

Economic Equity Evaluation of the 2023 Year of the Trail Campaign in North Carolina

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2023 was designated as the Year of the Trail in North Carolina by the General Assembly. Its purpose was to highlight the spectrum of benefits trails provide to individuals and communities, such as improved health and wellness, fostering social connections, and supporting economic growth through outdoor recreation.

METHODS

Comparisons by Economic Tier: The North Carolina Department of Commerce ranks the state's counties based on four economic indicators:

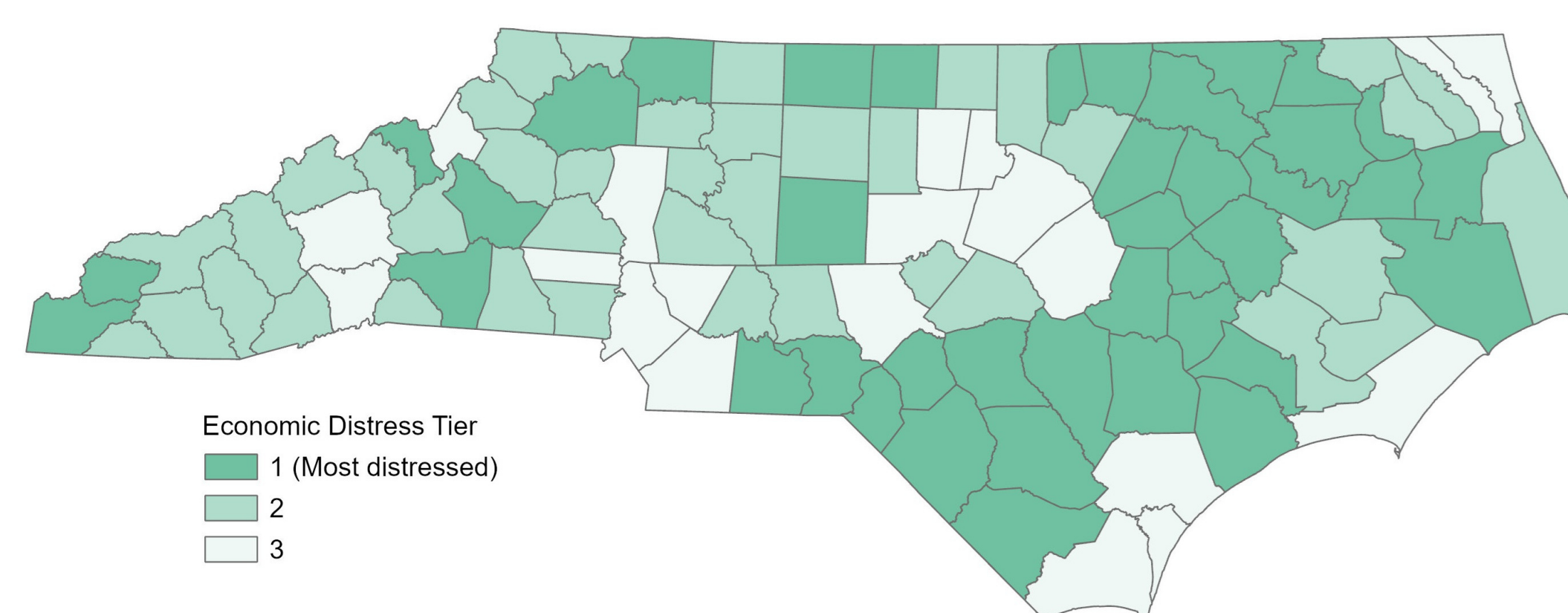
- Average unemployment rate
- Median household income
- Percentage growth in population
- Adjusted property tax base per capita

Tier 1 = 40 most economically distressed

Tier 2 = 40 mid-ranking counties

Tier 3 = 20 least economically distressed

2023 NC Economic Distress Tiers



Data Collection:

Two event sources:

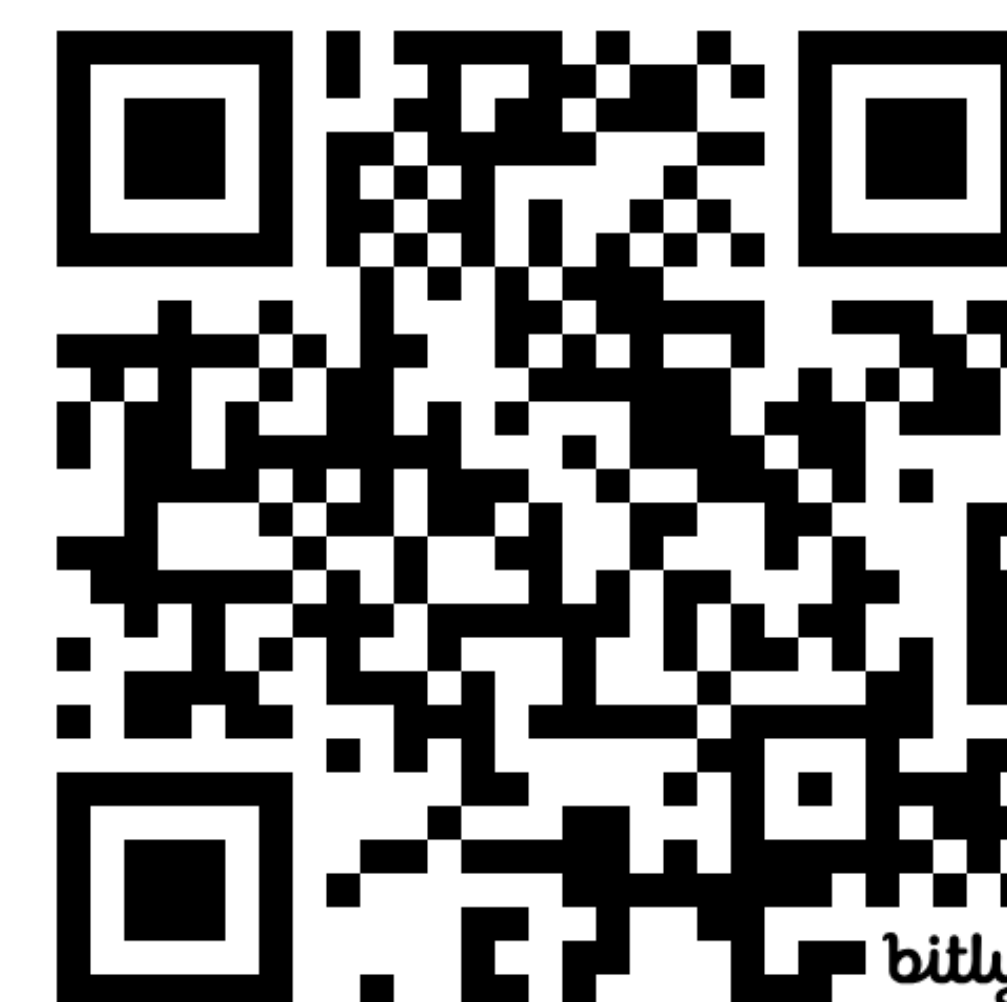
- Events registered on the Year of the Trail website.
- Events tagged as Year of the Trail on the NC State Parks website.

Counties were manually extracted based on event location data.



- Fewer events took place in the most economically distressed counties.
- This suggests a disparity in trail infrastructure and/or trail programmatic supports between the most and least economically distressed counties.
- Tier 1 counties may need additional resources and support if trails are to be a part of North Carolina's economic development and population health strategies. (*The NC General Assembly has budgeted \$54.9 million for trail development in the 2023-24 budget.*)

Learn more about the Year of the Trail here:



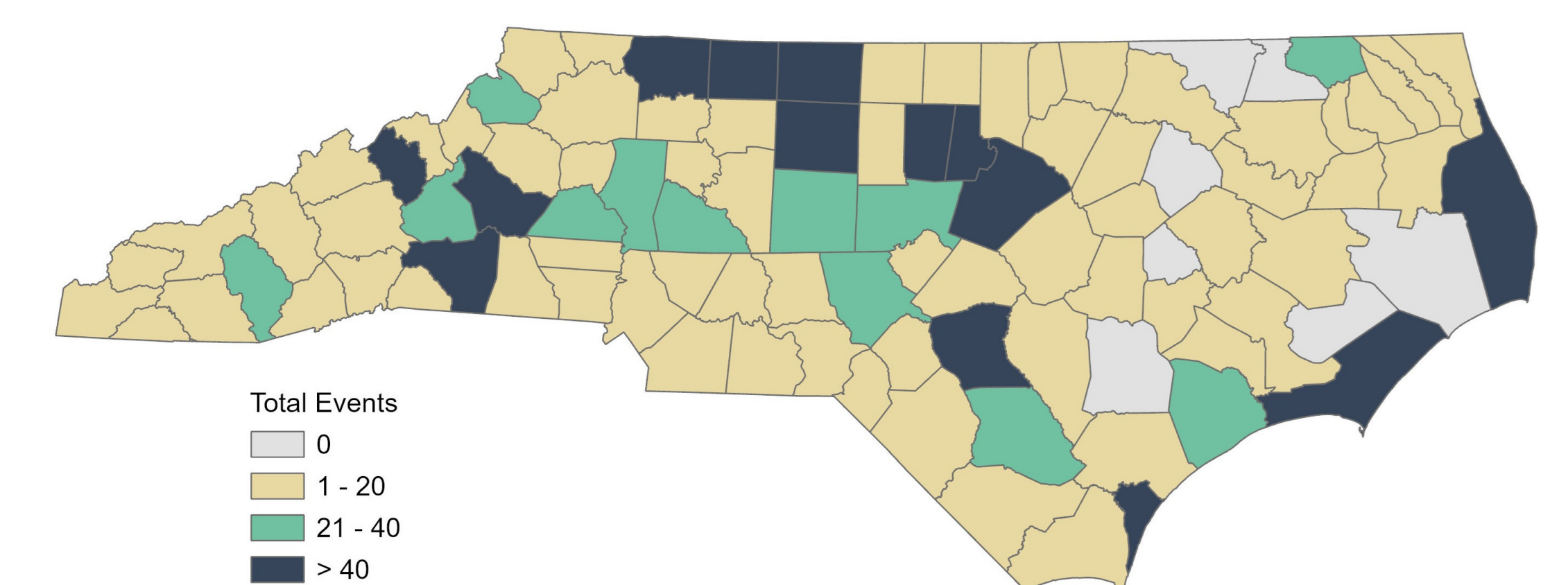
Data Analysis

Events were reported by county and compared across distress tiers.

An events ratio was calculated as number of events per 100k residents in each county and also compared across tiers.

RESULTS

Events by County

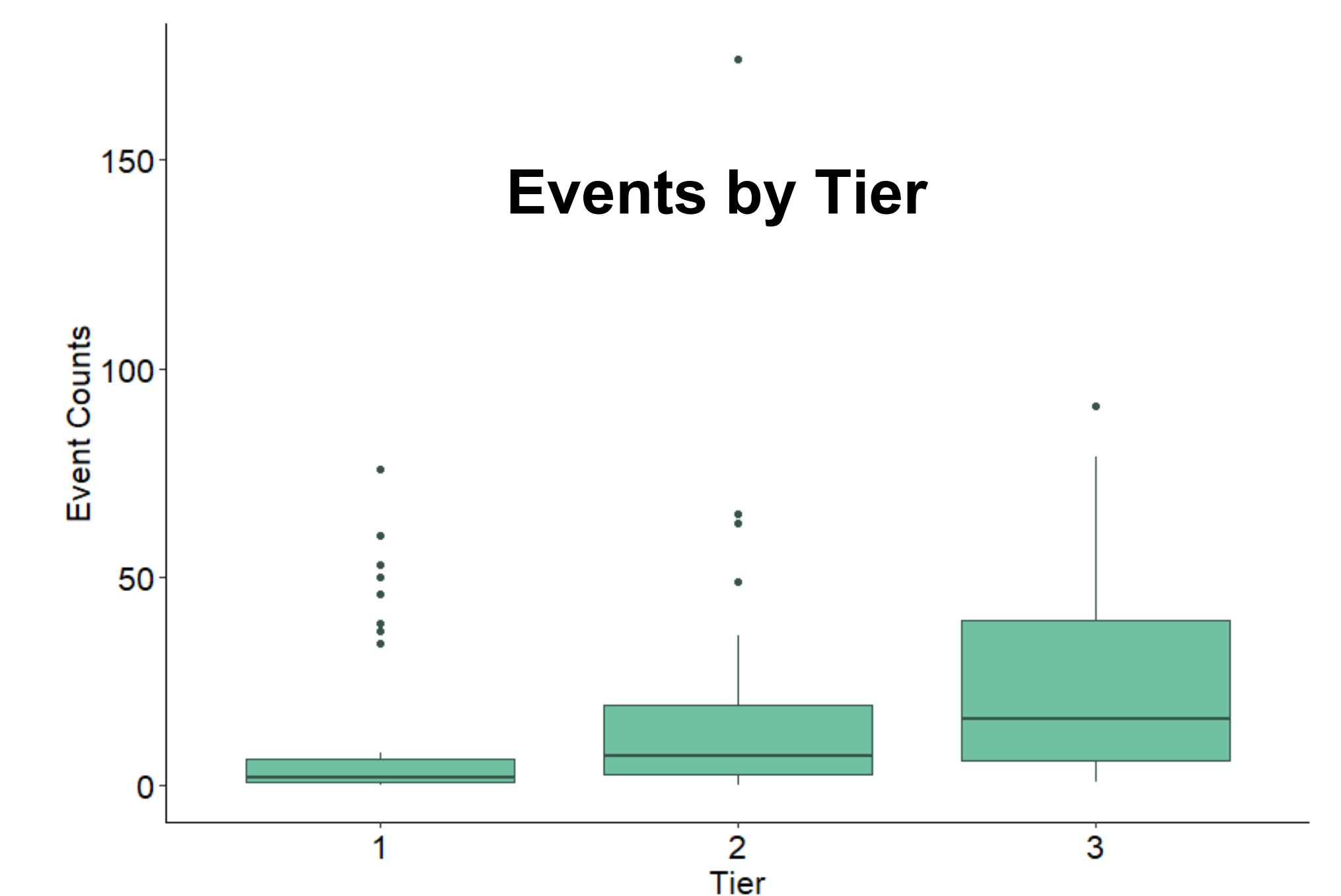


Counties with no events: 7

Tier 1: 6

Tier 2: 1

Events by Tier



Events per 100k Residents by Tier

