



# What's Going on in Greater Minnesota, 2025

MN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – AGRICULTURE FINANCE AND POLICY

FEBRUARY 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

# State of Rural, 2025

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# Demographic and Economic Highlights

## People

- Population
- Migration
- Race & Ethnicity

## Economic Vitality

- Top employment industries
- % of jobs in government
- Self-employed
- Earnings
- Job Vacancies
- Income maintenance

## Ag

- Land values
- Net income



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## The State of Rural Minnesota, 2025

*The shifts in trends from the pandemic continue in the most recent data release.*

January 2025

By Kelly Asche, Senior Researcher | Marnie Werner, Vice President of Research and Operations

Each year, the Center for Rural Policy and Development provides an update on various economic and demographic data pertaining to rural Minnesota. As policy discussions concerning the various regions of the state unfold, it is important to understand the past, present, and potential futures of rural regions. This report provides historical data points illustrating how rural conditions have changed and where they are at now, making for healthy discussions about the current demographic and economic vitality of these areas.

### Rural Atlas Online

To supplement and support the annual State of Rural Minnesota report, we also maintain and regularly update the Atlas of Rural Minnesota Online. This collection of interactive maps and charts provides readers with a higher-level analysis of the data, breaking it down in a variety of ways to give a better understanding of Minnesota's demographic, economic, and societal characteristics at the state, county, planning region, and economic development region levels. Visit <http://www.ruralmn.org/atlas-online-2025/> to view the site.

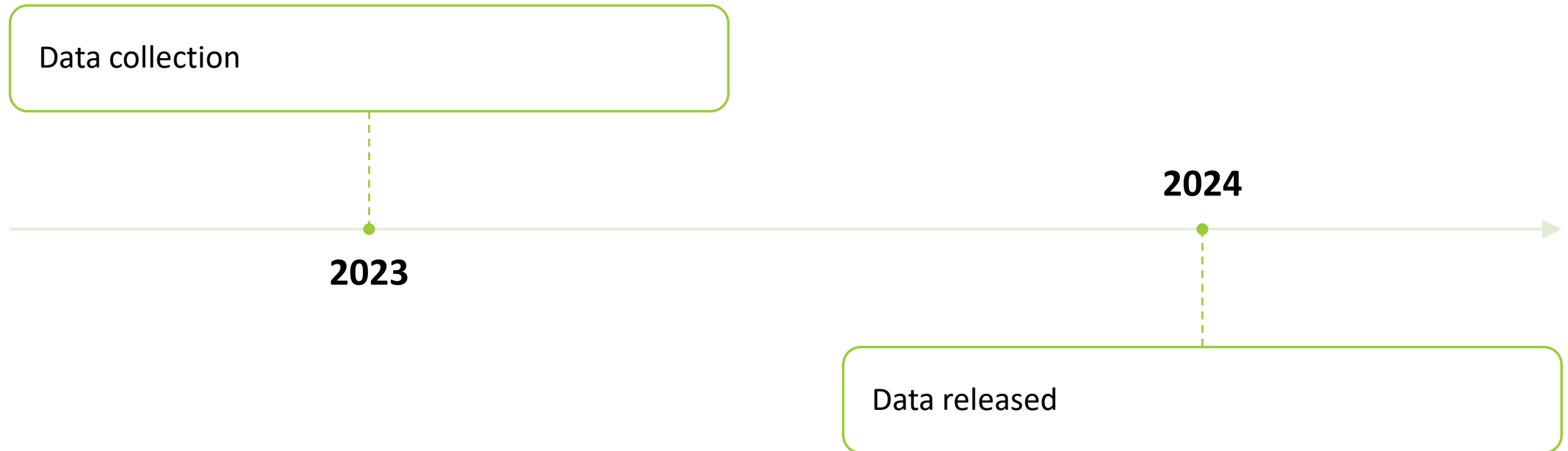
### The quick takeaways for 2024

#### People

Immediately following the pandemic, there was a significant shift in population patterns. For the first time in decades rural counties were experiencing population gains. In rural areas, these modest gains were due to in-migration. However, long-term population gains are likely unrealistic due to rural Minnesota's aging population and the increasing number of deaths that will occur there over the next 20 years.

# Data Lag

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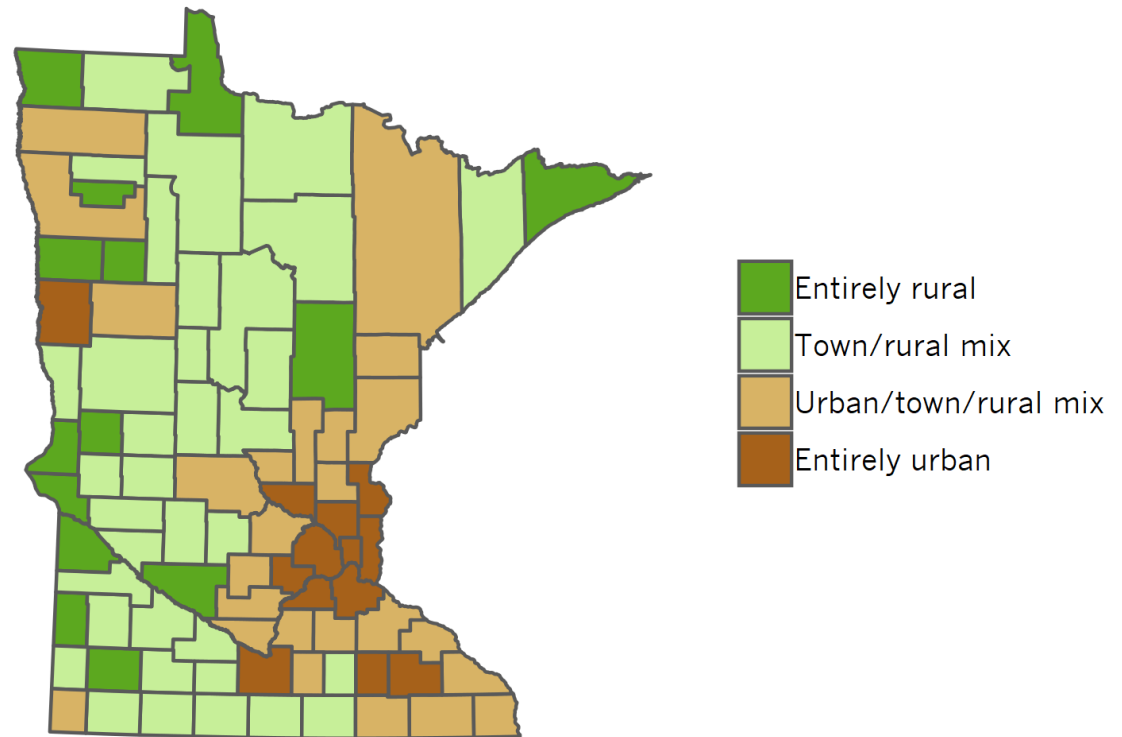


# Defining rural

Throughout this presentation we will present information using four county groups developed by the Minnesota Demographic Center using USDA's Rural-Urban Commuting Area codes.

Grouping counties by “ruralness” and “urbanness” instead by location gives us another way to look at the state.

County categorizations based on rural-urban commuting areas



# People

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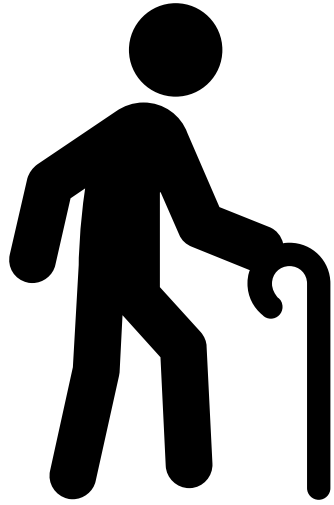
AGING POPULATIONS IN RURAL AREAS IMPACTING NATURAL  
POPULATION CHANGE

# Two components of population change

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**Natural Change**  
(Births – Deaths)

**Migration Change**  
(In-migration –  
Out-migration)

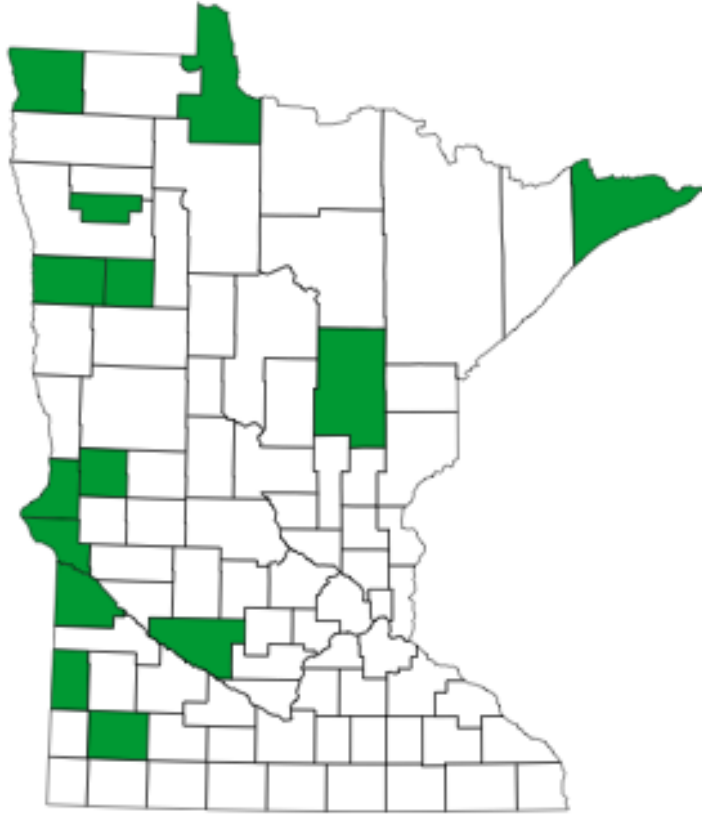


# Aging populations impacting rural natural change

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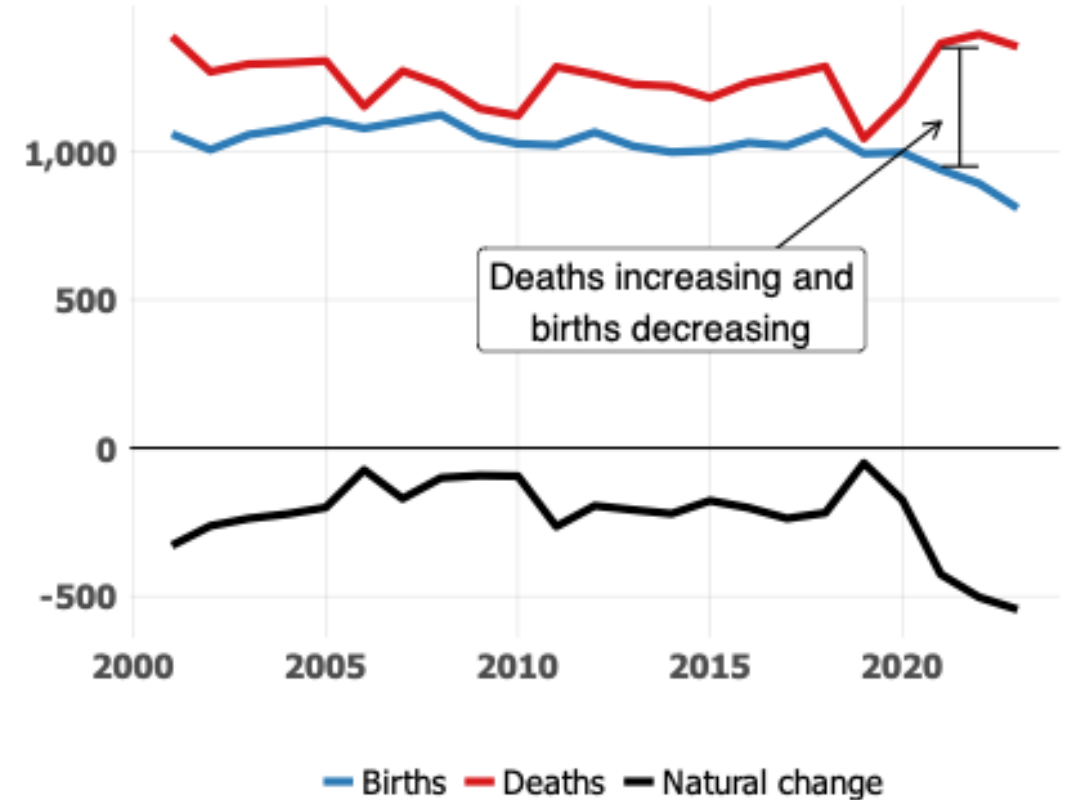
## Entirely rural county group



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS rural-urban commuting areas

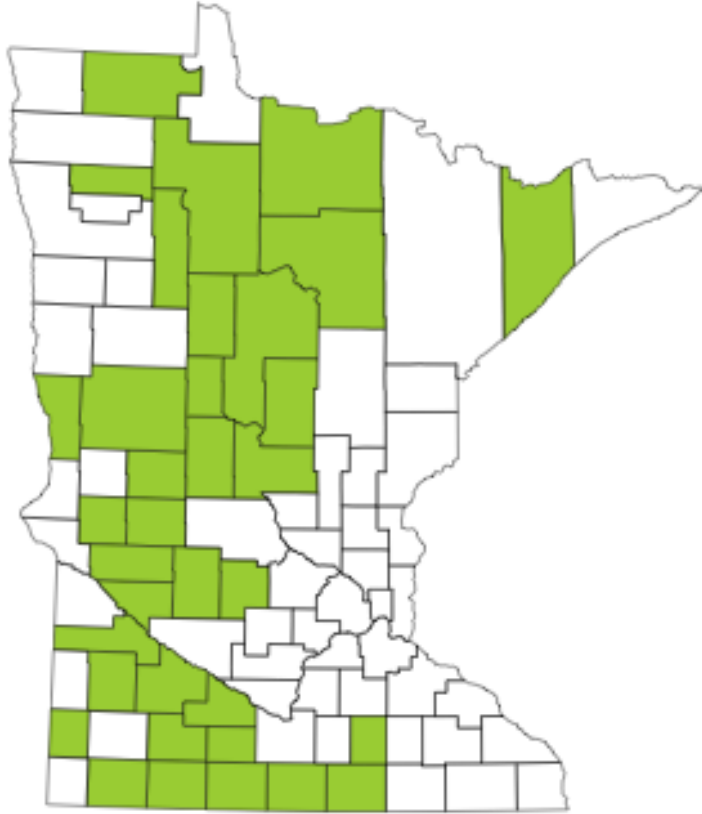
## Natural change - entirely rural counties

Rural areas are experiencing significantly more deaths than births



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

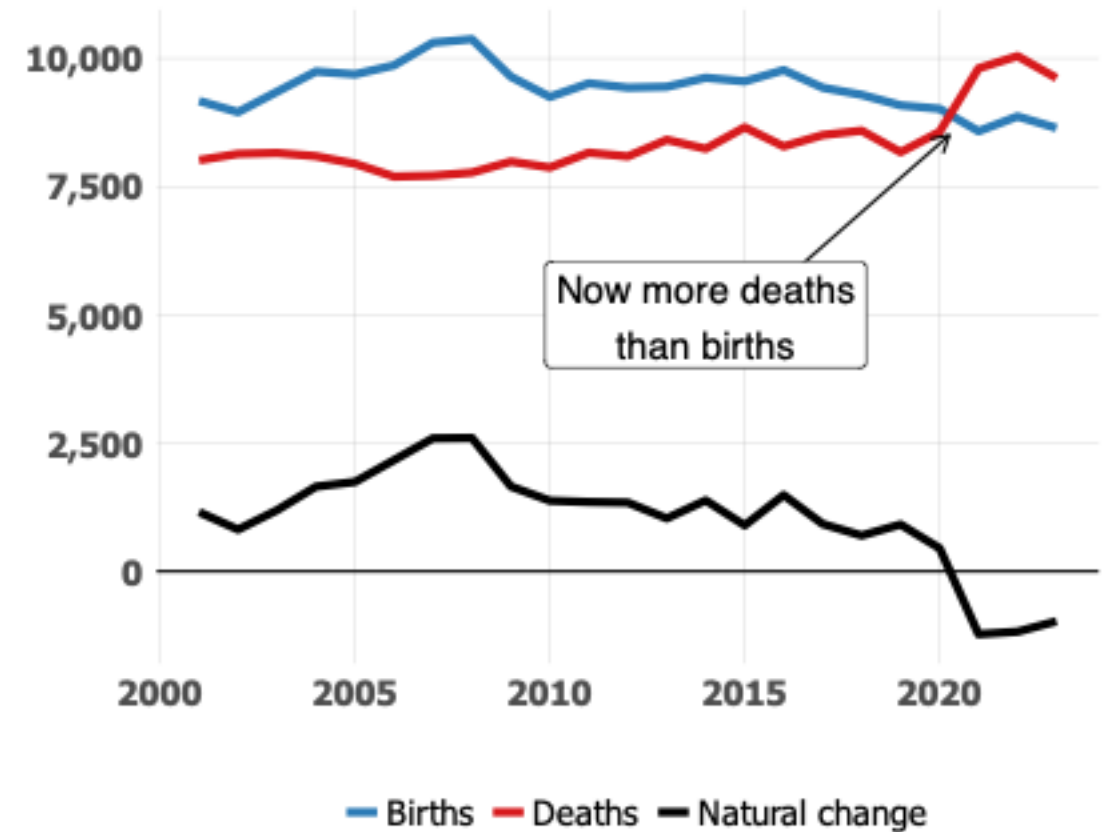
## Town/rural county group



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS rural-urban commuting areas

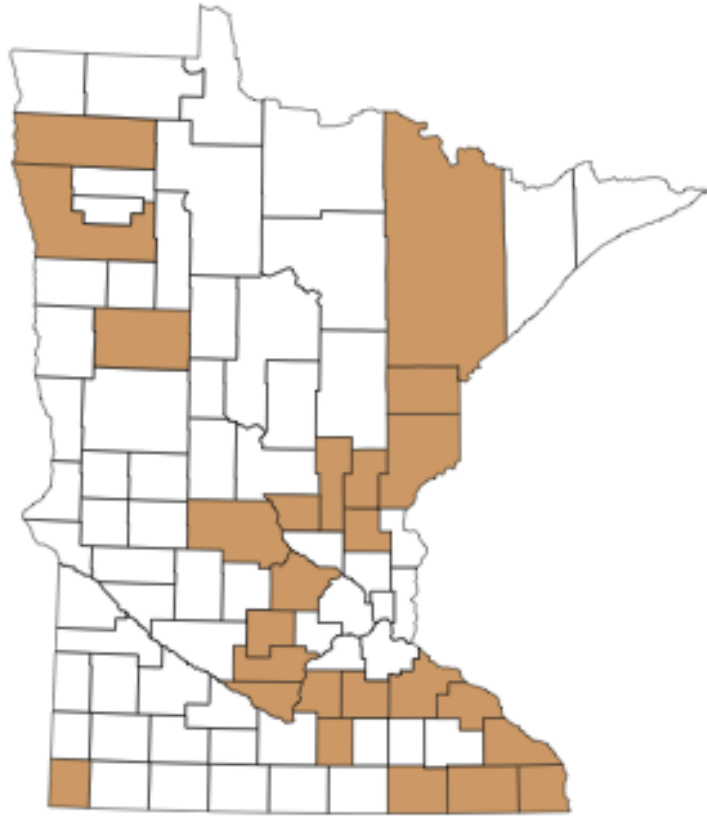
## Natural change - town/rural mix counties

There are now more deaths than births in our town/rural mix counties.



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

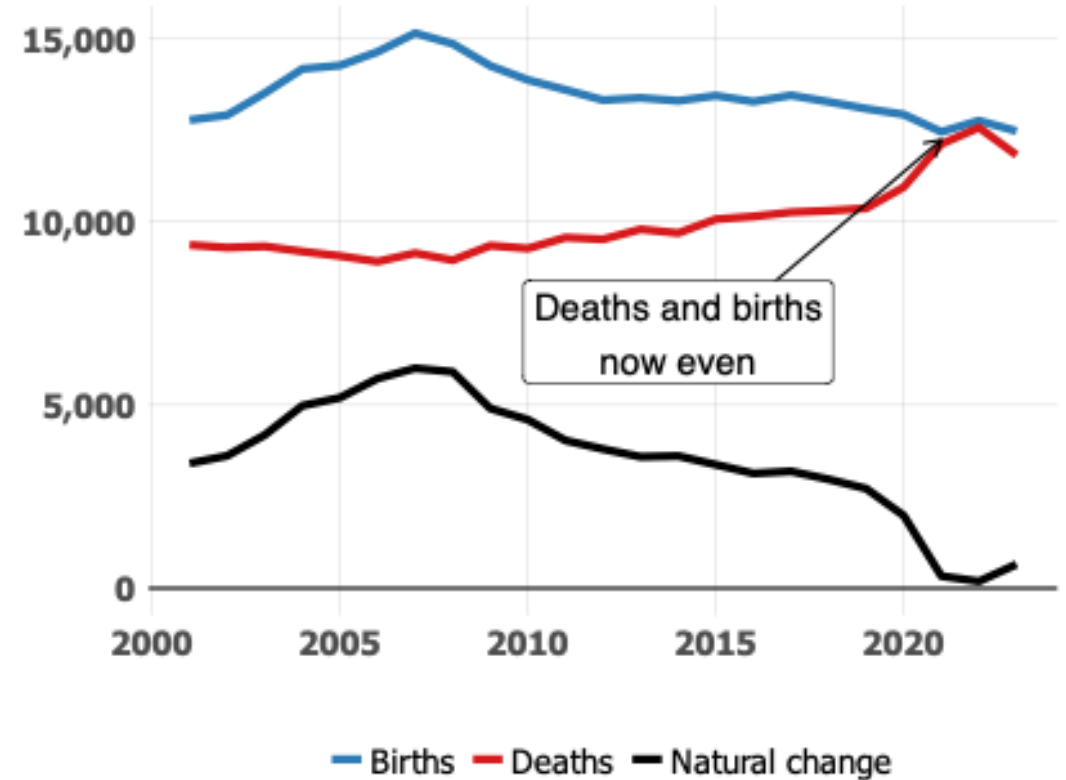
## Urban/town/rural county group



MN State Demographer & USDA-ERS rural-urban commuting areas

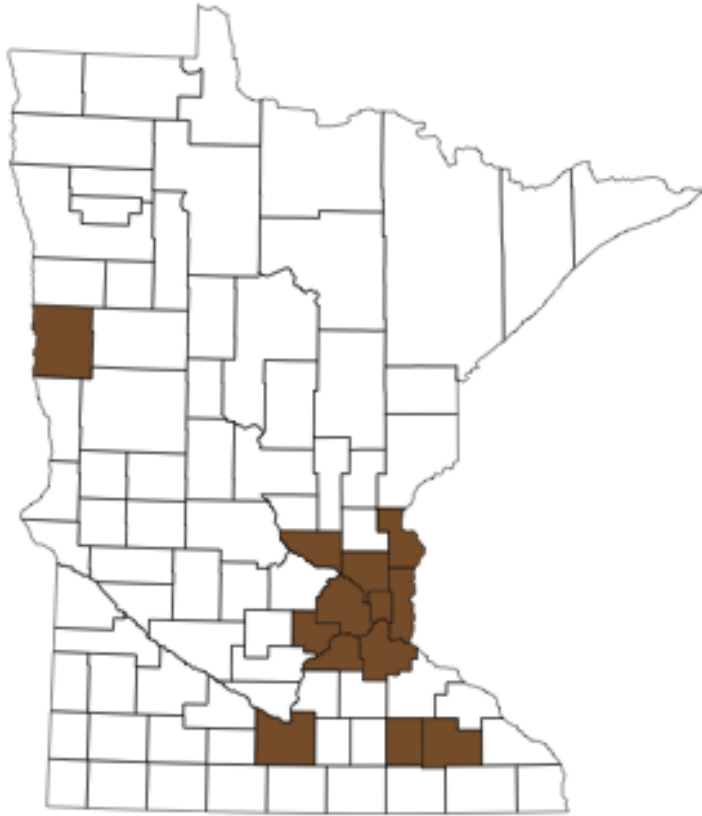
## Urban/town/rural mix counties

The number of deaths and births in our urban/town/rural mix counties is now even.



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

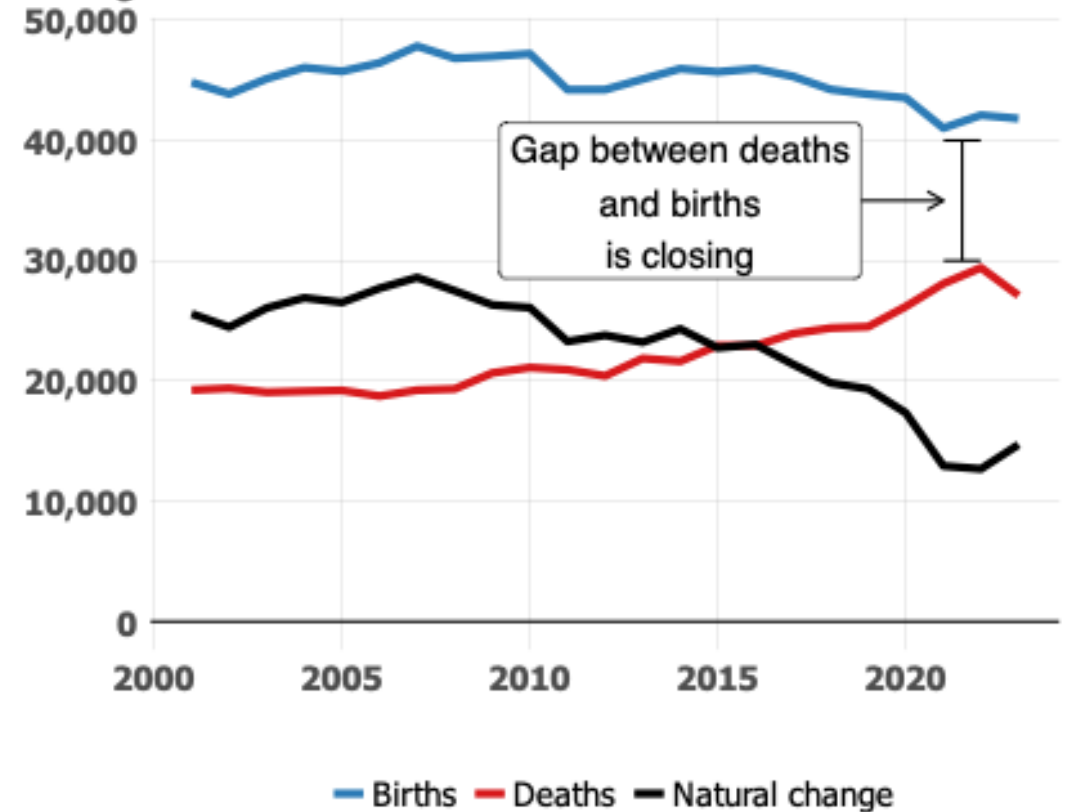
## Entirely urban county group



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS Rural-urban commuting areas

## Natural change - entirely urban counties

Entirely urban counties have increasing deaths and slightly declining births



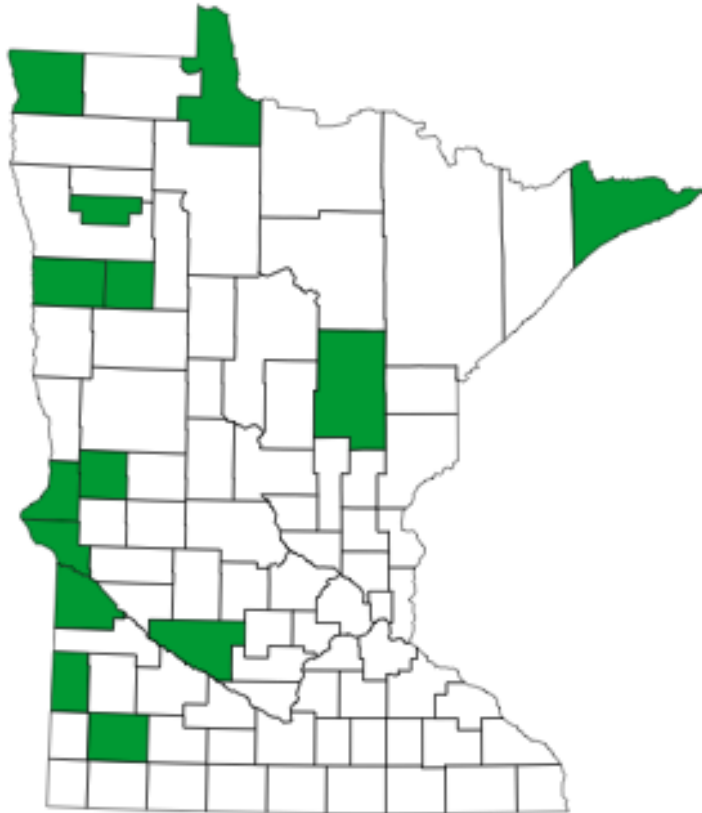
U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

# People

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A SHIFT IN MIGRATION FOR RURAL COUNTIES

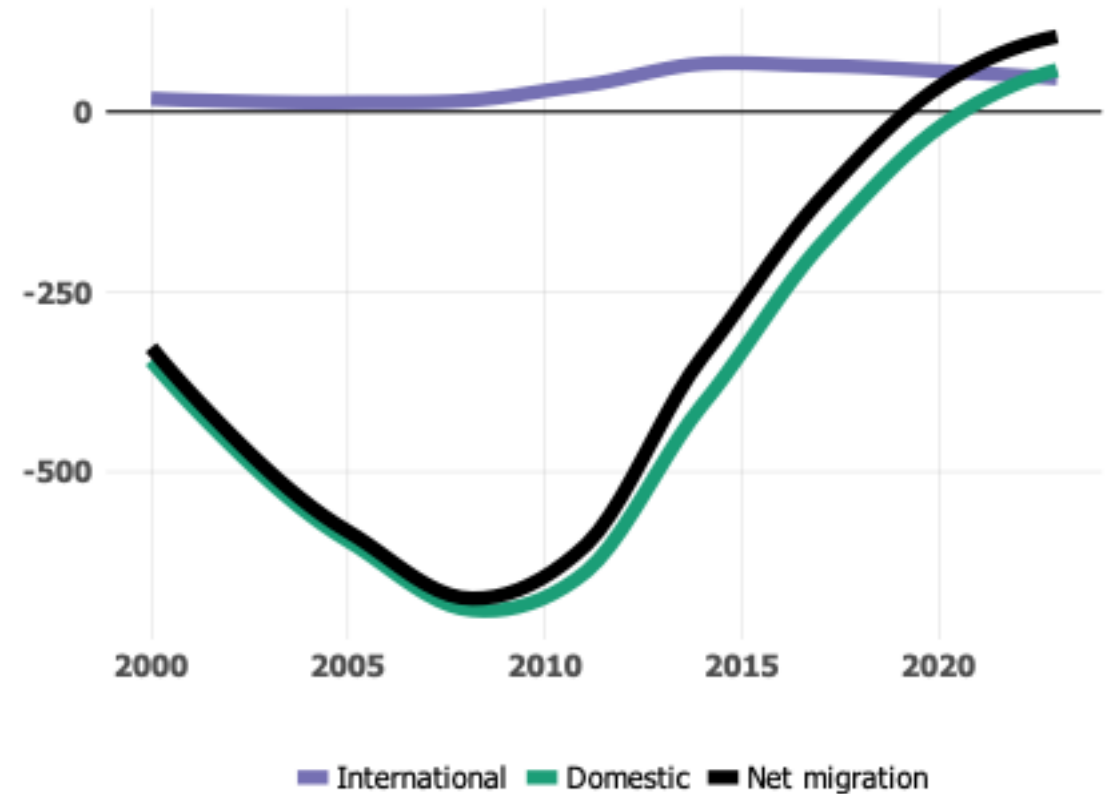
## Entirely rural county group



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS rural-urban commuting areas

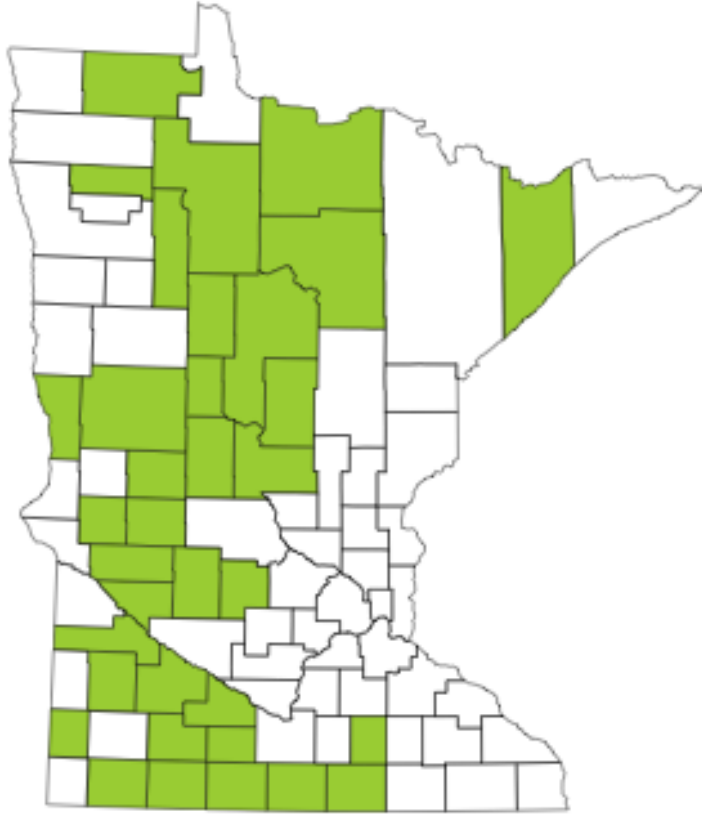
## Migration change - entirely rural counties smoothed trend line

Entirely rural counties have experienced a turn around in domestic migration



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

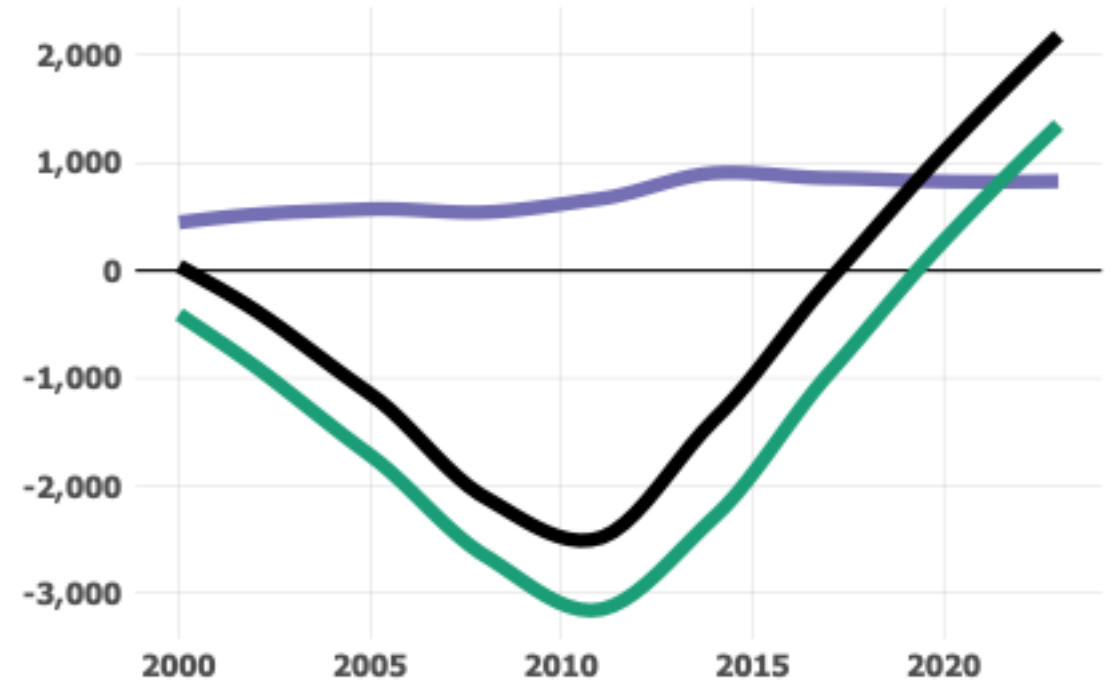
## Town/rural county group



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS rural-urban commuting areas

## Migration change - town/rural mix counties smoothed trend line

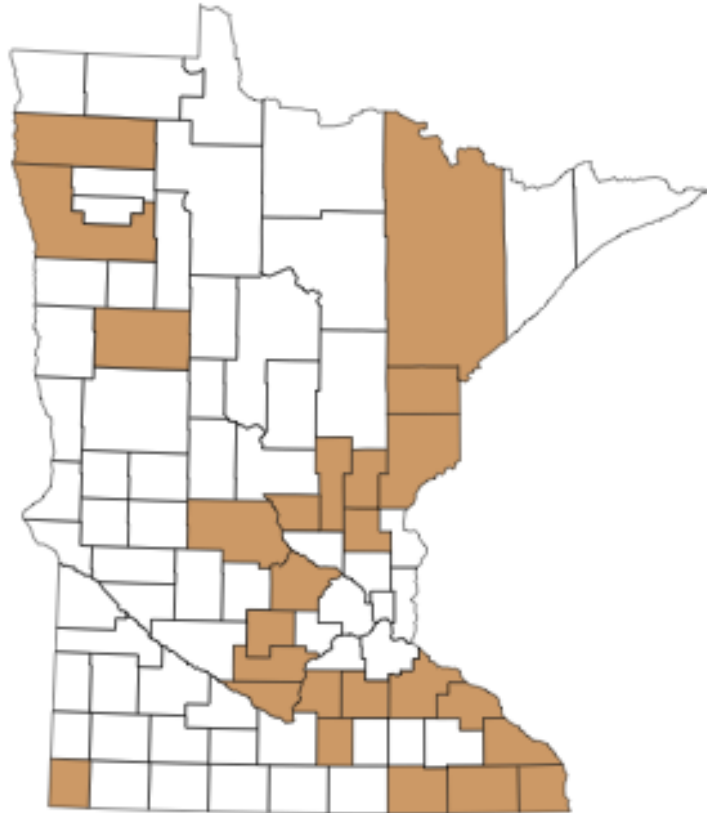
Town/rural mix counties have experienced a turn around in domestic migration



International Domestic Net migration

U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

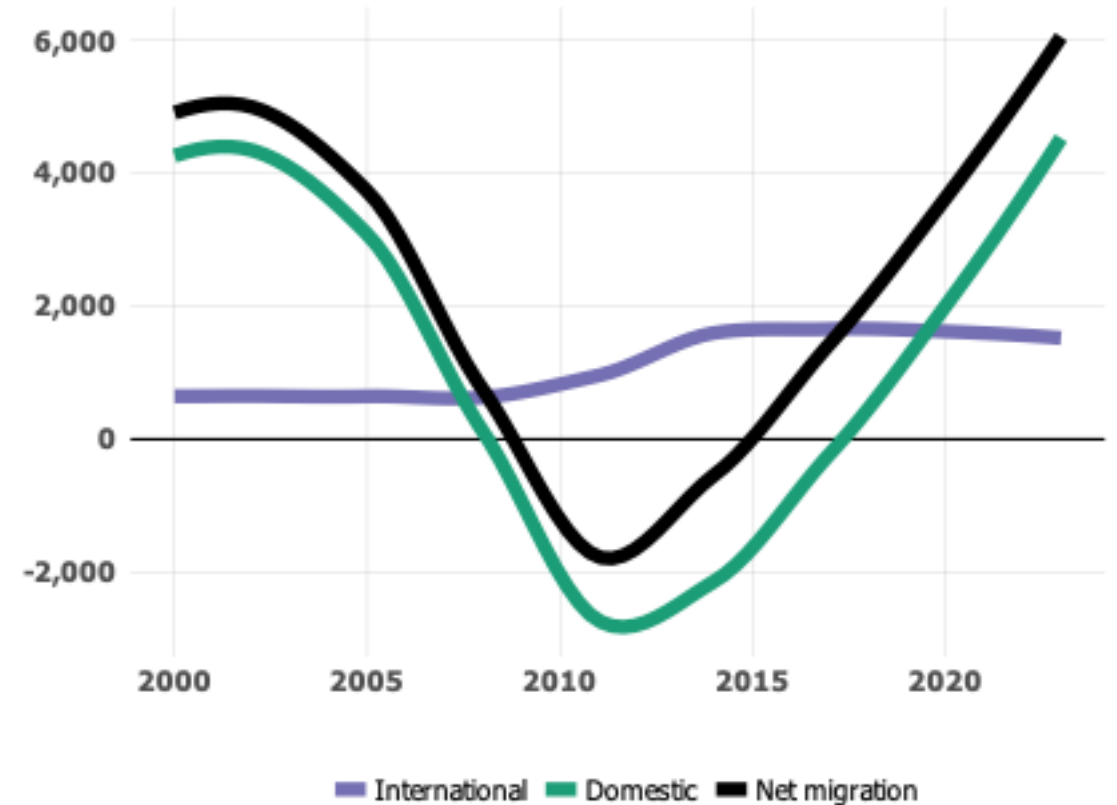
## Urban/town/rural county group



MN State Demographer & USDA-ERS rural-urban commuting areas

## Migration change - urban/town/rural mix counties smoothed trend line

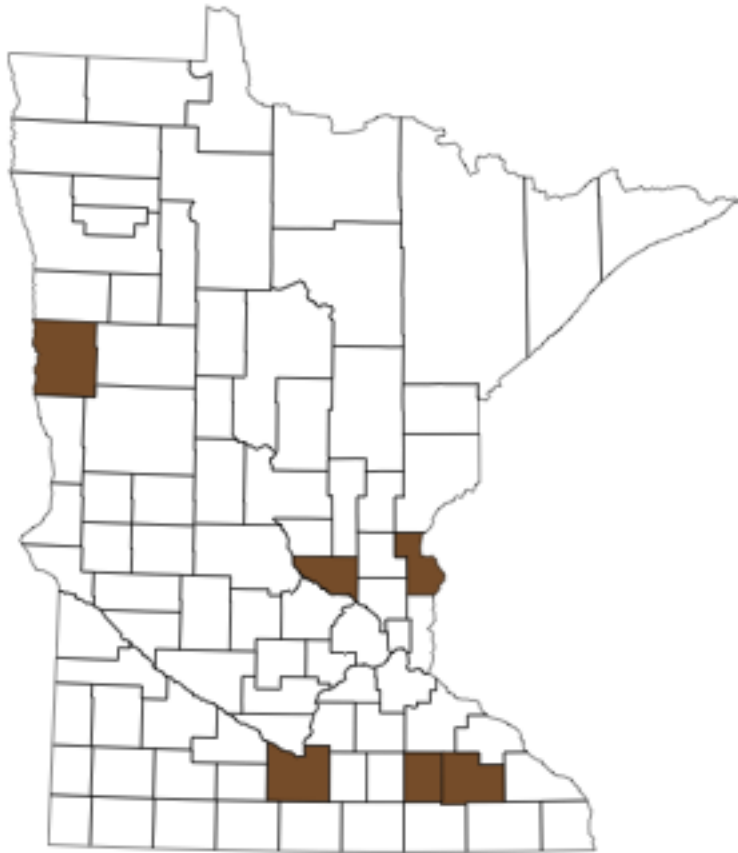
Urban/town/rural mix counties have experienced a turn around in domestic migration



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates



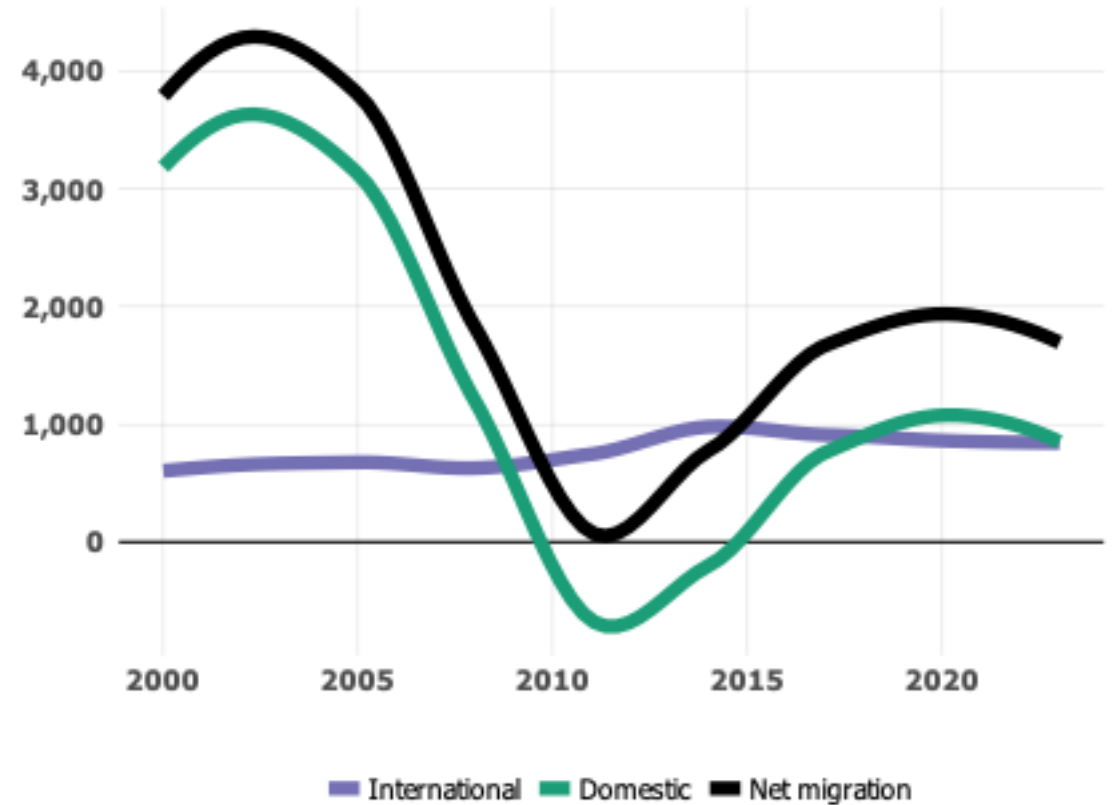
## Entirely urban counties in greater MN



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS - rural-urban commuting areas

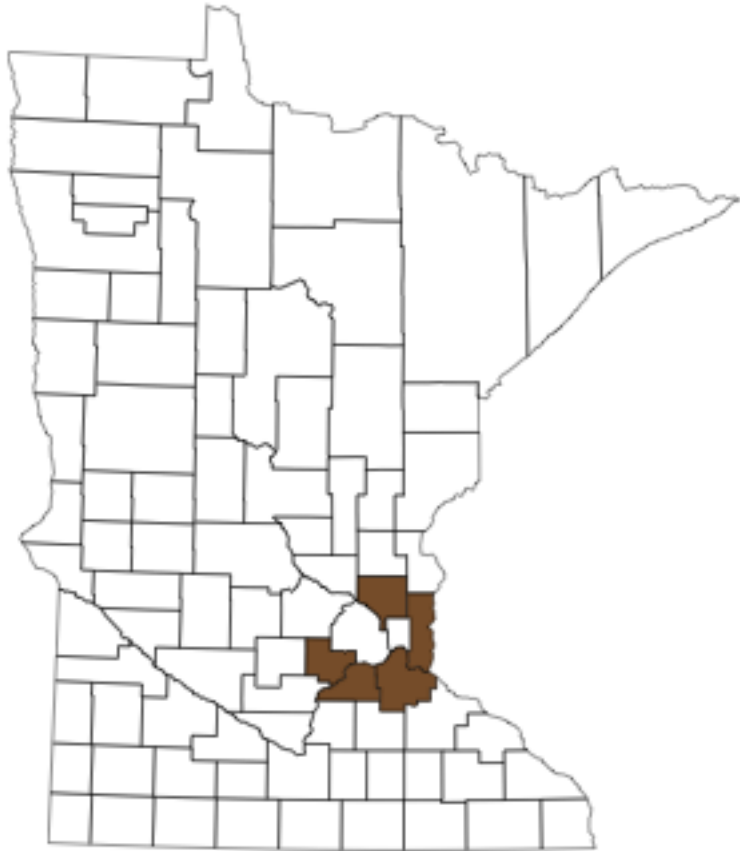
## Migration change: entirely urban - greater MN countie smoothed trend line

Entirely urban counties in greater Minnesota have experienced a turn around domestic migration



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

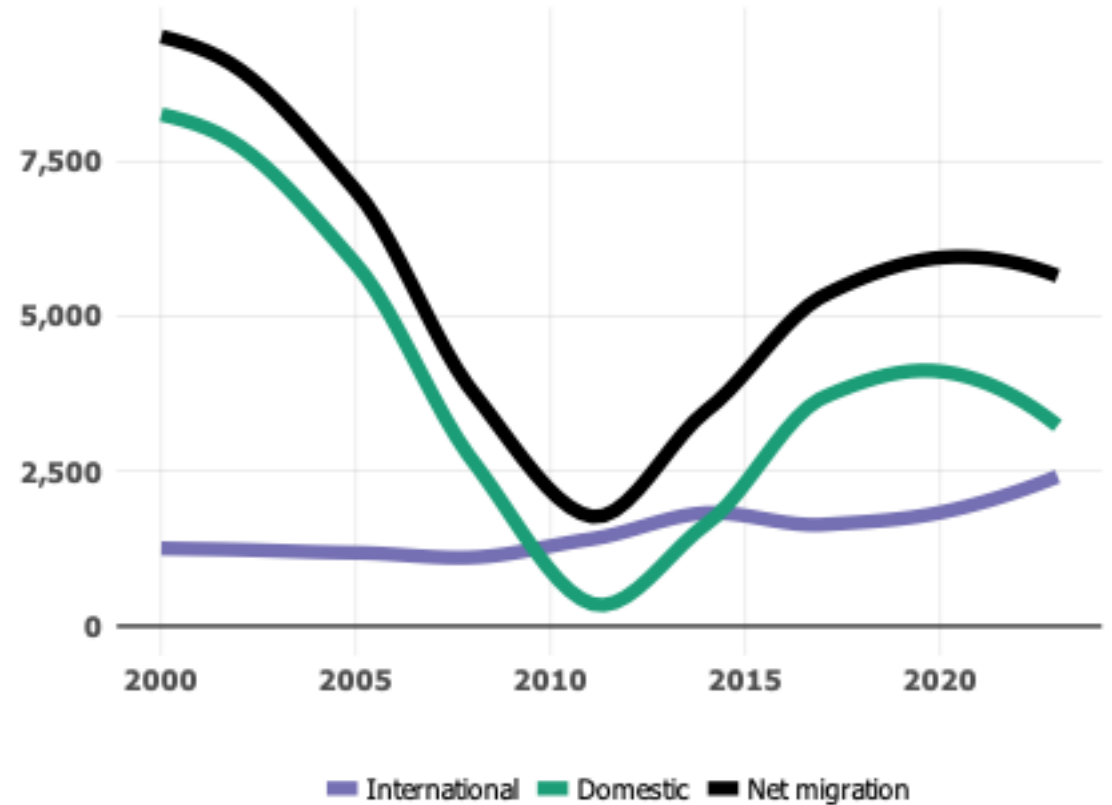
### Entirely urban counties in suburbs



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS - rural-urban commuting areas

### Migration change: entirely urban - suburban counties smoothed trend line

Entirely urban counties in the suburbs have experienced a turn around in domestic migration



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

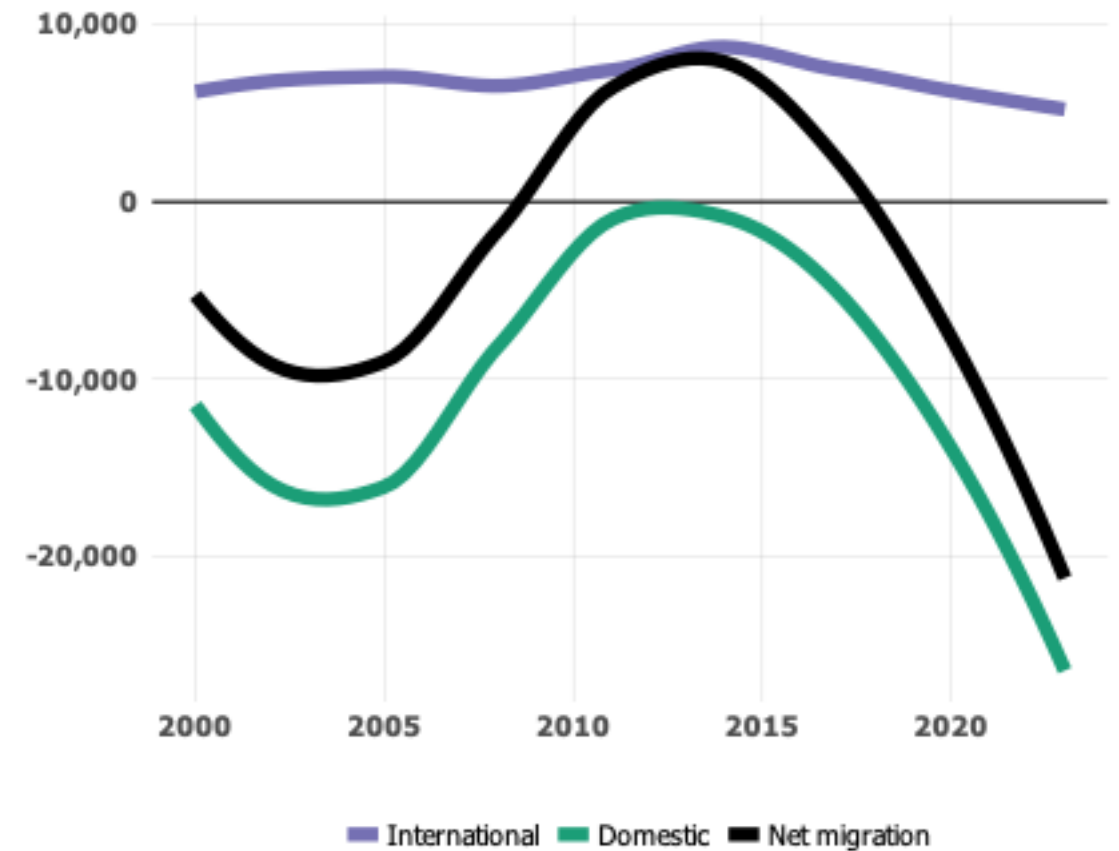
## Entirely urban - Hennepin & Ramsey



MN State Demographer & USDA ERS - rural-urban commuting areas

## Migration change: entirely urban - Hennepin and Ramsey counties - smoothed trend line

Hennepin and Ramsey counties experience net migration loss



U.S. Census Bureau - Annual Population Estimates

# People

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MORE RURAL COUNTIES EXPERIENCING POPULATION GAINS

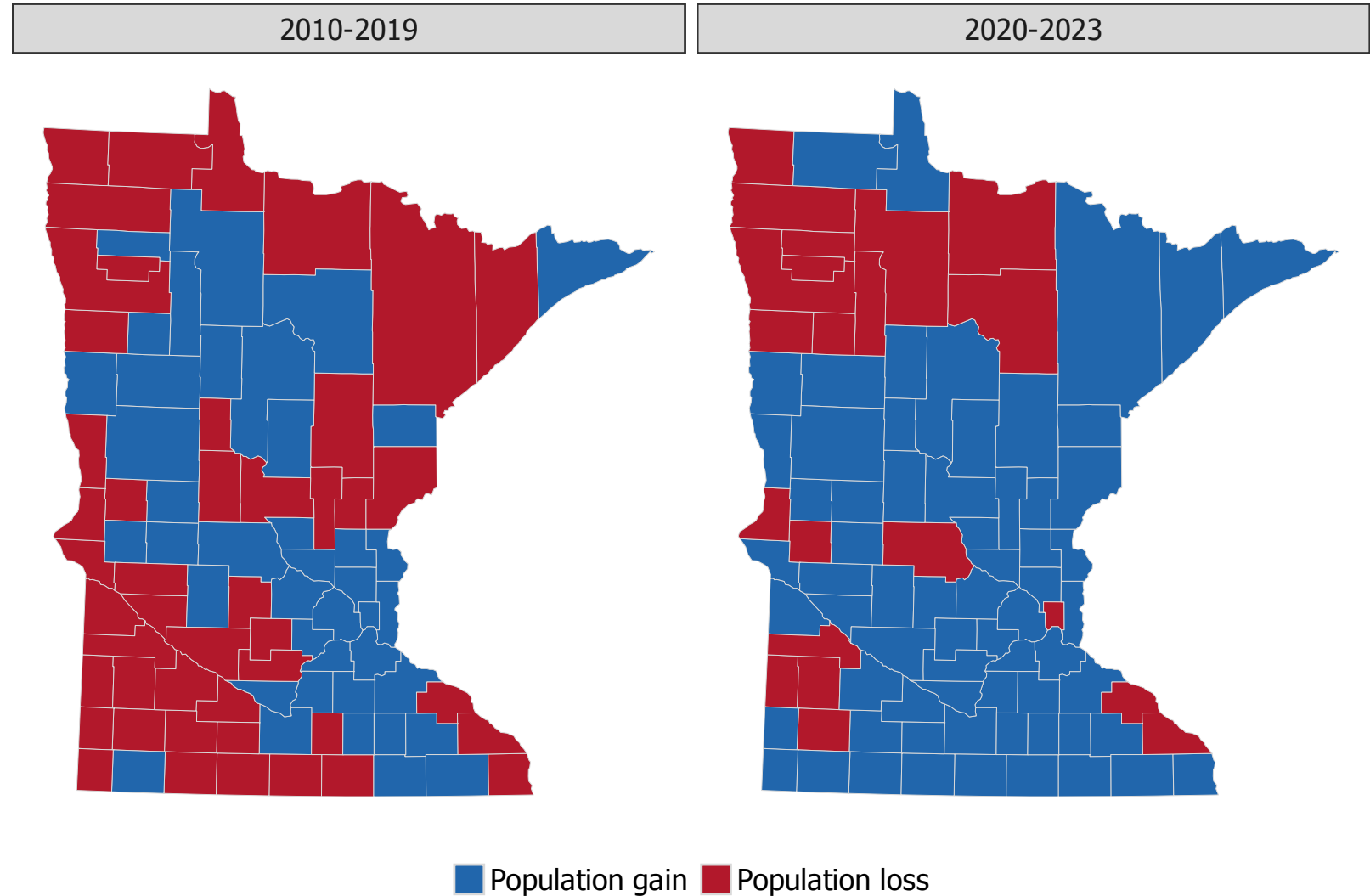
This decade has been good for rural areas so far

The changes in migration have positively impacted rural population numbers. Despite increasingly having more deaths than births, rural areas have been able to stave off population declines with more in-migration so far this decade.

In 2019, 46 counties (all rural) had a lower population than in 2010. So far this decade, only 21 counties have a lower population in 2023 than they did in 2020, and one of those counties is entirely urban (Ramsey).

## Population gain or loss last decade compared to this decade

Many more rural counties experiencing populations gains this decade compared to last decade



# Economic Vitality

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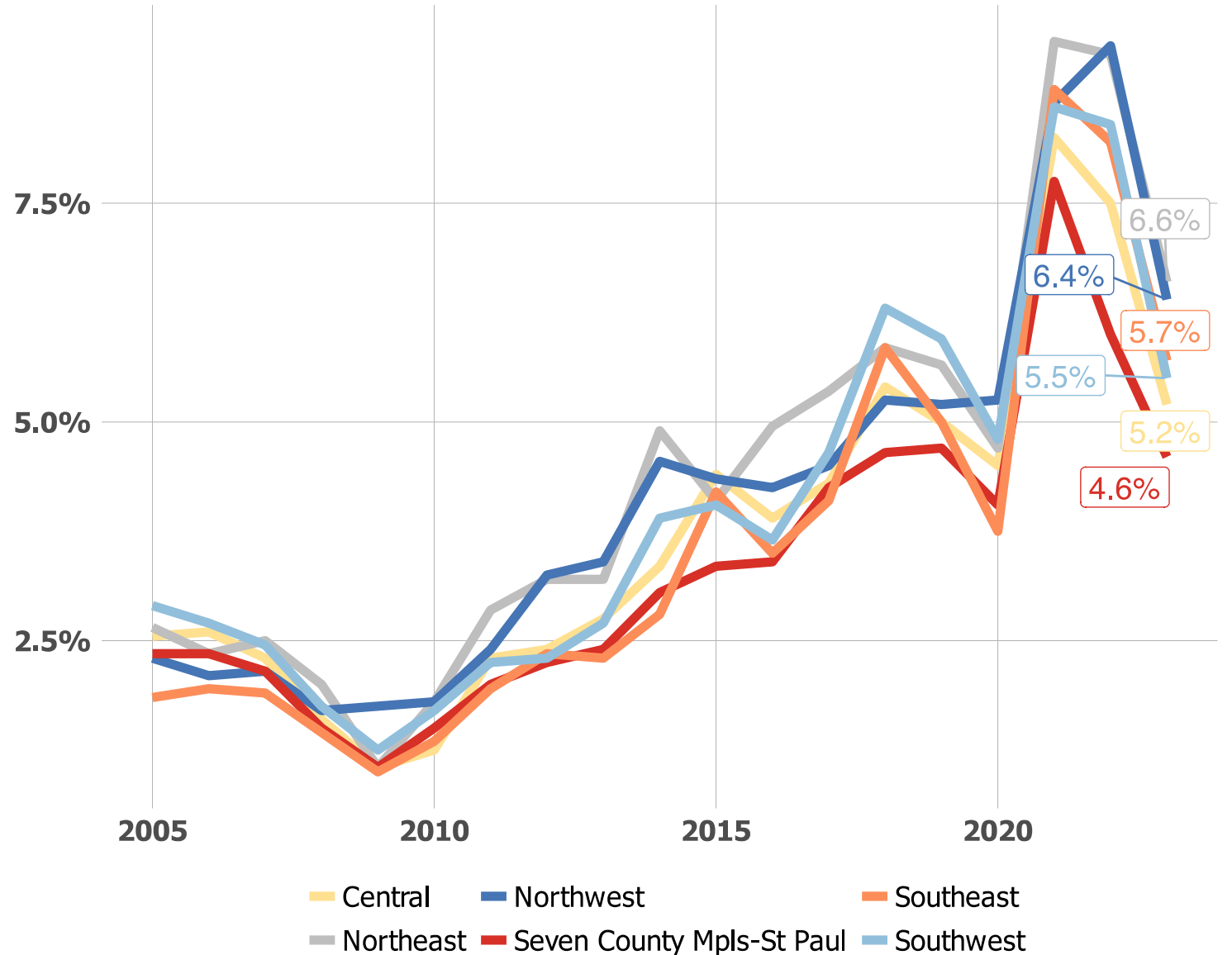
GREATER MINNESOTA FEELING PRESSURE TO FILL JOB VACANCIES

# The job vacancy rate is higher in Greater Minnesota

The job vacancy rate reflects the average quarterly number of job vacancies each year as a percentage of total jobs in the region. The higher the percentage, the more challenging it is to fill the positions. After peaking in 2021, job vacancy rates have fallen but continue to be high across all of rural Minnesota.

## Job vacancies as a percent of total employment

Job vacancies continue to be high in rural Minnesota



MN DEED - Job Vacancy Survey

# Rural Nursing Facilities – Summary of Research

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# Content



Demand for nursing beds



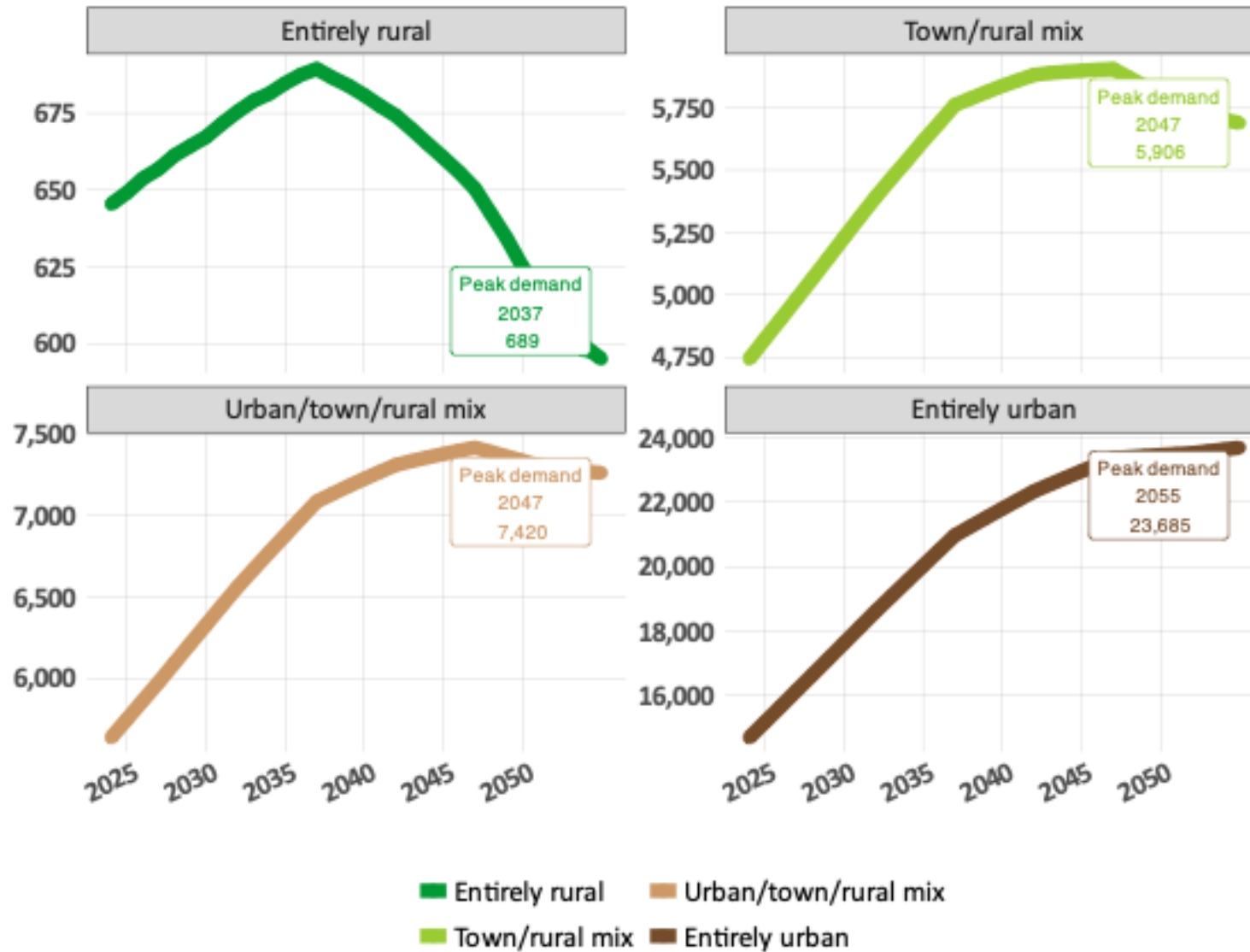
Declining capacity in nursing beds



Why is there so much decline?

## Projected demand for nursing beds among population 65+

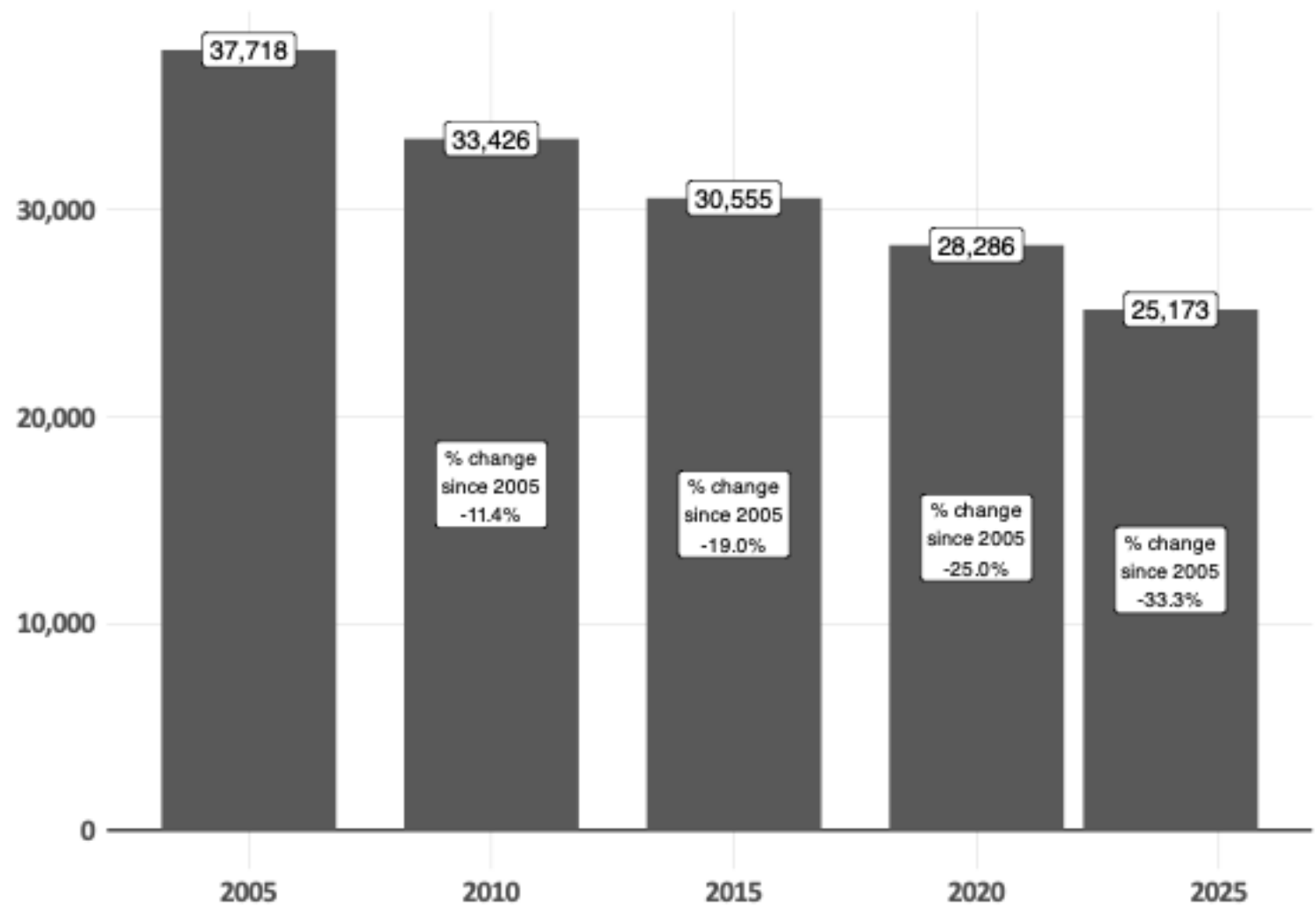
The trends in demand vary significantly by rural and urban-ness



# Demand for nursing beds

# Percent change in the number of nursing beds since 2005

The number of beds has decreased by a third since 2005

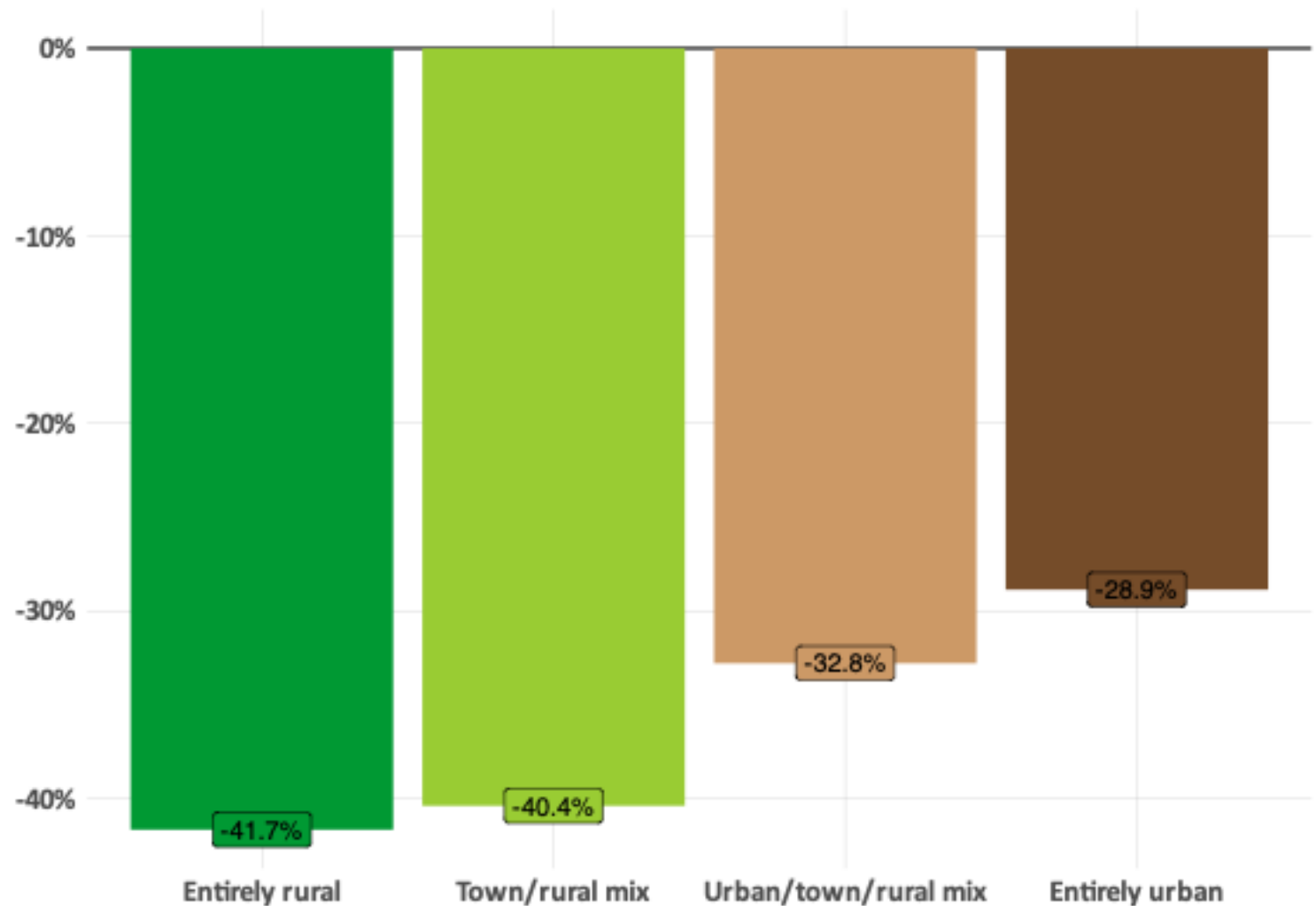


Care Providers of Minnesota; Minnesota Department of Health, Nursing Home Licensing

Decline in nursing beds - Minnesota has lost a third of it's nursing home beds

# Percent change in the number of nursing beds since 2005

The most severe declines have occurred in rural Minnesota



Care Providers of Minnesota; Minnesota Department of Health, Nursing Home Licensing

Decline in nursing beds - More severe declines in our most rural areas of MN

# Why is there so much decline? Primary reasons

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## Long term impact -

Technological, financial and policy changes allowing home-based care and assisted living to take a bigger piece of the elderly care pie, and

More recent impact -  
Workforce shortages.

# Look for future research

REMAINING  
RESILIENT IN AN  
AGING RURAL  
MINNESOTA



# Accessing mental health services in Greater MN

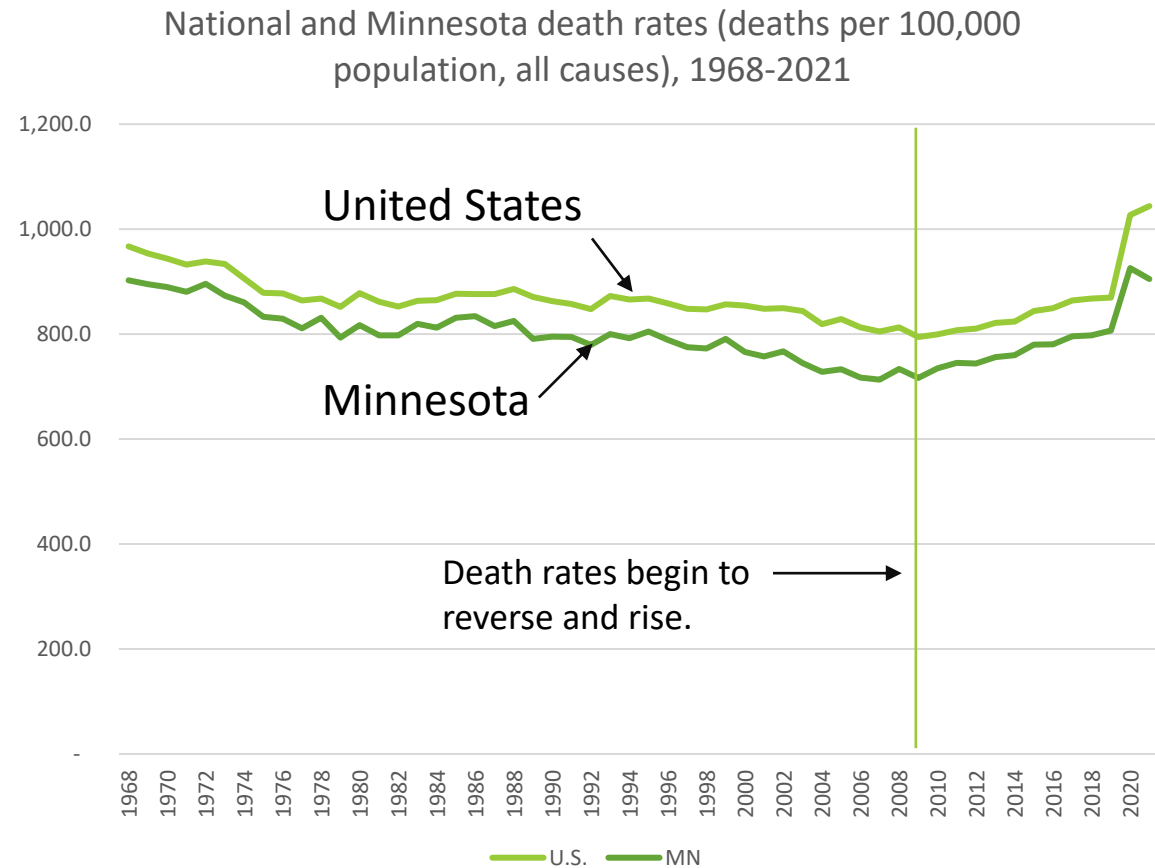
*MN House of Representatives – Agriculture Finance and Policy*

*February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025*



# Diseases and deaths of despair

- Up to 2009: The mortality rate for Americans was declining steadily.
- Around 2009: The trend reversed.
- Largely due to “diseases and deaths of despair.”

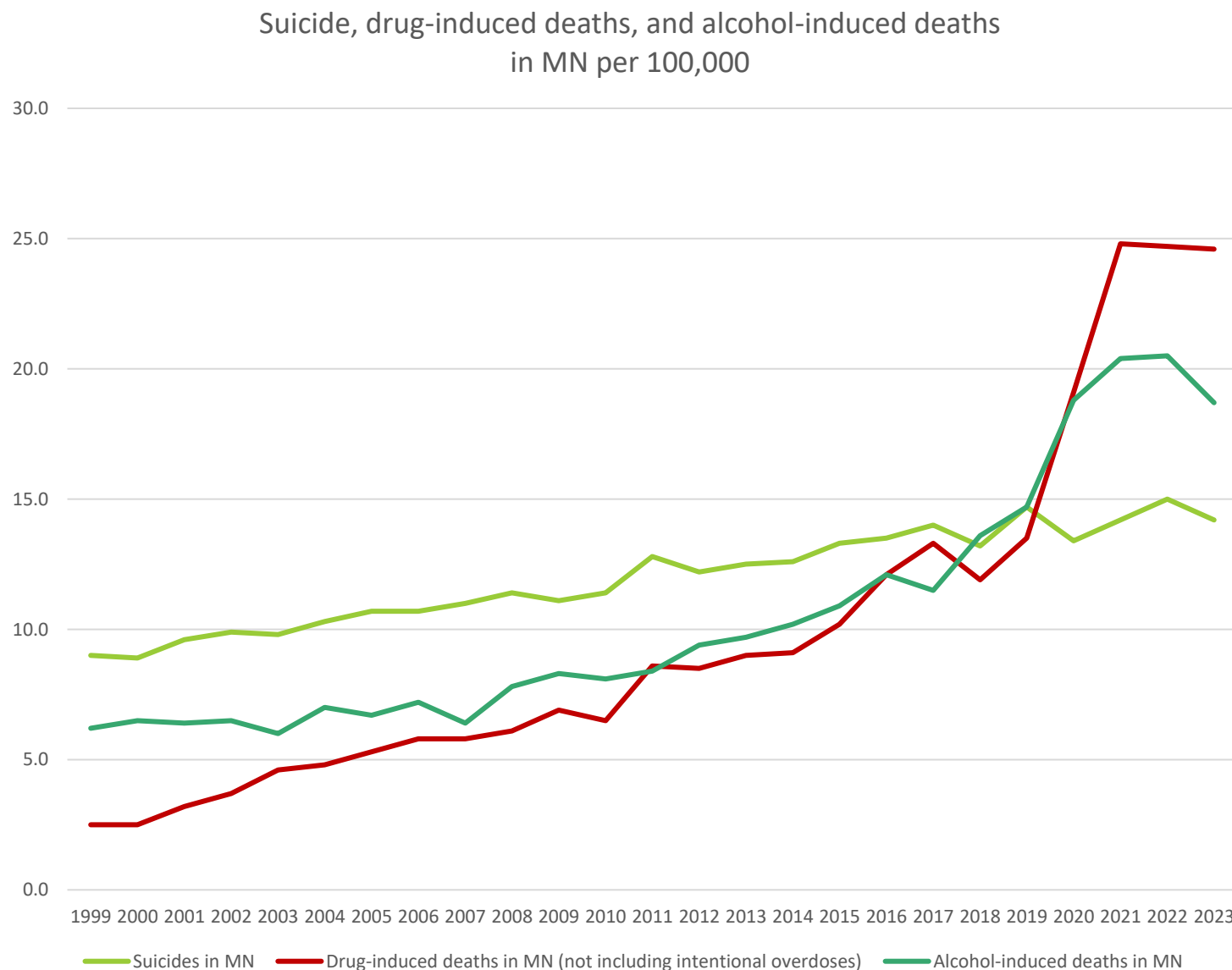




# Diseases and deaths of despair

Characterized by:

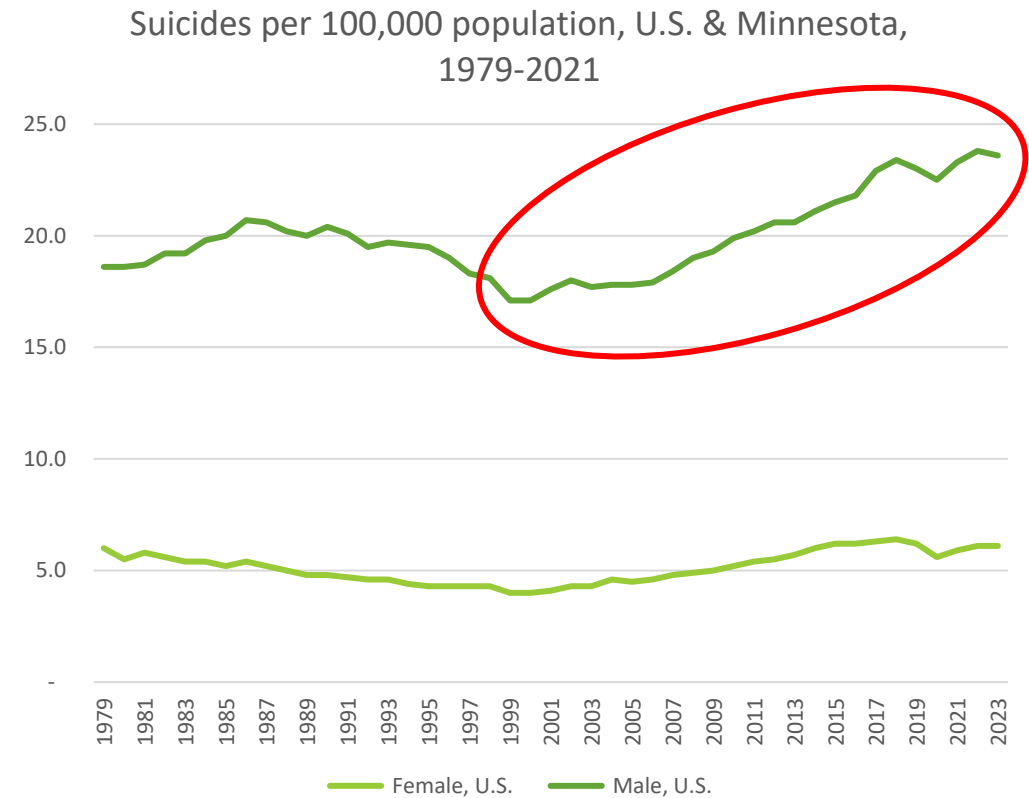
- Suicide
- Drug poisoning (including accidental overdose)
- Alcohol-related diseases



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics.

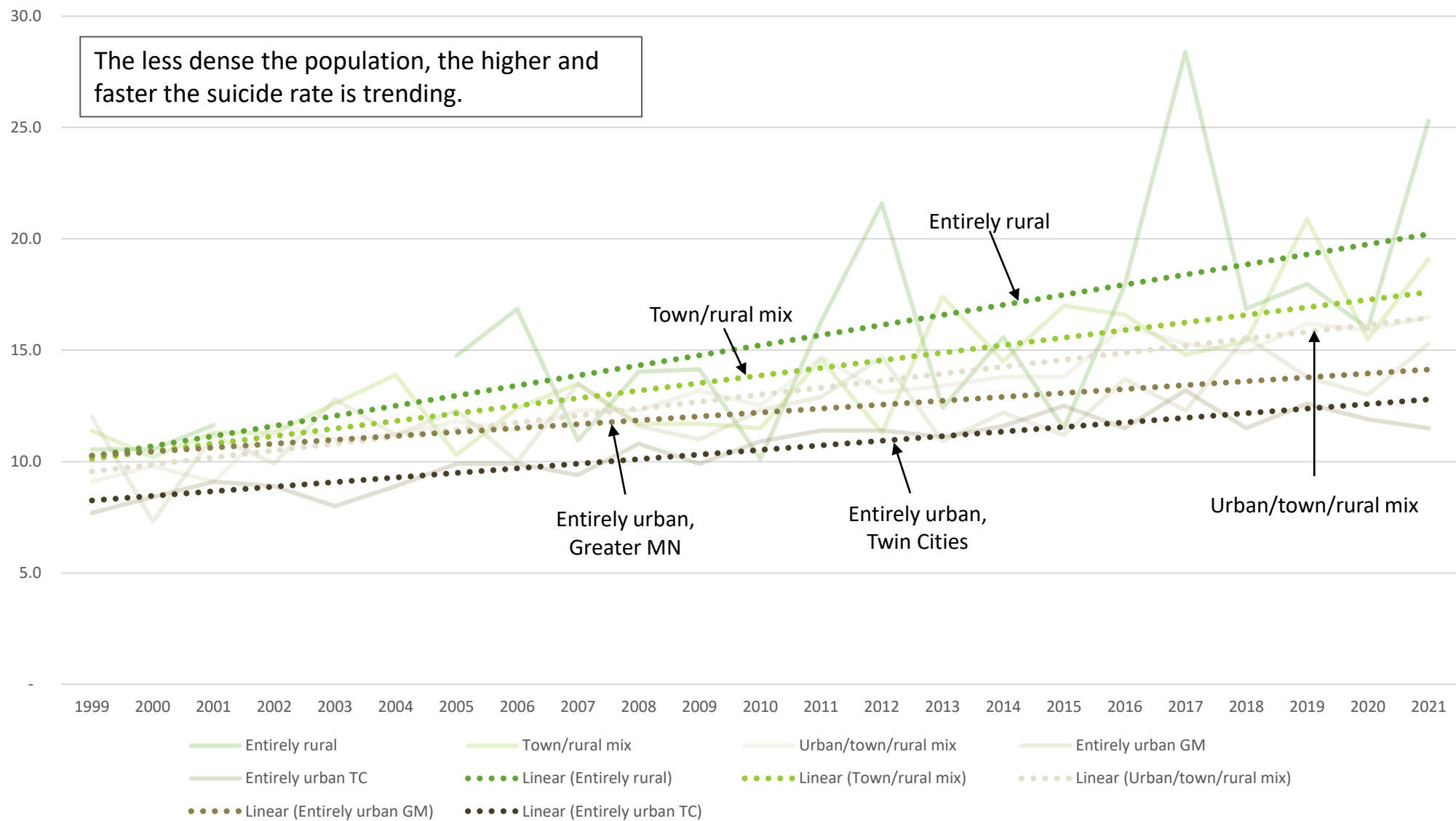
# Suicide rate since 2000

- The suicide rate began rising around 2000, then started a sharp climb around 2006.
- Research is ongoing, but social media appears to be a factor.
- Men have a higher suicide rate compared to women. Combining the two rates masks the magnitude of the rate among men.
- Women attempt more often; men tend to follow through on their attempts. The suicide rate among women can vary depending on race.

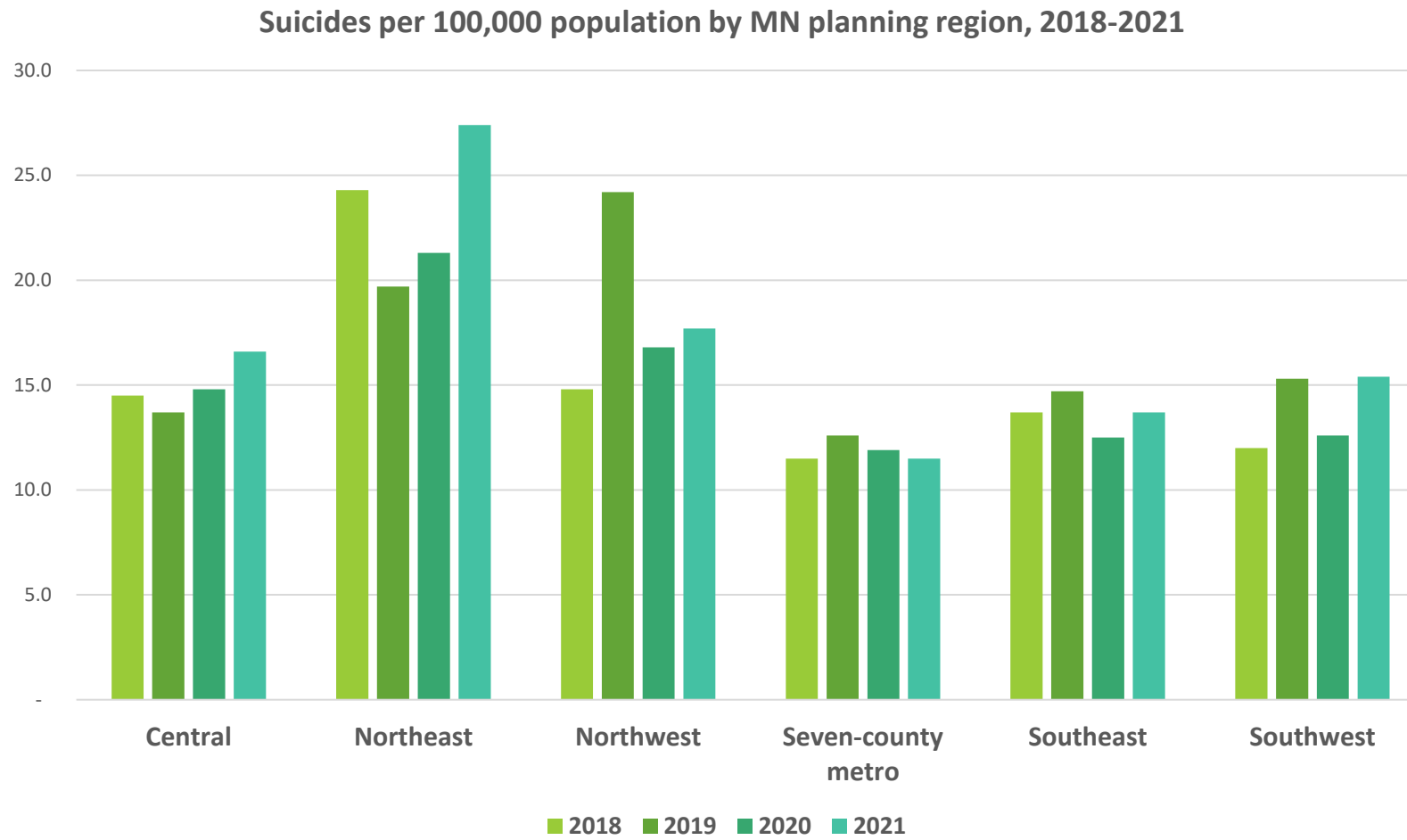


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics.

# Rates of suicide by population density in Minnesota



# Rates of suicide by geography



# Farmers

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Farmers struggle with some unique issues:

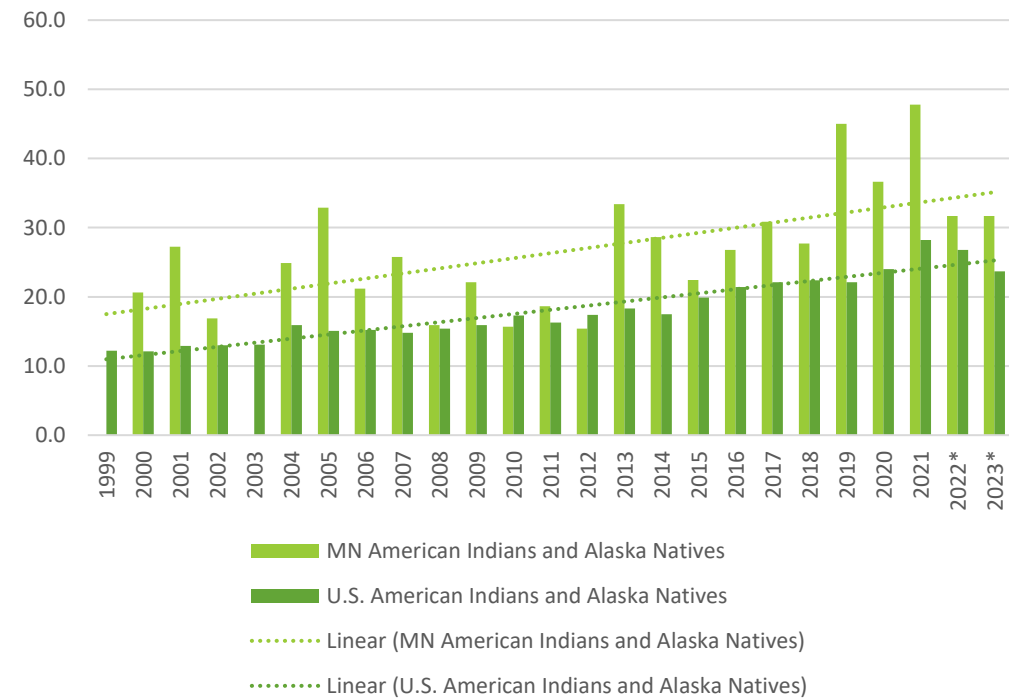
- Burden of losing the farm or not carrying on the legacy.
- Volatility of the markets and their income.
- Older farmers: losing a spouse. Younger farmers: relationship problems and divorce. In cases of divorce, the family business is at stake.
- Watching the farm community dwindle.
- Stigma around mental illness and long distances to access mental health care.



# Native Americans

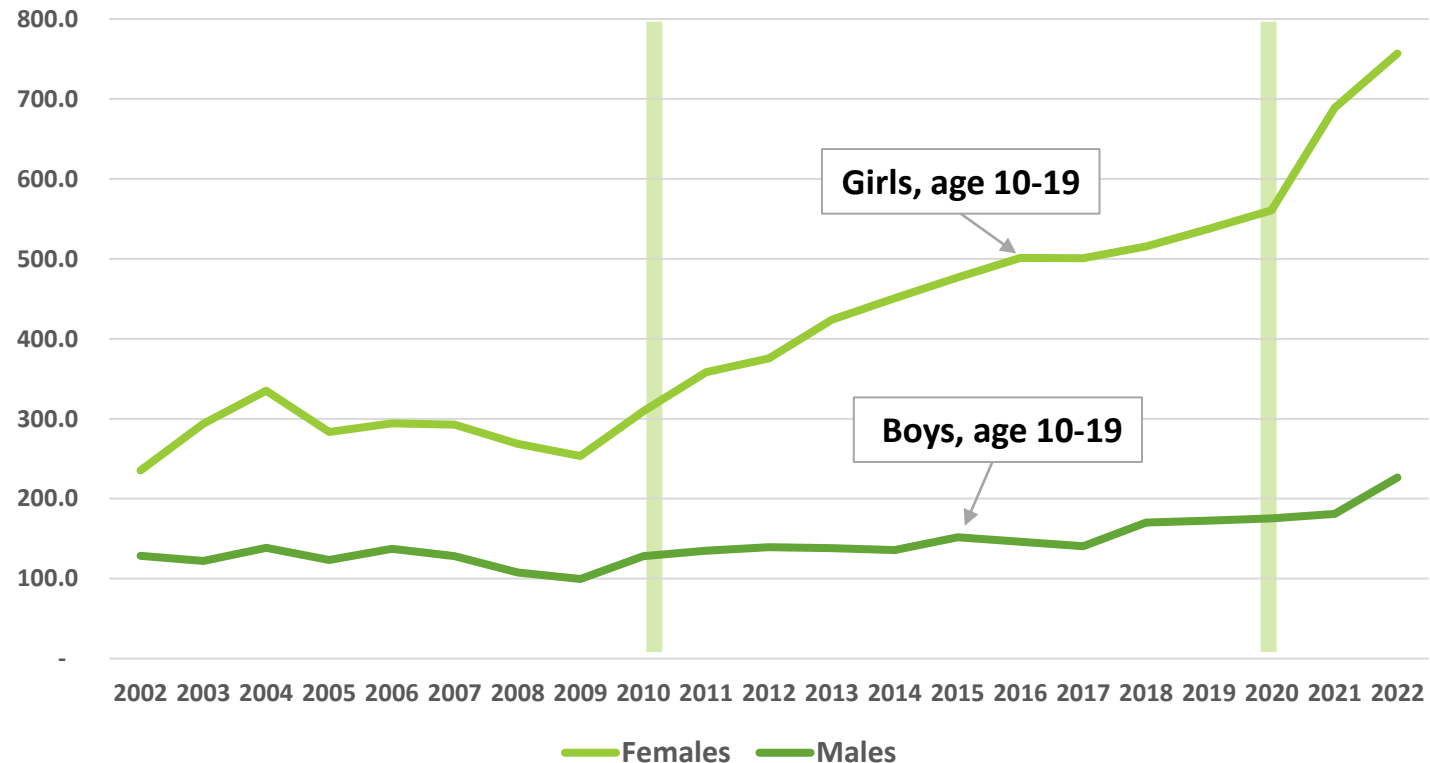
- The suicide rate among Minnesota's Native American population is noticeably higher than the national average for Native Americans.

Suicides among MN and U.S. Native Americans and Alaska Natives, 1999-2023



# Children's mental health is deteriorating

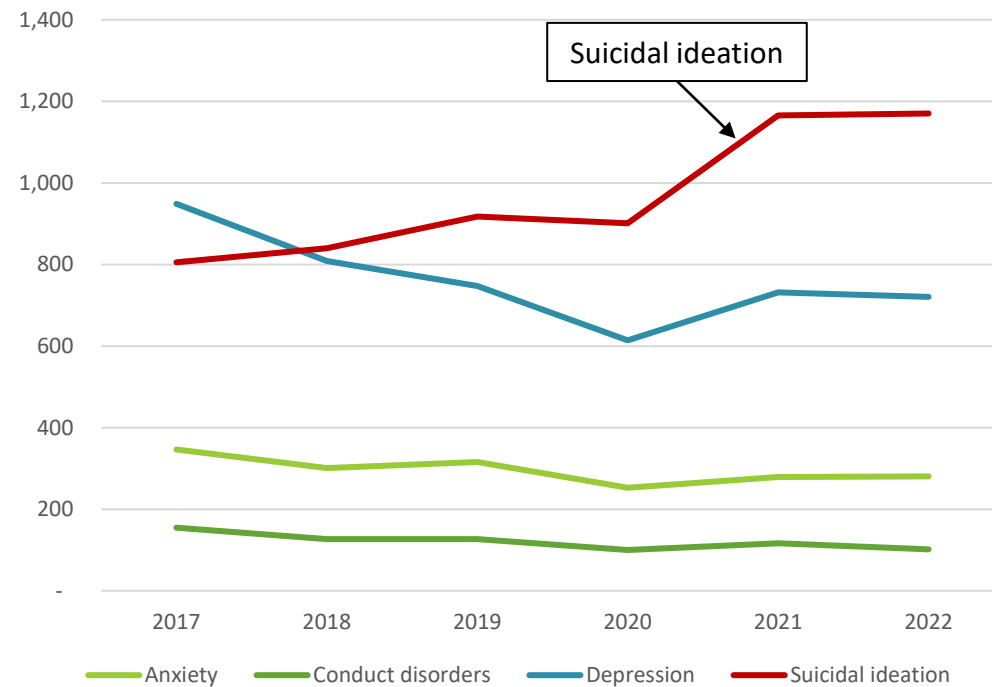
*After declining for years, reports of self-harm among children and adolescents began to rise again nationally, especially among girls.*



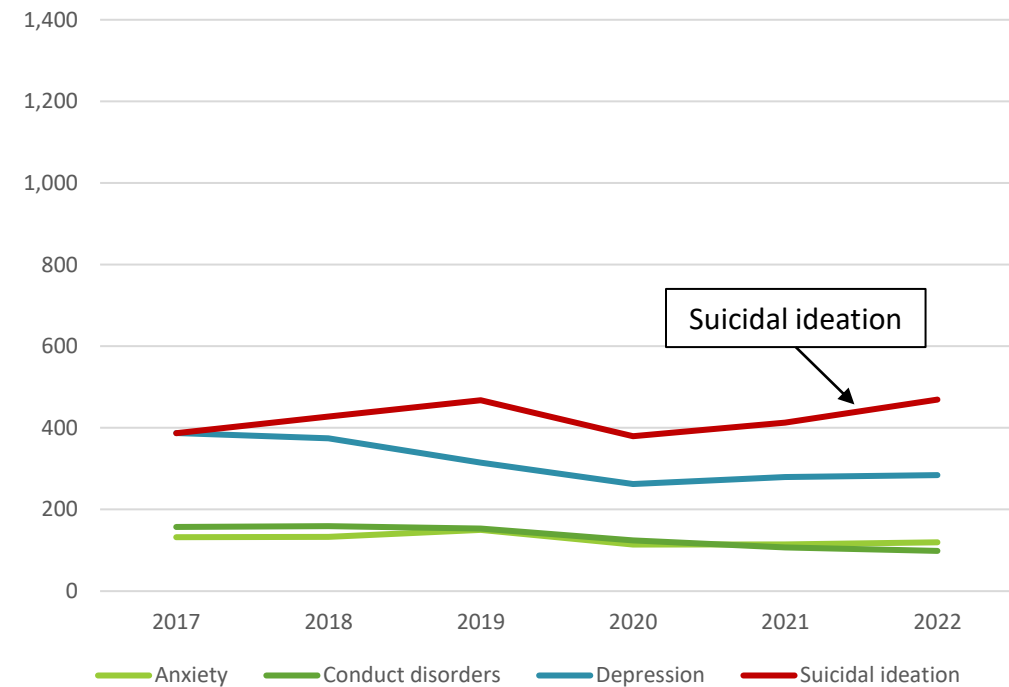
Cases of self-harm among U.S. adolescents ages 10-19, per 100,000, 2002-2022.  
Source: Centers for Disease Control.

# Emergency room visits

Primary reason for emergency room visits  
for Minnesota **girls** ages 12-17, 2017-2023,  
per 100,000



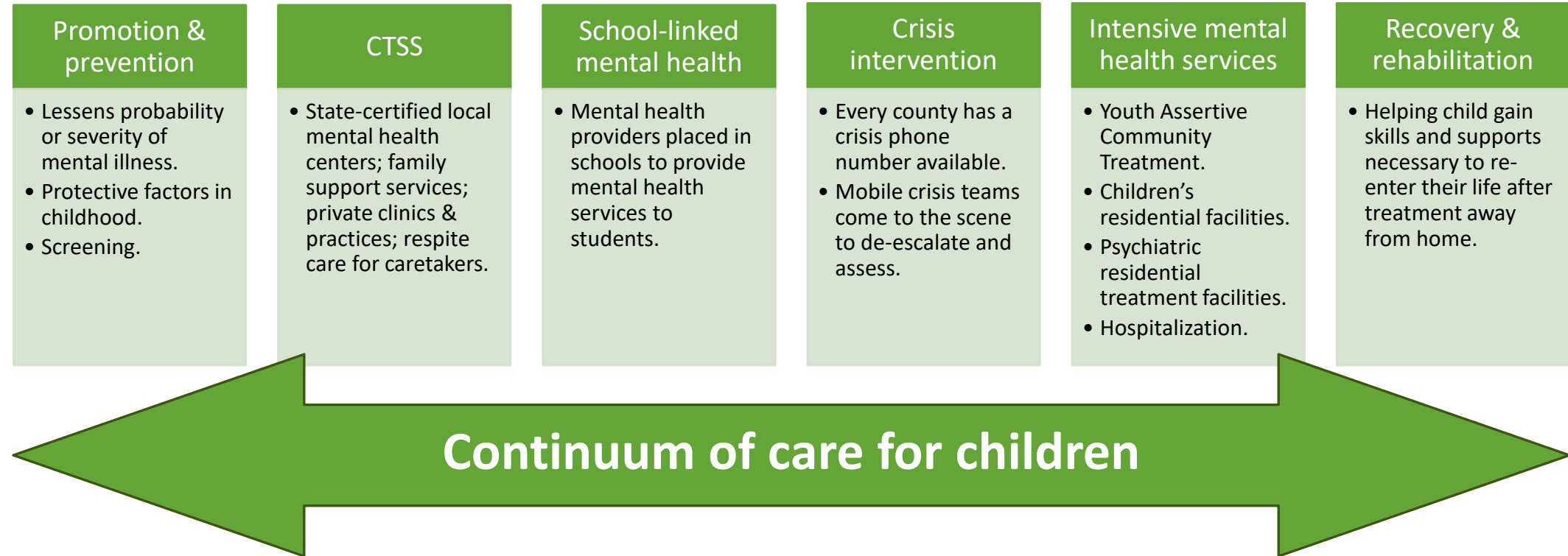
Primary reason for emergency room visits  
for Minnesota **boys** ages 12-17, 2017-2023,  
per 100,000



*Change in the number of emergency room visits statewide by adolescents ages 12-17 per 100,000 population for four major groups of mental health issues. Visits where anxiety, conduct disorders, and depression were listed as the primary reason appear to decline between 2017 and 2023, but it may only be because visits where the primary issue given was suicidal ideation saw a distinct jump even before 2020, especially for girls. In these cases, the other disorders may be present, just not the primary reason for the visit. Data source: Minnesota Hospital Association, Centers for Disease Control.*



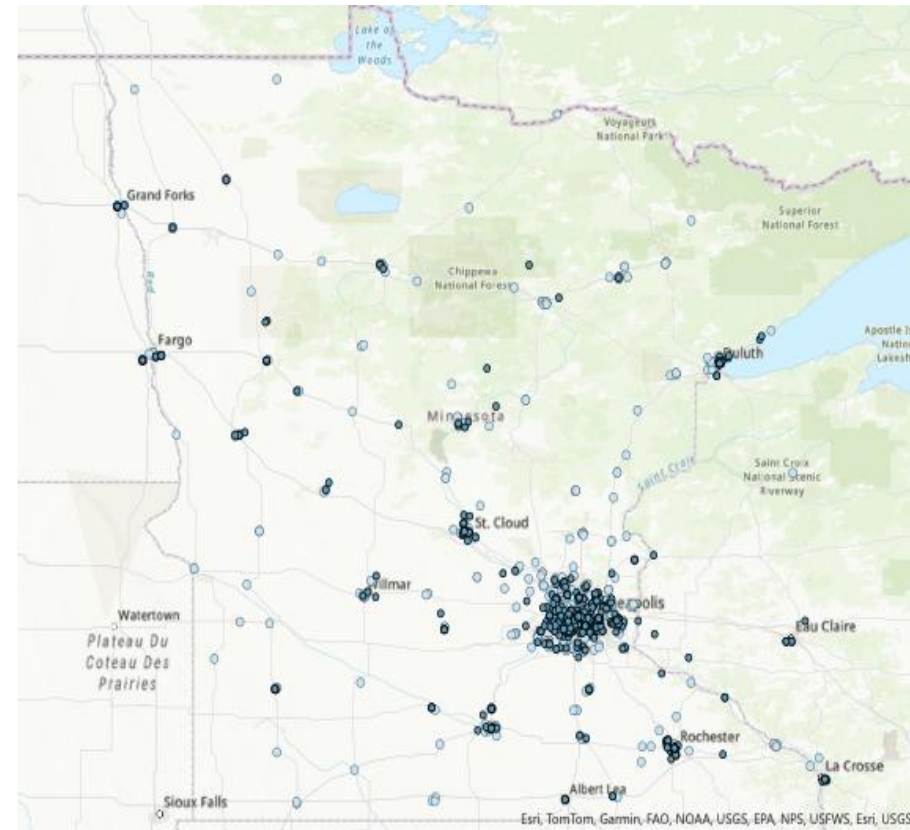
# Early intervention is key



Adapted from: [“Children’s Mental Health Inventory and Benefit-Cost Analysis.”](#)  
Results First, MN Management & Budget, January 2019.

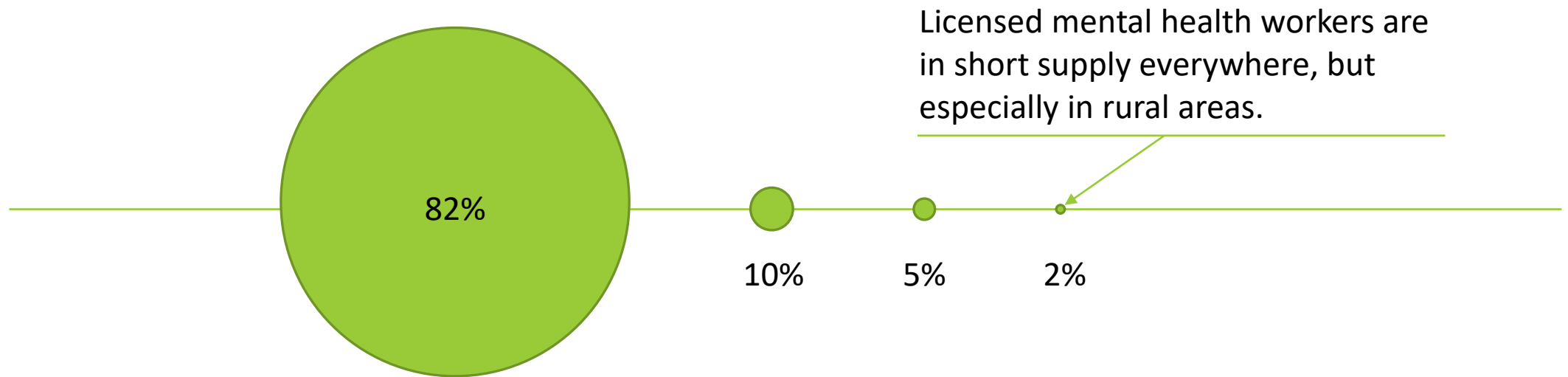
# Workforce shortage

- A distinct shortage of mental health workforce in rural areas.
- Many are retiring. Almost 60% of mental health workers/providers are over age 55.
- Difficulty recruiting people into the field.
- Difficulty getting people licensed after graduation.
- Difficulty recruiting people to rural areas.



Location of psychiatrists and advanced psychiatric registered nurses, 2024.  
MN Department of Health.

# Where are all the counselors?



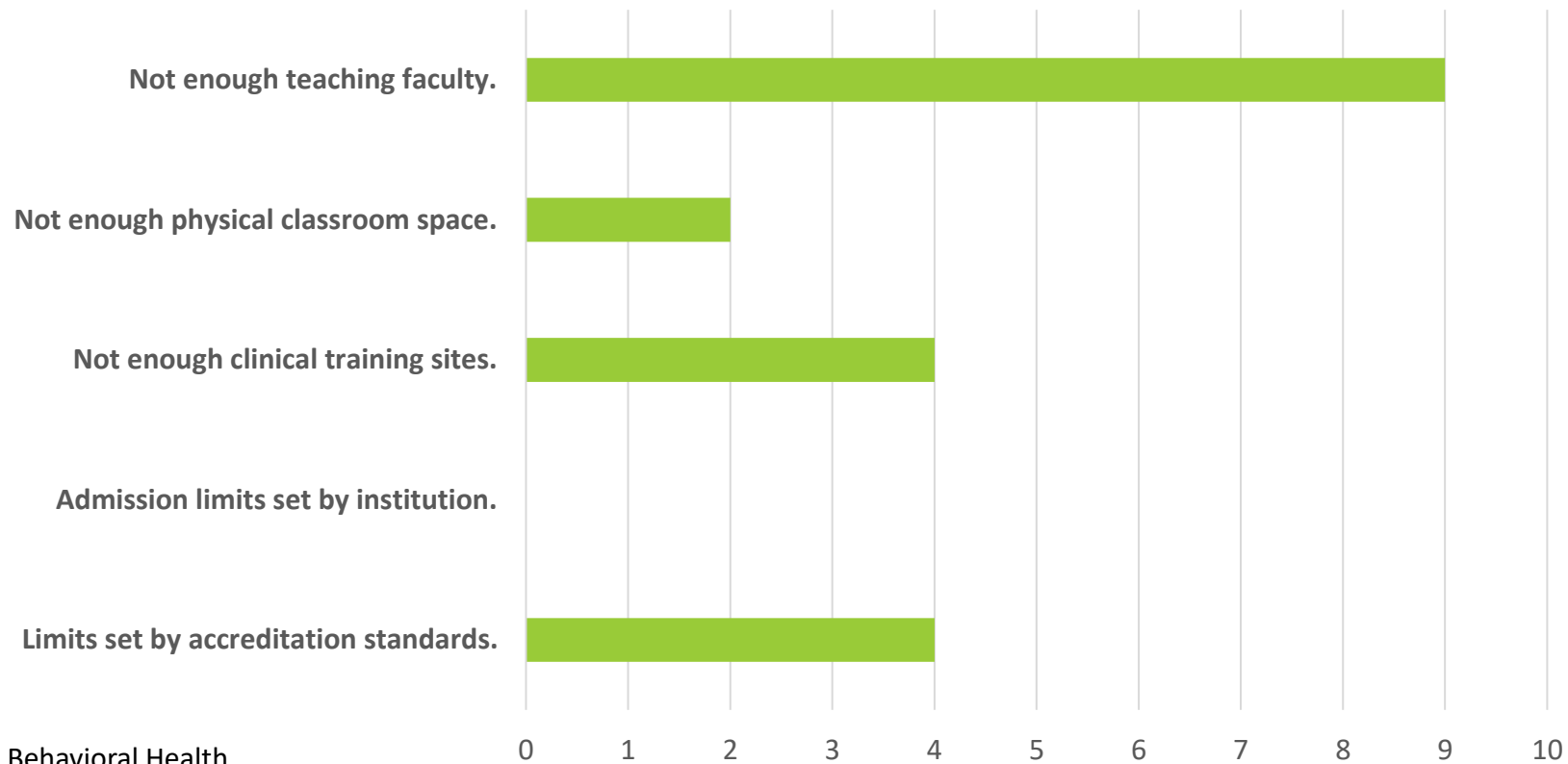
Metropolitan	Micropolitan	Small town	Isolated rural
One licensed mental health professional for every 197 residents.	1:258	1:306	1:741

**Note:** About 22% of the total licensed mental health professionals did not indicate a location or live out of state but are licensed in MN and therefore aren't included in this calculation.

MN Department of Health, 2022

# Higher ed doesn't have enough faculty

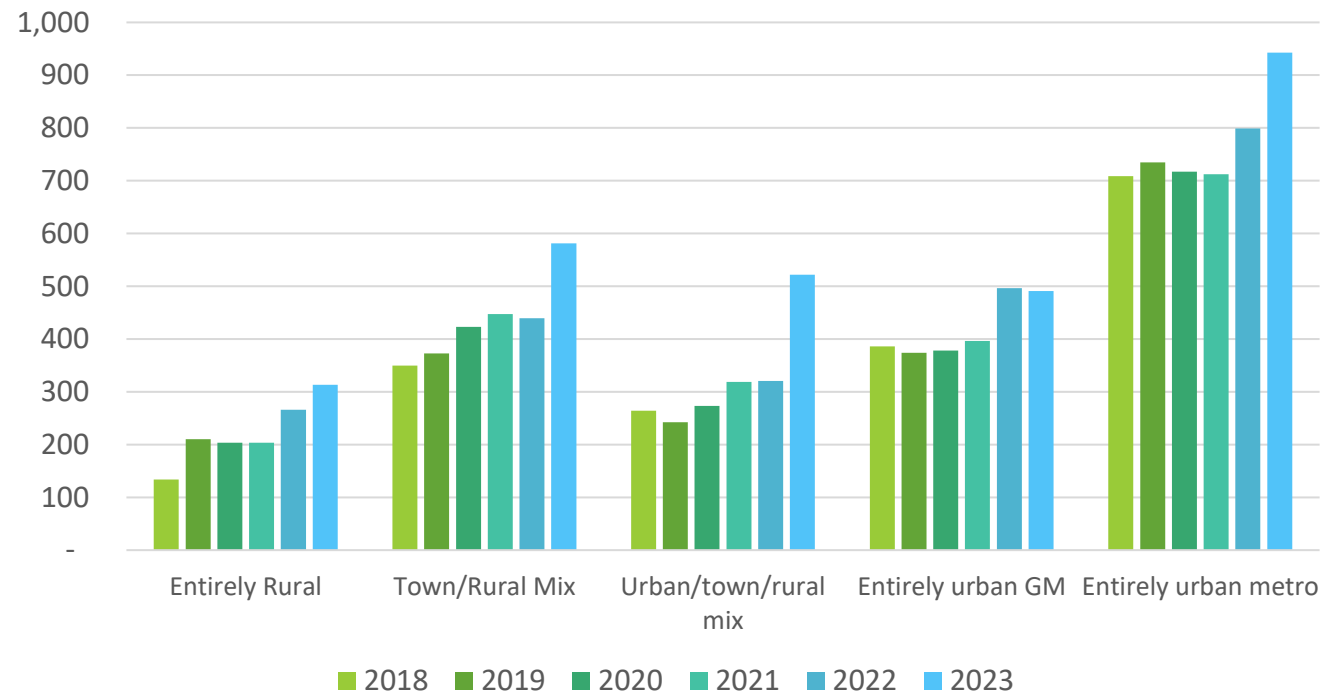
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Center for Rural Behavioral Health,  
Minnesota State University, Mankato

# 988 mental health line

988 usage per 100,000 population, by population density, 2018-2023



Data: Vibrant Emotional Health; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

○ A caveat: Dataset does not include calls made by residents with out-of-state cell phone numbers.

\* The suicide call line switched to the new 988 number on July 1, 2022.



“What can we do right now?”

# Suggested actions

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- Long term: Workforce
  - Help students afford programs, especially students from rural areas.
  - Help colleges and universities afford to take on more students.
  - Understand why graduates are not getting licensed.
  - Mental health is one of the lowest-paid fields among licensed healthcare providers, disincentivizes students.
  - Help rural clinics afford to offer internships. Students tend to stay where they've interned.
- Short term: Mental health for adults & children:
  - Learn about what mental health and mental illness are and are not. Stigma and fear keep people from seeking help.
  - Therapists in schools and in primary care clinics are showing promise, bringing treatment closer to kids and families, especially in rural areas.



Thank you!





# Recent research

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Rural Business  
Succession and  
Sale: Barriers  
and  
Opportunities



The declining  
capacity of  
nursing facility  
care in rural  
Minnesota



The journey to  
meaningful  
workforce  
participation  
among  
graduates in SW  
Minnesota



The suicide  
epidemic in rural  
Minnesota: How  
we got here and  
how we move  
forward

## Upcoming research

Changing migration trends in rural Minnesota

Pay parity regulations for mental health services vs. physical health services

Understanding differences in elder care services in rural Minnesota vs. Metro



Thank you!

