



2025 ACS Data Users Conference

Using the ACS and Public Data Sources to Map Public Benefits Access and Barriers in Georgia

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Motivation – Research

- Our research team is conducting a mixed-methods study to capture families' experiences with Georgia's child care subsidy program.
- To inform our study design and outreach, we sought to understand more about where families who may be eligible for subsidies live across the state.
 - Allows us to target areas where families who qualify for our study are.
 - Tells us whether certain priority populations may be harder to reach.
- We also explored challenges families may face when accessing child care subsidies or applying.
- Our findings could inform our partner agency's service delivery efforts.

Motivation – Presentation

- Many agencies are trying to maximize their resources and ensure their systems meet the needs of the people they are trying to serve.
- Beyond the context of our partner agency, the approach we used could help other agencies learn more about the populations they seek to serve and the challenges those populations might face.
- We use publicly available data sources – including, but not limited to, the ACS – and easy analytic techniques that many agencies could easily adopt.
- In this presentation, we show examples as a model for how other agencies can use this approach to examine questions about their own benefit programs.
- In our accompanying reports, we also link to public data sources that can be useful and explain our analyses in easy-to-follow steps.

Child Care Subsidies

- Child care subsidies are crucial for increasing access to affordable child care.
- Help families pay for part or all of the cost of child care for children from birth through age 13.
- Federal funding is provided through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to states, territories, and tribes, which often contribute additional funds.
- Federal eligibility requirements include: 1) family income below 85% of state median income; 2) engaged in work, education, or training; 3) child is under 13, unless the child has a disability; and 4) child must be a citizen.
 - States may establish their own eligibility rules within the federal guidelines.

Georgia's Child Care Subsidy Program

To be eligible for child care subsidies in Georgia, families must be:

- State residents
- Employed or enrolled at an educational institution
- Below certain income thresholds
- Part of a Georgia-defined “priority population,” which includes:
 - Families with very low incomes
 - Families of children with disabilities
 - Families who lack fixed, regular, and adequate housing
 - Families of children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K program

Research Questions

- Are the child care subsidy priority populations more prevalent in any parts of the state? Are multiple priority populations concentrated in certain areas?
- Where is there a higher prevalence of people with characteristics that could hinder their access to benefits, such as limited internet access, English proficiency, and access to transportation?
- What can we learn when we look at **both** the prevalence of priority populations and characteristics associated with access challenges?

Data and Methodology

Considerations for Selecting Data Sources

- County-level data
 - Allowed us to examine variation throughout the state
 - Data are generally accessible at the county level
- Public data sources
 - ACS 5-year summary-level estimates
 - Federal data reports
 - State data reports and dashboards
- 2019 data to avoid pandemic-related disruptions and account for data delays

Counts or Prevalence?

- **Counts** tell us how many people belong to a certain priority group in a geographic area.
- **Prevalence** tells us how many people belong to a certain priority group out of the total population in a geographic area (i.e., a population proportion).
- Since our goal was to compare the relative share of priority populations across different areas, we decided to use prevalence.

Determining Prevalence

$$\textit{Prevalence} = \frac{\textit{\# people in priority population}}{\textit{\# total people in county}}$$

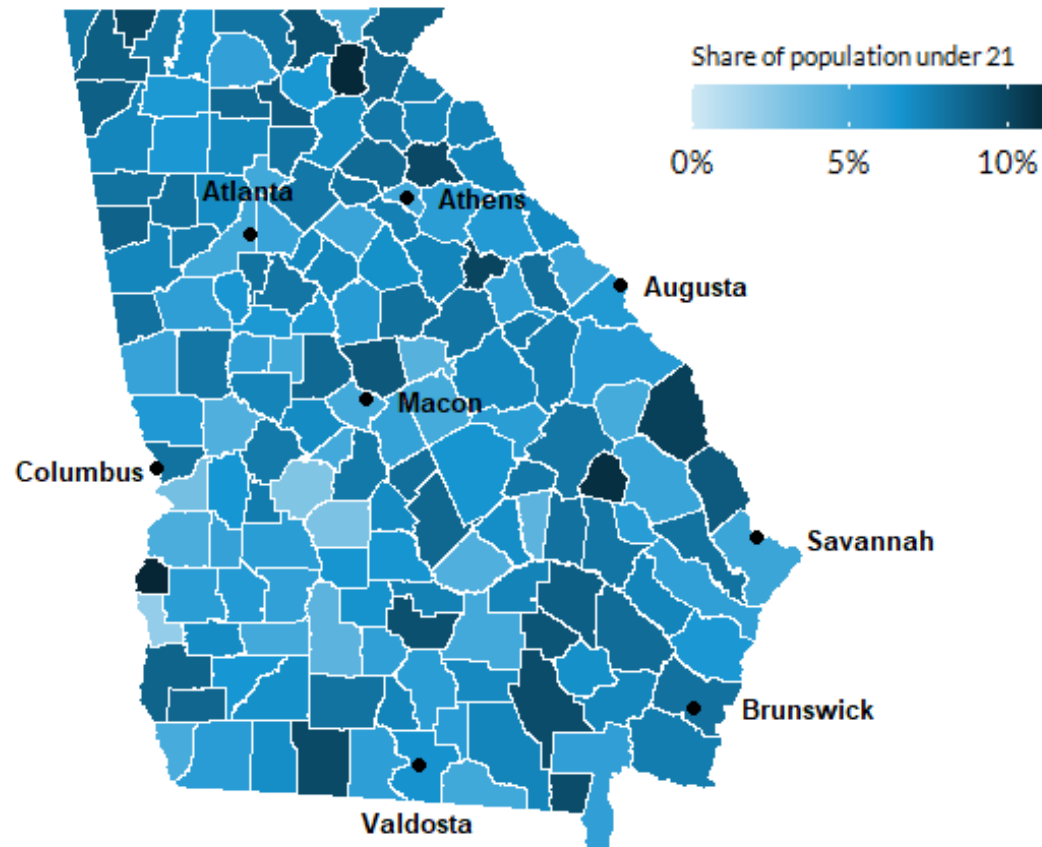
- Data source for numerator: state or federal data reports.
- Data source for denominator: ACS estimates for county population that most closely relates to priority population.
- For some populations (e.g., families with very low incomes), the ACS 5-year estimates produced proportions that we could use without additional calculations.
- We then created maps for the prevalence of individual priority populations and the overlap of multiple populations.

Example: Families of Children with Disabilities

$$\textit{Prevalence} = \frac{\textit{Students served by IDEA Part B (GA Dept. of Ed.)}}{\textit{County population under 21 (ACS 5 – year estimates)}}$$

Example: Families of Children with Disabilities

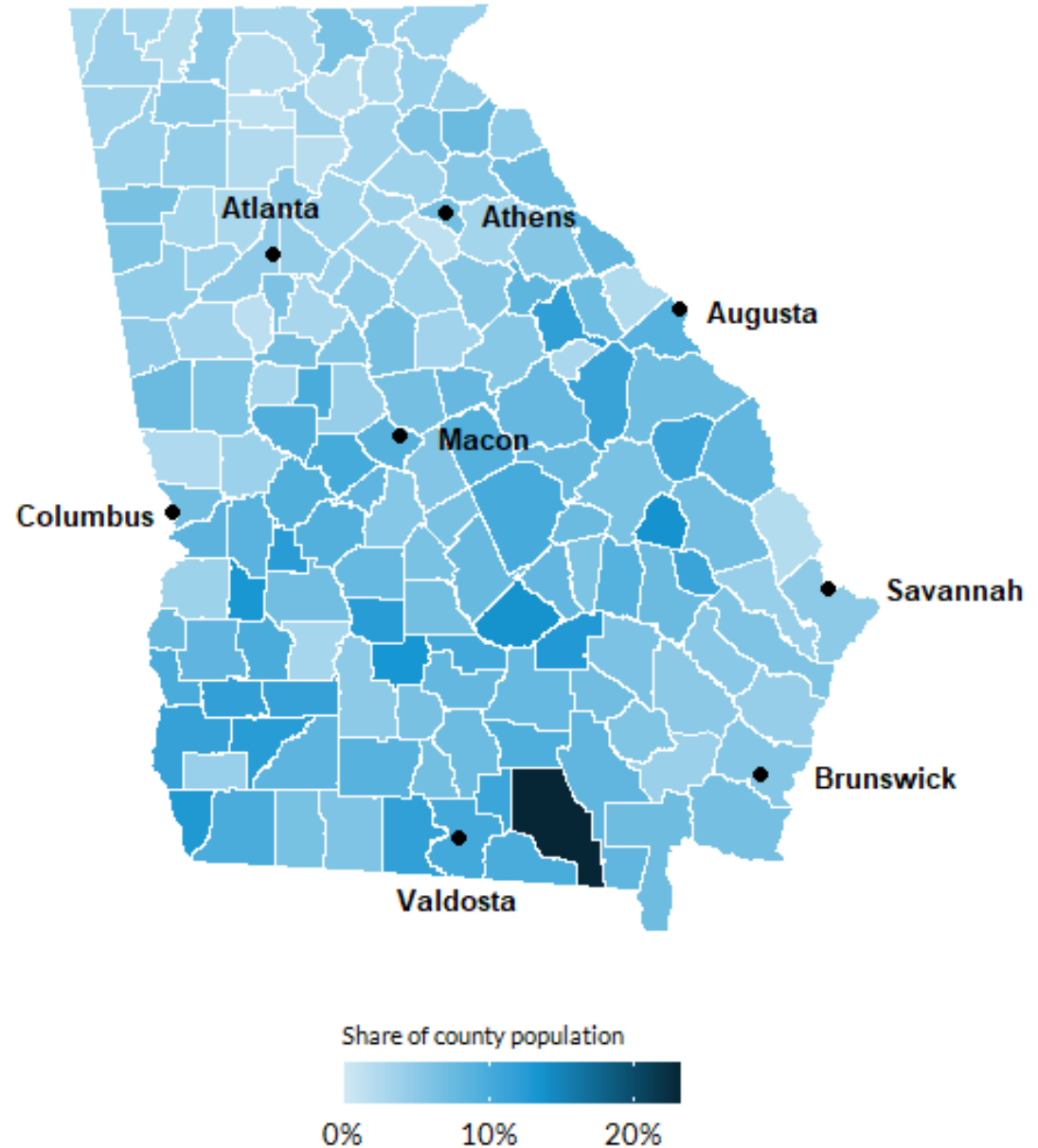
$$\text{Prevalence} = \frac{\text{Students served by IDEA Part B (GA Dept. of Ed.)}}{\text{County population under 21 (ACS 5-year estimates)}}$$



Findings and Takeaways

Priority Populations: Where are Families with Very Low Incomes?

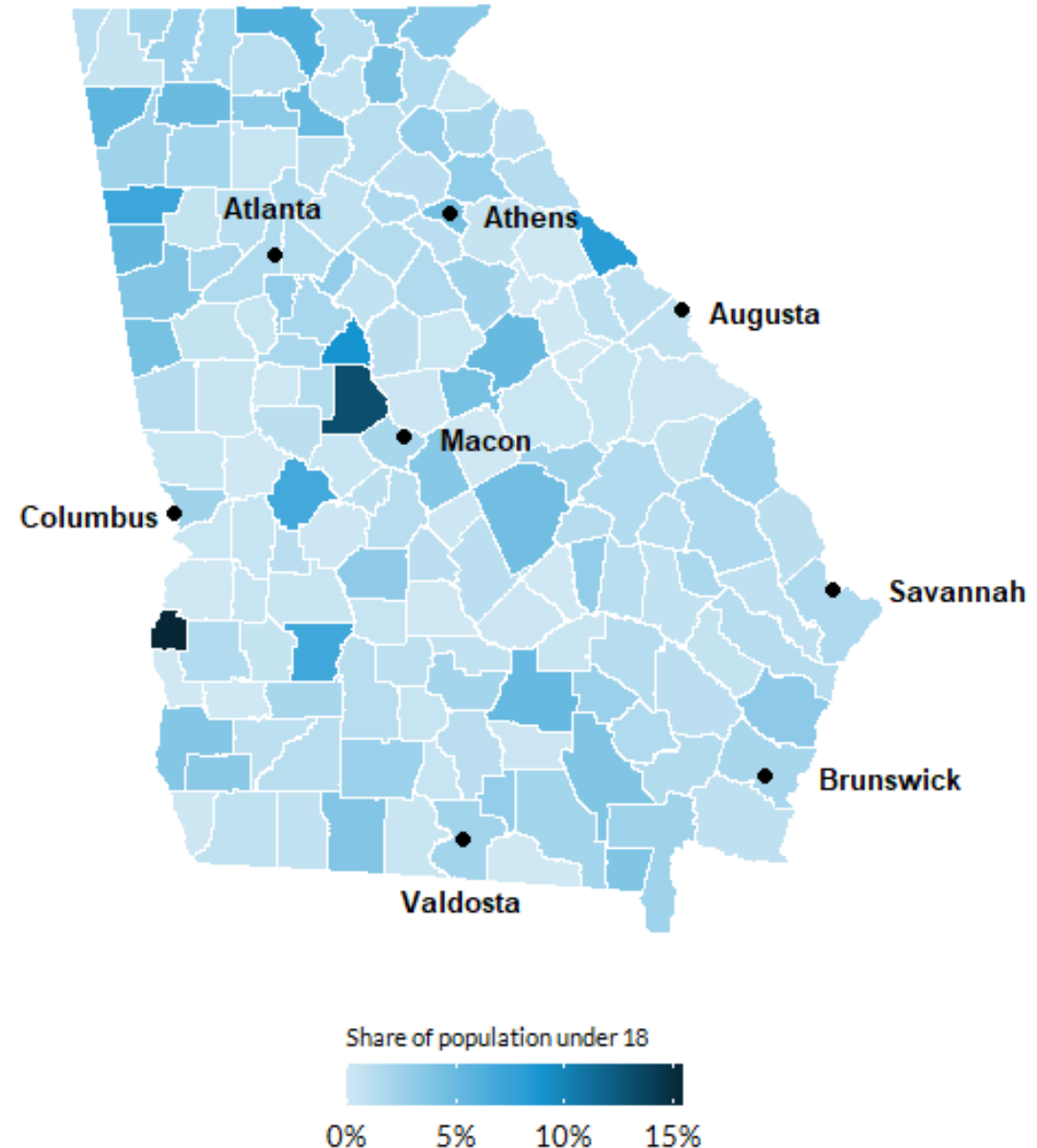
- **Measure:** Families with incomes below 50% of FPL, as a share of all families.
- **Finding:** Somewhat higher prevalence in southern part of the state, but not much difference.
- **Takeaway:** If trying to reach this population, may consider stronger outreach outside of the Atlanta metro area.



Source: 2019 five-year ACS estimates.

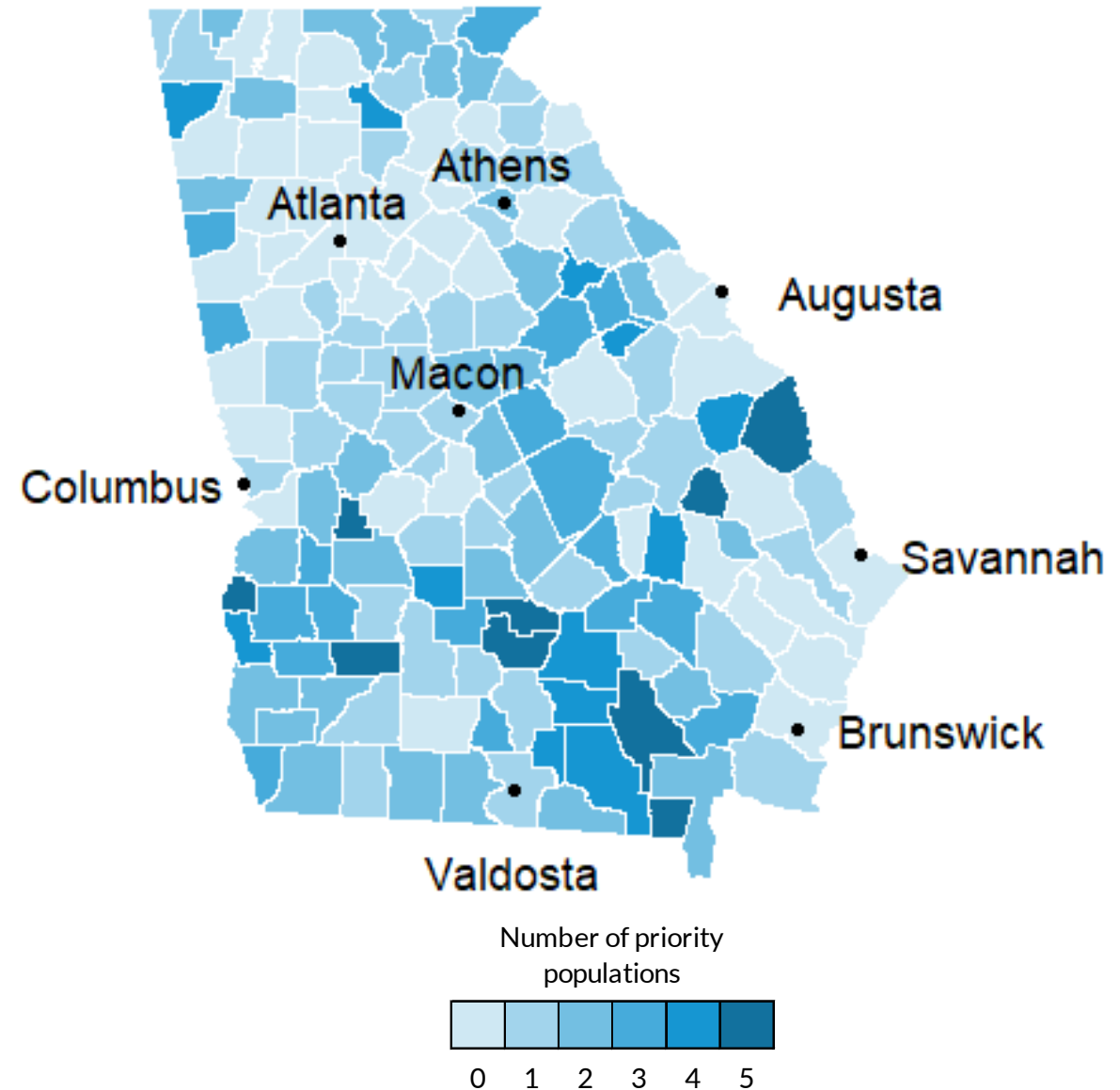
Priority Populations: Where are Families Experiencing Homelessness?

- **Measure:** Public school students reported as homeless under McKinney-Vento, as a share of population under 18.
- **Finding:** Low prevalence in most counties, but a few counties with as much as 15% prevalence.
- **Takeaway:** Different distribution compared with previous map, which indicates that priority populations not always in the same geographic areas.



Priority Populations: Where is there Higher-than-Average Prevalence for Multiple Populations?

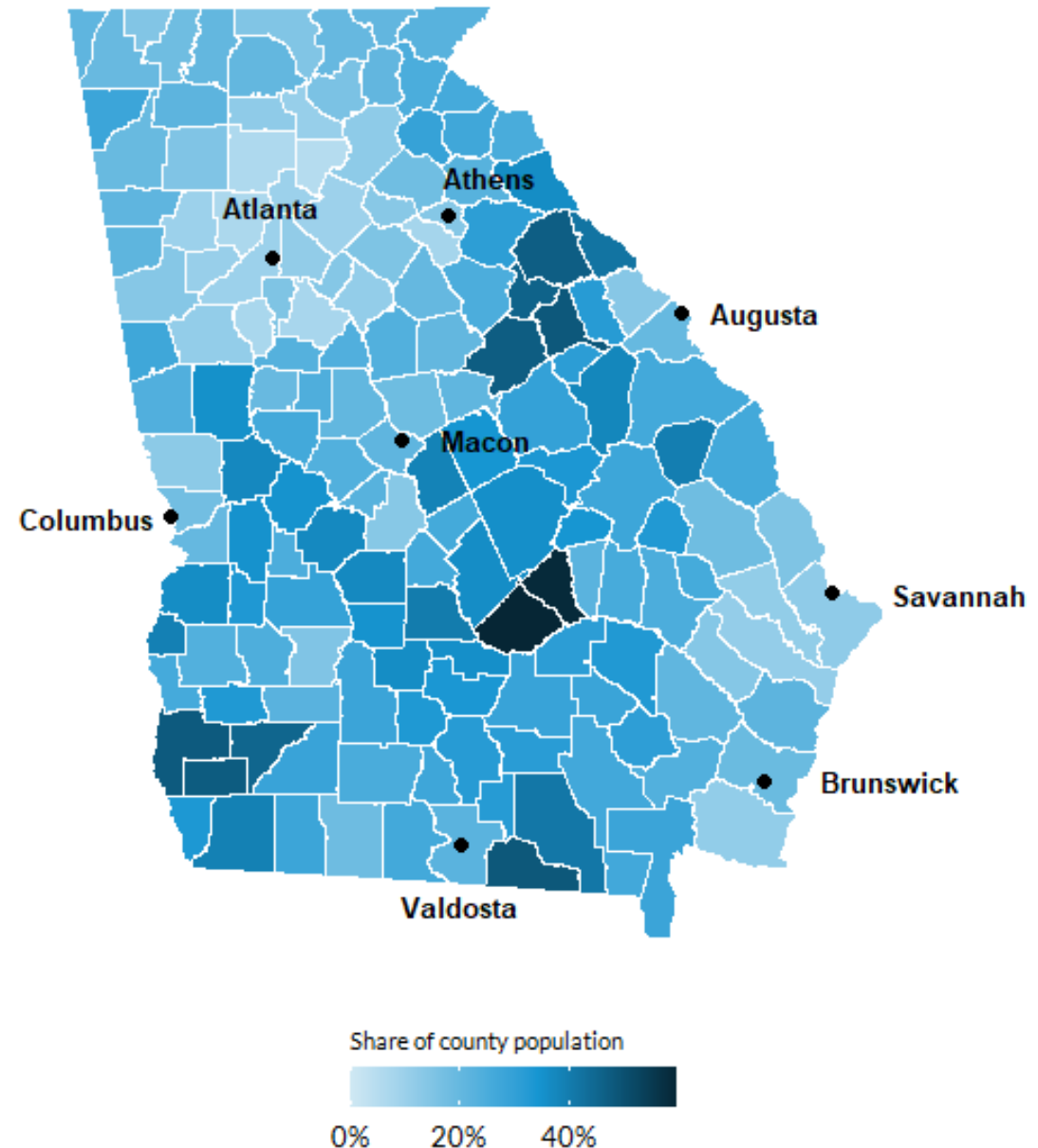
- **Measure:** Individual measures for each of the 10 priority populations; count whether county z-score is greater than 1.
- **Finding:** Many counties in the southern part of the state had higher-than-average prevalence across 3-5 populations.
- **Takeaway:** To maximize efficiency, if trying to reach many different types of priority populations, concentrate efforts in counties in the darker blues.



Sources: 2019 five-year ACS estimates and other secondary data sources. See report for more information.

Access Barriers: Where are Families without Internet Access?

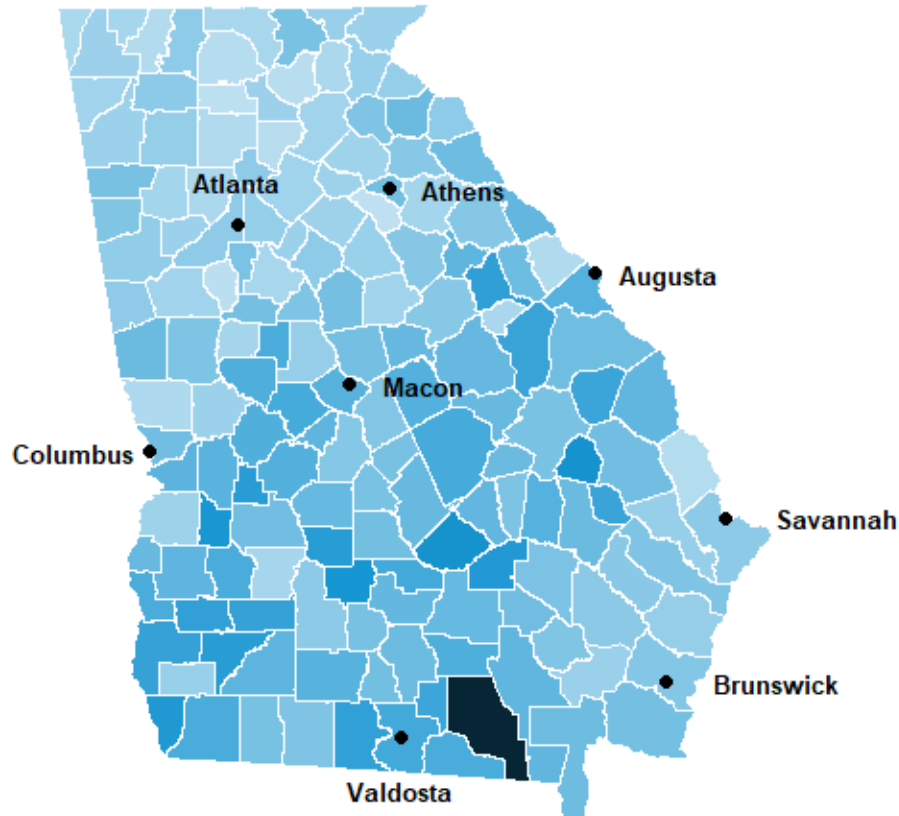
- **Measure:** Households without home internet access, as a share of all households
- **Finding:** Higher prevalence in rural counties.
- **Takeaway:** Trying to reach families in rural counties may require some nonelectronic communication and outreach.



Source: 2019 five-year ACS estimates.

Where is there Overlap between Populations and Barriers?

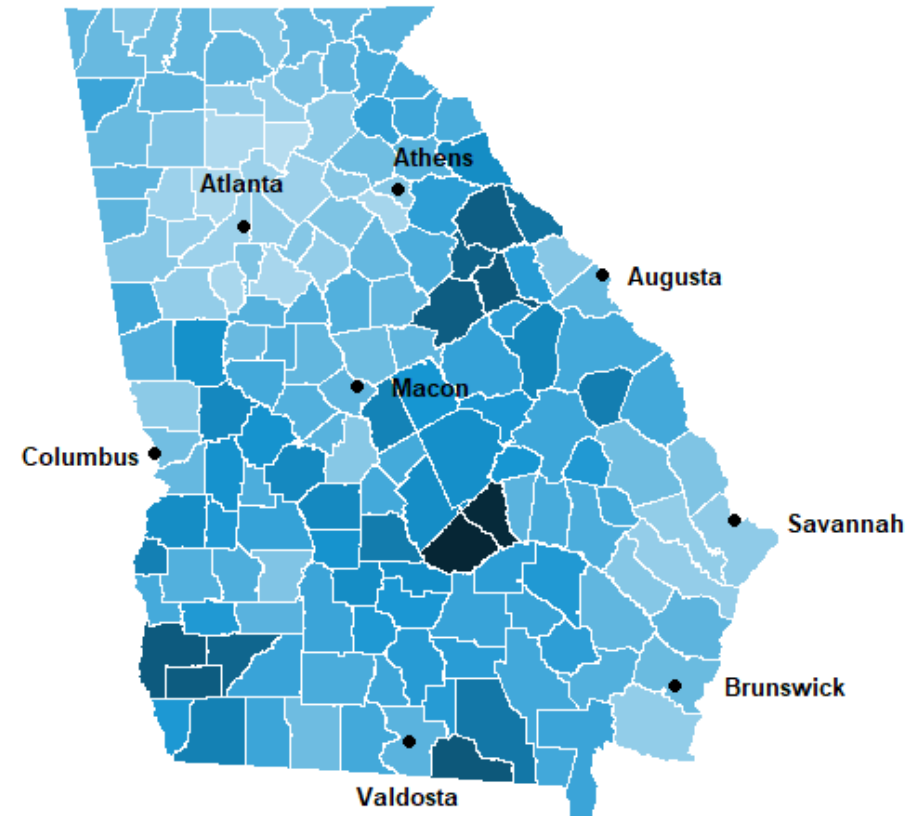
Families with Very Low Incomes



Share of county population

0% 10% 20%

Families without Internet Access

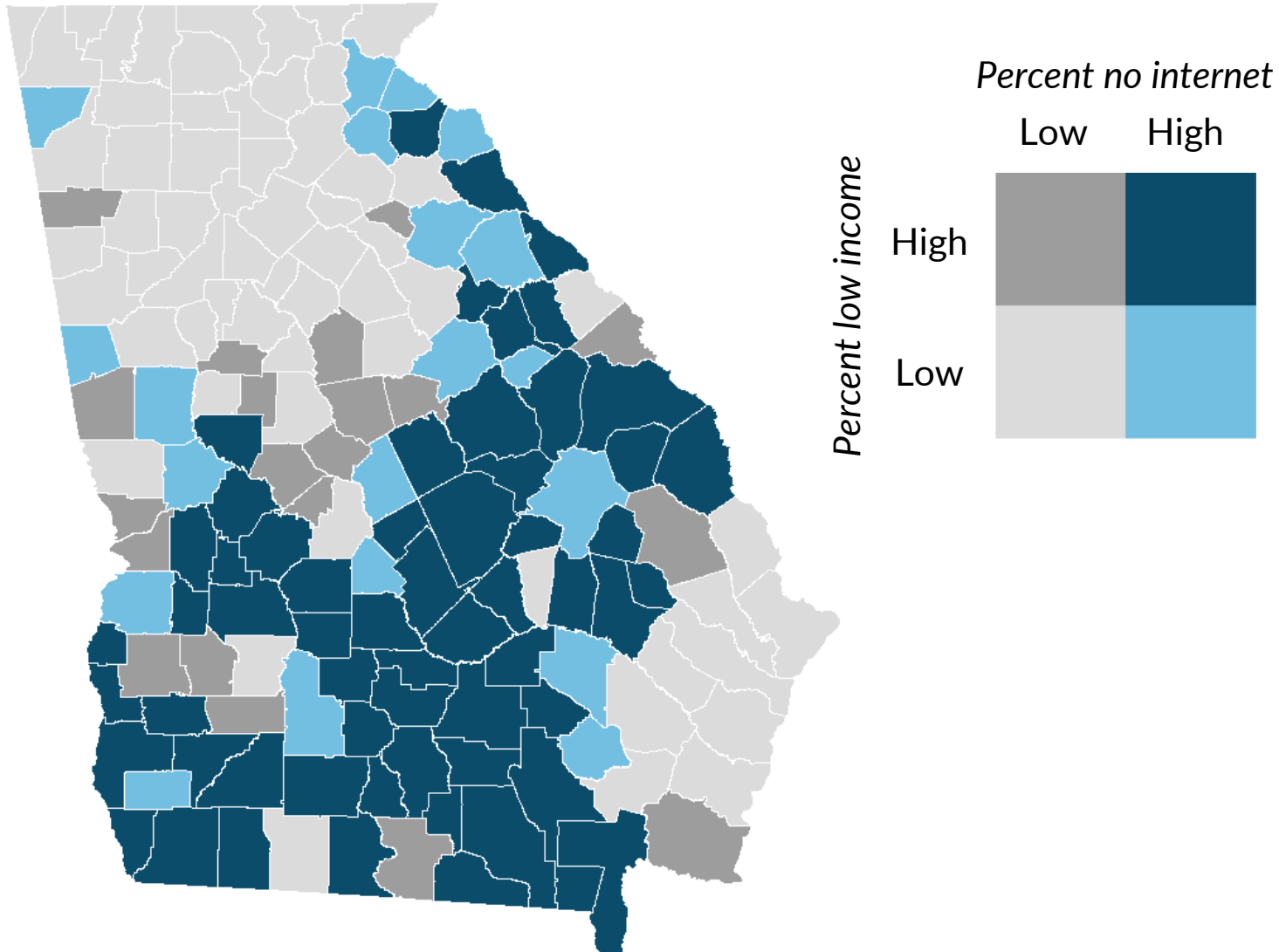


Share of county population

0% 20% 40%

Source: 2019 five-year ACS estimates.

Overlap Between Populations and Barriers



Takeaways

- Populations can differ in where they are concentrated. When trying to reach multiple populations, examine where each of them are located rather than assuming they are more prevalent in the same areas.
- Identifying areas with a high prevalence of multiple populations can help maximize efficiency when coordinating outreach efforts.
- Certain populations may face challenges when accessing public benefits, and these challenges may differ depending on the location of the population. Examining this overlap can indicate where efforts to mitigate challenges may be helpful to increase benefits access for a population.
- Public data make it easy to execute and replicate these analyses for other communities.

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findings



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