

Poverty & the Economy: Athens-Clarke County





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Myths & Realities



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- **Myth**: The federal poverty threshold is enough to get by.
 - **Reality**: The official thresholds used by the federal government to determine “need” in 2005 were \$10,160 for an individual and \$19,806 for a family of four. However, local costs of living estimates for Athens-Clarke County range from **\$29,709** to **\$37,962**, one and a half to nearly double the official poverty measure.

 - **Myth**: Poor people are lazy.
 - **Reality**: 60 percent of poor families in Georgia reported earning wages during the last census period. That number increases to **65 percent** for the families living in poverty in Athens-Clarke County.
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- **Myth**: There is a large government welfare support system.
 - **Reality**: Welfare reform has reduced the number of people receiving aid from the federal government, and Georgia regulations of welfare recipients are more stringent than federal laws.

 - **Myth**: The UGA student population skews statistics on poverty and other socio-demographic factors.
 - **Reality**: The effects of the UGA student population are minimal; even when the 18-24 age population is excluded from the analysis, the poverty rate for Athens-Clarke County is **23.5 percent**.
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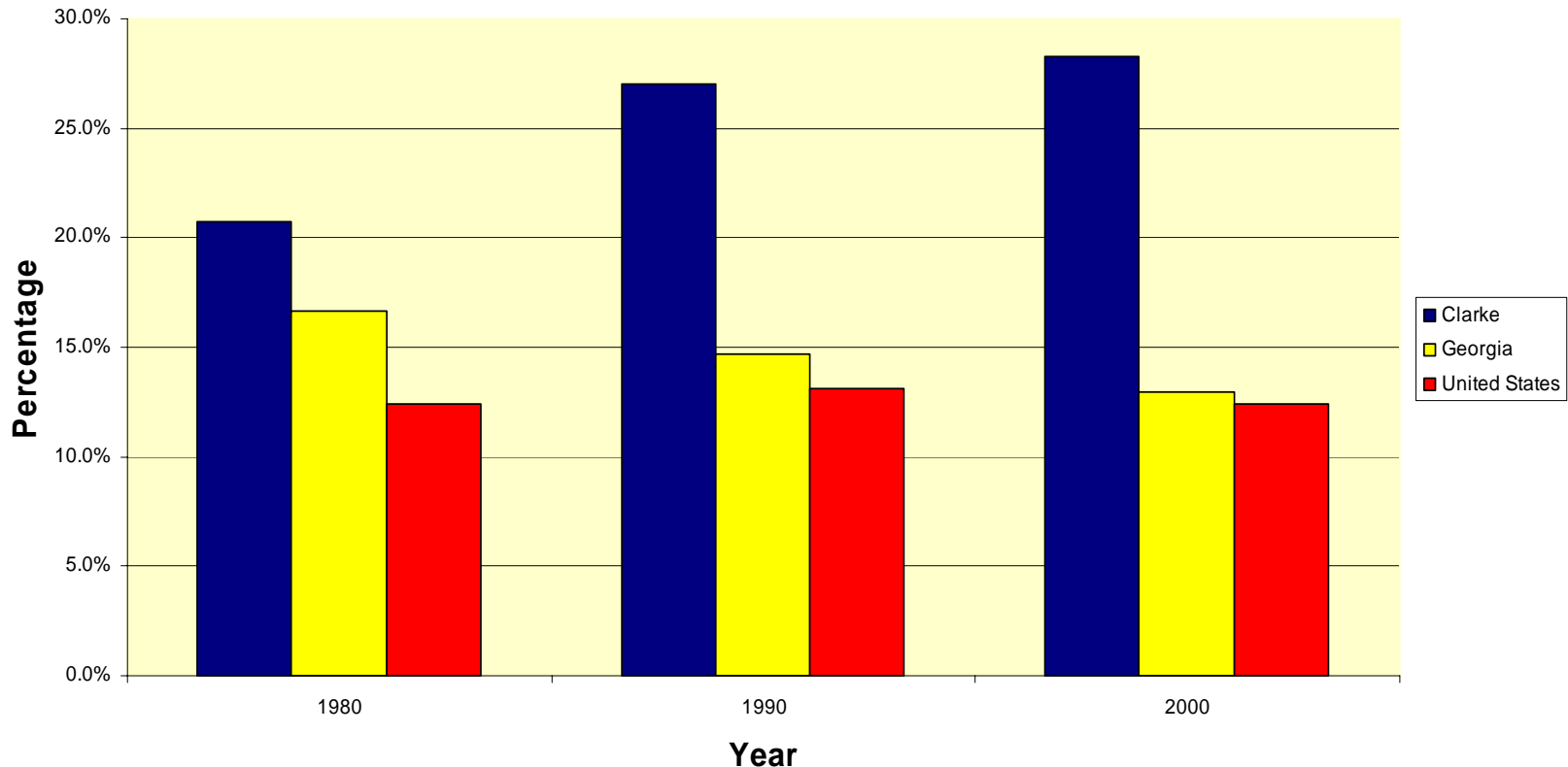
Athens-Clarke County: Over Time



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**While the nation and state's poverty rates have declined,
Clarke County's rates have actually increased.**

Poverty Rate 1980-2000





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The Geography of Poverty in ACC



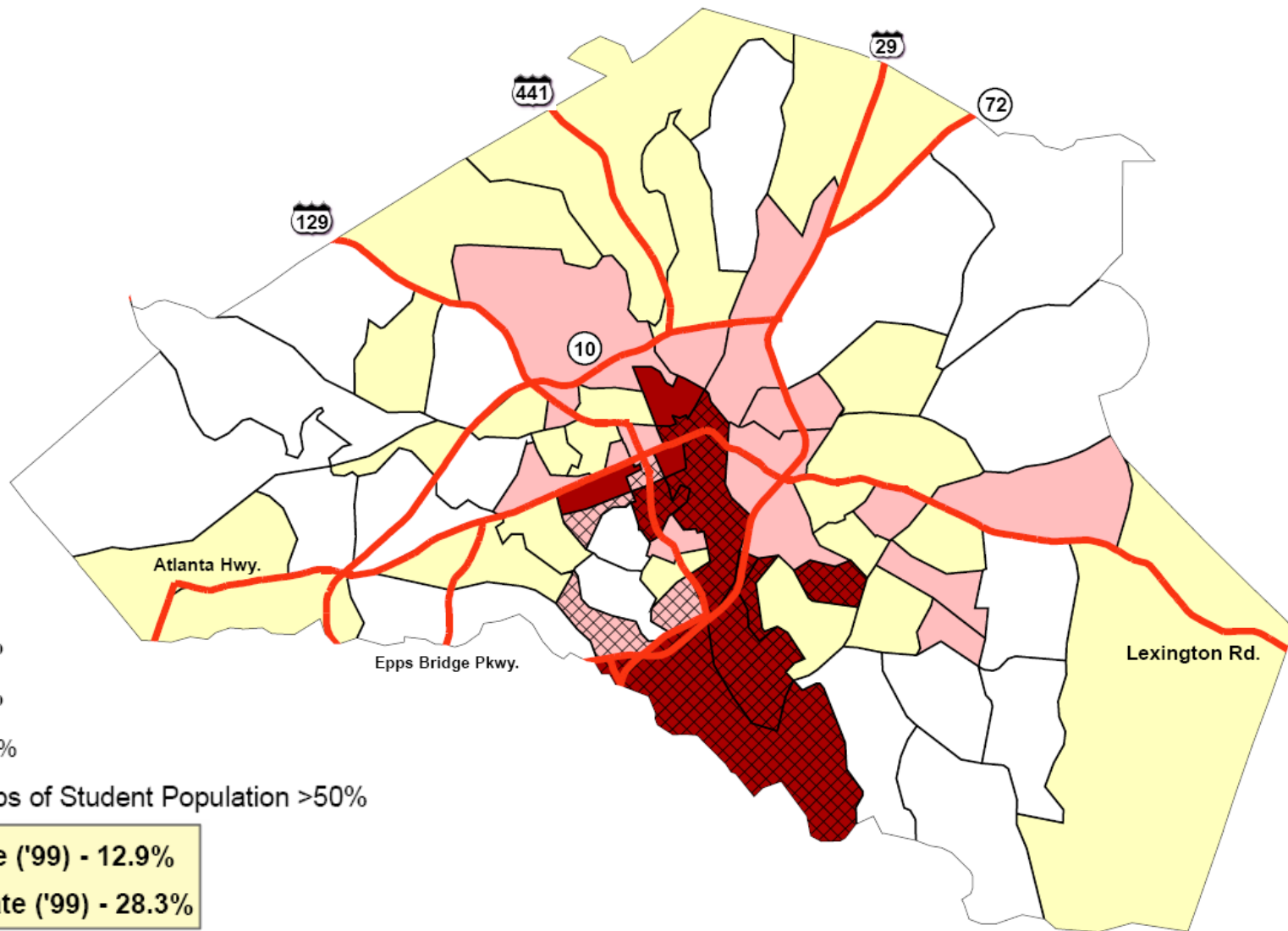
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Legend

- 0.0 - 12.9%
- 13.0 - 28.3%
- 28.4 - 50.0%
- 51.0 - 100.0%
- Block Groups of Student Population >50%

GA Poverty Rate ('99) - 12.9%

ACC Poverty Rate ('99) - 28.3%





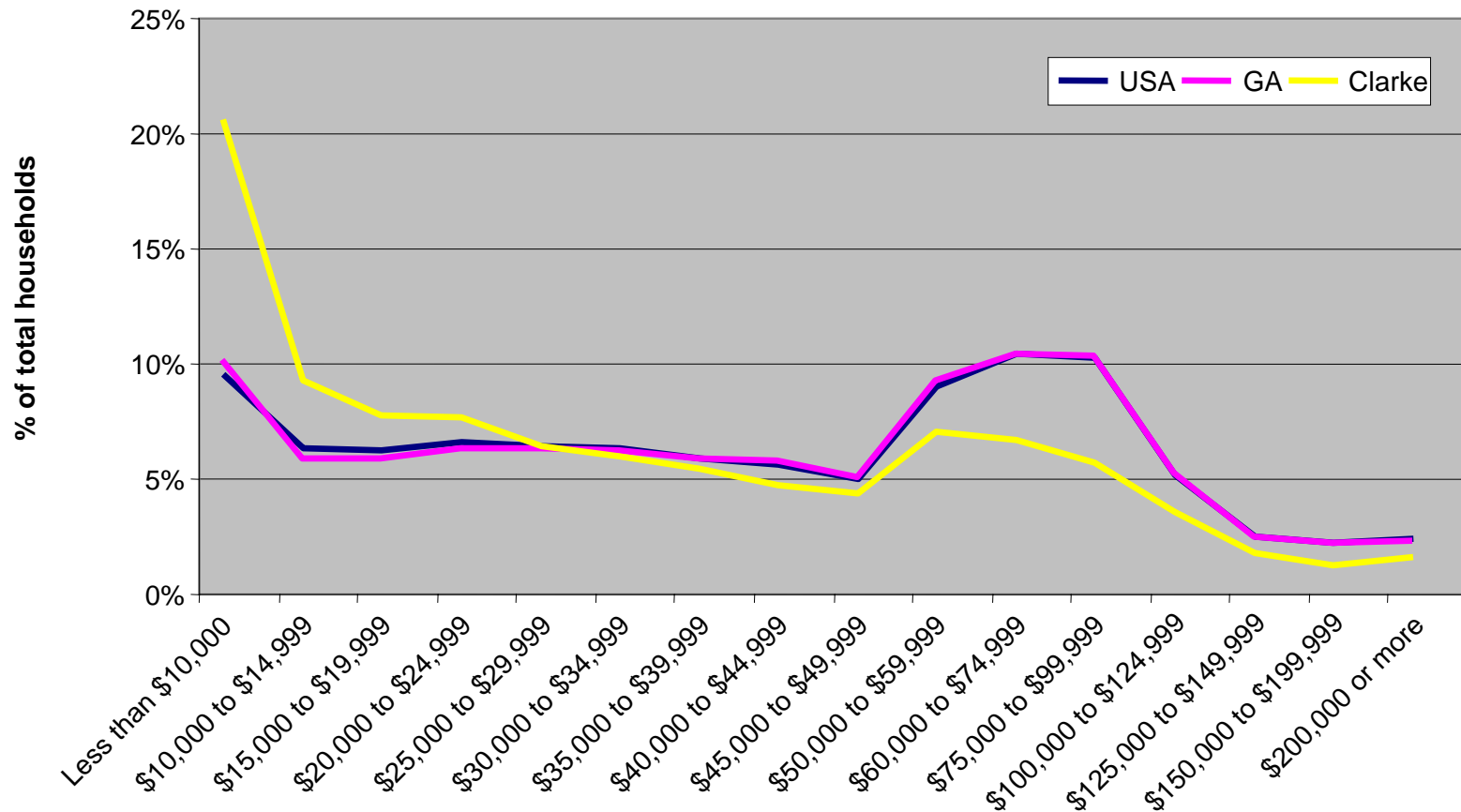
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Income Distribution in ACC



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There are sharp contrasts in how income is distributed in Clarke County and Georgia/United States.





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Some other facts about Athens-Clarke County:

- ACC lags behind the state of Georgia on many educational measures.
 - ACC is a “housing-stress” county.
 - Weekly wages for ACC are \$104 less than Georgia’s.
 - \$17,123 per capita income.
 - \$28,403 median household income.
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Where does that leave us?

- 1 in 4 kids live in poverty.
 - ACC's 50 percent poverty rate (16.8 percent) is the highest in Georgia.
 - 39.3 percent, or 36,000 citizens, live below the 150 percent poverty rate.
 - ACC's poverty rate is the 5th highest in the nation.
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What do we know?

- The poor face challenges in acquiring marketable skills.
 - Where people live matters.
 - Childcare options are limited.
 - Healthcare = emergency room.
 - A culture of poverty persists.
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What do we know?

- The poverty “industry”.
 - The poor are one disaster from chaos.
 - We know there is poverty of:
 - Wealth
 - Knowledge
 - Self-worth
 - Hope
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