Metro and Nonmetro Counties in Georgia

Based on the most recent listing of core based statistical areas by the Office of Management and Budget (December 2005), 70 counties in Georgia are part of metropolitan areas, and 31 counties are part of micropolitan areas. The micropolitan category defines counties that include an urban area with a population of 10,000 to 49,999 plus surrounding counties that are linked through commuting ties. These areas often represent important economic and trade centers in rural areas. The remaining 58 counties in Georgia are considered noncore counties. Using these classifications and the population estimates for 2005, 80.8 percent of Georgia residents live in metropolitan areas, 10.2 percent live in micropolitan areas, and 9.0 percent live in noncore areas.
Population

Georgia’s population in 2005 was 9,072,576, up 10.8 percent from the 2000 Census. During the 1990s, the population in Georgia increased by 26.4 percent. Nationally, population increased 13.1 percent during the 1990s, and 5.3 percent from April 2000 to July 2005. The population growth in metro areas of Georgia outpaced the nonmetro areas in both time periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Change in Population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmetropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

During the 1990s, only 8 counties in Georgia lost population (2 metro and 6 nonmetro counties.) The fastest growth during this time was in Forsyth County (123.2%) and Henry County (103.2%), both in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta Metropolitan Area.

From 2000 to 2005, 34 counties in Georgia lost population (9 metro and 25 nonmetro counties). The fastest growth during this period was again in Forsyth County (42.7%) and Henry County (40.6%).
The Economic Research Service, USDA, classifies counties as population loss counties if they experienced population loss from 1980 to 1990 and from 1990 to 2000. In Georgia, 8 counties are classified as population loss counties.

**ERS County Typology: Population Loss Counties**

"number of residents declined both between the 1980 and 1990 censuses and between the 1990 and 2000 censuses " (ERS, USDA)

- ERS Population Loss Counties
- Other Counties

Source: Economic Research Service, USDA
Map prepared by RUPRI

**Race / Ethnicity**

The population in Georgia is 66.4 percent white and 29.6 percent African American. Nationally, the population is 80.4 percent white and 12.8 percent African American (2004 Census Bureau population estimates).

**Racial Composition of the Population in Georgia and the U.S., 2004**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates
Within Georgia, the metropolitan population is 65.2 percent white and 30.2 percent African American. The micropolitan population is 70.7 percent white and 27.7 percent African American, and the noncore population is 71.9 percent white and 26.8 percent African American.

The map to the right shows the counties with a nonwhite majority population. In most of these counties, the African American population accounts for the majority of the population. In Muscogee and Liberty Counties, no race makes up a majority of population.

People of Hispanic origin make up 6.8 percent of Georgia’s population, compared to 14.1 percent of the total U.S. population. Many areas have experienced significant growth in the Hispanic population over the past decade and a half. The map to the right shows the counties in which the Hispanic population more than doubled during the 1990s.
Age

The age distribution of the metro and nonmetro population in Georgia is shown in the chart below. The percent of the population in the 25 to 44 age groups is greater in the metro areas, while the percent of the population age 55 and over is greater in the nonmetro areas.

The Economic Research Service classifies counties as retirement destination counties based on population change due to inmigration. In Georgia, 37 counties are classified as retirement destination counties.
Educational Attainment

The percent of the population age 25 and over that has earned a Bachelor’s Degree or higher is 24.4 percent in the U.S. and 24.3 percent in Georgia. In metro areas of Georgia, this percentage is 27.3 percent, compared to only 12.6 percent in nonmetro areas.

The chart to the right compares the educational attainment of Georgia’s metro and nonmetro populations. The percent of the population with high educational attainment (B.S. or higher) is greater in the metro areas, while the percent of the population with lower educational attainment (high school degree or lower) is greater in the nonmetro areas.

The Economic Research Service classifies counties as low employment counties if “25 percent or more of residents 25-64 years old had neither a high school diploma nor GED in 2000.” In Georgia, 84 counties are classified as low education counties.
Poverty

The poverty rate in Georgia in 2003 was 13.3 percent, compared to 12.5 percent for the U.S. (Census Bureau estimates). Within Georgia, the 2003 poverty rate ranged from 5.2 percent in Fayette County to 24.7 percent in Calhoun County.

The Economic Research Service classifies counties as persistent poverty counties if they experienced poverty rates of 20 percent or higher in each census from 1970 through 2000. There are 386 persistent poverty counties in the U.S., and 50 are located in Georgia. The majority of the persistent poverty counties in Georgia (43 of 50) are nonmetro counties.
Health Services

The designation of areas or populations as medically underserved is based on an index of four variables - the ratio of primary care physicians per 1,000 population, the infant mortality rate, the percent of the population with incomes below the poverty level, and the percent of the population age 65 and over (Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS). Within Georgia, many areas of the state are considered medically underserved, shown in the map below.

Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are those areas that “may have shortages of primary medical care, dental or mental health providers and may be urban or rural areas, population groups, or medical or other public facilities” (Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS). Within Georgia, many areas in the state are designated as primary care HPSAs for the total or low income populations.
**Per Capita Income**

Per capita income trends in Georgia have mirrored national trends over the past several decades. In 2004, per capita income in Georgia was $29,782, compared to $33,050 for the U.S.

Nonmetro per capita income in Georgia has lagged behind metro per capita income over the past several decades. In 2004, metro per capita income was $31,534, compared to $22,497 in nonmetro areas.

The per capita income gap is measured with nonmetro per capita income as a percent of metro per capita income. In Georgia the gap was at its smallest in 1973 and at its largest in 2000. In 2004, nonmetro per capita income was 71.3 percent of metro per capita income.
Within Georgia, 2004 per capita income ranged from $16,207 in Wheeler County to $46,699 in Fulton County. Twenty-two counties, the majority of them (17) nonmetro, had per capita income less than $20,000 in 2004.

Transfer payments include retirement and disability payments, social security benefits, public assistance, and medical benefits. In Georgia, 13 counties incomes’ rely heavily on transfer payments. In these counties, shown in the map below, transfer payments account for over 30 percent of total personal income in the county. All of these counties are nonmetro.
Employment Structure

In 2004, government and government enterprises accounted for the largest shares of employment in Georgia (14.8%) and the U.S. (13.9%). Retail trade was the second largest employment sector both in Georgia (10.9%) and the U.S. (11.0%).

The ERS Economic Typology classifies counties into one of five industry categories of specialization or as nonspecialized. The map to the right shows the classification of Georgia counties by this typology, illustrating the diversity in the state.
Unemployment

The unemployment rate in Georgia in 2005 was 5.3 percent, compared to 5.1 percent for the U.S. Within Georgia, the 2005 unemployment rate ranged from 3.1 percent in Oconee County to 11.0 percent in Chattahoochee County.

The Economic Research Service classifies counties as low employment counties if “less than 65 percent of residents 21 to 64 years old were employed in 2000.” Twenty six counties in Georgia are classified as low employment counties, 6 metro and 20 nonmetro counties.

ERS County Typology: Low Employment Counties

“less than 65 percent of residents 21-64 years old were employed in 2000” (ERS, USDA)

Source: Economic Research Service, USDA
Map prepared by RUPRI
Agriculture

Agriculture is an important industry in several parts of the state, and 23 counties are classified by the Economic Research Service as farming dependent (see map on page 11). The map below shows the value of agricultural products sold in 2002 for Georgia counties. In 14 counties, the value was over $100 million.

Average farm size in Georgia is 218 acres, and just under 10 percent of farms in the state are 500 acres or larger.
Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an important component to economic development today. Unfortunately, data that allow us to measure entrepreneurial activity and trends is difficult to ascertain, particularly at the county level. The CFED Development Report Card for the States rates each state on its entrepreneurial energy, “evaluating the extent to which new firms are generated and whether they are contributing to employment growth.” While this is a state-level ranking, it provides useful insight as to how a state is performing. Georgia’s ranking is “C”.

As mentioned, county level indicators of entrepreneurship are difficult to ascertain, but a good indicator is the proportion of workers that are self employed. The map below shows self employed workers as a percent of nonfarm private employment in the county.
Nonmetro Recreation Counties

The Economic Research Service’s classification of nonmetro recreation counties captures the recreational opportunities and development in many rural parts of the nation. The classification is based on a number of factors, including employment and income derived from recreation-related activities, seasonal housing units within the county, and receipts from hotels and motels. Nationally, 334 counties are classified as nonmetro recreation counties, and 6 are located in Georgia. Counties that were nonmetro in 1993 or in 2003 are classified. McIntosh and Glynn Counties were nonmetro in the 1993 classifications.
**Data Sources and References**

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http://www.bls.gov/lau/home.htm

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http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Rurality/Typology/

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http://www.bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/

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http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/bulletins/fy05/b05-02.html

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**U.S. Census Bureau**

Census 2000  

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http://www.census.gov/popest/estimates.php

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http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/metrodef.html

Nonemployer Statistics  
http://www.census.gov/epcd/nonemployer/

Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates  
http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe/saipe.html
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