

February 2014, Number 267

GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION OF SNAP ENROLLMENT IN GEORGIA

Introduction

In 2012, approximately 20 percent of Georgia's population received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly food stamps). This percentage share was the sixth highest in the country. However, there is substantial county level variation in the share of the population that received SNAP benefits in a given year. For instance, five percent of Forsyth County's population received SNAP benefits in 2012, while 41 percent of Terrell County's population received SNAP benefits in 2012.¹ In this brief, with the aid of maps, we illustrate the variations in SNAP enrollment as a share of county population as well as the changes that have occurred in those shares since 2000.²

Changes in SNAP Enrollment: 2000-2006

Figures 1 and 2 show the share of county population receiving SNAP benefits. From 2000 to 2006, the share of county population that received SNAP benefits increased. In 2000, 89 counties had less than a 10 percent share of their population receiving SNAP benefits. By 2006, only 47 counties had less than a 10 percent share. There was also an increase in the number of counties with higher shares of their populations receiving SNAP benefits from 2000 to 2006. In 2000, only 15 counties had a 16 percent or greater share of their population receiving SNAP

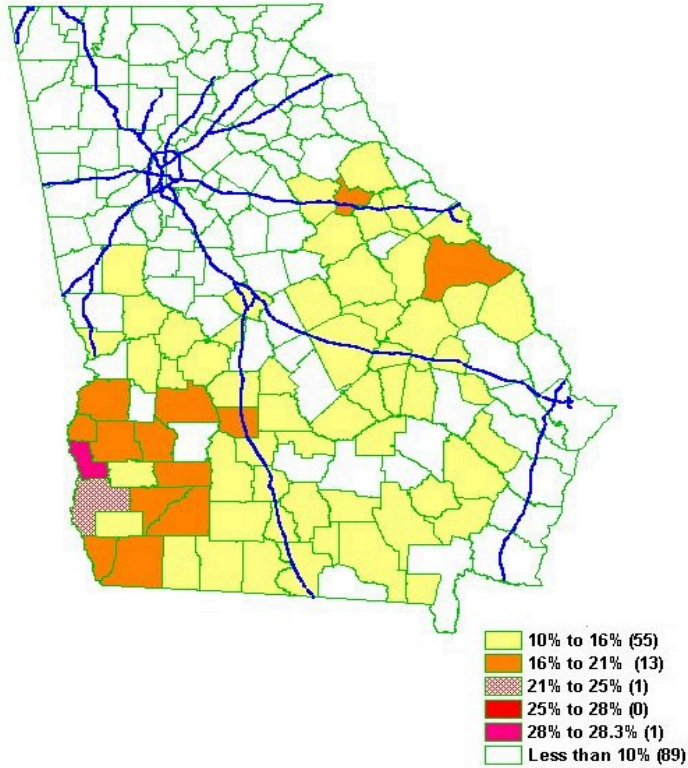
benefits. By 2006, 55 counties had a 16 percent or greater share of their population receiving SNAP benefits.

At the state level the increase in SNAP participation appears more modest, with a seven percent share of the state population receiving SNAP benefits in 2000, increasing to a 10 percent share in 2006. The differential between state and county is in part a function of the increasing urbanization of the state over this period. Some of the overall increase in SNAP enrollment from 2000 to 2006 was likely due to changes in the SNAP program. Starting in 2001, changes were made in SNAP procedures and rules that were intended to encourage enrollment for those who were eligible, particularly working families (NBER 2013).

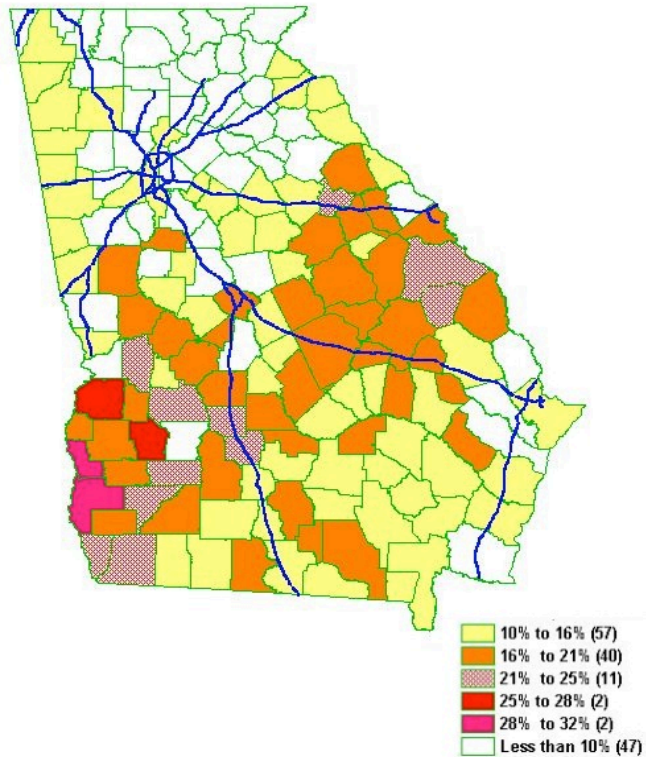
Changes in SNAP Enrollment: 2006-2012

By 2012 SNAP enrollment statewide had increased dramatically with 20 percent of the state's population receiving SNAP benefits. Figure 3 shows the general increase in all counties. Only seven counties had fewer than 10 percent of their populations receiving SNAP benefits. The number of counties with a substantial share of their population receiving SNAP benefits also increased from 2006 to 2012. In 2012, 67 counties had a 25 percent or greater share of their population receiving SNAP benefits, compared to four

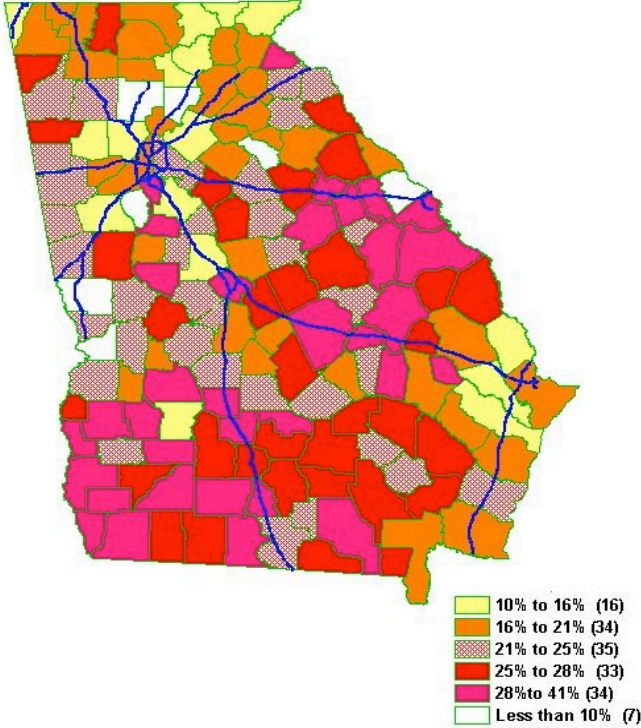
**FIGURE 1. SNAP ENROLLMENT SHARE OF COUNTY POPULATION CY 2000
(NUMBER OF COUNTIES)**



**FIGURE 2. SNAP ENROLLMENT SHARE OF COUNTY POPULATION CY 2006
(NUMBER OF COUNTIES)**



**FIGURE 3. SNAP ENROLLMENT SHARE OF COUNTY POPULATION CY 2012
(NUMBER OF COUNTIES)**



APPENDIX: DATA TABLE

County	-----Population*-----			-----SNAP Enrollment**-----			SNAP Enrollment Share of Population		
	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012
Appling	17,419	17,659	18,368	1,417	2,253	4,674	8%	13%	25%
Atkinson	7,609	8,022	8,284	830	1,260	2,271	11%	16%	27%
Bacon	10,103	10,290	11,198	929	1,151	2,592	9%	11%	23%
Baker	4,074	3,929	3,366	705	912	872	17%	23%	26%
Baldwin	44,700	45,591	46,367	3,462	4,741	10,394	8%	10%	22%
Banks	14,422	16,147	18,316	818	1,240	3,231	6%	8%	18%
Barrow	46,144	63,044	70,169	2,428	4,786	13,392	5%	8%	19%
Bartow	76,019	90,188	100,661	3,329	9,589	21,788	4%	11%	22%
Ben Hill	17,484	17,461	17,538	2,223	3,371	5,964	13%	19%	34%
Berrien	16,235	16,658	19,041	1,969	2,765	5,143	12%	17%	27%
Bibb	153,887	154,686	156,462	21,723	29,136	46,591	14%	19%	30%
Bleckley	11,666	12,280	12,913	1,108	1,574	2,620	9%	13%	20%
Brantley	14,629	15,403	18,587	1,478	2,306	4,756	10%	15%	26%
Brooks	16,450	16,273	15,403	2,184	2,712	4,470	13%	17%	29%
Bryan	23,417	28,705	32,214	1,184	1,717	3,871	5%	6%	12%
Bulloch	55,983	64,666	72,694	4,963	6,889	12,712	9%	11%	17%
Burke	22,243	22,637	23,125	3,794	5,290	7,663	17%	23%	33%
Butts	19,522	23,080	23,524	1,341	2,242	5,559	7%	10%	24%
Calhoun	6,320	6,122	6,504	917	1,123	1,541	15%	18%	24%
Camden	43,664	45,379	51,402	2,203	3,995	8,239	5%	9%	16%
Candler	9,577	10,250	11,117	1,338	1,781	2,911	14%	17%	26%
Carroll	87,268	108,030	111,580	6,037	12,395	24,401	7%	11%	22%
Catoosa	53,282	60,807	65,046	2,469	4,756	10,658	5%	8%	16%
Charlton	10,282	10,764	13,295	1,005	1,448	2,430	10%	13%	18%
Chatham	232,048	243,847	276,434	21,118	27,693	49,733	9%	11%	18%
Chattahoochee	14,882	13,458	13,037	670	867	1,112	5%	6%	9%
Chattooga	25,470	26,094	25,725	1,424	3,338	6,443	6%	13%	25%
Cherokee	141,903	193,676	221,315	1,980	4,900	18,838	1%	3%	9%
Clarke	101,489	111,240	120,266	6,147	10,248	20,825	6%	9%	17%
Clay	3,357	3,180	3,116	949	1,007	1,210	28%	32%	39%
Clayton	236,517	268,433	265,888	16,623	33,056	83,167	7%	12%	31%
Clinch	6,878	6,908	6,718	991	1,311	2,061	14%	19%	31%
Cobb	607,751	678,245	707,442	10,084	31,676	83,234	2%	5%	12%
Coffee	37,413	39,766	43,170	3,619	5,899	11,608	10%	15%	27%
Colquitt	42,053	44,078	46,137	5,081	6,758	13,692	12%	15%	30%

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APPENDIX: DATA TABLE (CONTINUED)

County	-----Population*-----			-----SNAP Enrollment**-----			SNAP Enrollment Share of Population		
	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012
Columbia	89,288	105,440	131,627	3,228	4,806	11,017	4%	5%	8%
Cook	15,771	16,240	16,923	1,961	2,508	4,858	12%	15%	29%
Coweta	89,215	113,863	130,929	4,273	9,001	19,164	5%	8%	15%
Crawford	12,495	12,568	12,600	1,042	1,590	2,998	8%	13%	24%
Crisp	21,996	21,877	23,606	4,007	5,374	7,403	18%	25%	31%
Dade	15,154	15,978	16,490	669	1,124	2,281	4%	7%	14%
Dawson	15,999	20,526	22,422	719	1,368	3,112	4%	7%	14%
Decatur	28,240	28,338	27,509	4,663	6,039	8,730	17%	21%	32%
DeKalb	665,865	727,139	707,089	31,250	68,038	155,649	5%	9%	22%
Dodge	19,171	19,836	21,329	1,839	3,401	5,433	10%	17%	25%
Dooly	11,525	11,699	14,318	1,610	2,023	3,110	14%	17%	22%
Dougherty	96,065	95,040	94,501	17,169	22,344	35,648	18%	24%	38%
Douglas	92,174	118,617	133,971	4,411	11,701	25,960	5%	10%	19%
Early	12,354	11,955	10,594	2,855	3,385	3,808	23%	28%	36%
Echols	3,754	4,026	3,988	309	474	1,063	8%	12%	27%
Effingham	37,535	48,633	53,293	2,251	3,397	6,666	6%	7%	13%
Elbert	20,511	20,597	19,684	1,981	2,826	5,189	10%	14%	26%
Emanuel	21,837	22,336	22,898	3,404	3,859	7,096	16%	17%	31%
Evans	10,495	11,319	10,689	1,247	1,822	3,059	12%	16%	29%
Fannin	19,798	22,180	23,492	1,093	1,478	4,298	6%	7%	18%
Fayette	91,263	104,580	107,524	1,129	2,954	7,625	1%	3%	7%
Floyd	90,565	95,006	96,177	6,442	10,907	20,997	7%	11%	22%
Forsyth	98,407	147,855	187,928	1,032	2,222	9,768	1%	2%	5%
Franklin	20,285	21,626	21,894	1,326	2,518	5,339	7%	12%	24%
Fulton	816,006	964,281	977,773	63,197	105,533	192,975	8%	11%	20%
Gilmer	23,456	27,957	28,190	1,013	1,742	5,488	4%	6%	19%
Glascocock	2,556	2,706	3,142	249	304	649	10%	11%	21%
Glynn	67,568	73,291	81,022	5,848	7,880	16,657	9%	11%	21%
Gordon	44,104	50,743	55,766	2,390	5,059	11,162	5%	10%	20%
Grady	23,659	24,629	25,440	2,847	3,585	6,820	12%	15%	27%
Greene	14,406	15,410	16,092	1,512	2,411	4,186	10%	16%	26%
Gwinnett	588,448	746,169	842,046	9,962	29,917	110,994	2%	4%	13%
Habersham	35,902	40,796	43,520	1,221	2,477	6,903	3%	6%	16%
Hall	139,277	171,444	185,416	5,529	11,727	30,872	4%	7%	17%
Hancock	10,076	9,423	8,996	1,603	1,707	2,622	16%	18%	29%

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APPENDIX: DATA TABLE (CONTINUED)

County	-----Population*-----			-----SNAP Enrollment**-----			SNAP Enrollment Share of Population		
	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012
Haralson	25,690	28,256	28,400	1,985	3,017	7,002	8%	11%	25%
Harris	23,695	28,276	32,550	973	1,461	3,032	4%	5%	9%
Hart	22,997	24,115	25,518	1,540	2,729	5,602	7%	11%	22%
Heard	11,012	11,331	11,633	891	1,609	2,684	8%	14%	23%
Henry	119,341	177,116	209,053	4,442	11,623	31,684	4%	7%	15%
Houston	110,765	127,986	146,136	8,118	12,640	26,435	7%	10%	18%
Irwin	9,931	10,210	9,600	943	1,273	2,530	9%	12%	26%
Jackson	41,589	55,430	60,571	2,346	4,534	11,037	6%	8%	18%
Jasper	11,426	13,397	13,630	1,059	1,879	3,524	9%	14%	26%
Jeff Davis	12,684	13,181	15,156	1,422	2,186	4,295	11%	17%	28%
Jefferson	17,266	16,523	16,432	2,388	3,453	5,234	14%	21%	32%
Jenkins	8,575	8,627	9,213	1,300	1,884	2,596	15%	22%	28%
Johnson	8,560	9,008	9,897	1,155	1,673	2,315	13%	19%	23%
Jones	23,639	26,913	28,577	1,273	2,546	5,107	5%	9%	18%
Lamar	15,912	16,593	18,057	1,342	2,014	3,829	8%	12%	21%
Lanier	7,241	7,642	10,400	1,027	1,407	2,495	14%	18%	24%
Laurens	44,874	47,051	48,041	5,652	8,259	14,247	13%	18%	30%
Lee	24,757	32,120	28,746	1,476	2,024	4,357	6%	6%	15%
Liberty	61,610	60,320	65,471	5,272	5,960	9,542	9%	10%	15%
Lincoln	8,348	8,127	7,737	745	994	1,523	9%	12%	20%
Long	10,304	11,142	16,048	1,395	1,927	3,069	14%	17%	19%
Lowndes	92,115	100,340	114,552	9,605	12,427	25,607	10%	12%	22%
Lumpkin	21,016	25,855	30,611	1,032	2,125	4,818	5%	8%	16%
McDuffie	21,231	21,534	21,663	2,706	3,873	6,495	13%	18%	30%
McIntosh	10,847	11,125	13,839	1,040	1,512	2,707	10%	14%	20%
Macon	14,074	13,534	14,263	2,150	2,288	3,358	15%	17%	24%
Madison	25,730	27,531	27,922	1,768	2,488	6,289	7%	9%	23%
Marion	7,144	7,013	8,711	966	1,496	2,103	14%	21%	24%
Meriwether	22,534	22,963	21,273	2,443	3,829	5,802	11%	17%	27%
Miller	6,383	6,119	5,969	929	1,121	1,763	15%	18%	30%
Mitchell	23,932	23,736	23,144	4,102	4,688	7,286	17%	20%	31%
Monroe	21,757	24,298	26,637	1,569	2,275	4,176	7%	9%	16%
Montgomery	8,270	9,002	8,913	837	1,134	2,182	10%	13%	24%
Morgan	15,457	17,712	17,881	1,181	1,985	3,799	8%	11%	21%
Murray	36,506	40,592	39,392	1,405	4,020	10,497	4%	10%	27%

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APPENDIX: DATA TABLE (CONTINUED)

County	-----Population*-----			-----SNAP Enrollment**-----			SNAP Enrollment Share of Population		
	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012
Muscogee	186,291	191,578	198,413	20,812	28,280	48,215	11%	15%	24%
Newton	62,001	90,577	101,505	5,064	11,506	25,820	8%	13%	25%
Oconee	26,225	30,266	33,619	586	1,044	2,484	2%	3%	7%
Oglethorpe	12,635	13,665	14,618	768	1,350	2,581	6%	10%	18%
Paulding	81,678	119,664	144,800	2,110	5,876	19,734	3%	5%	14%
Peach	23,668	25,104	27,622	3,264	4,357	6,747	14%	17%	24%
Pickens	22,983	29,217	29,268	1,023	2,054	5,264	4%	7%	18%
Pierce	15,636	17,394	18,844	1,684	2,512	4,253	11%	14%	23%
Pike	13,688	16,543	17,810	661	1,337	2,950	5%	8%	17%
Polk	38,127	40,833	41,188	2,243	4,429	10,914	6%	11%	26%
Pulaski	9,588	9,737	11,720	1,005	1,274	2,175	10%	13%	19%
Putnam	18,812	19,855	21,198	1,268	2,207	4,751	7%	11%	22%
Quitman	2,598	2,639	2,404	525	482	662	20%	18%	28%
Rabun	15,050	16,228	16,297	672	1,062	2,493	4%	7%	15%
Randolph	7,791	7,329	7,327	1,513	1,437	2,160	19%	20%	29%
Richmond	199,775	197,203	202,587	28,194	36,073	58,314	14%	18%	29%
Rockdale	70,111	79,449	85,820	3,067	9,111	19,681	4%	11%	23%
Schley	3,766	3,980	4,990	439	567	946	12%	14%	19%
Screven	15,374	15,027	14,202	1,990	2,719	3,943	13%	18%	28%
Seminole	9,369	9,066	8,947	1,766	1,918	2,804	19%	21%	31%
Spalding	58,417	62,112	63,865	5,184	10,735	19,466	9%	17%	30%
Stephens	25,435	25,167	25,891	2,096	3,488	7,835	8%	14%	30%
Stewart	5,252	4,696	6,042	978	1,241	1,486	19%	26%	25%
Sumter	33,200	32,523	31,554	5,784	7,999	10,565	17%	25%	33%
Talbot	6,498	6,564	6,517	895	1,206	1,604	14%	18%	25%
Taliaferro	2,077	1,873	1,680	397	428	506	19%	23%	30%
Tattnall	22,305	23,048	25,384	2,129	2,715	5,161	10%	12%	20%
Taylor	8,815	8,625	8,420	1,358	1,775	2,222	15%	21%	26%
Telfair	11,794	13,228	16,349	1,656	2,061	3,428	14%	16%	21%
Terrell	10,970	10,437	9,045	2,131	2,686	3,732	19%	26%	41%
Thomas	42,737	44,656	44,724	4,895	6,261	12,023	11%	14%	27%
Tift	38,407	41,343	41,064	4,284	5,728	11,641	11%	14%	28%
Toombs	26,067	27,216	27,315	3,727	5,159	8,465	14%	19%	31%
Towns	9,319	10,600	10,495	424	565	1,556	5%	5%	15%
Treutlen	6,854	6,871	6,769	964	1,235	2,187	14%	18%	32%

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APPENDIX: DATA TABLE (CONTINUED)

County	-----Population*-----			-----SNAP Enrollment**-----			SNAP Enrollment Share of Population		
	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012	2000	2006	2012
Troup	58,779	62,641	68,468	4,703	9,046	15,468	8%	14%	23%
Turner	9,504	9,314	8,410	1,515	2,244	2,901	16%	24%	34%
Twiggs	10,590	10,322	8,447	872	1,439	2,288	8%	14%	27%
Union	17,289	20,374	21,451	814	1,302	3,304	5%	6%	15%
Upson	27,597	27,479	26,630	2,490	4,238	7,730	9%	15%	29%
Walker	61,053	63,786	68,094	3,412	7,264	13,551	6%	11%	20%
Walton	60,687	78,980	84,575	3,697	6,758	16,117	6%	9%	19%
Ware	35,483	35,460	35,821	4,399	5,652	9,909	12%	16%	28%
Warren	6,336	5,924	5,578	944	1,135	1,807	15%	19%	32%
Washington	21,176	20,536	20,879	2,986	3,327	5,817	14%	16%	28%
Wayne	26,565	28,532	30,305	2,755	4,452	7,910	10%	16%	26%
Webster	2,390	2,211	2,793	209	455	521	9%	21%	19%
Wheeler	6,179	6,795	7,888	713	870	1,539	12%	13%	20%
White	19,944	24,461	27,556	986	1,887	4,839	5%	8%	18%
Whitfield	83,525	91,317	103,359	2,512	6,975	19,773	3%	8%	19%
Wilcox	8,577	8,633	9,068	1,094	1,521	2,227	13%	18%	25%
Wilkes	10,687	10,320	10,076	1,177	1,774	2,698	11%	17%	27%
Wilkinson	10,220	10,032	9,577	1,074	1,686	2,575	11%	17%	27%
Worth	21,967	21,448	21,741	3,037	3,527	6,026	14%	16%	28%
Georgia	8,186,453	9,318,715	9,919,945	567,243	942,468	1,935,054	7%	10%	20%

*Population data are from the 2000 Census and 2006 and 2012 Census, American Community Survey.

**SNAP data are from the Georgia Department of Human Resources Administrative SNAP files that the Fiscal Research Center maintains.

counties in 2006. Note these higher ratio counties were primarily in the southern portion of the state, but, there was also a significant increase in the percent of the population receiving SNAP benefits in the northern portion of the state. Several metropolitan Atlanta counties as well as some counties in the northwest corner of the state, including the urban areas of Dalton and Rome had shares increase to 21 percent or greater in 2012. This dramatic increase can mostly be attributed to declining economic conditions brought on by the 2008 recession (see NBER 2013).

Conclusion

Many more Georgians rely on SNAP benefits in 2012 than did in 2000. The SNAP rule changes and the recession of 2008 generally account for the increase. Yet the recession technically ended in 2009, and as of 2012, SNAP enrollment had not returned to pre-recession levels. In addition, as can be seen from the maps presented here, the level of reliance on SNAP by enrollment varies widely across the state. The underlying economic conditions in Georgia that have created this disparity in living standards will be a challenge that the business community, state and local policymakers will have to struggle with for years to come. In future briefs, we will try to examine the changes in employment and wages in Georgia at the county level that may have contributed to this result.

REFERENCES:

Ganong, Peter and Jeffrey B. Liebman (2013). "The Decline, Rebound, and Further Rise in SNAP Enrollment: Disentangling Business Cycle Fluctuations and Policy Changes." NBER Working Paper No. 19363, August. available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19363>.

NOTES:

1. All SNAP data are from the Georgia Department of Human Resources Administrative SNAP files that the Fiscal Research Center maintains. The data received minor cleaning and also geo-coding when necessary. Average monthly enrollments are used to determine yearly enrollment. For the data used to create these maps please see the Appendix.
2. The analysis and conclusions presented here are not materially affected by the expiration of elevated SNAP benefits that occurred at the end of 2013, as no changes were made to SNAP eligibility requirements. SNAP benefits were increased temporarily in 2009 as part of the federal stimulus package. The additional SNAP benefits were intended to aid struggling workers and help boost the economy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Bluestone is a Senior Research Associate with the Fiscal Research Center. He is a Georgia State University Urban Fellows Recipient. His research interests include urban economics, environmental economics and state and local fiscal policy. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from Georgia State University.

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Geographic Dispersion of SNAP Enrollment in Georgia

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