



IDAHO
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BRAD LITTLE, GOVERNOR
JANI REVIER, DIRECTOR

Profile of rural Idaho

A look at economic and social trends affecting rural Idaho

Part 1: Demographics

Research and Communications Bureau

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Forward

The variety and ruggedness of rural Idaho is unique among its peers with few exceptions. Its landscape, culture, identity, history, industry, the treasures it possesses and the future it holds are synonymous with its ruralness.

In 2005, the Idaho Department of Labor published a Profile of Rural Idaho in collaboration with other Idaho researchers. Now 20 years later, the department is refreshing this profile and will examine multiple aspects of the state's rural population, labor market and economy, as well as critical trends. It will also press further into some details compared with the previous publication to provide a comprehensive understanding of rural Idaho to its stakeholders.

The 2025 Rural Profile will be released in four parts over the course of the year.

- Part I will define how today's rural Idaho compares to that of 2005.
- Part II will cover the economy and labor market of rural Idaho and will be published at the end of June.
- Part III will examine some of the critical trends for rural Idaho – comparing present day developments with those identified in the 2005 report, as well as identifying a few known critical trends for the foreseeable future. Part III is set for publication in September.
- The final installment will be a summary of the three parts in a single report to be released in December.

It should be noted the department's rural profile report uses the most recent vintage data available at the time of creation. Similar to how the 2005 report referenced data from 2003, this report will reference data from 2023.

The creation of this report is under the same spirit former Gov. Dirk Kempthorne noted in his forward of the 2005 report, so "community members, working with leaders in business, government and the nonprofit sector, can gain a greater understanding of the entire state by reading this report. It is important for all of us to use the information contained in these pages to maintain Idaho's quality of life."

Part I – Introduction and highlights

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, 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

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013, and 2023*. Population Estimates Program. Accessed March 2025. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

² U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 5-year data files for 2009–2013 and 2019–2023*. 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.

Figure 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 county
Open country	No urban cluster of at least 7,500 and no strong commuting ties to a metro county

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *Rural Classifications*, last modified Jan. 8, 2025, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications>.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap commuting patterns. Accessed March 2025. <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>.

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 predominately 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 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.

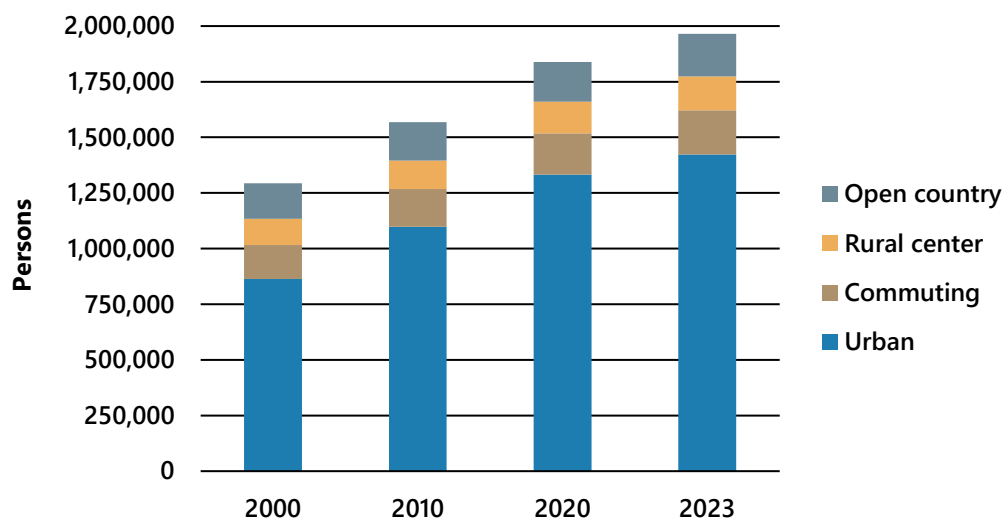
The imbalance eased up further from 2020 to 2023 as the state experienced an influx of new residents spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

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 2. 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

Figure 3a. Urban and rural counties, number and land area, 2003 and 2023

# of Idaho counties	# of counties		Land area (square miles)		% Total land area	
	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

Figure 3b. Urban and rural counties, population and density, 2003 and 2023

# of Idaho counties	Population		% Total population		Population per square mile	
	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

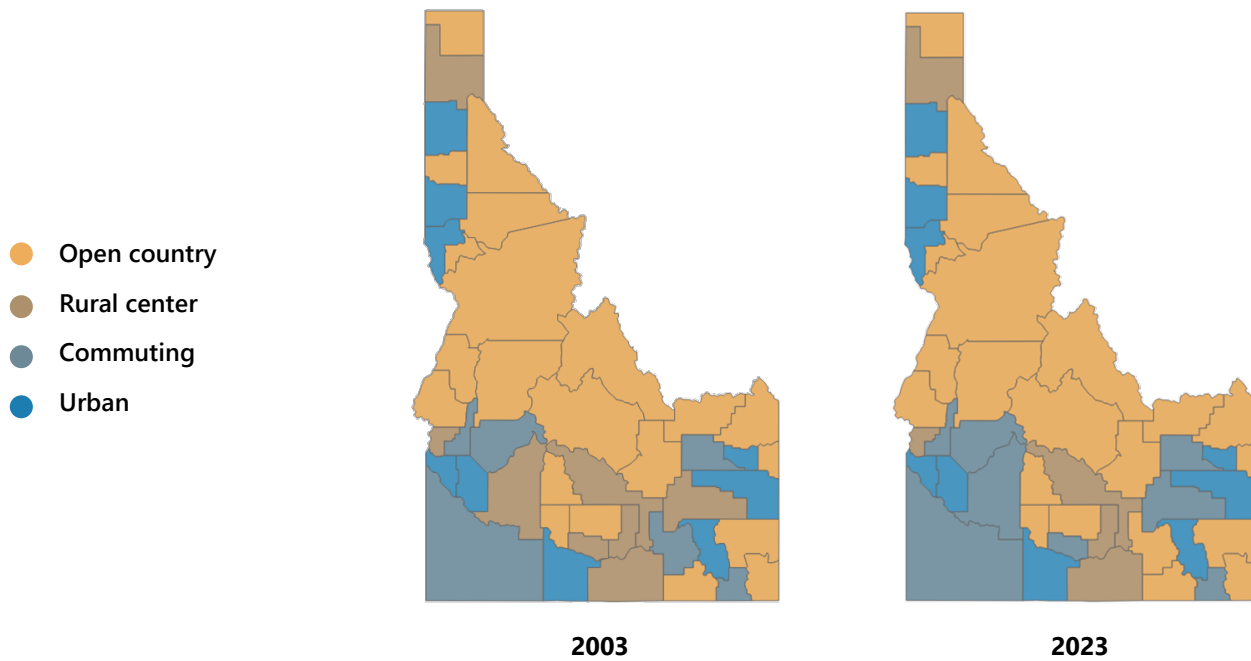
As Idaho's urban areas became more urban from 2003-2023, they expanded their economic influence into neighboring rural counties. As an increasing number of people migrated into bedroom communities in rural counties but were employed in urban counties, three of the counties classified as rural center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

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013, and 2023*. Population Estimates Program. Accessed March 2025. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>

Figure 4. Urban and rural county classification changes, 2003-2023



Source: Idaho Department of Labor

Figure 5. Urban and rural county classification, count and land area, 2003 and 2023

# of Idaho counties	# of counties		Land area (square miles)		% Total land area	
	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).

Figure 6. Urban and rural county classification, population and density, 2003 and 2023

# of Idaho counties	Population		% Total population		Population per square mile	
	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

Figure 7. 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

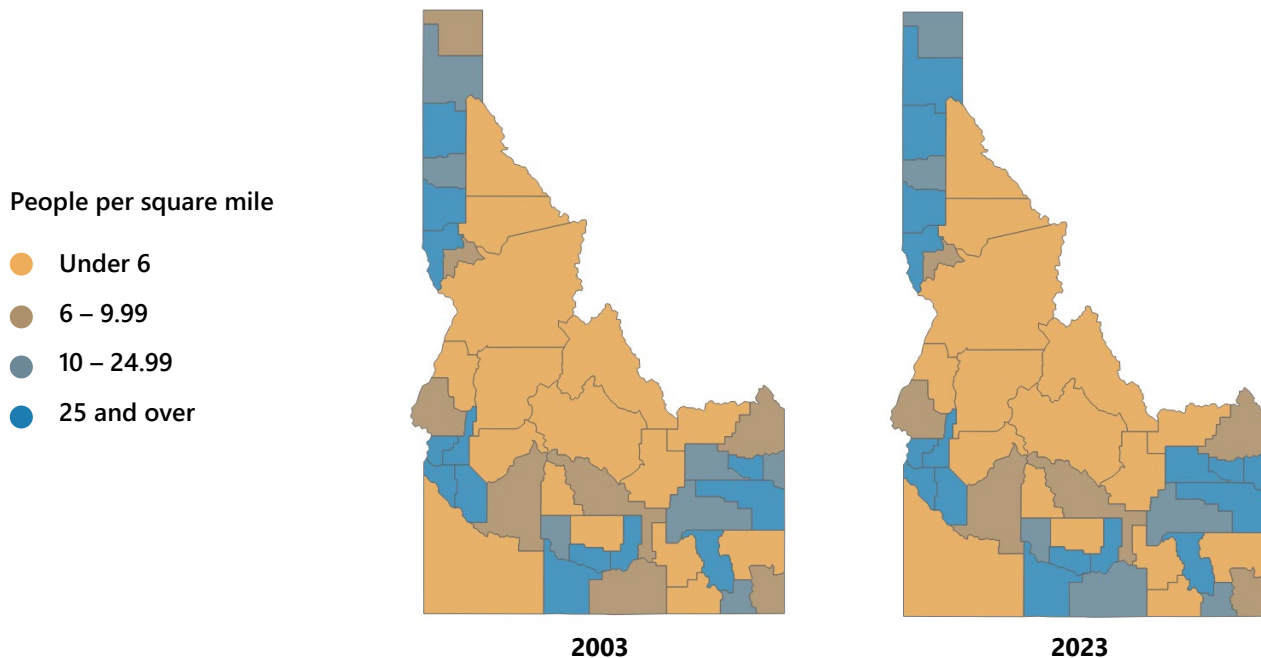
Population density, 2003 and 2023

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 8. Population density, 2003 and 2023



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

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, TIGERweb spatial files. Accessed March 2025. <https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/>.

In-migration

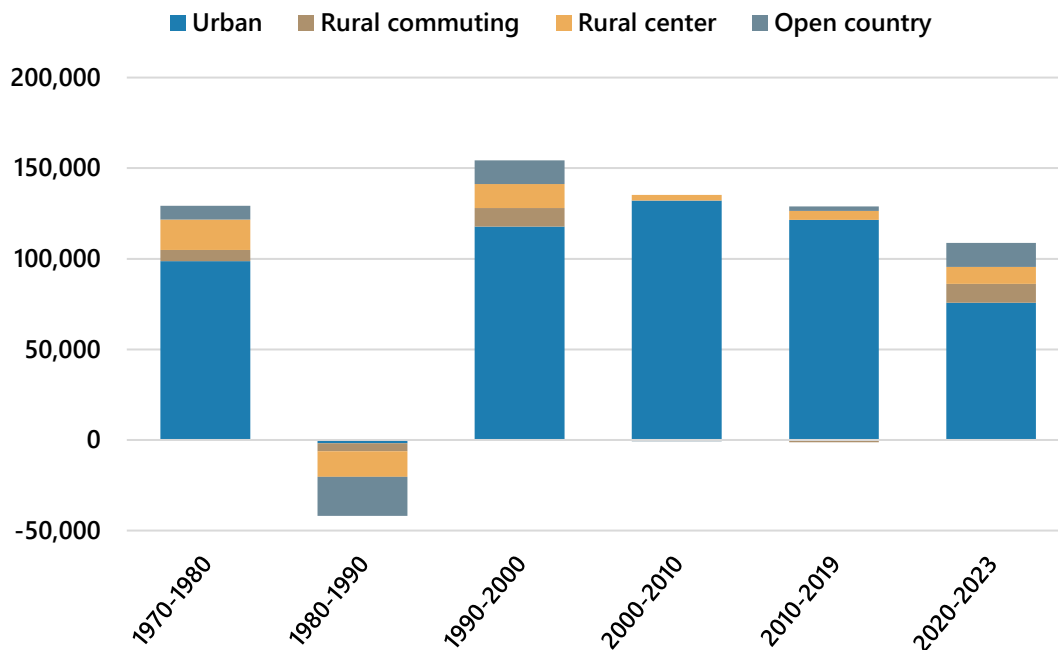
With family size in a long running state of decline over the past two decades, net migration — the net balance of residents moving in and out of a given area — became the most vital component of population growth in Idaho.

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.

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 9. 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 1 in the Appendix.⁷

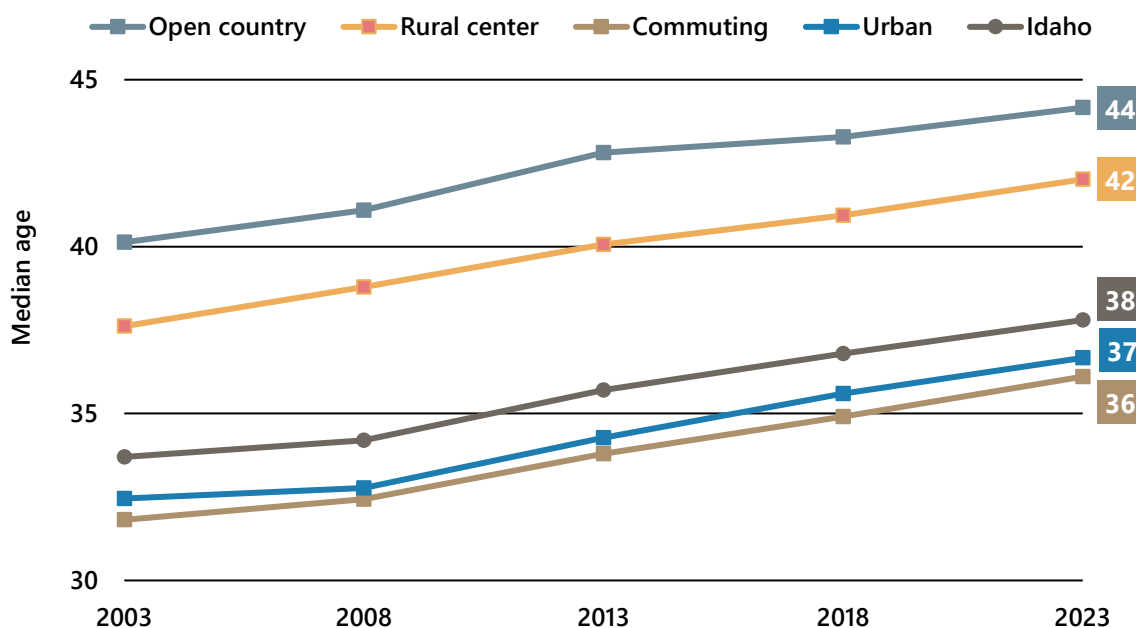
⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Decennial Census of Population and Housing, 1970–2020*; Accessed March 2025. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade.html>.

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 10. 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

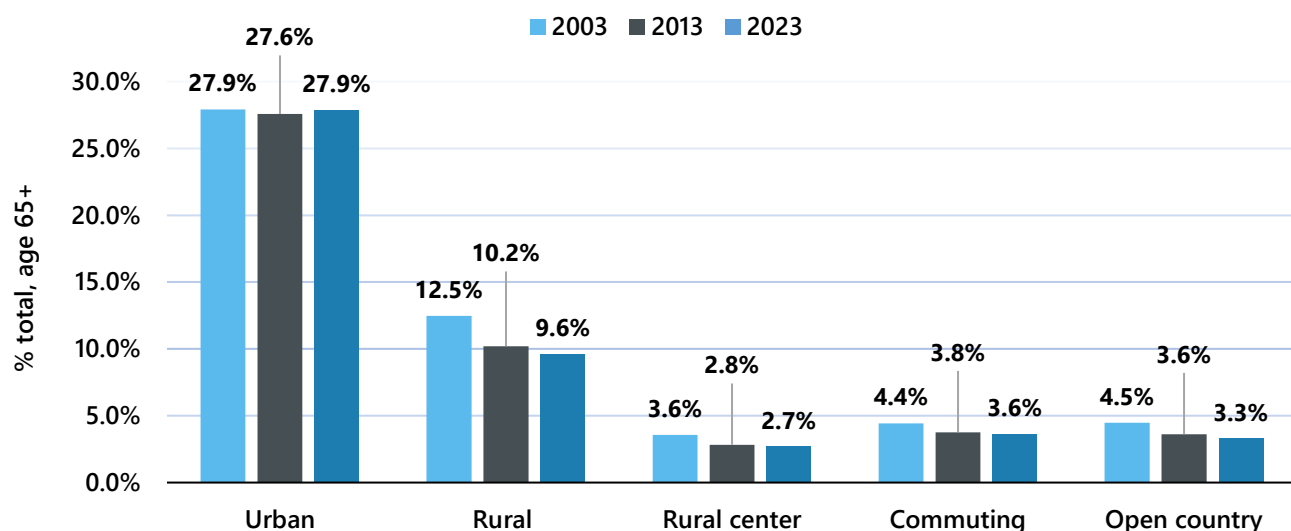
All the county classifications maintained their order relative to each other over the past 20 years — commuting rural counties remained the youngest and open country the oldest. Median ages ranged among Idaho's counties from younger than 25 in Madison County to almost 60 in Clark County. Nineteen of 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 U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2023*, accessed March 2025, <https://data.census.gov/>.

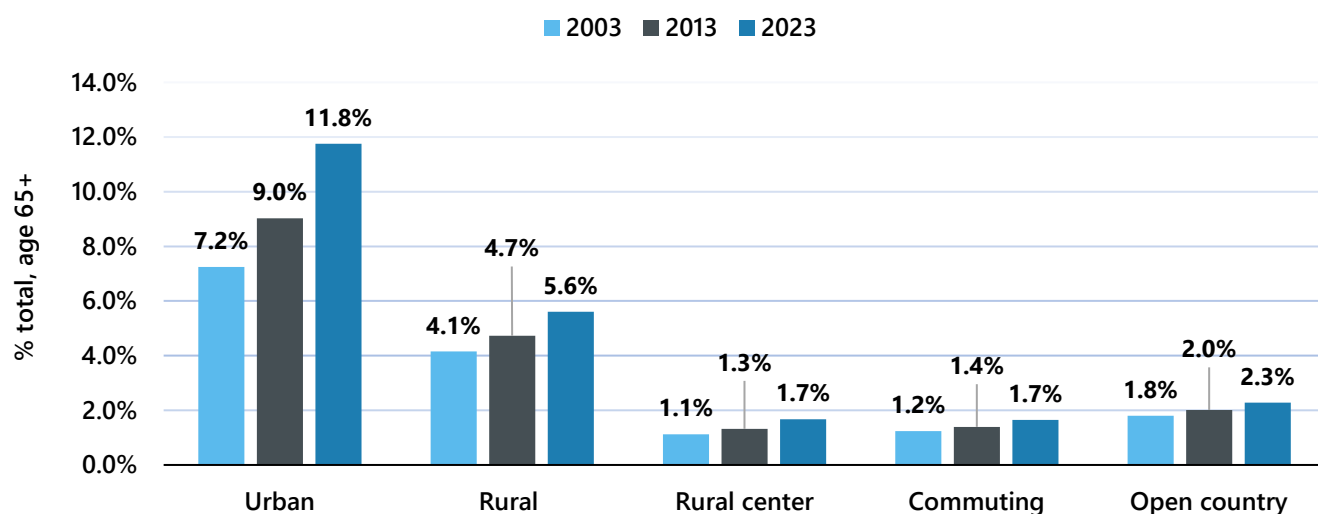
⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2019–2023*, accessed March 2025, <https://data.census.gov/>.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, *Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013, and 2023*, Population Estimates Program, accessed March 2025, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

Figure 11. 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 12. Urban and rural county classification, age 65 and over, 2003, 2013 and 2023

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

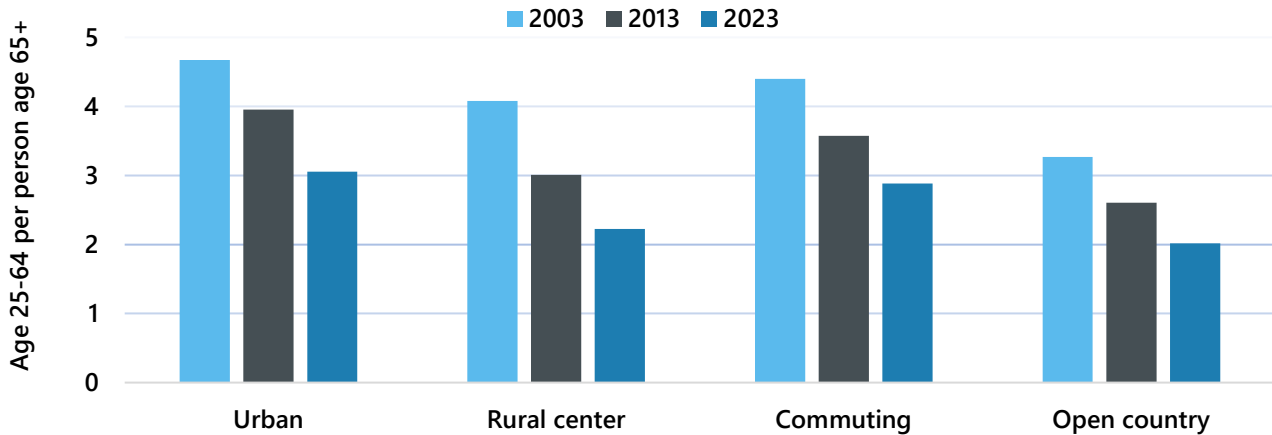
Viewed from another perspective, Idaho's changing demographics have shifted the ratio of the working age population per retiree. In 2003, Idaho had over 4.3 people aged 25 to 64 years of age for every person 65 and older. This ratio fell to 3.6 in 2013 and to 2.8 in 2023 and implies there are fewer people working to provide

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Annual Population Estimates for 2003, 2013, and 2023*. Population Estimates Program. Accessed March 2025. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

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.

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

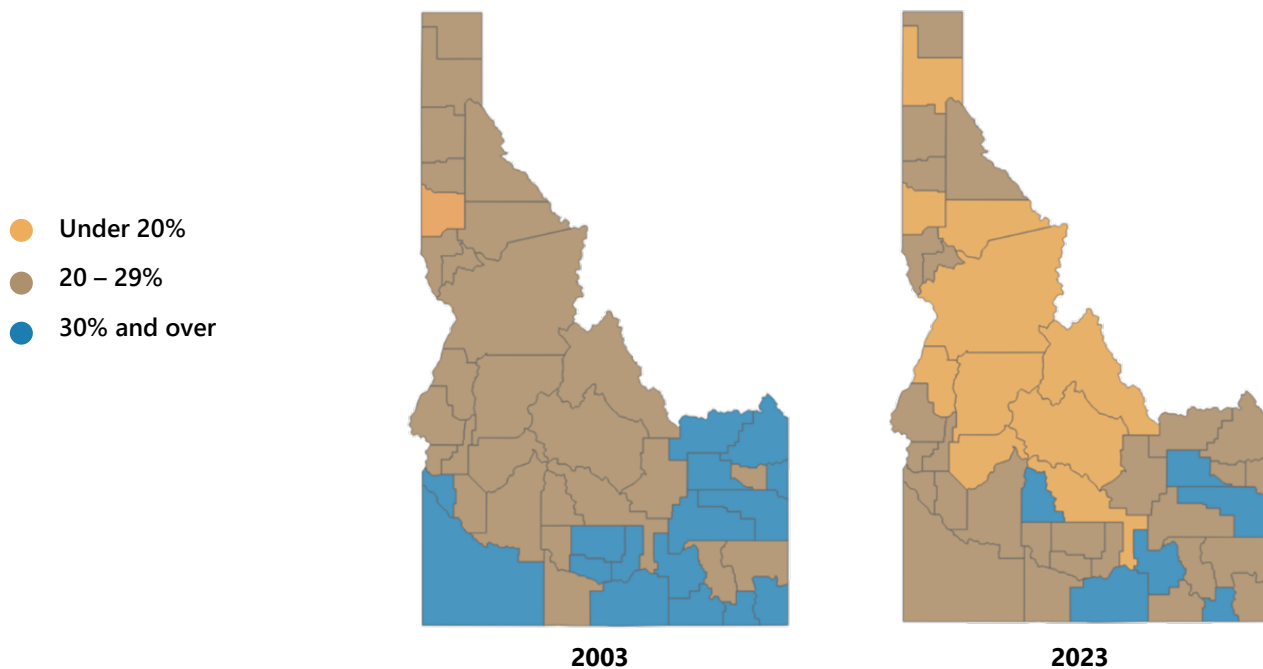


Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

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.

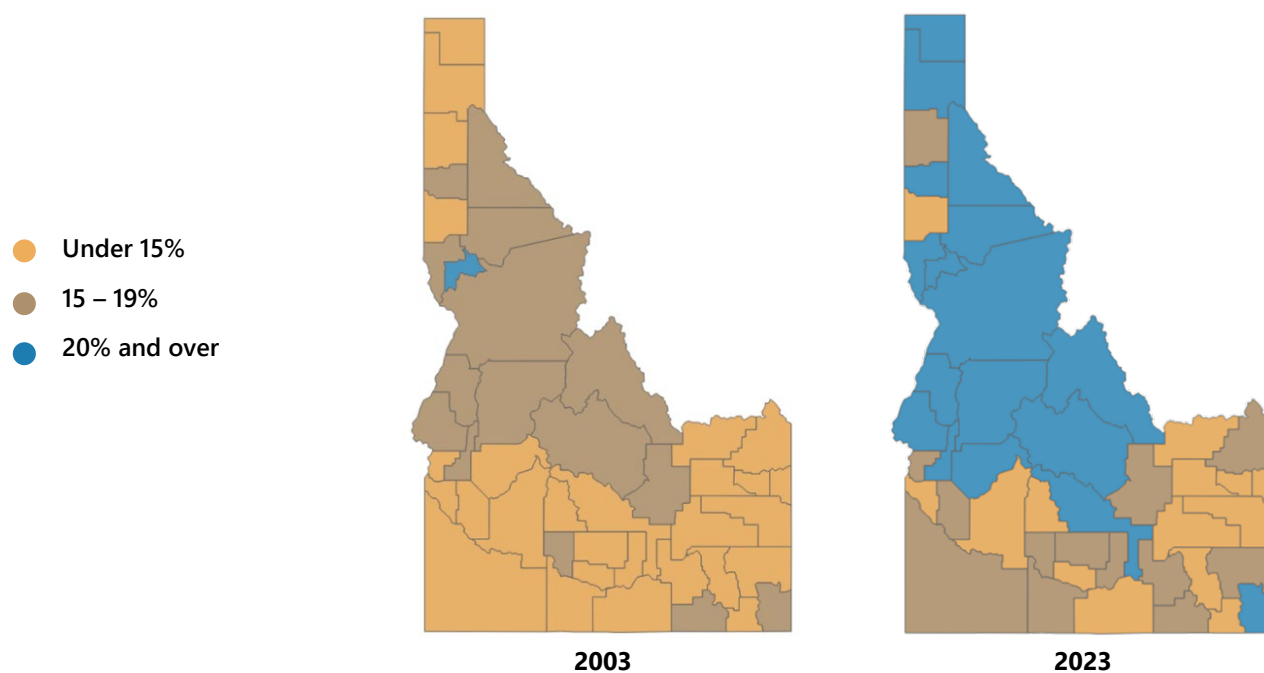
Figure 14. Resident population, under 18 years of age



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 15. 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.

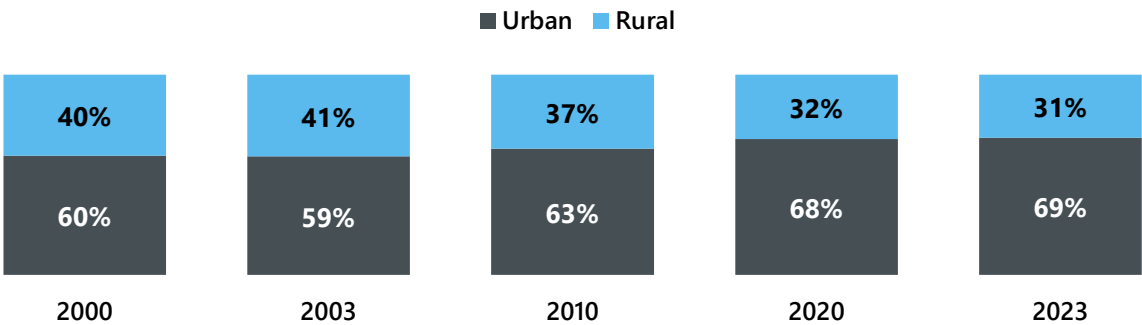
Race/ethnicity

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 16. Urban and rural county, Hispanic population



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

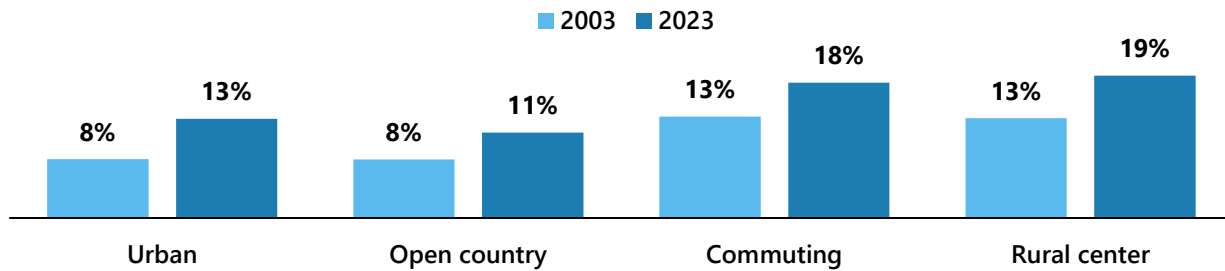
Nine of the top 10 counties with the highest share of Hispanics to the total population were rural in 2023. Although rural counties accounted for the highest concentrations of the Hispanic population, Idaho’s urban counties were home to nearly 70% of the statewide Hispanic population and claimed 74% 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.

Figure 17a. 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

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, *Annual Population Estimates by race/age*. Accessed March 2025. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

Figure 17b. Urban and rural county classification, Hispanic population, 2003 and 2023


Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

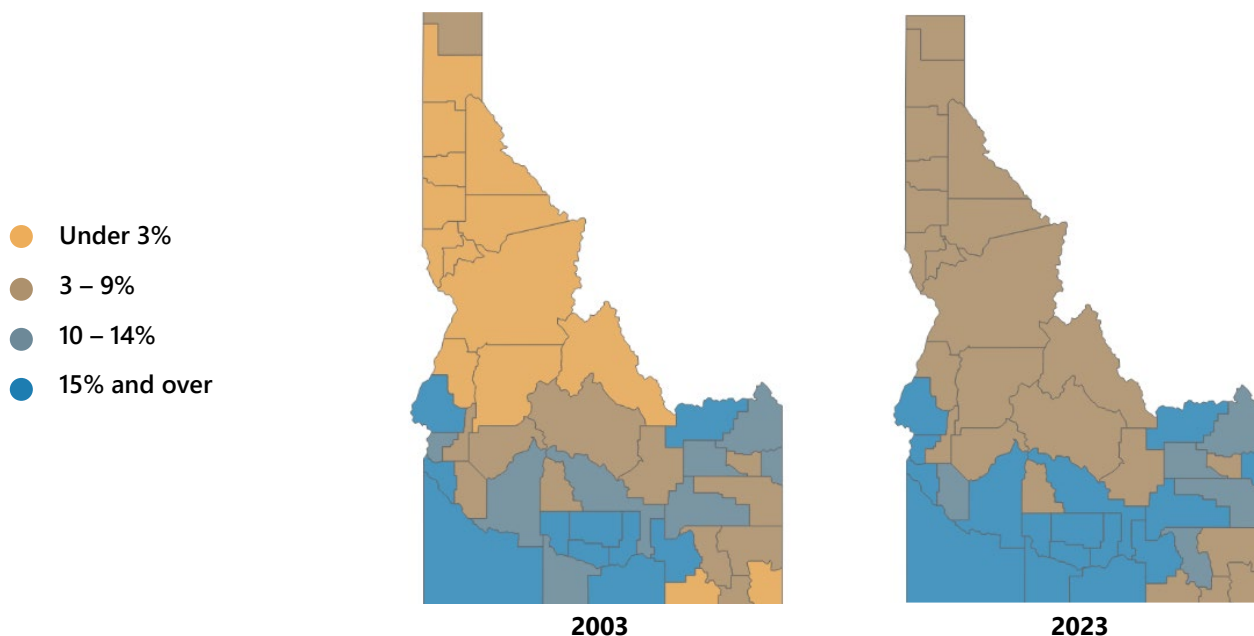
Hispanic population share by county

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.

Figure 18. 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 19. Hispanic concentration in county as a share of total resident population


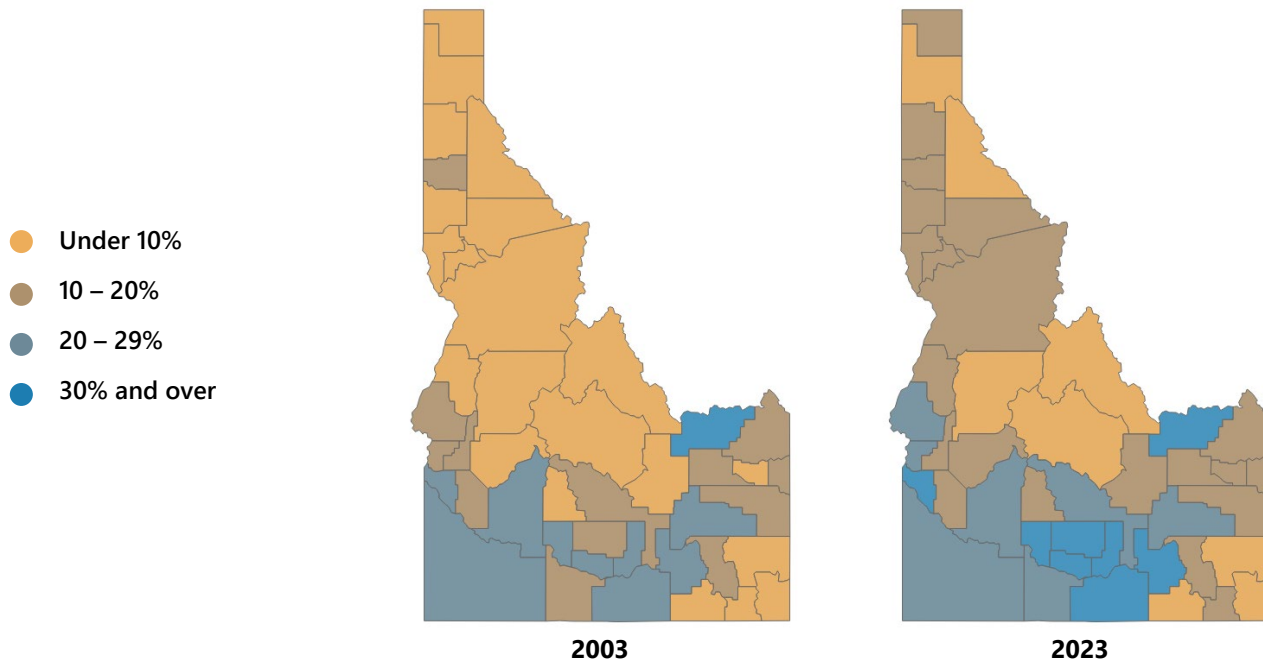
Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

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



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

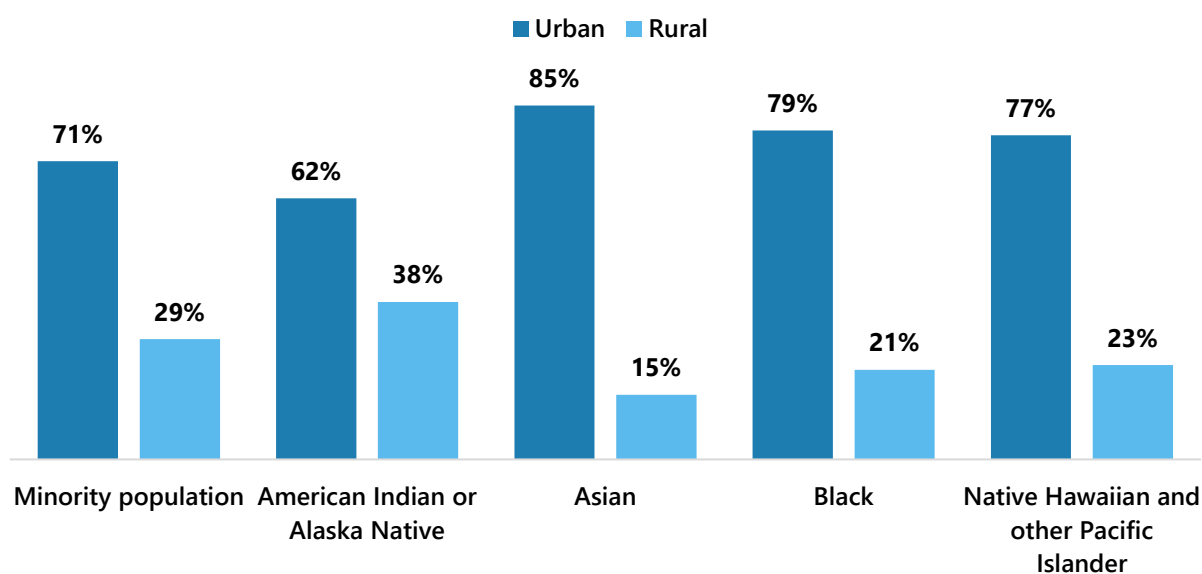
In 2023, nine of the top 10 counties with the highest minority share of the population were rural, but urban counties were still home to over 70% of the state's minority population. The number of counties with at least a 10% minority share of its total population increased from 20 to 36 between 2000-2023.

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

Figure 21. 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%

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 22. Urban and rural county, minority race distribution, 2023

Source: 2023 U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

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

Educational attainment

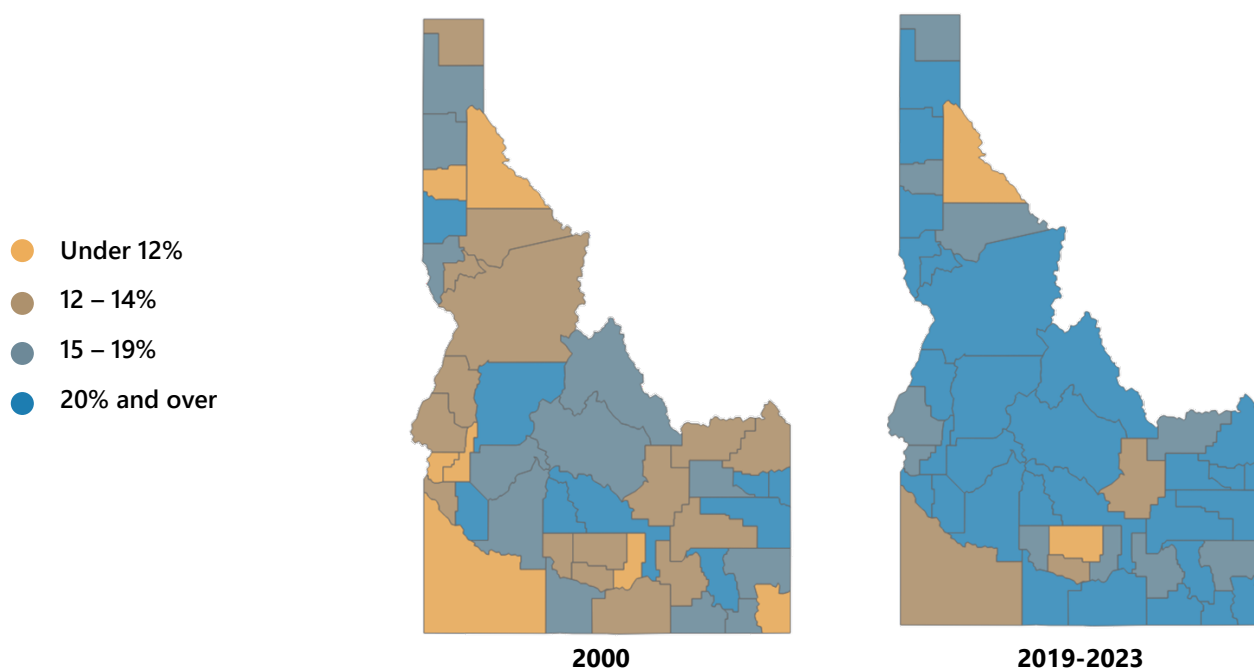
Over the past two decades, the percentage of Idaho adults with a postsecondary degree or higher has increased.

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}

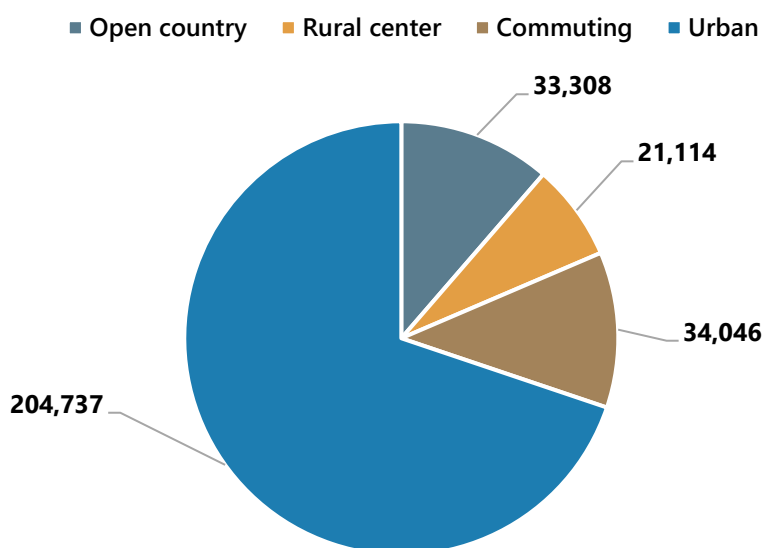
Figure 23. Population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher by county, 2000, 2019-2023



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

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000*, accessed March 2025, <https://www.census.gov/data.html>.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2019-2023*, accessed March 2025, <https://data.census.gov>.

Figure 24. Urban and rural county classification, public school enrollment, 2023-2024

Source: Idaho State Board of Education

Figure 25. Urban and rural classification, school districts with significant changes in enrollment, 2019-2023¹⁶

	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

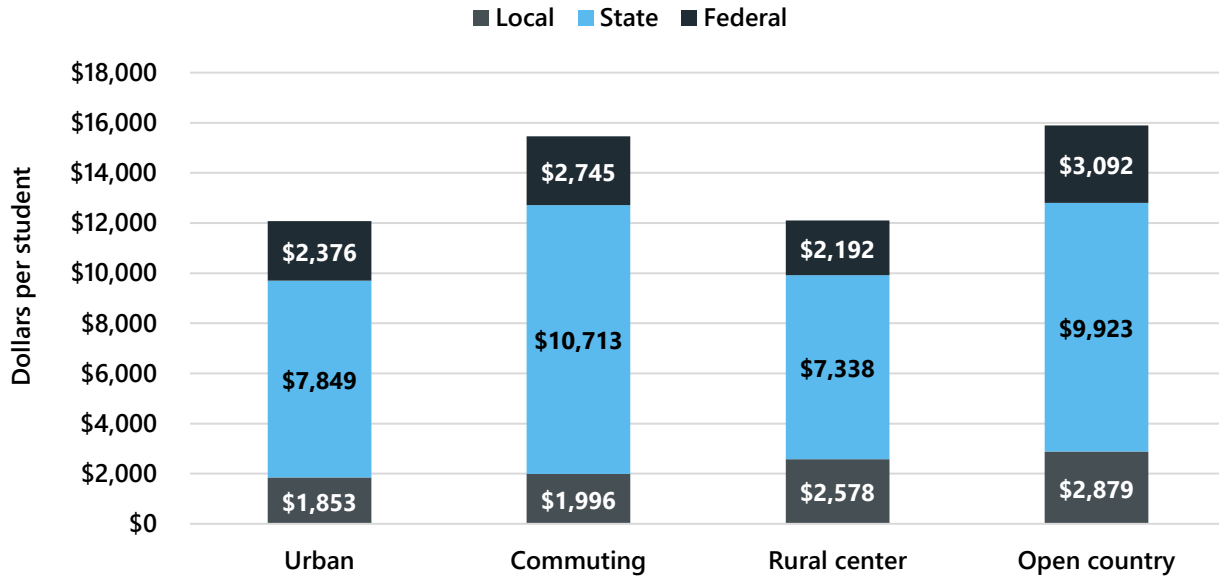
Source: Idaho State Board of Education

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

¹⁶ Idaho Education News, *Attendance Data*, accessed March 1, 2025, <https://www.idahoednews.org/idaho-education-data/attendance-data/>.

¹⁷ National Center for Education Statistics, "Elementary/Secondary Information System Common Core of Data", Funding revenue per pupil in Idaho's public primary and secondary schools. Accessed March 2025. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>.

Figure 26. Urban and rural county classification, school district funding per student, 2023-2024

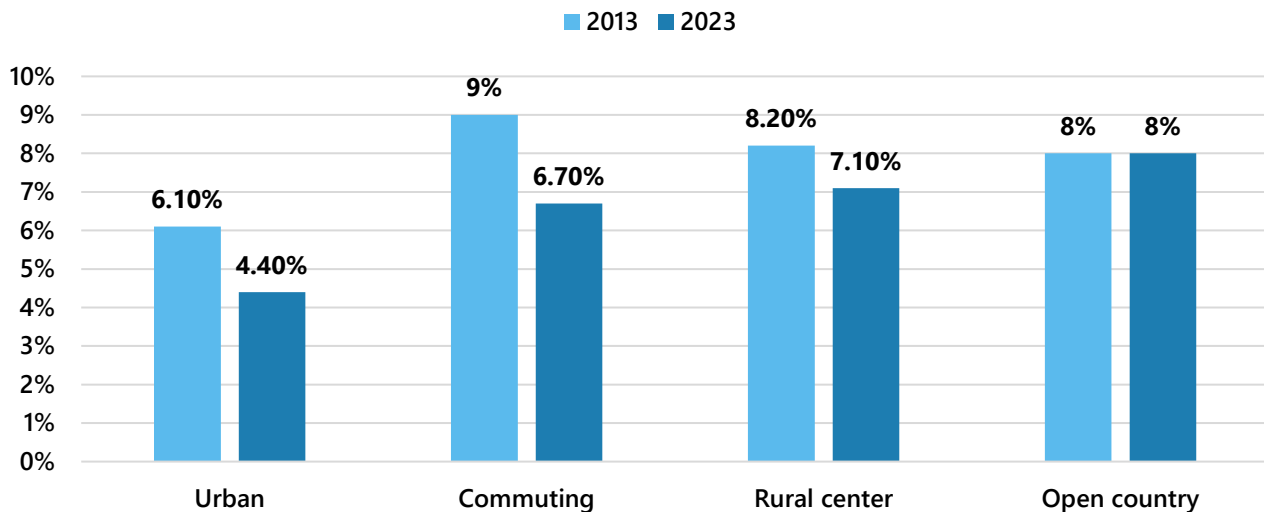


Source: National Center for Education Statistics

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.

Figure 27. 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

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year data files for 2009–2013 and 2019–2023. Accessed March 2025. <https://data.census.gov/>.

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Appendix – Tables

Table 1. 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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