

## Key definitions

- **Persistent poverty:** Counties with more than 20% of the population living in poverty over the last 30 years
- **Convergence:** Economic convergence describes the phenomenon that poorer regions tend to catch up with wealthier ones over time in terms of economic growth. It suggests that economies that start at a lower level of development will experience faster growth rates compared to economies that are already advanced. The expansion of the production economy created “convergence” across U.S. regions in which poorer and less developed areas of the U.S. grew at a faster rate than more developed areas, closing the economic divide. This convergence helped build prosperous rural communities across the country where employment and wealth were generated through manufacturing, natural resource extraction, and agriculture. ([Center on Rural Innovation, "Automation," 2022](#))
- **Agglomeration:** Agglomeration effects emerge when workers and firms experience unique benefits when located in close proximity to one another. When agglomeration economies are in effect, businesses become more productive because they are able to share infrastructure and resources. As businesses in a region become more productive, the region attracts skilled workers seeking higher wages and broader employment opportunities. This increased access to talent, in turn, makes businesses more productive and spurs the creation of new firms (or relocation of existing firms), adding value to the economy. These dynamics can result in an evolving cycle of economic development. ([Center on Rural Innovation, "Automation," 2022](#))
- **Knowledge economy:** An economic system in which knowledge, skills, and intellectual property are the main sources of economic growth and competitiveness. It is characterized by a high level of investment in education, research and development, and the production of knowledge-intensive goods and services.
- **Tech economy:** An economic system in which technology-based industries are the primary drivers of growth and innovation. It is characterized by a strong focus on research and development, digitalization, and the adoption of new technologies.
- **Tech jobs:** Tech jobs are occupations directly involved in building and maintaining computer, automation, and information technologies. These jobs include software engineers, cybersecurity analysts, IT specialists, data scientists, and network engineers. These occupations are found both within tech companies – businesses primarily focused on building and selling technology – as well as in non-tech employers like manufacturers, hospitals, and government. ([Center on Rural Innovation, "Tech Employment Landscape," 2022](#))

- **Tradable services:** Tradable services can be sold to customers outside of the local economy, and these include banking, finance, consulting, tourism, and technology
- **Cycle of poverty** (aka poverty trap): The set of factors and circumstances that perpetuate poverty across generations, making it difficult for individuals and families to break free from economic hardship
- **Equity lens:** Approaching something with an equity lens involves analyzing and interpreting the content with a focus on promoting fairness, justice, and equal opportunities for all groups involved. This approach recognizes that systemic obstacles, biases, or imbalances may impact different groups in unique ways. By reading through an equity lens, the aim is to identify these disparities and their causes in order to achieve a more balanced understanding of the issue, and a better foundation upon which to build solutions that center justice and equity for all groups.
- **Digital divide:** The gap between individuals, households, businesses, or geographic areas in terms of their access to and use of information and communication technologies, particularly the internet.
- **Brain drain:** The net population loss of college-educated young people and prime-age workers from rural areas as financial and social pressures push them into larger labor markets, generally in more populated urban areas.
- **Tech startup ecosystem:** A network of organizations aligned around supporting innovation of tech startups by contributing resources and services. ([Center on Rural Innovation, "Tech Employment Landscape," 2022](#))