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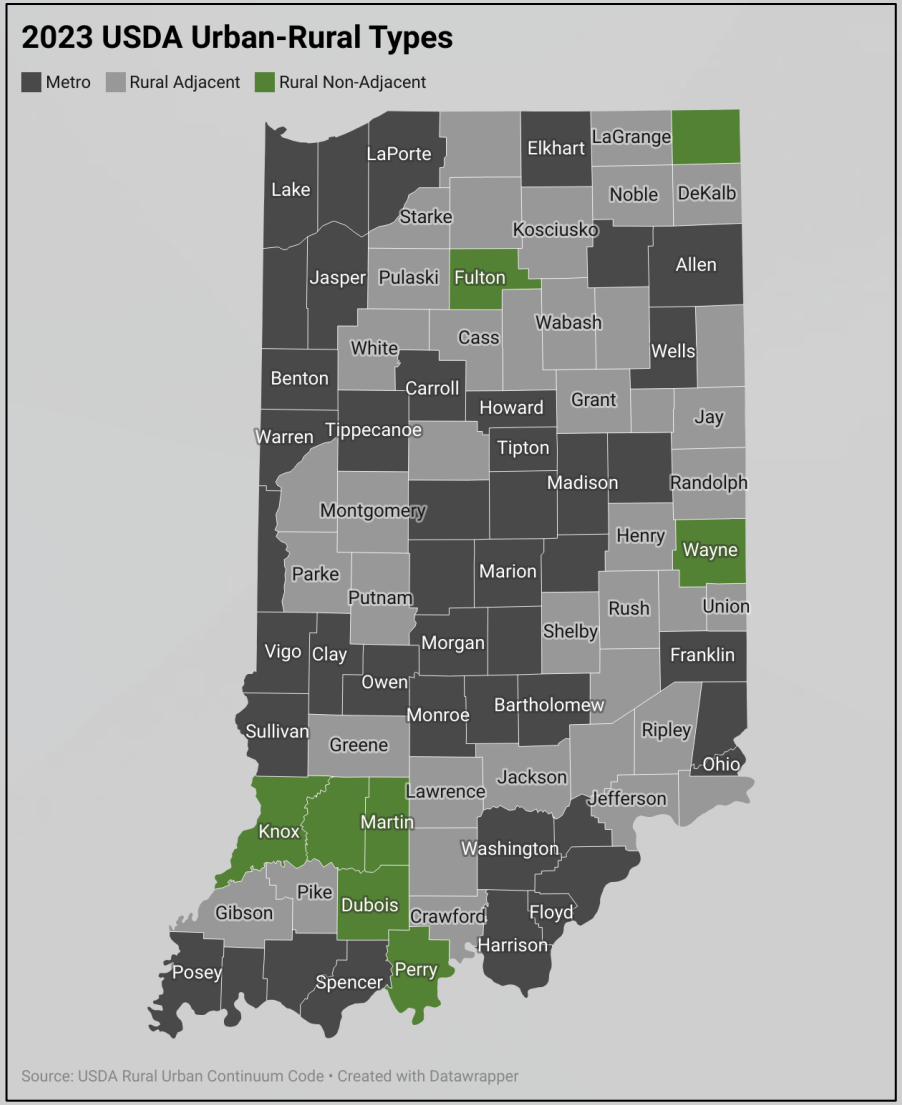
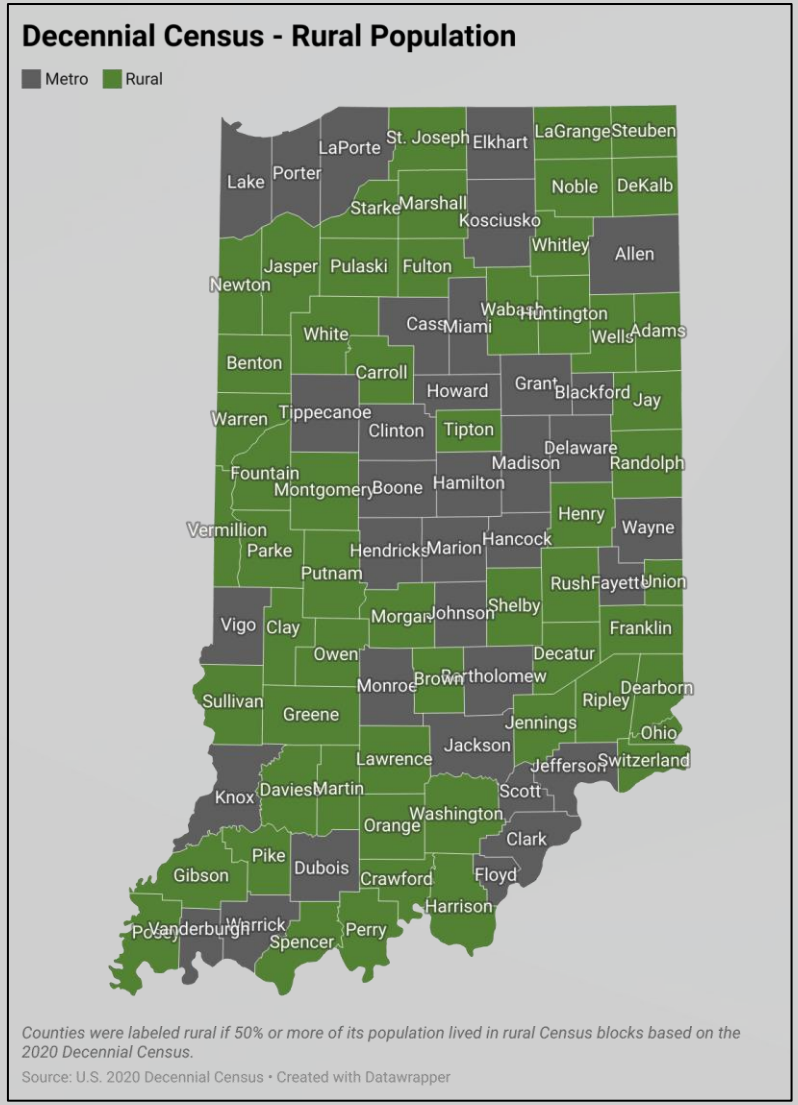
Office of Engagement

A Macro Indicator Analysis of the Evolving Metro-Rural Divide

Farm Policy Study Group
Beck Agricultural Center
December 2025

What is Rural?





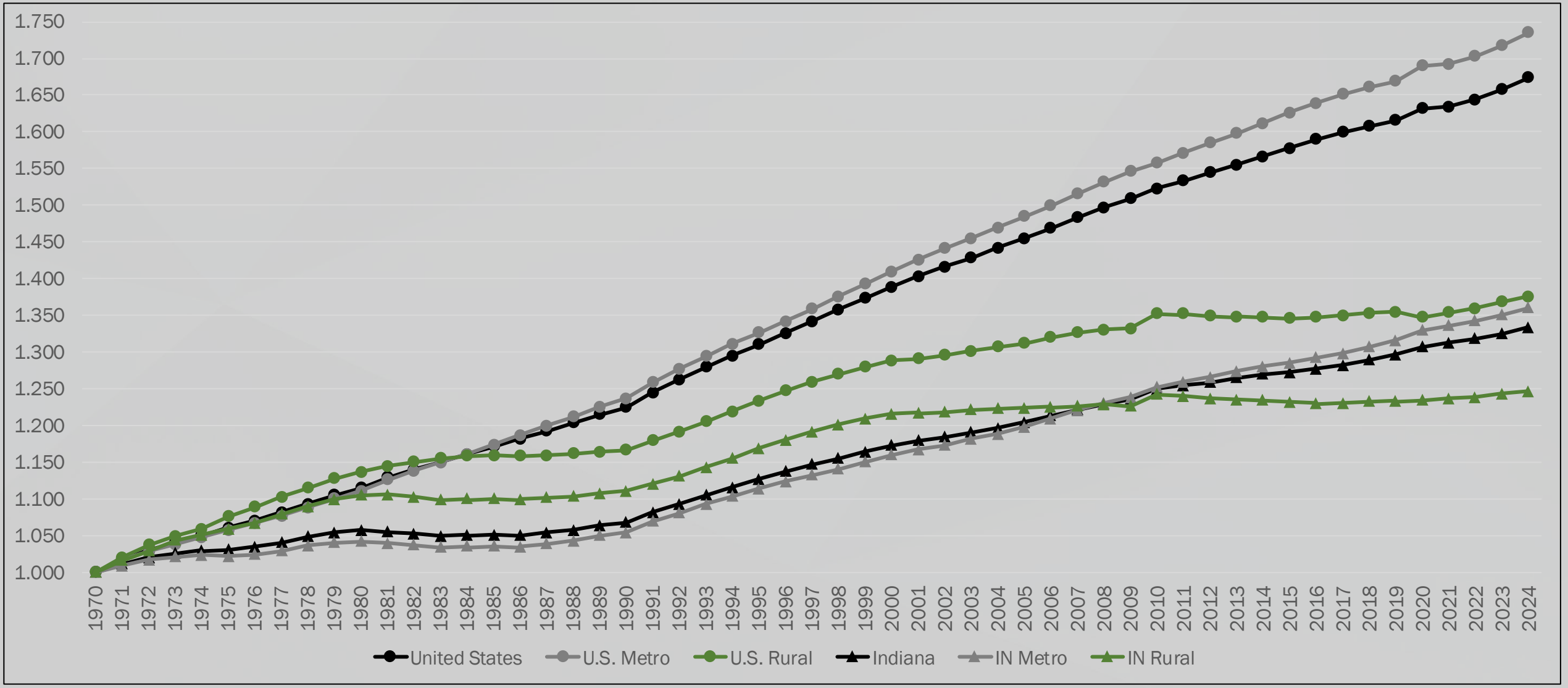
RUCC	2024
Metro	5,429,667
Rural	1,494,608
Rural Adjacent	1,230,550
Rural Non-Adjacent	264,058

Decennial Census	2024
Urban	5,386,043
Rural	1,538,232

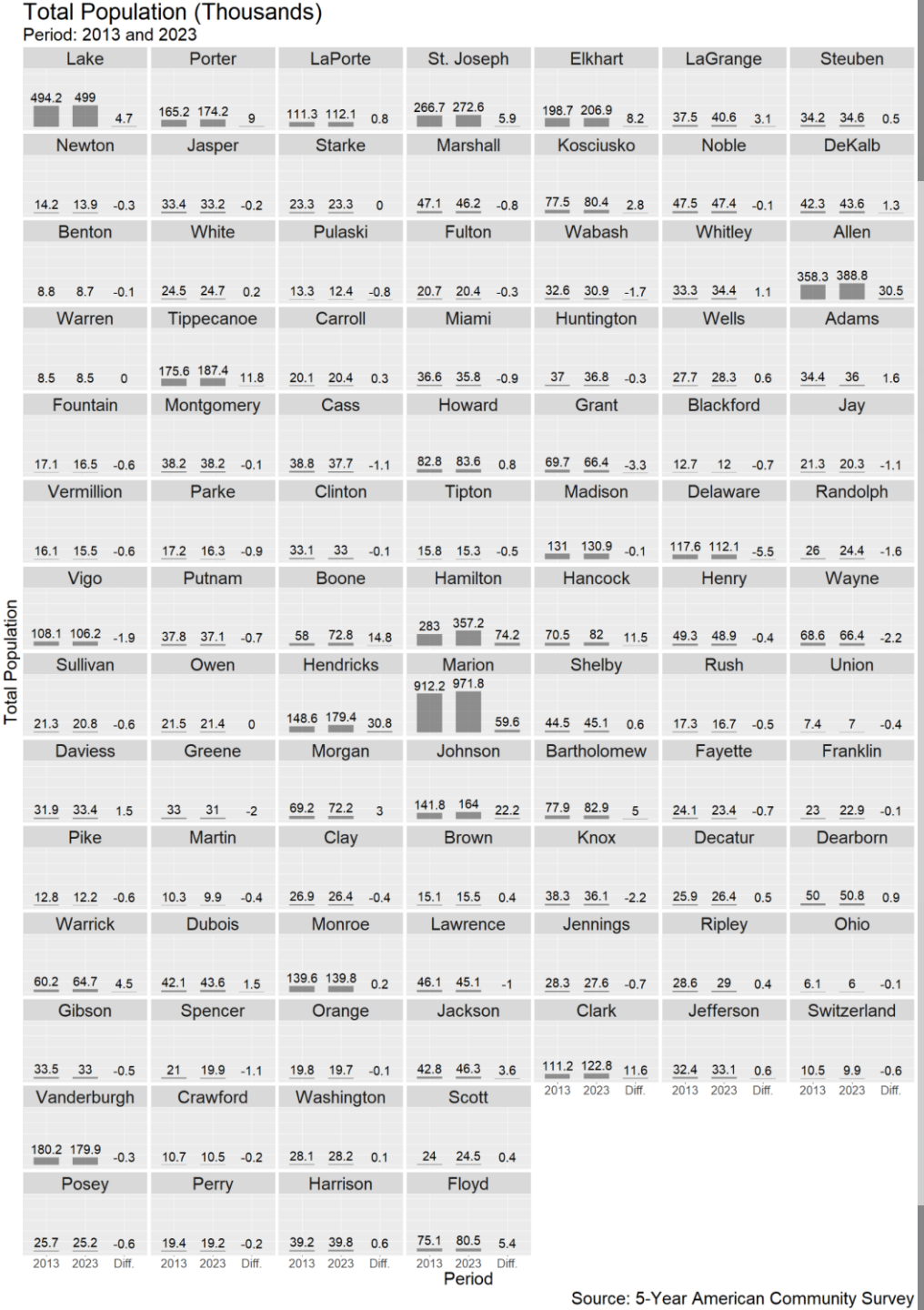
Source: USDA RUCC; Decennial Census

Total Population: 1970 – 2024

Indexed to 1970



Source: Census Population Estimates



Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

Indiana Population: 2013 & 2023

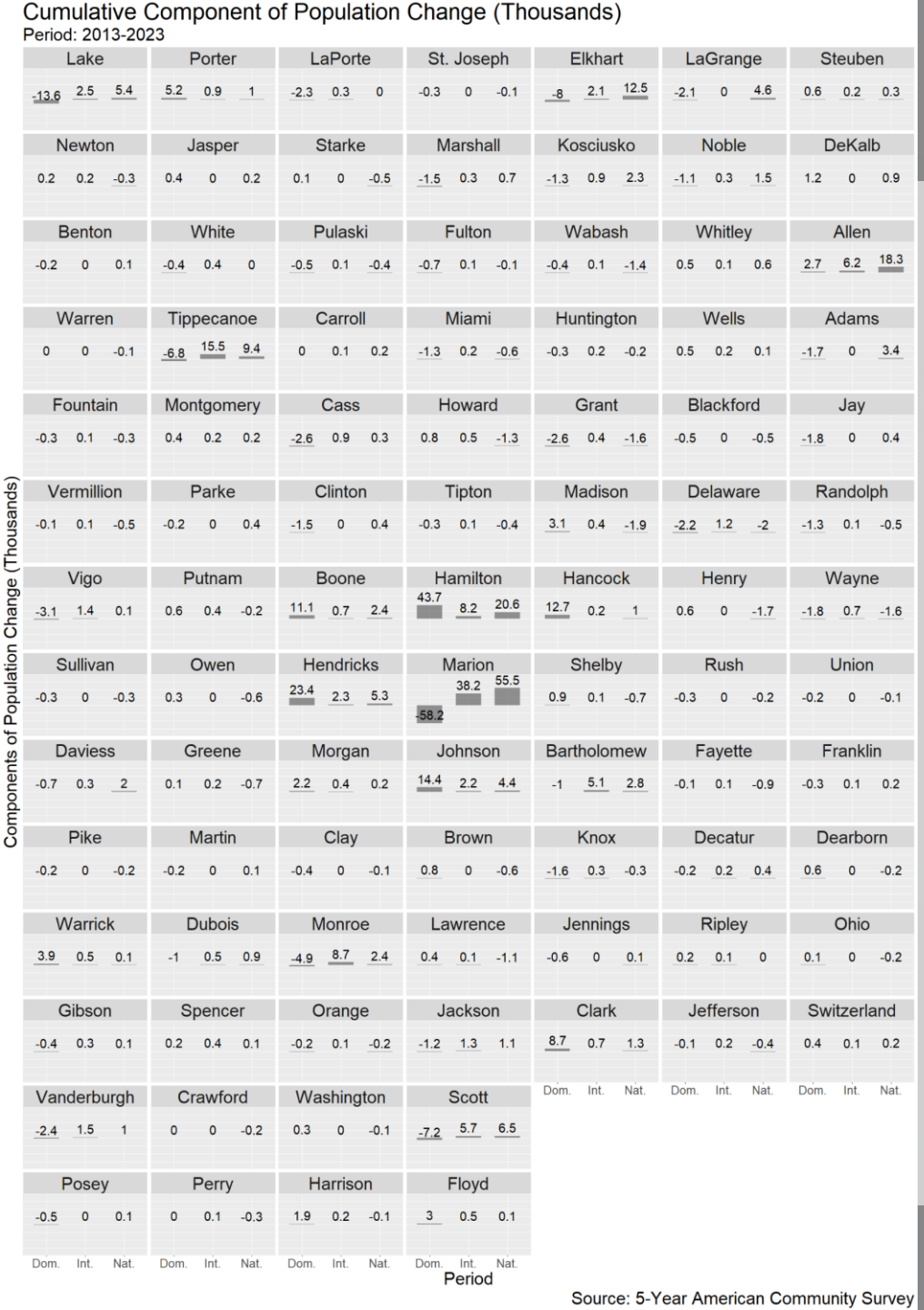
Data Insights

Indiana population increased by ~296,800 residents between 2013 & 2023

Hamilton County gained the most with more than 740,000; Delaware County lost the most with 5,400

Six counties had more than 200,000 residents (Allen, Elkhart, Hamilton, Lake, Marion, and St. Joseph)

Six counties had less than 10,000 residents (Benton, Martin, Ohio, Switzerland, Union, and Warren)



Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

Indiana Cumulative Components of Population Change: 2013 - 2023

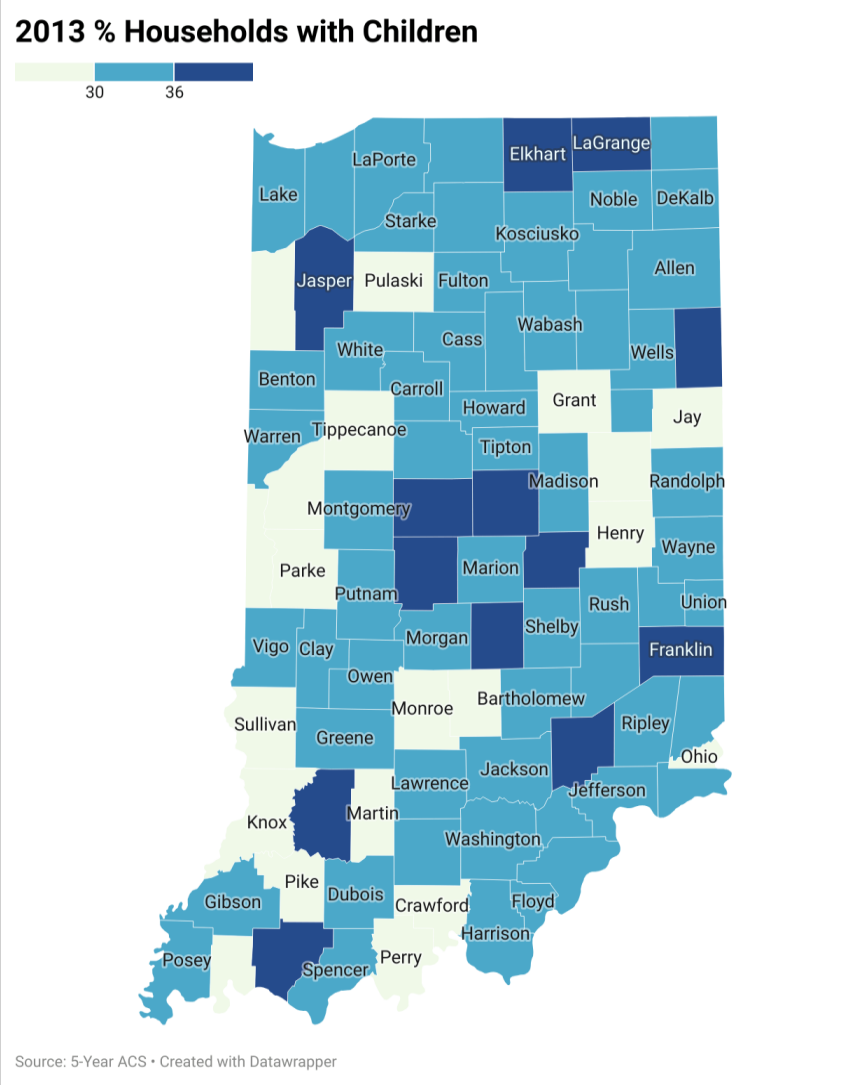
Data Insights

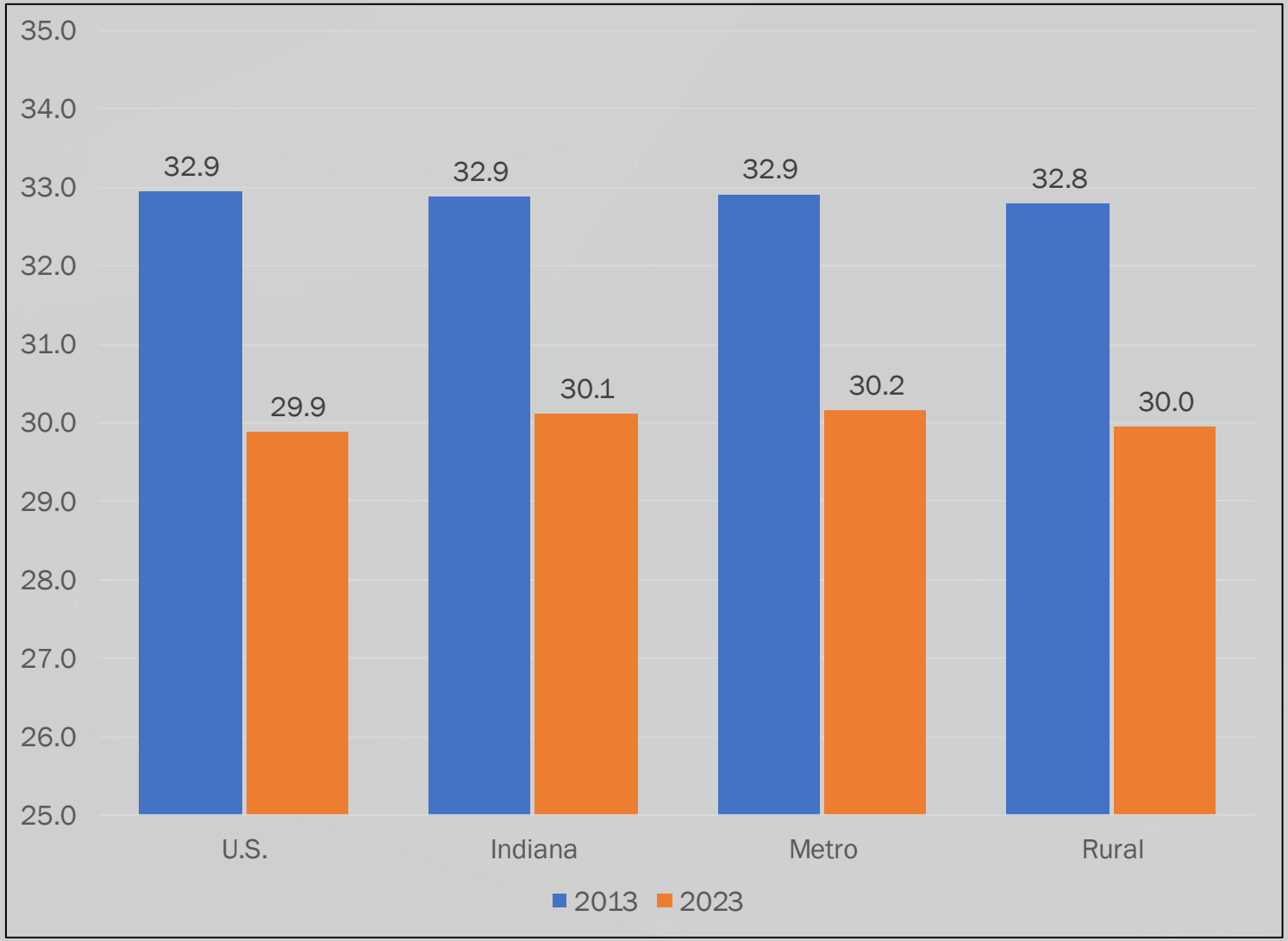
50 out of the 92 counties gained population due to an increase in the natural component (births minus deaths)

39 out of the 92 counties gained population due to an increase in the domestic component (in migration)

89 out of the 92 counties gained population due to an increase in the international component

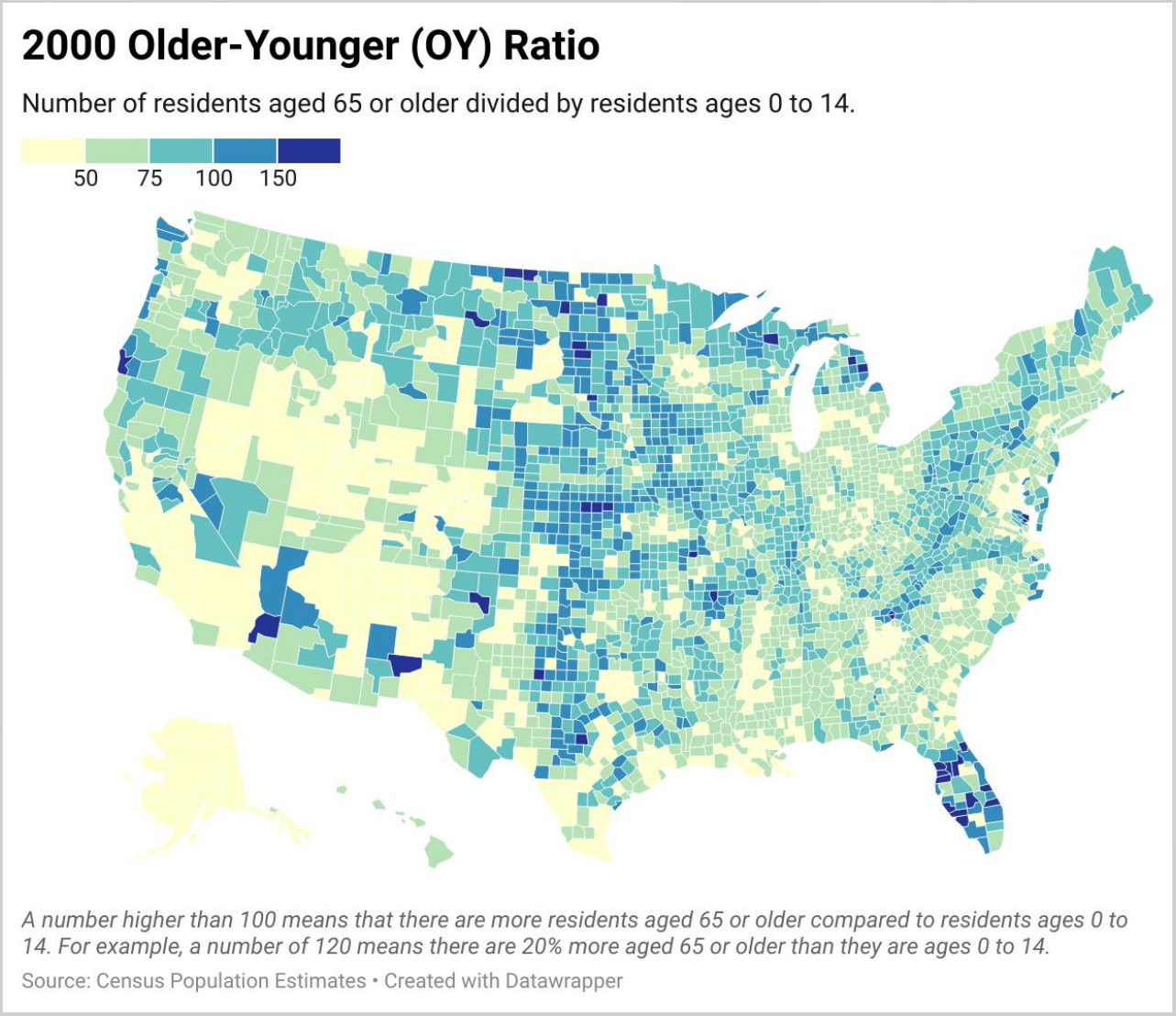
Percentage Households with Children





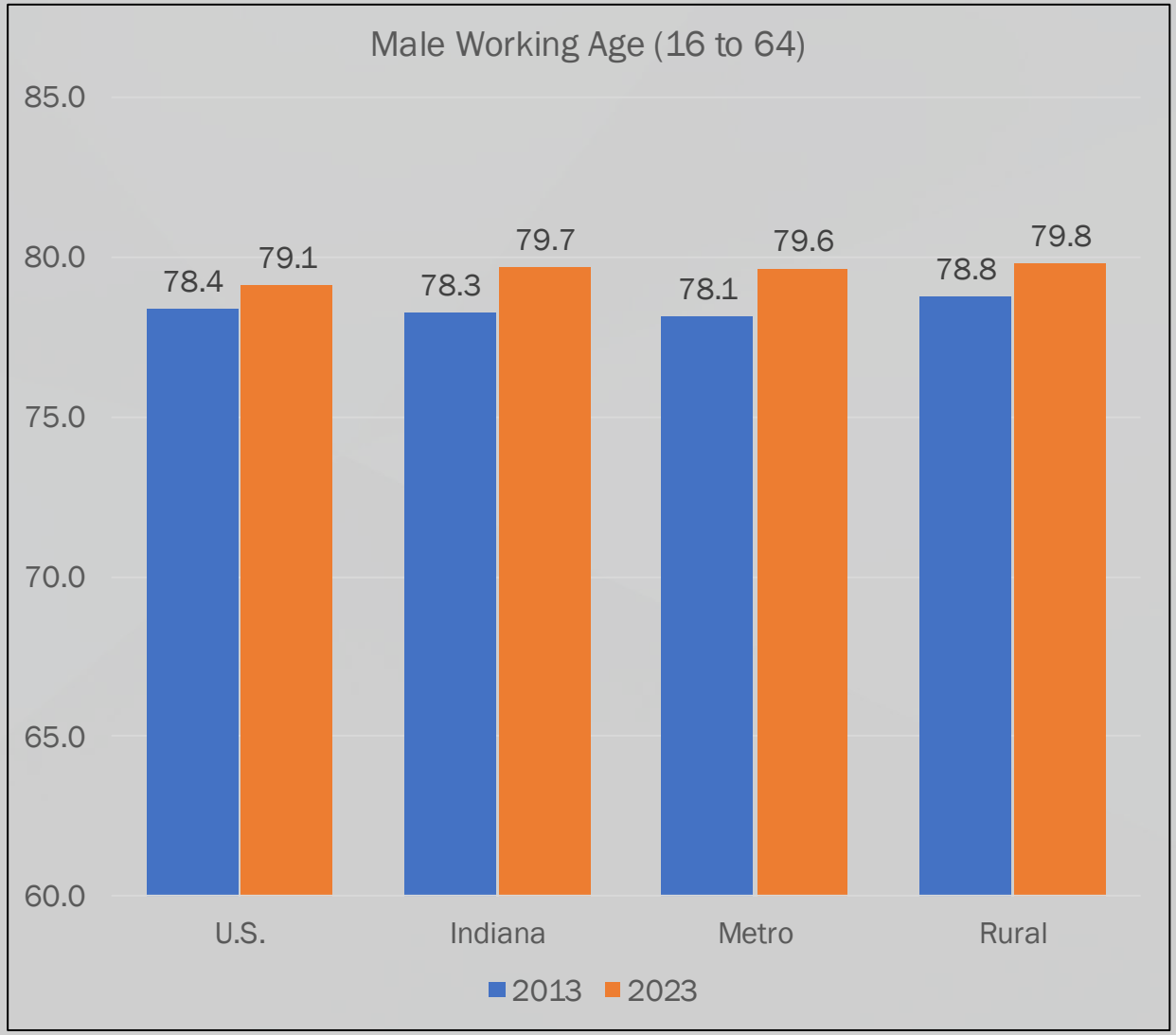
Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

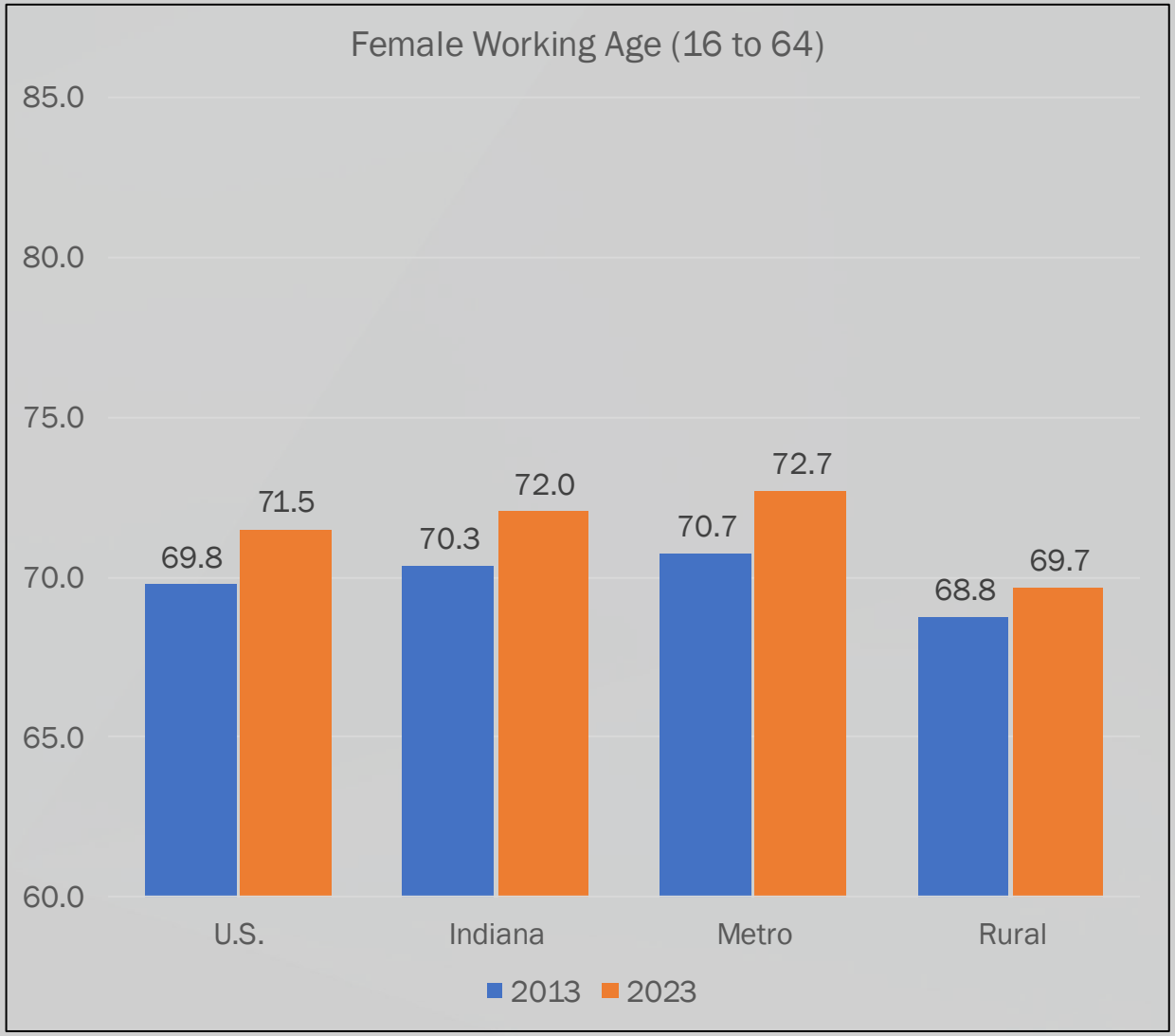
Older-Younger (OY) Ratio: 2000 & 2024



Indiana Population	2000	2024	Diff.
Age 0-14	1,309,904	1,296,342	-13,562
Metro	982,356	1,014,241	31,885
Rural	327,548	282,101	-45,447
Age 65 or Older	752,831	1,213,910	461,079
Metro	553,028	904,838	351,810
Rural	199,803	309,072	109,269

Labor Force Participation Rates

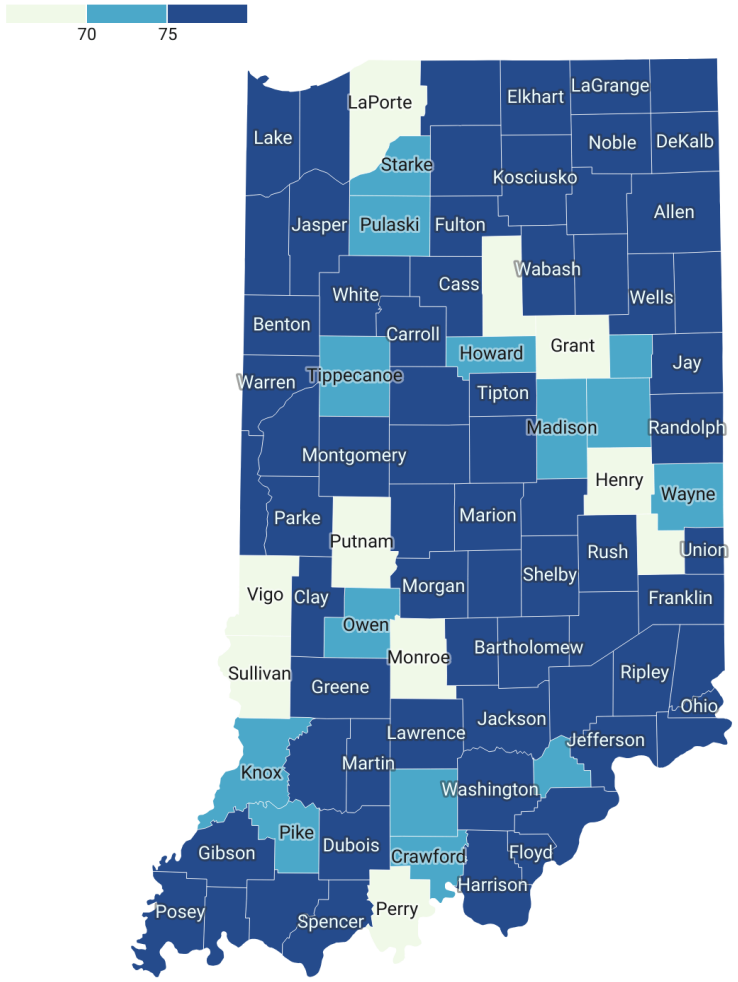




Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

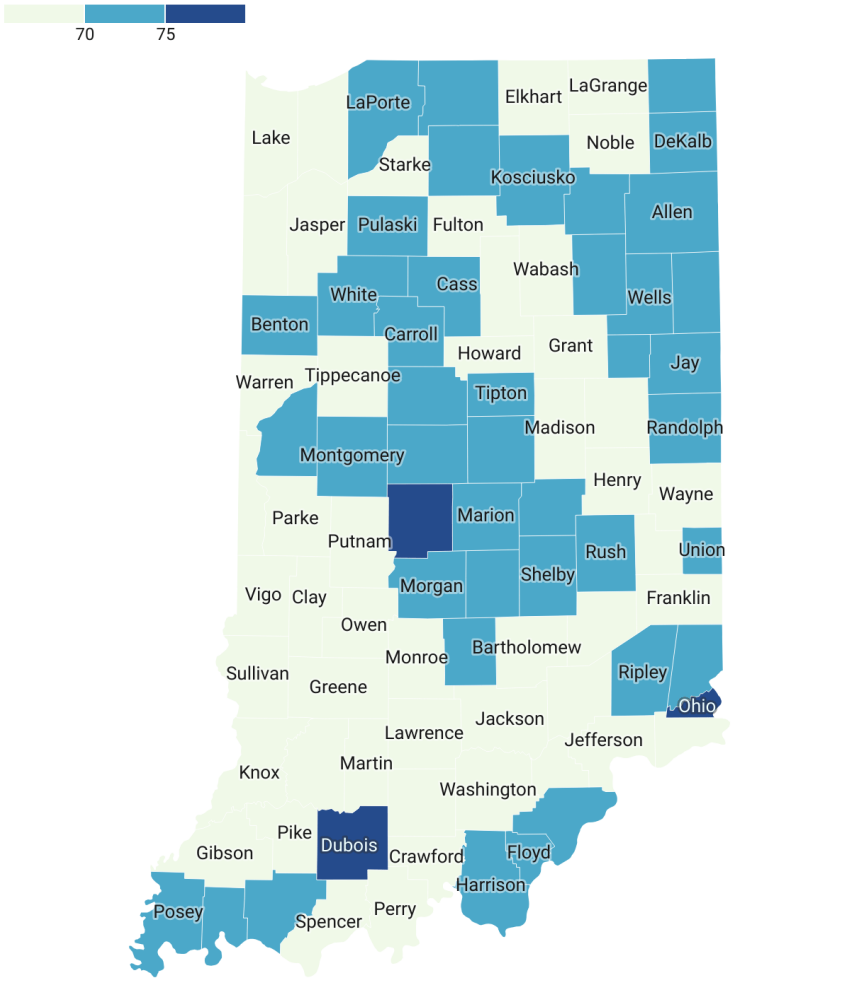
Labor Force Participation Rates (Cont'd)

2013 Male Working Age Labor Force Participation Rate



Source: 5-Year ACS • Created with Datawrapper

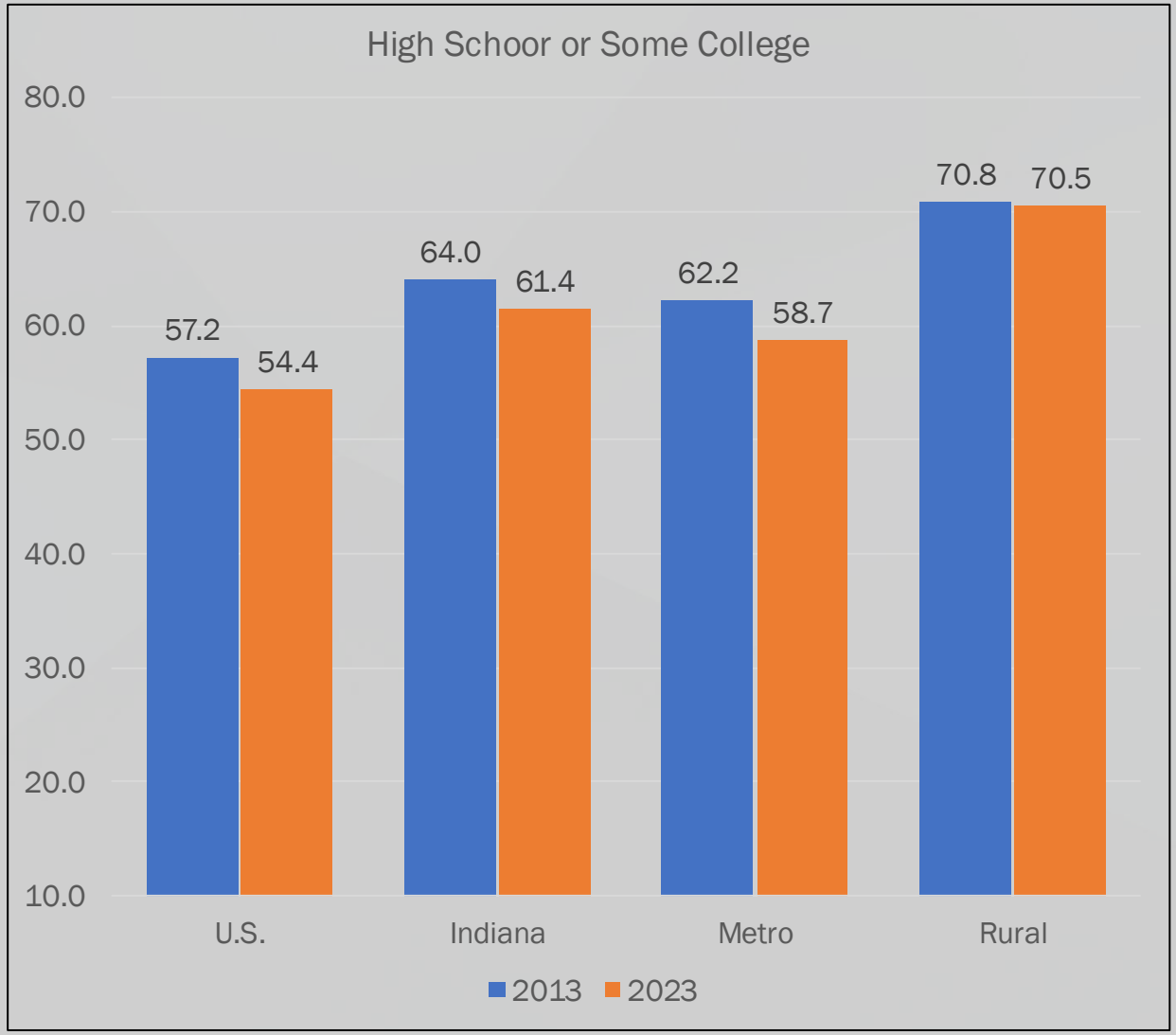
2013 Female Working Age Labor Force Participation Rate

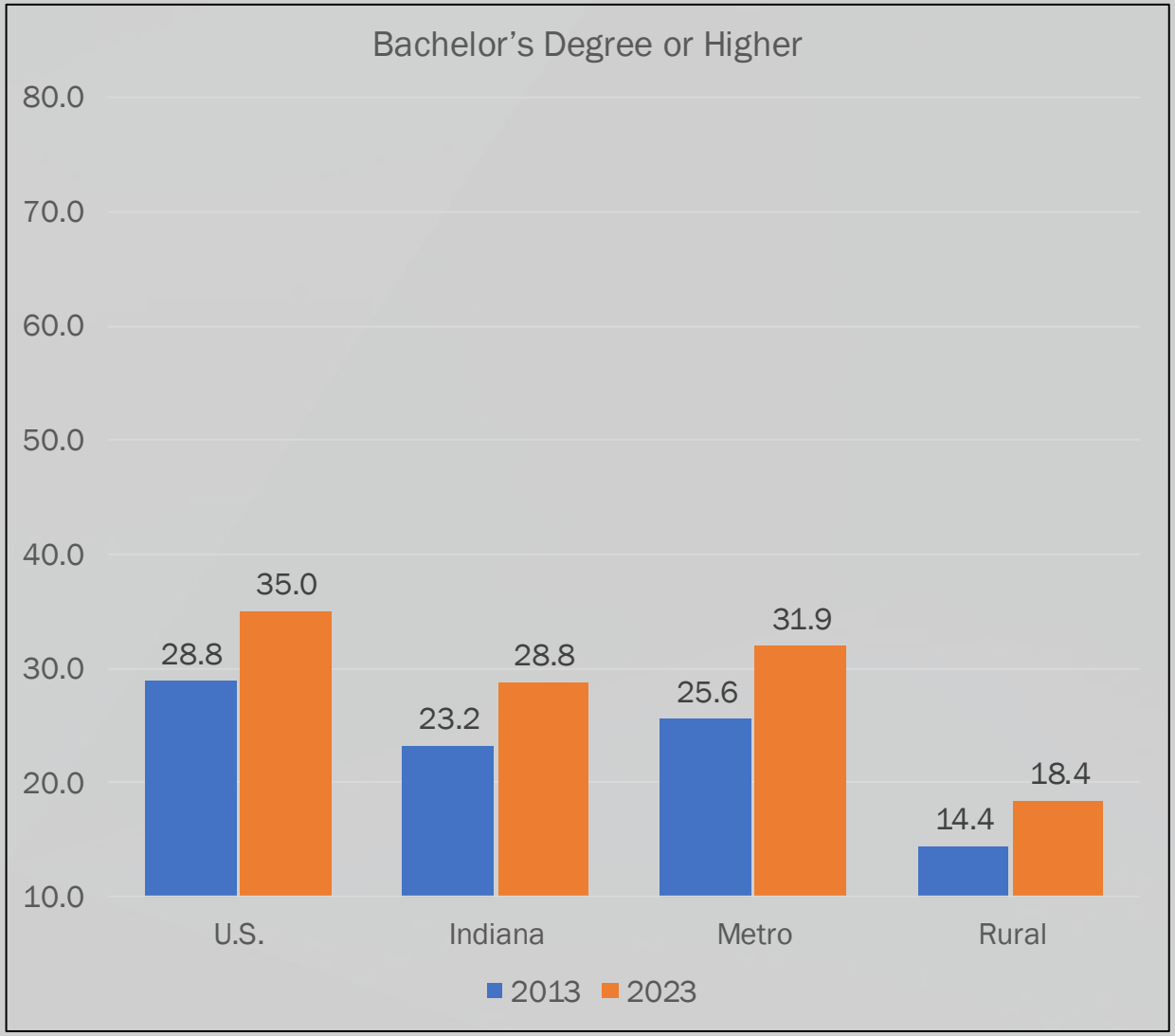


Source: 5-Year ACS • Created with Datawrapper

Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

Percentage Age 25 or Older: Educational Attainment

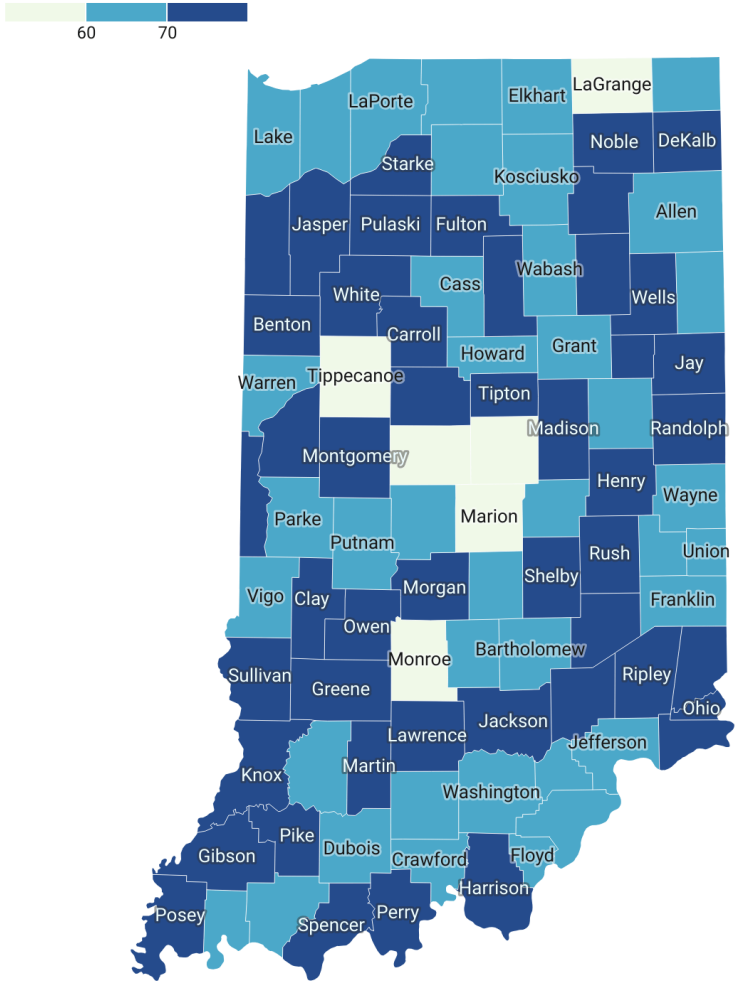




Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

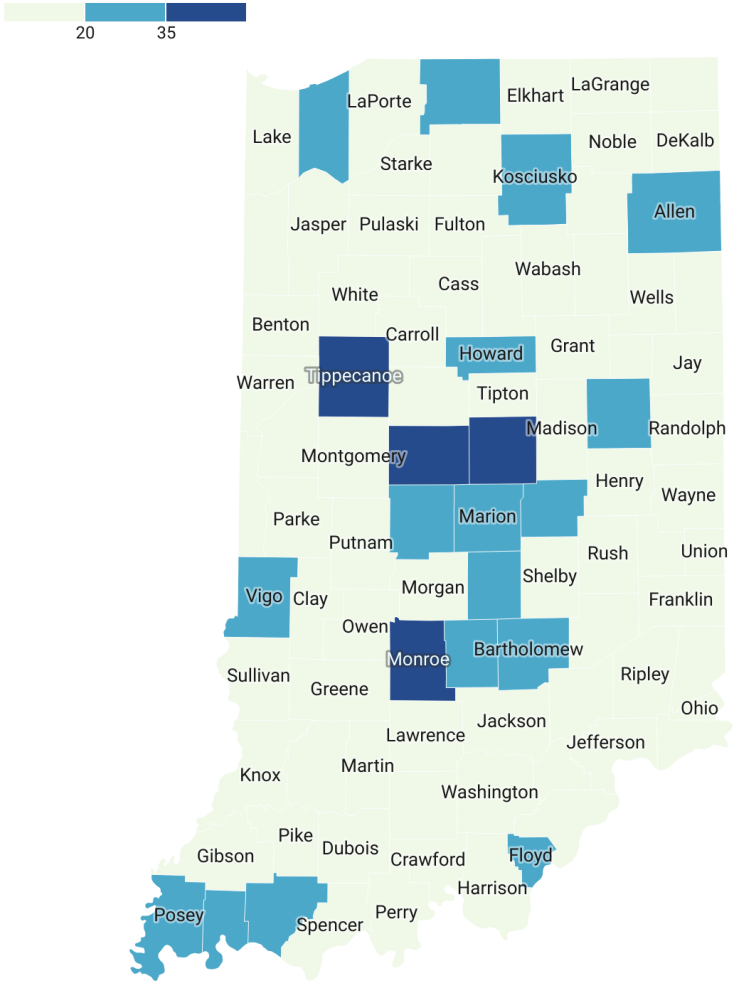
Percentage Age 25 or Older: Educational Attainment (Cont'd)

2013 % Pop. 25 or Older with High School or Some College



Source: 5-Year ACS • Created with Datawrapper

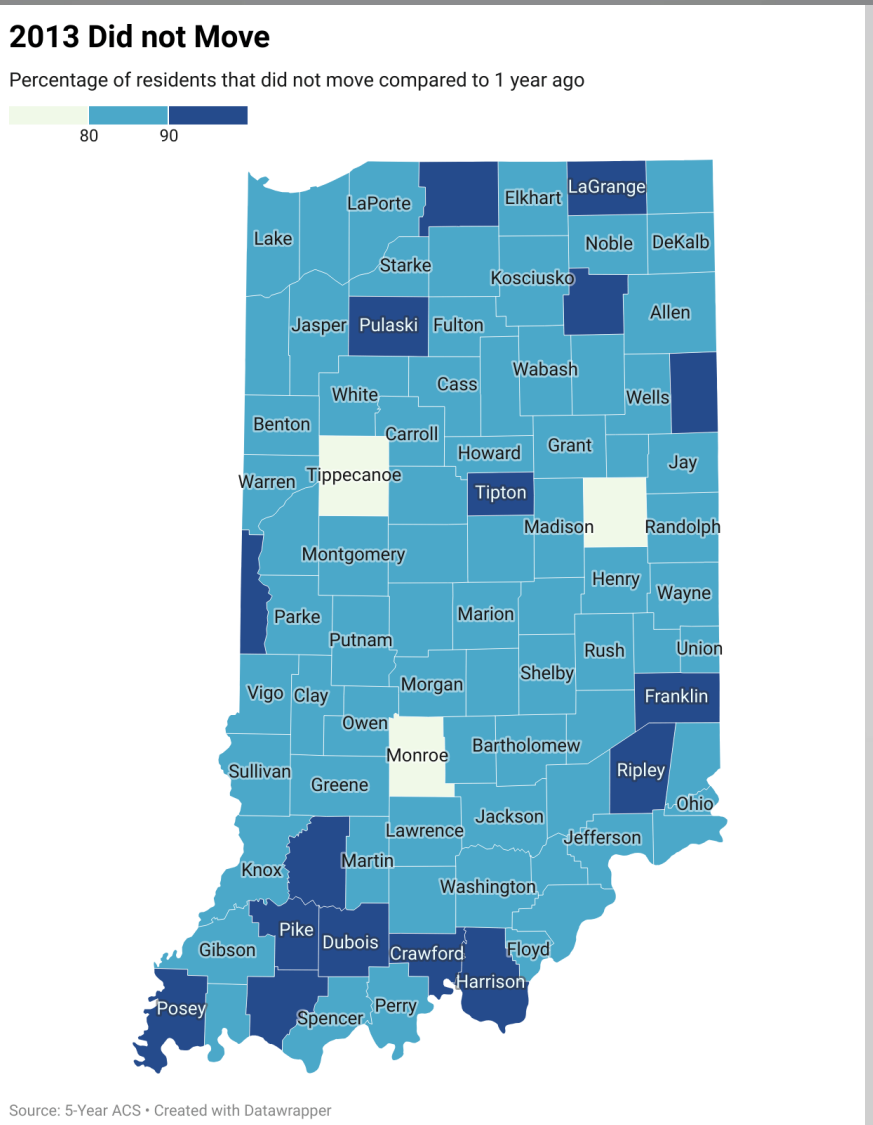
2013 % Pop. 25 or Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher

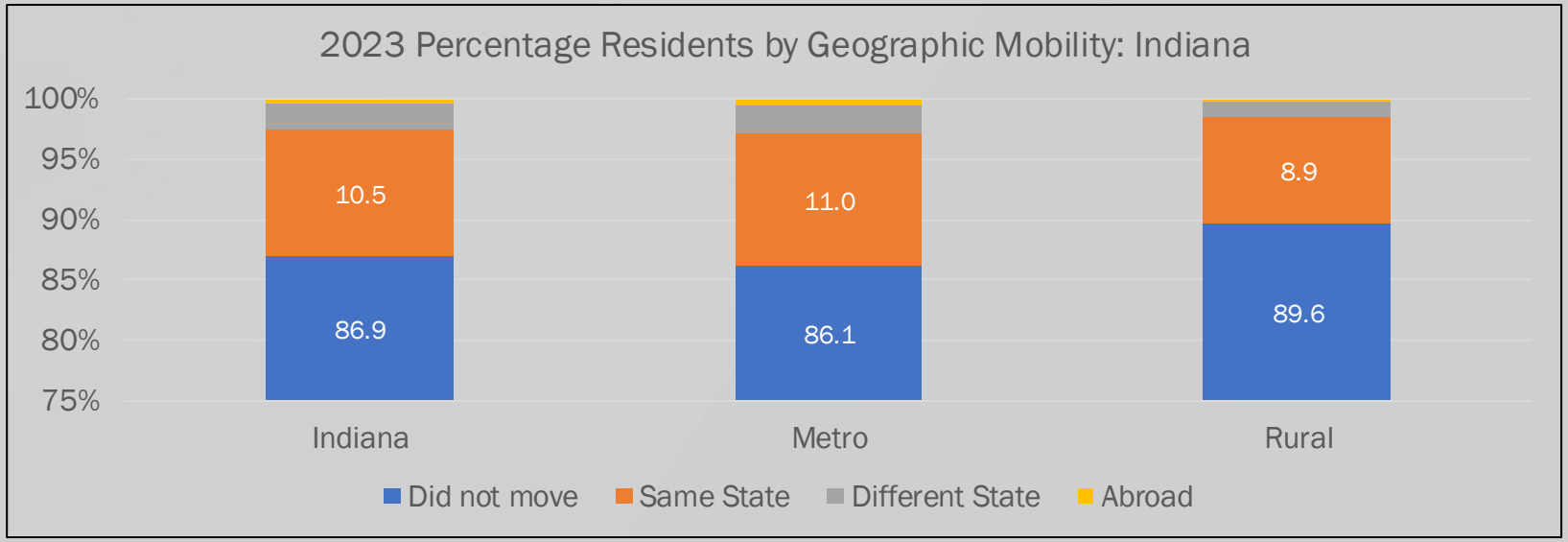


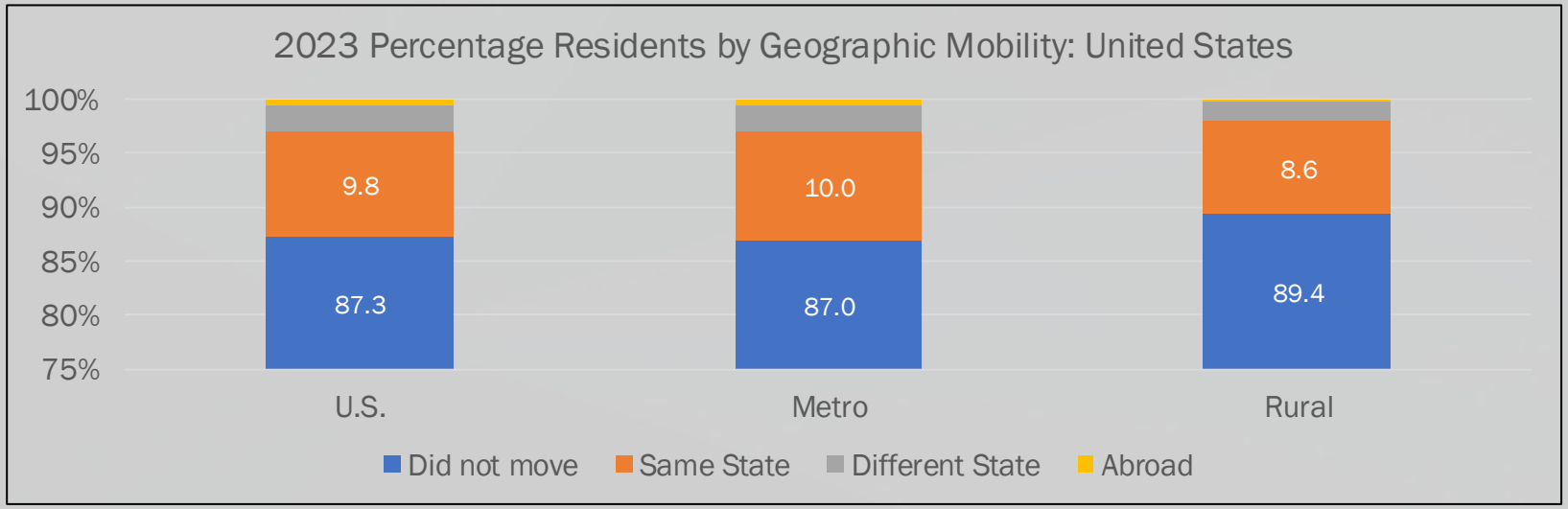
Source: 5-Year ACS • Created with Datawrapper

Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

Geographic Mobility: Compared to 1 Year Ago, Moved from ...







Source: 5-Year American Community Survey

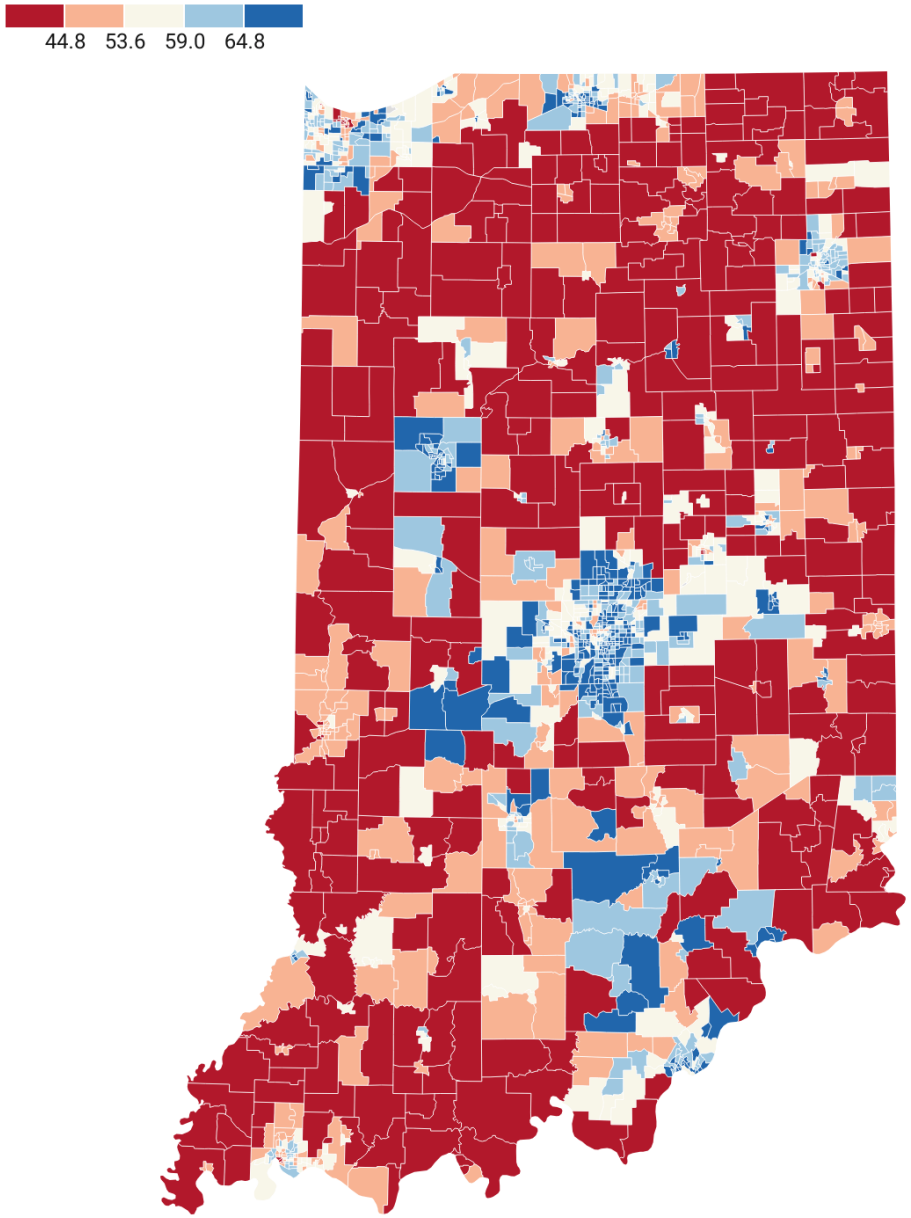
Number of Farms by Farm Sales

Source: USDA NASS

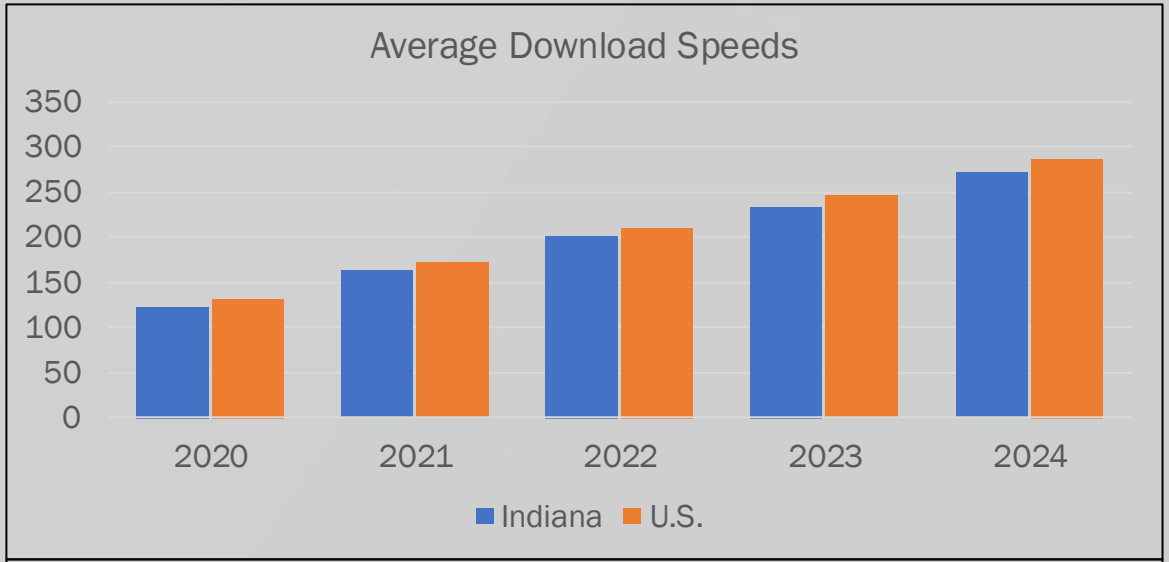
2020-2024 Broadband Quality

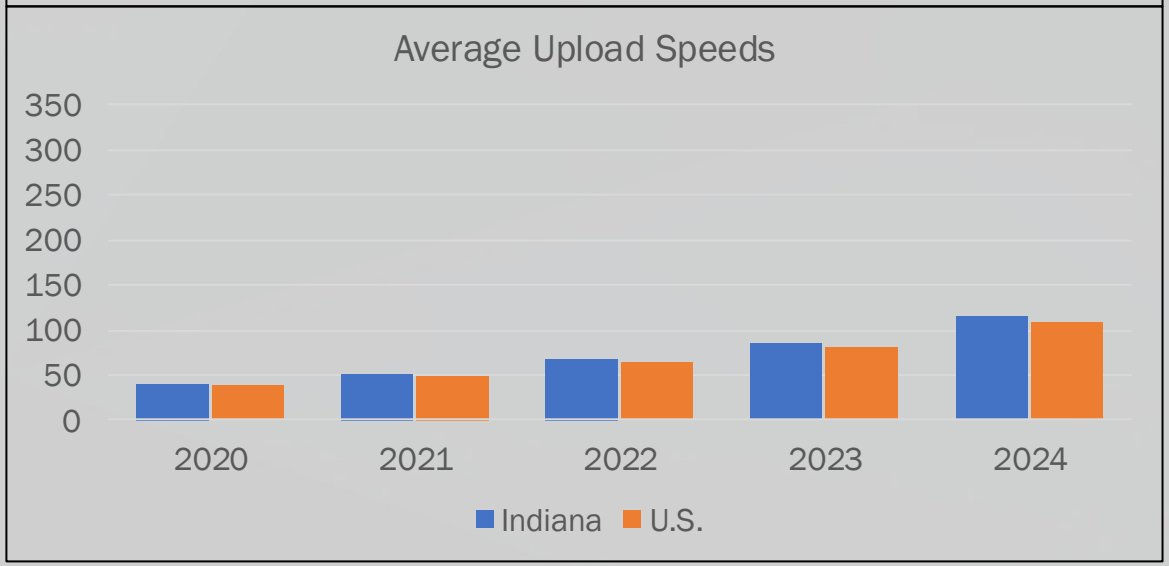
2020 Broadband Quality Score (BQS)

The BQS ranges from 0 to 100, where a higher number denotes a better broadband quality. BQS factors in download and upload speeds as well as latency.



Source: Ookla Speed Tests; RG • Created with Datawrapper





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Key Takeaways

- Population increasingly concentrating in urban areas; however, geographic mobility is stalling (may create other issues e.g., left-behind places)
- Between 2013 & 2023 population growth was mostly due to the international component
- Indiana is aging, not unlike the U.S., though at a lower pace. OY ratio for the US in 2024 was 102.5 (124 in rural areas); Indiana's was 93.6 (rural Indiana's was 109.6)
- Labor force participation rates increased; though, 45 counties (out of 92) saw their participation decline and gaps between male and female rates persist
- Indiana lags the nation regarding those with a Bachelor's degree or higher; however, almost three-quarters of residents aged 25 or older had high school or some college, conducive for reskilling/upskilling
- Number of farms decreased; share of higher sales increased
- Persistent low-quality broadband areas