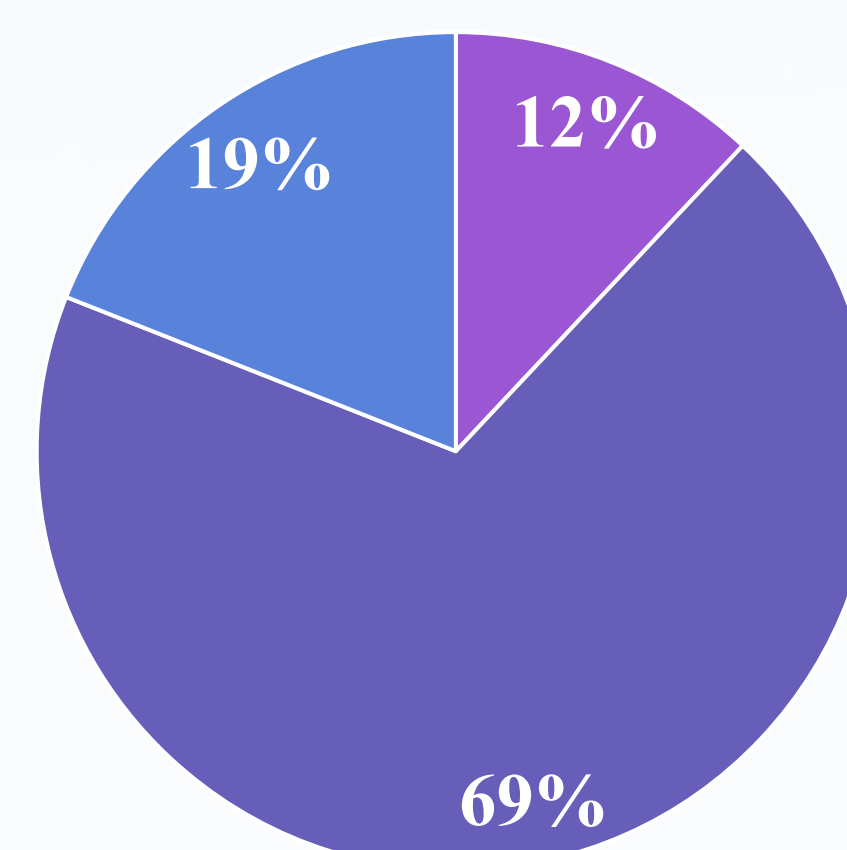


## PROBLEM

- The aim of this project is to determine factors that contribute to a future physician's decision to practice rural medicine.
- An emphasis is placed on investigating factors which are based in the medical education curriculum.

## BACKGROUND

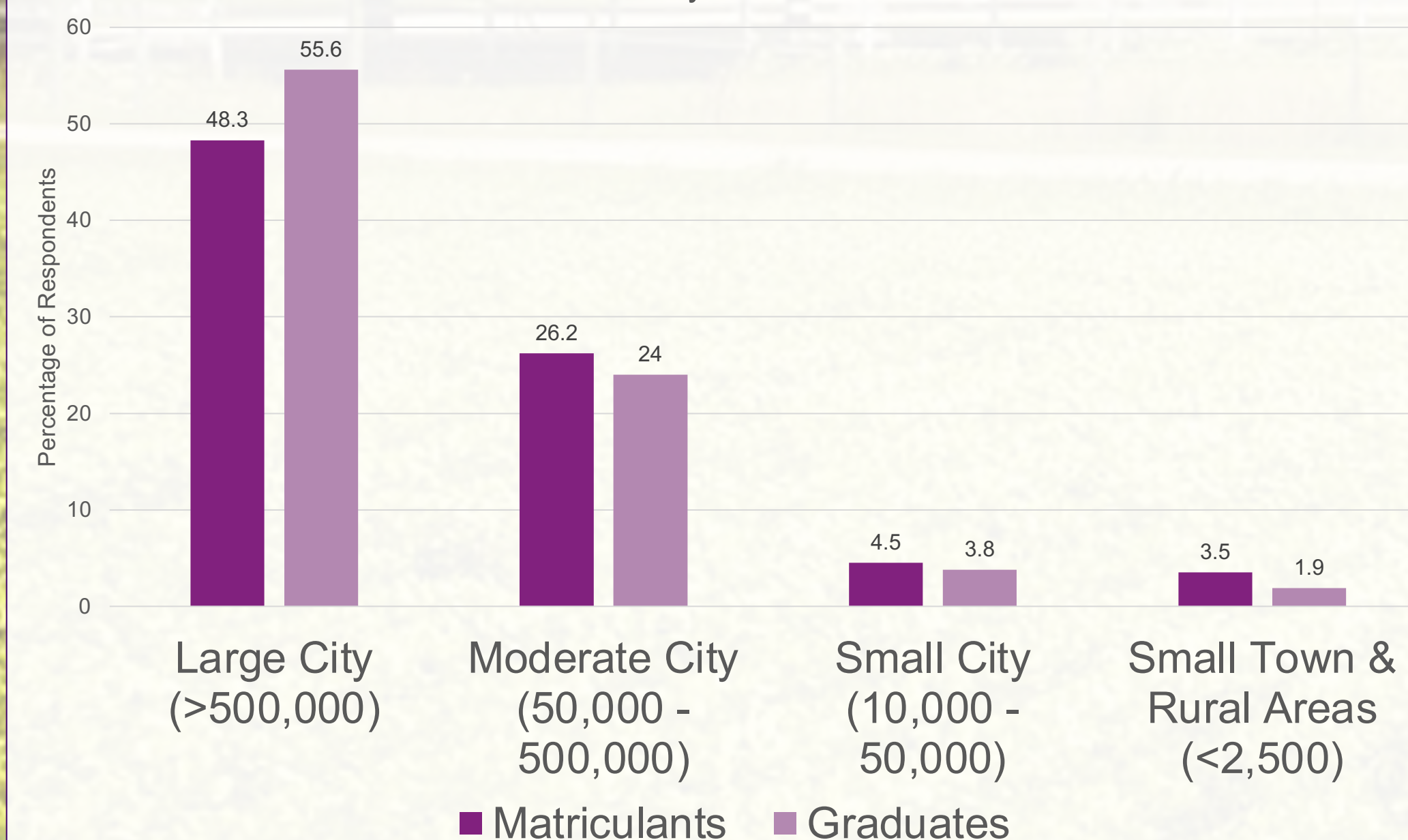
U.S. Population Distribution



■ Urban ■ Suburban ■ Rural

- Forty-six million Americans live in rural areas.
- 80% of rural America is medically underserved (shortage of providers, long travel distances for care, underinsured, etc.)
- More rural practitioners are needed, but not enough medical students and residents seek rural medicine to address current disparities.

Where Do Future Physicians Intend to Practice



## METHODS

- Interview and survey medical students from the Brody School of Medicine as well as residents from ECU Health who have a current or former interest in rural medicine.
  - SURVEY:** Collect important information about each participant such as demographics, academic achievement, and career outlook.
  - INTERVIEW:** Discover from participants what rurality means, whether rural medicine is a current interest or a former one, changes in interest over time and causes of those changes, understand what participants believe rural practice looks like.

- Rural-identity status
- SES
- MCAT
- Race
- Sex
- Specialty of choice

What does rurality mean?  
What factors discouraged or encouraged you from pursuing rural medicine?  
When did you become (dis)interested?



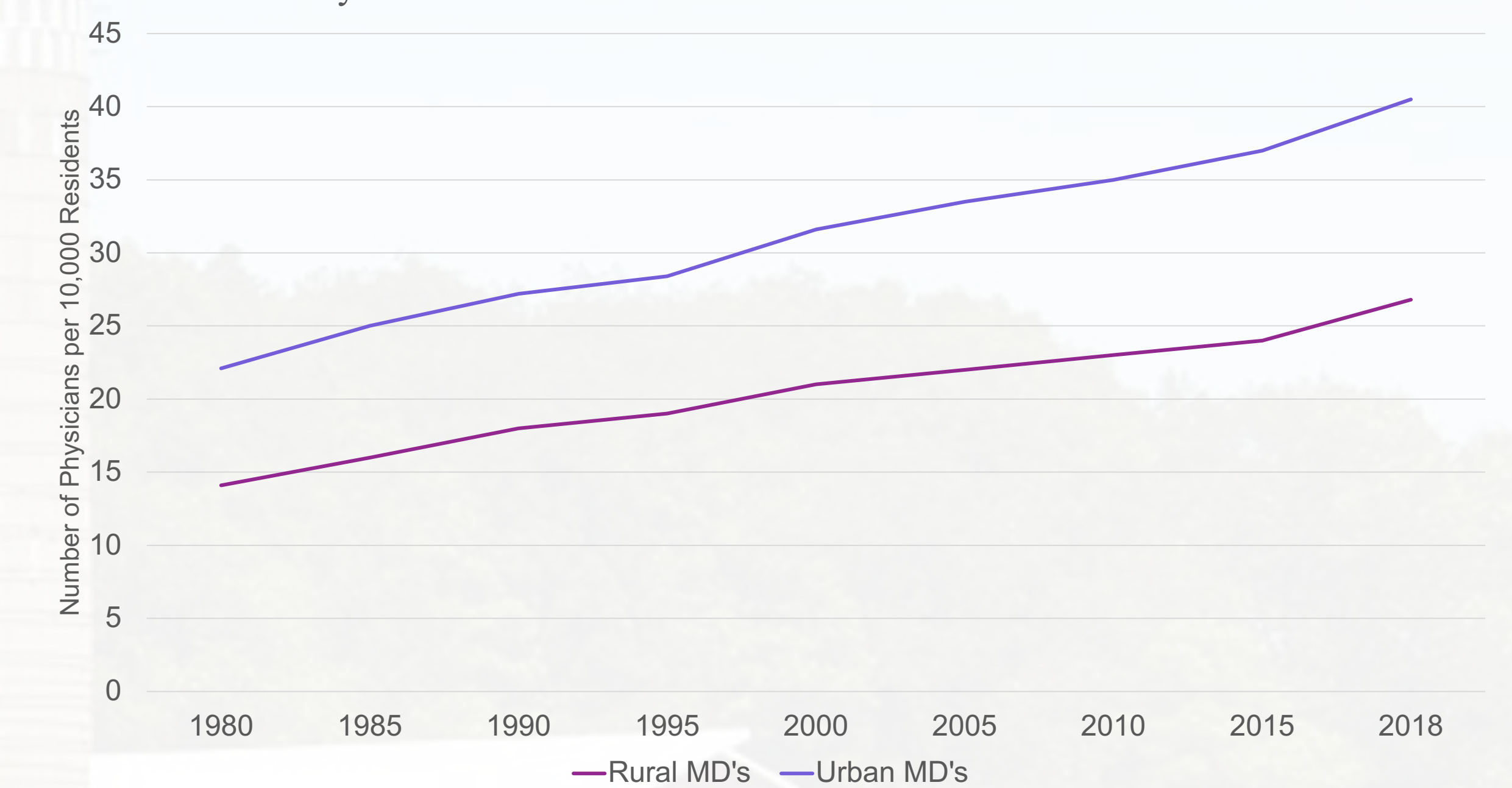
## EVALUATION PLAN

- Separate all participants who are or have been interested in rural medicine into two cohorts: currently interested in rural medicine and previously but no longer interested in rural medicine.
- Compare sets of quantitative information from survey data between two cohorts to determine if correlates exist between any factors (i.e. MCAT scores, rural-identity status, specialty).
- Qualitative interview answers will be assessed to discover themes and factors which cause individuals to pursue rural medicine as well as dissuade others, within medical education and other external factors such as lifestyle, pay, and scope of practice.
- Progression in educational career (i.e. first year medical students compared to fourth year residents) will be assessed to determine duration of exposure to potential factors.

## POTENTIAL IMPACT

- The results of this project allow the possibility of highlighting external factors outside of medical education inform policy changes that will promote individuals to practice rural medicine.
- Results may also indicate factors within medical education that influence one to pursue or abandon the pursuit of rural medicine. Medical schools (and institutions with a mission to help increase rural physicians) can make changes using evidence from the project to achieve better outcomes.
- Should barriers discouraging future physicians from practicing rural medicine be addressed (within and outside of medical education), current disparities may fall with more students choosing to practice in rural areas.

Physicians in Urban and Non-urban Areas of North Carolina



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