



THE ATLANTA
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION

25 Years of Changing Lives

State of Girls in Metro Atlanta 2023 Executive Summary



A recent research study commissioned by the Atlanta Women's Foundation reveals that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, girls in metro Atlanta are facing exacerbated negative effects. Factors such as disruptions in education, pressure to serve as caretakers for younger siblings, mental health issues, an uptick in obesity rates, and an increase in the proportion of girls living in homes that make at or below the federal poverty line require a comprehensive, strategic response.

The full report is available [here](https://atlantawomen.org). Key takeaways are summarized in the following pages.

Population & Economic Insecurity

Population

- Girls make up 49 percent of metro Atlanta's total youth population, representing 23 percent of metro Atlanta's total population.
- Black girls and young women make up the largest share (40.2 percent) of the girls' population in Atlanta as a whole.
- Tracking this growing diversity is important because there are often wide gaps in the well-being of girls across different groups, with white and Asian girls faring better on most indicators compared with Black, Hispanic/Latina, American Indian, and multiracial girls. These racial disparities in adolescence often carry over into adulthood, putting girls of color at higher risk of poor social, economic, and health outcomes later in life.

Economic Insecurity

- Family income is a large predictor of a girl's education and economic well-being in adulthood.
- Girls are more likely to live in poverty than boys (79,908 girls/young women compared to 70,906 boys), and poverty rates are highest for girls of color. (See Chart 1: Economic Insecurity)
- Girls who live in households where the parent is unemployed experience long-term challenges regarding education, economic security, and health.
- Since 2010, access to secure employment has only improved noticeably in one of the five Metro Atlanta counties – DeKalb County.



Health & Well-Being and Positive Developments

Health & Well-Being

- Physical and mental health and well-being is an issue of concern:
 - According to recent data collected by the Georgia Department of Education (FitnessGram), middle school girls' aerobic capacity is far lower than boys' (44.1% aerobic capacity for girls vs. 58.5% for boys).
 - Aerobic capacity is a key measure of heart health. Given that heart disease is the number one killer among women, developing heart-healthy habits during childhood and adolescence can be a powerful determinant to avoiding this most common chronic disease in adulthood.
 - The Georgia Department of Education conducted a statewide Student Health Survey in 2019, 2020, and 2021, which showcased some alarming trends (see Chart 2: Mental Well-being), including:
 - An increase in suicidal thoughts, confirmed in the 2020 VOX Teen survey:
 - 60 percent of respondents had experienced suicidal thought
 - Over 80 percent knew someone who had suicidal thoughts
 - An increase in feeling a drastic personality or behavior change and
 - An increase in students thinking about or acting on thoughts to harm themselves.
- Girls with unaddressed mental health problems may withdraw from classes and activities, have trouble in school, engage in unhealthy relationships, and self-harm, among other things. Supporting girls' mental health boosts their ability to lead healthy, fulfilling, and meaningful lives.

Positive Developments

- There are also some positive developments noted in the research:
- Graduation rates for girls across metro Atlanta have significantly increased over the past decade. Obtaining a high school diploma greatly reduces the likelihood of living in poverty for women, and rates of poverty decrease as women obtain higher degrees. See Chart 3: Graduation Rates.
- Teen births have declined across metro Atlanta. The ability to delay pregnancy is crucial to a woman's health and economic success. See Chart 4: Teen Birth Rates.



Chart 1: Economic Insecurity

Poverty rates in region are highest for girls of color

Poverty status for girls by race and county, 2019

Source: Author's analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

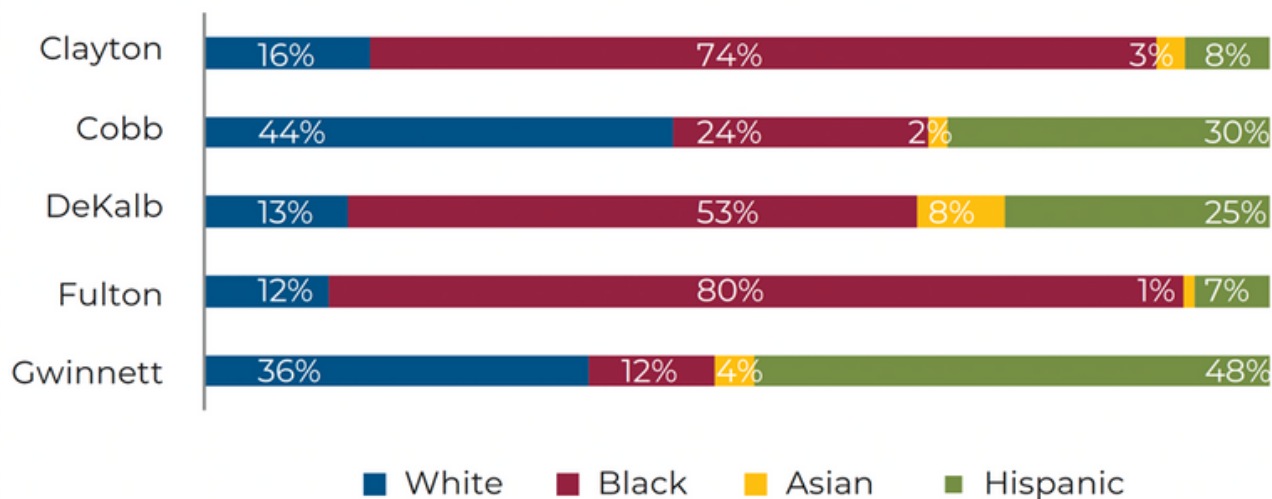


Chart 2: Mental Well-being

County	Share of girls who seriously considered hurting themselves at least once
Clayton County	20%
Cobb County	18%
DeKalb County	18%
Fulton County	19%
Gwinnett County	21%

Source: Author's analysis of data from the 2020 Georgia Student Health Survey



Chart 3:
Graduation Rates

Girls' graduation rates have improved over time in all districts

High school graduation rates (%) for the female student population,
2011 and 2021 school years

Source: Author's analysis of data from the Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2020-2021

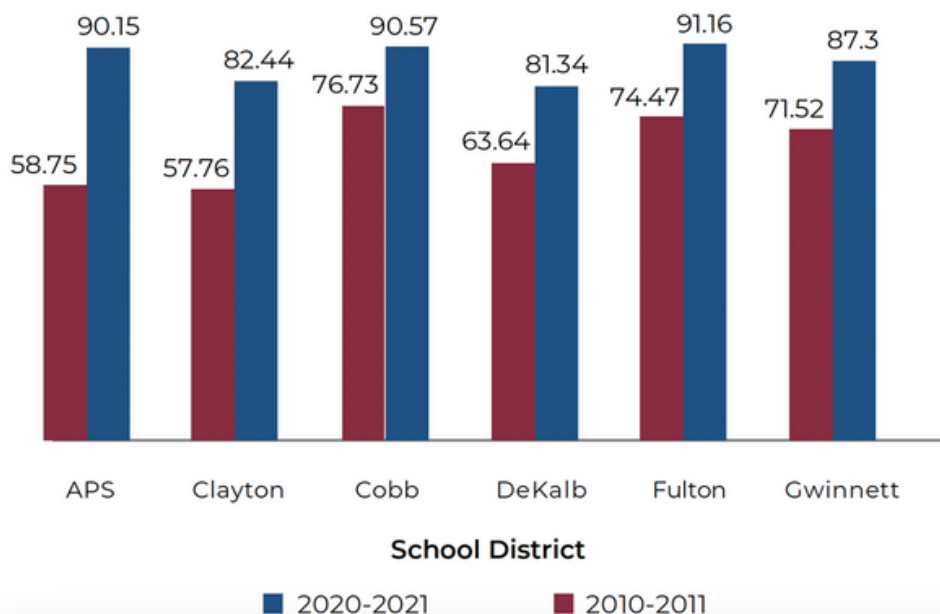
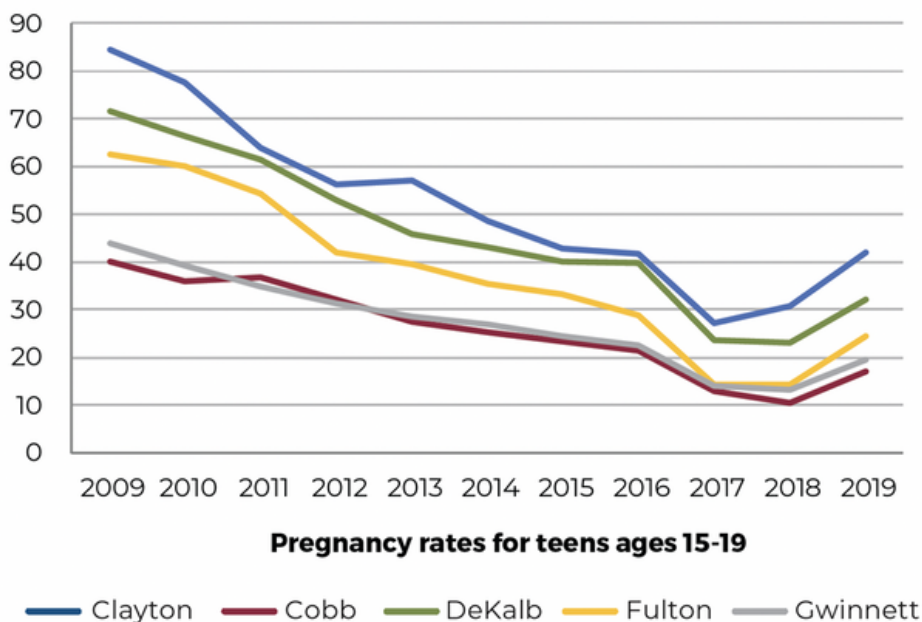


Chart 4: Teen Birth Rates

Metro Atlanta has experienced a significant decline in teen births

Teen birth rates by county per 1,000 teens, 2009-2019

Source: Author's analysis of data from Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009-2019





ALL GIRLS FORWARD: Girls Empowerment Program

AWF's research has inspired the [ALL GIRLS FORWARD: Girls Empowerment Program](#), which aims to ensure Atlanta's girls are empowered through education, socio-emotional development, and pregnancy prevention. Over the next five years, All Girls Forward will support local nonprofit organizations in providing the critical combination of services needed to ensure Atlanta's girls experiencing poverty can be on a level playing field with their peers.

This combination of services includes access to the following:

- mental and physical health services;
- supplemental educational opportunities, including STEM activities;
- college readiness support;
- mentoring; and
- financial literacy programming.

Program objectives include:

- empowering and educating a minimum of 5,000 girls at or below 200% of the federal poverty level;
- leveraging and expanding girl-focused programs in metro Atlanta with a priority on expanding services in Clayton County;
- creating new gender-based educational and health-related programs for girls; and
- developing a body of knowledge about the potential causes and solutions and making these findings available to policymaking entities.

Click [here](#) to support All Girls Forward!



atlantawomen.org