Thanks to Eran Ben-Porath, Sarah Cho, Emily Guskin, Kirby Goidel for allowing me to share their presentations. Any mistakes are mine alone.
Rural Voters Played A Big Part In Helping Trump Defeat Clinton

Revenge of the rural voter

Rural voters turned out in a big way this presidential cycle — and they voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump.

Rural America lifted Trump to the presidency. Behind Trump’s win in rural white America: Women joined men in backing him

First Read: How Rural America Fueled Trump’s Win

by CHUCK TODD, MARK MURRAY and CARRIE DANN
Unquestionable Decrease in Rural Population Over Time

Surveying Rural Populations Through RDD

Ashley Kirzinger, KFF
How Do RDD Surveys Define “Rural”? 

“The use of different definitions of rural by Federal agencies reflects the multidimensional qualities of rural America” USDA, 2008.
The U.S. Census Bureau

• Geographical areas using census blocks and block groups (Core Based Statistical Areas)

• Urban as areas of 50,000 or more people, urban clusters were at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people, rural was everything else.

• These are based on very small geographic building blocks and aren’t limited to city and county lines.

• Everything that is not urban is defined as nonmetropolitan or rural.
• The OMB also relies on counties but also ties in “social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties”

**Metropolitan** Statistical Areas have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population, plus adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties (25%).

**Micropolitan** Statistical Areas have at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties (25%).

• Each county in the U.S. is assigned one of the 9 codes.
How Do Surveys Define “Rural”?  

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
19.3%  

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
14.99%
The CDC’s 2013 NCHS Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties

- CDC’s classified counties using:
  1. Their status under the OMB delineation of metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs)
  2. The population size of MSAs
  3. The location of principal city populations within the largest MSAs

Rural are non-metro areas.

Diagram:

- U.S. counties and county equivalents
  - Metropolitan
    - Large metro
      - Large central metro
    - Medium metro
      - Medium central metro
    - Small metro
      - Small central metro
  - Nonmetropolitan
    - Micropolitan
      - Micropolitan Urban cluster population
      - Noncore

NOTE: MSA is metropolitan statistical area.
# Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Measurement Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Definition Description</th>
<th>Geographic Unit Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Census Bureau: Urban and Rural Areas</td>
<td>The Census Bureau’s classification of rural consists of all territory, population, and housing units located outside of urbanized areas and urban clusters. Urbanized areas include populations of at least 50,000, and urban clusters include populations between 2,500 and 50,000. The core areas of both urbanized areas and urban clusters are defined based on population density of 1,000 per square mile and then certain blocks adjacent to them are added that have at least 500 persons per square mile.</td>
<td>Census Block and Block Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture &amp; WWAMI Rural Health Research Center; Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCAs)</td>
<td>This classification scheme utilizes the U.S. Census Bureau’s urbanized area and cluster definitions and work commuting information. The RUCAs categories are based on the size of settlements and towns as delineated by the Census Bureau and the functional relationships between places as measured by tract-level work commuting data. This taxonomy defines 33 categories of rural and urban census tracts.</td>
<td>Census Tract, ZIP Code approximation available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB): Core Based Statistical Areas (i.e., Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan areas)</td>
<td>A metropolitan area must contain one or more central counties with urbanized areas. Nonmetropolitan counties are outside the boundaries of metropolitan areas and are subdivided into two types, metropolitan areas and noncore counties. Microprion areas are urban clusters of 10,000 or more persons.</td>
<td>County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (Boice Codes)</td>
<td>This classification scheme distinguishes metropolitan counties by the population size of their metropolitan area, and nonmetropolitan counties by degree of urbanization and adjacency to a metropolitan area or areas. All counties and county equivalents are grouped according to their official OMB metropolitan–nonmetropolitan status and further subdivided into three metropolitan and six nonmetropolitan groupings.</td>
<td>County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Urban Influence Codes</td>
<td>This classification scheme subdivides the OMB metropolitan and nonmetropolitan categories into 2 metropolitan and 10 nonmetropolitan categories. Metropolitan counties are divided into two groups by the size of the metropolitan area. Nonmetropolitan-microprion counties are divided into three groups by their adjacency to metropolitan areas. Nonmetropolitan-noncore counties are divided into seven groups by their adjacency to metropolitan or micropolitan areas and whether they have their “own town” of at least 7,500 residents.</td>
<td>County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Rural Health Policy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: RUCA Adjustment to OMB Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Definition</td>
<td>This method uses RUCAs 4-10 to identify small towns and rural areas within large metropolitan counties. In addition, census tracts within metropolitan areas with RUCA codes 2 and 3 that are larger than 400 square miles and have population density of less than 30 people per square mile are also considered rural.</td>
<td>Census Tract within OMB Metropolitan Counties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Counties**
  - Advantages: Stable
  - Disadvantages: County sizes vary

- **Zip Code Areas**
  - Advantages: Easy to implement
  - Disadvantages: Can change

- **Census geography**
  - Advantages: Most precise
  - Disadvantages: Hard to implement
Can you survey the “rural” population via web or RDD?
Methodology

• Web survey conducted on SurveyMonkey
• 3,689 adults
• Fielded March 24-28, 2017
Regardless of definition, web nearly matches population on rural distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Department of Defense</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>NCHS</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>SurveyMonkey Unweighted sample</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>SurveyMonkey Unweighted sample</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: excludes 1% of sample that did not have a valid zipcode
Methodology

- RDD phone survey conducted by the Pew Research Center
- Interviews conducted in English and Spanish
- 2,002 adults
- Fielded January 3-10, 2018
RDD phone sample also matches rural distribution

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Population</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: excludes 8% of sample that did not have a zipcode
Summary

• Large variances in what is a “rural” area (also suburban or urban)
• There is no one true definition, and each has advantages and disadvantages
• Even with changing methodologies and practices, web and RDD samples still show a diverse group of respondents when it comes to urbanicity, regardless of how “rural” respondents are defined
Degree of Rurality & Public Opinion
Defining Rurality

KFF/Post Rural Poll 2017:
“Rural” And “Small Town”

- Who is rural? What’s a small town?
  - Self-defined?
  - Administrative definitions?
  - By county?
  - By zip code?
Comparing Self-report to Other Definitions

- On the SSRS Omnibus Poll (dual-frame RDD):
  - 1,000 respondents
  - Asked to self identify as Urban, Suburban, Small Town or Rural
  - Asked for their zip code
  - Matched to:
    - CBSA: pop size of metro area, and proximity to central city
    - CDC (2013) Metro definitions
    - Share of county considered rural based on density of Census block within county
    - Share of zip code considered rural based on density of Census block within county
Comparing Self-report to Other Definitions

% In Each Category Who Say They Are Rural:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CBSA-Combined Rural</th>
<th>CBSA-Small/Med Metro</th>
<th>CDC Noncore</th>
<th>CDC Micro.</th>
<th>CDC Small Town</th>
<th>County 2/3+ Rural</th>
<th>Zip 2/3+ Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Rural”</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Small Town”</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-report is imperfect, but the three CDC categories seemed like a good match.
How much variance between the rural categories?

Do outcomes vary by HOW RURAL respondents’ county of residence is? [short answer: Yes]

Why would that be?
### Political Differences?

Small Towns Are Different than Rural/Micro.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Town</th>
<th>Micro.</th>
<th>Noncore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dem</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRC- 2016</td>
<td>40*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump - 2016</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>59*</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump App.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57*</td>
<td>59*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Similar in Perceptions of Self Relative to Various Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Small Town</th>
<th>Micro.</th>
<th>Noncore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural areas and small towns – very similar</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural areas/small towns – very/somewhat similar</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big cities – very different</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46*</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big cities – very/somewhat different</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>77*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants – very different</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants – very/somewhat different</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Noncore is Different than Small Town/Micro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small Town</th>
<th>Micro.</th>
<th>Noncore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most Important Problem: Jobs</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jobs in community: poor</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experienced job loss (self or HH)</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jobs – better than 10 years ago</strong></td>
<td>29*</td>
<td>28*</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends/family moved for better jobs</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jobs – will get better</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Noncore is Different than Small Town/Micro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Micro.</th>
<th>Noncore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kids’ future standard of living: Better</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage young people to leave</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>71*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Density is Destiny?

- Jobs: Density (pop/sq-mile) is linearly correlated with:
  - Jobs as MIP (+)
  - Work satisfaction (-)

- Share of friends from another race:
  - Density negatively correlated with share of friends that are different race than respondent
What Does Any of This Mean?

- The small-town/rural continuum is nuanced
- Different definitions may better fit different questions
  - Or at least yield different responses
- Be sure to specify rural definitions
- Consider weighting by density within rural categories
Exploring the Rural/Urban Divide: Role of Partisanship and the Politics of Place
Why the Rural/Urban Divide?

Population density was a powerful predictor of vote share.

*Sources: Atlas of US Presidential Elections; Census Bureau; The Economist*
Why the Rural/Urban Divide?

Hillary Clinton did worse in rural areas than Obama, Kerry, Gore, Clinton, or Dukakis.
But... *the more things change, the more they stay same*

- Urban/Rural Divides have long been a factor in U.S. politics.
- Thomas Jefferson (writing to James Madison in 1787):
  
  *I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries as long as they are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get plied upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe*

- William Diamond (1941, p 305) writing about the election of 1896 concluded:
  
  *The conflict of urban and rural populations must, therefore, be given its place as a factor in American history-a factor which has been perhaps as important as the frontier and the westward movement.*

- “The Politics of Rural Resentment” (2016)
Two Questions

• **Trump’s Rural Vote**: Is the rural/urban divide reflective of other attitudes that happen to be associated with place of residence? And, can we discern differences based on place relative to identity?

• **Rural/Urban Divides Overtime**: Is this anything new? Does this reflect change in partisan commitments over time?
Trump’s Rural Vote: Identity v. Place

Kaiser/Post Survey of Rural America

• Random sample of 1,686 adults ages 18 and over
• Conducted April 13- May 1, 2017.
• 1,070 from rural counties
• 307 from suburban counties
• 303 from urban counties
37.9% of respondents in urban counties considered the area they lived in to be urban while 46.2% described these areas as suburbs.

Place: based on county designation.

Identity: Based on survey response “Do you consider the area where you live to be rural, small town, suburban, or urban?”
Rural defined as place

(1) Rural falls out of the model once we include other attitudinal variables.

(2) Born again falls out of the model once included in the attitudinal variables.

(3) Place as connected to set of attitudes.
Rural Identity, however, remains a predictor even after including other attitudes.
The Changing Relationship of Rural Location and Partisan Affiliation
Predicted Probability Rural Respondent is a Republican, 1972-2016
Conclusions

• As a place, the rural/urban divide matters because it is associated with a specific set of attitudes.

• But.. rural identity (or self-placement) matters more than designation by county.

• The relationship between community size and partisan affiliation has changed over time as rural communities have become more Republican.

• The same relationship does not hold with political ideology, suggesting that this reflects shifts in partisan commitments but not issue positions or ideology.
TELLING THE FULL STORY OF RURAL AMERICA WITH SURVEY RESEARCH, FOCUS GROUPS AND JOURNALISM

A collaboration between The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation

Emily Guskin, Scott Clement and Liz Hamel
HOW WE STUDIED THE POPULATION

Survey
Focus groups
Follow-up interviews
FOCUS GROUPS
To understand more about the rural population we decided to hold two focus groups in a rural county, one of Trump voters, one of people who voted for anyone else.

We examined dozens of rural counties, narrowing down to counties that were far from a city and counties who voted for Obama in 2008 and 2012, but then flipped to Trump in 2016.

**Ashtabula County, Ohio** fit what we were looking for:
- 50 miles from Cleveland, on Lake Erie and the border of Pennsylvania
- Obama won by 14 points in 2008 and 13 points in 2012
- Trump beat Clinton by 19 points and was first presidential candidate to speak in the county since JFK
- 90 percent of the county is white
- Median household income is just above $40,000
- Population just under 100,000
FOCUS GROUP

The firm we hired to recruit was unable to find enough people. A voter registration database proved a useful source for contacts with some indication of political leaning and 2016 turnout.

Using tools like Google Maps and Facebook, we identified a community deli that offered to close early for us to host focus groups.

Participants agreed to be filmed during the focus group.

A Washington Post film crew came to town ahead of us to film B roll and get acquainted with the community.
FOCUS GROUP FACILITY

Photo courtesy of Aunt Neen’s Deli & Bakery Facebook page
FOCUS GROUP

Meet the rural Americans who fear they’re being forgotten

Hear from rural voters in Ashtabula County, Ohio, as they describe the most important issues to them.

June 14, 2017 | 6:03 PM EDT

What We Learned from Focus Groups

Individuals’ feelings and opinions beyond quantitative results

People feel left behind, some would move away if they could

Feelings there are no jobs, or at least no good jobs

Anxiety about drug use, specifically heroin and painkillers

Concerns about immigration, race and public assistance all jumbled together

Sense that immigrants are working for less and taking advantage of system

Sentiment that everyone is government assistance and that the system is being abused

Trump voters still like him, but concerned about his tweets and his making up facts

Non-Trump voters think Trump will bring us into a war

People in cities are ruder, keep to themselves
MAIN STORIES PUBLISHED USING POLL DATA
**A GAP DEFINED BY VALUES**

**By Sarah A. Pope and Scott Clement**

The notion that the United States and its values are in decline is a common refrain among those who observe American society. But a new report by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago suggests that the divide between rural and urban Americans is broader than previously thought. The study, conducted by the Pew Research Center, finds that rural Americans are much more likely than urban Americans to identify as conservative and to support policies that benefit rural areas.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center found that rural Americans are more likely than urban Americans to identify as conservative. The survey also found that rural Americans are more likely than urban Americans to support policies that benefit rural areas, such as increased spending on infrastructure and expansion of healthcare coverage.

**RURAL AMERICANS SAY THEY HAVE DIFFERENT VALUES**

- **Where immigrants are fewer, tolerance is less.**
- **Rural Americans see society as more divided.**
- **A feeling that values are widely divergent.**

**From The Washington Post**

**RURAL DIVIDE**

**Mistrial isn’t end of woes for Cosby**

Prosecutors say they will retry entertainer on sexual-assault charges.

**By Manuel Roig-Franzia**

HUNTINGTON, N.Y. — A mistrial was declared after a jury in the sexual-assault case against Bill Cosby was unable to reach a verdict.

The trial was the second to end in a mistrial in the case against the actor, who has been charged with three counts of sexual assault. The first trial ended in a hung jury last year.

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**

- A man walks past a store in Huntington, N.Y., where the trial was held.
- The jury was unable to reach a verdict in the trial.
- The actor Bill Cosby, at center, in the courtroom during the trial.

**THE WASHINGTON POST**

**FRI, JUN 23, 2017**

**A feeling that values are widely divergent**

- **Who live in bigger cities, including places like New York and Los Angeles.**
- **Who say that values are very different.**

- **Who live in smaller towns and cities.**
- **Who say that values are less different.**

- **Who live in rural areas.**
- **Who say that values are very different.**
For all their differences ...

- Household owns a gun
  - Urban: 27%
  - Suburban: 42%
  - Rural: 56%

- Say whites losing out because of preferences for blacks and Hispanics is a bigger problem than the reverse
  - Urban: 22%
  - Suburban: 27%
  - Rural: 34%

- Say Christian values are under attack
  - Urban: 44%
  - Suburban: 52%
  - Rural: 59%

- Say immigrants are a burden on country
  - Urban: 16%
  - Suburban: 21%
  - Rural: 42%

- Say they’ve not been able to pay their bills at some point in the past year
  - Urban: 21%
  - Suburban: 22%
  - Rural: 23%

... rural Americans also share commonalities with urbanites

- Say media doesn’t respect them
  - Urban: 53%
  - Suburban: 52%
  - Rural: 60%

- Think their children will achieve a better standard of living than them
  - Urban: 41%
  - Suburban: 41%
  - Rural: 43%

- Say grace a few times a week or more
  - Urban: 45%
  - Suburban: 41%
  - Rural: 31%
Poll shows mistrust of immigrants outside cities, suburbs

DIVIDE FROM AI

"I think it's just people not getting out there and knowing their neighbors," said Adam Lauck, who lives in a rural part of Minnesota and thinks immigrants strengthen America.

President Trump won the November election with broad support from rural America, and his aggressive stance against illegal immigration resonated strongly through the Post-Kaiser polls. Residents in rural areas are as diverse as the city dwellers to consider themselves part of the United States — 62 percent, compared with 38 percent of urban residents.

\[\text{Rural residents are more likely to say that recent immigrants have different values than their own — 62 percent, compared with 38 percent of urban residents.}\]

Trump voters in rural areas are the most critical. Seventy-four percent say recent immigrants are not doing enough to assimilate to life in America, vs. 49 percent of rural Americans overall who think they are, on average.

One reason for rural Americans' concerns about immigrants could be their lack of exposure to them. Born-and-raised residents make up 2.3 percent of the population in rural counties, compared with nearly 26 percent of urban counties, according to Census Bureau data for 2011-2013.

"Rural residents have had a lot of experience with immigrants," said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution. "They haven't had a chance to get used to them. Maybe their experience isn't very positive, but they hear-poor people saying all sorts of things about immigrants coming in and taking jobs.

Immigrants tend to concentrate in cities where jobs are more plentiful, though smaller groups have migrated to rural towns in recent years, and many perceive illegal immigrants as a source of cheap labor.

The Post-Kaiser poll finds that in rural areas where less than 3 percent of the population are immigrants, the number is 4 in 10 residents or an immigrant neighborhood.

They're hard-working people, the ones I've known all my life," she said. "They want to stick together and help each other out.

David Woods, a 35-year-old father of two and a farm laborer, said he loves his job, the fresh air, the shade of green creeper. He hopes to continue to work on farms after his family sold theirs.

"I'm not rich," Woods said. "I think there's enough dignity for everyone to work as a farm worker.

In 2008, Woodstock was a train company. It now has some small business owners. The company is still run by the same family, and they employ more workers.

The United States is home to more than 6 million immigrants. An estimated 3 million are likely to be illegal, the Pew Research Center reports.

If you do it right, I don't have a problem with it," said William Cooper, who runs an insurance agency in rural Michigan and is a supporter of immigration reform. "If you don't do it right, you can't sell it.

Cooper said the United States is drowning in debt and should only welcome immigrants the nation can afford. "Can't everybody live in the world live in America," he said. "We're putting ourselves into the purses.

But Lauck, a 35-year-old truck driver and gun enthusiast, painted a different picture of the political landscape. "I don't think our cultural fabric should be laid down in a tradition that needs to be preserved," Lauck said. "We fight for the Fourth of July, and that's for every body.

He said he has met immigrants from all over the world, including Mexico, South America, and others, and more feel entitled to U.S. government benefits than before. Rather than deporting immigrants, Lauck said, he would like the government to focus on requiring businesses to hire workers who are here legally. "They want to work for everything they get," he said. "That's what they came here for.

The Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll was conducted April 25-May 13 with a random national sample of 1,906 U.S. adults conducted on landline and cellular phones. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The sample of 547 rural Americans has an overall margin of sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points. The sample of 954 non-rural Americans has an overall margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.
Americans united when it comes to saying grace

BY SARAH PULLIAM BAILEY, JULIE ZAUMZER AND EMMY GUSKIN

OMRO, WIS. — One by one, the Weiss family rounded up the nine grandchil-
dren, who had been running circles around the barns. They gathered under a
towering maple tree, around a table laden with barbecue meatballs and French silk
pie, and grabbed one another’s hands.
“We ask your blessing on the meal we’re about to eat,” said David Weiss, 75, head
bowed under his camouflage hat.
“ Amen,” his family responded — a quintessential display of one of America’s
most enduring religious traditions.

A poll by The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation finds that say-
ing grace is a widespread practice in the United States. About half of all Americans
take a minute to say a prayer over their food at least a few times a week, the poll
reveals, making grace an unusual customality in a politically divided nation.

Rural and urban Americans are equally likely to say grace, the poll shows, North-
erners and Southerners, Catholics and Protestants, Democrats and Republicans,
all say grace to varying degrees. Even some Americans who reject organized
religions say grace.

Keller said the physical act of bowing heads, closing eyes and folding hands is an
important exercise in gratitude for people of many faiths, from childhood on up.
That’s true for the Weiss family, evangeli-
cal Protestants who gathered on their
77-acre farm in Wisconsin. Sivric Weiss, 11,
called grace “a peaceful moment to get
away from the world.” Her aunt Tracey Soll,
36, said that, “It offers me a chance to fix a
point in my day where I am intentional
about honoring and acknowledging what
God has done for us.”

In the Post-Kaiser poll, which was con-
ducted April 10 to May 1 among a random sample of 1,686 American adults, 48 per-
cent say they give blessings to God or say
grace before meals at least a few times each
week. There’s a religious split, as well: Six in
10 Protestants say grace a few times a
week or more, as do 52 percent of Catho-
lies. But the practice is more prevalent
among black Protestants (60 percent) and
white evangelical Protestants (74 percent)
than among white mainline or nonevan-
gelical Protestants, 31 percent of whom
report saying grace frequently before meals.

Overall, about 8 in 10 blacks, about 6 in
10 Hispanics and about 4 in 10 whites say
grace at least a few times each week.
The tradition of mealtime grace is firm-
ly established in the black church. For
Lynn Thompson, 64, grace connects her to
God even when she’s not well enough to
make it to her Arkansas Baptist church.

RURAL DIVIDE

'"By Greg Epstein, a humanist chap-
lain at Harvard University, who asks
someone to say a blessing before he
hosts nonreligious students for dinner. Some
bristle, he said, but Epstein believes in the
act of gratitude.

"Why do we have to give up the good
parts of being religious — including the
mindfulness, the reflection that comes
from a ritual like grace — just because we
don’t believe in the traditional wording of
the poem that people recite when they sit
down to a meal?" Epstein said. "Can we
come up with new words that reflect our
contemporary needs and values?"
Stuart H., 52, of Las Cruces, N.M., is a

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RURAL DIVIDE

SUPPORT FOR TRUMP HEAVY, NOT UNIFORM

BY DAN BALZ

Rural America has often backed Republicans in presidential elections, but rarely with the enthusiasm shown for Donald Trump in 2016. More sparsely populated areas of the country are the heart of Trump Nation and continue to provide majority support for a president who has faced near-constant controversy and discord.

At a time when his job approval rating is in net negative territory nationally, more than half of all adults (54 percent) in rural America say they approve of the way President Trump is doing his job, according to a new Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey. His approval rating among rural Americans is 10 percentage points higher than among suburbanites and 22 points higher than among city dwellers.

Even in areas he won by biggest margins, president is polarizing

At the same time, however, any suggestion of rural America as near-monolithic in its support for the president represents a misleading oversimplification. Even in areas of the country where Trump scored some of his biggest margins, he is a divisive figure — loved by his supporters but disliked by many who voted for Hillary Clinton. Four in 10 adults in rural America disapprove of his job performance, a hefty number for a president still in the early stages of his tenure.

On election night in November, Trump lost America’s cities in a landslide. In the suburbs, he narrowly prevailed over Clinton. But in the 2,632 counties that make up small-town and rural America, he swamped his Democratic rival, winning 60 percent of the vote to Clinton’s 34 percent. Trump’s 26-point advantage over Clinton in rural America is a starkly split by race. A8

Differences, in black and white Views of rural communities are starkly split by race.
RURAL DIVIDE

WASHINGTON POST-KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION POLL

RURAL VOTERS SWUNG SHARPLY TOWARD TRUMP IN 2016

Republican percentage point advantage (positive) or disadvantage (negative) over Democrats in presidential elections

Source: County-level election results from Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections; Urban/Suburban/Rural based on National Center for Health Statistics' categories.
Racial disparity remains stubborn

BY ARACELI HACOCHEA AND SAMUEL RECHTELOW

ST. MARTINVILLE, LA. — Euphemia De Toups makes a daily drive in her pickup truck to a country store to pick up fresh produce, bread and postage. In the plaza behind her is a bar-restaurant and a convenience store — places where she says every face is familiar, where she can find work. Her friends and relatives often spend time here, on the steps of the Baptist church where she sings gospel.

"This place is my home," De Toups says. "I can't imagine being anywhere else."

For thousands of rural americans, the countryside still holds promises of stability and opportunity. But for many, that opportunity is not available to all, as new disparities emerge between white and black residents in the region.

"The differences are still stark and severe," says De Toups, who at age 39 has never left St. Martinville. "I hope my children can find opportunities here, but I don't know if they will.

"The opportunity is still real," she says. But now, she asks, "what will happen to the people who hold onto those opportunities?"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: St. Marie De Toups, the white church on the northeast of St. Martinville, La. Euphemia De Toups and her husband both work at their own sprucing homes on the edge of the town in St. Martinville, and raised their three girls. In she said she hopes her daughters will make their own decisions.

The Washington Post

RURAL WHITES GENERALLY RATE THEIR COMMUNITIES BETTER THAN RURAL BLACKS

Q: How would you rate each of the following in your local community?

Percent of rural residents who responded 'excellent' or 'good'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a place to raise children</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a place where people look out for each other</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of public schools</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job opportunities</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll April 13-May 1, 2017, error margin +/- 3.5 percentage points among 1,070 rural residents, 4.5 points among the sample of 759 rural whites, +/- 12 points among the sample of 115 rural blacks and +/-11.5 points among 111 rural Hispanics.
U.S. flood insurance program struggling

Nevada's rocky health-care future

Access to health care impeded in rural Nev.

UAE ties to hail target Qatar

U.S. intelligence confirms threat

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