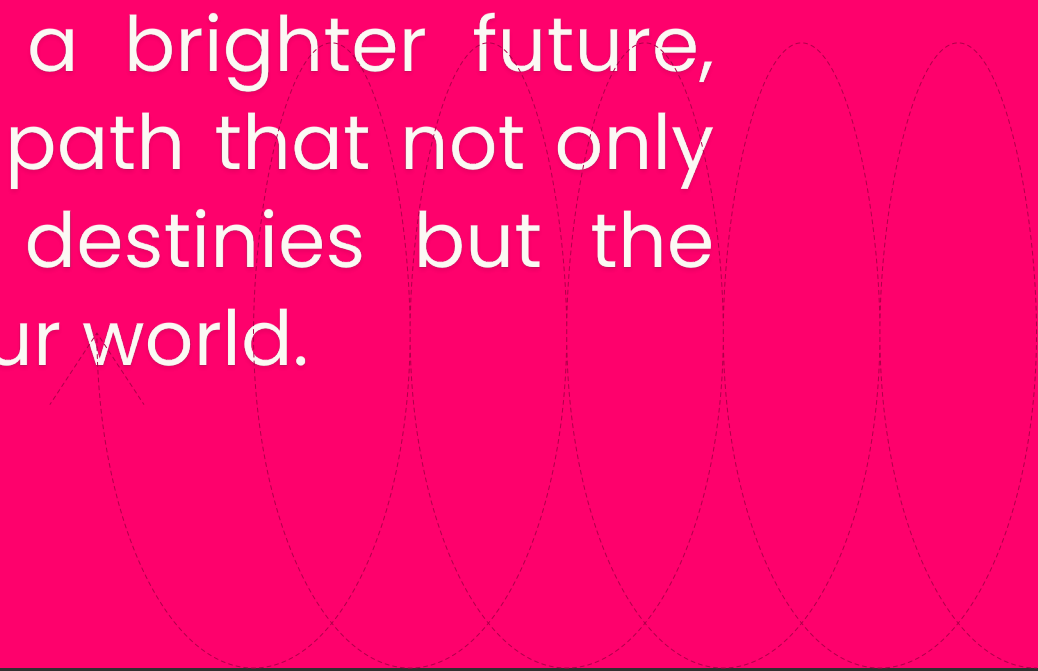
ENLIGHTENED SOLUTIONS



Millennials and Gen Z are the torchbearers of a **new era.**

Yearning for stability, yet facing the flames of wage gaps, racial and equity instability, student loans, housing shortages, and the urgency of climate and environmental sustainability.

In their pursuit of a brighter future, they are forging a path that not only shapes their own destinies but the very trajectory of our world.



Cost of Living in the Urban Core

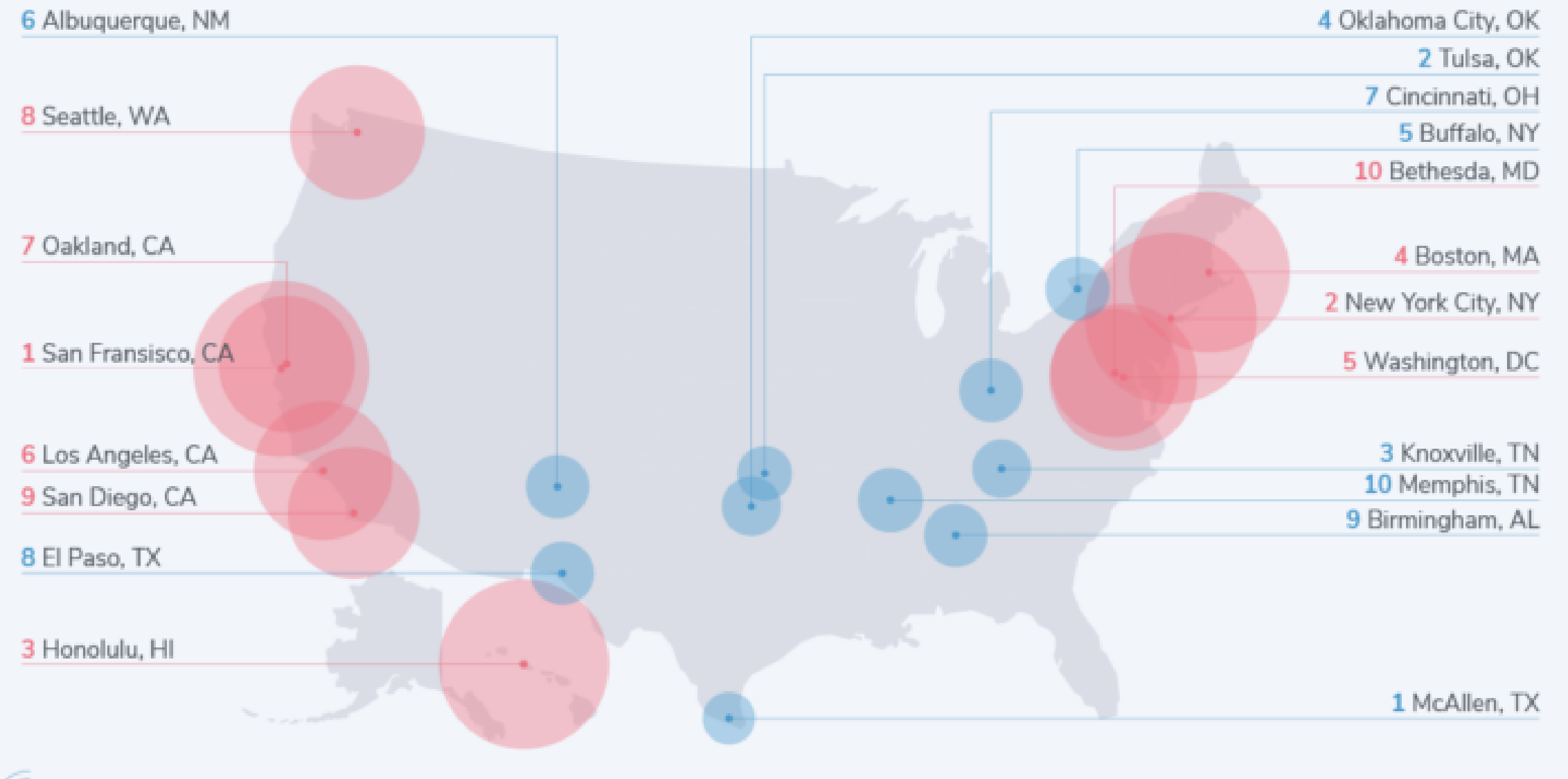
Urban living has become increasingly unaffordable due to:

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

Many young adults are making tough choices about their career and social lives, with financial constraints often overshadowing their desire for personal and professional growth in urban hubs.

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.

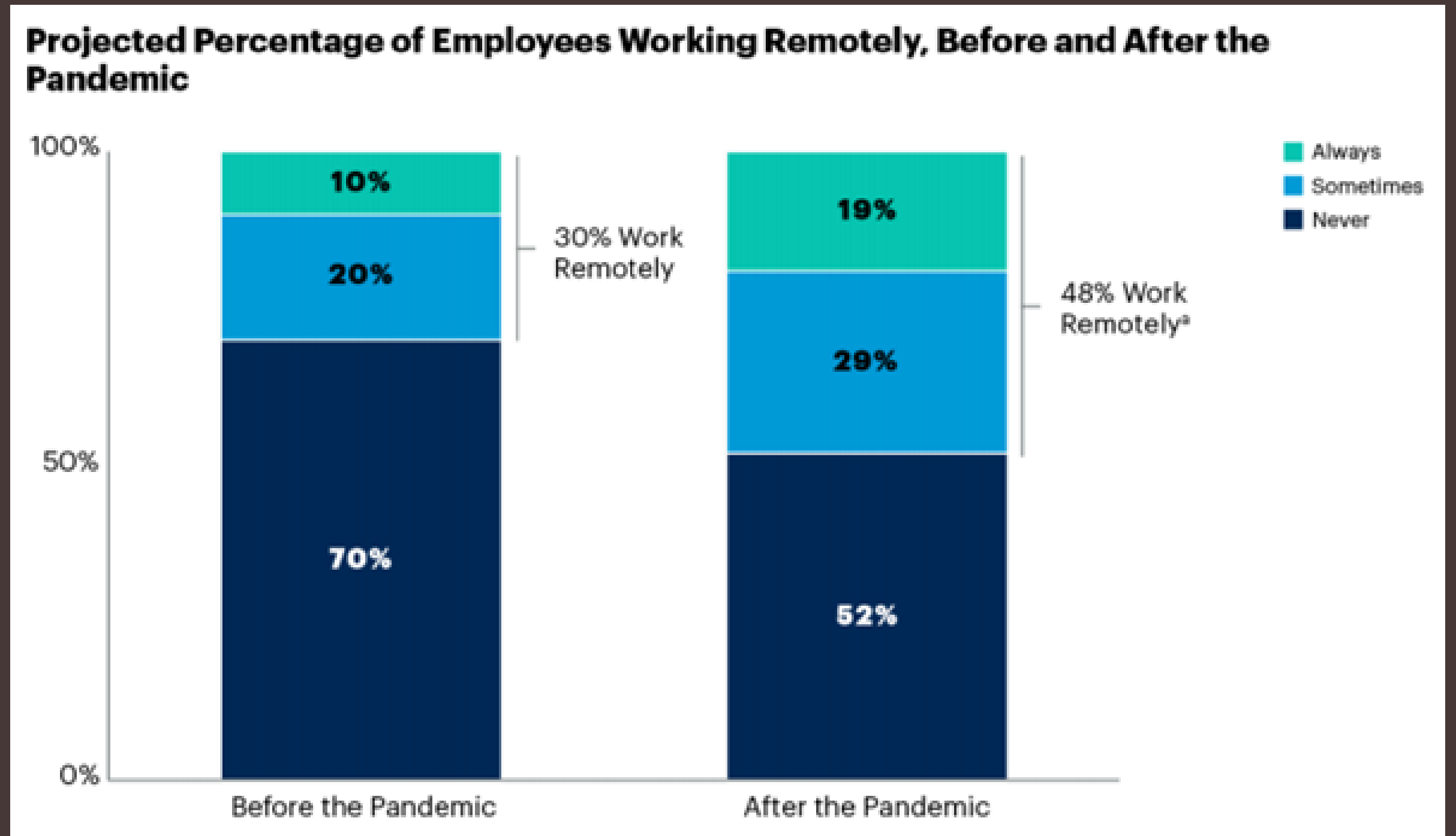


Rise of Remote Work

Remote work is poised to disrupt traditional migration patterns to city centers.

The appeal of more affordable suburban or rural locations, with lower housing costs and a higher quality of life, is gaining momentum.

This shift not only challenges the conventional notion of work-life balance but also has the potential to revitalize smaller and Midwestern communities.



“Return to Simplicity”

Many are seeking to reconnect with nature and explore self-sufficiency as a means of finding balance and meaning in their lives.

This trend reflects a desire to escape the complexities of modern living and embrace a more sustainable and holistic approach to existence.

Younger generations are moving to smaller towns, but they prioritize semi-rural areas with liberal-leaning voting blocks.



COURTESY OF ANNIE SPRATT VIA UNSPLASH

LIFE

WHY GEN Z LOVES COTTAGECORE

MARCH 7, 2023



ARIANA MANNINO



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

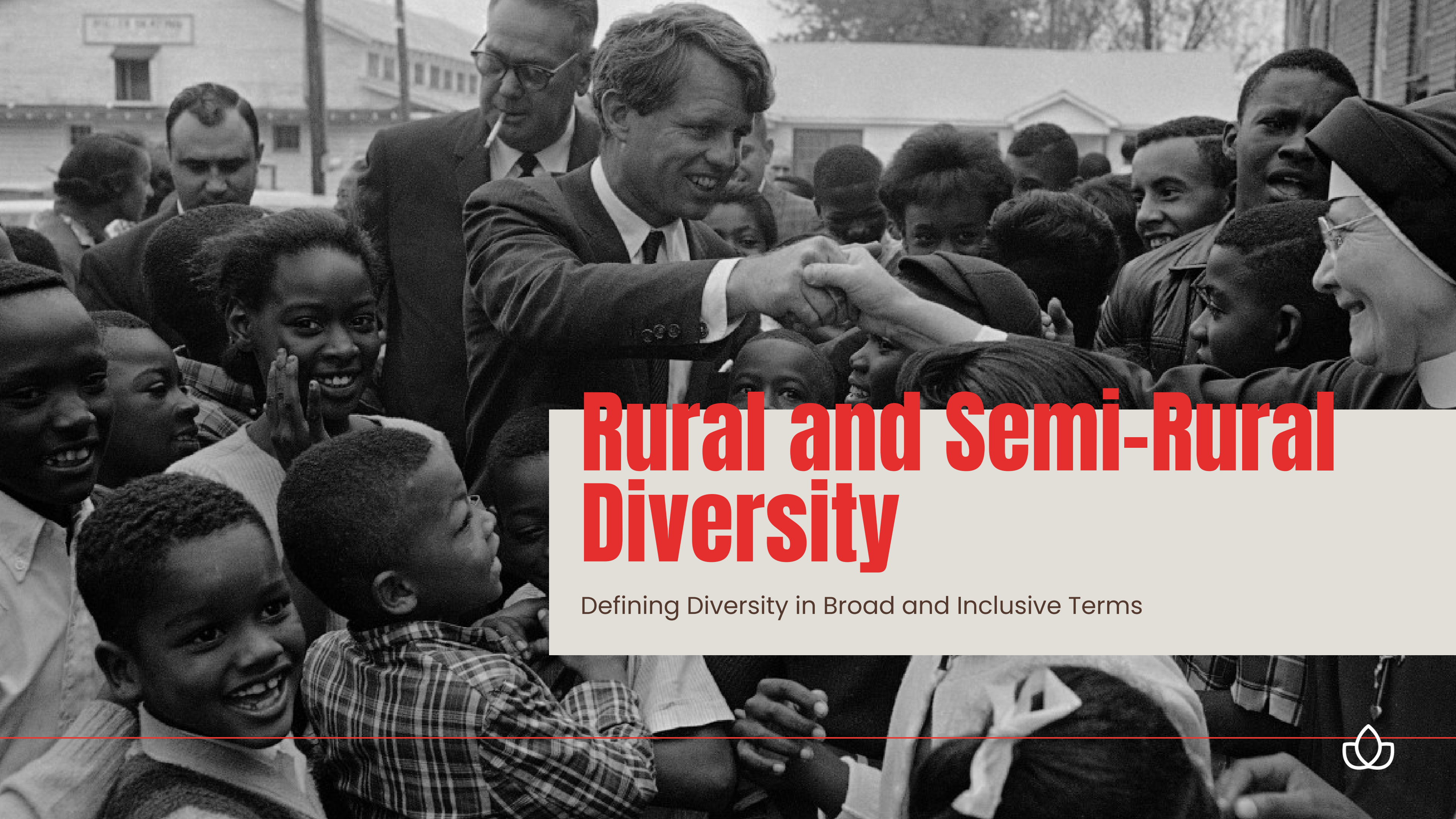


THREE REASONS GENS X, Z AND MILLENNIALS ARE MOVING TO SMALL TOWNS

Friday, July 28, 2023

- people continue to move away from urban centers while small towns and rural areas attract even more movers. The share of inbound moves for urban areas was 48.5% - indicating migration losses - compared to 54.6% for rural areas – migration gains.
- families moved to small cities. Nearly 30% of the inbound moves in small towns and micropolitan areas were made by families, compared to 24% of the moves in metropolitan areas. Rural areas are also attracting families as the share of inbound moves rose to 22.8% from 22.0% a year earlier.
- individuals moved to urban centers. Seventy percent of movers in urban centers were individuals. Fewer individuals moved to a smaller city compared to a year earlier.





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.

This usually includes issues with oppression of minority groups by majority groups. Some of the most commonly cited diverse groups are:

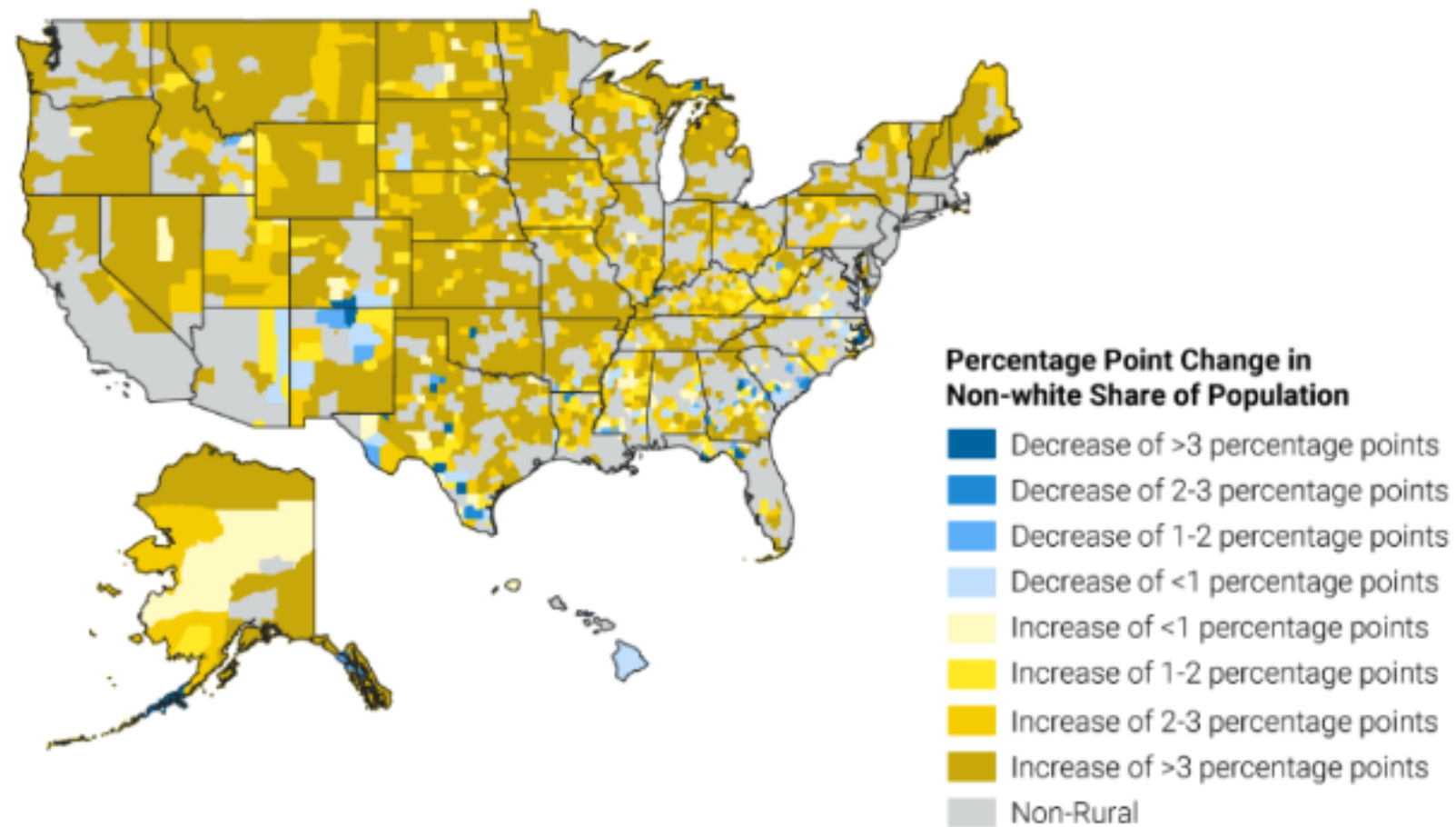
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- LGBTQIA+ Status
- Neurodivergence
- Physical Ability
- Religion
- Socio-Economic Status (Class)
- Age



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.^[2] 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

22% of rural populations are racially/ethnically diverse.

Rural America is growing 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

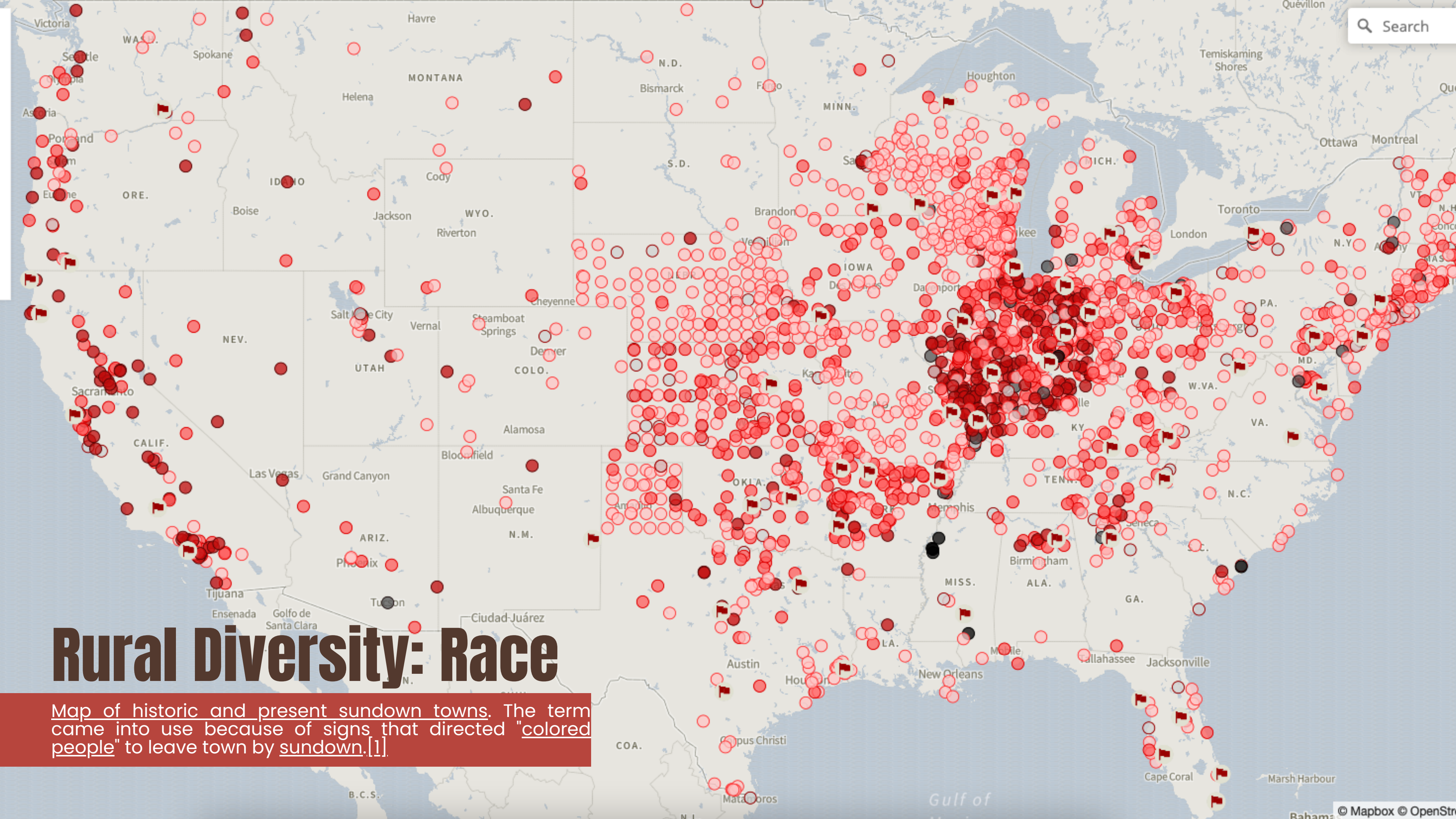
Poorer Healthcare

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

Arrest and Violence

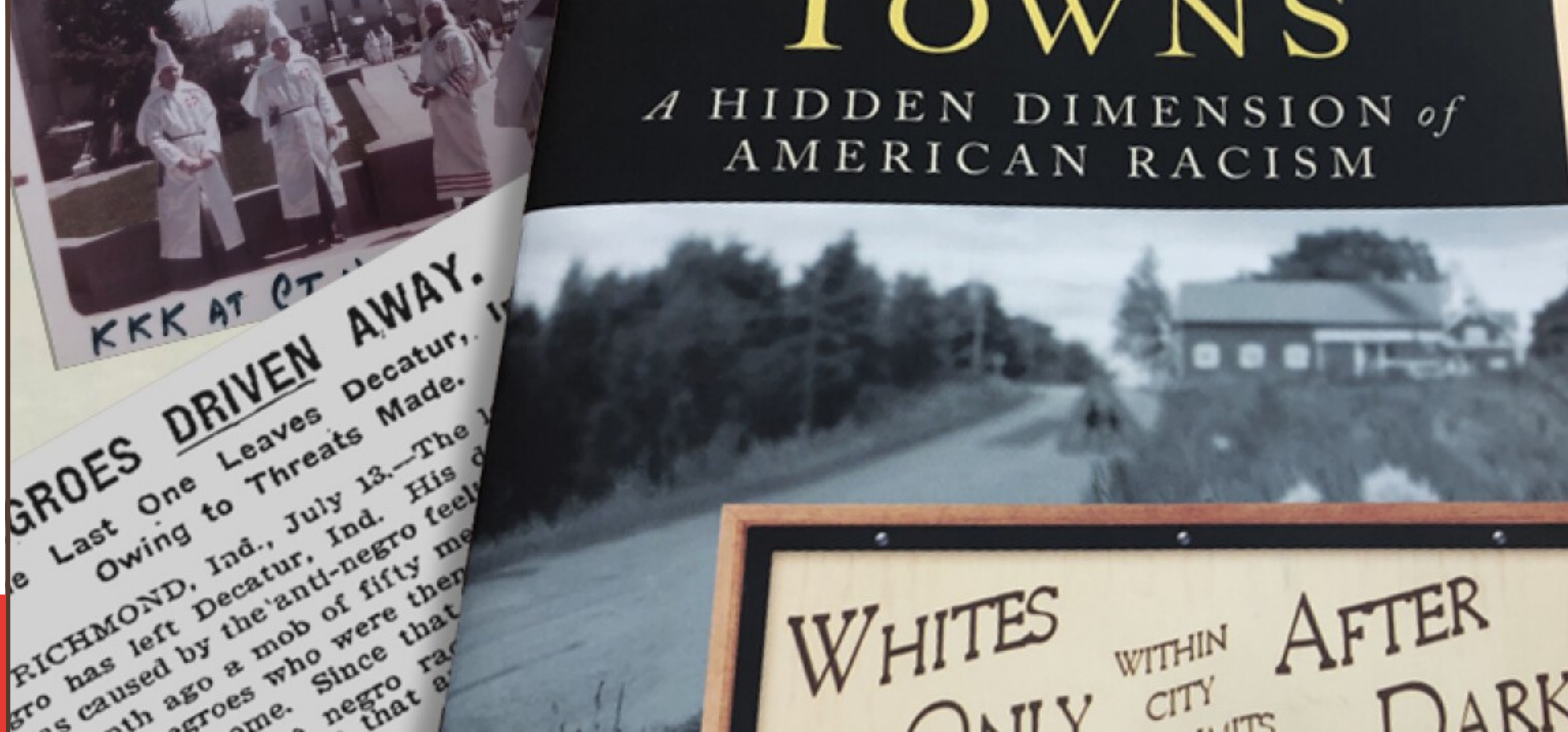
Higher arrest rates than urban core (148 arrests per 1,000 in rural areas versus 94 per 1,000 in urban areas).





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.[1]



What region has the HIGHEST CONCENTRATION of sundown towns?

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



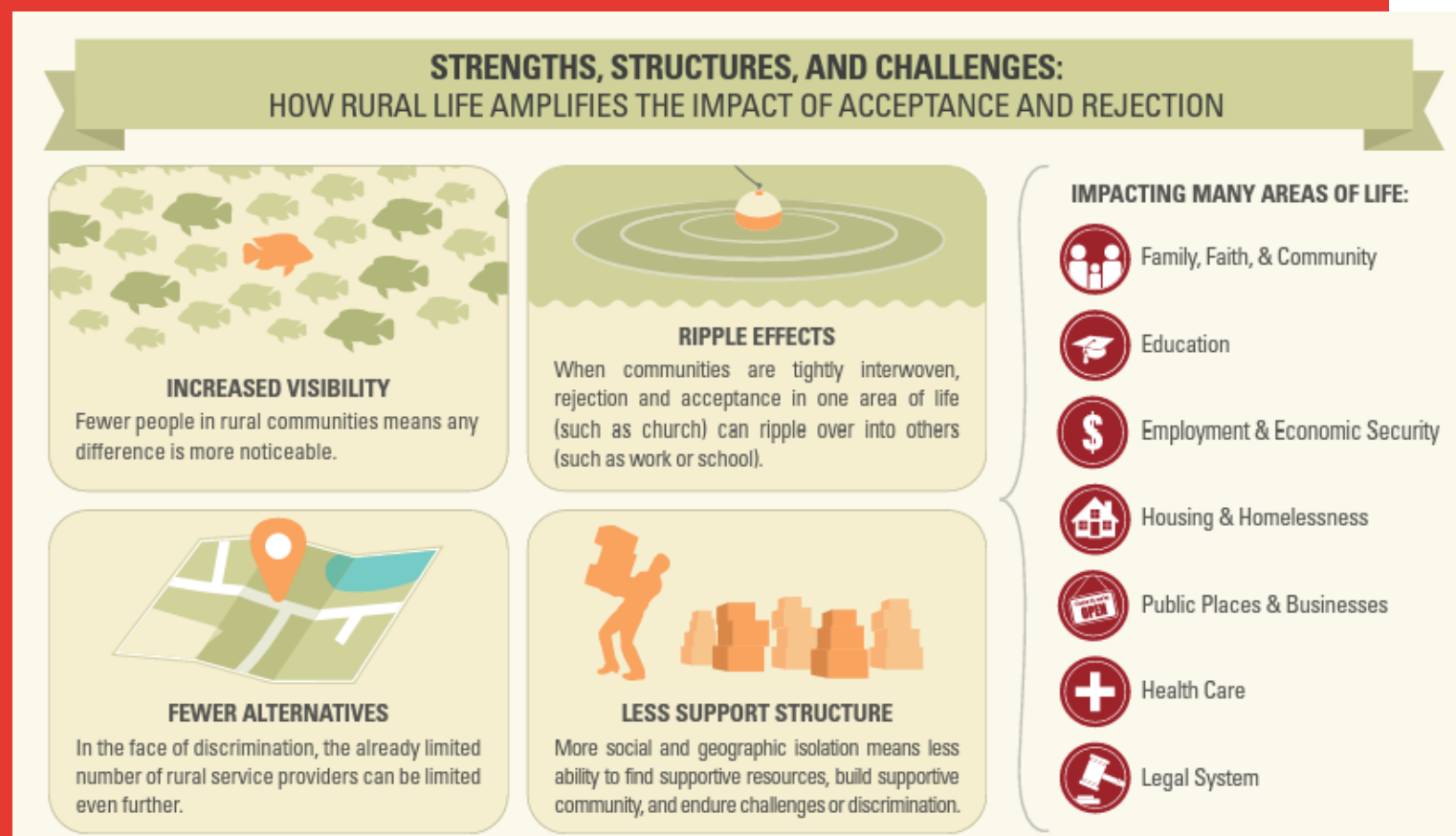
Poorer Healthcare

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



Violence

Higher rates of violence and hate crimes



Rural Diversity: Gender

Larger 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)

Isolation and Lack of Support

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

Poorer Healthcare

Lower life expectancy, higher infant and maternal mortality rates

Violence

Higher rates of domestic violence

Higher rates of child marriage

Rural Diversity: Gender



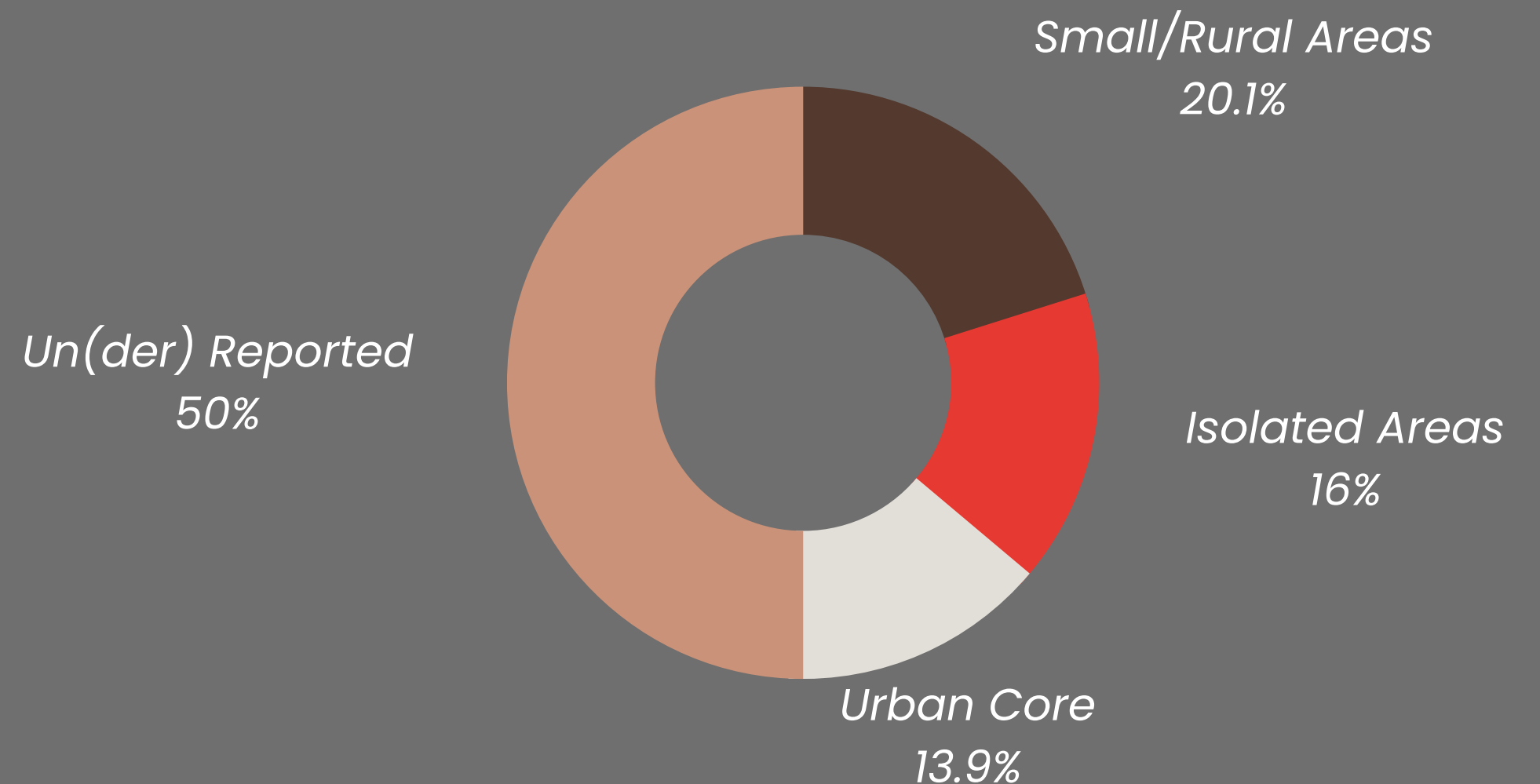
About 3 in 10 women in rural areas **report** Intimate Partner Violence

Women make up just over half of 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 resource was three times greater for rural women than for urban women
- Rural IPV programs served more counties and had fewer on-site shelter services.

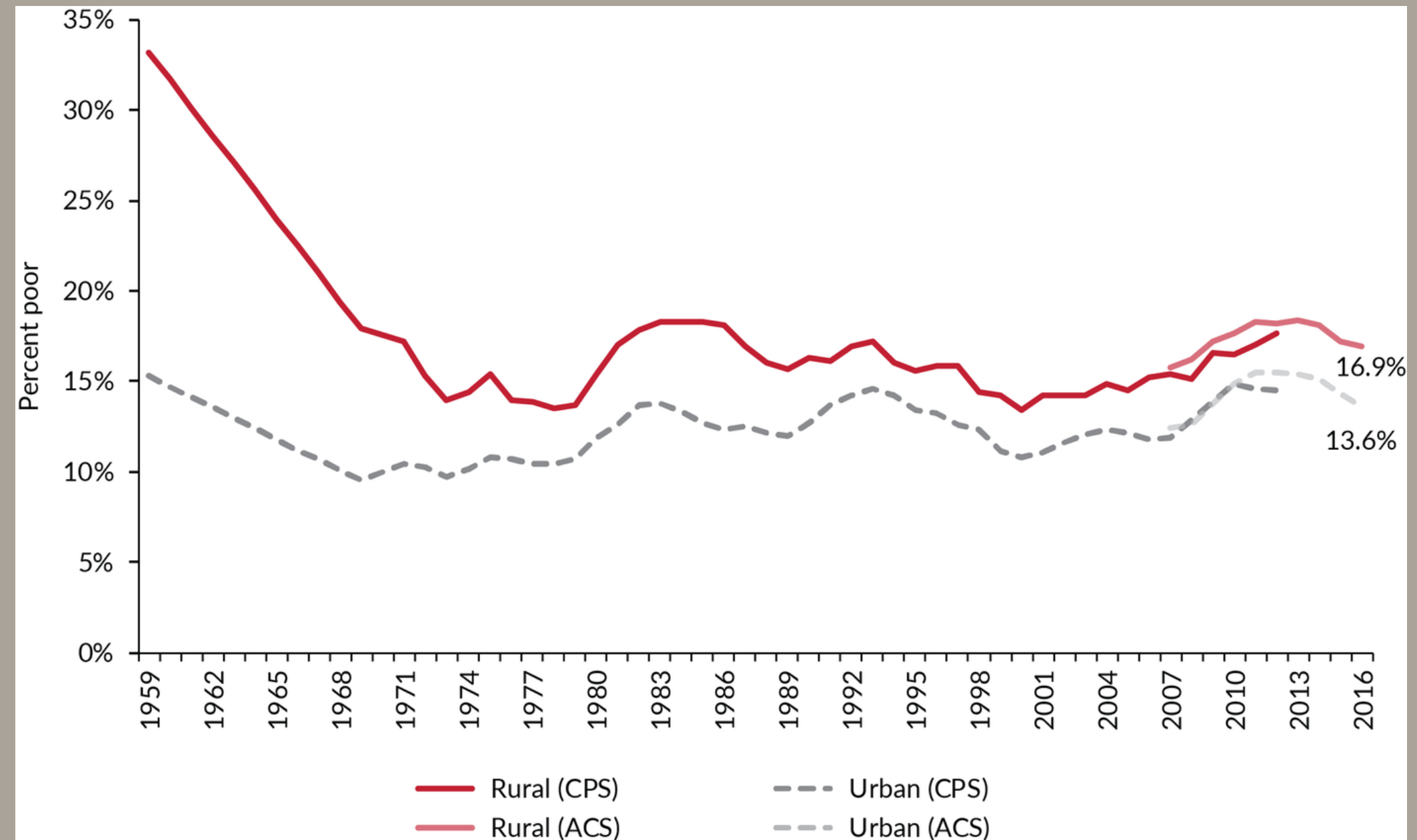
INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

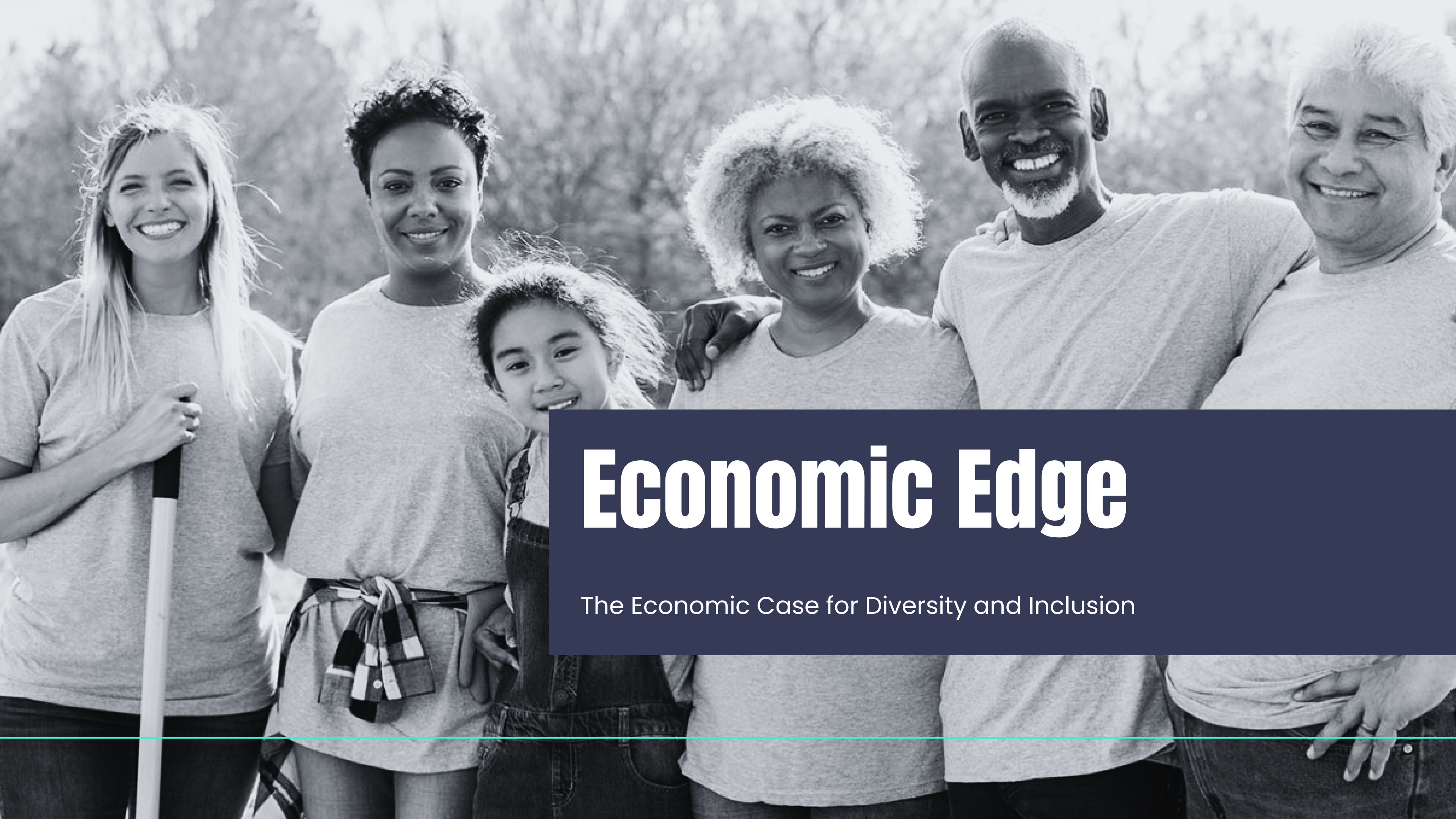


Rural Investment as an Equity Issue

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.





Economic Edge

The Economic Case for Diversity and Inclusion

Rural America's Legacy

People from various backgrounds have settled and resettled in rural Appalachia for various reasons, contributing to the region's evolving demographics.



JFK visiting rural Appalachia



Nearly 50% of Union Soldiers were farmers before enlisting



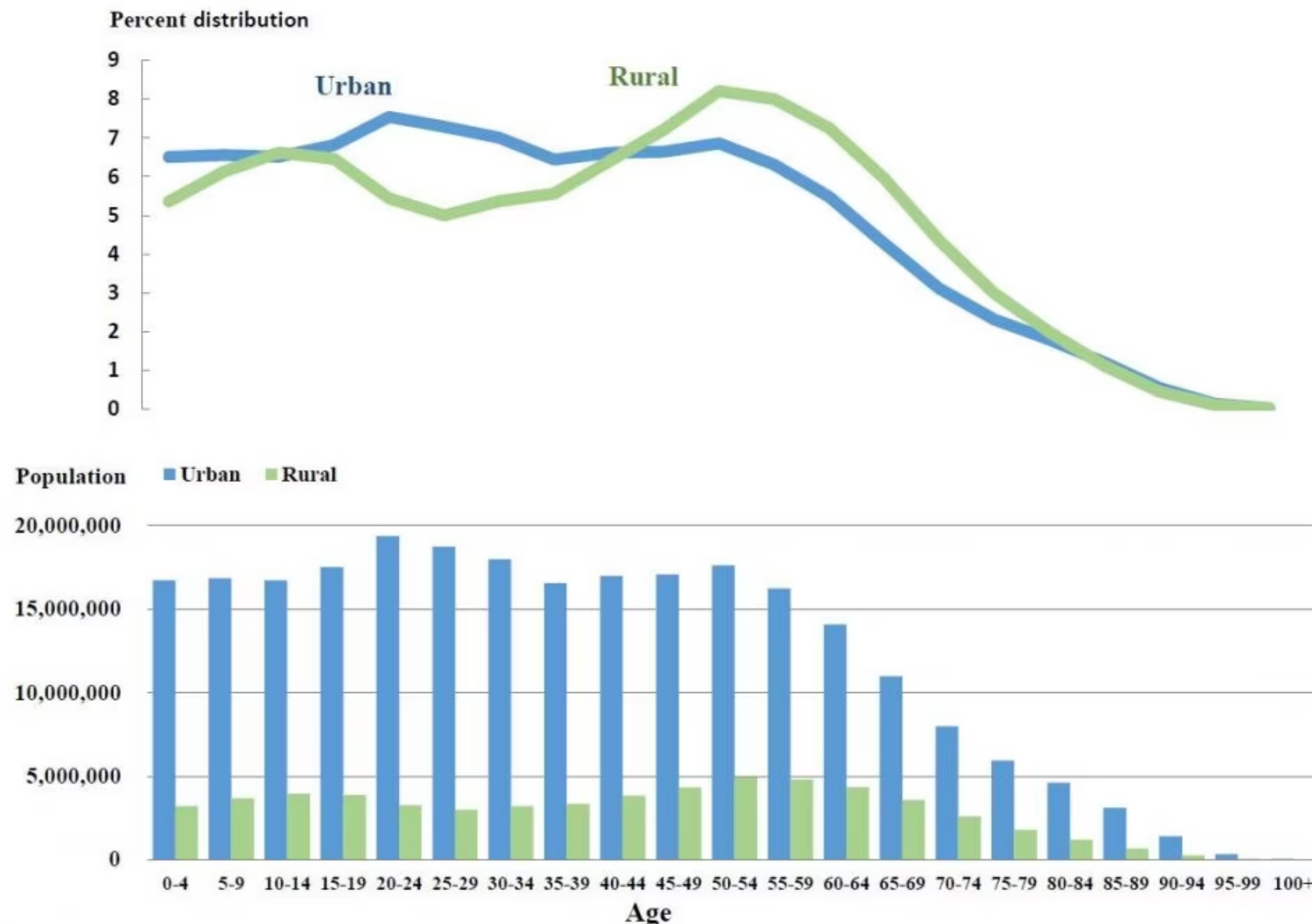
Miners before striking at Blair Mountain

Aging Patterns

Rural areas are becoming older overall, as younger people migrate to city centers.

This presents challenges in care, tax revenue, and governance.

Figure 1. Age Distribution of Urban and Rural Populations



For more information see <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>.

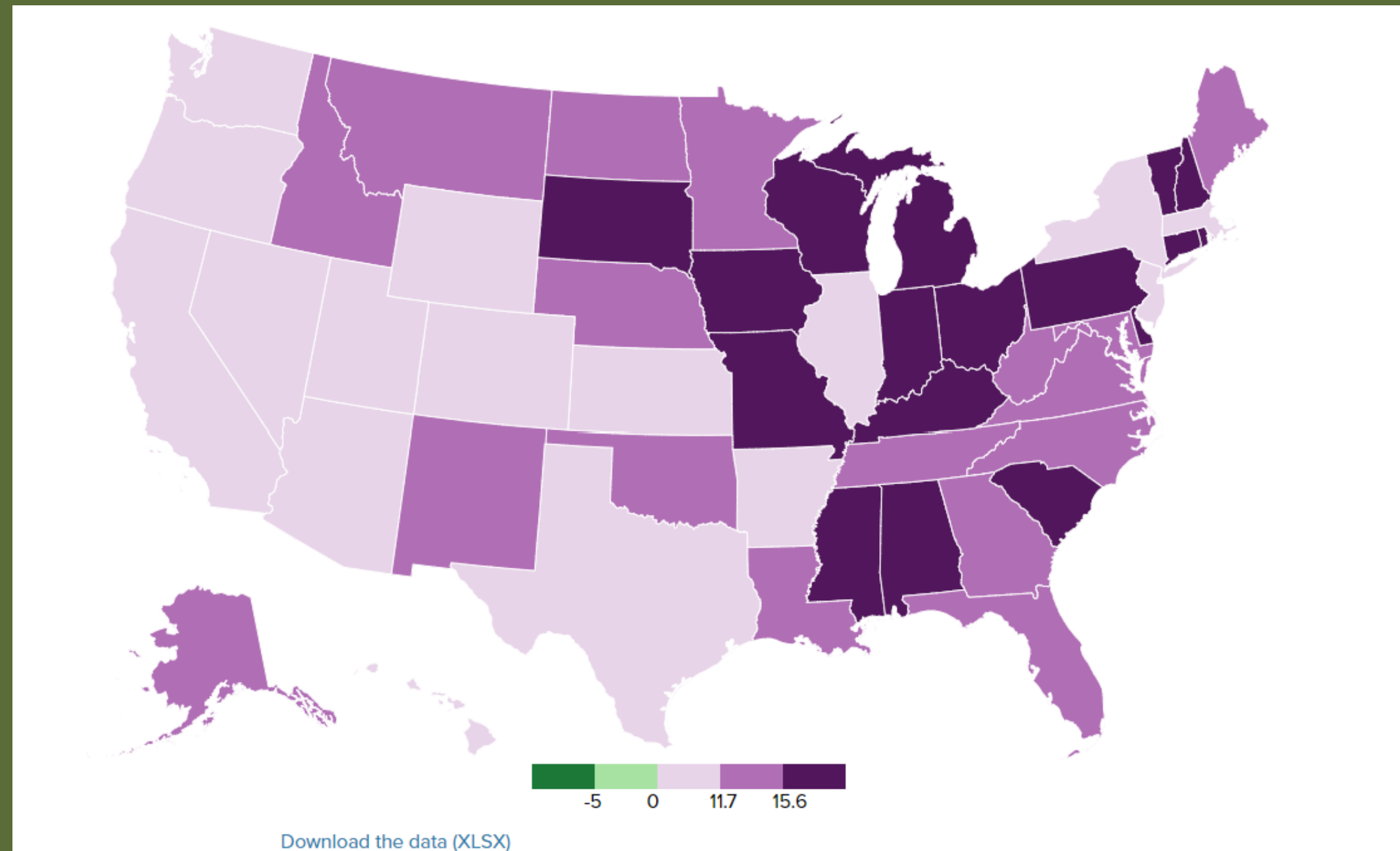
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

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

Brain Drain: Inclusion Lives On



Brain Drain has created increasingly insular rural communities as diverse people and people with diverse opinions leave to seek greater opportunity and inclusion.

There are still many folks living in rural and semi-rural areas who are highly committed to equitable living.



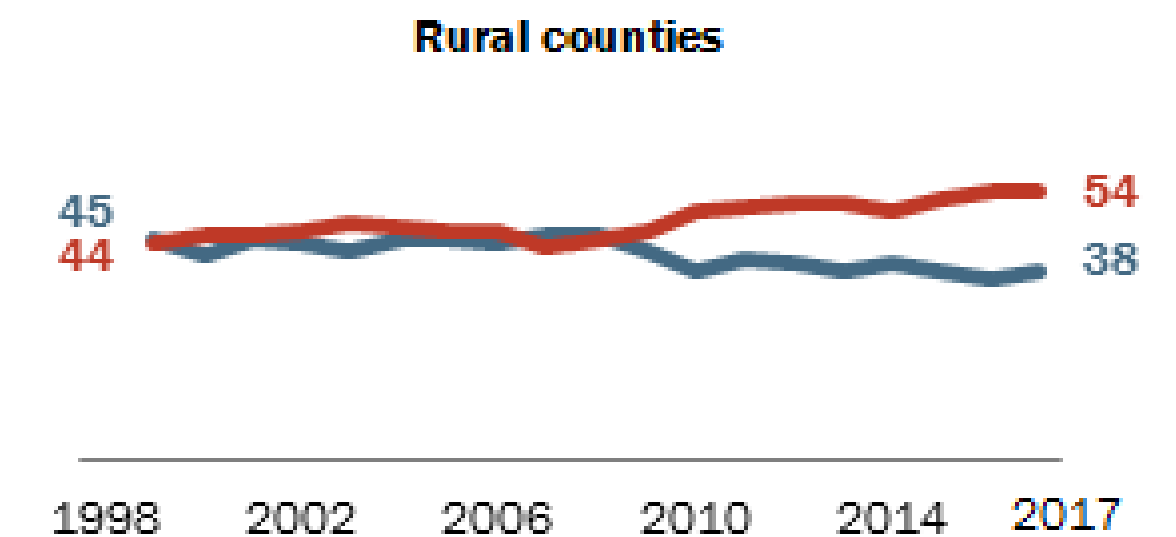
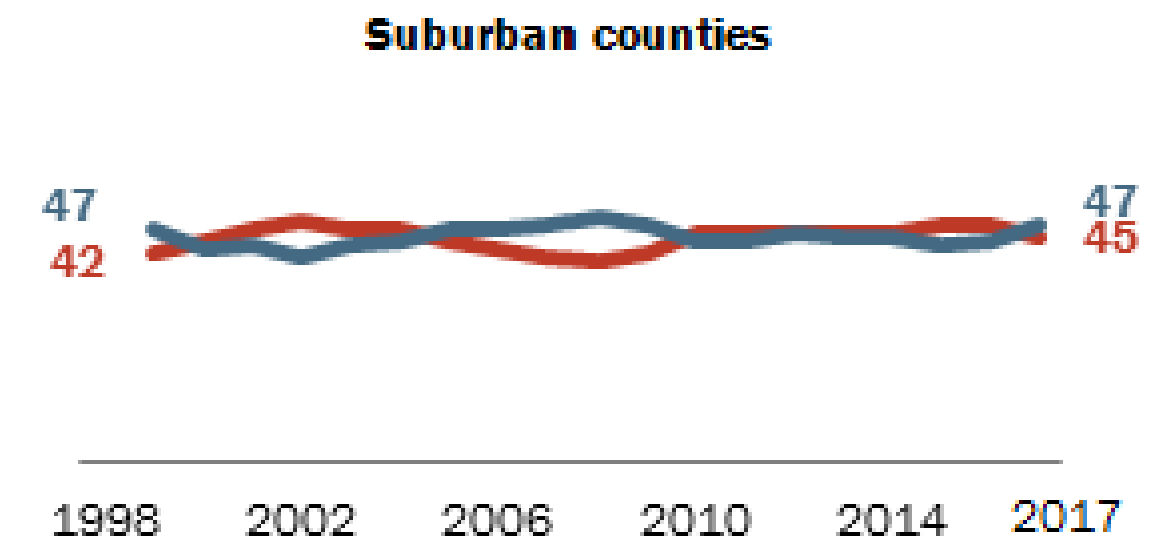
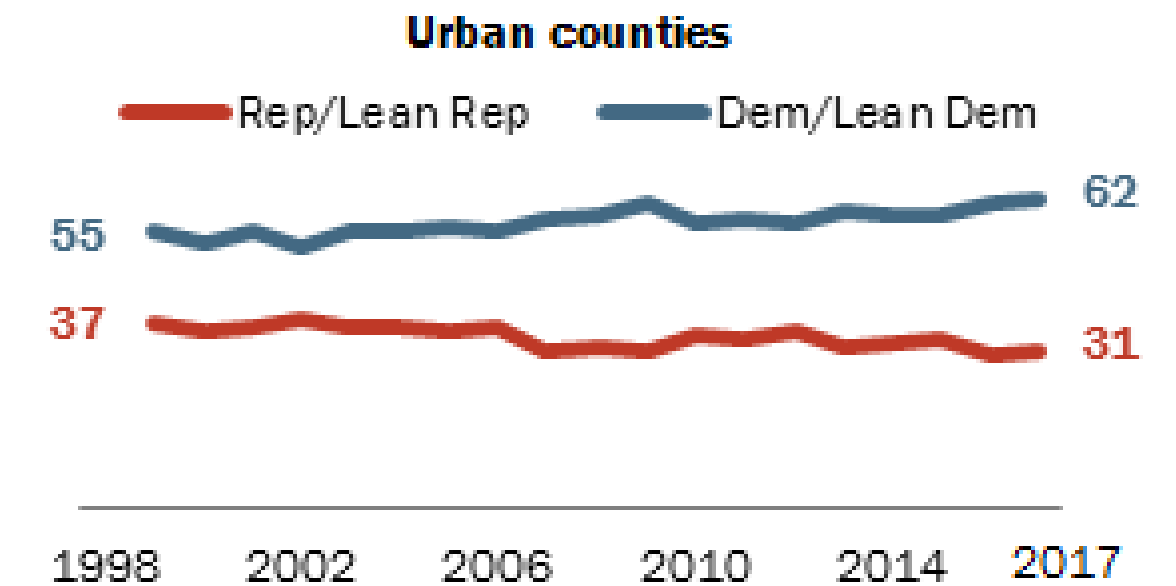
Rural Diversity of Opinion

Overall, 32% of voters in rural areas voted Democrat in the 2020 election

37% of voters in small metropolitan areas voted Democrat

In 2020, 50% of rural voters under 30 voted for Donald Trump, while 47% voted for Biden.

Voter turnout is lowest in rural counties. Indicating there may a group that feels unheard/unmotivated by existing political discourse



Inclusion Lives On



As younger people, diverse people, and people with diverse opinions have been pushed out, these remaining folks have become disenfranchised in their own communities.

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







Application

Designing bold solutions for inclusive communities

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		
<div><div></div><div>Monday - Saturday 7am - 9pm</div><div></div></div>		
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



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

Rural Solutions

Attract remote workers by ensuring they have necessary infrastructure

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.

This new funding option was created by the United States Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, which authorized \$600 million for an ambitious initiative to rebuild America's infrastructure. In FY 2019, Congress added \$500 million to the Program, and in FY 2020 and FY 2021, Congress appropriated an additional \$555 million and \$635 million, respectively. The ReConnect Program policies and procedures were codified in the April 2021 [ReConnect Regulation](#).

[See current programs](#)

What is e-Connectivity

	Increased Productivity	+
	Improved Operations	+
	Enhanced Healthcare Options	+
	Educational Opportunities	+
	Competitive Entrepreneurship	+

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.

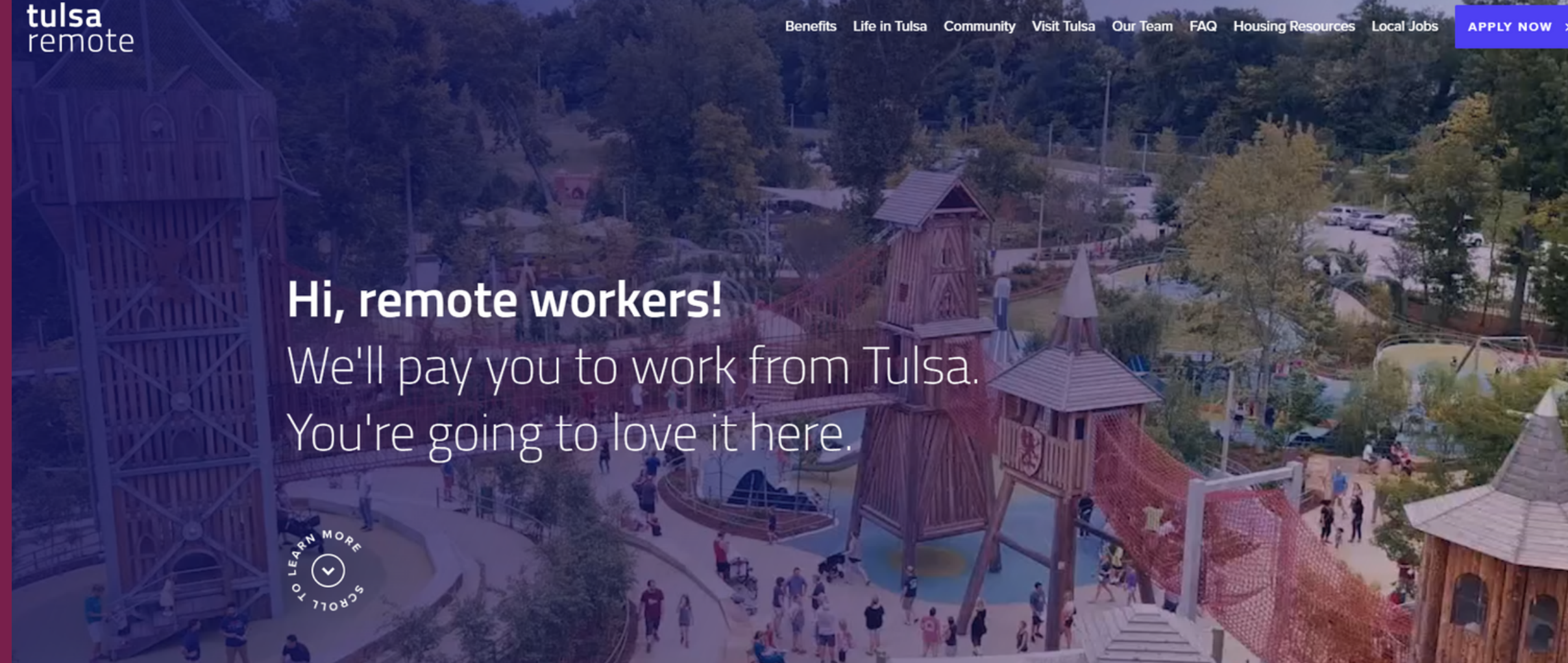
Increased resources for the program were paid for in part by funding from the [Children's Miracle Network](#). Meanwhile, the hospital has increased its number of delivering providers from four to seven, increased nurse training and expanded its prenatal curriculum. These and other efforts helped the 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.

Rise of Remote Work



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

Efforts and programs to center traditionally marginalized groups



NEWS

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



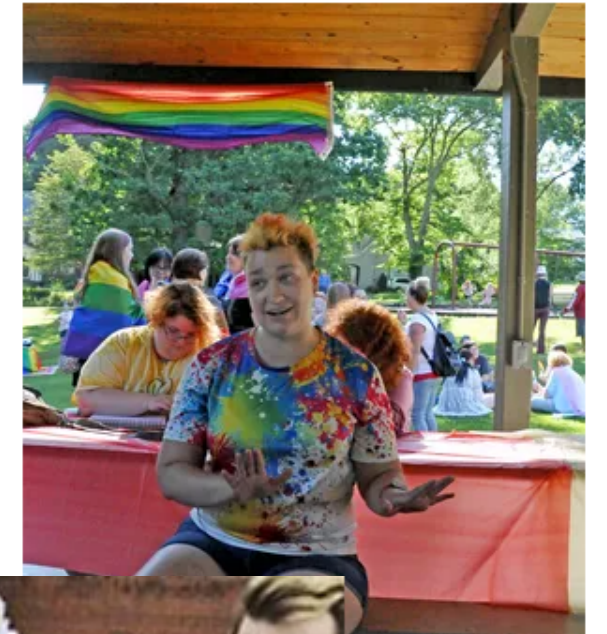
Bryce Buyakie
The Daily Record

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.



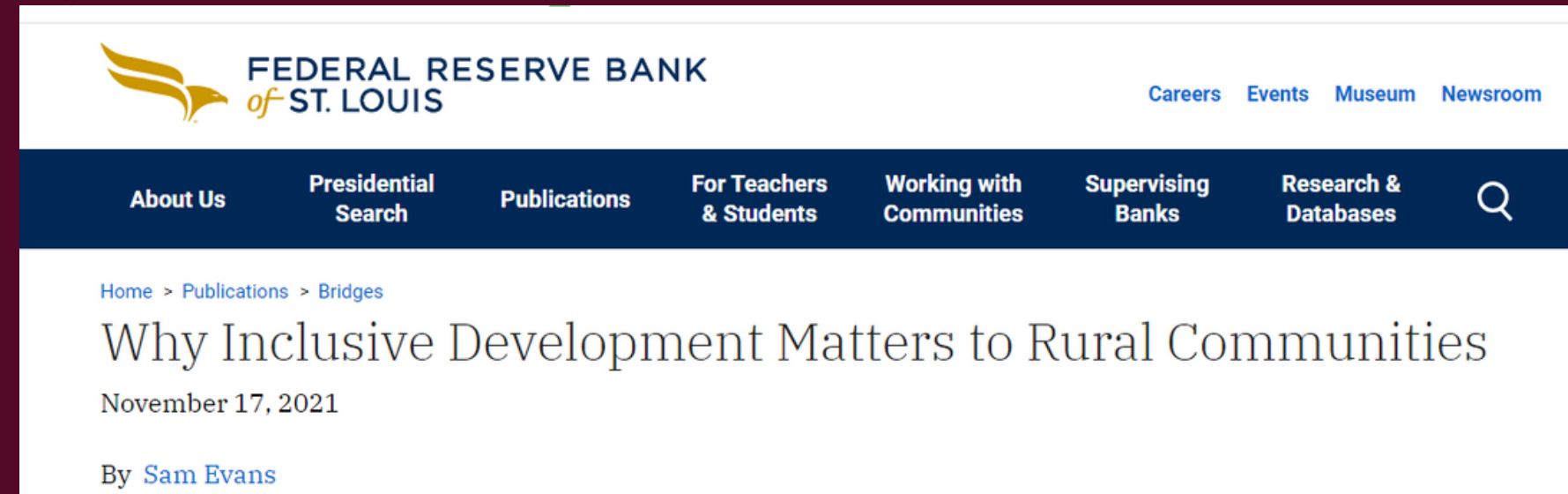
Pride Rally. She heard
s before it took place,
e what it was all about.

**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



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.



Comments & Questions





CONNECT WITH US



For inquiries or follow-ups

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