

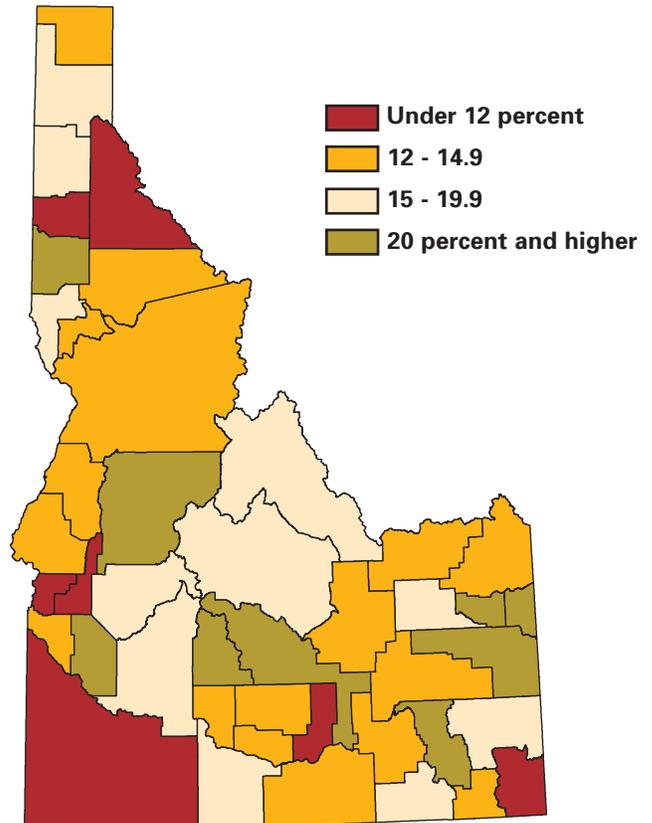
EDUCATION

The connection between rural education and community well-being is complex. A well-educated labor force is clearly an asset that attracts employers. Yet, if rural communities invest in education but cannot provide good job opportunities, young adults are likely to seek work elsewhere.

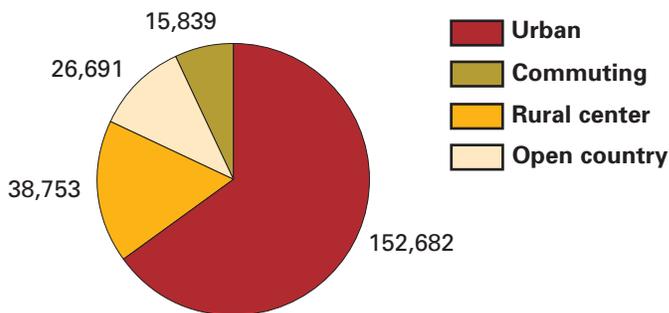
Despite the challenges surrounding rural education, several issues are clear from both the national and state perspective. Educational attainment among rural Americans is increasing steadily but remains lower than among the urban population. Enrollment is decreasing in some rural places that are experiencing net out-migration and/or a general aging of the population. It is more expensive to provide education in sparsely settled areas, although communication technologies are a partial solution. On the positive side, many rural schools are on par with, and sometimes outperform, those in urban areas.

In Idaho, 16 percent of rural adults age 25 and over had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher in 2000. While this figure has been improving steadily over the last three decades, it remains 9 percentage points below the level of urban adults. Less than 11 percent of adults had a bachelor's degree in Minidoka, Owyhee, Payette and Shoshone counties.

Population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher, 2000



Number of students (based on average daily attendance) Idaho's public schools, 2002-2003



About a third of Idaho's K-12 students attend schools in rural counties. Declining enrollment is a serious problem for many of these schools. Sixty-one percent of districts in the open country experienced a decline of at least 10 percent between 1997 and 2002 compared to about one-fourth of districts in urban counties.

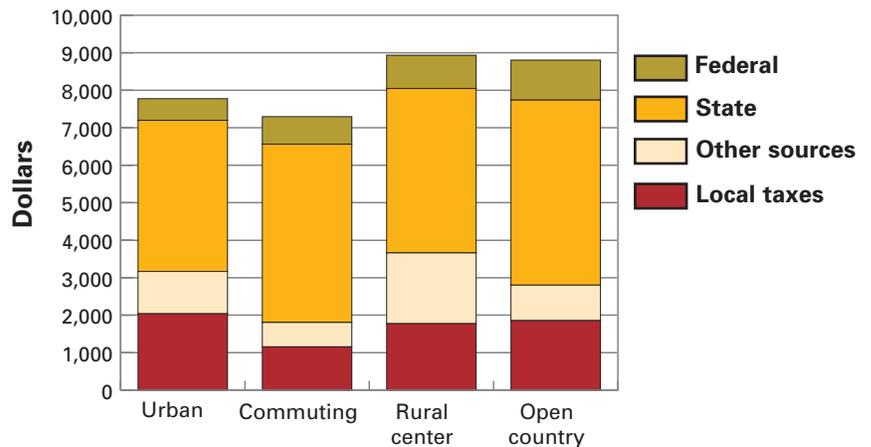
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Number of Idaho school districts with large changes in enrollment, 1997-2002

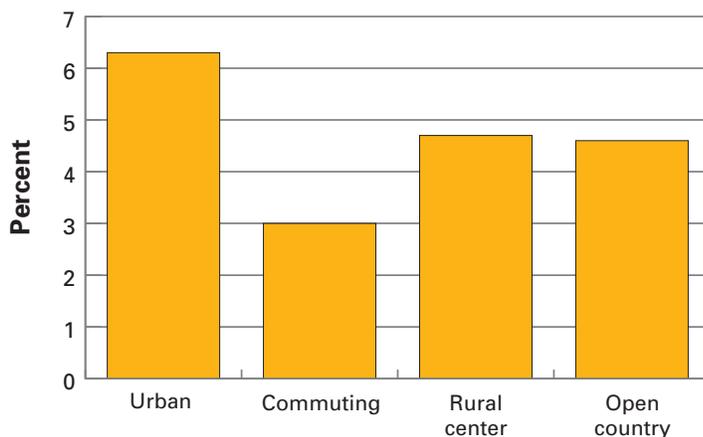
	Urban	Commuting	Rural Center	Open Country
Increase of 10% or greater	8	1	1	4
Decrease of 10% or greater	9	4	5	25
Total Reporting Districts	38	16	16	41

School district revenues come from four sources. In order of magnitude, they are state, local, "other" (such as the sale of bonds) and federal. On a per pupil basis, local taxes make up similar proportions of total revenues in three of the county groups, but a noticeably smaller share in commuting counties. Both revenues and expenditures are highest in the most rural areas.

School district revenues per pupil by source, Idaho's public schools, 2002-2003



High school dropout rate, 2000-2001



The high school dropout rate is one measure of school performance. Rates for the 2000-2001 school year were lower in all three groups of rural counties than in urban counties.