

2026 List of Distressed or Underserved Nonmetropolitan Middle-Income Geographies Source Information and Methodology

Release notes

- Due to the fall 2025 Federal government shutdown, unemployment data for all areas (except Puerto Rico) for October 2025 is unavailable; as a result, the unemployment data annual averages are based on 11 months of available unemployment data over the course of the relevant 12-month period.
- Due to pandemic restrictions, the poverty and unemployment data in the 2020 Decennial Census files for American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are only available at the “population in households” level rather than the “total population” level. In these territories, all nonmetropolitan, middle-income tracts met at least one of the criteria for being flagged as distressed.

Poverty rate (updated annually)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), 2024. The variable used was "Estimated percent of people of all ages in poverty." For the four island areas, the 2020 Decennial Census of Island Areas was used.

Note: Due to the U.S. Census Bureau’s adoption of American Community Survey (ACS) data in the estimation procedure for SAIPE, SAIPE data is available with a two-year lag from the year of the List of Distressed or Underserved Nonmetropolitan Middle-Income Geographies.

Unemployment (updated annually)

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2025 Annual Averages. For the four island areas, the 2020 Decennial Census of Island Areas was used.

County unemployment rate = (unemployment level) / (labor force) * 100

National unemployment rate = (total unemployment) / (total labor force) * 100

Note: BLS does not collect employment data for Kalawao County, Hawaii, and considers it to be part of Maui County. We assume unemployment data for Kalawao County is the same as that of Maui County.

Population loss (changes decennially)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau County Intercensal Estimates (for change between 2010 and 2020 populations and for change between 2015 and 2020 populations) and 2020 and 2010 Decennial Census of Island Areas (for the four island areas).

10-year population loss from 2010 to 2020 = (2020 population - 2010 population) / 2010 population

5-year population loss from 2015 to 2020 = (2020 population - 2015 population) / 2015 population

Note: The County Intercensal Estimates for 2010-2020 do not include the county changes for Connecticut. However, since none of the previous eight counties qualified for population loss, none of the tracts will be flagged.

Remote rural (low density)

Source: USDA Economic Research Service Urban Influence Codes, 2024. An area is considered low density if the Urban Influence Code is 6, 8, or 9. Previously, an area was considered low density if the Urban Influence Code was 7, 10, 11, or 12. The 2024 Urban Influence Codes use similar criteria and methods as previous delineations. However, they have been consolidated from 12 to 9 categories, including due to changes in the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of urban areas.