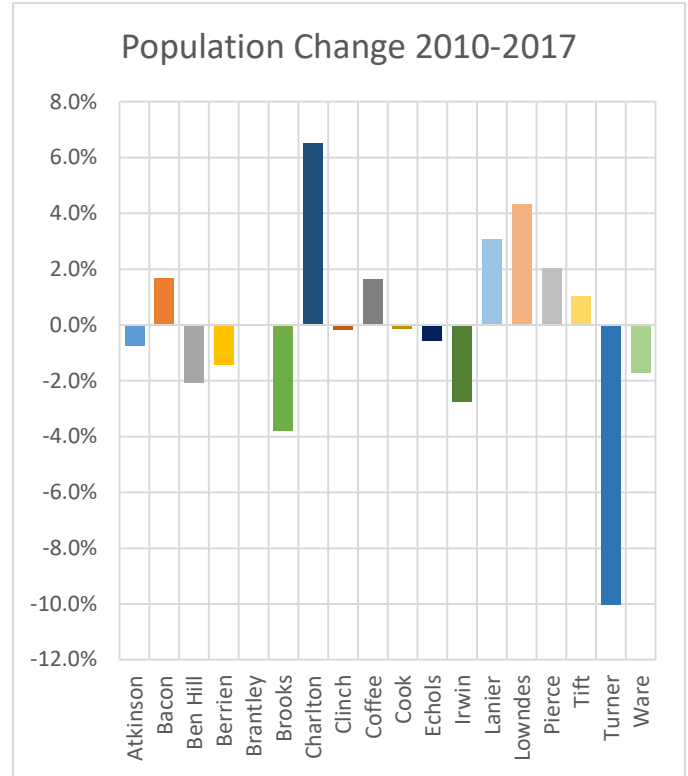
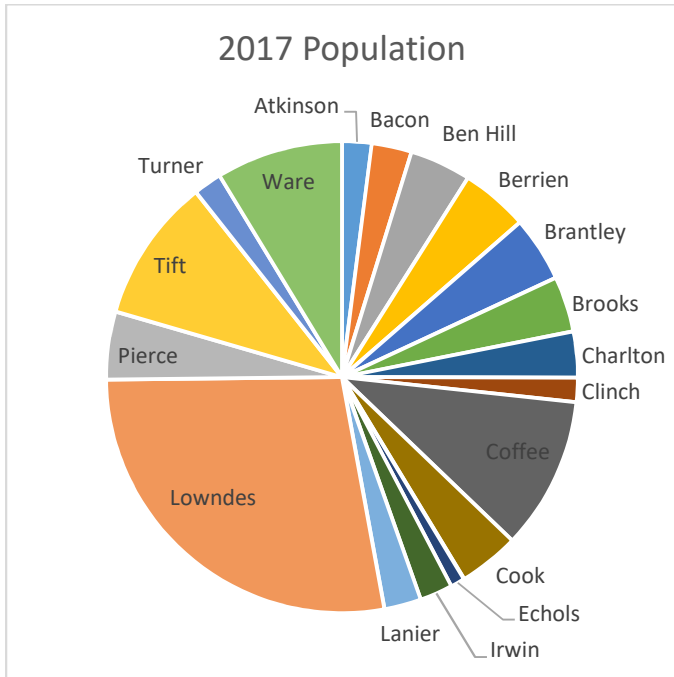


STATE OF THE REGION REPORT – APRIL 2019

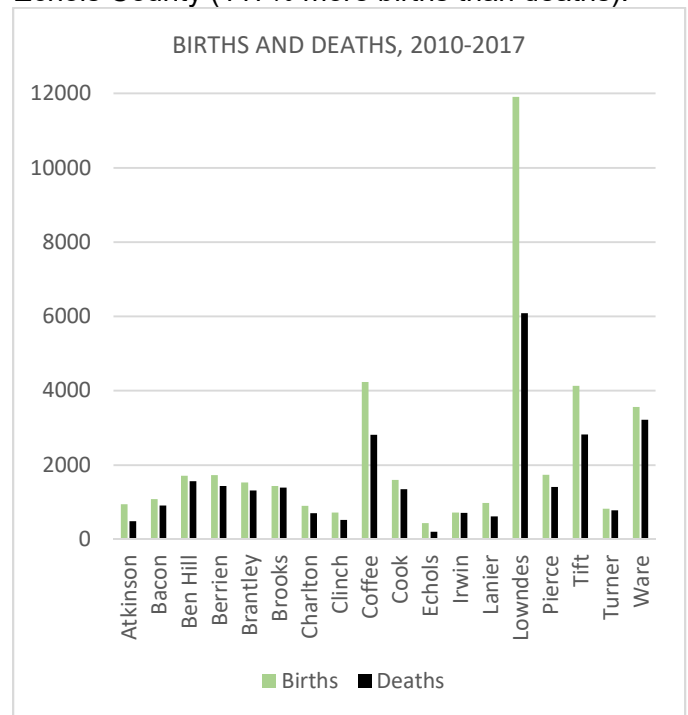
POPULATION

The Regional Population is stable, showing an increase of 1.1% since the 2010 Census.

- The Region’s total population (per the 2017 estimate, which is the most recent available) is **410,921**. This is a **1.1%** increase since the 2010 census and a **12.6%** increase since 2000.
- County populations range from **4,011** (Echols) to **113,941** (Lowndes).
- The largest city in the Region is Valdosta (**56,036**). The smallest city is Du Pont (**160**).

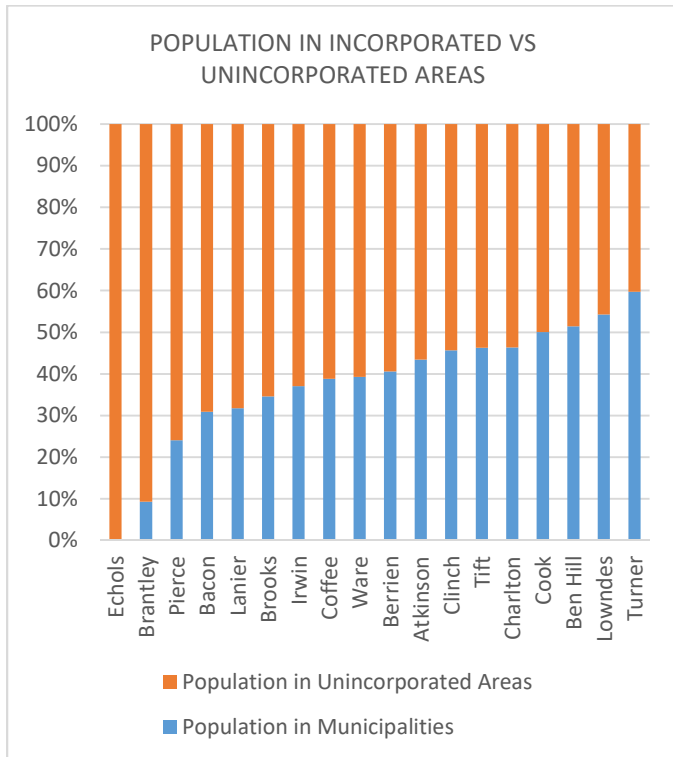


From 2010 to 2017, the region saw a natural increase (births minus deaths) of **11,830**. There were an estimated 40,194 births and 28,364 deaths. All counties had more births than deaths, ranging from Irwin County (1% more births than deaths) to Echols County (117% more births than deaths).



Incorporated & Unincorporated Areas

42.8% of the Region's population is in incorporated cities/towns. This ranges from **0%** (Echols County, with no incorporated cities) to **60%** (Turner County). The remaining **57.2%** of the Region's population is in unincorporated areas.



Latest Population Estimates

The most recent population estimates from the Census Bureau are for the year 2017. The Census Bureau updates its estimates retroactively, so these 2017 numbers are different in some cases from those in last year's report.

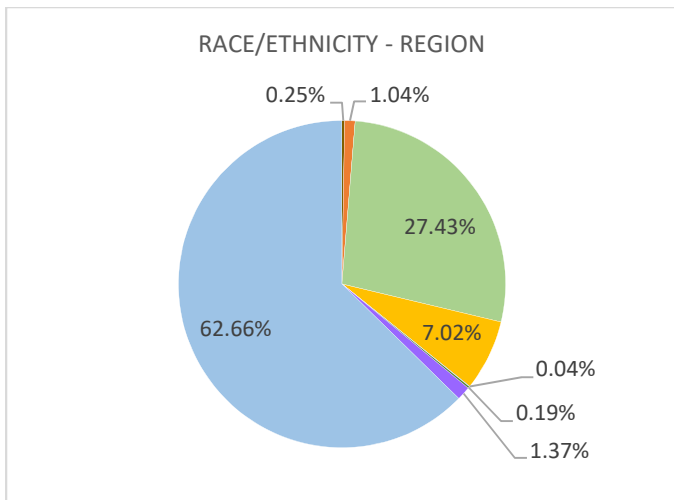
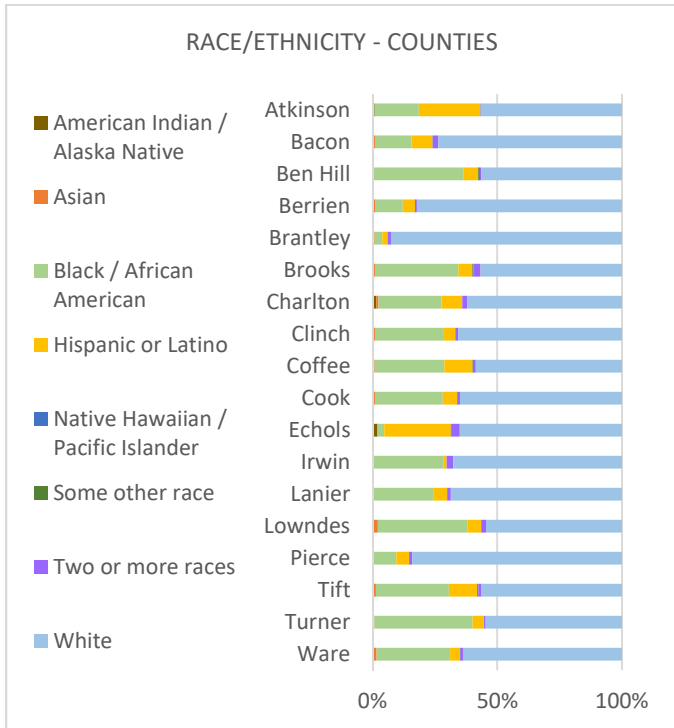
County	2017 Population	County	2017 Population
Atkinson	8,313	Cook	17,190
Bacon	11,279	Echols	4,011
Ben Hill	17,272	Irwin	9,278
Berrien	19,014	Lanier	10,388
Brantley	18,411	Lowndes	113,941
Brooks	15,629	Pierce	19,141
Charlton	12,963	Tift	40,531
Clinch	6,788	Turner	8,036
Coffee	43,048	Ware	35,688

City	2017 Population
Adel	5,291
Alapaha	874
Alma	3,484
Ambrose	401
Argyle	205
Ashburn	3,716
Barwick	339
Blackshear	3,526
Broxton	922
Cecil	387
Dasher	903
Douglas	11,566
Du Pont	160
Enigma	906
Fargo	279
Fitzgerald	8,884
Folkston	5,067
Hahira	2,894
Hoboken	803
Homeland	942
Homerville	2,455
Lakeland	3,296
Lake Park	872
Lenox	727
Morven	737
Nahunta	915
Nashville	4,826
Nicholls	3,835
Ocilla	3,436
Offerman	514
Omega	1,305
Patterson	562
Pavo	567
Pearson	2,131
Quitman	3,764
Ray City	1,108
Rebecca	289
Remerton	1,167
Sparks	2,200
Sycamore	796
Tifton	16,568
Ty Ty	885
Valdosta	56,036
Waycross	14,009
Willacoochee	1,483

RACE AND ETHNICITY

(2017 data)

Diversity is increasing in the Region, as nearly half of the municipalities are Minority-Majority.

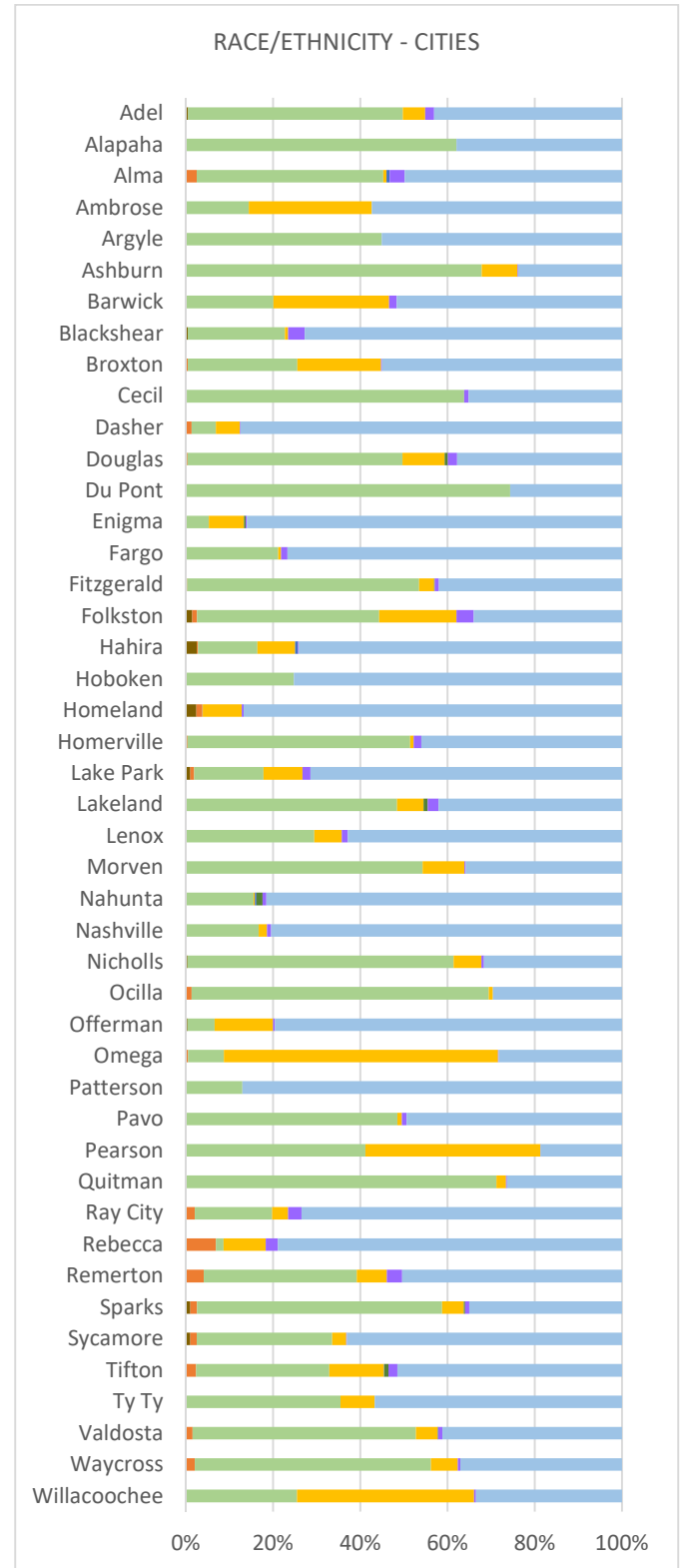


(For color legend, see the bar chart above.)

Overall, the region's population is 63% White, 27% Black/African American, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 1.4% two or more races, 1% Asian, 0.25% American

Indian/Alaska Native, 0.19% some other race, and 0.04% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

22 of the 45 municipalities in the region are minority-majority.



(For color legend, see the bar chart on the left.)

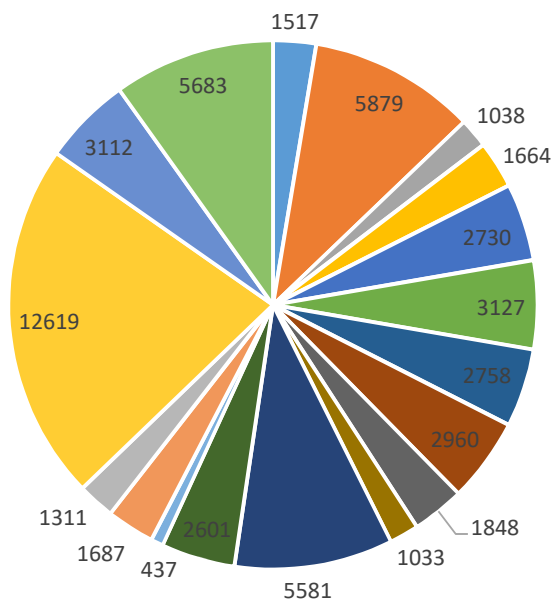
AGE GROUPS

(2017 data)

The senior population in the region is increasing, notably in Blackshear and Nahunta where 25% of the residents are 65+.

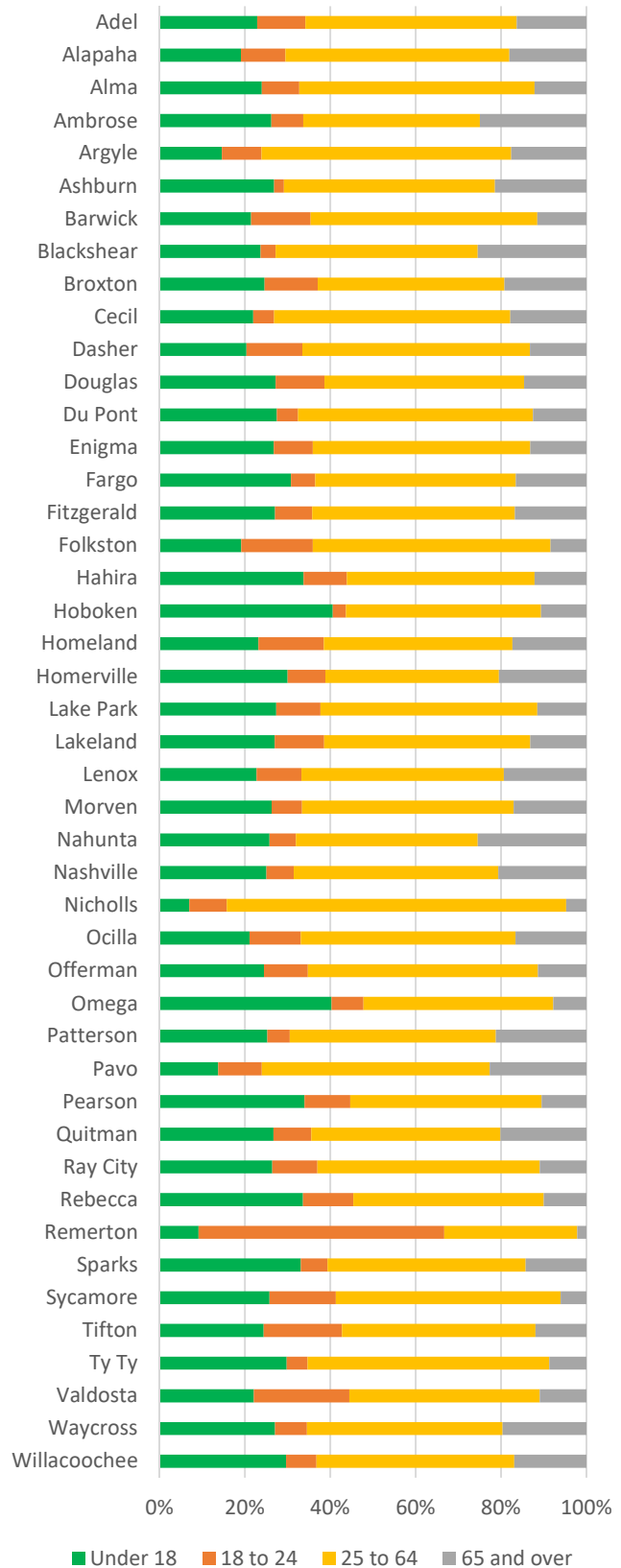
- Overall, the region's population is 24% under age 18, 11% ages 18 to 24, 50% ages 25 to 64, and 14% age 65 or older.
- The city with the greatest 18-to-24-year-old share of the population is Remerton (58%).
- The cities with the highest proportion of residents age 65+ are Blackshear and Nahunta (both 25%). Lowndes County has the greatest overall population of residents age 65+ (12,619).

65+ POPULATION BY COUNTY



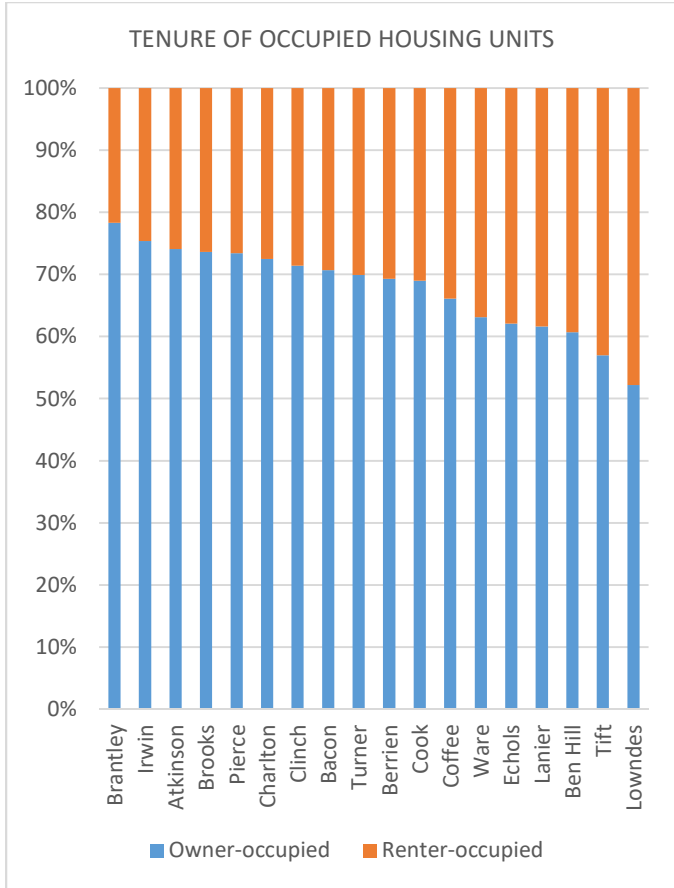
- Turner
- Ware
- Atkinson
- Bacon
- Ben Hill
- Berrien
- Brantley
- Brooks
- Charlton
- Clinch
- Coffee
- Cook
- Echols
- Irwin
- Lanier
- Lowndes
- Pierce
- Tift

AGE GROUPS - CITIES (2017 EST.)

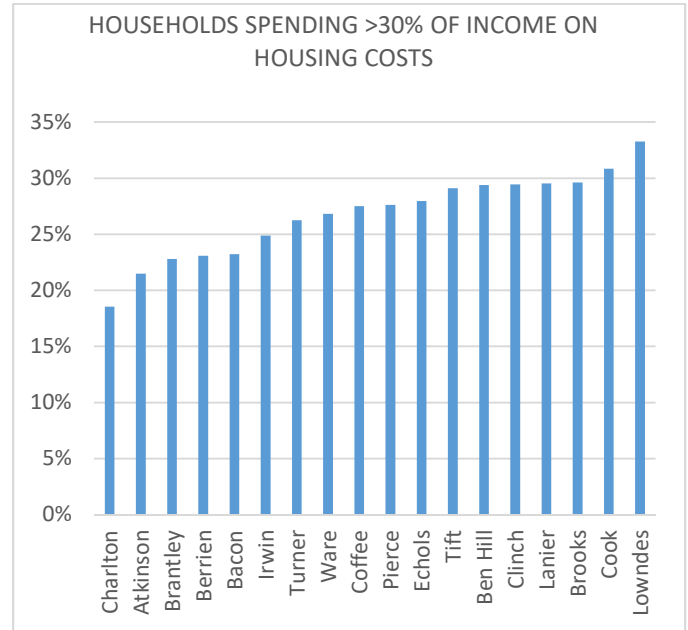


HOUSING

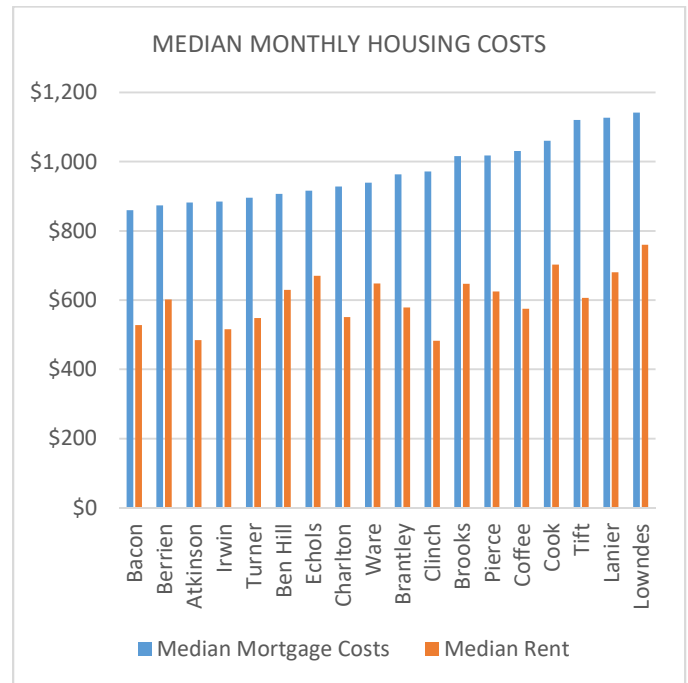
The bulk of the housing in the Region is owner-occupied (63%) and the majority of the region is not cost-burdened (spending more than 30% of income on housing).



Region-wide, **37%** of occupied housing units are rentals, and **63%** are owner-occupied. Ownership rates range from **52% (Lowndes)** to **78% (Brantley)**.



A common rule of thumb is that no more than 30% of income should be spent on housing. In the region, **29%** of households spend over 30% of their income on housing. This ranges from **19%** of the population (**Charlton**) to **33%** of the population (**Lowndes**).



Median monthly mortgage costs range from **\$860 (Bacon)** to **\$1142 (Lowndes)**, while median rent ranges from **\$483 (Clinch)** to **\$760 (Lowndes)**.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

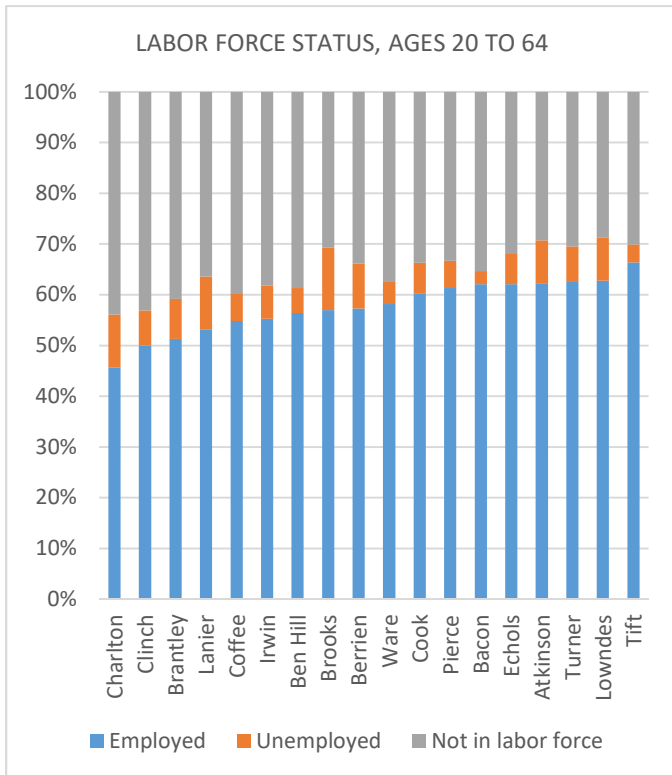
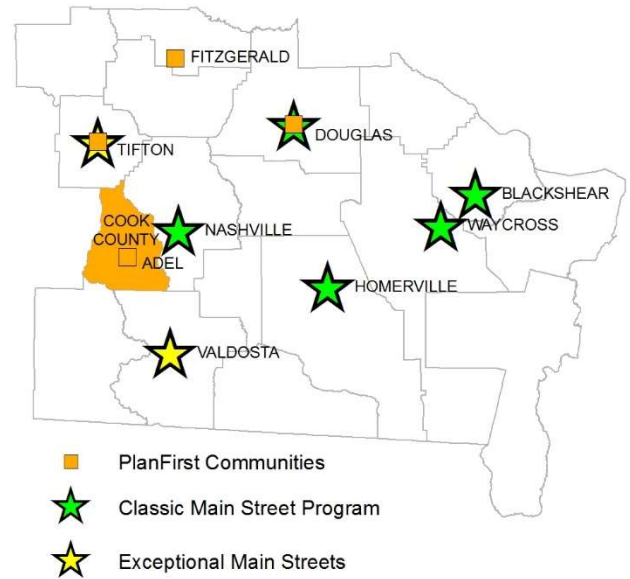
The Region takes a proactive role in attracting economic development opportunities, evidenced by the many active Development Authorities, Main Street programs, and PlanFirst Communities.

The following are some major new developments in the region during the past year:

- Polar Beverage opened a new 50,000-square-foot distribution center in Ben Hill County.
- An \$18-million expansion of GATX’s railcar cleaning facility is underway in Ware County.
- New businesses coming to Lowndes County include Metal Benderz (a \$5-million investment creating 50 jobs), CJB Applied Technologies, and Virtual World Technologies.

- Among adults aged 20 to 64, the percent employed ranges from 46% (Charlton) to 66% (Tift).
- Unemployment rates range from 3% (Bacon) to 12% (Brooks).

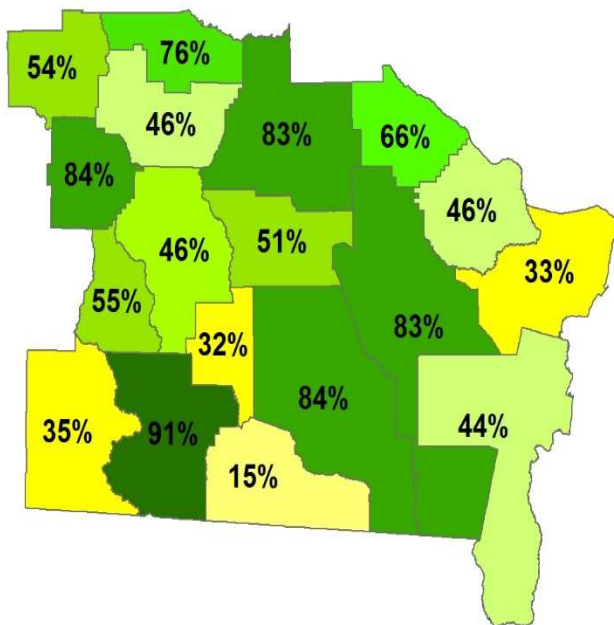
MAIN STREET AND PLANFIRST COMMUNITIES



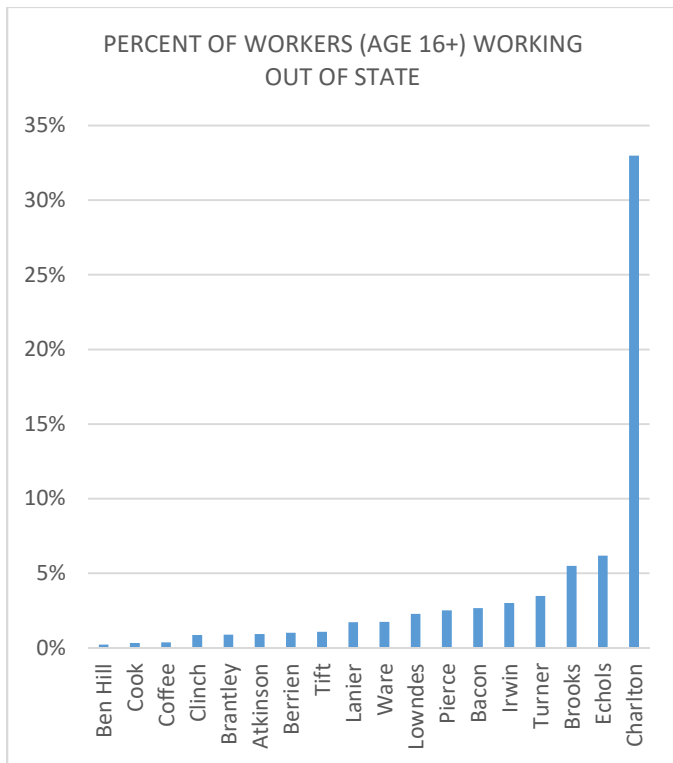
Proactive planning and cultivation of local businesses can infuse great energy into local economies. The region now has 7 communities recognized by the Georgia Main Street program, and 5 PlanFirst communities designated by the Department of Community Affairs (see the map above).

PLACE OF WORK

PERCENT OF WORKERS (AGE 16+) WHO WORK IN THEIR COUNTY OF RESIDENCE

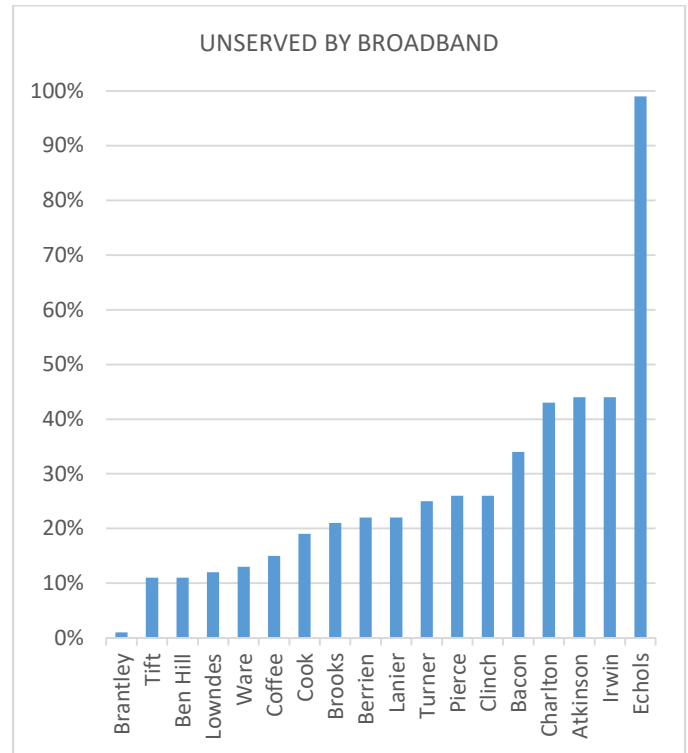


The percentage of workers who live in a county, and work in that same county, ranges from 15% (Echols) to 91% (Lowndes). The percentage of workers employed out-of-state also varies greatly (see below).



BROADBAND

There is a need for more reliable Broadband service in the Region at higher speeds.

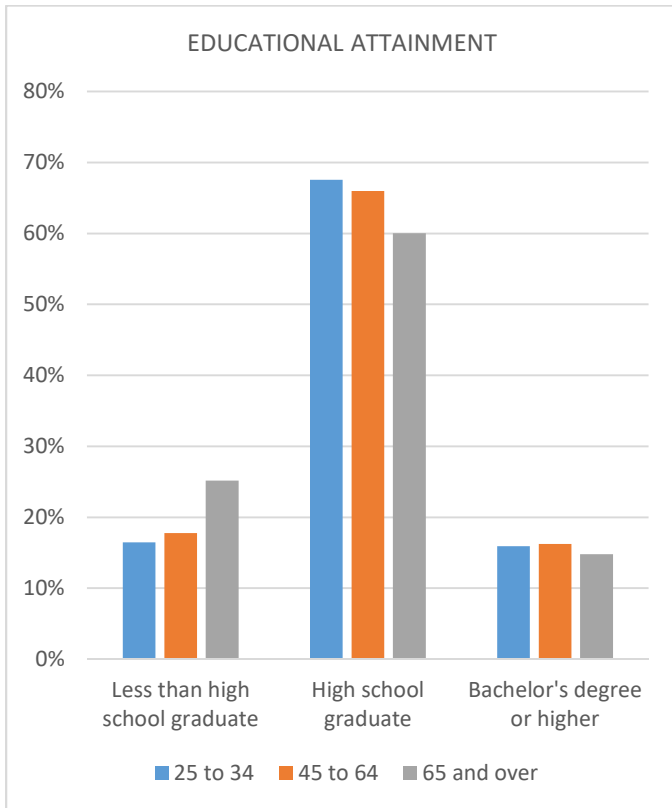


An estimated 23.2% of households in Georgia do not have a broadband internet subscription. While some of these households may choose not to have a subscription, availability and bandwidth/speed may be deciding factors. Unserved areas (*defined as not having broadband of at least 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up for at least one consumer in a census block*) in this region range from under 1% (**Brantley**) to 99% (**Echols**).

Even though Brantley County (and other areas not identified as unserved) is considered well-served, updated technology and business needs may require bandwidth of 1 gigabit per second (1 Gbps) or greater. Hospitals, libraries, and schools are some of the entities increasingly reliant on internet availability, bandwidth, and reliability.

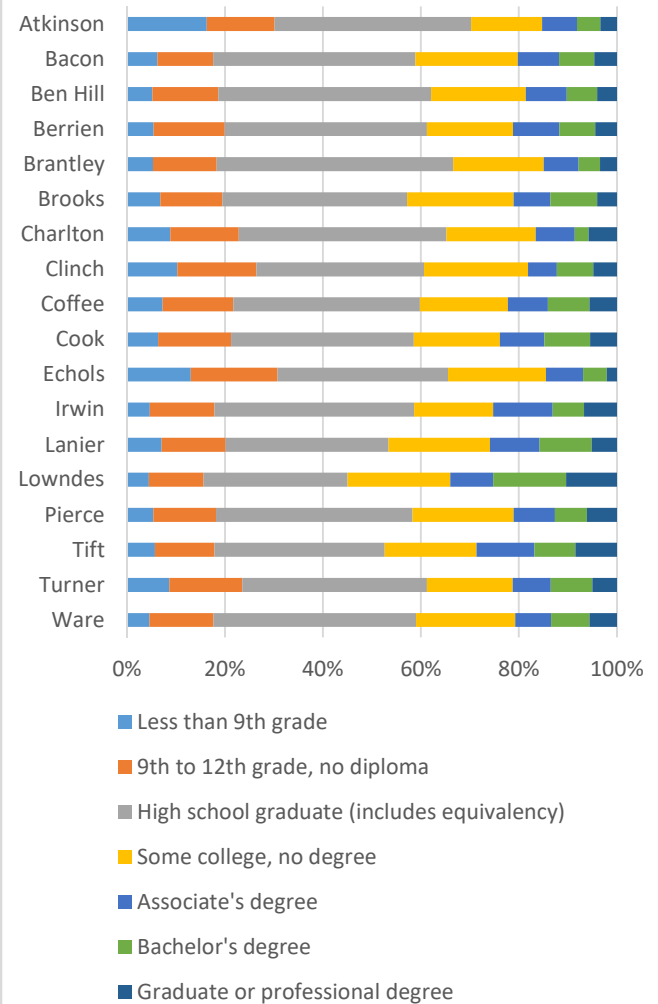
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Levels of education are increasing amongst those aged 25-34, typically referred to as the Millennial Generation.



- Levels of educational attainment in the region are trending towards being higher among younger adults. Region-wide, 75% of those age 65 and over are high school graduates, while among those aged 25 to 34, 84% graduated.
- Technical schools are a growing resource for education and training. Wiregrass Georgia Technical College enrollment currently stands at 5,810, a 66% increase since January 2018. Coastal Pines Technical College increased enrollment by 22 percent from 2015 to 2017 (with 4,313 students in 2017), and their dual enrollment program increased by 138% during the same time period.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR ADULTS AGE 25+



Data Sources

- Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 estimates – www.census.gov
- Georgia Trend*, April 2019.
- Georgia Fixed Internet Service - Federal Communications Commission Form 477 Data Set (Dec. 2017, V.1)
- Anderson, Duane. Fiber-Optic Internet In the United States at a Glance *Broadband Now*. Last modified February 21, 2019. Accessed April 11, 2019. <https://broadbandnow.com/Fiber>.

For questions or to obtain more information on this report, contact Local Government Services staff at (229) 333-5277.