

# RURAL COLLEGE STUDENTS: DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compared to college students from city, suburb, or town home communities, students from rural home communities

- are more likely to be 30 or older (Figure 1)
- are more likely to be married or unmarried with dependents (Figure 2)
- are more likely to have earned a GED or other equivalency exam (Figure 3)

## STUDENTS' AGE

Thirty five percent of rural students attending public or private 4-year institutions are 30 years old or older, which is the highest percent by degree of urbanization of students' permanent address.

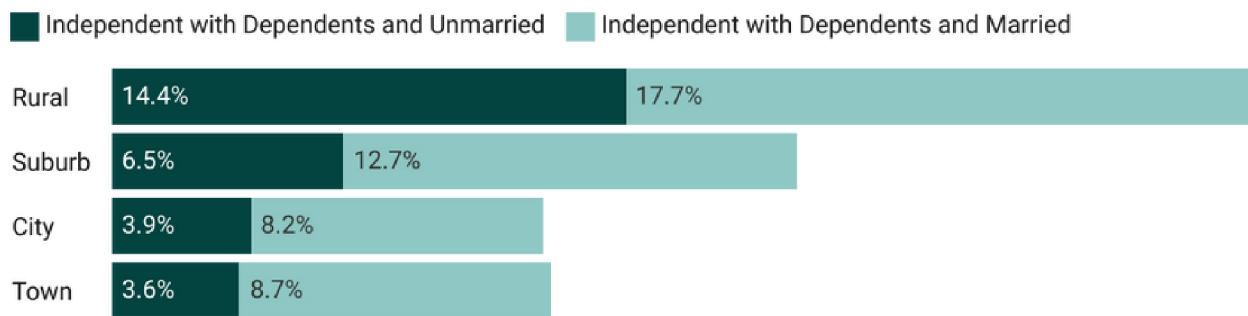
**Figure 1. College Students' Age by Degree of Urbanization of Students' Permanent Address**



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# STUDENTS WITH DEPENDENTS

**Figure 2. Percent of Students who are Independent and Unmarried/Married with Dependents, by Degree of Urbanization of Students' Permanent Address**



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# STUDENTS RECEIVING A GED

**Figure 3. Percent of Students Who Received a GED or Other Equivalency Exam, by Urbanization of Permanent Address**



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## Recommended citation:

Standley, E., Soria, K. M., & Friery, K. (2024). *Rural college students: Demographic insights*. AREAS Consortium.

## Methodology:

We analyzed data from the 2019-2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). The National Center for Education Statistics has overseen data collection for the NPSAS every 3-4 years since 1987. The NPSAS offers a representative cross-sectional study of students enrolled in postsecondary education. Learn more about the NPSAS at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas/>.

Our research is funded by the Ascendium Education Group and the University of Idaho. Ascendium Education Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to helping people reach the education and career goals that matter to them. Ascendium invests in initiatives designed to increase the number of students from low-income backgrounds who complete postsecondary degrees, certificates and workforce training programs, with an emphasis on first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. Ascendium's work identifies, validates and expands best practices to promote large-scale change at the institutional, system and state levels, with the intention of elevating opportunity for all. For more information, visit <https://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org>.