Why Rural Matters 2007:

The Realities of Rural Education Growth

Jerry Johnson, Ed.D, Research and Analysis Unit Manager
Marty Strange, Policy Director

Rural School and Community Trust

THE RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRUST

A Report of the Rural School and Community Trust Policy Program

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ABOUT THE RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRUST

The Rural School and Community Trust the leading national nonprofit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities. Our mission is to help rural schools and communities get better together. Working in some of the poorest, most challenging places, the Rural Trust involves young people in learning linked to their communities, improves the quality of teaching and school leadership, and advocates in a variety of ways for appropriate state educational policies, including the key issue of equitable and adequate funding for rural schools.

Why Rural Matters 2007: The Realities of Rural Education Growth

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Executive Summary

Why Rural Matters is the fourth in a series of biennial reports analyzing the importance of rural education in each of the 50 states and calling attention to the urgency with which policymakers in each state should address rural education issues.

Report Methodology: Gauging Rural Education

We framed this report around five gauges measuring: (1) the **Importance** of rural education, (2) the level of **Socioeconomic Challenges** known to be barriers to academic achievement faced by rural schools, (3) the level of **Student Diversity** among rural students, (4) the rural educational **Policy Context,** and (5) the educational **Outcomes** of rural students in each state. Each gauge is comprised of several equally weighted indicators—23 indicators in all—the largest number of indicators and gauges we have used to date.

The higher the ranking on a gauge, the more important or the more urgent rural education matters are in that state.

We then combined the five gauge rankings, computing an overall ranking called the Rural Education Priority Gauge to prioritize states according to the overall status of rural education in each state.

Importance

Six of the 13 states where rural education is most important to the overall educational performance of the state are located in the Prairie/Plains region (South Dakota, Oklahoma, Montana, North Dakota, Iowa, and Kansas). The rest of the 13 are in Northern New England (Maine and Vermont), the Southeast (North Carolina), the Mid-South Delta (Mississippi and Alabama), the Far West (Alaska), and Central Appalachia (Kentucky).

Rural education is predominant in small states where there are no large cities, but also relatively few rural students. The states with the most rural students are heavily urbanized, and rural students, though large in number, constitute a small minority. The ten states with the highest percentages of rural students have a combined rural enrollment of nearly 1.9 million—about 45% of the total student enrollment in those states, but only about 19% of the total rural enrollment in the U.S. On the other hand, more than half of all rural students attend school in 12 states where they are a much smaller minority, including some of the nation's most populous and most urban states: Texas, California, Ohio, Michigan, New York, and Florida.

Socioeconomic Challenges

Socioeconomic challenges, such as the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals or the adult unemployment rate, present the most persistent threats to high levels of student achievement. Eight of the 13 states facing the worst rural socioeconomic challenges are located in the Southeast and Mid-South Delta (Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Georgia). Other regions represented in the top 13 are Central Appalachia (Kentucky and West Virginia) and the Southwest (New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arizona).

Student Diversity

Public schools do not have a good track record in meeting the needs of diverse student populations. A great deal of diversity among rural students indicates both a challenge and an opportunity for a state to contribute to closing the many national achievement gaps. Four of the 12 states in which attention to rural student diversity is most crucial are located in the Southwest

(Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), and another four are in the Southeast (Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia). The remaining states are scattered in different regions: the Northwest (Oregon), the Midwest/Great Lakes (Illinois), and the Far West (California and Alaska).

Policy Context

Characteristics of the public schooling system that are driven by policy decisions—such as instructional expenditures per pupil or the size of schools and districts—are often closely related to student achievement and overall student well-being. Four of the states in which the policy context is least conducive to rural educational achievement are located in the Southeast (Louisiana, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi). Three others are all or partly in the Central Appalachian Region (Kentucky, Virginia, and Ohio). The remaining top 13 states are scattered across several regions: the Southwest (Arizona), the Midwest (Illinois and Missouri), the West (Utah and Idaho), and the Great Plains (North Dakota).

Outcomes

Student academic achievement outcomes—such as performance on national assessments or schools' success in graduating students—illustrate the urgency with which policymakers should approach improving rural schools. Seven of the 13 states with the poorest educational outcomes are located in the Southeast and Mid-South Delta (Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, and North Carolina). Two each are in the Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico), Central Appalachia (Kentucky and West Virginia), and the Far West (California and Hawaii).

Rural Education Priority

The states ranking the highest overall are located in quintessentially rural regions of the country: the **Southeast** (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, and Georgia), the **Mid-South Delta** (Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana), the **Southwest** (Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas), and **Central Appalachia** (Kentucky). Oklahoma, which borders the Mid-South Delta and the Southwest, is also included. The lowest ranking states are mostly urban states on the East Coast and in the Great Lakes Region.

No state scores at the top on all five indicators, but the four highest priority states (Mississippi, Alabama, Arizona, and North Carolina) score the highest on four of them.

The top priority states have challenging rural populations, few resources, and poor outcomes. States identified as the highest priority are ones whose rural schools face more substantial challenges than rural schools in other states, receive fewer resources than others, and produce less than others in terms of student educational outcomes. Poverty, fiscal incapacity, low levels of adult education, and low levels of student achievement run in the same mutually reinforcing circles in these states, many of which are as fiscally challenged as their citizens and schools.

Rural students in urban states are out of sight, out of mind. The states where rural education is most notably underperforming (that is, the state's performance ranks worse than its socio-economic challenges would suggest it should) are predominantly non-rural states on the East or West coast where the rural population is "out of sight, out of mind," including, among others, California and Maryland.

Major Report Highlights

★ *Rural student enrollment is increasing both absolutely and as a percentage of the national student enrollment (see page 1).*

Between 2002-03 and 2004-05, rural school enrollment gained while non-rural school enrollment declined:

- Overall public school enrollment in the U.S. increased by about 602,000 students, or 1%.
- Enrollment in rural schools (those in communities with a population under 2,500) *increased* by over 1,339,000 (or 15%).
- Enrollment for schools in communities of greater than 2,500 *decreased* by over 738,000 or 2%.

For consistency, the above comparisons use categories from the locale code system first developed in the 1980s by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). However, in 2006, NCES released a new locale code system that incorporates geospatial elements—e.g., distance from urban areas—in an effort to offer greater precision. We use this new locale code system to define rural schools and districts for *Why Rural Matters 2007*.

Using the new locale code system, in 2006, there were 9,974,462 students attending 26,390 schools in U.S. communities of under 2,500, accounting for 22% of U.S. public school enrollment. Nationally, 29% of public school students attended school in communities of fewer than 25,000 people. Meeting the needs of nearly ten million rural children is a challenge that is worthy of society's attention.

★ *The highest priority rural education regions are the Southwest, Southeast, Mid-South Delta, and Appalachia (see pages 18-20).*

Poverty, fiscal incapacity, low levels of adult education, and low levels of student achievement run in the same mutually reinforcing circles in states in these regions, many of which are as fiscally challenged as their citizens and schools. Of the 23 indicators used in this report, the ones most closely associated with the overall priority state ranking are (in order of correlation strength):

1. Percentage of rural families in poverty
2. Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals
3. Rural NAEP reading score
4. Rural median household income
5. Rural NAEP math score
6. Percentage of rural adults with a high school diploma
7. Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

★ *Rural education policymakers face four realities (see pages 28-30).*

Significant results from statistical correlations between state rankings on the five gauges used in this report suggest the following realities:

1. The more rural the state, the more severe the rural socioeconomic challenges.
2. The poorer a state's rural population,
    a. The worse the rural educational outcomes.
    b. The worse the rural educational policy context.
3. The more racially and ethnically diverse a state's rural population,
    a. The more severe the rural socioeconomic challenges.
    b. The worse the rural educational outcomes.
    c. The worse the rural educational policy context.
4. The worse the policy context, the worse the rural educational outcomes.

★ ***In low achieving states, policies are making things worse, not better.***

Research suggests that states serving higher percentages of students who are poor or have limited English language skills will have to invest additional resources to enable their students to reach the same level of achievement as other states. Research also demonstrates that poor and minority students derive substantial achievement benefits from attending smaller schools and districts. But the actual patterns we find in rural America are exactly the opposite. As expected, the states where the educational outcomes in rural schools require the most urgent attention are the states with the most impoverished, minority, and ELL rural students. They are also the states where schools receive the fewest resources and where students attend the largest schools and districts.

Other Report Highlights

★ ***Many states have seen a dramatic change in the demographic makeup of their student population in the past decade (see page 11).***

States where the demographic makeup of the student population has changed most dramatically in the past ten years are also among the states with the smallest rural minority enrollments in the nation (the top ten—New Hampshire, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Maine, Kansas, and Utah—together serve just over 100,000 rural minority students). Their average percentage increase is 124%. While the size of the rural minority population in these states is not large, the rapid rate of change suggests that schools might not be prepared to meet the needs of students with different backgrounds.

Substantial increases in the number of rural minority students are not limited to states with small rural minority enrollments, however. Nationally, the percent increase is about 55%, and states such as Texas, California, and North Carolina—each ranking near the top in terms of number and/or percent rural minority enrollment—show increases of more than 50%.

★ ***Rural schools are most racially and ethnically diverse in the Southeast and Southwest (see page 10).***

In five states (Hawaii, New Mexico, Alaska, Arizona, and California), there is no racial or ethnic majority group in rural schools. Minority students make up 25% or more of the student population in 11 other states (in descending order, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Carolina, Georgia, Delaware, Florida, Alabama, and Virginia) and these states serve 80% of all rural minority students in the U.S.

The most diverse rural student populations are concentrated in states where rural education is not likely to be a primary policy focus. Many of the states that rank highest overall on the Diversity Gauge are larger states with low *percentage* rural populations but high *numbers* of rural people, and five of the most diverse states rank in the bottom half of the Importance Gauge—Texas, Florida, California, Illinois, and Oregon. Given the limited policy efforts to meet the needs of diverse student populations in any setting, providing appropriate services to rural minority students in these states could prove doubly challenging.

★ ***Rural English Language Learners are most prevalent in the West (see page 11).***

In both New Mexico and Alaska, about one in three rural students qualifies for ELL services; in Arizona and California, one in five. The highest ranking state east of the Mississippi River is North Carolina, with just over 5% (or one in 20) of students qualifying for ELL services.

★ ***Rural instructional expenditures per pupil are lowest in Southern states, where rural schools face severe socio-economic challenges (see pages 13-14, 9).***

Instructional expenditures per pupil range from $3,600 in rural Oklahoma to more than $7,900 in rural New York. Seven other states join Oklahoma in spending less than $4,000 per pupil for instruction in rural schools: Mississippi ($3,688), Arkansas ($3,790), Alabama ($3,793), Tennessee ($3,856), Arizona ($3,925), Idaho ($3,925), and Utah ($3,994). Significantly, nine of the 13 top rated states on the Socioeconomic Challenges gauge are among the 13 states with the lowest per pupil instructional funding: Mississippi, Kentucky, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, Arizona, and Oklahoma. That these states serve the most impoverished rural schools and communities in the nation, and that they do so with fewer resources, suggests a disturbing pattern in which the distribution of resources appears to be compounding already challenging circumstances.

★ ***Low rural teacher salaries dominate in the nation's heartland (see page 14).***

The 13 states with the lowest spending on instructional salaries are in contiguous states in the Heartland, from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, including Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee.

★ ***Big schools in big districts dominate in Southeastern states known for consolidated countywide school districts and regional high schools (see page 14).***

The 13 states with the largest schools in the largest districts are located in or adjacent to the Southeast Region: (in order) Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Virginia, Louisiana, Delaware, Mississippi, Kentucky, and West Virginia. States with the smallest schools and districts are mostly in the Great Plains and the West—states with mostly local independent school districts.

★ ***The poorer and more diverse the rural student population, the lower the rural NAEP scores (see pages 16-17, 9, 12).***

Twelve states have the lowest average scores on both the math and reading NAEP test for rural schools. They are located primarily in the Southwest, the Southeast, and Central Appalachia (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia). These states also have high socioeconomic challenges and student diversity, showing a strong correlation between these factors and low rural NAEP scores.

★ ***Graduation rates are lowest in states mostly in the Southeast, but some states with the highest overall graduation rates also had the largest "graduation gaps" between white and minority students (see page 17).***

Rural graduation rates are below 70% in ten states, mostly in the Southeast: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. South Carolina leads the nation with the lowest rate at 55%.

In six states, less than half of all minority students in an 8th grade cohort graduated from high school five years later (Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Delaware, Georgia, and Indiana). In ten other states, the graduation rate among rural minority students was less than 60% (Nevada, Kansas, Oregon, Wyoming, North Carolina, Utah, Connecticut, Missouri, Alaska, and Alabama).

Some of the states that produced the highest overall rural graduation rates had the largest gaps in graduation rates between white and minority students (e.g., Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Utah, Wyoming). In these states, a very high percentage of rural minority students are Native American or Hispanic.

★ ***The poorest rural populations are in the poorest states least able to afford the cost of an adequate education (see pages 23 and 31).***

Unfortunately, over $12 billion in federal aid through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) intended to help schools combat the effects of poverty is distributed through formulas that systematically discriminate against small, high-poverty school districts. Congress should eliminate that bias and also consider a pilot program under Title II of ESEA that takes a more targeted approach to teacher improvement in some of the very poorest rural schools in the poorest rural regions.

★ ***As rural America grows increasingly diverse, the need for adequate resources and supportive policy environments to meet the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students grows ever more important (see pages 25-27).***

Nearly one-half of all ELL students live in rural communities, and the rate of growth of this population is very high. But the growth in ELL student populations is rural areas is not spread uniformly across states, within states, or even within school districts. Regionally, the fastest growth (in terms of both actual growth and percentage growth) occurred in the southeastern U.S (see pages 31-32).

Rural schools serving proportionally larger ELL student populations, on average, face higher concentrations of traditional barriers to educational achievement than do their counterparts serving fewer ELL students. In many states, higher percentages of ELL students are associated with higher levels of poverty among all students.

In considering policy implications, the limited level of funding available to rural districts serving ELL students is most pressing because it directly impacts many other areas of concern (e.g., teacher recruitment and retention, professional development) and because it is indicative of the ways in which policy contexts can work against public education in rural settings.

In the 2002-03 school year, the most recent data year available, federal dollars for bilingual education amounted to less than $51 per ELL student, and most of that was in the form of competitive grants that many rural districts did not have the capacity to compete for. Among districts enrolling at least 100 ELL students, only 36% received federal ELL funding.

Only nine states (Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, North Dakota, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington) reported providing categorical funds to rural school districts for ELL programs in the 2002-03 school year, ranging from $1,716 per rural ELL student in Florida to $20 per rural ELL student in Michigan. Some other states take into account the additional costs of ELL programs by allocating resources based on weighted student enrollment counts.

Introduction

Why Rural Matters is a biennial report analyzing the importance of rural education in each of the 50 states and calling attention to the urgency with which policymakers in each state should address rural education issues.

Unlike many state-by-state statistical analyses, *Why Rural Matters* is not a longitudinal study that pits the states in a race toward an arbitrary finish line. We deliberately alter the statistical indicators we use and the gauges we assemble in order to emphasize the complexity and variability of rural America. Different states and different regions receive greater attention when the indicators are altered even slightly, as we have found in previous editions. When we measured declining enrollment, the Great Plains surfaced as a priority region. But, when we measured transience, the rural Southwest emerged as a much higher priority. Both indicators are important measures of instability. In rural America, the problems are as diverse as the population.

Here, we again update and expand the earlier reports in an attempt to (1) provide information and analyses that highlight states' priority needs with regard to education policy impacting rural public schools, and (2) describe the complexities of the rural context for public education so policymakers can formulate policies that shape that context for the better.

Rural student enrollment is increasing both absolutely and as a percentage of the national student enrollment.

In 2002-03 (the school year used in the *Why Rural Matters 2005* report), 27% of the nation's children attended school in communities of fewer than 25,000 people, and 19% attended school in communities of fewer than 2,500. Updating those figures, we find that in 2004-05, those numbers increased to 29% and 22%, respectively.

Overall, public school enrollment in the U.S. increased by about 602,000 students, or about 1%, from 2002-03 to 2004-05. During that period, enrollment in rural schools *increased* by 1,339,000 (or 15%) for schools in communities of fewer than 2,500. Enrollment for schools in communities of greater than 2,500 *decreased* by over 738,000 or 2%. Thus, the proportional increase in rural enrollment is the result of both an increase in students attending schools in rural areas and a decrease in students attending schools in urban and suburban settings. This represents a reversal of the trend we saw in *Why Rural Matters 2005* when we compared enrollment figures for 2002-03 and 2000-01.

For consistency, the above comparisons use categories from the locale code system first developed in the 1980s by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In 2006, NCES released a new locale code system that incorporates geospatial elements—e.g., distance from urban areas—in an effort to offer greater precision (see "The Data" on page 3 for a description). We use this new locale code system to define rural schools and districts for *Why Rural Matters 2007*. Using this new system, we identified 26,390 rural schools serving 9,974,462 rural students in communities of under 2,500.

Meeting the needs of nearly ten million rural children is a challenge that is worthy of society's attention.

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Gauging Rural Education in the 50 States

We framed this report around five gauges measuring: (1) the **Importance** of rural education, (2) the level of **Socioeconomic Challenges** known to be barriers to academic achievement faced by rural schools, (3) the level of **Student Diversity** among rural students, (4) the rural educational **Policy Context,** and (5) the educational **Outcomes** of rural students in each state. Each gauge is

comprised of several equally weighted indicators—23 in all—the largest number of indicators and gauges we have used to date.

The higher the ranking on a gauge, the more important or the more urgent rural education matters are in that state.

The indicators used in the gauges are:

Importance Gauge
Percent rural schools
Percent small rural districts
Percent rural students
Number of rural students
Percentage of state's overall education funds going to rural districts

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma
Rural adult unemployment rate
Rural median household income
Percentage of rural families in poverty
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals

Student Diversity Gauge
Percent rural minority students
Number of rural minority students
Percent increase in rural minority students over a ten-year period
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students

Policy Context Gauge
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts
Median organizational scale among rural districts
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts

Outcomes Gauge
Rural NAEP math score
Rural NAEP reading score
Rural high school graduation rate

Rural America and its 50 state educational systems are much more complex than those who see them only from a distance might believe.

The indicators used in this report differ considerably from those used in previous versions of *Why Rural Matters,* and it is not appropriate to make overall year-to-year comparisons of a state's ranking on each of the gauges, even though some indicators are the same. The possibilities for describing the characteristics of rural schools, the policy context in which they operate, and the educational outcomes they achieve are virtually unlimited. Rural America and its 50 state educational systems are much more complex than those who see them only from a distance might believe. In fact, there are many perspectives from which to view rural education in America. This report represents one good way, as do each of the previous reports in the series. There are many other good ways.

To understand the limitations of making year-to-year comparisons from versions of *Why Rural Matters* using different indicators, consider the case of West Virginia. West Virginia, a very high ranking state in each of our previous reports, slips to 17th priority this year, primarily because the

inclusion of a separate gauge for diversity elevates other states to a higher position relative to West Virginia. Moreover, in rural West Virginia, countywide districts and the consolidation of many smaller community schools into fewer, larger schools situated in county seats (or larger towns) means that many of the state's districts no longer meet the locale code standards for "rural." Another indicator where West Virginia ranks lower is the percentage of state funding going to rural districts, a change that is at least partly related to the new rural definition (i.e., among West Virginia's 55 school districts, there are four fewer classified as rural under the new classification system).

Illinois, on the other hand, which ranked among the lowest priority states in the nation at 43rd in *Why Rural Matters 2005,* jumps to 23rd overall, mainly on the strength of high levels of student diversity and an unfavorable policy environment. West Virginia and Illinois are both states with rural students facing challenges. Over time, our selection of various gauges and indicators are not intended to elevate one over the other, but to see them both more clearly, and on their own terms.

For each of the five gauges, we added the state rankings on each indicator and then divided by the number of indicators to produce an average gauge ranking. Based on that ranking, we then divided the states into quartiles that described their relative position with regard to other states on that particular gauge. For the Importance and Student Diversity gauges, the four quartiles are labeled "Notable," "Important," "Very Important," and "Crucial." For the Socioeconomic Challenges, Policy Context, and Outcomes gauges, the four quartiles are labeled "Fair," "Serious," "Critical," and "Urgent." These categories are descriptive in only the most general way. Obviously, there is not much difference between an "Urgent" ranking of 12 and a "Critical" ranking of 13.

Lastly, we combined the five average gauge rankings to determine an overall average ranking, which we term the **Rural Education Priority Gauge.**

Despite the use of different indicators and gauges, certain states percolate to the top of the priority list each time we take stock of rural education. Most of the top states on the overall priority gauge have been there in the past reports. Apparently, no matter how you look at it, the educational performance of the rural communities in these states is both important and in urgent need of attention.

Finally, a further caution. Our data do not reveal the substantial variation in rural circumstances within many states. A state with an "average" ranking on an indicator may have within its boundaries rural regions that differ tremendously from one another. This is especially true for the socioeconomic and diversity indicators. The statewide average on some of these indicators may not reflect the reality anywhere in a state, with far higher rates in some parts of the state and far lower rates in others. When that is the case, we hope the presentation of these indicators here prompts a refined discussion and a better understanding of all rural areas.

The Data

The data we used for *Why Rural Matters 2007* were compiled from information maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau and then merged into a single data set in order to create variables for each school and district in the U.S. All data used here are available to the general public and may be downloaded in tabular formats.[i]

To define rural, we used the revised NCES locale code system released in 2006.[ii] The new locale codes are based on proximity to an urbanized area (a densely settled core with densely settled surrounding areas). The locale code system includes four major types of areas: city, suburban, town, and rural. Each type has three subcategories. For city and suburb, these are gradations of size—large, midsize, and small. Towns and rural areas are further distinguished by their linear distance from an urbanized area. They can be characterized as fringe, distant, or remote.

Rural *schools* used in our report are those designated as locale codes 41 (rural fringe), 42 (rural distant), or 43 (rural remote). We defined rural *districts* as those with at least 50% of their total students enrolled in rural schools.

We only used data for regular schools—public elementary and secondary schools that are non-charter and do not focus primarily on vocational, special, or alternative education. With regard to district-level data, we used regular local education agencies (local school districts and local school district components of supervisory unions) and excluded charter school-only districts.

Results

The data for each state and state rankings for each indicator are presented in the charts and figures on pages 41-90.

The results are summarized and discussed below. To aid in making comparisons, the national level data for each indicator is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. National Rural Statistics

Importance Gauge	U.S.
Percent rural schools	28.6%
Percent small rural districts	40.0%
Percent rural students	21.4%
Number of rural students (median state enrollment: 160,320)	9,974,462
Percentage of state's education funds to rural districts	18.4%
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge	
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	83.7%
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.1%
Rural median household income	$46,145
Percentage of rural families in poverty	13.1%
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	38.5%
Student Diversity Gauge	
Percent rural minority students	22.9%
Number of rural minority students (median state enrollment: 19,847)	2,200,333
Percent increase in rural minority students over a ten-year period	54.9%
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	4.1%
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.7%
Policy Context Gauge	
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.67
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,701
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$48,472
Median organizational scale among rural districts (divided by 100)	3,164
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts (median)	31.1%
Outcomes Gauge	
Rural NAEP math score	258.5
Rural NAEP reading score	240.5
Rural high school graduation rate	75.7%

Importance Gauge

Importance Gauge Indicators

The size and scope of the rural school and student populations in a state offer a relative and absolute measure of the scale of rural education within the context of a state's overall public education system, and helps define just how important rural education is to each state. In this section, we define each of the indicators in the Importance Gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data.

- **Percent rural schools** is the percentage of regular elementary and secondary public schools designated as rural by NCES. The higher the percentage of rural schools, the higher the state ranks on the Importance Gauge.

States vary considerably with regard to the percentage of schools located in rural areas, from a low of 5% in Massachusetts to a high of 68% in Montana. More than half of all public schools are rural in six states (Montana, South Dakota, Vermont, North Dakota, Maine, and Alaska), and at least one-third of all public schools are rural in 20 other states. In general, the highest percentages of rural schools are found in states where population sparseness and/or rough terrain make it difficult to transport students to consolidated regional schools in non-rural areas. The smallest percentages of rural schools are found in predominantly urban states on the East and West coasts.

- **Percent small rural districts** is the percentage of rural districts that are below the median district enrollment for all rural public school districts in the U.S. (median = 502 students). The higher the percentage of districts with enrollments below 502, the higher the state ranks on the Importance Gauge.

In 15 states, at least half of all rural districts have enrollments below the national median. Fourteen of them are located west of the Mississippi River (Vermont is the exception). States with the lowest percentage of small rural districts (including a few that have none) are primarily located in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions, where consolidated countywide districts are the norm. Hawaii operates as a single statewide district.

- **Percent rural students** is a measure of the relative size of the rural student population, and represents the percentage of all public school students who are enrolled in elementary and secondary schools designated as rural by NCES. The higher the percentage of rural students, the higher the state ranks on the Importance Gauge.

The ten states with the highest percentages of rural students have a combined rural enrollment of nearly 1.9 million—about 45% of the total student enrollment in those states, but only about 19% of the total rural enrollment in the U.S. The highest proportions of rural students are found in four regions: Northern New England, the Mid-South Delta, the Great Plains, and Central Appalachia. At the other end of the spectrum, ten states have less than 15% of their students enrolled in rural schools. The states with the smallest proportional enrollments are primarily urban East and West coast states and arid Western states where the population lives mostly in cities and the rural areas are extremely sparsely populated.

- **Number of rural students** is an absolute—as opposed to relative—measure of the size of the rural student population. The figure given for each state represents the total number of students enrolled in all regular public schools designated as rural by NCES. The higher the number, the higher the state ranks on the Importance Gauge.

The highest proportions of rural students are found in four regions: Northern New England, the Mid-South Delta, the Great Plains, and Central Appalachia.

More than half of all rural students in the country attend school in just 12 states, including some of the nation's most populous and most urban states (in order of rural enrollment size, Texas, California, Ohio, Michigan, New York, and Florida). The two states with the largest rural enrollments—Texas and North Carolina—serve nearly 1.4 million rural students, about 14% of all rural students in the nation, and more than the combined rural enrollments of 21 other states, including several that are typically thought of as rural (e.g., West Virginia, Nebraska, Vermont, Alaska).

More than half of all rural students in the country attend school in just 12 states, including some of the nation's most populous and most urban states.

- **Percentage of state's education funds to rural schools** represents the proportion of overall state K-12 funding for education that goes to school districts with 50% or more of their students enrolled in schools designated as rural by NCES. We focus the analysis on state-derived general fund revenues that are used to support the day-to-day operations associated with conducting school (thus, long-term outlays like capital construction funds are excluded). The higher the percentage of state funding for rural education, the higher the state ranks on the Importance Gauge.

Not surprisingly, states that rank high on percent rural schools and percent rural students also tend to rank high on this indicator. There are some inconsistencies, however, such as Alabama, West Virginia, South Carolina, and Louisiana. In Alabama, for example, 44% of all public schools are rural and 46% of all students attend rural schools, yet only 38% of state education funding goes to rural districts.[iii]

Importance Gauge Rankings

To gauge the importance of rural education to the overall educational performance of each state, we average each state's ranking on the individual indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 2).

Table 2. Importance Gauge Cumulative Rankings*

How important is it to the overall educational performance of the state to address the particular needs of schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The lower the score, the more important it is for policymakers to address rural school issues in that state.

CRUCIAL	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOTABLE
ME 9.6	MO 17.4	TX 24.0	OR 31.8
VT 10.4	NH 17.6	OH 24.2	IL 33.0
SD 11.6	AR 19.6	VA 25.2	CA 34.2
OK 11.6	NE 19.8	NM 25.4	FL 37.6
MT 11.8	TN 20.4	MI 25.4	CT 38.0
ND 12.6	SC 21.0	ID 25.8	MD 39.2
NC 13.6	WV 22.2	PA 28.0	NV 39.4
IA 13.8	WI 22.2	CO 28.8	NJ 40.2
MS 14.4	GA 22.4	LA 30.4	UT 41.4
KS 16.2	WY 22.6	AZ 30.8	HI 41.5
AL 16.6	MN 23.6	NY 31.4	DE 44.8
AK 16.8	IN 23.8	WA 31.4	MA 45.8
KY 17.0			RI 46.4

*Numbers are rounded.

Six of the 13 crucially important states (i.e., those in the highest ranking quartile) are located in the Prairie/Plains region (South Dakota, Oklahoma, Montana, North Dakota, Iowa, and Kansas). Other regions represented in the top quartile of the Importance Gauge are Northern New England (Maine and Vermont), the Southeast (North Carolina), the Mid-South Delta (Mississippi and Alabama), the Far West (Alaska), and Central Appalachia (Kentucky).

The next quartile includes states from the same regions referenced above (nine of 12 states), along with three Great Lakes states (Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Indiana). The Important category (third quartile) features some predominantly urban Midwest and Northeast states with sizable rural populations. The Notable category (fourth quartile) includes states with small relative and absolute rural student populations. Nine of the least important rural states are on the East or West Coast. Two others are located in the sparsely populated arid West where most people live in cities.

No state ranks in the highest quartile on all five indicators, but seven of the 11 states with the highest Importance Gauge ranking are in the highest quartile on four of them. In five of those seven states, the one indicator where the state did not rank in the top quartile was total rural enrollment (North Carolina and Alabama were the exceptions—of note: they are the only two states to rank in the top quartile for both absolute rural student enrollment and percentage rural student enrollment). Other states in the top quartile ranked lower on percent small rural districts (Mississippi and Kentucky) and percent rural schools (Mississippi, Kansas, and Kentucky).

The indicator most closely related to the cumulative ranking is the percentage of the state's education funds to rural schools. The indicator with the weakest relationship to the cumulative ranking is the number of rural students. The indicators here favor states where the relative size of the rural population is larger (and the relative size of rural education expenditures is greater), regardless of the absolute size of the rural population. Including the absolute enrollment size indicator does, however, allow the model to acknowledge large rural populations in some predominantly urban states.

Rural education is predominant in small states where there are no large cities, but also relatively few rural students. The states with the most rural students are heavily urbanized, and rural students, though large in number, constitute a small minority.

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge Indicators

Socioeconomic challenges present the most persistent threats to high levels of student achievement. Moreover, the negative effects of socioeconomic stress manifest in multiple ways. For instance, the income level of families is closely related to the preparedness level of children entering school, while the educational attainment level of adults in a community is closely related to both community economic well-being and community support for education. In this section, we define each of the indicators in the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data.

- **Percentage of rural adults with a high school diploma** is the percentage of rural adults age 25 and older who have earned a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED), as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau. The lower the percentage of graduates, the higher the state ranks on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge.

This indicator tells us about the level of educational attainment among adults in rural areas of a state. In places where there are low levels of adult educational attainment, there is likely to be less interest in supporting and/or ability to support public schools. This indicator may also suggest that low attainment rates are a measure of the past quality of public education in rural communities in the state. Rural residents in Central Appalachia, the Southeast, and the Mid-South Delta are least likely to graduate from high school. The 11 states with the lowest percentage of adults with a high school diploma form a contiguous region from Virginia to Arkansas (other

states are, in order of lowest rate, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, West Virginia, Tennessee, Louisiana, South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina). Next come Southwestern states (New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona). On average, the rural adult high school diploma rate among these states is under 78%. States with the highest rates are primarily located in the Northeast and the Great Plains.

* **Rural adult unemployment rate** is the percentage of rural residents age 16 or older who are in the labor force, but unemployed, as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau. The higher the unemployment rate, the higher the state ranks on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge.

Not surprisingly, many of the states with low adult rural high school graduation rates also have high rural unemployment rates (e.g., South Carolina, Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana). Other states with high unemployment rates are in the Great Lakes Region (Michigan) and the Northwest and Far West (Washington and Alaska). States with the lowest unemployment rates are primarily those located in the Northeast and the Great Plains, but also include some Mid-Atlantic and Western states.

Socioeconomic challenges present the most persistent threats to high levels of student achievement.

- **Rural median household income** is the median income level for households in rural areas, as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau. The indicator is not just a measure of poverty; it also offers a relative assessment of the level of economic distress and economic well-being among rural residents. The lower the rural median household income, the higher the state ranks on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge.

Many of the states identified as facing severe socioeconomic challenges on the previous indicators also rank high on this indicator. There are exceptions, though: Arizona and Michigan are states with low adult high school graduation rates and/or high unemployment rates, yet rural median household income for both states is above the national median. Oklahoma is a state with a fairly low unemployment rate among rural adults (5.3%, 29th lowest in the U.S.), but a very low median household income. This might suggest a lack of high paying jobs, a sizable population of "working poor" among rural people in the state, rapid out-migration by frustrated workers, very high levels of low-earning self-employment, or a combination of these and other factors.

- **Percentage of rural families in poverty** is the percentage of rural families with an income level below the federal poverty line, as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau. The higher the percentage, the higher the state ranks on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge.

Rankings here are fairly similar to those for the next indicator (percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals), but not exactly. Free and reduced meal rates are considerably higher across the board, because the income requirements are broad enough to capture "near-poverty" families as well as those meeting federal poverty definitions. Accordingly, we can consider meal rate as a measure of the prevalence of poverty in the student body, and percent families below the poverty line as a measure of its intensity. In three states (New Mexico, Mississippi, and Kentucky), more than one in five rural families lives below the poverty line. Thirteen other states (more than half which are in the Southeast, Central Appalachia, and the Mid-South Delta) have more than 15% of rural families living in poverty. Rural poverty is least intense in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes Regions.

- **Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals** represents the percentage of students in rural elementary and secondary schools who are eligible for participation in federal free or reduced-price meal programs. The higher the percentage of subsidized meal eligibility, the higher the state scores on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge.

Subsidized meal rate is the most common measure of student poverty used by education researchers. It is not without limitations however—participation rates are subject to conditions

that are unrelated to poverty levels, including the willingness of families to apply for assistance and the aggressiveness with which school officials secure applications. In general, the subsidized meal rate closely parallels other measures of socioeconomic challenges used in this analysis. As noted in the discussion of the previous indicator, however, it is a broader measure of family income stress and so it captures more families in "near-poverty." More than half of all rural students are eligible for free or reduced meals in nine states: in descending order, New Mexico (65.9%), Mississippi (65.0%), Louisiana (59.5%), Oklahoma (57.2%), Arizona (56.1%), South Carolina (55.6%), West Virginia (54.8%), Arkansas (51.8%), and Alabama (51.4%). Rates are lowest among rural students in predominantly urban Northeast states.

Free and reduced meal rate is a measure of the prevalence of poverty in the student body, and percent families below the poverty line as a measure of its intensity.

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge Rankings

To gauge the urgency of the impact of socioeconomic challenges to rural education in each state, we average each state's ranking on the individual indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 3).

Table 3. Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge Cumulative Rankings*

Given the socioeconomic conditions in the state's rural schools and communities, how urgent is it that policymakers develop policies that target educational needs associated with socioeconomic challenges? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The lower the score, the more important it is for policymakers to address socioeconomic related educational issues in that state.

URGENT	CRITICAL	SERIOUS	FAIR
MS 2.4	TX 15.2	WA 24.8	VT 35.0
KY 3.0	MO 15.8	ND 26,0	NE 35.6
WV 4.8	FL 19.6	PA 28.4	MN 35.8
LA 6.0	OR 20.8	OH 29.0	WI 37.0
SC 6.0	ID 22.0	NY 29.6	WY 37.8
NM 6.2	SD 22.4	IN 22.0	NV 38.6
AL 6.4	AK 22.6	HI 30.8	CO 40.2
TN 7.8	MT 22.6	DE 31.0	MD 42.4
AR 9.2	MI 22.8	UT 32.0	MA 43.0
NC 12.6	VA 23.0	KS 32.4	NJ 43.0
GA 13.6	ME 23.8	IL 32.8	RI 43.3
OK 14.4	CA 24.0	IA 34.6	NH 44.6
AZ 14.4			CT 48.4

*Numbers are rounded.

Eight of the 13 Urgent states (i.e., those in the highest ranking quartile) are located in the Southeast and Mid-South Delta (Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Georgia). Other regions represented in the top quartile of the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge are Central Appalachia (Kentucky and West Virginia) and the Southwest (New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arizona).

The next quartile is a mixed bag that includes three states from the same regions referenced above (Texas, Florida, and Virginia), along with states from the Great Plains (South Dakota and Montana), the Midwest (Missouri), the Northwest (Oregon and Idaho), the Far West (Alaska and California), the Northeast (Maine), and the Great Lakes Regions (Michigan). The Serious category (third quartile) is equally mixed, with states from nearly every region except those represented in the Urgent quartile. The Fair category (fourth quartile) includes a number of East Coast states, along with several Great Plains and Rocky Mountain States.

Six of the Urgent states rank in the highest quartile on all five indicators (two others—Kentucky and Tennessee—lacked free and reduced meal eligibility data, but ranked in the highest quartile on the four indicators for which data were available).

The indicator most closely related to the cumulative ranking is the percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals. The indicator with the weakest relationship to the cumulative ranking is the rural unemployment rate. Our gauge thus emphasizes the prevalence of poverty over measures of the severity of poverty and measures of more general economic distress like unemployment. Meal rate is also the only indicator that directly reflects the student population and not the population at large.

Achievement gaps between white and non-white students—documented and analyzed extensively over the past few decades—persist.

Student Diversity Gauge

Student Diversity Gauge Indicators

Public schools do not have a good track record in meeting the needs of diverse student populations. Here, we include a gauge that captures characteristics describing the diversity of the rural student population in each state—characteristics that are typically employed in analyses of academic outcomes to disclose achievement gaps between various groups of students. Illustrating the varying extents to which such characteristics exist in rural schools in each state suggests the relative levels of importance for policymakers to address existing or potential achievement gap issues. In this section, we define each of the indicators in the Student Diversity Gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data.

- **Percent rural minority students** is the percentage of minority students (per NCES designations: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic) in rural schools. The higher the percentage of rural minority students, the higher the state scores on the Student Diversity Gauge. (Note: Minority student enrollment data was not available for Nevada and Tennessee).

This indicator tells us about the relative size of the minority student population in rural areas of a state. Achievement gaps between white and non-white students—documented and analyzed extensively over the past few decades—persist. State and federal assessment and accountability systems now include provisions for disaggregating achievement data to disclose achievement gaps, but policies that support closing those gaps do not always exist. Identifying the states with the largest (relative) rural minority student populations highlights the states where the attention of policymakers to these issues is most important.

In five states (Hawaii, New Mexico, Alaska, Arizona, and California), there is no racial or ethnic *majority* group in rural schools, with white students comprising less than 50% of the rural student population and minorities, in the aggregate, over 50%. More than one in four rural students is a minority in 11 other states (in descending order, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, North Carolina, Georgia, Delaware, Florida, Alabama, and Virginia). Nearly 80% of all rural minority students in the U.S. attend school in these 16 states.

There is considerable variation among states with regard to their respective minority populations. Two of the states with the largest percentages of rural minority students have predominantly indigenous peoples (Hawaii and Alaska). Others rank high primarily on the basis of their large combination of Hispanic and American Indian populations (New Mexico, Arizona, and Oklahoma). Southern states rank high primarily on the basis of sizable African-American populations (Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Virginia). California is perhaps the nation's most ethnically diverse state, and its rural minority population is predominantly Hispanic.

- **Number of minority students** serves as an absolute—as opposed to relative—measure of the size of the rural minority student population. The indicator for each state represents the total number of minority students (per NCES designations: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic) in rural schools. The higher the number of rural minority students, the higher the state scores on the Student Diversity Gauge. (Note: Minority student enrollment data was not available for Nevada and Tennessee).

More than half of the nation's 2,200,333 rural minority students attend school in one of six states: Texas (307,500), California (224,293), North Carolina (208,540), Georgia (161,569), South Carolina (116,559), and Florida (104,571). The combined rural minority student population of Texas and California alone is greater than that of 35 other states combined. States with the smallest rural minority student populations are primarily in the Northeast. About 461,000 rural minority students attend school in the 34 states with the smallest minority populations—less than the total rural minority population of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia combined.

- **Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period** is the percentage increase in the total rural minority student population from the 1995-96 school year to the 2004-05 school year, and represents a relative measure of rural minority student population growth. The higher the percentage increase, the higher the state scores on the Student Diversity Gauge. (Note: The data required for computing this indicator was not available for Nevada, Tennessee, or Idaho).

Many states have seen a dramatic change in the demographic makeup of their student population in the past decade.

States scoring highest on this indicator are also among the states with the smallest rural minority enrollments in the nation (the top ten—New Hampshire, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Maine, Kansas, and Utah—together serve just over 100,000 rural minority students). They are, however, states where the demographic makeup of the student population has changed dramatically in a decade (the average percentage increase among the same ten states over the ten-year period is 124%). While the size of the rural minority student populations in these states is not large, the rapid rate of change suggests that schools might not be prepared to meet the needs of students with different backgrounds.

Substantial increases in the number of rural minority students are not limited to states with small rural minority enrollments, however. Nationally, the ten-year percent increase is about 55%, and states such as Texas, California, and North Carolina—each ranking near the top in terms of number and/or percent rural minority enrollment—show increases of more than 50%.

- **Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students** represents the percentage of students designated as English Language Learners in rural school districts in each state. The higher the percentage of rural ELL students, the higher the state scores on the Student Diversity Gauge. (Note: ELL student enrollment data was not available for Tennessee, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, or Hawaii).[iv]

States ranking highest here are those with sizable Hispanic and/or American Indian/Alaskan Native populations living in rural areas (in order, New Mexico, Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Oregon, Wyoming, Montana, Texas). In both New Mexico and Alaska, about one in three rural students qualifies for ELL services; in Arizona and California, one in five. The highest ranking state east of the Mississippi River is North Carolina, with just over 5% of students qualifying for ELL services.

- **Percent rural special education (IEP) students** represents the percentage of students in rural elementary and secondary schools who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) indicating they are eligible for special education services. The higher the percentage of IEP students, the higher the state scores on the Student Diversity Gauge. (Note: IEP student enrollment data was not available for New York, New Jersey, Hawaii, or Missouri).

Federal and state assessment policies (e.g., No Child Left Behind) require that schools make progress toward closing the gap between IEP and non-IEP students, and so quantifying the size of the rural special education student population in each state is important. Moreover, teaching children with exceptional needs requires specialized skills, materials, and technologies—three things that are not available in every school and that demand the attention of policymakers to ensure their availability. In Arizona, West Virginia, New Mexico, and Tennessee, nearly one in five rural students qualifies for special education services. Kentucky, Maine, and Florida are not far behind, at 18% rural IEP students. Eight other states have 15% or more of their rural students qualifying for special education services, with no distinct regional patterns.

Student Diversity Gauge Rankings

To gauge the importance of student diversity to rural education in each state, we average each state's ranking on the individual indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 4).

Rural schools are most racially and ethnically diverse in the Southeast and Southwest.

Table 4. Student Diversity Gauge Cumulative Rankings*

Given the diversity of students in the state's rural schools, how crucial is it in each state that policymakers develop policies that target educational needs associated with student diversity? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The lower the score, the more important it is for policymakers to address diversity-related educational issues in that state.

CRUCIAL	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOTABLE
AZ 11.4	KS 21.0	NY 24.7	WI 28.4
NM 13.0	CO 21.0	AR 24.8	ND 28.6
OK 15.6	PA 21.3	SD 25.4	WV 28.8
FL 16.0	VA 22.0	MO 25.5	ME 28.8
TX 16.4	WA 22.0	ID 25.8	OH 29.6
OR 16.6	IN 22.2	DE 26.0	MA 31.0
NC 16.6	HI 22.7	NJ 27.0	NH 33.2
IL 16.75	MD 23.4	MT 27.0	RI 33.8
CA 17.2	LA 24.0	KY 27.2	VT 34.0
SC 17.8	MS 24.0	WY 27.2	CT 34.0
GA 17.8	MN 24.4	NE 27.2	
AK 20.2	UT 24.6	IA 27.6	*TN and NV: NA*
	AL 24.6	MI 27.6	

*Numbers are rounded.

Four of the five states in which attention to rural student diversity is most crucial are located in the Southwest (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas). Four of the other states in the top quartile of the Student Diversity Gauge are located in the Southeast (Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia). The remaining Crucial states are scattered across several regions: the Northwest (Oregon), the Midwest/Great Lakes (Illinois), and the Far West (California and Alaska).

Many of the states in the first quartile are larger states with low percentage rural populations, but high numbers of rural people, and more than half of the top quartile here ranks in the bottom half of the Importance Gauge—Florida, California, Illinois, Oregon, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas. The most diverse rural student populations are concentrated in states where rural education is not likely to be a primary policy focus. Given the limited policy efforts to meet the needs of diverse

student populations in any setting, providing appropriate services to rural minority students in these states could prove doubly challenging.

The next quartile is a mix of states largely from the same regions referenced above. Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states make their first appearance in the Important category (third quartile). The Notable category (fourth quartile) includes more Northeastern states, along with Central Appalachian, Great Plains, and Great Lakes states.

The most diverse rural student populations are concentrated in states where rural education is not likely to be a primary policy focus.

Only one of the Urgent states ranks in the highest quartile on all five indicators—New Mexico. One other state, Arizona, ranks in the top quartile on four of five indicators.

The indicator most closely related to the cumulative ranking is the total number of rural minority students. The indicator with the weakest relationship to the cumulative ranking is the percent increase in minority student enrollment over a ten-year period. Our gauge thus emphasizes the importance of absolute size of the minority population—an appropriate methodological decision given (1) federal mandates directed at closing achievement gaps among subgroups under NCLB and (2) the fact that minority students as a whole represent a larger student population than other subgroups investigated as part of this gauge (ELL and IEP students).

Policy Context Gauge

Policy Context Gauge Indicators

For this gauge, we capture the characteristics of the public schooling system that are driven by policy decisions. We focus on policy outcomes that, research suggests, are closely related to student achievement and overall student well-being. Illustrating the variations in state policy contexts suggests, in relative terms, the extent to which policies are helping or hindering rural schools and students. In this section, we define each of the indicators in the Policy Context Gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data. (Note: Since Hawaii operates as a single school district, it was not possible to compute its indicators for this gauge.)

- **Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts** is a measure of how many dollars are spent on teaching and learning for every one dollar spent on pupil transportation. The lower the ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars, the higher the state scores on the Policy Context Gauge and the greater the concern policymakers should have for the rural education policy context.

Nationally, rural school districts spend $11.67 on instruction for every dollar spent on transportation.

Variations in the cost of providing pupil transportation are related to unavoidable issues related to terrain and geography, but also result from policies related to school and district size, personnel decisions, and the permissible length of bus rides for students. We included this indicator because extraordinary transportation costs burden school districts and draw funds away from essential instructional needs. Nationally, rural school districts spend $11.67 on instruction for every dollar spent on transportation. Among individual states there is considerable variation: Alaska spends the most at $22.50 on instruction for every dollar spent on transportation, while West Virginia spends the least at less than $8.

There are no discernible regional patterns. Comparisons of states facing similar terrain and geography reveal considerable variation (e.g., New Mexico spends $9.44 on instruction for every transportation dollar, while Texas spends $17.60; North Dakota spends $9.27, while South Dakota spends $13.67).

* **Rural instructional expenditures per pupil** is the total dollar amount spent on instruction (teacher salaries, instructional supplies, etc.) in rural schools divided by the total enrollment in rural schools. The lower the per pupil expenditures, the greater the concern for rural education and the higher the state scores on the Policy Context Gauge.

The dollar amounts for this indicator allow us to see the variation among states on the amount of money, per pupil, that goes toward teaching and learning in rural schools.

The range here is quite large, from the lowest at just under $3,600 in Oklahoma to the highest at more than $7,900 in New York. Seven other states join Oklahoma in spending less than $4,000 per pupil for instruction in rural schools: Mississippi ($3,688), Arkansas ($3,790), Alabama ($3,793), Tennessee ($3,856), Arizona ($3,925), Idaho ($3,925), and Utah ($3,994).

Nine of the 13 states we rated as Urgent (the top quartile) in the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge are among the 13 states with the lowest per pupil instructional funding: Mississippi, Kentucky, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, Arizona, and Oklahoma. Regional patterns are evident here: the nine states are all located in the Southeast, the Mid-South Delta, and the Southwest. That these states serve the most impoverished rural schools and communities in the nation, and that they do so with fewer resources, suggests a disturbing pattern in which the distribution of resources appears to be compounding already challenging circumstances.

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil are lowest in Southern states, where rural schools serve the most impoverished rural schools and communities in the nation, suggesting a disturbing pattern in which the distribution of resources appears to be compounding already challenging circumstances.

- **Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts** is the total dollar amount spent on instructional salaries divided by the total number of instructional staff members, and is used here to represent the relative level of financial commitment to teacher salaries. The lower the salary expenditures per FTE (full-time equivalent, a measure that accounts for staff who work only part of the day), the higher the state scores on the Policy Context Gauge.

Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is an acute challenge for rural schools. The ability to attract and keep high quality teachers to any school district is related—at least in part—to teacher salaries. States with the lowest salary expenditures on this indicator are primarily in the Prairie/Plains, the Southeast, and the Mid-South Delta (in order, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Nebraska, Tennessee, Montana, Louisiana, Iowa, and Kansas). States with the highest rates of spending on instructional salaries are predominantly on the East and West Coasts.

- **Median organizational scale among rural districts** is a measure of the combined effects of school and district size. We compute the organizational scale for each rural school by multiplying school enrollment by district enrollment. The organizational scale for each district is then divided by 100 for simplification. The figure given as the indicator for each state is the median of the computed organizational scale for all rural schools in that state. The larger the organizational scale, the higher the state scores on the Policy Context Gauge.

Both separately and in combination with one another, school size and district size have been shown to influence school operations and outcomes. Specifically, larger size has been associated with lower graduation rates and lower academic achievement levels, particularly among impoverished students. Our intent with this indicator is to obtain a relative measure of the scale of operations for rural education in each state. The range is extremely wide: Maryland, the highest ranking state, has a median organizational scale that is more than 700 times larger than the lowest ranking state, Montana. The 13 highest ranking states are located in or contiguous to the Southeast Region: in order, Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Virginia, Louisiana, Delaware, Mississippi, Kentucky, and West Virginia. These are primarily states known for consolidated countywide school districts and regional high schools. The lowest ranking states are mostly in the Great Plains and the West, and all are states with mostly local independent school districts.

- **Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts** is measured by a statistic called the coefficient of variation (COV), one of the standard measures of inequality. The higher the COV, the less equal are the revenue levels among rural schools in

the state, and so the higher the concern for equity and the higher the state ranks on the Policy Context Gauge.

A higher COV statistic indicates greater variation among districts in terms of the resource variable being investigated (here, the level of combined state and local revenue per pupil), and it means that not all districts are receiving comparable levels of operating revenue. Because it is commonly understood that providing an equal educational opportunity to students from impoverished backgrounds requires more expenditures, some variation in revenue is expected. To account for the varying levels of need among districts (e.g., districts with more impoverished students need additional revenue), prior to calculating the COV, we weighted the size of the impoverished student enrollment using a weighting system similar to that used by the federal government in calculating aid to schools under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

States with the most inequitable revenue are a mixed bag geographically, with no real regional patterns evident: in order of highest variation to lowest among those in the top quartile, Arizona, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Idaho, Ohio, New York, Oregon, Utah, Montana, Alaska, Texas, North Dakota, and Washington.

Several of the states scoring lowest on the COV indicator (that is, indicating relatively equitable revenue patterns) are among those with very low levels of instructional expenditures per pupil (Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi). The combination of low spending and high equity suggests that all rural districts in the state are suffering from roughly the same level of fiscal distress.

Conversely, several of the states scoring highest on the COV indicator are among those indicating high levels of instructional expenditures per pupil (Massachusetts, New York, and Alaska). The combination of high spending and low equity suggests that high state level average expenditures might be masking significant fiscal distress faced by some rural districts.

Big schools in big districts dominate in Southeastern states known for consolidated countywide school districts and regional high schools.

Policy Context Gauge Rankings

To gauge the urgency of the policy context to rural education in each state, we average each state's ranking on the individual indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 5, page 22).

Five of the states in which the policy context is least conducive to educational achievement are located in the Southeast (Louisiana, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky). Two others are all or partly in the Central Appalachian Region (Virginia and Ohio). The remaining Urgent states are scattered across several regions: the Southwest (Arizona), the Midwest (Illinois and Missouri), the West (Utah and Idaho), and the Great Plains (North Dakota).

The next quartile is a mix of states largely from the same regions referenced above. Northeastern states make their first appearance in the Serious category (third quartile). The Fair category (fourth quartile) includes a number of East Coast states, along with West Coast, Great Plains, and Great Lakes states.

None of the Urgent states ranks in the highest quartile on more than three of the five indicators. Six states (Arizona, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Kentucky) rank in the top quartile on three indicators.

The indicator most closely related to the cumulative ranking is rural instructional expenditures per pupil. The indicator with the weakest relationship to cumulative ranking is the inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts.

School size and district size have been shown to influence school operations and outcomes. Specifically, larger size has been associated with lower graduation rates and lower academic achievement levels, particularly among impoverished students.

Table 5. Policy Context Gauge Cumulative Rankings*

Given the policy context in each state, how urgent is it that policymakers explicitly address the particular needs of schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The lower the number, the more important it is for policymakers to address rural educational issues in that state.

URGENT	CRITICAL	SERIOUS	FAIR
AZ 10.6	IN 21.8	PA 26.0	NJ 29.4
LA 14.2	OR 22.2	NY 26.4	MA 30.0
FL 14.6	TN 22.2	SD 26.8	NH 30.4
OH 16.0	WV 22.8	RI 27.0	CA 30.6
AL 16.2	NC 23.0	WA 27.2	KS 30.8
ID 16.6	OK 23.2	IA 27.2	DE 31.0
MS 18.2	NM 23.4	MI 27.4	CT 31.8
UT 19.0	SC 24.4	NV 27.6	WY 33.6
IL 19.4	TX 24.8	MD 28.4	WI 33.6
ND 19.6	CO 25.2	NE 28.6	AK 39.4
VA 19.6	AR 25.4	GA 28.8	VT 40.3
MO 20.2	MT 25.6	ME 29.2	
KY 21.2		MN 29.2	*HI: NA*

*Numbers are rounded.

Outcomes Gauge

Outcomes Gauge Indicators

For this gauge, we include indicators representing student academic achievement as measured by national assessments and schools' success in graduating students from high school. Illustrating the variations among states in terms of the educational outcomes suggests in relative terms the urgency with which policymakers should approach improving rural schools. In this section, we define each of the indicators in the Outcomes Gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data. (Note: Rural assessment scores were not available for Alaska or Vermont).

- **Rural NAEP math scores** represent the average of grade 4 and grade 8 math scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for students attending rural schools. The lower the rural NAEP math score, the higher the state ranks on the Outcomes Gauge.

The NAEP offers assessment data for state-by-state comparisons. Disaggregation of the data by locale allows us to compare rural performance from state to state. States, districts, schools, and even individual teachers are facing increasing pressure to demonstrate improvement via achievement gains; in that climate, understanding the status of rural educational performance is crucial for policymakers and practitioners.

States with the lowest rural NAEP math scores are located primarily in the Southwest, the Southeast, and Central Appalachia (in order, New Mexico, Alabama, Hawaii, Mississippi, West Virginia, Louisiana, Arizona, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Georgia, Tennessee, Nevada, Arkansas). States with the highest NAEP math scores are in the Northeast (Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Rhode Island), the Great Lakes (Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin), and the Great Plains (Kansas, South Dakota). There is a strong relationship between socioeconomic challenges and

NAEP math scores—states facing greater socioeconomic challenges tend to produce lower NAEP math scores—and between student diversity and NAEP scores—states with greater student diversity tend to produce lower NAEP math scores. These relationships mirror achievement gaps identified in analyses of NAEP data that are not delimited to rural students.

- **Rural NAEP reading scores** represent the average of grade 4 and grade 8 reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for students attending rural schools. The lower the rural NAEP reading score, the higher the state ranks on the Outcomes Gauge.

Not surprisingly, performance on NAEP reading and NAEP math is closely correlated (for this analysis, the correlation coefficient [Pearson's r] is a robust .87). States in which rural schools perform poorly on math also tend to perform poorly on reading. Only one state in the worst performing quartile on math ranks somewhere outside the worst performing quartile on reading (Kentucky, which ranks as the seventh worst performing state on math and the 19th worst performing state on reading). Accordingly, there is one state in the worst performing quartile on reading that ranks somewhere outside the worst performing quartile on math (South Carolina, which ranks as the 14th worst performing state on math and the seventh worst performing state on reading).

The poorer and more diverse the rural student population, the lower the rural NAEP scores.

- **Rural high school graduation rate** represents the number of students graduating from rural school districts at the completion of the 2003-04 school year, expressed as a percentage of the district's adjusted 8th grade enrollment for the school year 1999-2000. The lower the graduation rate, the higher the state ranks on the Outcomes Gauge.

There is much debate among researchers over how best to calculate graduation rates. None of the many approaches are considered definitive. One approach that has had widespread acceptance is the one developed by Jay Greene of the Manhattan Institute.[v] This approach involves dividing the number of high school graduates in a given year by the number of potential graduates in the 8th grade class of five years earlier, with the 8th grade enrollment adjusted by the percent change in overall district enrollment during that same time period (the adjustment is a way of taking into account overall enrollment shifts that can create misleading results).

The range here is wide, from just under 55% in South Carolina to over 100% in North Dakota and Nebraska (a mathematical impossibility, of course—the 100% graduation rate is a statistical anomaly that is common with this type of calculation; nevertheless, it is indeed safe to conclude that North Dakota and Nebraska graduate a very high proportion of their students). Additionally, Utah, Vermont, Iowa, Rhode Island, Montana, Wisconsin, Wyoming, South Dakota, and Minnesota all have graduation rates above 90%. Joining South Carolina among the states with the lowest rural high school graduation rates are Georgia, Delaware, Arizona, Alabama, North Carolina, Florida, Alaska, Mississippi, and Tennessee—all with graduation rates below 70%.

In addition to computing rural graduation rates for each state, we also computed rural graduation rates by race/ethnicity and calculated the gap between graduation rates for white and minority (non-white) students. The necessary data for performing the analysis was not available for several states, and so it was not practical to include our "graduation gap" measure in the Outcomes Gauge. We can, however, report that some of the states that produced the highest overall graduation rates also had the largest gaps in graduation rates between white and minority students (e.g., Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Utah, Wyoming). In these states, a very high percentage of rural minority students are American Indian or Hispanic.

In six states, less than half of all minority students in an 8th grade cohort graduate from high school five years later (Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana). In ten other states, the graduation rate among rural minority students was less than 60% (Nevada, Kansas, Oregon, Wyoming, North Carolina, Utah, Connecticut, Missouri, Alaska, and Alabama).

Outcomes Gauge Rankings

To gauge the urgency of rural education outcomes in each state, we average each state's ranking on the three individual indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 6).

Table 6. Educational Outcomes Gauge Cumulative Rankings*

Given educational outcomes in each state, how urgent is it that policymakers explicitly address the particular needs of schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on three indicators. The lower the number, the more important it is for policymakers to address rural educational issues in that state.

URGENT	CRITICAL	SERIOUS	FAIR
HI 2.0	FL 15.3	WA 27.0	NE 35.3
AL 4.0	NV 16.7	IN 28.0	WY 35.3
AZ 5.0	OR 7.0	ME 29.3	MA 35.7
MS 5.3	AR 17.0	IL 30.7	WI 36.0
GA 7.0	OK 18.3	UT 31.0	CT 36.7
SC 7.3	VA 19.7	MD 32.7	MN 37.7
LA 8.3	TX 20.3	NH 33.7	SD 37.7
NM .7	MI 23.3	N 34.0	NJ 38.3
TN 12.3	MO 23.7	KS 34.0	OH 39.3
KY 12.7	CO 24.3	PA 34.3	ND 40.3
CA 13.7	DE 24.7	IA 34.3	RI 42.3
NC 14.3	ID 25.3	MT 34.7	
WV 14.7			*AK and VT: NA*

*Numbers are rounded.

Graduation rates are lowest in states mostly in the Southeast, but some states with the highest overall graduation rates also had the largest "graduation gaps" between white and minority students.

Seven of the 13 states with the poorest educational outcomes are located in the Southeast and Mid-South Delta (Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, and North Carolina). Two each are in the Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico), Central Appalachia (Kentucky and West Virginia), and the Far West (California and Hawaii).

Along with more states from these same regions, the next quartile adds states from the Pacific Northwest (Oregon), the Great Lakes (Michigan) and the Midwest (Missouri). Northeastern states begin to appear in the Serious category (third quartile). The Fair category (fourth quartile) includes East Coast, Great Plains, Prairie, and Great Lakes states.

Five of the Urgent states rank in the highest quartile on all three indicators (Alabama, Arizona, Mississippi, Georgia, and Louisiana). Hawaii ranks in the highest quartile on the two indicators for which data was available (third worst on NAEP math and first worst on NAEP reading).

Rural Education Priority Gauge

Finally, we average the cumulative rankings on the five gauges (Importance, Socioeconomic Challenges, Student Diversity, Policy Context, and Outcomes) to prioritize states according to the overall status of rural education. The five gauges are weighted equally. Thus, the three indicators comprising the Outcomes Gauge each receive slightly more weight than the indicators comprising each of the other gauges (because there are fewer of them sharing the same weight as the gauges with five indicators each). The rankings for the Rural Education Priority Gauge are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Rural Education Priority Gauge*

The combined average ranking of each state on the five gauges (Importance, Socioeconomic Challenges, Student Diversity, Policy Context, and Outcomes). The lower the number, the greater the need for policymakers to address rural educational issues in that state.

LEADING	MAJOR	SIGNIFICANT	NOTABLE
MS 8.4	AR18.4	CA 25.4	NE 32.6
AL 9.8	MO18.4	ND 26.0	MN 33.4
AZ 10.4	OR18.4	ME 26.2	NV 33.8
NC 10.6	WV 18.8	KS 26.8	VT 34.0
OK 11.0	VA 1.2	WA 26.8	MD 34.6
SC 12.0	ID 22.0	CO 27.2	DE 36.0
TN 12.5	IN 23.0	PA 27.2	NH 36.4
NM 13.0	AK 23.0	MI 28.2	WY 36.8
LA 13.6	MT 23.8	UT 28.4	WI 36.8
KY 14.4	IL 24.2	IA 29.4	NJ 41.6
FL 15.6	SD 24.4	OH 29.8	MA 43.8
GA 16.8	HI 24.8	NY 30.4	RI 44.2
TX 17.4			CT 45.2

*Numbers are rounded.

The highest priority rural education regions are the Southwest, Southeast, Mid-South Delta, and Appalachia.

The top quartile on the Priority Gauge includes states in quintessentially rural regions of the country: the Southeast (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, and Georgia), the Mid-South Delta (Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana), the Southwest (Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas), and Central Appalachia (Kentucky). Oklahoma, which borders the Mid-South Delta and the Southwest, is also included in this quartile.

No state scores in the top quartile on all five gauges, but the four highest priority states (Mississippi, Alabama, Arizona, and North Carolina) score in the highest quartile on four of five gauges.

Five of the states in the top quartile (Leading) on the Rural Education Priority Gauge are also ranked in the top quartile on the Importance Gauge (Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Kentucky). Of the remaining eight highest priority states, three are in the second importance quartile (South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia). Three others are in the third quartile (Arizona, New Mexico, and Louisiana), and one is in the fourth quartile (Florida).

All but two of the 13 highest priority states also ranked in the top quartile on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge. The two states that did not (Florida and Texas) each ranked near the top of the second quartile on the gauge.

Eight of the 13 highest priority states also ranked as Crucial (top quartile) on the Student Diversity Gauge (Arizona, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, New Mexico, Florida, Georgia, and Texas). Three others are in the second quartile (Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana). Kentucky is in the third quartile, and Tennessee did not have sufficient data for computing a ranking for that gauge.

Six Leading states on the Rural Education Priority Gauge are also ranked in the top quartile on the Policy Context Gauge (Mississippi, Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Florida). Six others were ranked in the second quartile on that gauge (the one exception was Georgia, which ranked in the third quartile).

Ten of the 13 highest priority states also ranked in the top quartile on the Outcomes Gauge. The two states that did not, Oklahoma and Florida, fell just outside the top quartile, ranking 14 and 18 respectively.

Two states in the Major Category (second quartile) ranked in the highest quartile on two of the four underlying gauges (West Virginia and Illinois). Of the other Major states, all but one (Indiana) had a ranking in the highest quartile on at least one of the underlying gauges.

The lowest ranking states on the Rural Education Priority Gauge are mostly urban states on the East Coast and in the Great Lakes Region. Of those ranking lowest overall, one (Vermont) is ranked near the top on Importance. Relatively low levels of socioeconomic challenges, little student diversity, and a favorable educational policy context keep the state from ranking as a higher priority (note: rural NAEP scores were not available for Vermont, so the state is not ranked on the Outcomes Gauge).

Discussion

Notes on Report Methodology

It is worth restating here a few caveats offered in earlier editions of *Why Rural Matters*.

First, the quartile categories we use to describe states' position on the continuum from 1-50 are arbitrary, and are used merely as a convenient way to group states into smaller units for the purpose of discussing patterns in the results. There is, then, very little substantive difference between the "Crucial" label attached to Kentucky with a ranking of 13th on the Importance Gauge and the "Very Important" label attached to Missouri with a ranking of 14th on the same gauge.

Second, as in past reports, we use regional terms loosely. *Why Rural Matters 2003* stated "the nuanced cultural patterns of rural America caution against rigid division of states into regions." That caution still holds true, and we heed it. A state like Oklahoma may be characterized as a Southern Plains state in some places and as a Southwestern state in others. The intent is not to confuse or obscure meanings, but to best characterize the context in which we are discussing specific relationships between individual states and geographic and cultural regions—e.g., in some instances, Oklahoma is part of regional patterns that include Southern Plains states like Kansas and Colorado; in other instances, the state is part of regional patterns that include Southwest states like New Mexico.

Third, the fact that some states are identified here as being the highest priority states should not be interpreted to suggest that rural education in other states does not deserve attention from policymakers. No state ranks in the least important/least urgent quartile of every indicator, and every state has at least one indicator on which it is ranked worse than the national median. Indeed, every state faces challenges in ensuring that all rural students receive a high quality education. The highest priority states are identified as such because they represent places where contexts, conditions, and forces converge—creating not only a cumulative effect but, in the case of some indicators, a compounding effect—to suggest the most extreme need for policymakers' attention.

Every state faces challenges ensuring that all rural students receive a high-quality education.

New Gauges

We made some substantial changes with regard to the number and configuration of gauges in this report. *Why Rural Matters 2005* included four gauges, while the 2007 report includes five. Importantly, we did not simply add another gauge; rather we substantively reconfigured existing gauges to better reflect our thinking about the contexts and characteristics of rural schools.

The Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge comprises indicators that were included in the previous report's separate Poverty Gauge and Challenges Gauge. We wanted to look more broadly at interrelated social and economic conditions—thus it made sense to combine measures of poverty with measures of the ability to generate income (e.g., unemployment rates, adult educational attainment rates).

The Student Diversity Gauge includes three indicators from the 2005 report's Challenges Gauge along with two new indicators. Our rationale for this change was two-fold: first, methodologically, we wanted to isolate and capture non-poverty student demographic characteristics to better describe the characteristics of the rural student population in each state. Second, and substantively, we were never entirely comfortable with including socially-ascribed student characteristics under a "challenges" heading. In creating a Student Diversity Gauge that describes the extent to which each state's rural schools serve student populations that have historically been underserved,

we are calling attention to the task at hand without opening the door for "victim blaming" interpretations.

The 2005 report combined outcomes of policy decisions (e.g., fiscal policy) and outcomes from the schooling process (e.g., assessment scores). This time around, we separate the two. Our Policy Context Gauge includes two indicators from the 2005 report's Policy Outcomes Gauge, along with other indicators that are entirely new and/or represent different approaches to measuring similar constructs. Collectively, the indicators in this gauge measure the educational context resulting from state and local policy decisions. Our Outcomes Gauge measures performance on national assessments in reading and math (a measure of academic achievement) and on high school graduation rates (a measure of organizational success).

The demographics of rural America are changing, and schools must be able to change too if they are to serve all students well.

New Indicators

Nine of the 23 indicators in this report are new to *Why Rural Matters*. We change the indicators to better fit the new gauges described above, and because we want to look at rural education through multiple lenses in order to present a fuller portrait of its complexity.

Of the nine new indicators included in this report, four represent different approaches to measuring what are essentially the same constructs measured by other indicators in previous reports. For one example, in this report we included the *inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts* as an indicator using a statistic called the coefficient of variation (COV). COV is a measure of fiscal equity, and in that sense it measures essentially the same thing as our *general revenue funding gap* indicator did in the last report. COV is a statistically more sophisticated way of measuring equity (and is a measure that is used in key funding formulas like the federal Title 1 program), and so we feel it is a more appropriate way of gauging equity.

In another example, in place of the *percentage of rural general fund expenditures going toward pupil transportation,* we used the *ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts* to accomplish two things. First, it incorporates overall spending into the measure as a way of clarifying the relative nature of the findings (e.g., if transportation is 4.5% of total expenditures in two states, and one of the two states spends twice as much on students overall, then the findings from the two states have different implications). Second, it contextualizes the findings in a way that sharpens their practical implication, by demonstrating what the effect of transportation costs is on the ability of the district to spend money on instruction.

Three new indicators present information that was not addressed in the 2005 report. *Percent small rural districts* is a measure of the percentage of a state's rural districts that are below the national median for enrollment size. Earlier reports included indicators measuring the percentage of small *schools*. We use districts in this report because, (1) districts are the primary unit of analysis for key fiscal and staffing policies, and (2) as recent history in key rural states has shown, consolidation, school closures, and reorganization generally starts with district level action (e.g., district "administration" consolidation is the shoehorn for closing schools). It is at the district level where the fight to save, sustain, and improve "small and rural" is most likely to be engaged.

Another new indicator measures the proportional growth in rural minority students over a ten-year period. The proportional size of the rural minority student population in each state is still an important indicator included, along with—for the first time—a measure of the absolute size of the rural minority population. For the current report, though, we also wanted to capture those states where their current rural minority populations—however small—represented substantial growth. The demographics of rural America are changing, and schools must be able to change too if they are to serve all students well. The *percent increase in rural minority students over a ten-year period* indicator measures this student population shift. Most of the states ranking highest on this indicator are ones that have much smaller rural minority student populations than in other

states. The tremendous rate of growth, however, is evidence of the need for educational policy and practice that will support schools' efforts to meet their changing demographic constituency.

One additional new indicator measures the level of expenditures on instructional salaries per instructional staff member. The measure is a proxy for teacher salaries, a piece of data that was not available for use in this report. As such, it is not an exact measure of what teachers earn on average; it is, however, a useful measure of the level of commitment to teacher salaries among school districts.

Top Ranking States

The top ranking states on our Rural Education Priority Gauge are located in several prototypical rural regions: the Mid-South Delta, the Southwest, the Southeast, and Central Appalachia. These regions differ considerably in terms of specific cultural and socioeconomic characteristics; still, the states in these regions exhibit a fairly consistent pattern in terms of the indicators that earn them the highest rankings.

Put simply, states identified as highest priority are ones whose rural schools face more substantial challenges than rural schools in other states, receive fewer resources than others, and produce less than others in terms of educational outcomes.

Of the 23 indicators used in this report, the ones most closely associated with the overall priority state ranking are (in order of correlation strength):

1. Percentage of rural families in poverty
2. Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals
3. Rural NAEP reading score
4. Rural median household income
5. Rural NAEP math score
6. Percentage of adults with a high school diploma
7. Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

There are no surprises here: Poverty, fiscal incapacity, low levels of adult education, and low levels of student achievement run in the same mutually reinforcing circles. Many of the high priority states are as fiscally challenged as their citizens and schools. Eight of the top states in the priority ranking are also in the lowest quartile on the "total taxable resources per capita" index calculated by the U.S. Treasury Department. These findings beg the question: Where is the federal government in the battle to break the powerful stranglehold that rural poverty has over rural student achievement?

To demonstrate the dramatic differences among states, we compare some characteristics of the combined 13th highest ranking states with those same characteristics for (1) all other states, and (2) the 13 lowest ranking states (see Table 8, page 30). (Note: The characteristics selected for comparison here represent the indicator within each of the five gauges that was most closely associated with the overall priority ranking.)

States identified as highest priority are ones whose rural schools face more substantial challenges than rural schools in other states, receive fewer resources than others, and produce less than others in terms of educational outcomes.

New High-Ranking States

Three of the highest priority states did not rank in the highest quartile in any of the previous reports: Tennessee, Florida, and Texas. All three states did however rank in the second highest quartile in *Why Rural Matters 2005*.

None of these three states rank in the top quartile on the Importance Gauge (Tennessee is fairly close at 18th, but Texas ranks 26th and Florida ranks 41st). With the exception of Tennessee, these new high-ranking states are not predominantly rural. Their rural schools and districts face

Table 8. Highest Priority States' Characteristics Compared with All Other States' and with Lowest Priority States' Characteristics*

INDICATOR	HIGHEST PRIORITY STATES	ALL OTHER STATES	LOWEST PRIORITY STATES
Percent rural students (Importance)	32.5%	25.5%	16.8%
Percent rural families living in poverty (Socioeconomic Challenges)	17.4%	10.3%	6.7%
Number of rural students (Diversity)	115,836	22,508	9,766
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil (Policy Context)	$4,100	$5,296	$5,967
Rural NAEP reading score (Outcomes)	233.4	244.3	248.0

* Numbers are rounded.

tremendous challenges to ensure that all of their students receive high quality educational opportunities, however.

Rural children, schools, and communities in predominately non-rural states are all too likely to be overlooked.

Similar to findings reported in *Why Rural Matters 2005* in fact, several of the states that exhibit the greatest need among their rural population are states that are, demographically, not very rural. Take Texas, for example. The more than 750,000 students attending rural schools in Texas (the largest rural student enrollment in the country) are the 14th most impoverished and the fifth most diverse rural student population in the nation, and they produce outcomes that are well below the national median. But given that three-quarters of a million students represents only 17% of the total student population in Texas, these students and their schools are not likely to be the center of attention for policymakers in the state. Rural children, schools, and communities in predominantly non-rural states are all too likely to be overlooked.

Regional Patterns

Results of the analyses conducted for this report suggest the Southwest (Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas), the Southeast (North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia), the Mid-South Delta (Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana), and Appalachia (Kentucky and Tennessee) as the highest priority regions.

All of these were priority regions in the 2005 report. All but the Southwest were priority regions in the 2003 report.

Two regions that ranked highest in the 2003 report, but dropped out of the top quartile in 2005 are Northern New England and the Northern Plains. In general, the states in these northern regions rate as lower priorities because of the movement—over the course of three report versions and six years—toward heavier weighting of conditions under which rural schools and districts operate (and, consequently, relatively less weighting of indicators measuring how "rural" states are). Consider Iowa, the eighth most rural state in our analysis. It ranks 35th in overall priority because poverty levels and student diversity are both well below the national median, the policy context is favorable for the most part, and educational outcomes are better than all but 14 other states.

Meeting the Needs of Rural ELL Populations

As rural America grows increasingly diverse, the need for adequate resources and supportive policy environments to meet the needs of English Language Learner students grows ever more important.

ELL Enrollment Growing

ELL enrollment in the U.S. has increased dramatically in recent decades, more than doubling in the 15-year period between 1989-90 and 2004-05—a rate of increase more than seven times higher than the rate of increase for total student enrollment.[vi] And, nearly one-half of all ELL students live in rural communities, according to one recent analysis.[vii] Clearly, the population of rural ELL students is sizable and growing.

But the dramatic growth illustrated in these national figures does not do justice to the impact of ELL student population increases on particular schools and school districts. That is because the growth is not spread uniformly across states, or even within states. So the national figures—striking as they might appear—are themselves masking far more remarkable increases in states in some parts of the country, in specific school districts in some states, and in specific schools and specific communities within some school districts.

To illustrate this point, we consider regional differences with regard to growth in rural ELL student populations from the 2000-01 school year to the 2004-05 school year. Comparing regions, we find that the greatest growth (in terms of both actual growth and percentage growth) occurred in the southeastern U.S. (see Table 9).

As rural America grows increasingly diverse, the need for adequate resources and supportive policy environments to meet the needs of English Language Learner students grows ever more important.

Table 9. Growth in Rural ELL Student Populations in Southeastern States*

STATE	RURAL ELL GROWTH, 2000-05	PERCENT RURAL ELL GROWTH, 2000-05
North Carolina	11,519	63.8%
Alabama	2,817	141.2%
Georgia	2,801	30.6%
South Carolina	2,359	254.5%
Virginia	1,749	71.3%
Kentucky	1,198	249.1%
Arkansas	906	54.3%
Mississippi	598	87.9%
Florida	297	24.8%
Louisiana	213	38.9%
West Virginia	199	177.7%

* Note: Data were not available for Tennessee.

Overall, the size of the rural ELL student population in these 11 states grew by more than 66%, or nearly 25,000 students. In terms of absolute numbers, the rural ELL student population increase in these 11 southeastern states represents 44% of all reported rural ELL population growth in the U.S. during this five-year period. In other words, more than four out of every ten new rural ELL students will likely be attending school in one of these Southeastern states. By comparison, the rate of growth among all other states combined was just under 25%. That is not to suggest that 25% more rural ELL students is insignificant, or that it does not present challenges to schools in terms of obtaining resources and providing appropriate services to meet the needs of their English

Language Learners. Rather, it suggests that the challenges are more acute in some parts of the country where the growth is most rapid (and, in the case of most southeastern states, where schools have little if any experience with, and resources for, serving ELL students).

The same kind of comparison produces similar results within a state. Not every rural school district in Alabama showed an increase of 141% rural ELL students. As in many other states, the growth in rural ELL student populations is concentrated in a handful of districts. Indeed, more than three-fourths of the growth in rural Alabama occurred in just eight school districts. Over a five-year period, these school districts gained more than 2,100 new students—from less than 1,250 in 2000-01 to nearly 3,400 in 2004-05—who require specialized services and materials in order to receive an appropriate education and to fully benefit from classroom instruction.

Rural Challenges to ELL Interventions

Rural schools serving proportionally larger ELL student populations, on average, face higher concentrations of traditional barriers to educational achievement than do their counterparts serving fewer ELL students.

Meeting the needs of a rapidly changing student population is a challenge for any school district. Providing effective services to meet the needs of ELL students tends to be more challenging in rural school settings, however, for several reasons: the socioeconomic characteristics of schools these students attend, the rural-specific challenges to service delivery, and the lack of responsive policy environments that recognize the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in rural educational settings.

Rural schools serving proportionally larger ELL student populations, on average, face higher concentrations of traditional barriers to educational achievement than do their counterparts serving fewer ELL students. In many states, higher percentages of ELL students are associated with higher levels of poverty among all students—ELL and non-ELL. For instance, the southeastern states identified above as having the most dramatic growth in rural ELL populations are also among the nation's most impoverished in terms of their overall rural populations.

Additionally, the remote setting and size of many rural schools creates challenges to delivering the kinds of programs and services typically used to address barriers and assist with teaching and learning efforts. For instance, ELL students in a district may be served by different schools that are long distances apart from each other, making sharing teachers and resources difficult. Also, with no higher education institution or associated resources nearby, it is often more difficult to provide professional development for teachers who have little if any experience serving the needs of ELL students. Additionally, a district might be struggling to reorganize programs and services to meet the needs of a rapidly growing ELL student population where there once was none.

And finally, policy contexts fail to recognize these challenges and provide resources that are adequate for overcoming them and providing high quality learning experiences.

ELL Funding

In considering policy implications, the limited level of funding available to rural districts serving ELL students is most pressing because it directly impacts many other areas of concern (e.g., teacher recruitment and retention, professional development) and because it is indicative of the ways in which policy contexts can work against public education in rural settings.

In the case of both state and federal funds designated for ELL programs, the limited ELL enrollment numbers in most rural districts means that they have limited—and often no—access to discretionary monies. That is not to suggest that non-rural districts and rural districts with very high numbers of ELL students receive adequate funding. They do not. In the 2002-03 school year (the most recent data year available), federal dollars for bilingual education amounted to less than $51 per ELL student nationally. And even that low average is misleading. Title VII (the bilingual education categorical program that was in place in 2002-03, but is not any longer) was a

competitive grant program, not an entitlement. Consequently, many districts received no federal funds to support additional services for students learning English. Among districts enrolling at least ten ELL students, 78% received no federal Title VII dollars in 2002-03. Among districts enrolling at least 50 ELL students, 69% received no federal dollars. Even among districts enrolling 100 or more ELL students, 64%% received no federal Title VII dollars.

It is important to note that Title VII's system of discretionary grants funding has since been replaced by Title III, a formula-based system similar to Title I. Unless substantially more federal dollars are put into the program, however, the result will be a re-dividing of a pie that already cannot feed everyone.

The picture with regard to state categorical dollars for ELL programs is much the same. Only nine states (Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, North Dakota, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington) reported providing categorical funds to rural school districts for ELL programs in the 2002-03 school year (per NCES data). The level of categorical funding ranged from $1,716 per rural ELL student in Florida to $20 per rural ELL student in Michigan. Some other states take into account the additional costs of ELL programs by allocating resources based on weighted student enrollment counts. In the case of many if not most states, the weights themselves (i.e., the extent of the additional dollars targeted toward ELL students) have been roundly criticized as inadequate.

Beating the Odds: Measuring the Gap between Socioeconomic Challenges and Educational Outcomes

Poverty is the single strongest and most persistent threat to high student achievement. We can measure the ability of schools (and districts and states) to overcome the barriers imposed by poverty and other socioeconomic challenges by comparing rankings on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge with rankings on the Outcomes Gauge. We compute the gap figure here by subtracting the state's ranking on the Outcomes Gauge from its ranking on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge.

Poverty is the single strongest and most persistent threat to high student achievement.

For this analysis, a state that is achieving outcomes consistent with its socioeconomic challenges (relative to other states) would produce a score of zero. If it has a positive score, its performance ranks worse than its socioeconomic challenges would indicate it should, compared to other states. If it has a negative score, it is performing better than its socioeconomic challenges would suggest (see Table 10, page 34).

The results suggest multiple patterns. States that are Notably Underperforming are disproportionately states ranked low on our Importance Gauge—eight of the top 12 are predominantly non-rural states, where the rural population is "out of sight, out of mind." But at the other end, only four of the Notably Over-Performing states on this analysis are in the top quartile on the Importance Gauge. So "in sight" does not necessarily mean "in mind." Another pattern evident here: eight of 12 Notably Underperforming states are coastal states (there are 19 coastal states in all, including Alaska and Hawaii). None of the Notably Over-performing is a coastal state—all are in Appalachia and the Heartland. In yet another pattern, many of the Notably Over-performing states are among the *least* diverse in the nation—except for Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma. The opposite does not hold true, however: many of the Notably Underperforming states are also not diverse.

Table 10. Beating the Odds*

The difference obtained from subtracting the state's ranking on the Educational Outcomes Gauge from its ranking on the Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge. The higher the number, the worse a state is doing (in terms of academic outcomes) relative to the socioeconomic challenges faced by its rural schools; the lower the number, the better the state is doing (in terms of academic outcomes) relative to the socioeconomic challenges faced by its rural schools.

States that are Notably Underperforming are disproportionately states ranked low on our Importance Gauge—eight of the top 12 are predominantly non-rural states, where the rural population is "out of sight, out of mind."

NOTABLY UNDERPERFORMING	SOMEWHAT UNDERPERFORMING	SOMEWHAT OVERPERFORMING	NOTABLY OVERPERFORMING
HI 31	AL 5	RI 0	OK -6
NV 28	IN 4	WA 0	TX -6
CO 21	UT 4	WI 0	AR -7
NH 17	VA 4	TN -1	ID -7
CA 14	WY 3	NC -2	MO -7
MD 14	FL 2	NM -2	PA -7
AZ 9	IA 2	SC -2	KY -8
DE 9	KS 2	LA -3	WV -10
CT 8	NJ 2	MN -3	MT -17
IL 7	MI 1	MS -3	OH -17
GA 6	NE 1	NY -3	ND -20
MA 6	OR 1	ME -4	SD -20

*Note: Alaska and Vermont are excluded due to missing data.

Making Things Better or Making Things Worse: Investigating the Relationships between Achievement Gaps and Educational Policy Variables

Beginning with the publication of the Coleman Report[viii] more than 40 years ago, researchers have documented differences in academic performance based on race and socioeconomic status—differences commonly referred to as achievement gaps. In the sizable literature investigating achievement gaps and educational policy, only a few policy variables consistently demonstrate the potential for narrowing gaps: increased fiscal resources, better teacher quality, and smaller school and district size.

In this analysis, we take the four quartile categories we constructed from rankings on the Outcomes Gauge, and we compute the combined key demographic and policy variables for each category.[ix] Our research question here is twofold. First, *are achievement gaps present—i.e., is the distribution of achievement related to race and socioeconomic status?* Second, *is the policy context one that works in ways that research suggests will narrow gaps and make things better, or one that works in ways that will likely widen gaps and make things worse?* (see Table 11, page 35).

Research suggests that states serving higher percentages of students who are poor or have limited English language skills will have to invest additional resources to enable their students to reach the same level of achievement as other states. Research also demonstrates that poor and minority students derive substantial achievement benefits from attending smaller schools and districts. But the patterns we find in rural America are exactly the opposite. As expected, the states where the educational outcomes in rural schools require the most urgent attention are the states with the most impoverished, minority, and ELL rural students, but they are also the states where schools receive the fewest resources and where rural students attend the largest schools and districts. The

Table 11. Comparison of Demographic and Policy Variables by Educational Outcomes Ranking*

	RANKING ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES			
OUTCOMES GAUGE INDICATOR	URGENT	CRITICAL	SERIOUS	FAIR
Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	49.9%	45.0%	35.0%	27.6%
Percent rural minority students	55.4%	44.5%	31.6%	26.6%
Percent rural ELL students	14.5%	9.8%	5.35	4.0%
Rural state and local revenue per pupil	$7,549	$7.741	$10,056	$10,807
Organizational scale among rural schools (median)	12,749	2,386	1,909	1,373

*Numbers are rounded.

pattern is perfectly predictable across all five indicators for all four quartiles. The more challenging the rural context, the less responsive the policy context. The policy context in low achieving states is making things worse, not better.

These patterns were also apparent in results from correlation analyses using the individual gauge rankings (see Table 12).

Table 12. Bivariate Correlation Analysis Results for Gauge Rankings

	IMPORTANCE GAUGE RANK	SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES GAUGE RANK	STUDENT DIVERSITY GAUGE RANK	POLICY GAUGE RANK	OUTCOMES GAUGE RANK
Importance Gauge Rank	1	.394**	-.107	.000	.036
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge Rank	.394**	1	.452**	.592**	.725**
Student Diversity Gauge Rank	-.107	.452**	1	.338*	.598**
Policy Gauge Rank	.000	.592**	.338**	1	.449**
Outcomes Gauge Rank	.036	.725**	.598**	.449**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

These correlations reinforce the analysis above.

1. The significant positive correlation between Socioeconomic Challenges and Outcomes indicates that the poorer a state's rural areas are, the worse the rural educational outcomes.
2. The significant positive correlation between Student Diversity and Outcomes indicates that the more diverse a state's rural areas are, the worse the rural educational outcomes.

As expected, the states where the educational outcomes in rural schools require the most urgent attention are the states with the most impoverished, minority, and ELL rural students, but they are also the states where schools receive the fewest resources and where rural students attend the largest schools and districts.

3. The significant positive correlation between Socioeconomic Challenges and Policy Context indicates that the poorer a state's rural areas are, the worse the rural educational policy context.

4. The significant positive correlation between Student Diversity and Policy Context indicates that the more diverse a state's rural areas are, the worse the rural educational policy context.

Three other significant correlations have implications for policymakers and practitioners as well:

1. The significant positive correlation between Student Diversity and Socioeconomic Challenges indicates that the more diverse the rural areas, the more severe the socioeconomic challenges.

2. The significant positive correlation between Importance and Socioeconomic Challenges indicates that the more rural the state, the more severe the socioeconomic challenges.

3. The significant positive correlation between Policy Context and Outcomes indicates that the worse the policy context, the worse the educational outcomes.

Policy Implications

One of the most significant findings in this report is the increasing number and share of U.S. public school students who attend schools located in very small rural communities with fewer than 2,500 people. While declining enrollment remains a significant factor in some rural school districts, rural enrollment on the whole is growing while non-rural enrollment is declining.

For some, the image of a disappearing rural America may have justified ignoring the problems faced by students, teachers, and leaders in rural schools. But that image is false and needs to be put to rest along with the indifference it comforted. Rural education does indeed matter, more and more.

Another finding of importance: the poorest rural populations are in the poorest states, least able to afford the cost of an adequate education. More than half of all rural students are eligible for free or reduced meals in nine states: in descending order, New Mexico (65.9%), Mississippi (65.0%), Louisiana (59.5%), Oklahoma (57.2%), Arizona (56.1%), South Carolina (55.6%), West Virginia (54.8%), Arkansas (51.8%), and Alabama (51.4%). In another finding, seven of these nine states have over 25% rural minority student population, and two (New Mexico and Arizona) have less than 50% white rural student population.

While declining enrollment remains a significant factor in some rural school districts, rural enrollment on the whole is growing while non-rural enrollment is declining.

All of these states are among the bottom 14 states in total taxable resources, according to the U.S. Treasury Department. Not surprisingly, six of these nine states rank among the lowest quartile in per pupil instructional expenditures in rural schools, and in the lowest 12 in per pupil expenditures for all schools in the state.

The fact that poor people live in poor states does not excuse any state from its duty to provide for these students. But, it does raise the question of what collateral responsibility the federal government has to help meet their needs.

Since 1964, the federal government has recognized that responsibility. Federal funding for public schools under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is mainly intended to help schools deal with the negative effect of poverty on student achievement. However, these programs have not necessarily been effective in reaching rural students in the most distressed rural communities, and this needs further evaluation.

Congress could begin that evaluation by scrutinizing the formulas used to distribute over $12 billion of federal funds under Title I of the act, because they contain a significant bias against the small school districts that are characteristic of rural America.

Two of the four Title I formulas used to distribute these funds—the *Targeted Grant Formula* and the *Educational Finance Incentive Grant Formula*—use a system of "weighting" the student count that is intended to direct more funding to districts with the highest concentrations of Title I students. These two grant formulas allow a district's student count to be weighted based on either the absolute number of Title I students or the percentage of Title I students, depending on which approach provides the district with a larger student count. This weighting alternative provides far greater funding per Title I student to large districts than to smaller districts with the same Title I eligibility percentage because the larger district has more students who receive the highest extra weight using the absolute number counting system. Since the weighting system determines the share of a limited amount of funding available, the smaller districts are disproportionately underfunded. Congress should recognize that the education of a Title I student in rural America is worth as much to the nation as the education of a Title I student anywhere.

English Language Learner student populations are growing rapidly in rural America—most rapidly in states that already face tremendous barriers to high student achievement and operate in less than favorable policy environments.

Second, Congress should look for better ways to direct the use of funds given to states and districts under Title II of the ESEA to improve teacher quality in high poverty schools. These funds have not been used very effectively according to many critics, and a more targeted approach is needed.

In rural schools, Title II funds are often available in such small amounts and teacher improvement resources are so limited and often so distant that the funds are sometimes used less than optimally. Congress should consider a pilot program that takes a more targeted approach to teacher improvement in some of the very poorest rural schools in the poorest rural regions. The significant regional patterns revealed in this report and in previous editions in this series indicate the areas of greatest need.

One of the most effective strategies Congress has used to address regionally significant rural problems is to encourage interstate compacts. Regional patterns justify regional responses. It might be attractive, for example, to provide Title II regional cooperation grants to interstate compacts that combine clusters of rural schools, private or public teacher training institutions, and other partners, crossing state lines to focus on the unique needs of high poverty rural schools in regions that share common socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

For example, a compact serving Central Appalachia might include high poverty rural districts in Eastern Kentucky and Eastern Tennessee, portions of Southeast Ohio and Southwest Pennsylvania, and all of West Virginia. Another serving the Mid-South Delta, would include high poverty rural districts in the Mississippi River Delta regions of the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, as well as in the Black Belt counties of West Central Alabama. Yet another compact might serve high poverty rural districts in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona where a central issue is the prevalence of English Language Learners in the student population.

In each case, teacher training and professional development strategies and their state policy responses could be fashioned to address the common denominators of the special issues facing these rural districts.

Findings presented here with regard to rural ELL education suggest parallel issues with regard to challenges and policy implications. English Language Learner student populations are growing rapidly in rural America—most rapidly in states that already face tremendous barriers to high student achievement and operate in less than favorable policy environments. As discussed earlier, meeting the needs of ELL student populations in a rural setting tends to be more difficult owing to rural-specific characteristics of schools and districts (e.g., isolation from higher education institutions can make it more difficult to provide teachers with the professional development they need to acquire skills in planning and implementing ELL-appropriate instructional strategies).

Moreover, funding for ELL programs and initiatives is nowhere near adequate. Most rural school districts receive no ELL dollars from state or federal sources. And, as noted earlier, these are districts that already operate with some of the nation's lowest levels of funding.

Finally, we reiterate the other major policy conclusions we reached in *Why Rural Matters 2005,* as they are supported by the findings in the current report as well. Succinctly, they are:

Keep schools small. Policymakers should find ways to fabricate the advantages of large scale without losing the intimacy, accountability, and engagement that are the blessings of small schools. Smallness should be recognized for what it is—a cost-effective educational strategy, especially in low-income communities.

Concentrate resources in high poverty areas. The cost associated with teaching low-income children most likely rises disproportionately as the poverty rate increases. Providing progressively

more support per pupil in schools with high poverty rates is necessary. The federal government cannot pull all this weight alone.

Address declining enrollment. Although rural school enrollment is growing on the whole, there are significant regions where declining enrollment remains a major problem, especially for the recruitment and retention of quality teachers. Appropriate policies include: maintaining close school-community relationships, making best use of distance learning, encouraging maintenance and repair of buildings and supporting use of schools for other compatible social services, encouraging interlocal cooperation, and limiting the length of bus rides children are forced to endure. Any state plan to reorganize or consolidate schools and districts because of declining enrollment should be accountable to standards that have the interests of children and communities in mind.

Fulfill facility needs at the community level. Public school facilities can play a vital community role in supplying non-school agencies and community groups with the space and technology they need to provide these and other services. State supplied funding should reduce the effect of disparities in local property wealth. There should be no arbitrary minimum enrollment sizes, minimum acreage requirement, or preferences for new construction over renovation and repair.

Maximize rural school effectiveness and efficiency with technology. Distance learning is one strategy that has proven to be effective in ensuring that schools and districts are able to provide rich curricula without restructuring and uprooting students and communities. If rural schools and communities are to take advantage of the benefits offered by technology, they must have financial and policy assistance in developing and maintaining the kind of technology infrastructure, interlocal cooperation, and program coordination that will support the use of distance learning among clusters of rural schools.

[i] Sources:
National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data Public Elementary and Secondary School District Universe, 2004-2005 (preliminary).
National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data Public Elementary and Secondary School District Universe, 2003-2004.
National Center for Education Statistics/U.S. Census Bureau School District Tabulation (STP2) and School District Tabulation Supplement (STP2S).
U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1)
U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 Summary File 2 (SF2)
U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3)
U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 Summary File 4 (SF4)
U.S. Census Bureau 2005 American Community Survey

Lack of data in these primary sources is denoted with N/A.

[ii] See http://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/commissioner/remarks2006/6_12_2006.asp for details. See also http://www.ruraledu.org/site/c.beJMIZOClrH/b.1129819/apps/nl/content3.asp?content_id=%7B2403BE78-E6C4-461D-BE33-0EBFE232A80D%7D&notoc=1 for a Rural Trust report describing the methodology and the changes resulting from its adoption.

[iii] This begs the question of whether the educational needs of non-rural schools are greater. And further investigation suggests the needs are not greater—both poverty levels and percent special education students are essentially the same for schools in rural and non-rural settings in these states (the differences are statistically not significant). The observed difference between the proportional size of the rural student population and the proportional size of the state's fiscal commitment to rural schools might then be interpreted to indicate a systematic under-funding of rural schools in the state.

[iv] Processes for identifying ELL students and establishing eligibility for services vary considerably among states and even among districts in the same state. Data used in this report likely represent underreporting in many states (and, as noted, five states reported nothing for this variable in the NCES Common Core of Data).

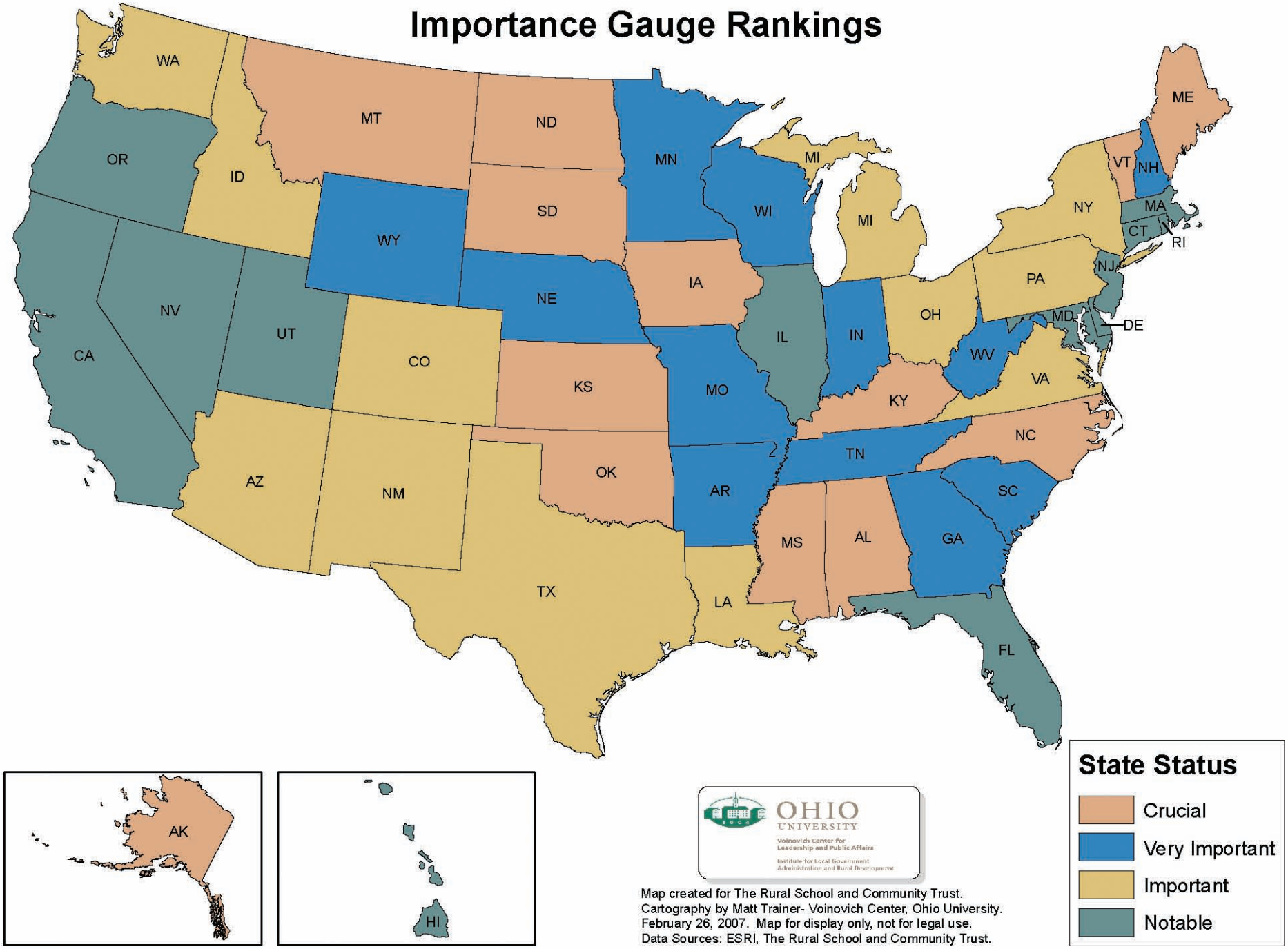
[v] See Green, J. (2002). High School Graduation Rates in the United States. New York: Manhattan Institute. http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_baeo.htm

[vi] See http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/faq/08leps.html

[vii] See http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tdl/policy/index.shtml

[viii] Coleman, J., et al. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

[ix] The data used in this report did not allow for us to explore variables associated with teacher quality.



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Cartography by Matt Trainer- Voinovich Center, Ohio University.
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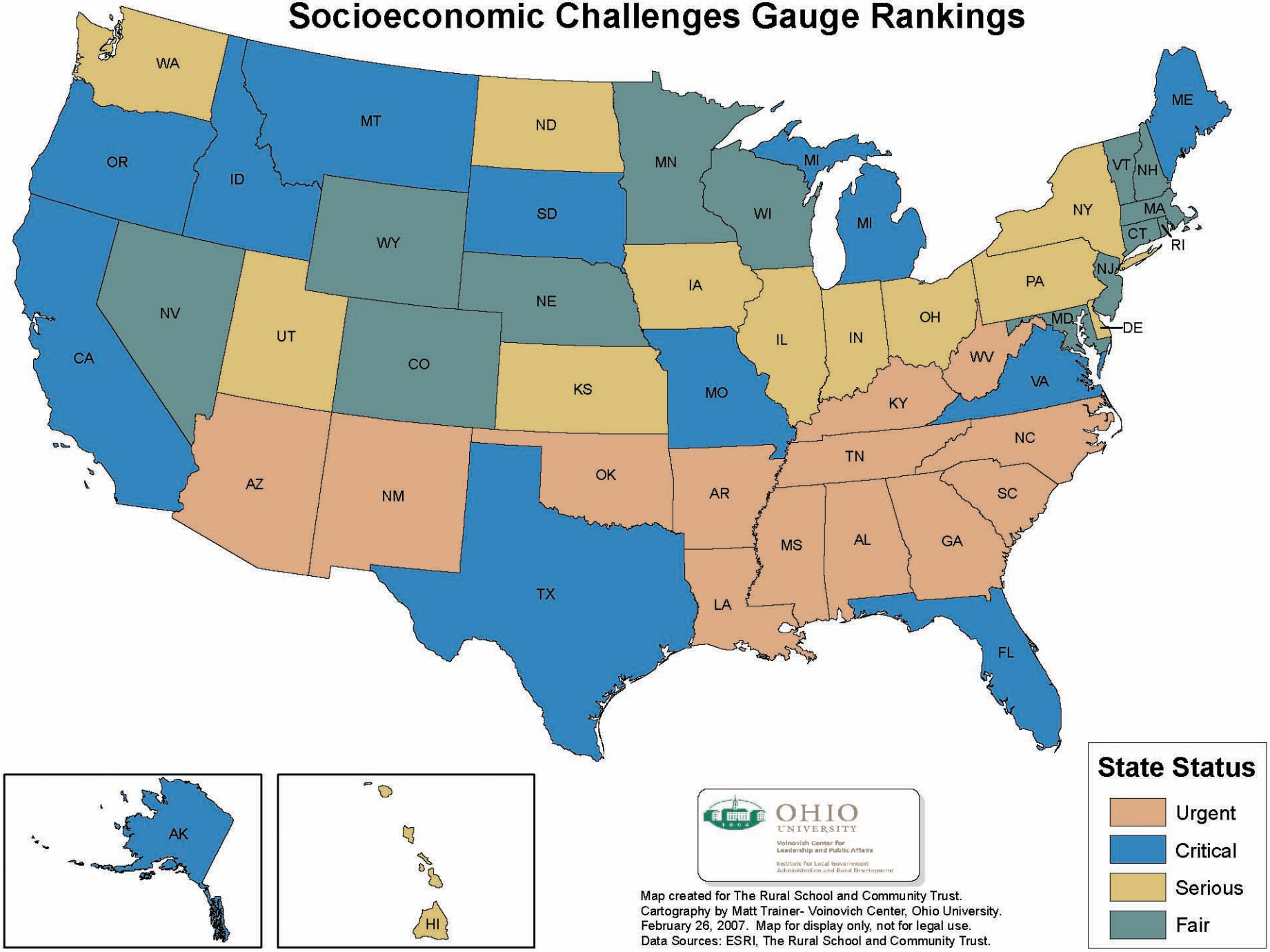
Data Sources: ESRI, The Rural School and Community Trust.


Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge Rankings
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
AK
HI
OHIO UNIVERSITY
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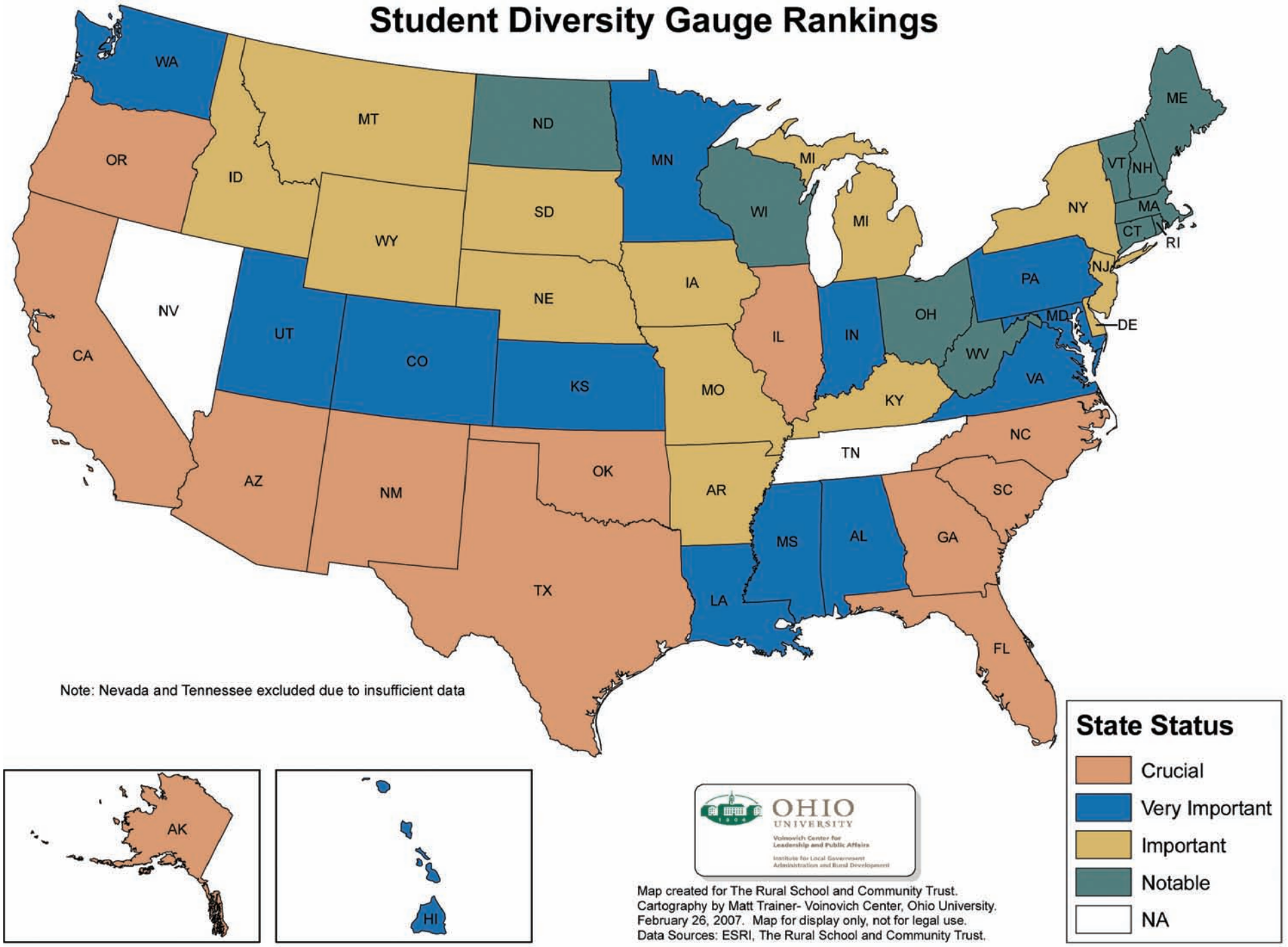
State Status
Urgent
Critical
Serious
Fair


Student Diversity Gauge Rankings
WA
OR
CA
NV
ID
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
MI
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
AK
HI
Note: Nevada and Tennessee excluded due to insufficient data
State Status
Crucial
Very Important
Important
Notable
NA
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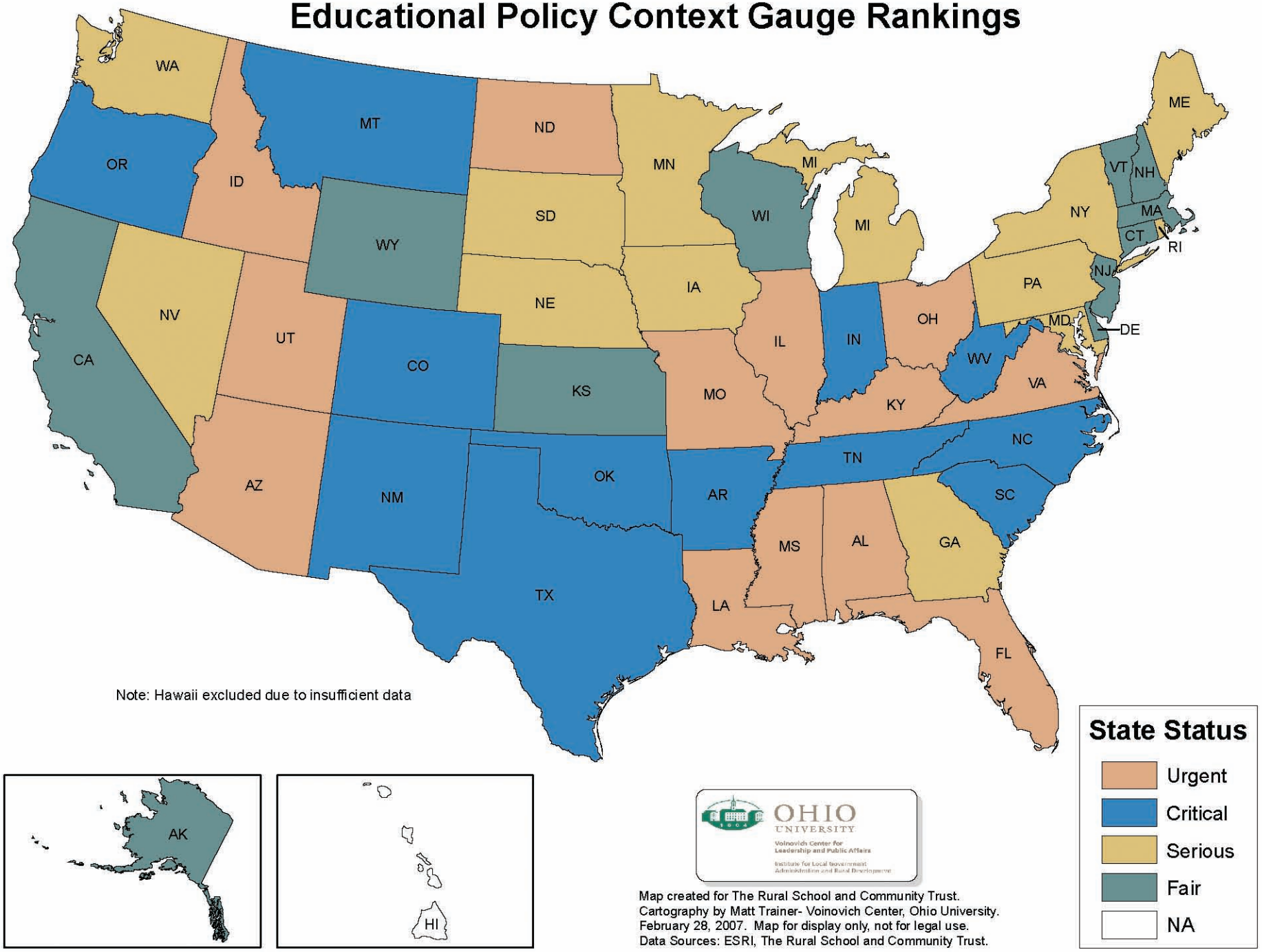
Educational Policy Context Gauge Rankings



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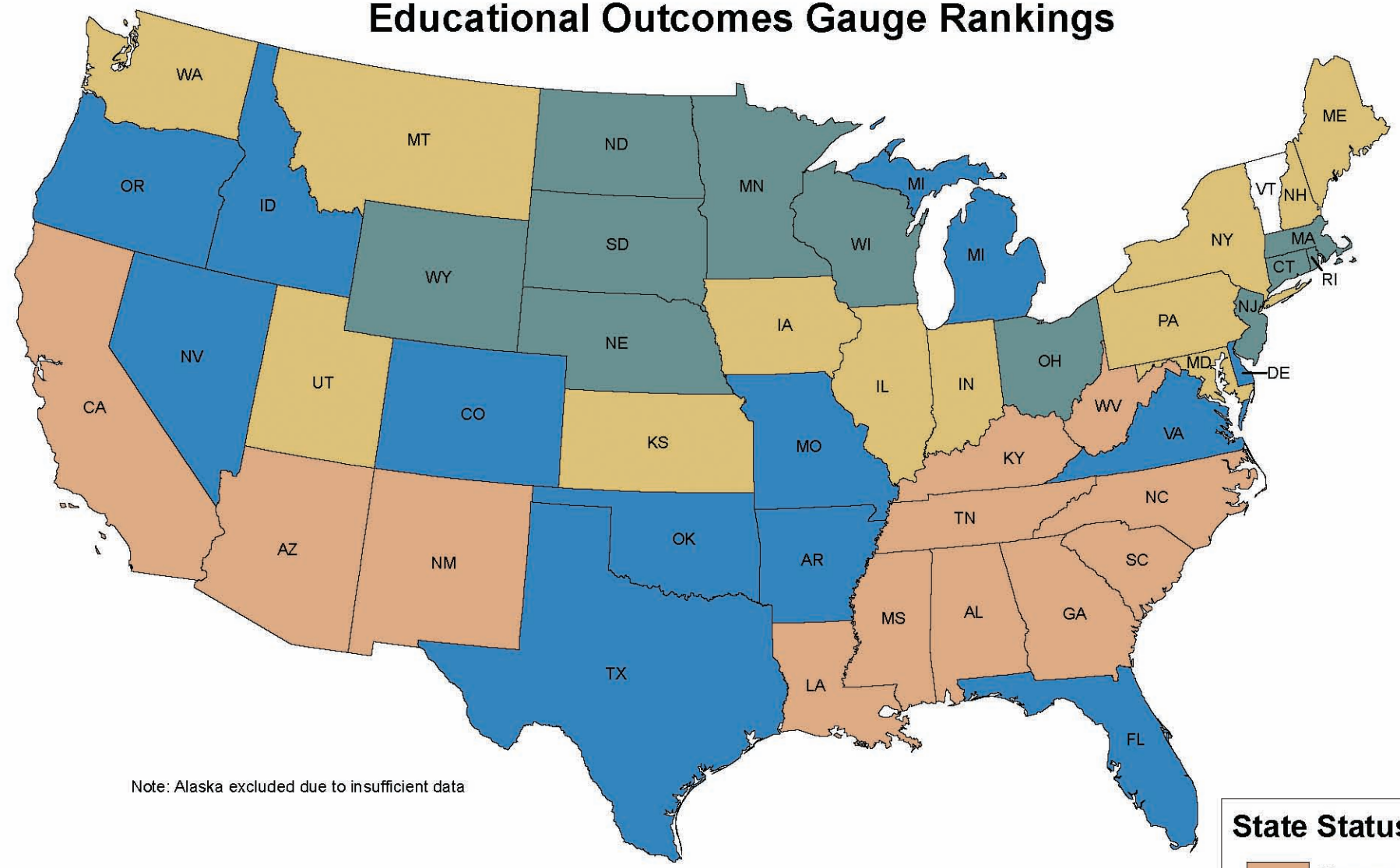
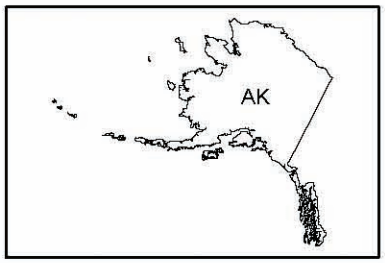
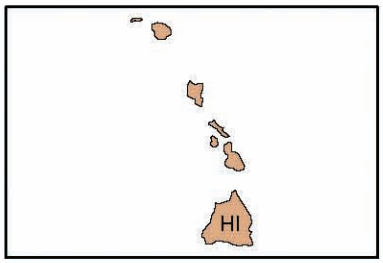
Educational Outcomes Gauge Rankings



Note: Alaska excluded due to insufficient data





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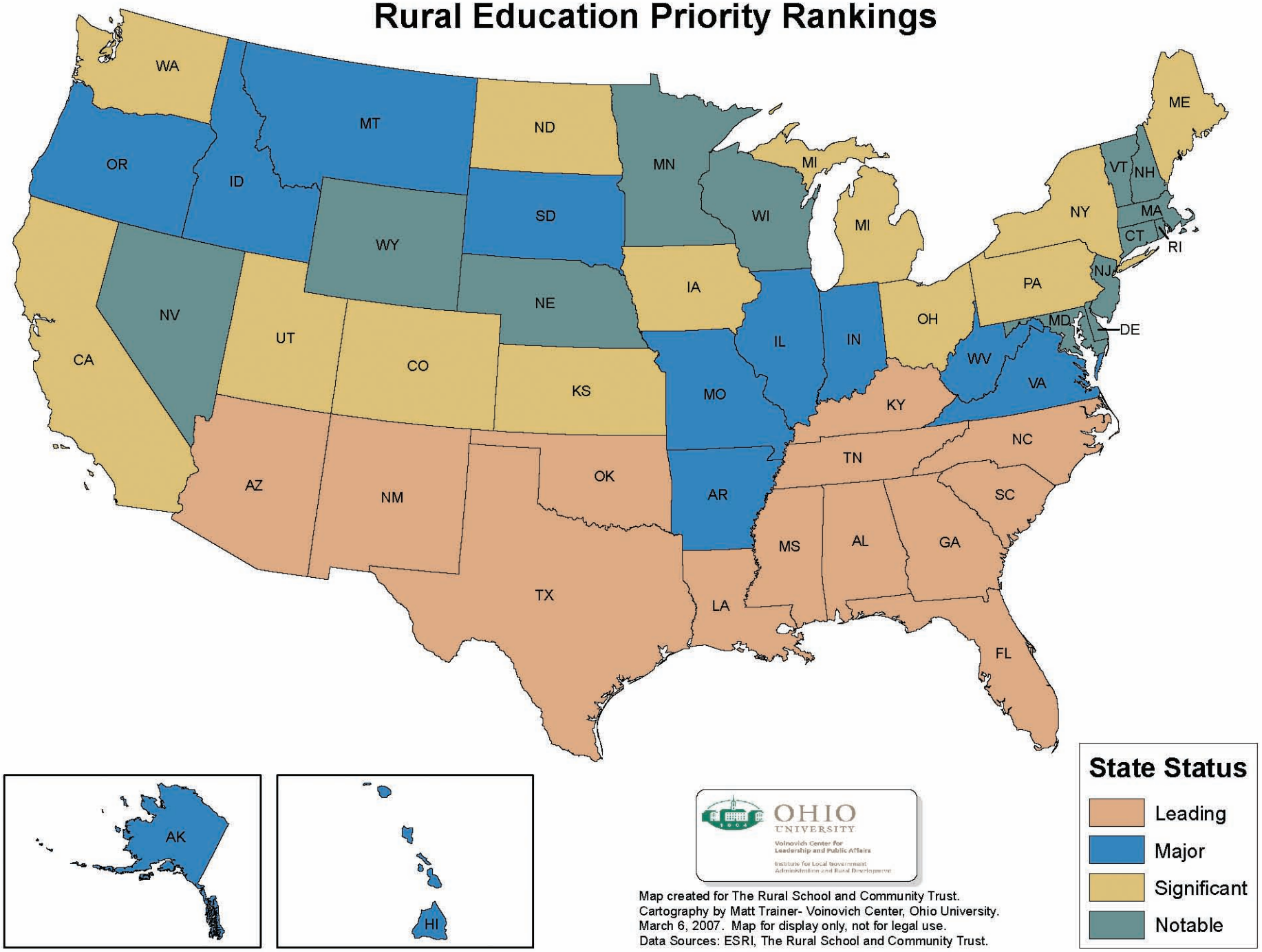
State Status

- Urgent
- Critical
- Serious
- Fair
- NA

Rural Education Priority Rankings



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ALABAMA – Ranking near the top on four of the five gauges, Alabama ranks second overall among the 50 states. Contributing to this ranking are high percentages of rural students and rural schools, very high rural poverty, low educational attainment among rural adults, and some of the lowest student test scores and the fifth lowest graduation rates in the country. Schools and districts are large, transportation spending is high relative to instructional spending, and the combination of relatively equitable funding levels and relatively low per pupil instructional expenditures suggests that all of Alabama's rural schools are insufficiently funded.

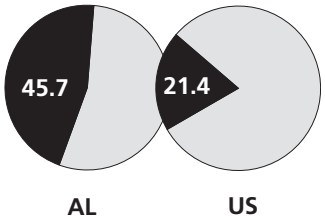
PRIORITY RANKING

2

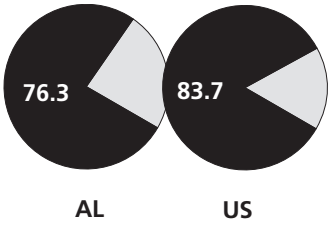
Importance Gauge

	AL	Rank*
Percent rural schools	44.0%	13
Percent small rural districts	1.5%	45
Percent rural students	45.7%	4
Number of rural students	332,160	11
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	38.1%	10

Percent rural students



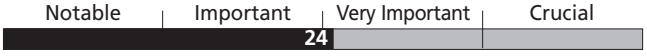
Percent rural adults with high school diploma



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

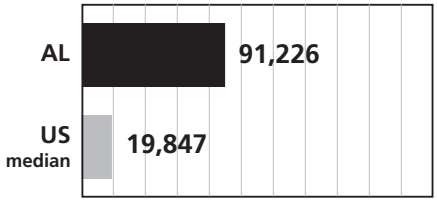
	AL	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	76.3%	2
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.7%	11
Rural median household income	$37,048	5
Percentage of rural families in poverty	19.7%	5
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	51.4%	9

Student Diversity Gauge



	AL	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	27.5%	15
Number of rural minority students	91,226	8
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	38.6%	39
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.8%	22
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	12.6%	39

Number of rural minority students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

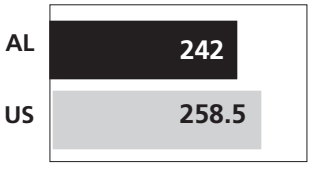
Policy Context Gauge

	AL	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$10.58	18
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,793	4
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$40,248	7
Median organizational scale among rural districts	18,455	6
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	7%	46

Outcomes Gauge

	AL	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	242	2
Rural NAEP reading score	228.5	5
Rural high school graduation rate	62.3%	5

Rural NAEP math score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

ALASKA – Alaska is among the nation's most rural states, with more than half of all schools located in rural areas. These rural schools face critically high levels of poverty—almost 50% of students qualify for subsidized meals—and serve one of the nation's highest percentages of both English Language Learner (ELL) students and minorities, primarily Alaska Natives. With high average statewide spending on instruction, but inequitable distribution of revenue, Alaska's rural schools are among the highest and the lowest funded schools in the nation. NAEP scores for rural Alaska were not available, but graduation rates indicate that just over six in ten rural students are earning a high school diploma.

PRIORITY RANKING

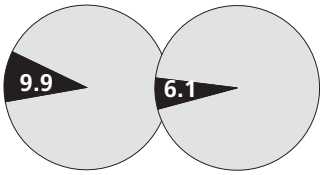
20

Importance Gauge

	AK	Rank*
Percent rural schools	55.0%	6
Percent small rural districts	64.8%	6
Percent rural students	32.1%	18
Number of rural students	40,394	45
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	40.1%	9

Percent rural schools

Rural adult unemployment rate



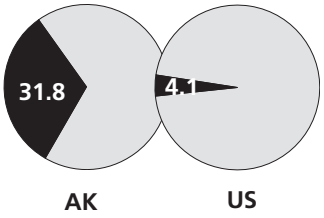
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	AK	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	90.1%	39
Rural adult unemployment rate	9.9%	1
Rural median household income	$52,692	41
Percentage of rural families in poverty	12.2%	22
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	48.8%	10

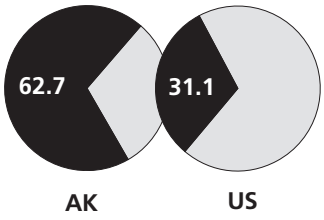
Student Diversity Gauge

	AK	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	54.5%	3
Number of rural minority students	22,021	21
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	32.1%	43
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	31.8%	2
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.6%	32

Percent rural ELL students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

	AK	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$22.50	49
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,903	48
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$72,185	49
Median organizational scale among rural districts	844	41
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	62.7%	10

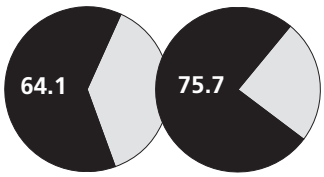
Outcomes Gauge

	AK	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	NA	NA
Rural NAEP reading score	NA	NA
Rural high school graduation rate	64.1%	5

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

† Alaska's data does not allow for the needed analysis.

Rural high school graduation rate



ARIZONA – Only 18% of Arizona's public school students attend rural schools, but socioeconomic challenges and an undesirable policy context lead to an overall ranking of three. The state's rural schools serve an impoverished and diverse student population, with a high rate of English Language Learners and the nation's largest population of Special Education (IEP) students. Compounding challenges, the distribution of state and local funding is the nation's least equitable, and per pupil spending on instruction is among the lowest in the nation. Arizona's rural schools are among the lowest in the nation on NAEP scores and graduation rates.

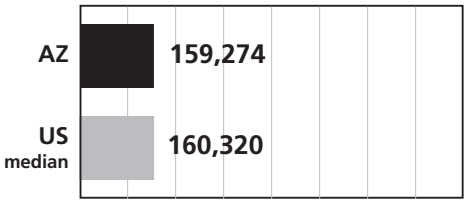
PRIORITY RANKING

3

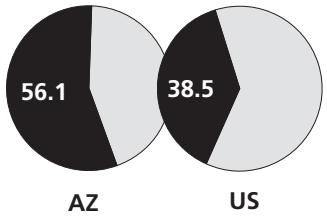
Importance Gauge

	AZ	Rank*
Percent rural schools	23.3%	37
Percent small rural districts	37.5%	23
Percent rural students	17.8%	34
Number of rural students	159,274	26
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	17.3%	34

Number of rural students



Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals



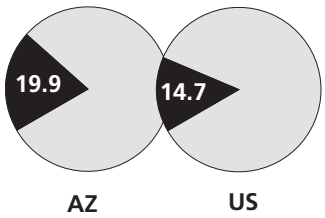
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	AZ	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	84.0%	17
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.9%	9
Rural median household income	$50,235	31
Percentage of rural families in poverty	16.3%	10
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	56.1%	5

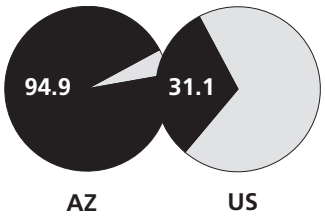
Student Diversity Gauge

	AZ	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	52.7%	4
Number of rural minority students	83,862	9
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	38.2%	40
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	22.9%	3
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	19.9%	1

Percent rural IEP students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



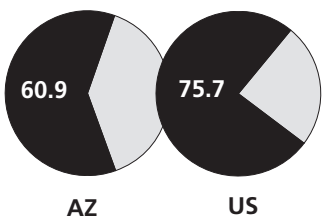
Policy Context Gauge

	AZ	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$9.14	6
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,925	6
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$45,829	21
Median organizational scale among rural districts	4,094	19
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	94.9%	1

Outcomes Gauge

	AZ	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	250.5	7
Rural NAEP reading score	228	4
Rural high school graduation rate	60.9%	4

Rural high school graduation rate



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

ARKANSAS – Near the top on two of the five gauges, Arkansas ranks 14th overall among the 50 states. Contributing to this ranking are some of the highest rural poverty rates in the U.S., low educational attainment among rural adults, and low test scores and graduation rates. Only four states spend less on salaries for instructional staff. Similar to Alabama, the combination of equity in the distribution of educational funding and overall low levels of spending on instruction suggests that all of the state's rural schools are inadequately funded.

PRIORITY RANKING

14

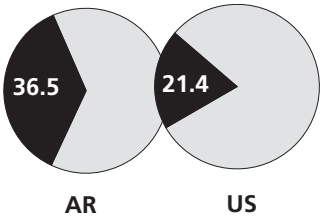
Importance Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

16

	AR	Rank*
Percent rural schools	36.8%	23
Percent small rural districts	40.9%	22
Percent rural students	36.5%	12
Number of rural students	167,638	24
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	32.1%	17

Percent rural students



Rural median household income

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

9

	AR	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	79.1%	9
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.2%	18
Rural median household income	$36,645	4
Percentage of rural families in poverty	18.1%	7
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	51.8%	8

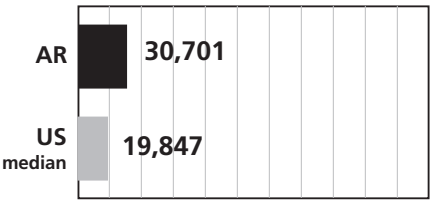
Student Diversity Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

27

	AR	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	18.3%	21
Number of rural minority students	30,701	16
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	59.4%	27
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.7%	23
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.1%	37

Number of rural minority students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

24

	AR	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$16.50	45
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,790	3
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$38,503	5
Median organizational scale among rural districts	2,449	26
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	6.7%	48

Outcomes Gauge

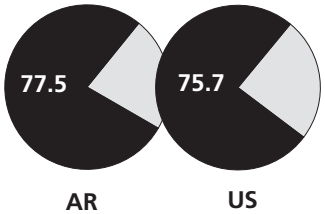
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

16

	AR	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	253.5	13
Rural NAEP reading score	236.5	14
Rural high school graduation rate	77.5%	24

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



CALIFORNIA – Although only 7% of California's public school students attend rural schools, the number of rural students (441,471) is more than all but three other states. The state's rural schools serve a diverse student population, with the nation's second largest minority student population and more than one in five students learning English as a second language. Instructional expenditures per pupil are below the national average, and the distribution of school funding is inequitable. California's rural NAEP scores and graduation rates are among the lowest in the nation.

PRIORITY RANKING

26

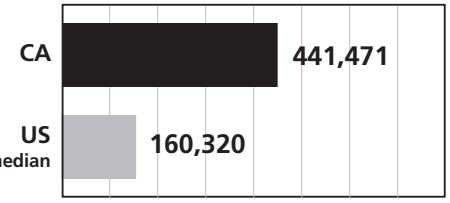
Importance Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

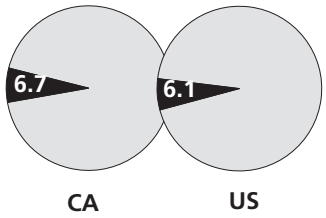
40

	CA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	12.7%	47
Percent small rural districts	33.0%	24
Percent rural students	7.4%	49
Number of rural students	441,471	4
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	3.8%	47

Number of rural students



Rural adult unemployment rate



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

25

	CA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	86.0%	24
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.7%	11
Rural median household income	$60,681	43
Percentage of rural families in poverty	11.2%	25
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	41.6%	17

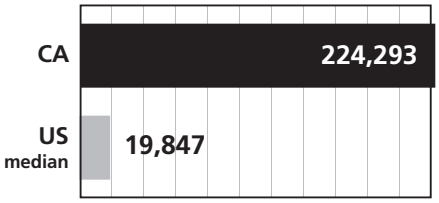
Student Diversity Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

9

	CA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	50.8%	5
Number of rural minority students	224,293	2
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	56.3%	29
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	20.0%	4
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	8.5%	46

Number of rural minority students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

42

	CA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$13.51	36
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,577	23
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$60,338	45
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,798	30
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	46.1%	19

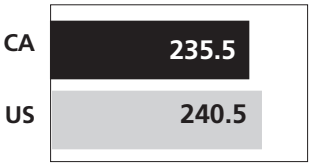
Outcomes Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

11

	CA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	256.5	14
Rural NAEP reading score	235.5	12
Rural high school graduation rate	74.0%	15

Rural NAEP reading score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

COLORADO – Colorado's rural communities have low levels of poverty, low rates of students with special education needs, and high levels of adult educational attainment, contributing to an overall priority ranking of 31. Still, the state's rural schools must meet the needs of one of the nation's highest percentages of ELL students—the tenth highest among the 50 states—and a very diverse student population. Rural per pupil instructional expenditures are below the national average, and salary expenditures for instructional staff are lower than all but 14 states.

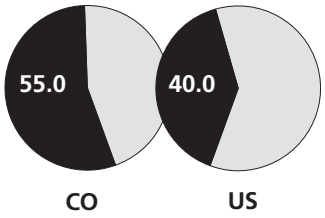
PRIORITY RANKING

31

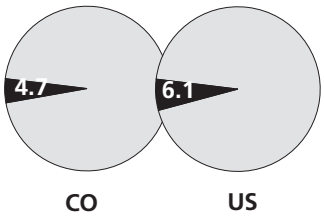
Importance Gauge

	CO	Rank*
Percent rural schools	29.2%	29
Percent small rural districts	55.0%	12
Percent rural students	17.7%	35
Number of rural students	127,280	29
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	10.6%	39

Percent small rural districts



Rural adult unemployment rate



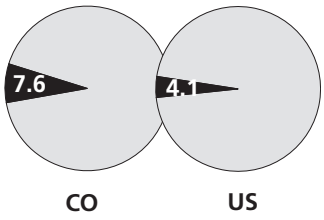
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	CO	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	91.4%	46
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.7%	34
Rural median household income	$57,852	42
Percentage of rural families in poverty	8.4%	40
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	25.7%	39

Student Diversity Gauge

	CO	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	23.7%	17
Number of rural minority students	30,217	17
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	86.7%	17
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	7.6%	10
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	11.1%	44

Percent rural ELL students

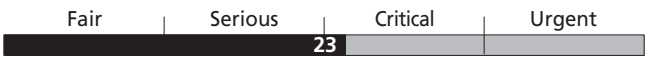


Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

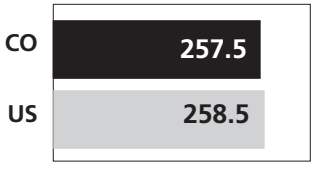
	CO	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$12.99	32
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,478	18
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$43,572	15
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,213	36
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	31.4%	25

Outcomes Gauge



	CO	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	257.5	16
Rural NAEP reading score	245.5	31
Rural high school graduation rate	78.4%	26

Rural NAEP math score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

CONNECTICUT – Connecticut has very few rural schools, and the barriers they face are negligible, awarding the state the nation's lowest overall priority ranking. Poverty rates are some of the lowest in the nation, adult educational attainment is high, and the level of per pupil spending on instruction in rural schools is among the highest of the 50 states. The combination of few challenges and ample resources results in achievement outcomes that are among the best—Connecticut's rural schools have NAEP scores that are some of the highest in the U.S.

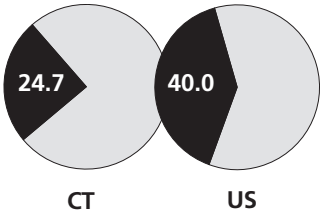
PRIORITY RANKING

50

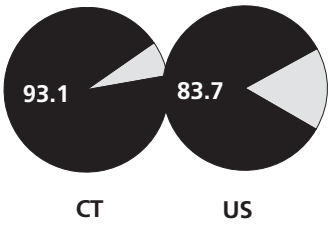
Importance Gauge

	CT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	15.6%	44
Percent small rural districts	24.7%	29
Percent rural students	13.9%	41
Number of rural students	76,037	36
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	10.4%	40

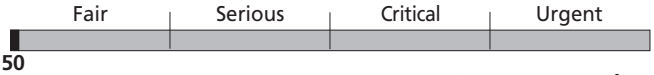
Percent small rural districts



Percent rural adults with high school diploma



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

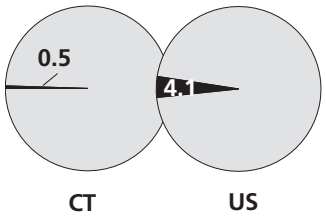


	CT	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	93.1%	50
Rural adult unemployment rate	3.8%	47
Rural median household income	$82,671	49
Percentage of rural families in poverty	3.1%	48
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	7.6%	48

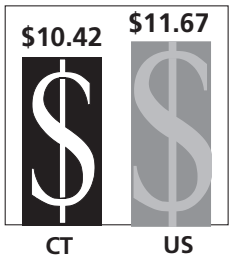
Student Diversity Gauge

	CT	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	8.2%	33
Number of rural minority students	6,225	39
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	90.0%	16
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.5%	37
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	11.1%	45

Percent rural ELL students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



Policy Context Gauge

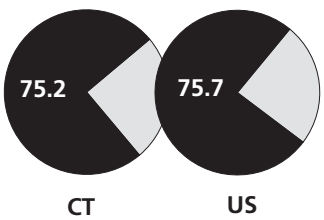
	CT	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$10.42	15
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,676	45
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$64,422	47
Median organizational scale among rural districts	4,045	20
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	20.4%	32

Outcomes Gauge

	CT	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	270	47
Rural NAEP reading score	251	45
Rural high school graduation rate	75.2%	18

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



DELAWARE – Delaware is one of the nation's least rural states, and its rural communities are among the least impoverished. Educational attainment among rural adults is low, however, and high rates of English Language Learners and special education students emphasize the critical need for high-quality teachers with specialized skills. Rural schools and districts are among the nation's largest, and fewer than six in ten rural students graduate from high school—the third worst rate in the country.

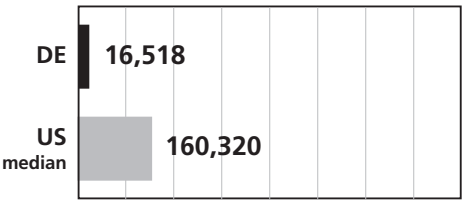
PRIORITY RANKING

43

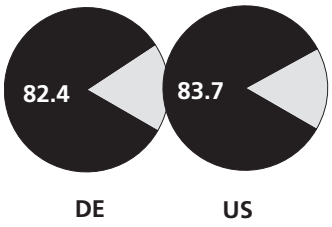
Importance Gauge

	DE	Rank*
Percent rural schools	15.6%	45
Percent small rural districts	0%	48
Percent rural students	15.8%	40
Number of rural students	16,518	49
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	8.3%	42

Number of rural students



Percent rural adults with high school diploma



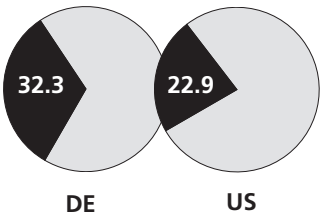
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	DE	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	82.4%	14
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.7%	34
Rural median household income	$51,698	40
Percentage of rural families in poverty	7.4%	44
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	37.0%	23

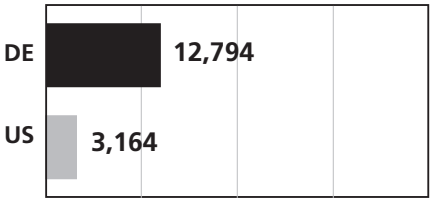
Student Diversity Gauge

	DE	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	32.3%	13
Number of rural minority students	5,343	40
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	36.7%	42
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	2.2%	19
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.8%	16

Percent rural minority students



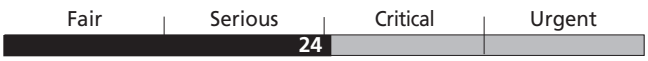
Median organizational scale among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

	DE	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.36	23
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,639	39
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$55,690	38
Median organizational scale among rural districts	12,794	10
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	7.1%	45

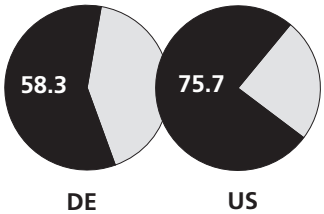
Outcomes Gauge



	DE	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	262	29
Rural NAEP reading score	249	42
Rural high school graduation rate	58.3%	3

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate

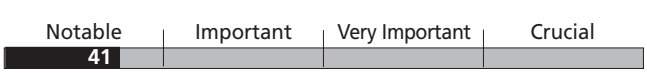


FLORIDA – Nearly 340,000 students attend rural schools in Florida, more than all but eight other states. The state ranks in or near the top on four of five gauges, and receives an overall ranking of 11. The rural student population is diverse, with high rates of ELL students, special education students, and student poverty. Florida's rural schools and districts are larger than all but two other states. Rural per pupil instructional spending is the 11th lowest in the U.S., and fewer than 64% of the state's rural students earn a high school diploma in four years—the seventh worst graduation rate in the country.

PRIORITY RANKING

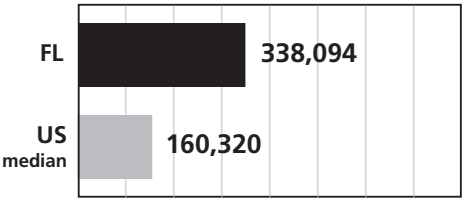
11

Importance Gauge

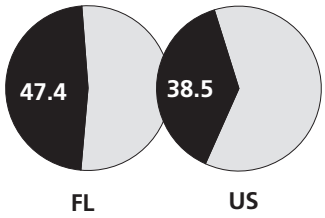


	FL	Rank*
Percent rural schools	14.0%	46
Percent small rural districts	1.5%	46
Percent rural students	13.5%	42
Number of rural students	338,094	9
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	5.1%	45

Number of rural students



Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals



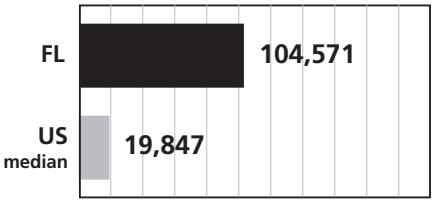
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	FL	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	84.3%	18
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.6%	25
Rural median household income	$46,991	24
Percentage of rural families in poverty	12.6%	20
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	47.4%	11

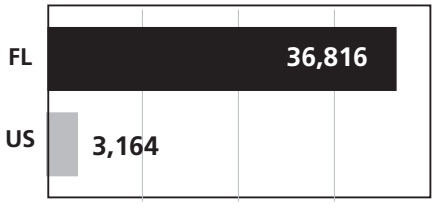
Student Diversity Gauge

	FL	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	30.9%	14
Number of rural minority students	104,571	6
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	64.1%	25
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.3%	28
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	17.8%	7

Number of rural minority students



Median organizational scale among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

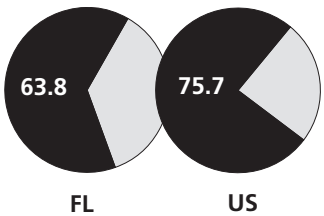
	FL	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.12	21
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,060	11
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$44,140	16
Median organizational scale among rural districts	36,816	3
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	35.5%	22

Outcomes Gauge

	FL	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	260	22
Rural NAEP reading score	239.5	17
Rural high school graduation rate	63.8%	7

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



GEORGIA – Nearly one-third of all public school students in Georgia attend rural schools—the third largest rural student population in the country, at almost half a million students. Minority and ELL enrollment is high in rural areas, as is the percentage of students who qualify for subsidized meals. Educational attainment among rural adults is among the nation's lowest, and only about 55% of current students graduate from high school in four years—the second worst rate in the country. Schools and districts in rural areas are about 7.5 times larger than the national median (the fourth largest nationally), and NAEP scores are among the lowest in the U.S.

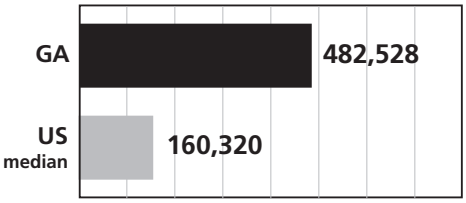
PRIORITY RANKING

12

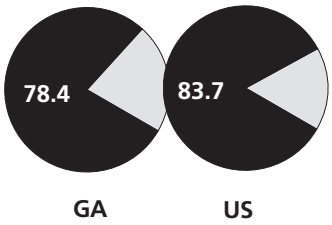
Importance Gauge

	GA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	28.0%	30
Percent small rural districts	6.7%	40
Percent rural students	31.7%	19
Number of rural students	482,528	3
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	29.9%	20

Number of rural students



Percent rural adults with high school diploma



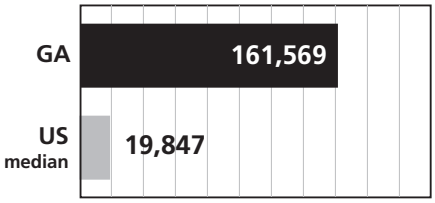
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	GA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	78.4%	8
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.5%	15
Rural median household income	$44,291	17
Percentage of rural families in poverty	14.0%	16
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	45.9%	12

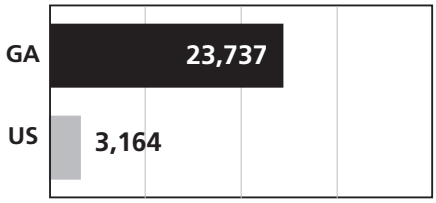
Student Diversity Gauge

	GA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	33.5%	12
Number of rural minority students	161,569	4
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	69.2%	23
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	2.7%	17
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.5%	33

Number of rural minority students



Median organizational scale among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

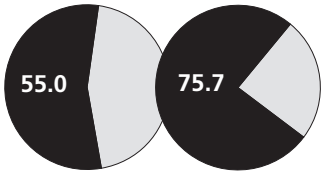
	GA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$15.63	41
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,651	27
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$54,366	36
Median organizational scale among rural districts	23,737	4
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	16.8%	36

Outcomes Gauge

	GA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	251	10
Rural NAEP reading score	234.5	9
Rural high school graduation rate	55.0%	2

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



HAWAII – Hawaii has few rural schools and a small number of rural students, yet high poverty, demographic challenges, and poor educational outcomes put the state at the middle in terms of overall priority. Poverty levels among the state's nearly 35,000 rural students are higher than national averages, and rural schools have the highest percentage of minority students in the nation. NAEP scores are among the lowest in the U.S. Note: School finance indicators could not be computed for Hawaii because the state's schools are organized as a single district.

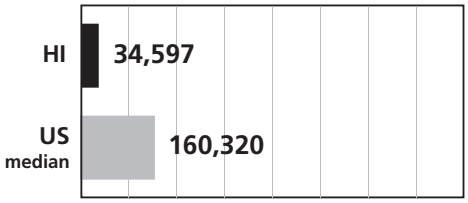
PRIORITY RANKING

25

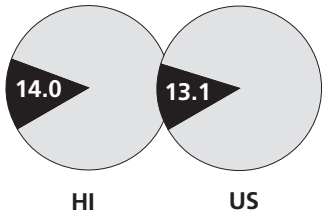
Importance Gauge

	HI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	21.3%	38
Percent small rural districts	0%	48
Percent rural students	19.4%	33
Number of rural students	34,597	47
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	NA	NA

Number of rural students



Percent rural families in poverty



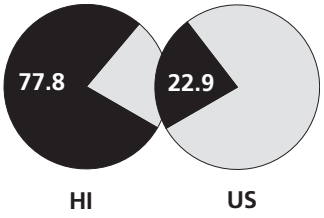
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	HI	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	92.5%	49
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.3%	42
Rural median household income	$49,490	28
Percentage of rural families in poverty	14.0%	16
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	40.1%	19

Student Diversity Gauge

	HI	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	77.8%	1
Number of rural minority students	26,923	20
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	19.9%	47
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	NA	NA
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	NA	NA

Percent rural minority students



Policy Context Gauge

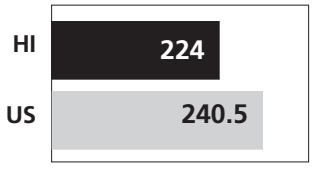
	HI	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	NA	NA
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	NA	NA
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	NA	NA
Median organizational scale among rural districts	NA	NA
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	NA	NA

† Hawaii's data does not allow for the needed analysis.

Outcomes Gauge

	HI	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	243.5	3
Rural NAEP reading score	224	1
Rural high school graduation rate	NA	NA

Rural NAEP reading score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

IDAHO – Idaho ranks near the middle in terms of importance, but high poverty levels and an undesirable policy context raise its overall ranking to 19. Idaho's rural schools face serious economic disadvantages, with high percentages of students qualifying for subsidized meals and low household income. Rural populations are fairly diverse, with the nation's fifth highest percentage of English Language Learners. Distribution of education funding is among the most inequitable in the U.S., rural instructional expenditures and instructional staff salary expenditures are low, and performance on NAEP lags behind both the national average and that of bordering states.

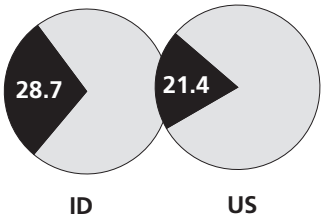
PRIORITY RANKING

19

Importance Gauge

	ID	Rank*
Percent rural schools	37.7%	21
Percent small rural districts	44.0%	21
Percent rural students	28.7%	25
Number of rural students	70,456	37
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	24.4%	25

Percent rural students



Rural median household income

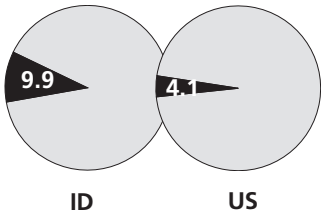
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	ID	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	85.1%	19
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.5%	40
Rural median household income	$44,404	18
Percentage of rural families in poverty	13.8%	19
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	44.7%	14

Student Diversity Gauge

	ID	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	17.4%	23
Number of rural minority students	12,257	32
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	NA	NA
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	9.9%	5
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	11.4%	43

Percent rural ELL students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

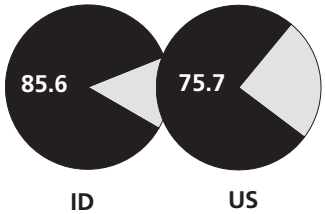
	ID	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.03	20
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,925	7
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$44,646	17
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,349	35
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	78.5%	4

Outcomes Gauge

	ID	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	260	22
Rural NAEP reading score	241	19
Rural high school graduation rate	85.6%	35

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate

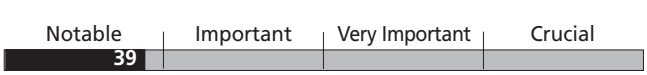


ILLINOIS – Illinois' nearly 237,000 rural students represent the nation's 17th largest rural enrollment, yet they make up only about 12% of the state's overall student population. Socioeconomic indicators rank consistently middle to low across various measures of wellbeing. The cultural diversity of Illinois's rural student population is among the nation's most rapidly changing, with a 135% increase in rural minority students over the past ten years. Over 17% of all rural students qualify for special education services—the nation's eighth highest figure, and rural schools spend proportionally more on transportation and less on instruction than other states.

PRIORITY RANKING

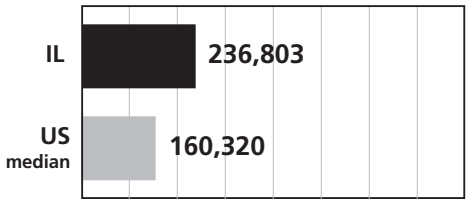
23

Importance Gauge

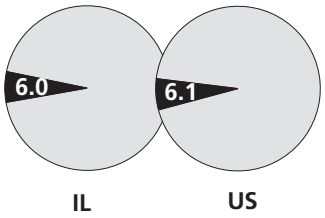


	IL	Rank*
Percent rural schools	20.0%	40
Percent small rural districts	32.4%	25
Percent rural students	11.6%	45
Number of rural students	236,803	17
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	11.3%	38

Number of rural students



Rural adult unemployment rate



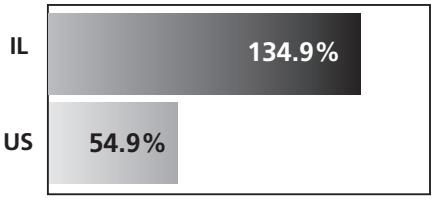
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	IL	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	88.4%	31
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.0%	20
Rural median household income	$51,311	36
Percentage of rural families in poverty	8.9%	37
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	24.7%	40

Student Diversity Gauge

	IL	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	8.3%	32
Number of rural minority students	19,751	24
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	134.9%	3
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	NA	NA
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	17.2%	8

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars

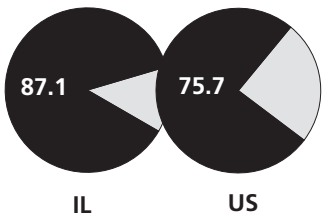
Policy Context Gauge

	IL	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$8.60	3
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,350	15
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$45,121	18
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,177	38
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	33.3%	23

Outcomes Gauge

	IL	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	259.5	21
Rural NAEP reading score	246	35
Rural high school graduation rate	87.1%	36

Rural high school graduation rate



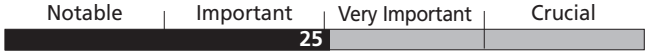
*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

INDIANA – More than one-third of Indiana's public schools are located in rural areas, and they serve over 300,000 students. Socioeconomic indicators are consistently middle to low, and the current rural student population has little cultural diversity, although that is changing rapidly. The percentage of students qualifying for special education services is among the nation's highest. Large schools and districts and a low ratio of instructional spending to transportation spending leads to a critical ranking in policy context.

PRIORITY RANKING

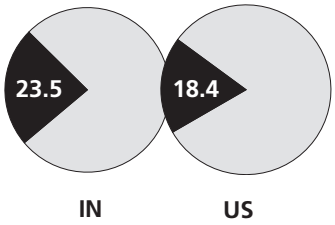
20

Importance Gauge

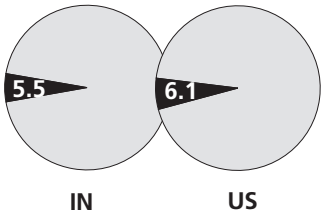


	IN	Rank*
Percent rural schools	33.4%	26
Percent small rural districts	14.4%	32
Percent rural students	30.4%	21
Number of rural students	306,735	13
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	23.5%	27

Percentage of state education funds to rural districts



Rural adult unemployment rate



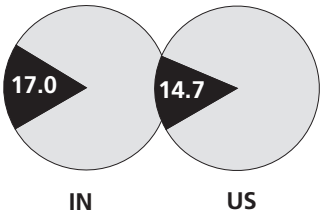
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	IN	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	85.7%	23
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.5%	28
Rural median household income	$50,839	34
Percentage of rural families in poverty	9.7%	33
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	27.0%	35

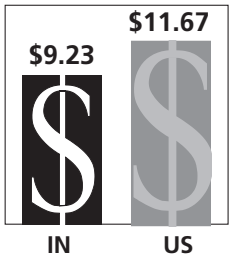
Student Diversity Gauge

	IN	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	5.0%	41
Number of rural minority students	15,401	31
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	102%	12
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	2.5%	18
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	17.0%	9

Percent rural IEP students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



Policy Context Gauge

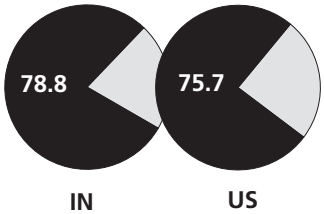
	IN	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$9.23	7
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,478	19
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$52,595	32
Median organizational scale among rural districts	6,391	14
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	16.6%	37

Outcomes Gauge

	IN	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	264	35
Rural NAEP reading score	242	21
Rural high school graduation rate	78.8%	28

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



IOWA – Iowa ranks near the top in importance, with 46% of the state's schools in rural areas, but in the bottom half on the remaining gauges. Iowa's rural schools, on average, face fewer socioeconomic barriers to student achievement than other states. Cultural diversity among the student population is low, but among the nation's most rapidly increasing. The state has relatively small schools and districts, but they operate with low expenditures on both instruction and instructional staff salaries. More than 96% of Iowa's rural students graduate in four years—among the highest rates in the nation and well above the national rate of 76%.

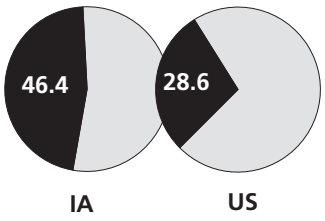
PRIORITY RANKING

35

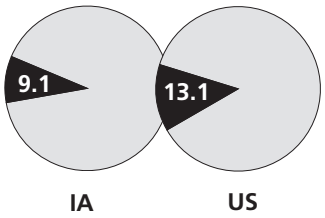
Importance Gauge

	IA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	46.4%	10
Percent small rural districts	64.2%	8
Percent rural students	36.0%	13
Number of rural students	169,707	23
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	32.7%	15

Percent rural schools



Percent rural families in poverty



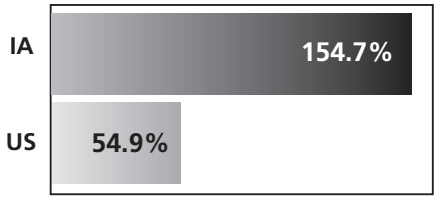
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	IA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	89.9%	37
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.3%	42
Rural median household income	$46,274	22
Percentage of rural families in poverty	9.1%	36
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	26.4%	36

Student Diversity Gauge

	IA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	4.5%	43
Number of rural minority students	7,567	36
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	154.7%	2
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.8%	30
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.0%	27

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

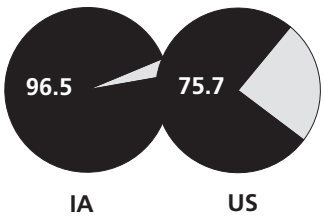
	IA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$13.93	38
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,448	17
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$42,436	12
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,146	39
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	24.1%	30

Outcomes Gauge

	IA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	263	33
Rural NAEP reading score	244.5	25
Rural high school graduation rate	96.5%	45

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



KANSAS – Four out of ten public schools in Kansas are located in rural areas, and they serve more than one-third of all students in the state—with 64% of those students in school districts that are smaller than the national median. The state's rural schools face relatively low levels of socioeconomic challenges, with high adult employment and educational attainment, as well as average poverty levels. The state has near average rural student diversity, but it is a student population that is changing rapidly. Policy context indicators are below the national midpoint, with the exception of instructional salaries, which are the 13th lowest in the nation. Schools and districts are small, and graduation rates are high.

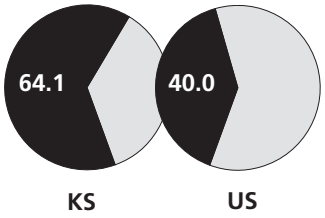
PRIORITY RANKING

29

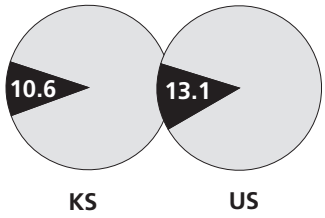
Importance Gauge

	KS	Rank*
Percent rural schools	43.0%	15
Percent small rural districts	64.1%	10
Percent rural students	33.5%	17
Number of rural students	155,806	27
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	34.6%	12

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural families in poverty



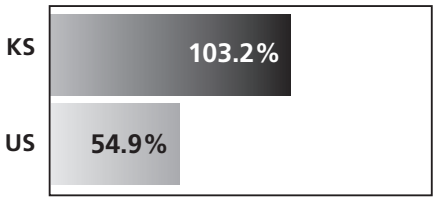
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	KS	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	89.9%	37
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.1%	44
Rural median household income	$45,086	20
Percentage of rural families in poverty	10.6%	30
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	32.1%	31

Student Diversity Gauge

	KS	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	12.5%	28
Number of rural minority students	19,485	26
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	103.2%	9
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	2.1%	20
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.4%	22

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Salary expenditures per instructional staff member

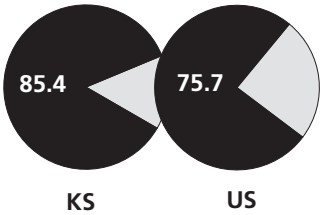
Policy Context Gauge

	KS	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$13.20	34
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,785	30
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$42,684	13
Median organizational scale among rural districts	833	42
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	16.9%	35

Outcomes Gauge

	KS	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	266.5	43
Rural NAEP reading score	244.5	25
Rural high school graduation rate	85.4%	34

Rural high school graduation rate



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

KENTUCKY – Kentucky's rural schools serve more than 42% of the total student population and receive over 45% of educational funds in the state. Overcoming poverty and other challenges, such as the lowest levels of rural adult educational attainment in the U.S., is made more difficult by a poor policy context that includes large schools and districts, low levels of spending on instruction, and proportionally higher spending on transportation. Graduation rates are low, as are NAEP scores. Positioned near the top on four of five gauges, Kentucky gets a priority ranking of tenth among the 50 states.

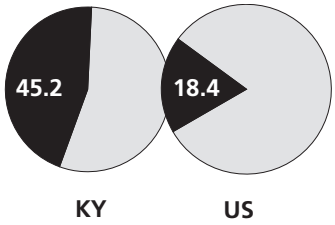
PRIORITY RANKING

10

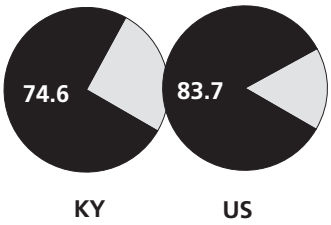
Importance Gauge

	KY	Rank*
Percent rural schools	41.6%	16
Percent small rural districts	8.5%	39
Percent rural students	42.3%	9
Number of rural students	265,683	16
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	45.2%	5

Percentage of state education funds to rural districts



Percent rural adults with high school diploma



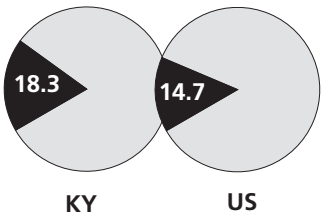
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	KY	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	74.6%	1
Rural adult unemployment rate	7.5%	5
Rural median household income	$36,098	3
Percentage of rural families in poverty	20.5%	3
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	NA	NA

Student Diversity Gauge

	KY	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	4.2%	44
Number of rural minority students	11,088	33
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	71.8%	22
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.7%	32
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	18.3%	5

Percent rural IEP students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

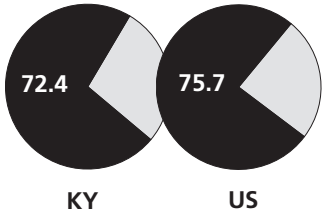
	KY	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$9.38	10
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,008	9
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$47,035	26
Median organizational scale among rural districts	8,957	12
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	5.9%	49

Outcomes Gauge

	KY	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	250.5	7
Rural NAEP reading score	241	19
Rural high school graduation rate	72.4%	12

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



LOUISIANA – Ranking in the top ten on all five socioeconomic indicators, Louisiana's rural schools serve some of the most impoverished communities in the U.S. The rural minority population is sizable, the percentage of special education students is moderately high, and educational attainment for rural adults is lower than all but five states. Instructional expenditures are low, and proportional spending on transportation is among the nation's highest. Schools and districts are large in comparison with other states. NAEP scores and graduation rates are among the lowest in the U.S. All of this gives the state an overall priority ranking of nine.

PRIORITY RANKING

9

Importance Gauge

	LA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	31.5%	28
Percent small rural districts	1.5%	47
Percent rural students	28.8%	24
Number of rural students	203,339	22
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	20.1%	31

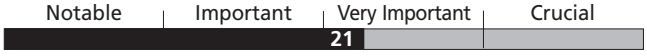
Percent rural schools

Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	LA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	77.8%	6
Rural adult unemployment rate	7.5%	5
Rural median household income	$39,468	10
Percentage of rural families in poverty	18.9%	6
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	59.5%	3

Student Diversity Gauge



	LA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	34.8%	10
Number of rural minority students	70,856	12
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	27.5%	45
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.6%	35
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.7%	18

Percent rural minority students

Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars

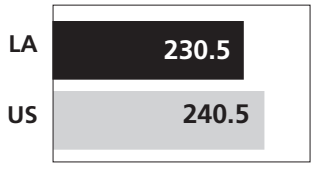
Policy Context Gauge

	LA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$8.65	4
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,245	14
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$42,223	11
Median organizational scale among rural districts	13,443	9
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	18.2%	33

Outcomes Gauge

	LA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	250	6
Rural NAEP reading score	230.5	6
Rural high school graduation rate	73.1%	13

Rural NAEP reading score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

MAINE – With more than half of its students and just over 56% of its schools in rural areas, Maine ranks highest among the 50 states in terms of rural importance. Socioeconomic challenges are consistently critical across the five indicators. The state's rural student population is rapidly growing more diverse, and the percentage of special education students is among the nation's highest. Concerns about the policy context rank moderately low, with the exception of funding equity across rural districts and schools, which is the 17th worst in the U.S. NAEP scores for math are low, but graduation rates and NAEP reading scores are above national averages.

PRIORITY RANKING

28

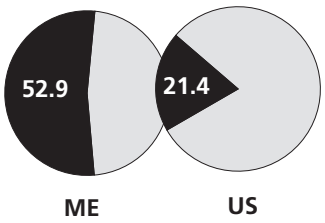
Importance Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

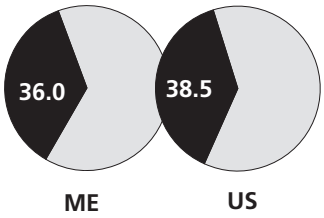
1

	ME	Rank*
Percent rural schools	56.1%	5
Percent small rural districts	64.2%	9
Percent rural students	52.9%	1
Number of rural students	104,854	32
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	56.6%	1

Percent rural students



Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

24

	ME	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	88.9%	33
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.8%	22
Rural median household income	$44,967	19
Percentage of rural families in poverty	12.5%	21
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	36.0%	24

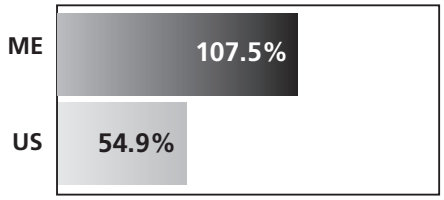
Student Diversity Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

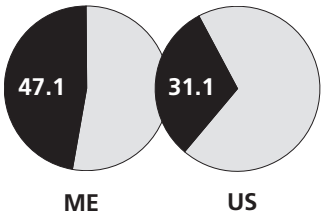
41

	ME	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	2.8%	47
Number of rural minority students	2,985	44
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	107.5%	8
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.5%	39
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	17.9%	6

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

37

	ME	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$13.14	33
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,397	43
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$45,543	20
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,471	33
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	47.1%	17

Outcomes Gauge

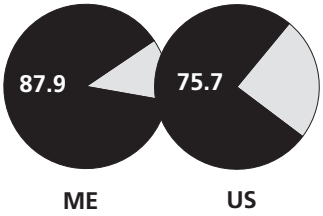
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

28

	ME	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	258.5	19
Rural NAEP reading score	245.5	31
Rural high school graduation rate	87.9%	38

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



MARYLAND – Maryland is not very rural, and the state contends with fewer rural socioeconomic obstacles than most other states. However, student diversity is relatively high, with large absolute and percentage minority student populations. Additionally, undesirable policy contexts in Maryland's rural schools demand the attention of policymakers: Schools and districts are large (median organizational scale is nearly 13 times higher than the national median and the largest in the U.S.) and spending on transportation is high relative to spending on instruction.

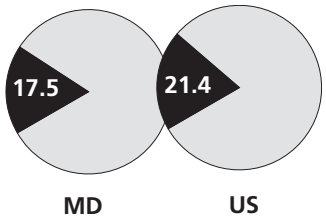
PRIORITY RANKING

42

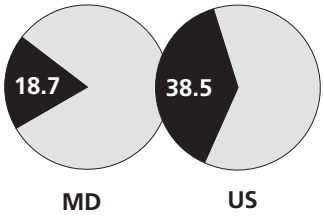
Importance Gauge

	MD	Rank*
Percent rural schools	18.1%	42
Percent small rural districts	0%	48
Percent rural students	17.5%	37
Number of rural students	146,557	28
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	9.0%	41

Percent rural students



Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals



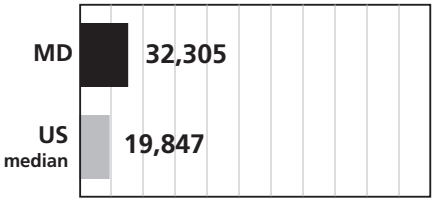
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	MD	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	87.8%	28
Rural adult unemployment rate	3.6%	49
Rural median household income	$69,906	46
Percentage of rural families in poverty	5.8%	45
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	18.7%	44

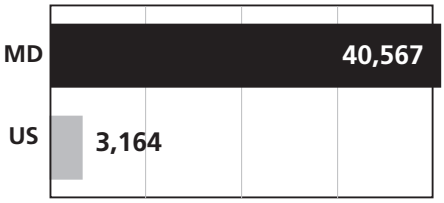
Student Diversity Gauge

	MD	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	22.0%	18
Number of rural minority students	32,305	15
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	64.3%	24
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.0%	29
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.7%	31

Number of rural minority students



Median organizational scale among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

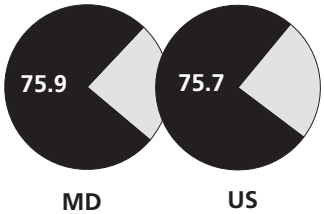
	MD	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$10.68	19
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,337	35
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$59,878	44
Median organizational scale among rural districts	40,567	1
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	9.0%	43

Outcomes Gauge

	MD	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	265	38
Rural NAEP reading score	248	41
Rural high school graduation rate	75.9%	19

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



MASSACHUSETTS – Massachusetts is among the least rural states in the U.S., with only 5% of its schools and slightly less than 5% of its students in rural areas. Rural Massachusetts is relatively affluent, and its schools operate with the benefit of per pupil instructional expenditures and instructional salary expenditures that are higher than all but seven other states. Not all schools share in the wealth, however, as the distribution of state and local education funds among rural schools in Massachusetts is the second most inequitable in the U.S. And while NAEP scores are among the very best in the nation, the state's rural graduation rate is the 11th worst in the country.

PRIORITY RANKING

48

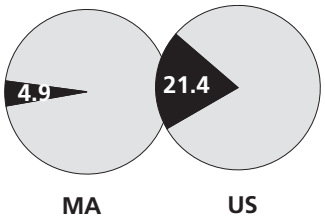
Importance Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

49

	MA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	5.3%	50
Percent small rural districts	13.1%	35
Percent rural students	4.9%	50
Number of rural students	39,378	46
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	3.2%	48

Percent rural students



Percent rural adults with high school diploma

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

46

	MA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	92.3%	48
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.6%	27
Rural median household income	$72,265	47
Percentage of rural families in poverty	4.0%	47
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	11.4%	46

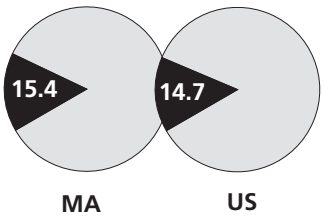
Student Diversity Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

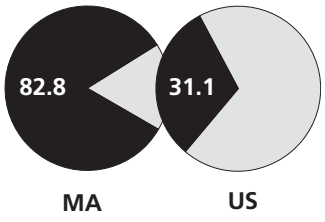
44

	MA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	7.0%	37
Number of rural minority students	2,749	45
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	82.0%	19
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.3%	41
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	15.4%	13

Percent rural IEP students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

40

	MA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$14.11	39
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,378	42
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$58,241	42
Median organizational scale among rural districts	2,778	25
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	82.8%	2

Outcomes Gauge

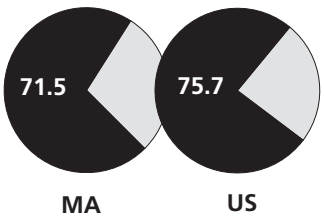
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

40

	MA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	273.5	48
Rural NAEP reading score	258	48
Rural high school graduation rate	71.5%	11

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



MICHIGAN – Michigan is a predominantly urban state, yet its rural schools serve nearly 370,000 students—the seventh largest rural student population in the U.S. Indicators of socioeconomic stress are around the national midpoint in the state's rural schools and communities, with the exception of rural unemployment rates, which are the fourth highest in the nation. Rural student diversity is ranked as important, with a large and rapidly growing minority student population. Schools and districts are relatively large and there is inequity in the distribution of resources. Though salary expenditures are high, rural student outcomes are critical, with only average NAEP scores and a low graduation rate.

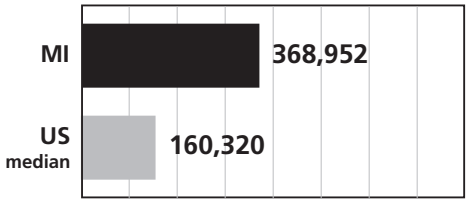
PRIORITY RANKING

33

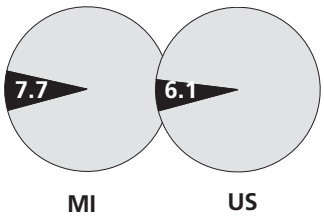
Importance Gauge

	MI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	26.3%	31
Percent small rural districts	29.9%	26
Percent rural students	23.1%	31
Number of rural students	368,952	7
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	19.5%	32

Number of rural students



Rural adult unemployment rate



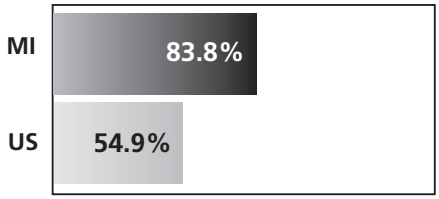
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	MI	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	87.4%	25
Rural adult unemployment rate	7.7%	4
Rural median household income	$48,682	27
Percentage of rural families in poverty	10.8%	29
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	32.6%	29

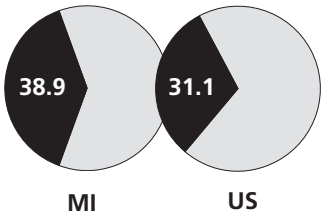
Student Diversity Gauge

	MI	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	8.0%	34
Number of rural minority students	29,655	18
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	83.8%	18
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.6%	34
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.4%	34

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

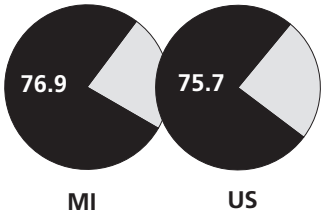
	MI	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.73	27
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,734	28
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$57,253	41
Median organizational scale among rural districts	3,837	21
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	38.9%	20

Outcomes Gauge

	MI	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	261.5	26
Rural NAEP reading score	243.5	23
Rural high school graduation rate	76.9%	21

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate

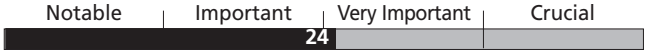


MINNESOTA – Thirty percent of Minnesota's public school students attend rural schools, nearly half of them in small school districts, but indicators of socioeconomic stress are consistently low, earning the state a low priority ranking at 39. Student diversity rates as very important for policy consideration with a large and growing minority student population. Minnesota spends proportionally more on transportation than instruction compared to most other states. Educational outcomes are better than average, with rural NAEP scores on math among the nation's highest, and a 90% graduation rate.

PRIORITY RANKING

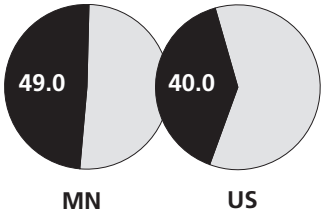
39

Importance Gauge

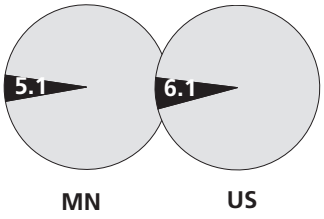


	MN	Rank*
Percent rural schools	35.6%	25
Percent small rural districts	49.0%	18
Percent rural students	27.0%	28
Number of rural students	212,665	21
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	23.8%	26

Percent small rural districts



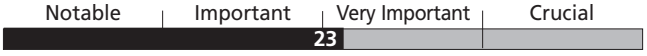
Rural adult unemployment rate



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

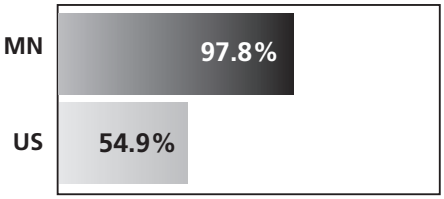
	MN	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	89.5%	35
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.1%	31
Rural median household income	$51,599	39
Percentage of rural families in poverty	8.2%	42
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	29.3%	32

Student Diversity Gauge

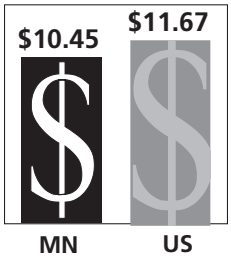


	MN	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	8.5%	31
Number of rural minority students	18,043	27
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	97.8%	14
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.7%	24
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.0%	26

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



Policy Context Gauge

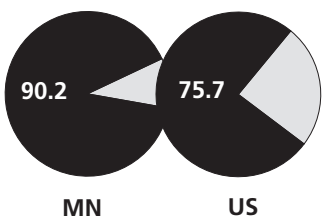
	MN	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$10.45	17
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,015	31
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$53,379	35
Median organizational scale among rural districts	2,023	29
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	17.3%	34

Outcomes Gauge

	MN	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	266.5	43
Rural NAEP reading score	245.5	31
Rural high school graduation rate	90.2%	39

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



MISSISSIPPI – Mississippi receives the highest overall priority ranking among the 50 states. Education in Mississippi is very rural: 46% of students live in rural areas and over 50% of state education funds go to rural districts. The state's rural children and their communities are among the most impoverished in the country and face challenges that exceed those of most other states. Compounding these obstacles are conditions and outcomes directly attributable to policy decisions: schools and districts are very large, and operate with the second lowest instructional expenditures and the fourth lowest instructional salaries in the nation. Not surprisingly, NAEP scores and graduation rates are among the country's lowest.

PRIORITY RANKING

1

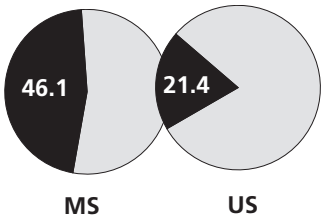
Importance Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

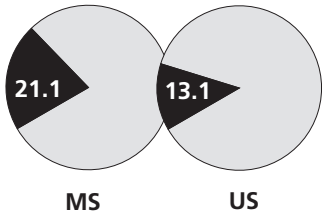
9

	MS	Rank*
Percent rural schools	43.7%	14
Percent small rural districts	13.8%	33
Percent rural students	46.1%	3
Number of rural students	227,885	19
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	50.7%	3

Percent rural students



Percent rural families in poverty



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

1

	MS	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	76.4%	3
Rural adult unemployment rate	8.0%	3
Rural median household income	$34,615	2
Percentage of rural families in poverty	21.1%	2
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	65.0%	2

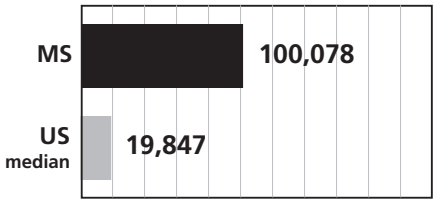
Student Diversity Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

21

	MS	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	43.9%	6
Number of rural minority students	100,078	7
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	29.0%	44
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.5%	38
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.1%	25

Number of rural minority students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

7

	MS	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$12.34	30
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,688	2
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$38,837	6
Median organizational scale among rural districts	10,449	11
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	12.2%	42

Outcomes Gauge

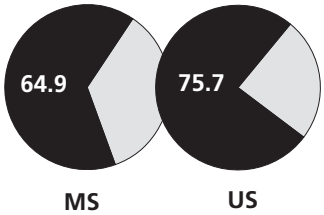
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

4

	MS	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	244	4
Rural NAEP reading score	227	3
Rural high school graduation rate	64.9%	9

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



MISSOURI – Missouri's rural student population totals more than a quarter of a million—the 15th largest in the U.S. Rural student populations are more impoverished than in most other states, and are rapidly becoming culturally more diverse. A poor policy context is evidenced by low levels of instructional spending per pupil and spending on instructional salaries—the nation's third lowest on the latter. Graduation rates and NAEP reading scores among rural students are near the U.S. midpoint, but rural NAEP math scores are the 18th lowest in the U.S.

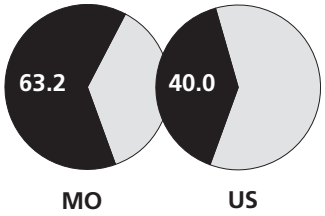
PRIORITY RANKING

14

Importance Gauge

	MO	Rank*
Percent rural schools	40.5%	18
Percent small rural districts	63.2%	11
Percent rural students	30.2%	22
Number of rural students	271,730	15
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	29.5%	21

Percent small rural districts



Rural median household income

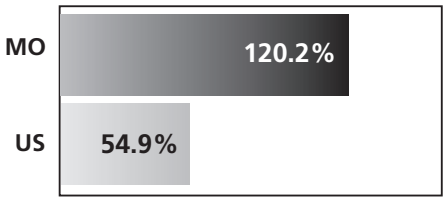
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	MO	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	82.5%	15
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.0%	20
Rural median household income	$40,982	12
Percentage of rural families in poverty	15.5%	14
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	40.3%	18

Student Diversity Gauge

	MO	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	6.1%	38
Number of rural minority students	16,480	29
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	120.2%	4
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.8%	31
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	NA	NA

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Salary expenditures per instructional staff member

Policy Context Gauge

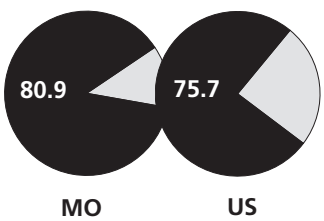
	MO	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.67	25
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,035	10
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$38,064	3
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,456	34
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	24.6%	29

Outcomes Gauge

	MO	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	258	18
Rural NAEP reading score	243.5	23
Rural high school graduation rate	80.9%	30

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



MONTANA – With 68% of all public schools located in rural areas and serving two-fifths of the state's students, public education in Montana is among the most rural in the nation. Socioeconomic challenges are critically high, with nearly one in six rural Montana families living at or below the federal poverty line. The percentage of rural English Language Learner students is the eighth highest in the U.S. Overall instructional expenditures per pupil are above average, but instructional salaries are low and there is considerable disparity in the level of funding made available to local districts.

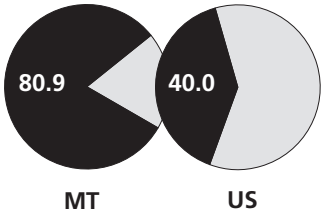
PRIORITY RANKING

22

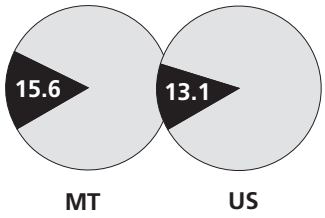
Importance Gauge

	MT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	67.8%	1
Percent small rural districts	80.9%	1
Percent rural students	39.6%	10
Number of rural students	57,959	39
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	42.3%	8

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural families in poverty



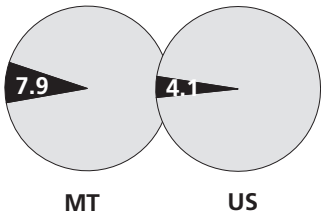
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	MT	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	90.8%	44
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.6%	25
Rural median household income	$41,422	13
Percentage of rural families in poverty	15.6%	12
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	40.1%	19

Student Diversity Gauge

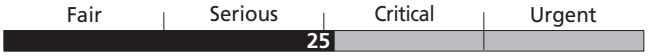
	MT	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	18.8%	20
Number of rural minority students	10,886	34
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	43.8%	37
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	7.9%	8
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.2%	36

Percent rural ELL students



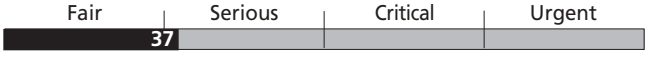
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member

Policy Context Gauge



	MT	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.66	24
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,388	36
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$41,469	10
Median organizational scale among rural districts	57	49
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	63.2%	9

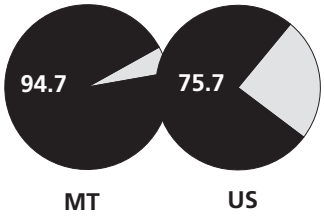
Outcomes Gauge



	MT	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	262.5	30
Rural NAEP reading score	245.5	31
Rural high school graduation rate	94.7%	43

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



NEBRASKA – Nearly 45% of Nebraska's public schools are rural, and almost 65% of its districts have enrollments below the national median. Socioeconomic challenges are below the midpoint with the exception of median household income. The rural student population is moderately diverse, but that is changing rapidly. Nebraska's instructional salaries are among the nation's lowest, and the distribution of educational funds is among the nation's most inequitable. High school graduation rates exceed all but one other state, but NAEP scores are only about average for the nation's rural schools.

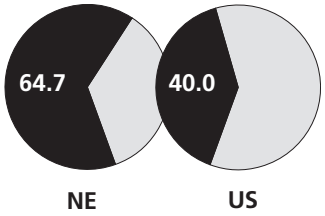
PRIORITY RANKING

38

Importance Gauge

	NE	Rank*
Percent rural schools	44.6%	12
Percent small rural districts	64.7%	7
Percent rural students	30.1%	23
Number of rural students	85,182	34
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	25.5%	23

Percent small rural districts



Rural median household income

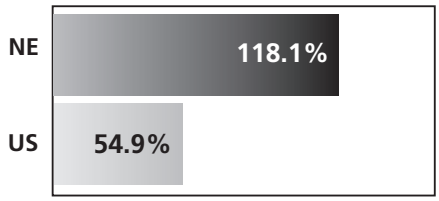
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	NE	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	90.3%	42
Rural adult unemployment rate	3.2%	50
Rural median household income	$43,765	16
Percentage of rural families in poverty	8.4%	40
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	32.2%	30

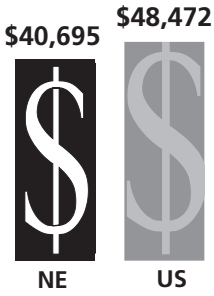
Student Diversity Gauge

	NE	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	8.9%	30
Number of rural minority students	7,562	37
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	118.1%	7
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.9%	21
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	12.1%	41

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Salary expenditures per instructional staff member



Policy Context Gauge

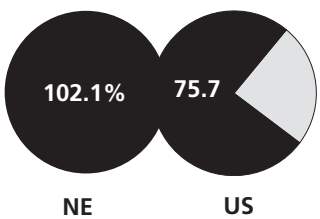
	NE	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$17.96	48
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,497	38
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$40,695	8
Median organizational scale among rural districts	206	46
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupilr among rural districts	80.9%	3

Outcomes Gauge

	NE	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	262.5	30
Rural NAEP reading score	245	28
Rural high school graduation rate	102.1%	48

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



NEVADA – Most of Nevada's population live in cities, and only 13% of public school students attend schools in rural areas. Socioeconomic challenges are generally low. Unavailability of data meant that we could not compute several student diversity indicators, but a 5% English Language Learner (ELL) student population was 13th highest in the nation. Schools and districts are very large, NAEP scores are among the lowest in the U.S., and the distribution of funds among rural school districts within the state is far from equitable.

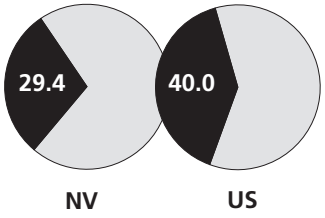
PRIORITY RANKING

40

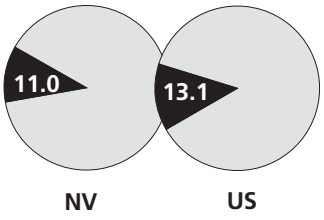
Importance Gauge

	NV	Rank*
Percent rural schools	21.3%	39
Percent small rural districts	29.4%	27
Percent rural students	12.9%	44
Number of rural students	50,665	41
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	3.8%	46

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural families in poverty



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

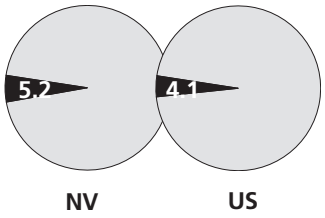
	NV	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	90.2%	40
Rural adult unemployment rate	3.8%	47
Rural median household income	$61,589	45
Percentage of rural families in poverty	11.0%	27
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	28.1%	34

Student Diversity Gauge

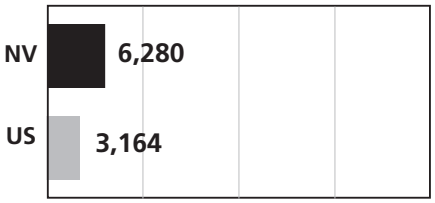
	NV	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	NA	NA
Number of rural minority students	NA	NA
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	NA	NA
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	5.2%	13
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	12.1	42

† Nevada's data does not allow for the needed analysis.

Percent rural ELL students



Median organizational scale among rural districts



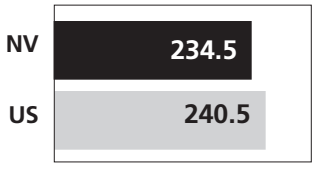
Policy Context Gauge

	NV	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$13.33	35
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,164	33
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$56,195	40
Median organizational scale among rural districts	6,280	15
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	47.8%	15

Outcomes Gauge

	NV	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	252.5	12
Rural NAEP reading score	234.5	9
Rural high school graduation rate	79.4%	29

Rural NAEP reading score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

NEW HAMPSHIRE – Rural schools in New Hampshire account for almost half of all schools, while a third of the state's students attend those schools. Rural areas of the state are comparatively affluent, and face less extensive challenges than most other states. Cultural diversity among students is increasing at a faster rate than any other state in the country, but in both number and percentage of all students, remains low. The distribution of operating revenue for rural districts is among the most inequitable in the U.S, and while NAEP scores are among the highest in the nation, four-year graduation rates are below the national rate.

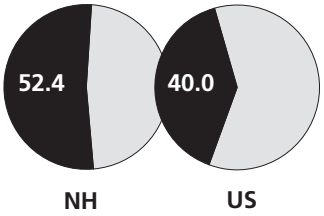
PRIORITY RANKING

44

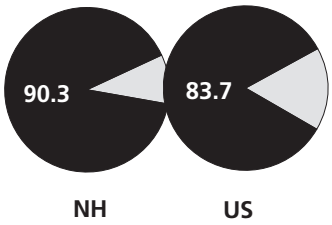
Importance Gauge

	NH	Rank*
Percent rural schools	48.3%	8
Percent small rural districts	52.4%	13
Percent rural students	33.9%	16
Number of rural students	70,004	38
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	34.6%	13

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural adults with high school diploma



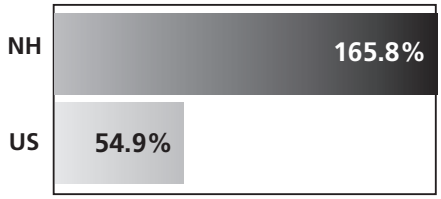
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	NH	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	90.3%	42
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.0%	46
Rural median household income	$60,743	44
Percentage of rural families in poverty	5.4%	46
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	15.2%	45

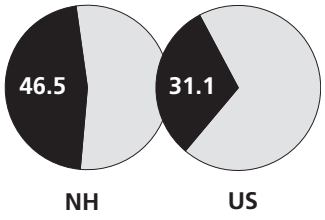
Student Diversity Gauge

	NH	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	2.5%	48
Number of rural minority students	1,781	46
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	165.8%	1
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.2%	42
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.8%	29

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

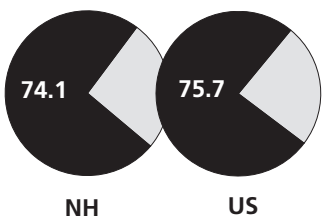
	NH	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$12.09	29
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,109	41
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$53,023	33
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,784	31
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	46.5%	18

Outcomes Gauge

	NH	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	266	42
Rural NAEP reading score	249.5	43
Rural high school graduation rate	74.1%	16

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



NEW JERSEY – New Jersey is among the nation's least rural states, and its rural areas are among the most affluent in the U.S. Serious challenges identified in *Why Rural Matters 2005* (the nation's seventh largest percentage of special education students and a sizable population of English Language Learners) could not be computed because of data unavailability. In terms of policy outcomes, schools and districts are larger than national averages, and rural districts pay proportionally more toward transportation than instruction compared to almost every other state.

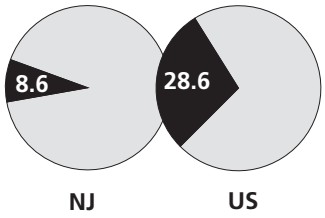
PRIORITY RANKING

47

Importance Gauge

	NJ	Rank*
Percent rural schools	8.6%	48
Percent small rural districts	13.2%	34
Percent rural students	9.1%	46
Number of rural students	122,235	30
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	7.0%	43

Percent rural schools



Rural median household income

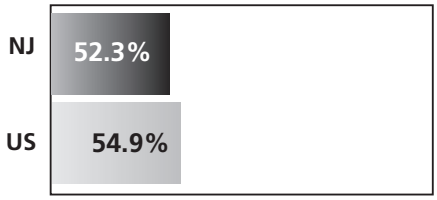
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	NJ	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	91.1%	45
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.7%	34
Rural median household income	$83,374	50
Percentage of rural families in poverty	2.2%	49
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	26.2%	37

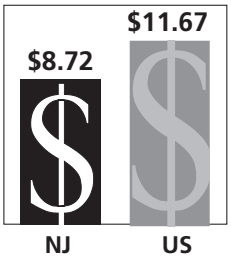
Student Diversity Gauge

	NJ	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	16.1%	25
Number of rural minority students	19,730	25
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	52.3%	31
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	NA	NA
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	NA	NA

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



Policy Context Gauge

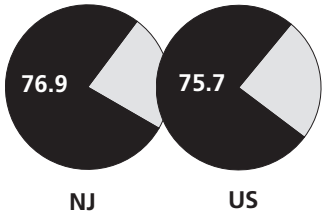
	NJ	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$8.72	5
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,956	47
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$61,556	46
Median organizational scale among rural districts	3,831	22
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	29.6%	27

Outcomes Gauge

	NJ	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	269.5	46
Rural NAEP reading score	253.5	47
Rural high school graduation rate	76.9%	22

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



NEW MEXICO – New Mexico has the eighth highest rural education priority ranking among the 50 states, despite ranking below the median on the Importance Gauge. The reason: It ranks sixth in terms of socioeconomic challenges and second in terms of student diversity. Nearly one in four families of school-age children lives in poverty, more than one in three students is learning English as a second language, and nearly one in five students qualifies for special education services. Exacerbating these challenges are inequitable distributions of state education funds and high transportation costs compared to instructional spending. It's not surprising that rural NAEP scores are the lowest in the U.S.

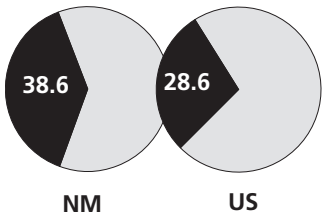
PRIORITY RANKING

8

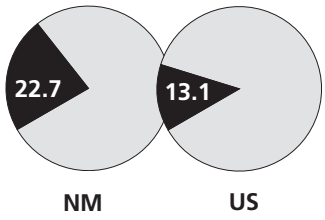
Importance Gauge

	NM	Rank*
Percent rural schools	38.6%	19
Percent small rural districts	50.6%	15
Percent rural students	25.0%	29
Number of rural students	77,724	35
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	22.5%	29

Percent rural schools



Percent rural families in poverty



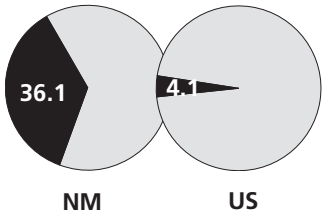
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	NM	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	80.3%	12
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.7%	11
Rural median household income	$37,284	6
Percentage of rural families in poverty	22.7%	1
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	65.9%	1

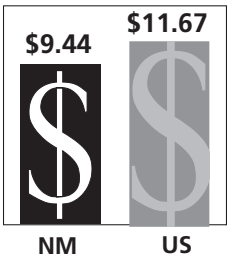
Student Diversity Gauge

	NM	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	72.9%	2
Number of rural minority students	56,649	13
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	23.7%	46
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	36.1%	1
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	18.8%	3

Percent rural ELL students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



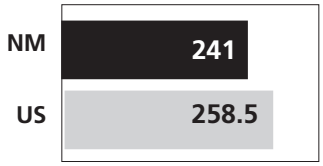
Policy Context Gauge

	NM	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$9.44	12
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,628	24
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$46,636	25
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,069	40
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	47.2%	16

Outcomes Gauge

	NM	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	241	1
Rural NAEP reading score	225.5	2
Rural high school graduation rate	77.1%	23

Rural NAEP math score



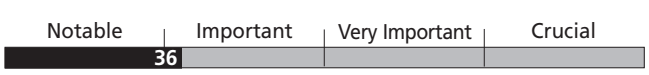
*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

NEW YORK – New York is among the nation's least rural states, yet its rural schools still serve nearly 360,000 students—one of the largest rural student populations in the country. Socioeconomic challenges consistently rank below the national median. Student diversity is moderately high (data for ELL enrollments and IEP enrollments were unavailable, however). Some aspects of the policy context are troubling, with large rural schools and districts, proportional transportation spending to instruction among the highest in the nation, and overall revenue inequity among the nation's worst.

PRIORITY RANKING

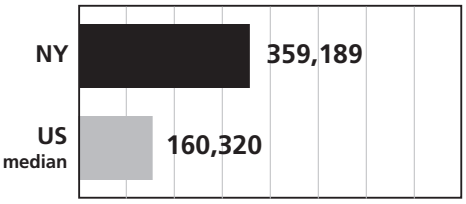
37

Importance Gauge

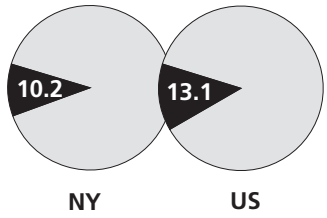


	NY	Rank*
Percent rural schools	17.0%	43
Percent small rural districts	24.7%	28
Percent rural students	13.1%	43
Number of rural students	359,189	8
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	14.5%	35

Number of rural students



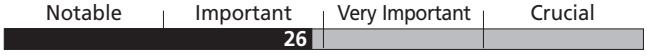
Percent rural families in poverty



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

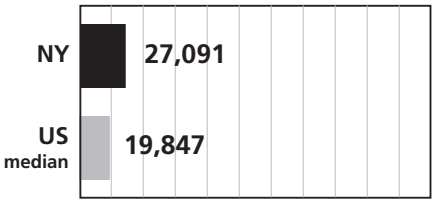
	NY	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	87.9%	29
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.8%	22
Rural median household income	$50,572	33
Percentage of rural families in poverty	10.2%	31
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	28.7%	33

Student Diversity Gauge

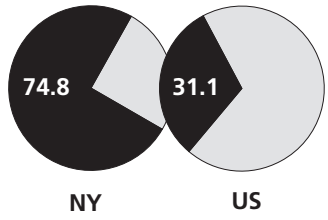


	NY	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	7.5%	35
Number of rural minority students	27,091	19
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	79.8%	20
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	NA	NA
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	NA	NA

Number of rural minority students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



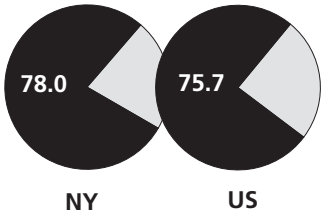
Policy Context Gauge

	NY	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$9.43	11
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,919	49
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$69,826	48
Median organizational scale among rural districts	4,320	18
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	74.8%	6

Outcomes Gauge

	NY	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	264.5	37
Rural NAEP reading score	247.5	40
Rural high school graduation rate	78.0%	25

Rural high school graduation rate



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

NORTH CAROLINA – North Carolina is one of only two states to rank in the top ten on both absolute and percentage rural student enrollment. More than 45% of all North Carolina's students attend rural schools; however, less than 3% attend schools in small districts and rural schools and districts are the second largest in the nation. Schools serve an impoverished student population, as well as the third largest minority student population in the nation. Per pupil instructional expenditures are among the lowest in the U.S. NAEP reading scores are also among the nation's lowest, and fewer than 64 of every 100 students earn a high school diploma in four years—better than only five other states.

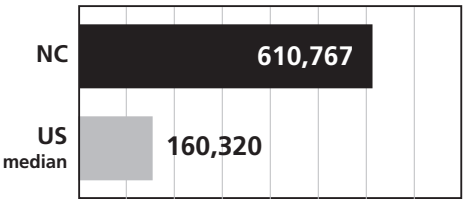
PRIORITY RANKING

4

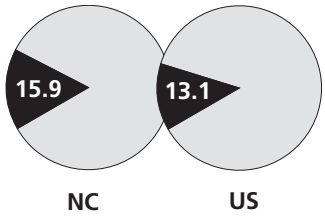
Importance Gauge

	NC	Rank*
Percent rural schools	45.0%	11
Percent small rural districts	2.5%	44
Percent rural students	45.2%	5
Number of rural students	610,767	2
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	44.1%	6

Number of rural students



Percent rural families in poverty



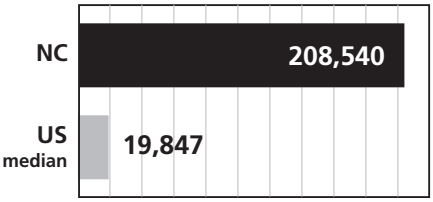
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	NC	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	79.4%	11
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.4%	17
Rural median household income	$40,254	11
Percentage of rural families in poverty	15.9%	11
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	45.2%	13

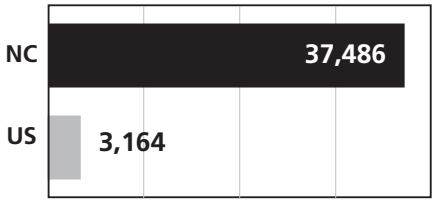
Student Diversity Gauge

	NC	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	34.1%	11
Number of rural minority students	208,540	3
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	51.2%	32
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	5.1%	14
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.3%	23

Number of rural minority students



Median organizational scale among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

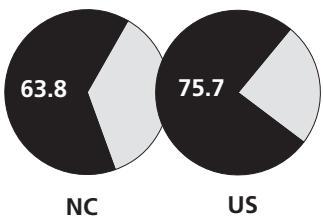
	NC	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$17.58	46
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,165	12
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$46,454	24
Median organizational scale among rural districts	37,486	2
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	22.7%	31

Outcomes Gauge

	NC	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	260	24
Rural NAEP reading score	236	13
Rural high school graduation rate	63.8%	6

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



NORTH DAKOTA – Nearly six out of ten North Dakota schools are located in rural areas, and more than 75% of rural districts are smaller than the national median enrollment. High spending on transportation, the lowest instructional salaries in the nation, and inequity in funding to rural schools are causes for concern with policymakers. The state's cumulative ranking is just below the median at 27, however, largely because of decent educational outcomes—graduation rates are the second best in the country, and NAEP scores are well above the national median.

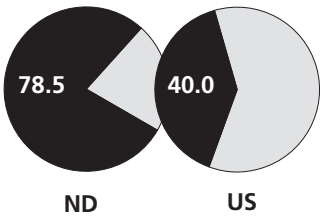
PRIORITY RANKING

27

Importance Gauge

	ND	Rank*
Percent rural schools	58.0%	4
Percent small rural districts	78.5%	2
Percent rural students	43.5%	7
Number of rural students	43,682	43
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	43.4%	7

Percent small rural districts



Rural median household income

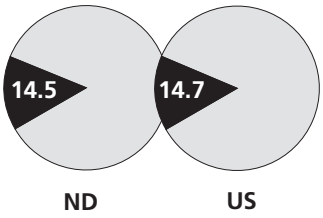
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	ND	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	85.3%	20
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.1%	44
Rural median household income	$42,143	15
Percentage of rural families in poverty	11.2%	25
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	34.4%	26

Student Diversity Gauge

	ND	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	15.2%	26
Number of rural minority students	6,636	38
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	50.6%	33
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.6%	25
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.5%	21

Percent rural IEP students



Salary expenditures per instructional staff member

Policy Context Gauge

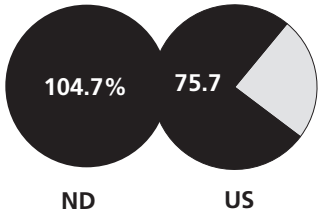
	ND	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$9.27	9
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,736	29
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$36,371	1
Median organizational scale among rural districts	203	47
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	60.2%	12

Outcomes Gauge

	ND	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	263	33
Rural NAEP reading score	246.5	39
Rural high school graduation rate	104.7%	49

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



OHIO – Ohio has the fifth largest rural student population in the nation at nearly 440,000. Schools serving these students are characterized by moderately high levels of poverty and moderately low levels of student diversity. Minority enrollment in rural areas is increasing more rapidly than in nearly all other states, however. Ohio's rankings in terms of policy context are among the nation's worst, with the second lowest level of rural per pupil instructional spending nationally, the 13th highest proportional spending on transportation relative to instruction, and the fifth largest district and school size.

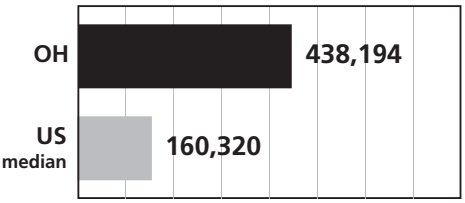
PRIORITY RANKING

36

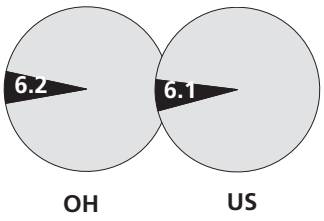
Importance Gauge

	OH	Rank*
Percent rural schools	25.7%	32
Percent small rural districts	17.8%	30
Percent rural students	24.7%	30
Number of rural students	438,194	5
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	25.2%	24

Number of rural students



Rural adult unemployment rate



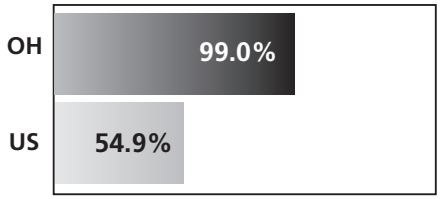
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	OH	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	85.6%	22
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.2%	18
Rural median household income	$50,098	29
Percentage of rural families in poverty	9.7%	33
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	23.3%	43

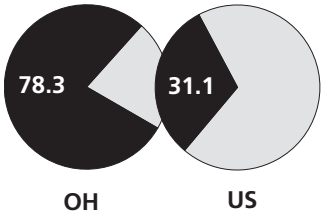
Student Diversity Gauge

	OH	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	4.7%	42
Number of rural minority students	20,552	22
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	99.0%	13
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.5%	36
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.3%	35

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

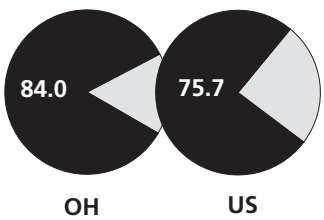
	OH	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$10.03	13
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,369	16
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$49,463	29
Median organizational scale among rural districts	4,528	17
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	78.3%	5

Outcomes Gauge

	OH	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	266.5	43
Rural NAEP reading score	249.5	43
Rural high school graduation rate	84.0%	32

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



OKLAHOMA – Nearly half of all Oklahoma's public schools are located in rural areas, enrolling more than one-third of all public school students in the state. Close to 60% of all rural students qualify for subsidized meals—the fourth highest rate in the country—and nearly one in six rural families lives at or below the federal poverty line. Minority enrollment in rural schools is sizable, as are the percentages of ELL and IEP students. Compounding challenges are the nation's lowest rural per pupil instructional expenditures and the fourth lowest instructional salaries in the country. NAEP scores are also among the lowest in the nation.

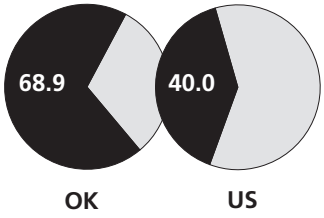
PRIORITY RANKING

5

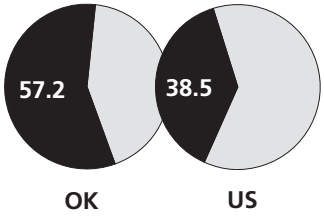
Importance Gauge

	OK	Rank*
Percent rural schools	48.4%	7
Percent small rural districts	68.9%	5
Percent rural students	34.3%	15
Number of rural students	214,306	20
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	35.2%	11

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals



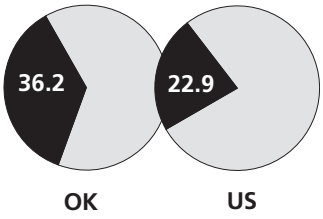
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	OK	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	83.5%	16
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.3%	29
Rural median household income	$39,268	8
Percentage of rural families in poverty	15.3%	15
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	57.2%	4

Student Diversity Gauge

	OK	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	36.2%	9
Number of rural minority students	77,531	11
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	56.2%	30
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	3.7%	16
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	16.4%	12

Percent rural minority students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

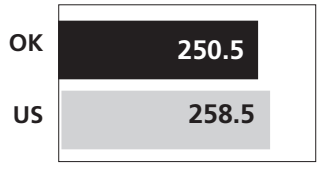
Policy Context Gauge

	OK	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$16.38	44
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,591	1
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$38,273	4
Median organizational scale among rural districts	753	43
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	31.7%	24

Outcomes Gauge

	OK	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	250.5	7
Rural NAEP reading score	235	11
Rural high school graduation rate	87.2%	37

Rural NAEP math score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

OREGON – Serving almost 90,000 students, Oregon's rural schools make up more than one-fourth of all public schools in the state. Socioeconomic challenges are at critical levels, with high poverty and adult unemployment. The population of both English Language Learners and Special Education students is high, and the overall student population is rapidly growing more diverse. Policy contexts suggest the need for immediate attention: inequity in state and local revenue per pupil in rural districts is among the nation's most severe, and proportional spending on transportation relative to instructional spending is higher than all but five states.

PRIORITY RANKING

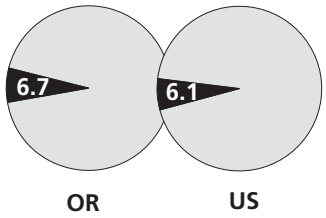
14

Importance Gauge

	OR	Rank*
Percent rural schools	25.5%	33
Percent small rural districts	47.7%	19
Percent rural students	16.8%	38
Number of rural students	88,834	33
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	13.3%	36

Percent small rural districts

Rural adult unemployment rate



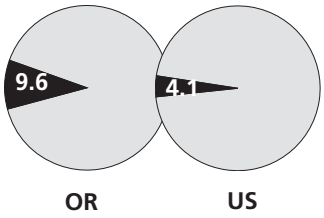
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	OR	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	87.5%	27
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.7%	11
Rural median household income	$47,450	26
Percentage of rural families in poverty	12.0%	24
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	41.8%	16

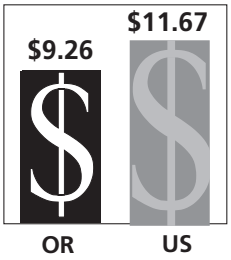
Student Diversity Gauge

	OR	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	17.9%	22
Number of rural minority students	15,922	30
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	102.3%	11
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	9.6%	6
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	15.1%	14

Percent rural ELL students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



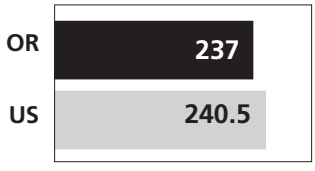
Policy Context Gauge

	OR	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$9.26	8
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,628	25
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$53,360	34
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,180	37
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	70.4%	7

Outcomes Gauge

	OR	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	257.5	16
Rural NAEP reading score	237	15
Rural high school graduation rate	76.2%	20

Rural NAEP reading score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

PENNSYLVANIA – Pennsylvania's rural schools provide educational services to nearly 370,000 children—the sixth largest rural school population in the nation. Diversity among students is limited, though the state's minority population is increasing rapidly. Socioeconomic challenges are moderately low, state and local revenue is shared fairly equally among rural districts, and per pupil instructional spending is well above the national median. In terms of other policy outcomes, however, the state fares less well: the ratio of transportation costs to instructional spending is the second highest among states and schools and districts are the 16th largest in the nation.

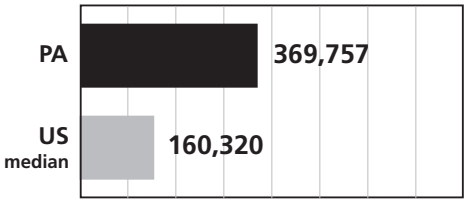
PRIORITY RANKING

31

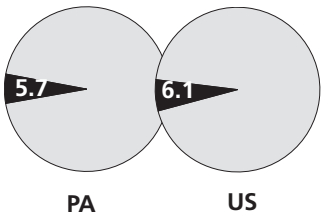
Importance Gauge

	PA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	23.7%	35
Percent small rural districts	9.8%	37
Percent rural students	21.2%	32
Number of rural students	369,757	6
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	20.2%	30

Number of rural students



Rural adult unemployment rate



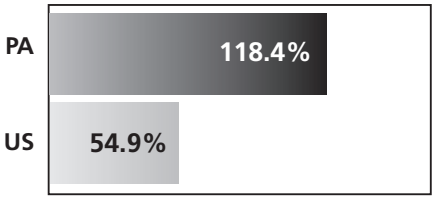
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	PA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	85.5%	21
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.7%	24
Rural median household income	$47,325	25
Percentage of rural families in poverty	10.2%	31
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	24.5%	41

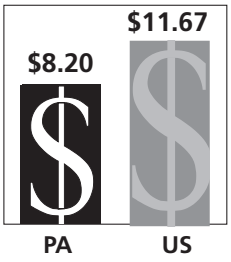
Student Diversity Gauge

	PA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	5.4%	39
Number of rural minority students	19,942	23
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	118.4%	6
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	NA	NA
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.7%	17

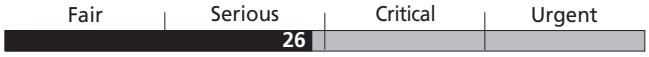
Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



Policy Context Gauge



	PA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$8.20	2
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,129	32
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$55,698	39
Median organizational scale among rural districts	5,299	16
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	12.5%	41

Outcomes Gauge

	PA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	264	35
Rural NAEP reading score	246	35
Rural high school graduation rate	84.8%	33

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate

RHODE ISLAND – Rhode Island is among our least rural states, and rural communities are relatively affluent, with challenges that are low compared with other states. Though relatively low in diversity, the percentage of rural IEP students is the 11th highest in the nation. Rhode Island's overall policy context ranks just slightly below the median, but a few outcome indicators rank worse, including proportional spending on transportation to instructional spending (14th in the nation), the size of rural schools and districts (23rd largest nationally), and revenue inequity among rural school districts in the state (21st nationally). NAEP scores and high school graduation rates are well above national figures.

PRIORITY RANKING

49

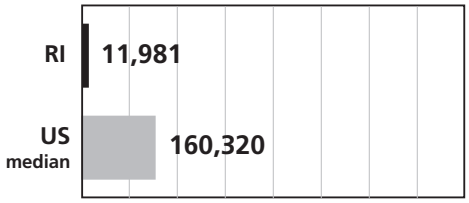
Importance Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

50

	RI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	8.4%	49
Percent small rural districts	12.5%	36
Percent rural students	8.6%	48
Number of rural students	11,981	50
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	3.1%	49

Number of rural students



Rural median household income

Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

48

	RI	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	90.2%	40
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.6%	38
Rural median household income	$75,590	48
Percentage of rural families in poverty	NA	NA
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	10.0%	47

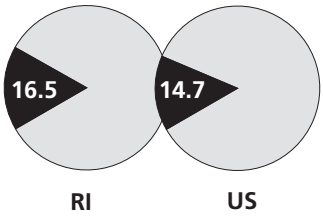
Student Diversity Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

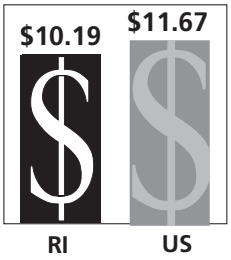
46

	RI	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	5.3%	40
Number of rural minority students	637	48
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	60.4%	26
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.08%	44
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	16.5%	11

Percent rural IEP students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



Policy Context Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

29

	RI	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$10.19	14
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,087	40
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$54,891	37
Median organizational scale among rural districts	3,774	23
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	38.8%	21

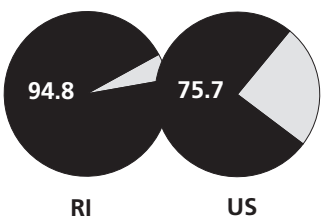
Outcomes Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

48

	RI	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	265	38
Rural NAEP reading score	251	45
Rural high school graduation rate	94.8%	44

Rural high school graduation rate



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

SOUTH CAROLINA – With a sizable rural population, severe socioeconomic challenges, and poor educational outcomes, South Carolina is the sixth highest rural education priority state. More than one-third of all public schools are rural, more than half of all rural students qualify for subsidized meals (the sixth highest percentage in the nation), and almost half of all rural students don't earn a high school diploma in four years (the worst rate in the U.S.). Minority and IEP student enrollment is among the highest in the country. Instructional expenditures are low, as are salaries. Rural schools and districts are among the largest in the nation, and NAEP scores are among the lowest.

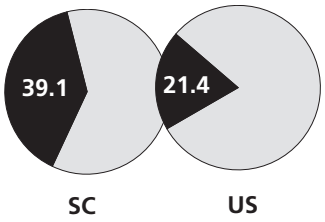
PRIORITY RANKING

6

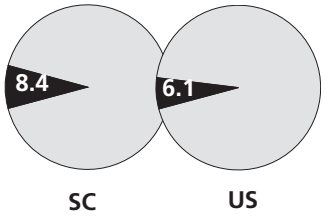
Importance Gauge

	SC	Rank*
Percent rural schools	38.4%	20
Percent small rural districts	5.8%	41
Percent rural students	39.1%	11
Number of rural students	272,577	14
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	30.1%	19

Percent rural students



Rural adult unemployment rate



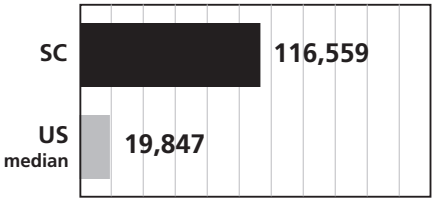
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	SC	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	78.2%	7
Rural adult unemployment rate	8.4%	2
Rural median household income	$39,048	7
Percentage of rural families in poverty	17.7%	8
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	55.6%	6

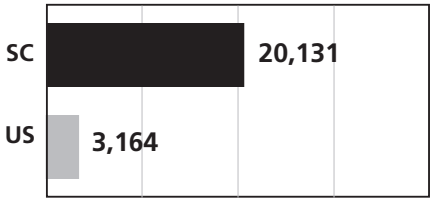
Student Diversity Gauge

	SC	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	42.8%	7
Number of rural minority students	116,559	5
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	37.4%	41
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.6%	26
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	16.9%	10

Number of rural minority students



Median organizational scale among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

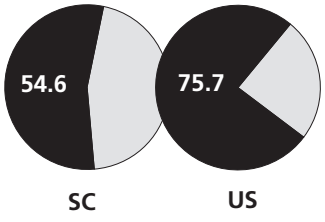
	SC	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$15.79	42
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,188	13
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$46,334	23
Median organizational scale among rural districts	20,131	5
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	14.4%	39

Outcomes Gauge

	SC	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	256.5	14
Rural NAEP reading score	231	7
Rural high school graduation rate	54.6%	1

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



SOUTH DAKOTA – South Dakota is one of our most rural states: 62% of all public schools are rural, 43% of all public school students attend rural schools, and 75% of rural districts are smaller than the national median. More than forty-five cents of every state dollar spent on education goes to rural schools. Socioeconomic challenges are critical, and the percentage of English Language Learners is among the nation's highest (12th). Instructional expenditures per pupil are below the U.S. median, and instructional salaries are lower than all but one state. Still, NAEP scores are above average, and graduation rates are high.

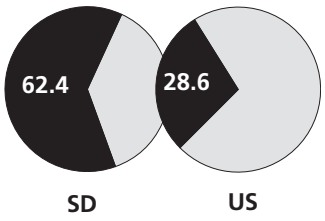
PRIORITY RANKING

24

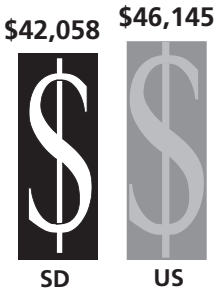
Importance Gauge

	SD	Rank*
Percent rural schools	62.4%	2
Percent small rural districts	75.4%	4
Percent rural students	43.2%	8
Number of rural students	52,500	40
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	45.5%	4

Percent rural schools



Rural median household income



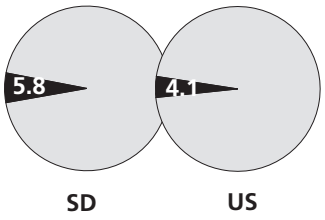
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	SD	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	87.4%	25
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.2%	30
Rural median household income	$42,058	14
Percentage of rural families in poverty	14.0%	16
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	34.3%	27

Student Diversity Gauge

	SD	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	17.3%	24
Number of rural minority students	9,088	35
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	47.4%	36
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	5.8%	12
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.5%	20

Percent rural ELL students



Salary expenditures per instructional staff member

Policy Context Gauge

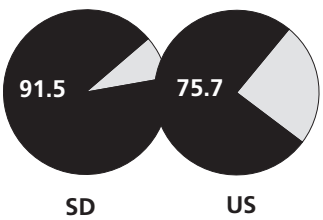
	SD	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$13.67	37
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,559	21
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$36,990	2
Median organizational scale among rural districts	188	48
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	30.8%	26

Outcomes Gauge

	SD	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	265	38
Rural NAEP reading score	246	35
Rural high school graduation rate	91.5%	40

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



TENNESSEE – Tennessee's public schools serve more rural students than all but nine other states, and face some of the toughest rural socioeconomic challenges in the country. Compounding these challenges, rural spending on instruction is among the nation's lowest, and it's most likely low across the state, since revenue is fairly equally distributed among rural schools. Schools and districts are large, and graduation rates and NAEP scores are some of the worst in the nation. A gauge ranking for student diversity was not calculated due to missing data.

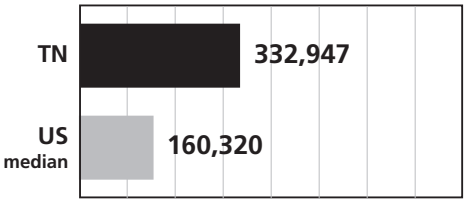
PRIORITY RANKING

7

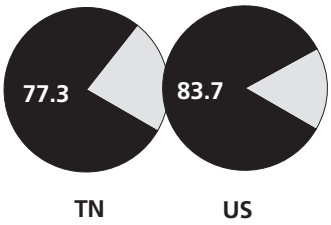
Importance Gauge

	TN	Rank*
Percent rural schools	36.5%	24
Percent small rural districts	9.5%	38
Percent rural students	35.6%	14
Number of rural students	332,947	10
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	32.6%	16

Number of rural students



Percent rural adults with high school diploma



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

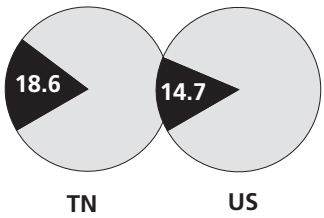
	TN	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	77.3%	4
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.9%	9
Rural median household income	$39,348	9
Percentage of rural families in poverty	16.6%	9
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	NA	NA

Student Diversity Gauge

	TN	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	NA	NA
Number of rural minority students	NA	NA
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	NA	NA
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	NA	NA
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	18.6%	4

† Tennessee's data does not allow for the needed analysis.

Percent rural IEP students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

Policy Context Gauge

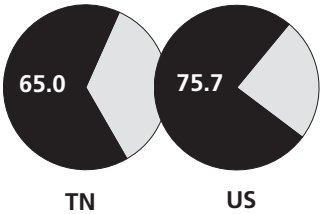
	TN	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$15.90	43
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,856	5
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$41,406	9
Median organizational scale among rural districts	15,296	7
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	6.9%	47

Outcomes Gauge

	TN	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	252	11
Rural NAEP reading score	238	16
Rural high school graduation rate	65.0%	10

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate

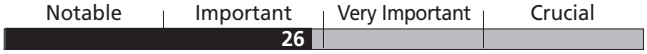


TEXAS – More children attend rural schools in Texas than in any other state (more than three quarters of a million), yet its rural enrollment comprises less than 18% of the total student population. Socio-economic challenges are critical concerns for rural education in Texas, as are large numbers of English Language Learners and the nation's largest minority enrollment. Transportation costs are proportionally low compared to instructional spending, and school and district size is slightly below average, but revenue distribution is relatively inequitable and instructional salaries are low.

PRIORITY RANKING

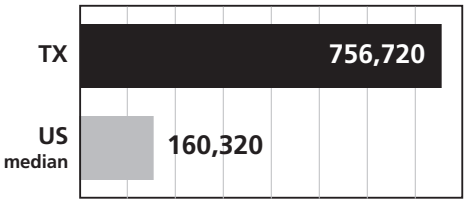
13

Importance Gauge

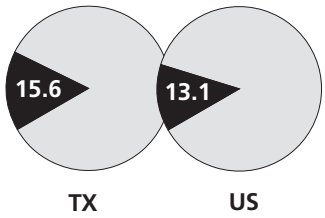


	TX	Rank*
Percent rural schools	25.0%	34
Percent small rural districts	50.0%	16
Percent rural students	17.6%	36
Number of rural students	756,720	1
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	18.6%	33

Number of rural students



Percent rural families in poverty



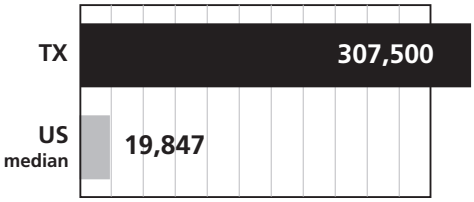
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	TX	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	81.5%	13
Rural adult unemployment rate	6.5%	15
Rural median household income	$46,117	21
Percentage of rural families in poverty	15.6%	12
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	43.2%	15

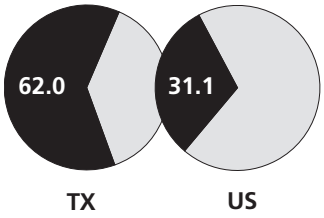
Student Diversity Gauge

	TX	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	40.6%	8
Number of rural minority students	307,500	1
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	49.6%	34
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	7.8%	9
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.7%	30

Number of rural minority students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

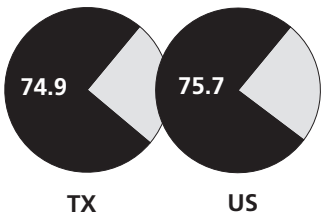
	TX	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$17.60	47
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,504	20
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$45,326	19
Median organizational scale among rural districts	2,351	27
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	62.0%	11

Outcomes Gauge

	TX	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	261.5	26
Rural NAEP reading score	240	18
Rural high school graduation rate	74.9%	17

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



UTAH – Utah's population lives mostly in cities, and the rural student population is among the smallest in the nation, both relatively and absolutely. Socioeconomic challenges are only moderate, but there is a relatively large population of English Language Learners and a sizable (and rapidly growing) minority student population. Per pupil spending for instruction is among the lowest in the nation, and revenue distribution is among the most inequitable. NAEP scores are at or below the median, but graduation rates are some of the best in the country.

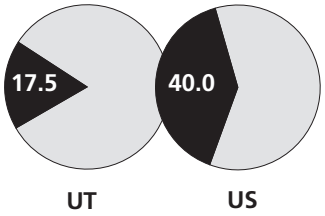
PRIORITY RANKING

34

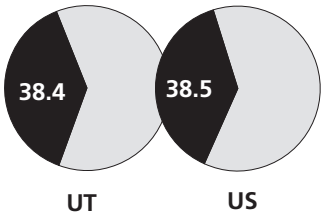
Importance Gauge

	UT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	19.2%	41
Percent small rural districts	17.5%	31
Percent rural students	8.9%	47
Number of rural students	42,740	44
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	6.6%	44

Percent small rural districts



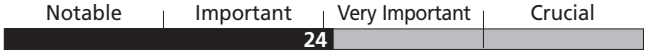
Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

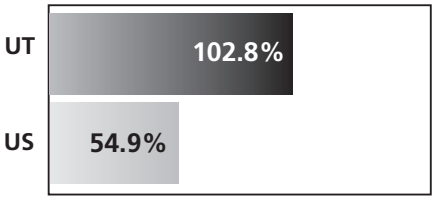
	UT	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	89.6%	36
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.6%	38
Rural median household income	$50,116	30
Percentage of rural families in poverty	9.2%	35
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	38.4%	21

Student Diversity Gauge



	UT	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	10.3%	29
Number of rural minority students	4,406	41
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	102.8%	10
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	4.0%	15
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	13.8%	28

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Rural instructional expenditures per pupil

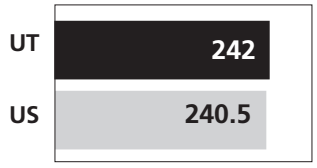
Policy Context Gauge

	UT	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.82	28
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$3,994	8
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$47,830	27
Median organizational scale among rural districts	3,245	24
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	69.0%	8

Outcomes Gauge

	UT	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	260.5%	25
Rural NAEP reading score	242	21
Rural high school graduation rate	97.9%	47

Rural NAEP reading score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

VERMONT – Crucially important because of its high percentage of rural students (more than half of the state's students attend rural schools), Vermont nevertheless ranks as a low priority because it has relatively few challenges and a generally supportive policy context. Rural Vermont is relatively affluent in comparison with most other states. Diversity among students is limited but growing rapidly. Vermont's rural schools and districts are reasonably sized, have high instructional spending levels, and spend less proportionally on transportation than on instruction. NAEP scores were not available, but graduation rates are among the highest in the nation, at almost 97%.

PRIORITY RANKING

41

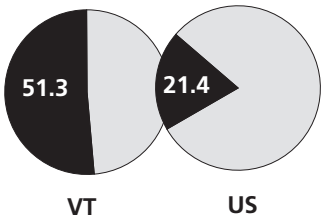
Importance Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

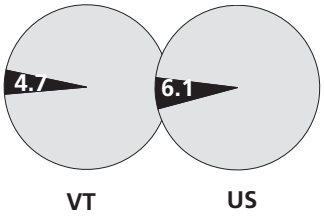
2

	VT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	59.7%	3
Percent small rural districts	75.9%	3
Percent rural students	51.3%	2
Number of rural students	49,176	42
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	51.3%	2

Percent rural students



Rural adult unemployment rate



Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

38

	VT	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	89.2%	34
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.7%	34
Rural median household income	$50,476	32
Percentage of rural families in poverty	8.9%	37
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	25.9%	38

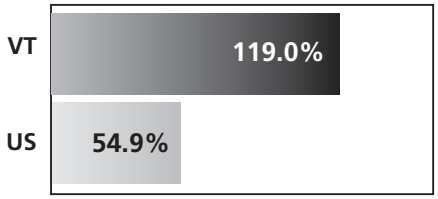
Student Diversity Gauge

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

47

	VT	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	3.1%	45
Number of rural minority students	1,542	47
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	119%	5
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.7%	33
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	12.5%	40

Percent 10-year increase in rural minority students



Salary expenditures per instructional staff member

Policy Context Gauge

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

49

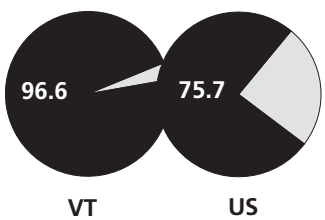
	VT	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$15.57	40
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,743	46
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$49,588	30
Median organizational scale among rural districts	313	45
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	NA	NA

Outcomes Gauge

NA† Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

	VT	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	NA	NA
Rural NAEP reading score	NA	NA
Rural high school graduation rate	96.6%	46

Rural high school graduation rate



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

† Rural NAEP scores for VT were unavailable, and so did not allow for the needed analysis.

VIRGINIA – Virginia has the 12th largest rural enrollment in the U.S. (over 327,000), and more than one-fourth of all students attend rural schools. Socioeconomic challenges rate as critically important for policy consideration, with rural adult educational attainment among the nation's lowest. Student diversity rates are relatively high, with a sizable rural minority population and a high percentage of students receiving special education services. Schools and districts are large, transportation costs are proportionally high compared to instructional spending, and educational outcomes are mediocre at best.

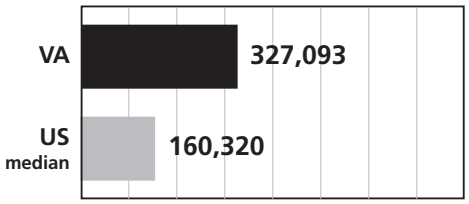
PRIORITY RANKING

18

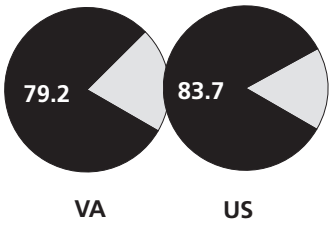
Importance Gauge

	VA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	31.8%	27
Percent small rural districts	5.4%	42
Percent rural students	27.5%	27
Number of rural students	327,093	12
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	30.2%	18

Number of rural students



Percent rural adults with high school diploma



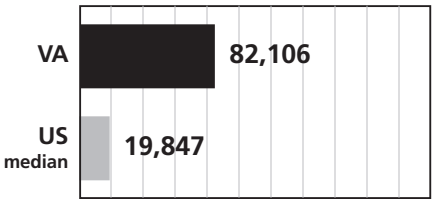
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	VA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	79.2%	10
Rural adult unemployment rate	5.1%	31
Rural median household income	$46,340	23
Percentage of rural families in poverty	12.1%	23
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	32.8%	28

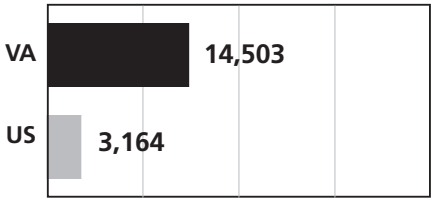
Student Diversity Gauge

	VA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	25.1%	16
Number of rural minority students	82,106	10
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	43.5%	38
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	1.3%	27
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.6%	19

Number of rural minority students



Median organizational scale among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

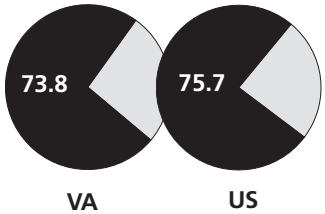
	VA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$10.42	16
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,574	22
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$42,832	14
Median organizational scale among rural districts	14,503	8
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	16.4%	38

Outcomes Gauge

	VA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	259	20
Rural NAEP reading score	244.5	25
Rural high school graduation rate	73.8%	14

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



WASHINGTON – Nearly one in four of Washington's schools are located in rural areas, and half of all rural districts are smaller than the national median for enrollment. Socioeconomic challenges are a serious concern, with rural adult unemployment rates higher than all but six other states. The percentage of Washington's rural students who are English Language Learners is the 11th highest in the nation. The amount of state and local revenue available to rural school districts varies dramatically from district to district, and educational outcomes are near the midpoint for the 50 states.

PRIORITY RANKING

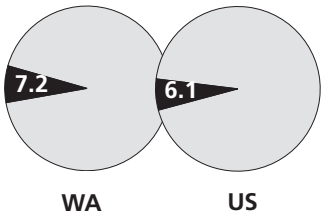
29

Importance Gauge

	WA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	23.4%	36
Percent small rural districts	47.0%	20
Percent rural students	16.4%	39
Number of rural students	161,366	25
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	11.9%	37

Percent small rural districts

Rural adult unemployment rate



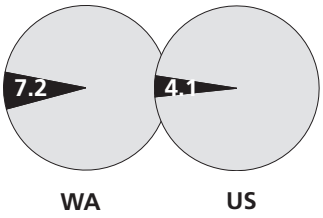
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	WA	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	87.9%	29
Rural adult unemployment rate	7.2%	7
Rural median household income	$51,514	38
Percentage of rural families in poverty	10.9%	28
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	38.2%	22

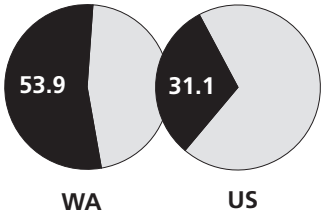
Student Diversity Gauge

	WA	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	21.7%	19
Number of rural minority students	35,031	14
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	57.4%	28
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	7.2%	11
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	12.7%	38

Percent rural ELL students



Inequality in state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts



Policy Context Gauge

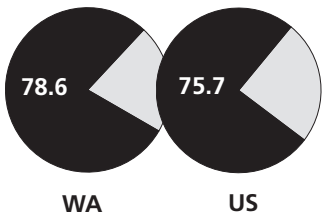
	WA	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.69	26
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,647	26
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$59,609	43
Median organizational scale among rural districts	2,334	28
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	53.9%	13

Outcomes Gauge

	WA	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	261.5	26
Rural NAEP reading score	245	28
Rural high school graduation rate	78.6%	27

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



WEST VIRGINIA – West Virginia's rural areas are among the most impoverished in the U.S. Rural household income is the lowest in the U.S., more than half of all rural students qualify for subsidized meals, and one in five families lives below the federal poverty line. The state's rural special education population is the nation's second largest and educational attainment among rural adults is the fourth lowest. Schools and districts are among the nation's largest, and they are burdened by the highest proportional transportation costs to instructional spending of any state. Graduation rates are above the national average, and rural NAEP scores are among the lowest in the U.S.

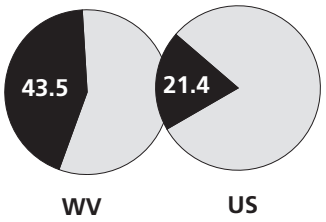
PRIORITY RANKING

17

Importance Gauge

	WV	Rank*
Percent rural schools	40.6%	17
Percent small rural districts	3.6%	43
Percent rural students	43.5%	6
Number of rural students	121,428	31
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	33.3%	14

Percent rural students



Rural median household income

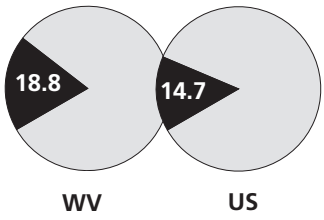
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	WV	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	77.3%	4
Rural adult unemployment rate	7.1%	8
Rural median household income	$34,279	1
Percentage of rural families in poverty	19.9%	4
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	54.8%	7

Student Diversity Gauge

	WV	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	3.1%	45
Number of rural minority students	3,712	42
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	97.6%	15
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.3%	40
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	18.8%	2

Percent rural IEP students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars

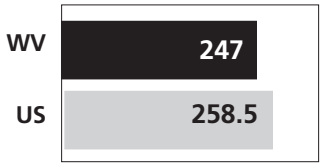
Policy Context Gauge

	WV	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$7.99	1
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,249	34
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$46,034	22
Median organizational scale among rural districts	7,748	13
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	8.7%	44

Outcomes Gauge

	WV	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	247	5
Rural NAEP reading score	231.5	8
Rural high school graduation rate	81.9%	31

Rural NAEP math score



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

WISCONSIN – Wisconsin has a sizable rural student population, with nearly 40% of its schools located in rural areas and serving more than one-fourth of the state's students. Rural schools and communities in Wisconsin are relatively affluent and contend with substantially fewer challenges in comparison with most other states. Similarly, outcome indicators are fairly strong and the state scores at or above the national median on all policy context indicators as well. Graduation rates are high and NAEP scores compare favorably with other states, but are not as high as might be expected given the policy context and low level of challenges faced.

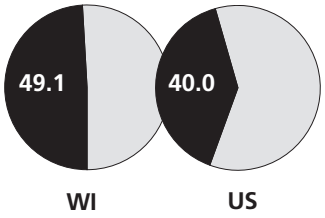
PRIORITY RANKING

46

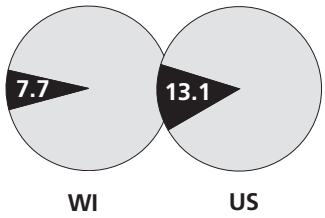
Importance Gauge

	WI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	36.9%	22
Percent small rural districts	49.1%	17
Percent rural students	28.1%	26
Number of rural students	234,700	18
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	22.9%	28

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural families in poverty



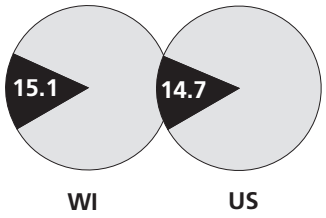
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	WI	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	88.8%	32
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.9%	33
Rural median household income	$51,306	35
Percentage of rural families in poverty	7.7%	43
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	24.2%	42

Student Diversity Gauge

	WI	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	7.5%	35
Number of rural minority students	17,613	28
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	75.2%	21
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	0.2%	43
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	15.1%	15

Percent rural IEP students



Salary expenditures per instructional staff member

$48,169 $48,472

Policy Context Gauge

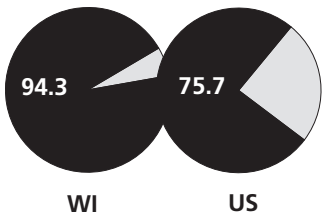
	WI	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$12.35	31
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,392	37
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$48,169	28
Median organizational scale among rural districts	1,774	32
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	13.3%	40

Outcomes Gauge

	WI	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	265	38
Rural NAEP reading score	245	28
Rural high school graduation rate	94.3%	42

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



WYOMING – More than half of all Wyoming public schools are located in rural areas of the state, yet their total enrollment is just over 26,000—the third lowest number of rural students nationally. Socio-economic challenges are relatively low, but the state serves one of the nation's highest percentage of English Language Learner (ELL) students. Per pupil spending on instruction is among the highest in the nation on average. NAEP scores are above the national median, and the rural graduation rate is among the highest in the U.S.

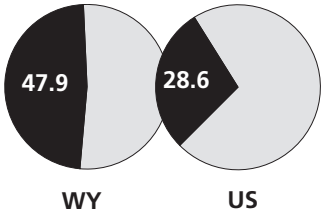
PRIORITY RANKING

45

Importance Gauge

	WY	Rank*
Percent rural schools	47.9%	9
Percent small rural districts	52.1%	14
Percent rural students	31.6%	20
Number of rural students	26,195	48
Percentage of state education funds to rural districts	27.2%	22

Percent rural schools



Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced meals

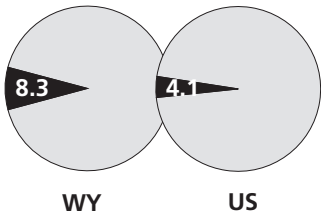
Socioeconomic Challenges Gauge

	WY	Rank*
Percentage of rural adults with high school diploma	92.2%	47
Rural adult unemployment rate	4.4%	41
Rural median household income	$51,484	37
Percentage of rural families in poverty	8.8%	39
Percentage of rural students eligible for free or reduced meals	35.4%	25

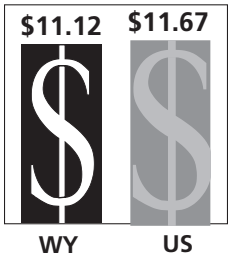
Student Diversity Gauge

	WY	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	14.0%	27
Number of rural minority students	3,666	43
Percent increase in rural minority students over a 10-year period	47.6%	35
Percent rural English Language Learner (ELL) students	8.3%	7
Percent rural Special Education (IEP) students	14.3%	24

Percent rural ELL students



Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars



Policy Context Gauge

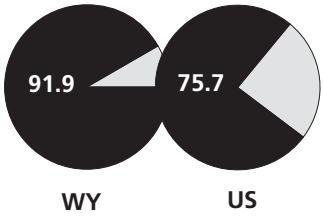
	WY	Rank*
Ratio of instructional dollars to transportation dollars in rural districts	$11.12	21
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,575	44
Salary expenditures per instructional staff member (FTE) in rural districts	$50,519	31
Median organizational scale among rural districts	611	44
Inequality in the combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural districts	27.0%	28

Outcomes Gauge

	WY	Rank*
Rural NAEP math score	262.5	30
Rural NAEP reading score	246	35
Rural high school graduation rate	91.9%	41

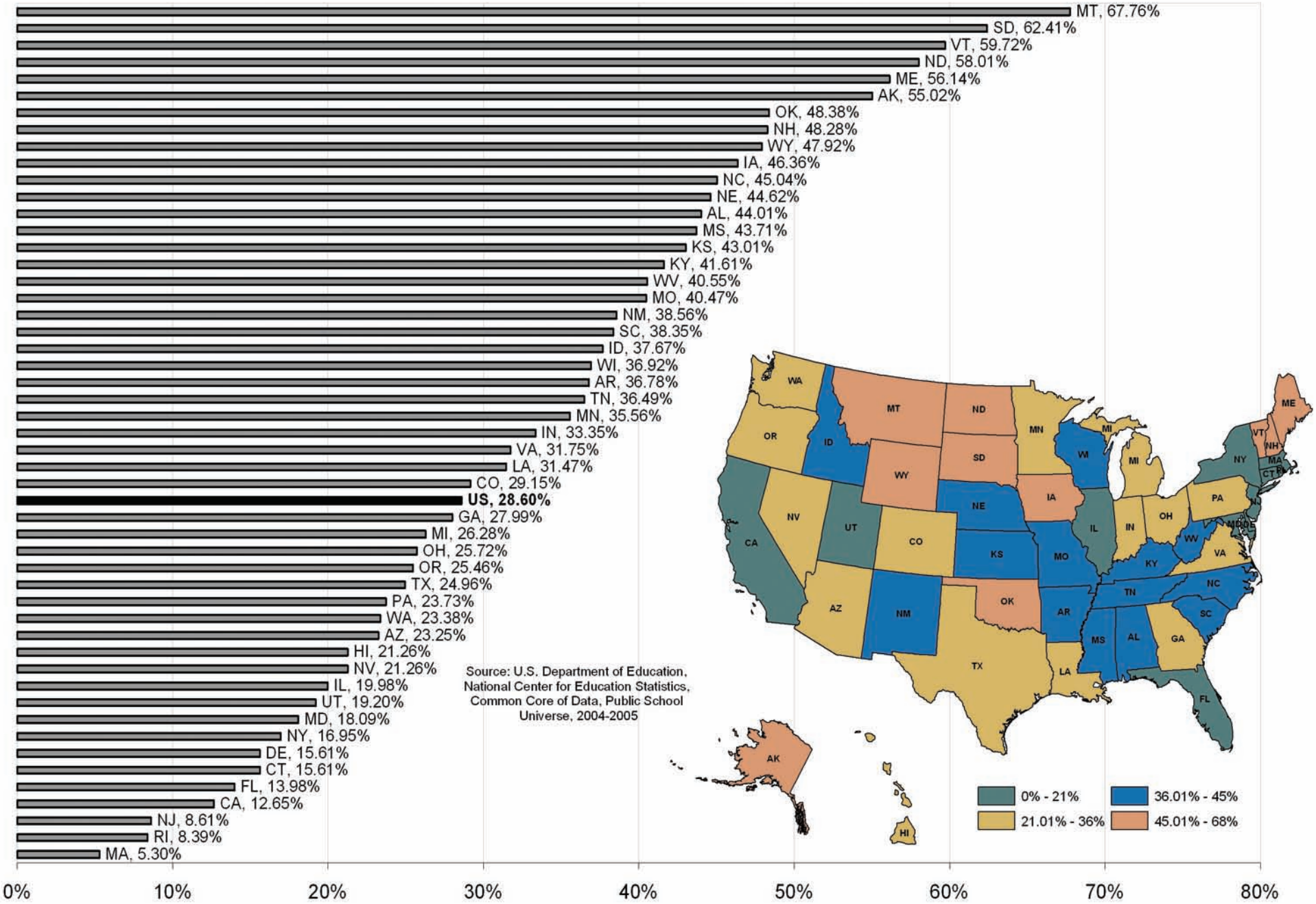
*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent**

Rural high school graduation rate



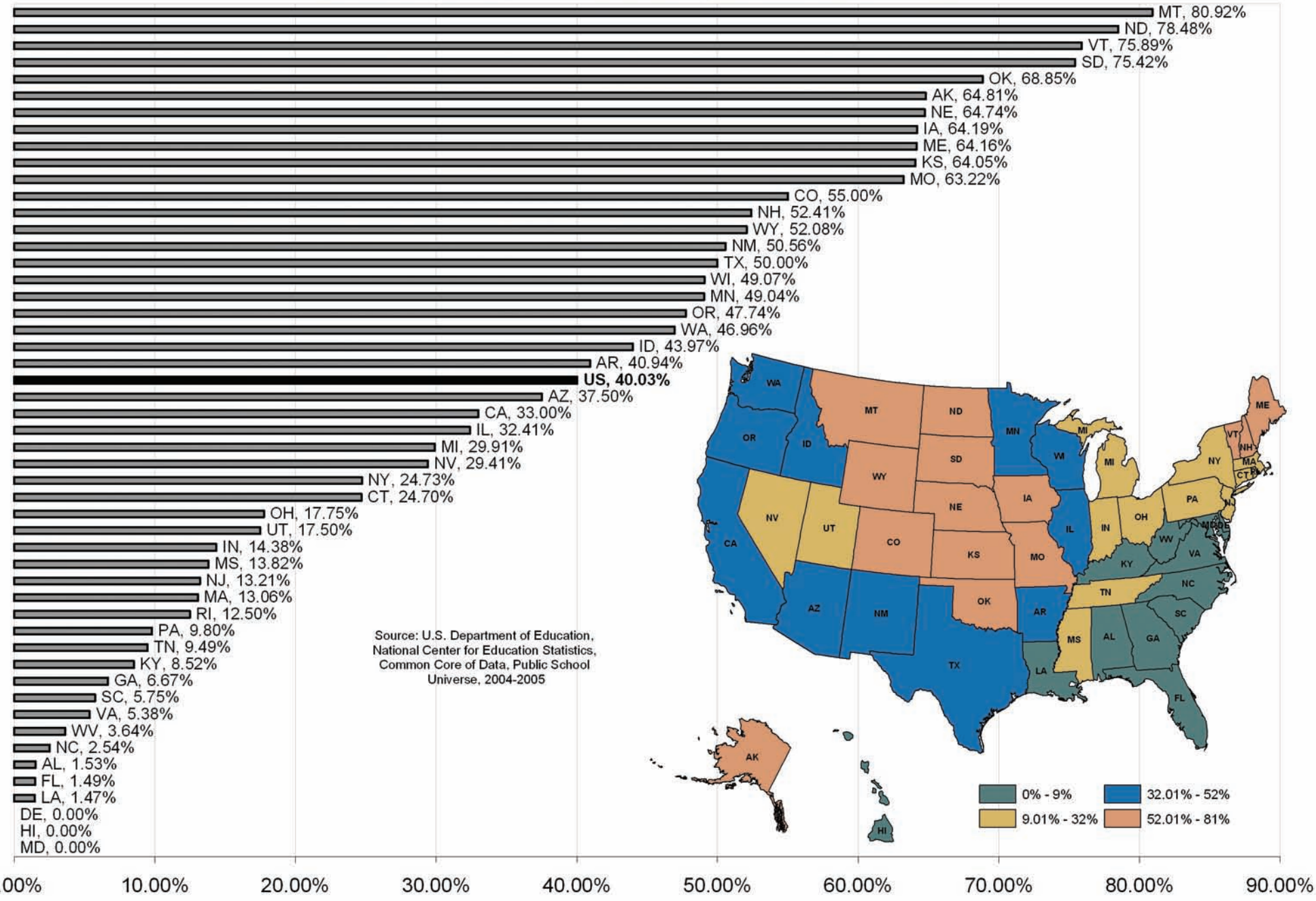
Percent Rural Schools

The number of rural public schools located in places classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, expressed as a percentage of all public schools in the state.



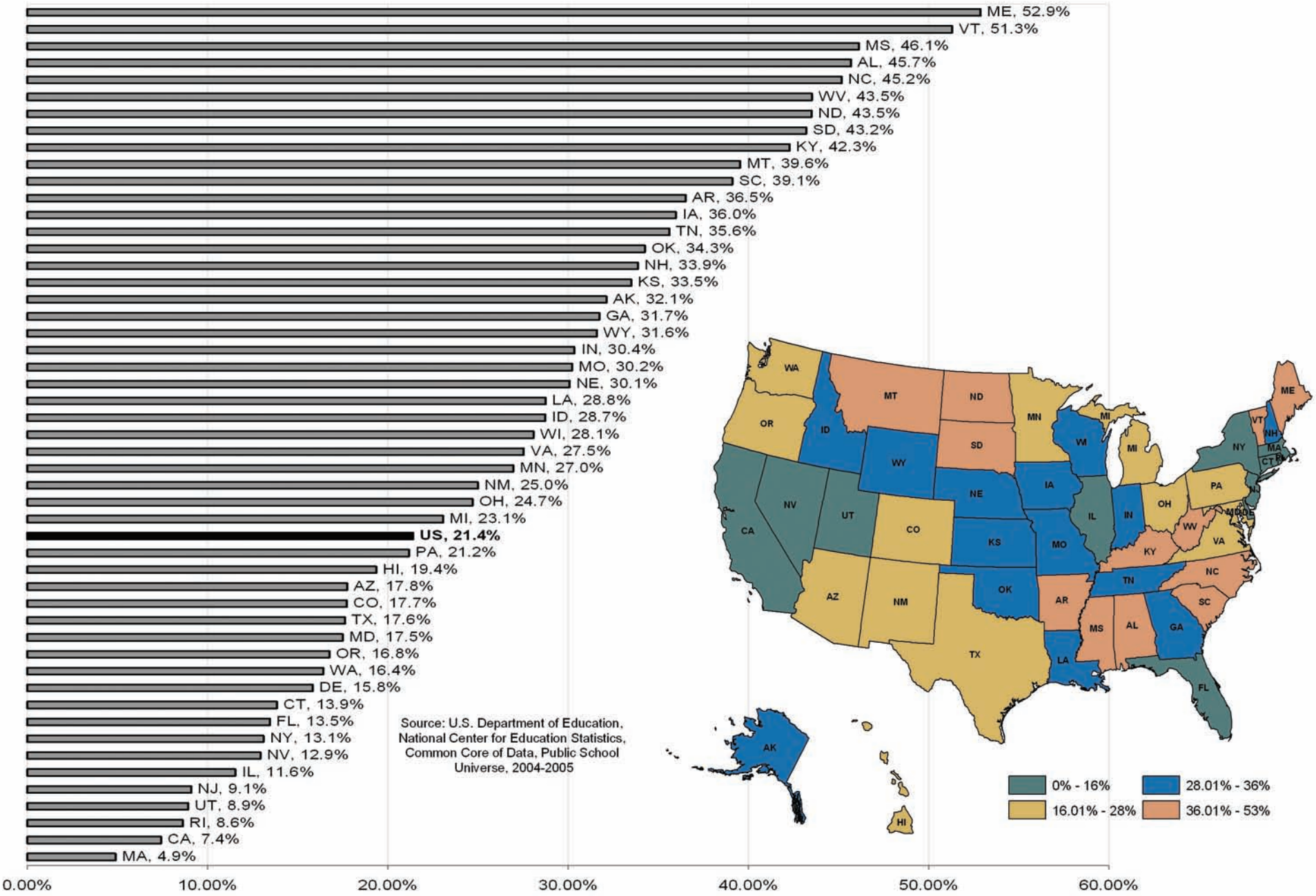
Percent Small Rural Districts

The number of rural public school districts with an enrollment size below the national median, expressed as a percentage of the total number of public school districts in the state



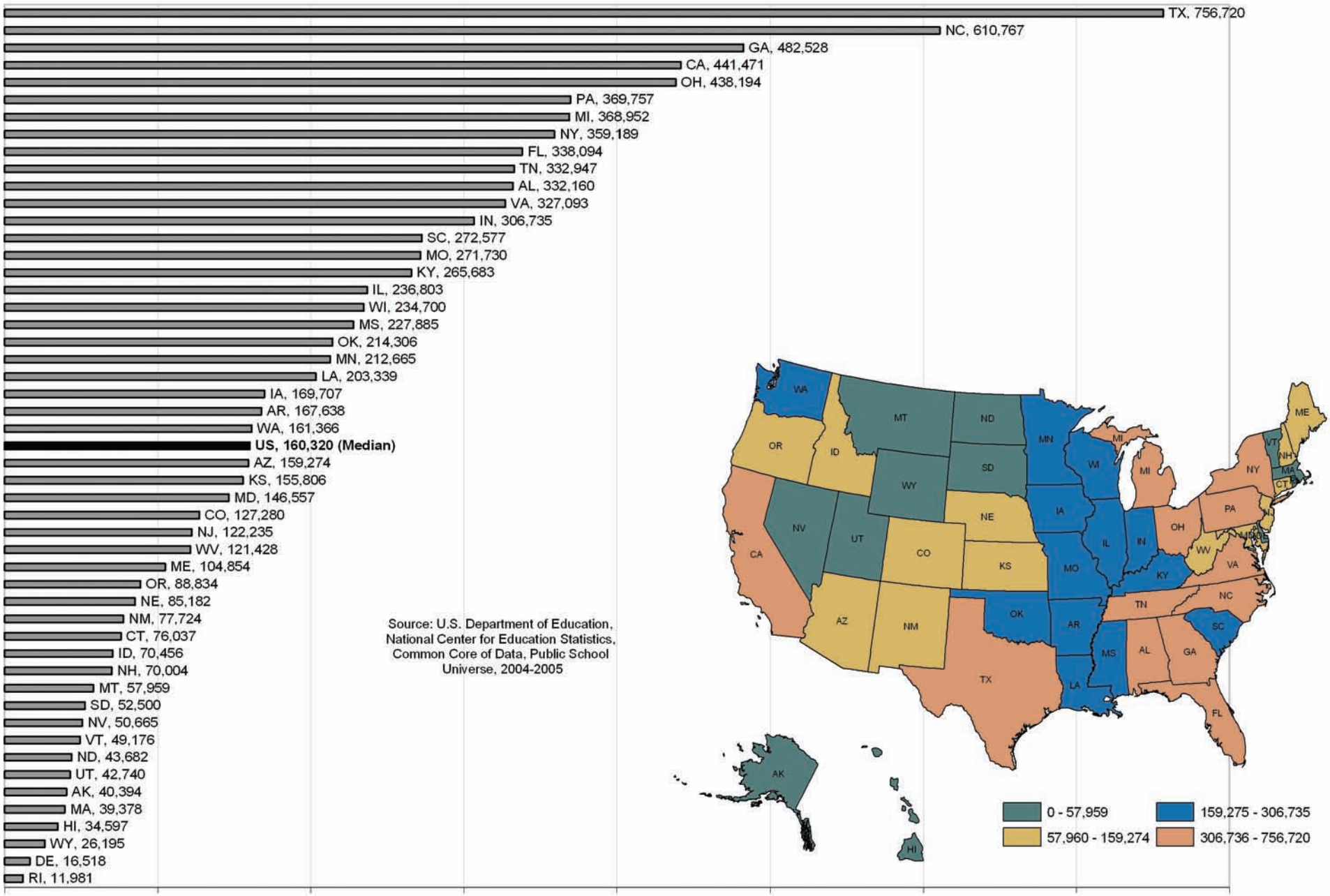
Percent Rural Students

The total number of students attending public schools located in places classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, expressed as a percentage of all public school students in the state.



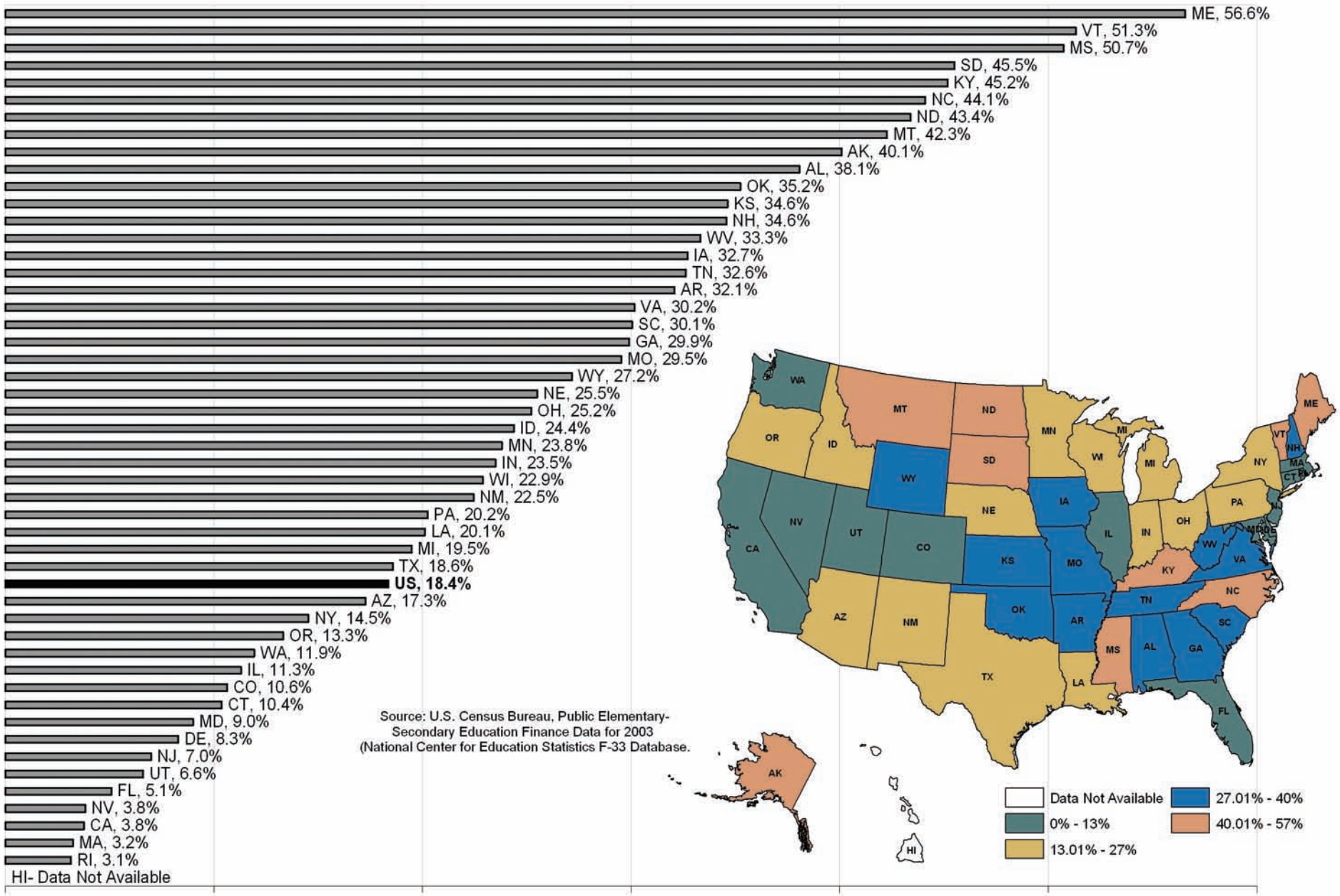
Number of Rural Students

The total number of students attending public schools located in places classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau



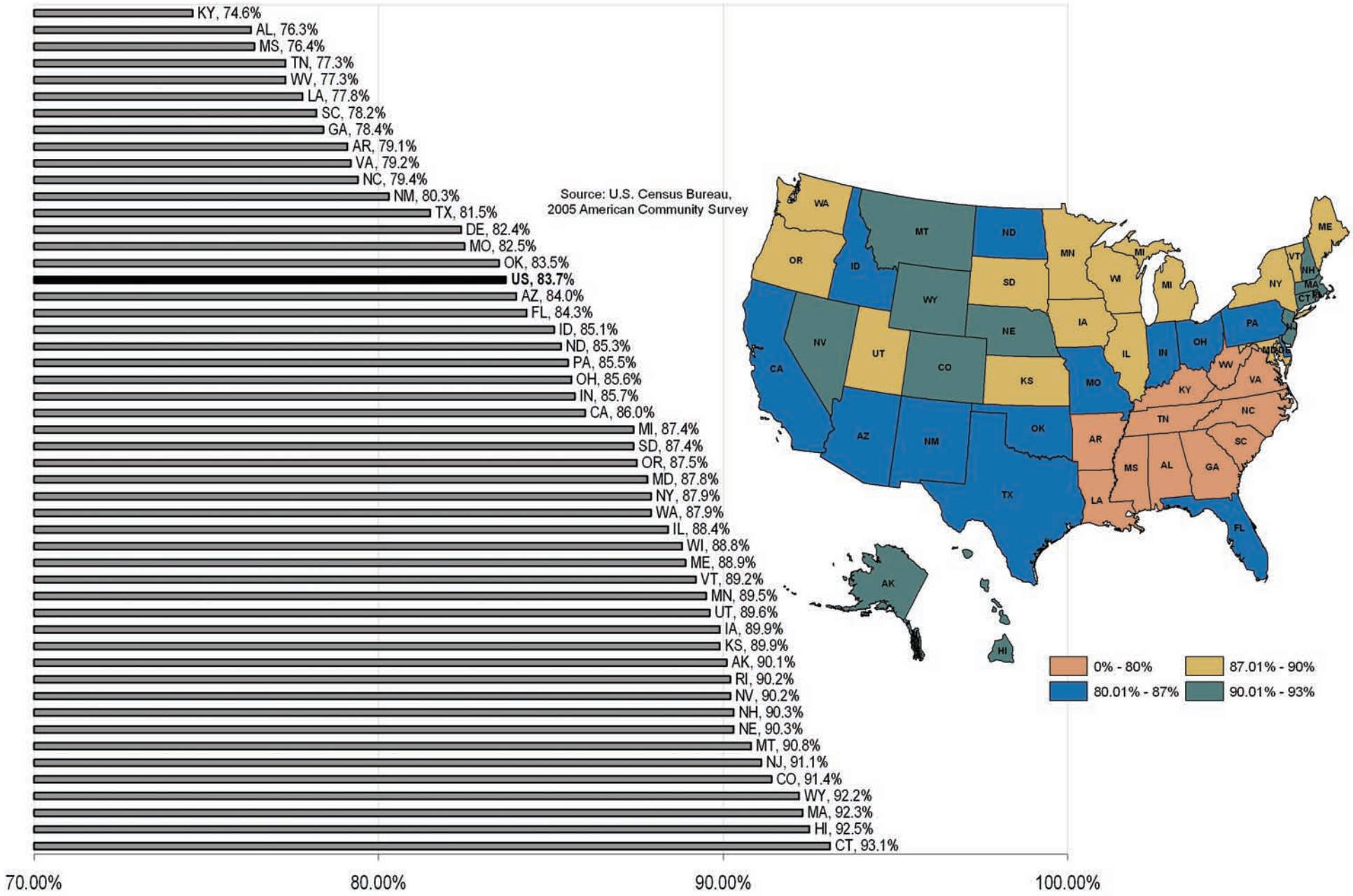
Percentage of State Education Funds to Rural Districts

State education funding to local school districts located in rural settings,
expressed as a percentage of all state education funding to local school districts.



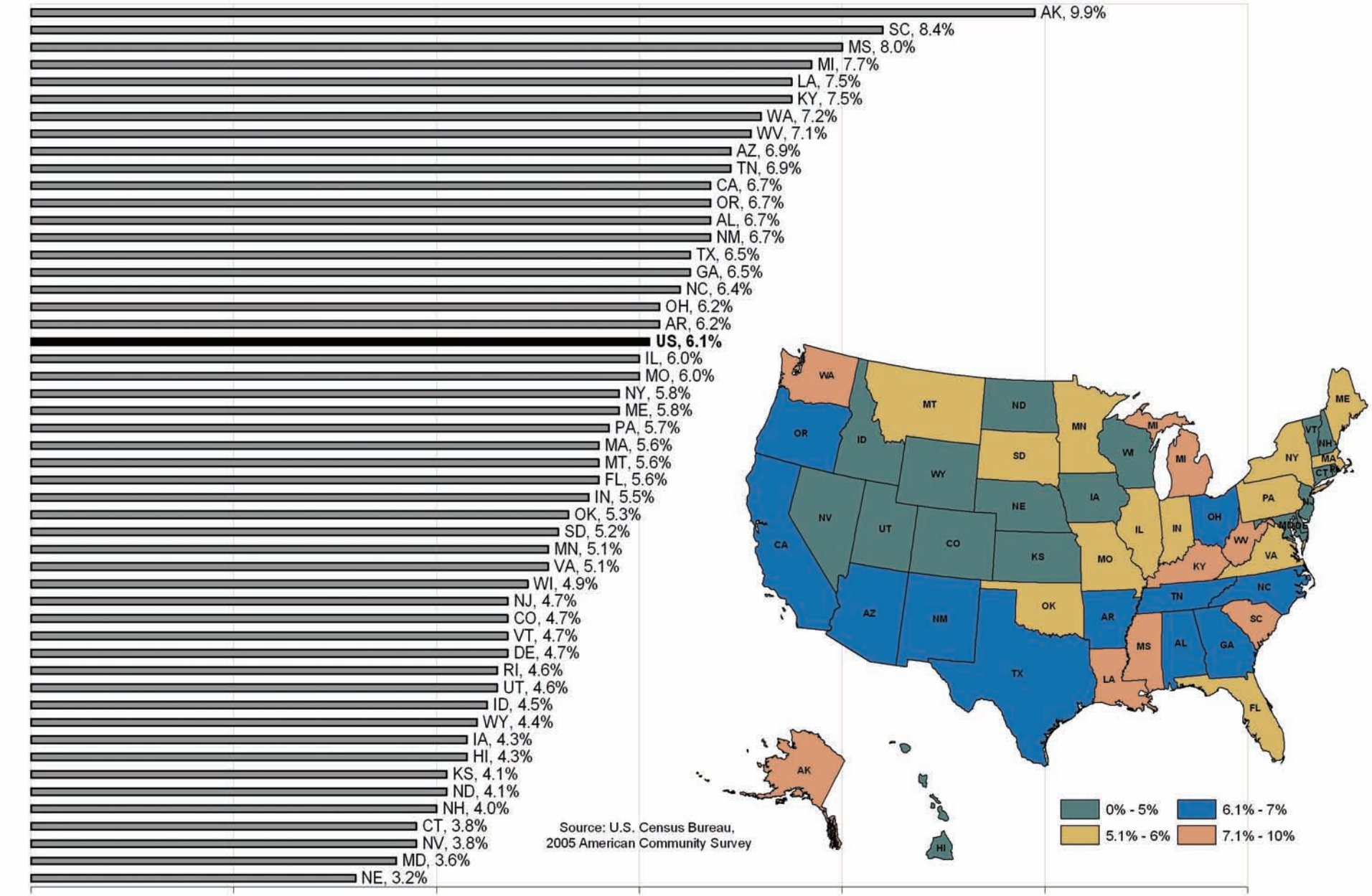
Percentage of Rural Adults with High School Diploma

Number of adults age 25 and older living in rural areas who have earned a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED), expressed as a percentage of all rural adults age 25 and older.



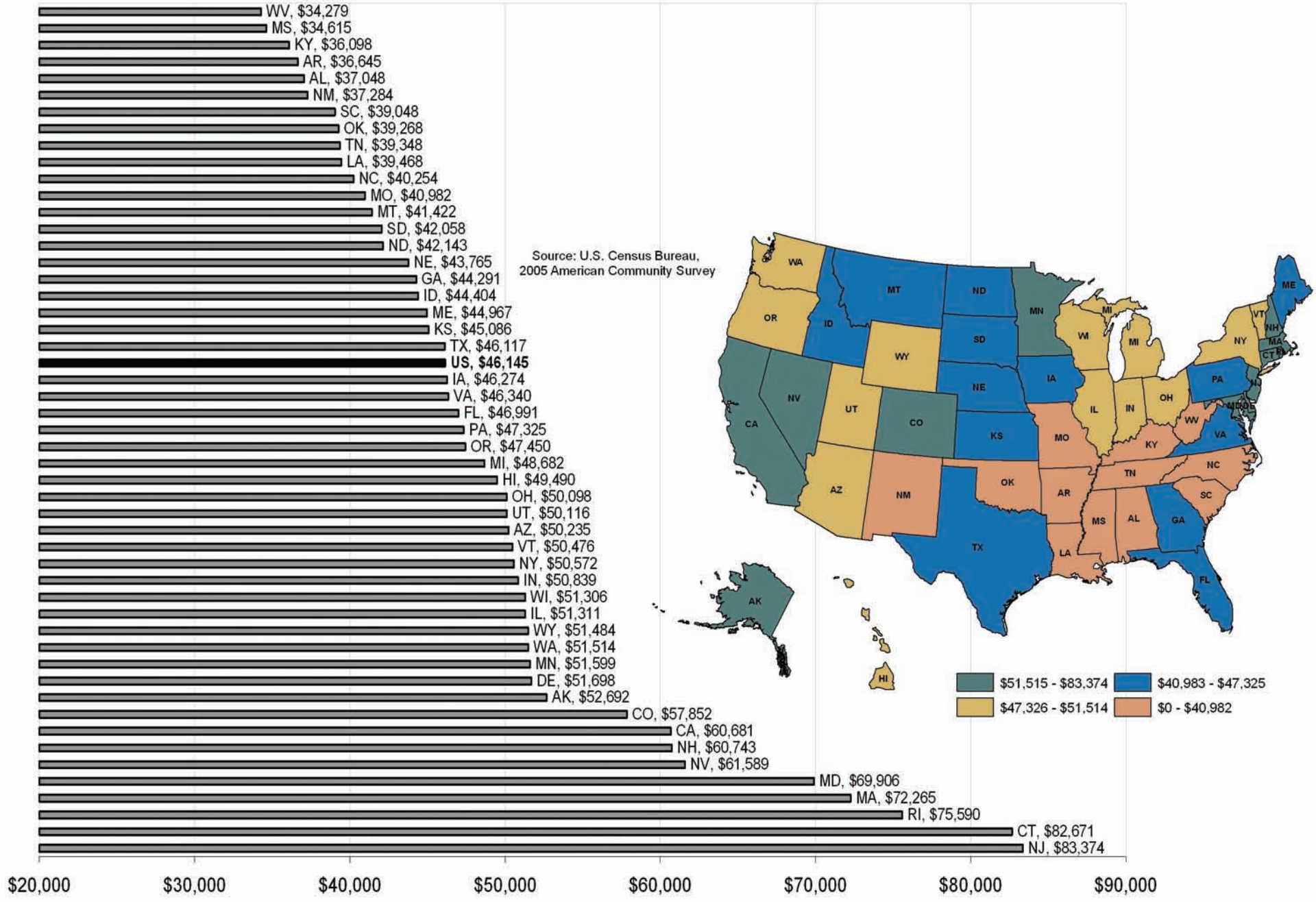
Rural Adult Unemployment Rate

Number of rural residents age 16 or older who are in the labor force
but unemployed, expressed as a percentage of all rural adults age 16 or older and in the labor force.



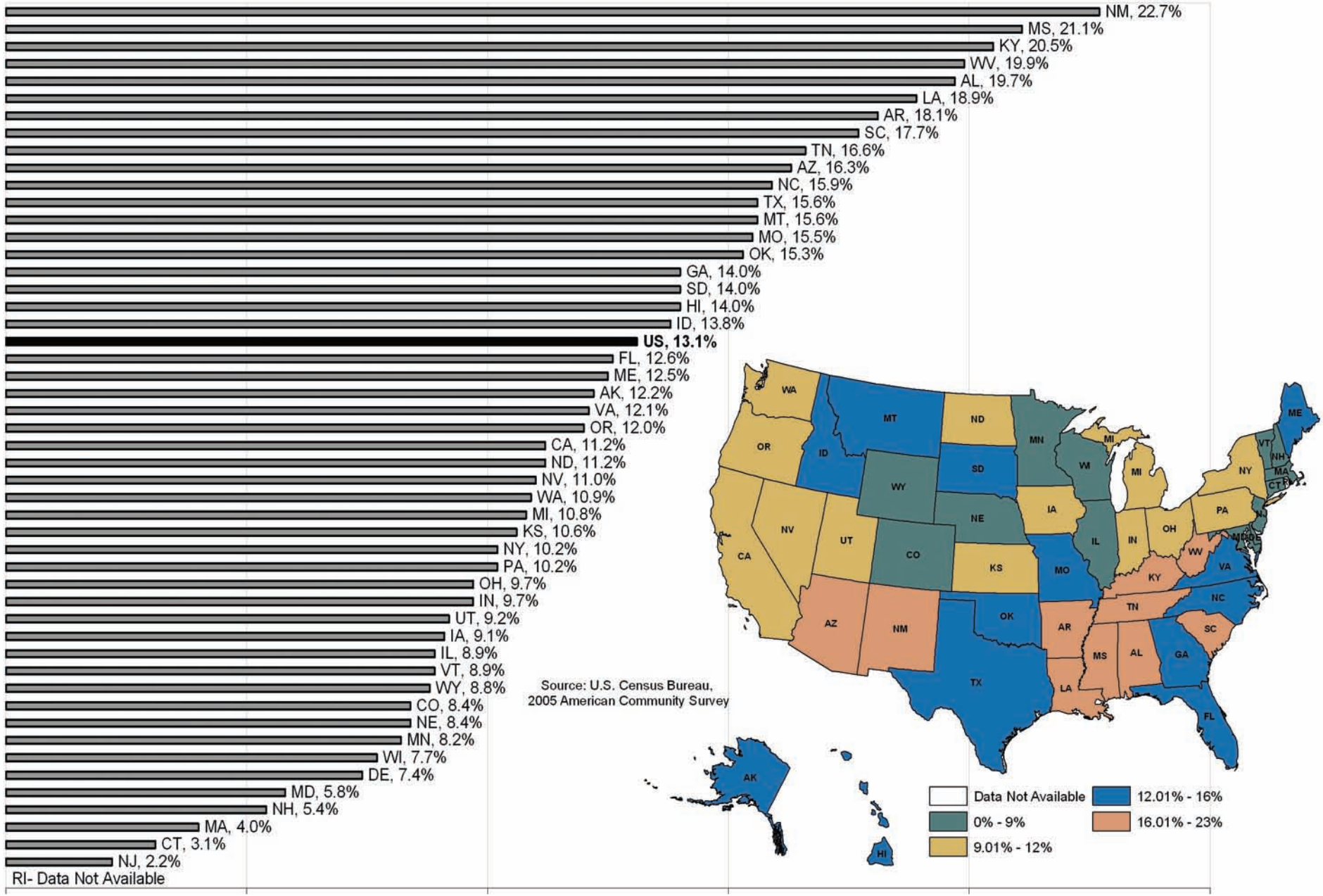
Rural Median Household Income

Median income level for households located in areas designated as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau



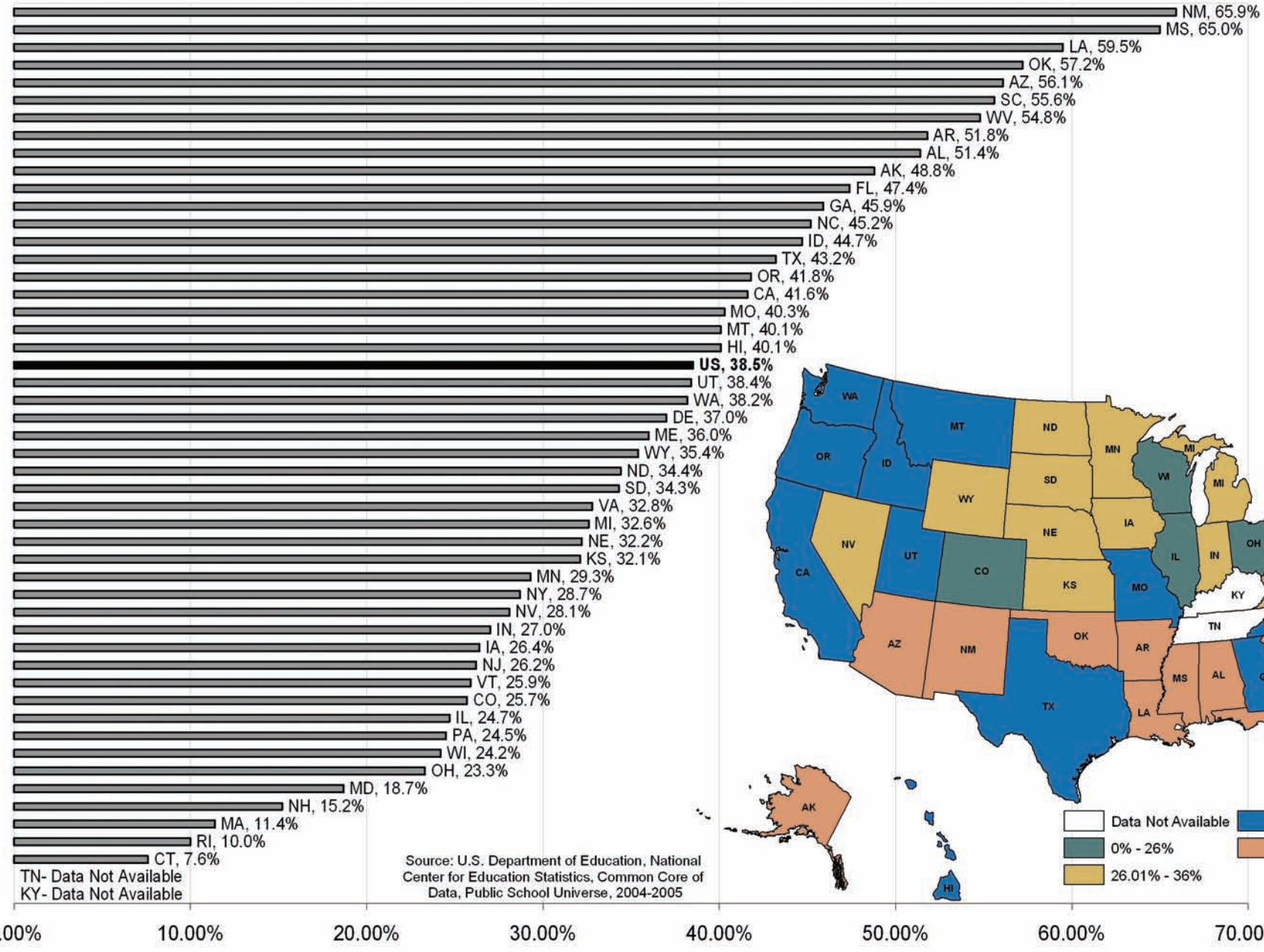
Percentage of Rural Families in Poverty

The percentage of families with income levels below the federal poverty line living in rural areas.



Percentage of Rural Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Meals

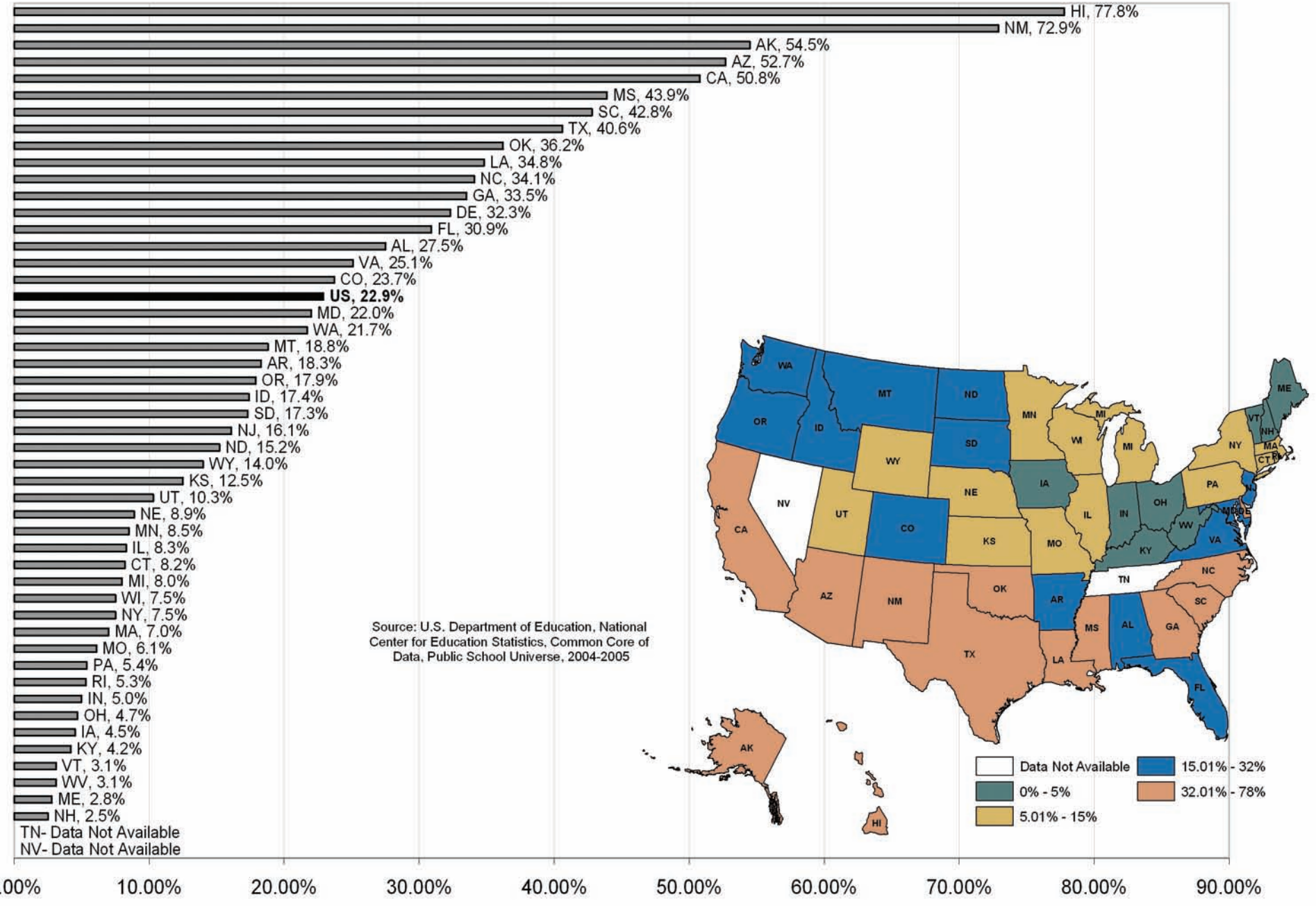
Students attending public schools in rural areas who qualify for free or reduced-price meal programs, expressed as a percentage of all students attending public schools in rural areas.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2004-2005

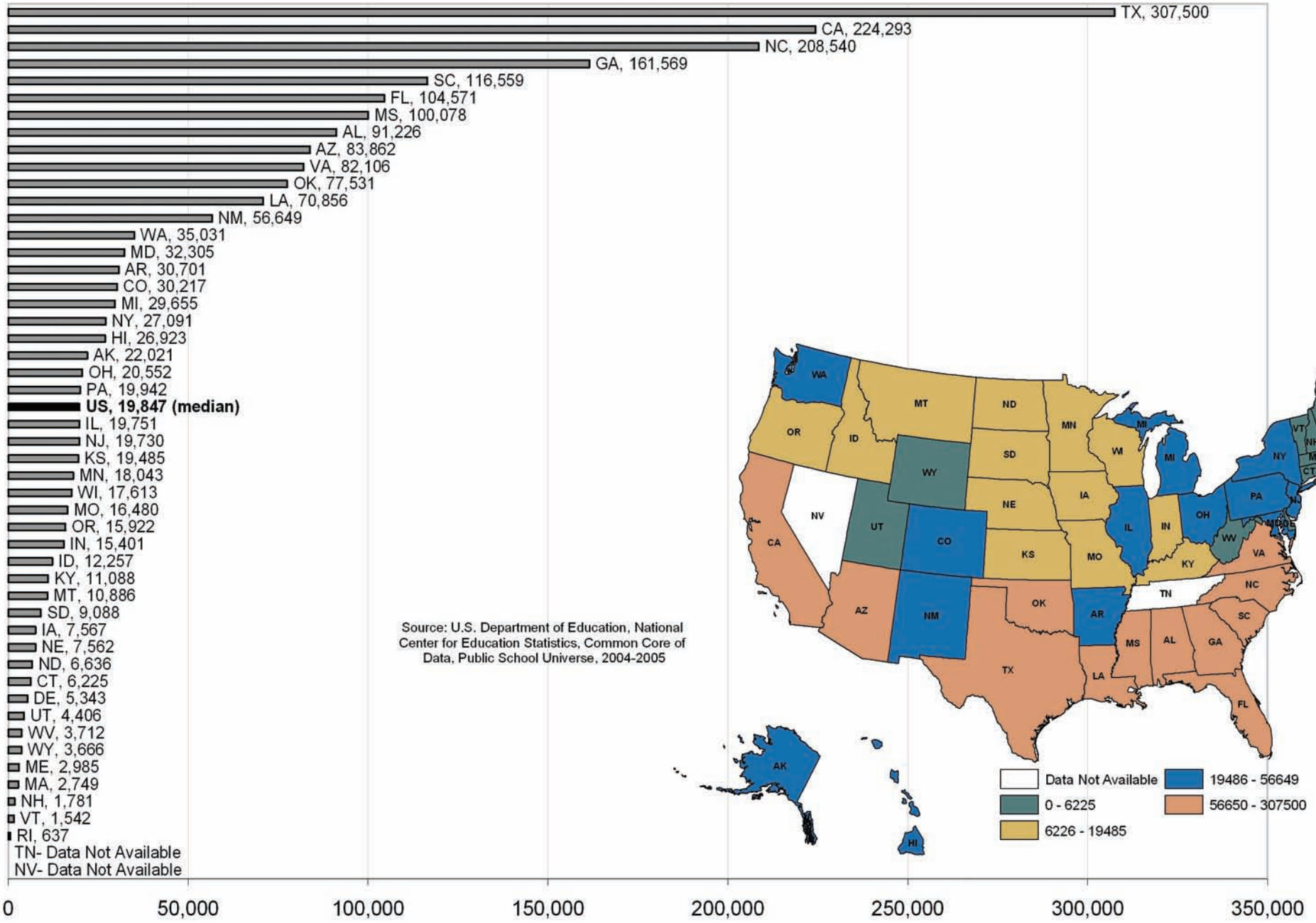
Percent Rural Minority Students

The number of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities, expressed as a percentage of all students enrolled in rural schools.



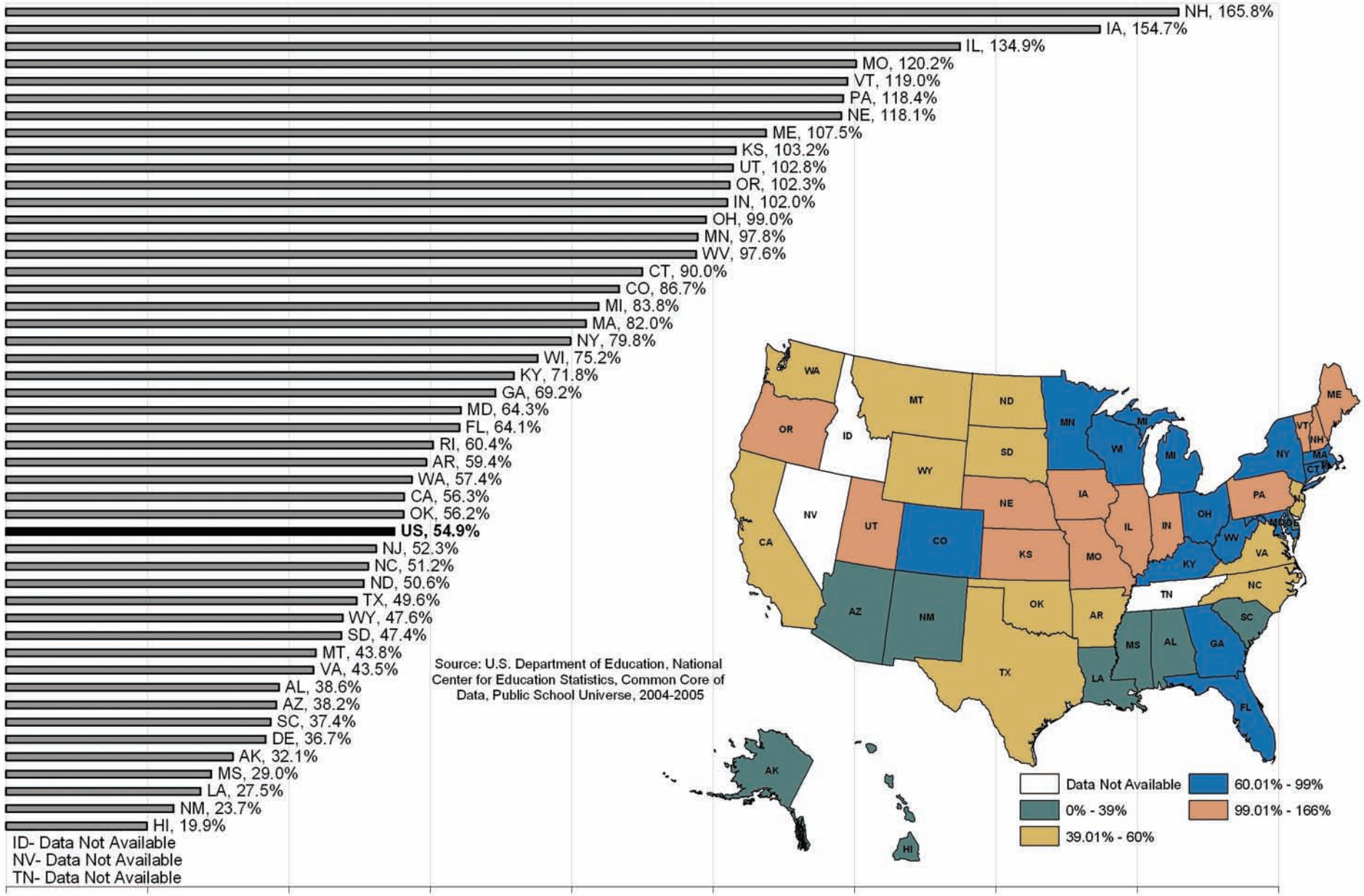
Number of Rural Minority Students

The total number of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities, expressed as a percentage of all students enrolled in rural schools.



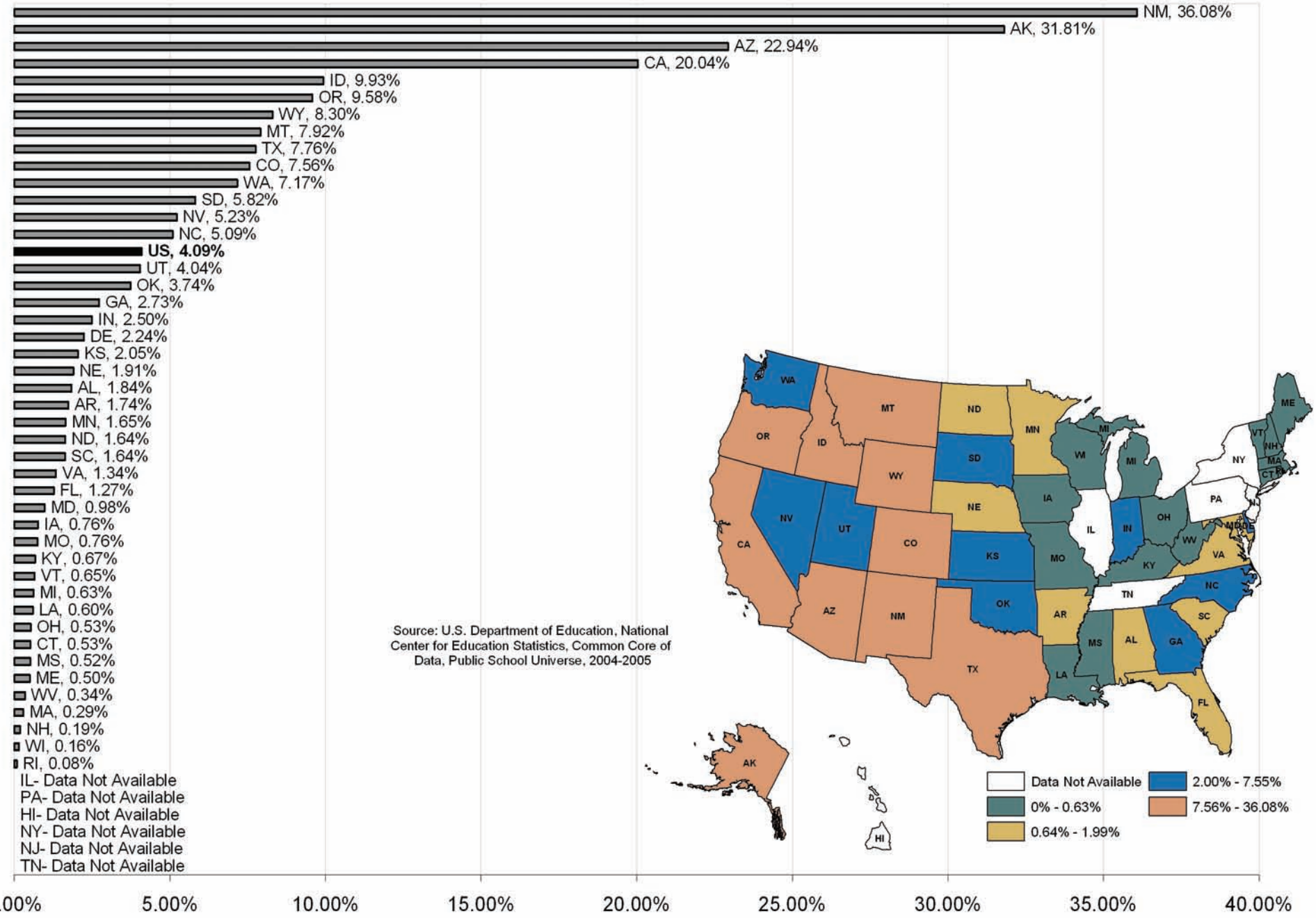
Percent Increase in Rural Minority Students over a 10-year Period

The percentage of increase in the total rural minority student population
from the 1995-96 school year to the 2004-05 school year.



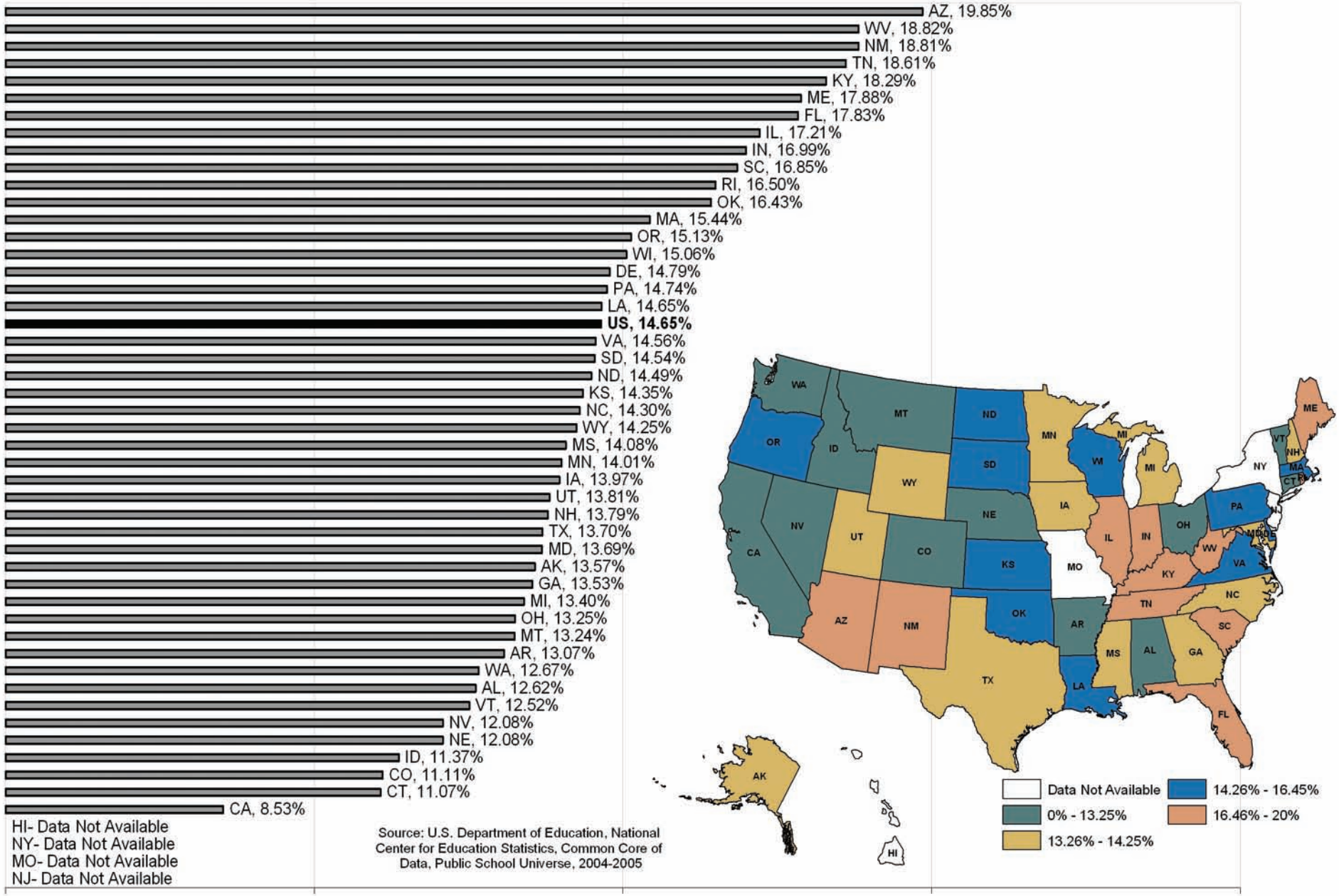
Percent Rural English Language Learner (ELL) Students

The total number of students enrolled in rural districts who are English Language Learners, expressed as a percentage of all students enrolled in rural schools.



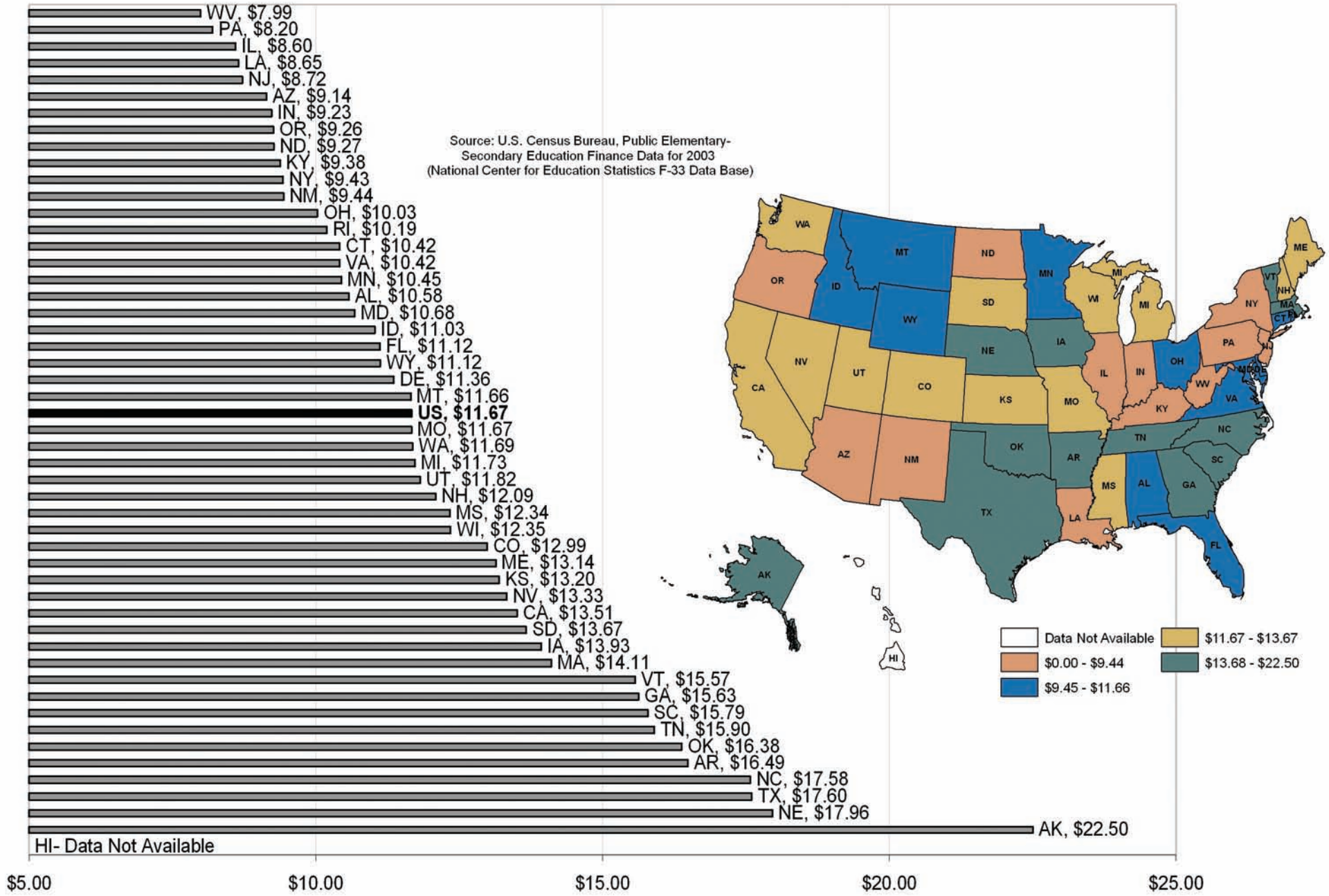
Percent Rural Special Education (IEP) Students

Students enrolled in rural schools who receive special education services, expressed as a percentage of all students enrolled in rural schools.



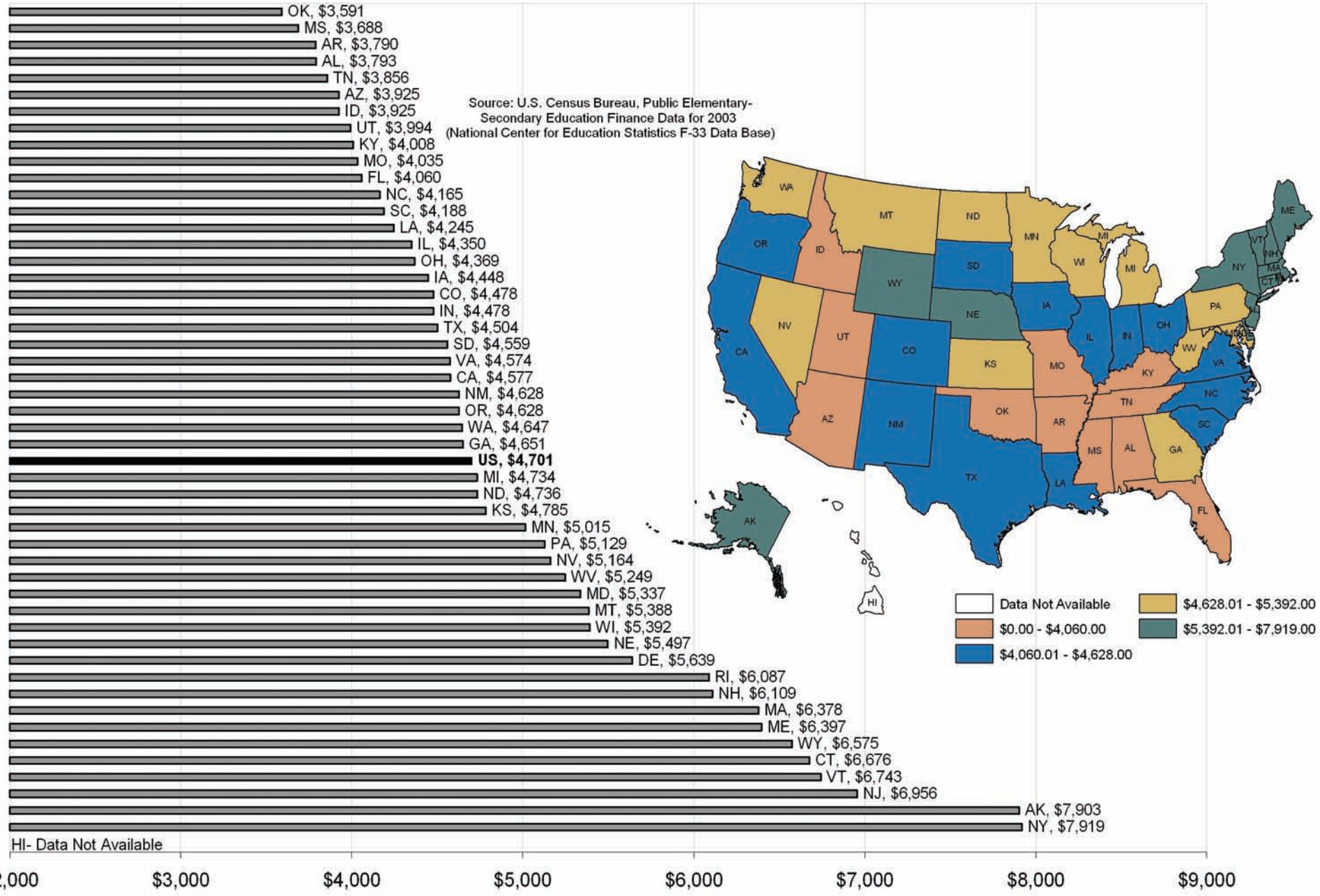
Ratio of Instructional Dollars to Transportation Dollars in Rural Districts

Ratio of total current expenditures for regular education instruction
to total current expenditures for pupil transportation.



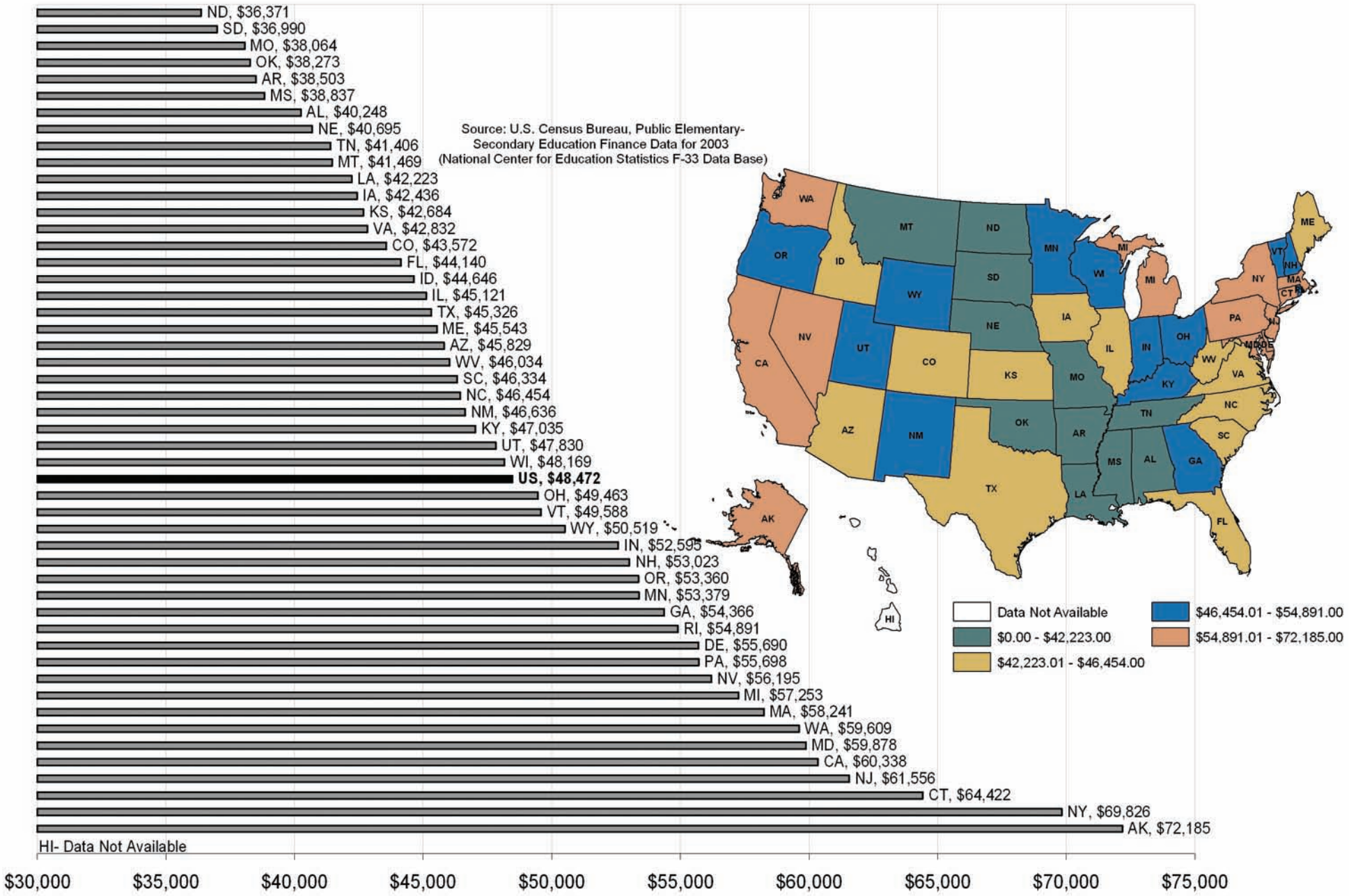
Rural Instructional Expenditures per Pupil

Total current expenditures for instruction (i.e., for activities associated with the interaction of students and teachers in the classroom) in rural school districts, divided by the total number of students enrolled in those districts.



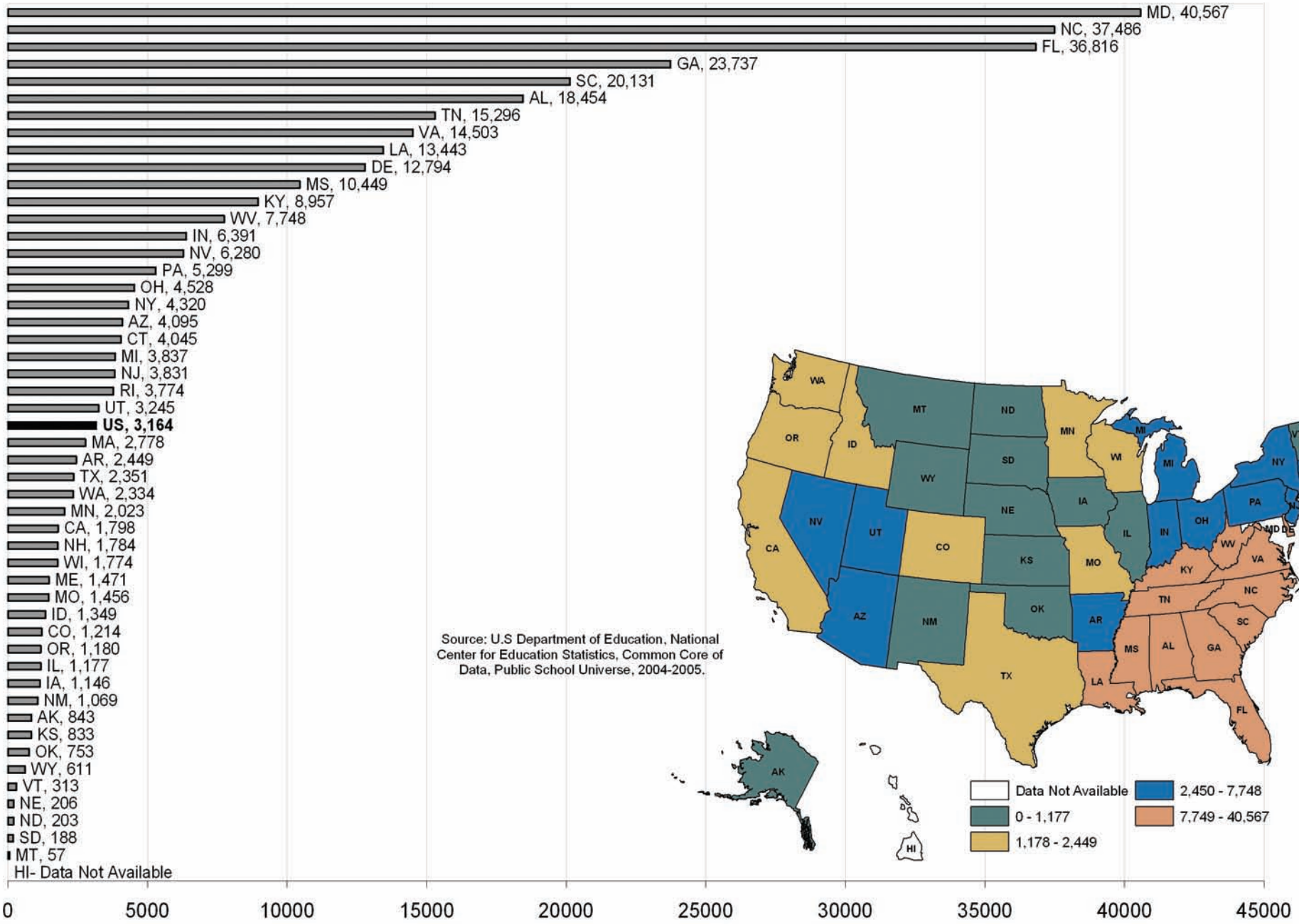
Salary Expenditures per Instructional Staff Member (FTE) in Rural Districts

Total current expenditures for instructional salaries in rural school districts, divided by the total number of instructional staff members.



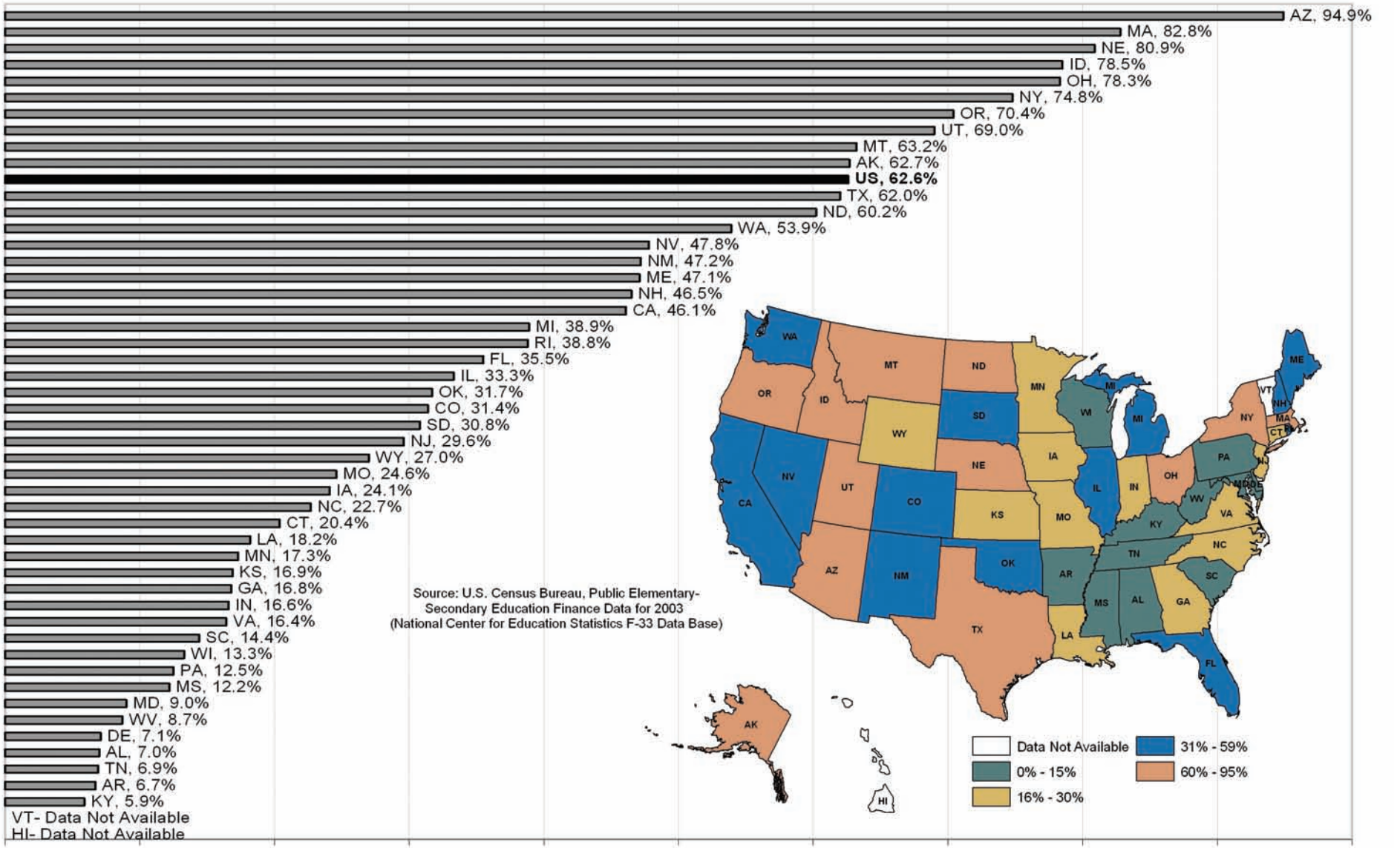
Median Organizational Scale among Rural Districts

The state median for the organizational scale indicator obtained by multiplying school enrollment by district enrollment (note: for simplification, the indicators were divided by 100).



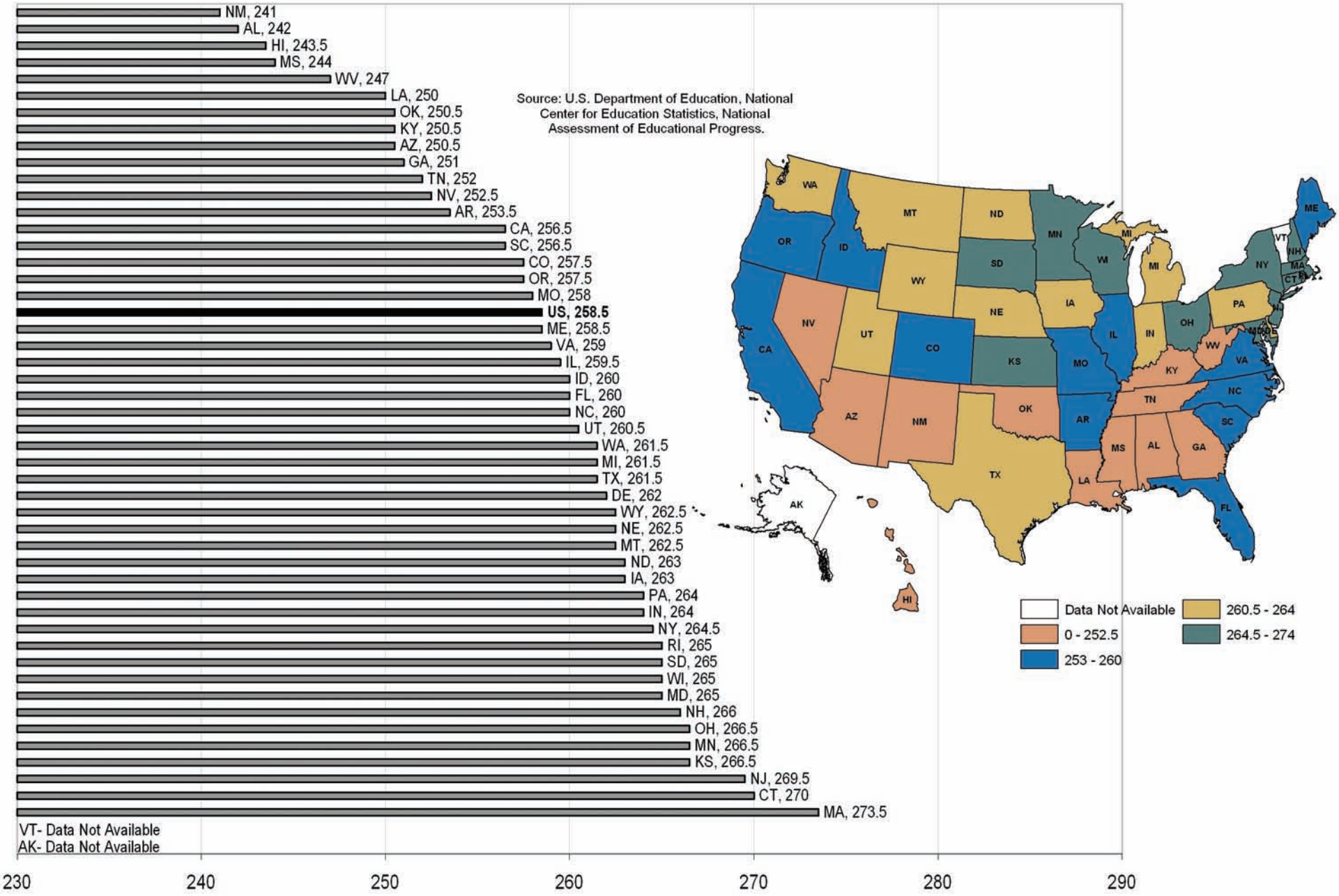
Inequality in the Combined State and Local Revenue Per Pupil among Rural Districts

As measured by the coefficient of variation (COV), a statistic that describes the relative inequality in combined state and local revenue per pupil among rural school districts in each state.



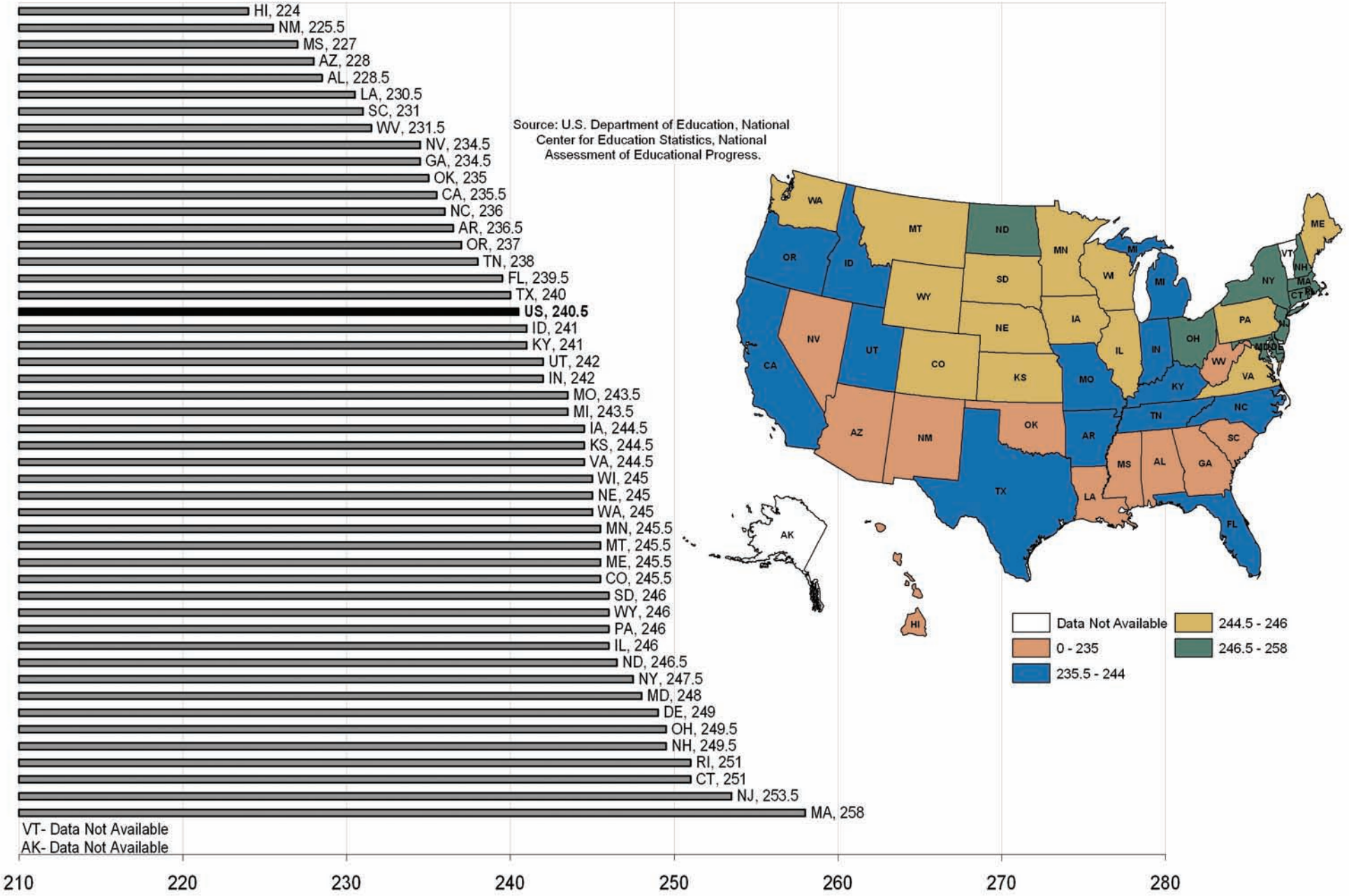
Rural NAEP Math Score

The mean score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for math (grades 4 and 8), as reported by the U.S. Department of Education for rural schools in each state.



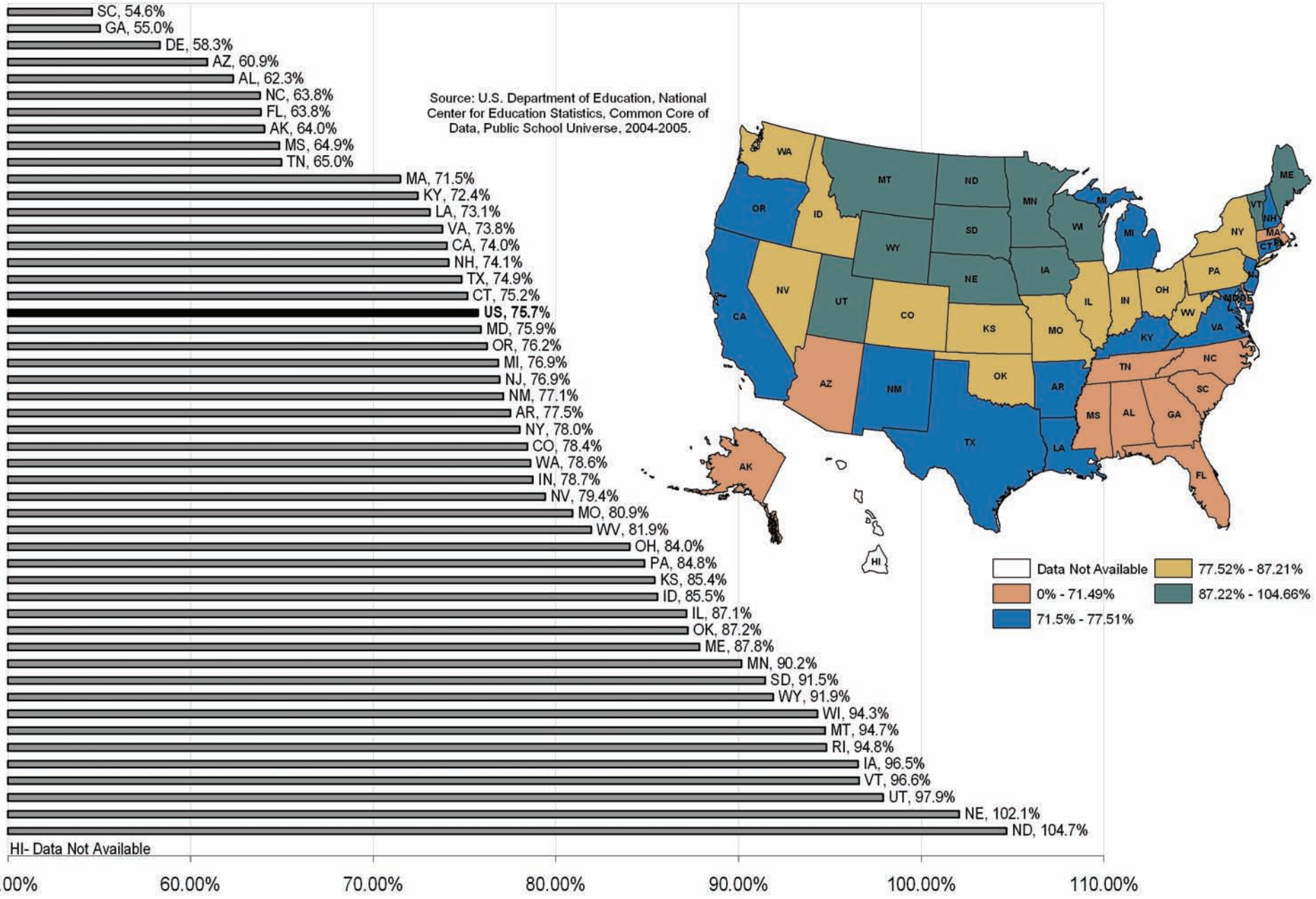
Rural NAEP Reading Score

The mean score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for reading (grades 4 and 8), as reported by the U.S. Department of Education for rural schools in each state.



Rural High School Graduation Rate

The number of students graduating from rural school districts at the completion of the 2003-04 school year, expressed as a percentage of the district's adjusted 8th grade enrollment for the school year 1999-2000.



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