

Child Care Gap Assessment: Kentucky

June 2025

National Overview: Child Care Assessment

- There is broad bipartisan support for child care at all levels of government, but there is little known about exactly how much care is needed.
- This approach will focus on the potential need for child care at a local level, relative to the availability of care, and provide comprehensive, comparative data across the country.
- This gap analysis will:
 - give policymakers and stakeholders a baseline from which to devise strategies to strengthen quality of and access to child care.
 - give policymakers a critical tool for holding federal, state, and local leaders accountable for improving access to child care.
 - serve as an evidence base that will allow federal, state, and local leaders across the country to use data rather than anecdotes to evaluate the need for care.
- *Note:* For purposes of this project, “child care” includes all legally operating early care and education programs as defined by the State.
This includes center- and home-based child care, as well as Pre-K and Head Start programs.

Child Care Gap Assessment

Data Sources

- State data on child care facilities and capacity
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023 estimates
- Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Defense

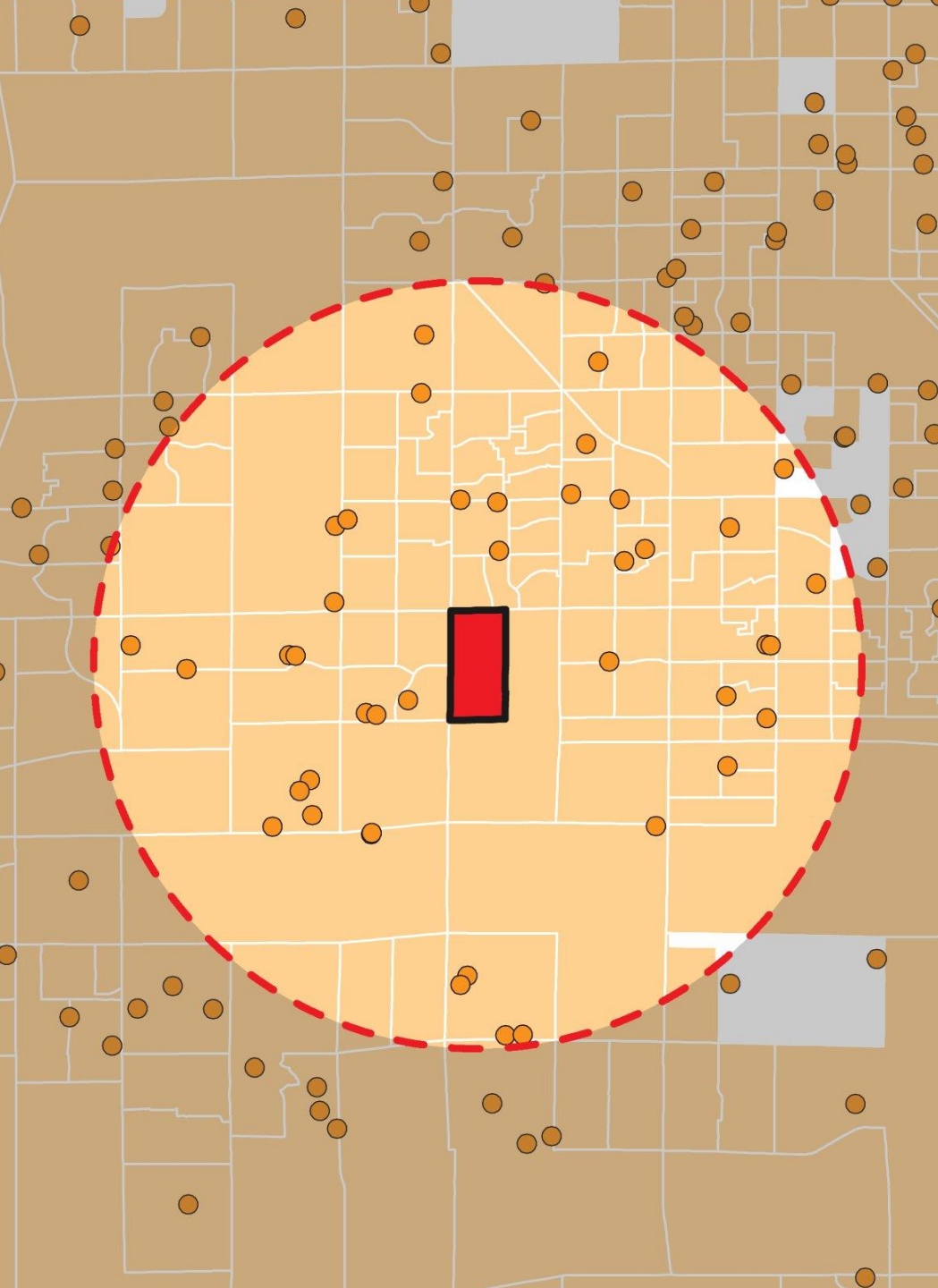
Analysis Includes

- Estimate of:
 - potential need, based on Census data on population under age six with parents in labor force
 - supply, based on data on child care facilities provided by state agencies
 - gap, or the difference between these two data sets based on distance from home to facility
- Maps showing how supply and potential need are distributed across the state, with breakdown by county, state legislative district, and Congressional District
- Cross tabulation of child care gaps by socioeconomic characteristics like minority population, population in poverty, etc.

Notes

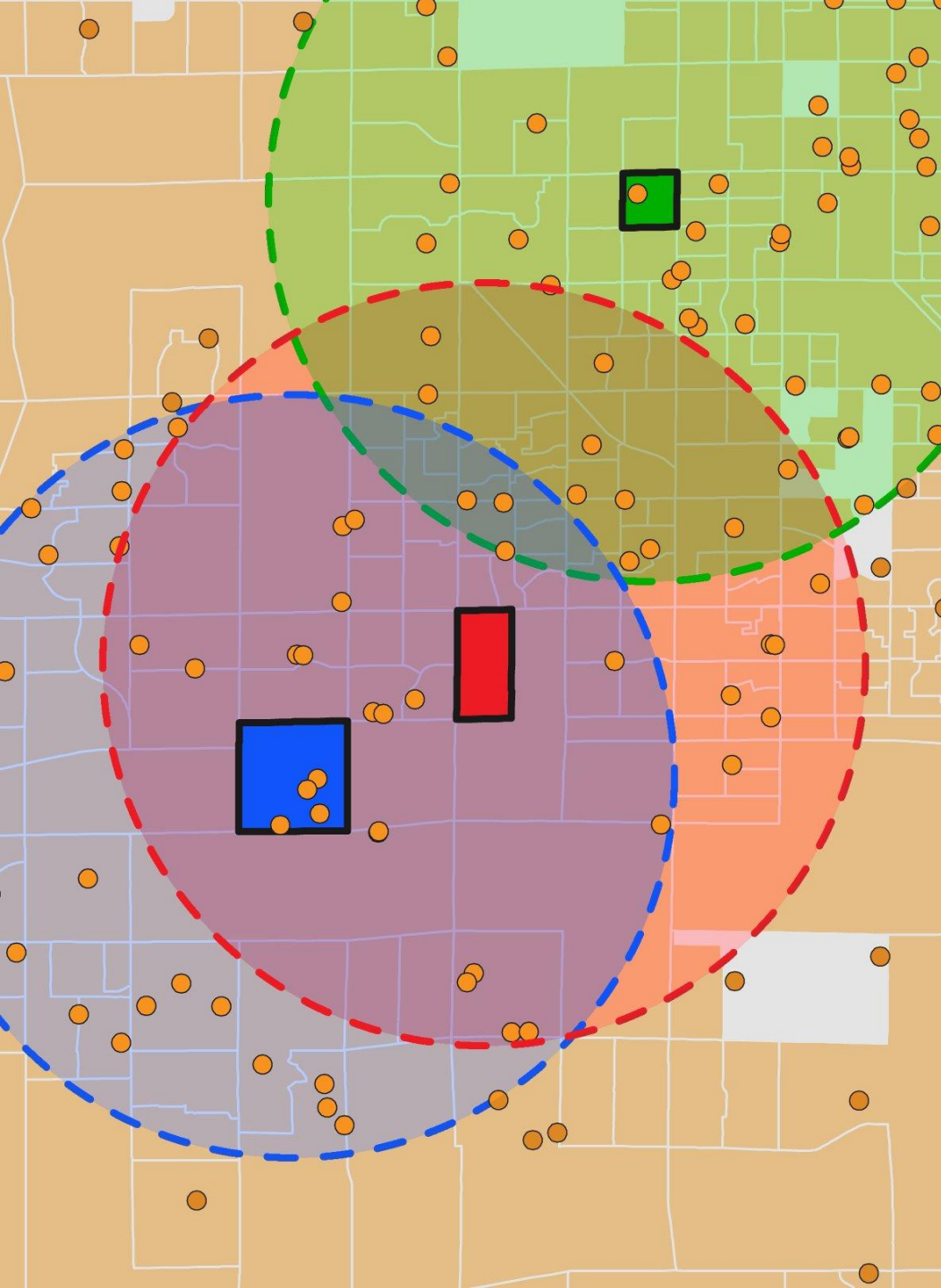
- Child care facilities included in the analysis are primarily those serving children under age six. In some cases, school age children may be included since detailed age data is not always available.
- The analysis for Kentucky **includes** cross-state interactions.

Method



Distance-Based Method

- Block groups are assigned a service area:
- 7 miles from the block group center for urban and 9 miles for rural.
- **For Kentucky: Distance was calculated based on sample data set 41,500 children home and child care location**
- Population in the block group can access the spaces available in the facilities within the service area.
- Child care potential need within the block group is proportionally allocated to the facilities within the service area.



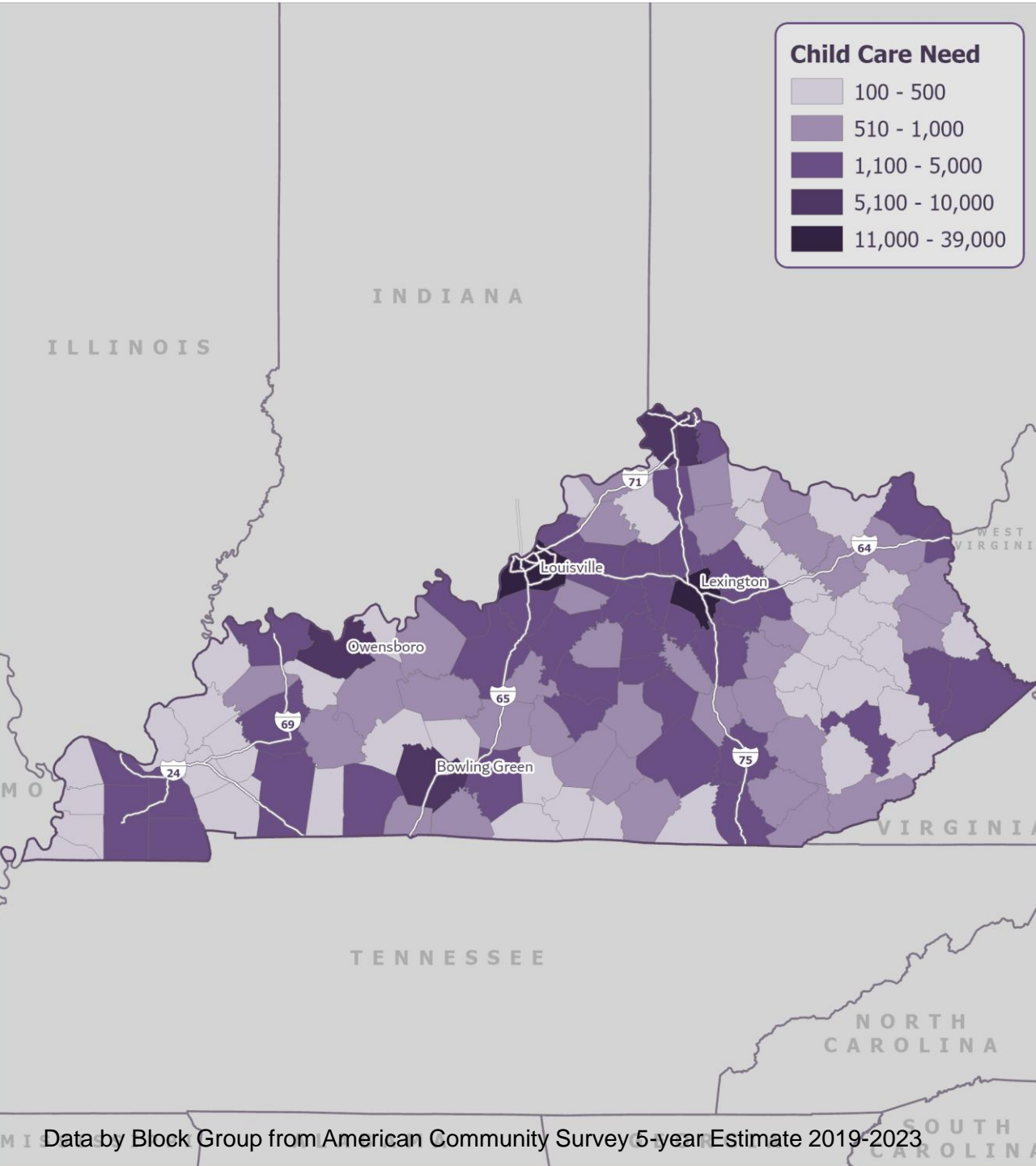
Distance-Based Method

- Service areas from neighboring block groups overlap.
- Facilities are allocated children (potential need) from all block groups whose service area the facility falls into, until all capacity is used up.
- This method results in assignment of potential need to available spaces without going over the facility capacity.

Methodology: Definitions

- This project focused on understanding the gap between **potential need** for and supply of child care.
- **Potential need** = all children under six with all available parents in labor force.
- **Demand** = rate at which parents and families will actually utilize child care.
- There are a number of factors that can impact demand.
- This data on gap between supply and potential need gives states and the country a starting point.
- More work needs to be done to understand what demand in states and communities might look like.

Gaps Analysis



Children Under 6 with Parents in the Labor Force

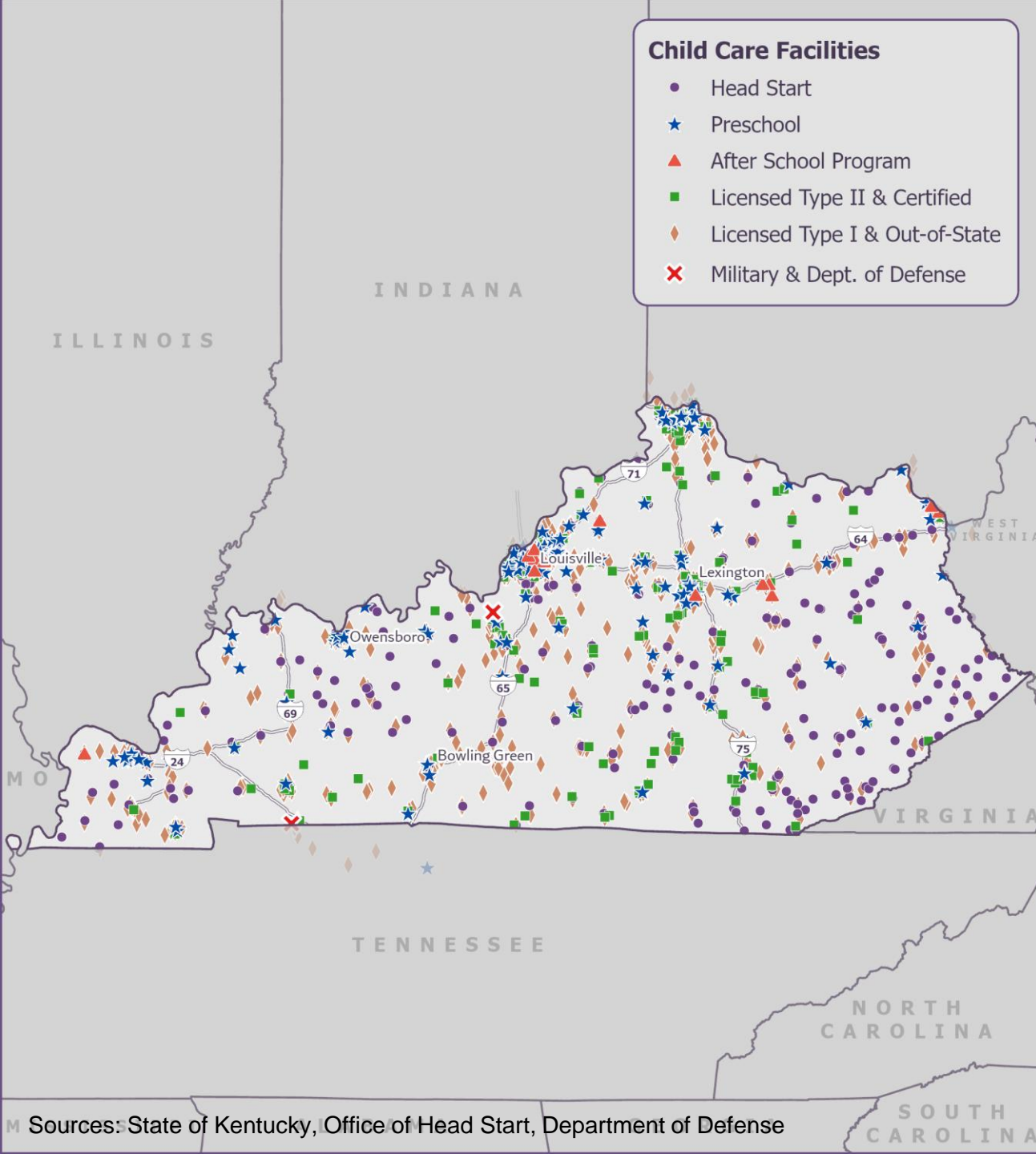
Defined as:

- Living with both parents and both parents are in the labor force
- Living with one parent and that parent is in the labor force

Child Care Potential Need: 201,751

No change since 2021 (- 0.2%)





Kentucky Child Care Providers

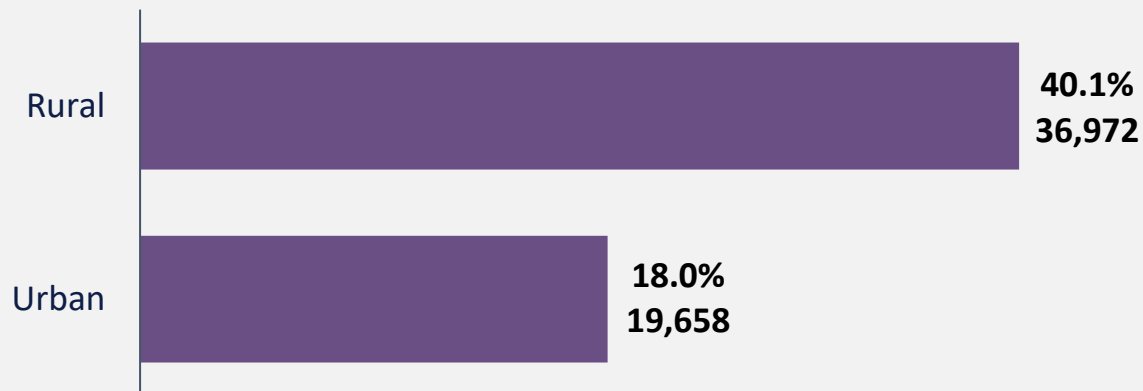
| Facility Type | Count | Licensed Capacity |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| LICENSED TYPE I | 1,562 | 136,393 |
| LICENSED TYPE II | 36 | 422 |
| LICENSED MILITARY | 1 | 418 |
| CERTIFIED | 212 | 1,276 |
| Additional facilities from Office of Head Start | 201 | 6,450 |
| Department of Defense | 1 | 985 |
| TOTAL | 2,013 | 145,944 |

- Facility Count and Licensed Capacity are estimated for children under age 6
- Increase of 8,582 (6.2%) Capacity since 2021



Child Care Gap

Distance-Based Method



Total Gap: 56,630

Children potentially needing child care are matched to facilities within a specified distance from the block group they live in:

- 7 miles in urban areas
- 9 miles in rural areas

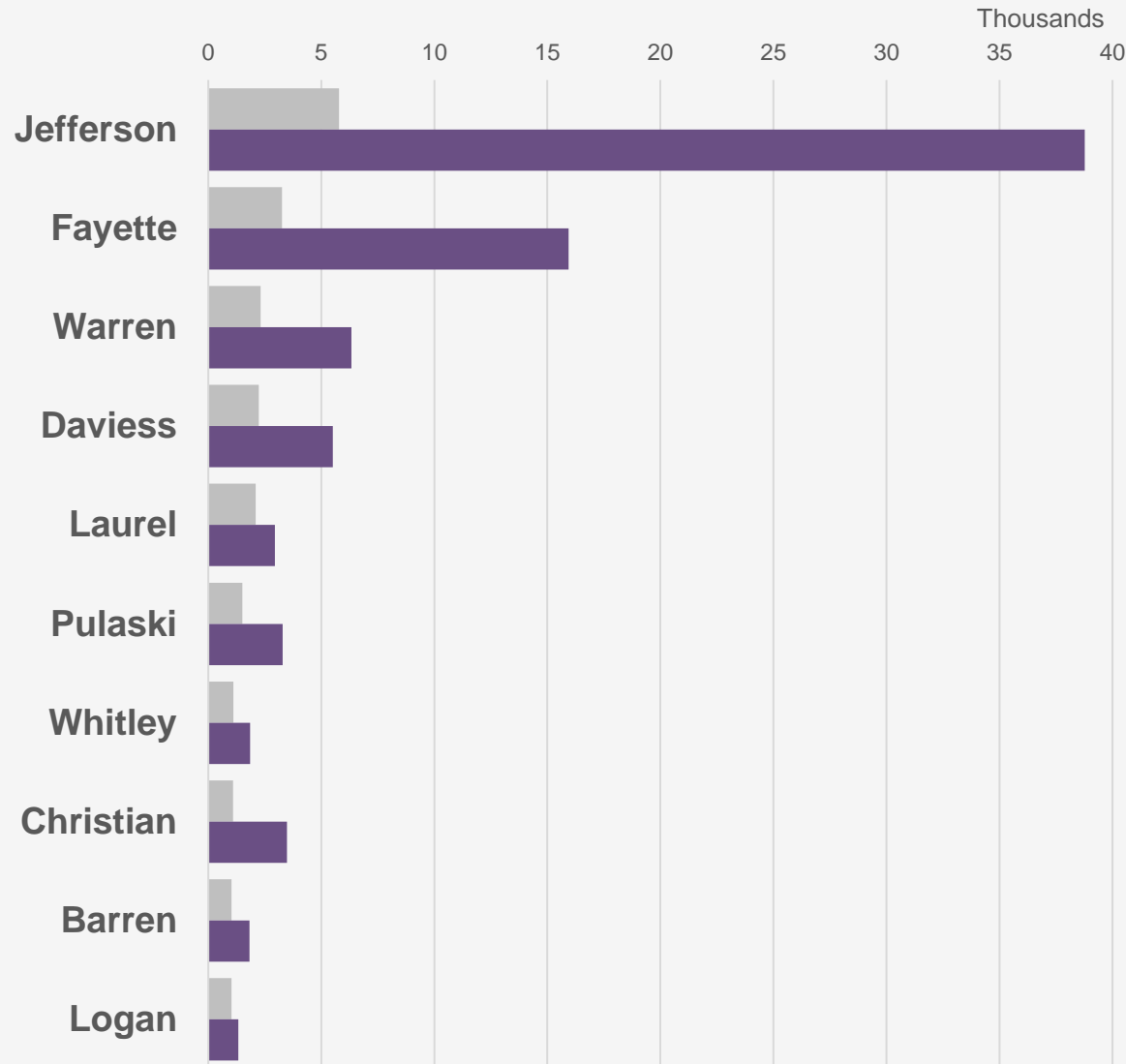
**Decreased gap in Urban Areas since 2021
(possibly due to difference in distance and cross state interactions)**

Child Care Capacity Study

- Study conducted by Metro United Way of Louisville in March 2025 to establish the relationship between attendance and enrollment
- Based on Inspection Reports and Provider Survey
- Analysis included all age groups and is only available at State level
- **Finding:** Enrolled Capacity 32.7% lower than Licensed Capacity
- **Potential Impact on Child Care Gap:** Increased Gap 75,148 (37.2%) up from 56,630 (28.1%). **This is not included in current analysis.**
- This only includes supply side reduction factor while ignoring parental choice
- Additional survey work on developing understanding of true need and capacity is recommended

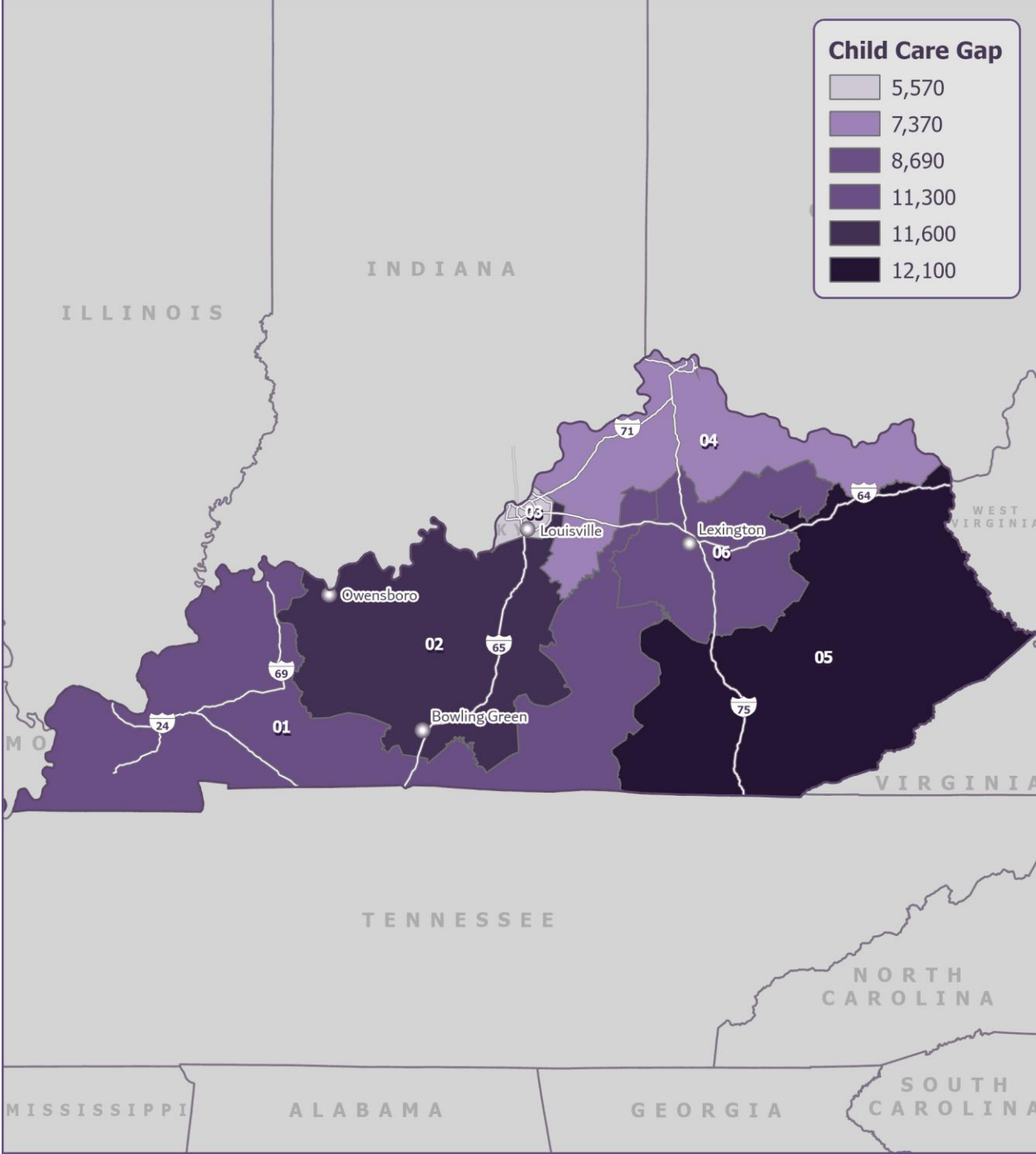
Child Care Potential Need vs. Child Care Gap

10 Counties with the Highest Gap
Distance-Based Method

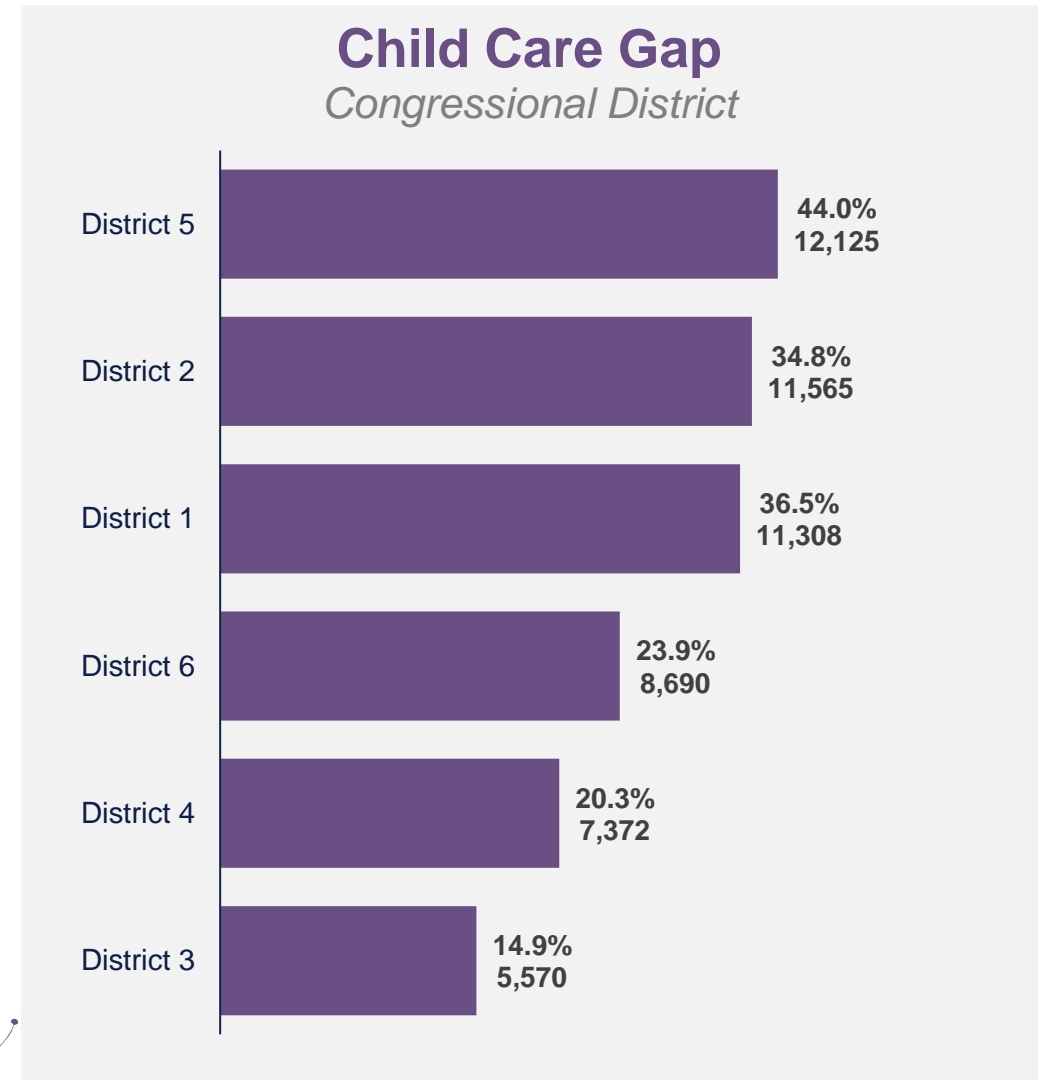


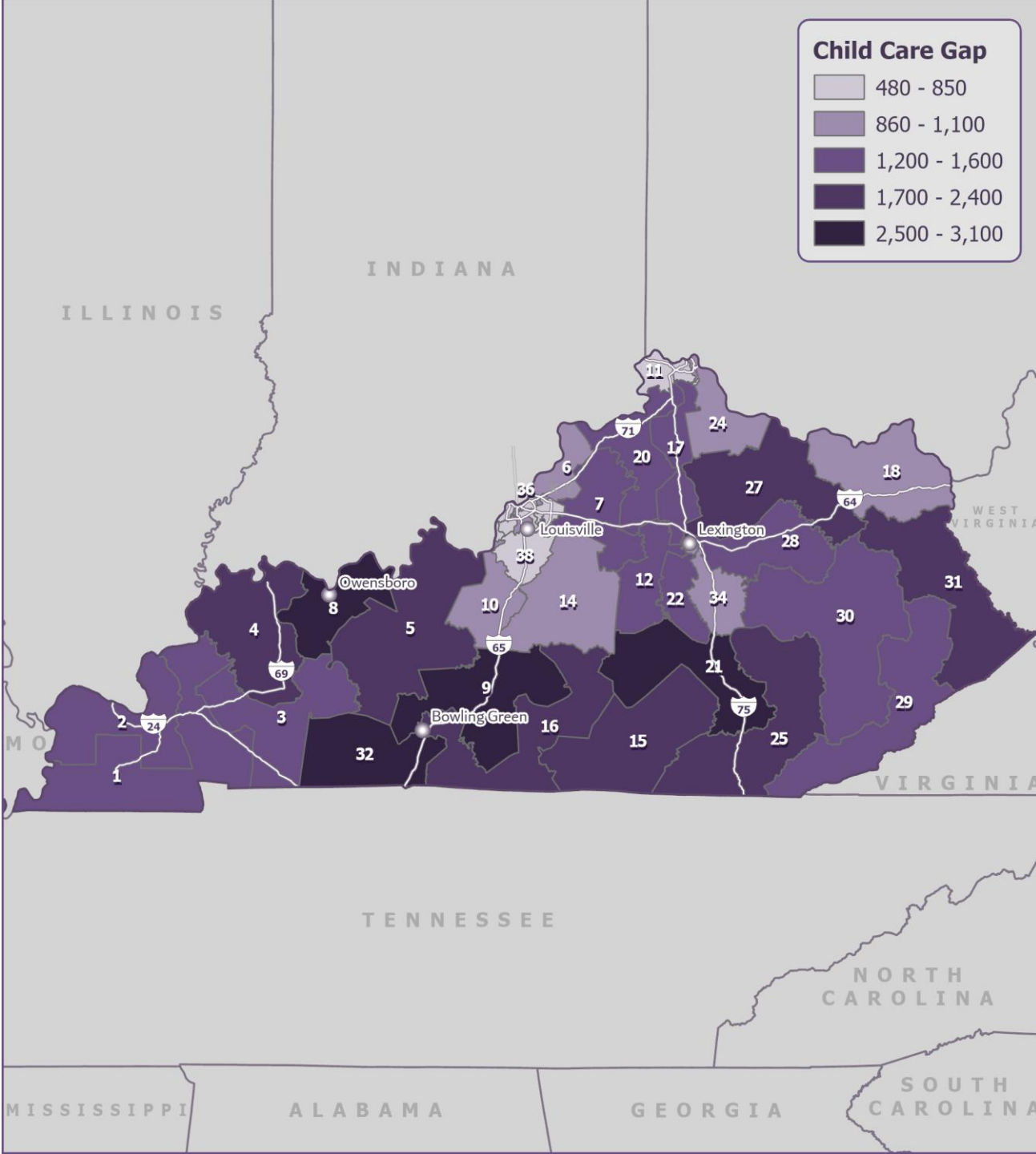
Potential Need vs. Gap

- When the number of children who potentially need child care exceeds capacity, there is a **gap** in child care
- *Jefferson County has the highest gap in Kentucky with 38,774 children potentially needing child care and a gap of 5,783 spaces.*



Congressional Districts

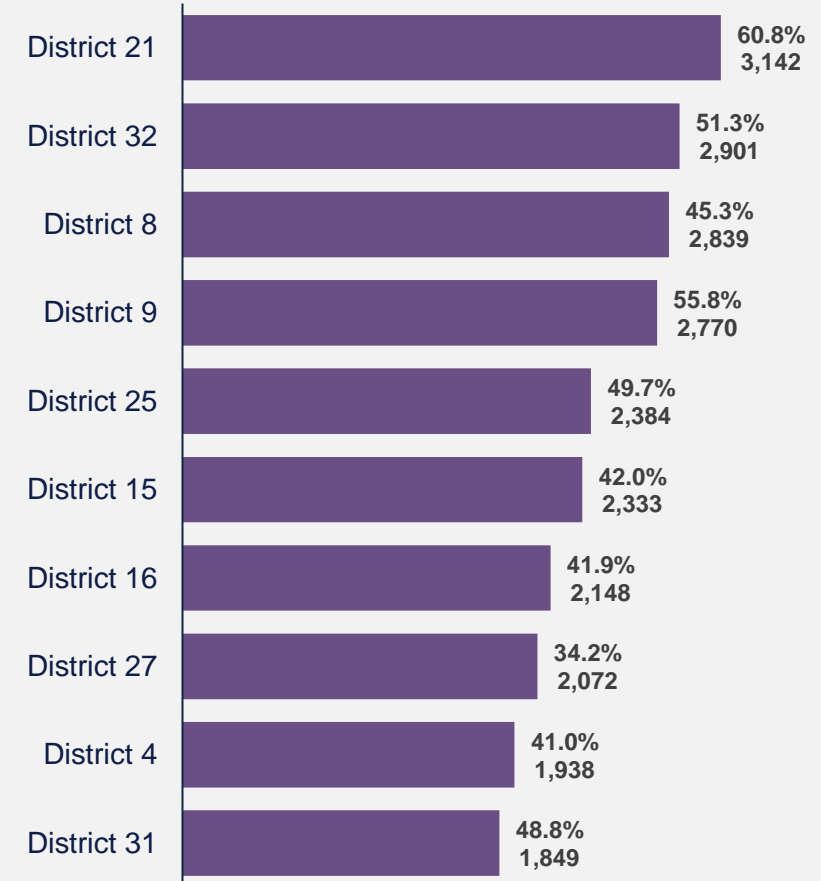


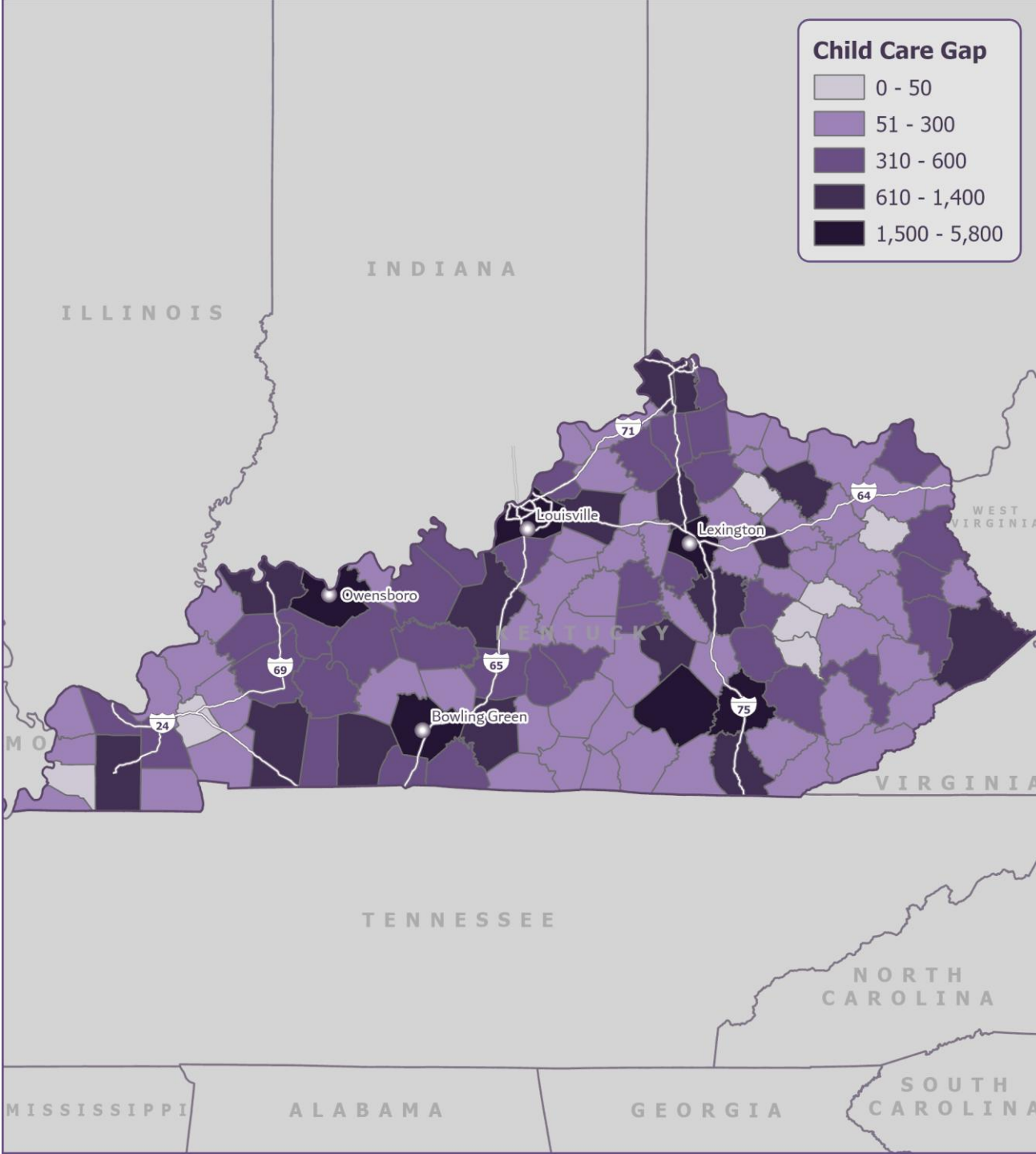


State Senate Districts

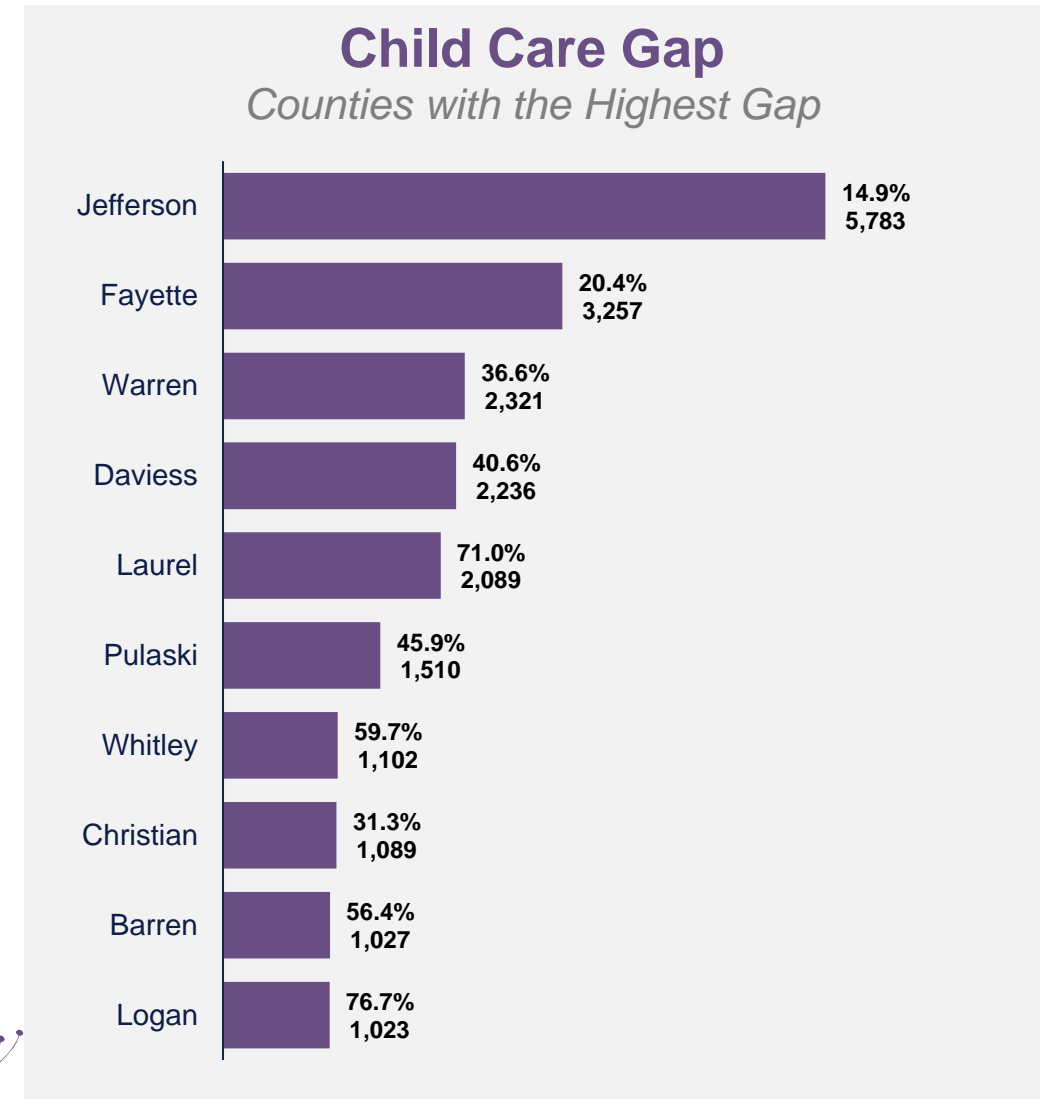
Child Care Gap

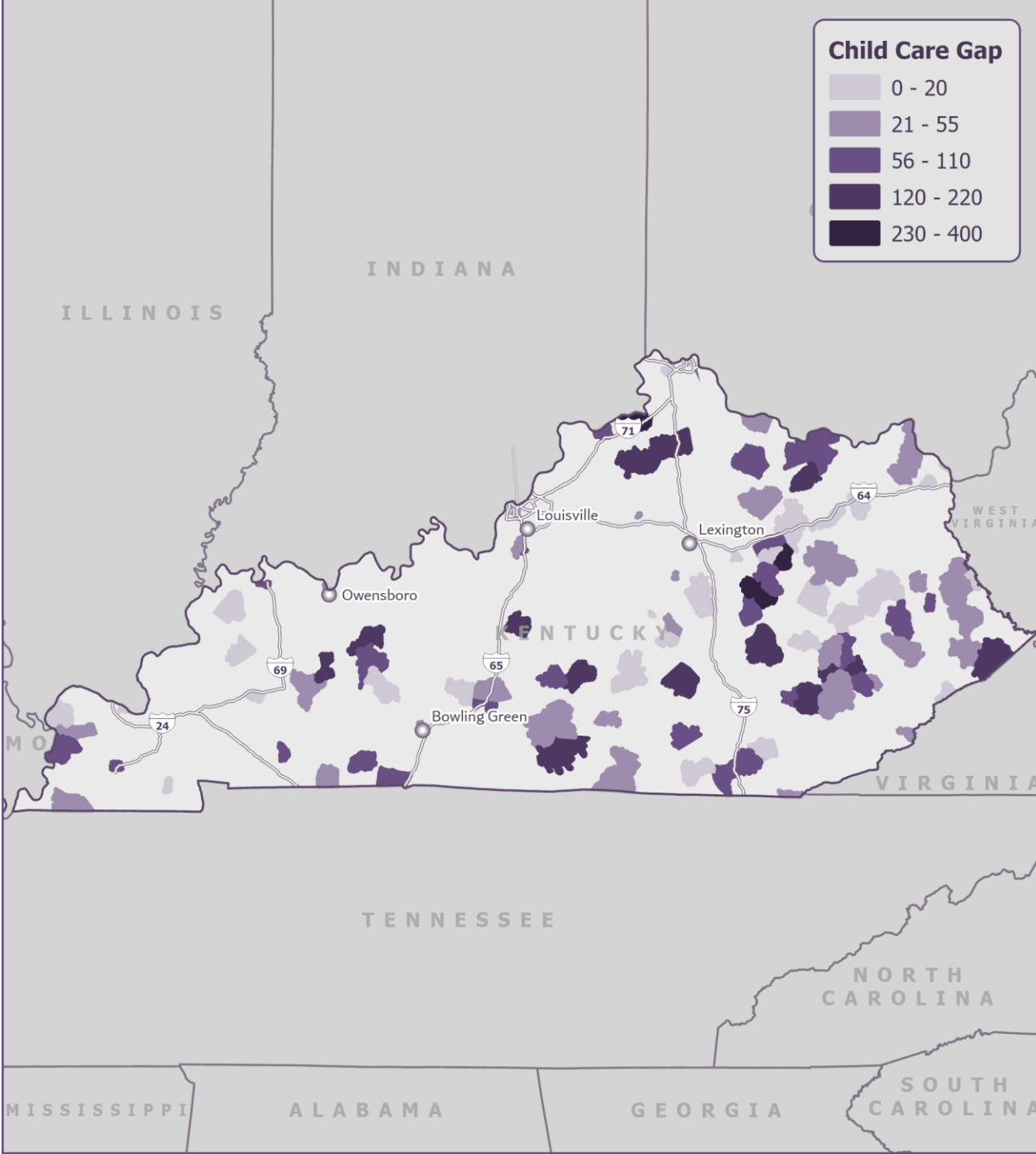
State Senate Districts with the Highest Gap





Counties

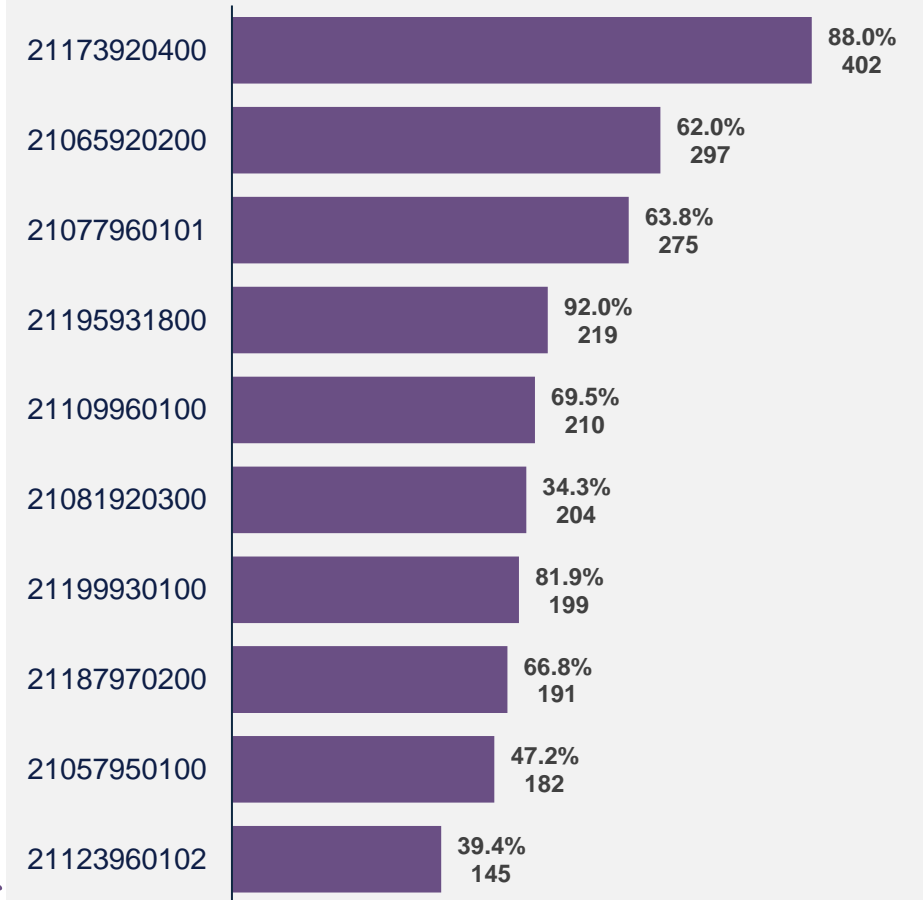




Opportunity Zones

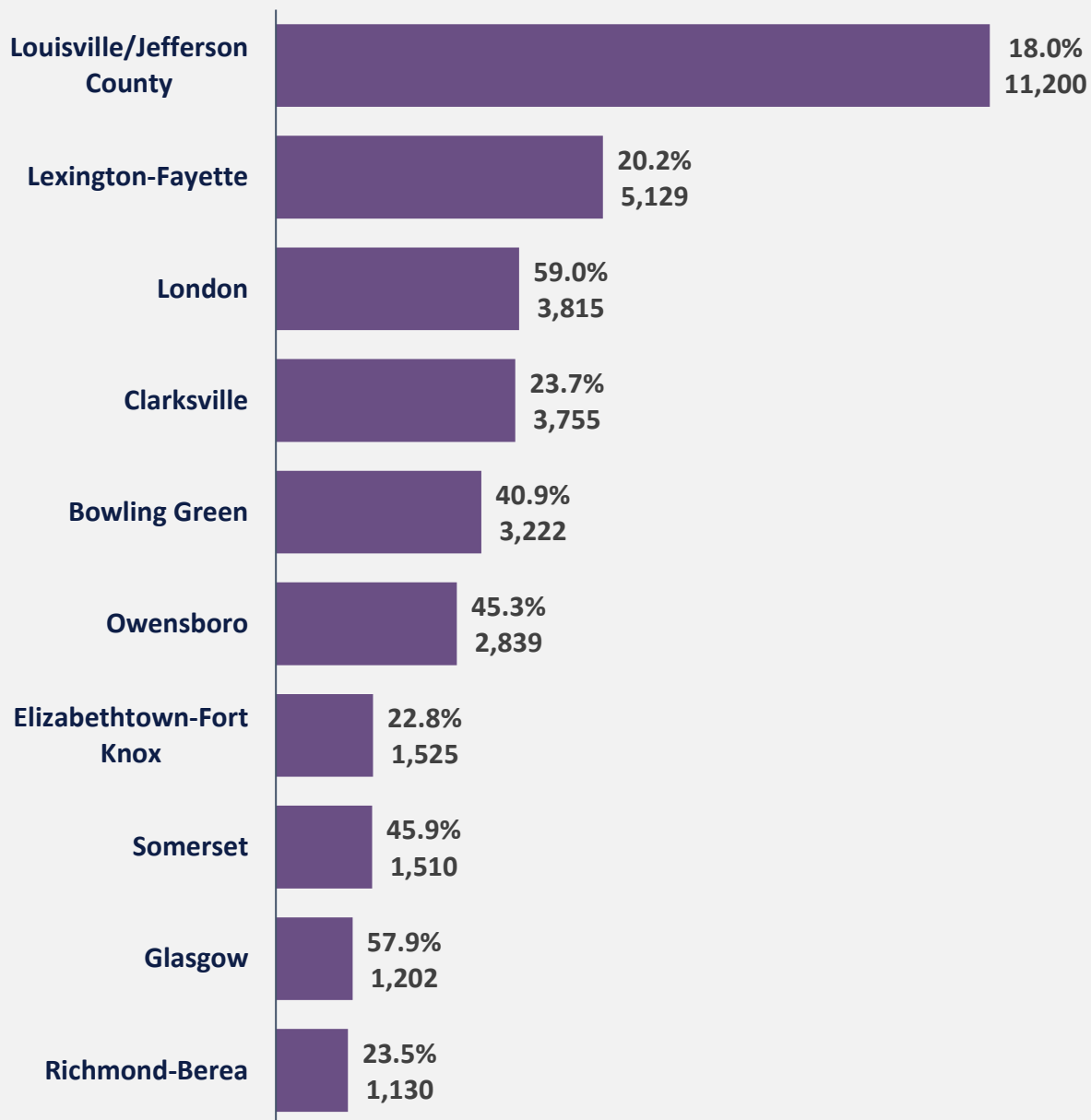
Child Care Gap

Opportunity Zones with the Highest Gap



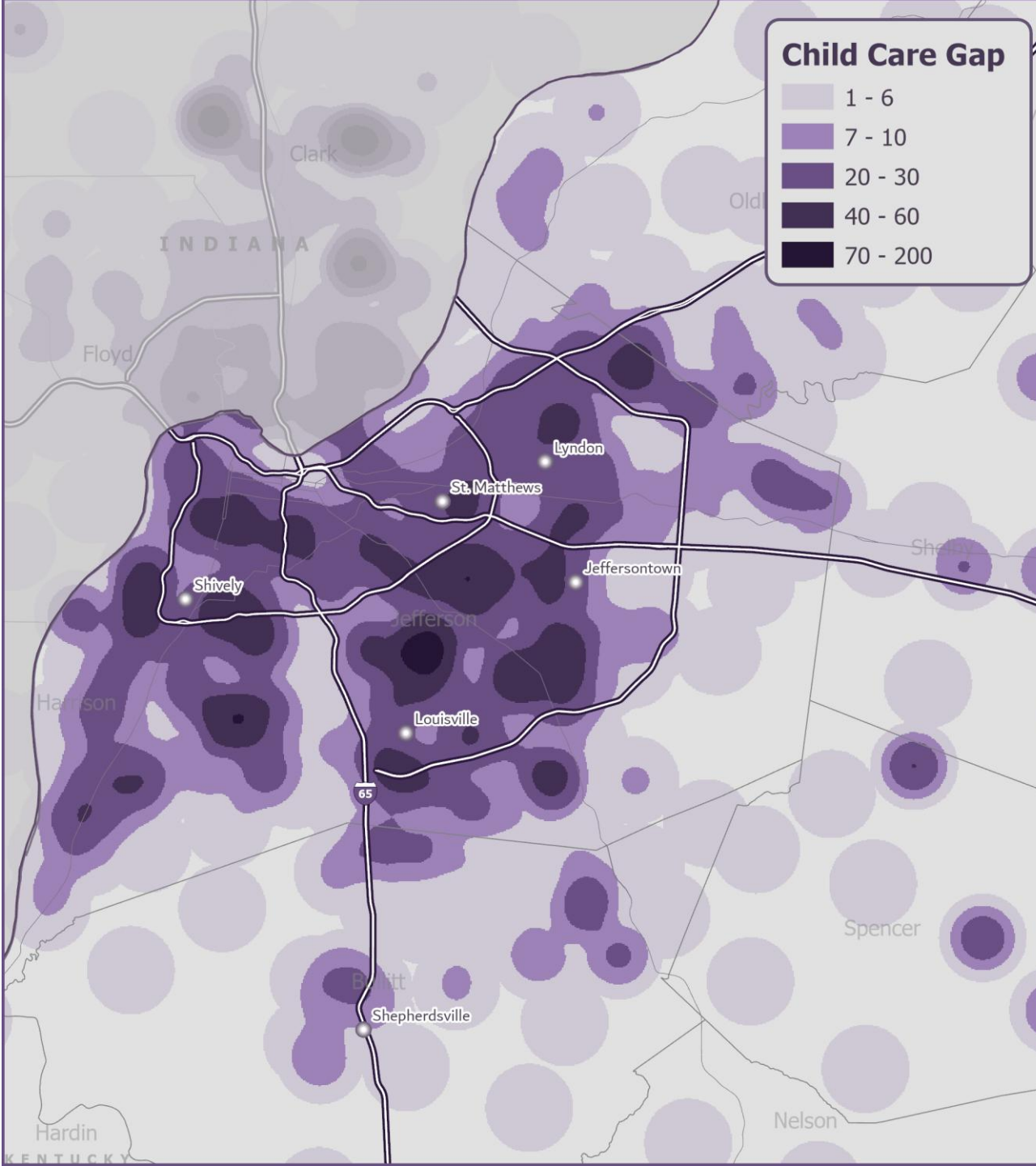
Child Care Gap

Urban Areas with the Highest Gap



Urban Areas

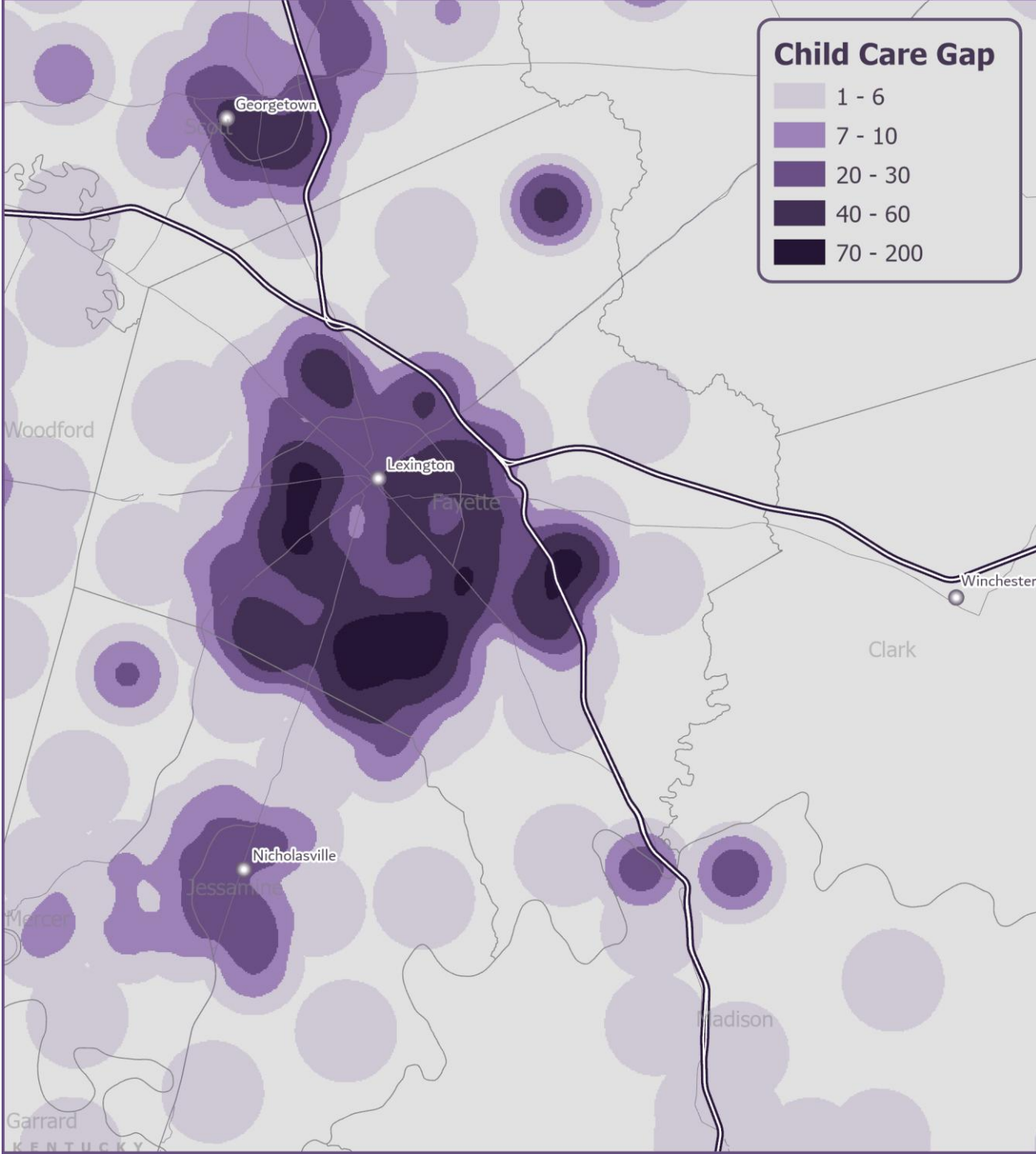
- Larger urban areas were also analyzed.
- Heat maps were developed for select urban areas.



Louisville/Jefferson County Area

Clusters of high child care gaps are shown in dark purple.

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Potential Need | 62,282 |
| Gap | 11,200 (18%) |



Lexington-Fayette Area

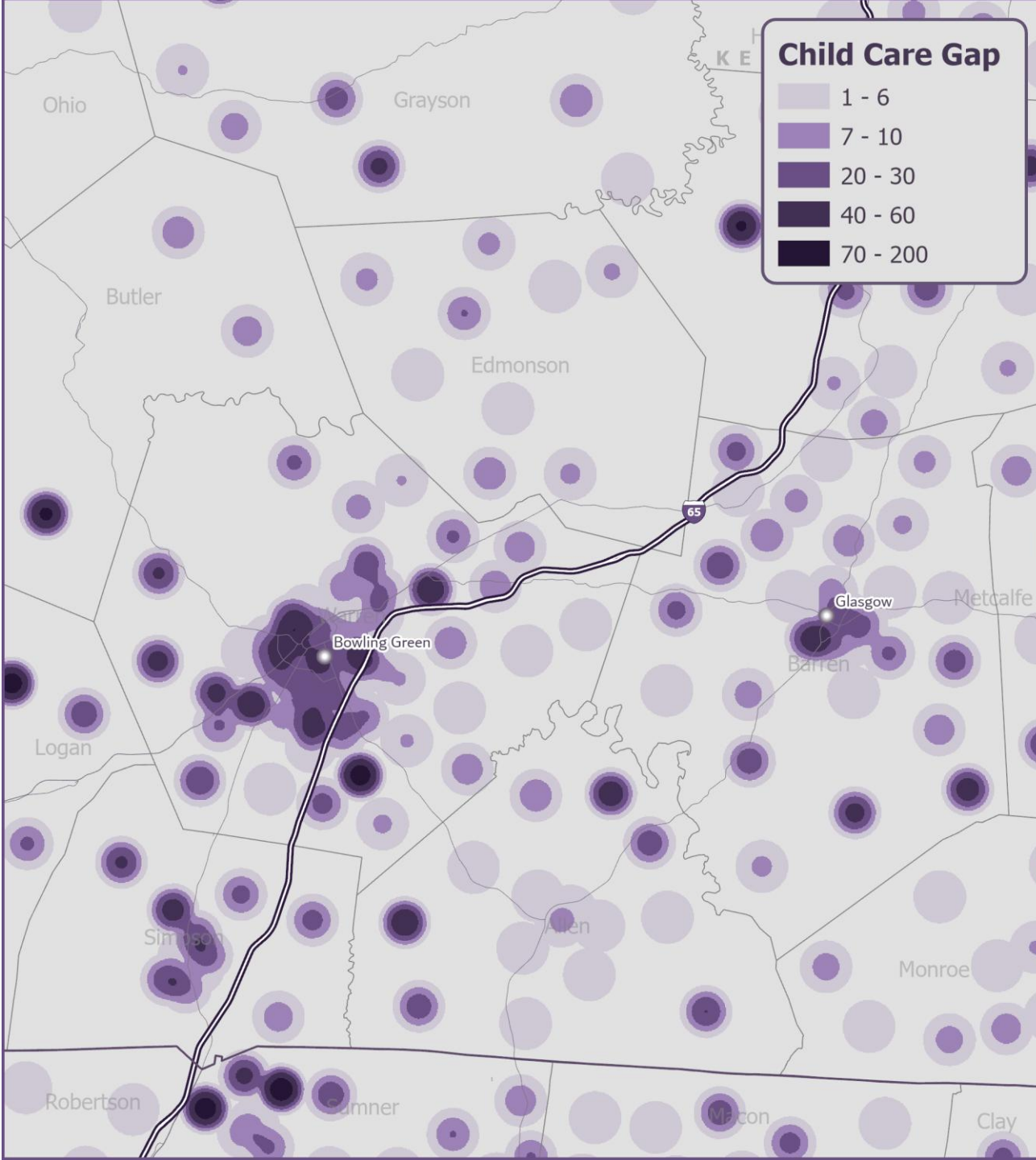
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Potential Need

25,404

Gap

5,129 (20.2%)



Bowling Green Area

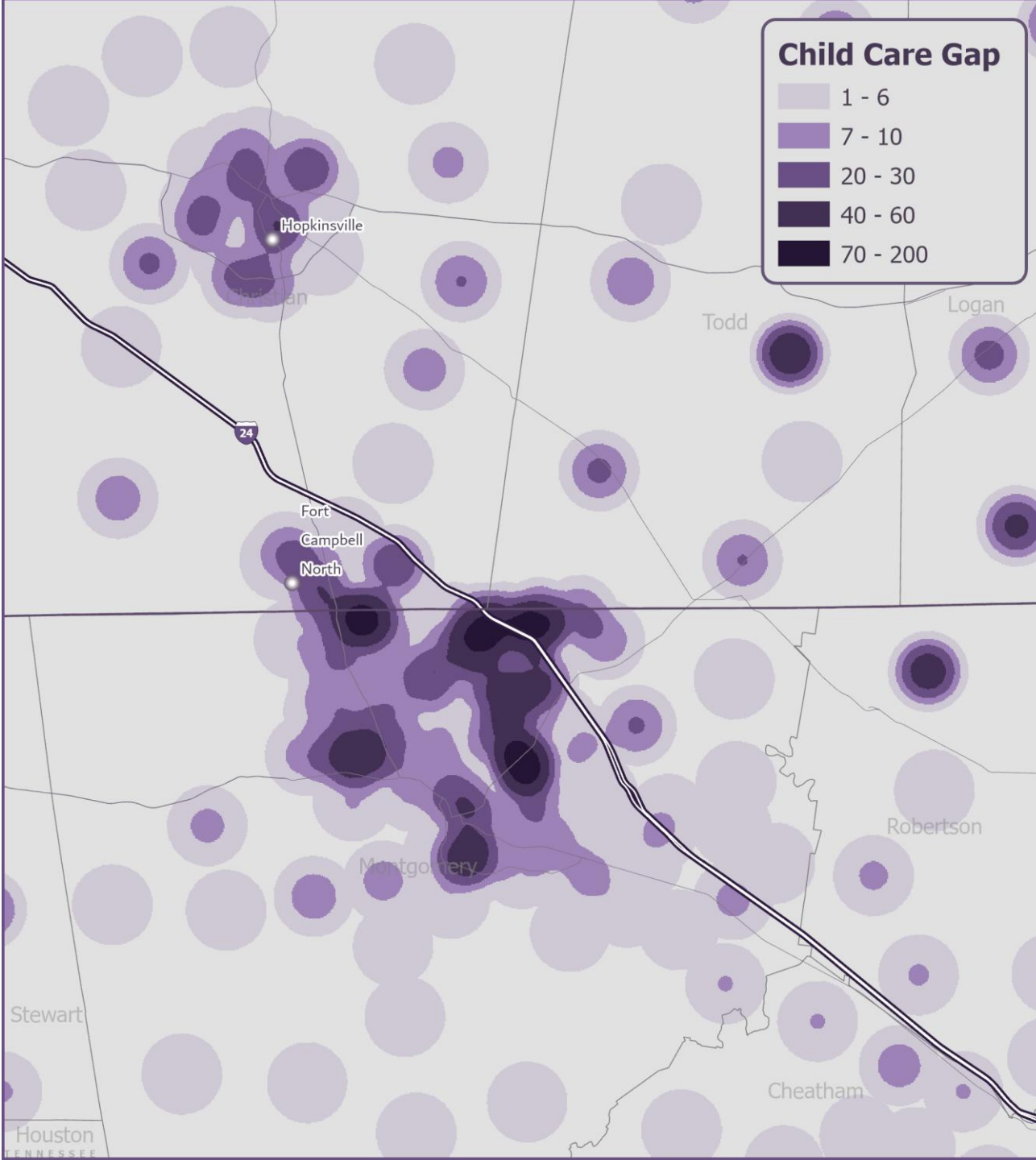
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Potential Need

7,873

Gap

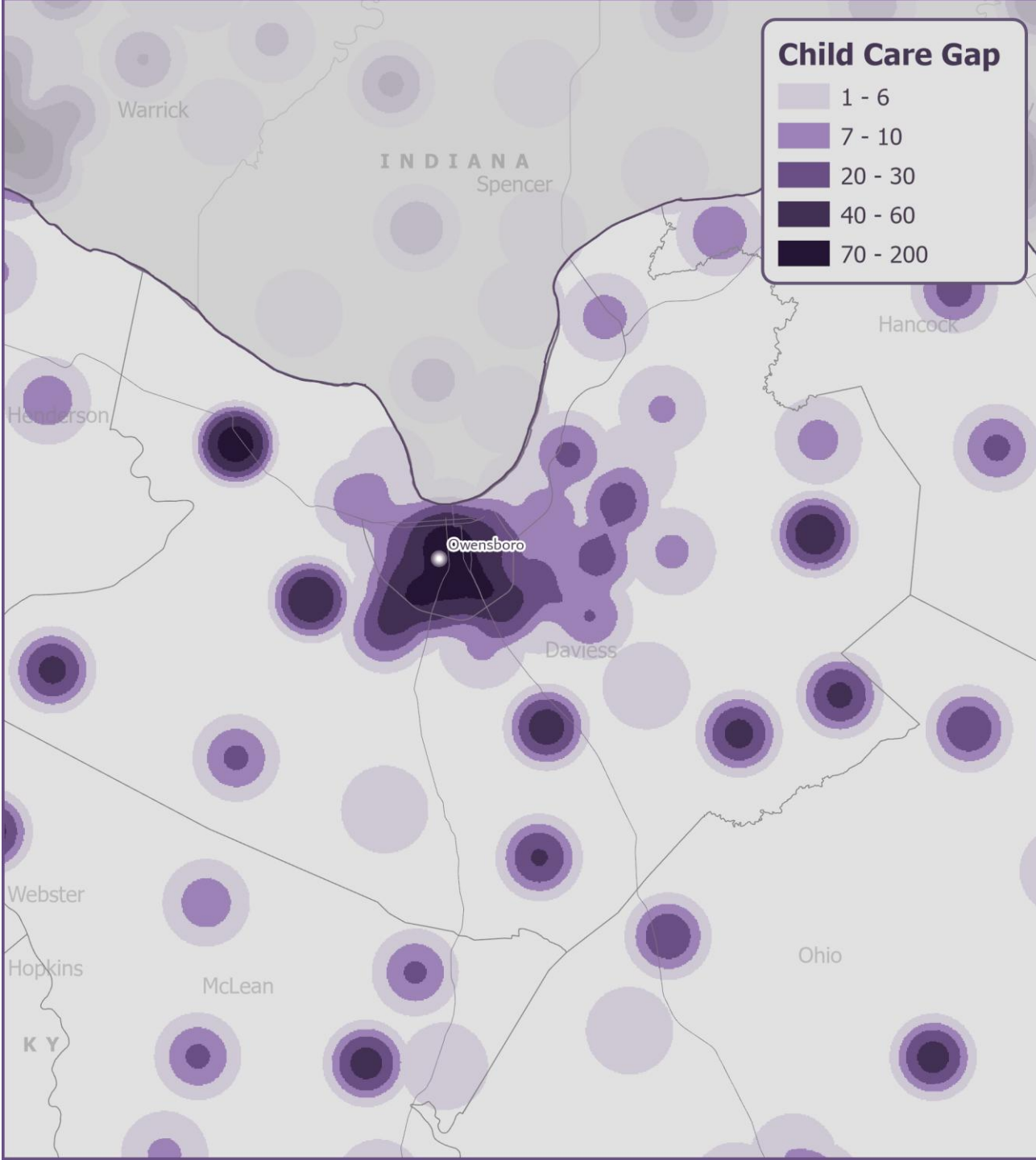
3,222 (40.9%)



Clarksville Area

Clusters of high child care gaps are shown in dark purple.

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Potential Need | 15,824 |
| Gap | 3,755 (23.7%) |



Owensboro Area

Clusters of high child care gaps are shown in dark purple.

Potential Need

6,273

Gap

2,839 (45.3%)

Contact Information

Linda K. Smith

Director of Policy

linda.smith@nebraska.edu

