Rural enrollment in Medicare Advantage (MA) plans grew to nearly 1.5 million enrollees in September 2010 (15% of eligible Medicare beneficiaries), while national MA enrollment grew to over 11.5 million (25%).

The rural MA market is composed of 30% enrollment in preferred provider organization (PPO) plans (439,111 enrollees), 36% in private fee-for-service (PFFS) plans (530,458), 27% in health maintenance organization/point-of-service (HMO/POS) plans (396,958), and 7% in other prepaid plans (101,283).

The market share of PFFS plans in rural areas has shifted from 52% in December of 2009 to 36% in September 2010, while the market share held by PPO plans has risen from 17% to 30% of enrollment.

In nine states, over 20% of rural Medicare beneficiaries are enrolled in an MA plan: Hawaii (39.2%), Minnesota (38.3%), New York (24.1%), Ohio (24.6%), Oregon (24.3%), Pennsylvania (30.0%), Utah (24.6%), Wisconsin (29.0%), and West Virginia (20.9%).

Approximately 63% of rural MA enrollees (921,483 Medicare beneficiaries) reside in micropolitan counties.