

Who are Colorado's School-Age Children Without Access to Internet?



Perspectives on the Pandemic
April 2020

On March 18, Governor Polis issued an executive order that, among other actions, closed all of Colorado's schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The original order closed schools until at least April 17, but subsequently many of Colorado's largest school districts have announced that school will not reopen this academic year. School closures are one of many recent actions taken as a response to the rapidly evolving environment related to the virus, and Coloradans, including the state's educators, are quickly adapting to the virus-related actions, often with a migration of teaching and assignments to an on-line model. However, many of Colorado's most vulnerable school-age children live in households lacking internet access. While many of these children also lack access to appropriate devices, this study focuses on those without access to the internet.

As demonstrated in this analysis and corroborated by recent reporting in the *Colorado Sun* approximately one out of every twenty school-age children in Colorado lives in a household without internet access. Behind this headline number are children.

The children in households without internet are disproportionately Hispanic, younger, and from lower income households.

Almost six in ten of these children have at least one parent working in an essential industry. As Colorado faces school closures for the remainder of the school year, many of these vulnerable children risk returning to school next year having had little or no formal access to schooling for six months. As a result, Colorado is at risk of widening the existing learning divide for these students.

However, providing internet access and computers to these children while necessary, may not be sufficient. Colorado has a chance to think creatively about what other supports can be made available. Given that many of these children have parents working in essential industries and likely are receiving childcare, is there an opportunity to coordinate schooling with that childcare? What opportunities does the summer bring? Can Colorado work quickly with these families to develop programs using the summer months to provide education support to vulnerable children while also protecting public health? In what other ways can Colorado organize to support these vulnerable learners? How can Colorado take the lessons learned from this crisis to minimize the gap that already existed? The first steps require a better understanding of just who and where these most vulnerable of Colorado's children are.

Colorado's School-Age* Children



Each of these students is not attending a formal school setting, most likely for the remainder of the academic year.

Colorado's School-Age* Children without Internet

54,102



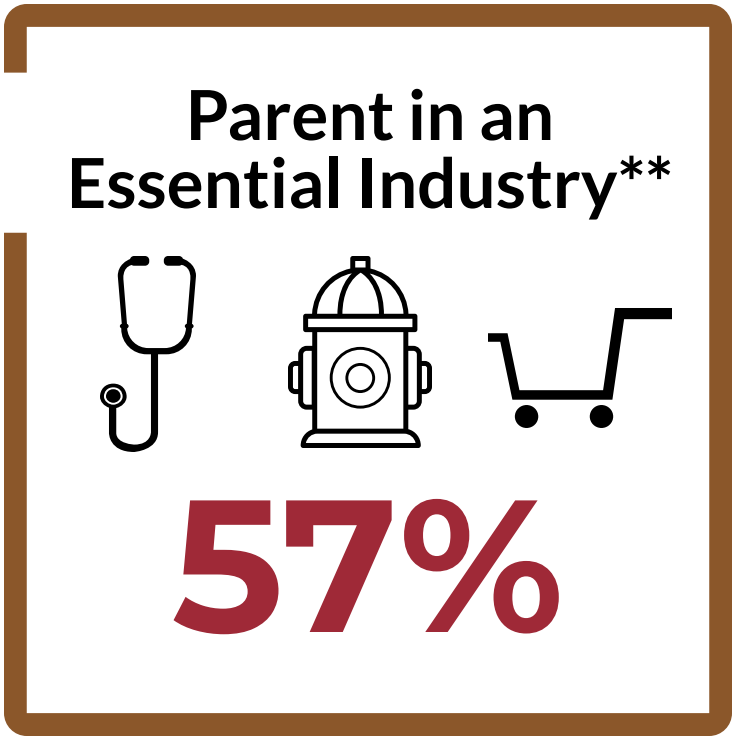
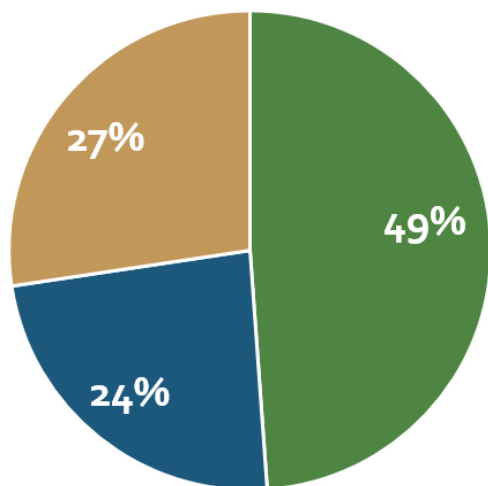
■ Internet (94.91%) ■ No Internet (5.09%)

Colorado's School-Age Children without Internet

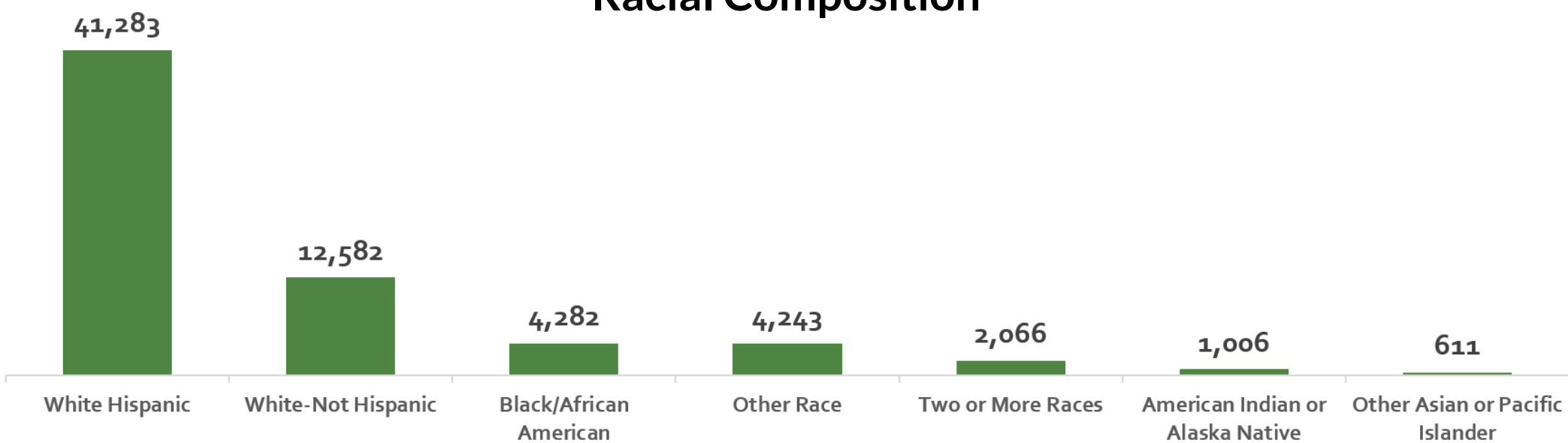
Colorado’s school-age children without access to the internet are predominately elementary school and have a parent working in an essential industry.

Distribution by Level of School

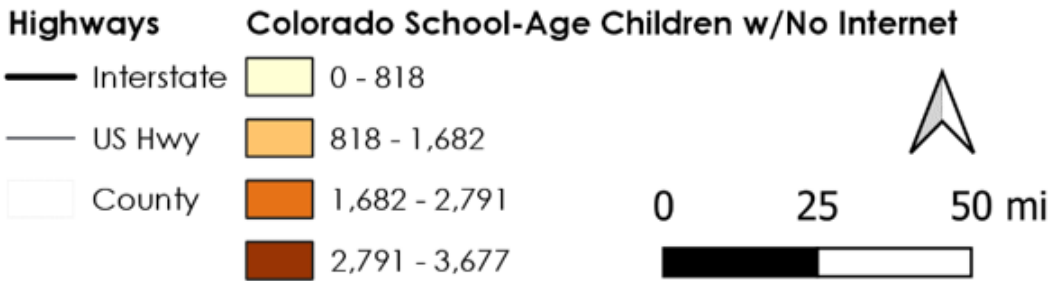
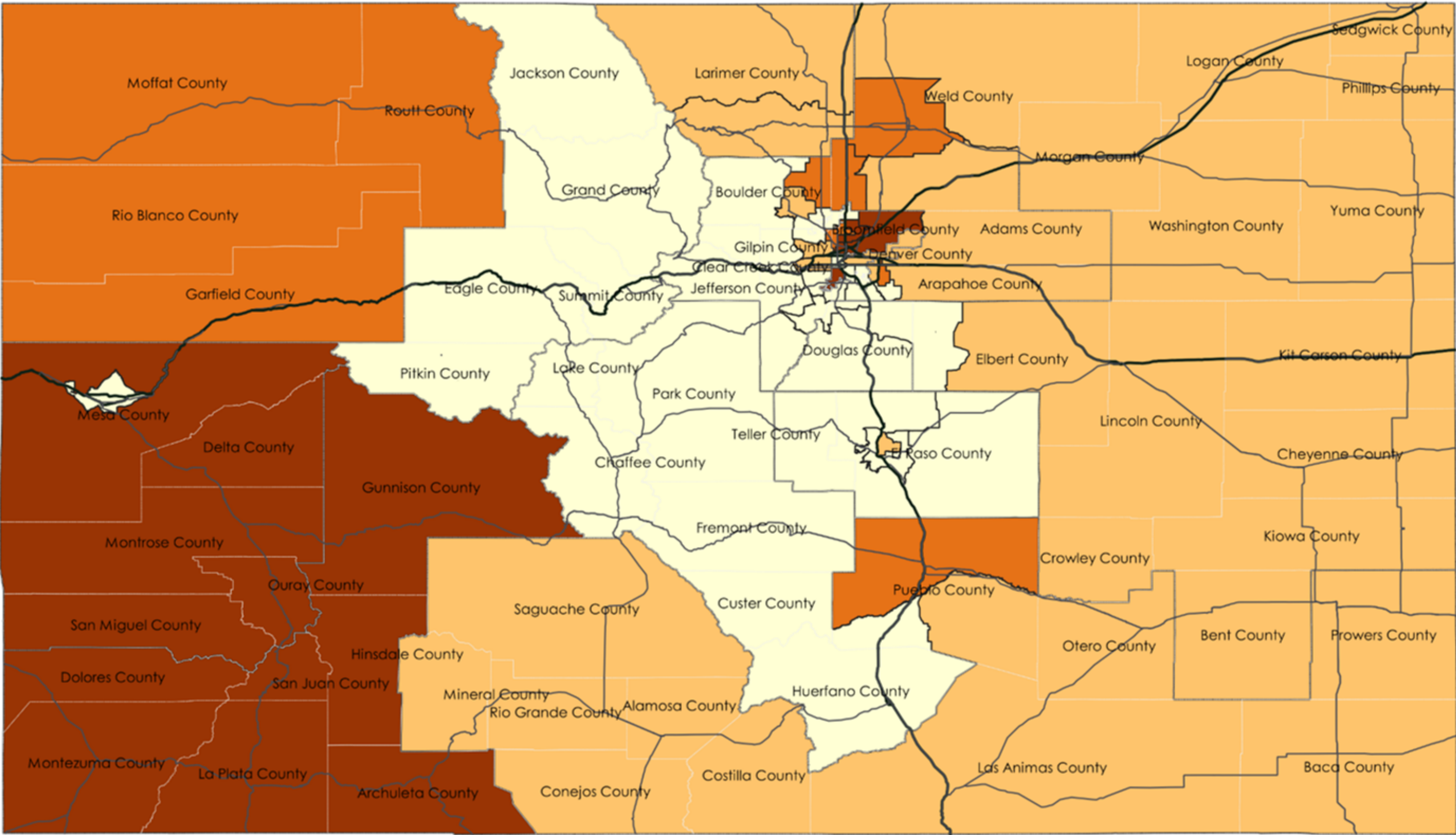
■ Elementary ■ Middle ■ High



Racial Composition



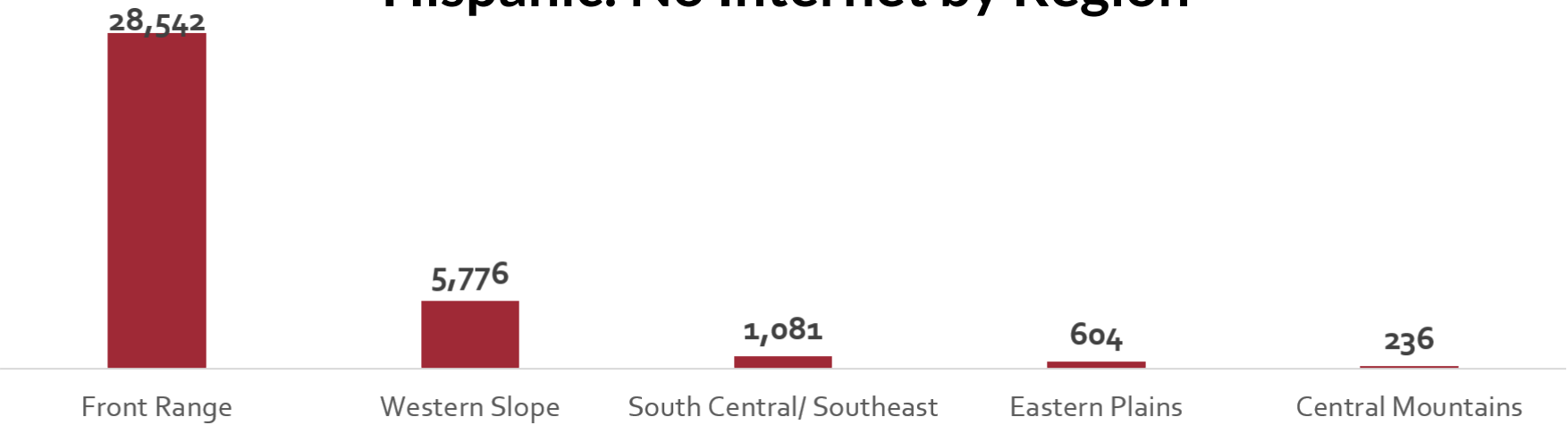
School-Age Children without Internet



Colorado's Hispanic School-Age Children without Internet

2 of 3 are Hispanic

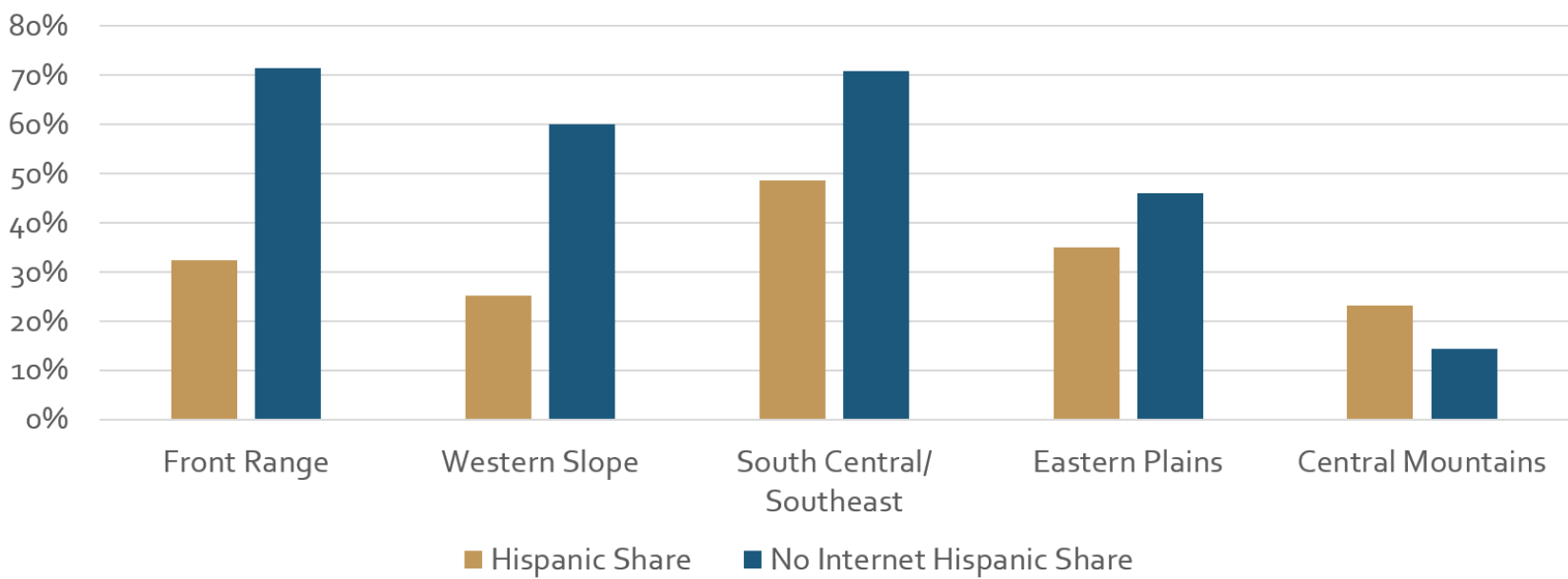
Hispanic: No Internet by Region



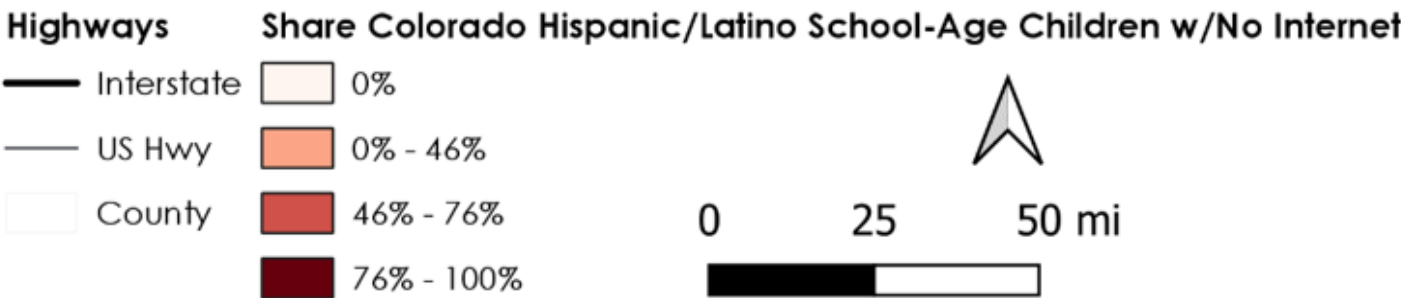
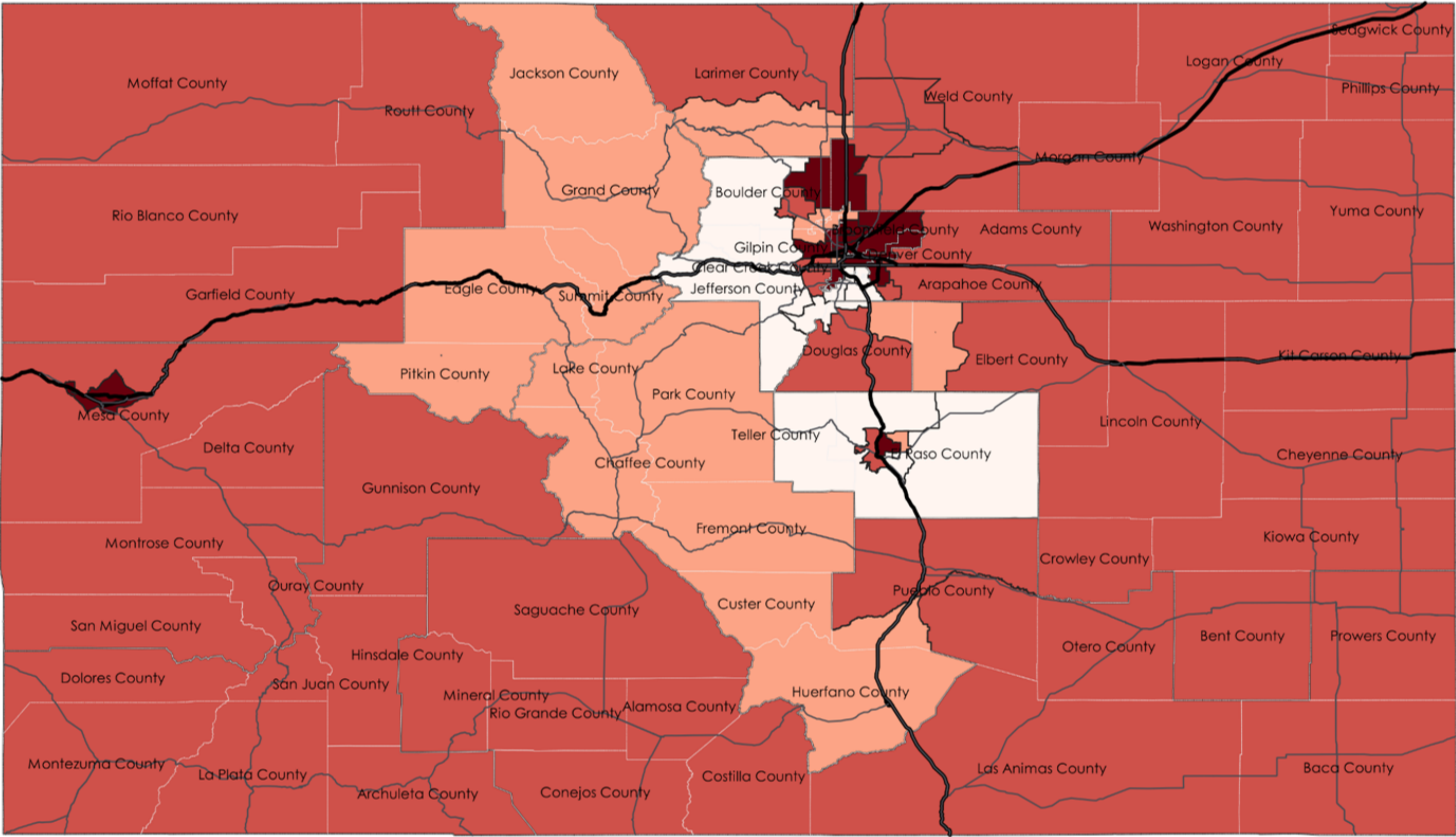
For all regions except the Central Mountains, the share of Hispanic school-age children without internet access outstrips the region's share of Hispanic school-age children.

Hispanic school-age children bear a disproportionate burden of lack of access to the internet.

Hispanic Share vs. No Internet Hispanic Share



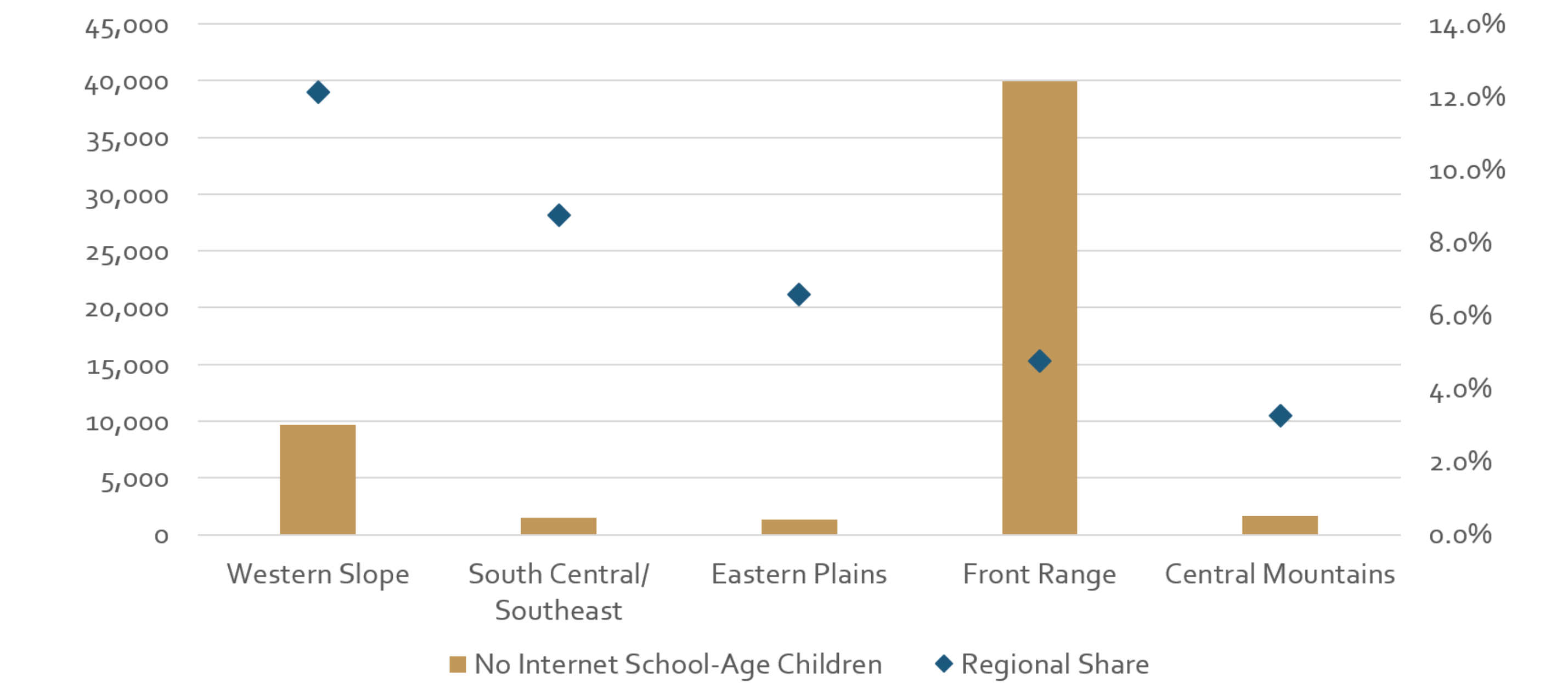
Share of Hispanic School-Age Children without Internet



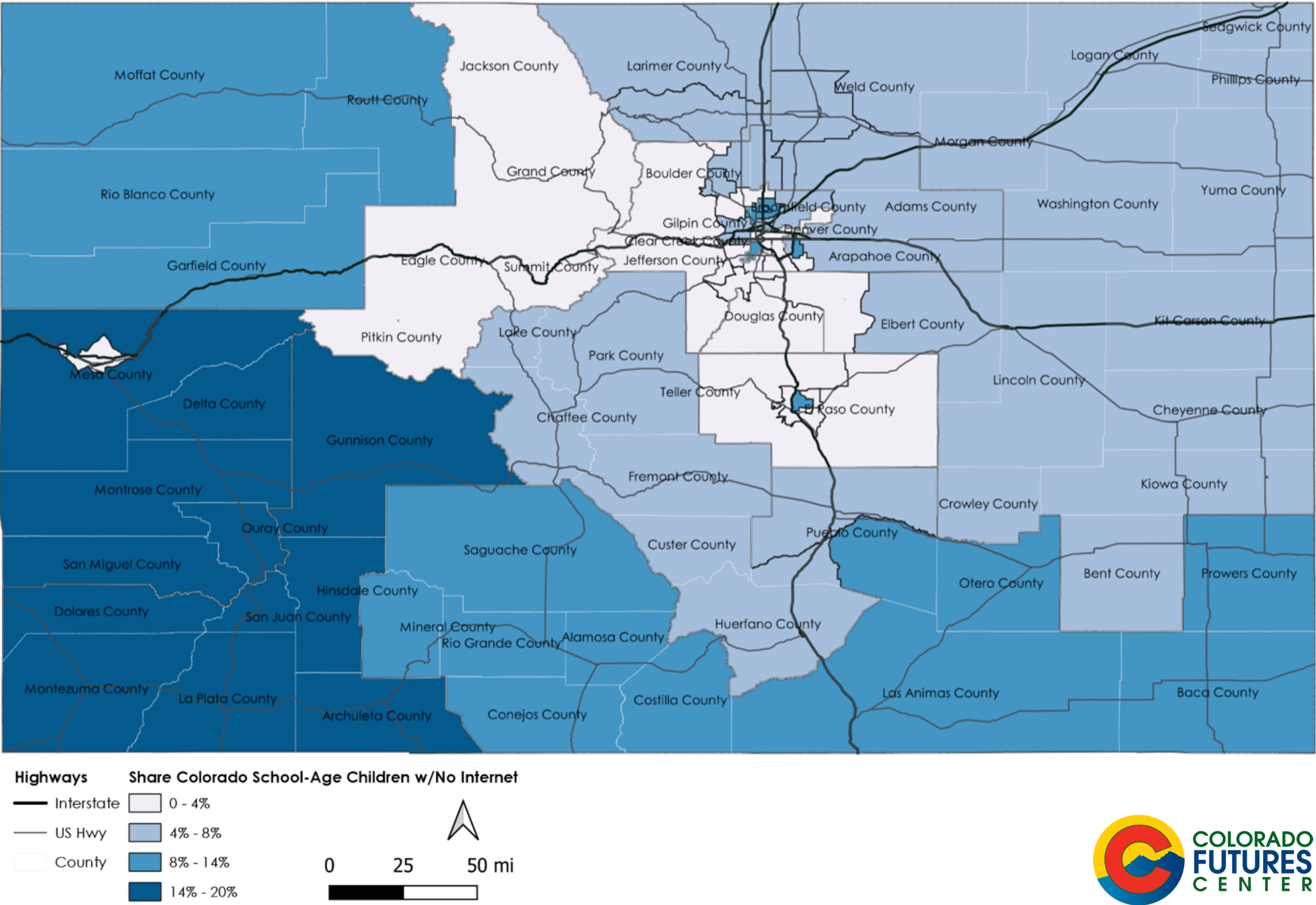
Colorado's School-Age Children without Internet by Region

The Western Slope is the region with the largest share of school-age children without internet.

Totals and Share by Region



Share of School-Age Children without Internet

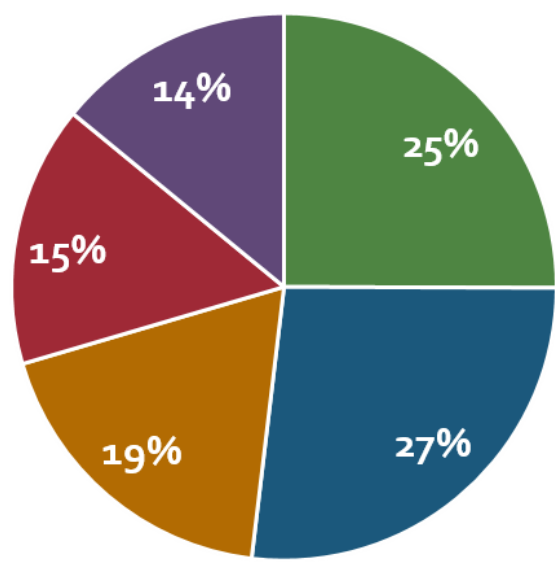


Colorado's 30,343 School-Age Households without Internet

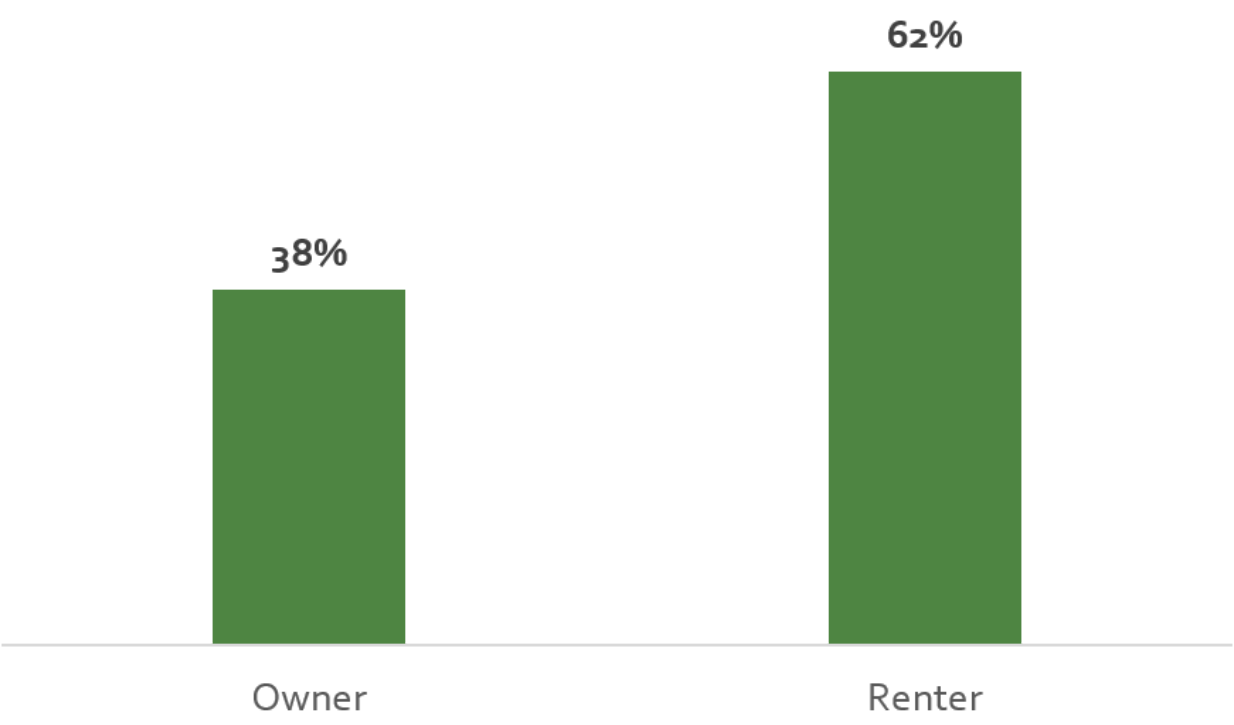
The majority of households with school-age children live in households earning \$50,000 or less and one in four is headed by a single parent.

Household Income

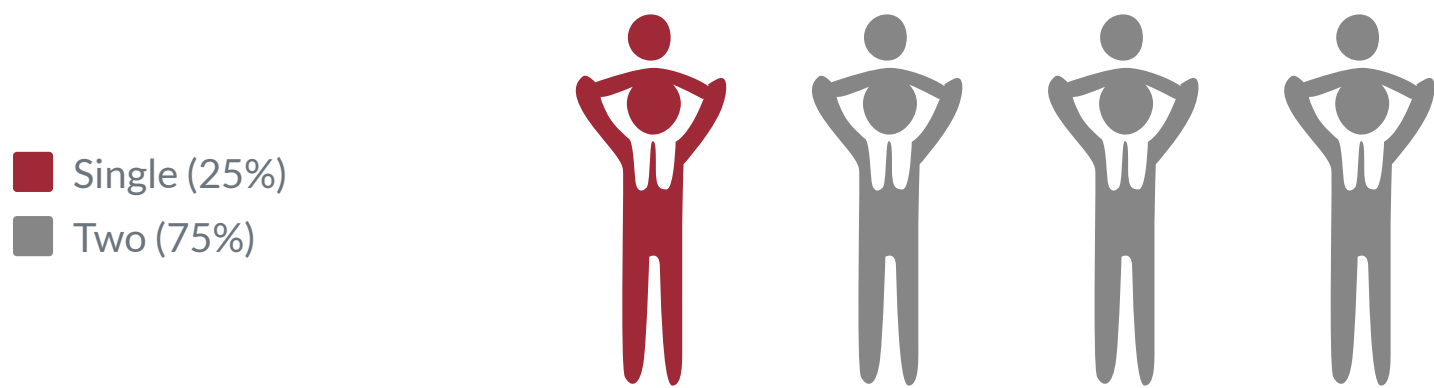
<\$25K \$25-\$50K \$50-\$75K \$75-\$100K >\$100K



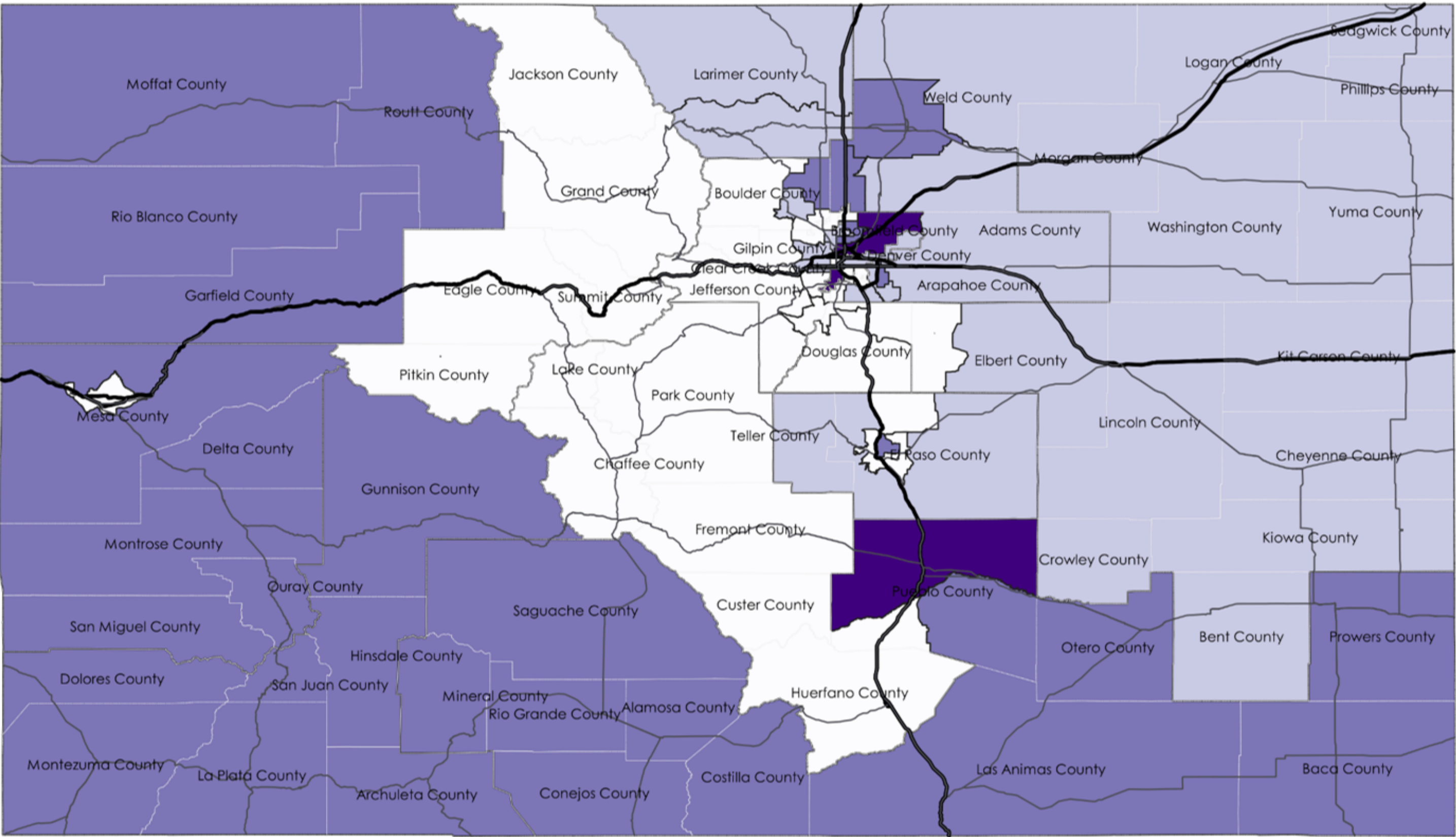
Tenure: Renter vs. Owner



Single vs. Two-Parents



School-Age Households without Internet



Highways

- Interstate
- US Hwy
- County

Colorado School-Age Households w/No Internet

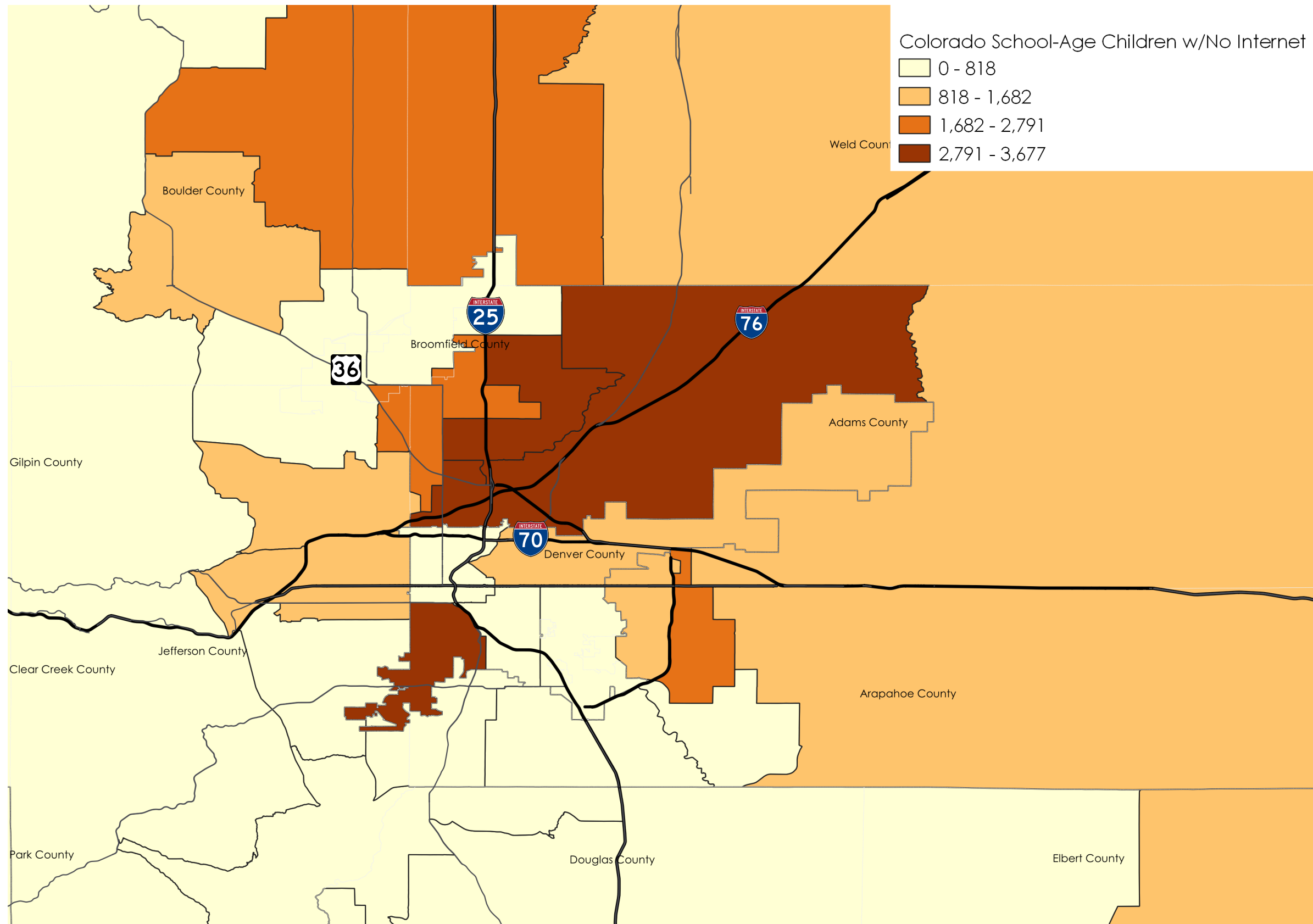
- 0 - 428
- 428 - 889
- 889 - 1,535
- 1,535 - 2,126

0 25 50 mi

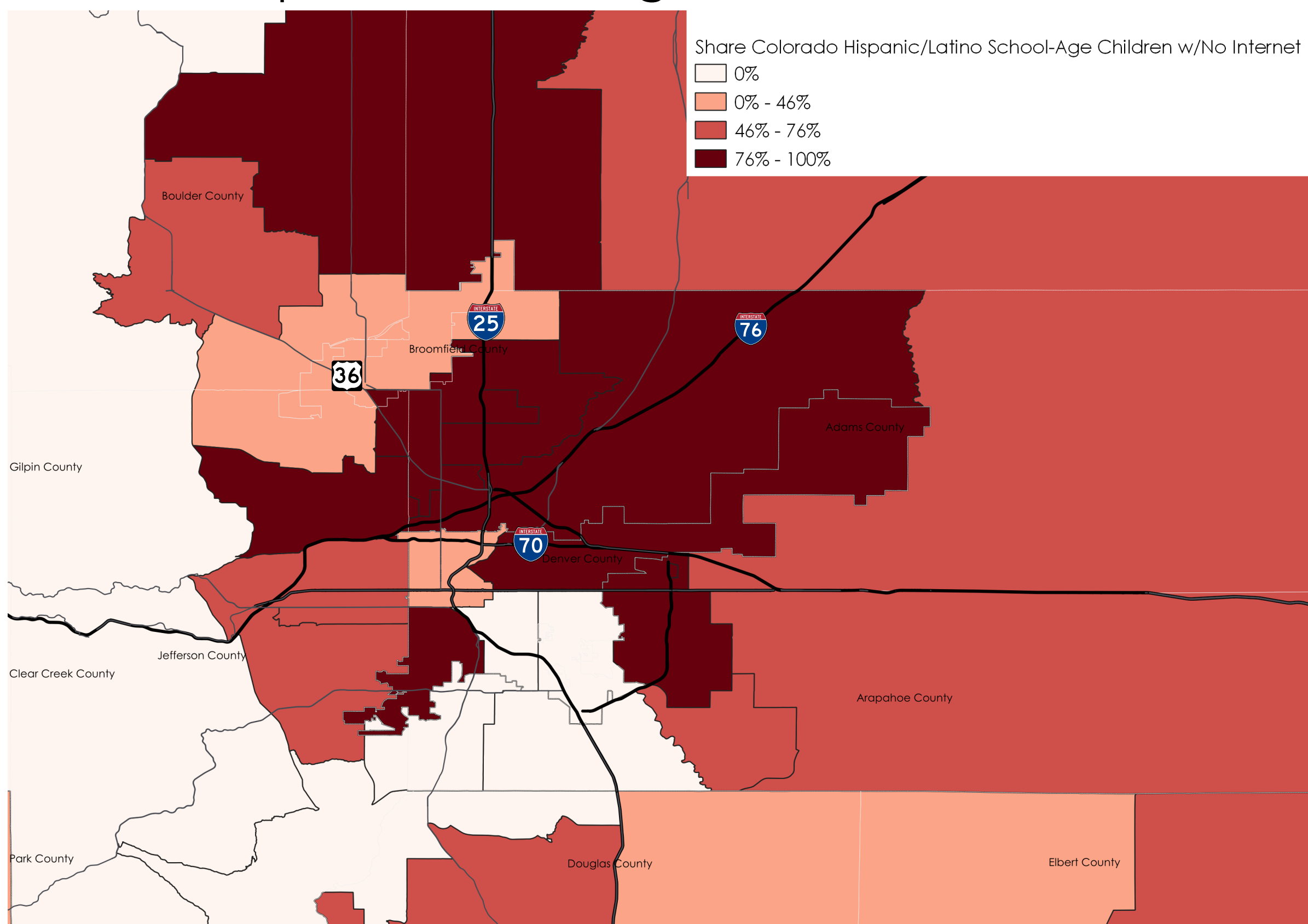


Metro Denver Up Close

School-Age Children without Internet

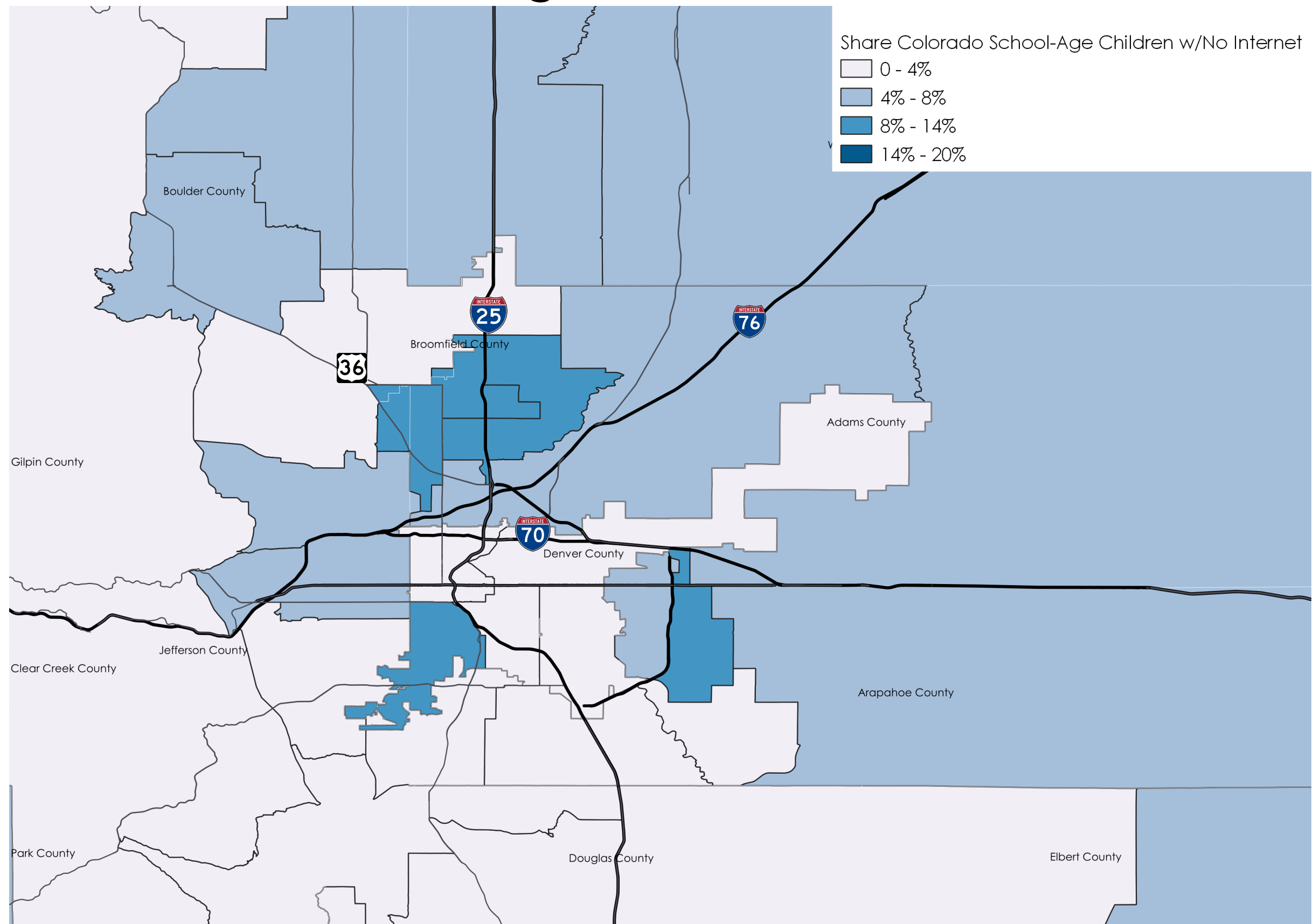


Share of Hispanic School-Age Children without Internet

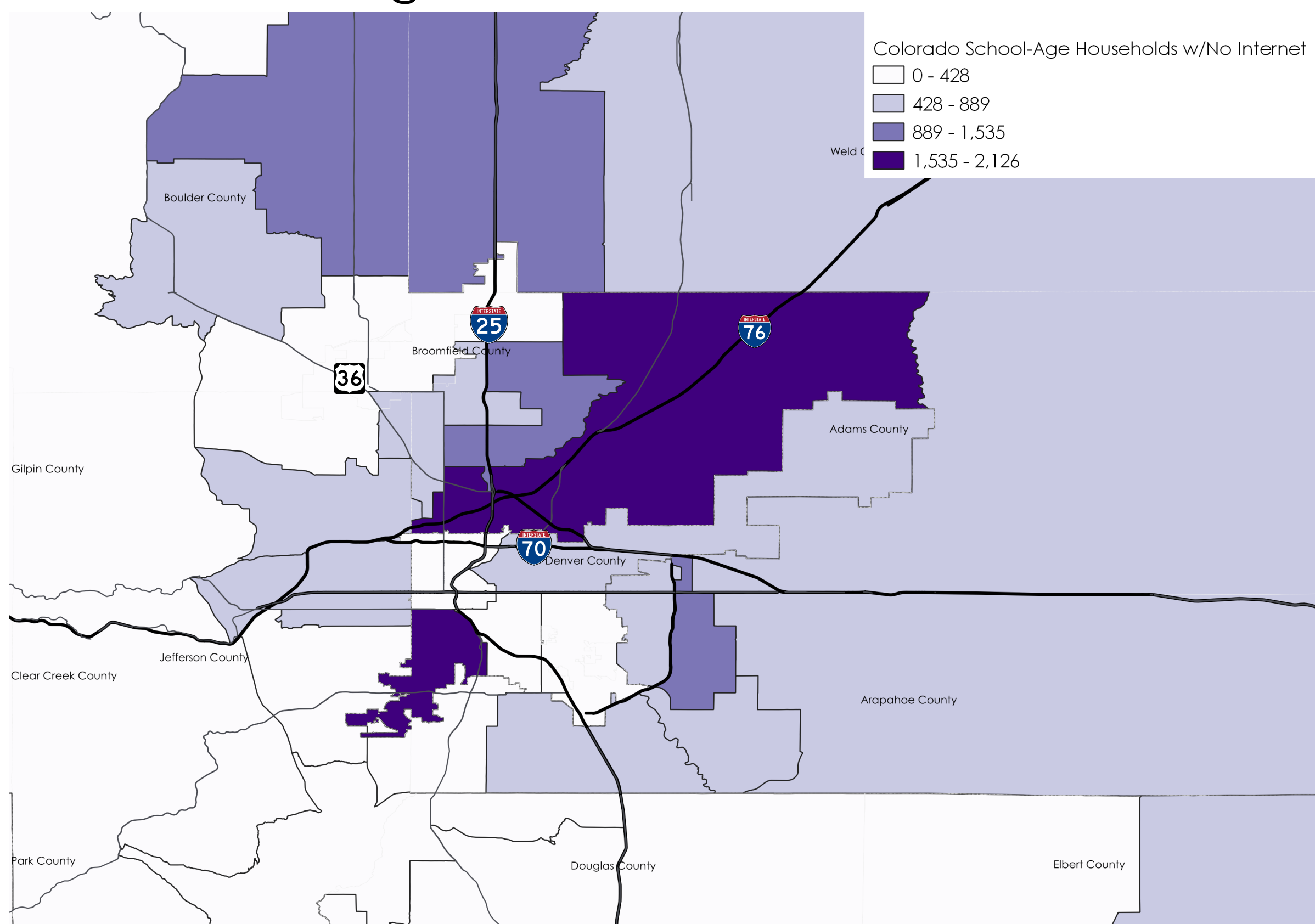


Metro Denver Up Close

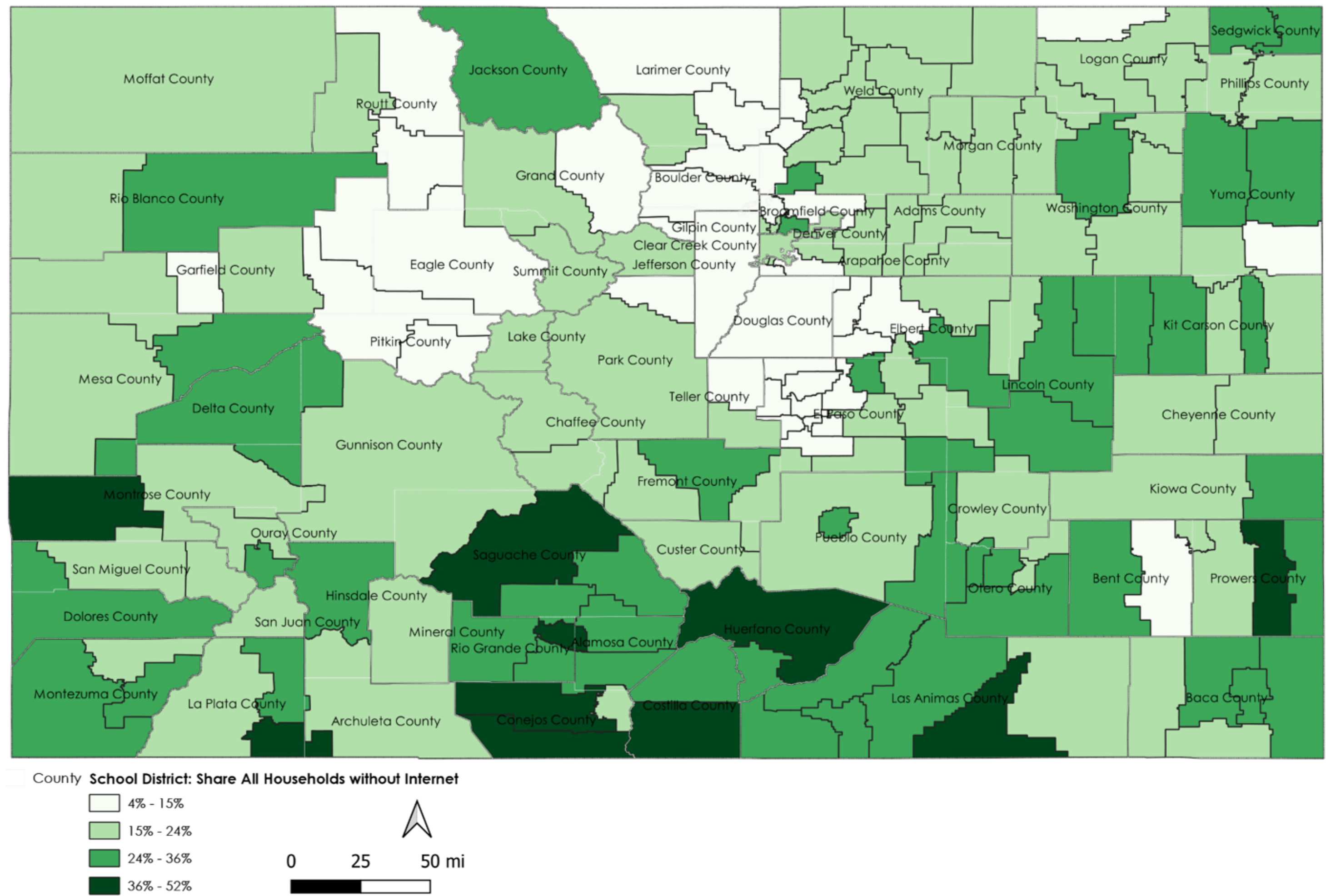
Share of School-Age Children without Internet



School-Age Households without Internet



Share of All Households (with and without school-age children) without Internet by School District



Metadata | Sources | Endnotes

All findings except for those related to school districts are based on analyst calculations using 2018 1-year PUMS American Community Survey (ACS) sourced from the IPUMS-USA database: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V10.0>. School district findings are based on analyst calculations using pre-tabulated 2018 5-year ACS.

All point estimates contain margins of error.

^Based on responses from the household to question CINETHH.

*School-Age defined as: 5-18 years old

**Essential industries are defined as those falling into one of the 12 critical businesses as per Governor Polis' order: Health Care Operations; Critical Infrastructure; Critical Manufacturing; Critical Retail; Critical Services; News Media; Financial and Professional Institutions; Economically Disadvantaged Population Providers; Construction; Defense; Critical Services Necessary to Maintain the Safety, Sanitation and Critical Operations of Residences or Other Critical Businesses; Vendors that Provide Critical Services or Products, Including Logistics and Technology Support, Child Care and Services; and Educational Institutions that Provide Critical Services to Students and the General Public

Share Your Story

The Colorado Equity Compass provides organizations and communities with a data and storytelling platform used to improve health equity outcomes.

For more information:
e-mail Annie VanDan at avandan@changematrix.org.



Further Inquiries | More Insight

The Colorado Futures Center is a 501c3 organization dedicated to informing about economic, fiscal and public policy issues impacting community economic health and quality of life.

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