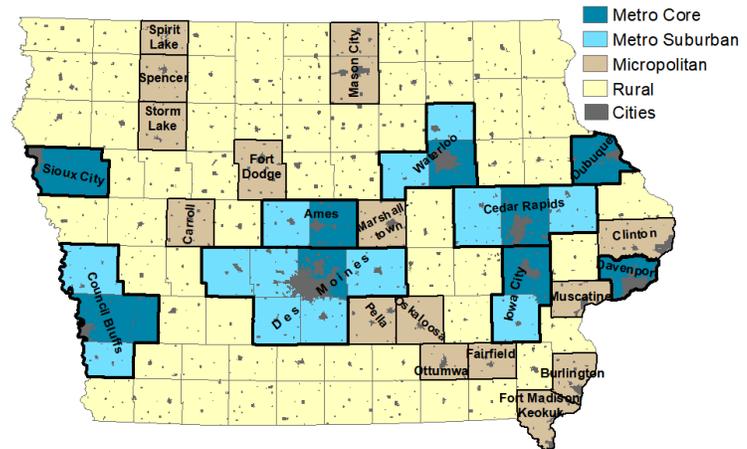


Rural Iowa at a Glance 2022

This publication summarizes current demographic, economic, and social trends in rural Iowa between 2011 and 2021. It is modeled after the United States Department of Agriculture’s *Rural America at a Glance*. Current year data are presented along with changes from last year and from five years and a decade ago. Indicators are taken from federal data sources at the county-level. Information is reported for Iowa’s metro, micropolitan, and rural areas. **Metropolitan core** areas include central counties with an urban city over 50,000 people. **Metropolitan suburban** counties include the outlying suburbs of metro cities that are linked by commuting patterns. **Micropolitan** counties have an urban city of at least 10,000 people. **Rural** counties, technically called “non-core” areas, have no urban city of 10,000 or more.



Key Findings

- COVID-19 slowed population losses in non-metro Iowa as fewer people migrated out of small cities and towns.
- Over the past decade, the non-metro white population shrunk by -7%, but losses were offset by a 5% gain in persons of color, resulting in a net loss of only 2%.
- The pandemic eliminated many jobs statewide, where labor force participation rates fell sharply and unemployment rates rose rapidly. Last year, metro cities and micros lost 4-5% of their jobs.
- There are fewer jobs in rural and micropolitan Iowa today than in 2011. There was also a large loss of self-employed small businesses and self-employed farmers.
- Micropolitan cities have low employment participation and high unemployment, suggesting many have stopped looking for work.
- Despite job losses, non-metro incomes have grown due to wage gains and government payments. This should blunt some of the effects of high inflation.
- Only 22% of Iowa's 83,000 farms are commercial operations, but they operate 66% of the farmland and generate 89% of production value.
- Commercial net farm income grew last year and debt-to-asset ratios are low. However, midsize farms are at 91% of debt utilization.

Population

COVID slowed growth in metro cities, but accelerated it in suburbs.
Non-metro losses were stabilized by COVID.
Overall, rural Iowa continues to decline while metros grow.

Rural Iowa

- 23.7% of population in 2021, down -0.3 from 2020, -0.6% from 2016, -2.7% from 2011.
- Rural areas continued to lose people since 2011, but losses stabilized during COVID.

Micropolitan Iowa

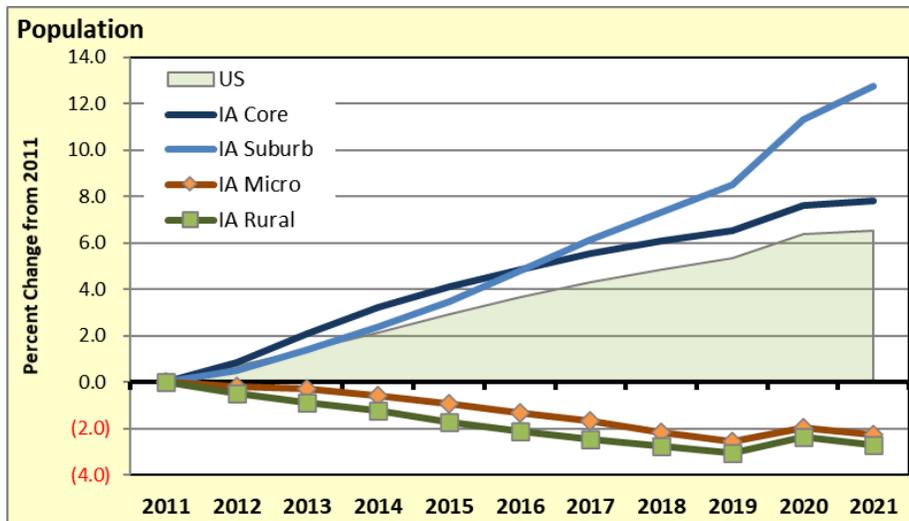
- 14.7% of population in 2021, down -0.3 from 2020, -1.0% from 2016, -2.2% from 2011.
- Micros continued to lose people since 2011, but losses stabilized during COVID.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- 12.0% of population in 2021, up 1.3 from 2020, 7.6% from 2016, 12.7% from 2011.
- Suburban populations boomed over past decade, even during COVID. Suburbs growing much faster the U.S rate.

Metro Core Iowa

- 49.5% of population in 2021, up 0.2% in 2020, 2.8% since 2016, 7.8% from 2011.
- Metros contain the majority of the state's people. Metros grew fast over past 10 years, but leveled off during COVID. Growing slightly faster than U.S. rate.



U.S. Average: up 0.1% from 2020, up 2.8% from 2016, up 6.5% from 2011.

Source: Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Natural Change

COVID-19 slowed natural gains across Iowa.
Non-metro Iowa does not have enough births to offset deaths.

Rural Iowa

- Lost -2.7 people per 1,000 residents in 2021, where deaths exceeded births.
- Natural change was stable between 2011-2020, but rural now losing people due to COVID.

Micropolitan Iowa

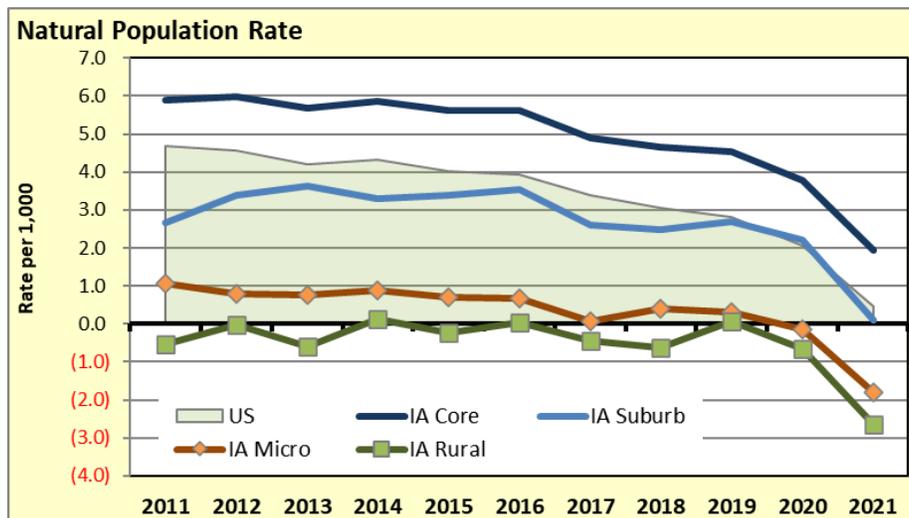
- Lost -1.8 people per 1,000 residents in 2021, where deaths exceeded births.
- Slow natural gains between 2011-2017, then went flat between 2018-2020. COVID resulted in natural losses.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- No natural increase in 2021, where births equaled deaths.
- Fast natural gains over the past decade, but COVID resulted in no natural gains.

Metro Core Iowa

- Gained 1.9 people per 1,000 residents, where births exceeded deaths.
- Baby boom in metros until 2016, when gains slowed down. COVID reduced natural gains, but births still exceed deaths.



U.S. Average: 0.5 in 2021, 3.9 in 2016, 4.7 in 2011.

Source: Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

*Natural increase is where births exceed deaths.
Natural decrease is where deaths exceed births.*

Net Migration

COVID-19 slowed out-migration in rural Iowa and cities.
Suburbs continue to see rapid in-migration.

Rural Iowa

- Lost -1.2 people per 1,000 residents in 2021, where more people left than moved in.
- Large rural out-migration until it slowed between 2016-2018 as more stayed. COVID largely stopped out-migration as people did not move.

Micropolitan Iowa

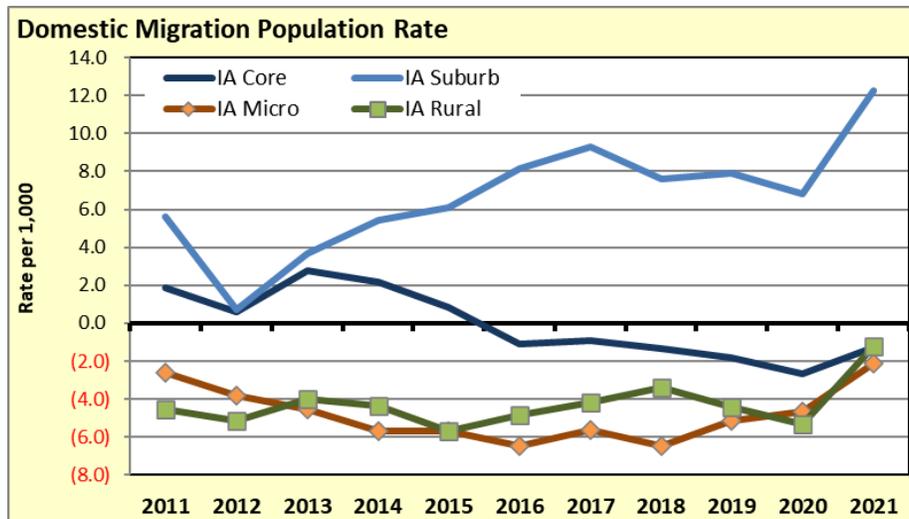
- Lost -2.1 people per 1,000 in 2021, where more people left than moved in.
- Massive micro out-migration between 2011-2018, after which is steadily slowed as people stayed. COVID largely stopped out-migration as people did not move.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- Gained 12.3 per 1,000 in 2021, where far more people moved in than left.
- Massive in-migration over the past decade, especially during COVID when many people relocated to suburbs.

Metro Core Iowa

- Lost -1.3 people per 1,000 residents in 2021, where more people left than moved in.
- More people were moving into metros until 2015, after which more people began to move out. COVID largely stopped metro out-migration as people did not move.



Source: Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

*In-migration is where more moved into the area than moved out.
Out-migration is where more moved out of the area than moved in.*

Age Structure

Metros gained children and younger workers, while rural areas lost them.
 Boom in seniors age 65-74 statewide, but elderly moving to metros.

K-12 and College Age Populations

- Declines in K-12 age children in both rural and micropolitan areas (down 3-10%), but gains in metros (up 3-6%). Sharp gains in people 20-24 years old in suburban metros (up 23%) and small gains in rural areas (up 4%), but declines in micropolitans (down 3%).

Working Age Adults 25-44 Years Old

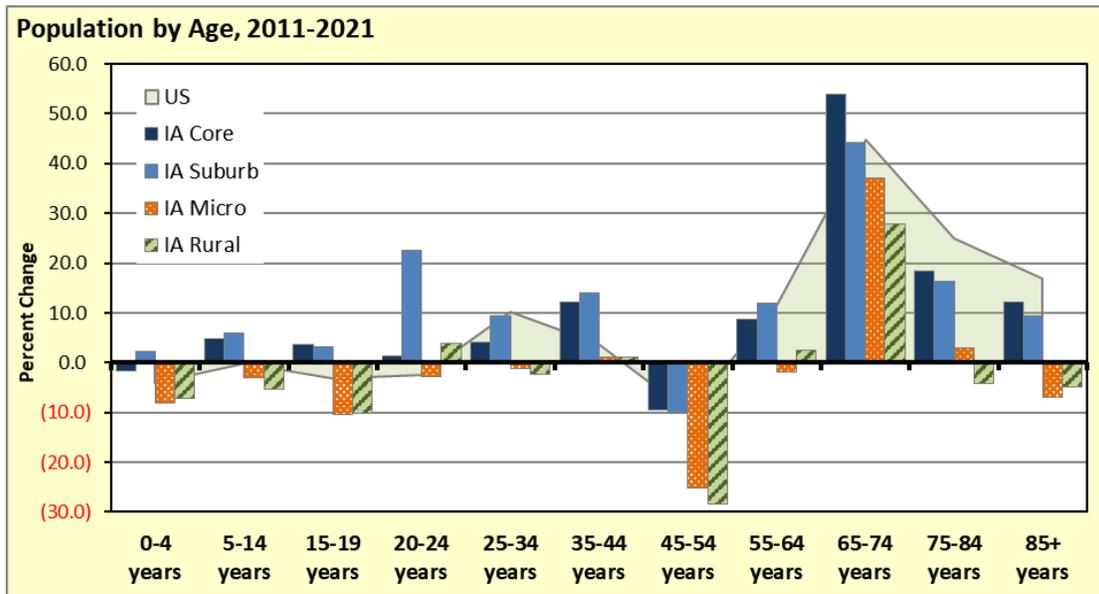
- No gains in rural and micropolitan areas, but fast gains in metro core and suburban areas (up 4-14%). Metros luring many 35-44 year olds.

Working Age Adults 45-64 Years Old

- Sharp losses of 45-54 year olds in rural and micropolitan areas (down 25-28%), while metros saw smaller losses (down 10%). Only metros had gains in 55-64 year olds (up 9-12%).

Senior and Elder Populations

- Fast gains in seniors age 65-74 years statewide due to Baby Boomers. Gains in elders over 75 years old in metros, but elder losses in rural and micropolitan areas.



Source: Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Persons of Color

Minority growth avoided sizable population losses in non-metro Iowa.
Whites moving to the suburbs, but leaving non-metro Iowa.

Rural Iowa

- The white non-Hispanic population fell by a sizable –6.4% since 2010.
- Losses were offset by gains in Hispanics and those of multiple or other races, lessening the impact of population decline to only –2.6%.

Micropolitan Iowa

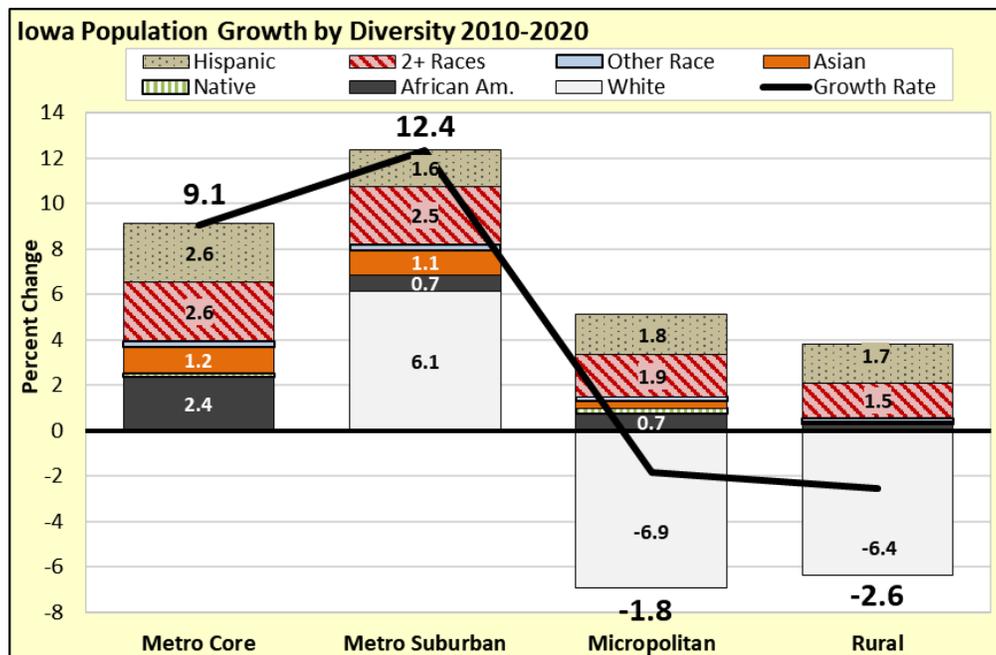
- The white non-Hispanic population fell by a nearly –7.0% since 2010.
- Losses were offset by gains in Hispanics, multiple or other races, and African Americans. As a result, losses were only –1.8%.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- The white non-Hispanic population grew by 6.1%, as did people of multiple races, Hispanics, and Asians.
- As a result, suburban metro populations boomed by 12.4% since 2010.

Metro Core Iowa

- The white non-Hispanic population was stable. The 9.1% population gain was entirely driven by people of color. This included Hispanics, those of multiple races, and African Americans.



Source: Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau

Household Income

Non-metro incomes lower, but faster growing.
Suburban income high and fast growing.
Metro core income growth sluggish.

Rural Iowa

- \$60,441 per household in 2021, up 1.4% from 2020, 6.5% from 2016, 13.0% from 2011.
- Lowest incomes in the state, but growing faster than metro core.

Micropolitan Iowa

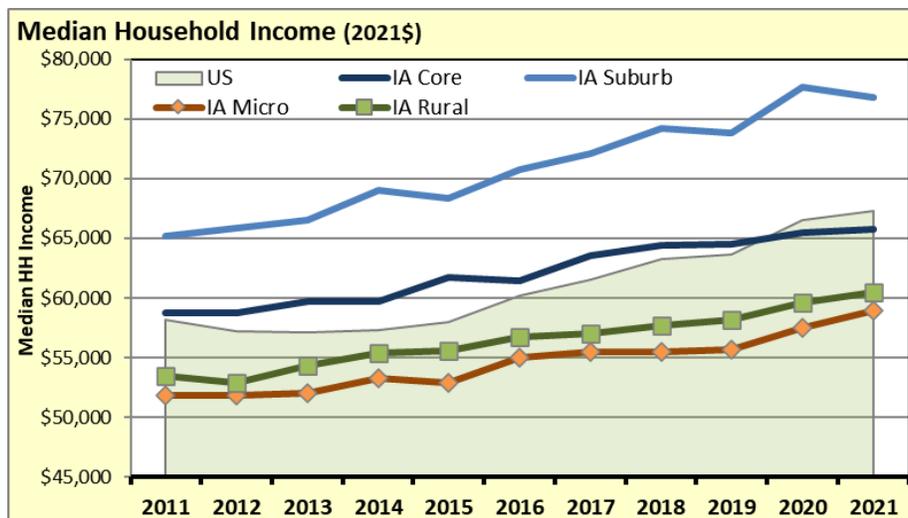
- \$58,914 per household in 2021, up 2.5% from 2020, 7.1% from 2016, 13.6% from 2011.
- Lowest incomes in the state, but growing faster than metro core.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- \$76,791 per household in 2021, down -1.1% from 2020, but up 8.6% from 2016 and 17.9% from 2011.
- Highest and fastest growing in the state, far exceeded U.S. average income.

Metro Core Iowa

- \$65,767 per household in 2021, up 0.5% from 2020, 7.1% from 2016, 11.9% from 2011.
- Metros have middle-range incomes that are similar to national average, but income growth has been slow.



U.S. Average: \$67,340 in 2021, up 1.3% from 2020, up 11.9% from 2016, up 15.8% from 2011.

Source: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Household income includes wages, self-employment, capital gains, and transfers (retirement, Social Security, and welfare).

Poverty

Poverty falling statewide, but not as fast as U.S. rates.
Suburban poverty is low.

Rural Iowa

- 9.9% of people in poverty in 2021, down –1.4 points from 2016 and –1.9 from 2011.
- Poverty has fallen at a slower rate since 2011, but lower than metro cores and micros.

Micropolitan Iowa

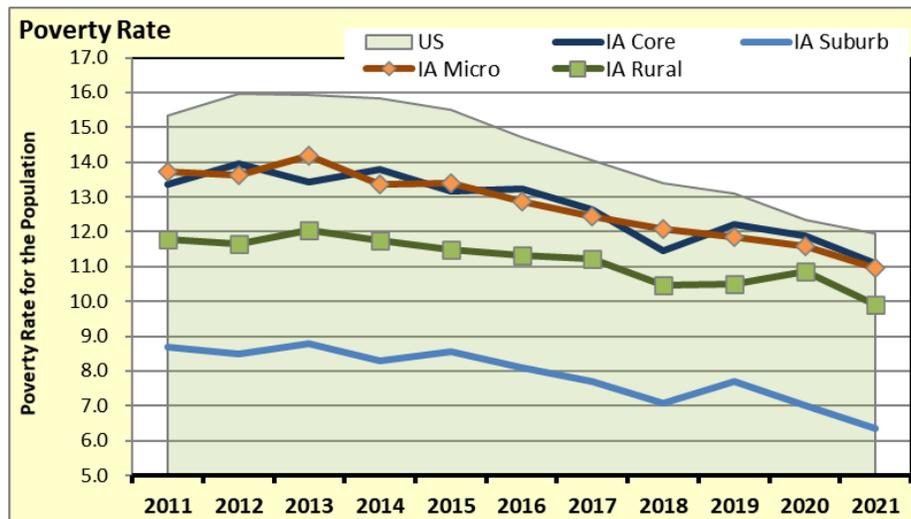
- 11.0% of people in poverty in 2021, down –1.9 points from 2016 and –2.8 from 2011.
- Tied for highest poverty rate in Iowa, but fastest drop since 2011.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- 6.4% of people in poverty in 2021, down –1.7 points from 2016 and –2.3 from 2011.
- Lowest rate in Iowa.

Metro Core Iowa

- 11.1% of people in poverty in 2021, down –2.1 points from 2016 and –2.3 from 2011.
- Tied for highest rate in Iowa, with gains in the late 2010s, but drops in the 2020s.



U.S. Average: 11.9% in 2021, down –2.8 points from 2016, down –3.4 points from 2011.

Source: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

*Poverty rate is the percent of people whose incomes fall below the federal poverty level.
In 2021, it was \$12,880 for one person and \$26,500 for a four-person family.*

Labor Force Participation

Sharp drops in participation due to COVID-19, but better than U.S. rates.
Micropolitans have low participation rates.

Rural Iowa

- 66.2% participation in 2021, down –2.0 points from 2016, but no change from 2011.
- Sharp rise in participation from 2011-2016, then sharp drop from 2019-2020. Relatively stable during COVID.

Micropolitan Iowa

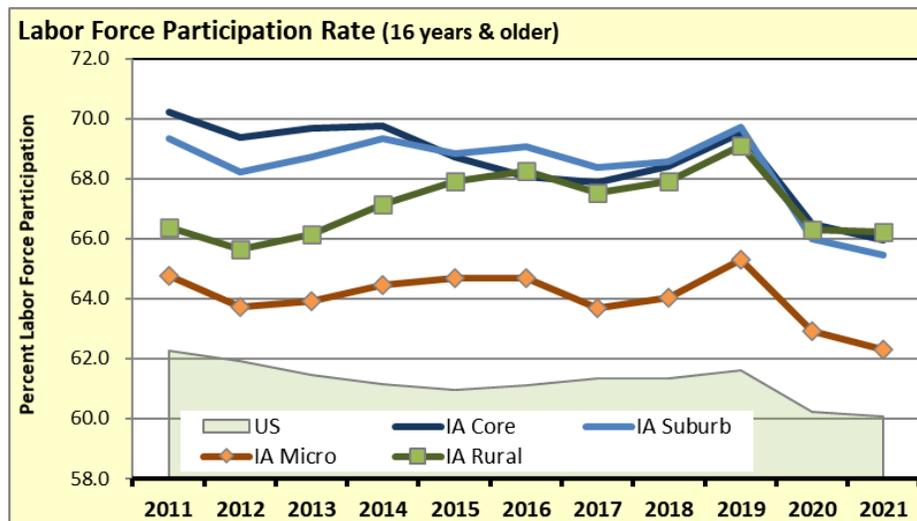
- 62.3% participation in 2021, down –2.4 points from 2016 and –2.5 from 2011.
- Lowest in the state. Participation rates have been low for most of the 2010s, and have fallen during COVID.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- 65.5% participation in 2021, down –3.6 point from 2016 and –3.9 from 2011.
- High and stable rates from 2011-2019, then drops in 2020. Participation stable during COVID.

Metro Core Iowa

- 66.0% participation in 2021, down –2.1 points from 2016 and –4.3 from 2011.
- High and stable rates from 2011-2019, then drops in 2020. Participation stable during COVID.



U.S. Average: 60.1% in 2021, down –1.0 point from 2016, down –2.2 points from 2011.

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Labor force participation is the percent of people 16 years and older that have a job. It is a broad measure because it includes those not seeking work such as the unemployable, discouraged workers, and those not in the labor force.

Unemployment

Sharp spike in unemployment due to COVID, but lower than U.S. rates.
Unemployment a problem in metro cities and micropolitans.

Rural Iowa

- 3.8% unemployed in 2021, down -0.3 and -1.8 points from 2016 and 2011.

Micropolitan Iowa

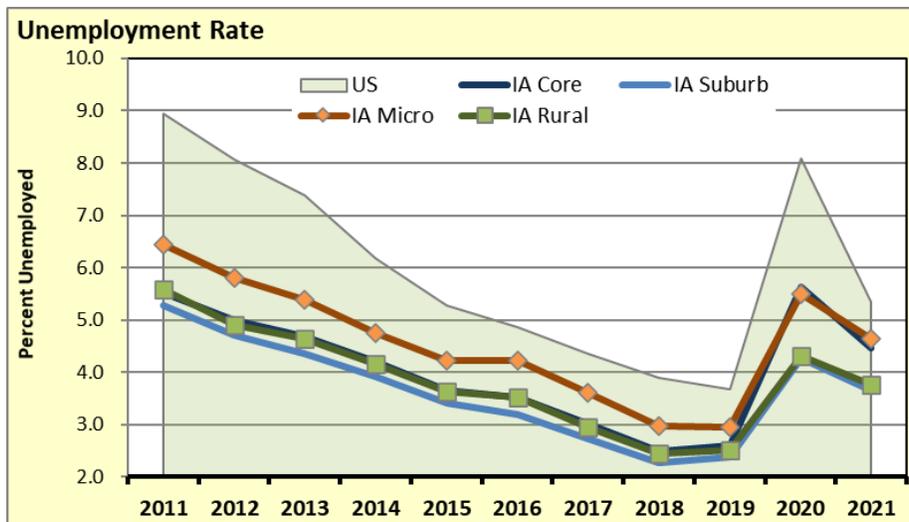
- 4.7% unemployed in 2021, up 0.4 points since 2016, but down -1.8 points from 2011.
- Tied for highest rate in Iowa.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- 3.6% unemployment in 2021, up 0.4 points since 2016, but down -1.6 points from 2011.
- Lowest rate in Iowa.

Metro Core Iowa

- 4.5% unemployment in 2021, up 1.0 point since 2016, but down -1.0 point from 2011.
- Tied for highest rate in Iowa.



U.S. Average: 5.4% in 2021, up 0.5 of a point from 2016, down -3.6 points from 2011.

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment rate is the percent of people not having a job that are actively looking for one. It is a narrow measure because it excludes the unemployable, discouraged workers, and those not in the labor force.

Jobs

COVID eliminated many jobs statewide.
Metros are the job creation engines of the state, despite the pandemic.
Rural and micropolitan areas have a job creation problem.

Rural Iowa

- 22.6% of jobs in 2021, down -3.1% from 2020, -5.0% from 2016, -2.2% from 2011.
- Rural areas were gaining jobs from 2011-2016, then slowed between 2017-2020. COVID losses mean rural areas have fewer jobs now than in 2011.

Micropolitan Iowa

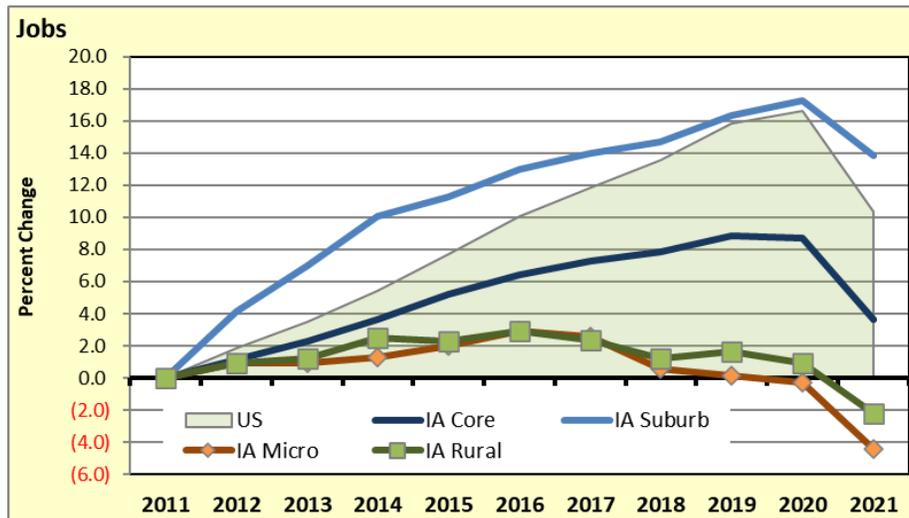
- 14.6% of jobs in 2021, down -4.1% from 2020, -7.1% from 2016, -4.4% from 2011.
- Micro job gains from 2011-2017, but flat job growth since 2018. COVID losses mean micropolitans have fewer jobs now than in 2011.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- 9.4% of jobs in 2021, down -2.9% from 2020, up 0.8% from 2016, but up 13.8% from 2011.
- Very fast gain in jobs until COVID, but still far above the number of suburban jobs in 2011. COVID had a minimal impact on job creation.

Metro Core Iowa

- 53.4% of jobs in 2021, down -4.7% from 2020 and -2.6% from 2016, but up 3.7% from 2011. Majority of the state's jobs are located in metro cities.
- Fast gains in jobs until 2019 when growth plateaued. COVID sharply reduced jobs, but still above 2011 numbers.



U.S. Average: down -5.4% from 2020, stable since 2016, but up 10.3% from 2011.

Source: Regional Economic Accounts, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Job numbers are a total of both full-time and part-time positions, including self-employed, for all economic sectors (private, government, and farm).

Self-Employed Businesses (non-farm)

Self-employed businesses booming in metros,
but going bust in rural areas and micropolitans.
COVID hit small businesses hard across Iowa.

Rural Iowa

- 26.2% self-employed in 2021, down –2.0% from 2020, –8.8% from 2016, –5.5% from 2011.
- Rural businesses growing from 2011-2015, then slowed and turned into losses in 2020. Fewer rural businesses now than in 2011.

Micropolitan Iowa

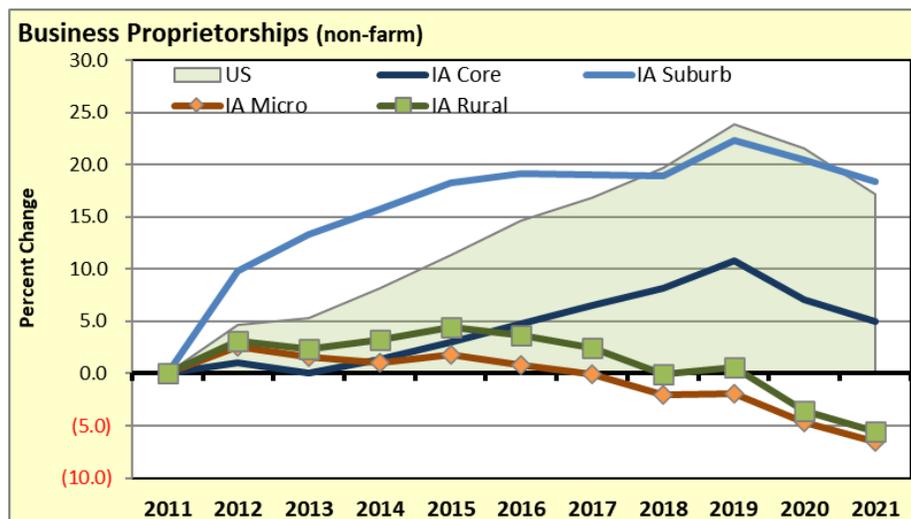
- 13.5% self-employed in 2021, down –1.9% from 2020, –7.3% from 2016, –6.5% from 2011.
- Little to no gains in businesses for most of the 2010s, then micros started to lose businesses in 2018. Fewer businesses now than in 2011

Metro Suburban Iowa

- 13.1% self-employed in 2021, down –1.7% from 2020 and –0.7% from 2016, but up 18.4% from 2011.
- Sharp gain in business all through the 2010s. Small decline in early 2020s, but far above 2011 numbers.

Metro Core Iowa

- 47.2% self-employed in 2021, down –1.9% from 2020, no change since 2016, but up 5.0% from 2011.
- Metro business growth started in 2013 and peaked in 2019, after which it fell. However, there are still more metro business now than a decade ago.



U.S. Average: down –3.6% from 2020, up 2.2% from 2016, but up 17.2% from 2011.

Source: Regional Economic Accounts, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Self-employed businesses are sole proprietors or general partners engaged in non-farm activities.

Self-Employed Farms

Sizable loss of farm businesses across Iowa since 2014.

Rural Iowa

- 60.0% of farms in 2021, down -3.2% from 2016 and -4.7% from 2011.

Micropolitan Iowa

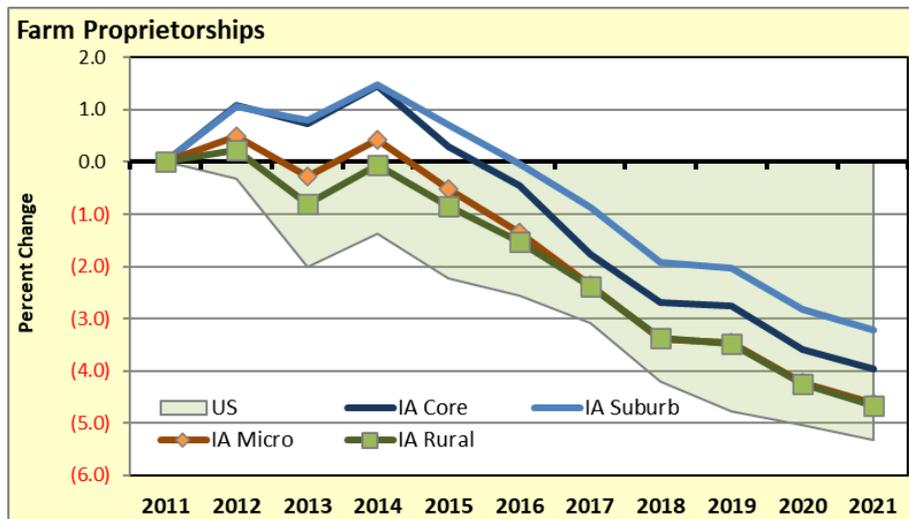
- 14.9% of farms in 2021, down -3.3% from 2016 and -4.6% from 2011.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- 14.1% of farms in 2021, down -3.2% from 2016 and -3.2% from 2011.

Metro Core Iowa

- 10.9% of farms in 2021, down -3.5% from 2016 and -4.0% from 2011.



U.S. Average: down -2.8% from 2016, down -5.3% from 2011.

Source: Regional Economic Accounts, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Self-employed farms are sole proprietors or non-corporate partners engaged in agricultural production activities.

Non-Metropolitan Jobs by Sector

Good job opportunities in goods-producing industries.
Half of jobs in the services sector, but in rapid decline.

Professional-Related Services (private)

Includes professional, finance, real estate, telecom, business, and health services.

- 29.7% of jobs in 2021, down -5.7% from 2016, but up 0.9% from 2011. Metros have a larger share of jobs at 42.3% .

Goods-Producing (private)

Includes manufacturing and construction.

- 24.2% of jobs in 2021, down -2.4% from 2016, but up 6.3% since 2011. Metros have a larger share of jobs at 16.0% .

Personal-Related Services (private)

Includes entertainment, recreation, lodging, food, and personal services; and retail trade.

- 23.4% of jobs in 2021, down -12.0% from 2016 and -8.6% from 2011. Similar to metro jobs at 26.1% .

State and Local Government

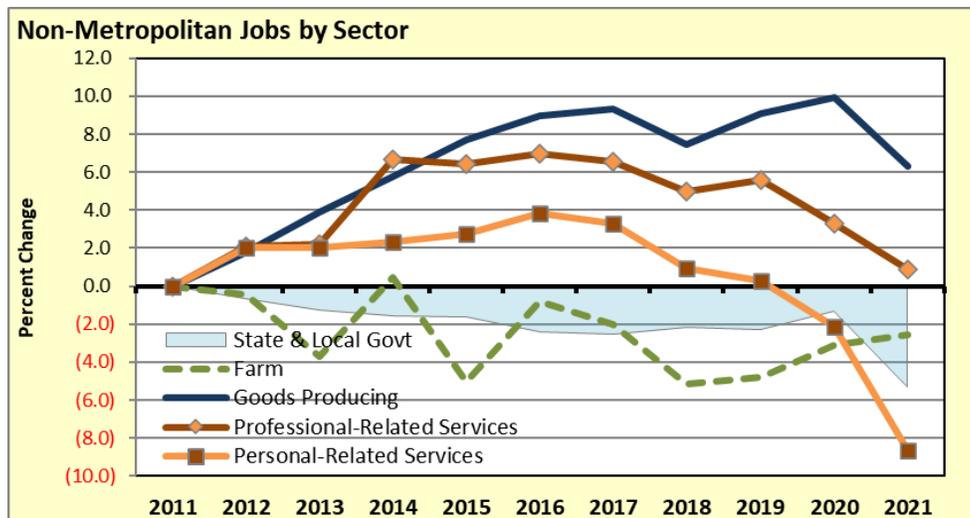
Includes state, city, and county government; and public education (K-12 to higher education).

- 12.6% of jobs in 2021, down -2.9% from 2016 and -5.3% from 2011. Similar to metro jobs at 13.6% .

Farm

Includes farm proprietors and farm workers.

- 10.2% of jobs in 2021, down -1.7% from 2016 and -2.5% from 2011. Metros have far smaller shares of jobs at 2.0% .



Source: Regional Economic Accounts, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Earnings Per Job

Earnings boost statewide!
Best paying jobs are in metro cities.
Suburban earnings growing fast, but micropolitan earnings are flat.
Rural earnings fluctuate with the farm economy.

Rural Iowa

- \$49,234 per job in 2021, up 4.4% from 2020, no change from 2016, 13.2% from 2011.
- Lowest earnings in Iowa, but experienced sharp gains and drops due to farm economy.

Micropolitan Iowa

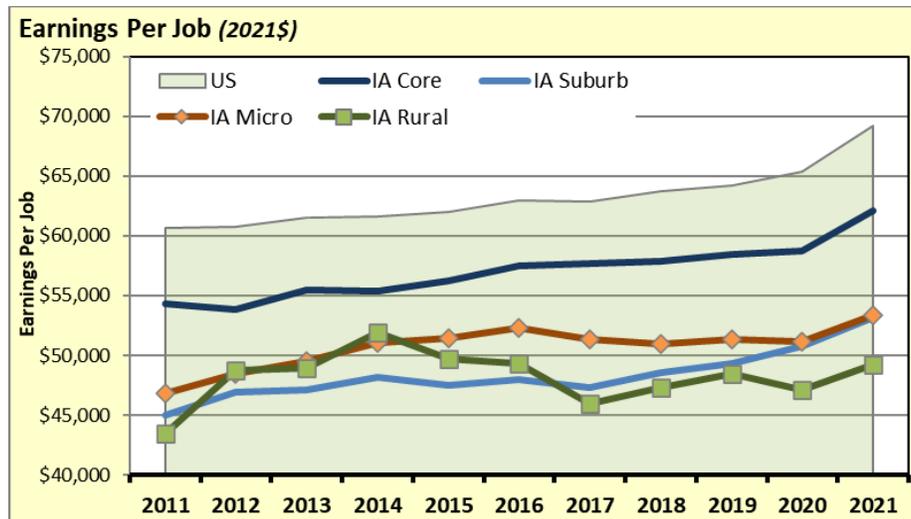
- \$53,347 per job in 2021, up 4.3% from 2020, 2.1% from 2016, 13.8% from 2011.
- Earnings grew from 2011-2016, but were flat until 2021.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- \$53,209 per job in 2021, up 4.7% from 2020, 10.9% from 2016, 18.3% from 2011.
- Rapid growth in earnings over past decade, especially since 2017.

Metro Core Iowa

- \$62,087 per job in 2021, up 5.6% from 2020, 8.1% from 2016, 14.3% from 2011.
- Highest earnings in Iowa, with consistent growth since 2011.



U.S. Average: \$69,201 in 2021, up 5.9% from 2020, up 9.9% from 2016, up 14.1% from 2011.

Source: Regional Economic Accounts, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Earnings include wages, salaries, and self-employment income from employment in all economic sectors (private, government, and farm).

Non-Metropolitan Earnings by Sector

Goods-producing and government are the best paid.
Personal services jobs are the lowest paid.

Goods-Producing (private)

Includes manufacturing and construction.

- \$72,711 per job in 2021, up 2.9% from 2020, down -1.7% from 2016, but up 18.8% since 2011. Metros pay 14% higher at \$83,040.

State and Local Government

Includes state, city, and county government; and public education (K-12 to higher education).

- \$63,196 per job in 2021, pp 4.3% from 2020, 8.1% from 2016, 14.9% from 2011. Metros pay 18% higher at \$74,470.

Professional-Related Services (private)

Includes professional, finance, real estate, telecom, business, and health services.

- \$43,597 per job in 2021, up 3.3% from 2020, 8.0% from 2016, 14.4% from 2011. Metros pay high a stunning 44% higher at \$62,867.

Farm

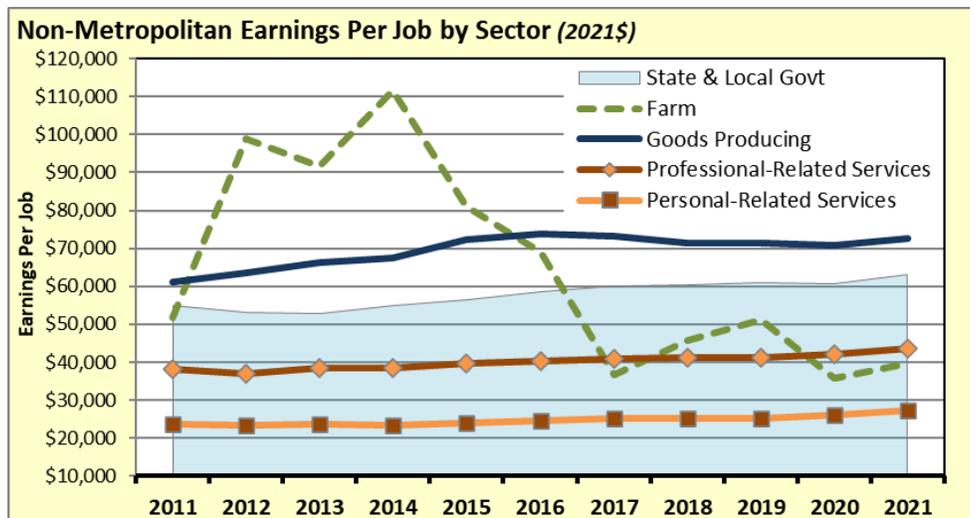
Includes farm proprietors and farm workers.

- \$39,581 per job in 2021, up 10.6% from 2020, but down -42.5% from 2016 -23.5% from 2011. Metro farm earnings are 16% lower at \$33,293.

Personal-Related Services (private)

Includes entertainment, recreation, lodging, food, and personal services, plus retail trade.

- \$27,419 per job in 2021, up 4.4% from 2020, 11.6% from 2016, 15.0% from 2011. Metros pay 20% higher at \$32,856.



Source: Regional Economic Accounts, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Home Values

Metro home values are higher than non-metros.
However, all Iowa homes values are far below the nation.

Rural Iowa

- \$119,474 home value in 2021, up 2.5% from 2020, 9.1% from 2016, 10.6% from 2011.
- Tied for lowest, but growing faster than micropolitans.

Micropolitan Iowa

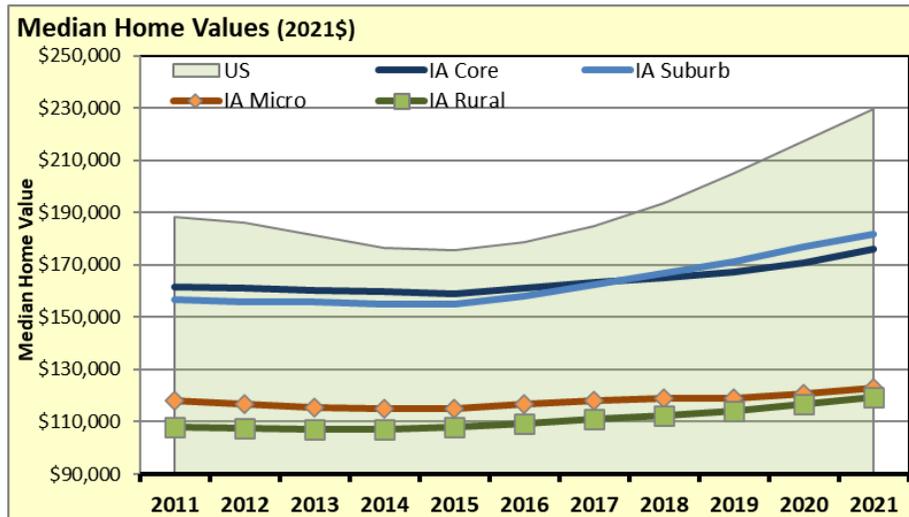
- \$122,953 per home value in 2021, up 1.6% from 2020, 5.4% from 2016, 4.0% from 2011.
- Tied for lowest and slowest growing home values in Iowa.

Metro Suburban Iowa

- \$181,890 per home value in 2021, up 2.8% from 2020, 15.2% from 2016, 16.2% from 2011.
- High home values that have grown faster than metro cities, but still far below U.S. values.

Metro Core Iowa

- \$176,256 per home value in 2021, up 3.2% from 2020, 9.5% from 2016, 9.0% from 2011.
- High home values that have grown slower than suburbs since 2016, but still far below U.S. values.



U.S. Average: \$229,800 in 2021, up 5.7% from 2020, up 28.7% from 2016, up 22.0% from 2011.

Source: American Community Survey (5-year), U.S. Census Bureau

Family Farms – Numbers, Acreage, and Value

83,000 farms in Iowa, but two-thirds are places to live or retire.

Retirement Farms: *(retired farm operators)*

- 12.2% of farms, 3.0% of farmland, 0.5% of production value. Sharply falling shares.

Residence Farms: *(non-farm occupation, farms sales under \$150,000)*

- 55.1% of farms, 20.2% of farmland, 1.1% of production value.

Small Farms: *(farmer occupation, farm sales between \$150,000-349,999)*

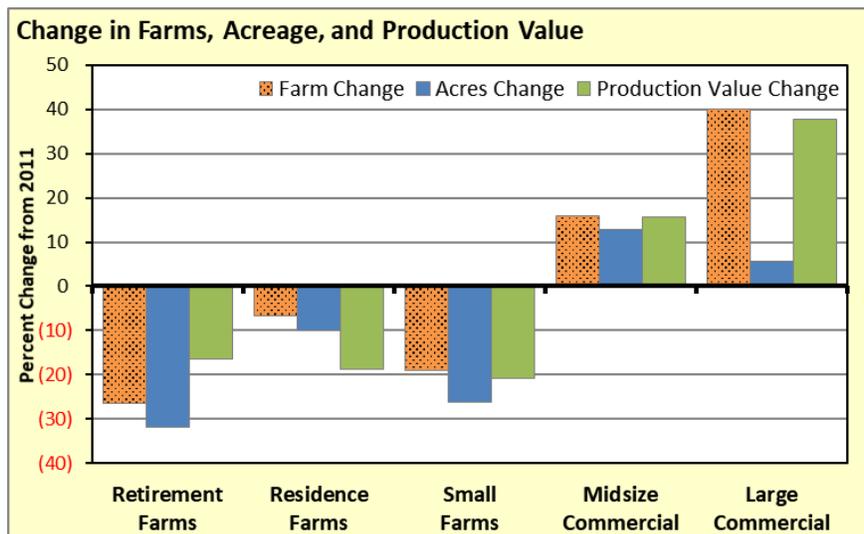
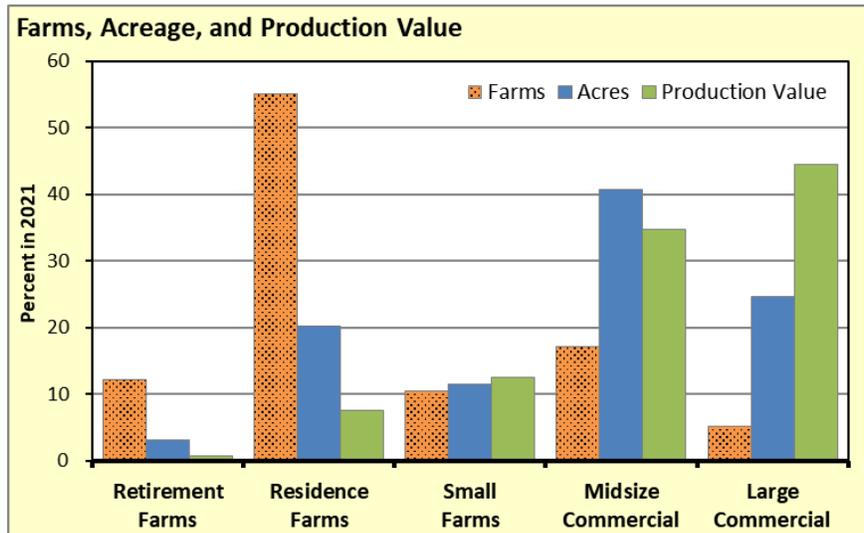
- 10.5% of farms, 11.4% of farmland, 9.8% of production value. Sharply falling shares.

Midsize Commercial Farms: *(farmer occupation, farm sales between \$350,000-999,999)*

- 17.1% of farms, 40.8% of farmland, 16.7% of production value. Growing shares.

Large Commercial Farms: *(farmer occupation, farm sales \$1 million or more)*

- 5.1% of farms, 24.7% of farmland, 71.9% of production value. Fast growing shares.



Source: Agricultural Resource Management Survey, ERS-USDA.

Family Farms – Farm and Household Income

Benefits of getting big – large farm, large income.
 Commercial farm income growing, but small farm income falling.
 Off-farm income critical for small farm survival.

Retirement Farms

- Net farm income \$18,671, fell –40.1% last year and –20.8% from 2011.
- Farm family income \$70,501, fell –18.6% last year, but up 3.4 from 2011.

Residence Farms

- Net farm income \$11,225, up 49.0% last year (unreliable estimate for 2011).
- Farm family income \$100,965, fell –24.6% last year, but up 21.5% from 2011.

Small Farms

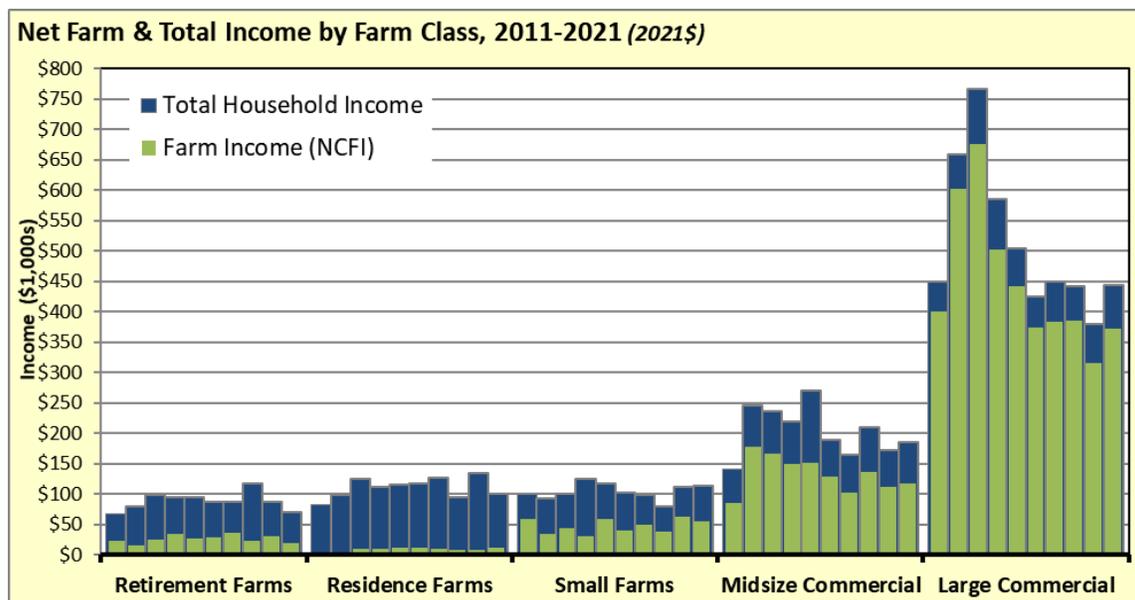
- Net farm income \$54,330, fell –14.1% last year and –8.1% from 2011.
- Farm family income \$113,385, stable last year and up 13.1% since 2011.

Midsize Commercial Farms

- Net farm income \$117,415, up 5.4 last year and 36.7% since 2011.
- Farm family income \$185,768, up 8.0% last year and 30.9% since 2011.

Large Commercial Farms

- Net farm income \$371,969, up 17.8% last year, but down –6.9 from 2011.
- Farm family income \$399,750, up 16.4% last year, but down –1.2% from 2011.



Source: Agricultural Resource Management Survey, ERS-USDA.

Family Farms – Farm Debt

Debt to asset ratios low for all farms.
However, small and midsize farms are fast approaching debt limits.

Retirement Farms

- Debt to asset ratio 5.0 in 2021, up 3.0 points last year and 4.0 from 2011.
- 56.8% of maximum debt load in 2021., up 37.4 points last year.

Residence Farms

- Debt to asset ratio 7.1 in 2021, down –1.7 points last year and stable since 2011.
- 67.7% of maximum debt load, down –6.4 points last year.

Small Farms

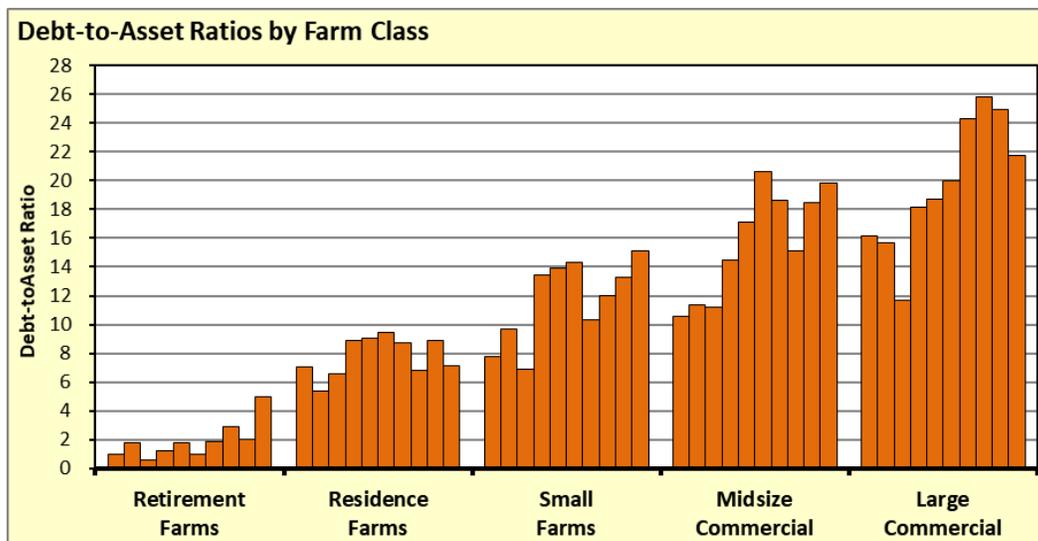
- Debt to asset ratio 15.1 in 2021, up 1.8 points last year and 7.3 from 2011.
- 94.8% of maximum debt load, up 32.1 points last year.

Midsize Commercial Farms

- Debt to asset ratio 19.8 in 2021, up 1.3 points last year and 9.0 from 2011.
- 90.9% of maximum debt load, up 13.5 points last year.

Large Commercial Farms

- Debt to asset ratio 21.8 in 2021, down –3.2 points last year, but up 5.6 points from 2011.
- 60.6% of maximum debt load, down –16.7 points last year.



Source: Agricultural Resource Management Survey, ERS-USDA.

Debt-to-asset ratios measures the percent of farm debt divided by farm assets, such as land.

Debt repayment capacity utilization is the percent of farm debt divided by the maximum debt the farm can cover from regular income.

Summary

In micropolitan and rural Iowa – what we call non-metro Iowa – population losses have slowed due to fewer people migrating out of small towns and cities. In metro cities, the population grew more slowly as deaths far exceeded births. Suburbs, on the other hand, grew sizably as more people moved into less populated areas outside cities. These population trends are likely caused by the COVID-19 pandemic where deaths spiked, birth rates fell, and people did not move. Natural declines in non-metros will hamper future population growth. Non-metro Iowa has rapidly diversified over the past decade. Rural and micropolitan areas would have shrunk by 7% over the past decade as the white population left. Gains in people of color offset those losses, so that small cities and towns only shrank by 2% since 2010. In the future, people of color will be an important part of non-metro Iowa's future students, workers, and customers. Rural Iowa continues to lose school-age children and working age adults, which will likely result in further school consolidation and exacerbate existing rural workforce shortages.

The pandemic eliminated many jobs statewide, but the effects were more strongly felt in non-metro Iowa, where there are fewer jobs today than there was in 2011. As a result, labor force participation rates fell sharply and unemployment rates rose rapidly. Micropolitan cities were particularly hard hit, where employment participation was low and unemployment high. This suggests that some people have stopped looking for work and have dropped out of the labor market altogether. Despite dismal job numbers, incomes grew and poverty fell across Iowa, especially in rural areas. This is likely attributable to wage gains given to workers during the pandemic, but also to government payments in the form of unemployment benefits and stimulus checks. Income gains should help blunt the impact of inflation on Iowa households.

Some of the best job opportunities in non-metro Iowa are in the goods-producing sector, primarily manufacturing and construction. These jobs account for over 24% of jobs, have grown by over 6% since 2011, and pay the highest wages in rural Iowa at \$72,700 per job. Employment in professional services is also plentiful, but growth has been slow and pay is only about \$44,000 per job. The personal services sector in non-metro Iowa continues to struggle. The number of jobs fell by nearly 9% over the past 10 years, and pay is a low \$27,400 per job – although many jobs are part-time or seasonal. Growing the rural economy through self-employment or entrepreneurship faces major challenges. Self-employed businesses fell by 2% last year and is down by over 6% from a decade ago. This is likely due to a smaller customer base, lack of workers, and lower spending due to lower incomes in non-metros. By contrast, most self-employed businesses were located in metro Iowa and are growing fast.

Of Iowa's 83,000 farm operations, nearly two-thirds are residential or retirement farms. Only 22% are operations where farming is the main activity. These commercial farms operate 66% of the state's farmland and generate 89% of its production value. Over the past decade, small farms have declined while large ones have grown, suggesting small operations may effectively disappear from rural Iowa in the near future. Commercial net farm incomes have grown over the past year, especially for large farms. On the other hand, small farms have struggled with low net farm incomes that have steadily fallen over the past decade. Commercial farms are solvent, with debt only accounting for 20-22% of farm assets. However, small and midsize farms have debt utilization rates over 90%, meaning they have little room to take on additional farm debt without repayment problems.

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Suggested Citation:

Peters, D. 2022. *Rural Iowa at a Glance 2022*. SOC 3104, September 2022. Iowa State University Extension: Ames, IA.

This work was supported by the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station and ISU Extension and Outreach, funded by the State of Iowa and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



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Appendix – Data and Methods

County data are aggregated into **metropolitan core** (counties with an urban center over 50,000 people, plus outlying suburbs linked by commuting patterns), **metropolitan suburban** (outlying counties of a core metro county that are linked by commuting patterns), **micropolitan** (counties with an urban center of between 10,000-49,999 people, plus outlying counties linked by commuting patterns), and **rural/non-core** (counties having no urban center of 10,000 or more) areas based on 2021 Core-Based Statistical Areas delineated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Rural and non-core are used interchangeably, but rural has a specific definition not used in this bulletin (rural officially defined as places under 2,500 people or the countryside). Income data between 2011 and 2021 are **inflation-adjusted** to real dollars using the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis personal consumption price indexes.

Population and **age** counts are intercensal estimates between the official decennial censuses. Natural change is the difference between births and deaths; and net migration is the difference of those who moved in versus those who moved out. Both are reported as a rate per 1,000. **Persons of color** is the population self-identifying as both a race and Hispanic status. Source: Population Estimates and Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau. **Median home values** are self-reported values by owner of occupied housing units, taken from the American Community Survey (5-year), U.S. Census Bureau.

Median household income includes wages, self-employment, capital gains, transfers (retirement, Social Security, welfare) and all other income from persons in the household; and is reported as the income at the 50th percentile of households (median). Medians are used instead of means because they are less affected by very high incomes. Source: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau. The **poverty rate** is calculated as the percent of people living in households whose income (from earnings, capital gains, and transfers) falls below the poverty income line for their household size. It excludes people living in institutions or group quarters such as prisons, military bases, nursing facilities, and college dormitories. Source: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

The **labor force** is the number of people available for work, counting those employed plus those jobless but looking for work. The labor force participation rate used in this publication is the labor force divided by total the population 16 years and older. It measures the percent of people participating in the job market, and by extension the broader economy. It is similar to the unemployment rate except it includes those not seeking work such as the unemployable, students, homemakers, and retirees. Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The **unemployment rate** is the number of people unemployed divided by the labor force (those employed plus the jobless who are looking for work). The unemployment rate measures the percent of people not having a job that want one; and is a narrow measure of unemployment because it does not count the unemployable, discouraged workers, and those not in the labor force. Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Jobs include both full-time and part-time positions such as wage and salary jobs, farm and non-farm proprietors, and general partners for all economic sectors (private, government, and farm). It measures jobs, not employed persons, so one person may have multiple jobs. **Earnings** include wages and salaries, supplements to wages or salaries, and proprietors' income earned from jobs as previously defined. Economic sectors are defined using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The **farm sector** includes farm proprietors and farm workers. The **goods-producing sector** includes construction and manufacturing. The **professional-related services sector** includes information/telecom, finance and insurance, real estate and rentals, professional services, management of companies, administrative support services, private educational services, and private healthcare and social services. The **personal-related services sector** includes entertainment and recreation services, accommodation and food services, repair and maintenance services, other personal services, and retail trade. The **state and local government sector** includes state agencies, city and county government, public K-12 education, and public higher education. **Self-employed businesses** include sole proprietorships or individual general partners for non-farm activities. **Self-employed farms** include farm sole proprietors and farm non-corporate partners engaged in agricultural production activities. Source: Regional Economic Accounts, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

USDA's Economic Research Service classifies farms according to occupation and gross cash farm income (GCFI). These data exclude corporate-owned farms. **Retirement Farms** are those operated by a retired person with a GCFI under \$350,000. **Residence Farms** are those either operated by someone whose primary occupation is not farming, or a farm operation with a GCFI under \$150,000. **Small Farms** are those operated by a farmer with a GCFI of \$150,000 to \$349,999. **Midsized Commercial Farms** are farmer-operated with GCFI of \$350,000 to \$999,999. **Large Commercial Farms** are farmer-operated with GCFI of \$1 million or more. **Net farm income** (NFI) includes net cash income (farm sales less expenses) plus value of inventory change and non-money incomes, but deducts depreciation and labor costs. **Farm household income** counts all income from farm and non-farm sources for all earners in the household (such as spouses), and is only reported for farm families and not corporate farms. It includes net farm income plus all other off-farm income sources (salaries and wages, non-farm self-employment, dividends and rents, retirement and Social Security, and cash public assistance). The **debt-to-asset ratio** is defined as total liabilities divided by total assets; and measures the risk associated with the operation's financial structure. Assets include current ones that will be realized in cash, sold or consumed in the production process within one year; and non-current ones such as farm real estate and working assets that support the farm. Liabilities include current debt (paid within one year) and non-current debt (payable after one year) owed by the farm. The **debt repayment capacity utilization** (DRCU) is the percent of current farm debt over the maximum feasible debt (assuming 10% interest rates) the farm can cover from regular income streams, which measures debt utilization and the farm's ability to take on additional debt. Source: Agricultural Resource Management Survey, Economic Research Service and National Agricultural Statistics Services, USDA.

About Rural Sociology at Iowa State University

Rural Sociology at Iowa State University has a long history, being one of the first programs in the nation. The first rural sociologist was hired at Iowa State in 1913. The research and extension programs were established in 1915 and 1922, respectively, in the College of Agriculture. The Bachelor of Science degree in rural sociology was established in 1919, the Master of Science in 1920, and the Ph.D. in 1940. At present, there are six rural sociology faculty members who engage in teaching, research, and extension activities in the sociology of agriculture, rural communities, and population studies. The program offers an undergraduate degree in Agricultural and Rural Policy Studies.