

The Role of Age in Voter Attitudes: A Demographic Study

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STUDY OBJECTIVES

The goal of this study was to examine trends in attitudes about United States social programs by age. Less than half of eligible 18- to 34-year olds reported voting in the 2012 Presidential election, while close to 70% of those 65 and over participated in the election (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). While rates of voting were lower for all age categories, the difference in the 2010 Congressional election was even sharper—voting rates for younger cohorts ranged between 16% and 25%, while close to 60% of those 65 and over reported voting.

This study observed differences in attitudes toward funding for major social programs—including welfare, child care programs, education, and Social Security—between age cohorts. If older voters are represented at higher rates than younger voters, how might that affect policy and funding priorities for programs that traditionally benefit specific age groups, like Social Security, education, child care, and welfare programs?

DATA

The 2012 American National Election Survey (ANES) Time Series Study was used to determine voter attitudes. Responses from both the face-to-face and internet samples were used, totaling 5,914 completed surveys. The county and age data were obtained through the 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5–Year Estimates, published by the U.S. Census Bureau.

MAJOR FINDINGS

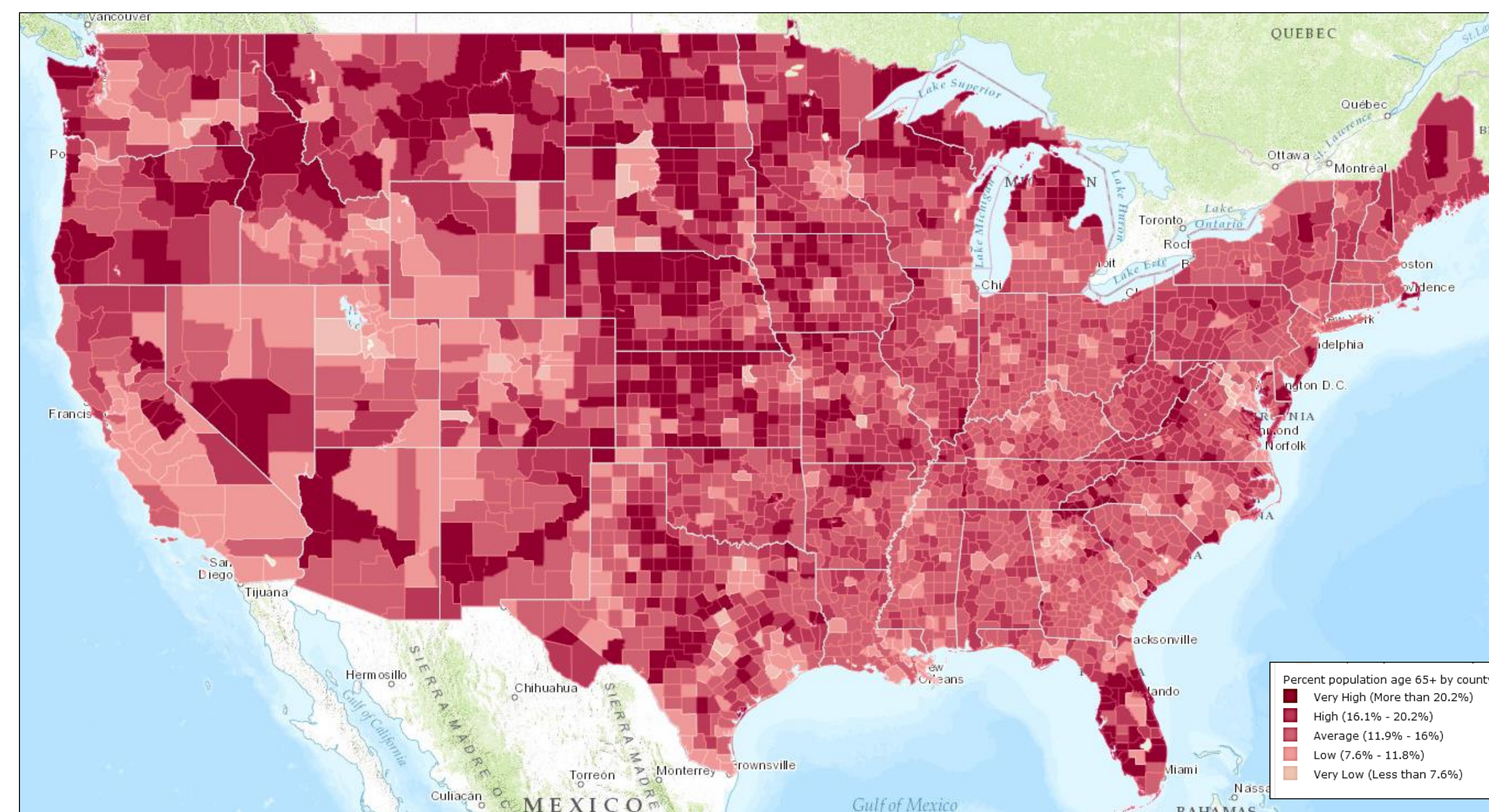
- Attitudes toward Social Security, education, and child care funding were significantly related to age, while attitudes towards federal funding for welfare programs were not.
- Older adults were more likely to support reductions in funding public education and less likely to support increases in funding for child care than younger age cohorts.
- Younger adults were less likely to support increased funding for Social Security and more likely to support decreases in funding, while those in the pre-retirement cohort were the most likely to support increases in funding for the program.
- Older adults were less likely to support increases in funding for programs that may not directly affect them, while younger adults were more likely to support these programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REFERENCES

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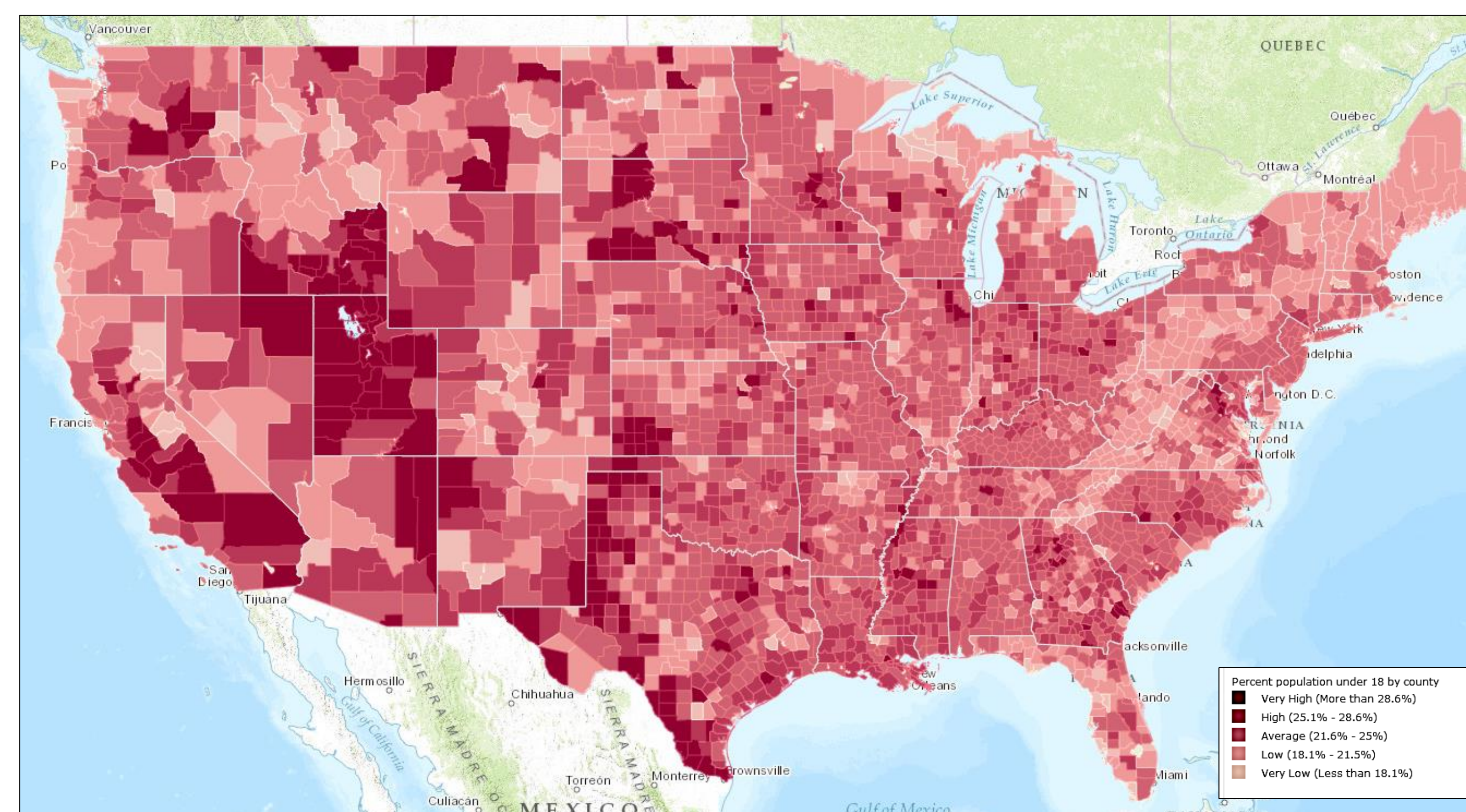
The American National Election Studies (ANES). *The ANES 2012 Time Series Study*. [Dataset and codebook]. Stanford University and the University of Michigan [producers]. Retrieved from www.electionstudies.org.
 U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.
 U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Voting—Age Population—Reported Registration and Voting by Selected Characteristics: 1996 to 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/index.html>.

Percent of Population 65 Years and Over, by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008–2012 American Community Survey

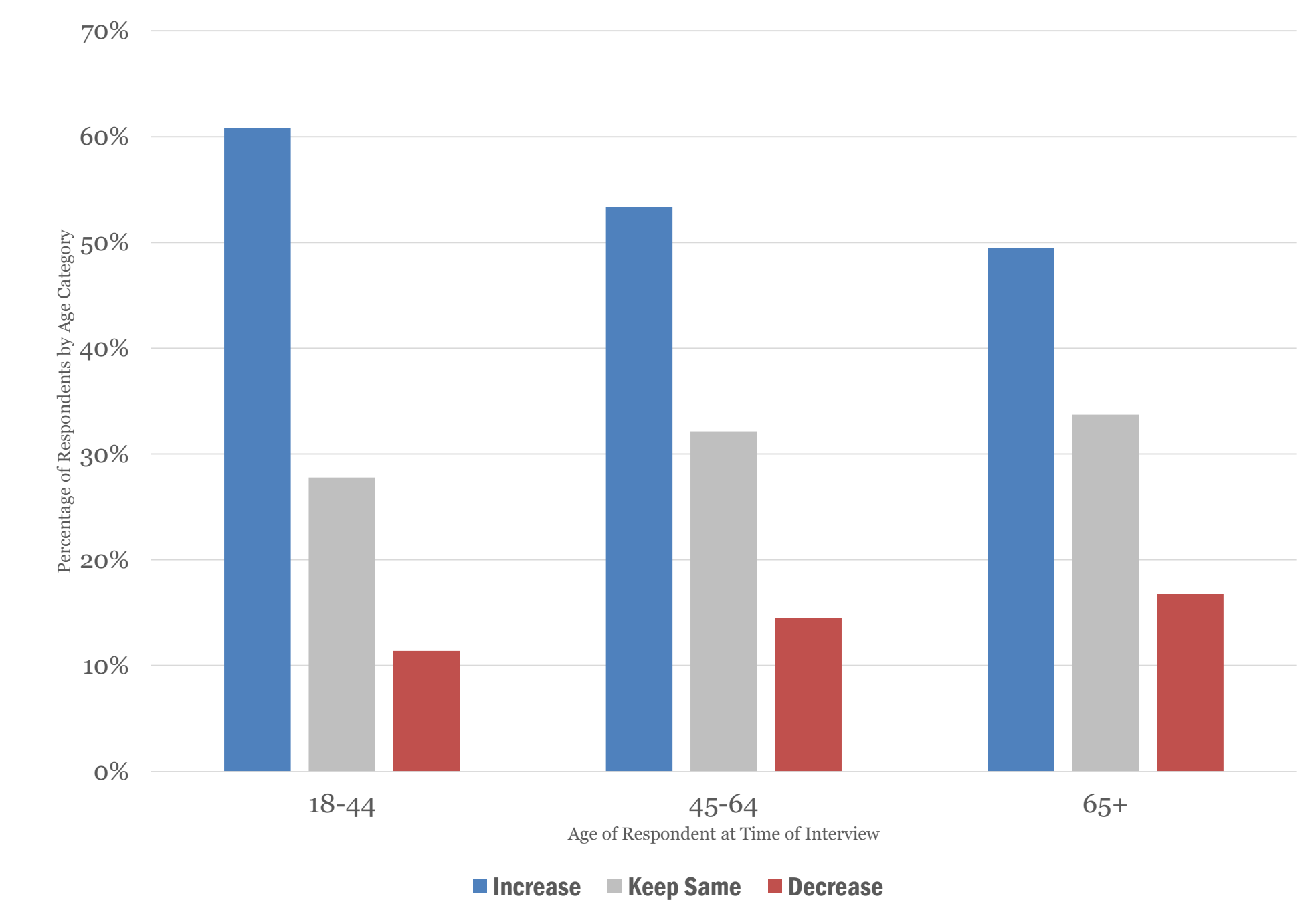
Percent of Population 18 Years and Under, by County



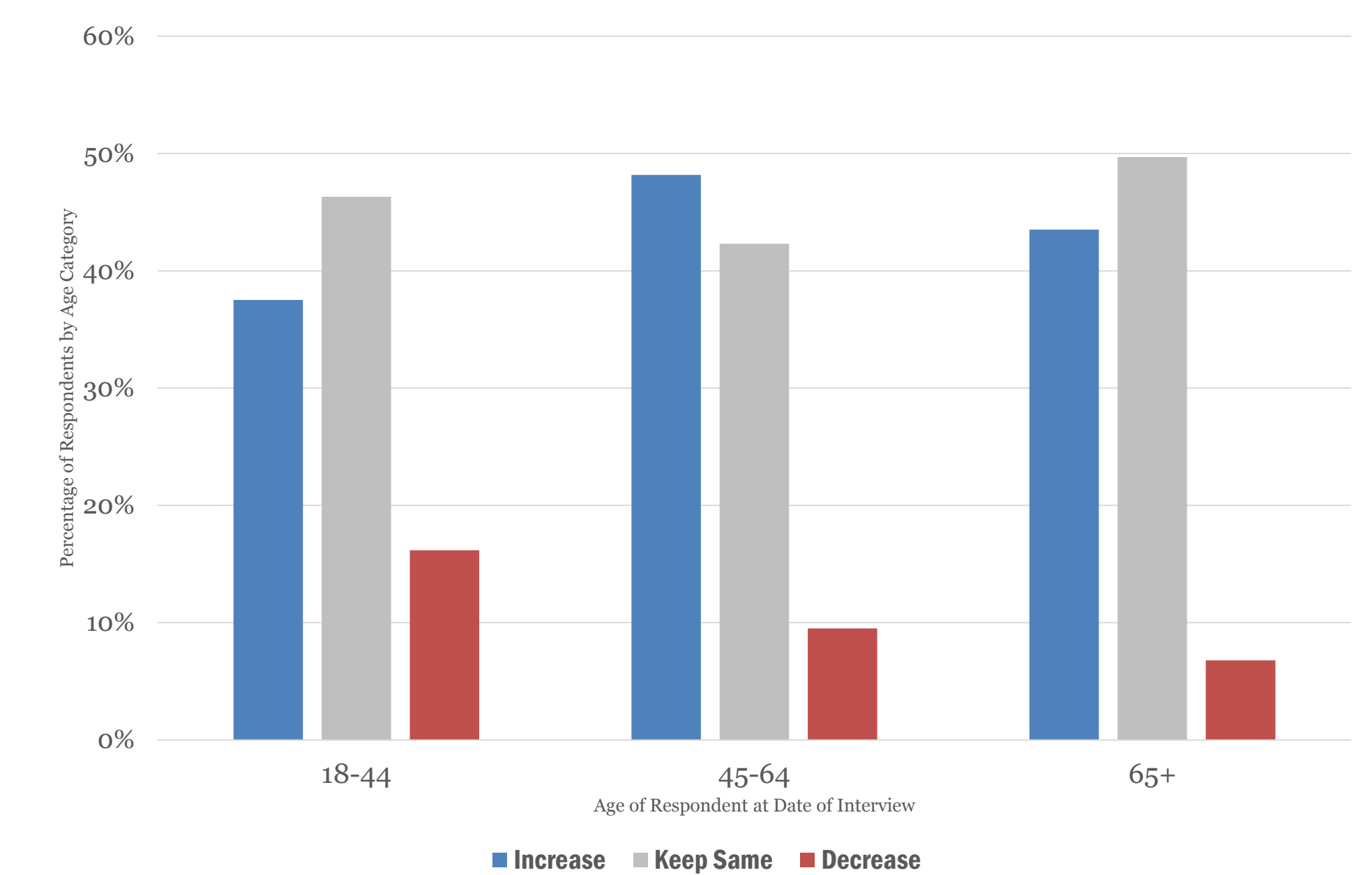
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008–2012 American Community Survey

Counties with the Lowest Child to Senior Population		Counties with the Highest Child to Senior Population	
County	Number of Children per 100 Seniors	County	Number of Children per 100 Seniors
Mineral County, CO	11.62	Wade Hampton Census Area, AL	890.51
Sumter County, FL	22.31	Chattahoochee County, GA	881.89
Hinsdale County, CO	37.34	Todd County, SD	768.10
Charlotte County, FL	46.15	Shannon County, SD	738.94
Sheridan County, ND	46.61	Bethel Census Area, AL	684.91

Attitudes Toward Public Expenditures on Education by Age



Attitudes Toward Public Expenditures on Social Security by Age



Attitudes Toward Public Expenditures on Child Care by Age

