

## The Personal Care Assistance in Rural America

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### Objective/Issue

Over 8 million people in the US have a self-care disability and need assistance to live and participate in their communities. Of those, nearly 20% (>1.5 million) live in rural areas. The objective of this study was to assess county-level PCA worker-to-need ratios across each of the states to assess the match between supply of PCAs in rural states and communities where PCA help was most needed.

### Data/Setting

We analyzed data from national data sets on employment, self-care needs, and location of workers and people who need care.

### Design/Methods

We used occupation codes, industry codes, employment status, and paid status to define PCAs. We used two ACS questions that indicate the respondent needs assistance with self-care. We used the US Office of OMB definitions of rural at the county level. We developed maps showing PCA distribution and persons needing support by state and region.

### Results/Findings

We found that in both rural and urban areas PCA workers are more likely to be female. PCAs in urban areas are more likely to be people of color and in rural areas more likely to be White. In rural areas PCAs are more likely to be living in poverty. There was a wage difference, (\$10 rural vs. \$15 urban per hour). There are fewer PCAs available in areas where there are higher numbers of people with self-care disabilities. The mismatch between availability of workers to those needing assistance with self-care activities is the largest in the South. Regardless of how rural a state is, the most rural parts of a state have the fewest PCAs per people with self-care disabilities.

### Conclusions/Discussion:

The lack of PCA workers in rural areas impedes the implementation of home and community based care in rural areas. Policymakers and HCBS service providers need to be aware that many people with self-care disabilities live where there are fewer PCA workers available.

**Key Words:** rural, home care, personal care aides

### Full Report:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/836efdf9752d4f1c8d101181d7735c04>