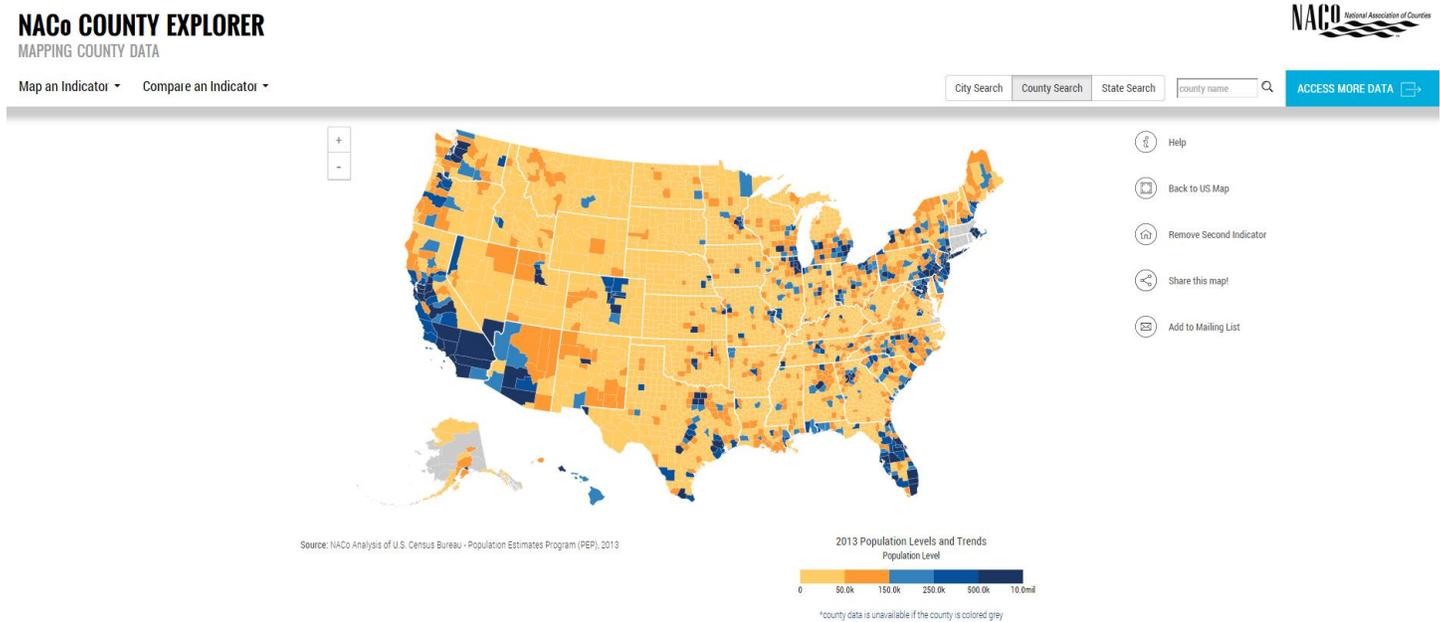


NACo County Explorer – Mapping County Data

This past summer, the National Association of Counties (NACo) unveiled its latest map interactive tool, the County Explorer available at www.naco.org/countyexplorer. It is a one-stop-shop for county data and profiles for each and every of the 3,069 U.S. counties, while incorporating city-county searches and other queries. This is an upgraded version of the previous NACo database County Intelligence Connections (CIC), with the addition of familiar “Find a county” searches available on the NACo website.

What the user can find on NACo’s County Explorer?

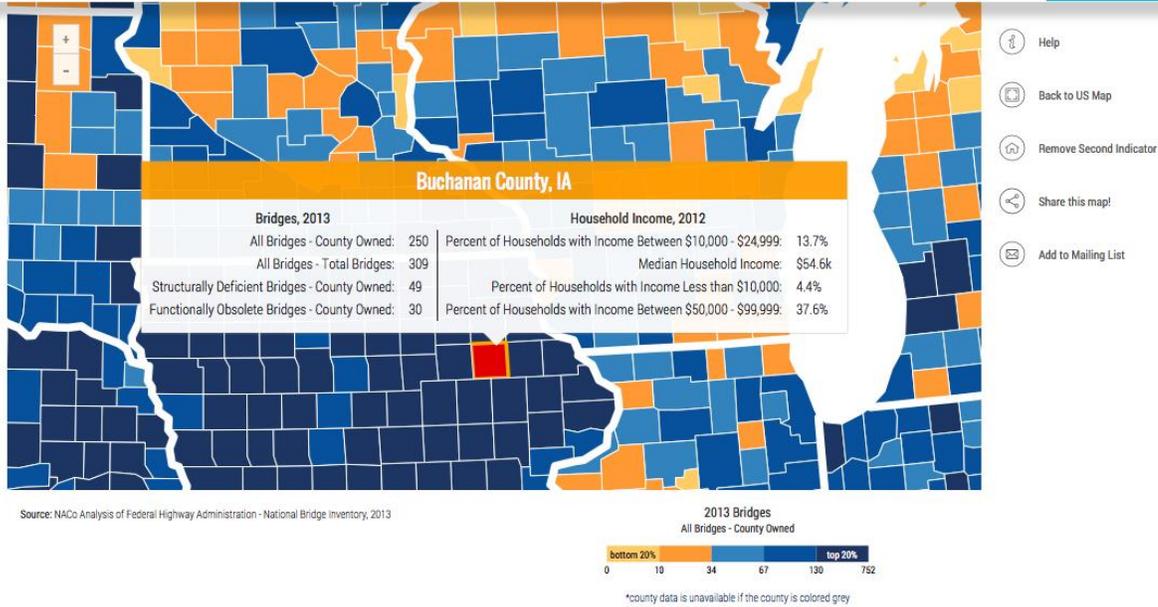
The map is available for free to NACo members and other users interested in county information. It is easy to access either going through the regular NACo website at www.naco.org/countyexplorer or going directly to explorer.naco.org. The interactive allows the users to map county data from more than 70 datasets and 500 county indicators for the latest year available. The indicators range from county finance and demographics to the number of bridges and roads in a county.



What users notice first when accessing the County Explorer is the colorful, interactive U.S. county map. The interactive guides users to visualize data and benchmark counties quickly by color. First, the user needs to select an indicator by clicking on the top left-hand side corner “Map an Indicator.” For example, how many county-owned bridges are in each county? By selecting the Transportation category in “Map an Indicator”, then hover over “Bridges” and click on “All Bridges- County Owned”, the user can see the map of the number of county-owned bridges and click on any county to see specific data at the county level. Beyond the individual county data, the map shows how counties compare with each other on a specific indicator. The darker the color on the map, the higher up is the county in the rankings on that indicator. Most often, the five colors in the legend show the bottom 20 percent, the following 20 percent up to the top 20 percent of counties for the mapped indicator. The legend placed at the bottom right hand side of the map explains not only what the colors on the map represent, but also the year of the data and the name of the indicator. Further, below the map, County Explorer has the list of the definitions for the indicators shown on the map.

Map an Indicator - Compare an Indicator -

City Search County Search State Search county name ACCESS MORE DATA



The County Explorer allows users to see two indicators for a county simultaneously. For example, a user might want to see the number of county-owned bridges and the share of county households within \$10,000- \$24,999 income bracket. To see the second indicator, the user needs to click on “Compare an Indicator” tab in the top right-hand corner and select the appropriate category, in this example, “Economy”, then “Household Income”, and click on “Percent of Households with Income Between \$10,000- \$24,999.”

The interactive tool also incorporates the information available through NACo’s “Find a County”. The user may locate a county on the map directly by clicking on the location of that specific county or typing in the name of the county in the search box in the top right hand corner. In case the user wants to find out the county in which a city or a township is located, she would click on the top right corner on the “City Search”, type in the name of the City in the search box and the interactive tool will pinpoint the county on the map. The “State Search” button provides the user the ability to see a list of all the counties in a state with some of the basic county info. In addition, by double-clicking on any county on the County Explorer map, a user can find the names of the county officials in a county and other county government information.

County Explorer is a do-it-yourself tool, allowing any user that has a computer or a tablet and an Internet connection to access county information and maps any time of day.

County elected and staff can use the County Explorer in their daily work or strategic planning, communication and advocacy activities. The data provided for each county for the wide range of available indicators and the ability to see the figures for any of the other county in the country can help county officials in making decisions in their activities. Also, users can use the map images in their materials and presentations, as long as they attribute all images to NACo Research. On Windows computers, the user should press the “Print Screen” button on the computer keyboard to copy an image of the screen with the County Explorer map displayed. Then paste it into Paint, MS Word or another program to crop the map part of the image. On a Mac computer, the user should press the “Cmd” key plus the “Shift” key plus the number “4” key and then click and drag across the area they want to copy. After releasing the mouse, the image is saved to the desktop.

For advocacy purposes and not only, the County Explorer includes a category of printable county profiles on specific topics such as Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), the estimated cost for counties of the removal of the federal exemption of municipal bond interest and profiles of county economies. For PILT profiles, the user would select “Map an Indicator”, select “County Profiles”, then “PILT” and click on “PILT Profiles.” Clicking on any county on the map or typing the name of a county in the search box in the top right-hand corner, will allow the user to see the one page printable PILT profile for the selected county. Because these PDF profiles show up as an additional webpage, the user needs to ensure

that her web browser allows popups. County specific profiles can prove a useful tool for county leaders and decision makers with in-depth looks at specific areas of concern.

The County Explorer map has a companion data query tool-County Explorer Extraction Tool, useful for more sophisticated data users. For a paid annual subscription, users can access data files of the data shown on the map and also previous years of data starting with 2000, to build their own trends and rankings. An user interested in purchasing a subscription would need to click on the top right corner “Access more data” button, click on the “here” button in the following popup and fill out their info in the box showing up by clicking “Contact for Price for an Account.” The user will receive a follow up email with the price of the subscription and the license agreement.

Every month, NACo updates the County Explorer map and the extraction tool with new years of data and additional datasets. Users accessing the County Explorer page are met by the latest monthly update and the announcement for the following month update. For example, in November, the NACo Research Department who maintains the database, added to County Explorer 2013 Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding and the 2014 number of arts-related establishments. In December, the County Explorer will gain 2013 education attainment data. To be alerted when new data has been added, users should plug in their email address in “Sign up for our monthly update here” in the welcome box showing up on the County Explorer.

The screenshot displays the NACo County Explorer interface. At the top left, the logo reads "NACo COUNTY EXPLORER" with the tagline "MAPPING COUNTY DATA". Navigation options include "Map an Indicator" and "Compare an Indicator". Search filters for "City Search", "County Search", and "State Search" are present, along with a "county name" input field and an "ACCESS MORE DATA" button. A central popup window titled "November 2014 Update" is open, listing "New Indicators!" such as "Federal Funding - Secure Rural Schools (SRS) - 2013" and "Public Amenity - Arts Establishments - 2014". It also includes a sign-up link and a preview of the next update: "Coming soon! December 2014 Update: Educational Attainment". Below the popup, a section titled "How to Use Our Updated Search Functions" features buttons for "City-County Search" and "County Officials". On the right side of the interface, a vertical menu contains icons for "Help", "Back to US Map", "Remove Second Indicator", "Share this map!", and "Add to Mailing List".

The County Explorer is one of the latest NACo products and it is a continuous work-in-progress. This is a product that can bring value-added to our members and others who work on behalf of counties. Our hope is that as many NACo members will utilize the County Explorer and join us in building a more useful and effective tool.