

Summary

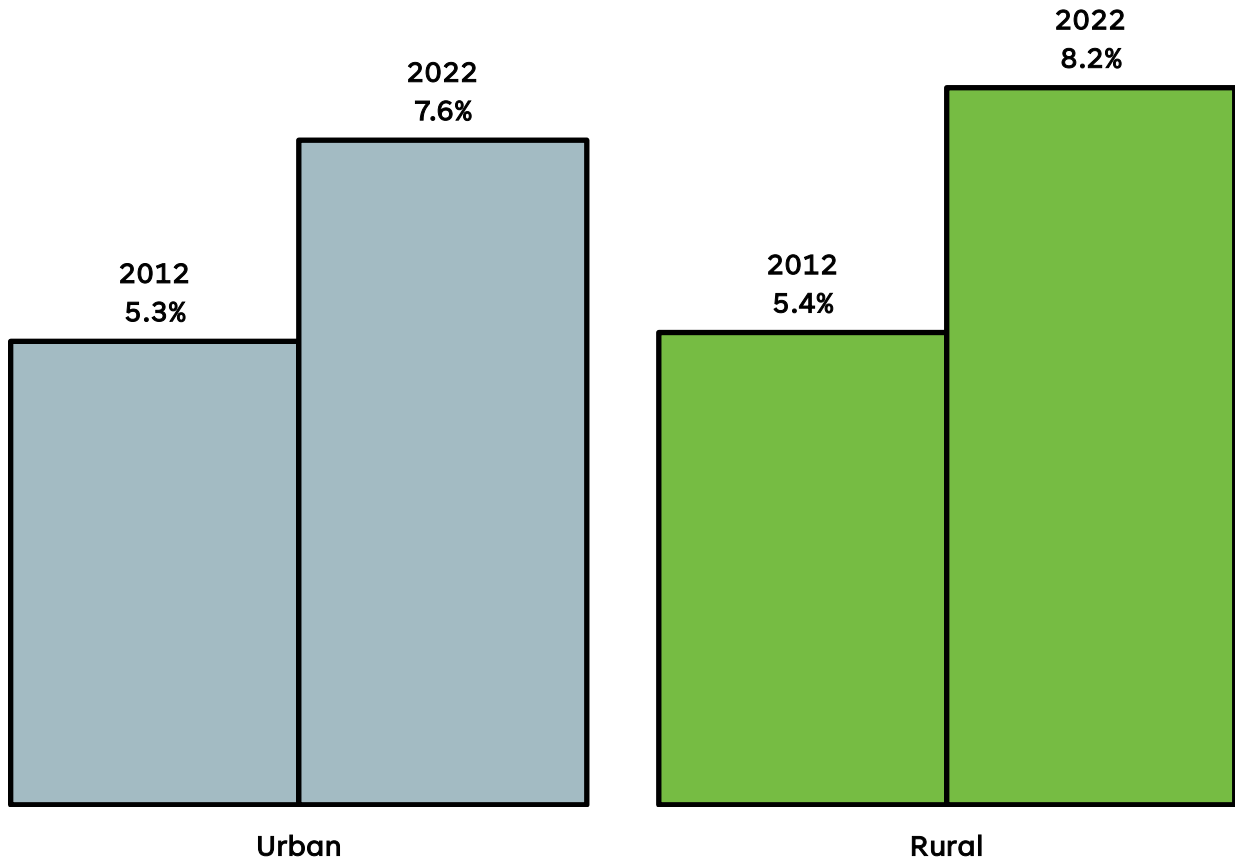
One of the fastest-growing segments of Pennsylvania's rural economy are workers 65 years old and older. To learn more about older rural workers, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania used employment and demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau and found that:

- Rural workers under 65 years old and older have increased by 50 percent from 2012 to 2022. Among similarly aged urban workers, there was a 56 percent increase.
- From 2012 to 2022, the number of rural workers under 65 years old decreased by 5 percent. Among urban workers under 65 years old, there was a 7 percent increase.
- Pennsylvania is not alone in having an aging workforce. Across the United States, the number of older workers increased by 75 percent from 2012 to 2022.
- Rural older workers share many of the same demographic and household characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and marital status) as urban older workers. There were, however, some key differences in educational attainment, disability status, and race.
- Rural older workers who worked full-time/year-round earned less than urban older workers.

Older Workers as a Percentage of All Workers

According to 2022, 4th-quarter data, from the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics database, there were more than 97,000 individuals 65 years old or older working in rural Pennsylvania. These individuals made up 8 percent of the entire rural workforce of 1.19 million rural workers. A decade earlier, in 2012, 5 percent of all rural workers were 65 years old or older. In urban Pennsylvania during 2022, there were approximately 353,700 older workers, or nearly 8 percent of the 4.64 million urban workers. In 2012, urban older workers also comprised 5 percent of the workforce.

Figure 1: Rural and Urban Employed Persons 65 Years Old and Older as a Percentage of All Employed Persons, 4th Quarter, 2012 and 2022



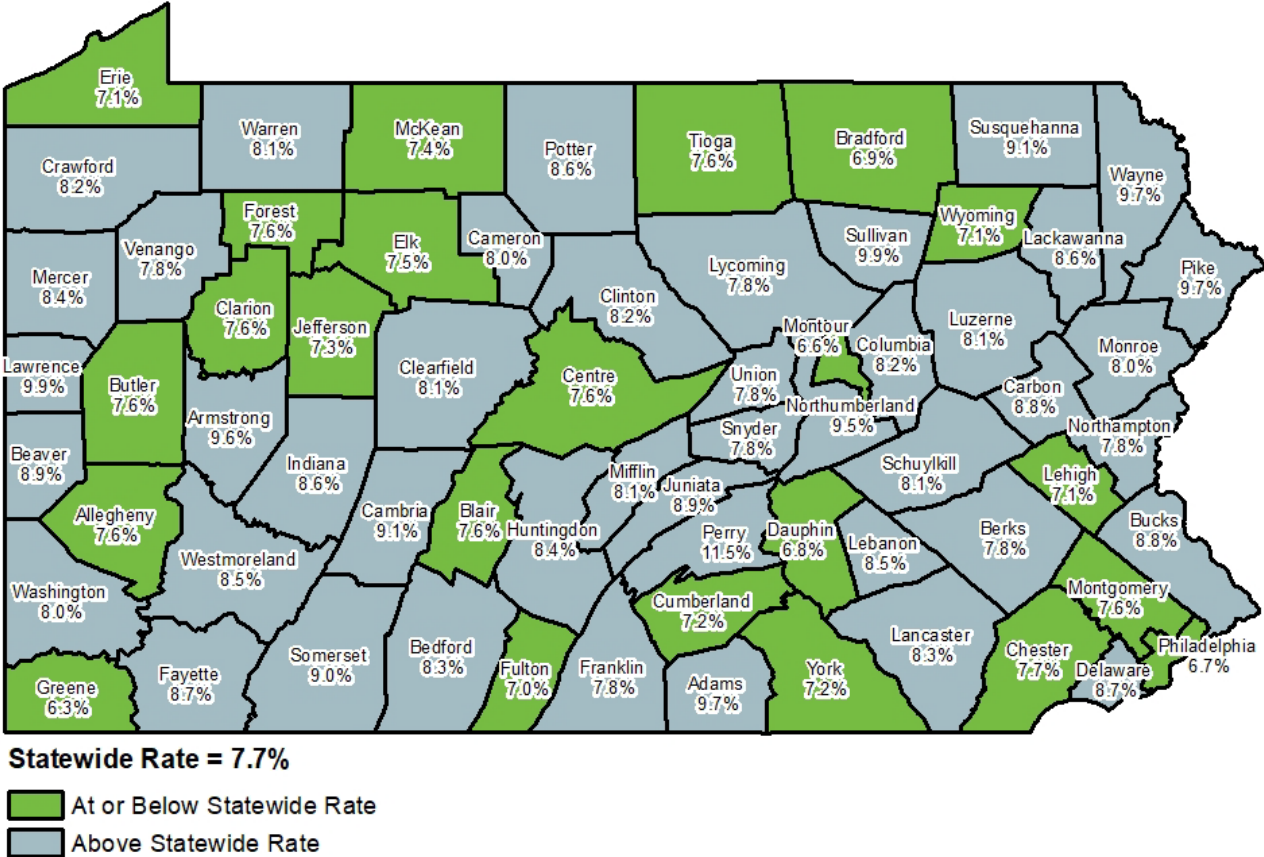
Data source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), U.S. Census Bureau.

Location of Older Workers

Within Pennsylvania, the three counties with the highest percentage of workers 65 years old and older in 2022 were Lawrence (9.9 percent), Sullivan (9.9 percent), and Perry (11.5 percent). The three counties with the lowest rates were Philadelphia (6.7 percent), Montour (6.6 percent), and Greene (6.3 percent).

At the national level, the three states with the highest percentage of older workers were New Jersey (8.8 percent), Vermont (9.0 percent), and Hawaii (9.2 percent). The three states with the lowest rates were Georgia (6.1 percent), Kentucky (6.1 percent), and Utah (5.9 percent). Among the 46 states reporting data, Pennsylvania ranked 17th in the percentage of older workers with 7.7 percent.

Figure 2: Percentage of Workers 65 Years Old and Older by County, 4th Quarter, 2022



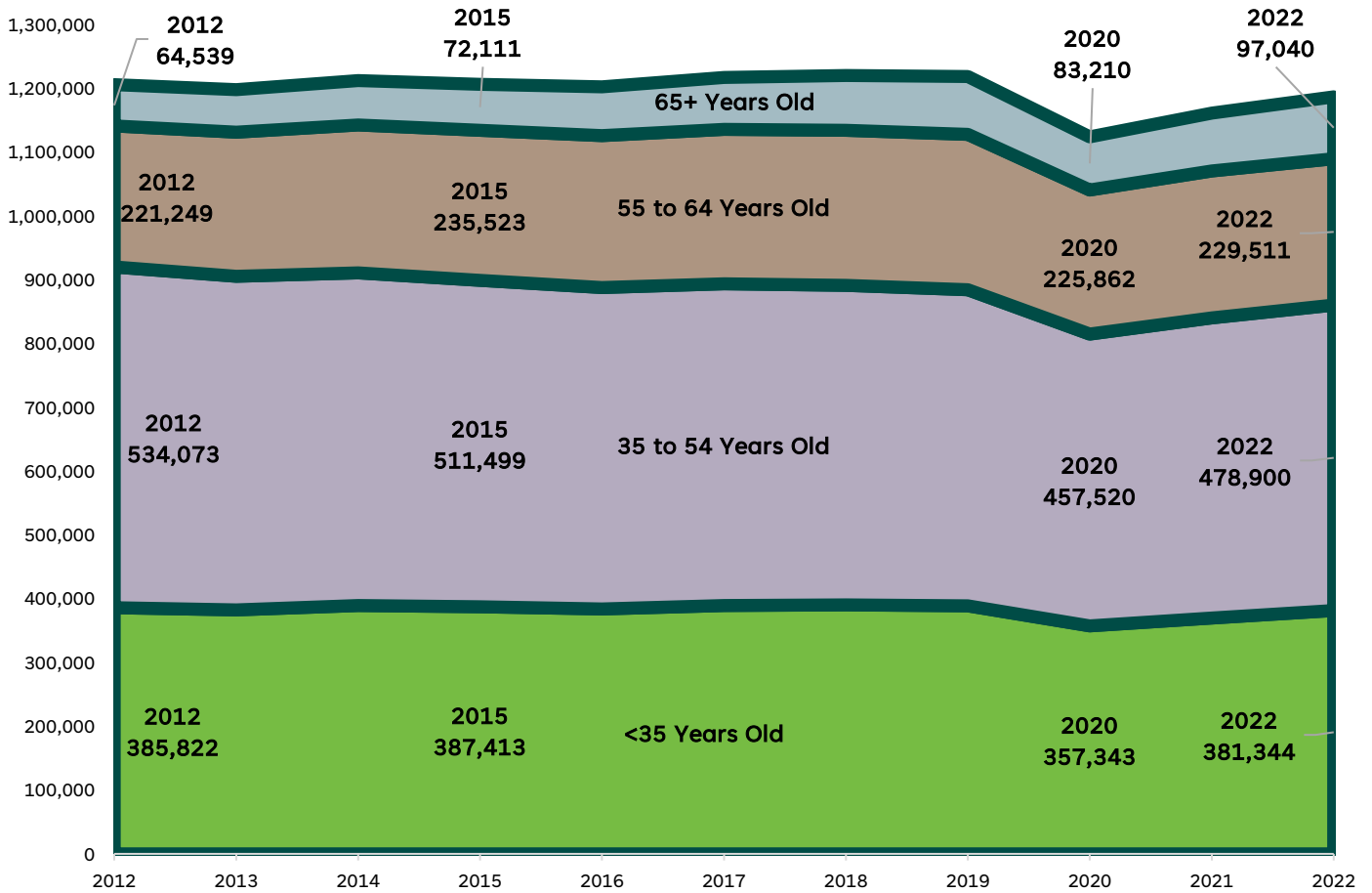
Data source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), U.S. Census Bureau.

Change in Older Workers

In rural Pennsylvania, one of the fastest growing segments of the labor market are workers 65 years old and older. From 2012 to 2022, the number of older rural workers increased by 50 percent. During this same period, the number of workers under 65 years old decreased by 5 percent. Among urban workers, those 65 years old and older increased 56 percent. Workers under 65 years old also increased by 7 percent.

The COVID pandemic affected all age groups nearly equal. From 2019 to 2020, all age groups had an 8 percent decrease in employment, except for the 55 to 64 years olds, who had a 7 percent decrease. From 2020 to 2021, the number of older workers increased by 9 percent, while the other age groups increased by 3 percent.

Figure 3: Rural Employment by Age, 4th Quarters, 2012 to 2022

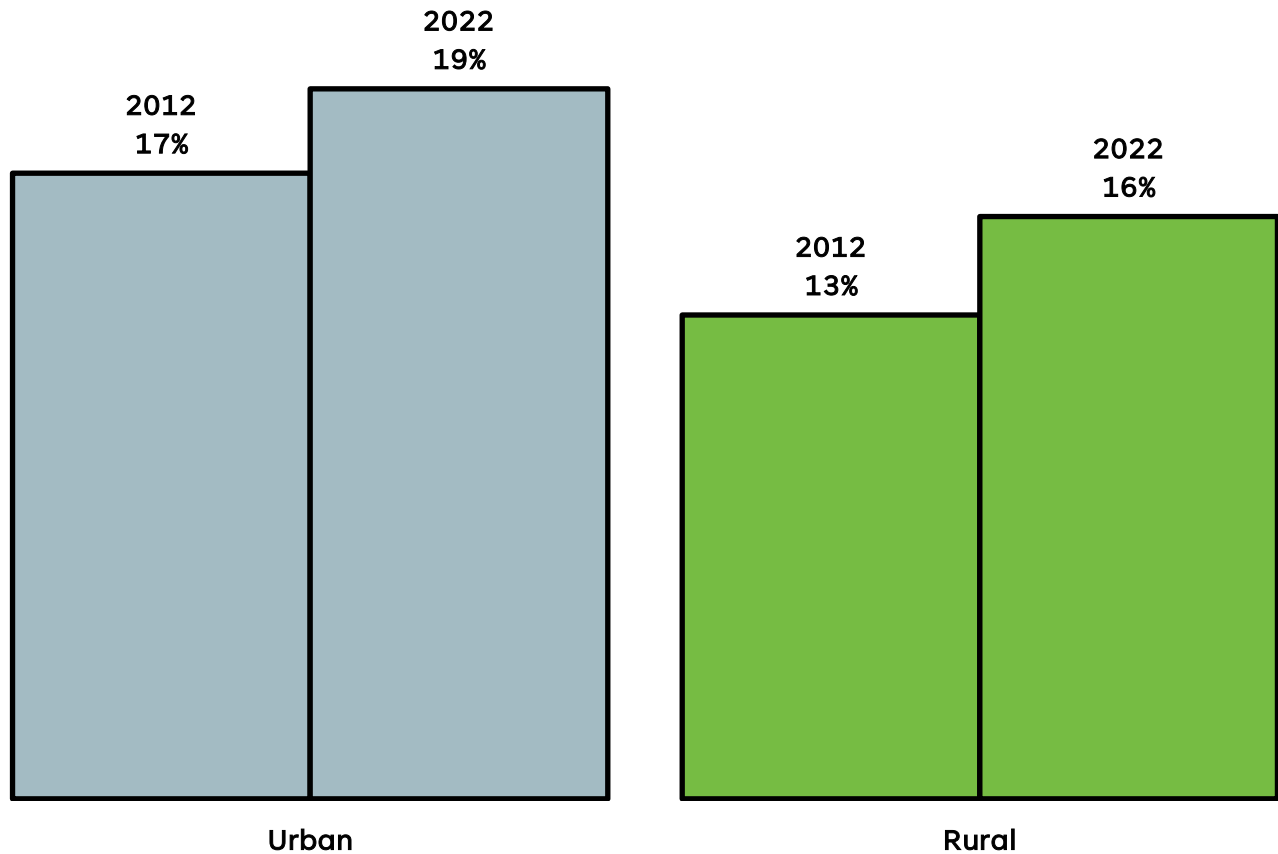


Data source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), U.S. Census Bureau.

Older Workers as a Percentage of All Older Pennsylvanians

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey Microdata Sample, 16 percent of rural and 19 percent of urban senior citizens were employed. From 2012 to 2022, the percentage of both rural and urban senior citizens employed increased.

Figure 4: Percentage of Rural and Urban Older Pennsylvanians Employed, 2012 and 2022

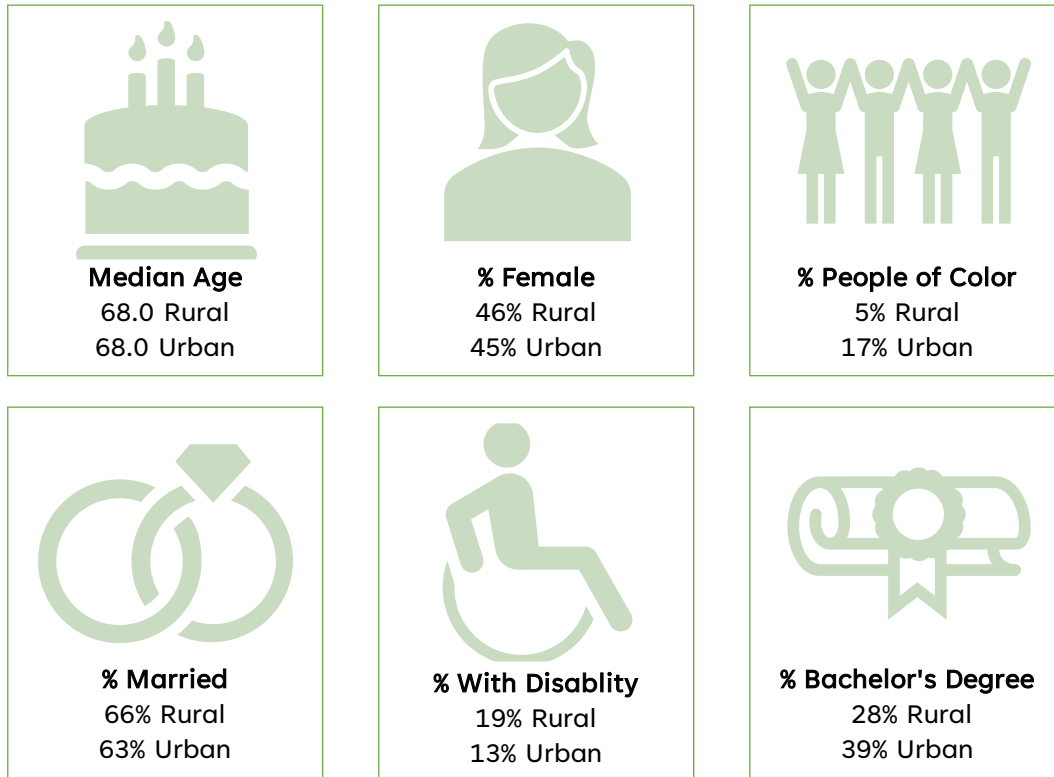


Data source: 2012 and 2022, 1-year Average, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau.

Characteristics of Rural and Urban Older Workers

Older rural and urban workers share many of the same characteristics, such as age and gender. Although, there were some key differences. Employed rural older workers were more likely to be married and have a disability than urban older workers. In addition, rural older workers were less likely to have a college degree than urban older workers.

Figure 5: Demographic Characteristics of Employed Persons 65 Years Old and Older, 2022



Data source: 2022, 1-year Average, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau.

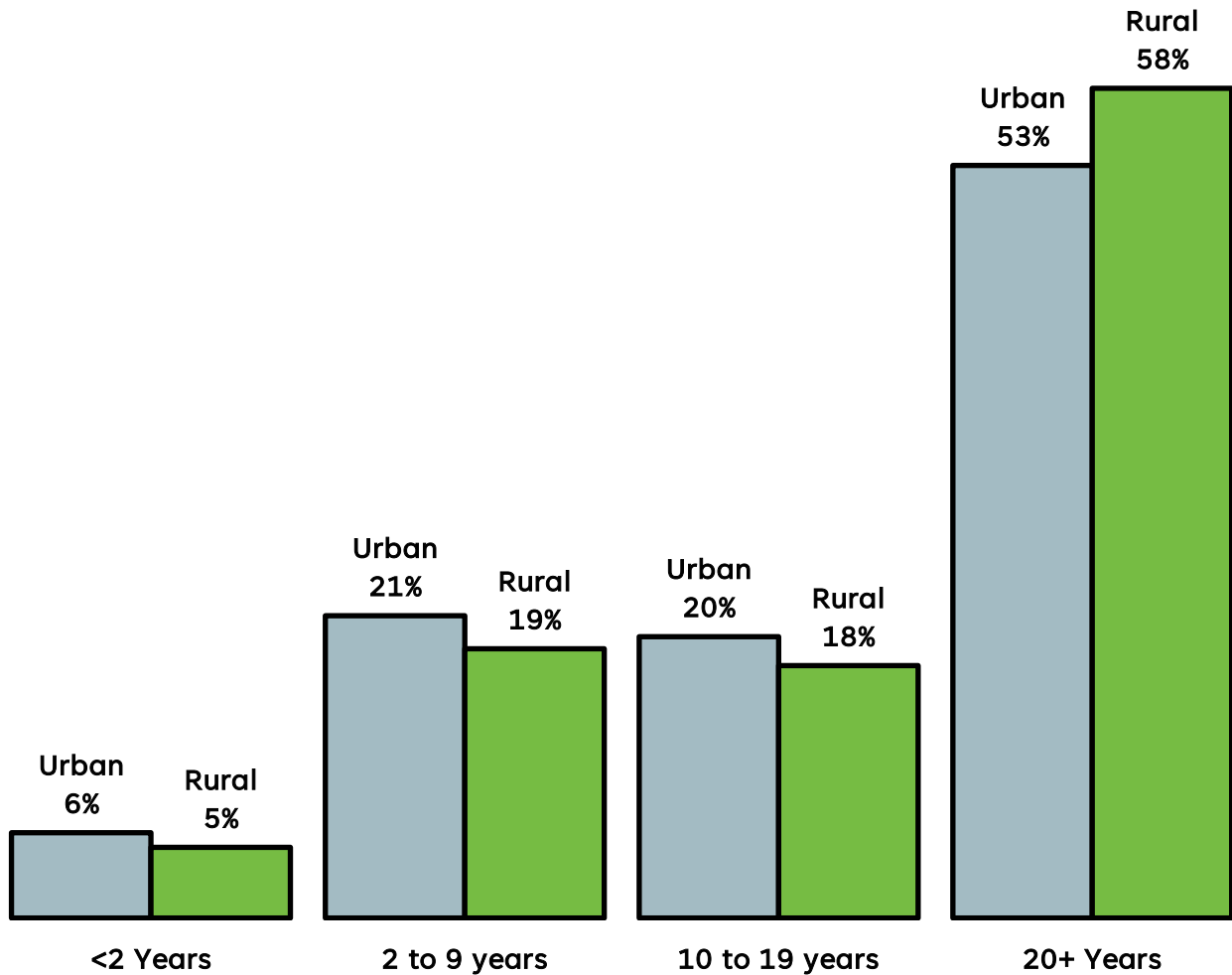
Housing and Household Characteristics of Older Workers

Homeownership: Nearly 88 percent of rural older workers and 87 percent of urban older workers lived in a home they owned. In 2022, the median value of this home for rural older workers was \$200,000, of which they paid a median property tax of \$2,550. For urban older worker homeowners, their home was valued at \$275,000, and their median property tax was \$3,550.

Household Characteristics: The average rural older worker lives in a household with 2.03 people, compared to 2.07 people who live with urban older workers. Nearly the same percentage of rural and urban older workers lived alone (24 percent and 25 percent).

Households with Internet Access: Ninety-two percent of rural older workers have internet access, while 8 percent do not. Among households of urban older workers, 94 percent have home internet access and 6 percent do not.

Figure 6: Rural and Urban Older Workers by Number of Years Living in the Same Home, 2022



Data source: 2022, 1-year Average, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau.

Employment Characteristics of Older Workers

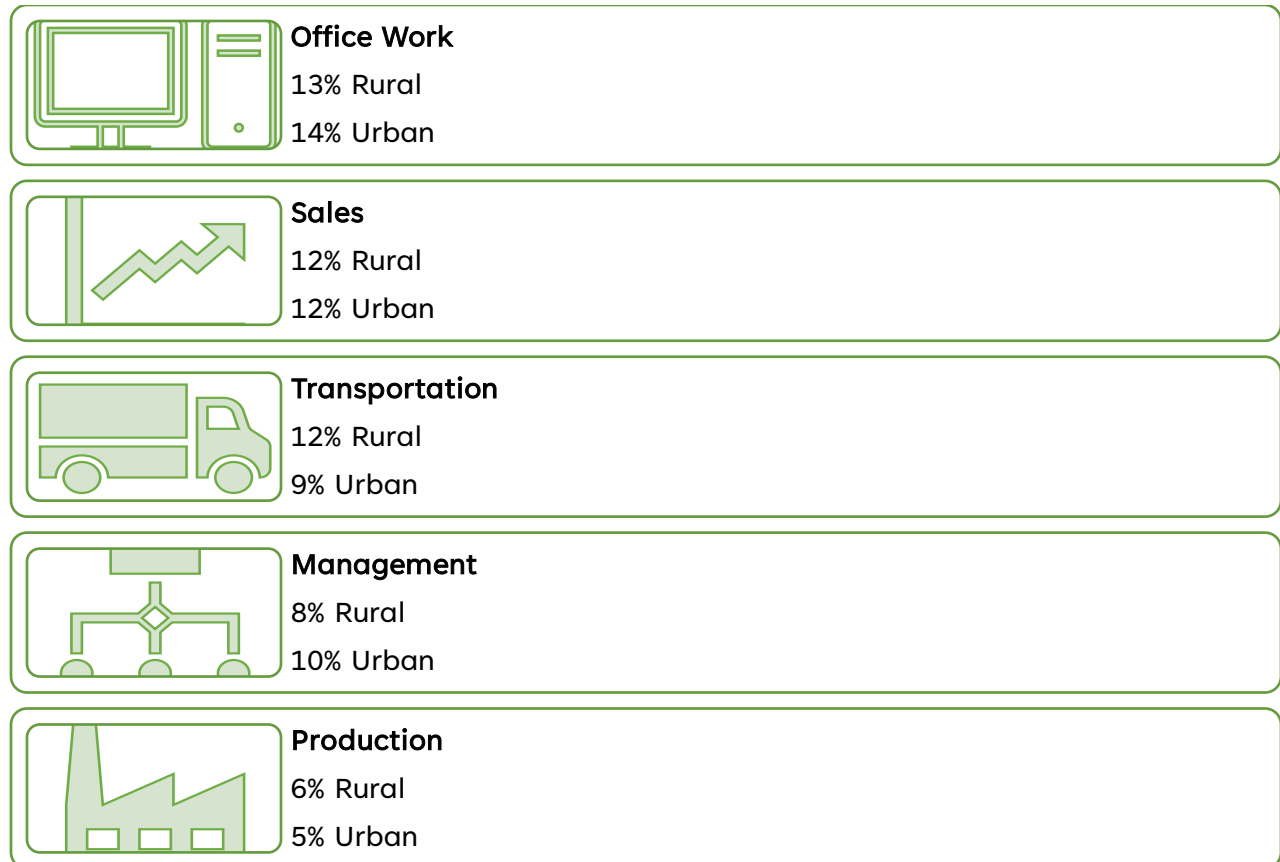
Full-Time/Year-Round Employment: In 2022, 49 percent of rural older workers worked full-time/year-round. That is, they worked an average of 32 hours or more per week, and they typically worked at least 50 weeks a year. This is an increase from 2012, when 45 percent of rural older workers worked full-time/year-round. Among urban older workers in 2022, 57 percent worked full-time, year-round. A decade earlier, in 2012, 48 percent of the urban older workers worked full-time/year-round.

Working from Home: In 2022, 12 percent of rural older workers worked at home. In 2012, 9 percent worked at home. Among urban older workers, 17 percent worked at home in 2022. A decade earlier, in 2012, 7 percent of urban older workers worked at home.

Self-Employed: In 2022, 19 percent of rural older workers were self-employed. This is a slight decrease from 2012, when 21 percent of rural older workers were self-employed. Among urban older workers, 17 percent were self-employed in 2022. In 2012, 18 percent of urban older workers were self-employed.

Commuting Time to Work: Among those rural older workers not working at home, the average commuting time in 2022 was nearly 22 minutes. Urban older workers had a longer average commute time of 24 minutes. From 2012 to 2022, both rural and urban older workers saw their commute time increase by more than one minute.

Figure 7: Top Five Occupations for Rural and Urban Older Workers, 2022

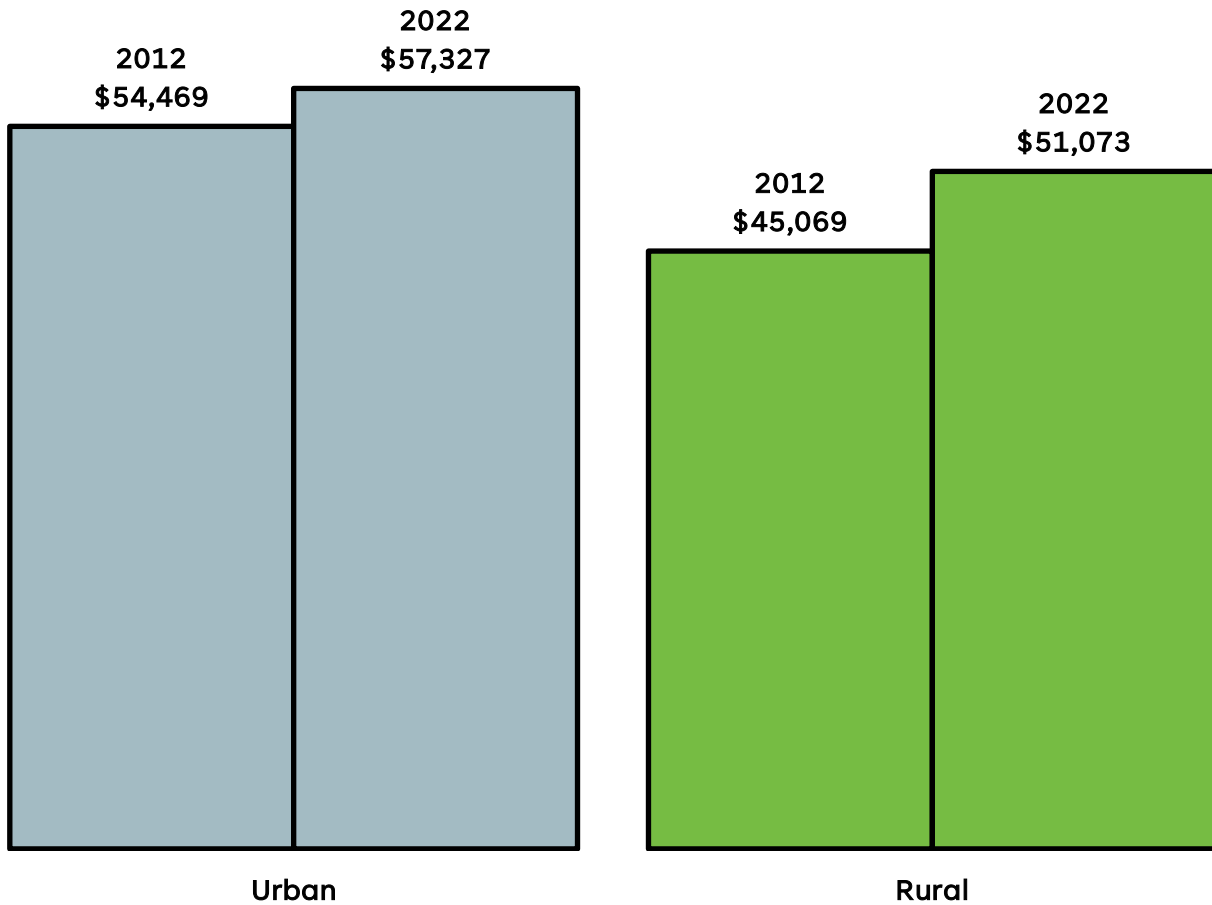


Data source: 2022, 1-year Average, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau.

Wages and Salary

Among rural older workers who were employed full-time/year-round, the median annual earnings were \$51,073. Among urban older workers who were also employed full-time/year-round, the median earnings were \$61,496. In both rural and urban areas, workers under 65 years old earned more than those 65 years old and older.

Figure 8: Median Earnings for Rural and Urban Older Workers Employed Full-Time/Year-Round, 2012 and 2022



Data adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U with 2022 = 100.

Data source: 2012 and 2022, 1-year Average, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau.

Conclusion

The Aging Population Will Continue to Grow: It is no secret that rural Pennsylvania is growing older. In 2020, more than one-in-five residents (21 percent) were 65 years old and older. By 2040, it is projected that more than one-in-four residents (26 percent) will be 65 years old and older. The increase is largely being driven by Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964).

Older Workers are the New Normal: From 2012 to 2022, rural workers under 65 years old decreased 5 percent, while those 65 years old and older increased 50 percent. Older workers were able to fill in many of the gaps left behind by younger workers. According to projections by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, this trend will likely continue. From 2022 to 2023, the number of seniors in the U.S. labor force will increase from 10.9

million to 14.6 million, a 34 percent jump. Workers under 65 years old are projected to increase by just 2 percent.

Recruiting and Retaining Older Workers Will Require Accommodation and Flexibility:

According to the Pew Research Center, older workers strongly prefer jobs that entail less strenuous physical activities. This reality is reflected in the fact that less than one-half of rural older workers are employed full-time/year-round. In addition, 19 percent of rural older workers have a disability. For employers to attract and retain older workers, they may need to rethink how tasks are completed and provide extra accommodations for part-time workers.

Re-Thinking Retirement: According to Census data, 32 percent of rural and urban older workers received retirement income. This suggests that these older workers retired from one job and are working in a different job. A decade earlier, in 2012, about 28 percent of rural and urban older workers were in a similar situation. This “work-after-work” trend may be income driven. For example, in 2012, the annual median rural retirement income was \$13,000. In 2022, the annual median was \$12,500, a 4 percent decrease. Urban retirees saw a 6 percent decrease. For employers, this could suggest that older workers are re-entering the labor market and looking for competitive wages.

Methodology

Data Sources: This fact sheet analyzed data from Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), U.S. Census Bureau; and the 2012 and 2022, 1-year Average, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau. Both data sources are publicly available on the Census Bureau’s webpage.

Definitions:

Rural and Urban: Rural was defined as a county or Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) as having a population density below the statewide rate of 291 persons per square mile. Urban counties and PUMAs were identified as having a population density at or above the statewide rate.

Older Workers: Employed persons who are 65 years old and older.

Senior Citizens: Persons 65 years old or older.

Full-Time/Year-Round Workers: An employed person who works an average of 32 hours or more per week and at least 50 weeks a year.

Note: All financial data was adjusted for inflation using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index with 2022 = 100.

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