

Key Facts in Rural Health

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Area Deprivation is Higher Among Rural Counties—but Not All Rural Counties are Deprived

The South Carolina Rural Health Research Center studied how counties across the U.S. fared on an index that brings together five measures of community resources: income, poverty, unemployment, high school graduation rate, and single parent homes.

The study found that rural counties are disproportionately represented among the most deprived—but not all rural counties are deprived.

Counties that experience multiple disadvantages, as measured by this index, are disproportionately concentrated in areas with high concentrations of racial/ethnic minority residents: the South, the Southwest, and areas with American Indian/Alaska Native presence. The map below illustrates rural and urban counties experiencing the highest levels of relative deprivation.

County-level deprivation was linked to higher rates of potentially preventable hospitalization among children, emphasizing the link between social determinants and health outcomes. Examining rurality alone may not reveal important predictors of health care use.

