

# Putnam County Head Start

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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### **Helpful Hints**

A green box provides a definition or context for a term. Sources are provided as applicable.

An orange box provides detailed information that expounds on the data to give context. Sources are provided as applicable.

A gray box includes pertinent information and notes from the writers of this Community Assessment.

A blue box provides additional analysis from the writers of this Community Assessment.

A yellow box provides additional community resources. Links are provided as applicable.

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 1: What is a Community Assessment (CA)? How is it completed?

#### Introduction

## MODULE 1: WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT (CA)? HOW IS IT COMPLETED?

### Introduction

A Community Assessment is a tool to make informed program decisions, to determine the types of services most needed by families and children, and to help set long- and short-term program objectives. Head Start leadership staff studies the most important changes in the communities and counties they serve on a regular basis. However, the Community Assessment is the formal and far-reaching process performed every five years and updated annually.

#### Head Start

“Head Start programs prepare America’s most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. To achieve this, Head Start programs deliver services to children and families in core areas of early learning, health, and family well-being while engaging parents as partners every step of the way.

The Head Start program encompasses Head Start preschool programs, which primarily serve 3- and 4-year-old children, and Early Head Start programs for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. Head Start programs operate in every state, many tribal nations, and several U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico. Head Start services are delivered nationwide through 1,600 agencies that tailor the federal program to the local needs of families in their service area.”

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-programs>

#### Early Head Start

“Early Head Start (EHS) programs serve infants and toddlers under the age of 3, and pregnant women. EHS programs provide intensive comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and to pregnant women and their families.”

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/early-head-start-programs>

#### Migrant and Seasonal Head Start

“Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program means: (1) with respect to services for migrant farm workers, a Head Start program that serves families who are engaged in agricultural labor and who have changed their residence from one geographic location to another in the preceding two-year period; and, (2) with respect to services for seasonal farmworkers, a Head Start program that serves families who are engaged primarily in seasonal agricultural labor and who have not changed their residence to another geographic location in the preceding two-year period.”

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, <https://headstart.gov/definition/migrant-or-seasonal-head-start?redirect=eclkc>

#### American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start

Head Start launched 34 American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start programs in the summer of 1965. [...] The Office of Head Start (OHS) honors the rich cultural heritage of our AIAN children, families, and communities. Based on the needs of local communities, Head Start programs offer traditional language and cultural practices to provide high-quality services to young children and their families. The targeted tools and resources below are available to assist in the planning, development, and organization of AIAN and other programs serving AIAN communities.

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/american-indian-alaska-native-programs>



## Head Start Performance Standards

### [1302.11 Determining community strengths, needs, and resources.](#)

#### **“(b) Community-wide strategic planning and needs assessment (community assessment).”**

(1) To design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include, at a minimum:

(i) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including:

(A) Children experiencing homelessness in collaboration with, to the extent possible, McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432 (6)(A));

(B) Children in foster care; and

(C) Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies;

(ii) The education, health, nutrition and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being;

(iii) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;

(iv) Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served;

(v) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and,

(vi) Strengths of the community.

(2) A program must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes, including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten (including an assessment of how the pre-kindergarten available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered for a full school day), rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics and resources.

(3) A program must consider whether the characteristics of the community allow it to include children from diverse economic backgrounds that would be supported by other funding sources, including private pay, in addition to the program’s eligible funded enrollment. A program must not enroll children from diverse economic backgrounds if it would result in a program serving less than its eligible funded enrollment.”

Head Start Early Learning and Knowledge Center, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov>

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 1: What is a Community Assessment (CA)? How is it completed?

*Methodology: The Community Assessment Process*

#### Methodology: The Community Assessment Process

This Community Assessment offers detailed information about numerous topics, as well as an examination of the Head Start/Early Head Start service area's strengths and barriers relative to early childhood development. This is a comprehensive collection and analysis of key indicators to evaluate the needs and characteristics of eligible Head Start/Early Head Start children and families. This report not only fulfills the federal requirement, but it becomes an integral part of the program's planning, implementation, and evaluation process.

Every comprehensive community analysis and related findings become the latest baseline to:

- Identify current community needs.
- Design new plans.
- Choose additional community partners.
- Develop strategic collaborations.
- Evaluate the progress of past interventions.
- Make relevant decisions about program improvement changes expeditiously.

[mano-Y-ola](#) facilitated this Community Assessment process, which focused on promoting the effective participation of agency staff members and helping identify and organize the best data sources to comply with the [Head Start Performance Standards](#). Before collecting and analyzing the required data, the consultants and the Head Start Director agreed to strategic priorities on data collection and analysis that are relevant to current issues and program priorities.

The Community Assessment methodology focuses on different levels of analysis. The following components of the Community Assessment represent key methods for completing this report:

- Review of most recent secondary data on indicators that have an impact on the program and its service delivery model(s). (On the following page a rationale and brief description is offered for the use of census data: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.)
- Development and utilization of additional assessments to include data observed or collected directly from firsthand experience.

The Community Assessment includes all the necessary and required topics established by the [Office of Head Start](#). Data collection and analysis may include, but is not limited to, the Program Information Report (PIR) data, family partnership agreements, child/family application data, child screening and outcomes data, census data, local and state planning department reports, state department data, local interagency committee reports, data from local school districts, child care resource and referral agencies, agencies serving children with disabilities, health care providers, and social service providers.

The Head Start program staff identifies and uses other methods to collect data from different sources and service areas. These include family needs surveys and key informant surveys. The *Family Needs Survey* is administered to identify needs and strengths of eligible Head Start families in the service area (see *Appendix A: Family Needs Survey*). The Head Start program staff also identifies and provides names of key informants to participate in a survey that will provide added support for secondary data analysis findings. *Key Informant Survey* results generate important implications and connections to program needs and

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 1: What is a Community Assessment (CA)? How is it completed?

*Methodology: The Community Assessment Process*

serve to generate strategic discussions in relation to program improvement based on empirical data (see *Appendix B: Key Informant Questions*).

This year’s Community Assessment enhances the agency’s existing efforts by collecting, analyzing, illustrating, and narrating secondary data from reliable sources and primary data from clients and community experts in a reader-friendly format. This assessment is intended for digital use as a living document with live links to the most recent and relevant data available at the time of the study. The data contained herein enable agency leadership to effectively develop strategic plans and priorities based on the actual needs of the community members they serve.

**Census Data.** A predominant data source used for this report is the [United States Census Bureau](#). The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on race and ethnicity for various products and reports. At a minimum the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requires five categories: White, Black/African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native (AIAN), Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHPI).

Every 10 years, the Census Bureau conducts a [decennial census count](#), which is a comprehensive count of the population. The decennial census uses seven race categories in its count, the five aforementioned categories required by the OMB as well as “Multiracial” and “Some Other Race.”

In addition to its decennial count, the Census Bureau produces an annual [July 1<sup>st</sup> estimate](#) of the population, and unlike the decennial census, this estimate only includes six race categories, excluding the “Other” race category included every 10 years.

This community assessment currently uses the July 1<sup>st</sup> estimates data to identify the race and ethnicity of the population studied, as well as the growth/change in race or ethnicity from 2020 to 2023. It is imperative not to compare race data included in this assessment to decennial census data. The different number of race categories greatly impacts the values. For example, according to the 2020 census, 61.6 percent of the population in the United States is White only, compared with July 1, 2023, estimates of 75.3 percent. The most significant difference between these two collection methods is the proportion of the population that self-identifies as White, Multiracial, and Other, see Table 1.

<b>United States: Calculating Race and Ethnicity</b>		
<i>Source: U.S. Census</i>		
	<b>July 1, 2023 Estimates</b>	<b>2020 Census</b>
<b>White</b>	75.3%	61.6%
<b>Black</b>	13.7%	12.4%
<b>Asian</b>	6.4%	6.0%
<b>AIAN</b>	1.3%	1.1%
<b>NHPI</b>	0.3%	0.2%
<b>Multiracial</b>	3.1%	10.2%
<b>Other</b>	Not Reported	8.4%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	19.5%	18.7%

**Table 1: Calculating Race and Ethnicity**

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 1: What is a Community Assessment (CA)? How is it completed?

Methodology: *The Community Assessment Process*

**American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate.** Another U.S. census data source used extensively in this report is the [U.S. Census Bureau](#)'s 2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimate.

“The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides data every year — giving communities the current information they need to plan investments and services. Information from the survey generates data that help determine how more than \$675 billion in federal and state funds are distributed each year. Through the ACS, we know more about jobs and occupations, educational attainment, veterans, whether people own or rent their homes, and other topics. Public officials, planners, and entrepreneurs use this information to assess the past and plan the future. When you respond to the ACS, you are doing your part to help your community plan for hospitals and schools, support school lunch programs, improve emergency services, build bridges, and inform businesses looking to add jobs and expand to new markets, and more.”<sup>1</sup>

Table 2 is a chart describing the difference between 1-Year and 5-Year Estimates. Although the 5-Year Estimate is the “least current” data set, it is the *most reliable*, and it allows for comparison and analysis of all counties, townships, or census tracts, which are geographic levels necessary when conducting an analysis of various populations, and/or other needs and indicators for Head Start programs.

1-Year Estimates	5-Year Estimates
12 months of collected data	60 months of collected data
Data for areas with populations of 65,000+	Data for all areas
Smallest sample size	Largest sample size
Less reliable than 3-Year or 5-Year	Most reliable
Most current data	Least current data
Annually released: 2005-present	Annually released: 2009-present
Best used when currency is more important than precision; Analyzing large populations	Best used when precision is more important than currency; Analyzing very small populations; Examining tracts and other smaller geographies because 1-Year Estimates are not available

**Table 2: U.S. Census Data: ACS 1-Year and 5-Year Estimate Features**

**NOTE:** Several reports refer to the number or percentage of women who had a birth in the past 12 months. The ACS 5-Year Estimates data set used in this Community Assessment provides an average of women who had a birth in the past 12 months from 2017 to 2021.

## MODULE 2: WHO DOES THIS CA BELONG TO, AND WHICH COMMUNITY(IES) DO THEY SERVE?

### State of the Grantee

*The State of the Grantee is a brief narrative written by the agency about the agency and the community in which it operates; the remainder of the Community Assessment is written by mano-Y-ola LLC.*



[Putnam County Head Start](#) is a grantee agency regulated by the [Putnam County Board of Education](#) for the city of Eatonton, Georgia, that provides services throughout the Putnam County area. Putnam County Head Start operates one center-based program and serves the entire Putnam County, Eatonton Georgia area. The program operates full-day sessions, Monday – Friday and functions on the same calendar days as the local school system. The program serves 181 children and families.

#### PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the Putnam County Head Start program is to promote child development and school readiness for preschool-age children from low-income families, providing comprehensive services to empower diverse families and strengthen our community.

#### VISION

To reach eligible preschoolers and their families in our service area and positively affect their lives by assisting them in obtaining the skills necessary to achieve social competence and be cognitively and physically ready to learn and grow.

#### GOAL

The Putnam County Head Start Program is a team of dedicated professionals who serve and support young children and their families through:

- Teamwork
- Collaboration with community partners
- Commitment to our shared vision

We partner with parents to provide enriching experiences and comprehensive services to support the optimal learning of young children. We empower families to strengthen their foundation for independence, success, productivity and contentment.

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 2: Who does this CA belong to, and which community(ies) do they serve?

#### *State of the Grantee*

#### *Corporate Values*

The corporate values governing Putnam County Head Start and its development will include the following:

- We celebrate every individual's strength, as well as each family's definition of itself.
- We believe in providing healthy, safe environments and encouraging lifelong learning.
- We believe in shared leadership where opportunities are present for everyone to develop to their fullest potential.
- We believe every family is its child's most influential teacher and most powerful prevention mechanism.
- We know we are stronger when we have meaningful partnerships within the community.
- We believe healthy relationships will result when we reflect compassion, dignity and mutual respect for diversity.
- We believe all activities should promote the wellness and growth of our communities.
- We embrace and encourage change to improve opportunities for our staff, children and families.
- We believe that our children and families deserve excellence in service provision.

We respect the individuals and believe that individuals who are treated with respect and given responsibility respond by giving their best. We require complete honesty and integrity in everything we do. We make commitments with care and then live up to them in all things we do and what we say we are going to do. Work is an important part of life, and it should be fun. Being a good businessperson does not mean being stuffy and boring. We are frugal. We guard and conserve the program's resources with at least the same vigilance that we would use to guard and conserve our own personal resources. We insist on giving our best effort in everything we undertake. Furthermore, we see a huge difference between "good mistakes" (best effort, bad result) and "bad mistakes" (sloppiness or lack of effort). Clarity in understanding our mission, our goals and what we expect from each other is critical to our success. We are believers in the golden rule. In all our dealings, we strive to be believers in the golden rule and to be friendly and courteous, as well as fair and compassionate. We own problems and we are responsive and customer friendly.

#### *Our Organizational History*

The Putnam County Head Start Program has operated under the Putnam County Board of Education since its inception in 1965. The program is located in Eatonton, Georgia and serves all of the Putnam County area. The program is accredited with the prestigious National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The program's goal is to provide quality early childhood care and education services to the neediest population in the Putnam County service area. Annually the program is funded to serve and maintains a full enrollment of 181 children, ages 3 and 4. The Putnam County School District is regulated by the Putnam County Board of Education, which is also the Head Start grantee. The Putnam County Head Start Program is located in the Putnam County Primary School, which is a centralized location near the Board

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 2: Who does this CA belong to, and which community(ies) do they serve?

#### *State of the Grantee*

of Education main building. The location makes the program desirable to all segments of the community by providing a neutral and safe place for services to be delivered.

#### *Program Design and Approach to Service Delivery*

Putnam County Head Start BOE is a quality preschool program for children, ages 3 and 4. Also known as the “Putnam County Early Learning Program,” the program encompasses Federal Head Start and GA Pre-K Program. The program currently serves 86 percent of preschool aged children in the service area.

Putnam County Head Start provides a center-based option, operating five days per week for six- and one-half hours per day, for 180 days with a total enrollment of 181 children. Putnam County Head Start operates on the same calendar days as those of the Putnam Charter School System. We provide an excellent educational program, accredited with the prestigious National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our education program incorporates these research-based curriculums: Creative Curriculum, Second Step, Zoo-phonics (a kinesthetic method for teaching phonics, reading and spelling), Frog Street Press (develops beginning reading and writing skills), Writing Without Tears (Writing Skills) and Cavity Free Kids Curriculum (dental health). The Creative Curriculum, which is our main curriculum, aligns with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework standards. Teachers work cooperatively with parents to identify goals and to develop individual educational plans for all children. Our program also implements the Second Step Curriculum, which focuses on promoting the social and emotional development of children, ages 3-5. To excel in growth, Putnam County Head Start is fortunate to provide an area geared for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (S.T.E.A.M.). In our learning environment, we incorporate a S.T.E.A.M. Lab where teachers could incorporate multiple disciplines at the same time and promote learning experiences that allow children to explore, question, research, discover, and exercise innovative building skills.

Our program proudly offers family support services and the opportunity for families to participate as full partners in the education of their children. Families are invited to take part in training classes and learn about health and nutrition, child development and the variety of resources available in the community.

#### *Governance, Organizational and Management, and Ongoing Oversight*

##### **Governing Body Structure, Requirements and Responsibilities**

The Putnam County Board of Education is charged with the responsibility of setting Grantee policy, certifying contract compliance and ensuring fiscal responsibility. The Board of Education directly supervises the Program Director, and participates in program development, planning, implementation and evaluation. The program’s governing body membership includes at least one member with “a background and expertise in fiscal management or accounting” and at least one member with “a background and expertise in early childhood education and development.” A licensed attorney, familiar with issues that come before the governing body.

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 2: Who does this CA belong to, and which community(ies) do they serve?

#### *State of the Grantee*

#### Policy Council and Parent Committee

The Policy Council is made up of Head Start parents and community representatives. The Policy Council has By-Laws that are approved by the Grantee board and Policy Council each year. The By-Laws outline the responsibilities of the Policy Council members. The community representatives are elected by parents at center level during a parent center committee meeting. Parent members are nominated and elected at center level. The number of parent members is written in the By-Laws. All Policy Council members are trained in their role and their responsibilities as a member. The training is provided each year in November with a follow-up session in December. Training materials include the Policy Council process, responsibilities, Performance Standards, State Regulations, center enrollment, budgets, policies and procedures, and Director's monthly report. The Policy Council performs all responsibilities as noted in the Performance Standards.

Each month during a Policy Council meeting and Grantee Board meeting, members receive financial statements, including expenses for that month and a Non-Federal Share report. In addition, the Director gives a written monthly report that includes enrollment, attendance, number of meals served, medical and dental needs identified and complete volunteer hours, Self-Assessment follow-up, and updates on the strategic goals and Child Outcomes Report on a quarterly basis.

The Policy Council and Grantee Board review and approve all policies and procedures, Community Assessment and yearly Head Start Addendum, By-Laws, Management Plan, Self-Assessment, Training Plan, School Readiness Plan, and Annual Report. In addition, both governing bodies receive a Program Information Report (PIR) Summary.

The Program's primary source of funding is provided by a federal grant from the Dept. of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. The State of Georgia Bright From The Start Pre-K program provides additional funds. A substantial amount of In-Kind support is provided by our local Board of Education, the program's Grantee. This includes the current facility and utilities, transportation up-keep, repairs and fuel expenses. Meals for the children are provided by the USDA.



**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**

**MODULE 2: Who does this CA belong to, and which community(ies) do they serve?**

*Community Profile*

**Community Profile**

Georgia is a state in the southeastern region of the United States. It is bordered to the north by Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina, to the south by Florida, the west by Alabama and the east by the Atlantic Ocean. Atlanta is both the state’s capital and largest city. Georgia is made up of four distinct geological regions, the Appalachian Plateau, Blue Ridge, Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

The following table provides a general community profile of the Putnam County service area, including geography, weather, and local county government structure.

Putnam County							
County Seat	Area	Bordering Counties	Cities / Municipalities	Topography	Locale	Weather <sup>ii</sup>	Government Structure
Eatonton	361 sq. mi.	Baldwin, Greene, Hancock, Jones, Jasper, Morgan	Crooked Creek, Eatonton, Willard	Piedmont region, Upper Oconee River sub-basin of the Altamaha River basin	Rural: (100%)	High: 76° F Low: 52° F Avg. Annual Precipitation: 46''	Board of Commissioners consists of a an elected county-wide chairman and four commissioners from each district <sup>iii</sup>

**Table 3: Putnam County Community Profile**

Characteristics of HS/EHS Families (PIR)



## Office of Head Start / Head Start Enterprise System

“The Office of Head Start (OHS) Program Information Report (PIR) provides comprehensive data on the services, staff, children, and families served by Head Start and Early Head Start programs nationwide. All grant recipients and delegates are required to submit a PIR for Head Start and Early Head Start programs.”<sup>iv</sup>

**Head Start:** During the 2023-24 program year, Head Start (HS) programs in the United States were funded to serve more than 527,000 preschool aged children; 533,868 were served that program year. In Georgia, Head Start programs were funded to serve 16,893 preschool aged children, of which 181 were located in Putnam County. More than 16,500 Head Start recipients were served statewide, of which 194 were served by the Putnam County Head Start Program.

### Head Start Enrollment (2024 PIR)

Source: Office of Head Start Enterprise System

	United States	Georgia	Putnam County Head Start Program
ACF Funded Enrollment	527,510	16,893	181
Total Cumulative Enrollment	533,868	16,527	194
Cumulative Enrollment of Children	533,868	16,527	194

Table 4: Head Start Enrollment (2024 PIR)

[This report link](#) illustrates select 2024 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data, comparing the Putnam County Head Start Program data with data for programs in Georgia and the United States.

Note: All data was collected from the [HSES Enterprise System](#); some discrepancies are noted between the PDF reports released and the Excel Zip File Download. Data reflected in this section of the CA is collected from the 2024 Excel Zip File Download.

**MODULE 3: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY(IES) SERVED?**

**Population and Demographic Data**

Current Population

*Total Population*

Based on the U.S. Census July 1, 2023, population estimates, there are approximately 334.9 million residents in the United States, of which more than 11 million residents are in Georgia (Table 5). In Putnam County there are more than 23,000 residents.

<b>Total Population</b>	
<i>Source: July 1, 2023 Estimates</i>	
<b>United States</b>	334,914,895
<b>Georgia</b>	11,029,227
<b>Putnam County</b>	23,129

**Table 5: Total Population (July 1, 2023 Estimates)**

*Race and Ethnicity*

**The U.S. Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity to be two separate and distinct concepts.**

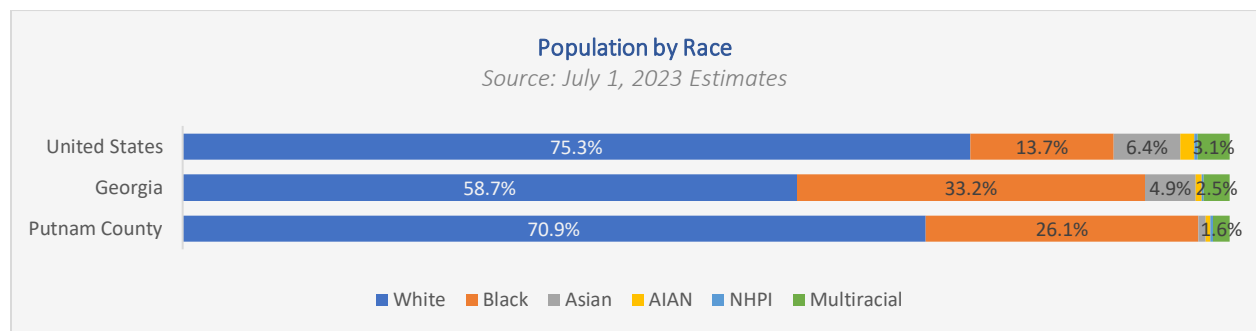
**What is race?** “The Census Bureau defines race as a person’s self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can report as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or some other race. Survey respondents may report multiple races.”

**What is ethnicity?** “Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken out in two categories, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics may report as any race.”

U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov>

Note: As described in the methodology, the July 1 population estimates only use six race categories compared with the decennial count, which includes seven race categories. July estimates do not report on those who identify as an “Other” race, causing the White and Multiracial population counts to be significantly different compared with decennial data. Caution should be used when comparing data between these two sources.

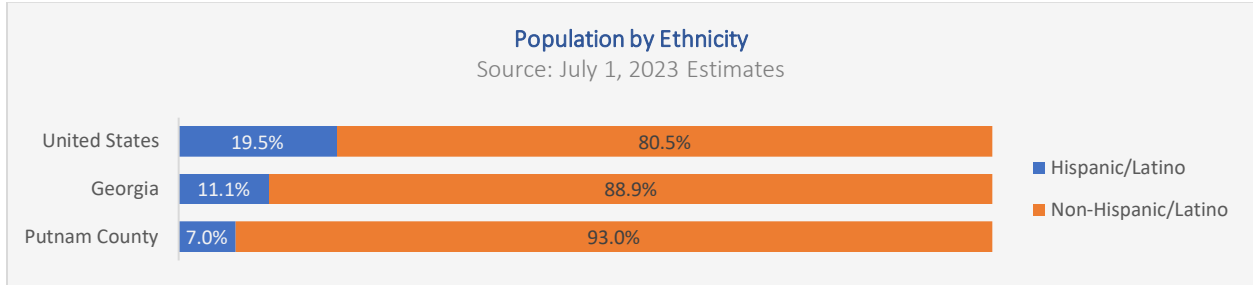
In the United States, 75.3 percent of the population identifies as White, 13.7 percent as Black, 6.4 percent as Asian, and 3.1 percent as Multiracial (Figure 1). The racial makeup in Georgia is significantly different, as only 58.7 percent identify as White, 33.2 percent as Black, 4.9 percent as Asian and 2.5 percent as Multiracial. In Putnam County 70.9 percent of the population identifies as White and 26.1 percent as Black.



**Figure 1: Population by Race (July 1, 2023 Estimates)**

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?**  
*Population and Demographic Data*

In the United States, 19.5 percent of the population is Hispanic/Latino. In Georgia and Putnam County, 11.1 and 7 percent of the population is Hispanic/Latino, respectively.



**Figure 2: Population by Ethnicity (July 1, 2023 Estimates)**

**Race and Ethnicity Definitions**

**White** refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

**Black or African American** refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

**American Indian or Alaska Native** refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

**Asian** refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

**Some Other Race** includes all other responses not included in the White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander race categories described above. Respondents reporting entries such as multiracial, mixed, interracial, or a Hispanic or Latino group (for example, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Spanish) in response to the race question are included in this category.

**Multiracial** includes people identifying themselves with two or more races.

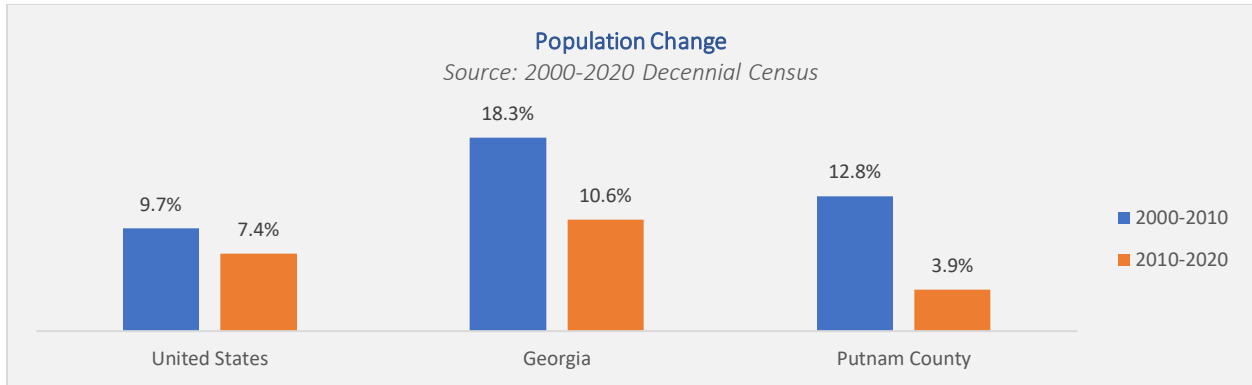
**Hispanic or Latino** refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.”

U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/>

## Population Growth and Change

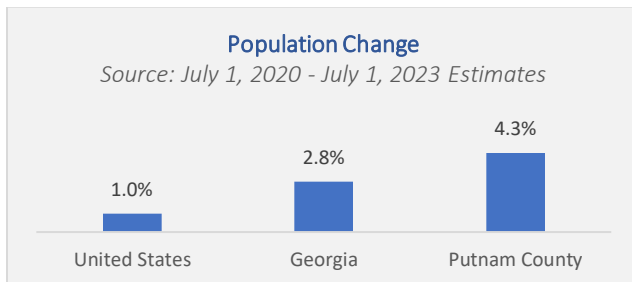
### Population Change

From 2000 to 2010, the population in the United States and Georgia increased by 9.7 and 18.3 percent, respectively, and from 2010 to 2020 the population in the United States and Georgia increased by 7.4 and 10.6 percent, correspondingly (Figure 3). In Putnam County the population increase outpaced the United States from 2000 to 2010; however, the following decade the population increased by only 3.9 percent.



**Figure 3: Population Change (2000-20)**

The United States continued to see a population increase from 2020 to 2023 of 1 percent. The population in Georgia and Putnam County increased by 2.8 and 4.3 percent, respectively, during that timeframe.



**Figure 4: Population Change (2020-23)**

Both increasing and declining populations can have significant effects on a community.

A rapidly increasing population can place pressure on the current infrastructure and increase the need for educational institutions, social services, and housing, while a declining or aging population can place considerable strain on the economy and its workforce.

### Natural Change and Migration

To measure the components of population change over the three-year period, data from the July 1, 2020, to July 1, 2023, estimates are used. Currently, only these July estimates include details of the population change with regard to natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration (both domestic and international migration).

**Natural increase** of a population is calculated by subtracting the number of deaths from the number of births in a specific time period.

**Net migration** is calculated by adding net domestic migration (in- and out-migration within the United States) and net international migration (in- and out-migration from a country outside of the United States, including Puerto Rico).

In the United States the population increased by 3.3 million residents from 2020 to 2023 (by approximately 522,000 from 2020-21, by 1.22 million from 2021-22, and by 1.64 million from 2022-23). The primary driver of this change was net migration, which accounted for more than 2.5 million individuals. In fact, net migration accounted for 74.2 percent of the population change in the United States, while natural increase accounted for 25.8 percent of the population change.

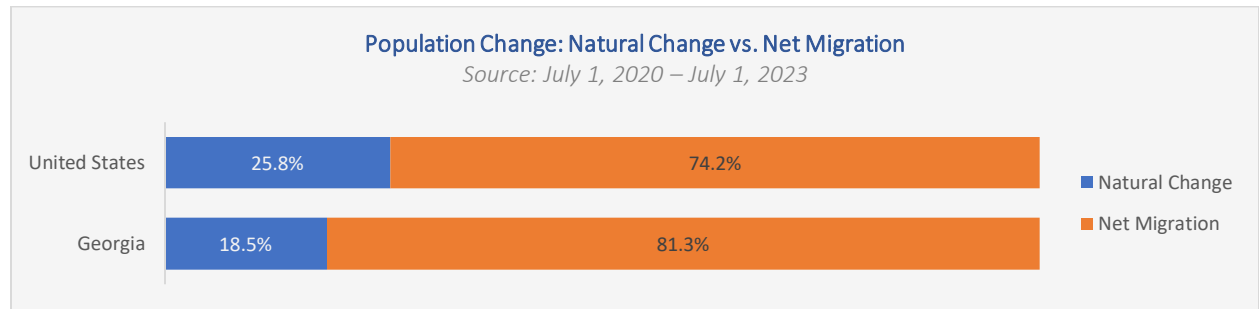
NOTE: Total population change reported in the July 1 estimates includes a residual, which represents a change in population that cannot be attributed to natural increase or migration. Therefore, some data may not add up to 100 percent.

In Georgia the population change from 2020 to 2023 was also driven predominantly by net migration, 81.3 percent. In Putnam County there was a net migration of almost 1,400, but unlike the nation and the state, there was a decrease in natural change, meaning there were more deaths than births in this time period.

**Population Change: Natural Change vs. Net Migration**  
*Source: July 1, 2020 – July 1, 2023 Estimates*

	Total Population Change	Natural Change	Net Migration
<b>United States</b>	3,387,962	873,698	2,514,264
<b>Georgia</b>	296,837	54,811	241,436
<b>Putnam County</b>	959	-421	1,390

**Table 6: Population Change: Natural Change vs. Net Migration (2020-23)**

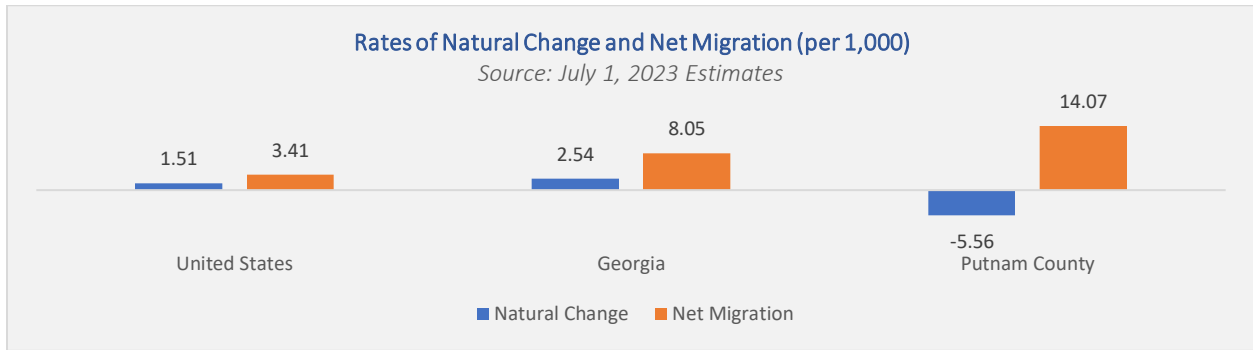


**Figure 5: Population Change: Natural Change vs. Net Migration (2020-23)**

**Rates of Change 2023**

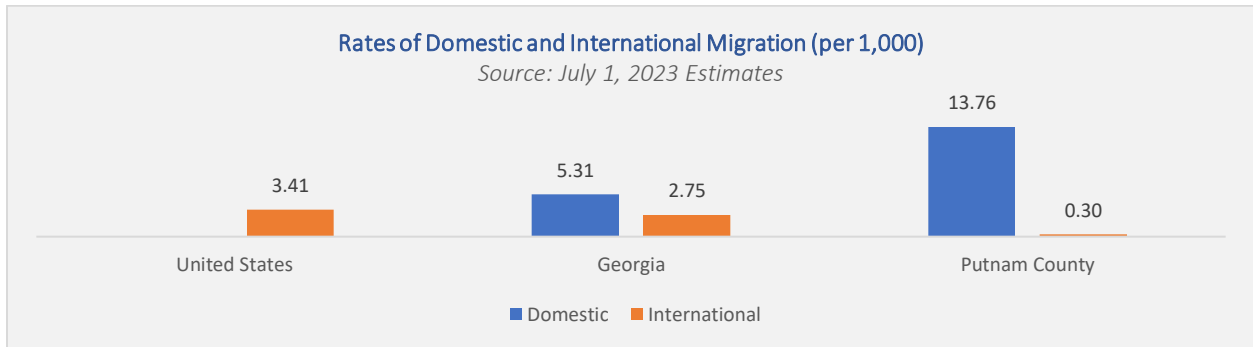
In addition to providing population estimates, the U.S. Census publishes rates of natural change, net migration, domestic migration, and international migration. Knowing the rate of each of these components makes it clear to understand how quickly something is changing over time. Each rate of change described in the following paragraphs refers to a rate of change per 1,000 individuals.

In 2023 the population in the United States increased by approximately 1.64 million individuals, the rate of natural change was 1.51 (per 1,000), while the rate of net migration was 3.41. Net migration accounted for an even greater proportion of the population change in Georgia and Putnam County from 2020 to 2023. Additionally, the rate of natural change in Putnam County was -5.56; this highlights and emphasizes that migration was the County’s source of population growth.



**Figure 6: Rates of Natural Change and Net Migration (July 1 2023 Estimates)**

The figure below illustrates the two components that make up the net migration rate: domestic migration and international migration. Understanding whether net migration was due to domestic migration (from a state or county in the United States) or international migration (from a country outside of the United States, including Puerto Rico) provides additional clues to the way a community is changing. The population change in Putnam County is predominantly due to domestic migration, 13.76.

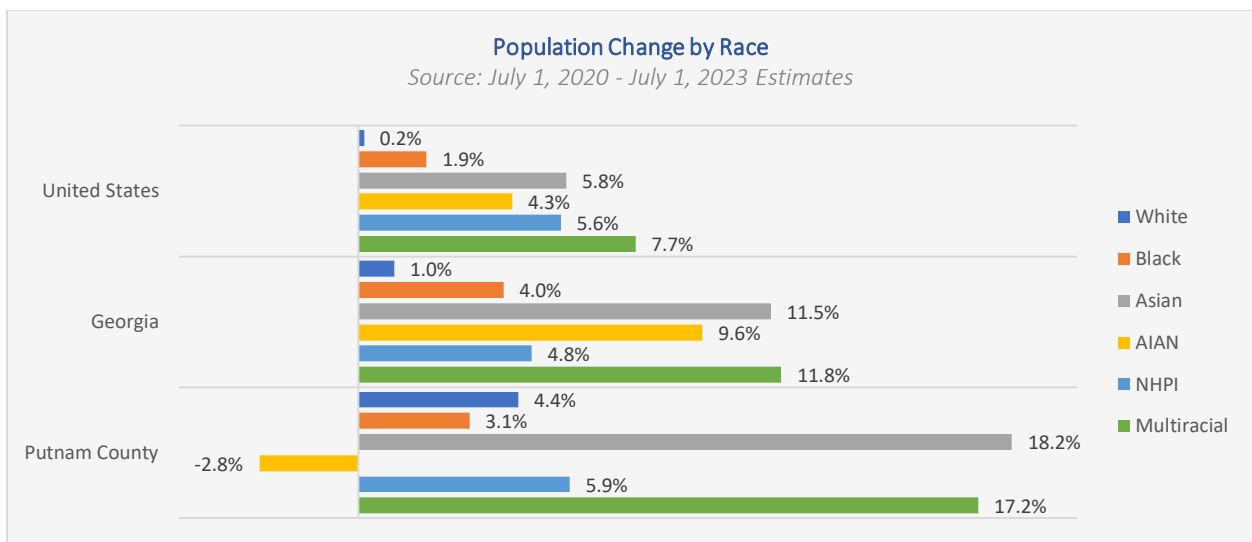


**Figure 7: Rates of International and Domestic Migration (July 1 2023 Estimates)**

*Population Change by Race/Ethnicity*

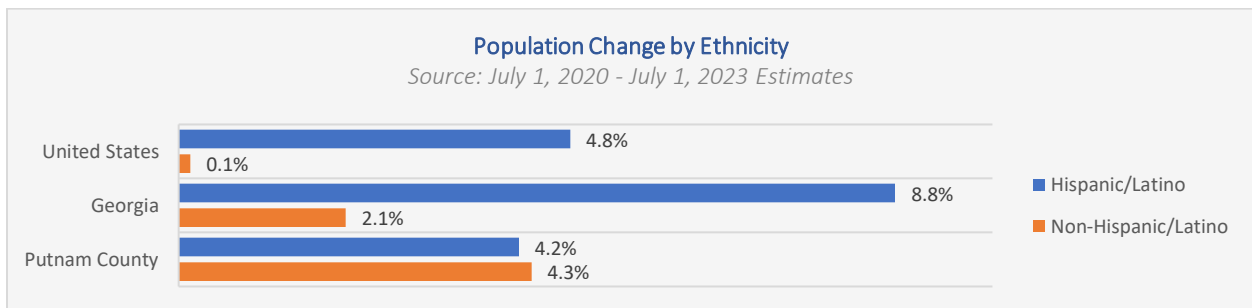
Although the overall population increased by 1 percent in the United States from 2020 to 2023, there are significant differences in the percentage increases for different races and ethnicities. For example, in the United States from 2020 to 2023, the White population only increased by 0.2 percent, and the Black population increased by 1.9 percent. The Asian and Multiracial (two or more) populations increased by 5.8 and 7.7 percent, respectively.

In Georgia and Putnam County the Asian population grew the most from 2020 to 2023, by 11.5 and 18.2 percent, respectively, followed by the Multiracial population, which grew by 11.8 and 17.2 percent, respectively.



**Figure 8: Population Change by Race (2020-23)**

In the United States, the Hispanic/Latino population increased by 4.8 percent from 2020 to 2023, and the non-Hispanic/Latino population by 0.1 percent (Figure 9). Similar to the nation, in Georgia the Hispanic population grew at a much more rapid pace than the non-Hispanic population, 8.8 vs. 2.1 percent. In Putnam County the Hispanic and non-Hispanic populations grew approximately 4 percent each.



**Figure 9: Population Change by Ethnicity (2020-23)**



Language

*Language Spoken at Home*

In the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County 13.4, 8.4, and 4.4 percent of residents speak Spanish as their primary language at home, respectively.

<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>					
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>					
	Only English	Spanish	Asian & Pacific Languages	Other Indo-European Languages	Other Languages
<b>United States</b>	78.0%	13.4%	3.5%	3.8%	1.2%
<b>Georgia</b>	85.0%	8.4%	2.6%	2.7%	1.2%
<b>Putnam County</b>	94.5%	4.4%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%

**Table 7: Language Spoken at Home (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Linguistic Isolation*

Based on U.S. census data, in Georgia and Putnam County, 2.8 and 0.8 percent of all households (both natives and foreign-born), respectively, were linguistically isolated, meaning that all persons in the household, age 14 and over, had limited English proficiency (LEP). Of Spanish-speaking households in Georgia and Putnam County, 20.7 and 15.5 percent, respectively, were linguistically isolated (Table 8).

<b>Limited English-Speaking Households</b>					
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>					
	All Households	Spanish	Asian and Pacific Languages	Other Indo-European Languages	Other Languages
<b>United States</b>	4.2%	19.3%	22.5%	14.4%	14.5%
<b>Georgia</b>	2.8%	20.7%	24.1%	8.8%	8.5%
<b>Putnam County</b>	0.8%	15.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

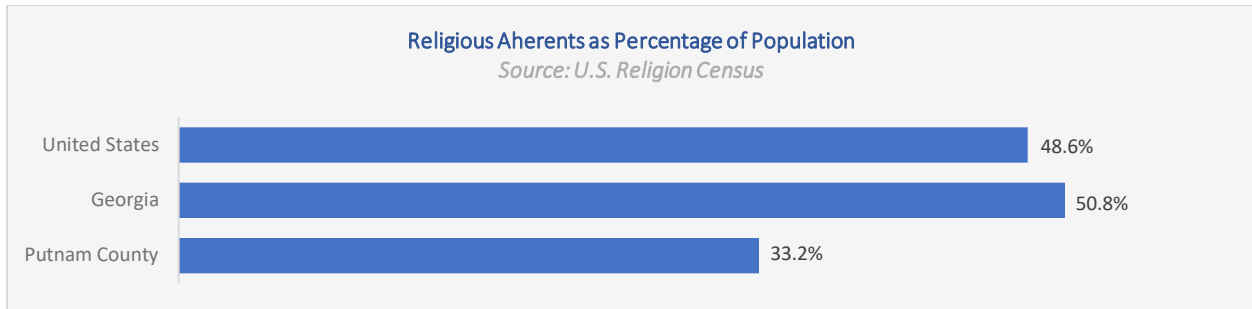
**Table 8: Linguistic Isolation (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

“Increased linguistic diversity contributes to the United States’ global competitiveness and our ability to integrate culturally and economically. Speaking a parent’s native language other than English at home can have a positive effect on children’s English literacy development, and bilingual language skills can positively affect children’s educational achievement. The Census Bureau’s report, however, highlights a sobering statistic: millions of residents of the United States are not proficient in the English language. A linguistically isolated household is one where no one in the home above the age of 14 speaks English only or speaks a second language and speaks English well.”

National Center for Children in Poverty, <https://www.nccp.org/>

Religion

The [U.S. Religion Census](#) is a decadal census conducted by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, and “includes many non-Christian groups as well as special counts for religious traditions that do not have central data collection points, such as non-denominational churches or Muslim and Jewish communities.”<sup>v</sup> According to the [U.S. Religion Census](#), 48.6 percent of the population in the United States is an adherent of a religious group; it is slightly higher in Georgia at 50.8 percent, and lower in Putnam County at 33.2 percent.



**Figure 10: Religious Adherents as Percent of Population (2020)**

Of the total adherents in the United States, the top congregation in the United States is the Catholic Church (38.4 percent), in Georgia and Putnam County, it is the Southern Baptist Convention at 29.1 percent and 33.7 percent, respectively.

The table below contains the top five congregations for the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County.

	Congregation	Percentage of Total Adherents
<b>United States</b>	Catholic Church	38.4%
	Non-denominational Christian Churches	13.1%
	Southern Baptist Convention	10.9%
	United Methodist Church	5.0%
	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	4.2%
<b>Georgia</b>	Southern Baptist Convention	29.1%
	Catholic Church	16.5%
	Non-denominational Christian Churches	13.5%
	United Methodist Church	10.1%
	National Missionary Baptist Convention, Inc.	3.0%
<b>Putnam County</b>	Southern Baptist Convention	33.7%
	United Methodist Church	19.3%
	Non-denominational Christian Churches	14.9%
	African Methodist Episcopal Church	12.4%
	Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	6.0%

**Table 9: Adherents by Congregation Type (2020)**

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?**  
*Population and Demographic Data*

Household Member Characteristics

*Sex and Age*

Census data indicate that 49.5 percent of the United States population is male, and 50.5 percent is female; this is not significantly different for the state of Georgia and Putnam County (Table 10). The youngest residents, those below age 5, make up 5.7 percent of the United States population. In Georgia and Putnam County, 5.9 and 4.6 percent of the population, respectively, is under the age of 5. The median age in Georgia and Putnam County is 37.4 and 47.4 years, respectively.

<b>Population by Sex and Age</b>				
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>				
	Male	Female	Under Age 5	Median Age
<b>United States</b>	49.5%	50.5%	5.7%	38.7
<b>Georgia</b>	48.8%	51.2%	5.9%	37.4
<b>Putnam County</b>	49.2%	50.8%	4.6%	47.4

**Table 10: Population by Sex and Age (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Households with Children Under Age 18*

In the United States nearly 34 million households have children under the age of 18, 26.6 percent of total households (Table 11). In Georgia there are more than 1 million households with children under the age of 18, of which 1,625 are in Putnam County.

<b>Households with Children &lt;18</b>			
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>			
	Total Households	Households with Children <18 Years	Percentage of Households with Children <18 Years
<b>United States</b>	127,482,865	33,959,007	26.6%
<b>Georgia</b>	4,008,013	1,126,339	28.1%
<b>Putnam County</b>	10,134	1,625	16.0%

**Table 11: Total Households (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

“A **family** is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family. The number of families is equal to the number of family households. However, the count of family members differs from the count of family household members because family household members include any non-relatives living in the household.

“A **family household** is a household maintained by a householder who is in a family (as defined above) and includes any unrelated people (unrelated subfamily members and/or secondary individuals) who may be residing there. The number of family households is equal to the number of families. The count of family household members differs from the count of family members, however, in that the family household members include all people living in the household, whereas family members include only the householder and his/her relatives. See the definition of family.

“A **nonfamily household** consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom he/she is not related.”

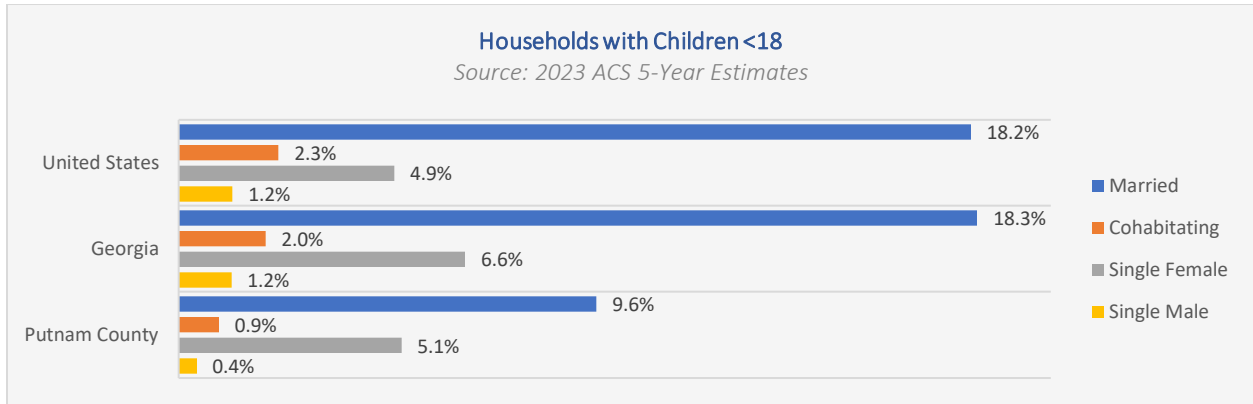
U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/>

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**

**MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?**

*Population and Demographic Data*

Of the households in Georgia and Putnam County, 18.3 and 9.6 percent, correspondingly, are married-couple families with children under the age of 18. Cohabiting couples make up 2 and 0.9 percent of total households, respectively, with children under 18; 6.6 and 5.1 percent, correspondingly, are single female householders, and 1.2 and 0.4 percent, respectively, are single male householders (Figure 11).



**Figure 11: Households with Children <Age 18 (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Grandparents and Grandchildren*

“An increasing number of children in the United States live in households headed by a grandparent. This trend is due to increasing numbers of single parent families, the high rate of divorce, teenage pregnancies, incarceration of parents, substance abuse by parents, illness, disability or death of parents, parental abuse, or neglect. In many of these homes, neither of the child’s biological parents is present. In most cases, children taken care of by grandparents move in with them as infants or preschoolers and remain with them for five years or more. These grandparents are a diverse group ranging in age from their 30s to their 70s. Many grandparents are ready to simplify their lives and slow down. Giving that up and taking over the responsibilities of being a primary caregiver again can stir up many feelings including grief, anger, loss, resentment and possibly guilt. The transition can be very stressful, and the emotional and financial burdens can be significant. Culture shock at having to deal with children and adolescents of a different generation can be great. Grandparent-headed households have a significantly higher poverty rate than other kinds of family units.”

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, <https://www.aacap.org/>

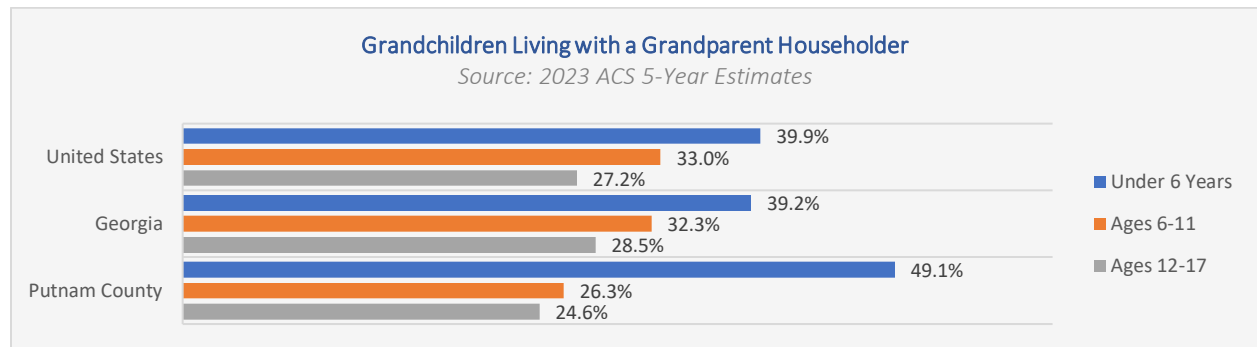
In Georgia, more than 246,000 grandchildren under the age of 18 live with a grandparent householder, 9.7 percent of children under age 18, of which more than 124,000 live with a grandparent who is responsible for them (Table 12). More than one-third of grandchildren who live with a grandparent householder do not have a parent present in the home, 40.3 percent. In Putnam County, 898 children under age 18 live with a grandparent householder, 20.3 percent of children under age 18. Of the grandchildren living with a grandparent householder in Putnam County, 73.7 percent do not have a parent present in the home.

**Grandchildren <18 Living with a Grandparent Householder**  
*Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

	Grandchildren <18 Living with a Grandparent Householder	Percentage of Children <18 Living with a Grandparent Householder	Grandparent Responsible	Parent not Present	Percentage of Parents not Present
<b>United States</b>	5,827,453	7.9%	2,575,437	997,902	38.7%
<b>Georgia</b>	246,578	9.7%	124,446	50,169	40.3%
<b>Putnam County</b>	898	20.3%	338	249	73.7%

**Table 12: Grandparents Living with and Responsible for Own Grandchildren (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

Of the more than 246,000 grandchildren under age 18 living with a grandparent householder in Georgia, 39.2 percent are children under the age of 6. In Putnam County 49.1 percent of grandchildren under age 18 living with a grandparent householder are under the age of 6.



**Figure 12: Grandchildren Living with Grandparent Householder (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

## Socioeconomic Status

### Education

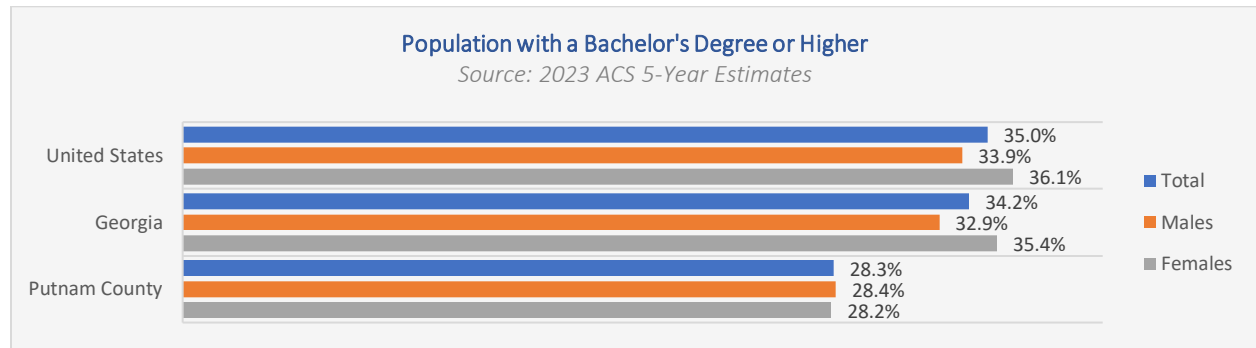
#### *Educational Attainment (Adults)*

In the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County, 89.4, 89, and 87.9 percent of the adult population over age 25, respectively, is, at minimum, a high school graduate (Table 13). The percentages of the adult population with a bachelor’s degree in the United States and Georgia are 35 and 34.2 percent, respectively; in Putnam County the percentage is much lower than the state, 28.3 percent.

Educational Attainment of Adults Age 25+		
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>		
	High School Degree+	Bachelor's Degree+
United States	89.4%	35.0%
Georgia	89.0%	34.2%
Putnam County	87.9%	28.3%

**Table 13: Educational Attainment (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

In the United States and Georgia, the proportion of women with a bachelor’s degree is slightly greater than the proportion of men with a bachelor’s degree (Figure 13). In Putnam County the proportion of women with a bachelor’s degree is slightly lower than the proportion of men with a bachelor’s degree.



**Figure 13: Population with a BA Degree or Higher (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

#### *Educational Attainment of Mothers*

**“Mother’s Education Significant to Children’s Academic Success**

A mother knows best—and the amount of education she attains can predict her children’s success in reading and math. In fact, that success is greater if she had her child later in life, according to a new University of Michigan study. Sandra Tang, a U-M psychology research fellow and the study’s lead author, said children of mothers 19 and older usually enter kindergarten with higher levels of achievement. These students continue to excel in math and reading at higher levels through eighth grade than children of mothers 18 and younger.”

University of Michigan,  
<https://news.umich.edu/mothers-education-significant-to-children-s-academic-success/>

Based on a study conducted using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort, a parent’s education (especially the mother’s) has a notable impact on the child’s future academic

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success.<sup>vi</sup> In the United States, according to 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 14.7 percent of women who had a birth in the past 12 months have a graduate or professional degree. In Georgia 13 percent of women who had a birth in the past 12 months have a graduate or professional degree. In Putnam County none of the women who had a birth in the past 12 months have a graduate or professional degree.

*Georgia Department of Education*

“Local educational agency or LEA means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.”

Code of Federal Regulations, 303.23 Local Education Agency. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/section-303.23>

**Student Membership by Race/Ethnicity**

According to the [Georgia Department of Education](#), there are more than 1.7 million students enrolled in Georgia during the 2024-25 school year. Approximately 34 percent of the students are White, 36 percent are Black, 5 percent are Asian, 5 percent are Multiracial, and 19 percent are Hispanic/Latino. In Putnam County schools, there are more than 2,900 students enrolled, of which approximately 41 percent are White, 36 percent are Black, 4 percent are Multiracial, and 18 percent are Hispanic/Latino.

<b>Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2024-25, FTE1)</b>							
<i>Source: Georgia Department of Education</i>							
	White	Black	Asian	AIAN	NHPI	Multiracial	Hispanic/Latino
<b>Georgia</b>	595,457	628,083	89,683	4,113	1,743	86,341	339,242
<b>Putnam County</b>	1,206	1,044	*	*	*	130	529

\* Data samples were too small to disclose

**Table 14: Student Membership by Race/Ethnicity (2024-25)**

**Graduation Rates**

At the end of the 2021-22 school year, according to the [Georgia Department of Education](#), in Georgia and Putnam County schools, 84.1 and 90.2 percent of all students, respectively, graduated within four years. Graduation rates were lowest for English Learners, 66.2 percent. The tables below show the graduation rates by race and ethnicity, economically disadvantaged students, EL students, and students with a disability.

<b>Graduation Rates (June 2022)</b>									
<i>Source: Georgia Department of Education</i>									
	All	White	Black	Asian or NHPI	Multiracial	Hispanic/Latino	Economically Disadvantaged	English Learners	Students With Disability
<b>Georgia</b>	84.1%	87.4%	82.2%	93.8%	83.4%	77.8%	78.6%	66.2%	72.5%
<b>Putnam County</b>	90.2%	87.5%	97.1%	*	*	78.6%	90.2%	*	81.5%

\* Data samples were too small to disclose

**Table 15: Graduation Rates (2022)**

Financial Assets and Income

*Median Household Income*

Georgia’s median household income of \$74,664 is lower than that of the United States, which is \$78,538. The median household income is even lower for Putnam County, \$64,163 (Table 16). The per capita income in the United States is more than \$43,000, while the per capita incomes in Georgia and Putnam County are lower, \$39,525 and \$42,671, respectively.

<b>Household, Family, and Per Capita Income</b>					
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>					
	<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>Mean Household Income</b>	<b>Median Family Income</b>	<b>Mean Family Income</b>	<b>Per Capita Income</b>
<b>United States</b>	\$78,538	\$110,491	\$96,922	\$130,215	\$43,289
<b>Georgia</b>	\$74,664	\$103,618	\$90,337	\$120,846	\$39,525
<b>Putnam County</b>	\$64,163	\$96,575	\$84,754	\$104,467	\$42,671

**Table 16: Household Income (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

Median and mean household incomes are included to ensure that comparisons are not misleading. Using the mean household income alone, for example, will ignore extreme values if the data is not symmetrically distributed. It is a fact that more people earn low salaries than high ones because a fairly large proportion of the population works part-time, so the data will not be symmetrically distributed. Therefore, the mean is not the best “average” to use in this case when comparing income across the state.

For more information and to see a list of U.S. states by median household income visit the following: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/median-household-income-by-state>.

The **mean** is the average (when one adds all of the values and then divides by the number of values).  
 The **median** is the middle value in a list of numbers (found after the list of numbers is sorted in order).

“**Per capita income** is a measure of the amount of money earned per person in a nation or geographic region. Per capita income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population. Per capita income for a nation is calculated by dividing the country’s national income by its population.”  
 Investopedia, <https://www.investopedia.com>

*Average Salary: Private Occupational Sector*

**Rationale for Using Average Salary by Private Sector:** The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov) offers average salary data on the following sectors: private, the federal government, state government, local government, combined government, and total of all ownership. It is difficult to do a real “apples-to-apples” comparison of public and private sector compensation because public sector job descriptions and duties may be very different from those in the private sector, and vice versa, so often there are no comparable positions within the other sectors.

The analyses of average wages and benefits in public and private sectors reveal that state and local government workers earn more than private-sector workers because state and local government workers



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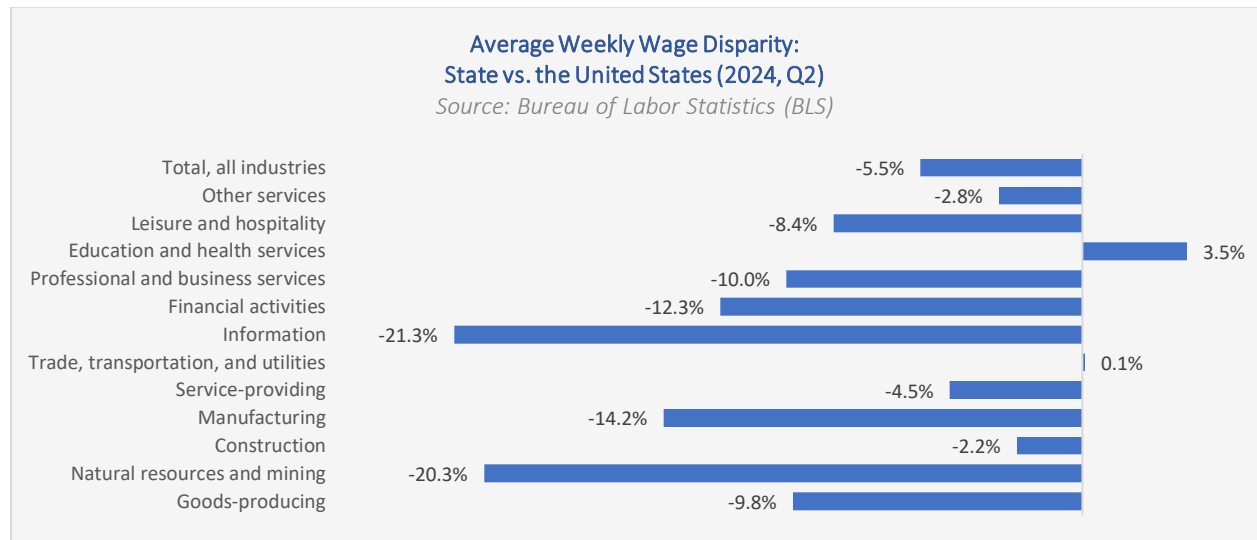
are better educated and have more work experience, on average, than do private-sector workers.<sup>vii</sup> Workers with lower skills and education levels in state and local government jobs earn less than their private-sector counterparts. The public sector jobs, in most cases, offer better job security and certainty of pension benefits, notably absent in the private sector.

The following data tables and analysis of average weekly wages focus on private industries. According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the average weekly salary in the private sector in the United States is \$1,384, compared with \$1,308 in Georgia (Table 17). The greatest disparity in wages is seen for the Information and Natural Resources and Mining sectors, where Georgians earn 21.3 and 20.3 percent less, respectively, on average, than the weekly national wage (Figure 14).

**Average Weekly Wages: Private Occupational Sector (2024, Q2)**  
*Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)*

	Average Weekly Wage in United States	Average Weekly Wage in Georgia	Wage Disparity
<b>10 Total, All Industries</b>	\$1,384	\$1,308	-\$76
<b>101 Goods-Producing</b>	\$1,517	\$1,368	-\$149
<b>1011 Natural Resources and Mining</b>	\$1,305	\$1,040	-\$265
<b>1012 Construction</b>	\$1,486	\$1,453	-\$33
<b>1013 Manufacturing</b>	\$1,569	\$1,346	-\$223
<b>102 Service-Providing</b>	\$1,357	\$1,296	-\$61
<b>1021 Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</b>	\$1,165	\$1,166	\$1
<b>1022 Information</b>	\$3,156	\$2,483	-\$673
<b>1023 Financial Activities</b>	\$2,058	\$1,805	-\$253
<b>1024 Professional and Business Services</b>	\$1,891	\$1,701	-\$190
<b>1025 Education and Health Services</b>	\$1,212	\$1,255	\$43
<b>1026 Leisure and Hospitality</b>	\$616	\$564	-\$52
<b>1027 Other Services</b>	\$990	\$962	-\$28

**Table 17: Average Weekly Wages: Private Occupational Sector (2024, Q2)**



**Figure 14: Average Weekly Wages: Private Occupational Sector (2024, Q2)**

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The Information sector comprises establishments engaged in the following processes: (a) producing and distributing information and cultural products, (b) providing the means to transmit or distribute these products, as well as data or communications, and (c) processing data. The Natural Resources and Mining sector consists of: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction.

Table 18 provides the average weekly wages by all private occupational sectors in the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County. All average weekly wages in Putnam County are lower than the United States and Georgia.<sup>viii</sup>

<b>Average Weekly Wages: Private Occupational Sector (2024, Q2)</b>			
<i>Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)</i>			
	<b>United States</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Putnam County</b>
<b>10 Total, All Industries</b>	\$1,384	\$1,308	\$868
<b>101 Goods-Producing</b>	\$1,517	\$1,368	\$1,149
<b>1011 Natural Resources and Mining</b>	\$1,305	\$1,040	\$1,013
<b>1012 Construction</b>	\$1,486	\$1,453	\$1,244
<b>1013 Manufacturing</b>	\$1,569	\$1,346	\$1,133
<b>102 Service-Providing</b>	\$1,357	\$1,296	\$771
<b>1021 Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</b>	\$1,165	\$1,166	\$757
<b>1022 Information</b>	\$3,156	\$2,483	\$807
<b>1023 Financial Activities</b>	\$2,058	\$1,805	\$1,190
<b>1024 Professional and Business Services</b>	\$1,891	\$1,701	\$982
<b>1025 Education and Health Services</b>	\$1,212	\$1,255	\$773
<b>1026 Leisure and Hospitality</b>	\$616	\$564	\$527
<b>1027 Other Services</b>	\$990	\$962	\$660

**Table 18: Average Weekly Wages: Private Occupational Sector (2024, Q2)**

*Unbanked and Underbanked*

Based on data reported by the [Prosperity Now Scorecard](#), in the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County, 5, 7, and 6 percent of households, respectively, are unbanked, which indicates that no one in the household has a checking or savings account.

Households that are considered underbanked have access to a checking and/or saving account; however, in the past 12 months they have made use of “non-bank money orders, non-bank check-cashing services, non-bank remittances, payday loans, rent-to-own services, pawn shops or refund anticipation loans (RALs).”<sup>ix</sup> In the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County, 14, 17, and 14 percent of households, respectively, are underbanked.

<b>Unbanked and Underbanked Households (2021)</b>			
<i>Source: Prosperity Now Scorecard</i>			
	<b>United States</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Putnam County</b>
<b>Unbanked</b>	5%	7%	6%
<i>Percentage of households with neither a checking nor savings account.</i>			
<b>Underbanked</b>	14%	17%	14%
<i>Percentage of households that have a checking and/or a savings account and have used non-bank money orders, non-bank check-cashing services, non-bank remittances, payday loans, rent-to-own services, pawn shops or refund anticipation loans (RALs) in the past 12 months.<sup>x</sup></i>			

**Table 19: Unbanked and Underbanked Households (2021)**

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?

#### Socioeconomic Status

##### What is the Scorecard?

“The Prosperity Now Scorecard is a comprehensive resource featuring data on family financial health and policy recommendations to help put all U.S. households on a path to prosperity. The Scorecard equips advocates, policymakers and practitioners with national, state and local data to jump-start a conversation about solutions and policies that put households on stronger financial footing across five issue areas: Financial Assets & Income; Businesses & Jobs; Homeownership & Housing; Health Care; and Education.

The Scorecard assesses all states on their relative ability to provide opportunities for residents to build and retain financial stability and wealth. The state outcome rankings are a measure of financial prosperity and how that prosperity is shared and safeguarded. The Scorecard also ranks the states on racial disparities—the gaps in 26 outcome measures between White residents and residents of color—and factors this into a state’s overall performance. Prosperity Now is increasing its focus on racial economic inequality because, as the data illustrates, structural inequality in the United States means that race and ethnicity have an outsized impact on economic well-being. Black, Latino, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people fare worse across all Scorecard outcomes and issues.

The Scorecard also separately assesses states on the strength of 29 policies to expand economic opportunity. Taken together, these 29 policies provide a comprehensive view of what states can do to help residents build and protect wealth in the issue areas described above. Unlike the outcome measures, the strengths of states’ policies are assessed on fixed criteria arrived at through consultation with issue experts and Prosperity Now’s own knowledge of policies that are promising, proven or effective in helping families build and protect financial stability and wealth.

The Scorecard also offers information at the local level—city, county, congressional district, tribal area and metro areas—on up to 33 measures.”

Prosperity Now Scorecard, <https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/>

#### ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed Households

“ALICE, an acronym for **Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**, is a new way of defining and understanding the struggles of households that earn above the federal poverty level, but not enough to afford a bare-bones household budget.

“For far too many families, the cost of living outpaces what they earn. These households struggle to manage even their most basic needs - housing, food, transportation, child care, health care, and necessary technology. When funds run short, cash-strapped households are forced to make impossible choices, such as deciding between quality child care or paying the rent, filling a prescription, or fixing the car. These short-term decisions have long-term consequences not only for ALICE families, but for all of us.”

United for ALICE, <https://www.unitedforalice.org/>

[United for ALICE](#) is an organization that studies the financial hardships of households and families on a national level and has partnerships with select states to conduct similar research and work on a state and local level. ALICE is an acronym that stands for: **Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**. Based on the 2024 National Overview report, using 2022 data, 42 percent of households in the United States were below the ALICE threshold, of which 13 percent were living under the federal poverty guidelines, and 29 percent of households were ALICE.

In Georgia and Putnam County, 48 and 39 percent of households, respectively, were below the ALICE threshold, of which 13 and 14 percent, correspondingly, were living under the federal poverty guidelines, and 35 and 25 percent of households were ALICE, respectively. “These households earned above the FPL, but not enough to afford basic household necessities.”<sup>xi</sup>

*Family Budget Calculator*

The [Economic Policy Institute](#) (EPI) is a nonprofit organization that examines the needs of middle- and low-income workers through policy research, data analysis, and the proposal of public economic policies. Specifically, they have developed the [Family Budget Calculator](#), which “measures the income a family needs in order to attain a modest yet adequate standard of living.”<sup>xii</sup> The Family Budget Calculator examines costs for 10 different family types and needs, including housing, food, child care, transportation, health care, other necessities, and taxes. Per EPI, in comparison to the Federal Poverty level, “EPI’s family budgets provide a more accurate and complete measure of economic security in America.”<sup>xiii</sup>

The table below provides information on required annual expenses for Putnam County and two types of families: one parent with two children, and two parents with two children. The required annual income needed for a single-parent family with two children in Putnam County is \$72,504; the required annual income needed for a two-parent family (one working) with two children is \$82,740. The Federal Poverty Level for a family of three is \$25,820, and for a family of four it is \$31,200.

<b>Family Budget Calculator (January 2024, Data are in 2023 Dollars)</b>		
<i>Source: Economic Policy Institute</i>		
	<b>Putnam County</b>	
	<b>1 Parent 2 Children</b>	<b>2 Parents 2 Children</b>
<b>Hourly Wage Required</b>	\$34.86	\$39.78
<b>Poverty Wage</b>	\$12.41	\$15.00
<b>Annual Expenses</b>		
<b>Housing</b>	\$10,992	\$10,992
<b>Food</b>	\$7,596	\$10,164
<b>Transportation</b>	\$18,552	\$19,740
<b>Health Care</b>	\$9,708	\$14,304
<b>Other Necessities</b>	\$6,576	\$7,448
<b>Child Care</b>	\$10,896	\$10,896
<b>Taxes</b>	\$8,184	\$9,144
<b>Required Annual Income</b>	<b>\$72,504</b>	<b>\$82,740</b>

The annual income needed by a single-parent family with two children in Putnam County is \$72,504, **more than 2.5 times the federal poverty level** for a family of three, which is \$25,820.

**Table 20: Family Budget Calculator (2024)**

Federal Assistance Benefits

*Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*

[Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) provides temporary cash assistance and employment-related services to enable families with children to become self-supporting. According to the [Georgia Department of Human Services](#), during the month of June 2024, 127 households and 3,879 children received TANF benefits in Georgia. In Putnam County, one household and 7 children received TANF benefits.

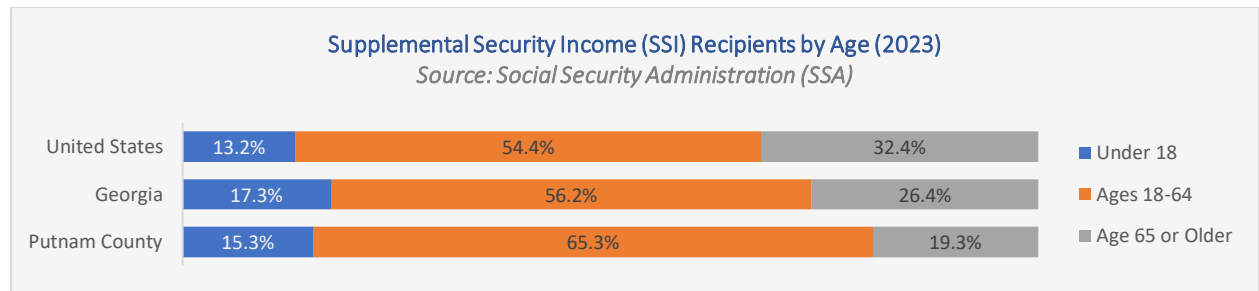
*Supplemental Security Income (SSI)*

[Supplemental Security Income, or SSI](#), provides monthly financial payments to low-income adults who are blind, disabled, or age 65 and older. Children who are disabled or blind are also eligible to receive SSI benefits. Families receiving SSI are categorically eligible for Head Start services, providing the family with an additional benefit and supportive resource. In 2023, more than 42,000 children under age 18 received SSI benefits in Georgia, of which 73 children were in Putnam County (Table 21).<sup>xiv</sup>

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Recipients by Age (December 2023)**  
*Source: Social Security Administration (SSA)*

	Total	Age		
		< 18	18–64	65+
United States	7,425,331	983,169	4,039,319	2,402,843
Georgia	245,992	42,666	138,289	65,037
Putnam County	476	73	311	92

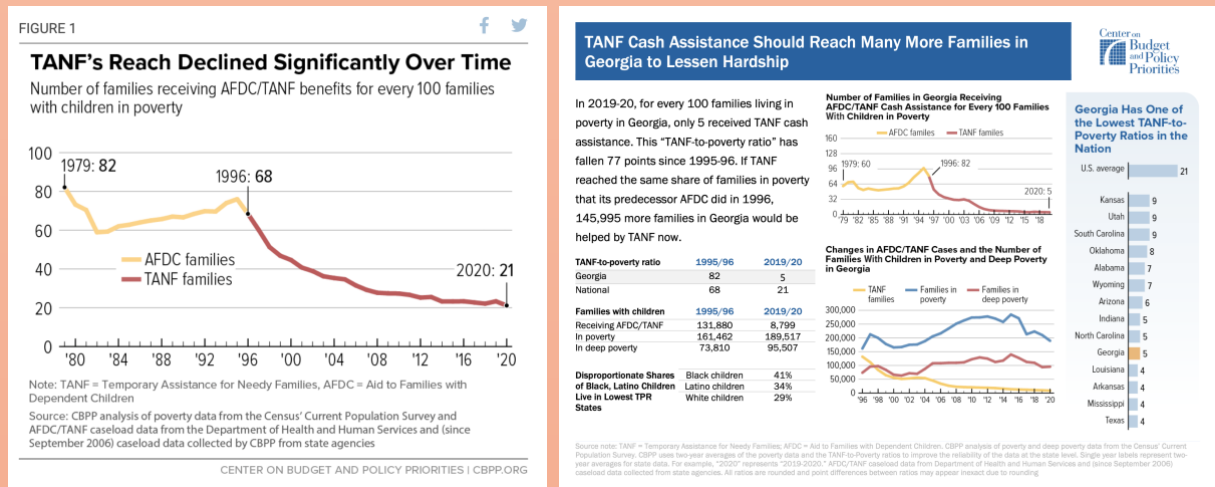
**Table 21: Supplemental Security Income Recipients by Age (2023)**



**Figure 15: Supplemental Security Income Recipients by Age (2023)**

**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

“Families use assistance provided by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to pay rent, for utilities, diapers, food, transportation, and other necessities. Yet too few families struggling to make ends meet can access the program, and TANF’s history of racism means that it fails to reach many families in states where Black children are likelier to live. If TANF had the same reach in 2020 as its predecessor, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), did in 1996, 2.38 million more families nationwide would have received cash assistance. Instead, in 2020, for every 100 families in poverty nationwide, only 21 received TANF cash assistance — down from 68 families in 1996. At an economically precarious time for families, this ‘TANF-to-poverty ratio’ (TPR) is the lowest in the program’s history.”



“Access to TANF largely depends on where a family lives. There are no federal minimum eligibility standards and states have the power to erect barriers or create pathways to TANF cash assistance. This has led to wide variation among state TPRs, which range from 71 in California and Vermont to just four in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.”

“These geographic disparities reflect racial inequities in TANF: compared to white children, Latinx children are somewhat more likely, and Black children even more likely, to live in states with the lowest TPRs. The history of racism in cash assistance programs in the United States lives on in policies that impact access to TANF today, from strict work requirements and time limits to invasive behavioral requirements, exacerbating the barriers Black and Latinx families still face to economic stability.

“More income during early childhood can improve children’s futures, research continues to find. But TANF’s limited reach means that when families hit hard times because they have lost a job, are fleeing domestic violence, or are facing a health or mental health crisis, they may have no access to cash assistance. Blocking families from assistance to meet their basic needs often puts them on a downward spiral, making it even harder to get back on their feet, and may have long-term negative consequences for children.

“State and federal policymakers can change these trends. States should remove barriers to assistance and ease policies that cut off families who are still struggling. At the federal level, policymakers should hold states accountable for serving families experiencing poverty and provide the resources to help them do so.”

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/tanf-reaching-few-poor-families>

## Poverty

### Federal Poverty Guidelines

The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) issues the Federal Poverty Guidelines in the [Federal Register](#) annually. The Poverty Guidelines for a family of four in 2024 is \$31,200. Research suggests that a family of four requires at least double that amount to make ends meet.<sup>xv</sup> The measurement only accounts for the family’s annual income; it does not include other aspects of economic status such as housing, debt, assets, or property. The calculation used today was originally developed in the 1960s based on the amount of money spent by families on food. The poverty level was reached by multiplying that dollar amount (money spent by families on food) three times. Nowadays, families not only spend approximately one-seventh of their annual income on food, but the cost of child care, transportation, and health care have also increased drastically over the past 60 years.<sup>xvi</sup>

Persons in Family/Household	Poverty guideline
1	\$15,060
2	\$20,440
3	\$25,820
4	\$31,200
5	\$36,580
6	\$41,960
7	\$47,340
8	\$52,720

*For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$5,380 for each additional person.*

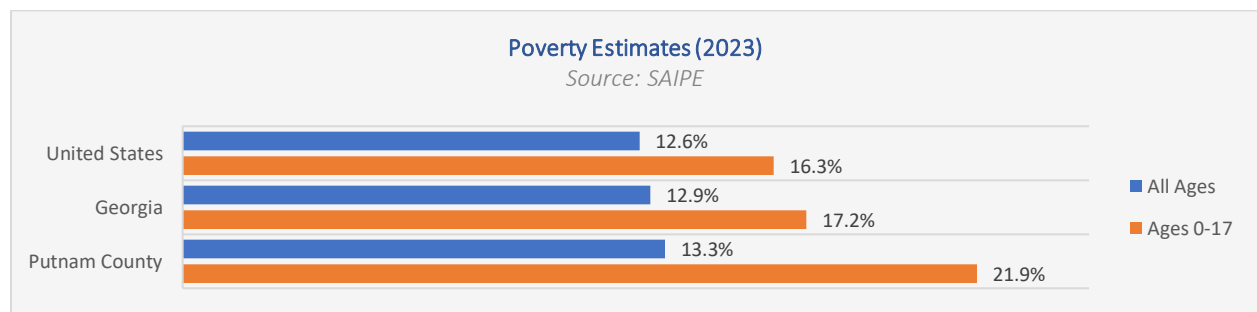
Learn more about how poverty is measured by watching this [YouTube video](#) from the Institute for Research on Poverty.

### Poverty in Georgia

Per the 2023 [Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates \(SAIPE\)](#), 12.9 percent of the population in Georgia live in poverty (more than 1.3 million individuals), and 17.2 percent of children, ages 0-17, live in poverty (more than 426,000 children) (Table 22 & Figure 16). In Putnam County, 13.3 percent of the overall population live in poverty, and 21.9 percent of children, ages of 0-17, live in poverty.

	All Ages	Poverty Est., All Ages	Age 0-17	Poverty Est., Age 0-17
United States	40,951,625	12.6%	11,582,950	16.3%
Georgia	1,372,488	12.9%	426,470	17.2%
Putnam County	3,027	13.3%	946	21.9%

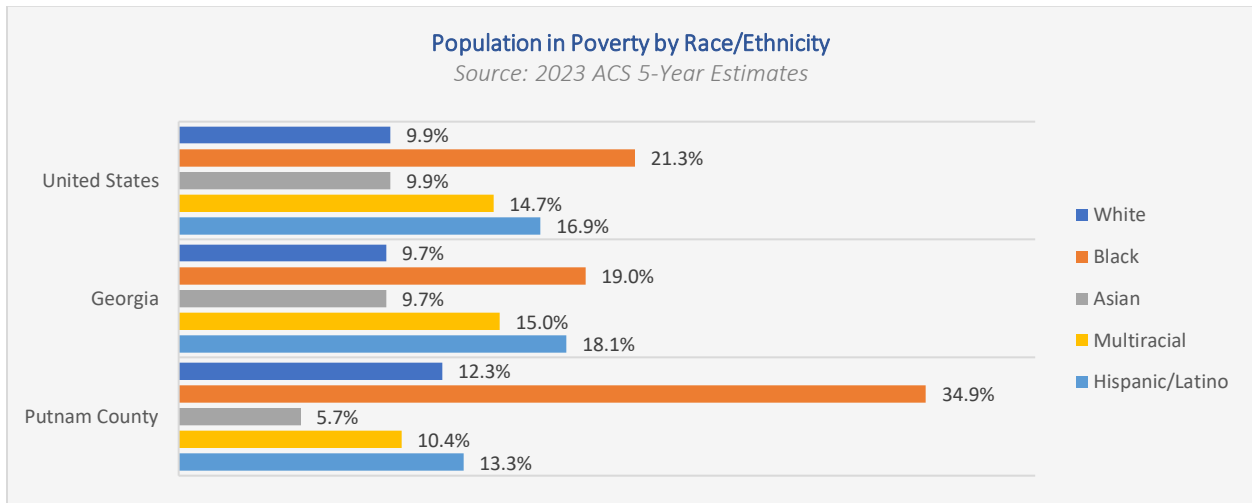
**Table 22: Poverty (2023)**



**Figure 16: Poverty (2023)**

**Poverty by Race/Ethnicity**

Although the overall poverty rate (for all ages) in Georgia is 12.9 percent, the poverty rate for Black residents, who make up 33.2 percent of the population in the state, is 19 percent. The poverty rate for those who identify as Asian, who make up 4.9 percent of the population, is 9.7 percent. Of the Hispanic/Latino residents in the state, who make up 11.1 percent of the population, 18.1 percent live in poverty (Figure 17). In Putnam County, the poverty rate for the Black population is 34.9 percent, 5.7 percent for the Asian population, and 13.3 percent for the Hispanic/Latino population.



**Figure 17: Poverty by Race/Ethnicity (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Language Spoken by Population in Poverty**

In the United States, almost one-fifth of the population in poverty speak Spanish as their primary language, 18.7 percent. In Georgia and Putnam County, the proportion of the population in poverty that speak Spanish as their primary language is lower, 11.6 and 5 percent, respectively.

	English Only	Spanish	Asian and Pacific Island Languages	Other Indo-European languages	Other Languages
United States	72.6%	18.7%	3.2%	3.6%	1.9%
Georgia	82.8%	11.6%	2.1%	2.0%	1.4%
Putnam County	94.0%	5.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%

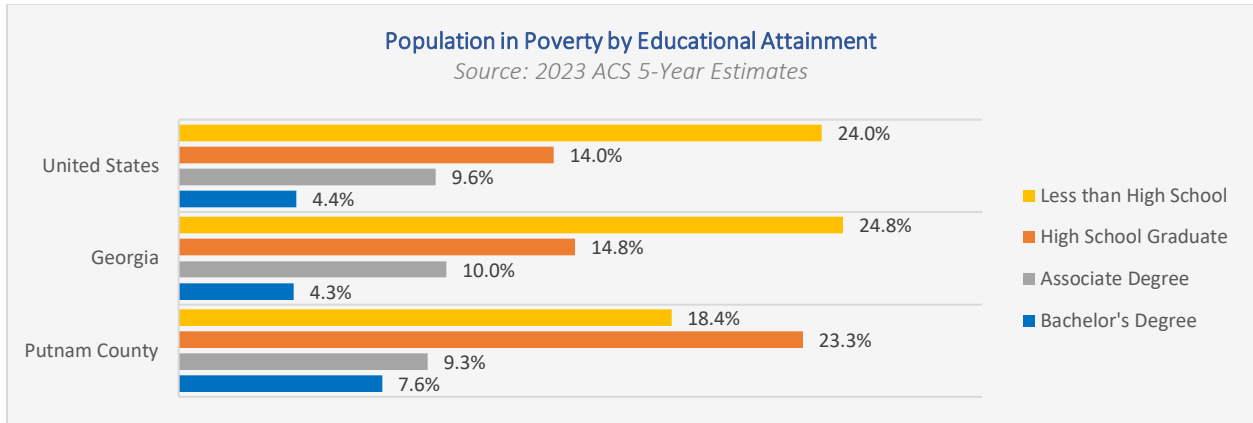
**Table 23: Language Spoken by Population in Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Poverty by Educational Attainment**

Obtaining a higher level of education significantly impacts poverty rate. In Georgia and Putnam County, 24.8 and 18.4 percent of the population with less than a high school degree, respectively, live in poverty, while 4.3 and 7.6 percent of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher, correspondingly, live in



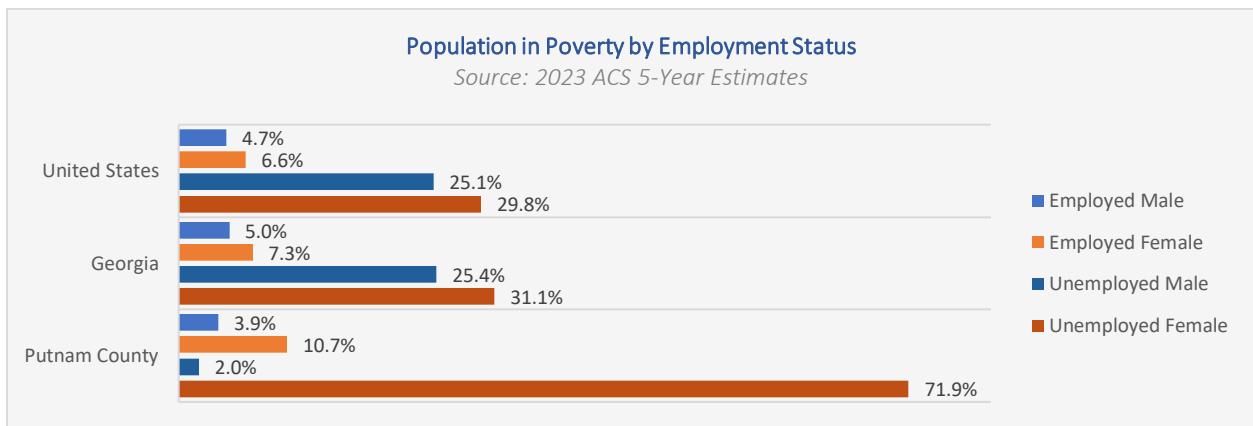
poverty (Figure 18). Unlike the state and the nation, individuals with a high school degree in Putnam County live in poverty at higher rates than those without a high school diploma or equivalent.



**Figure 18: Poverty by Educational Attainment (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Poverty by Employment Status**

Like educational attainment, a significant difference is seen in poverty rates between employed and unemployed individuals. In the United States and Georgia employed and unemployed females live in poverty at higher rates than employed and unemployed males (Figure 19). In Putnam County the percentage of unemployed females living in poverty far outpaces the the state rate, 71.9 percent compared with 31.1 percent, respectively.



**Figure 19: Population in Poverty by Employment Status (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Births to Women in Poverty**

Of the nearly 4 million women between the ages 15 and 50 who had a birth in the United States in the past 12 months, nearly 800,000, or 20 percent were living in poverty (Table 24). In Georgia more than

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138,000, or 21.8 percent of all women who had a birth gave birth in poverty. In Putnam County 66 women between the ages of 15 and 50 gave birth in poverty, 20.2 percent of those who gave birth.

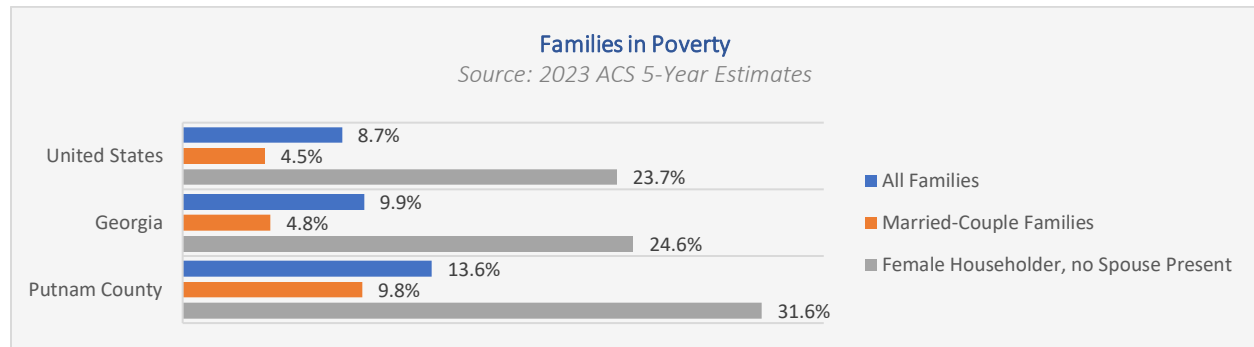
<b>Women 15-50 Years Who Had a Birth in the Past 12 Months in Poverty</b>			
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>			
	<b>Total Births</b>	<b>Births in Poverty</b>	<b>Percentage of Births in Poverty</b>
<b>United States</b>	3,997,128	795,916	20.0%
<b>Georgia</b>	138,505	30,079	21.8%
<b>Putnam County</b>	327	66	20.2%

NOTE: Census estimates report on the number of women who gave birth in the past 12 months; the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates report on the average of five years from 2019 to 2023.

**Table 24: Women Who Had a Birth in Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Families in Poverty**

In the United States, 8.7 percent of all families live in poverty, 4.5 percent of married-couple families live in poverty, and 23.7 percent of families led by a single female live in poverty. In Georgia and Putnam County, 9.9 and 13.6 percent of all families, respectively, live in poverty, 4.8 and 9.8 percent of married-couple families, correspondingly, live in poverty, and 24.6 and 31.6 percent of single female householder families, respectively, live in poverty (Figure 20).



**Figure 20: Families in Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

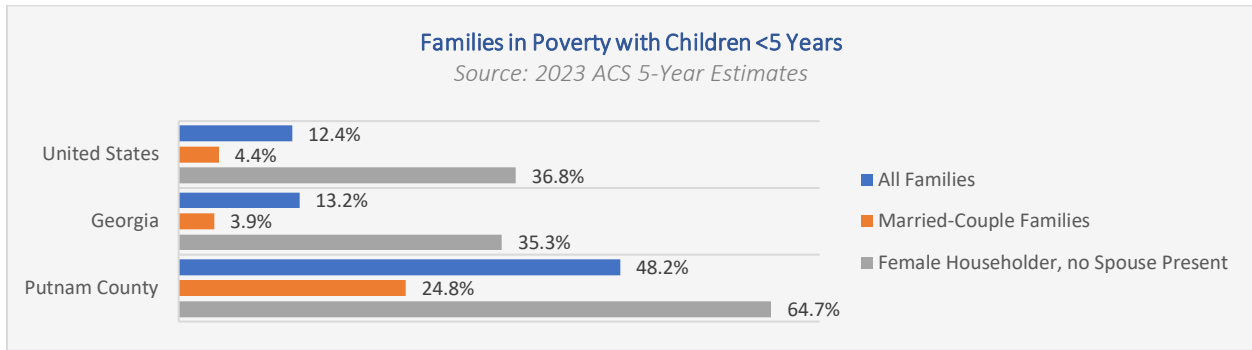
**Families with Children Under Age 5 in Poverty**

Of families with related children under the age of 5 in the United States and Georgia, 12.4 and 13.2 percent, respectively, live in poverty. In Putnam County, the rate of families with children under 5 years living in poverty is much higher, 48.2 percent (Figure 21). The poverty rate for married-couple families with children under the age of 5 in the United States and Georgia is 4.4 and 3.9 percent, respectively. In Putnam County, nearly 25 percent of married-couple families with children under the age of 5 live in poverty.

In the United States and Georgia, of the families with only a female householder, no spouse (or partner) present, with children under the age of 5, 36.8 and 35.3 percent live in poverty, correspondingly; in Putnam County, 64.7 percent of single female parent households with children under age 5 live in poverty.

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**Figure 21: Families in Poverty with Children <5 Years (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Children in Poverty**

*Children Ages 0-5: Percent in Poverty*

In the United States there are almost 23 million children, ages 0-5, of which nearly 4 million live in poverty, 17.2 percent. In Georgia and Putnam County, 19.6 and 44.9 percent of children, ages 0-5, correspondingly, live in poverty, a total of 152,054 and 523 children, respectively (Table 25).

**Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty**  
*Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

	Total Children Ages 0-5	Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty	
United States	22,847,032	3,926,390	17.2%
Georgia	774,237	152,054	19.6%
Putnam County	1,165	523	44.9%

**Table 25: Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Racial Proportion of Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty*

In the United States and Georgia, of all children, ages 0-5, living in poverty, 39.6 and 27.9 percent are White, respectively, a corresponding 25.5 and 48.8 percent are Black, 18.6 and 12.6 percent, respectively, are Multiracial, and 11.4 and 7.7 percent, correspondingly, identify as Other (Figure 22).

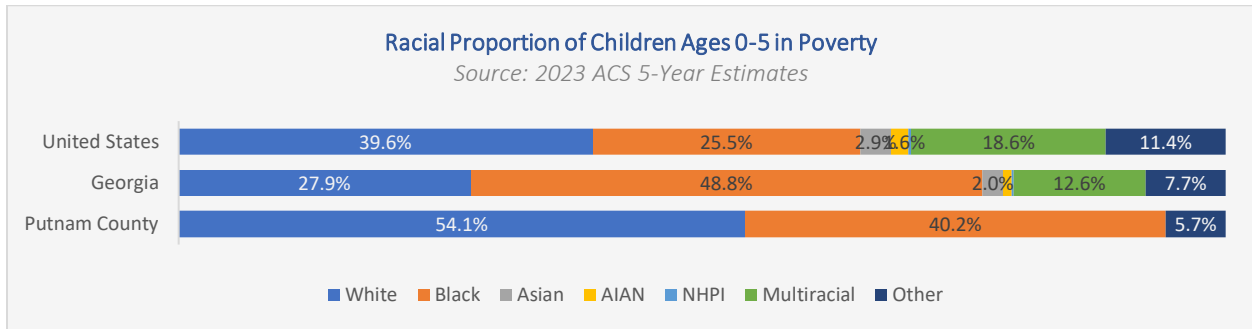
In Putnam County of all children, ages 0-5, more than half of the children in poverty are White, 40.2 percent are Black, and 5.7 percent identify as Other.

**Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty by Race**  
*Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

	White	Black	Asian	AIAN	NHPI	Multiracial	Other
United States	1,553,567	1,003,018	115,322	63,868	11,827	729,994	448,794
Georgia	42,458	74,249	3,022	1,230	272	19,177	11,646
Putnam County	283	210	0	0	0	0	30

**Table 26: Number of Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty by Race (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

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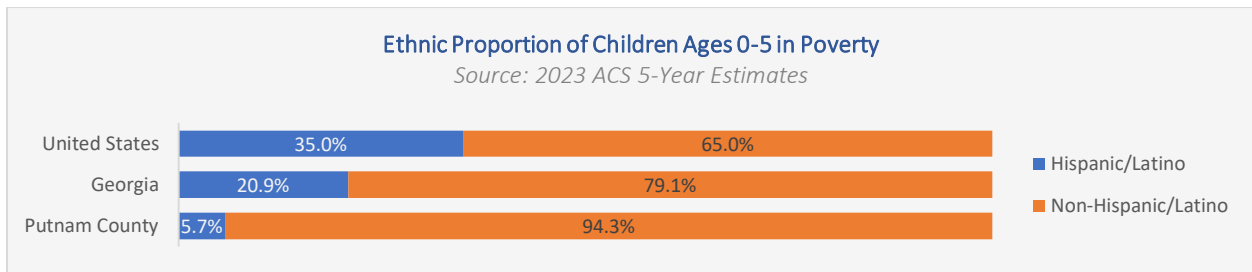
**Figure 22: Racial Proportion Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Ethnic Proportion of Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty**

In the United States more than one-third of all children, ages 0-5, in poverty are Hispanic/Latino, 35 percent (Table 27 & Figure 23). In Georgia and Putnam County, 20.9 and 5.7 percent of children, ages 0-5, in poverty are Hispanic/Latino, respectively.

	Hispanic / Latino	Non-Hispanic / Latino
United States	1,374,500	2,551,890
Georgia	31,704	120,350
Putnam County	30	493

**Table 27: Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty by Ethnicity (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**



**Figure 23: Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty by Ethnicity (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Extreme Poverty**

Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank as an individual living on \$2.15 or less per day.<sup>xvii</sup> The extent to which extreme poverty exists in the United States is heavily debated. In 2018 Dr. Bruce D. Meyer, Professor at the McCormick Foundation University of Chicago, found that extreme poverty is very rare to nonexistent in the United States as existing studies and reports “fail to account for important benefits such as in-kind transfers, public assistance, and unreported earnings.”<sup>xviii</sup>

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Below are two alternative measures to estimate extreme poverty in the United States: the number of children, ages 0-5, with a household income of less than 50 percent of the federal poverty level, and families earning less than \$10,000 per year.

In the United States, nearly 1.9 million children, ages 0-5, live in households with an income of less than 50 percent of the federal poverty level. The federal poverty level for a family of four in the United States is \$31,200, approximately \$21.40 per day, per person. A family of four living on less than 50 percent of the federal poverty level in the United States must make ends meet with less than \$10.70 per day, per person. In Georgia, nearly 74,000 children live in extreme poverty, of which 30 children live in Putnam County.

Children Ages 0-5 in Extreme Poverty	
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>	
	Total Income < 50% of FPL
United States	1,899,029
Georgia	73,622
Putnam County	30

Table 28: Children Ages 0-5 in Extreme Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Although the median family income in Georgia is \$90,337, 3.5 percent of families statewide have an income of less than \$10,000 per year. In Putnam County, 3.4 percent of families have an income of less than \$10,000 per year. As an example, a family of four, living on an income of less than \$10,000, must make ends meet with approximately \$6.80 per day, per person.

Extreme Poverty			
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>			
	Total Families	Families Earning Less than \$10,000/Year	
		Number	Percent
United States	82,220,165	2,504,204	3.0%
Georgia	2,661,506	93,600	3.5%
Putnam County	6,535	223	3.4%

Table 29: Extreme Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

### Economic Features and Trends

The economic forecast was challenging in 2023 amidst numerous government near-shutdowns due to party divisions on solving the impending debt ceiling. The future remained uncertain as lawmakers tried to agree on long-term solutions to reestablish national fiscal and political stability. However, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. economy showed annual growth of 2.7 percent in the third quarter of 2024, compared with 2023. Similarly, “the economy has grown 12.6 percent under the Biden-Harris Administration, with the lowest average unemployment of any Administration in 50 years, and 16 million jobs created.”<sup>xix</sup>

As 2025 starts and a new presidential administration begins, a number of potential economic policies may impact the U.S, state and local economies. These policy changes include tariffs, new immigration policies, and tax cuts extended.<sup>xx</sup> According to U.S. Economist David Mericle, “The drag from tariffs and reduced immigration will likely appear earlier in 2025, while tax cuts will likely boost spending with a longer delay.”<sup>xxi</sup>

### Economic Overview of the Community

#### Labor Force

The labor force is a critical indicator of a community’s economic health, reflecting the number of individuals actively working or seeking employment. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides labor force data through the [Current Population Survey \(CPS\)](#) and the [Local Area Unemployment Statistics \(LAUS\)](#) program, which track national and local employment trends.

**In labor force**

- Currently working (civilian/armed forces)
- Unemployed: recently worked/seeking employment

**Not in labor force**

- Never worked/retired

U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/>

As of 2023, Georgia had over 5.3 million individuals in the labor force, while Putnam County reported 8,899 workers. The county’s employment rate stood at 96.2 percent, with 338 individuals unemployed, resulting in a 3.8 percent unemployment rate—slightly higher than Georgia’s statewide rate of 3.2 percent. Although Putnam County’s unemployment rate is slightly higher than the state average, it remains below national levels, indicating a stable labor market.

<b>Labor Force (2023)</b>				
<i>Source: U.S. Department of Labor</i>				
	<b>Individuals in the Labor Force</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Unemployment Rate</b>
<b>Georgia</b>	5,305,623	5,135,833	169,790	3.2
<b>Putnam County</b>	8,899	8,561	338	3.8

**Table 30: Labor Force (2023)**

#### Top Industries

The economic framework of the service area must be analyzed within the context of key terms and definitions to ensure the data is understood and put into proper context. While the terms “industry” and “occupation” both refer to aspects of the working world, they are distinctly different from one another. “Industry” refers to the broad category of economic activity or the sector in which a business operates. It

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describes what kind of work a company or organization does. Examples include health care, retail, and manufacturing. “Occupation” refers to the specific job or role that an individual performs and/or the type of work a person does. Examples of occupations include food preparation, sales and management.

In the United States the median earnings of the top five industries and occupations by labor force size, vary greatly. The top four industries in the United States make up approximately 44 percent of the total labor force, with median earnings ranging from approximately \$30,000 to \$58,000. The fifth largest industry in the United States (professional, scientific, and technical services), accounting for 8.1 percent of the total labor force, reports median earnings of approximately \$84,000.

Similar to the United States, the top four industries in Georgia make up more than 40 percent of the labor force, with median earnings ranging from approximately \$30,000 to \$50,000. The fifth largest industry (professional, scientific, and technical services), accounts for 8.5 percent of the total labor force and reports median earnings of approximately \$81,000.

In Putnam County the top industry is retail trade, more than 15 percent of the total labor force is employed in this industry. The median earnings for this industry are less than \$20,000. The following four industries, accounting for 6.5 to 11.3 percent of the total labor force, report median earnings ranging from \$34,000 almost \$50,000.

<b>Top Five Industries by Labor Size</b>				
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>				
	<b>Industries</b>	<b>Labor Force Size</b>	<b>Percentage of Labor Force</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>
<b>United States</b>	Health care and social assistance	22,381,833	14.0%	\$46,717
	Retail trade	17,368,629	10.9%	\$30,963
	Manufacturing	15,912,421	10.0%	\$58,079
	Educational services	14,999,788	9.4%	\$50,574
	Professional, scientific, and technical services	12,900,923	8.1%	\$84,120
<b>Georgia</b>	Health care and social assistance	599,006	11.7%	\$45,680
	Retail trade	572,313	11.2%	\$30,102
	Manufacturing	521,766	10.2%	\$50,059
	Educational services	473,404	9.2%	\$48,896
	Professional, scientific, and technical services	438,199	8.5%	\$81,231
<b>Putnam County</b>	Retail trade	1,495	15.6%	\$19,649
	Manufacturing	1,086	11.3%	\$49,067
	Educational services	991	10.3%	\$41,561
	Health care and social assistance	853	8.9%	\$34,630
	Construction	620	6.5%	\$46,812

**Table 31: Top Five Industries by Labor Size (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Employment Sector Changes*

The [U.S. Census Business Dynamics Statistics](#) (BDS) “provides annual measures of business dynamics (such as job creation and destruction, establishment births and deaths, and firm startups and shutdowns) for the economy overall and aggregated by establishment and firm characteristics.”<sup>xxii</sup> The most recent data available at the time of this assessment is the 2022 BDS dataset. Below is a brief summary of total

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establishments, as well as job creation and losses. For more detailed exploration of the dataset, please use the [BDS Explorer](#).

Based on the 2022 [U.S. Census Business Dynamics Statistics](#), in Georgia there are a total of 175,195 firms with 228,401 unique establishments employing more than 4.2 million individuals. In the past 12 months more than 17,000 establishments and 98,000 employees were connected to “firm deaths” in the state (a firm death is when a business stops operating in the community). The same report indicates that there were 37 establishments in Putnam County and 247 employees connected to “firm deaths” in the past 12 months (Tables 32 & 33).

<b>Total Establishments and Employees (2022)</b>			
<i>Source: U.S. Census Business Dynamics Statistics</i>			
	<b>Number of firms</b>	<b>Number of establishments</b>	<b>Number of employees</b>
<b>United States</b>	5,535,295	7,400,528	133,689,031
<b>Georgia</b>	175,195	228,401	4,205,637
<b>Putnam County</b>	431	447	5,223

**Table 32: Total Establishments and Employees (2022)**

<b>Firms Exits in Past 12 Months (2022)</b>			
<i>Source: U.S. Census Business Dynamics Statistics</i>			
	<b>Firms</b>	<b>Establishments</b>	<b>Employees</b>
<b>United States</b>	485,537	501,180	2,643,141
<b>Georgia</b>	17,639	17,990	98,000
<b>Putnam County</b>	35	37	247

**Table 33: Firms Exits in Past 12 Months (2022)**

Although 37 establishments stopped operating in Putnam County, there was a net job creation of 265, a rate of 5.2. The largest number of jobs created were in the manufacturing industry, 121 jobs were created with a corresponding rate of 9.8. The industry with the highest rate of jobs created was agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, where 30 jobs were created with a corresponding rate of 89.55. *Note: the rate of job creation is the number of jobs created relative to the total number of jobs in an industry.*

<b>Job Creation and Loss in Past 12 Months (2022)</b>				
<i>Source: U.S. Census Business Dynamics Statistics</i>				
	<b># of Jobs Created</b>	<b># of Jobs Lost</b>	<b># of Net Jobs Created</b>	<b>Rate of New Jobs Created</b>
<b>United States</b>	21,440,730	14,765,196	6,675,534	5.12
<b>Georgia</b>	674,984	485,983	189,001	4.6
<b>Putnam County</b>	842	577	265	5.2

**Table 34: Job Creation and Loss in Past 12 Months (2022)**



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#### Future Projections

The Georgia Department of Labor reported on the highest demand jobs in the state over the next two years. According to their analysis, “Georgia is forecasted to add jobs to its economy at the rate of 1.4 percent annually.”<sup>xxiii</sup> This analysis contains the industries and occupations with highest growth and top jobs by education. Per the [Georgia Department of Labor](#) for [2023-2025](#), the top five occupations within industries with the most job growth from 2023-2025 are:

- Food Service and Drinking Places
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Ambulatory Health Care Services
- Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers
- Educational Services

Similarly, the Department of Labor has released a [Hot Careers to 2030 List](#), which was created to identify occupations within the state that had above average wages and job growth and is organized by skill type and education level. Furthermore, the Department of Labor produces area labor profiles for all counties in the state<sup>xxiv</sup>. These profiles provide employment trends, employer information, labor force statistics, and education data on the labor force. [Putnam County’s](#) most recent area labor profile was released in November 2024.

While some occupations are on the rise, others are waning. The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Employment Projections](#) provides a list of occupations that have declined in recent years and are projected to continue declining.

Putnam County is poised to grow in population and economic opportunity in the near future. The announced \$6.5 billion Rivian manufacturing plant in neighboring Walton and Morgan counties is expected to spur regional growth, from which Putnam County may benefit.<sup>xxv</sup> Georgia Highway 44 in the northeast portion of the county is currently in the planning stages for a major expansion in anticipation of growth.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The U.S. Small Business Administration generated a 2020 report from the Statistics of U.S. Businesses regarding Georgia’s Small Business Profile: <https://advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-Small-Business-Economic-Profile-GA.pdf>

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**Early Childhood Education Workforce**

According to a survey completed by the National Head Start Association in October of 2023, 15 percent of staff positions in Head Start were vacant, with compensation being the top reason for continued vacancy.<sup>xxvii</sup> In order to deal with this workforce crisis, in August of 2024, the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) published a final rule on [Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming](#). Included in this final rule was raising annual Head Start teacher wages to, “promote competitive salaries for Head Start Staff.”<sup>xxviii</sup> Per the First Five Years Fund, “programs pay educators higher salaries, comparable to local public preschool teachers. If a Head Start program doesn’t have a public preschool to compare itself to, the rule instructs it to use the metric of 90 percent of local public kindergarten teacher salary.”<sup>xxix</sup> Unfortunately, these changes do not come with any additional funding, therefore programs will need to find alternative ways to meet their workforce needs.

Based on data collected from the [Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics](#) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, before COVID there were a total of 11,920 preschool teachers in Georgia (Table 35). This number has not recovered, as in 2023 there were only 9,760 preschool teachers in Georgia. However, the number of child care workers increased significantly from 17,200 in 2019 to 22,960 in 2023.

<b>Georgia Early Childhood Education Workforce (2019 &amp; 2023)</b>		
<i>Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)</i>		
	<b>Number of Employees (2019)</b>	<b>Number of Employees (2023)</b>
<b>Child Care Workers</b>	17,220	22,960
<b>Education and Child Care Administrators, Preschool and Daycare</b>	2,040	860
<b>Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education</b>	11,920	9,760
<b>Special Education Teachers, Preschool</b>	120	850

**Table 35: Georgia Early Childhood Education Workforce (2019 & 2023)**

The largest group of employees in Georgia in the Early Childhood Education workforce, child care workers, also have the lowest median annual wage, \$27,760, with a mean hourly wage of \$13.43.

<b>Georgia Early Childhood Education Wages (2023)</b>				
<i>Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)</i>				
	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Median Annual Wage</b>	<b>Mean Annual Wage</b>	<b>Mean Hourly Wage</b>
<b>Education and Child Care Administrators, Preschool and Daycare</b>	860	\$49,250	\$60,350	\$29.01
<b>Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education</b>	9,760	\$36,800	\$42,550	\$20.46
<b>Special Education Teachers, Preschool</b>	850	\$77,550	\$73,250	\$35.22
<b>Child Care Workers</b>	22,960	\$27,760	\$27,940	\$13.43

**Table 36: Early Childhood Education Wages (2023)**

**“Ninety Percent of Kindergarten Teaching Wage” Metric**

In Georgia, the average annual wage for a Kindergarten teacher in 2023 was \$70,760.<sup>xxx</sup> If a Head Start program needs to use the metric of 90 percent of a local public kindergarten teacher’s wage, in Georgia, the current HS teacher wage would be \$63,684. Based on 2024 PIR data, the average annual wage for a

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Head Start classroom teacher in Georgia is \$39,178. The average annual wage for an Early Head Start classroom teacher is \$31,983; the wage for a Migrant Head Start classroom teacher is \$27,329. Table 37 below illustrates the gains that will have to be made to meet the metric 90 percent of kindergarten wages.

<b>Classroom Teacher Wages in Georgia</b>		
<i>Source: 2024 Program Information Report</i>		
<b>Program</b>	<b>Classroom Teacher Wages</b>	<b>Balance/Wages to be Gained (to reach 90% of KG wage)</b>
<b>Head Start</b>	\$39,178	\$24,506
<b>Early Head Start</b>	\$31,983	\$31,701
<b>Migrant Head Start</b>	\$27,329	\$36,355

**Table 37: Classroom Teacher Wages in Georgia (2024)**

## Housing and Homelessness

### Affordable Housing and Housing Shortage

Based on the [National Low-Income Housing Coalition](#) (NLIHC) April 2024 [The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes](#) report (using 2022 data), there is no single state in the United States that has an adequate supply of affordable rental homes for the lowest income renters. Nationwide, only 34 affordable and available rental homes exist for every 100 extremely low-income renter households.<sup>xxxii</sup> The lack of affordable housing creates a cost burden for both renters and homeowners. “Cost burdened” is defined as spending more than 30 percent of income on housing, and “severely cost burdened” as spending more than 50 percent of one’s income on housing.

In Georgia 90 percent of renter households with extremely low income (30 percent of the area median income, or AMI) are cost burdened, and 78 percent are severely cost burdened.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Statewide there are only 34 affordable and available rental homes per 100 households at or below extremely low income.

“Housing expenditures that exceed 30 percent of household income have historically been viewed as an indicator of a housing affordability problem. The conventional 30 percent of household income that a household can devote to housing costs before the household is said to be ‘burdened’ evolved from the United States National Housing Act of 1937. The 30-percent rule was considered a rule of thumb for the amount of income that a family could spend and still have enough left over for other non-discretionary spending; it made its way to owner-occupied housing too.”

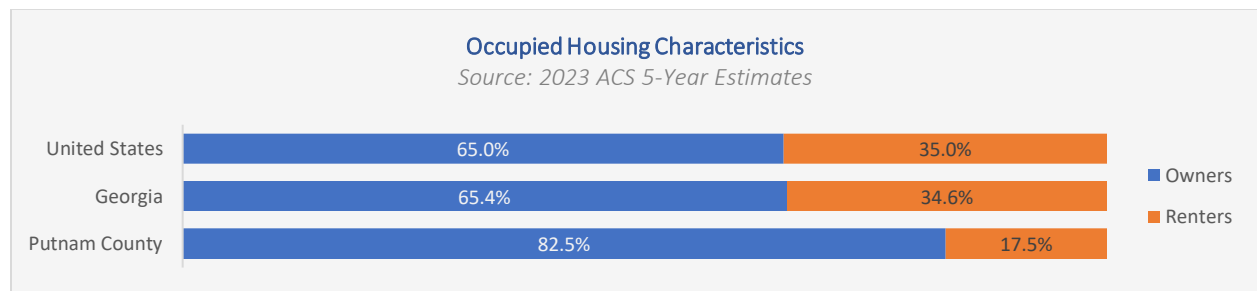
U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/>

### Housing Ownership

In the United States and Georgia, approximately two-thirds of all occupied housing units are owner-occupied, 65 and 65.4 percent, respectively, and 35 and 34.6 percent are renter-occupied, respectively (Table 38 and Figure 25). In Putnam County, of the occupied housing units, 82.5 percent are owner-occupied, and 17.5 percent are renter-occupied.

<b>Occupied Housing Characteristics</b>			
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>			
	<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	<b>Renter-Occupied</b>
<b>United States</b>	127,482,865	82,892,037	44,590,828
<b>Georgia</b>	4,008,013	2,619,529	1,388,484
<b>Putnam County</b>	10,134	8,364	1,770

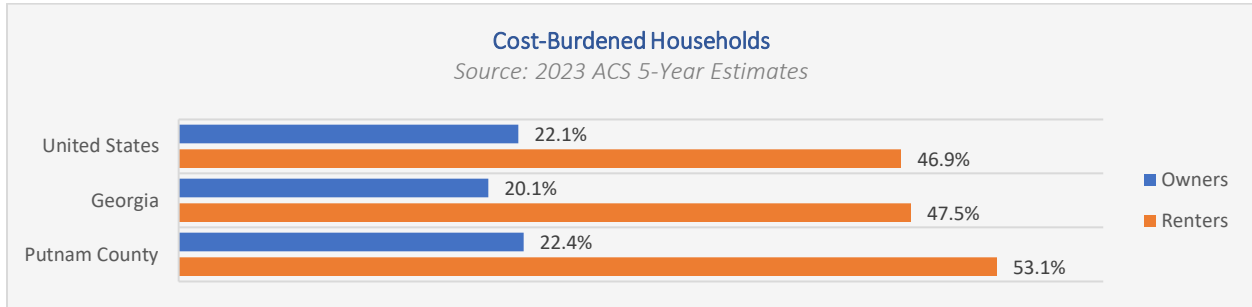
**Table 38: Occupied Housing Characteristic (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**



**Figure 24: Occupied Housing Characteristics (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Cost-Burdened Households*

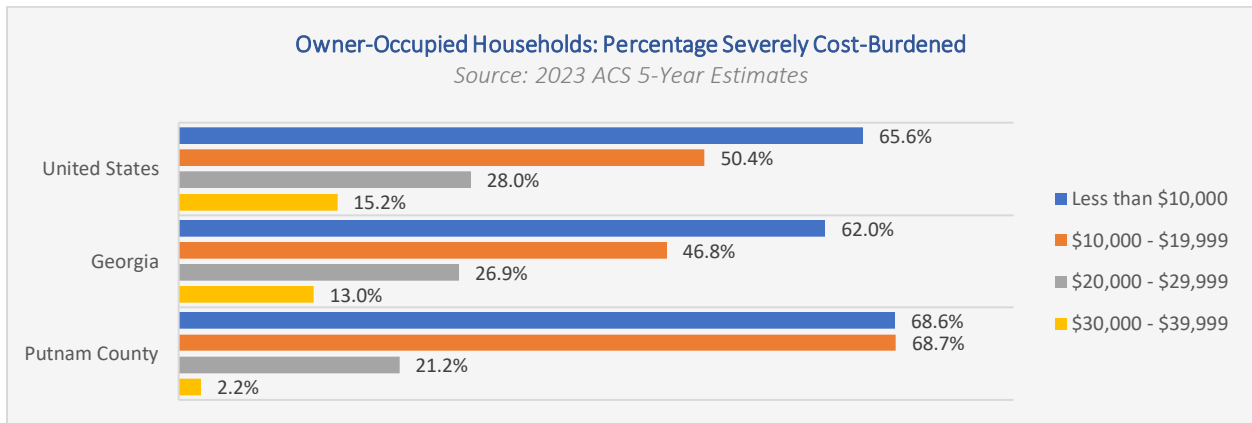
Based on U.S. census data (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates), in Georgia and Putnam County, 20.1 and 22.4 percent of owner-occupied households (with or without a mortgage), correspondingly, are cost-burdened, indicating 30 percent or more of household income is spent on housing. For renter-occupied households in Georgia and Putnam County, the estimate is higher; 47.5 and 53.1 percent are determined to be cost-burdened, respectively (Figure 26).



**Figure 25: Cost-Burdened Households (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Severely Cost-Burdened Households*

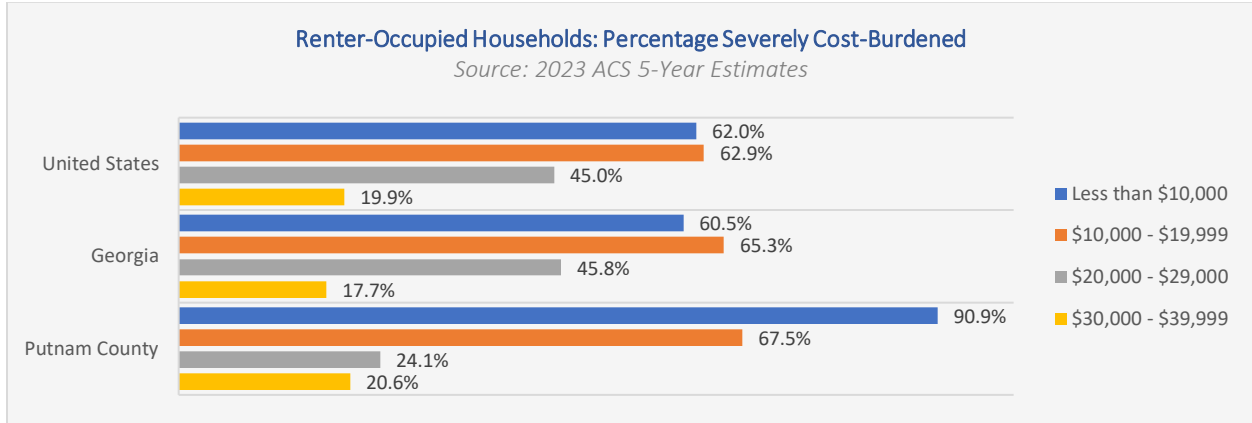
Of owner-occupied households earning less than \$10,000 per year in the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County, 65.6, 62, and 68.6 percent, correspondingly, are severely cost-burdened, meaning more than 50 percent of household income is spent on housing.



**Figure 26: Owner-Occupied Households: Severely Cost-Burdened Households (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

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In the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County, 62, 60.5, and 90.9 percent of renter-occupied households earning less than \$10,000 per year, respectively, are severely cost-burdened (Figure 28).



**Figure 27: Renter-Occupied Households: Severely Cost-Burdened by Income (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Energy Burden*

Based on data collected in October 2024 from the [Department of Energy's LEAD Tool](#), in the United States the average household energy burden is 3 percent (this is calculated by taking the average annual energy cost and dividing it by the average household income). Households with an energy burden of more than 6 percent are considered to have a "high energy burden" and households with an energy burden of more than 10 percent are considered to have a "severe energy burden."

In the United States, households earning less than 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines spend approximately 20 percent of their income on energy.<sup>xxiii</sup> In Georgia and Putnam County, the average annual energy costs range from approximately \$2,000 to \$2,500 (Table 39). The average energy burden for all households combined is 2 percent in Georgia and 3 percent in Putnam County. For those households earning less than 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, their energy burden is measured at 19 percent.

Household Energy Burden (Data Collected October 2024)						
Source: Department of Energy						
	Total Households			Households <100% of FPG		
	Average Household Income	Average Annual Energy Cost	Energy Burden	Average Household Income	Average Annual Energy Cost	Energy Burden
Georgia	\$101,462	\$2,190	2%	\$10,436	\$2,025	19%
Putnam County	\$96,057	\$2,538	3%	\$12,256	\$2,320	19%

**Table 39: Household Energy Burden (Data Collected October 2024)**

**Fair Market Rent**

According to the 2024 [National Low-Income Housing Coalition \(NLIHC\)](#) report, 35 percent of households were renters. The Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom home in Georgia is \$1,507 per month. To be able to rent a two-bedroom home without exceeding 30 percent of a person’s gross income as a recommended rule, a renter must earn \$60,271 annually; yet the median income for a renter in Georgia is \$49,806.<sup>xxxiv</sup> With a median income of \$49,806, a renter is able to afford \$1,245 per month for a home, \$262 dollars less than the fair market rental value of a two-bedroom home.

It is critical to point out that Head Start families do not earn wages typical of an average renter in the state. The NLIHC defines extremely low-income households as those with income at or below the poverty threshold, or 30 percent of AMI (median family income for the area of residence), whichever is higher. For Georgia this amount is \$28,155, which is \$3,045 more than the Poverty Guidelines level for a family of three, which is \$25,820. The rent that someone with “extremely low income” can afford is only \$704 per month, \$803 less than the fair market value of a two-bedroom home (Table 40).

In Putnam County, 20.4 percent of households are renters. Rent affordable by a household classified as “extremely low income” is \$638 per month, \$384 less than the fair market value of a two-bedroom home. For those working a full-time job and earning minimum wage, affordable rent is not more than \$377 per month, \$645 less than the fair market rental value of a two-bedroom home (Figure 29).

In Georgia, to afford the Fair Market Rent of a two-bedroom home, one must earn \$60,271, \$2,171 more than the Federal Poverty Level for a family of 9, which is \$58,100.

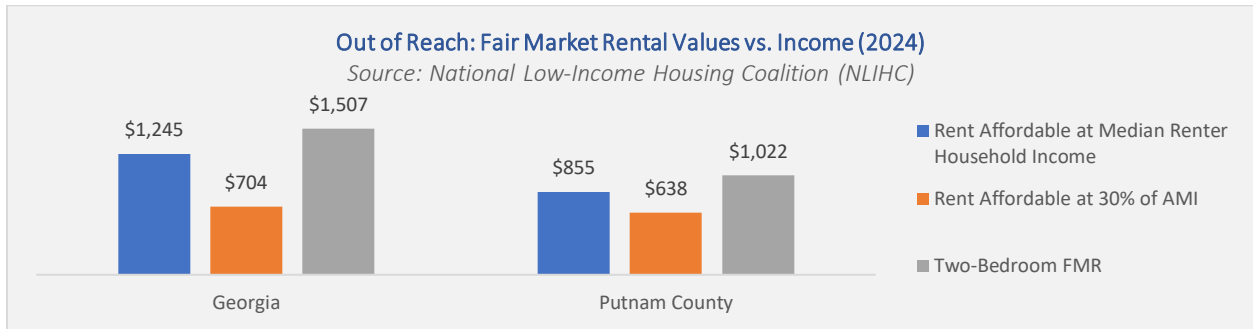
This means that if one can afford to house their family of 9 in a two-bedroom home (without exceeding 30 percent of their income), they are over-income for Head Start services.

The high cost of homeownership and rental units continues to make it difficult for low-income families to access affordable housing. In Putnam County, those earning minimum wage must work 108 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom home at fair market rental value.

<b>Out of Reach: Fair Market Rental Values vs. Income (2024)</b>		
<i>Source: National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)</i>		
	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Putnam County</b>
<b>% of Total Households that are Renters (2018-2022)</b>	35.0%	20.4%
<b>Two-Bedroom FMR</b>	\$1,507	\$1,022
<b>Income Needed to Afford Two-Bedroom FMR</b>	\$60,271	\$40,880
<b>Estimated Median Renter Household Income</b>	\$49,806	\$34,186
<b>Rent Affordable at Median Renter Household Income</b>	\$1,245	\$855
<b>30% of AMI</b>	\$28,155	\$25,500
<b>Rent Affordable at 30% of AMI</b>	\$704	\$638
<b>Rent Affordable with Full-Time Job Paying Minimum Wage</b>	\$377	\$377
<b>Work Hours Per Week at Minimum Wage Needed to Afford Two-Bedroom FMR</b>	160	108

**Table 40: Fair Market Rental Value vs. Income (2024)**

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**Figure 28: Fair Market Rent of Two-Bedroom Home vs. Income (2024)**



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Public Housing

**Public Housing**

“Public housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public housing comes in all sizes and types, from scattered single-family houses to high-rise apartments for elderly families. There are approximately 970,000\* households living in public housing units, managed by some 3,300 Housing Agencies (HAs). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers Federal aid to local HAs that manage housing for low-income residents at rents they can afford. HUD furnishes technical and professional assistance in planning, developing and managing these housing units.

“Public housing is limited to low-income families and individuals. An HA determines your eligibility based on 1) annual gross income; 2) whether you qualify as elderly, a person with a disability, or as a family; and 3) U.S. citizenship or eligible immigration status. If you are eligible, the HA will check your references to make sure you and your family will be good tenants. HAs will deny admission to any applicant whose habits and practices may be expected to have a detrimental effect on other tenants or on the project’s environment.”

\* The number of households changes daily within the Public and Indian Housing Inventory Management System (IMS-PIC).

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, <https://www.hud.gov>

Based on data gathered from the [Office of Public Policy Development and Research \(PD&R\), under the Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#), in 2023 there were a total of 137,035 housing units available in Georgia within all HUD Programs, occupied by a total of 258,409 persons. Average HUD expenditure for rent per month was \$830, and the average family expenditure per month was \$371. The average household income of those living in public housing programs in Georgia is \$15,911, with an average annual income per person of \$7,214.

Individuals seeking public housing often face lengthy waiting lists. In Georgia the average number of months a person waited for housing was 28 months. Approximately three out of four public housing recipients were determined to have extremely low income (less than 30 percent of the area median income), 73 percent, 42 percent were female-headed households with children, 87 percent of residents were minorities, and 17 percent were determined to have a disability.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Table 41 provides detailed information on the number of units available in all public housing programs in Georgia and Putnam County. Additionally, it reports the total number of residents, average expenditures per month (by HUD and families), average annual household and per person income, average number of months on the waiting list, the proportion of residents that have an extremely low income, and the percentage of recipients that are female heads of household, minorities, and residents with disabilities.

**Public Housing Programs (2023)**

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

	Subsidized Units Available	Total People	Average HUD Exp./Mo.	Average Family Exp./Mo.	Average Annual Household Income	Average Annual Income per Person	Average Months on Waiting List	Extremely Low Income (<30%)	Female HH with Children	Minority	Disabled
<b>Georgia</b>	137,035	258,409	\$830	\$371	\$15,911	\$7,214	28	73%	42%	87%	17%
<b>Putnam County</b>	175	378	\$440	\$326	\$14,383	\$6,430	NR	69%	49%	84%	17%

NR = Not Reported

**Table 41: HUD Programs (2023)**

## Homelessness

### Point-in-Time Count

The Point-in-Time Count, required each year by the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#), is conducted to assist federal and state governments in determining how to allocate funding for housing, substance abuse, and mental health programs. The 2024 count reflected that on a single night in January, there were more than 771,000 homeless persons in the United States, of which 12,290 were in Georgia.

In the United States nearly four out of 10 homeless people were determined to be unsheltered, 35.5 percent, and one in three were homeless people in families, 33.6 percent. In Georgia 54.3 percent of homeless persons were unsheltered, and 22.2 percent were homeless people in families.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

<b>Point-in-Time Count (2024)</b>		
<i>Source: HUD Exchange</i>		
	<b>United States</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
<b>Overall Homeless</b>	771,480	12,290
<b>Unsheltered Homeless</b>	274,224	6,673
<b>% Unsheltered Homeless</b>	35.5%	54.3%
<b>Homeless People in Families</b>	259,473	2,728
<b>% Homeless People in Families</b>	33.6%	22.2%

**Table 42: Point-in-Time Count (2024)**

“The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that [Continuums of Care](#) conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. Continuums of Care also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd-numbered years). Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally. The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is a point-in-time inventory of provider programs within a Continuum of Care that provide beds and units dedicated to serve persons who are homeless, categorized by five Program Types: Emergency Shelter; Transitional Housing; Rapid Re-housing; Safe Haven; and Permanent Supportive Housing.”

HUD Exchange, <https://www.hudexchange.info/>

### Homeless Youth

In the United States, of the more than 771,000 homeless people counted in January 2024, 38,170 were unaccompanied youth under the age of 25, an increase of 10 percent compared with the January 2023 count of 34,703. Nationwide, in 2024 there were 9,177 parenting youth under the age of 25, with a total of 10,346 children, increases of 27.7 and 22.2 percent, respectively, compared with the January 2023 count.

In Georgia the count of unaccompanied youth increased by 5.5 percent from January 2023 to January 2024, reaching 578. Total parenting youth under age 25 decreased from 2023 to 2024 by 39.7 percent. The count of children of parenting youth in the state also decreased by 35.3 percent.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

<b>Point-in-Time Count – Homeless Youth (2023-24)</b>			
<i>Source: HUD Exchange</i>			
		<b>United States</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
<b>Overall Homeless Unaccompanied Youth (Under 25)</b>	<b>2023</b>	34,703	548
	<b>2024</b>	38,170	578
	<b>Change</b>	10.0%	5.5%
<b>Overall Homeless Parenting Youth (Under 25)</b>	<b>2023</b>	7,184	136
	<b>2024</b>	9,177	82
	<b>Change</b>	27.7%	-39.7%
<b>Overall Homeless Children of Parenting Youth</b>	<b>2023</b>	8,469	170
	<b>2024</b>	10,346	110
	<b>Change</b>	22.2%	-35.3%

**Table 43: Homeless Youth (2023-24)**

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?

#### Housing and Homelessness

“The **McKinney-Vento** program is designed to address the problems that homeless children and youth have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Under this program, State Educational Agencies (SEAs) must ensure that each homeless child and youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youth. [...] In addition, homeless students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment.”

“The McKinney-Vento Act defines ‘homeless children and youth’ as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes –

- Children and youth who are:
  - sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as *doubled-up*);
  - living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
  - living in emergency or transitional shelters;
  - abandoned in hospitals; or
  - awaiting foster care placement;
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.”

National Center for Homeless Education, <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/>

#### Georgia Homeless Education Program

According to [ED Data Express](#), there were more than 40,000 homeless students during the 2022-23 school year in Georgia, of which there were 11 homeless students in Putnam County. The number of homeless students has increased steadily in the past three school years in the United States and Georgia while remaining relatively constant in Putnam County.

#### Homeless Students (2020-22)

Source: U.S. Department of Education, *ED Data Express*

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
United States	1,087,283	1,205,259	1,374,537
Georgia	31,161	35,516	40,136
Putnam County	10	11	11

Table 44: Homeless Students (2020-22)

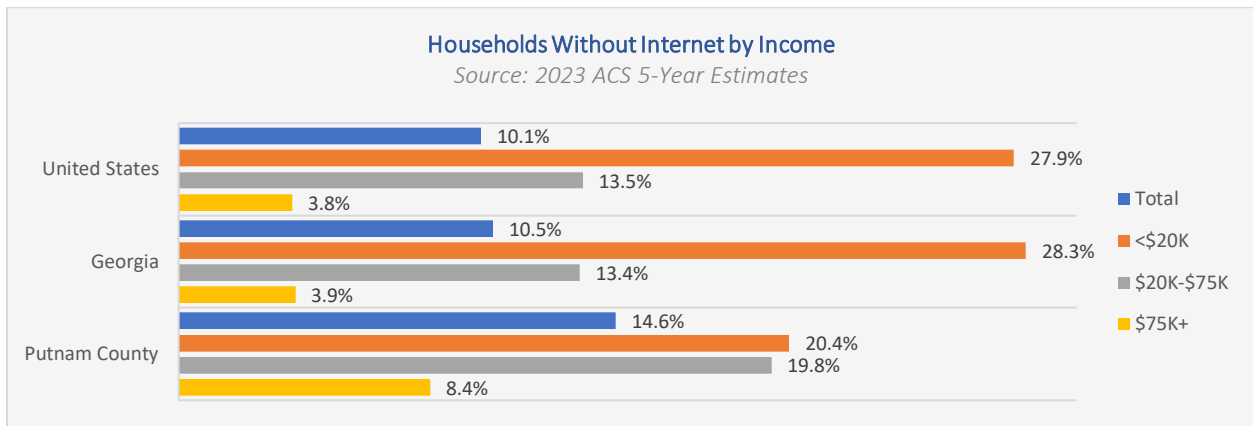
In May of 2021 the U.S. Department of Education published the [Early Childhood Homelessness State Profiles](#) report, using 2018-19 data. At the time of this report, this continues to be their most recent publication providing an estimated number of children under age 6 who are experiencing homelessness. The [School House Connection](#) has a more up-to-date report titled [Infant and Toddler Homelessness across 50 States: 2021-2022](#). The School House Connection also provides a general data on the number of homeless students in public schools by state and county via their [Child and Youth Homelessness in the United States](#) dashboard.

## Communication and Transportation

### Access to Internet and Computer Devices

#### Households Without an Internet Subscription

In the United States there are more than 127 million households in occupied housing units, of which 10.1 percent are without an internet subscription (Figure 30). In Georgia and Putnam County, of the households in occupied housing units, 10.5 and 14.6 percent are without an internet subscription, respectively. Of the households in Georgia and Putnam County earning less than \$20,000 a year, 28.3 and 20.4 percent, correspondingly, do not have an internet subscription.



**Figure 29: Households Without Internet by Income (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

#### Children Under Age 18 Without a Computer Device

There are more than 73 million children under the age of 18 in the United States, of which 1.4 percent do not have access to a computer device at all. In Georgia and Putnam County, 1.5 and 0.9 percent of children under age 18 are without a computer device, respectively.

### Community Library Connection

Libraries provide services to clients across the spectrum of age, income, and service needs. They may offer access to computers and the internet, assistance with résumés, computer classes, child/youth story time, and other services. According to [Gallup](#), visiting the library was the most common activity of the American public in 2019. The data collected by Gallup also shows that adults in lower income households visit libraries at higher frequencies, as libraries are “free and offer a variety of services, including Wi-Fi.”<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Once the COVID-19 vaccine became widely available and many libraries re-opened, some libraries hired social workers to help provide social services to customers who may be homeless or need assistance applying for jobs or social service benefits.

The [American Library Association](#) (ALA) publishes the [State of America’s Libraries](#) annually. This report examines libraries in the public, academic, and school sectors. The ALA envisions libraries as community partners for economic development. Per previous State of America’s Libraries Reports:

“Public libraries drive economic opportunity for their community members through skill development and small business support. Nearly 90 percent of public libraries offer digital literacy training programs, through which community members can learn résumé development and job searching and gain new skills to aid in career advancement.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

In examination of the most recent [State of America’s Libraries Report \(2024\)](#), the focus has remained on how local libraries can continue to provide innovative services to their communities, such as the Cleveland Public Libraries’ Neighborhood Housing Court kiosks, that provide accessibility for individuals to housing court, as access to the main courthouse can be difficult, Penn State University Libraries, which opened three sensory rooms on campus for neurodivergent students, and Spartanburg County Public Libraries, which started a Bags for Hope program for local residents who were struggling with food insecurity.<sup>xi</sup> Head Start and Early Head Start programs may find that developing partnerships with local libraries can greatly benefit the children and families they serve.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is an organization that supports museums and libraries through grants, research, and policy development. Through data collection, it maintains a Library Search and Compare function that allows the public to search for libraries by state, city, rural area, suburb, or town. This search also allows users to research programs provided by individual libraries, populations served, and number of visitors to individual libraries.

Institute of Museum and Library Services, <https://www.ims.gov/search-compare/>

Local public library access and services vary per state and county. The [Georgia Public Library Service](#) offers a [Find A Library](#) directory that makes it possible to search for all local public libraries across the state.<sup>xii</sup> Putnam County is served by the [Azalea Regional Library System](#), which also serves Green, Hancock, Jasper, Morgan, and Walton Counties. The Azalea Regional Library System services include a tech lending program, which provides Chromebooks and hotspots. Other services include interlibrary loan, access to career and skills development, and online learning programs.

Transportation

*Vehicle Ownership*

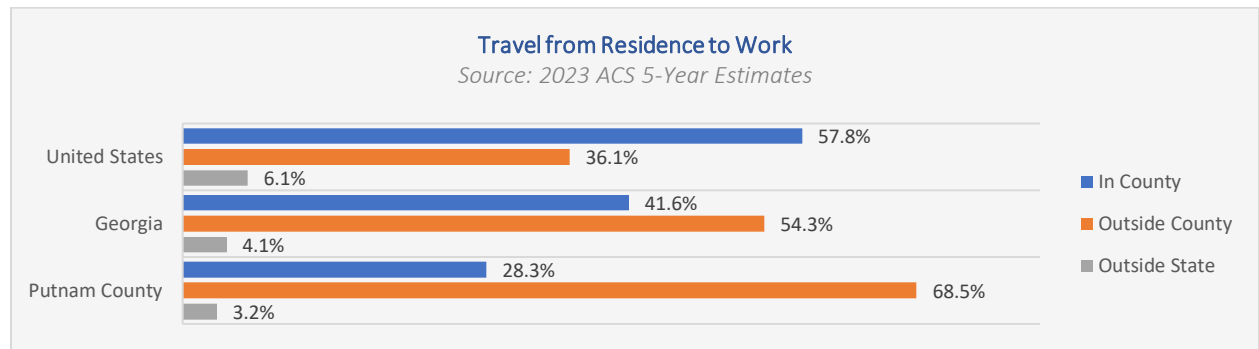
Based on census data, 10.6 million households in occupied housing units in the United States do not have access to a vehicle, 8.3 percent. Of the total workforce over the age of 16 living in households, 6.7 million do not have access to a vehicle, 4.3 percent (Table 45). In Georgia and Putnam County, 5.9 and 4.5 percent of households in occupied housing do not own a vehicle, respectively, and a corresponding 2.9 and 3.2 percent of the total workforce do not own a vehicle.

Households and Workforce Without Access to a Vehicle				
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>				
	Households Without Access to a Vehicle		Total Workforce (Age 16+ in Households) Without Access to a Vehicle	
United States	10,602,826	8.3%	6,778,862	4.3%
Georgia	238,394	5.9%	144,170	2.9%
Putnam County	455	4.5%	298	3.2%

**Table 45: Households and Workforce Without Access to a Vehicle (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

*Travel to Work*

In the United States more than half, or 57.8 percent, of recorded aggregated travel time to work was to an employment location within the county of residence. Approximately one-third, 36.1 percent, of travel time to work was spent traveling to an employment location outside the county of residence, and 6.1 percent was outside the state of residence. In Georgia and Putnam County, of the total travel time to work, 41.6 and 28.3 percent, respectively, was within the county, 54.3 and 68.5 percent, correspondingly, was outside the county, and 4.1 and 3.2 percent was outside the state.



**Figure 30: Travel from Residence to Work (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?**  
*Communication and Transportation*

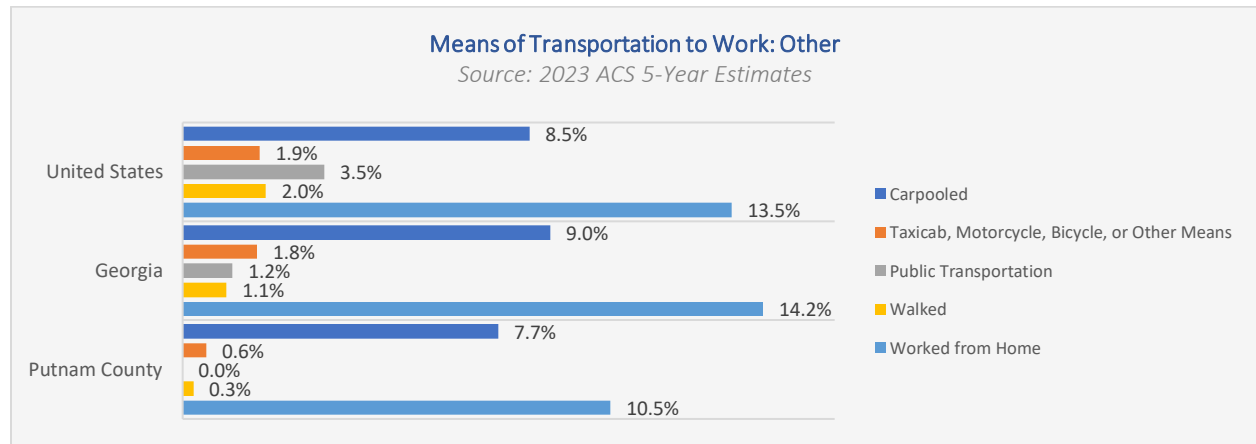
*Means of Transportation to Work*

In the United States, of the more than 156 million people in the workforce, 70.6 percent drove to work alone (Table 46). In Georgia and Putnam County, 72.6 and 80.9 percent of the working population, respectively, drove to work alone.

<b>Means of Transportation to Work: Drove Alone</b>			
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>			
	<b>Total Workforce</b>	<b>Drove Alone</b>	
<b>United States</b>	156,116,469	110,229,451	70.6%
<b>Georgia</b>	5,028,691	3,651,096	72.6%
<b>Putnam County</b>	9,443	7,641	80.9%

**Table 46: Means of Transportation to Work: Drove Alone (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

Of the population that did not drive alone to work in the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County, 8.5, 9, and 7.7 percent, respectively, carpooled. In Georgia, only 1.2 percent of the workforce uses public transportation to travel to work. In Putnam County no one in the workforce commutes to work via public transportation.



**Figure 31: Means of Transportation to Work: Other (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

In the United States and Georgia, it takes approximately 26.6 and 28.3 minutes, respectively, for workers, ages 16+, to commute to work (Table 47). Travel to work using a vehicle (combining driving alone and carpooling) is approximately 26 and 28.2 minutes, respectively, while the travel time to work using public transportation (excluding taxicabs) is nearly double, 49.7 and 49.3 minutes, respectively. Those who indicated they walked to work spend an average of 12.4 and 12.8 minutes commuting to work, correspondingly. There was no data for Putnam County.

<b>Aggregate Travel Time by Means of Transportation</b>					
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>					
	<b>Total Aggregate Time</b>	<b>Car, Truck, or Van</b>	<b>Public Transportation</b>	<b>Walked</b>	<b>Other Means</b>
<b>United States</b>	26.6	26.0	49.7	12.4	26.7
<b>Georgia</b>	28.3	28.2	49.3	12.8	30.3

**Table 47: Aggregate Travel Time to Work (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?

#### Communication and Transportation

##### Public Transportation

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), approximately 45 percent of the U.S. population does not have access to public transportation.<sup>xlii</sup>

The following are search tools for available public transportation resources in the United States and Putnam County:

- The search engine [US Bus Station](#) provides information about bus routes, bus stops, and bus companies per state and county.
- [The American Public Transportation Association](#) (APTA) offers information on “all modes of public transportation, including bus, paratransit, light rail, commuter rail, subways, waterborne services, and intercity and high-speed passenger rail.”<sup>xliii</sup>
- [Putnam County Transit](#) provides public transportation to the citizens of Putnam County with priority to the needs of the elderly and disabled.

A lack of proper city planning and the outward expansion of cities without resource allocation to improve the public transportation sector has led to a public transit system that does not serve its residents. Public transit systems either do not get residents where they need to go, or they multiply commute times. Vehicle ownership can be a catch-22 for those in poverty, necessary to travel to a job, while a job is necessary to afford a vehicle. Transit systems often cite the lack of ridership as a reason to cut costs or limit location services; however, the lack of these basic offerings are often the reason residents do not use transit services, as they do not meet their needs.

In the United States, public transportation is seen more as a social welfare issue rather than a basic right, leading to a political divide. Furthermore, with individual cities and states often tasked with budgeting and planning their own transit systems, voting based on these perceptions leads to transit offerings where they are the least needed: often to more affluent and liberal areas, where there are more likely to be vehicle-owners, rather than to lower income communities.

Experts recommend cities make public transportation cheaper, easier, and more attractive, invest in electric buses, and impose more fees for car usage such as increased parking costs, reinvesting those funds into improving public transit systems. The public can voice concerns and exhort the federal government to regulate public transportation and make it available to all.

Sustainable America, *Why Doesn't the U.S. Have Better Public Transportation?* <https://sustainableamerica.org/blog/why-doesnt-the-us-have-better-public-transportation/#:~:text=There%20are%20some%20claims%20that,of%20suburbs%20we%20know%20today>



## Disabilities

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The nation’s special education law is called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. IDEA defines the term “child with a disability” in order to make special education and related services available to children with disabilities in public schools and Head Start programs. That definition includes specific disability terms, which are also defined by IDEA.<sup>xiv</sup> Based on data collected from the [IDEA Data Center](#), 8,702 infants and toddlers, ages 0 through 2, were served by early intervention programs in Georgia, accounting for 2.3 percent of the birth through age 2 population. In the United States, 4 percent of the population, ages 0 through 2, is served under IDEA Part C programs (Table 48).<sup>xlv</sup>

<b>IDEA Part C: Early Intervention, Ages 0-2 (2022-23)</b>					
<i>Source: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</i>					
	<b>Birth to 1 Year</b>	<b>1 to 2 Years</b>	<b>2 to 3 Years</b>	<b>Total Served Birth Through 2 Years</b>	<b>Percentage of Population,<sup>1</sup> Birth Through 2 Years</b>
<b>U.S. and Outlying Areas</b>	46,794	133,883	260,838	441,515	4.0%
<b>Georgia</b>	799	2,655	5,248	8,702	2.3%

<sup>1</sup> Percentage of population = Number of infants and toddlers, birth through age 2, served under IDEA Part C, divided by the estimated U.S. resident population, birth through age 2, multiplied by 100.

**Table 48: IDEA Part C: Early Intervention, Ages 0-2 (2022-23)**

As reported by the IDEA Data Center, during the 2022-23 school year, more than 10,100 children, ages 3 to 5, received special education assistance in Georgia. The largest group of children received special education for developmental delay, followed by speech or language impairments (Table 49).

<b>IDEA Part B: Assistance for All Children with Disabilities, Ages 3-5 (2022-23)</b>		
<i>Source: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</i>		
	<b>U.S., Outlying Areas</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
<b>All Disabilities</b>	535,392	10,161
<b>Developmental Delay</b>	241,715	6,094
<b>Speech or Language Impairments</b>	175,254	2,232
<b>Autism</b>	81,082	1,517
<b>Other Health Impairments</b>	12,441	148
<b>Intellectual Disabilities</b>	6,088	21
<b>Hearing Impairments</b>	5,045	90
<b>Multiple Disabilities</b>	3,815	0
<b>Orthopedic Impairments</b>	2,366	21
<b>Visual Impairments</b>	1,380	19
<b>Traumatic Brain Injury</b>	595	13
<b>Specific Learning Disabilities</b>	307	0
<b>Emotional Disturbance</b>	333	2
<b>Deaf-Blindness</b>	135	4

**Table 49: IDEA Part B: Child Count, Ages 3-5 (2022-23)**

“The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a law that makes a free and appropriate public education available to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

“IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

“Infants and toddlers, birth through age 2, with disabilities and their families receive early intervention services under **IDEA Part C**. Children and youth, ages 3 through 21, receive special education and related services under **IDEA Part B**.”

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,  
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?**  
*Disabilities*

Georgia School System

According to the Georgia Department of Education, there are approximately 370 children enrolled in special education programs. Of these children, 130 are children enrolled with a significant learning disability.

<b>Special Education (2024-25, FTE 1)</b>	
<i>Source: Georgia Department of Education</i>	
<b>Significant Learning Disability</b>	130
<b>Other Health Impairment</b>	69
<b>Autism</b>	58
<b>Significant Development Delay</b>	54
<b>Speech Impediment</b>	40
<b>Emotional &amp; Behavioral Disturbance</b>	11
<b>Mild Intellectual Disability</b>	10

Table 50: Special Education (2024-25)

## Health and Wellness

### WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

“Many factors combined affect the health of individuals and communities. Whether a person is healthy or unhealthy is determined by his/her circumstances and environment. To a large extent, factors such as where we live, the state of our environment, genetics, our income and education level, and our relationships with friends and family all have considerable impact on health, whereas the more commonly considered factors such as access and use of health care services often have less of an impact.

The determinants of health include:

- the social and economic environment,
- the physical environment, and
- the person’s individual characteristics and behaviors.

The context of people’s lives determines their health, and so blaming individuals for having poor health or crediting them for good health is inappropriate. Individuals are unlikely to be able to directly control many of the determinants of health. These determinants—or things that make people healthy or not—include the above factors, and many others:

**Income and social status** – higher income and social status are linked to better health. The greater the gap between the richest and poorest people, the greater the differences in health.

**Education** – low education levels are linked with poor health, more stress and lower self-confidence.

**Physical environment** – safe water and clean air, healthy workplaces, safe houses, communities and roads all contribute to good health.

**Employment and working conditions** – people in employment are healthier, particularly those who have more control over their working conditions.

**Social support networks** – greater support from families, friends and communities is linked to better health.

**Culture** – customs and traditions, and the beliefs of the family and community all affect health.

**Genetics** – inheritance plays a part in determining lifespan, healthiness and the likelihood of developing certain illnesses.

**Personal behavior and coping skills** – balanced eating, keeping active, smoking, drinking, and how we deal with life’s stresses and challenges all affect health.

**Health services** – access and use of services that prevent and treat disease influence health.

**Gender** – men and women suffer from different types of diseases at different ages.”

World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/>

## Environmental Factors

Safe water and clean air are critical environmental factors that contribute to the health and well-being of a community. The [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#)’s mission is to protect health and the environment. EPA provides information and data on a wide range of environmental subjects, such as air and water quality. Through [MyEnvironment](#) information can be found on numerous environmental subjects per location.

## Drinking Water Quality

The [Safe Drinking Water Act](#) requires states to report drinking water information periodically to the [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA). Data on public water systems by state, county, city, or town can be found through the [Safe Drinking Water Information System \(SDWIS\) Federal Reporting Systems](#).

### Drinking Water Violations Include:

- “Failed to follow established monitoring and reporting schedules
- Failed to comply with mandated treatment techniques
- Violated any Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs)
- Failed to communicate required information to their customers”

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, [Epa.gov](#)

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According to data retrieved from SDWIS, in Georgia there are more than 14,000 public water facilities, of which 241 serve the population in Putnam County. As of the first quarter in 2024, the 241 public water facilities in Putnam County received 178 site visits which recorded 337 violations (0.9 percent of the state total) (Table 51).<sup>xlvi</sup>

Public Water Systems (2024)								
<i>Source: Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS)</i>								
	Population Served		Number and Percentage of State Total					
	Count		Facilities		Site Visits		Violations	
Georgia	11,645,117	x	14,431	x	15,323	x	38,984	x
Putnam County	22,296	0.2%	241	1.7%	178	1.2%	337	0.9%

**Table 51: Public Water Systems (2024)**

**Contaminants in Your Drinking Water?**

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) offers information on water utilities that serve communities based on data collected through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). For each utility, data are provided on contaminants found in water exceeding the EWG guidelines. To explore the data on the quality of water in a specific community, enter the zip code via the link below.

Environmental Working Group, <https://www.ewg.org/tapwater/>

**Air Quality**

Air agencies provide additional information about the air quality in an area using a uniform reporting system and Air Quality Index (AQI).

“The AQI focuses on health effects that may be experienced within hours or days after exposure to polluted air. It uses a normalized scale from 0 to 500: the higher the AQI value, the greater the level of pollution and the greater the health concern.”<sup>xlvii</sup>

According to annual 2023 summary data by the EPA, there was no data for Putnam County.

**Air Quality Index (AQI) Values**

Numerical Value	AQI Levels of Health Concern	Meaning
0-50	Good	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
51-100	Moderate	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
151-200	Unhealthy	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
201-300	Very Unhealthy	Health alert: everyone may experience some serious health effects.
301-500	Hazardous	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

United States Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/outdoor-air-quality-data/air-data-basic-information>

### Health Insurance and Access to Care

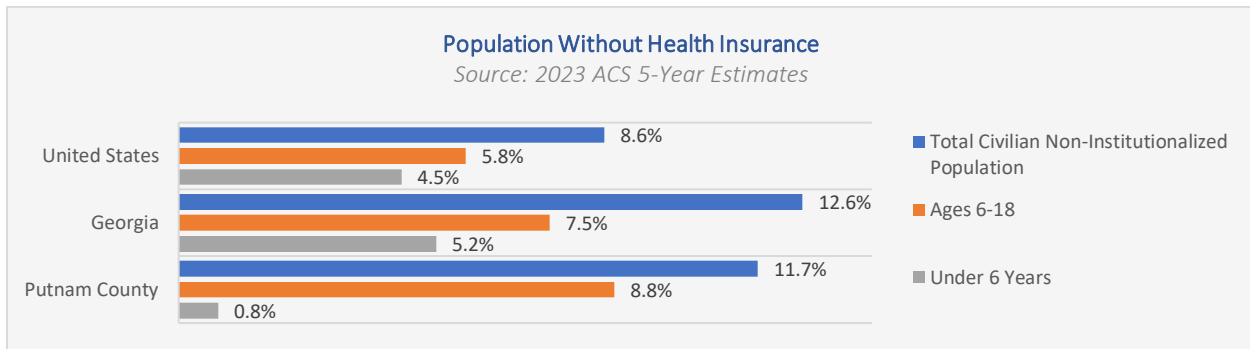
#### Population Without Health Insurance

Based on census data, 8.6 percent of the United States civilian noninstitutional population lacks health insurance. Georgia and Putnam County report an even higher percentage of the population that lacks health insurance, 12.6 and 11.7 percent, respectively (Figure 33).

“Civilian noninstitutional population: Persons 16 years of age and older residing in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, who are not inmates of institutions (e.g., penal and mental facilities, homes for the aged), and who are not on active duty in the Armed Forces.”

U.S. Department of Labor, <https://www.dol.gov/>

In Georgia and Putnam County, 7.5 and 8.8 percent of children, ages 6 to 18, respectively, and a corresponding 5.2 and 0.8 percent of children under the age of 6 lack health insurance.



**Figure 32: Population Without Health Insurance Coverage (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

#### Health Professional Shortage Areas

The [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) (HRSA) provides data on health care programs that provide health care to people who are geographically isolated and economically or medically vulnerable. One of the datasets reports on Health Professional Shortage Areas, or HPSAs. The three categories measured within HPSAs are primary care, dental health care, and mental health care. To be considered a primary care HPSA, the population-to-provider ratio must be 3,500:1, a dental health care HPSA has a population-to-provider ratio of 5,000:1, and a mental health care HPSA must have a population-to-psychiatrist ratio of 30,000:1. HPSA designations can be determined as follows:<sup>xlviii</sup>

- A **geographic location** (a county or service area) with a shortage of providers for the entire population in that area,
- A **population group** within a geographic area (for example: low-income population, Medicaid-eligible population, migrant population, homeless population) with a shortage of providers,
- Or a **facility** (for example: comprehensive health center, correctional facility, federally qualified health center or other public facility) with a shortage of providers.

Putnam County reports two low-income HPSAs: one for primary care and the second for dental care. This designation indicates that the population earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level is underserved (Table 52).<sup>xlix</sup> Additionally, the county as a whole is determined to be a high-needs geographic

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#### Health and Wellness

HPSA, indicating that there are insufficient mental health providers for the population of Putnam County. The [Oconee Center](#) provides mental health services to six counties in Georgia, one of which is Putnam County.

<b>Health Professional Shortage Areas (July 2024)</b>			
<i>Source: Health Resources Service Administration</i>			
<b>HPSA Discipline Class</b>	<b>HPSA Name</b>	<b>Designation Type</b>	<b>HPSA Designation Last Update</b>
<b>Primary Care</b>	LI-Putnam County	HPSA Population	09/10/2021
<b>Dental Health</b>	LI-Putnam County	HPSA Population	02/18/2022
<b>Mental Health</b>	MHCA 13 - Oconee Community Service Board	High Needs Geographic HPSA	08/30/2021

*LI = Low Income*

**Table 52: Health Professional Shortage Areas (July 2024)**

#### *Dentist-to-Population Ratio*

As per the [2024 County Health Rankings](#) (utilizing 2022 data), in Georgia there were 5,880 dentists, of which five were in Putnam County. The ratio of dentists per residents in Georgia was 1 to 1,856, and in Putnam County the ratio of dentists per residents was 1 to 4,597.

#### Find a Dentist

[InsureKidsNow.gov](#) provides information on free- or low-cost health and dental coverage for children and teenagers through Medicaid and/or the Children's Health Insurance Program. To find a pediatric dentist who accepts Medicaid and CHIP, use the [Dentist Locator](#).

**Mental Health**

Reliable and consistent mental health assessment data on a county level does not exist. However, there are several resources that provide useful information within a constrained scope. The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) contains behavioral health data, including the “prevalence of mental illness and substance use disorders, behavioral health service provision and use, and evaluation data.” [Mental Health America \(MHA\)](#) collects data from their “free, anonymous, clinically validated mental health screens,” providing valuable information on mental health, access, and treatment.

According to the 2021-22 [National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#), conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), in the United States 58.9 million people over the age of 18 were reported to have a mental illness (23.1 percent of the population over the age of 18). In Georgia 1.8 million individuals over the age of 18 have been diagnosed with a mental illness (22.5 percent of the population over the age of 18).

“The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), conducted annually by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), provides nationally representative data on the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs; substance use disorders; mental health issues; and receipt of substance use and mental health treatment among the civilian, noninstitutionalized population aged 12 or older in the United States. NSDUH estimates allow researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and the general public to better understand and improve the nation’s behavioral health.”

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>

The MHA has developed a state ranking based on the prevalence of mental illness and access to mental health care. States ranked 1-13 have a lower prevalence of mental illness and “relatively more access to insurance and mental health treatment.”<sup>1</sup> The higher the ranking, the higher the prevalence of mental illness and lack of access to care. The table below illustrates the top and bottom ranked states for adult ranking, youth ranking, prevalence of mental illness, access to care, and the overall ranking. Although Georgia has a low ranking for the prevalence of mental illness, its overall ranking is high due to the high ranking for adults with prevalence of mental health diagnoses and lack of access to care.

<b>Mental Health: Ranking the States (2023)</b>					
<i>Source: Mental Health Association</i>					
	<b>Adult Ranking</b>	<b>Youth Ranking</b>	<b>Prevalence of Mental Illness</b>	<b>Access to Care</b>	<b>Overall Ranking</b>
<b>Top Ranked State (1)</b>	Kentucky	District of Columbia	Georgia	Vermont	Wisconsin
<b>Bottom Ranked State (51*)</b>	Kansas	Oregon	Oregon	Texas	Kansas
<b>Georgia Ranking</b>	39	5	3	47	26

\* The MHA ranks the mental health prevalence and access of the 50 states in the United States as well as the District of Columbia.

**Table 53: Mental Health: Ranking the States (2023)**

## Immunizations

“Vaccination is an important part of keeping children healthy and protected from potentially serious diseases like measles and whooping cough. CDC’s recommended immunization schedule helps protect children from 14 serious diseases by the time they reach 2 years old.

“Local, state, and federal health departments use surveys and other data sources such as immunization information systems (IISs) to estimate vaccination coverage (the proportion of children receiving vaccinations) and identify where additional efforts are needed to increase vaccination coverage.”

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/>

[ChildVaxView](#), created by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), provides national, regional, state, and selected local area vaccination coverage estimates for 2-year-old and 3-year-old children by birth year using interactive maps, trend lines, bar charts, and data tables.<sup>li</sup>

According to Childhood Vaccination Coverage Trend Report, in Georgia 59.3 percent of 2-year-olds born in 2021 completed the Combined 7 series vaccination coverage, compared with 66.1 percent of 2-year-olds in the United States. For 3-year-olds, the percentage was also lower for Georgia than the United States at 62 versus 72.2 percent. (Data was not available at county level.) For more information on specific vaccinations administered by age, visit [ChildVaxView](#).



Prevalent Health Problems

*Asthma*

According to the [Georgia Department of Public Health, Online Analytical Statistical Information System \(OASIS\)](#), in 2023, there were 12,008 children, ages 0-9, in Georgia who visited the ER with a diagnosis of asthma (2.2 percent of asthma ER visits for children ages 0-9)<sup>iii</sup>. In Putnam County, there were 36 children who visited the ER with a diagnosis of asthma (1.9 percent of asthma ER visits for children ages 0-9).

*Obesity*

According to [The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America 2024](#), Georgia has the 23<sup>rd</sup> highest adult obesity rate in the nation, 35 percent.<sup>liii</sup> Highest rates of obesity were seen for those ages 45-64 (43.3 percent) and Black residents (43.8 percent). The report also includes data from 2020 about WIC participants, ages 2-4, which indicated that 13.1 percent of participants were identified as obese.

**Diabetes and Hypertension**

According to [The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America 2024](#), the most common obesity-related diseases reported are diabetes and hypertension. In Georgia, 12.9 percent of the adult population had diabetes and 35.9 percent had hypertension (2023) ranking Georgia 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, respectively, in the nation.<sup>liv</sup>

*Oral Health*

The National Survey of Children’s Health from the [Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health](#) provides national and state data on a variety of health-related subjects pertinent to children and families. According to the 2022-23 survey, in the United States 78 percent of parents or guardians indicated the condition of their children’s teeth was “excellent or very good,” 16.3 percent rated the condition as “good,” and 5.6 percent rated the condition as “fair or poor” (Table 54). In Georgia, according to respondents’ answers, children had a higher “excellent or very good” rating, at 79.6 percent, but a lower “good” rating, at 14.9 percent; they had a slightly lower “fair or poor” rating at 5.5 percent.

The survey also released respondents’ data on children’s oral health (toothaches, bleeding gums, decayed teeth, or cavities); 14.4 and 13.8 percent of the respondents in the United States and Georgia, correspondingly, indicated their children had one or more oral health problems.

<b>National Survey of Children's Health (2022-23)</b>		
<i>Source: Data Resource Center for Child &amp; Adolescent Health</i>		
<b>How would you describe the condition of this child’s teeth, age 1-17 years?</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
Excellent or Very Good	78.0%	79.6%
Good	16.3%	14.9%
Fair or Poor	5.6%	5.5%
<b>During the past 12 months, has this child had oral health problems such as toothaches, bleeding gums, decayed teeth, or cavities, age 1-17 years?</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
One or More Oral Health Problems	14.4%	13.8%
No Oral Health Problems	85.9%	86.2%

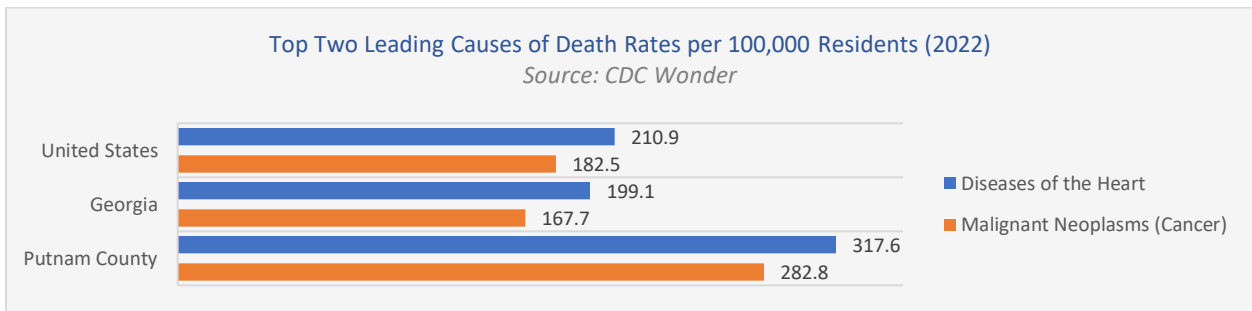
**Table 54: National Survey on Children’s Health (2022-23)**

Leading Causes of Death

According to data gathered from [CDC Wonder](#) in 2022, the top two leading causes of death in the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County were diseases of the heart and malignant neoplasms (cancer). Table 55 illustrates the top five leading causes of death (sorted by state rank), as well as the death rates per 100,000 residents.

Leading Causes of Death Rates per 100,000 Residents (2022)		
<i>Source: CDC Wonder</i>		
	Top 5 Leading Causes of Death	Rate per 100,000
<b>United States</b>	Diseases of Heart	210.9
	Malignant Neoplasms	182.5
	Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)	68.1
	COVID-19	56.0
	Cerebrovascular Diseases	49.6
<b>Georgia</b>	Diseases of Heart	199.1
	Malignant Neoplasms	167.7
	Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)	59.7
	COVID-19	51.6
	Cerebrovascular Diseases	46.8
<b>Putnam County</b>	Diseases of Heart	317.6
	Malignant Neoplasms	282.8
	Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)	108.8
	Diabetes Mellitus	91.4
	Cerebrovascular Diseases	Unreliable

**Table 55: Leading Causes of Death (2022)**

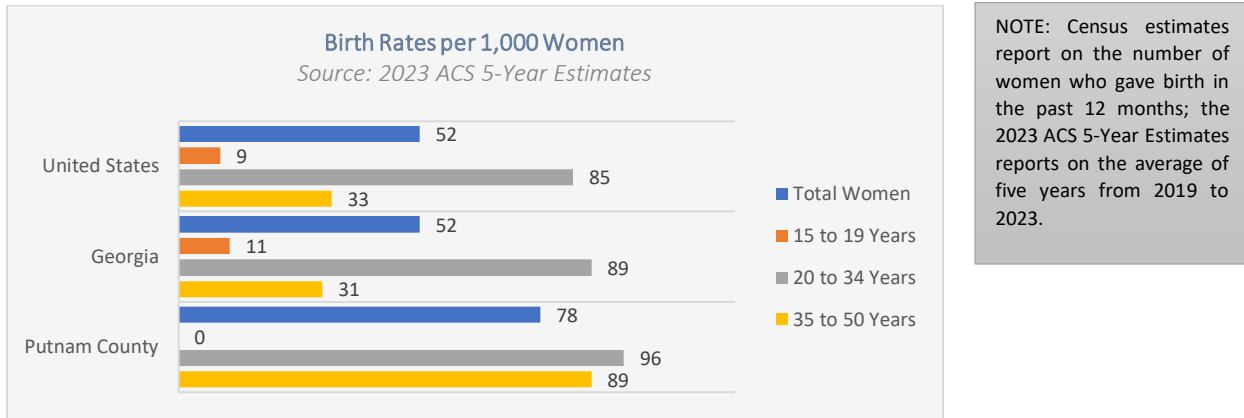


**Figure 33: Leading Causes of Death (2022)**

## Maternal and Infant Health

### Fertility/Birth Rates

According to U.S. census data, there was a birth rate of 52 per 1,000 women in the United States and Georgia for women between the ages of 15 to 50 in the past 12 months (Figure 35). In Putnam County 78 women per 1,000 women, ages 15 to 50, respectively, gave birth in the past 12 months.



**Figure 34: Birth Rates per 1,000 Women (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

### Teen Pregnancy

According to the [Georgia Department of Public Health, Online Analytical Statistical Information System \(OASIS\)](#), Georgia’s birth rate for girls, ages 15-19, in 2023 was 16.5 (per 1,000 teen mothers). In Putnam County, the rate was higher at 28.8 (per 1,000 teen mothers).<sup>lv</sup>

	Total Births	Number	Rate per 1,000
Georgia	125,005	6,238	16.5
Putnam County	221	19	28.8

**Table 56: Teen Births, 15-19-year-olds (2023)**

### Prenatal Health Care

Based on data from [Georgia Department of Public Health, Online Analytical Statistical Information System \(OASIS\)](#), 9.4 percent of births in Georgia in 2023 were to mothers who received late or no prenatal care. In Putnam County, the percentage was slightly higher at 11.8 percent.<sup>lvi</sup> Late prenatal care is defined by the Georgia Department of Public Health as care received after the second trimester.

	Number	Percentage
Georgia	11,556	9.4%
Putnam County	26	11.8%

**Table 57: Births with Late or No Prenatal Care (2023)**

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*Health and Wellness*

*Low Birthweight Babies*

“**Low birthweight** is defined as less than 2500 grams, or 5 ½ pounds. It is also common to classify low birthweight births into **moderately low birthweight** (1500-2499 grams) and **very low birthweight** (less than 1500 grams, or 3 1/3 pounds). These classifications are useful because they often correspond to clinical characteristics – increasing morbidities or illnesses with decreasing birthweight. Babies born too small are often born too soon. While the causes of low birthweight and preterm birth may be different in some cases, there is significant overlap within these populations of infants.”

March of Dimes, <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/Peristats.aspx>

According to data obtained through the [Georgia Department of Public Health, Online Analytical Statistical Information System \(OASIS\)](#), of the 125,005 live births in 2023 in Georgia, more than 12,000 infants were born with a low birthweight (10.2 percent) and 2,120 with a very low birthweight (1.7 percent). In Putnam County, of the 221 live births, 30 were born with low birthweight (13.6 percent), and five were born with very low birthweight (2.3 percent).<sup>lvii</sup>

**Babies with Low Birthweight (2023)**

Source: Georgia Department of Public Health, (OASIS)

	Total live births	Low (- 2500 grams / 5.5 pounds)		Very low (- 1500 grams / 3.3 pounds)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Georgia</b>	125,005	12,732	10.2%	2,120	1.7%
<b>Putnam County</b>	221	30	13.6%	5	2.3%

**Table 58: Babies with Low Birthweight (2023)**

*Infant Mortality*

**Fetal death:** spontaneous intrauterine death of a fetus at any time during pregnancy.

**Perinatal death:** death of an infant between 20 weeks gestation through 27 days after birth.

**Neonatal death:** death of an infant less than 28 days old.

**Postneonatal death:** death of a newborn between 28 days and 1 year of age expressed per 1,000 live births.

**Infant death:** death of an infant under age 1.

Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/births.htm>

Data obtained from the [Georgia Department of Public Health, Online Analytical Statistical Information System \(OASIS\)](#) reported that in 2023 there were 884 infant deaths (a rate of 7.1 infants per 1,000 live births), of which 527 were neonatal and 357 were post-neonatal infant deaths. In Putnam County, there were 2 reported infant deaths in 2023.<sup>lviii</sup>

**Infant Mortality (2023)**

Source: Georgia Department of Public Health, (OASIS)

	Infant Deaths		Neonatal Deaths		Post neonatal Deaths	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
<b>Georgia</b>	884	7.1	527	4.2	357	2.9
<b>Putnam County</b>	2	*	0	0.0	2	*

\* Rates based on 1-4 events

**Table 59: Infant Mortality (2023)**

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*Nutrition*

**Nutrition**

The **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)** is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture established in 1969. FNS “works to end hunger and obesity through the administration of 15 federal nutrition assistance programs including WIC, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and school meals.” The program’s mission is to “increase food security and reduce hunger by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet and nutrition education in a way that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence. No American should have to go hungry.”

USDA Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/about-fns>

“SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move toward self-sufficiency.”

USDA Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>

“The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.”

USDA Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>

“The **National School Lunch Program (NSLP)** is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946.”

USDA Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp>

**Public Assistance Programs**

*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*

According to the [USDA Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\)](#), there were more than 738,000 households in Georgia who received SNAP benefits in July 2023, of which 1,585 households received benefits in Putnam County; in Georgia nearly 1.5 million people received SNAP benefits, of which 3,190 received benefits in Putnam County.

<b>SNAP Recipients (July 2023)</b>		
<i>Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)</i>		
	<b>Households</b>	<b>Persons</b>
<b>United States</b>	21,849,172	41,105,872
<b>Georgia</b>	738,282	1,495,948
<b>Putnam County</b>	1,585	3,190

**Table 60: SNAP Recipients (July 2023)**

To match inflation and cost of living in the United States, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits increased by 12.5 percent in October 2023. Maximum allotments have also increased, and “a family of four in the continental U.S. and Washington, D.C., will now be allowed a maximum of \$973.” As cost of living is different across U.S. states and territories, this amount may be higher for Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Moreover, the shelter cap value has increased from \$624 in 2023 to \$672 in 2024. However, some eligibility requirements have changed. In order to receive SNAP benefits, able-bodied adults between the ages of 51 and 52 who do not have dependents must show proof that they are training, in school, or actively working. In October 2024, this eligibility age requirement for recipients to receive benefits without showing proof of work will be pushed to age 54.

ABC News, *SNAP Benefits Increase as Eligibility Requirements Change Through 2024*. <https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Food/snap-benefits-increase-eligibility-requirements-change-2024/story?id=103657033>

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*Nutrition*

*Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)*

The special supplemental nutrition program for [Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#) is a federal program providing support to low-income pregnant, nursing, and non-nursing postpartum women and children, ages 0 to 5. The program is designed to provide supplemental foods, nutrition education, and referrals for health care services. According to 2023 data, more than 6.5 million women and children participated in WIC programs nationwide, up 5 percent from 2022. In Georgia almost 204,649 women and children participated in WIC programs in 2023, up 6.8 percent compared with 2022.<sup>lix</sup>

<b>WIC Participation (2022-23)</b>			
<i>Source: USDA WIC Program</i>			
	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>United States</b>	6,260,143	6,576,017	5.0%
<b>Georgia</b>	191,689	204,649	6.8%

**Table 61: WIC State Participation (2022-23)**

The [Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center](#) provides county-level data on children, ages birth to 4, enrolled in WIC. Based on this data, in 2023 in Georgia, 150,815 children, birth to 4 were enrolled in WIC, and in Putnam County, 334 children, birth to 4, were enrolled (Table 62).<sup>lx</sup>

<b>Children Ages Birth to 4 Enrolled in WIC (2023)</b>	
<i>Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center</i>	
<b>Georgia</b>	150,815
<b>Putnam County</b>	334

**Table 62: Children Ages Birth to 4 Enrolled in WIC (2023)**

*National School Lunch Program*

The Georgia school system’s Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program provides meals to low-income children attending public schools. During the 2022-23 school year, 80.9 percent of all students in Putnam County participated in the free/reduced-price lunch program, 2,408 students.<sup>lxi</sup>

<b>National School Lunch Program: Direct Certification (2022-23)</b>				
<i>Source: National Center for Education Statistics</i>				
	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch</b>	
			<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Putnam County</b>	<i>Total</i>	2,978	2,408	80.9%
	<i>Putnam County Elementary School</i>	622	503	80.9%
	<i>Putnam County High School</i>	919	743	80.8%
	<i>Putnam County Middle School</i>	681	551	80.9%
	<i>Putnam County Primary School</i>	756	611	80.8%

**Table 63: National School Lunch Program: Direct Certification (2022-23)**

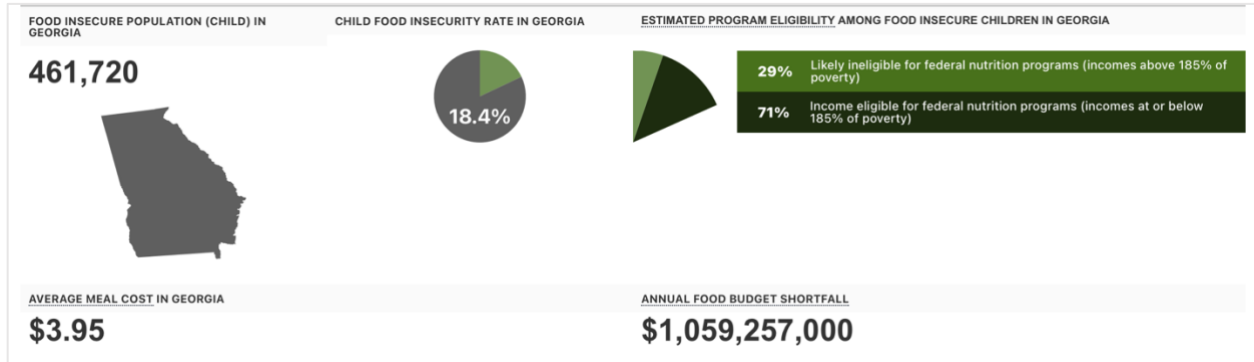
**Food Insecurity**

Food deprivation and its measure are often referred to as *Food Insecurity*.

Food insecurity happens when a healthy lifestyle for all members of a household is not sustainable due to inconsistent food access. Whether short- or long-term, food insecurity indicates when people cannot purchase food due to monetary restrictions.

In 2022 in the United States, more than 44 million residents lived in a household in which they did not always know where they would find their next meal. An estimated 13.4 million children under the age of 18 in the United States lived in homes that were unable to consistently access enough and nutritious foods, a rate of 18.5 percent.<sup>lxii</sup>

In Georgia 13.1 percent of the total population lived without access to enough and nutritious foods. The food insecurity rate for children was even higher, 18.4 percent, which accounted for 461,720 children (Figure 36).



**Figure 35: Child Food Insecurity in Georgia (2022)**

The overall food insecurity rate in Putnam County was 15.3 percent. The overall child food insecurity rate was higher, at 22.8 percent. There were 990 children who experienced food insecurity in Putnam County (Table 64).<sup>lxiii</sup>

**Food Insecurity (2022)**  
*Source: Feeding America*

	Food Insecurity Rate (Full Pop.)	Child Food Insecurity Rate	Estimated Number of Food Insecure Children
Georgia	13.1%	18.4%	461,720
Putnam County	15.3%	22.8%	990

**Table 64: Food Insecurity (2022)**

[CLICK HERE to find your local food bank.](#)

### Food Access

The Economic Research Service, a division of the USDA, has developed a Food Access Research Atlas that measures food store access for individuals and neighborhoods. The USDA uses a variety of measures to determine food store access, as well as to define low-income and low-access neighborhoods. As per the USDA, “most measures and definitions consider at least some of the following indicators of access:

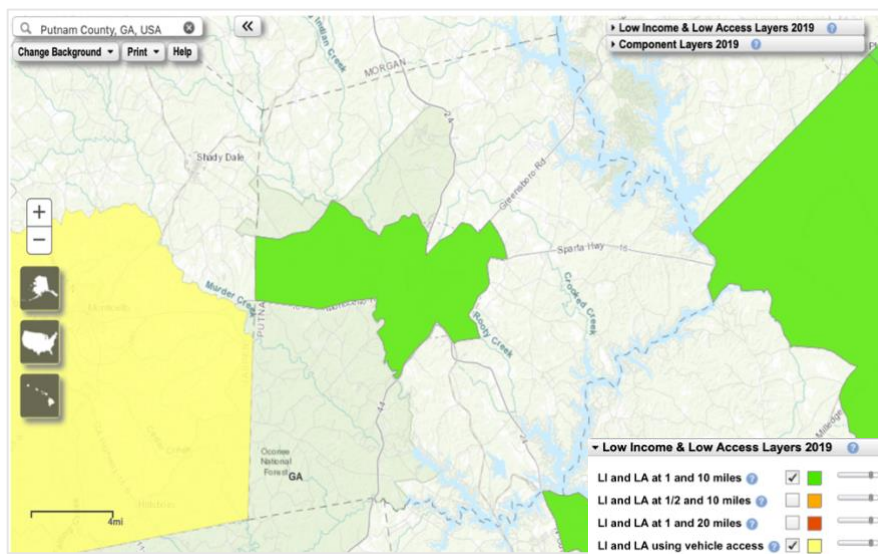
- Accessibility to sources of healthy food, as measured by distance to a store or by the number of stores in an area;
- Individual-level resources that may affect accessibility, such as family income or vehicle availability; and
- Neighborhood-level indicators of resources, such as the average income of the neighborhood and the availability of public transportation.”<sup>lxiv</sup>

Low-income neighborhoods and census tracts are defined as areas where the poverty rate is 20 percent or higher or the family median income is less than or equal to 80 percent of the state’s median family income.<sup>lxv</sup>

Low-access neighborhoods and census tracts are defined as areas where at least 500 people (or more than 33 percent of the population) in an urban area live more than half a mile or one mile away from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store and more than 10 or 20 miles away in a rural area.<sup>lxvi</sup>

The image below illustrates the census tracts in the program’s service area that have limited food access using two measures: low-income and low-access using 1 and 10 miles, and low-income and low-access using vehicle access and 20 miles. (See comprehensive definitions in the green box.)

[FOOD ACCESS RESEARCH ATLAS \(Click on title for interactive map.\)](#)



**Green Shading:** “Low-income and low-access tract measured at 1 mile and 10 miles.

**Definition:** A low-income tract with at least 500 people, or 33 percent of the population, living more than 1 mile (urban areas) or more than 10 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store.”

**Yellow Shading:** “Low-income and low-access tract using vehicle access and at 20 miles.

**Definition:** A low-income tract where at least one of the following is true: at least 100 households are located more than one-half mile from the nearest supermarket and have no vehicle access; or at least 500 people, or 33 percent of the population, live more than 20 miles from the nearest supermarket, regardless of vehicle availability.”

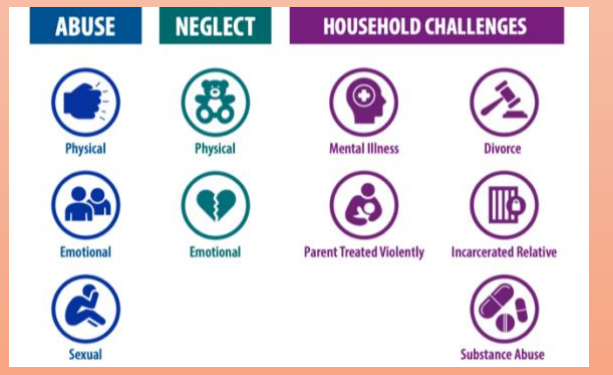
USDA Economic Research Service,  
<https://www.ers.usda.gov>



### Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

“Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are preventable, potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) such as neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, and having a family member attempt or die by suicide. Also included are aspects of a child’s environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with substance use; mental health problems; or instability due to parental separation or incarceration of a parent, sibling or other member of the household.” (Figure taken from the FY2021-24 Adverse Childhood Experience Prevention Strategy, developed by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.)

Centers for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/>



### Prevalence of Drug and/or Alcohol Abuse

#### Drug- and Alcohol-Induced Deaths

Based on data collected from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s [CDC Wonder](#), a system for disseminating public health data and information, in 2022 there were more than 112,000 drug-induced deaths and more than 51,000 alcohol-induced deaths in the United States, with corresponding rates of 33.6 and 15.4 per 100,000 residents (Table 65). Georgia reported 2,804 drug-induced deaths (a rate of 25.7 per 100,000 residents). Statewide, there were 1,273 alcohol-induced deaths (a rate of 11.7 per 100,000 residents).<sup>lxvii</sup> No data was reported for Putnam County.

**Drug- and Alcohol-Induced Deaths (Number and Rates per 100,000 Residents) (2022)**

Source: CDC Wonder

	Total Drug-Induced Deaths		Total Alcohol-Induced Deaths	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
<b>United States</b>	112,109	33.6	51,191	15.4
<b>Georgia</b>	2,804	25.7	1,273	11.7

**Table 65: Drug- and Alcohol-Induced Deaths (2022)**

#### Opioid Prescriptions

According to data gathered from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), 37.5, 47.3, and 36.7 retail opioid prescriptions were dispensed per 100 persons in 2023 in the United States, Georgia, and Putnam County, respectively.

#### Opioid Prescriptions Key Highlights

“The overall national opioid dispensing rate declined steadily from a rate of 46.8 opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 persons in 2019 to a rate of 37.5 opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 persons in 2023.

- Dispensing rates for opioids vary widely across states and counties. Opioid dispensing rates were highest in Southern states. States with the highest opioid dispensing rates per 100 persons in 2023 include Arkansas (71.5), Alabama (71.4), Mississippi (63.1), and Louisiana (62.7).
- States with the lowest opioid dispensing rates per 100 persons in 2023 include Hawaii (22.6), California (23.8), New Jersey (26.3), and New York (26.3).”

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/>

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 3: What are the characteristics of the community(ies) served?**  
*Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)*

Child Maltreatment and Foster Care

*Abuse and Neglect*

Based on data collected from [Georgia Department of Human Services](#), between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, in Georgia there were 122,890 reports of child maltreatment, of which 144 reports were in Putnam County.<sup>lxviii</sup> The majority of maltreatment reports were for neglect, nearly 99,000.

For further exploration of the data, please visit the Georgia Department of Human Services Data Dashboard: <https://dhs.georgia.gov/division-family-children-services-child-welfare>.

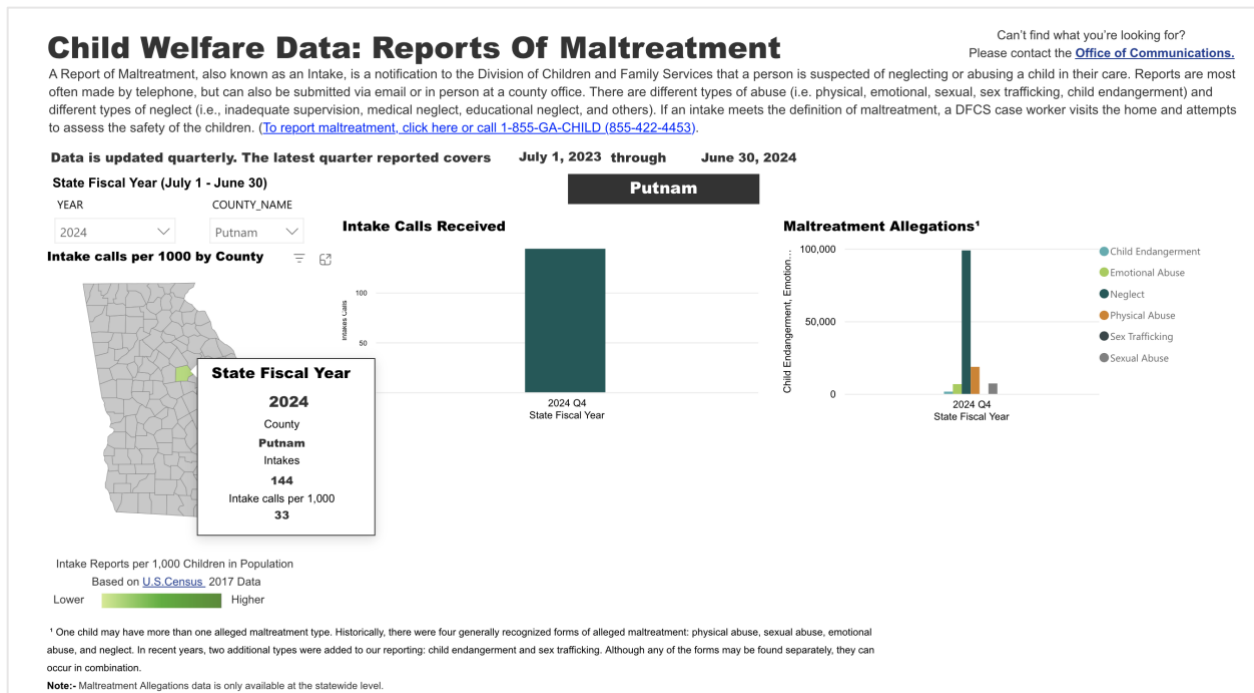


Figure 36: Georgia Department of Human Services: Child Welfare Data Dashboard

*Foster Care*

Children in foster care are categorically eligible for Head Start services, regardless of the foster families' incomes. According to data from [Georgia Department of Human Services](#), between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, a total of 10,419 children were in foster care in Georgia, of which 3,436 were children, ages 0-4.<sup>lxix</sup> In Putnam County there were 20 children in foster care during this same time period, of which seven were ages 0-4.

## Potential Need and Cost of Child Care

### *Children Potentially Needing Child Care*

Based on census data, in Georgia nearly 500,000 children under the age of 6, or 67.6 percent, live in single- or dual- parent households, where one or both parent(s) are in the labor force, indicating that this group potentially needs child care (Table 66). Of those 500,000 children, 687 are in Putnam County, representing 63.1 percent of children under age 6 in the county.

<b>Children Under Age 6, Parent(s) in Labor Force</b>			
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>			
	<b>Number of Householders</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Percentage of Children</b>
<b>United States</b>	21,899,788	14,828,467	67.7%
<b>Georgia</b>	738,206	499,339	67.6%
<b>Putnam County</b>	1,088	687	63.1%

**Table 66: Children Under Age 6, Parent(s) in Labor Force (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

### *Cost of Child Care*

Based on [Child Care Aware® of America](#) data, the annual cost of infant child care in Georgia in a center-based program is \$11,066 (compared with public college tuition, which is \$8,306). The cost of care for a 4-year-old is \$9,666 per year. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that child care should cost no more than 7 percent of a household’s income.<sup>lxx</sup> Single parents earning Georgia’s standard living wage pay 31.7 percent of their income for infant center-based care.<sup>lxxi</sup>

“CCAOA’s [Child Care Affordability Analysis](#) found that in 2023:

- The national average price of child care was \$11,582 annually. This would comprise 10 percent of a married-couple family’s average annual income and 32 percent of a single parent’s income.
- Although child care prices did increase in 2023, they did not outpace inflation.
- In all 50 states, the price of center-based child care for two children exceeded average annual rent payment by 25 percent to over 100 percent.
- Similarly, the price of child care for an infant in a center exceeded annual in-state tuition at a public university in 39 states.
- Child care for two children in a center would cost a child care workforce professional anywhere from 59 percent to over 100 percent of annual income.
- Child care was more expensive than most other household expenses such as housing and health care in all U.S. regions.”

Child Care Aware, <https://www.childcareaware.org/thechildcarestandstill/>

### **Child Care Prices by County**

The [U.S. Department of Labor](#) maintains a national database of child care prices, which reports on average child care costs by county. The most recent report utilized 2022 dollars; 2024 estimates are provided. For exploration of this data, please use the following: [The Price of Child Care by County](#).

## MODULE 4: WHAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVE THESE COMMUNITY(IES)?

### Federal and/or State-Funded Preschool Programs

Based on the 2023 State of Preschool report issued by the [National Institution for Early Education Research \(NIEER\)](#), in the United States 35 percent of 4-year-olds and 7 percent of 3-year-olds were served in state-funded preschool programs in 2022-23.

From the [Executive Summary](#):

“As the challenges of the pandemic recede, federal, state, and local governments should renew their attention to how they can improve early education policies to provide more children—especially those most in need—with stronger early learning opportunities. Half of all 3- and 4-year-old children in poverty attend no preschool program at all. States should lead the way, and the new wave of commitments to universal preschool education suggests they will do so. Yet, most states that have committed to serve all children still have far to go to meet the call, and most states have not yet made this commitment. In addition, as states expand enrollment, they face crucial choices about quality and adequate funding.”

During the 2022-23 school year, approximately 1.63 million children were served in state-funded pre-K programs, up from approximately 1.53 million the year before, with an increase of 110,209 children. However, total enrollment has still not recovered from pre-pandemic levels. Total state pre-K spending during the 2022-23 school year was \$11.73 billion, with average state spending of \$7,277 per child.

In assessing the robustness of preschool offerings across states, funding, universal access, age of students, uniformity and quality of delivery, length of day, and workforce recruitment, retention, and support remain pivotal issues. As of 2022-23, only nine states and Washington, D.C. had more than 50 percent of 4-year-olds enrolled in state-funded preschools (Figure 38). Only Washington, D.C. and Vermont offer universal preschool starting at age 3, with Illinois and New Jersey offering pre-K at age 3 but without extending it to universal access. Laws have recently been passed in California, Colorado, Hawaii, and New Mexico to provide universal preschool. Four additional states have universal preschool policies but have yet to fully implement them: Georgia, Illinois, Maine, and New York.

FIGURE 4: ENROLLMENT OF 4-YEAR-OLDS IN PRESCHOOL VARIES WIDELY: SOME STATES WORK TOWARDS UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL AND OTHERS ENROLL NO CHILDREN

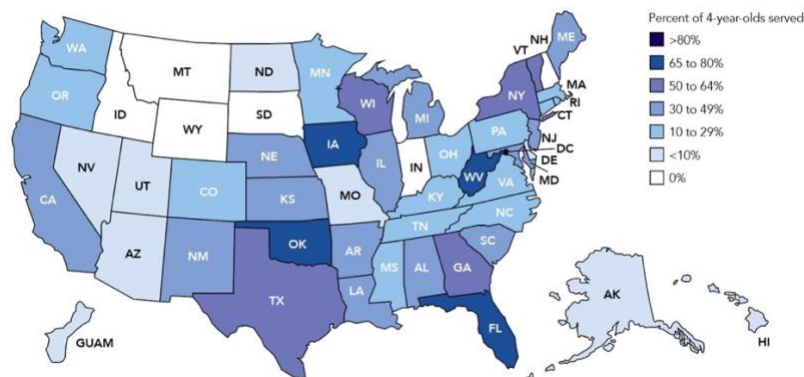


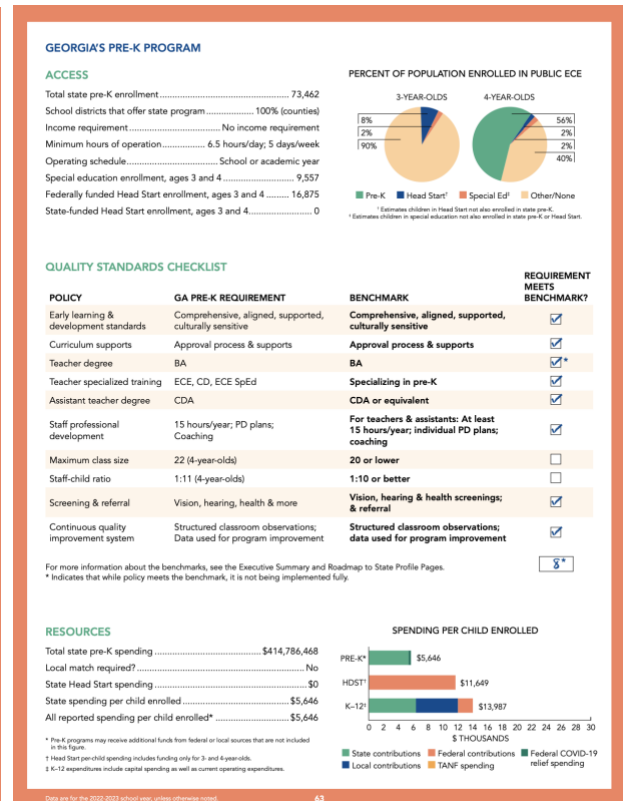
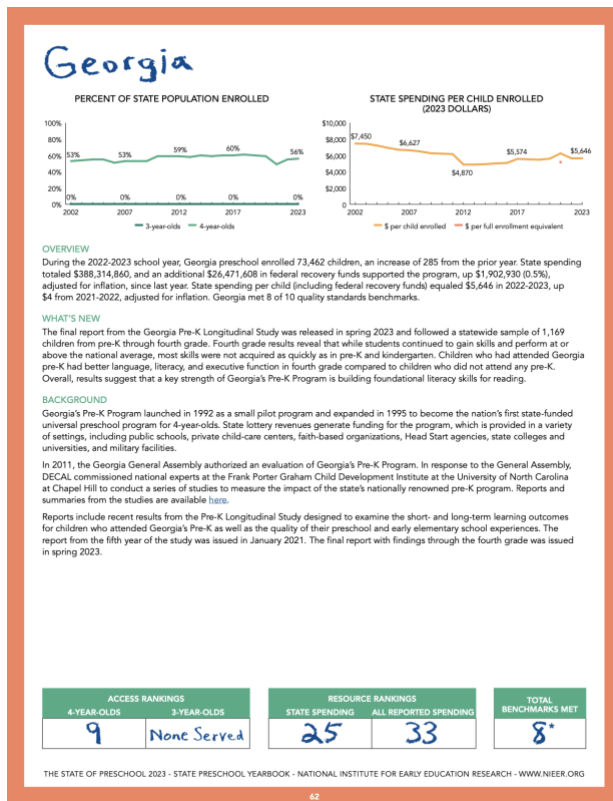
Figure 37: Enrollment of 4-Year-Olds in Preschool (2022-23)

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 4: What other organizations serve these community(ies)?**  
*Federal and/or State-Funded Preschool Programs*

*Georgia Overview*

Georgia ranks 9<sup>th</sup> for access and enrollment of 4-year-olds but does not serve any 3-year-olds.<sup>lxvii</sup> During the 2022-23 school year, programs enrolled 56 percent of all 4-year-old children. The state is 25<sup>th</sup> in state spending, with per-child spending of \$5,646 and has met **8 of the current 10 quality standards benchmarks**. During the 2022-23 program year, 73,462 children were enrolled in pre-K programs, 9,557 in special education programs, and 16,875 in federally funded Head Start programs.<sup>lxviii</sup> Total state funding for preschool was \$414,786,468.

Click for full size: [Georgia State Profile](#).



Based on data collected from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), in Putnam County there were a total of 163 children enrolled in Pre-K programs in 2023, accounting for 72.8 percent of 4-year-old children in the county. Of the 163 children enrolled, 115 were children from low-income families.

**Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment (2023)**  
 Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center

	Total Pre-K Enrollment	% of Total 4-Year-Old Children	Children from Low-Income Families Enrolled in Pre-K
<b>Georgia</b>	73,465	56.2%	34,602 (47.1%)
<b>Putnam County</b>	163	72.8%	115 (70.6%)

Table 67: Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment (2023)

## Child Care Policy & Financial Assistance

### *Child Care and Development Block Grant Act*

“The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) is a law that authorizes the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program, which is administered by states, territories, and tribes. States use CCDF to provide financial assistance to low-income families to access child care so they can work or attend a job training or educational programs. States can also use CCDF dollars to invest in improving quality through teacher workforce, supporting child care programs to achieve higher standards, and providing consumer education to help parents select child care that meets their families’ needs. In short, CCDBG Act is the law and CCDF is the program.”<sup>lxxiv</sup>

The First Five Years Fund reports that due to insufficient funding, only 13 percent of eligible children under the age of 6 receive benefits.<sup>lxxv</sup> Tennessee reported the highest participation rate, with 35 percent of subsidy-eligible children receiving benefits from the program, while the District of Columbia reported the lowest participation rate at 5 percent. In Georgia only 14 percent of eligible children receive benefits from the CCDF program.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

### *Child Care Policy Updates*

The [Georgia Child Care Association \(GCCA\)](#), representing over 700 child care providers, including Putnam County Head Start, has provided their [2024-25 Policy Position Statement](#) to inform early education stakeholders and legislators about industry opportunities and challenges. Their mission is to “enhance, support and promote quality in the licensed early learning child care industry, for its members and for the children of Georgia.” The issues addressed in this statement include the following challenges in early education:

- Retaining skilled early educators makes it difficult to balance cost, affordability of tuition rates, stability of the workforce and continuity of care given rising wages, inflation, and challenge in recruiting.
- Addressing child care access and affordability to quality child care across Georgia relative to funding disparities resulting in “child care deserts” especially in rural communities, which Putnam County in considered.
- Mitigating rising insurance costs. Access to liability insurance has decreased due to increases of more than 20 percent, which has negatively impacted independent and small operators.

The charge for Georgia’s leaders and legislators is to invest equitably in the future of their families and build a robust child care infrastructure through bold solutions. A key area of focus for legislative activity targets school readiness and third grade reading proficiency.

The [Georgia Early Literacy Act \(HB 538\)](#) aims to improve the quality of early reading and literacy instruction across the state of Georgia. It requires the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) to provide for developmentally appropriate, evidence-based literacy instruction for child care providers. It also requires the State Board of Education to establish a uniform standard for measuring literacy, and it requires the

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start

### MODULE 4: What other organizations serve these community(ies)?

#### *Child Care Policy & Financial Assistance*

approval of high-quality foundational skills and instructional materials to be used in preschool and grades K-3.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

Senator Jon Ossoff of Putnam County made a proposal in May 2023 and had bi-partisan support on expanding pre-school opportunities for Kids in Putnam County. This was to help families access early childhood education and developmental programs through the provision of comprehensive services focused on early learning and development, health, and family well-being.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

The [Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students \(GEEARS\)](#) reports that “in the FY 25 budget approved on the final day of the 2024 Georgia General Assembly, state lawmakers approved a \$97 million increase for Georgia’s Lottery-funded Pre-K Program, including funding to:

- Ensure salary parity for pre-K lead and assistant teachers with K-12 teachers;
- Cap pre-K class size at 20 children;
- Increase start-up grants from \$8,000 to \$30,000 for new classrooms;
- Support transportation costs; and
- Provide additional operations support.”<sup>lxxix</sup>

Please use the following link for more details of the 2025 Policy Agenda: <https://geears.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-GEEARS-Policy-Agenda.pdf>.

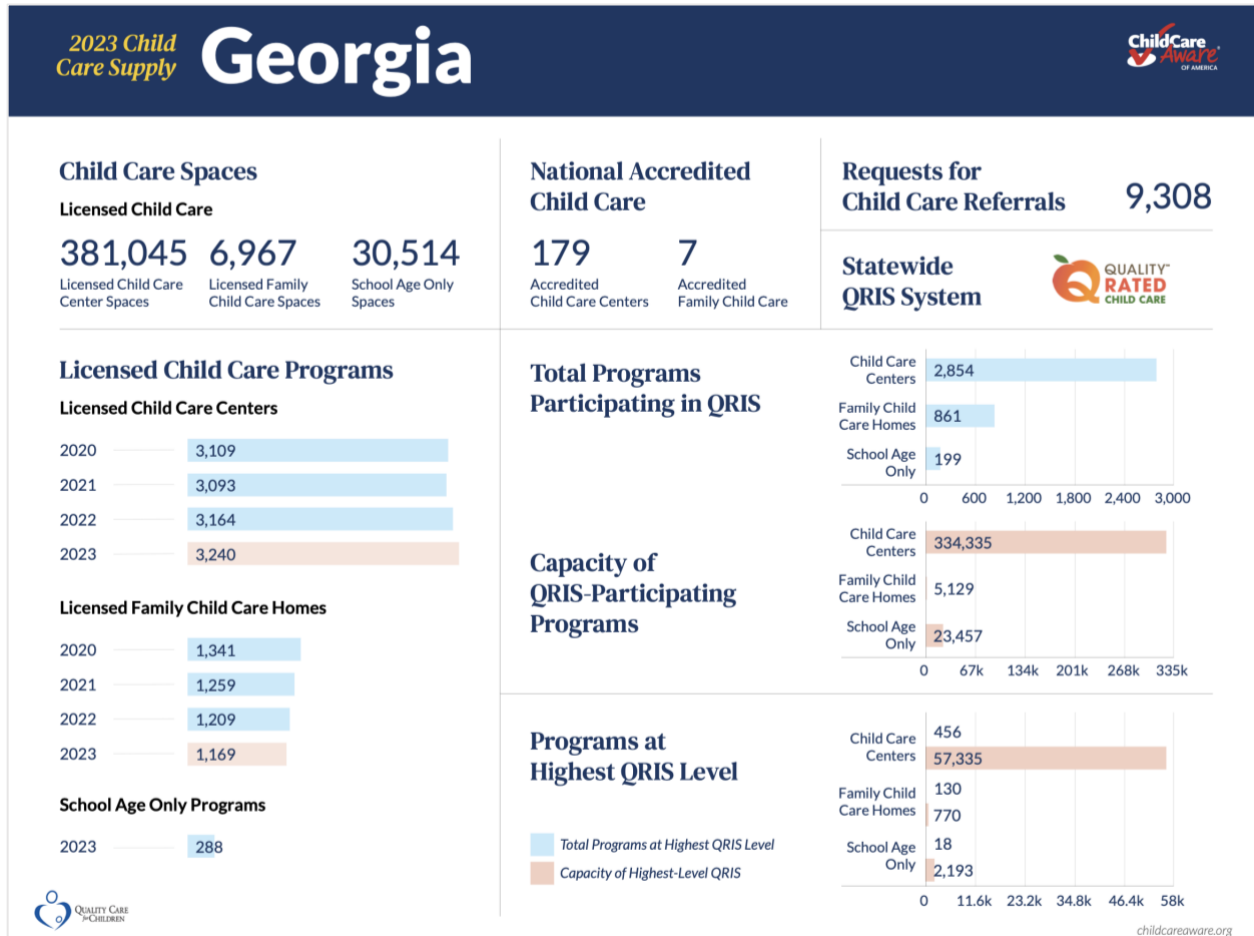
#### *Georgia Subsidy Program: Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS)*

In the state of Georgia, child care assistance is provided to low income families through the [Child Care and Parent Services \(CAPS\) Program](#). “The CAPS program supports early education goals by assisting low income families with the cost of child care while they work, go to school or training, or participate in other work-related activities.”<sup>lxxx</sup>

As per data collected from the Community Data Explorer developed by the state's [Cross Agency Child Data System \(CACDS\)](#), in Georgia a total of 111,255 children participated in the CAPS program in 2023. Of these, 49,943 children were ages 0 to 4, and 30,391 were ages 4 to 6. In Putnam County, 161 children participated in the CAPS program in 2023, of which 67 were ages 0 to 4, and 39 were ages 4 to 6.

**Georgia Licensed Child Care Programs**

The following fact sheet is from the [2023 Child Care Aware of America Annual Child Care Landscape Analysis Report](#).



**Child Care Programs**

As per the [Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning](#), in January 2025, there are 5,212 child care providers in Georgia with a license capacity of more than 390,000. Of these providers, 3,240 are child care learning centers, and 1,111 are family child care learning homes. In Putnam County there are a total of five providers listed with a combined license capacity of 400 (Table 68).

**Child Care Providers (January 2025)**  
*Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning*

Name	Address	City	Zip	License Capacity
A Kid's World of Peace Center, LLC	108 Oconee Street	Eatonton	31024	97
Lemon Tree Academy	100 Lakeview Estates Drive	Eatonton	31024	89
Little Scholars Academy	107 Harmony Crossing Suite 3 & 5	Eatonton	31024	41
Peaceful Kidz Learning Center, LLC	601 S. Jefferson Street	Eatonton	31024	73
Stepping Stones Learning Ctr	115 N. Madison Avenue	Eatonton	31024	100

**Table 68: Child Care Providers (January 2025)**



**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 4: What other organizations serve these community(ies)?**  
*Resources, Collaborative/Formal Agreements, and Partnerships*

**Resources, Collaborative/Formal Agreements, and Partnerships**

Name of Program/Partner	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone Number	Services Provided by Partner to Program
<b>Dental</b>						
<b>Young-Jones Dental Center</b>	136 Sparta Hwy	Eatonton	GA	31024	406-484-0280	Dental Services
<b>Help A Child Smile</b>	1806 Over Lake Dr.	Conyers	GA	30013	800-770-0388	Mobile Dentistry
<b>Education</b>						
<b>The Plaza Arts Center-Eatonton</b>	305 N. Madison	Eatonton	GA	31024		Cultural Mainstay of the community, offering cultural shows and open venue for events.
<b>Putnam County UGA Extension</b>	663 Godfrey Rd	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-4151	Education in agriculture, environment, community and youth
<b>FERST Foundation</b>	Web Based	Eatonton	GA	31024	800-565-0177	Literacy Monthly Free Books for children
<b>Employment/Job Training</b>						
<b>CENTRAL GA. TECHNICAL COLLEGE</b>	580 James Marshall Bypass	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-923-5000	Community College and GED
<b>Health</b>						
<b>Kid's First Pediatrics- Dr. Al-Hakim MD</b>	116 Sparta Hwy	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-923-0904	Pediatric Doctor
<b>Oconee Valley Health Care</b>	130 Sparta Highway	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-484-2200	Form 3300, Physicals, Immunizations
<b>Putnam County Health Department</b>	117 Putnam Drive	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-4858591	Form 3300, Physical, Immunizations, Car Seat Program
<b>Mental Health</b>						
<b>Oconee Center Behavioral Health</b>	1241 Orchard Hill Rd	Milledgeville	GA	31061	478-445-4817	Mental health, Developmental Disabilities, Addictive Diseases
<b>River Edge Behavioral Health Center</b>	60 Highway 22 West	Milledgeville	GA	31061	478-451-2700	Mental Health Services for Children and Family

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 4: What other organizations serve these community(ies)?**  
*Resources, Collaborative/Formal Agreements, and Partnerships*

Name of Program/Partner	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone Number	Services Provided by Partner to Program
<b>Mind Is Unique Mental Health Counseling and Behavior Services</b>	1025 A Warrenton Hwy	Thompson	GA	30824	478-456-5863	Transdisciplinary and /or multidisciplinary services
<b>Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health of Georgia</b>		Athens	GA		706-438-2951	Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) Programs
<b>Nutrition</b>						
<b>Golden Harvest Food Bank</b>	3310 Commerce Dr	Augusta	GA	30909	706-736-1199	Supplies food packs for Children on weekends
<b>WIC (Women Infants Children)</b>						Growth assessments, Hemoglobin
<b>Other</b>						
<b>Putnam County Administration Building</b>	117 Putnam Drive	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-5826	Open Venue for workshops etc.
<b>A Kids World Of Peace</b>	108 Oconee St	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-7590	Child Care Partner
<b>Stepping Stones Learning Centers</b>	115 N. Madison Ave	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-0690	Child Care Partner
<b>Social Services/Family Support Services</b>						
<b>GA Military College</b>	201 E. Greene St.	Milledgeville	GA	31061	877-499-6333	Higher Education Seminars for parents
<b>Circle Of Love</b>	PO Box 641	Greensboro	GA	31201	478-745-9292	Crisis Intervention, Domestic Violence Shelter, Advocacy & Follow-up Services
<b>Division of Family and Children Services</b>	675 Godfrey Road	Eatonton	GA	31024	855-422-4453	Family Service, Child Protective
<b>GA Dept. of Child Support Services</b>	111 Fieldstone Drive	Milledgeville	GA	31061	844-649-2347	Child Support Education and Parent Assistance
<b>Overview</b>	120 South Jefferson	Milledgeville	GA	31061	478-453-4111	Energy Assistance, Home Repair, Family Empowerment
<b>Mothers Against Crime</b>		Eatonton	GA		706-485-5332	Improve Community and increase safety
<b>Putnam Family Connection</b>	302 N Madison Ave	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-816-6305	Family Support, Resources and Parent Education
<b>TANF Putnam</b>	675 Godfrey Road	Eatonton	GA	31024		Temporary assistance for needy families

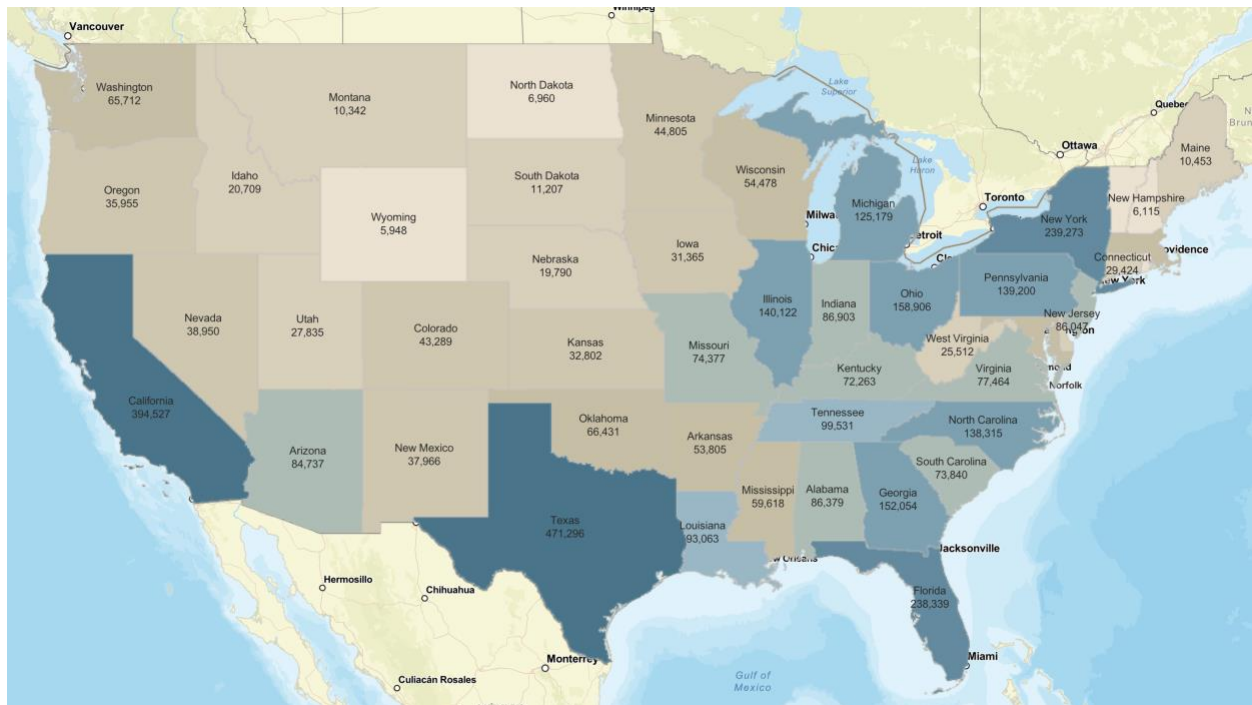
**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 4: What other organizations serve these community(ies)?**  
*Resources, Collaborative/Formal Agreements, and Partnerships*

Name of Program/Partner	Address	City	State	Zip	Phone Number	Services Provided by Partner to Program
<b>Life Source Food Distribution</b>	314 S. Washington	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-484-2331	Food
<b>Walmart Super Center</b>	201 Walmart Dr.	Eatonton	GA	31024		Donations to families
<b>Putnam County Public Transit System</b>	117 Putnam Drive	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-6355	Transportation
<b>Goodwill Of Lake Oconee</b>	1030 Lake Oconee Parkway	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-0244	Parent training program and job placement
<b>PUTNAM CHRISTIAN OUTREACH</b>	252 Industrial Boulevard	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-4066	Parent training program and job placement
<b>KIWANIS CLUB</b>	158 Old Glenwood Springs Rd	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-3303	In-Kind donations
<b>Habitat For Humanity</b>	1027 Greensboro Rd Ste2	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-991-1600	Affordable housing assistance
<b>Housing Authority of Eatonton</b>	208 Lawson Dr	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-4855361	Affordable housing assistance
<b>McDonalds Of Eatonton GA</b>	105 Oak Street	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-3533	In-Kind donations
<b>Eatonton Service League</b>		Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-5141	In-Kind donations
<b>Farmers and Merchants Bank of Eatonton GA</b>	100 S Madison Ave	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-9941	Providing education for financial responsibilities
<b>The People's Bank of Eatonton GA</b>	209 S Jefferson Ave	Eatonton	GA	31024	706-485-8542	Providing education for financial responsibilities

**MODULE 5: ARE WE PROVIDING SERVICES IN THE RIGHT LOCATIONS?**

**Geographic Location of Eligible Children and Families**

Based on the 2023 American Community Survey (5-Year Estimates), in the United States, there are approximately 3.9 million children, ages 0-5, living in poverty. The state of Texas has the highest number of children, ages 0-5, living in poverty (471,296), followed by California (394,527) and Florida (238,339). Georgia reports a total of 152,054 children, ages 0-5, living in poverty.



**Figure 38: United States: Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**Putnam County**

Of the more than 152,000 children, ages 0-5, living in poverty in Georgia, 523 are in Putnam County (Table 69). Using the [Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex by the U.S. Census Bureau](#), an estimated 49 percent of children, ages 0-5, in poverty are Early Head Start-eligible infants and toddlers (256). Approximately 34 percent are Head Start-eligible 3- and 4-year-old children (178), and approximately 17 percent are 5-year-olds (89).

<b>Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty</b>				
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates</i>				
	<b>Under 6 Years</b>	<b>Est. 0-2</b>	<b>Est. 3-4</b>	<b>Est. 5</b>
<b>United States</b>	3,926,390	1,923,931	1,334,973	667,486
<b>Georgia</b>	152,054	74,506	51,698	25,849
<b>Putnam County</b>	523	256	178	89

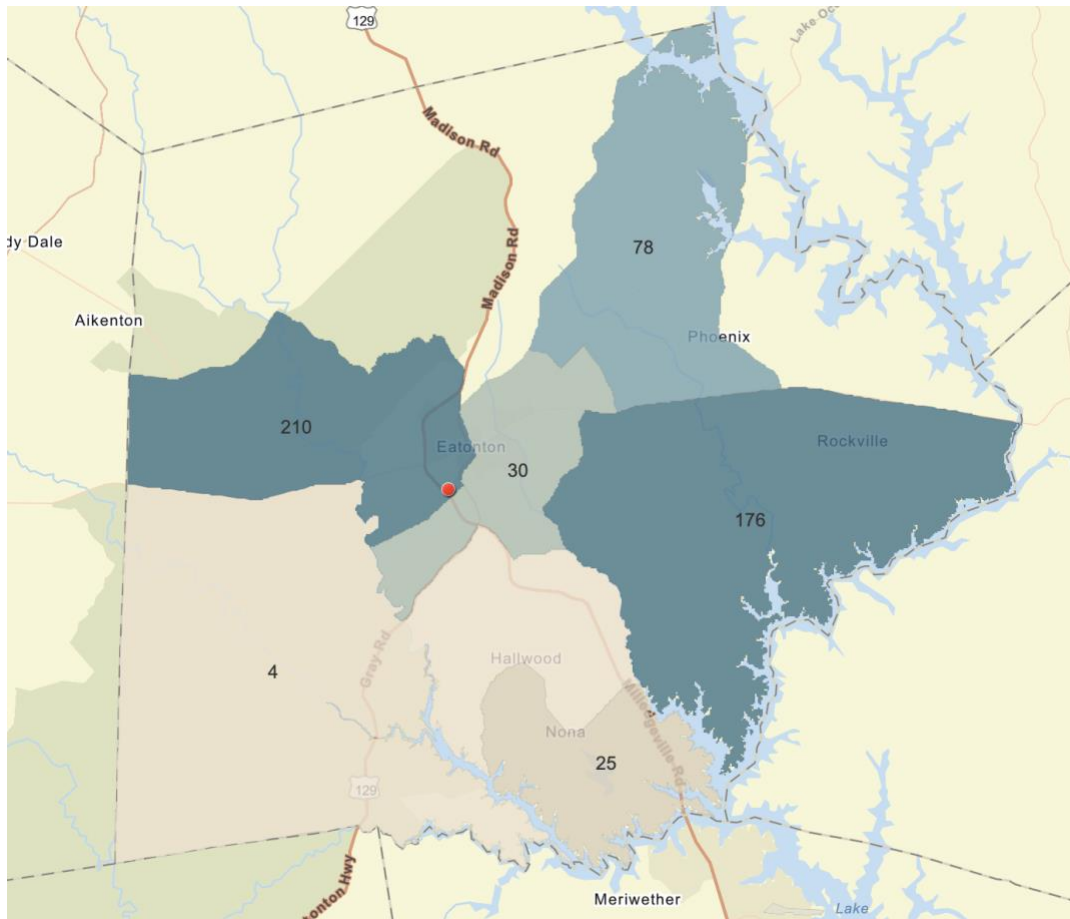
**Table 69: Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**MODULE 5: Are we providing services in the right locations?**  
*Geographic Location of Eligible Children and Families*

**Census Tracts**

To better estimate the geographic location of eligible children and families, the number of children, ages 0-5, in poverty was studied by census tract. A census tract is a statistical subdivision with at least 1,200 residents, a maximum of 8,000 residents, and an average of 4,000 residents.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

The following figure illustrates the number of children, ages 0-5, in poverty in Putnam County; the center location is represented by a **red dot**. Census tract 9602.03 reports a total of 210 children, ages 0-5, in poverty, followed by census tract 9601.01 with 176 children, ages 0-5, in poverty (Table 70).



**Figure 39: Putnam County: Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty by Census Tract (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

<b>Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty</b>	
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate</i>	
Census Tract 9602.03	210
Census Tract 9601.01	176
Census Tract 9601.03	78
Census Tract 9602.04	30
Census Tract 9603.02	25

<b>Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty</b>	
<i>Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimate</i>	
Census Tract 9603.01	4
Census Tract 9601.04	0
Census Tract 9602.01	0

**Table 70: Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty by Census Tract (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)**

Note: Numbers reported in the census tracts are the total number of children, ages 0-5, in poverty. Unshaded census tracts did not report any children, ages 0-5, in poverty.

## MODULE 6: WHAT ARE THE RESIDENTS OF THE COMMUNITY(IES) SAYING?

### Strengths and Needs of Eligible Children and Families

#### Parent Survey Responses

In order to collect primary data from Putnam County Head Start parents and guardians, a Family Needs Survey was distributed in English and Spanish to all families enrolled at the time of the Community Assessment. A total of 117 surveys were completed and returned. [Click this link](#) for a comprehensive copy of the survey.

#### Key Informant Responses

As a strategic step to supplement secondary data findings, the Putnam County Head Start program staff identified a group of key informants and invited them to offer answers to questions that provide additional insight into the communities and families served by the agency in their service area. The key informants, leaders, and experts who responded to the community assessment included the following: Nutrition Director for the Putnam County Board of Education, RN-Nurse Manager at the Putnam County Health Department, Human Resources Director at Putnam BOE, Social Services-Community Coordinator 3 at GA Department of Community Supervision, Reentry Services, School Climate/Wraparound Specialist at Oconee RESA, and Adjunct Instructor at Central GA Technical College.

The following includes complete answers provided by key informants, in alphabetical order:

#### 1. What do you see as the top priority issues affecting early childhood development (0-4-year-old children) during the next four years in your city and/or county?

- *Access to early literacy resources to support the development of appropriate literacy skills.*
- *Classroom management issues.*
- *Improper home environment – lack of supervision when they are home.*
- *In this community widespread poverty is a top issue. Living in poverty causes young children to have poor coping skills, issues with regulating their emotions and reduced social functions.*
- *The top priority issues: having access to quality early education programs, some families need affordable child care with the yearly rising cost. Additionally, priority issues could include mental health support and developmental screenings that would promote growth and development.*
- *Too much screen time for young children. Not enough physical play time to develop motor/cognitive skills.*

#### 2. What do you see as the top priority issues impacting education for adults during the next four years in your city and/or county?

- *Access to competitive employment opportunities with adequate compensation & benefits.*
- *Adults are having to work several jobs to make ends meet. This cuts out time to further education.*

- *Finance.*
- *Limited access and financial barriers.*
- *The shortness of income within the household. The cost of education is so expensive, especially if they do not get a grant of some sort.*
- *The top priority issues impacting adult education in our communities will always be access to affordable education with flexible hours if they have to work and provide for their families. Not having access to the many resources that have made education obtainable, such as partnerships that have been created between educational institutions, local businesses, and community organizations. New technology is an issue for some adults who may not be able to understand and taking over basic jobs. Transportation is a huge barrier in the rural areas, and finances.*

**3. What do you perceive to be the number one priority issue or concern for the city and/or county leaders during the next four years? (i.e., environmental, economic, health, social, and others) Please explain.**

- *As a community leader, I perceive that the number one priority issue for city and county leaders over the next four years will be addressing ongoing economic recovery and resilience from the impacts of the pandemic. This would be creating sustainable job opportunities and supporting local businesses. Leaders should focus on equal quality health services being in an undeserved community.*
- *Crime Putnam is awesome with having free events for the community to come together in a positive setting.*
- *Providing affordable services to the population.*
- *Providing employment opportunities in the area that have competitive compensation & benefits.*
- *The availability, affordability and quality of homes in the community is a top concern.*
- *We live in a rural area, so the leaders have to figure out how they can help the economics in the community.*

**4. In your opinion, what are the top two to three strengths of your city and/or community?**

- *A diverse community.*
- *Access to food and nutrition resources are one. Then the community's vitality is a second.*
- *Board of Education is all about the students learning and being ready for the real world.*
- *People (businesses as well as general population) willing to step in to fill needs of those who are struggling.*
- *Providing interventions to help students stay on their learning levels.*
- *Pull together when there is a need in our county.*
- *Small community with community values.*
- *Small/close knit community.*
- *Strong community partnerships encouraging support and participation.*

**5. What top priorities do you feel the community must address to recover from COVID-19?**

- *Access to competitive employment opportunities with adequate compensation & benefits.*
- *Encouraging the community to get the COVID shots.*
- *I feel like DPH and the new SHINE program has done a great job already making COVID vaccines free and accessible to local communities, targeting children and families with their free mobile clinic.*
- *Realization that they need to get a job and work for a living, instead of waiting on a handout from the state.*
- *Recover the image of health care in the community. Our community has become leery of vaccinations and avoids seeking medical attention when needed.*

**6. What is the status (reputation) of the early childhood education and services in your city and/or community? Please explain.**

- *Early Childhood services are positive. There are only a few daycares in the community, and they all have positive reputations. The Head Start Program in the community is NAEYC accredited, which means quality child care on a top level.*
- *Head Start programs are generally viewed positively because they provide early childhood education and comprehensive support services to low-income families. However, some people in the community see Head Start as a program for poor minorities.*
- *I feel like our early childhood education program is valued in the community. We see a good amount of children/parents who really want to obtain one of the coveted spots for their child/children. (More 3-year-old spots would be a great benefit to the community and the early development of children.)*
- *I have not personally heard anything negative on our Head Start Program in Putnam.*
- *It's a very well-managed school, the students love going there and there's evidence of learning.*
- *The early childhood programs have a positive reputation based on their effectiveness, professional competency and trust.*

**7. Please offer any additional advice regarding community partnership and involvement that could be beneficial to the Head Start Leadership in your city and/or community.**

- *Collaborating with local businesses, health care providers and educational institutions will continue to provide essential support, whether it's funding, volunteer opportunities, and specialized training for staff. The partnerships can also facilitate family engagement initiatives, offering parents access to workshops and resources that promote child development and well-being.*
- *Continue to offer outreach programs that engage all stakeholders in the community in the program.*
- *Get the parents more educated on what their child is learning.*
- *If not already involved, become a part of the Family Connections monthly meetings at the Plaza.*



## CONSULTANT OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Community Assessment for Putnam County Head Start reveals critical insights emphasizing the urgent need for a world-class early childhood program. Despite a strong foundation in high-quality early education, addressing the region’s unique challenges — such as limited access to competitive employment opportunities, transportation barriers, and lack of affordable housing — is essential to ensuring children’s academic success and well-being.

The Community Assessment for Putnam County Head Start identifies critical gaps in economic opportunities, education, and essential services while acknowledging the community's strengths. Strategic interventions are necessary to tackle poverty, enhance teacher retention, and improve access to resources to promote equitable access to early childhood education.

### Key Challenges

- **Economic Hardship:** Poverty disproportionately affects Black families with children under five. Families cite low wages and high cost of utilities and housing as significant barriers, with many struggling to receive necessary services such as health care.
- **Housing Instability:** The high cost of housing (mortgage, rent and utilities) leaves many families cost-burdened, making it difficult to achieve financial stability or generational wealth.
- **Teacher Retention:** Rising living costs force educators out of the area, contributing to turnover in child care centers and disrupting continuity for children.
- **Access to Resources:** Many families lack access to essential services, such as financial literacy, health care, transportation, and digital tools, further deepening inequities.
- **Competitive Employment:** Families and Key Informants alike express concern about lack of sufficient local employment opportunities that provide adequate compensation, benefits and a living wage.

### Community Strengths

Putnam County boasts a close-knit community that values collaboration and strong civic engagement. Key Informants describe the region as diverse and supportive, with residents who are willing to step up and help one another when needs arise. Putnam County Head Start has a positive reputation in the community for providing effective education and services.

### Recommendations

- **Expand Financial Literacy Programs:** Develop robust financial literacy services to empower families with skills for budgeting, credit repair, and savings.
- **Increase Access to Health Care Services:** Partner with local organizations to enhance access and equity in health care, connecting residents with dentists and doctors and restoring the public’s trust in the reputation of local health care services.

**2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start**  
**Consultant Observations and Conclusions**

- **Strengthen Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with local leaders to address gaps in access to food, transportation, and other essential services – especially in rural areas.
- **Enhance Teacher Support:** Implement competitive wages and explore housing subsidies or other retention strategies to ensure stability and quality in early childhood education.

Putnam County Head Start’s dedication to its community is key to supporting early childhood development. By tackling challenges and embracing the area’s diversity and community spirit, the agency can create more opportunities and equity for families, helping build a brighter future for the county’s children.

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Are you curious about how the community is changing? Join our [Insights Dashboard](#) to explore the most current data available.

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A: [Family Needs Survey](#)

Appendix B: [Key Informant Questions](#)

## 2025 Community Assessment: Putnam County Head Start End Notes

### END NOTES

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