

REG MURPHY CENTER

FOR ECONOMIC AND POLICY STUDIES

COLLEGE OF COASTAL GEORGIA

Poverty in the South Georgia Coast

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Poverty is a major problem in the South Georgia Coast.

The official measure of poverty in the U.S. is the poverty rate: the percentage of an area's population living in families with money incomes that fall below the poverty thresholds calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau. (For more on how poverty is measured and a table of the 2014 poverty thresholds, see the Appendix 1 of this report.) Table 1 below lists poverty rates in 2014 in the U.S., Georgia, and the six counties of the South Georgia Coast: Brantley, Camden, Charlton, Glynn, McIntosh, and Wayne.

Table 1: Poverty Rates, 2014

Area	Population	Number in Poverty	Poverty Rate
Brantley	18,272	3,973	21.7
Camden	49,981	5,980	12.0
Charlton	9,970	2,946	29.5
Glynn	81,059	15,666	19.3
McIntosh	14,106	3,290	23.3
Wayne	27,567	7,032	25.5
Georgia	9,823,818	1,802,783	18.4
U.S.*	315,804,000	46,657,000	14.8

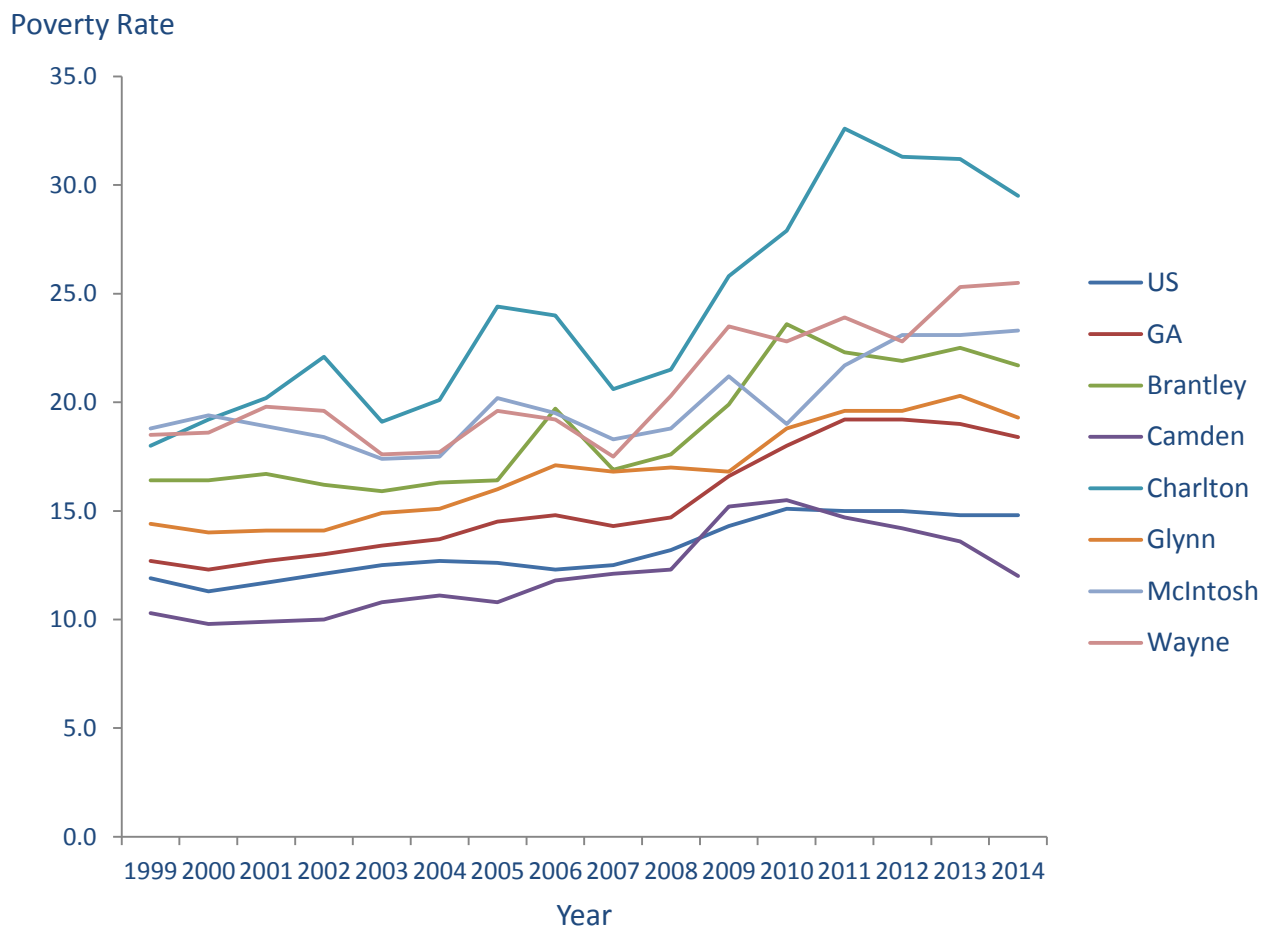
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.

*U.S. data from the Census publication, *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*.

Of the six counties of the South Georgia Coast, only Camden has a poverty rate (12.0 percent) below the U.S. poverty rate of 14.8 percent and the Georgia poverty rate of 18.4 percent. Poverty is particularly high in the more rural counties of the South Georgia Coast. In Brantley and McIntosh, more than one in five residents lives in poverty; in Wayne, more than one in four residents lives in poverty; and in Charlton, almost three in ten residents lives in poverty.

The most recent poverty experience is not unusual for the South Georgia Coast. Figure 1 below traces the poverty rate paths of the U.S., Georgia, and the six South Georgia Coast counties since 1999. (A table of the poverty rates is provided in Appendix 2.)

Figure 1: Poverty Rates, 1999-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.

As Figure 1 shows, while Georgia’s poverty rate has exceeded the U.S. poverty rate every year since 1999, poverty rates in Brantley, Charlton, Glynn, McIntosh, and Wayne have exceeded Georgia’s poverty rate every year since 1999. Camden’s experience has been different: since 1999, Camden’s poverty rate has been below Georgia’s poverty rate and, except for 2009 and 2010, below the U.S. poverty rate.

Figure 1 also shows that poverty rates surged in the U.S., Georgia, and the six South Georgia Coast counties as a result of the Great Recession of 2007-2009. And as Figure 1 and Table 2 below indicate, only in Camden has the poverty rate returned to its pre-recession level.

Table 2: Poverty Rates, 2007 and 2014

Area	2007 Poverty Rate	Rate difference, 2007 to 2014
Brantley	16.9	+4.8
Camden	12.1	-0.1
Charlton	20.6	+8.9
Glynn	16.8	+2.5
McIntosh	18.3	+5.0
Wayne	17.5	+8.0
Georgia	14.3	+4.1
U.S.*	12.5	+2.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.
 *U.S. data from the Census publication, *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*.

Even more troubling are child poverty rates. The child poverty rate is the percentage of an area’s population under age 18 living in families with money incomes that fall below the Census Bureau poverty thresholds. Not only are child poverty rates significantly greater than poverty rates for total populations, children in poverty often receive inadequate nutrition and inadequate health care, from which they may suffer long-lasting harm.

Table 3 on the next page shows child poverty rates in 2014 in the U.S., Georgia, and the six counties of the South Georgia Coast.

Table 3: Child Poverty Rates, 2014

Area	Population under Age 18	Number in Poverty	Poverty Rate
Brantley	4,514	1,451	32.1
Camden	12,926	2,329	18.0
Charlton	2,406	817	34.0
Glynn	18,632	5,597	30.0
McIntosh	2,660	959	36.1
Wayne	7,205	2,529	35.1
Georgia	2,456,276	646,960	26.3
U.S.	72,386,485	15,686,012	21.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.

Of the six counties of the South Georgia Coast, only Camden has a child poverty rate (18.0 percent) below the U.S. child poverty rate of 21.7 percent and the Georgia child poverty rate of 26.3 percent. Brantley, Charlton, Glynn, McIntosh, and Wayne all have child poverty rates of at least 30 percent.

Going Forward

Poverty in the South Georgia Coast is a problem begging for attention and action. The Reg Murphy Center of the College of Coastal Georgia is committed to improving our understanding of poverty in the region. This report is the first of a series of Murphy Center reports on poverty in the South Georgia Coast. Future reports will explore the causes of poverty, the frequency and duration of spells of poverty, and the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the people in poverty in the area.

Appendix 1: How Poverty is Measured

The official measure of poverty was developed in the early 1960s by Mollie Orshansky, an economist at the Social Security Administration. Orshansky constructed poverty thresholds based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s “economy food plan” -- a low cost food plan a family would resort to for “temporary or emergency use when funds are low” – and its 1955 Household Food Consumption Survey. The Household Food Consumption Survey indicated that families on average spent about one-third of their after-tax income on food. Orshansky calculated poverty thresholds by simply multiplying the cost of the economy food plan for different family sizes by three. The first poverty thresholds were calculated back to 1959. The Census Bureau updates the poverty thresholds each year by adjusting for inflation using the Consumer Price Index.

The official poverty rate is the percentage of people in families with money income that falls below the appropriate poverty threshold. A family is defined as persons living together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Money income is before-tax income. It includes wages and salaries, interest, dividends, disability benefits, survivor benefits, alimony, child support, unemployment compensation, social security, supplemental security income, and public assistance. Money income does not include payments in kind, such as food stamps, health benefits, and subsidized housing.

The Census Bureau also calculates poverty thresholds according to the age composition of families of different sizes. It calculates 48 thresholds in all. A weighted average of thresholds by family size provides the best summary of the poverty thresholds. The weighted averages of the 2014 poverty thresholds by family size are shown in the table below:

Family size	2014 Weighted Threshold
One person	\$12,071
Two people	15,379
Three people	18,850
Four people	24,230
Five people	28,695
Six people	32,473
Seven people	36,927
Eight people	40,968
Nine or more people	49,021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Appendix 2: Area Poverty Rates, 1999-2014

	US	GA	Brantley	Camden	Charlton	Glynn	McIntosh	Wayne
1999	11.9	12.7	16.4	10.3	18.0	14.4	18.8	18.5
2000	11.3	12.3	16.4	9.8	19.2	14.0	19.4	18.6
2001	11.7	12.7	16.7	9.9	20.2	14.1	18.9	19.8
2002	12.1	13.0	16.2	10.0	22.1	14.1	18.4	19.6
2003	12.5	13.4	15.9	10.8	19.1	14.9	17.4	17.6
2004	12.7	13.7	16.3	11.1	20.1	15.1	17.5	17.7
2005	12.6	14.5	16.4	10.8	24.4	16.0	20.2	19.6
2006	12.3	14.8	19.7	11.8	24.0	17.1	19.5	19.2
2007	12.5	14.3	16.9	12.1	20.6	16.8	18.3	17.5
2008	13.2	14.7	17.6	12.3	21.5	17.0	18.8	20.3
2009	14.3	16.6	19.9	15.2	25.8	16.8	21.2	23.5
2010	15.1	18.0	23.6	15.5	27.9	18.8	19.0	22.8
2011	15.0	19.2	22.3	14.7	32.6	19.6	21.7	23.9
2012	15.0	19.2	21.9	14.2	31.3	19.6	23.1	22.8
2013	14.8	19.0	22.5	13.6	31.2	20.3	23.1	25.3
2014	14.8	18.4	21.7	12.0	29.5	19.3	23.3	25.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau