

**AMERICA'S TOP-RATED CITIES**

- CBSA: Core Based Statistical Area
- STATE
- Top Rated City
- East Region - VOLUME 4





# Athens, Georgia

## Background

Athens, home to the University of Georgia, retains its old charms while cultivating new ideas. Antebellum homes that grace the city still stand because Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea took a route that left this northeast Georgia town intact (while burning Atlanta, about 60 miles to the southwest). The Athens Music History Walking Tour, available through the local convention and visitors' bureau, stops at Weaver D's soul food restaurant with the slogan, "Automatic for the People," that went national as the name of locally grown R.E.M.'s 1992 album. In September 2020, the city launched the Athens Music Walk of Fame. The public art walk spans a two-city blocks loop around West Washington and Clayton Streets connected by North Lumpkin Street. Guitar pick plaques are located on the sidewalk in front of significant music venues like the Georgia Theatre, the 40 Watt Club, and the Morton Theatre. The first round of inductees included The B-52s, Danger Mouse, and R.E.M.

Present-day Athens started as a small settlement where an old Cherokee trail crossed the Oconee River. In 1785 the state's General Assembly chartered the university, which established a campus here in 1801. Three years later, the school held its first graduation ceremony. The city was named for the ancient Greece's center of learning.

Undoubtedly the major influence in the city and surrounding Clarke County, the University of Georgia, is also the area's largest employer. The comprehensive land- and sea-grant institution offers all levels of degree programs in numerous disciplines. Other educational institutions in Athens are the Navy Supply School, Athens Technical College, and branches of Piedmont College and Old Dominion University.

Other major employers are focused on health care, government, and manufacturing. They include Athens Regional Medical Center and St. Mary's Health Care System, which specialize in oncology, pediatrics, heart disease, and other areas. Manufacturing continues to be a major employment sector.

With its shops, boutiques and restaurants, Athens offers plenty to do. The Georgia State Museum of Art, Museum of Natural History, and the State Botanical Garden are affiliated with the university. The restored 1910 Morton Theater once hosted Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong, and now hosts dramatic and musical performances. Undoubtedly the strong presence of young people in Athens has contributed to its burgeoning artistic scene. The city center is home to bars, galleries, cafes, and music venues that cater to the city's creative climate. The city's annual AthFest, an outdoor celebration of Athens' creative scene, happens in the summer in the downtown area. Athens is repeatedly named one of the best places for small business, the best college town for retirees, and the best place to recapture your youth. The city also boasts a bicycle-friendly culture and hosts several annual bicycle races.

The climate is mild, with average temperatures about 20 degrees warmer than the U.S. average. Snowfall is next to nothing, but precipitation is at its highest from January-March. Spring is lovely, with three to four inches of rain, sunshine up to 70 percent of the time starting in April, and temperatures averaging in the 70s.

## Rankings

### Business/Finance Rankings

- The Athens metro area appeared on the Milken Institute “2024 Best Performing Cities” list. Rank: #117 out of 203 small metro areas (based on performance category). Criteria: job growth; wage growth; high-tech growth and impact; community resilience; housing affordability; household broadband access. *Milken Institute, “Best-Performing Cities 2024,” February 6, 2024*

### Safety Rankings

- The National Insurance Crime Bureau ranked 390 metro areas in the U.S. in terms of per capita rates of vehicle theft. The Athens metro area ranked #210 (#1 = highest rate). Criteria: number of vehicle theft offenses per 100,000 inhabitants in 2022. *National Insurance Crime Bureau, “Hot Spots 2022,” October 25, 2023*

### Seniors/Retirement Rankings

- Athens made the 2023 *Forbes* list of “25 Best Places to Retire.” Criteria, focused on overall affordability as well as quality of life indicators, include: housing/living costs compared to the national average and state taxes; air quality; crime rates; median home prices; risk associated with climate-change/natural hazards; availability of medical care; bikeability; walkability; healthy living. *Forbes.com, “The Best Places to Retire in 2023,” May 12, 2023*

## Business Environment

### DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Population Growth

Area	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Census	2022 Estimate	Population Growth 1990-2022 (%)
City	86,561	100,266	115,452	127,315	127,981	47.9
MSA <sup>1</sup>	136,025	166,079	192,541	215,415	220,191	61.9
U.S.	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538	331,449,281	333,287,562	34.0

Note: (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census, 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2020 Census, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

#### Race

Area	White Alone <sup>2</sup> (%)	Black Alone <sup>2</sup> (%)	Asian Alone <sup>2</sup> (%)	AIAN <sup>3</sup> Alone <sup>2</sup> (%)	NHOPI <sup>4</sup> Alone <sup>2</sup> (%)	Other Race Alone <sup>2</sup> (%)	Two or More Races (%)
City	55.9	24.9	4.5	1.0	0.0	3.3	10.5
MSA <sup>1</sup>	66.3	17.1	3.9	0.7	0.3	3.2	8.5
U.S.	60.9	12.2	5.9	1.0	0.2	7.3	12.5

Note: (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area; (2) Alone is defined as not being in combination with one or more other races; (3) American Indian and Alaska Native; (4) Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

#### Hispanic or Latino Origin

Area	Total (%)	Mexican (%)	Puerto Rican (%)	Cuban (%)	Other (%)
City	11.5	6.1	0.2	0.4	4.8
MSA <sup>1</sup>	9.2	5.5	0.2	0.2	3.2
U.S.	19.1	11.2	1.8	0.7	5.3

Note: Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin can be of any race; (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

#### Age

Area	Percent of Population									Median Age
	Under Age 5	Age 5-19	Age 20-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65-74	Age 75-84	Age 85+	
City	4.4	18.9	36.7	10.9	8.0	9.1	7.2	4.1	0.8	29.1
MSA <sup>1</sup>	5.1	19.3	27.9	12.2	10.6	10.2	9.0	4.5	1.1	33.3
U.S.	5.5	18.8	20.3	13.2	12.1	12.7	10.2	5.3	1.8	39.0

Note: (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

#### Disability by Age

Area	All Ages	Under 18 Years Old	18 to 64 Years Old	65 Years and Over
City	13.1	13.6	10.5	28.4
MSA <sup>1</sup>	13.5	8.1	11.3	31.2
U.S.	13.4	4.8	11.0	33.1

Note: Figures show percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population that reported having a disability.

Disability status is determined from six types of difficulty: vision, hearing, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living. For children under 5 years old, hearing and vision difficulty are used to determine disability status. For children between the ages of 5 and 14, disability status is determined from hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, and self-care difficulties. For people aged 15 years and older, they are considered to have a disability if they have difficulty with any one of the six difficulty types; Note: (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

#### Ancestry

Area	German	Irish	English	American	Italian	Polish	French <sup>2</sup>	European	Scottish
City	8.5	8.4	11.3	3.3	3.1	1.6	1.8	3.1	2.8
MSA <sup>1</sup>	8.7	10.2	12.8	6.2	2.8	1.2	1.6	3.0	2.4
U.S.	12.7	9.5	8.6	5.6	4.9	2.6	2.1	1.7	1.6

Note: Figures are the percentage of the total population reporting a particular ancestry. The nine most commonly reported ancestries in the U.S. are shown. Figures include multiple ancestries (e.g. if a person reported being Irish and Italian, they were included in both columns); (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area; (2) Excludes Basque

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Foreign-born Population**

Area	Percent of Population Born in								
	Any Foreign Country	Asia	Mexico	Europe	Caribbean	Central America <sup>2</sup>	South America	Africa	Canada
City	9.7	3.0	2.4	0.9	0.3	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.2
MSA <sup>1</sup>	7.6	2.6	1.7	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.2
U.S.	13.7	4.3	3.3	1.5	1.4	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.2

Note: (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area; (2) Excludes Mexico.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Household Size**

Area	Persons in Household (%)							Average Household Size
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven or More	
City	33.0	35.1	16.9	11.1	3.4	0.1	0.3	2.24
MSA <sup>1</sup>	28.6	34.4	17.5	12.2	5.1	1.7	0.6	2.45
U.S.	28.6	34.3	15.3	12.3	5.8	2.3	1.5	2.50

Note: (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

**Household Relationships**

Area	Householder	Opposite-sex Spouse	Same-sex Spouse	Opposite-sex Unmarried Partner	Same-sex Unmarried Partner	Child <sup>2</sup>	Grandchild	Other Relatives	Non-relatives
City	40.1	11.6	0.2	2.7	0.2	20.8	2.0	3.7	10.7
MSA <sup>1</sup>	38.6	15.6	0.2	2.3	0.2	25.1	2.3	3.7	7.3
U.S.	38.3	17.5	0.2	2.5	0.2	28.3	2.4	4.8	3.4

Note: Figures are percent of the total population; (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area; (2) Includes biological, adopted, and stepchildren of the householder  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census

**Gender**

Area	Males	Females	Males per 100 Females
City	60,695	67,286	90.2
MSA <sup>1</sup>	106,020	114,171	92.9
U.S.	165,228,214	168,059,348	98.3

Note: (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

**Marital Status**

Area	Never Married	Now Married <sup>2</sup>	Separated	Widowed	Divorced
City	54.3	31.4	1.4	3.9	9.0
MSA <sup>1</sup>	43.3	41.5	1.4	4.5	9.3
U.S.	34.1	47.8	1.7	5.6	10.7

Note: Figures are percentages and cover the population 15 years of age and older; (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area; (2) Excludes separated  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Religious Groups by Family**

Area	Catholic	Baptist	Methodist	LDS <sup>2</sup>	Pentecostal	Lutheran	Islam	Adventist	Other
MSA <sup>1</sup>	6.4	12.8	5.7	1.0	2.4	0.3	0.2	1.3	7.9
U.S.	18.7	7.3	3.0	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.3	1.3	11.6

Note: Figures are the number of adherents as a percentage of the total population and cover the eight largest religious groups in the U.S.; (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area; (2) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Sources: 2020 U.S. Religion Census, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies; The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA)

**Religious Groups by Tradition**

Area	Catholic	Evangelical Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Black Protestant	Islam	Judaism	Hinduism	Orthodox	Buddhism
MSA <sup>1</sup>	6.4	19.1	7.2	2.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	<0.1
U.S.	18.7	16.5	5.2	2.3	1.3	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.3

Note: Figures are the number of adherents as a percentage of the total population; (1) Figures cover the Athens-Clarke County, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area

Sources: 2020 U.S. Religion Census, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies; The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA)