



March 2025



The County Landscape Project:
Maps and Stats



Vision

Healthy, safe and vibrant counties across America.

Mission

Strengthen America's Counties.

About

The National Association of Counties (NACo) strengthens America's counties, serving nearly 38,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

- Advocate county priorities in federal policymaking
- Promote exemplary county policies and practices
- Nurture leadership skills and expand knowledge networks
- Optimize county and taxpayer resources and cost savings, and
- Enrich the public understanding of county government.

The County Landscape Project

Counties are vital to the foundation of our communities, helping shape the places where we live, work and thrive. From maintaining critical infrastructure and delivering essential public services to fostering economic growth and ensuring public safety, county governments play a pivotal role in the daily lives of millions of Americans. Notwithstanding our significance, the complexity and diversity of county governments often go unnoticed. The County Landscape Project brings the nuts and bolts of county governance to the forefront, providing a clear and comprehensive guide to how counties function, govern and serve our residents.

As NACo continues its commitment to strengthen America's counties, we recognize the need for a unified, accessible and authoritative resource that provides a comprehensive guide to our nation's county government system. By developing key insights, data and best practices under a single, cohesive project, we aim to enhance the way county officials, policymakers, federal and philanthropic partners and the public engage with and utilize these valuable resources.

Whether examining the **organizational structures, financial frameworks, essential services or intergovernmental roles of counties**, the project serves as a critical reference for understanding county government at its core.

This initiative reflects NACo's dedication to providing clarity in county governance, empowering leaders with actionable insights and fostering collaboration across all levels of government. Whether you are an elected official shaping policy, a researcher exploring county data or a resident seeking to understand the impact of local government, these resources serve as a guide to the essential functions of counties nationwide.

As we move forward, we invite you to explore, engage and utilize the resources from the Project in your work. Counties are the backbone of our nation's governance, and together, we can ensure that our impact is recognized, strengthened and sustained for generations to come.

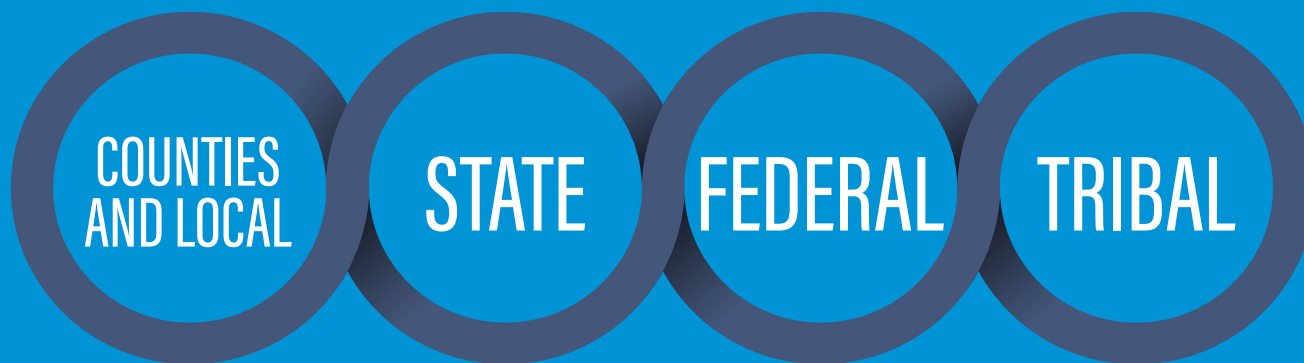


Matthew D. Chase
CEO/Executive Director

Counties Are Vital to Our Nation's Intergovernmental System

County governments, led by our elected and appointed officials, are instrumental partners in our nation's **intergovernmental system**, which balances, divides and shares power and responsibilities between all levels of government.

Counties are uniquely positioned to implement and administer vital intergovernmental systems, facilitate cooperation of all levels of government, and deliver results and impact for our residents and businesses at the community level.



Annually, counties invest nearly

\$743
billion

in our communities

America's counties employ over

3.6
million

public servants, representing one out of every 50 American workers

* The 3,069 county governments include all counties, parishes in Louisiana and boroughs in Alaska.

Table of Contents

.....

County Governance and Management

- 05** County Authority
- 06** County Government Structure
- 07** County Workforce

Federal to County Nexus

- 09** Direct Transfers to State and Local Governments
- 10** Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- 11** Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)
- 12** Secure Rural Schools (SRS)
- 13** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- 14** Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- 15** Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
- 16** Medicaid

The Day to Day

- 18** Municipal Bonds
- 19** Broadband Access
- 20** Airports and Seaports
- 21** Roads
- 22** Bridges

Keep America Healthy

- 24** County Investments in Health and Human Services
- 25** Local Health Departments
- 26** Behavioral and Mental Health

Stronger Local Economies

- 28** Demographic Makeup of America's Counties
- 29** Local Workforce
- 30** Economic Output
- 31** Education and Workforce Development

Foster Safe and Vibrant Communities

- 33** Housing and Community Development
- 34** Justice and Public Safety
- 35** Disaster Management and Response

Support Our Nation's Veterans

- 37** Veterans Medical Benefits
- 38** Veterans Demographics

America's Counties

Our 3,069 county, parish and borough governments are on the front lines of delivering vital public services to over 300 million residents across the nation. Our locally elected officials operate under different levels of county authority outlined under state law or local charters, which provide counties with structural, functional and fiscal powers.



County Governance and Management

Assess and collect taxes, including those for other public entities such as public schools, municipalities and special purpose districts

Administer elections through the funding and management of over **100,000 polling places** staffed with over **630,000 certified poll workers** each election cycle

Employ one in every 50 American workers to help provide essential community services and facilities, such as parks and recreation, public libraries, public safety, emergency management, and community and economic development



Federal to County Nexus

Provide mandated **healthcare for low-income, uninsured or indigent residents** in a majority of states

Manage more than \$603 million in federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes funds within 1,723 public lands counties, which are critical to services, such as law enforcement, fire protection, and search and rescue

Invest nearly \$272.6 million in federal Secure Rural Schools funding, critical to counties and schools impacted by the decline in federal revenue sharing from timber harvests on federal public lands



The Day to Day

Own and maintain **44 percent of public road miles** and **38 percent of bridges** which help keep residents physically connected

Invest more than \$146 billion in building, maintaining and operating public facilities, such as courthouses, jails, dams and reservoirs, water purification systems, libraries, ports and sewage treatment facilities

Own or support operations of **more than one-third of public airports** and **40 percent of public transportation systems**



Keep America Healthy

Manage and govern **more than 1,900 local public health departments and authorities** which support the health and safety of our residents

Employ **over 533,000 hospital and healthcare workers** and own or support **more than 900 public hospitals** that provide inpatient medical and specialized care critical for low income and uninsured individuals

Operate more than **700 long-term care facilities** and more than **750 behavioral health authorities**



Stronger Local Economies

Employ over 3.6 million public servants who help provide essential services to over 300 million residents, collectively making county governments one of the largest employers in the nation

Invest \$17.7 billion annually in the construction, operation and support of housing and redevelopment projects, and are key players in community planning, land use, zoning, and enacting policies and other regulations that expand housing access and affordability

Implement local policies and intergovernmental initiatives that foster economic development, promote residential, commercial and industrial development, and support job creation and business retention



Foster Safe and Vibrant Communities

Invest more than \$124 billion annually in justice and public safety, **operate 91 percent of local jails**, which processed 7.6 million admissions in 2023

Provide essential first responder services through sheriffs, police departments, constables, 911 operations, firefighters and EMT/EMS professionals

Engage in all aspects and phases of emergency management such as: planning, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. As the regularity and costs of disasters increase, counties are working hard to protect our residents, property, infrastructure systems and local economies



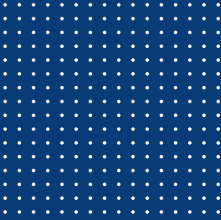
Support Our Nation's Veterans

Fund and operate, almost exclusively through local tax revenues, County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) **in 29 states and the District of Columbia**

CVSOs **help veterans claim more than \$52 billion in federal VA benefits** each year

Are home to more than 16 million veterans, comprising seven percent of residents living in our counties

County Governance and Management





County Government
Structure and Authority



County Government
Administration



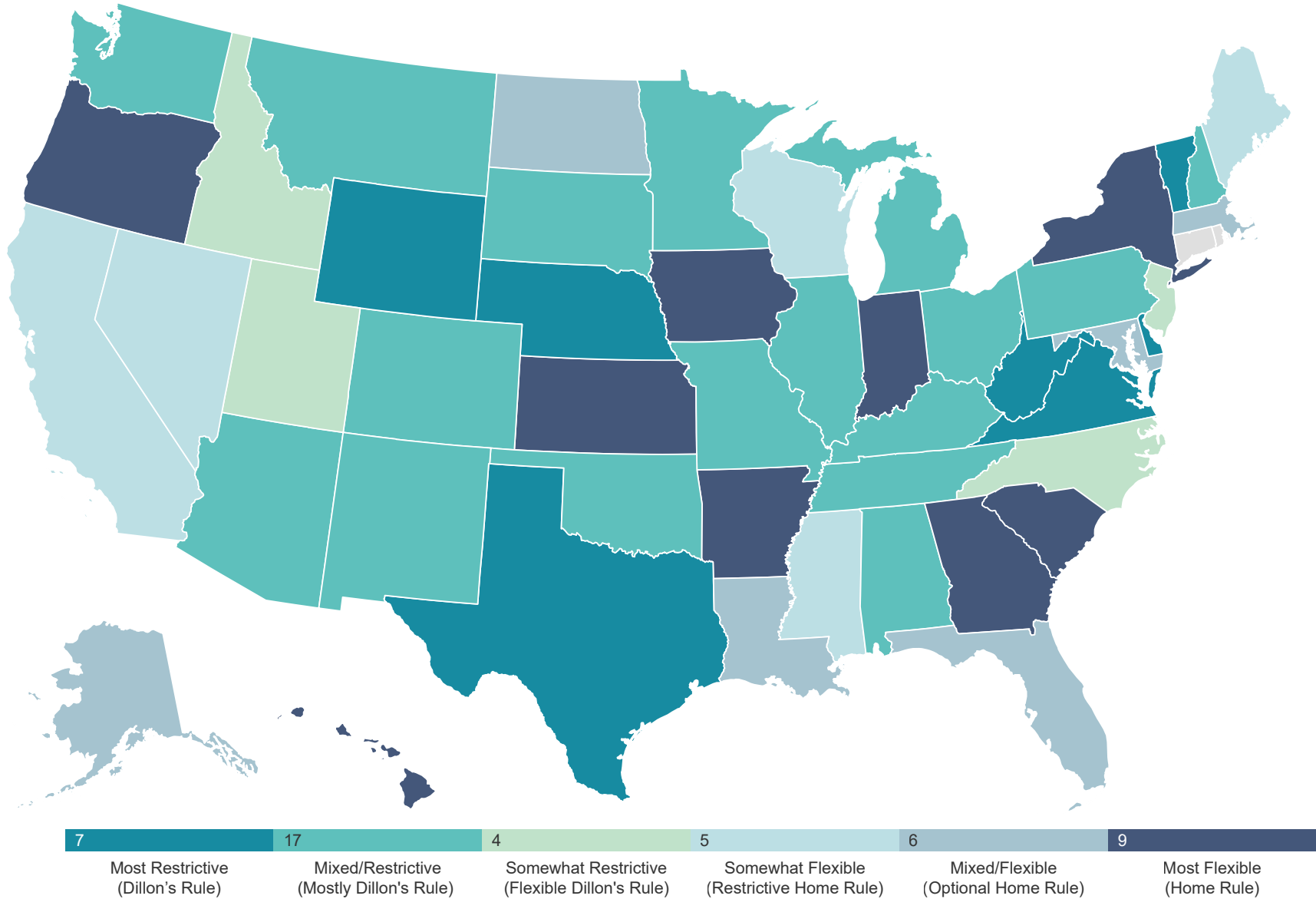
County Government
Services



County Government
Workforce

County Authority Level

.....



The level of authority given to counties under state law to determine local affairs and government operations. County authority levels provide the basis for how counties are structured, what services we provide, how we raise revenue and allocate finances and any flexibilities available within these categories. Under Dillon's Rule authority, counties operate only within areas defined and allowed by state constitution and statute. Under Home Rule authority, counties have the authority to legislate independently from state statute. Source: NACo Research, 2023.

Thirty-one (31) states, representing 58 percent of county governments, grant counties the option to operate under Home Rule, providing greater flexibility than the alternative Dillon’s Rule. While working within these systems, counties provide critical services to our communities, covering many areas, including public health, infrastructure, emergency response and economic development.

44 STATES

in which counties **have authority over zoning***

43 STATES

in which counties **have the authority to establish special districts**

39 STATES

in which counties **have the authority to call a local state of emergency**

46 STATES

in which counties **may or shall play a role in emergency management**

43 STATES

in which counties **may levy property taxes**

* For some counties this authority only extends over unincorporated areas

County government authority is essential in determining how quickly and effectively counties can respond to the needs of our residents.

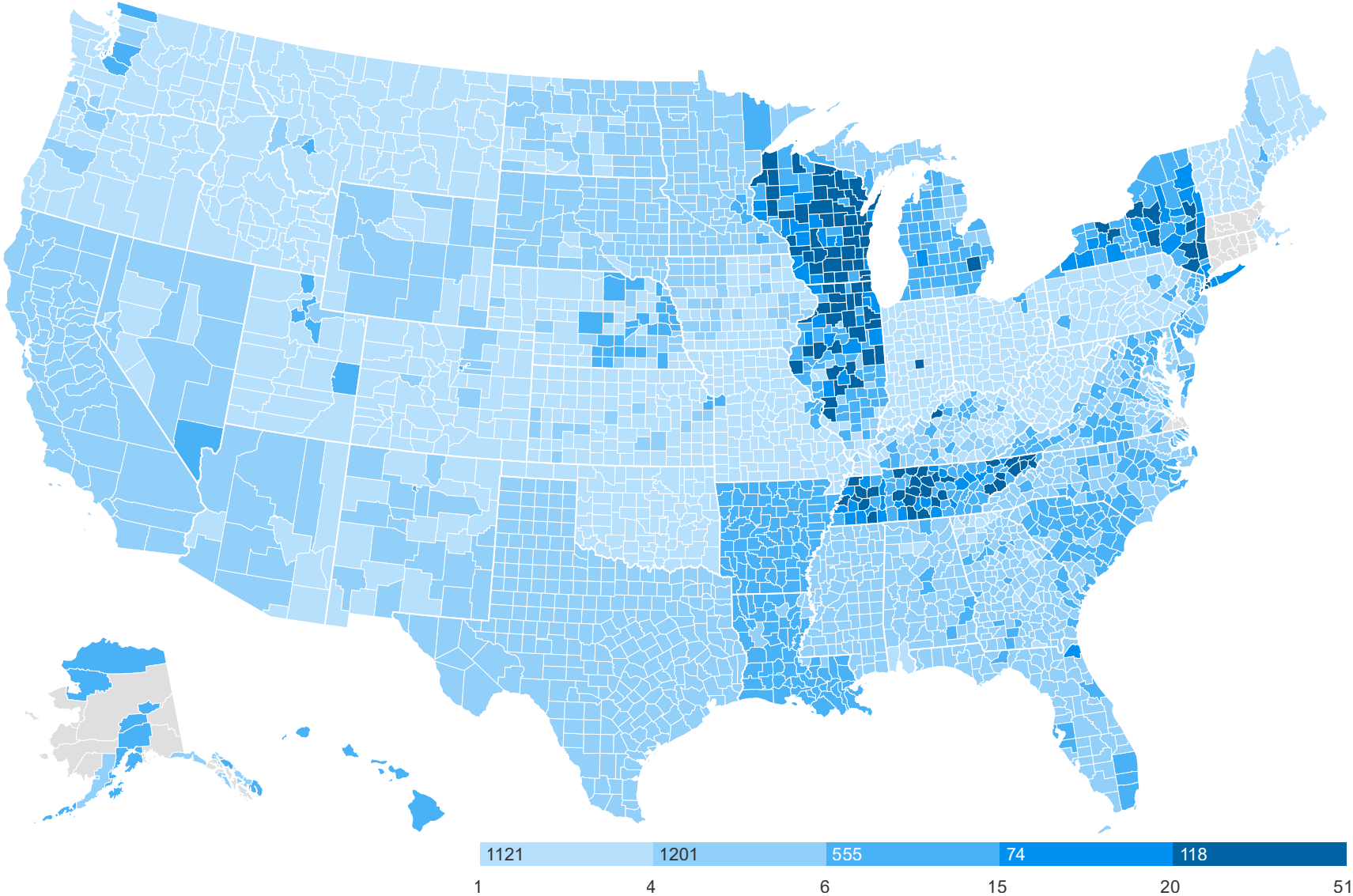
Counties derive authority from the state, typically under state constitutions and statutes.

On the ground, county authority varies significantly across the states. Twenty states, including Washington and North Dakota, have a mix of Dillon’s/Home Rule counties, while others, such as Utah and North Carolina, instruct the courts to rule favorably toward counties, greatly expanding county flexibility.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS OPERATE WITHIN STATE-DERIVED AUTHORITY TO SERVE, GOVERN AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

County Government Structure: Size of the Legislative Body

.....



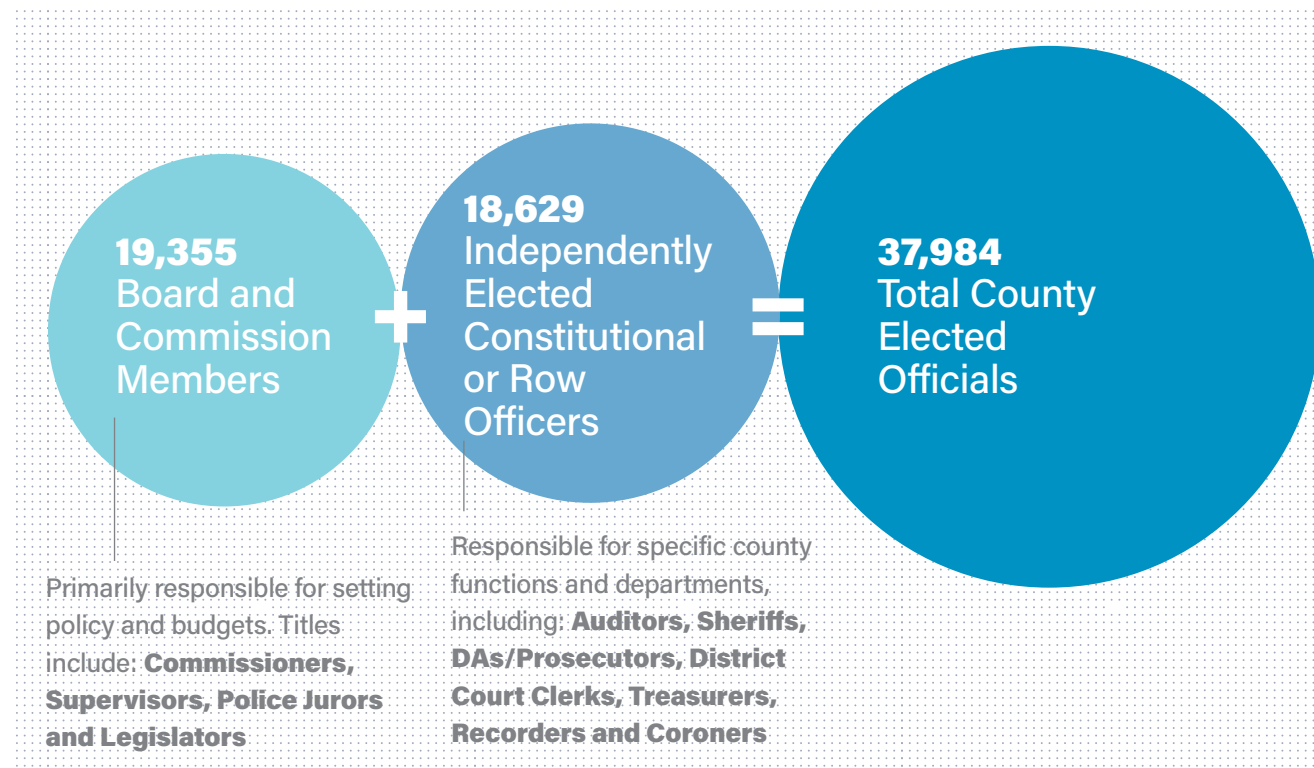
Number of representatives elected to a county governing board.

Source: NACo Research, 2017.

County Leadership

Counties provide vital services across America, including those mandated by federal and state policies and those requested by our communities. Counties build and maintain parks, community centers, libraries and recreational hubs. Counties are responsible for managing elections, from presidential to local. While balancing numerous administrative responsibilities, counties deliver essential services to ensure healthy, vibrant and safe communities.

County Elected Leadership Consist of:



Core Services

Public administration - records, elections and permits

Justice and public safety

Transportation and infrastructure

Health and human services

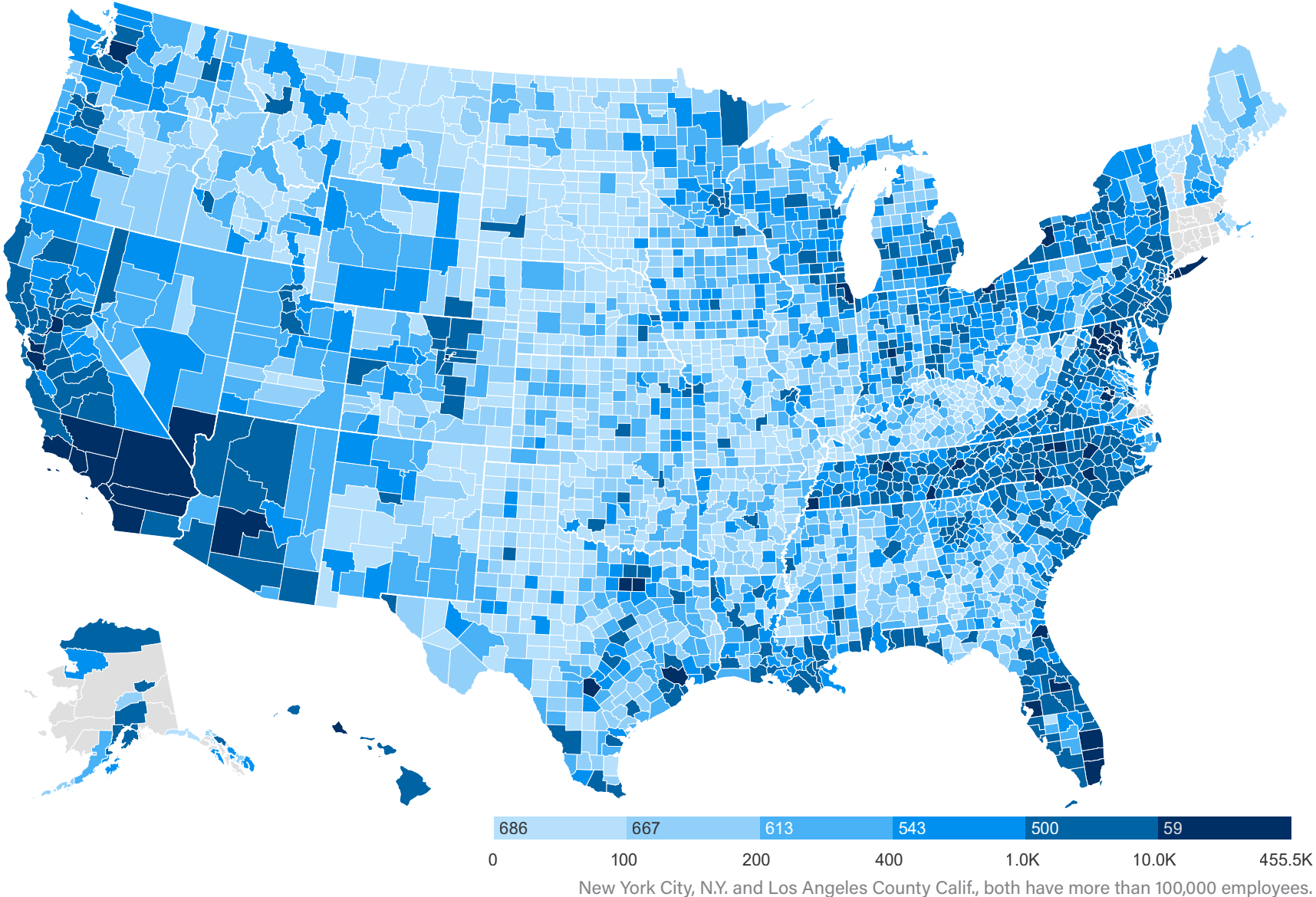
Community, economic and workforce readiness

Environmental planning and stewardship

**COUNTY GOVERNMENTS
SHAPE LOCAL POLICY
AND BUDGETS TO MEET
THE NEEDS OF OUR
COMMUNITIES**

Total County Government Employment

.....



The number of full-time and part-time employees working for the county.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Individual Governments: Employment 2022.

Counties Employ Over 3.6 Million
Public Servants, Including:

382,000



LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

325,000



HOSPITAL WORKERS

248,000



HUMAN SERVICES WORKERS

207,000



PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS

101,000



FIRE PROTECTION WORKERS

County governments are critical to the nation's workforce, **employing one in every 50 American workers.**



The county workforce is indispensable to the nation as we contribute to the stability and growth of local economies, facilitate employment opportunities, shape workforce policies, and play a crucial role in crisis response. Our dedicated contributions are vital for cultivating prosperous communities and safeguarding the well-being of the nation as a whole.

COUNTIES ARE DEEPLY ENGAGED IN THE
LABOR MARKET, EMPLOYING OVER

**3.6
MILLION**

PUBLIC SERVANTS, REPRESENTING ONE
OUT OF EVERY 50 AMERICAN WORKERS

Federal to County Nexus





In FY 2024, over 200 counties utilized more than **\$937 million** in direct CDBG funding to support housing, infrastructure, economic development and public services



In 2021, residents living in the ten county-administered SNAP states received more than **\$50 billion** in funding



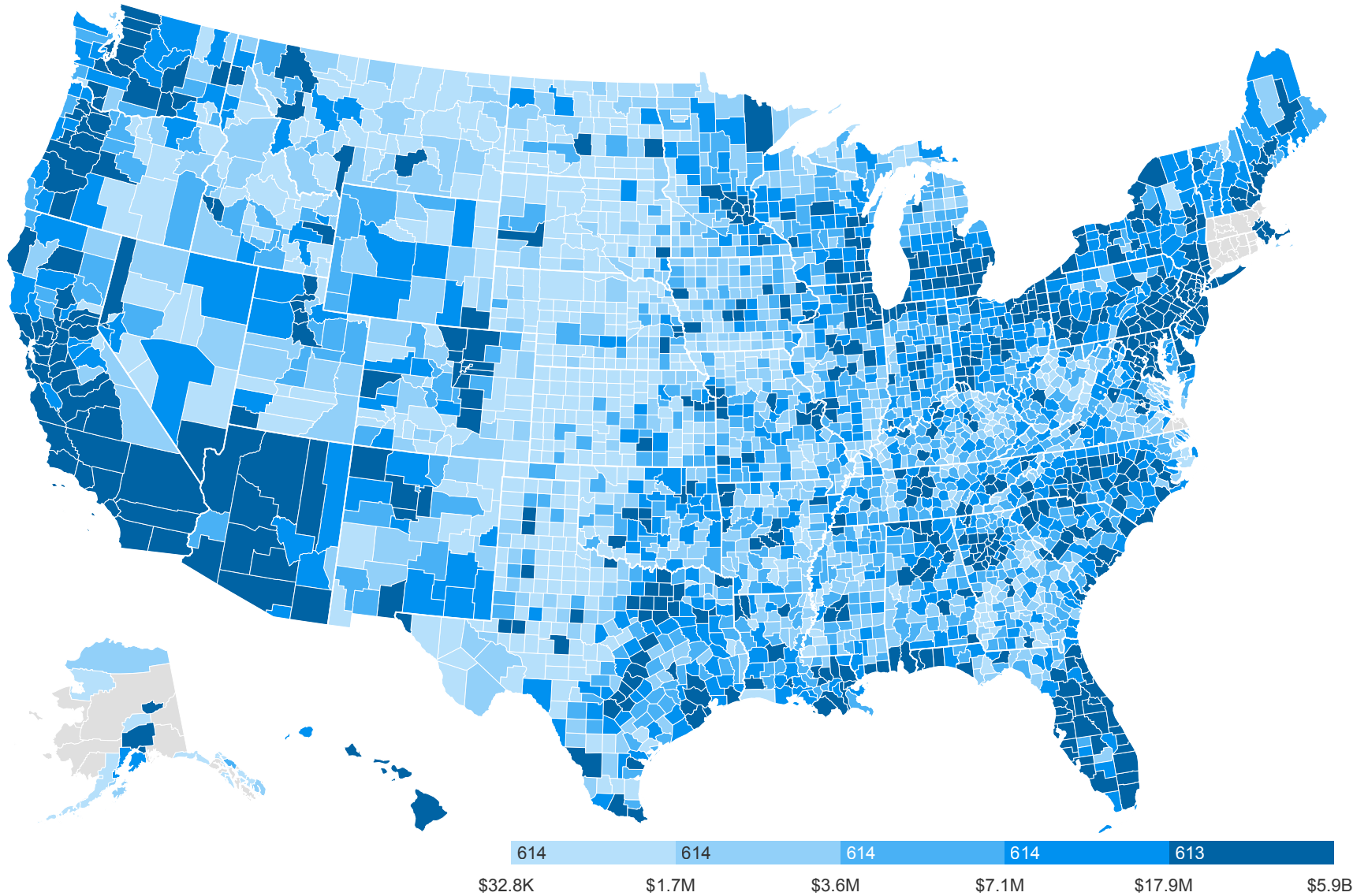
In FY 2024, county governments manage more than **\$603 million** in federal Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding



In FY 2023, more than 700 counties leveraged nearly **\$272.6 million** in federal SRS funding

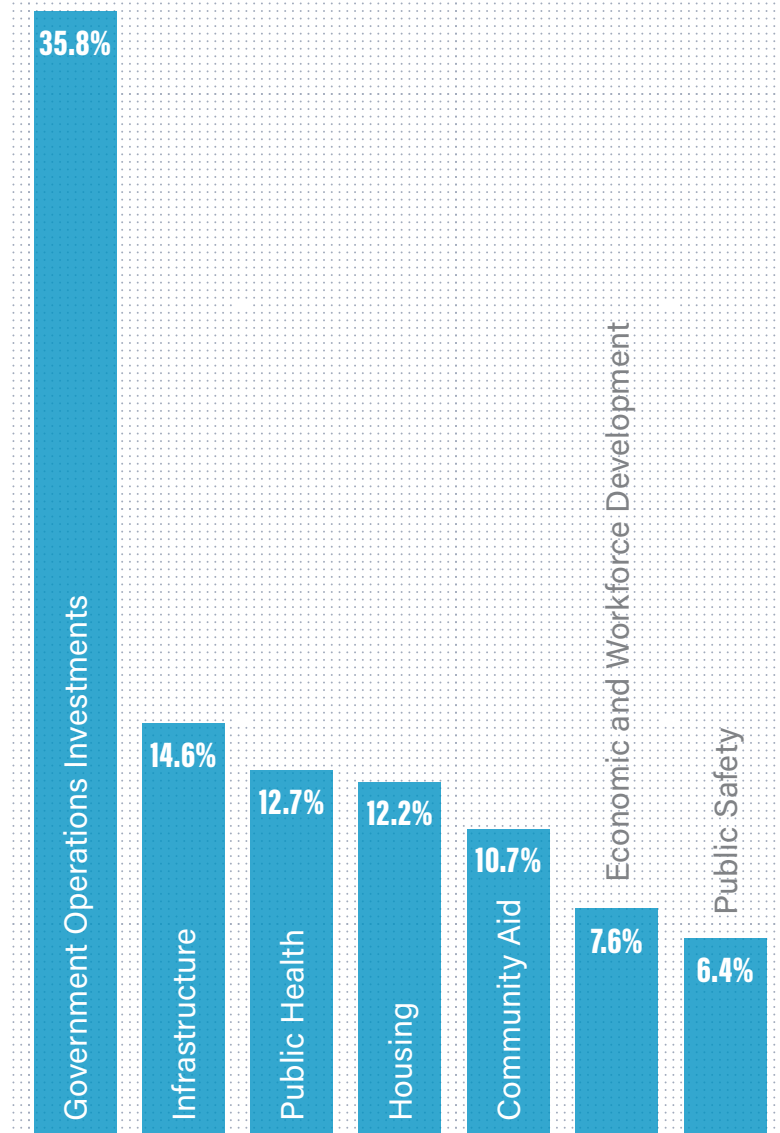
Direct Transfers of the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) County Allocation

.....



Allocation to be paid directly to counties by the U.S. Treasury as part of the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), a part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Note: County allocation includes consolidated funds. Source: U.S. Department of Treasury, 2022.

Share of County-Invested Dollars, By Project Type



The graph represents the breakdown of obligated funds allocated by counties with populations over 250,000. Obligated values indicate the total amount available to spend for each investment area.

Direct federal-to-local transfers empower counties to drive community and economic development, ensuring every dollar stays closer to the people it serves.

Counties effectively invest these funds in:



Community Health



Educational & Vocational Programs



Workforce Training



Infrastructure Upgrades



Broadband Deployment



Justice & Public Safety



Emergency Response



Economic Development

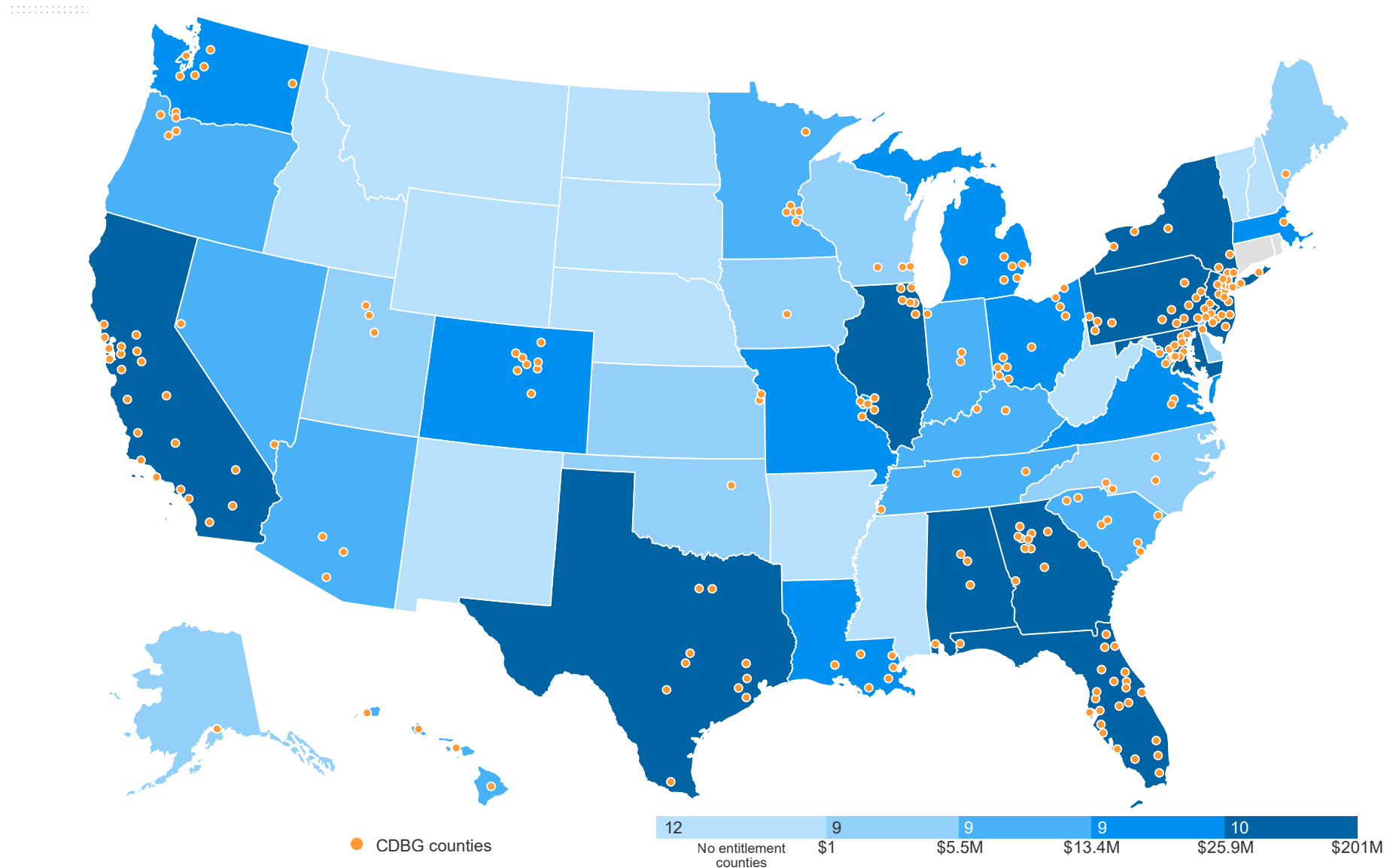
COUNTIES HAVE INVESTED

\$65.1 BILLION

OF DIRECT FEDERAL-TO-LOCAL FUNDS TO **STRENGTHEN OUR U.S. INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM AND GROW OUR LOCAL ECONOMIES**

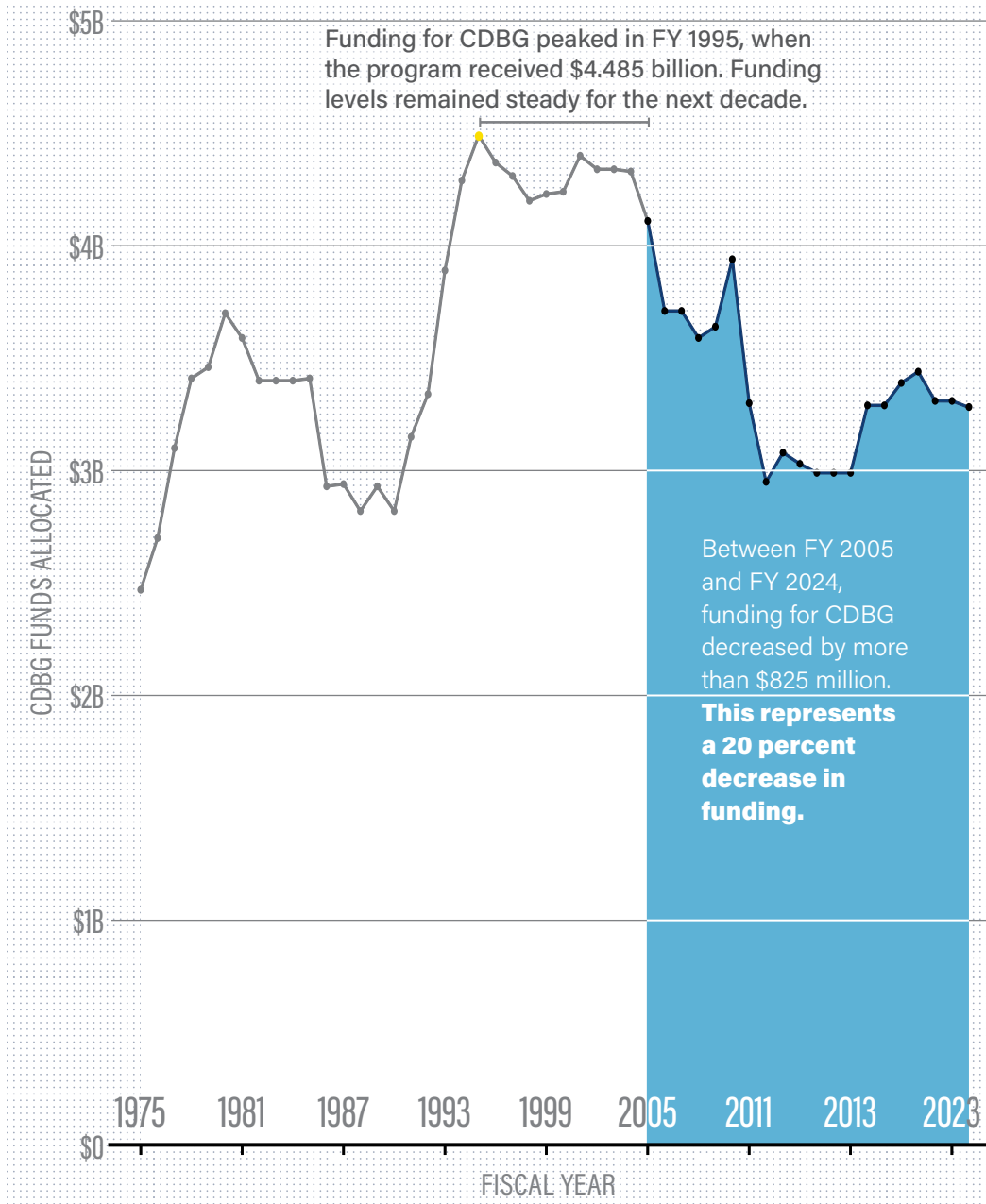
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Direct Funding to Communities by State



Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding received directly by entitlement counties in FY 2024. Entitlement counties are urban counties with populations of at least 200,000 (excluding the population of entitled cities). Non-entitlement counties may apply for CDBG funding through the state portion of the program. Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY 2024 data.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Allocations by Fiscal Year 1975-2024



There are more than **200 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** entitlement counties across the nation.



COUNTIES ADMINISTER AND IMPLEMENT CDBG FUNDING

to provide affordable housing for renters or homeowners or provide direct rental assistance to low-income households.



CDBG FUNDING IS ALSO USED TO PARTNER WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

to address economic development, water, infrastructure and human services, and to strengthen the U.S. workforce.

COUNTIES INVEST CDBG FUNDING TO FOSTER SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

THROUGH ADDRESSING LOCAL HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

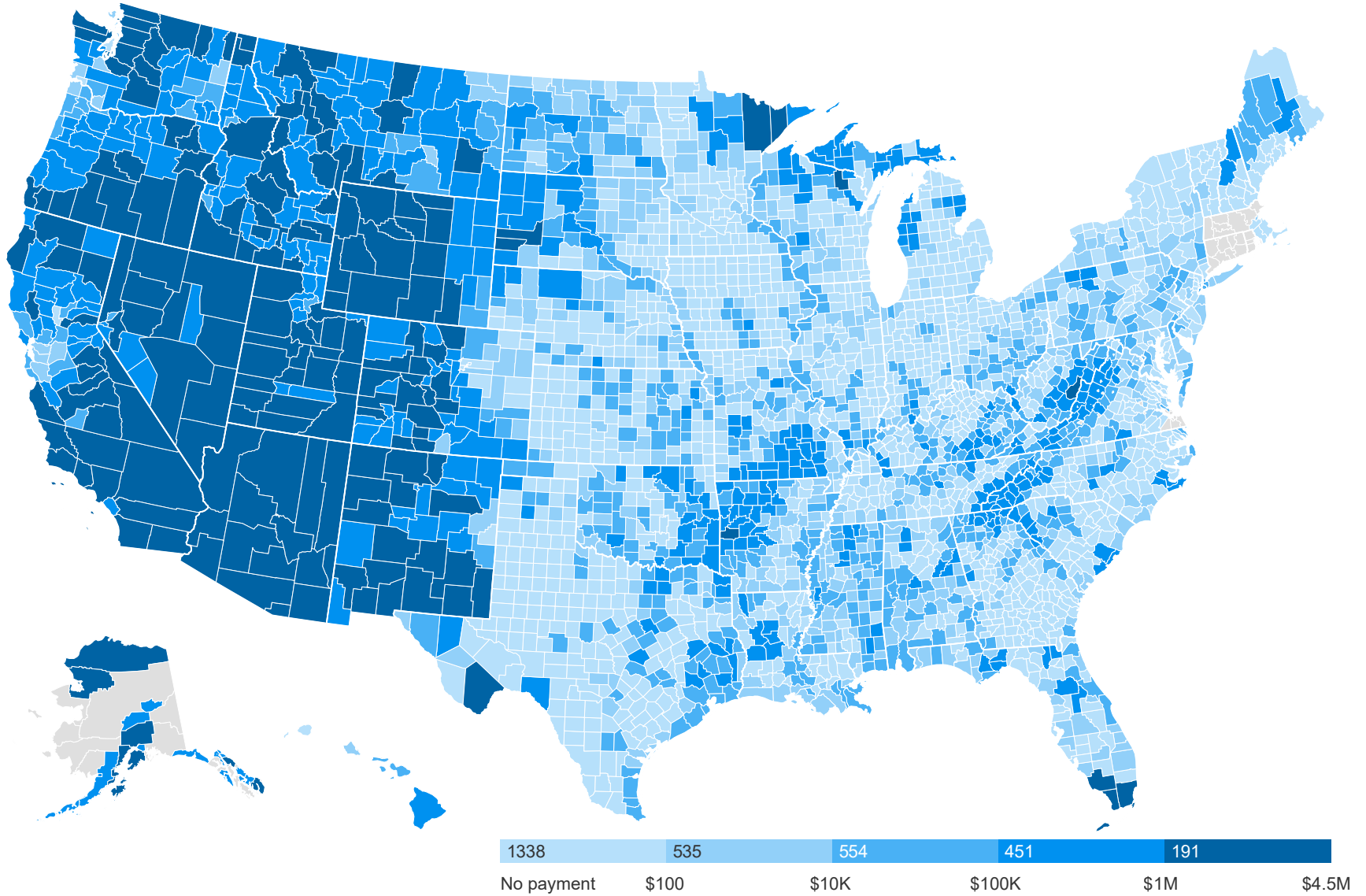
Counties are crucial to the investment of more than

\$937 million

in direct CDBG funding in FY 2024.

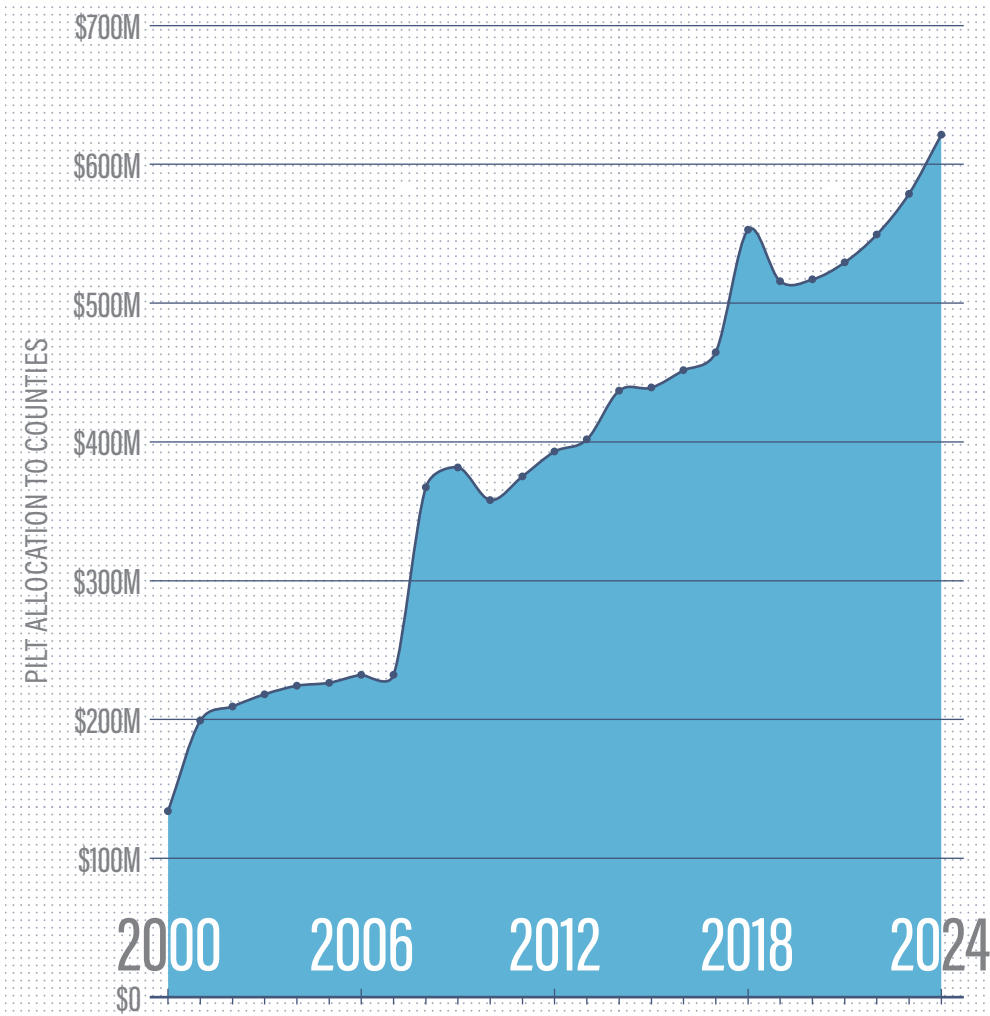
Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT): Transfers to Counties

.....



Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) transfers to county governments based on the presence of certain federal public lands within our boundaries in FY 2024. Source: U.S. Department of the Interior.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Transfers by Fiscal Year 2000-2024



Counties manage more than
\$603 MILLION
 in PILT funding in FY 2024.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT) IS A DIRECT FEDERAL TRANSFER TO COUNTIES TO OFFSET REVENUE LOSSES SINCE COUNTIES CANNOT COLLECT CRITICAL PROPERTY TAXES ON FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS

62%

percent of America's counties have federal public land within our boundaries; the federal government owns roughly 640 million acres (or 28 percent) of land in the U.S.

As federal public land is not taxable by local governments, public land counties incur substantial annual losses in property tax revenue.

Though counties cannot collect property taxes on federal public land, we still provide essential services to residents and those who visit these public lands. In 2022 alone, over 311 million people visited national parks.

Counties provide road and bridge maintenance, law enforcement, search and rescue, emergency medical, emergency management, fire protection, solid waste disposal and environmental compliance on these lands.

THE PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT) IS CRITICAL FOR COUNTY SERVICES INCLUDING:



Road and Bridge Maintenance



Law Enforcement



Emergency Management



Search and Rescue



Emergency Medical



Fire Protection



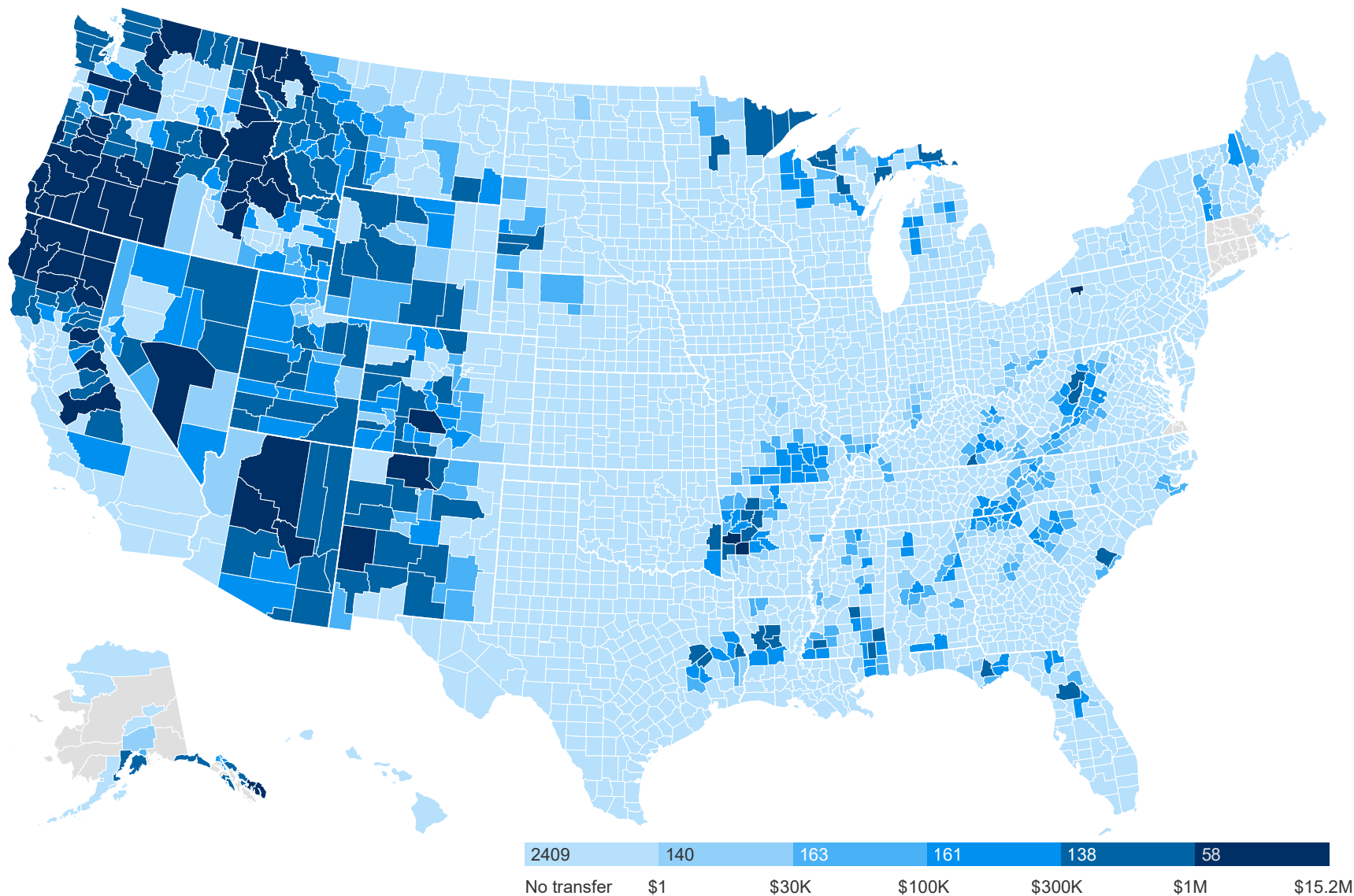
Solid Waste Disposal



Environmental Compliance

Secure Rural Schools (SRS): Transfers to Counties

.....



Total funding received by counties through the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program based on receipts from timber harvests on federal lands.

Source: U.S. Forest Service data and Bureau of Land Management, FY 2023 receipts year.

U.S. Counties and Secure Rural Schools (SRS)

SRS PAYMENT, **FY 2023 RECEIPTS YEAR**

\$272.6M

PROJECTED 25% FUND PAYMENT, **FY 2017 RECEIPTS YEAR**

FY 2017 numbers have been adjusted to reflect 2023 inflation rates.

\$99.4M

PROJECTED 25% PAYMENT VS SRS PAYMENT

-63.5%

PERCENT OF COUNTIES WITH U.S. FOREST SERVICE LAND

24%

The projected 25% payments for FY 2017 have been adjusted for inflation. This was the last year when projected payments were released.

SRS is critical to local communities, providing funding to counties and schools impacted by the diminished revenue from timber harvests on federal lands.



Rural communities and schools rely on a share of receipts from timber harvests to supplement local funding for education services and roads.

National policies implemented in the 1980s substantially diminished the revenue-generating activity permitted in forests, resulting in a steep decline in county and school revenues from federal timber sales.

In response to this decline, SRS was enacted to stabilize payments to counties and schools and compensate for lost revenues.

Over **700 rural counties, parishes and boroughs** receive funding from the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program.

In total, counties received nearly **\$272.6 million** in funding through the SRS program in FY 2023. SRS was reauthorized on November 15, 2021, for FYs 2021 through 2023.

Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Funding Supports:



Transportation Infrastructure



Schools



Forest Management



Ecosystem Protection



Emergency Services



Protection from Wildfire

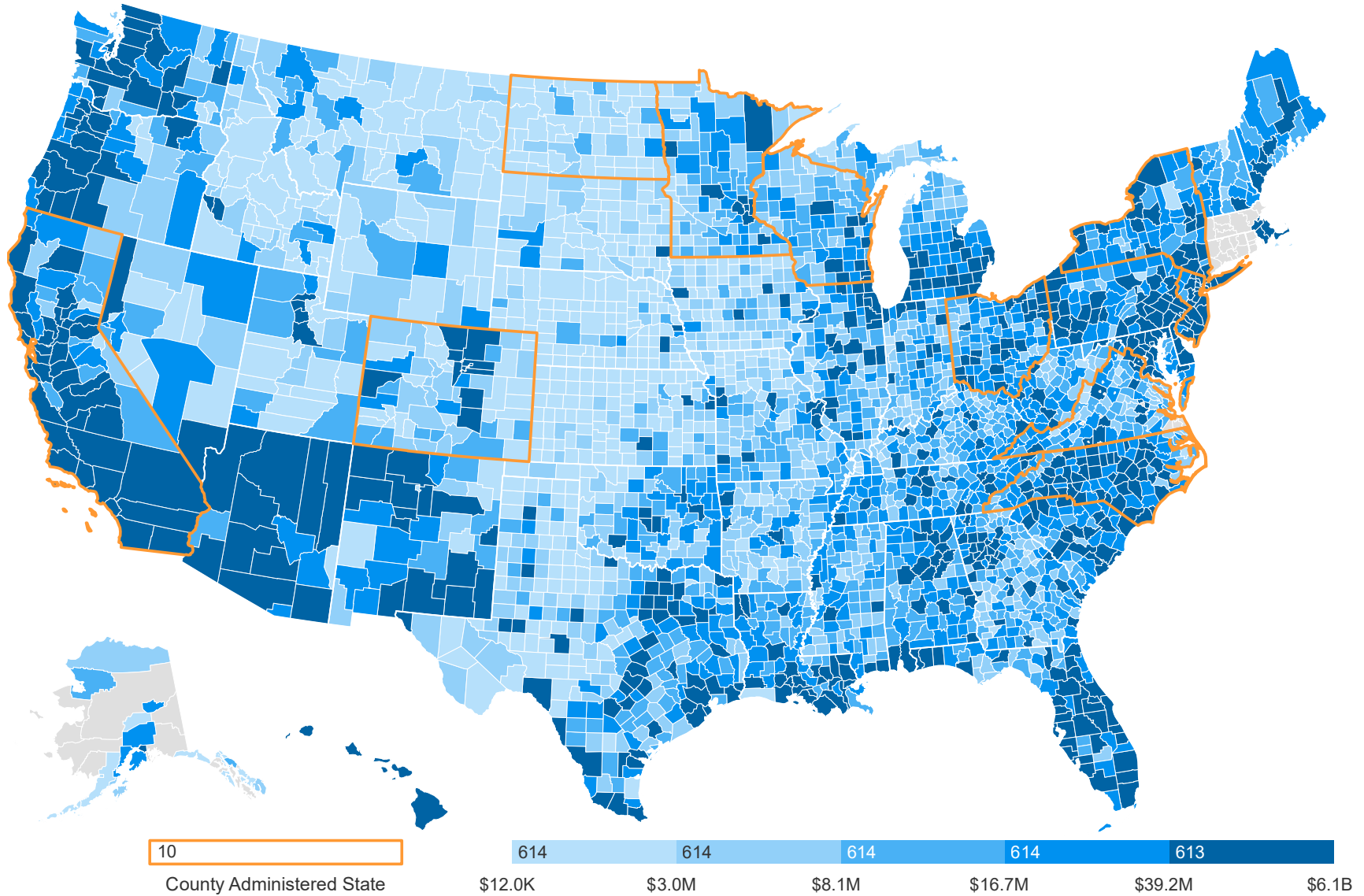


Search and Rescue

COUNTIES LEVERAGE CRITICAL SRS FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS, ROADS AND OTHER LOCAL SERVICES

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits

.....



Benefits issued to qualifying low-income individuals to supplement their ability to purchase food. Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Personal Current Transfer Receipts Data, 2021.

Counties are an integral part of the federal-state-local partnership in service delivery. Across the nation, counties administer federal resources and funds to combat food insecurity.

Whether a federal program is state or county-administered varies by program and state.

In the ten county-administered states covering one-third of SNAP recipients, states generally offer significant authority and much-needed flexibility to county administrative offices.

Because of the flexibility granted within SNAP, county administration varies from state to state. Ten states delegate SNAP administration to county agencies.

Although counties are granted significant authority and flexibility, we must still comply with certain federal and state mandates (such as who is eligible for SNAP and the amount of benefits and services a family can receive), which creates a complex implementation system.

MORE THAN

41 MILLION

LOW-INCOME AMERICANS RECEIVED ASSISTANCE FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) IN FY 2021

In county-administered states, county administrative offices are generally granted significant authority and much-needed flexibility over program implementation. Counties in these states contribute significant local funds for the administrative and supplemental costs and cover **32 percent** of our nation's SNAP recipients.

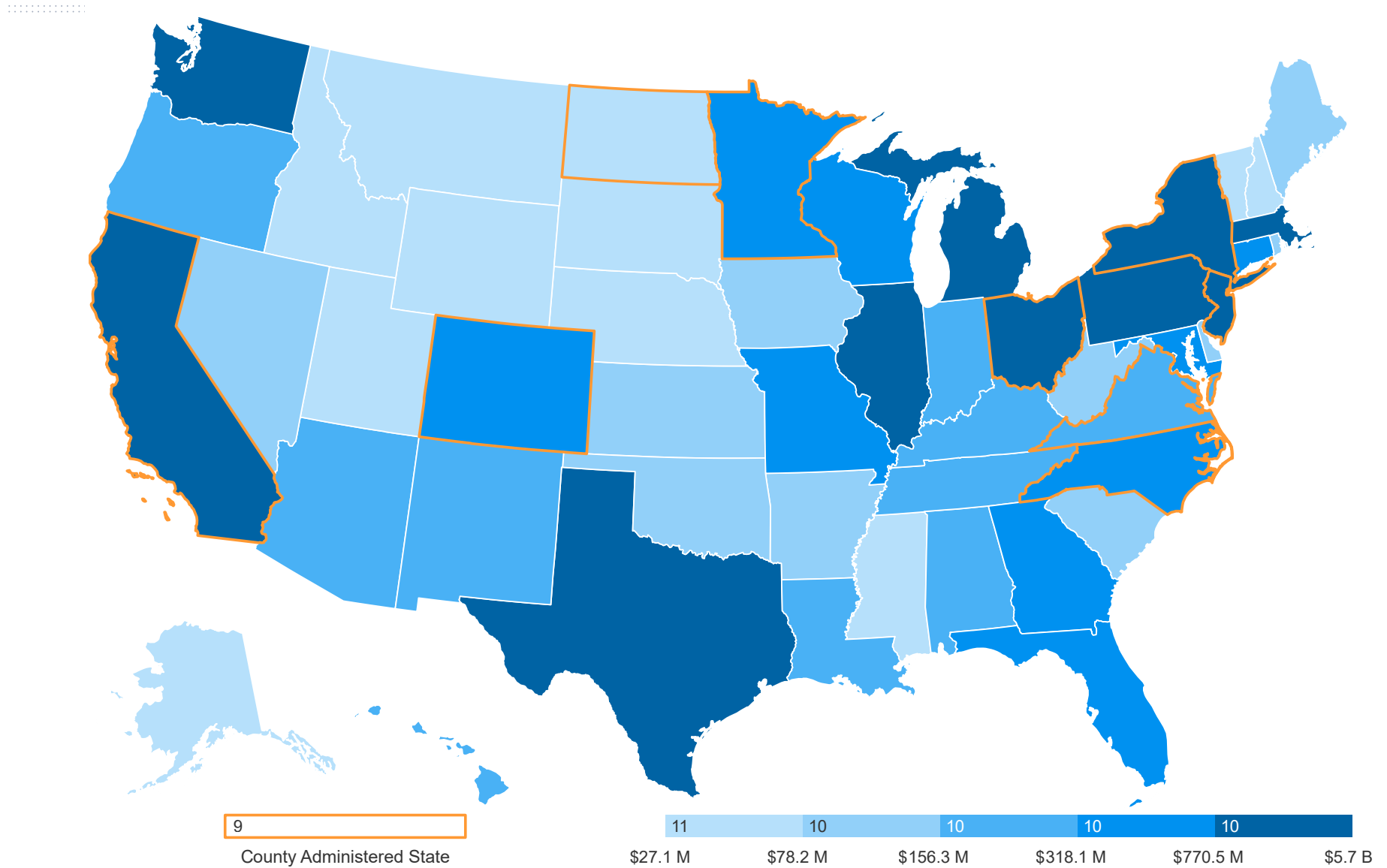
Each year, counties invest **\$62.8 billion** in safety net services, including SNAP, for millions of residents, providing critical support for moving individuals, children and families out of poverty and improving immediate and long-term health and wellbeing.

SNAP is a federal public assistance program offering nutrition support to eligible low-income individuals and families. Although SNAP is primarily a partnership between the federal government and states, **ten states delegate SNAP administration to county agencies.** *

*States with county-administered SNAP programs include California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin .

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

State, Local and Federal Expenditures



Total Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) federal expenditures plus state and local “maintenance of effort” (MOE) contributions.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 2021 data.

National TANF expenditures cover a range of programs, including **basic assistance, childcare, work-related support and refundable tax credits.**

Breakdown of National TANF Expenditures - 2021

National TANF Expenditures **\$30 billion**[†]

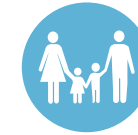


THE FLEXIBILITY OF TANF IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO COUNTIES AND OUR RESIDENTS because counties may allocate the funds to critical underfunded programs and services.

The TANF Program is a federal entitlement program providing resources for a wide range of services that address the root causes of poverty.*

*States with county-administered TANF programs include California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio and Virginia.

† The \$30 billion national TANF expenditures include transfers to Child Care and Development Fund and Social Services Block Grant



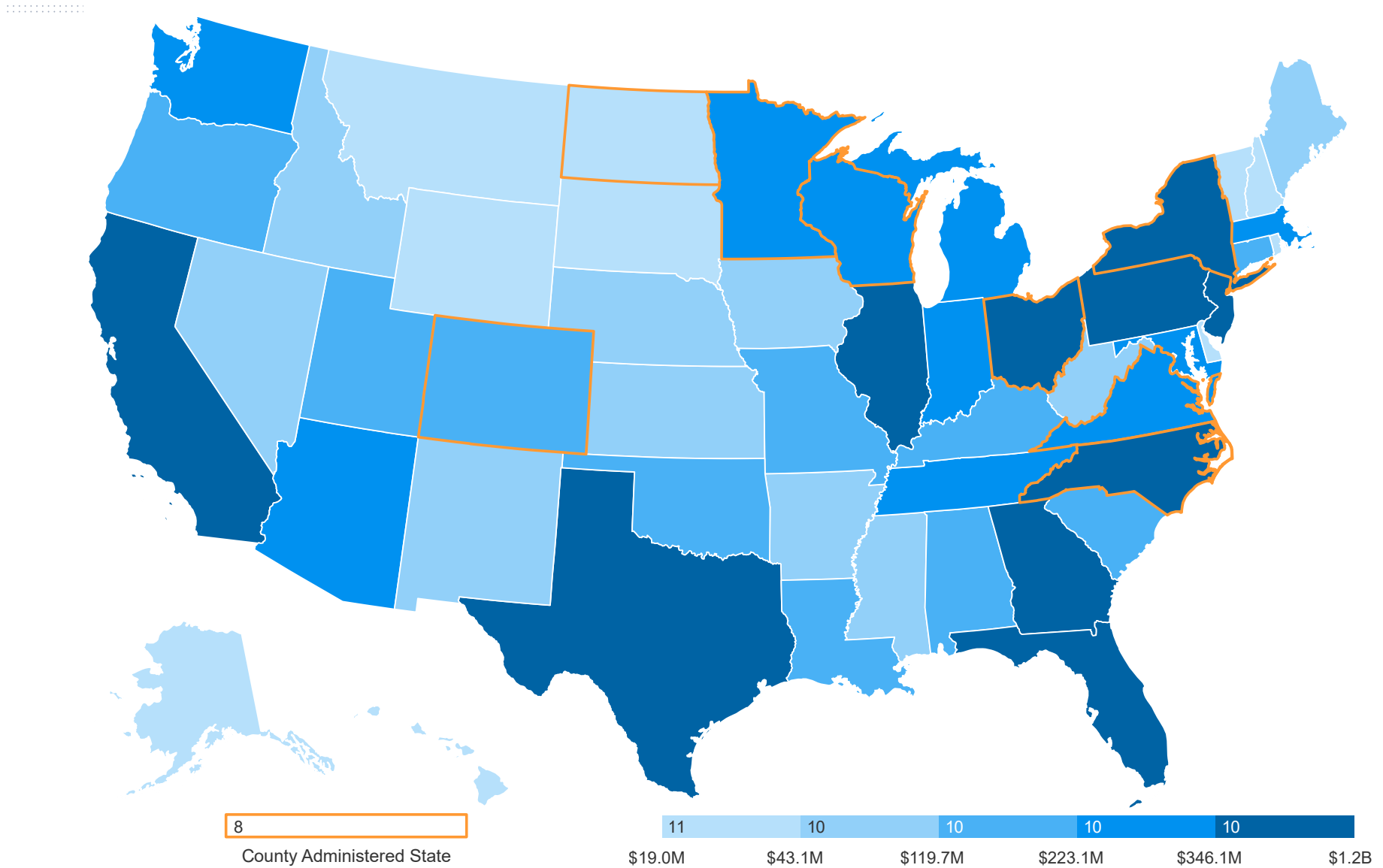
Counties' contributions and involvement in the TANF program varies from county to county.

UNDER TANF, COUNTIES MAY ALSO TRANSFER FUNDS TO OTHER PROGRAMS PROVIDING VITAL SERVICES FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES.

IN NINE STATES, COUNTIES ARE THE PRIMARY ADMINISTRATORS OF THE TANF PROGRAM. THESE COUNTY-ADMINISTERED STATES ACCOUNTED FOR 54 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL CASELOAD AND 53 PERCENT OF FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL TANF EXPENDITURES IN FY2021

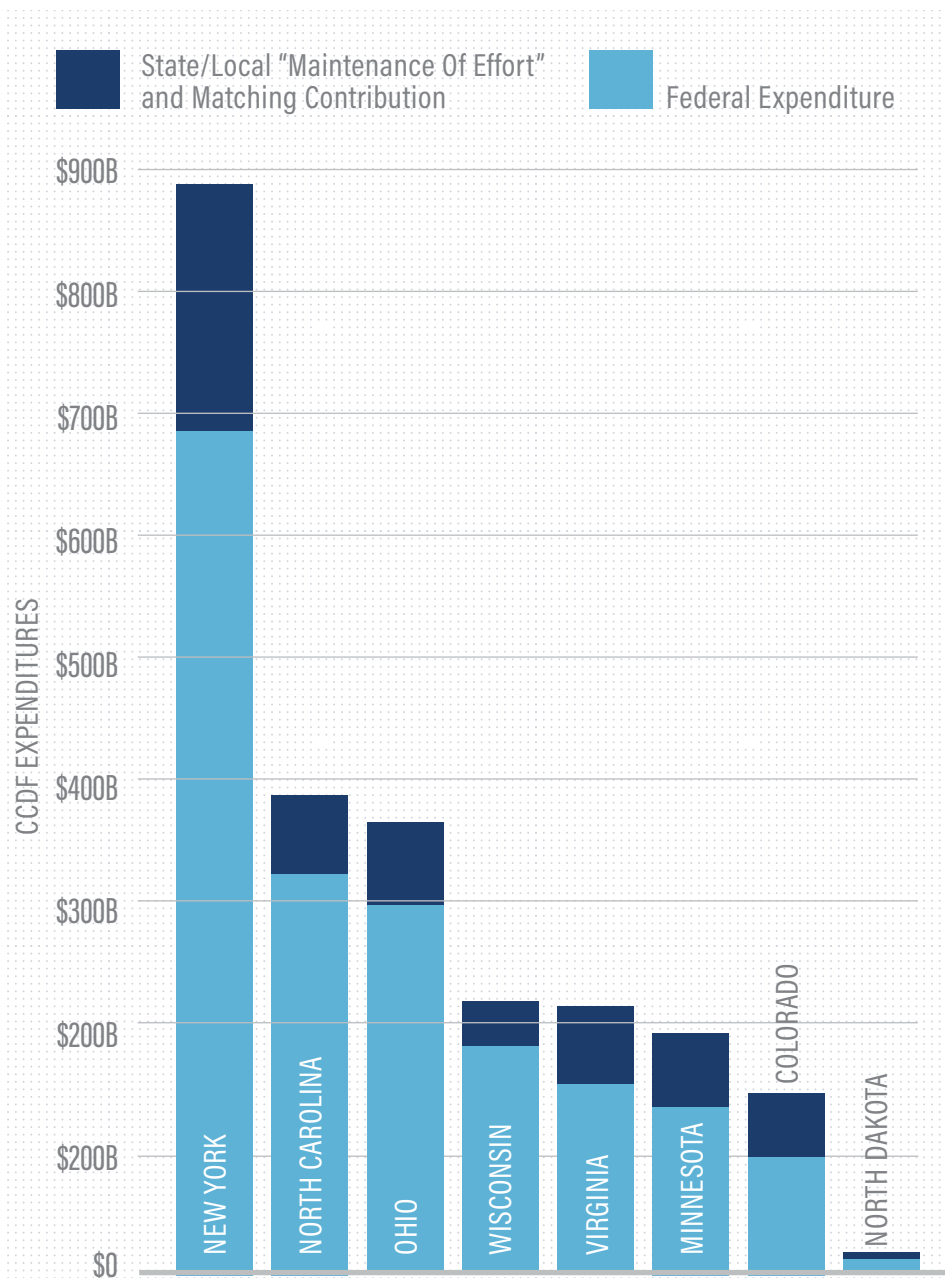
Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

State, Local and Federal Expenditures



The combined dollar amount representing federal expenditures and state and local maintenance-of-effort contributions, as well as matching funds. Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) - Office of Child Care, FY 2020 data.

Child Care and Development Fund FY 2020 Expenditures in the Eight County-Administered States



Eight states delegate the administration of the Child Care and Development Fund program to counties; in **FY 2020, these eight states together invested more than \$3 billion in federal, state and local funds in the CCDF program, accounting for nearly one-quarter of the national total.**

The scope of the county role in administering CCDF varies. County governments in these states may set policies related to eligibility, sliding fee scales and payment rates as well as perform eligibility determinations, issue payments, connect parents with childcare and more. Counties administering CCDF may contribute county general revenue funds to help meet the required non-federal match.

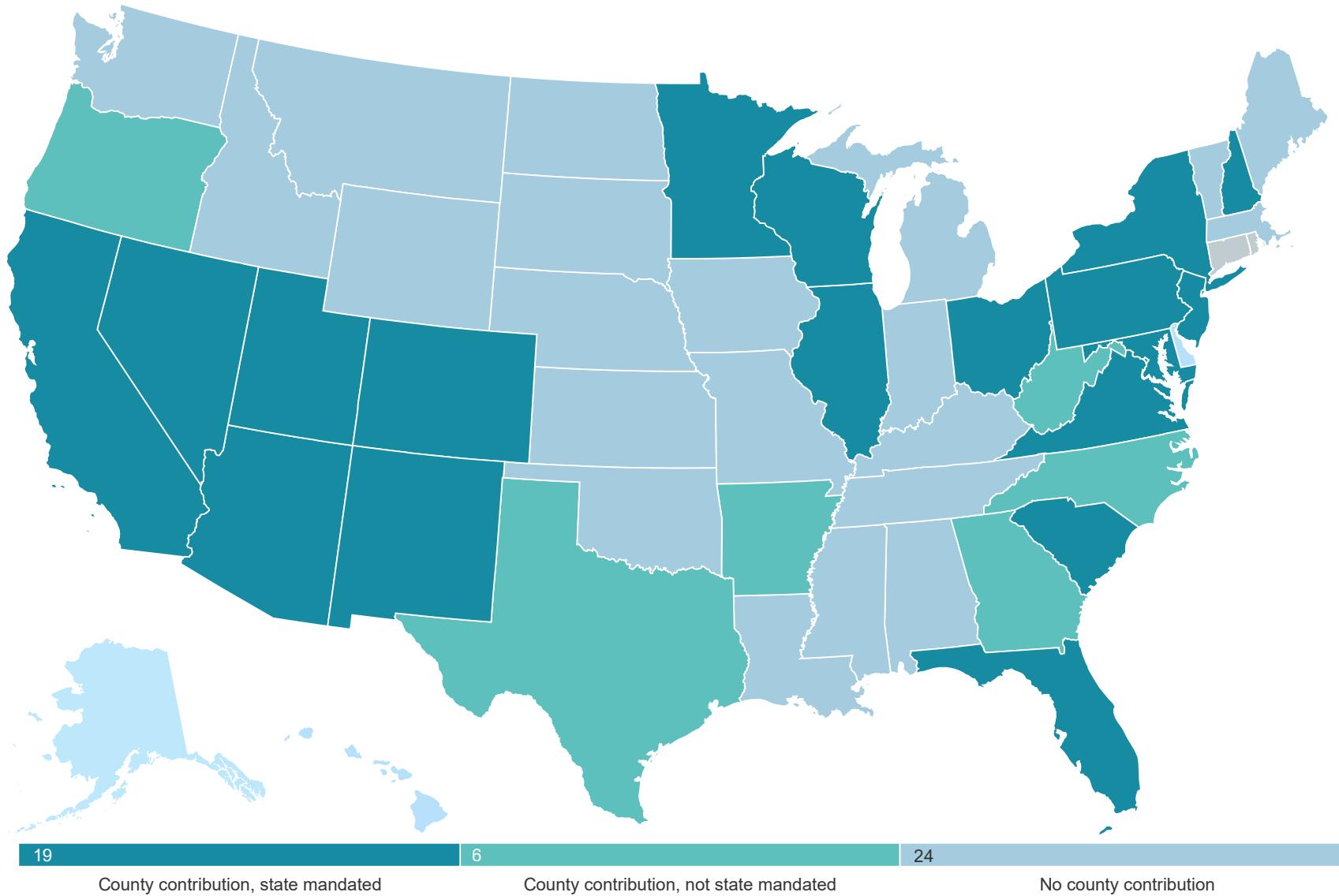
Through the **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**, states and counties help families access safe, reliable, affordable childcare that allows parents to work and promotes children's healthy growth and development.

THROUGH THE CCDF PROGRAM, COUNTIES PLAY A ROLE IN THE TWO-GENERATION APPROACH TO SERVICE DELIVERY BY SUPPORTING PARENTS' WORK AND HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

*The eight states with county-administered CCDF programs include Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, New York, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Medicaid Contribution Mandates for Counties

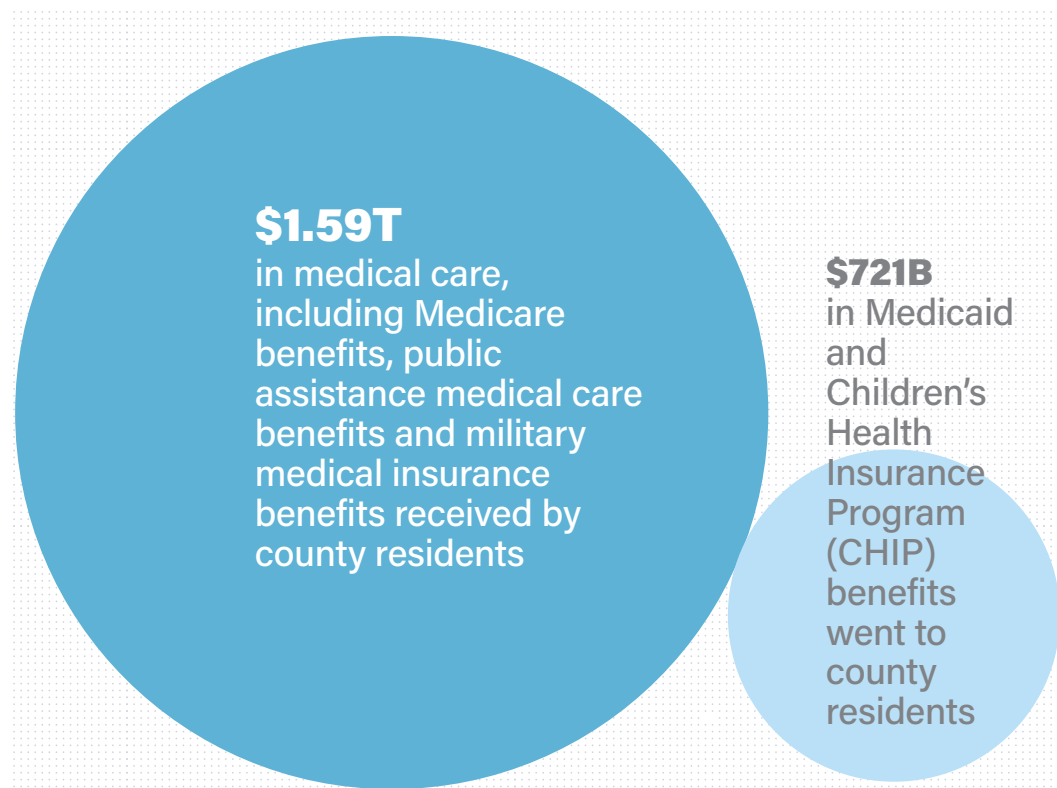
.....



Identifies if counties within a state contribute to Medicaid and associated state mandates. Source: NACo Research, 2023.

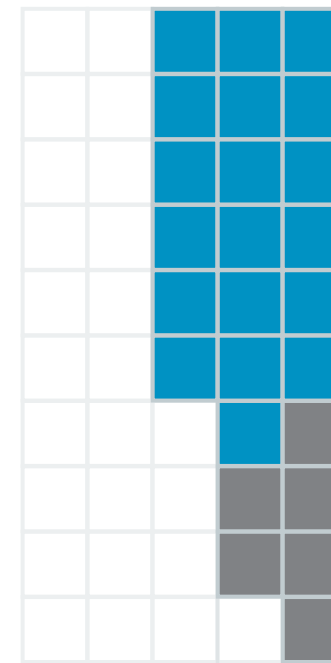
Medicaid operates and is jointly financed as a partnership between federal, state and local governments. Counties across the nation often deliver Medicaid-eligible services and, in many instances, help states finance the non-federal match and administrative costs.

Federal Medical Benefits Analysis



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Local Area Personal Income and Employment data, 2021.

Counties contribute to Medicaid in 25 states



19 states
mandate counties to contribute to the non-federal share of Medicaid costs and/or administrative, program, physical health and behavioral health costs

6 states
In which counties contribute to Medicaid without a state mandate for administrative and program costs, support our hospitals that serve large numbers of Medicaid beneficiaries, participate in Medicaid waiver and more

MEDICAID IS JOINTLY FUNDED BY FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING COUNTIES IN 25 STATES

The Medicaid program is the largest source of health coverage in the United States, covering over **86 million** low-income individuals, or one in five Americans.



The Day to Day

Counties Play a Critical Role in Connecting our Nation's Residents, Communities and Businesses



Tax-exempt municipal bonds have financed **more than \$3.8 trillion** in infrastructure investments.



Counties support 40 percent of transit agencies and **34 percent** of airports.



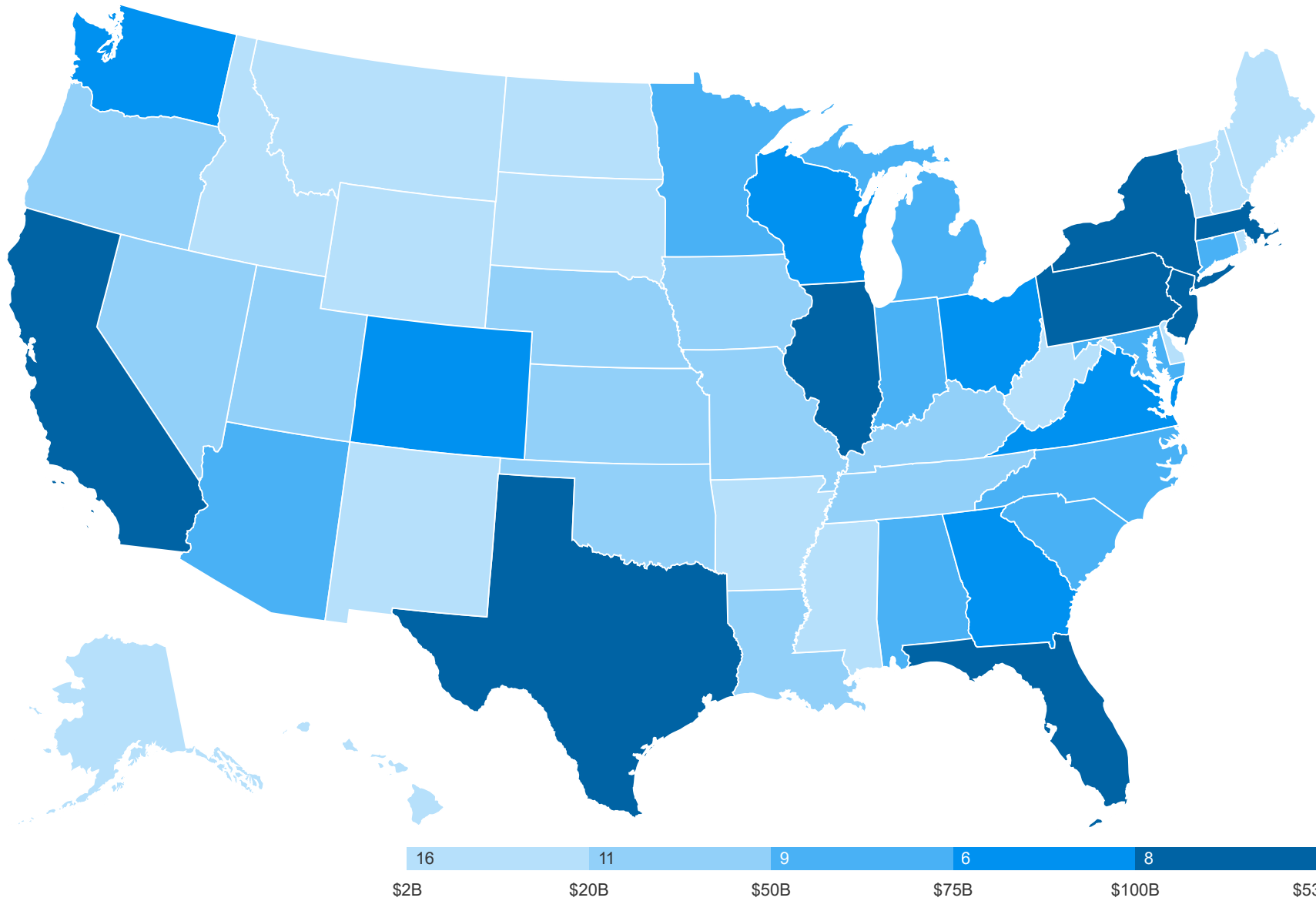
Counties invest more than \$146 billion in building, maintaining and operating physical infrastructure and public works.



Counties own and maintain 44 percent of public road miles and **38 percent** of bridges.

State and Local Investments Via Tax-Exempt Municipal Bonds 2015-2025

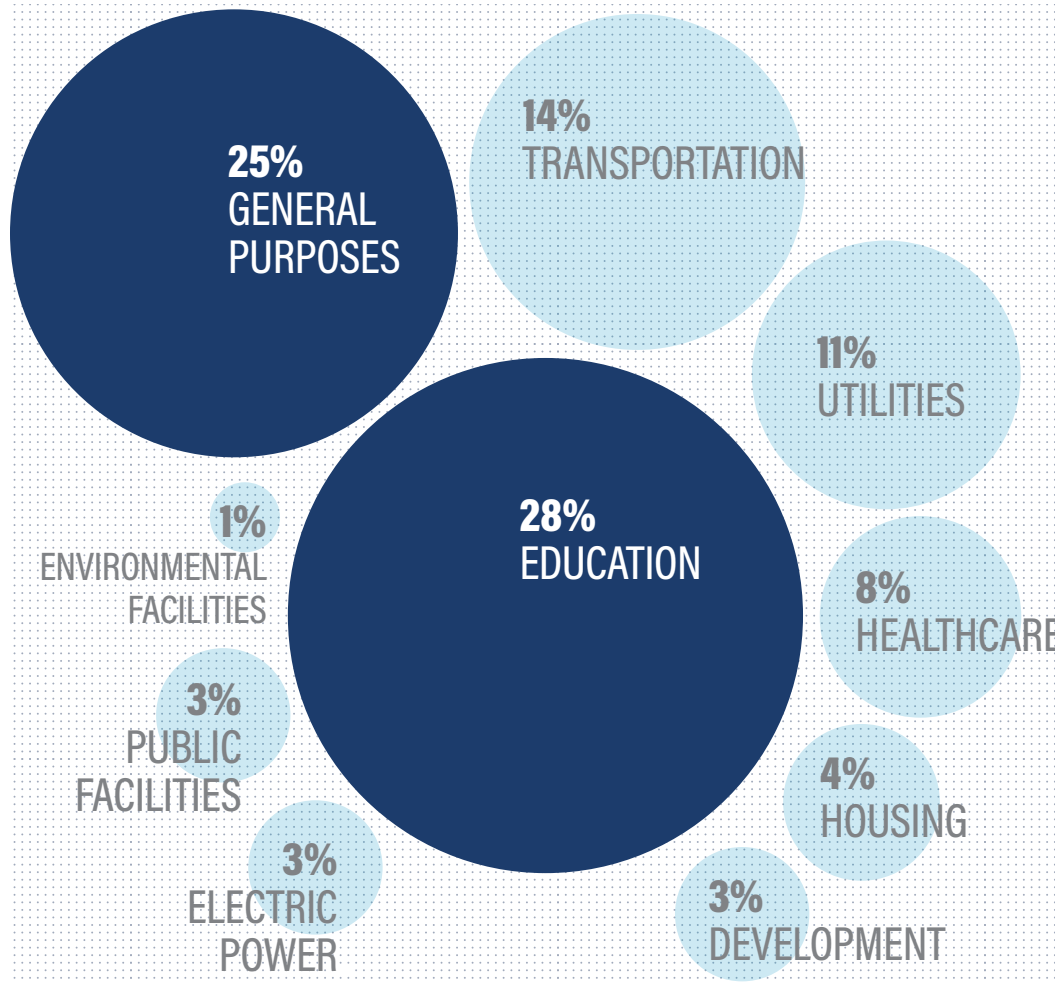
.....



The total investment made by state and local governments in each state since 2015 through projects financed by tax-exempt municipal bonds. These bonds enable governments to fund infrastructure, public services, and community improvements at lower borrowing costs. Sources: the Center for Municipal Finance at the University of Chicago, data as of January, 2025.

Tax-exempt municipal bonds are a vital financing tool for America's counties, enabling investments in essential infrastructure projects such as roads, schools, water systems, and public safety facilities. **Between 2015 and 2025, counties, localities, states and state/local authorities have financed more than \$3.8 trillion in infrastructure investments through tax-exempt municipal bonds.**

Use of Proceeds from Municipal Bonds Issued: 2011-2020



Source: Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board. (2021). Municipal securities: Financing the nation's infrastructure.



Since the original 1913 tax code, county governments have depended on access to the capital market and issuance of tax-exempt bonds to finance our nation's infrastructure. Counties primarily issue bonds to finance key, long-term capital projects at a lower cost since the interest of the bonds is exempt from federal taxation.

THE ABILITY TO ISSUE BONDS FREE FROM FEDERAL TAXATION HAS BEEN A LONG-STANDING PRINCIPLE OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIP.

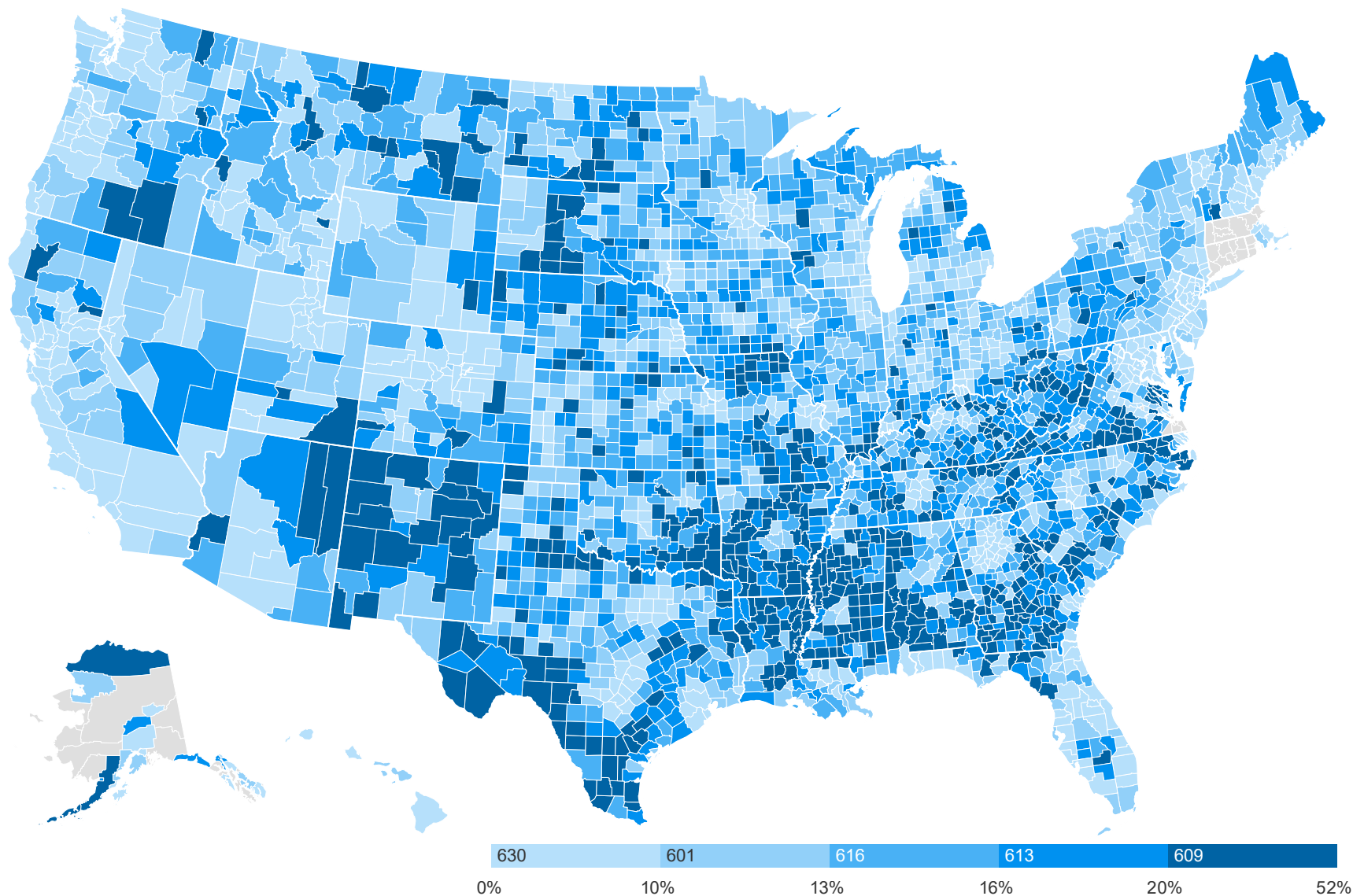
ELIMINATING THE TAX EXEMPTION IS EXPECTED TO SHIFT

**\$823.92
BILLION**

IN NEW COSTS ON ISSUERS AND BORROWERS OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS

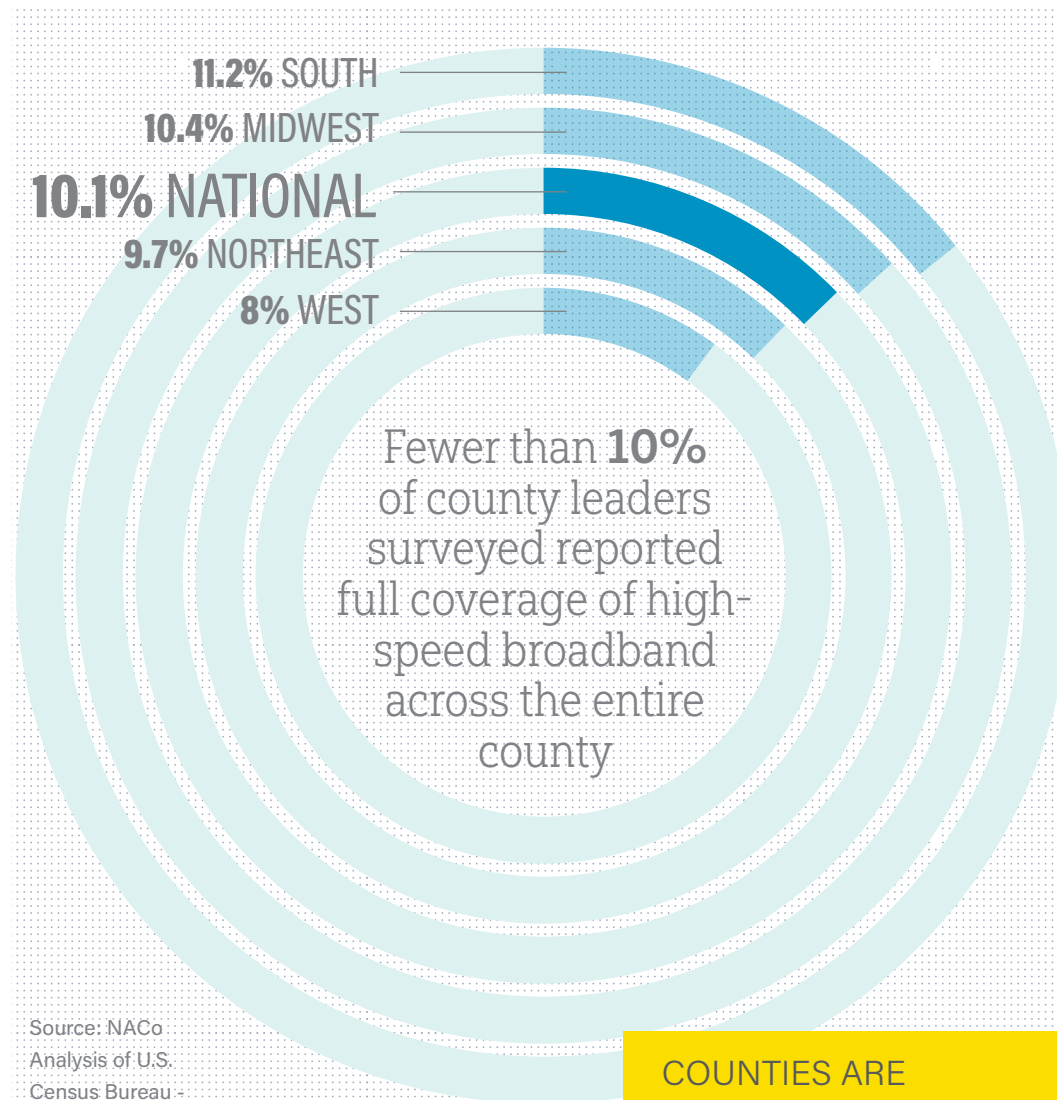
Share of Households *Without* Broadband Access

.....



The share of households in the county without broadband internet access. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a broadband internet subscription as cable, fiber optic, or DSL; a cellular data plan; satellite; a fixed wireless subscription; or other non-dial up subscription types. Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2019-2023 (Tables S2801 and S2802).

Percent of Households Without Broadband Access by Region, 2023



Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2019-2023 (Tables S2801 and S2802).

COUNTIES ARE WORKING TO **EXPAND BROADBAND ACCESS AND BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE**

National statistics illustrate the variation in broadband access across counties.



Approximately **13 percent** of Americans in rural areas and **17 percent** of Americans in tribal lands still lack access to broadband that meets the federal definition for minimum standards.



Hennepin County, Minn., is addressing the digital divide through "Connecting Hennepin." The initiative funds the development and implementation of a digital equity plan and is supported by **\$10 million** in Recovery Funds. The program targets a variety of goals, including digital literacy and navigation, community digital adoption and coalition building.



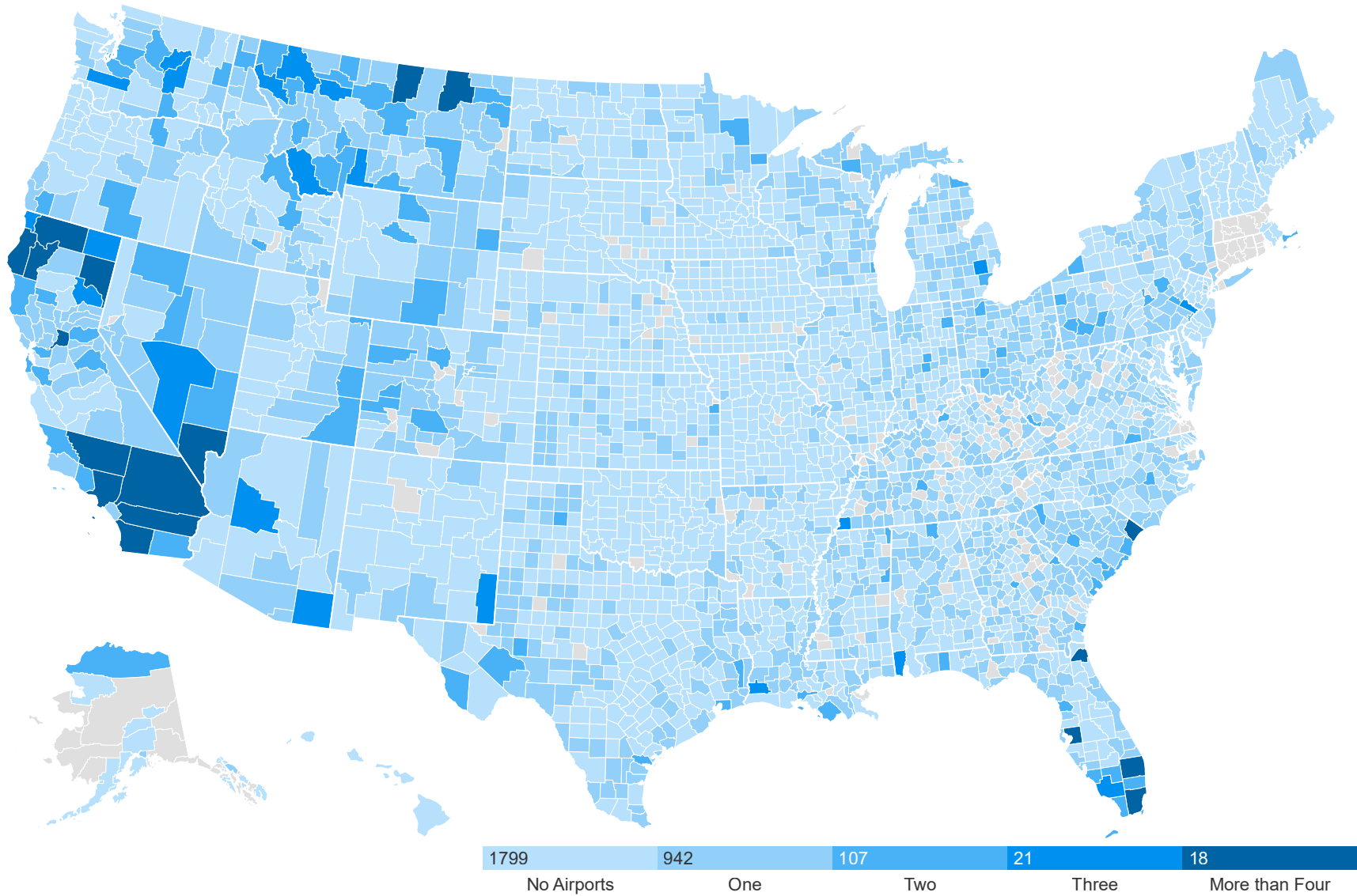
York County, Pa., is bolstering local broadband access through a **\$25 million** investment to increase new fiber-optic infrastructure. Approximately **144 miles** of construction have been planned for the deployment of urban wireless networks throughout the county.

County officials play a crucial role in pursuing sustainable broadband access, affordability and reliability solutions.

The American Rescue Plan Act provides counties the flexibility to fund a broad range of projects, from bolstering fiber-optic infrastructure to creating new public WiFi hotspots to support digital literacy.

County-Owned Airports

.....



Number of public airports owned by counties or regional airport authorities with county ownership or county elected officials on the board of the airport authorities. Source: Federal Aviation Administration and Office of Aviation Analysis, 2017 data.

County Airports and Seaports at a Glance

COUNTIES INVEST
OVER \$6B
IN AIR
TRANSPORTATION
FOR THE PROVISION,
OPERATION,
CONSTRUCTION
AND SUPPORT OF
AIRPORT FACILITIES

COUNTIES INVEST
OVER \$550M
IN THE OPERATION,
MAINTENANCE AND
SUPPORT OF SEA
AND INLAND PORT
FACILITIES

Counties are involved
in the operation of

34%

of airports

Examples of county-owned airports and seaports

1.

Clark County Commission,
Nev. - [Harry Reid
International Airport](#)

Harry Reid International Airport (formerly known as McCarran International Airport) is a central hub of economic activity for Clark County, serving **more than 58.4 million** passengers in 2024. The airport is the primary commercial airport serving Las Vegas. Approximately **690,000 pounds** of cargo are transported through the airport every day. Operating revenue for the airport totaled **\$589 million** and indirectly impacted the local economy. The airport employs nearly **1,400 workers**.

2.

Detroit/Wayne County
Port Authority, Mich. - [Port
of Detroit](#).

The Port of Detroit is the largest seaport in the state of Michigan and is also connected to river commerce; the port handles approximately **8.2 million** tons of bulk cargo every year. The port supports 16,000 jobs and **\$1.04 billion** in economic activity. The total volume of port trade, based on the value of exports and imports passing through the port, was over **\$130 billion** in 2020.

3.

Jackson County Port
Authority, Miss. - [Port of
Pascagoula](#).

The Port of Pascagoula is the largest seaport in Mississippi and in the top 20 U.S. seaports processing foreign cargo by volume, handling 26 million tons of cargo in 2019. As of 2004, the Jackson County Port Authority supported over 19,000 jobs and port operations created **\$902 million** in personal income. The total volume of port trade, based on the value of exports and imports passing through the port, was **\$3.9 billion** in 2020.

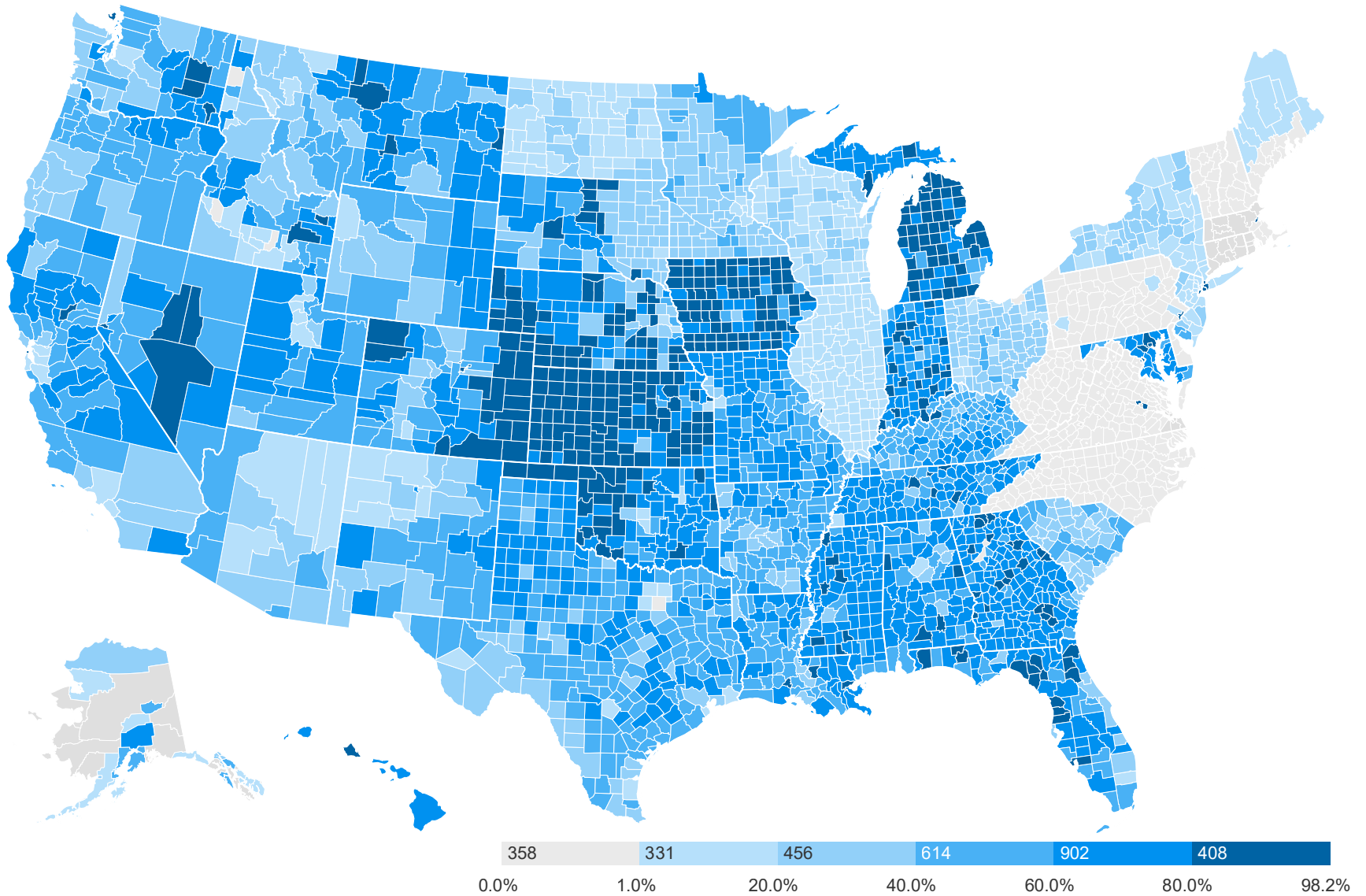
4.

City & County of
Denver Department of
Aviation, Colo. - [Denver
International Airport](#).

Denver International Airport is a primary transportation service provider for Denver County. In 2024, Denver International served more than **82 million** passengers and surpassed **732 million** tons of cargo handled. In 2023, total operating revenue for the airport was **\$1.02 billion** and directly employed more than **1,180 workers**.

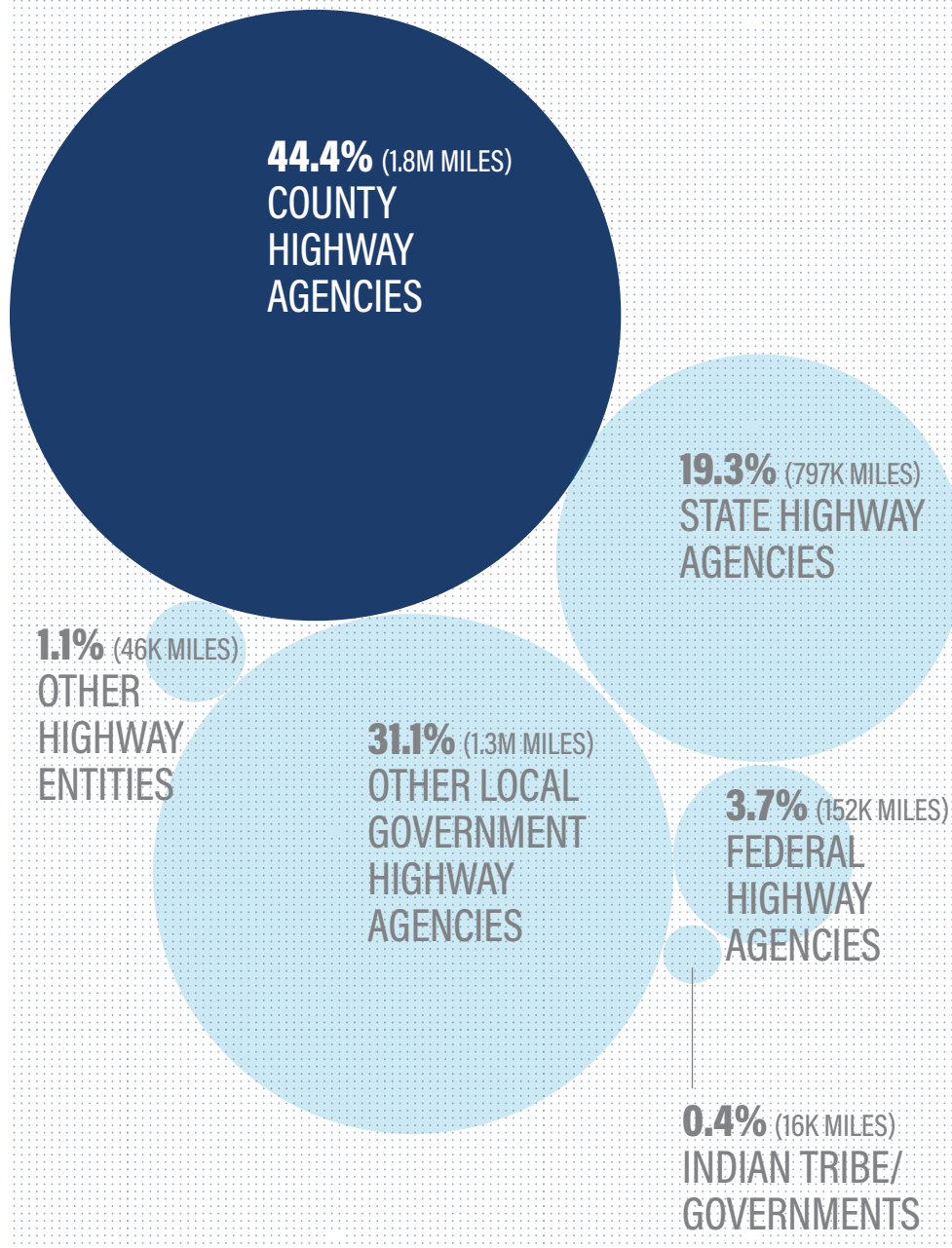
Share of Road Miles Owned by County Highway Agencies

.....



Share of public road miles under the control of county governments. Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, 2022.

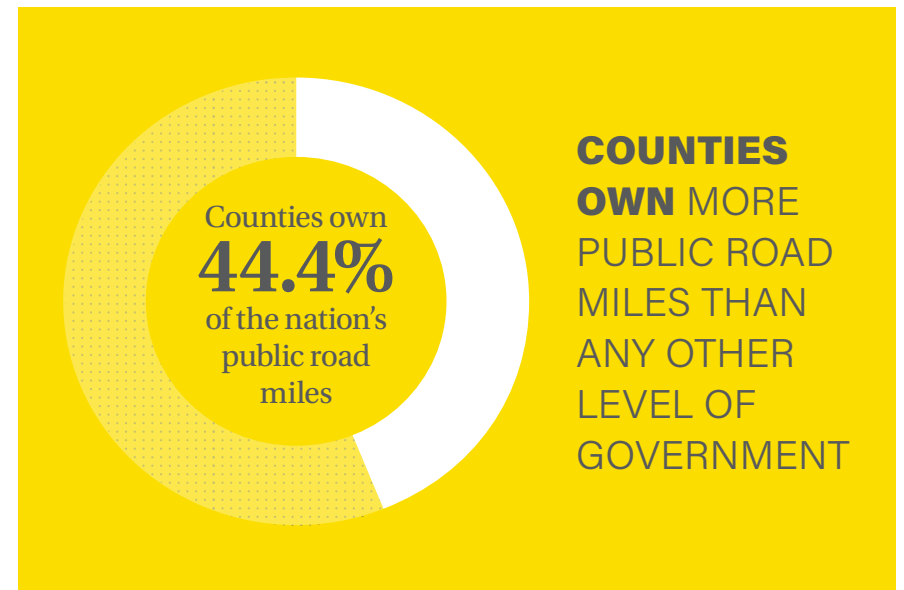
Breakdown of Ownership of Public Roads
by Highway Agency, 2022



Counties oversee 1.8 million miles of public roads nationwide, forming the backbone of local transportation networks where the vast majority of trips begin and end.

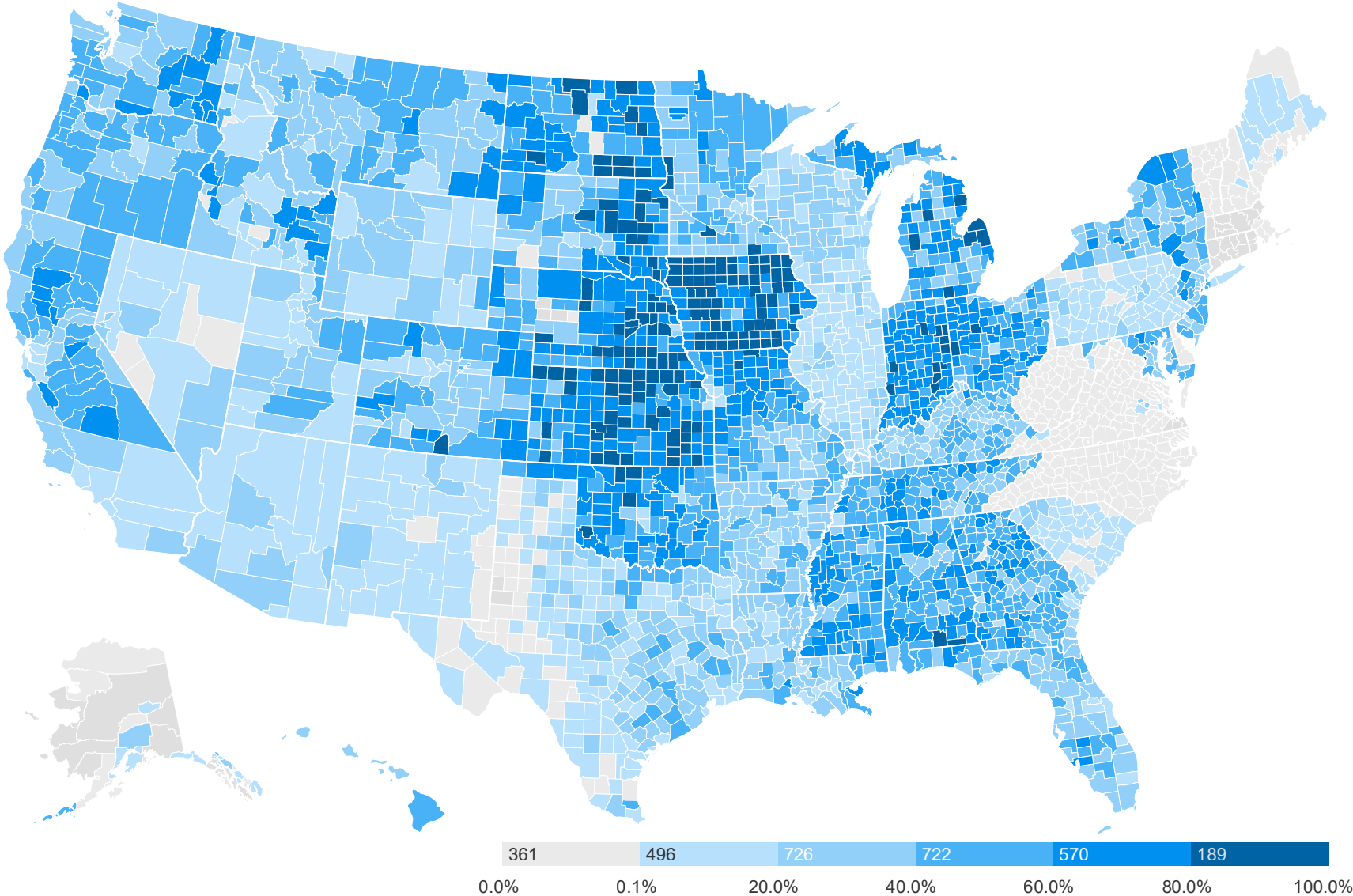


County governments invest nearly **\$33 billion** annually towards the maintenance, operation, repair and construction of toll and non-toll highways.



County-Owned Bridges

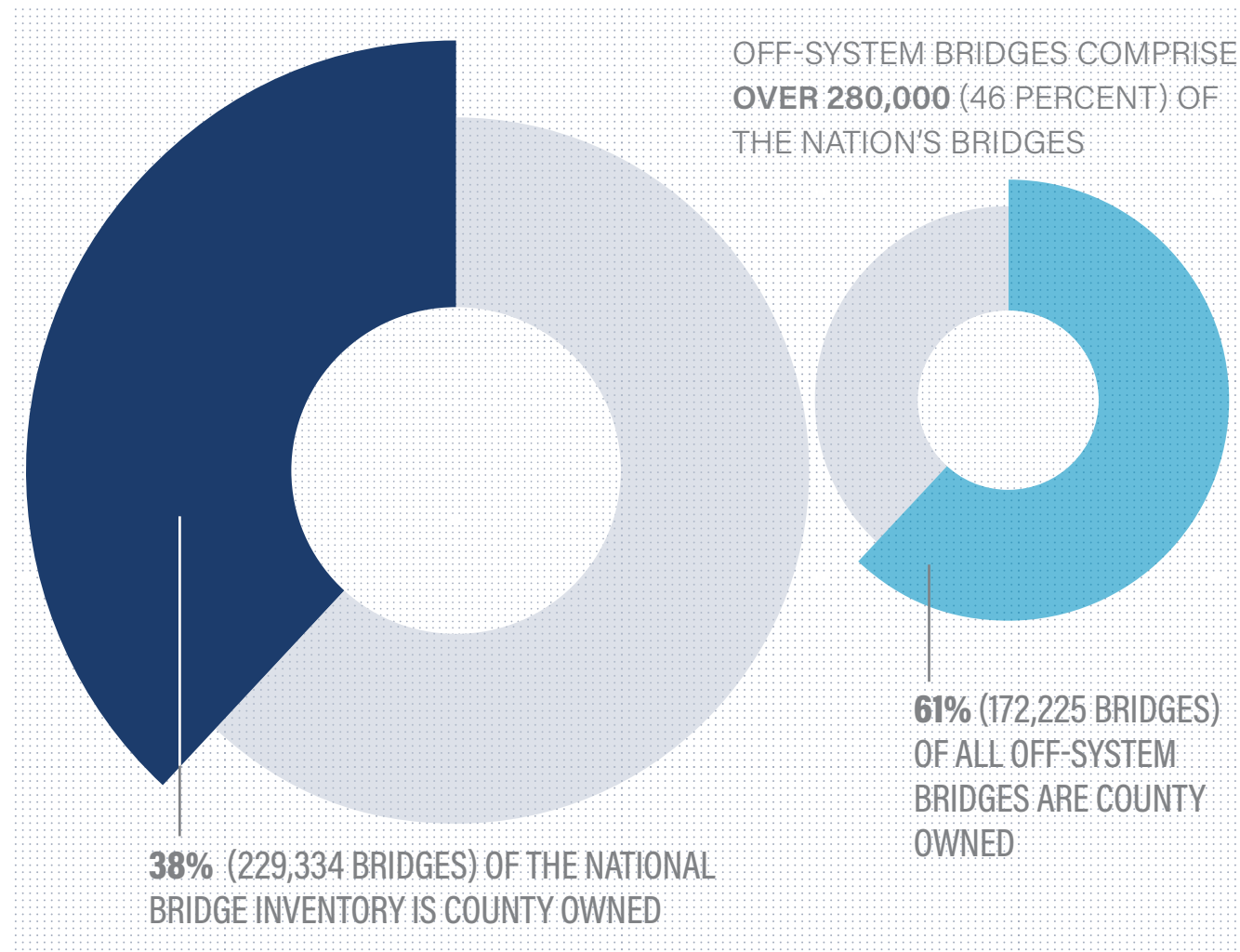
.....



Share of bridges owned by a county highway agency. Source: National Bridge Inventory Data - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), 2024.

Counties own and maintain **38 percent** of the nearly **610,000 bridges** that compose the National Bridge Inventory.

National Bridge Inventory and Off-system Bridges Share County Owned, 2024



6.7 PERCENT of the nation's bridges are considered structurally deficient. With the bipartisan infrastructure law, counties will invest funds to improve bridge conditions.



COUNTIES WITH THE MOST COUNTY-OWNED BRIDGES, BY POPULATION SIZE

Sumner County (a small county) and Butler County (a mid-sized county), both in Kansas, own 527 and 429 bridges, respectively. Harris County in Texas (a large county) owns 856 bridges.

COUNTIES OWN AND MAINTAIN

38%

OF THE NATIONAL BRIDGE INVENTORY

Keep America Healthy



Counties Play an Essential Role in Protecting, Promoting and Improving the Health of Communities Across the Nation.



Counties employ over

533,000

hospital and health care workers.

Counties support more than

900

hospitals that provide inpatient medical care and specialized care.



Counties also own and support more than

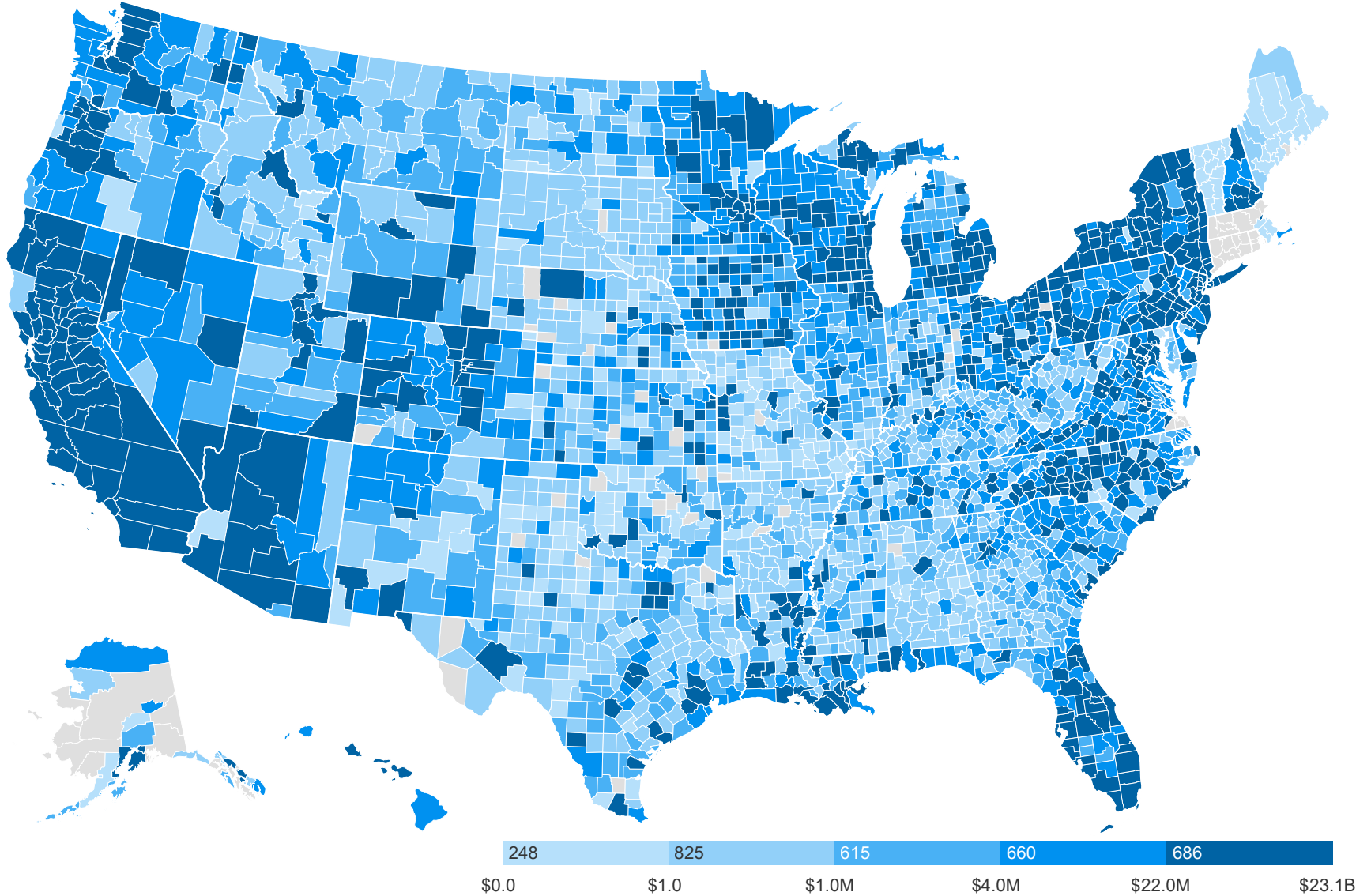
700

long-term care facilities.



County Investments in Health and Human Services

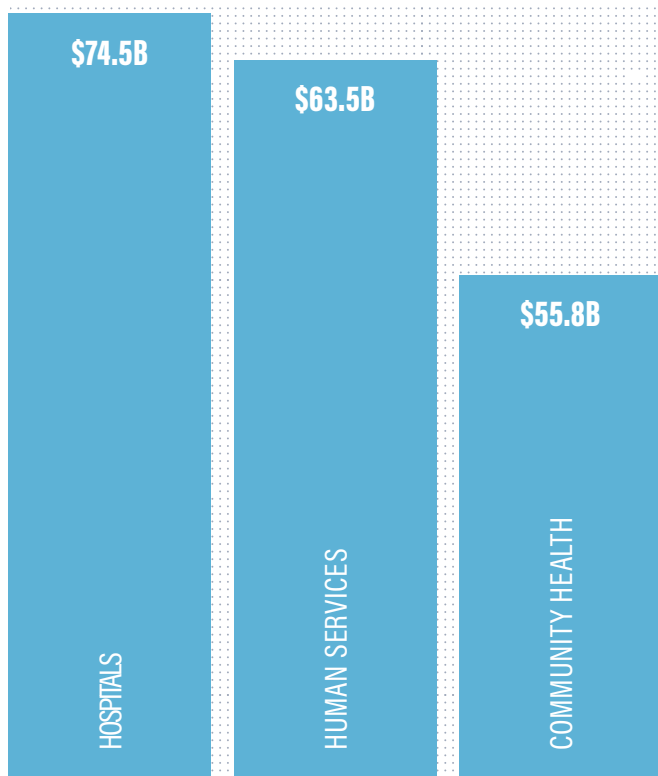
.....



Amount of health and human services expenditures, including health, hospitals, cash assistance, vendor payments, other human services, and current operations, construction, other capital outlays, assistance and subsidies, and intergovernmental transfers. Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Individual Governments, Finance 2022.

Each year, counties invest **\$63.5 billion** to serve as a safety net for millions of residents and deliver vital services to our nation's most vulnerable populations.

County Health and Human Services Spending by Category - 2022



COUNTIES PLAY A DIRECT ROLE IN THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF RESIDENTS, INVESTING MORE THAN

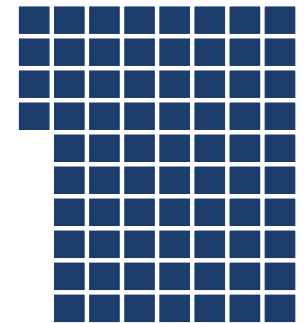
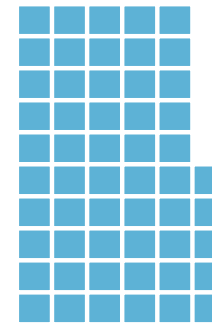
\$193 BILLION

IN COMMUNITY HEALTH, HOSPITALS AND HUMAN SERVICES ANNUALLY

In total, counties invest more than

\$130 billion

in community health and hospitals annually, including:



More than

\$55 billion

for the provision of community and public health services (other than hospital care) such as mental health and substance abuse programs, county health department inspections, water and air quality regulation and health inspections.

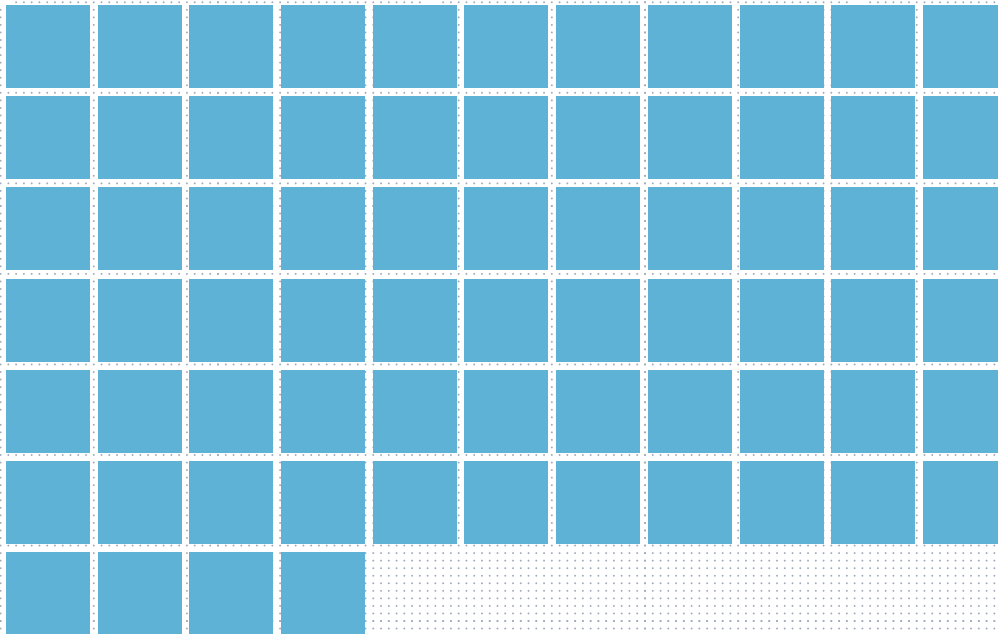
More than

\$74 billion

in operating county-owned hospital facilities, including those operated by public universities and for the provision of inpatient medical care and specialized care.

Geographic Jurisdictions Served by Local Health Departments (LHDs)

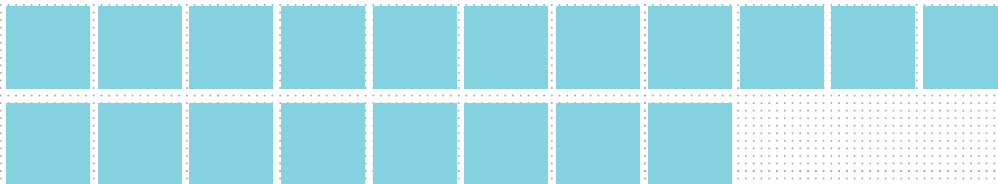
70 PERCENT COUNTY (includes city-counties)



8 PERCENT MULTY-COUNTY



19 PERCENT CITY OR TOWN



3 PERCENT OTHER



Note: other includes LHDs serving multiple cities or towns




Counties play a critical role in protecting public health through overseeing **MORE THAN 1,900** local public health departments.

County health departments provide essential public health and prevention services to residents, such as conducting screenings and administering immunizations to ensure the community's well-being.

Additionally, county LHDs play a crucial role in surveillance efforts to detect and monitor emerging infectious diseases and safeguard the food and water supply. They also take proactive measures to prepare for and respond to natural disasters and other public health emergencies.

APPROXIMATELY TWO-THIRDS OF LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (LHDS) ARE COUNTY-BASED, AND AN ADDITIONAL EIGHT PERCENT SERVE MULTIPLE COUNTIES.

America's 3,069 Counties are Integral to the Nation's Behavioral Health System.



1 IN 4 ADULTS IN THE U.S. EXPERIENCE A MENTAL ILLNESS.

NEARLY ONE HALF DID NOT RECEIVE TREATMENT IN 2022.



1 IN 17 ADULTS IN THE U.S. EXPERIENCE A SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS.

OVER ONE THIRD DID NOT RECEIVE TREATMENT IN 2022.



1 IN 8 ADULTS IN THE U.S. EXPERIENCE A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.

APPROXIMATELY 95 PERCENT DID NOT FEEL THEY NEEDED TREATMENT AND FIVE PERCENT FELT THAT THEY NEEDED TREATMENT.



Approximately

21.5 million

adults had a **substance use disorder with any mental illness.**

IN 40 STATES PLUS THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, there is at least one mental health facility operated by a regional/ district authority or county, local or municipal government.

ACROSS 48 STATES PLUS THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, there is at least one mental health facility that accepts county or local government funds as a source of payment for mental health treatment services.

EIGHTY-NINE (89) PERCENT OF COUNTIES ARE DESIGNATED AS WHOLLY WITHIN A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREA ACCORDING TO THE RURAL HEALTH INFORMATION HUB

Counties plan and operate community-based services for persons with mental illnesses and substance use conditions through **750 behavioral health authorities** and community providers.



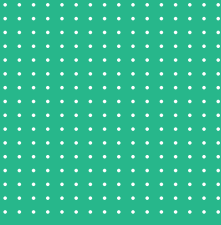
America's **3,069 counties** are integral to the nation's behavioral health system.



In 33 states, counties are actively engaged in delivering traditional mental health services to residents. In more than half of these states (18), counties have significant involvement in health and human services.

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood, showing a dense collection of houses with gabled roofs, surrounded by trees. A road with a bus stop is visible in the lower-left corner. In the background, a range of mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear sky. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

Stronger Local Economies





County governments are collectively one of the largest employers in the nation, employing over

3.6 million
Americans



Counties collectively invest more than

\$121 billion
annually to support our children's education and development



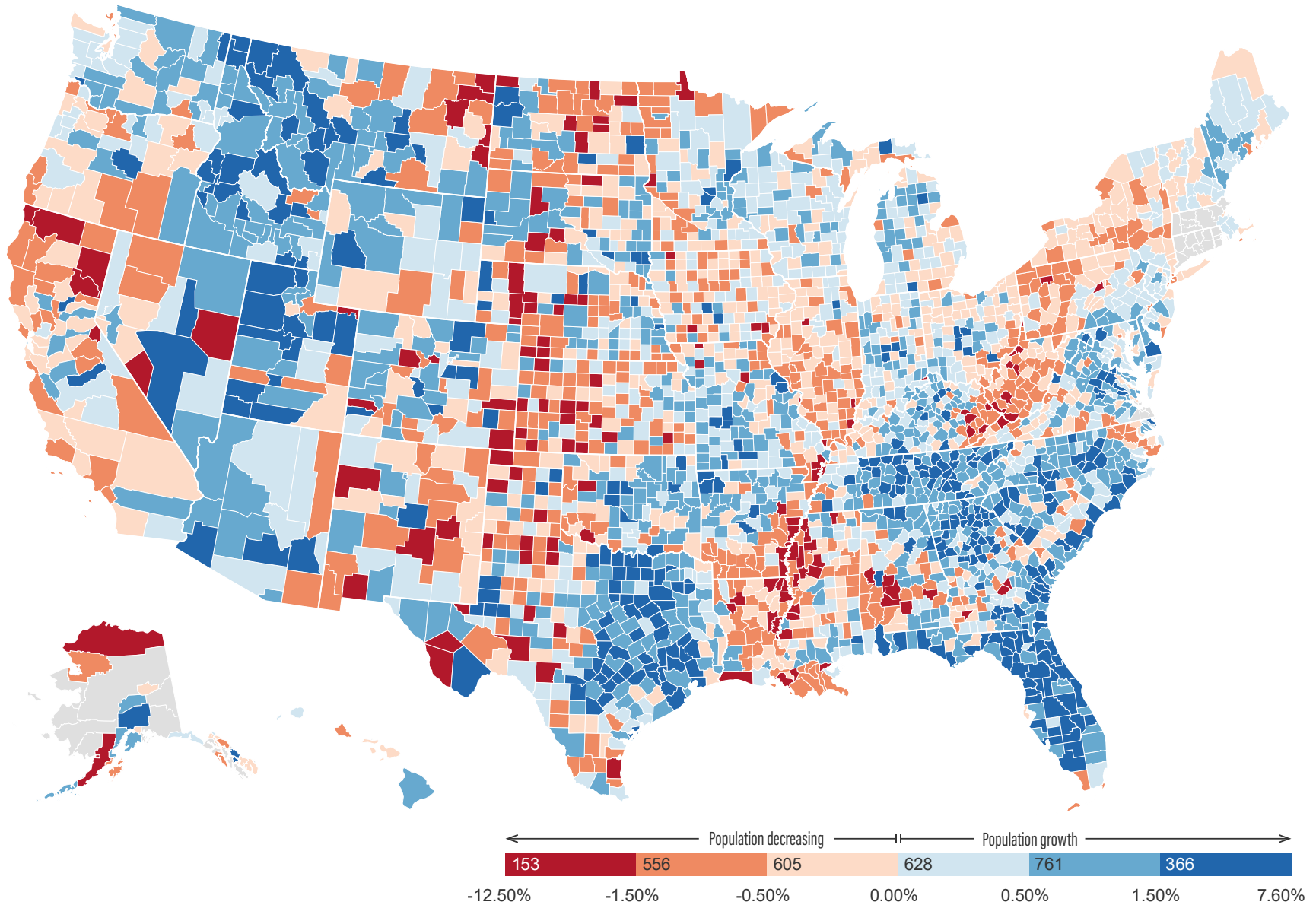
In local communities, counties are prioritizing the needs of residents and constructing a foundation for sustained resiliency



County leaders directly facilitate the implementation of public policy and services that directly impact the lives of residents

Percent Change in County Population Between 2022 and 2023

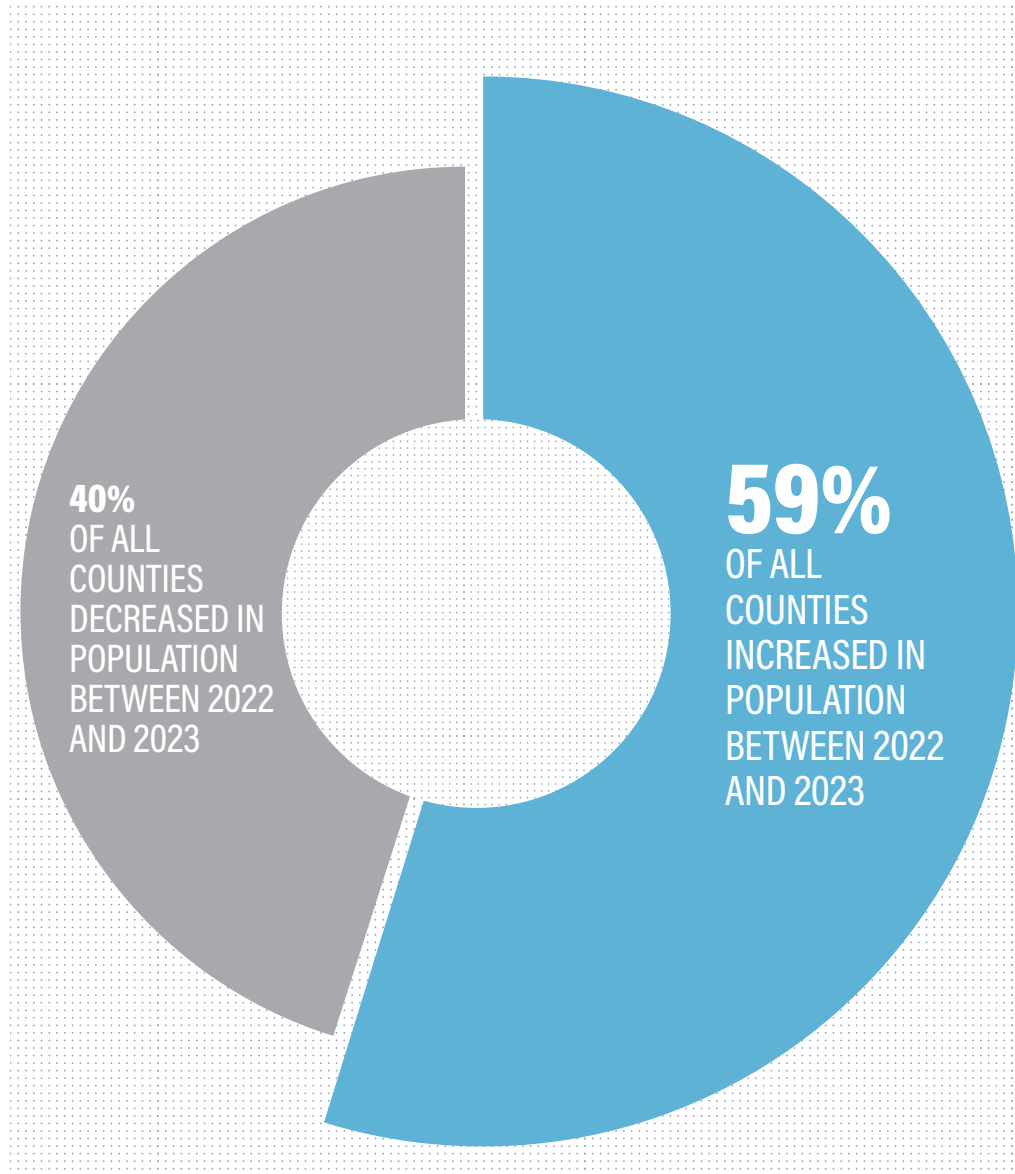
.....



The relative change in the size of the county's population between 2022 and 2023 expressed as a percentage.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Population Estimates Program (PEP) - 2023.

County Populations Changed Between 2022 and 2023



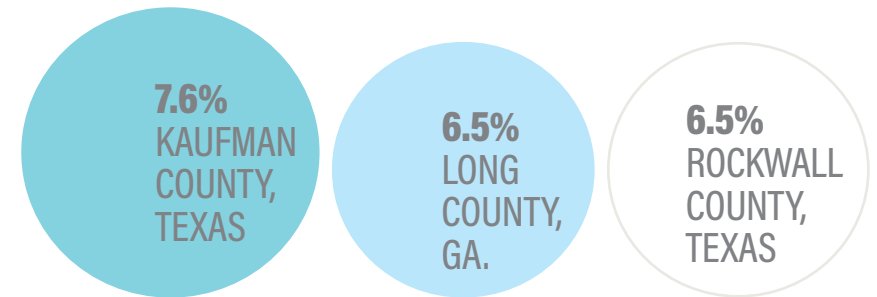
Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Population Estimates Program (PEP) - 2023

Note: for the analysis, there were 15 counties that did not experience any population change between the years 2022 and 2023.

Between 2022 and 2023, the U.S. population grew by 1.64 million, or approximately 0.5 percent. **In 2023, 37 percent of counties experienced notable population increases** (of more than 0.5 percent)

THE FASTEST-GROWING COUNTIES

Between 2022 and 2023, Southern and Western counties experienced the most substantial gains.



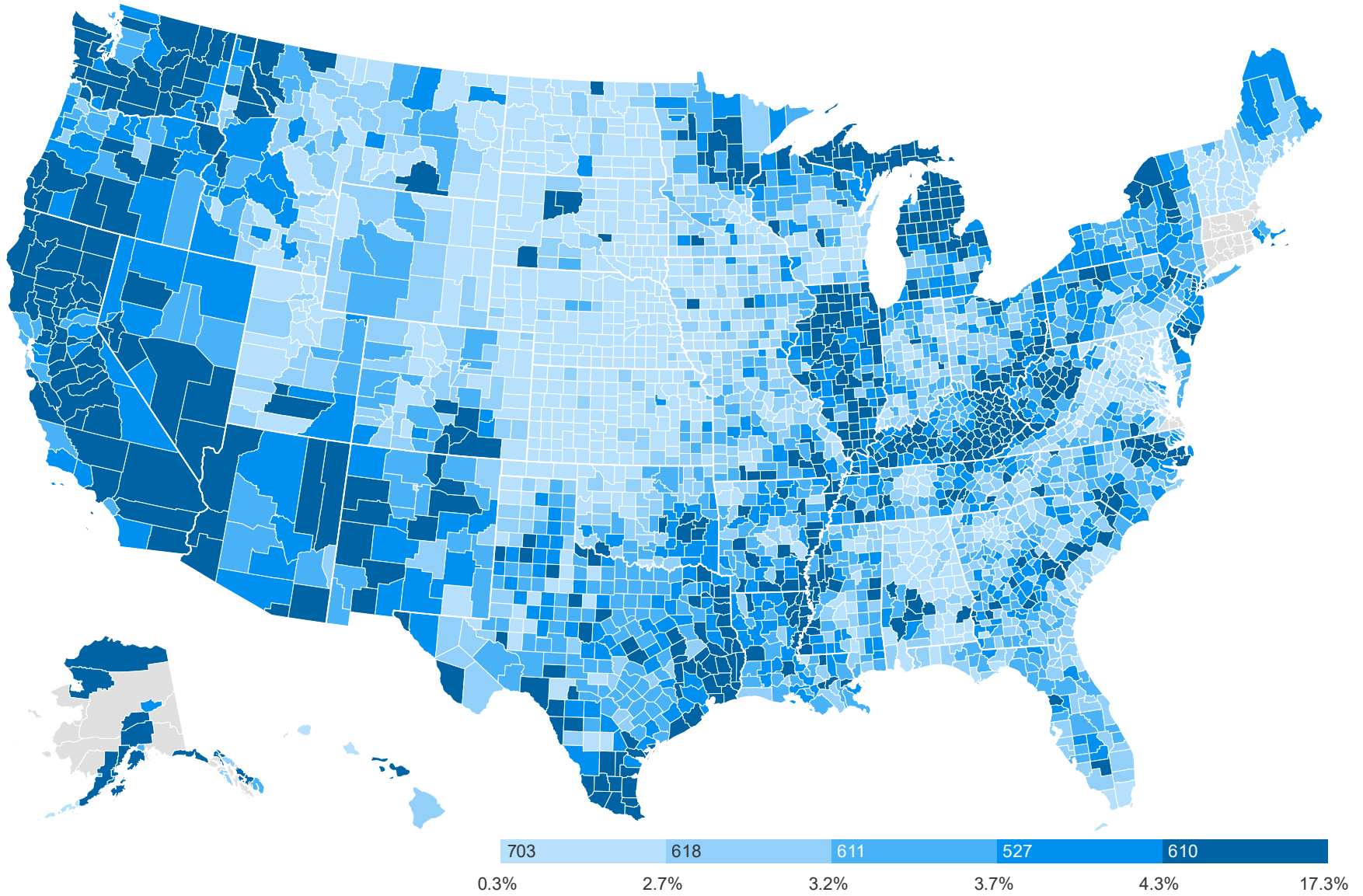
AMERICA'S

3,069 COUNTIES

COUNTIES ARE DIVERSIFYING AND EVOLVING

Unemployment Rate by County

.....

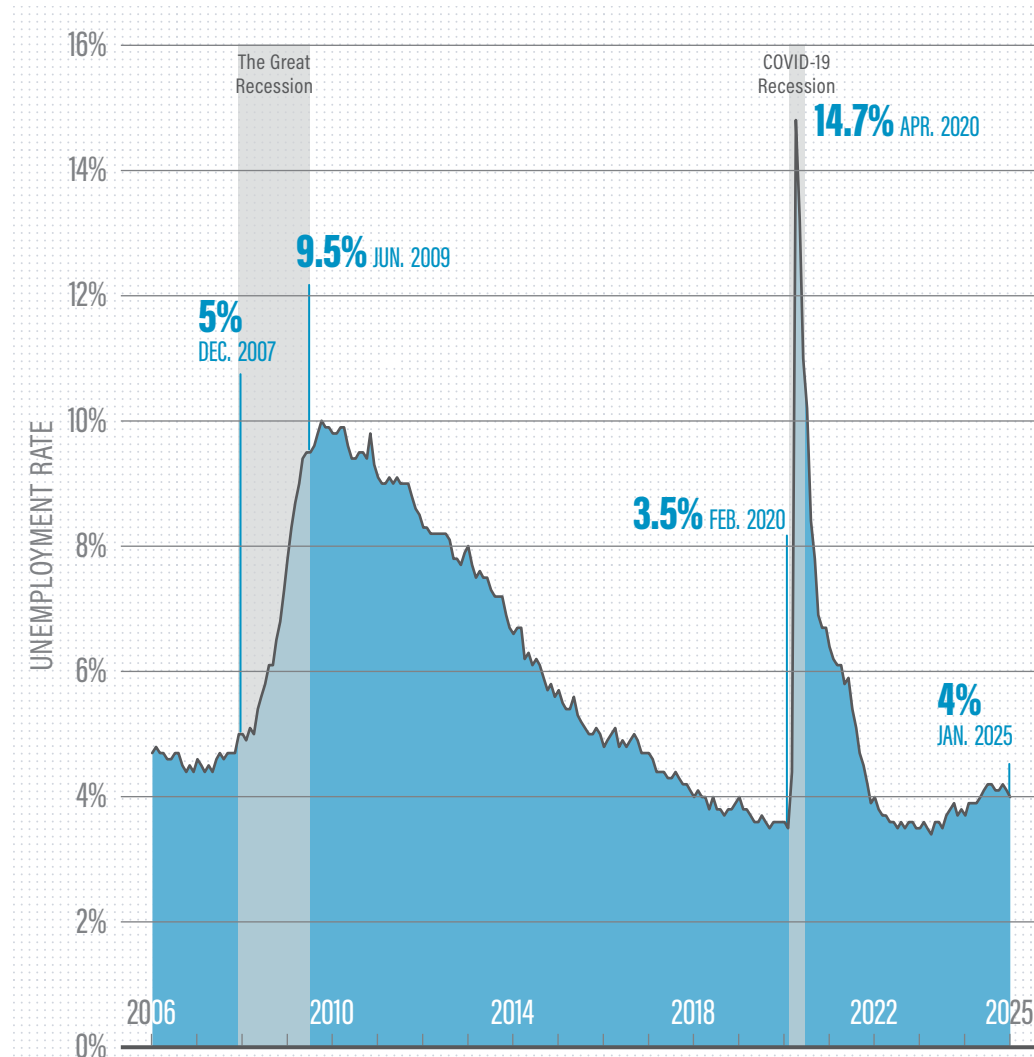


Number of persons unemployed as a percent of the labor force.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics - Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), 2023. Data for 2024 will be available later in 2025.

During the Great Recession, local communities faced rising unemployment, **but the 2020 recession hit even harder, with the rate peaking at 14.7 percent.** Now, most counties have substained an unemployment rate under 4 percent - some experiencing workforce shortages.

**National Unemployment Rate
From January 2006 to January 2025**



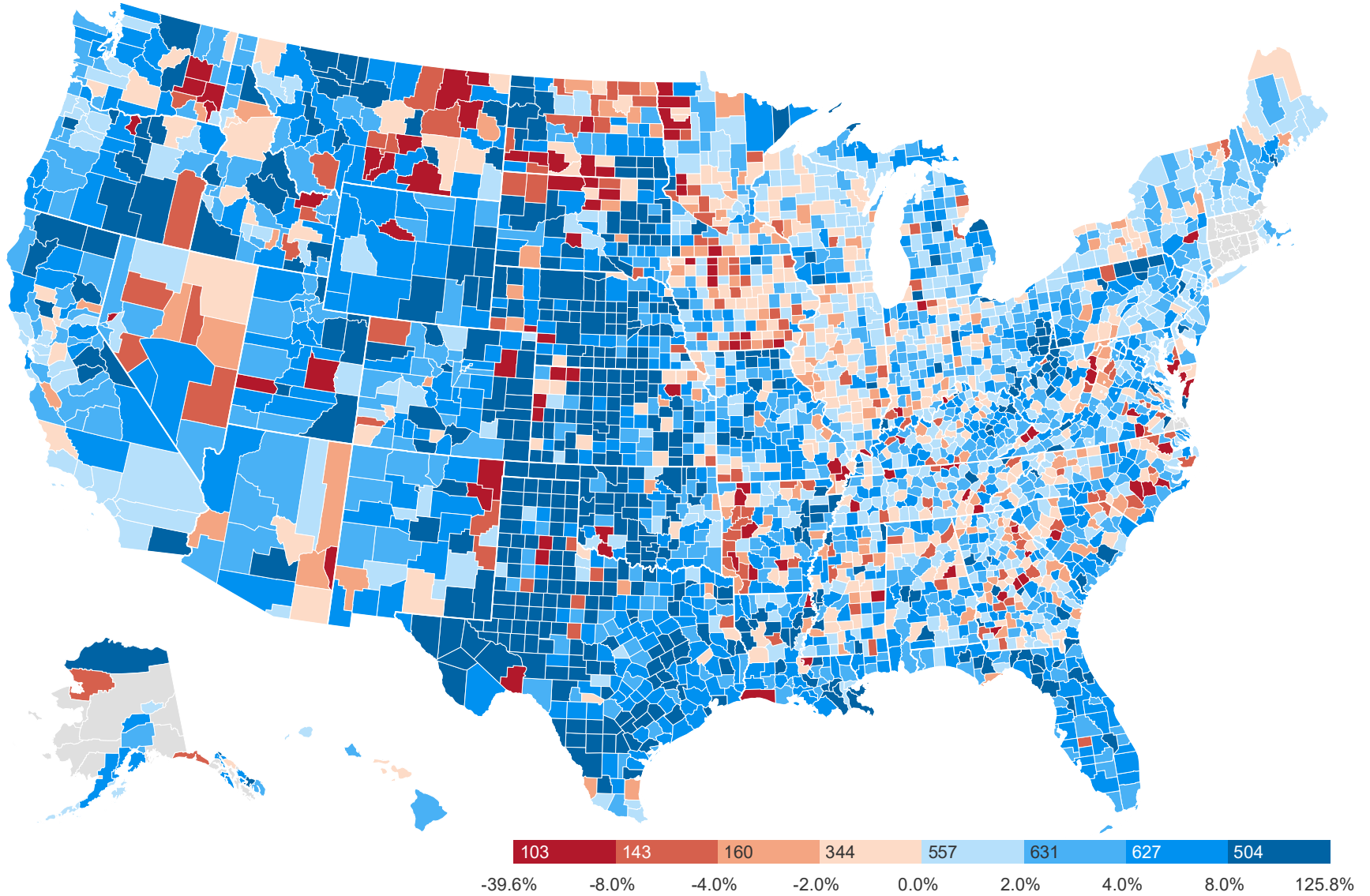
Workforce Development Boards are part of the state and local structure that oversees the implementation of workforce programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. County governments play an essential role in determining the membership of the WDBs, which include representatives of local businesses (who must be the majority of the board), representatives of the workforce community and representatives of education and training.

COUNTY LEADERS IMPLEMENT LOCAL POLICIES THAT ELEVATE LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ESTABLISH LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS FOR RESIDENTS.

COUNTIES ARE VITAL IN SUPPORTING U.S. LABOR MARKET RECOVERY AND PREPAREDNESS

Change in County Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Between 2022 and 2023

.....

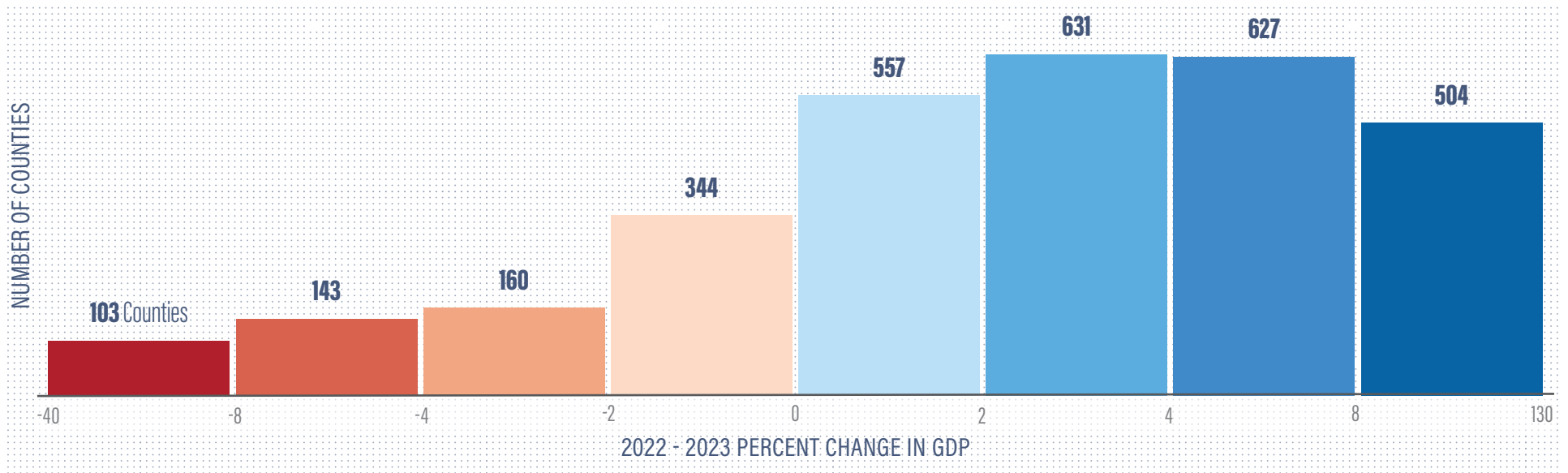


The percentage change in real GDP between 2022 and 2023.

Source: Department of Commerce / Bureau of Economic Analysis / Regional Economic Accounts / Gross Domestic Product Data by County, 2023.

Economic output increased in 76 percent of counties between 2022 and 2023. A vital indicator, economic output (also known as Real Gross Domestic Product or GDP), is often used to measure productivity in the local economy, estimating the total value of goods and services produced. During this period, 2,319 counties saw an increase in real GDP, while 727 counties experienced a decline, and 23 counties saw no change.

County-Level Change in GDP



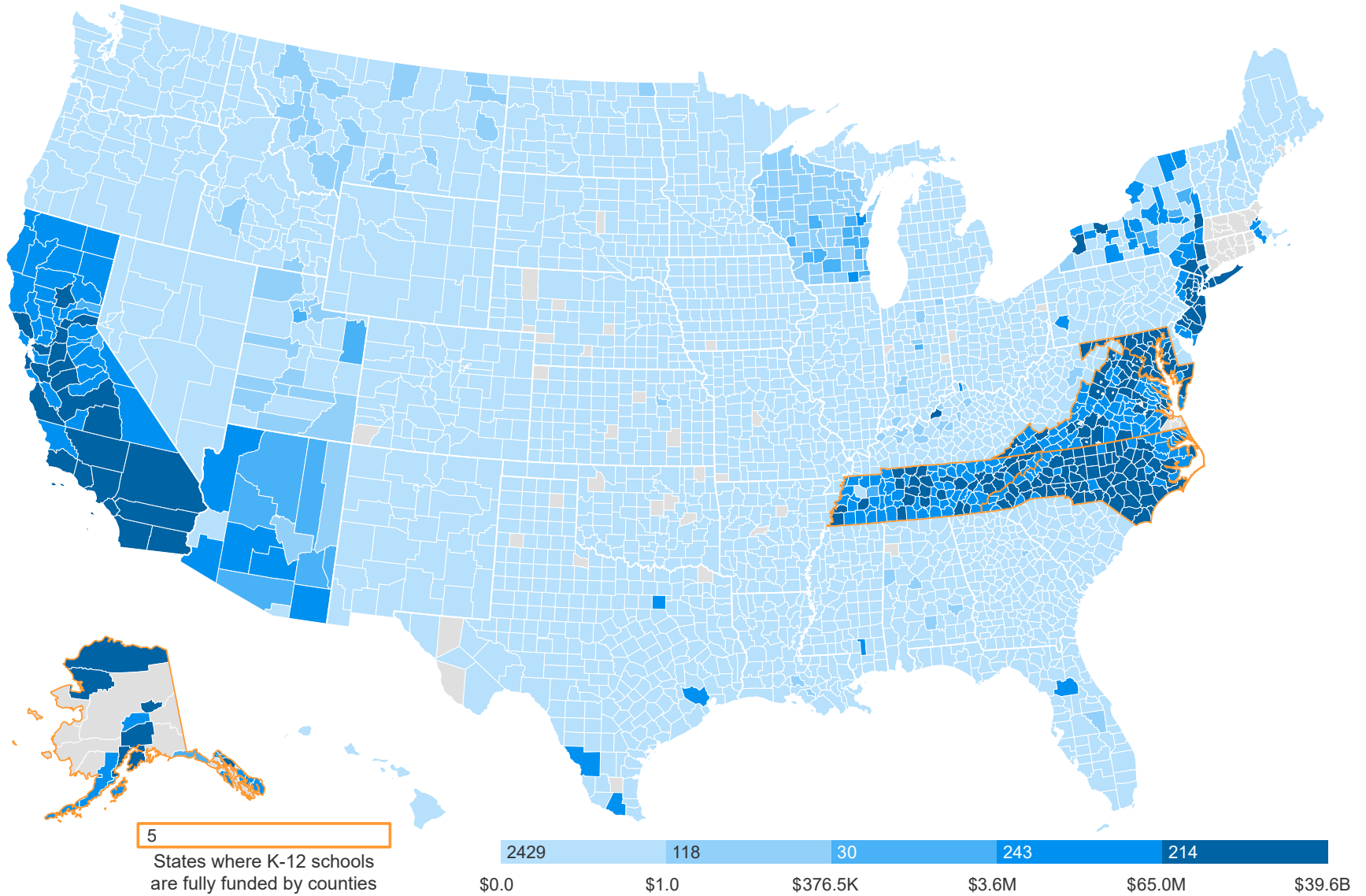
Between 2022 and 2023, economic output across all counties increased by **2.9 percent**, with the service-producing sector driving the growth.

COUNTY OFFICIALS ACTIVELY PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH by attracting and retaining businesses, providing assistance to businesses for recovery, fostering entrepreneurship within the community and engaging in partnerships that drive economic growth.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES RELY ON COUNTIES TO INVEST IN ECONOMIES THAT THRIVE AND GROW

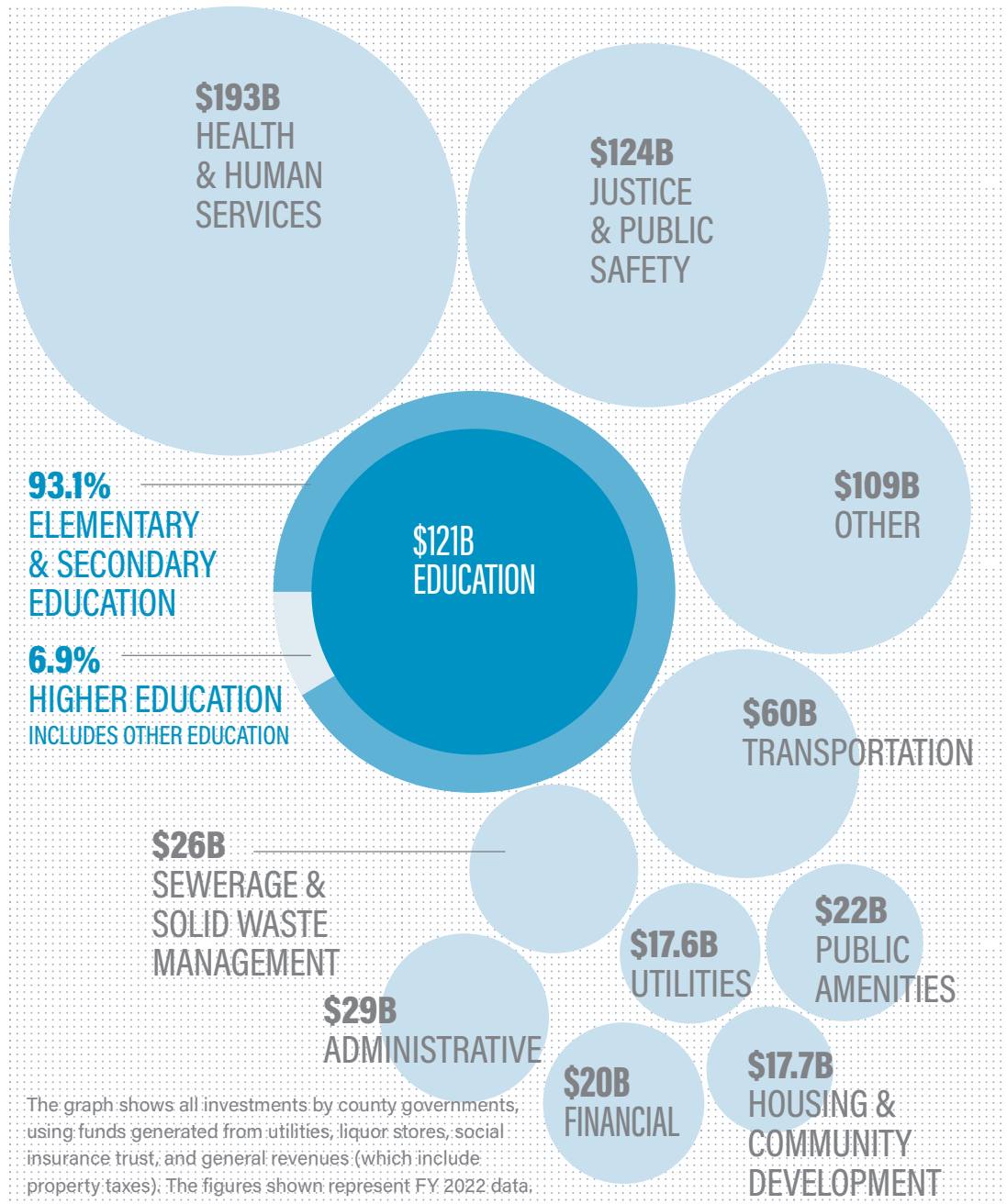
County Education Investments

.....



Total county education investments, including elementary and secondary education, higher education, current operations, construction, other capital outlay and intergovernmental transfers. Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Individual Governments: Finance, 2022.

Annual County Investments Using all Revenue Sources



County property taxes provide the primary source of funding for public schools. Counties levy and collect property taxes while most often the states distribute the education funds to school districts. In five states, counties directly administer education funds.* Even in states where counties are not responsible for overseeing school districts, county governments share a tax base with those school districts and often provide complementary services to participating children.

*States where K-12 schools are directly funded by counties include: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Alaska.

Counties create opportunities through partnerships with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and administer continuing education and workforce development programs.

CTE programs provide students with academic

and technical skills, and knowledge and training to be competitors in the job market. Similarly, county-administered continuing education and workforce development programs enhance knowledge and skills in a particular area leading to a license or credential.

COUNTIES SUPPORT THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN THROUGH VARIOUS MECHANISMS, INCLUDING AN ANNUAL INVESTMENT OF MORE THAN

\$121 BILLION

Foster Safe and Vibrant Communities





Counties invest more than \$12 billion annually in local parks and recreational facilities



Counties invest more than \$124 billion annually in justice and public safety



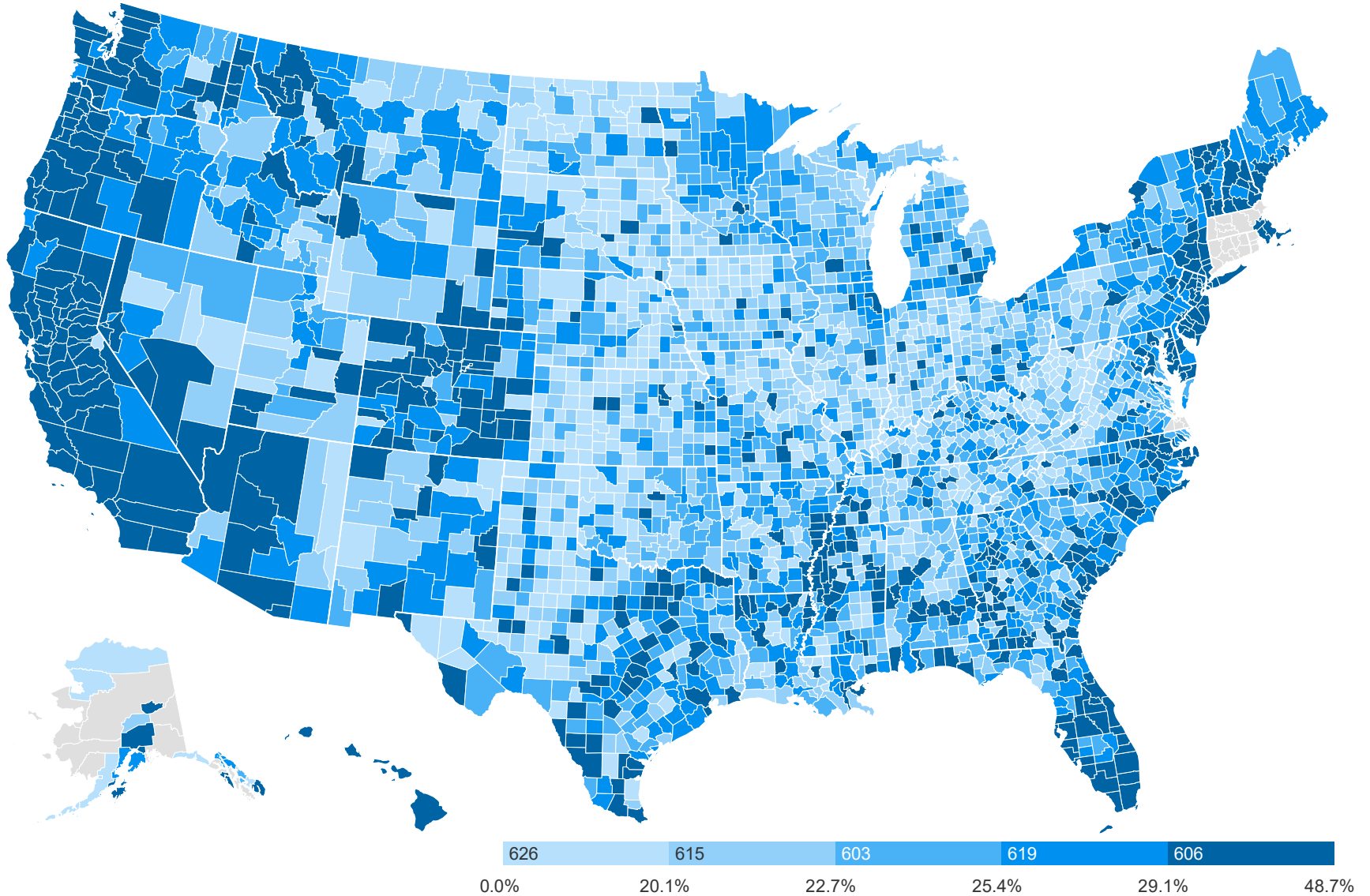
Counties in all 48 states with county governments and the district of columbia operate, manage and fund our own **public-safety answering points**, often mandated by the state



Counties invest \$17.7 billion annually in housing and community development

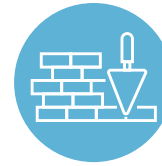
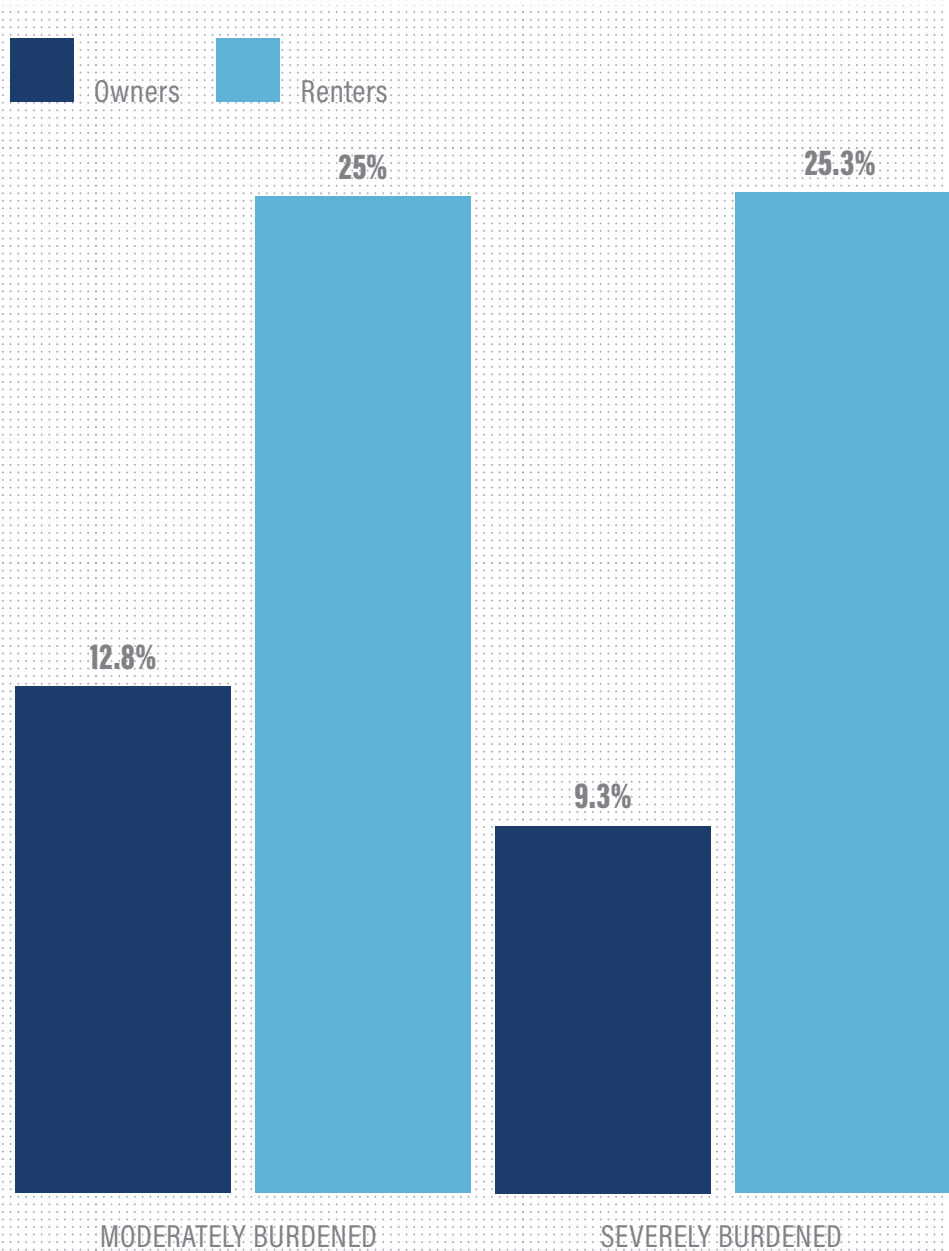
Cost-Burdened Households Across Counties

.....



The share of households (owners and renters) that spent 30 percent or more of their household income on housing costs. Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2019-2023 (Tables DP04, B25091 and B25070).

Share of Cost-Burdened Households Across Counties, 2023



Counties are housing stakeholders, investing **\$17.7 BILLION** annually in the construction, operation and support of housing and redevelopment projects.



In 2023, **HALF OF RENTERS (20.1 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS) AND OVER ONE-FIFTH OF HOMEOWNERS (17.6 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS)** in counties were cost-burdened – spending more than **30 PERCENT** of their incomes on housing.

Counties are key players in community planning, land use, zoning and enacting policies and other regulations that affect housing.

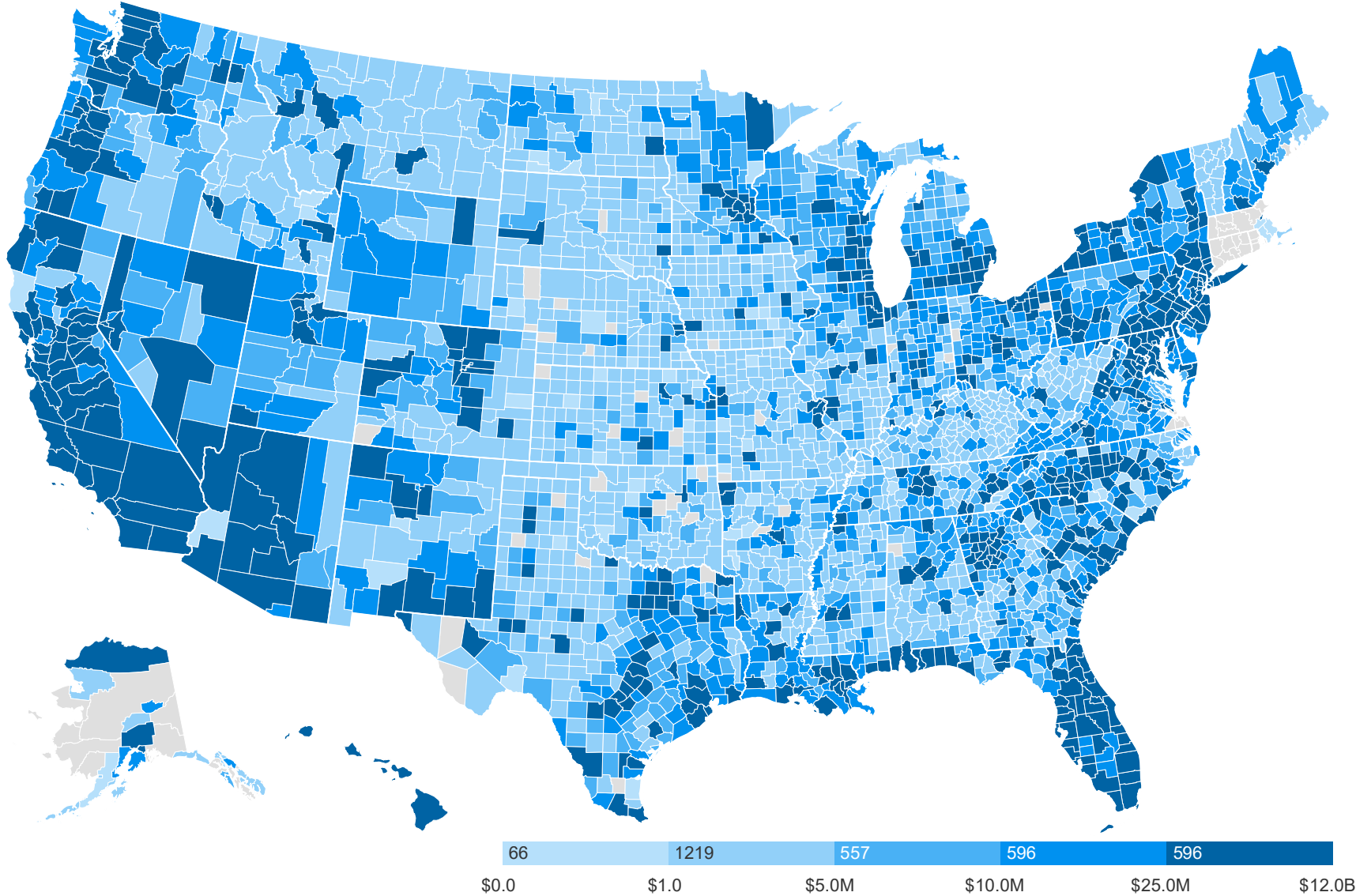
Housing challenges are a longstanding issue. High housing costs are placing great financial stress on individuals and families.

The pandemic highlighted and amplified the existing gaps and challenges in the housing system and counties are investing in solutions to help residents across the nation.

HOUSING COST BURDENS AFFECT BOTH RENTER AND OWNER HOUSEHOLDS AS WELL AS HOUSEHOLDS OF ALL INCOME LEVELS

County Justice and Public Safety Investments

.....



Justice and public safety expenditures by county. These include correctional facilities, judicial and legal services, police and fire protection, protective inspection, current operations, construction, other capital outlay and intergovernmental transfers. Source: U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Individual Governments: Finance, 2022.

Counties play a major role in two distinct areas of justice and public safety: **emergency response and preparedness, and the criminal justice system.**

Counties Annually Invest:



Counties operate

91%

of local jails.



Counties are the backbone of the public safety system, operating **91 percent** of local jails, which processed **7.6 million** admissions in 2023.

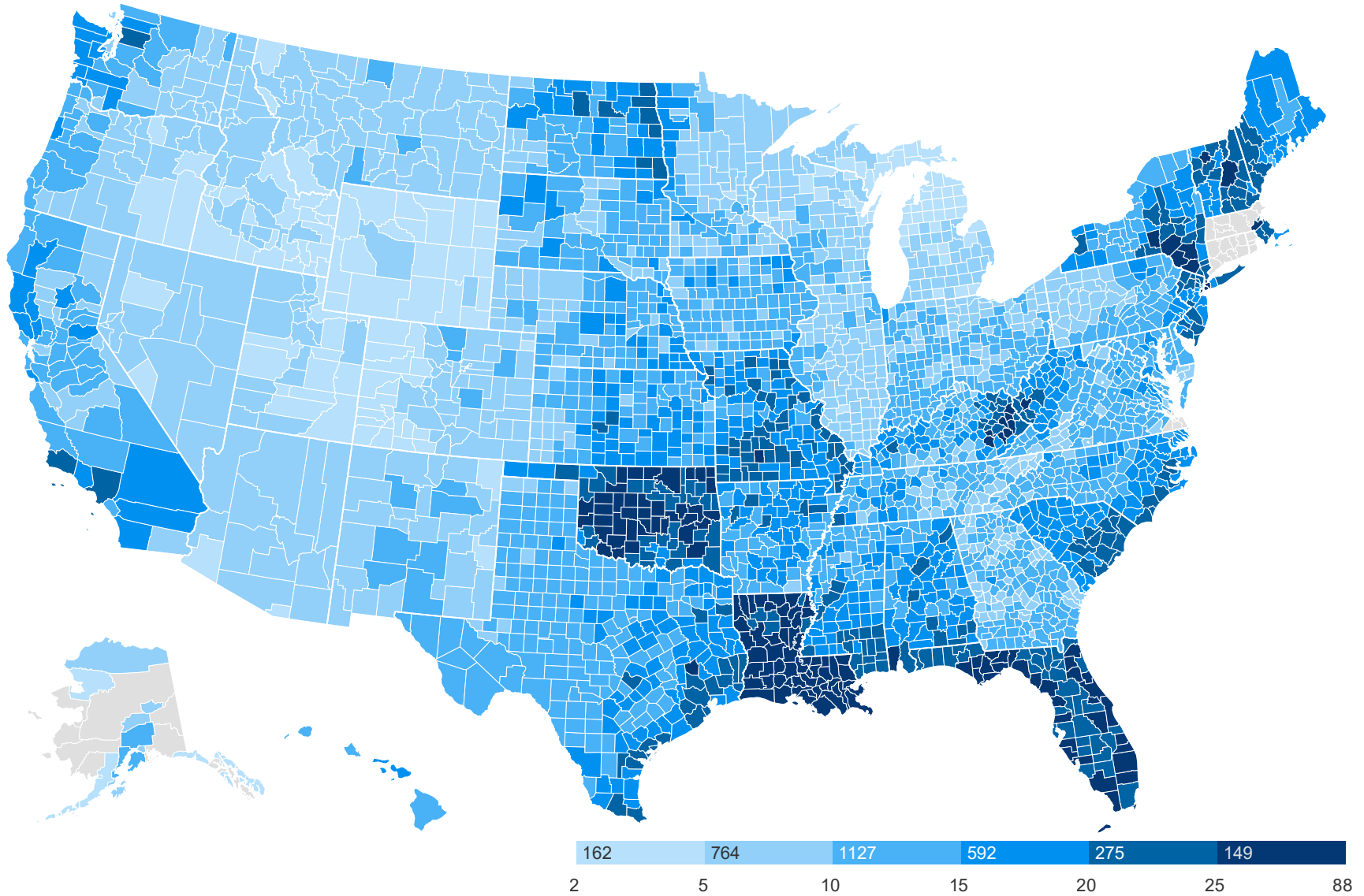
Public safety is a top priority for county residents. County elected officials influence the criminal justice system by passing ordinances, establishing policies, selecting program administrators and staff and making crucial funding decisions that directly and indirectly impact the system.

Counties are the first line of response in an emergency. All county governments operate, manage and fund our own PSAPs, often referred to as 911 centers. These answering points function as the vital link between the community and public safety personnel.

COUNTY, STATE, FEDERAL AND OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MANAGE, FUND AND OPERATE 7,050 PUBLIC-SAFETY ANSWERING POINTS (PSAPS) THROUGHOUT THE NATION

Number of Federally Declared Disasters by County Between 2000 and 2023

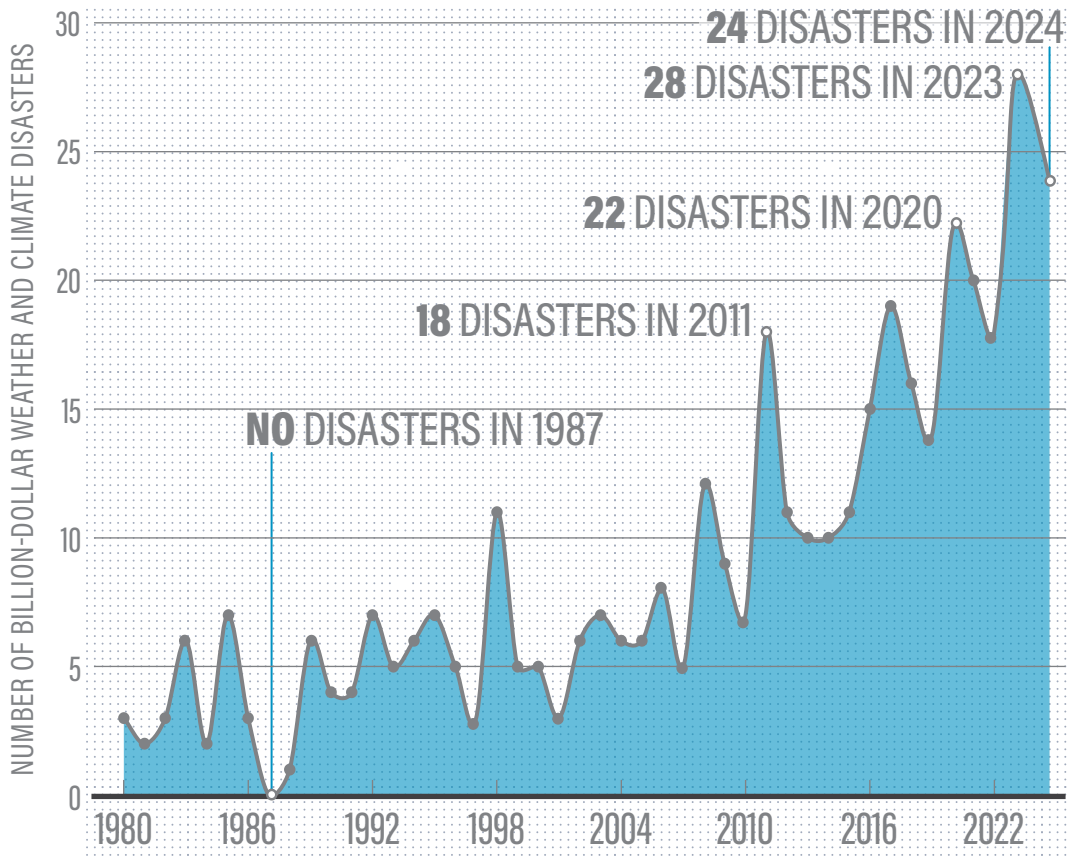
.....



The number of disaster declarations authorized by the President, both major disaster declarations and emergency declarations, for incidents affecting a county in 2000-2023. Source: U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency 2000-2023 Disasters data, 2024.

Over the past two decades, natural and man-made disasters have increased in frequency, severity and cost. In 2024, the nation experienced **27 separate billion-dollar disasters**, totaling approximately **\$182.7 billion** in damages.

Weather and Climate Billion-Dollar Disasters in the U.S. From 1980-2024 - Consumer Price Index (CPI) Adjusted



In 2023,
849 counties
 experienced at least
 one Federally Declared
 Major Disaster,
312 counties
 had at least one
 Emergency Declaration
 and
720 counties
 had at least one
 Disaster Declaration.

America's counties engage in all aspects and phases of emergency management: planning, preparation, mitigation, response and recovery. As the regularity and costs of disasters increase, counties are working hard to protect our residents, property, infrastructure systems and local economies.

Disasters have profound impacts on communities across the United States, highlighting the need for county government leadership and intergovernmental partnerships to ensure local communities are ready to respond when a disaster strikes.



Counties often designate housing stock to support temporary housing for residents, non-local volunteers and federal employees.

77%

OF COUNTIES HAVE PRE-DESIGNATED SHELTERS FOR DISASTER EVACUEES, AS OF 2018

A close-up, low-angle shot of a soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet and tactical vest, saluting with their right hand. The soldier is positioned on the left side of the frame, looking towards the right. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall image has a semi-transparent orange overlay on the right side, which contains a grid of small white dots.

Support Our Nation's Veterans

16 million

veterans live in U.S. counties,
comprising **6.4 percent of
county residents**

\$273 billion

in federal dollars distributed
to veterans in counties
across the nation in FY 2023

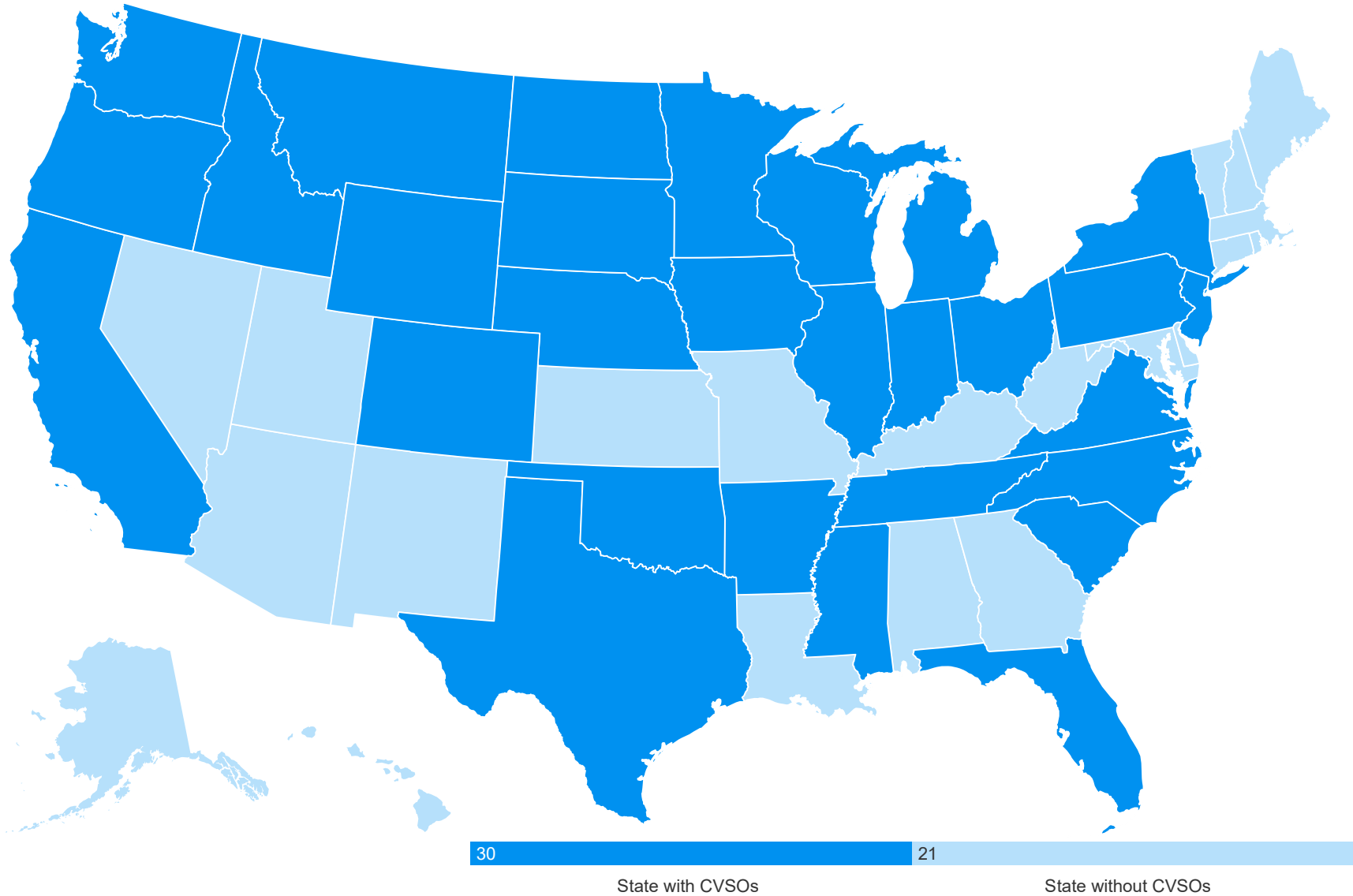
County Veteran Service
Officers (CVSOs) operate in

29 states

and the District of
Columbia, and are
responsible for helping
veterans access federal
benefits

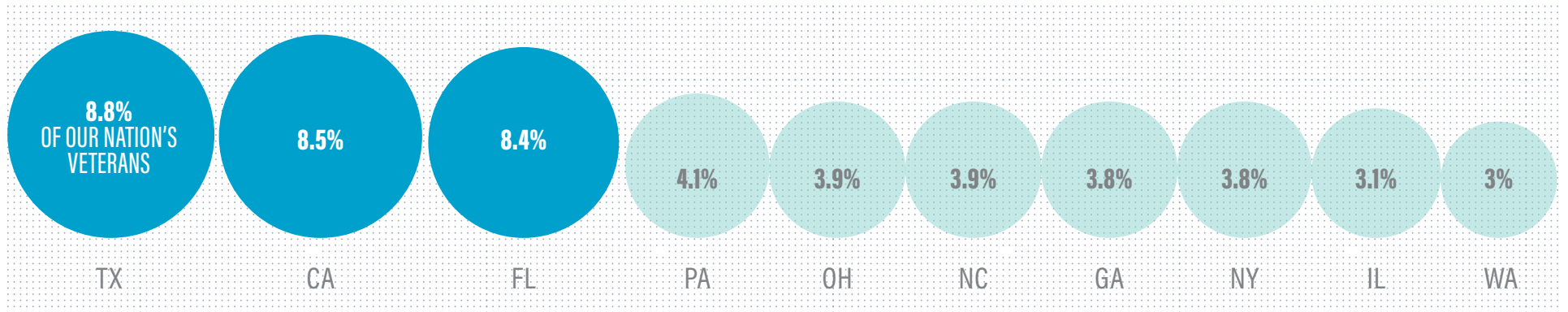
County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) by State

.....



Indicates whether a state (including the District of Columbia) has or does not have at least one county which funds or employs Veteran Service Officers (VSOs). Source: National Association of Counties research, 2023.

The 10 States With the Highest Share of the Veteran Population, 2023



Half of the more than 16 million veterans reside in the ten states shown above. **The three states with over one million veterans each — California, Texas and Florida — have CVSOs to help veterans access services.**



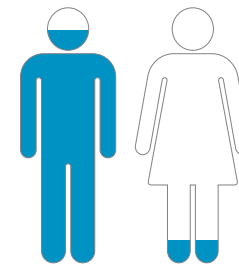
COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS (CVSOS) HELP VETERANS ACCESS A RANGE OF SERVICE-CONNECTED FEDERAL BENEFITS. These federal benefits include health care, disability, pension, compensation and transition assistance programs.



Veterans have attained high levels of schooling. Among veterans 25 years and older, over two-thirds completed at least some post-secondary education, and **31 PERCENT** completed a bachelor's degree.

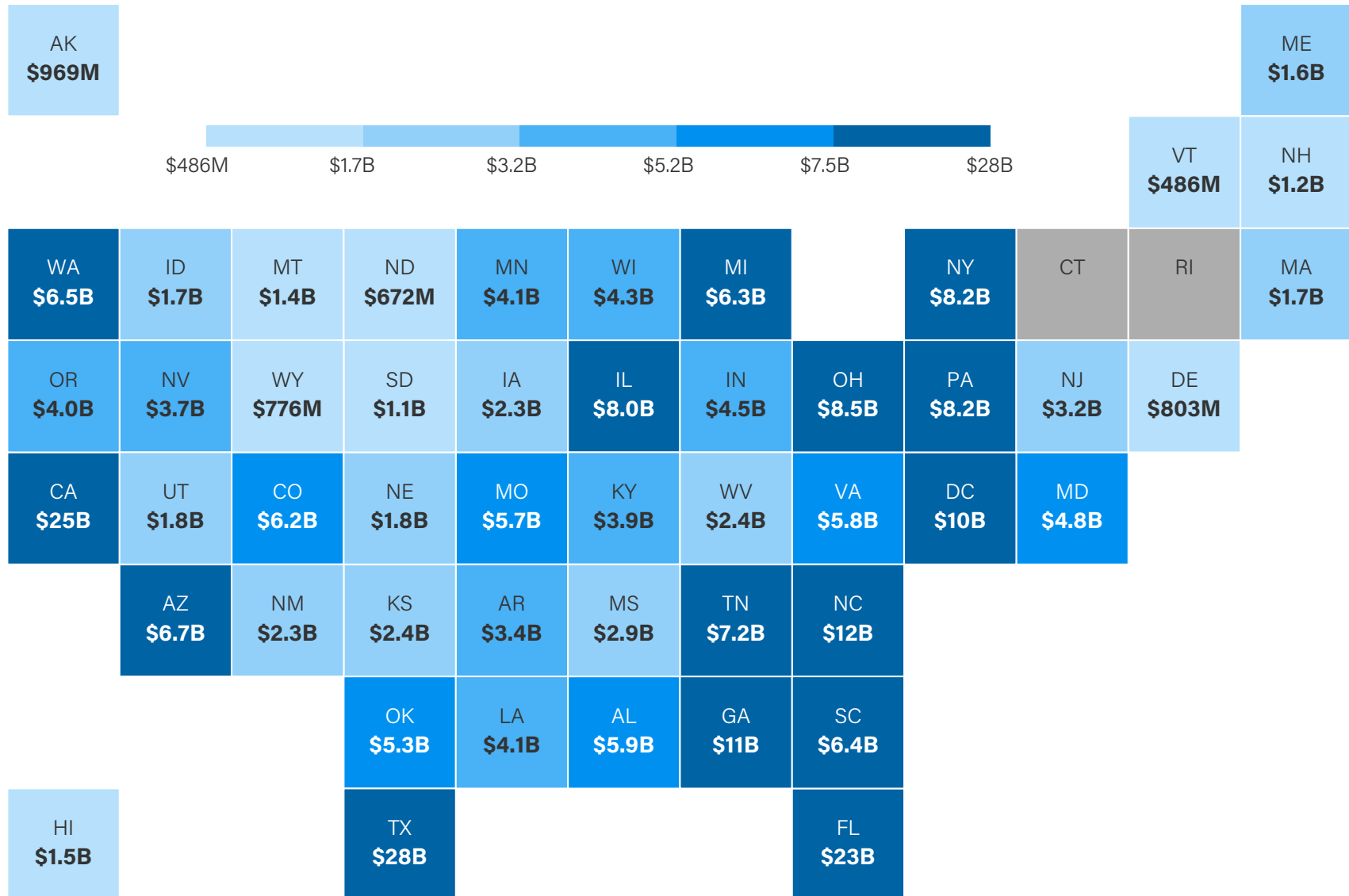
THOUGH CVSOS' PRIMARY FOCUS IS HELPING VETERANS NAVIGATE THE FEDERAL BENEFITS SYSTEM, THESE OFFICES ARE CURRENTLY FUNDED ALMOST ENTIRELY BY COUNTIES

Though the veteran population is predominantly male (90 percent), women make up a growing share, 10 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that female veterans will make up 17 percent of the total veteran population by 2040.



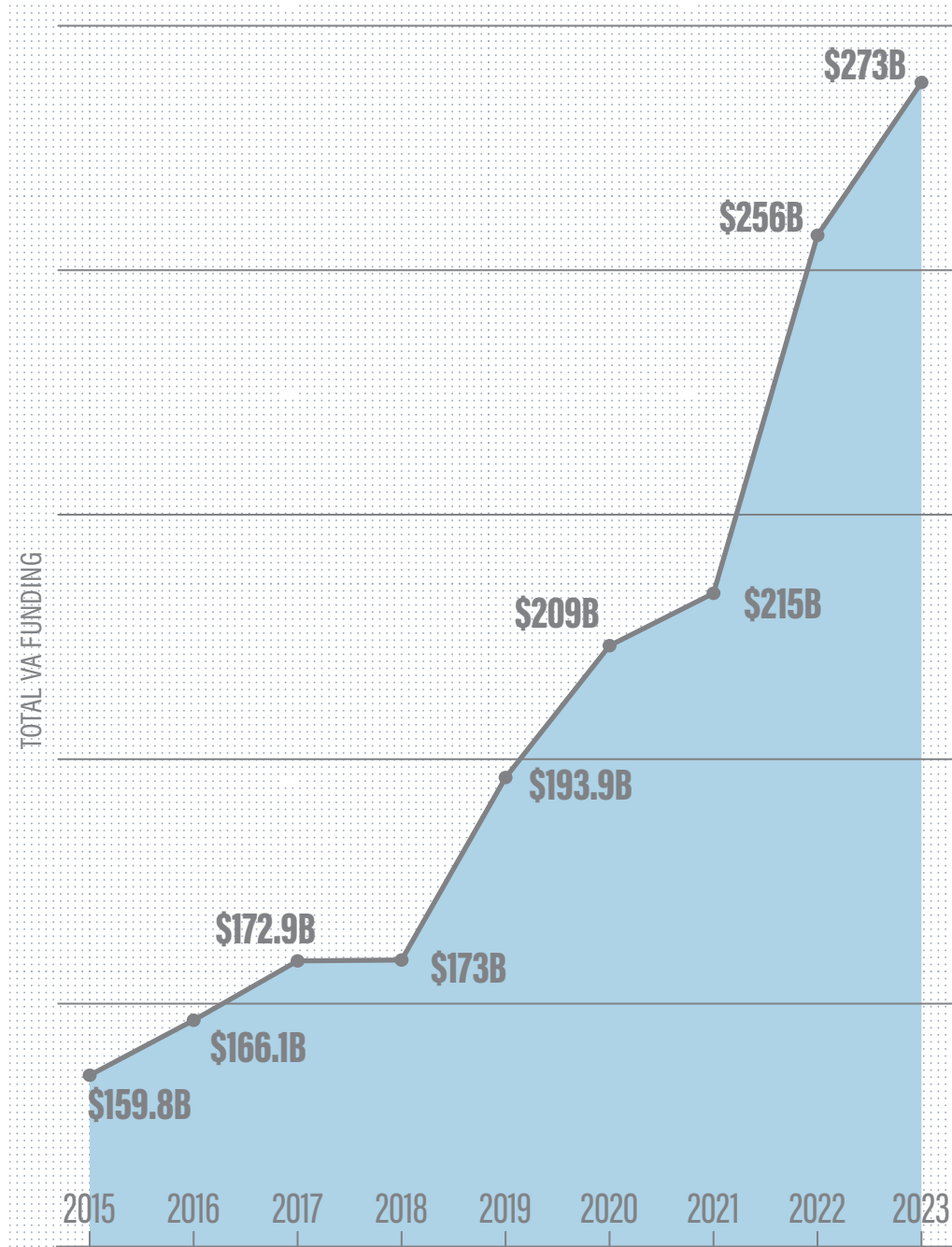
Geographic Distribution of Veteran Affairs (VA) Expenditures by State

.....



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expenditures within the county jurisdiction. Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Data, 2023.

Total Veteran Affairs (VA) Funding, 2015 - 2023



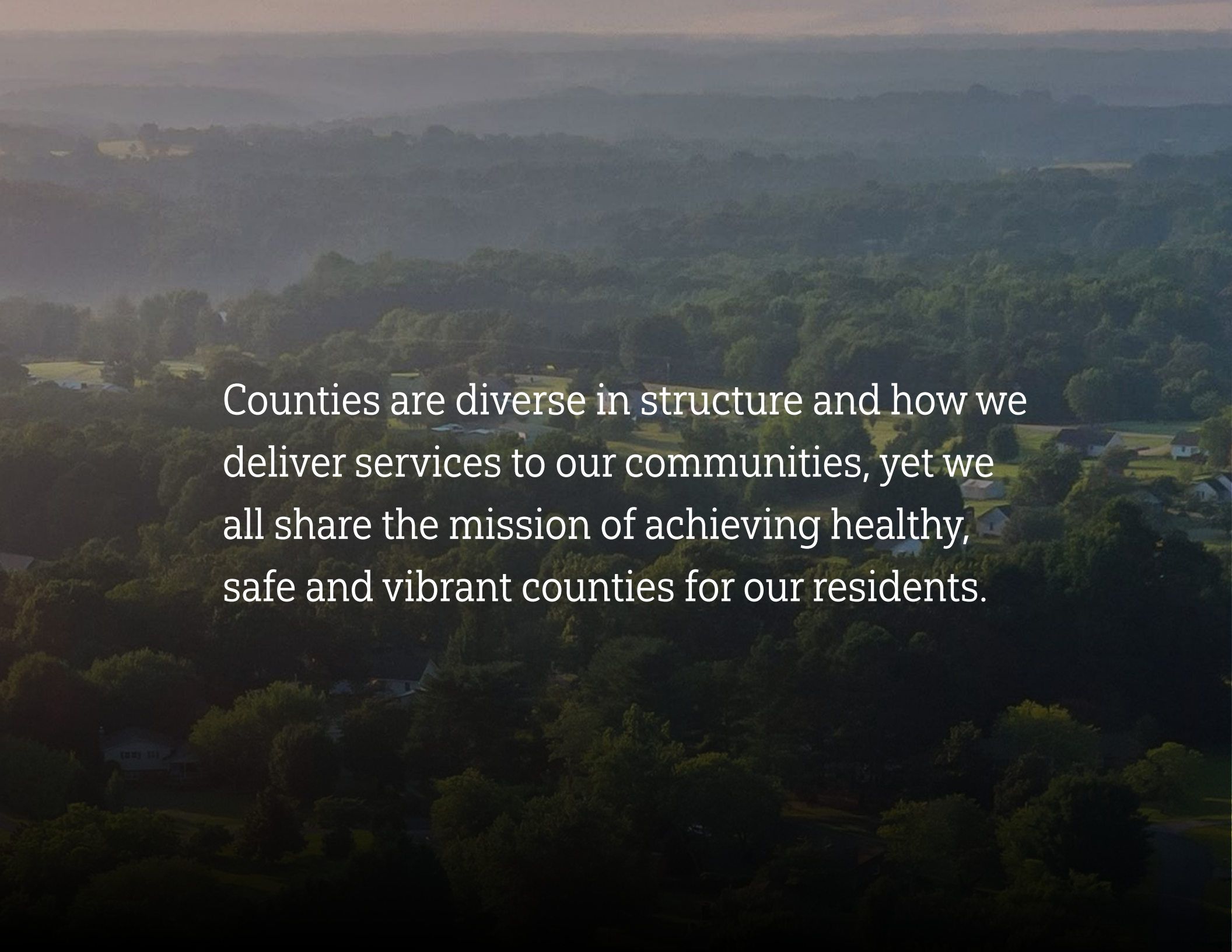
In FY 2023, over **\$273 billion in federal dollars** was distributed to veterans in counties across the nation.

FY 2023 VA funds increased by \$17.5 billion, representing a **7 percent** increase from 2022 expenditure levels. Two VA spending categories—compensation and pension, and medical care—largely drove this increase, comprising **51 percent** and **38 percent** of FY 2023 VA expenditures, respectively.



Texas, California and Florida—the states with the largest veteran populations—also had larger total VA expenditures, which represented **28 percent** of all VA funds in FY 2023.

\$273
BILLION
IN VA FUNDING DISTRIBUTED
TO SUPPORT VETERANS AND
THEIR FAMILIES

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by dense, lush green forests covering rolling hills. Scattered throughout the landscape are several small, white houses with dark roofs, some with visible porches. The background shows more distant, hazy hills under a soft, overcast sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of a quiet, natural community.

Counties are diverse in structure and how we deliver services to our communities, yet we all share the mission of achieving healthy, safe and vibrant counties for our residents.

County Breakdown by Population Size

827
MID-SIZED
COUNTIES
between 50K and
500K residents

451
COUNTIES
between
100K & 500K

376
COUNTIES
between 50K
& 100K

2,108 **SMALL**
COUNTIES
under 50K residents

720 **COUNTIES**
under 10K residents

580 **COUNTIES**
between 10K & 20K

437 **COUNTIES**
between 30K & 50K

371 **COUNTIES**
between 20K & 30K

134 **LARGE COUNTIES**
over 500K residents





660 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Suite 400 • Washington, D.C. 20001
202.393.6226 • www.NACo.org

A Publication of the NACo
County Landscape Project

[FB.COM/NACoDC](https://www.facebook.com/NACoDC) 

[TWITTER.COM/NACoTWEETS](https://twitter.com/NACoTWEETS) 

[YOUTUBE.COM/NACoVIDEO](https://www.youtube.com/NACoVIDEO) 

[WWW.NACo.ORG/LINKEDIN](https://www.linkedin.com/company/naco) 