



Aging in Rural Georgia

Georgia House Rural Development Council Meeting



About GCOA

Georgia Council on Aging

Created by the General Assembly in 1977 to advise state government on aging issues in Georgia



GEORGIA COUNCIL ON AGING

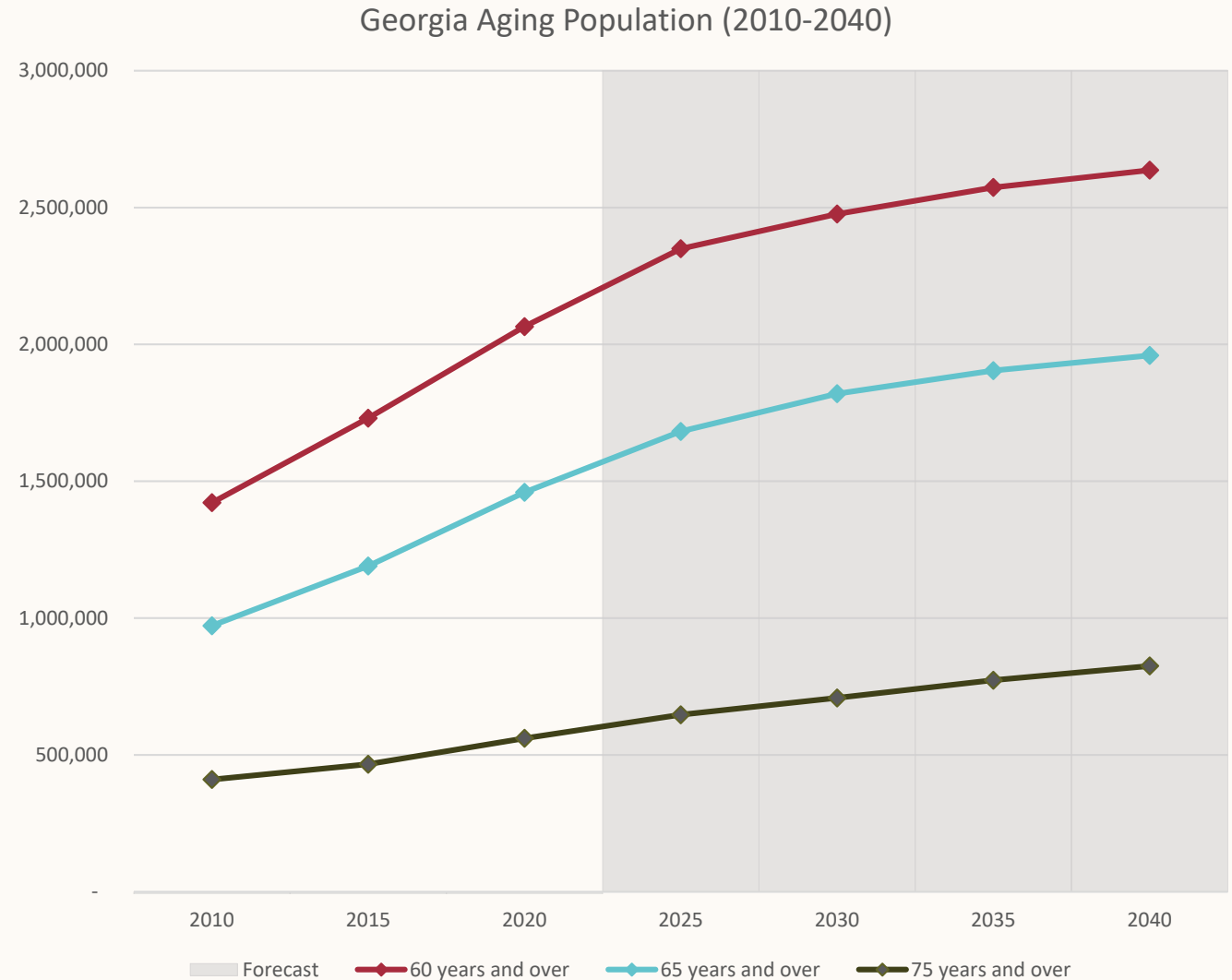
Coalition of Advocates for Georgia's Elderly

Created by the Council as a forum to identify and address concerns of older Georgians



Georgia's Aging Population

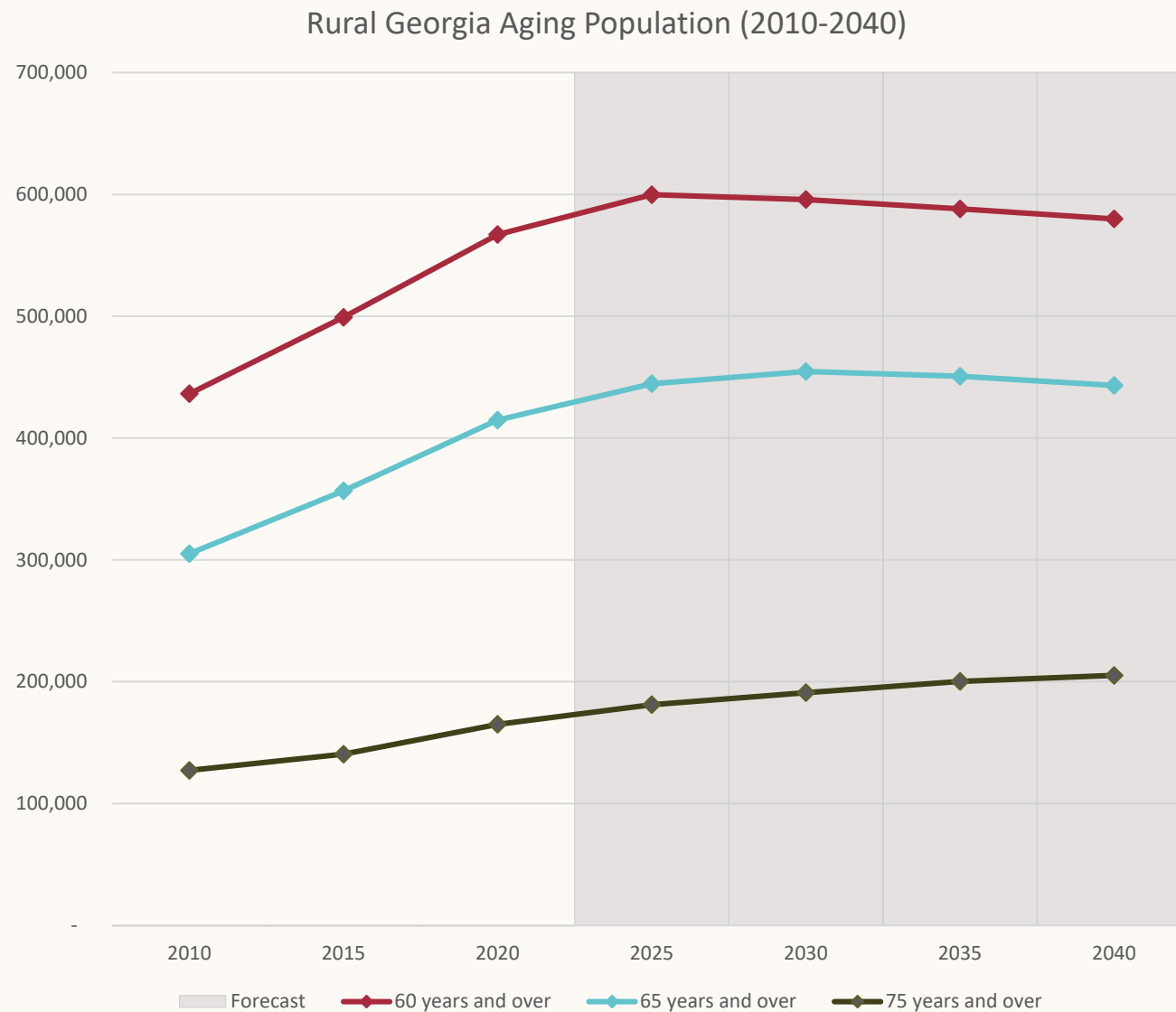
- 14.6% of Georgia's overall population is 65+
- The proportion of Georgia's 60+ population is projected to grow rapidly in the next 20 years in the rural areas.
- In 2020, the proportion of individuals in Georgia aged 65 years and older is predicted to witness a significant growth, projecting an increase of 34.3% compared to the statistics of 2020. A 47.1% growth is expected among the 75 years and over.



Graph from the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

Rural Area Aging Population

- Georgians 65+ make up 19% of the population in rural counties. This percentage is projected to increase to 22% by 2030.

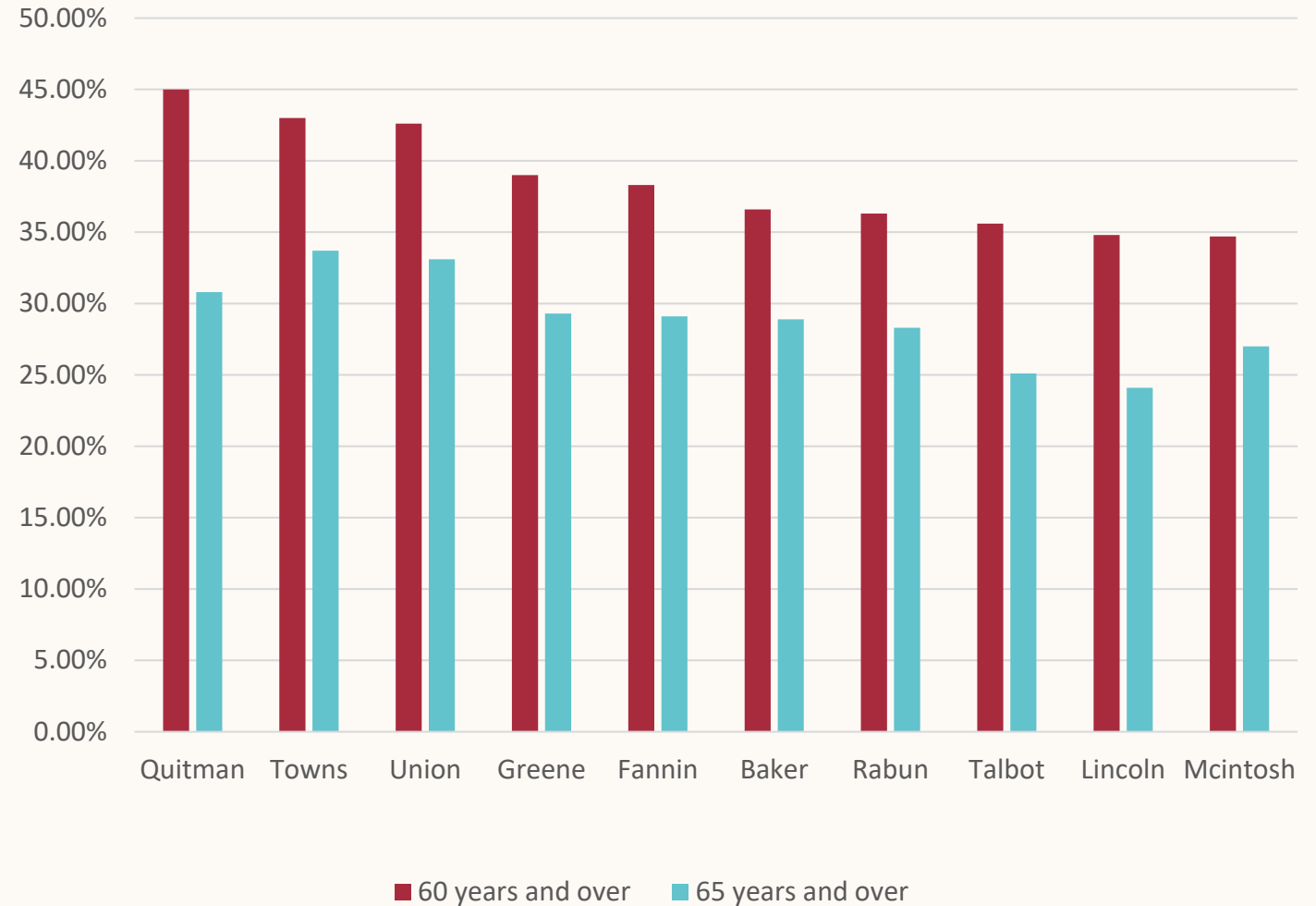


Graph from the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

Rural Area Aging Population

- As of 2021, Quitman (45%), Towns (43%), Union (42.6%), Greene (39%), and Fannin (38%) are among top five counties with the highest percentage of population of 60 years and over. The rapid growth was largely driven by aging baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) who began turning 65 in 2011.

Rural Georgia Aging Population (2021)

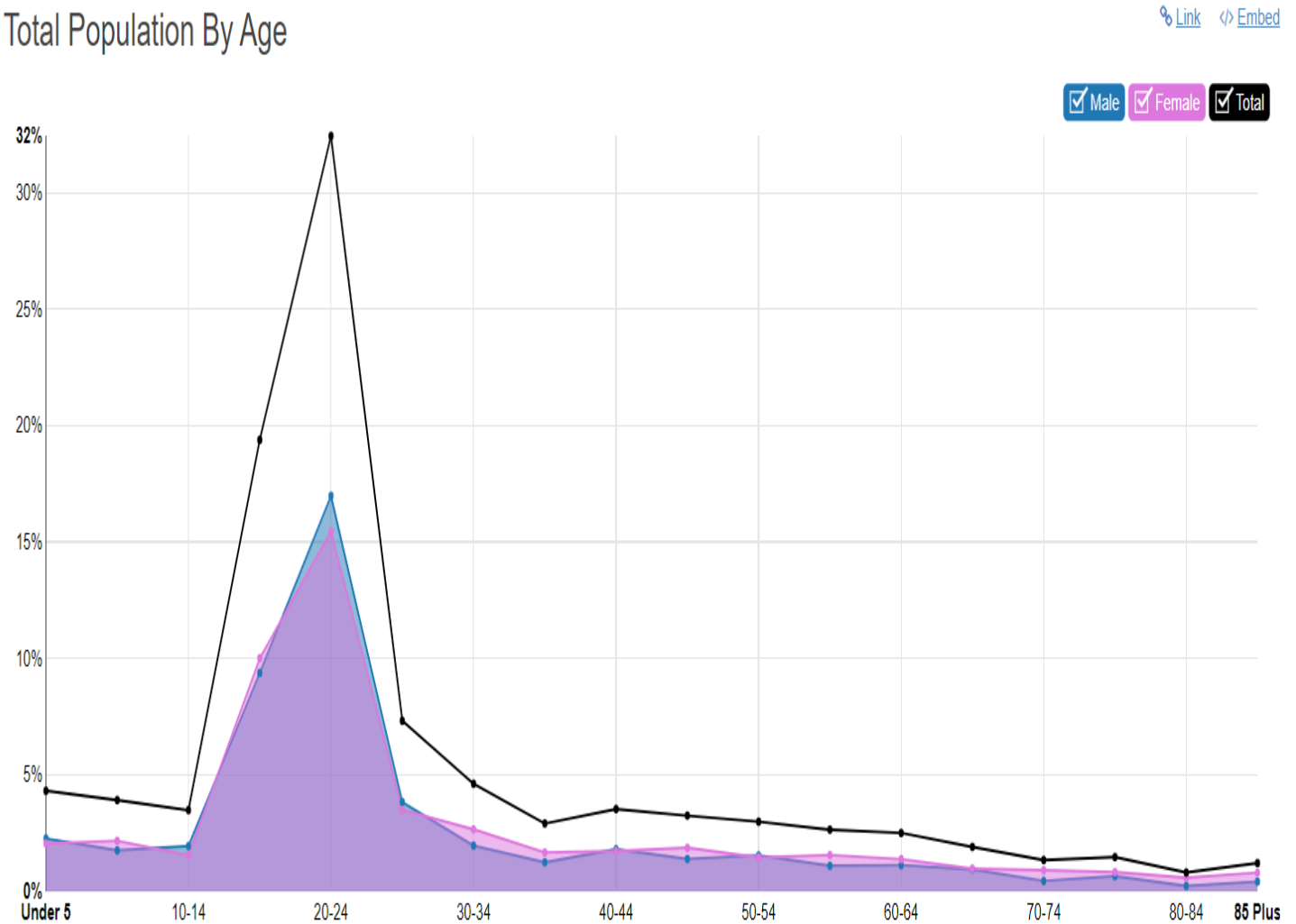


Graph from the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

Statesboro at a Glance

- Residents 18 years and older are 86% of the population.
- Residents 65 years and older are 7% of the population in Statesboro.

Total Population By Age



Graph from Homearea.com

Unique Challenges Faced by Older Adults in Rural Georgia



While older adults contribute significantly to the workforce and consumer market, which can stimulate economic growth, this demographic also requires healthcare and social services, particularly long-term care, resulting in increased demand on public resources.



Aging individuals have specific healthcare needs, including chronic disease management, mental health support, and preventive care.



Many older adults in Georgia face financial challenges, especially those who have retired or have limited fixed income.

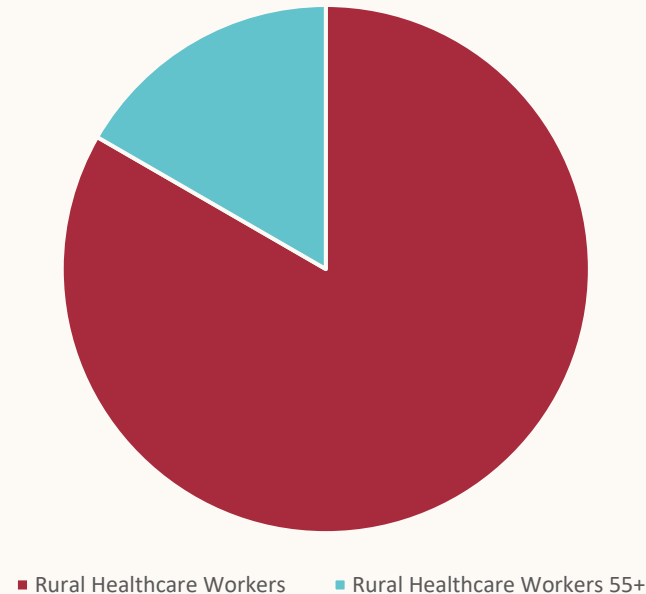


Access to healthy and affordable food is essential for healthy aging. In rural areas of Georgia, food deserts and limited transportation can pose challenges for older adults.



As of 2021, the State mental health agencies (SMHAs) reported they served 5.70% of 65+ Georgians in Community Mental Health Programs.

Georgia's Rural Healthcare Workforce



The Georgia Healthcare Workforce Commission reports that 20% of the current rural healthcare workforce is 55+ and likely to retire in the next ten years.

Georgia loses 3.7% of healthcare workers each year (retirement, moving out of state, etc.) and retains 58% of its healthcare graduates (Georgia Healthcare Workforce Commission).

Only 8% of the state's practicing physicians serve rural Georgia (PCOM South Georgia).



2024 CO-AGE Priorities

\$10 Million in Funding for HCBS

Multidisciplinary Teams for Adult Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation

Medical Aid in Dying

Improvements to Assisted Living



\$10 Million in Funding for Home & Community Based Services

- There are over 12,000 older adults on waiting lists for these non-Medicaid services.
- \$10 Million would help keep almost 5,000 seniors in their homes rather than prematurely moving to more costly nursing homes.

Multidisciplinary Teams for Adult Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation

- Teams of law enforcement, social workers, mental health services, housing resources, Area Agencies on Aging, and others work together to identify and resolve local cases of elder abuse.
- The law does not make these teams mandatory in all eleven circuits. CO-AGE supports mandatory teams in all circuits.

Medical Aid in Dying (MAID)

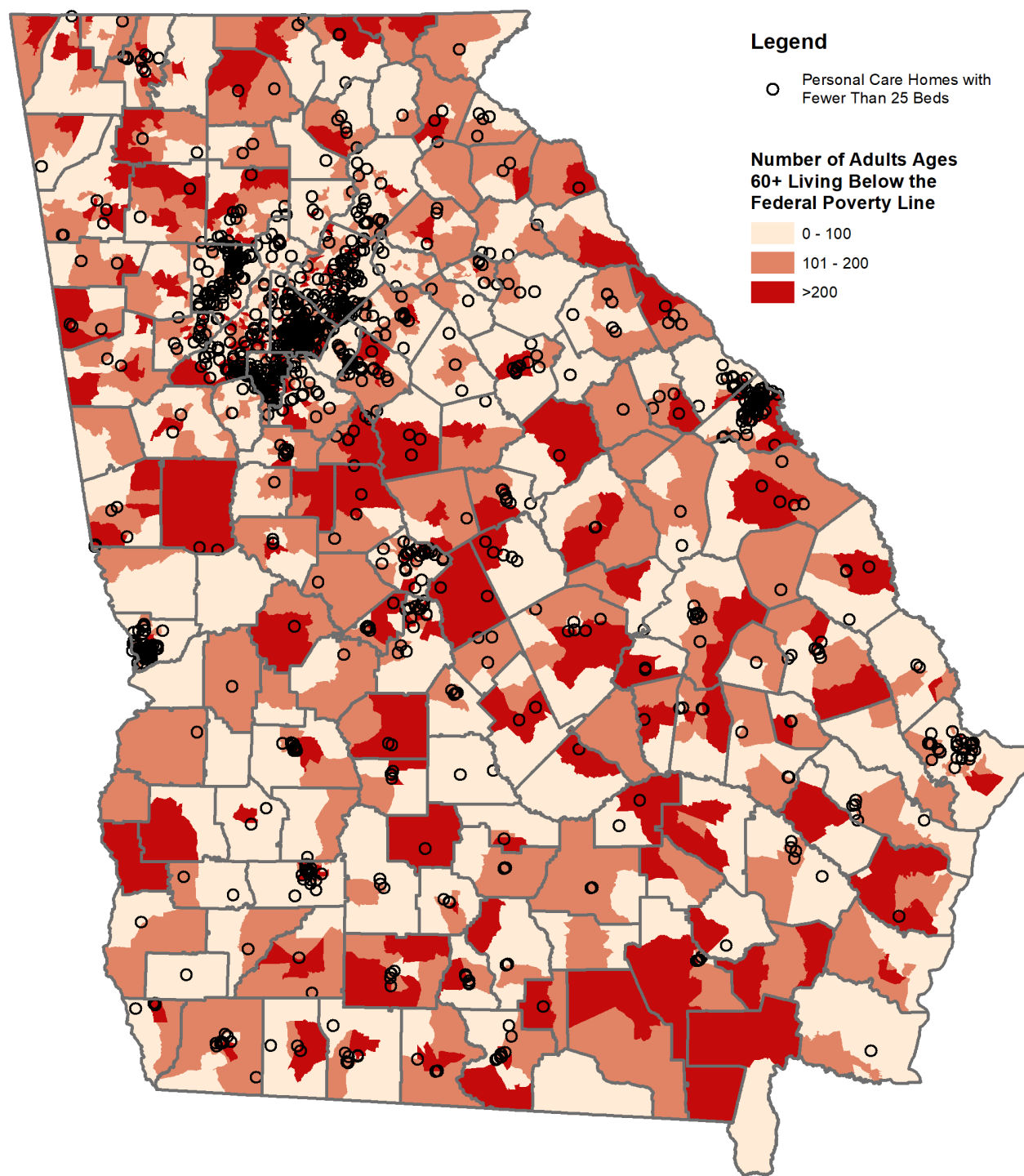
- Many older adults receive terminal diagnoses that presage a long, painful, and expensive process before death ensues.
- Laws to allow self-administered Medical Aid in Dying exist in other states.
- CO-AGE supports a legislative study committee to discuss MAID laws.

Improvements to Assisted Living

- Georgia has unique laws about assisted living. If a facility has over 25 beds it cannot provide Medicaid services.
- This closes out assisted living access to low-income seniors who can no longer live at home if smaller Personal Care Homes with Medicaid have Wait Lists.
- CO-AGE supports changes to Georgia's laws to open Medicaid access for all eligible seniors regardless of where they live.

Improvements to Assisted Living

- Georgia has unique laws and rules about assisted living by prohibiting Medicaid if a facility has over 25 beds
- This closes out assisted living access for low-income seniors needing more services than provided by smaller Medicaid Personal Care Homes, especially Memory Care services
- Other states use Medicaid to fund supportive services in assisted living, including in Memory Care units
- CO-AGE supports changes to Georgia's laws to open Medicaid access for all eligible seniors regardless of where they live.



Legend

○ Personal Care Homes with Fewer Than 25 Beds

Number of Adults Ages 60+ Living Below the Federal Poverty Line

- 0 - 100
- 101 - 200
- >200

Sources

- Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center
- <https://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/JimmyLewisHTHRuralHealthcareWorkforce.pdf>
- <https://www.pcom.edu/about/departments/marketing-and-communications/digest-magazine/digest-featured-stories/health-care-in-rural-georgia.html>
- <https://www.pcom.edu/south-georgia/news/local-physicians-talk-rural-medicine.html>
- <https://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/GeorgiaHealthcareWorkforceCommissionFinalReport.pdf>
- https://www.house.ga.gov/Documents/CommitteeDocuments/2021/Rural_Development_Council/CVIOG%202020%20Census%20Data.pdf
- [Statesboro City, Georgia - Housing, Employment, Education, More \(homearea.com\)](https://www.homearea.com/)



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Questions?

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