

Population

Basic demographic data describing the age structure, sex distribution, and racial makeup of the state of Kansas is a backdrop to putting ElderCount information into perspective. With 2,688,418 people, the state of Kansas constitutes about 1% of the U.S. population. The population is dispersed among 105 counties. One third of all Kansans live in two counties, Johnson and Sedgwick, each with 17% of the state's population. Wyandotte and Shawnee each contain 6% of Kansans. On the other hand, 68 counties have less than one-half of one percent of the Kansas population.

The majority (64) of Kansas counties contain fewer than 2,000 older adults and 34 counties have 1,000 or fewer people age 65 or older. In fact, only 5 counties have more than 10,000 people age 65 or older:

Many rural counties have been experiencing a steady decline in total population for decades. The challenges of maintaining independence and autonomy in older adulthood vary by geographic locale. Older adults in rural areas and their families face a unique set of challenges when it comes to accessing health care and receiving community-based long-term care services (see page 24).

The following data are reported in the ElderCount chart book:

Population, 65+

The number and percent of the population age 65 and older is reported for each county and each AAA. With 271 people, Greeley county had the fewest older adults in 2000 compared to Sedgwick county, with 51,574 people age 65+. In general, rural areas have higher percentages of older adults, while urban areas have higher numbers. (See Maps 1 and 2.)

Race: nonwhite, 65+

Close to nine of ten people (all ages) who live in Kansas report their race to be white (86%). Among older adults, the percent is even higher (94.4%).

In ElderCount all people who reported their race to be Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or Other are reported as nonwhite.

The 2000 census enumerated close to 20,000 Kansans age 65+ whose race was reported as one of the above, the remaining 94% of older Kansans reported their race as white. Table 1 reports the number and percent of African Americans in the 10 largest counties.

Hispanic, 65+

The Census Bureau asked people to identify their race and then also to indicate whether they were of Hispanic origin. The latter is not considered a race. People of any race can be of Hispanic origin. In the 2000 census, 186,299 people (all ages) in Kansas reported Hispanic origin, or close to 7% of the population. There are 6,483 older adults of Hispanic origin in Kansas. (See Table 1.)

Men and Women, 85+

National data consistently report that among older adults, it is women age 85 and older who are the most likely to be living in or near poverty, have long-term care needs, and lack family support. While all older adults age 85 and older are not in need of assistance, it is important to recognize that those areas with higher numbers and higher percentages of people age 85+, in particular women age 85+, are likely to have special needs. (See Table 2.)

Registered to vote, 65+

Democracies work when major decisions reflect the will and values of the people. Voting is both a constitutional right and a responsibility. We report the number and percentage of older adults registered to vote, as a measure of how older adults contribute to society.

Table 1. African American and Hispanic People Age 65 and Older in the Largest Kansas Counties, 2000

	County	Total Population	All 65+	African American		Hispanic	
				65+	% of all 65+	65+	% of all 65+
1	Sedgwick	452,869	51,574	3,132	6.1%	1,176	2.3%
2	Johnson	451,086	45,069	443	1.0%	531	1.2%
3	Shawnee	169,871	23,341	1,375	5.9%	715	3.1%
4	Wyandotte	157,882	18,520	4,128	22.3%	922	5.0%
5	Douglas	99,962	7,937	223	2.8%	98	1.2%
6	Leavenworth	68,691	6,766	415	6.1%	70	1.0%
7	Reno	64,790	10,618	126	1.2%	247	2.3%
8	Riley	62,843	4,729	74	1.6%	67	1.4%
9	Butler	59,482	7,483	34	0.5%	64	0.9%
10	Saline	53,597	7,480	158	2.1%	107	1.4%
	Kansas	2,688,418	356,229	11,924	3.3%	6,483	1.8%

Source: Census 2000.

Note: People of any race can report that they are Hispanic.

Table 2. People Age 85 and Older, by AAA: 2000

AAA	# 85+	of all ages, % 85+	of 85+, % women	of 65+, % 85+
1	3,036	1.3	73.0	12.0
2	8,016	1.5	71.6	12.4
3	3,409	3.3	71.1	16.7
4	4,392	1.5	72.7	13.1
5	5,091	2.8	72.8	16.3
6	4,686	2.1	71.1	15.3
7	2,257	2.3	70.6	15.8
8	6,899	2.3	71.2	16.3
9	2,587	3.4	69.9	17.9
10	5,502	2.8	70.9	16.0
11	5,895	1.3	73.5	13.1
Kansas	51,770	1.9	71.8	14.5

Source: Census 2000.

Rural Kansas

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The well-being of older adults in Kansas cannot be fully understood without reference to the rural context. Factors that are of particular interest in rural areas include population shifts, accessibility to health care, the quality of health care providers, and informal networks.

Thirty-one of the counties in Kansas are described as frontier, with population densities of six or fewer people per square mile. Sixty-nine of the counties have population densities of 20 or fewer people per square mile. This represents over 65% of Kansas counties.

Rural areas continue to experience out-migration of younger people, who leave their hometowns to find employment in larger, more heavily populated areas.

Often, accessibility to health and long-term care services is lacking in rural areas because of the extensive traveling distances required and the harsh climate. Tertiary care can be accessed in rural settings; however, this usually involves driving to large medical centers that are located in more heavily populated areas anywhere from 1 to 5 hours from the rural older adult's home. One rural community has a population of 800 people, yet the three physicians in this community serve over 8,000 clients.

It is not unusual for a single home health agency to provide services for more than one county in the rural setting. Besides the driving time required to access the health care system in many areas of Kansas, weather conditions also impact access. It is not possible to travel 3 hours to a tertiary center during a winter storm without risking safety.

As younger workers move to larger cities for

employment, the well-being of older adults suffers the loss of highly skilled staff. Health care facilities struggle to provide quality care with a shortage of qualified health care workers. Maintaining expertise and experience in multiple areas of practice requires an enormous investment of human and monetary resources, which is difficult to achieve with both dwindling resources and health care reimbursement rates.

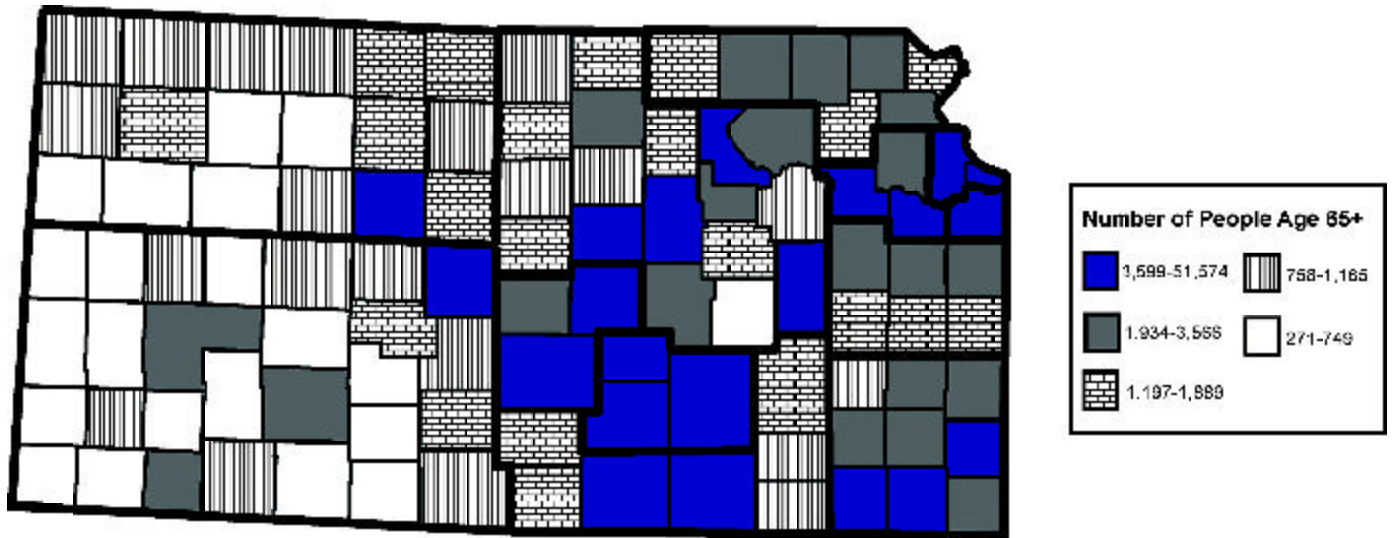
An equally important factor to well-being in the rural areas is the decrease of informal networks. Once the young family member leaves the small town for employment in a larger city, the older adult has fewer resources for daily assistance with personal care or help in other areas of daily living. Lacking assistance with grocery shopping, meal preparation, or laundry, the older adult in a rural area may actually find that the local nursing home is the only option.

Indeed, Kansas ranks higher than the national average of long-term care institutionalization of older adults. Older adults in rural areas may actually receive expensive long-term care that is at a higher level of care than what is necessary.

The challenges of rural life are woven into every aspect of well-being of the older adult. However, the picture is not without hope. Rural health providers have developed innovative methods to deal with the challenging rural context. Rural hospitals have provided specialized care through the development of outpatient clinics staffed by specialized physicians who travel to rural Kansas on a regular basis. Hospitals have incorporated physician clinics, dentist offices, long-term care and assisted living centers, and hospitals under one roof. Scholarship programs are recruiting, educating, and retaining qualified health care professionals. Nursing homes are diversifying services to include assisted living and community-based services

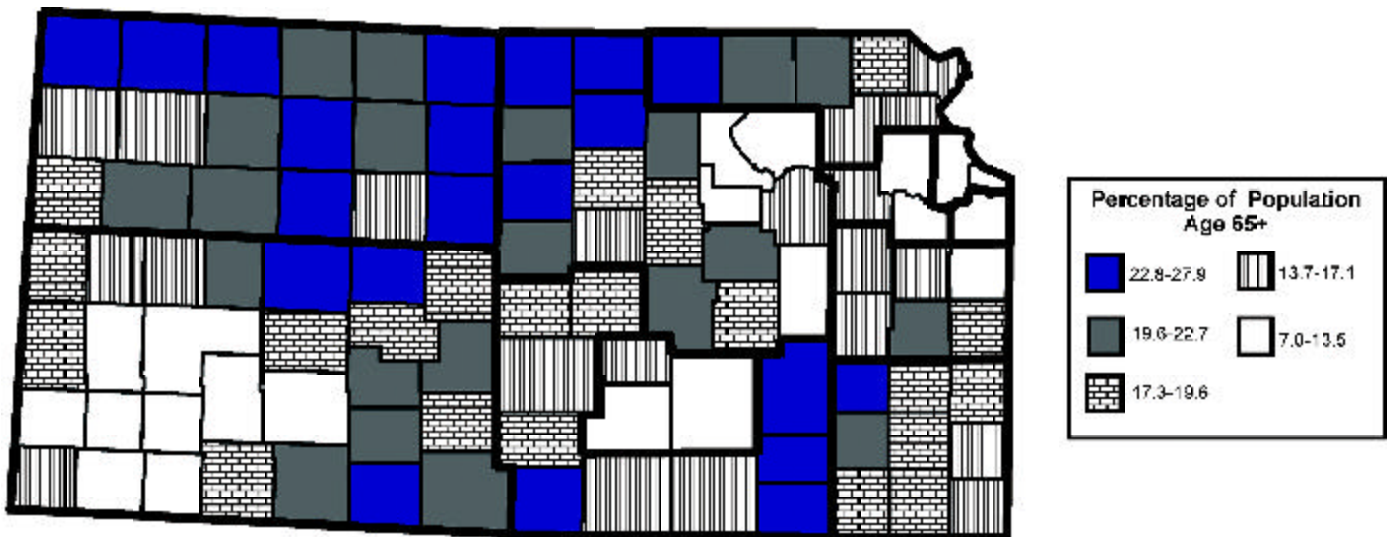
Kansas citizens continue to innovate and create as they strive to provide for the well-being of elders in rural settings.

Map 1. Number of People Age 65+: 2000



Source: Census 2000

Map 2. Percentage of Population Age 65+: 2000



Source: Census 2000

Note: In order to classify the 105 counties in 5 equal-sized groups, in some cases counties "on the cusp" of 2 quintiles may be assigned to different quintiles.