maine DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

Climate Migration Through an Economic Lens

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passivhausMaine and E2Tech: Climate Migration in Maine Panel Discussion

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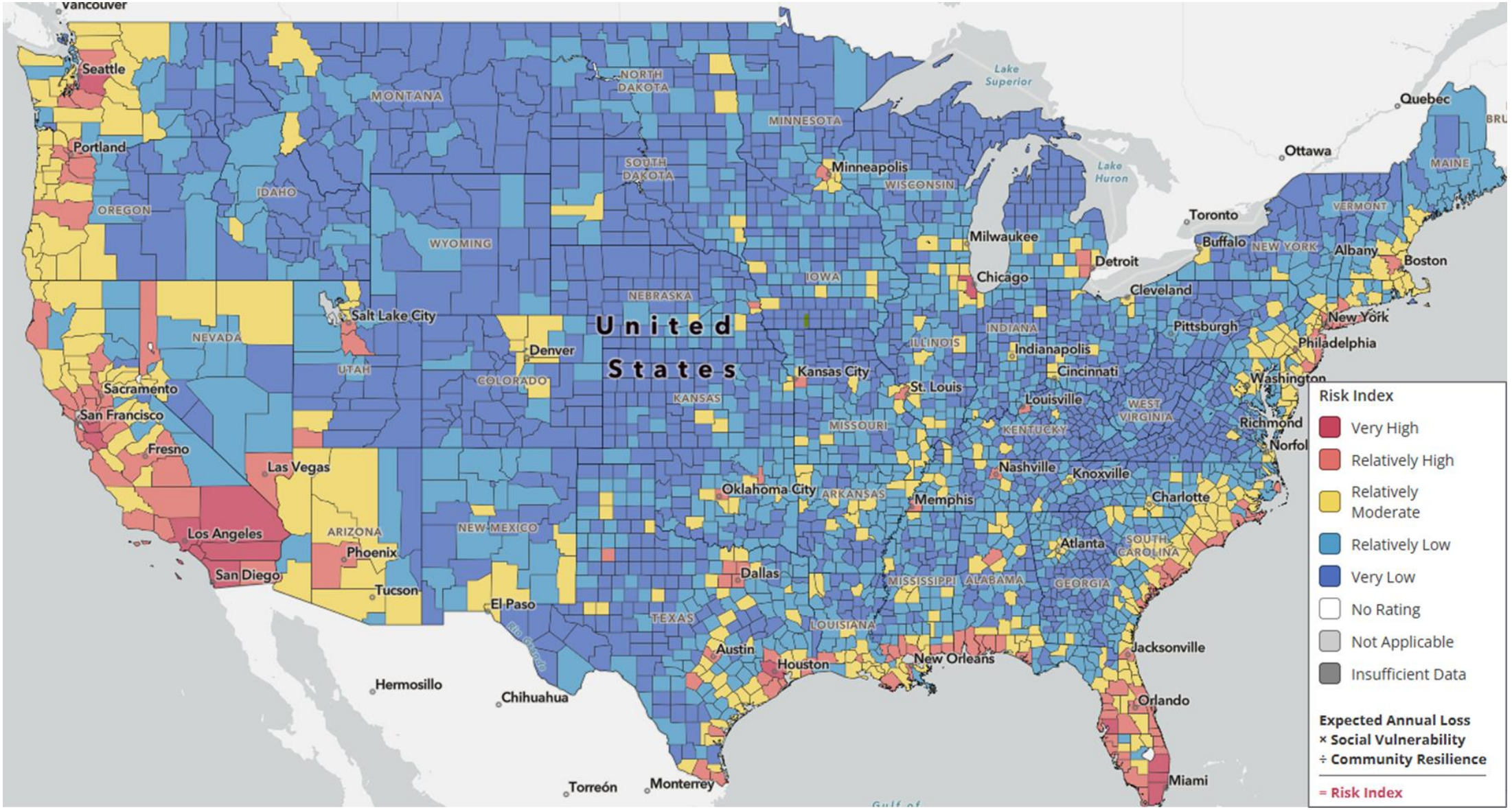
Let’s start by looking at a few maps …

FEMA National Risk Index

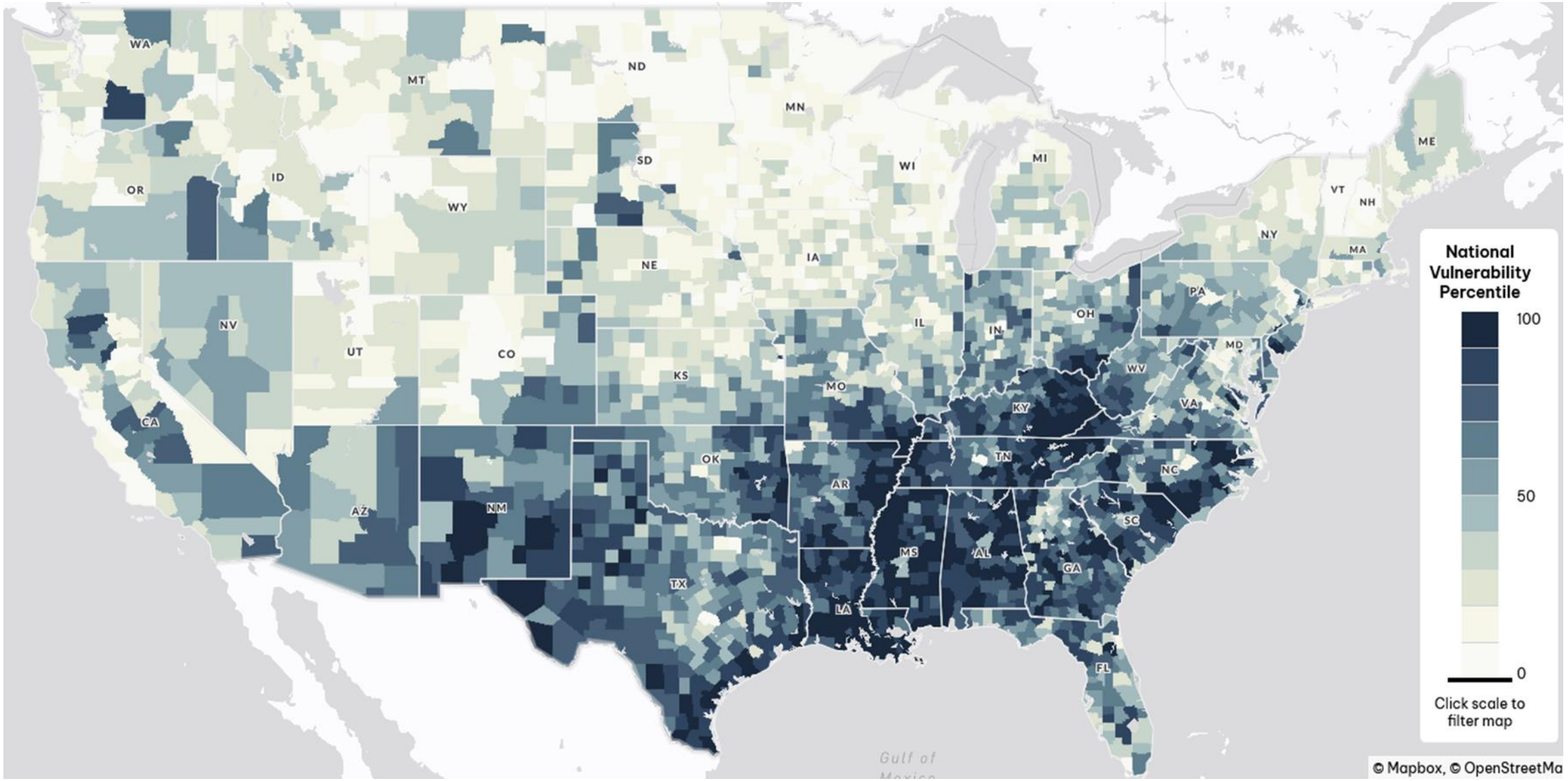
Combined measure of expected natural hazard losses, social vulnerability, and community resilience



Source: FEMA, https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/map#

Overall Climate Vulnerability by County

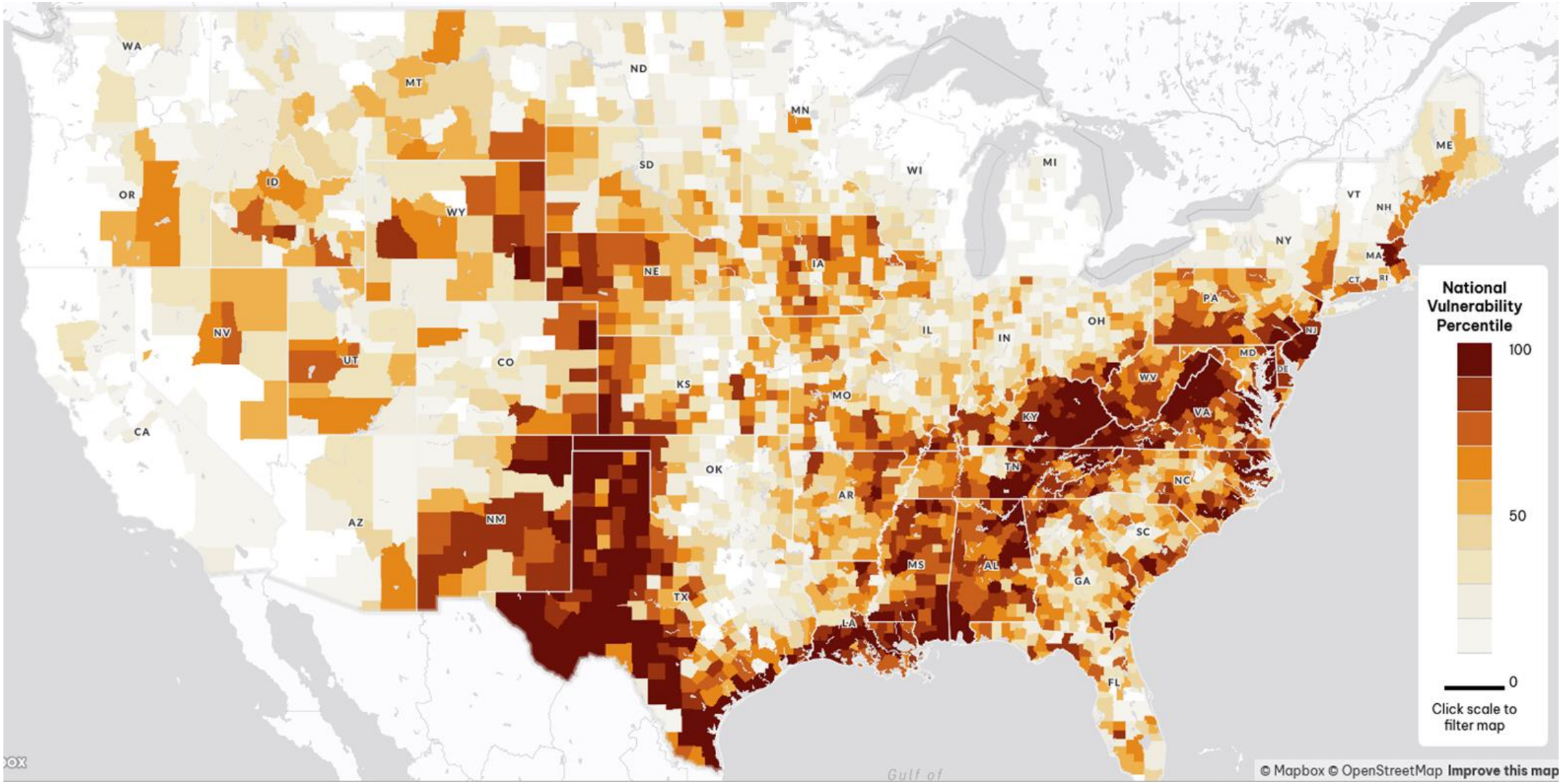
Score combining environmental, social, economic, and infrastructure effects on local stability



Source: The U.S. Climate Vulnerability Index by the Environmental Defense Fund and Texas A&M University

Climate Impacts by County

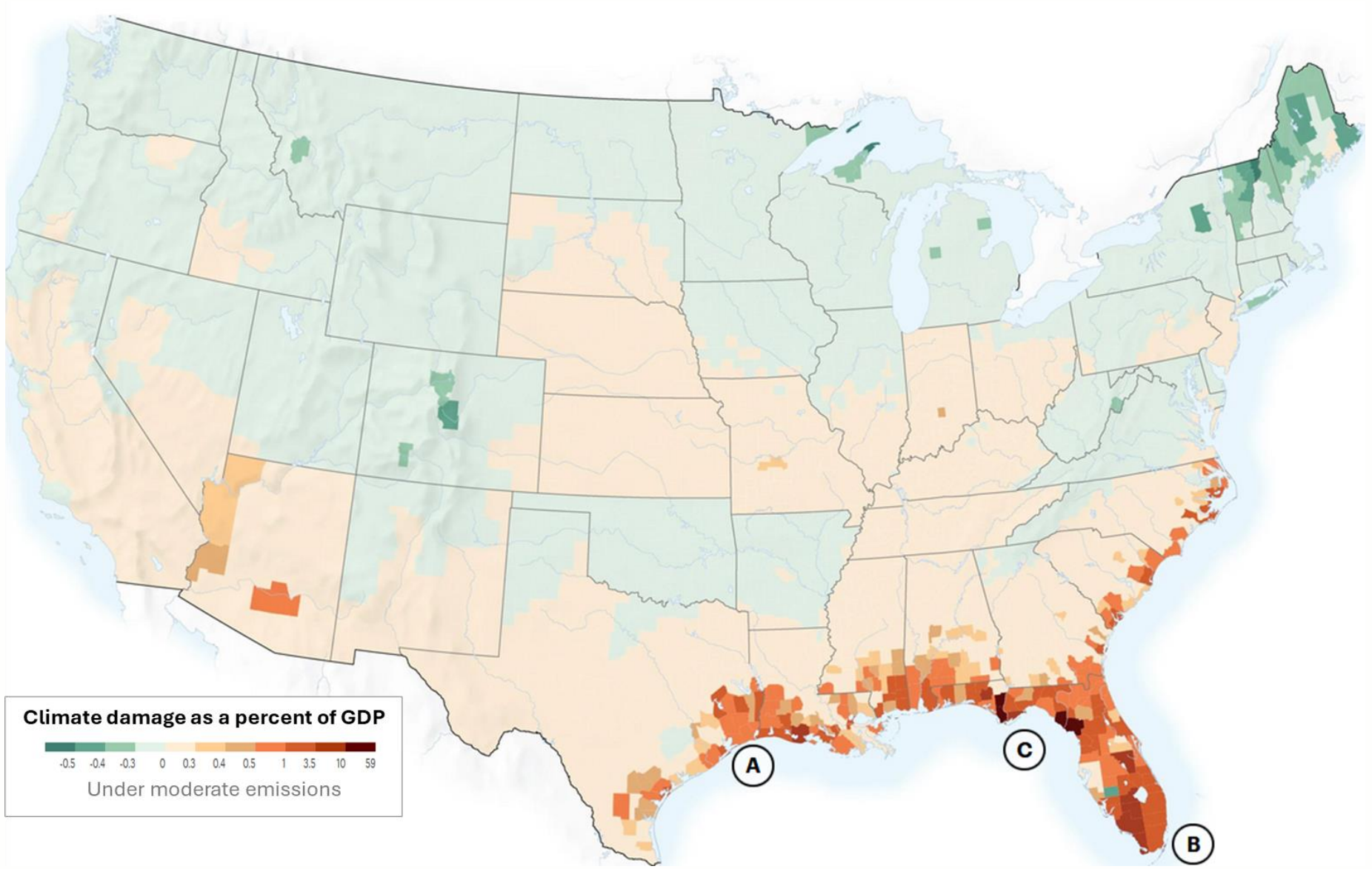
Measures vulnerability to environmental and economic disruptions related to climate impacts



Source: The U.S. Climate Vulnerability Index by the Environmental Defense Fund and Texas A&M University

Estimated Economic Damages from Climate, 2040-2060

Net economic impact from climate change by county, shown as share of local GDP



Source: ProPublica, 2020. https://projects.propublica.org/climate-migration/

What is Climate Migration?

Climate Migration is the movement of people from their homes – permanently or temporarily – due to climate-related events and change

Climate Migrants are people who leave their homes – forcibly or voluntarily – because of these changes

Exists on a spectrum

Sudden-onset events or disasters (hurricanes, floods, wildfires)

Everything in between (recurring floods, extreme heat)

Slow-onset (sea level rise, drought, temperature changes)

Forced, highly visible, trackable

Voluntary, "invisible", difficult to track

Difficult to Measure

Climate event spectrum (visible to invisible)

Mixed motivations (climate + economic + social)

Limited data (historical, current, future)

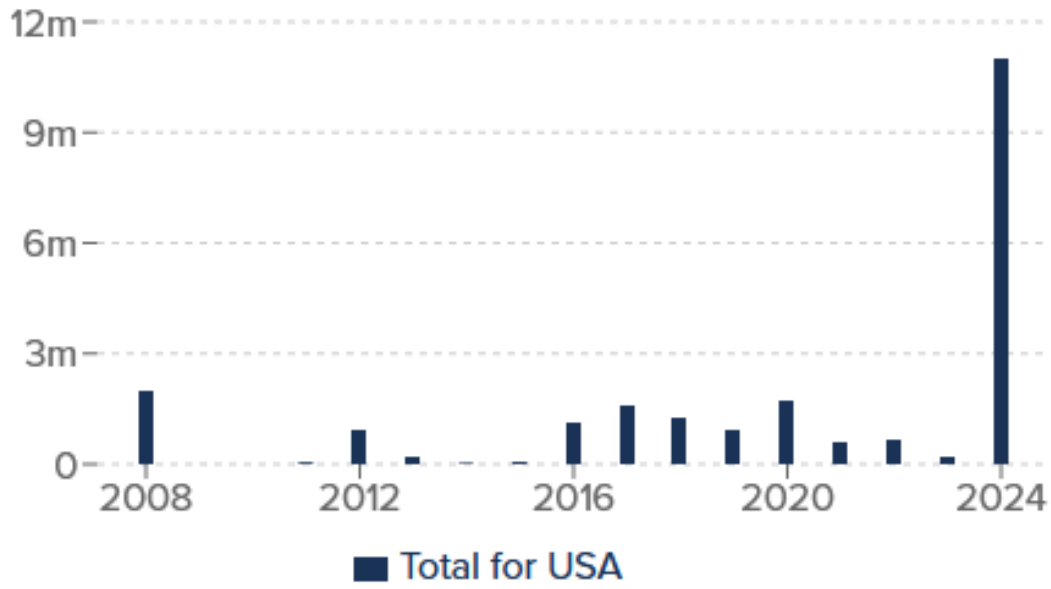
The National Context:

What Empirical Evidence Shows About Climate Migration

What's Measurable - Internal Displacement

22.3 million people internally displaced in U.S. (2008-2024)

as a result of severe storms, wildfires, flood events, and other climate-related environmental disasters



Source: "Global Internal Displacement Database: 2025 Internal Displacement," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, October 7, 2025, https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data. Note: Figure represents people who had no choice but to relocate, at least temporarily.

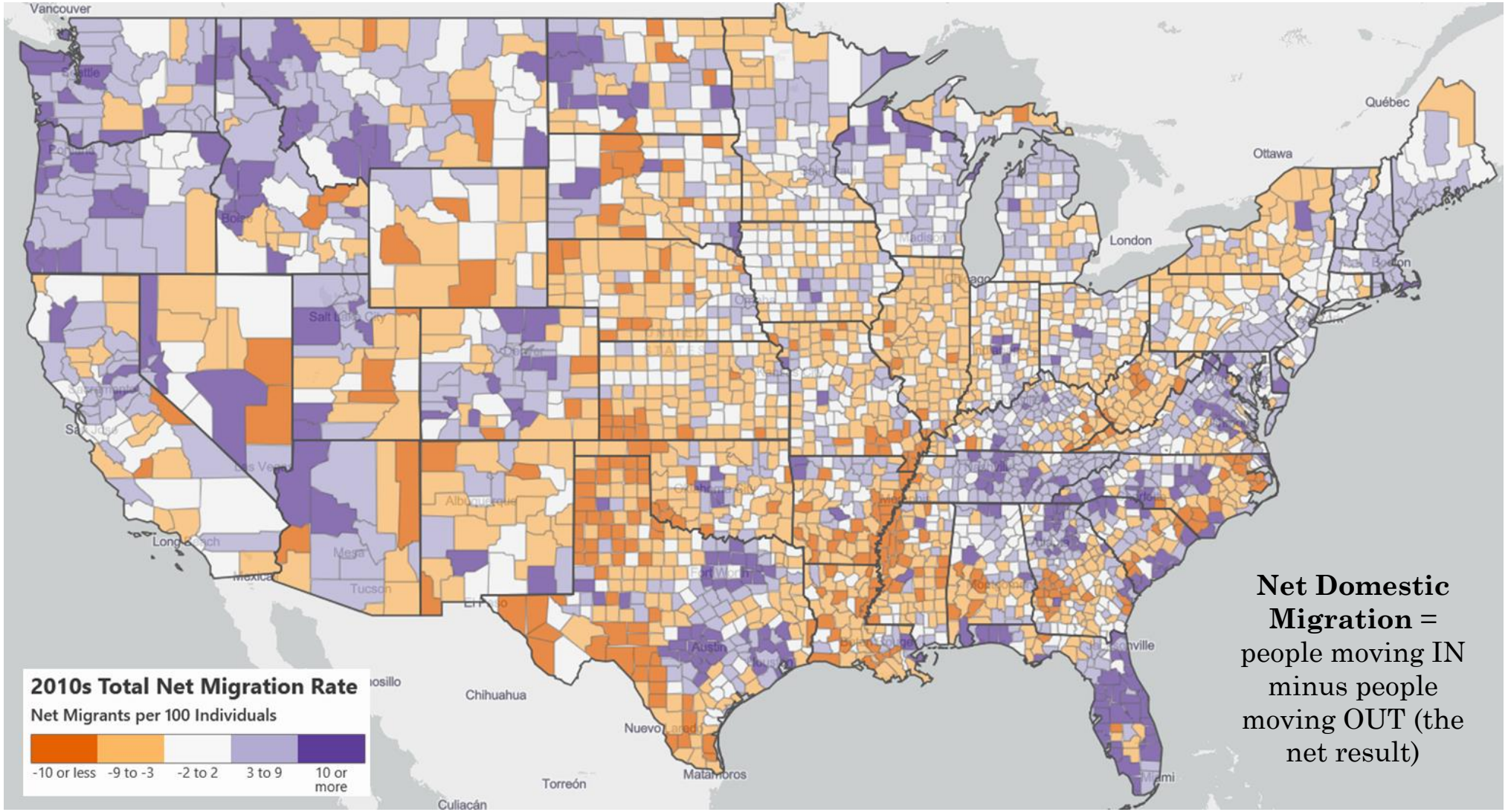
Where Are People Moving Within the U.S.?

Domestic Migration Patterns: Past, Present, and Future

Where People Moved in the 2010s

Gains and losses relative to population size

- Strong **IN-migration:** Florida, parts of Texas & Southeast, Mountain West
- Widespread **OUT-migration:** Midwest, Great Plains
- Mixed patterns: Maine/ northern New England

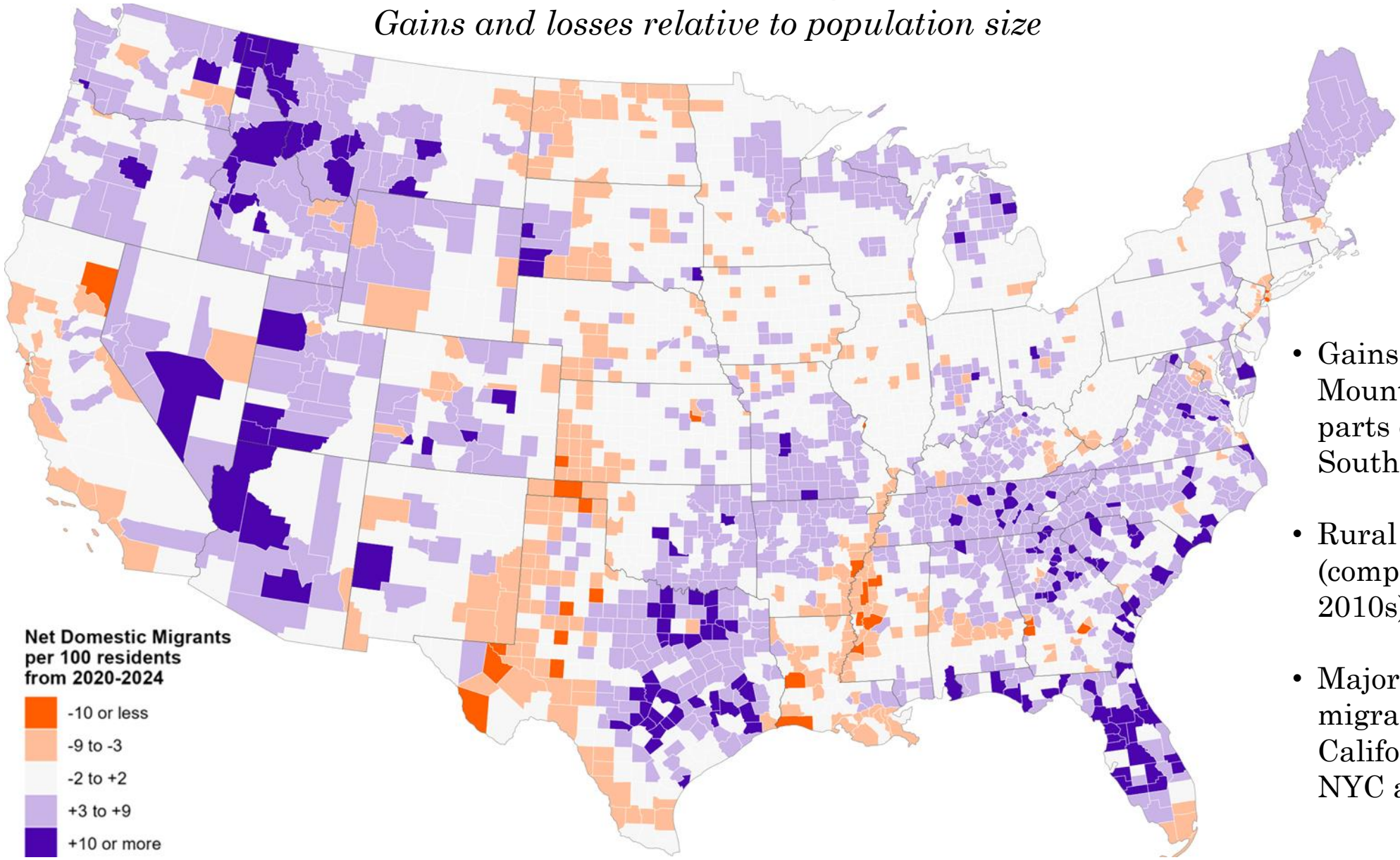


Net Domestic Migration = people moving IN minus people moving OUT (the net result)

Source: Applied Population Laboratory, University of Wisconsin - Madison, 2024. Web. [09.25.25] https://netmigration.wisc.edu/. Note: Figures do not reflect total population change, excludes births, death, and international migration.

Where People Are Moving Now (2020-2024)

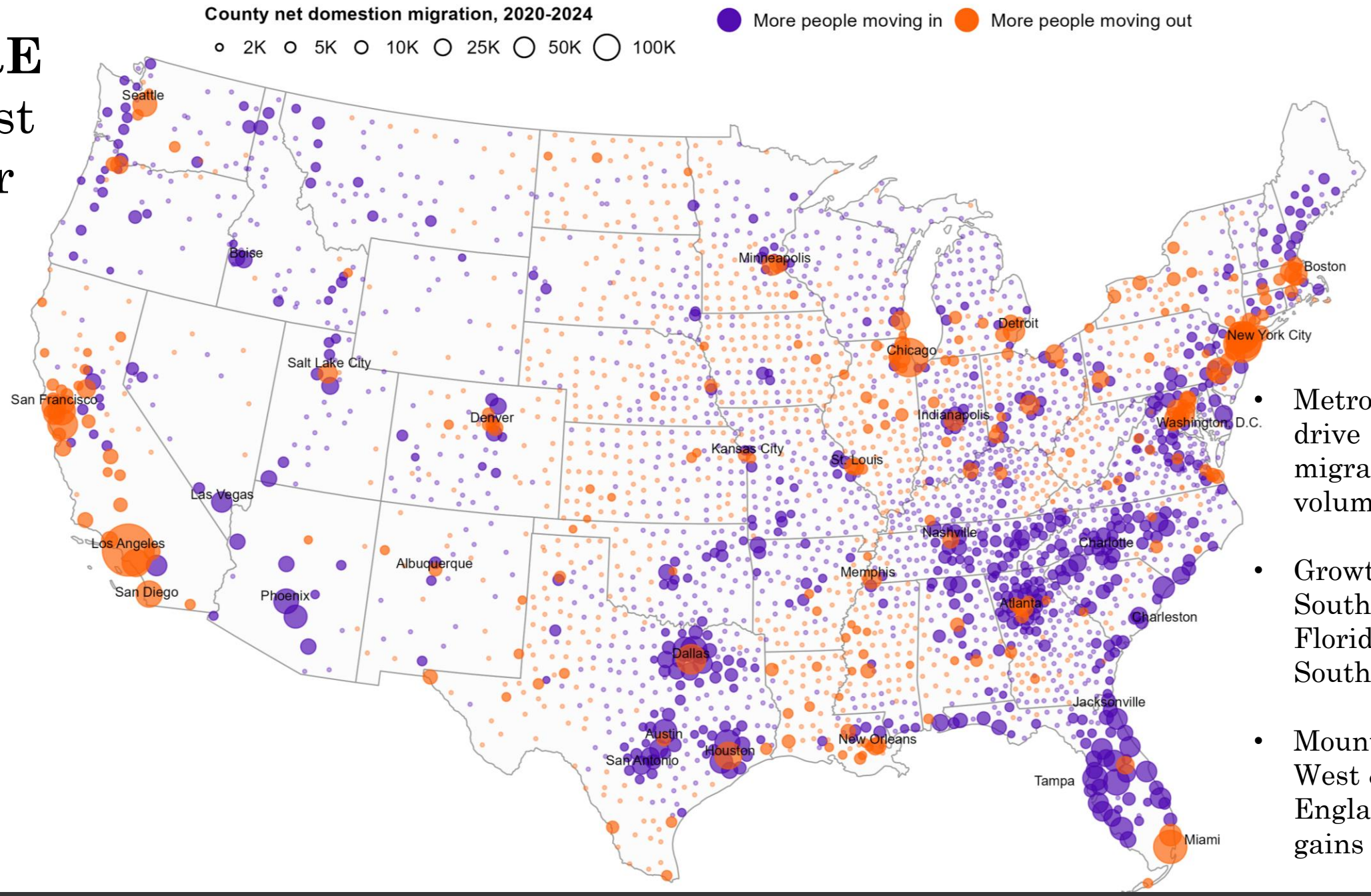
Gains and losses relative to population size



- Gains: Southeast, Mountain West, parts of Texas & Southwest
- Rural Maine gains (compared with 2010s)
- Major metro out-migration: California coast, NYC area

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau 2024 Population Estimates Program (Vintage 2024). Note: Most recent period captures pandemic-era shifts and more recent patterns.

WHERE the most number people moved **IN** vs. **OUT** (2020-2024)

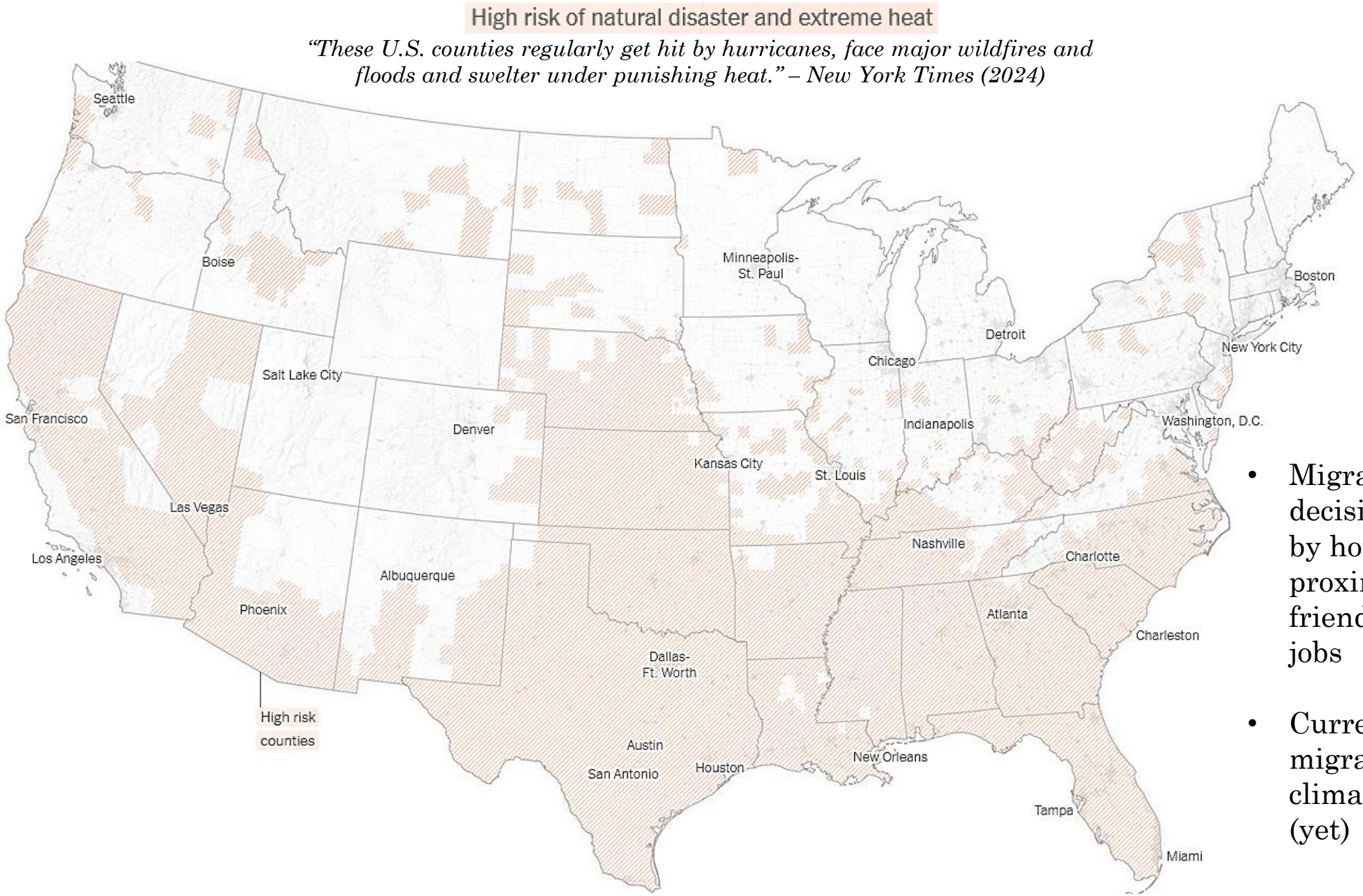


- Metro areas drive migration volume
- Growth: Southeast & Florida coast, Southwest
- Mountain West & New England gains

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau 2024 Population Estimates Program (Vintage 2024)

Note: All counties shown by color. Dot size shown for counties with 2,000+ net migration.

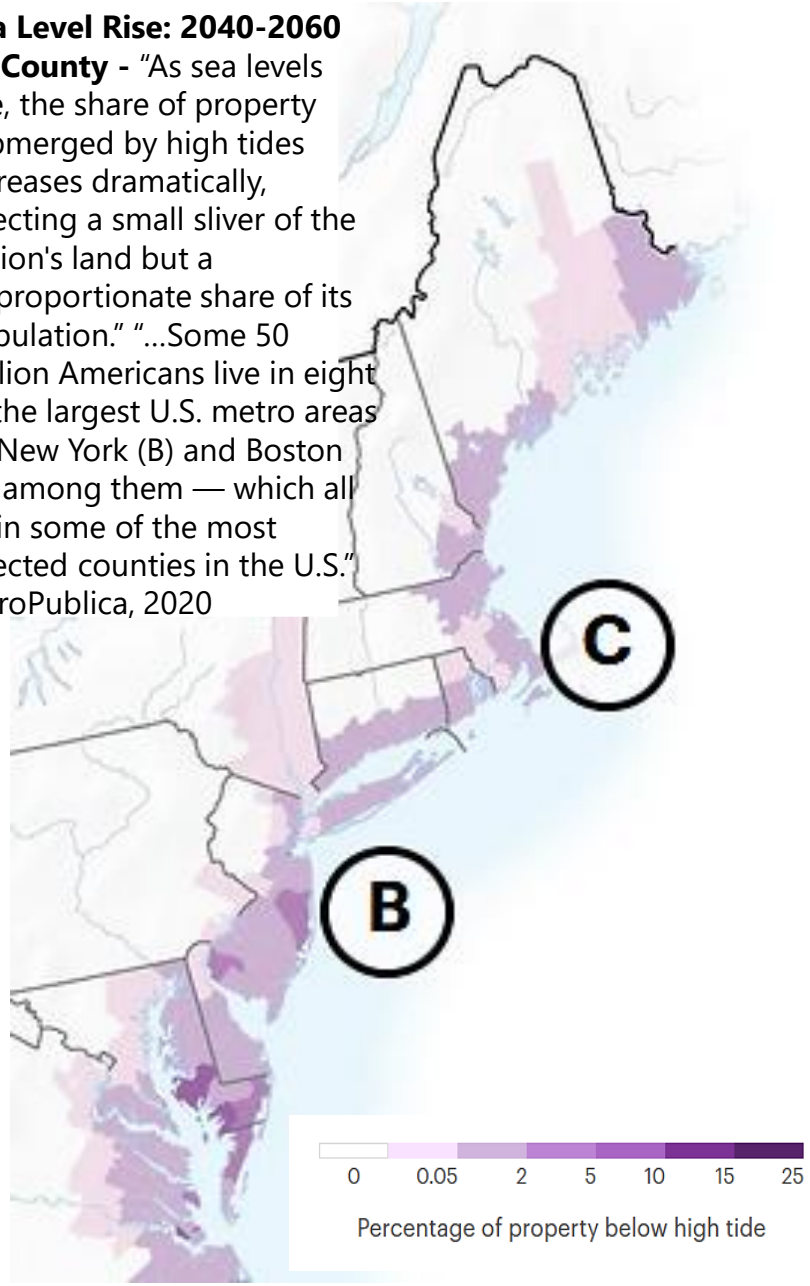
Overlap between high-risk areas and growth regions particularly in Texas, Florida, Southeast, and parts of California, Arizona



- Migration decisions driven by housing costs, proximity to friends/family, jobs
- Current migration ≠ climate-driven (yet)

Source: The New York Times September 30, 2024, article based on data from U.S. Census and CoreLogic https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/09/30/climate/americans-moving-hurricane-wildfire-risk.html; U.S. Census Bureau, *Why People Move* (2023) based on 2022 CPS data.

Sea Level Rise: 2040-2060 by County - "As sea levels rise, the share of property submerged by high tides increases dramatically, affecting a small sliver of the nation's land but a disproportionate share of its population." "...Some 50 million Americans live in eight of the largest U.S. metro areas — New York (B) and Boston (C) among them — which all lie in some of the most affected counties in the U.S." – ProPublica, 2020



The Coastal Challenge

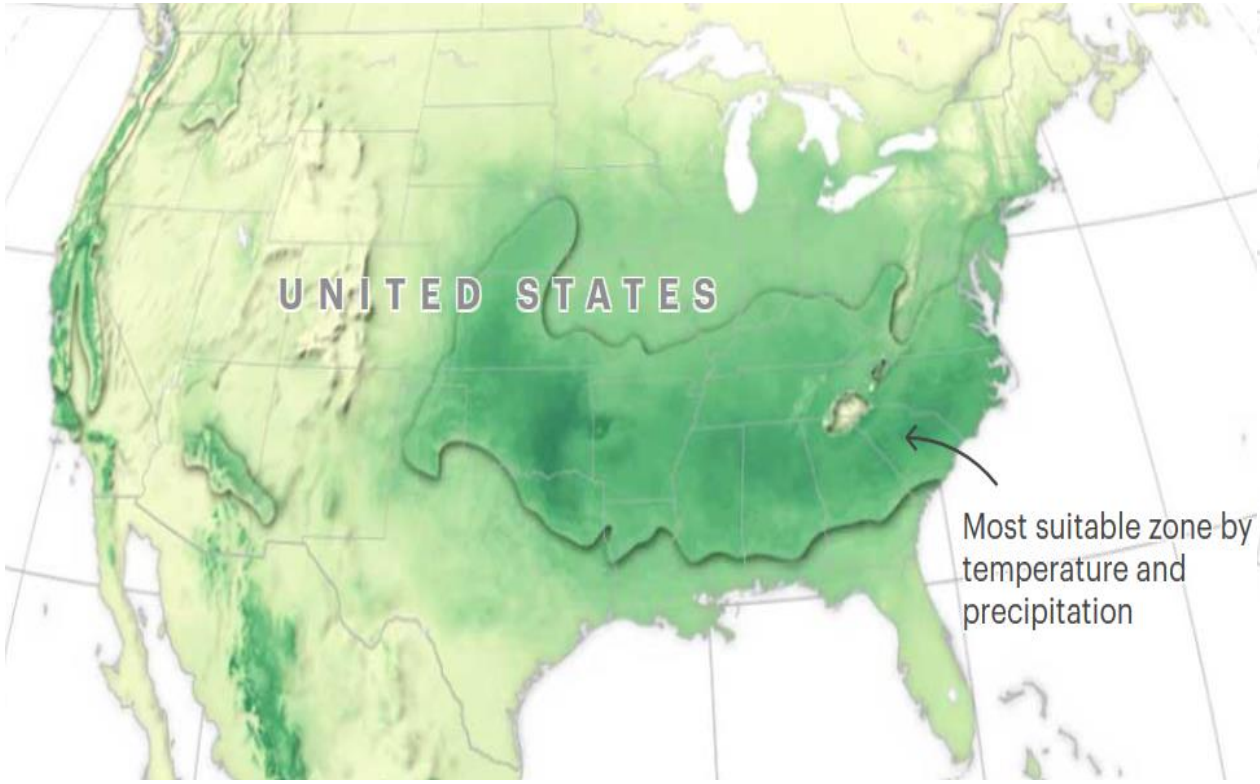
- Coastal areas face compounding climate risks: sea-level rise + storms + flooding + other risks
- Coastal areas cover ~ 10% of U.S. land but home to about 40% of the population, as of 2020
- In Maine, 55% of the population lives in coastal counties (2024)

Source: ProPublica, 2020; NOAA, Economics and Demographics - Fast Facts (2020); U.S. Census Bureau 2024 Population Estimates Program (Vintage 2024)

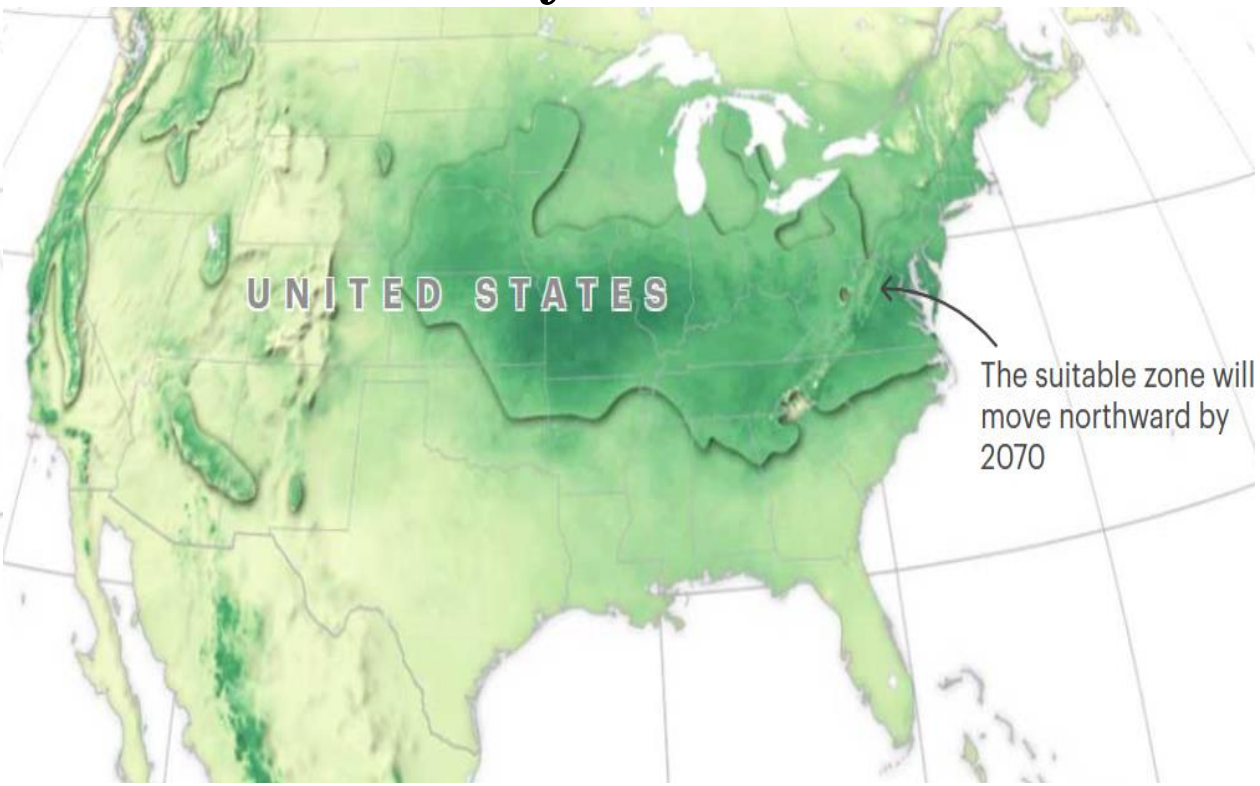
Long-Term Climate Migration Patterns

Optimal climate zones shift northward

Now



By 2070



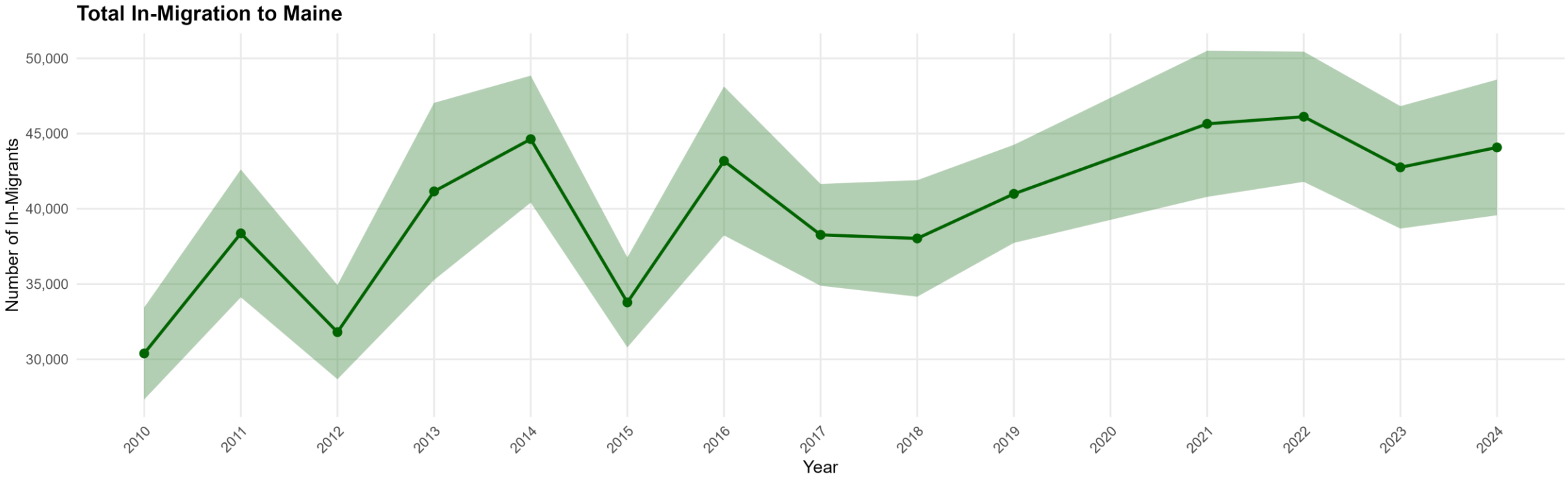
Source: ProPublica, 2020 https://projects.propublica.org/climate-migration/

Maine In-Migration Trends

In-Migration Patterns and Local Context

Maine's Migration Trends

- Total in-migration trending upward – includes all people who moved to Maine from another US state and abroad



- 91% domestic, 9% abroad
- **42% of domestic in-migrants moved from a New England state**. Top origin states include MA (15%), NH (15%), FL (9%), CA (7%), NY (5%), CT (5%) PA (4%)

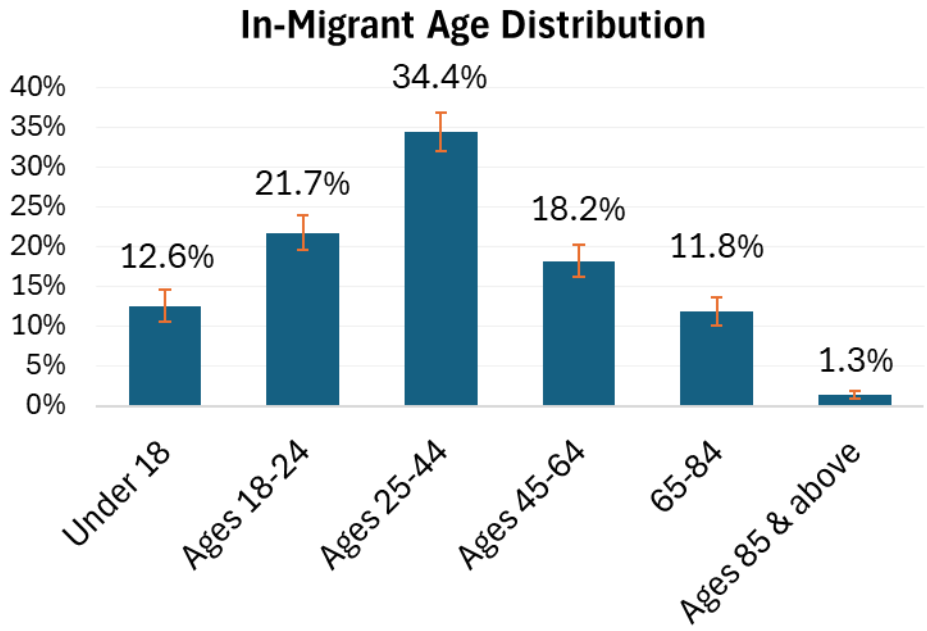
Data: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 1-Year Estimates; 2023 ACS 5-Year PUMS, estimates calculated by Maine Office of the State Economist. Note: Shaded area represents margins of error with 90% confidence intervals.

Who's Moving to Maine

What We Know About Recent Arrivals

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Median age is 31** – younger than statewide median age (44.8 years)
  - Maine has highest median age in U.S., but unchanged since 2020
- **56.1% bachelor's degrees or higher** compared to 35.3% statewide
- **Slightly more females** (51%) than males (49%)

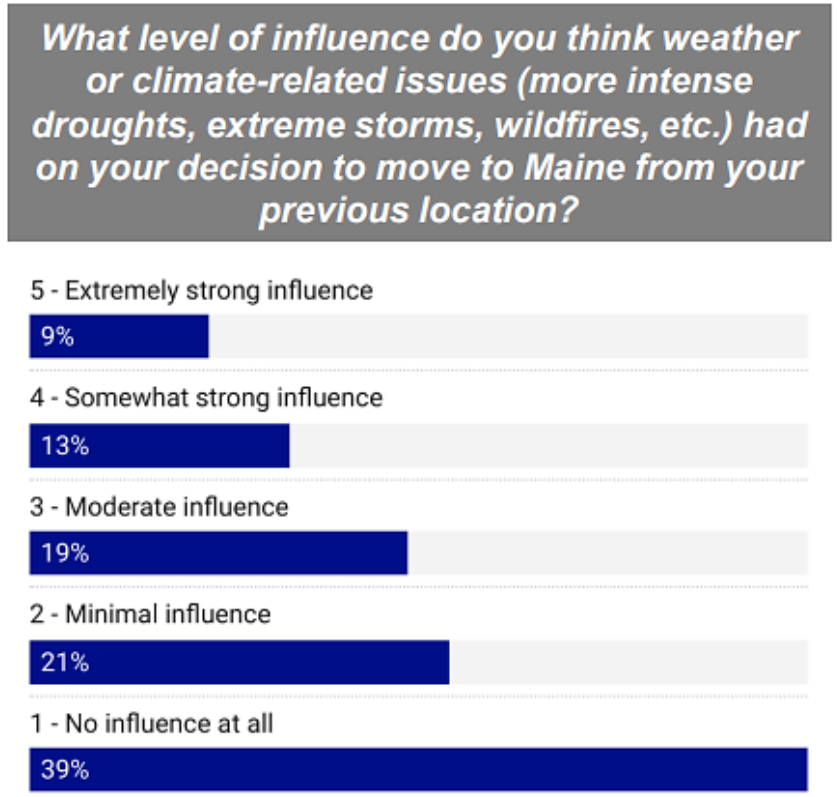


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates (Vintage 2024); 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample and pretabulated tables.

Why move to Maine? Climate as a factor?

And other factors that influenced the decision to move to Maine

- Climate influenced some decisions but was not a primary driver
- Outdoor recreation amenities, being closer to friends/family/networks, remote work/economic opportunity, and community safety topped the list
- **Climate often one factor among many**



Source: *Source: Why People Move to Maine,* Wallace Economic Advisors, LLC, January 2025 https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov.decd/files/inline-files/WHY%20PEOPLE%20MOVE%20TO%20MAINE.pdf

Economic and Demographic Implications

What This Means for Maine

Maine's Position:

- Relatively well-positioned compared to national climate outlooks
- Attracting in-migrants, including younger people
- Changing weather patterns affect entire state

Opportunities:

- Demographic renewal and workforce growth (inland/statewide)
- Quality of life as economic asset and competitive advantage

Challenges:

- Housing availability/affordability pressures (median home price increased 37% from 2021 to 2025)
- Infrastructure needs (growth in some areas, decline in others)
- Coastal vulnerability, accelerated aging (median ages in most coastal counties above 45)
- Rural areas may face future pressure from inland migration

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2024 Population Estimates Program (Vintage 2024); MaineHousing, *Maine's Housing Outlook*, January 2026. https://mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/outlook-reports/2026-housing-outlook-report.pdf

Key Takeaways

- Climate migration spectrum (slow to sudden) - challenging to measure
- Many moving to high-risk areas; climate one factor among many
- **Maine's unique position:**
  - Relative climate-resilience, attracting in-migrants, including younger people
  - Opportunity: demographic renewal, workforce growth
  - Challenge: intensified housing pressures, infrastructure, coastal vulnerability
- **Value of ongoing research and partnerships -** understanding who's moving and why informs decisions

Contact Information

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