



ANALYSIS OF ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES IN SOUTH GEORGIA

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Abstract

Assisted living facilities are important parts of healthcare, and the accessibility to them is a concern in South Georgia. Studies have shown that residents of the rural areas and small cities tend to have lower accessibility to assisted living facilities. However, no such study has been conducted for South Georgia, which includes most rural areas and small cities. The objective of this project is to involve our students in the analysis of assisted living facility locations in South Georgia. We collected and assembled location data of assisted living facilities in 18 counties in South Georgia into a digital database and utilized Geographic Information System (GIS) to map all locations. Through map analysis, we conclude that there is a problem for rural and small city residents in South Georgia to access assisted living facilities. We suggest our government officials to increase accessibility and improve access to assisted living facilities in South Georgia.

Introduction

Assisted living facilities are important parts of healthcare, and care facilities play a significant role within our community by caring for our seniors and people with disability. South Georgia has a large senior population, so it is crucial to study the accessibility of the senior population to the existing assisted living facilities to see if there is a problem for seniors to access the facilities.

The study results will help the state and local governments to evaluate the current accessibility problems, properly plan for more facilities in underserved areas, and ultimately, provide better senior care options for the people in the eighteen South Georgia counties.

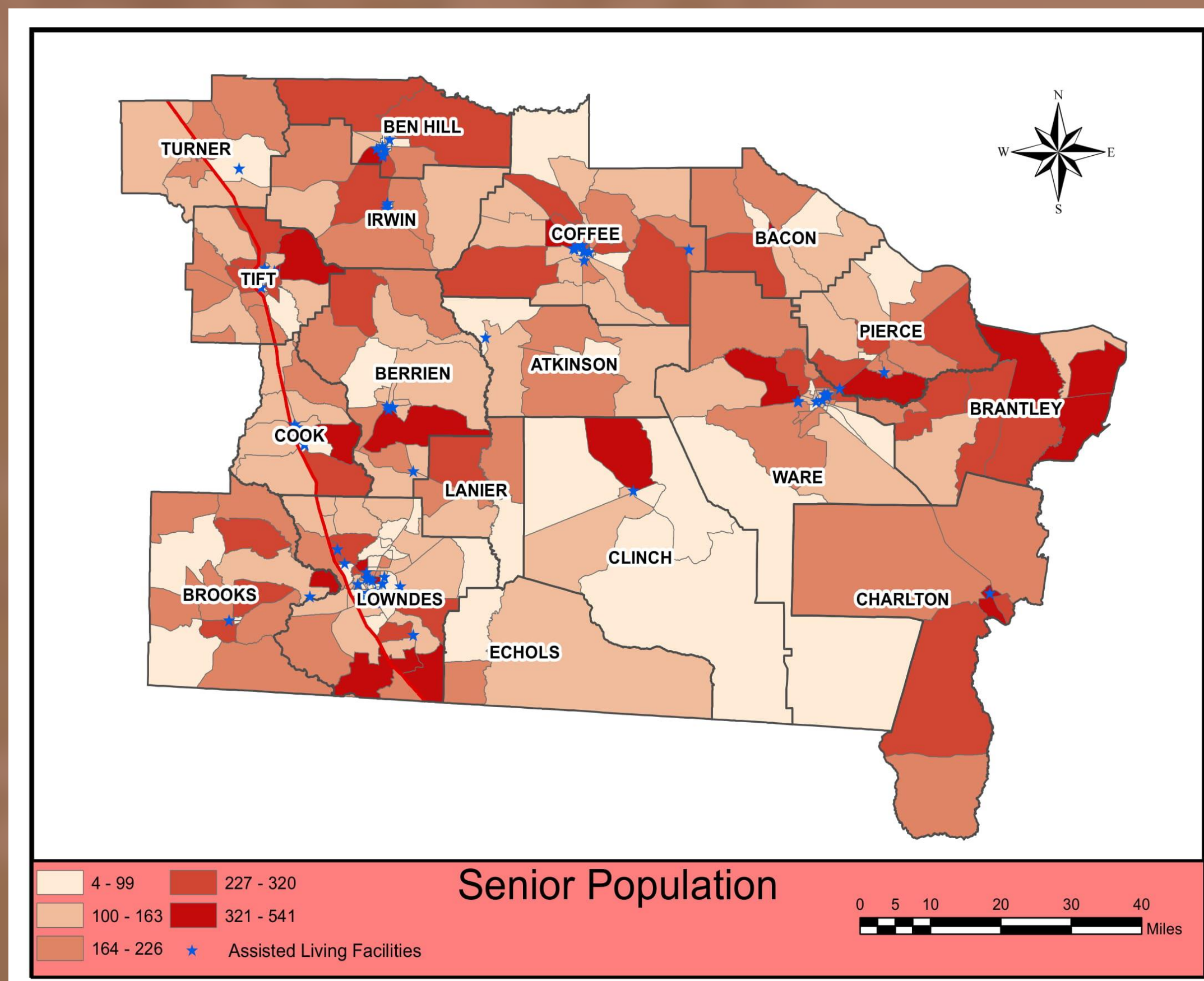
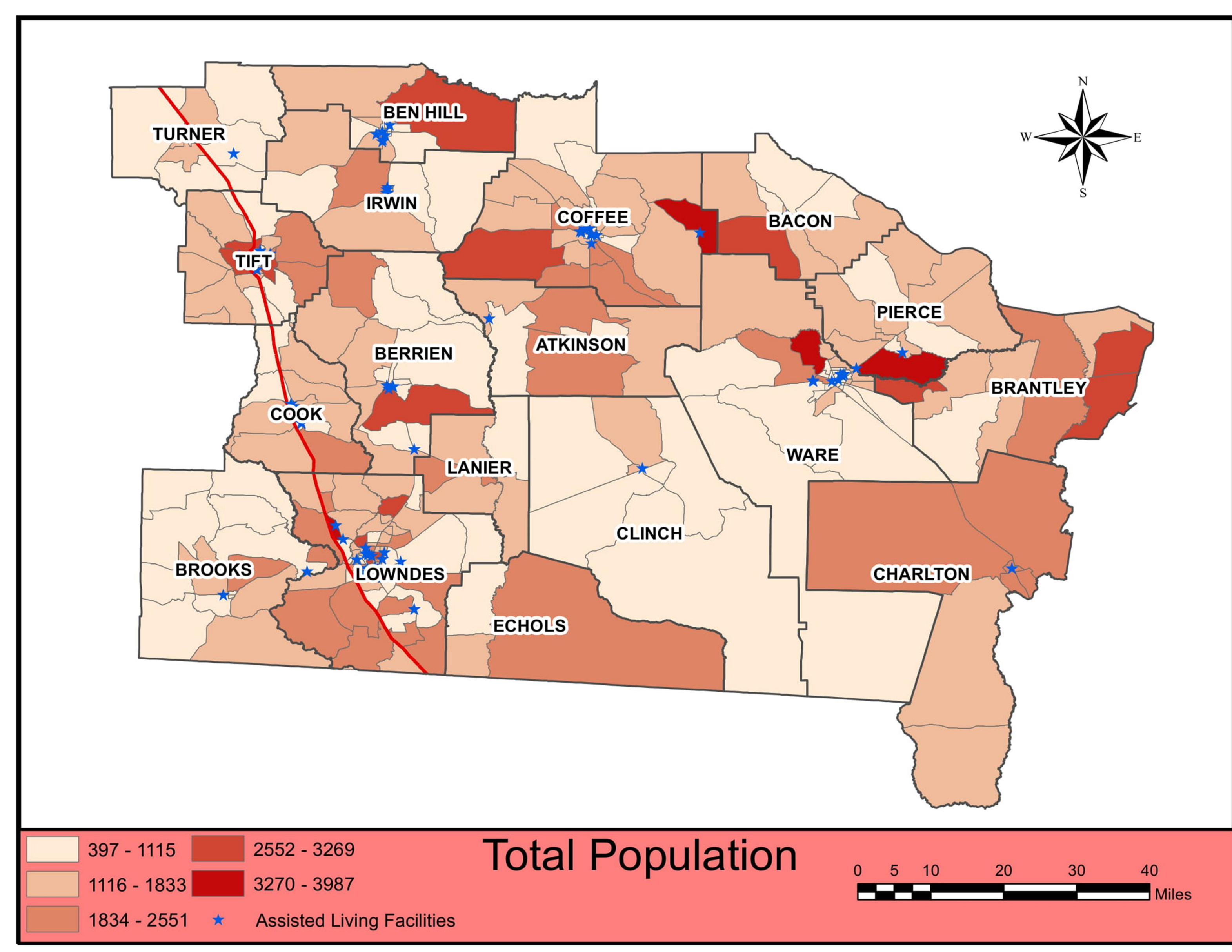
Analysis and Results

The count of assisted living facilities by county was compared with population and senior population data by county. Only one county was found to have no assisted living facility. Of the remaining 17, 4 counties had more than 2 facilities per 1000 senior residents and 6 had less than 1 per 1000. The highest ratio of facilities to senior population was found in Coffee county, while the lowest was in Echols. The highest total number of facilities was Lowndes county, while the lowest was Echols.

The number of facilities per county seemed to be most closely correlated with total population, while locations of facilities within individual counties seemed to trend towards areas with the highest senior population. Poverty level and race did not appear to have a large impact on distribution of facilities.

Conclusion

Location data of assisted living facilities in 18 counties in South Georgia were collected and assembled into a digital database in GIS. The map analyses provided significant insight of the assisted living facility locations and the population and transportation in each county. It is clear that the facilities located within each county was in direct correlation with the size of the population and elderly concentration within each county. The counties that need to have more facilities include the Brantley, Peirce, Ben Hill, and Carlton counties, since the population is dense and consist of the largest elderly population. Through GIS map analysis, we conclude that there is a problem for rural and small city residents in South Georgia to access assisted living facilities and better government planning is crucial for the study area.

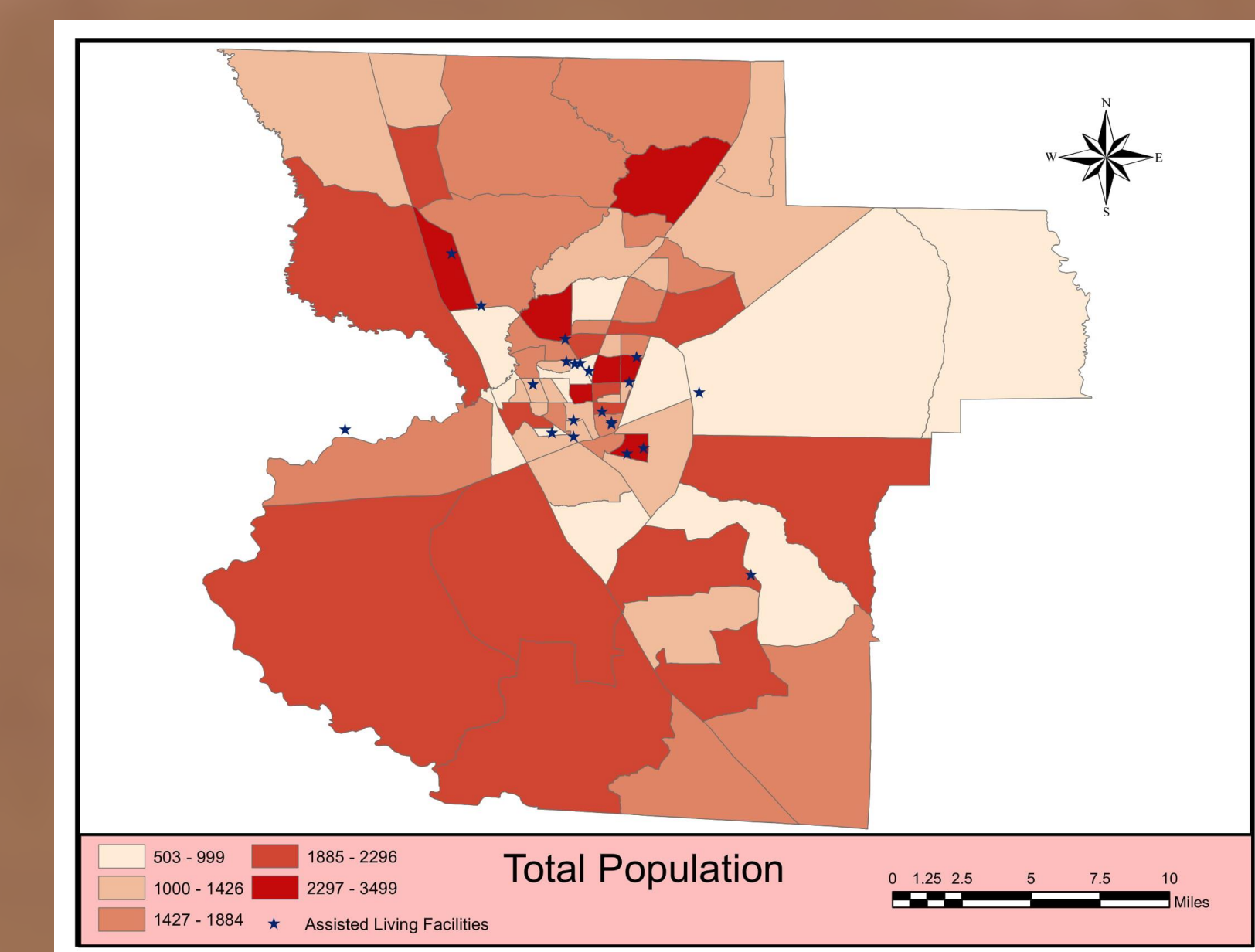
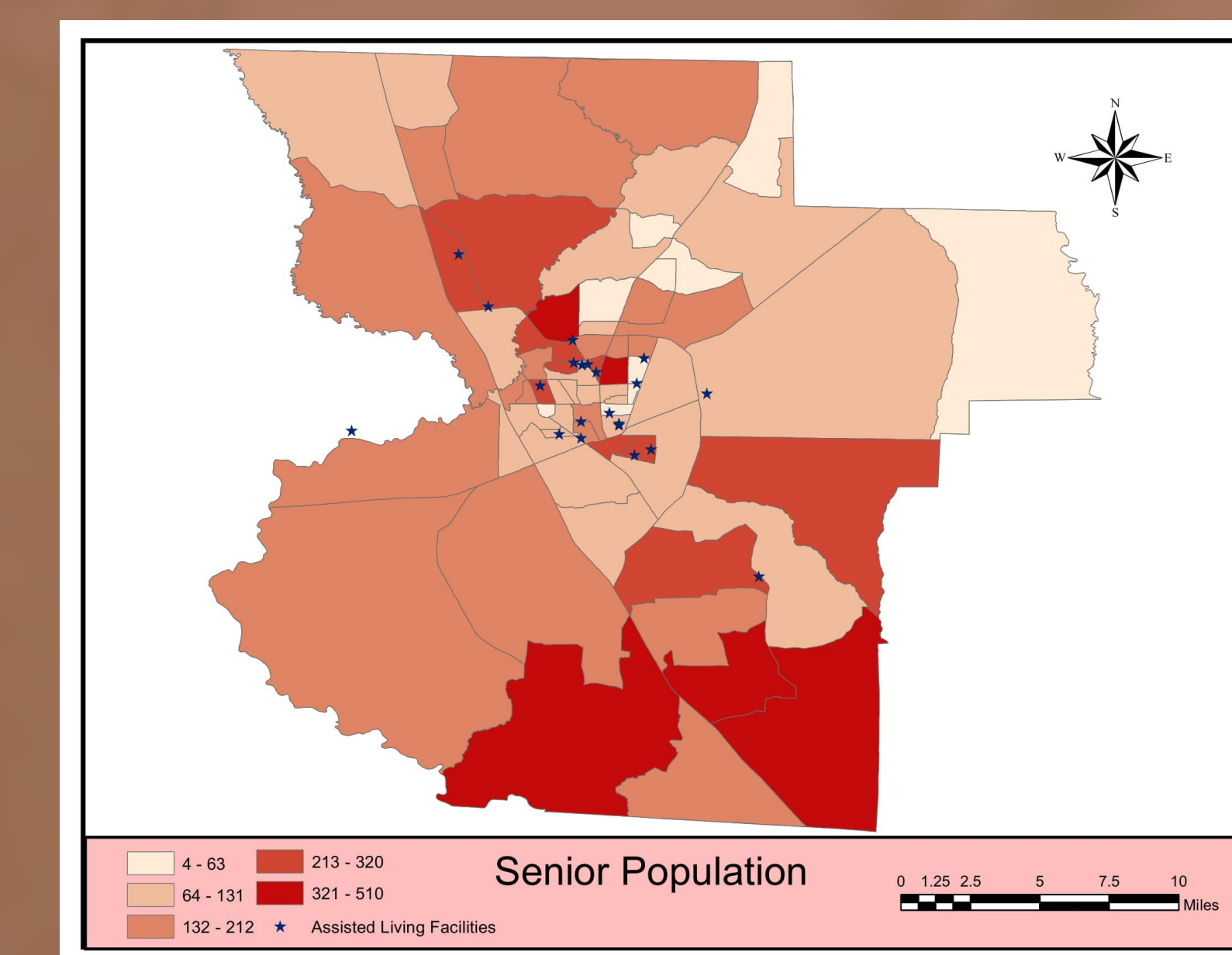


Study Area

The study area consists of the southeastern eighteen counties in Georgia ranging from as far East as Brooks County and as far west as the Atlantic coast. The area also stretches from Florida-Georgia line all the way to Tifton and Douglas. It must also be noted that the assisted living facilities within the study area are mainly in the larger municipalities and tend to not be in the rural or smaller populations.

Methodology

Assisted living facilities were found primarily by use of search engines such as google and google maps, with some data pulled from online directories. Data collected for each assisted living facility included the name, county, city, address, phone number, and rating out of 5 stars. Additionally, latitude and longitude were collected from each address, and then used to create maps on ArcGIS for data analysis. County data from the area agency on aging was also pulled for supplemental data analysis.



Literature Review

Assisted Living facilities are an alternative to the more generalized nursing home care. The number of facilities is growing, with over 38,373 currently. There has been a need for research on this topic to better the care provided by these facilities (Mollica, 2008). The facilities can have problems, such as abuse, with 12.83% being between residents themselves (Castle, 2013). The evolution of assisted living facilities is ever-changing, and more research is needed for improving the quality of the care in the facilities (Rapegno & Ravaud, 2017). However, no studies of assisted living were found in Georgia, especially those related to the physical access to these facilities

Limitation and future research suggestions

The limitations were varied, and mainly due to time constraints and not having direct access to the care facilities data base. This limited the amount of data that was able to be obtained from the websites and government agencies. Future suggestions include searching for more data and comparing with our collections, and further detailed study of the communities and assisted living facilities. This will give us a better understanding of the facilities and the communities to assess the needs of the communities and the care provided by the facilities.

References

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- Rapegno, N. and Ravaud, J. 2017. "Disability, Residential Environment and Social Participation: Factors Influencing Daily Mobility of Persons Living in Residential Care Facilities in Two Regions of France." BMC Health Services Research 17 (1): 683.
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