

Reflections of Rural Maine:

Economic, Social, and Demographic Trends in
the Upper Union River Watershed

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Conservation and People in Rural Maine

- Who cares?
- About the study
- A central place for social capital
- Findings from year 2000 census
- Findings from year 2010 census
- Conclusions
- Questions and discussion

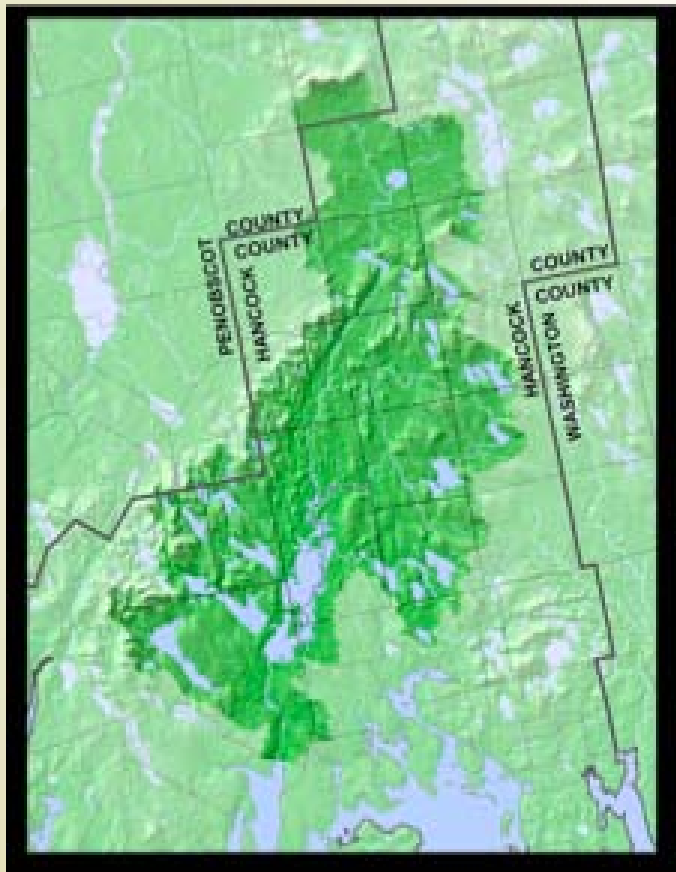
Who cares?

- Conservation must be connected to people; conservation that doesn't involve local people tends to be much less effective.
- The people of rural Maine are experiencing rapid economic, demographic and social change.
- These changes affect attitudes toward local conservation efforts, along with conservation outcomes.

About the Study

- Initial study done in conjunction with Union River Watershed Coalition (URWC).
 - Year 2000 census data
 - “Ground-truthing” in 2006
- Goal: establish economic, demographic, and social baselines, similar to the biological baselines used to study the river.
- Isolate the *upper* sections of the watershed.
- Emphasis on social capital formation.
- Follow-up study for CONVERGENCE 2012.

The Upper Union River Watershed (UURW)



- Drains nearly 1400 km²
- Approximately 7240 km of streams
- 81 lakes and ponds.
- 8 towns in study



Stories Data Tell

The study identifies economic, demographic, and social data that

- differentiate the upper watershed from the rest of Hancock County and Maine.
- illuminate the upper watershed's position on typical contemporary rural issues, such as youth out-migration, gendered poverty, and urban linkages.
- present particular challenges or opportunities for the upper watershed.
- relate to social capital levels and formation.

Social Capital

- Social capital refers to connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.
- Social capital facilitates communities' achieving group objectives.
- Some communities have a wealth of social capital, while others have relatively less.
- *Social capital is a critical ingredient of successful local economic development.*

Social Capital, Conservation, and Rivers

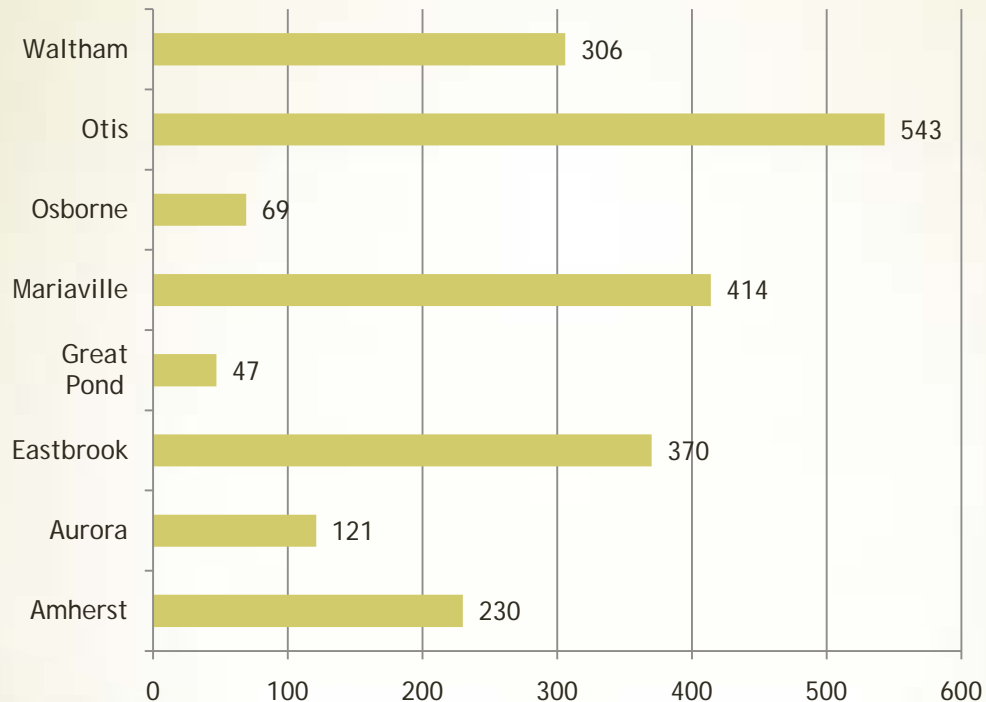
- Local conservation efforts benefit from high levels of social capital.
- Conversely, conservation efforts can contribute to social capital.
- In particular, river conservation has unique attributes that facilitate social capital formation.

Rivers and Three Forms of Social Capital

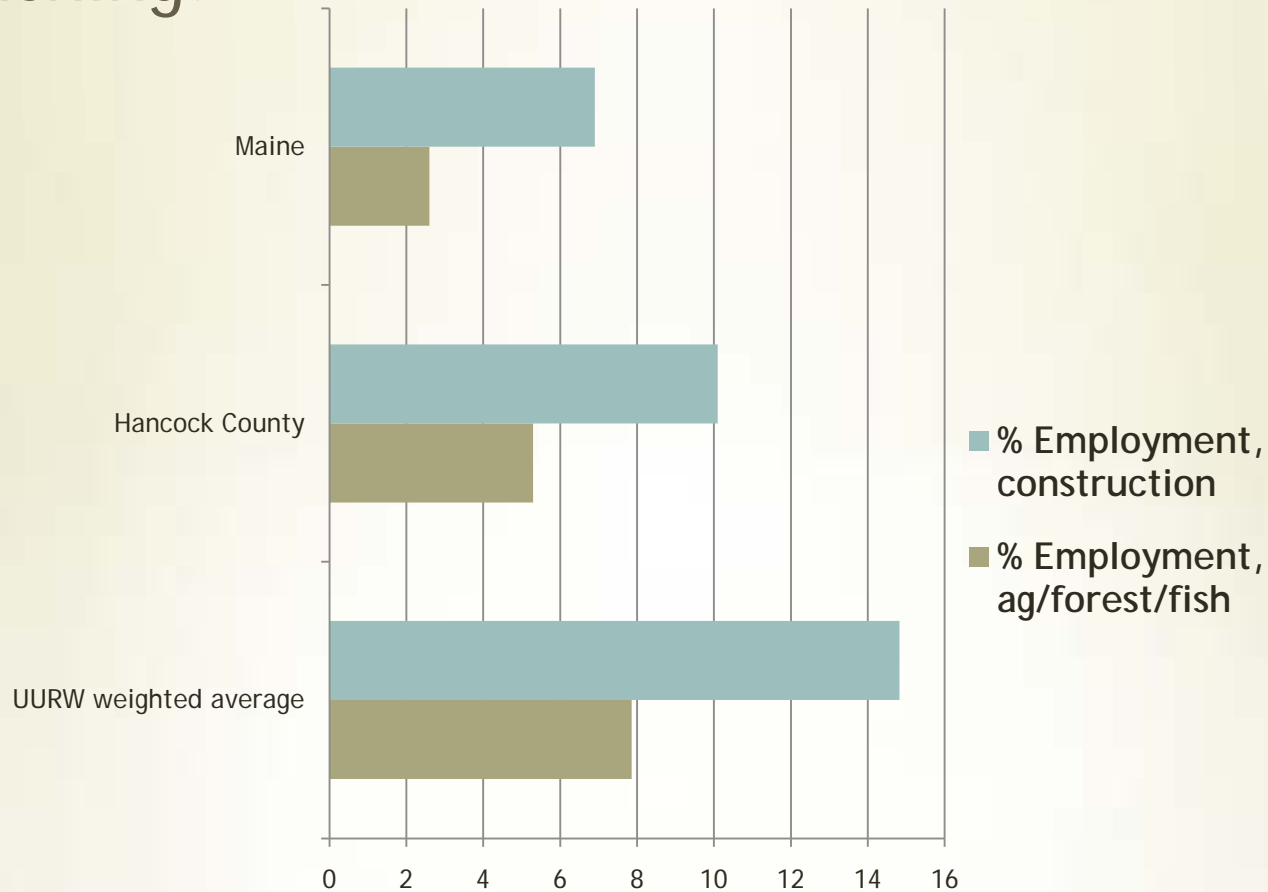
- River conservation can contribute to three forms of social capital (SC):
 - Bonding SC: rivers create place; they can give towns and groups a sense of identity and common purpose.
 - Bridging SC: rivers connect; groups must connect up and down the river for successful conservation.
 - Linking SC: the world cares about rivers; groups can use rivers to obtain access to outside resources.

Findings from the 2000 Census

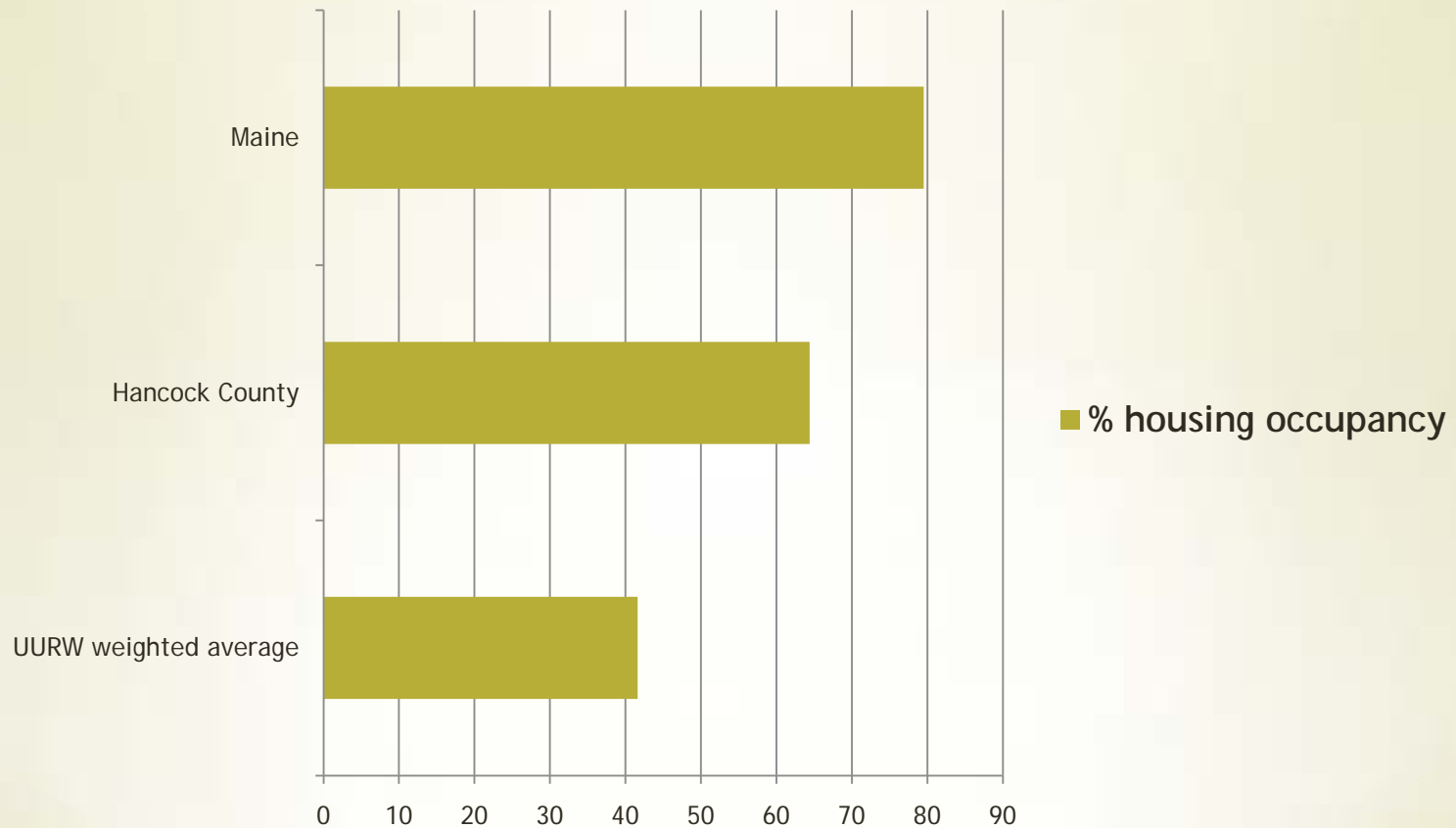
- The towns of the UURW have heterogeneous populations.



- Employment is relatively dependent on construction, agriculture, forestry and fishing.



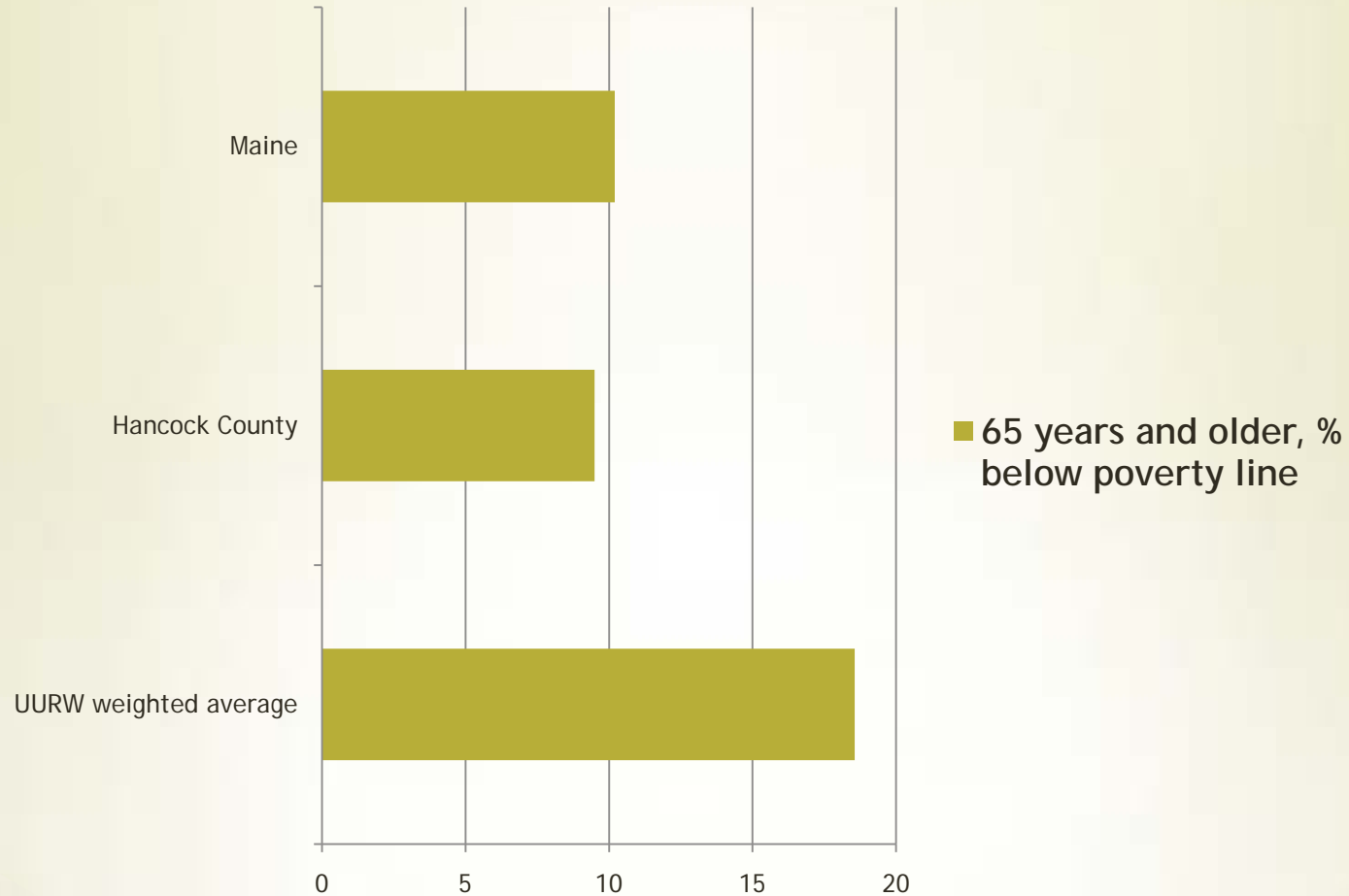
- A high number of vacation homes creates a significant amount of unoccupied housing.



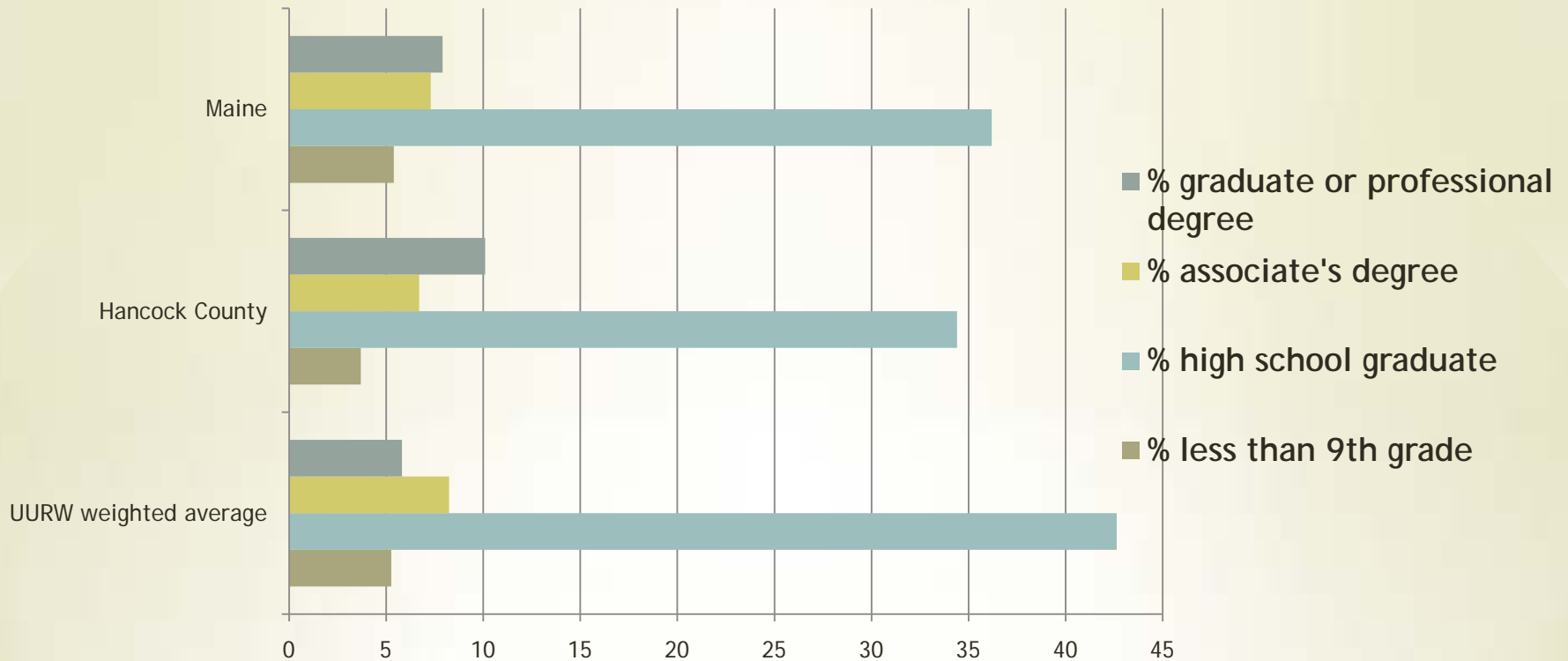
- Poverty is relatively high in the UURW, but heterogeneous across towns.



- The incidence of poverty amongst the elderly is particularly high in the UURW.

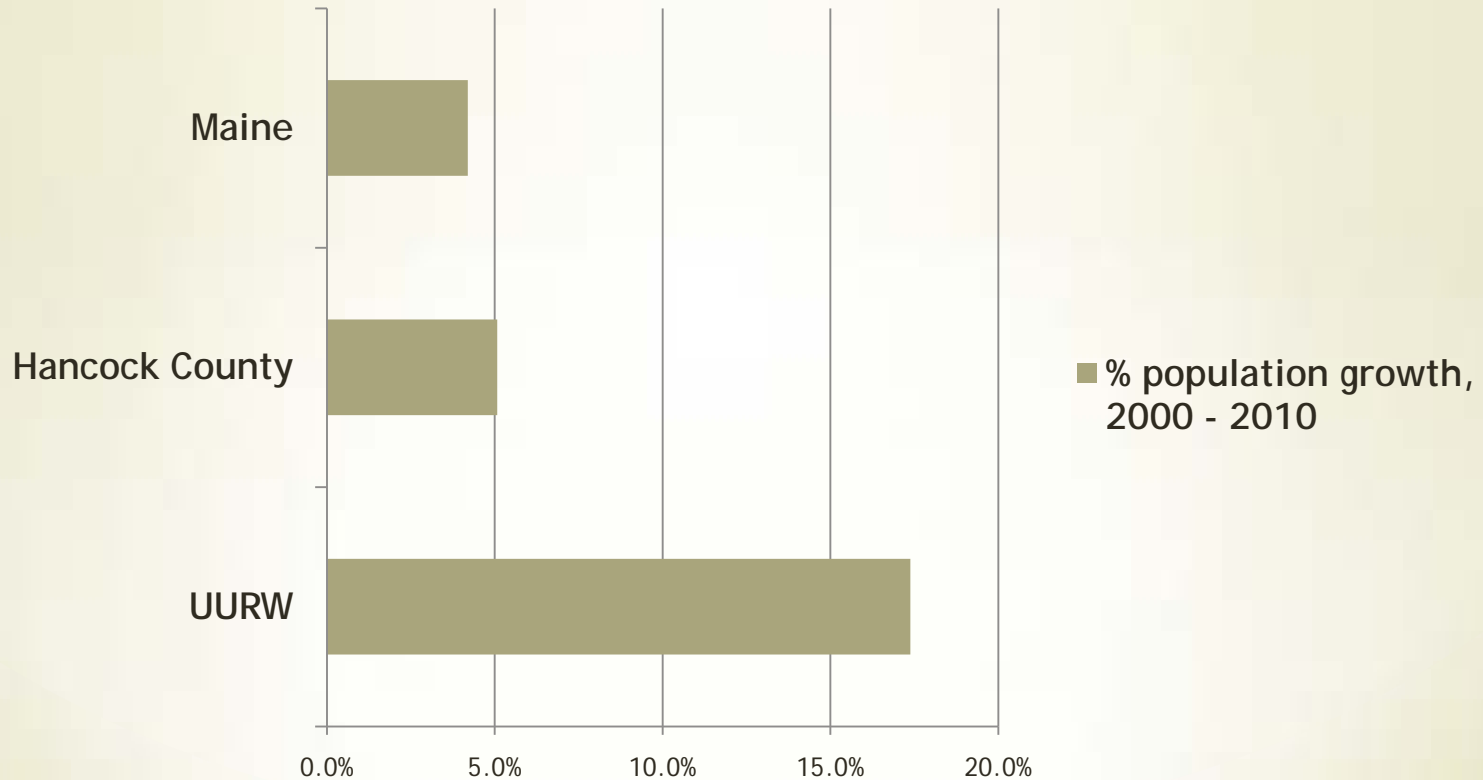


- The UURW presents a mixed picture regarding educational attainment.

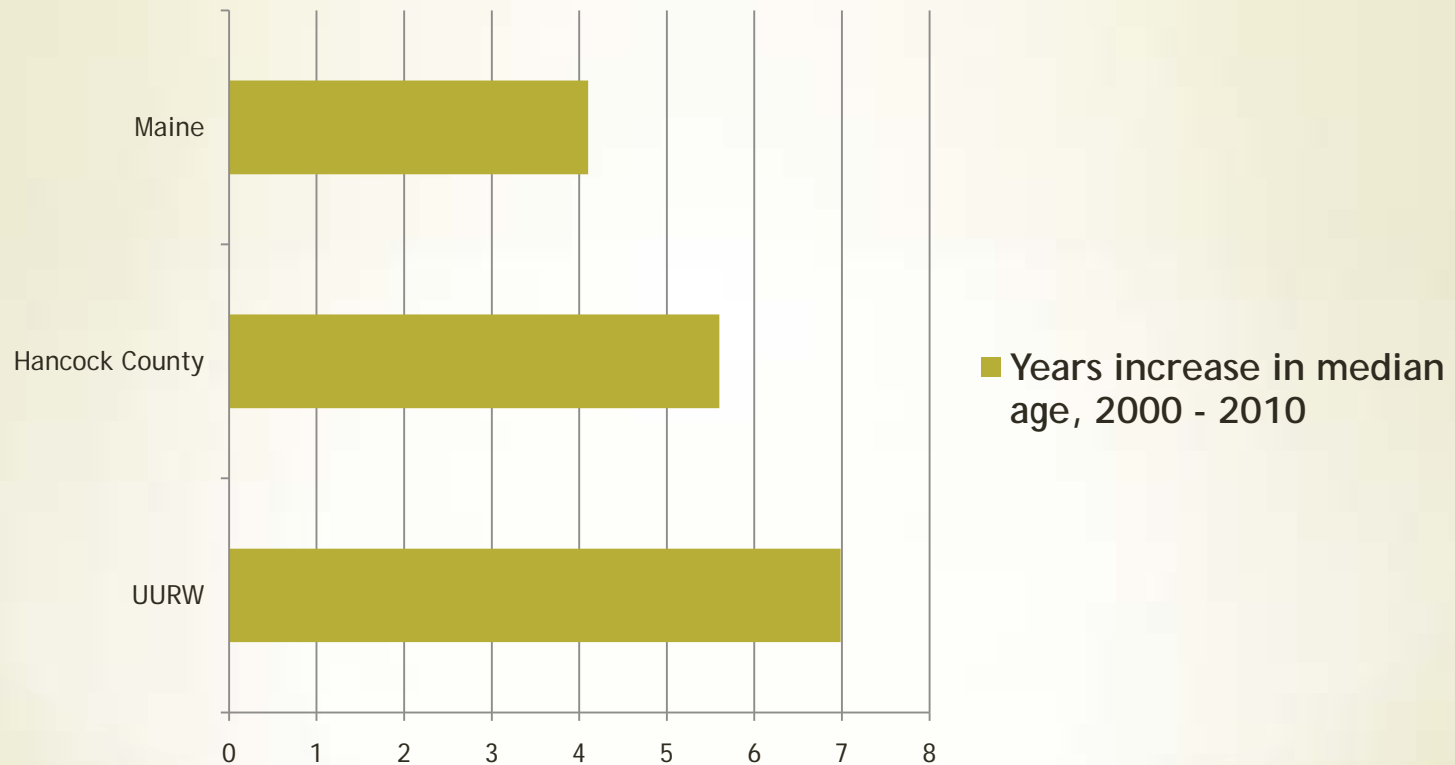


Findings from the 2010 Census

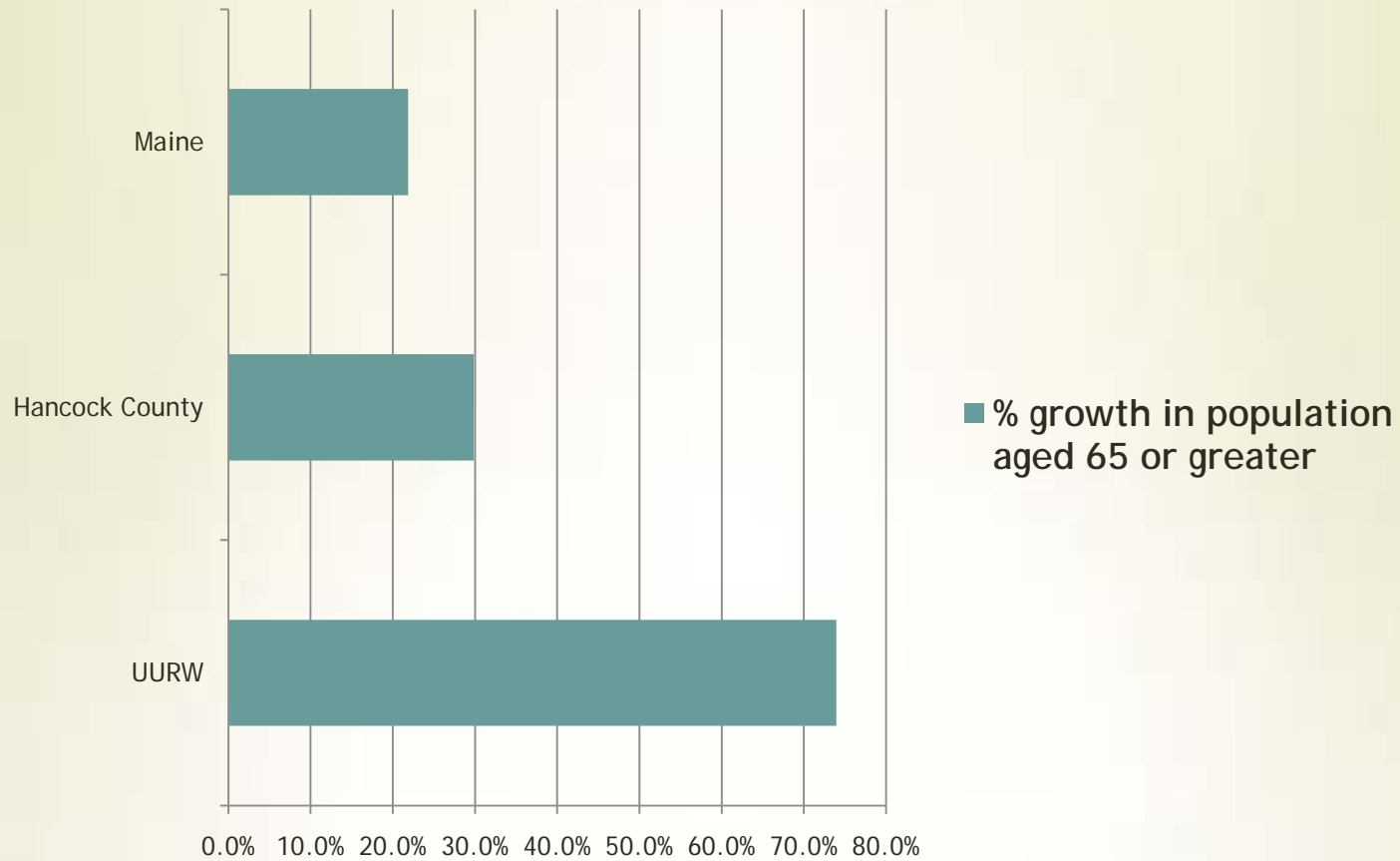
- The population of the UURW grew rapidly.



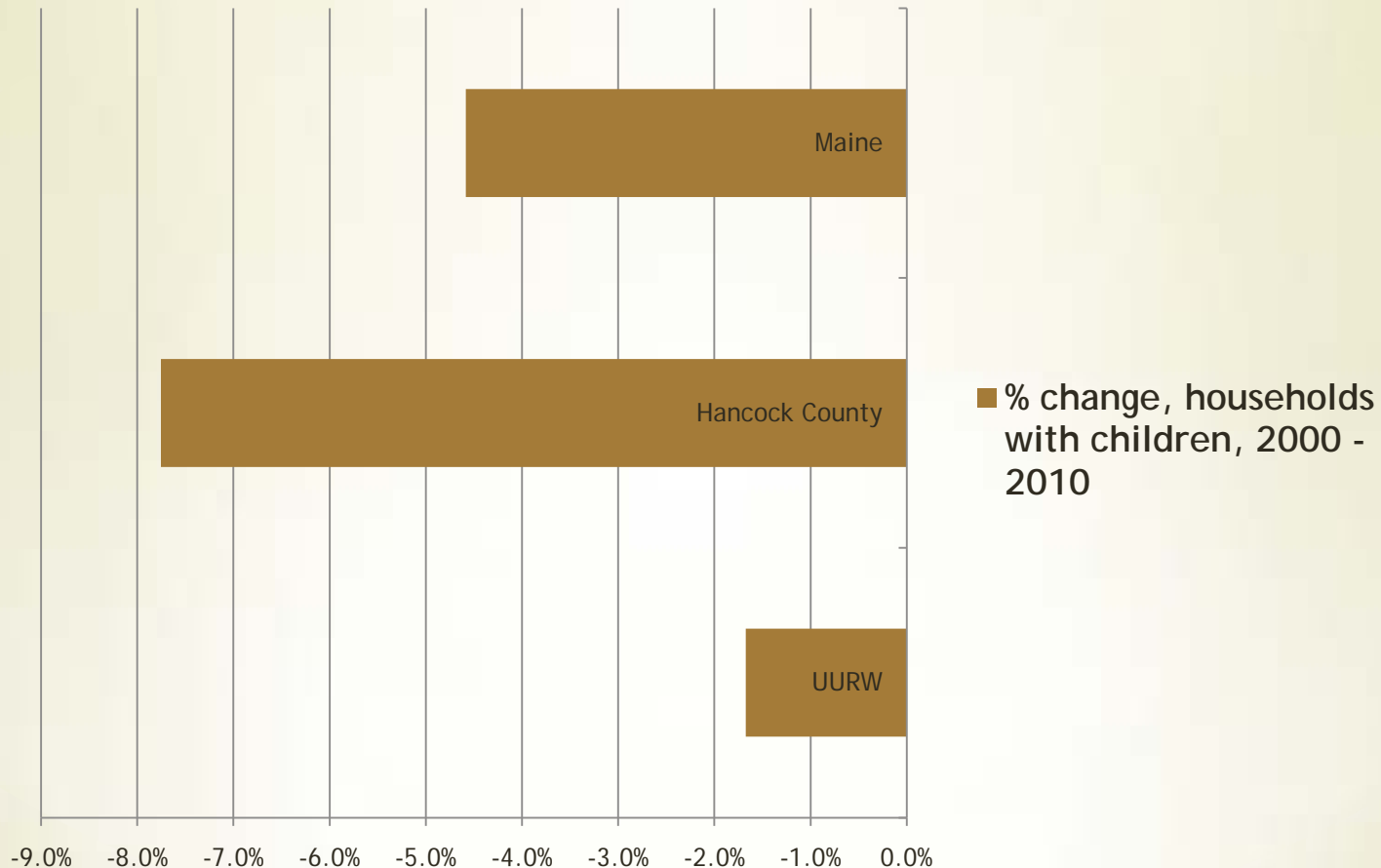
- At the same time, the UURW aged much faster than Hancock County or Maine:
 - The median age within the UURW grew considerably.



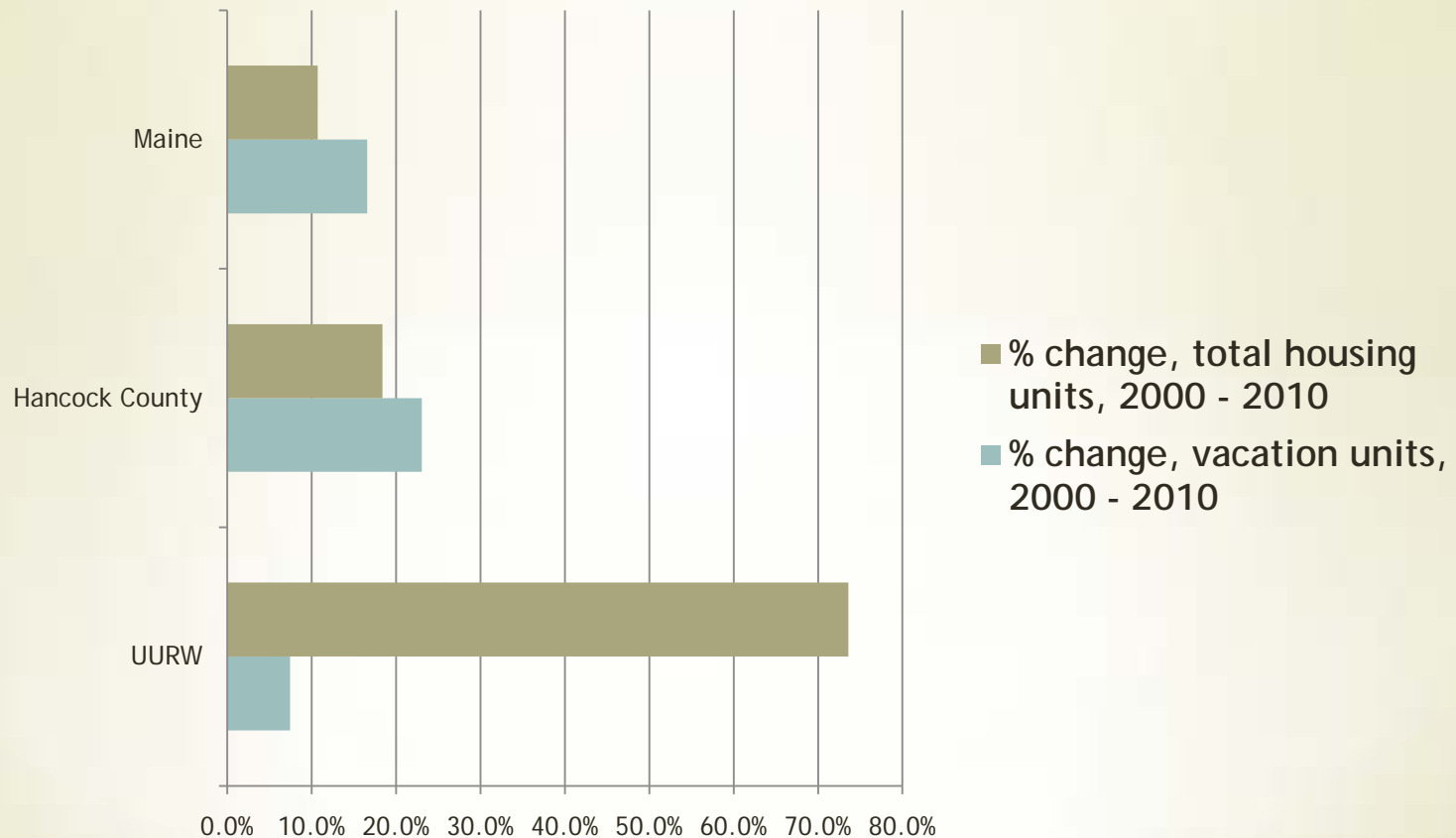
- The size of the population aged 65 or greater increased dramatically.



- Somewhat surprisingly, the UURW lost households with children at a slower rate than did Hancock County and Maine.



- The UURW experienced a housing boom. The expansion of housing stock was largely unrelated to the building of vacation homes.



Conclusions

- Unlike some parts of rural America, the UURW is experiencing population and housing stock growth; this may present a challenge for conservation efforts.
- The economy of the UURW is relatively dependent on activities that may clash with “preservationist” forms of conservation.
- Significant aging of the population may open the door for amenity-based growth.

Conclusions

- Population growth can help or hinder social capital formation:
 - New residents can increase the density of social networks.
 - Retirees may have more time to contribute to group and town efforts.
 - New residents may have values that conflict with those of long-time residents, and may not recognize established ways of doing things.

Thank you...

Questions and Discussion...

