IDAHO
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BRAD LITTLE, GOVERNOR
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Rural profile of Idaho

A look at economic and social trends affecting rural populations of Idaho

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Research and Communications Bureau

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Profile of rural Idaho, 2025

A look at economic and social trends shaping the rural populations of Idaho

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Foreword

Dear Idahoans,

Idaho's story – where we've come from and where we're headed – is shaped by the enduring influence of our rural heritage. The "Profile of Rural Idaho" shines a light on both the tremendous strengths of rural Idaho along with the challenges we must continue to address together.

Idaho is experiencing unprecedented growth in many regions, with new industries taking root, new jobs being created and new opportunities unfolding across the state. At the same time, some rural areas are not experiencing this prosperity evenly. Community members, alongside leaders in business, government and the nonprofit sector, will gain a deeper understanding of the realities facing rural Idaho by exploring this updated report. We will use the insights in these pages to help preserve and enhance Idaho's exceptional quality of life.

Rural Idahoans have always been and will continue to be key to our state's future. We benefit immensely from the values rooted in our rural heritage and we are determined to have the next generation of Idahoans carry those values into the future. Working together, we will improve the health and vitality of rural Idaho because it directly influences the well-being of our entire state.

Sincerely,

Brad Little
Governor of Idaho

Introduction

This publication delves into the heart and heritage of Idaho through analysis of the people, economy and geography of its rural counties. Throughout the findings, it reveals how the state's rural identity has evolved since publishing the "2005 Profile of Rural Idaho." Over the last 20 years, Idaho's population has continued to grow at a very fast clip, with some aspects of rural life transforming significantly and others remaining consistently stable.

Counties are defined as rural if they lack a principal city with at least 20,000 residents. Just like the 2005 report, this definition results in nine counties classified as urban and 35 classified as rural. Although no single rural county was reclassified to urban between 2005-2025, the relationship between these areas has changed as significant population growth has become the norm and competition for natural resources has intensified.

Rural Idaho has unique realities compared to the state's urban and metropolitan areas. Some elements of rural life — such as its untouched spaces and strong sense of community — serve as magnetic attractions for residents to live freely and relatively undisturbed. For others, the isolation that comes with these remote areas can significantly hinder job opportunities, limit educational attainment and decrease overall health. Going forward, maintaining the state's intrinsic identity and economic resiliency will depend on even the most rural areas remaining healthy and strong.

The 2025 profile is divided into three interconnected parts. Part I outlines demographic trends and the evolving definition of rural by comparing the Idaho of today with its 2005 counterpart. Part II examines the economic backbone of rural Idaho, highlighting regional variations and long-term shifts in employment and wages in topics like agriculture, housing and recreation. Part III identifies the critical trends shaping the state's future such as technological change, infrastructure demands, environmental sustainability and the complex interplay between rural resilience and statewide growth.

Together, these sections present not only a statistical snapshot but also a portrait of transition. This report's intent is to inform policymakers, community leaders and citizens about where rural Idaho stands and where it is headed. While celebrating the inherent strengths of rural areas, it also highlights their obstacles and challenges. Understanding the economic and social factors that shape rural Idaho is crucial to maintaining the balance between progress and preservation for the state as a whole.

Executive summary

Idaho's rural identity remains vital — economically, culturally and environmentally — even as urbanization accelerates. The state's future depends on sustaining its rural strengths while connecting them to the broader engines of growth.

The "2025 Profile of Rural Idaho" offers a comprehensive look at its demographic, economic and social forces over the past two decades. This report examines how rapid population growth, shifting migration patterns and evolving industry structures have altered the state's predominant rural character. It updates the 2005 profile and deepens analysis of population, labor market and regional trends.

Overall growth and demographic change

- Idaho's population grew nearly three times faster than the U.S. average from 2003–2023 — with the fastest growth rate in the nation during the past decade.
- Despite 88% of Idaho's land being rural, only 28% of residents lived in rural counties in 2023, down from 36% in 1990.
- In-migration — not births — has driven nearly all population growth, concentrating newcomers around major urban centers.
- Rural Idaho's population is aging rapidly, with most rural counties now showing median ages above the state's overall average.

Population composition and diversity

- The share of Idaho's non-white population rose from 12% in 2000 to 20% in 2023.
- Hispanic residents now make up 14% of Idaho's total population and over one-third of the state's growth since 2000.
- Educational attainment improved statewide as the share of rural adults with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 16% to 22%.

Economic structure and industry patterns

- Rural Idaho remains anchored in goods-producing industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, forestry and natural resources.
- Rural areas now account for two-thirds of all natural-resource jobs and more than three-quarters of Idaho's farm acreage.
- Urban areas, by contrast, have shifted toward service-providing sectors, especially health care, education and professional services.
- Manufacturing employment has grown faster in rural areas than in urban, while construction and service industries remain more concentrated in urban counties.

Wages and economic gaps

- Average weekly wages in Idaho nearly doubled between 2003-2023, from about $549 to $1,059.
- Rural counties continue to earn below the urban average; however, open country counties posted the highest wage growth, closing some of the gap.
- Commuting counties remain the lowest-paid, reflecting their heavy reliance on lower-wage service and support occupations.

Regional characteristics

- Northern Idaho blends manufacturing and recreation economies.
- North central continues to rely on government and health care.
- South central and southwestern regions remain agricultural cores and food-processing hubs.
- Eastern and southeastern Idaho show mixed specialization in government, mining and manufacturing.
- Each region exhibits distinct population and employment dynamics tied to geography and infrastructure.

Key challenges and emerging opportunities

- Persistent rural issues include aging demographics, housing affordability, infrastructure gaps and workforce shortages.
- Expanding broadband access and telework have opened new opportunities for rural participation in statewide economic growth.
- Rural communities' natural amenities, strong social networks and flexibility position them to adapt and remain central to Idaho's future.

Idaho's rural identity — deeply tied to its land, communities and resilience — remains inseparable to the state's overall well-being, even as demographic and economic currents continue to flow toward its urban cores.

Part I. Demographics

Idaho has witnessed incredible change over the past two decades.

When looking at the 20-year period of 2003-2023, the state's population growth was over three times faster than the U.S. average — the fastest in the nation behind only Utah. When looking specifically at the 10-year period of 2013-2023, Idaho's population growth was first in the nation.[1]

This kind of rapid growth is not new to Idaho — the 2005 report noted that in the 1970s and 1990s the state's population growth was seventh in the nation and double the national average.

Over the past two decades, in-migration of new residents into Idaho has been the state's primary contributor to population growth. While the number of counties classified as urban (9) and rural (35) has not changed, new residents have overwhelmingly moved to urban counties or areas within commuting distance to them. This pattern has skewed Idaho's largest population growth away from rural areas, despite the state's land area being 88% rural.

Although all but two of Idaho's rural counties have seen population increases, rural counties have received just under 13% of the in-migration into the state since 2000. The proportion of residents living in rural counties compared with the state as a whole has continued to steadily decline from 36% in 1990, 31.9% in 2003 and 26.7% in 2023.

An older national population over the past two decades has also led to an increasingly older population in rural areas. All of Idaho's counties have seen their share of people 65 years and older increase, especially with the state being a destination of choice for retirees looking to spend their twilight years. Rural areas have seen the highest concentration of this growth with median ages the highest in open country and rural center counties.

The racial and ethnic composition of Idaho's population has also seen an evolution, with urban and rural counties reporting comparable growth rates. The share of Idaho's non-white population increased from 12% in 2000 to 20% in 2023 and accounted for more than a third of Idaho's total growth from 2000 to 2023. Hispanics comprised nearly 14% of Idaho's population in 2023 and accounted for over 20% of the state's population growth over each of the past two decades since 2003.

As far as education, the share of adults in rural Idaho with a bachelor's degree grew from 16% in 2000 to 22.1% in 2023. From a county perspective, 29 counties had 20% or more of their adult population with bachelor's degrees or higher in 2023 — a significant increase from 2000, when only nine counties (Latah, Valley, Ada, Camas, Blaine, Bannock, Bonneville, Teton and Madison) met this threshold.[2]

Following the exploration of demographics in part I, part II will focus on economic shifts and provide a regional overview of significant factors influencing local rural communities.

[1] **"**Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013, and 2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html.
[2] "American Community Survey, 5-year data files for 2009–2013 and 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://data.census.gov/.

Rural definitions

What defines rural? From a statistical standpoint the dividing line between urban and rural varies among researchers and policymakers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines rural as a population ranging "from 5,000 up to 50,000, depending on the definition."[3] The meaning of rural can vary based on the nature of different rural areas and the needs of users.

The 2005 profile defined a rural county as having fewer than 20,000 residents in the largest town or city. It further classified rural counties into one of three subcategories: commuting, rural center and open country. This report follows this matrix of definitions for consistency and to better analyze the comparative changes in rural Idaho over the past two decades.

The three subcategories of rural include:

- **Commuting** – counties in which at least 25% of the workforce commutes to a metro county.[4] Elmore County meets this definition as over a third of its employed residents commute to neighboring Ada County for work.
- **Rural centers** – counties with an urban cluster of at least 7,500 residents, but without a central city of 20,000 or more, and without any strong commuting ties to a metro county. Blaine County is an example of a rural center with Hailey's population of over 9,000 residents and a limited number, if any, of workers who commuted from their homes to work in an urban county in 2023.
- **Open country** – counties without an urban cluster of 7,500 or greater population threshold, and without strong commuting ties to a metro county. For example, an open country county would be Shoshone County, in which the largest urban cluster around Kellogg had about 2,100 people in 2023.

Table 1.1. Urban and rural county definitions

Detailed classification definitions	
Urban	At least one city with 20,000+ residents
Rural	No city with 20,000+ residents
Rural county type	
Commuting	At least 25% of the workforce commutes to a metro county
Rural center	Urban cluster of at least 7,500 but without a central city of 20,000+ and no strong commuting ties to a metro country
Open country	No urban cluster of at least 7,500 and no strong commuting ties to a metro county

Population urban/rural classification

The number of urban and rural counties has remained unchanged in Idaho since 2003. Of the state's 44 counties, 35 were still classified as rural in 2023, despite the state's rapid population growth. Since people coming into the state between 2003-2023 predominantly chose to move into counties already established as urban, rural areas did not grow enough to change from rural to urban.

Idaho's population growth has been strong for most of its history. From 2000 to 2010, Idaho's percentage increase in population ranked fourth in the nation. It only increased in strength in the next decade, leading the

[3] "Rural Classifications," U.S. Department of Agriculture, last modified Jan. 8, 2025, https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications.
[4] "OnTheMap commuting patterns," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/.

nation in terms of percentage change from 2016-2021 with rates that were double, if not higher than the U.S. average.

The degree Idaho's rural counties participated in the state's population boom varied since 2000 as growth rates averaged at less than half of urban counties during this time. The "2005 Rural Profile" noted from 2000 to 2003, 13 rural counties lost population even as the state was growing. Later in the decade, Idaho's imbalance between urban and rural county growth shifted enough so that by 2010 the amount of rural counties losing population fell to seven.

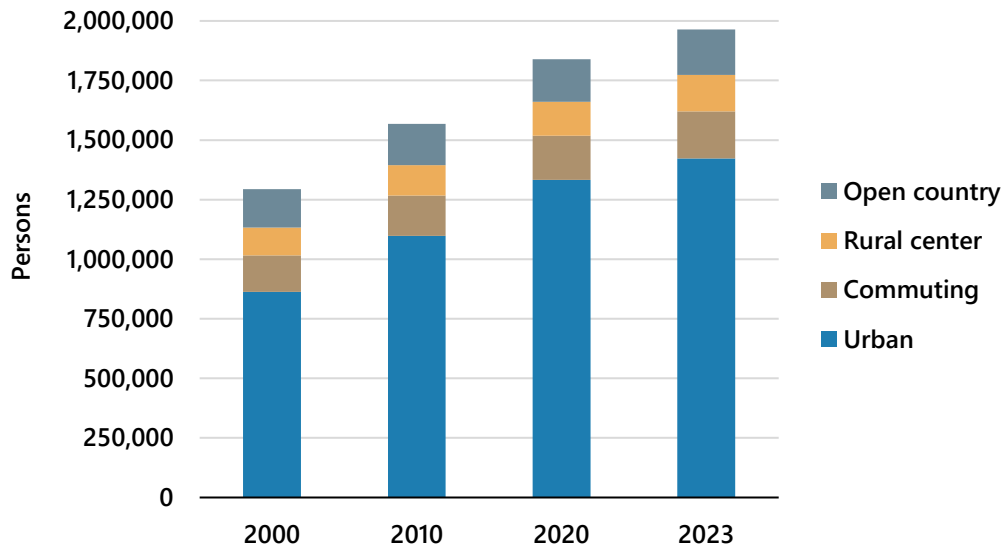
The imbalance eased up further from 2020 to 2023 as the state experienced an influx of new residents spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

From 2020 to 2023, as Idaho led the nation in population change with a growth rate over three times that of the nation, none of its counties experienced population declines. The population of the state's nine urban counties increased by 6.8% and the remaining 35 rural counties increased by 7%.

More than half of the state's population growth from 2020-2023 occurred in the three most populous urban counties of Ada, Canyon and Kootenai. However, the top five counties by percentage growth rate were all rural — Camas, Boundary, Boise, Bonner and Adams counties all had a population growth exceeding 10%.

Idaho also claimed eight of the nation's 100 fastest growing counties from 2020-2023. Of these high growth counties, six were rural and two were urban, with Camas County ranking first in the state and 21st in the nation in percentage population change at nearly 14%.

Figure 1.1. Urban and rural county classification, population, 2000-2023



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Idaho's nine urban counties accounted for 72% of statewide population in 2023, up four percentage points from 68% in 2003. All three rural classifications saw their share of total population decline between one and two percentage points each between 2003 and 2023. Open country rural counties had the largest decline as their share of total population decreased by two percentage points from nearly 12% to under 10%.[5]

[5] "Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013 and 2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html.

Table 1.2a. Urban and rural counties, number and land area, 2003 and 2023

	# of counties		Land area (square miles)		% Total land area	
# of Idaho counties	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**
Urban	9	9	10,170	10,170	12%	12%
Rural	35	35	72,475	72,475	88%	88%
Total	**44**	**44**	**82,645**	**82,645**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: U.S. Census TIGERweb

Table 1.2b. Urban and rural counties, population and density, 2003 and 2023

	Population		% Total population		Population per square mile	
# of Idaho counties	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**
Urban	928,716	1,423,114	68%	72%	91	140
Rural	434,664	541,612	32%	28%	6	7
Total	**1,363,380**	**1,964,726**	**100%**	**100%**	**16**	**24**

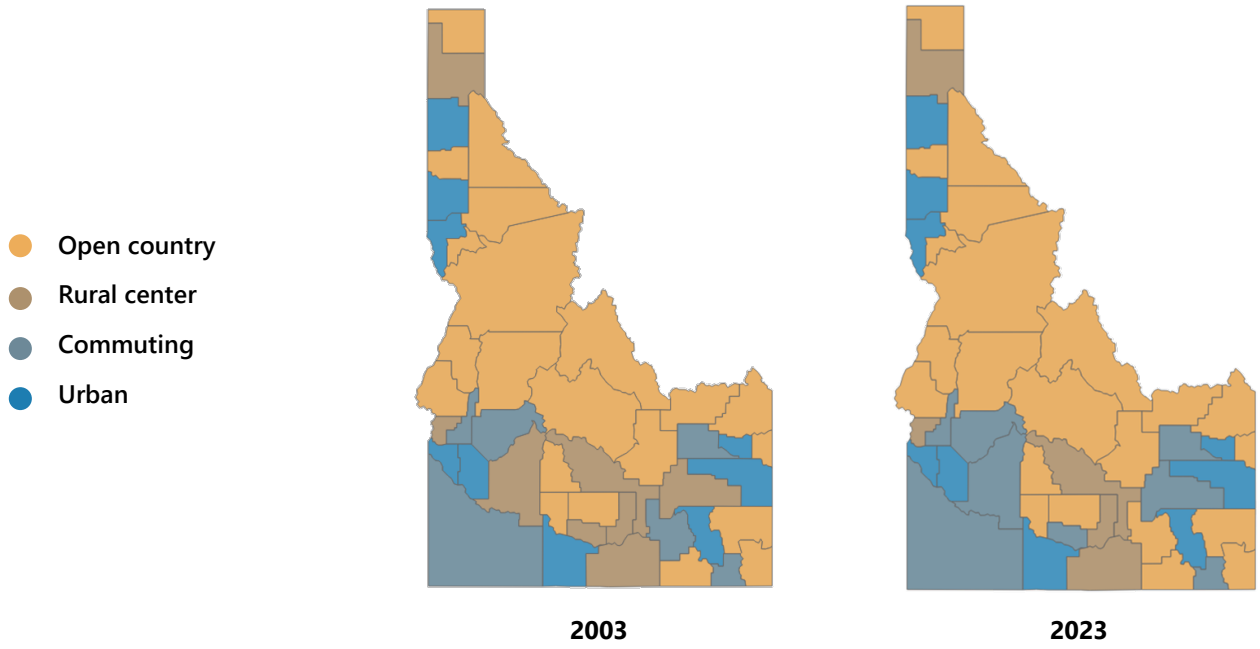
Source: U.S. Census, Annual Population Estimates and TIGERweb

As Idaho's urban areas became more urban from 2003-2023, they expanded their economic influence into neighboring rural counties. As an increasing number of people migrated into bedroom communities in rural counties but were employed in urban counties, three of the counties classified as rural center in 2003 changed to commuting counties by 2023. These included:

- Bingham County which is nestled between the urban Bannock and Bonneville counties.
- Elmore County just east of Ada County and the Boise City metropolitan statistical area.
- Jerome County with commuting ties to Twin Falls County.

Power County emerged from the past 20 years as the only county to change its classification from commuting to open country.

Figure 1.2. Urban and rural county classification changes, 2003-2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor

Table 1.3. Urban and rural county classification, count and land area, 2003 and 2023

	# of counties		Land area (square miles)		% Total land area	
# of Idaho counties	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**
Urban	9	9	10,170	10,170	12%	12%
Commuting	6	8	13,288	17,651	16%	21%
Rural center	8	5	13,867	8,100	17%	10%
Open country	21	22	45,320	46,724	55%	57%
Total	**44**	**44**	**82,645**	**82,645**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: U.S. Census, Annual Population Estimates and TIGERweb

Even as the number of urban counties remained unchanged, the changes within those nine counties increased city densities. In fact, the number of incorporated cities with populations of 20,000+ increased from 11 in 2003 to 14 in 2023. Idaho cities with populations over 20,000 in 2023 that were below the threshold in 2003 include Eagle (Ada), Kuna (Ada) and Rexburg (Madison).

Table 1.4. Urban and rural county classification, population and density, 2003 and 2023

	Population		% Total population		Population per square mile	
# of Idaho counties	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**	**2003**	**2023**
Urban	928,716	1,423,114	68%	72%	91	140
Commuting	72,963	197,600	5%	10%	5	11
Rural center	208,425	153,043	15%	8%	15	19
Open country	153,276	190,969	11%	10%	3	4
Total	**1,363,380**	**1,964,726**	**100%**	**100%**	**16**	**24**

Source: U.S. Census, Annual Population Estimates and TIGERweb

Table 1.5. Labor region, city population, 2003 and 2023

Idaho labor region		# of cities by population, 2003					
Number	**Name**	**0-4,999**	**5,000-9,999**	**10,000-49,999**	**50,000-99,999**	**100,000+**	**Total**
1	Northern	30	2	3	0	0	**35**
2	North Central	27	0	2	0	0	**29**
3	Southwestern	24	4	5	1	1	**35**
4	South Central	29	4	1	0	0	**34**
5	Southeastern	27	0	2	1	0	**30**
6	Eastern	34	1	1	1	0	**37**
	Statewide	**171**	**11**	**14**	**3**	**1**	**200**
Idaho labor region		**# of cities by population, 2023**					
Number	**Name**	**0-4,999**	**5,000-9,999**	**10,000-49,999**	**50,000-99,999**	**100,000+**	**Total**
1	Northern	30	0	4	1	0	**35**
2	North Central	27	0	2	0	0	**29**
3	Southwestern	21	4	6	1	3	**35**
4	South Central	28	3	2	1	0	**34**
5	Southeastern	24	2	2	1	0	**29**
6	Eastern	31	1	2	1	0	**35**
	Statewide	**161**	**10**	**18**	**5**	**3**	**197**

Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Demographics

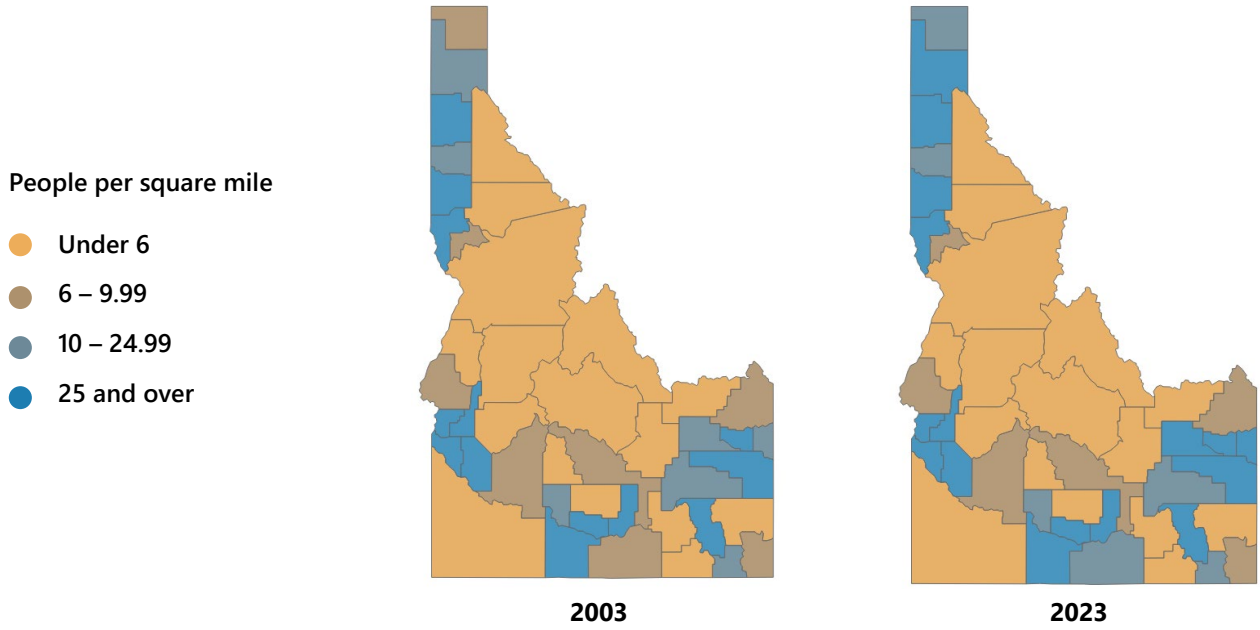
Population density, 2003 and 2023

Idaho averaged nearly 24 people per square mile in 2023. Urban counties averaged 140 people per square mile — ranging from a low of 38 in Latah County to a high of 499 in Ada County. Rural counties averaged 7.5 people per square mile — ranging from a low of 0.5 in Clark County to a high of 67 in Payette County. Sixteen rural counties had fewer than six people per square mile while only two urban counties had fewer than 50.[6]

There were six rural counties that had fewer than two people per square mile in 2023: Butte, Camas, Clark, Custer, Lemhi and Owyhee. In 2003, there were seven counties in this category, and the only one to increase to over two people per square mile by 2023 was Idaho County at 2.1.

From 2003-2023, the number of persons per square mile grew by 44% statewide, with urban counties increasing by 53% and rural counties increasing by 25%. By labor region, the most significant growth in population density occurred within the southwestern (+57% change), eastern (+53%) and northern (+48%) regions.

Figure 1.3. Population density, 2003 and 2023



Source: U.S. Census, Annual Population Estimates and TIGERweb

In-migration

With family size in a long running state of decline over the past two decades, net migration — the net balance of residents moving in and out of a given area — became the most vital component of population growth in Idaho.

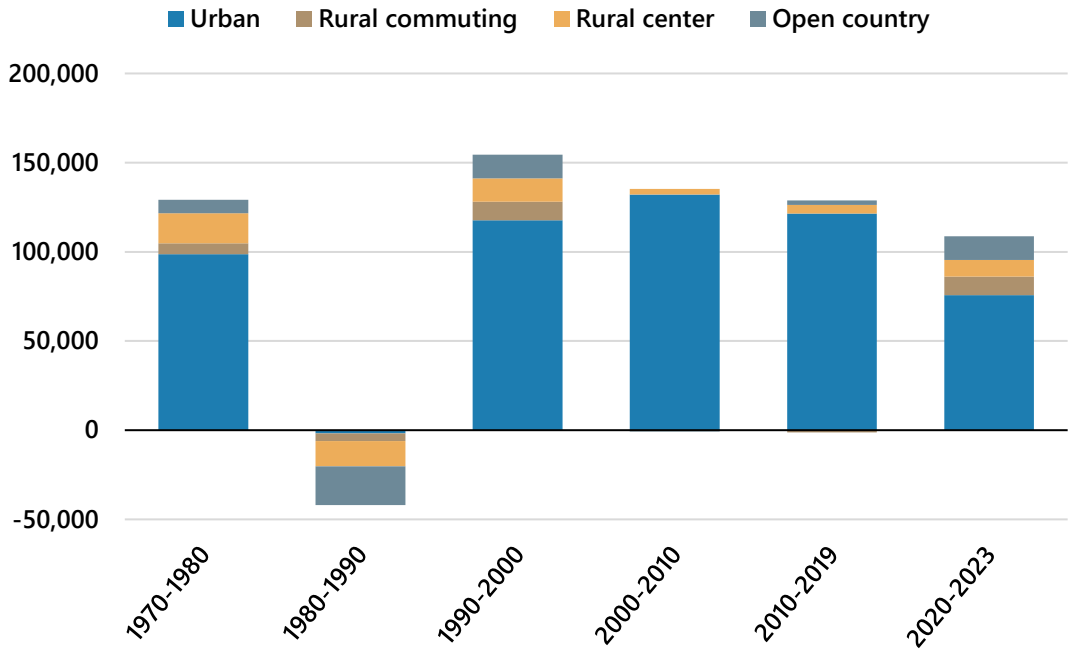
From 1990 to 1999, natural population growth — the excess of births over deaths — accounted for roughly 36% of Idaho's total population growth, while net migration contributed 64% of the growth, with more than a net total of 150,000 people moving to Idaho in that period.

Since the 1990s, the disparity between natural growth and net migration has grown even further. Between 2022 to 2023, natural growth accounted for just 22% of total population growth, with 78% contributed by net migration.

[6] "TIGERweb spatial files." U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/.

The patterns of migration exerted an enormous influence on the relative growth rates of urban and rural counties. In the past two decades, new residents moving to Idaho have overwhelmingly preferred to move to urban counties, therefore heavily skewing Idaho's population growth away from rural areas. Since 2000, roughly 329,200 of Idaho's 370,700 new residents have moved to urban counties; thus, rural communities account for just 11% of Idaho's total net migration in this period.

Figure 1.4. Urban and rural county classification, net migration, 1970-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Idaho Department of Labor

Prior to this, the decade from 1980-1990 was distinctive as net migration to Idaho was negative — more people moved out of Idaho than moved in. Even in this period, which deviated sharply from Idaho's larger trend of high population growth, rural counties experienced most of the population losses, accounting for 96% of the negative net migration.

Even with abnormal periods like the 1980s, the broader trend of net migration in Idaho over the past fifty years has continued to support the urbanization of the state.

With smaller family sizes, net migration exerts the dominant influence on which areas of Idaho will grow relative to others. Through many decades and multiple economic cycles, urban counties continue to attract vastly more new residents than rural communities – not only in absolute terms, but relative to their size. This is the predominate reason why rural Idaho continues to shrink as a share of the state's total population — falling from 32% in 2003 to less than 28% in 2023.

For a full breakdown of net migration to Idaho by county type, see Table A.15 in the Appendix.[7]

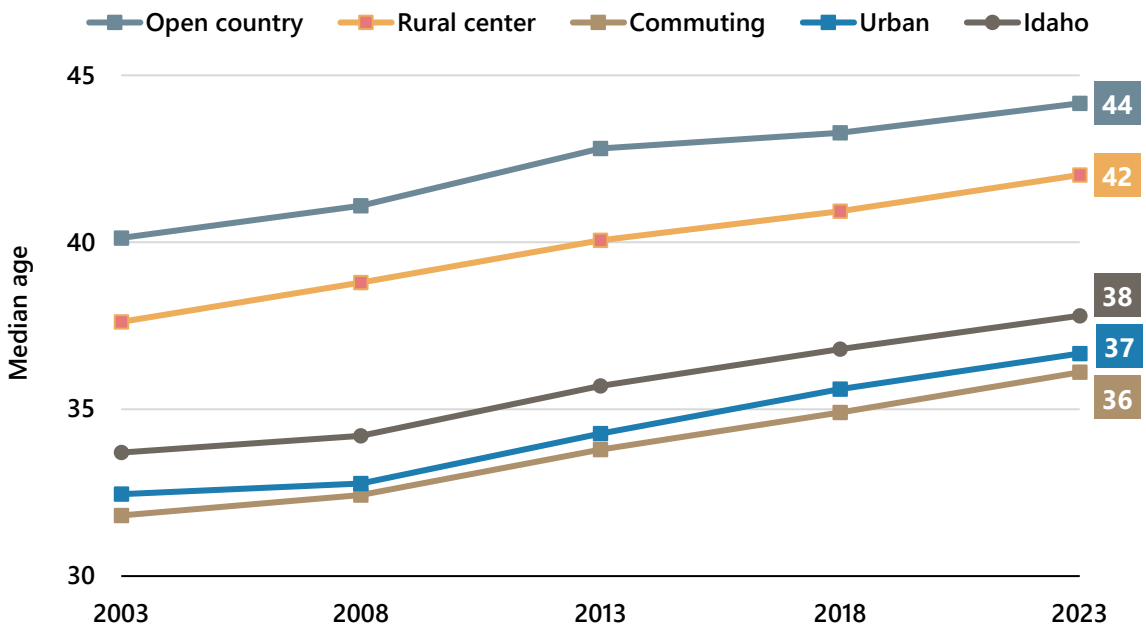
[7] "Decennial Census of Population and Housing, 1970–2020," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade.html.

Age

Idaho and its rural counties have been getting older over the past 20 years. As a result, the state has a greater proportion of its population over the age of 65 in 2023 than it did in 2003.

This development is not unique to Idaho and its rural counties. On a national level, demographic trends have pushed up the median age of most places as the large proportional size of the Baby Boomer generation has progressed into retirement age over the past 20 years. In addition, there are fewer children proportionally as people are opting for smaller families or no children at all.

Figure 1.5. Urban and rural county classification, median age, 2003-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Idaho Department of Labor

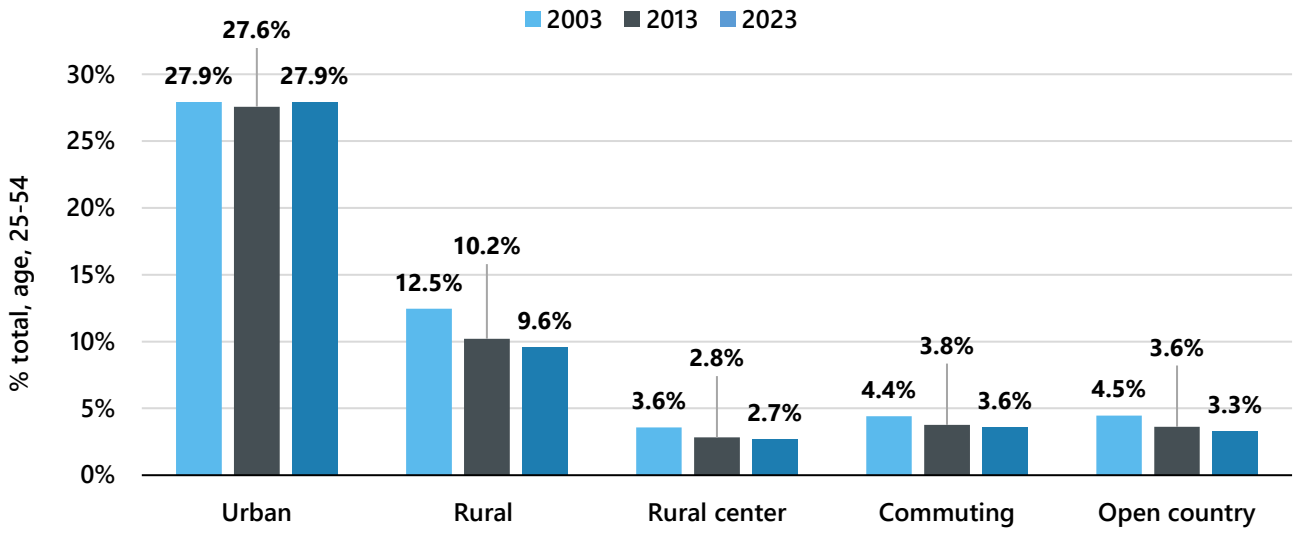
The median age in Idaho increased from 34 to 38 between 2003 to 2023. Despite the increase, Idaho was the eighth youngest state in the nation in 2023.[8]

All the county classifications maintained their order relative to each other over the past 20 years — commuting rural counties remained the youngest and open country the oldest. Median ages ranged among Idaho's counties from younger than 25 in Madison County to almost 60 in Clark County. Nineteen of Idaho's 44 counties had median ages of at least 40 years in 2023 — 17 of which were rural and two were urban (Nez Perce and Kootenai).[9]

As the median ages of urban and commuting rural counties hint at, the prime working age population (25-54 years of age) has concentrated into urban areas more than rural counties. From 2003 to 2023, the portion of this demographic living in rural counties has fallen from 12.5% to 9.6% of the state's total population.[10]

[8] "American Community Survey, 2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://data.census.gov/.
[9] "American Community Survey, 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://data.census.gov/.
[10] "Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013 and 2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html.

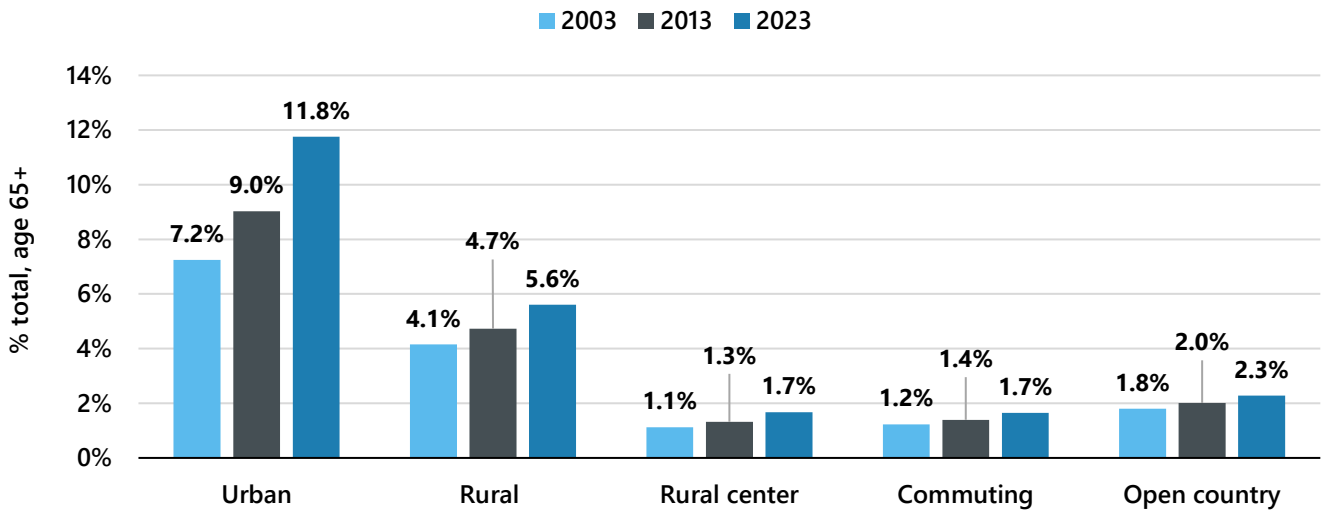
Figure 1.6. Urban and rural county classification, prime working age, 2003, 2013 and 2023



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

On the other side of the spectrum, as Idaho's total population climbed by 44% from 2003 to 2023, the 65 and older population increased almost three times faster (134%), expanding its proportion from 11.4% to 17.4%. The total share of those aged 65 and older living in Idaho's rural counties increased from 4.1% in 2003 to 5.6% in 2023. This change reflects national trends, as retirees in-migrated to Idaho and current residents aged in place.[11]

Figure 1.7. Urban and rural county classification, age 65 and over, 2003, 2013 and 2023



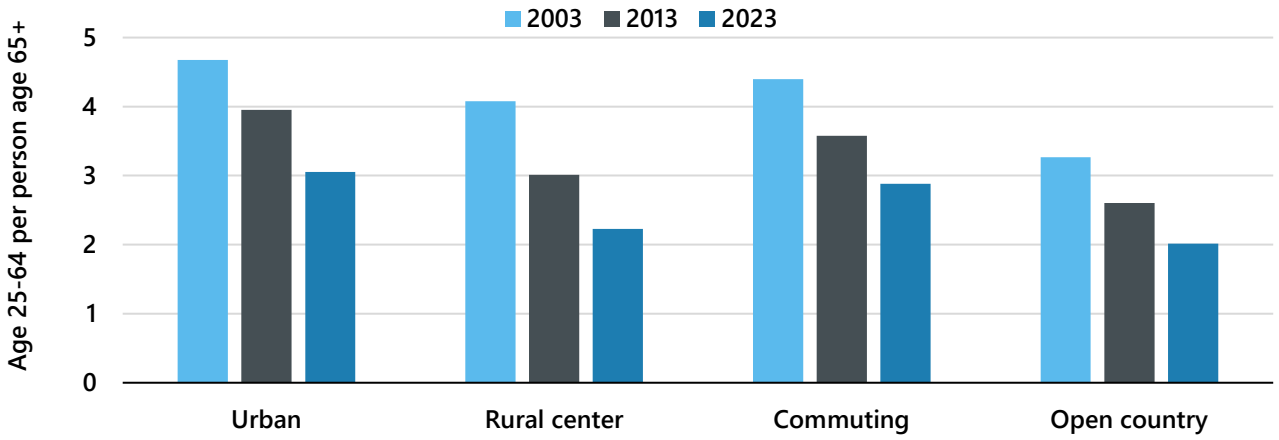
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Idaho Department of Labor

Viewed from another perspective, Idaho's changing demographics have shifted the ratio of the working age population per retiree. In 2003, Idaho had over 4.3 people aged 25 to 64 years of age for every person 65 and older. This ratio fell to 3.6 in 2013 and to 2.8 in 2023 and implies there are fewer people working to provide the goods and services the economy is demanding. Along with a significant drop in the ratio overall, there continued to be a distribution gap between urban and rural counties.

[11] "Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013 and 2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html.

While Idaho's nine urban counties had a ratio of 3.1 people aged 25-64 for every person over the age of 65 in 2023, its 35 rural counties had a lower ratio at 2.3 with open country counties reporting the lowest at two.

Figure 1.8. Urban and rural county classification, age 25-64 per retiree, 2003, 2013 and 2023

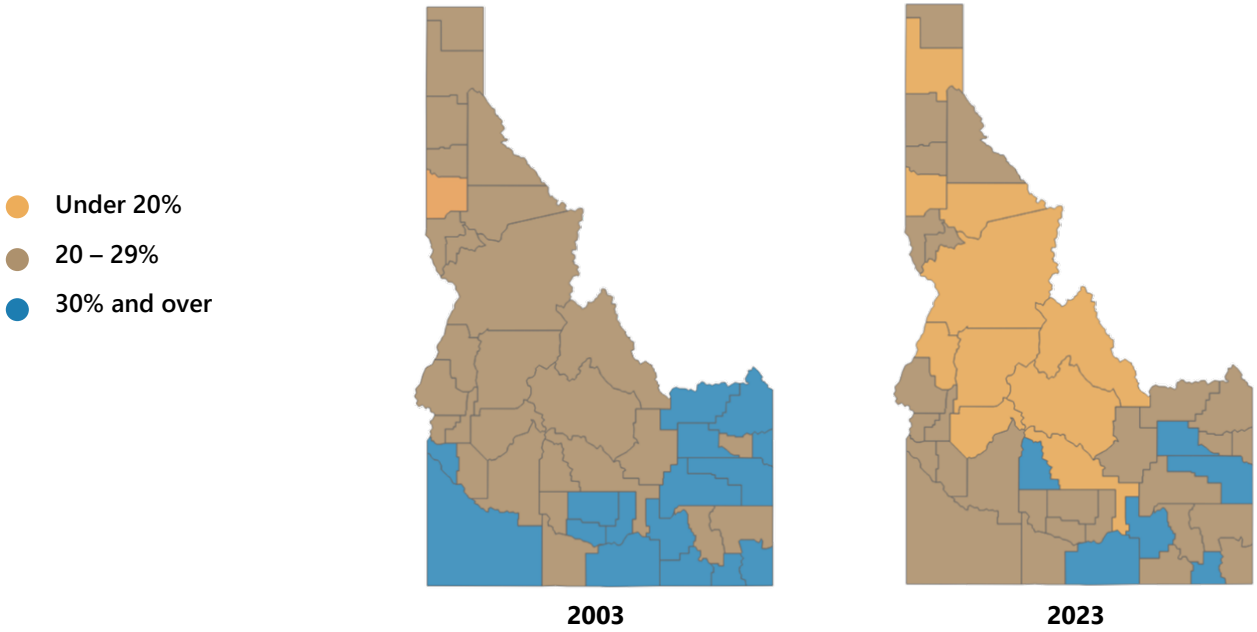


Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Nearly 60% of rural counties designated as open country were home to a population with a median age exceeding 40 years old, compared with only 20-40% of counties for any other urban or rural classification.

In 2003, Idaho had 19 counties where at least 30% of the population was under the age of 18. By 2023, that number declined to six, comprised of five rural and one urban county.

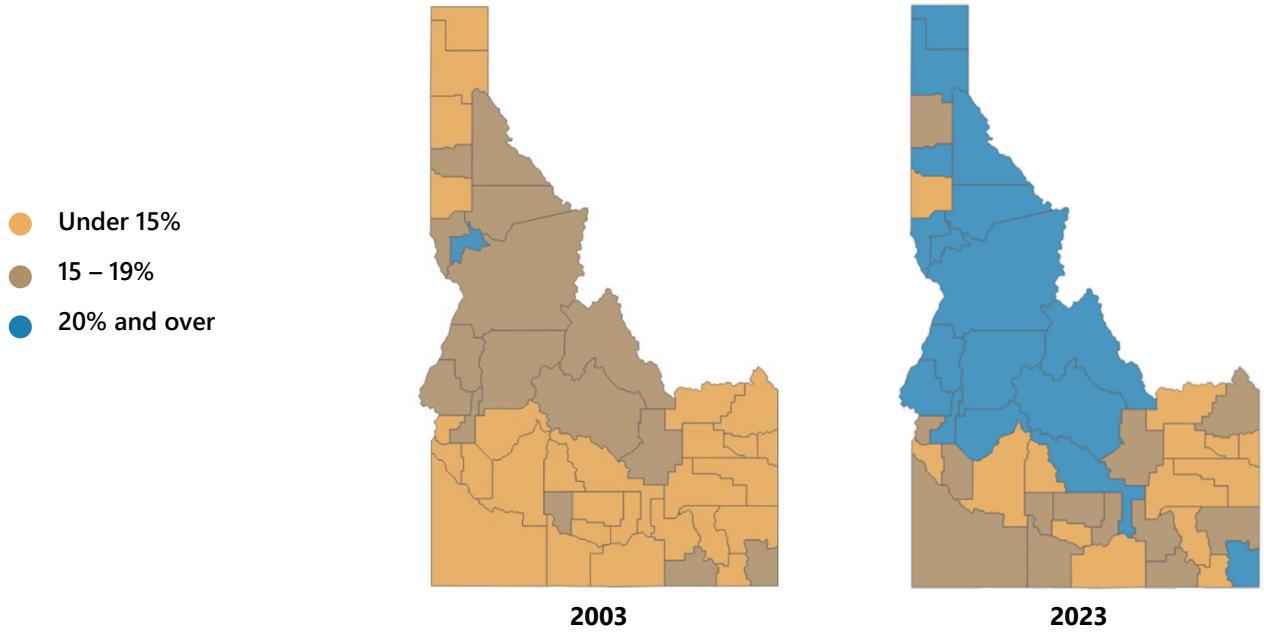
Figure 1.9. Resident population, under 18 years of age



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

In 2023, there were 30 counties (26 of which were rural) with at least 15% of their population over the age of 65, compared with just 12 in 2003.

Figure 1.10. Resident population, 65 years of age and older



Source: 2005 Rural Profile of Idaho, U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

In 2023, 15 of Idaho's rural counties had a higher share of the population over the age of 65 than those under the age of 18.

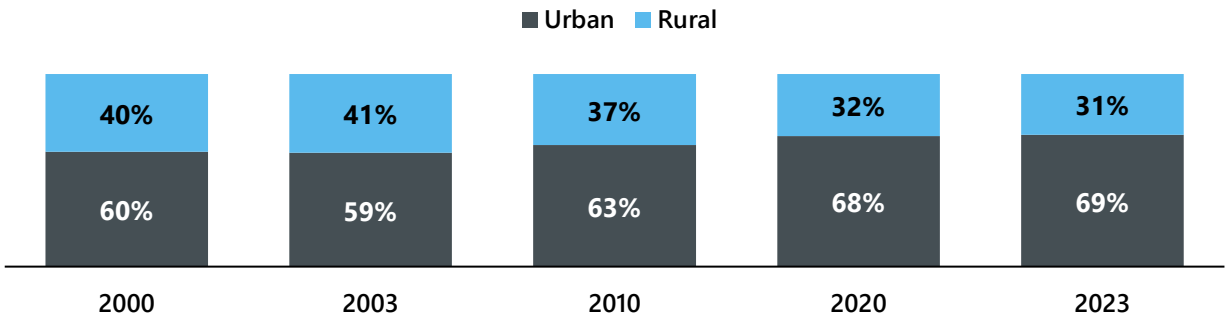
Race/ethnicity

The racial and ethnic diversity of Idaho's population continued to increase and evolve over the past two decades. The share of its non-white population increased from 12% in 2000 to 20% in 2023 and accounted for more than a third of total growth.

Hispanic ethnicity

Hispanics accounted for 13% of the urban population and 16% of the rural population in 2023, an increase from 8% and 11% in 2003, respectively. Idaho's commuting and rural center counties had the highest share of Hispanics at 18-19% of their total population while open country counties had the lowest at 11%.[12]

Figure 1.11. Urban and rural county, Hispanic population



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Nine of the top 10 counties with the highest share of Hispanics to the total population were rural in 2023. Although rural counties accounted for the highest concentrations of the Hispanic population, Idaho's urban

[12] "Annual Population Estimates by race/age," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html.

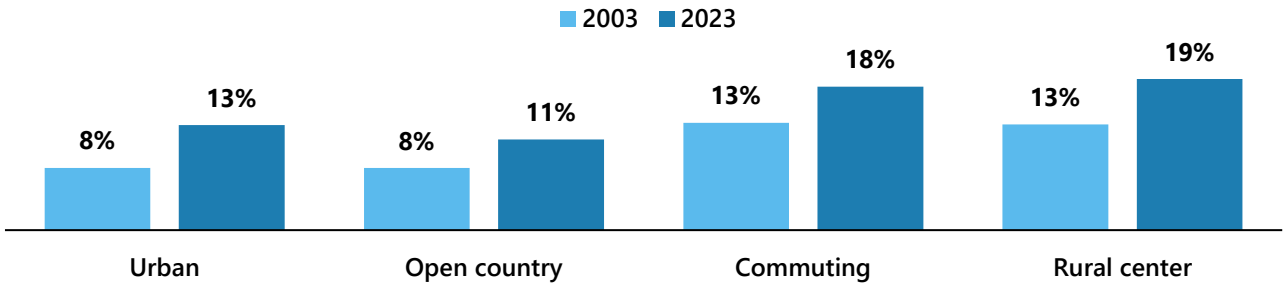
counties were home to nearly 70% of the statewide Hispanic population and claimed 74% of the total Hispanic population growth between 2020-2023. Like the state's general population change, more of Idaho's Hispanic residents elected to live in urban counties.

Table 1.6. Urban and rural county classification, Hispanic population, 2003-2023

Region type	Population, 2023		% of total statewide population, 2023		% share of population that is Hispanic		Annualized population growth, 2003-2023	
	Total	Hispanic	Total	Hispanic	2003	2023	Total	Hispanic
Urban	1,423,114	186,116	72%	69%	8%	13%	2.2%	5.0%
Open country	190,969	21,551	10%	8%	8%	11%	0.9%	2.8%
Commuting	197,600	35,238	10%	13%	13%	18%	1.2%	2.7%
Rural center	153,043	28,753	8%	11%	13%	19%	1.2%	3.1%
Statewide	**1,964,726**	**271,658**	**100%**	**100%**	**9%**	**14%**	**1.8%**	**4.2%**

Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Figure 1.12. Urban and rural county classification, Hispanic population, 2003 and 2023



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Hispanic population share by county

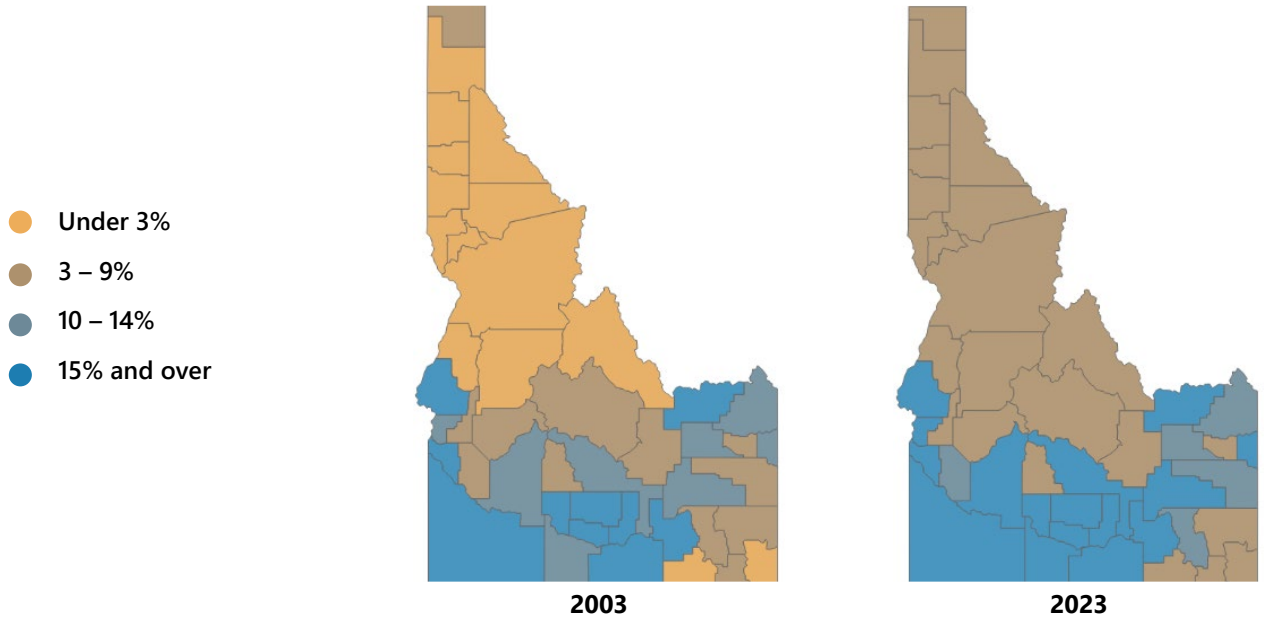
By region, Idaho's Hispanic population was the highest in the southwestern and south central labor market areas in 2023. Combined, these two regions account for nearly 60% of the state's total residents and over 70% of Idaho's Hispanic population.

Table 1.7. Labor regions, Hispanic population, 2003 and 2023

Region		% of total statewide population, 2023		% share of population that is Hispanic		Annualized population growth, 2003-2023	
Number	Name	Total	Hispanic	2003	2023	Total	Hispanic
1	Northern	14%	5%	3%	5%	2.0%	6.0%
2	North central	6%	2%	2%	5%	0.7%	4.6%
3	Southwestern	46%	51%	10%	15%	2.3%	4.4%
4	South Central	11%	21%	16%	26%	1.3%	3.8%
5	Southeastern	9%	8%	8%	13%	0.8%	2.9%
6	Eastern	13%	12%	8%	13%	2.2%	4.6%
	Statewide	**100%**	**100%**	**9%**	**14%**	**1.8%**	**4.2%**

Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Figure 1.13. Hispanic concentration in county as a share of total resident population



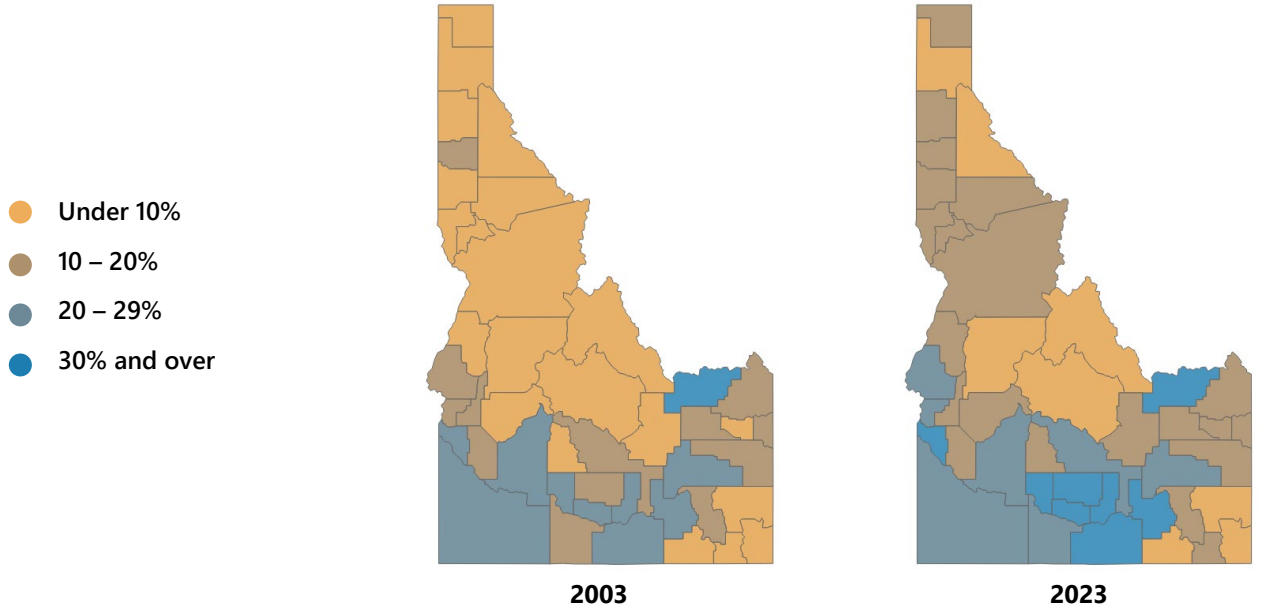
Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Seven rural counties had a Hispanic population in 2023 that constituted at least 30% of their total resident population — Jerome, Minidoka, Clark, Power, Lincoln, Gooding and Cassia counties. Only Clark County had already reached this concentration level in 2003. While 14 of Idaho's counties had a Hispanic population under 3% of total residents in 2003, all counties surpassed this level by 2023.

Race distribution

The share of Idaho's non-white minority population increased from 12% in 2000 to 16% in 2010, eventually reaching 20% in 2023, where it comprised 19% and 21% of the populations in urban in rural counties respectively. This was an increase from the 2003 minority population that contributed 12% and 15% to the populations of urban and rural counties respectively.

Figure 1.14. Minority race population in county by percent, 2003-2023



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

In 2023, nine of the top 10 counties with the highest minority share of the population were rural, but urban counties were still home to over 70% of the state's minority population. The number of counties with at least a 10% minority share of its total population increased from 20 to 36 between 2000-2023.

All eight counties with minorities comprising less than 10% of the population were rural, with five located within southeastern and eastern Idaho.

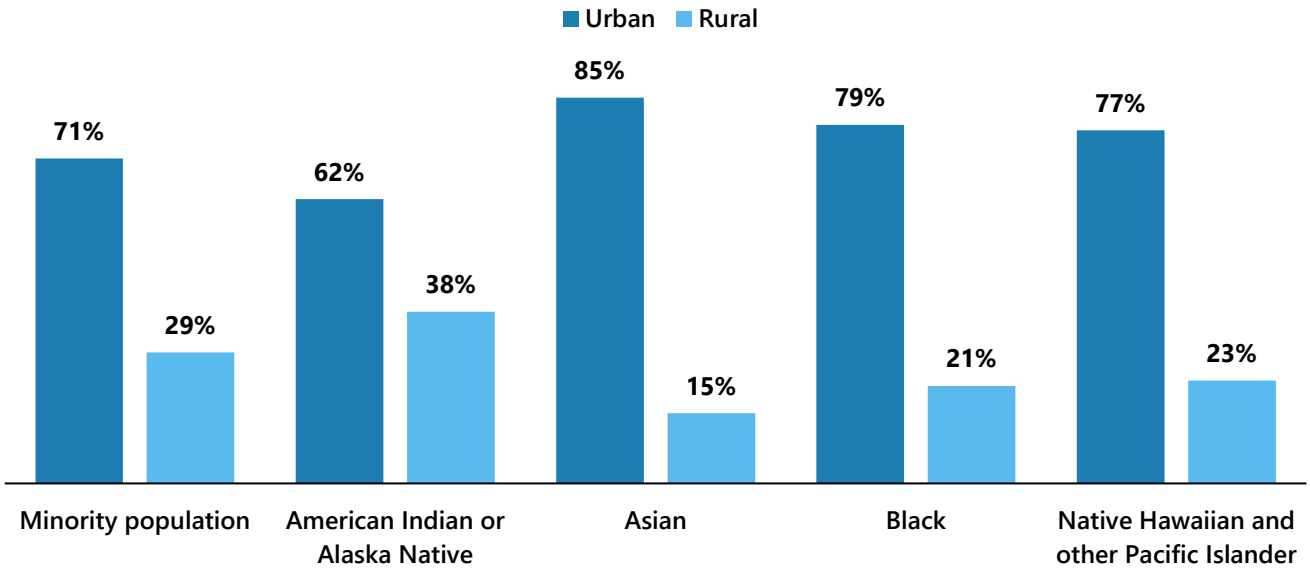
Table 1.8. Urban and rural county classification, minority race population, 2003-2023

Region type	Population, 2023		% of total statewide population, 2023		% share of population that is a minority race		Annualized population growth, 2003-2023	
	Total	Minority	Total	Minority	2003	2023	Total	Minority
Urban	1,423,114	276,259	72%	71%	12%	19%	2.2%	4.7%
Open country	190,969	30,877	10%	8%	11%	16%	0.9%	2.8%
Commuting	197,600	46,089	10%	12%	18%	23%	1.2%	2.5%
Rural center	153,043	34,530	8%	9%	15%	23%	1.2%	3.1%
Statewide	**1,964,726**	**387,755**	**100%**	**100%**	**13%**	**20%**	**1.8%**	**4.0%**

Source: 2003-2023 U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

Approximately 38% of American Indian and Alaska Natives lived within Idaho's rural counties in 2023, compared with only 15% of its Asian population. Of the 12 Idaho counties located within a federally recognized Indian Tribal Area, nine were rural and three were urban (Kootenai, Bannock and Nez Perce).[13]

Figure 1.15. Urban and rural county, minority race distribution, 2023



Source: 2023 U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

[13] "Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013 and 2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html.

Educational attainment

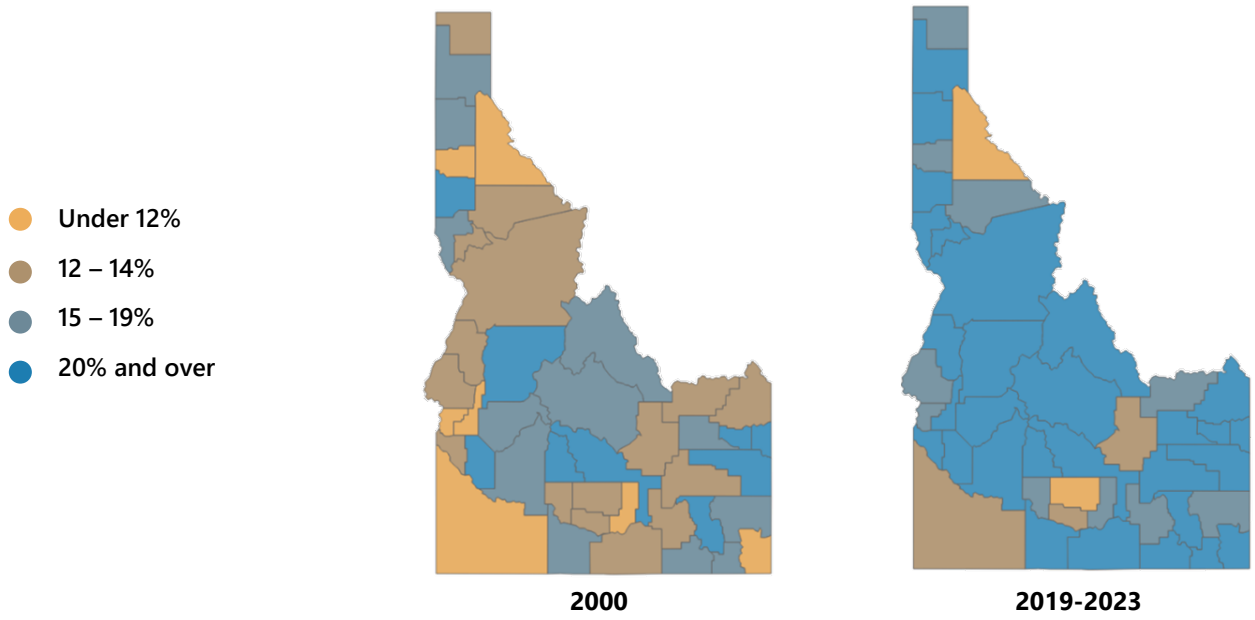
Over the past two decades, the percentage of Idaho adults with a postsecondary degree or higher has increased.

In 2023, 29 counties had 20% or more of their adult population with bachelor's degrees or higher. This was a significant increase from 2000, when only nine counties (Latah, Valley, Ada, Camas, Blaine, Bannock, Bonneville, Teton and Madison) had 20% or more of their adult population earning bachelor's degrees or higher.

There were only two counties in 2023 (Lincoln and Shoshone) that had under 12% of adults with a bachelor's degree compared with seven counties in 2000 (Shoshone, Benewah, Gem, Payette, Owyhee, Minidoka and Bear Lake).

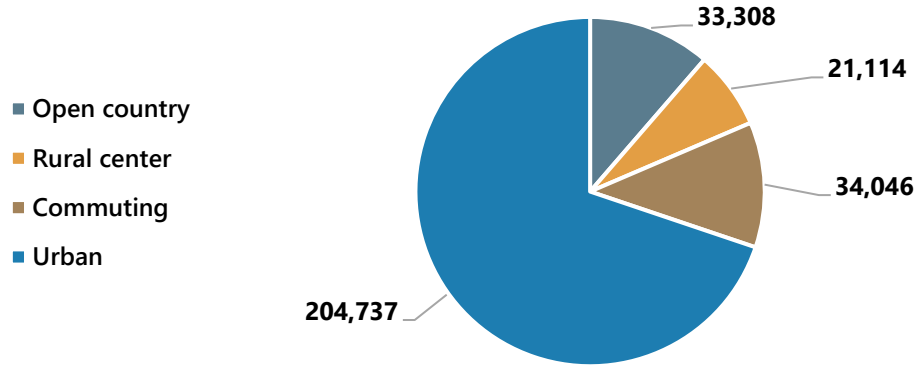
The share of rural adults in Idaho with a bachelor's degree grew from 16% in 2000 to 22.1% in 2023. For urban adults, this metric grew from 27% in 2000 to 32.5% in 2023.[14,15]

Figure 1.16. Population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher by county, 2000, 2019-2023



Source: U.S. Census, Decennial Census and American Community Survey

Figure 1.17. Urban and rural county classification, public school enrollment, 2023-2024



Source: Idaho State Board of Education

[14] "Census 2000," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://www.census.gov/data.html.
[15] "American Community Survey, 2019-2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://data.census.gov.

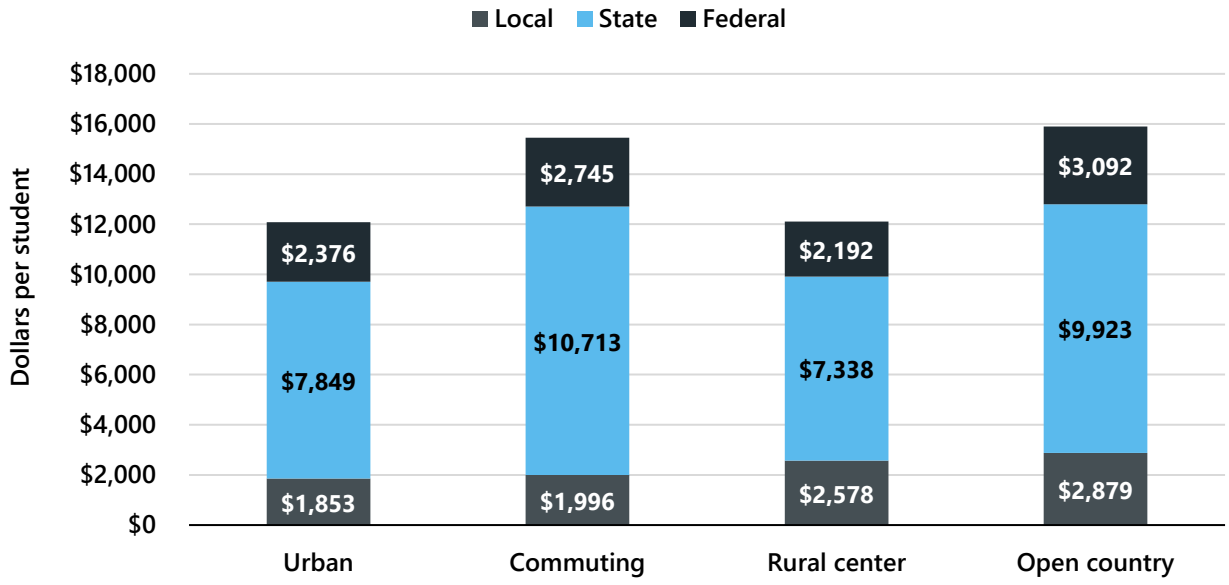
Table 1.9. Urban and rural classification, school districts with significant changes in enrollment, 2019-2023[16]

	Urban	Commuting	Rural center	Open country
Increase of 10% or greater	18	5	1	9
Decrease of 10% or greater	14	8	3	9
Total reporting districts	**99**	**26**	**11**	**56**

Source: Idaho State Board of Education

School district revenues came from many sources in the school year of 2023-2024. In order of magnitude, they were state, federal and local. On a per pupil basis, local taxes made up a smaller share of revenue for urban and commuting counties (approximately $2,000 per pupil) compared with rural centers and open country counties (approximately $2,500 to $2,900 per pupil). Both revenues and expenditures per pupil were highest in the most rural areas.[17]

Figure 1.18. Urban and rural county classification, school district funding per student, 2023-2024



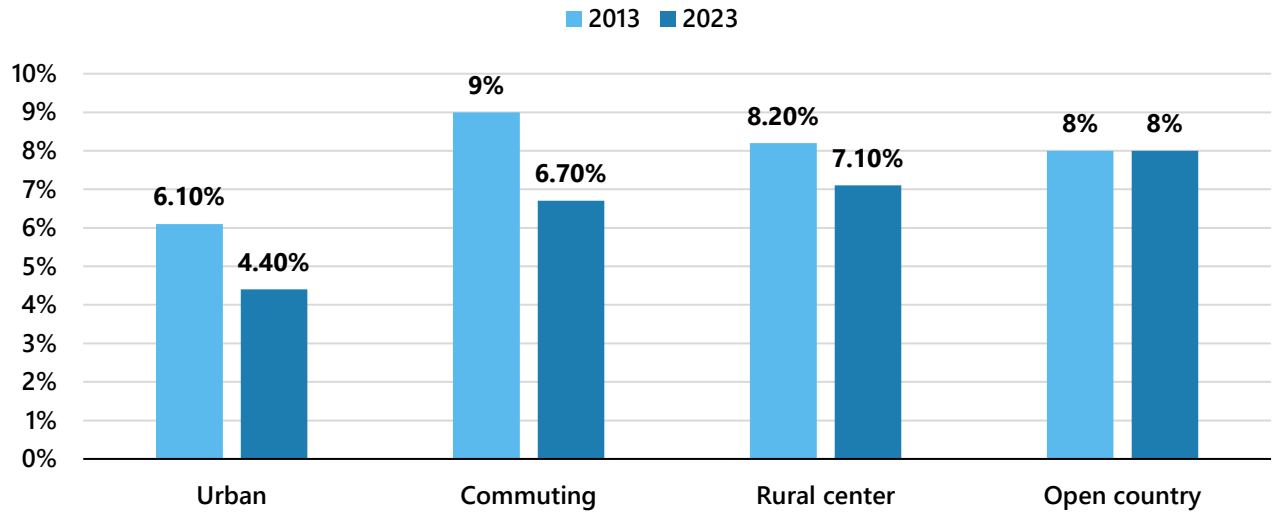
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Rural center and open country counties experienced a decrease in adults with a 9-12th grade education without a high school diploma from 2013-2023.[18]

However, despite advances in technology increasing broadband access and many rural areas of Idaho experiencing a bounce back in their demographics post-pandemic, there was still a larger percentage of rural adults who had less than a high school education than their urban counterparts in 2023.

[16] "Attendance Data," Idaho Education News, accessed March 1, 2025, https://www.idahoednews.org/idaho-education-data/attendance-data/.
[17] "Elementary/Secondary Information System Common Core of Data," National Center for Education Statistics, accessed March 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/.
[18] "American Community Survey, 5-year data files for 2009–2013 and 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed March 2025, https://data.census.gov/.

Figure 1.19. Rural and urban county classification, population 25 and over, 9-12th grade education without high school diploma, 2013 and 2023



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey

Part II. Economy and work

The economy of rural Idaho is intertwined with its natural resources, including its forests, rivers and open land. The amenities found throughout the state's landscape, most of which are located in rural counties, are highly connected with value-added industries like manufacturing and tourism.

Between 2003-2023, national trends favored job growth in service-providing industries over goods-producing industries. Idaho's urban counties followed the national trend, with employment in service-providing industries growing 2.1% annually compared with goods-producing industries growing slightly slower at 1.6%.

In contrast, employment in Idaho's rural counties over the past 20 years shifted toward goods-producing industries — agriculture, forestry, mining, construction and manufacturing — with a 1.5% annual growth rate exceeding the 1.2% annual growth for service-providing industries.

Two particularly strong rural industries in the state are natural resources and manufacturing. Rural counties in Idaho contribute more than two out of every three natural resource jobs statewide and are home to over 75% of the state's total farm acreage.

The industry focus and wage levels of rural areas of the state are significantly different than urban overall. However, each labor region's job concentration is more directly influenced by regional industry trends than whether the county is classified as urban or rural.

Over the past 20 years, Idaho's agriculture industry has been foundational to its economy, adapting through technological advancements and market shifts. Rural areas remain critical hubs for agricultural production and food processing, benefiting from the lower transportation costs and closer proximity to raw materials.

Rural open counties saw the highest agricultural employment growth at 82%, or 1,200 additional workers, during this time. However, urbanization, aging workforce demographics and other labor challenges have started to reshape traditional farm operations throughout all of Idaho.

Livestock production and specialized food processing also dominated job growth over the past 20 years, while securing labor and optimizing land use emerged as critical trends for long-term sustainability.

Labor mobility and economic stability in rural counties during this time were shaped by telework policy shifts and a reduction in housing affordability. Broadband expansion and the COVID-19 pandemic boosted rural remote work opportunities, despite the adoption of telework being slower in rural counties than urban.

The recreation economy throughout rural Idaho grew rapidly over the past two decades. Despite providing more local revenue, concerns surfaced regarding housing affordability, labor availability, sustainability and the preservation of natural beauty.

Growth and long-term stability in the state's rural recreational centers have depended on investing in infrastructure to increase public access while addressing needed amenities to attract and retain a seasonal workforce. While rural Idaho's economy has continued to adapt and integrate service-providing industry growth, it is still maintaining its foundation of natural resources.

Even though employment opportunities are an important aspect of economic health, they are not the only reason people continue to choose to relocate and remain in rural Idaho. Along with breathtaking scenery and open spaces, rural Idaho offers vast recreational opportunities, welcoming neighbors and a slower pace of life. Despite the potential for lower wages, the value of rural Idaho is enhanced by its proximity to natural amenities, community social networks and unique sense of place.

With the foundation of economic analysis established in part II, the focus in part III will transition to exploring critical trends further shaping rural Idaho's future.

Employment and wages

A majority of the data for this section is sourced from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (QCEW) data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics along with internal data compiled by the Idaho Department of Labor for 2003-2023.

Statewide industry employment, 2003-2023

The economy of rural Idaho is highly connected with its natural resources — whether that be fertile soil for agriculture, vast undeveloped land area, forests, rivers or commodities used in the manufacturing of physical goods.

However, like the U.S., Idaho's economy is shifting from a heavy reliance on the production of goods — seen in jobs within agriculture, forestry, mining, construction and manufacturing — toward service-providing roles. Between 2003-2023, goods-producing jobs in Idaho grew by a healthy 1.6% per year but were overshadowed by service-providing employment increasing at a faster 1.9%.

Annual employment growth rates for all industries combined ranged from a low of 1.2% in rural center counties to a high of 2% in the state's urban areas.

While goods-producing jobs tend to be more highly concentrated in rural counties, the less resource intensive service-providing industries generally have a stronger presence in urban areas. In fact, urban counties had the fastest growth rate for service-providing employment between 2003-2023 at 2.1%.

Annual growth rates for goods-producing jobs from 2003-2023 were 1.5% for rural counties and 1.6% for urban counties. Among rural counties, commuting counties had the fastest annual goods-producing job growth at 2%, followed by open country at 1.3% and rural center at 1.1%.

Table 2.1. Annualized employment growth rate by industry classification, 2003-2023

Annual average job growth, 2003-2023	Total employment	Goods-producing jobs	Service-providing jobs
Urban counties	2.0%	1.6%	2.1%
Rural counties	1.3%	1.5%	1.2%
Commuting	1.4%	2.0%	1.2%
Rural center	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%
Open country	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%
Idaho	**1.8%**	**1.6%**	**1.9%**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry

While overall goods-producing employment growth was similar for both urban and rural areas, the specific goods-producing industries of manufacturing and construction exhibited different employment growth patterns between urban and rural areas.

Manufacturing had the fastest annual growth rates in commuting counties at 2.5% while rural center and urban counties experienced slower annual growth rates closer to half a percent. Open country manufacturing jobs increased at a 1% annual rate.

In construction, commuting and urban areas each experienced annual growth rates over 3% while rural center and open country construction job growth was much slower at under 2%.

Manufacturing provided the highest share of industry employment within the rural counties. Rural counties experienced annual growth rates of 1.3% for manufacturing jobs between 2003-2023, which was double the 0.6% increase for urban counties.

As a result, the concentration of production jobs in Idaho's rural areas increased as they accounted for 29% of statewide manufacturing employment in 2023 compared with only 26% in 2003.

Construction employment shifted in the opposite direction as rural county employment accounted for 23% of construction jobs in 2023, down from 26% in 2003.

Together, approximately one fourth of all manufacturing and construction jobs statewide were located within rural areas. For the natural resource industries of agriculture, hunting, fishing, forestry, and mining, more than two-thirds of all employment was also located within rural counties.

In 2023, service-providing jobs made up nearly 80% of Idaho's total employment. Looking by county type, it accounted for over 82% of employment in urban counties. However, this job type was less predominant in the rural county types, making up only 66% of commuting employment, 72% of rural center employment and 74% of open country employment.

Between 2003-2023, annual service-providing employment growth was similar between rural county classification types in a tight range of 1.2-1.3%. Urban counties had a faster annual growth rate of 2.1% during this period.

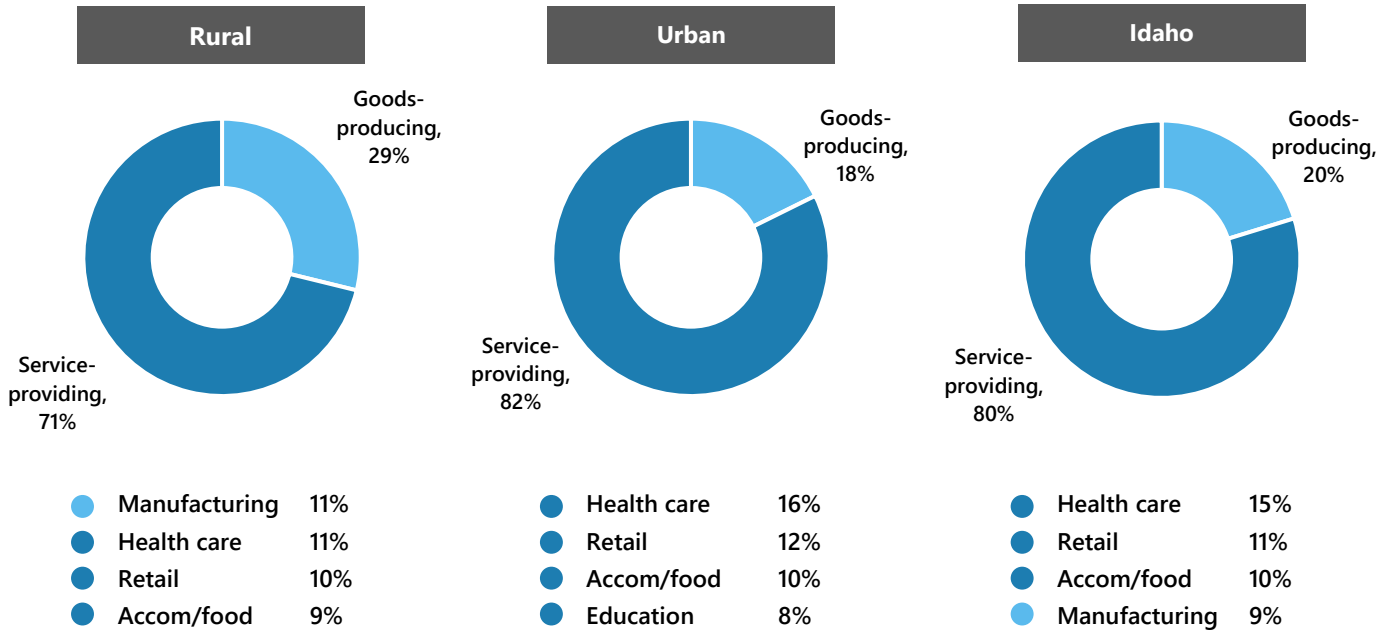
While the goods-producing industry of manufacturing is the largest industry sector for rural areas, the service-providing industry of health care is the top employment industry for both Idaho statewide as well as the urban counties.

In 2023, less than one in five health care and social assistance jobs were located within Idaho's rural counties while over 80% was located within an urban county.

Other service-providing industries where less than 20% of statewide employment was located within rural counties included finance and insurance (12%), wholesale trade (18%), and real estate rental and leasing (18%).

Service-providing industry sectors with at least 30% of statewide employment located within rural counties in 2023 included utilities (33%) and public administration (30%).

Figure 2.1. Employment by industry sector, 2023

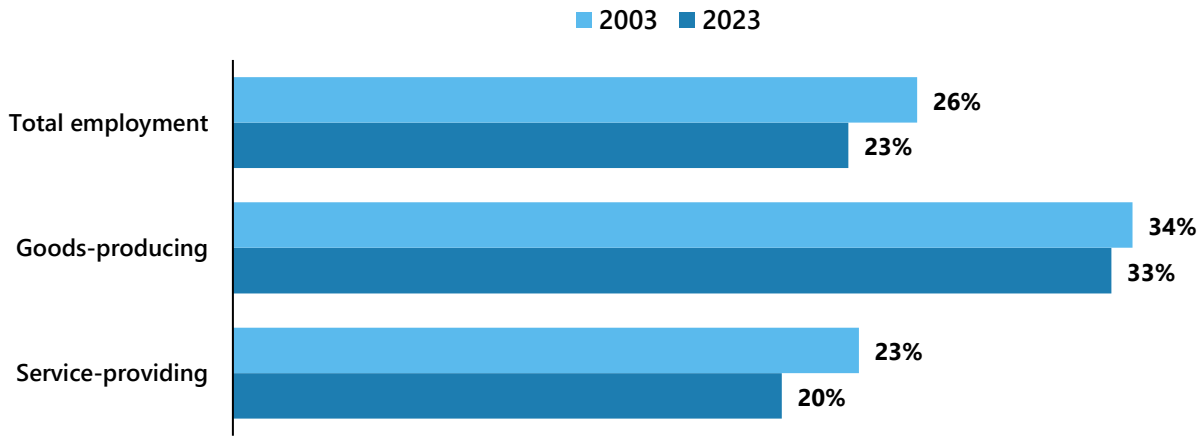


Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2023

Shifting concentration between urban and rural jobs

Rural counties comprised 23% of total statewide employment in 2023, down from 26% in 2003. Rural Idaho had a higher share of statewide jobs within goods-producing industries at 33% and a smaller share of service-providing employment at 20%. All other service-providing jobs became more concentrated in urban areas in 2023 compared with 2003, with the exception of professional and business services (increasing from 17% rural in 2003 to 20% in 2023) and information (increasing from 21% to 23%).

Figure 2.2. Rural county share of statewide employment by major industry sector, 2003 and 2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

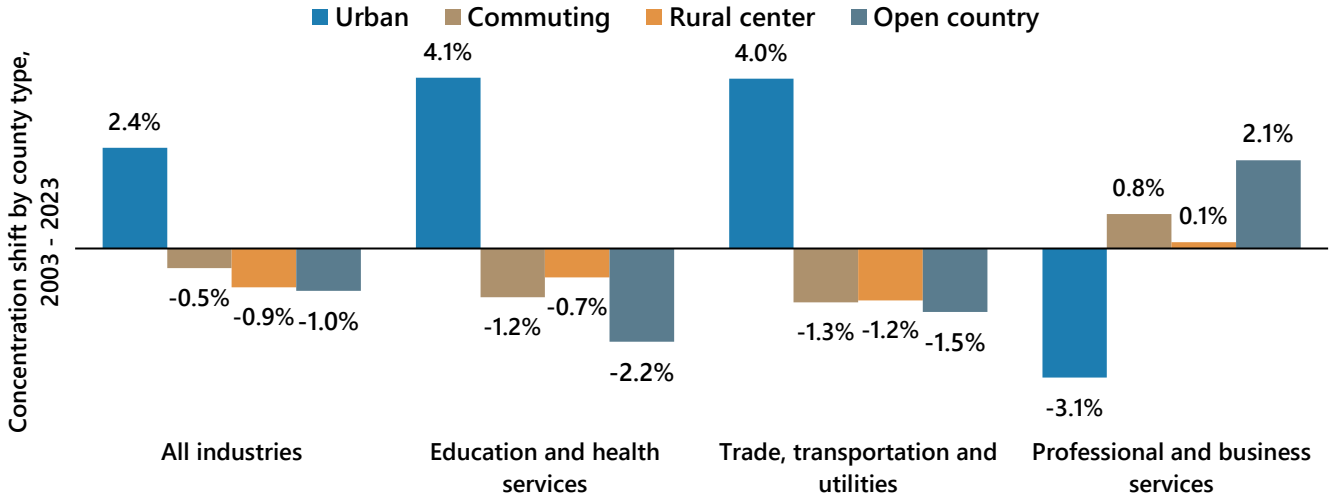
The share of statewide residents living within a rural county declined from 32% in 2003 to 28% in 2023 and employment concentration also shifted in a similar manner. Compared with 2003, employment for all industries combined had shifted by 2023 — concentrating toward urban areas by over 2%. However, different magnitudes of share shifts occurred between the top three service-industry sectors of: 1) education and health, 2) trade/transportation/utilities and 3) professional and business services.

Both education and health services as well as trade/transportation/utilities had an employment share shift of over 4% toward the urban areas, while professional and business services became more concentrated in the rural areas — specifically within open country counties.

Although rural counties had a lower share of 2023 statewide employment than in 2003, each rural county classification did see one or more industries shift job concentration in their favor:

- Commuting counties gained a small share of manufacturing, professional and business services, and miscellaneous service employment.
- Rural center counties had an overall decline of nearly 1% of statewide jobs but increased in information.
- Open country counties also had a 1% decline in total concentration, but managed to gain in manufacturing, information and professional and business services.

Figure 2.3. Employment concentration shift by county type, 2003-2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Average weekly wages

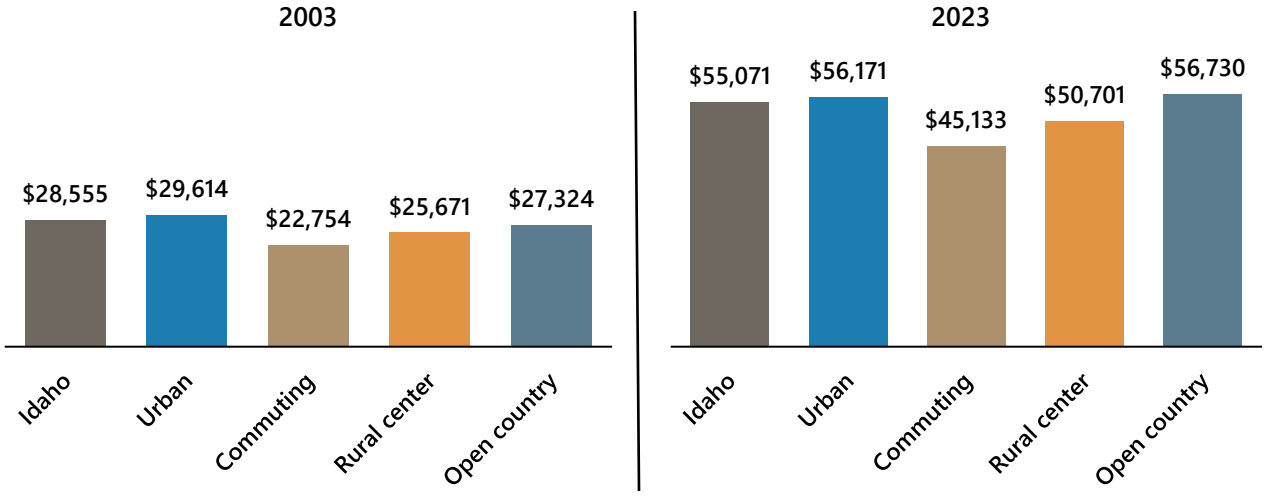
The average weekly wage for an employee based in Idaho was $1,059 in 2023 ($55,000 annually), nearly double the average of $549 in 2003 ($28,000 annually).

The low of $868 was in commuting counties with the high of $1,091 in open country counties. For rural and urban counties, the averages were $988 and $1,080, respectively.

From 2003-2023, open country counties had the highest annual wage growth of all county types at 3.7% — resulting in 2023 annual wages that were 3% higher than the statewide average. This was a change from the 2003 levels, when open country average weekly wages were only 96% of the statewide average.

Commuting and rural center counties also experienced faster wage growth than urban counties from 2003-2023, but their average weekly wages remained below the urban counties.

Figure 2.4. Annual average wages per employee by county type, 2003 and 2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

In 2003, 37% of Idaho's urban employees had average earnings exceeding $640/week compared with only 28% in rural counties. By 2023, that relationship changed to where a similar share of rural and urban employees earned an inflation-adjusted level of $1,080 per week.

High-paying jobs that often contribute to higher average weekly wages in an area can be seen in industries like information, financial activities and professional business services.

Commuting counties had the lowest share of workers earning at least $1,080 per week in 2023 at 32% (similar to 2003). This was likely due to the fact that combined, these three industry sectors accounted for only 8% of employment within this county type.

To contrast, these industries accounted for 13% of employment in rural center counties and closer to 20% of employment in either urban or open country counties.

Especially high earners can be seen in open country counties in the eastern region of Idaho. This is notable since over 40% of jobs within this area are classified within the information, financial activities and professional business services industry classes and require high educational attainment and specialized skills.

The charts below highlight the regional and county type differences for workers earning at least $640 per week in 2003 (Table 2.2a) and those earning over $1,080 in 2023 (Table 2.2b). Numbers in green represent the highest share by county classification type while those in red represent the lowest.

Table 2.2a. Share of statewide average weekly wages by county type (Idaho=100), 2003

Share of employees earning average weekly wages in 2003 of $640+ ($16+ per hour)						
Region	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Commuting**	**Rural center**	**Open country**	**Total**
Northern	32%	**33%**	--	27%	34%	**32%**
North central	**40%**	**23%**	--	--	23%	**37%**
Southwestern	**40%**	24%	**23%**	**25%**	23%	**38%**
South central	**28%**	30%	26%	**33%**	**20%**	**29%**
Southeastern	36%	30%	26%	--	**37%**	**33%**
Eastern	34%	29%	**31%**	--	27%	**33%**
Idaho	**37%**	**28%**	**26%**	**31%**	**29%**	**35%**

Table 2.2b. Share of statewide average weekly wages by county type (Idaho=100), 2023

Share of employees earning average weekly wages in 2023 of $1,080+ ($27+ per hour)						
Region	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Commuting**	**Rural center**	**Open country**	**Total**
Northern	40%	33%	--	35%	32%	**38%**
North central	40%	**29%**	--	--	**29%**	**38%**
Southwestern	**45%**	30%	**28%**	**32%**	31%	**43%**
South central	**30%**	38%	**37%**	**40%**	30%	**35%**
Southeastern	**30%**	33%	31%	--	38%	**32%**
Eastern	34%	**58%**	34%	--	**66%**	**43%**
Idaho	**41%**	**39%**	**32%**	**38%**	**45%**	**40%**

Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Aggregated unemployment insurance tax reports

Specialized counties by industry type

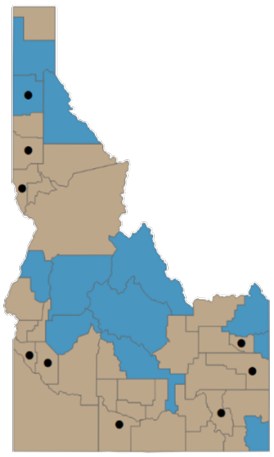
The 2025 U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service typology identifies counties with a large proportion of annual earnings or jobs dedicated to a particular industry family in 2019, 2021 and 2022. Counties having a high concentration in one industry can also have a high dependence on another. For example, Caribou County in the southeast had a high concentration of both manufacturing and mining. Minimum thresholds differ for each industry family as those classified as farming dependent can have a minimum threshold of either 20% earnings or 17% employment while mining only needs to be reliant on at least 11% earnings or 7% employment.[19]

● Represents an urban county

Mining dependent

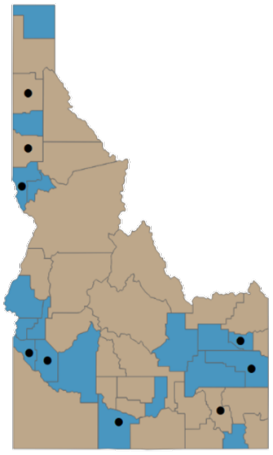
Shoshone and Caribou — both rural — were the only specialized mining counties.

Recreation dependent



12 counties — 11 rural and one — urban (Kootenai), were reliant on hospitality and tourism.

Nonspecialized

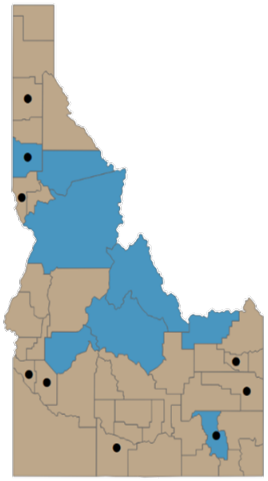


18 counties — 12 rural — did not meet earnings or employment levels to be classified as industry dependent.

Farming dependent

Nine counties — all rural and mostly in the Snake River Plain — were highly concentrated in farming income.

Government dependent



Eight counties — six rural — relied on federal or state government for earnings and employment.

Manufacturing dependent

Caribou and Power — both rural counties in the southeast — were manufacturing dependent.

[19] "2025 County Typology Codes," U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed June 2025, https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-typology-codes.

Region 1 – Northern

Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, Shoshone counties

Table 2.3. Classifications of northern counties

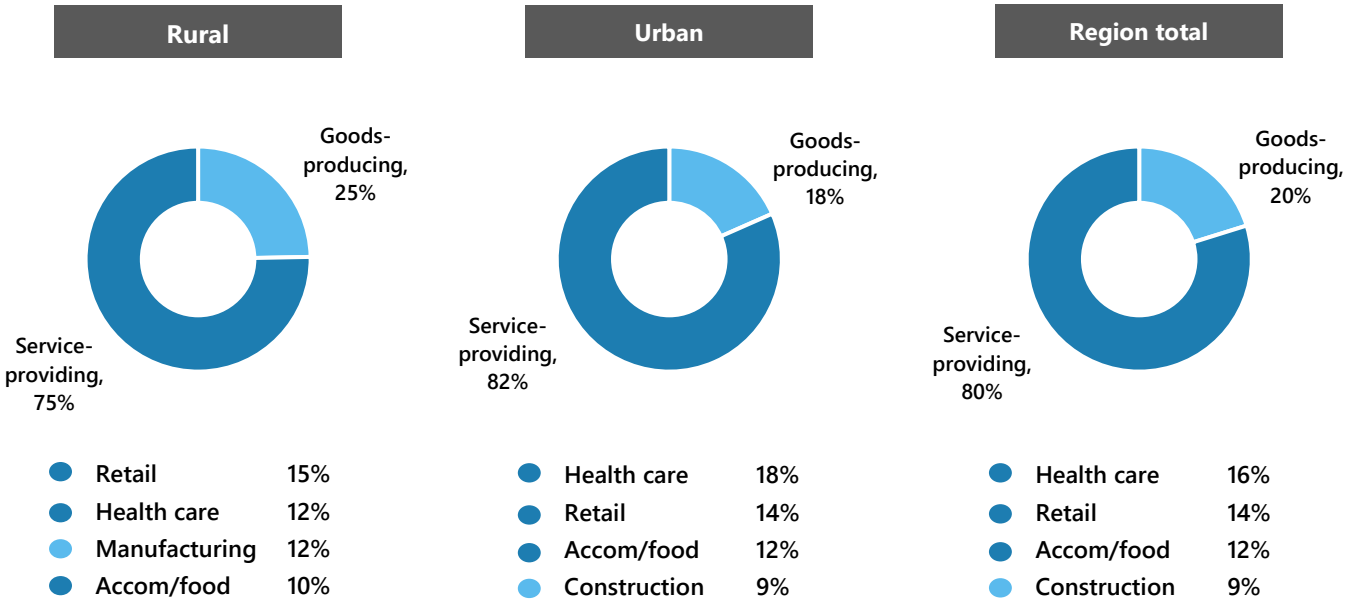
Region	Name	Urban	Commuting*	Rural center	Open country
1	**Northern**	Kootenai	--	Bonner	Benewah, Boundary, Shoshone

*Northern Idaho does not currently have any counties classified as commuting.

Region overview

Economic development in northern Idaho has been strongly influenced by the growing importance of goods-producing industries, such as natural resources, within the region's rural counties. It has also been strongly affected by the economic activity in the region's only urban center (Kootenai County).

Figure 2.5. Northern employment by industry sector, 2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2023

Urban county employment

Between 2003-2023, northern Idaho's only urban county of Kootenai held a large concentration of its economic activity, increasing from 66% of the region's total employment to 71.5%. The county also had the fastest annual job growth in northern Idaho during this time period at 2.3% with employment in the county increasing 57.5%, growing more than twice the rate of the region's four remaining rural counties, which collectively grew by just 22.2%.

Rural county employment

With rural counties in northern Idaho growing slower than the urban center, unique patterns in industry allocation emerged between 2003-2023. For example, the rural counties in the region retained an immense goods-producing sector, comprising industries like natural resources, construction, logging and mining.

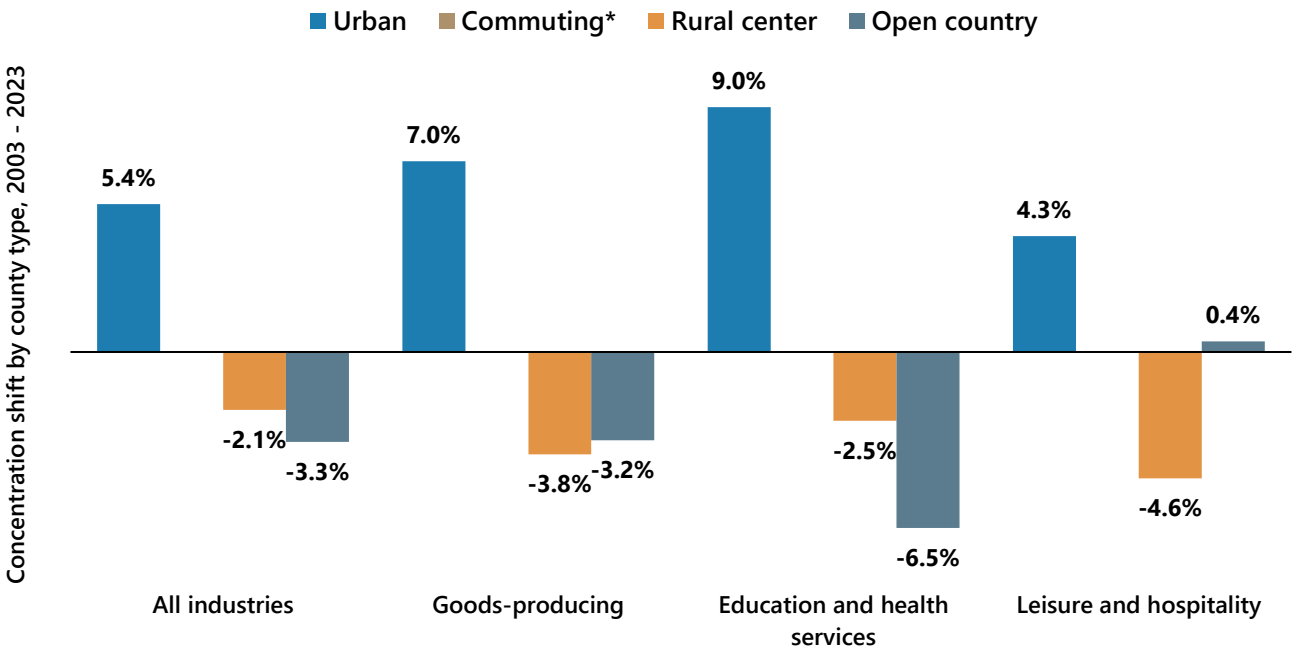
Rural counties represented 29% of total jobs within the northern region in 2023 but accounted for nearly 35% of regional goods-producing employment. Within the goods-producing sector, the rural counties were home to over 60% of the region's natural resource jobs — specifically in forestry, logging and mining. While the rural

counties of Benewah, Bonner and Boundary had natural resource jobs focused on forestry, logging and agriculture, Shoshone County instead specialized in mining.

The rural counties also accounted for 38% of regional manufacturing employment. Bonner County, the region's only rural center county, comprised three of every five rural manufacturing jobs in the northern region with a niche concentration of aerospace product and parts production.

However, compared with the employment share of goods production in rural Idaho at large (29%), rural northern Idaho's share was relatively small (25%). This difference can likely be explained by the relatively large leisure and hospitality industry in northern Idaho, such as the substantial ski resorts seen in Bonner and Shoshone counties.

Figure 2.6. Northern region employment concentration shift by county type, 2003-2023



*Northern Idaho does not currently have any counties classified as commuting.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2003-2023

Regional wages

Wages in northern Idaho's rural counties remained relatively low compared with its one urban county of Kootenai and other rural counties around the state in 2023. Just 33% of wage earners in north Idaho's four rural counties earned at least $1,080 weekly, compared with 40% in Kootenai County and 39% in rural counties statewide. In 2003, the ratio of wage earners at the equivalent percentiles was much more balanced between rural and urban counties in northern Idaho, at 33% and 32% respectively.

Region 2 – North central

Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce counties

Table 2.4. Classifications of north central counties

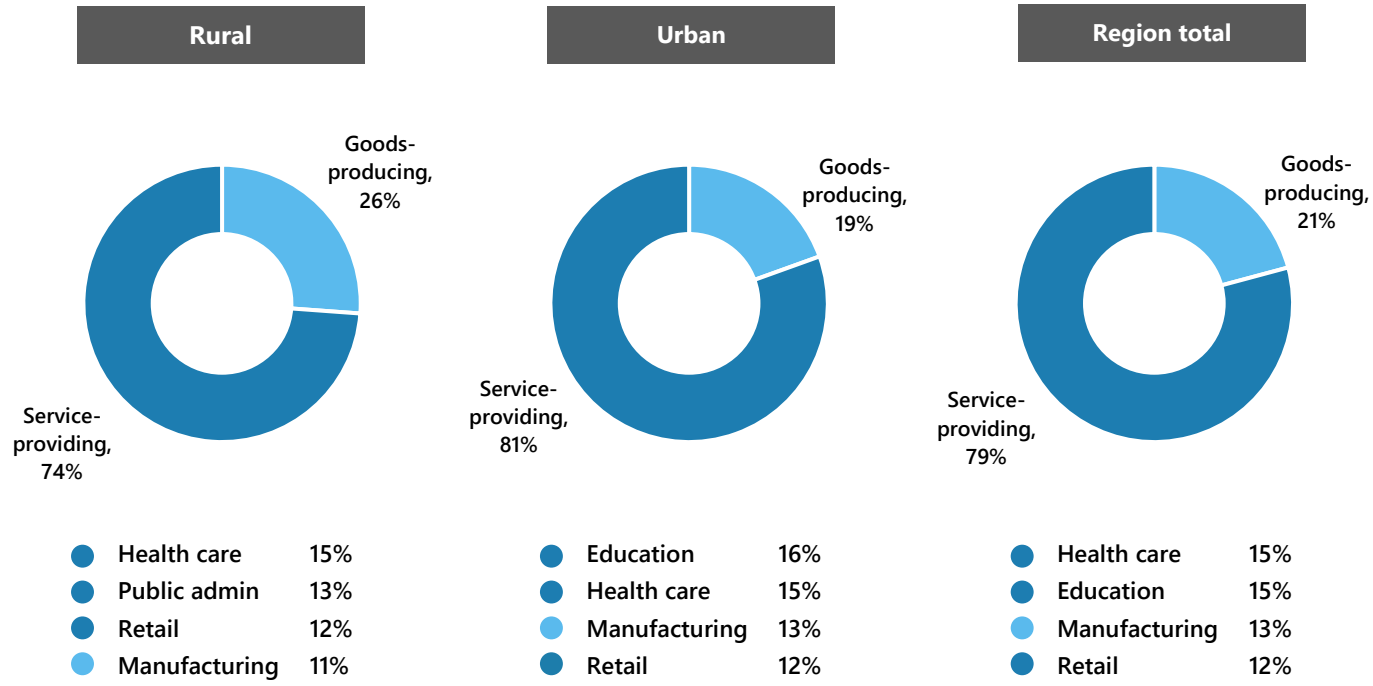
Region					
2	**North central**	Latah, Nez Perce	--	--	Clearwater, Idaho, Lewis

*North central Idaho does not currently have any counties classified as commuting or rural center.

Region overview

North central is home to three rural open country counties and two urban counties. The rural counties (Clearwater, Idaho, Lewis) cover 85% of the region's land area, comprise 27% of the population and employ 20% of its workers. While total employment concentration stayed fairly constant at 20% rural and 80% urban from 2003-2023, some notable movement occurred within individual industrial sectors.

Figure 2.7. North central employment by industry sector, 2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2023

Urban county employment

Although both rural and urban counties in north central Idaho reported manufacturing job growth over the past 20 years, the 2.3% annual growth rate for this industry in urban counties was nearly three times the 0.8% annual growth seen in rural open country counties. This result contrasts sharply with statewide growth patterns where rural manufacturing jobs experienced a growth rate that was double that of urban areas.

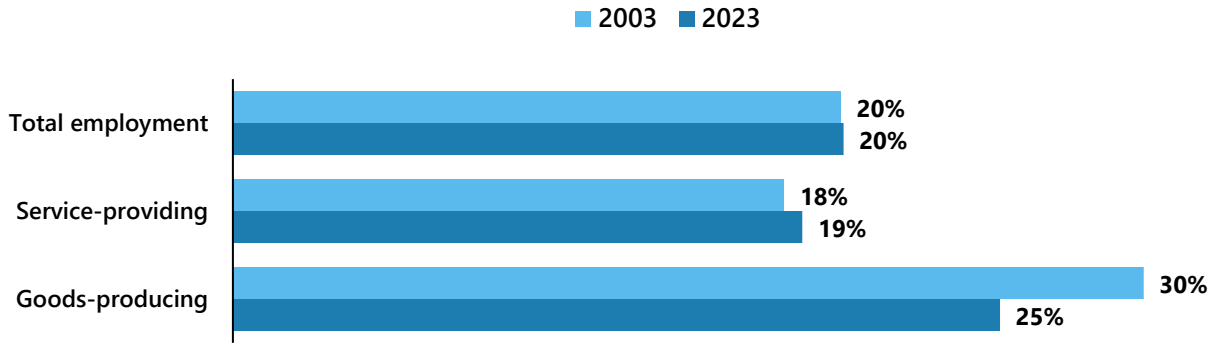
North central Idaho has the highest share of combined education and health services employment for any of Idaho's labor regions at 30% of total jobs. This is likely because Latah and Nez Perce, the region's two urban counties, are home to two of the state's public postsecondary institutions — the University of Idaho and Lewis-Clark State College, respectively. However, while education and health care establishments were top employers for Latah County in 2023, Nez Perce was dominated by large manufacturers.

Rural county employment

In 2003, rural counties comprised 30% of the region's goods-producing jobs, but that share declined to 25% by 2023. Although construction jobs had a slight concentration shift toward rural counties, a larger offsetting shift in manufacturing jobs occurred in the urban areas. Rural counties experienced a slightly faster growth rate in construction jobs, increasing from 26% of regional employment in 2003 to 28% in 2023 — a 2.7% annual growth rate compared with a 2.1% annual rate for urban areas. With more than two manufacturing jobs in the region for each construction job, goods-producing employment overall became more heavily concentrated within the urban counties.

In contrast, service-providing jobs, like professional and business services and financial activities, became more heavily rooted in the rural areas and increased slightly from 18% of regional employment in 2003 to 19% in 2023.

Figure 2.8. North central rural county share of employment by major industry sector, 2003 and 2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Education and health care establishments also comprised at least two of the top three employers in 2023 for each of the region's three rural counties. These rural areas accounted for 20% of total regional employment and 16% of regional education and health care jobs. The industries within these rural counties that employed at least 30% of regional workers included natural resources (52%), public administration (35%), utilities (31%) and construction (30%).

Private goods-producing industries and government enterprises combined contribute nearly half of this rural region's 2023 GDP (46%) compared with less than a third for Idaho statewide (32%).[20] Due to the high reliance on goods-production and government operations, these same rural counties were offset by a lower regional job share within the service-providing sectors of real estate rental and leasing (10%), education (12%), accommodation and food services (15%) and information (15%).

Regional wages

In 2023, average weekly wages per employee in north central were $948, with rural county workers averaging $873 compared with $962 for urban employment. Despite lower rural wages overall, average weekly wages in 2023 were higher in the rural counties for the utilities, professional and business services, and public administration industries, which combined accounted for 18% of rural employment and 12% of urban employment. In 2023, 29% of rural employees had average weekly wages exceeding $1,080 per week ($56,000 per year) compared with 40% of urban employees.

[20] "Gross Domestic Product by County and Metropolitan Area, 2023," U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, published Dec. 4, 2024, https://www.bea.gov/news/2024/gross-domestic-product-county-and-metropolitan-area-2023.

Region 3 – Southwestern

Ada, Adams, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee, Payette, Valley, Washington counties

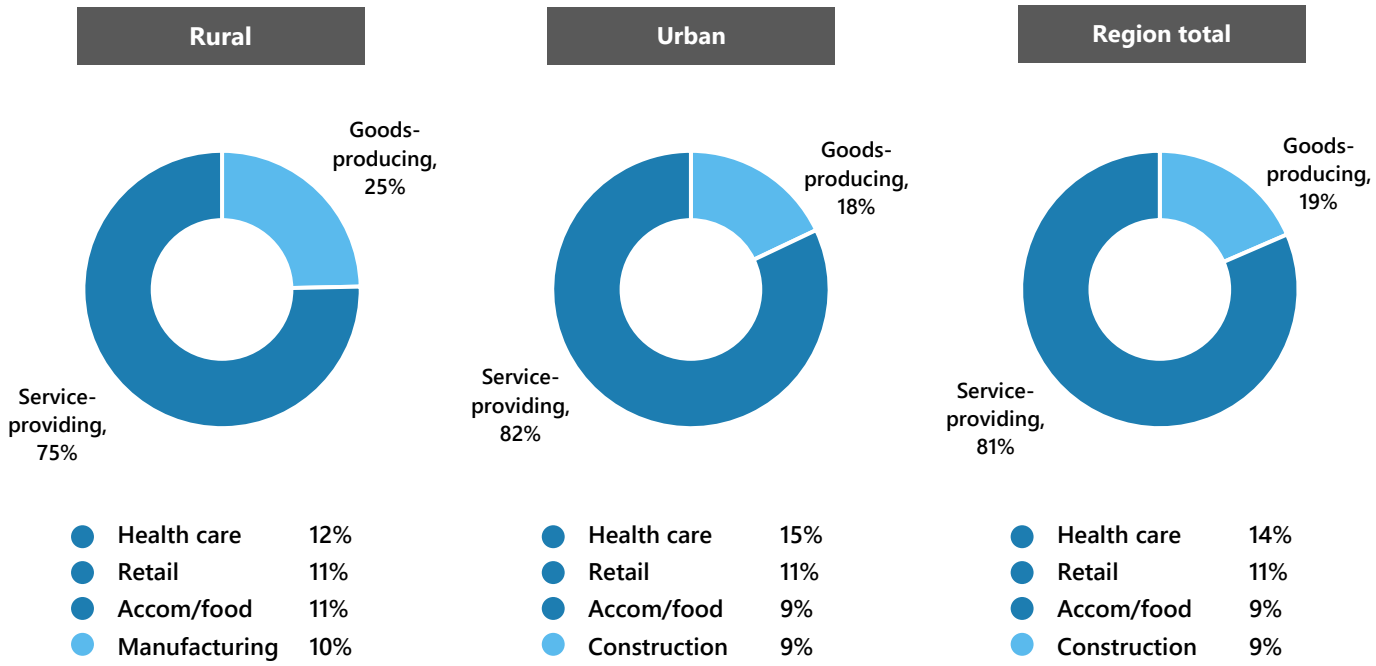
Table 2.5. Classifications of southwestern counties

Region	Name	Urban	Commuting	Rural center	Open country
3	**Southwestern**	Ada, Canyon	Boise, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee	Payette	Adams, Valley, Washington

Region overview

From 2003 to 2023, southwestern Idaho's average employment grew by 56%, or 2.3% average annualized growth. Southwestern Idaho's rural counties accrued about half the growth of their urban neighbors. By classification type, open country rural counties grew 10 percentage points faster than rural center counties and over five percentage points faster than commuting counties (Figure 2.10). While growth was slower in rural counties, heightened industry diversification occurred in both rural and urban counties.

Figure 2.9. Southwestern employment by industry sector, 2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2023

Urban county employment

In 2023, the two urban counties in southwestern Idaho comprised 40% of the state's population and 86% of the region's residents.[21] While these two urban counties are neighbors, they complement each other more than they compete with each other. Canyon County offers more affordable housing options or larger lots plus a pastoral quality of life. Ada County generates many of the jobs and provides cultural and recreational opportunities.

The region's urban county job growth of 60%, or 2.4% of average annualized growth, outpaced the total growth of the region slightly.[22] Many operations have centralized within urban counties due to their larger

[21] "Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013, and 2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html.
[22] "Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by Industry, 2023," Idaho Department of Labor, accessed June 2025.

labor pools, preeminent transportation including an airport with commercial flights, and economies of scale for purchasing or transportation costs.

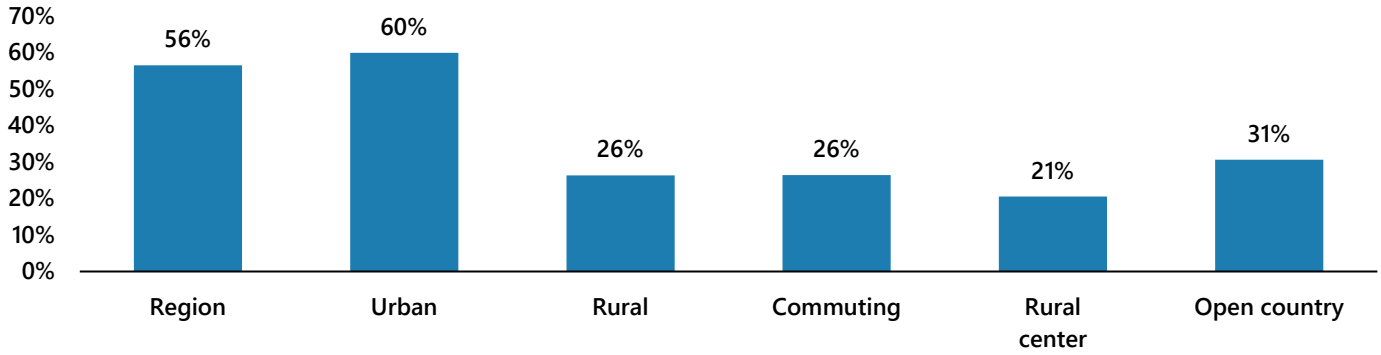
Rural county employment

The slower job growth in rural counties between 2003-2023 can be explained by the makeup of their leading industries and their location within the state. While growth was slower in southwestern Idaho's rural counties, it was sustainable for a population who prefers a quieter lifestyle.

While many operations left southwestern Idaho's rural counties, the rural counties had a larger share of manufacturing employment. This was likely due to the location of manufacturing plants near fields and transportation corridors in rural counties trimming expenses.

From 2003 to 2023, the commuting counties of Elmore, Owyhee and Gem counties experienced 46% growth of goods-producing jobs. Professional and business services grew by 48%, comprising a variety of business activities. Available jobs in the area were impacted by the seasonal nature of agricultural activities, processing a raw product in a timely fashion or completing a project in coordination with other workers' schedules. Examples of seasonal industries include leisure and hospitality, retail and educational services.

Figure 2.10. Average employment change for all industries by county type, 2003-2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2003-2023

Mountain Home Air Force Base is a major employer with a flow of workers back and forth between Elmore and Ada counties. Until production stopped in 2009, Elmore County residents worked at Micron, a large semi-conductor plant located in southeast Boise. The company has continued its back-office activities and has a strong research and development division. The campus is currently constructing a new fabrication plant with an investment of $15 billion. This new plant will encourage more commuting between Elmore County and Ada County, especially considering housing prices were 34% lower in Elmore County as of April 2025.[23]

Table 2.6. Commuting industries by share of total average employment, 2003-2023

Industries					
	2003	2023	2003-2023	2003	2023
Goods producing	22.0%	25.4%	3.4%	2	1
Education and health services	22.5%	22.4%	-0.1%	1	2
Trade, transportation and utilities	18.8%	18.6%	-0.3%	3	3
Leisure and hospitality	13.1%	12.7%	-0.4%	4	4
All other industries	23.7%	21.0%	-2.7%		

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2003-2023

[23] "April 2025 Realtor Statistics," Intermountain Multiple Listing Service, accessed May 2025, https://www.intermountainmls.com.

Payette is the only rural center county in southwestern Idaho with food processing and agriculture comprising its base economy. Its top industries have not changed significantly since 2003. It is a slow growing county partly due to competition for workers who may choose to work in Oregon due to its higher wage structure.

From 2003-2023, southwestern Idaho's open country counties — Adams, Valley and Washington — experienced the fastest pace of employment growth compared with its rural counterparts — an increase of 31%. These three counties are not located close to the urban counties. They appear more self-sufficient due to this distance with employment spread across most sectors in correlation with population growth.

The largest industry sector for southwestern Idaho's open country counties — leisure and hospitality — experienced 84% growth. Tourism grew at a red-hot pace during the COVID-19 pandemic in these more isolated mountainous counties. To support the growth in primary and second homes, the financial activities industry thrived with 67% growth, although this industry carried smaller employment needs. The shift from goods-production to services followed an expansion of jobs overall, not a reduction of sector jobs.

Table 2.7. Open country industries by share of total average employment, 2003-2023

Industries	Open country		% change	Rank (1=highest)	
	2003	2023	2003-2023	2003	2023
Leisure and hospitality	15.6%	22.1%	6.4%	4	1
Goods producing	22.6%	19.9%	-2.7%	1	2
Education and health services	18.2%	18.0%	-0.2%	2	3
Trade, transportation and utilities	16.9%	16.5%	-0.4%	3	4
All other industries	26.7%	23.6%	-3.1%		

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2003-2023

Region 4 – South central

Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, Twin Falls counties

Table 2.8. Classifications of south central counties

Region	Name	Urban	Commuting	Rural center	Open country
4	**South central**	Twin Falls	Jerome	Blaine, Cassia, Minidoka	Camas, Gooding, Lincoln

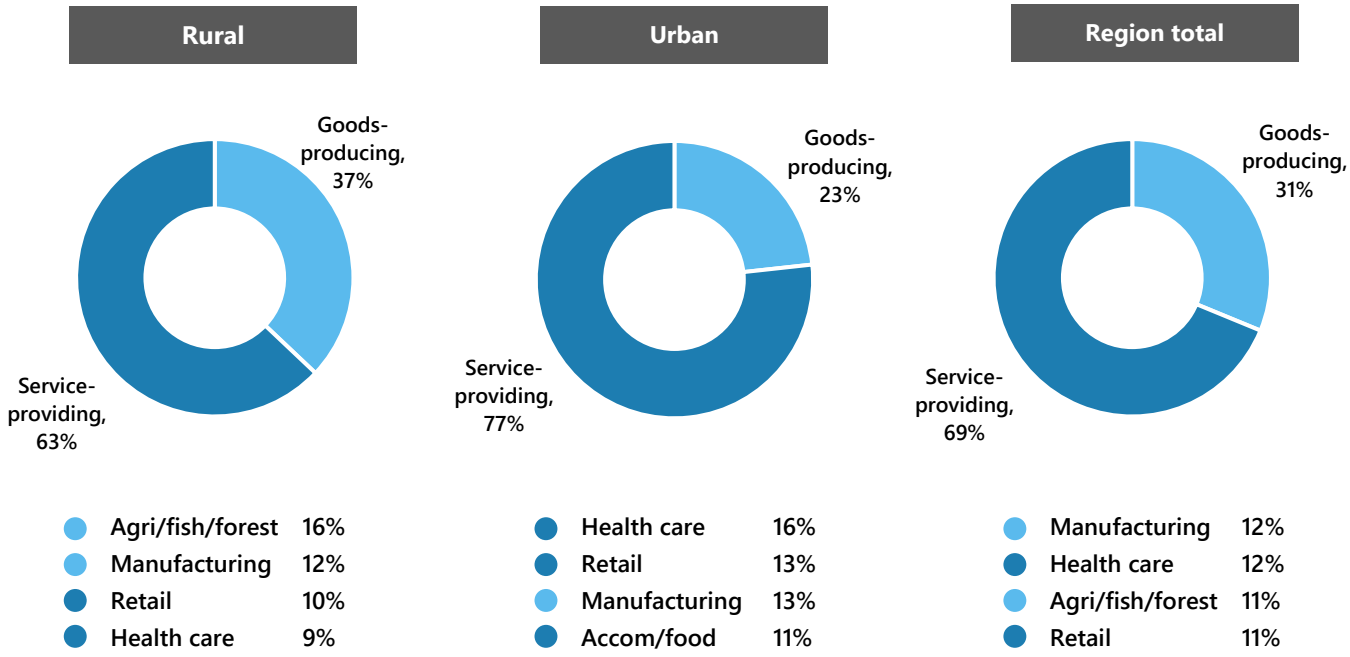
Region overview

With the expansion of food processing, agriculture has grown to 16% of total rural employment in south central Idaho as of 2023. As the only region to have agriculture as a top industry, this sector is the lifeblood of south central Idaho.

The goods-producing industry employment share in the south central region increased from nearly 28% in 2003 to over 31% in 2023. Over the past two decades, additional large food processors such as Chobani and Clif Bar have settled in the Magic Valley.

Education and health services employment share for the region increased from 17% in 2003 to 19% in 2023. As south central's population grows and ages, demand for education and health services is a growing share of total employment.

Figure 2.11. South central employment by industry sector, 2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2023

Twin Falls County, the single urban county in the region, has a higher share of service-producing industries than rural counties as the larger population creates a greater share of diverse employment opportunities.

Jerome County has become an increasingly important complement to Twin Falls County, with a growing share of employment in agriculture, manufacturing and food processing. The connection between Jerome and Twin Falls has grown so strong that the two counties became the Twin Falls MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) in

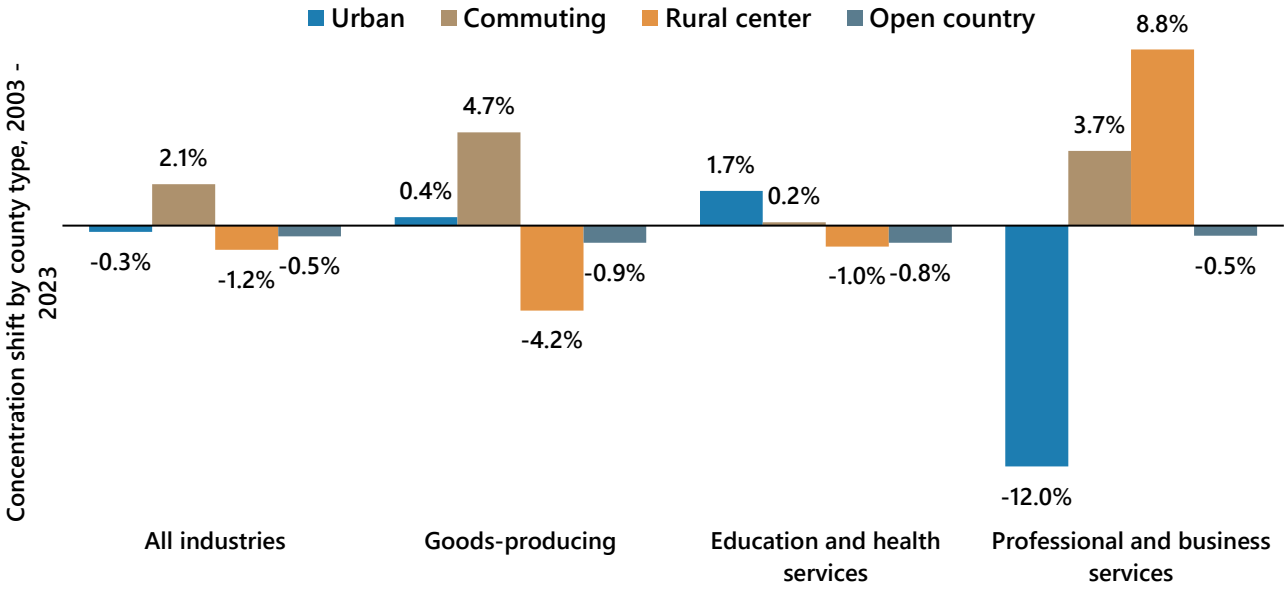
2017.[24] Unlike most other regions, south central Idaho's sole urban county declined in its concentration of total employment.

Rural county employment

Rural counties have a larger share of goods-producing jobs than Twin Falls County as their two largest industries are agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting and manufacturing. Jerome, south central's commuting county, gained share in total employment in goods producing, specifically in manufacturing employment — more than doubling from 2003-2023.[25]

However, some rural center counties, Blaine County specifically, have seen an employment shift away from agriculture and manufacturing in favor of construction and professional/scientific services. Open country counties' employment share has slightly declined in all super sectors, as the most rural parts of the region have experienced weaker economic growth than more populated counties in the region.

Figure 2.12. South central employment concentration shift by county type, 2003-2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Regional wages

The share of employees earning above average wages has increased in all county classifications from 2003-2023, with the largest percentage growth coming from Jerome County at 11%. As of 2023, half of Jerome's employment was in goods-producing industries, with both construction and manufacturing wages being significantly higher than average wages overall.[26]

South central rural center counties had the highest share of employees earning above average wages in both 2003 and 2023, as Blaine County had the highest median household income of any county in Idaho.

Rural counties saw greater gains in above average wage growth than urban Twin Falls County, as agribusiness and other manufacturing spread and evolved over the past two decades in addition to remote work arrangements increasing labor mobility in rural areas.

[24] Jan Roeser, "Twin Falls, Jerome Counties Elevated from Micropolitan to Metropolitan Area," *Idaho at Work,* published June 14, 2018, https://idahoatwork.com/2018/06/14/twin-falls-jerome-counties-elevated-from-micropolitan-to-metropolitan-area/.
[25] "Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by Industry, 2003–2023," Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed June 2025, https://www.bls.gov/cew/.
[26] "County Profile Report," Idaho Department of Labor, accessed May 2025, https://lmi.idaho.gov/regional-info.

Region 5 – Southeastern

Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida, Power counties

Table 2.9. Classifications of southeastern counties

Region	Name	Urban	Commuting	Rural center*	Open country
5	**Southeastern**	Bannock	Bingham, Franklin	--	Bear Lake, Caribou, Oneida, Power

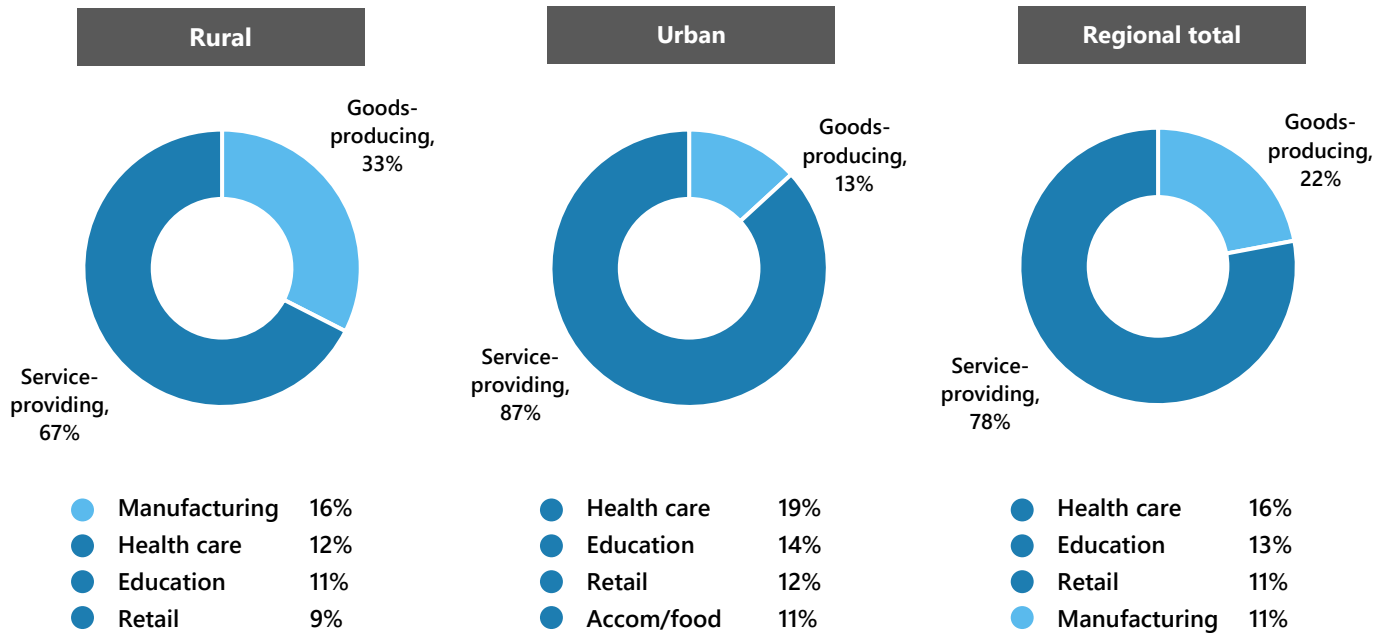
*Southeastern does not currently have any counties classified as rural center.

Region overview

Southeastern Idaho's employment concentration is similar between its urban and rural counties. For both county types, education and health care comprised two of the top three industries in 2023. Between 2003-2023, these industries combined saw a 34% increase in employment among rural counties and a slightly faster 35% increase in the sole urban county of Bannock.

Most rural area expansion for education and health services came with the addition of eight new general and surgical hospitals and five new rural elementary schools. Urban growth was broader, including strong growth in individual and family services, home health care and increased postsecondary employment.

Figure 2.13. Southeastern employment by industry sector, 2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2023

Urban county employment

Bannock County accounted for 54% of regional employment in 2023, while the remaining rural counties combined made up 46%. Bannock County's employment grew 16% between 2003 and 2023 which was slightly outpaced by rural growth in the region of 25%. As a result of its slower job growth, Bannock County's share of regional employment declined by 2% in the period.

While Bannock County was home to over 60% of regional service-providing jobs, it comprised less than one-third of the labor region's goods-producing sector employment. Since 2003, Bannock County had growth in grocery wholesalers and building material dealers within the trade, transportation, and utilities industries.

However, Bannock's manufacturing jobs actually declined between 2003-2023 while the region's rural counties experienced positive growth.

Rural county employment

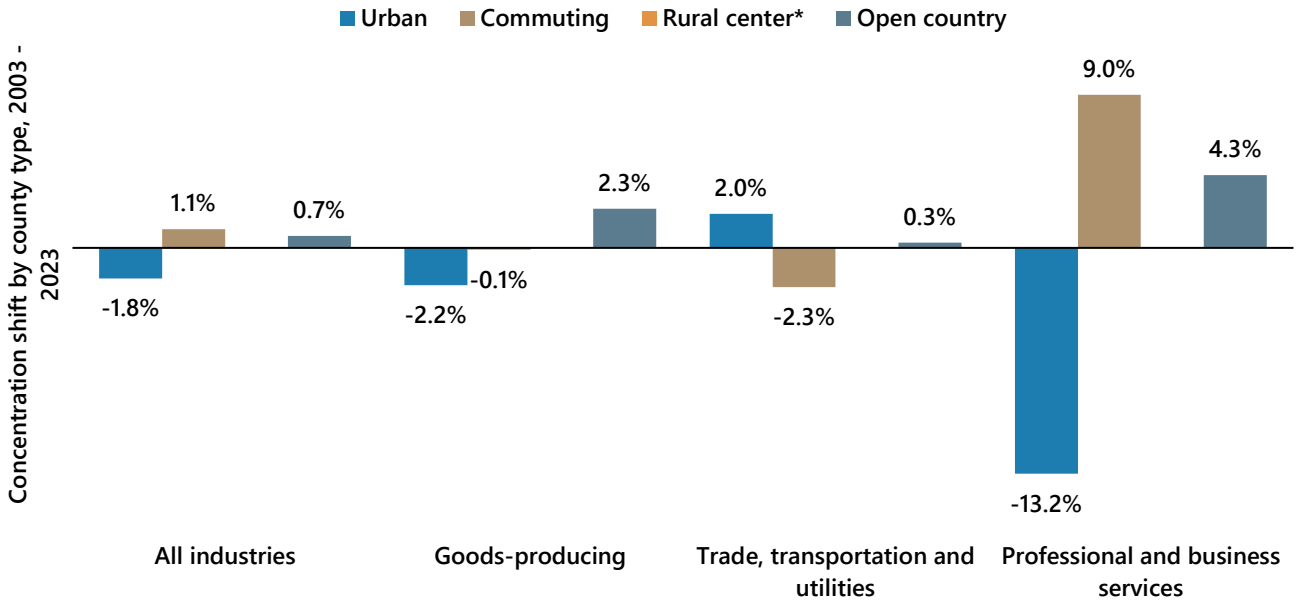
Between 2003-2023, growth in leisure and hospitality jobs was at 68% for southeastern Idaho's rural counties — nearly double the 38% seen within its urban county. Goods-producing industries were also more prominent in rural counties — maintaining 33% of total employment in 2023 compared with urban's 13%.

There were significant losses for grocery wholesalers in rural counties, but this was offset by rural increases in general freight trucking and grocery store employment.

Between 2003-2023, goods-producing industries had a 24% job growth in southeastern Idaho's rural counties. Frozen fruit and vegetable manufacturing continued to be a dominant industry, though its employment reduced by 35% from 2003. Other sources of rural job growth since 2003 included a new animal slaughter and pesticide factory, additional plastic manufacturing, phosphate mining, grain/seed farming and increased vegetable farm labor with the addition of nine new employers.

Though total employment increased overall in southeast Idaho from 2003-2023, the region's rural share of total jobs increased from 44% to 46%. This change was driven by an increase in jobs at architectural and engineering firms for the professional and business services sector in commuting counties, and telecommunications companies driving a 16% higher concentration in information jobs in open country counties.

Figure 2.14. Southeastern region employment concentration shift by county type, 2003-2023



*Southeastern does not currently have any counties classified as rural center.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Regional wages

The faster growth of southeastern Idaho's rural counties compared with its urban county also meant the share of employees earning a 2023 weekly wage of $1,080 or more lagged behind other urban counties. While Idaho's urban counties had 41% of employees earning over $1,080 per week in 2023, only 30% of employees in urban Bannock County reached this threshold. This compares with 33% of rural county job holders in the region earning at least $1,080 per week, led by 38% of workers in the region's four open country counties.

Region 6 – Eastern

Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, Teton counties

Table 2.10. Classifications of eastern counties

Region	Name	Urban	Commuting	Rural center*	Open country
6	**Eastern**	Bonneville, Madison	Jefferson	--	Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Lemhi, Teton

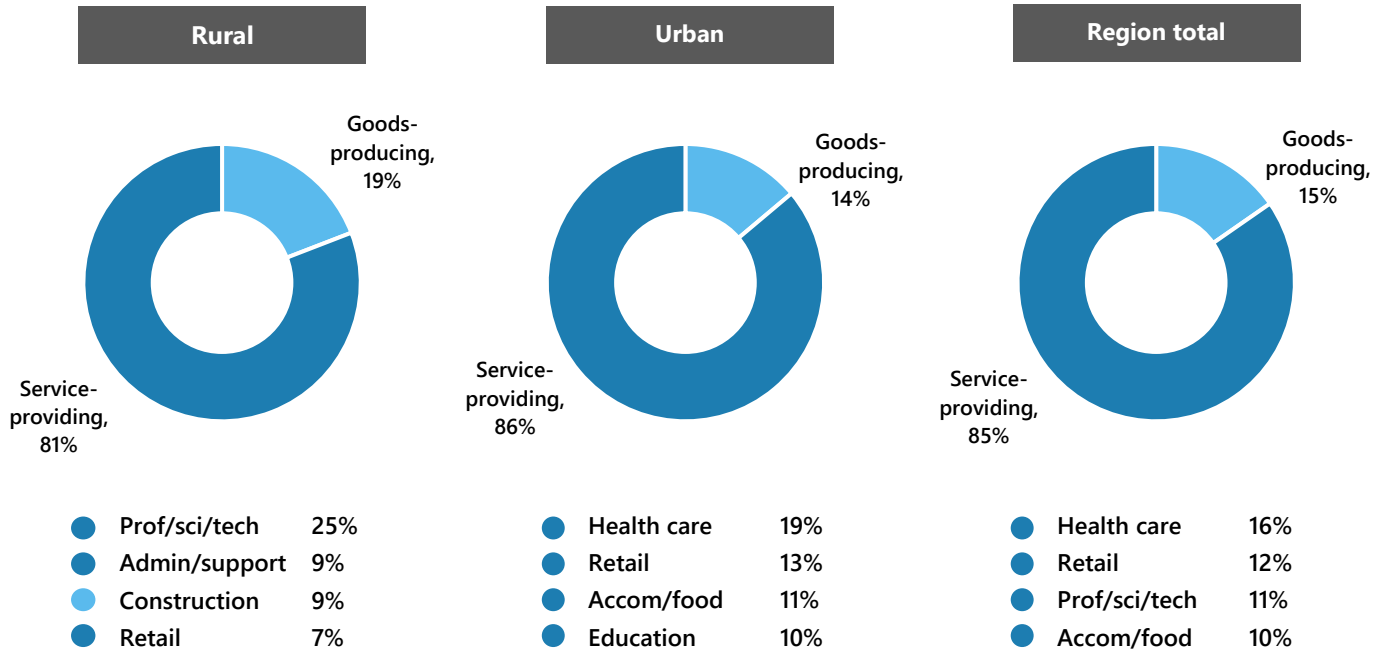
*Eastern Idaho does not currently have any counties classified as rural center.

Region overview

The majority of eastern Idaho is characterized by the open country rural classification (Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Lemhi and Teton counties). There are no rural center county types in the region.

From 2003-2023, total employment in rural eastern Idaho saw a shift from urban toward open country, led specifically by a decline in the urban concentration of professional and business services sector as the Idaho National Laboratory significantly increased employment in the region's rural areas.

Figure 2.15. Eastern employment by industry sector, 2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage by industry, 2023

Urban county employment

In eastern Idaho's urban counties of Bonneville and Madison, the education and health industry overtook the trade, transportation and utilities industry to become the top industry group by total jobs.

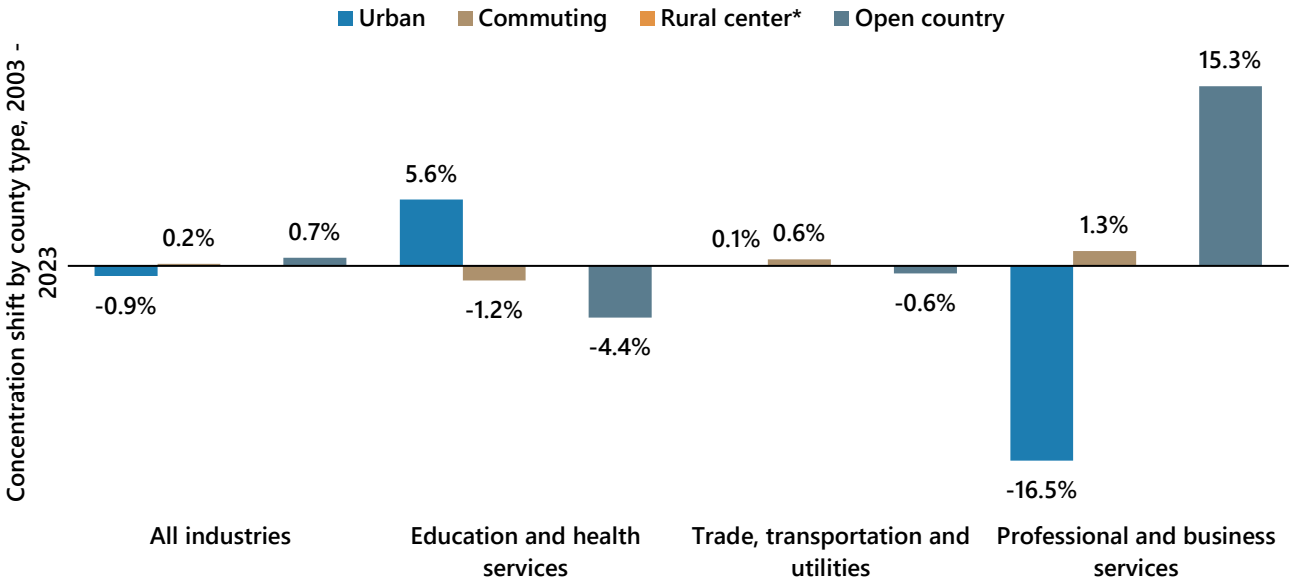
As the population grew, nearly 6% of the region's education and health workforce shifted away from rural areas into urban hospitals, clinics and schools as the urban centers offered more competitive wages, career growth and job stability. If similar trends continue, the displacement over time will likely result in more pronounced rural labor shortages in education and health services.

Rural county employment

Rural counties had slower population growth over the past 20 years than the overall eastern region, limiting demand for local trade and business services. Rural manufacturing employment lost share of regional jobs as larger firms centralized operations while some transportation and logistics jobs were outsourced to larger hubs outside eastern Idaho. The area's rural region also continued to be highly dependent on the construction industry as steady population increases drove demand for residential building expansion and infrastructure investments.

Professional and business services continued as one of the top industries as a share of total employment in the region. Anchored by Idaho National Laboratory, this was the top employment sector in 2023 for rural counties in eastern Idaho, accounting for more than one in three total rural jobs.

Figure 2.16. Employment concentration shift by county type, 2003-2023



*Eastern does not currently have any counties classified as rural center.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

The slight decline in open country's employment in the trade, transportation and utilities sector meant a gain for the region's sole rural commuting county, Jefferson County. This commuting workforce shift absorbed some displaced workers from the surrounding rural areas. Infrastructure improvements enhanced transportation networks, while business relocations and expansion in neighboring Madison and Bonneville counties provided commuting accessibility. Local agriculture and distribution hubs — especially in warehousing and trucking — also strengthened logistics-related job growth in the area.

Regional wages

All rural county types in the eastern region enjoyed wage increases, as the largest growth in share of employees by weekly wage was from 27% to 66% in open country counties, followed by modest wage growth in the single commuting county.

Rural eastern Idaho saw an increase from 33% to 43% in total share of employees earning average weekly wages of $640+ per week in 2003 to the inflation-adjusted equivalent of $1,080+ per week in 2023. Idaho National Laboratory made a relatively large workforce earnings footprint as a rural open country employer in the region. As a result, eastern Idaho led the state in 2023 at 66% for the largest share for open rural county average weekly wages exceeding $1,080 per week.

Agriculture

A majority of the data in this section is based on the most recently available 2022 Census of Agriculture which is generated every five years. Therefore, to track changes over the most recently available data for a 20-year time period, the date range will be 2002-2022. More recent data from 2023 and 2024 will also be featured when available and sourced with a citation.

Over the past 20 years, agriculture has continued to be one of the base economic drivers of Idaho's economy. The state's 2024 agricultural exports were estimated at $2.6 billion with goods shipped to over 120 countries.[27]

Idaho's agricultural share of total gross domestic product (GDP) grew from 3.3% in 2002 to 5.3% in 2022. The state experienced overall industry diversification, the creation of innovative products, the addition of new or expanding companies and population growth over this same period.

Idaho boasts the production of more than 185 commodities from over 23,000 farms and ranches, many receiving national ranking. A major shift of dominance from crops to livestock occurred around the millennium after the migration of California dairies to Idaho in search of more business-friendly governance. During 2023, milk comprised $3.8 billion of the $7 billion in livestock cash receipts alone.[28]

Table 2.11. Idaho's national ranking for select agricultural commodities

Rank	Product type
1	Potatoes, barley, peppermint, trout and alfalfa hay
2	Sugar beets and hops
3	Milk and cheese
4	Onions, spring wheat and lentils

Source: Idaho Department of Agriculture

Background

Agriculture maintains its status as one of Idaho's major industries with favorable weather conditions, a long growing season and rich soil found along the Snake River plains all contributing to yields that frequently outpace other states.

The water rights to the reservoirs along the Snake River have been adjudicated, thus securing irrigation during the growing season to the envy of other states still navigating water laws. Over the past 20 years, deals have been hammered out to buy water rights and ease tension between surface water users and groundwater users, with private and public monies to motivate the sellers. For utilities needing more power, the conversion of farmland into windfarms has been beneficial. Certain trout farms have conceded senior water rights to municipalities struggling to accommodate population growth.

The northern part of the state, such as the Palouse Prairie, relies on dryland farming and grazing of livestock as its niche agricultural enterprises. Agriculture is a smaller share of the economy for the northern 10 counties with their lakes, rivers and mountains compared with the drier, irrigated southern half of Idaho.

Transportation of commodities from fields to plants relies primarily on the interstate system in southern Idaho utilizing the busy east-west I-84 corridor. The northern area moves products, primarily wheat, with the rare amenity of an inland seaport. The railroad distribution system has many spurs throughout Idaho and fills the need for shipping less-perishable products.

[27] "Idaho Ag Facts Infographic 2024," Idaho Department of Agriculture, accessed June 2025, https://agri.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/marketing/Publications&Resources/2025-Ag-Facts-Sheet.pdf.
[28] Brett Wilder, Xiaoxue "Rita" Du, and Garth Taylor, "The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2022," published Dec. 19, 2022, https://www.agproud.com/articles/56640-the-financial-condition-of-idaho-agriculture-2022.

Land use

Agriculture is normally associated with rural areas, yet the urban county share of Idaho's farmland was third in the total number of acres following first ranked rural open counties and second ranked rural commuting counties in 2022. Change over the past 20 years indicated a downward trend in Idaho's overall acres dedicated to farming activities, with a decline of 1.9% or a loss of 219,000 acres.[29]

Rural open country farmland totals approximately 40% of Idaho's total farmland in acres. Half of Idaho's counties are open country making it the largest county classification by count.

The top five counties based on farmland acres in 2022 included counties large in area and represented all four county classifications (Table 4).

Table 2.12. Top five counties with the most farmland acres, 2022

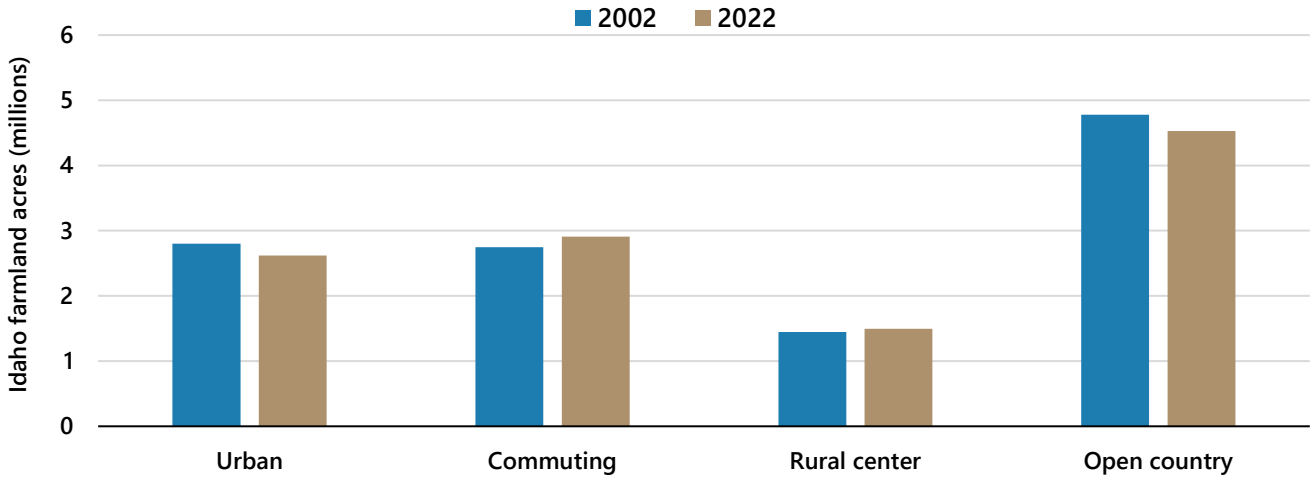
Rank	County name	County type	Acres in farmland
1	Bingham	Commuting rural	**897,796**
2	Owyhee	Commuting rural	**729,407**
3	Cassia	Rural center	**657,664**
4	Idaho	Open country	**545,260**
5	Twin Falls	Urban	**459,167**

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Census of Agriculture, 2022

Commuting counties carried the largest gain of farmland from 2002-2022, growing by 6%. This growth was largely attributed to Owyhee County, which added about 160,000 acres mainly for livestock and its feed supply chain of grain, hay and forage. This tally is not inclusive of public grazing lands owned by the federal government.

Over the past 20 years, urban counties lost the most farmed acreage at almost 180,000 acres — a decline of 6.4%. This loss was from competition for land use, primarily for housing (an acute community and workforce need in most urban and rural counties, as well as nationally) and mixed-use developments. Industrial warehousing was another growing industry over this time, eating up large acreages developed into business parks.

Figure 2.17. Idaho farmland in acres, 2002 and 2022



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. *Census of Agriculture, 2002–2022.*

[29] "Census of Agriculture, 2002–2022," U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed May 2025, https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/.

Small hobby farmers comprised a bigger portion of Idaho's farming profile in 2022. About 25% of the farms worked nine acres or less. In 2002, this figure was 20%. The biggest share of hobby farmers was found in the urban county classification in both 2002 and 2022.

Urban's share of operations that were nine acres or less in 2002 grew from 49% of Idaho's small farms to 53% in 2022. Commuting carried the highest rural share of farms that were nine acres or less but lost ground from 2002 (26.1%) to 2022 (22.9%).

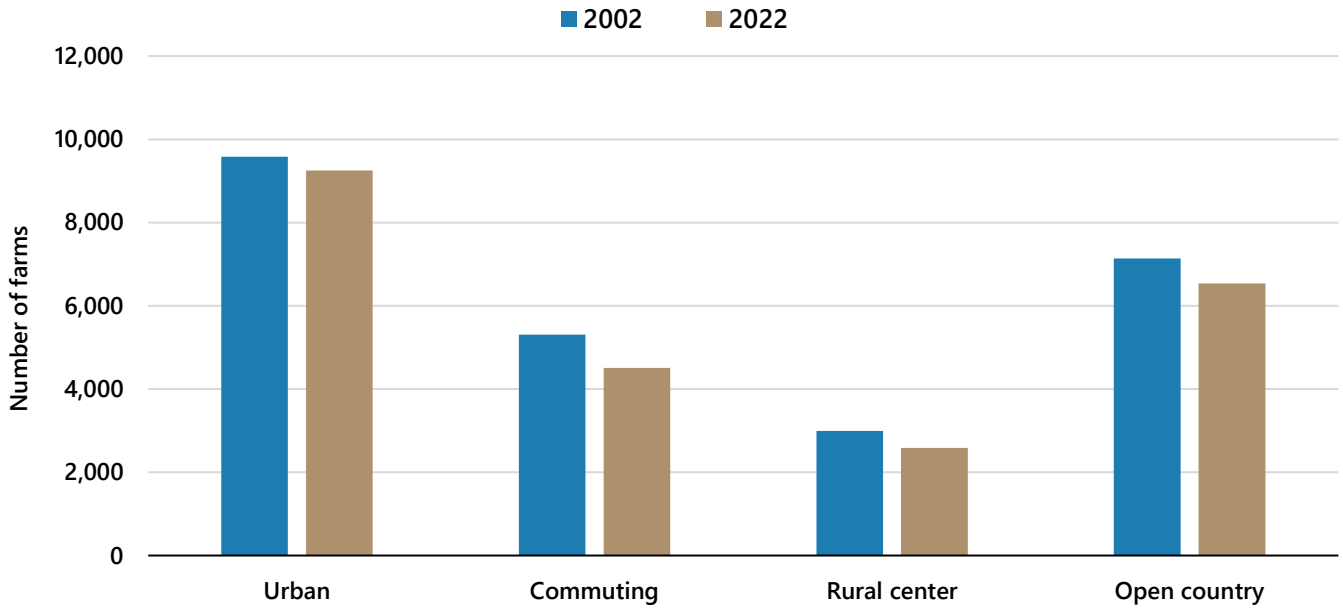
Large farms defined as 1,000 acres or more were most concentrated in rural open counties with a 43% share in 2022 versus a 24% share in the 2002 report.

The total number of Idaho farms dropped to about 23,000 in 2022, a decrease of 8.6% from 2002. Its acres continue to decline, yet the yields have not faltered due to critical research and development in technology and agronomy. For example, drones assessing water levels and soil nutrients are a common tool used by producers. No-till soil techniques and automated farming implements have also changed the process and time dedicated to ground prep, planting and harvest.

The University of Idaho, Idaho's land grant research institution, has extensive research and development facilities interspersed among specific concentration areas for crops, seeds and livestock. Seeds that are better adapted to certain climates and surviving pests have been developed and are distributed from Idaho globally.

The average farm size based on acreage has increased since 2002 by 7.4% to 505 acres.[30] This is likely because the industry realized the efficiencies of managing larger swaths of arable acres with more employees and equipment such as irrigation pivots versus pipes or canvas dams. This is a divergence from the small family farms that comprised the heart of agriculture in the 20th century.

Figure 2.18. Idaho farm count by county, urban or rural, 2002 and 2022



Source: Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. *Census of Agriculture, 2002-2022*

[30] "Census of Agriculture, 2002–2022," U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed May 2025, https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/.

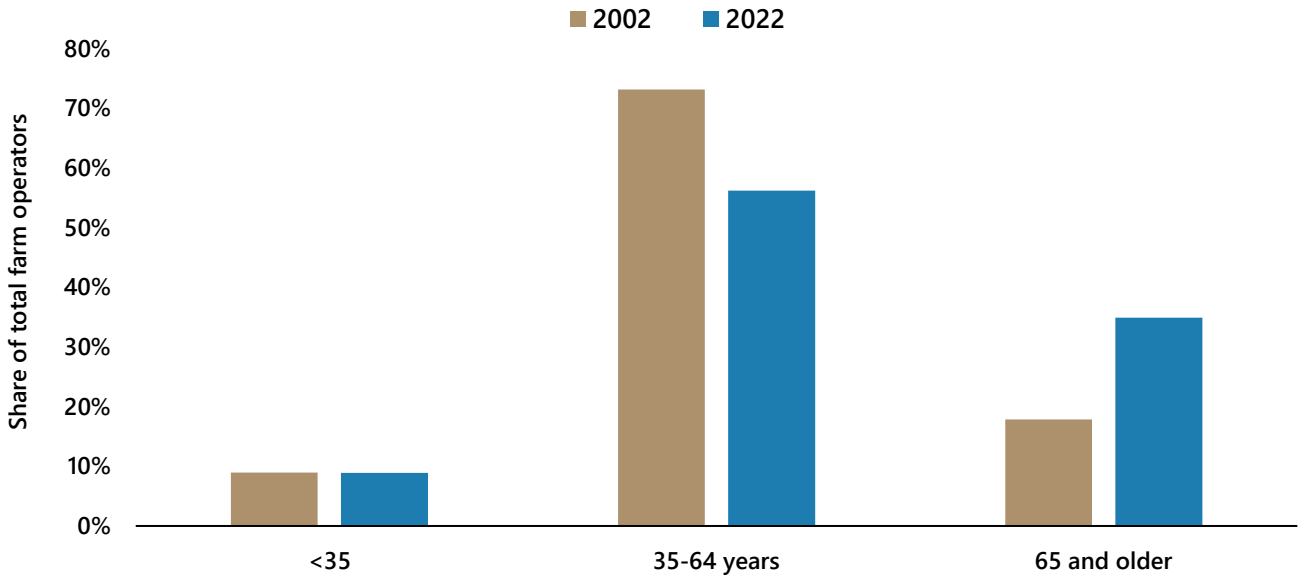
Demographics

The demographic profile of Idaho's agricultural producers has changed since 2002 with those 65 and older increasing by 123%. In the 2022 Census of Agriculture, approximately 35% of all operators fell within this age group as compared with 18% in 2002 (Figure 2.19).

Agricultural producers below 35 years of age did not appear to change significantly between 2002-2022, growing by about 500 operators or 14%. This younger age group is usually the smallest share of operators since wealth is generally required to farm profitably. Without a second job or generational wealth, it is difficult to overcome the large capital investment and knowledge required for annual operating loan renewals.

Those in the 35-64 years of age category decreased in share by 12% from 2002 to be just over half of the total in 2022 when they had previously made up 73% of all operators.[31] This middle-aged group of operators likely decreased for various reasons including the opportunity to cash in farmland at a premium or to follow a different lifestyle/career choice when first entering the workforce.

Figure 2.19. Age of Idaho's farm operators, 2002 and 2022



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Census of Agriculture, 2022

Table 2.13. Farm operator's age by county classification, 2002-2022

County type	Average age 2002	Average age 2022	% growth	# growth
Urban	54.3	57.1	5.2%	2.8
Commuting	53.3	55.4	4.1%	2.2
Rural center	53.5	56.4	5.4%	2.9
Open country	55.4	58.1	4.8%	2.7

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Census of Agriculture, 2002–2022

[31] "Census of Agriculture, 2002–2022," U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed May 2025, https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/.

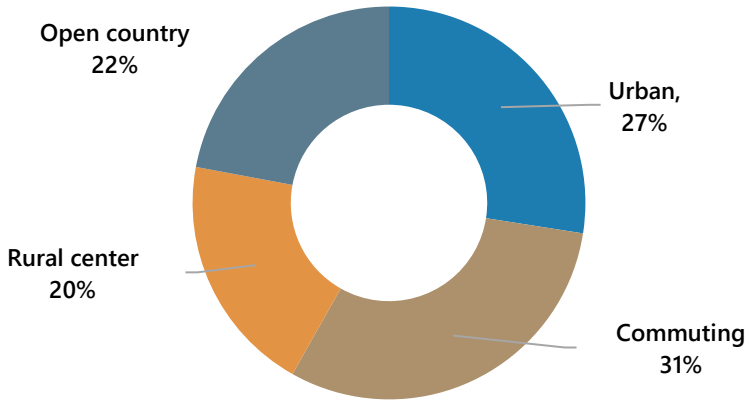
Labor

The shift away from farm work to service occupations started decades ago, manifesting in a labor shortage in the 21st century, with farmers and ranchers depending on a small group of workers who embraced the farming culture. Automation helped somewhat with the labor shortage, yet the human workforce was still needed to complete certain tasks.

The H-2A guest visas supply seasonal farm labor across the nation and in Idaho. In 2023, there were around 7,000 H-2A certifications in the state.[32] This was about double the 3,800 certifications seen in 2008 when a similar report was prepared. The H-2A guest visa programs only allow seasonal labor for periods of six months or less, leaving the dairy industry in a lurch.

The distribution of Idaho's 2024 H-2A certified workers by primary worksite within Idaho is shown below in Figure 2.20. Approximately seven out of every 10 workers were primarily located within rural counties with commuting counties having the highest concentration.

Figure 2.20. H-2A worker distribution by worksite, 2024



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, H-2A Disclosure Data FY2024

Value-added food processing

Value-added food processing is when a product is improved from its raw form, usually taken directly from the field, garden or feed lot, and its value to the consumer is increased. It can also include improving a product's packaging, making it more convenient for consumer use.

Over the past 20 years, commodities from Idaho's fields, along with livestock grazing on permitted public lands or in contained feed lots, have continued to fuel the engines of national and foreign-direct-investment food processors and local artisan value-added food producers in the state.

From 2002-2022, the count or level of food processing plants across Idaho continued to be concentrated in urban counties which also had the most food processing workers and the most establishments. With the higher population, urban counties can staff large plants to a greater degree than many of the rural counties. New plants require direct investment towards land acquisition, commercial construction, along with infrastructure for wastewater systems, utilities and roads. The workforce may need more investment in housing, schools, retail and health care.

[32] "H-2A Performance Disclosure Data, 2023–2024," U.S. Department of Labor, accessed June 2025, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor/performance.

When looking at the county type with the greatest changes in food manufacturing between 2002-2022, open country counties experienced the highest percentage change in both employment and establishments created, as shown in Table 2.14.[33]

Table 2.14. Food manufacturing by county type, 2002-2022

Average employment						
County type	**2002**	**2022**	**Change #**	**Change %**	**Share '02**	**Share '22**
Urban	8,774	11,022	2,248	25.6%	53.8%	53.6%
Commuting	3,045	3,797	752	24.7%	18.7%	18.5%
Rural center	2,975	2,998	23	0.8%	18.2%	14.6%
Open country	1,510	2,743	1,233	81.7%	9.3%	13.3%
Totals	**16,304**	**20,560**	**4,256**	**26.1%**		
Establishments						
County type	**2002**	**2022**	**Change #**	**Change %**	**Share '02**	**Share '22**
Urban	136	211	75	55.1%	61.5%	61.2%
Commuting	31	45	14	45.2%	14.0%	13.0%
Rural center	29	45	16	55.2%	13.1%	13.0%
Open country	25	44	19	76.0%	11.3%	12.8%
Totals	**221**	**345**	**124**	**56.1%**		

Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2002 and 2022

Urban areas have a greater pool of skilled workers needed for modern food manufacturing, such as engineers, programming logic controls operators, lab techs and wholesale salespeople.

The 2002-2022 growth rate for average employment is highest in the rural open country counties at almost 82%, adding about 1,200 workers. The urban counties added about 2,200 workers but grew only 25% due to their larger share of average employment.

The rural open country counties carried the most farmland dedicated to growing crops or fattening livestock. These counties were also in prime locations for manufacturers, lowering the distance and cost to haul commodities for processing.

Agriculture, including both livestock and crops, requires a robust supply chain of national and local businesses. Agri-business is the combination of producing food in the form of fresh or value-added products and marketing the food products. It is not uncommon for some companies to be vertically integrated with in-house transportation and warehousing activities.

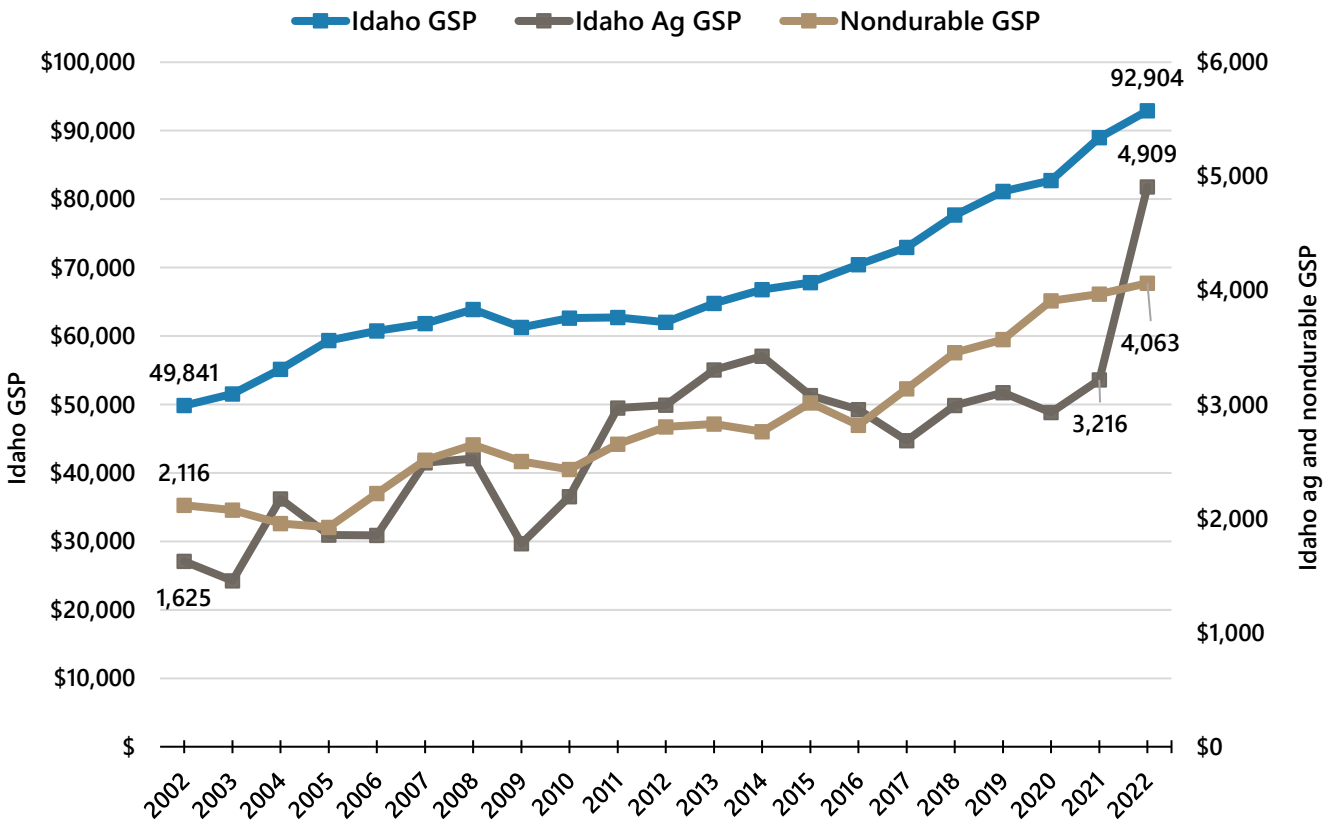
Gross state product

Idaho's agriculture industry is about 5.3% of total gross state product (GSP) while food processing, or nondurable goods manufacturing, comprises 4.4% of total GSP. Figure 2.21 shows nondurable goods following the total GSP historically but flattening during the COVID-19 pandemic. To contrast, the agricultural sector had some of its most dramatic growth during the pandemic, evidenced by the steep growth starting in 2020.

[33] "Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages by Industry, 2023," Idaho Department of Labor, accessed June 2025, https://lmi.idaho.gov/data-tools/industry-wages/.

From 2002 to 2022, Idaho's agricultural GSP doubled with non-durable manufacturing almost doubling as well, keeping pace with Idaho's total GSP growth of 86%.[34] However, the dominance of the sectors flipped — non-durable manufacturing held a higher share of the GSP in 2002, but by 2022, agriculture had taken the lead.

Figure 2.21. Idaho gross state product, in real dollars ($ million)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. "Gross Domestic Product by State," 2002–2024.

Two urban counties were among the top agricultural producers in 2022 based on receipts (Canyon and Twin Falls). The other three top producing counties were evenly spread among the three rural classifications. The revenue share among classifications did not change significantly from 2002 to 2022 as certain areas are consistently prime locations for specific commodities.[35]

Table 2.15. County distribution by agricultural product revenue, 2022 (in thousands)

Counties	2002	2022	Change %	Change #	Share '02	Share '22
Urban	$1,025,943	$2,891,623	181.9%	$1,865,680	26.3%	26.5%
Commuting	$1,215,414	$3,132,355	173.7%	$1,916,941	31.1%	28.8%
Rural center	$706,464	$2,094,208	196.4%	$1,387,744	18.1%	19.2%
Open country	$960,443	$2,774,013	188.8%	$1,813,570	24.6%	25.5%
Total	**$3,908,264**	**$10,892,199**	**178.7%**	**$6,983,935**		

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. Census of Agriculture, 2002-2022

[34] "Gross Domestic Product by State, 2002–2024," U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, accessed May 2025, https://www.bea.gov/data/gdp/gdp-state.
[35] "Census of Agriculture, 2002–2022," U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed May 2025, https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/.

Exports

In 2023, Idaho's largest agricultural export partners, by a large margin, shared borders with the U.S. — Canada received 31% of Idaho's agricultural products while Mexico received 19%. Other major importers of Idaho's agricultural products included the Netherlands at 5% and the Pacific Rim countries of China, Japan and South Korea with a combined total of 19%.[36]

It was estimated by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture that 25% of Idaho's barley and 20% of Idaho's potatoes were exported in 2023. Approximately 17% of Idaho's value-added milk products were exported to other countries including products such as dehydrated milk, protein powder and cheese.

Exports experience volatility based on a plethora of factors including the country's foreign currency exchange, trade relations and reporting challenges. The 2023 estimate of exports at $2.6 billion was a small portion of Idaho's inflation adjusted GSP of $95.9 billion.[37]

Changing landscape of work

A majority of the data for this section is derived from a combination of the 2000 decennial census along with more recent 5-year data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey covering the periods of 2009-2013, 2014-2018, and 2019-2023.

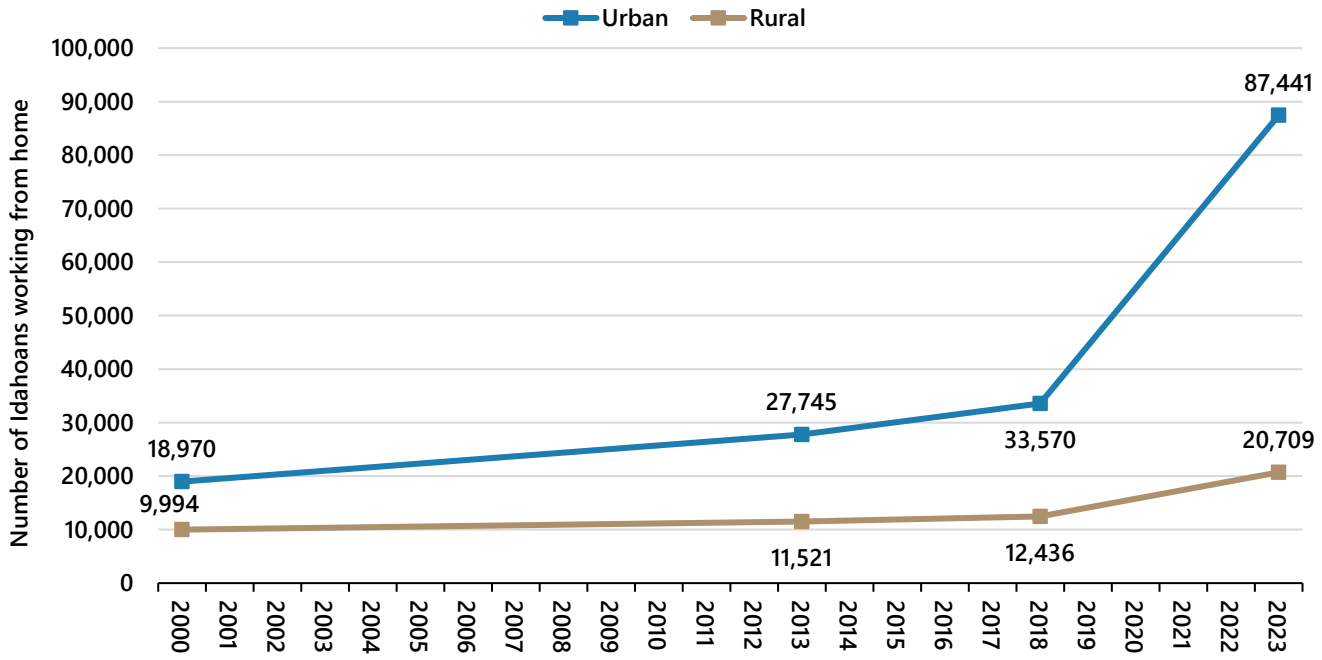
The 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic changed the work from home landscape. Idaho's unemployment skyrocketed to over 11% as lockdowns caused businesses to temporarily close and furlough or lay off their workforce. Initially a short-term solution to the workforce issues during the pandemic, work from home and telework began to rise to prominence well after the pandemic.

Work from home jobs include self-employed people who run a business out of their homes while telework refers to an employee needing specialized telecommunication equipment to remote in. This enabled an increase in individuals moving to Idaho from out of state, as many were able to telework and maintain their old job or a similar role based out of state.

Before the pandemic, between 2000-2018, the number of at-home workers remained relatively stagnant for rural counties and only slightly increased year over year for urban counties. As shown in Figure 2.22, work from home employee numbers increased at a much faster pace after 2018 until 2023, due to the effects of the pandemic.

[36] "Idaho Agriculture: Growing for the World," Idaho Department of Agriculture, accessed June 2025, https://agri.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/marketing/Publications&Resources/Idaho-Exports-2025.pdf.
[37] "Gross Domestic Product by State, 2002–2024," U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, accessed May 2025, https://www.bea.gov/data/gdp/gdp-state.

Figure 2.22. Number of rural and urban Idaho employees working from home, 2000-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Table B99087, U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Decennial Census Table P030

From 2013-2018, broadband access improvements allowed some modest growth in at-home work, with 8% growth in rural counties and 21% growth in urban counties. During the time of the pandemic and immediately after (2019-2023) growth in urban counties skyrocketed to 160% while rural increased to 67%.[38]

Even though a greater number of at-home workers were located in urban areas during the pandemic, rural counties still saw significant increases. Open country counties — historically the rural county subtype with the most at-home workers — increased by an additional 3,800 at-home workers (81%) from 2018 to 2023. Open country counties also had the highest growth among rural county subtypes, nearly doubling.[39] Commuting counties and rural center counties each saw 2,000 more people working from home in the same period, growing by 57% and 58%, respectively. (Table 2.16 and Figure 2.23)

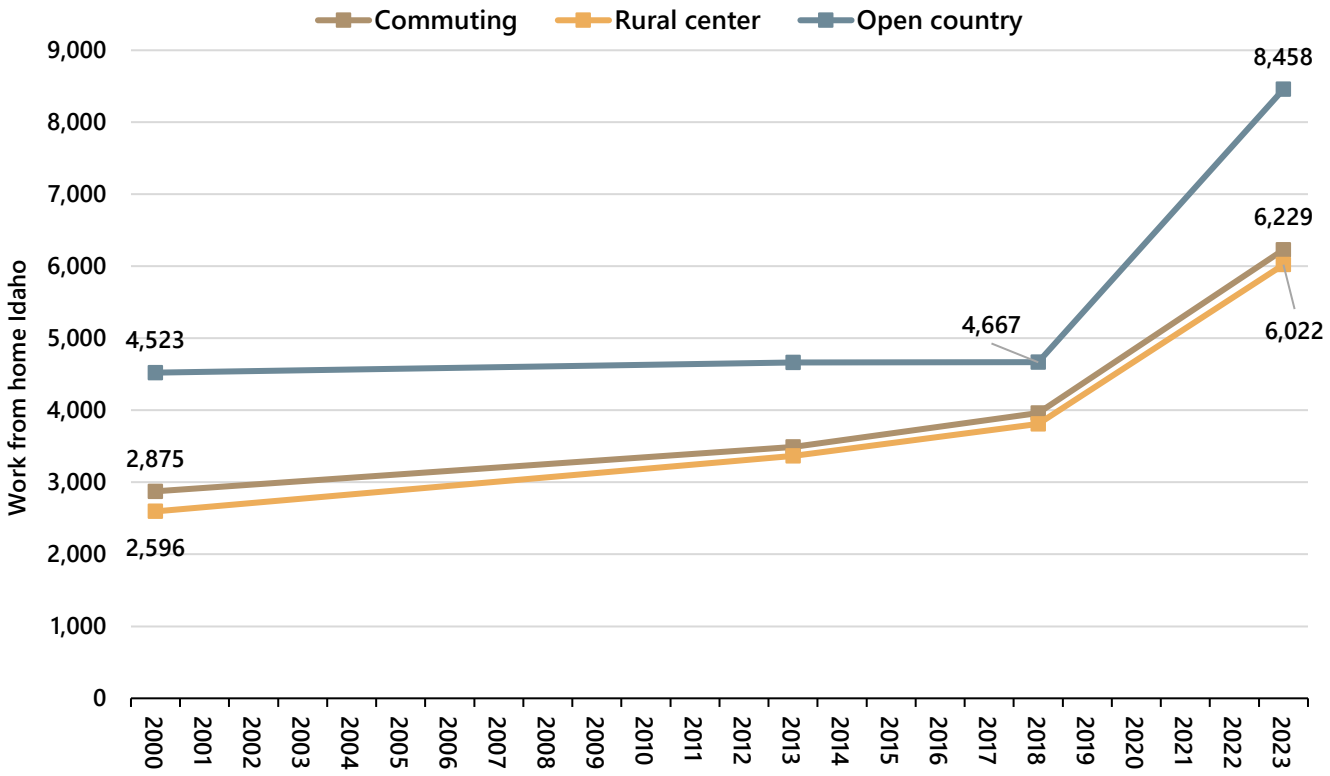
Table 2.16. Growth rate of at-home workers in Idaho by five-year period and county types

Time frame	Urban	Rural			
		Total	Commuting	Rural center	Open country
2013-2018	21%	8%	13%	13%	0%
2018-2023	160%	67%	57%	58%	81%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table B99087

[38] "American Community Survey, 5-year data files for 2009–2013, 2014–2018, and 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html.
[39] "American Community Survey, 5-year data files for 2009–2013, 2014–2018, and 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html.

Figure 2.23. Number of at-home workers in Idaho by rural county subtype, 2000-2023



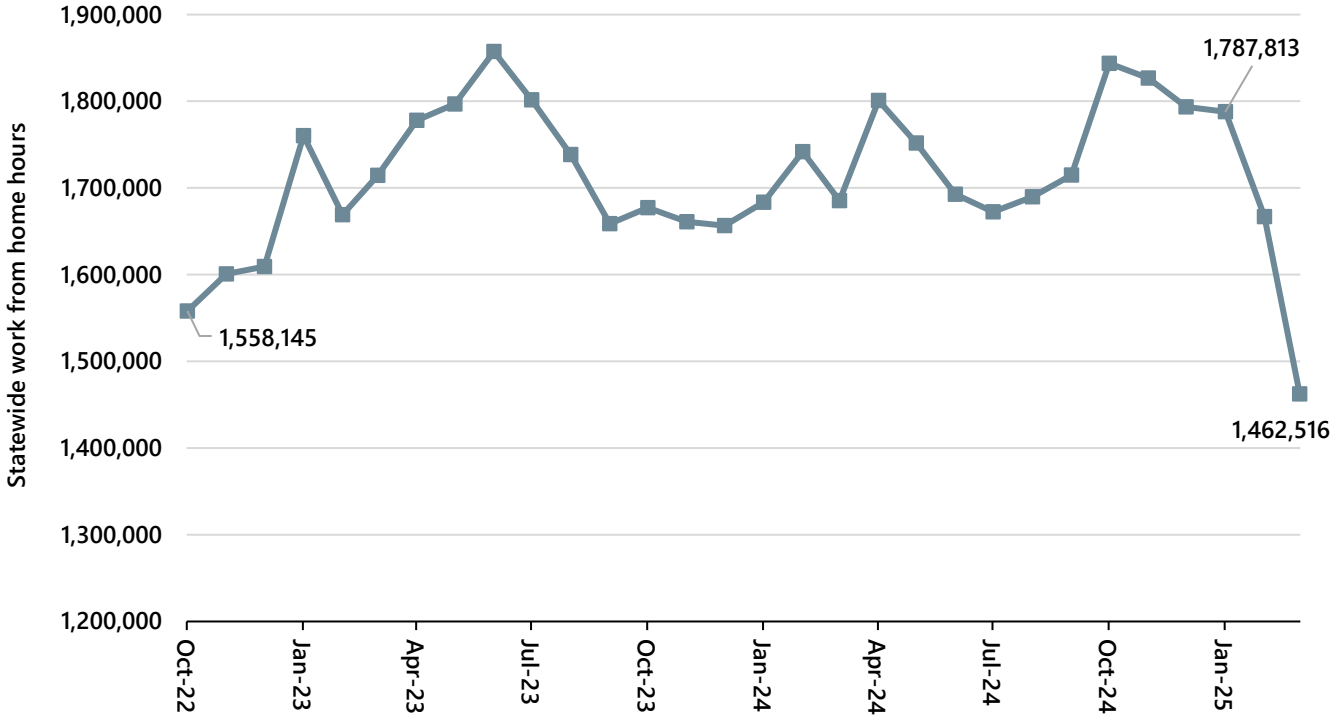
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table B99087. 2000 U.S. Census Decennial Census Table P030

Data from 2023 suggests a slowdown in work from home, but not a decline. More up-to-date data exists from the current population survey through 2024 but not on the individual county level.

For Idaho statewide, a decline in work from home hours was not seen until February 2025 when the number of hours decreased by 100,000 and then again by an estimated 200,000 hours in March 2025.[40] It's possible this was related to realignment in federal policy due to the executive order ending federal work from home. County level data assessing the impact of this recent trend in rural counties will further elucidate this change in the future.

[40] "IPUMS CPS Telework Data," University of Minnesota, accessed June 2025, https://cps.ipums.org/cps.

Figure 2.24. Total hours per month worked from home in Idaho, 2022-2025



Source: IPUMS CPS Telework Data

Housing

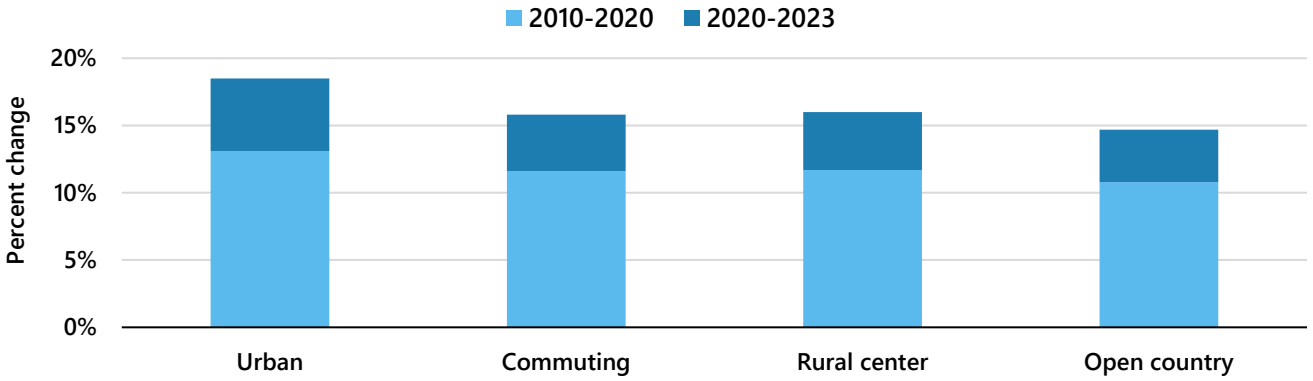
A majority of the data for this section comes from a combination of U.S. Census Bureau data covering the decennial census, annual housing unit estimates, and American Community Survey data covering the periods of 2009-2013, 2014-2018, and 2019-2023. Additional data was supported by fair market rental rates published annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Housing affordability is a challenge significantly impacting both renters and owners in recent years, particularly in states like Idaho that have experienced rapid population growth.

From 2010-2023, growth in the number of housing units in rural and urban Idaho reflected population trends, with urban counties growing faster than rural ones. The urban counties of Ada, Canyon, Kootenai and Madison experienced growth of 25% or more during this time.[41] However, there were some rural counties with exceptional growth as well — the number of housing units in Jefferson and Teton both grew by over 25%.

[41] "Demographic and Housing Estimates, decennial data for 2010, 2020, and 5-year data file for 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html.

Figure 2.25. Growth in number of housing units, 2010-2020 and 2020-2023

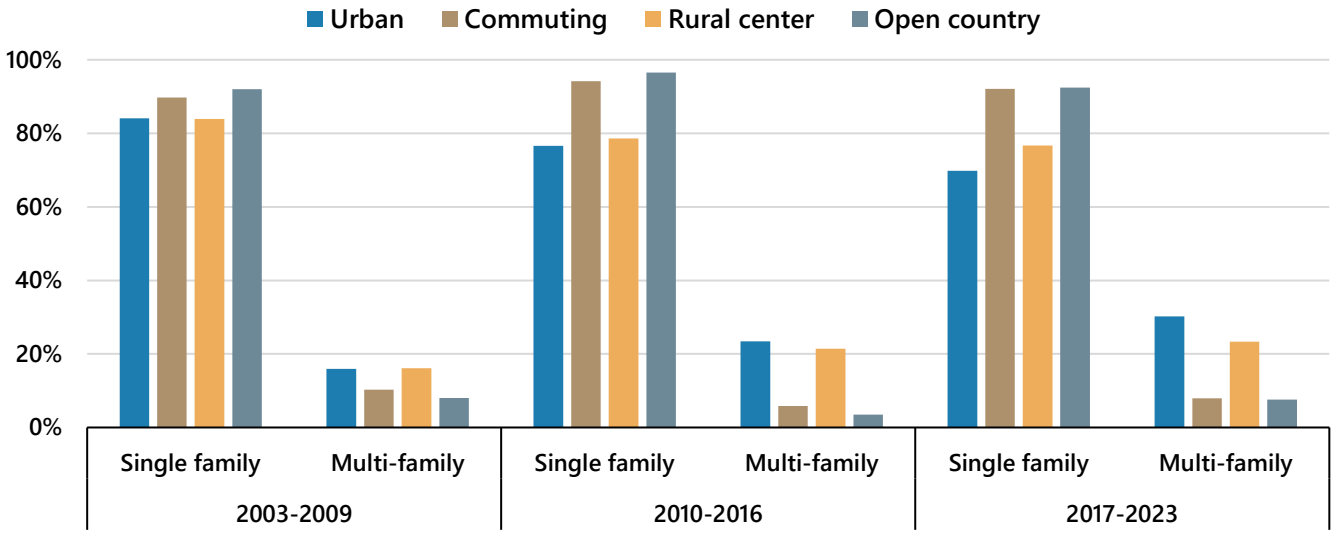


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Demographic and Housing Estimates, decennial data for 2010, 2020, and 5-year data file for 2019–2023.

During the recovery of the Great Recession (2010-2016) multi-family housing permits were in high demand and became a growing share of overall housing permits in Idaho's urban and rural centers.

Multi-family permits continued to rise in number through 2017-2023 as continued migration into Idaho pressured home prices. Commuting and open country counties had the largest share of single-family housing permits (92%) and had 10% or less of overall housing permits for multi-family units during this time.

Figure 2.26. Single and multi-family housing unit permits by county classification, 2003-2009, 2010-2016, and 2017-2023



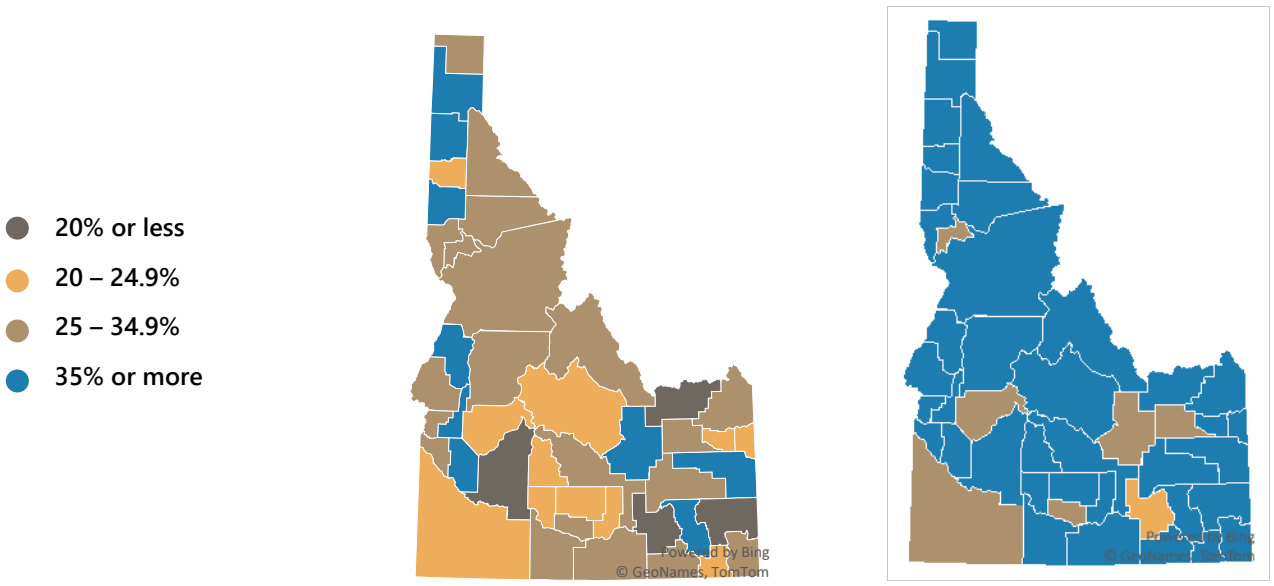
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Building Permits Survey, 2003–2023.

One commonly used indicator of affordability is the proportion of households paying more than 30% of their income for housing.

- In 2003, nine counties (five urban, one commuting, one rural center and two open country) had at least 35% of all renters spend more than 30% of their income on gross rent.
- In 2023, 37 counties (nine urban, four commuting, five rural center and 19 open country) had at least 35% of all renters spend more than 30% of their income on gross rent.

No counties saw a decline in the share of renters who spent at least 30% of their income on gross rent between 2003-2023. As Idaho's population has grown, so has the demand for housing, not just in urban counties, but all across the state.

Figure 2.27. Share of renter-occupied households spending more than 30% of income on gross rent



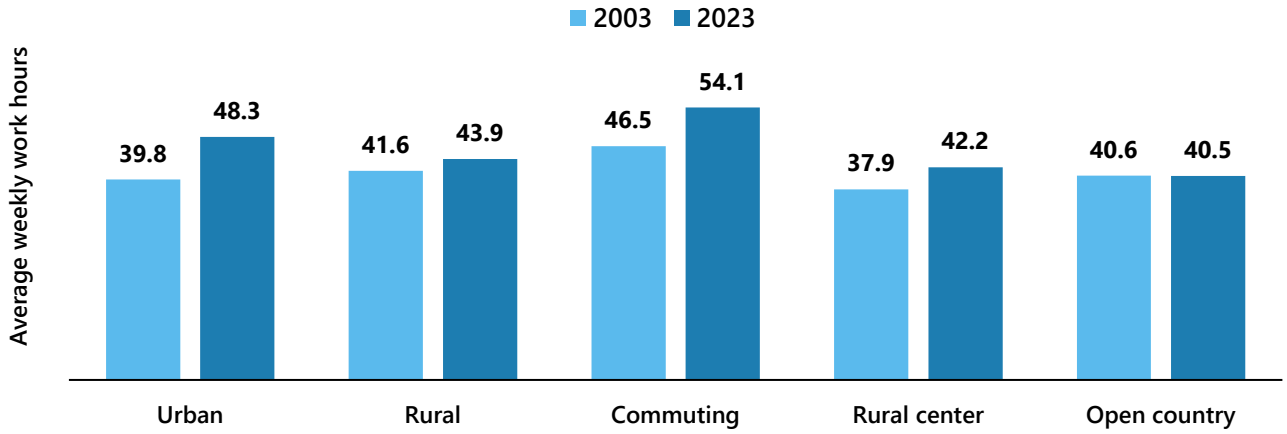
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Occupancy Status, 2000 Decennial Census and 5-year data file for 2019–2023.

In 2003, a single, full-time worker could afford fair market rents on two-bedroom rentals in all 44 Idaho counties by working at least 40 hours per week. By 2023, rental rate increases in five counties — Boise, Canyon, Gem, Oneida and Owyhee — surpassed wage growth as two-bedroom fair market rents required either above average wage rates or more than 40 weekly work hours.

When looking at three-bedroom rentals, housing looks even less accessible for a single-wage household. In 2023, an average employee would need to work more than 40 hours per week in 33 of Idaho's 44 counties (nine urban, 24 rural) to afford three-bedroom fair market rents; in 2003, it was 26 counties (five urban, 21 rural).

Of the rural county subtypes, all eight of the commuting counties had three-bedroom rental rates unaffordable to single full-time workers in 2023. Open country counties showed the highest potential, yet rental rates in over half of these counties continued to be out of reach for your average worker.

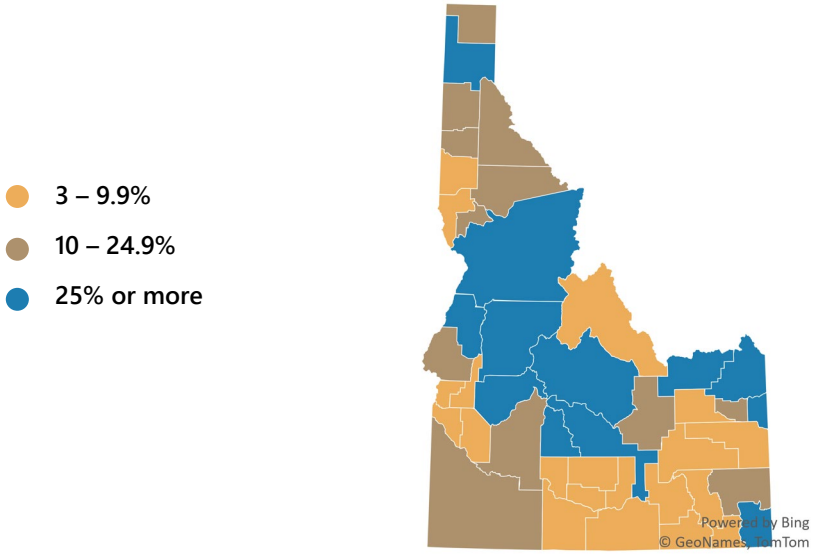
Figure 2.28. Weekly work hours, at average wage rates, required to afford three-bedroom fair market rents, 2003 and 2023



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Fair Market Rents, 2003–2023.

In addition to lower housing demand, rural Idaho had a significant portion of vacant homes reserved for part-time seasonal and recreational uses in 2023. In five rural counties — Bear Lake, Camas, Clark, Fremont and Valley counties — 40% or more of housing units were vacant.[42] In Valley County, 70% of housing units were vacant.[43]

Figure 2.29. Percentage of housing units that are vacant by county, 2019-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Occupancy Status, 5-year data file for 2019–2023.

[42] "Occupancy Status, 2000 Decennial Census and 5-year data file for 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html.
[43] "Fair Market Rents, 2003–2023," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed May 2025, http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr.html.

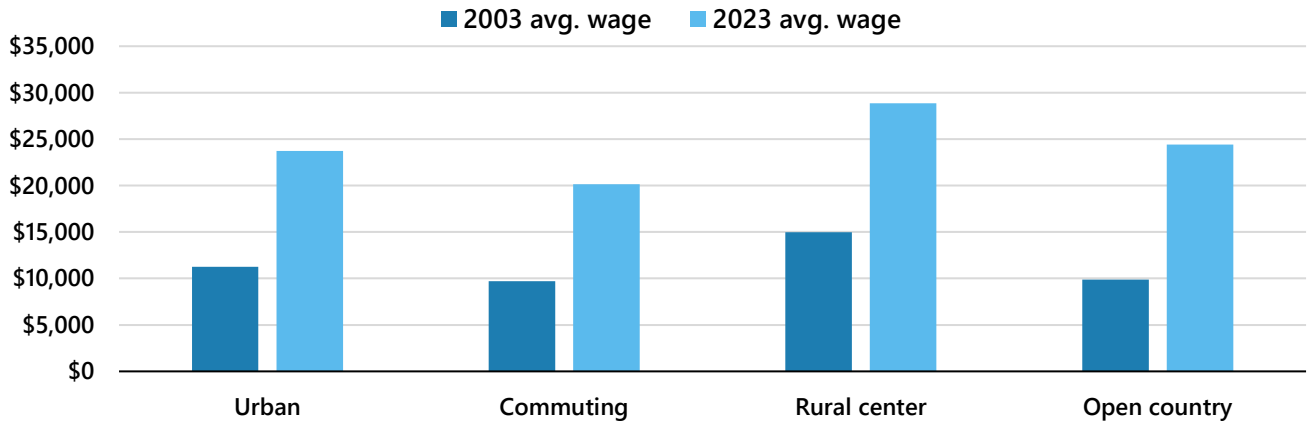
Recreation and tourism

A majority of the data for this section is sourced from quarterly employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Idaho Department of Labor from 2003-2023 along with more recent 2024 tourism and lodging data from Idaho Commerce and the Idaho Tax Commission.

Rural Idaho offers vast stretches of publicly owned land, plentiful outdoor recreation opportunities and relatively small populations. These elements contribute to the region's strong reliance on recreation and tourism as a key economic driver. Idaho's leisure and hospitality industries have enhanced the quality of life across rural Idaho communities, making them attractive destinations for a talented and skilled workforce in various industry sectors.

In 2003, the average annual wages of leisure and hospitality workers were higher in Idaho's rural counties than urban. This pattern continued in 2023 — rural leisure and hospitality workers' average annual wages were $24,476 while urban's were $23,726 (Figure 2.30). Rural average annual wages grew at a slightly higher rate than urban from 2003-2023, 4% per year for all sectors, while urban average annual wages grew at a rate of 3.8% per year.

Figure 2.30. Leisure and hospitality* annual wages per employee by county type, 2003-2023



*Note: Together, art, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service industries data falls under the leisure and hospitality sector.
Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2003-2023

State urban leisure and hospitality employment experienced more rapid growth than rural from 2003-2023 at 77%, or about 3% annually (Table 2.17). Combined rural employment growth trended slower at 44%, or about 2% annually. However, over 6,300 new leisure and hospitality jobs were created in rural Idaho from 2003-2023.

In 2023, one out of every 10 total private jobs in rural Idaho were directly supported by the leisure and hospitality sector, more than they were in 2003.[44]

Table 2.17. Leisure and hospitality employment by county type in rural Idaho, 2003-2023

County type	2003 employment	2023 employment	Annual growth rate, 2003-2023
Urban	41,758	73,713	2.9%
Commuting	3,595	5,333	2.0%
Rural center	5,786	7,664	1.4%
Open country	4,864	7,559	2.2%

Source: Idaho Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2003-2023

[44] "Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages by Industry, 2023," Idaho Department of Labor, accessed June 2025, https://lmi.idaho.gov/data-tools/industry-wages/.

Tourism growth is largely measured in year-round rural lodging dollars spent over time. In 2024, tourism was the state's third-largest industry, generating $5.83 billion in direct travel spending. This marked a 37% increase from 2019 and a 2% increase since 2022.[45]

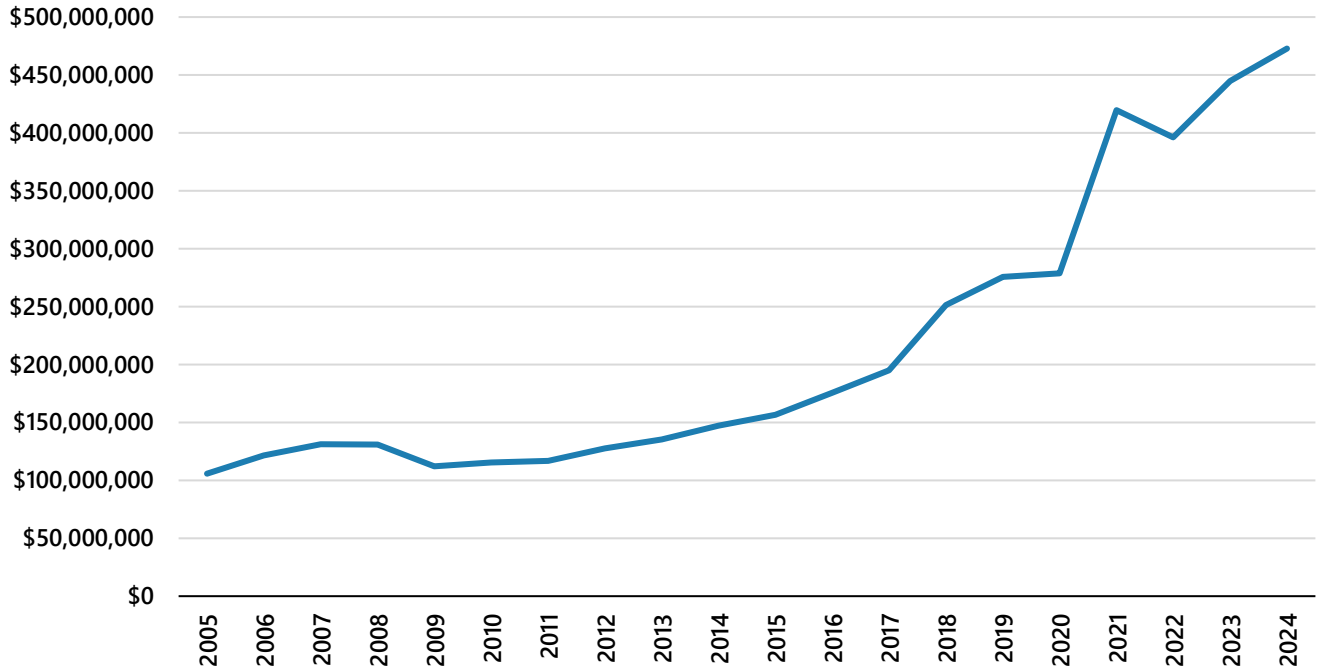
Rural recreation remains a major draw, with visitors spending $164 million at campgrounds and $916 million annually on short-term vacation rentals.[46]

Idaho's tourism industry in 2005 was much smaller than it was in 2024, with total travel spending estimated at $2.7 billion. The industry has more than doubled in size since then, reflecting increased visitor interest in outdoor recreation, lodging and entertainment.[47]

Tourist travel in rural Idaho, where most state recreation is located, has been on the rise for the past 20 years. Tourist numbers spiked 51% during the short pandemic era (2020-2021) from tourists visiting the state. Since 2005, the gain in tourism popularity has propelled construction of new hotels and resorts to accommodate the rooms needed to meet demand. In 2024, lodging sales revenue peaked at nearly $473 million in rural Idaho, the highest in history.[48]

The higher-than-normal lodging sales revenue seen between 2020-2024 has been a boon to Idaho's rural tourism economy. These numbers have not reverted to pre-pandemic levels, a testament to new tourists' desire to return to the state after discovering all it has to offer.

Figure 2.31. Lodging revenue in rural Idaho, in nominal dollars, 2005-2024



Source: Idaho Department of Commerce, Idaho lodging data, 2005-2024

[45] "Idaho Tourism Economic Impact Report 2023," Idaho Department of Commerce, accessed June 2025, https://industry.visitidaho.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ITC-Dean-Runyan-Report-State-2024.pdf.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "Idaho Lodging Data, 2005-2024," Idaho Department of Commerce, accessed June 2025, https://commerce.idaho.gov/tourism-resources/research/.

Amenities and social economy

A majority of the data for this section is derived from many sources and incorporates the most recently available data.

The value of Idaho's rural counties would be significantly understated if only viewed in a quantitative sense. While rural counties comprise 88% of the state's land area, they are only responsible for 28% of its population and 25% of annual gross domestic product (GDP).

However, when other qualitative aspects of the rural lifestyle are considered — such as the close proximity to recreational opportunities; the fostering of social networks; and the impact of tourism, history and heritage — rural Idaho emerges as a vital organ of the state's economy and well-being. The true value of rural Idaho rests more with its ability to create unique experiences and less with financial statistics.

Table 2.18. Distribution of Idaho's geography, population and income

Data type	Statewide total	Statewide share within rural counties	Data source
Land area	82,645 square miles	88%	U.S. Census TIGERweb spatial files
Water area	923 square miles	80%	U.S. Census TIGERweb spatial files
Acres in farmland	11.5 million acres	77%	U.S. Census of Agriculture
Resident population	2 million residents	28%	U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates
Share of GDP, 2023	$120 billion	25%	U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Amenities found throughout rural Idaho

While Idaho is an agricultural powerhouse, it is also a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts. Idaho offers unique geography with over 3,100 wild river miles of navigable whitewater, rugged peaks, diverse wildlife, designated dark sky areas and high volumes of publicly accessible lands.

Over 60% of Idaho's land area is currently managed by federal agencies and state endowments — most of which is available for public use on a seasonal or year-round basis.

Rural Idaho is currently home to an international dark sky reserve (Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve) and three dark sky parks (Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, Bruneau Dunes State Park and City of Rocks National Reserve).

In 2017, the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve was named the first international dark sky reserve in the U.S and in 2025 was one of only 24 such sites globally.[49] The greatest opportunities for experiencing Idaho's other natural amenities, such as public lands, are found within rural counties (Table 2.19).

[49] Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve, accessed June 2025, https://idahodarksky.org.

Table 2.19. Idaho's recreational amenities within its rural counties

Data type	Statewide total	Statewide share within rural counties	Data source
National Forest Service acreage	11.4 million acres	97%	U.S. Forest Service
Idaho endowment land	2.4 million acres	90%	Idaho Department of Lands
State Park campsites and cabins	1,900+ sites	81%	Idaho State Parks and Recreation
Idaho Birding Trail	355 sites	66%	Idaho Fish and Game
Fish hatcheries	36 hatcheries	92%	Idaho Fish and Game
Ski lifts	91 lifts	80%	Skiresort.info
Dark sky reserve/parks	4 sites	100%	Visit Idaho

History, heritage and sense of place

An excerpt from a 2014 University of Washington Press blog notes: "Idaho's place is properly understood to be a product of its spaces, cultures, and times… The here and now of the state, after all, is the product of its past."[50]

In 1900 — only 10 years after Idaho achieved statehood — the urban counties of Nez Perce and Latah were the first and second most populated counties in the state. The rural counties of Fremont and Shoshone followed at third and fourth, respectively. Ada — the state's most populous county and home to more than one of every four Idaho residents in 2023 — was ranked sixth in 1900.[51]

Over the past 120+ years, Idaho's nine urban counties have become hubs of commerce. However, they are not always the most populated. In 2023, the rural counties of Bonner and Bingham had higher resident populations than the once top-ranking urban counties of Nez Perce and Latah. Despite the large populations in these rural counties, they are not considered urban because they lack a large principal city.

While the concentration of Idaho's population has shifted significantly over the years, the associated heritage and history embedded within its regions results in a strong sense of place and identity for its residents. Rural counties remain the site of more than half of each of the state's nationally recognized historic places, national historic landmarks and century farms (Figure 2.20).

Table 2.20. Idaho's history and heritage sites within its rural counties

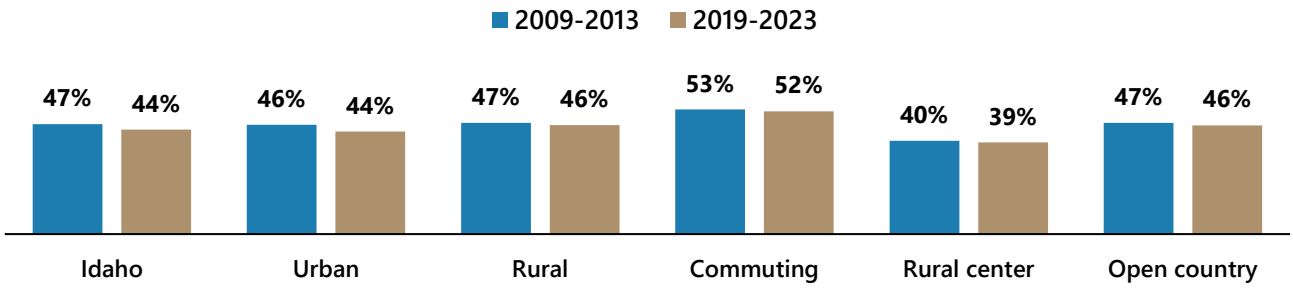
Data type	Statewide total	Statewide share within rural counties	Data source
National Register of Historic Places	1,084 historic places	58%	National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks	11 historic landmarks	73%	National Park Service
State highway historical markers	252 historical markers	74%	State of Idaho GIS Office
Century Farms	450+ farms	65%	Idaho State Historical Society

In 2023, the U.S. Census estimated 44% of Idaho's residents were born in the state — down from 47% in 2013.[52] The remaining resident population was comprised of people who chose Idaho to be their permanent home.

[50] Adam Sowards, "Idaho's Place: Making a Case for a New History of the Gem State," University of Washington Press Blog, published July 9, 2014, https://uwpressblog.com/2014/07/09/idahos-place-making-a-case-for-a-new-history-of-the-gem-state/.
[51] "1900 Decennial Census, Statistics of Population," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 2025, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/volume-1/volume-1-p5.pdf.
[52] "American Community Survey, 2009–2013 and 2019–2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html.

In the three rural counties of Bingham, Jefferson and Power, over 60% of residents were born in Idaho. This contrasts with less than 30% of residents born in the state in the rural counties of Bonner, Oneida, Teton and Elmore. The highest share of residents born in Idaho was in rural commuting counties while rural center counties had the lowest concentration.

Figure 2.32. The share of current residents that were born in Idaho, by county type



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 5-year data file for 2013 and 2023, Table B05002

The social economy of rural Idaho

An economy is not simply defined by the production and consumption of its goods and services. Other emotional aspects, such as levels of well-being, quality of life and community connections are important considerations for measuring the social economy of rural Idaho.

Since 1984, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare has conducted the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to identify the prevalence of disease, injury, health conditions and health-related behaviors associated with death and disability.

The results of the BRFSS are presented within three demographic residence categories:

1. Frontier counties with less than six residents per square mile.
2. Rural counties that are neither frontier nor urban.
3. Urban counties with at least one principal city of 20,000+ residents.

Together, the frontier and rural categories defined in this data grouping compose the 35 rural counties that have been previously defined in this report.

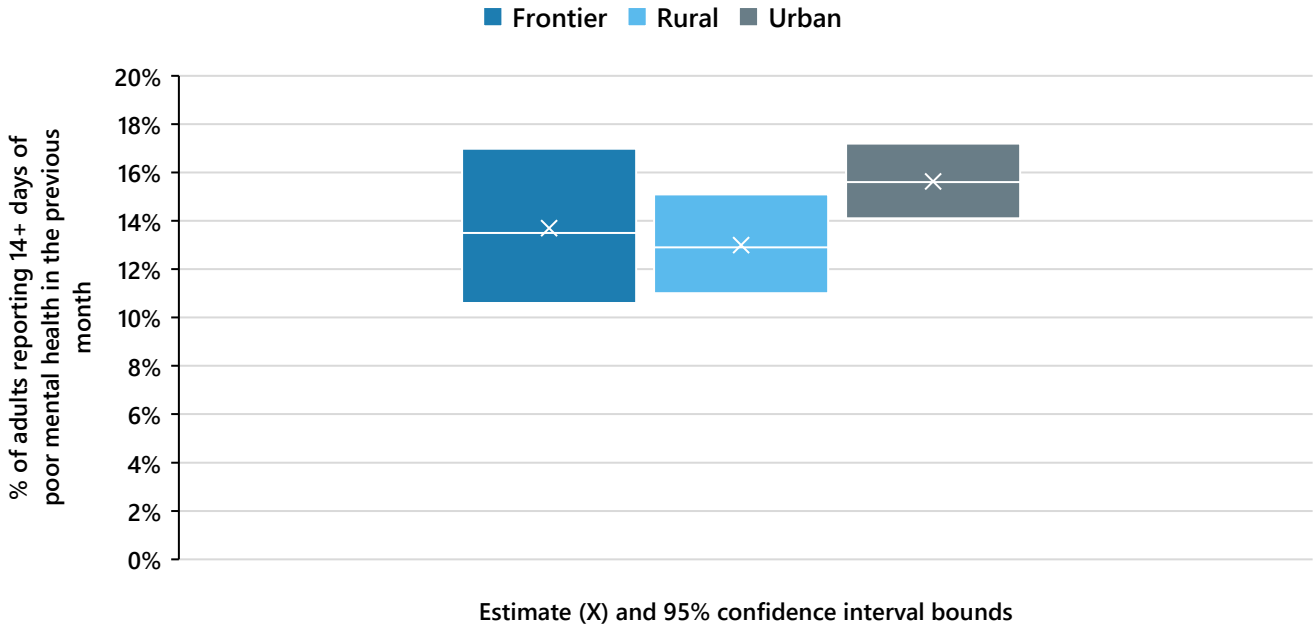
Between 2014-2023, the share of Idaho adults that reported fair or poor general health in the BRFSS increased from 13% in 2014 to 16% in 2023. While 16% of urban adults were estimated to have fair or poor general health in 2023, that share rose to just under 18% for rural counties and nearly 20% for frontier counties.

A higher share of frontier and rural residents were more likely to report at least 14 days of poor physical health in the previous month than urban residents. Residents in rural and frontier counties were also less likely to have health insurance or a primary health care provider and were more likely to delay medical care for cost reasons.

The pattern between rural and urban residents shifts when discussing mental health instead of physical. Both frontier and rural counties had a lower response rate in 2023 for adults who struggled with at least 14 poor mental health days over the previous month (Figure 2.33) as well as lower overall depression diagnoses.[53]

[53] "Idaho Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023," Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, accessed June 2025, https://www.gethealthy.dhw.idaho.gov/idaho-brfss.

Figure 2.33. Adult residents reporting 14+ days of poor mental health in the previous month



Source: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2023

Similarly, the 2023 Needs Assessment by the Idaho Commission on Aging showed 83% of rural respondents rated their quality of life as either good or very good compared with 74% for urban dwellers.[54] Approximately 97% of survey respondents were over the age of 60.

Compared with urban residents, rural individuals were less likely to report not being able to participate as often as they would prefer in activities such as community events or social/support groups, park or nature visits, religion or worship services, senior center meals or activities and volunteer work.

For nearly all categories of activities where the respondent was unable to complete it themselves and did not have the help they required, the Needs Assessment showed rural residents consistently appeared to have a stronger social network with lower response rates for necessary tasks going undone. This included recurring activities such as home and yard maintenance, shopping for necessities, transportation and meeting social needs. While urban residents were more frequently worried about loneliness, falling and living in pain, rural respondents were more likely to be concerned with paying their bills.

Rural Idaho plays a vital role in the accessibility of Idaho's natural resources, recreational amenities and heritage. While urban areas may be better defined by financial prosperity, rural areas can be defined by their social economy, providing residents with a sense of place, identity and community. Going forward, the challenge for rural Idaho lies in preserving natural resources and affordability while simultaneously promoting economic development and population growth.

[54] "2023 Needs Assessment," Idaho Commission on Aging, accessed June 2025, https://libraries.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023-ICOA-Needs-Assessment-Booklet.pdf.

Part III. Critical trends

The fabric of rural Idaho continuously evolves and is reshaped by the interplay of many factors. This section of the Rural Profile for Idaho identifies a few of the critical trends that define these shifts and their implications on the state's rural areas.

This part will explore issues related to rural barriers to employment, including the realities of poverty and living wages, the importance of Supplemental Security Income benefits, public health challenges like crime and opioid use and the complexities of farm succession and competing land use. This analysis provides additional insight into current and future conditions for rural communities.

Additional county-level data tables are available in the attached appendix following the conclusion of part III and the reference page.

Critical trends of rural Idaho

Rural barriers to employment

Idaho experienced one of its tightest labor markets on record between 2022-2024, setting historical lows for both unemployment rates and average duration of unemployment insurance claims. In addition, the state saw employer demand for workers significantly outpace the supply of available labor.

Although the intensity of labor market shortages has since subsided, the large baby boomer generation continues to age into retirement, and the following generations continue to be smaller in proportion to older generations.

Idaho's labor force participation rate has declined in the past three decades — peaking in 1998 at over 70% and steadily declining to 64% from the most recent 2024 data. In the latest five-year period of 2019-2023, 20 Idaho counties had labor force participation rates below 60% — all of which were classified as rural.[55]

Along with an aging population, rural counties share additional characteristics that could be considered potential barriers to employment including lower educational attainment and less access to child care services, public transportation and reliable broadband coverage.

Table 3.1. Urban/rural Idaho: educational attainment, child care employment and broadband internet subscriptions

	Labor force participation rate	% of population age 25+ who did not finish high school		Child care employees per 1,000 residents under the age of 5		# of counties where 20%+ of households did not have a broadband internet subscription	
	2019-2023	2009-2013	2019-2023	2014	2024	2014-2018	2019-2023
Urban counties	64.1%	9.6%	7.1%	29	43	9	3
Rural counties	59.1%	14.9%	11.6%	14	27	35	24
Commuting	62.5%	16.3%	12.4%	15	24	8	4
Rural center	59.4%	14.5%	11.5%	16	32	5	3
Open country	55.7%	14.0%	10.8%	13	25	22	17
Idaho	**63.7%**	**11.2%**	**8.3%**	**25**	**39**	**44**	**27**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey." Idaho Department of Labor, "Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages." U.S. Census Bureau, "Annual Population Estimates."

Labor shortages significantly affect an employer's ability to grow. To offset the aging demographic trends, reducing existing employment barriers will help employers fill staffing needs in the short-term. However, if the availability of skilled workers continues to decline over the long term, businesses will be forced to implement other technologies such as automation, software and artificial intelligence.

Age

An aging population will continue to be a challenge for Idaho's rural areas and is particularly more intense compared with urban areas due to lower birth rates and a higher median age.

From 2014-2024, Idaho birth rates decreased by 16% — falling from nearly 14 births per 1,000 residents in 2014 to fewer than 12 births per 1,000 residents in 2024. Globally, birth rates continue to decline below replacement levels with a reversal considered to be highly unlikely.

Open country counties had the combination of the lowest birth rate at under 11 births per 1,000 residents in

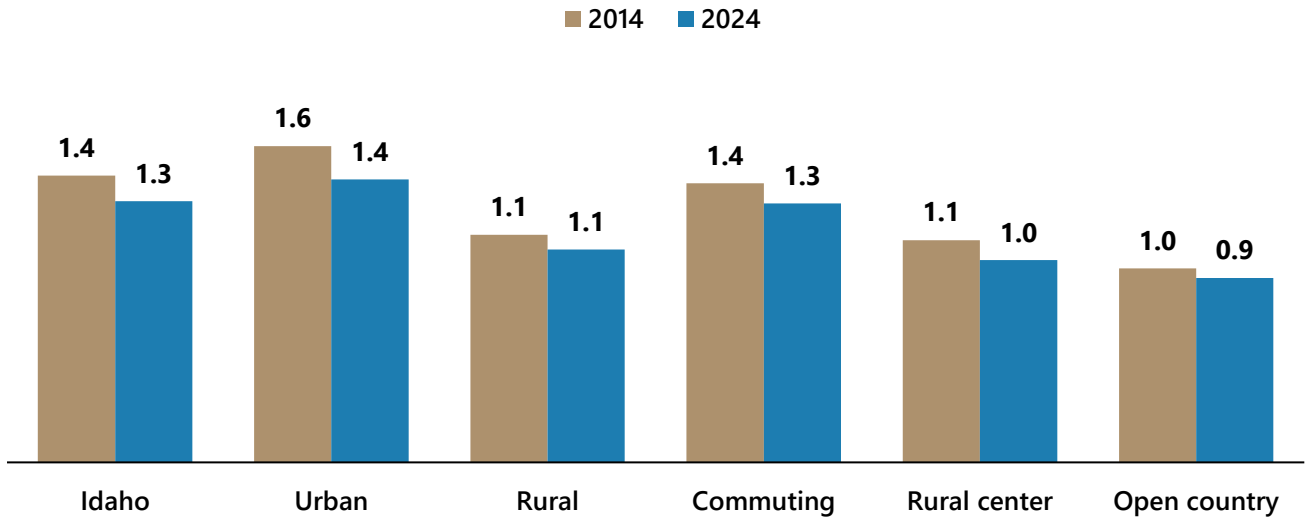
[55] "American Community Survey, 5-year data files for 2009–2013, 2014-2018 and 2019-2023," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed August 2025, https://data.census.gov/.

2024 while simultaneously having the highest resident median age exceeding 44 years. As birth rates look poised to continue falling and a higher share of the resident population hits retirement age, this is likely to result in a chronic labor supply shortage for many of Idaho's counties — most drastically in the rural areas.

At the same time birth rates are declining, the share of the population reaching retirement age is increasing faster than the general population. A ratio can be used to measure this trend, where a number over one indicates there is a higher population of the prime working age group (ages 25-54) compared with those ages 55 and over. A number less than one means there are more people over the age of 55 than the prime working age population.

It is evident the statewide shift in age was fairly minor overall in the past decade, with the ratio decreasing slightly from 1.4 in 2014 to 1.3 in 2024. However, both rural center and open country counties were at or below one for this metric in 2024, as seen in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Population ratio of prime working age (age 25-54) compared with those age 55+, 2014-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Annual Population Estimates 2014-2024."

Of the top 20 counties statewide by highest median age, 16 of them also had labor force participation rates below 60%. While a higher share of these residents may be of retirement age and are not actually seeking employment, age is still a barrier for older workers in the labor force who may face discrimination or lack in-demand skills — such as computer literacy — in today's labor market.

Educational attainment

Higher educational attainment tends to have a positive correlation with labor force participation — for example, a population with advanced degrees will be more active in the labor force.

Conversely, a population with a more basic education level will generally be less active in the labor force. Higher rates of unemployment are also associated with populations that have lower education levels.

In 2023, the population of Idaho residents ages 25-64 who finished high school saw a labor force participation rate of 80%, compared with 62% for the population who had not completed high school.

Rural counties continue to have a higher share of their adult population who have not completed at least a high school education. The most recent county level U.S. Census data from 2019-2023 estimates that while just over 7% of urban residents over the age of 25 had not finished high school, this share was more than 11% in rural Idaho.

Each primary campus of Idaho's public two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions were located in one

of Idaho's nine urban counties. The proximity to these learning centers is a significant benefit to the urban residents nearby but may create accessibility barriers for its rural residents.

Continued focus on targeted workforce education programs within rural areas, such as in-school career technical education programs, registered apprenticeships and Idaho LAUNCH, may provide the greatest training benefit to rural areas with high workforce needs that are not within close proximity of a public postsecondary institution.

Transportation

Although transportation may not be the primary reason rural workers have lower labor force participation rates, it is certainly an important factor. When a commute gets too long or stressful, there is an increased risk of employee burn-out and higher job turnover for employers.

Rural county residents averaged 23-minute commutes from 2019-2023 — three minutes longer than urban county commuters and more than two minutes longer compared with 10 years earlier.

Statewide, the saturation of public transportation is very low with less than 1% of commuters utilizing it on a daily basis. From 2019-2023, there were 15 Idaho counties — all rural — that reported 0% of commuters relying on public transportation to get to work. This is an increase from the nine counties reporting no usage from 2009-2013.

Fewer public transportation options available in low density rural areas combined with much lower employer density per square mile means access to private transportation remains crucial for allowing the rural labor force to seek and maintain employment. Those without access to transportation are going to find it very difficult to remain in the labor force over the long term in a vast, mountainous goods-producing state such as Idaho.

Broadband

Broadband was highlighted as a critical labor force trend in the "2005 Profile of Rural Idaho" and that need has only intensified since. High speed broadband creates opportunities for the highly skilled rural labor force to train or work remotely with less reliance on an employer's specific location.

Although advancements in broadband technology have significantly improved access speeds, many rural pockets of Idaho continue to be under-served with low download/upload rates, spotty reliability, prohibitive subscription costs and limited alternative options.

For the five-year period of 2019-2023, 29 of Idaho's 44 counties — four urban and 25 rural — had at least 10% of their resident households without any type of internet subscription. During the same period, there were 27 Idaho counties — three urban, 24 rural — where at least 20% of households did not maintain a broadband internet subscription (this includes cable, fiber optic, digital subscriber lines and satellite but excludes cell phone only access).

Broadband technology has increased to the point where the Federal Communications Commission established new upload and download speed benchmarks in 2024. A high-speed fixed broadband system is now defined as maintaining download speeds of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of 20 Mbps.[56] As a comparison, the previous 2015 benchmark had set standardized broadband speeds of 25 Mbps for download and 3 Mbps for upload.

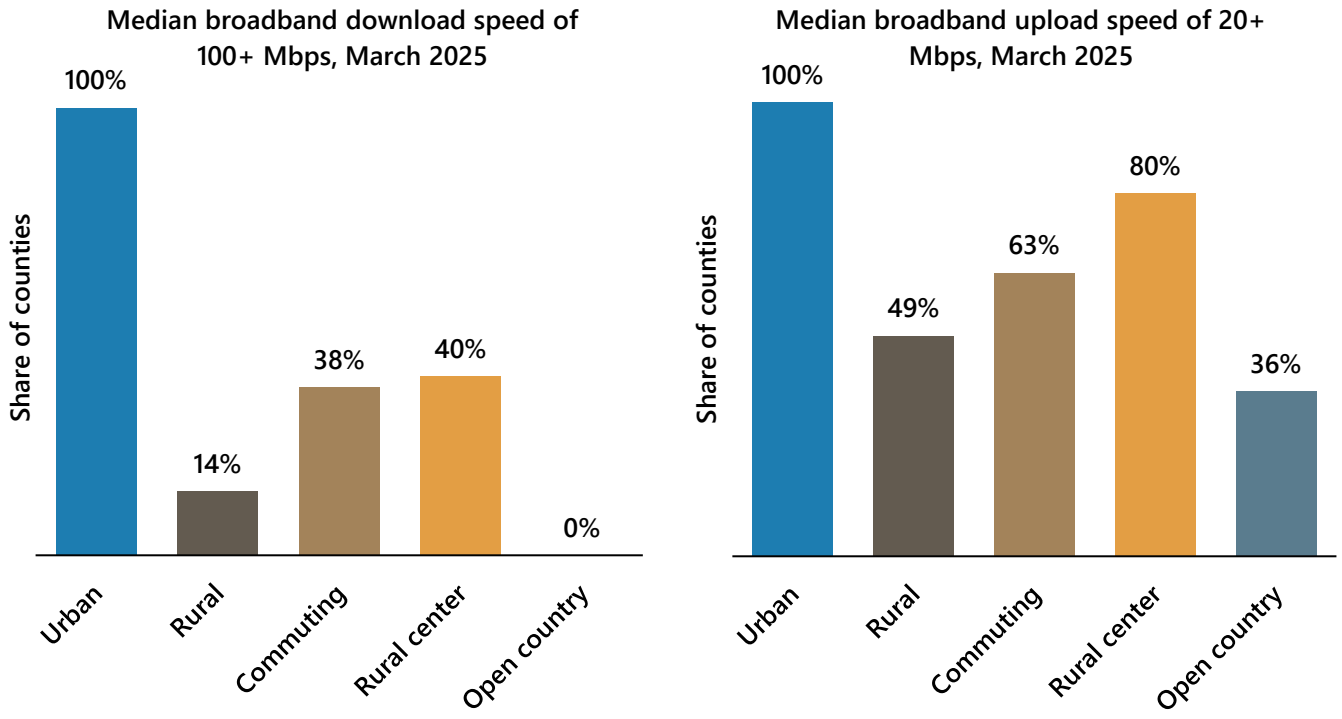
As of March 2025, broadband download/upload speed data from the State of Idaho Shared Resources website showed all nine urban counties met this updated minimum speed requirement. This contrasts with only four of Idaho's 35 rural counties (Elmore, Jefferson, Jerome, Payette) meeting the same threshold.

[56] "FCC Increases Broadband Speed Benchmark," Federal Communications Commission, released March 14, 2024, https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-401205A1.pdf.

Three additional rural counties (Blaine, Gem, Power) met one of the two speed requirements and are within 5 Mbps of reaching the second. This currently leaves 28 rural counties unable to meet current minimum broadband speeds with their existing infrastructure.

The completion of planned middle-mile and last-mile fiber projects are expected to significantly increase the broadband accessibility of Idaho statewide, especially for its rural residents. This will broaden work opportunities in Idaho's most remote areas but is currently an obstacle for rural county employment.

Figure 3.2. Median broadband download and upload speeds by county type, March 2025



Source: State of Idaho, "Shared Datasets for the State of Idaho, March 2025."

Poverty and living wage estimates

Statewide poverty rates declined significantly for the period of 2019-2023 compared with five years prior (2014-2018). However, rural counties experienced a more subdued drop than that of urban ones.

Poverty is a barrier to employment as basic expenses like quality housing, transportation and child care are an ongoing struggle. This population is often employed in low paying jobs and employer-provided benefits like medical insurance, paid time off or contributions to a retirement program may not be available.

Poverty rates are highest in urban and open country counties. Urban counties tend to have a higher concentration of lower wage service jobs in retail, hospitality and food service. Open country counties tend to be more isolated and offer fewer employer options. With a small population spread over a large physical area, access to basic services such as health care and education are often constrained and can act as barriers to upward mobility.

Compared with open country counties, commuting counties are more advantaged due to their proximity to urban areas. This rural county type experienced the greatest percentage decline in poverty over the most recent time period by utilizing the economic growth of their urban neighbors while also maintaining a lower cost of living.

Table 3.2. Share of population in poverty by county type, 2014-2018 and 2019-2023

County classification	Poverty rate, 2014-2018	Poverty rate, 2019-2023	% Change in poverty rate	Poverty rate, age 18-34, 2019-2023	Poverty rate, age 35-64, 2019-2023	Poverty rate, age 65+, 2019-2023
Urban counties	17.7%	12.7%	-5.0%	15.0%	7.5%	7.6%
Rural counties	16.1%	11.9%	-4.1%	13.1%	9.5%	9.9%
Commuting	17.1%	10.9%	-6.2%	12.5%	9.2%	9.5%
Rural center	15.0%	10.5%	-4.5%	12.0%	7.9%	8.2%
Open country	16.1%	12.6%	-3.5%	14.9%	11.0%	11.5%
Idaho	**13.8%**	**10.6%**	**-3.2%**	**14.6%**	**8.1%**	**8.3%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey 2008-2012, 2019-2023."

Between 2019-2023, Idaho's urban counties had a higher poverty rate than rural counties for young adults ages 18-34. However, rural counties had a higher share of their resident population below poverty for both the 35-64 age group and those ages 65 and older. For the population specifically over the age of 65, urban areas saw poverty rates decline slightly from 7.8% in 2013 to 7.6% in 2023, while rural areas increased from 9% in 2013 to 9.9% in 2023.

Between 2019-2023, rural counties had 90 out of every 1,000 residents who were over the age of 65 and below poverty while urban counties had 78. All of the different rural county types had a higher rate of poverty than urban for this age group, with the highest rate in open country counties at every 94 out of 1,000.

The share of the rural population below poverty has become more concentrated for residents over the age of 65. Nearly 17% of the population below poverty in rural areas was over the age of 65 from 2019-2023, almost double the 9% seen from 2009-2013. Although urban areas had a much lower share at 6% in 2013, this rate also nearly doubled to 11% in 2023.

The Economic Policy Institute publishes a family budget calculator that estimates the income needed to afford basic necessities. The following table estimates the annual cost of living for a family of four (two parents and two kids, a four- and eight-year-old).

Table 3.3. Annual living wage estimates by expense type, January 2025 (in 2024 dollars)

County classification	Housing	Food	Child care	Transportation	Health care	Other necessities	Taxes	Total
Urban	$13,608	$13,068	$15,276	$18,204	$15,768	$8,976	$11,232	**$96,132**
Commuting	$11,388	$12,156	$12,528	$20,772	$15,696	$7,920	$9,876	**$90,336**
Rural center	$12,696	$12,864	$12,270	$20,112	$15,684	$8,604	$10,632	**$93,312**
Open country	$11,760	$13,728	$12,252	$21,432	$15,732	$8,580	$10,824	**$94,308**

Source: Economic Policy Institute, "Family Budget Map 2019-2024."

Compared with urban residents, families in rural counties have lower expenses on housing and child care. However, rural areas have less access to grocery stores and longer commutes, with open country counties in particular having transportation and food costs estimated at 16% and 5% higher than urban, respectively.

While the cost of living is cheaper in rural counties, only 31% of rural households earn incomes high enough to support a family of four, compared with 49% of urban households. Rural counties also have higher fertility rates (number of women ages 15-50 giving birth in a given year) than urban counties at 6.6% and 4.6% respectively.

Rural county families are not only less likely to earn a high enough income to reach the Economic Policy Institute's threshold but are also having more children per capita compared with urban families, further highlighting the living wage challenge of raising a family in rural Idaho.

Supplemental Security Income benefits

A more generous Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit is believed to create a disincentive for older individuals to seek higher wage employment income or acquire additional assets as they approach the program's eligibility age of 65.

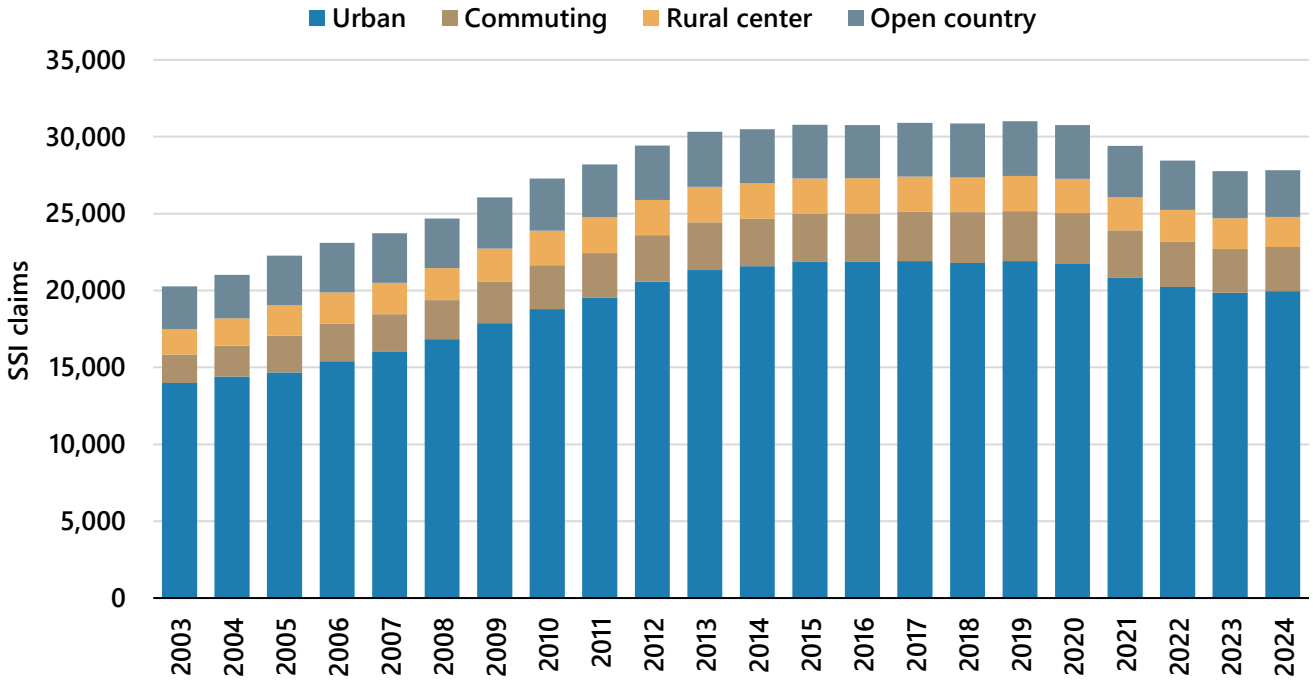
However, in Idaho, the majority of SSI recipients are eligible based on a disability and not age alone — 94% were eligible in 2023 based on blindness or a disability compared with only 6% based on age. This is a similar rate to the 7% based on age alone in 2003.

Since SSI benefits provide additional income to residents who are 65 and older or disabled with limited income and resources, trends in the count of recipients in Idaho provide insight into the relative prevalence of economic hardship and disability in the state.

Between 2003-2023, total SSI recipients in Idaho increased by 37%, which was less than the total population growth of more than 44% in the state. Therefore, despite SSI utilization growing in absolute terms, the utilization rate decreased in Idaho, particularly given a decline in SSI recipients beginning in 2020, as shown in Figure 3.3.

When comparing the different rural county types to urban, there was no trend indicating an outsized increase in SSI utilization in rural counties. The growth of SSI recipients was highest in urban counties and the rural commuting county type, in line with their relatively rapid population growth.

Figure 3.3. Number of SSI recipients in Idaho by year and county type



Source: U.S. Social Security Administration, "SSI Recipients by State and County."

Utilization rates of SSI per recipient data (expressed in the table below as claims per 1,000 residents) are roughly uniform across different county types. This indicates rural Idaho has not experienced a disproportionate expansion of economic hardship and disability rates relative to the state's urban counties.

Table 3.4. SSI recipients in Idaho by county type, 2003-2023

County classification	SSI claims, 2003	SSI claims, 2013	SSI claims, 2023	% SSI claim increase, 2003-2023	SSI claims per 1,000 residents, 2023
Urban counties	13,978	21,335	19,847	42.0%	13.9
Rural counties	6,287	8,982	7,919	26.0%	14.6
Commuting	1,850	3,099	2,859	54.5%	14.5
Rural center	1,657	2,313	1,996	20.5%	13.0
Open country	2,780	3,570	3,064	10.2%	16.0
Idaho	**20,265**	**30,317**	**27,766**	**37.0%**	**14.1**

Source: U.S. Social Security Administration, "SSI Recipients by State and County."

This result is somewhat counterintuitive, given rural counties have historically seen lower levels of economic growth and relied more on physically intensive jobs in industries like agriculture, logging and mining that might be expected to result in higher levels of disability. The fact rural Idaho has instead experienced a recent decline in disability claims instead suggests positive trends for the population's health and economic vitality.

Crime and drug use

The frequency of crime and drug use in a local area can affect economic and workforce conditions. Crime rates in Idaho are relatively low compared to other states and rural Idaho is generally known to have even lower crime rates than statewide averages.

Violent crime in Idaho, particularly in rural counties, has decreased since 2003. Property crime saw a 72% reduction in total rural offenses and a 55% reduction in urban counties from 2003-2023. This was driven by drastic reductions of over 70% in both burglary and theft offenses in the period.

Table 3.5. Criminal offense rate per 100,000 population

Offense type	Rural, 2003	Rural, 2023	% rural change, 2003-2023	Urban, 2003	Urban, 2023	% urban change, 2003-2023
Violent crime	220	180	-18%	257	229	-11%
Murder and non-negligent manslaughter	2.1	1.7	-22%	1.9	1.5	-23%
Forcible rape	31	23	-28%	41	33	-19%
Robbery	13	4	-73%	21	12	-44%
Aggravated assault	173	152	-12%	193	183	-5%
Property crime	2,397	533	-78%	3,181	933	-71%
Burglary	485	109	-78%	587	153	-74%
Larceny-theft	1,740	366	-79%	2,369	685	-71%
Motor vehicle theft	154	53	-66%	199	87	-56%
Arson	18	6	-66%	27	8	-72%
Drugs	434	627	44%	488	614	26%

Source: Idaho State Police, "Crime in Idaho report, 2003-2023."

The cause of this decrease can be partially attributed to the long-term downward unemployment trend. A study conducted by the Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization in 2019 found persistently higher

unemployment trends are positively correlated with property crime rates.[57]

Unemployment in rural Idaho decreased from 6.7% in 2003 to just 3.9% in 2023. This was more drastic than the urban decrease from 5% to 3.1% during the same period. As more people are able to earn employment income through legitimate means, there may be less incentive to engage in criminal acts which carry a high risk of penalties like incarceration.

Rural Idaho has a lower offense type than urban for most violent crime types, but the opposite is true when focusing on drug-related offenses. While most violent crime rates decreased statewide over the last 20 years, drug offense rates increased 44% for rural counties and 26% for urban counties between 2003-2023. Open country counties had the highest drug offense rate of any county type at 693 per 100,000 residents compared with commuting counties with the lowest at 543 per 100,000 residents.

Population reports published by the Idaho Department of Correction show 37% of Idaho's incarcerated population and 43% of the probation/parole population were sentenced on drug charges as of 2023. This compares with 21% of the incarcerated population and 29% of the probation/parole population sentenced on drug charges in 2003.[58]

Farm succession and land competition

The farming lifestyle of rural Idaho has evolved throughout its history and the last two decades have not been an exception. During the pandemic, concerns heightened due to the influx of new people migrating into Idaho.

The urbanization of Idaho requires large amounts of available land and resources. At times, this expansion is in direct competition with the agricultural industry's viability. Additionally, family-run farms are faced with the cost burden of rising land prices and expensive specialized equipment offset by limited revenue growth.

With these high input costs, those in the farming or agricultural space must decide whether to stay or pursue occupations more lucrative in the present-day economy, such as real estate development or construction.

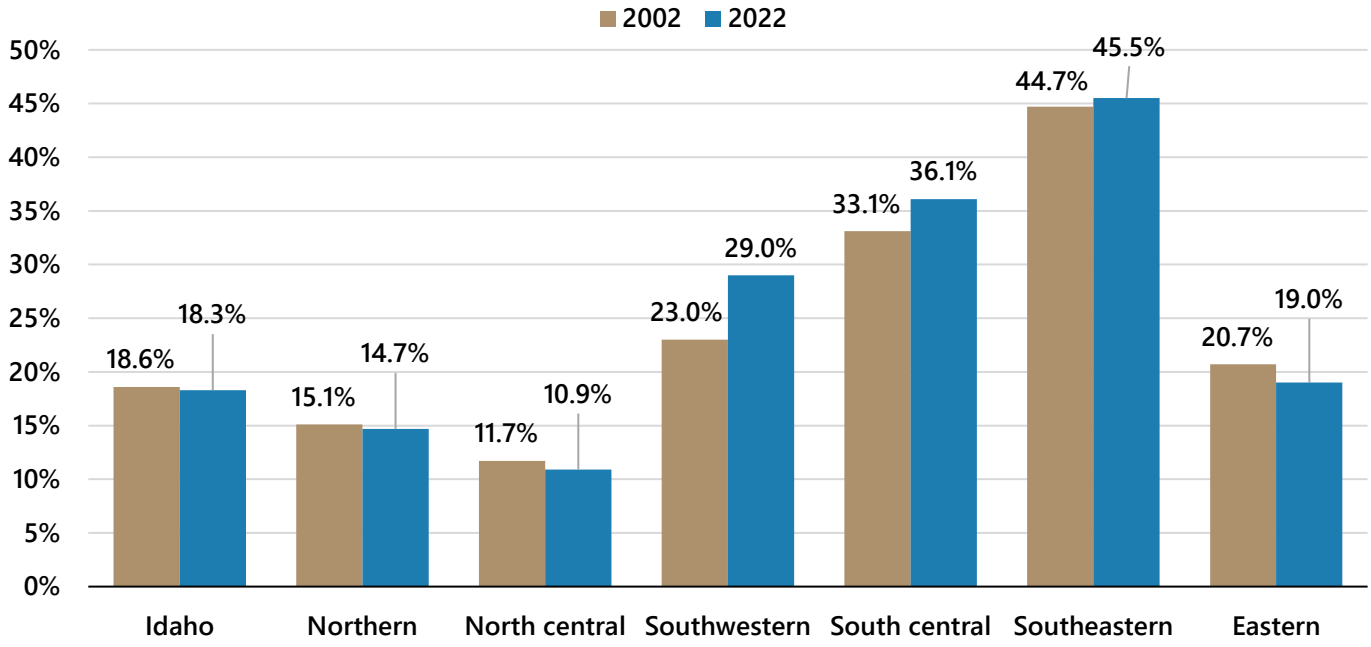
The prices of farm land acres have increased substantially even as agricultural commodity revenues have lagged. Between 2002-2022, the number of farms in rural Idaho decreased 9.8%, while the price per acre of farm land increased 151%.

The overall acres of land in rural county farms decreased by less than 1% from 2002-2022 but experienced more significant cumulative declines of over 7% in the northern, north central and eastern regions.[59] The total share these three regions contributed to Idaho's rural farm acres declined from 29% in 2003 to 26% in 2023.

In contrast, farm acreage expanded by over 2% in the rural counties within the southwest, south central and southeastern regions. The increase in acres in these growing regions is a result of a combination of smaller farms consolidating into larger operations, conversion of non-agricultural land to farmland, economic incentives, local policies and investment programs.

[57] F. Jawadi, S.K. Mallick and A. Idi Cheffou et al, "Does higher unemployment lead to greater criminality? Revisiting the debate over the business cycle," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, last modified Feb. 3, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2019.03.025.
[58] "Incarcerated and Community Population Reports, 2013-2023," Idaho Department of Correction, accessed September 2025. https://www.idoc.idaho.gov/content/about-us/research-and-statistics/archives.
[59] "Census of Agriculture, 2002-2022," National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, accessed May 2025. https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/.

Figure 3.4. Regional farm land as a share of total rural county area, 2002-2022



Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, "Census of Agriculture 2002-2022."

As rural working farm acreage decreased statewide from 2002-2022, the local population also became relatively older. The share of the rural population over the age of 65 increased by 54% from 2002-2022, significantly outpacing the 24% growth rate of the total rural population. This aging demographic includes farmers, ranchers and large land owners who either work the land themselves or lease it to another entity.

Table 3.6. Share of rural population age 65 and over by region, 2002-2022

Year	Northern	North central	Southwestern	South central	Southeastern	Eastern	Idaho
2002	13.6%	17.0%	13.8%	12.5%	13.4%	11.8%	**13.2%**
2022	24.1%	28.2%	20.1%	15.5%	17.5%	13.2%	**20.2%**

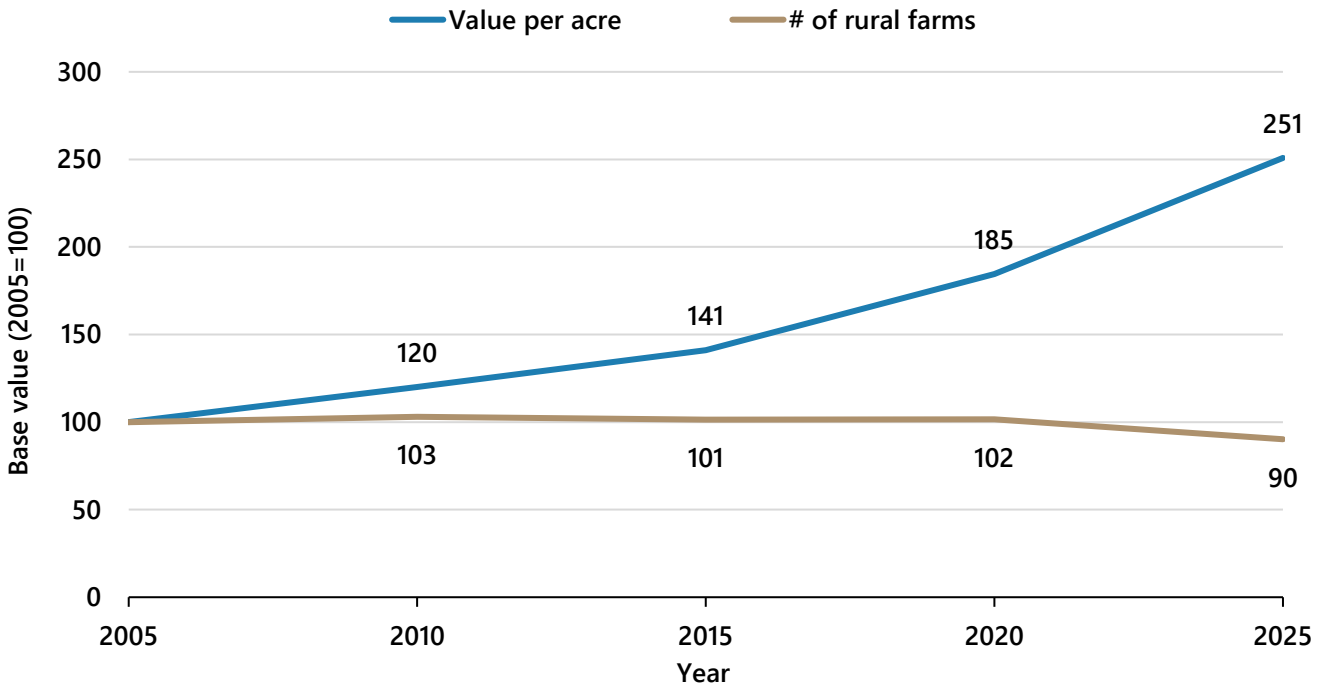
Source: U.S Census Bureau, "Annual and decennial population estimates, 2000-2023."

Farmwork requires ongoing physical manual labor to move irrigation pipe, divert water gates, drive farm equipment and battle ongoing weather effects. When farmers are no longer able to tend the land themselves it results in a critical juncture of land succession pathways among an aging rural population.

Upon the retirement or passing away of the farm or ranch owners, the access to their working land either moves through a line of ownership/lease succession or it simply ends. As farm acre prices continue to rise while cost inputs remain elevated, these decisions may tip in favor of farmland being sold and transitioning to other competing uses for a higher monetary return, such as residential or commercial land development.

It is projected by 2035 that 41% of agricultural land across the U.S. will have a change in ownership. It is reasonable to expect Idaho will be at or above this rate of ownership change with future demographic shifts, land value increases and competing land use pressures.

Figure 3.5. Number of rural farms and value per farm acre comparison, 2005-2025 (2005=100)



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Census of Agriculture 2002-2022."

Renewable energy and future electricity demand

Although rural Idaho may be viewed as having less economic opportunity, certain industries — such as agribusiness and manufacturing — continue to strongly grow their presence in the state's rural areas. A close proximity to raw inputs for these industries reduces production costs which then increases profitability. A skilled workforce in these rural areas is needed to enhance a producer's competitive edge.

Renewable energy production and transmission is likely to be another stronghold industry in rural Idaho going forward. Modern technology adoption, such as a higher penetration of electric vehicles, construction of large regional data centers, and continued implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) will be highly dependent on rural Idaho for electricity generation.

An AI query currently requires around 10 times more electricity than a simple internet search while the charging of electric vehicles will require overall power grid expansion. As both of these technologies continue to evolve and be more widely used, more on-demand electricity will be required. Idaho currently produces around 20% of its total energy needs and 60% of its annual electricity consumption.[60] Rural Idaho is likely to be where increased energy investment will be directed to power the grid when technologies like these become a larger economic force.

The Idaho National Laboratory in rural eastern Idaho will continue to be a cornerstone for the nation's high-demand nuclear energy needs for several decades in the future. It currently employs a high share of workers in rural eastern Idaho and forecasts strong continued growth — including new partnerships with colleges statewide along with other regionally advanced nuclear energy developers.

Although renewable energy industries will continue to be a very small component of the overall job market, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the highest employment growth nationally from 2024-2034 will

[60] "Idaho Energy Landscape 2024," Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources, accessed September 2025, https://oemr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024-Idaho-Energy-Landscape.pdf.

be within the top four growth industries of solar, wind, geothermal and other electric power generation.[61]

- **Wind.** At the end of 2023, wind comprised nearly 15% of Idaho's in-state power generation and 10% of its in-state power sales with 973 megawatts of total capacity. Of the 588 wind turbines located within Idaho, 43% are in rural counties. Wind turbines are currently located within six of Idaho's 44 counties, four rural (Bingham, Cassia, Elmore, Power) and two urban (Bonneville, Twin Falls). Of Idaho's 25 completed wind turbine projects, 12 have wind turbines within a rural county.[62]
- **Solar.** Seven of the 12 large scale solar photovoltaic projects statewide are located in rural counties. In terms of AC/DC capacity generated, rural counties are responsible for 44% of the state's 502-megawatt DC capacity and 45% of the state's 619-megawatt AC capacity.[63]
- **Geothermal.** More than 75% of the state's permitted geothermal wells are located within rural counties.[64]
- **Hydroelectric and irrigation.** Of Idaho's 407 dams, 328 (81%) are in rural counties. This includes 78% of the state's 230 dams used primarily for hydroelectric power or irrigation.[65]

Researcher's note on rural comparability

It is easier to define what is urban than what is rural. Rural areas are a residual of what remains after urban areas are delineated. As the definition of an urban area continues to be fluid and dynamic on a federal level, the difficulty in making historical comparisons between rural and urban areas becomes increasingly complex.

Most recently, the definition of an urban area was changed in two major ways by the U.S. Census Bureau following the 2020 decennial census. The minimum population threshold to qualify as urban was increased from 2,500 to 5,000 while a second variable of housing density was added for the first time. To be urban, areas must now meet at least one of these two eligibility criteria. The inclusion of housing unit density is expected to allow for more frequent urban area classification updates between each decennial census.

As a result of these two definition changes, the count of Idaho's current urban areas has decreased from 43 using the 2010 definitions to now 27 following the new eligibility guidelines. As urban definitions continue to evolve, it will become more difficult (if not impossible) to make direct comparisons between past and future rural reports. Rural does not mean the same thing to every stakeholder and how the definition is framed will potentially create very different data results.

Table 3.7. U.S. Census Bureau, urban area criteria and urban designated areas in Idaho

Designation	2010 Census	2020 Census
Qualifying urban areas	Population of **2,500+**	Population of **5,000+** ***or*** **2,000 housing units**
Urban area type	Urbanized areas and urban clusters defined by a 50,000-population threshold	Eliminated urban clusters. All qualifying areas are designated as an urban area
Count of Idaho's census urban areas using the definition of the corresponding time period	43	27

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Differences between the final 2020 census urban area criteria and the 2010 census urban area criteria."

[61] "Employment Projections – 2024-2034," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, released August 28, 2025, accessed September 2025, https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/ecopro_08282025.pdf.
[62] "U.S. Wind Turbine Database," U.S. Geological Survey, accessed August 2025, https://energy.usgs.gov/uswtdb/.
[63] Ibid.
[64] "Geothermal Resources Map," Idaho Department of Water Resources, accessed August 2025, https://maps.idwr.idaho.gov/agol/GeothermalResources/.
[65] "National Inventory of Dams," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, accessed August 2025. https://nid.sec.usace.army.mil/#/.

Key findings

Over the past two decades, rural Idaho has undergone profound demographic, economic and social changes that continue to shape its future. Population growth has been rapid statewide, but unevenly distributed, with rural counties capturing only a modest share of in-migration compared with urban centers.

As a result, the rural share of Idaho's population has steadily declined, even as many rural communities remain vital hubs of agriculture, natural resource industries and recreation. An aging population, declining birth rates and persistent barriers to employment — such as educational attainment gaps, limited transportation and uneven broadband access — pose challenges to sustaining workforce participation in rural areas.

At the same time, rural Idaho plays a crucial role in the state's economy and its future. Natural resources, manufacturing and renewable energy production remain central to rural livelihoods and are expected to continue to expand in importance with the growth of AI, data centers and electric vehicle infrastructure that will demand greater energy capacity. Yet rural Idahoans also face mounting social and economic pressures, including poverty, opioid use and competition for farmland.

Together, these dynamics highlight the dual reality of rural Idaho: communities that are deeply resilient and resource-rich, but also facing structural headwinds that require targeted investment, workforce support and adaptive strategies to ensure sustainable growth.

Highlighted takeaways

- **Population and demographics:** The rural share of Idaho's population has fallen to 26.7% (2023), with rural counties aging faster than urban counterparts.
- **Economy and industry:** Rural Idaho persists as an economic cornerstone of agriculture, manufacturing and natural resources, in addition to emerging as a critical provider of renewable energy.
- **Labor force challenges:** Lower educational attainment, lack of transit and broadband gaps present challenges for labor force participation in rural counties.
- **Social and well-being issues:** Drug offenses and persistent poverty weigh more heavily on rural communities.
- **Land and succession:** Farm consolidation, aging landowners and rising land values are reshaping rural landscapes, with significant implications for future land use.
- **Data and definitions:** Shifts in the U.S. Census Bureau definitions of "urban" complicate rural-urban comparisons over time, challenging the consistency of research.

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Appendix

Population

Table A.1. Total population by select period

Counties	Class type	2000	2010	2020	2023	Persons per sq. mile, 2003	Persons per sq. mile, 2023
Idaho	**State**	**1,299,430**	**1,571,450**	**1,849,415**	**1,971,122**	**16**	**24**
Ada	Urban	303,328	393,531	498,301	526,690	311	501
Adams	Open country	3,477	3,953	4,425	4,898	3	4
Bannock	Urban	75,728	83,071	87,281	90,585	69	81
Bear Lake	Open country	6,424	5,971	6,367	6,783	6	7
Benewah	Open country	9,186	9,285	9,579	10,400	11	13
Bingham	Commuting	41,753	45,769	48,099	50,398	20	24
Blaine	Rural center	19,115	21,326	24,345	25,180	8	10
Boise	Commuting	6,702	7,032	7,663	8,560	4	5
Bonner	Rural center	36,950	40,915	47,411	52,709	22	30
Bonneville	Urban	82,968	104,592	124,736	131,475	47	70
Boundary	Open country	9,913	11,026	12,141	13,677	8	11
Butte	Open country	2,894	2,907	2,583	2,747	1	1
Camas	Open country	968	1,109	1,084	1,232	1	1
Canyon	Urban	133,082	189,428	233,031	258,742	258	441
Caribou	Open country	7,281	6,977	7,016	7,233	4	4
Cassia	Rural center	21,393	23,088	24,755	25,817	8	10
Clark	Open country	1,024	988	793	801	1	<1
Clearwater	Open country	8,930	8,740	8,752	9,192	3	4
Custer	Open country	4,336	4,366	4,269	4,531	1	<1
Elmore	Commuting	28,610	27,123	28,680	29,706	8	10
Franklin	Commuting	11,350	12,794	14,283	15,516	18	23
Fremont	Open country	11,769	13,251	13,419	14,258	7	8
Gem	Commuting	15,215	16,675	19,278	21,384	28	38
Gooding	Open country	14,196	15,503	15,657	16,113	20	22
Idaho	Open country	15,470	16,291	16,590	17,928	2	2
Jefferson	Commuting	19,193	26,236	31,082	34,259	19	31
Jerome	Commuting	18,493	22,469	24,268	25,574	32	43
Kootenai	Urban	109,487	138,901	172,791	185,237	94	150
Latah	Urban	34,878	37,334	39,638	41,691	33	39
Lemhi	Open country	7,724	7,957	7,958	8,447	2	2
Lewis	Open country	3,740	3,816	3,524	3,740	8	8
Lincoln	Open country	4,051	5,211	5,136	5,444	4	5
Madison	Urban	27,519	37,623	52,912	55,123	64	117
Minidoka	Rural center	20,103	20,112	21,671	22,526	26	30
Nez Perce	Urban	37,398	39,339	42,148	42,978	44	51
Oneida	Open country	4,135	4,298	4,564	4,955	3	4
Owyhee	Commuting	10,690	11,512	11,999	12,762	1	2
Payette	Rural center	20,624	22,621	25,588	27,284	52	67
Power	Open country	7,484	7,879	7,883	8,301	5	6
Shoshone	Open country	13,762	12,729	13,205	14,072	5	5
Teton	Open country	6,098	10,193	11,734	12,632	16	28
Twin Falls	Urban	64,360	77,517	90,374	95,404	35	50
Valley	Open country	7,659	9,787	11,842	12,630	2	3
Washington	Open country	9,970	10,205	10,560	11,508	7	8
Urban		**868,748**	**1,101,336**	**1,341,212**	**1,427,925**	**91**	**140**
Rural		**430,682**	**470,114**	**508,203**	**543,197**	**6**	**7**
Commuting		152,006	169,610	185,352	198,159	9	11
Rural center		118,185	128,062	143,770	153,516	15	19
Open country		160,491	172,442	179,081	191,522	3	4

Source: U.S. Census, "Annual Population Estimates."

Table A.2. Population rate change by select period, in percent

Counties	Class type	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2023
Idaho	**State**	**29.1%**	**20.9%**	**17.7%**	**6.6%**
Ada	Urban	47.4%	29.7%	26.6%	5.7%
Adams	Open country	6.9%	13.7%	11.9%	10.7%
Bannock	Urban	14.7%	9.7%	5.1%	3.8%
Bear Lake	Open country	5.6%	-7.1%	6.6%	6.5%
Benewah	Open country	15.7%	1.1%	3.2%	8.6%
Bingham	Commuting	11.1%	9.6%	5.1%	4.8%
Blaine	Rural center	41.0%	11.6%	14.2%	3.4%
Boise	Commuting	91.0%	4.9%	9.0%	11.7%
Bonner	Rural center	38.8%	10.7%	15.9%	11.2%
Bonneville	Urban	14.9%	26.1%	19.3%	5.4%
Boundary	Open country	19.0%	11.2%	10.1%	12.7%
Butte	Open country	-0.8%	0.4%	-11.1%	6.3%
Camas	Open country	33.1%	14.6%	-2.3%	13.7%
Canyon	Urban	47.7%	42.3%	23.0%	11.0%
Caribou	Open country	4.6%	-4.2%	0.6%	3.1%
Cassia	Rural center	9.5%	7.9%	7.2%	4.3%
Clark	Open country	34.4%	-3.5%	-19.7%	1.0%
Clearwater	Open country	5.0%	-2.1%	0.1%	5.0%
Custer	Open country	4.9%	0.7%	-2.2%	6.1%
Elmore	Commuting	34.9%	-5.2%	5.7%	3.6%
Franklin	Commuting	22.9%	12.7%	11.6%	8.6%
Fremont	Open country	7.6%	12.6%	1.3%	6.3%
Gem	Commuting	28.5%	9.6%	15.6%	10.9%
Gooding	Open country	22.0%	9.2%	1.0%	2.9%
Idaho	Open country	12.4%	5.3%	1.8%	8.1%
Jefferson	Commuting	16.0%	36.7%	18.5%	10.2%
Jerome	Commuting	22.2%	21.5%	8.0%	5.4%
Kootenai	Urban	56.9%	26.9%	24.4%	7.2%
Latah	Urban	13.9%	7.0%	6.2%	5.2%
Lemhi	Open country	12.0%	3.0%	0.0%	6.1%
Lewis	Open country	6.4%	2.0%	-7.7%	6.1%
Lincoln	Open country	22.5%	28.6%	-1.4%	6.0%
Madison	Urban	16.2%	36.7%	40.6%	4.2%
Minidoka	Rural center	3.8%	0.0%	7.8%	3.9%
Nez Perce	Urban	10.8%	5.2%	7.1%	2.0%
Oneida	Open country	18.4%	3.9%	6.2%	8.6%
Owyhee	Commuting	27.4%	7.7%	4.2%	6.4%
Payette	Rural center	25.5%	9.7%	13.1%	6.6%
Power	Open country	5.6%	5.3%	0.1%	5.3%
Shoshone	Open country	-1.2%	-7.5%	3.7%	6.6%
Teton	Open country	77.3%	67.2%	15.1%	7.7%
Twin Falls	Urban	20.1%	20.4%	16.6%	5.6%
Valley	Open country	25.4%	27.8%	21.0%	6.7%
Washington	Open country	16.6%	2.4%	3.5%	9.0%
Urban		**34.6%**	**26.8%**	**21.8%**	**6.5%**
Rural		**19.2%**	**9.2%**	**8.1%**	**6.9%**
Commuting		23.1%	11.6%	9.3%	6.9%
Rural center		23.8%	8.4%	12.3%	6.8%
Open country		12.8%	7.4%	3.8%	6.9%

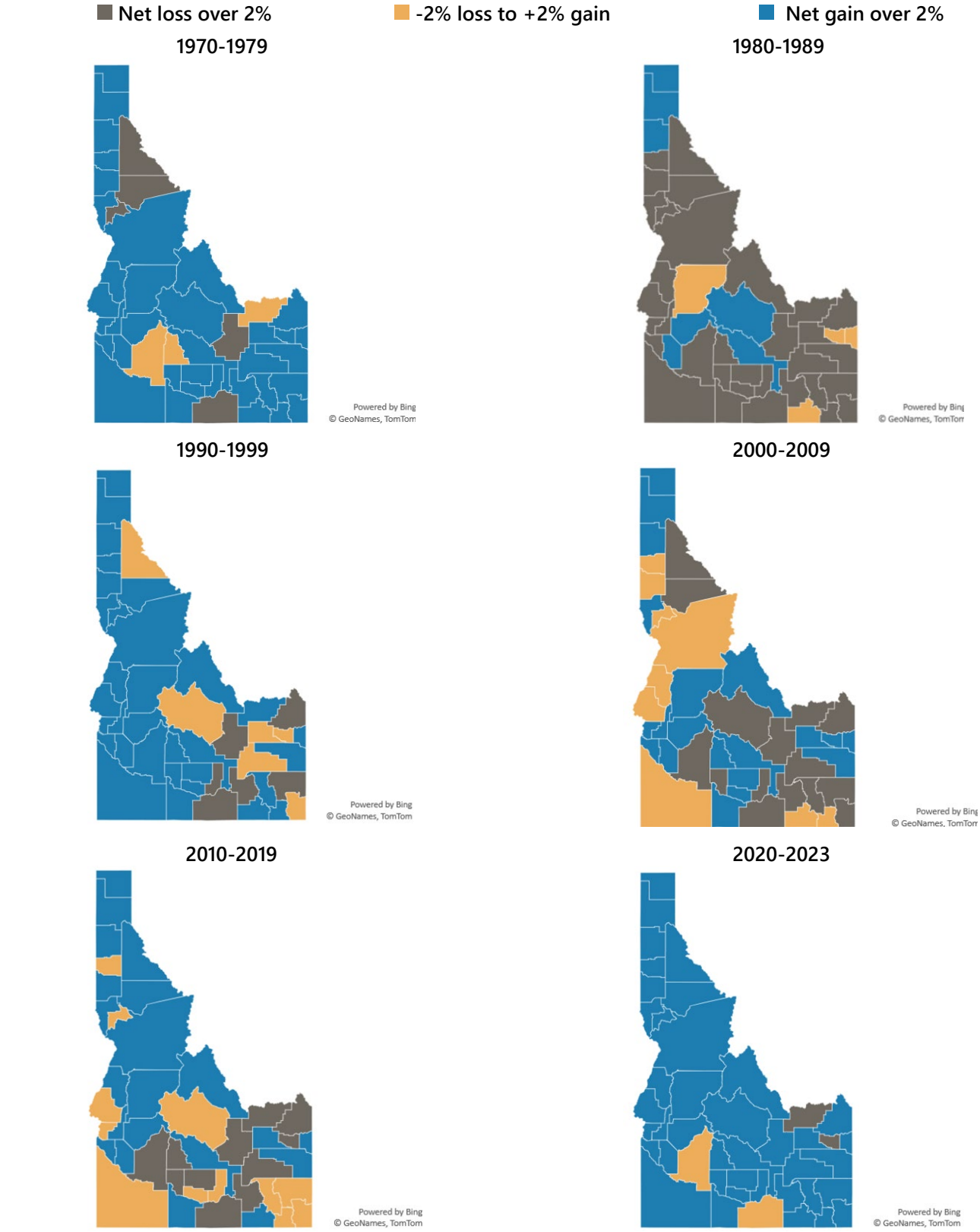
Source: U.S. Census, "Annual Population Estimates."

Table A.3. Net migration by select period

Counties	Class type	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	2020-2023	Net migration, % of total pop. change, 2020-2023
Idaho	**State**	**154,383**	**116,292**	**255,210**	**108,697**	**87%**
Ada	Urban	56,671	30,338	68,011	26,191	90%
Adams	Open country	513	15	364	591	108%
Bannock	Urban	798	8,093	-357	2,672	82%
Bear Lake	Open country	251	170	-29	369	100%
Benewah	Open country	873	187	126	1,002	111%
Bingham	Commuting	594	4,749	-1,975	1,789	77%
Blaine	Rural center	2,357	1,900	616	690	90%
Boise	Commuting	1,485	193	853	969	112%
Bonner	Rural center	8,492	638	4,969	5,718	107%
Bonneville	Urban	833	10,389	4,662	5,068	69%
Boundary	Open country	1,206	329	1,080	1,529	101%
Butte	Open country	-38	136	-329	193	108%
Camas	Open country	126	73	-50	148	100%
Canyon	Urban	24,556	19,273	25,093	22,267	84%
Caribou	Open country	-122	373	-76	174	96%
Cassia	Rural center	-123	2,024	-682	506	51%
Clark	Open country	57	123	-165	-17	net decline
Clearwater	Open country	720	-195	399	662	147%
Custer	Open country	-217	33	-15	330	142%
Elmore	Commuting	348	3,439	-2,201	343	36%
Franklin	Commuting	1,165	1,216	183	978	74%
Fremont	Open country	-135	1,215	-927	644	84%
Gem	Commuting	2,934	354	1,406	2,082	111%
Gooding	Open country	1,541	960	-876	361	103%
Idaho	Open country	1,099	-15	658	1,577	120%
Jefferson	Commuting	908	2,937	705	2,598	77%
Jerome	Commuting	1,684	2,089	-127	799	64%
Kootenai	Urban	30,095	6,211	23,102	13,699	99%
Latah	Urban	-444	1,988	850	1,316	74%
Lemhi	Open country	905	-125	315	691	152%
Lewis	Open country	425	5	30	308	120%
Lincoln	Open country	409	421	-155	247	85%
Madison	Urban	-3,575	6,334	-6,602	-1,455	net decline
Minidoka	Rural center	-1,019	1,413	-365	636	72%
Nez Perce	Urban	2,293	364	1,363	1,442	146%
Oneida	Open country	458	182	126	381	97%
Owyhee	Commuting	1,227	846	-127	776	98%
Payette	Rural center	3,408	1,307	429	1,818	96%
Power	Open country	449	698	-769	232	77%
Shoshone	Open country	-179	-374	463	1,101	124%
Teton	Open country	1,723	1,202	944	702	76%
Twin Falls	Urban	6,506	4,325	5,286	4,542	92%
Valley	Open country	1,545	317	1,318	948	104%
Washington	Open country	1,581	142	81	1,080	120%
Urban		**117,733**	**87,315**	**121,408**	**75,742**	**85%**
Rural		**36,650**	**28,977**	**6,197**	**32,955**	**94%**
Commuting		10,345	15,823	-1,283	10,334	81%
Rural center		13,115	7,282	4,967	9,368	95%
Open country		13,190	5,872	2,513	13,253	108%

Source: U.S. Census, "Annual Population Estimates."

Figure A.1. Net migration change by decade, 1970-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Population Estimates

Demographics

Table A.4. Share of population under age 18 (%), share of population over age 65 (%), and median age (yrs)

Counties	Class type	<Age 18, 2010	<Age 18, 2020	<Age 18, 2023	Age 65+, 2010	Age 65+, 2020	Age 65+, 2023	Median age, 2023
Idaho	**State**	**27%**	**25%**	**24%**	**12%**	**16%**	**17%**	**37.8**
Ada	Urban	26%	23%	22%	10%	15%	17%	39.0
Adams	Open country	19%	17%	17%	21%	30%	31%	53.0
Bannock	Urban	27%	26%	25%	11%	15%	16%	35.4
Bear Lake	Open country	27%	27%	26%	18%	21%	22%	40.3
Benewah	Open country	24%	22%	22%	18%	23%	24%	45.0
Bingham	Commuting	33%	30%	29%	11%	15%	16%	35.1
Blaine	Rural center	24%	20%	18%	12%	21%	24%	46.7
Boise	Commuting	21%	15%	16%	16%	28%	29%	53.1
Bonner	Rural center	22%	20%	20%	17%	26%	27%	47.8
Bonneville	Urban	31%	31%	29%	11%	13%	14%	33.8
Boundary	Open country	26%	23%	24%	17%	23%	23%	44.1
Butte	Open country	28%	24%	23%	18%	24%	26%	44.6
Camas	Open country	21%	23%	22%	16%	23%	25%	46.5
Canyon	Urban	31%	28%	26%	11%	14%	15%	35.1
Caribou	Open country	29%	28%	27%	16%	18%	19%	38.3
Cassia	Rural center	33%	31%	31%	13%	14%	15%	32.8
Clark	Open country	31%	22%	24%	13%	20%	22%	40.5
Clearwater	Open country	18%	15%	15%	22%	28%	29%	51.9
Custer	Open country	20%	17%	17%	19%	31%	32%	52.3
Elmore	Commuting	28%	25%	24%	10%	14%	15%	33.5
Franklin	Commuting	35%	31%	30%	13%	14%	15%	34.1
Fremont	Open country	31%	24%	24%	14%	18%	18%	39.3
Gem	Commuting	25%	23%	22%	19%	22%	23%	44.0
Gooding	Open country	29%	27%	26%	15%	18%	19%	38.1
Idaho	Open country	21%	20%	20%	21%	28%	30%	49.1
Jefferson	Commuting	36%	33%	32%	10%	12%	13%	33.2
Jerome	Commuting	31%	30%	29%	11%	13%	14%	34.3
Kootenai	Urban	25%	23%	22%	14%	19%	20%	41.2
Latah	Urban	19%	19%	19%	10%	14%	15%	30.9
Lemhi	Open country	20%	18%	18%	22%	31%	31%	51.5
Lewis	Open country	22%	22%	21%	22%	28%	29%	47.9
Lincoln	Open country	33%	27%	26%	11%	15%	15%	36.7
Madison	Urban	26%	20%	21%	6%	5%	6%	20.9
Minidoka	Rural center	29%	29%	28%	15%	16%	16%	35.1
Nez Perce	Urban	22%	21%	21%	18%	20%	22%	41.7
Oneida	Open country	30%	28%	28%	17%	20%	20%	39.3
Owyhee	Commuting	29%	25%	24%	14%	18%	19%	39.5
Payette	Rural center	29%	26%	25%	15%	19%	20%	39.6
Power	Open country	31%	31%	30%	12%	17%	17%	34.1
Shoshone	Open country	21%	20%	21%	20%	24%	24%	44.4
Teton	Open country	30%	24%	21%	6%	13%	15%	41.2
Twin Falls	Urban	27%	27%	26%	14%	16%	17%	36.6
Valley	Open country	20%	18%	18%	17%	26%	28%	49.0
Washington	Open country	25%	23%	22%	21%	26%	26%	44.8
Urban		**27%**	**24%**	**24%**	**11%**	**16%**	**16%**	**36.7**
Rural		**28%**	**24%**	**24%**	**15%**	**20%**	**20%**	**40.4**
Commuting		31%	27%	27%	12%	16%	16%	36.1
Rural center		27%	23%	23%	15%	21%	21%	42.0
Open country		25%	22%	22%	17%	23%	23%	44.2

Source: U.S. Census, "Annual Population Estimates."

Economic indicators

Table A.5. Employment, unemployment, employer establishments, and average annual wages

Counties	Class type	Change in employment, 2003-2023	% change in employment, 2003-2023	Unemployment rate (in %), 2023	% employer growth, 2003-2023	Avg wage per worker, 2023
Idaho	**State**	**292,629**	**45%**	**3.2**	**94%**	**$56,300**
Ada	Urban	109,698	65%	2.7	89%	$65,345
Adams	Open country	121	7%	6.1	36%	$53,644
Bannock	Urban	5,533	15%	3.1	44%	$45,586
Bear Lake	Open country	10	0%	2.9	51%	$38,362
Benewah	Open country	528	15%	5.0	22%	$53,562
Bingham	Commuting	3,861	20%	3.1	45%	$45,292
Blaine	Rural center	1,334	11%	2.7	28%	$57,960
Boise	Commuting	570	17%	4.2	48%	$37,460
Bonner	Rural center	4,371	26%	4.4	59%	$49,411
Bonneville	Urban	19,546	44%	2.6	71%	$47,678
Boundary	Open country	1,438	38%	4.6	40%	$47,697
Butte	Open country	-82	-7%	4.0	16%	$109,958
Camas	Open country	9	2%	3.3	53%	$59,633
Canyon	Urban	44,157	64%	3.4	117%	$49,538
Caribou	Open country	389	12%	3.1	22%	$66,631
Cassia	Rural center	2,749	30%	2.6	39%	$47,637
Clark	Open country	-48	-9%	3.3	17%	$60,033
Clearwater	Open country	339	12%	5.7	1%	$48,422
Custer	Open country	-426	-18%	4.0	35%	$40,032
Elmore	Commuting	2,150	21%	3.3	31%	$45,106
Franklin	Commuting	1,365	25%	2.7	68%	$43,639
Fremont	Open country	2,267	42%	2.6	44%	$42,379
Gem	Commuting	1,844	28%	3.8	74%	$42,668
Gooding	Open country	825	12%	3.1	19%	$46,550
Idaho	Open country	875	14%	4.0	20%	$45,480
Jefferson	Commuting	5,622	59%	2.6	108%	$41,895
Jerome	Commuting	2,456	27%	3.1	34%	$49,406
Kootenai	Urban	27,119	47%	3.7	86%	$53,058
Latah	Urban	4,823	31%	2.7	38%	$47,035
Lemhi	Open country	375	11%	3.8	12%	$47,145
Lewis	Open country	8	1%	3.4	26%	$41,283
Lincoln	Open country	273	13%	4.0	57%	$48,222
Madison	Urban	10,520	81%	2.2	128%	$39,991
Minidoka	Rural center	2,358	25%	2.7	47%	$48,395
Nez Perce	Urban	2,955	16%	2.8	13%	$52,370
Oneida	Open country	472	25%	3.1	68%	$34,884
Owyhee	Commuting	815	18%	3.9	44%	$46,343
Payette	Rural center	1,606	17%	3.8	52%	$47,314
Power	Open country	477	14%	3.8	13%	$54,559
Shoshone	Open country	673	14%	5.3	6%	$50,622
Teton	Open country	3,734	93%	2.3	112%	$50,846
Twin Falls	Urban	9,100	27%	3.2	45%	$46,675
Valley	Open country	2,478	67%	3.7	60%	$48,401
Washington	Open country	33	1%	4.0	22%	$41,335
Urban		**233,450**	**51%**	**3.0**	**80%**	**$56,171**
Rural		**45,863**	**23%**	**3.4**	**42%**	**$51,378**
Commuting		18,682	28%	3.2	54%	$45,133
Rural center		12,416	22%	3.4	43%	$50,701
Open country		14,765	21%	3.8	33%	$56,730

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) and Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)."

Education

Table A.6. Share of population age 25+ by educational attainment

Counties	Class type	% with H.S. diploma+, 2009-2013	% with H.S. diploma+, 2019-2023	% Bachelor's Degree+, 2009-2013	% Bachelor's Degree+, 2019-2023	% age 5+ speaking "less than well" English, 2019-2023
Idaho	**State**	**88.8%**	**91.7%**	**25.1%**	**31.2%**	**3.6%**
Ada	Urban	93.6%	95.1%	36.0%	43.9%	2.9%
Adams	Open country	92.8%	92.9%	21.9%	21.3%	0.2%
Bannock	Urban	91.8%	93.8%	26.8%	30.2%	1.4%
Bear Lake	Open country	90.7%	93.0%	16.1%	20.3%	1.8%
Benewah	Open country	87.4%	84.4%	13.4%	19.8%	0.6%
Bingham	Commuting	84.6%	89.2%	17.3%	20.8%	4.4%
Blaine	Rural center	90.6%	91.2%	44.7%	45.5%	7.5%
Boise	Commuting	89.2%	95.6%	24.1%	29.9%	1.3%
Bonner	Rural center	90.7%	91.6%	21.1%	28.9%	0.8%
Bonneville	Urban	90.5%	92.1%	26.0%	32.2%	2.5%
Boundary	Open country	84.9%	87.2%	15.4%	19.6%	2.6%
Butte	Open country	89.2%	87.6%	17.9%	13.8%	3.5%
Camas	Open country	84.3%	86.0%	22.3%	27.4%	1.3%
Canyon	Urban	82.7%	87.7%	16.8%	22.8%	6.4%
Caribou	Open country	88.7%	90.5%	17.5%	15.5%	0.5%
Cassia	Rural center	78.0%	85.4%	15.6%	20.9%	8.1%
Clark	Open country	70.1%	75.7%	11.4%	17.3%	18.2%
Clearwater	Open country	84.9%	91.1%	15.5%	19.4%	1.2%
Custer	Open country	89.6%	93.6%	26.3%	25.2%	0.4%
Elmore	Commuting	84.0%	88.1%	16.9%	21.2%	4.6%
Franklin	Commuting	92.0%	94.0%	17.4%	21.5%	1.3%
Fremont	Open country	87.9%	90.7%	19.7%	21.8%	3.8%
Gem	Commuting	86.3%	89.0%	15.8%	22.3%	4.2%
Gooding	Open country	74.6%	79.8%	12.1%	17.1%	11.0%
Idaho	Open country	88.9%	91.8%	14.8%	22.0%	2.1%
Jefferson	Commuting	89.4%	93.3%	22.0%	27.2%	3.2%
Jerome	Commuting	70.2%	73.4%	13.4%	13.4%	16.5%
Kootenai	Urban	92.1%	94.4%	23.3%	28.8%	0.8%
Latah	Urban	95.3%	96.9%	44.1%	44.9%	1.4%
Lemhi	Open country	90.4%	92.7%	23.8%	22.9%	1.2%
Lewis	Open country	88.3%	90.8%	16.2%	20.0%	2.4%
Lincoln	Open country	74.5%	82.5%	11.8%	11.6%	7.7%
Madison	Urban	94.9%	97.0%	33.7%	40.3%	1.4%
Minidoka	Rural center	75.7%	82.1%	9.9%	16.8%	10.9%
Nez Perce	Urban	90.0%	92.9%	21.1%	26.8%	1.4%
Oneida	Open country	93.1%	94.2%	13.2%	26.2%	1.3%
Owyhee	Commuting	75.4%	77.7%	8.2%	13.7%	10.1%
Payette	Rural center	85.4%	86.7%	16.4%	19.6%	4.1%
Power	Open country	80.3%	88.0%	15.9%	16.7%	11.0%
Shoshone	Open country	84.8%	88.8%	13.5%	11.5%	0.8%
Teton	Open country	87.8%	92.6%	34.4%	48.3%	5.5%
Twin Falls	Urban	83.7%	88.7%	16.3%	23.0%	4.7%
Valley	Open country	92.4%	91.0%	34.3%	35.4%	0.7%
Washington	Open country	81.8%	88.7%	16.7%	19.0%	5.2%
Urban		**90.4%**	**92.9%**	**27.8%**	**34.3%**	**3.1%**
Rural		**85.1%**	**88.4%**	**18.9%**	**23.3%**	**4.8%**
Commuting		83.6%	87.6%	17.0%	21.1%	5.8%
Rural center		85.5%	88.5%	21.9%	27.4%	5.2%
Open country		86.0%	89.2%	18.4%	22.2%	3.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey, 2009-2013 and 2019-2023."

Income

Table A.7. Per capita personal income ($), household income ($), transfer payment income (% total)

Counties	Class type	Per capita personal income, 2023	Median household income, 2019-2023	Transfer income % of total, 2009-2013	Transfer income % of total, 2019-2023
Idaho	**State**	**$59,385**	**$74,636**	**15.4%**	**16.5%**
Ada	Urban	$72,588	$88,907	12.3%	13.3%
Adams	Open country	$45,707	$59,286	27.0%	27.9%
Bannock	Urban	$50,084	$64,080	15.8%	18.5%
Bear Lake	Open country	$49,045	$67,304	21.8%	21.5%
Benewah	Open country	$45,633	$56,553	22.5%	27.3%
Bingham	Commuting	$48,780	$76,842	14.9%	15.3%
Blaine	Rural center	$187,239	$84,470	8.8%	15.7%
Boise	Commuting	$54,614	$77,349	24.1%	27.2%
Bonner	Rural center	$55,464	$65,168	23.1%	25.7%
Bonneville	Urban	$60,032	$76,646	13.5%	15.3%
Boundary	Open country	$47,225	$62,438	21.8%	23.8%
Butte	Open country	$51,958	$43,281	19.9%	22.6%
Camas	Open country	$60,737	$55,536	15.5%	19.3%
Canyon	Urban	$47,903	$72,355	16.2%	16.3%
Caribou	Open country	$50,947	$66,653	16.6%	19.7%
Cassia	Rural center	$54,685	$67,042	15.3%	20.8%
Clark	Open country	$44,385	$52,083	20.9%	18.5%
Clearwater	Open country	$43,947	$57,961	29.3%	29.5%
Custer	Open country	$52,420	$56,957	21.5%	35.6%
Elmore	Commuting	$46,255	$58,976	17.7%	18.1%
Franklin	Commuting	$45,872	$65,991	17.9%	15.0%
Fremont	Open country	$47,011	$72,767	17.8%	24.2%
Gem	Commuting	$47,755	$66,245	24.1%	22.9%
Gooding	Open country	$63,424	$62,395	17.6%	20.6%
Idaho	Open country	$45,574	$60,975	26.5%	26.8%
Jefferson	Commuting	$48,137	$82,952	14.2%	15.8%
Jerome	Commuting	$46,359	$69,338	14.2%	13.2%
Kootenai	Urban	$63,893	$77,034	17.8%	19.0%
Latah	Urban	$54,794	$65,179	13.8%	16.7%
Lemhi	Open country	$53,841	$52,057	25.0%	30.2%
Lewis	Open country	$54,650	$49,643	26.8%	26.3%
Lincoln	Open country	$46,300	$66,038	13.3%	14.9%
Madison	Urban	$29,168	$58,259	10.1%	8.6%
Minidoka	Rural center	$49,862	$70,060	15.1%	14.8%
Nez Perce	Urban	$56,586	$71,466	18.8%	19.8%
Oneida	Open country	$49,108	$72,563	24.7%	15.3%
Owyhee	Commuting	$48,928	$59,773	16.8%	22.5%
Payette	Rural center	$49,505	$65,723	18.6%	21.4%
Power	Open country	$46,316	$59,760	17.3%	16.6%
Shoshone	Open country	$45,440	$49,975	23.1%	25.1%
Teton	Open country	$69,601	$90,740	9.8%	9.9%
Twin Falls	Urban	$52,087	$65,338	14.6%	16.6%
Valley	Open country	$66,382	$76,125	23.8%	24.6%
Washington	Open country	$44,134	$53,608	23.7%	28.4%
Urban		**$60,364**	**$77,833**	**14.3%**	**15.3%**
Rural		**$56,812**	**$67,800**	**18.4%**	**20.3%**
Commuting		$47,900	$71,456	16.9%	17.4%
Rural center		$75,009	$69,269	16.5%	20.6%
Open country		$51,449	$63,068	21.4%	23.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey, 2009-2013 and 2019-2023." Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Personal Income by County."

Poverty

Table A.8. Share of population below poverty by select age group

Counties	Class type	All ages, 2009-2013	Under 18, 2009-2013	Age 65+, 2009-2013	All ages, 2019-2023	Under 18, 2019-2023	Age 65+, 2019-2023
Idaho	**State**	**15.5%**	**19.3%**	**8.2%**	**10.6%**	**12.5%**	**8.3%**
Ada	Urban	13.1%	15.4%	8.0%	8.5%	9.4%	7.0%
Adams	Open country	16.6%	22.2%	10.7%	15.0%	13.0%	17.5%
Bannock	Urban	15.5%	17.5%	6.3%	12.2%	13.8%	9.2%
Bear Lake	Open country	12.9%	18.2%	8.8%	10.2%	11.9%	9.1%
Benewah	Open country	14.7%	17.3%	9.0%	15.0%	20.1%	7.9%
Bingham	Commuting	15.2%	20.8%	5.9%	11.0%	13.3%	7.8%
Blaine	Rural center	8.3%	11.0%	8.3%	7.4%	12.0%	5.4%
Boise	Commuting	17.0%	13.5%	14.2%	8.2%	14.4%	7.3%
Bonner	Rural center	15.2%	19.4%	7.1%	10.7%	17.0%	8.0%
Bonneville	Urban	11.4%	13.9%	5.9%	9.5%	12.3%	6.9%
Boundary	Open country	16.5%	18.6%	10.7%	17.2%	23.7%	13.5%
Butte	Open country	15.7%	25.7%	5.3%	21.3%	27.2%	16.3%
Camas	Open country	15.5%	22.9%	0.0%	6.7%	5.7%	15.1%
Canyon	Urban	20.4%	28.0%	8.7%	10.1%	12.3%	9.0%
Caribou	Open country	7.8%	7.7%	7.0%	7.3%	9.8%	4.0%
Cassia	Rural center	15.9%	18.6%	9.6%	10.3%	12.5%	7.9%
Clark	Open country	14.9%	32.8%	0.0%	12.7%	14.3%	2.9%
Clearwater	Open country	12.5%	17.5%	5.2%	12.5%	15.5%	11.7%
Custer	Open country	16.1%	16.3%	17.2%	11.5%	1.6%	6.8%
Elmore	Commuting	16.3%	22.4%	11.4%	12.4%	10.7%	12.1%
Franklin	Commuting	12.2%	18.4%	8.8%	8.4%	7.7%	8.1%
Fremont	Open country	12.4%	15.3%	7.0%	9.8%	14.5%	5.8%
Gem	Commuting	18.2%	27.1%	8.3%	10.4%	13.5%	11.1%
Gooding	Open country	20.8%	28.7%	14.5%	15.3%	22.8%	13.4%
Idaho	Open country	17.5%	26.4%	9.6%	10.8%	10.8%	10.0%
Jefferson	Commuting	13.1%	17.7%	4.0%	9.2%	11.5%	7.9%
Jerome	Commuting	18.3%	25.8%	11.1%	13.9%	17.7%	13.0%
Kootenai	Urban	13.4%	17.0%	7.9%	9.3%	12.4%	6.6%
Latah	Urban	20.4%	14.9%	4.7%	15.3%	11.3%	7.2%
Lemhi	Open country	23.3%	41.5%	9.9%	11.8%	11.2%	12.0%
Lewis	Open country	17.9%	25.6%	11.0%	17.4%	21.1%	17.5%
Lincoln	Open country	16.6%	22.8%	17.3%	9.4%	9.2%	11.8%
Madison	Urban	35.8%	23.4%	6.8%	26.8%	15.4%	9.6%
Minidoka	Rural center	13.6%	20.1%	8.1%	14.9%	20.6%	14.0%
Nez Perce	Urban	11.1%	16.2%	8.4%	13.1%	17.6%	8.0%
Oneida	Open country	16.1%	26.6%	13.3%	11.8%	11.0%	14.9%
Owyhee	Commuting	24.2%	31.4%	15.7%	13.4%	19.7%	8.3%
Payette	Rural center	20.0%	24.0%	10.7%	9.0%	11.5%	7.7%
Power	Open country	13.9%	20.0%	4.2%	8.1%	7.0%	10.3%
Shoshone	Open country	17.4%	22.2%	10.4%	15.1%	20.3%	10.7%
Teton	Open country	11.7%	18.2%	7.4%	9.4%	8.1%	13.0%
Twin Falls	Urban	15.0%	19.7%	9.3%	10.7%	15.2%	8.1%
Valley	Open country	9.5%	8.8%	3.6%	14.2%	14.1%	15.1%
Washington	Open country	15.0%	19.4%	10.7%	15.3%	18.6%	14.3%
Urban		**15.5%**	**18.6%**	**7.8%**	**10.3%**	**11.8%**	**7.6%**
Rural		**15.5%**	**20.8%**	**9.0%**	**11.5%**	**14.3%**	**9.9%**
Commuting		16.2%	21.9%	8.9%	11.0%	13.2%	9.5%
Rural center		14.7%	18.9%	8.4%	10.4%	15.0%	8.2%
Open country		15.4%	20.9%	9.4%	12.7%	15.1%	11.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey, 2009-2013 and 2019-2023."

Table A.9. Share of population below poverty, living wage estimates, and labor force participation rates

Counties	Class type	Poverty rate, 2014-2018	Poverty rate, 2019-2023	Annual living wage estimates (family of 4 - 2 parents + 2 children) 2024	Labor force participation rate, 2019-2023
Idaho	**State**	**13.8%**	**10.6%**	**$93,828**	**63.0%**
Ada	Urban	12.8%	8.5%	$112,757	66.4%
Adams	Open country	14.6%	15.0%	$92,187	48.9%
Bannock	Urban	16.1%	12.2%	$87,439	62.0%
Bear Lake	Open country	13.2%	10.2%	$91,285	57.2%
Benewah	Open country	15.6%	15.0%	$91,679	52.5%
Bingham	Commuting	13.9%	11.0%	$86,505	64.7%
Blaine	Rural center	10.8%	7.4%	$111,070	67.9%
Boise	Commuting	15.9%	8.2%	$96,570	52.4%
Bonner	Rural center	15.6%	10.7%	$93,647	51.5%
Bonneville	Urban	12.7%	9.5%	$96,011	65.2%
Boundary	Open country	16.3%	17.2%	$89,635	49.9%
Butte	Open country	15.6%	21.3%	$102,704	52.3%
Camas	Open country	17.9%	6.7%	$100,711	55.1%
Canyon	Urban	20.4%	10.1%	$98,387	62.1%
Caribou	Open country	9.1%	7.3%	$91,780	63.4%
Cassia	Rural center	14.6%	10.3%	$86,624	66.1%
Clark	Open country	27.8%	12.7%	$92,989	63.2%
Clearwater	Open country	13.3%	12.5%	$97,829	46.0%
Custer	Open country	20.3%	11.5%	$97,944	47.9%
Elmore	Commuting	17.0%	12.4%	$87,262	62.6%
Franklin	Commuting	13.5%	8.4%	$86,833	62.1%
Fremont	Open country	12.0%	9.8%	$89,331	57.6%
Gem	Commuting	18.1%	10.4%	$89,989	55.6%
Gooding	Open country	21.8%	15.3%	$88,565	63.3%
Idaho	Open country	15.9%	10.8%	$96,694	49.7%
Jefferson	Commuting	13.2%	9.2%	$97,737	66.2%
Jerome	Commuting	17.5%	13.9%	$90,894	65.4%
Kootenai	Urban	13.0%	9.3%	$99,790	60.5%
Latah	Urban	21.1%	15.3%	$91,881	62.7%
Lemhi	Open country	21.5%	11.8%	$97,635	53.5%
Lewis	Open country	17.0%	17.4%	$92,573	47.1%
Lincoln	Open country	16.0%	9.4%	$89,400	67.0%
Madison	Urban	35.7%	26.8%	$88,347	68.5%
Minidoka	Rural center	15.6%	14.9%	$85,389	63.2%
Nez Perce	Urban	11.7%	11.8%	$98,863	60.0%
Oneida	Open country	15.3%	11.8%	$89,888	63.7%
Owyhee	Commuting	27.4%	13.4%	$86,907	55.8%
Payette	Rural center	18.5%	9.0%	$89,801	57.5%
Power	Open country	13.4%	8.1%	$89,890	66.8%
Shoshone	Open country	17.8%	15.1%	$90,284	54.6%
Teton	Open country	11.4%	9.4%	$113,040	73.3%
Twin Falls	Urban	15.9%	10.7%	$91,688	63.8%
Valley	Open country	12.0%	14.2%	$96,315	52.1%
Washington	Open country	15.5%	15.3%	$91,685	47.3%
Urban		**17.7%**	**12.7%**	**$96,132**	**63.5%**
Rural		**16.1%**	**11.9%**	**$93,236**	**57.8%**
Commuting		15.0%	10.5%	$93,312	60.6%
Rural center		17.1%	10.9%	$90,336	61.2%
Open country		16.1%	12.6%	$94,308	56.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey, 2014-2018 and 2019-2023." Economic Policy Institute, "Family Budget Calculator 2024."

Health and social indicators

Table A.10. Actively licensed health care/social services providers per 10,000 residents, August 2025

Counties	Type	Physicians and surgeons	Registered nurses	General dentists	Residential care facility admin.
Idaho	**State**	**17**	**121**	**4.7**	**1.5**
Ada	Urban	31	158	6.2	0.3
Adams	Open country	8	72	4.0	0.0
Bannock	Urban	17	129	5.1	2.7
Bear Lake	Open country	10	108	3.0	1.5
Benewah	Open country	11	58	6.6	4.7
Bingham	Commuting	7	113	3.3	2.2
Blaine	Rural center	34	74	4.8	0.0
Boise	Commuting	1	114	2.3	0.0
Bonner	Rural center	14	102	5.4	1.7
Bonneville	Urban	17	123	3.6	1.6
Boundary	Open country	5	79	5.7	2.8
Butte	Open country	7	62	0.0	3.7
Camas	Open country	0	80	0.0	0.0
Canyon	Urban	6	94	2.7	2.1
Caribou	Open country	3	94	2.8	1.4
Cassia	Rural center	8	84	5.4	1.5
Clark	Open country	0	50	0.0	0.0
Clearwater	Open country	19	125	3.3	1.1
Custer	Open country	2	41	0.0	0.0
Elmore	Commuting	4	52	4.4	2.4
Franklin	Commuting	8	78	7.0	1.9
Fremont	Open country	1	97	4.9	1.4
Gem	Commuting	6	90	2.7	1.4
Gooding	Open country	6	62	1.9	2.5
Idaho	Open country	10	97	10.0	0.6
Jefferson	Commuting	1	142	3.4	1.1
Jerome	Commuting	6	155	1.5	1.2
Kootenai	Urban	22	147	5.9	2.4
Latah	Urban	18	75	4.0	0.9
Lemhi	Open country	13	100	3.6	3.6
Lewis	Open country	3	97	2.7	8.0
Lincoln	Open country	4	59	1.8	7.2
Madison	Urban	5	80	3.2	0.4
Minidoka	Rural center	4	72	3.5	0.4
Nez Perce	Urban	16	153	5.1	3.0
Oneida	Open country	2	84	4.0	2.0
Owyhee	Commuting	1	55	1.6	3.1
Payette	Rural center	4	85	4.3	4.0
Power	Open country	2	47	2.4	1.2
Shoshone	Open country	6	63	0.0	2.1
Teton	Open country	18	108	3.9	0.0
Twin Falls	Urban	16	128	5.5	2.5
Valley	Open country	25	106	4.7	1.6
Washington	Open country	5	69	3.5	2.6
Urban		**20**	**132**	**5.0**	**1.4**
Rural		**8**	**92**	**4.0**	**1.8**
Commuting		5	106	3.3	1.7
Rural center		13	87	4.8	1.6
Open country		9	83	3.9	2.1

Source: Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses.

Table A.11. Health and social indicators, 2023

Counties	Class type	Accidental deaths per 100,000	Pregnant teen 15-17 per 1,000	Marriage rate per 1,000	Divorce rate per 1,000	Serious crime rate per 100,000
Idaho	**State**	**63.1**	**3.6**	**6.9**	**3.3**	**3,708**
Ada	Urban	55.1	2.5	5.9	3.4	3,590
Adams	Open country	102.0	0.0	7.1	4.3	4,886
Bannock	Urban	56.4	2.0	7.5	2.7	5,795
Bear Lake	Open country	73.9	0.0	5.6	2.2	1,902
Benewah	Open country	144.7	0.0	6.6	3.4	3,194
Bingham	Commuting	91.3	5.6	4.2	2.9	2,492
Blaine	Rural center	28.0	3.6	8.9	2.6	2,984
Boise	Commuting	58.7	0.0	13.0	2.3	3,668
Bonner	Rural center	57.1	5.7	8.7	3.1	3,403
Bonneville	Urban	66.2	4.6	8.6	3.6	4,433
Boundary	Open country	44.3	3.7	5.1	3.6	2,528
Butte	Open country	181.3	0.0	4.0	6.2	2,143
Camas	Open country	405.8	0.0	14.6	7.3	85
Canyon	Urban	60.9	3.8	5.5	3.8	4,089
Caribou	Open country	69.3	10.0	5.9	2.5	600
Cassia	Rural center	85.6	10.7	6.4	3.0	2,315
Clark	Open country	0.0	0.0	3.7	1.2	994
Clearwater	Open country	119.4	7.9	8.5	2.3	1,376
Custer	Open country	110.5	0.0	27.6	2.9	2,444
Elmore	Commuting	67.3	3.9	5.8	4.8	2,339
Franklin	Commuting	45.2	2.4	3.9	2.3	1,439
Fremont	Open country	42.3	0.0	8.5	2.5	3,152
Gem	Commuting	123.4	2.4	10.1	3.3	3,174
Gooding	Open country	37.4	8.2	4.9	2.2	3,337
Idaho	Open country	128.6	3.3	6.5	2.7	2,944
Jefferson	Commuting	49.7	0.0	6.6	2.9	1,621
Jerome	Commuting	86.3	16.9	8.0	3.0	4,368
Kootenai	Urban	54.6	3.1	10.8	3.6	4,190
Latah	Urban	46.0	3.0	5.6	2.5	2,877
Lemhi	Open country	59.2	0.0	9.1	2.6	976
Lewis	Open country	133.7	0.0	6.7	3.5	2,418
Lincoln	Open country	91.7	0.0	1.5	2.6	3,684
Madison	Urban	34.8	0.9	5.8	2.1	1,072
Minidoka	Rural center	93.4	9.4	5.0	3.8	2,560
Nez Perce	Urban	102.4	0.0	6.4	3.1	4,658
Oneida	Open country	100.9	0.0	8.7	1.6	2,005
Owyhee	Commuting	39.3	3.3	5.6	1.4	1,657
Payette	Rural center	80.6	3.4	5.7	3.7	4,314
Power	Open country	60.6	4.9	5.1	1.7	3,850
Shoshone	Open country	78.4	8.2	6.2	4.1	5,215
Teton	Open country	47.8	4.0	7.3	2.3	2,104
Twin Falls	Urban	75.7	4.8	5.0	4.2	4,460
Valley	Open country	47.5	0.0	26.0	2.9	5,035
Washington	Open country	52.5	0.0	10.3	2.9	2,215
Urban		**59.0**	**3.1**	**6.8**	**3.4**	**3,947**
Rural		**74.0**	**4.9**	**7.4**	**3.0**	**2,863**
Commuting		74.9	5.0	6.4	3.1	2,547
Rural center		66.6	6.7	7.3	3.2	3,192
Open country		79.1	3.1	8.5	2.9	2,926

Source: Idaho State Police, "Uniform Crime Reporting." Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, "Vital Records and Health Statistics."

Housing

Table A.12. Housing indicators

Counties	Class type	% Housing units built before 2000	Housing growth 2000-2023	Adjusted vacancy rate 2019-2023	Median house value 2019-2023	Median rent 2019-2023
Idaho	**State**	**65%**	**53%**	**1.3%**	**$376,000**	**$1,150**
Ada	Urban	57%	82%	1.4%	$476,000	$1,465
Adams	Open country	75%	35%	0.8%	$327,300	$823
Bannock	Urban	80%	26%	1.6%	$267,200	$879
Bear Lake	Open country	79%	24%	0.4%	$234,200	$687
Benewah	Open country	85%	14%	0.2%	$255,800	$853
Bingham	Commuting	76%	24%	0.6%	$258,000	$845
Blaine	Rural center	77%	33%	0.6%	$663,800	$1,217
Boise	Commuting	72%	33%	0.7%	$424,100	$854
Bonner	Rural center	67%	38%	1.5%	$433,400	$1,059
Bonneville	Urban	67%	58%	1.9%	$327,000	$1,054
Boundary	Open country	67%	40%	1.3%	$344,100	$867
Butte	Open country	93%	1%	1.6%	$195,800	$525
Camas	Open country	67%	22%	9.2%	$248,900	$992
Canyon	Urban	54%	92%	1.2%	$350,300	$1,259
Caribou	Open country	84%	0%	0.9%	$220,200	$800
Cassia	Rural center	82%	17%	1.8%	$257,300	$920
Clark	Open country	82%	-6%	2.5%	$203,000	$771
Clearwater	Open country	84%	12%	0.8%	$240,800	$847
Custer	Open country	82%	6%	1.7%	$295,600	$744
Elmore	Commuting	71%	17%	0.2%	$278,300	$1,111
Franklin	Commuting	74%	37%	1.4%	$304,000	$831
Fremont	Open country	75%	30%	0.5%	$281,800	$803
Gem	Commuting	68%	38%	0.6%	$367,300	$887
Gooding	Open country	85%	12%	0.9%	$231,800	$859
Idaho	Open country	80%	18%	1.2%	$284,600	$797
Jefferson	Commuting	58%	76%	0.4%	$335,000	$1,098
Jerome	Commuting	70%	32%	0.0%	$254,000	$862
Kootenai	Urban	59%	76%	1.5%	$467,400	$1,330
Latah	Urban	77%	28%	1.1%	$342,500	$905
Lemhi	Open country	83%	13%	2.1%	$282,100	$721
Lewis	Open country	92%	3%	1.9%	$202,400	$708
Lincoln	Open country	76%	21%	1.0%	$206,700	$860
Madison	Urban	45%	103%	4.7%	$365,000	$965
Minidoka	Rural center	83%	19%	2.3%	$235,300	$909
Nez Perce	Urban	85%	15%	1.3%	$291,300	$936
Oneida	Open country	81%	22%	0.0%	$228,100	$1,009
Owyhee	Commuting	72%	11%	0.3%	$281,600	$771
Payette	Rural center	76%	29%	2.0%	$310,700	$874
Power	Open country	80%	5%	0.0%	$191,200	$729
Shoshone	Open country	94%	1%	1.2%	$222,700	$880
Teton	Open country	46%	154%	2.7%	$595,900	$1,196
Twin Falls	Urban	69%	45%	1.0%	$292,700	$1,011
Valley	Open country	65%	62%	0.1%	$599,500	$1,011
Washington	Open country	81%	13%	1.2%	$250,300	$919
Urban		**61%**	**68%**	**1.5%**	**$405,257**	**$1,244**
Rural		**74%**	**28%**	**1.0%**	**$300,738**	**$916**
Commuting		70%	31%	0.5%	$293,178	$939
Rural center		74%	30%	1.5%	$371,957	$974
Open country		77%	25%	1.0%	$276,956	$849

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey, 2019-2023." U.S. Census Bureau, "Housing unit annual estimates."

Agriculture

Table A.13. Agricultural indicators, 2002-2022

Counties	Class type	Number of farms 2022	Acres in farms, 2022	% total land in farms, 2022	% Change in farm acres, 2002-2022	Agricultural GDP (in '000s of $), 2023
Idaho	**State**	**22,877**	**11,547,963**	**21.8%**	**-1.9%**	**$4,825,813**
Ada	Urban	1,142	112,556	17%	-50%	$121,118
Adams	Open country	229	145,570	17%	-26%	$14,446
Bannock	Urban	1,005	419,823	59%	18%	$8,126
Bear Lake	Open country	353	209,678	34%	-1%	$30,127
Benewah	Open country	240	130,471	26%	-5%	$31,050
Bingham	Commuting	1,081	897,796	67%	9%	$158,582
Blaine	Rural center	203	259,553	15%	15%	$9,179
Boise	Commuting	108	66,311	5%	32%	$4,059
Bonner	Rural center	798	97,446	9%	7%	$25,290
Bonneville	Urban	893	406,594	34%	-15%	$102,311
Boundary	Open country	319	73,364	9%	-4%	$18,726
Butte	Open country	147	99,988	7%	-18%	$34,222
Camas	Open country	111	186,429	27%	39%	$25,214
Canyon	Urban	2,311	277,388	74%	2%	$197,514
Caribou	Open country	399	416,460	37%	-2%	$80,322
Cassia	Rural center	554	657,664	40%	-12%	$614,622
Clark	Open country	67	206,127	18%	16%	$8,198
Clearwater	Open country	273	66,230	4%	-6%	$40,295
Custer	Open country	235	113,930	4%	-13%	$37,580
Elmore	Commuting	284	296,190	15%	-14%	$237,689
Franklin	Commuting	727	276,073	65%	13%	$71,296
Fremont	Open country	545	275,247	23%	-4%	$65,339
Gem	Commuting	718	199,547	56%	-10%	$18,832
Gooding	Open country	499	212,600	46%	9%	$706,931
Idaho	Open country	696	545,260	10%	-15%	$54,168
Jefferson	Commuting	679	262,180	37%	-14%	$55,169
Jerome	Commuting	448	180,152	47%	-3%	$437,603
Kootenai	Urban	968	107,727	14%	-30%	$118,176
Latah	Urban	989	324,990	47%	-4%	$77,885
Lemhi	Open country	306	131,616	5%	-24%	$42,007
Lewis	Open country	219	249,015	81%	15%	$55,653
Lincoln	Open country	229	104,847	14%	-18%	$187,826
Madison	Urban	358	166,920	56%	-12%	$48,435
Minidoka	Rural center	454	308,562	64%	35%	$153,842
Nez Perce	Urban	415	344,412	63%	0%	$74,222
Oneida	Open country	446	327,714	43%	-10%	$38,829
Owyhee	Commuting	461	729,407	15%	28%	$181,826
Payette	Rural center	574	171,424	66%	11%	$92,745
Power	Open country	276	443,958	49%	4%	$51,718
Shoshone	Open country	44	1,605	0%	-63%	$996
Teton	Open country	268	112,072	39%	-10%	$14,581
Twin Falls	Urban	1,169	459,167	37%	4%	$436,450
Valley	Open country	142	45,321	2%	-31%	$17,380
Washington	Open country	495	428,579	46%	-9%	$25,234
Urban		**9,250**	**2,619,577**	**40%**	**-6.4%**	**$1,184,237**
Rural		**13,627**	**8,928,386**	**19%**	**-0.4%**	**$3,641,576**
Commuting		4,506	2,907,656	26%	5.9%	$1,165,056
Rural center		2,583	1,494,649	29%	3.5%	$895,678
Open country		6,538	4,526,081	15%	-5.3%	$1,580,842

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Census of Agriculture, 2002-2022." Bureau of Labor Statistics, "GDP by county."

Transportation, infrastructure and miscellaneous

Table A.14. Commute time, vehicle crash rates, unimproved road miles and driver license issuance

Counties	Class type	Commute time (in min), 2019-2023	Fatal and injury crash rate per 1,000 pop., 2023	Unimproved road miles (per 1,000)	Issued driver licenses per 100 population age 16+, 2023
Idaho	**State**	**21.6**	**4.3**	**33**	**91.2**
Ada	Urban	21.2	4.4	1	90.4
Adams	Open country	18.3	3.3	55	100.8
Bannock	Urban	21.0	4.7	14	89.4
Bear Lake	Open country	25.4	4.4	185	97.5
Benewah	Open country	22.4	5.4	40	100.1
Bingham	Commuting	18.1	4.5	6	93.0
Blaine	Rural center	16.6	3.3	10	92.3
Boise	Commuting	17.1	10.7	0	105.0
Bonner	Rural center	18.0	3.7	2	99.0
Bonneville	Urban	17.7	3.1	124	93.2
Boundary	Open country	23.7	3.6	1	103.6
Butte	Open country	17.8	6.1	79	95.6
Camas	Open country	16.5	11.7	24	107.1
Canyon	Urban	22.5	5.3	1	89.3
Caribou	Open country	22.7	1.5	24	101.3
Cassia	Rural center	29.9	6.6	64	91.1
Clark	Open country	23.2	13.8	44	83.4
Clearwater	Open country	20.6	2.7	1	89.0
Custer	Open country	19.0	3.3	7	101.3
Elmore	Commuting	39.8	4.4	15	85.0
Franklin	Commuting	21.1	1.5	139	101.1
Fremont	Open country	26.7	4.7	95	94.7
Gem	Commuting	23.9	3.5	8	95.7
Gooding	Open country	16.8	4.2	23	88.2
Idaho	Open country	25.1	5.1	3	98.3
Jefferson	Commuting	22.8	2.3	18	95.7
Jerome	Commuting	19.7	8.4	10	85.5
Kootenai	Urban	14.8	3.5	1	97.3
Latah	Urban	20.8	2.6	2	77.8
Lemhi	Open country	34.9	4.9	17	99.3
Lewis	Open country	26.1	4.1	18	94.6
Lincoln	Open country	16.0	4.4	34	86.0
Madison	Urban	20.3	3.6	33	58.9
Minidoka	Rural center	29.9	4.7	2	95.6
Nez Perce	Urban	15.2	4.8	7	92.0
Oneida	Open country	18.3	6.6	189	103.9
Owyhee	Commuting	21.9	2.7	55	97.2
Payette	Rural center	35.1	4.6	0	95.2
Power	Open country	22.0	7.7	47	92.4
Shoshone	Open country	25.3	3.3	3	94.1
Teton	Open country	30.9	2.1	92	90.0
Twin Falls	Urban	24.8	5.2	1	91.8
Valley	Open country	20.7	5.9	9	102.7
Washington	Open country	26.7	2.1	8	93.3
Urban		**19.8**	**4.3**	**22**	**89.8**
Rural		**23.2**	**4.4**	**37**	**94.8**
Commuting		25.9	4.4	28	93.1
Rural center		19.6	4.4	26	95.5
Open country		23.1	4.3	44	96.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey 2019-2023." Idaho Transportation Department, "Idaho Traffic Crashes 2023."

Table A.15. Urban and rural county classification, net migration, 1970-2023

Year	Urban	Rural (total)	Rural commuting	Rural center	Rural open country	Idaho state total
1970-1980	98,600 (76%)	30,600 (24%)	6,200 (5%)	16,800 (13%)	7,600 (6%)	129,200
1980-1990	-1,864 (4%)	-40,057 (96%)	-4,298 (10%)	-14,169 (34%)	-21,590 (52%)	-41,921
1990-2000	117,733 (76%)	36,650 (24%)	10,345 (7%)	13,115 (8%)	13,190 (9%)	154,383
2000-2010	132,055 (98%)	2,407 (2%)	155 (0%)	3,060 (2%)	-808 (-1%)	134,462
2010-2019	121,408 (95%)	6,197 (5%)	-1,283 (-1%)	4,967 (4%)	2,513 (2%)	127,605
2020-2023	75,742 (70%)	32,955 (30%)	10,334 (10%)	9,368 (9%)	13,253 (12%)	108,697
Total (1970-2023)	**543,674 (89%)**	**68,752 (11%)**	**21,453 (4%)**	**33,141 (5%)**	**14,158 (2%)**	**612,426**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Idaho Department of Labor

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