



**Improving the Health of Kansas  
Farmers and Rural Communities  
through  
Extension CHWs**



**Dr. Elaine Johannes  
Kansas State University/K-State Extension**

*KFMC Kansas Health Impact Conference October 23, 2025*

# Objectives -

- ❖ **Learn** about the health and wellness challenges of farmers, ranchers and their families in Kansas and the region.
- ❖ **Understand** the role of CHWs (community health workers) in improving agricultural producers' and rural residents' health and well-being.
- ❖ **Gain awareness** of opportunities to partner with local Extension units for CHW services and health programs

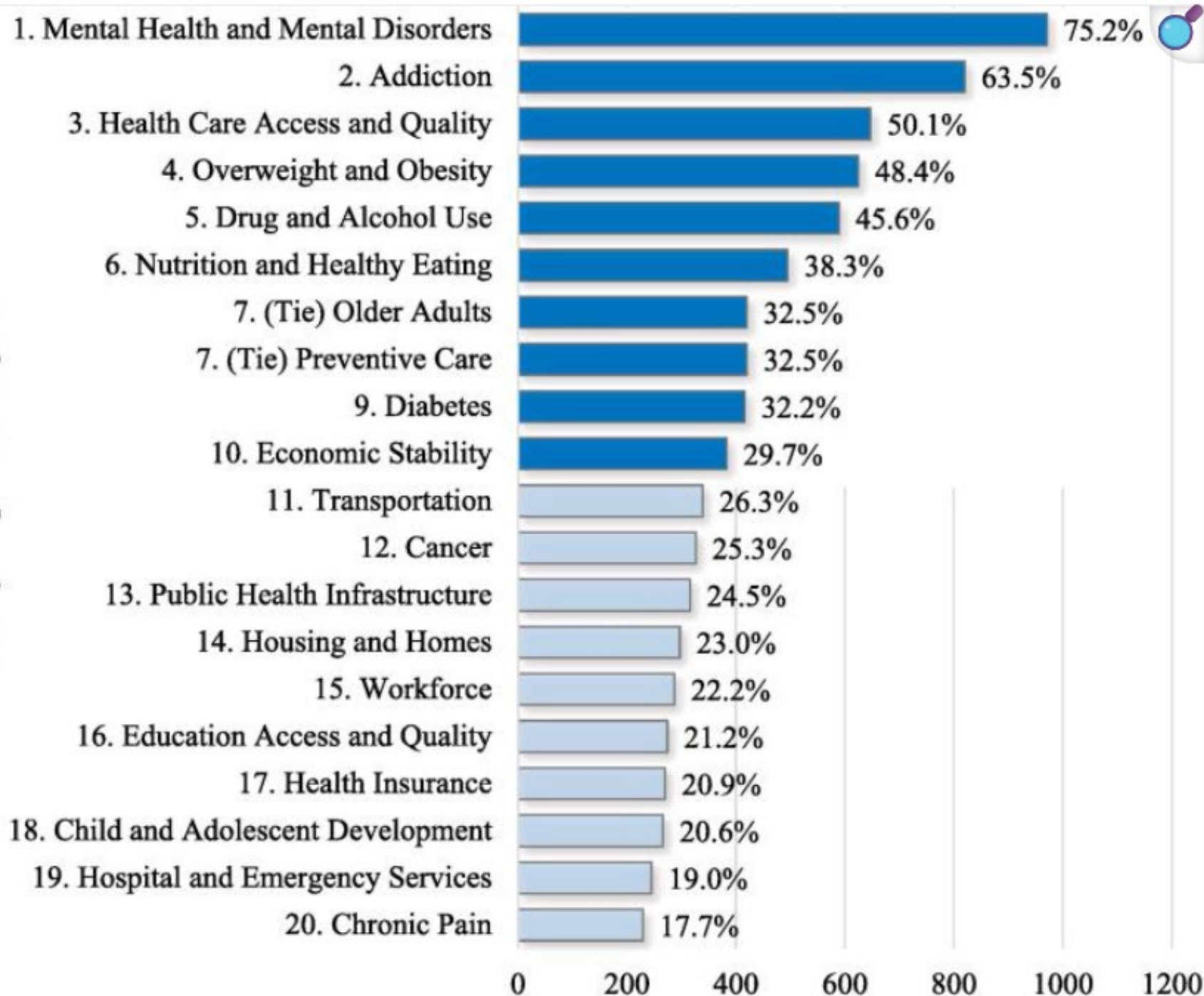


# Kansas State University

*First Land-grant University in the  
United States; 1863*



## Healthy People 2030 Objective



# 1 in 5 people in the U.S. live in rural areas

Preventable early deaths from each of the **5 leading causes** were more common among people living in rural communities\*



- Heart Disease
- Cancer
- Unintentional Injury
- Stroke
- Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease

## Protect Yourself

Be physically active | Eat right | Don't smoke  
Wear your seat belt | See your doctor regularly

\*Compared to people who live in urban areas, National Vital Statistics System mortality data, 2010-2022





## Who is Kansas Agriculture?

At least **100,655 farmers** and ranchers operating 55,734 farms in Kansas. These farms **generated over \$23.9 billion** in market value of agricultural products sold with an average size of 804 acres (2022)

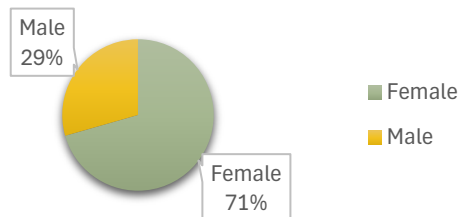
The average age of the Kansas producer is **58.2 years**. Young farmers under the age of 35 make up 9% of all producers. Over **28% of producers are new** and beginning farmers and ranchers. Roughly **35%** of producers are female.

14% of the state's total Gross Regional Product (GRP) and about 13% percent of the entire Kansas workforce tied to agriculture. **Agriculture is the largest economic driver in Kansas**, directly contributing \$62 billion and 143,522 jobs to the economy.

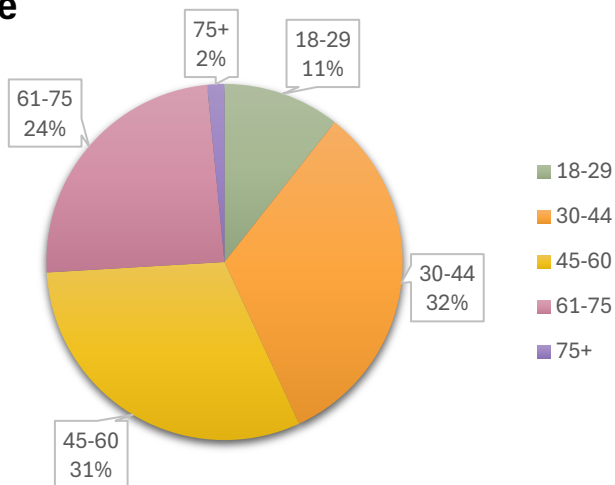
The Kansas agricultural economy includes renewable energy production, food processing, research and education, agribusiness services, animal health and more.

# Surveillance of Wants, Needs, and Perceptions of Agriculture Safety and Health in Kansas (338 respondents)

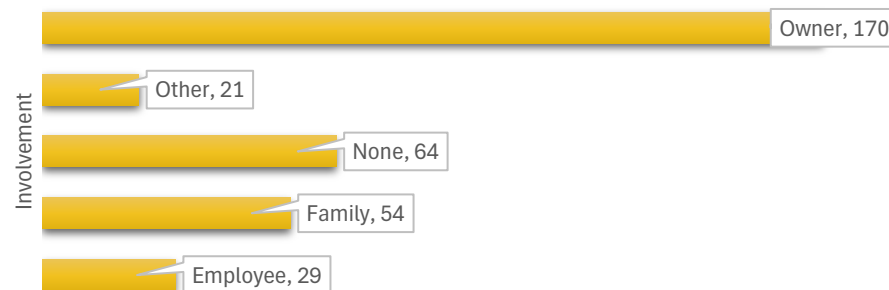
## Gender



## Age

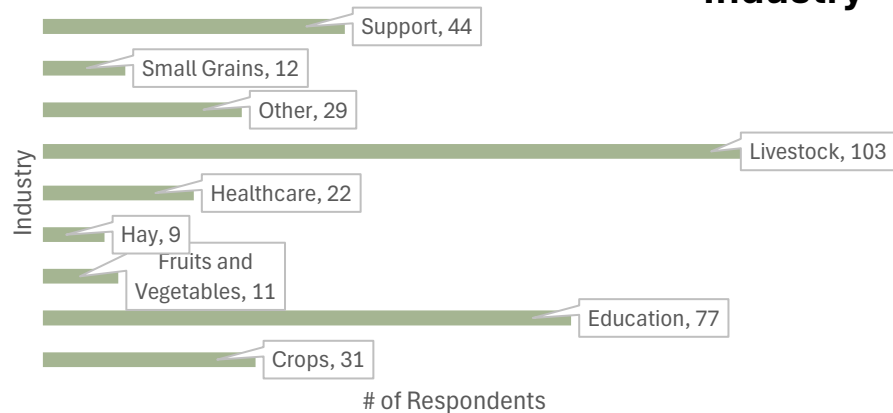


## Involvement in the Operation



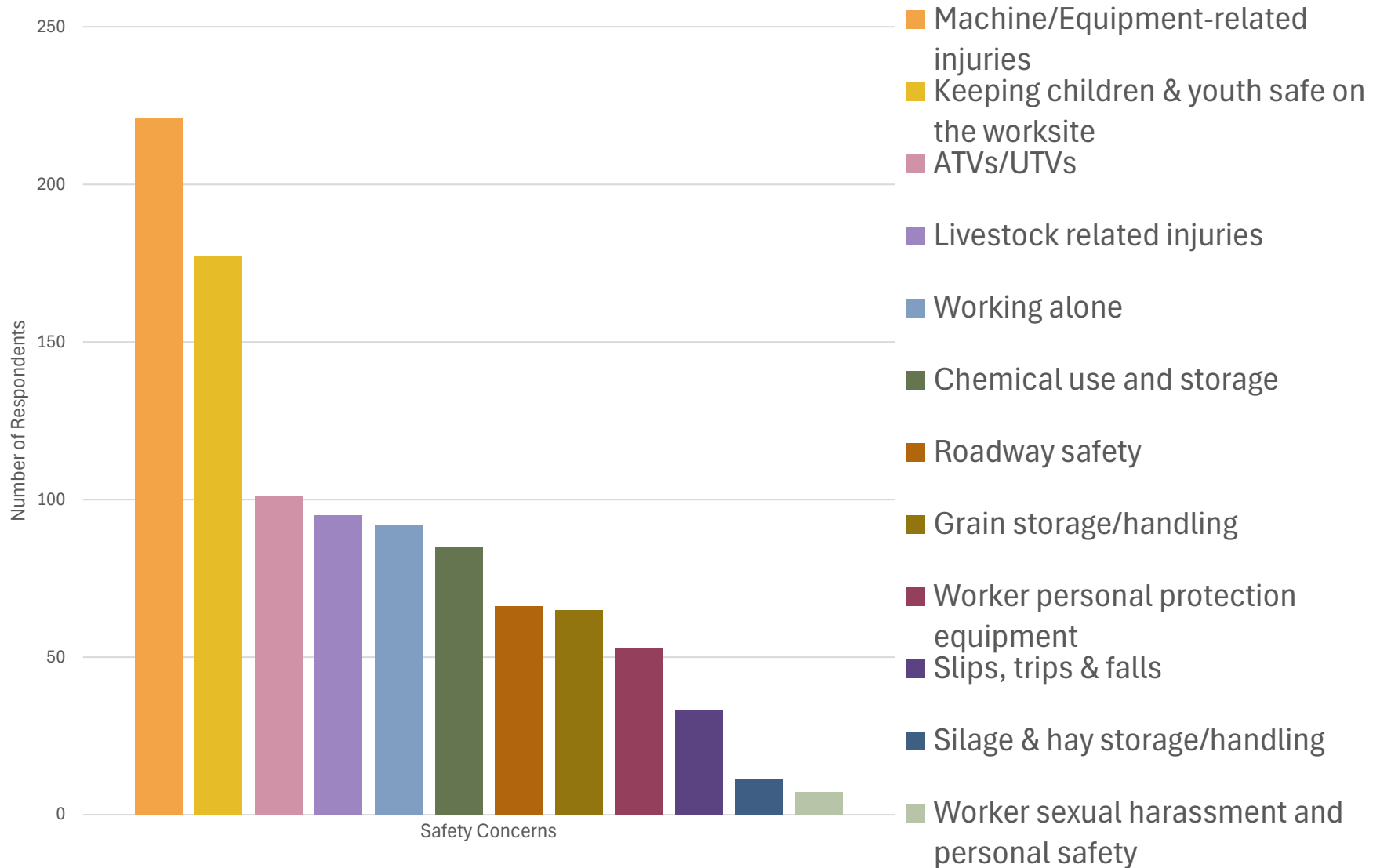
# of Respondents

## Industry

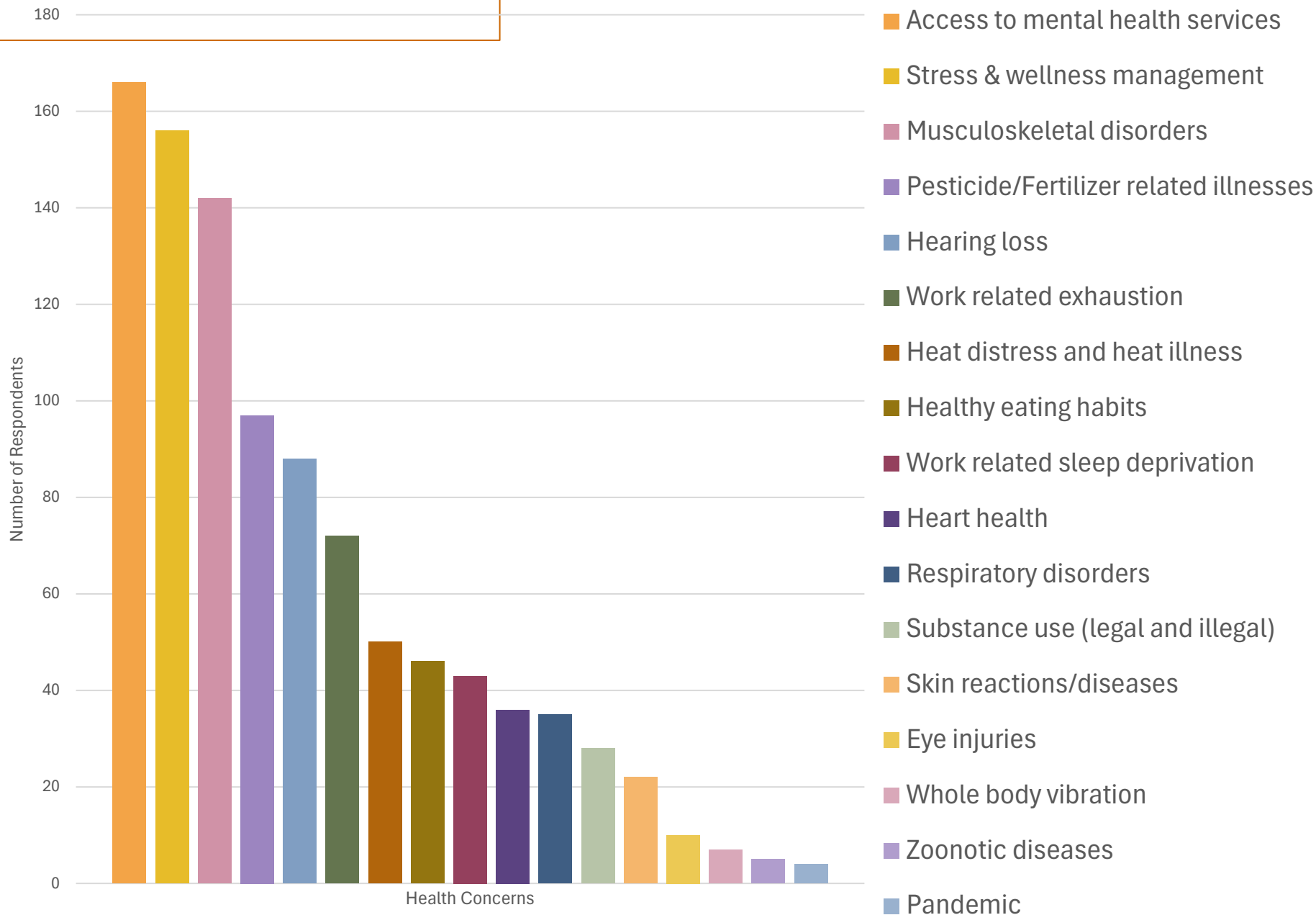


# of Respondents

# Safety Concerns



# Health Concerns



# The Situation in Farm Country

<https://www.kansasfarmersunion.org/>

- **Bankruptcies:** up 95% in first quarter of 2025 compared to 2024.
- **Commodity Markets:** since 2022, corn prices are down 50% and soybean prices are down 40%.
- **Production Costs:** up nearly 50% in the past decade, with phosphates up 60% (Fertilizer costs doubled after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.)
- **Trade Deficit:** Agricultural imports are projected to exceed exports by \$47 billion in 2025 – the largest deficit in history.
- **Food Prices:** Rising 2.9% this year, while farmers get 15.9 cents for every food dollar.
- **Farm Labor Shortage:** Farmer and ranchers are in desperate need of a high-quality, reliable workforce.
- **USDA Staffing:** Down 20% of its staff capacity in 2025, straining the department's ability to serve farmers.
- **Death by Suicide:** Suicide rates in rural areas climbed 46% between 2000 and 2020 compared to a 27.3% increase in metro areas.

# The Farmer's Share

Did you know that farmers and ranchers receive only 14.3\* cents of every food dollar that consumers spend? According to the USDA, off farm costs including marketing, processing, wholesaling, distribution and retailing account for more than 80 cents of every food dollar spent in the United States.

Bacon  
1 lb.



Retail: \$5.99  
Farmer: \$0.91

Top Sirloin Steak  
1 lb.



Retail: \$9.99  
Farmer: \$2.98

Bread  
Wheat Loaf



Retail: \$4.49  
Farmer: \$0.14

Fresh Carrots  
5 lbs.



Retail: \$4.69  
Farmer: \$2.59

Corn Cereal  
18 oz. box



Retail: \$7.49  
Farmer: \$0.10

Tomatoes  
1 lb.



Retail: \$3.99  
Farmer: \$0.98

Eggs  
1 dozen



Retail: \$3.29  
Farmer: \$2.12

Flour  
All Purpose, 5 lbs.



Retail: \$6.89  
Farmer: \$0.49

Boneless Ham  
1 lb.



Retail: \$6.49  
Farmer: \$0.91

# The landscape of Mental Health and Financial Supports for Midwest Farmers

## Willingness and ability to seek help



Key informants described farmers as...

Most



Least

**Willing to seek financial help**

Publicly visible challenges and “in the same boat” as farmers

**Willing to seek mental health support**

Mental health stigma dissipating, openness and enthusiasm

**Able to seek financial help**

Overwhelmed with daily operations therefore limited ability

**Able to seek mental health support**

Even when willing, farmers often unable to get mental health support

*“I think there's increasing openness about it in the community in general, but the challenges are just finding a provider in our local community.”*

# What impacts farmers' help-seeking?



Common perception that farmers don't want to seek help

## Tension



### Willingness

- Farm viability
- Stigma (or lack thereof)
- Demographic characteristics (age, gender)
- Existing relationships with healthcare provider

### Ability

- Cost (health insurance, health care)
- Time required away from work
- Availability of services
- Internet access
- Awareness of programs and resources

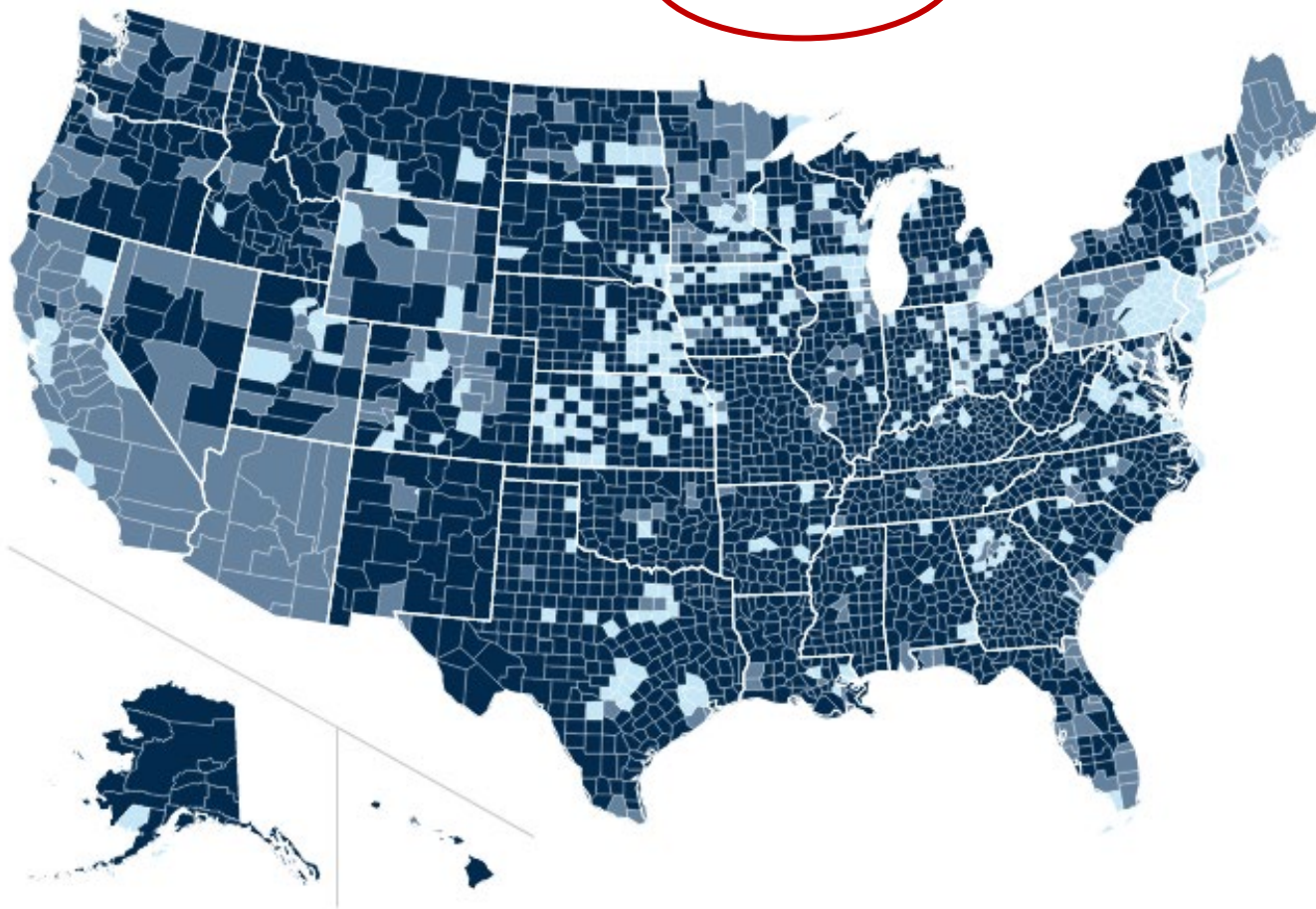
**Farmers more willing than able to seek help**

Florence Becot – Andrea Bjornestad – Carrie Henning-Smith – Sarah Ruskowski  
September 30, 2025; <https://z.umn.edu/UMASH-Farmer-MentalHealth-Research>

## Total Farmer Health Model



## Health Professional Shortage Areas: Primary Care, by County, April 2025

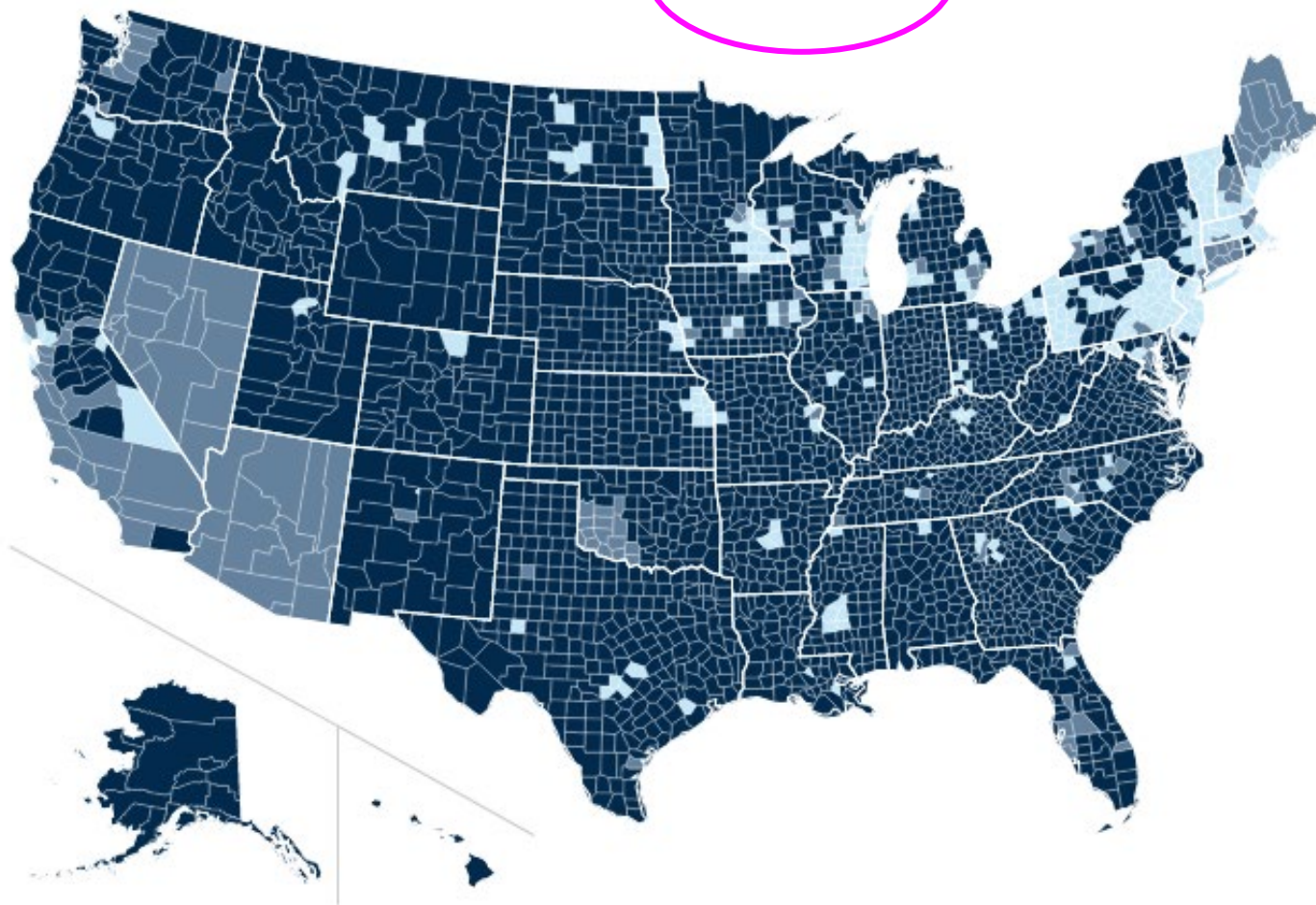


None of county is  
shortage area

At least part of county is  
shortage area

Whole county is  
shortage area

## Health Professional Shortage Areas: Mental Health, by County, April 2025



# Community Health Workers (CHW)



Links between health and human service systems  
and the community



Reduced ED use



Reduced hospitalizations



Fewer hospital  
readmissions



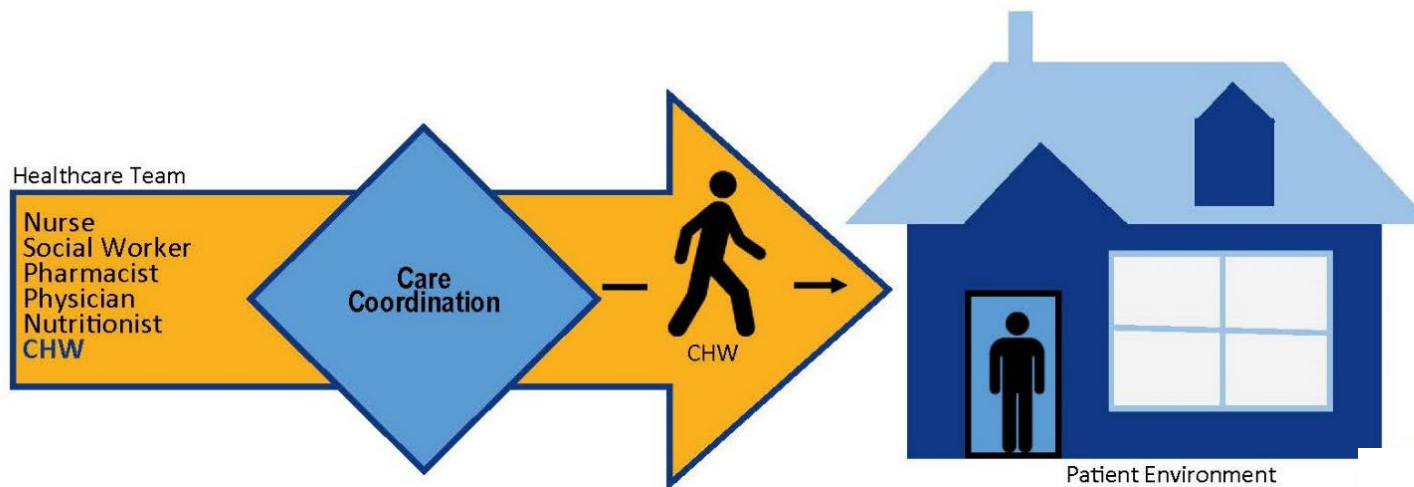
Reduced nursing  
home placements

# CHW: SCOPE OF PRACTICE

- **Client Support:** Provides encouragement and social support
- **Care Coordination:** Links people to information and services.
- **Healthcare Liaison:** Is a culturally-informed liaison between clients, health and care systems.
- **Health Education:** Provides culturally appropriate health education to individuals, organizations and/or communities to improve health literacy.
- **Advocacy:** Recognizes gaps and advocates for individual and community health needs.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER IS...

... a frontline public health worker who is a **trusted member** of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served.



## Who employs CHWs?

- Schools & universities
- Clinics & hospitals
- Physician offices
- Social service organizations
- Health insurance organizations
- Public health agencies
- Faith-based organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- More!

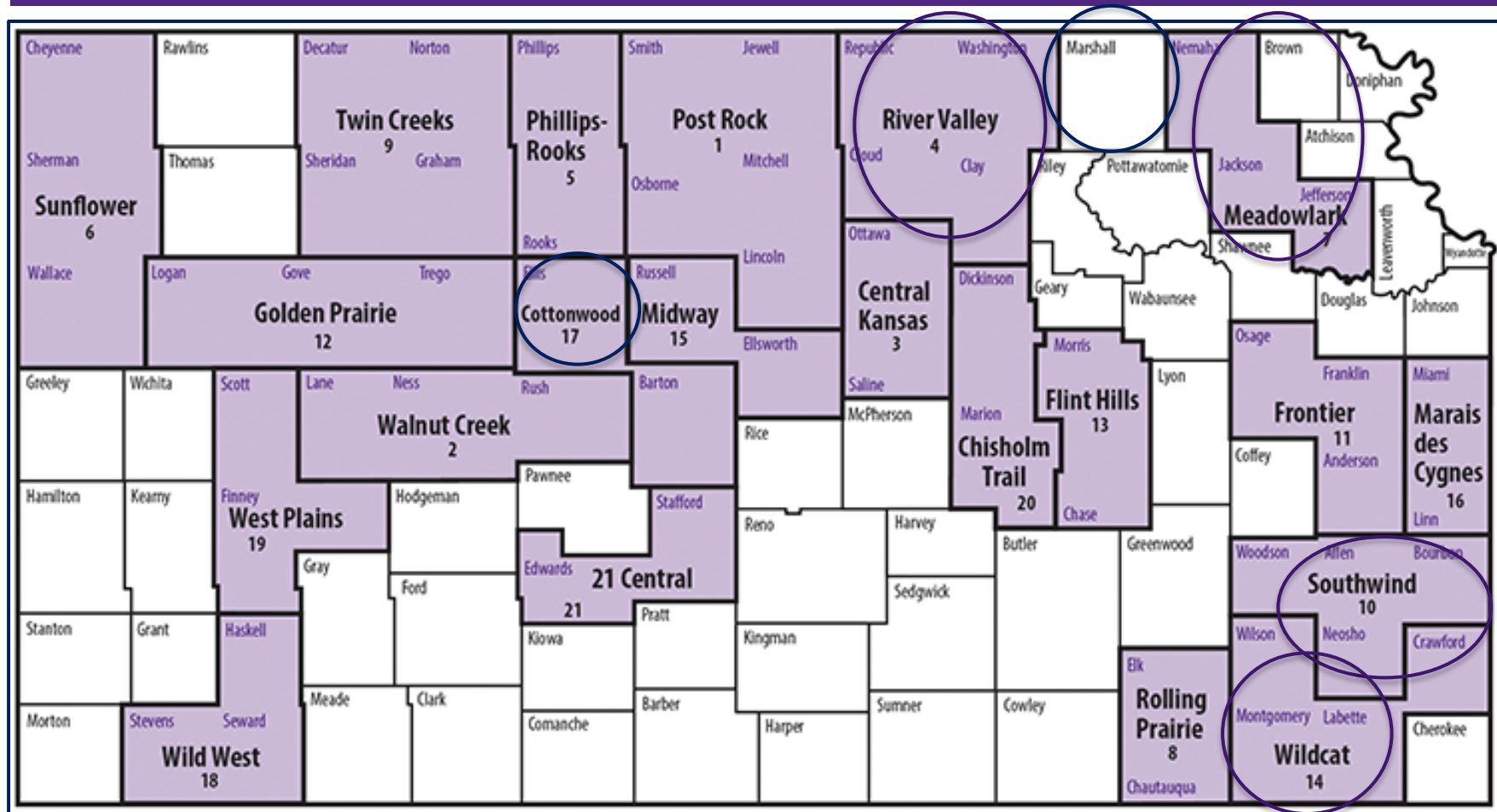
## What are the benefits of CHWs?

- Reduced health care costs
- Improved health outcomes
- Increased health insurance coverage
- Increased use of preventive care
- Reduced use of urgent and emergency care
- Improved self-management of chronic diseases
- More culturally aware provider practices



# KSRE CHW Network -

- Five initial Projects - March, 2024
- Replication/Model Site - May, 2025



# MARSHALL COUNTY CHW

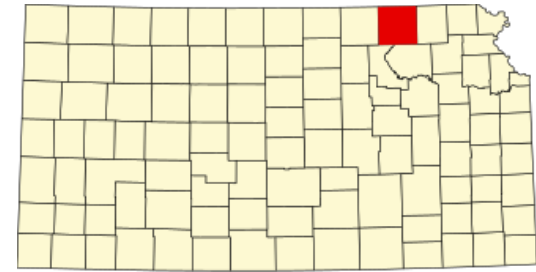
## SUSIE LATTA, AGENT & ARLENE WESSEL, CHW

**K-State 105 community health worker project helps rural Kansas and agricultural workforce**

Monday, Aug. 5, 2024



Susie Latta, left, K-State Research and Extension — Marshall County family and consumer sciences agent, and Arlene Wessel, center, community health worker, meet with a community member in Marshall County.



# A RURAL REMEDY – CBO DECISION TREES

| Extension<br>Mission Fit                                                                                                     | CHW<br>Scope of Work                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Health and Social Care<br>Partner Payments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>KSRE Mission:</b> improve the lives, livelihoods, and communities of Kansans through education, research, and innovation. | <b>Client Support:</b> Provide encouragement and social support to assist clients with goal setting<br><b>Care Coordination:</b> Link people to appropriate information and services.<br><b>Healthcare Liaison:</b> Liaison between clients, community and healthcare systems.<br><b>Health Education:</b> Provide health education to individuals, organizations and/or communities to reduce risk factors and encourage healthy behaviors.<br><b>Advocacy:</b> Recognize gaps and advocate for individual and community health needs. | <b><u>CPT/HCPCS Code - KS</u></b><br><br><b>98960 (\$22.20)</b><br>Self-management education & training, face-to-face, 1 patient, 30 minutes.<br><br><b>98961 (\$10.78)</b><br>Self-management education & training, face-to-face, 2-4 patients, 30 minutes.<br><br><b>98962 (\$7.77)</b><br>Self-management education & training, face-to-face, 5–8 patients, 30 minutes.<br><br><b>Modifier U7 (Not reimbursable)</b><br>To indicate the CHW has met the required training requirements and has received a certificate of completion. Reporting only code. |

# Key Sources of Rural Stress – Farm Financial Situation

- Net farm/ranch income decline
- Debt/asset ratio – meeting debt payments
- Cash flow on the operation
- Arranging financing
- Complicated or strained decision making – tendency to make worse decisions under stress



# Key Sources of Rural Stress – Family Financial Situation

- Ability to meet family living expenses
- Long hours, two or three jobs, balancing work and family
- Sense of inadequacy due to economic difficulties
- Facing the challenge of having to leave the farm (generational legacy)



← → ↻ 🔍 <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/community-health-workers>



**RHIhub**  
Rural Health Information Hub

Online Library ▾

Topics & States ▾

Rural Data Visualizations ▾

Case Studies & Conversations ▾

Tools for Success ▾

[Rural Health](#) > [Topics & States](#) > [Topics](#) 

## Community Health Workers in Rural Settings

### On This Page

- [Overview](#)
- [FAQs](#)

### More in This Topic Guide

- [Resources](#)
- [Organizations](#)
- [Models and Innovations](#)
- [About This Guide](#)

The American Public Health Association [defines a community health worker](#) (CHW) as:

“...a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served.”

They are critically important in rural areas where health services are limited. CHWs often share characteristics with the population they serve, such as socio-economic status, language, veteran status, or medical condition. CHWs serve a wide variety of rural and urban populations.

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/community-health-workers>

Insights > **Our Research**

# Marketplace Pulse: Health Insurance Coverage in Farm Country

**Brief** | **May-01-2024** | **Hempstead K** | **6-min read**

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/our-research/2024/05/marketplace-pulse-health-insurance-coverage-in-farm-country.html>

# Thank you!

---

**Elaine Johannes, PhD**

Kansas Health Foundation

Distinguished Professor in Community  
Health

State Extension Specialist

[ejohanne@ksu.edu](mailto:ejohanne@ksu.edu)

785-532-7720 (desk phone)

785-410-2249 (cell phone)

*Ask me about being #28.* 🌻

**KANSAS STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

