

W. Frank Barton School of Business

Center for Economic Development and Business Research

Kansas Population Projections, 2014-2064

Rural Population



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

1845 Fairmount St.
Wichita KS 67260-0121
316-978-3225
www.CEDBR.org
cedbr@wichita.edu

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Rural Population | Released October 2016

The Center for Economic Development and Business Research (CEDBR), part of the W. Frank Barton School of Business at Wichita State University, recently released population projections by age cohort from 2014 to 2064 for every Kansas county¹. In these projections, the overall Kansas population is forecast to grow from 2,904,321 to 3,538,277, a 21.8 percent increase. The rural population of the state, comprised of 69 rural counties, is forecast to decline from 408,458 to 269,681, a 33 percent decline.

The rural area of the state is defined as counties that are neither part of a Kansas metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area². Note that it does not include the small towns or countryside areas in counties that are part of a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area. With this definition, the population in the rural areas in each region of the state in 2014 was between 54,205 and 89,572³. The Southeast region had the highest rural population, and four other regions had between 61,498 and 68,310 rural residents. The Southwest region had the smallest rural population.

In every region in Kansas, the rural counties are expected to have a declining population; however, the severity of the decline varies from region to region. The region with the smallest decline is projected to be the North Central region, which is expected to decline from 68,310 to 59,621 people over the forecast, a decline a 12.7 percent. The other region with a relatively small projected decline is the Northeast region, with a 23.2 percent decline. The four remaining Kansas regions, the Northwest, South Central, Southeast and Southwest, are all projected to experience declines between 39.2 and 46.2 percent in their rural populations.

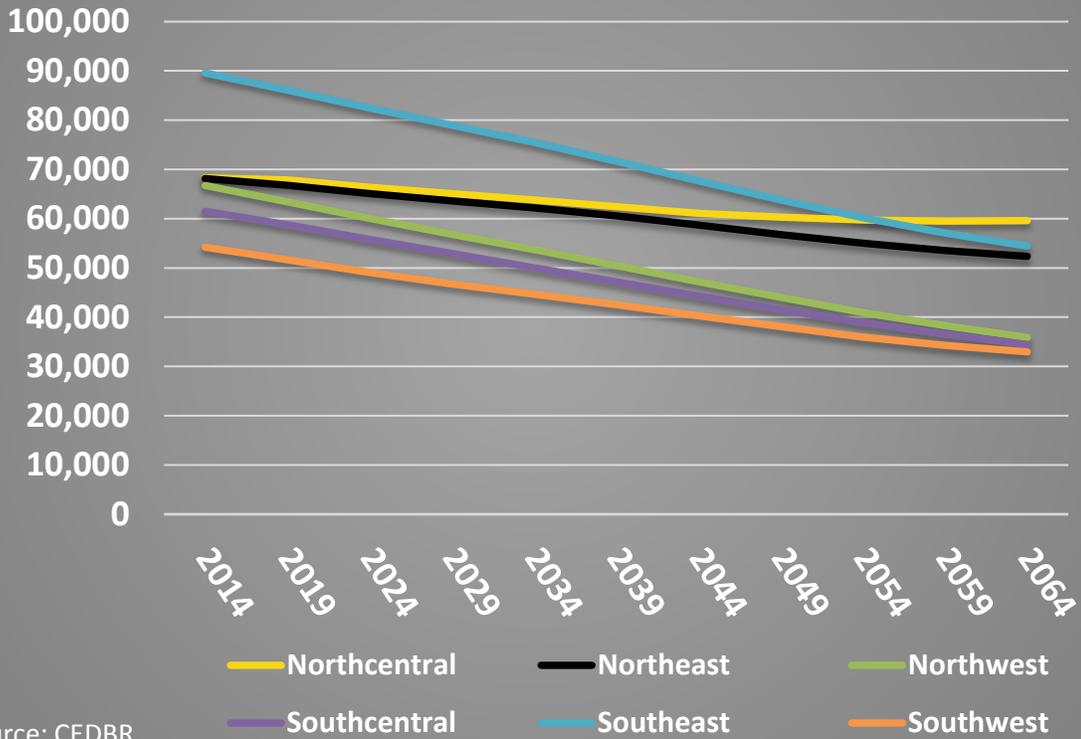
Over the fifty year period forecasted, this means that the average annual rate of decline will range from 0.3 percent for the North Central region to 1.3 percent for the Northwest region. The state's annual average decline for the rural population is projected to be 0.8 percent, in contrast with the state's overall population increasing at an average annual rate of 0.4 percent.

¹ The projections, as well as articles about metropolitan, regional, elderly, micropolitan and working age population growth, can be found at population.cedbr.org.

² A map of United States metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas is available at http://www.census.gov/population/metro/files/metro_micro_Feb2013.pdf. Kansas has 5 metropolitan areas and 16 micropolitan areas. The metropolitan and micropolitan areas include 36 Kansas counties.

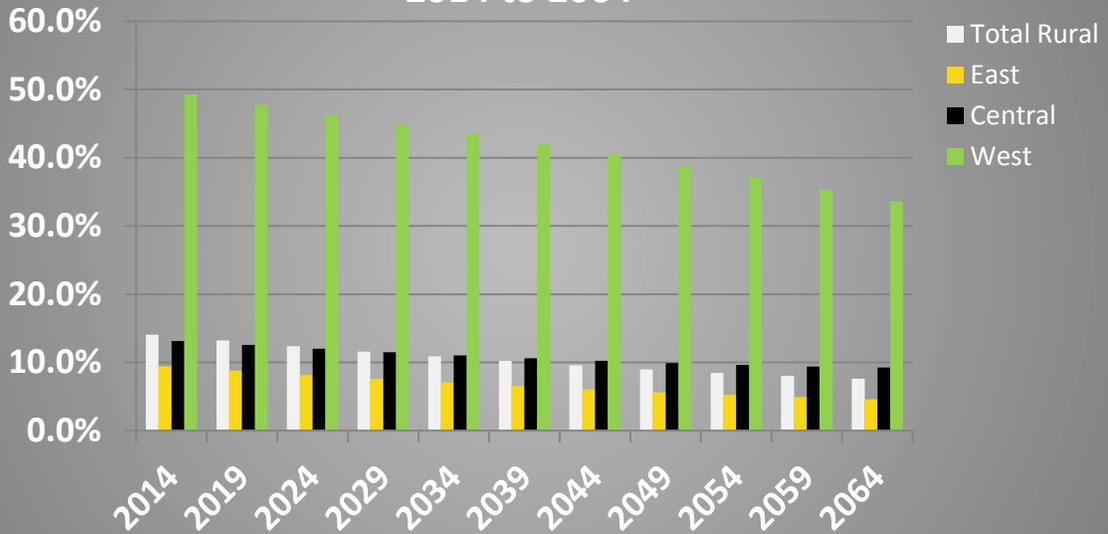
³ A visual representation of the regions used for this graph can be found at http://www.kansastag.gov/AdvHTML_Upload/council_map.gif

Kansas Regional Rural Population Forecast, 2014 to 2064



Source: CEDBR

Forecast of Rural Share of Population by Kansas Region, 2014 to 2064



The rural population of the state is relatively uniformly distributed, with five of the six regions having between 50,000 and 70,000 rural residents. However, due to the unequal share of micropolitan and metropolitan population distributed throughout the state, the rural share of the total population in the regions varies widely.

In the eastern third of the state, the rural share of the population is the lowest, with only 9.4 percent of the population living in rural counties in 2014. The eastern portion of the state contains Kansas City, Lawrence, Topeka, and Manhattan metropolitan areas, which lead to the low rural share of the population in the region. Most of these metropolitan areas are projected to grow over the next fifty years, which, combined with the projected decline in the rural population, will lead the rural share of the population to drop to 4.6 percent by 2064.

In the central third of the state, the majority of the overall population lives in the Wichita metropolitan area, with a rural share of the population of 13.1 percent. The central region has fewer metropolitan and micropolitan areas than the Eastern region, leading to a higher percentage of the population in rural areas. The rural share of the Central region's population is projected to decline consistently through 2064 to 9.2 percent, as both the rural population declines and the Wichita metropolitan area continues to grow.

In the Western region of the state, the rural population makes up a much larger fraction of the total population than in the other two regions. This is in large part because there are no metropolitan areas in the Western region. The four micropolitan areas in the Western region contained 50.7 percent of the total population in 2014, while the rural counties contained 49.3 percent. The rural share is projected to decline to 33.6 percent in 2064, as the rural population is forecast to decline while the population of Hays and Dodge City are projected to increase.

View more detailed data released in this forecast at www.population.cedbr.org or subscribe to CEDBR's e-Connection Newsletter at www.subscribe.cedbr.org. The Center for Economic Development and Business Research can customize forecasts upon request. Contact Jeremy Hill at 316-213-3673 for cost and availability.