

Workforce & Economic Development Data 101



A brief guide for Georgia leaders to tell compelling stories and make informed decisions with community data.

What is community data?

Data exists at many levels. While national or state-level data may be helpful for providing context for the causes we serve, community data is essential for identifying where inequities exist and how we can align resources with the needs of our community. It helps ensure we're providing the right services to the right people.

The case for more standard data.

Georgia's nonprofits, agencies, and organizations often address shared or overlapping issues. The more we can describe these issues and evaluate our impact with standardized indicators, the easier it is to learn from one another, form authentic partnerships, tell compelling stories, and secure funding.

Equity-driven. Data-informed.

When used improperly, data can perpetuate inequities. For instance, a data metric indicating poor performance could lead to limited funding in the places that need it most. That is why it is crucial to focus on identifying and addressing disparities when using data to understand community needs and inform policy, programming, and funding decisions. Data can guide you to answers but is not the answer in itself. So, use data as a critical navigation tool and let equity be your destination.

Why are workforce and economic development data important?

Workforce and economic data tell us about the health of our economy, and the people who comprise it. Workforce data help employers make hiring decisions and inform workforce development program creation. Understanding workforce and economic development data is essential for understanding the economy and identifying opportunities to address inequities and challenges. Utilizing workforce data can add clarity and eliminate some uncertainties in trying to prioritize what and where efforts should be focused in strengthening our communities.



Neighborhood Nexus supports Georgia's mission-driven organizations to ask the right questions, use the best data, tell compelling stories, and make informed decisions. We accomplish this by offering community data from dozens of sources all in one place, building organizational data capacity, and providing custom projects. Find out more at neighborhoodnexus.org.

AVAILABLE GEOGRAPHIES LEGEND

The data referenced in this document is publicly available. "Available Geographies" refers to the various levels or areas by which that information can be reviewed.

- S** State
- M** Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)
- C** County
- L** Locality/City
- Z** Zip Code
- T** Census Tract



Dismantling occupational segregation and inequitable access to opportunity starts with disaggregated employment data. Understanding how race, ethnicity, gender, and age intersect with wage and occupation can not only help us create upward mobility for those who have been excluded from opportunity, but also inform strategies for a more diverse, resilient regional workforce.

— Nate Futrell, Industry Partnerships Director, CareerRise



Indicators

01 MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS

Original source:

[Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#)



Usual hourly and weekly earnings of wage and salary workers before taxes and other deductions; inclusive of overtime pay, commissions or tips usually received

Why it matters

Disparities in pay across race and sex impact people's ability to care for themselves and their families.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation

Disaggregate these data further by looking at gender and race to understand pay equity, and consider the disproportionate burden it puts on women and people of color. See also: [Living Wage*](#)

Helpful data tools

- [BLS Beta Labs](#)
- [DOL Earnings and Ratios](#)



02 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Original source:
[American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#)



The number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labor force

Why it matters

This metric is affected by the size of the labor force, and helps paint a picture of the health of the economy and the people who make up that economy by indicating the number of people who are available for and seeking work, and are unable to obtain it.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation

Use the unemployment rate as a way of understanding the human and economic capacity to work. Disaggregate the data by race, sex and age for a broader picture of how different communities are impacted by unemployment.

Helpful data tools

- [BLS Economy At a Glance](#)
- [BLS Unemployment Rates](#)
- [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#)
- [Guidance for Labor Force Statistics](#)

03 LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

Original source:
[Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#)



Percentage of population that is either working or actively looking for work

Why it matters

Unlike the employment to population ratio, this metric includes people who are actively looking for work in addition to those who are working.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation

Compare the participation rate to the employment to population ratio to gain an understanding of what percentage of the population is looking for work, but unable to obtain it.

Helpful data tools

- [FRED Economic Data](#)

04 EMPLOYER-BASED HEALTH INSURANCE

Original source: [ACS](#)



The percentage of the population with coverage offered through one's own employment or a relative's. It may be offered by an employer or by a union.

Why it matters

Healthcare coverage is often offered as a benefit of full-time employment. A healthy populace is not only good for individuals, but also good for the economy. When people have access to healthcare, they are less likely to miss work or leave the workforce altogether due to their own illness or the illness of a loved one.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation:

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation: Use this metric in addition to the uninsured rate, and disaggregate by age and sex to see how people are impacted.

05 INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS

Original source: [Georgia Department of Labor](#)

S M C L Z T

The number of individuals who filed for unemployment insurance for the first time during the given timeframe

Why it matters

Initial jobless claims indicate new unemployment, and serve as a leading indicator of the health of the economy.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation

Use initial unemployment claims data in conjunction with continuing unemployment claims to better understand ongoing disruptions in the economy. Review this metric alongside the unemployment rate, keeping in mind that most people who are unemployed do not receive unemployment benefits.

Helpful data tools

- [Continuing Jobless Claims](#)

06 JOB GAINS

Original source: [Jobs Report](#)

S M C L Z T N*

*National

Estimated job change at firms over the course of the quarter

Why it matters

This metric provides an overview of what fields and industries grew and shrank over the quarter.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation

Use this information to forecast where there may be gaps in career fields, and coordinate with Workforce Development organizations and schools to connect students and the underemployed.

Helpful data tools

- [Census QWI Explorer](#)

07 LOCATION QUOTIENT

Original source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#)

S M C L Z T

Compares the concentration of an industry within a specific area to the concentration of that industry nationwide

Why it matters

This metric helps make comparisons between a specific area and the nation at large. It can be used to indicate focus areas needed for specific industries to thrive and to maximize labor force efficiency.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation:

Industries with a location quotient greater than one indicate that they are part of an area's economic base. See where there are areas of need for future jobs, and advocate for programming and funding to support the growth of specific industries where appropriate and possible.

Helpful data tools

- [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages \(QCEW\)](#)



08 CHILDREN UNDER AGE SIX IN HOUSEHOLD

Original source: [ACS](#)



The percentage of households with a child under age six

Why it matters

Childcare needs impact the ability of the adults in the household to enter into and remain in the labor force. Providing care for one's own child, or an inability to obtain safe and reliable childcare outside of the home keeps people out of the workforce.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation

Use this metric to identify communities where there is a sizable need for childcare services to economically support families, and educationally support children.

Helpful data tools

- [National Survey of Early Care and Education \(NSECE\)](#)

09 LABOR FORCE UNDERUTILIZATION/ UNDEREMPLOYMENT RATE

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)



Percentage of people classified as unemployed, marginally attached workers, and part-time for economic reasons/people who work part-time involuntarily

Why it matters

Underemployment impacts both personal and national economies. Without adequate income, individual families are unable to meet their own needs. Collectively, this leads to decreased consumer demand, and slower economic growth.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation:

This metric offers a broader perspective on unemployment and potential economic hardships. It can be critical to identifying areas more vulnerable to negative economic impact.

Helpful data tools

- [FRED Labor Underutilization](#)

10 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Original source: [ACS](#)



The highest level of education that an individual of 25 and over has completed

Why it matters

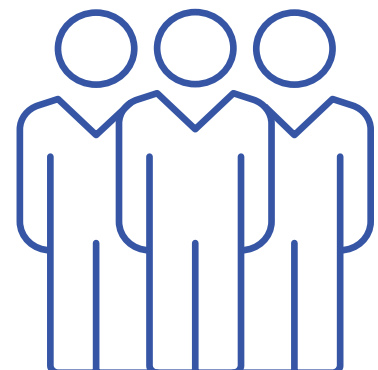
Education attainment impacts lifetime earnings of workers.

Neighborhood Nexus recommendation:

Use this metric in conjunction with median weekly earnings and demographic data to find and advocate to address areas of disparity between wages, race, sex, and educational attainment.

Helpful data tools

- [Educational Attainment UGA](#)



From the Field

ONE ATL ECONOMIC MOBILITY INDEX

This index was developed as part of the Mayor's One Atlanta Vision to illustrate economic mobility in different neighborhoods. The Neighborhood map visualizes whether economic mobility pathways are operating effectively in different parts of the city and enabling residents to achieve better economic and social outcomes.

Features indicators 01, 02, 04 and 10

CareerRise WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITY DASHBOARD

The Workforce and Occupational Opportunity Dashboard was created to provide users with insights into Metro Atlanta's labor market that can help inform decision-making around program development, education and training opportunities, hiring practices, and more.

Features indicators 01 and 10

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

We would like to thank our partners at CareerRise and Invest Atlanta for their support. Their work has informed the research that went into developing this document.



Additional Information

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

- Living wage
- Paid leave
- Pay equity
- Employment to population ratio
- Percent of households with no internet at home
- Job retention

DATA SOURCES & TOOLS

- [DataNexus](#)
- [JOLTS](#)
(*Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey*)
- [21-County Region Commuting Patterns Dashboard](#)
- [Income Inequality](#)



Caution: Data Isn't Perfect

When using data, be cautious and remember that data can have gaps, be biased, or perpetuate inequities. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Equity

Certain data points may contribute to systemic inequities. If you see correlations between deficits and certain geographic areas or demographic groups, use this as an opportunity to advocate for additional funding or resources for these communities. Don't use low performance as a justification to deny opportunities to communities that have been consistently and systematically overlooked.

Validity

Available data may not accurately represent the indicator. Look at how the metric is defined and see if the data actually represents this definition. If it doesn't, you may need to explore different metrics that may be more valid or proceed with caution if the invalid metric is the closest approximation of the data you need.

Reliability

Available data may not represent the defined metric consistently across all geographies and time frames. Look to see if there are any major differences in the data across categories. If something stands out, it may not have been collected or documented the same way across all categories.

Availability

Certain data points may not be publicly available for all years or geographies defined. Do not ignore gaps in data when you see them. Instead, ask yourself why there might be gaps and determine if it affects how useful the data is for your purpose.

Data Primers in this series:

Access Data 101

Demographic Data 101

Education Data 101

Environmental Data 101

Health Data 101

Household Economics Data 101

Housing Data 101

Workforce & Economic Development Data 101



Gaps in labor force data may make it difficult to identify and address inequities in your community. Neighborhood Nexus can provide additional data points and help you leverage community data to support those you serve and achieve your organization's strategic priorities.

Visit neighborhoodnexus.org/our-services to find out more!