Wisconsin Rural Decline in a National Context

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Rural Wisconsin geographically

Number of rural counties:
Wisconsin: 46
U.S. 1,934
What’s the challenge?
Depopulation!
Wisconsin outperformed nation during 90s
% of Rural Counties With Declining Population: 1990-2000

30% 0%
U.S. Wisconsin

Only one urban county
Wisconsin, U.S. similar during 00s
% of Rural Counties With Declining Population: 2000-2010

47% U.S.
44% Wisconsin

All urban counties grew!
Depopulation grows to 2/3 of rural counties
% of Rural Counties With Declining Population: 2010-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Wisconsin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 urban counties declined as well
Wisconsin slightly outperforming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>If like U.S.</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 30%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 40%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 30%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would expect 23 in top half, actually 28!
Wis. different in source of decline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Wisconsin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Decline</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outmigration</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Depopulation leads to less economic activity

- Declining workforce
- Fewer jobs
- Fewer businesses
- Slower income growth
Labor force declines with population: 2010-2018

Greatest pop. declines

Greatest pop. gains
Job growth slows, declines: 2010-2018

Greatest pop. declines

Greatest pop. gains

-3.9%
2.3%
13.1%
Business growth slows, declines: 2010-2018

Greatest pop. declines
-5.5%

Greatest pop. gains
8.5%
Total income growth slows: 2010-2018

Greatest pop. declines

Greatest pop. gains

-0.8%  9.4%  24.4%
Implications for counties

- Service costs often not directly proportional to population
- Slower income growth
- Evidence of declining construction
- Declining workforce creates challenges in hiring for county positions

\[ \text{Declining tax base} \]
Decline leads to more decline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000 to 2010</th>
<th>2010 to 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bottom Half</strong></td>
<td>Top 20%</td>
<td>Bottom 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Half</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Top 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**2010 to 2018: 78%**

**2000 to 2010: 73%**
What factors best explain population loss/gain during 2010-2018?

- Growth during 2000-2010 (decline leads to decline)
- Unemployment rate in 2010 (higher rate, more decline)
- City > 10,000 (less decline)
- Natural amenities (less decline)
- Poverty in 2010 (greater poverty, more decline)
- Industry diversity (more diversity, less decline)
- Broadband access (more broadband, less decline)
What’s next?