Spatial Patterns of Work, Poverty, & Safety Net Provision in the U.S.

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Abstract

Problems of poverty and inequality in the next thirty years will be powerfully shaped by recent spatial changes in need and hardship across America. Poverty problems have become more acute in urban, suburban, and rural communities over the last thirty years, with particularly sharp increases in suburban areas nationwide. The Great Recession and the sluggish nature of labor market growth during the economic recovery that followed have hardened these spatial trends in poverty. The challenges of poverty and joblessness will confront all levels of government and all types of communities – urban, suburban, and rural – for years to come. While it remains the case that a more robust set of public and private safety net programs exists in the U.S. today that at any point in history, many programs of assistance vary widely from place to place. As a result, we should be concerned with gaps in safety net provision across place and with how key programs of assistance have responded (or not responded) to rising need in different geographic locations around the country. This final research report for the US2050 Initiative presents descriptive analyses of census and safety net program data to better orient future thinking to the spatial variation in poverty, work, and safety net provision that will affect how well policy can tackle hardship and inequality in the coming decades. This report details several key findings:

- Today, there are more people living in poverty and in deep poverty in the suburbs of our largest cities than in cities themselves.
- Poverty rates rest near historic highs in urban and rural areas, remaining highly concentrated and persistent in many urban and rural places. At the same time concentrated poverty has become much more commonplace in suburban America.
- Changes in the geography of poverty reflect a durable new normal that will persist for several decades, as the economic recovery of the last decade has not altered the relative distribution of poverty between cities, suburbs, and rural communities.
- Federally funded and regulated safety net programs, such as the EITC and SNAP, are responsive temporally and spatially to trends in poverty, while also providing consistent levels of assistance across geography.
- A stronger federal role in the Medicaid program through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid's ability to respond to rising numbers of low-income individuals has led coverage to expand by about 20 percent in metropolitan areas since 2012.
- Nonprofit human services – critical elements of the safety net, but also heavily reliant on local capacity – also are more varied in their presence and responsiveness to poverty across different types of geography. It is estimated that roughly $60 billion in new nonprofit human service spending properly targeted would close resource gaps between urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Deeper descriptive understanding of spatial variation in demographic trends and safety net provision is relevant to researchers, policymakers, and charitable philanthropy alike. Insight into recent spatial trends in joblessness and poverty across the geographic landscape identifies a new set of challenges that will confront local communities, states, and the federal government in the coming decades. Accurate understanding of spatial trends in poverty by place and race also help to challenge popular misconceptions about who is poor and where poverty is located. Debates about future changes to expand, contract, or reform existing safety net

programs should be mindful of how different policy tools are differently responsive to poverty across place. Shifting spatial trends in poverty and work also raise new questions that will inform research agendas for social science and policy research communities in the years to come. Moreover, findings from this project should be relevant to strategic thinking in charitable philanthropy about pathways for enhancing the presence and capacity of nonprofit human service organizations. Apart from how philanthropy can deploy existing funding more effectively and mobilize new resources, charitable nonprofits and foundations can work more intentionally to cultivate the next generation of indigenous community leaders in high-need, underserved areas.

Introduction[1]

Finding viable pathways to reduce poverty and narrow income inequality will be a central challenge for U.S. government and philanthropy in the next three decades. The nature of these challenges, as well as characteristics of the policy tools available, vary widely by place in a manner that runs counter to popular conceptions and contemporary policy debate. Most discussion of poverty problems, however, overlooks the changing geography of poverty and the limitations on the antipoverty safety net's ability to respond to need across different local geographic areas. Nevertheless, the ability of federal, state, and local governments to work with charitable philanthropy to generate impactful solutions will hinge on accurate understandings of the spatial distribution of poverty moving forward and identifying how the safety net responds (or does not respond) to need across the geographic landscape.

A central focus of this final report for the U.S. 2050 Initiative, therefore, is to explore how poverty problems transcend geographic and regional divides today. For the first time in American history there are more poor people in suburbs of our cities, than in the cities themselves. The rise in suburban poverty since 1990, however, has not corresponded with a notable decrease in urban or rural poverty. Urban poverty has grown significantly since 1990 and remains near historic levels a decade after the Great Recession. Moreover, many rural places have seen progress against poverty stall amidst tepid economic and population growth over the past several decades. Problems of concentrated poverty have intensified across all types of urban and rural communities, with persistently high poverty rates becoming commonplace in many suburban communities (Allard 2017; Jargowsky 2014). As concerning, the number of working Americans with income hovering just above the poverty line also has increased across urban, suburban, and rural communities since 1990 (Allard 2017; Berube & Kneebone 2013; Thiede, Lichter, & Slack 2016). Despite unemployment rates returning to pre-recession levels, labor force attachment has declined by several percentage points in most suburban and rural areas.

More than just an interesting set of economic and demographic trends, the changing nature of poverty and work across the urban, suburban, and rural landscape will pose some of the most urgent challenges to the U.S. antipoverty safety net in the next several decades. Another focus of this final report for the U.S. 2050 Initiative, therefore, is a descriptive examination of how the safety net is responding to the changing geography of poverty. A more robust set of public and privately funded safety net programs are in place today than 30 years ago, yet capacity to help working low-income families and jobseekers can vary widely from community to community. This is due to many features of the safety net that often do not receive adequate attention. First, many public assistance programs are predicated on work and the presumption that full-time work pays enough to support a family, which complicates program provision when wage growth is sluggish and job availability varies from place to place. Several key public assistance programs are administered differently in different places, with different eligibility determinations and bundles of support. The capacity of community-based institutions and organizations at the core of the modern American safety net (e.g., schools, community health centers, housing and employment services, and nonprofit emergency assistance providers) similarly vary widely across geography (Allard 2017). As a result,

[1] This working paper was made possible by the US 2050 project, supported by the Peter G. Peterson Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the author. Many thanks to Matthew Fowle, Chieko Maene, and Elizabeth Pelletier for their contributions to this report. The author thanks Bradley Hardy, Mark Hugo Lopez, and Paul Ong for comments on prior drafts. This report also benefited from comments and feedback on related work from staff at the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality and from researchers at the Sol Price Center for Social Innovation at the University of Southern California.

the antipoverty safety net in the U.S. functions in many ways like thousands of local safety nets, rather than one large national safety net.

When safety net program delivery relies upon local capacity, funding, and political will, we should expect that provision of assistance will vary from place to place. Within cities and rural communities, there is evidence that the location of safety net providers is mismatched to concentrations of low-income people (Allard 2009a, 2009b). Research suggests that suburbs and rural communities lag far behind cities in human service and public safety net program capacity (Allard 2017; Berube & Kneebone 2013). There is evidence of stark geographic disparities in access to high-quality early childhood programs in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas (Jessen-Howard, Malik, Workman, & Hamm, 2018; Malik et al., 2018; Reinvestment Fund, 2018). Amidst evidence that where one lives powerfully shapes mobility (see Chetty & Hendren 2018), the ironic reality is that the neediest communities often are most lacking in social assistance and safety net program resources (Allard 2008).

Despite growing awareness of geographic variation in patterns of inequality, hardship, and diseases of despair, however, scholars and policymakers are only beginning to understand the spatial interplay of work, poverty and social assistance provision in contemporary American society. Any future efforts to develop policy tools that promote economic well-being and mobility should understand the complex connections between place, work, poverty and safety net provision across urban, suburban, and rural areas. This final research report for the U.S. 2050 Initiative poses several key questions about spatial patterns in labor force participation, poverty, and safety net assistance that will inform work to reduce inequality and enhance mobility in the coming decades: How does poverty and work vary across geography today? How has the antipoverty safety net responded recent changes in the geography of poverty?

To answer these questions, this project assembles many different data resources required to answer these critical questions. First, this project examines trends in work and poverty across the urban, suburban, and rural landscape from 1990 to 2017 using data from the 1990 and 2000 decennial census, as well as five-year tract-level data from the American Community Survey (currently available for 2013-17). Analyses involve both county- and tract-level analyses, with particular focus on the largest 100 metropolitan areas and rural counties. Second, the project creates a safety net database that contains county-level information on a variety of public assistance and safety net programs since 2000. As detailed below, data have been gathered for several key programs reaching low-income adults and families: Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Medicaid; free and reduced lunch; and nonprofit human service program provision.

Several key findings about place, poverty, and safety net provision should shape our policy and research discussions around the reduction of poverty and inequality in America by 2050:

- Today, there are more people living in poverty and in deep poverty in the suburbs of our largest cities than in cities themselves.
- Poverty rates rest near historic highs in urban and rural areas, remaining highly concentrated and persistent in many urban and rural places. At the same time concentrated poverty has become much more commonplace in suburban America.
- Changes in the geography of poverty reflect a durable new normal that will persist for several decades, as the economic recovery of the last decade has not altered the relative distribution of poverty between cities, suburbs, and rural communities.

- Federally funded and regulated safety net programs, such as the EITC and SNAP, are responsive temporally and spatially to trends in poverty, while also providing consistent levels of assistance across geography.
- A stronger federal role in the Medicaid program through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid's ability to respond to rising numbers of low-income individuals has led coverage to expand by about 20 percent in metropolitan areas since 2012.
- Nonprofit human services – critical elements of the safety net, but also heavily reliant on local capacity – also are more varied in their presence and responsiveness to poverty across different types of geography. It is estimated that roughly $60 billion in new nonprofit human service spending properly targeted would close resource gaps between urban, suburban, and rural communities.

This report begins by briefly reviewing conventional understanding around issues of place and poverty. Discussion turns to an overview of the core elements of the contemporary safety net and how administration of different programs varies or does not vary by place. Then, discussion shifts to a descriptive analysis of recent spatial trends in poverty and labor force participation. Next, I examine how different safety net programs have responded to changes in need over time and across different geographic areas. The report finishes with a set of conclusions for researchers, policymakers, and advocates.

Place, Poverty, and Safety Net Provision in America

The manner in which we come to understand the linkage between poverty and place matters immensely to how we understand the causes of poverty and society's responsibility to address need. Popular understandings of the relationship between place and poverty that emerged in the 1960s have defined both poverty research and policy responses in the decades that followed. Michael Harrington's seminal book published in 1962, *The Other America*, called society to pay attention to the reality of poverty – often deep poverty – in affluent post-war urban and rural America. Estimates of the time indicated that a narrow majority of poor Americans (52.2 percent, roughly 18 million persons) lived in rural areas, with the remainder living primarily in cities (Orshansky 1966). The frame of poverty as a rural and urban phenomenon informed the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty, which powerfully shaped the contours of poverty research and antipoverty policy for the next fifty years.[2] Numerous studies over the next several decades would document the rise, persistence, and heightened concentration of poverty in central cities, particularly among black Americans (see Jargowsky 1997, Wilson 1987). Although poverty problems in rural America remained severe and persistent in the decades following the War on Poverty, rural poverty received less attention from researchers, the news media, and philanthropy compared to urban poverty for much of the past 50 years. Yet, population loss, low rates of employment, and too few good paying low-skill jobs have combined over the last several decades to leave many rural places stuck with high rates of poverty and low prospects for mobility even for those with advanced education or training (see Ziliak 2018).

[2] For example, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, in his 1964 book, *War on Poverty*, summarized very clearly how researchers and policymakers understood the crisis of poverty in cities in the 1960s. He observed that urban America was stratifying into two types of places, "inner-city poor, suburban better-off." The President's Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty 1967 report began, "rural poverty is so widespread, and so acute, as to be a national disgrace," with the nation "largely oblivious" to the poor left behind in rural America (Breathitt 1967).

Historically, researchers and policymakers have paid little attention to poverty in suburban America. Over time scholarship began to identify changes in the race and class composition of suburbs in the 1970s and 80s that revealed need and hardship. Continued suburban expansion in the 1980s and 90s led to research examining the shifting demographic characteristics and the growing heterogeneity of the suburban experience. Of particular note was continued change in the racial and ethnic composition of suburban populations across U.S. metro areas driven by black out-migration from cities and Hispanic immigrant settlement in suburbs (see Frey & Geverdt 1998; Orfield & Luce 2012). Even after the recession of 2001, however, only a handful of studies in the early 2000s examined issues of poverty and need in suburbs (Kingsley & Pettit 2003; Lucy & Phillips 2000; Madden 2003; Orfield 2002). A more notable shift in popular and scholarly awareness of suburban poverty occurred after a series of influential Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program studies began to be released just before the Great Recession. Several studies by Brookings revealed a tipping point in the mid-2000s, where the number of suburban poor first exceeded the central city poor nationally (Berube & Kneebone 2006, 2013; Kneebone & Garr 2010).[3]

In contrast to past thinking, today's poverty problems are not bound to any single geographic area or typology. Research is still only beginning to explore recent spatial trends and shifts in poverty, but much of the observed rise in poverty across the American landscape in the last several decades is tied closely to structural changes in the economy and labor force attachment occurring throughout the country. Labor force participation has been falling since 2000 across most population sub-groups and geographic areas of the country, due mostly to demand for labor (Abraham & Kearney 2018; Hipple 2016; Krause & Sawhill 2017). Inflation-adjusted earnings for most prime-age working adults have fallen or stayed relatively flat since the late 1970s (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). Low rates of upward intergenerational economic mobility are present in all parts of the country and are related in part to racial segregation and growing income inequality (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez 2014). The collapse of housing values following the Great Recession exacerbated the impact of structural economic change and the downturn on poverty.

Just as was the case during the War on Poverty, any significant effort in the coming decades to tackle poverty and employment problems should start with a clearer understanding of how poverty and work vary across the geographic landscape today. Such insights challenge presuppositions about poverty, which then may lead to more accurate understandings of the causes of poverty and narratives that can counter efforts to stereotype or marginalize the poor. This is particularly the case for common presumptions that poverty is predominately a problem experienced only by people of color in cities. Clearer understandings of place and poverty dynamics also are central to thinking about where the safety net is most robust and how safety net policy can be improved to be more responsive to need across the geographic landscape. Again, perceptions of place, poverty, and race matter, as racial stereotypes associated with the urban poor undermine support for safety net programs. In short, objective evidence about how poverty is present in different places will be important to any efforts to reduce inequality and promote mobility in society.[4]

In addition to having an accurate grasp on the changing geography of need in America today, it is critical to understand that structure and core policy features of the American antipoverty safety net. Of primary importance is recognizing that the American antipoverty safety net is more accurately a collection or compilation of local safety nets, each tailoring the provision of aid to some degree to reflect local levels of need, understandings of poverty, institutional capacity, and political will. Even though the U.S. maintains a

[3] See also Murphy (2007), Murphy (2010), and Murphy and Wallace (2010).

[4] For a more additional discussion of the conventional discourse around place, race, and poverty, see Allard (2017), Gilens (1999), and Schram (2003).

more robust set of public and privately funded safety net programs today than in 1990, the capacity to help working poor families and jobseekers varies widely by place: where one lives powerfully shapes many of the kinds of social supports available (Allard 2009b, 2017). Such insights are relevant as poverty problems continue to present across the geographic spectrum – persisting in places historically experiencing high rates of poverty and surging at historically unprecedented rates in communities never thought to have poverty "problems."

And, just as our current conceptualizations of poverty emerge from the War on Poverty, many of today's most important antipoverty safety net programs were launched during or just after the War on Poverty (Bailey & Danziger 2013). For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) is a federal program providing monthly in-kind food assistance to households at or below 130 percent of federal poverty. Although in operation since the early 1970s, SNAP program caseloads have risen in the last fifteen years due to a mix of rising need and shifting eligibility policies. Today, SNAP connects roughly 40 million individuals to $65 billion in food assistance, with an average monthly household benefit per recipient of about $125 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service 2019). Medicaid, enacted in 1965, provides more than $550 billion in health and specialized care coverage to nearly 75 million children, adults, and elderly persons with income near or below the federal poverty line (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2019; Rudowitz, Hinton, & Antonisse 2018). The EITC, also created in the 1970s, provides about 27 million tax filers with over $65 billion in refunds and credits following a benefit schedule that varies by household income, marital status, and number of children (Internal Revenue Service 2018b). Many legal and administrative barriers to receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC, since renamed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF) were disassembled during the late-1960s, removing obstacles to many other new or growing programs of antipoverty assistance. In addition, federal spending in the late-60s and early-70s laid the foundation for the modern human service safety net (e.g., employment services, emergency food assistance, behavioral health, child care, homelessness services). The National School Lunch Act, passed in 1946 and expanded in the mid-60s, authorized the federal government to subsidize free and reduced-price lunches for pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade students who meet income eligibility requirements (below 130 percent of the federal poverty level for free meals; 130-185 percent of the federal poverty level for reduced-price meals).[5] Other important programs, such as Head Start and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, were enacted during this same era.

The founding elements of the antipoverty safety net have powerfully shaped a host of programs and initiatives that have emerged since. For instance, building on the success and popularity of the EITC, the federal government adopted the Child Tax Credit (CTC) in 1997. The CTC is a partially refundable credit expanded in recent years to help more than 90 percent of families – particularly low-income families – cover the costs of raising children (Marr, Huang, Sherman, & Debot, 2015). Similarly, Medicaid health insurance coverage for children was expanded through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) beginning in 1997. CHIP provides coverage to children in households with income well over 200 percent of the federal poverty line, further up the income distribution than traditional Medicaid eligibility. Head Start paved the way for additional federal funding for dozens of programs intended to support child development, particularly among children in low-income families (U.S. Government Accounting Office 2017). Since the mid-90s, the federal government has launched Early Head Start, expanded Head Start to full-day, full-year services, created

[5] Children also may be eligible if their families participate in other federal assistance programs (such as SNAP), if they are experiencing homelessness, if they are in the foster care system, or if they are enrolled in a federally-funded Head Start program (or a comparable state program).

block grants to support costs of child care for working parents, and created a suite of home visiting programs intended to provide support services to particularly vulnerable children and parents (Chaudry, Morrissey, Weiland, & Yoshikawa 2017; Duncan and Magnuson 2013; Congressional Research Service 2016).

Several of the most important safety net programs are funded, administered, and regulated primarily by the federal government. The EITC operates through the federal tax code, is funded out of the federal budget, and is administered directly by the Department of Treasury. Decisions about income eligibility and the size of credits or refunds is determined by Congress. The CTC operates in a similar manner through the federal tax code. SNAP also is funded by the federal government, which sets benefit levels and guidelines around program eligibility to ensure the program is administered with a great degree of uniformity around the country (Bartfeld, Gundersen, Smeeding, & Ziliak 2015).[6]

Other key safety net programs, however, involve a mix of federal and state fiscal and administrative responsibility. For instance, Medicaid is jointly financed and administered by federal and state government. Funding for most Medicaid program participants is roughly split between the federal government and states, with broad federal parameters around eligibility thresholds, covered populations, and mandatory services covered. Unlike "traditional" Medicaid coverage, the Medicaid coverage expansion through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was largely funded by the federal government. In both instances, states have wide latitude to design and deliver Medicaid coverage. The result is wide variation in the characteristics of individual state Medicaid programs (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2016b).[7] CHIP operates as a federal block grant to states, which also allows states discretion in how to structure eligibility and coverage. TANF is another important safety net program that shares responsibility between federal and state government. Federal and state TANF funds provide about $30 billion in cash assistance and support services to low-income households through a fixed block grant that has not been increased since 1996. In addition, TANF contains a combination of work requirements and diversion policies that have led caseloads to fall by nearly 70 percent over the past 20 years, even during recessionary periods. States retain significant discretion over how to structure TANF programs and how to spend state TANF funds, which has led to significant variation in TANF program features nationally (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2018). Unemployment Insurance (UI) has federal oversight and support for administrative costs, but operates largely as a state-funded and administered program to provide temporary benefits to people who have lost their jobs and are deemed unemployed through no fault of their own (U.S. Department of Labor 2015). As with Medicaid and TANF level control means that benefits and length of eligibility can vary from state to state.

Many programs of assistance – even if they are funded by federal or state government – are delivered directly at the local level. Housing assistance falls within this category, where federal and state funds co-mingle with local funding to deliver subsidized housing or housing vouchers through local housing authorities. Human service programs, mostly delivered through community-based nonprofit organizations, provide a wide array of assistance with job training, adult education, counseling, child welfare services, and temporary emergency food or cash assistance to millions of low-income Americans. Delivering more than $100 billion in services and assistance to low-income populations each year, nonprofit human service

[6] See also Bartfeld, Gundersen, Smeeding, and Ziliak (2016). States have discretion over features of program eligibility, such as determinations of categorical eligibility or value of vehicle asset limits. States also have control over how program enrollment and recertification occurs.

[7] ACA extended coverage to all individuals with income at or below 138 percent of federal poverty. After legal challenges, states received the authority to opt-in or opt-out of these expansions. To date, 37 states and the District of Columbia have expanded Medicaid through ACA (Kaiser Family Foundation 2019). More than 90 percent of the costs related to expansions in Medicaid coverage for low-income adults through the ACA are paid by the federal government.

organizations have become increasingly important actors within the antipoverty safety net and critical sources of support for non-disabled working-age adults in the past few decades. Funded primarily through government and to a lesser extent philanthropic sources, human service programs are reliant on local actors and organizations to secure funding and deliver programming. Thus, the human service portion of the antipoverty safety net is inherently local, varying in presence and capacity from place to place and between neighborhoods within a given place (Allard 2009b, 2017; Smith 2012). In the same way most early childhood programs also are largely administered by local institutions and organizations, even if they receive federal and state dollars, which also corresponds to variation in the provision of those programs.

While the initial expectations were that federal safety net dollars would be targeted at cities and rural places, the state and local discretion over program administration has resulted in many elements of the safety net taking a decidedly urban emphasis over the last several decades (Allard 2017). Research has documented the greater concentration or accessibility of housing, human services, Medicaid providers, and early childhood programs in urban centers (Allard 2009b; Hughes 1997; Jessen-Howard, Malik, Workman, & Hamm, 2018; Malik et al., 2018; Reinvestment Fund, 2018). The urban focus of safety net programming reflects concerns around racial equality and social justice in cities, as well as fear of racial tension and social unrest. Urban centers also had structural advantages favoring more robust development of antipoverty program and human service infrastructure. Advocates, legal aid organizations, charitable philanthropy and nonprofit organizations supporting greater access to and public support of antipoverty programs were better resourced in cities than rural areas. Cities have access to greater wealth and more robust tax revenue sources than suburban or rural communities. Major cities have more highly professionalized local governmental institutions and favorable economies of scale favorable to human service program administration. Combined, these political and economic factors led to a greater concentration of human service capacity in cities than in rural or suburban areas (Allard 2017; Smith and Lipsky 1993). Today's most promising innovations to reduce poverty and promote mobility often are anchored in efforts by charitable philanthropy in urban centers.[8]

For anti-poverty programs to be effective at reducing poverty or mitigating hardship, however, we should expect them to respond to rising need in real-time and consistently over different local places. The temporal and "local-spatial responsiveness" of safety net programs is determined by several key features of the programs themselves: degree of counter-cyclicality; source of funding sources; degree of administrative discretion; local-level organizational capacity; institutional and jurisdictional fragmentation; competitive pressures between places; and local political will. More than just an academic exercise, these structural and institutional elements of safety net programs help us to understand when certain programs are more likely to be responsive to poverty across the geographic landscape. Such insights are relevant to understanding the operations of the current safety net and to weighing different policy structures for future efforts to reduce poverty. Table 1 briefly describes several key safety net programs at the center of this research report through the lens of these key program features.

Counter-cyclicality. The degree to which safety net programs expand counter-cyclically during economic downturns and periods when need rises is critical determinant of how responsive programs are to rising need in any one place. Programs that do not cap provision of benefits or program participation when the number

[8] For example, the Harlem Children's Zone Project seeks to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty in a historically high-poverty, racially segregated community by providing high-quality education and support services to children from conception to cradle to college within a geographically bounded area in New York City. The Promise Neighborhoods Initiative launched by the Obama Administration was an effort to replicate portions of the Harlem Children's Zone by supporting local efforts in a selected set of high-poverty urban and rural communities to coordinate a continuum of educational services and care for children and their parents.

of eligible individuals increases, such as SNAP and the EITC, are able to provide assistance to all who are eligible regardless of how large caseloads expand during a downturn. Many other programs and sources of support may not automatically expand during periods when need rises. For example, human service programs – critical elements of today's safety net – cannot easily expand during times of need without intentional decisions at the state and local level to raise program funding or increase private giving. As a result, we see human service programs only sluggishly responsive to rising need (Allard 2009b). Some programs, like TANF, operate with a fixed block grant that places a hard cap on the amount of assistance that can be provided and the number of people that can receive benefits. The counter-cyclical responsiveness of safety net programs also is reflected by the degree to which assistance is tied to work. For example, one can only receive the EITC or UI if one has been employed. Prolonged periods of unemployment would make one ineligible for assistance from these critical anti-poverty programs. In the same way, experimentation with work requirements within SNAP and Medicaid risk making those programs less responsive to need during extended economic downturns or in places where jobs are not readily available.

Table 1. Safety Net Program Characteristics Shaping Local-Spatial Responsiveness to Poverty

Program Name and Year Enacted	Counter-Cyclical Properties	Funding Source(s)	Degree of State & Local Administrative Discretion	Degree Reliant on Local Capacity	Degree of Institutional Fragmentation
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - 1964	Yes	Federal	Moderate	Substantial	Low
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) - 1975	Somewhat	Federal	Minor	Minor	Low
Medicaid - 1965	Yes	Federal & State	Substantial	Substantial	High
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) -1935	No	Federal & State	Substantial	Substantial	High
Child Tax Credit (CTC) -1996	Somewhat	Federal	Minor	Minor	Low
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) - 1995	Yes	Federal	Substantial	Substantial	High
Human Service Programs – expanded following War on Poverty	No	Federal, State, Local & Private Philanthropy	Substantial	Substantial	High

Funding Sources. The source of program funding powerfully determines the local-spatial responsiveness of a given safety net program. We should expect federally funded programs will be more responsive to rising need across local geography than those that rely on state or local dollars, despite notions that state and local governments act more responsively to the needs of the public. While the federal government can deploy resources quickly and deficit spend to meet rising need during periods of economic downturn, state and local governments adhere more closely to balanced budget principles and may not be able to marshal additional program funding or revenue in a timely manner. Local governments also have access to a limited set of tax or fee revenues, many of which are pro-cyclical and fall just as need rises. Human

service programs reliant on private donors, charitable philanthropy, and/or program fees may have more freedom about how to channel resources to address local need, but also find it difficult to rapidly expand these private sources of revenue.

Degree of Administrative Discretion. Apart from funding, the degree to which safety net programs offer state and local government discretion over administration and eligibility also will shape the responsiveness of those programs to shifting need. County government departments, school districts, and municipalities all administer federal and state-funded antipoverty programs, at times with additional own-source revenue included. As noted, many human service programs are delivered through community-based nonprofit organizations, which operate independent of government agencies. The degree to which program administration has been devolved to subnational government or local actors will determine how responsive programs may be to rising poverty. Federal antipoverty programs where state and local government are not responsible for program funding and have little discretion over program administration, should demonstrate more spatially uniform responses to rising need. For programs where state and local governments have administrative discretion over eligibility determinations, benefits structure, and delivery of assistance, however, we would expect program responses to increased poverty to be varied.

Local Institutional and Organizational Capacity. Many federally funded antipoverty programs rely upon state or local capacity for implementation or delivery of assistance (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid). Thus, the administrative capacity of local institutions and organizations will shape how any those programs respond to shifting geographic patterns in need. We should expect that safety net programs reliant on local administrative and organizational capacity of local actors will be less consistently responsive to rising need across the geographic landscape. Variation in local capacity could reflect the presence of wealth in the community, the strength of the tax base, and the presence of charitable philanthropy. Capacity to act reflects the professionalization and resource environment of local elected bodies, governance structures, and charitable nonprofits. Greater professionalization should correspond with greater capacity to recognize and diagnose problems, leverage needed resources, and implement coherent responses. Local places with more experienced, better staffed, or better resourced local organizations should deliver more responsive local safety nets during periods of high need.

Local Institutional and Organizational Fragmentation. Apart from capacity, institutional and organizational fragmentation can create challenges that inhibit the local responsiveness of antipoverty programs (Allard and Roth 2010; Allard 2017; Hughes 1997). This is particularly the case for programs of assistance that require coordination of different local organizations or actors. Community-based providers in these settings often work with local elected officials and administrators when seeking funding for services, securing local support or endorsement to provide services, coordinating service delivery, or building program-related partnerships and collaboration. In addition to county government and agencies, many service providers must interact with dozens of municipalities, townships, villages, school districts, and other quasi-governmental authorities. In addition, each jurisdiction or organization one may engage maintains its own mission and set of policy priorities. All told, fragmentation in its many forms complicates any effort to provide a systematic local response to widespread or acute need.

Local Political Will and Competitive Pressures. Where local discretion and capacity to act are present, the specific types of actions taken often reflect local political culture, values, and constituent pressures. Local institutions and organizations often closely reflect local private values. The nature and role of these private values matters quite a bit to how well local safety net responds. In communities where there is support for public intervention or for charitable philanthropy, we might expect greater efforts to address rising need. In

communities where values prioritize protecting residents from higher taxes and from redistributing local resources to "underserving" population groups, we would expect there to be weaker efforts to address growing poverty problems. Local attitudes about race and immigration matter as well, given the racial and immigrant symbols that underlie much of the debate around safety net programs. Values such as these, combined with the imperatives to protect tax bases and economic competitive climates, create very little incentive for different local jurisdictions to cooperate or coordinate activities with others.

Complicating matters, local communities grapple with competitive pressures that can depress local safety net responses. Scholars typically expect local places will underprovide or choose not to provide any type of safety net assistance with own-source revenues out of concern that those programs will attract low-income families. Local governments are unwilling to attract larger numbers of poor families because of the fear that such in-migration will lead to increased government spending without increased tax revenues. Rising poverty thus would simultaneously weaken the desirability of the community to business interests or affluent residents and force the community to increase tax rates, further hampering economic competitiveness. We should not expect, therefore, local places to allocate local own-source dollars to safety net programming in a manner that brings them out of line with comparable efforts in neighboring communities. Thus, we should expect safety net programs that rely on local dollars will be less likely to expand consistently across local places as need rises.

Implications for Safety Net Programs. The framing around safety net programs presented here allows us to think about which aspects of the safety net may display more local-spatial responsiveness to changes in poverty than others. Table 1 provides a broad characterization of each major program examined in this report. Even though states can vary eligibility rules or recertification periods, federal funding and narrow subnational discretion over SNAP administration should lead the program to be responsive to poverty shifts similarly in different places. The EITC is federally funded and administered with strict eligibility rules based on household income, marital status, and number of children, which also should make the program uniformly responsive across different types of geography. Other programs where there is significant subnational discretion and reliance on local administrative capacity may vary in delivery significantly from local place to local place. For example, should not expect TANF to be responsive to shifts in poverty, even though the program is intended to aid the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families in society. Medicaid and CHIP coverage also should vary somewhat in their responsiveness because of the important role state government plays in program delivery and the reliance on local capacity to deliver care. While nonprofit human service programs also are funded mostly through federal and state government, these programs are primarily delivered through or in coordination with community-based nonprofit organizations. Provision of human service programs is highly dependent on local political will, the capacity of the local nonprofit service infrastructure, and the strength of local philanthropy, which vary widely across local places.

Identifying how policy or programmatic features will shape the local-spatial responsiveness of safety net programs is relevant for accurate understandings of program caseload and spending trends over time. Below, I draw upon the logics outlined above to examine how key safety net programs have (or have not) expanded to meet rising need in recent years. These insights provide intuitions and expectations about how key programs of assistance will respond to shifting patterns of need and hardship in the next several decades. Understanding the features of programs likely to be most responsive to poverty across the geographic landscape also is important, however, as policymakers, charitable philanthropy, and advocates develop new tools and solutions for tackling poverty.

Data and Definitions

To begin to answer the questions framing this report, I analyze a unique dataset that combines demographic information at the county- and tract-level with a county-level safety net database. These data provide glimpses into emerging issues about the changing spatial contours of poverty and work, as well as to how federal programs and local safety nets are responding. In this section, I provide more detailed description of the data and measures.

Geographic Units of Analysis. Analyses in this final research report focuses on two basic levels of local geography in the U.S.: counties and census tracts. Many demographic analyses presented here compare urban, suburban, and rural counties. More fine-grained analyses of urban-suburban demographic differences are conducted within the largest 100 metropolitan areas. Not only do the largest 100 metros contain 66 percent of the total population (212 million of 321 million persons in 2017), but the vast majority of the suburban population in the U.S. lives in the largest 100 metros.[9]

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines metropolitan area boundaries and the primary and major cities within those metros.[10] My sorting of counties into geographic types follows from OMB classifications. Urban counties are defined as those containing the primary urban center of a given metropolitan area and suburban counties are those counties that are defined as part of the same metropolitan area, but do not contain the metro's primary city. Rural counties are defined as non-metropolitan counties. Within urban counties, I make distinctions between those outside the largest 100 metropolitan areas in 2010 (typically smaller metros with a few hundred thousand residents and fewer suburban communities) and urban counties within the largest 100 metros.[11] When focusing on the largest 100 metropolitan areas in the U.S., I present census tract-level data sorted into urban versus suburban categories based upon OMB metro area definitions. Municipalities and tracts are defined as urban and suburban by whether they fall within a primary or major city or not. Defining urban-suburban geography closely to census tract jurisdictions is advantageous because it allows me to trace spatial trends in poverty consistently over time and at different levels of aggregation. To show variation within suburban types, I sort suburban tracts into age categories according to the year in which the median house was built. Thus, I identify suburbs built mostly before 1950, between 1950 and 1970, between 1970 and 1979, between 1980 and 1989, between 1990 and 1999, and after 2000. Because urban counties often contain significant suburban population, county-level geography tends to understate suburbanization (see Allard 2017). Thus, I use tract-level information about urban and suburban population to code urban counties in the largest 100 metro areas according to how much of the county population is located in suburban municipalities: less than one-third of county population in suburban municipalities; one-third to two-thirds of county population in suburban municipalities; and more than two-thirds of county population in suburban municipalities.

This report also uses counties as the unit of analysis for examining trends in safety net provision. County-level data are preferred for several reasons. First, counties tend to be the administrative unit of

[9] The urban-suburban typology applied here is outlined in more detail in Allard (2017). Data from the 1990 and 2000 census is refitted to 2010 metropolitan geography, so analyses compare trends across the largest 100 metropolitan areas as if they had been constituted in their current form for the past 25 years. More than 70 percent of the population in the 100 largest metro areas in 2017 was located in suburban municipalities (150 million of 212 million persons).

[10] OMB formally defines metropolitan areas, or metropolitan statistical areas, as those areas containing an urbanized population center with 50,000 or more inhabitants and adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that urban center.

[11] The top 100 metropolitan areas in 2010 represents quite a diverse mix of regions, ranging from urban centers with several million residents like Chicago, IL or Los Angeles, CA, to smaller metros with roughly 500,000 people such as Jackson, MS and Youngstown, OH.

government responsible for administering many public assistance programs (e.g., SNAP, TANF). Institutional charitable philanthropy also often is bounded within a given county or set of counties in a region. More practically, it is difficult to get reliable data on safety net program provision consistently at lower levels of geography. Appendix Table 9 contains information about the number of counties within each geographic category.

Defining Poverty. This project examines several different indicators of poverty. Most analyses examine the number of people or households with income below the federal poverty threshold ($19,749 for a family of three with two children in 2017, see Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar 2018). Based on the federal poverty line, analyses also examine changes in the number of people living within 150 percent of the poverty threshold (often referenced as low-income populations), between 100 and 150 percent of the poverty threshold (referenced here as the near-poor), and those in extreme or deep poverty living on less than 50 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

Tracing the number of low-income persons over time and geography conveys a sense of changing demands placed on safety net providers, schools, public services, and community-based organizations. Safety net program eligibility often extends to persons with income just above the poverty line, so we should think of this portion of the population to reflect households most likely to be eligible for and seek safety net assistance.[12] Private charities have greater discretion over eligibility, but often will target help to those with low levels of income. At the same time, the experience of deep poverty often corresponds to the higher prevalence of material hardship, food insecurity, and housing instability. Thus, understanding how more acute need varies by geography and over time also is critical when thinking about safety net responses.

Apart from the number of poor people, analyses will examine poverty rates – or the share of the population that is poor – provide insight into how widespread poverty is nationally or regionally, but also within a particular community or local place. Researchers use poverty rate measures to identify places as those with concentrated poverty (defined here as places with poverty rates over 20 percent) vary over time and place. Persistently poor places are defined as those where the poverty rate has exceeded 20 percent for three decades. Living in a community with a high rate of poverty, particularly for prolonged periods in youth, has been shown to have deleterious effects on employment and well-being throughout the life course. The experience of poverty in childhood has been shown to have powerful immediate and downstream effects on cognition, mobility, and well-being (Chetty, Hendren, & Katz 2015; Evans & Kim 2012; Keels, Duncan, DeLuca, Mendenhall, & Rosenbaum 2005; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000; Ludwig, et al., 2013; Persico, Figlio, & Roth 2016; Sharkey 2016; Ziol-Guest & McKenna 2014). Problems of homelessness and housing instability have become pervasive in all geographic regions of the country (Henry, Watt, Rosenthal, & Shivji 2017). Persistent poverty has been traced to rising rates of addiction and diseases of despair in rural, urban, and suburban places (Stein, Gennuso, Ugboaja, and Remington 2017). Living in a high-poverty area also has been found to have many deleterious effects on employment, household well-being, and important child development outcomes (Chetty, Hendren, & Katz 2015; Ludwig, et al., 2013; Sharkey 2016).

Measuring Employment. Labor force participation is calculated for counties and census tracts using decennial census and five-year American Community Survey (ACS) data. The total number of individuals ages 16 or older, who report being active in the labor force is divided by the number of individuals 16 years

[12] For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides monthly in-kind food assistance to households at or below 130 percent of federal poverty. Similarly, Medicaid provides insurance coverage for individuals under 65 years of age with incomes up to 133 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

of age or older. In addition, this project will explore unemployment rates (county and tract-level) and median household income (only at the tract-level).

Safety Net Program Measures. Analyses of safety net programs are drawn from a longitudinal county-level database containing information about government safety net programs and nonprofit human service expenditures. Specifically, this project examines county-level participation or caseload information for the EITC, CTC, SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, free and reduced lunch eligibility, and UI. I also examine nonprofit human service expenditures from 2000 to 2015 for organizations registering as primarily providing one of the following types of service or assistance: substance abuse dependency, prevention, and treatment; mental health treatment; employment services; food and emergency services; or general human services (e.g., large organizations providing many different services, such as Catholic Charities).

Data on tax filings are based on individual form 1040 income tax returns filed with U.S. addresses and made available through Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Statistics of Income (SOI) data. The IRS publishes data at the county level between 1989 and 2016, but the availability of individual variables varies by year and level of analysis. In this report, we use IRS SOI data to examine county-level information about federal EITC receipt, CTC receipt, and receipt of UI.[13] EITC data also is drawn from the Brookings Institution, where the Metropolitan Policy Program EITC Interactive reflects the number of tax filings from 2000 to 2014. County-level SNAP program is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau and we include program participation data in 1989 and 2000 through 2011.[14] TANF administrative data is drawn from state websites and electronic or print administrative data records received. Analyses examine the number of persons receiving assistance in March of 2000 and 2010, as well as the number of households receiving assistance in those same months and years. [15] Information about free or reduced lunch comes from the National Center for Education Statistics, which maintains a county-level database with information on the number of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches at school. To capture the contributions and capacity of private charitable organizations, this project draws upon county-level nonprofit human service delivery revenue and expenditure data drawn from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) for the years 2000 to 2015. These data are based on the IRS 990 forms that nonprofit organizations submit to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to report basic organizational and fiscal information as part of an organization's tax-exempt status.[16]

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[13] Data published by the IRS between 1998 and 2016 at the zip code level also was aggregated to the county level. Each zip code was matched to a county using crosswalk files published by the HUD Office of Policy Development and Research. If a zip code spanned multiple counties, tax filing numbers and dollar amounts were apportioned to each matched county according to the ratio of the zip code's residential addresses that were contained within that county. The filing statistics and dollar amounts were then summed up to the county level. See https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-county-data for more information about the IRS SOI data.

[14] Complete SNAP caseload data for years after 2011 are not available as of the writing of this report.

[15] Because different states determine their federal TANF caseload differently, there is some variation across states in the types of cases included. For example, some states include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-Unemployed Parent (TANF-UP) program for two-parent households meeting eligibility. Because it was not possible to decompose administrative data into different parts consistently, analyses here presume that a state's report of its federal TANF caseload reflect the state's understanding of what constitutes TANF participation. Reported state TANF data, however, does make use of the same definition in 2000 and 2010 for comparison purposes.

[16] NCCS data classify nonprofits according to the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE), which helps sort nonprofits human service organizations into areas of primary focus. Specifically, I include nonprofit organizations that self-classify as one of the following NTEE codes: B60; F20; F21; F22; F30; F32; J20; J21; J22; K30; K31; K34; K35; K36; L21; L40; L41; P20; P22; P24; P27; P28; P29; P30; P40; P42; P43; P44; P84.

While these data provide important insights into the changing geography of poverty, work, and safety net provision, results should be interpreted with several important caveats in mind. First, I rely on the federal poverty measure in the analyses that follow, even though there are compelling arguments to think about alternative definitions that take into account program income and out-of-pocket work or medical costs, control for spatial differences in cost of living, focus on consumption, or that relate to hardship and material need. Most alternative poverty measures aren't gathered consistently over time in different places, nor with accuracy or depth at small-scale geographic units such as census tracts. Next, administrative safety net data provide more accurate snapshots of caseloads and program output than self-reported survey data, which tends to provide under- or over-estimates of enrollment in public assistance programs and no information about social service receipt. Moreover, public assistance and human service programs typically are administered at the county-level or in county-defined catchment areas. But, publicly available administrative data is not easily be disaggregated to the municipality or census tract, making it difficult to make precise statements about local geography and the response of safety net programs to rising poverty. Similarly, administrative data most often contains county caseload counts and total program expenditures, which do not provide much insight into the demographics of program participants or the duration of program receipt. Finally, while useful for assessing broad patterns in the national nonprofit sector, data from the NCCS have several limitations. First, they reflect only nonprofit organizations that submit 990 forms to the IRS.[17] Nonprofit data from the IRS only contain location information about an organization's administrative headquarters and not separate offices where services may be delivered. IRS data, therefore, may miss many large social service nonprofits that operate programs in rural regions or suburban communities, but maintain headquarters in a central city or rural population center.[18] With these limitations in mind, I have shaped the NCCS data in two important ways. One, I aggregate data from individual organizations to the county-level. Counties often are the geographic jurisdiction that bound nonprofit service activities, so aggregating to the county-level should provide as accurate an impression about the capacity of local nonprofit social service organizations as is possible with available data. Two, I have capped organizations included in the analyses with annual revenues at or below certain levels (e.g., $10 million in annual revenue) to avoid including extremely large national or regional administrative headquarters that would distort nonprofit social service expenditure and revenue totals. Limitations aside, I believe that the findings discussed here present valuable conceptual and practical insights into the realities confronting local safety nets in urban, suburban, and rural America.

Spatial Trends in Poverty 1990 to 2017

Poverty problems in the U.S. surged to historic highs during the course of the last three decades. The steady and persistent spatial patterns of rising poverty, however, strongly suggests that public policy and philanthropy will have to develop solutions to address the greater incidence of poverty in all types of places in

[17] Excluded from these data are nonprofits with budgets under $25,000 and small church-based programs that are not required to file tax-exempt status.

[18] Data on expenditures and revenues are reported in broad categories without connection to specific services, programs, or sources. The categorizations of nonprofit social service organizations are based on the primary substantive focus of programs and do not reflect the many other service or program areas in which a nonprofit might operate. See Allard (2009b) and Grønbjerg and Smith (2001) discuss the limitations of IRS data when developing estimates of the size and scope of the nonprofit service sector. Finally, there is evidence that for-profit firms have become more prominent in the delivery of local social services (see Smith 2012). Although Allard (2009b) estimates the share of services provided to poor working age adults by for-profit firms to be relatively modest in size, these for-profit firms do not submit 990 forms and are not captured by these data.

the next several decades. From 1990 to 2017, the number of poor people in the U.S. rose from 31.7 million to 45.7 million. Within these broad national trends is evidence that poverty problems remained stubbornly persistent in rural America, while becoming more acute in metropolitan areas. The number of poor people in metropolitan areas grew in size from 24.3 million in 1990 to 37.4 million in 2017 – a 53.8 percent increase. Although the increases were less dramatic in percentage terms, the number of poor people in rural (or non-metropolitan) counties increased by 11.3 percent from 1990 to 2017 (7.4 million to 8.3 million). See Appendix Table 1 for additional detail.

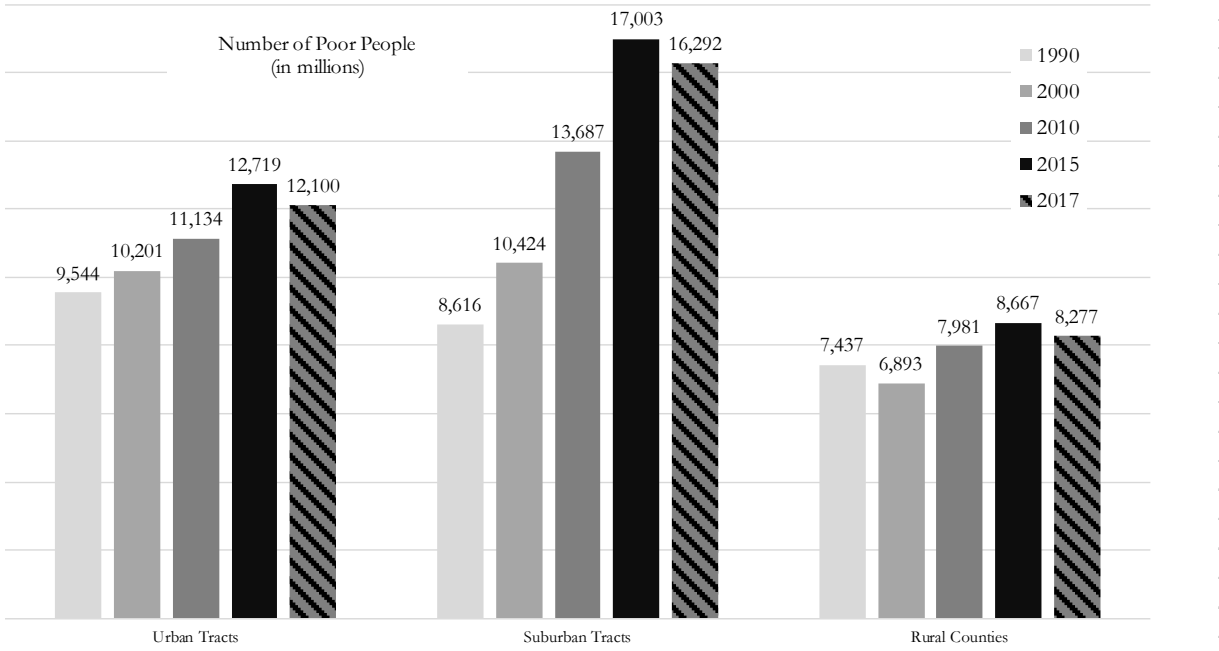
It is the case that sustained economic recovery since the end of the Great Recession has led to reductions in the number of people in poverty in recent years. For example, the number of poor people living in metropolitan areas peaked at about 39.1 million in the 2011-2015 ACS, since falling to 37.4 million in the 2013-2017 ACS. Similarly, the number of people in poverty in rural America has fallen from 8.7 million to 8.3 million since 2015.[19] Despite this progress, urban, suburban, and rural America are nowhere near pre-recession poor population totals.

Changing Geography of Poverty within Largest 100 Metros. Consistent with a growing literature, there is evidence of significant spatial change in the distribution of poverty across cities and suburbs in the largest 100 metropolitan areas since 1990. While it is commonly presumed that poverty problems in suburbs are recent developments, poverty has been present in suburban America for some time. Suburbs in the largest 100 metropolitan areas were home to nearly as many poor people in 1990 as cities in those same metros – 8.6 million versus 9.5 million. Suburban census tracts saw the number of poor people nearly doubling from 8.6 million to 16.3 million during in the next three decades, compared to an increase from 9.5 million to 12.1 million in urban tracts (see Figure 1). During this time, the suburban poor population grew at a rate more than twice the suburban population growth rate and three times the rate of growth in poverty in urban centers.[20] While there is evidence that the number of people living in poverty in the largest 100 metro areas peaked at 29.7 million in the 2011-2015 ACS and has since fallen to 28.4 million in the 2013-2017, such modest reductions in poverty have not changed the relative spatial balance of poverty in cities versus suburbs – there are still approximately 4 million more poor people in the suburbs of our largest metro areas than in the cities themselves.

[19] Author's calculations from the 2011-15 and 2013-17 ACS. Recent decreases in poverty population are more readily apparent in single-year estimates (see Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar 2018), but are beginning to be captured by five-year ACS data.

[20] See Appendix Table 1 for details.

Figure 1. Comparing Changes in Poverty across Urban, Suburban, and Rural Geography, 1990–2017



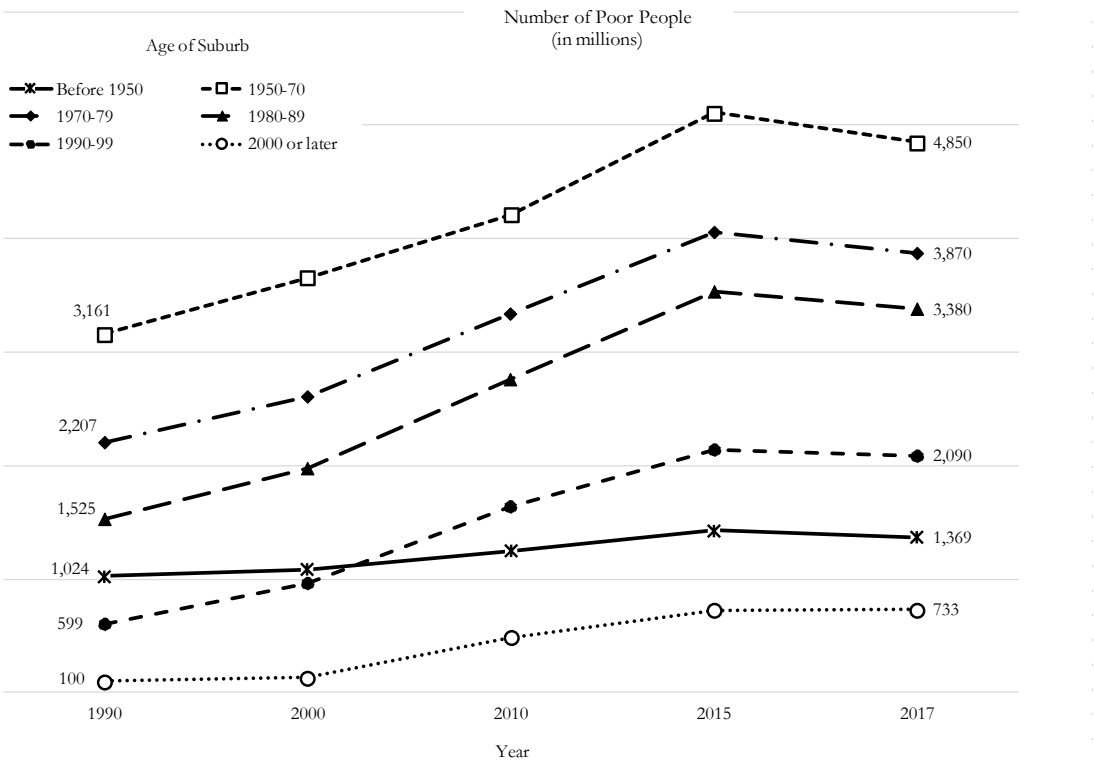
Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2011-15, 2013-17.

Note: Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only. Figures for 2010 and 2017 reflect five-year ACS data.

Rising suburban poverty has not been isolated to a handful of older suburbs or to those suburbs located outside of older industrial cities. Figure 2 demonstrates how the number of people in poverty increased substantially from 1990 to 2015 across older and newer suburbs. In fact, it appears that the oldest suburbs – those built before 1950 – experienced smaller increases in those living below the poverty line compared to suburbs built after 1950. Consistent with national trends, there is evidence that the economic recovery has led to slight decreases in poverty across all types of suburbs. It remains the case that poverty population totals in American suburbs have not returned to pre-recession levels.

To provide an alternative view of need, Appendix Table 1 also traces trends in the number of people living on less than 50 percent of the federal poverty threshold, what is commonly referred to as deep poverty. Roughly 13 million Americans in our largest metropolitan areas live in deep poverty, compared to about 3.5 million rural Americans nationwide. The prevalence of deep poverty has increased substantially in suburban areas compared to urban or rural places. For example, there were 3.7 million individuals living in deep poverty in the suburbs of our largest 100 metropolitan areas in 1990, compared to 4.6 million in the cities of those metros. By 2017, there were 7.2 million persons in deep poverty in suburban census tracts of the largest 100 metros, doubling in a period of thirty years. Almost 5.5 million people lived in deep poverty in central cities in 2017 – an increase of about 18 percent since 1990. The number of rural Americans in deep poverty increased at about the same pace – 18.7 percent from 1990 to 2017. Similar to trends in income poverty, deep poverty is now a more acute problem for suburbs than has been the case at any time in history.

Figure 2. Comparing Changes in Poverty across Older and Newer Suburban Areas, 1990–2017



Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2011-15, 2013-17.
Note: Data are presented for the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas. Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. Figures for 2010, 2015, and 2017 are drawn from the 2006-10, 2011-15, and 2013-17 ACS, respectively. Age of suburb is determined by the median year of housing construction in a given census tract.

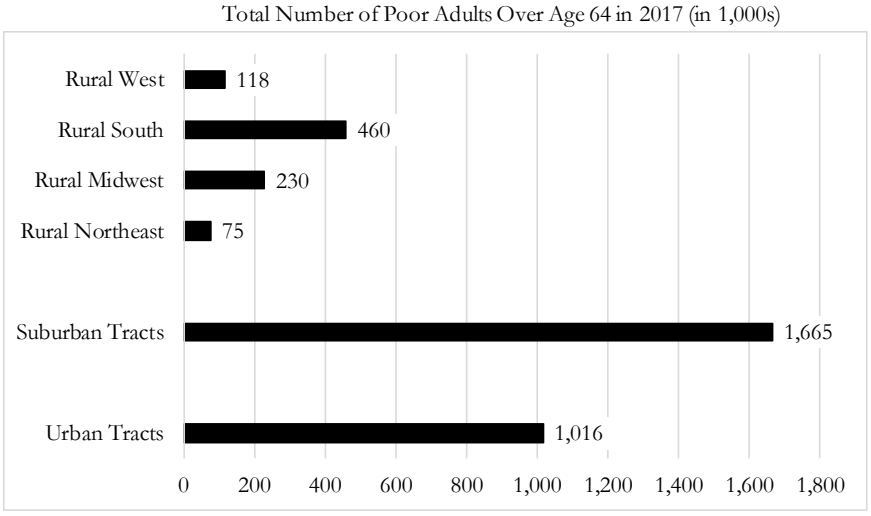
Elderly Americans, one of the fastest growing population sub-groups driven by the greying of the baby boomer generation, can be particularly vulnerable to falling into poverty.[21] Many Americans who have aged out of the workforce live on fixed incomes and can experience hardship as retirement income proves inadequate to cover rising costs of living or out-of-pocket medical expenses. Poverty problems among the elderly also create challenges for families and caregivers. Moreover, rising poverty among older Americans places significant resource demands upon public and private safety net programs, particularly Medicaid, SNAP, and human service programs. As we think about future demands upon government and philanthropy in the coming decades, therefore, it is important to understand where increases in poverty among older Americans may be most severe.

Poverty rates among older Americans vary substantially across geography. The elderly poverty rate in urban tracts in 2017 is 15.6 percent compared to 10.8 percent in rural counties and 8.4 percent in suburban tracts. Poverty rates among older Americans, according to the official poverty measure, appear to have stayed relatively flat or fallen slightly over the past 20 years.[22] Even if poverty rates among older Americans are not rising dramatically, the most modest increases in the number of poor elderly adults can place great burden on the safety net and community-based organizations. Understanding where elder poverty is concentrated and

[21] See also Pew Research Center (2018).
[22] Urban and suburban figures reflect the largest 100 metropolitan areas. Author's calculations from the 2013-17 American Community Survey not shown here.

where it is rising fastest is key to anticipating future challenges. Figure 3 charts the number of Americans over 65 years of age or older living in poverty in 2017. Consistent with findings above, there are more poor elderly Americans in the suburbs of our largest cities than within the cities themselves (1.7 million versus 1.0 million respectively in 2017). The suburban elderly poor also outnumber the elderly poor living in rural America (roughly 882,000). Within rural America, a larger number of poor elderly Americans live in the rural South in 2017 than in all other rural regions in the U.S. combined (about 460,000 versus 423,000 respectively).[23] The distribution of the elderly poor follows closely the greying of the population, as both suburbs and the South are home to a disproportionately large share of older Americans.

Figure 3. Poverty among Adults 65 Years of Age or Older, 2017



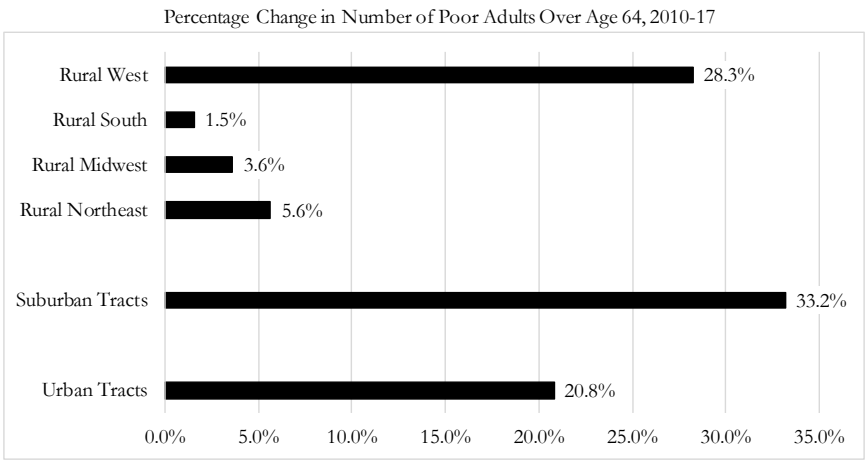
Sources: American Community Survey, 2013-17.

Note: Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only.

Unlike poverty overall, the number of older Americans in poverty has not fallen numerically in the last several years – a reflection of larger and larger numbers of older Americans being forced to live on low-levels of income as they age out of the workforce. From 2010 to 2017, the number of older Americans living in poverty increased by about 20 percent. As Figure 4 shows, poverty among older Americans has grown at a much faster rate in suburbs than in cities following the Great Recession (33.2 percent versus 20.8 percent increase, respectively). Although not shown in Figure 4, it is the newest suburbs – those built since 1990 -- that have experienced the largest percentage increases in poverty among adults over 64 years old. Most rural regions of the U.S. have seen relatively little increase in the number of poor older Americans since 2010. The notable exception are rural counties in the West, where the number of elderly residents living in poverty has increased by 28.3 since 2010.

[23] The metropolitan South also is home to roughly 900,000 poor elderly Americans (author's calculations not shown here).

Figure 4. Percentage Change in Number of Adults 65 Years of Age or Older in Poverty, 2010-17



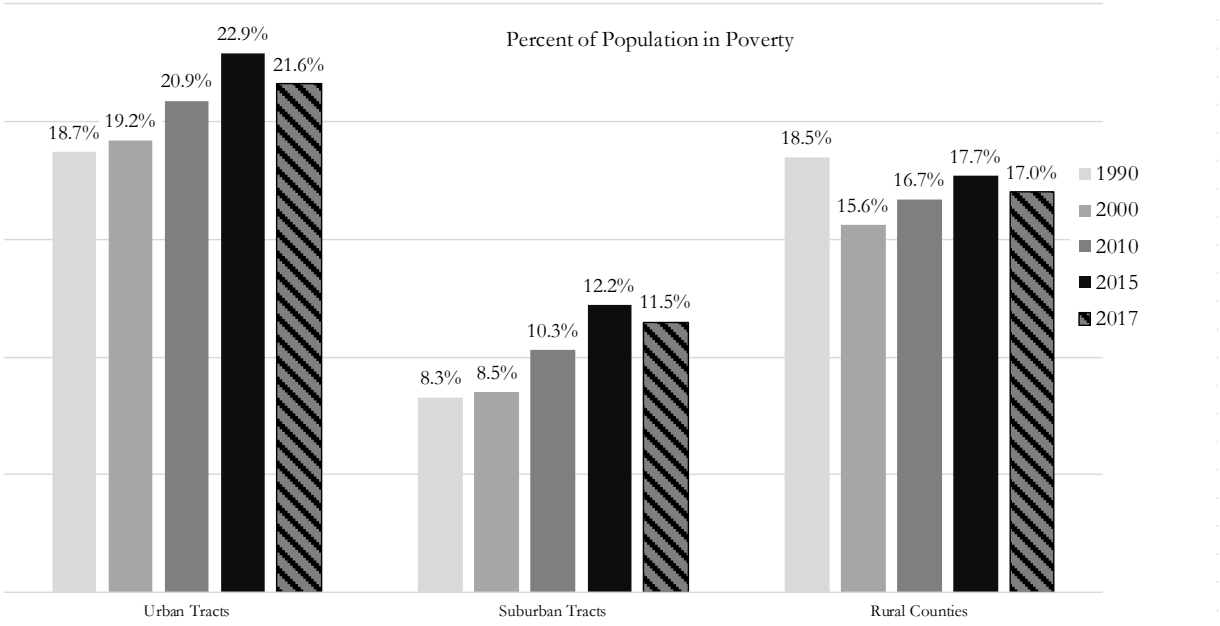
Sources: American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2013-17.

Note: Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. Figures for 2010 and 2017 are drawn from the 2006-10 and 2013-17 ACS, respectively. Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only.

Concentrated and Persistent Poverty. Figure 5 charts trends in poverty rates across tracts in the largest 100 metropolitan areas and in rural counties from 1990 to 2017. Three key patterns emerge when looking at poverty rates across geography in the last thirty years. First, consistent with post-war history, poverty rates remain nearly twice as high in urban centers and rural areas than suburban places. Average poverty rates were 21.6 percent and 17.0 percent in urban tracts and rural counties respectively in 2017, compared to 11.5 percent in the average suburb. It is the case that poverty rates vary across the suburban landscape today. While the average poverty rate in newer suburbs is about 7 percent, poverty rates in the average suburb built before 1980 fall between 12 and 16.4 percent. In fact, poverty is approaching a prevalence in older suburbs today that we typically imagine only located in central cities or remote rural places (see Appendix Table 2 for additional detail).

Second, poverty rates remain much higher in urban and suburban America than in 1990. The average urban tract poverty rate was 18.7 percent in 1990 and 21.6 percent in 2017. Poverty rates increased in more dramatic terms across suburban America in the last thirty years, rising from 8.3 percent on average in 1990 to 11.5 percent in 2017. Appendix Table 2 shows that poverty rates are higher in older suburbs than newer suburbs. For example, suburbs built before 1950 had an average tract poverty rate of 12.0 percent in 1990, which was 50 percent higher the average tract poverty rate for suburban areas overall (8.3 percent, see Appendix Table 2). By 2017, the average tract poverty rate in these early suburbs increased to 16.4 percent, still much higher than the suburban average. The mean tract poverty rate for suburbs built between 1950 and 1970 was 8.6 percent in 1990 and rose to 12.4 percent by 2017 – about a fifty percent increase in 25 years. It is the case that average poverty rates in rural counties fell significantly during the economic expansion of the 1990s from 18.5 percent to 15.6 percent in 2000. Most of the ground gained in rural areas, however, was lost in the course of the economic recessions that book-ended the first decade of the 21st Century. Rural poverty rates steadily increased after 2000 and today remain about 1.5 percentage points higher at the start of the century.

Figure 5. Comparing Poverty Rates across Urban, Suburban, and Rural Geography, 1990–2017



Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2011-15, 2013-17.

Note: Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only. Figures for 2010, 2015, and 2017 are drawn from the 2006-10, 2011-15, and 2013-17 ACS, respectively.

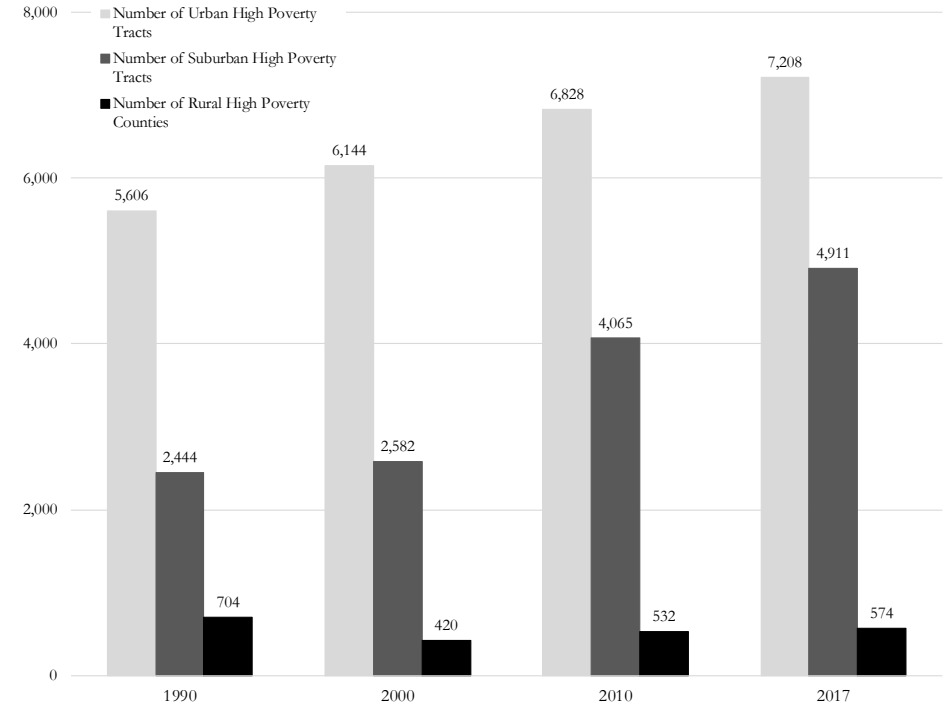
Third, it is the case that the economic expansion has finally begun to push poverty rates downward. Falling poverty rates can be seen in urban, suburban, and rural areas. For example, mean poverty rates in urban tracts of the largest 100 metros peaked in 2015 at 22.9 percent, but has since fallen to 21.6 percent (see Figure 5). Suburban tracts in the largest 100 metros and rural counties nationally similarly have seen average poverty rates fall by almost 1 percentage point since 2015. Again, progress against high rates of poverty has been slow to come since the economic recovery began. Years of continued economic growth will be required even for poverty rates to reach their pre-2010 levels, let alone approach their levels during the boom of the 1990s.

Apart from concern about poverty rates and their position relative to prior decades, it is important to consider of how concentrated poverty has changed over time and geography. To permit comparisons between urban, suburban, and rural places, I define concentrated poverty locations (also referred to as high-poverty locations) as census tracts or counties where the poverty rate is over 20 percent.[24] With this 20 percent threshold in mind, we see the number of high-poverty urban and suburban census tracts in the largest 100 metro areas and in rural counties nationally plotted in Figure 6. Since 1990, the number of urban tracts with poverty rates over 20 percent has increased by nearly one-third (5,606 to 7,208 in 2017) and the number of people living in high-poverty urban tracts has increased by 40 percent (see Figure 7). Given popular conceptions of suburbs as places of opportunity, it is striking that there were over 2,400 suburban census tracts with poverty rates over 20 percent in 1990. Even more striking is the suburban growth in concentrated poverty that has since followed. From 1990 to 2017, the number of high-poverty suburban tracts in the

[24] Urban poverty scholarship often identifies high-poverty areas as those with poverty rates over 40 percent (Galster 2005, Jargowsky 1997). A 20 percent cut-off, however, is consistent with persistent poverty identified by rural poverty scholars and allows comparison between the different types of geography than if a 30 or 40 percent cut-off was used.

largest metro areas doubled and the number of people in high-poverty suburban tracts increased by 156 percent.

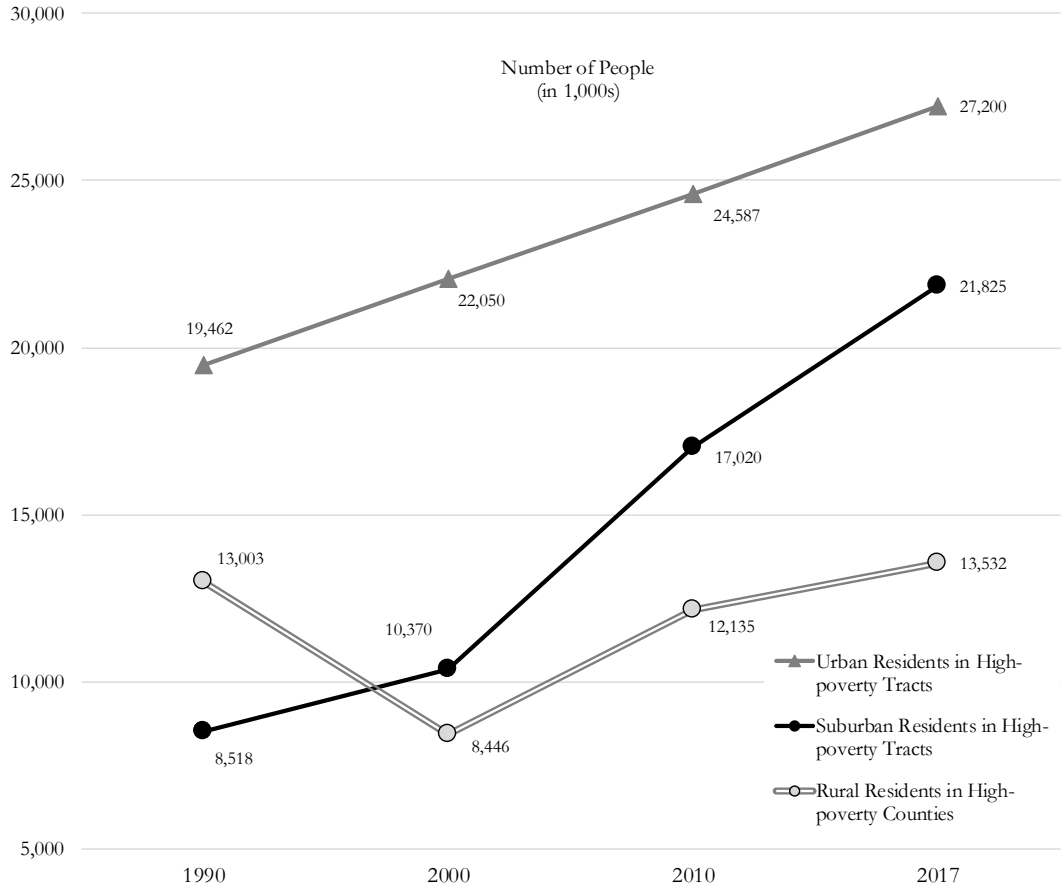
Figure 6. Number of High-Poverty Urban, Suburban, and Rural Places, 1990-2017



Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2013-17.
Note: Urban/suburban data are presented for the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas. Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. High-poverty tracts or counties are those with poverty rates over 20 percent. Figures for 2010 and 2017 are drawn from the 2006-10 and 2013-17 ACS, respectively.

Just as the number of poor places has steadily increased in recent decades across the geographic landscape, the number of people living in high-poverty places also has increased dramatically since 1990 (see Figure 7). Historically, concentrated poverty problems have been more severe in cities than in suburbs. Today, although more urban residents in the largest metro areas live in high-poverty tracts today than suburban residents (27.2 million versus 21.8 million), suburbs are closing the historical gap. From 1990 to 2017, the number of people living in high-poverty suburban census tracts in the largest 100 metro areas increased by more than 150 percent, compared to an increase of 40 percent in urban census tracts. What would normally be an alarming increase in the number of people living in concentrated poverty in cities, is swamped by the sharp increase in suburban population living in tracts with poverty rates over 20 percent. If current rates of growth hold for even the next decade, the number of people living in high-poverty suburban tracts will eclipse those in high-poverty urban tracts well before 2050.

Figure 7. Number of People in High-Poverty Urban, Suburban, and Rural Places, 1990-2017



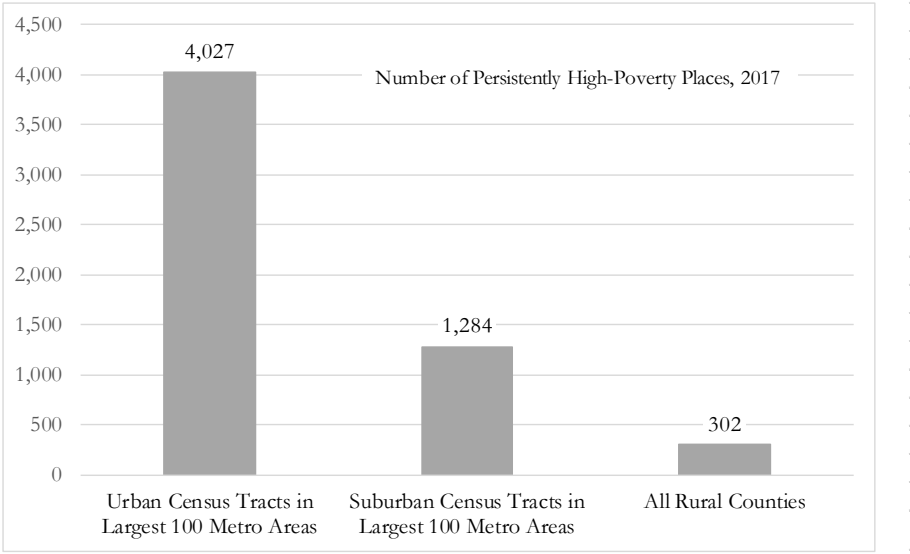
Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2013-17.
Note: Urban/suburban data are presented for the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas. Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. High-poverty tracts or counties are those with poverty rates over 20 percent. Figures for 2010 and 2017 are drawn from the 2006-10 and 2013-17 ACS, respectively.

The trend in concentrated poverty within rural counties follows a somewhat different path. Figure 6 indicates that the number of high-poverty rural counties fell by nearly half during the 1990s, likely due to the historic economic expansion of that decade (704 in 1990 to 420 rural counties in 2000). Yet, the two recessions of the early 2000s can be clearly seen to have eroded this progress. From 2000 onwards, there has been a steady upward shift in the number of high-poverty rural counties (574 rural counties in 2017). Today, there are slightly more rural residents living in high-poverty counties (13.5 million) than was the case in 1990 (13.0 million). As we would expect, however, the fall in the number of people living in high-poverty rural counties over the 1990s was wiped out by the sharp increase in population living in high-poverty rural counties that followed in the next two decades.

It also is important to consider the realities faced by persistently poor places – those with poverty rates over 20 percent for the prior three decades. In rural America, the number of counties identified as persistently poor has increased modestly over the past three decades. In 1979, 242 rural counties were defined as persistently poor, rising to a recent high-water mark of 535 counties in 1990 before falling to 302 persistently poor counties in 2017 (see Figure 8). If we apply this same definition to census tracts in the top

100 metropolitan areas in America, there are more than 5,000 tracts today that would be labeled as persistently poor.

Figure 8. Number of Persistently High-Poverty Urban, Suburban, and Rural Places, 2017



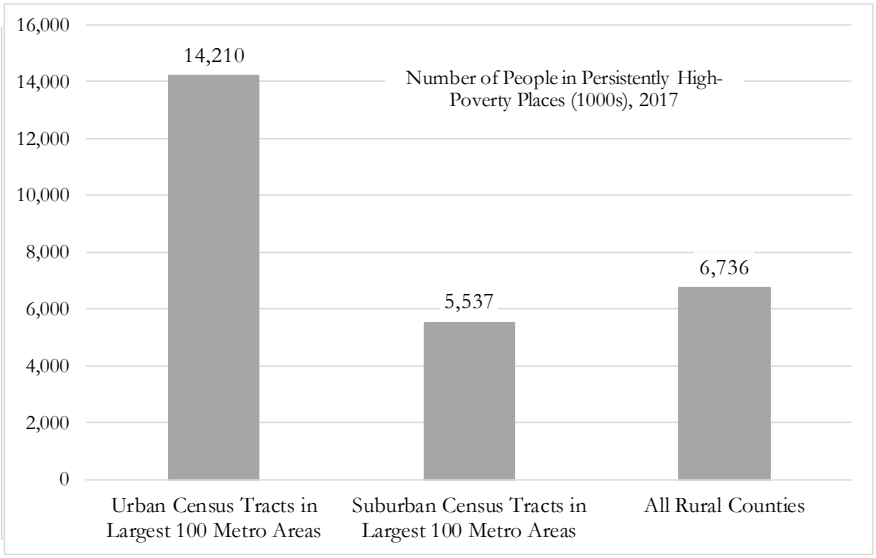
Sources: USDA, Economic Research Service 2019; 1990, 2000 Census; 2006-10, 2013-17 American Community Survey.
Note: Persistently poor places are defined as those with poverty rates over 20 percent in the 1990 and 2000 Census, and the 2006-2010 and 2013-17 American Community Survey.

And, it is the case that a substantial number of Americans across the geographic landscape live in persistently poor places today. There are about 6.7 million people in persistently poor rural counties, along with nearly 20 million Americans living in urban and suburban neighborhoods that are persistently poor (see Figure 9). Strikingly, nearly 30 percent of those living in persistently poor neighborhoods in metropolitan America are located in suburban neighborhoods.

Trends in Poverty by Race and Ethnicity. To place changes in poverty across race and ethnic groups in context, it is important to understand overall changes in the race and ethnic composition of urban, suburban, and rural areas. While non-Hispanic whites still compose a sizeable majority of the U.S. population and a large majority of residents in suburban America, there has been no aggregate population growth within this racial sub-group in urban, suburban, or rural areas since 2000 (see Appendix Table 3). There have been important shifts in black residential and settlement patterns across metro areas in the past few decades. Whereas little growth in the black population has occurred overall in urban centers over the last 20 years, suburbs in the largest 100 metros have seen the black population increase by about 50 percent since 2000. In 2000, 56 percent of black Americans living in the largest 100 metropolitan areas resided in cities. Today, roughly 46 percent of black residents in these same metros live in cities. Similarly, rural areas have seen very little change in number of black residents since 2000. Cities, suburbs, and rural areas, however, all show substantial increases in the Hispanic and Asian population over the past two decades. Across all suburbs in the top 100 metros, the Hispanic and Asian populations nearly doubled since 2000, with similar increases occurring in rural communities and to a lesser extent in cities of the largest metros. [25]

[25] See also Pew Research Center (2018).

Figure 9. Number of People in Persistently High-Poverty Urban, Suburban, and Rural Places, 2017



Sources: USDA, Economic Research Service 2019; 1990, 2000 Census; 2006-10, 2013-17 American Community Survey.
Note: Persistently poor places are defined as those with poverty rates over 20 percent in the 1990 and 2000 Census, and the 2006-2010 and 2013-17 American Community Survey.

In following the first column of Table 2, it is clear that the number of poor non-Hispanic whites has increased substantially in urban, suburban, and rural areas over the past 20 years. From 2000 to 2017, the number of non-Hispanic white poor in cities of the largest 100 metropolitan areas increased by 18.6 percent (2.33 million to 2.76 million, see Table 2). Suburbs experienced an even larger increase – 39.1 percent – in the number of non-Hispanic white poor persons during that same time span (4.98 million to 6.93 million). Most of the suburban growth in poverty among non-Hispanic whites over the past 20 years occurred in the newest suburbs – those built after 1980 (not shown here). The number of non-Hispanic whites in poverty grew by 18.3 percent in rural areas from 2000 to 2017 – nearly identical to the rate of growth in cities. Since 2000, growth in the number of poor non-Hispanic whites clearly outpaced change in the number of non-Hispanic whites (poor and non-poor) living in cities (-2.8 percent), suburbs (2.4 percent), or rural counties (-0.8 percent) since 2000 (see Appendix Table 3).

Despite changes in the racial composition of cities and suburbs, there has been little change in the share of the poor identifying as non-Hispanic white. Non-Hispanic whites composed 23.3 percent of all poor persons in urban tracts of the largest 100 metros in 2017, relatively unchanged from 2000. Non-Hispanic whites compose 44.0 percent of the suburban poor in 2017, down slightly from 49.6 percent in 2000. In rural America, the share of non-Hispanic whites who are poor remained nearly constant at roughly 70 percent in 2000 and 2017.

Table 2. Number of People Living in Poverty by Race, Ethnicity and Place 2000-17

	Number of Poor People (1000s)			
	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Urban Tracts				
2000	2,326	3,743	3,247	615
2010	2,599	3,829	3,818	692
2015	2,868	4,179	4,544	854
2017	2,759	3,954	4,278	845
% Change 2000-17	18.6%	5.6%	31.8%	37.4%
Suburban Tracts				
2000	4,984	1,820	2,785	463
2010	6,130	2,445	4,091	648
2015	7,272	3,023	5,331	831
2017	6,931	2,875	5,088	851
% Change 2000-17	39.1%	58.0%	82.7%	83.8%
Rural Counties				
2000	4,520	1,257	675	44
2010	5,190	1,331	936	59
2015	5,608	1,367	1,076	76
2017	5,346	1,292	1,030	76
% Change 2000-17	18.3%	2.8%	52.6%	72.7%

Sources: Census 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2011-15, 2013-17.
Note: Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only. Figures for 2010, 2015, and 2017 reflect five-year ACS data.

Black Americans, on the other hand, compose a declining share of poor people in metropolitan and rural America. Consistent with slow rates of growth in the black urban population from 2000 to 2017, the number of poor blacks in cities of the largest metros was about the same in 2017 as in 2000 (4.0 million versus 3.7 million persons, respectively). Contrary to popular perceptions perhaps, blacks composed a declining share of the urban poor from 2000 to 2017 (37.7 percent to 33.4 percent). Despite significant increases in black suburban population and in the number of poor blacks in suburbs since 1990, blacks compose just 18.3 percent of the suburban poor in 2017 – a figure that has remained essentially unchanged since 1990. The number of black Americans living in poverty in rural communities also has stayed relatively steady over the past twenty years at around 1.3 million people.

As we should expect, change in the spatial distribution of Hispanic Americans with income below the poverty line closely follows patterns of Hispanic population growth in metropolitan areas. About one-third of the urban poor in the largest 100 metro areas identified as Hispanic in 2000, compared to slightly more than one-quarter of the suburban poor that year. Cities in the largest 100 metro areas experienced a 31.8 percent increase in the number of poor Hispanic residents from 2000 to 2017. The number of Hispanic poor people living in cities eclipsed the number of poor blacks living in cities during that two-decade span. Similarly, there were more poor Hispanics than poor blacks in the suburbs of our largest metro areas in 2000. Again, reflecting the reality that suburbs have come to serve as a key destination for Hispanics, the number of Hispanic poor people increased 82.7 percent from 2000 to 2017 (2.8 million to 5.1 million). Today, as Hispanics each compose about one-third of the poor population in urban centers and suburbs (36.1 percent and 32.3 percent, respectively).

Even though the number of Asian Americans living in poverty is much smaller in urban, suburban,

and rural America compared to other racial and ethnic groups, there have been dramatic increases in poverty among Asians across the geographic landscape since 2000. While roughly even numbers of poor Asian Americans live in cities and suburbs of the largest 100 metros, the number of Asians living in poverty increased by 83.8 percent from 2000 to 2017 in suburban America. Comparably large percentage changes also are seen in rural America.

One fact about poverty that has not changed in the last twenty years: poverty rates remain much higher among racial and ethnic minorities than non-Hispanic whites (see Table 3). The black poverty rate in the average urban tract was 27.0 percent in 2017, compared to 24.2 percent among Hispanics, 18.9 percent for Asians, and 18.1 percent among non-Hispanic whites. Similarly, the mean poverty rate for blacks in suburban tracts is slightly higher than the Hispanic suburban poverty rate (18.6 percent versus 15.7 percent in 2017), but almost double the average non-Hispanic white or Asian poverty rate in suburbs. Similar to patterns in cities, poverty rates among blacks and Hispanics in rural counties consistently are about twice as high as poverty rates for non-Hispanic whites and Asians. Although poverty rates have started to fall across all racial and ethnic groups in recent years, poverty remains far more prevalent across all groups today than in 2000.

Table 3. Poverty Rate by Race, Ethnicity and Place 2000-17

	Poverty Rate			
	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Urban Tracts				
2000	15.2%	23.6%	22.4%	17.9%
2010	16.3%	25.8%	23.4%	16.9%
2015	18.9%	28.9%	25.9%	19.6%
2017	18.1%	27.0%	24.2%	18.9%
Suburban Tracts				
2000	6.8%	14.0%	13.0%	8.9%
2010	8.2%	15.8%	14.6%	9.2%
2015	9.9%	19.8%	16.9%	10.9%
2017	9.5%	18.6%	15.7%	10.7%
Rural Counties				
2000	12.4%	27.7%	25.7%	13.7%
2010	13.2%	31.6%	28.0%	15.1%
2015	14.1%	34.1%	29.0%	18.3%
2017	13.7%	32.3%	26.7%	17.1%

Sources: Census 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2011-15, 2013-17.
Note: Poverty status is defined as household income at or below the federal poverty threshold. Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only. Figures for 2010, 2015, and 2017 reflect five-year ACS

Trends in the racial and ethnic composition of people living in high-poverty areas is more complex by geography. While three times as many black and Hispanic residents of cities live in census tracts with poverty rates over 20 percent as non-Hispanic whites, the vast majority of people living in high-poverty rural counties are white (see Table 4). The picture in suburban areas follows a slightly different path. Although 2 of every 3 individuals living in high-poverty suburban tracts are people of color, the number of non-Hispanic whites living in high-poverty suburban areas has increased by more than 130 percent since 2000. As with overall trends seen in Figure 7, there were steady increases in the number of people living in high-poverty urban tracts and rural counties between 2000 and 2015. After 2015, however, the number of people in high-

poverty tracts began to fall across all race and ethnic groups – another sign that the economic recovery has begun to improve economic conditions for those at lower end of the wage distribution.

Today, high-poverty urban tracts in the largest 100 metro areas remain places of striking racial segregation, as has been the case for many decades. About 8 in 10 high-poverty urban tracts have populations that are predominately composed of race and ethnic minority groups (not shown here). Seventy percent of all people – poor and not poor – living in high-poverty urban tracts are black (34.3 percent) or Hispanic (36.4 percent). The average high-poverty urban tract is 37.6 percent black in 2017, down slightly from 42.0 percent in 2000. High-poverty tracts were 33.6 percent Hispanic in 2017, relatively unchanged since 2000. Blacks and Hispanics living in cities remain highly segregated in high-poverty neighborhoods. In 2017, 65.5 percent of black urban residents lived in high-poverty neighborhoods of the largest 100 metropolitan areas, compared to 82.4 percent of black urban residents with income below the federal poverty line. Similarly, slightly more than half of urban Hispanics lived in high-poverty tracts in 2017, but 76.9 percent of poor Hispanics in cities lived in high-poverty neighborhoods. The concentration of non-Hispanic white poor people in high-poverty urban neighborhoods, however, changed significantly in the last decade as well. Whereas 41.2 percent of poor urban non-Hispanic whites lived in high-poverty tracts in 2000, 50.3 percent did by 2017.

Table 4. Number of People Living in High Poverty Areas by Race, Ethnicity and Place 2000-17

	Number of People (1000s)			
	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Urban Tracts				
2000	4,553	8,764	7,160	1,139
2010	5,690	8,708	8,453	1,375
2015	6,689	9,584	10,140	1,806
2017	6,114	9,180	9,734	1,700
% Change 2000-17	34.3%	4.7%	35.9%	49.3%
Suburban Tracts				
2000	3,233	2,364	4,095	366
2010	6,478	3,541	5,995	602
2015	9,059	5,046	9,066	978
2017	7,624	4,558	8,216	862
% Change 2000-17	135.8%	92.8%	100.6%	135.5%
Rural Counties				
2000	5,088	1,969	820	40
2010	7,791	2,508	1,121	74
2015	10,677	3,798	1,536	113
2017	8,766	2,513	1,355	104
% Change 2000-17	72.3%	27.6%	65.2%	160.0%

Sources: Census 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2011-15, 2013-17.
Note: High poverty places are defined as those with poverty rates over 20 percent. Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only. Figures for 2010, 2015, and 2017 reflect five-year ACS data.

High-poverty suburban tracts increasingly are coming to resemble the racially segregation found in high-poverty urban neighborhoods, despite the fact that many suburban communities are majority white. The average high-poverty suburban tract in 2017 had a residential population that was just 37.5 percent non-Hispanic white in 2017, despite the fact that the average suburban tract was 63 percent non-Hispanic white. Roughly half of all poor suburban blacks and Hispanics lived in high-poverty tracts in 2017 up slightly from 2000 for each population sub-group. It is important to note, however, that a growing number of poor non-

Hispanic white households are living in high-poverty suburban tracts as well. More than one-quarter of poor non-Hispanic whites – in old and newer suburbs alike – live in a suburban tract where the poverty rate exceeds 20 percent. The share of poor suburban non-Hispanic whites living in high-poverty areas has more than doubled since 2000 (12.3 percent to 22.3 percent in 2017).

While findings here clearly demonstrate that poverty and exposure to concentrated poverty remains more prevalent among communities of color, the reality of place, race, and poverty in America does not conform to popular stereotypes or conceptions (see Allard 2017). Poverty among non-Hispanic whites has become more severe in all geographic areas. The number of non-Hispanic whites living in areas with poverty rates over 20 percent has more than doubled since 2000. Contrary to popular perceptions, most poor people are not people of color living in poor urban places. Yet, it remains the case that people of color disproportionately experience poverty and are more likely to live in high-poverty, racially segregated communities than non-Hispanic whites. As we think about poverty solutions in the coming decades, it will be imperative to find policies that recognize the disproportionate exposure of communities of color to poverty and do not play to stereotypes of the poor based on race.

Trends in Work, Place, and Poverty. Recent reductions in poverty are driven by improved labor market conditions in recent years. Unemployment rates from 2010 to 2017 fell by about 1 to 2 percentage points in the ACS, returning to pre-recession levels in many places (see Appendix Table 4). Although recent national economic indicators show progress, there is evidence that the benefits of such growth are not reaching all households in all places. For example, employment growth since 2010 has been mostly concentrated in the largest metropolitan areas – those with more than 1,000,000 residents. Smaller metro areas and rural regions have not benefited nearly as much from the fruits of economic recovery (Hendrickson, Muro, and Galston 2018; Pew Research Center 2018).[26] Data from the St. Louis Federal Reserve indicate that median weekly wages have increased only by about 3 percent from $342 in 2010 to $353 in 2017 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). Inflation adjusted earnings and wages since 2007 suggest that workers in jobs with lower pay have seen wages stay flat or compared to those in higher skill or higher pay jobs (Autor 2010; Monaco and Pierce 2015).

Lower rates of unemployment and modest wage growth also have co-occurred with drops in labor force participation since the end of the Great Recession. Labor force participation held fairly steady across urban, suburban, and rural geography from 1990 to 2010, but has fallen nationally since 2010 (see Appendix Table 4). Declines in labor force participation are due in large part to changing demand for workers, particularly those vulnerable to the effects of trade and automation, rather than changes in labor supply (Abraham & Kearney 2018; Hipple 2016; Krause & Sawhill 2017). Subtle spatial patterns are apparent when viewing changes in labor force participation rates in recent years. First, in contrast to thirty years ago, when labor force participation was several percentage points higher in suburbs than cities, average labor force participation rates have converged in the last decade. For example, the mean labor force participation rate in urban tracts of the 100 largest metro areas has increased by almost three percentage points since 2000 (61.6 percent to 64.3 percent in 2017). The average labor force participation rate in suburbs fell by about 1 percentage point from 2000 to 2017 (65.6 percent to 64.5 percent), although newer suburbs saw average labor force participation rates fall by 2 to 3 percentage points compared to older suburbs. As a result, the average labor force participation rate in urban tracts is nearly identical today to average rates in most types of suburbs. It remains the case that labor force participation in rural areas trends lower than in metropolitan areas and

[26] See also Shearer, Shah, Friedhoff, and Berube (2018) and Berube (2019).

that trend has persisted in rural America even as unemployment rates have fallen. In 2017, the average labor force participation rate in rural counties was 56.7 percent down from 59.2 percent in 2010. Moreover, it appears that labor force attachment is holding steady in many suburban and rural areas at these lower levels, even as the economic recovery has continued into its 8th year.

The spatial relationship between changes in labor force participation and changes in poverty since 2010, however, does not suggest that places with rising labor force participation rates are free from poverty problems. Appendix Table 5 examines poverty trends across metropolitan and rural counties at different points in the distribution of percentage change in labor force participation. The top panel compares counties in the top quintile (upper 20th percentile), the next panel compares counties in the middle quintiles (middle 20th to 80th percentiles), and the third panel compares counties in the lower quintile (bottom 20th percentile). First, it is apparent that places experiencing the largest increases in labor force participation during the economic recovery also have seen larger increases in the number of people living in poverty on average than places with more modest increases or net decreases in labor force participation. For example, the number of people in poverty increased by 17.4 percent from 2010 to 2017 across metropolitan counties within the upper 20th percentile of percentage change in labor force participation during that same period. The average increase in number of people living in poverty was 10.9 percent for metropolitan counties in the between the 20th and 80th percentiles in change in labor force participation rate. Second, as we would expect, mean poverty rates are a few percentage points lower in counties with larger increases in labor force participation (top quintile) than in counties in the bottom four quintiles. Poverty rates have risen on average since 2010, however, regardless of where a county falls in the distribution of change in labor force participation. Although these descriptive analyses of aggregate patterns that mask migration flows, changes in industry, shifts in job quality or availability, and individual behavior, we should be cautious to presume that rising poverty is simply because choices by individuals to "sit on the sidelines" as the economy continues to recover.

Consistent with this somewhat more muddled economic picture than unemployment rates alone convey, there is a growing group of Americans living just above the federal poverty line (defined here as individuals in households with income between 100 percent and 150 percent of federal poverty, see Appendix Table 1).[27] In 1990, there were about 15.5 million people living just above the federal poverty line in metropolitan areas and another 5.1 million in rural America. By 2017, the number of people in metropolitan areas with income near poverty exceeded 23 million, increasing by about half in three decades. Today, nearly one in four people living in the U.S. are living near or below the federal poverty line. Particularly sharp increases in the number of people living just above the poverty line have occurred in metropolitan America since 2000, particularly in suburban America, reflections of the two economic recessions in that period and economic recoveries that did not reach all households. The spatial distribution of families at risk of falling into poverty is the same as for those in poverty: in 2017 there were almost 5 million more people in suburbs with income just above the poverty line as in cities (11.1 million versus 6.5 million). And, as is the case with poverty, the rate of increase in the number of people living just above the federal poverty line in the suburbs and cities of the largest metro areas far exceeds population growth rates. It is important to take note of households precariously perched above the poverty line because many of these households struggle to make ends meet and ensure basic needs are met. Moreover, many of these households are eligible for safety net program assistance intended to help enhance chances for mobility and prevent slippage into poverty.

[27] Income between 100 percent and 150 percent of the federal poverty threshold ranged from $19,749 to $29,624 for a family of three with two children in 2017, see Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar (2018).

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Several key points about recent trends in place, poverty, and work bear revisiting as we think about implications for 2050. Both by the level of poverty and the rate of change, it is clear that suburban America now copes with changing levels of poverty commonly thought to be distinct urban or remote rural realities in the U.S. The rise of suburban poverty in America, however, has not coincided with a precipitous decrease in urban or rural poverty. Even with the economic progress of the last few years, poverty problems have become more acute across the geographic landscape since 1990. Nor is the rise and persistence of suburban poverty simply a reflection of population growth. Suburbs – and to a lesser extent cities -- have seen poverty rise at a rate faster than population growth. This suggests that trends in poverty over the past three decades are more about people becoming poor in place and the structural realities around downward mobility, than being solely about population migration or movement from place to place. Regardless of urban or suburban geography, communities of color experience poverty and concentrated poverty at much higher rates than non-Hispanic whites. Poverty among older Americans continues to rise. Labor force participation has been falling in suburban areas roughly as much as in rural communities. Contrary to popular expectations perhaps, data here suggest a convergence in labor force participation rates across urban and suburban geography. Finally, the economic recovery has not fundamentally changed the relative distribution of poverty across urban, suburban, and rural places. The current geography of poverty in America appears fixed for the time being.

Such insights have important implications for how we might expect poverty problems to emerge over the next three decades. First, one of the greatest challenges confronting national, state, and local government in the coming years will be the durable and persistent presence of concentrated poverty across the urban, suburban, and rural landscape and across all racial and ethnic groups. Lessons from the last thirty years have taught us that failing to take action on concentrated poverty – particularly to exposure during childhood – will have substantial downstream consequences. Our nation's ability to reduce poverty and inequality by 2050 will be determined in no small part by how we address concentrated poverty. Second, the greying of the population suggests that we are only beginning to see the poverty problems that will emerge as a greater number of Americans are finding their fixed incomes fall short of providing for basic needs. It is important to weigh how federal safety net programs such as SNAP and Medicaid, and local community-based nonprofit services, may address the health and well-being of retired baby boomers living in poverty across the geographic landscape. Third, rising poverty in metropolitan areas over the last several decades appears related to economic structural change and people becoming poor in all types of places, although immigration and migration of low-income households likely matters as well. While any reductions in poverty are welcomed signs of trickling down of economic opportunity during the current recovery, it does not appear that sustained periods of growth and expansion are able to make substantial dents in the number of people living near or below the federal poverty line. This sobering reality indicates that safety net programs will continue to confront persistent demand for assistance even when unemployment rates are very low and the domestic economy is expanding at a strong pace. Recent good news around poverty reduction, therefore, should be tempered by the fact that most suburban places – like most urban and rural places – are still grappling with poverty problems that are more severe than at the onset of the Great Recession.

Recent Safety Net Response to Need across the Geographic Landscape

With recent trends in poverty, race, and place in mind, I now turn to descriptive analyses of how key safety net program caseloads, benefits, and expenditures vary across urban, suburban, and rural geography. Results presented in this section of the report are focused on county-level changes in poverty, work, and program participation because county geography is best for approximating the administrative units of analyses for safety net program delivery, as well as being good approximations for the catchment areas of many public assistance and human service programs. County-level geography smooths over urban-suburban distinctions, so when making urban-suburban comparisons in safety net provision, I sort metropolitan counties into five categories: urban counties outside the largest 100 metros; urban counties in the largest metros by percent suburban (0-33 percent, 33-66 percent, and more than 66 percent); and suburban counties in the largest 100 metro areas.

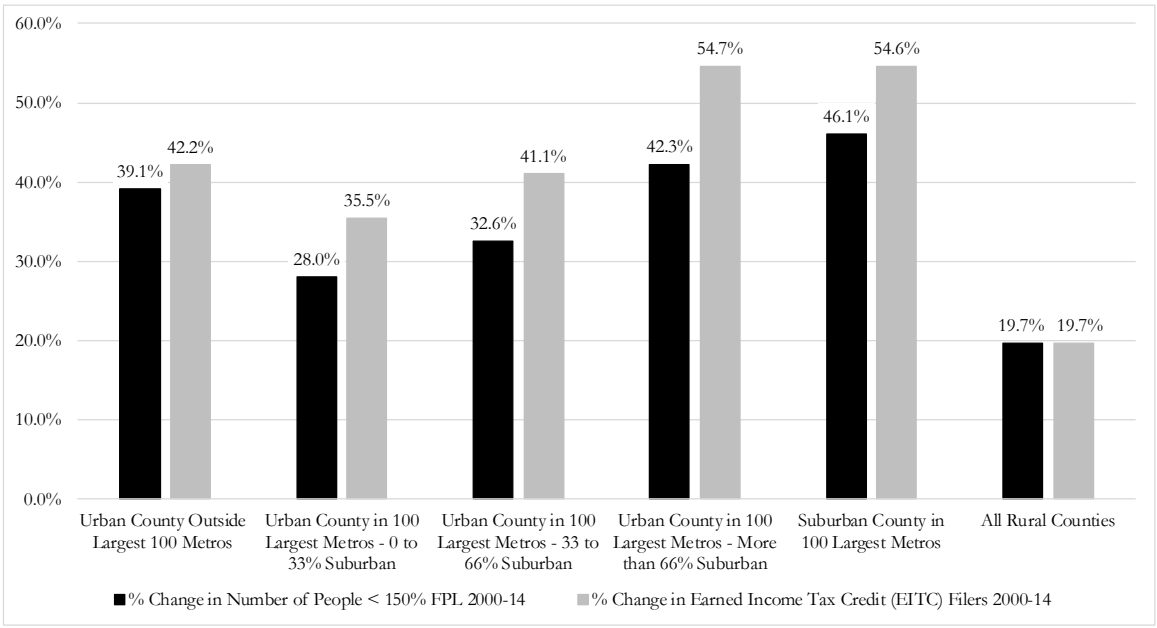
Public Assistance Programs. Figures 10 through 12 examine county-level variation in the percentage change in people with income at or below 150 percent of federal poverty (a rough proxy for the population potentially eligible for each public assistance programs), as well as changes in receipt of the EITC, Child Tax Credit, SNAP, TANF, Medicaid/CHIP, and eligibility for free or reduced lunch. The specific temporal comparisons in participation vary by program depending on the years for which data are available (see Appendix Table 6 for more detail).

Consistent with expectations discussed above and detailed in Table 1, the federal EITC has expanded parallel to increases in the number of low-income people across the geographic landscape since 2000. For example, EITC filings in metro areas slightly outpaced changes in the number of people near and below the poverty line, likely a reflection that the EITC reaches many households just above the 150 percent of poverty cut-off used here. Rural counties actually saw EITC filings and the number of people within 150 percent of poverty closely track each other, increasing by about 20 percent from 2000 to 2014. Increasingly the EITC has become a critical source of assistance for low-income households in suburban communities. Growth in EITC filings occurred at a faster rate in suburban counties and in the most heavily suburbanized urban counties since 2000. While urban counties in the largest 100 metros that are less than one-third suburban saw a 35.5 percent increase in EITC filers from 2000 to 2014, suburban counties and the most suburbanized urban counties experienced about 55 percent increases. The local-spatial responsiveness of the EITC also is reflected in benefits provided, as the median EITC refund or credit received is roughly $2,300 across urban, suburban, and rural locations (in $2015, see Appendix Table 6).

Another point stands out when viewing trends in the EITC across space and time. Despite substantial increases in the number of families within 150 percent of poverty, the number of EITC filings rose only a few percentage points between 2010 and 2015 across metropolitan areas and fell in rural areas during that period. Figure 12 similarly shows that the Child Tax Credit – seen as an effective tool for reducing poverty when bundled with the EITC and SNAP (Hardy, Smeeding & Ziliak 2018) – also experienced a decrease in the number of filings by about 5 percent from 2010 to 2015 across urban, suburban, and rural America. These trends could be explained in part by wage and earnings growth among lower income families, which have led previously eligible filers to phase out of eligibility altogether. At the same time, job and wage growth has been sluggish for those in lower paying jobs during this early portion of current economic recovery. Thus, some individuals may have experienced such long unemployment spells that they have no work earnings to report to make them eligible. Prior to the Tax and Job Creation Act of 2017 (TJCA), the CTC wasn't available to families earning less than $3,000 and phases to zero for married tax filers with

income over $150,000 (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016a).[28] Taken together, the EITC and CTC are not well-equipped to reach economically vulnerable households with low or no earnings, even though these credits are among the largest cash assistance programs for low-income populations (Hardy, Smeeding & Ziliak 2018; Jones 2014). Moving forward, we might expect that the EITC and CTC will be more effective at reducing poverty during periods of low unemployment and low-wage growth, rather than periods of persistently high rates of unemployment and severe decreases in work earnings as was the case from 2010 to 2015.

Figure 10. Percentage Change in EITC Receipt across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-2014



Sources: 2000 Census, 2010-14 American Community Survey, Brookings EITC interactive, 2000, 2014.

Figure 11 charts changes in SNAP and TANF caseloads from 2000 to 2010, when the most complete data for each program is available. Again consistent with expectations for a federally financed and regulated programs, median SNAP benefits receipt is nearly identical across urban, suburban, and rural geography – about $1,600-1,700 per person in 2010 (in $2015, see Appendix Table 6). Moreover, SNAP caseloads increased at comparable rates across all types of geography. It is apparent that SNAP participation more than doubled from 2000 to 2010 in urban, suburban, and rural areas, a rate of increase that well beyond observed increases in the number of low-oncome individuals in each type of place. Prior research suggests that sharp increases in SNAP were due in large part to a mix of policy changes that expanded eligibility and eased the burden of enrollment. While SNAP caseloads are up everywhere, Table 2 suggests that the increases have been most acute in suburban counties and heavily suburbanized urban counties since 2000. The rate of change in SNAP participation is slightly lower in rural counties than metro counties, but caseloads doubled during a time when the number of people living near or below the poverty line increased by about 12 percent.

[28] Passage of the TJCA temporarily lowered the phase-in point to $2,500, although that policy change is not reflected in these data.

Consistent with expectations about safety net programs with substantial control and reliant on local capacity to act, county-level administrative data available indicates the number of adults and children receiving TANF cash assistance fell fairly substantially even in the face of significant increases in the number of low-income households and single-female headed households in poverty between 2000 and 2010. For example, the number of low-income individuals increased by 13.3 percent from 2000 to 2010 in urban counties where less than one-third of the population lived in suburbs and the number of poor single-female headed households increased by almost 25 percent during that time (not shown here). The number of TANF recipients in those weakly suburbanized urban counties, however, fell by one-third in that decade span. TANF program participation fell at a similar rate in across the urban and rural landscape. Interestingly, the number of TANF clients declined less in suburban and heavily suburbanized urban counties in the largest 100 metropolitan areas than in other geographies. TANF receipt fell by 16.6 percent from 2000 to 2010 in suburban counties, roughly half the rate of decline in program participation seen in more urbanized counties. The decline of TANF caseloads, even amidst the aftermath of the worst economic recession in post-war history reflects the features of the policy that limit its local-spatial responsiveness. Not only does federal law permit state government and local places wide latitude in setting eligibility, determining program benefits, and enforcing work requirements, but TANF is highly reliant on the capacity of local service organizations.[29]

Figure 12 considers trends in Medicaid/CHIP enrollment from 2012 to 2017. As noted, the ACA expanded eligibility for Medicaid coverage to a wider range of low-income adults and state expansion of income eligibility thresholds have similarly expanded coverage. Costs of expanding coverage to low-income non-custodial parents and childless adults was nearly fully funded by the federal government, although states roughly cover 40 percent of the costs of expanding income eligibility outside the provisions of the ACA. It is not surprising, therefore, to see Medicaid/CHIP caseloads rise by about 20 to 25 percent in urban and suburban America since 2012. Growth in Medicaid coverage occurred at about half this rate in rural counties – perhaps a reflection of many southeastern states opting out of the ACA Medicaid expansions.[30]

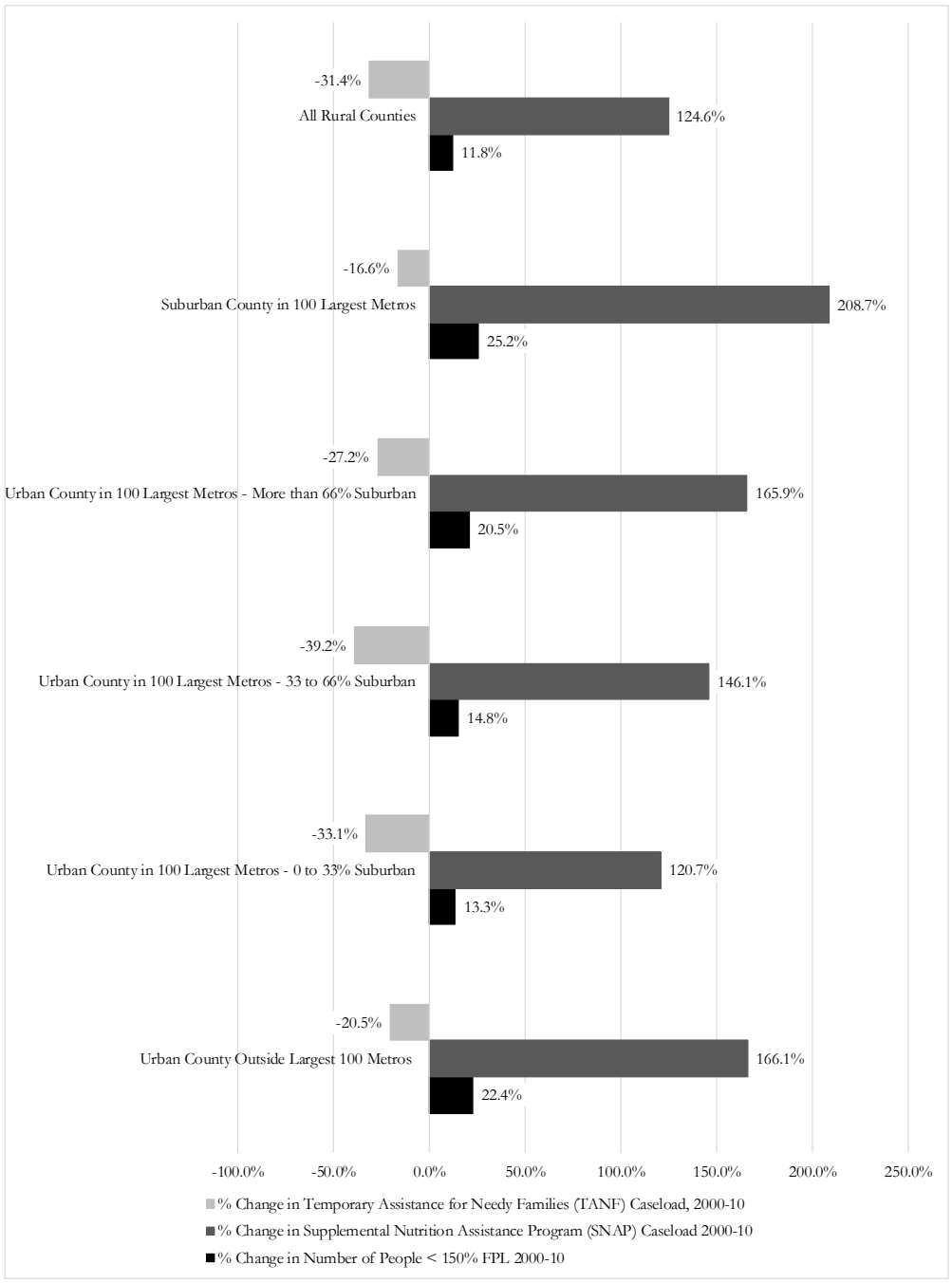
Finally, we see evidence that eligibility for free or reduced school lunch varies closely with changes in the number of people near or below poverty. This makes sense as eligibility formulas are tied to the poverty threshold, but the local-spatial responsiveness of this program is unique compared to many other programs targeting children in low-income households. The free or reduced lunch program is funded by the federal government, which we would expect leads to more consistent administration over geography. Many other school-based and early childhood programs of assistance, however, are reliant on local schools, community-based nonprofit organizational capacity, and state or local funding.[31] This has led many to be concerned that early childhood programming and other supports for children may vary widely by geography ((Jessen-Howard, Malik, Workman, & Hamm, 2018; Malik et al., 2018; Reinvestment Fund, 2018).

[29] See Soss, Fording, and Schram (2011).

[30] Medicaid coverage expansions observed here are consistent with estimates of the share of covered individuals who are eligible through the ACA expansion, see Rudowitz & Antonisse (2018).

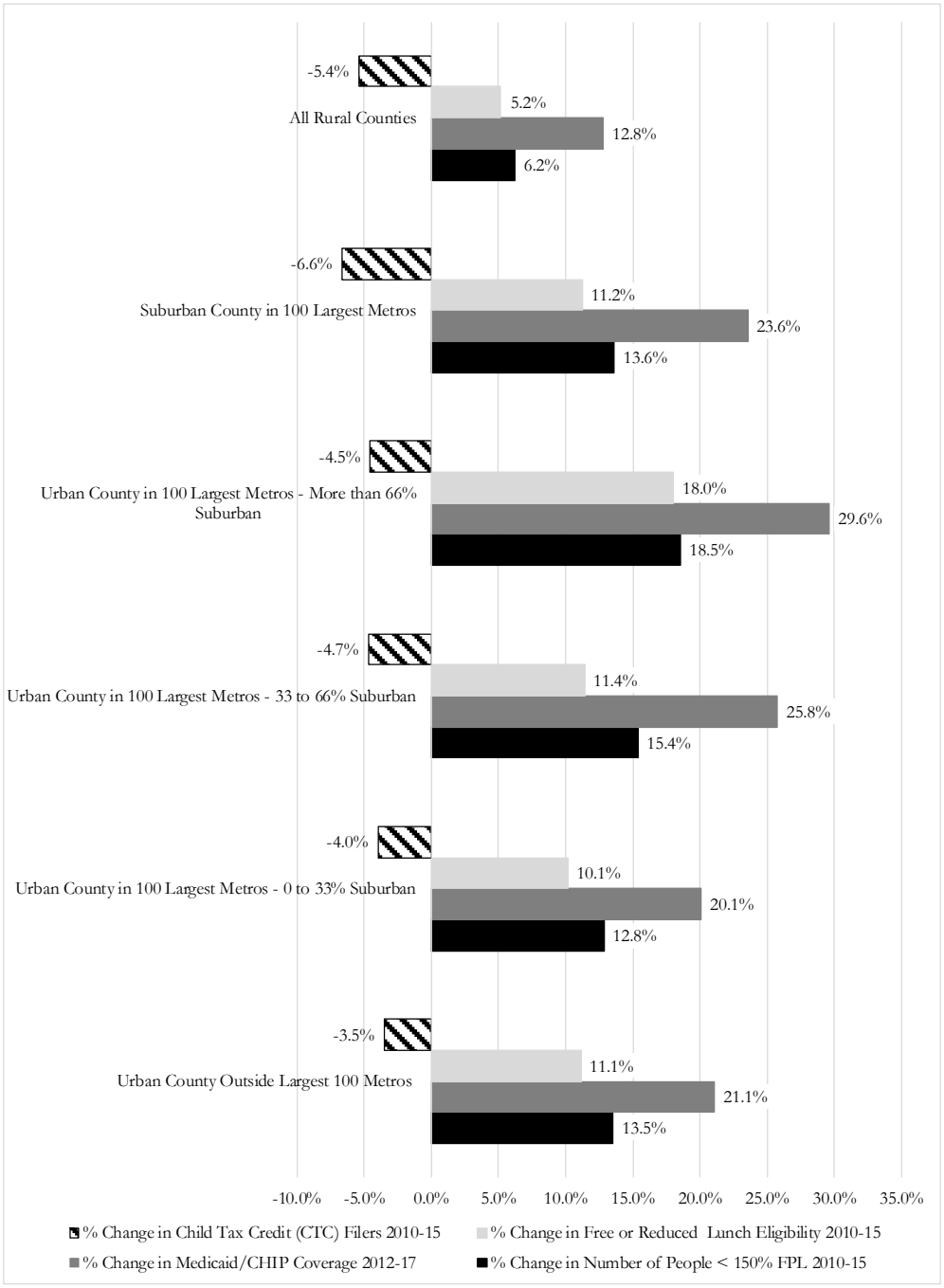
[31] It should be noted that consistent funding and eligibility across geography may not translate to equitable take up of free or reduced lunch, nor to consistency in the dietary quality of meals.

Figure 11. Percentage Change in SNAP and TANF Receipt across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-10



Sources: 2000 Census, 2006-10 American Community Survey, USDA, Economic Research Service 2000, 2010, TANF State Administrative Data 2000, 2010

Figure 12. Percentage Change in CTC, Medicaid/CHIP, and Free or Reduced Lunch Receipt across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2010-2015



Sources: 2006-10, 2011-15 American Community Survey, IRS SOI Tax Statistics, 2010, 2015, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010, 2015

Nonprofit Human Services. To consider how local nonprofit service sectors may be responding to the changing geography of poverty, analysis turns to county-level human service expenditure data from nonprofit IRS 990 filings. These data permit useful comparisons of nonprofit human service capacity across urban, suburban, and rural counties and the responsiveness of that capacity to rising poverty.

Nationally, roughly two-thirds of all nonprofit human service expenditures are reported in urban counties. Roughly $53 billion of the $82 billion in nonprofit human service expenditures in 2015 was reported by nonprofits in urban counties (see Table 5). Expenditures among all registered human service nonprofits increased by about 60 percent in real dollars across most urban, suburban, and rural counties alike from 2000 to 2015. While such increases in funding and program spending are a good sign during a period of time that saw poverty increase dramatically, nonprofit human service organizations saw much slower growth in expenditures in the wake of the Great Recession. For example, while total expenditures increased by about 60 percent in suburban and rural counties from 2000 to 2010, suburban counties saw expenditures increase by 9.1 percent from 2010 to 2015 and rural counties saw a 5.1 percent real dollar decline in expenditures in the five years following the Great Recession.

Per capita expenditure data presented in Tables 6 and 7 also suggest many suburban and rural areas have far to go to increase before being even near parity with nonprofit human service expenditures typically observed in urban centers. On average, urban counties where less than one-third of the population lives in suburbs spent $1,896 per person with income at or below 150 percent of poverty in 2010, compared to $630 in suburban counties and $536 in rural counties, respectively. Suburban and rural counties also are shown to deviate more widely around these lower means – suggesting the presence of wider variation in human service provision outside of cities than within cities. Given that nonprofit human service expenditures stayed relatively flat from 2010 to 2015, despite substantial increases in the number of low-income people nationally, it is not surprising to see average per capita human service expenditure levels fall by 4.1 percent to 12.3 percent across urban, suburban, and rural geography between 2010 and 2015.

Table 5. Trends in Total Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-2015

Total Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures (in 2015 $millions)	Urban County Outside Largest 100 Metros	Urban Counties in the Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas			Suburban County	All Rural Counties
All Nonprofit Organizations		0 to 33% Suburban	33 to 66% Suburban	More than 66% Suburban		
2000	$7,402	$7,267	$10,173	$7,293	$12,349	$4,642
2010	$11,934	$11,639	$16,469	$12,349	$19,677	$7,683
2015	$12,121	$12,421	$16,079	$12,665	$21,462	$7,290
% Change 2000-2010	61.2%	60.2%	61.9%	69.3%	59.3%	65.5%
% Change 2010-2015	1.6%	6.7%	-2.4%	2.6%	9.1%	-5.1%
% Change 2000-2015	63.8%	70.9%	58.1%	73.7%	73.8%	57.0%

Sources: National Center on Charitable Statistics, 2000, 2010, 2015

Table 6. Trends in Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures per Low-income Person across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-2015

Mean Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures per Low-income Person (in $2015) All Nonprofit Organizations	Urban County Outside Largest 100 Metros	Urban Counties in the Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas			Suburban County	All Rural Counties
		0 to 33% Suburban	33 to 66% Suburban	More than 66% Suburban		
2000	$870 ($879)	$1,387 ($1,008)	$1,239 ($1,415)	$1,213 ($864)	$469 ($982)	$357 ($1,379)
2010	$1,143 ($1,055)	$1,896 ($1,248)	$1,366 ($705)	$1,704 ($1,174)	$630 ($1,404)	$536 ($1,856)
2015	$1,025 ($1,103)	$1,744 ($1,319)	$1,284 ($773)	$1,494 ($1,100)	$604 ($2,237)	$479 ($1,985)
% Change 2000-2010	31.4%	36.7%	10.3%	40.5%	34.3%	50.1%
% Change 2010-2015	-10.3%	-8.0%	-6.0%	-12.3%	-4.1%	-10.6%
% Change 2000-2015	17.8%	25.7%	3.6%	23.2%	28.8%	34.2%

Sources: National Center on Charitable Statistics, 2000, 2010, 2015

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Nonprofit expenditure data that include larger nonprofit human service organizations, also mask a different story about program resources when looking at "smaller" nonprofits with annual budgets under $10 million – those organizations one might infer are most likely to be working locally on social issues. Smaller nonprofits account for about one-third of all human service expenditures in the sector. As a result, it is not surprising that per capita expenditures for this subset of the sector are roughly half of that for the sector as a whole. More troubling, perhaps, if one believes that these organizations are more closely connected to local communities: expenditures from 2000 to 2010 grew at a much smaller rate than for all nonprofits. Per capita resources among nonprofits under $10 million in annual budget also fell sharply during that time.

Appendix Table 8 traces per capita nonprofit human service expenditures across regions of the country and by geography. There is evidence of some regional variation in human service expenditures by geography. For instance, nonprofit human service expenditures increased by roughly 70 percent in urban counties in the Northeast and South from 2000 to 2010, but by less than 50 percent in urban counties of the Midwest. Urban counties remain much better funded across all regions of the U.S. relative to suburban or rural counties. Suburban and rural counties in the South, along with rural counties in the West, however, appear to have extremely limited nonprofit human service capacity.

Table 7. Trends in Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures per Low-income Person across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties (Nonprofits with less than $10 million in annual revenue), 2000-2015

Mean Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures per Low-income Person (in $2015) Nonprofit Organizations with Revenue < $10 million Annually	Urban County Outside Largest 100 Metros	Urban Counties in the Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas			Suburban County	All Rural Counties
		0 to 33% Suburban	33 to 66% Suburban	More than 66% Suburban		
2000	$1,005 ($777)	$921 ($556)	$875 ($582)	$1,022 ($683)	$546 ($962)	$483 ($1,580)
2010	$798 ($591)	$886 ($561)	$704 ($379)	$913 ($591)	$522 ($993)	$500 ($1,227)
2015	$647 ($487)	$786 ($588)	$591 ($316)	$676 ($406)	$424 ($754)	$442 ($1,015)
% Change 2000-2010	-20.6%	-3.8%	-19.5%	-10.7%	-4.4%	3.5%
% Change 2010-2015	-18.9%	-11.3%	-16.1%	-26.0%	-18.8%	-11.6%
% Change 2000-2015	-35.6%	-14.7%	-32.5%	-33.9%	-22.3%	-8.5%

Sources: National Center on Charitable Statistics, 2000, 2010, 2015

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

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A few key findings emerge from the descriptive analyses presented here. First, federally funded and regulated program caseloads – as expected – demonstrate a significant degree of local-spatial responsiveness. The EITC, SNAP, and Medicaid all exhibit programmatic features that we would expect to lead to greater local-spatial responsiveness: counter-cyclical properties and federal regulation of eligibility and benefits. Benefits received through the EITC and SNAP also are essentially identical across local geography. More highly localized safety net provision – here best exemplified by TANF and nonprofit human service programs – are clearly more varied in availability and not consistently responsive to need across geography. In the case of nonprofit human service programming, the path forward to geographic parity begins with narrowing per capita funding gaps and seeding new local capacity.

As policymakers, charitable philanthropy, and researchers weigh policy pathways to reduce poverty and inequality in the next three decades, we should pay close attention to the programmatic features that promote responsive programs as much as funding levels or social innovation status. Without ensuring that safety net programs operate with spatial-local responsiveness, any new funding could get refracted through the same institutional and political lenses that can lead to varied program delivery and availability. Ironically, it appears that enhancing the fiscal and regulatory role of the federal government – not state or local government – to ensure safety programs are spatially responsive to economic downturns and to reduce the variability of key program benefits across place. Greater policy devolution and restrictions on access to assistance only will work to ensure the safety net becomes less, not more, responsive to need and hardship.

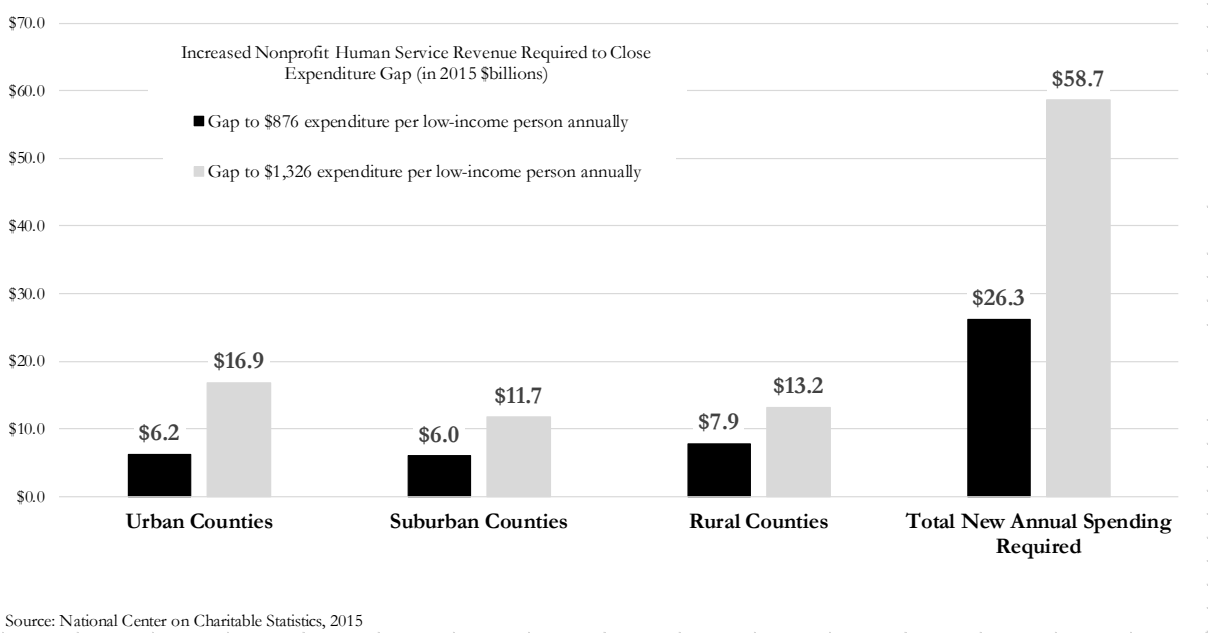
Implications for 2050

Several key findings emerge from this report, which should frame research and policy conversations to help better prepare communities and the safety net for the coming thirty years. First, poverty problems in America are firmly entrenched in urban, suburban, and rural America despite the sustained economic recovery. Not only is the shifting geography of poverty within metro areas a permanent demographic change, but it means that issues of poverty and inequality are as problematic in cities today as at the dawn of the War on Poverty. Moreover, the challenges of stagnant regional economies and limited mobility that face rural communities today echo the conditions observed by researchers and politicians fifty years ago. Second, the relationship between poverty and labor force participation is complex. The persistence of poverty problems is not simply the result of falling labor force participation and people unwilling to "get off the sidelines" in a tight labor market. Instead, structural changes in the labor market appear to be driving the long-run trends of higher rates of poverty and larger numbers of people living near or below the poverty line. Third, the safety net appears most responsive to need when programs are federally funded and administered. Fourth, there is some evidence here of a perverse reality within the contemporary American safety net, where key antipoverty tools work may actually reinforce local structural economic conditions that perpetuate poverty and limit mobility. Of particular focus in this report is the limited capacity of nonprofit human service programs in areas of highest need. Not only are nonprofit organizations and charitable giving pro-cyclical, but they are not currently well-matched to the geography of poverty.

In light of the findings presented here, several key questions come to mind as we contemplate the nature of place, poverty, and work over the next three decades:

How might policymakers and philanthropy strengthen the nonprofit human service safety net? Analyses presented here highlight the vast differences in human service provision by place and underscore how tepid the response of human service funding was to the Great Recession. Yet, community-based nonprofit service organizations are central to how our contemporary safety net functions, providing key sources of support to enhance the mobility and well-being of millions of Americans. As a first step to reducing the geographic disparities observed in human service provision, Figure 13 estimates the total amount of new nonprofit human service funding required to lift all counties to a median urban county (and not lowering counties above the median to the median). Two sets of estimates are provided based on two different median targets: the median urban county overall ($876 annual spending per low-income person); the median urban county that is 1/3 to 2/3 suburban ($1,326 annual spending per low-income person). Nationally, about $58.7 billion in new social service spending would be required annually to lift urban, suburban, and rural communities to a median per capita expenditure of $1,326. More than half of this new human service funding would be targeted directly to suburban and rural communities. To reach a median urban county per capita expenditure of $876, about $26.3 billion in new program revenues are required. While these annual totals are not significant in the scheme of the federal budget – an increase of roughly 1 percent of all discretionary spending – such increases in human service funding would require a dramatic change to public policy, funding formulas, and philanthropy, particularly given the state of the federal budget and the sluggish responsiveness of private giving to the rise in poverty since 2010.

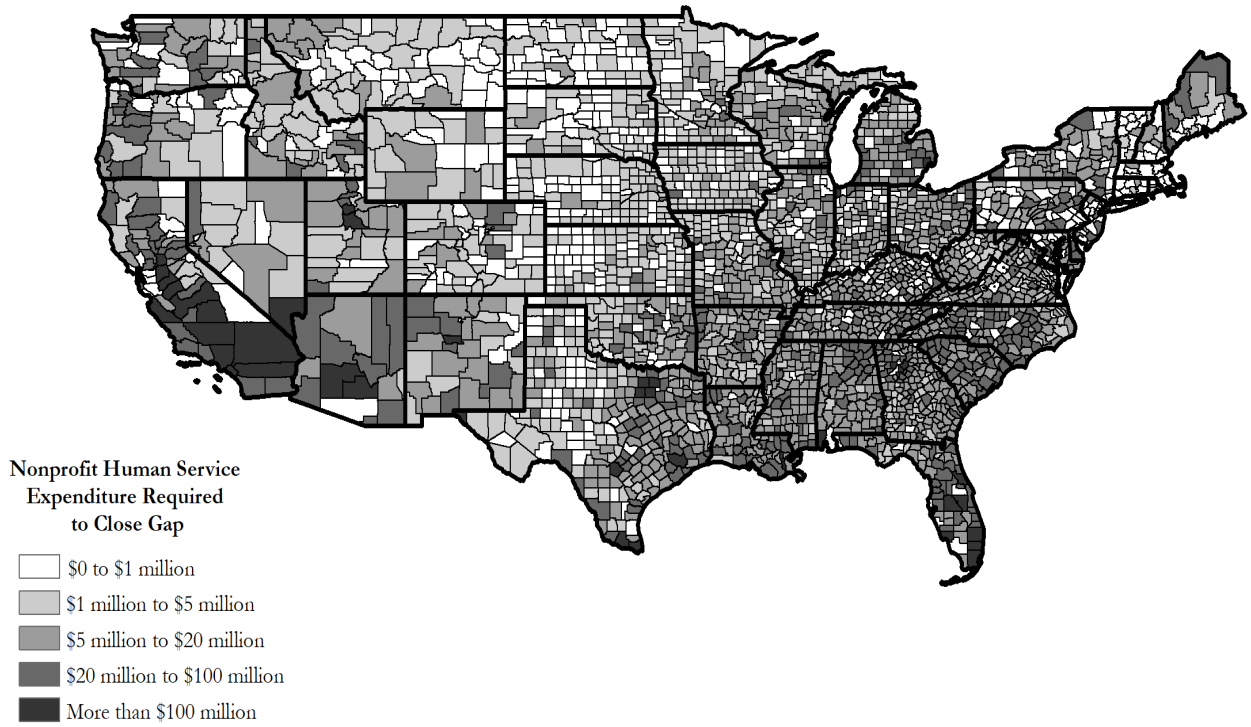
Figure 13. Closing the Nonprofit Human Service Gap (in 2015 $billions)



Source: National Center on Charitable Statistics, 2015

To visualize how funds to close nonprofit human service expenditure gaps would be distributed across the U.S., Figure 14 "maps the human service gap" between current per capita expenditures and a per capita expenditure of $1,326. Counties in lighter grey would require less than $5 million in annual additional funding, while a handful of counties shaded dark grey would require additional funds in excess of $100 million. The map underscores several key realities about expanding the capacity of community-based nonprofits. First, the patchwork nature of this map reinforces the notion that human service programming varies widely by local place and that this local variation is associated with less local-spatial responsive programs. Second, the need to develop greater capacity to deliver antipoverty programs and solutions, much like the poverty problems we encounter, is present everywhere – not just in high-poverty urban centers or remote rural places. While we see a relatively small number of counties in the Midwest and Northeast needing modest additional annual funding, counties needing more than $5 million or $20 million annually to close the human service gap are distributed all across the country, in poor southeastern rural regions, the suburban counties outside of major urban centers, and within major urban counties themselves.

Figure 14. Mapping New Revenues Required to Bring Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures to $1,326 per Low-Income Person (in $2015)



How else can we strengthen the federal government's role in safety net provision? The dramatic increase in poverty across urban and suburban America, and the persistence of poverty in rural America, over the last 30 years indicates the need for a more aggressive and ambitious federal antipoverty strategy. As we see even in the limited evidence presented here, federally funded and regulated antipoverty programs are more successful at reaching populations in need across the changing geography of poverty. A first step would be to base SNAP benefits on more contemporary, realistic household food budgets that would help families purchase food to cover more of the month and thus enhance SNAP's ability to reduce the effects of poverty. Federal policy also could raise the EITC credit for childless single low-income adult workers and the threshold at which the credit phases out. Perhaps less feasible, but nonetheless important given findings here, the federal government should increase the TANF block grant from $16.5 billion to $25 billion to bring it in line with inflation since passage of welfare reform in 1996. As discussed above, federal support for social services should be increased to achieve greater geographic parity. Such work could begin perhaps by increasing and targeting appropriations made through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). These two key federal block grants have not kept pace with inflation for some time, but inflation adjustments would increase real-dollar CDBG funding by more than $10 billion and the SSBG by almost $20 billion annually (Allard 2017).

How well might a work-based safety net work in the coming years? Whether discussing tax credit programs where cash assistance is only received if one has work earnings, or public assistance programs like TANF, where work can be a condition of receiving assistance, or proposals to impose work requirements

on SNAP and Medicaid, safety net assistance can be contingent in many ways on work. Yet, we know that work is not equally available across all places and thus individuals living in low opportunity areas may face hurdles finding work, let alone earning enough to lift themselves out of poverty. Findings here suggest a few consequences for a work-based safety net administered across geographic areas where job availability varies. First, even though the EITC and CTC are among our most successful antipoverty programs, there is some evidence here that each tax credit may not reach those experiencing long-term joblessness. In addition, we should be mindful that future periods of economic expansion may be characterized by low unemployment and low wage growth as has been the case during recoveries since 2000. These conditions of economic recovery place unique demands on the safety net. We might presume that a strong labor market with low unemployment rates requires fewer safety net programs or resources. A focus only on low unemployment, however, can overlook falling labor force participation or low-wage growth, which may result in persistently high safety net program caseloads and the need to maintain program expenditures even in good economic times. Finally, we must be vigilant about the effect that marginal tax rates may have on low-income households. Many public assistance programs and work supports, such as SNAP, the EITC, childcare subsidies, and housing assistance, phase out eligibility as income levels rise above a certain level. Scholars refer to these interactions between earnings and public assistance program income or benefits as an "implicit marginal tax rate," (Holt & Romich 2007; Romich 2006). Marginal tax rates reflect the program benefit income or subsidy dollar amount lost for every additional dollar earned. Because many low-wage workers with dependent children qualify for tax credits and means-tested benefits, there is reason to believe that workers seeing hourly earnings rise to $12 to $15 an hour can experience marginal tax rates of over 50 percent. It is important, therefore, to consider policies that smooth or flatten marginal tax rates in order to offer better pathways out of poverty traps (Romich & Hill 2017).

Will spatial structures work differently in the coming decades? In many ways, we should spatial structures and processes to operate similarly in the coming decades – although our empirical understandings of how place matters may change. The findings presented here, along with research elsewhere, lead to expectations that more families will live in higher poverty neighborhoods over time. High-poverty areas typically are characterized by low-quality housing, limited access to jobs, and poorly resourced community-based institutions and services (Allard 2009). Living in areas of high or concentrated poverty, particularly as a child, increases exposure to a variety of risks and harms (Chetty, Hendren, & Katz 2015; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Ludwig et al. 2013). Unfortunately, it seems unlikely that the social processes driving residential segregation, discrimination, and class-based sorting will change dramatically without significant shifts in public policy in the next decade.

It is possible that the spatial structures shaping labor market activity are changing and will continue to change. Traditionally, we expect spatial access to jobs will affect employment outcomes. Classic economic theory tells us that greater spatial access to jobs should correspond with more information about opportunities (Kain 1968, 1992), the heightened ability to deploy networks to secure employment, and lower commuting costs. Most of our research on job access, however, is rooted in a paradigm where urban centers are areas of poverty and low-growth, suburbs are the affluent places where jobs are being increasingly located, and little attention was paid to rural communities. Over the past twenty years, the spatial distribution of employment has shifted. It is no longer a given that there are greater employment opportunities in suburbs, particularly for job-seekers with low levels of skill or training. And as many rural communities contract, there is renewed concern about disappearing work opportunities in rural America as well. Automation and artificial intelligence (AI) likely with change the numbers, quality, and skill demands of jobs available, but it is not clear

whether such technological change will vary across places or have more consistent spatial effects. Given the concentration of high-tech job growth in certain metro areas, however, we should expect the automation may lead to greater job losses or employment instabilities in less advantaged urban, suburban, and rural labor markets. We also may expect that the willingness of cities and local places to regulate labor markets will change, as a growing number of cities and counties are adopting policies intended to raise wages, improve job quality, and reduce instability (Romich et al., 2018). So far, however, innovative local social policy and workplace regulatory experiments largely are found in only the largest and most affluent urban centers.

Will technology change how place matters or how the safety net operates across different places? We should expect changes in technology to continue movement towards online applications, app-based interactions with program staff, and benefit dispersal through technology. While these developments may make it easier to enroll or to receive benefits and may root out discriminatory discretionary practice, it may be hard for program applicants to get help with more complex needs. Technology interfaces also have the potential to make safety net programs less compassionate and less dignified for recipients. Data science and analytics similarly are poised to alter how programs are administered. Data systems may be able to better detect changes in eligibility or noncompliance, thus improving program efficiency by saving money and reducing caseloads. Analytics could be used to better target program resources and provide nudges or light-touch interventions. If safety net program databases could be linked to other sources of information about earnings and need in real-time, there also is the possibility that program benefits could be adjusted in a manner that addresses emergent needs and smooths benefit cliffs.

What do recent trends in place and poverty mean for future discourse around poverty and social policy? The changing geography of poverty grabs our attention in part because it runs counter to the popular narratives around place and poverty in America. Popular discourse associates poverty problems with urban centers and remote rural places, and often does so in a manner that links poor people in poor places to communities of color. These linkages can be used to mobilize racial sentiments and promote some of the most deleterious stereotypes about the poor. Links between place, race, and poverty also dampen support for the safety net because of perceptions that the poor are "undeserving" or "others" who are not part of the community (see Allard 2017). Similarly, despite rhetoric that governmental institutions and nongovernmental organizations closest to the local place better serve the needs of residents in those places, it appears that safety net program elements most controlled by local actors are those that vary the most and provide the least consistent coverage. If the goal is to provide a safety net that helps lift people out of poverty and achieve greater economic well-being or mobility, it may be important to challenge impressions that devolution and decentralization of safety net responsibilities yield better outcomes for poor people.

What are the implications for future research? Findings here lead to a number of questions that should guide future research inquiry. Of primary importance is generating new insight into the economic realities behind trends in larger numbers of poor people and higher rates of poverty across the geographic landscape. Much of our work on spatial mismatches and the geographic contours in job accessibility is twenty years old or more. Many of the assumptions or conclusions we might draw from that literature may not hold given all that has unfolded in the last few decades. Particularly critical is research that explores how shifts in low-skill and low-wage work opportunities outside of cities are related to trends in suburban poverty. Researchers should think more about the consequences of living in high-poverty urban versus suburban or rural communities. Do high-poverty suburban communities demonstrate the same lack of community resources, amenities, and opportunities as is commonly found in high-poverty urban or rural areas? Similarly, given growing evidence that moves away from high-poverty areas early in life leads to better later-life

outcomes, researchers need to better understand how places emerge to become and cease to function as places of opportunity. Discussion of mobility today at least implicitly presumes that there are high-opportunity, low-poverty neighborhoods in suburban communities. Yet, it may be that the opportunity zones of today are not the same as 20 to 30 years ago. Finally, given the safety net's reliance on local actors, more research should be done to understand the impact of rising or persistent poverty on local institutions and the political economy of local government.

What role should philanthropy play? Charitable philanthropy plays an essential role in capacity-building efforts within local safety nets. Charitable foundations should find ways to reach beyond their traditional urban boundaries to establish programming and technical assistance in suburban and rural communities nearby population centers. Philanthropy can use its convening power to help promote greater regional and local provision of antipoverty assistance and social services. Apart from providing additional private program funding, advocating for greater public commitments, and helping local nonprofits strengthen their fundraising toolkits, it will be important for charitable philanthropy to build local community capacity to tackle poverty through intentional effort to cultivate a new generation of local nonprofit leaders. To sustain and transform suburban conversations about poverty, communities also must develop indigenous leaders that reflect the racial, ethnic, and class diversity of suburban America today. Finally, charitable philanthropy should work to help increase individual private giving to community-based nonprofits working with low-income communities. Increased charitable to human service nonprofits will be necessary if we are to close the geographic gaps in funding of community-based nonprofit service organizations. Private philanthropy to human service nonprofit organizations has hovered near $35 to $40 billion a year for much of the last decade – roughly 1 of every 10 dollars in private giving to charity annually (National Philanthropic Trust 2019; Allard 2009b). Without a fundamental change in how Americans motivate their personal philanthropy, it will be all the harder to achieve provision of nonprofit human services at relative parity by geography.

Can we find a shared fate? In the end, our ability as a society to tackle the presence and persistence of poverty across the geographic landscape hinges on our ability to recognize the shared fate all communities have in the fight against poverty. Without a sense of the collective stake that residents in metropolitan areas have to reducing poverty in rural areas or rural residents have in alleviating poverty in central city neighborhoods or outlying suburbs, we cannot expect to make progress. Much of our discourse portrays poor people as undeserving and as the "other," even though there are people struggling in poverty from all our communities. Complicating matters, however, is evidence that many residents of urban, suburban, and rural places are distrustful of residents in different geographic locales and perceive that other types of communities don't share their values. Attitudes about a host of social issues, race and immigration, and the role of government also vary sharply between urban, suburban, and rural places (Pew Research Center 2018). Unfortunately, such differences are the product of decades of partisan politics and economic growth that has favored the wealthy and highly educated. As a result, many communities may find it difficult to find more collective approaches to social problems in the near-term.

Although poverty problems pose many challenges and for the next several decades, we must proceed with optimism that society has the ability to find common ground and agreement around solutions to these challenges. We should expect the capacity of our local government and nonprofit agencies will continue to grow. Despite many efforts to topple the safety net, a much stronger set of public antipoverty programs are in place today than during the War of Poverty. Elected leaders may find ways to bring us together as a country to improve opportunities for all, rather than sow division and beliefs that public policy is zero-sum. Finally, and most importantly, we have a current generation of young Americans that have more tools and a stronger

commitment than any generation before to promote social justice, equity, and inclusion. It will be their intellect, passion, and leadership that will identify new pathways, new tools, and new resources to address poverty wherever it exists in America – urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Appendix Table 1: Changes in Population and Poverty by Geography, 1990 to 2017

	Largest 100 Metro Areas								All Counties in the U.S.		
	Urban	Suburban Tracts (year of median housing build)									
	Tracts	All	< 1950	1950-70	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Total Population (1,000s)											
1990	52,408	106,634	9,007	38,751	28,475	21,142	8,027	1,231	130,756	73,586	44,368
2000	56,357	125,462	9,048	39,895	31,000	26,819	16,390	2,311	146,775	86,295	48,352
2010	57,923	140,224	8,868	39,759	31,873	29,478	22,324	7,922	158,175	95,684	50,107
2017	61,630	150,569	8,966	40,833	33,157	31,523	25,236	10,855	168,585	102,039	50,380
% Change, 1990-2017	17.6%	41.2%	-0.5%	5.4%	16.4%	49.1%	214.4%	781.8%	28.9%	38.7%	13.6%
% Change, 1990-2010	10.5%	31.5%	-1.5%	2.6%	11.9%	39.4%	178.1%	543.5%	21.0%	30.0%	12.9%
% Change, 2010-17	6.4%	7.4%	1.1%	2.7%	4.0%	6.9%	13.0%	37.0%	6.6%	6.6%	0.5%
Total Population w/Income 100-150% FPL (1,000s)											
1990	4,950	6,527	671	2,387	1,717	1,203	470	80	10,913	4,683	5,117
2000	5,764	8,029	749	2,776	2,041	1,585	761	117	12,841	5,483	5,096
2010	6,209	10,063	802	3,086	2,429	2,087	1,267	392	14,748	6,705	5,421
2017	6,516	11,141	808	3,290	2,624	2,356	1,506	556	15,856	7,315	5,381
% Change, 1990-2017	31.6%	70.7%	20.4%	37.8%	52.8%	95.8%	220.4%	595.0%	45.3%	56.2%	5.2%
% Change, 1990-2010	25.4%	54.2%	19.5%	29.3%	41.5%	73.5%	169.6%	390.0%	35.1%	43.2%	5.9%
% Change, 2010-17	4.9%	10.7%	0.7%	6.6%	8.0%	12.9%	18.9%	41.8%	7.5%	9.1%	-0.7%

Appendix Table 1: Changes in Population and Poverty by Geography, 1990 to 2017 (continued)

	Largest 100 Metro Areas								All Counties in the U.S.		
	Urban	Suburban Tracts (year of median housing build)									
	Tracts	All	< 1950	1950-70	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Total Population w/Income < FPL (1,000s)											
1990	9,544	8,616	1,024	3,161	2,207	1,525	599	100	17,695	6,611	7,437
2000	10,201	10,424	1,087	3,655	2,613	1,976	958	135	19,566	7,440	6,893
2010	11,134	13,687	1,251	4,213	3,340	2,759	1,638	485	23,457	9,479	7,981
2017	12,100	16,292	1,369	4,850	3,870	3,380	2,090	733	26,454	10,919	8,277
% Change, 1990-2017	26.8%	89.1%	33.7%	53.4%	75.4%	121.6%	248.9%	633.0%	49.5%	65.2%	11.3%
% Change, 1990-2010	16.7%	58.9%	22.2%	33.3%	51.3%	80.9%	173.5%	385.0%	32.6%	43.4%	7.3%
% Change, 1990-2000	6.9%	21.0%	6.2%	15.6%	18.4%	29.6%	59.9%	35.0%	10.6%	12.5%	-7.3%
% Change, 2000-10	9.1%	31.3%	15.1%	15.3%	27.8%	39.6%	71.0%	259.3%	19.9%	27.4%	15.8%
% Change, 2010-17	8.7%	19.0%	9.4%	15.1%	15.9%	22.5%	27.6%	51.1%	12.8%	15.2%	3.7%
Total Population w/Income < 50% FPL (1,000s)											
1990	4,648	3,739	452	1,388	954	651	252	42	8,108	2,924	2,980
2000	5,001	4,693	492	1,649	1,169	890	432	61	9,070	3,420	2,848
2010	5,033	5,892	543	1,778	1,434	1,196	722	219	10,419	4,093	3,251
2017	5,488	7,185	600	2,090	1,714	1,504	932	345	11,890	4,850	3,536
% Change, 1990-2017	18.1%	92.2%	32.7%	50.6%	79.7%	131.0%	269.8%	721.4%	46.6%	65.9%	18.7%
% Change, 1990-2010	8.3%	57.6%	20.1%	28.1%	50.3%	83.7%	186.5%	421.4%	28.5%	40.0%	9.1%
% Change, 2010-17	9.0%	21.9%	10.5%	17.5%	19.5%	25.8%	29.1%	57.5%	14.1%	18.5%	8.8%
N	15,446	31,268	2,459	9,705	7,207	6,290	4,179	1,426	379	721	2,043

Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2013-17.
Note: Suburban tracts are sorted by year of median housing build. Urban and suburban data are presented for the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas. FPL = federal poverty threshold.

Appendix Table 2. Changes in Poverty Rates by Geography, 1990 to 2017

	Largest 100 Metro Areas							All Counties in the U.S.		
	Urban	Suburban Tracts (year of median housing build)								
	Tracts	All	< 1950	1950-70	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Mean Poverty Rate											
1990	18.7%	8.3%	12.0%	8.6%	8.2%	7.6%	7.1%	8.2%	14.1%	12.8%	18.5%
2000	19.2%	8.5%	12.7%	9.4%	8.7%	7.6%	6.0%	6.0%	13.4%	10.6%	15.6%
2010	20.9%	10.3%	15.2%	11.1%	10.8%	9.6%	7.4%	6.1%	15.5%	12.1%	16.7%
2017	21.6%	11.5%	16.4%	12.4%	12.1%	10.8%	8.3%	7.0%	16.4%	13.0%	17.0%
N	15,446	31,268	2,459	9,705	7,207	6,290	4,179	1,426	379	721	2,043

Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2013-17.

Note: Suburban tracts are sorted by year of median housing build. Urban and suburban data are presented for the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas. FPL = federal poverty threshold.

Appendix Table 3. Total Population by Race, Ethnicity and Place 2000-17

	Number of People (1000s)			
	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Urban Tracts				
2000	24,773	14,089	12,499	3,540
2010	23,675	13,795	14,881	4,377
2015	23,946	13,932	16,324	4,899
2017	24,082	14,022	16,844	5,147
% Change 2000-17	-2.8%	-0.5%	34.8%	45.4%
Suburban Tracts				
2000	90,386	11,077	15,650	5,432
2010	91,931	14,254	22,823	8,130
2015	92,442	15,729	26,403	9,412
2017	92,514	16,263	27,697	10,016
% Change 2000-17	2.4%	46.8%	77.0%	84.4%
Rural Counties				
2000	39,773	4,109	2,577	351
2010	40,114	4,239	3,536	450
2015	39,696	4,267	4,035	512
2017	39,435	4,241	4,176	537
% Change 2000-17	-0.8%	3.2%	62.0%	53.0%

Sources: Census 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2011-15, 2013-17.

Note: Urban and suburban census tract data reflect largest 100 metro areas only. Figures for 2010, 2015, and 2017 reflect five-year ACS data.

Appendix Table 4. Trends in Labor Force Participation and Unemployment, 1990 to 2017

	Largest 100 Metro Areas								All Counties in the U.S.		
	Urban	Suburban Tracts (year of median housing build)									
	Tracts	All	< 1950	1950-70	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000+	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Mean Labor Force Participation Rate											
1990	63.8%	67.5%	63.8%	65.9%	67.8%	69.3%	70.2%	67.8%	63.2%	63.7%	58.8%
	(11.2)	(10.5)	(8.0)	(8.2)	(11.2)	(11.8)	(10.8)	(13.0)	(5.6)	(7.0)	(6.4)
2000	61.6%	65.6%	63.5%	63.4%	65.4%	67.3%	69.5%	67.9%	63.1%	63.9%	59.0%
	(11.2)	(10.0)	(8.0)	(7.6)	(10.3)	(11.2)	(10.9)	(12.5)	(5.5)	(6.6)	(6.9)
2010	64.8%	66.4%	65.6%	65.2%	65.3%	66.8%	69.2%	70.6%	63.8%	63.7%	59.2%
	(11.2)	(10.0)	(9.1)	(8.1)	(10.2)	(11.3)	(10.8)	(12.0)	(4.9)	(6.4)	(7.9)
2017	64.3%	64.5%	65.3%	64.3%	63.3%	64.0%	66.3%	67.3%	62.1%	61.1%	56.7%
	(10.8)	(9.6)	(8.5)	(8.0)	(9.7)	(10.8)	(10.4)	(12.2)	(5.2)	(7.0)	(8.2)
% Change, 1990-2017	0.8%	-4.4%	2.4%	-2.4%	-6.6%	-7.6%	-5.6%	-0.7%	-1.7%	-4.1%	-3.6%
% Change, 2010-17	-0.8%	-2.9%	-0.5%	-1.4%	-3.1%	-4.2%	-4.2%	-4.7%	-2.7%	-4.1%	-4.2%
Mean Unemployment Rate											
1990	8.5%	5.2%	7.2%	5.6%	5.1%	4.7%	4.5%	4.6%	6.5%	5.9%	7.0%
	(5.7)	(3.1)	(4.3)	(3.3)	(2.9)	(2.7)	(2.6)	(2.6)	(2.0)	(2.3)	(3.5)
2000	8.4%	4.8%	6.2%	5.3%	4.8%	4.3%	3.7%	3.7%	6.2%	4.8%	6.1%
	(5.9)	(3.3)	(4.1)	(3.6)	(3.2)	(2.9)	(2.6)	(2.5)	(2.0)	(1.9)	(2.9)
2010	9.8%	7.5%	8.7%	7.9%	7.7%	7.2%	6.4%	6.0%	8.1%	7.3%	7.5%
	(6.0)	(4.2)	(4.9)	(4.4)	(4.2)	(4.0)	(3.4)	(3.5)	(2.1)	(2.4)	(3.8)
2017	8.5%	6.3%	7.5%	6.7%	6.3%	6.0%	5.2%	5.0%	6.8%	6.0%	6.4%
	(5.7)	(3.7)	(4.4)	(4.0)	(3.7)	(3.4)	(2.9)	(2.8)	(2.0)	(2.1)	(3.5)
% Change, 1990-2017	0.0%	21.2%	4.2%	19.6%	23.5%	27.7%	15.6%	8.7%	4.6%	1.7%	-8.6%
% Change, 2010-17	-13.3%	-16.0%	-13.8%	-15.2%	-18.2%	-16.7%	-18.8%	-16.7%	-16.0%	-17.8%	-14.7%
N	15,446	31,268	2,459	9,705	7,207	6,290	4,179	1,426	379	721	2,043

Sources: Census 1990, 2000; American Community Survey, 2006-10, 2013-17.

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses. Suburban tracts are sorted by year of median housing build. Urban and suburban data are presented for the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas.

Appendix Table 5. Changes in Labor Force Participation and Poverty, 2010 to 2017

% Change Total Labor Force, 2010-17	Mean % Change Total Labor Force, 2010-17	Mean Labor Force Participation Rate, 2017	Mean % Change in Number of People, 2010-17	Mean % Change in Number of Poor People, 2010-17	Mean Poverty Rate in 2010	Mean Poverty Rate in 2017
Top Quintile (Upper 20th Percentile)						
Metropolitan Counties	10.4%	64.5%	33.2%	17.4%	12.3%	12.7%
Rural Counties	12.5%	60.4%	12.0%	13.1%	16.8%	16.1%
Middle Quintiles (20th to 80th Percentiles)						
Metropolitan Counties	-1.5%	60.9%	8.2%	10.9%	13.5%	14.4%
Rural Counties	-2.9%	58.1%	0.9%	2.3%	16.0%	16.1%
Lower Quintile (Bottom 20th Percentile)						
Metropolitan Counties	-13.4%	51.7%	-1.1%	19.0%	16.8%	19.0%
Rural Counties	-14.1%	51.9%	-4.9%	3.6%	18.1%	19.3%

Sources: 2006-10, 2013-17 American Community Survey.

Note: Figures reported for 2010 are drawn from the 2006-10 ACS and figures for 2017 are drawn from the 2013-17 ACS. Metropolitan counties include urban and suburban counties. Poverty is defined here as household income at or below the federal poverty line (FPL).

Appendix Table 6. Trends in Public Assistance across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-2017

	Urban County Outside Largest 100 Metros	Urban Counties in the Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas			Suburban County	All Rural Counties
		0 to 33% Suburban	33 to 66% Suburban	More than 66% Suburban		
% Change in Number of People < 150% FPL						
2000-10	22.4%	13.3%	14.8%	20.5%	25.2%	11.8%
2000-14	39.1%	28.0%	32.6%	42.3%	46.1%	19.7%
2000-17	34.3%	22.9%	26.7%	37.6%	41.1%	13.9%
2010-15	13.5%	12.8%	15.4%	18.5%	13.6%	6.2%
2010-17	9.8%	8.5%	10.3%	14.2%	12.7%	1.9%
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)						
Number of Filers (1000s)						
2000	2,948	1,813	3,392	2,345	4,557	3,741
2010 (IRS)	4,282	2,497	4,943	3,682	7,231	4,839
2010	4,081	2,367	4,608	3,456	6,765	4,635
2014	4,192	2,456	4,785	3,627	7,046	4,478
2015 (IRS)	4,352	2,548	5,041	3,833	7,507	4,696
% Change 2000-14	42.2%	35.5%	41.1%	54.7%	54.6%	19.7%
% Change 2010-14	2.7%	3.8%	3.8%	4.9%	4.2%	-3.4%
% Change 2010-15 (IRS)	1.6%	2.0%	2.0%	4.1%	3.8%	-3.0%
Median Return or Credit (in $2015)						
2000	$2,214	$2,284	$2,291	$2,200	$2,200	$2,209
2010	$2,371	$2,473	$2,483	$2,351	$2,336	$2,348
2014	$2,372	$2,480	$2,511	$2,334	$2,326	$2,359
Child Tax Credit (CTC)						
Number of Filers (1000s)						
2010	3,537	1,606	3,924	3,011	7,685	3,729
2015	3,413	1,542	3,740	2,874	7,174	3,527
% Change 2010-15	-3.5%	-4.0%	-4.7%	-4.5%	-6.6%	-5.4%
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)						
Number of Recipients (1000s)						
1989	2,828	2,254	3,417	2,107	3,611	4,387
2000	2,696	2,052	2,972	2,156	3,359	3,828
2010	7,175	4,529	7,313	5,732	10,369	8,597
% Change 1989-2000	-4.7%	-9.0%	-13.0%	2.3%	-7.0%	-12.7%
% Change 2000-2010	166.1%	120.7%	146.1%	165.9%	208.7%	124.6%
% Change 1989-2010	153.7%	100.9%	114.0%	172.0%	187.2%	96.0%
Median Annual Per Recipient Benefit						
1989	$1,279	$1,384	$1,339	$1,268	$1,245	$1,196
2000	$1,165	$1,228	$1,240	$1,191	$1,120	$1,076
2010	$1,668	$1,696	$1,719	$1,726	$1,667	$1,634

Appendix Table 6. Trends in Public Assistance across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-2017 (Continued)

	Urban County Outside Largest 100 Metros	Urban Counties in the Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas			Suburban County	All Rural Counties
		0 to 33% Suburban	33 to 66% Suburban	More than 66% Suburban		
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)						
Number of Recipients (1000s)						
2000	586	429	1,507	738	572	478
2010	466	287	916	537	477	328
% Change 2000-2010	-20.5%	-33.1%	-39.2%	-27.2%	-16.6%	-31.4%
Medicaid/CHIP						
Number of Recipients (1000s)						
2012	7,743	4,631	9,311	6,560	12,971	9,466
2015	8,718	5,267	10,761	7,745	14,904	10,163
2017	9,377	5,561	11,710	8,504	16,026	10,679
% Change 2012-17	21.1%	20.1%	25.8%	29.6%	23.6%	12.8%
Free or Reduced Lunch						
Number of Eligible Children (1000s)						
2000	2,283	1,932	3,128	1,705	3,007	3,008
2010	3,084	1,764	3,764	2,378	4,810	3,610
2015	3,427	1,943	4,193	2,807	5,350	3,797
% Change 2000-15	50.1%	0.6%	34.0%	64.6%	77.9%	26.2%
% Change 2010-15	11.1%	10.1%	11.4%	18.0%	11.2%	5.2%
Unemployment Insurance (UI)						
Number of Filers (1000s)						
2010	2,306	966	2,440	2,147	4,672	2,549
2015	1,012	362	1,089	866	1,848	1,083
% Change 2010-15	-56.1%	-62.5%	-55.4%	-59.7%	-60.4%	-57.5%

Sources: 2000 Census, 2010-14, 2011-15, 2013-17 American Community Survey, Brookings EITC interactive, 2000, 2010, 2014, IRS SOI Tax Statistics, 2010, 2015, USDA, Economic Research Service 1989, 2000, 2010, TANF State Administrative Data 2000, 2010, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000, 2010, 2015

Appendix Table 7. Trends in Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-2015

Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures (in $2015)	Urban County Outside Largest 100 Metros	Urban Counties in the Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas			Suburban County	All Rural Counties
		0 to 33% Suburban	33 to 66% Suburban	More than 66% Suburban		
Total Expenditures for All Organizations ($millions)						
2000	$7,402	$7,267	$10,173	$7,293	$12,349	$4,642
2010	$11,934	$11,639	$16,469	$12,349	$19,677	$7,683
2015	$12,121	$12,421	$16,079	$12,665	$21,462	$7,290
% Change 2000-2010	61.2%	60.2%	61.9%	69.3%	59.3%	65.5%
% Change 2010-2015	1.6%	6.7%	-2.4%	2.6%	9.1%	-5.1%
% Change 2000-2015	63.8%	70.9%	58.1%	73.7%	73.8%	57.0%
Total Expenditures for Organizations <$10 million Annual Budget ($millions)						
2000	$4,810	$2,785	$3,940	$3,500	$5,713	$3,525
2010	$4,582	$3,121	$4,314	$3,942	$6,684	$4,086
2015	$4,489	$3,206	$4,211	$3,555	$6,588	$3,980
% Change 2000-2010	-4.7%	12.1%	9.5%	12.6%	17.0%	15.9%
% Change 2010-2015	-2.0%	2.7%	-2.4%	-9.8%	-1.4%	-2.6%
% Change 2000-2015	-6.7%	15.1%	6.9%	1.6%	15.3%	12.9%

Appendix Table 7. Trends in Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties, 2000-2015 (Continued)

Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures (in $2015)	Urban County Outside Largest 100 Metros	Urban Counties in the Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas			Suburban County	All Rural Counties
		0 to 33% Suburban	33 to 66% Suburban	More than 66% Suburban		
Mean Per Low-Income Person Expenditure for All Organizations						
2000	$870	$1,387	$1,239	$1,213	$469	$357
	($879)	($1,008)	($1,415)	($864)	($982)	($1,379)
2010	$1,143	$1,896	$1,366	$1,704	$630	$536
	($1,055)	($1,248)	($705)	($1,174)	($1,404)	($1,856)
2015	$1,025	$1,744	$1,284	$1,494	$604	$479
	($1,103)	($1,319)	($773)	($1,100)	($2,237)	($1,985)
% Change 2000-2010	31.4%	36.7%	10.3%	40.5%	34.3%	50.1%
% Change 2010-2015	-10.3%	-8.0%	-6.0%	-12.3%	-4.1%	-10.6%
% Change 2000-2015	17.8%	25.7%	3.6%	23.2%	28.8%	34.2%
Mean Per Low-Income Person Expenditure for Organizations <$10 million Annual Budget						
2000	$1,005	$921	$875	$1,022	$546	$483
	($777)	($556)	($582)	($683)	($962)	($1,580)
2010	$798	$886	$704	$913	$522	$500
	($591)	($561)	($379)	($591)	($993)	($1,227)
2015	$647	$786	$591	$676	$424	$442
	($487)	($588)	($316)	($406)	($754)	($1,015)
% Change 2000-2010	-20.6%	-3.8%	-19.5%	-10.7%	-4.4%	3.5%
% Change 2010-2015	-18.9%	-11.3%	-16.1%	-26.0%	-18.8%	-11.6%
% Change 2000-2015	-35.6%	-14.7%	-32.5%	-33.9%	-22.3%	-8.5%
Median Per Low-Income Person Expenditure for All Organizations						
2000	$673	$1,188	$913	$934	$84	$14
2010	$855	$1,519	$1,369	$1,426	$126	$42
2015	$721	$1,322	$1,326	$1,195	$128	$45
% Change 2000-2010	27.0%	27.9%	49.9%	52.7%	50.0%	200.0%
% Change 2010-2015	-15.7%	-13.0%	-3.1%	-16.2%	1.6%	7.1%
% Change 2000-2015	7.1%	11.3%	45.2%	27.9%	52.4%	221.4%
Median Per Low-Income Person Expenditure for Organizations <$10 million Annual Budget						
2000	$830	$814	$779	$782	$144	$19
2010	$700	$741	$634	$814	$179	$64
2015	$546	$564	$563	$584	$171	$65
% Change 2000-2010	-15.7%	-9.0%	-18.6%	4.1%	24.3%	236.8%
% Change 2010-2015	-22.0%	-23.9%	-11.2%	-28.3%	-4.5%	1.6%
% Change 2000-2015	-34.2%	-30.7%	-27.7%	-25.3%	18.8%	242.1%

Sources: National Center on Charitable Statistics, 2000, 2010, 2015

Appendix Table 8. Trends in Nonprofit Human Service Expenditures across Urban, Suburban, Rural Counties by Region, 2000-2015

	% Change in # of Low-Income People, 2000-15	Expenditures - All Nonprofits (in $2015 millions)			Expenditures - Nonprofits with $10million or less in Revenue (in $2015 millions)			Median Expenditure Per Low-Income Person - All Nonprofits (in $2015)			Median Expenditure Per Low-Income Person - Nonprofits <$10million Annual Budget (in $2015)		
		2000	2015	% Change, 2000-15	2000	2015	% Change, 2000-15	2000	2015	% Change, 2000-15	2000	2015	% Change, 2000-15
Northeast													
Urban	19.2%	$7,002	$12,090	72.7%	$3,161	$3,050	-3.5%	$1,373	$1,644	19.7%	$1,342	$901	-32.9%
Suburban	21.6%	$7,168	$11,083	54.6%	$2,779	$2,967	6.8%	$957	$1,077	12.5%	$1,123	$942	-16.1%
Rural	14.6%	$684	$1,282	87.6%	$579	$683	17.9%	$365	$494	35.3%	$657	$756	15.1%
Midwest													
Urban	41.1%	$8,056	$11,643	44.5%	$3,854	$3,709	-3.8%	$1,097	$1,161	5.8%	$1,176	$684	-41.8%
Suburban	57.1%	$1,915	$3,211	67.7%	$995	$1,173	17.8%	$106	$206	94.3%	$184	$276	50.0%
Rural	16.7%	$1,665	$2,370	42.4%	$1,346	$1,464	8.8%	$13	$62	376.9%	$22	$85	286.4%
South													
Urban	41.1%	$8,580	$14,591	70.1%	$4,070	$4,388	7.8%	$530	$545	2.8%	$537	$389	-27.6%
Suburban	57.1%	$2,213	$5,291	139.1%	$1,344	$1,694	26.0%	$37	$59	59.5%	$62	$78	25.8%
Rural	16.7%	$1,546	$2,444	58.1%	$1,037	$1,080	4.1%	$1	$21	2000.0%	$0	$30	--
West													
Urban	35.0%	$8,497	$14,963	76.1%	$3,951	$4,315	9.2%	$641	$758	18.3%	$717	$502	-30.0%
Suburban	53.2%	$1,053	$1,878	78.3%	$594	$754	27.0%	$155	$292	88.4%	$276	$328	18.8%
Rural	17.9%	$748	$1,193	59.5%	$562	$753	33.9%	$35	$86	145.7%	$52	$135	159.6%

Sources: Census 2000; American Community Survey, 2011-15; National Center for Charitable Statistics 2000, 2015.

Note: Low-income status is defined here as household income at or below 150% of the federal poverty line (FPL).

Appendix Table 9. Safety Net Sample Sizes for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Counties

		Safety Net Program			
County Type	Total	SNAP 2010	EITC 2014	TANF 2010	Nonprofit Human Services 2015
Metropolitan Counties	1,100	1,099	1,099	773	1,100
Urban Counties	379	379	379	267	379
Suburban Counties	721	720	720	506	721
Rural Counties	2,043	2,037	2,038	1,238	2,043
One hundred largest metro areas	573	572	572	398	573
Urban Counties	114	114	114	76	114
Urban County: 0 to 33% Suburban	30	30	30	18	30
Urban County: 33 to 66% Suburban	39	39	39	27	39
Urban County: +66% Suburban	45	45	45	31	45
Suburban County	459	458	458	322	459

Sources: 2006-10 American Community Survey; USDA Economic Research Service 2010, Brookings Institution EITC Interactive 2014; TANF Administrative Data 2010; National Center for Charitable Statistics 2015.

Note: Year in parentheses reflects the year for which sample sizes are reported.

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