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## ***Does It Cost Less to Live in Rural Areas? Evidence from New Data on Food Security and Hunger***

### ***Rural Sociology***

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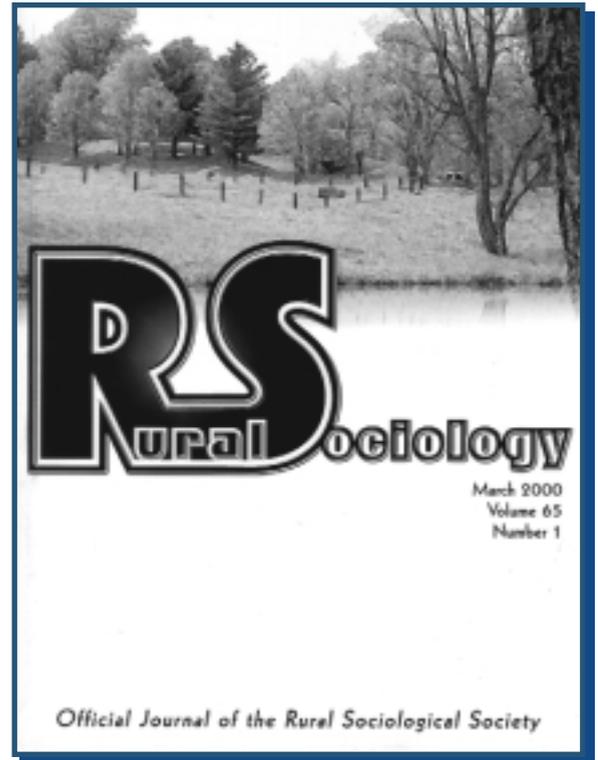
Bellingham, WA: Rural  
Sociological Society

“Does It Cost Less to  
Live in Rural Areas?  
Evidence from New  
Data on Food Security  
and Hunger”

by Mark Nord

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**I**t costs about 16 percent less, on average, to live in rural than in urban areas. This implies that the official poverty

rate overstates rural economic hardship compared with that in urban areas. This study uses data on food insecurity and hunger collected by the Census Bureau for USDA to estimate differences in the cost of living between rural and urban areas. The level of households' food insecurity is used as a proxy for well-being, and rural-urban differences in the association of income with food security provide an estimate of the difference in costs of living between the two areas. Geographic poverty threshold adjustments based on housing costs, as proposed by the National Academy of Sciences panel on improving the measurement of poverty, are found to generally over-correct for costs of living compared with cost of living differences estimated from food security data.