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**The Glynn Economy since 2000:
Labor Force**

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Introduction

In August 2021, the **Reg Murphy Center** published **The Glynn Economy since 2000: Industrial Structure**, a study that examines how the industrial structure of the Glynn economy has changed since 2000. This study is a companion to the **Industrial Structure** study; it examines how the Glynn labor force has changed since 2000. It has two sections: the first examines change (or lack thereof) in the size of the Glynn labor force; the second examines change in educational attainment in the Glynn labor force. The section on size begins on page 2; the section on educational attainment begins on page 5.

Our two **Glynn Economy since 2000** studies are motivated by a basic yet often overlooked fact: economies don't simply grow; they change. The changes are often surprising. Our **Industrial Structure** study found several surprising changes in Glynn's industrial structure over the past 20 years, in particular: (i) leisure and hospitality, Glynn's leading sector, has become an even larger and more vital to the Glynn economy, (ii) health care has had the largest increase in employment and has become the county's second leading employer, and (iii) manufacturing and construction have had the largest decreases in employment. This companion study, our **Labor Force** study, finds some surprises, as well.

A quick note: as with the **Industrial Structure** study, when this **Labor Force** study refers to "now" or "today" or "currently", it occasionally cites 2019 data rather than 2020 data. It does so for the same reasons. In some cases, 2019 data are the most recent annual data available. No less significant, 2020 economic data are an anomaly. They do not reflect an economy in its most recent year of a long evolution; they reflect an economy in a pandemic. Evolution over the long term is our concern in our **Labor Force** study, as it was in the **Industrial Structure** study.

The Size of the Glynn Labor Force since 2000

For all the emphasis our Glynn Economy since 2000 studies are putting on *change*, it's ironic that what stands out most about the Glynn labor force since 2000 is a feature that basically hasn't changed. Table 1 below shows the population, labor force and the percentage of the population in the labor force for Glynn County for the years 2000 to 2020.

Table 1. Glynn Population and Labor Force Data, 2000-2020

Year	Population	Labor Force	LF/Pop %
2000	67,568	34,847	51.6
2001	68,558	34,809	50.8
2002	69,408	36,208	52.2
2003	70,391	36,969	52.5
2004	71,475	37,373	52.3
2005	72,589	39,156	53.9
2006	74,870	39,947	53.4
2007	76,513	40,582	53.0
2008	78,013	41,141	52.7
2009	78,946	40,134	50.8
2010	79,816	38,450	48.2
2011	80,386	38,179	47.5
2012	81,022	38,656	47.7
2013	81,508	38,010	46.6
2014	82,175	37,028	45.1
2015	83,579	37,264	44.6
2016	84,502	39,177	46.4
2017	85,282	40,184	47.1
2018	85,219	40,034	47.0
2019	85,292	38,828	45.5
2020	86,002	38,215	44.4

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Let's expand the picture with an additional data point: as of this writing, the most recent monthly estimate of Glynn's labor force is 39,381 for August 2021. That figure is just a wee bit larger than 39,156, the labor force figure for 2005. In other words, Glynn's labor force today is no larger than it was 16 years ago.

Shifting business conditions and a variety of other factors cause a labor force to fluctuate in size from year to year. Since 2005, year-to-year fluctuations in the size of Glynn’s labor force have ranged between -1,684 and 1,913, while the size of the labor force itself has ranged between 37,028 in 2014 and its all-time high of 41,141 in 2008. There is nothing unusual about magnitude of the year-to-year fluctuations in the size of the labor force or the magnitude of the range in the size of the labor force that we have seen in Glynn since 2005.

Yet to residents of Glynn and people familiar to the area, the fact that the county’s labor force hasn’t increased in 16 years is surprising, if not shocking. People who have been living in or visiting Glynn since 2005 have quite literally seen a substantial amount of economic development. What they have seen is no illusion. Since 2005, Glynn’s population has grown by 19 percent, from 72,589 to 86,002. Total personal income in Glynn, adjusted for inflation, has increased by 28 percent, from \$2.926 billion to \$3.74 billion.

Nineteen percent population growth and 28 percent real personal income growth over 16 years, but no change in the size of the labor force. That’s what’s unusual about Glynn.

What’s behind Glynn’s odd long-run labor force pattern? Table 2 below shows Glynn’s population by age group in 2010 and 2019. (Note: Age grouping inconsistencies in Census county population estimates require starting with 2010 rather than 2005. Also, 2019 is the most recent year for which county age group estimates are available.)

Table 2. Glynn Population by Age Group, 2010 and 2019

Age	2010 Population	2019 Population	Change
Total	79,816	85,292	5,476
< 16 years	17,640	16,082	-1,558
16-19 years	3,586	3,985	399
20-24 years	4,842	4,980	138
25-54 years	30,840	30,772	-68
55-64 years	10,572	11,627	1,055
≥ 65 years	12,336	17,846	5,510

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Between 2010 and 2019, Glynn’s working age population – that is, everyone 16 years old or older – increased by 7,034. The population of 16 to 19 year olds increased by 399. The population of 20 to 24

year olds increased by 138. The population of 25 to 54 year olds decreased by 68. The population of 55 to 64 year olds increased by 1,055. The population of 65 year olds and older increased by 5,510.

Put another way, people age 55 years or older account for 93 percent of the increase in Glynn’s working age population since 2010; people age 65 years or older account for 78 percent of the increase.

It’s pretty clear what’s at work here, but let’s take it all the way. The labor force participation rate for a population is the percentage of the population that is in the labor force. (Recall that the labor force consists of people who are employed and people who are unemployed, and that people who are unemployed are not working but looking for work. People who are neither working nor looking are considered not in the labor force.) Labor force participation rates are not available at for counties but are available for states. Table 3 shows labor force participations rates by age group for Georgia in 2019.

Table 3. Georgia Labor Force Participation, 2019

Age	Working age Population	Labor Force	Participation Rate
Total	8,196,000	5,079,000	62.0
16-19 years	576,000	176,000	30.6
20-24 years	609,000	438,000	71.9
25-54 years	4,220,000	3,405,000	80.7
55-64 years	1,233,000	764,000	62.0
≥ 65 years	1,558,000	296,000	19.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

In Georgia, 25-54 year olds have the highest labor force participation rate at 80.7 percent; 65 year olds and older have the lowest labor force participation rate at 19 percent. Between 2010 and 2019, Glynn lost people with the highest labor force participation rate and gained people with the lowest labor force participation rate.

In short, for the past 16 years Glynn has been attracting many retirees and soon-to-be-retirees but not many younger workers. That’s why, even though Glynn’s population has grown significantly, its labor force hasn’t grown at all.

Educational Attainment in the Glynn Labor Force since 2000

More important than the size of a labor force is its quality: the knowledge and skills of the people in the labor force. A standard though certainly incomplete measure of a worker’s knowledge and skills is the level of education the worker has attained. To economize on words (as well as to be fluent in jargon), we’ll use the term ‘educational attainment.’

The U.S. labor force is highly educated. It has been so for a long time, and its level of educational attainment continues to increase. Table 4 below shows levels of educational attainment of people age 25 years or older in the U.S. in 2000 and in 2019. (Note: Data on educational attainment of people in the labor force are available for the U.S. and for states, but not for counties. Data on educational attainment of people age 25 years or older are available for counties, as well as for the U.S. and states. Using data on the 25 years and older populations allows us to compare educational attainment in Glynn with that of Georgia and the U.S.)

Table 4. U.S. Educational Attainment, 2000 and 2019

Education	2000		2019	
	Population age ≥ 25 years	%	Population age ≥ 25 years	%
Total	182,211,639		224,898,568	
Less than HS diploma	35,715,625	19.6	25,618,541	11.4
HS grad, no college	52,168,981	28.6	60,482,353	26.9
Some college or assoc.	49,864,428	27.4	64,296,023	28.6
Bachelor's or higher	44,462,605	24.4	74,501,651	33.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

The Census Bureau data in Table 4 indicate that, of people age 25 years or older in the U.S. in 2000, 51.8 percent had at least some college, while 48.2 percent had at most a high school diploma. 24.4 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher, while 19.6 percent had not graduated from high school.

Of people age 25 years or older in the U.S. today, 61.7 percent have at least some college, 38.3 percent have at most a high school diploma, 33.1 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 11.4 percent have not graduated from high school.

That’s quite a change. The change was 20 years in the making, but it takes time to produce an educated person takes time, and it takes unrelenting persistence and dedication over a good bit of time to significantly reduce the high school dropout rate. Reducing the percentage of the 25 years or older population without a high school diploma from 20 percent to 11 percent in 19 years is a remarkable achievement.

Georgia has contributed to the achievement. Table 5 below shows levels of educational attainment of people age 25 years or older in the Georgia in 2000 and in 2019.

Table 5. Georgia Educational Attainment, 2000 and 2019

Education	2000		2019	
	Population age ≥ 25 years	%	Population age ≥ 25 years	%
Total	5,185,965		7,080,222	
Less than HS diploma	1,111,349	21.4	856,025	12.1
HS grad, no college	1,486,006	28.7	1,939,945	27.4
Some college or assoc.	1,328,432	25.6	1,982,684	28.0
Bachelor's or higher	1,260,178	24.3	2,301,568	32.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Of Georgians age 25 years or older in 2000, 49.9 percent had at least some college, 50.1 percent had at most a high school diploma, 24.3 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 21.4 percent had not graduated from high school.

Of Georgians age 25 years or older today, 60.5 percent have at least some college, 39.5 percent have at most a high school diploma, 32.5 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 12.1 percent have not graduated from high school.

Glynn is in on the success, too. Table 5 below shows levels of educational attainment of people age 25 years or older in Glynn in 2000 and in 2019.

Table 6. Glynn Educational Attainment, 2000 and 2019

Education	2000		2019	
	Population age ≥ 25 years	%	Population age ≥ 25 years	%
Total	44,806		60,245	
Less than HS diploma	7,965	17.8	5,995	10.0
HS grad, no college	13,107	29.2	16,862	28.0
Some college or assoc.	13,080	29.2	20,434	33.9
Bachelor's or higher	10,654	23.8	16,954	28.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

In 2000, 53 percent of Glynn residents age 25 years or older had at least some college, 47 percent had at most a high school diploma, 23.8 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 17.8 percent had not graduated from high school.

Today, 62 percent of Glynn residents age 25 years or older have at least some college, 38 percent have at most a high school diploma, 28.1 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 10 percent have not graduated from high school.

There is much good news here for Glynn. The substantial increase in educational attainment in its 25 years and older population over the past 20 years is good news. Further good news is that the pace of Glynn’s increase is right alongside that of the nation’s and the state’s – there’s no falling behind happening here. Even further, the distribution of levels of educational attainment in Glynn’s 25 years and older population is quite similar to the distributions in the U.S. and Georgia. Though the percentage with at least a bachelor’s degree or is lower in Glynn than in the U.S. and Georgia, the percentage with at least a high school diploma is higher in Glynn than in the U.S. and Georgia.

This trend in educational attainment in the U.S. – and in Georgia and Glynn, we hope – is going to continue for a while. Within the 25 years or older population, the level of educational attainment varies inversely with age. That is, in aggregate, the level of educational attainment is highest among younger people and lowest among older people. Table 7 below shows levels of educational attainment among people age 25 years to 29 years in the U.S. in 2020. (Note: The data in Table 7 are derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS), rather than the American Community Survey (ACS). ACS data on educational attainment for the age 25-29 population are not available.)

Table 7. Educational Attainment among 25-29 year olds, 2020

Education	% of 25-29 year olds
Less than HS diploma	5.2
Bachelor's or higher	39.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, CPS Historical Tables

Today, while 33.1 percent of Americans age 25 years or older have a bachelor’s degree or higher, 39.2 percent of Americans age 25 years to 29 years have a bachelor’s degree or higher. And while 11.4 percent of Americans age 25 years or older have not graduated from high school, only 5.2 percent of Americans age 25 years to 29 years have not graduated from high school.