

## The Rural Nonfarm Population of Indiana

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In view of the definitions of the 1950 Census of Population, the rural nonfarm population of the United States may be described as the "left-overs." The urban population includes all people in places of 2,500 or more inhabitants, and all people in the densely settled urban fringes around cities of 50,000 or more (1). The rest of the population is classified as rural. The rural farm population includes all persons living on farms. The rural nonfarm group is the negatively defined remainder, that is, those persons who do not live in urban areas and who do not live on farms.

In 1950 909,874 of Indiana's 3,934,224 people—almost a quarter of the total—were classified in the rural nonfarm category (Fig. 1) (1).

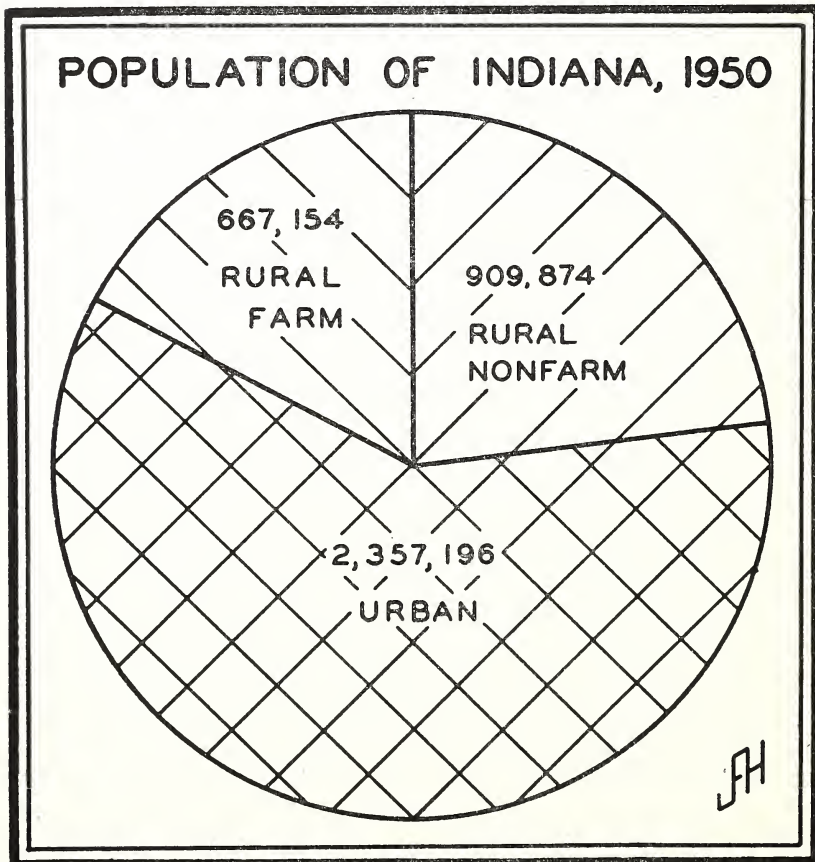


Fig. 1

In terms of their distribution, the rural nonfarm people are a link in the continuum between extreme urban concentration and extreme rural dispersion. Slightly more than a third of the state's rural nonfarm population lived in villages; approximately 20 percent (177,111 persons) in the 116 villages of 1,000 to 2,500 persons, and about 16 percent in the 299 villages of less than 1,000 inhabitants (Fig. 4) (1). It must be noted that the Census does not present separate data on the population of places of less than a thousand persons unless they are incor-

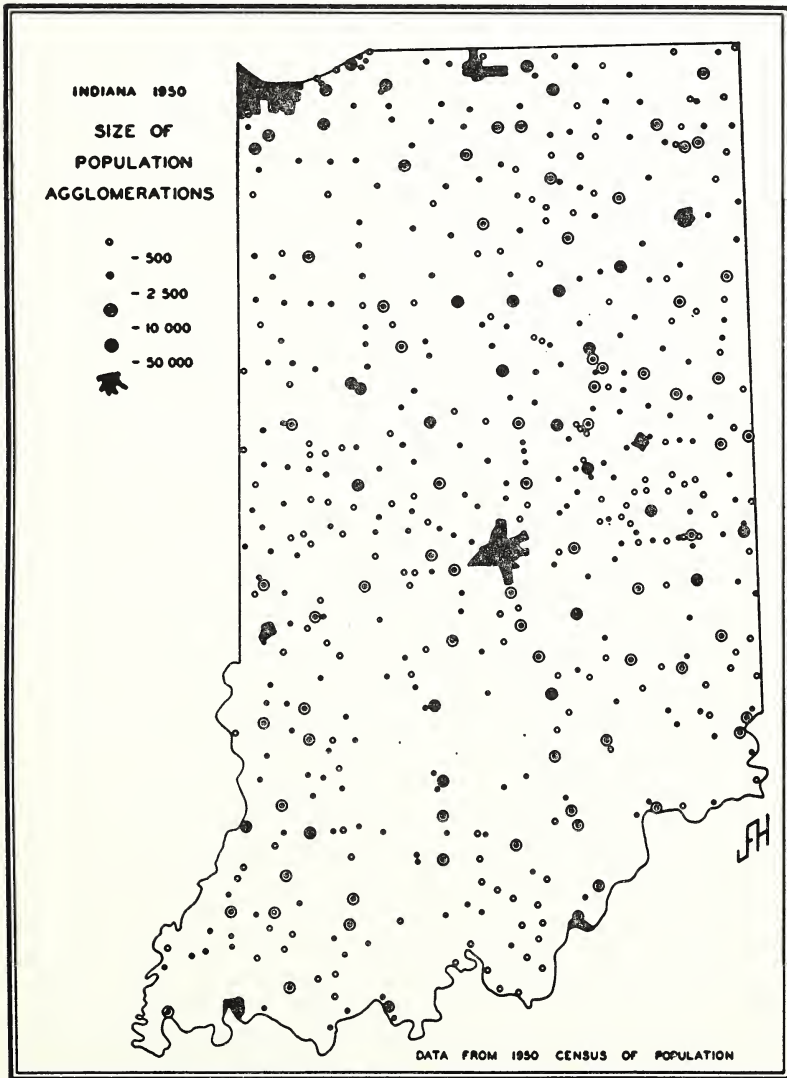


Fig. 2

porated, and many small Indiana villages lie outside the scope of this paper for that reason. The village population forms a sizeable proportion of the rural nonfarm population of the state; this proportion is not large enough, however, to justify use of the term "village population" as synonymous with "rural nonfarm population."

The greatest density of villages in Indiana is found in an east-west belt across the central part of the state, with especially heavy concentrations near Muncie in Grant, Madison, Henry, and Wayne Counties (Fig. 2). Villages are scattered relatively uniformly across the northeastern and southwestern parts of the state, but are somewhat more sparse in the northwest and extremely sparse in the southeast. One must remember that this map shows villages of less than 1,000 persons only if they have been incorporated. The concentration of incorporated small villages in certain sections of the state—northeast of Louisville or east of Indianapolis, for instance—leads one to suspect that there are regional variations in the localized historico-political factors conducive to incorporation of small villages. It would appear that Trewartha's upper limit of 150 persons for the unincorporated hamlet may prove applicable only coincidentally outside southeastern Wisconsin (3).

Three special aspects of village distribution in Indiana merit brief attention. First, the apparent lack of hexagonal pattern, as hypothesized by Christaller. Second, the lineation of villages along transportation routes, such as the New York Central Railroad between Indianapolis and Chicago, the Monon Railroad and U.S. 421 north of Lafayette, and the Pennsylvania Railroad and U. S. 31 between Indianapolis and Louisville. Third, the lineation of villages and towns along the outcrop of the Bedford limestone. Other similar relationships are readily apparent when the map is closely examined.

The village population of Indiana represents but little more than a third of the state's rural nonfarm population. In the absence of a single term to describe the remainder, I have tentatively designated them the "unagglomerated rural nonfarm population," as in theory they are dispersed throughout the state in isolated habitations (2). In point of fact, however, this fraction of the rural nonfarm population is strikingly concentrated. These people may live in the open country, but they live largely in those parts of the open country which are close to our larger urban centers.

Examination of the distribution of the unagglomerated rural nonfarm population provides ample evidence for this assertion (Fig. 3). Fifteen Indiana counties in 1950 had an unagglomerated rural nonfarm population density greater than 25.0 persons per square mile. Eight of these counties contained parts of the urban fringes of metropolitan centers (although the population of the urban fringe proper is classified as urban, not as rural nonfarm), three others contained one city larger than 25,000 and a second larger than 10,000, and the other four each contained one city of at least 25,000 persons. In short, every county with a density greater than 25.0 unagglomerated rural nonfarm persons per square mile also contained a city of at least 25,000 persons. Conversely, fourteen of the sixteen Indiana cities of more than 25,000 per-

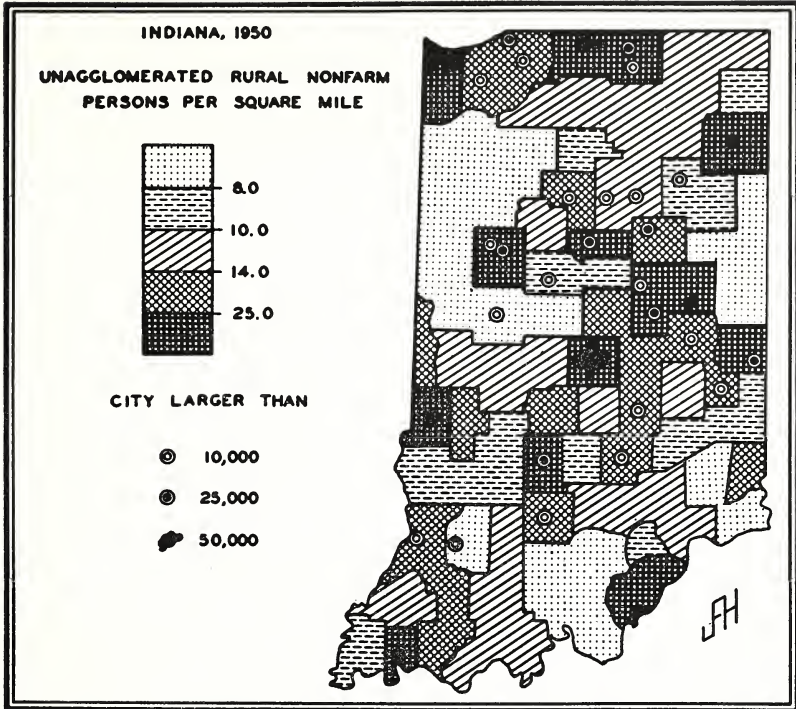


Fig. 3

sons—and all of the metropolitan centers—were in counties with at least 25.0 unagglomerated rural nonfarm persons per square mile. This fact is especially striking in view of the exclusion from the rural nonfarm category of all persons in the densely settled urban fringes of metropolitan centers.

The evidence is not so overwhelming, but nevertheless convincing, in the counties with sparser unagglomerated rural nonfarm population per square mile. Eighteen counties had densities ranging from 14.0 to 25.0 per square mile. Ten of these counties had one city of 10,000 persons or more, and six were adjacent to counties containing metropolitan centers. The relatively great densities in southwestern Indiana, which are not associated with urban centers, presumably result from the traditional settlement pattern of small unincorporated villages in mining areas.

Indiana's cities of ten to twenty-five thousand persons have not proven as great a magnet for unagglomerated rural nonfarm people as have the larger cities. Only twelve of the eighteen are in counties with as many as 14.0 unagglomerated rural nonfarm persons per square mile, and two such cities are in counties in each of the three lowest density categories. One possible explanation is that the limits of the small city enclose a relatively large area, thus precluding the necessity

of moving outside the city to find "elbow room." Nevertheless, further investigation should discover why these cities, especially Crawfordsville and Washington, are in counties with such low densities of unagglomerated rural nonfarm population.

### Summary and Conclusions

The rural nonfarm population of Indiana in 1950 was concentrated in villages and selected counties (Fig. 4). Almost 20 percent lived in large villages of 1,000 to 2,500 persons, and approximately 16 percent lived in incorporated small villages of less than 1,000. Seventeen percent lived in eight counties with metropolitan centers, 13 percent in nine counties with cities of 25,000 persons or more, and 10 percent in fourteen counties with cities of 10,000 or more. In short, more than a third of Indiana's rural nonfarm population was in her villages, and two-fifths was concentrated in 31 counties with cities over 10,000. The other 68 counties had only a quarter of the state's rural nonfarm population (if their villages be excluded).

Three fundamental conclusions can be derived from this consideration of the distribution of Indiana's rural nonfarm population:

(1) The rural nonfarm population consists of two distinct groups, the village population and the unagglomerated population; further research should determine whether these two groups should even be grouped in the same major demographic category.

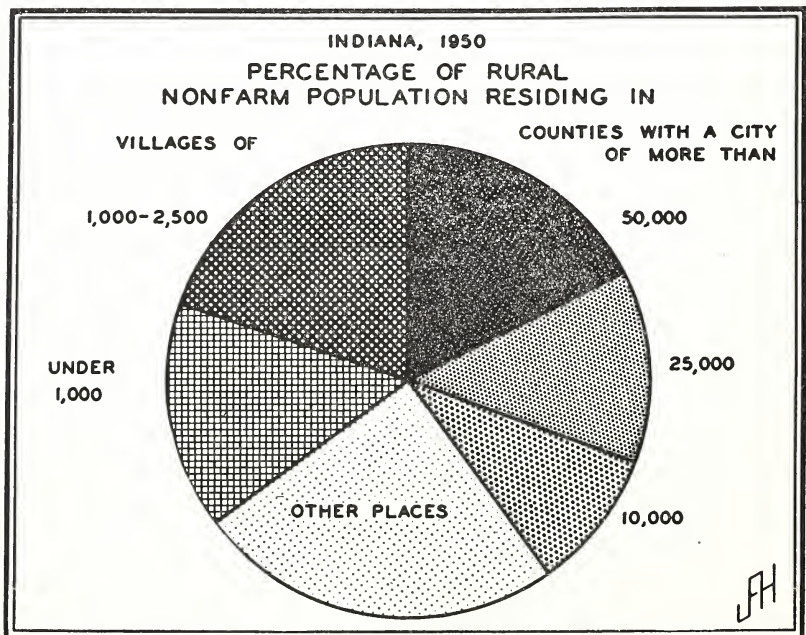


Fig. .

(2) To the extent that "rural" has connotations of "agricultural"—and it certainly has these connotations among many social scientists—to this extent, the term "rural nonfarm" is not only self-contradictory, but is definitely inappropriate for the vast majority of the rural nonfarm population; some such term as "semi-urban" would appear much more fitting.

(3) There obviously is a close relationship between the distribution of the urban population and the unagglomerated rural nonfarm population. Efforts thus far to quantify this relationship have proven abortive, but further research should reveal a formula or equation appropriate to represent this relationship.

#### Literature Cited

1. Bureau of the Census, U. S. Census of Population. 1950. Definitions of urban and rural in Volume I, Number of Inhabitants, pages xv-xvii; data on Indiana villages in Volume I, pages 14-7 and 14-19 through 14-21; data on major components of the population in Volume II, Characteristics of the Population, Part 14: Indiana, page 14-31.
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3. TREWARTHA, GLENN T. The unincorporated hamlet: one element of the American settlement fabric, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. **33**:35-38.