

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

March 2011

Educational Attainment in Metro Atlanta

This *Regional Snapshot* examines at recently-released educational attainment data from the U.S. Census Bureau for metro areas, counties and small areas within the region. It finds that metro Atlanta ranks ninth in the nation in the share of its population with at least a Bachelor's degree. It also finds that almost every county in the region made strides last decade in increasing the share of population with at least a Bachelor's degree, while simultaneously decreasing the share of population without a high school diploma.

This *Snapshot* also reveals that the Atlanta region has a relatively high concentration of those with Business-related degrees.

And, finally, by looking at small-area data from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, the *Snapshot* shows how strongly educational attainment is tied to income.

METRO ATLANTA: AN EDUCATED PLACE

Approximately 34 percent of metro Atlanta's population (25 or older) has at least a Bachelor's degree, which is the ninth-largest percentage (see note below Table 1) among the 20 most populous metro areas. Washington, D.C. has the highest share of its population with at least a Bachelor's degree, at 47 percent. Nationally, approximately 28 percent of the population 25 and older has at least a Bachelor's degree.

Conversely, only 13 percent of metro Atlanta's population is without a high school diploma, which also ranks ninth (from lowest to highest) among the 20 most populous metro areas. Minneapolis has the lowest share of its population without a high school diploma at 7.5 percent. Nationally, 14.8 percent of the population 25 and older does not have a high school diploma.

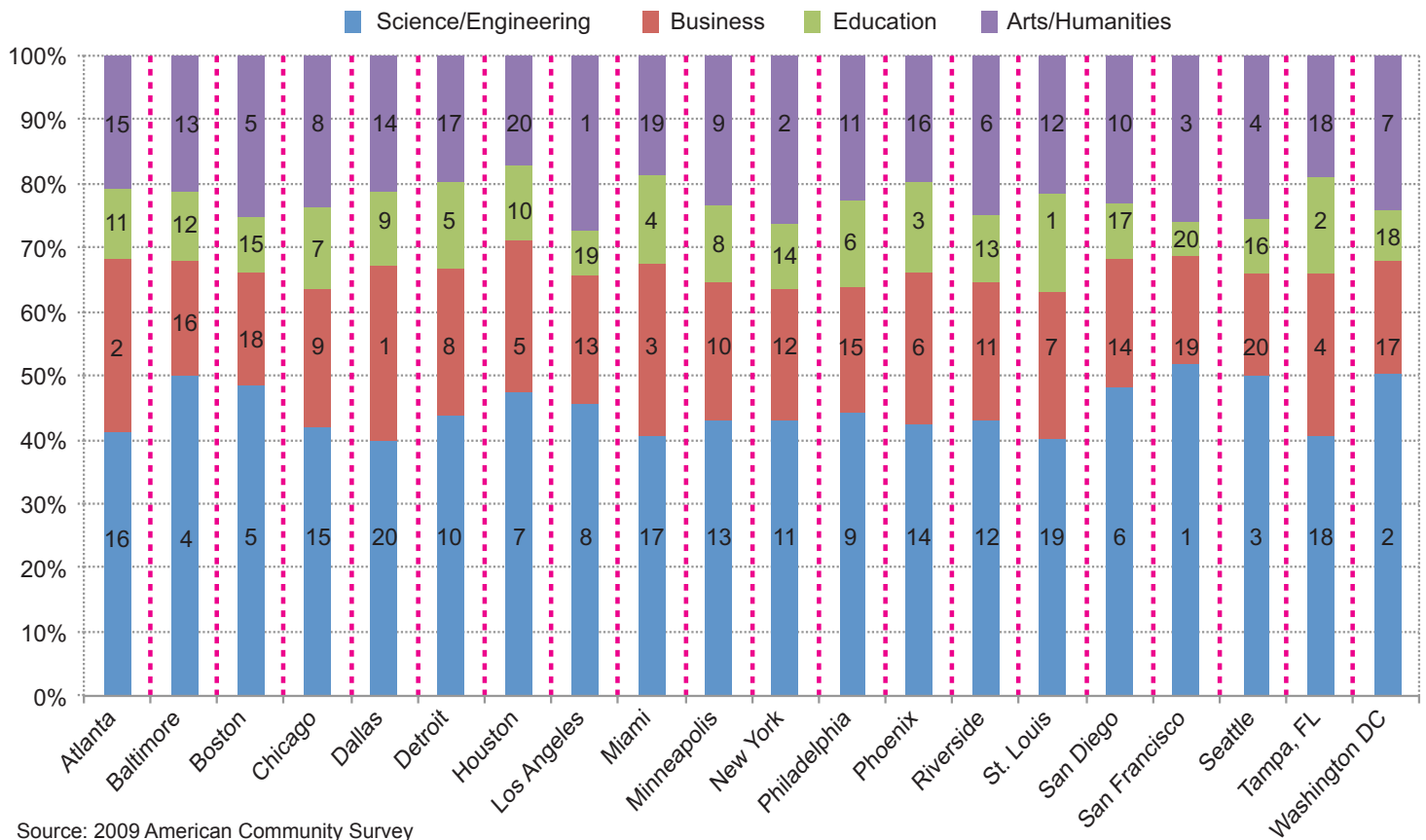
Table 1 – Metro Area Educational Attainment, 2009

	Totals			Percent		Ranks		
	Total Population 25+	With At Least Bachelor's Degree	With No High School Diploma	With At Least Bachelor's Degree	With No High School Diploma	Total Population 25+	With At Least Bachelor's Degree (from highest to lowest)	With No High School Diploma (from lowest to highest)
Atlanta	3,504,920	1,195,276	458,593	34.1%	13.1%	9	9	9
Baltimore	1,804,373	626,719	214,717	34.7%	11.9%	20	7	7
Boston	3,132,664	1,321,315	295,703	42.2%	9.4%	10	3	3
Chicago	6,230,059	2,088,840	876,066	33.5%	14.1%	3	10	12
Dallas	4,044,042	1,213,697	732,930	30.0%	18.1%	4	13	17
Detroit	2,966,607	779,567	387,402	26.3%	13.1%	12	18	8
Houston	3,644,404	1,016,354	727,063	27.9%	20.0%	7	15	18
Los Angeles	8,352,116	2,518,599	1,870,474	30.2%	22.4%	2	12	20
Miami	3,815,620	1,059,965	666,796	27.8%	17.5%	6	16	16
Minneapolis	2,164,041	813,026	163,236	37.6%	7.5%	16	4	1
New York	12,948,724	4,614,759	2,026,685	35.6%	15.7%	1	6	15
Philadelphia	3,996,265	1,292,142	472,347	32.3%	11.8%	5	11	6
Phoenix	2,783,435	759,832	427,278	27.3%	15.4%	13	17	14
Riverside	2,486,687	476,409	531,263	19.2%	21.4%	14	20	19
St. Louis	1,893,423	556,361	213,485	29.4%	11.3%	19	14	5
San Diego	1,976,858	683,147	287,827	34.6%	14.6%	17	8	13
San Francisco	3,028,503	1,317,394	396,544	43.5%	13.1%	11	2	10
Seattle	2,320,986	868,771	202,577	37.4%	8.7%	15	5	2
Tampa	1,929,746	474,986	260,685	24.6%	13.5%	18	19	11
Washington, D.C.	3,625,144	1,714,346	362,917	47.3%	10.0%	8	1	4

Source: 2009 American Community Survey

Note: The American Community Survey relies on sample data to develop estimates. The figures shown are the midpoint for a range of possible estimates at the 90 percent confidence level. Since a range of estimates is possible for each metro area, the ranks may not be exact.

Chart 1 – Degree Type by Metro Area (Ranks among 20 most populous metros for each degree on chart)



Source: 2009 American Community Survey

Note: The American Community Survey relies on sample data to develop estimates. The figures shown are the midpoint for a range of possible estimates at the 90 percent confidence level. Since a range of estimates is possible for each metro area, the ranks may not be exact.

METRO ATLANTA RANKS HIGHLY IN SHARE OF POPULATION WITH BUSINESS DEGREES

In 2009, the American Community Survey asked respondents for the first time ever about the type of degree obtained. The responses were then categorized into five broad categories: Science and Engineering, Science and Engineering Related, Business, Education, and Arts/Humanities/all others. The first two were combined in this analysis to represent the Science and Engineering category. Reference the table to the right for an explanation of specific types of degrees that fall under each category.

As Chart 1 shows, approximately 27 percent of metro Atlanta’s population (25 and older with at least a Bachelor’s degree) has a degree in a Business field. Only Dallas has a higher percentage of those with a degree in a Business field (see note below Chart 1).

Overall in metro Atlanta, 41 percent of its population has a degree in a Science/Engineering or related field (rank of 16 out of 20), 27 percent in a Business field, 21 percent in an Arts/Humanities field (rank of 15 out of 20) and 11 percent in an Education field (rank of 15 out of 20).

Category	Examples of Specific Degrees
Science and Engineering	Computer Science, Mathematics, Statistics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Sociology, Psychology, Criminology, Chemical Engineering, Behavioral Science
Science and Engineering Related	Pre-Med, Physical Therapy, Mechanical Engineering Technology
Business	Business Administration, Accounting, Human Resources Development
Education	Early Childhood Education, Higher Education Administration, Special Education
Arts, Humanities, Other	English, Foreign Languages, Literature, Philosophy, Theology, History, Public Administration, Pre-Law, Journalism, Dance, Public Relations

ALL COUNTIES MAKE STRIDES IN EDUCATION

Table 2 compares 2000 data to 2005-2009 American Community Survey data, which is an average of 60 months of survey data conducted between 2005 and 2009. It shows that, in almost every county, the share of population (25 and older) with at least a Bachelor's degree increased. Rockdale was the only exception, with a 0.2 percentage-point decline, which, given that these are survey data and subject to margins of error, may not represent an actual decline.

Forsyth County experienced the biggest percentage-point increase (+9.4 percent), followed by Cherokee (+5.4 percent), Paulding (+4.9 percent) and Fayette (+4.7 percent). Despite the gains, however, both Paulding and Cherokee still have a lower share of their populations with at least a Bachelor's degree than the region as a whole (34.3 percent). Overall, the 20-county region had a 2.6 percentage-point increase in those 25 and older with at least a Bachelor's degree.

The nation as a whole experienced a 3.6 percentage-point increase in those 25 and older with at least a Bachelor's degree.

Conversely, in each county the share of the population (25 and older) without a high school diploma decreased. Carroll County experienced the largest percentage-point decline (-7.9 percent), followed by Bartow (-7.1 percent), Spalding (-6.8 percent) and Newton (-6.7 percent).

Again, despite these steep declines, each of these counties still has a higher share of their populations without a high school diploma than did the region as a whole. Overall, the 20-county region had a 2.8 percentage-point decrease in those 25 and older without a high school diploma.

The nation as a whole experienced a 4.8 percentage-point decline in those 25 and older without a high school diploma.

Table 2 – County-Level Educational Attainment

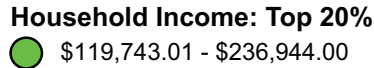
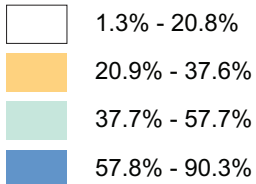
	Share of Those with At Least a Bachelor's Degree			Share of Those With No High School Diploma		
	2000	2005-2009	Percentage Point Difference	2000	2005-2009	Percentage Point Difference
Barrow	10.9%	13.8%	2.9%	26.7%	24.5%	-2.1%
Bartow	14.1%	16.7%	2.6%	28.2%	21.0%	-7.1%
Carroll	16.5%	17.4%	0.9%	28.9%	21.0%	-7.9%
Cherokee	27.0%	32.3%	5.4%	15.6%	11.7%	-3.9%
Clayton	16.6%	17.5%	0.9%	19.9%	17.1%	-2.9%
Cobb	39.8%	43.0%	3.3%	11.2%	10.0%	-1.2%
Coweta	20.6%	24.7%	4.0%	18.4%	13.8%	-4.6%
DeKalb	36.3%	37.6%	1.3%	14.9%	13.0%	-2.0%
Douglas	19.2%	23.0%	3.8%	18.9%	14.2%	-4.6%
Fayette	36.2%	40.9%	4.7%	7.6%	6.4%	-1.2%
Forsyth	34.6%	44.0%	9.4%	14.3%	9.6%	-4.7%
Fulton	41.4%	45.8%	4.4%	16.0%	12.2%	-3.8%
Gwinnett	34.1%	35.2%	1.1%	12.7%	12.4%	-0.4%
Hall	18.7%	19.8%	1.1%	29.5%	25.5%	-4.0%
Henry	19.5%	23.5%	3.9%	15.8%	10.7%	-5.1%
Newton	14.5%	19.0%	4.5%	25.3%	18.6%	-6.7%
Paulding	15.2%	20.1%	4.9%	19.2%	14.2%	-5.0%
Rockdale	23.4%	23.1%	-0.2%	17.6%	15.5%	-2.0%
Spalding	12.5%	13.5%	1.0%	32.2%	25.4%	-6.8%
Walton	13.0%	16.8%	3.7%	26.5%	21.6%	-4.9%
20-County Total	31.7%	34.3%	2.6%	16.4%	13.5%	-2.8%

Source: 2000 Census (SF3) and 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Note: The American Community Survey relies on sample data to develop estimates. The figures shown are the midpoint for a range of possible estimates at the 90 percent confidence level.

Map 1 – Percent of Population 25+ with at Least a Bachelor's Degree & Areas with Highest Household Income (20%)

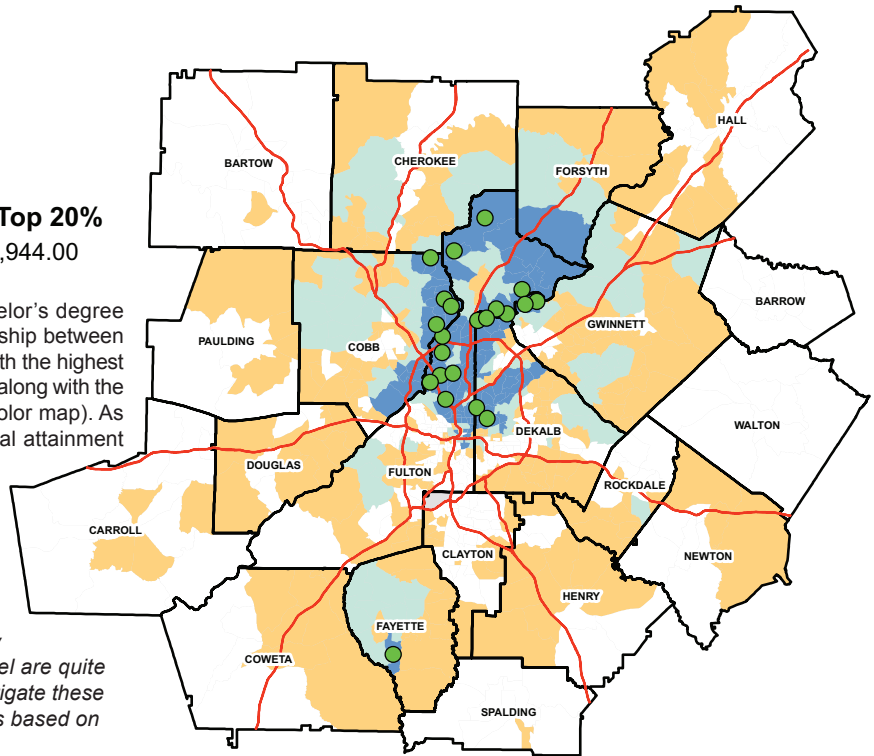
**Educational Attainment
Bachelor's Plus**



Map 1 shows the distribution of those with at least a Bachelor's degree within the 20-county region. It also shows the strong relationship between income and educational attainment by showing those areas with the highest household incomes (green dots) in the region (top 20 percent) along with the distribution of those with at least a Bachelor's degree (the color map). As can be seen, the areas with the highest levels of educational attainment tend to also have the highest median household income.

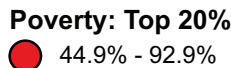
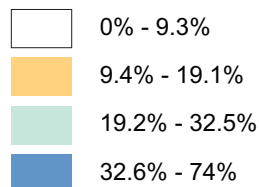
The heaviest concentrations of those with the highest levels of education and income are found north of I-20, along the GA 400 corridor between I-75 and I-85. There are heavy concentrations in Fayette County as well.

Note: This map displays 2005-2009 American Community Survey data at the census tract level. Since these are survey data, some of the margins of error at the individual tract level are quite large. The fact that the data are displayed in wide ranges mitigate these problems somewhat, but use caution in drawing conclusions based on estimates at the individual tract level.



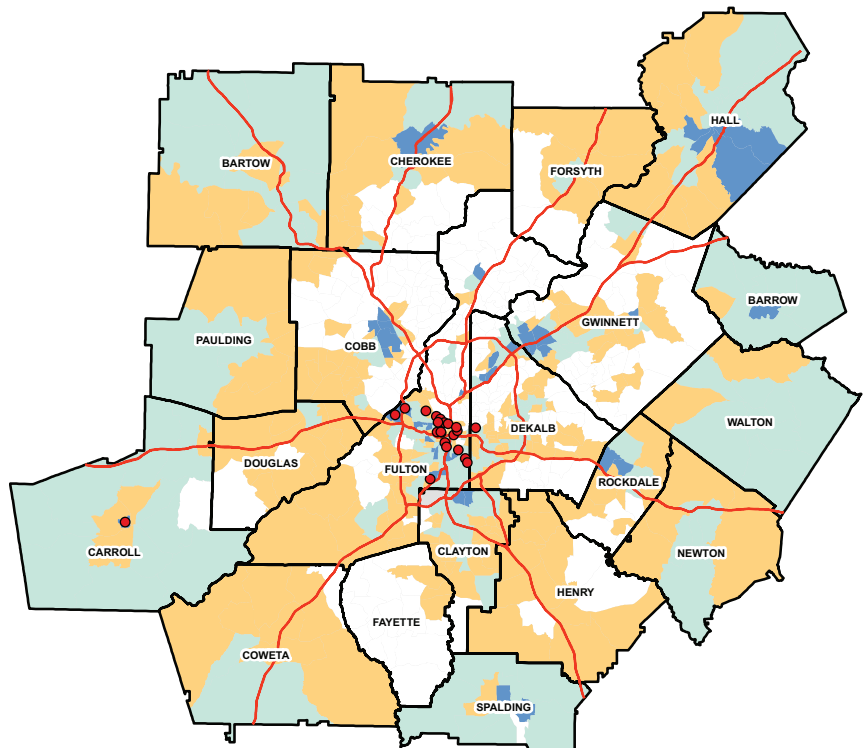
Map 2 – Percent of Population 25+ with No High School Diploma & Areas with Highest Poverty Rates (20%)

**Educational Attainment
No High School Diploma**



Map 2 shows the distribution of those without a high school diploma within the 20-county region. It also shows areas with the highest 20 percent of poverty rates (red dots). Poverty and poor educational outcomes are concentrated within the urban core, generally in southwest Atlanta. Despite having high concentrations of those without a high school diploma, the region's rural fringes do not experience the high levels of poverty seen within the urban core. This does not suggest, however, that no economic hardships are felt in these areas.

Note: This map displays 2005-2009 American Community Survey data at the census tract level. Since these are survey data, some of the margins of error at the individual tract level are quite large. The fact that the data are displayed in wide ranges mitigate these problems somewhat, but use caution in drawing conclusions based on estimates at the individual tract level.



For more information on these issues or to suggest new subjects, please email mcarnathan@atlantaregional.com.

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