

## The Geography of the Household Type in Atlanta Region

Greg Lewis

This Census Issue focuses on the distribution of households across census tracts within the 10-county ARC region. Households are defined as the set of people who occupy a housing unit — “a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied ... as separate living quarters” (U.S. Census 2003: B-14). Household are classified by their size (the number of people living in them) and by their type (the relationships among the members of the household). In “family” households, at least one additional household member is related to the “householder” by birth, marriage, or adoption. “Nonfamily” households include those with only one person and those where the householder is not related to any other household member.

As a natural extension, this report also examines the distribution of population by marital status, using individuals rather than households as the base. The report illustrates patterns for 2000 and compares them to those for 1990. Because the boundaries of many census

tracts changed between 1990 and 2000, geographic comparisons across years are not always exact.

### Household Size

About 24 percent of households in both Georgia and the Atlanta metropolitan region contained only one person in 2000, up about one percentage point since 1990 (Table 1). Fulton county stands out for its large number of one-person households. DeKalb, Cobb, and Clayton counties follow, with percentages near the state average. One-person households are least common in Fayette, Henry, and Cherokee counties. Indeed, they are strongly concentrated inside the Perimeter and along I-75 and GA-400 north of the Perimeter (Map 1).

About 32 percent of the households in the state and 31 percent of those in the region contained exactly two people, with little variation among the counties. On the other hand, only 37

percent of the households in Fulton county contained three or more people, 7 to 8 percentage points below the state and regional percentages of 44 and 45, respectively. DeKalb and Cobb percentages are near the state average, but 49 percent or more of the households in the remaining counties have at least three members. The distribution of larger households is almost the mirror-image of one-person households: they are most common farther outside the Perimeter and south of I-20 and east of I-85 inside the Perimeter (Map 2).

The average number of people in a household has been quite stable in Georgia, falling only from 2.66 to 2.64 between 1990 and 2000. Average household size was nearly identical for the Atlanta metropolitan area, but showed slight growth (Table 2). The average household in Fulton county had 0.2 fewer people than the state average, but the average household in the most suburban counties (Cherokee, Fayette, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale) was 0.2 larger than the state average. Gwinnett and Clayton counties showed the most growth in household size; Douglas county, the most decline. Map 1 shows that the smallest households are concentrated north of I-20, close to I-75, I-85, I-285, and GA-400. The largest households are typically in the outlying areas, and inside the Perimeter south of I-20.

### **Household Type**

Three relationship types account for over three-quarters of Georgia households. About 25 percent of households contain married couples living with their own children under age 18, 27 percent have married couples without children under 18, and 29 percent are nonfamily households (Table 3). Figures for the Atlanta metropolitan region are quite similar, except that married couples without children are somewhat less common and nonfamily

households are somewhat more common than in the state as a whole.

As might be expected from the household size statistics, Cherokee, Fayette, Gwinnett, and Henry counties have the highest percentages of married-with-children households; each is at least 10 percentage points above the state average. Fulton and DeKalb counties are well below the state average, with fewer than 20 percent of their households including a married couple with children. The distribution of married-with-children households resembles a doughnut, with the Perimeter marking the doughnut hole (Map 4). Households of this type declined as a percentage of all households in the 1990s, by over 2 percentage points for the state as a whole and somewhat slower in the Atlanta region. The percentage of households containing married couples with children actually grew slightly in Fulton county as a whole and in the portions of Fulton and DeKalb counties inside the Perimeter, especially north of I-20 (Map 5). Otherwise, this pattern was seen primarily at the outer boundaries of the region.

Fulton, Clayton, and DeKalb county households are also less likely than others to include a married couple *without* children under 18. Cherokee, Fayette, Henry, and Rockdale county households are well above state averages in their shares of such households. The share of households fitting this pattern fell in all Atlanta metropolitan counties, with the sharpest decreases in Clayton and DeKalb counties. Fayette county showed almost no change.

Unsurprisingly, Fulton and DeKalb counties have well-above-average numbers of nonfamily households, and Fayette and Henry counties have quite small shares of such households. Nonfamily households are concentrated inside

the Perimeter and along the major arteries north of the city (Map 6). This household type grew in all Atlanta metropolitan counties, but Douglas county showed the most rapid growth, at over three times the regional rate.

Households headed by women living with their own children comprised 8.3 percent of all Georgia households and 8.1 percent of households in the Atlanta region. They comprised 13 percent of Clayton county households and nearly 10 percent of DeKalb and Fulton households but remain fewer than 5 percent of Cherokee and Fayette households. Such households are concentrated in the southern half of the region (Map 7). During the 1990s, female-headed households with children grew by 0.6 percentage point statewide and somewhat more rapidly (0.8 percentage point) in the Atlanta region. Growth was most rapid by far in Clayton county (4.8 percentage points). The share of such households actually fell in Fulton county, where they had been most prevalent in 1990.

Interestingly, although men living with their children but not their wives were only one-fourth as common as women living with their children but not their husbands, their share of households grew more rapidly statewide (by 0.7 percentage point) and nearly as rapidly regionwide (by 0.6 point). Such households were most common in Clayton, Douglas, and DeKalb counties, with the first two also having the most rapid rates of increase.

### *The Index of Dissimilarity*

One way to quantify differences in residential distributions is the index of dissimilarity, which is commonly used in studies of racial residential segregation and of gender segregation of occupations. Here we use the census tract as the unit of analysis. The index of dissimilarity shows what percentage of households of Type

A would need to move to a different census tract to have the same residential distribution as households of Type B, that is, for households of Types A and B to comprise the same percentage of every census tract.

Three household types have fairly distinct residential patterns: married couples with or without children, unmarried individuals with children, and nonfamily households. Married people with and without children have similar residential patterns; the index of dissimilarity between them is only 14.9. That is, only 14.9 percent of married-with-children households would need to move to have the same census tract distribution as married-without-children households. Both differ markedly in their residential patterns from single-parent-with-children households. Female-headed households with children have indexes of dissimilarity above 40 with both types of married-couple households. Male-headed households with children have indexes closer to 34 with both married-couple household types, but they their residential distributions resemble those of female-headed households (their index of dissimilarity is 24.5). Nonfamily households differ most from married-with-children households (their index of dissimilarity is 39.4), but their indexes are above 33 for all other groups as well.

### **Marital Status**

In this section we consider the marital status of adults, using individuals rather than households as the base. Overall, 56.3 percent of Georgians over age 15 were married in 2000, down 1.7 percentage points from 1990. Adults in the Atlanta region were 2 percentage points less likely than those statewide to be married, but the rate of decrease was about the same as that for the state (Table 4). Adults in Cherokee, Fayette, and Henry counties were 10 percentage points more likely than those

throughout the state to be married, while adults in DeKalb and Fulton counties were 10 percentage points less likely than Georgians elsewhere to be married. Census tracts with the highest percentages of married people tend to be on the outer boundaries of the region; only a minority of adults are married in most tracts inside the Perimeter (Map 8).

In 2000, 27.3 percent of Georgians were single (never married), up 1.4 percentage points from 1990. Singles comprised a larger percentage of the population in the Atlanta region (30.7 percent), within numbers rising faster than statewide (a 2.2 rather than a 1.4 percentage point rise). DeKalb and Fulton counties have disproportionately large shares of singles, while Cherokee, Fayette, and Henry counties have disproportionately small shares. The residential pattern of singles largely reflects that of one-person households (Map 9).

Widows and widowers comprised a declining share of the Georgia population, 6.1 percent in 2000, down from 7.1 percent in 1990. They are most common in Fulton county, least common in Gwinnett. Their residential distribution resembles that of single people (Map 10). The divorced comprised 10.3 percent of both the Georgia and Atlanta regional populations, with numbers rising faster statewide than in the region. The divorced are especially common in Clayton and DeKalb counties, least common in Fayette County. However, Map 11 suggests that the distribution of divorced people is nearly random across the region.

Single men and women tend to live in the same neighborhoods -- their index of dissimilarity is only 11.1. Divorced men and women have similar residential patterns -- their index of the similarity is 12.7. Indeed, the divorced and the single tend to live side-by-side, with an index of the only 14.1. The married live most separately from the single and the widowed (with indexes of 27.3 and 26.5, respectively). The widowed also differ from the single (with an index of 23.3). None of these patterns is as striking as when children were considered in the previous section.

### **Conclusion**

The Perimeter remains an important boundary in terms of household type. Households inside the Perimeter are typically smaller than those outside the Perimeter, with far more one-person and nonfamily households. Larger households, especially those comprised of a married couple and their children, tend to be located in suburban areas. In the most striking trend in terms of household type, however, married-with-children households have been increasing faster inside the Perimeter north of I-20 than in most parts of the region. Sizeable majorities of adults outside the Perimeter, but only a minority inside, are married.

Single and divorced parents living with their children comprise a third grouping, whose geographic distribution is distinguished more by I-20 than I-285. Their housing patterns are distinct from both married couples, with or without children, and nonfamily (including one-person) households.

**TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS BY SIZE**

	One Person			Two People			Three or More People		
	2000	1990	Change	2000	1990	Change	2000	1990	Change
Cherokee	16.0	13.9	2.1	33.0	32.1	0.8	51.1	54.0	-2.9
Clayton	21.9	19.8	2.1	28.1	30.5	-2.4	50.0	49.7	0.3
Cobb	23.1	22.4	0.7	32.4	32.5	-0.1	44.5	45.1	-0.6
DeKalb	26.9	25.1	1.8	31.1	33.0	-1.9	42.0	42.0	0.1
Douglas	18.4	14.8	3.5	32.3	30.4	1.9	49.3	54.8	-5.5
Fayette	14.9	12.6	2.4	32.6	30.2	2.4	52.5	57.3	-4.8
Fulton	32.2	30.9	1.3	30.4	30.8	-0.4	37.4	38.3	-0.9
Gwinnett	18.4	17.7	0.7	29.7	31.3	-1.6	52.0	51.1	0.9
Henry	15.4	13.4	2.0	31.4	33.0	-1.6	53.2	53.6	-0.4
Rockdale	16.9	14.3	2.6	31.8	30.5	1.3	51.3	55.2	-3.9
Atlanta Region	24.3	23.4	0.9	30.9	31.7	-0.8	44.8	44.9	-0.1
Georgia	23.6	22.5	1.1	31.9	31.3	0.6	44.5	46.2	-1.7

**TABLE 2. MEAN HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

	2000	1990	Change
Cherokee	2.84	2.86	-0.02
Clayton	2.82	2.74	0.08
Cobb	2.63	2.60	0.03
DeKalb	2.60	2.56	0.04
Douglas	2.78	2.89	-0.12
Fayette	2.87	2.95	-0.07
Fulton	2.43	2.43	-0.00
Gwinnett	2.87	2.76	0.11
Henry	2.87	2.89	-0.02
Rockdale	2.86	2.91	-0.05
Atlanta Region	2.65	2.61	0.04
Georgia	2.64	2.66	-0.02

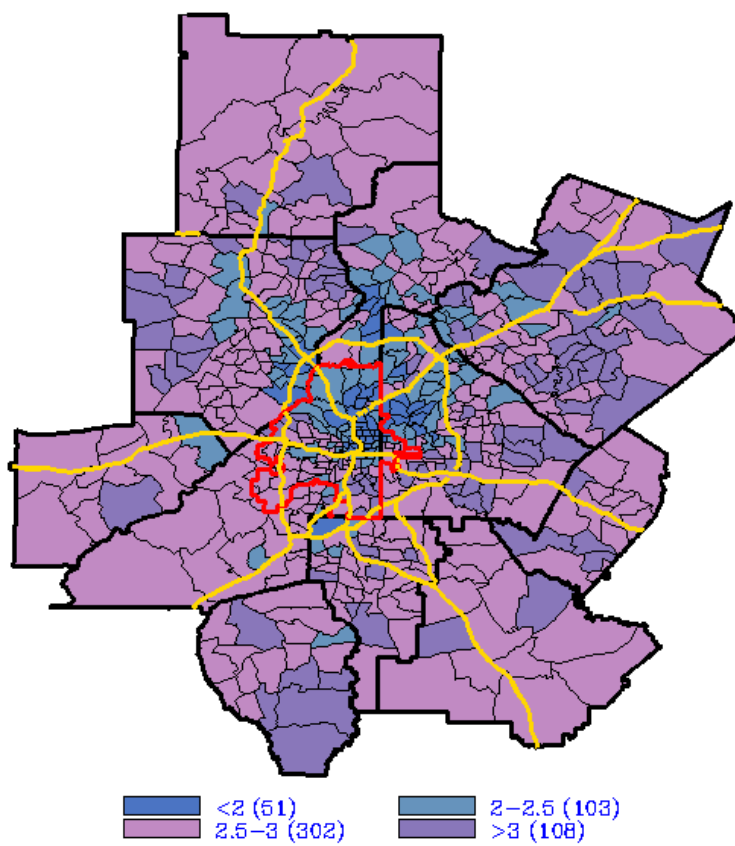
**TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE**

	<u>Married With Children</u>			<u>Married Without Children</u>			<u>Nonfamily</u>		
	2000	1990	Change	2000	1990	Change	2000	1990	Change
Cherokee	35.4	39.2	-3.8	32.9	33.9	-1.0	20.5	17.1	3.4
Clayton	25.1	30.5	-5.3	21.3	27.1	-5.8	27.7	25.1	2.6
Cobb	28.5	30.5	-2.0	27.0	28.6	-1.7	30.6	29.4	1.2
DeKalb	19.8	22.1	-2.3	21.6	26.4	-4.8	36.6	33.4	3.2
Douglas	29.4	36.5	-7.1	30.4	32.2	-1.8	23.9	18.3	5.6
Fayette	37.5	42.6	-5.0	35.3	35.5	-0.2	17.4	14.1	3.2
Fulton	18.3	17.5	0.9	19.8	21.8	-2.0	41.6	38.9	2.7
Gwinnett	35.4	37.2	-1.7	27.0	28.8	-1.7	24.2	23.8	0.4
Henry	35.5	36.2	-0.7	32.2	36.9	-4.7	18.9	16.1	2.7
Rockdale	30.5	36.7	-6.1	32.5	33.5	-1.0	20.7	17.3	3.4
Atlanta Region	25.9	26.9	-1.1	24.5	26.9	-2.4	31.9	30.3	1.6
Georgia	25.2	27.5	-2.3	27.3	28.8	-1.5	29.3	27.1	2.2

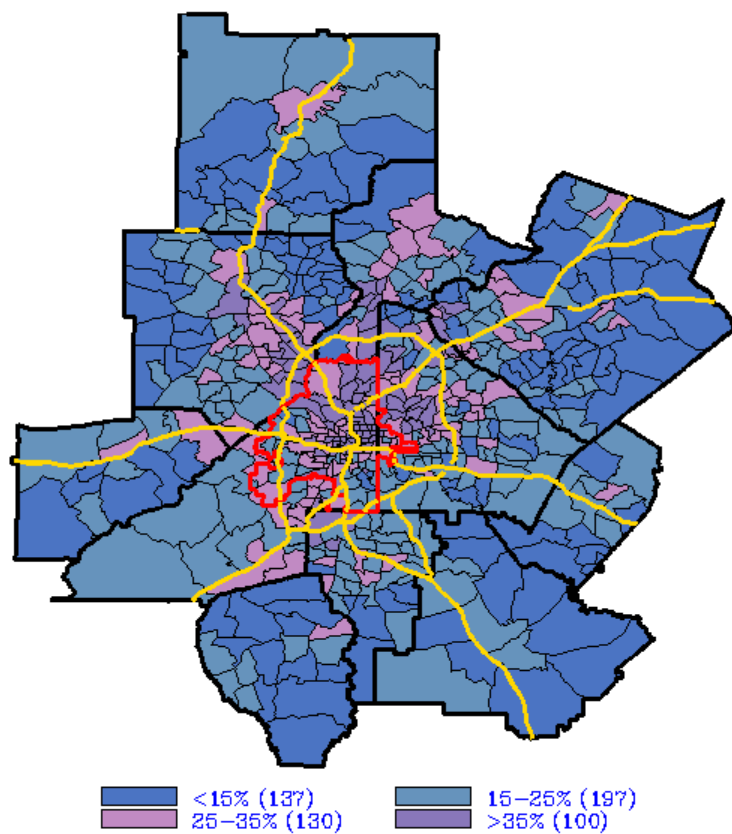
**TABLE 4. DISTRIBUTIONS OF POPULATION BY MARITAL STATUS**

	<u>Single</u>			<u>Married</u>			<u>Widowed</u>			<u>Divorced</u>		
	2000	1990	Change	2000	1990	Change	2000	1990	Change	2000	1990	Change
Cherokee	19.3	17.9	1.4	67.3	70.0	-2.7	3.8	4.5	-0.7	9.5	7.5	2.0
Clayton	31.3	25.5	5.8	52.0	59.3	-7.3	4.2	4.4	-0.2	12.5	10.8	1.6
Cobb	27.7	25.3	2.4	58.3	60.8	-2.5	3.9	4.1	-0.2	10.1	9.7	0.4
DeKalb	37.5	32.4	5.1	46.7	51.6	-4.9	4.9	5.7	-0.8	10.8	10.3	0.6
Douglas	22.9	20.0	2.9	60.9	65.6	-4.8	4.7	5.0	-0.3	11.5	9.3	2.1
Fayette	19.4	18.3	1.1	69.1	72.1	-3.1	4.7	4.3	0.5	6.8	5.3	1.5
Fulton	37.5	36.0	1.5	45.9	45.7	0.2	6.0	7.3	-1.4	10.7	11.0	-0.4
Gwinnett	24.9	22.6	2.3	62.5	65.2	-2.6	3.4	3.3	0.1	9.1	8.9	0.2
Henry	19.5	18.6	1.0	66.4	68.5	-2.2	4.2	5.5	-1.3	9.9	7.5	2.5
Rockdale	22.9	20.4	2.5	62.1	65.7	-3.7	4.9	5.2	-0.3	10.2	8.7	1.5
Atlanta Region	30.7	28.5	2.2	54.4	56.3	-1.9	4.6	5.3	-0.7	10.3	9.9	0.4
Georgia	27.3	25.9	1.4	56.3	58.0	-1.7	6.1	7.1	-1.0	10.3	9.1	1.3

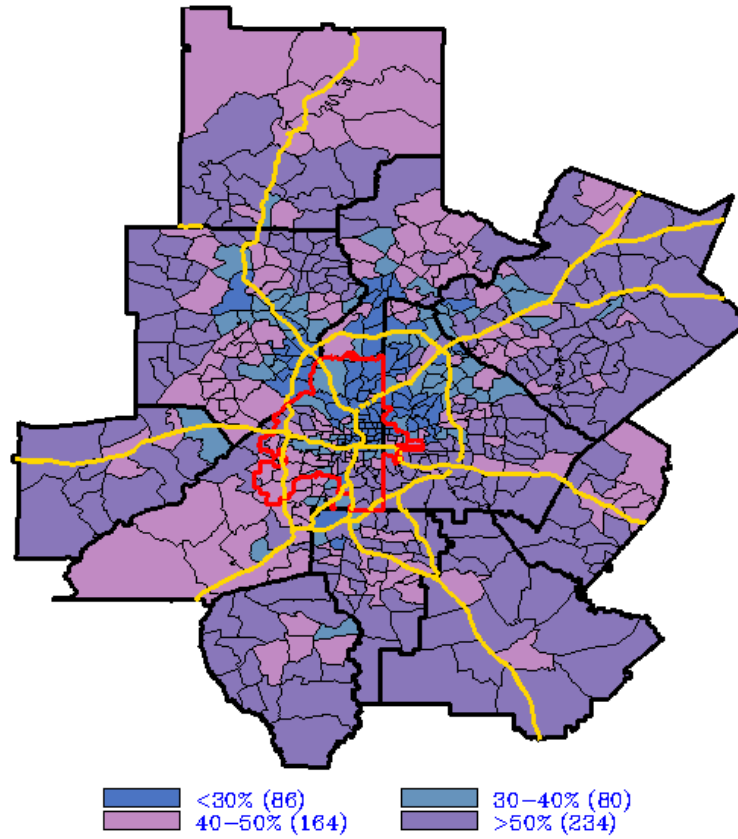
Map 1: Mean Household Size - 2000



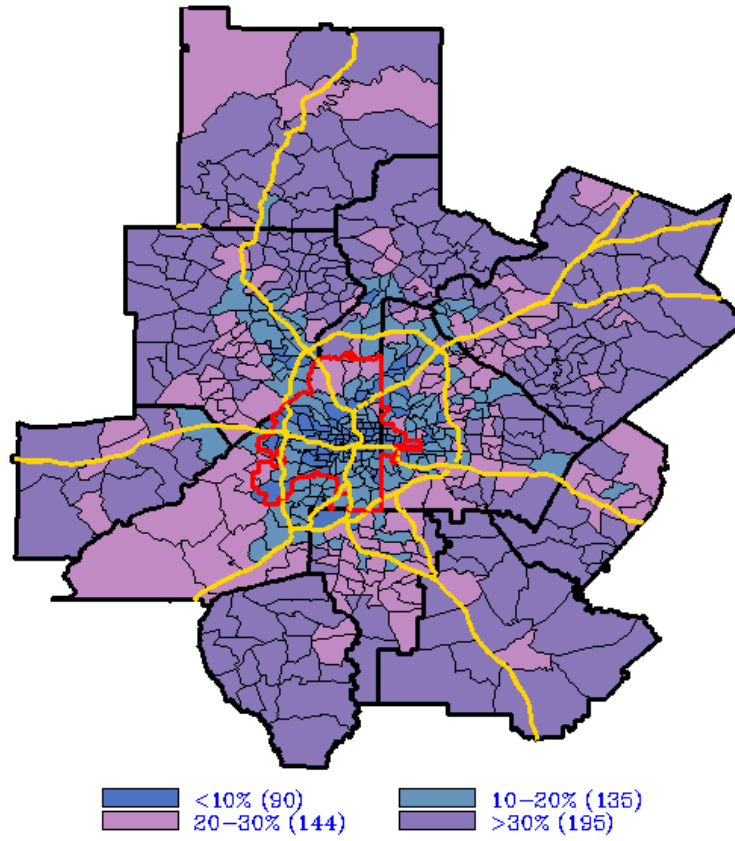
**Map 2: Households that Include Only One Resident - 2000**



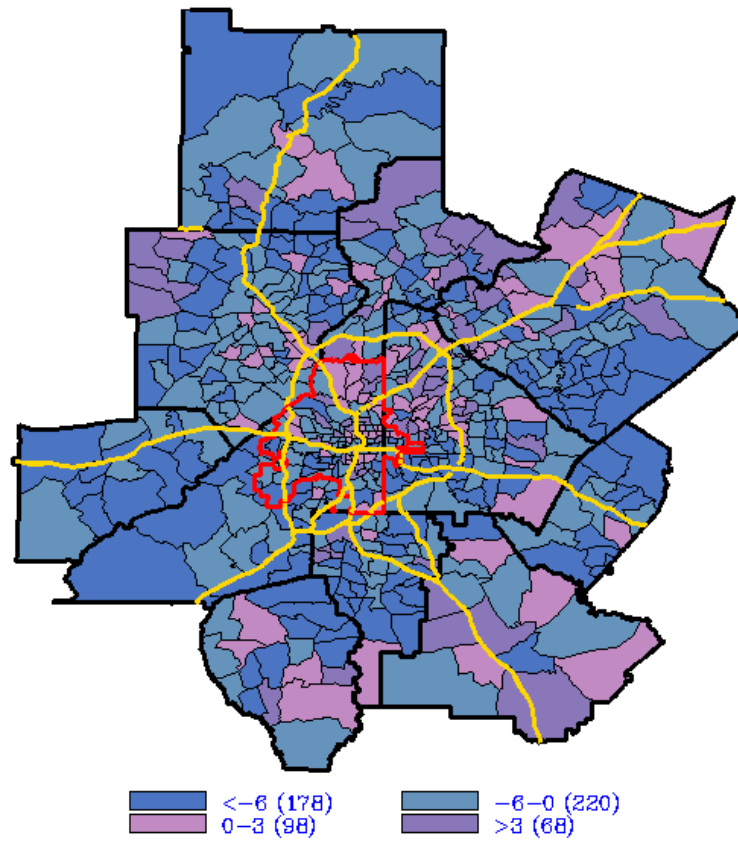
**Map 3: Households that Include Three or More Residents - 2000**



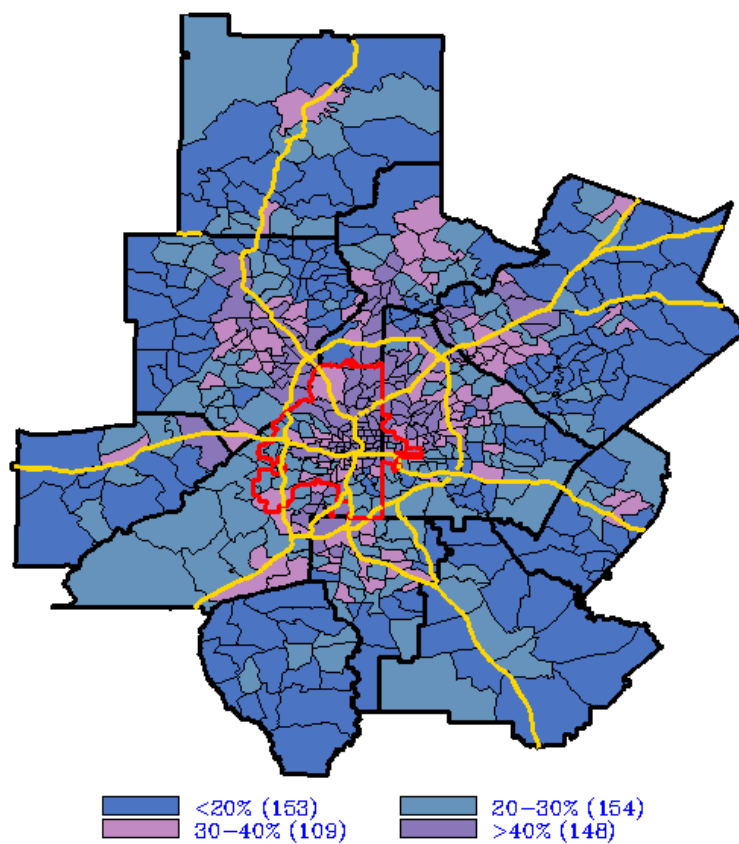
**Map 4: Married-with-children Households - 2000**



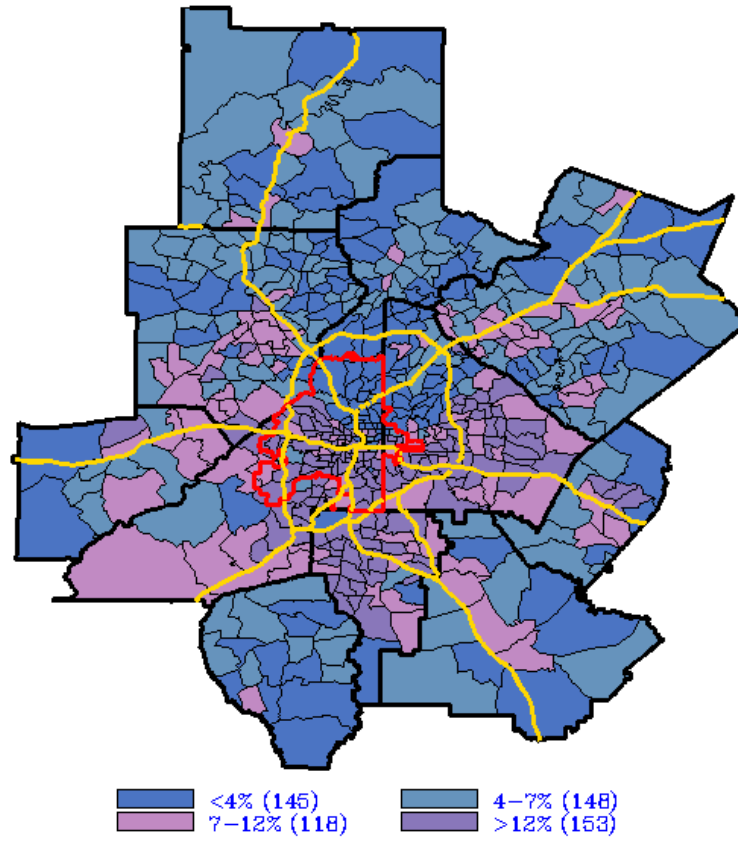
Map 5: Change In Married-with-Children Households - 1990-2000



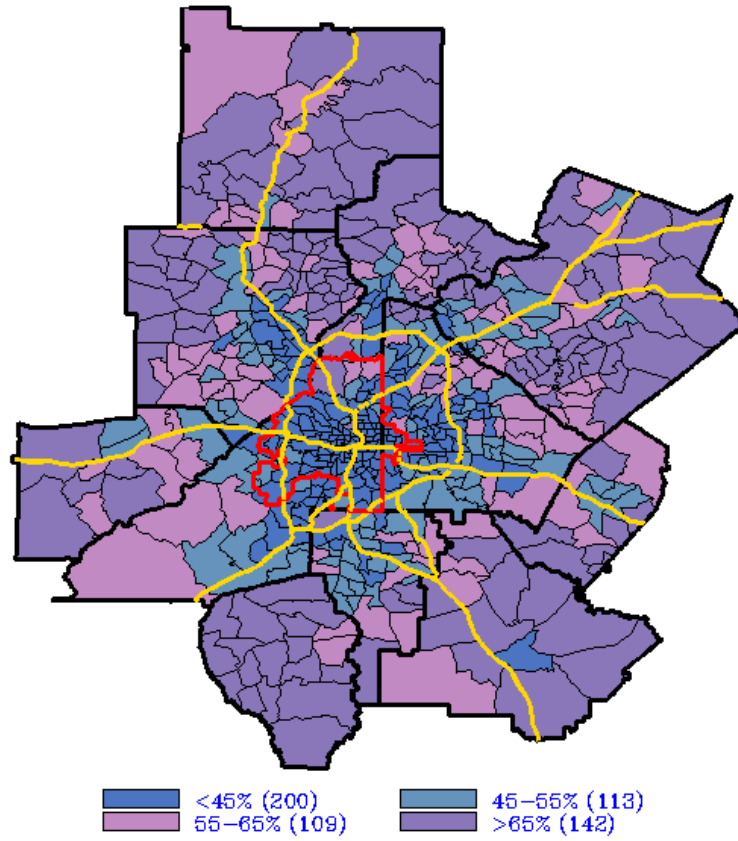
Map 6: Non-Family households - 2000



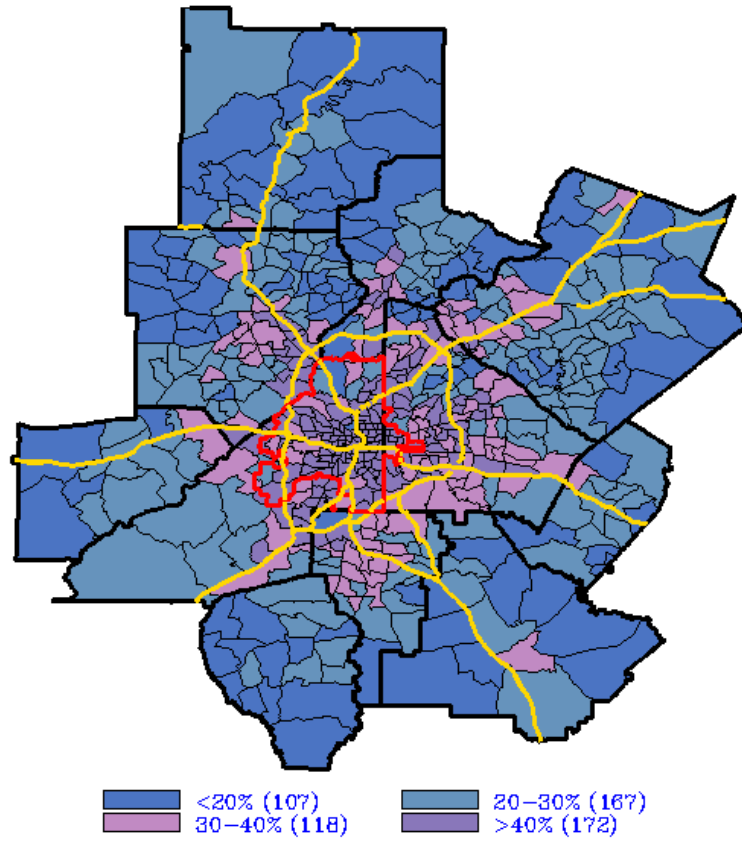
**Map 7: Female Headed Households With Children - 2000**



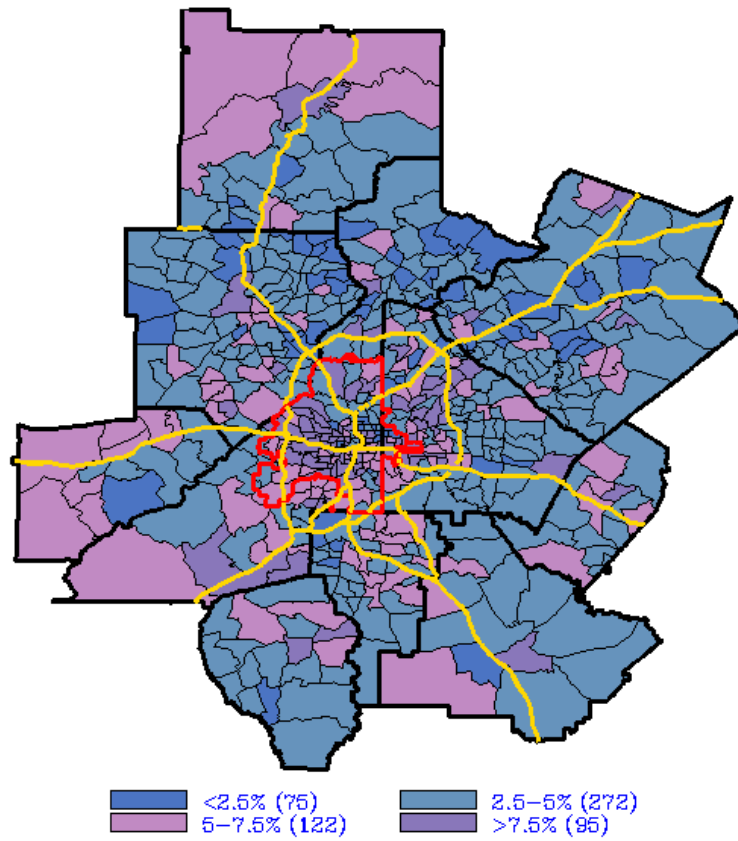
**Map 8: Percentage of Adults Currently Married - 2000**



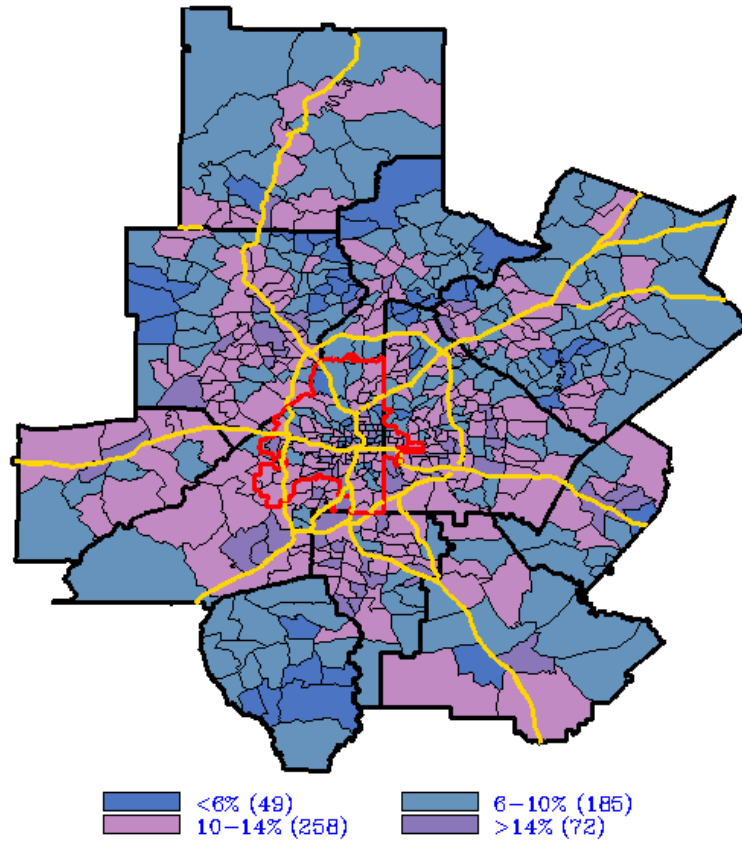
**Map 9: Percentage of Adults Never Married - 2000**



**Map 10: Percentage of Adults Widowed - 2000**



Map 11: Percentage of Adults Divorced - 2000



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**Gregory B. Lewis** is Professor of Public Administration and Urban Studies at Georgia State University and Director of the joint Ph.D. program in Public Policy of Georgia State and the Georgia Institute of Technology. A well-published scholar in public administration journals, his research focuses on how a variety of personal and organizational characteristics affect the careers of public employees. He has served on the editorial boards of *Public Administration Preview*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *American Review of Public Administration*, and *State and Local Government Review* and as Chair of the Public Administration section of American Political Science Association.

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