

**WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for September 12, 2022**  
**Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.**

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about finances in rural Appalachia (or "Appalatchia" – however you grew up saying it), and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Last week the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau released a report about Consumer Finances in Rural Appalachia. This report looks at the entire Appalachian region of the US encompassing 206,000 square miles spanning parts of 13 states- with the exception that the entire state of West Virginia is considered Appalachia. Of our 88 Ohio counties, 32 of them are Appalachian, including Coshocton County.

Across the nation, only 14 percent of the population lives in a rural area. This equates to 46 million of the total 330 million Americans. In Appalachia, that percentage is more than double with 33 percent of people living in a rural county.

There is a category of counties called "Persistent Poverty Counties," which means that over 20 percent of the population has lived below the poverty line for more than 30 years. Only three counties in Ohio that meet this definition including Athens, Meigs, and Vinton compared to almost all the Appalachian counties in eastern Kentucky.

People living in the Appalachian region have long faced financial challenges in comparison to other regions of the United States. This report sifted through some of the current statistics to examine the state of consumer finances in Appalachia. Some areas of interest include practices with different types of loans and medical debt collections and access to services.

Household incomes are much lower in Appalachia compared to the rest of the nation. In rural Appalachia, the annual median household income is about \$49,000, more than \$21,000 below the national median of \$70,000. According to the report, "This gap has increased in the last two decades. While the median rural Appalachian household income was 89 percent of the national median in 1999, it was only 69 percent of the national median in 2020."

As an educator, I found it fascinating that the graduation rates differ slightly between Appalachia and the rest of the country by 4 percentage points. And not in the direction you might expect. Nationwide the high school graduation rate is 86 percent, but in rural Appalachia it is 90 percent.

So, what does this look like for our finances in Appalachian Ohio? As I look through the numbers here are the ones that jump out at me.

Credit utilization is how much of your available credit you are using. Essentially this equates to keeping balances on credit cards or other revolving loans like a personal line of credit or home equity line of credit. When credit scores are determined, high credit utilization means a lower score.

Rural Appalachian Ohio has a higher credit card utilization rate at 35 percent compared to both Ohio as a whole and the nation at 31 percent. Pair that with a lower income to begin with, and this puts many individuals and families in tight financial situations.

There is also a higher percentage of people in rural Appalachian Ohio with medical debt collection (22 percent) compared to all of Ohio (19 percent) and the nation (17 percent).

The reason this information was studied by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was to help them ensure that the consumer finance market is fair, transparent, and competitive for rural Appalachians. You can learn more about their work and services like education and compliance resources at [consumerfinance.gov](http://consumerfinance.gov).

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

The final "Savoring Ohio Produce" webinar is next Tuesday, September 20 from 4-5 PM on Potatoes. Visit our website to register or watch recorded webinars anytime. The Coshocton County Fair is quickly approaching! We would love to have you attend the Tasting Smorgasbord on Tuesday, October 4 at 12:30 pm to try samples of tasty creations from our 4-H members. We also encourage you to bring cans of food when you attend to help with the Farm Credit "Stock the Traylor" competition that will benefit our local Salvation Army.

You can find details about future programs related to financial wellness, food safety, and more at our website [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu).

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu). Make it a healthy day!