

UNST 124g spring 2012
global challenges, global opportunities

1 introduction

Human development is associated with a set of economic and social standards in a global context. The report you will read for this assignment defines the term:

Human development is the expansion of people's freedoms and capabilities to lead lives that they value and have reason to value.

The report augments that definition to include *sustainability* goals:

Sustainable human development is the expansion of the substantive freedoms of people today while making reasonable efforts to avoid seriously compromising those of future generations.

It is important for you to keep in mind as you read the 2011 UN Human Development Report (Klugman, 2011) that social, environmental, and economic inequality are distinct, but related effects of human cultures and institutions. That is, the opportunities and vulnerabilities associated with different groups of people are socially constructed.

Last term we used the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index (HDI) (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/>) as a measure of human welfare. Earlier this term we examined welfare and justice metrics in more detail, working our way through a report on social justice in the developed world (OCED, 2011). We recognized there substantive differences among developed-economy countries. We also examined the Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality within economies and saw that there too, great differences emerge among countries.

Differences in the level of inequality emerge within countries as well. Starting here in the United States, where do you expect there to be the largest income inequality? Where do you expect incomes to be most equal? Does the map in Figure (1) look as you would expect? It turns out that United States has more cities with a Gini coefficient of 0.5 or higher than any other country in the OCED (López Moreno et al., 2010). Examine the data in Figures 1 through 4. Do any obvious relationships stand out to you among these measurements? Our cities compare poorly to cities the rest of the wealthy world but they do not compare so poorly to more rural places (although there is more to the story than just that).

Globally, there is indeed an "urban advantage" (López Moreno et al., 2010). Access to health care, education, and both the formal and informal economies are all better in the city than they are in the country. Yet cities are heterogenous, we find deep poverty, environmental hazards, and great ranges of access to the urban advantage, depending on where a person lives, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic group.

Cities and rural communities face related, but distinct environmental and sustainable development challenges. They also present different opportunities to meet those challenges.

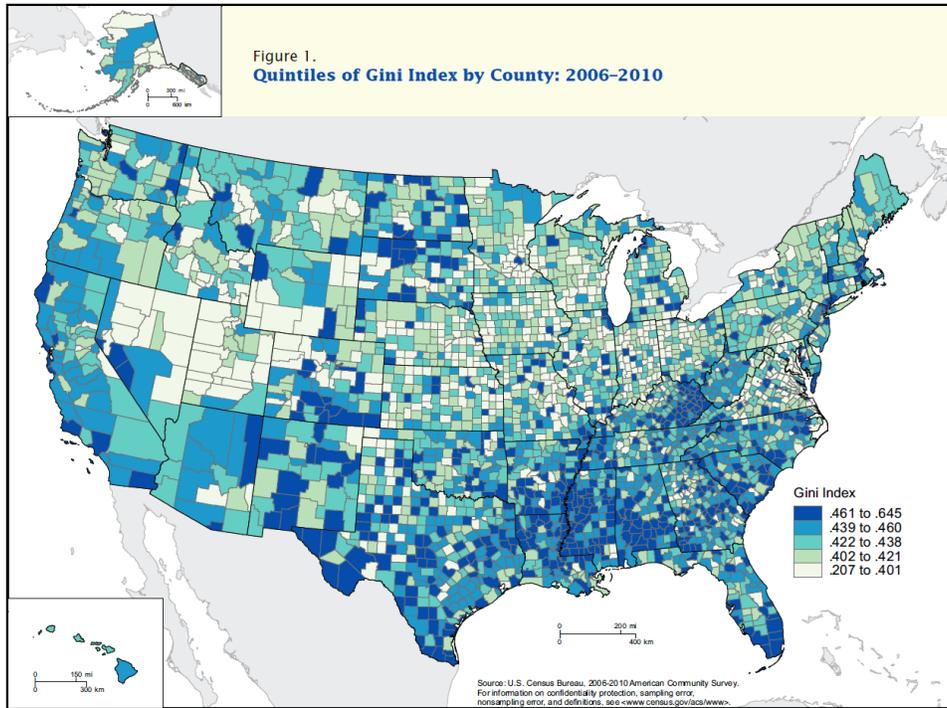


Figure 1: United States Gini coefficient by county, 2006 to 2010. Recall that the more equal the distribution, the smaller the coefficient.

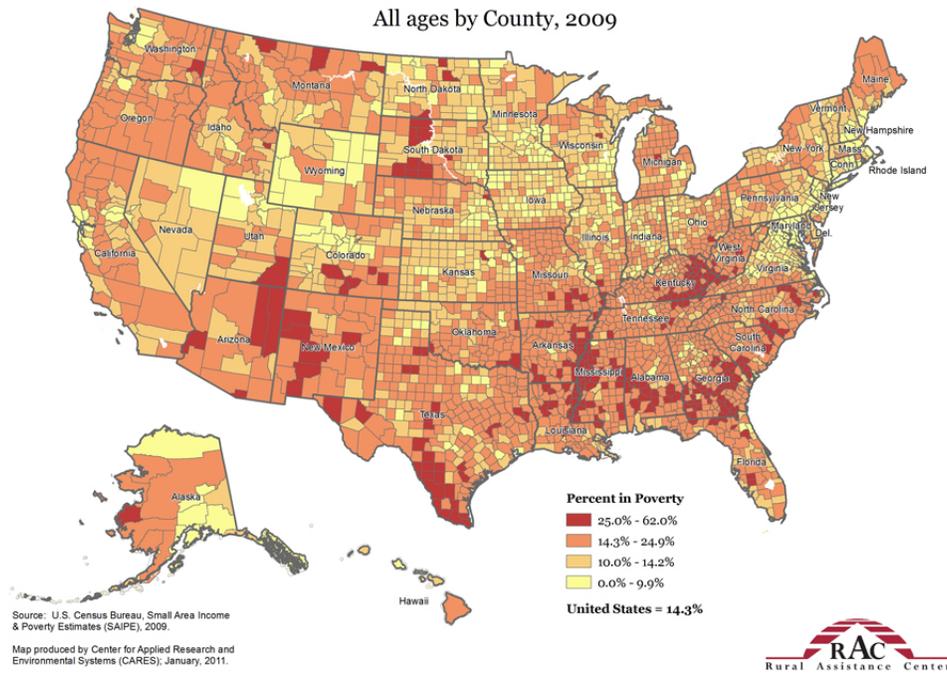


Figure 2: United States poverty rate, all ages, by county, 2009.

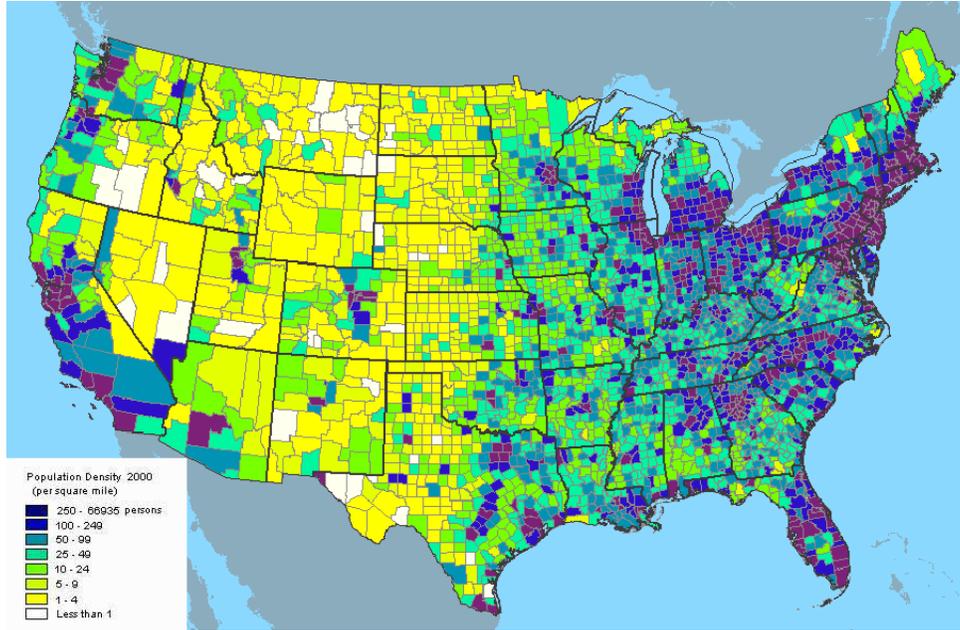


Figure 3: United States population density by county, 2000. USGS National Atlas.

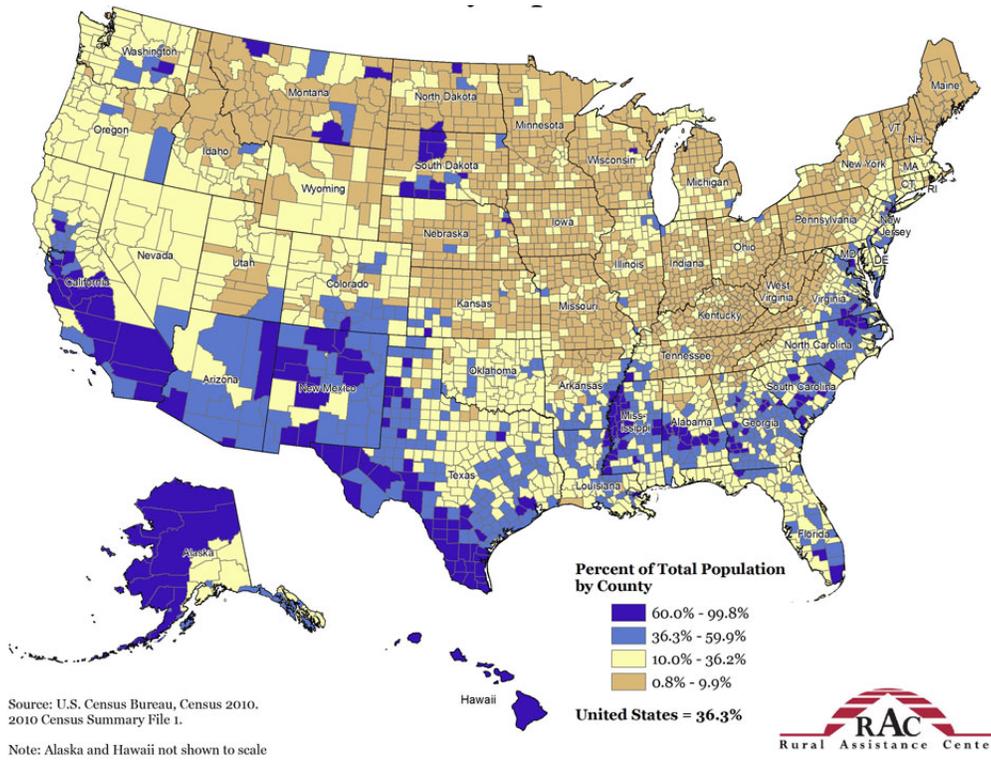
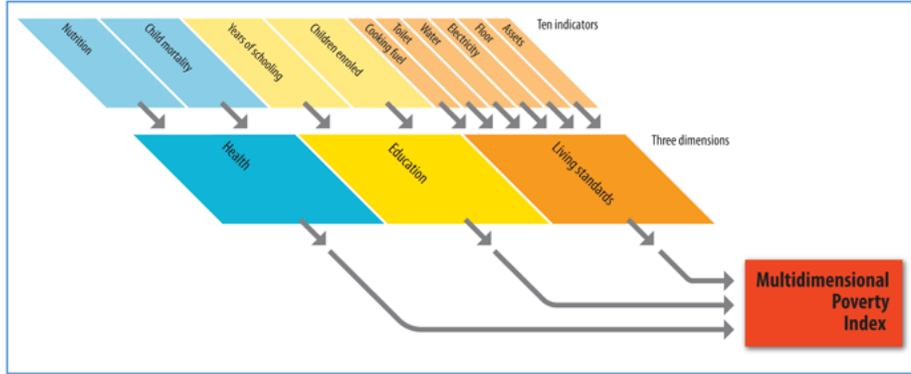


Figure 4: United States population diversity by county, 2010.

Components of the Multidimensional Poverty Index

MPI—three dimensions and 10 indicators



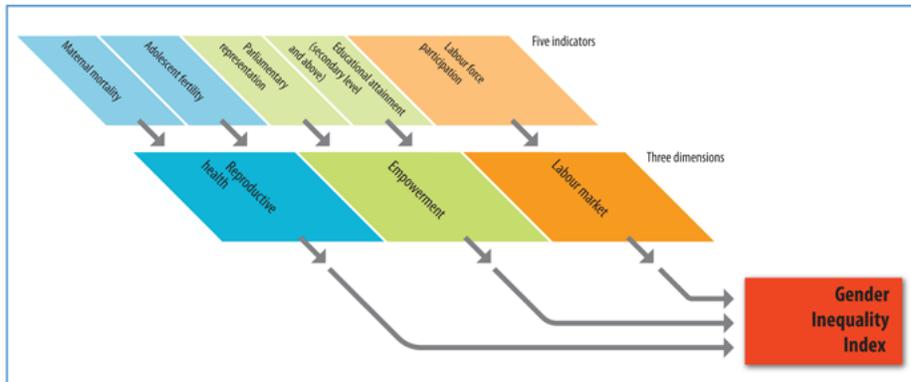
Note: The size of the boxes reflects the relative weights of the indicators.

Source: Alkire and Santos 2010.

Figure 5: Components of the Multidimensional Poverty Index used in the UNHDR.

Components of the Gender Inequality Index

GII—three dimensions and five indicators



Note: The size of the boxes reflects the relative weights of the indicators and dimensions.

Source: HDRO.

Figure 6: Components of the Gender Inequality Index used in the UNHDR.

2 UNHDR 2011 reading themes

- Some terminology you should define as you read the report:
 - coping ability; coping range
 - adaptive capacity
 - opportunity access; opportunity cost
 - slum
 - time horizon
- *Intersections* between environmental challenges and equity are a main theme running through the report. For example, deforestation is in many places due to the use of wood as a cooking fuel, which itself is related to indoor air quality, a problem that disproportionately affects poor women because their low social status limits them to the low-opportunity jobs of gathering fuel and domestic labor. As you read the report, highlight the connections you find between environmental degradation, climate change, and inequality. There are many.
- Environmental challenges—of all kinds—affect different groups of people differently. For example, the urban and rural poor face different air quality risks and within either of those groups, men, women, and children are affected differently. As you read the report, highlight different groups and the differing challenges they face.
- The human development metrics discussed in the report can be investigated using a web mapping tool developed by the UN: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/map/>. Use that tool to inspect the MPI and GII discussed in the report.
- This and prior UN human development reports explore the relationships among power inequity, development, and the environment. Does democratic governance lead to better environmental quality and equitable development? As you read the report, find evidence that would allow you to discuss this question. Is the answer simple?

3 references

Klugman, J. 2011. United Nations Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 176. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/>

OECD. (2011). *Social Justice in the OECD—How Do the Member States Compare?*. from http://www.sgi-network.org/pdf/SGI11_Social_Justice_OECD.pdf. Retrieved 22 January 2012.

López Moreno, E., O. Oyeyinka, and G. Mboup. 2010. State of the World's Cities 2010/2011. UN-HABITAT, Nairobi, Kenya. pp 224.