

County Economic Status Designations in the Appalachian Region, Fiscal Year 2027

Distressed Counties (76)

- Alabama (1) – Macon
- Georgia (1) – Chattooga
- Kentucky (41) – Bath, Bell, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Elliott, Estill, Fleming, Floyd, Green, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lewis, McCreary, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Metcalfe, Monroe, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Robertson, Rockcastle, Rowan, Wayne, Whitley, and Wolfe
- Mississippi (7) – Chickasaw, Kemper, Montgomery, Noxubee, Panola, Winston, and Yalobusha
- Ohio (3) – Adams, Meigs, and Scioto
- Pennsylvania (1) – Forest
- South Carolina (1) – Union
- Tennessee (6) – Clay, Cocke, Hancock, Johnson, Pickett, and Scott
- Virginia (2) – Buchanan and Lee
- West Virginia (13) – Braxton, Calhoun, Clay, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, Roane, Summers, Webster, Wetzel, Wirt, and Wyoming

At-Risk Counties (85)

- Alabama (7) – Bibb, DeKalb, Fayette, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Randolph
- Georgia (2) – Elbert and Franklin
- Kentucky (10) – Adair, Boyd, Edmonson, Greenup, Hart, Lincoln, Montgomery, Nicholas, Pulaski, and Russell
- Mississippi (9) – Benton, Calhoun, Choctaw, Clay, Marshall, Monroe, Oktibbeha, Prentiss, and Tishomingo
- New York (2) – Allegany and Cattaraugus
- North Carolina (3) – Cherokee, Rutherford, and Watauga

- Ohio (13) – Athens, Brown, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Pike, and Vinton
- Pennsylvania (2) – Cameron and Fayette
- South Carolina (1) – Cherokee
- Tennessee (12) – Bledsoe, Campbell, Carter, Claiborne, Fentress, Greene, Grundy, Jackson, Meigs, Morgan, Sequatchie, and Van Buren
- Virginia (8) – Carroll (+ Galax city), Dickenson, Grayson, Henry (+ Martinsville city), Russell, Scott, Tazewell, and Wise (+ Norton city)
- West Virginia (16) – Barbour, Boone, Fayette, Gilmer, Greenbrier, Jackson, Lewis, Mason, Mercer, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Randolph, Ritchie, Tyler, and Upshur

Transitional Counties (240)

- Alabama (25) – Blount, Calhoun, Chambers, Cherokee, Chilton, Clay, Cleburne, Colbert, Coosa, Cullman, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, St. Clair, Talladega, Tallapoosa, Tuscaloosa, Walker, and Winston
- Georgia (28) – Banks, Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Catoosa, Dade, Douglas, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Gwinnett, Habersham, Haralson, Hart, Heard, Lumpkin, Madison, Murray, Pickens, Polk, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, Walker, White, and Whitfield
- Kentucky (3) – Clark, Garrard, and Madison
- Maryland (3) – Allegany, Garrett, and Washington
- Mississippi (8) – Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Lowndes, Pontotoc, Tippah, Union, and Webster
- New York (12) – Broome, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins
- North Carolina (27) – Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Forsyth, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, McDowell, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey
- Ohio (14) – Ashtabula, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Mahoning, Muskingum, Perry, Ross, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, and Washington
- Pennsylvania (45) – Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Bradford, Cambria, Carbon, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lawrence, Luzerne, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Mifflin, Monroe, Northumberland, Perry, Pike, Potter,

Schuylkill, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren, Wayne, Westmoreland, and Wyoming

- South Carolina (4) – Anderson, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg
- Tennessee (32) – Anderson, Bradley, Cannon, Coffee, Cumberland, DeKalb, Franklin, Grainger, Hamblen, Hamilton, Hawkins, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lewis, Loudon, McMinn, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Overton, Polk, Putnam, Rhea, Roane, Sevier, Smith, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, Warren, Washington, and White
- Virginia (14) – Alleghany (+ Covington city), Bath, Bland, Craig, Floyd, Giles, Highland, Montgomery (+ Radford city), Patrick, Pulaski, Rockbridge (+ Buena Vista city + Lexington city), Smyth, Washington (+ Bristol city), and Wythe
- West Virginia (25) – Berkeley, Brooke, Cabell, Doddridge, Grant, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Kanawha, Marion, Marshall, Mineral, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Preston, Putnam, Taylor, Tucker, Wayne, and Wood

Competitive Counties (18)

- Alabama (3) – Elmore, Limestone, and Madison
- Georgia (4) – Dawson, Hall, Jackson, and Paulding
- North Carolina (1) – Davie
- Ohio (2) – Clermont and Holmes
- Pennsylvania (4) – Allegheny, Butler, Montour, and Washington
- South Carolina (1) – Greenville
- Tennessee (2) – Blount and Knox
- West Virginia (1) – Jefferson

Attainment Counties (4)

- Alabama (1) – Shelby
- Georgia (2) – Cherokee and Forsyth
- Virginia (1) – Botetourt

County Economic Status Designations in the Appalachian Region, Fiscal Year 2027

Appalachian Regional Commission
March 2026

Introduction

In accordance with the Commission's policy for determining the economic status of the 423 Appalachian counties, the Research staff has analyzed the distribution of distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, and attainment counties for Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 using the most current data available. ARC uses an index-based county economic classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties. The system involves the creation of a national index of county economic status through a comparison of each county's averages for three economic indicators—three-year average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate—with national averages. The resulting values are summed and averaged to create a composite index value for each county. Each county in the nation is then ranked, based on its composite index value, with higher values indicating higher levels of distress (see Figure 1, below). For FY 2027, there are 3,115 U.S. counties common among the system's three federal datasets (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment data, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis income data, and U.S. Census Bureau poverty data). This is an increase from 3,106 in FY 2025 and FY 2026 because the nine Councils of Governments in Connecticut, which are considered county equivalents, are now present in all three datasets. Prior to FY 2025, the index included eight counties in Connecticut.

County Economic Levels

Each Appalachian county is classified into one of five economic status designations based on its position in the national ranking.

Distressed

Distressed counties are the most economically depressed counties. They rank in the worst 10% of the nation's counties.

At-Risk

At-Risk counties are those at risk of becoming economically distressed. They rank between the worst 10% and the worst 25% of the nation's counties.

Transitional

Transitional counties are those transitioning between strong and weak economies. They make up the largest economic status designation. Transitional counties rank between the worst 25% and the best 25% of the nation's counties.

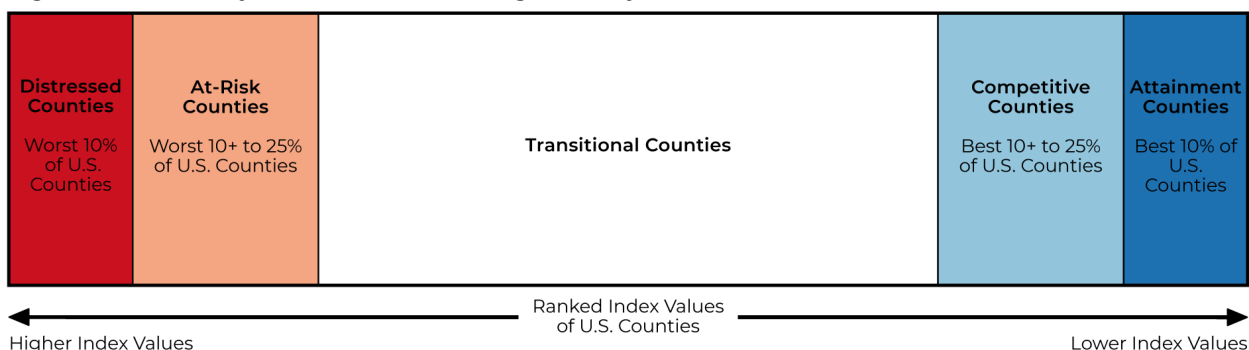
Competitive

Competitive counties are those that are able to compete in the national economy but are not in the highest 10% of the nation's counties. Counties ranking between the best 10% and the best 25% of the nation's counties are classified competitive.

Attainment

Attainment counties are the economically strongest counties. Counties ranking in the best 10% of the nation's counties are classified attainment.

Figure 1: ARC County Economic Status Designation by National Index Value Rank



Regional Changes in Economic Status

Thirty-nine counties in eleven Appalachian states will experience a shift in economic status in FY 2027. Twenty-three of these counties will see a positive shift in economic status in the following ten states: Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Sixteen counties will experience a negative shift in economic status in eight states: Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. As a result, the number of counties in each economic level will change in FY 2027. The number of distressed counties in Appalachia will increase from 75 to 76. The number of at-risk counties will decrease from 90 to 85. The number of transitional counties will remain the same at 240. The number of competitive counties will increase from 14 to 18 and the number of attainment counties will remain the same at 4. Table 1 outlines the net change in counties per economic level, and Map 1 displays the FY 2027 designations.

Table 1: Net Change in the Number of Counties per Economic Level, FY 2026 - 2027

Economic Levels	FY 2027	FY 2026	Net Change
Distressed	76	75	+1
At-Risk	85	90	-5
Transitional	240	240	0
Competitive	18	14	+4
Attainment	4	4	0
Total	423	423	0

State-Level Analysis

Eleven of the thirteen Appalachian states will have changes in the economic status of their counties in FY 2027. Tennessee will experience the most economic shifts, with eight counties (seven positive and one negative) moving to another status level. Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio and West Virginia will also have significant changes in status. Other states with shifts include Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Ten states will have distressed counties in FY 2027. Virginia will have two fewer distressed counties while Mississippi and Tennessee will each have one fewer than in FY 2026. Kentucky will gain three distressed counties, and West Virginia will gain two distressed counties. Alabama, Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina will maintain their current number of distressed counties. See Table 2 for a comparison of the number of counties per economic level by Appalachian state in FY 2026 and FY 2027.

Table 2: Comparison of the Number of Counties per Economic Level by State in FY 2026 and FY 2027

FY 2027 Designations						
State	Distressed	At-Risk	Transitional	Competitive	Attainment	Total
Alabama	1	7	25	3	1	37
Georgia	1	2	28	4	2	37
Kentucky	41	10	3	0	0	54
Maryland	0	0	3	0	0	3
Mississippi	7	9	8	0	0	24
New York	0	2	12	0	0	14
North Carolina	0	3	27	1	0	31
Ohio	3	13	14	2	0	32
Pennsylvania	1	2	45	4	0	52
South Carolina	1	1	4	1	0	7
Tennessee	6	12	32	2	0	52
Virginia	2	8	14	0	1	25
West Virginia	13	16	25	1	0	55
	76	85	240	18	4	423

FY 2026 Designations						
State	Distressed	At-Risk	Transitional	Competitive	Attainment	Total
Alabama	1	5	28	2	1	37
Georgia	1	4	26	4	2	37
Kentucky	38	12	4	0	0	54
Maryland	0	1	2	0	0	3
Mississippi	8	6	10	0	0	24
New York	0	2	12	0	0	14
North Carolina	0	4	27	0	0	31
Ohio	3	12	15	2	0	32
Pennsylvania	1	2	47	2	0	52
South Carolina	1	1	4	1	0	7
Tennessee	7	16	27	2	0	52
Virginia	4	5	15	0	1	25
West Virginia	11	20	23	1	0	55
	75	90	240	14	4	423

County-Level Analysis

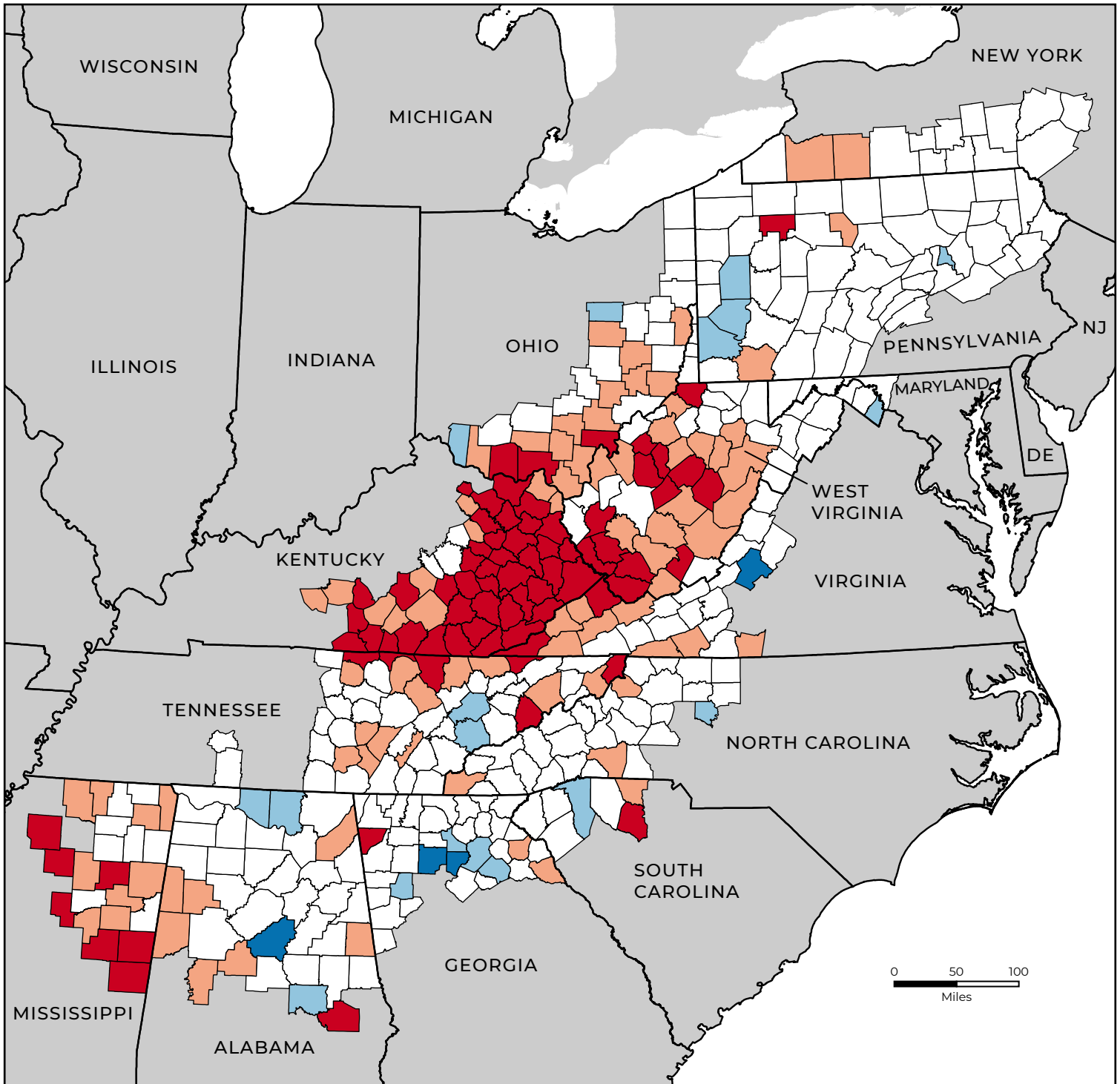
Table 3 and Map 2 display the thirty-nine counties with positive and negative shifts in economic status in FY 2027. Map 3 displays the prior year's designations for comparison. See Appendix A for a complete list of county economic status designations for FY 2027.

Table 3: Counties with a Shift in Economic Status in FY 2027

State	County	Economic Level FY 2027	Economic Level FY 2026	Economic Shift
Alabama	DeKalb	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Alabama	Elmore	Competitive	Transitional	+
Alabama	Lamar	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Georgia	Heard	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Georgia	Polk	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Kentucky	Green	Distressed	At-Risk	-
Kentucky	Laurel	Distressed	At-Risk	-
Kentucky	Monroe	Distressed	At-Risk	-
Kentucky	Montgomery	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Maryland	Allegany	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Mississippi	Choctaw	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Mississippi	Oktibbeha	At-Risk	Distressed	+
Mississippi	Prentiss	At-Risk	Transitional	-
North Carolina	Alleghany	Transitional	At-Risk	+
North Carolina	Davie	Competitive	Transitional	+
North Carolina	Jackson	Transitional	At-Risk	+
North Carolina	Watauga	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Ohio	Ashtabula	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Ohio	Brown	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Ohio	Gallia	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Ohio	Guernsey	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Ohio	Trumbull	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Pennsylvania	Allegheny	Competitive	Transitional	+
Pennsylvania	Washington	Competitive	Transitional	+
Tennessee	Bledsoe	At-Risk	Distressed	+
Tennessee	DeKalb	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Tennessee	Grundy	At-Risk	Distressed	+
Tennessee	Hawkins	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Tennessee	Johnson	Distressed	At-Risk	-
Tennessee	Overton	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Tennessee	Unicoi	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Tennessee	Warren	Transitional	At-Risk	+
Virginia	Dickenson	At-Risk	Distressed	+
Virginia	Henry (+ Martinsville city)	At-Risk	Transitional	-
Virginia	Wise (+ Norton city)	At-Risk	Distressed	+
West Virginia	Hardy	Transitional	At-Risk	+
West Virginia	Summers	Distressed	At-Risk	-
West Virginia	Wayne	Transitional	At-Risk	+
West Virginia	Wetzel	Distressed	At-Risk	-

County Economic Status in Appalachia, Fiscal Year 2027

(Effective October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027)



The Appalachian Regional Commission uses an index-based county economic classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties.

County Economic Levels

- Distressed (76)
- At-Risk (85)
- Transitional (240)
- Competitive (18)
- Attainment (4)



**Appalachian
Regional
Commission**

Map Created: March 2026

Data Sources:

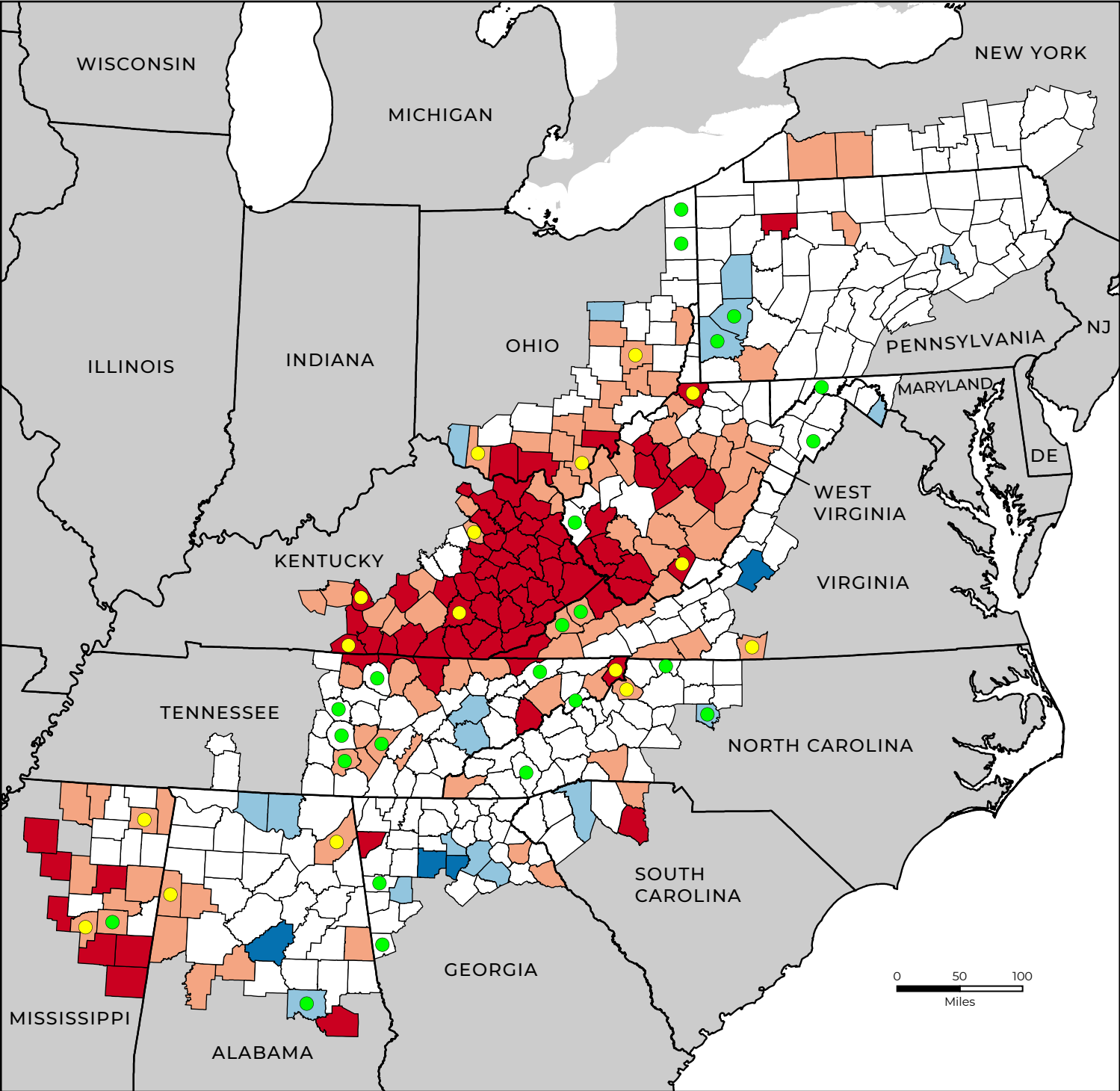
Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2022–2024

Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, LAPI, 2024

Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, 2020–2024

Changes in County Economic Status in Appalachia, Fiscal Year 2027

(Effective October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027)



This map reflects changes in the region's county economic status between Fiscal Year 2026 and Fiscal Year 2027, based on the most current economic data available. The symbols represent the positive and negative changes experienced by each county.

Changes in Economic Status

- Positive (23)
- Negative (16)

County Economic Levels

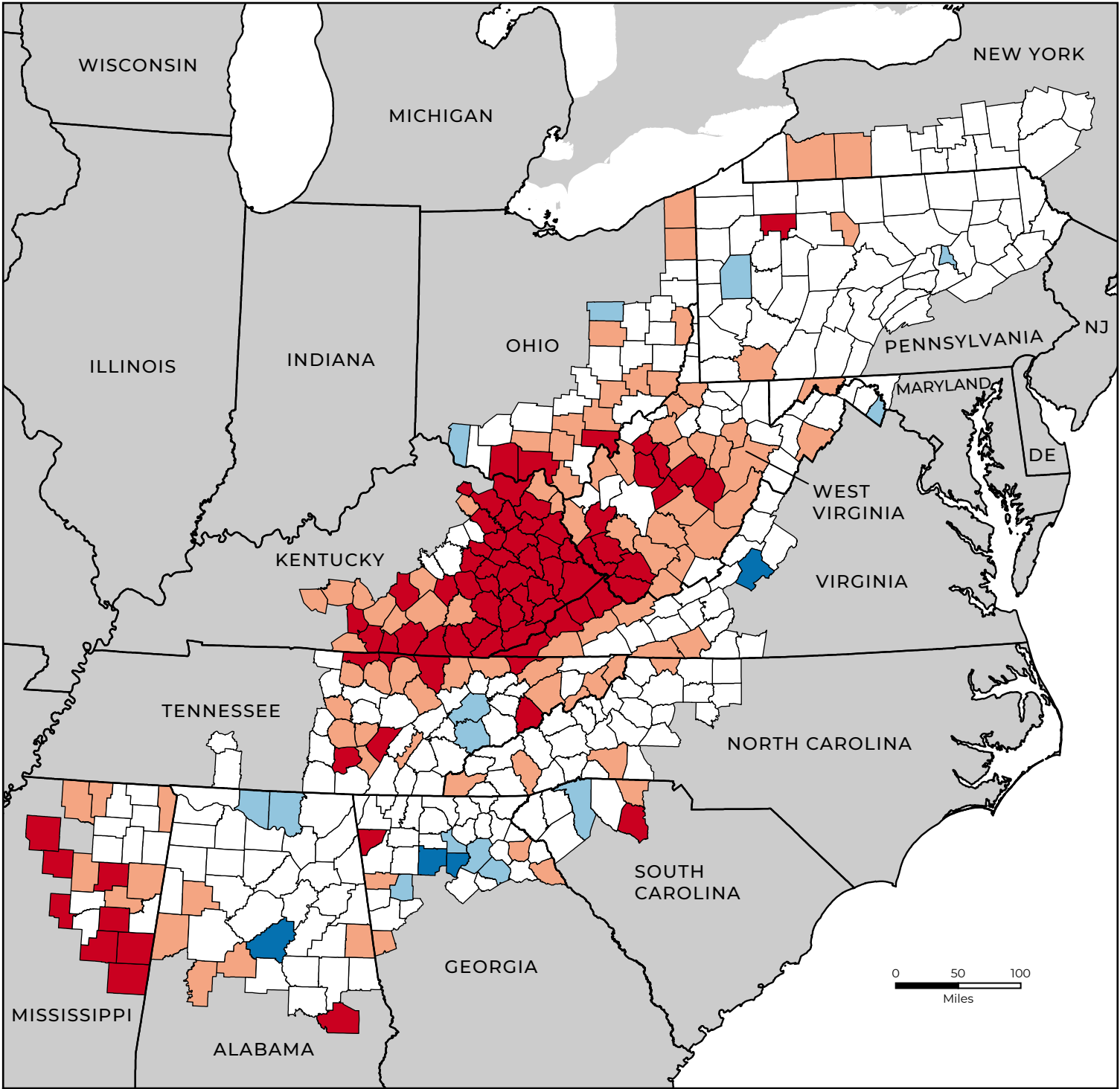
- Distressed (76)
- At-Risk (85)
- Transitional (240)
- Competitive (18)
- Attainment (4)



Map Created: March 2026
Data Sources:
Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2022–2024
Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, LAPI, 2024
Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, 2020–2024

County Economic Status in Appalachia, Fiscal Year 2026

(Effective October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026)



The Appalachian Regional Commission uses an index-based county economic classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties.

County Economic Levels

- Distressed (75)
- At-Risk (90)
- Transitional (240)
- Competitive (14)
- Attainment (4)



Map Created: May 2025
Data Sources:
Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2021–2023
Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, LAPI, 2023
Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, 2019–2023