AFTERSCHOOL CHOICES, INFLUENCES AND NEEDS

Quality experiences, according to youth today, are all about community: a feeling of belonging, opportunities to meet new people, and a no-judgment zone. Opportunities to rest and to expand skills and build toward their future are also top priorities for youth today!

During a typical school week, what do you do after school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Blank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I went home</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went to a friend’s house</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went to an after-school program that is NOT at my school</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went to my job</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went to a relative’s or care-giver’s house</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went to volunteer</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spent time outdoors (alone or with friends)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stayed at school for afterschool activities (clubs or sports)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in other types of activities (passion project, library, organized sports, etc.)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did you do in summer 2023? Participants could select multiple responses.

- **41%** Travel
- **38%** Nothing much/just hanging out
- **36%** Summer camp (of any kind)
- **34%** Working
- **33%** Summer learning program - local (based in my community)

* Summer learning also happened at summer school (29%) and at summer programs away from home (28%).

WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT TO TEENS TODAY

Respondents ranked their future college and career, social justice, and social media as today’s most important topics.

What topics are most important to you today?

- **53%** Life After High School (college & career)
- **46%** Social Justice (including your rights, interaction with law enforcement)
- **40%** Social Media and/or Games
- **40%** Education (during the high school years)
- **39%** My Community / My Neighborhood (my ATL—the good, the bad and the ugly)

Which life skills are most important to you but are not adequately taught in school? Participants chose their top 3. Topics advised by youth and staff at VOX ATL.

- **46%** Healthy Relationships
- **40%** Earning and saving money
- **33%** Self-care and managing well-being
- **31%** Budgeting
- **29%** Conflict management or resolution

OVERVIEW

VOX ATL created a regional survey in 2015 to fill an information gap and let adults who work with youth know more about teens’ needs from their own perspectives. Expanding statewide in 2019*, this strengths-based survey shares young people’s insights around:

- **AFTERSCHOOL**: How do teens spend time outside of school? What influences their choices, and how do youth wish to spend their time? This section also includes teens’ perspectives on what makes a quality after-school program and where they feel valued.
- **MENTAL HEALTH**: What do teens say are the main causes of stress today and their choices for stress relief? This section also shares teens’ views about stigma and access to resources so we can strive to remove barriers.
- **COMMUNICATIONS**: Where do teens get their information, and how do they like to communicate, so we can reach them more effectively?

*Statewide expansion and increased focus on mental health is supported by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities.

WHAT TEENS WANT TO DO AFTERSCHOOL

The most desired opportunities are related to post-secondary success!

- **48%** Have career-related experiences (like an internship or job shadowing)*
- **48%** Hang out outdoors (alone or with friends)
- **43%** Play a sport
- **41%** Hang out in a relaxing space just for teens
- **40%** Stay home/personal time

What influenced how you spent your time after school last year (2022-23)?

- **#1 (tie!):** Opportunities that might help my future & opportunities that interest me - 39% said lots of influence each
- **#2:** The adults in my life - 35% said lots of influence
- **#3:** Location & Transportation - 32% and 31% respectively said lots of influence

Other factors include school requirements (28% said "lots of influence), affordability/cost (22%), and mental health, friends, and loved ones (4%).

More data is available at voxatl.org/vox-teen-survey.
FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

On a typical day, what is your average daily level of stress?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely High</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What causes you the most stress?

Participants could choose their top 3. This is the third year in a row in this teen survey (since 2000) that mental health is the No. 1 named cause of stress. 45% My mental health*

41% School

33% Preparing for life after high school

Family challenges (22%), my physical health (29%), and financial stress (4%) and trauma (29%) each followed on in stressors.

How do teens cope with stress or relax?

Participants could select multiple responses.

1. - Consuming media e.g. TV, music, anime, podcasts (40%)*

2. - Getting involved with extracurricular activities (44%)

3. - Talking it out with peers (41%)

Making something creative and gaming were near (38% each), and then reading and exercise (33% each) Top answers in 2022 were having a space away from others (46.5%) and talking it out with peers (46%) The top answer from the previous two years: making something creative.

The good news is, while mental health may be teens’ top stressor, 72%* said, yes, they are talking about mental health with each other! (Closest digits from 2002 and up to 5% in 2023)

Youth today are stressed!

More than 70% of respondents have been experiencing high to moderate stress levels.

The new top answer

LACK OF INFORMATION IS STILL A VERY IMPORTANT FACTOR!

This year: 46% of youth said they knew someone who had suicidal thoughts

23% experienced suicidal ideations themselves, and

27% said they do not know what their schools do to support students’ mental health (or their schools don’t provide services).

What does your school do to support students’ mental health?

Participants could select multiple responses.

45% The school counselors or teachers and staff support students’ mental health 1:1

38% They offer classes about mental health, self-care, and other stress-reducing techniques

36% There’s a mental health center or program at/in my school

34% They provide an outlet for us to express ourselves

31% They offer activities to recognize signs and symptoms of mental health challenges

30% They hold assemblies about mental health

23% They have peer-to-peer groups

12% I don’t know what they do

12% They don’t do any of these things

Barriers to accessing mental health care

Participants could select multiple responses.

39% Cost (too expensive/ I don’t know what insurance I have or I don’t have insurance that covers mental health care)

28% I don’t feel ok asking for help

26% I don’t know where to go for mental health care

23% None of these apply to me

21% I don’t have access to mental health care providers

18% My parent(s)/guardian(s)/ supervisor(s)/adult(s) said “no” to mental health services

15% I don’t have transportation or a way to get to care

2% Other (i.e. lack of trust, lack of providers, discomfort)

HIGHLIGHTED HEADLINES: YOUTH VOICES ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Especially since feeling heard and supporting their communities helps youth cope and feel valued, VOX ATL regularly publishes teens’ original content about mental health – from articles to videos, reels, and podcasts! VOXATL.org/category/mental-health

HIGHLIGHTED HEADLINES FROM 2023 INCLUDE:

The Tab Behind the Talk - How TalkIt’s Sexual Content Impacts Teens

The Pressures of Perfectionism

Teens React to Gun-related Child Deaths in Atlanta

How Can Parents Better Support Teen Mental Health?

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Thanks to the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities for supporting this annual survey and seeking youth voices to reduce stigma and strengthen Georgia’s quality system of care.

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Teens are talking about mental health — with each other!

Do you know talk openly about mental health concerns?

No 28%*

Yes 72%*

81% of survey respondents said they have a caring adult in their lives to help mitigate stress and mental health issues.

Who do you trust and feel supported by?

Participants could select multiple responses.

64% My friends

58% My parent(s)/guardian(s)

52% My teacher(s)

45% My sibling(s)

35% My coach(s)

29% My best friend(s)

29% My after-school program instructor(s)

Do you have a caring adult to confide in who won’t judge you if you express your feelings?

No response 2%

Yes 81%*
Which apps were most popular in 2023?

- **Instagram**: 73% said they use daily or often
- **TikTok**: 70% said they use daily or often
- **YouTube**: 66% said they use daily or often
- *Twitter changed to X in the middle of this survey. Least used were Tumblr and Slack.*

In 2022:

- **YouTube** was #1, virtually tied with TikTok, as 38% & 37% of respondents said they use these daily (only 3% said they never use YouTube).

Where do you get the majority of your news?

- **Social media**
- **Family (parent/guardian) - people in my household**
- **Friends**
- **News channels (CNN, ABC, NBC or FOX News)**
- **Digital news websites**
- **School**
- **Radio (like NPR)**
- **Print newspaper or magazine**

**Social media** also serves as respondents’ most popular news source.

**STAYING CONNECTED**

Surprise! Texting is still the No. 1 way teens say they communicate with their peers. DMs on social media and group messaging platforms come in a close second.

What is the most common way you communicate with your peers?

- **Texting**: 21%
- **Social media DMs**: 18%
- **Messaging platforms like GroupMe, WhatsApp or Discord**: 18%
- **Video calls (like FaceTime or Snapchat video chat)**: 16%
- **In person**: 10%
- **Phone calls**: 9%
- **Social media posts and comments**: 7%
- **Email**: 5%
- **Instant messaging (like Messenger or Skype)**: 4%
- **Instant messaging (like Kik or AIM)**: 3%
- **Voice calls**: 2%
- **Other**: 1%

**METHODOLOGY**

This 2023 Teen Survey was updated with input from stakeholders, including the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) and Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), as well as teens and staff from VOX ATL.

We updated the questions to include insights that these stakeholders requested to inform their work, while maintaining the mobile and youth-friendly Survey Monkey platform, and the opportunity for participants to enter into drawings for a gift card. We also added two different "stop" questions to try to minimize, fraudulent responses.

We promoted the survey through peer-to-peer communications, on VOX ATL social media, and to youth-serving organizations via email, GSAN’s summer learning event, and GA DBHDD. We published teens’ promotional graphics with the survey link, and we encouraged teens in our programs to take the survey and share it with their peers.

The survey was open June 1 - September 1, 2023.

*We eliminated responses that did not answer our two "stop questions," had zipcodes outside of Georgia or where zip code did not match the county. We also evaluated duplicate IP addresses but took into account if respondents said they heard about the survey from a legitimate source such as a recognized VOX teen participant or community partner.

**WHO TOOK THE 2023 SURVEY?**

**County**

- 6% Clayton
- 13% Cobb
- 14% DeKalb
- 32% Fulton
- 7% Gwinnett
- 29% GA counties

72% of respondents live in the 5-county metro-Atlanta area.

**School**

- 56% Public school
- 9% Private school
- 5% Alternative school
- 5% Homeschool
- 2% Not in school
- 13% College (of any kind)
- 1% Other

**Race**

- 10% American Indian or Alaskan(n) Native
- 5% Asian
- 38% Black or African American
- 7% Hispanic or Latino
- 2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- 47% White
- 1% Prefer not to identify
- 1% Multi-racial

**Gender**

- 57% Female
- 38% Male
- 2% Transgender
- 2% Gender Queer/ Non-Binary
- 1% Gender Neutral/Agender
- 0% Prefer not identify

**Age**

- Respondents ranged in age from 11 to 25. More than 40% of respondents were aged 16-17, and the median age of respondents was 17. (This is a similar age profile to our 2022 and 2021 surveys.)

**WHO TOOK THE 2023 SURVEY?**

2% 11
2% 12
1% 13
4% 14
11% 15
12% 19
20% 16
13% 20-25

5% 13
4% 14
11% 15
12% 19
20% 16
13% 20-25

After cleaning the data, reviewing for incomplete responses, and controlling for fraudulent responses, we analyzed 458 entries.

*We eliminated responses that did not answer our two "stop questions," had zipcodes outside of Georgia or where zip code did not match the county. We also evaluated duplicate IP addresses but took into account if respondents said they heard about the survey from a legitimate source such as a recognized VOX teen participant or community partner.*

**STAYING CONNECTED**

Social media also serves as respondents’ most popular news source.

**What is the most common way you communicate with your peers?**

Participants could select multiple responses or leave the question blank.

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- Video calls (like FaceTime or Snapchat video chat): 16%
- In person: 10%
- Phone calls: 9%
- Social media posts and comments: 7%

**Where do you get the majority of your news?**

(Choose all that apply.)

- Social media: 55%
- Family (parent/guardian) - people in my household: 52%
- Friends: 48%
- News channels (CNN, ABC, NBC or FOX News): 46%
- Digital news websites: 39%
- School: 38%
- Radio (like NPR): 30%
- Print newspaper or magazine: 22%

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