

Rural Recycling Access



March 28, 2023

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Study Parameters

- The Census does not actually define “rural.”
- “Rural” encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area. Whatever is not urban is considered rural.
- Data requested from each state recycling office
 - Waste disposed
 - Recycling collected

Rural Needs

- Rural areas cover 97 percent of the nation's land area but contain 19.3 percent of the population (about 60 million people) – Census Bureau 2016. Nearly 20% of our population generally doesn't have the same level of service for recycling as the urban counties. Much more self haul collection and fewer with recycling access.
- Hub and Spoke infrastructure can assist in achieving economies of scale to bring processing cost effectiveness to rural communities.
- Identification of investment opportunities for pending federal infrastructure funding.

Ranking

■ Poor

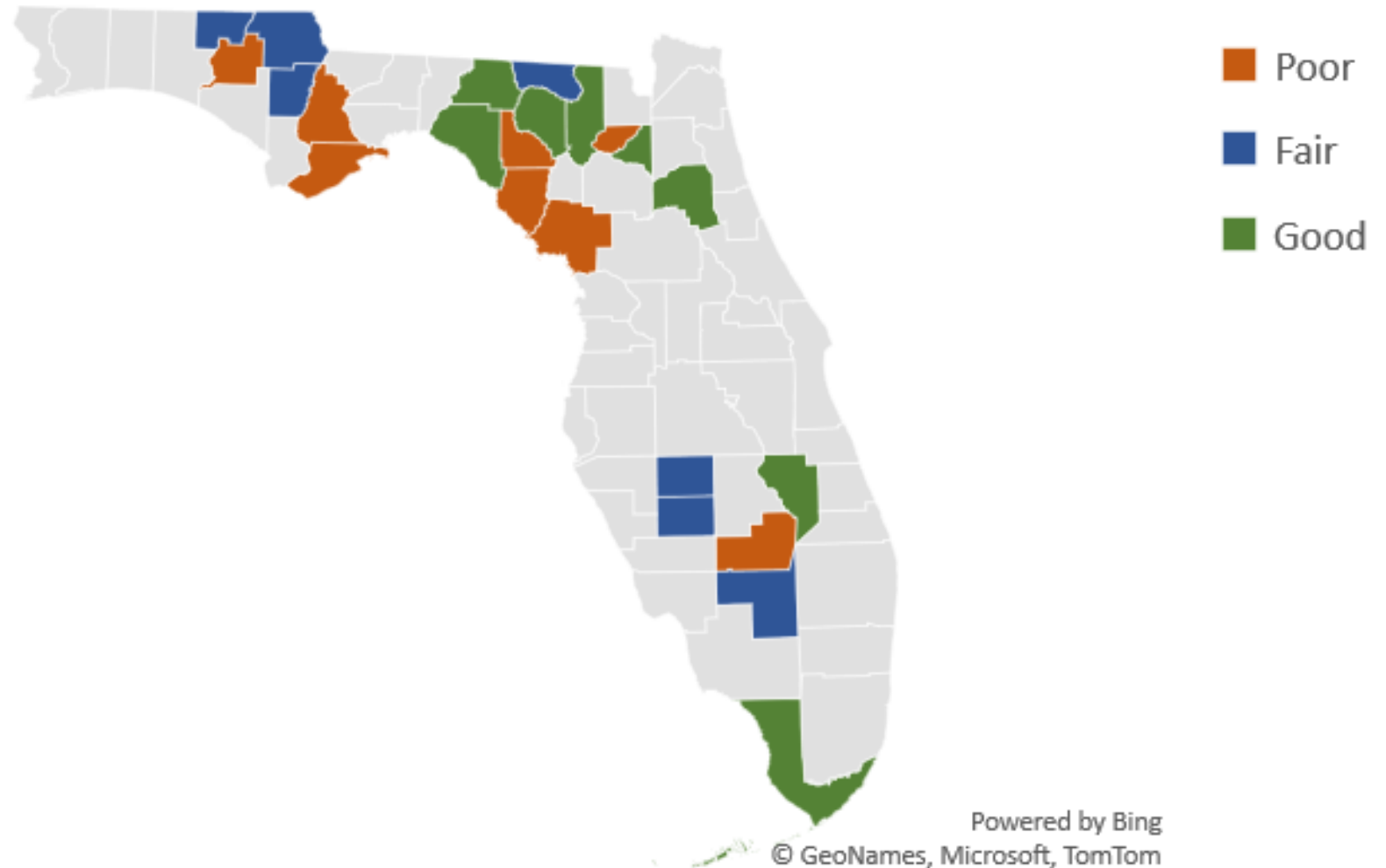
■ Fair

■ Good

- Counties were ranked by the percent of the waste stream recovered for recycling.
- The rankings were grouped as, Poor, Fair and Good.
- The reporting parameters vary from state to state, so the three **rankings were set on percentages within each state**, comparing programs to others in-state with identical reporting parameters.
- Some counties reported that there is no recycling program.
- And, unfortunately, several did not respond, and are listed as “No Report.”

Florida

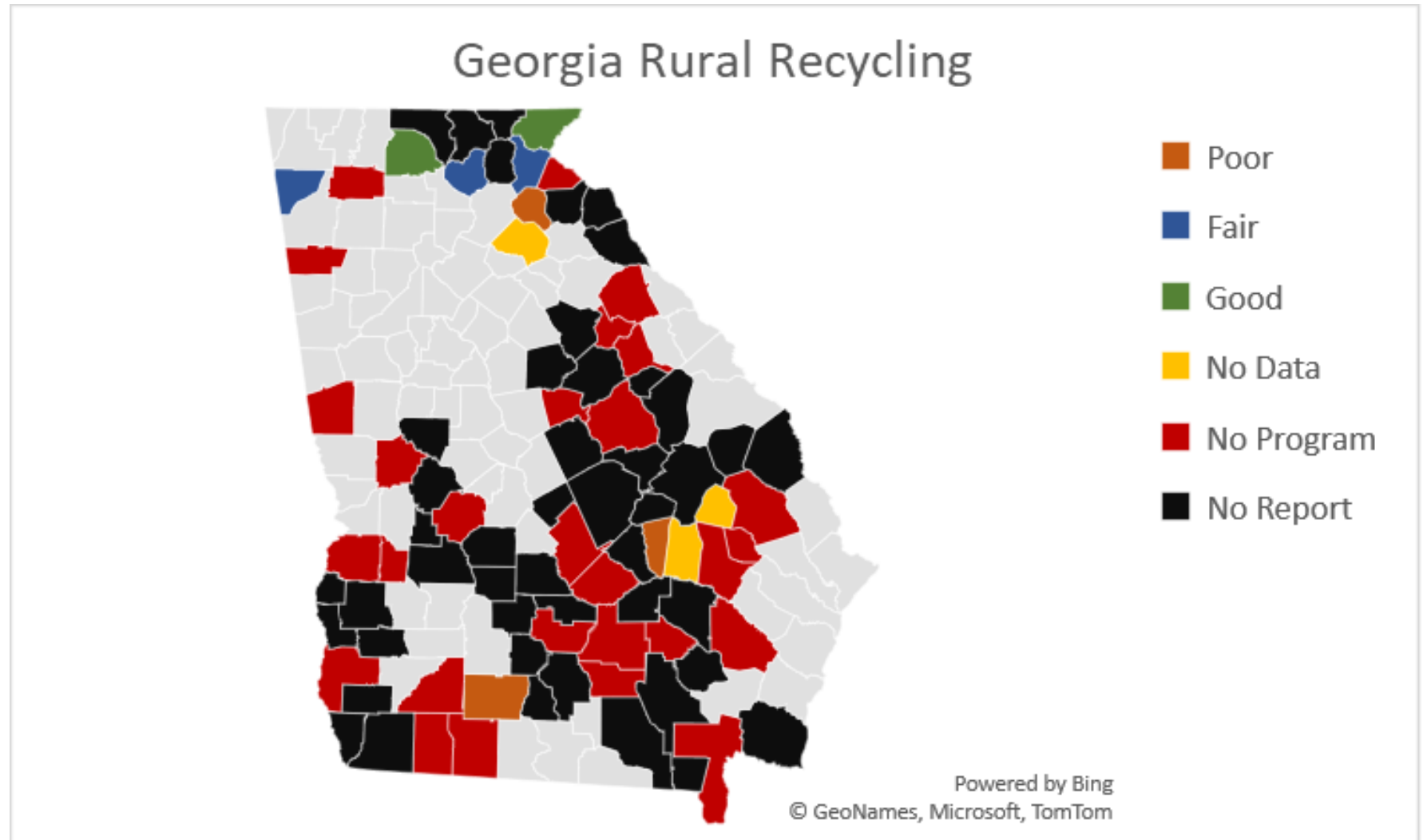
Florida Rural Recycling



Counties in grey are urban,
per US Census

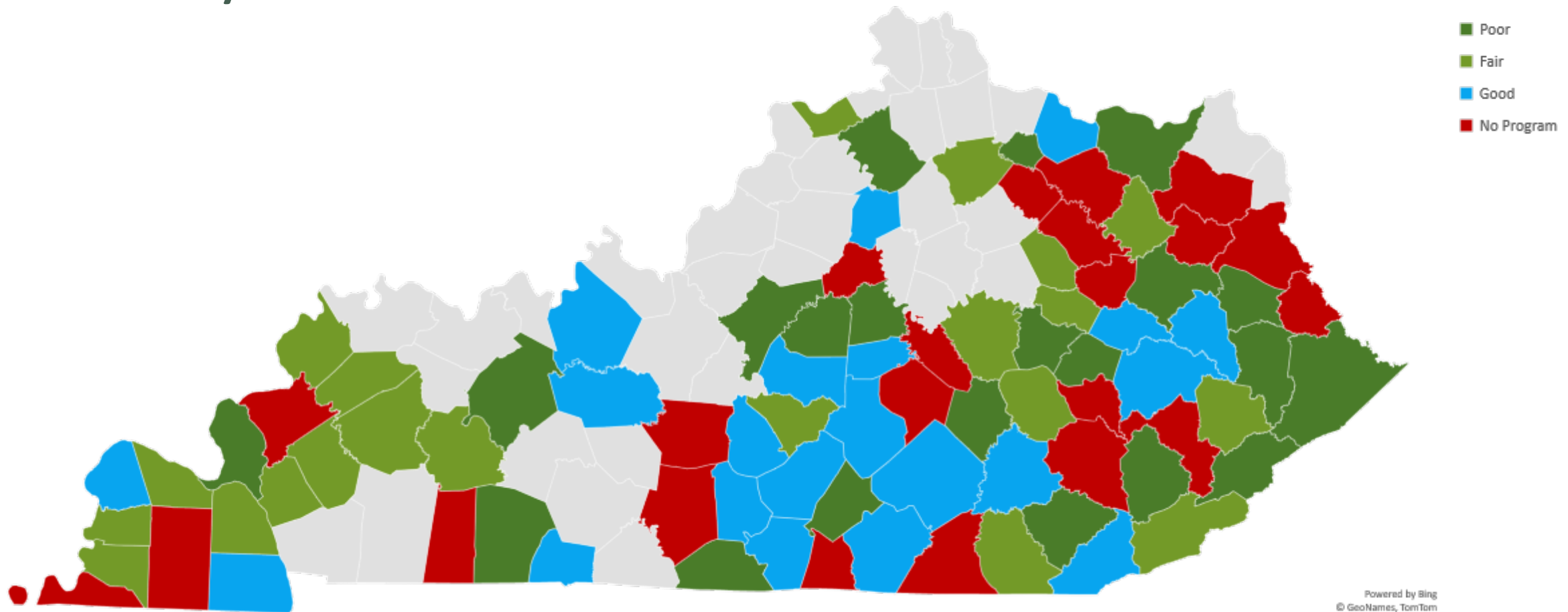
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Georgia



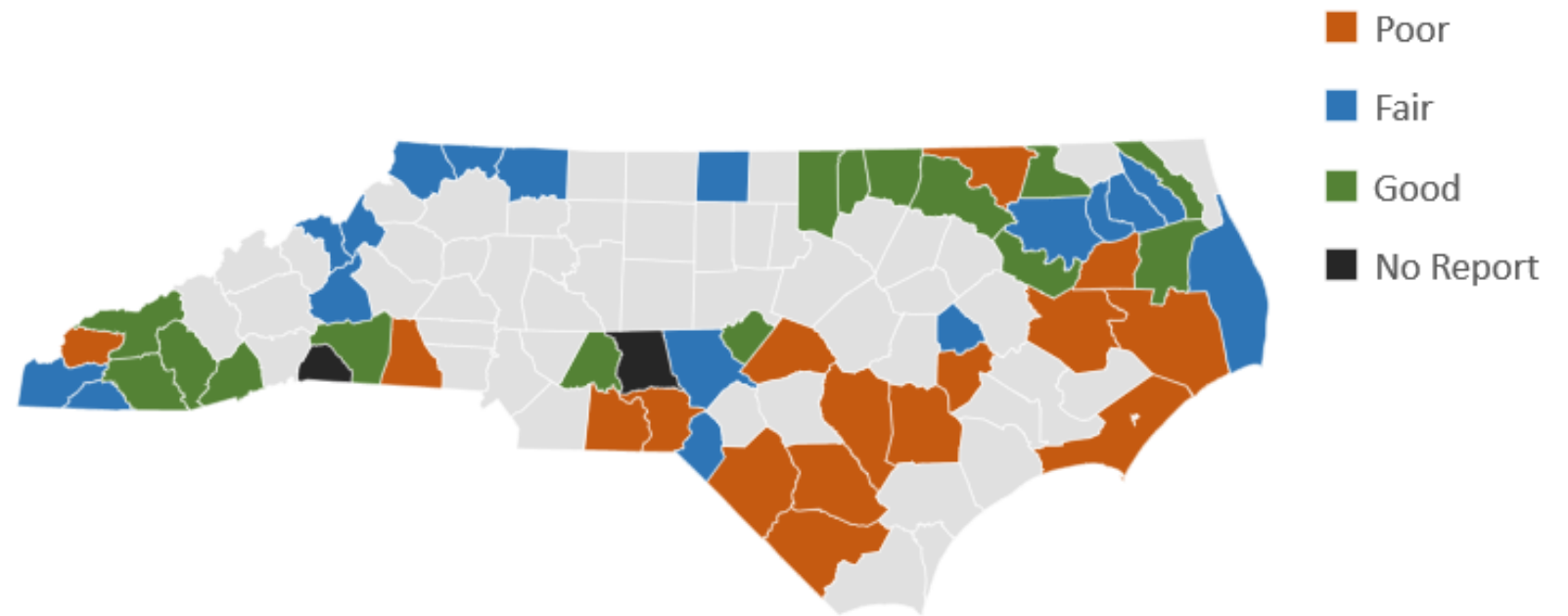
Kentucky

Kentucky Rural Recycling



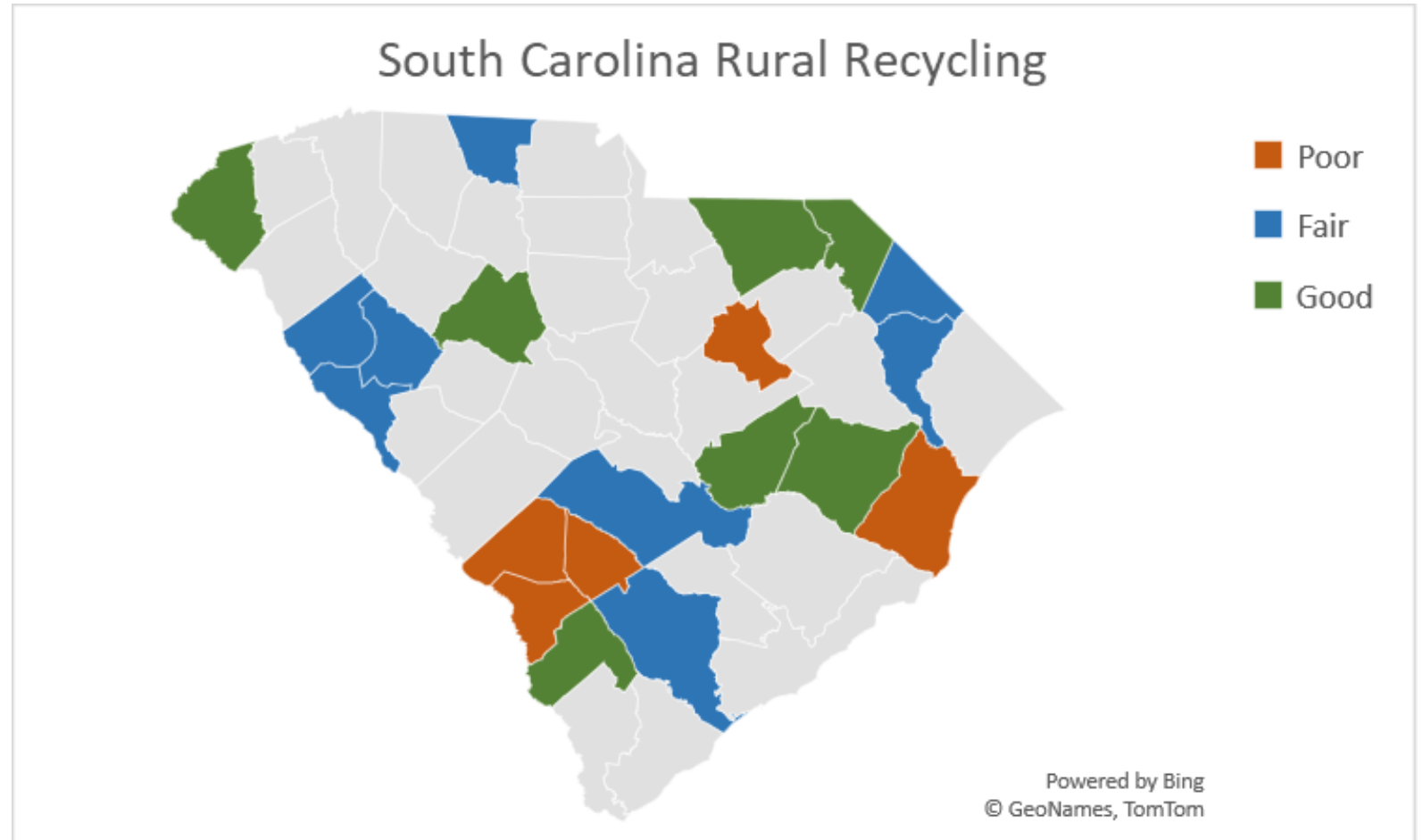
North Carolina

North Carolina Rural Recycling



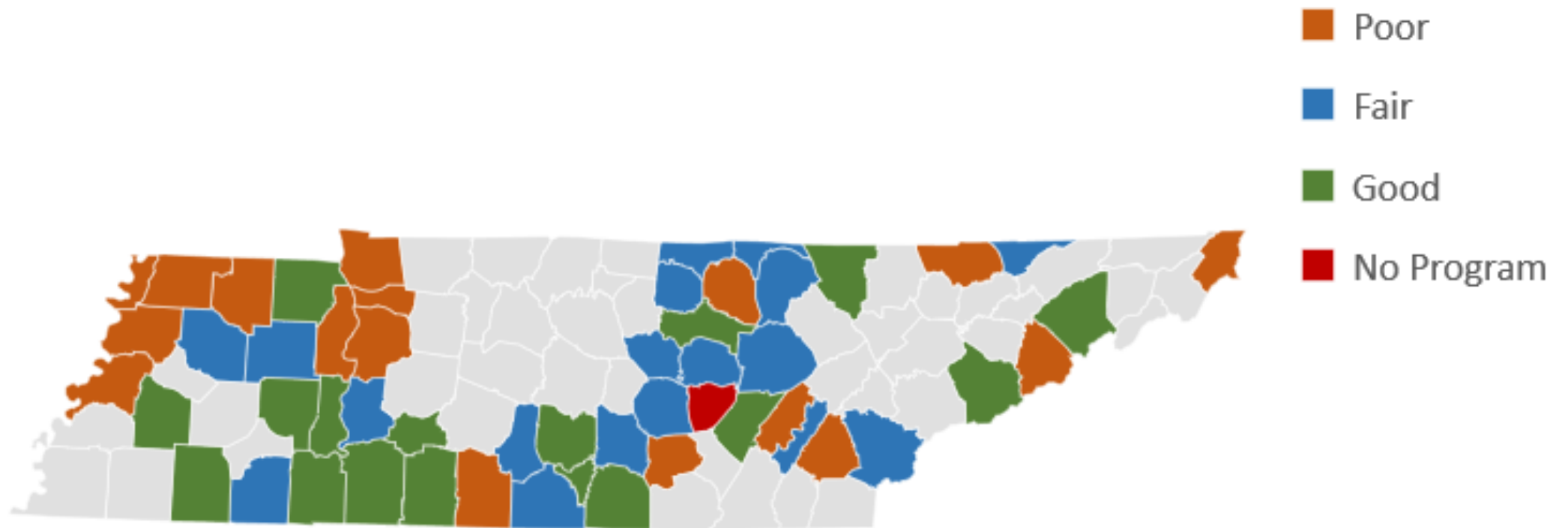
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South Carolina



Tennessee

Tennessee Rural Recycling



Data Gaps

- Several states have no reporting system
 - Mississippi
 - Louisiana
 - Georgia
- Alabama reporting is permitted facility based.
- Virginia reporting for rural communities is quadrennial.
- In reporting states, the parameters for reporting are not consistent.

Conclusions

- 60 Million people in the SERDC region are in rural counties, as defined by the US Census.
- Measurement needs improvement
 - Lack of reporting
 - Often lack of program tracking
 - Gross errors in reports
- Program improvements needed
 - Funding
 - Outreach improvement
 - Infrastructure investment

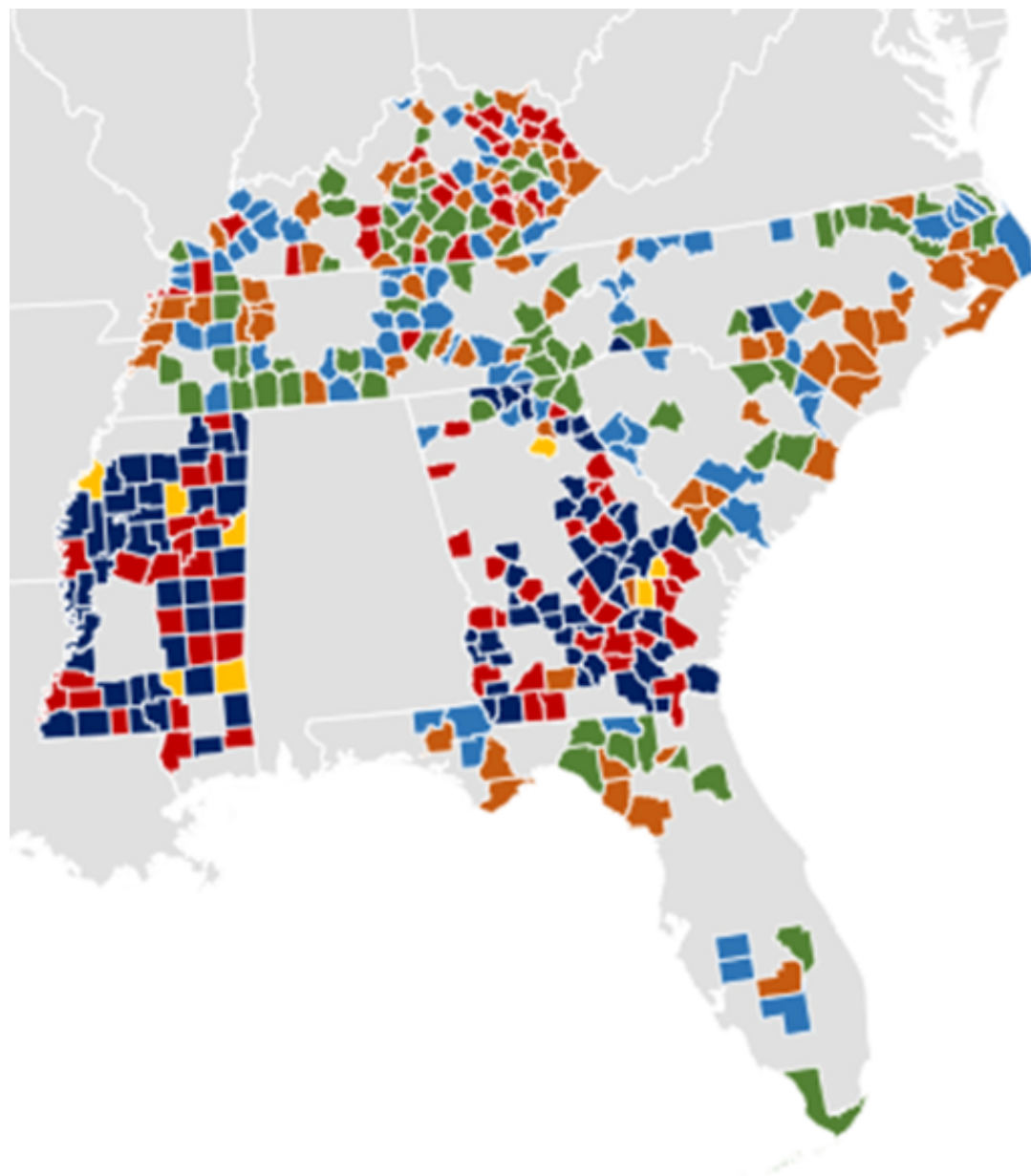
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- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- No Data
- No Program
- No Report