

ISSUE BRIEF

MAY 2016

Georgia's Youngest Learners: A Look at Child Well-Being from Birth through Five

Children's early experiences and relationships with caregivers lay the foundation for future learning and success in school, with the rate of brain development during the first several years of life exceeding that of any subsequent stage. In order for children to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed, it is critical that families, schools, and communities provide experiences that support the physical, social, emotional, language, literacy, and cognitive development of Georgia's youngest learners. A number of factors, including poverty, access to quality early education programs, and exposure to adverse experiences, influence children's school readiness skills. The brief that follows highlights data relevant to the well-being of Georgia's children ages 0-5 and their families.

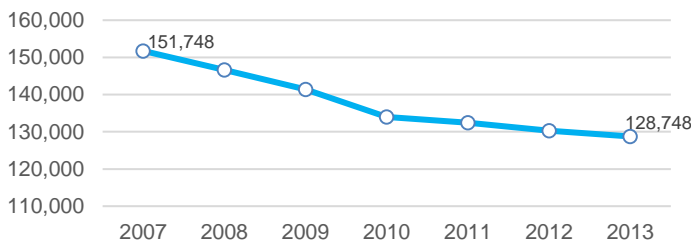
BIRTH RATES

The number of babies born in the U.S. has declined steadily since 2007. In 2013, the U.S. birth rate for women ages 15 to 44 reached a record low.

Georgia has seen a similar decline over the last several years, with the number of babies born in 2013 (128,748) 15% lower than in 2007 (151,137).

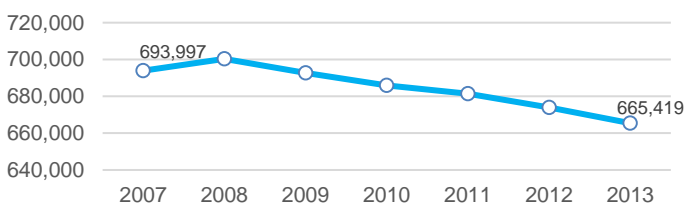
Children ages 0-4 represent approximately 27% (665,419) of the child population (under 18) in Georgia.

Total Births in Georgia, 2007-2013



Source: Population Reference Bureau Analysis of Final Birth Data, National Center for Health Statistics

Georgia Population, Ages 0-4, 2007-2013[†]



Source: Population Division, U.S. Census.

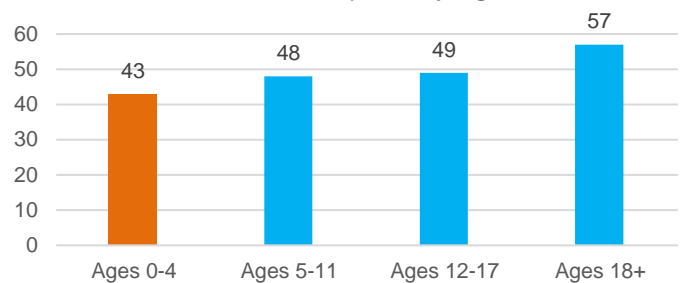
[†] Note: 2010-2014 data are U.S. Census Bureau Estimates

GROWING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. By 2030, the overall U.S. child population is estimated to be "majority minority."¹

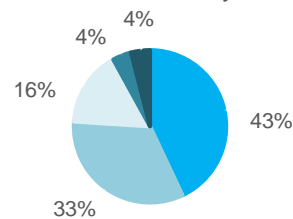
In Georgia, an increasingly larger proportion of children are Hispanic or non-white, and children under five are more diverse than any other age group. A growing number of Georgia's children live in immigrant families (i.e., child or 1+ parent foreign born).

Percent of Georgia Population Identified as White and Non-Hispanic by Age, 2014



Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau

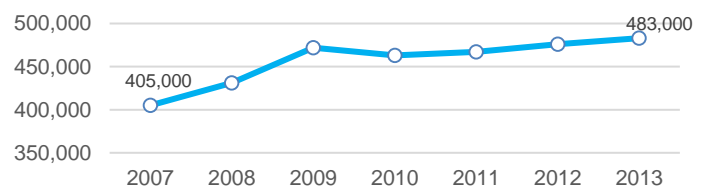
Percent of Georgia Children Ages 0-4 by Race/Ethnicity



Legend: White, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, 2+ Races

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau

Georgia Children (under 18) in Immigrant Families



Source: Population Reference Bureau, Census Supplementary Survey, Amer. Community Survey

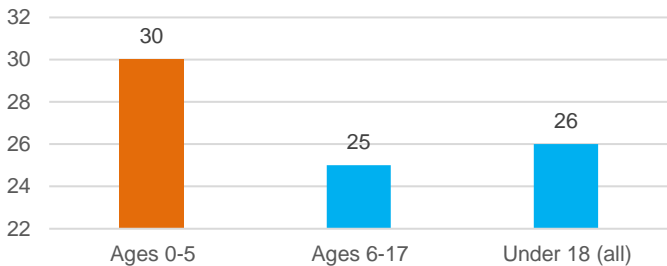
POVERTY

Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to children's healthy development. Children from low-SES homes lag behind their higher-SES peers in both cognitive and non-cognitive skills at kindergarten entry.²

In 2014, 24% of children ages 0-5 in the United States were living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. In Georgia, this number was 30%.³ Georgia's *youngest* children, those age 5 and under, are more likely to be living in poverty than their older peers.

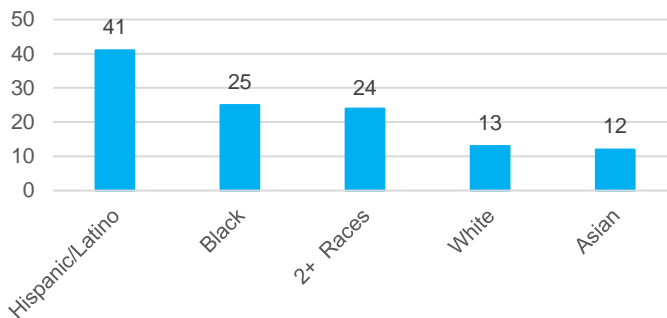
Finally, Georgia children who are Hispanic/Latino or Black are experiencing poverty at higher rates than their White and Asian counterparts.

Percent of Georgia Children Living in Poverty by Age, 2014



Source: Population Reference Bureau, Census Supplementary Survey, Amer. Community Survey

Percent of Georgia Children (under 18) Living in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity, 2014

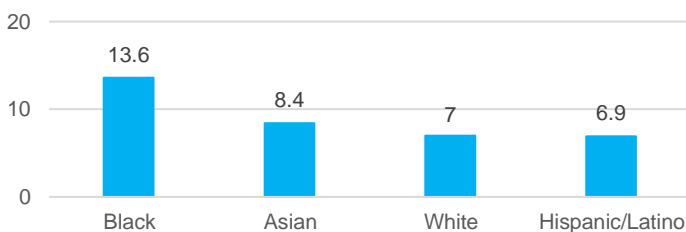


Source: Population Reference Bureau, Census Supplementary Survey, Amer. Community Survey

HEALTHY BIRTHS

Infants born prematurely (before the 37th week of pregnancy) and/or at a low birthweight (<2,500 grams or 5 lbs, 8 oz) are at greater risk for health complications and developmental delays.⁴ In Georgia, rates of both premature (13%) and low birthweight (9.5%) births are higher than national averages (11% and 8.0%, respectively).⁵ Disparities in these rates by race and ethnicity are evident.

Percent of Low Birthweight Babies in Georgia by Race/Ethnicity, 2014



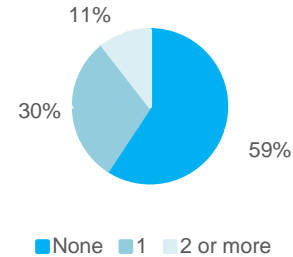
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

TOXIC STRESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early exposure to adverse experiences such as domestic violence, caregiver mental illness, or parental incarceration—often referred to as “toxic stress”—can disrupt developing brain architecture, leading to potentially long-lasting effects on children's learning and development.⁶

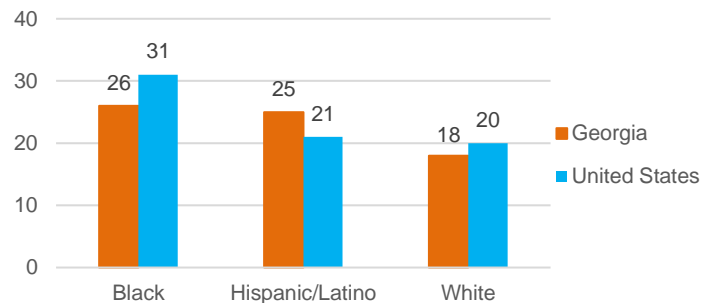
Nationally and in Georgia, 22% of children under 18 have experienced two or more adverse experiences, with notable racial and ethnic disparities.⁷

Percent of Georgia Children under 5 with 0, 1, or 2+ Adverse Experiences, 2012



Source: National Survey of Children's Health, 2011-2012

Percent of Children (under 18) with 2+ Adverse Experiences by Race/Ethnicity, 2012



Source: Child Trends' Analysis of the 2011-2012 National Survey of Children's Health

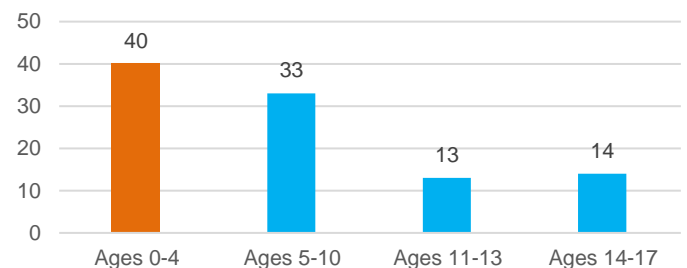
CHILD WELFARE

In Georgia and nationally, younger children are more likely than older children to experience abuse and neglect, with children under 5 accounting for 40% of all confirmed maltreatment cases among Georgia's children ages 0-18.

After several years of steady improvement, the rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases in Georgia rose sharply in 2014 to 10.2 per 1,000.

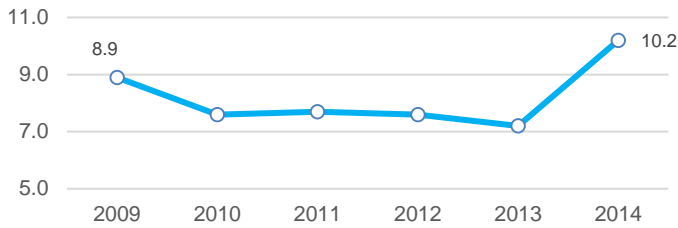
The most common form of child maltreatment in Georgia is neglect, representing 63% of all confirmed cases in 2012.

Percent of Confirmed Child Maltreatment in Georgia by Age, 2012



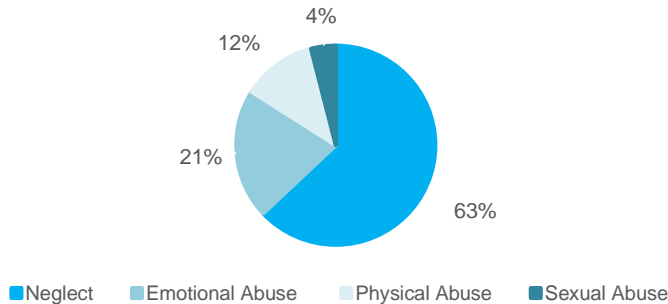
Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Child File

Georgia Children with Substantiated Incident of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (per 1,000)



Source: Child Protective Services Data System, Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services.

Percent of Confirmed Child Maltreatment in Georgia by Type, 2012



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Child File

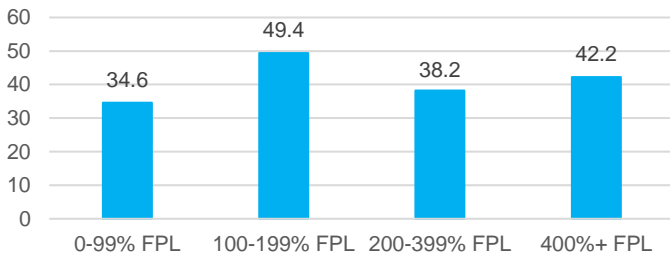
DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Approximately 15% of U.S. children ages three to 17 have a developmental disability, with higher prevalence among children from low-SES families.⁸ Standardized developmental screening is crucial to early detection and the success of early intervention efforts.

In 2012, Georgia parents of children ages 0-5 reported completing developmental screening tools^{††} at a rate of 38%, eight points higher than the national average but still far from meeting the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation that all children receive such screenings at scheduled well-visits that occur during the first three years.^{7,9} Disparities in reported screening rates can be seen by income and race/ethnicity.

State Medicaid program guidelines dictate that all children receive screening services through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) program. However, in 2015, only 54% of eligible children received a screen.¹⁰

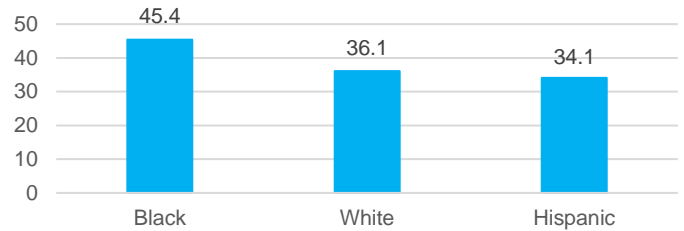
Percent of Children 0-5 Who Received a Developmental Screening^{††} by Income, 2012



Source: National Survey of Children's Health, 2011-2012

††Parents were asked whether their child had been screened for being at risk of delay using a parent-reported standardized screening tool during a health visit

Percent of Children 0-5 Who Received a Developmental Screening^{††} by Race/Ethnicity, 2012



Source: National Survey of Children's Health, 2011-2012

CHILD CARE - COST

In the U.S., child care is the second largest expense for families with young children, behind only housing.¹¹ Families with young children require child care in order to work, yet the high cost puts quality care out of reach for many working families.

Average Weekly Parent Fees in Georgia, 2013-2014 (Infants)

	Child Care Center	Family Child Care Home
Urban	\$161	\$127
Rural	\$99	\$91

Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Georgia

*Although estimates vary, Child Care Aware of America reports the average annual fees for fulltime center care for an infant are **\$7,644 in Georgia**¹²*

Meanwhile, wages for the early childhood workforce remain quite low.

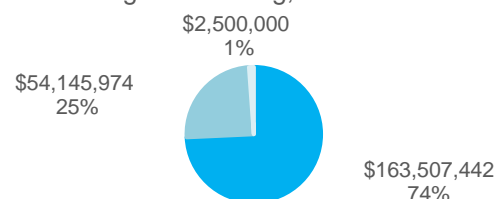
Georgia Early Childhood Workforce Average Hourly Wage (Child Care Center)

Assistant Teacher	Lead Teacher	Administrator
\$9.18	\$12.30	\$15.40

Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Georgia

Child care subsidy programs can help low-income working families afford child care. Georgia's child care subsidy program, known as CAPS (Childcare and Parent Services), is funded largely through a federal Child Care and Development Block Grant. The program serves only a fraction—approximately 40,000—of the many Georgia children in low-income families who are estimated to need quality child care but unable to afford it. Georgia's most recent child care subsidy plan called for increased income eligibility thresholds (65% of state median income), higher reimbursement rates for providers, lower family co-payments, and an emphasis on access to *high-quality* care. However, without additional state funds to support the program, these changes are likely to result in a *decrease* in the number of children served.

Source of Georgia Child Care Assistance Program Funding, FY 2014



■ Federal Child Care Funds ■ State General Funds ■ State Lottery Funds

Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Fiscal Year 2014

CHILD CARE - QUALITY

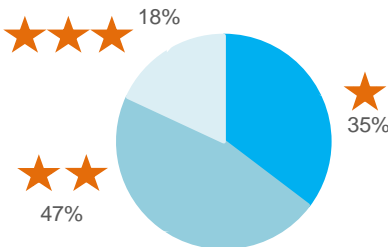
A large body of research reveals a robust relation between early childhood program quality and child-level outcomes, including language, cognitive, and social-emotional skills.¹³ However, across the U.S. and in Georgia, early childhood programs vary markedly in their quality. A 2008-2009 study found the quality of such programs in Georgia to be, on average, in the low-medium range.¹⁴ In 2013, Georgia launched *Quality Rated*, a tiered quality rating and improvement system used to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in such programs.



Currently, 43% (approx. 2,600) of eligible Georgia child care providers are participating in Quality Rated. Of those providers who have received a rating, 18% received the highest rating of three stars.

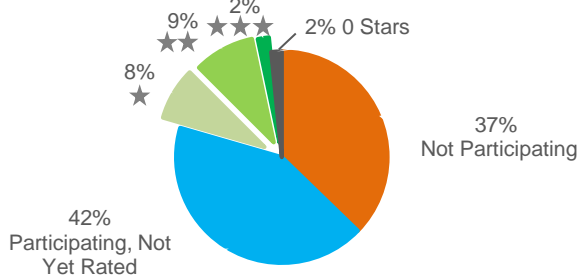
Nearly 40% of child care subsidy recipients attend a program that is either not participating in Quality Rated or received "0" stars.

Percent of Georgia Quality Rated Providers Receiving 1, 2, or 3 Stars



Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, May 2016

Percent of Child Care Subsidy Certificates by Quality Rated Status



Source: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

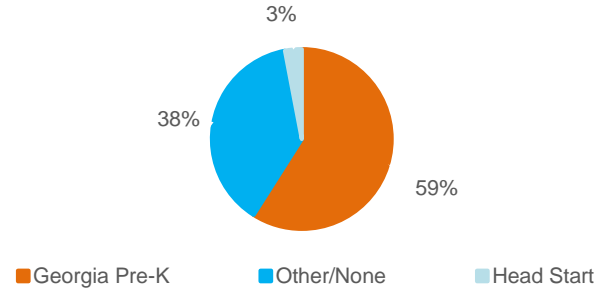
PRE-K

In 1995, Georgia launched the nation's first universal pre-kindergarten program for 4-year-olds. With funding from state lottery revenues, Georgia Pre-K served 80,440 students in 2014-2015, representing 59% of age-eligible children and 55% of the state's low-income 4-year-olds.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) established a quality standards checklist for pre-kindergarten programs. In 2015, NIEER reported that Georgia met 8 of the 10 benchmarks on this checklist.

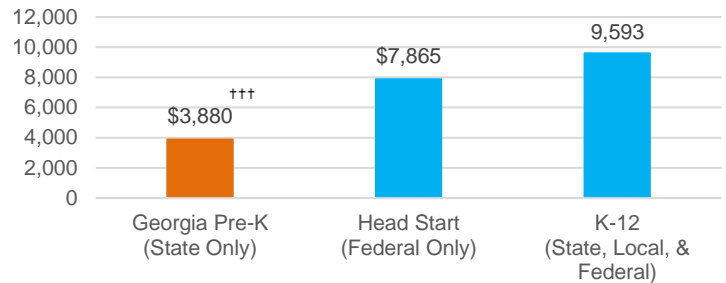
In 2011, the Georgia General Assembly funded a series of ongoing studies to evaluate learning outcomes of children attending Georgia Pre-K as well as the quality of Pre-K classrooms.

Program Enrollment as Percentage of Total Population of Georgia Four-Year-Olds, 2014-2015



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, State Preschool Yearbook, 2015

Spending per Child Enrolled, 2014-2015



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, State Preschool Yearbook, 2015

NIEER Preschool Quality Standards Checklist – Georgia

- Comprehensive Early Learning Standards
- Teacher Degree (BA)
- Teacher Specialized Training (Elem., ECE, 0-5, etc.)
- Assistant Teacher Degree (CDA or higher)
- Teacher In-Service (at least 15 hours/year)
- Maximum Class Size (20 or lower) **Currently 22 in GA**
- Staff:Child Ratio (1:10 or better) **Currently 1:11 in GA**
- Screening/Referral and Support Services
- Meals (at least 1/day)
- Monitoring (site visits)

Total Benchmarks Met: 8

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, State Preschool Yearbook, 2015
 †††Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources not included in this figure

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