

Projection of Populations 2015 – 2040

Chart below based on data from the Kentucky State Data Center and University of Louisville Publication

<http://ksdc.louisville.edu/data-downloads/projections/>

County	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Total Pop. Loss/Gain	% Pop. Loss/ Gain	According to the US Census Bureau a County gains/loses \$2,200 annually for every person counted/not counted in the US Census. (<i>\$2,200 not adjusted for inflation</i>)	
										Annual	10 Year Census Span
Bell	28691	27337	26394	25291	24024	22678	21374	-7,317	-25.5	-\$16,097,400	-\$160,974,000
Boyd	49542	48325	47912	47353	46626	45763	44820	-4,722	-9.5	-\$10,388,400	-\$103,884,000
Breathitt	13878	13484	12817	12078	11244	10352	9493	-4,385	-31.5	-\$9,647,000	-\$96,470,000
Floyd	39451	37756	36156	34308	32302	30240	28262	-11,189	-28.3	-\$24,615,800	-\$246,158,000
Harlan	29278	27703	26368	24936	23381	21799	20324	-8,954	-30.6	-\$19,698,800	-\$196,988,000
Johnson	23356	23175	23058	22813	22416	21935	21451	-1,905	-8.2	-\$4,191,000	-\$41,910,000
Knott	16346	15693	14841	13957	12997	12015	11060	-5,286	-32.3	-\$11,629,200	-\$116,292,000
Lawrence	15860	15745	15668	15378	14979	14515	14038	-1,822	-11.4	-\$4,008,400	-\$40,084,000
Lee	7887	6752	6433	6102	5727	5318	4898	-2,989	-37.8	-\$6,575,800	-\$65,758,000
Leslie	11310	10711	10144	9505	8831	8158	7537	-3,773	-33.3	-\$8,300,600	-\$83,006,000
Letcher	24519	23123	22207	21147	19970	18736	17545	-6,974	-28.4	-\$15,342,800	-\$153,428,000
Magoffin	13333	12307	11697	11059	10386	9386	8997	-4,336	-32.5	-\$9,539,200	-\$95,392,000
Martin	12929	12307	11697	11059	10386	9686	8997	-3,932	-30.4	-\$8,650,400	-\$86,504,000
Owsley	4755	4461	4300	4125	3919	3685	3463	-1,292	-27.1	-\$2,842,400	-\$28,424,000
Perry	28712	27565	26777	25771	24621	23382	22189	-6,523	-22.7	-\$14,350,600	-\$143,506,000
Pike	65024	61792	59412	56810	53994	51085	48297	-16,727	-25.7	-\$36,799,400	-\$367,994,000
Wolfe	7335	7259	7282	7208	7074	6902	6696	-639	-8.7	-\$1,405,800	-\$14,058,000
TOTAL	392,206	375,495	363,163	348,900	332,877	315,635	299,441	-92,765	-23.6	-\$204,083,000	-\$2,040,830,000
Kentucky	4,339,367	4,425,092	4,533,464	4,634,415	4,726,382	4,808,682	4,886,381	+547,014	+11.2	+\$1,203,430,800	+\$12,034,308,000

“Cascading Impacts” of Population Loss on Rural Communities

Demographic trends in rural Kentucky and across the United States are often discounted in a nation dominated by urban interests.

The magnitude, timing, and pervasiveness of community depopulation in Kentucky communities has evolved unevenly across the state and reflect diverse dynamics influencing rural demographic trends.

The impacts of rural population-loss “cascade” and build upon themselves insidiously, often resulting in profound community change that occur so gradually they become accepted as the norm.

Population loss creates obstacles for communities in at least six (6) significant categories:

1. **Infrastructure and Basic Services**
2. **Representation**
3. **Opportunity**
4. **Access**
5. **Agency**
6. **Narrative Control**

In addition to those major categories two (2) other critical areas must be considered:

- **Strain on mental health and a rise in collective trauma**
- **Decline in innovation**

Rural America and Appalachian Kentucky are often characterized as charity cases — or worse, as areas doomed to decline. This characterization has been driven by an economic shift that favors population density.

Rural communities are not an economic liability to the country—every rural community has a unique combination of assets in which they can invest to grow and promote resilience. These assets include but are not limited to **natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built capital**.

A Simple Framework for Action

1. **Accept** the relevance of science-based trend data. (*Recognize there is a problem.*)
2. **Evaluate** what has and hasn’t worked. (*Understand why the problem persists.*)
3. **Assess and Act** on what could work through a place-oriented approach that: (*Work to fix the problem.*)
 - a. Invests in assets and conditions necessary for a region to flourish and,
 - b. Identifies and implements strategies for achieving growth.

In order to rekindle rural vitality and sustainability, it is necessary to strengthen access to the assets and conditions needed to cultivate economic activity that can lift up rural areas. Four (4) cornerstone components of economic advancement include: **sound leadership** at all levels including a leadership development “pipeline”, access to a skilled (or trainable) **workforce** prepared for entrepreneurialism and employment opportunities being created by the digital economy, access to financial **capital** and access to reliable **communication technologies**.

Rural communities need both **place-based** and **people-based** solutions (*A place-based approach enables rural communities to connect opportunity to workers. A people-based approach enables a region to connect workers to opportunity.*) **and** a **place-sensitive vision for reinvention**. This should not be an “either-or” decision. Both approaches are critically necessary.

Unleashing the economic potential of rural regions is critical to eliminating economic and quality of life disparity in Kentucky and the United States and by necessity actively involve the education community in a solution driven effort.

Doing nothing guarantees rural communities will continue getting what they always have and gradually fading to a shadow of what was. Changing the course for millions of rural people requires a multi-sector commitment to asset-based strategies that offer an opportunity for the long-term well-being of communities.