

Why Rural Matters: The Need for Every State to Take Action on Rural Education

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Fully one quarter of America's school-age children attend public schools in rural areas or small towns. But if you listen to the education policy debate, chances are you will not hear much about them. In most of the 50 states, it is the education of urban children that gets nearly all of the attention. This report aims to adjust that picture by bringing rural schools and communities into focus. Rural kids, their schools, and their communities do matter. And in many states, action on behalf of rural schools needs to be an urgent priority.

This is the first in a series of reports on the context of rural education in the 50 states. We believe it is the first attempt to describe the importance of rural education in each of the 50 states, and to suggest the urgency with which policymakers should address the needs of rural schools and communities.

One fourth of U.S. schoolchildren go to schools in rural areas or small towns of less than 25,000 population. Fourteen percent go to school in even smaller places with fewer than 2,500 people. But these children, and the communities and schools they live and study in, are largely unnoticed in the national debate over the direction of American education. While policymakers, advisors, and scholars debate—and they should—the wisdom of alternative policies for urban schools, and for special education students or second language learners, or for poor and minority students, we rarely read serious analysis of the particular policy issues faced by students who live in rural places.

This void is not a matter of indifference as much as it is a matter of constituency. Rural people are so widely dispersed that they are politically invisible. They are a demographic and political majority in only five states (Maine, Mississippi, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia) and a handful of congressional districts. Even in states with a numerically large rural population, rural people are often a particularly small demographic minority. California has 2.2 million rural people—more than all but seven states—but they constitute less than 8% of California's population.

Rural people are scattered among many jurisdictions, with varying degrees of local control. They are citizens of remote places too numerous to count, each with distinguishing socioeconomic characteristics that make fact finding difficult and conclusions elusive.

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There is a further problem. We have generally defined economic progress as growth, and for most communities, the idea of "development" has specially meant eliminating what makes us rural. In this view, any special problems of rural places will go away with growth and development. And without growth and development, these rural places themselves will eventually go away. So there is a persistent attitude that if we close our eyes, sooner or later, one way or another, the "rural problem" will just go away. The solution for rural people trapped in these social problems has frequently been to move on (west), to move in (to the city), or to move up (to someplace prosperous).

Finally, there is the frustration over the lack of a precise demographic definition of "rural." This lament seems to be obligatory in every analysis of rural America. But it obscures a more fundamental cultural dilemma. We are an urban society now, one that is pretty sure we know what "urban" is, but not at all sure we know what "rural" is.

So talking and thinking seriously about rural education as a public policy issue is understandably a problem for our society, and, for the most part, we do not do it.

But despite this reluctance to discuss rural education, realities persist that make it necessary. Among those realities:

- People persistently choose to live in rural areas if they can make a living there. Each generation sees a "renaissance" of interest in rural communities and a spurt of growth in certain chosen places. We are deep into such a renaissance now.
- Rural America is as diverse as urban America, especially among the young. Minorities constituted 17% of all rural residents in 1997. Well over one third of the rural population of each of the four minority groups was under

age 18 in 1997, compared with only one fourth of the rural white population.

- Rural America is far poorer than metropolitan areas as a whole, and nearly as poor as central cities. Of the 250 poorest counties in America, 244 are rural. Poverty is especially prevalent among rural minorities. In fact, if you are African-American, your chances of living in poverty are greater if you live in rural America than if you live in the inner city. And this rural poverty is not all in Appalachia and the deep South. The Great Plains, the Southwest, the northern reaches of New England and the Great Lakes states, as well as other regions, are matted with persistently poor rural places.
- Some of our most urban states are also our most rural states. Only one in ten New Jerseyites lives in a rural place, but that's more rural people than there are in Maine, where more than half the population lives in such small places. A higher percentage of Pennsylvanians live in rural places than Kansans. And more rural Americans live in New York State than in Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming *combined*. In fact, the West is our most urban region, demographically speaking. Twice as many people live in places under 2,500 east of the Mississippi than west of it. Nevada rivals Rhode Island as our most demographically urban state.

Schools throughout rural America tend to be numerous and small, both by necessity and by community preference. They tend to be close to the communities they serve. They are places where students, teachers, parents and administrators know each other. They are different from many schools in larger places.

While they have many of the same needs as other schools, they also face some problems that are different, creating challenges for policymakers. Among these special problems:

- recruitment and retention of rural teachers, principals, and administrators is strained by professional isolation and chronically lower salaries than larger schools in larger places;
- long bus rides eat away at children's time for study, play, and family, while high transportation costs whittle away at funds for instruction;

- teachers are expected to teach both in and out of the field in which they are certified;
- high per-pupil costs contrast low levels of discretionary spending; and
- distance and sparsity make these schools last to be connected to the digital world that might help solve the curricular problems associated with distance and sparsity.

Gauging Rural Education in 50 the States

Education policy is largely the province of state government, so our analysis of rural education considers each state individually and in relation to the other states. Using standard data sources, sometimes requiring special data runs we requested, we analyze and compare the states on two measures, or gauges, of concern for their rural schools and communities. In all cases, we use the most conservative definition of "rural" that we can—the Census definition of places with 2,500 or fewer people.

1. *Rural Importance Gauge*: How important is it to the overall educational performance of each state to explicitly address the particular needs of schools serving its rural communities? Eight indicators of the scale, proportion, and challenge of rural education in the state are considered.

- The percentage of the state's population living in rural places with 2,500 or fewer people (1990 Census of Population and Housing). States that score high on this indicator tend to be very rural, and to have relatively small populations—they look and feel very rural. The higher the percentage, the more important "rural" is to the state.
- The number of people living in rural places with 2,500 or fewer people (1990 Census of Population and Housing). Many states score high on this indicator that score low on the previous one. These are states in which a large rural population is a small demographic minority. The higher the number of rural people, the more important "rural" is to the state.
- Percentage of public schools in rural areas, (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). This indicator includes schools offering any grade level, and excludes schools that are not oper-

- ating. This indicator scores high for states that have not pursued school closing strategies and often have many small schools. The higher the percentage of schools in rural areas, the more important “rural” is to the state.
- Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). This indicator scores high in states that have kept rural schools open, but also in states that have built larger schools in rural areas. The higher the percentage, the more important “rural” is to the state.
 - Percentage of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). This indicates rural schools with a substantial at-risk student population. The higher the percentage of minority students in rural schools, the more important “rural” is to the state.
 - Ratio of average number of rural students to average number of grades in rural schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). Because schools have various grade configurations, average daily enrollment is not a good indicator of school size. This ratio is a better indicator of the average size of rural schools. The lower the ratio, the smaller schools are, and the more important “rural” is to the state’s policy considerations.
 - Percentage of all students who attend small rural schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). This is the number of students who live in rural areas and attend schools with enrollments below the state median, divided by the number of students in all public schools in the state – a measure of how prevalent the small and rural school experience is in the state. The higher the percentage of students attending small rural schools, the more important “rural” is to the state.
 - Percentage of rural children in poverty (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Agency Universe and special census tabulation, 1990). This is another indicator of rural schools with a substantial at-risk student population. The higher the state’s percentage of rural children in poverty, the more important “rural” is to the state.
2. *Rural Urgency Gauge:* Given conditions in the state’s rural schools and communities, how urgent is it in each state that policymakers develop explicit rural education policies? Eleven indicators are used to quantify the need for concern, including some that compare the conditions in the state’s rural schools with those of its nonrural schools.
- Average rural teaching salary (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey Public School Teacher Questionnaire, 1993-94). Indicates how the rural parts of the state compete with other rural areas in other states for teacher pay. The lower the average rural teaching salary, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.
 - Difference between average rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, Public School Teacher Questionnaire, 1993-94). Indicates how rural areas of the state compete with nonrural areas of the state for teacher pay. The higher the disparity, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.
 - Percentage of students who are free lunch eligible, 1997-98 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). This is the best measure of the level of poverty and near poverty in schools, and is an indicator of how much economic stress rural schools cope with. The higher the percentage of students eligible for free lunch, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.

- Percentage of rural communities scoring below national average on Education Climate Index (Cross tabulation of public schools by state: ECI and metro status. Prepared by Quality Education Data, Denver, CO, 1997-98). The Education Climate Index measures socioeconomic status by zip code, using income, educational attainment, and occupation. The higher the percentage of rural communities in a state that score below the national average on the ECI, the more urgent it is that state policymakers give attention to rural education.
- Average rural student-to-teacher ratio (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). This is a proxy for class size. The higher the average ratio, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.
- Percentage of rural householders with less than 12 years of school and no diploma (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Agency Universe, 1997-98). These are rural people 15 years of age and older who have not completed high school. The higher the percentage, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.
- Percentage of rural schools with Internet access, 1997-98 (Cross tabulation of public schools by state: Internet access and metro status. Prepared by Quality Education Data, Denver, CO, February, 2000). The lower the percentage, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.
- Percentage of out-of-field teachers who are in rural schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, Public School Teacher Questionnaire, 1993-94). The higher the rural percentage of out-of-field teachers, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.
- Average percentage of rural school expenditures spent on instruction (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Agency Universe, 1995-96). The lower the average percentage spent on instruction, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.
- Percentage of rural schools with declining enrollment of ten percent or more between 1993 and 1997 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98). This indicates schools operating in a stressful economy and usually coping with reduced revenue. The higher the percentage of rural schools with declining enrollment, the more urgent it is that state policymakers give attention to rural education.
- The percentage of the state's population living in rural places with 2,500 or fewer people (1990 Census of Population and Housing). States that score high on this indicator tend to be very rural, and to have relatively small populations—they look and feel very rural. The higher the percentage of people living in rural places, the more urgent it is that policymakers give attention to rural education.

The indicators included in these gauges were selected on the basis of how well they contributed to the general gauge questions and data availability. Many potential indicators were omitted, either because rural data cannot be broken out from state level data (e.g., SAT scores, transportation revenues, access to higher education, adult literacy) or because data are not reliably collected in all states (e.g., dropout rates and National Assessment of Educational Progress test scores, because many heavily rural states do not participate in NAEP).

Sometimes, the best indicators available for every state and by rural locale have been included here despite the fact that the data is relatively old. Data on teacher salaries is from 1993, for example. We know that some states have made explicit efforts to increase salaries, often as part of new state accountability systems. But for the sake of consistency, we have included only those data sources that comprehensively cover all (or very nearly all) 50 states. Every effort was made to collect the most recent data available. We know that future iterations of this report, which we hope to publish every 2 years, will have much more current data.

Results

The results of this analysis are summarized below. The detailed data and scores are presented in the summaries that follow for each of the 50 states and for the 18 indicators.

To “gauge” the importance of rural education and the urgency of need for policy action in each state, we ranked states using the following procedure:

- Data were collected for each indicator by state and locale. Each indicator carries the same weight. There are seven unique indicators in the Importance Gauge and ten unique indicators in the Urgency Gauge. The percentage of population living in rural areas was an indicator common to both gauges.
- Each state was placed in rank order on each indicator for each gauge, with a score of 1 being the most important or urgent.
- All of the state rankings were added and then divided by the number of indicators to give a cumulative ranking for each state (see below).
- States were ordered by their average ranking and then divided into quartiles that place the states in relative position along a spectrum describing how important rural education is to the state’s educational system relative to other states (ranging from “Useful” to “Important” to Very Important” to “Crucial”) and how urgent it is that policymakers address rural education (ranging from “Fair” to “Serious” to “Critical” to “Urgent”).

Discussion

The categories merely describe a state’s relative position along a continuum. When evaluating the urgency of policy attention to rural matters, there is no bright line distinguishing New Mexico as “urgent” from Montana as merely “critical.” Likewise, the difference in importance between Vermont as “crucial” and Alaska as merely “very important” are negligible. However, these categories do allow us to group states into certain clusters in order to discuss patterns in the findings.

There is a cluster of seven states where rural education is simply crucial to the state’s educational performance and where the need for attention is urgent. These states are located in the western Black Belt and Mississippi Delta (Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi—note that Louisiana barely misses the urgent ranking), in the heart of Appalachia (Kentucky and West Virginia), and in the core of the Northern Plains (North Dakota and South Dakota—note that Montana barely misses Urgent ranking). These regions are chronically depressed, suffer large areas of out-migration, and are deeply distressed by changes in the global economy. Six of these seven states rank in the top ten in rural student poverty and all rank in the top one third in at least six of the urgency indicators. Declining enrollment in schools is widespread in these states, teacher pay is rather consistently low, rural adults have low levels of educational attainment, and communities rank low in the Educational Climate Index (all seven states are in the top one third among states in urgency on this indicator). If the states are ranked on the basis of the combined raw scores on both gauges, these seven states are joined by their near neighbors Louisiana, Montana, and Oklahoma as the top ten states where rural education is important and needs are urgent.

At the other end of the spectrum are eight states that rank low on both gauges – seven states on the East Coast from Maryland northward (Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island), plus Hawaii. Although these are among our most urban states, there are over 6.6 million rural people in them. However, rural poverty and minority rates are relatively low, and communities are much more likely to be stressed by growth and sprawl than to be distressed by population declines and shrinking enrollments. Rural schools in these states are larger than in most other states, a product of consolidation and urbanization.

Another group of five states, all in the Southeast (Tennessee, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia) and the Southwest (New Mexico), score “urgent” on the Urgency Gauge but less than “crucial” on the Importance Gauge. Consolidation and the removal of schools from rural areas have simply removed much of rural education from rural communities in these states. They rank relatively high in the number of rural people and in the percentage of population living in rural areas, but much lower in the average size of rural schools, the percentage of public school students enrolled in rural schools, and the percentage of students attending small rural schools. If these states reconsidered their school size policy, and located smaller rural schools closer to rural communities, they would score very high on the importance gauge. It is a weakness in the scoring system that they do not score higher than they do on the Importance Gauge. There is no mistake that the need for rural policy is urgent. They score in the top third in urgency indicators more than four times as often as they score in the bottom third. All score in the top ten on one or more urgency indicators.

Importance Gauge Cumulative Rankings*

How important is it to the overall educational performance of each state to explicitly address the particular needs of schools serving its rural communities?

Crucial		Very Important		Important		Useful	
SD	12.5	AK	18.5	TX	25.0	AZ	31.6
AR	13.3	IA	19.0	VA	25.0	CA	32.4
ND	13.8	LA	19.5	MN	25.1	FL	32.8
MS	14.0	NE	20.0	GA	26.4	DE	33.9
WV	14.6	KS	20.1	OR	27.1	NY	34.8
OK	15.1	SC	20.1	MI	27.4	UT	34.9
MT	15.3	MO	20.5	IN	28.5	HI	36.3
NC	16.8	NM	21.0	CO	29.0	MD	36.6
KY	17.3	WY	21.3	WA	29.5	NV	36.8
AL	17.4	WI	22.6	OH	30.5	CT	38.4
ME	17.8	NH	23.3	PA	31.0	MA	40.1
ID	18.1	TN	23.5	IL	31.4	NJ	43.4
VT	18.3					RI	46.0

*Numbers are rounded

Urgency Gauge Cumulative Rankings

Given conditions in the state's rural schools and communities, how urgent is it in each state that policymakers develop explicit rural education policies?

Urgent		Critical		Serious		Fair	
MS	13.0	MT	20.3	IN	25.1	TX	28.5
KY	14.8	IL	20.3	KS	25.3	WA	28.5
AR	15.0	OK	21.1	OR	25.5	CO	28.5
SD	15.8	MO	21.3	CA	25.8	NH	28.6
ND	16.4	ID	22.5	FL	26.1	NE	29.2
TN	18.3	WI	22.5	PA	26.1	DE	30.3
LA	18.6	AZ	23.3	ME	26.3	MD	30.3
SC	18.9	VT	23.6	OH	26.5	HI	32.7
AL	19.1	IA	23.7	AK	26.6	NY	35.2
WV	19.2	VA	24.2	NC	27.0	MA	35.3
GA	19.5	MN	24.4	UT	27.9	CT	35.8
NM	20.1	WY	24.7	NV	28.0	RI	40.1
		MI	24.8			NJ	40.5

Seven states score “critical” on the Importance Gauge but less than “urgent” on the Urgency Gauge. There is little geographic pattern to this group—Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Vermont. Sparsity of settlement and rugged terrain are common features in many of these states and, except for North Carolina, these are states with small schools. Their average rank is 10th on the percentage of schools in rural areas, the percentage of

students enrolled in rural schools, and (if you exclude North Carolina) small average rural school size. Their average rank is 13th on the percentage of students attending small rural schools. North Carolina is an odd fit here. Its strength on the Importance Gauge is due to its large number and percentage of rural population, and to its large rural minority population. Although none of these states rank “urgent” on the Urgency Gauge, four of the seven rank “critical”

(Idaho, Montana, Oklahoma, and Vermont). There is no pattern, however, to their scoring on any indicators, with the possible exception that all seven of these states rank either in the top ten (Montana, Oklahoma, and Alaska) or the bottom ten (Idaho, Vermont, Maine, and North Carolina) for urgency in the rate of rural school Internet access.

Of the remaining states, only four score above average on both gauges: Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. These are states with a high percentage of students in rural schools and in small schools, a relatively high percentage of out-of-field teachers serving rural schools, below-average rural teacher pay (except Wisconsin), and a sharp disparity between their rural and nonrural teachers (except Wyoming).

The rest of the states score moderately on both gauges. But we want to emphasize that no matter where a state scores on these gauges, every child, including every rural child is important. And every state can improve the policy climate within which its rural schools operate. Nebraska may relish its “fair” urgency rating, but cannot be sanguine about its capacity to recruit and retain good rural teachers while ranking fourth lowest in rural teacher salaries. Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota may rank relatively low on the importance gauge because they are predominately large, urban states, but they are home to almost 5.8 million rural people, and their rank of 1, 3 and 4, respectively, on rural teacher pay disparity is a disservice to rural children.

And that brings us to a final point. Note that the Importance Gauge is a measure of the importance *to that particular state* that it explicitly address rural education. That’s because this report is directed to the attention of state education leaders and policymakers, and of the rural people they serve. Some very large states, with very large rural populations, may score relatively lower than other states with smaller rural populations, simply because the first state has very large urban populations and second state is far more rural overall. Thus, it may be more important for Vermont’s educational performance that its policymakers consider the rural dimensions of its educational system than it is for California’s policymakers to do so. But from a national perspective, it is at least as important for California to consider the educational needs of its 2.2 million people

living in rural places as it is for Vermont to consider the educational needs of the 381,000 Vermonters who live in rural places. And from the perspective of rural Californians, it is certainly every bit as important that California have a rural education policy as it is to Vermonters that Vermont does. Thus while the rankings in this report are useful in identifying states where rural education is paramount to good schooling in the state, it is also useful in identifying states where rural communities’ educational needs may be unjustly lost in the political shuffle of state politics. No child deserves to be lost in the shuffle.

Conclusion

As far as we know, this is the first time data of this kind has been assembled to describe the relative importance of rural education in each of the 50 states and to suggest the relative urgency with which policymakers should address the needs of rural schools and communities. We hope to update this analysis every other year. We know that more recent data will soon be available from several sources. We know that some important data on student achievement may soon be available from the states themselves. We hope to be able to add new indicators about school facilities, school finance, and other important topics. It is important to note that many indicators we would like to have included in this analysis could not be included because rural data cannot be isolated from statewide data.

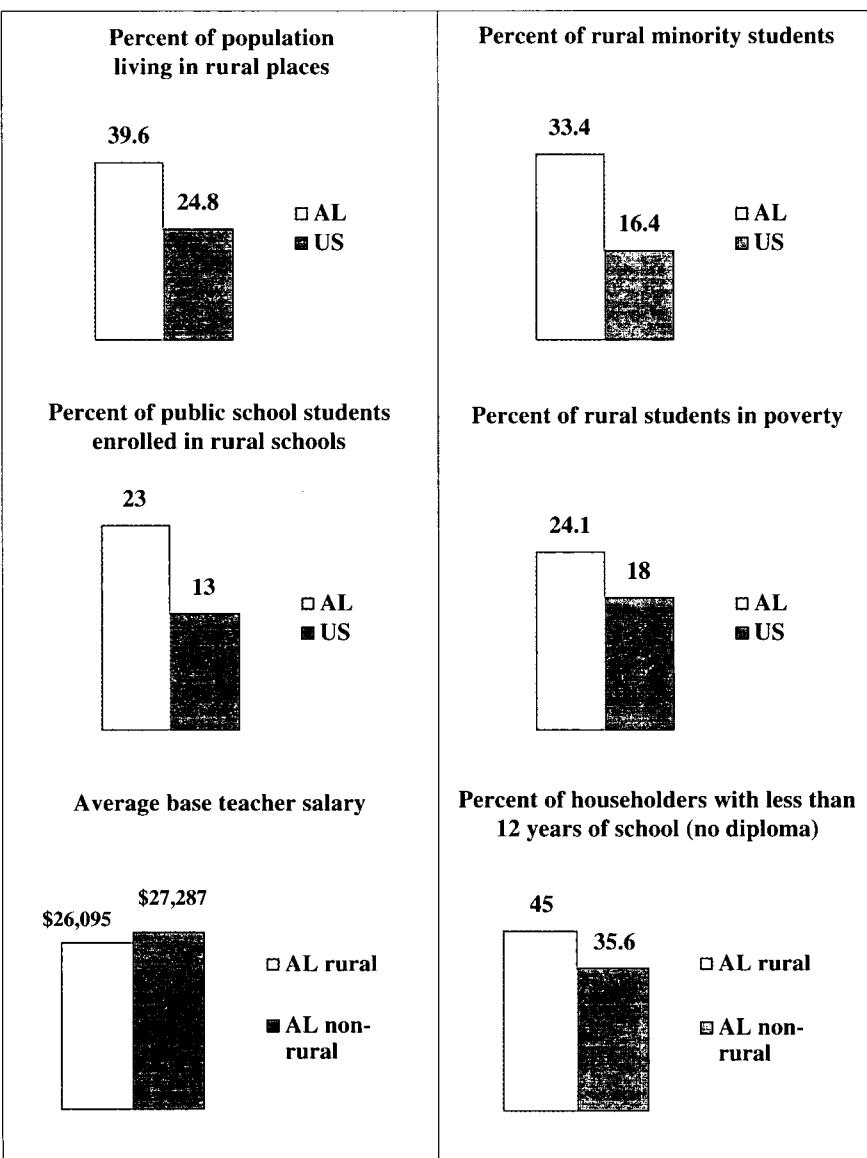
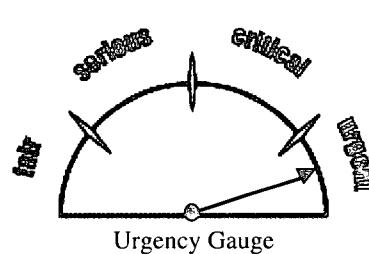
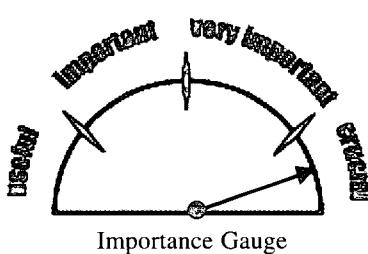
In each interim year, beginning next year, we intend to prepare a more detailed analysis of the policies with which selected states approach (or do not approach) the problems of their rural schools and communities. Unlike the Importance and Urgency Gauges presented here, which measure the relative position of each state among the 50, the Policy Context Gauge will assess individual policies on the basis of specific criteria, and score the states based on absolute policy performance. These analyses will be intensive, based on raw data from state sources, and we will select states based on criteria that in large part reflect the results of the analysis of importance and urgency presented here.

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(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY STATE)

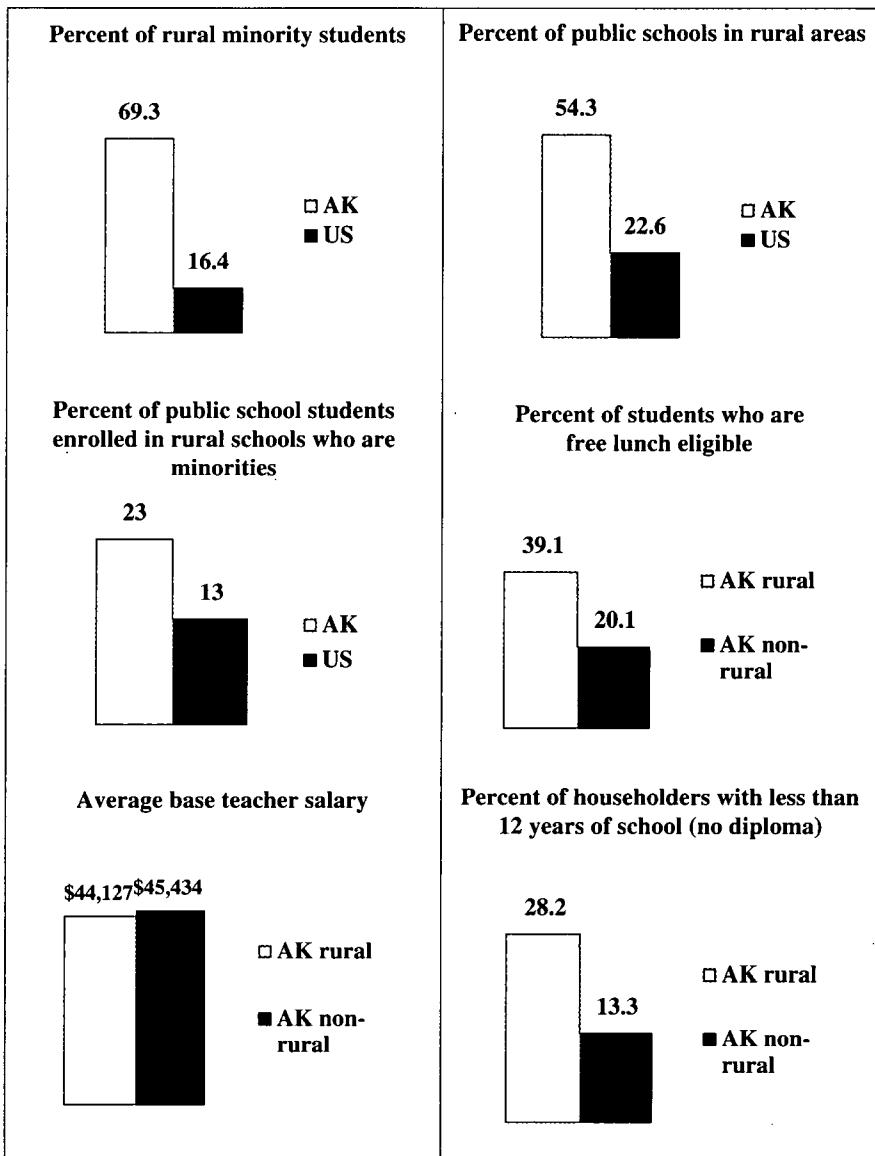
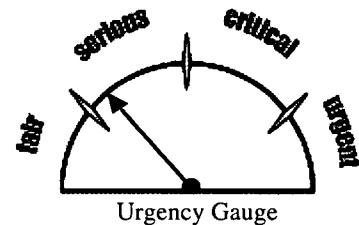
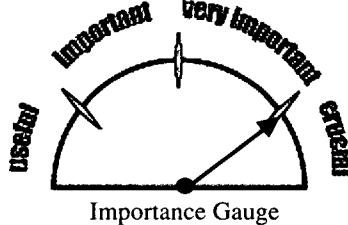
Importance Gauge	AL	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	39.6%	14
Number of rural people	1,601,038	17
Percent of public schools in rural areas	27.3%	23
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	23%	17
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	33.4%	8
Average number of students to average number of grades	67.4	29
Percent of rural students attending small schools	9.2%	22
Percent of rural students in poverty	24.1%	9
Urgency Gauge	AL	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$26,095	17
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,192	41
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	40.7%	11
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	55.7%	5
Average rural student to teacher ratio	16.7	16
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	45%	5
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	48.7%	3
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	20.6%	25
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	55.2%	37
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	17%	36

ALABAMA ranks very high in the percentage of rural students who live in poverty and in the percentage who are minorities. Nearly half of rural adults in the state have less than a 12th grade education, and less than half of rural schools have Internet access, both among the worst rates in the nation. Rural education is crucial in Alabama, and conditions make it urgent that policymakers give it their attention.



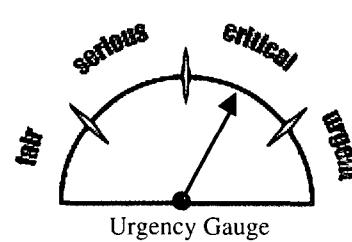
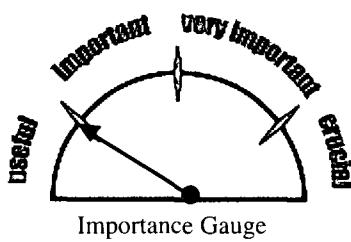
Importance Gauge	AK	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	32.5%	22
Number of rural people	178,808	46
Percent of public schools in rural areas	54.3%	7
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	23%	17
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	69.3%	2
Average number of students to average number of grades	13.5	1
Percent of rural students attending small schools	8.6%	26
Percent of rural students in poverty	15.7%	27
Urgency Gauge	AK	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$44,127	50
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,307	40
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	39.1%	13
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	19.8%	19
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.5	31
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	28.2%	26
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	47%	2
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	28%	18
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	52.6%	27
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	12%	45

Over half of ALASKA'S public schools are in rural areas. Its rural schools are the smallest on average in the nation, and are among the most heavily attended by minorities (Alaska Natives). It has the highest average rural teacher salary, and has the second lowest rate of rural schools with Internet access. Rural education is very important in Alaska and in serious need of policy attention.

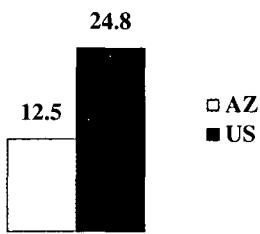


Importance Gauge	AZ	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	12.5%	46
Number of rural people	458,255	37
Percent of public schools in rural areas	11.1%	46
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	5%	47
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	41.1%	6
Average number of students to average number of grades	56.8	24
Percent of rural students attending small schools	3.6%	45
Percent of rural students in poverty	35.7%	2
Urgency Gauge	AZ	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$28,693	30
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,717	26
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	15.2%	20
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.4	9
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	34.3%	16
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	77.3%	26
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	7%	45
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	44.5%	2
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	24%	13

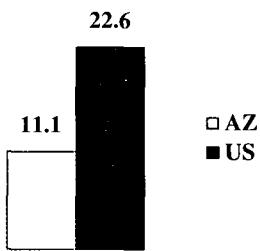
ARIZONA is one of the least rural states, but its rural children are among the most likely to be minorities and to live in poverty. Its rural schools spend a relatively low percentage of their budgets on instruction. The state's need to address rural education policy is critical.



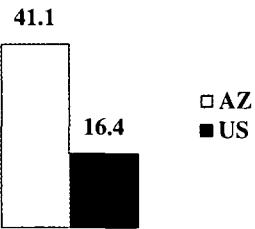
Percent of population living in rural places



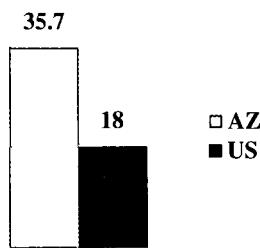
Percent of public schools in rural areas



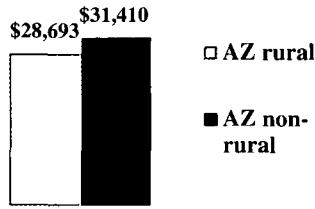
Percent of rural students who are minorities



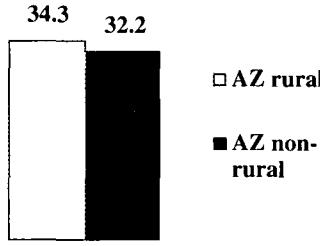
Percent of rural students in poverty



Average base teacher salary

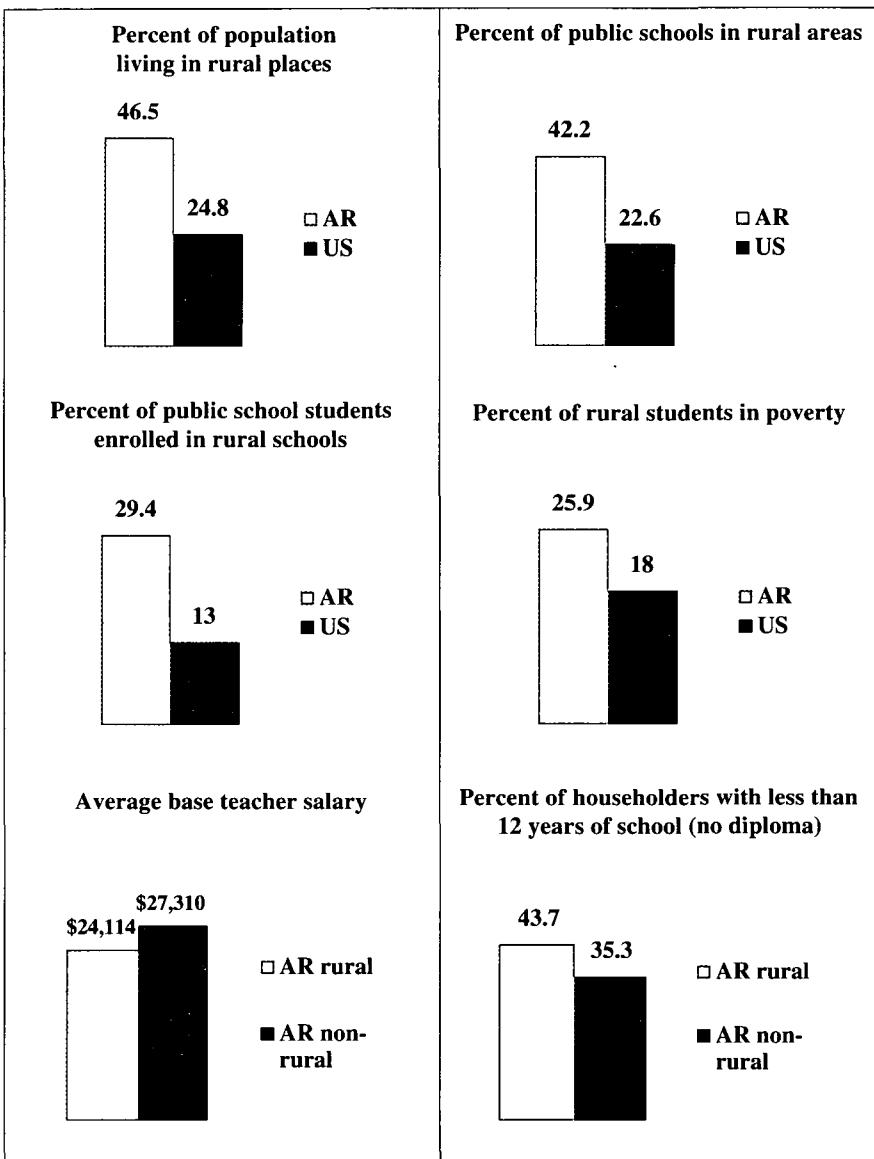
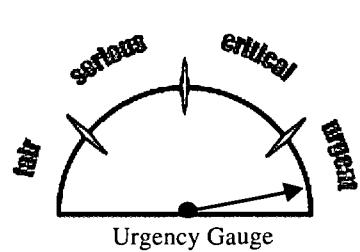
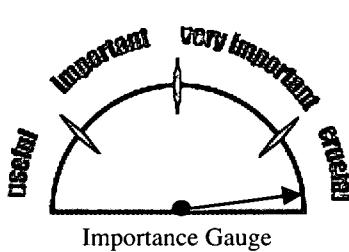


Percent of householders with less than 12 years of school (no diploma)



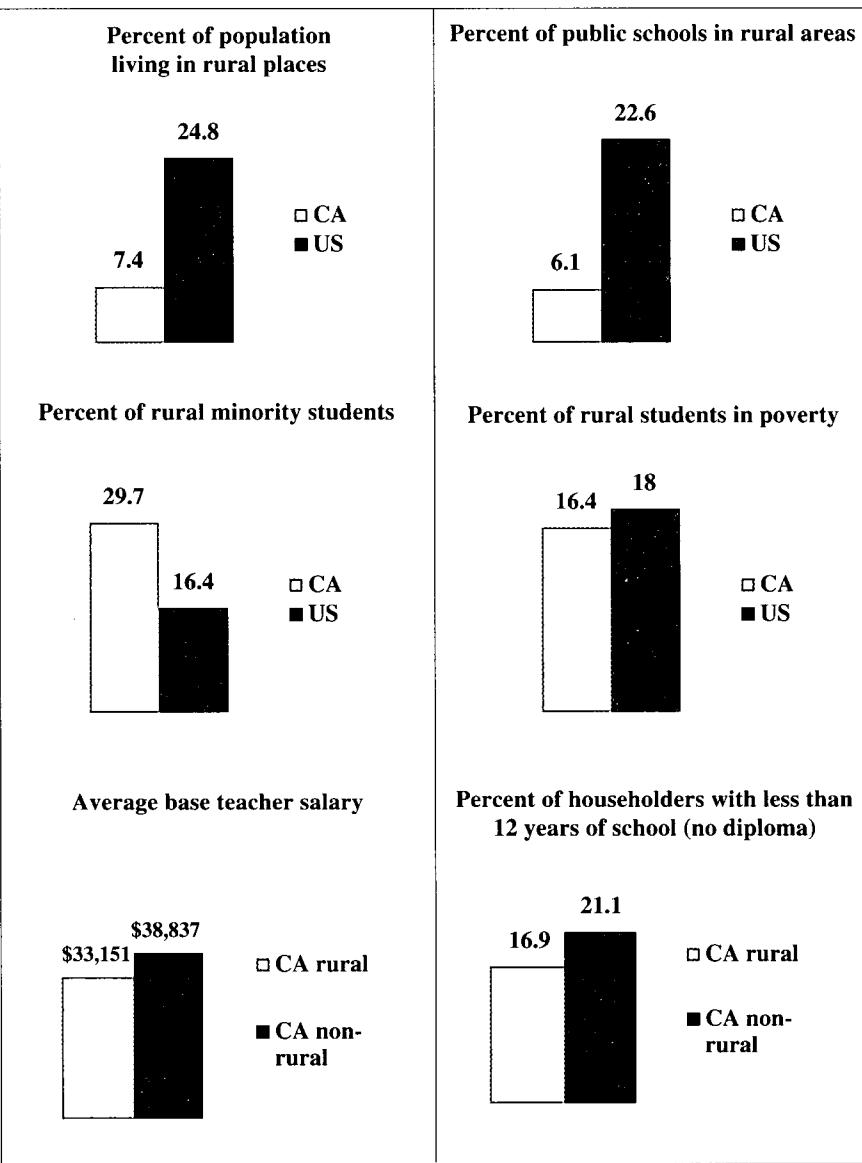
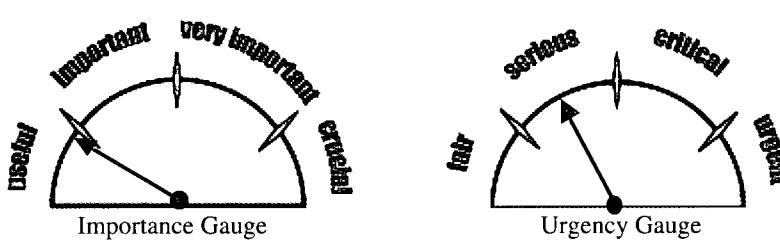
Importance Gauge	AR	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	46.5%	11
Number of rural people	1,092,704	25
Percent of public schools in rural areas	42.2%	14
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	29.4%	10
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	16.5%	20
Average number of students to average number of grades	50.1	18
Percent of rural students attending small schools	17.9%	1
Percent of rural students in poverty	25.9%	7
Urgency Gauge	AR	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$24,114	9
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$3,196	22
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	42.4%	9
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	67.2%	2
Average rural student to teacher ratio	16.4	18
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	43.7%	7
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	58%	5
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	32.4%	11
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	56.2%	40
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	17%	31

ARKANSAS leads the nation in the percentage of its students who attend small, rural schools, and is among the leaders in the percentage of rural children in poverty. Rural teacher salaries are among the lowest in the nation, as is the rate of rural school Internet access. Rural education is crucial to Arkansas' children, and policymakers urgently need to give it their attention.



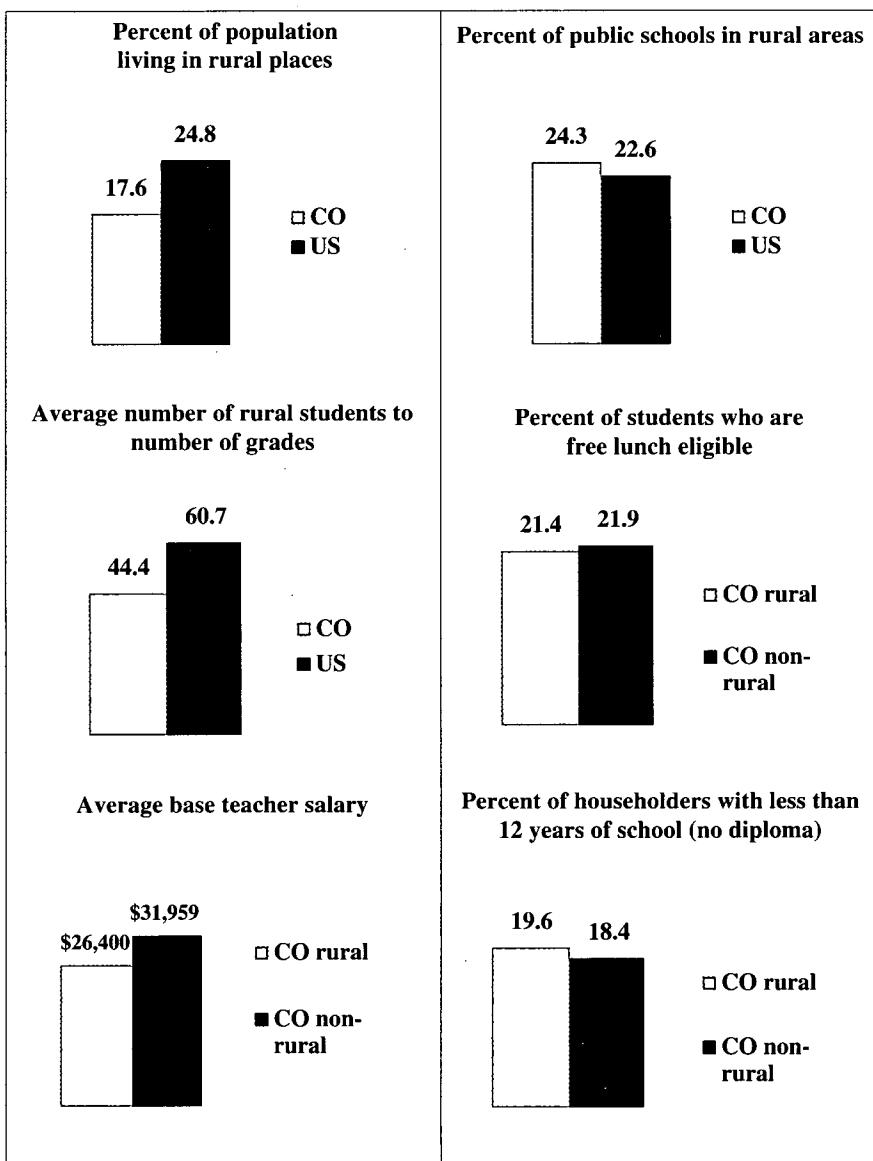
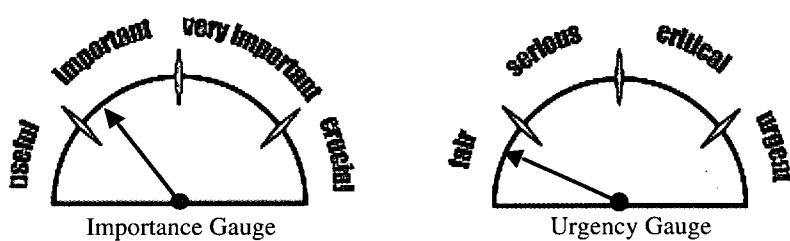
Importance Gauge	CA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	7.4%	50
Number of rural people	2,188,700	8
Percent of public schools in rural areas	6.1%	49
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	2.1%	50
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	29.7%	12
Average number of students to average number of grades	49.7	17
Percent of rural students attending small schools	1.4%	48
Percent of rural students in poverty	16.4%	25
Urgency Gauge	CA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$33,151	40
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$5,686	9
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	43.5%	7
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	8.9%	25
Average rural student to teacher ratio	19.4	1
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	16.9%	46
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	61.3%	7
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	5.8%	48
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	57.6%	44
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	30%	7

Among all states, **CALIFORNIA** has the smallest percentage of its population living in rural areas, but the eighth largest rural population nonetheless. It has the highest rural student-to-teacher ratio in the nation and the seventh highest percentage of rural schools experiencing declining enrollment. The size of the rural population alone makes rural education worthy of attention and conditions in rural schools make the need for policy action serious.



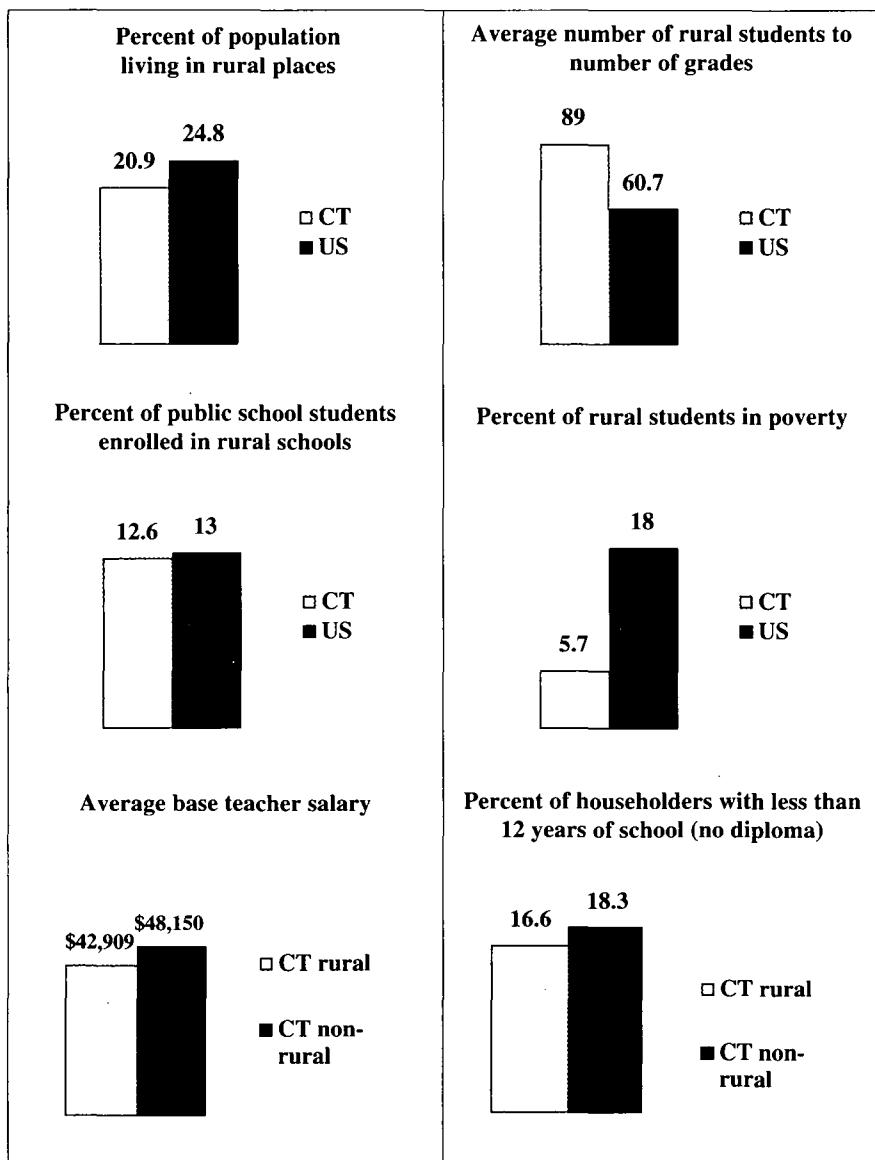
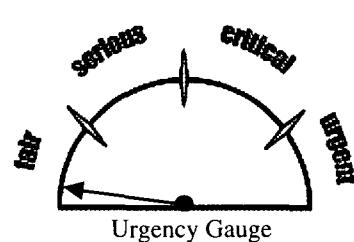
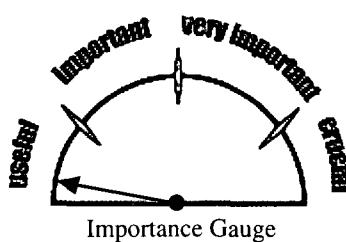
Importance Gauge	CO	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	17.6%	39
Number of rural people	578,877	34
Percent of public schools in rural areas	24.3%	25
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	11.7%	38
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	16.8%	19
Average number of students to average number of grades	44.4	13
Percent of rural students attending small schools	7.7%	31
Percent of rural students in poverty	14.1%	33
Urgency Gauge	CO	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$26,400	19
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$5,559	11
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	21.4%	30
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	7.2%	31
Average rural student to teacher ratio	15.1	25
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	19.6%	43
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	78.5%	29
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	12.8%	36
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	51.2%	17
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	17%	34

While a relatively small percentage of COLORADO's population is rural, close to one quarter of its public schools are in rural areas. The state pays its rural teachers below the national average and well below what it pays its other teachers. Rural education is important in Colorado, but with positive factors like relatively high levels of education among its sparse rural population, and few teachers teaching out-of-field, it does not register particularly high on the urgency gauge.



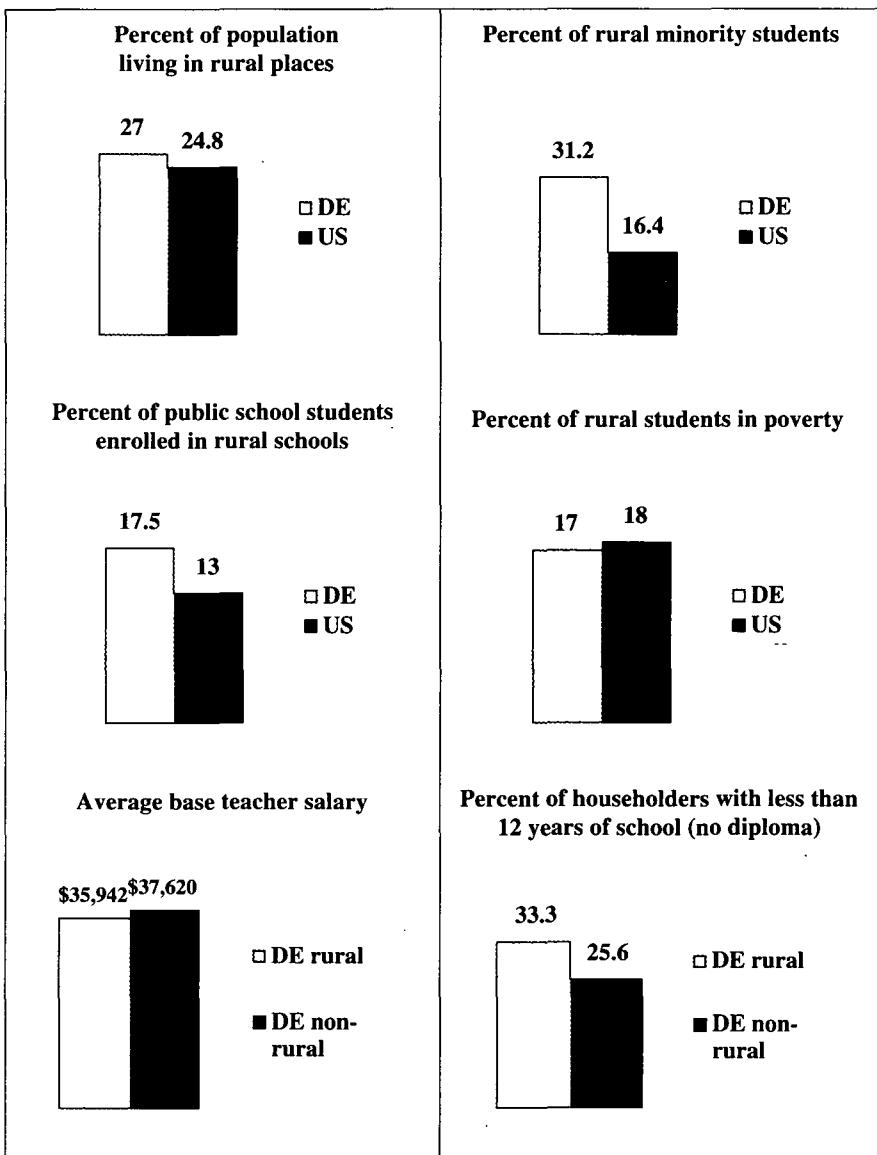
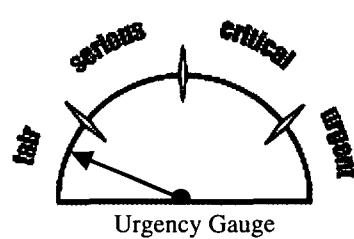
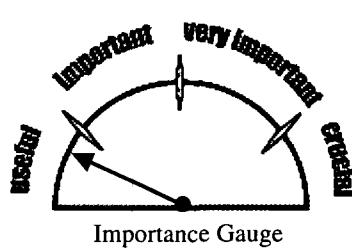
Importance Gauge	CT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	20.9%	36
Number of rural people	685,568	32
Percent of public schools in rural areas	15.7%	43
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	12.6%	36
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	6.2%	32
Average number of students to average number of grades	89.0	39
Percent of rural students attending small schools	5.1%	41
Percent of rural students in poverty	5.7%	48
Urgency Gauge	CT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$42,909	49
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$5,241	12
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	5.9%	43
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	0%	45
Average rural student to teacher ratio	13.8	37
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	16.6%	47
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	64.9%	13
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	5.2%	49
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	51.0%	16
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	9%	47

CONNECTICUT has more rural people than most would suspect (more than Maine or Nebraska and twice as many as North Dakota). But despite very low levels of rural poverty, Connecticut's rural schools have low rates of Internet access and their teachers suffer one of the larger pay disparities compared to their nonrural colleagues. While the urgency and importance of rural education are less in Connecticut than in other states, policymakers still need to attend to these issues.



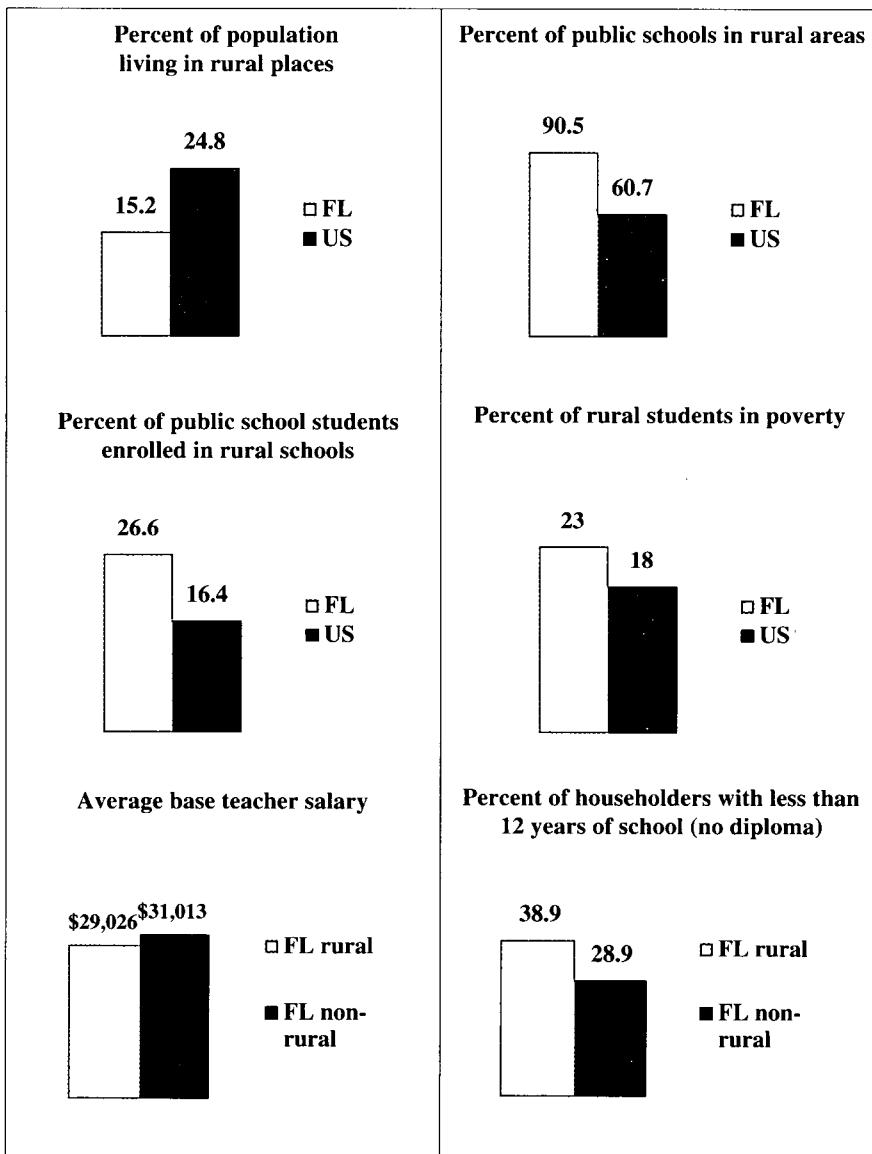
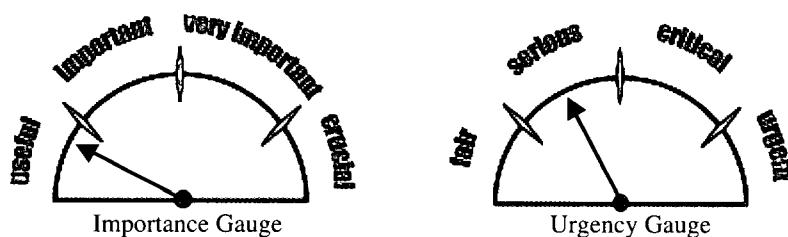
Importance Gauge	DE	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	27%	32
Number of rural people	179,667	45
Percent of public schools in rural areas	18.3%	39
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	17.5%	29
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	31.2%	10
Average number of students to average number of grades	128.1	49
Percent of rural students attending small schools	4.2%	44
Percent of rural students in poverty	17%	23
Urgency Gauge	DE	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$35,942	44
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,678	38
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	31.7%	18
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	0%	45
Average rural student to teacher ratio	16.9	14
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	33.3%	19
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	94.1%	47
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	28.9%	15
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	52.2%	23
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	16%	38

Over one fourth of DELAWARE'S population is rural, one third of rural adults have less than a 12th grade education, and nearly one third of rural students are minorities, all making rural education more important than you might imagine in Delaware. But rural teachers' pay is relatively high and the disparity between them and other teachers relatively low. Internet access rate for rural schools is very high.



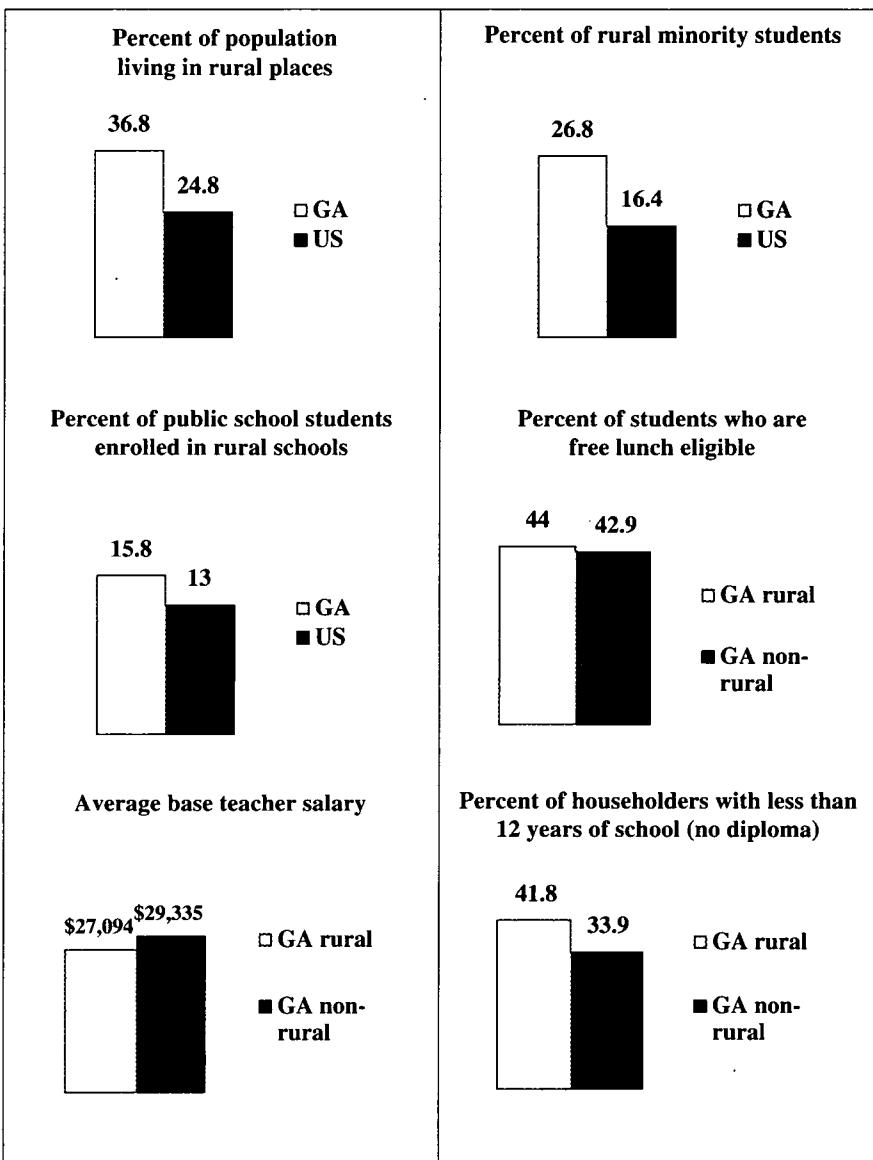
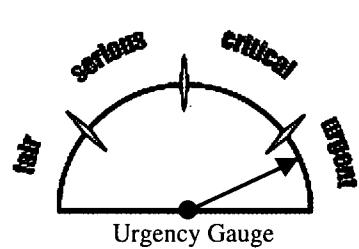
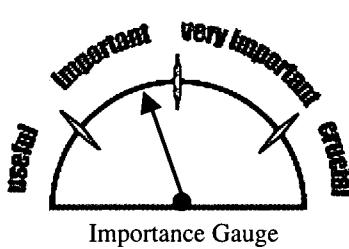
Importance Gauge	FL	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	15.2%	43
Number of rural people	1,970,598	9
Percent of public schools in rural areas	7%	48
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	4.7%	48
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	26.6%	15
Average number of students to average number of grades	90.5	40
Percent of rural students attending small schools	2.8%	47
Percent of rural students in poverty	23%	12
Urgency Gauge	FL	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$29,026	32
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,987	36
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	42%	10
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	27.7%	17
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.9	6
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	38.9%	12
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	82.3%	35
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	9.6%	41
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	46.6%	5
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	6%	50

FLORIDA has nearly 2 million rural people, but less than 5% of public school students attend rural schools. Many rural students live in poverty and many of them are minorities. Well under half of expenditures in rural schools are for instruction. Relatively well-paid teachers teach in relatively large classes in relatively large schools. A lot rural kids leave rural communities to go to school, leaving rural schools in serious need of attention.



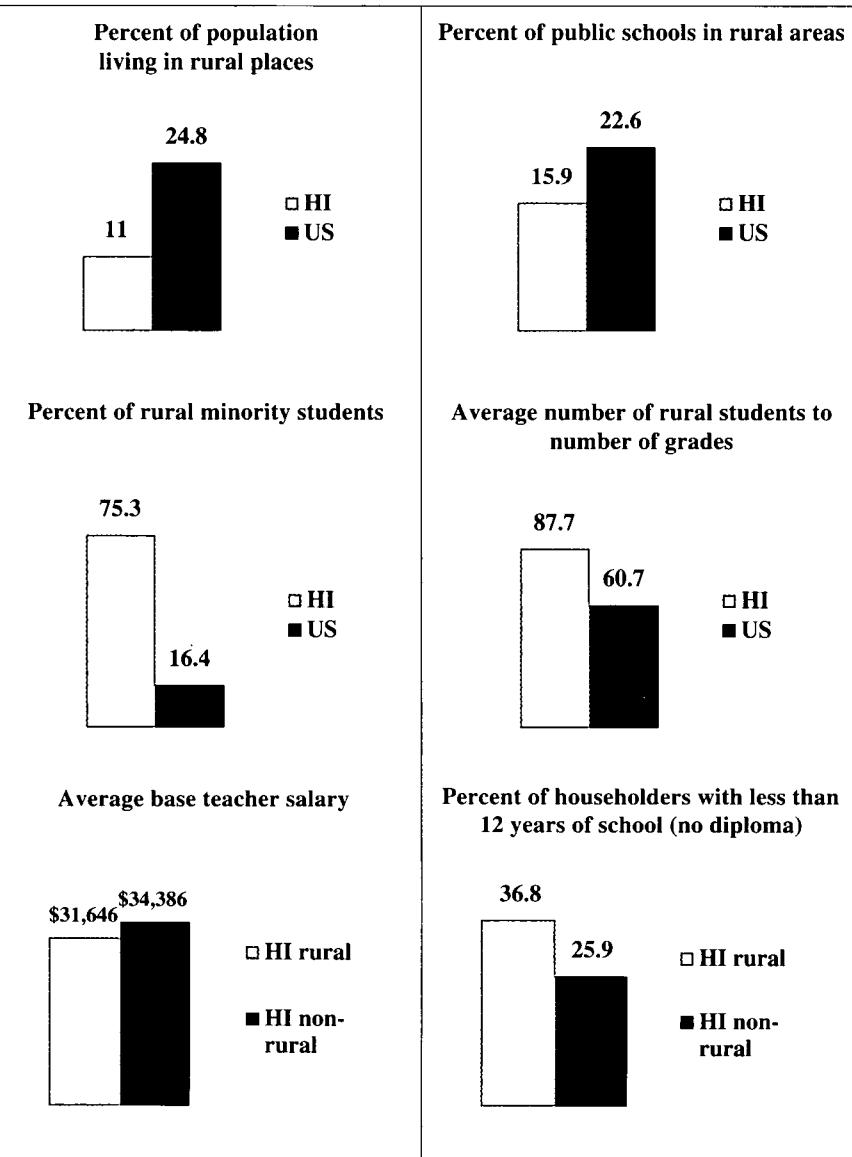
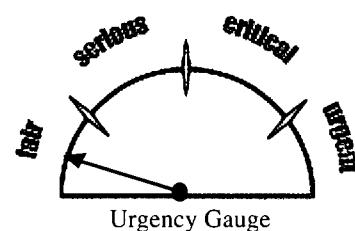
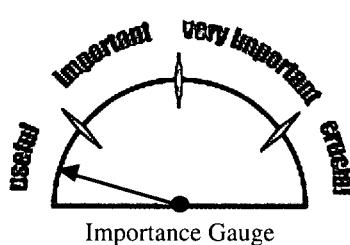
Importance Gauge	GA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	36.8%	17
Number of rural people	2,380,877	7
Percent of public schools in rural areas	18.2%	40
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	15.8%	32
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	26.8%	14
Average number of students to average number of grades	127.4	48
Percent of rural students attending small schools	6.9%	36
Percent of rural students in poverty	19.9%	17
Urgency Gauge	GA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$27,094	24
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,241	32
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	44%	6
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	43.9%	9
Average rural student to teacher ratio	16.5	17
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	41.8%	10
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	69.6%	17
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	19.4%	27
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	51.6%	19
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	16%	37

Well over one third of **GEORGIA**'s population—nearly 2.4 million people—lives in rural areas, but many rural children are bused to schools in larger communities. Nearly half the students left in rural schools qualify for free lunches and they are crammed into schools that are among the largest in rural America. Georgia's rural poverty and the low levels of education among its adult rural population create an urgent need for policy action.



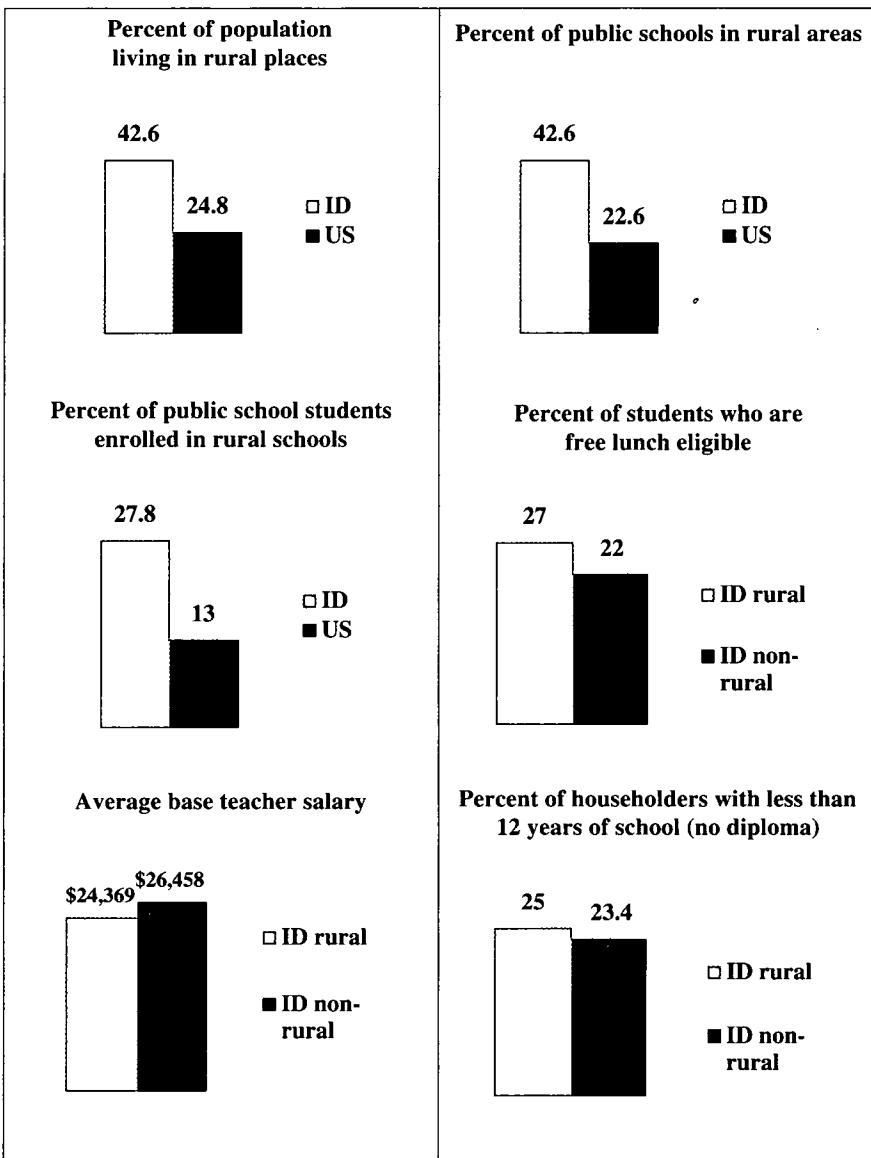
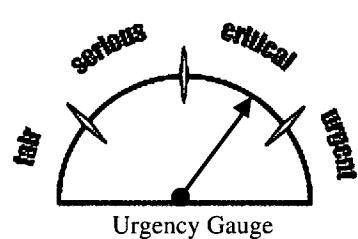
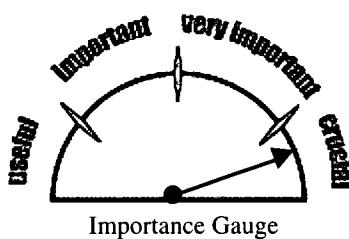
Importance Gauge	HI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	11%	48
Number of rural people	122,058	50
Percent of public schools in rural areas	15.9%	42
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	12.8%	35
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	75.3%	1
Average number of students to average number of grades	87.7	38
Percent of rural students attending small schools	5.3%	40
Percent of rural students in poverty	N/A	N/A
Urgency Gauge	HI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$31,646	36
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,740	25
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	36.8%	14
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	4.8%	38
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.2	11
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	100%	50
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	10.3%	40
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	17%	32

HAWAII is the least rural state in the nation, with the fewest number of people living in rural areas and nearly the smallest percentage of its total population living in rural areas. But it ranks number one in the percentage of rural students who are minorities, and more than one third of its rural students qualify for free lunches. Remarkably, every rural school has Internet access.



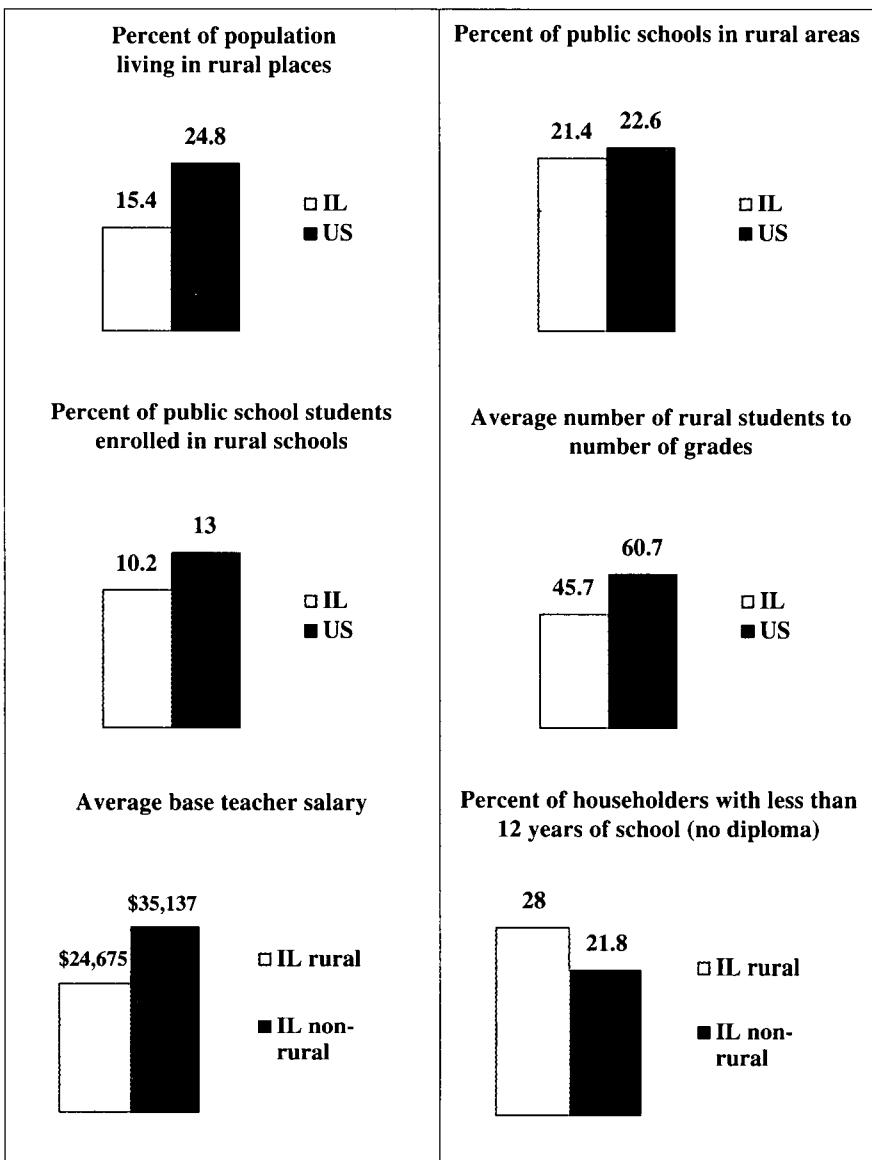
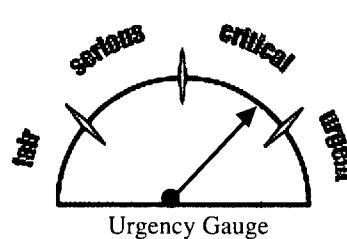
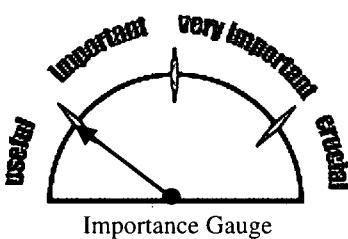
Importance Gauge	ID	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	42.6%	13
Number of rural people	428,535	38
Percent of public schools in rural areas	42.6%	13
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	27.8%	13
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	N/A	N/A
Average number of students to average number of grades	54.0	21
Percent of rural students attending small schools	12.6%	10
Percent of rural students in poverty	16.6%	24
Urgency Gauge	ID	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$24,369	10
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,089	35
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	27%	25
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	5.3%	37
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.2	11
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	25%	31
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	92.9%	46
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	35.3%	8
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	53%	29
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	38%	2

IDAHO ranks second in the percentage of students attending small, rural schools and, unfortunately, second in the percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments. Idaho ranks eighth in the percentage of out-of-field teachers who are in rural schools. Rural teachers are paid relatively poorly, but the pay gap between them and other Idaho teachers is not as great as the gap in most states. It is crucial that Idaho develops a rural education policy, as the needs of its rural schools are critical.



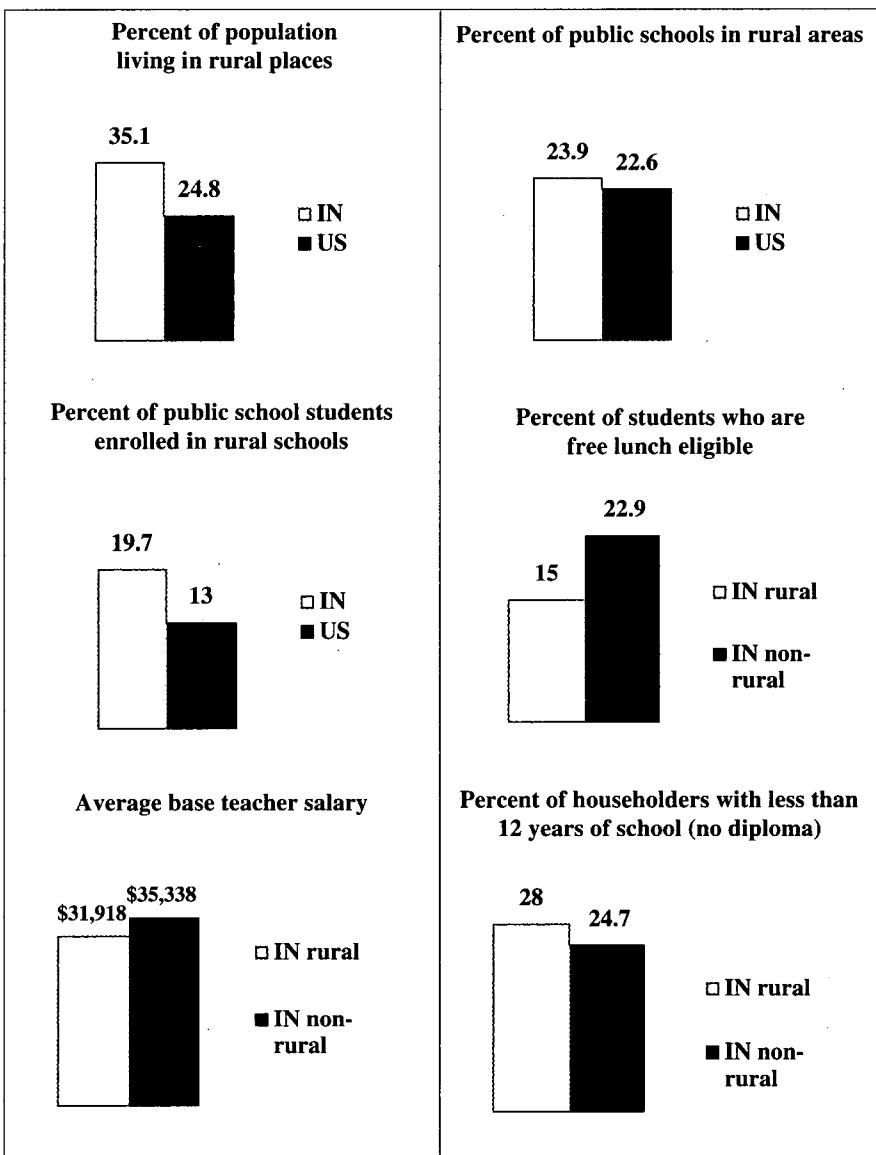
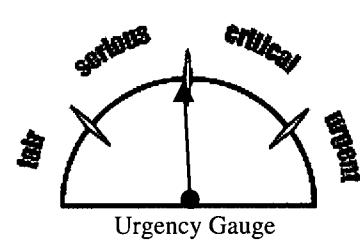
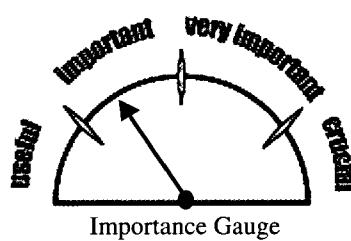
Importance Gauge	IL	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	15.4%	42
Number of rural people	1,762,050	14
Percent of public schools in rural areas	21.4%	32
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	10.2%	41
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4%	37
Average number of students to average number of grades	45.7	14
Percent of rural students attending small schools	7.4%	32
Percent of rural students in poverty	12.4%	39
Urgency Gauge	IL	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$24,675	11
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$10,462	1
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	7.9%	27
Average rural student to teacher ratio	15.3	23
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	28%	28
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	60.6%	6
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	12.1%	38
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	50.9%	15
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	25%	12

ILLINOIS' rural teachers earn nearly \$10,500 less than teachers in the rest of the state, the largest gap in the nation. There are over one million people living in rural Illinois, and the state ranks among the top ten states in the percentage of students attending small rural schools, one fourth of which suffer declining enrollment. The sheer number of rural people makes it important for Illinois to address rural education policy, while the conditions in rural schools and communities make it critical for the state to do so.



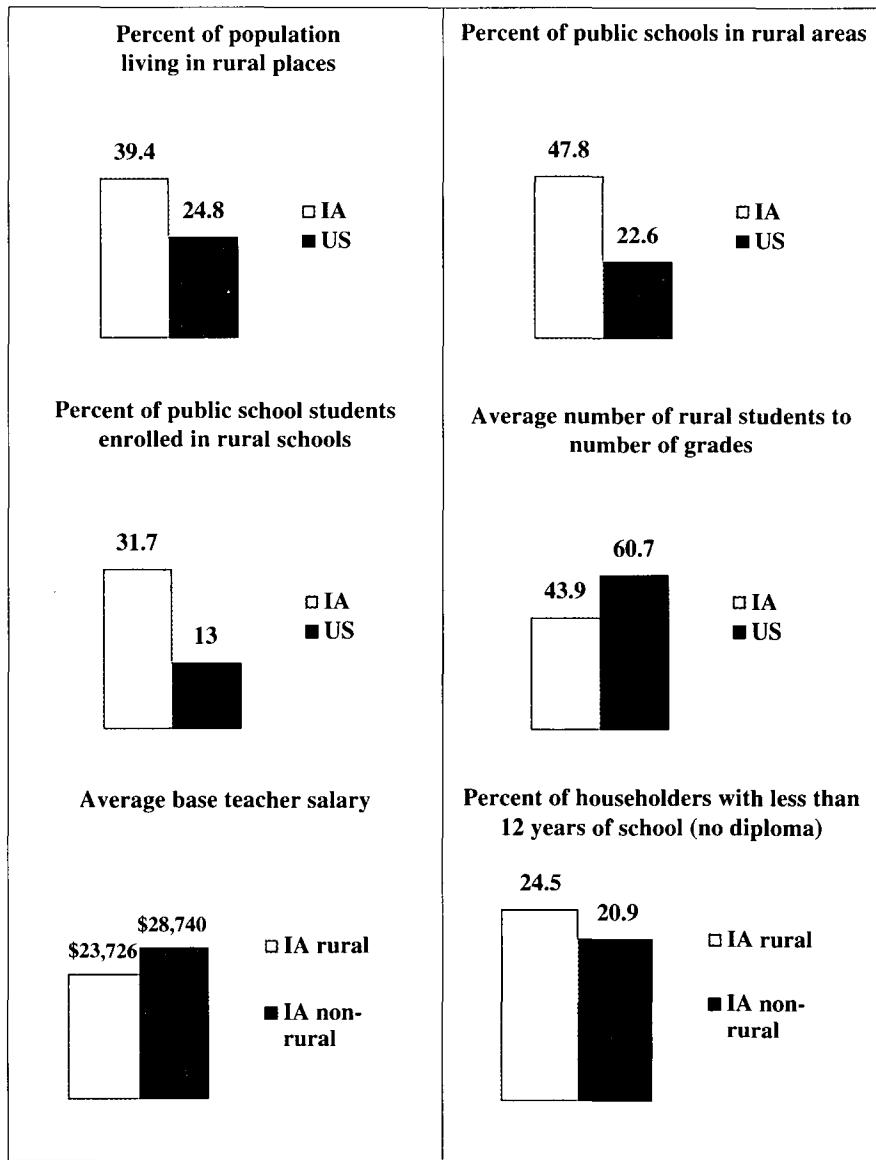
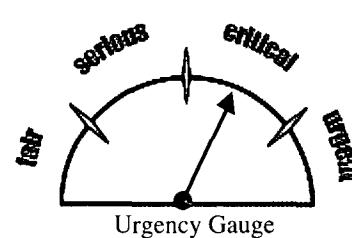
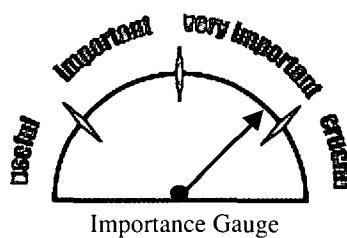
Importance Gauge	IN	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	35.1%	18
Number of rural people	1,946,060	10
Percent of public schools in rural areas	23.9%	27
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	19.7%	23
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	1.4%	48
Average number of students to average number of grades	78.7	33
Percent of rural students attending small schools	8.7%	25
Percent of rural students in poverty	10.2%	44
Urgency Gauge	IN	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$31,918	37
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$3,420	21
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	15%	39
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	7.6%	28
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.9	6
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	28%	28
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	74.6%	21
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	27.1%	20
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	49.2%	9
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	8%	49

Nearly 2 million people live in rural INDIANA, over one third of its population, but fewer than one in five students go to a rural school and the rural poverty rate is quite low among an overwhelmingly white population. Consolidation has left many large rural schools, relatively few of which suffer declining enrollment. But rural schools spend less than half their budget on instruction. It is important for the state to have an explicit rural education policy, and the need for one is serious.



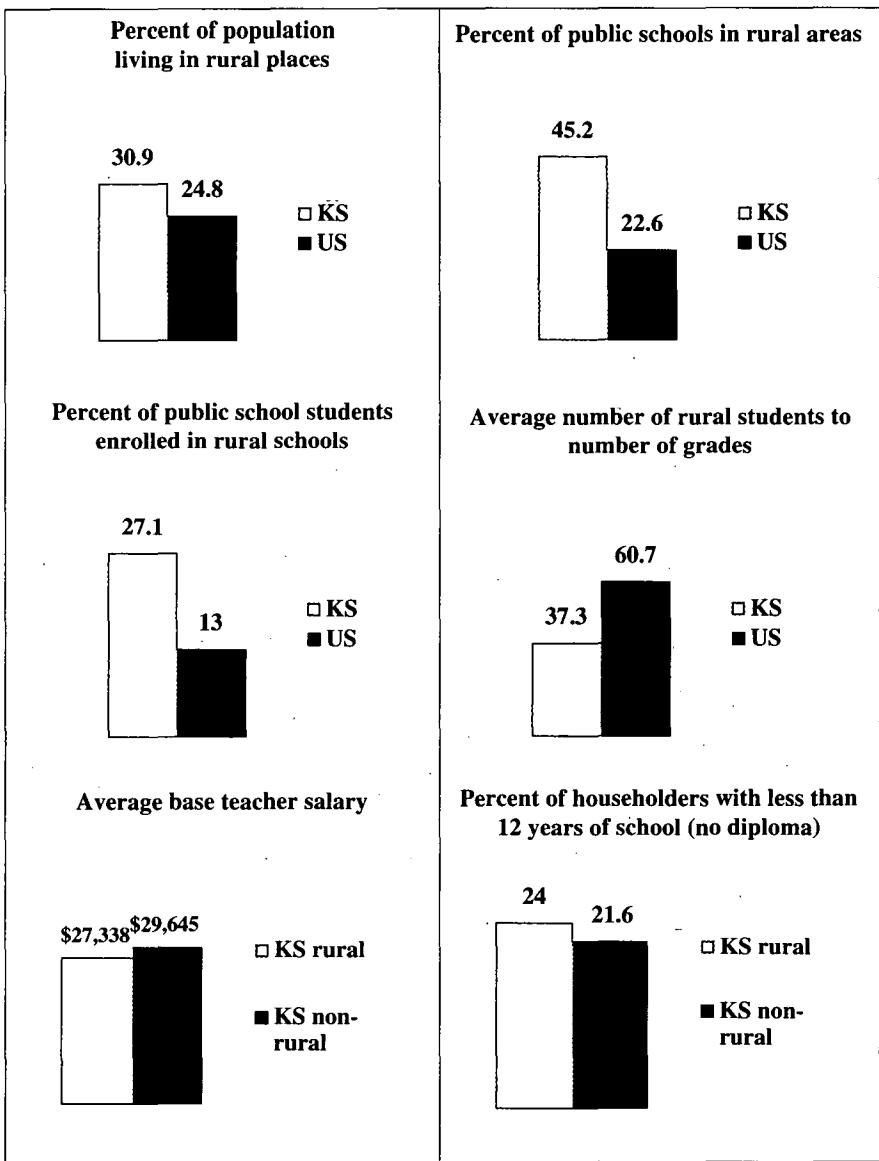
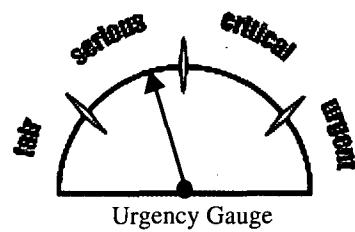
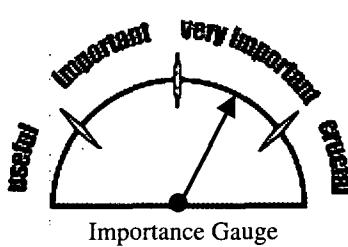
Importance Gauge	IA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	39.4%	15
Number of rural people	1,093,690	24
Percent of public schools in rural areas	47.8%	10
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	31.7%	8
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.2%	45
Average number of students to average number of grades	43.9	11
Percent of rural students attending small schools	17.8%	2
Percent of rural students in poverty	12.9%	37
Urgency Gauge	IA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$23,726	8
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$5,014	14
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	17.9%	35
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	4.8%	38
Average rural student to teacher ratio	13.4	40
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	24.5%	34
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	83.1%	35
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	36.5%	7
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	50.9%	14
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	21%	21

Nearly one third of IOWA'S students and one half its schools are in rural areas, both among the highest rates in the nation. But its rural teachers are among the lowest paid in the nation and the pay gap between them and their nonrural colleagues is one of the larger in the nation. Rural school size and class size are small by national standards. The state's demographics make it very important for Iowa to have an explicit rural education policy, and conditions in rural schools make the need for it critical.



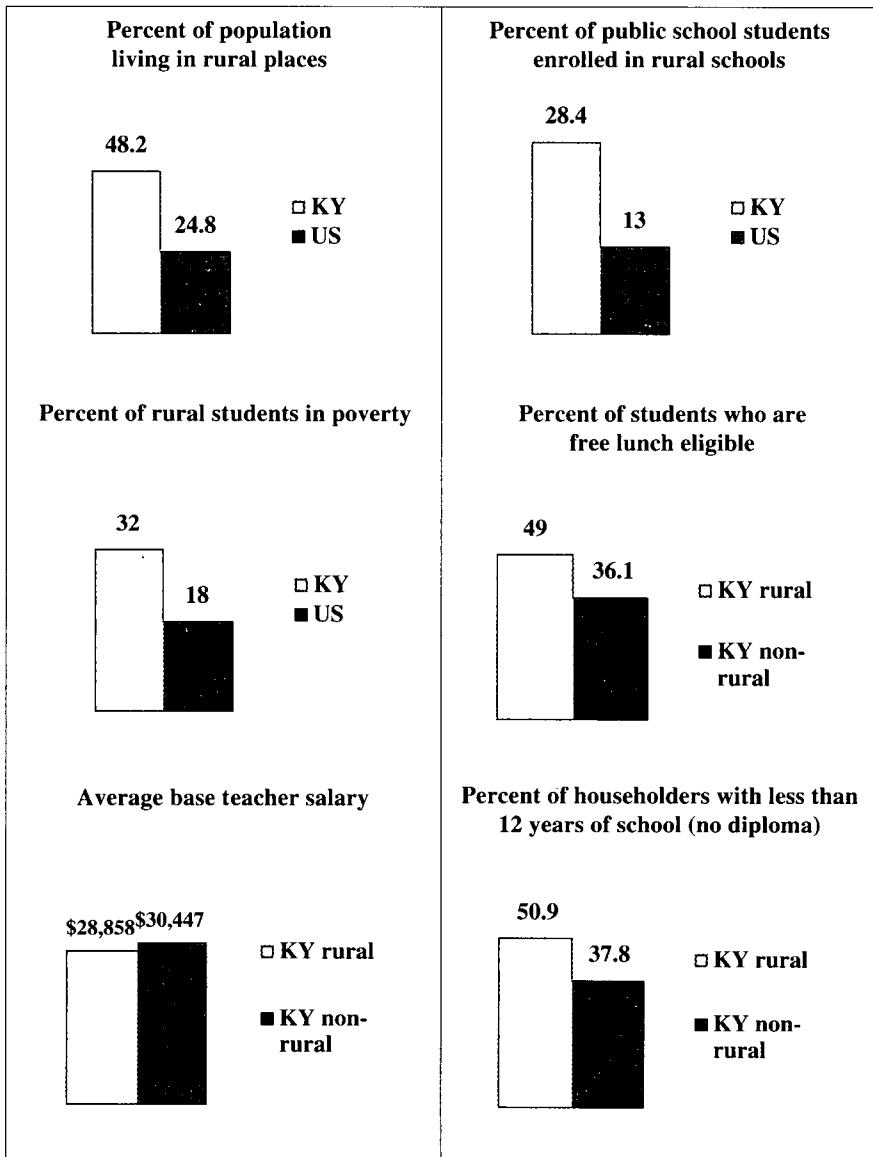
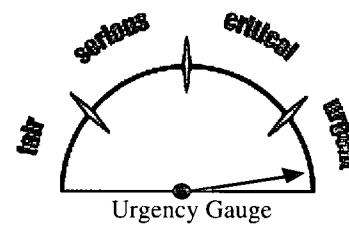
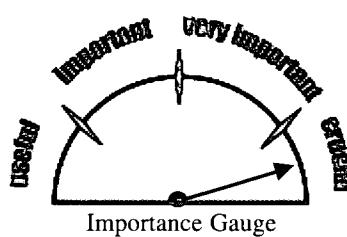
Importance Gauge	KS	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	30.9%	27
Number of rural people	765,010	31
Percent of public schools in rural areas	45.2%	12
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	27.1%	14
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	5.6%	33
Average number of students to average number of grades	37.3	8
Percent of rural students attending small schools	14.2%	6
Percent of rural students in poverty	14.7%	30
Urgency Gauge	KS	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$27,338	25
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,309	31
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	29.3%	22
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	3.5%	41
Average rural student to teacher ratio	13.4	40
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	24%	37
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	78.7%	30
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	58%	2
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	46.8%	6
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	23%	17

KANSAS has one of the highest percentages of its students attending small rural schools and the second highest percentage of out-of-field teachers who are rural. Well under half its rural school expenditures are for instruction. Rural schools are very important in Kansas and the need for an explicit rural education policy is serious.



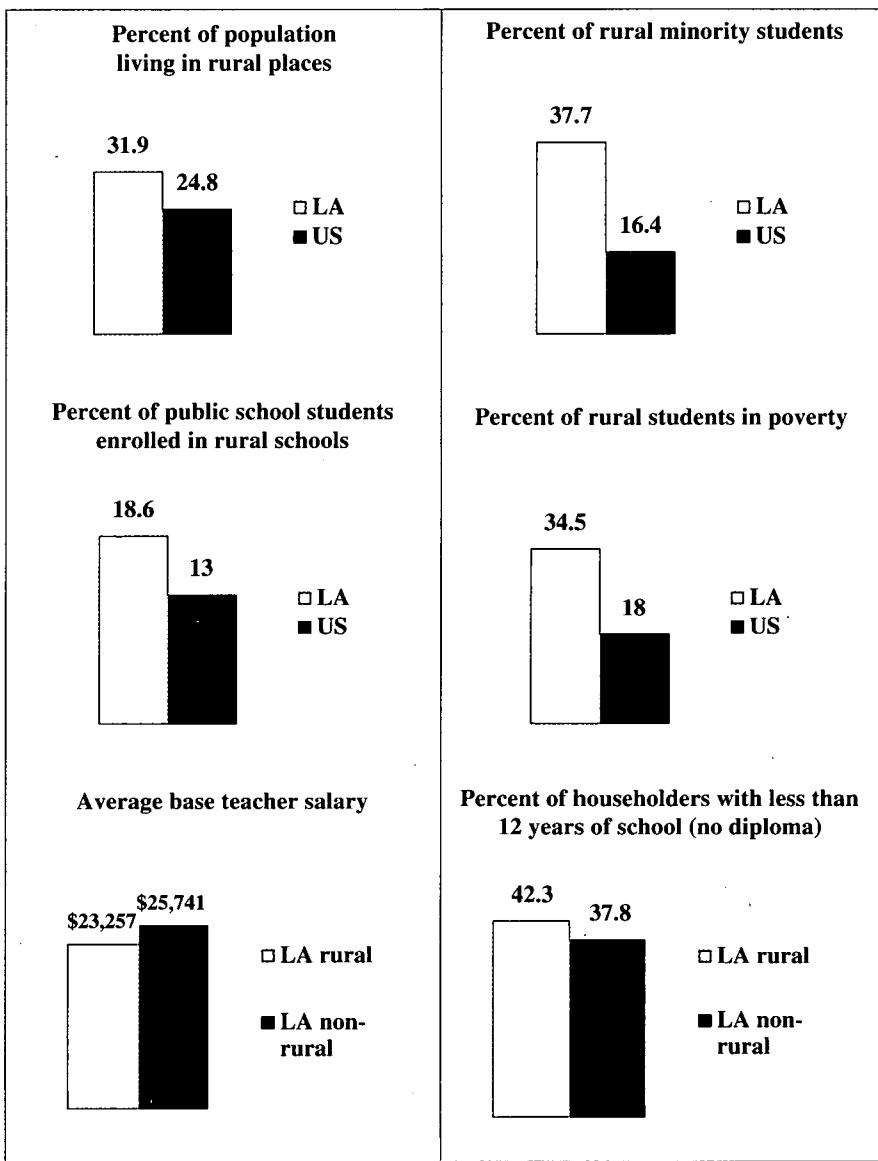
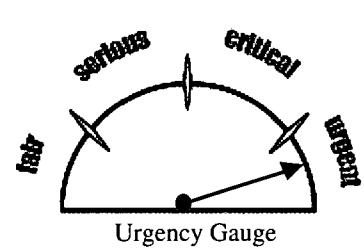
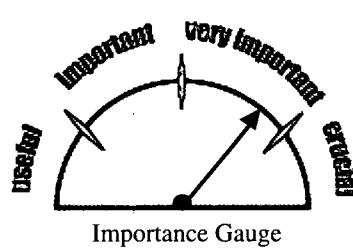
Importance Gauge	KY	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	48.2%	8
Number of rural people	1,774,971	13
Percent of public schools in rural areas	35.8%	16
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	28.4%	12
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.6%	42
Average number of students to average number of grades	72.6	31
Percent of rural students attending small schools	12.4%	11
Percent of rural students in poverty	32%	5
Urgency Gauge	KY	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$28,858	31
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,589	39
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	49%	3
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	63.5%	3
Average rural student to teacher ratio	15.4	22
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	50.9%	1
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	63.3%	10
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	24.6%	24
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	51.8%	21
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	39%	1

KENTUCKY has the highest percentage of rural adults with less than a 12th grade education and the highest percentage of rural schools with declining enrollments. It has the third highest percentage of rural students who are free lunch eligible. Good rural schools are crucial to the state's education performance, and the need for an explicit rural policy is urgent.



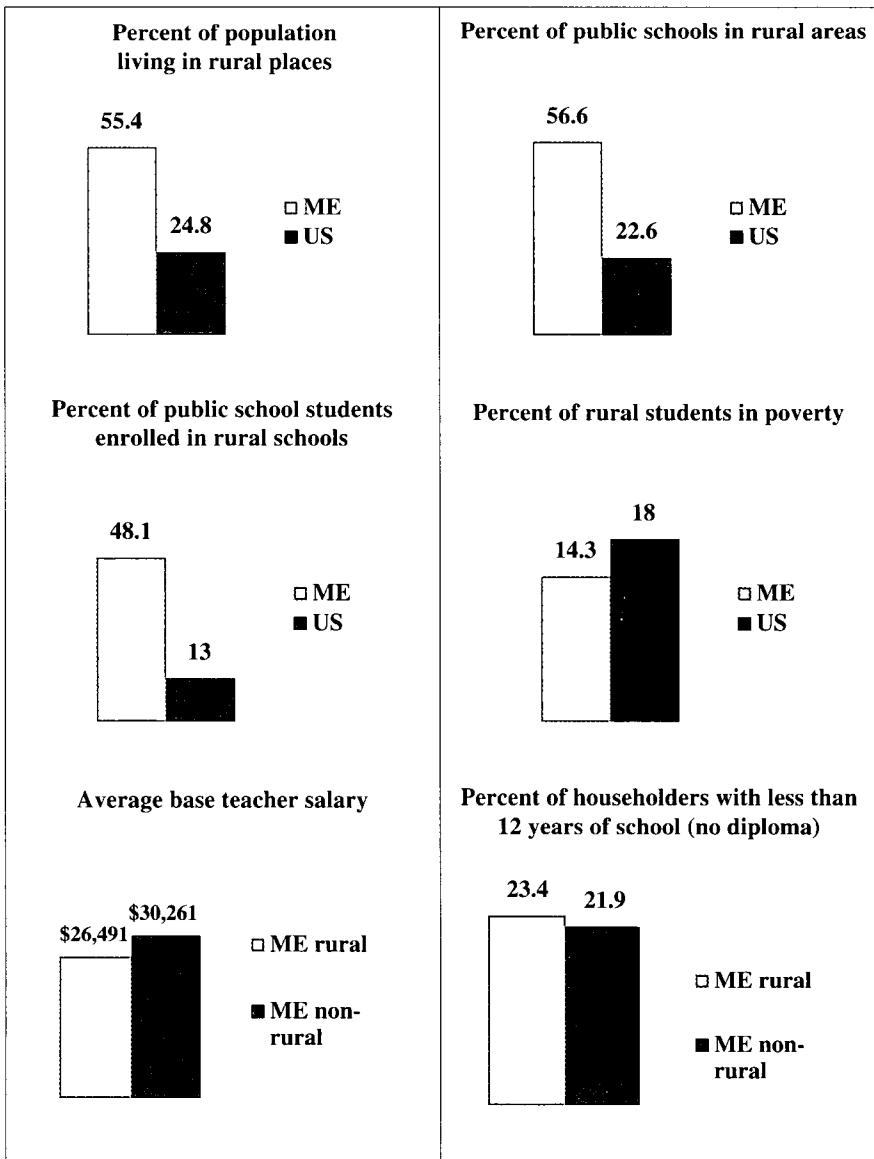
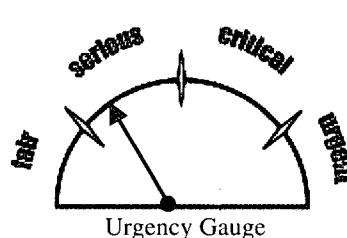
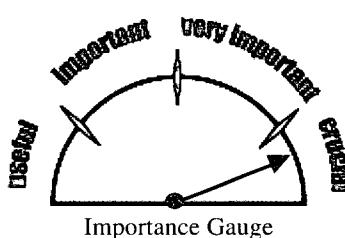
Importance Gauge	LA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	31.9%	24
Number of rural people	1,348,214	20
Percent of public schools in rural areas	24%	26
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	18.6%	26
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	37.7%	7
Average number of students to average number of grades	70	30
Percent of rural students attending small schools	9.4%	20
Percent of rural students in poverty	34.5%	3
Urgency Gauge	LA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$23,257	7
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,484	28
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	48.6%	4
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	54.2%	7
Average rural student to teacher ratio	15.8	20
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	42.3%	9
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	84.2%	39
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	17.8%	28
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	52.3%	24
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	23%	15

LOUISIANA has the third highest percentage of rural students in poverty in the nation and among the lowest average rural teacher salaries. It also ranks among the top ten states in the percentage of rural adults with less than a 12th grade education. Louisiana's rural poverty makes rural schools very important to the state's educational performance, and the need for a rural education policy is urgent.



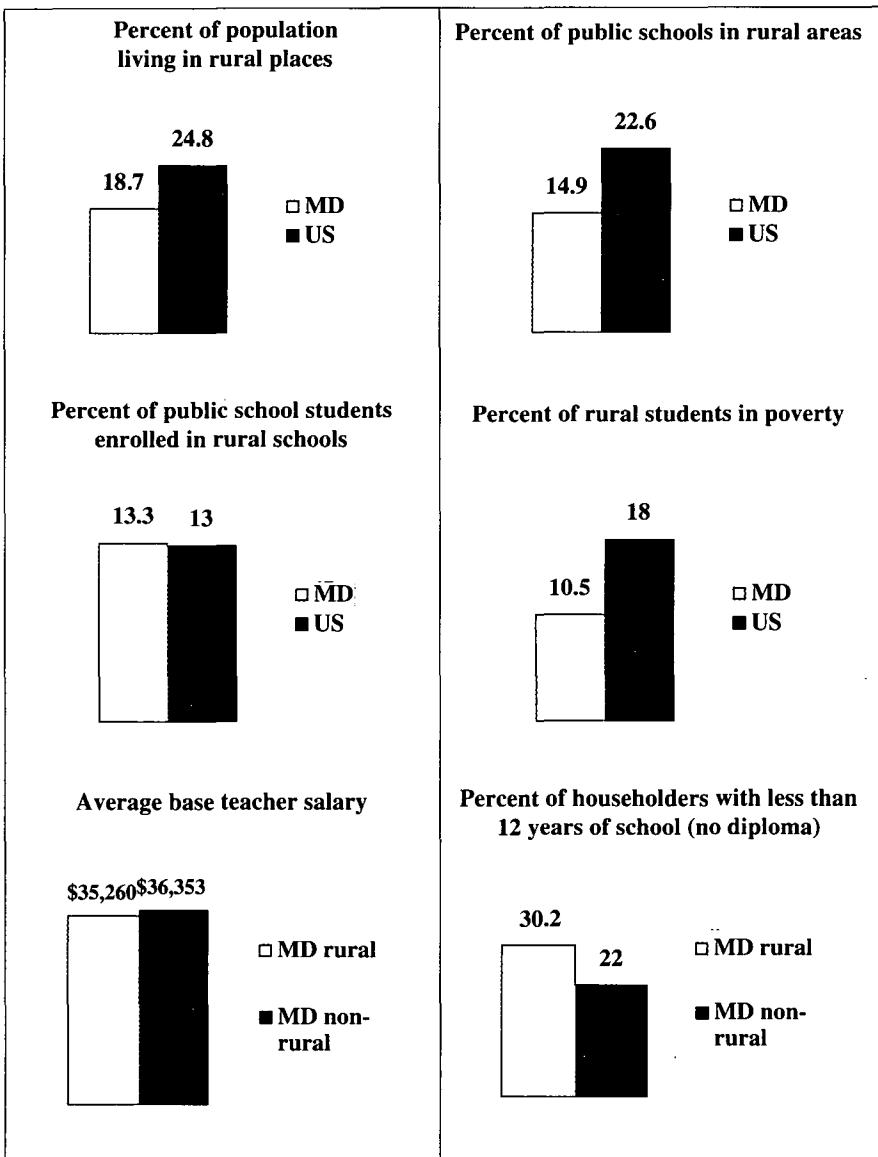
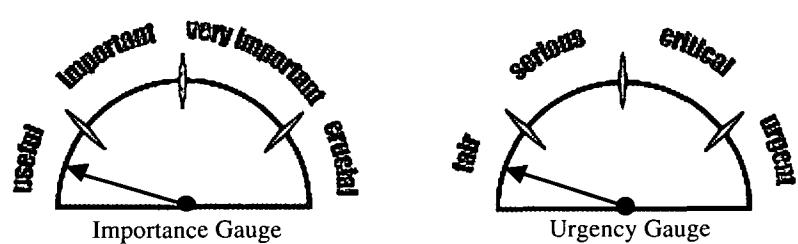
Importance Gauge	ME	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	55.4%	3
Number of rural people	680,104	33
Percent of public schools in rural areas	56.6%	6
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	48.1%	3
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.2%	44
Average number of students to average number of grades	50.8	19
Percent of rural students attending small schools	16%	3
Percent of rural students in poverty	14.3%	31
Urgency Gauge	ME	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$26,491	20
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$3,770	18
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	24.8%	27
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	6.2%	33
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.7	27
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	23.4%	38
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	96%	49
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	28.7%	16
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	56.5%	42
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	23%	16

Over half of MAINE's population lives in rural areas and almost half its students go to rural schools. It has one of the highest percentages of rural schools with Internet access, and is among the highest in the portion of rural school expenditures spent on instruction. Its demographics make rural schools crucial to the state, and the need for a rural education policy is serious.



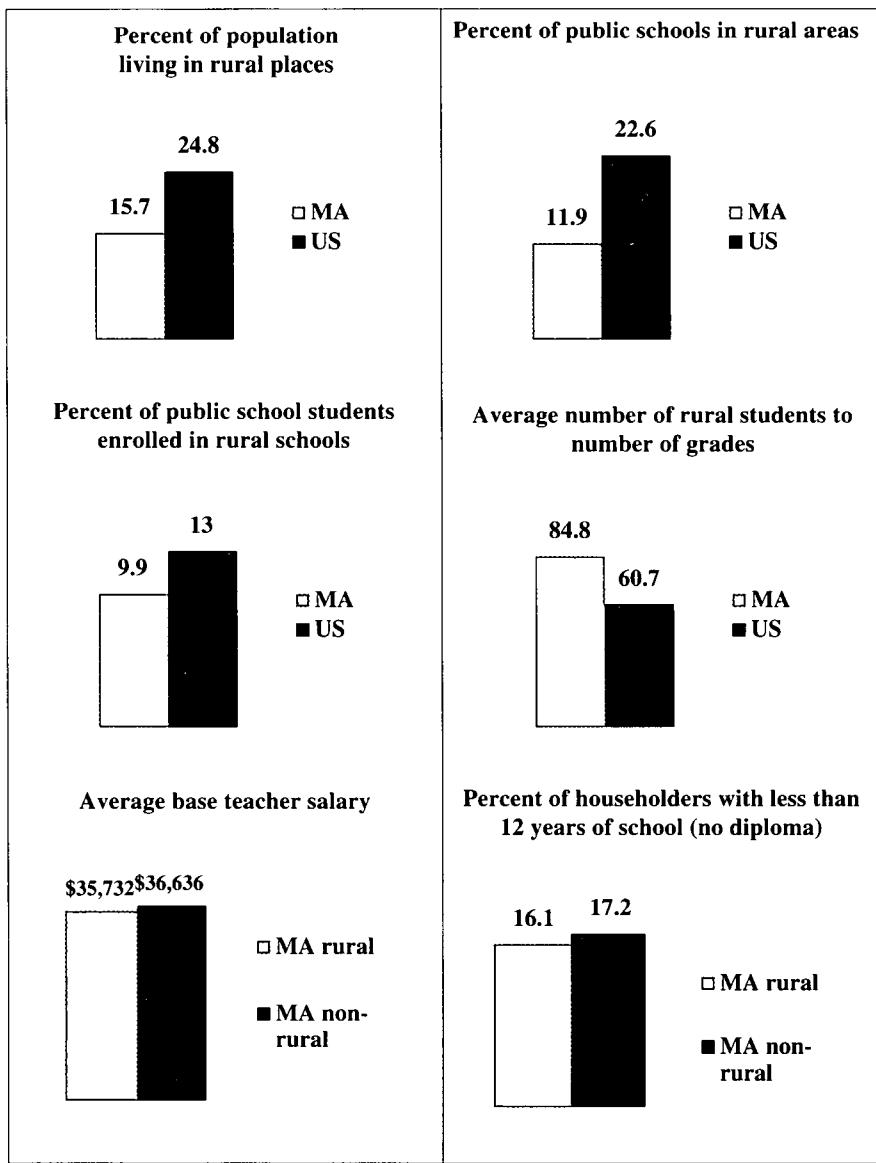
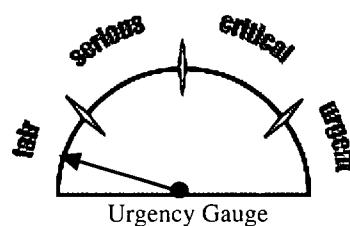
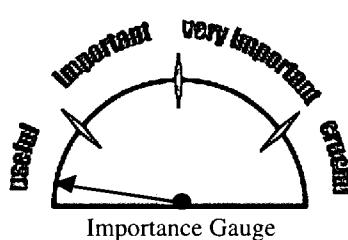
Importance Gauge	MD	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	18.7%	38
Number of rural people	893,039	28
Percent of public schools in rural areas	14.9%	44
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	13.3%	33
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	20.5%	18
Average number of students to average number of grades	126.4	47
Percent of rural students attending small schools	5.1%	42
Percent of rural students in poverty	10.5%	43
Urgency Gauge	MD	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$35,260	41
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,093	42
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	17.2%	36
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	5.5%	36
Average rural student to teacher ratio	18.2	5
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	30.2%	23
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	56.3%	4
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	13.1%	35
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	53.4%	31
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	14%	42

MARYLAND'S rural schools are large, have very low rates of Internet access, and high student-to-teacher ratios. Low poverty rates and moderate minority enrollment make these disadvantages less alarming, but policymakers still need to address these issues.

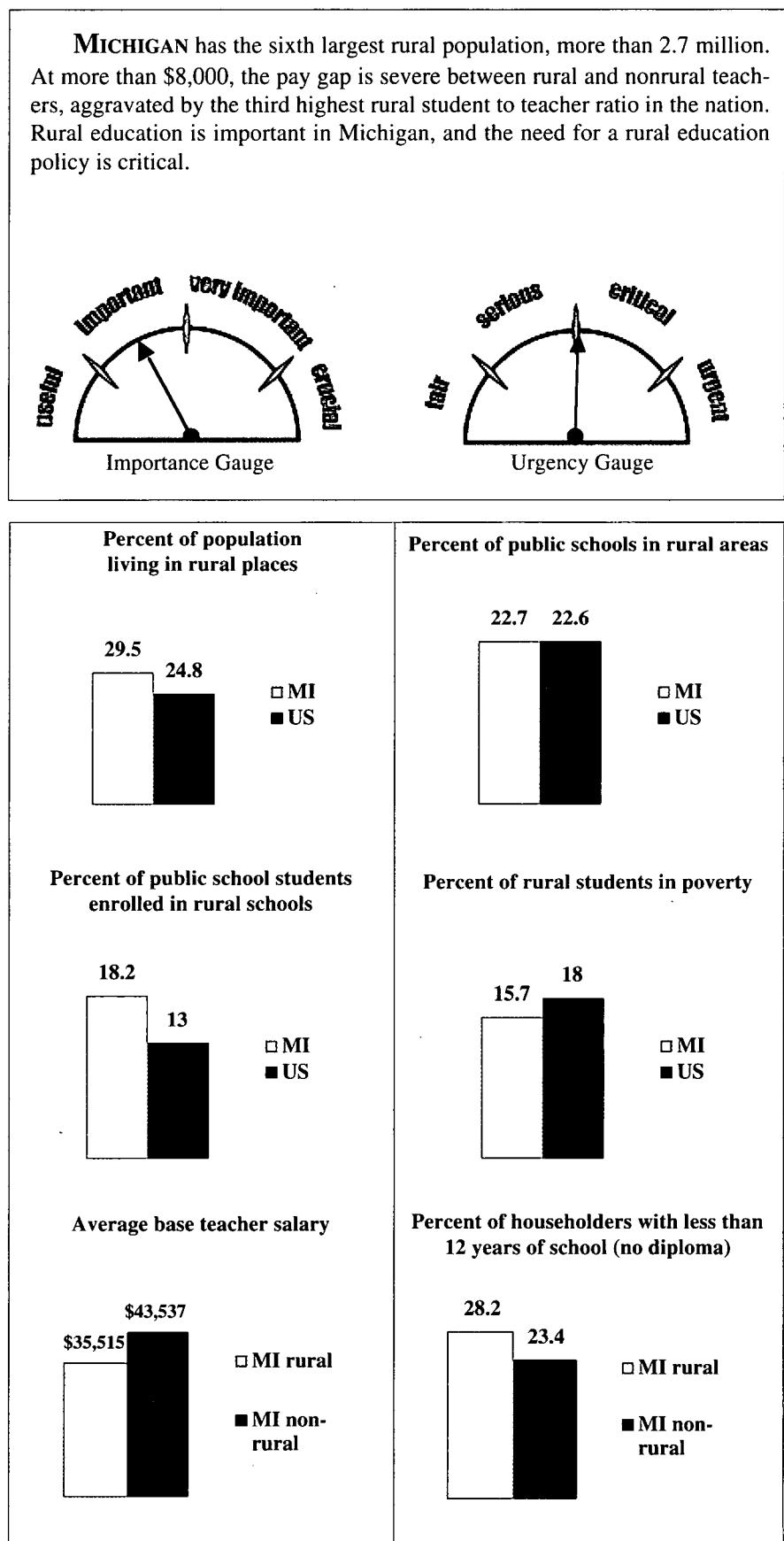


Importance Gauge	MA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	15.7%	40
Number of rural people	946,822	27
Percent of public schools in rural areas	11.9%	45
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	9.9%	43
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	3.8%	39
Average number of students to average number of grades	84.8	35
Percent of rural students attending small schools	3%	46
Percent of rural students in poverty	7.7%	46
Urgency Gauge	MA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$35,732	43
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$904	44
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	0%	45
Average rural student to teacher ratio	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	16.1%	48
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	68.5%	15
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	8.5%	43
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	49.7%	11
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	18%	29

One of the most urban states, MASSACHUSETTS nonetheless has nearly one million rural people. Less than half of rural school expenditures go to instruction, and Internet access rates are very low for rural schools. But rural poverty and minority rates are low, rural teacher salaries are among the highest, and the pay gap between rural and other teachers is among the lowest.

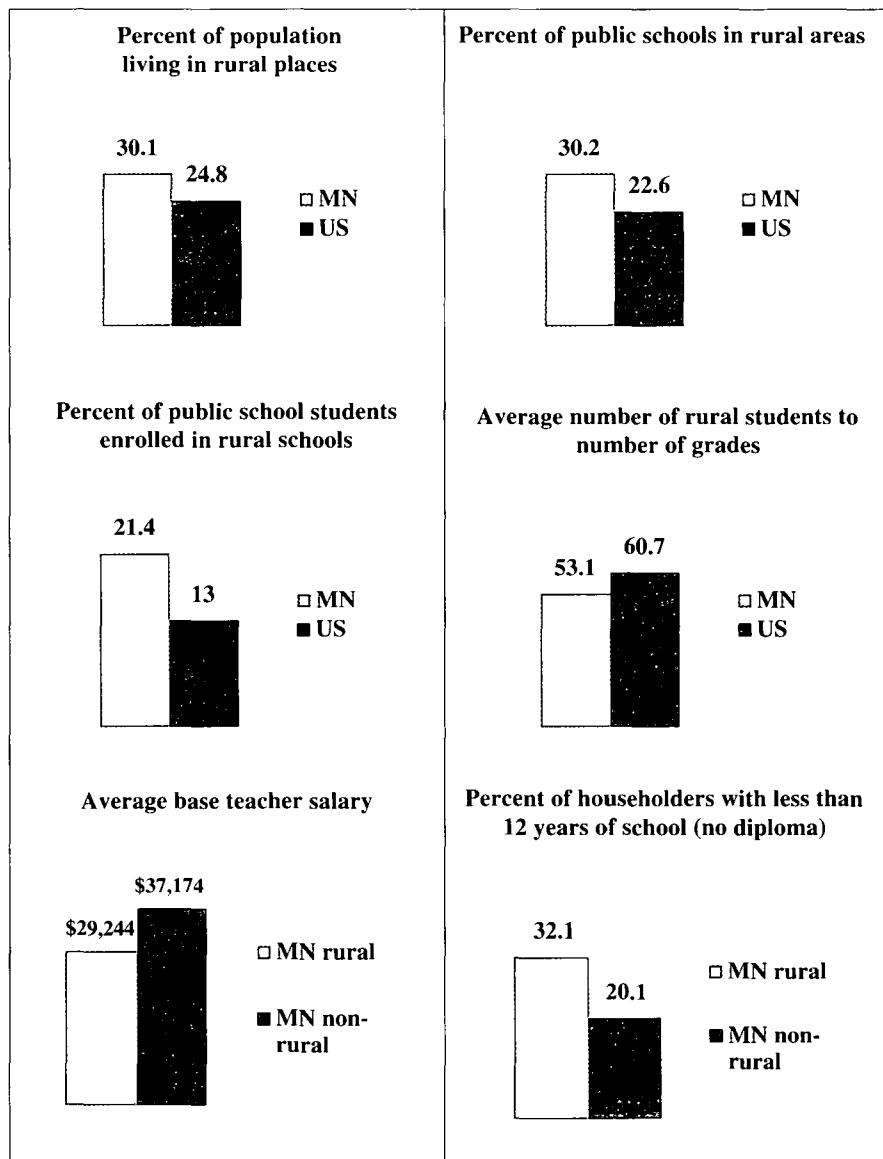
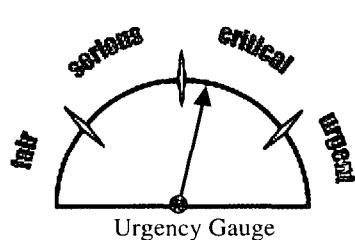
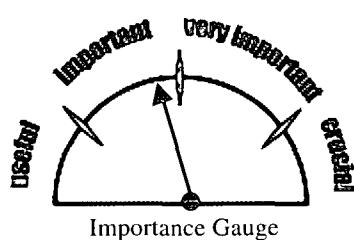


Importance Gauge	MI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	29.5%	30
Number of rural people	2,739,455	6
Percent of public schools in rural areas	22.7%	30
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	18.2%	27
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	6.3%	31
Average number of students to average number of grades	84.7	34
Percent of rural students attending small schools	7.2%	34
Percent of rural students in poverty	15.7%	27
Urgency Gauge	MI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$35,515	42
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$8,022	3
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	21.9%	29
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	7.3%	22
Average rural student to teacher ratio	18.5	3
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	28.2%	26
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	70.8%	18
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	16.4%	31
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	53.8%	34
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	18%	28



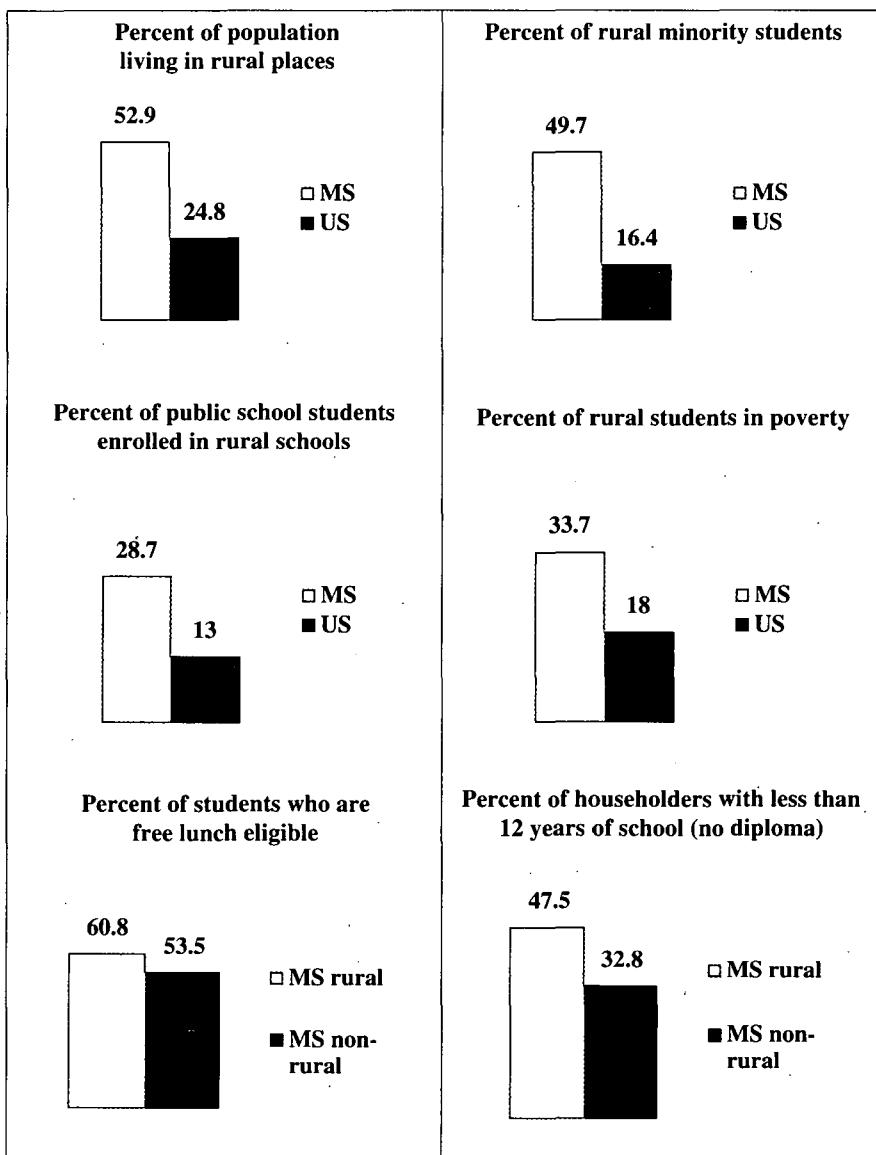
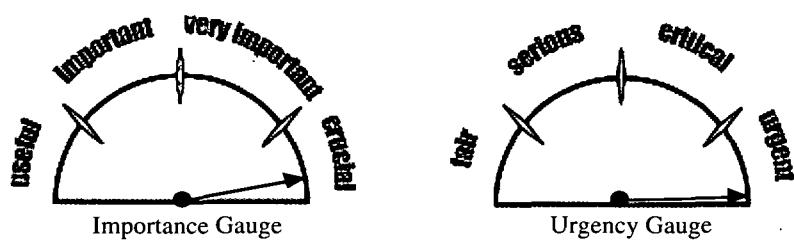
Importance Gauge	MN	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	30.1%	29
Number of rural people	1,318,625	21
Percent of public schools in rural areas	30.2%	20
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	21.4%	22
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	6.6%	30
Average number of students to average number of grades	53.1	20
Percent of rural students attending small schools	8.9%	23
Percent of rural students in poverty	13.4%	36
Urgency Gauge	MN	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$29,244	33
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$7,930	4
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	20.6%	31
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	11.9%	22
Average rural student to teacher ratio	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	32.1%	21
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	88.7%	43
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	35.1%	9
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	53.7%	33
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	22%	19

MINNESOTA has over one million rural people, but below-average rural poverty and minority rates. It has high rates of Internet access among its rural schools, but also the fourth largest pay gap between rural and other teachers and the ninth highest percentage of out-of-field teachers who are rural. Rural schools are important to Minnesota's educational performance, and its need for a more explicit rural education policy is critical.



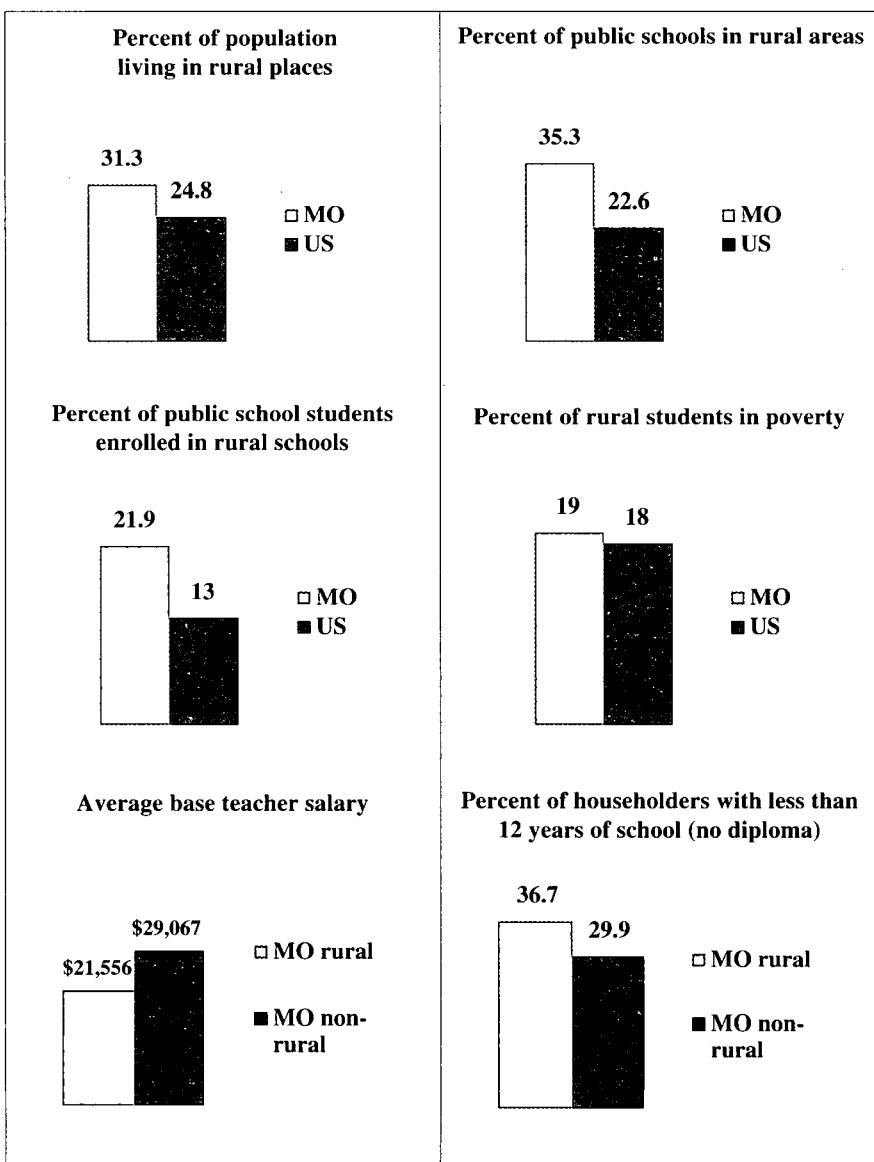
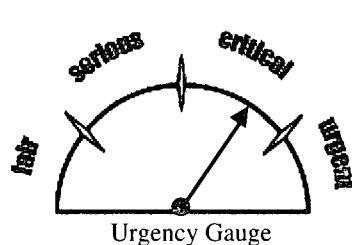
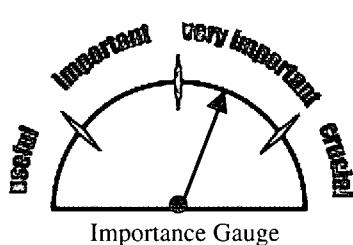
Importance Gauge	MS	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	52.9%	4
Number of rural people	1,362,487	19
Percent of public schools in rural areas	32.1%	19
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	28.7%	11
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	49.7%	4
Average number of students to average number of grades	84.9	36
Percent of rural students attending small schools	11.5%	15
Percent of rural students in poverty	33.7%	4
Urgency Gauge	MS	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$23,108	6
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,923	37
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	60.8%	1
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	63%	4
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.3	10
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	47.5%	3
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	63.3%	11
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	36.7%	6
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	56.2%	41
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	22%	20

MISSISSIPPI has more rural students who are free lunch eligible than any other state. More than half of the state's population lives in rural places, more than one third of rural students live in poverty, and close to half of all rural adults have less than 12 years of schooling. Almost half of all rural students are minorities. Demographics make it crucial that the state address rural education policy, while conditions in rural schools and communities make it more urgent to do so than in any other state.



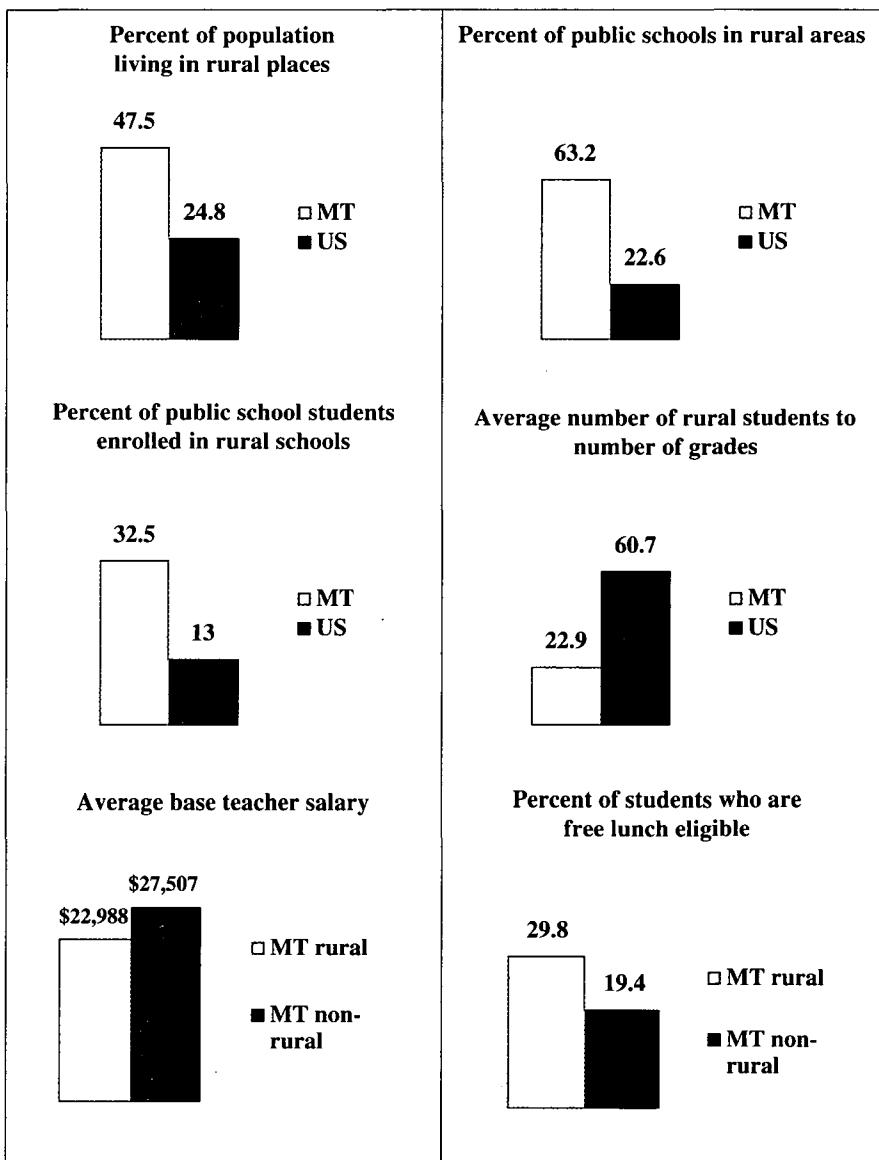
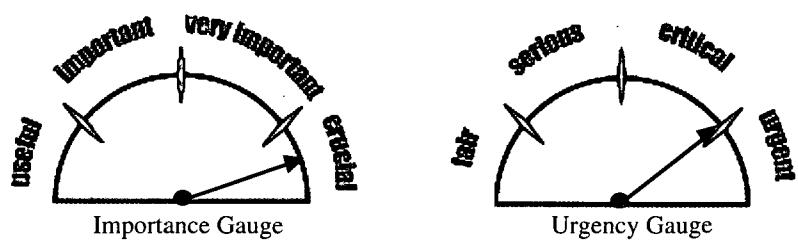
Importance Gauge	MO	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	31.3%	25
Number of rural people	1,601,064	16
Percent of public schools in rural areas	35.3%	17
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	21.9%	20
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.3%	43
Average number of students to average number of grades	47.9	15
Percent of rural students attending small schools	12.7%	9
Percent of rural students in poverty	19%	19
Urgency Gauge	MO	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$21,556	3
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$7,511	5
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	30.1%	20
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	42.3%	10
Average rural student to teacher ratio	13.7	38
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	36.7%	14
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	89%	44
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	27%	21
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	52.8%	28
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	20%	26

One third of MISSOURI's people (1.6 million), one third of its schools, and one fifth of its students are in rural communities. More than half of those rural students go to very small schools. Good rural schools are therefore very important to Missouri. Unfortunately, it has the third lowest average rural teacher salary, and the fifth largest pay gap between rural and other teachers' salaries. The need for a more explicit rural education policy is critical.



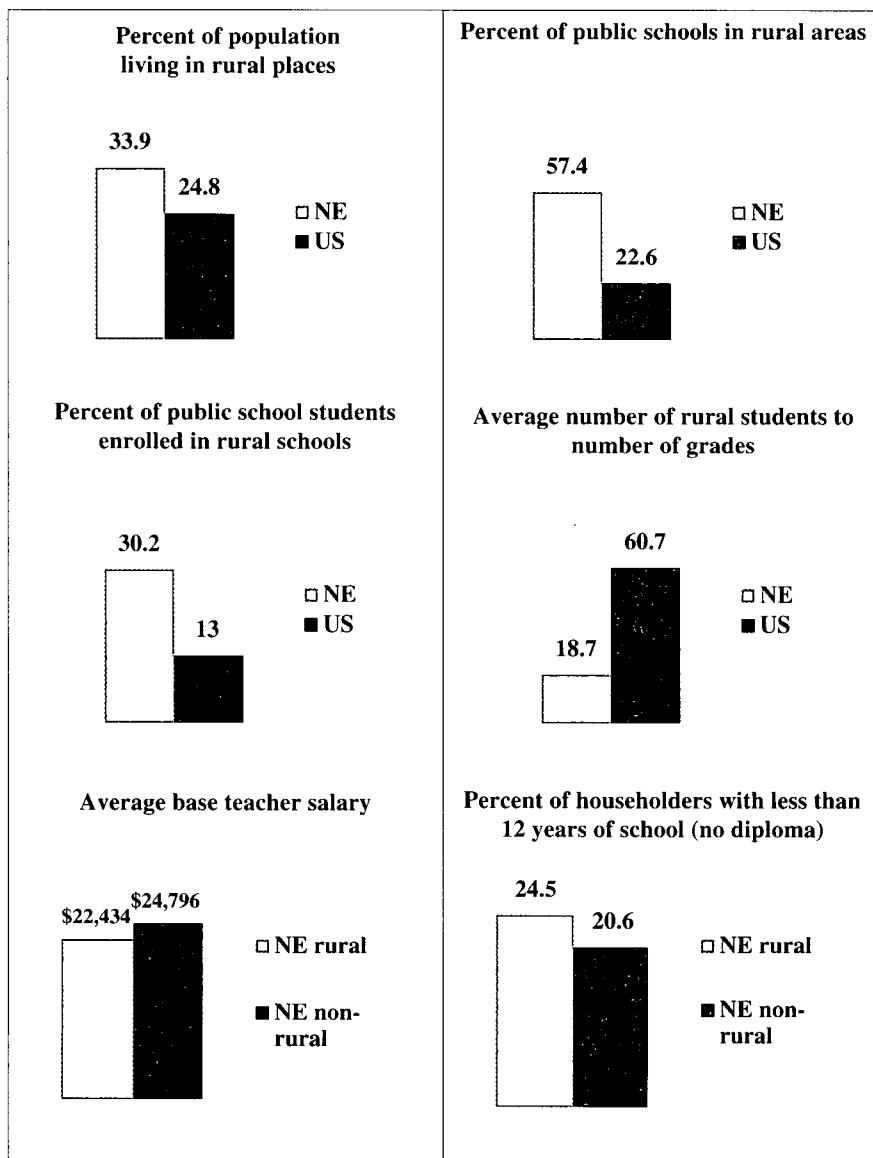
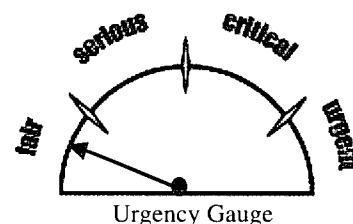
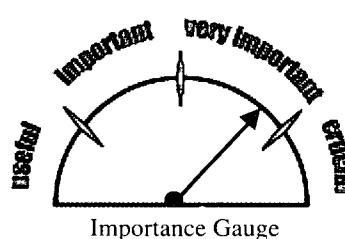
Importance Gauge	MT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	47.5%	9
Number of rural people	379,239	41
Percent of public schools in rural areas	63.2%	4
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	32.5%	6
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	13.2%	23
Average number of students to average number of grades	22.9	4
Percent of rural students attending small schools	8.7%	24
Percent of rural students in poverty	23.4%	11
Urgency Gauge	MT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$22,988	5
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$4,519	15
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	29.8%	21
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	5.6%	35
Average rural student to teacher ratio	13.5	39
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	24.2%	36
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	61.8%	8
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	43.9%	4
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	58.9%	46
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	32%	5

Quintessentially rural, MONTANA ranks in the top ten among states in the percentage of its population living in rural communities, the percentage of public schools and students in rural areas, the percentage of out-of-field teachers who are in rural schools, low average rural teacher salaries, small average rural school size, and the percentage of rural schools with declining enrollment. Rural education is crucial to Montana, and the need for an explicit rural education policy is critical.



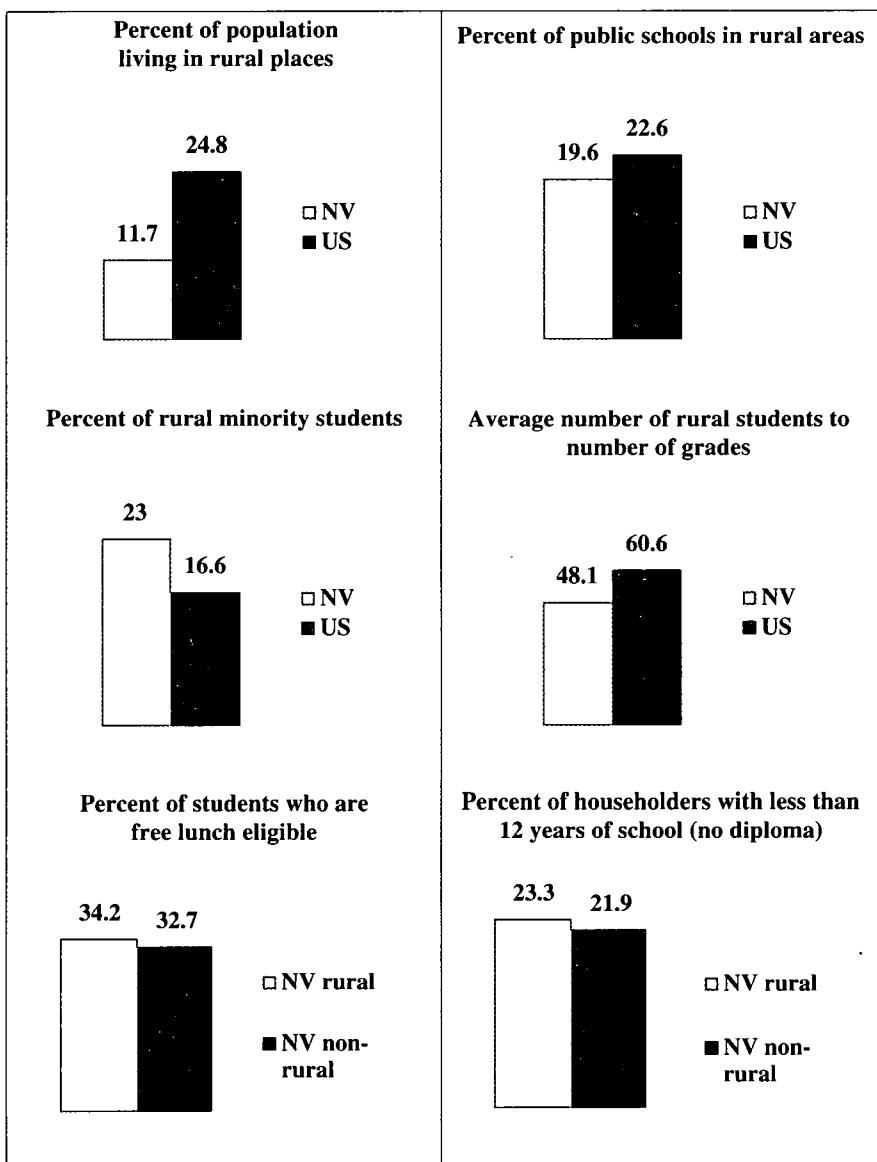
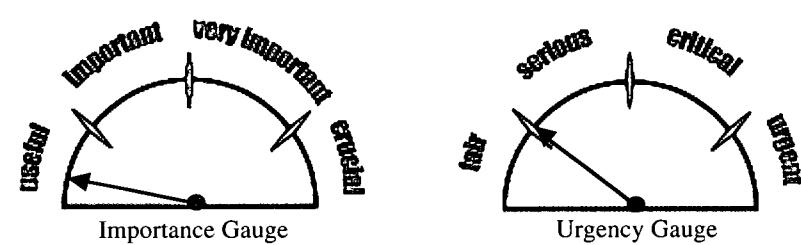
Importance Gauge	NE	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	33.9%	21
Number of rural people	534,401	36
Percent of public schools in rural areas	57.4%	5
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	30.2%	9
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4.3%	36
Average number of students to average number of grades	18.7	2
Percent of rural students attending small schools	9.5%	19
Percent of rural students in poverty	14.2%	32
Urgency Gauge	NE	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$22,434	4
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,362	29
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	19.7%	34
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	8.8%	26
Average rural student to teacher ratio	12.4	45
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	24.5%	34
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	80.5%	32
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	10.8%	39
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	62.9%	49
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	29%	8

More than half of NEBRASKA's public schools are in rural areas. The state has many small schools, and many small classes, but teachers aren't paid much in rural Nebraska and many schools suffer declining enrollment. Still, 64% of what Nebraska spends in rural schools goes for instruction, the second highest rate in the nation, and relatively few teachers are teaching out-of-field. Demographics alone make it very important that Nebraska continuously addresses rural education policy.



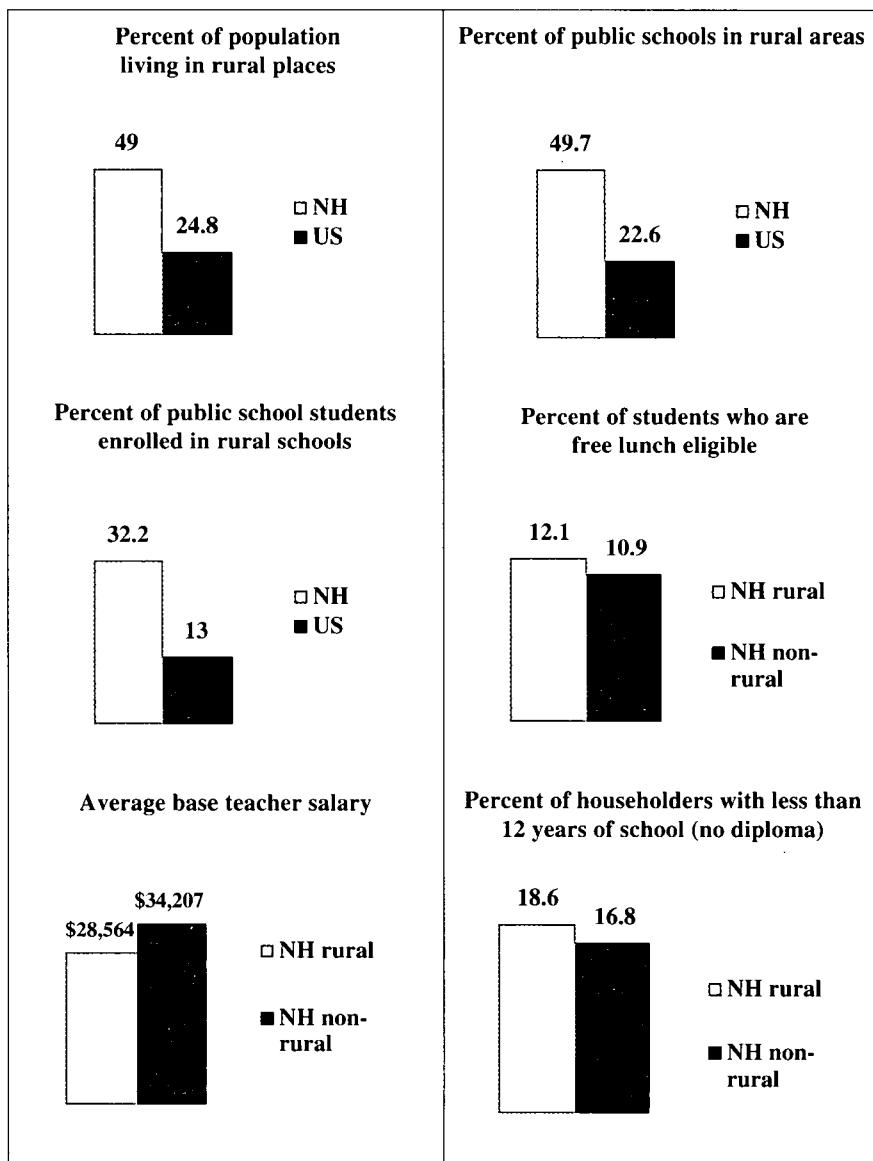
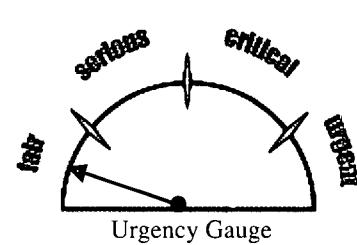
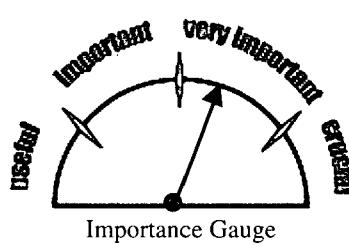
Importance Gauge	NV	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	11.7%	47
Number of rural people	140,389	48
Percent of public schools in rural areas	19.6%	38
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	7.7%	46
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	23%	16
Average number of students to average number of grades	48.1	16
Percent of rural students attending small schools	5.1%	43
Percent of rural students in poverty	12.2%	40
Urgency Gauge	NV	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$32,747	39
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	-\$897	50
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	34.2%	15
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	0%	45
Average rural student to teacher ratio	16.2	19
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	23.3%	39
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	65.9%	14
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	25.5%	22
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	45.4%	4
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	24%	14

Demographically, NEVADA is among the least rural states. It is one of only two states where rural teachers earn more, on average, than other teachers (the other is Utah). It has the fourth lowest percentage of rural school expenditures going to instruction, a low rate of Internet access, and a high rate of rural schools with declining enrollment. Overall, rural is not an important factor in Nevada education, but these deficiencies make the need for an explicit rural education policy serious nonetheless.



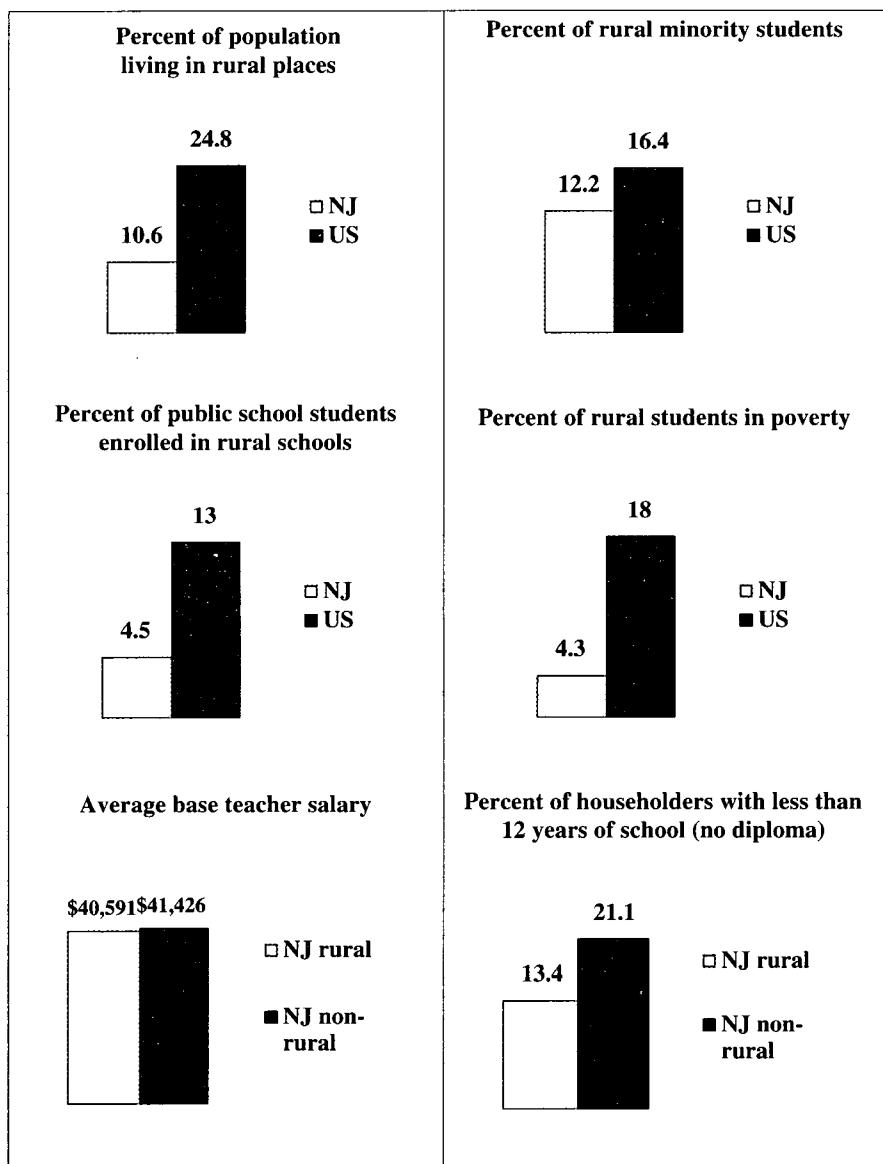
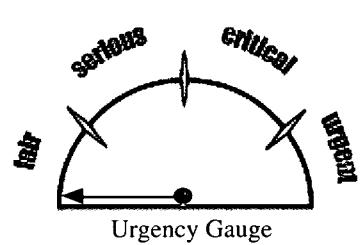
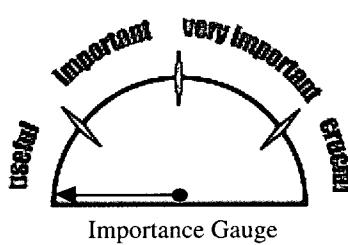
Importance Gauge	NH	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	49%	7
Number of rural people	534,401	35
Percent of public schools in rural areas	49.7%	8
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	32.2%	7
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	1.4%	49
Average number of students to average number of grades	55.1	23
Percent of rural students attending small schools	12.1%	12
Percent of rural students in poverty	8.1%	45
Urgency Gauge	NH	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$28,564	29
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$5,643	10
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	12.1%	40
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	0.5%	44
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.7	27
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	18.6%	44
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	80.9%	33
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	17.4%	29
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	49.7%	10
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	14%	43

NEW HAMPSHIRE has almost half of its population and half of its public schools in rural areas. Close to one third of public school students attend rural schools. It has one of the lowest percentages of rural minority students and of rural students in poverty. Because of its demographics, the need for a rural education policy is very important.



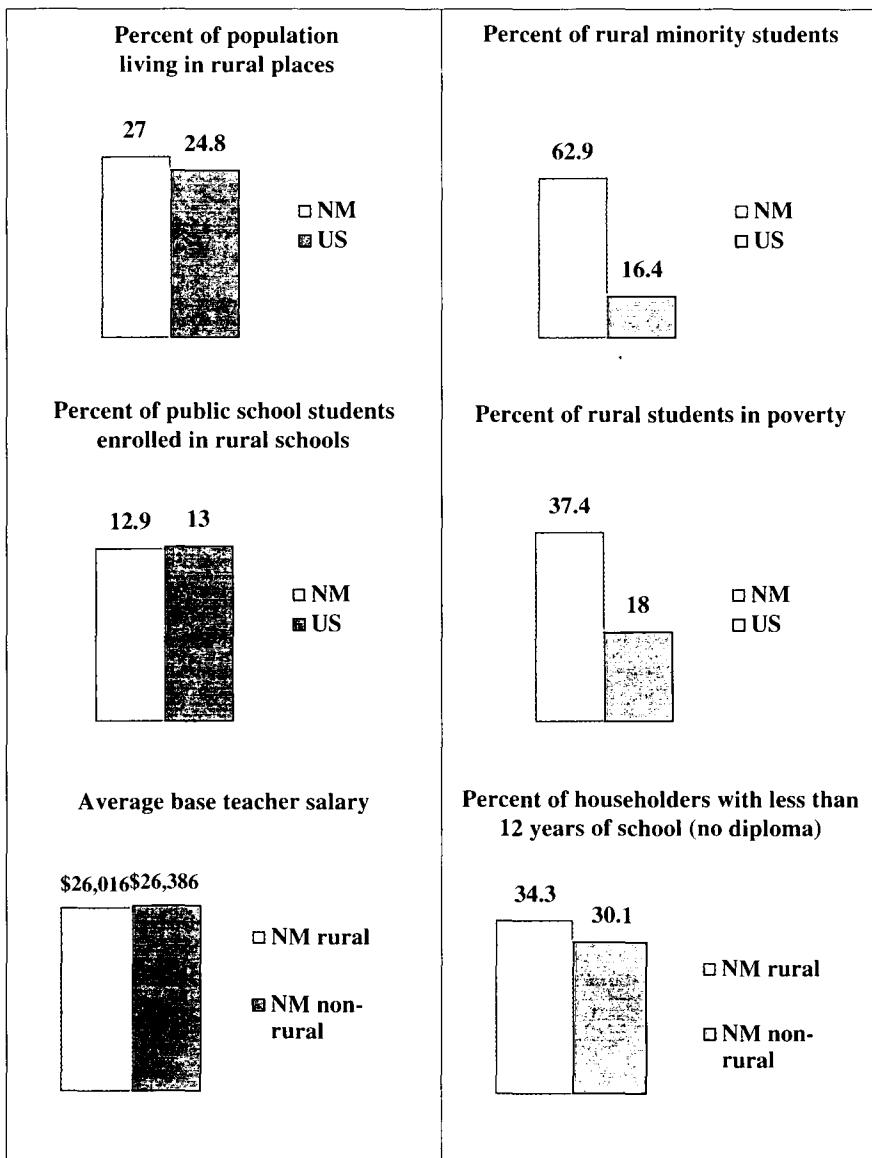
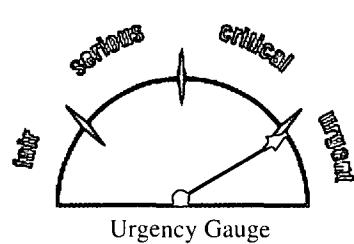
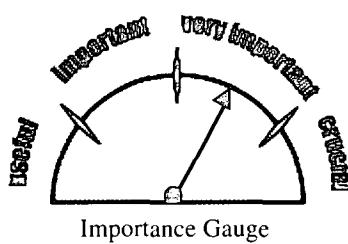
Importance Gauge	NJ	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	10.6%	49
Number of rural people	819,968	30
Percent of public schools in rural areas	4.8%	50
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	4.5%	49
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	12.2%	24
Average number of students to average number of grades	125.7	46
Percent of rural students attending small schools	1%	50
Percent of rural students in poverty	4.3%	49
Urgency Gauge	NJ	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$40,591	47
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$835	45
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	10.1%	42
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	N/A	N/A
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.3	34
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	13.4%	49
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	86%	40
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	6.3%	46
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	48.1%	7
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	14%	41

NEW JERSEY is considered one of the least rural states in the nation, yet there are more than 800,000 people living in rural places in the state. Although New Jersey pays its rural teachers well, rural schools have one of the lowest rates of expenditures going to instruction. Despite having some of the largest rural schools, the rural student to teacher ratio in New Jersey is relatively low. Given the state's demographics and the fair conditions in its rural schools and communities, it would be useful for New Jersey to address rural education policy.



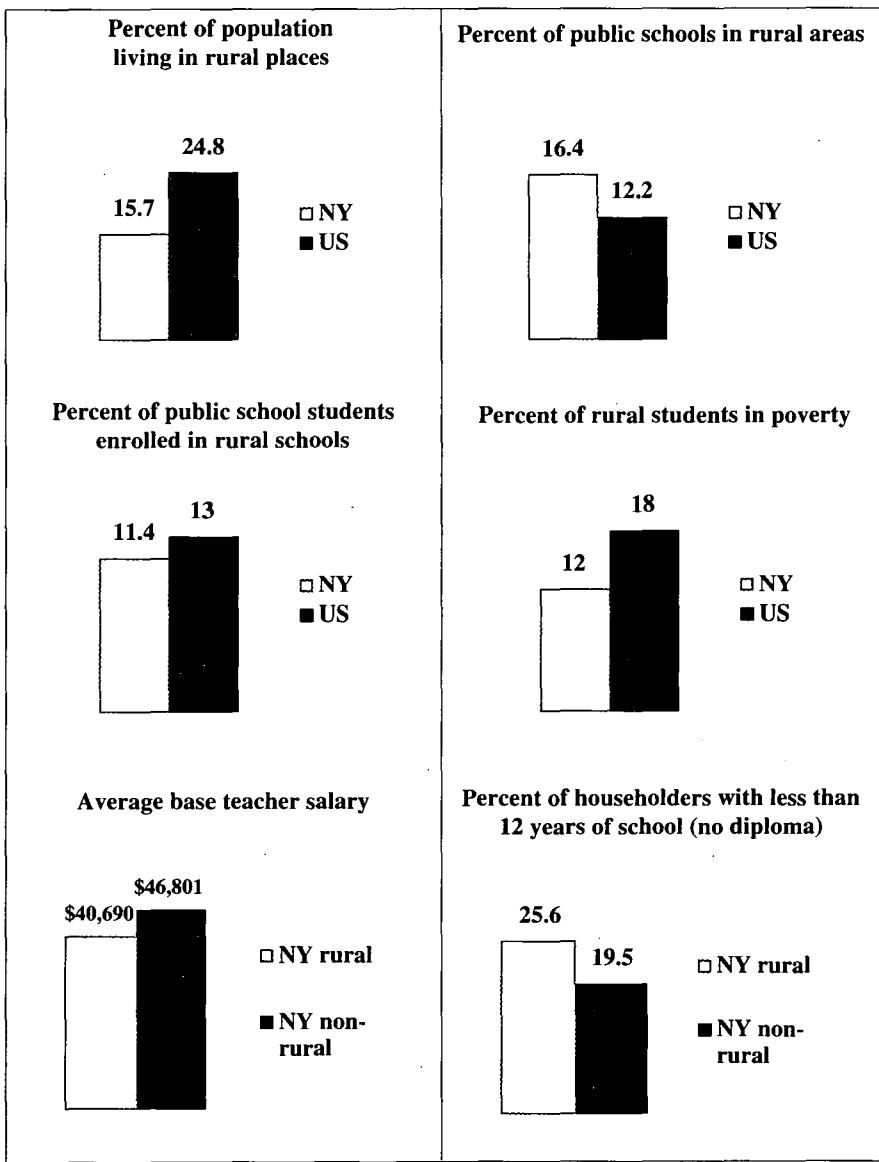
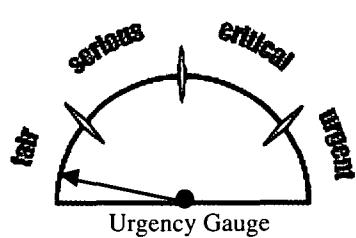
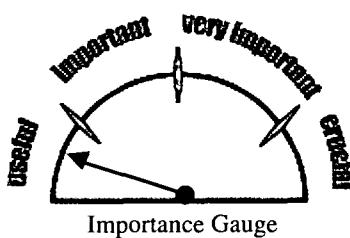
Importance Gauge	NM	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	27%	32
Number of rural people	409,418	39
Percent of public schools in rural areas	28.1%	22
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	12.9%	34
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	62.9%	3
Average number of students to average number of grades	41.8	10
Percent of rural students attending small schools	8.5%	27
Percent of rural students in poverty	37.4%	1
Urgency Gauge	NM	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$26,016	16
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$370	46
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	34.8%	13
Average rural student to teacher ratio	15.5	21
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	34.3%	16
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	64.3%	12
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	16.4%	31
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	44.6%	3
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	27%	11

NEW MEXICO ranks first in rural student poverty and third in rural student minority rates, making it a leader among states whose rural education system is challenged to fulfill expectations. With relatively low rural teacher salaries (but close to par with nonrural teachers), low rates of Internet access in rural schools, over one fourth of rural schools with declining enrollment, and over one third of rural adults with less than 12 years of schooling, New Mexico's need for an explicit rural education policy is urgent.



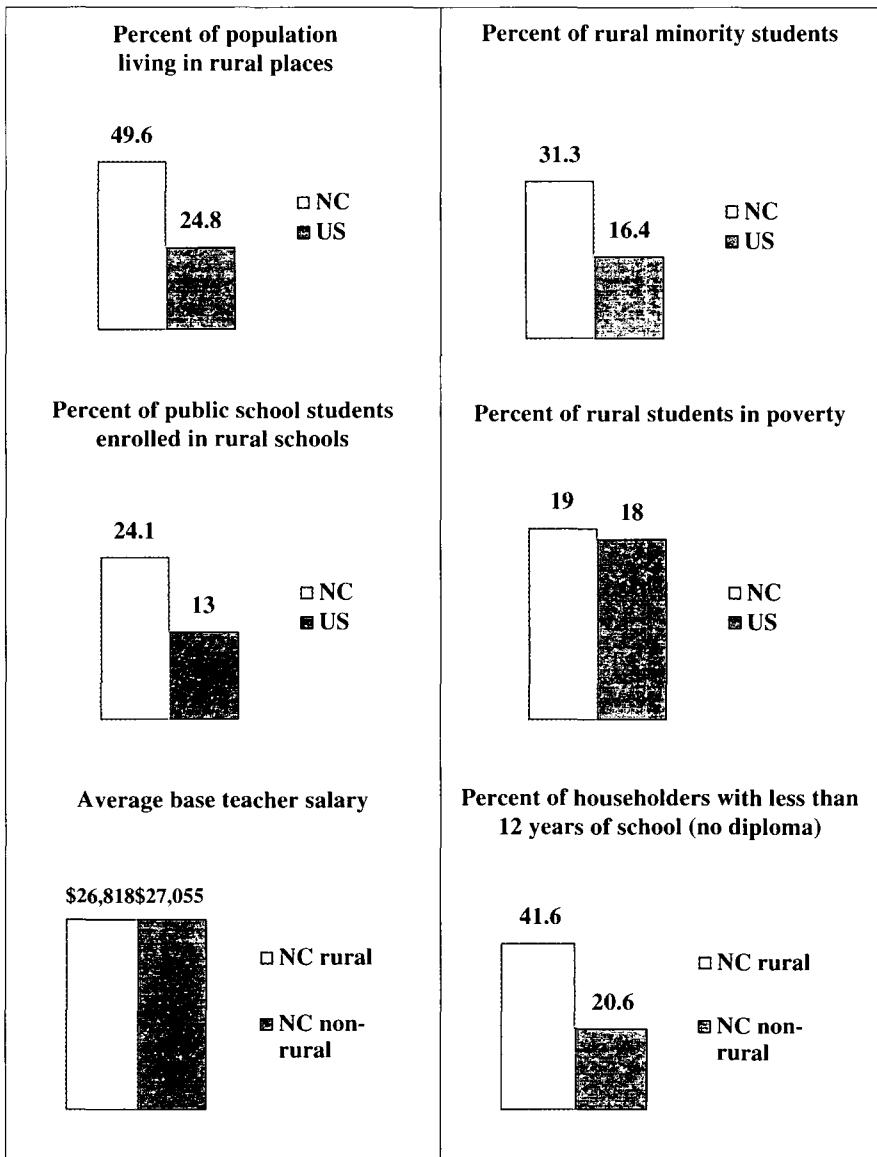
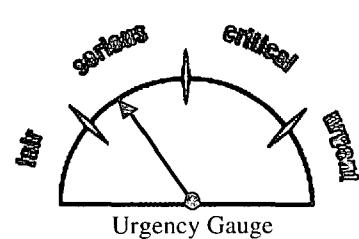
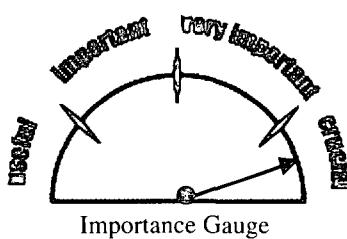
Importance Gauge	NY	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	15.7%	40
Number of rural people	2,826,408	4
Percent of public schools in rural areas	16.4%	41
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	11.4%	40
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4.6%	34
Average number of students to average number of grades	95.4	41
Percent of rural students attending small schools	6.8%	37
Percent of rural students in poverty	12%	41
Urgency Gauge	NY	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$40,690	48
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$6,111	8
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	20.3%	32
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	0.6%	43
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.3	34
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	25.6%	30
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	77.1%	26
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	6.3%	46
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	58.3%	45
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	17%	35

While **NEW YORK** has the 4th largest rural population (2.8 million), 5 of 6 New Yorkers are nonrural, and only 11% of public school students are enrolled in rural schools. Relatively few of them are poor or minorities. Still, the sheer number of rural New Yorkers makes it useful for state policymakers to be concerned with rural education. Rural teachers are paid about as well in New York as anywhere, but still earn 13% less than other New York teachers, among the widest gaps in the nation.



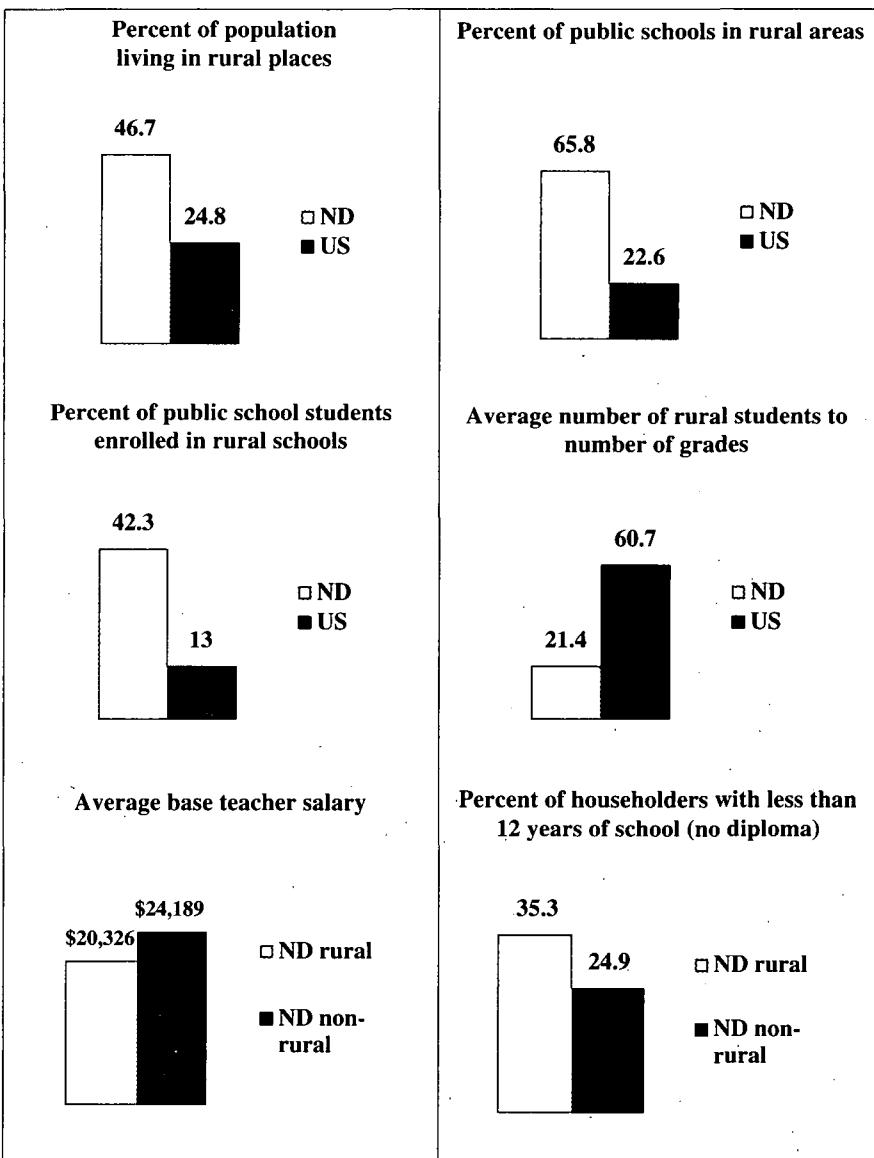
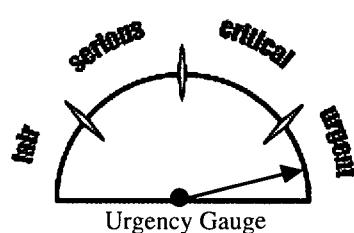
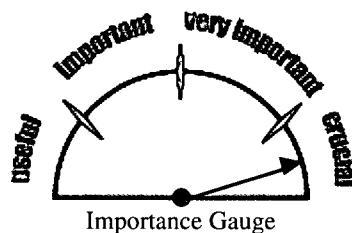
Importance Gauge	NC	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	49.6%	6
Number of rural people	3,290,859	3
Percent of public schools in rural areas	29.1%	21
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	24.1%	15
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	31.3%	9
Average number of students to average number of grades	99.3	44
Percent of rural students attending small schools	10.5%	17
Percent of rural students in poverty	19%	19
Urgency Gauge	NC	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$26,818	22
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$237	48
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	20.3%	32
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	35.2%	12
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.6	29
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	41.6%	11
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	88.1%	42
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	29.5%	14
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	54.1%	35
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	10%	46

NORTH CAROLINA ranks third in number of rural people, sixth in percentage of population that is rural, ninth in percentage of minority rural students and eleventh in the percentage of rural adults with less than a 12th grade education. The gap between rural and other teachers' pay is minimal, and rural schools are big but classes are moderate. Rural education is crucial in North Carolina, and indications are serious that it needs policymakers' attention.



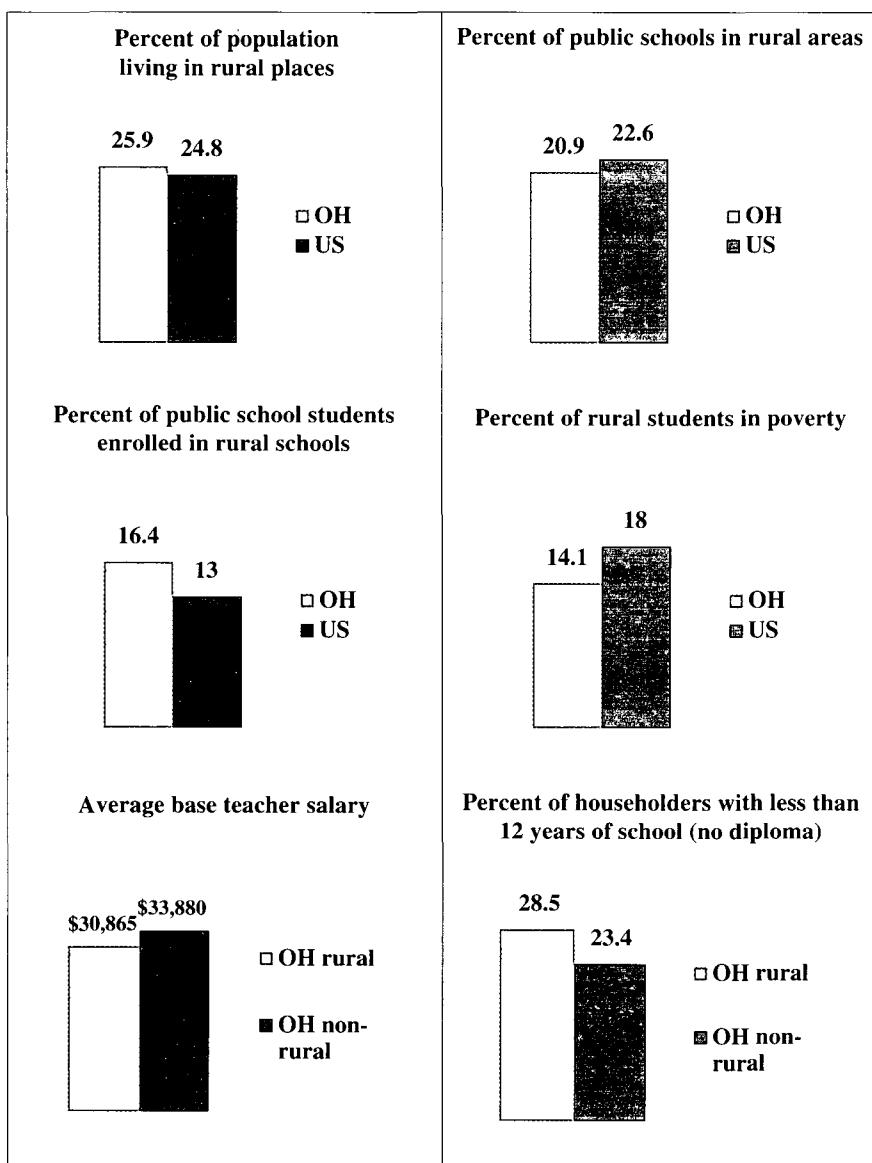
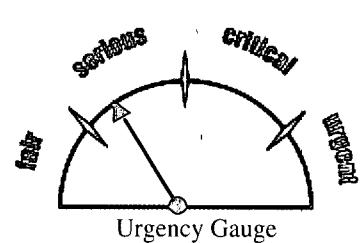
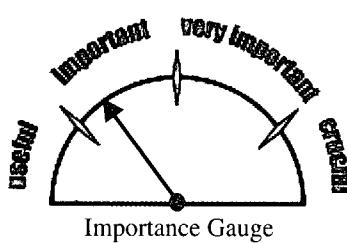
Importance Gauge	ND	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	46.7%	10
Number of rural people	298,461	43
Percent of public schools in rural areas	65.8%	3
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	42.3%	5
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	10.5%	27
Average number of students to average number of grades	21.4	3
Percent of rural students attending small schools	15.2%	4
Percent of rural students in poverty	21.4%	15
Urgency Gauge	ND	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$20,326	1
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$3,863	17
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	28.3%	24
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	30.2%	15
Average rural student to teacher ratio	13	43
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	35.3%	15
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	87.4%	40
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	49.9%	3
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	48.5%	8
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	35%	4

NORTH DAKOTA is among the top five states in the percentage of schools, students, and people in rural places. Its rural schools are especially small, its rural population surprisingly poor, and, due to Native American enrollment, its rural student population more heavily minority than the national average. Rural teachers earn less here than anywhere in the nation. More than one-third of rural adults have less than a 12th grade education. Only three other states have more schools with declining enrollments. Rural schools are crucial in North Dakota, and the need for policy attention is urgent.



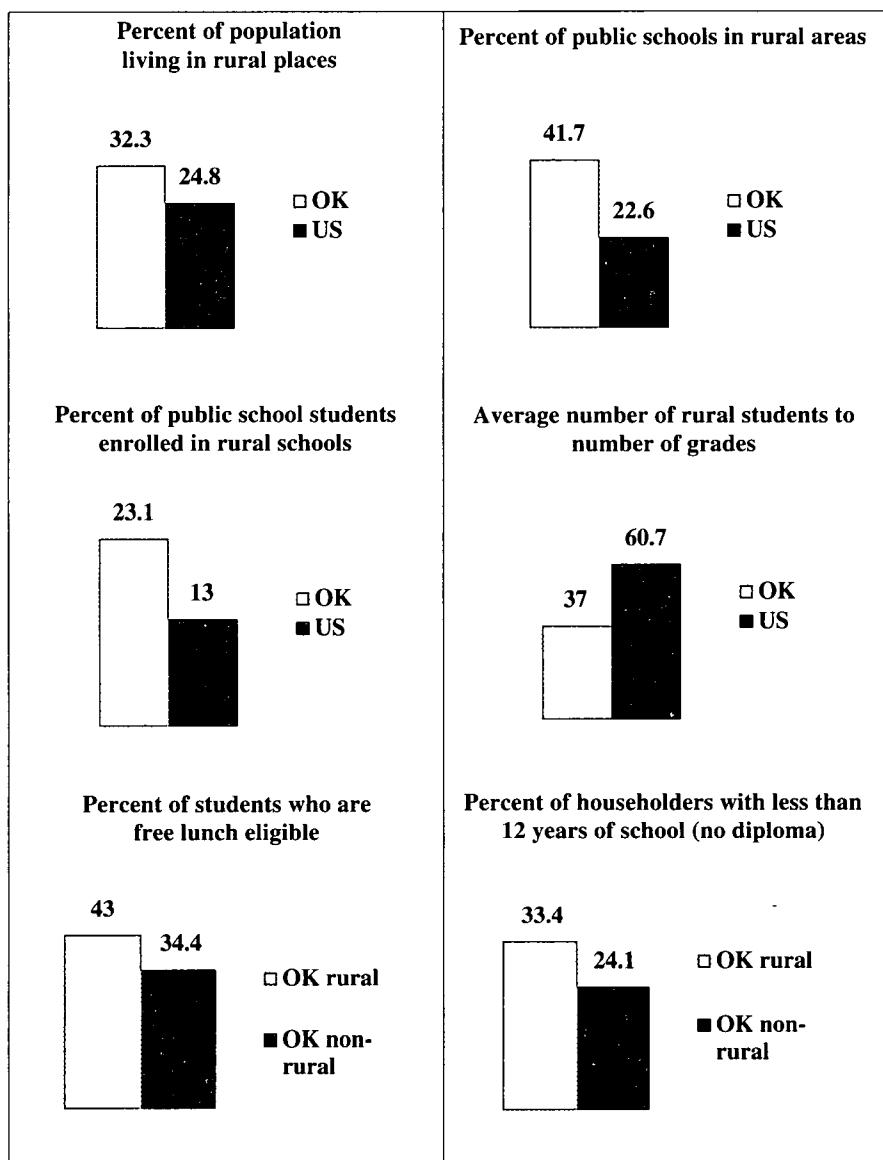
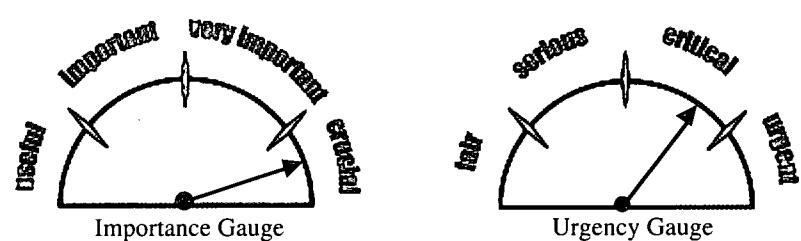
Importance Gauge	OH	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	25.9%	34
Number of rural people	2,807,706	5
Percent of public schools in rural areas	20.9%	33
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	16.4%	31
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	1.9%	46
Average number of students to average number of grades	77.4	32
Percent of rural students attending small schools	7.8%	30
Percent of rural students in poverty	14.1%	33
Urgency Gauge	OH	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$30,865	34
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$3,015	23
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	15.8%	37
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	11%	23
Average rural student to teacher ratio	18.4	4
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	28.5%	25
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	68.5%	16
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	27.4%	19
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	53.7%	32
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	13%	44

More than one in four people in **OHIO** live in rural areas, the fifth largest number of rural people in the nation (2.8 million). Rural schools have less than one sixth of the state's students, but more than one fourth of the state's teachers who teach out-of-field. They also have one of the highest rural student-to-teacher ratios in the nation. With so many rural people in the state, rural schools are important, and the need for policy attention is serious.



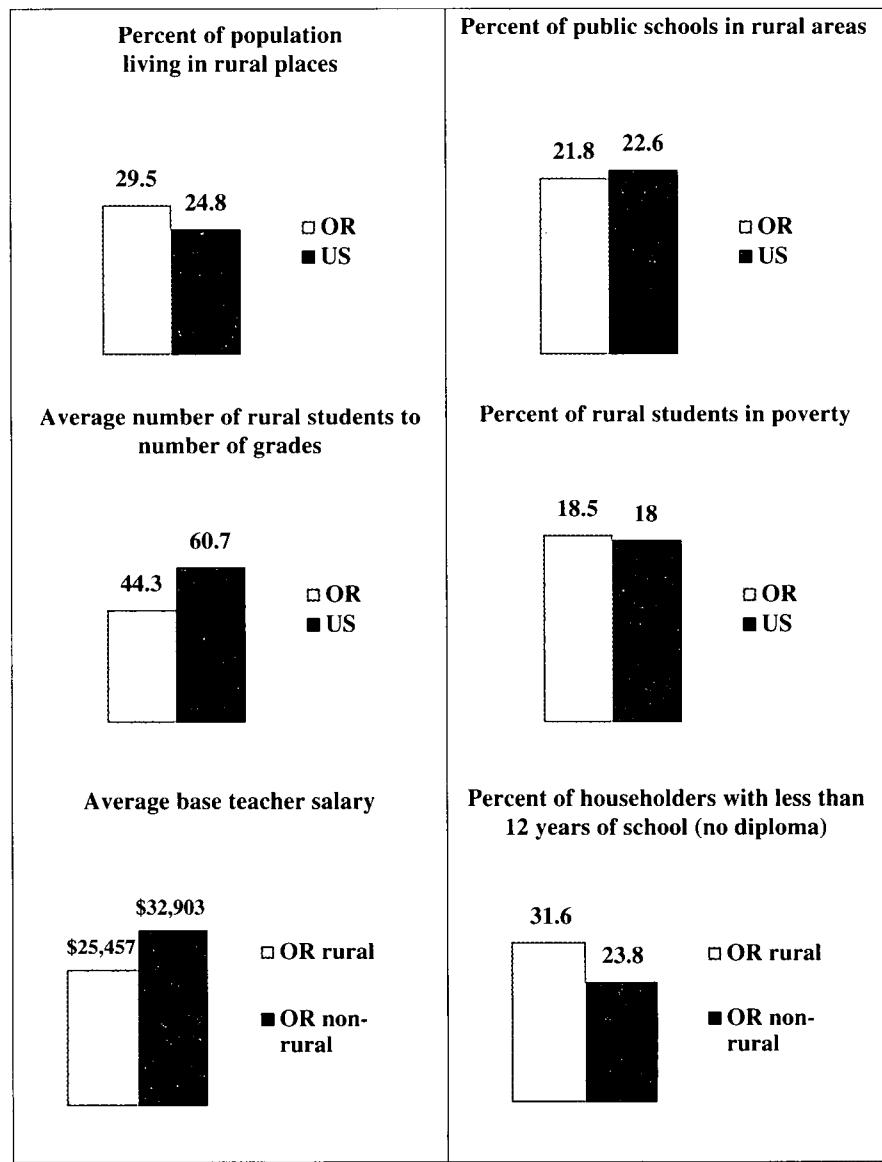
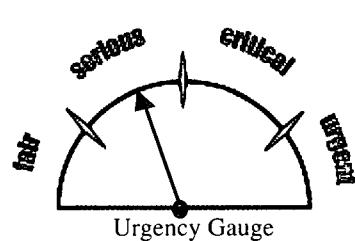
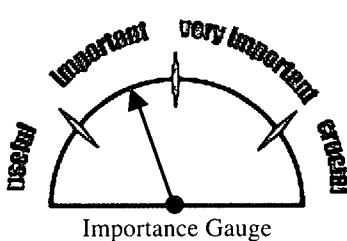
Importance Gauge	OK	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	32.3%	23
Number of rural people	1,015,446	26
Percent of public schools in rural areas	41.7%	15
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	23.1%	16
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	29.1%	13
Average number of students to average number of grades	37	7
Percent of rural students attending small schools	13.9%	7
Percent of rural students in poverty	21.7%	14
Urgency Gauge	OK	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$25,622	14
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$1,092	43
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	43%	8
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	32.6%	14
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.5	31
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	33.4%	18
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	43.3%	1
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	34.6%	10
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	56.6%	43
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	18%	27

OKLAHOMA ranks in the top third among states in five of eight "importance" indicators, including the percentage of schools and students in rural areas, the smallness of its schools, and the percentage of its students who are minorities (largely Native American). Its rural schools are the least "connected" to the Internet in the nation, rural poverty is widespread, and rural teachers' salaries are relatively low. Rural schools are crucial to the state's educational performance, and the need for explicit rural policy is critical.



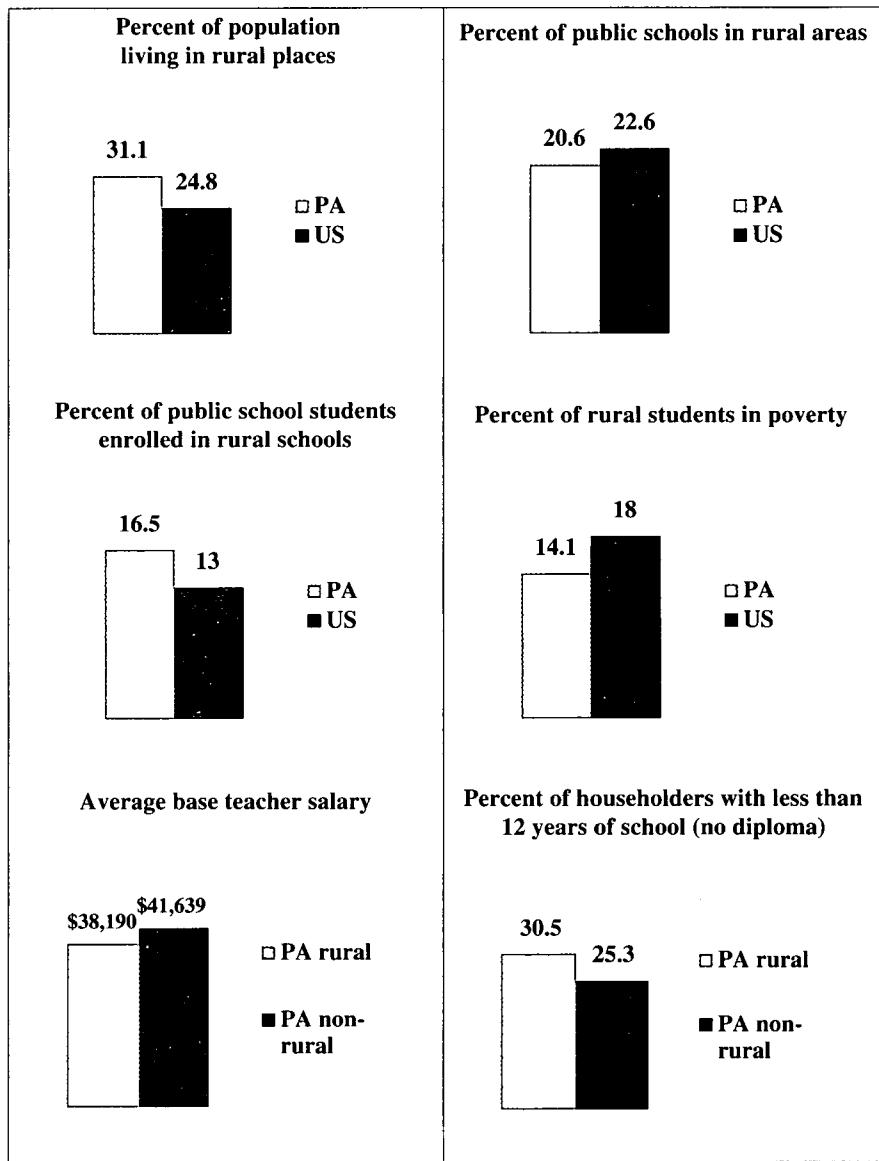
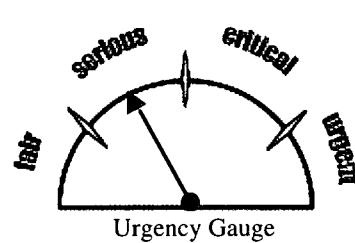
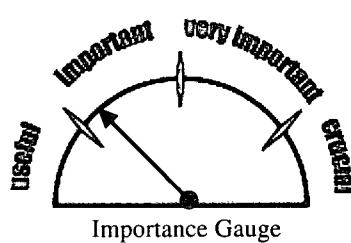
Importance Gauge	OR	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	29.5%	30
Number of rural people	839,050	29
Percent of public schools in rural areas	21.8%	31
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	11.6%	39
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	11.4%	26
Average number of students to average number of grades	44.3	12
Percent of rural students attending small schools	8%	29
Percent of rural students in poverty	18.5%	21
Urgency Gauge	OR	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$25,457	13
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$7,446	6
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	31.6%	19
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	4.1%	40
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.5	8
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	24.6%	33
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	79.5%	31
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	8.1%	44
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	55.7%	38
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	22%	18

OREGON ranks near the middle on most of the “importance” indicators, but pays its rural teachers poorly and a lot less than its nonrural teachers. Oregon has above average rural poverty rates, suffers declining enrollment in 22% of its rural schools, and has above average rural school and class size. It seriously needs an explicit rural education policy.



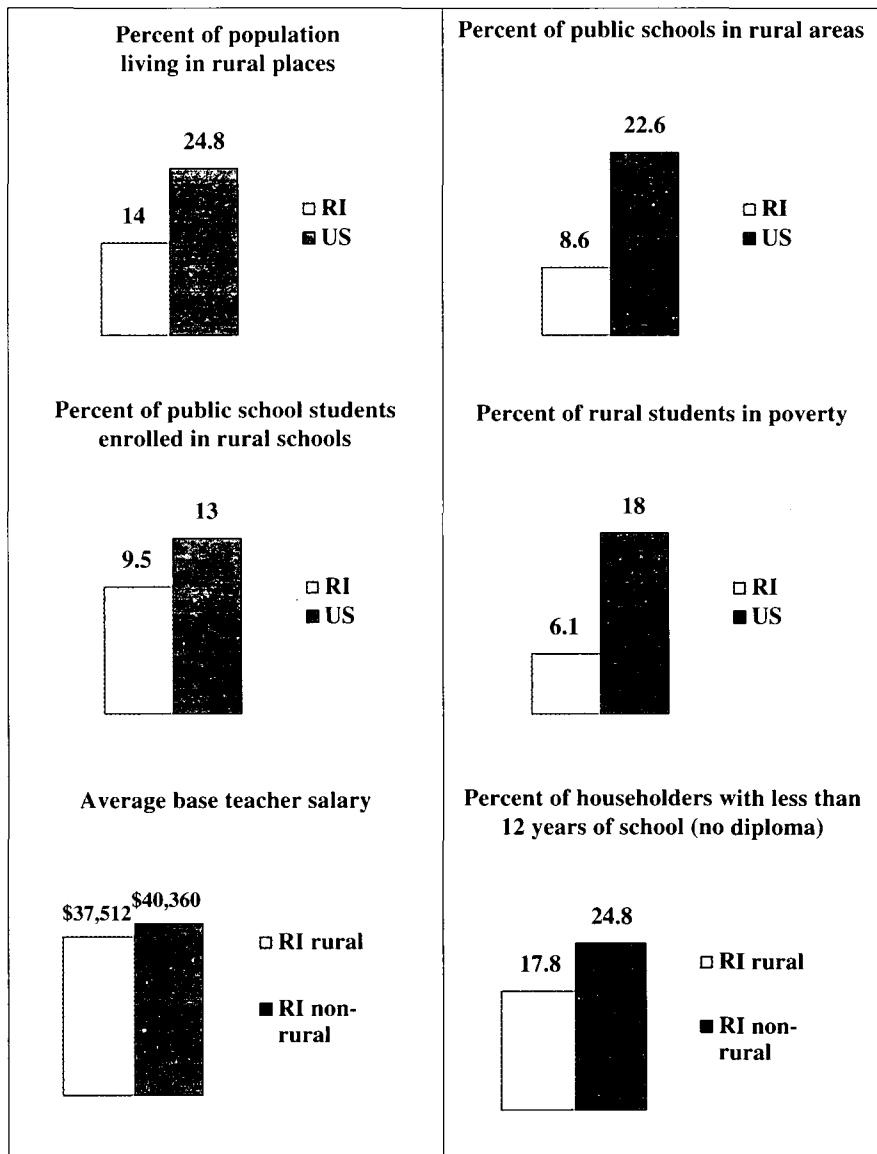
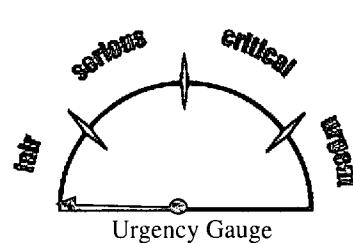
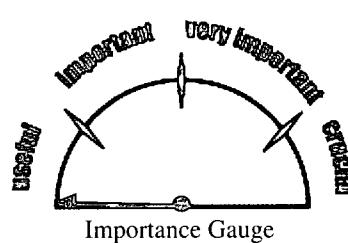
Importance Gauge	PA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	31.1%	26
Number of rural people	3,693,348	1
Percent of public schools in rural areas	20.6%	36
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	16.5%	30
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.7%	40
Average number of students to average number of grades	98.8	43
Percent of rural students attending small schools	6.0%	39
Percent of rural students in poverty	14.1%	33
Urgency Gauge	PA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$38,190	46
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$3,449	20
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	10.9%	24
Average rural student to teacher ratio	17.2	11
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	30.5%	22
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	62.3%	9
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	9.4%	42
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	51.9%	22
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	16%	39

PENNSYLVANIA has more rural people than any other state (3.7 million). Its rural schools are poorly connected to the Internet, rural class sizes are large, and although rural teachers are paid quite well, they are paid a lot less than nonrural teachers in the state. Rural education is important in Pennsylvania, and policymakers need to give serious attention to rural school policy.



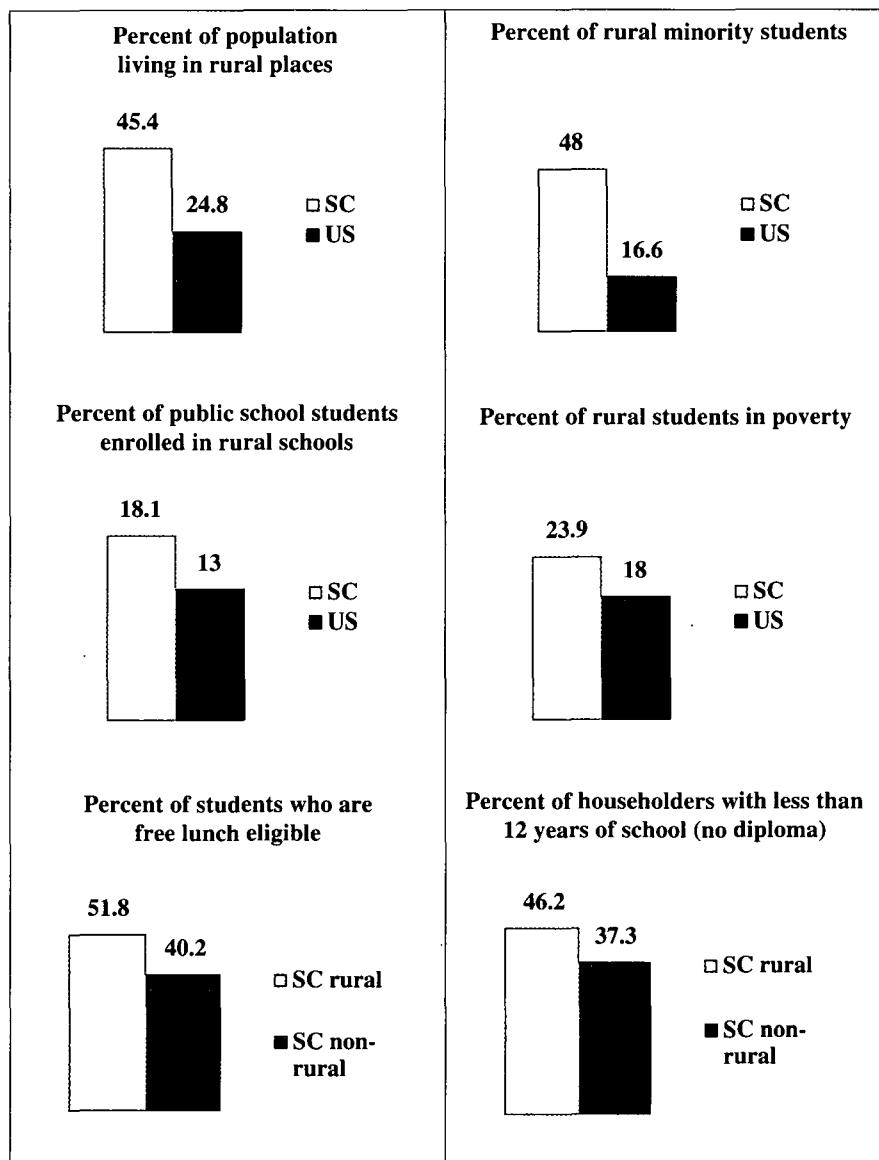
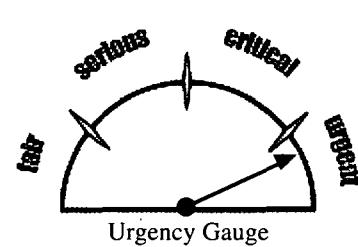
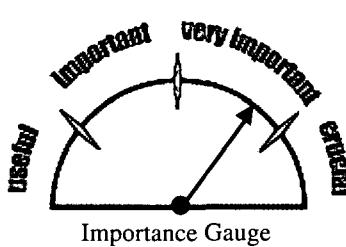
Importance Gauge	RI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	14%	44
Number of rural people	140,083	49
Percent of public schools in rural areas	8.6%	47
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	9.5%	44
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	3.8%	38
Average number of students to average number of grades	134.6	50
Percent of rural students attending small schools	1.4%	49
Percent of rural students in poverty	6.1%	47
Urgency Gauge	RI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$37,512	45
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,848	24
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	11.3%	41
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	0	45
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.6	29
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	17.8%	45
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	75%	22
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	2.5%	50
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	60.1%	48
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	8%	48

One of the least rural states, **RHODE ISLAND** has fewer rural people than any state in the nation and ranks in the bottom 10 on 7 of 8 "importance" indicators, and in the bottom half on 7 of 9 "urgency" indicators.



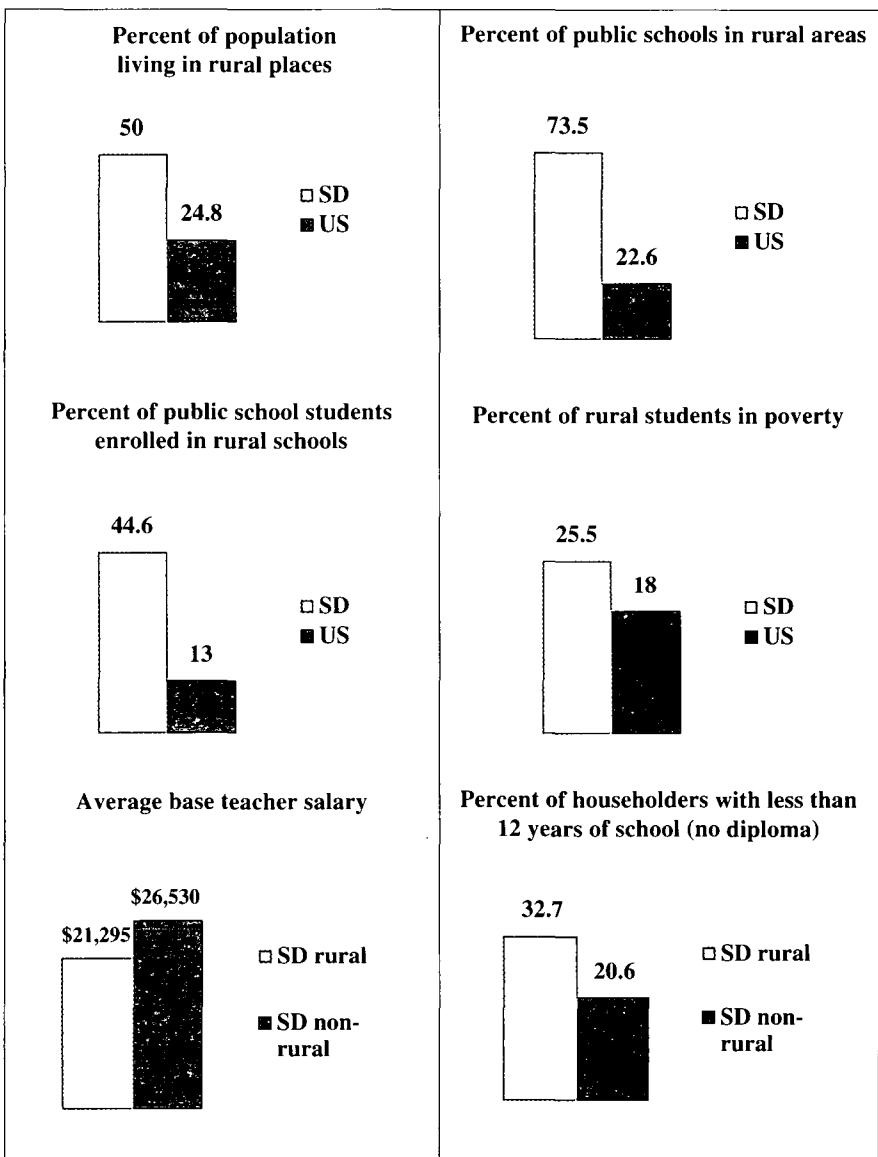
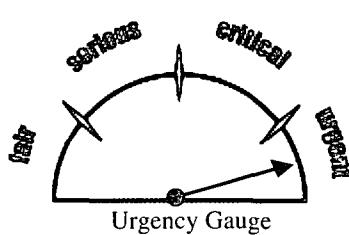
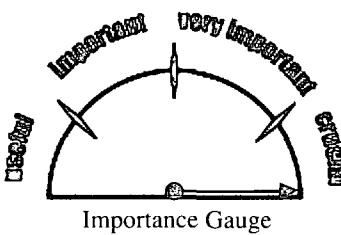
Importance Gauge	SC	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	45.4%	12
Number of rural people	1,581,325	18
Percent of public schools in rural areas	23.8%	28
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	18.1%	28
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	48%	5
Average number of students to average number of grades	96.4	42
Percent of rural students attending small schools	9.6%	18
Percent of rural students in poverty	23.9%	10
Urgency Gauge	SC	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$28,068	27
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$315	47
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	51.8%	2
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	54.7%	6
Average rural student to teacher ratio	15.3	23
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	46.2%	4
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	73.8%	20
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	17.3%	30
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	50.5%	13
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	21%	24

SOUTH CAROLINA'S rural population is large (1.6 million) and demographically important (45% of the total population). Nearly half its rural students are eligible for free lunches and more than half are minorities. Nearly half of rural adults haven't finished high school (ranked fourth in the nation) and barely half of rural school expenditures go for instruction. Rural education is very important to South Carolina, and its policymakers urgently need to address rural school needs.



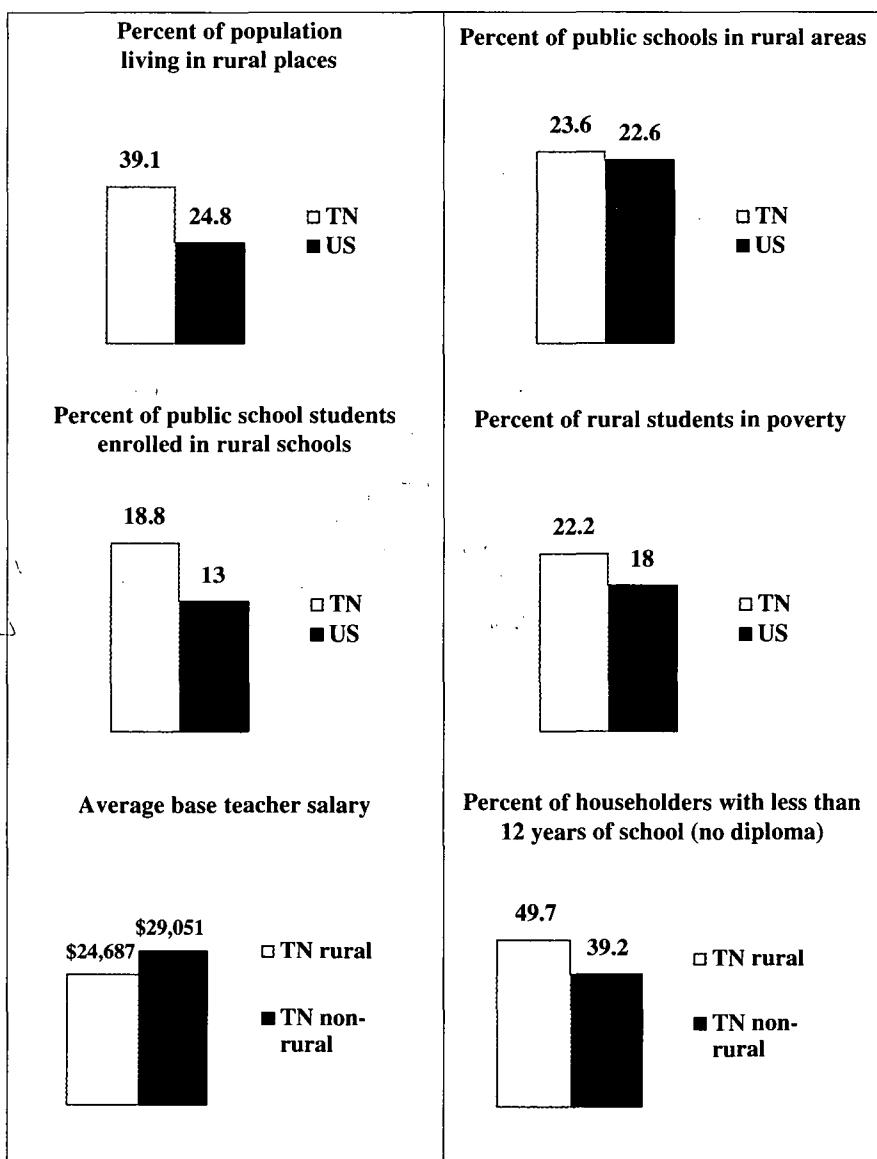
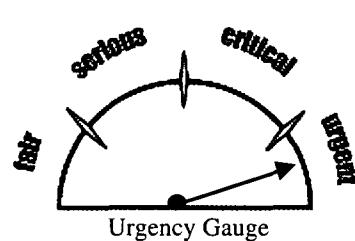
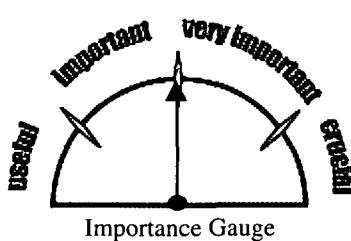
Importance Gauge	SD	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	50%	5
Number of rural people	348,101	42
Percent of public schools in rural areas	73.5%	1
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	44.6%	4
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	15.3%	22
Average number of students to average number of grades	24.5	5
Percent of rural students attending small schools	12.1%	13
Percent of rural students in poverty	25.5%	8
Urgency Gauge	SD	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$21,295	2
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$5,235	13
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	40.4%	12
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	29.2%	16
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14	36
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	32.7%	20
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	76.7%	24
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	60%	1
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	56%	39
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	31%	6

Nearly three quarters of **SOUTH DAKOTA**'s public schools are in rural areas—more than in any other state. It ranks in the top five among states in the percentage of people living in rural places, students attending rural schools, and the smallness of its average rural school. Moreover, more than one fourth of its rural students live in poverty and one sixth are minorities (mainly Native American). South Dakota pays its rural teachers less than any state except North Dakota, and they earn 20% less than nonrural teachers. Rural schools are crucial to the state's education system, and the need for rural education policy attention is urgent.



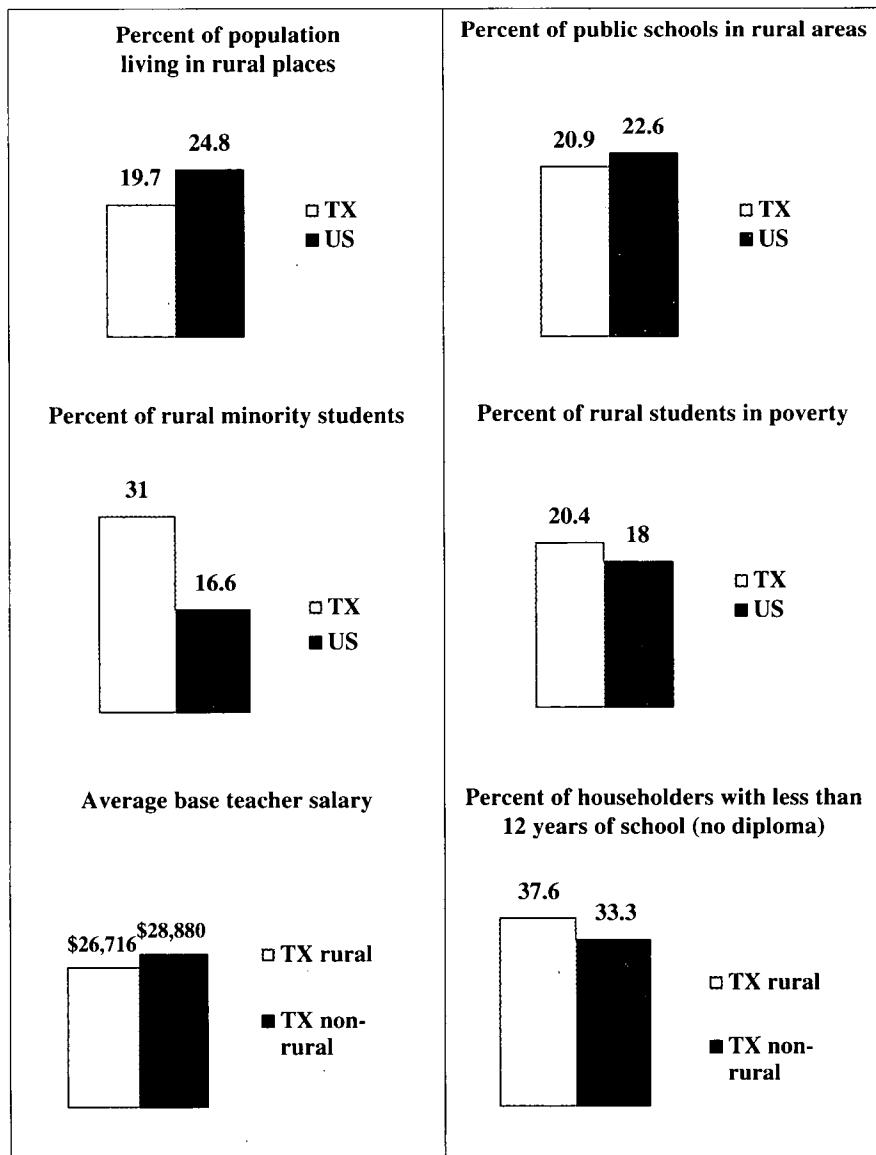
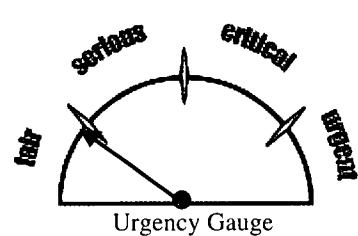
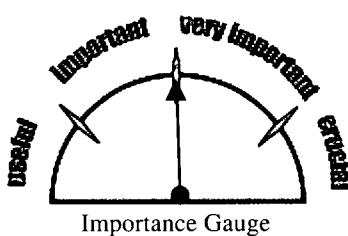
Importance Gauge	TN	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	39.1%	16
Number of rural people	1,907,237	11
Percent of public schools in rural areas	23.6%	29
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	18.8%	25
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	7.9%	29
Average number of students to average number of grades	87.5	37
Percent of rural students attending small schools	8.1%	28
Percent of rural students in poverty	22.2%	13
Urgency Gauge	TN	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$24,687	12
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$4,364	16
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	67.6%	1
Average rural student to teacher ratio	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	49.7%	2
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	75.8%	23
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	19.7%	26
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	54.9%	36
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	17%	33

With nearly two in five people living in rural places, **TENNESSEE** is among the most populous rural states (1.9 million rural people). Almost one fourth of its rural students live in poverty and nearly half its rural adults didn't finish high school (rank second). Rural teachers are paid poorly and earn 15% less than their nonrural counterparts. Rural schools are very important to the educational system of Tennessee, and the policy needs of these schools urgently need to be addressed.



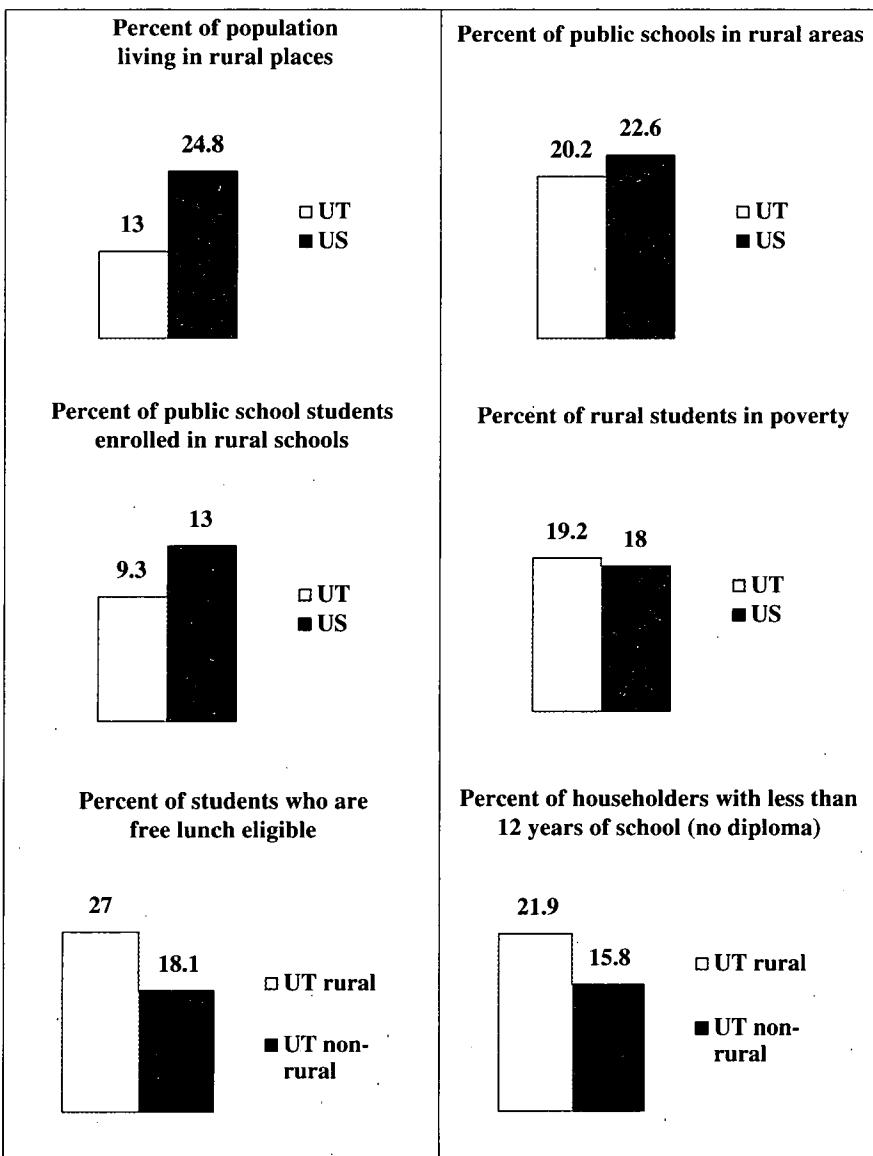
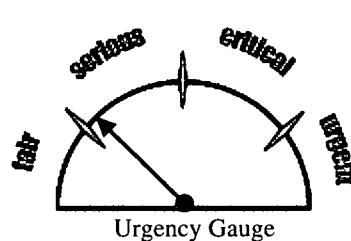
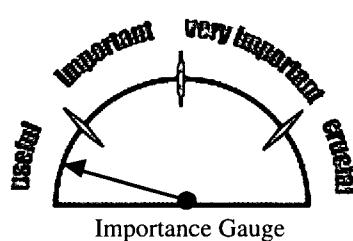
Importance Gauge	TX	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	19.7%	37
Number of rural people	3,351,993	2
Percent of public schools in rural areas	20.9%	33
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	10.2%	41
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	31%	11
Average number of students to average number of grades	58.7	25
Percent of rural students attending small schools	7%	35
Percent of rural students in poverty	20.4%	16
Urgency Gauge	TX	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$26,716	21
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,164	34
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	34.2%	15
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	24.1%	18
Average rural student to teacher ratio	12.9	44
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	37.6%	13
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	83.9%	38
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	12.4%	37
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	52.5%	26
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	17%	30

Over 3.3 million people live in rural TEXAS (rank second), but that is only 20% of the state's population, making it far less "rural" demographically than most states. Only one tenth of its students attend school in a rural community, but more than one third qualify for free lunches and nearly one third are minorities. With a large rural population widely dispersed between big cities, Texas' rural schools are important to the educational performance of the state, and clearly in need of policy consideration.



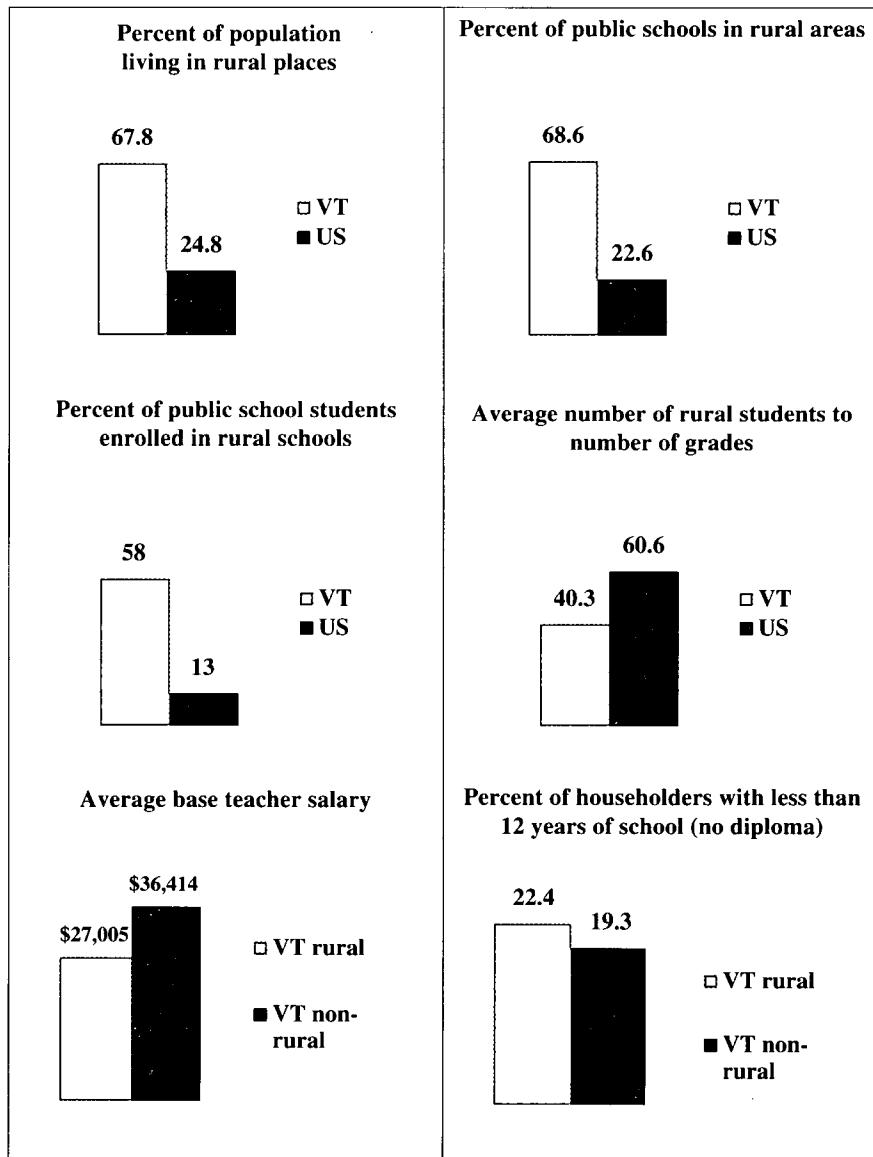
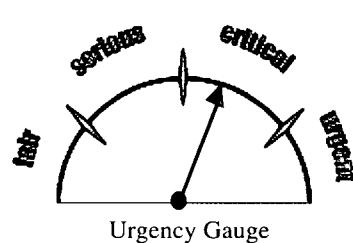
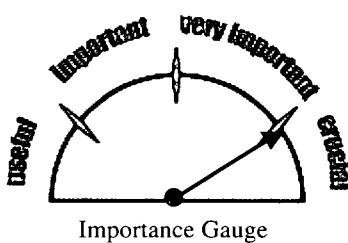
Importance Gauge	UT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	13%	45
Number of rural people	223,769	44
Percent of public schools in rural areas	20.2%	37
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	9.3%	45
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	12%	25
Average number of students to average number of grades	63.3	27
Percent of rural students attending small schools	6.2%	38
Percent of rural students in poverty	19.2%	18
Urgency Gauge	UT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$25,679	15
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$-283	49
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	27%	25
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	7.3%	29
Average rural student to teacher ratio	16.9	14
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	21.9%	42
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	76.7%	25
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	13.3%	34
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	51.7%	20
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	29%	9

UTAH does not have many rural people (rank 44) and they do not constitute a very large percentage of the state's population (rank 45). Very few of its students go to rural schools, and nearly one third of the rural schools suffer declining enrollment. Teacher pay in rural Utah is about average for rural America, and this is one of only two states (the other is Nevada) where the average rural teacher pay is higher than for nonrural teachers.



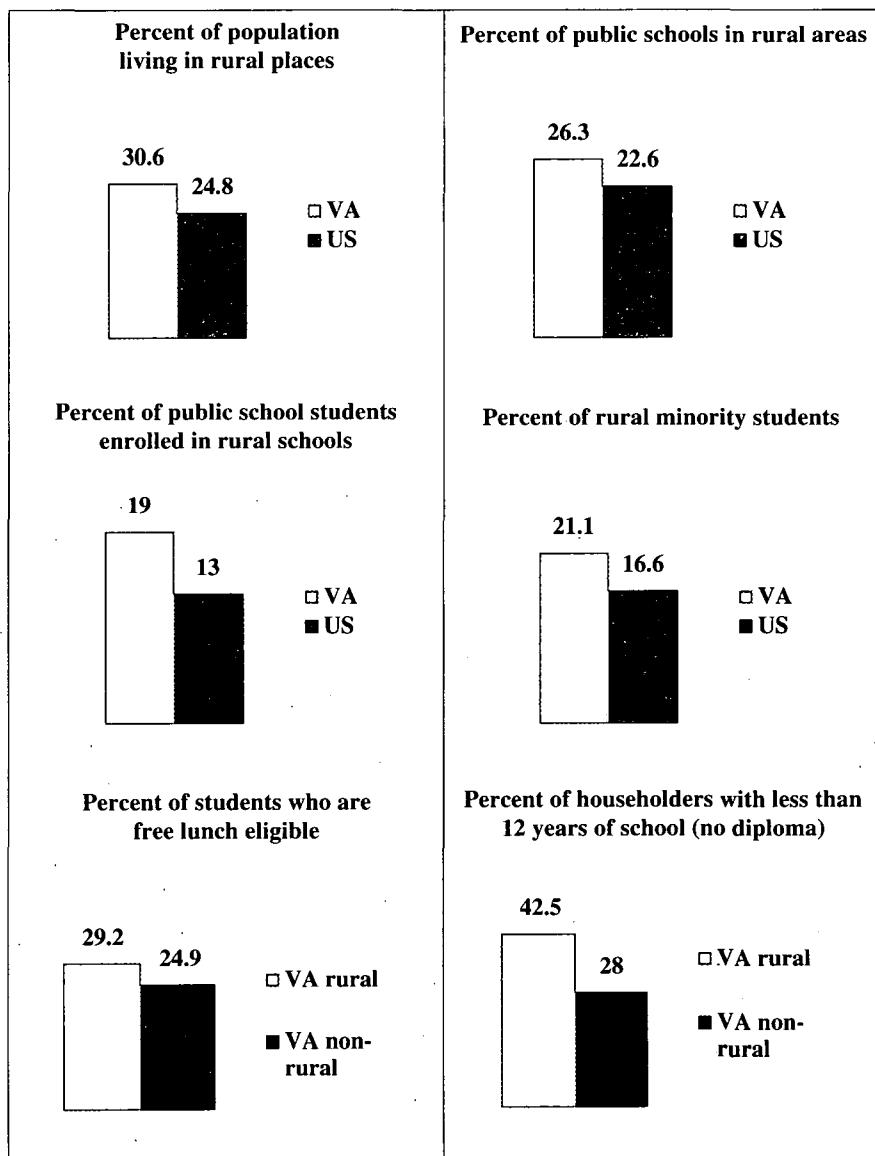
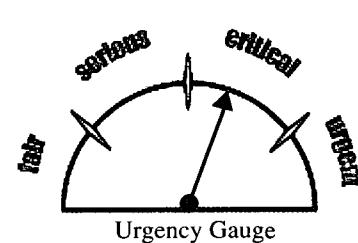
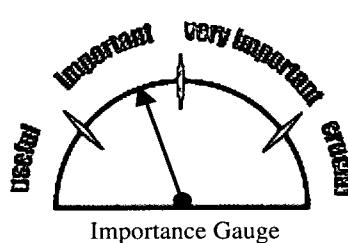
Importance Gauge	VT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	67.8%	1
Number of rural people	381,609	40
Percent of public schools in rural areas	68.6%	2
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	58%	1
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	1.6%	47
Average number of students to average number of grades	40.3	9
Percent of rural students attending small schools	15.1%	5
Percent of rural students in poverty	12%	41
Urgency Gauge	VT	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$27,005	23
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$9,409	2
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	32.6%	17
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	1.3%	42
Average rural student to teacher ratio	13.4	40
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	22.4%	41
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	95.2%	48
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	25%	23
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	42.2%	1
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	21%	22

VERMONT ranks first in the percentage of its population living in rural places and students attending rural schools, and ranks second in the percentage of schools located in rural places. There are few rural minorities and relatively little rural poverty. Rural teachers are paid about the national rural average, but a whopping 26% less than nonrural teachers in Vermont. Rural schools spend less of their budget on instruction than in any other state, but more than 95% of rural schools are connected to the Internet. Rural schools are crucial to Vermont's educational system, and the need for policy attention is critical.



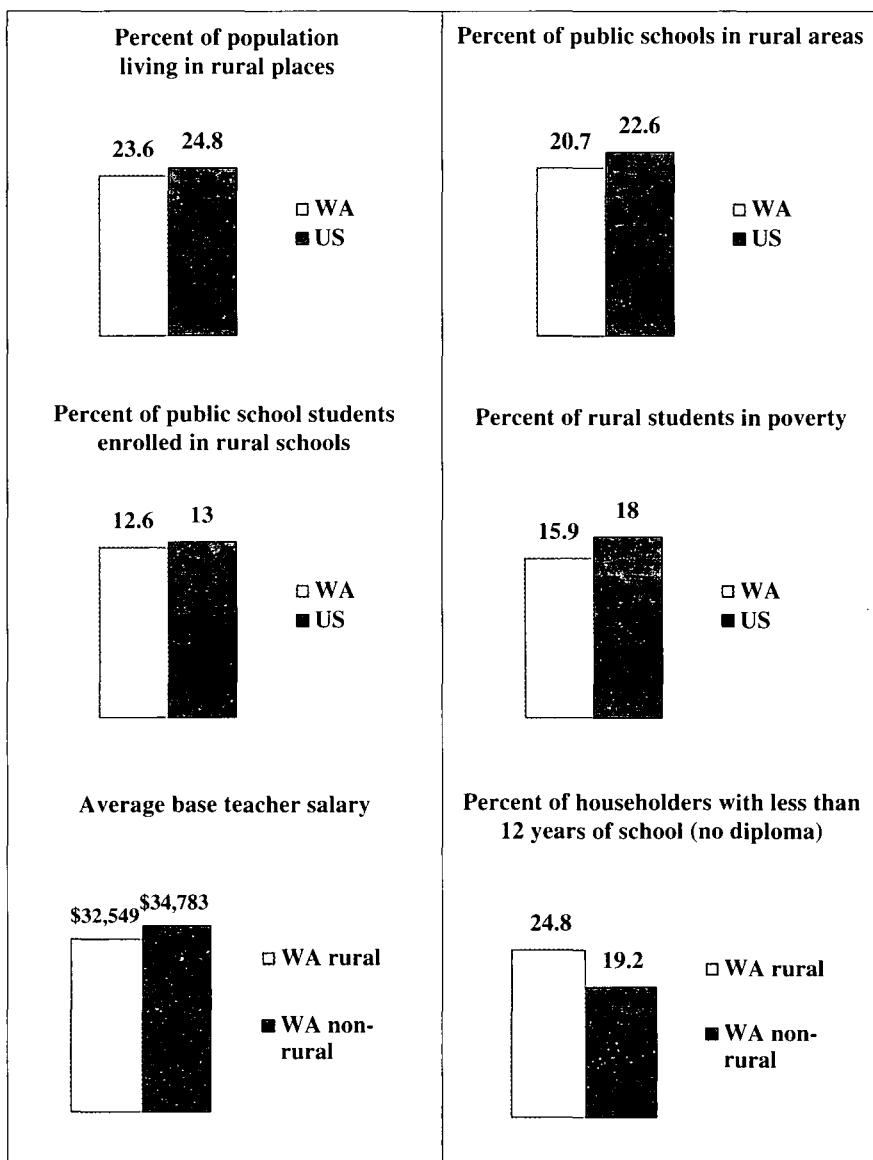
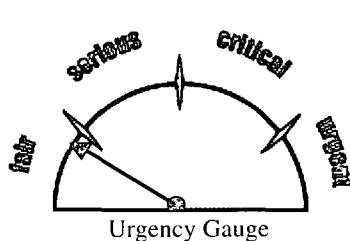
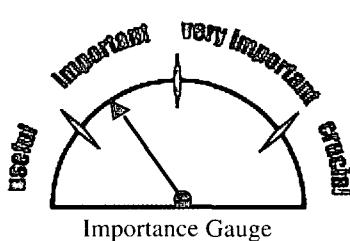
Importance Gauge	VA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	30.6%	28
Number of rural people	1,893,915	12
Percent of public schools in rural areas	26.3%	24
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	19%	24
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	21.1%	17
Average number of students to average number of grades	101.7	45
Percent of rural students attending small schools	9.3%	21
Percent of rural students in poverty	14.9%	29
Urgency Gauge	VA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$27,358	26
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$3,655	19
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	29.2%	23
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	37.1%	11
Average rural student to teacher ratio	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	42.5%	8
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	90.5%	45
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	31%	12
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	53.3%	30
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	16%	40

In VIRGINIA, nearly 1.9 million people live in rural places, and on most other indicators, the rural factor is moderately important. More than two in five rural adults lack a high school education and nearly one third of the teachers teaching out-of-field serve rural students. Overall, Virginia's rural schools are an important part of the state's education system, and the need for policy attention is critical.



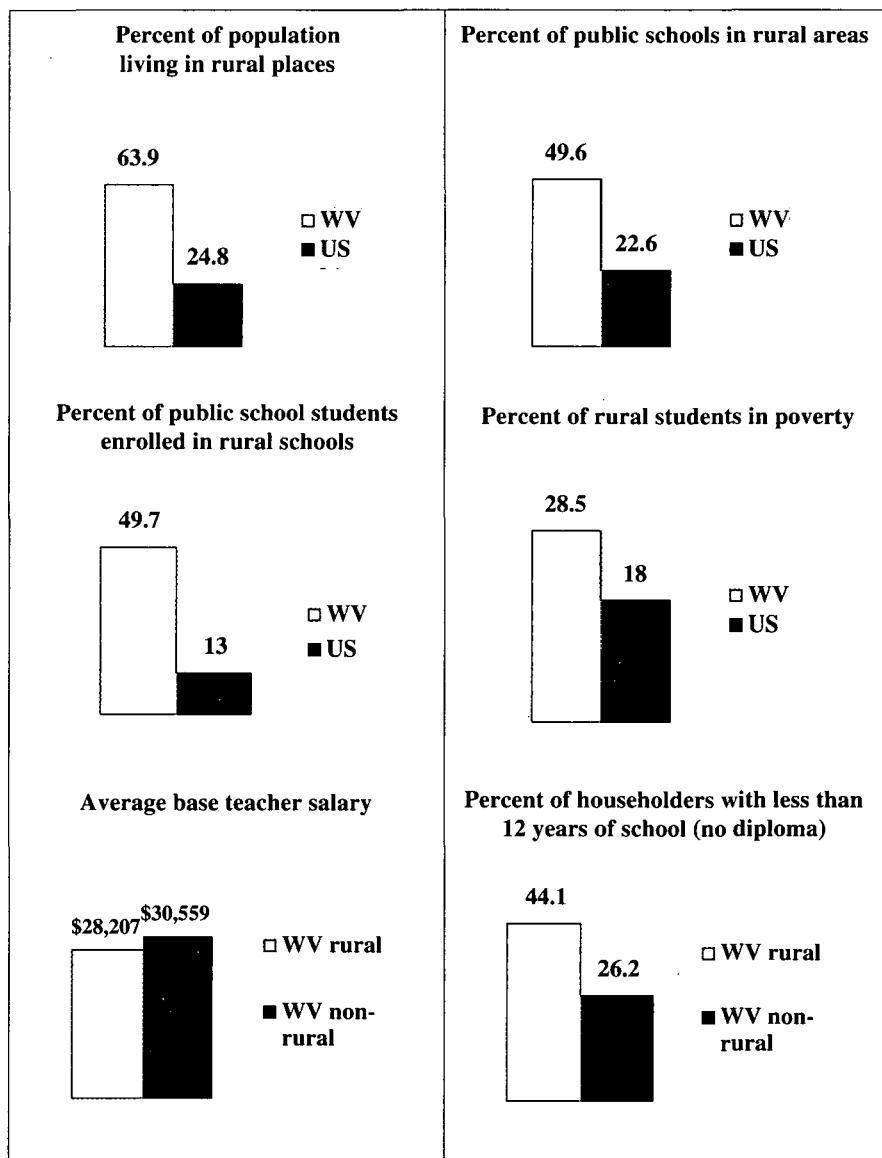
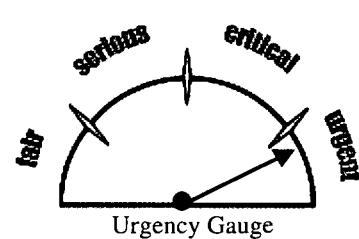
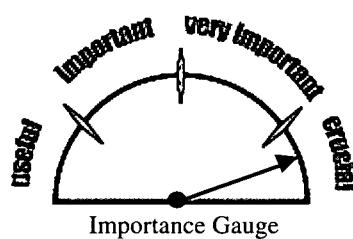
Importance Gauge	WA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	23.6%	35
Number of rural people	1,148,744	22
Percent of public schools in rural areas	20.7%	35
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	12.6%	36
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	16.3%	21
Average number of students to average number of grades	63.4	28
Percent of rural students attending small schools	7.2%	33
Percent of rural students in poverty	15.9%	26
Urgency Gauge	WA	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$32,549	38
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,234	33
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	N/A	N/A
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	5.7%	34
Average rural student to teacher ratio	18.9	2
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	24.8%	32
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	77.6%	28
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	15.2%	33
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	52.4%	25
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	20%	25

There are more than 1.1 million rural people in WASHINGTON, and it has the second highest average rural student to teacher ratio. It does not score high on any other indicator. Overall, rural education is important in Washington simply because there are so many rural people.



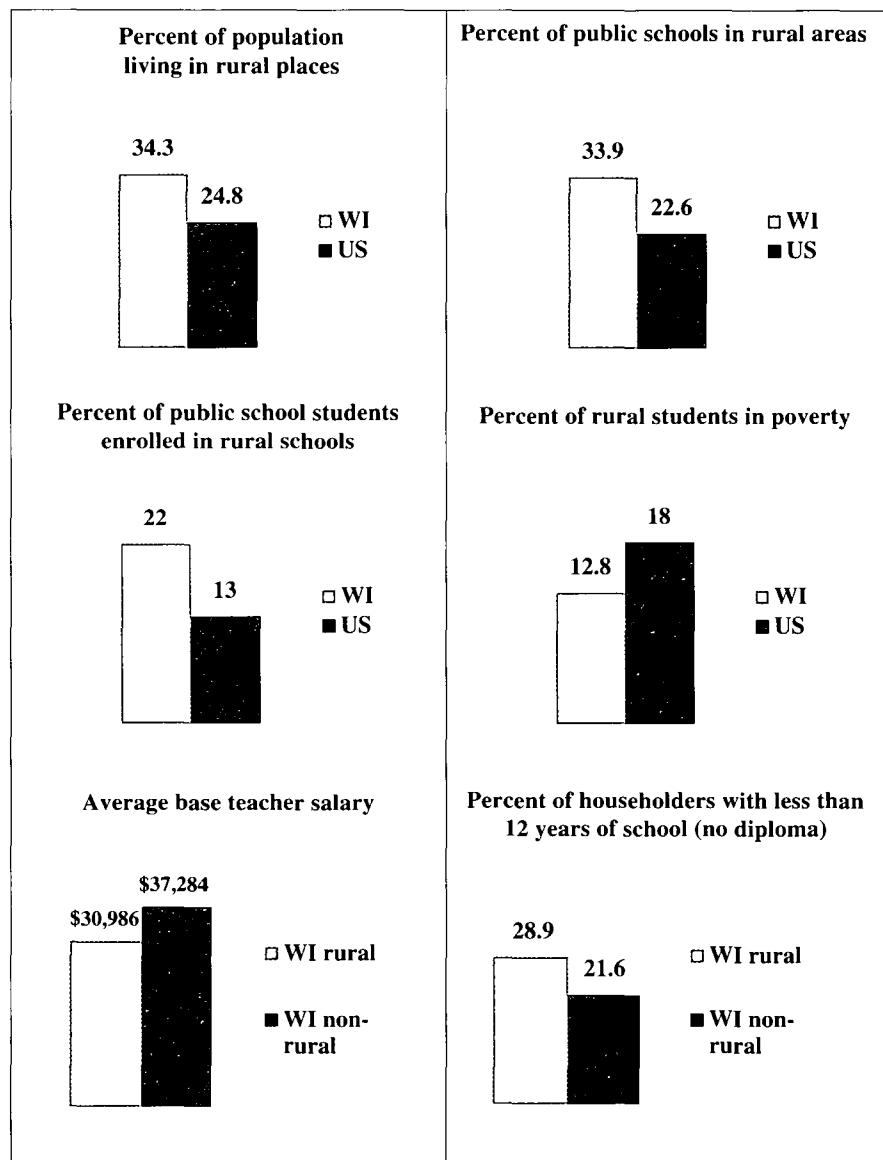
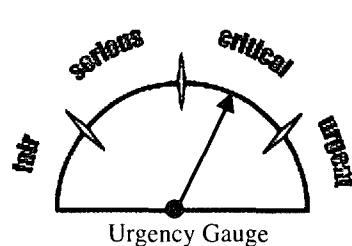
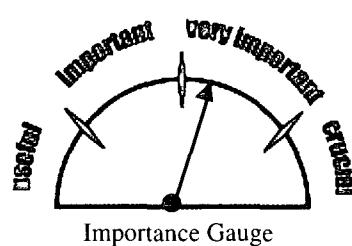
Importance Gauge	WV	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	63.9%	2
Number of rural people	1,145,293	23
Percent of public schools in rural areas	49.6%	9
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	49.7%	2
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	2.6%	41
Average number of students to average number of grades	62.9	26
Percent of rural students attending small schools	13.5%	8
Percent of rural students in poverty	28.5%	6
Urgency Gauge	WV	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$28,207	28
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,352	30
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	46.6%	5
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	47.9%	8
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.4	33
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	44.1%	6
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	83.5%	37
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	43%	5
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	59.3%	47
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	28%	10

In **WEST VIRGINIA**, nearly two out of three people live in a rural place (rank second). Half the public schools are rural, but only 13% of the students go to those schools. More than one fourth of the rural students live in poverty, and nearly half qualify for free lunches. The state ranks in the top ten in the percentage of rural adults with less than 12 years of school, percentage of rural schools with declining enrollment, and percentage of teachers teaching out of field who serve rural schools. Rural education is crucial in West Virginia, and the need for policy attention is urgent.



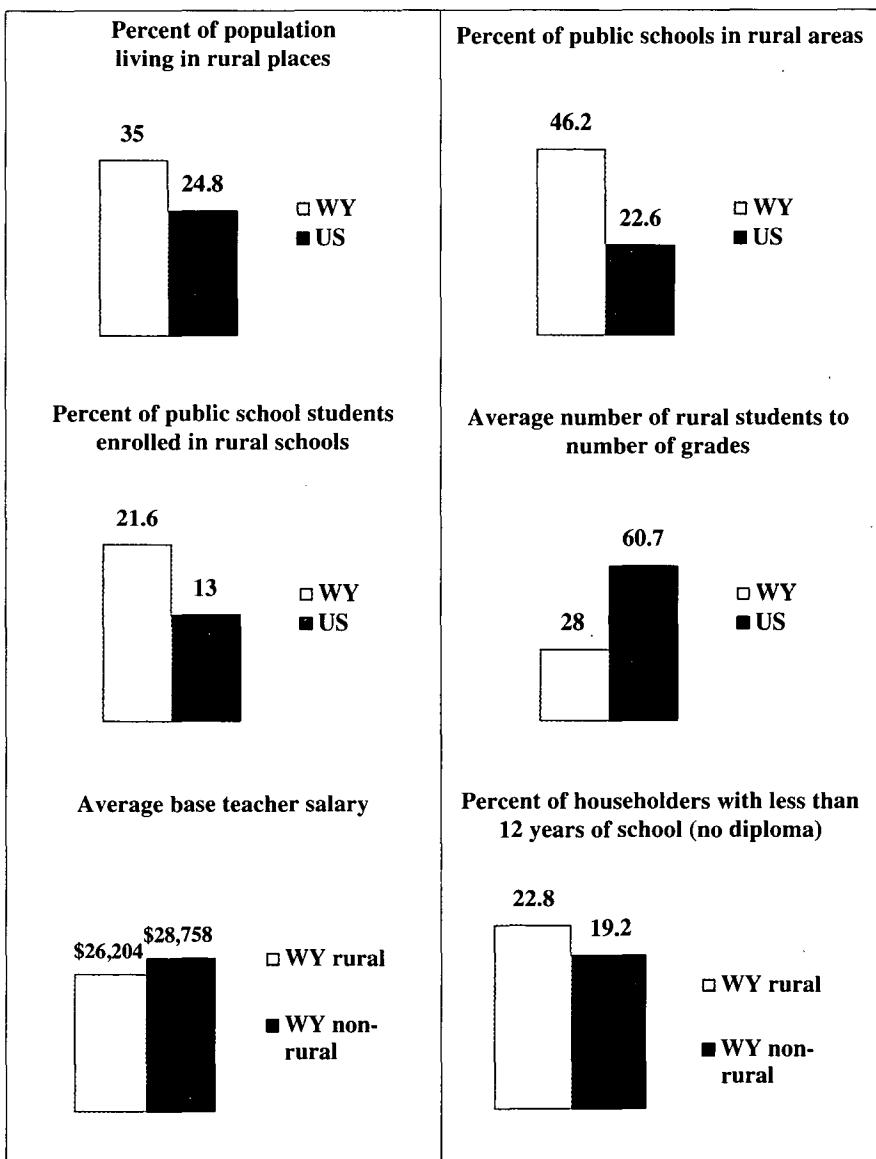
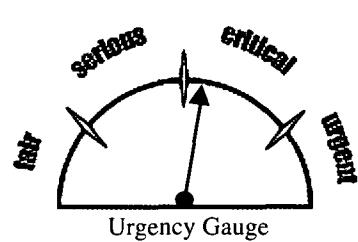
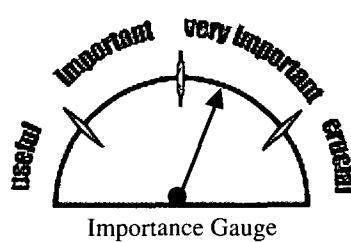
Importance Gauge	WI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	34.3%	20
Number of rural people	1,679,813	15
Percent of public schools in rural areas	33.9%	18
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	22%	19
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	4.4%	35
Average number of students to average number of grades	54.6	22
Percent of rural students attending small schools	11.9%	14
Percent of rural students in poverty	12.8%	38
Urgency Gauge	WI	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$30,986	35
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$6,298	7
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	15.7%	38
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	12.1%	21
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.9	26
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	28.9%	24
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	72.7%	19
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	28.6%	17
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	51.3%	18
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	21%	23

WISCONSIN is home to nearly 1.7 million rural people. It ranks above the middle in 6 of the 8 rural “importance” indicators and 7 of the 10 “urgency” indicators. The pay gap between rural and nonrural teachers is the seventh largest. Rural education is very important in Wisconsin, and the need for policy attention is critical.



Importance Gauge	WY	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most important</i>		
Percent of state's population that is rural	35%	19
Number of rural people	158,953	47
Percent of public schools in rural areas	46.2%	11
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	21.6%	21
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	9.9%	28
Average number of students to average number of grades	28	6
Percent of rural students attending small schools	10.7%	16
Percent of rural students in poverty	17.8%	22
Urgency Gauge	WY	Rank
<i>A rank of 1 is most urgent</i>		
Average rural teacher's salary	\$26,204	18
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	\$2,554	27
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	22.8%	28
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	7.1%	32
Average rural student to teacher ratio	11.9	46
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	23%	40
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	81%	34
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	29.9%	13
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	50%	12
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	36%	3

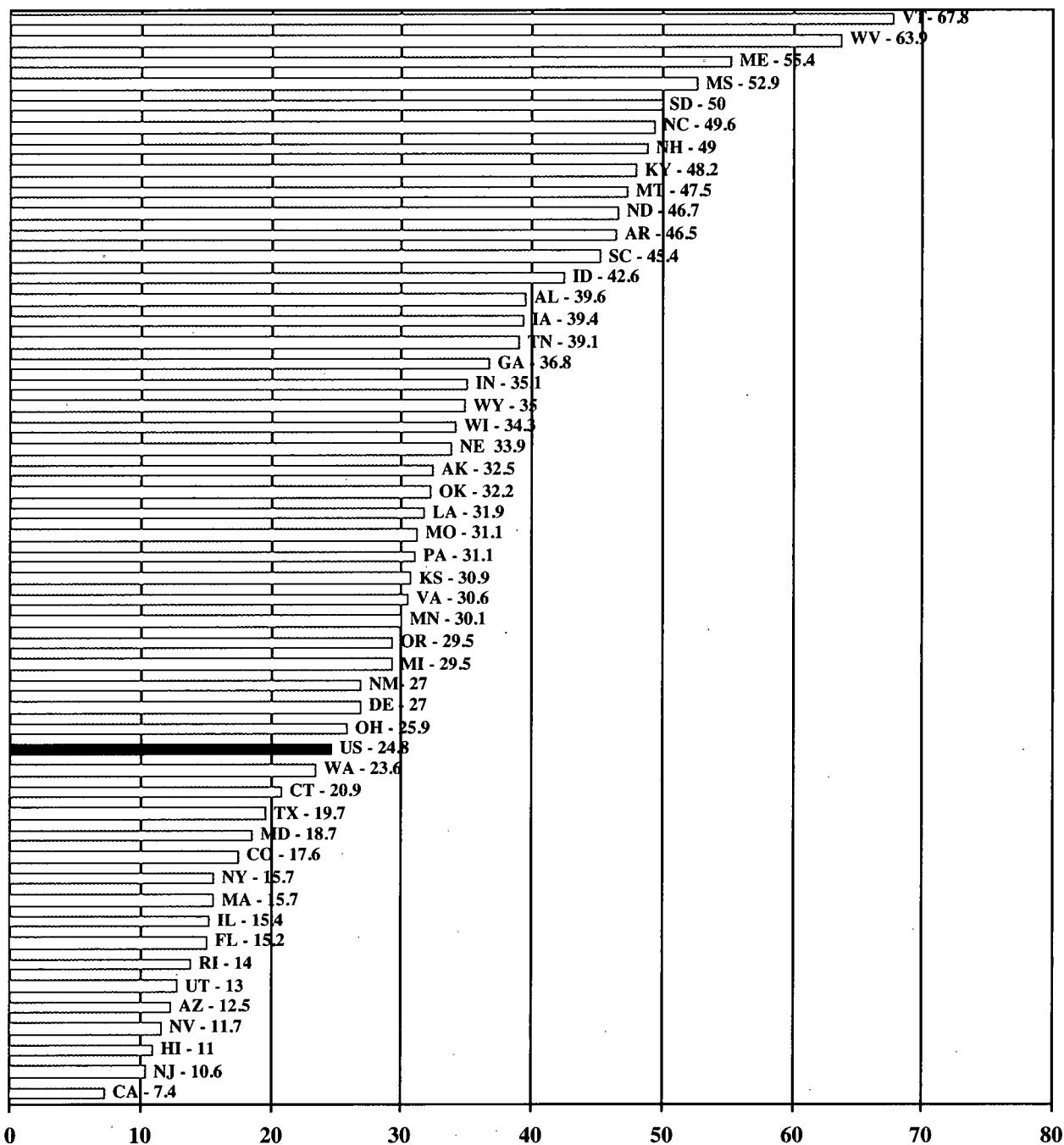
Nearly half of WYOMING'S public schools are in rural places, they are small and they have small classes. Wyoming pays rural teachers well above the national average, explaining why it has among the highest proportion of rural school expenditures going to instruction. Still, more than one third of its rural schools suffer declining enrollment, one of the highest rates in the nation. Rural education is very important in Wyoming, and the need for policy attention is critical.



IMPORTANCE INDICATORS

(STATE-BY-STATE COMPARISON)

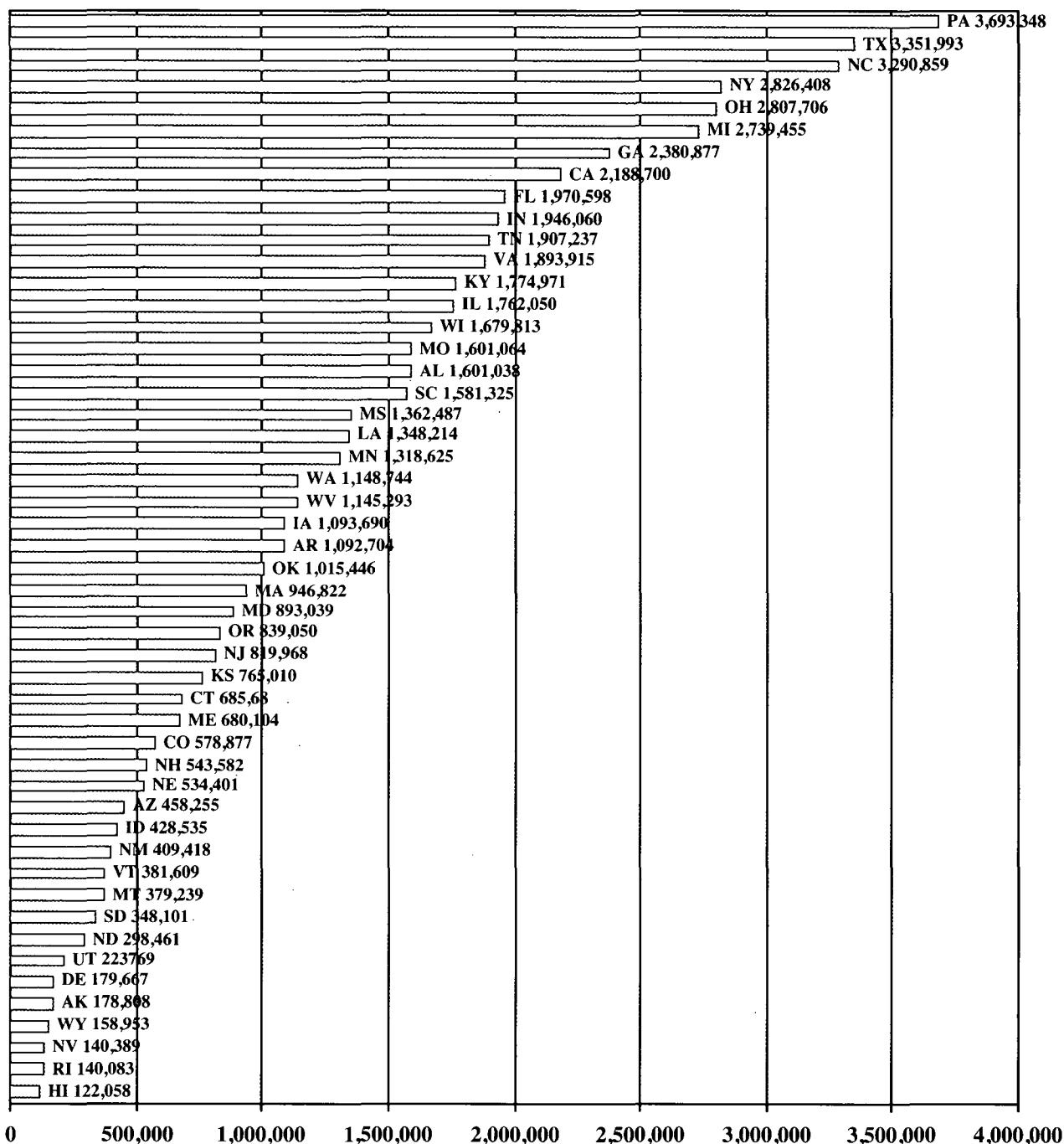
Percentage of Population in Rural Places



Definition: The percentage of people living in places with 2,500 people or less, as designated by the U.S. Census.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, "Population and Housing Unit Counts," CPH-2-1. Table 1. Urban and Rural Population: 1900 to 1990.

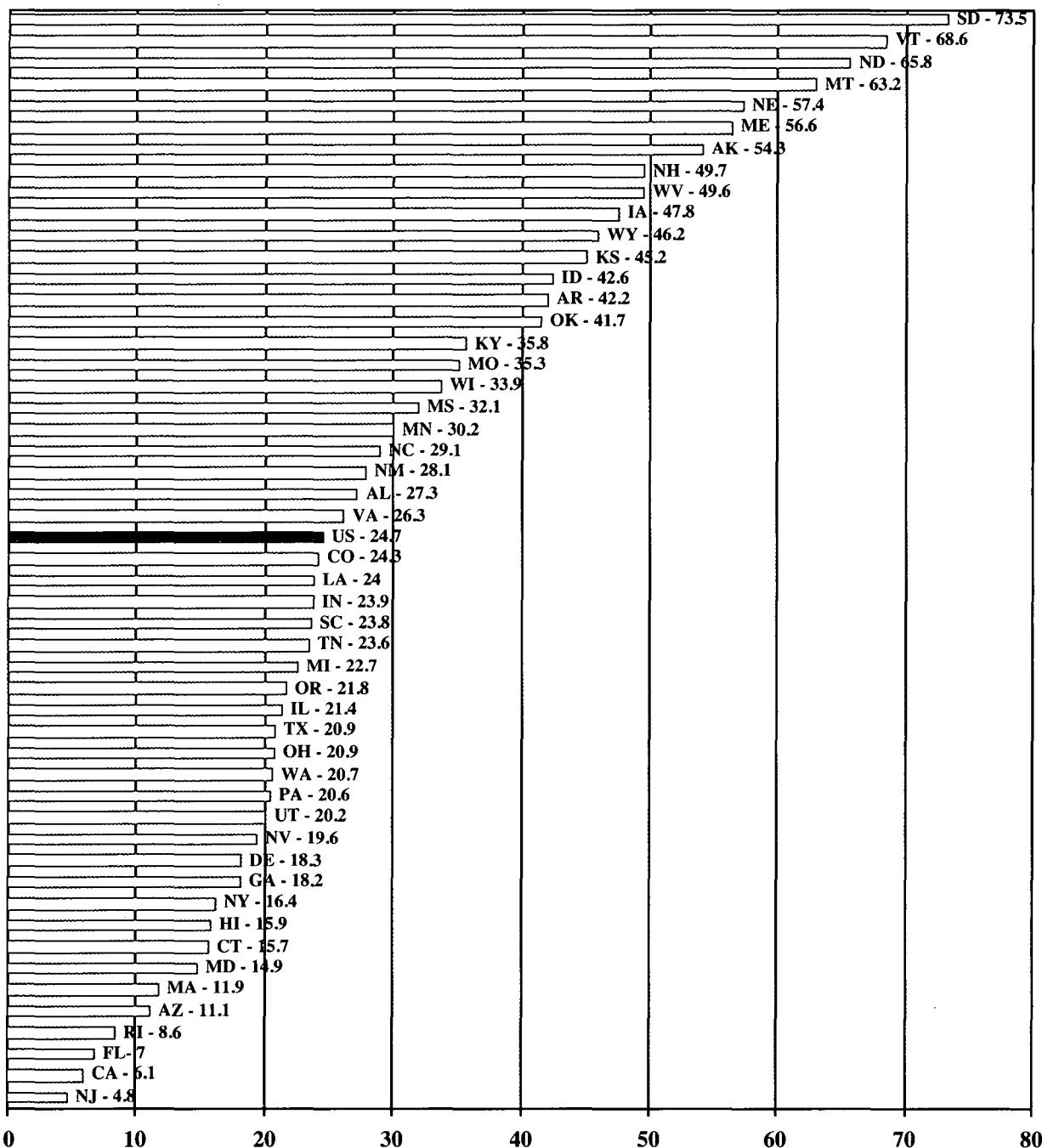
Number of People Living in Rural Areas



Definition: The number of people living in places with populations of 2,500 or less.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, "Population and Housing Unit Counts," CPH-2-1. Table 1. Urban and Rural Population: 1900 to 1990.

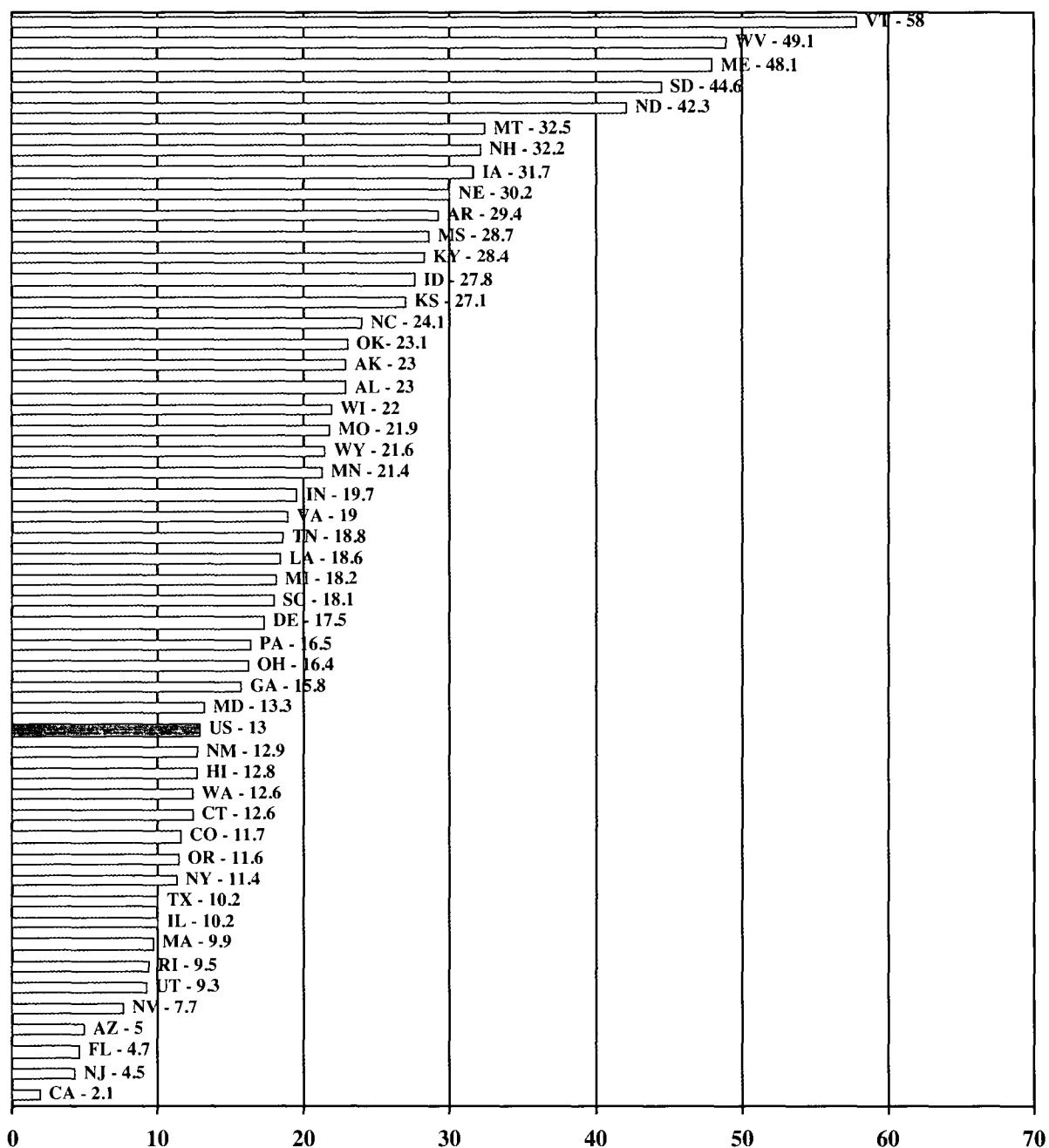
Percentage of Public Schools in Rural Areas, 1997-98



Definition: The number of public schools in each state located in areas with populations of 2,500 or less. These include elementary, middle, and high schools. All schools are included in this count except for closed schools.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98.

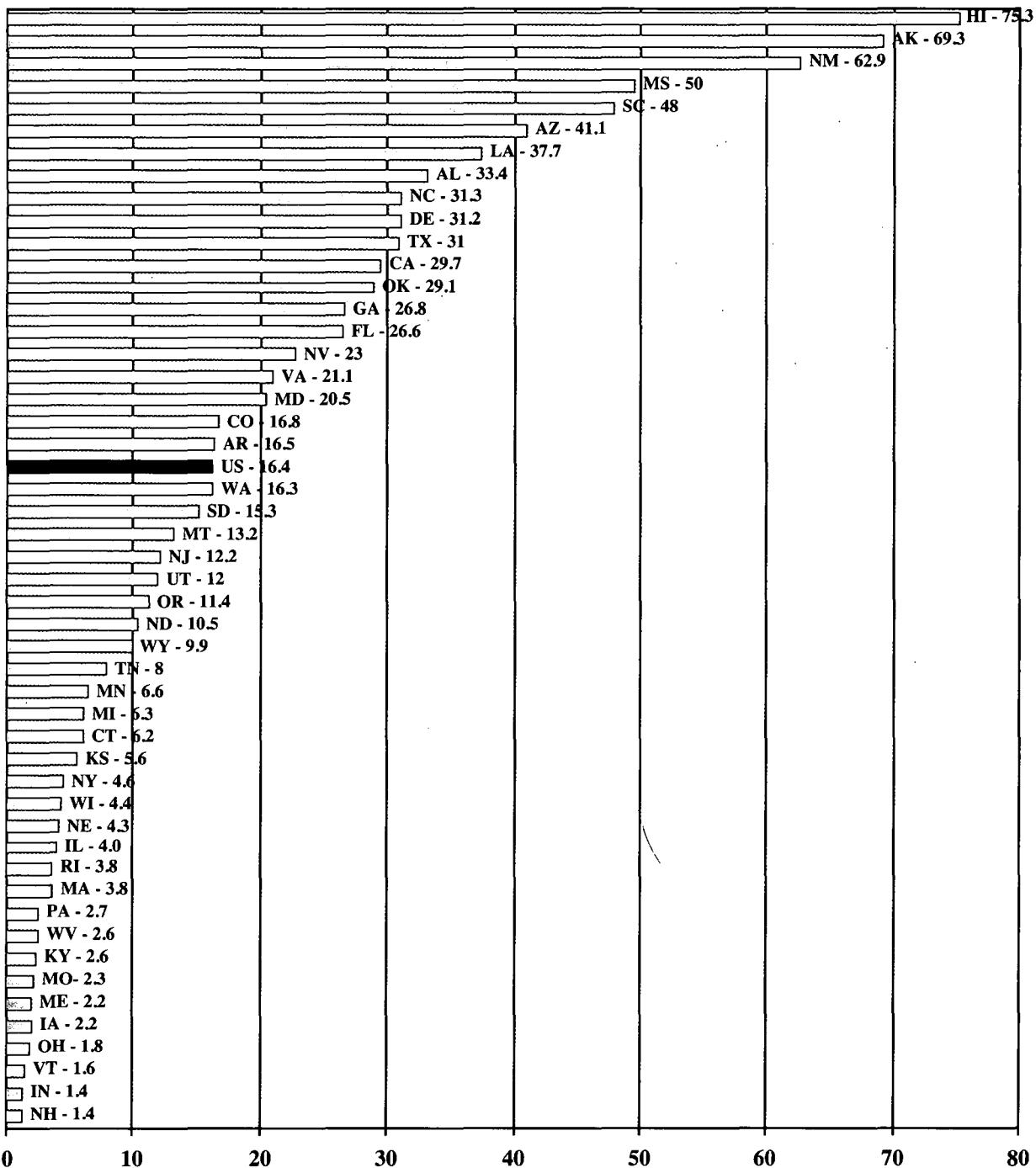
Percentage of Students Enrolled in Rural Schools



Definition: The percentage of all public schools students who attend schools in rural areas.

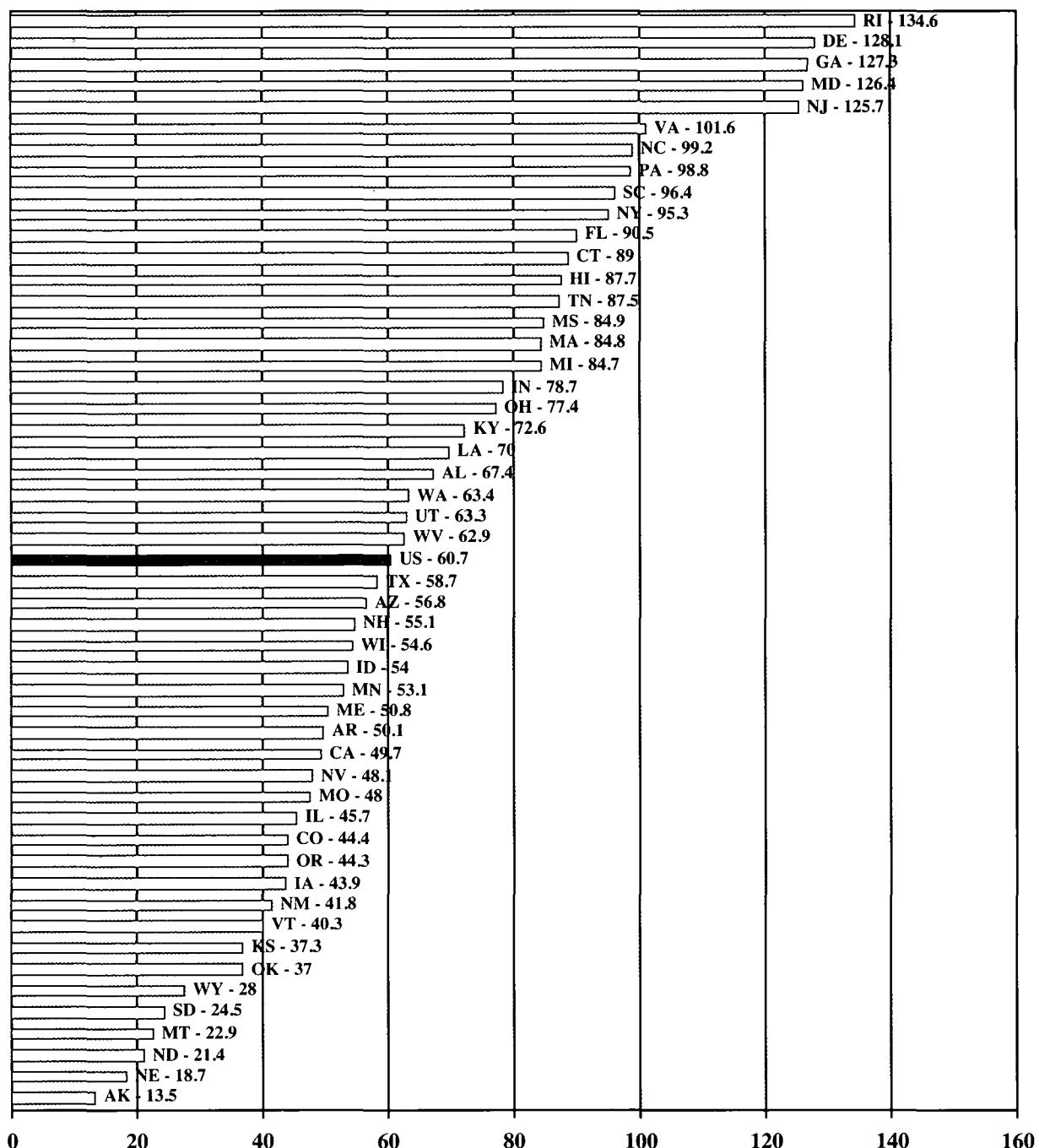
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98.

Percentage of Students Enrolled in Rural Schools Who Are Minorities



Definition: The number of rural minority students as a percentage of all rural students.

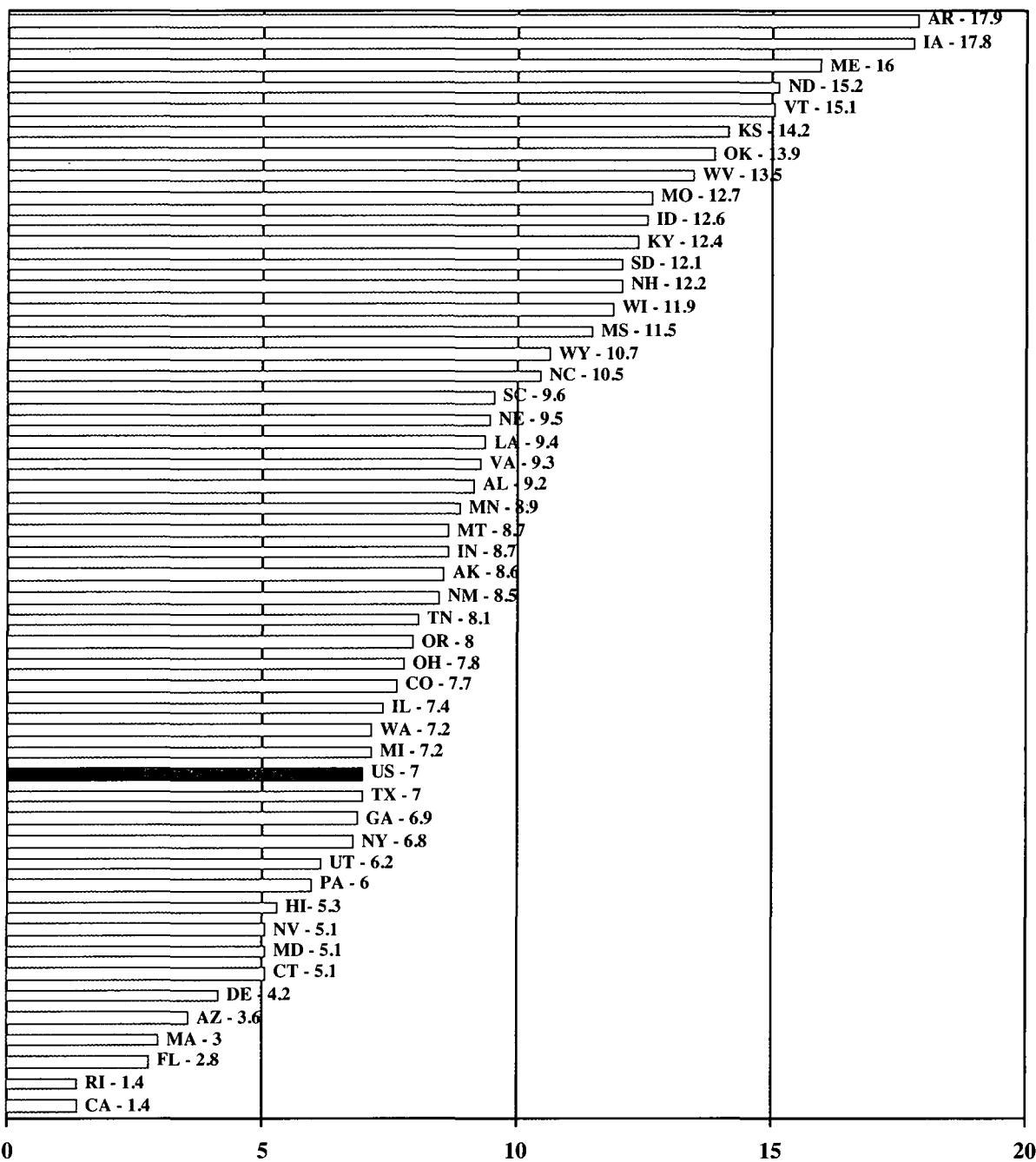
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98.

Average Number of Rural Students to Average Number of Grades

Definition: A ratio of the average number of rural students in rural schools to the average number of grades in rural schools. Because schools have different grade configurations, this is a proxy for school size.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1997-98.

Percentage of all Students Attending Small Rural Schools, 1997-98

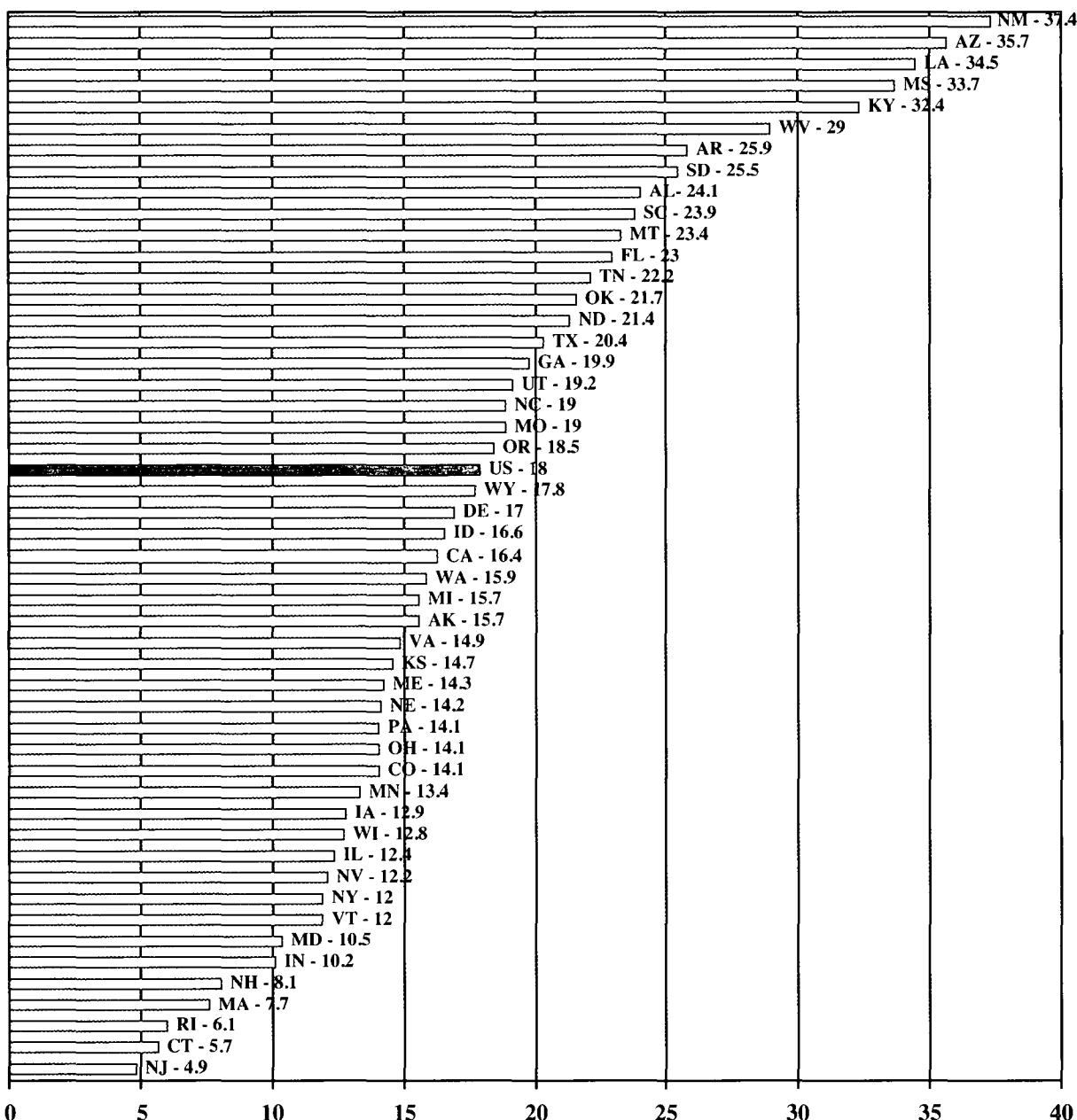


Definition: The number of students living in rural areas and attending schools with enrollments below the state median, as a percentage of all public school students.

Note: Data not available for ID

Source: U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common core of Data, Public School Universe 1997-98.

Percentage of Rural Children in Poverty



Definition: The percent of all children living in rural areas who are below the federal poverty level, as designated by the U.S. Census. Due to the fact that these figures are based on the 1990 U.S. Census, they are dated but are still the most recent figures available for both state and locale.

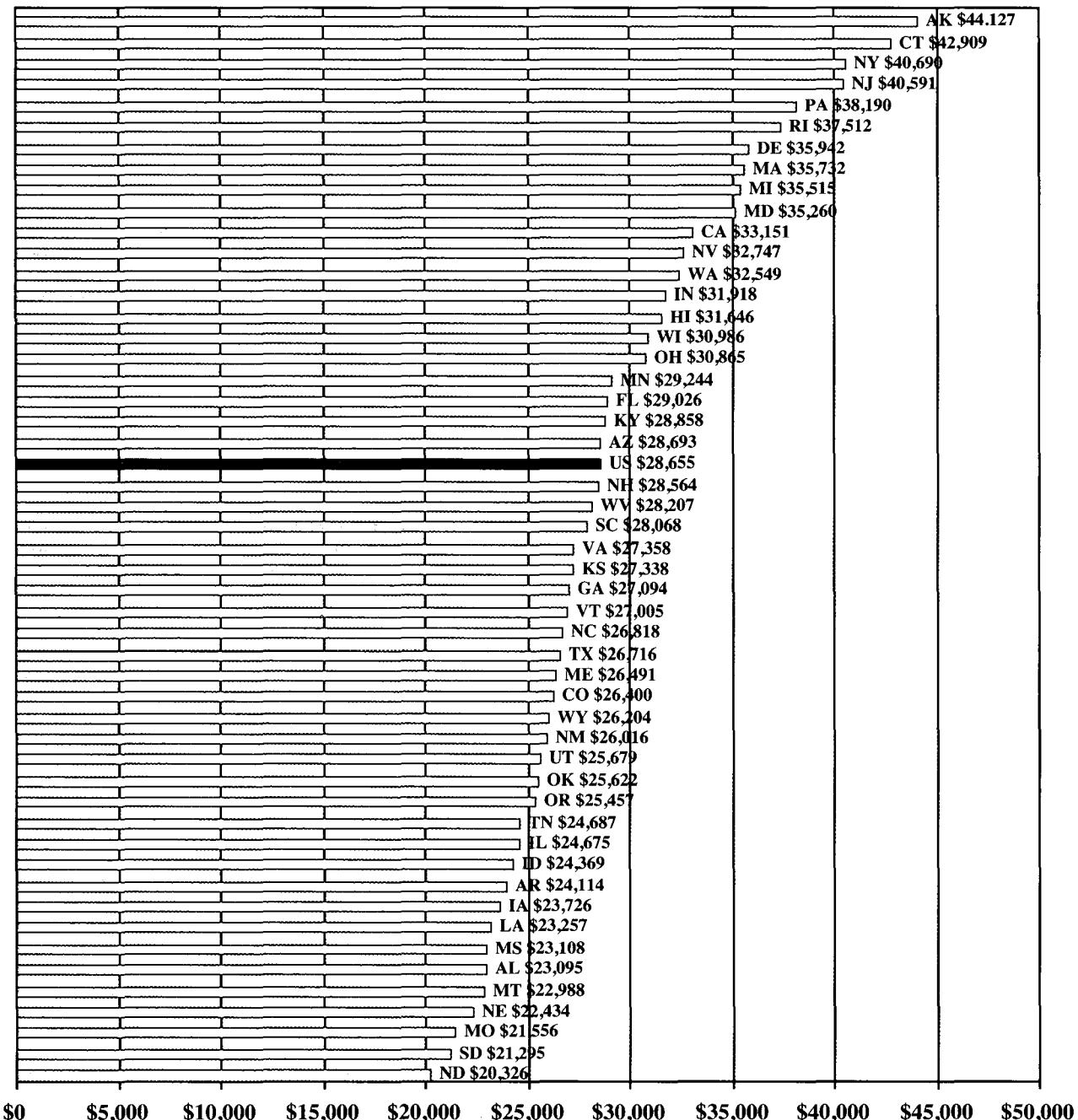
Note: Data not available for HI

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Agency Universe, and Special Census Tabulation 1990.

URGENCY

INDICATORS

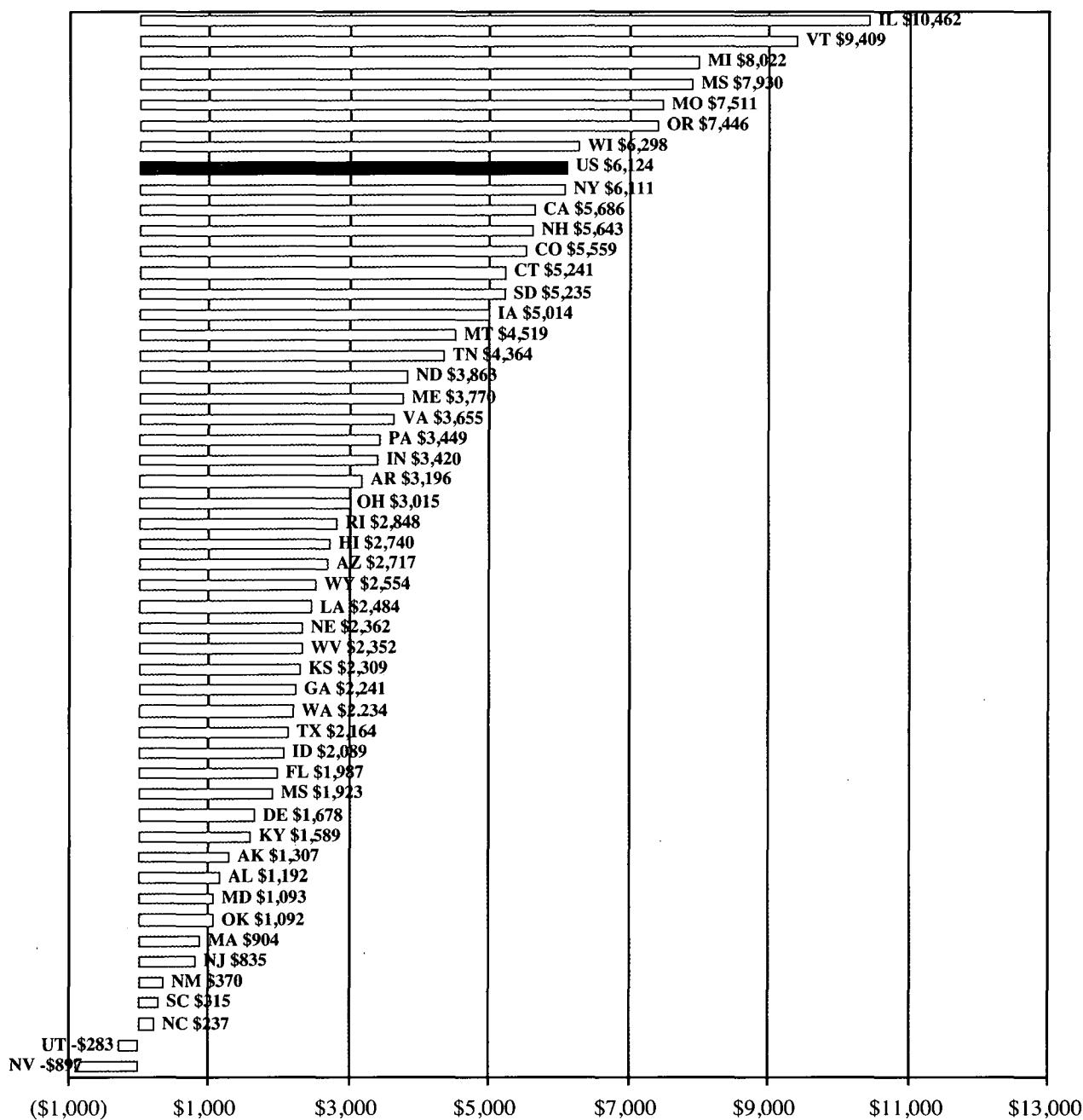
(STATE-BY-STATE COMPARISON)

Average Rural Teaching Salary, 1993-94

Definition: The average rural academic year base teaching salary. Although these figures are from the 1993-94 school year, they are the most recent figures that are available at both the state and locale levels.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey Public School Teacher Questionnaire, 1993-94.

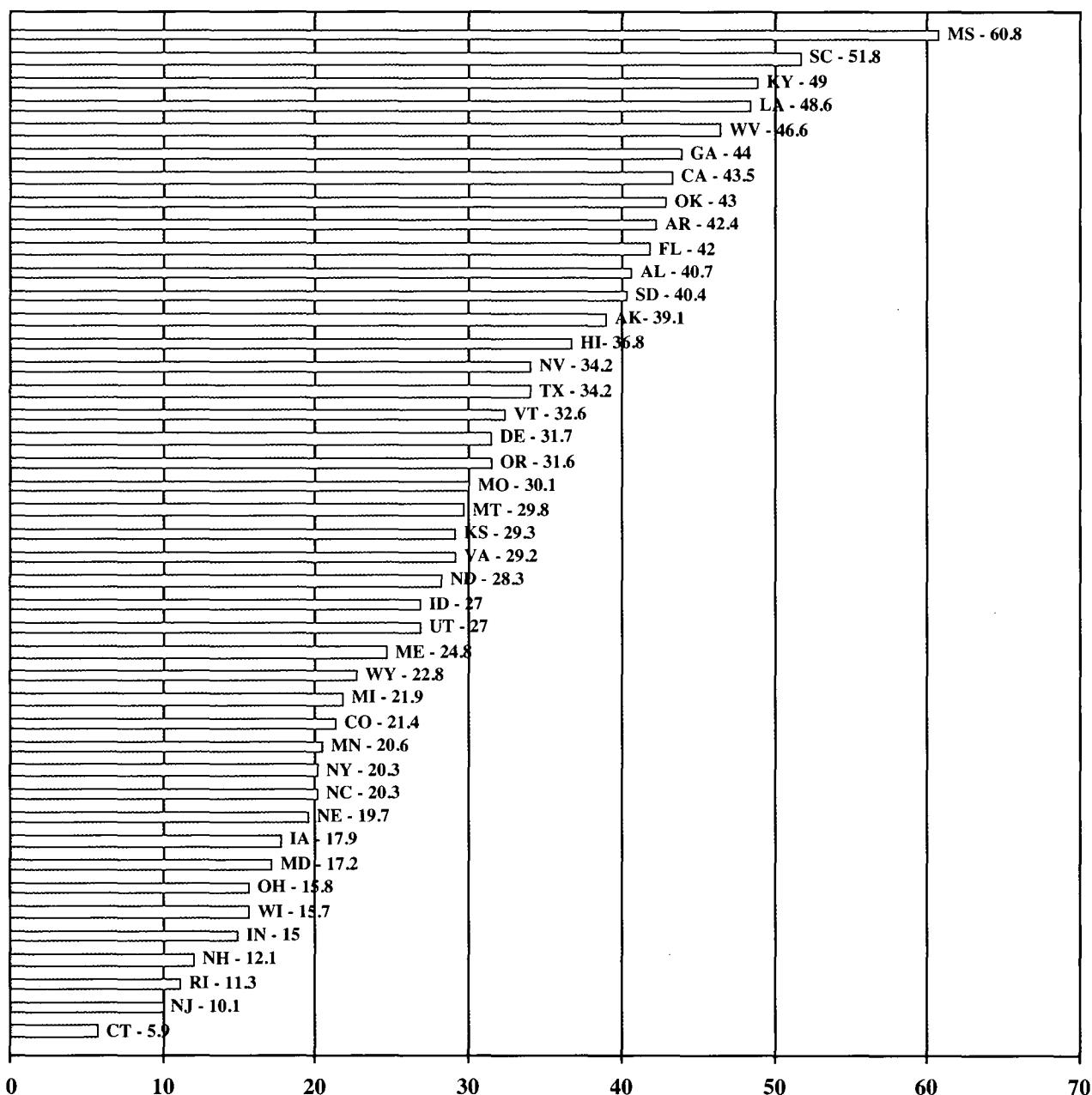
**Difference Between Average Rural Teacher Salary and Teacher Salary
in the Rest of the State**



Definition: The difference between the average rural teacher salary and the teacher salary in the rest of the state shows how much less or more rural teachers earn than their counterparts in the rest of the state.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, Public School Teacher Questionnaire, 1993-94.

Percentage of Rural Students Who Are Free Lunch Eligible, 1997-98

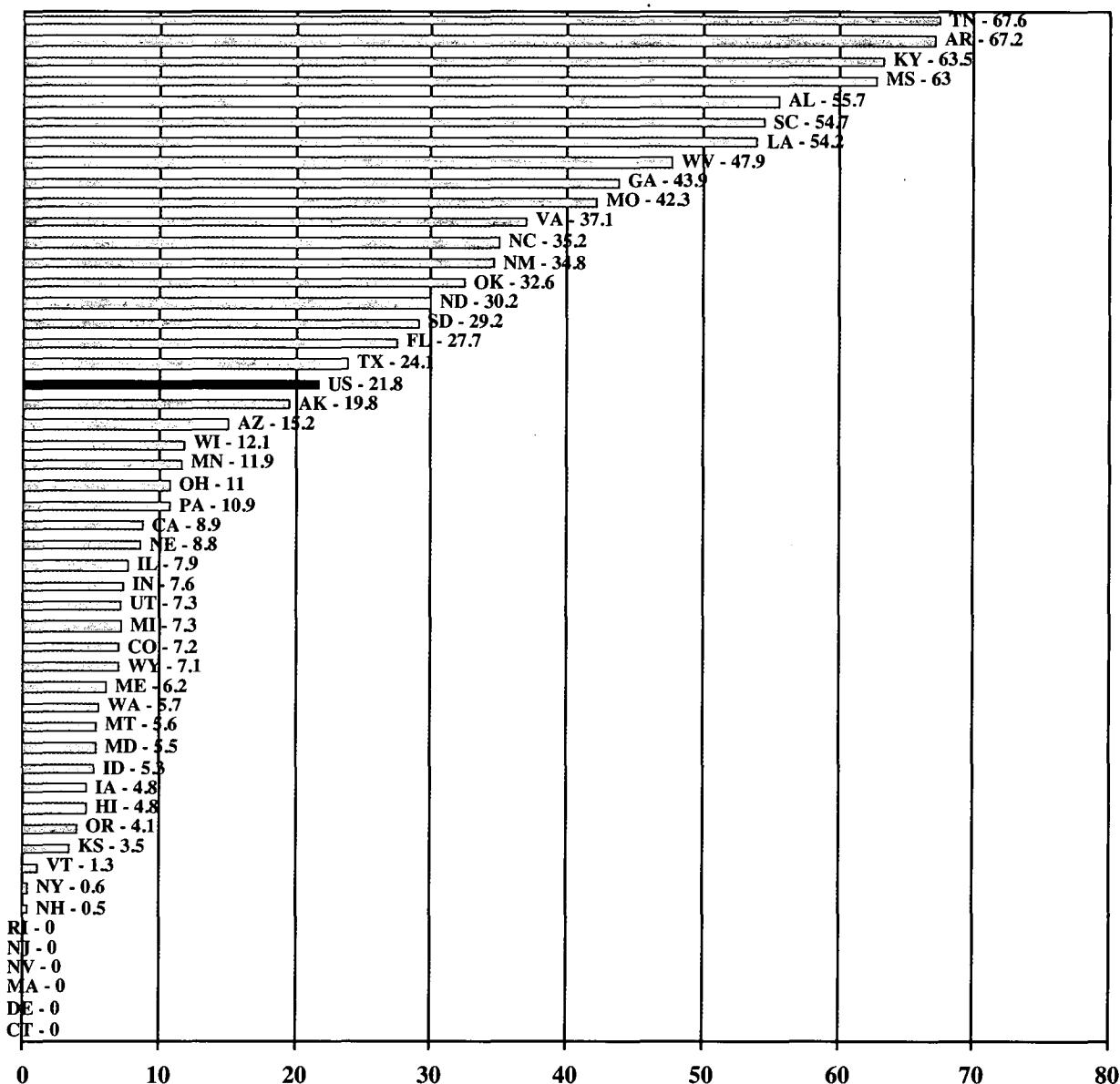


Definition: The percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible is the count, by each rural school, of students eligible for free lunch programs. This is a measure of the socioeconomic status of schools.

Note: Data not available for AZ, IL, MA, NM, PA, WA

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe 1997-98.

Percentage of Rural Communities Scoring Below Average on the Education Climate Index, 1997-98

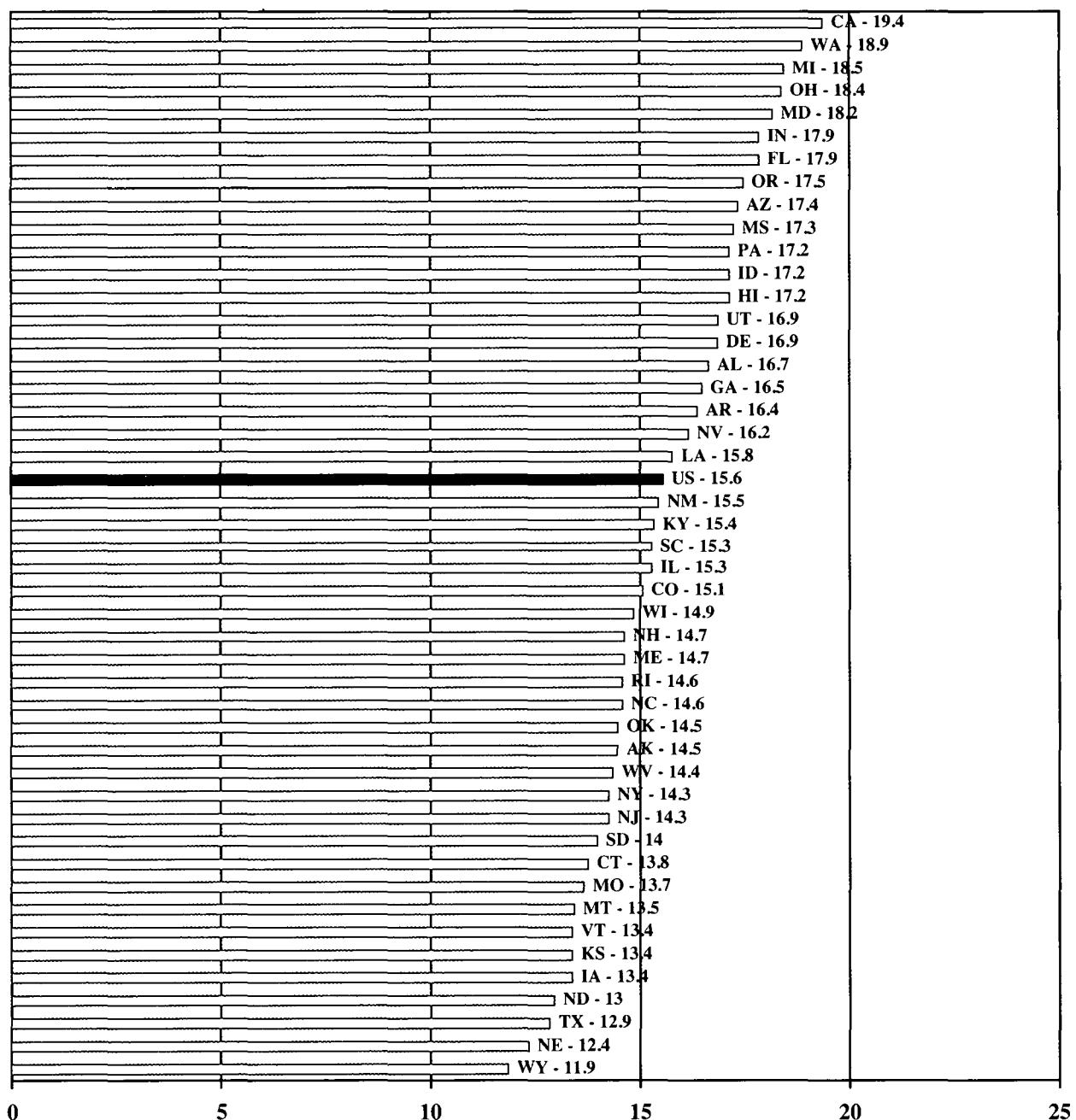


Definition: The Education Climate Index (ECI) is a measure of socioeconomic status by zip code developed by Quality Education Data. The factors of the index are income, educational attainment, and occupation of persons within the zip code. The ECI does not reflect the status of any given school, but of the population of an entire zip code. It is divided into categories of low, below average, average, above average, and high.

Note: Data not available for MA, MN, TN, and VA

Source: Cross-tabulation of public schools by state: ECI and metro status. Prepared by Quality Education Data, Denver, Colorado. August 1999.

Average Rural Student to Teacher Ratio, 1997-98

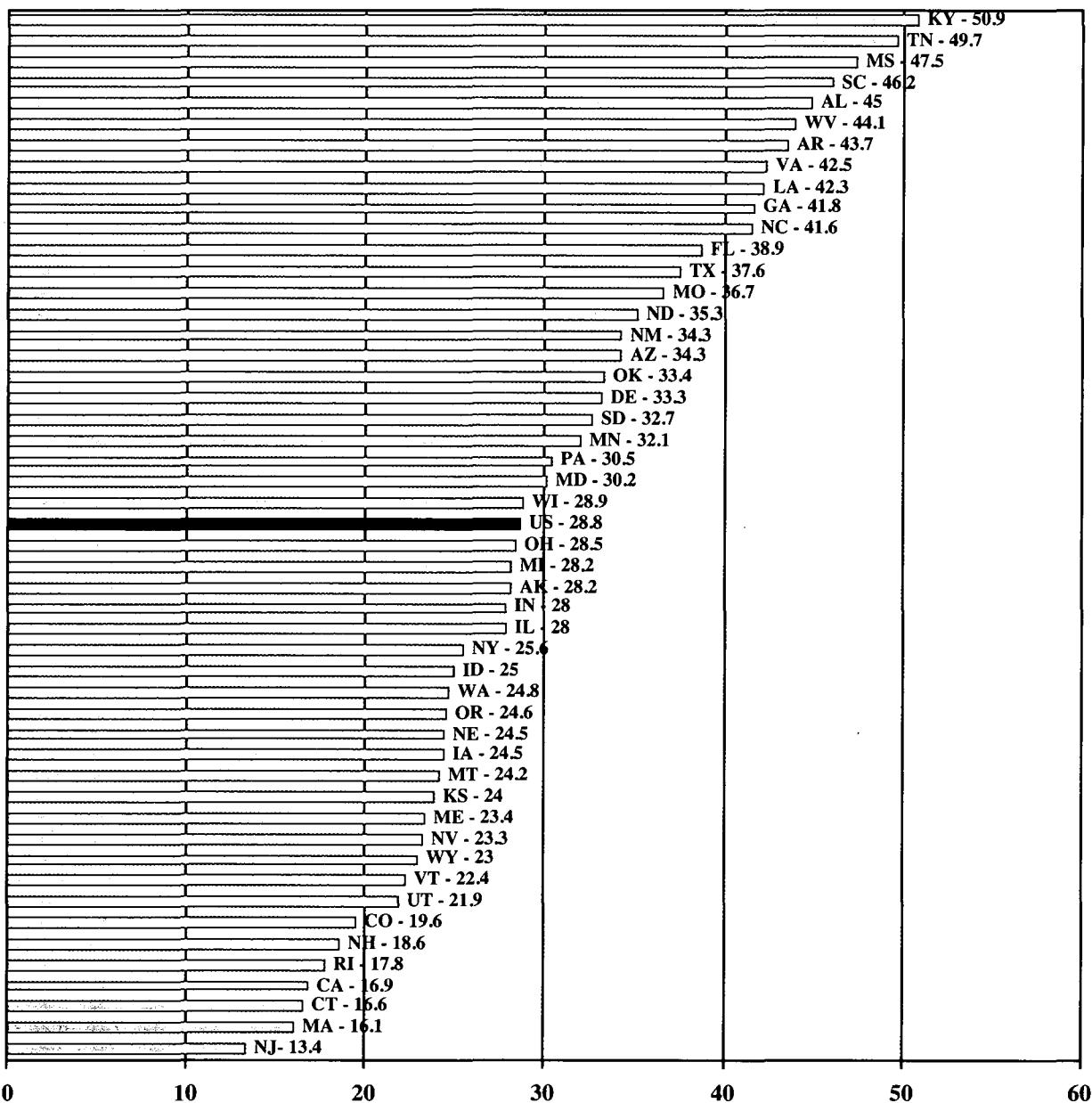


Definition: The average rural student to teacher ratio is a proxy for the average class size in rural schools. It is the count, by school, of the number of students to every one teacher.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe 1997-98.

Note: Data not available for HI

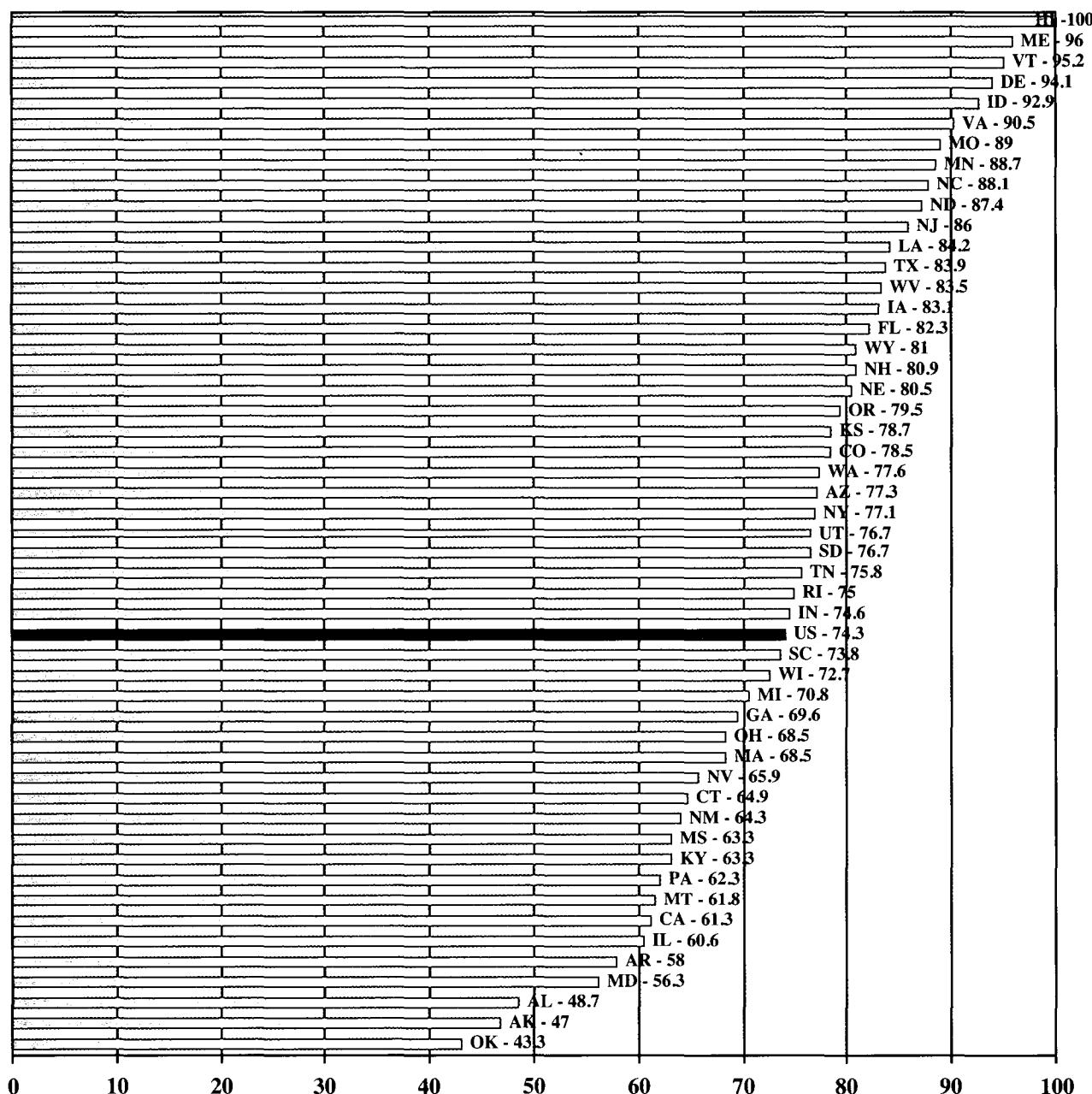
Percentage of Rural Householders with Less Than 12 Years of School, No Diploma



Definition: The percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school and no diploma is based on the 1990 U.S. Census. These figures represent the percentage of householders in rural areas, aged 15 and over, who have not completed high school. As of yet, there are no reliable state-by-state statistics on dropouts by locale.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Agency Universe 1997-98.

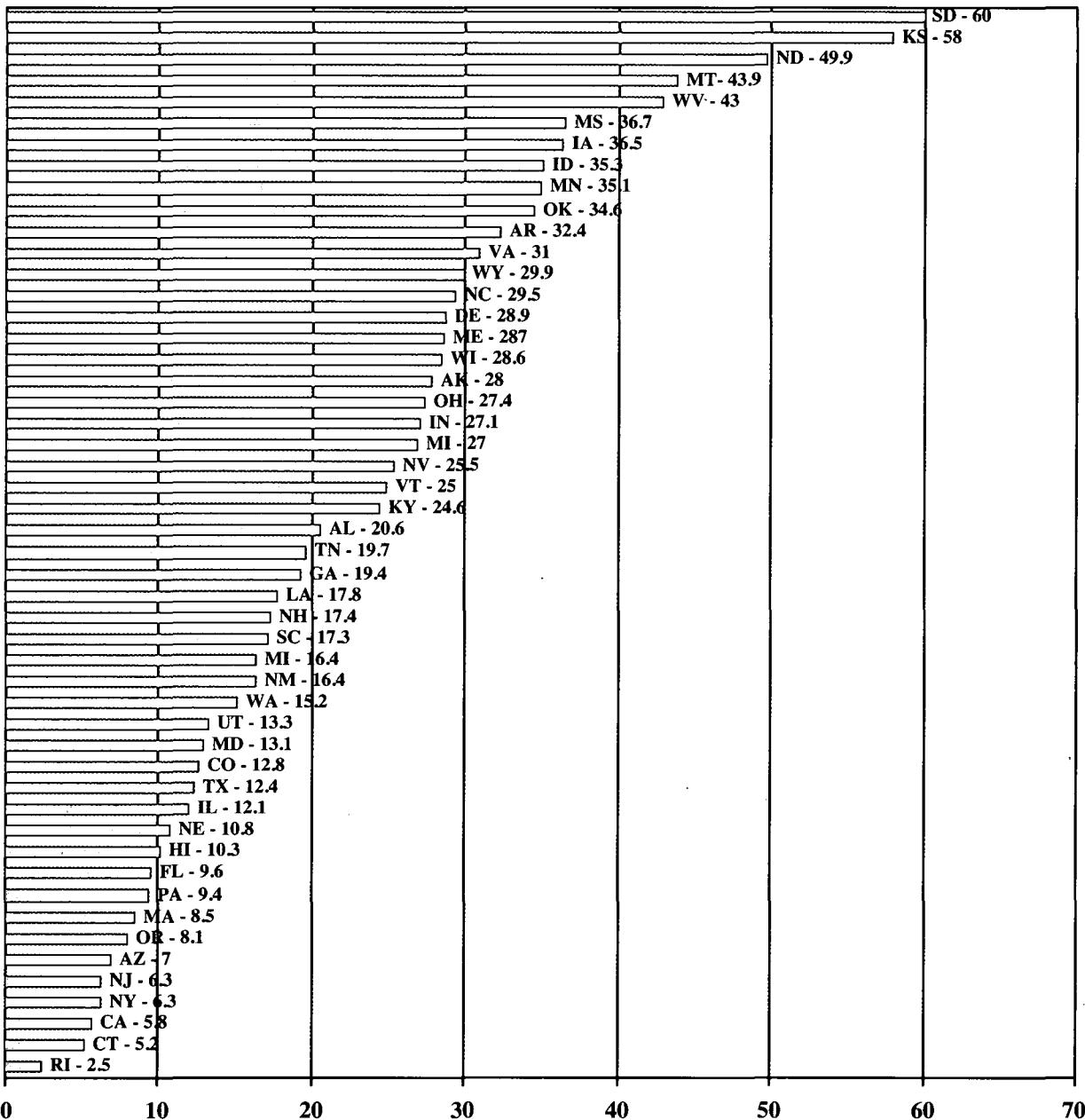
Percentage of Rural Schools with Internet Access, 1997-98



Definition: The percentage of rural schools that have internet access.

Source: Cross-tabulation of public schools by state: Internet access and metro status.
Prepared by Quality Education Data,
Denver, Colorado, February, 2000.

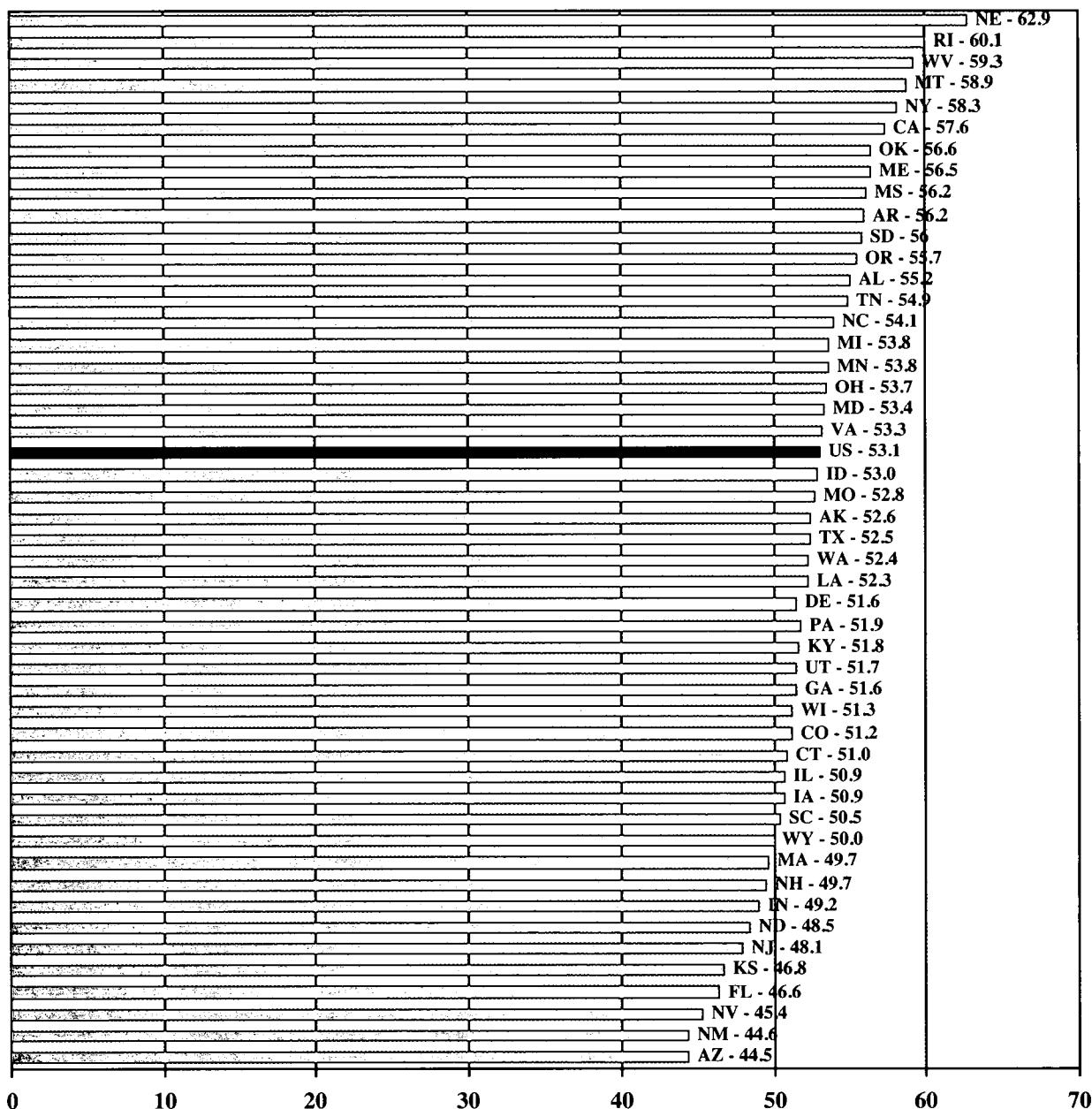
Percentage of Out-of-Field Teachers Who Are Rural



Definition: The percentage of all teachers whose main teaching assignments do not correspond with their major or minor. These figures represent the proportion of teachers who teach in rural schools. The data are from 1993-94, which is the most recent data available that can be broken out by both state and locale.

Source: U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, Public School Teacher Questionnaire, 1993-94.

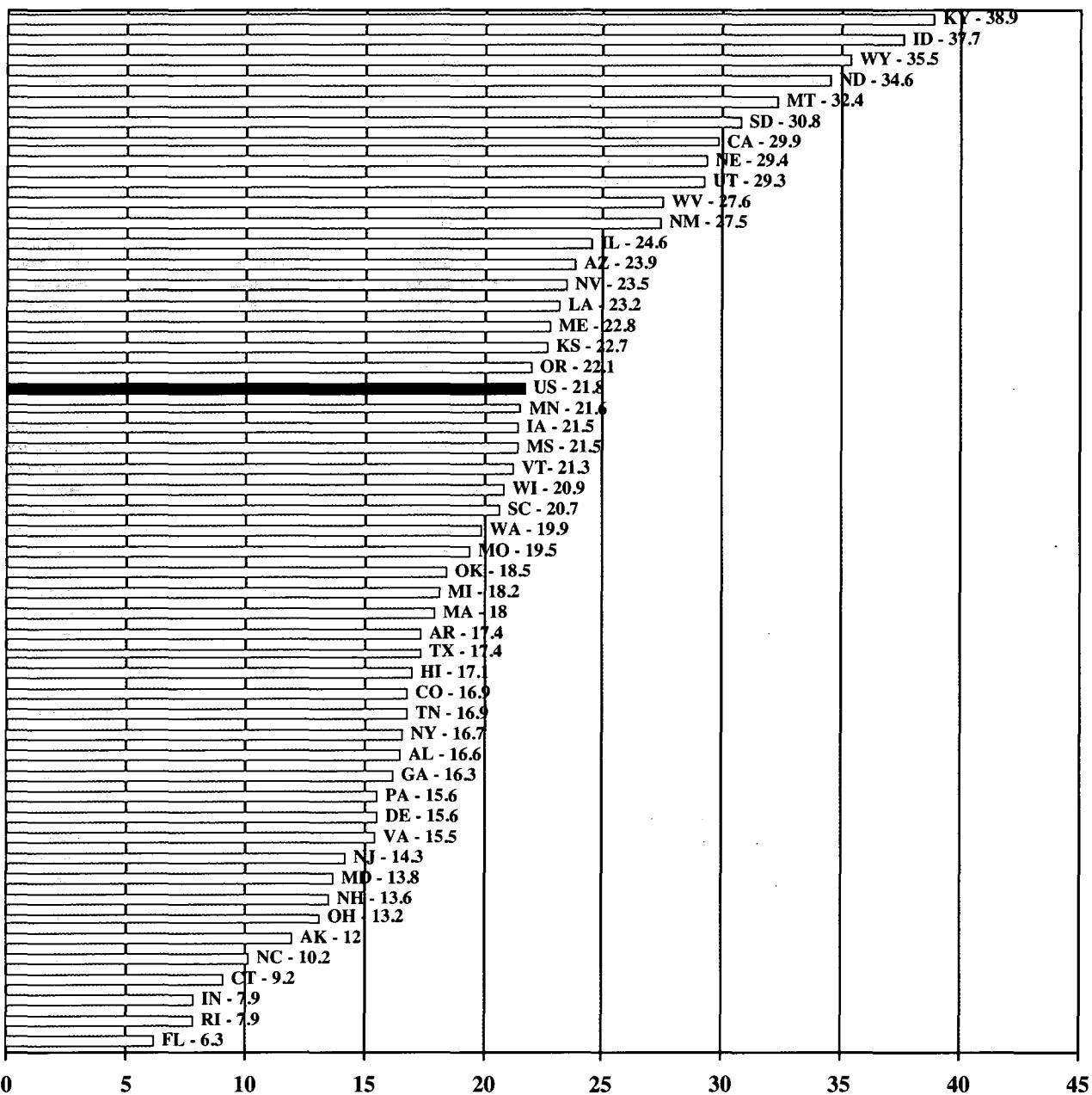
Average Percentage of Rural School Expenditures Spent on Instruction



Definition: The percent of all expenditures in rural districts being spent on classroom interaction between teachers and students. The data are from 1995-96, which was the most recent fiscal survey in the Common Core of Data.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Agency Universe, 1995-96.

Percentage of Rural Schools with Declines in Enrollment of at Least 10%, 1993-97



Definition: The percentage of rural public schools that have seen their enrollments decrease by at least 10% between the school years 1993 and 1997.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 1993-94 and 1997-98.