
Do We Live in the Best or Worst of Times? (Symptoms of Rural Angst)

By No Author *Wed, Feb 12, 2020*

Do We Live in the Best or Worst of Times?

[Symptoms of rural despair]

The mortality rate of white non-Hispanics aged 50–54 with only a HS degree was 30% below the death rate of blacks of the same age in 1999 but 30% greater in 2015.

The age-adjusted suicide rate rose 16% in U.S. urban counties from 1999 to 2017 but rose 53% in rural counties. By 2017, the rural suicide rate was 20/100,000 people, almost double the urban rate.

Death rates from drug overdoses were higher in cities in 1999, but by 2015 were higher in rural areas.

Real wages in the U.K. at the start of 2020 are about 4% below their level at the beginning of 2008.

The labor force participation rate of men ages 25–54 in the U.S. is still below the Jan. 2008 rate (82.8% vs. 83.3%) despite a 3.5% unemployment rate.

The share of adults agreeing that “Life is better now for people like me” is 34% in France, 28% in Greece, 24% in Italy, 43% in the U.S. and 49% in the U.K. The share is 53% in Australia, 58% in Canada, 68% in Germany, 68% in Japan, 67% in the Netherlands, 63% in Spain, and 66% in Sweden.

Source: “Unhappiness and Age,” David G. Blanchflower (NBER Working Paper 26642), January 2020.