

Excerpts from the ARC Regional Economic Distress Report from 2005

Source:

Trends in National and Regional Economic Distress: 1960-2000

Prepared for the Appalachian Regional Commission

Lawrence E. Wood

Assistant Professor

College of Communication

Ohio University

Athens, Ohio

April 2005

“Of all the regions in this analysis, Central Appalachia has been one of the poorest performers in relation to the ARC’s economic distress measure over time. Furthermore, and unlike all other regions in the U.S., **current and persistent economic distress within the Central Appalachian Region has been associated with employment in the mining industry, particularly coal mining.**”

“As employment in Central Appalachia’s mining sector has declined over time, with levels of employment in the mining industry being 10 percent in 1960 and declining to only 2 percent in 2000, many counties that were already typically experiencing relatively poor and tenuous economic circumstances in the past have been unable to successfully adapt to changing economic conditions.”

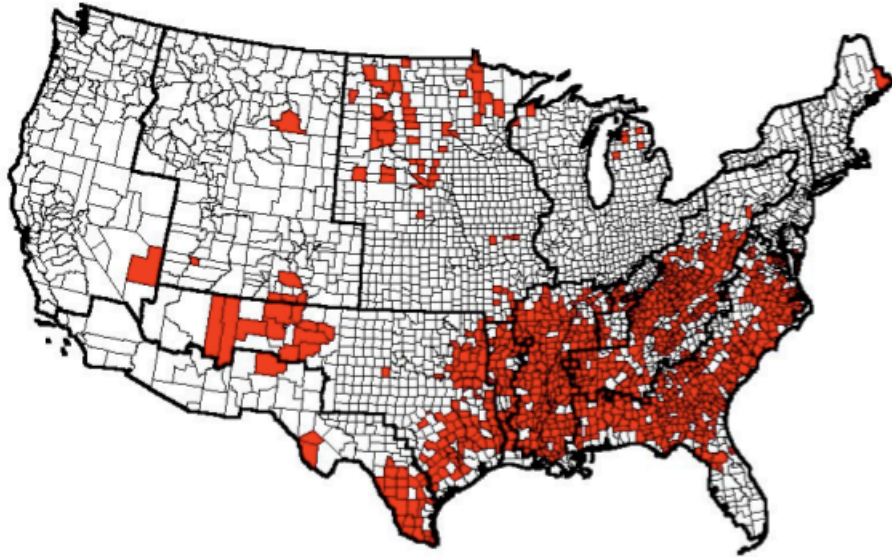
“**The counties that have emerged from distress in the region have consistently had fewer jobs in mining** and a greater number of jobs in manufacturing when compared to the counties that have remained persistently distressed.”

“The overarching issue that stands out, however, is the fact that so much of the improvement in both Appalachia and the rest of the United States occurred during a period when national policy was supportive of full employment and poverty alleviation efforts. This finding suggests that **regional economic development is most likely to take place when national policies create the conditions to support it.** As such, addressing persistent distress would seem to require a renewed national commitment, similar to the one that inspired the establishment of the ARC and the regional development policies of the 1960s.”

“In addition, **the region’s continued dependence on extractive industries, particularly coal mining, has defined and limited the options for a diversified economy.** A number of the counties that had emerged from distress by 1980 but then fell back into distress in 1990 were in Central Appalachia, especially West Virginia.”

Here are a couple of maps from the report. The first shows counties considered economically distressed in 1960 and the second shows counties that continued to fall in the “distressed” category as of the 2000 census. In Appalachia, notice how the Central Appalachian counties where MTR occurs stand out:

Distressed Counties in the U.S. 1960



Distressed Counties in the U.S. in both 1960 and 2000

