THE COUNTY LANDSCAPE
COUNTIES’ HISTORY

Counties are one of America’s oldest forms of government, dating back to 1634 when the first county governments (shire) were established in Virginia. The organization and structure of today’s 3,069 counties are chartered under state constitutions or laws and are tailored to fit the needs and characteristics of the state and local areas. Counties are governed by locally elected officials, including more than 19,000 county elected executives and board members, and another 18,000 independently elected constitutional officers. Though organizational structures vary, all county governments are on the front lines of building healthy, vibrant and safe communities.
Under America’s form of federalism, the intergovernmental system balances, divides and shares power and responsibilities between levels of government. Counties are uniquely positioned to implement and administer vital intergovernmental systems and facilitate cooperation of all levels of government.

Annually, counties invest over $600 BILLION in local communities.

America’s counties employ 3.6 MILLION workers who help provide essential services to over 300 million residents.
MORE ABOUT COUNTY EXPLORER

NACo’s County Explorer tool provides easy access to county-level data, with hundreds of indicators across local issues including county economies, transportation and infrastructure, health and public safety – each telling a unique story.

features:

- Detailed data-points on every county
- Redesigned & user-friendly interface
- Compatible on mobile devices
- Interactive legend to explore different categories of data
- Compare counties across multiple data points
- County and State profiles on variety of topics

Check it out at explorer.naco.org.

Email research@naco.org for more information and sign up for monthly updates at www.naco.org/CESignUp.
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FEDERAL TO COUNTY NEXUS
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<th>Counties are investing</th>
<th>In FY 2021, over 200 entitlement counties received more than</th>
<th>In 2019, county residents received</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$65.1 BILLION</td>
<td>$965 MILLION in direct CDBG funding.</td>
<td>$53 BILLION in SNAP funding.</td>
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<td>in ARPA Recovery Funds in local communities.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>County governments received more than</th>
<th>In FY2019, 656 counties received more than</th>
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<tr>
<td>$514 MILLION</td>
<td>$249 MILLION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in PILT funding in FY2021.</td>
<td>in SRS funding.</td>
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Allocation to be paid directly to counties by the U.S. Treasury as part of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), a part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Source: U.S. Department of Treasury, 2021.
The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (Recovery Fund) allocates **$65.1 billion** in direct, flexible aid to every county, parish and borough in the country. The fund, which the National Association of Counties (NACo) helped develop and strongly advocated to pass, is part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Counties can allocate these critical recovery funds to a broad array of investments under five categories:

**PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE EFFORTS**

**NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACTS CAUSED BY COVID-19**

**REVENUE RECOVERY**

**PREMIUM PAY**

**WATER, SEWER OR BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE**

From the 200 county plans collected by NACo, **counties’ top three investment categories include bolstering our nation’s local health programs, strengthening our infrastructure system and ensuring that vital human services are available to residents.** Counties are also investing in eliminating the digital divide, sanitizing public buildings and improving airflow systems.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) — DIRECT FUNDING TO ENTITLEMENT COUNTIES BY STATE

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding received directly by entitlement counties in FY 2021. Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
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 and non-profit sectors to address economic development, water, infrastructure and human services, and to support job creation and retention.

Counties invest CDBG funding to foster safe and vibrant communities through addressing local housing and community development needs.

Entitlement counties received over $965 million in direct CDBG funding in FY 2020.
Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funding to county governments based on the presence of certain federal public lands within our boundaries in FY 2021. Source: U.S. Department of the Interior.
As federal land is not taxable by local governments, public land counties incur substantial annual losses in tax revenue. Though counties cannot collect property taxes on federal land, we still provide essential services to residents and those who visit these public lands each year. Such services include road and bridge maintenance, law enforcement, search and rescue, emergency medical, fire protection, solid waste disposal and environmental compliance.

62% of America’s counties have federal public land within their boundaries; the federal government owns roughly 640 million acres (or 28 percent) of land in the U.S.

The Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Program provides payments to counties and other local governments to offset losses in tax revenues due to the presence of substantial acreage of federal land in their jurisdictions.

Counties collectively received more than $514 million in PILT funding in FY 2021.

PILT funding is critical for county services including:

- Road and bridge maintenance
- Law enforcement
- Search and rescue
- Emergency medical
- Fire protection
- Solid waste disposal
- Environmental compliance

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

U.S. COUNTIES AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS (SRS)

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS FUNDING SUPPORTS:

- TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE
- SCHOOLS
- FOREST MANAGEMENT
- ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION
- EMERGENCY SERVICES
- PROTECTION FROM WILDFIRE
- SEARCH AND RESCUE

STRONGER COUNTIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

SRS is critical to local communities, providing funding to counties and schools impacted by the decline in 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.

In total, counties received $249.1 million in funding through the SRS program in FY 2019. SRS was reauthorized on November 15, 2021, for FYs 2021 through 2023.

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 to compensate for lost revenues.

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

PROJECTED 25% FUND PAYMENT, FY 2017 RECEIPTS YEAR

$79.8M

PROJECTED 2017 25% FUND PAYMENT, FY 2019 SRS

-68%

PERCENT OF COUNTIES WITH U.S. FOREST SERVICE LAND

24%

$249.1M

SRS PAYMENT, FY 2019 RECEIPTS YEAR

$249.1M

PROJECTED 25% FUND PAYMENT, FY 2017 RECEIPTS YEAR

$79.8M

PROJECTED 2017 25% FUND PAYMENT, FY 2019 SRS

-68%

PERCENT OF COUNTIES WITH U.S. FOREST SERVICE LAND

24%

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, 2019.
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, **10 STATES DELEGATE SNAP ADMINISTRATION TO COUNTY AGENCIES.**

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 supports 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, **10 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.*

More than **41 MILLION** low-income Americans received assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in FY 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 county-administered states, 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.

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.
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.

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

**Breakdown of National TANF Expenditures - 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic assistance</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related activities and support</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program management</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refundable tax credits</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total transferred to other programs</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total National TANF Expenditures: $32 Billion**

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

**The Flexibility of TANF is Extremely Important to Counties and Our Residents** because counties can allocate the funds to critical underfunded programs and services.

**The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program** is a federal entitlement program providing federal funding for a wide range of services that address the root causes of poverty.*

**In 10 States, Counties Are the Primary Administrators of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program.**

Counties’ contributions and involvement in the TANF program vary from county to county.

**Under TANF, Counties Can Also Transfer Funds to Other Programs Providing Vital Services for Low-Income Families.**
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.
Eight states delegate the administration of the CCDF program to counties; in **FY 2018**, these eight states together invested more than $3 billion in federal, state and local funds in the CCDF program, accounting for more than one fifth 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.

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

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.**
MEDICAID CONTRIBUTION MANDATES FOR COUNTIES

Identifies if counties within a state contribute to Medicaid and associated state mandates. Source: NACo Research, 2016.
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.

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### Federal Medical Benefits Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$1.37T</th>
<th>In medical care, including Medicare benefits, Public Assistance Medical Care Benefits and Military Medical Insurance benefits received by county residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$603B</td>
<td>In Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) benefits went to county residents</td>
</tr>
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### Counties Contribute to Medicaid in 26 States

- **18 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, to administrative and/or program costs for Medicaid, supporting our hospitals that serve large numbers of Medicaid beneficiaries, participating in Medicaid waiver and more.

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The Medicaid program is the largest source of health coverage in the United States, covering over 76 million low-income families and individuals, or one in five Americans.

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CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
COUNTIES PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN CONNECTING OUR NATION’S RESIDENTS, COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES

COUNTIES OWN AND MAINTAIN 44% OF PUBLIC ROAD MILES AND 38% OF BRIDGES.

COUNTIES SUPPORT 40% OF TRANSIT AGENCIES AND 34% OF AIRPORTS.

COUNTIES INVEST $134 BILLION IN BUILDING, MAINTAINING AND OPERATING PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS.

14% OF HOUSEHOLDS DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO BROADBAND.
SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS *WITHOUT* BROADBAND ACCESS

The share of households in the county without access to broadband internet access. Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2015-2019 (Tables B28003).
PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT BROADBAND ACCESS BY REGION, 2019

16% SOUTH
15% CENTRAL
14% NATIONAL
13% NORTHEAST
11% WEST

Fewer than 10% of county leaders surveyed reported full coverage of high-speed broadband across the entire county.

NATIONAL STATISTICS ILLUSTRATE THE VARIATION IN BROADBAND ACCESS ACROSS COUNTIES.

Over 11 million
Americans in rural areas and over 846,000 in tribal lands still lack access to broadband that meets the federal definition for minimum standards.

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

Hennepin County, Minn. is addressing the digital divide through its “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.

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

Source: NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2015-2019 (Tables B28003).
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.
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 nearly 40 million passengers in 2021. The airport is the main commercial airport serving Las Vegas. Approximately 600,000 pounds of cargo are transported through the airport every day. Operating revenue for the airport totaled $476 million and indirectly impacted the local economy. The airport employs over 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 processed 13 million tons of cargo during 2019. In 2011, the port supported nearly 16,000 jobs, $500 million in business revenue, and $255 million in personal income. 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 2019, Denver International had 33.5 million enplanements and saw 1.6 billion pounds of cargo land. Total operating revenue for the airport was $591 million. In 2020, Denver International Airport directly employed 1,068 people.
SHARE OF ROAD MILES OWNED BY COUNTY HIGHWAY AGENCIES

There are **4.1 million** public road miles within counties across the nation where most trips both start and end.

In total, local highway agencies, including counties, cities and municipalities, own and maintain **3.1 million** road miles.

In 2017, county governments invested **$30 billion** in the maintenance, operation, repair and construction of toll and non-toll highways.

**COUNTIES OWN MORE PUBLIC ROAD MILES THAN ANY OTHER LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT.**

**BREAKDOWN OF OWNERSHIP OF PUBLIC ROADS BY HIGHWAY AGENCY, 2019**

- **43.6%** County Highway Agencies
- **19.4%** State Highway Agencies
- **31.6%** Other Local Government Highway Agencies
- **3.8%** Federal Highway Agencies
- **0.4%** Indian Tribe/Governments
- **1.2%** Other Highway Entities
COUNTY-OWNED BRIDGES

Share of bridges owned by a county highway agency. Sources: National Bridge Inventory Data - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), 2020.
Counties own and maintain 38 percent of the 605,000 bridges that compose the national bridge inventory.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, 7.5 percent of the nation’s bridges are considered structurally deficient. With the bipartisan infrastructure law, counties will invest funds to improve bridge conditions.

Off-system bridges comprise 46.3 percent of the nation’s bridges (over 280,000 bridges).

Counties own and maintain 38 percent of the national bridge inventory.
Number of public transit agencies owned or operated by counties or regional transit authorities with county ownership or county elected officials on the board of the transit authorities. Note: Counties outline in red are those with county supported transit agencies. Sources: NACo Analysis of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD) data, 2015-2019.
The Milwaukee County Transit System provides nearly 29 million rides each year and generates a massive economic impact for the region. In 2020, the agency provided 58 MILLION annual passenger miles, operated 371 vehicles in maximum service and expended a total of $145 MILLION in operating funds (16.3 percent of which were provided by local government). The agency operates bus, commuter bus and demand response services.

The MIAMI-DADE COUNTY transit system is the 14th largest in the U.S., and consists of three main modes: metrorail, metrorail and metromover (4.4-mile electrically powered, fully automated people mover system). In 2020, the department provided 314 MILLION annual passenger miles, operated 1,452 vehicles in maximum service and expended a total of $687 MILLION in operating funds (58.5 percent of which were provided by local government). The department operates commuter bus, demand response, heavy rail, bus, monorail/automated and vanpool services.

King County Metro is the Puget Sound region's largest public transportation agency. In 2020, the department provided 260 MILLION annual passenger miles, operated 3,371 vehicles in maximum service and expended a total of $929 MILLION in operating funds (21.9 percent of which were provided by local government). The department operates commuter bus, demand response, heavy rail, bus, monorail/automated and vanpool services.

The Montgomery County Division of Transit Services plans, schedules and manages the county's Ride On bus system, which consists of 375 county-owned and operated buses. In 2020, the agency provided 71 MILLION annual passenger miles, operated 314 vehicles in maximum service and expended a total of $129 MILLION in operating funds (55 percent of which were provided by local government). The agency operates bus and demand response services.

Counties annually invest more than $23 BILLION in the operation, maintenance and construction of public mass transit systems, including subways, surface rails, ferries and buses.

Counties are involved in 40% of public transit systems across the nation.
KEEPING AMERICA HEALTHY
COUNTIES PLAY AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN PROTECTING, PROMOTING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION.

Counties employ over 391,000 hospital and health care workers.

Counties support more than 900 hospitals that provide inpatient medical care and specialized care.

Counties also own and support 700 long-term care facilities.
PERCENT OF THE POPULATION FULLY VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19

Share of the county population that has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. A fully vaccinated person is one who has received two doses in a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or one dose of the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of February 3rd, 2022.
Counties are critical drivers in meeting essential vaccine milestones and protecting public health through more than 1,900 local public health departments.

**COUNTIES SUPPORT VACCINE ADMINISTRATION THROUGH COUNTY-OPERATED VACCINE CLINICS,** leveraging local public health expertise to allocate the vaccine supply, working with state and federal partners to overcome access barriers and increasing vaccine confidence through public messaging and education.

**COUNTIES ARE KEY DRIVERS IN MEETING CRITICAL VACCINE MILESTONES THROUGH LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS AND HAVE LED COVID-19 RESPONSE EFFORTS THROUGH VACCINE ADMINISTRATION.**
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 2017.
Each year, counties invest $62.8 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 – 2017

$62.8B
$59.0B
$41.4B

COUNTIES play a direct role in the health and well-being of residents, investing more than $163 billion in community health, hospitals and human services annually.

In total, counties invest over $100 billion in community health and hospitals annually, including:

More than $41 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 $59 billion in operating county-owned hospital facilities, including those operated by public universities and for the provision of inpatient medical care and specialized care.
MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER RATIO

The ratio of county residents to mental health providers. Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute analysis of CMS, National Provider Identification file 2020 data.
America’s 3,069 counties are integral to the nation’s behavioral health system.

- 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experience a mental illness.
- More than half did not receive treatment in the past year.
- 1 in 25 adults in the U.S. experience a serious mental illness.
- Approximately one third did not receive treatment in the past year.
- 64 percent of incarcerated people have a mental illness, and the county court system processes over 8 million individuals each year, making county jails one of the largest providers of behavioral and mental health services.

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.

Approximately 9.5 million adults have both a mental health and substance abuse disorder.

1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experience a mental illness.

- More than half did not receive treatment in the past year.
- Approximately 90% did not receive treatment in the past year.
- 1 in 25 adults in the U.S. experience a serious mental illness.
- Approximately one third did not receive treatment in the past year.
- 64 percent of incarcerated people have a mental illness, and the county court system processes over 8 million individuals each year, making county jails one of the largest providers of behavioral and mental health services.

One third of the population lives in a county designated as a mental health professional shortage area.

Counts plan and operate community-based services for persons with mental illnesses and substance use conditions through 750 behavioral health authorities and community providers.
CREATING PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES
County governments are collectively one of the largest employers in the nation, employing 3.6 million workers.

Nationally, the unemployment rate is 4% — 0.5 percentage points above pre-pandemic levels.

The impact of the pandemic on the local government workforce remains acute, with over 647,000 local government jobs yet to be recovered.

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

County leaders are leveraging the American Rescue Plan Act’s (ARPA) state and local fiscal recovery fund to bolster the local workforce.

County leaders directly facilitate the implementation of public policy and services which have tangible ramifications in the lives of residents.
The relative change in the size of the county’s population over the past decade expressed as a percentage. Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2020 Decennial Census.
Racial and ethnic demographic makeups of counties are shifting. In 2020, 375 counties were majority people of color — an increase from 2010, when only 317 counties were majority people of color (encompassing those identifying as Hispanic, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander).

Four of the five counties with the highest percentage of residents of color are in Texas (Starr, Maverick, Webb and Zapata counties), along with Oglala Lakota County, S.D.

47% of all counties increased in population between 2010 and 2020.

53% of all counties decreased in population between 2010 and 2020.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2020 Decennial Census.

America’s 3,069 counties are diversifying and evolving.
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY COUNTY

COUNTY LEADERS ARE IMPLEMENTING LOCAL POLICIES THAT ELEVATE RECOVERY EFFORTS AND ESTABLISH LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS FOR RESIDENTS.

Different counties face different recovery and workforce planning needs in the post-COVID era.

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.

COUNTIES ACT AS A CRITICAL CONVENER, forging meaningful connections between workers, employers, community colleges, workforce organizations and other local stakeholders to thread the needle on workforce concerns unique to each community.

COUNTIES ARE VITAL IN SUPPORTING LABOR MARKET RECOVERY.
Economic output declined in 72 percent of counties between 2019 and 2020 as characterized by the coronavirus-related recession. A vital indicator, economic output (also known as GDP) is often used to measure productivity in the local economy, estimating the total value of goods and services produced.

The State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, which includes $65.1 billion in direct aid to every county in the U.S., is increasing local government spending and positively impacting GDP growth.

Between 2019 and 2020, economic output across all counties declined by 3.4 percent, disproportionately impacting counties with homogenous economies.

COUNTY OFFICIALS ACTIVELY WORK TO 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 CREATE ECONOMIES THAT THRIVE AND GROW.
States where K-12 schools are fully funded by counties

Counties Education Investments

Counties support the public education system through various mechanisms, including an annual investment of $103 billion.

County property taxes provide the primary source of funding for public schools, fully or partially funding school districts in five states.* 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 fully funded by counties, include: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Alaska.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems across the nation. Through ARPA Recovery Fund, counties are supporting programs for children in disproportionately impacted communities.

Counties are also creating opportunities through partnerships with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools, as well as administering continuing education and workforce development programs.

CTE programs provide students with academic, technical skills, 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.
FOSTERING SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES
COUNTIES INVEST $12 BILLION ANNUALLY IN LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.

COUNTIES INVEST $12.8 BILLION ANNUALLY IN HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ANNUALLY.

COUNTIES INVEST $107 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.
COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS COUNTIES

The share of owner households 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, 2015-2019 (Tables DP04, B25091 and B25070).
Counties are key players in community planning, land use, zoning and enacting policies and other regulations that affect housing.

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

The ongoing public health crisis has highlighted and amplified the existing gaps and challenges in the housing system and counties are investing in solutions to help residents across the nation.
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, 2017.
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:

- $29B to operate correctional facilities
- $21B in county courts and legal services
- $42B to support 2,961 police and sheriff departments
- $13.3B in fire protection activities

Counties operate 91% of local jails.

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 backbone of the public safety system, operating 91 percent of local jails and processing over 8 million admissions each year.

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 2012 AND 2021

The number of disaster declarations authorized by the President, both major disaster declarations and emergency declarations, for incidents affecting a county in 2012-2021. Source: U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency 2012-2021 Disasters data, 2022.
Over the past 20 years, natural and man-made disasters have increased in frequency, severity and cost. Last year, the nation experienced 20 separate billion-dollar disasters, which totaled approximately $145 billion in damages.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE BILLION-DOLLAR DISASTERS IN THE U.S. FROM 1980-2021 – CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI) ADJUSTED

In 2021, 965 counties experienced at least one federally declared major disaster, 590 counties had at least one Emergency Declaration and 850 counties had at least one Disaster Declaration.

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

America’s counties engage in all aspects and phases of emergency management: 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.

8% of counties have pre-designated shelters for disaster evacuees.

77% of counties indicate that there is adequate housing stock to support temporary housing for residents, non-local volunteers and federal employees, as of 2018.
OUR NATION’S VETERANS
More than 17 MILLION veterans live in U.S. counties, comprising 7 PERCENT OF COUNTY RESIDENTS.

More than $209 BILLION in federal dollars were distributed to veterans in counties across the nation in FY 2020.

County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) operate in 29 STATES and the District of Columbia, and are responsible for helping veterans access federal benefits.
Indicates whether a state has or does not have County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOS). Source: National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (Adapted by Center for a New American Security (CNAS)).
# The 10 States with the Highest Share of the Veteran Population, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Share of Veteran Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>8.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>7.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>7.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH</td>
<td>3.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NY</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>3.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>3.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>3.12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over seven percent of county residents are veterans (17.5 million veterans). Half of the 17.5 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 (CVOSOs) 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, two-thirds completed at least some post-secondary education, and over 28 percent completed a bachelor's degree.

**Though CVOSOs’ 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 (91 percent), women make up a growing share, about 9 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the percentage of female veterans will increase to 17 percent by 2040.
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF VETERAN AFFAIRS (VA) EXPENDITURES BY STATE

In FY 2020, more than $209 billion in federal dollars was distributed to veterans in counties across the nation.

FY 2020 VA FUNDS INCREASED BY $15.1 BILLION, representing a 7 percent increase from 2019 expenditure levels. Two VA spending categories—compensation and pension, and medical care—largely drove this increase, comprising 48 percent and 40 percent of FY 2020 VA expenditures, respectively.

Texas, California and Florida—the states with the largest veteran populations—also had larger total VA expenditures, which represented 27 percent of all VA funds in FY 2020.

More than $209 BILLION in VA funding distributed to support veterans and their families.
COUNTY GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT
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, 2017.
Almost one-third of counties operate under the Home Rule system of authority, allowing county governments more flexibility than the alternative Dillon’s Rule. While working within these systems, counties provide key services to residents in areas such as public health, infrastructure, emergency response and economic development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATISTICS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OF STATES IN WHICH COUNTIES HAVE AUTHORITY OVER ZONING, THOUGH FOR SOME COUNTIES THIS AUTHORITY ONLY EXTENDS OVER UNINCORPORATED AREAS.</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF STATES IN WHICH COUNTIES HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH SPECIAL DISTRICTS.</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF STATES IN WHICH COUNTIES HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO CALL A LOCAL STATE OF EMERGENCY.</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF STATES IN WHICH COUNTIES CAN OR MUST PLAY A ROLE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF STATES IN WHICH COUNTIES CAN LEVY PROPERTY TAXES, WHILE ONLY ABOUT HALF OF STATES PERMIT COUNTIES TO LEVY GENERAL PURPOSE SALES TAXES.</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

County government authority is important in determining how quickly and effectively counties can respond to the needs of residents. Counties derive authority from the state.

On the ground, county authority varies greatly across the states. Ten states, including Washington and North Dakota, have a mix of Dillon's/Home Rule counties. Other states, like Utah or North Carolina, direct the courts to rule favorably toward counties, greatly expanding county flexibility.

County governments work within state-derived authority to govern local communities.
GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE:
SIZE OF THE LEGISLATIVE BODY

Number of representatives elected to a county governing board. Source: NACo Research, 2017.
COUNTY MANAGEMENT

Counties provide vital services across America, including those mandated by federal and state policies as well as those requested by local residents. Counties often build and maintain parks, community centers, libraries and cultural centers. 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.

THERE ARE:

37,984 TOTAL COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS

19,355 BOARD AND COMMISSION MEMBERS

18,629 INDEPENDENTLY ELECTED CONSTITUTIONAL OR ROW OFFICERS

Primarily responsible for setting policy and budgets. Titles include: COMMISSIONERS, SUPERVISORS, POLICE JURORS AND LEGISLATORS.

Responsible for specific county functions and departments, including: Sheriffs, DAs/Prosecutors, Treasurers, Clerks, Recorders and Coroners.

FEDERAL POLICIES MATTER TO COUNTIES AND HAVE LONG-LASTING, OFTEN COSTLY IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

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 GOVERNING BODIES ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS BY MAKING LOCAL POLICY DECISIONS AND ENACTING LAWS.
COUNTIES EMPLOY 3.6 MILLION INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING:

374,000
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

328,000
HOSPITAL WORKERS

259,000
HUMAN SERVICES WORKERS

200,000
PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS

93,000
FIRE PROTECTION WORKERS

County governments are critical to the nation’s workforce, employing more than one in every 50 American workers.

Despite the consistent shortage of people employed in local government jobs throughout the pandemic, COUNTIES ARE FOCUSED ON ADDRESSING RESIDENTS’ NEEDS AND LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR ECONOMIC REVIVAL.

Under the Final Rule, as designated by the U.S. Department of Treasury, COUNTIES CAN INVEST RECOVERY FUNDS TO RESTORE AND BOLSTER PUBLIC SECTOR CAPACITY TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENTS’ ABILITY TO DELIVER CRITICAL COVID-19 SERVICES. Counties can invest in multiple employee assistance programs, including employer rehiring initiatives, incentives for newly employed personnel, on-the-job training programs and employee support programs.

Together with funding to stabilize and build resilience for long-term workforce health, COUNTY EMPLOYMENT INVESTMENTS HELP IMPROVE THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SITUATION.

COUNTIES EMPLOY 3.6 MILLION INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING:

374,000
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

328,000
HOSPITAL WORKERS

259,000
HUMAN SERVICES WORKERS

200,000
PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS

93,000
FIRE PROTECTION WORKERS

Counties are deeply engaged in the labor market, employing more than 3.6 MILLION workers or more than one percent of Americans.
NACo’s MISSION
STRENGTHEN AMERICA’S COUNTIES.

NACo’s VISION
HEALTHY, SAFE AND VIBRANT COUNTIES ACROSS AMERICA.