

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.*

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?

| In 2022-23 | Often | Sometimes | Never | Blank |
|--|-------|-----------|-------|-------|
| I went home | 47% | 40% | 11% | 2% |
| I went to a friend's house | 22% | 53% | 25% | 1% |
| I went to an after-school program that is NOT at my school | 21% | 44% | 34% | 1% |
| I went to my job | 24% | 36% | 39% | 2% |
| I went to a relative's or care-giver's house | 25% | 44% | 31% | 1% |
| I went to volunteer | 20% | 50% | 29% | 2% |
| I spent time outdoors (alone or with friends) | 29% | 52% | 17% | 1% |
| I stayed at school for afterschool activities (clubs or sports) | 40% | 44% | 16% | 0% |
| Participated in other types of activities (passion project, library, organized sports, etc.) | | | | 10% |

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.

Respondents wish schools taught more about healthy relationships, money management, and how to prioritize self-care.

What topics are most important to you today?

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

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

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

**In 2022 Career-related activities was also #1 & hang out in a relaxing space just for teens was #2 at 45%.*

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.



What makes an afterschool program a quality experience?

Participants/respondents could select multiple responses.

Survey options were named as elements of "quality" by teens in the video "What is Quality," and more details are published at voxatl.org/guide-on-the-side/. This year's top answers include:

- 51%** The community/a feeling of belonging
- 49%** Opportunities to meet new people
- 48%** No-judgment zone (a space that is free of judgment)*
- 47%** Opportunities to expand my skills*

No-judgment zone & *Opportunities to expand my skills* were No. 1 in 2022.

Who helps you prepare for life after high school?

Only **19%** of respondents said afterschool program staff help with postsecondary planning, representing a big opportunity for impact. Respondents could select multiple responses.

- 58%** My parent/guardian
- 44%** School guidance counselor
- 40%** A teacher
- 38%** Another relative who's already graduated high school

VALUE AND TRUST

Friendship is vital, and **56%** of respondents felt most valued, trusted, and supported among friends. Teens felt most valued when asked for their opinions — especially by adults — or are able to assist others in their community.

Where do you feel valued — like you matter?

Participants could select multiple responses.

- 56%** Among my friends/peer group
- 54%** At home
- 37%** At school
- 35%** At an after-school club
- 31%** On my sports team
- 30%** In my community
- 25%** In my faith-based organization (church, mosque, synagogue, youth group)
- 17%** I don't really feel valued by others at this time
- 13%** At an after-school (community) program
- 1%** Other (work, with family)

I feel valued when...

Participants could select multiple responses.

- 59%** I can help others (family, friends, or community)
- 57%** Adults in my life ask for my ideas or opinions
- 54%** I can earn my own money or work at an internship
- 49%** I spend time with people I care about
- 49%** I feel like I can make a difference in regards to a problem or social issue I care about
- 48%** My peers ask for my ideas or opinions
- 45%** I am in a leadership position in an organization or group
- 41%** Something I make or perform gets shown to others (art, media, music, theater, etc.)

Who do you trust and feel supported by?

Participants could select multiple responses.

- 64%** My friend(s)
- 58%** My parent(s) or guardian(s)
- 52%** My teacher(s)
- 45%** My sibling(s)
- 33%** My coach(es)
- 29%** My tutor(s)
- 29%** My afterschool program instructor(s)

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

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

- 11%** Extremely High
- 30%** High
- 41%** Moderate
- 16%** Low
- 3%** None



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.

- 41%** My mental health*
- 35%** School
- 33%** Preparing for life after high school

Family challenges (32%), my physical health (29%), and financial stress & past trauma (24% each) followed as top stressors.

How do teens cope with stress or relax?

Participants could select multiple responses.

- #1 - Consuming media e.g. TV, music, anime, podcasts (48%)***
- #2 - Getting involved with extracurricular activities (44%)**
- #3 - Talking it out with peers (41%)**

Making something creative and gaming were next (**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. *New top answer

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Teens are talking about mental health — with each other!



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).

Where do you get information on mental health?

Participants could select multiple responses.

- 45%** My family
- 43%** My friends
- 42%** I look it up myself online
- 39%** School counselor
- 35%** A community organization / program
- 34%** School Resource Center
- 34%** It just pops up on my social media feed
- 27%** Faith-based organization
- 7%** I do not get that kind of information from anyone
- 3%** Other (i.e. therapy)



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
- 15%** I don't know what they do
- 12%** They don't do any of these things



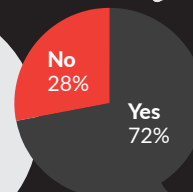
Youth today are stressed!

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

The good news is, while mental health may be teens' top stressor, **72%*** said, yes, they are talking about mental health with each other!

(*Down slightly from 76% in 2022 and up from 59% in 2021)

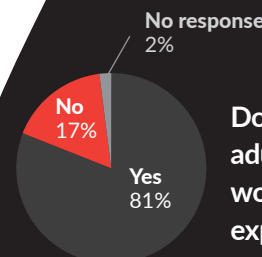
Do teens you know talk openly about mental health concerns?



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

Friends and family are integral for learning healthy coping mechanisms, but self-help is the 3rd most popular coping mechanism — **42%** above teachers and school support.

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



BARRIERS BARRIERS BARRIERS BARRIERS BARRIERS BARRIERS

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 like/connect with the mental health care provider
- 18%** My parent(s)/guardian(s)/supervising 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 Tick Behind the Tok - How TikTok'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?
- Mental Health and School [podcast]



This campaign is supported by DBHDD and organized in partnership with Voices for Georgia's Children and Silence the Shame.

VOX ATL also proudly partners with the Free Your Feels campaign to create peer-to-peer content supporting teens as they speak, listen and connect around mental health! Join in at FreeYourFeels.org and on IG @FreeYourFeelsGA.



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.

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.

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

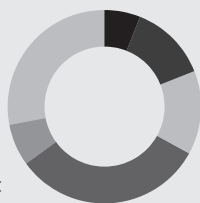


**We eliminated responses that did not answer our two "stop questions," had zipcodes outside of Georgia or where zipcode did not match the county. We also evaluated duplicate IP addresses but took into account if respondents said they heard about the survey from a legitimate source such as a recognized 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 *E.g. charter and magnet schools

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

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.)

| | | | | | |
|----|----|-----|----|-----|-------|
| 2% | 11 | 11% | 15 | 12% | 19 |
| 2% | 12 | 20% | 16 | 13% | 20-25 |
| 1% | 13 | 21% | 17 | | |
| 4% | 14 | 13% | 18 | | |

Gender *Respondents were able to select as many gender identities as applicable.

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

Race Just over 60% of respondents identified as young people of color.

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

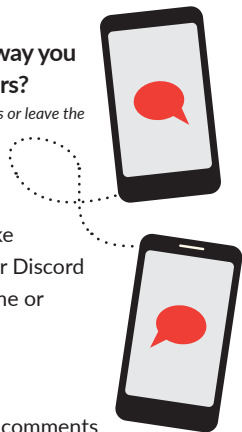
STAYING CONNECTED

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?

Participants could select multiple responses or leave the question blank.

- 21% Texting
- 18% Social media DMs
- 18% Messaging platforms like GroupMe, WhatsApp or Discord
- 16% Video calls (like FaceTime or Snapchat video chat)
- 10% In person
- 9% Phone calls
- 7% Social media posts and comments



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

Where do you get the majority of your news?

(Check all that apply.)

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

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).

