

Indiana's "Silver Tsunami":

Revenue at Stake from Aging Businessowners
Present Risks and Opportunities

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Executive Summary

This report is the second in a three-phase analysis of Indiana’s business succession landscape commissioned by the Indiana Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Phase 1 estimated the share of business owners aged 55 or older across all 92 Indiana counties and sectors¹ using data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Business Survey (ABS) and a proportional allocation methodology. Statewide, Phase 1 found that approximately **51.7%** of Indiana business owners in the included sectors — representing nearly **44,000** businesses — are aged 55 or older, and that **45** of Indiana’s 92 counties already have a majority of business owners that are 55 or older. Phase 2, presented here, translates those age profiles into dollar-denominated revenue estimates to quantify the scale of the succession challenge and map the geographic distribution of risk.

Indiana’s Data Axle database records an estimated **\$205.5B** in annual business revenue associated with owners aged 55 or older — **58.9%** of the state’s total captured private-sector business activity. As Baby Boomer owners continue to retire over the coming decade, this revenue pool represents both the scale of the succession challenge and the scope of the opportunity for business acquisition.

Key findings from the analysis:

- **The scale is substantial and exposure is nearly universal.** Indiana’s Data Axle database records an estimated \$205.5B in annual business revenue associated with owners aged 55 or older — 58.9% of the state’s total Data Axle-captured private-sector business activity (excluding the out-of-scope industries), and more than 10 times the state’s general fund budget. While owners aged 55+ constitute a majority of all businessowners in 45 or Indiana’s 92 counties, **88 of Indiana’s 92 counties have at least half of their estimated business revenue associated with 55+ owners.**
- **Structural vulnerability is concentrated in smaller and rural counties.** While large metros like Marion, Tippecanoe, and Allen account for the most 55+ revenue in absolute terms, the counties with the deepest structural exposure are often smaller and more rural — places where aging-owned businesses represent the economic foundation rather than a component of a diversified base. The composite vulnerability index identifies Owen, Tippecanoe, and Wells as the highest-risk counties, and Greater Lafayette and South Central as the highest-risk READI regions.

¹The following industries were excluded from the analysis to align with the scope of the Census Bureau’s Annual Business Survey (ABS): crop production (NAICS 111), animal production and aquaculture (112), rail transportation (482), postal service (491), monetary authorities and central banking (521), funds, trusts, and other financial vehicles (525), offices of notaries (541120), religious, grantmaking, civic, professional, and similar organizations (813), private households (814), and public administration (92).

- **Small businesses carry disproportionate succession risk in many counties.** Small businesses (fewer than 100 employees) account for the majority of succession exposure in most Indiana counties, and in places like Vigo and Lake Counties, small businesses carry an outsized share of 55+ revenue relative to the county’s overall economic footprint — a pattern with direct implications for community-level disruption if transitions fail.
- **The \$1M–\$15M acquisition-target tier represents a concrete, addressable opportunity.** An estimated \$57.26B in 55+-owned revenue statewide falls in the core entrepreneurship-by-acquisition market — firms large enough to sustain a new owner-operator but typically below institutional private equity thresholds. On a per-worker basis, rural and mid-sized counties have above-average acquisition opportunity, meaning the constraint is not the supply of acquisition targets but the supply of prepared, financed buyers willing to operate in smaller markets.
- **Sadly, without intervention, many businesses with aging ownership and no succession planning will close.** National research finds that 92% of small business exits occur through closure rather than sale or transfer to a new owner. Indiana’s rural and mid-sized counties — with older ownership profiles, thinner buyer pools, and limited intermediary capacity — face exactly the conditions associated with the highest closure risk. The revenue estimates presented here establish where that risk is most concentrated and where targeted policy and program investment is most needed.

Introduction

Indiana faces a “Silver Tsunami” of aging business owners. As the Baby Boomer generation continues to retire, a substantial share of Indiana’s private sector businesses — and the revenue and economic activity they generate — face uncertain succession. This report translates Phase 1 county-level owner age profiles into dollar-denominated estimates of the economic activity at stake, identifying where the risk is greatest and where opportunities for entrepreneurship through acquisition (ETA) are most concentrated.

Phase 1 Background. Phase 1 of this project established county- and sector-level estimates of the share of business owners aged 55 or older throughout Indiana. Owner age distributions from the Census Bureau’s Annual Business Survey (ABS) were combined with county-level establishment data from Data Axle using a proportional allocation framework. For each Indiana county × NAICS sector cell, the Phase 1 model estimated the probability that a given business owner falls in the 55-or-older age bracket. Agriculture (NAICS 11), select transportation, finance, and public administration industries were excluded to align with the Census Bureau ABS coverage scope.

Key Phase 1 findings are summarized in Table 1. Statewide, a slim majority of business owners are already in the 55+ age range, with risk concentrated in rural and mid-sized

counties where these businesses represent a disproportionate share of local employment. The county × sector age profiles from Phase 1 serve as the foundational inputs to all Phase 2 revenue calculations in this report.

Table 1: *Phase 1 findings: business owner age profiles, Indiana statewide*

Metric	Value
Statewide share of business owners aged 55+	51.7%
Total 55+ business owners	43,880
Counties where 55+ owners exceed 50% of all owners	45 of 92
Estimated 55+ owners of small businesses (<100 employees)	42,884

Source: IBRC from Census Bureau Annual Business Survey (ABS)

Literature Review

In the U.S., as Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964 continue to approach retirement, an estimated \$100 trillion in small and medium-sized business assets will be transferred, inherited, or sold.¹ The McKinsey Institute for Economic Mobility (2026) estimates that by 2035, approximately six million small and medium-sized businesses will face ownership transitions as their owners retire — up to 42 percent more annual exits than a decade prior — with more than one million firms representing viable candidates for sale at up to \$5 trillion in enterprise value.² Small and medium-sized businesses form the backbone of the American economy: 99% of registered firms are small businesses, collectively employing over 61 million workers and generating approximately 35% of all business revenue.³ This generational transition — commonly referred to as the “silver tsunami” — represents an unprecedented concentration of ownership change over a compressed time horizon.

The economic stakes of this transition extend beyond individual firm transactions. Markley, Macke, and Luther (2017) emphasize that small business succession should be understood as a community-level economic event, not merely a firm-level one.⁴ Their survey of rural business successions in the Upper Midwest found that when ownership transfers succeed, local economic expansion often follows: among 118 new owners studied, 41% increased employment, 68% grew their customer base, and 68% increased sales volume. McKinsey’s national analysis corroborates this framing at scale, estimating that effective ownership transitions could keep up to 12 million jobs in place and protect approximately \$250 billion in annual local spending power.⁵ The inverse — when succession fails and businesses close — removes anchor employers, erodes local tax bases, and diminishes community vitality, with effects that fall disproportionately on rural areas already facing demographic pressures from outmigration and population aging.

The central problem is that most businesses with owners approaching retirement age

are ill-prepared for transition. The Olin Brookings Commission (2024) found that more than 85% of small business owners lack a formal succession plan, and the Exit Planning Institute estimates that 70% of businesses that go to market fail to find a buyer.⁶ Even among motivated, well-resourced buyer-seller pairings, the transaction process is slow and fragile. The Stanford Graduate School of Business biennial *Search Fund Study* (2024), which tracks entrepreneurship-by-acquisition activity across 681 search funds since 1984, reports that only 57% of recent searchers successfully completed an acquisition — meaning that nearly half of dedicated, investor-backed buyers fail to close a deal despite investing one to two years in the pursuit.⁷ The median seller in these transactions was 55 years old, placing them squarely within our demographic window of concern.

The practical consequence of this preparation gap is visible in exit patterns. McKinsey’s analysis of 2022 small and medium-size business (SMB) exits found that closure — not transfer — is the dominant outcome: 92% of exiting firms closed, while only 5% were sold to new owners and 3% transferred to family members.⁸ The authors estimate that between 6 and 13% of these closures were potentially avoidable — businesses with viable operations that failed to change hands not because they lacked value, but because succession pathways were limited, opaque, or too costly to navigate. Risk is distributed unevenly: rural areas face disproportionate exposure, with small businesses accounting for more than half of total employment in some states and buyer pools far thinner than in major metropolitan markets. At the sub-national level, McKinsey identifies what it calls the “missing middle” — firms valued roughly between \$500,000 and \$25 million — as the segment most likely to face preventable closure, falling below institutional private equity thresholds while too complex for informal transfer.⁹ This segment corresponds closely to the \$1M–\$15M acquisition-target tier analyzed in the present study.

Compounding the planning gap is the complexity of owner motivations. The Olin Brookings Commission’s analysis of business owners found that while financial terms matter most, owners place substantial weight on buyer type — strongly preferring family members or employees as successors over private equity investors or competitors — and on the preservation of company culture. These nonfinancial priorities can impede transactions in markets where family succession is unavailable and buyer pools are shallow, conditions that may characterize many Indiana counties. The academic literature reinforces this point: Ip and Jacobs (2006), in a synthesis of over 400 articles on business succession planning, identify owner reluctance, emotional attachment to the firm, and the absence of an identified successor as the most persistent barriers to timely planning across firm sizes and sectors.¹⁰

Taken together, this body of evidence establishes a coherent and troubling picture: a large share of American businesses are approaching ownership transition without succession plans in place, in a market where the default outcome is closure rather than transfer. The economic consequences of unplanned exits are felt most acutely at the local level, where the closure of a single employer can have outsized effects on employment, income, and community vitality — and where the infrastructure to fa-

cilitate ownership transfer is often thinnest. The present study applies this national framework to Indiana, using establishment-level data to quantify the scope of the at-risk business environment and identify where the risks — and the opportunities for entrepreneurship through acquisition — are most concentrated.

Data and Methodology

Revenue serves as the primary unit of analysis because it provides the most direct proxy for the economic value at risk should a business fail to successfully navigate an ownership transition. Revenue data are drawn from Data Axle, a proprietary establishment-level database covering employment, industry classification, and sales figures for businesses across the country.¹² Data Axle records were extracted in March 2026. Establishments are classified by 2-digit NAICS sector, consistent with the Phase 1 industry scope (excluding agriculture, select transportation, finance, and public administration sub-industries). Where Data Axle's reported sales value is zero or missing, a midpoint revenue figure is imputed from the establishment's categorical sales range — a standard approach for handling bracketed financial data that avoids systematic bias toward either end of the distribution.

An establishment's Data Axle record must have been updated on or after January 1, 2022, to be included in the analysis. Because Data Axle is a point-in-time database rather than a longitudinal panel — and not all records are refreshed on a consistent schedule — some degree of undercounting is inevitable. Records predating this threshold may reflect businesses still in operation, and conversely, some records meeting the threshold may belong to businesses that have since closed. The cutoff represents a pragmatic balance between data currency and coverage; the figures presented here should be understood as conservative estimates of the establishments and revenue at risk.

Revenue is attributed to 55+-owned businesses using proportional allocation: for each geography and sector combination (state, county, and READI region by 2-digit NAICS sector), total Data Axle revenue is multiplied by the Phase 1 estimated share of business owners aged 55 or older in that cell. This approach assumes that revenue within a given geography-sector cell is distributed across ownership age groups in proportion to their share of owners — that is, if 60% of owners in a county-sector cell are 55 or older, approximately 60% of that cell's revenue is attributed to 55+-owned businesses. This approach inherits the assumptions of Phase 1 and should be interpreted as an approximation of magnitude rather than a precise accounting.

Part I: Scale and Distribution of Succession Risk

The sections below document the scale and geographic distribution of succession risk across Indiana's counties, sectors, and READI regions — establishing the revenue baseline that informs the targeting analysis in Part II.

i Key Takeaways

- An estimated **\$205.5B** — 58.9% of Indiana’s total captured business revenue — is associated with businesses owned by individuals aged 55 or older.
- **88 of Indiana’s 92 counties** have a majority of estimated business revenue tied to 55+ owners, making the succession challenge a statewide baseline condition rather than a regional outlier.
- In rural and smaller-metro counties — Owen, Tippecanoe, Warren, Wells — 55+-owned businesses represent the economic foundation, with 55+ revenue shares exceeding 63.6% of all county business revenue.
- Wholesale trade and manufacturing dominate the 55+-owned revenue profile in most high-vulnerability counties; sector concentration limits the community’s cushion if businesses close.
- National data show that 92% of small business exits result in closure rather than transfer — applied to Indiana’s scale, the default outcome without intervention carries significant economic consequences.

Statewide Revenue at Stake

Indiana’s Data Axle database records approximately **\$348.9B** in total business revenue across all 92 counties. Of this, an estimated **\$205.5B — 58.9% of total revenue** — is associated with businesses owned by individuals aged 55 or older, and 88 counties have at least half of their estimated business revenue associated with 55+ owners.

To put that figure in context, Indiana’s general fund budget for fiscal year 2025 was \$21.5B.¹³ The revenue associated with 55+-owned businesses is more than 10 times that amount — a measure of the economic weight that will pass through ownership transition over the coming decade. Not all of this revenue is at immediate risk; owners retire on different timelines, and many family business successions will proceed without disruption. It’s also critical to remember that Data Axle data is a point-in-time estimate. The \$205B figure is not revenue during one year; it’s annual revenue from all companies who have an updated Data Axle record between January 1, 2022 and March 2026.

National research suggests the default outcome for businesses without succession plans is closure rather than transfer. In the McKinsey report (2026) mentioned earlier, researchers found that 92% of small business exits in 2022 occurred through closure, while 3% transferred to new owners (often to family members), and just 5% were completed as sales.⁸ Applied to Indiana’s \$205.5B, that baseline implies a substantial share of the state’s private-sector economic activity faces a structural vulnerability that policy and planning can either mitigate or allow to materialize.

Exposure is nearly universal across Indiana’s counties: **88 of Indiana’s 92 counties** have at least half of their estimated business revenue associated with 55+ owners — a

finding that reflects the statewide aging of the owner population documented in Phase 1. The challenge is not confined to a handful of outlier counties: it is the baseline condition for nearly the entire state.

County Revenue at Stake

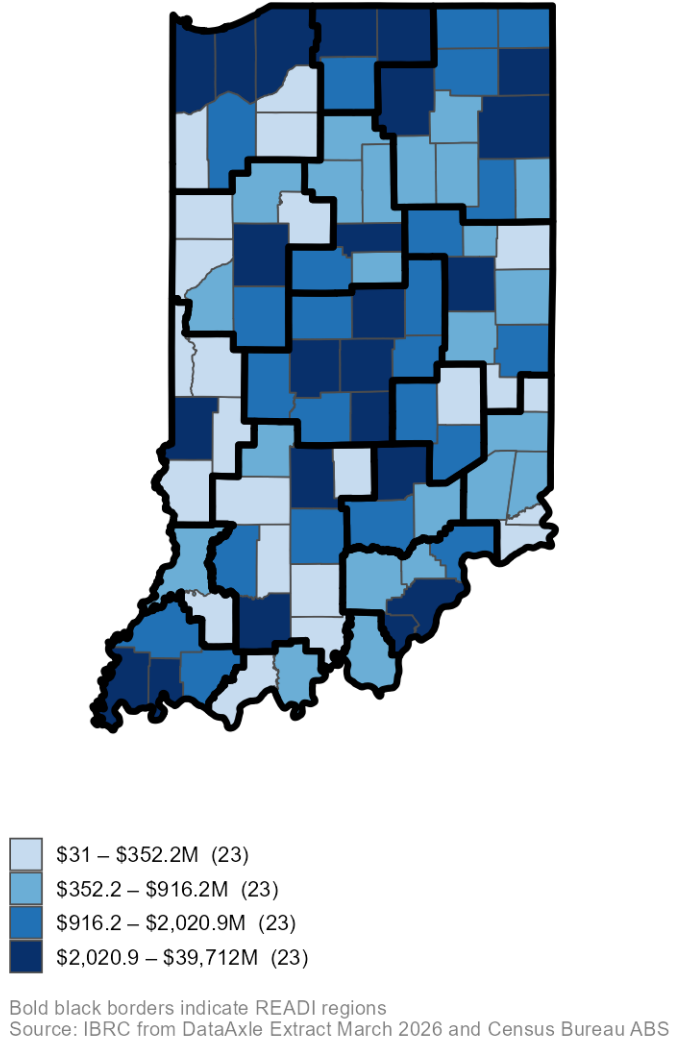
At the county level, succession exposure is geographically concentrated by volume but structurally pervasive by share. A small number of large counties — led by Marion (\$39.7B), Tippecanoe (\$12.6B), and Allen (\$12.2B) — account for the largest absolute pools of 55+ business revenue, reflecting the concentration of economic activity in Indiana’s metropolitan centers (see Table 2). These counties represent the largest total dollars at stake and will likely attract the most organic buyer interest given their deeper labor markets and access to capital.

Table 2: *Top 10 Indiana counties by estimated 55+ business revenue*

Rank	County	Est. 55+ Revenue (\$B)	Total Revenue (\$B)	% from 55+ Owners
1	Marion	39.7	68.3	58.1%
2	Tippecanoe	12.6	19.6	64.3%
3	Allen	12.2	20.8	58.6%
4	Elkhart	11.8	19.4	60.5%
5	Lake	11.5	20.0	57.6%
6	Vanderburgh	8.9	15.3	58.1%
7	Hamilton	7.4	13.2	56.2%
8	St. Joseph	6.5	11.3	57.1%
9	Porter	4.8	8.4	57%
10	Hendricks	4.3	7.1	59.9%

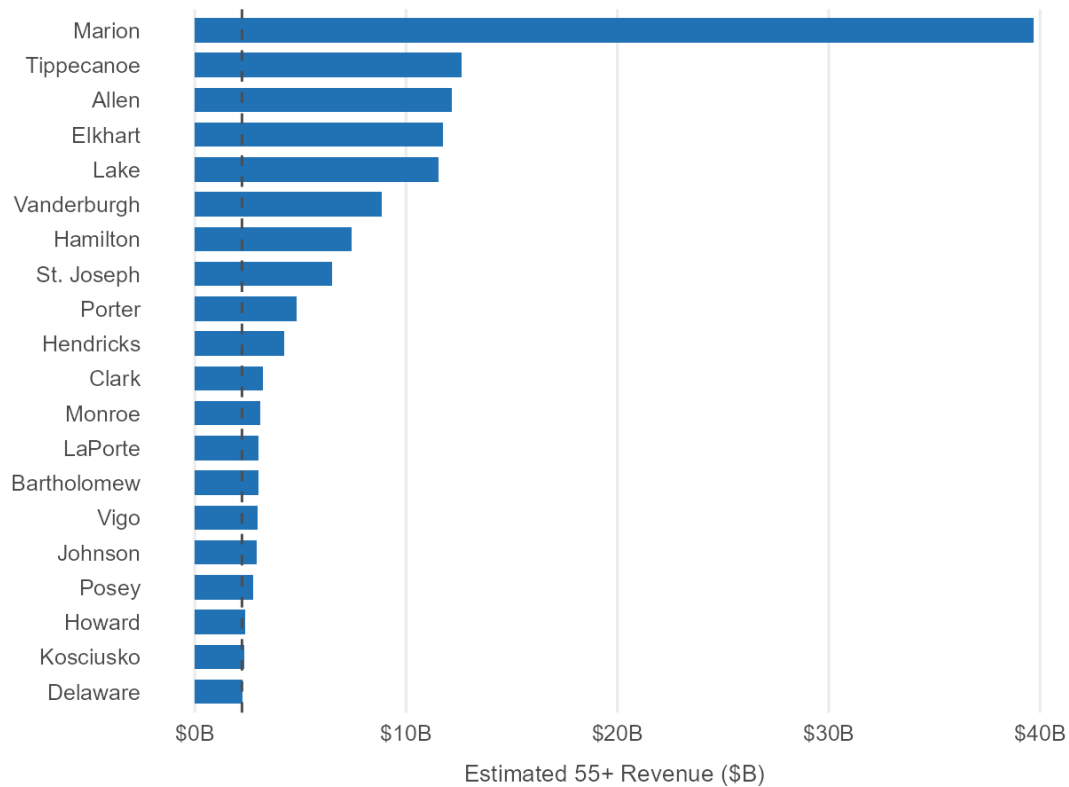
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

Figure 1: *Estimated revenue from 55+-owned businesses by county (\$M). Bold black borders indicate READI regions*



[View high-res version »](#)

Figure 2: Top 20 counties by estimated 55+ business revenue (\$B)



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

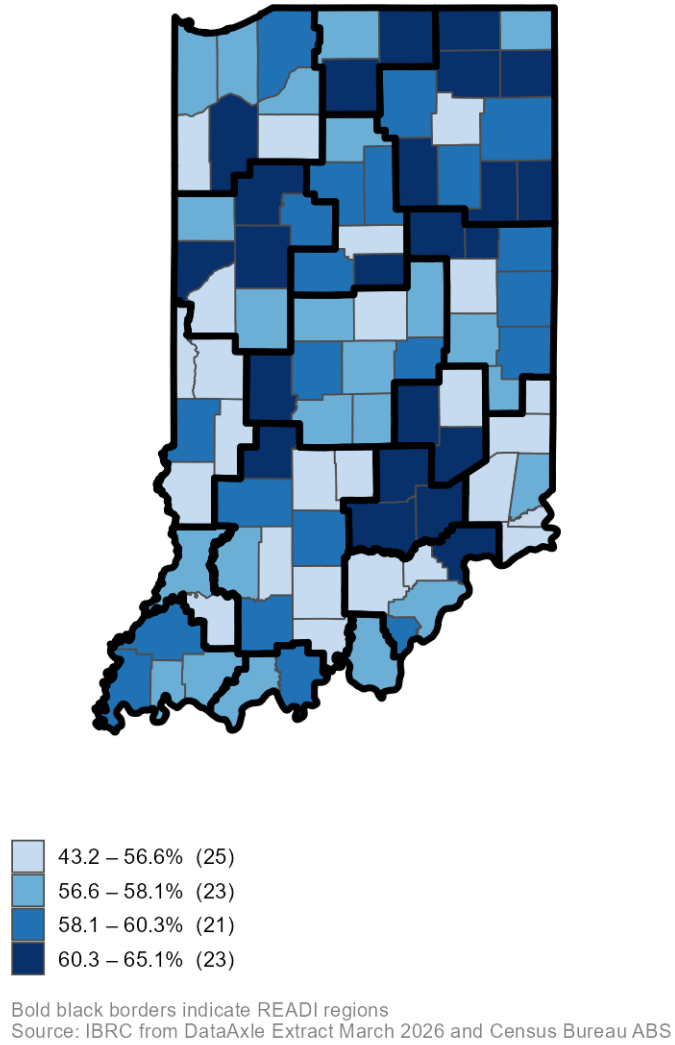
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The picture shifts when revenue is measured as a *share* of the county’s total economic base. Here, more rural Indiana counties are represented (see Figure 3 and Figure 4): Owen County leads at 65.1%, followed by Tippecanoe (64.3%), Warren (64.3%), and Wells (63.6%). In these counties, 55+-owned businesses do not merely represent a large absolute pool; they represent the economic foundation. When the owner of a major employer in a rural county retires without a successor, there may be a lack of a big-city buyer market to absorb the transition. The potential for disruption is compounded by limited local labor market depth to absorb displaced workers if closures occur.

This divergence — high absolute exposure in urban counties, high structural exposure in rural ones — defines the geography of succession risk in Indiana and motivates the vulnerability index developed later in this report.

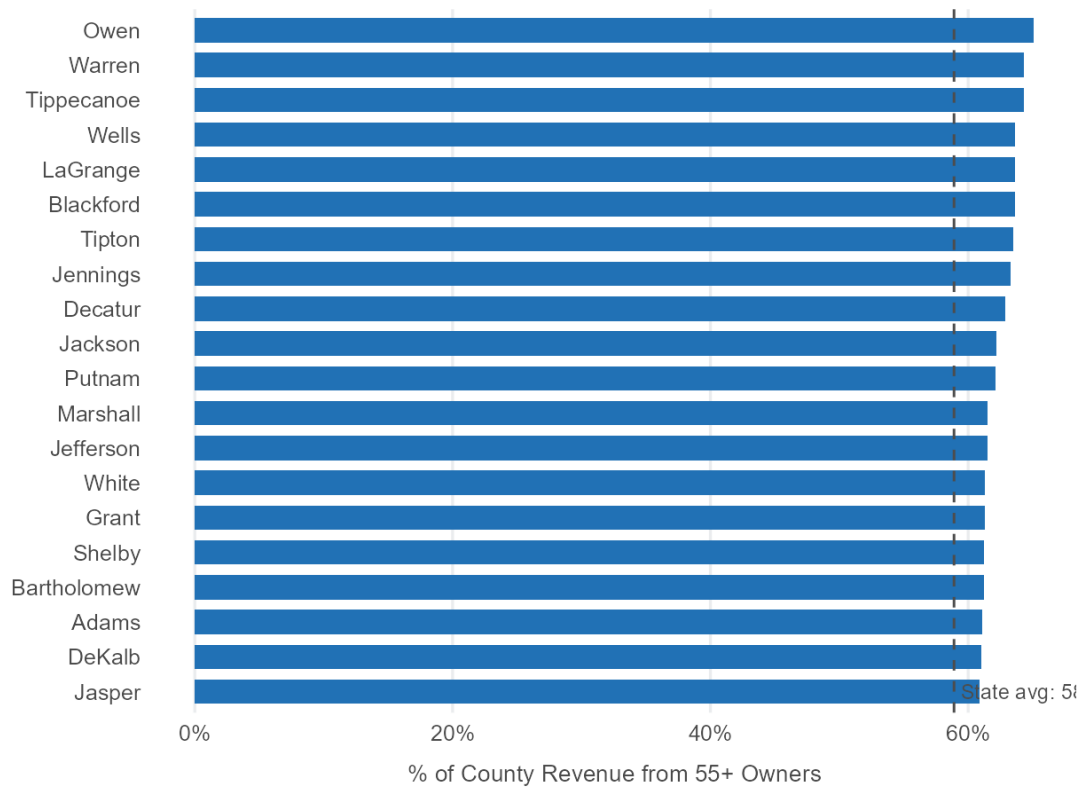
Revenue Share by County

Figure 3: Share of county revenue from 55+-owned businesses. Bold black borders indicate READI regions



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Figure 4: Top 20 counties: share of revenue from 55+-owned businesses



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

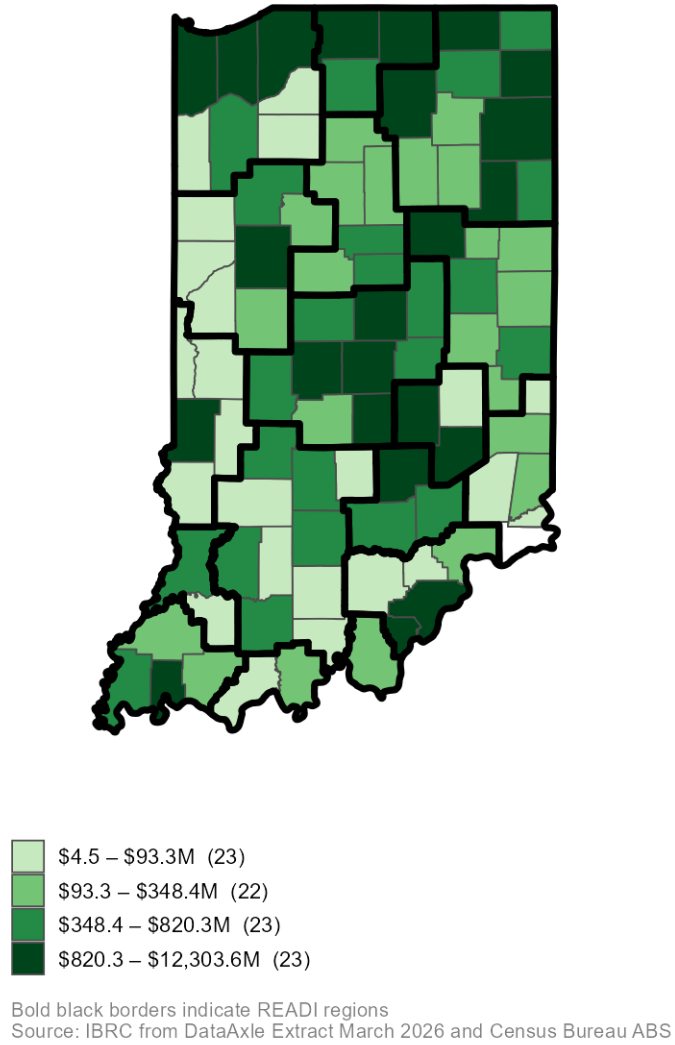
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Sector Breakdown

The sector with the highest estimated 55+ revenue is **Wholesale Trade**, at **\$79.2B**. Sectors with the highest share of revenue from 55+ owners reflect the age composition of their ownership base as estimated in Phase 1.

Wholesale trade, though it has a presence in every county (see Figure 5), isn't exactly Main Street: the industry is composed of primarily large, owner-operated distributors where a single firm can represent hundreds of millions in annual revenue. This is reflected in the sector's estimated revenue per worker (revenue at 55+-owned firms / sector's total employment) of \$849,800 — more than 3 times the next-highest sector — indicating that wholesale trade's outsized revenue share is more likely to be driven by firm scale and capital intensity rather than the density of business activity. For succession planning purposes, the challenge in this sector is less about volume of transitions and more about the potential for a small number of high-value exits to have outsized local economic consequences. See Table 3 and Figure 6 for estimates of revenue attributed to 55+-owned firms by sector.

Figure 5: County-level 55+ revenue for the top sector statewide. Bold black borders indicate READI regions



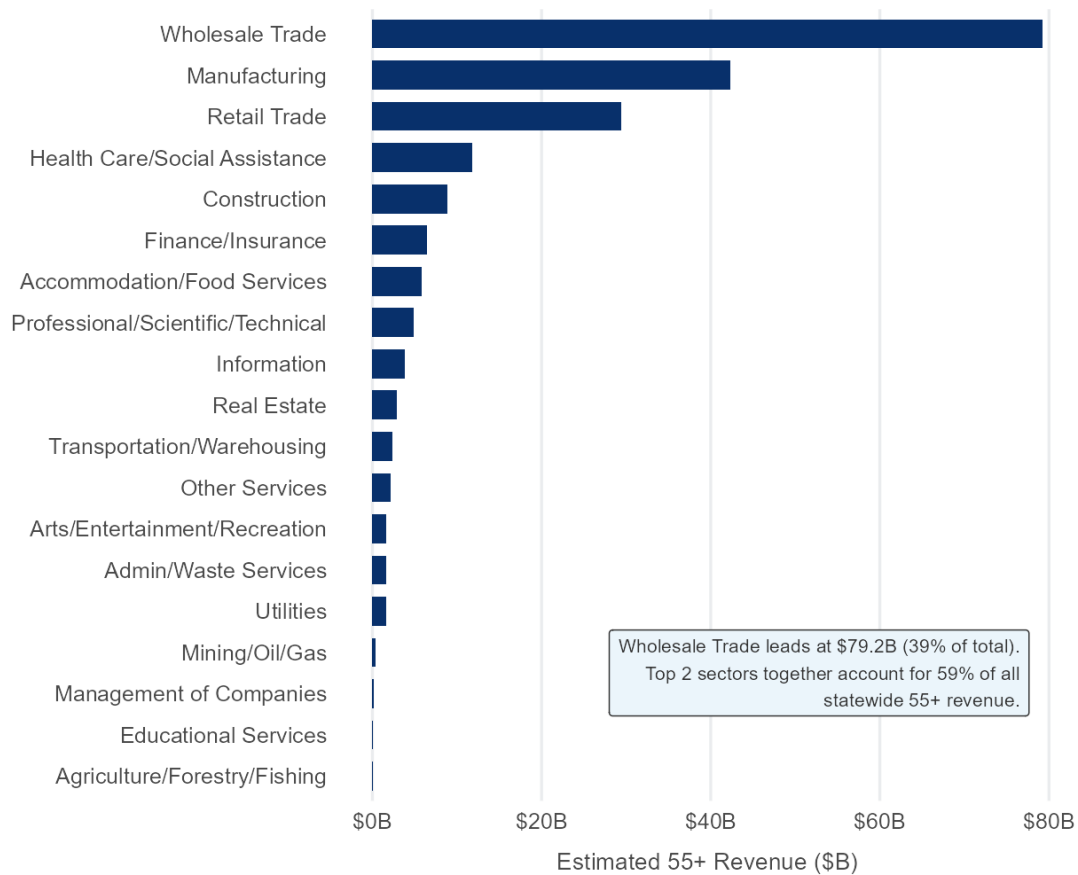
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Table 3: Estimated 55+ business revenue by sector, Indiana statewide

Sector	Total Rev. (\$B)	55+ Rev. (\$B)	% from 55+	Rev./Worker (\$K)
Wholesale Trade	114.6	79.2	69.2%	849.8
Manufacturing	70.9	42.3	59.6%	178.4
Retail Trade	55.5	29.4	53%	124.7
Health Care/Social Assistance	24.3	11.8	48.5%	46.2
Construction	17.1	8.9	51.9%	94.2
Finance/Insurance	11.0	6.4	58.5%	118.6
Accommodation/Food Services	13.0	5.8	44.7%	27.4
Professional/Scientific/Technical	9.6	4.8	50.3%	59.8
Information	6.8	3.8	55.8%	129.4
Real Estate	5.9	2.9	49.1%	75.5
Transportation/Warehousing	5.2	2.4	45.5%	69.1
Other Services	4.2	2.2	51.1%	37.0
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	3.1	1.7	54.1%	39.3
Admin/Waste Services	3.4	1.7	49.1%	47.9
Utilities	2.7	1.6	61%	254.0
Mining/Oil/Gas	1.1	0.3	32.8%	51.0
Management of Companies	0.3	0.2	63.5%	66.4
Educational Services	0.2	0.1	37.7%	0.3
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	0.2	0.0	21.5%	36.4

Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

Figure 6: Estimated 55+ business revenue by sector, Indiana statewide

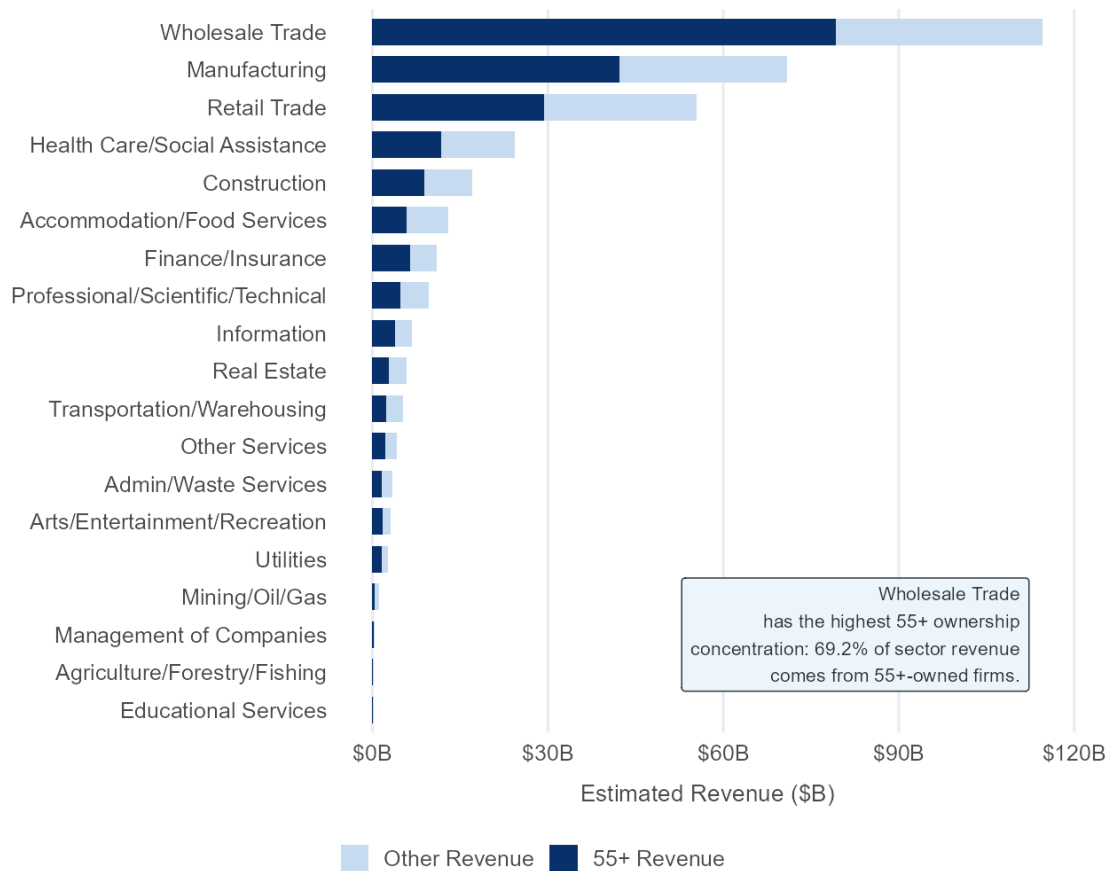


Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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The sectors most relevant to OEI’s program focus are those combining significant (but not astronomical) revenue with high concentrations of owner-operated small businesses and realistic buyer pools, including construction (\$8.9B, 51.9% from 55+ owners), health care and social assistance (\$11.8B, 48.5%), retail trade (\$29.4B, 53%), and professional, scientific, and technical services (\$4.8B, 50.3%). These are also the sectors that McKinsey’s national analysis identifies as facing the highest volume of ownership transitions through 2035 — retail trade, accommodation and food services, professional services, and construction together account for nearly half of all anticipated national SMB exits.² In Indiana, these sectors are where the succession challenge is most likely to translate into community-level disruption: a medical practice that closes, a contractor who retires without a buyer, a Main Street retailer whose owner walks away.

Figure 7: Total business revenue by sector: 55+-owned vs. other



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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The sector composition of 55+ revenue also interacts with geography in ways that amplify risk in specific counties and regions. A county where the majority of 55+-owned business revenue is concentrated in a single sector — whether wholesale trade, manufacturing, or health care — has less structural resilience than a diversified one. If succession fails in the dominant sector, there’s less economic cushion. This dynamic motivates the top-sector concentration component of the vulnerability index developed later in this report, and is visible in the county-level map of wholesale trade revenue, which reveals striking geographic variation in how exposed individual counties are to transitions in that single sector alone.

It’s worth noting what sector-level data cannot tell us. Revenue shares at the sector level are approximations, and the succession challenge ultimately plays out at a human level among individual owners. The sectors identified here as highest-priority are a starting point, but identifying which specific businesses are approaching transition, and which owners are open to succession planning or sale, requires the kind of direct engagement and business climate survey work that goes beyond what Data Axle or

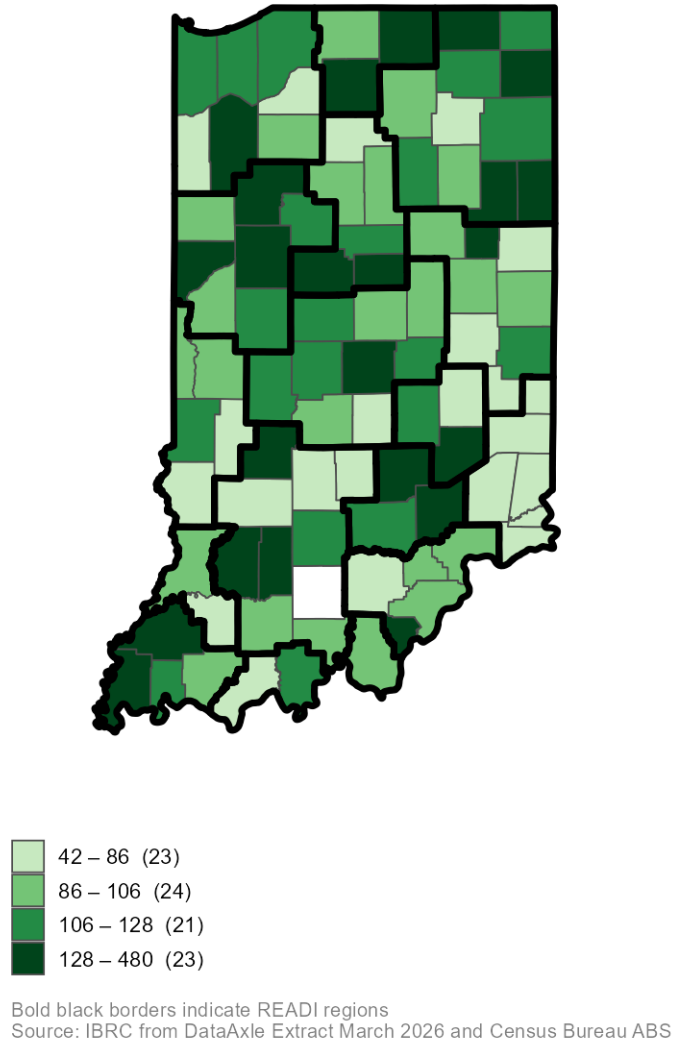
government data can provide.

Revenue per Worker

Revenue per worker at 55+-owned businesses — defined here as estimated revenue at 55+-owned businesses divided by *total* county employment — measures the economic weight each worker carries from businesses at succession risk. Counties with high revenue per worker face compounded exposure: not only is a large share of revenue from aging owners, but that revenue is supported by a smaller workforce, leaving less labor market capacity to absorb displacement.

The county-level map (Figure 8) reveals a pattern that doesn't *map* neatly onto population size or metro status. Several of Indiana's highest revenue-per-worker counties are relatively small by employment but carry disproportionately large 55+-owned business revenue bases. Posey (\$480K) and Owen (\$251.2K) lead the state by a wide margin — a pattern consistent with the industrial character of both counties. Posey's economy is anchored by capital-intensive petrochemical and metals production along the Ohio River, while Owen County has a high number of medical device manufacturers. **It must be noted that we aren't confirming these firms are owned by 55+ owners; these are merely estimates based on statewide trends and the proportional allocation algorithm.**

Figure 8: *Estimated 55+-owned business revenue per worker by county (\$000s). Bold black borders indicate READI regions*



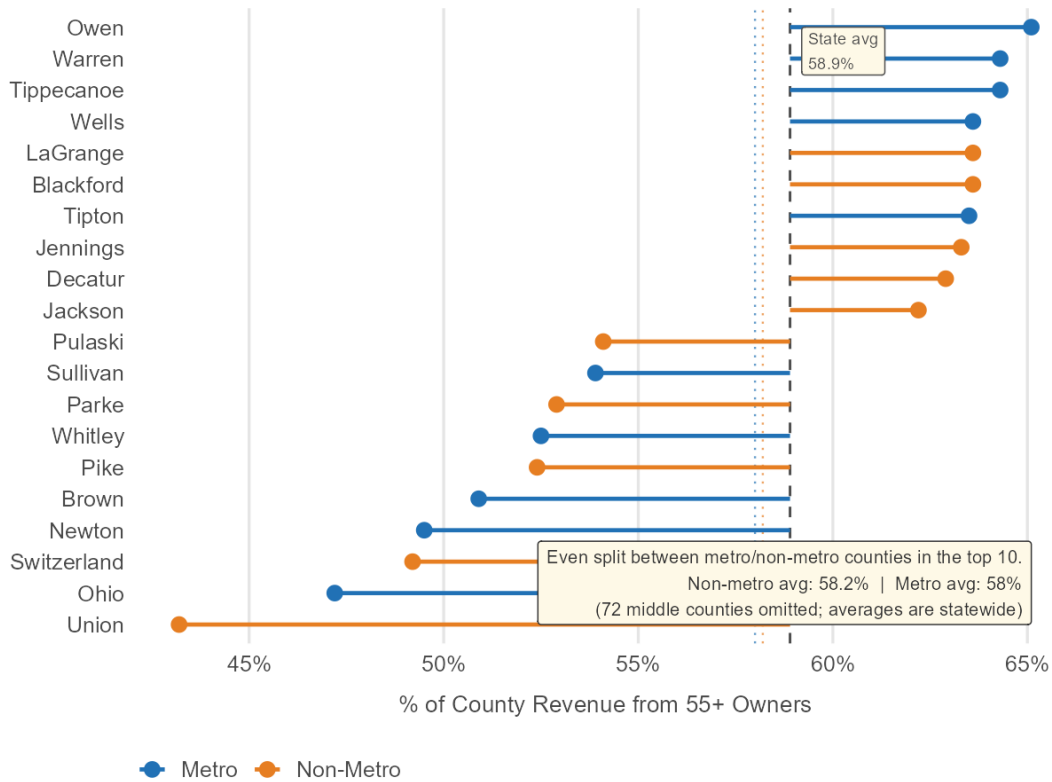
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Metro vs. Non-Metro Patterns

Using July 2023 OMB CBSA designations, Indiana counties are classified as metro (Metropolitan Statistical Areas) or non-metro (micropolitan and non-CBSA). The chart below compares the top and bottom 10 counties by the estimated share of total revenue earned by businesses owned by 55+ owners, colored by metro status. The metric captures the extent to which a county’s private business economic activity — proxied by revenue — is attributed to businesses with aging owners. Counties at the

top of the distribution have higher succession risk, but also greater opportunities for mergers and acquisitions (M&A) by entrepreneurs.

Figure 9: Top and bottom 10 Indiana counties by estimated 55+-owned business revenue share, by metro status



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; metro definitions from U.S. OMB

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Small Business Focus

Small businesses — defined here as establishments with fewer than 100 employees — are the primary vehicle through which abstract “succession risk” can play out as community-level economic disruption. Unlike large corporations with institutional succession planning, small businesses typically depend on a single owner-operator or, perhaps, a partnership or LLC. When that owner retires without a succession plan in place, or doesn’t find a buyer, the business closes and workers lose their jobs.

Table 4 below shows the top 10 counties by estimated 55+-owned-small business revenue.

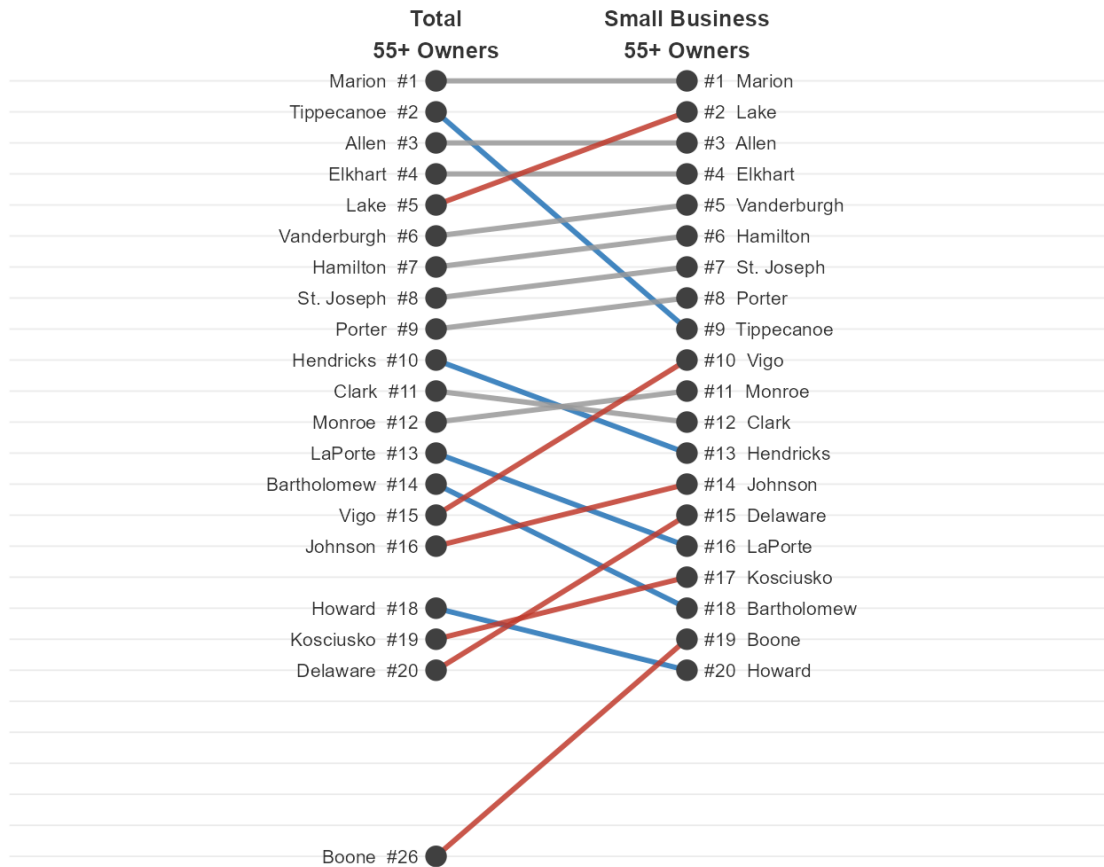
Table 4: *Top 10 counties by estimated 55+-owned small-business revenue (establishments with fewer than 100 employees)*

Rank	County	Est. 55+ SB Rev. (\$B)	Total SB Rev. (\$B)	% SB from 55+ Owners
1	Marion	21.4	37.4	57.2%
2	Lake	9.2	16.0	57.5%
3	Allen	8.0	14.0	57.6%
4	Elkhart	5.5	9.0	60.6%
5	Vanderburgh	5.2	9.0	57.5%
6	Hamilton	5.1	9.2	55.3%
7	St. Joseph	4.6	8.0	57.2%
8	Porter	3.1	5.4	58.2%
9	Tippecanoe	2.9	5.1	57.7%
10	Vigo	2.2	3.7	59.3%

Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

The bump chart below (Figure 10) compares each county’s rank by total 55+-owner revenue with its rank by 55+-owner small business revenue. Counties that rise on the right side — where small business rank is higher than total rank — are places where small businesses carry a disproportionate share of succession risk relative to the county’s overall economy.

Figure 10: County ranks by total 55+ revenue vs. small-business 55+ revenue (top 15 by total revenue shown)

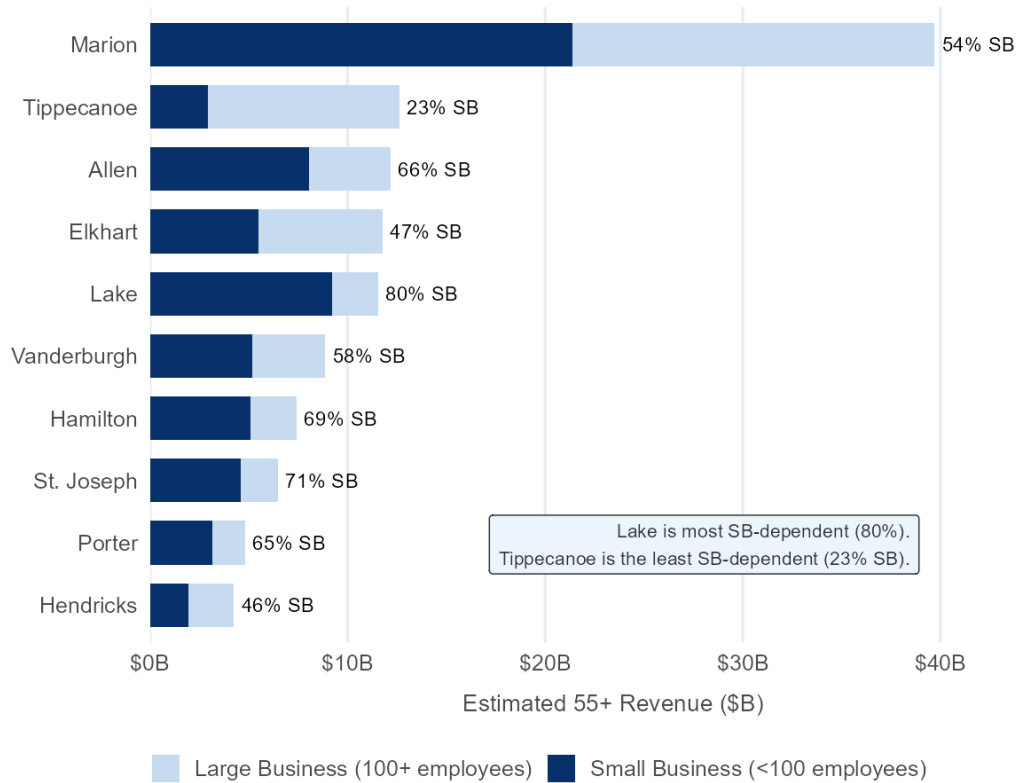


Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

Boone rises 7 spots — small businesses carry an outsized share of 55+ revenue relative to overall county rank.

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Figure 11: 55+ business revenue by small-business status, top counties



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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READI Region Summary

READI regions — Indiana’s 15 sub-state planning geographies established by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) — are the primary lens through which the state coordinates regional economic development investment. The analysis that follows summarizes succession exposure across all 15 regions, with particular attention to structural exposure rather than absolute revenue scale.

The region with the highest estimated 55+ revenue is **Central Indiana** (\$61.5B), while **Southeast** has the lowest (\$1.8B).

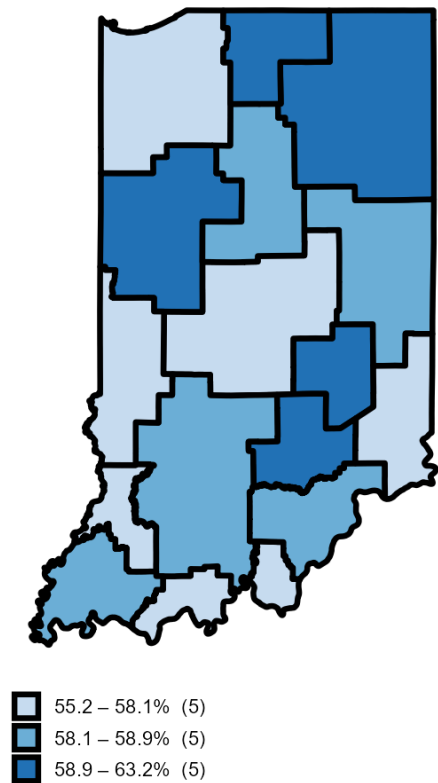
Table 5: Estimated 55+ business revenue by READI region

Rank	READI Region	Est. 55+ Rev. (\$B)	Total Rev. (\$B)	% from 55+ Owners
1	Central Indiana	61.5	106.0	58%
2	Northeast	25.1	42.2	59.4%
3	Northwest	21.3	36.8	57.9%
4	South Bend-Elkhart	19.8	33.2	59.4%
5	Greater Lafayette	15.4	24.4	63.2%
6	Southwest	14.5	24.7	58.5%
7	Indiana Uplands	9.2	15.8	58.3%
8	East Central	8.1	13.7	58.7%
9	Our Southern Indiana	7.3	12.5	58.2%
10	North Central	6.5	11.1	58.7%
11	South Central	5.3	8.6	61.8%
12	Wabash River	3.8	6.6	57.9%
13	Accelerate Rural Indiana	3.3	5.4	61.4%
14	Indiana First	2.6	4.5	57.7%
15	Southeast	1.8	3.3	55.2%

Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

In absolute terms, to no one's surprise, Central Indiana dominates: its \$61.5B in estimated 55+-owned business revenue is more than 2.5× the next-largest region (Northeast at \$25.1B) and reflects the concentration of Indiana's economic activity in the Indianapolis metropolitan area. But absolute revenue is a function of regional size as much as succession risk. The more telling measure is the share of regional revenue attributed to 55+-owned businesses — a signal of how deeply aging ownership is embedded in a region's economic base. On this metric, Greater Lafayette (63.2%) and South Central (61.8%) lead the state, followed by Accelerate Rural Indiana (61.4%) and Northeast (59.4%). These are regions where the majority of private-sector economic activity is already in the hands of owners approaching retirement age, and where the infrastructure to facilitate ownership transfer — buyer networks, intermediaries, access to financing — is likely thinnest relative to the scale of the challenge.

Figure 12: Share of READI region revenue from 55+-owned businesses

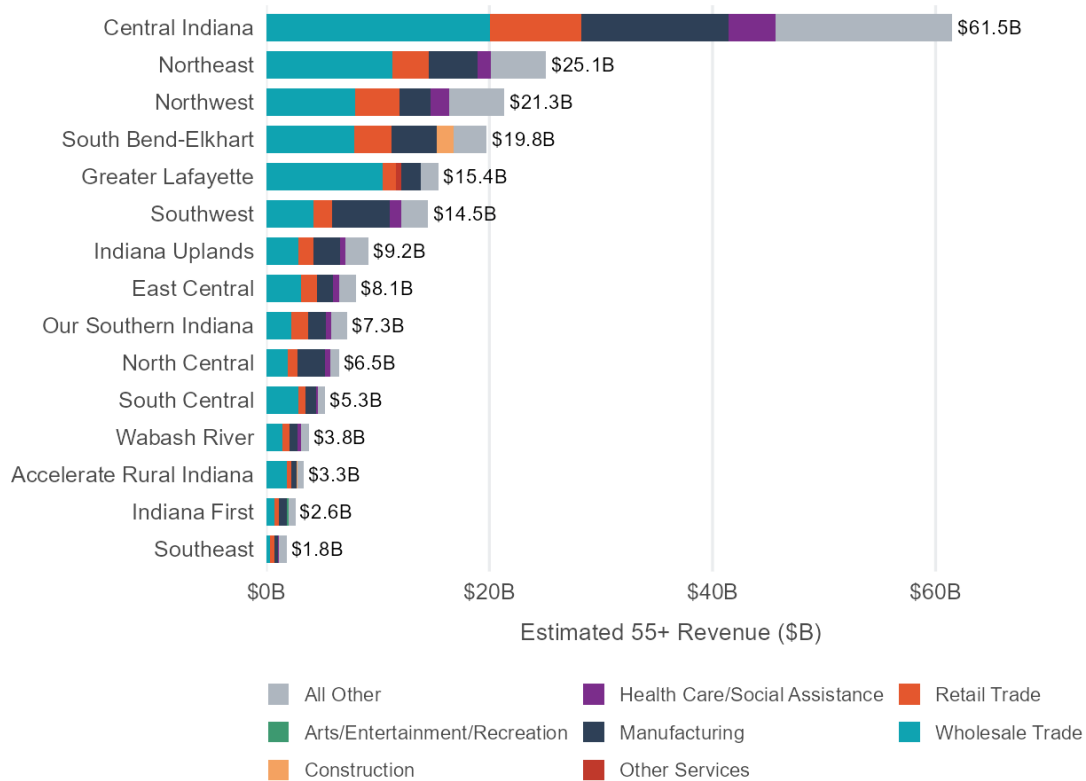


Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IF

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The sector composition of 55+ revenue varies substantially across regions. Wholesale trade dominates in Central Indiana in absolute terms, reflecting the state’s manufacturing and distribution corridors, while health care and social assistance, retail trade, and construction carry greater weight in smaller and more rural regions. This matters for OEI because the succession challenge in a region anchored by wholesale trade distributors is structurally different from one anchored by rural health care practices or Main Street retail — the buyer profiles, financing structures, and intermediary needs differ across these sectors. The regional sector breakdown provides a starting point for tailoring outreach and program design to the specific business landscape each READI region presents.

Figure 13: Estimated 55+ business revenue by READI region and top sector



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

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Part II: Targeting and Opportunity

The sections below synthesize the preceding analysis into two targeting frameworks: a composite vulnerability index identifying where structural succession risk is most concentrated, and an acquisition-target tier analysis identifying where the opportunity for entrepreneurship through acquisition is greatest.

i Key Takeaways

- The succession vulnerability index identifies **Greater Lafayette, South Central, and Accelerate Rural Indiana** as the highest-risk READI regions — combining high 55+-owned business revenue share, high 55+ revenue per worker, and high revenue concentration in the top sector.
- Revenue tier analysis shows that rural regions (Southeast, Wabash River, East Central) carry the largest shares of sub-\$3M-annual-revenue businesses — the segment least likely to transfer through market mechanisms

without active support.

- Non-metro counties including Rush, Ripley, Benton, and Parke exceed the state average of 10.05 acquisition-target firms per 1,000 workers (defined as 55+-owned businesses with annual revenue between \$1M and \$15M), indicating that the constraint in rural Indiana is buyer supply, not potential-seller supply.
- The market will not solve this on its own: OEI and its partners are positioned to address the gap through buyer recruitment, facilitating buyer-seller matching, and helping buyers access acquisition financing in underserved markets.

Succession Vulnerability Index

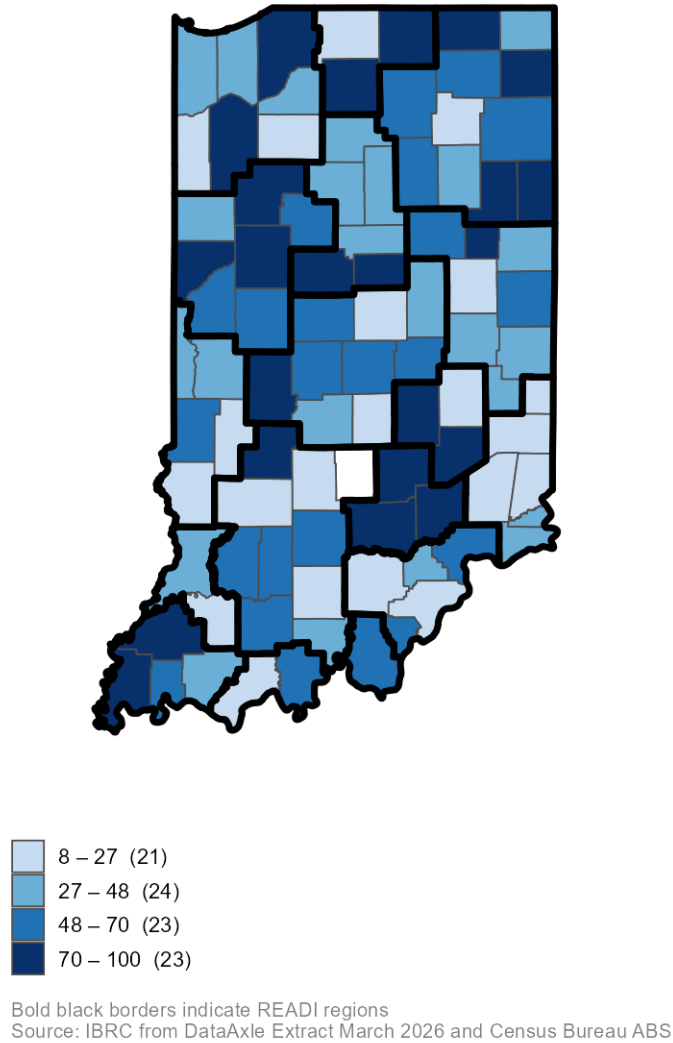
The revenue figures presented in the preceding sections measure the dollars at stake. But as McKinsey’s national analysis of the ownership transition wave states, the consequences of failed business transitions extend well beyond revenue to owners: they “erode jobs, dismantle wage ladders for frontline and skilled workers, and eliminate locally rooted wealth-building opportunities.”⁸ In many Indiana communities — particularly outside major metropolitan areas — the continued operation of small, locally owned businesses is foundational for economic mobility. The vulnerability index developed here is one tool for identifying where these foundations may be at risk.

The index combines three dimensions of succession exposure into a single composite score at the county and READI levels:

1. **55+ revenue share:** the share of county total business revenue from 55+-owned businesses
2. **55+-owned-business revenue per worker:** 55+-owned-business revenue divided by total county employment, a size-adjusted measure of succession risk “density”
3. **Top-sector concentration:** the share of 55+ revenue concentrated in the single largest sector

The composite is the unweighted average of the three percentile ranks. Counties and regions with high scores are more likely to be exposed across multiple dimensions — high ownership concentration, high 55+-owned-revenue density, and high top-sector concentration — and may be more vulnerable to succession and transition failure.

Figure 14: County succession vulnerability index (composite percentile). Bold black borders indicate READI regions

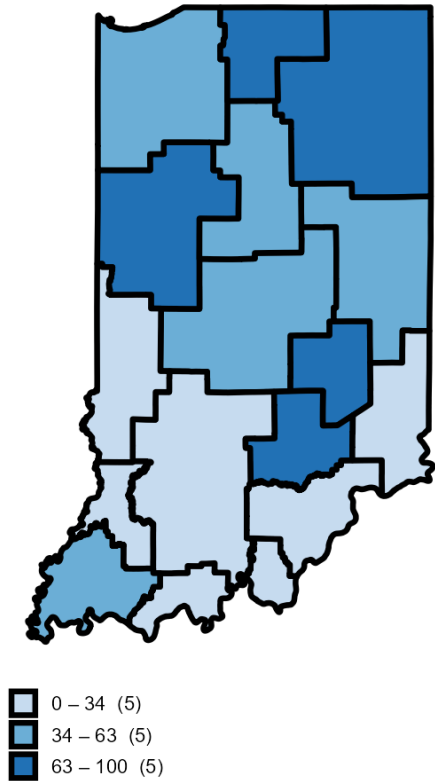


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Interestingly, of the 20 counties with the highest composite vulnerability score, all of them have a top-sector share of 50% or higher, and the top sector is either wholesale trade or manufacturing. In fact, it’s not until you get to Switzerland County, which is one of the lower-vulnerability counties, do you find a sector other than those two as the top sector: arts, entertainment, and recreation, with a 55+-owned-business revenue share of total revenue of 72%. This means that, out of all revenue earned by 55+-owned companies, 72% of it is in arts, entertainment, and recreation. It’s important to note that this is in the 92nd percentile, so even though the *sector* is different, the *level of concentration* is a risk. Perhaps, because of the sector, it’s even more of a risk: firms in arts, entertainment, and recreation are probably more likely to be small businesses,

which carry higher ownership transfer risk than larger companies. Why, then, did Switzerland County score relatively low on its composite score? It's one of the few counties where the majority of total business revenue is **not** attributed to 55+-owned businesses.

Figure 15: READI region succession vulnerability index (composite percentile)



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from I

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The highest concentration of succession vulnerability is in south-central Indiana, spanning the South Central and Accelerate Rural regions. The manufacturing-centric Bartholomew, Shelby, Jackson, Decatur, and Jennings Counties are a high-scoring cluster — though manufacturing employers may be more likely to have succession planning in place.

The figure below summarizes the regional analysis, displaying each READI region's vulnerability index score alongside the three component metrics and total 55+ revenue. Regions at the top of the ranking — Greater Lafayette, South Central, and Accelerate Rural — combine high 55+-owned business revenue share, high revenue per worker, and high single-sector dependence. Regions toward the bottom — Southeast, Indiana First, and Uplands — score lower on the composite not because succession risk is absent but because their estimated ownership profiles may provide greater structural resilience.

Figure 16: Succession vulnerability by READI region, ranked by composite vulnerability index



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC
 Vulnerability index = average percentile rank of 55+ revenue share, revenue per worker at 55+-owned businesses, and top-sector concentration.
 Bar widths scaled to the maximum value across all 15 regions within each column.

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Revenue Tier Analysis: The Composition of Succession Risk

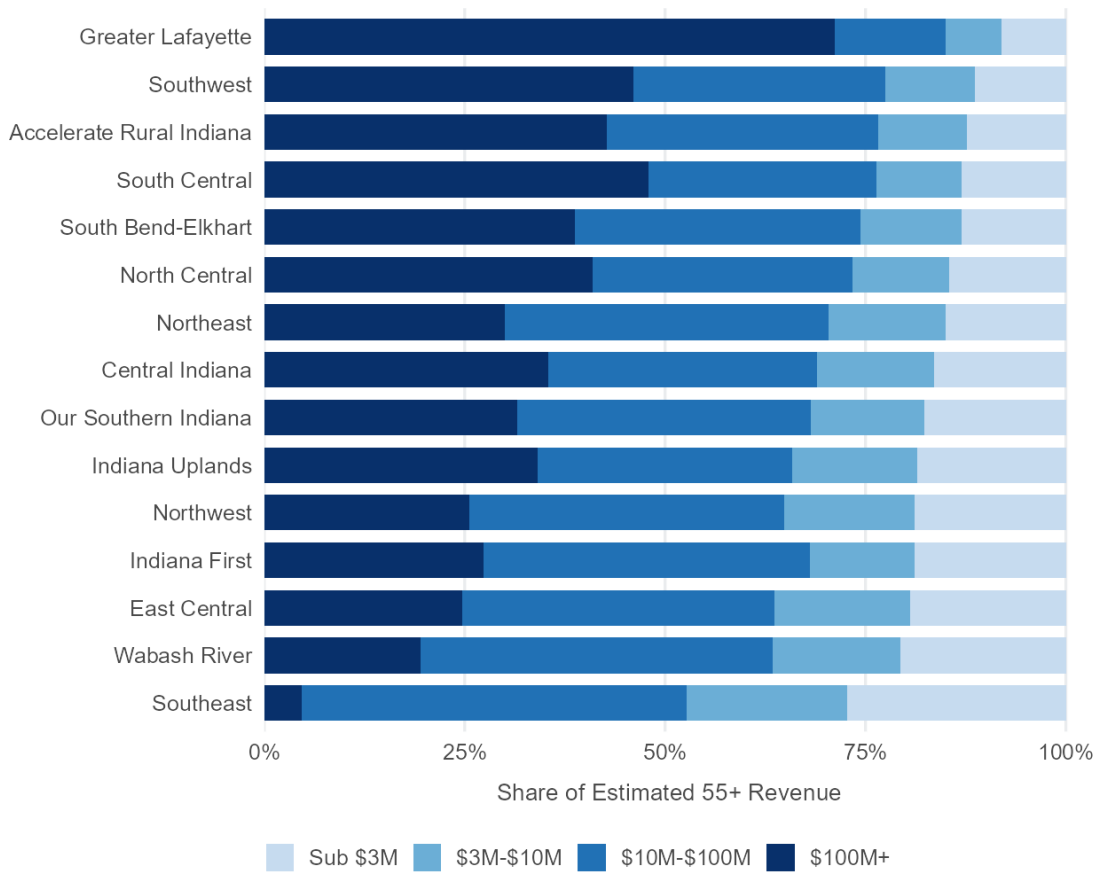
The vulnerability index identifies *where* succession risk is concentrated. But the policy response depends as much on the *nature* of that risk as on its scale. A county whose 55+-owned revenue is concentrated in a handful of large manufacturers faces a fundamentally different succession environment than one where the same dollar volume is distributed across hundreds of sub-\$3M owner-operated shops, restaurants, and service businesses. Business size shapes succession pathways: larger firms tend to have formal management structures, professional advisors, and access to capital markets that facilitate ownership transition. Smaller firms — particularly those below \$3M in annual revenue — are far more likely to close outright when an owner exits rather than transfer to a new operator.

To characterize this structural dimension, estimated 55+-owned business revenue is distributed across four size tiers:

- **Sub-\$3M** — very small businesses which, in theory, have the highest closure risk and limited transferability; typically less likely to have a formal succession infrastructure
- **\$3M-\$10M** — lower-middle market; transferable with the right buyer and deal support; directly relevant to entrepreneurship through acquisition
- **\$10M-\$100M** — middle market; more likely to have professional management and established acquisition channels
- **\$100M+** — enterprise tier; most likely to have existing succession planning and institutional buyer access

Figure 17 shows the composition of estimated 55+ revenue across these four tiers for each READI region, ranked by the share concentrated in sub-\$3M small-businesses. More rural regions — Accelerate Rural Indiana, Indiana First, and Indiana Uplands — have the largest shares of very small business revenue, meaning the succession challenge in those places is structurally harder: more of the at-risk revenue is in businesses where market-based transfer is unlikely without active support. Central Indiana and Northwest Indiana present a different profile, with larger enterprise and middle-market shares that align more readily with conventional acquisition and transition mechanisms.

Figure 17: Revenue tier composition of 55+-owned businesses by READI region. Regions ranked by share of revenue in sub-\$3M very small businesses.



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

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Table 6 condenses the four tiers into three policy-relevant buckets for each READI region. The very small business share identifies where closure risk is most acute; the transferable share represents the realistic pool for market-based succession; and the enterprise share approximates the segment least in need of public intervention. Regions in the top half of the table combine high very small business shares with significant total revenue at stake — a combination that represents the most complex policy challenge, requiring not just buyer recruitment but active deal support for transitions that the market will not complete on its own.

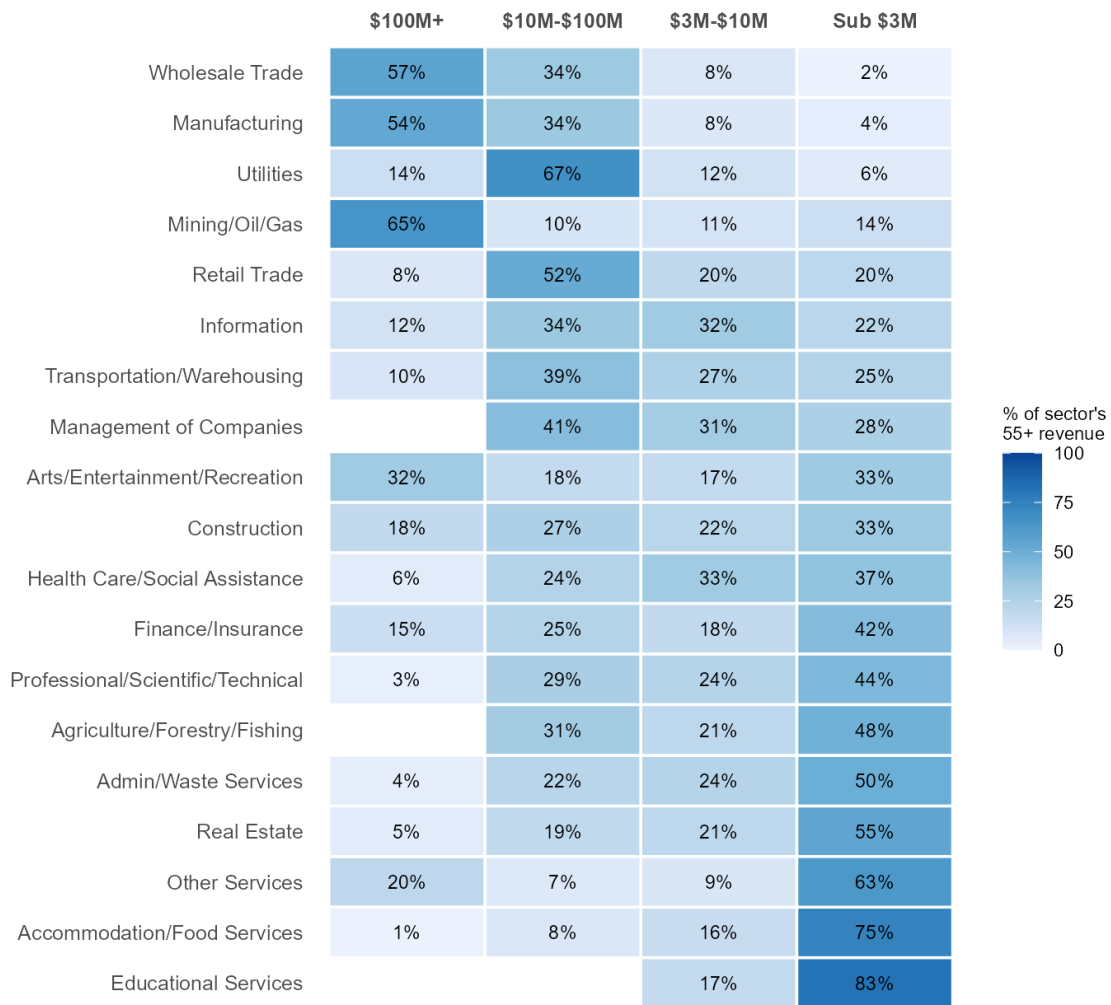
Table 6: Revenue tier composition by READI region: share of estimated 55+ business revenue

READI Region	Very Small Business (Sub \$3M, %)	Transferable (\$3M-\$100M, %)	Enterprise (\$100M+, %)	Total 55+ Rev. (\$M)
Southeast	27.3	68.1	4.6	1,833
Wabash River	20.7	59.9	19.5	3,831
East Central	19.5	55.9	24.6	8,064
Northwest	18.9	55.6	25.5	21,333
Indiana First	18.9	53.7	27.4	2,610
Indiana Uplands	18.6	47.3	34.1	9,190
Our Southern Indiana	17.7	50.8	31.5	7,266
Central Indiana	16.5	48.1	35.4	61,501
Northeast	15.0	55.0	30.0	25,074
North Central	14.6	44.4	41.0	6,514
South Bend-Elkhart	13.1	48.2	38.8	19,760
South Central	13.0	39.1	47.9	5,290
Accelerate Rural Indiana	12.4	44.8	42.8	3,334
Southwest	11.4	42.6	46.1	14,473
Greater Lafayette	8.0	20.8	71.2	15,406

Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

The sector lens — Figure 18 — reveals the structural reasons behind these regional patterns. Agriculture, accommodation and food services, retail trade, and other services are overwhelmingly concentrated in the sub-\$3M tier, consistent with their predominantly owner-operated character and thin margins that limit firm valuation. Manufacturing, wholesale trade, and utilities, by contrast, have significant shares in the upper tiers, reflecting the larger capital bases and more formalized management structures common in those industries. For OEI, this finding supports sector-targeted program design: the industries most likely to benefit from active succession intervention are precisely those most concentrated in the very small business tier, where market mechanisms are least reliable.

Figure 18: Revenue tier composition by NAICS sector. Each cell shows the share of that sector’s estimated statewide 55+ revenue in that tier. Sectors ranked by share in sub-\$3M very small businesses.

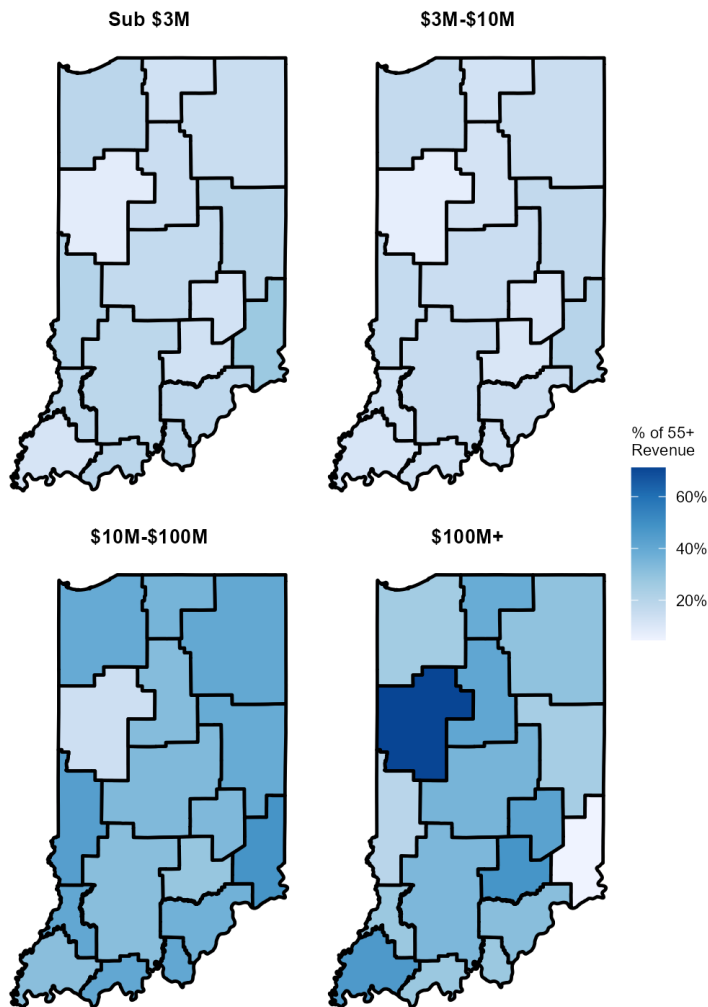


Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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The geographic distribution of this structural risk is visible in Figure 19. Regions where the sub-\$3M panel is darkest — concentrated in south-central and southeast Indiana — are the same regions that scored highest on the vulnerability index in the preceding section. The alignment is not coincidental: high vulnerability scores reflect high succession exposure, and the tier maps reveal *why* that exposure is especially hard to resolve — most of the at-risk revenue in those regions is in businesses too small to attract conventional buyers. Conversely, the \$100M+ panel highlights the degree to which Greater Lafayette and Central Indiana’s succession risk, while large in absolute terms, is concentrated in enterprise-scale firms with existing succession infrastructure.

Figure 19: Share of 55+ revenue by tier across READI regions. Each panel shows the share of a region’s estimated 55+ revenue falling in that tier.



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

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Taken together, the tier analysis sharpens the policy picture: the succession challenge in Indiana is not uniform, and the appropriate public response varies by both geography and firm size. For the enterprise and upper-middle-market segments, conventional deal infrastructure is likely sufficient. The more acute and less self-correcting problem is concentrated in the transferable tier — and specifically in the \$1M–\$15M segment that entrepreneurship through acquisition (ETA) research identifies as the prime target. That segment is the focus of the following section.

Entrepreneurship through Acquisition: The \$1M–\$15M Tier

Not all businesses at succession risk are equally suited for ownership transfer. Research on ETA identifies the \$1M–\$15M annual revenue tier as the core acquisition-entrepreneur market: firms large enough to generate a full-time livelihood for a new owner-operator, but typically too small to attract institutional private equity buyers. The owner-operated firm in this range is often underleveraged, unrepresented by sophisticated brokers, and motivated by retirement rather than value maximization — conditions that align well with the acquisition entrepreneur model described by Ruback and Yudkoff (2017) and tracked in the Stanford Search Fund Study (Kelly and Heston, 2024).⁷ This market inefficiency is precisely what makes the tier so relevant for public policy: these are businesses that may not reliably find buyers through market mechanisms alone, and where targeted intermediary development, buyer recruitment, and acquisition financing programs can make a material difference.

Across Indiana, an estimated **\$57.26B** in 55+-owned business revenue is concentrated in the \$1M–\$15M acquisition-target tier. On average, this represents **31.5%** of county 55+ revenue, though the share varies substantially across Indiana’s 92 counties.

The table below summarizes the top 15 counties by acquisition-target tier share of 55+ revenue. These are counties where the acquisition-target segment dominates the local succession landscape relative to the overall 55+-owned revenue base. Counties at the top of this distribution — Newton County (79.9%), Rush County (60.2%), Sullivan County (59.6%), and Brown County (55.2%) — are places where the majority of aging-owner business revenue is concentrated in firms of exactly the size most amenable to ETA. These are not necessarily the largest markets in absolute terms, but they are the markets where the ETA model is most structurally applicable and where a functioning acquisition ecosystem could address the largest share of local succession risk.

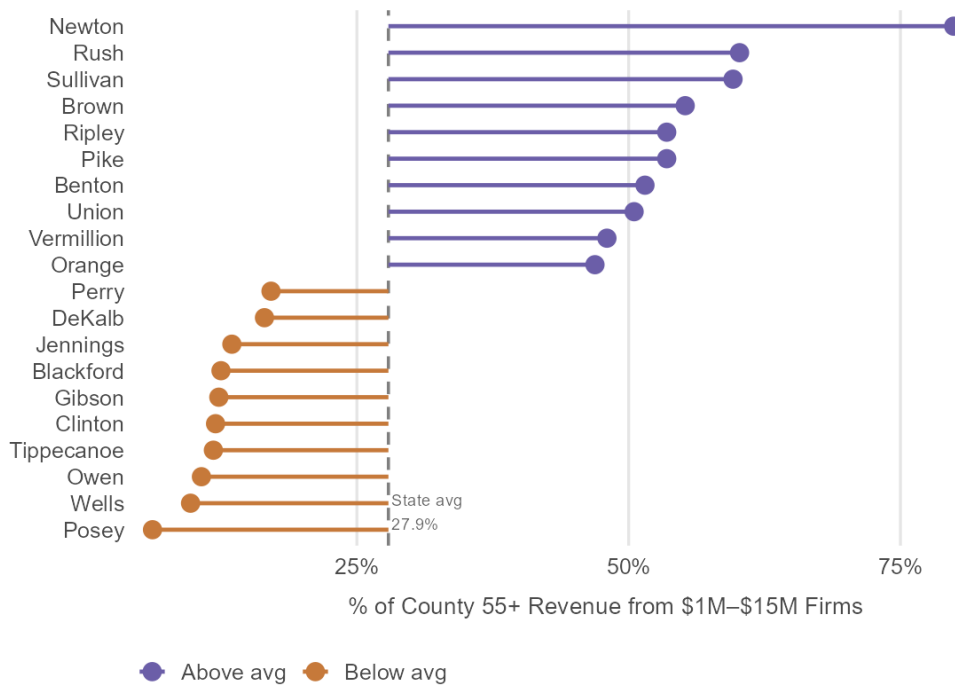
Table 7: Top 15 counties by acquisition-target tier share of 55+ revenue

County	% of 55+ Rev. (\$1M-\$15M)	Firms per 1K Workers	55+ Rev. (\$1M-\$15M, \$M)
Newton	79.9%	11.5	82.0
Rush	60.2%	13.5	124.3
Sullivan	59.6%	10.4	77.8
Brown	55.2%	10.3	38.9
Pike	53.5%	8.4	48.2
Ripley	53.5%	12.6	217.6
Benton	51.5%	11.7	40.1
Union	50.5%	6.5	35.2
Vermillion	48%	10.2	89.1
Orange	46.9%	5.3	110.0
Clay	44.4%	9.8	140.2
Starke	43.6%	8.3	97.8
Spencer	43.5%	6.9	87.7
Dearborn	42.3%	10.9	336.5
Fayette	42.3%	9.4	122.2

Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

Figure 20 shows the share of 55+ revenue concentrated in the \$1M–\$15M tier across Indiana counties. Non-metro counties including Daviess, Rush, Ripley, Jasper, Knox, Crawford, and Carroll all exceed the state average of 10.05 acquisition-target firms per 1,000 workers — on a per-worker basis, rural Indiana is a dense market for ETA, and the constraint is buyer supply, not deal supply.

Figure 20: Top and bottom 10 counties by share of 55+ revenue from \$1M–\$15M acquisition-target firms. Purple = above state average; amber = below



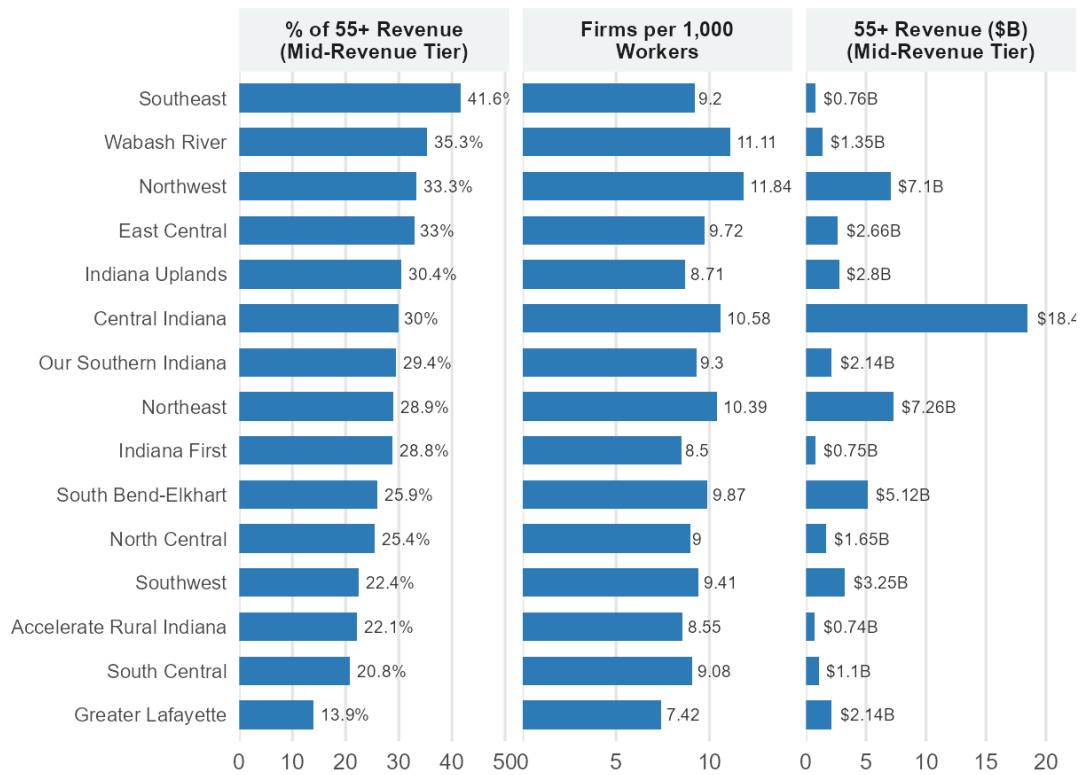
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS
 55+ ownership estimated via ABS age apportionment.
 The \$1M–\$15M tier is the core ETA market: firms large enough to sustain a new owner but below institutional private equity thresholds. They may also be more motivated by retirement rather than maximizing sale price (Ruback & Yudkoff, 2017; Kelly & Heston, 2024).

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Taken together, these metrics point to a two-track strategy for OEI. In large metro counties — Marion, Lake, Allen, Hamilton — the absolute opportunity is enormous and the buyer market has some organic depth, suggesting that OEI’s role is primarily to reduce friction: connecting sellers to intermediaries, improving acquisition financing access, and building awareness of ETA as a succession pathway among retiring owners. In rural and mid-sized counties — the Newtons, Rushes, and Sullivans at the top of the share and density distributions — the opportunity is structurally concentrated but the buyer market is thin, suggesting a more active role for OEI and/or its partners: recruiting and preparing acquisition entrepreneurs willing to operate in smaller markets, developing local intermediary capacity, and potentially subsidizing the transaction costs that make small-market deals less economical for professional brokers.

At the READI region level, Figure 21 presents all three ETA-tier measures side by side, enabling comparison across planning geographies.

Figure 21: Entrepreneurship-through-acquisition target tier (\$1M–\$15M 55+-owned firms) by READI region: share of 55+ revenue, firms per 1,000 workers, and absolute revenue



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC. Firms per 1,000 workers is a size-adjusted measure of succession transition opportunity density. The \$1M–\$15M tier is the core ETA market: firms large enough to sustain a new owner but below institutional private equity thresholds. They may also be more motivated by retirement rather than maximizing sale price (Ruback & Yudkoff, 2017; Kelly & Heston, 2024).

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For OEI’s regional programming, the most structurally underserved markets are those that combine high share and high density with limited absolute scale — Southeast, Wabash River, and Accelerate Rural Indiana — where acquisition opportunities are concentrated but the transaction infrastructure to facilitate them is likely least developed.

Table 8: Acquisition-target tier by READI region

READI Region	% of 55+ Rev. (\$1M-\$15M)	Firms per 1K Workers	55+ Rev. (\$1M-\$15M, \$B)
Southeast	41.6%	9.2	0.8
Wabash River	35.3%	11.1	1.4
Northwest	33.3%	11.8	7.1
East Central	33%	9.7	2.7
Indiana Uplands	30.4%	8.7	2.8
Central Indiana	30%	10.6	18.4
Our Southern Indiana	29.4%	9.3	2.1
Northeast	28.9%	10.4	7.3
Indiana First	28.8%	8.5	0.8
South Bend-Elkhart	25.9%	9.9	5.1
North Central	25.4%	9.0	1.7
Southwest	22.4%	9.4	3.2
Accelerate Rural Indiana	22.1%	8.6	0.7
South Central	20.8%	9.1	1.1
Greater Lafayette	13.9%	7.4	2.1

Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

Conclusion

Indiana is in a succession risk crisis. The demographic shift documented in Phase 1 has matured into a revenue story: an estimated \$205.5B in annual private-sector business activity is associated with owners aged 55 or older, representing 58.9% of the state’s total captured business revenue. The question is no longer whether a wave of ownership transitions is coming. It’s whether those transitions will result in business continuity or business closure — and national evidence suggests that, without intervention, closure is more likely.

For OEI, the analysis points to three interconnected takeaways.

1. The risk is statewide but the structural vulnerability is concentrated.

In absolute dollar terms, the largest succession challenge is in Indiana’s major metros — Marion, Tippecanoe, Allen, Lake, and Elkhart account for a disproportionate share of total 55+ revenue. But the counties and regions facing the deepest structural exposure are often smaller and more rural: places where 55+-owned businesses represent not just a large share of revenue but the economic foundation, where labor pools are limited, and where sector concentration leaves little cushion if transitions fail. The vulnerability index identifies these places — Owen, Tippecanoe, Wells at the county level; Greater Lafayette and South Central at the READI level — as the highest-priority targets for proactive intervention. These are communities where the closure of a handful of businesses could permanently break local economic ladders, erode tax bases, and

eliminate the wage and wealth-building pathways that small businesses provide to workers and families.

2. The opportunity is real, geographically distributed, and time-limited.

The \$57.3B in 55+-owned revenue concentrated in the \$1M–\$15M acquisition-target tier is not merely a risk metric — it’s an inventory of businesses that could sustain a new generation of owner-operators if the conditions for transfer are in place. The firms-per-1,000-workers analysis makes clear that this opportunity is not confined to Indiana’s cities: rural and mid-sized counties have above-average acquisition opportunity density, and regions like Southeast, Wabash River, and Accelerate Rural Indiana combine high ETA-target shares with the kind of locally embedded, community-anchored businesses that acquisition entrepreneurs can sustain and grow. The window for acting on this opportunity is defined by the retirement timeline of the current owner cohort. Businesses that close because no buyer was found do not re-enter the market.

3. The market won’t solve this on its own.

The national research is unambiguous on this point: 92% of small business exits occur through closure rather than sale or transfer, not because the businesses lack value but because the infrastructure to facilitate ownership transfer is fragmented, opaque, and inaccessible — particularly for smaller firms in smaller markets. Indiana’s rural and mid-sized counties face exactly the conditions McKinsey identifies as highest-risk: older ownership profiles, likely thinner buyer pools, limited intermediary capacity, and weaker access to acquisition financing. OEI is positioned to address these constraints by building awareness of succession planning among retiring owners, recruiting and preparing acquisition entrepreneurs for Indiana markets, developing regional intermediary capacity in high-vulnerability READI regions, and working with capital providers to improve access to acquisition financing for smaller-market deals.

Platforms like SMB.co — a marketplace connecting buyers with owners interested in selling their businesses, akin to a “Zillow of ETA” — represent an example of the kind of intermediary infrastructure this analysis points toward.¹⁴ By improving the visibility of acquisition opportunities and reducing the search costs that prevent buyers and sellers from finding each other, marketplace models have the potential to address one of the most persistent structural failures in the small business transition market, particularly in smaller-county and rural markets where buyer pools are thinnest and the need is greatest.

Caveats and Limitations

Data Axle reported annual sales figures are modeled estimates, not directly reported revenue, and accuracy varies by establishment size and industry. Where the reported

sales value is zero or missing, a midpoint imputed from a categorical sales range is used; this imputation introduces additional uncertainty for smaller establishments. Revenue attribution to 55+ owners relies on the Phase 1 proportional allocation assumption that owner age distribution is uniform within each county-sector cell. Actual concentrations will differ, and this uncertainty is greater in rural counties and smaller sectors where the underlying American Business Survey sample sizes used in Phase 1 are thinner; that uncertainty propagates into the Phase 2 revenue estimates for those geographies.

An establishment's Data Axle record must have been updated on or after January 1, 2022, to be included in the analysis. Because Data Axle is a point-in-time database rather than a longitudinal panel, some degree of undercounting is inevitable: records predating this threshold may reflect businesses still in operation, and some records meeting the threshold may belong to businesses that have since closed. The figures presented here should be understood as conservative estimates of the establishments and revenue at risk.

The revenue-per-worker metric used in the succession vulnerability index divides estimated 55+-owned business revenue by total county employment — not employment at 55+-owned businesses specifically. This is a simplification driven by data availability; the metric is best interpreted as a measure of the economic weight of succession risk relative to overall county labor-market capacity rather than a precise firm-level ratio.

The revenue tier estimates carry somewhat greater uncertainty than the top-line county and regional figures, as they apply the age-share proportional allocation to a revenue subgroup within each county-sector cell rather than to total cell revenue. These figures are best interpreted as order-of-magnitude indicators of ETA-target market size rather than precise counts of acquisition-ready firms.

Results are best used to identify relative hot spots and order-of-magnitude comparisons, not as precise revenue benchmarks.

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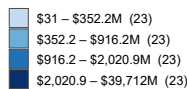
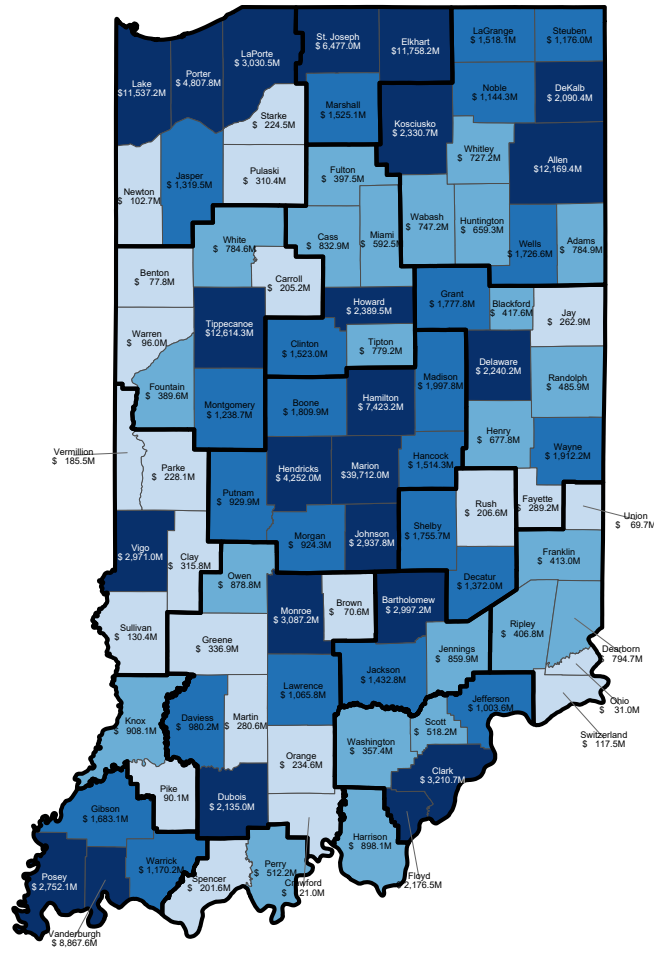
5. Yearwood et al., *The Great Ownership Transfer*, 8.
6. Boumgarden et al., *Main Street's Tidal Wave of Transition*, 1; Exit Planning Institute, *2023 National State of Owner Readiness* (Cleveland: Exit Planning Institute, 2023).
7. Peter Kelly and Sara Heston, *2024 Search Fund Study: Research Overview*, Case E-870 (Stanford: Stanford Graduate School of Business, 2024), 2.
8. Yearwood et al., *The Great Ownership Transfer*, 4.
9. Yearwood et al., *The Great Ownership Transfer*, 12.
10. Barry Ip and Gabriel Jacobs, "Business Succession Planning: A Review of the Evidence," *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 13, no. 3 (2006): 326–350.
11. Richard Ruback and Royce Yudkoff, *HBR Guide to Buying a Small Business* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2017); Kelly and Heston, *2024 Search Fund Study*, 2.
12. Data Axle, "Business Data," *Data Axle*, accessed March 2026, <https://www.data-axle.com/data-solutions/business-data/>.
13. National Association of State Budget Officers, as cited in Urban Institute, "Indiana: State Fiscal Briefs," State and Local Finance Initiative (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2025), <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-fiscal-briefs/indiana>.
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Appendix: High-Resolution Figures

Figure 1: *Estimated revenue from 55+-owned businesses by county (\$M). Bold black borders indicate READI regions*

Est. Revenue from 55+-Owned Businesses by County

Indiana Counties, DataAxle Extract March 2026 (\$M)



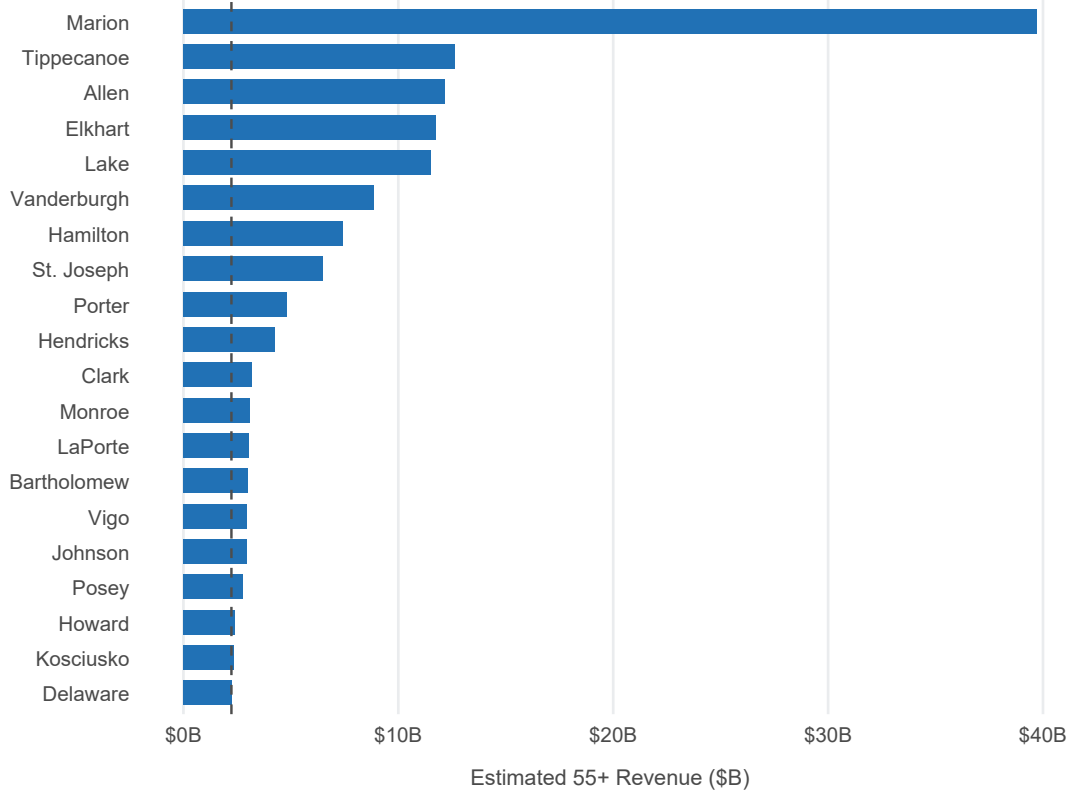
Bold black borders indicate READI regions
 Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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Figure 2: Top 20 counties by estimated 55+ business revenue (\$B)

Top 20 Counties by Est. 55+ Business Revenue

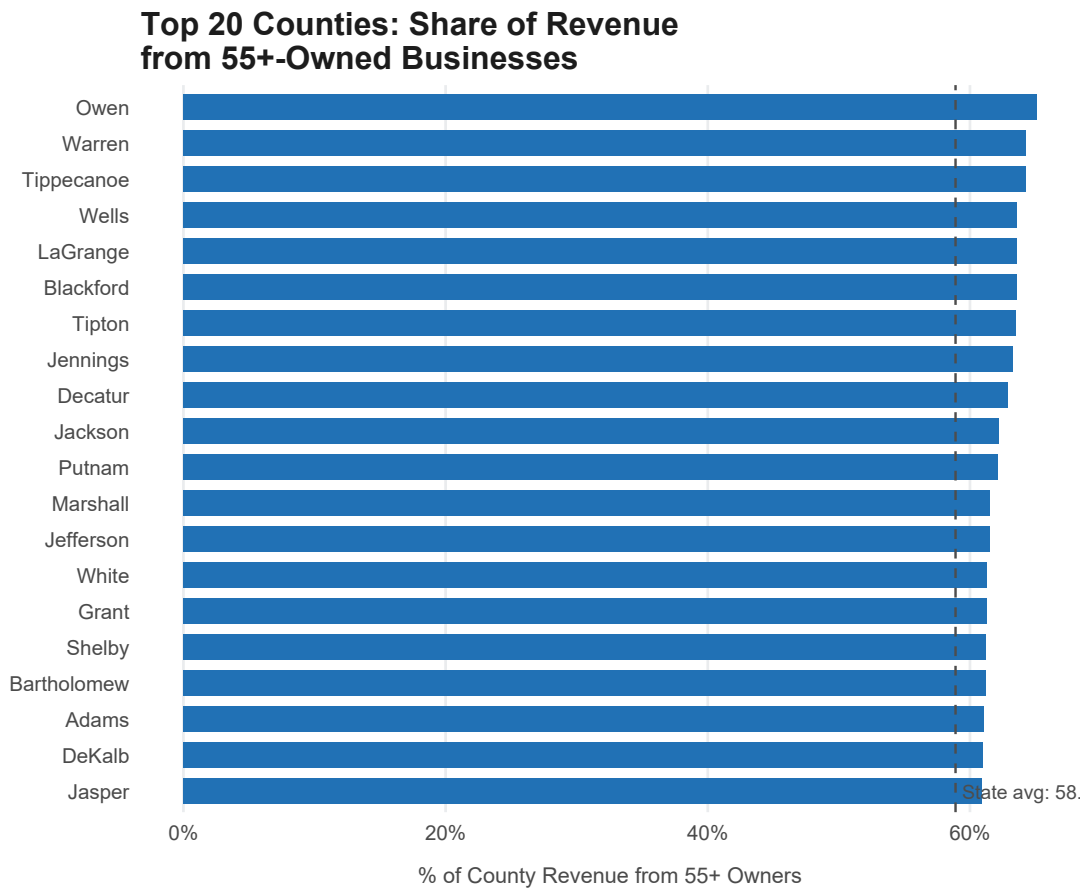
Dashed line = average county 55+ revenue



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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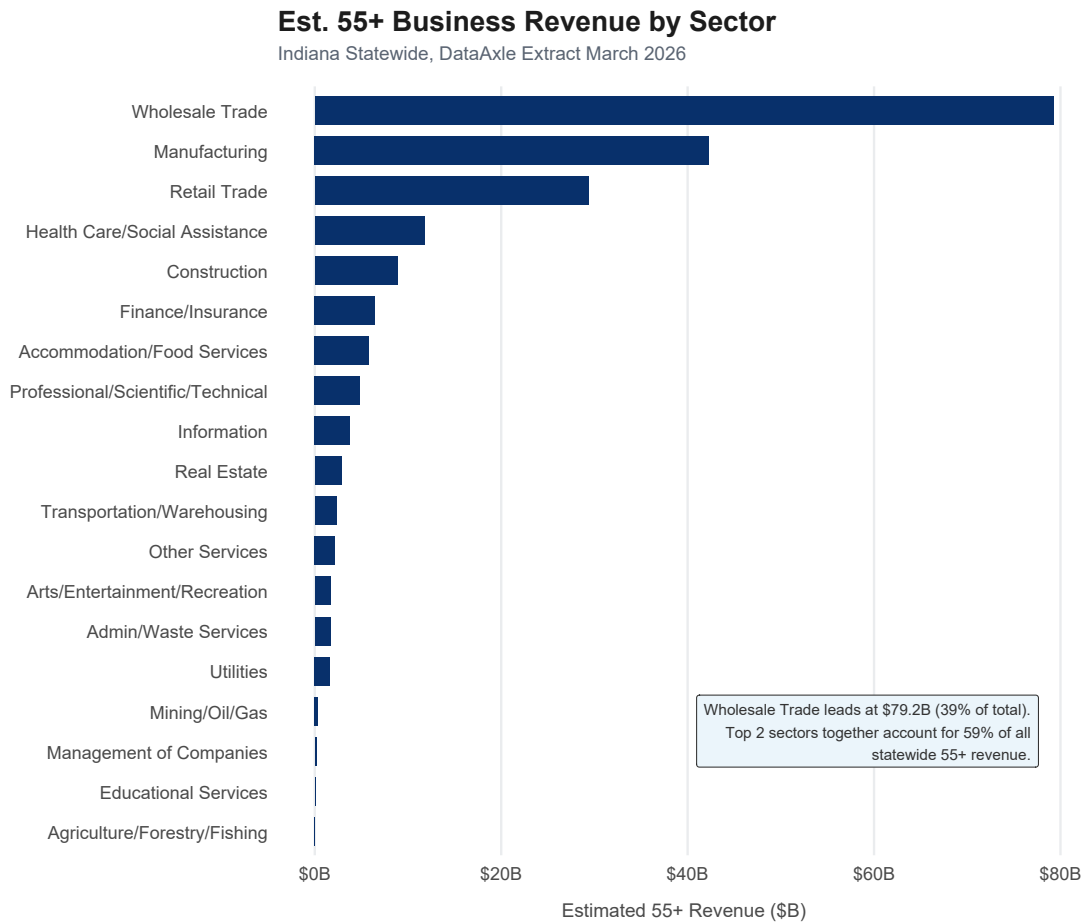
Figure 4: *Top 20 counties: share of revenue from 55+-owned businesses*



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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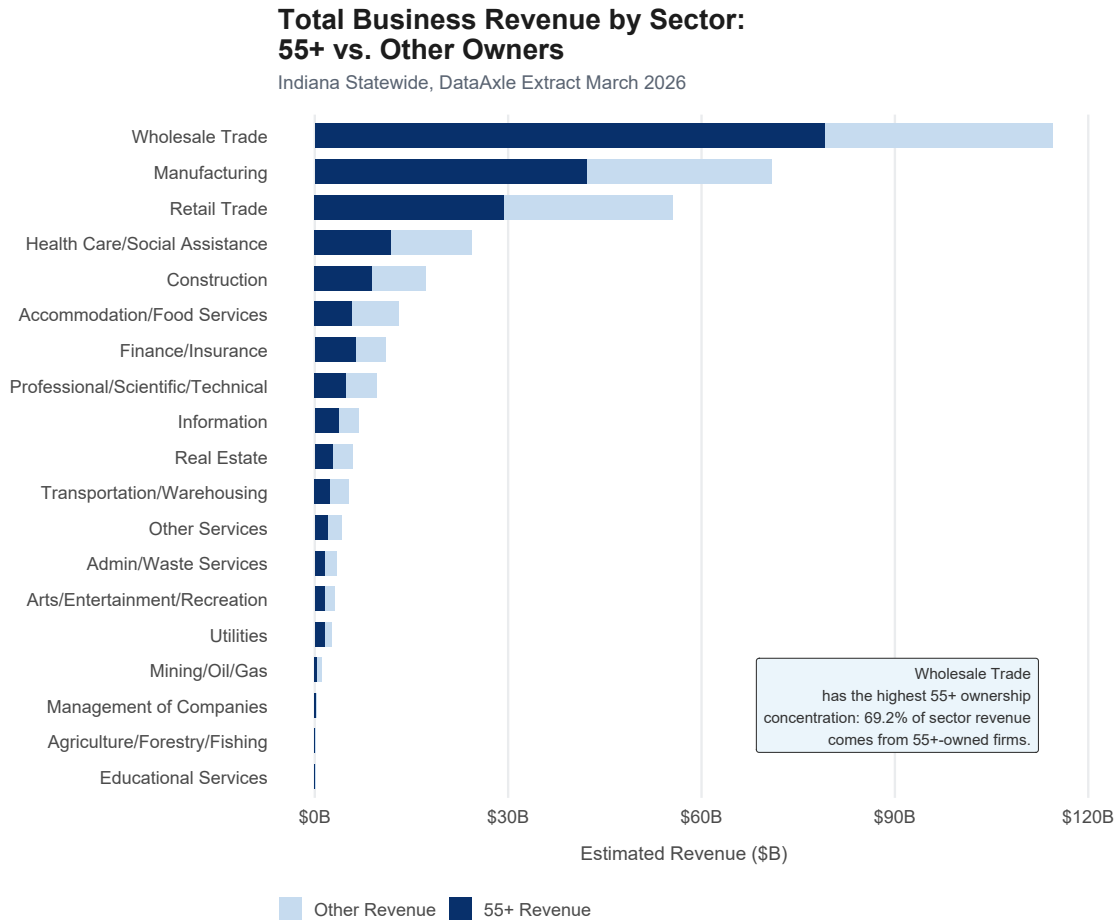
Figure 5: Estimated 55+ business revenue by sector, Indiana statewide



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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Figure 6: Total business revenue by sector: 55+-owned vs. other

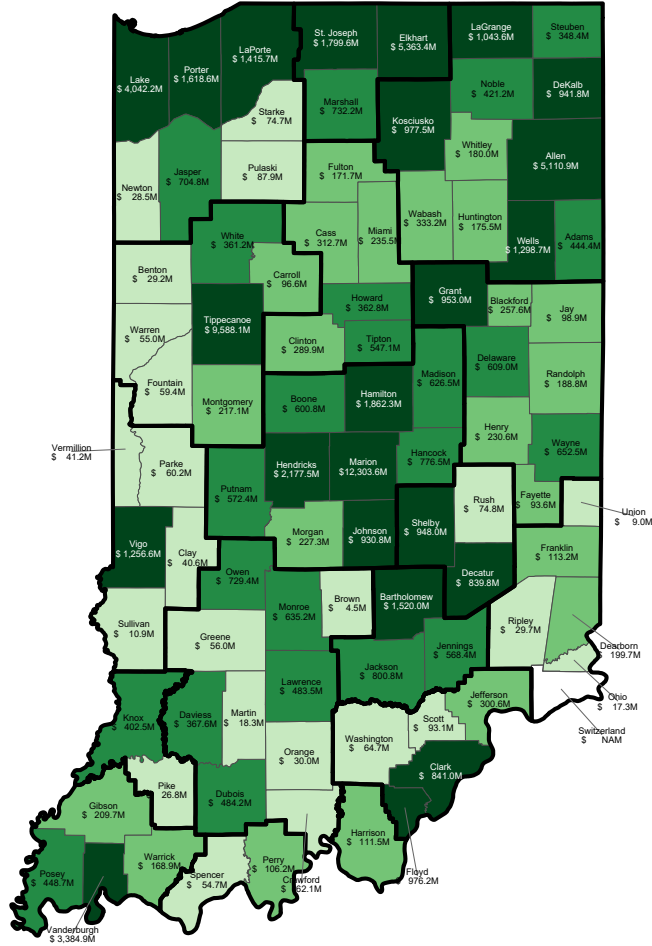


Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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Figure 7: County-level 55+ revenue for the top sector statewide. Bold black borders indicate READI regions

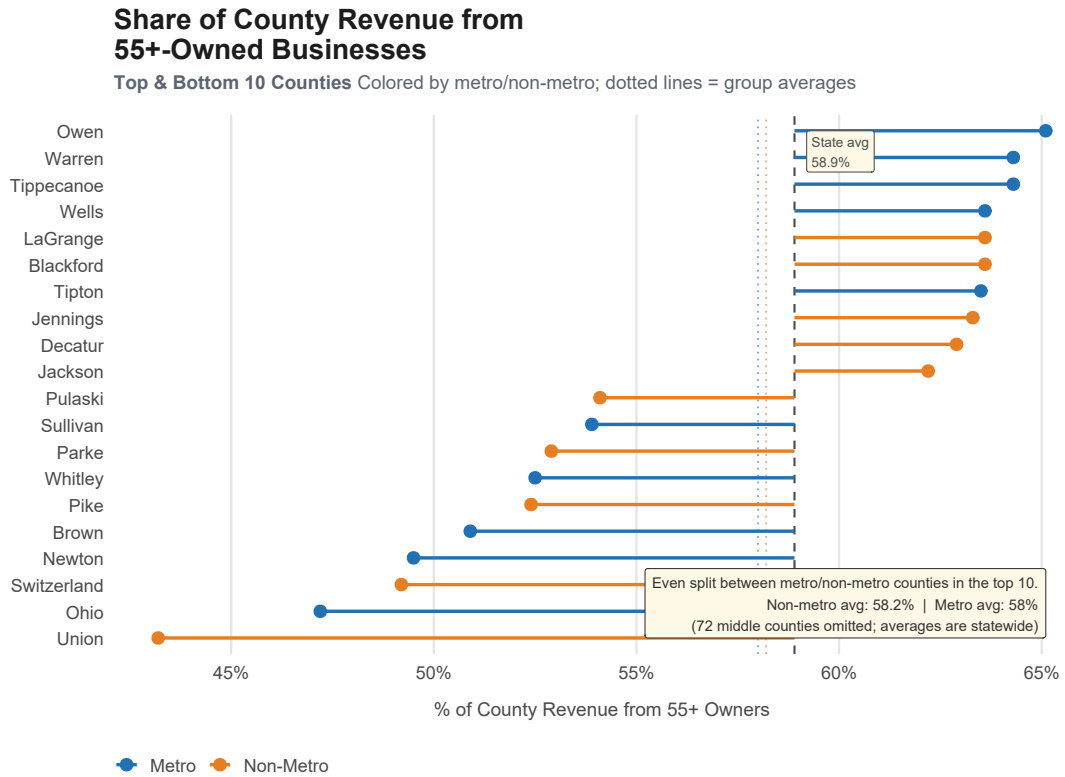
**Wholesale Trade:
Est. 55+ Revenue by County**
Indiana Counties, DataAxle Extract March 2026 (\$M)



Bold black borders indicate READI regions
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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Figure 9: Top and bottom 10 Indiana counties by estimated 55+-owned business revenue per worker, by metro/non-metro status



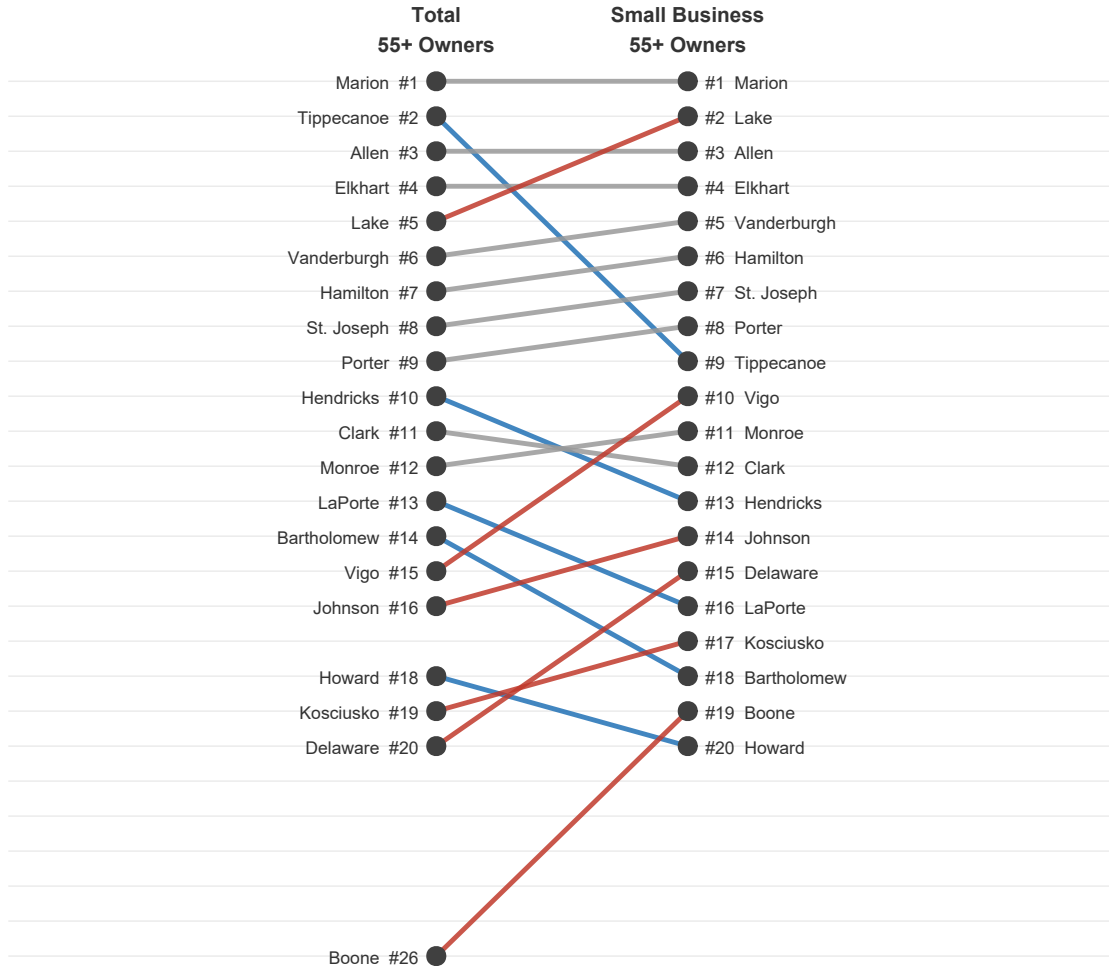
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; metro definitions from U.S. OMB

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Figure 10: County ranks by total 55+ revenue vs. small-business 55+ revenue (top 15 by total revenue shown)

**How County Rankings Shift:
Total vs. Small Business 55+ Revenue**

Red = rises in SB ranking (more SB-dependent); blue = drops (large firms dominate); gray = stable (± 1 rank)



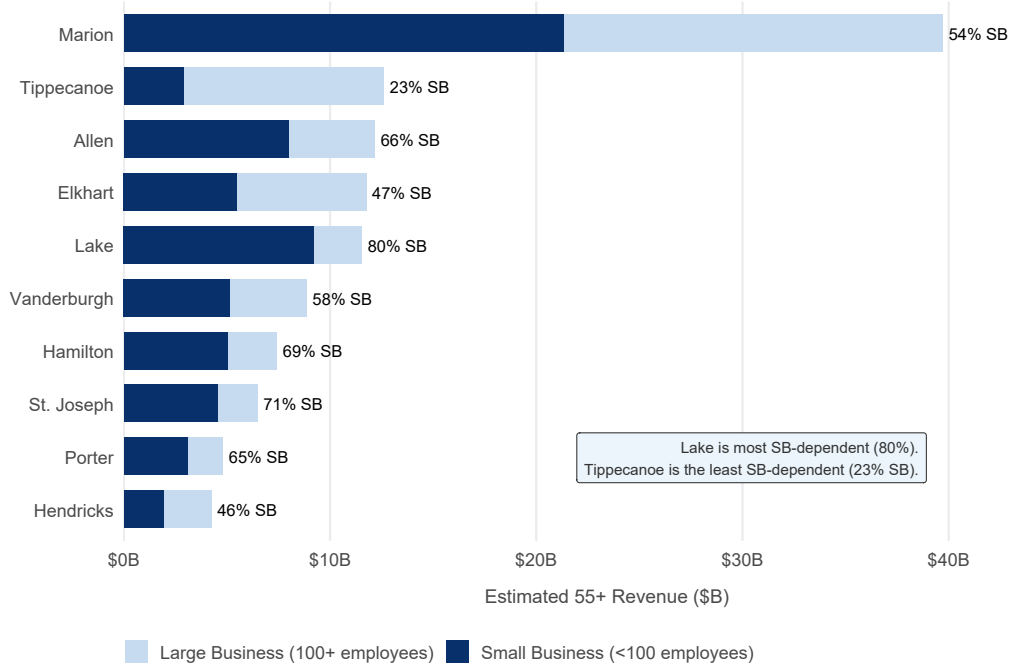
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS
Boone rises 7 spots — small businesses carry an outsized share of 55+ revenue relative to overall county rank.

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Figure 11: 55+ business revenue by small-business status, top counties

**Small vs. Large Business 55+ Revenue,
Top 10 Counties**

Sorted by total 55+ revenue; label = small business share of 55+ revenue



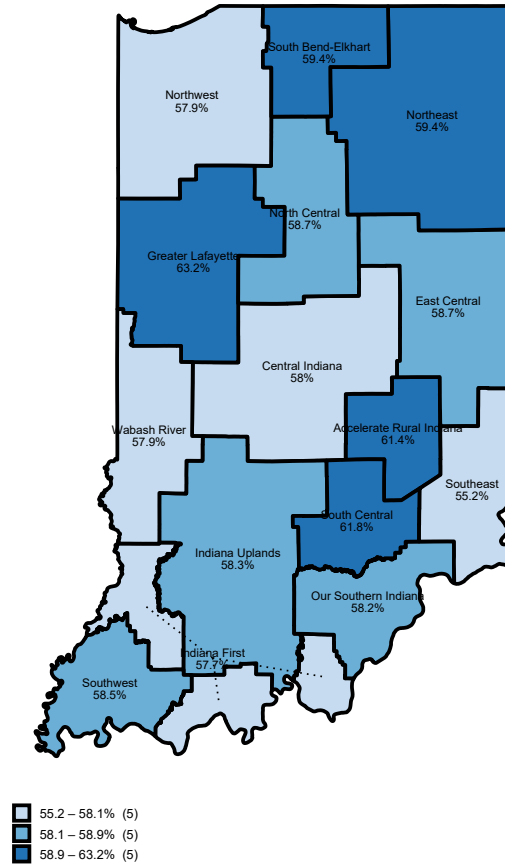
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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Figure 12: Share of READI region revenue from 55+-owned businesses

Share of READI Region Revenue from 55+-Owned Businesses

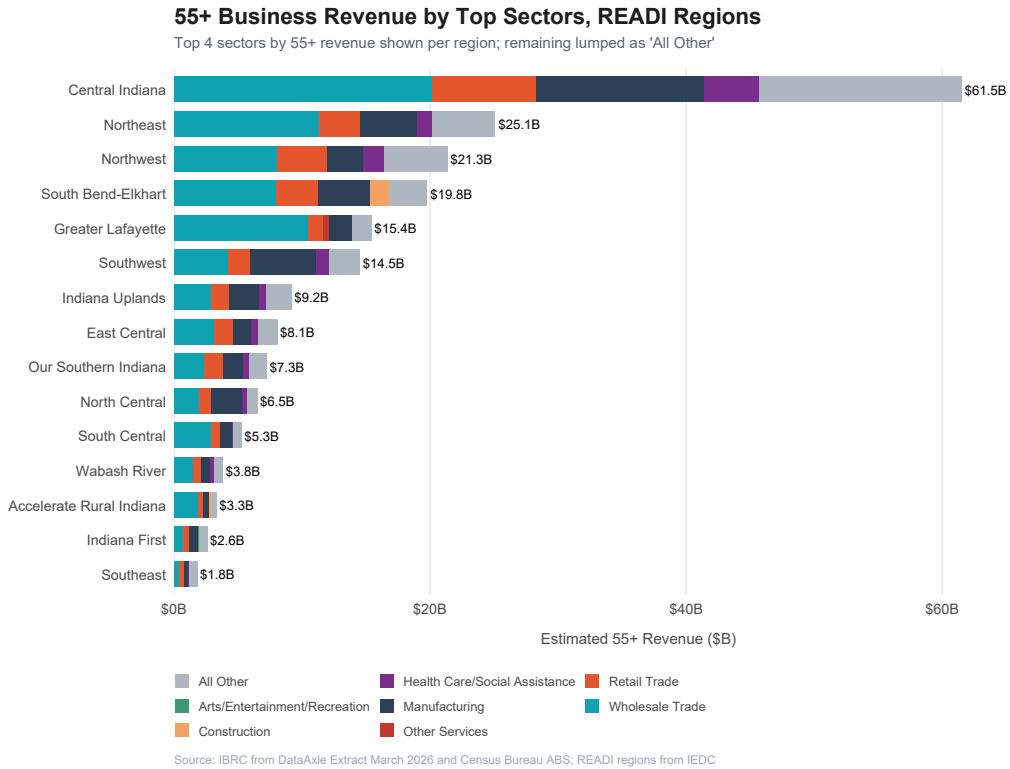
Indiana READI Regions, DataAxle Extract March 2026



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

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Figure 13: Estimated 55+ business revenue by READI region and top sector

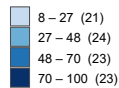
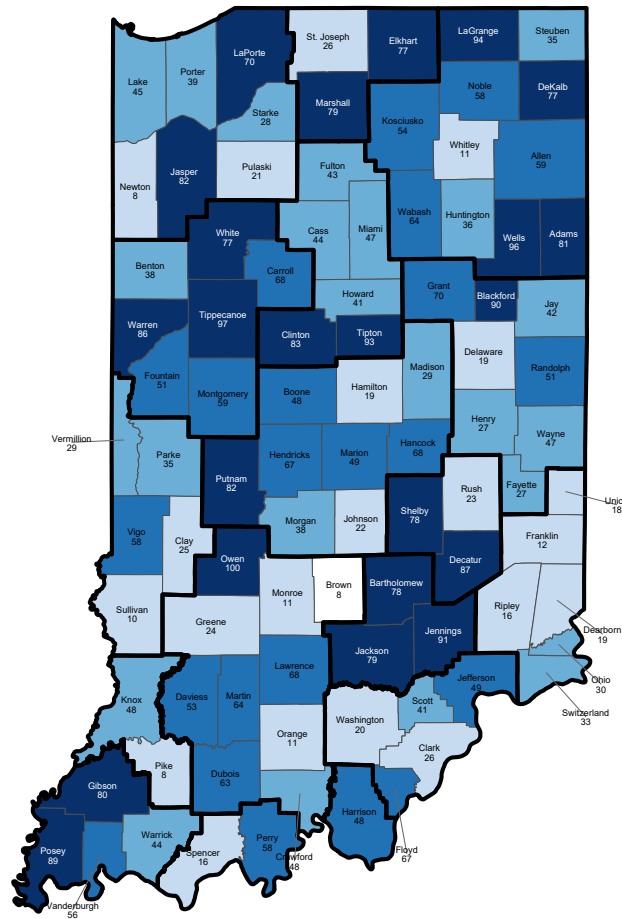


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Figure 14: County succession vulnerability index (composite percentile). Bold black borders indicate READI regions. Darker colors = higher vulnerability

Business Succession Vulnerability Index by County

Composite of 55+ revenue share, revenue at 55+-owned businesses per worker, and sector 55+ revenue concentration



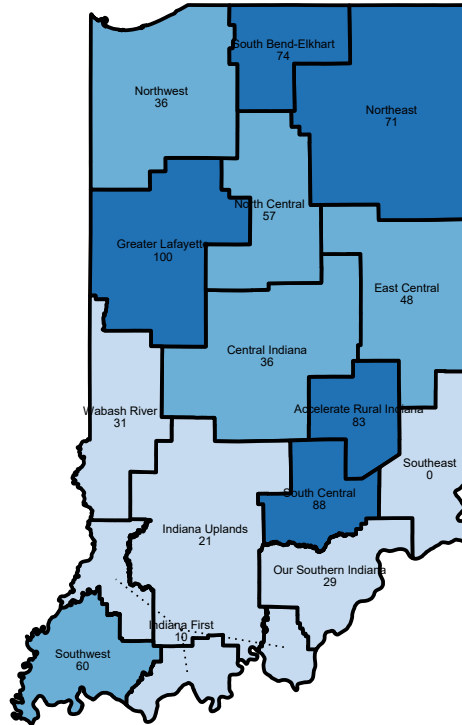
Bold black borders indicate READI regions
 Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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Figure 15: READI region succession vulnerability index (composite percentile). Darker colors = higher vulnerability

Business Succession Vulnerability Index by READI Region

Composite of 55+ revenue share, revenue at 55+-owned businesses per worker, and sector 55+ revenue concentration



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

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Figure 16: Succession risk and acquisition opportunity by READI region, ranked by composite vulnerability index

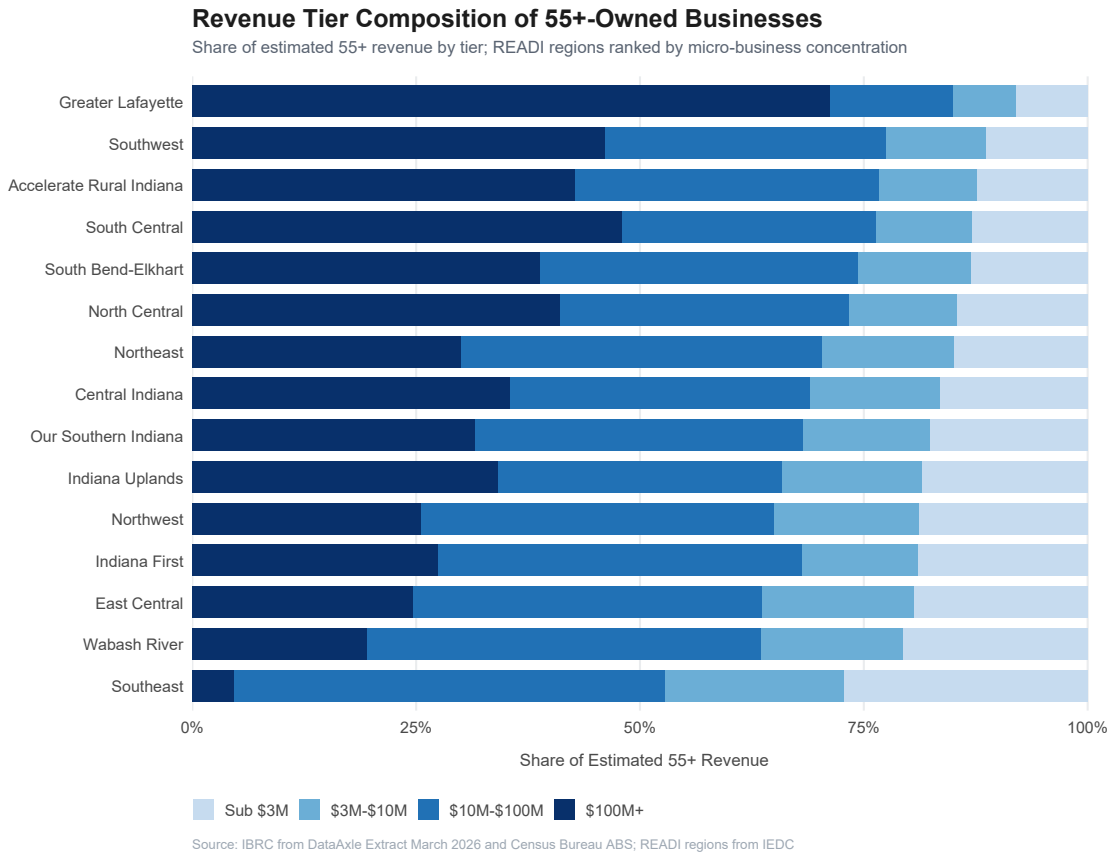
Succession Vulnerability by READI Region
Ranked by composite vulnerability index

	READI Region	Vulnerability Index (0-100)	Share of Regional Rev. from 55+ Owners	Rev. at 55+ Owned Firms per Worker (\$K)	Top-Sector Share of 55+ Revenue	Est. 55+ Revenue (\$B)
More Vulnerable	1 Greater Lafayette <i>Purdue and agri-tech</i>	100	63.2%	\$179.0K	67.5%	\$15.4B
	2 South Central <i>Precision and engine mfg., home of Cummins</i>	88	61.8%	\$138.2K	54.6%	\$5.3B
	3 Accelerate Rural Indiana <i>Rural south-central communities</i>	83	61.4%	\$130.4K	55.9%	\$3.3B
	4 South Bend-Elkhart <i>RV manufacturing capital and Notre Dame anchor</i>	74	59.4%	\$134.3K	40.0%	\$19.8B
	5 Northeast <i>Advanced manufacturing hub anchored by Fort Wayne</i>	71	59.4%	\$123.6K	45.0%	\$25.1B
	6 Southwest <i>River economy centered on Evansville metro</i>	60	58.5%	\$147.2K	35.7%	\$14.5B
	7 North Central <i>Auto parts manufacturing and agricultural services</i>	57	58.7%	\$119.2K	37.5%	\$6.5B
	8 East Central <i>Legacy auto and glass mfg., mid-sized cities</i>	48	58.7%	\$96.5K	38.2%	\$8.1B
	9 Central Indiana <i>Indiana's largest metro economy</i>	36	58.0%	\$117.1K	32.6%	\$61.5B
	10 Northwest <i>Chicago-adjacent industrial corridor</i>	36	57.9%	\$115.4K	37.4%	\$21.3B
Less Vulnerable	11 Wabash River <i>Terre Haute industrial and university corridor</i>	31	57.9%	\$104.3K	36.8%	\$3.8B
	12 Our Southern Indiana <i>Louisville-adjacent river communities</i>	29	58.2%	\$103.8K	31.3%	\$7.3B
	13 Indiana Uplands <i>IU, Crane, limestone, tourism</i>	21	58.3%	\$93.1K	31.2%	\$9.2B
	14 Indiana First <i>Rural southeast communities</i>	10	57.7%	\$96.2K	27.2%	\$2.6B
	15 Southeast <i>Rural agricultural and small-town commerce</i>	0	55.2%	\$72.6K	20.6%	\$1.8B

Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC. Vulnerability index = average percentile rank of 55+ revenue share, revenue per worker at 55+-owned businesses, and top-sector concentration. Bar widths scaled to the maximum value across all 15 regions within each column.

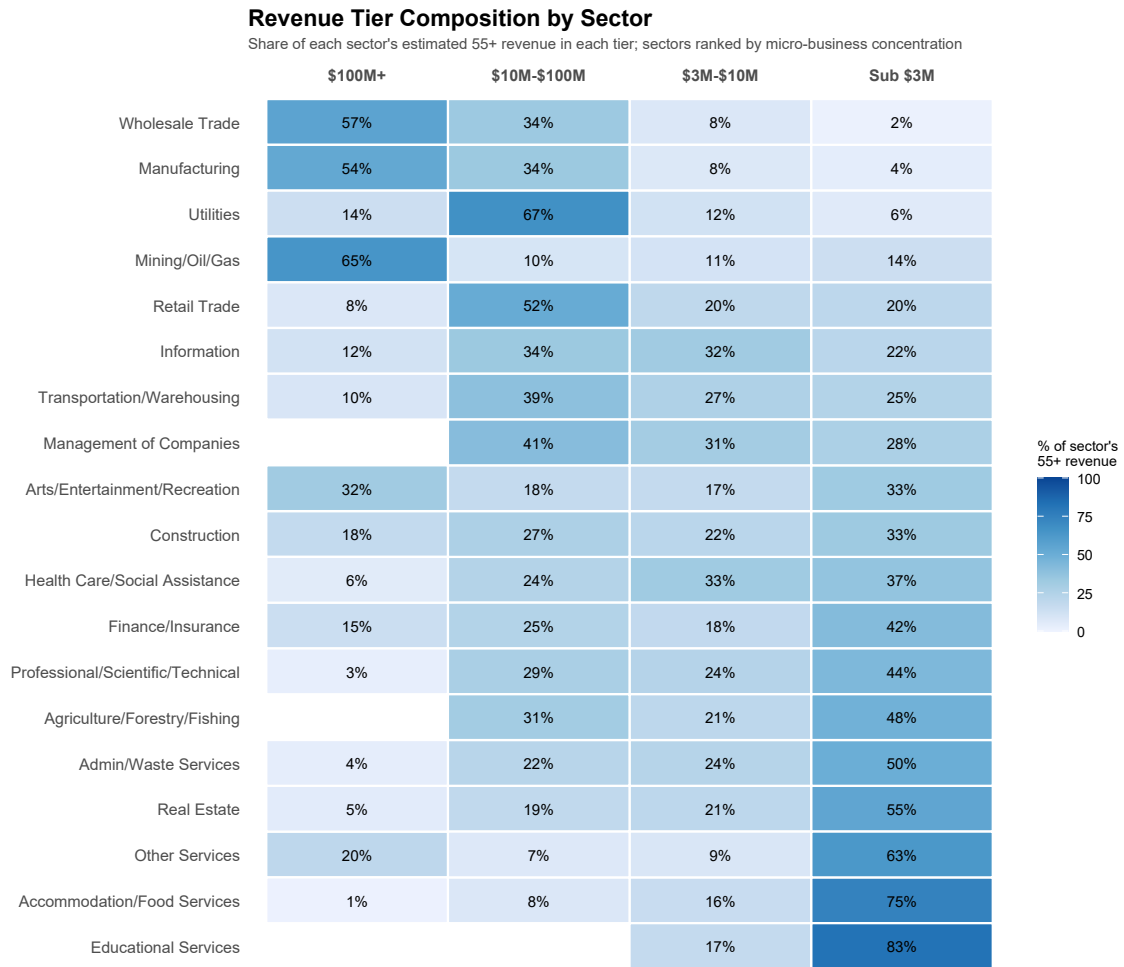
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Figure 17: Revenue tier composition of 55+-owned businesses by READI region, ranked by share in sub-\$3M very small businesses



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Figure 18: Revenue tier composition by NAICS sector: share of each sector's estimated statewide 55+ revenue in each tier



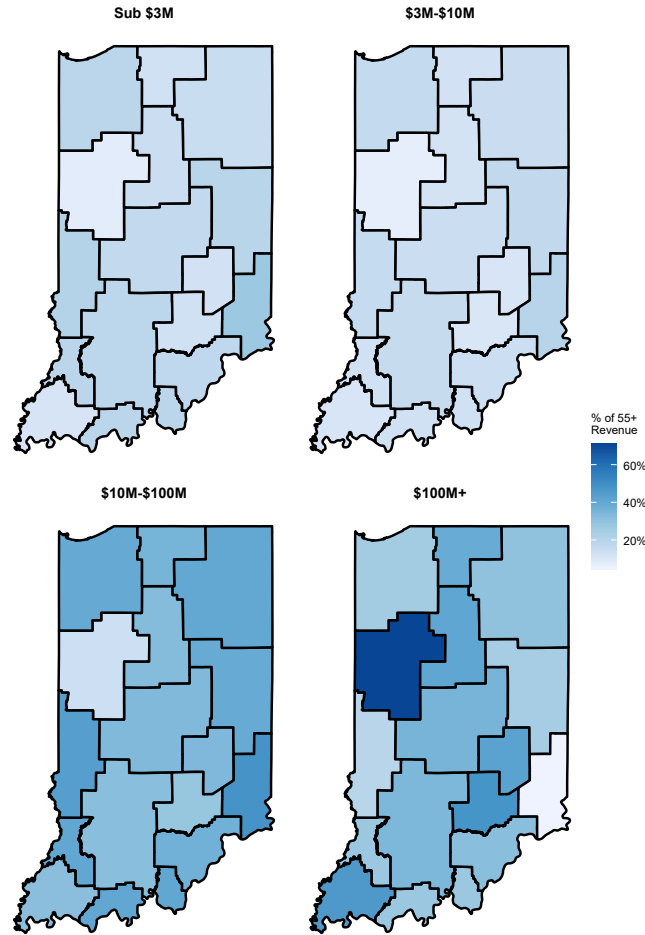
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS

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Figure 19: Share of 55+ revenue by tier across READI regions. Each panel shows the share of a region's estimated 55+ revenue falling in that tier.

Share of 55+ Revenue by Tier, READI Regions

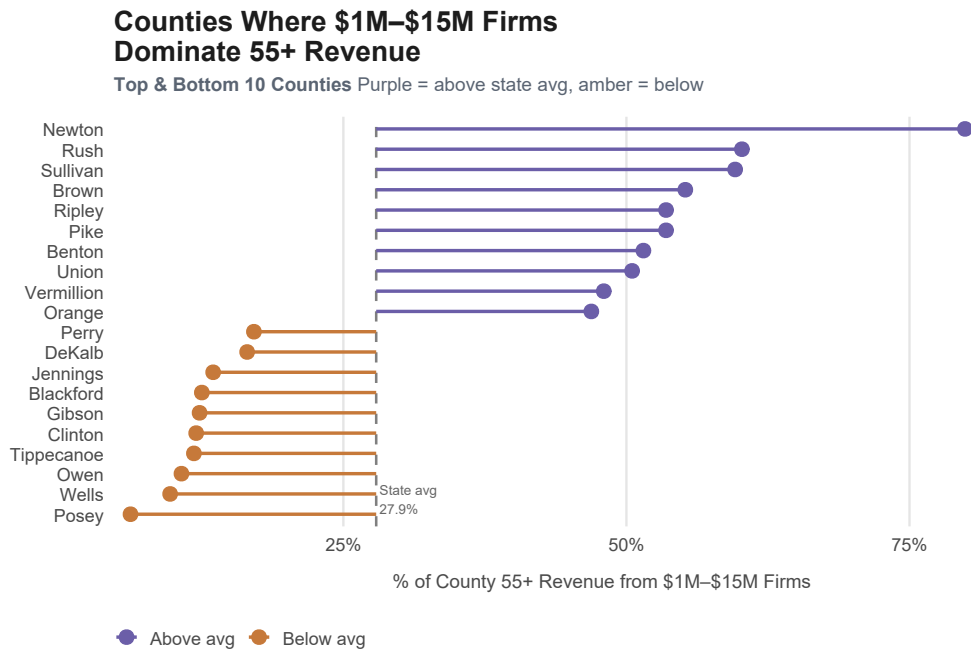
Each panel: share of a READI region's estimated 55+ revenue falling in that tier.



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC

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Figure 20: Top and bottom 10 counties by share of 55+ revenue from \$1M–\$15M acquisition-target firms



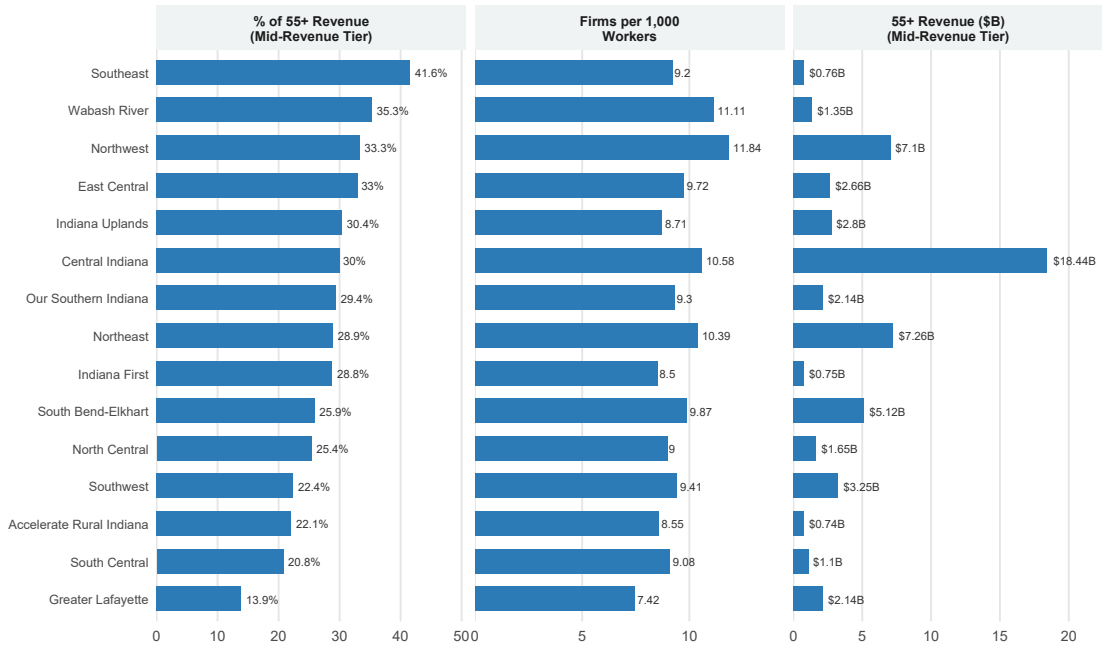
Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS 55+ ownership estimated via ABS age apportionment. The \$1M–\$15M revenue tier is the core 'acquisition entrepreneur' market — firms large enough to sustain a new owner but typically below institutional private equity thresholds. The owner-operated \$1M–\$15M firm is underleveraged, often unrepresented by sophisticated brokers, and typically motivated by retirement rather than maximizing sale price. Entrepreneurship-through-acquisition (ETA) research identifies this segment as the most active for small business succession through direct ownership transfer. See (Ruback & Yudkoff, 2017; Kelly & Heston, 2024; Boumgarden et al., 2024).

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Figure 21: Entrepreneurship-through-acquisition target tier by READI region: share of 55+ revenue, firms per 1,000 workers, and absolute revenue

Entrepreneurship-by-Acquisition Target Tier by READI Region

\$1M-\$15M 55+-owned firms: share of revenue, density, and absolute dollars



Source: IBRC from DataAxle Extract March 2026 and Census Bureau ABS; READI regions from IEDC. Firms per 1,000 workers is a size-adjusted measure of succession transition opportunity density. The \$1M-\$15M revenue tier is the core 'acquisition entrepreneur' market — firms large enough to sustain a new owner but typically below institutional private equity thresholds. The owner-operated \$1M-\$15M firm is underleveraged, often unrepresented by sophisticated brokers, and typically motivated by retirement rather than maximizing sale price. Entrepreneurship-through-acquisition (ETA) research identifies this segment as the most active for small business succession through direct ownership transfer. See (Ruback & Yudkoff, 2017; Kelly & Heston, 2024; Boumgarden et al., 2024).

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