



# Fortifying Main Street:

## The Economic Benefit of Public Pension Dollars in Rural America

Research Webinar

July 14, 2022



NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON  
**Retirement Security**

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# AGENDA

01. Introductions

02. Research Review

03. Q&A

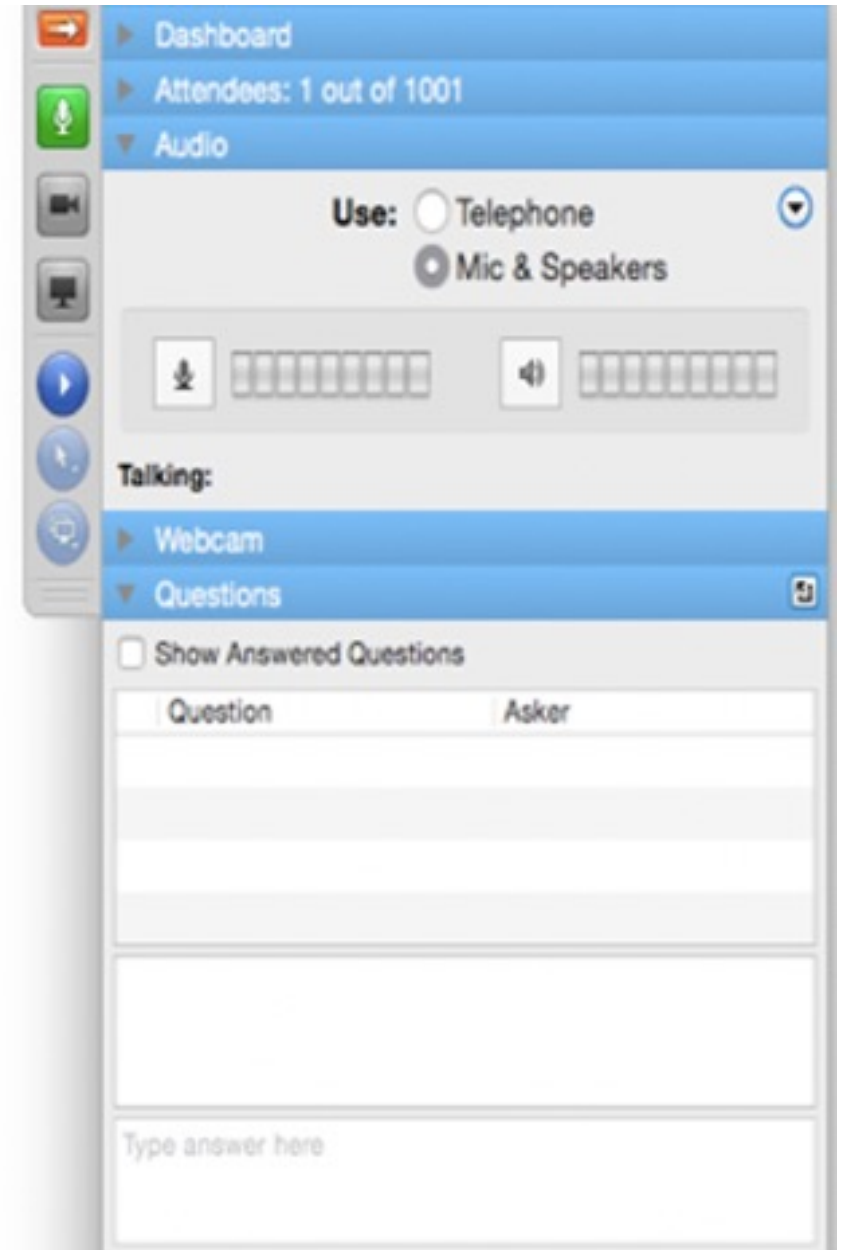
# FORTIFYING MAIN STREET

THE ECONOMIC BENEFIT OF  
PUBLIC PENSION DOLLARS  
IN RURAL AMERICA



# Logistics

- Attendees in listen only mode.
- Questions are welcome. Submit using “Question” function on control panel
- Audio/technical issues during webinar: call GoToWebinar at 1-800-263-6316
- Webinar replay and slides will be posted at [nirsonline.org/reports/mainstreet2022](http://nirsonline.org/reports/mainstreet2022)



# SPEAKERS



**Dan Doonan**

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Report Co-Author



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NIRS Research Manager and  
Report Co-Author



**Nathan Chobo**

Linea Solutions Consultant and  
Report Co-Author

# Why This Research

- **Previous NIRS research (*Pensionomics*) has focused on the downstream economic impact of the spending of pension benefits.** This research focuses on the raw dollar amounts of pension benefits at the county level.
- **New data on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by county only became available in the past few years,** enabling new areas of research.
- **Previous research by other organizations had indicated that rural areas received a greater relative economic impact** from the flow of pension benefit dollars than cities and other metropolitan areas.
- **Cities likely receive a greater amount of pension benefit dollars in absolute terms,** but these are dwarfed by the size of the economy in large cities.

# States Included in This Research

- **2020 edition:** CA, IA, ID, IL, KS, ME, MN, MO, MS, ND, NM, NV, NY, PA, SC, SD, TX, WI, WY
- **2022 additional states:** AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, HI, IN, KY, LA, MD, MI, MT, NE, NH, OH, OK, OR, RI, TN, UT, VA, VT, WA, WV
- **States not included in this research:** AK, AZ, CT, DE, MA, NC, NJ

# Key Findings

- **Public pension benefit dollars** represent between one and three percent of GDP on average in the 2,922 counties studied.
- **Rural counties** have the highest percentages of their populations receiving public pension benefits.
- **Small town counties** experience a greater relative impact in terms of both GDP and total personal income from pension benefit dollars than rural or metropolitan counties.

# Key Findings

- **Rural counties** experience a greater relative impact in terms of total personal income than metropolitan counties.
- **Counties that contain state capitals** are outliers from other metropolitan counties, likely because there is a greater density of public employees in these counties, most of whom remain in these counties in retirement.
- **On average, rural counties have lost population** while small town counties and metropolitan counties have gained population in the period between 2000 and 2018.

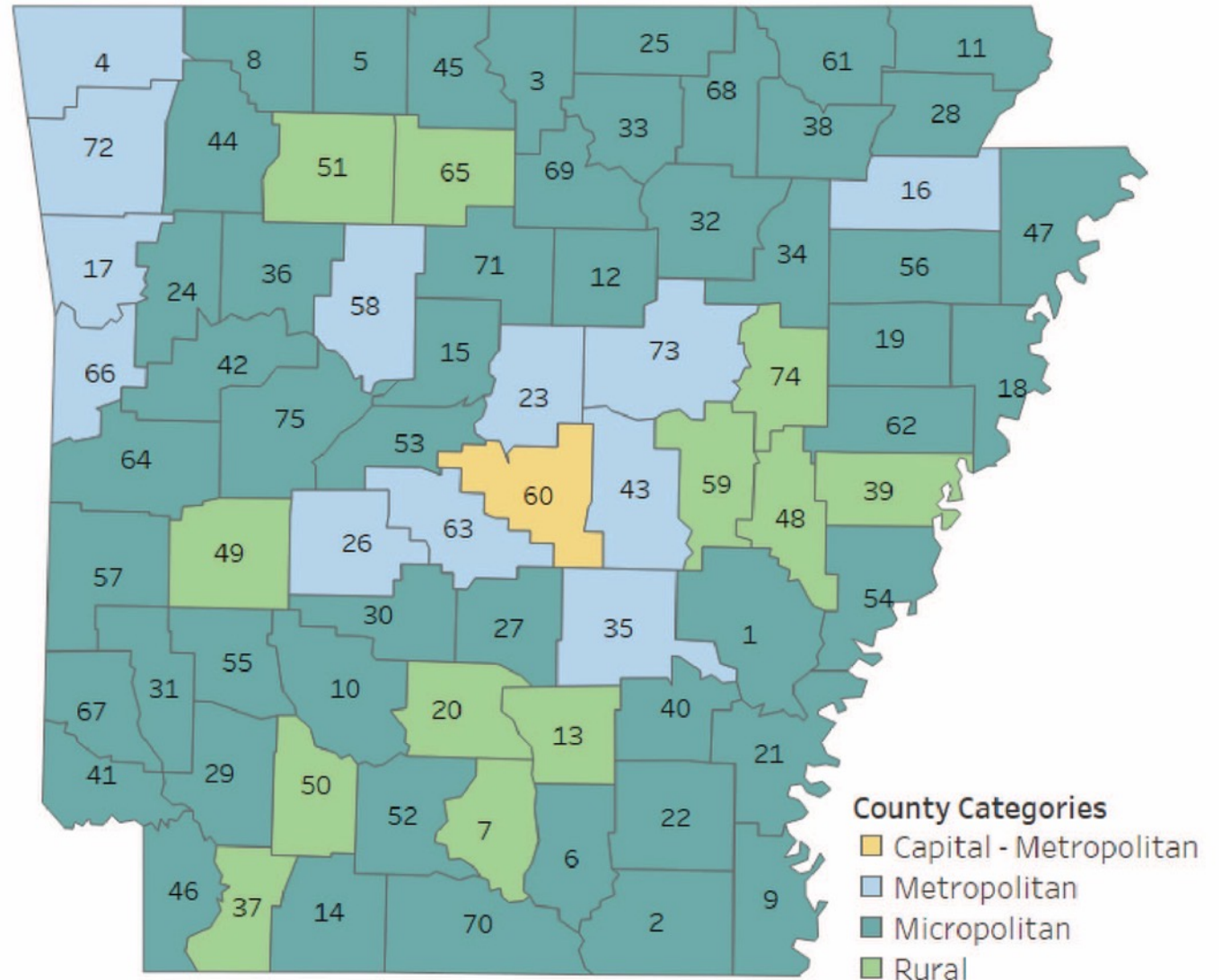


# Summary of County Data Findings

Type of County	Number of Counties	Average Population Density	% of Population Receiving	Benefits as Share of GDP	Benefits as Share of Personal Income
Capital	45	544.21	2.60%	1.29%	1.64%
Independent City	9	1350.97	N/A	0.67%	0.75%
Metropolitan	822	281.44	1.87%	1.13%	1.15%
Micropolitan	1365	28.59	2.58%	1.86%	1.79%
Rural	681	5.01	3.02%	1.13%	1.76%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2922</b>	<b>103.49</b>	<b>2.02%</b>	<b>1.20%</b>	<b>1.25%</b>

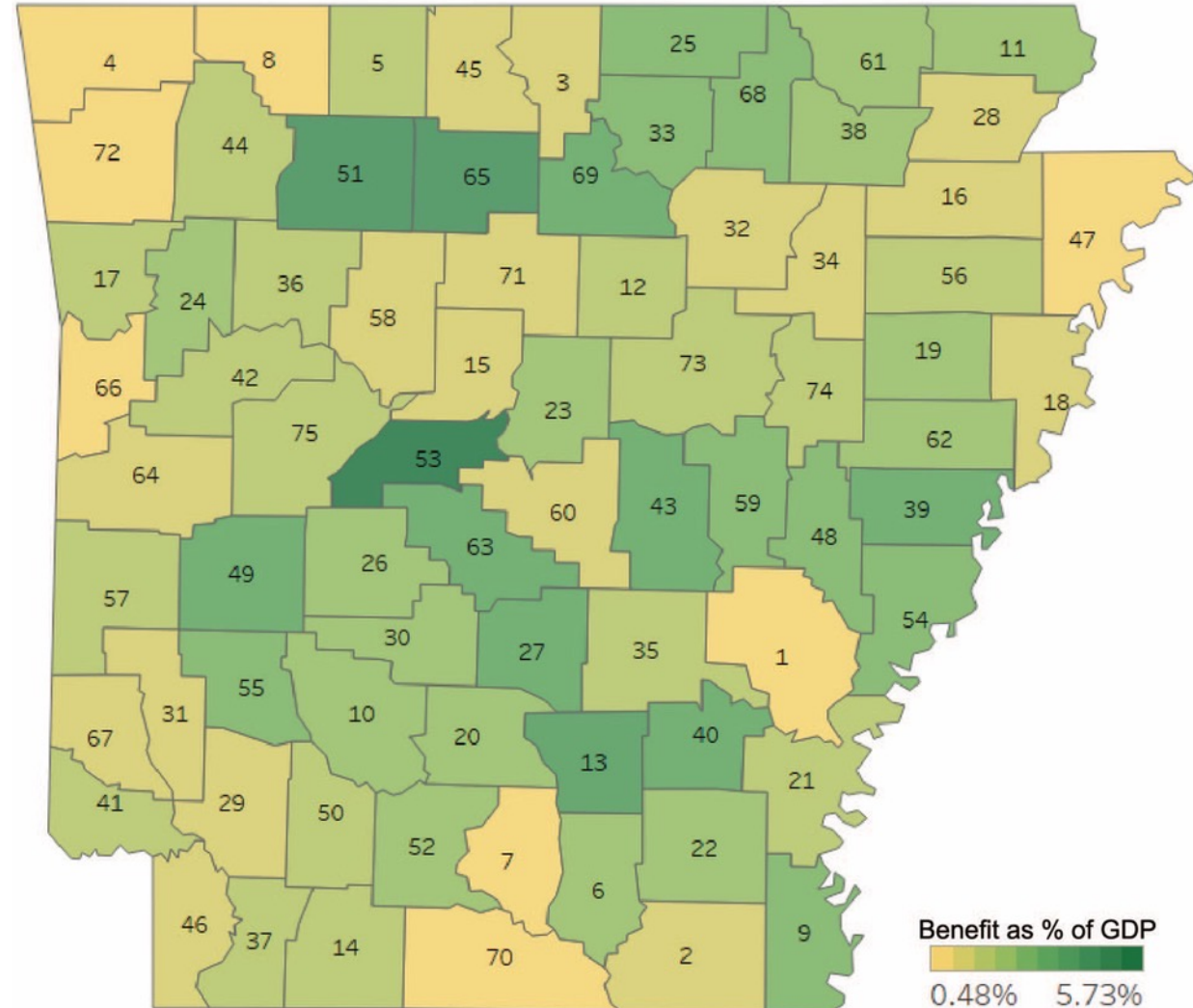
# Arkansas County Type

Figure A4. Arkansas County Type



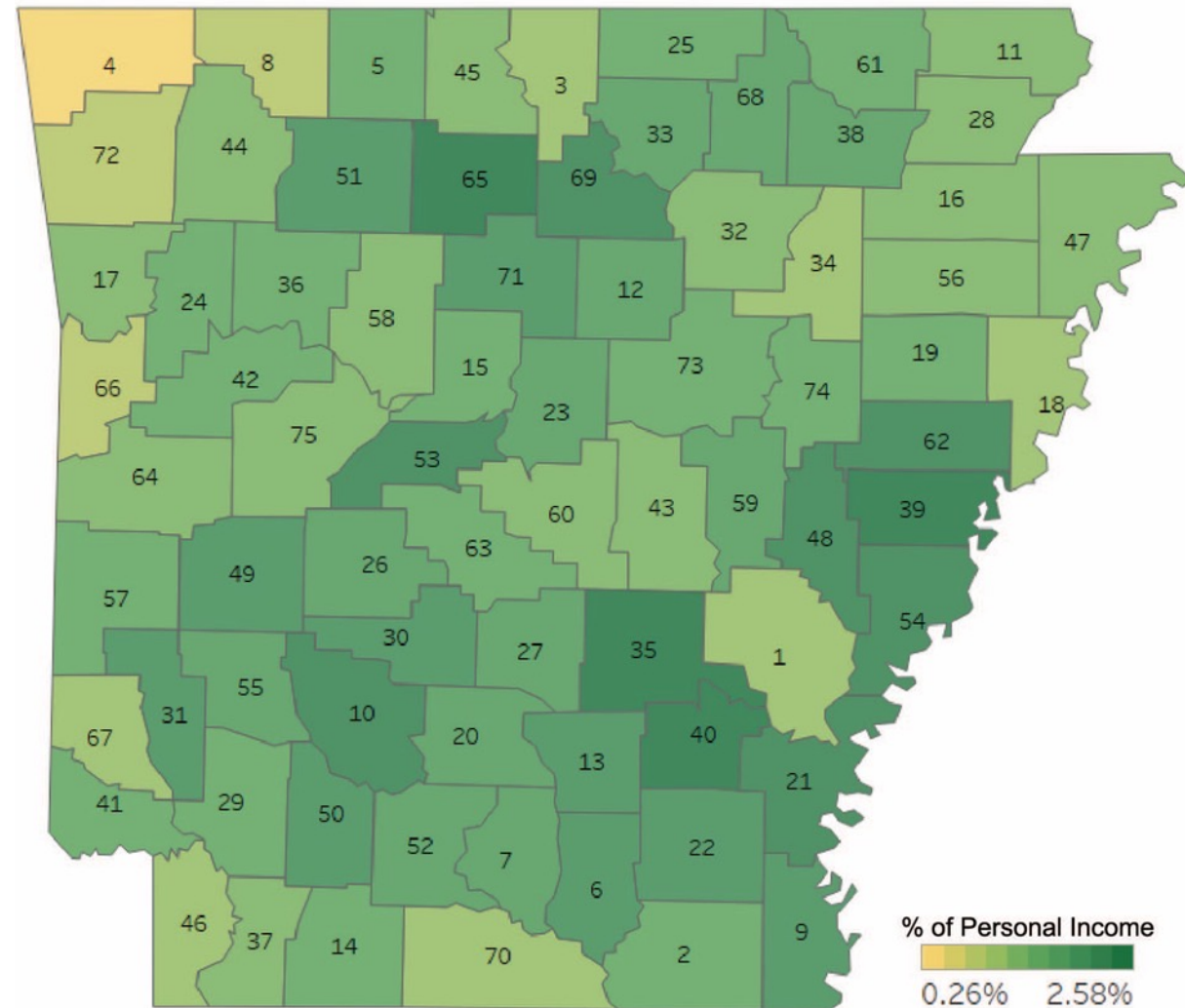
# Arkansas Percent of GDP

Figure A5. Arkansas Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



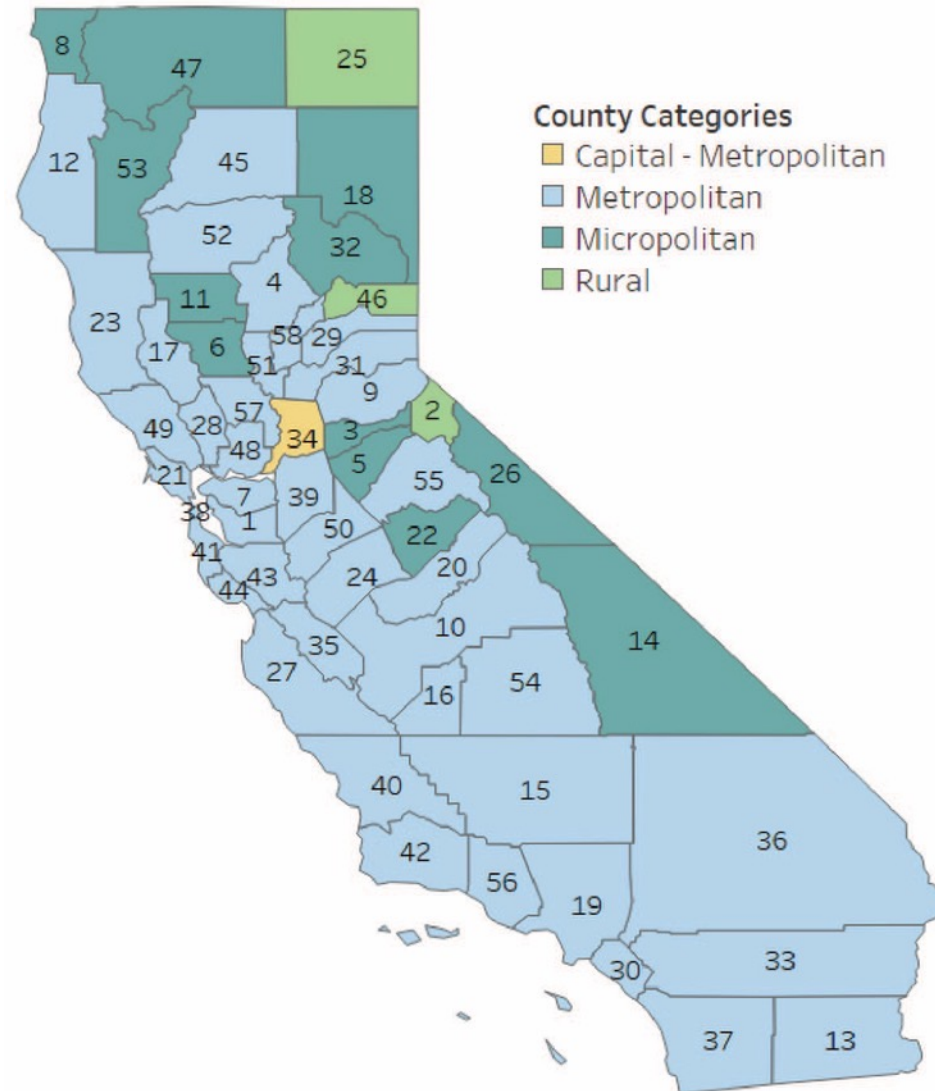
# Arkansas Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A6. Arkansas Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



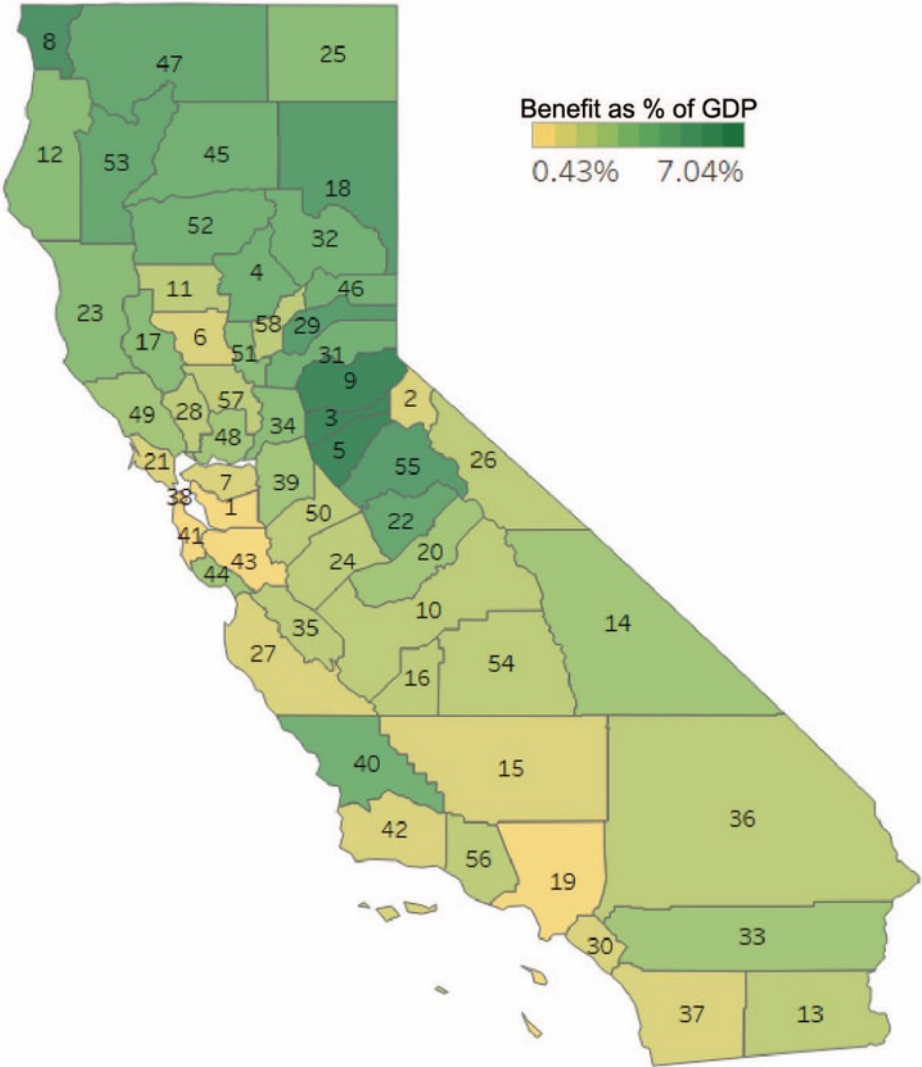
# California County Type

Figure A7. California County Type



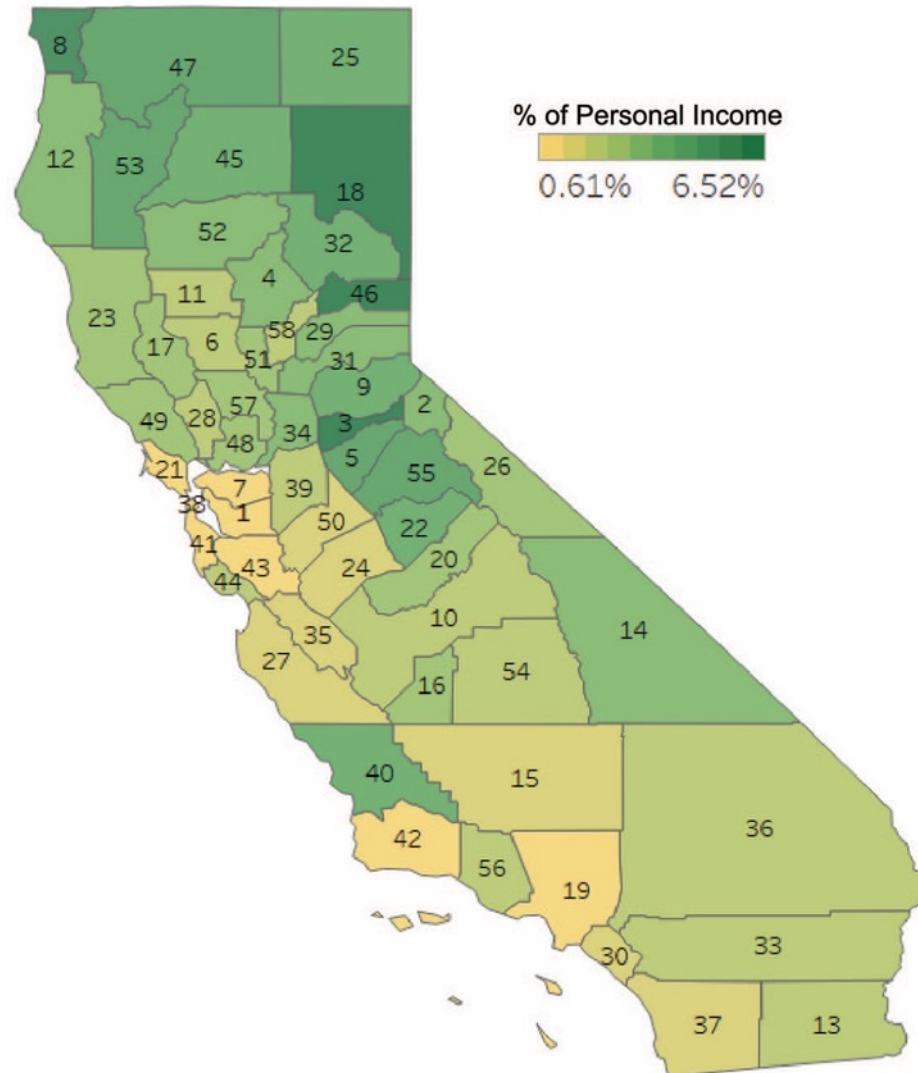
# California Percent of GDP

Figure A8. California Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



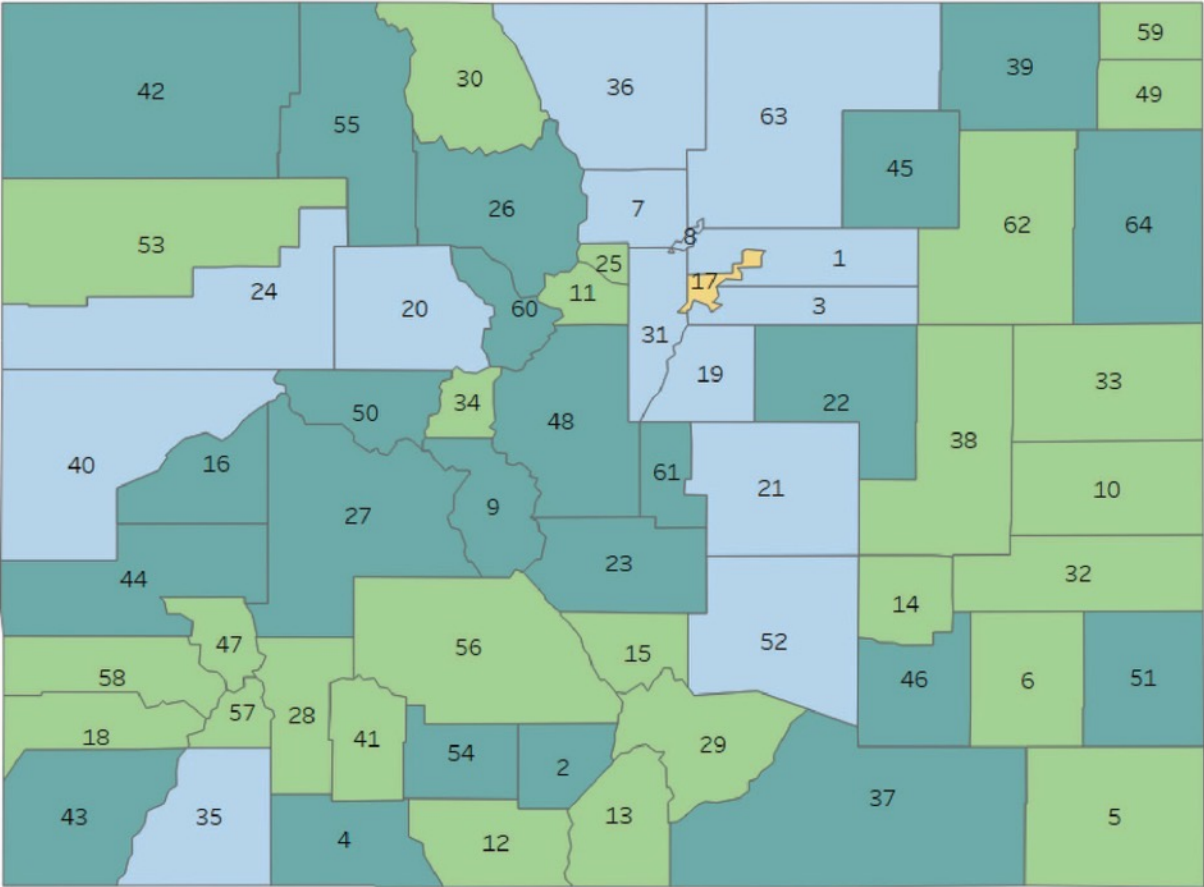
# California Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A9. California Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



# Colorado County Type

Figure A10. Colorado County Type

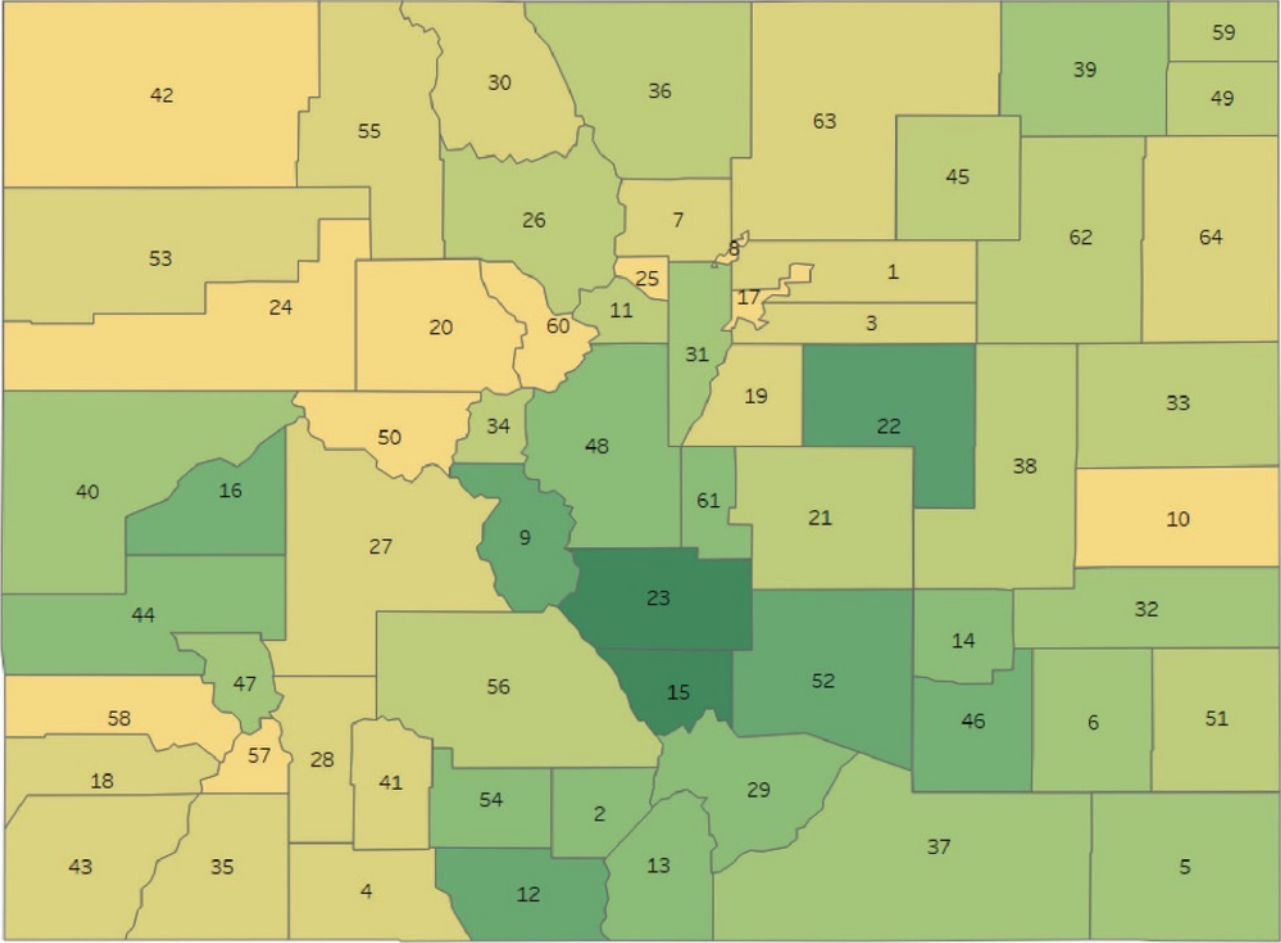


- County Categories**
- Capital - Metropolitan
  - Metropolitan
  - Micropolitan
  - Rural



# Colorado Percent of GDP

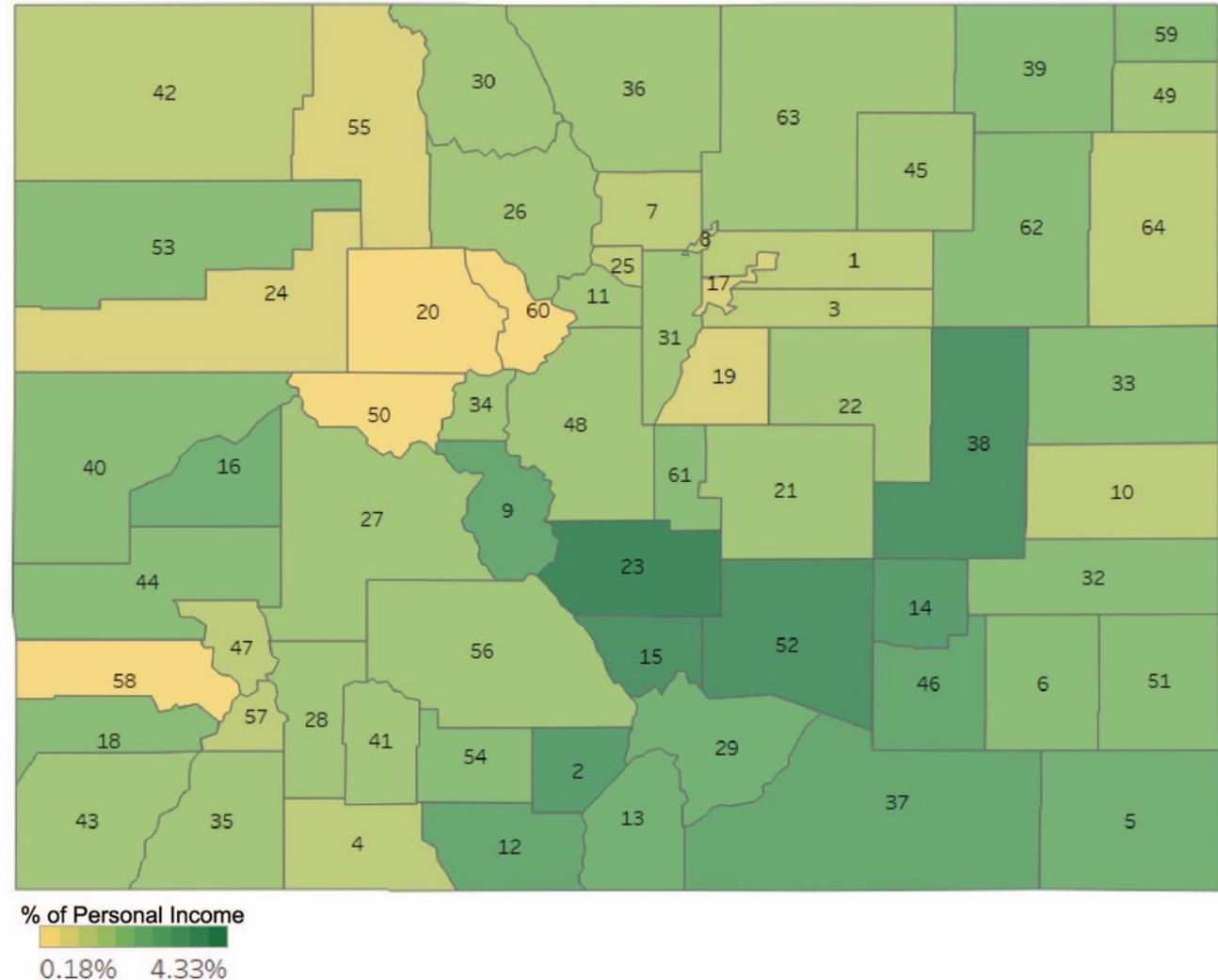
Figure A11. Colorado Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



Benefit as % of GDP  
 0.25% 6.01%

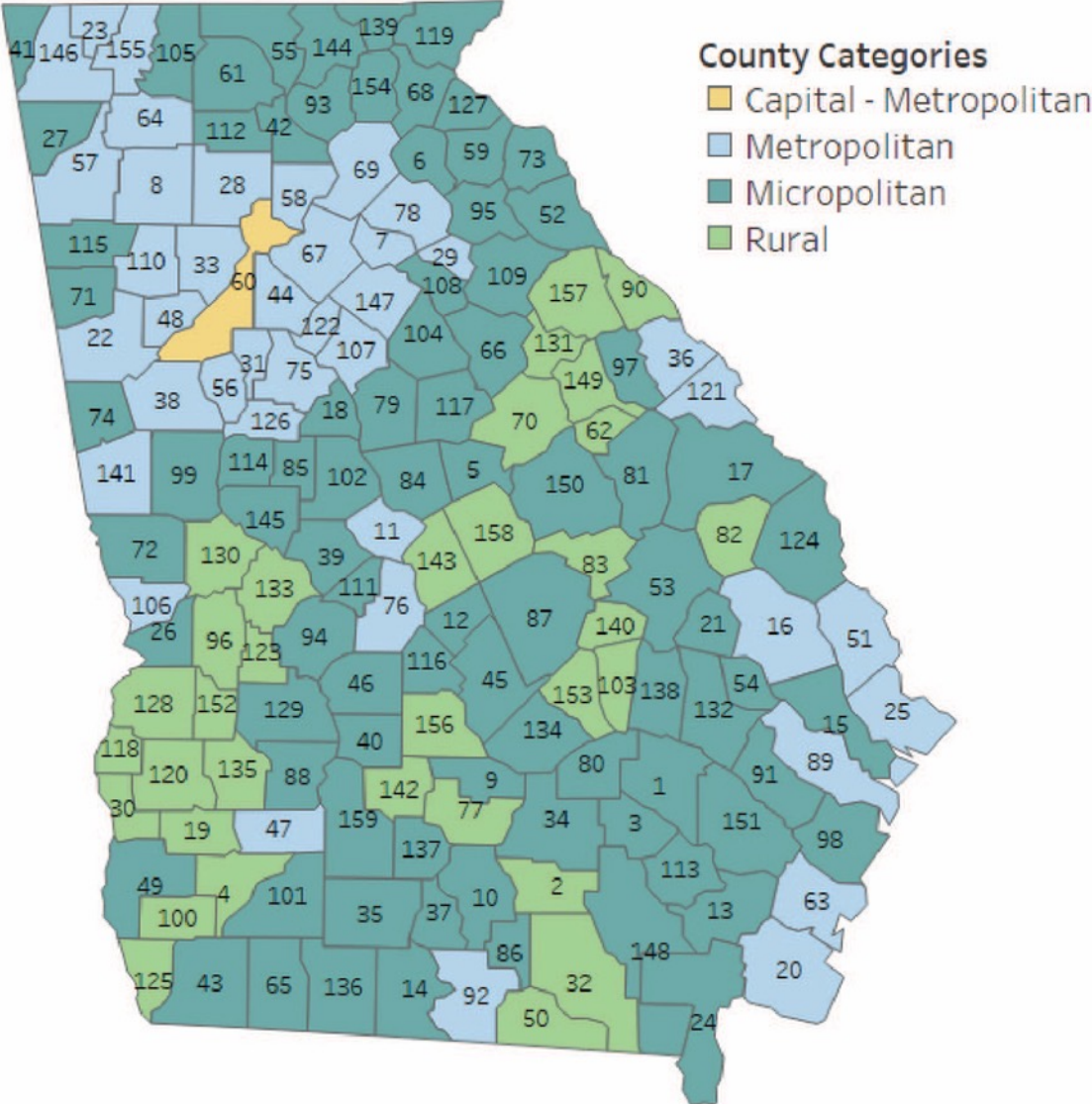
# Colorado Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A12. Colorado Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



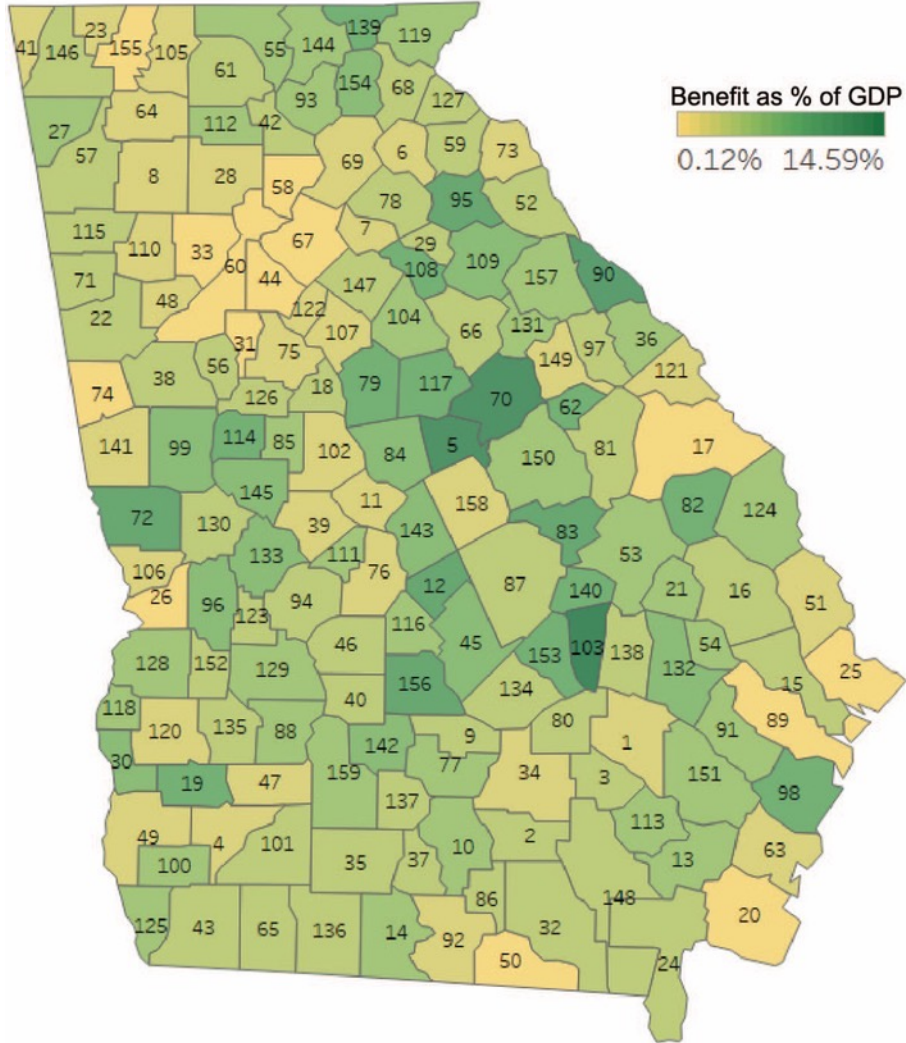
# Georgia County Type

Figure A16. Georgia County Type



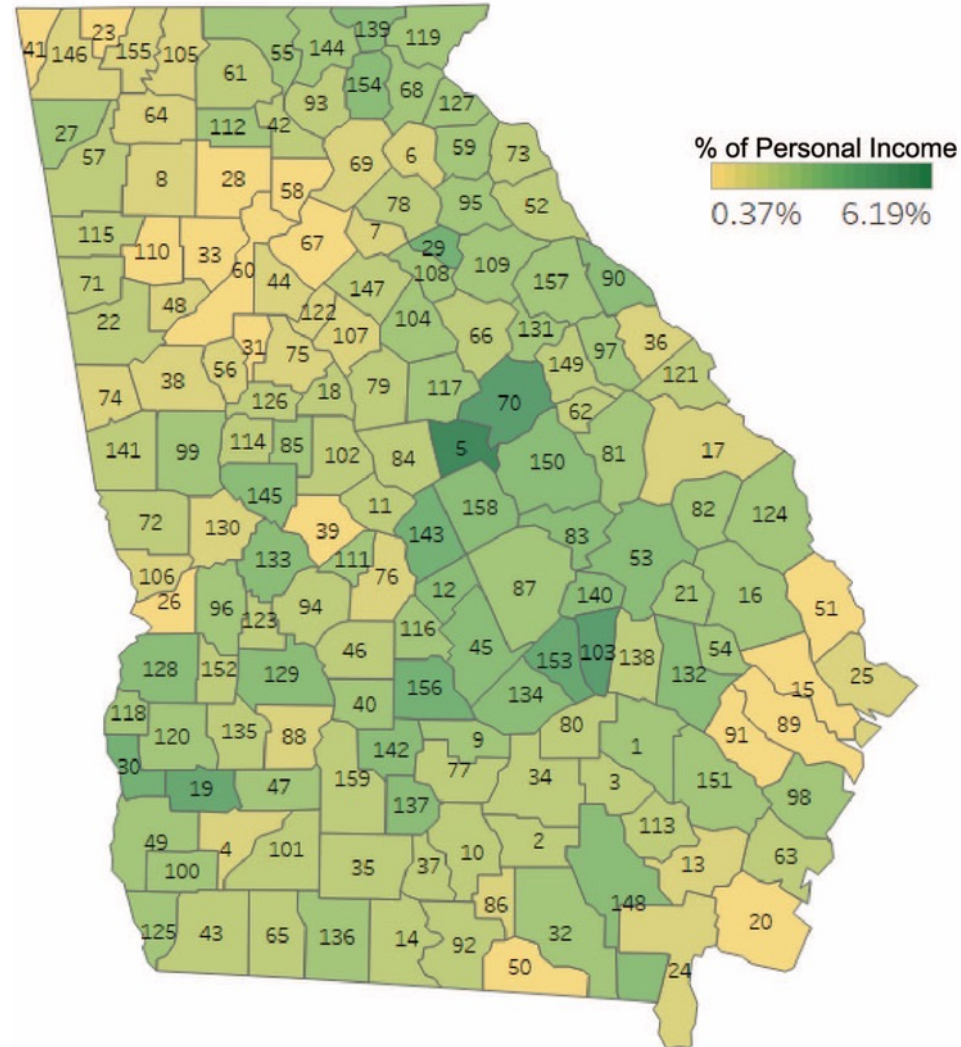
# Georgia Percent of GDP

Figure A17. Georgia Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



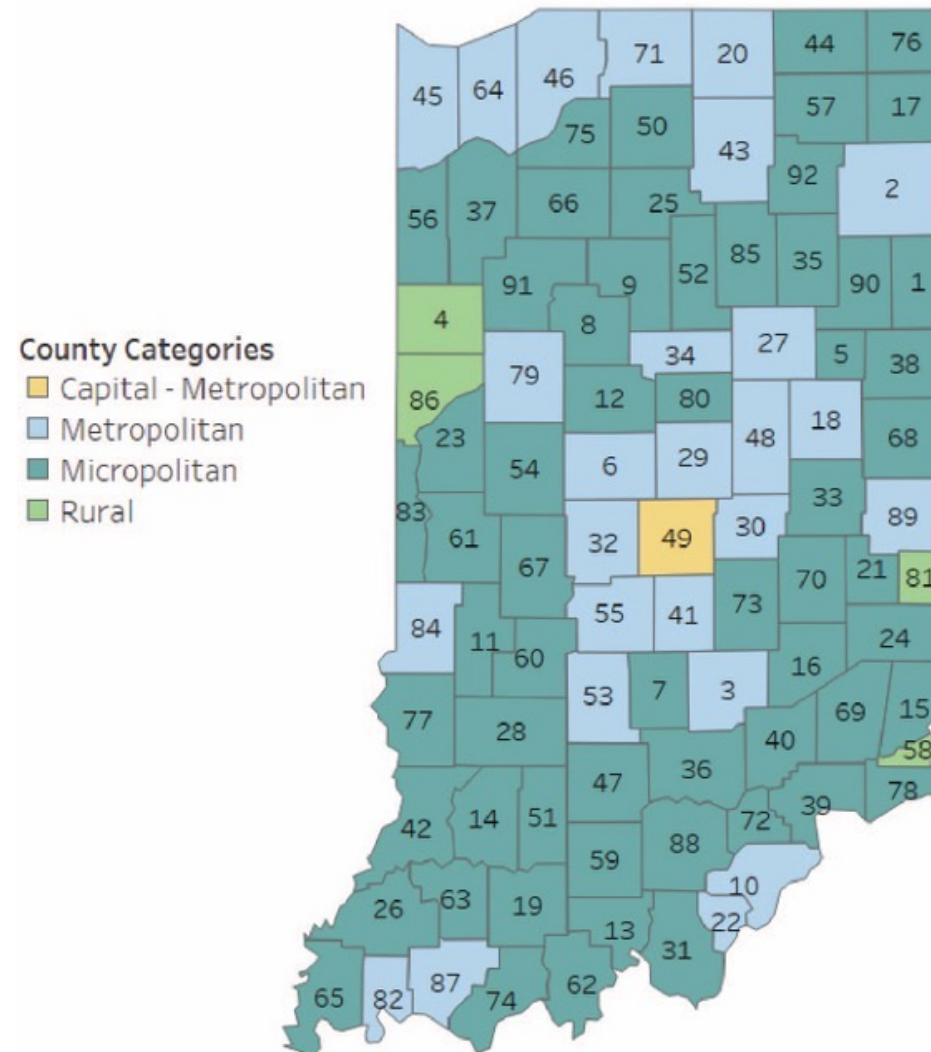
# Georgia Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A18. Georgia Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



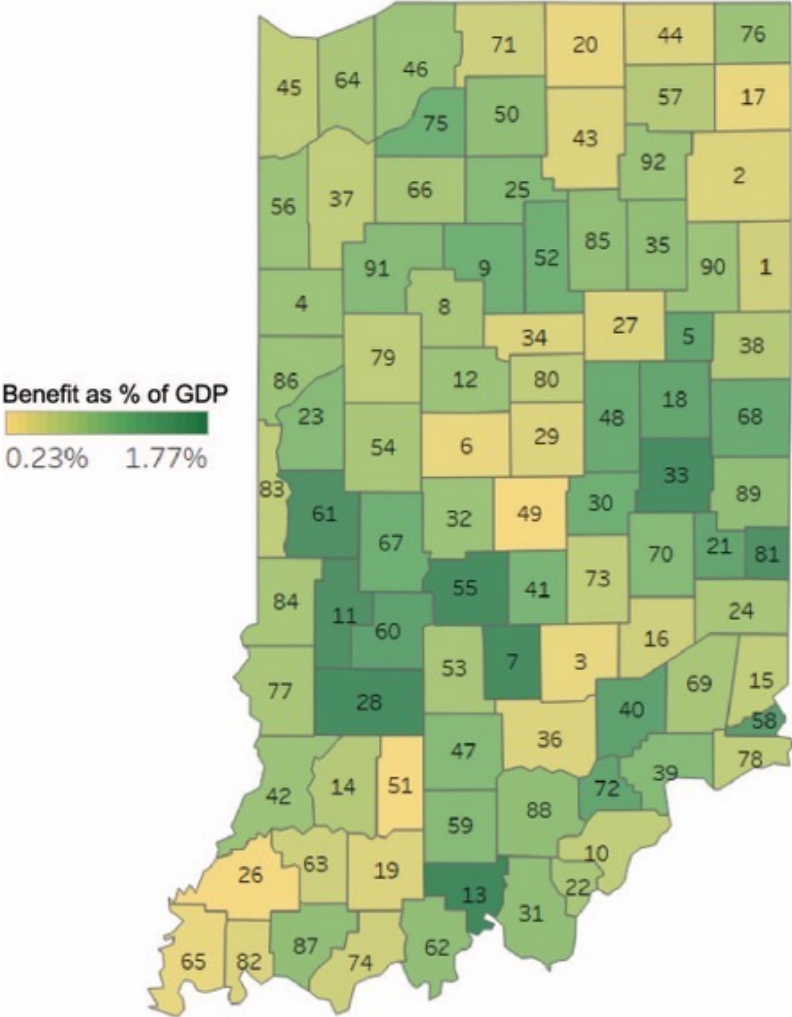
# Indiana County Type

Figure A28. Indiana County Type



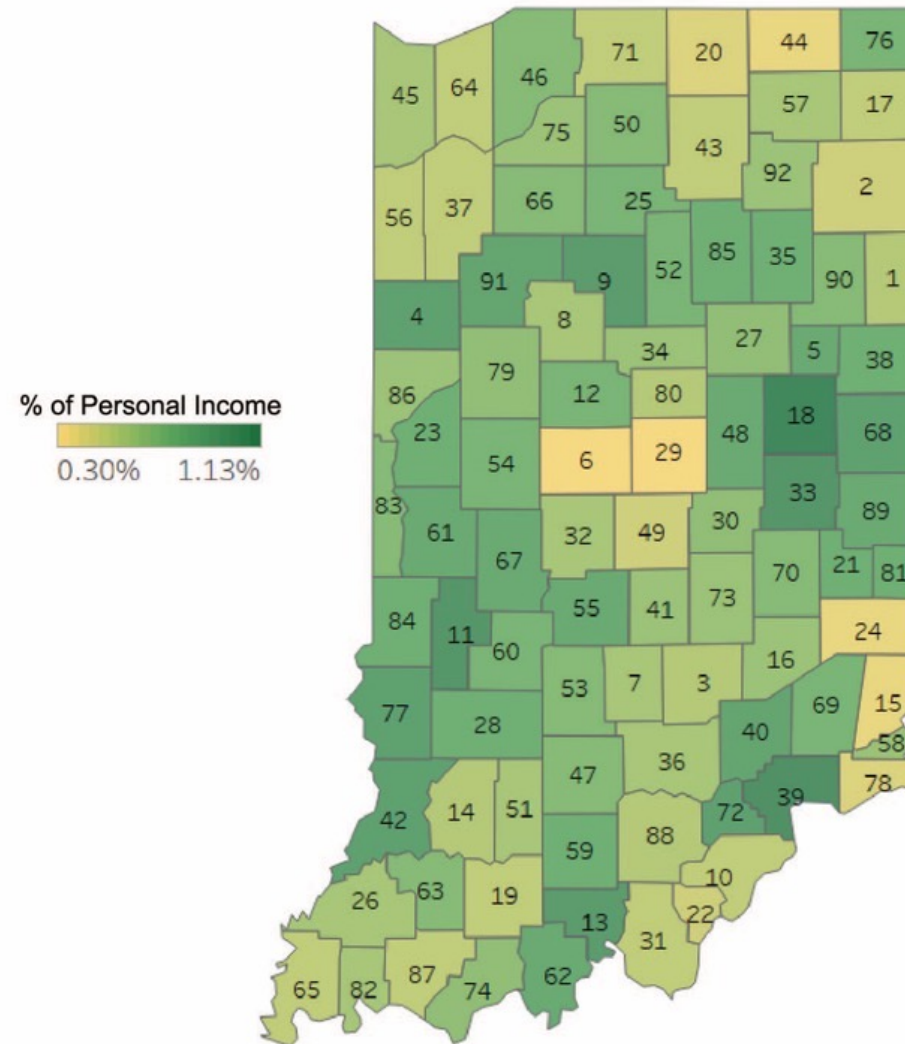
# Indiana Percent of GDP

Figure A29. Indiana Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



# Indiana Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

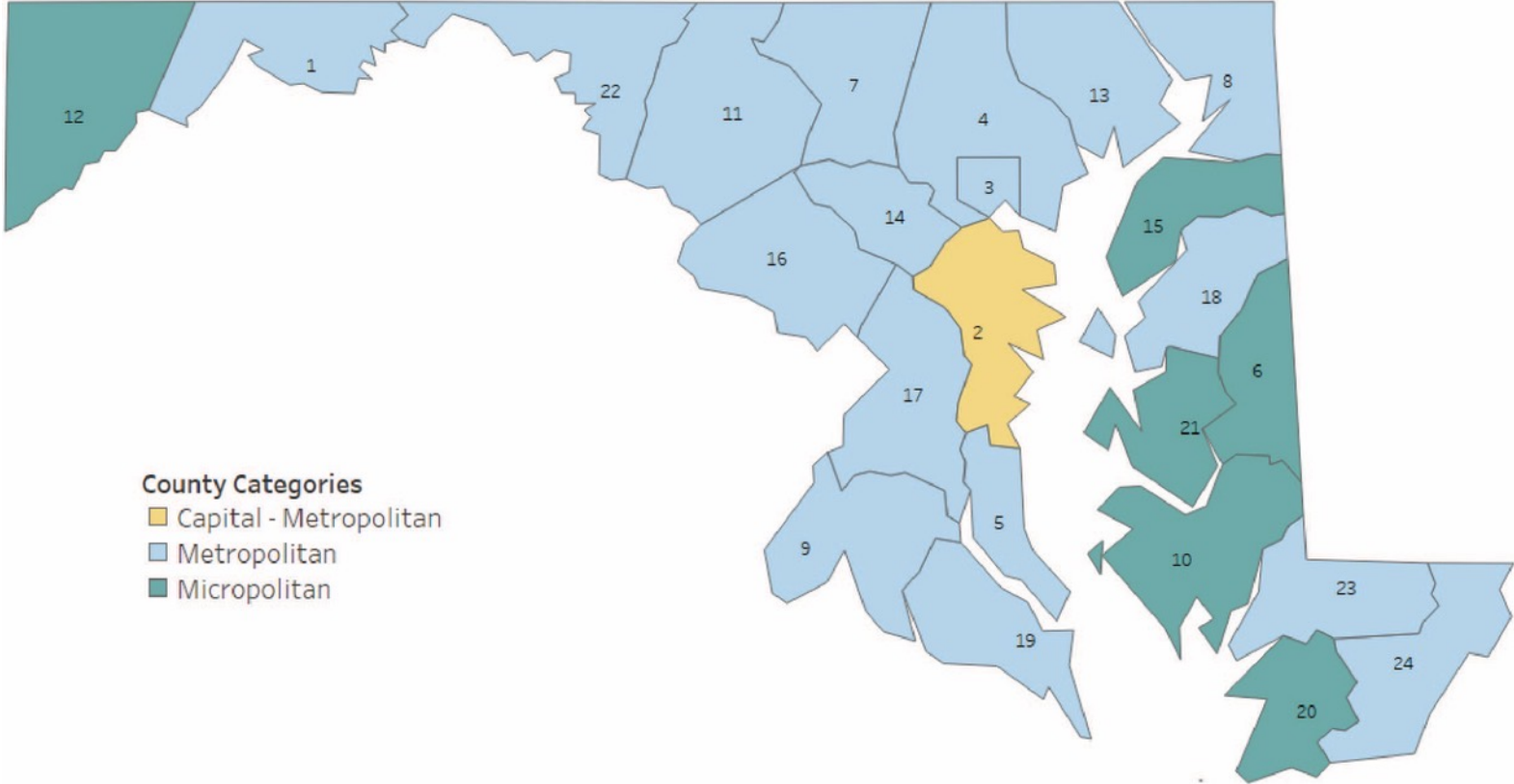
Figure A30. Indiana Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income





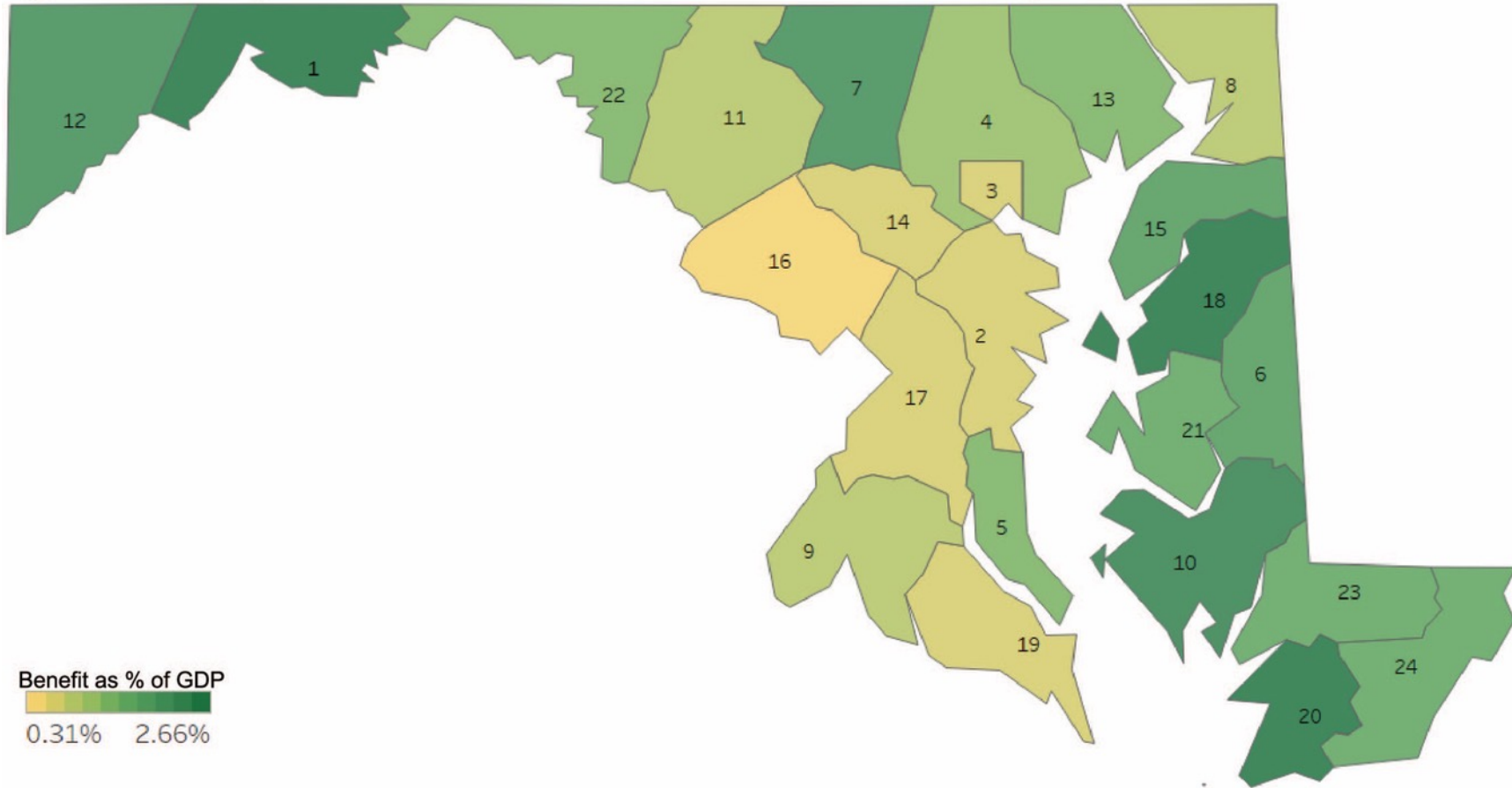
# Maryland County Type

Figure A46. Maryland County Type



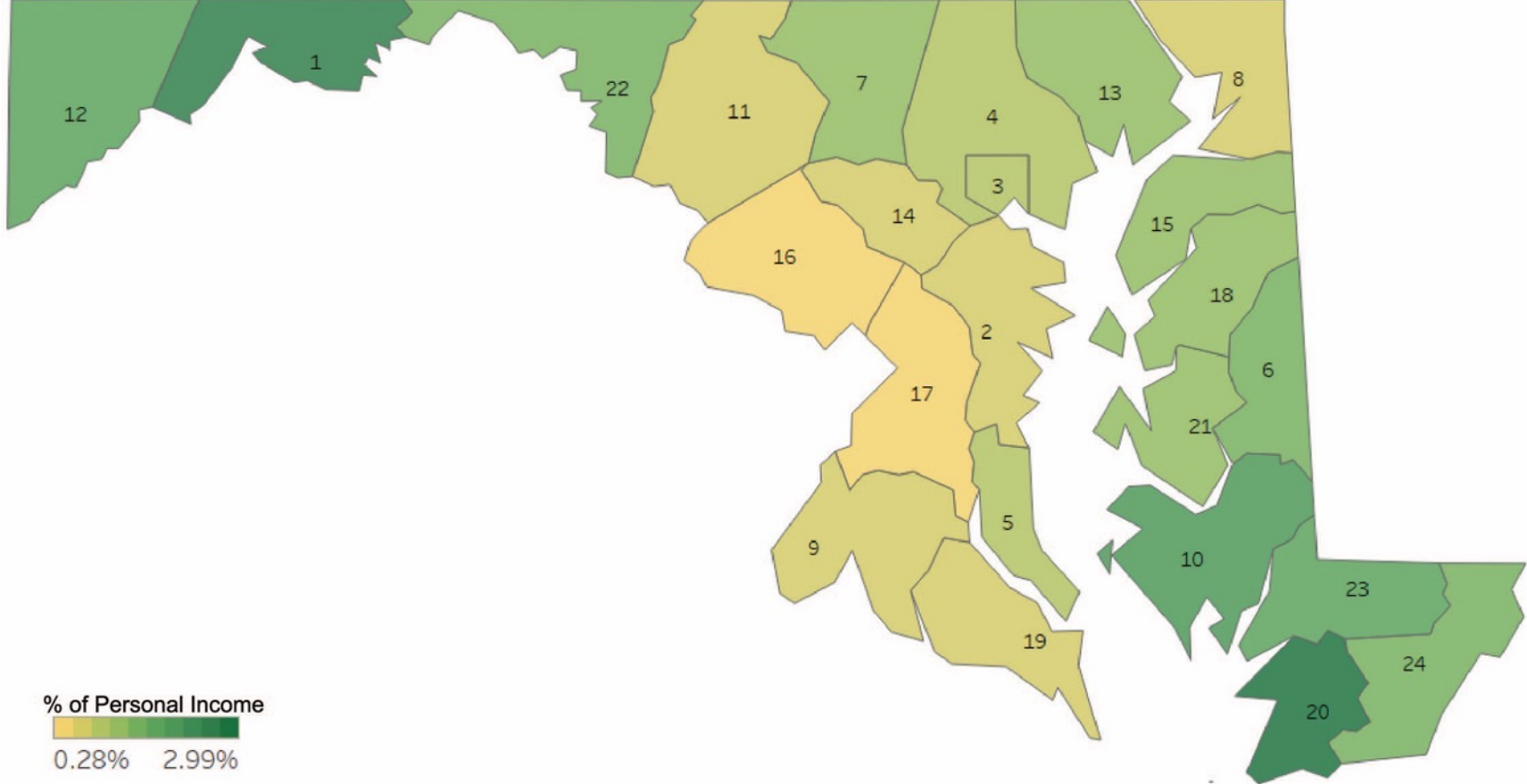
# Maryland Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of GDP

Figure A47. Maryland Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



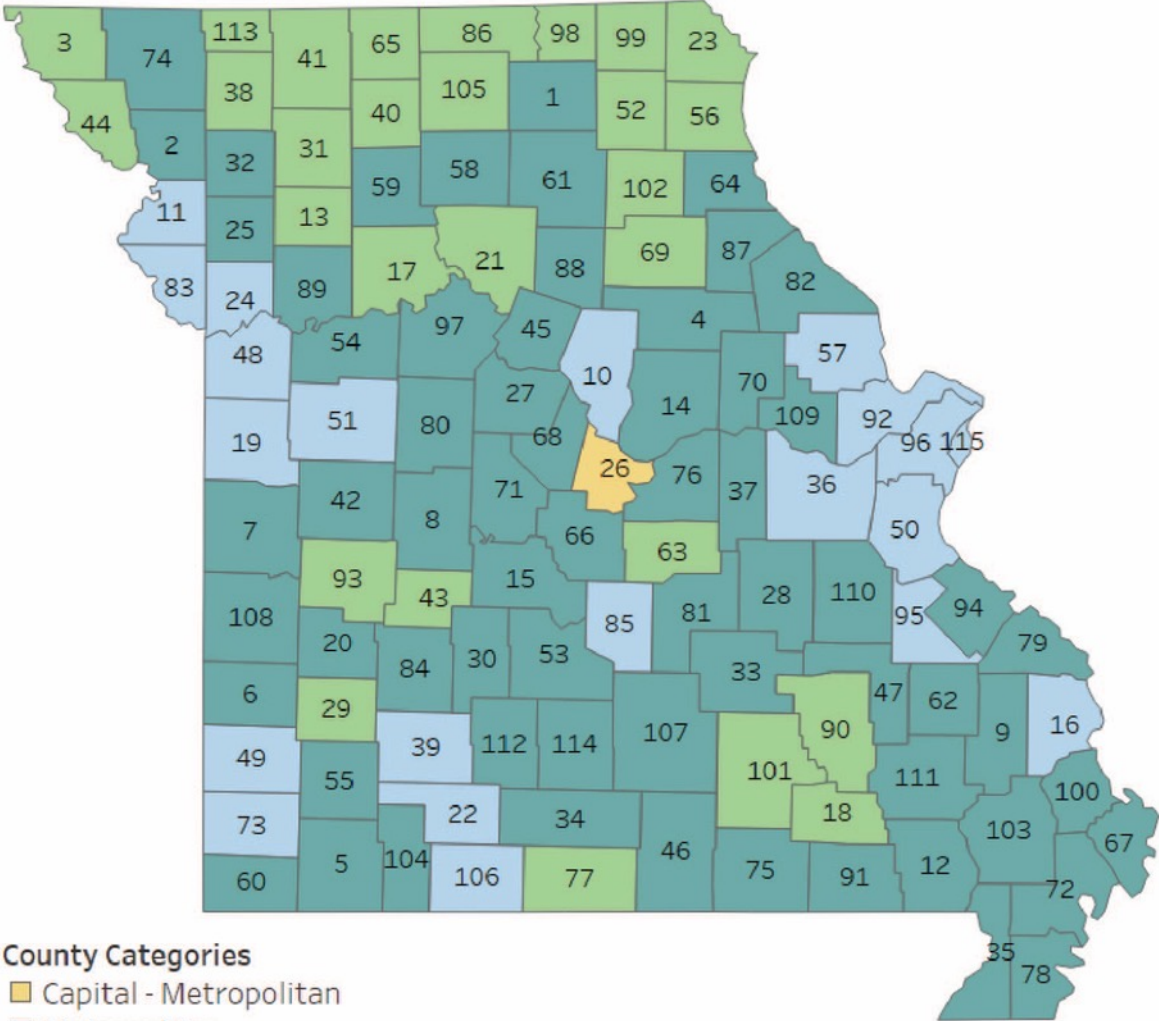
# Maryland Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A48. Maryland Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



# Missouri County Type

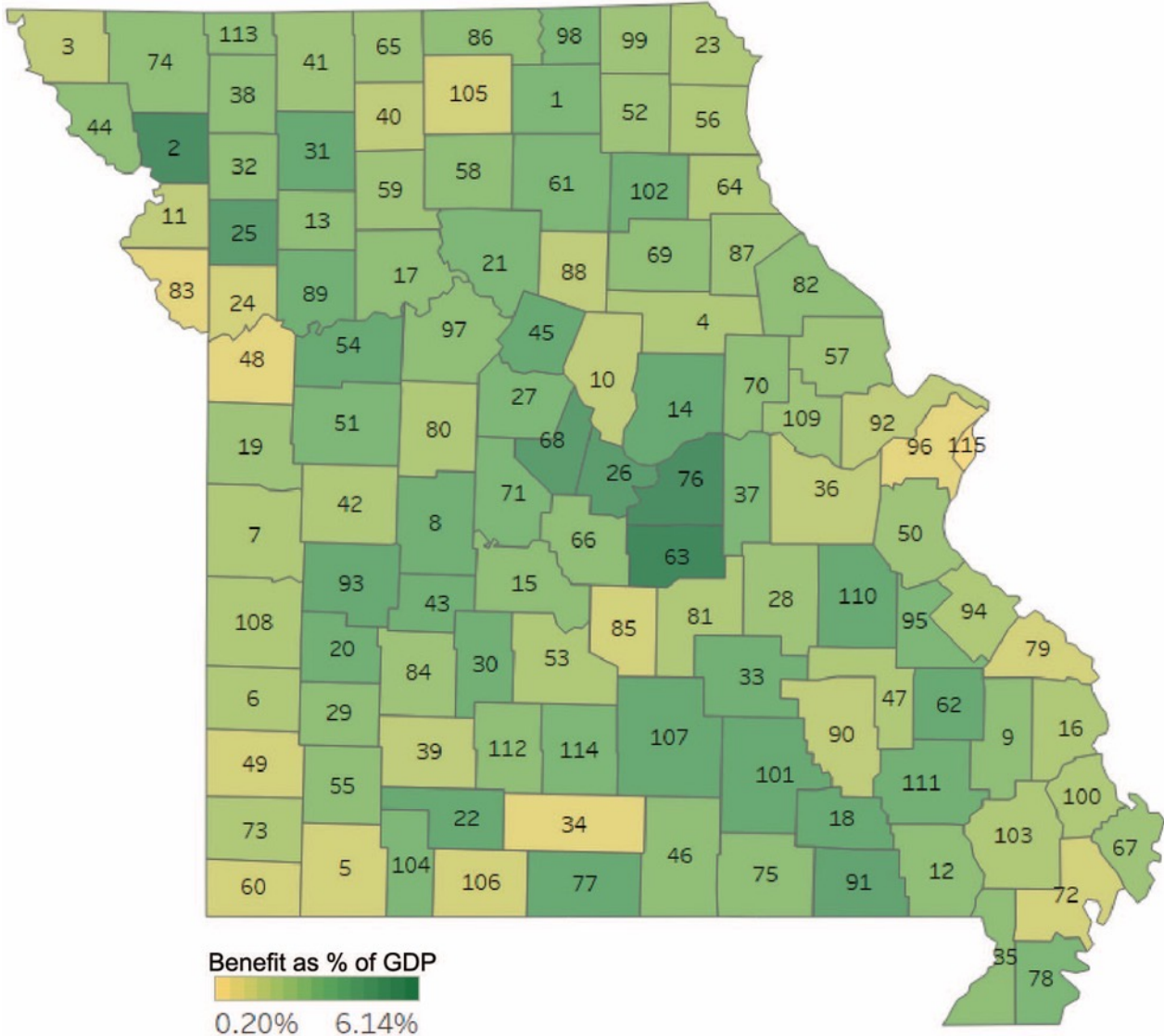
Figure A58. Missouri County Type



- County Categories**
- Capital - Metropolitan
  - Metropolitan
  - Micropolitan
  - Rural

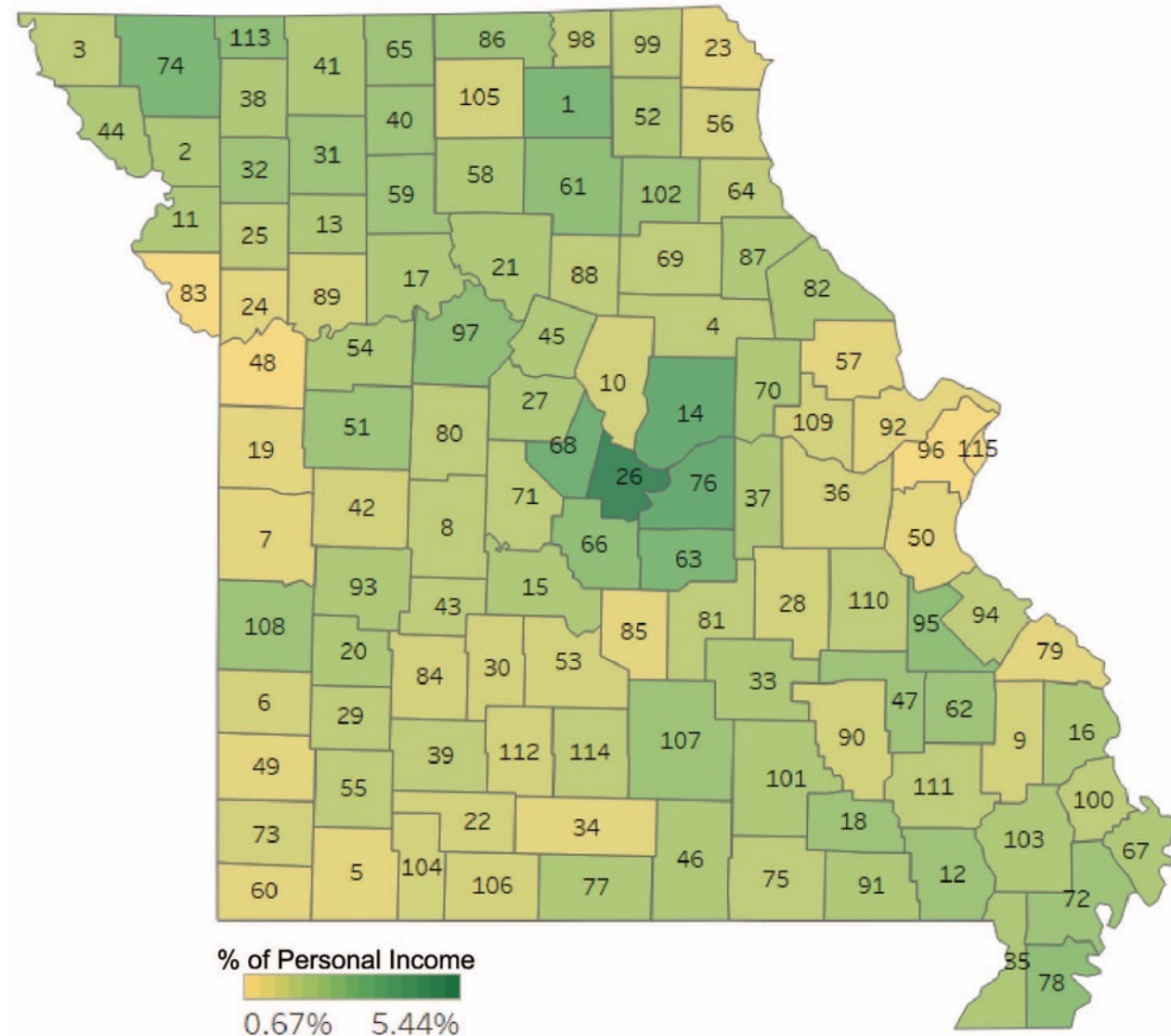
# Missouri Percent of GDP

Figure A59. Missouri Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



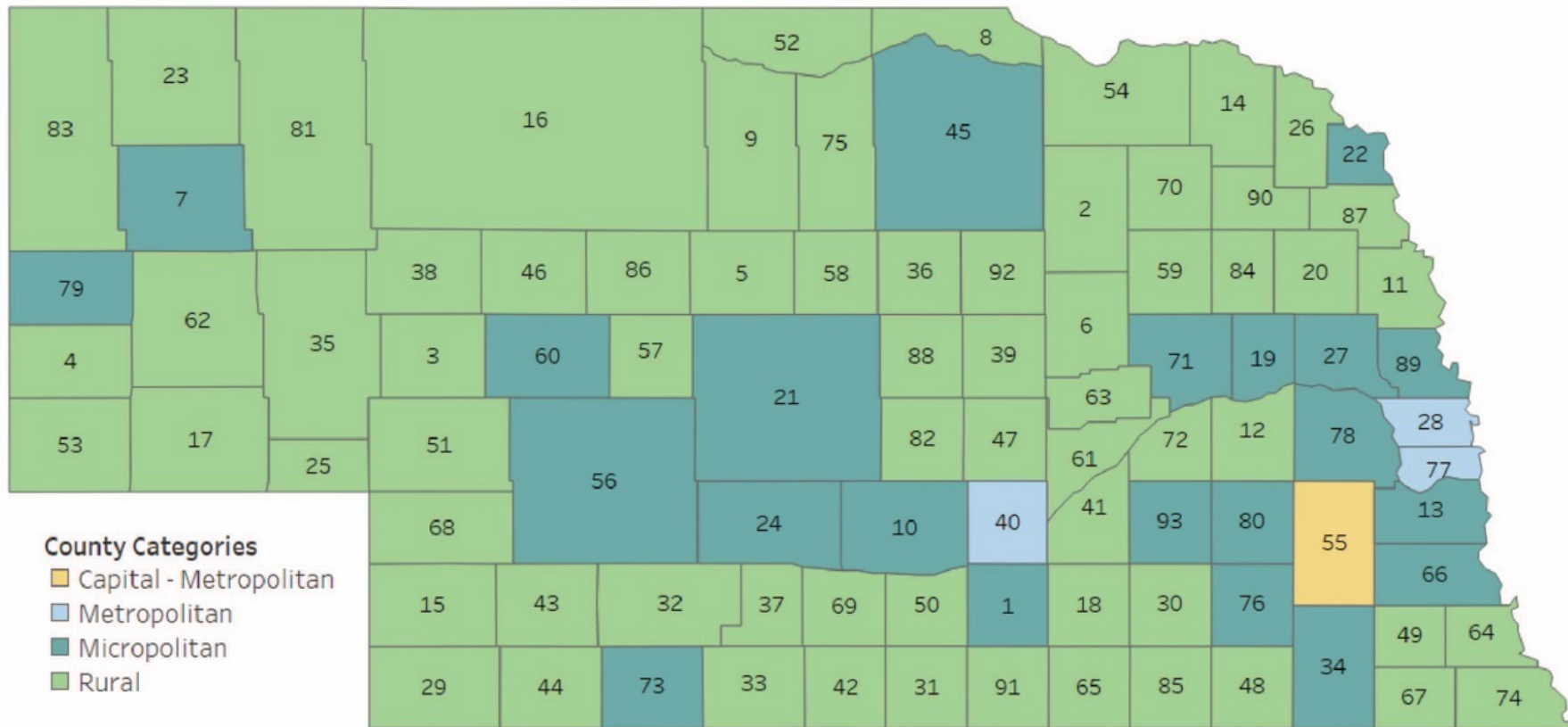
# Missouri Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A60. Missouri Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



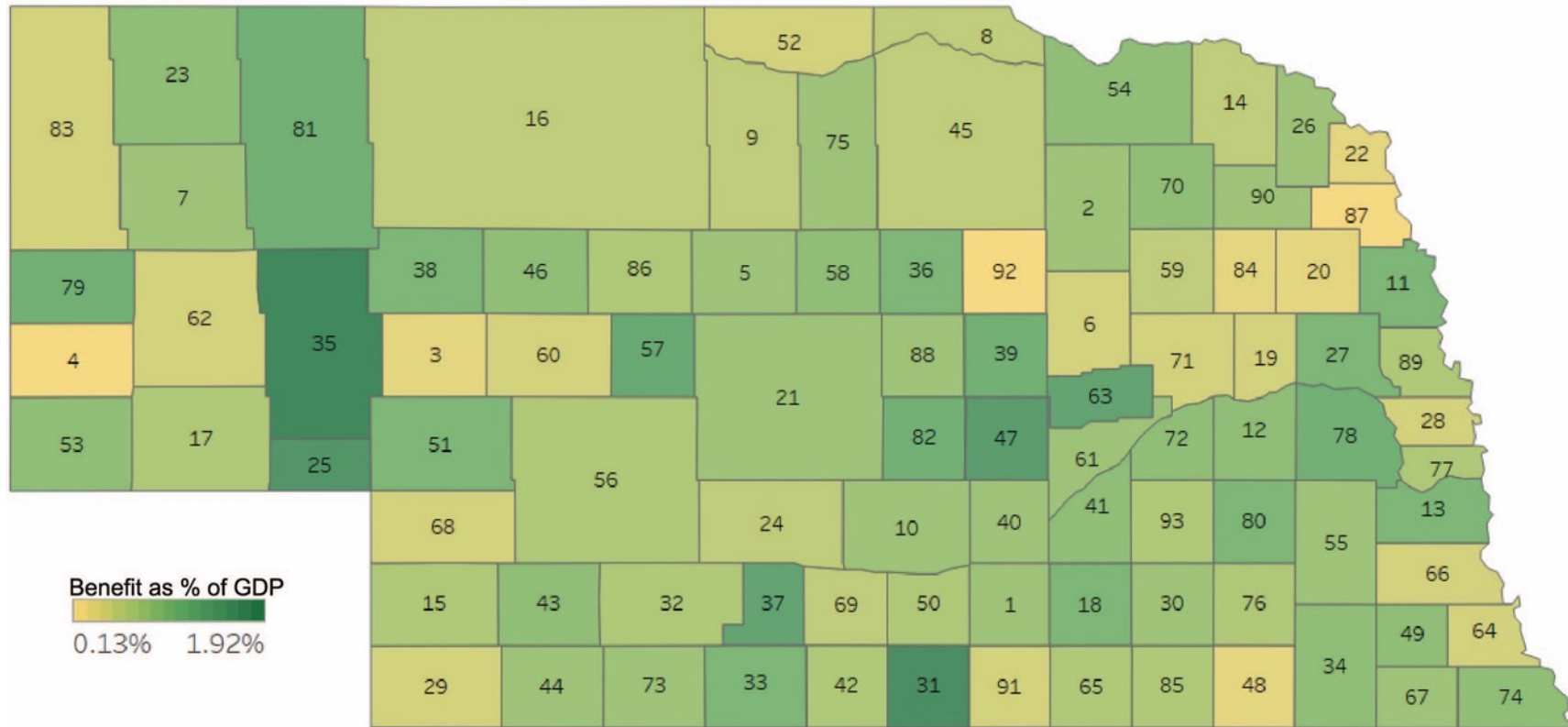
# Nebraska County Type

Figure A64. Nebraska County Type



# Nebraska Percent of GDP

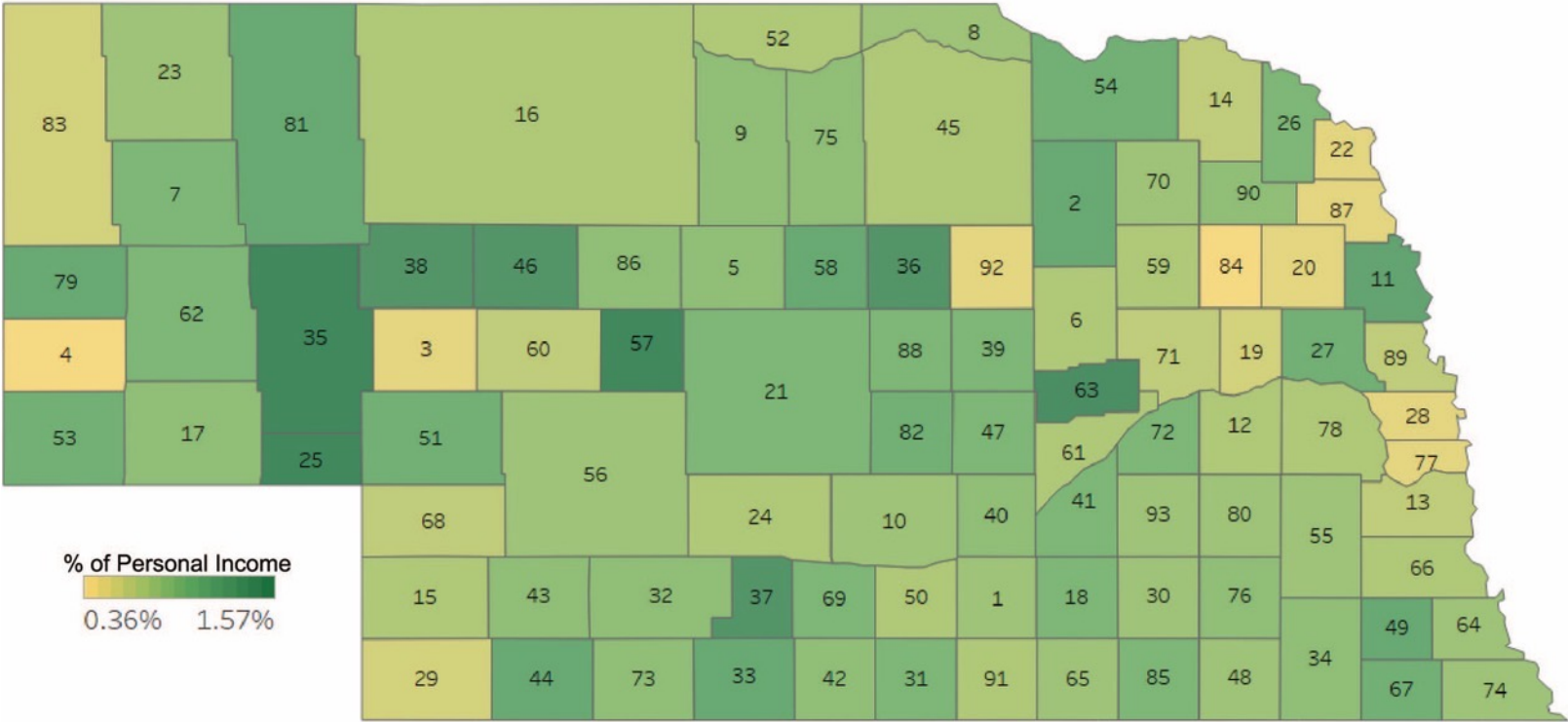
Figure A65. Nebraska Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP





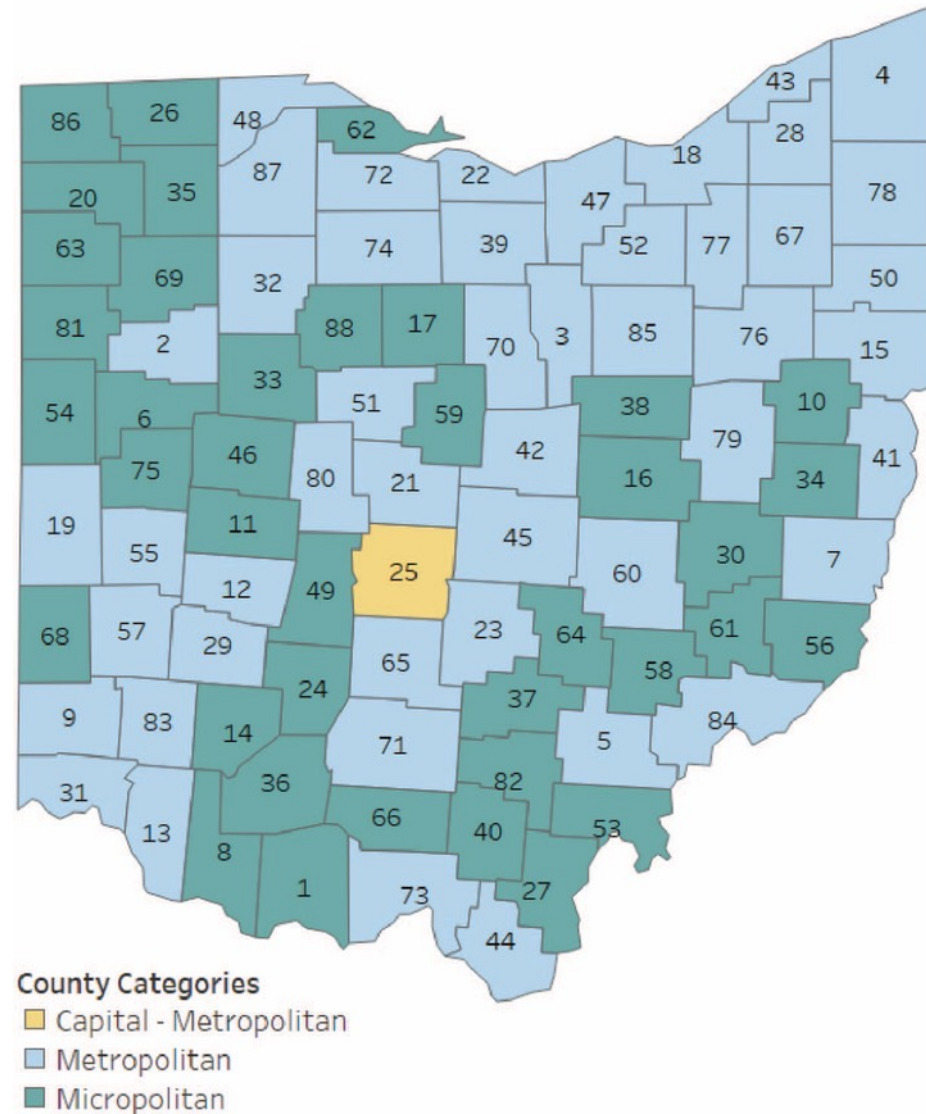
# Nebraska Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A66. Nebraska Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



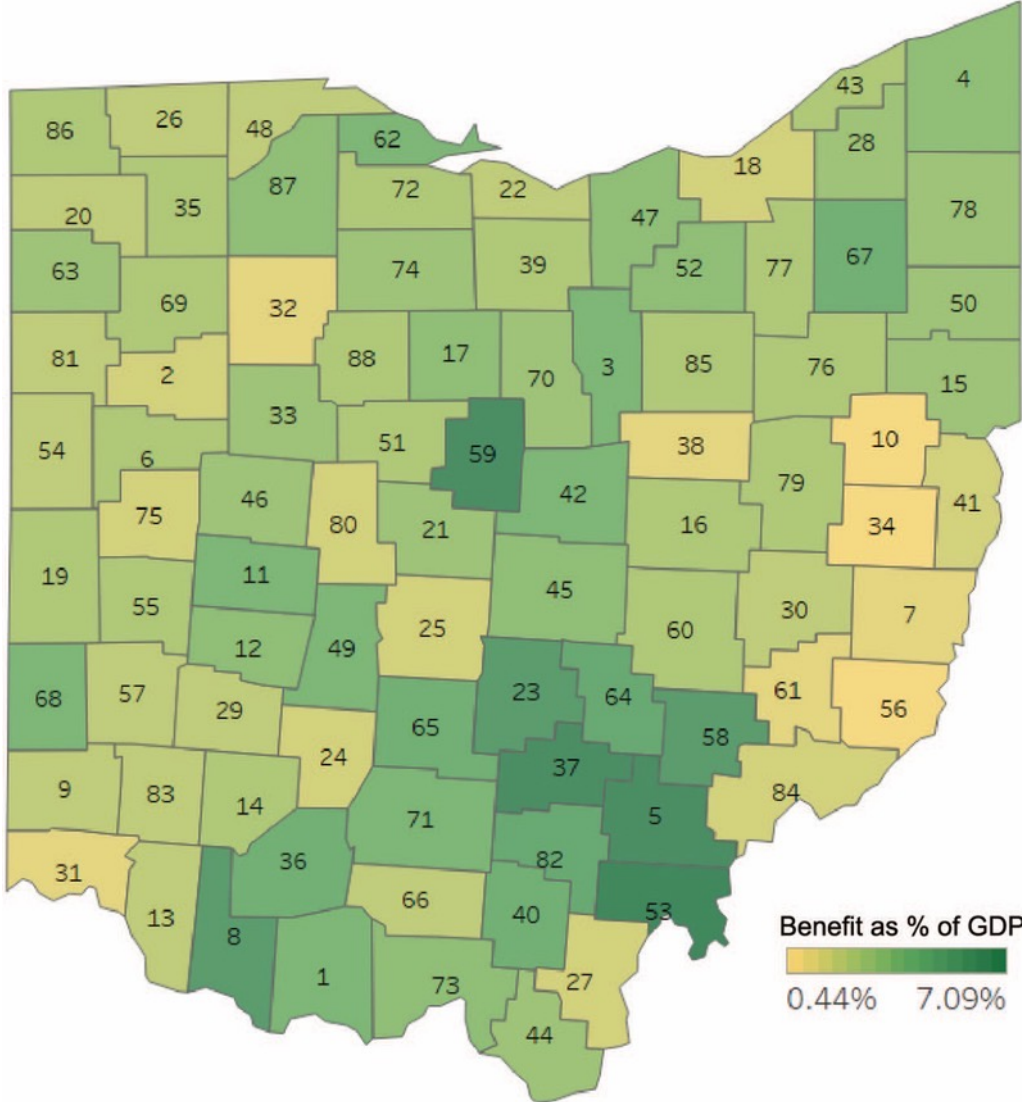
# Ohio County Type

Figure A82. Ohio County Type



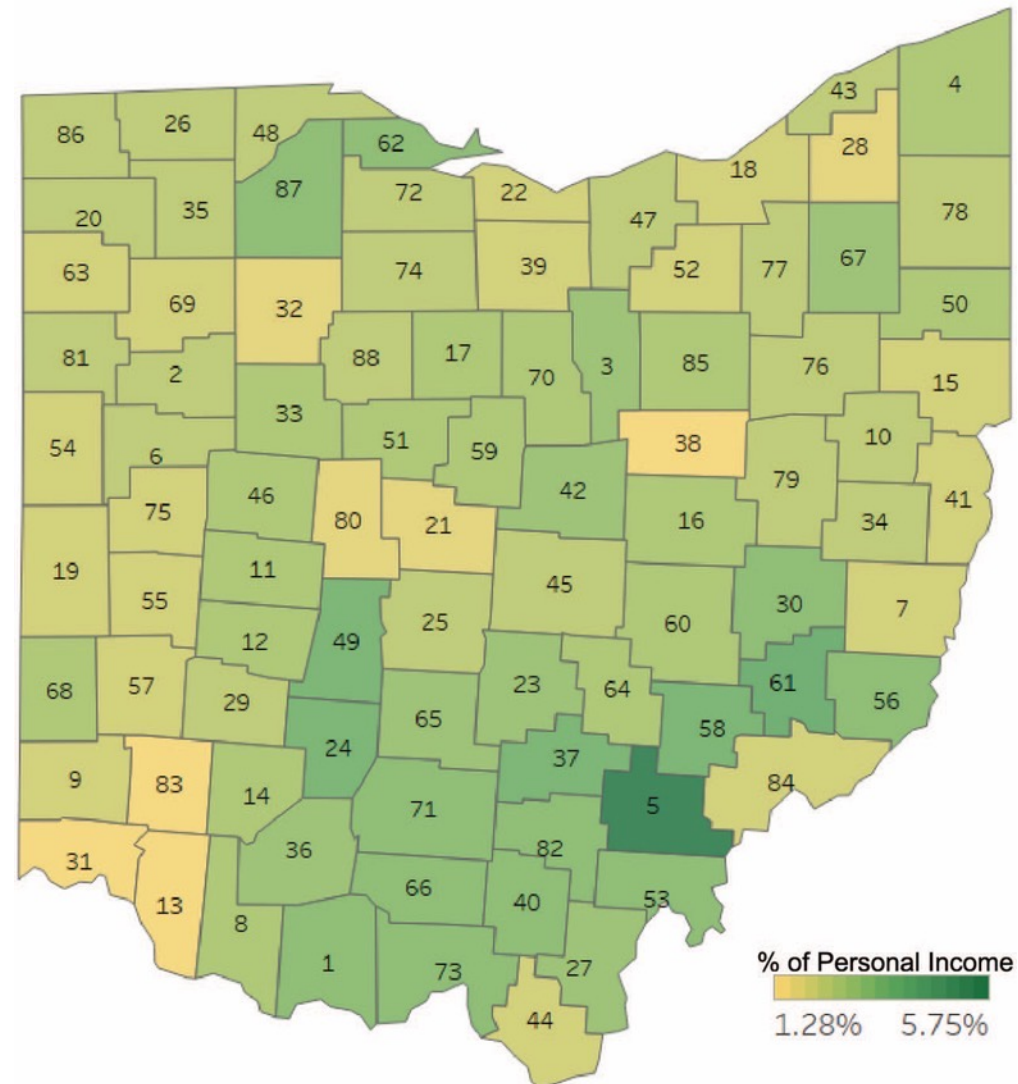
# Ohio Percent of GDP

Figure A83. Ohio Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



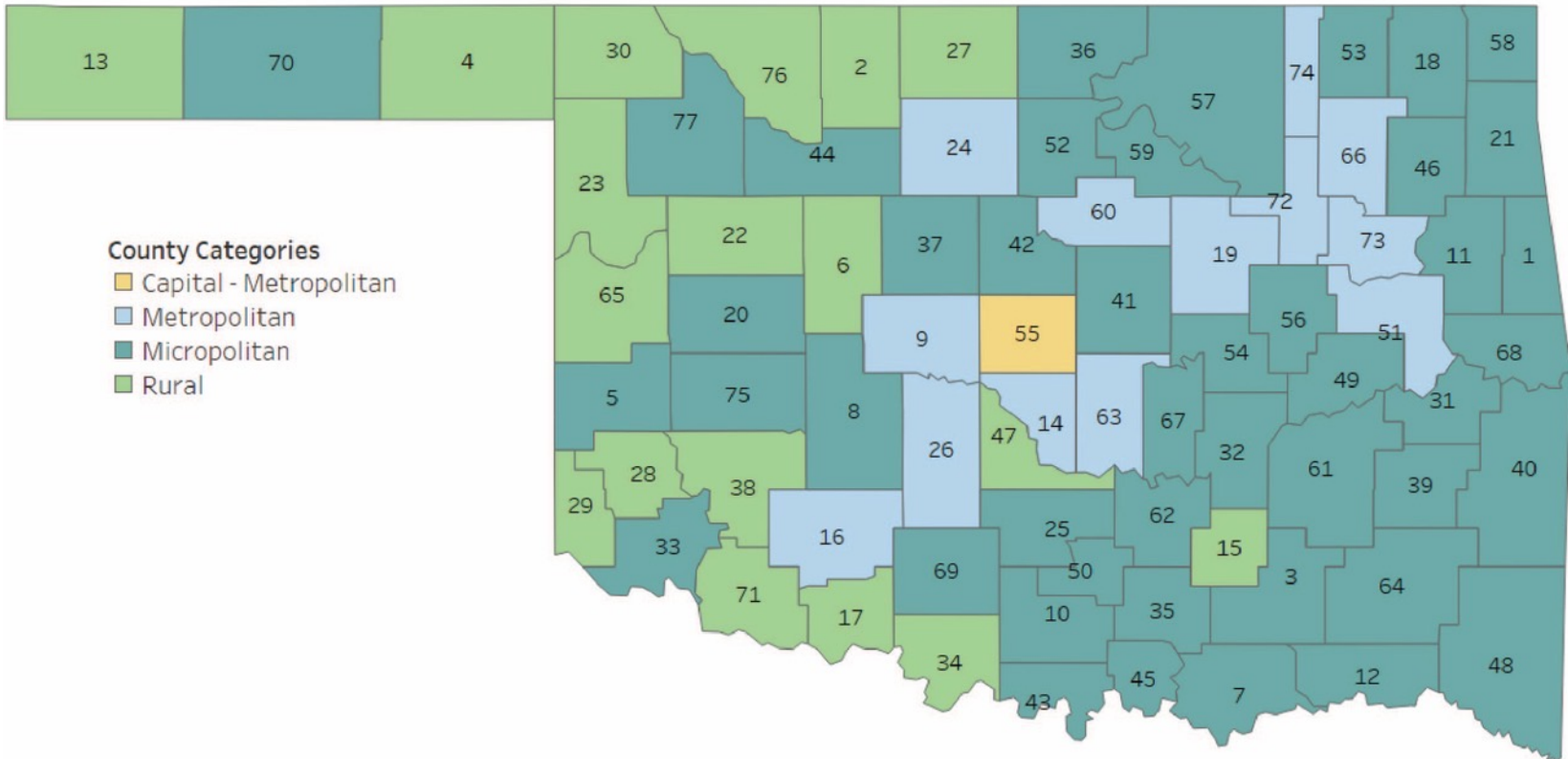
# Ohio Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A84. Ohio Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



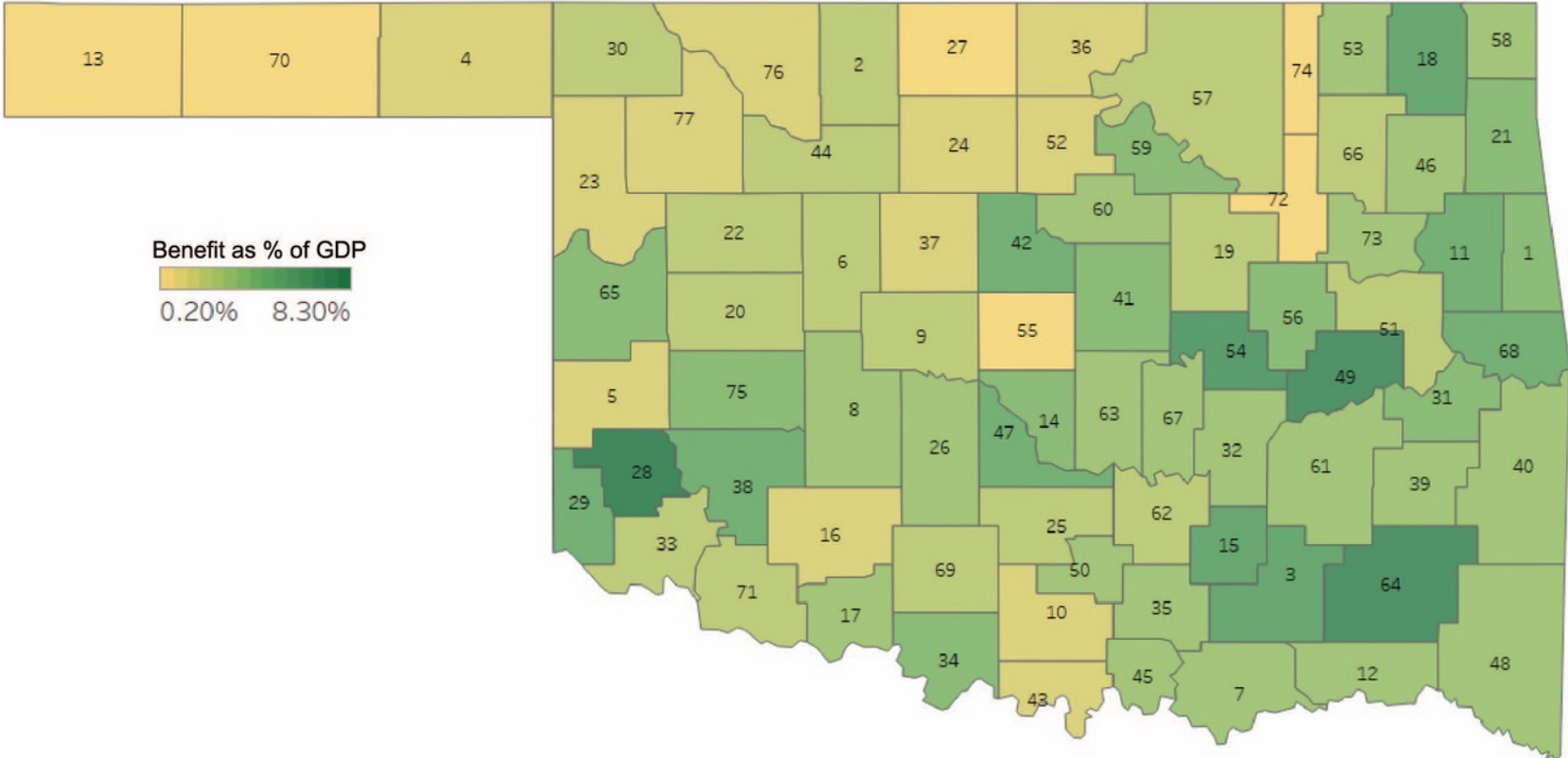
# Oklahoma County Type

Figure A85. Oklahoma County Type



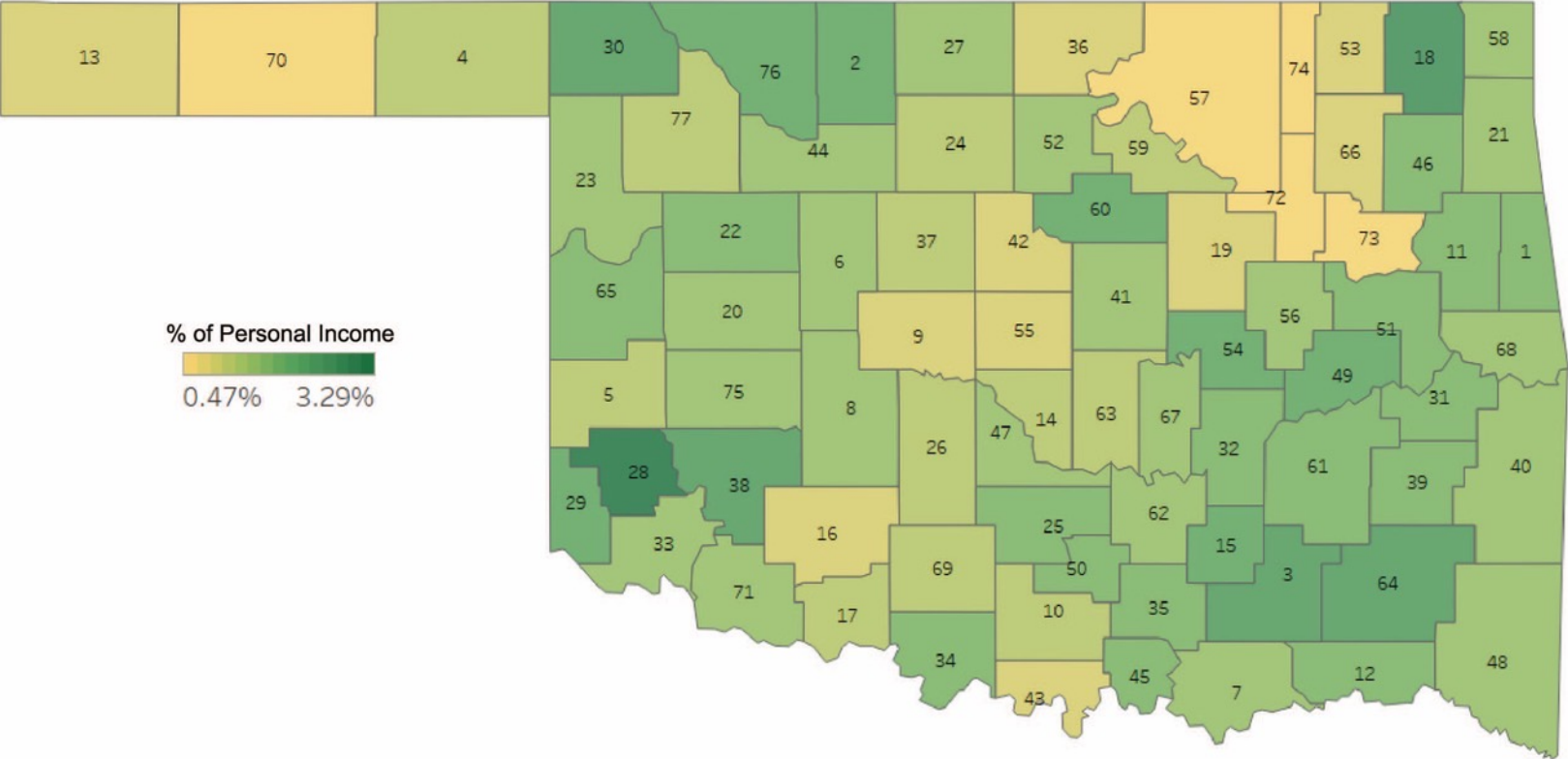
# Oklahoma Percent of GDP

Figure A86. Oklahoma Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



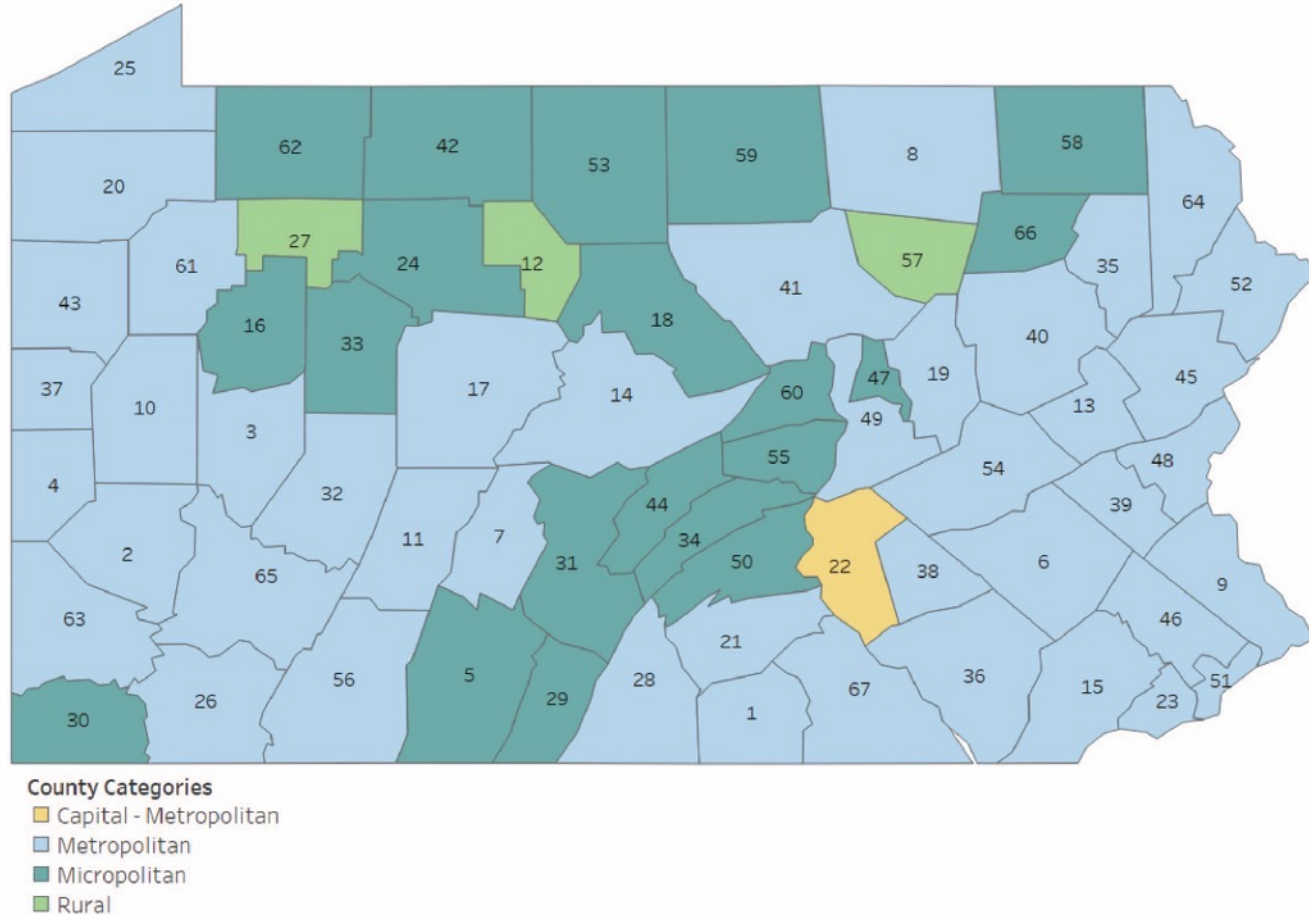
# Oklahoma Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A87. Oklahoma Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



# Pennsylvania County Type

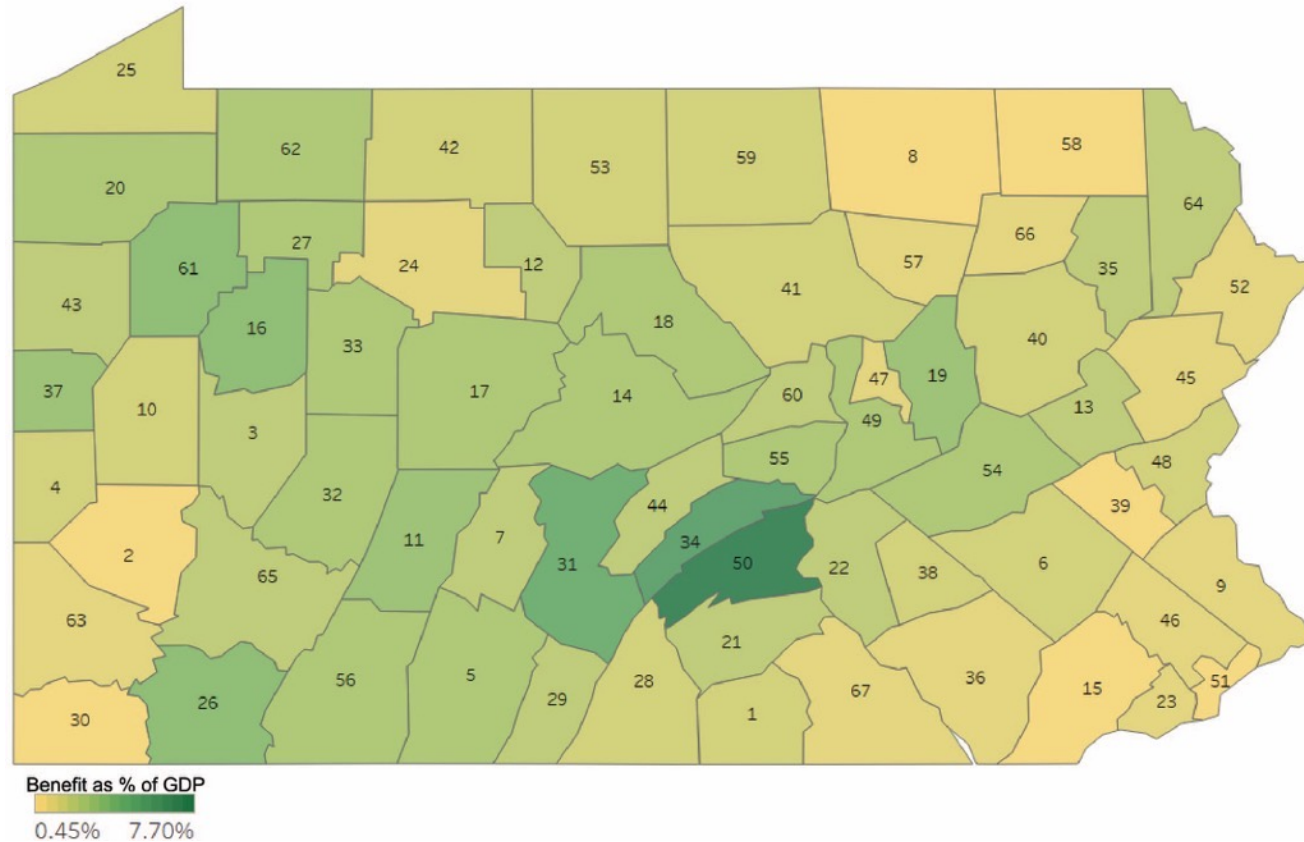
Figure A91. Pennsylvania County Type





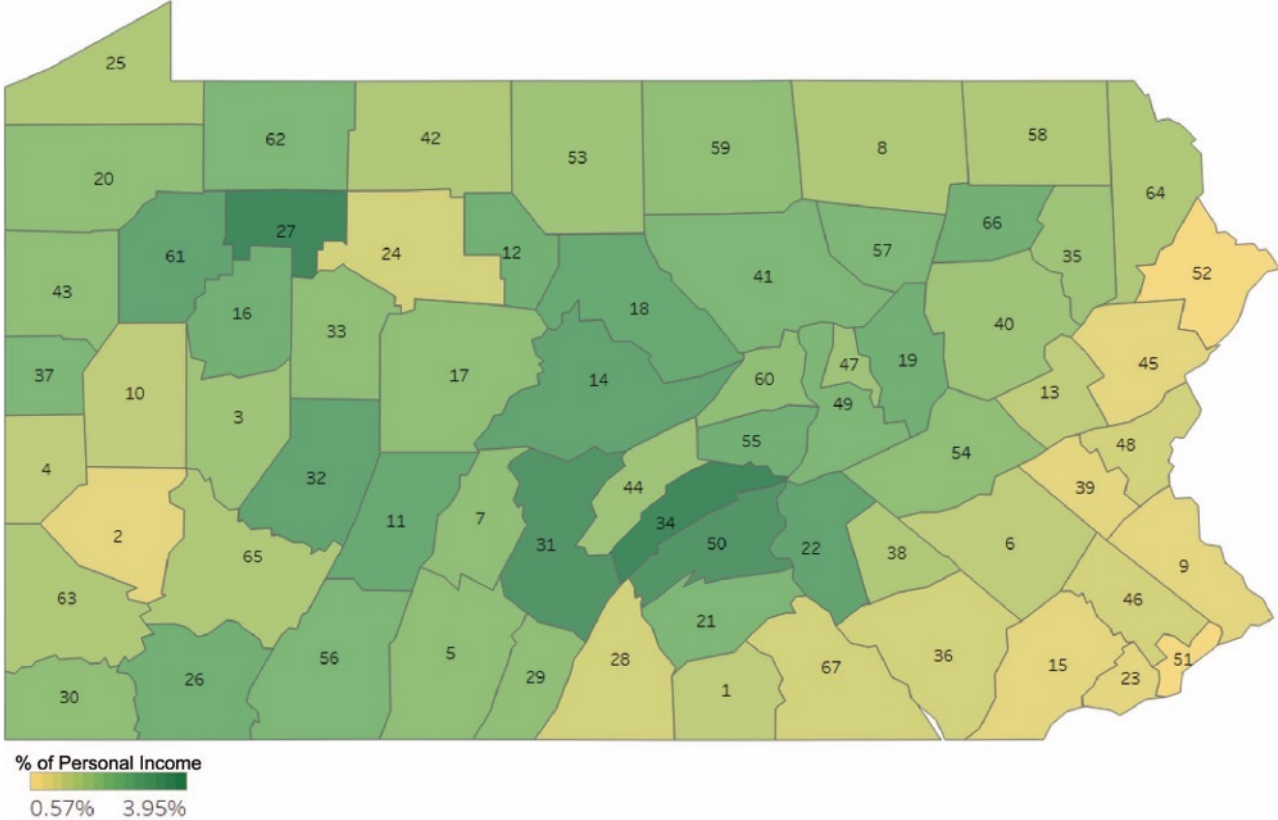
# Pennsylvania Percent of GDP

Figure A92. Pennsylvania Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP



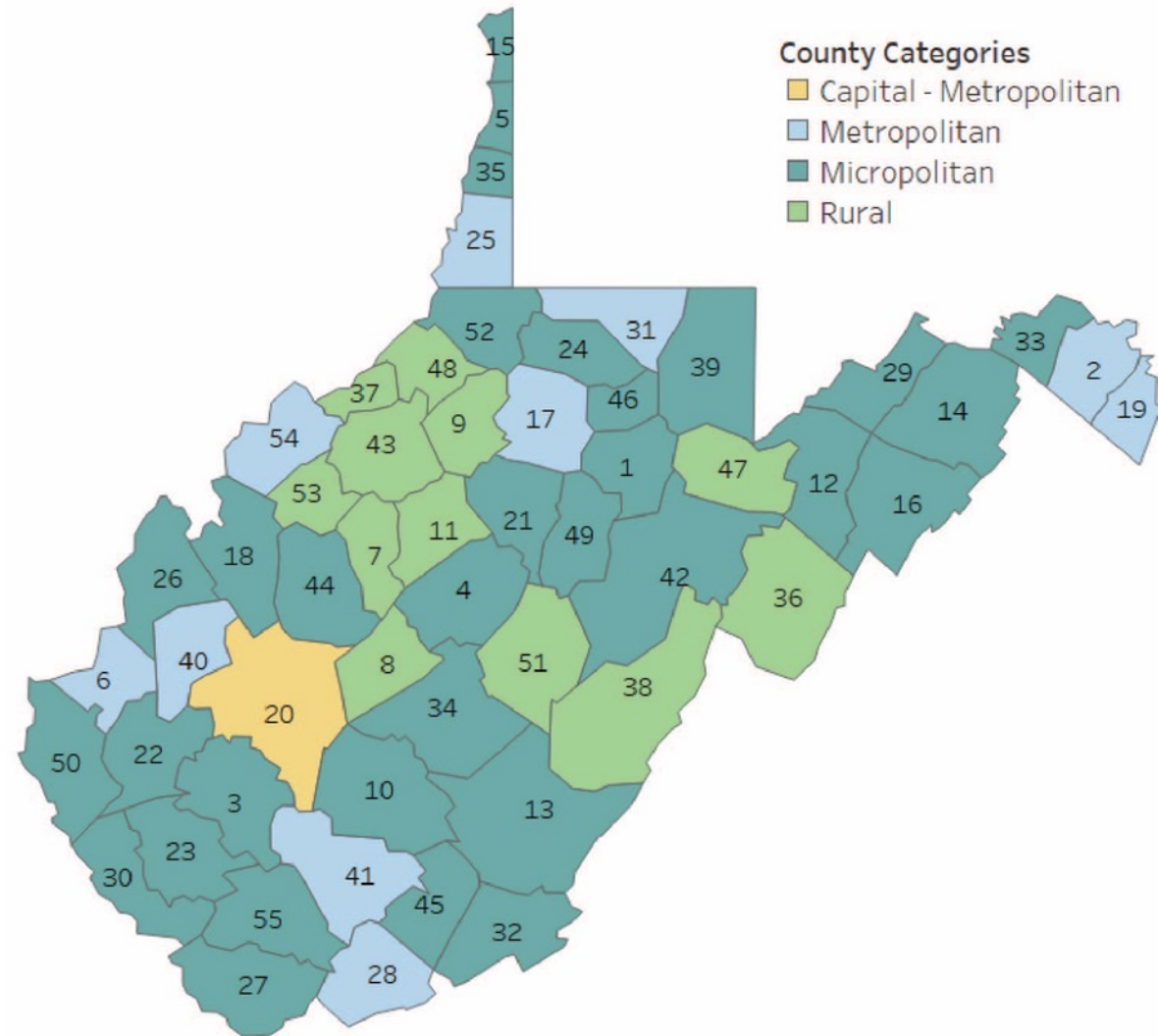
# Pennsylvania Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A93. Pennsylvania Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



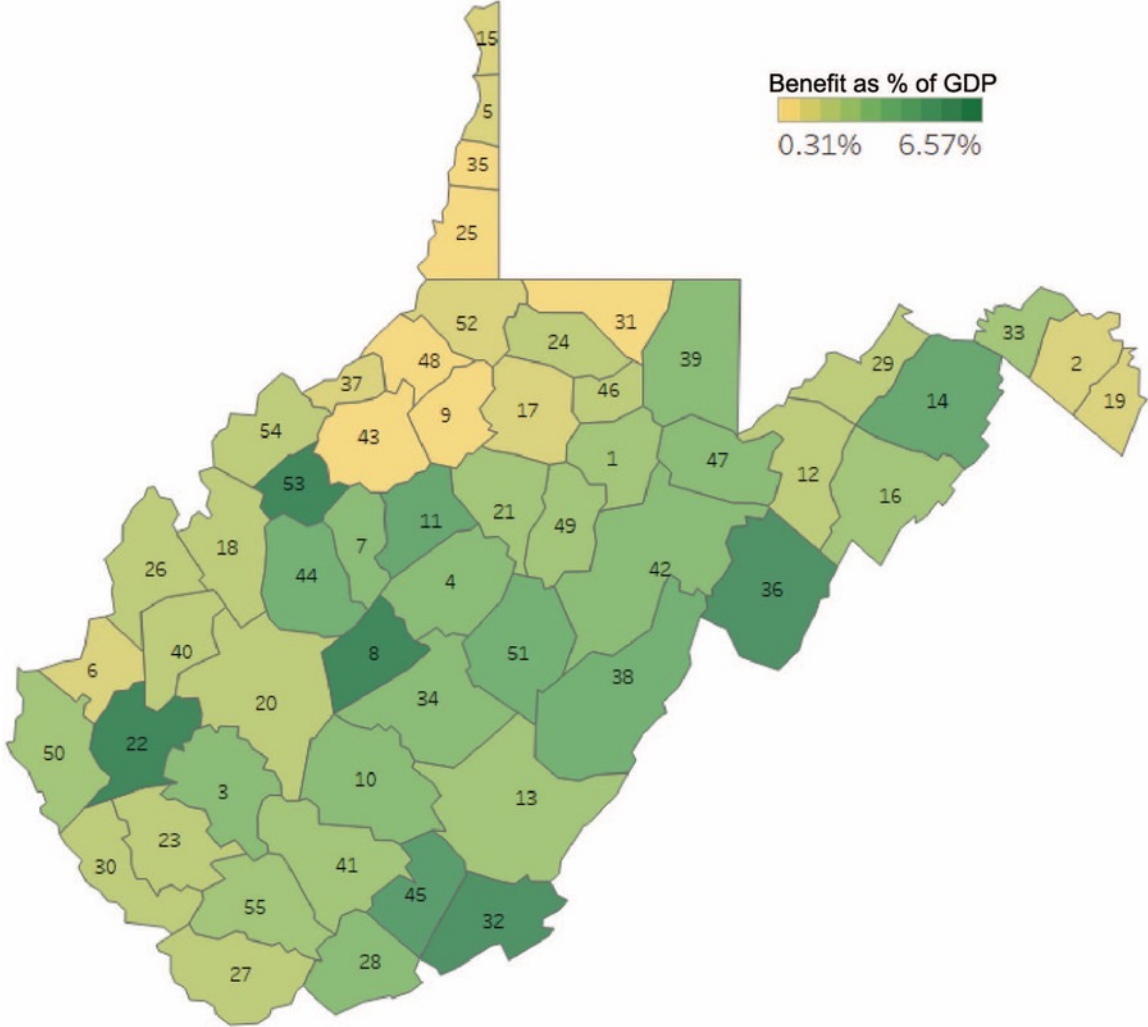
# West Virginia County Type

Figure A121. West Virginia County Type



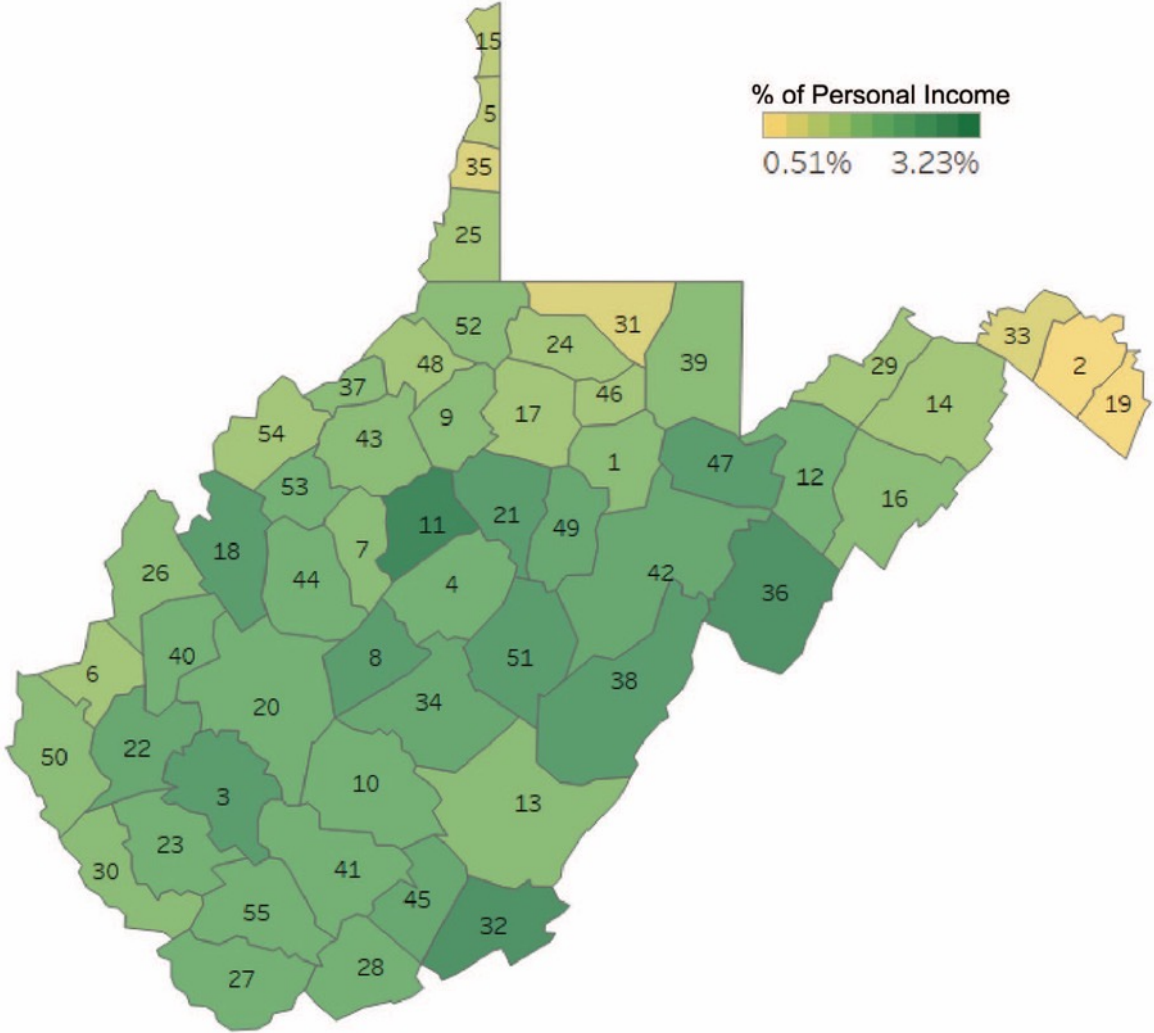
# West Virginia Percent of GDP

Figure A122. West Virginia Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County GDP

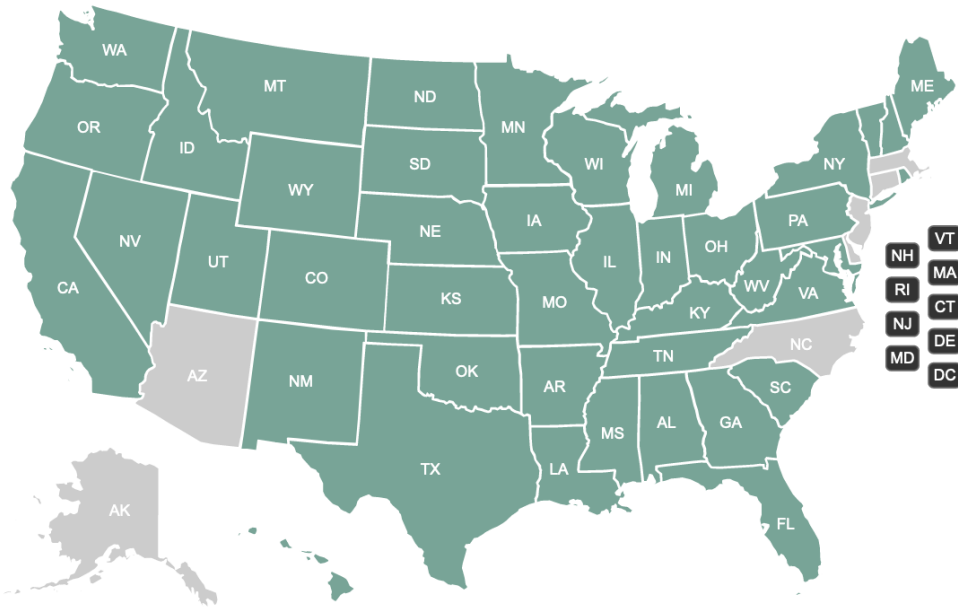


# West Virginia Percent of Total Personal Income (TPI)

Figure A123. West Virginia Pension Benefit Dollars as Share of County Total Personal Income



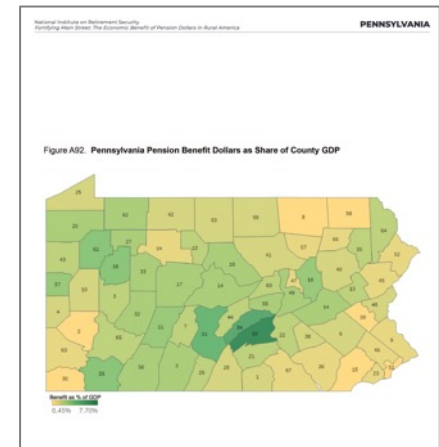
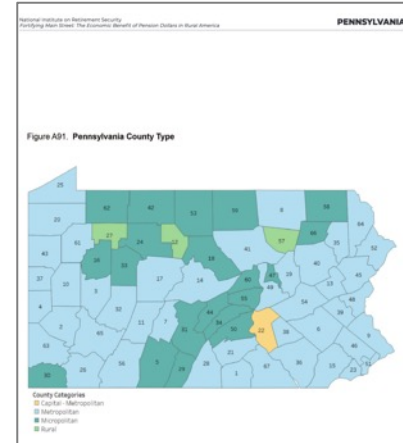
# Online Map with State Fact Sheets



**PENNSYLVANIA** Fortifying Main Street: The Economic Benefit of Public Pension Dollars in Rural America

Table A31. Pennsylvania County Data

County No.	County Name	County Type	2018 Pension Benefits	Benefits as a % of GDP	Population Total (2000 vs 2018)
1	Adams	Metropolitan	\$6,415,032.02	1.02%	127%
2	Allegheny	Metropolitan	\$74,330,716.98	0.87%	138%
3	Armstrong	Metropolitan	\$6,660,363.44	2.82%	176%
4	Beaver	Metropolitan	\$16,629,262.39	1.92%	138%
5	Bedford	Metropolitan	\$10,334,364.12	0.74%	120%
6	Berks	Metropolitan	\$36,503,337.42	1.44%	127%
7	Blair	Metropolitan	\$76,761,461.97	2.86%	222%
8	Bradford	Metropolitan	\$37,893,340.12	0.74%	126%
9	Bucks	Metropolitan	\$42,022,866.96	1.99%	109%
10	Butler	Metropolitan	\$23,753,303.09	1.27%	147%
11	Cameron	Metropolitan	\$48,224,024.30	3.28%	204%
12	Canaan	Rural	\$1,312,033.60	2.22%	148%
13	Carbon	Metropolitan	\$42,841,074.44	1.98%	133%
14	Cecil	Metropolitan	\$22,640,008.88	2.88%	202%
15	Chester	Metropolitan	\$36,172,743.32	0.87%	108%
16	Clinton	Metropolitan	\$14,324,244.21	3.44%	248%
17	Crawford	Metropolitan	\$75,424,896.92	2.76%	205%
18	Cumberland	Metropolitan	\$4,324,918.59	2.9%	249%
19	Columbia	Metropolitan	\$67,176,664.40	2.9%	243%
20	Dauphin	Metropolitan	\$75,422,918.92	3.48%	276%
21	Delaware	Metropolitan	\$26,476,084.27	2.37%	237%
22	Elk	Metropolitan	\$42,672,276.30	2.04%	202%
23	Fayette	Metropolitan	\$38,226,301.77	1.4%	126%
24	Franklin	Metropolitan	\$7,046,207.86	1.4%	144%
25	Greene	Metropolitan	\$8,824,024.99	1.6%	131%
26	Harrisburg	Metropolitan	\$16,320,000.00	3.4%	241%
27	Huntingdon	Metropolitan	\$6,324,000.00	3.9%	399%
28	Indiana	Metropolitan	\$6,477,000.00	1.1%	176%
29	Juniata	Metropolitan	\$3,324,000.00	2.0%	202%
30	Lancaster	Metropolitan	\$19,324,000.00	0.7%	108%
31	Lebanon	Metropolitan	\$19,324,000.00	4.7%	344%
32	Lehigh	Metropolitan	\$75,422,918.92	2.4%	242%
33	Luzerne	Metropolitan	\$43,642,918.92	1.1%	144%
34	Mechanic	Metropolitan	\$43,642,918.92	1.1%	144%



<https://www.nirsonline.org/resources/fortifying-main-street/>

# Conclusion

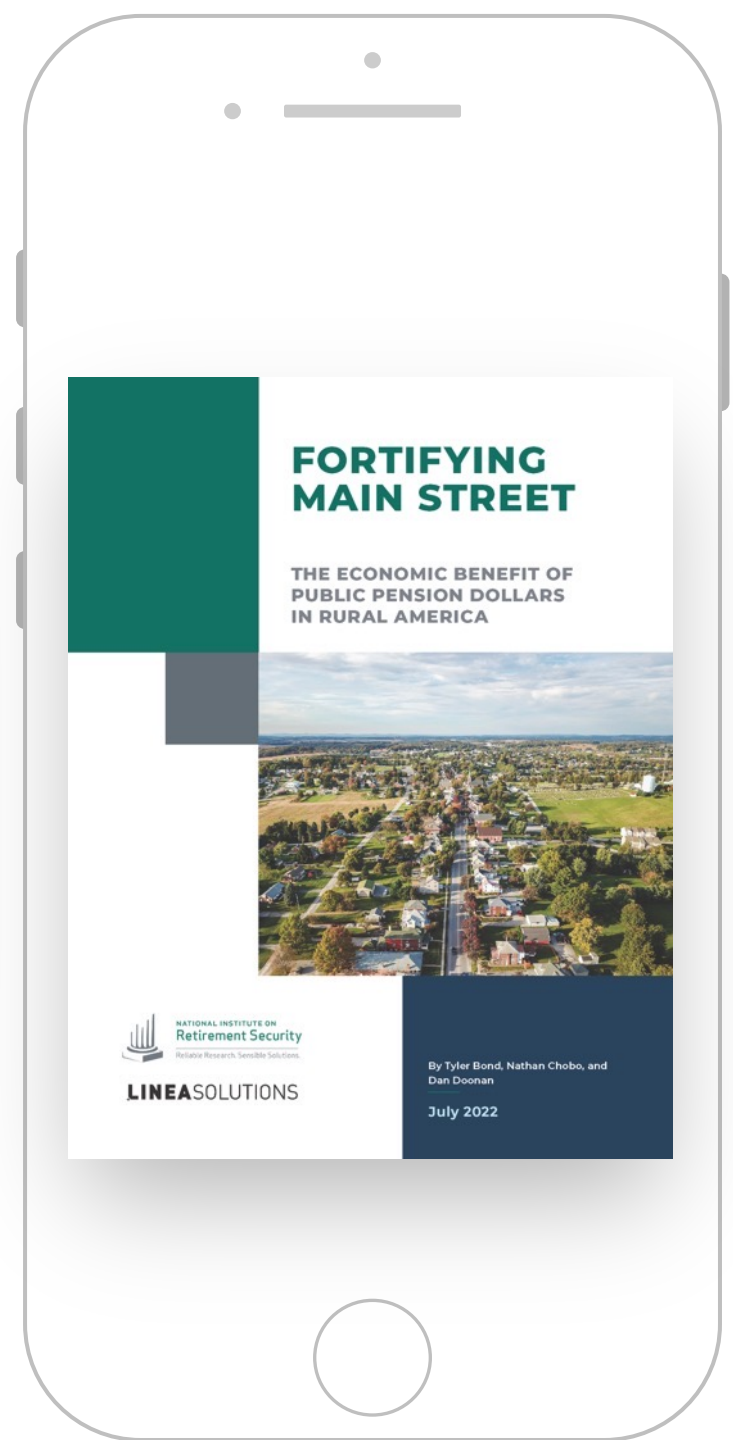
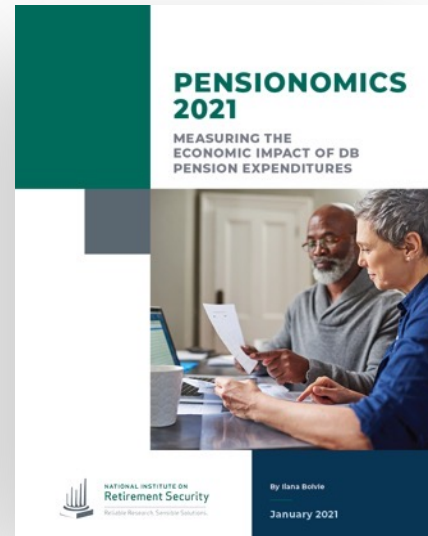
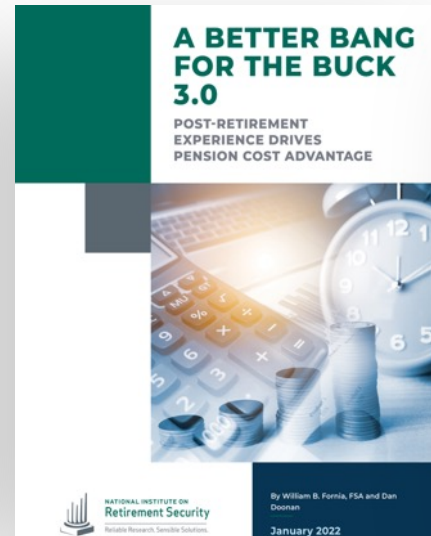
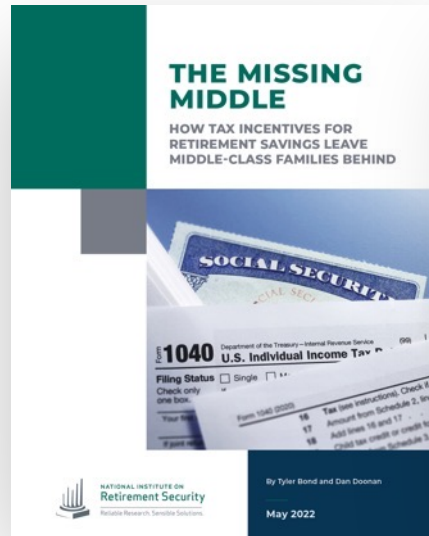
- Public pension benefit dollars represent a notable amount of GDP in many counties, especially small town counties.
- These benefit dollars also account for a fair amount of personal income, indicating their true purpose as a source of income for retired workers.
- The conversation around public pension plans too often focuses on the contributions made to the plans and ignores the benefits that are ultimately paid to retirees and other beneficiaries.


# Questions





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