Outmigration in rural Kansas: Outmigration is a migratory movement that frequently pulls young people from small rural communities to large metropolitan or regional cities. There are numerous social, environmental, and economic factors contributing to young adult outmigration.

Social: Rural place attachment – such as place dependence and place identity. Having weak social ties could influence outmigration.

Environmental: Climate change and decreased water availability. These factors make living in rural areas more difficult.

Economic: Entrepreneurship, industry growth, and education. Lack of these resources could push people to bigger areas with more opportunities.

Methods
This study investigates how, if at all, social, environmental, and economic factors influence and/or interact concerning young adults’ outmigration choices.

Qualitative Approach
- Survey of K-State college students from hometowns with less than 30,000 people.
- Survey comprised of open-ended questions relating to social, environmental, and economic factors.
- Results were analyzed using thematic analysis and qualitative description.
- Trustworthiness ensured with Krefting (1991) Rigor in Qualitative Research outline

Results
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Parent Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Family Life/Values Community</td>
<td>Rural Social Network</td>
<td>I love my hometown because I felt a sense of ownership and belonging. Within my school, church, and various groups, I get to know people and find out just how many people I am related to! Everyone knew everyone and was involved in my life. The rural community I was raised in does not represent my morals in any way. The people in my hometown, believe in last names rather than individually. What I mean by this, is that if one has a parent or grandparent, with good standing in the community, then they are automatically at a better advantage for everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>Community Impact</td>
<td>Community Opportunities</td>
<td>Presence of Personal and Professional Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic Impact</td>
<td>Environmental Water Farming Practice Ecological Issues</td>
<td>Perception of Resource Use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Parent codes and major themes were identified in each topic. The major themes represent the overarching findings from each topic, while parent codes allow for a more granular understanding of the findings. Respondents’ thought on each topic varied significantly, as shown in the included quotes.

Discussion & Conclusions
Overall themes that emerged from the survey were rural social networks, presence of personal and professional growth, and perception of resource use.

Social Networks: Split feelings of family, community, and rural life values, with some respondents having strong connections, while others did not.

Presence of Personal and Professional Growth: Despite respondents noting a lack of jobs, economic opportunities, and people in rural areas, these costs could be outweighed by lower costs of living and being close to family.

Perception of Resource Use: Some felt high concern for environmental issues pertaining to native ecosystems and agroecosystems, while others valued increased development as more important to their rural community, even if it was at the cost of the environment.

Limitations & Implications
Limitations
- No in-person surveys conducted.
- Limited survey audience – only studied K-State students, not other young adults.
- Researcher bias – conclusions are influenced by the ways in which researchers see the world.

Implications
- Communities can better understand the role of these social, environmental, and economic factors may have in young adult decisions to migrate out of their rural community.
- Community leaders, policymakers, and researchers can fine tune the ways in which they help their rural communities prosper.

References
- Colburn et al, NRES Capstone Project, Fall 2021