

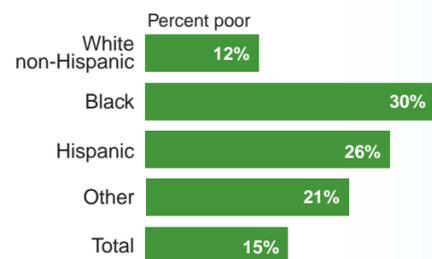
Racial and Ethnic Diversity is Increasing in Rural America

The face of rural and small-town America has slowly evolved as racial and ethnic diversity increases. Racial and ethnic minorities now make up 19% of non-metro residents and have become more geographically dispersed across the Nation.

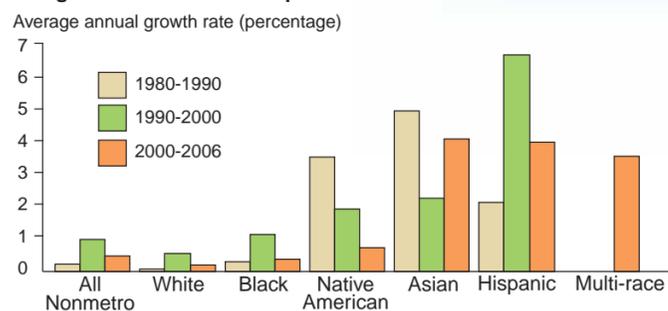
Hispanics and Asians are the fastest growing minority groups in the United States as a whole and in nonmetro areas. Higher growth rates partly result from a growing demand for low-skill labor and changes in 1960s era U.S. immigration laws that favored immigration from non-European countries.

Because immigrants tend to be young adults, they are more likely to form families and have children, cementing their presence in rural communities. On the other hand, minority populations tend to experience higher rates of poverty, potentially straining social service programs.

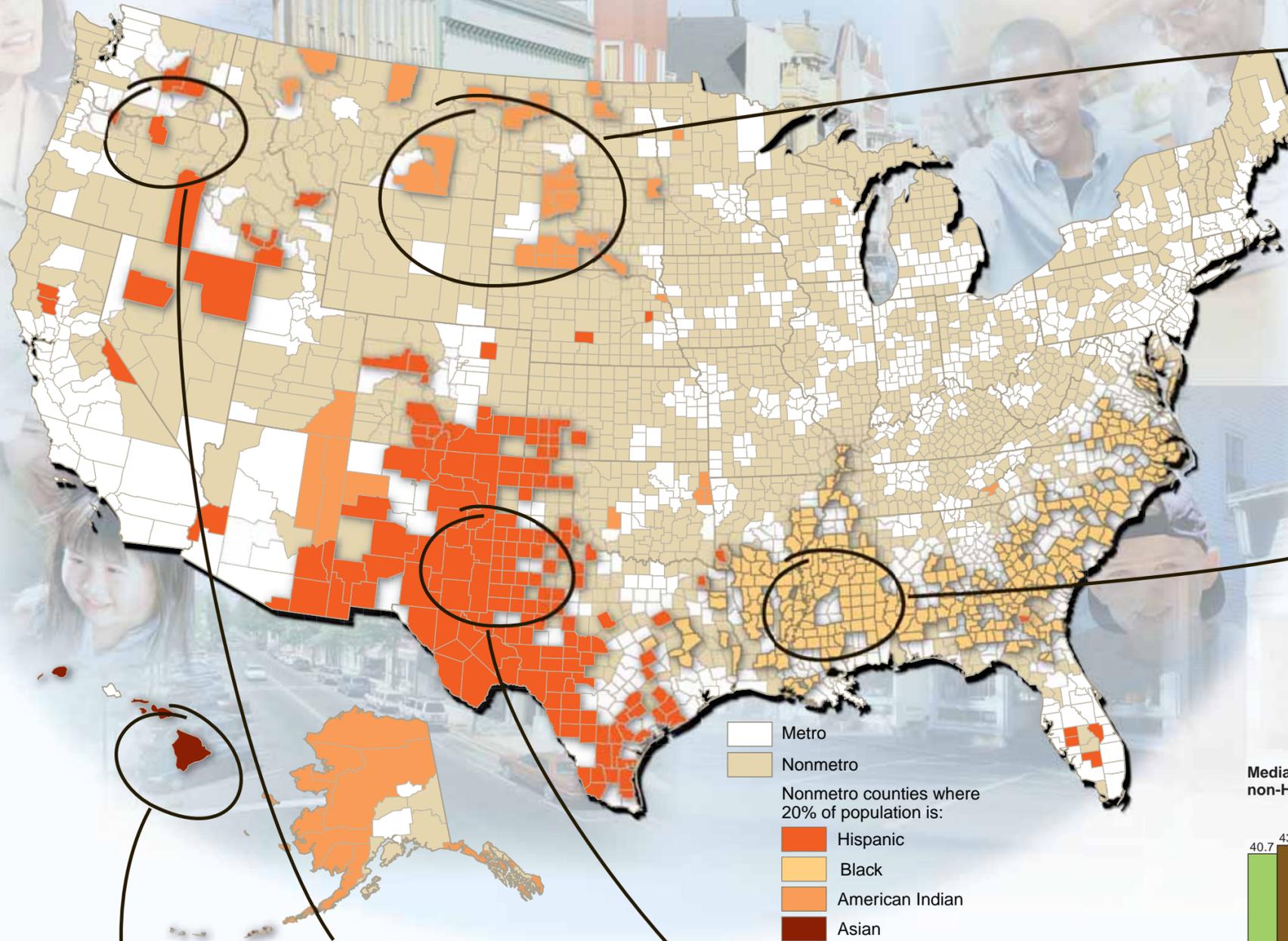
Blacks and Hispanics have the highest rates of nonmetro poverty



Nonmetro minority populations are increasing at higher rates than non-Hispanic Whites



Note: Multi-race data available since 2000 only.



Native American population growth from 1980 to 2000 resulted largely from more people reporting Native American heritage on their Census forms.

Since 2000, the minority population in 1,727 nonmetro counties (84% of the total) has increased and become a larger share of county population.

In roughly 150 nonmetro counties scattered across the country, the Hispanic population growth offset non-Hispanic population loss between 2000 and 2006.

Blacks, concentrated in the deep South, remain the largest minority group in nonmetro areas, making up 8.4% of all nonmetro residents in 2006. This figure has hardly changed since 1980. In contrast, the Hispanic proportion grew from 3.1% in 1980 to 6.4 percent by 2006.

In recent decades, Hispanics have moved to the Pacific Northwest, attracted by jobs in labor-intensive fruit, vegetable, and horticultural sectors.

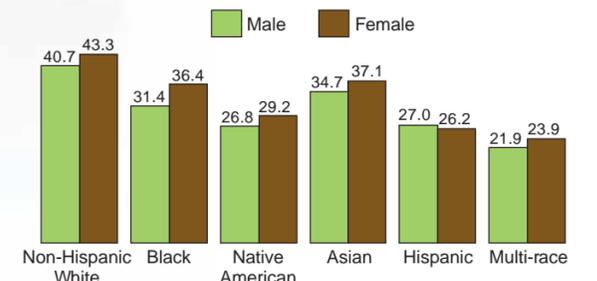
Asians, among the smaller minority populations, are concentrated in the state of Hawaii, mainland university towns, and refugee resettlement communities.

Metro
Nonmetro
Nonmetro counties where 20% of population is:
Hispanic
Black
American Indian
Asian

Nonmetro Hispanics have traditionally concentrated in the Southwest, but shifting employment opportunities have led to a wider geographic dispersion.

- Meat processing: the Hispanic percentage of the nonmetro workforce reached 36% in 2006.
- Crop agriculture: an estimated 75% of all hired farmworkers were Hispanic in 2006 and of these, an estimated 50% were undocumented.

Median age disparities between minorities and non-Hispanic Whites have policy implications



ERS is a leading source for demographic analysis of rural and small town America, focusing on population trends, racial and ethnic diversity, educational attainment, and income and poverty.

For more information, see the ERS Website:

Rural Population and Migration Briefing Room, www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/population/