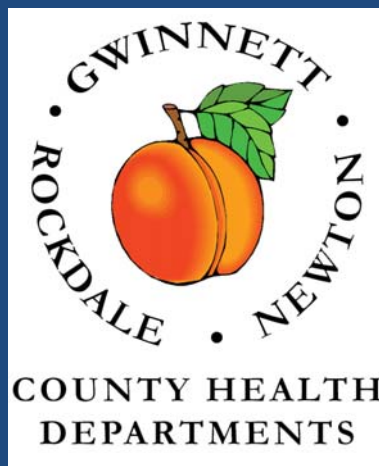


Rockdale County Health Department

A healthy, protected, and prepared community

Community Health Assessment Community Health Improvement Plan



March 2014



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Rockdale County Health Department, Georgia

Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan, 2014



About the Rockdale County Health Department

The Rockdale County Health Department continuously monitors the health status of the community to identify health problems, educate the public on ways to reduce health risks, and promote better health through individual contact and media interactions.

We regularly participate in and mobilize community groups to develop policies and action plans to improve the health of the people in the community. The health department enforces laws, regulations, and ordinances that protect health and ensure safety. Working together to provide these vitally important, essential public health services, we can improve the quality of life for everyone in the community and state.

Our Mission

To protect and improve the health of our community by monitoring and preventing disease; promoting health and well being; and preparing for disasters.

Our Vision

A healthy, protected, and prepared community.

Our Values

Availability: We will be available to our clients through emergency preparedness services, disease and outbreak investigations, expanded hours and readily available services.

Affability: We will work to ensure our clients have a good experience at our clinics. We will treat clients, co-workers, partners and others in our community with respect. We will value our employees.

Ability: We will work toward a high level of competency in all areas of service.

Accountability: We will be good stewards of the funds and materials we receive.

Adaptability: We will always look forward to meet the current and future needs of our community.

Purpose of This Report

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

-World Health Organization (WHO)¹

This report describes a combined community health assessment (CHA) and community health improvement plan (CHIP) for Rockdale County, Georgia. By examining the county's health status, this combined CHA/CHIP will help our community focus our efforts on the most important health needs of county residents. This community-wide health assessment is intended to help shape coordinated community plans to improve health.

This report focuses not just on disease indicators like death rates and case counts, but also on the many factors that influence health, which include income, housing, education, and transportation. This focus is consistent with the WHO definition of health—stated above—and reflects the diversity of community efforts currently ongoing and needed in Rockdale County to improve health.

This report was done in collaboration with the Rockdale Coalition for Children and Families (Rockdale Coalition).² Of importance, the Rockdale Coalition has produced a thorough summary of community resources,³ many of which are highlighted in this report.

¹ World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>

² Rockdale Coalition for Children and Families (<http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/>)

³ Rockdale County Community Resources <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>

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How the Assessment and Improvement Plan Were Conducted

As noted in the Purpose section, this combined CHA/CHIP was done in collaboration with Rockdale Coalition. As background, the Rockdale Coalition previously completed a community health assessment and community health improvement plan with the health department and other community partners before the release of the PHAB standards and measures. This assessment and improvement plan was done using a participatory framework suggested by the Rockdale Coalition's umbrella agency, Georgia Family Connections Partnership.

In the process of preparing for an accreditation application, the Rockdale County Health Department learned of a framework called Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP), which is a community-driven strategic planning process that can be useful in guiding CHAs and CHIPs. A representative from the health department presented the MAPP framework to the Rockdale Coalition, the Hospital Authority of Rockdale County (HARC), Rockdale Medical Center, and the United Way. These organizations elected to form a MAPP Team to further the CHA/CHIP process. This team worked together using the MAPP framework to (1) build upon the previously collected data, assets, and resources; (2) establish health priorities; and (3) develop action plans for this Rockdale County CHA/CHIP.

As part of the CHA/CHIP process, we conducted a Forces of Change Assessment (FOC) in which community leaders discussed trends that affect the health of the community, including specific threats and opportunities. This FOC meeting included members of Rockdale County's HEALTH SafetyNet (described later) and was facilitated by the United Way. Each participant was asked to brainstorm barriers to a healthy Rockdale community. Themes were identified from responses that fit in multiple categories and relevant threats and opportunities were discussed.

To supplement community information in the assessment, data from the U.S. Census Bureau⁴ were included on county demographics, income and poverty, and transportation. Illness and death statistics (morbidity and mortality) and other demographic information were obtained from the Georgia Department of Public Health's Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS).⁵ OASIS dashboards allow for comparison of Rockdale County morbidity and mortality rates with statewide rates. Other data came from the County Health Rankings.⁶ When possible, available data for Rockdale County were compared against Healthy People 2020 goals established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.⁷

To better understand Rockdale County's determinants of health, including economics, transportation, recreation, and water resources, documents from other county agencies were reviewed and referenced.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml###>

⁵ Online Analytical Statistical Information System <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/>

⁶ County Health Rankings <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

⁷ Healthy People 2020 <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>

Quick Stats about Rockdale County and the Health Priorities

- The county's **population increased** dramatically from the 1970s to the 2000s, but the rate of increase **slowed markedly** after 2008
- The number of **residents 60 years and older grew by more than 50%** from 2000 to 2010; the senior population is on course to grow rapidly in the coming decades
- The county **diversified** substantially between 1990 and 2010; nearly half (47%) the county's residents were African-American in 2010, whereas the county was 90% White in 1990
- The county's **median household income** is higher than the Georgia and the U.S. figures, but over **one in five children** in Rockdale County live in **poverty**
- **Two-thirds** of Rockdale students are **eligible for free and reduced-price** school meals
- **Rockdale County** ranks **10th in overall health, 23rd in clinical care, and 103rd in physical environment** among Georgia's 159 counties
- Over **one in five** Rockdale County residents **lacked health insurance** from 2010-2012, including nearly half (46%) of adults 25-34 years old
- The county appears to have an **adequate number** of certain health care professionals, including **primary care physicians and dentists**
- There were about **7,000 residents per mental health care provider**, which was **twice as high** as the statewide ratio of about 3,500:1
- Nearly **one in three** Rockdale County adults are **obese**, as are **one in seven** low-income preschool **children**
- More than **one in four** Rockdale county residents gets **no leisure-time physical activity**
- **One in seven** Rockdale County residents has **diabetes**, and the number of residents with diabetes **increased by 79%** between 2004 and 2010
- The age-adjusted **death rate due to suicide** in Rockdale County was slightly lower than the statewide rate
- **Over half** of renters and more than **two in five** home mortgage holders are considered "**cost burdened**" when it comes to housing
- The average **travel time to work** was **50% higher** than the national average
- **Nearly half** of residents are considered to have **low access to a grocery store**, including 800 households without a car
- **About one in nine** residents smoked **tobacco**, as did **one in seventeen pregnant women**
- Among pregnant women, White mothers had the **highest smoking rate (one in six)**
- The Rockdale County **cancer death rate** (age-adjusted) nearly met the Healthy People 2020 goal; **cancer death rates were highest among White men**, followed by African-American men and then women
- The **teen pregnancy rate has declined substantially** in the past decade and is now below the Healthy People 2020 goal; 2010-2011 rates were nearly identical for White and Black girls, and the rate for Hispanic girls had declined sharply from previous years
- The rate of **Chlamydia** cases **increased by 70%** from 2009 to 2012

Background: The National Health Context

When assessing a community's health, it is important to keep in mind which illnesses and conditions cause the most disability and early death. This burden of disability and early death is commonly measured with an indicator called disability-adjusted life years, or DALYs. DALYs measure both the years lost to early death and those worsened due to disease and disability. Although this measure is not available specifically for Rockdale County, recent estimates for the United States serve as a useful benchmark. Figure 1, which uses 2010 data from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation,⁸ clearly shows that non-communicable diseases cause the vast majority (85%) of DALYs in the United States. These non-communicable diseases include heart and circulatory diseases (17% of DALYs), cancer (15%), mental health disorders (14%), musculoskeletal disorders (12%), and a range of other health problems like dementia, emphysema, and diabetes.

Injuries, shown in green, are the second largest category causing DALYs, representing 10% of total DALYs. This category includes transport injuries (including motor vehicle collisions; 3% of DALYs), self-harm and interpersonal violence (3%), and unintentional injuries (4%). The final category causing DALYs included communicable diseases (3%), diseases of the newborn (2%), maternal conditions (<1%), and nutritional deficiencies (<1%).

Figure 1. Distribution of Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) by Type of Condition or Illness, United States, 2010



⁸ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME): Global Burden of Disease <http://viz.healthmetricsandevaluation.org/gbd-compare/>

Source: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (<http://viz.healthmetricsandevaluation.org/gbd-compare/>)

Clearly, to make the biggest impact on health, we must reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. However, the causes of these diseases are complex and long-term, are strongly influenced by the environment and community, and are tied to human behavior. They must be addressed from their very beginnings through environmental design, prevention efforts, community interventions, primary care, and at later stages through hospital care. Because of this complexity and the range of influences, we must work across a variety of disciplines and specialty areas to make the biggest impact on health. Areas that the public might consider unrelated to health, including income, housing, education, and transportation, must be part of the discussion.

The importance of non-communicable diseases is further evident in the top ten health risk factors for early death and disability in the United States in 2010:⁹

- Poor diet (dietary risks)
- Smoking
- Overweight and obesity
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes and pre-diabetes
- Physical inactivity
- Alcohol use
- High cholesterol
- Drug use
- Air pollution (specifically particulate matter)

Infectious diseases, injuries, and maternal and newborn health remain critical to the overall health of the population. These areas need continuous focus to prevent outbreaks, disease, and tragic outcomes.

Background: Premature Death in Rockdale County

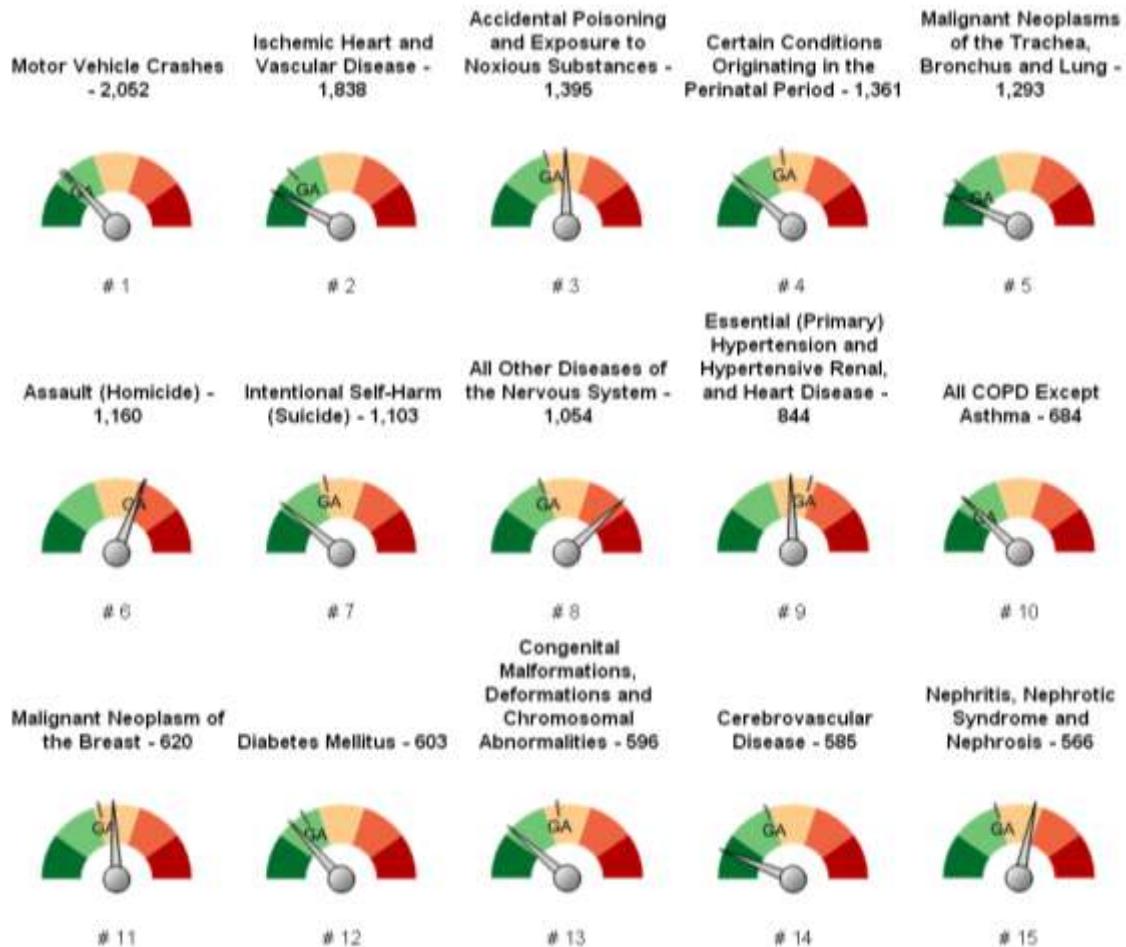
A combined measure of death *and* disability (like the DALY) in Rockdale County is not available, but data are available on leading causes of premature death in Rockdale County (Figure 2).¹⁰ This local information is similar to the data from the national level: chronic disease like heart disease and cancer dominate this list. Because this measure examines the number of potential years of life lost before age 75 years, conditions that cause death among children and adolescents are weighted heavily. Deaths from injuries and accidents (motor vehicle crashes, poisoning, assault, and suicide) led to many years of potential life lost; many of these conditions are related to abuse of alcohol and drugs and mental health conditions. Conditions that affect infants (conditions originating in the perinatal period and congenital

⁹ IMHE <http://www.healthmetricsandevaluation.org/gbd/visualizations/gbd-arrow-diagram>

¹⁰ Source: Georgia Online Analytical Statistical Information System (<http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/>)

malformations) were also major causes of premature death; tobacco use and other drugs can increase the risk of these conditions. It is important to note that this measure does not adjust for age, as do many other measures cited in this report, and Rockdale’s County’s relatively younger population likely explains some of the high burden of conditions more common among younger people.

Figure 2. Top 15 Leading Causes of Premature Death in Rockdale County, Georgia, 2007-2011



Number indicates years of potential life lost due to death before the age of 75 per 100,000 population less than 75 years of age. The “GA” marker indicates the Georgia rate.

Source: Georgia Online Analytical Statistical Information System (<http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/>)

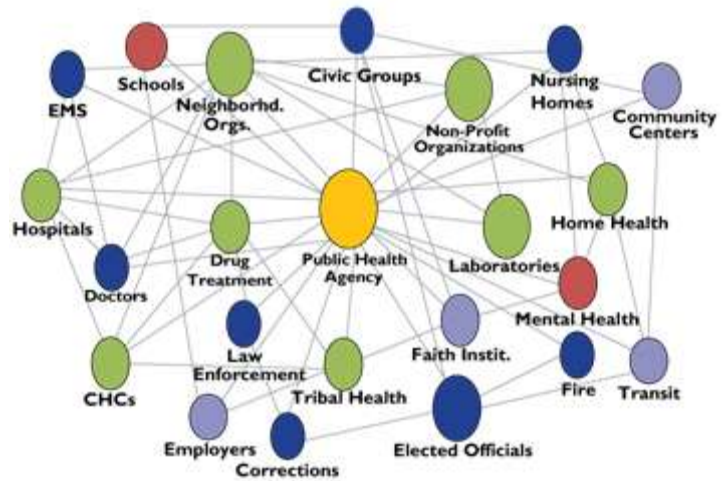
Background: The “Public Health System:” Far Beyond the Health Department

All communities have a public health system to prevent and treat illness, disability, and death. A public health system is composed not just of government agencies, but includes many other organizations and people.

According to the National Public Health Performance Standards of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), public health systems are “all public, private, and voluntary entities that contribute to the delivery of essential public health services within a jurisdiction.”¹¹

A community’s public health system includes:

- Public health agencies at state and local levels
- Healthcare providers
- Public safety agencies
- Human service and charity organizations
- Education and youth development organizations
- Recreation and arts-related organizations
- Economic and philanthropic organizations
- Environmental agencies and organizations



Organization of This Report

We know that much of what influences our health happens outside of the doctor’s office—in our schools, workplaces and neighborhoods.

-County Health Rankings & Roadmaps¹²

When we think about health, we often think first about medical care. As noted above, however, medical care is only part of the health picture. Section 1 describes many of the factors that strongly influence health.

Section 1: Factors that Influence Health

- (1) Demographics and Diversity
- (2) Economy and Basic Needs
- (3) Housing
- (4) Education and Child Activities
- (5) Transportation
- (6) Community Engagement
- (7) Safety
- (8) Environment

¹¹ Essential Public Health Services <http://www.cdc.gov/nphpsp/essentialservices.html>

¹² County Health Rankings & Roadmaps <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/about-project>

The second section of this report focuses on the health indicators of Rockdale County residents and examines the critical role of the health care sector.

Section 2: Health Status

- (1) Overall Health Status
- (2) Access to Health Services
- (3) Health Behaviors
- (4) Chronic Diseases
- (5) Cancer
- (6) Injuries
- (7) Teen Pregnancy
- (8) Maternal and Infant Health
- (9) Infectious Diseases
- (10) Mental Health and Social Support
- (11) Emergency Preparedness

Section One: Determinants of Health

The social determinants of health are the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics.

- World Health Organization¹³

Demographics and Diversity

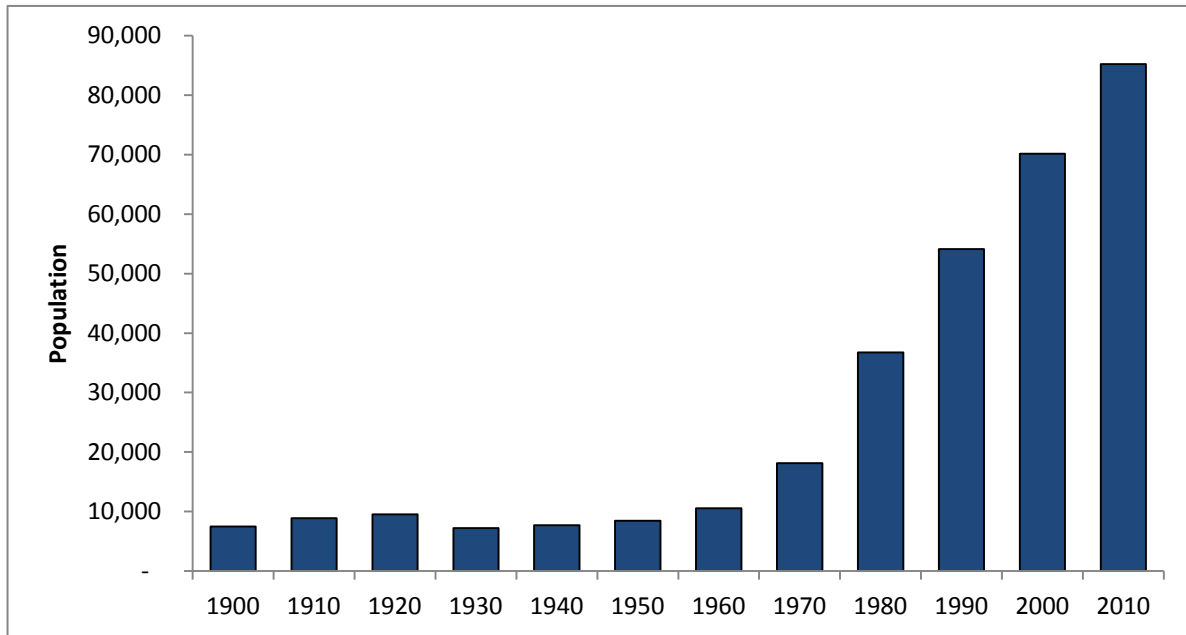
To understand and improve health—and health determinants—in Rockdale County, we must first consider the county and its residents.

Rockdale County is located in the Atlanta metropolitan area’s eastern suburbs about 25 miles from downtown Atlanta. Over the past 4 decades, the county has grown dramatically, increasing nearly four-fold from 1970 to 2010 (Figure 3). The fastest rate of population growth took place from 1970 to 1980 when the population more than doubled from 18,152 to 36,747, but the population still grew by over 20% (70,111 to 85,215) from 2000 to 2010. The city of Conyers (population 15,238) is the only incorporated area in the county.

¹³ WHO: Social Determinants of Health

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/key_concepts/en/index.html

Figure 3. Population of Rockdale County, Georgia, 1900-2010

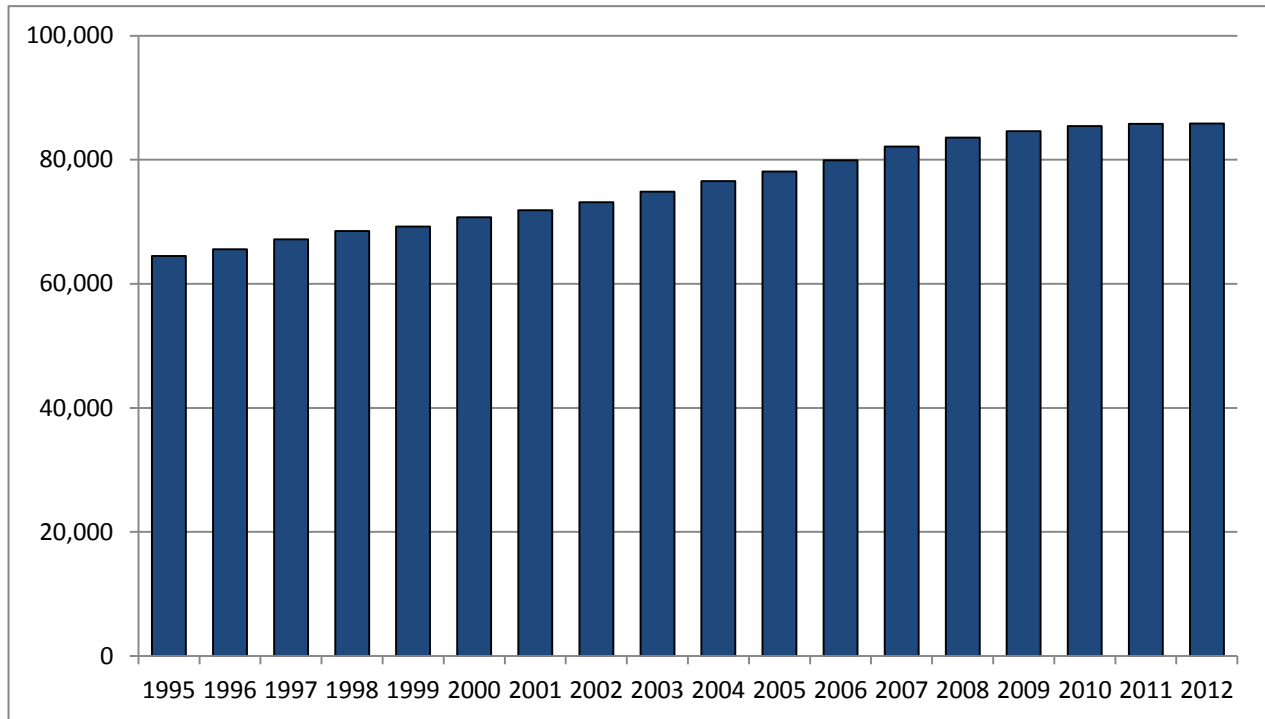


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

Available at <http://opb.georgia.gov/historical-census-data>

It is important to note that annual population estimates suggest that the rapid population growth apparent in Figure 3 had slowed by 2008 (Figure 4), likely due to the economic recession. From 2006 to 2007, the county added an estimated 2,235 residents, but from 2011 to 2012, the estimated increase was only 55 people.

Figure 4. Annual Population Estimates, Rockdale County, Georgia, 1995-2012



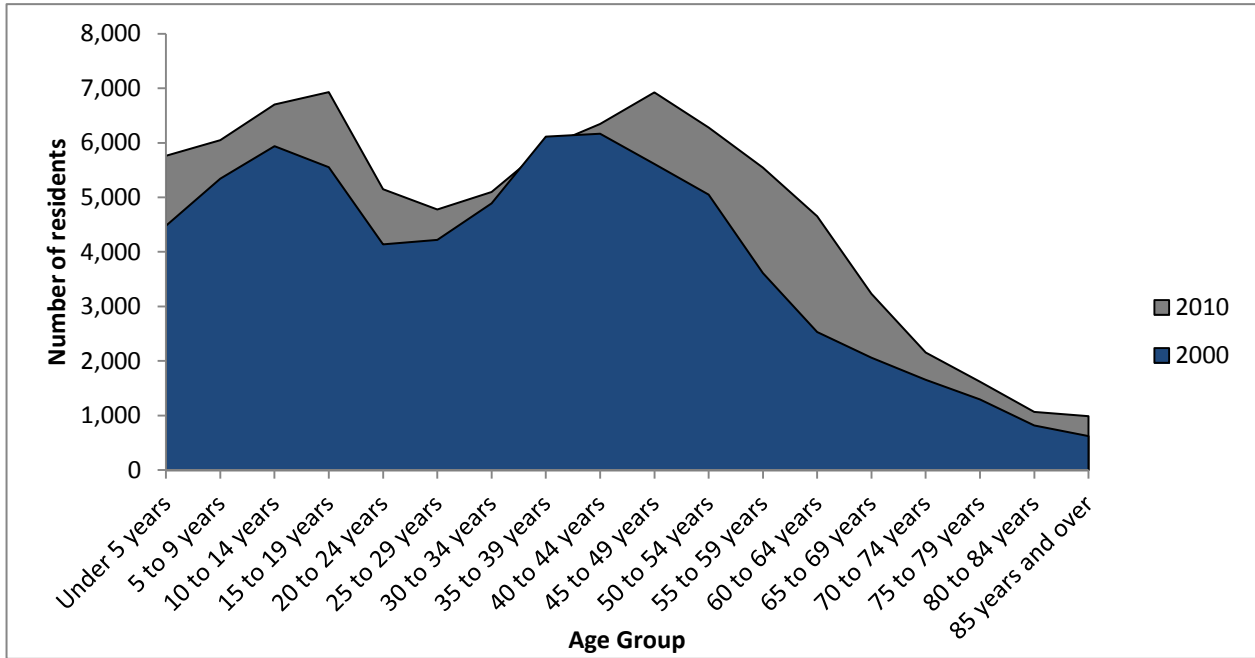
Source: Georgia Department of Public Health (<http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryPopulation.aspx>)

Age Distribution

In the 2000 and 2010 censuses, Rockdale County's population was predominantly composed of children and middle-aged adults (Figure 5). However, the county is "home to the fastest growing senior population in the Metro Atlanta region," according to the Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan.¹⁴ The number of residents 60 years and older grew by 53% from 2000 to 2010, more than twice the overall increase in population (22%), and this group accounted for nearly one-third of the overall population increase. By comparison, there were smaller population increases among children and an even smaller decrease among adults age 35 to 39 years (Figure 6). In 2010, nearly one-third (30%) of the population was younger than 20 years old and about one in 9 residents (11%) was 65 years or older.

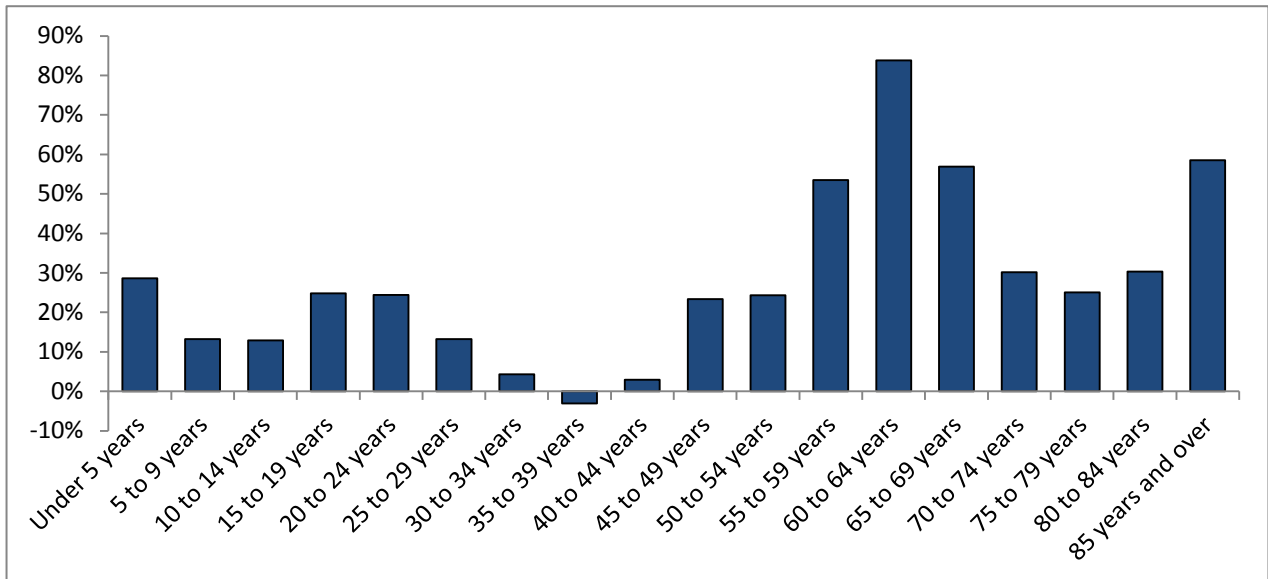
¹⁴ Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
<http://www.rockdalecounty.org/docs/Rockdale%20County%20Comprehensive%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>

Figure 5. Population Distribution of Residents, Rockdale County, 2000 and 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 6. Percentage Change in Population by Age Group, Rockdale County, 2000–2010

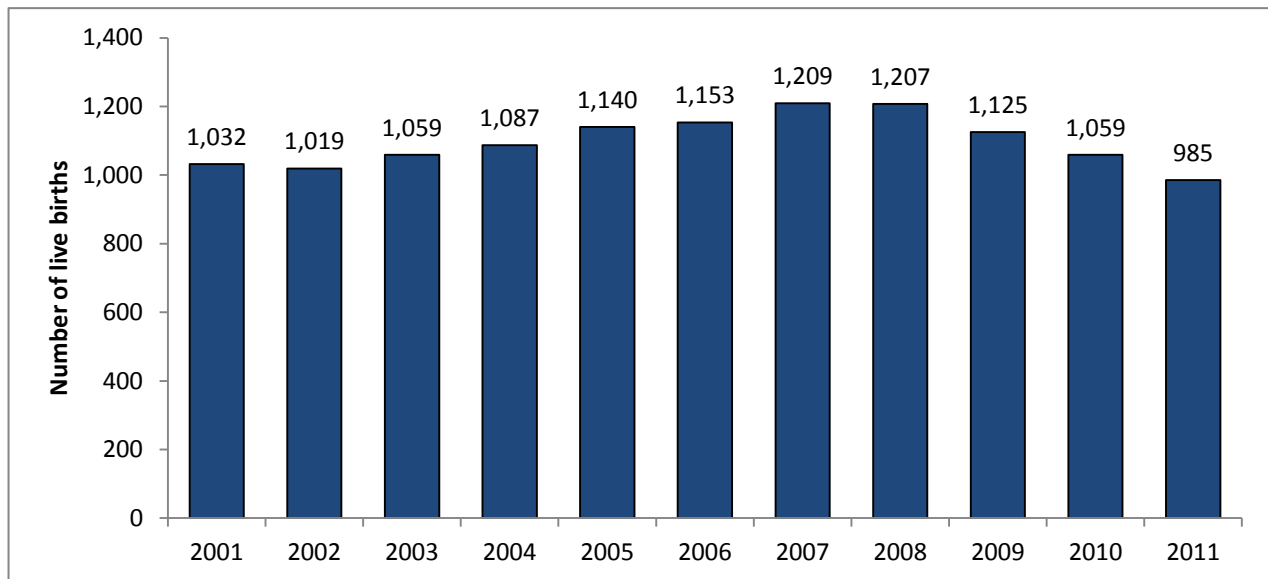


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Falling Birth Rate

The number and rate of births in the county have declined since 2007 (Figure 7).¹⁵ The number of births to Rockdale County mothers in 2011 (the most recent year with available data) was lower than the annual number of births as far back as 2001 despite more reproductive-age women in the county. The number of births peaked in 2007 at 1,209 and declined to 985 in 2011, representing a 19% decline over these five years. The birth rate (or number of births per 1,000 women age 10–55 years) declined by 20% over this same period.¹⁶ The birth rate in 2011 was highest among Hispanic women (70 births per 1,000 women), followed by non-Hispanic Black women (30 per 1,000), non-Hispanic White women (26 per 1,000), and Asian women (23 per 1,000).

Figure 7. Number of Births to Rockdale County Mothers, 2001-2011



Source: OASIS (<http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/>)

Diversity

Rockdale County has grown increasingly diverse since 1990. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about half (47%) of the population was non-Hispanic Black, 41% was non-Hispanic White, 9% was Hispanic (of any race), 2% was Asian, and 2% was multiracial (Figure 8). By comparison, the county's population in 2000 was about three-quarters (73%) non-Hispanic White, 18% Black, 6% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% multiracial. The county was 90% White in 1990.

In the 2010 census, the Hispanic population of Rockdale County (9.5%) was majority Mexican (7.2% of the total population) and the remaining Hispanic population identified as Puerto Rican (0.7%), Cuban

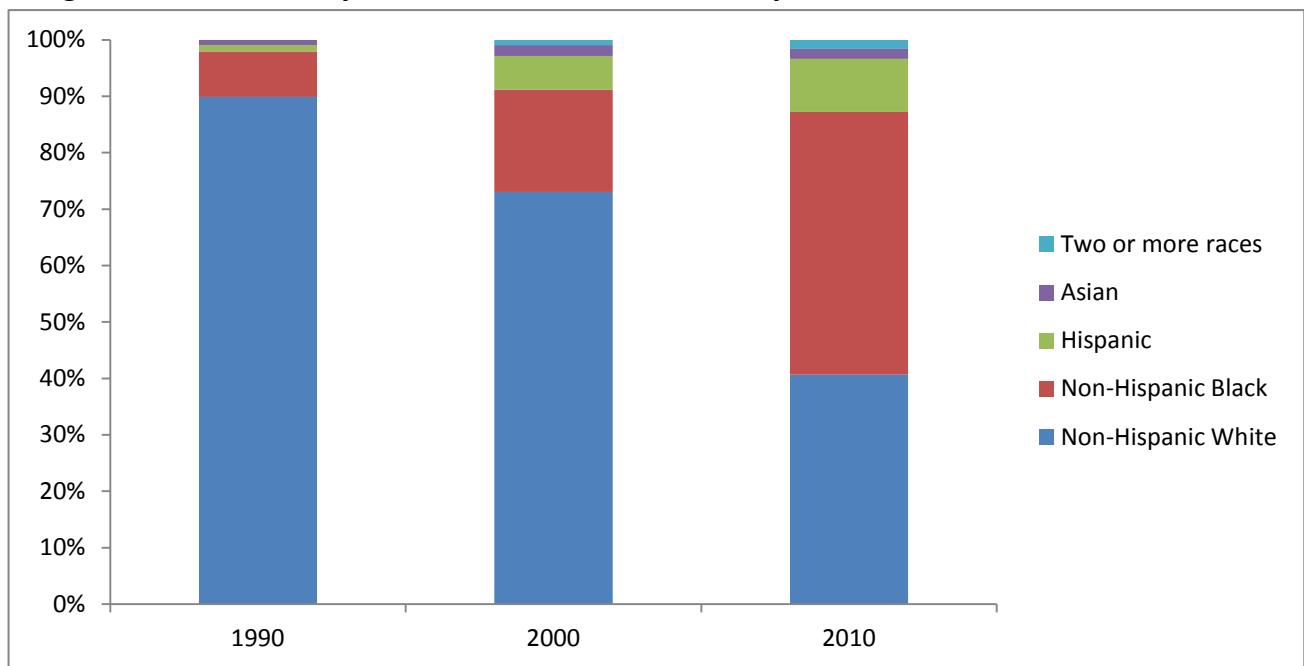
¹⁵ Georgia Online Analytical Statistical Information System

¹⁶ Georgia Online Analytical Statistical Information System

(0.2%), or other Hispanic or Latino (1.3%). Among the 1.8% of the population that reported being Asian, 0.6% were Asian Indian, 0.4% were Vietnamese, 0.2% were Filipino, 0.2% were Korean, 0.1% were Chinese, and 0.3% was other Asian.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s five-year estimates for 2008-2012, about one in nine (10.8%) Rockdale County residents were foreign born. Among these estimated 9,213 foreign born residents, most (74%) were from Latin America, while 13% were from Asia, 6% were from Africa, 5% were from Europe, 1% were from elsewhere in North America, and less than 1% were from the Oceania region. A little more than half (53%) of Rockdale County residents were born in Georgia and a little more than one-third (36%) were born in another U.S. state.

Figure 8. Race/Ethnicity Distribution of Rockdale County Residents, 1990, 2000, and 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Linguistic Isolation

People who do not speak English in Rockdale County may have difficulty accessing services that are available to fluent English speakers. In Rockdale from 2008-2012, an estimated 11.8% of people age 5 years or older spoke a language other than English at home, and 5.9% spoke English less than “very well” (over three-quarters of whom spoke Spanish at home).

Families and Households

In 2010, there were an estimated 30,027 households in Rockdale County, with an average of 2.8 people per household.¹⁷ Families—defined as a householder with at least one related person—made up three-quarters (75%) of households; just over half (51%) of all households were married-couple families and 24% were families without a married couple. Twenty-one percent of households were composed of people living alone (31% of whom were age 65 years or older) and 4% were households in which no one was related to the householder. Less than half of households (41%) included children younger than 18 years old.

Rockdale County's population has been quite mobile. According to 2008-2012 estimates, one in five residents (18%) moved or changed residence in the previous year. One in ten residents (10%) had moved to Rockdale from outside the county in the previous year, including about one in forty (2.3%) who moved from another state.

Demographic Change Community Plan

Although Rockdale County's growth rate has slowed in recent years, the county will continue to change. In particular, the county has become increasingly diverse and the senior population will continue to grow. Many seniors live alone and will require a higher level of services.

The Rockdale County Health Department will continue to serve the language needs of an increasingly diverse clientele. Many staff members are certified in a language other than English or are native speakers of that language. The health clinic also offers telephone-based interpreter services.

The Rockdale County Community Resource List includes information on organizations that address the needs of parents and youth (pages 65-68) and seniors (pages 76-77).¹⁸

Economy and Basic Needs

Few people would deny that there are many advantages of having more income or wealth. Nevertheless, apart from the well-known link between economic resources and being able to afford health insurance and medical care, their influence on health has received relatively little attention from the general public or policy-makers, despite a large body of evidence from studies documenting strong and pervasive relationships between income, wealth and health

-Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), Report on Income, Wealth, and Health¹⁹

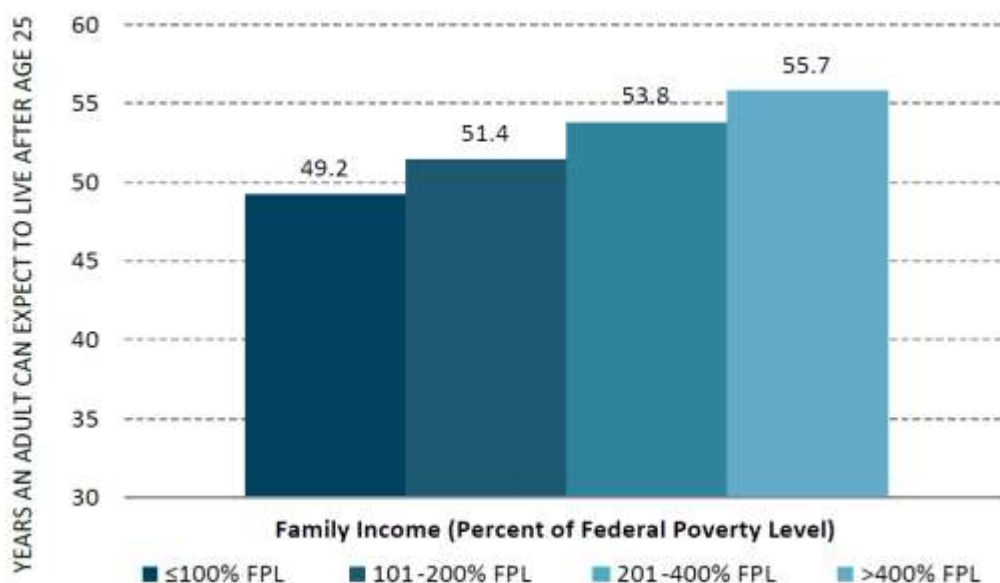
¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau

¹⁸ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>

¹⁹ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70448

As described by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation above, there are strong links between income, wealth, and health, which is why any health assessment must include an examination of these factors. To give just one example of the connection between income and health, life expectancy at age 25 is closely correlated with income as a percentage of the federal poverty level (FPL) (Figure 9). Life expectancy at age 25 was more than 6 years longer for people earning more than 4 times the FPL compared with those earning less than or equal to the FPL.²⁰

Figure 9. Number of Years an Adult Can Expect to Live After Age 25 by Family Income, United States



Source: RWJF (http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70448)

We will examine income indicators for Rockdale County first and then markers of poverty within the county.

Household Income

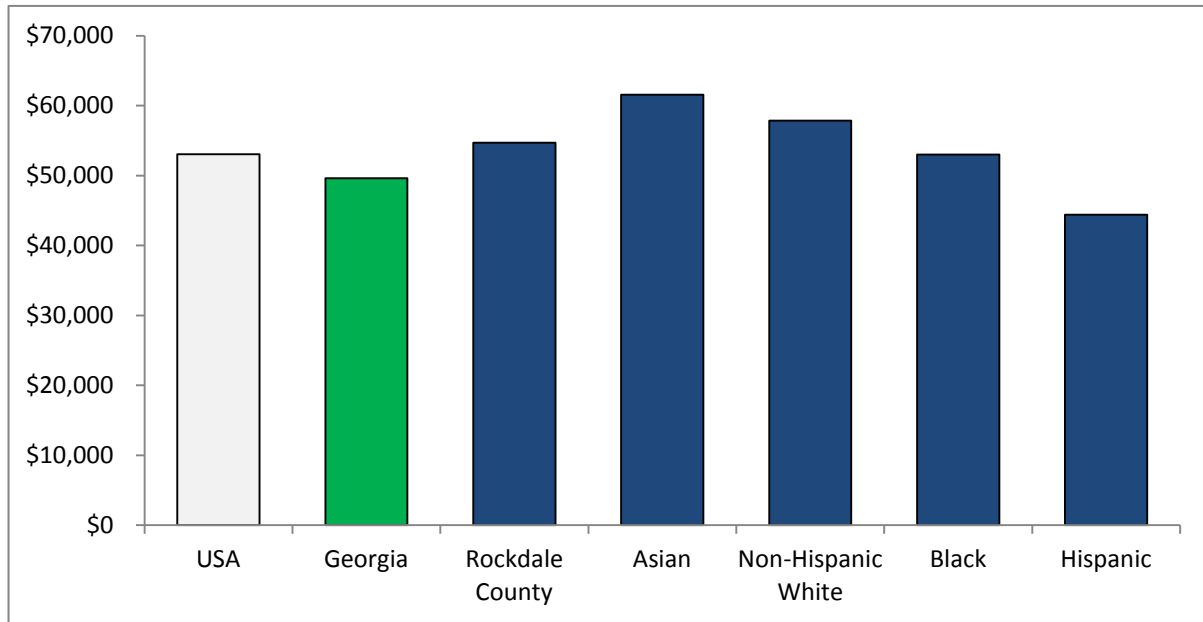
Rockdale County’s median household income was higher than the median household income for Georgia and the United States (Figure 10). From 2008-2012, the median household income in Rockdale County was estimated to be \$54,704. By comparison, the Georgia median was \$49,604 and the national median was \$53,046.²¹ Asian residents had the highest median household income in Rockdale (\$61,538), followed by non-Hispanic White residents (\$57,873), Black residents (\$53,016), and Hispanic residents (\$44,405). Married couples had an estimated median income of \$75,353, which exceeded the

²⁰ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70448

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau

estimate for male householders without a wife present (\$49,219) and female householders without a husband present (\$30,724). People 65 years and older had an estimated median income of \$36,971.

Figure 10. Median Household Income in Rockdale County by Race/Ethnicity, 2008-2012

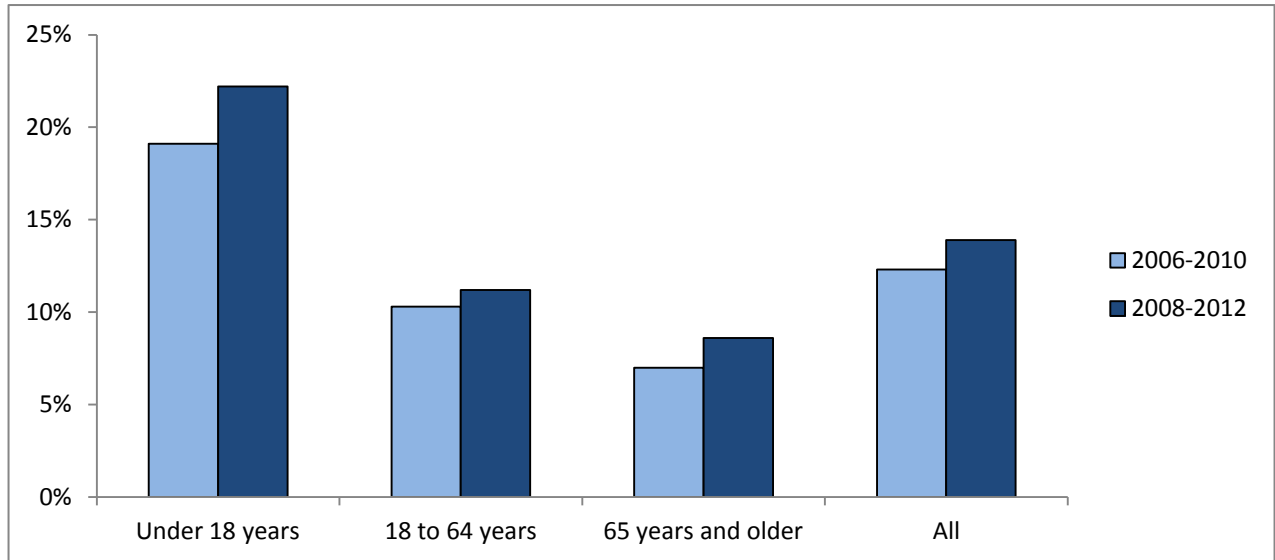


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Poverty

Although the county's median income was higher than the state's, large numbers of residents live in poverty. From 2008-2012, about one in seven (14%) of Rockdale County residents had household incomes below the federal poverty level. About one in five (22%) children lived in poverty, as did 11% of residents 18-64 years and 9% of residents age 65 years or older (Figure 11). Compared with the estimates 2 years earlier, poverty rates increased for all age groups.

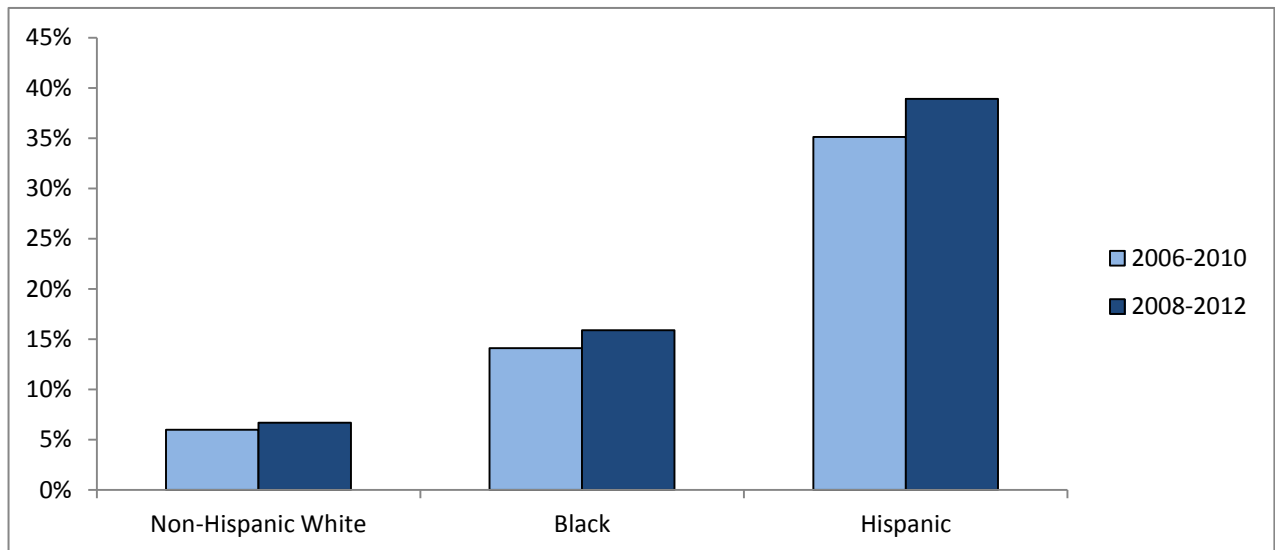
Figure 11. Percent of People Living in Poverty by Age Group, Rockdale County, 2006-2010 and 2008-2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

About one in fifteen (7%) non-Hispanic Whites lived in poverty compared with about one in six (16%) Black residents, and more than one in three (39%) Hispanic residents (Figure 12). Two-thirds (66%) of students in 2013 were eligible to receive free or reduced price school meals (Figure 13), which was higher than the statewide percentage of 60% and much higher than the 25% of Rockdale County students eligible in 2000.²²

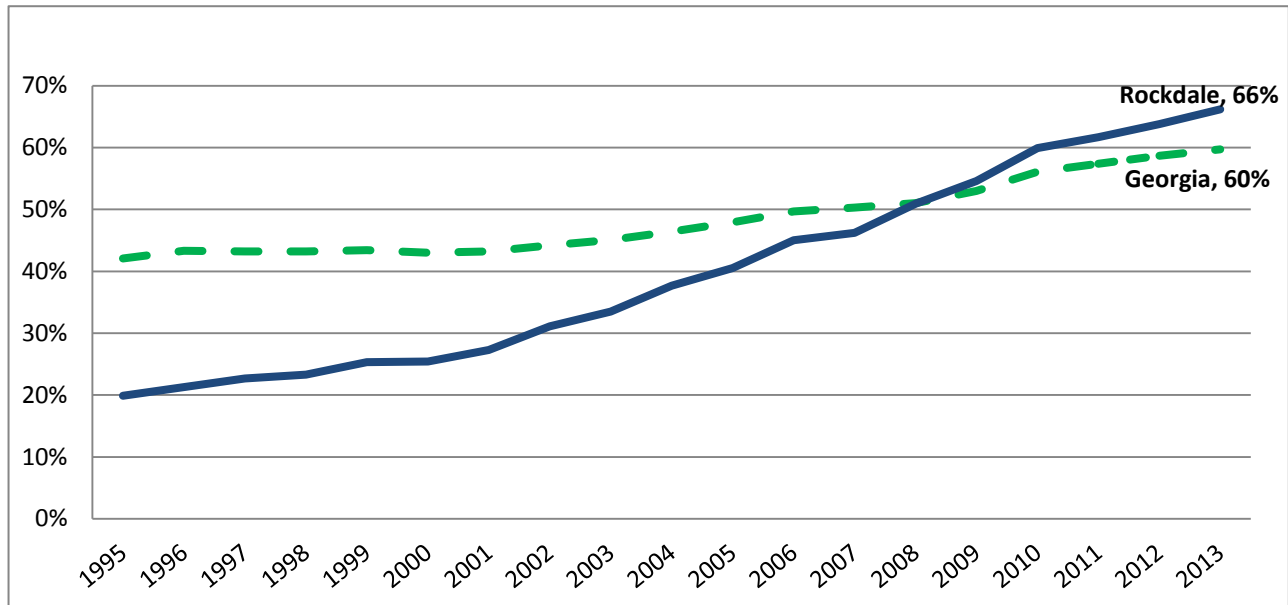
Figure 12. Percent of People in Each Race/Ethnicity Group Living in Poverty, Rockdale County, 2006-2010 and 2008-2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

²² Kids Count Data Center <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#GA/5/0>

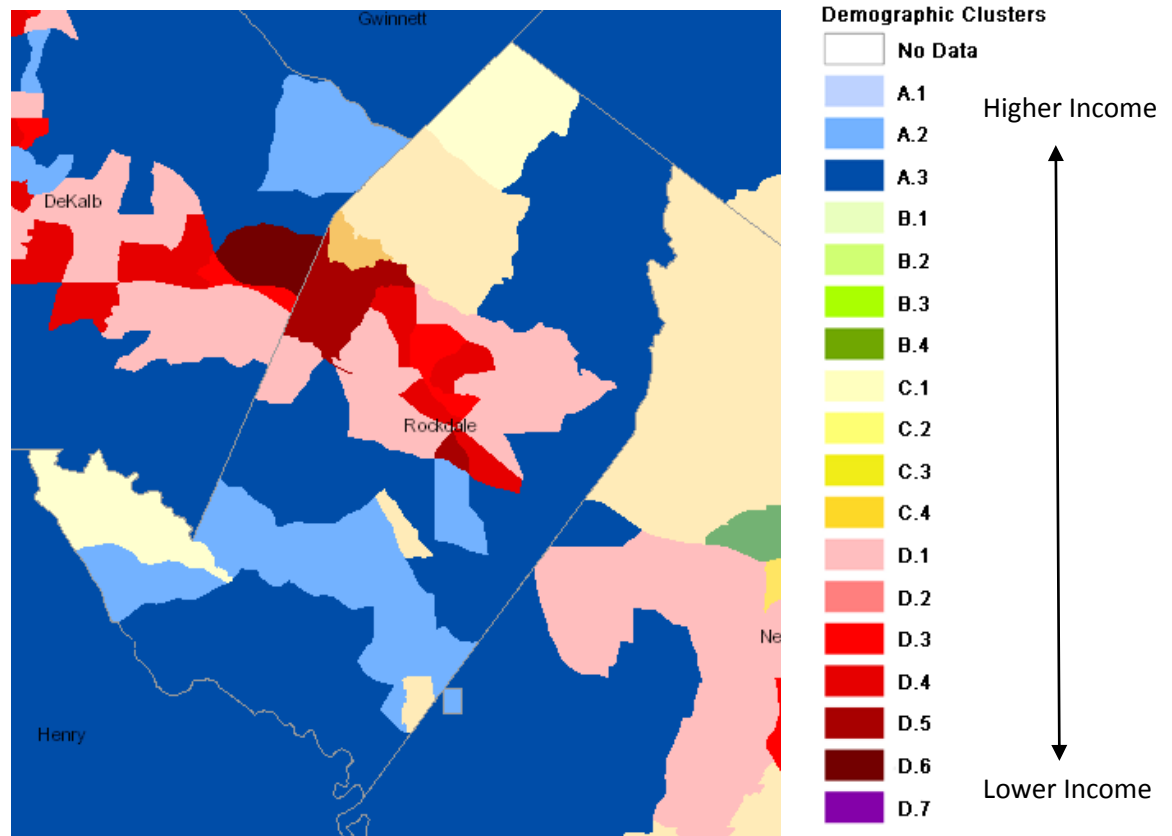
Figure 13. Percent of School Children Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, Rockdale County and Georgia, 1995-2013



Source: Kids Count Data Center <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#GA/5/0>

Demographic data suggest that some of the poverty in the county is clustered along the west-central portion of the county along interstate 20, including part of the city of Conyers (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Demographic clusters of Rockdale County, 2011



Source: <http://oasis.state.ga.us/GADemoProfile/DemoClusters2011.htm>

Detailed descriptions of demographic cluster groups are available at

<http://oasis.state.ga.us/GADemoProfile/documents/DemoClusters2011Description.pdf>.

Blue colors represent higher income areas; yellow and red colors represent lower income areas.

Employment and Income

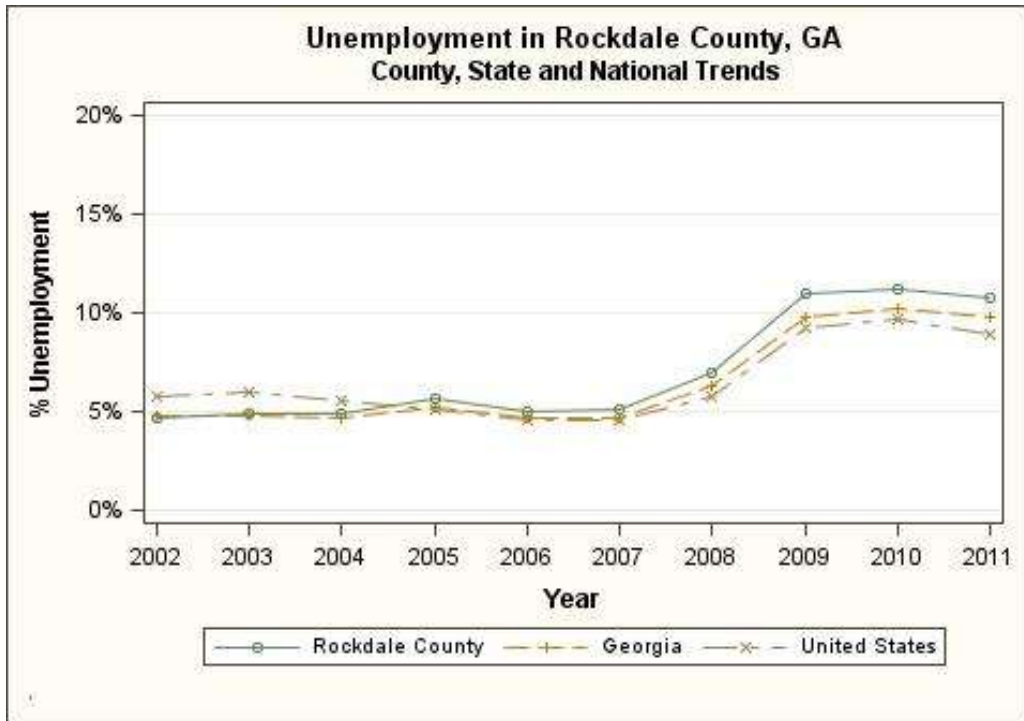
From 2008-2012, an estimated 68% of the county’s population age 16 years and older was employed. An estimated 82% of Rockdale households received earnings, 18% received retirement income other than Social Security, and 26% received Social Security. Some households received income from more than one source. The average annual income from Social Security was \$17,447. An estimated 4% of households received Supplemental Security Income (average \$9,642 per year) and 14% received Food Stamp/SNAP benefits.

Since 2007, unemployment has become a major problem for Rockdale County, as it has for much of the nation. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, job loss and unemployment are linked to a number of health problems, including stress-related conditions like stroke and heart disease.²³ As of November 2013, the unemployment rate was estimated to be 7.9%, which was much improved from the

²³ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2013/rwjf403360

2010 peak of nearly 12.5%, but still above rates seen in the early 2000s of about 5% (Figure 15). Unemployment rates in the county have been about 1 percentage point higher than the state unemployment rate since 2009.²⁴

Figure 15. Unemployment Rate in Rockdale County, Georgia, 2002-2011



Source: County Health Rankings

(<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>)

Basic Needs Resources and Improvement Plan

Although the county's median household income exceeds that of that of the state, many county residents, particularly children, live in poverty.

Several community resources exist to help meet resident's basic food needs. The health department administers the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, which provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support and supplemental foods to low income families.²⁵ The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) of the Georgia Department of Human Services provide residents with food stamps through the Georgia Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).²⁶ DFCS provides Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

²⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

²⁵ Rockdale County Health Department <http://www.gnrhealth.com/services/clinical-services/women-infants-children-wic>

²⁶ Georgia Division of Family and Children Services <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/food-stamps>

The Rockdale Coalition’s Community Resource List includes resources on clothing assistance (pages 31-33), financial assistance (pages 44-47), and food assistance (pages 48-53).²⁷ The Rockdale Coalition collaborates with the Rockdale Community Resource Network, the Rockdale Nonprofit Resource Summit, the Day of Connections Resource Fair, and the Rockdale Community Resource Center.²⁸ The Rockdale Coalition also promotes community services by recognizing people that have made outstanding contributions to the community through the F. William Hughey Community Service Award and the John K. Morgan Community Service Scholarship.

Leadership Rockdale, part of the Rockdale Chamber of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing the personal and professional growth to benefit the community. Leadership Rockdale directs Hands Across Rockdale, which coordinates and promotes volunteer efforts in the county.²⁹

The Partnership for Rockdale Employment Preparation (PREP) works “to reduce barriers and create job opportunities in the health-care industry that can lead to financial stability for Rockdale County families.”³⁰

The Partnership for Community Action, which serves Rockdale, DeKalb, and Gwinnett Counties, works to create opportunities that lead to family self-sufficiency, in part by providing employment specialists who can assist residents with employment and career services.³¹

Housing

Where we live is at the very core of our daily lives. Housing is generally an American family's greatest single expenditure, and, for homeowners, their most significant source of wealth. Given its importance, it is not surprising that factors related to housing have the potential to help—or harm—our health in major ways.

-Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Report on Housing and Health³²

As noted by the Robert Wood Johnson foundation, housing can strongly affect health.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, during 2008-2012, there were about 33,000 housing units in Rockdale County, 88% of which were occupied. Of the total number of housing units, about three-quarters (76%) were single family houses. Nineteen percent of housing units were in multi-unit

²⁷ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>

²⁸ Rockdale Coalition Collaborations <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/collaborative-participation/>

²⁹ Rockdale Coalition Collaborations <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/collaborative-participation/>

³⁰ Rockdale Coalition Collaborations <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/collaborative-participation/>

³¹ Partnership for Community Action www.pcaction.org

³² Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Report on Housing and Health <http://www.rwjf.org/en/research-publications/find-rwjf-research/2011/05/housing-and-health.html>

structures like apartment buildings. Three percent of Rockdale County housing units were mobile homes.

About three-quarters (72%) of occupied Rockdale County housing units were owned and the rest were rented. About one in five (22%) of housing units were built since 2000 and nearly half (43%) were built since 1990. Two in three (66%) residents moved into their current household since 2000.

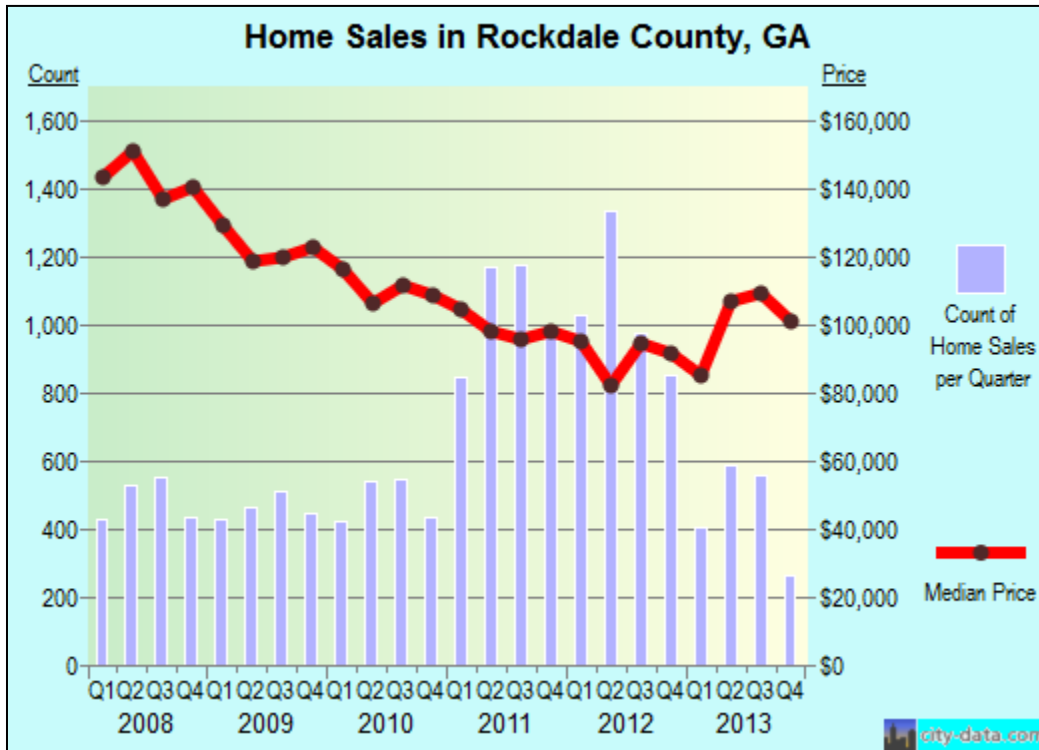
A relatively high percentage of Rockdale County residents are considered “cost burdened” when it comes to housing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines cost burdened households as those that pay more than 30% of income for housing. People in these households may have difficulty affording necessities like food, transportation, and medical care. From 2008-2012, the median monthly housing cost in Rockdale County was \$1,430 for mortgage owners and \$398 for non-mortgage owners. Forty percent of owners with mortgages and about one in eight (14%) owners without mortgages were considered cost burdened. The median monthly housing cost for renters was \$951, and over half (54%) spent 30% or more of their household income on rent, which was higher than the national average of 47%.

Housing foreclosures have been a major problem for many Rockdale County residents in recent years. According to data from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Rockdale County had one of the top 5 highest foreclosure rates among the 159 Georgia counties in all four quarters of 2011.³³ Related to the foreclosure trend, prices from home sales declined substantially since 2008, but increased in 2013 (Figure 16). According to the American Communities Survey, the median value of owner-occupied housing units from 2008-2012 was \$156,200,³⁴ though values have may have declined since then.

³³ Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta <http://www.frbatlanta.org/pubs/mdft/>

³⁴ ³⁴ U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 16. Home Sales in Rockdale County, Georgia, 2008-2013



Source: http://www.city-data.com/county/Rockdale_County-GA.html

No estimates of Rockdale County’s homeless population are available.

Housing Community Improvement Plan

At present, many Rockdale County residents are cost-burdened when it comes to housing; many still owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth and many foreclosures have taken place. However, based on Figure 15, housing prices appear to have stabilized or increased in 2013.

The Rockdale Coalition’s Community Resource List provides information on area shelters and transitional housing (pages 78-83).³⁵ The Rockdale HOPES (Housing Opportunities for People Experiencing Setbacks) Coalition brings many community organizations together to help provide solutions for families who are facing challenging housing situations.³⁶

Rockdale Emergency Relief (RER) provides Rockdale County residents with temporary financial assistance for urgent needs like past-due rents and utilities, medical needs (on a limited scale), and for disasters such as fire.³⁷ Among other activities, RER does screening for the community clothes closet,

³⁵ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf

³⁶ Rockdale HOPES Coalition <http://rockdalehopescoalition.org/>

³⁷ Rockdale Emergency Relief www.rockdalecountyemergencyrelief.org/

manages the Rockdale Community Food Bank, coordinates a community-based holiday assistance program, and distributes comfort items like fans, electric heaters, and diapers. Together with local law enforcement, RER operates a voucher program that provides shelter for people who are stranded in the community or are experiencing temporary homelessness.

Education and Child Activities

Everyone knows that without a good education, prospects for a good job with good earnings are slim. Few people think of education as a crucial path to health, however. Yet a large body of evidence strongly—and, with very rare exceptions, consistently—links education with health, even when other factors like income are taken into account.

-Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Report on Education and Health³⁸

Rockdale County residents have education levels similar to people across the state and the nation. Rockdale County residents were more likely to have completed high school than were people statewide or nationwide, but were slightly less likely to have completed a bachelor's degree. The county has a large public school system and several institutions of higher learning.

From 2008-2018, an estimated 87% of Rockdale County residents 25 years and older were high school graduates, which was higher than the percentages for Georgia (84%) and the nation (85%). One in four (25%) residents age 25 years and older had a bachelor's degree or higher.³⁹ By comparison, 28% of both Georgia and U.S. residents held a bachelor's degree.

The Rockdale County Public School System serves the entire county and includes 11 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 1 magnet school, 1 charter school, and 3 high schools. All are fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.⁴⁰ As of 2013, Georgia began measuring school districts using the Georgia College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) on a 100 point scale. Rockdale County's elementary and middle schools scored higher than the state averages, but the high school level scored lower than the state average.⁴¹

Rockdale County Public School System (Georgia average)

Elementary School - 85.7 (83.4)

Middle School – 87 (81.4)

High School - 67.6 (72.6)

³⁸ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70447

³⁹ U.S. Census Bureau

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_5YR_DP02

⁴⁰ Rockdale County Public Schools <http://portal.rockdale.k12.ga.us/about/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴¹ Rockdale County Public Schools

<http://portal.rockdale.k12.ga.us/Community%20Relations%20Docs/CCRPI%20Accountability%20Released.pdf>

The 2012 four-year cohort graduation rate for Rockdale County high school students was 72%, which was higher than the Georgia rate of 70%,⁴² but lower than the national rate of 78% in 2010, the most recent year for which data are available.⁴³ Salem High School had a four-year graduation rate of 69%, Heritage High School had a rate of 74%, and Rockdale County High School had a rate of 74%.

The Rockdale Center and Rockdale Career Academy campuses of Georgia Piedmont Technical College are located within the county.⁴⁴ The Rockdale County Extension Office of the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences is also located in Conyers.⁴⁵

Education Community Improvement Plan

The Rockdale Coalition provides a list of resources for childcare assistance in their Community Resource List (page 30), including information on Georgia’s lottery-funded Pre-K program, parenting workshops, and the Childcare and Parent Services program of Rockdale’s Department of Family and Children’s Services, which can help families pay for early childhood and school age care and education programs.⁴⁶ The Community Resource List also provides information on resources for GED preparation, early literacy, and professional development (page 43).

The Rockdale County Public Schools partners with many community organizations and agencies through the STARS Project, which is a community partnership that aims to “provide safe and orderly schools and support services for all students that enable them to reach their highest potential.”⁴⁷ The 5 objectives of the STARS Project are to:

- Prevent violence in our schools.
- Promote healthy lifestyles free from tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.
- Protect against bullies and other threats.
- Provide school-based mental health services.
- Prepare our youngest learners to be ready for kindergarten.

⁴² Georgia Department of Education <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Documents/2012%204%20Year%20Cohort%20Graduation%20Rate.pdf>

⁴³ U.S. Department of Education <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013309rev.pdf>

⁴⁴ Georgia Piedmont Technical College http://www.gptc.edu/content.cfm?PageCode=ce_locations

⁴⁵ University of Georgia Rockdale County Extension Office <http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/rockdale/>

⁴⁶ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>

⁴⁷ STARS Project <http://portal.rockdale.k12.ga.us/about/ss/stars/Pages/default.aspx>

Transportation

Transportation decisions affect our individual lives, economy and health. Everyone needs to use various modes of transportation to get to work or school, to get medical attention, to access healthy foods at grocery stores and markets, and to participate in countless other activities every day.

-American Public Health Association⁴⁸

Vehicle Transportation⁴⁹

Rockdale County is generally highly dependent on personal vehicles for transportation, though portions of the City of Conyers are classified as walkable.⁵⁰ The average travel time to work in Rockdale County from 2008-2012 was estimated to be 33.7 minutes, which was longer than the Georgia average of 27.0 and about 50% higher than the national average of 22.6 minutes.⁵¹ According to the Healthy Communities Institute, these lengthy commutes cut into workers' free time and can contribute to health problems like headaches, anxiety, and increased blood pressure. Longer commute times also require workers to consume more fuel, which is both expensive to workers and damaging to the environment.

According to Rockdale County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan, certain groups of people are often dependent on public transit and include "the elderly, the disabled, low income individuals and households without private transportation."⁵² Five percent of Rockdale County households did not have access to a car, truck or van for private use.⁵³ Thirty-one percent of households had one vehicle.

Public transit is limited within the county. According to the Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan:⁵⁴



⁴⁸ American Public Health Association (<http://www.apha.org/advocacy/priorities/issues/transportation>)

⁴⁹ Photograph source: Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
<http://www.rockdalecounty.org/docs/Rockdale%20County%20Comprehensive%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>

⁵⁰ WalkScore.com (<http://www.walkscore.com/score/rockdale-county-georgia>)

⁵¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

⁵² Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
<http://www.rockdalecounty.org/docs/Rockdale%20County%20Comprehensive%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>

⁵³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

⁵⁴ Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
<http://www.rockdalecounty.org/docs/Rockdale%20County%20Comprehensive%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>

Regional bus service operated by Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and a limited amount of transportation services for residents ages 60 and over are currently available in Rockdale County. No conventional, fixed route, fixed schedule transit service or rail transit service is currently provided in Rockdale County.

The Comprehensive Plan highlights several transportation programs for residents ages 60 and over offered by Rockdale County Senior Services, which include fixed-route transportation services, demand response services, group shopping, and a transportation voucher program.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Walking and biking have clear health benefits, and are particularly beneficial in Rockdale County given the large burden of inactivity and chronic diseases.⁵⁵ The Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation plan includes information on bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The report emphasizes that proper design is important to maintain safety for those on foot or riding a bicycle. Also according to the plan, “everyone is a pedestrian at one point in almost every trip, even if the primary mode of travel for a trip involves a personal vehicle or transit.”⁵⁶



The Comprehensive Plan summarizes the status of sidewalks in Rockdale County as follows:

The evaluation of existing bicycle and pedestrian systems in the study area revealed a fairly well developed sidewalk network within the City of Conyers and a basic network in Rockdale County. There are existing sidewalks adjacent to or in the vicinity of several of the schools and community facilities in the County. However, the field surveys found that often there are gaps in sidewalks, or that sidewalks are only present on one side of the road, requiring pedestrians to enter or cross the street in order to continue along the sidewalk.

The plan points out that the county and city have several trails located within parks. Portions of the Arabia Mountain, Rockdale County, and River Trails, supported by the PATH Foundation, are located within the county.⁵⁷ However, according to data cited in the plan, the average “Level of Service” for existing bike lanes in Rockdale County was rated as grade D. Although this level was better than the

⁵⁵ Guide to Community Preventive Services <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/environmental-policy/communitypolicies.html>

⁵⁶ Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan <http://www.rockdalecounty.org/docs/Rockdale%20County%20Comprehensive%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>

⁵⁷ PATH Foundation <http://pathfoundation.org/trails/arabia-mountain/>

grade of F that the Atlanta metropolitan region received, it is below what is considered adequate for bicycle connectivity.



Arabia Mountain, Rockdale County, and South River Trails

Source: PATH Foundation (<http://pathfoundation.org/trails/arabia-mountain/>)

Community input is important when determining future steps for a transportation network. Listed below is input from community members about bicycle and pedestrian facilities and public transportation from community stakeholder meetings, as described in the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.⁵⁸

- Need a bicycle plan for the city
- Need multi-use paths
- More bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Downtown neighborhoods
- Sidewalk and golf cart paths needs within a ¼ mile radius of activity nodes
- Needs of greens space and trails in northern County
- Connect the trails from DeKalb County in the southern part of the County
- Better bicycle and pedestrian facilities around schools, parks, recreation areas, and civic areas
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements around Flat Shoals Road and Parker Road
- Pedestrian refuge need at certain locations
- Retrofit some intersections to increase a pedestrian friendly environment
- Need inter county transit system
- Potential of Light Rail Transit is at the Park & Ride but people need some place to go; need to make Rockdale a destination, not just a pass-through

⁵⁸ Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
<http://www.rockdalecounty.org/docs/Rockdale%20County%20Comprehensive%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>

- Shuttle needs between urban centers for seniors

Transportation Improvement Plan

Rockdale County residents have on average long commutes, which likely negatively impact quality of life. The county appears to be generally accessible to people with access to vehicles. However, transportation is a significant problem for many people without a privately-owned car or truck, including children, seniors, low-income residents, and the disabled. The Comprehensive Transportation Plan outlines opportunities and recommendations to improve public transit and active transportation like walking and bicycling, which improve overall health.



According to the Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, several opportunities exist to expand public transit in the county.⁵⁹

- Rockdale County Senior Services staff expressed a desire to expand the transportation voucher program – it has a lower cost per unit than the other services because it doesn't have to account for the cost of vehicle operation.
- City or County Bus Services or Shuttles that operate on a local-fixed route are desired by some residents. In addition to the [Comprehensive Transportation Plan] efforts, recent studies including Lifelong Communities and the Conyers [Livable Centers Initiative] have suggested the potential for a shuttle in Old Town Conyers connects to other local activity centers.
- MARTA currently operates bus service to Stonecrest Mall and has plans to extend light rail or bus rapid transit services along I-20 East to Stonecrest by 2030. There may be an opportunity to connect to these MARTA services in the future.
- The State is currently exploring the potential for a commuter rail line from Madison, GA to Atlanta. This rail line would likely operate on the CSX line that passes through downtown Conyers and Old Town would be a key station area along this route.
- Several private shuttle operators, including Churches and Day Care providers, operate within the County. Private shuttle operations provide another transportation alternative to residents at their own expense. Private jitney cabs were also of interest. Jitneys are typically privately operated and will stop at any location along a fixed route.
- Rockdale County continuously works with GRTA [Georgia Regional Transportation Authority] regarding Xpress expansion plans and the appropriate location for future park and ride facilities within the County.

⁵⁹ Rockdale County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
<http://www.rockdalecounty.org/docs/Rockdale%20County%20Comprehensive%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>

Regarding walking and bicycle riding, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan has several recommendations. The plan highlights the county's recreational areas and suggests that these be considered when developing additional facilities to foster bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. The plan also determined the following three groups of places to have potential high demand for bicycle, pedestrian and multi-use path facilities:

- Area within 0.5 mile radius of schools, hospital, library, shopping centers and park and ride lots.
- Pedestrian/bicycle linkages to major attractions, including parks and the Monastery
- Pedestrian/bicycle linkages to existing pedestrian/bicycle network and previous identified pedestrian/bicycle corridors. The previous identified pedestrian/bicycle corridors are ARC strategic bicycle corridor and PATH trail.

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan has the following system-wide infrastructure and policy recommendations:

- Appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be included in all roadway improvement projects. The type of facility and level of accommodation will vary depending on need, land use and other factors.
- Where bike lanes are recommended or planned, and it is later determined during the project development process that bike lanes cannot be accommodated for any reason, then shared lane markings (sharrows) should be used in its place rather than just signage or no facility at all.
- For roads with a rural-typical section (i.e. open drainage, no curb and gutter), construct minimum 6.5' paved shoulders as part of GDOT [Georgia Department of Transportation] widening, reconstruction or resurfacing projects, and minimum 4' shoulders on county roads (increase to 6.5' if rumble strips are used).
- Construct and maintain sidewalks on both sides of the road within a ½-mile radius of all schools, as recommended by GDOT's Pedestrian and Streetscape Guide and supported by GDOT's Safe Routes to School Program. These could be implemented as part of roadway construction projects, developments or subdivisions, in order to help with implementation.
- Install fluorescent green-yellow pedestrian crossing warning signs at all trail crossings to warn motorists of bicycle and pedestrian crossings. In addition, install advance warning signage where sight distance is poor.
- Develop and adopt access management policies in the County. Roads such as SR 20 / 138 or Salem Road, with multiple commercial driveways per business and a lack of inter-parcel access, create many conflict points and potential safety hazards for bicycles and pedestrians. Additionally, fewer driveways allow for continuous sidewalks which create a more pedestrian-friendly and ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] compatible environment.
- Upgrade intersections for pedestrian and bicycle safety anytime a roadway is improved. Intersection treatments may include, but are not limited to: traffic signals, raised medians or crossing islands, crosswalks, advance crosswalk bars, curb ramps (as required by ADA in all

roadway alteration projects), pedestrian countdown signal heads, pedestrian or trail crossing signage, “no turn on red” or other restrictive signage, and signal time adjustments. FHWA’s [Federal Highway Administration] PEDSAFE tool and FHWA’s “How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan” are helpful aides in choosing the right facility:

- FHWA PEDSAFE tool: <http://www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe/>
- FHWA’s “How to Develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan”:
<http://www.walkinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=229>.
- Subdivision and Zoning Codes: Update subdivision and zoning regulations to require that developers do the following:
 - Construct sidewalks on both sides of the road within subdivisions and along the main street frontage of a subdivision, commercial, office or retail development.
 - Provide bicycle parking at large commercial, office, and retail developments.
 - Construct a path, bike lanes or suitable bicycle facility as part of any new development.
 - Provide inter-development or inter-parcel walkways and pedestrian connections not otherwise located parallel to street rights-of-way, and where warranted to improve non-motorized access to major facilities or other activity centers.

Environment

According to the County Health Rankings, Rockdale physical environment ranked 103rd of the 159 Georgia counties. The Healthy Communities Institute defines the physical environment as all places where we live and work (e.g., homes, buildings, streets, and parks). The environment influences a person’s level of physical activity and ability to have healthy lifestyle behaviors. For example, inaccessible or nonexistent sidewalks or walking paths increase sedentary habits. These habits contribute to obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Factors that contribute to healthy lifestyle behaviors include access to grocery stores and recreation facilities.

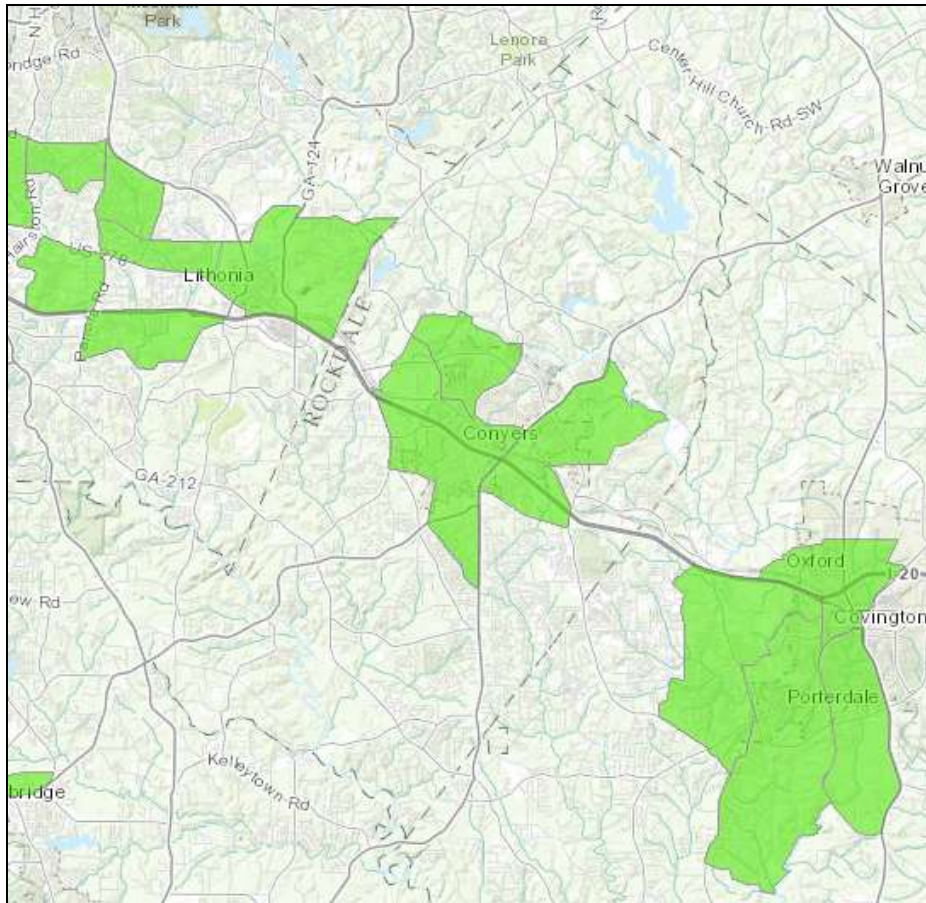
Access to Healthy Foods

In 2009, the county had 22 grocery stores per 100,000 population, which was similar to the nationwide county average of 21 per 100,000.⁶⁰ There are strong correlations between the density of grocery stores in a neighborhood and the nutrition and diet of its residents. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an estimated 39,854 (47%) Rockdale County residents (including 10,845 children and 3,940 seniors) had low access to a grocery store in 2010 and an estimated 798 households had no car and low access to a grocery store. About 13% of low-income residents had low access to a grocery store compared with 8% statewide and 6% nationwide.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx#.Um68NnC-qtE>

People who live in certain areas of Rockdale County have less access to fresh foods than others. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a food desert as a census tract with a substantial share of residents who live in low-income areas and have low levels of access to a grocery store or a healthy, affordable food retail outlet.⁶¹ Census tracts in the center of Rockdale County, including part of the city of Conyers and areas bordering interstate 20, are considered food deserts (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Food Deserts in Rockdale County, Georgia



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx#.UuAPAdIo7Gg>

Fast Food

In 2009, Rockdale County had a density of fast food restaurants that was higher than the national average (94 vs. 57 per 100,000).⁶² According to the Healthy Communities Institute, “fast food is often high in fat and calories and lacking in recommended nutrients.... studies suggest that fast food outlets strongly contribute to the high incidence of obesity and obesity-related health problems.”⁶³ Forty-six

⁶¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/>

⁶² U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx#.Um68NnC-qtE>

⁶³ Healthy Communities Institute <http://www.healthypasodelnorte.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=NS-Indicator&file=indicator&iid=1122582>

percent of all restaurants in the county in 2010 were fast food restaurants, which was slightly lower than the Georgia average of 50% but much higher than the national average of 27%.⁶⁴

Liquor Stores

In 2011, Rockdale County had a liquor store density of about 9 per 100,000 population,⁶⁵ which was lower than the national average of 11 per 100,000. Studies have shown that neighborhoods with a high density of alcohol outlets are associated with higher rates of violence, regardless of other community characteristics like poverty and age of residents. High alcohol outlet density has been shown to be related to increased rates of drinking and driving, motor vehicle-related pedestrian injuries, and child abuse and neglect.

Parks and Recreation

Rockdale had an estimated 8 recreation or fitness facilities per 100,000 residents in 2009, which was the same as the Georgia average but lower than the national benchmark of 16 per 100,000.⁶⁶ Seven percent of Rockdale County residents lived within half a mile of a park in 2010 compared with 16% of Georgians overall.

Water Safety

According to the Safe Drinking Water Information System cited in the County Health Rankings, drinking water safety in Rockdale County was good. In fiscal year 2012, no residents were reported to have been exposed to water exceeding a violation limit.⁶⁷

Air Quality

According to the County Health Rankings, the average daily measure of fine particulate matter (12.9 micrograms per cubic meter) in Rockdale County exceeded the state average and national benchmark.⁶⁸ The county is one of 21 metropolitan Atlanta counties with poor air quality.

Environment Community Improvement Plan

As shown by the unfavorable environmental ranking from County Health Rankings, Rockdale County faces several environmental challenges, including problems with air quality and access to healthy foods and recreational facilities.

⁶⁴ County Health Rankings <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/measure/factors/84/map>

⁶⁵ U.S. Census Bureau

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=BP_2011_00A1&prodType=table

⁶⁶ County Health Rankings <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/measure/factors/68/map>

⁶⁷ County Health Rankings <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/home>

⁶⁸ County Health Rankings <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/measure/factors/125/map>

The Rockdale Coalition's Community Resource List provides a wealth of information about activities for youth and families.⁶⁹ The county government also maintains a list of Rockdale County Parks and Recreation Facilities.⁷⁰

To help protect water quality, the Rockdale County Health Department works to ensure that septic systems do not pose a threat to resident's health or the environment.⁷¹



Septic System

Source: Rockdale County Health Department <http://www.gnrhealth.com/services/environmental-health-index/septic-systems-homeownerslandlords>

Safety

Violent Crime Rate

The Rockdale County violent crime rate of 409 per 100,000 residents in 2011 was higher than the Georgia rate (366 per 100,000).⁷² From 2007-2011, violent crime was the sixth leading cause of premature death in the county, as noted in the Background section. The property crime rate of 4,170 per 100,000 in Rockdale County was also higher than the statewide rate of 3,556 per 100,000.

Motor Vehicle Collisions

Motor vehicle-related injuries kill more children and young adults than any other single cause in the United States and they were the leading cause of years of potential life lost (i.e., premature death) in Rockdale County from 2007-2011. Rockdale County had an age-adjusted death rate due to motor vehicle collisions in 2009-2011 that was similar to the Georgia rate (12.3 vs. 12.9 per 100,000) and nearly

⁶⁹ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>

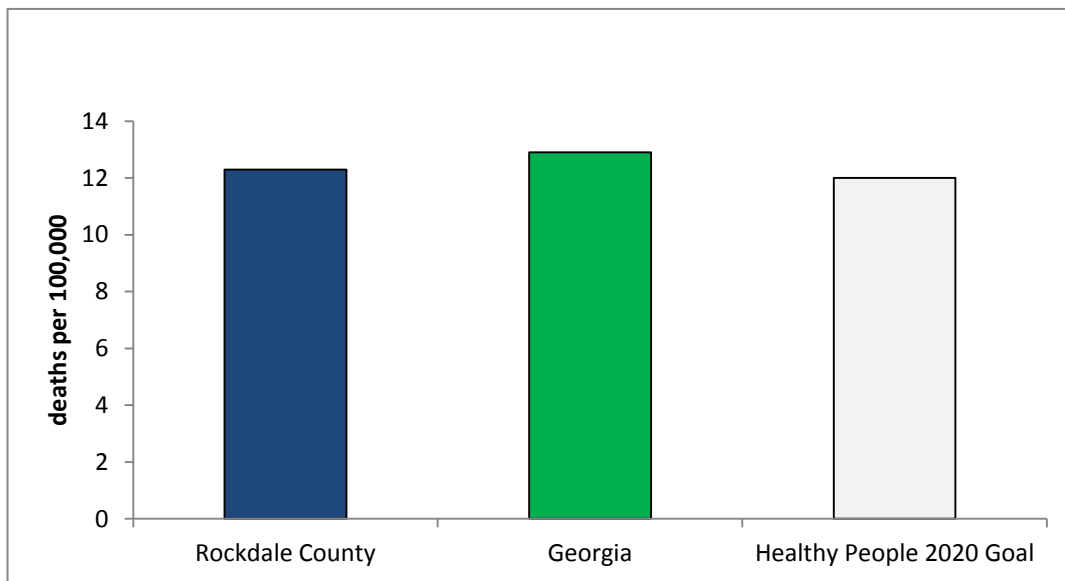
⁷⁰ Rockdale County Parks and Recreation Facilities <http://www.rockdalecounty.org/main.cfm?id=2511>

⁷¹ Gwinnett Newton Rockdale County Health Departments <http://www.gnrhealth.com/services/environmental-health-index/septic-systems-homeownerslandlords>

⁷² Georgia Statistics System <http://georgiastats.uga.edu/crossection.html>

met the Healthy People 2020 goal of 12 per 100,000 (Figure 18). For the years 2006-2008, the Rockdale County rate had 17.1 per 100,000, suggesting the rate had improved in recent years. According to the CDC, one in three crash deaths involve a drunk driver, suggesting that alcohol is likely involved in many Rockdale County motor vehicle-related deaths as well.⁷³

Figure 18. Age-Adjusted Death Rate Due to Motor Vehicle Collisions per 100,000 residents, 2009-2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Poisoning

According to Poison Prevention.org, more than 2 million poisonings are reported each year in the United States and the majority of non-fatal poisonings occur in children younger than six years old. Poisonings are a leading cause of death nationwide and were the third leading cause of premature death in Rockdale County. From 2009-2011, 27 deaths in Rockdale County were caused by poisoning.⁷⁴

Safety Community Improvement Plan

Available data suggest that violent crime and motor vehicle safety could be improved in Rockdale County.

Changes in road design and community development may help reduce the number of deaths. Because drinking is involved with about one-third of deaths from car crashes, interventions to reduce drinking

⁷³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/drinkinganddriving/?s_cid=vitalsigns-093-bb

⁷⁴ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

and driving would help protect the health of Rockdale County residents.⁷⁵ These evidenced-based interventions include publicized sobriety checkpoint programs, mass media campaigns, multi-component interventions with and community mobilization, and school-based intervention programs. Programs that increase use of child safety seats like community-wide information and enhanced enforcement campaigns, can help protect young children.⁷⁶

To help protect the county's youngest residents, the Health Department sought and received a state grant for car safety seats. The Health Department promotes the car seat initiative through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and, in partnership with the local organization Prevent Child Abuse Rockdale, provides free car seats and training on proper use to low-income participants.

Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)⁷⁷ and Teens in the Driver's Seat⁷⁸ clubs in high schools do alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) education. There is also a Responsible Alcohol Sales and Service (RASS) training program⁷⁹ for vendors that has been shown to be effective in Rockdale County.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers provides information about poisoning prevention on their website.⁸⁰ The National Georgia Poison Control operates a 24-hour emergency treatment information service (www.georgiapoisoncenter.org, 800-222-1222).



The Rockdale Coalition's Community Resource List provides information on legal resources (pages 54-58).⁸¹

⁷⁵ The Guide to Community Preventive Services: Motor Vehicle-Related Injury Prevention <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/mvoi/AID/index.html>

⁷⁶ The Guide to Community Preventive Services: Use of Child Safety Seats <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/mvoi/childsafetyseats/index.html>

⁷⁷ Students Against Destructive Decisions www.sadd.org/

⁷⁸ Teens in the Driver's Seat www.t-driver.com/

⁷⁹ Georgia Responsible Alcohol Sales and Service Program http://www.livedrugfree.org/fileadmin/files/Underage_Drinking_Initiative/Underage_Drinking_Info/RASS_PSA_-_Rockdale_County_-_Final_Version.pdf

⁸⁰ American Association of Poison Control Centers www.aapcc.org

⁸¹ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>

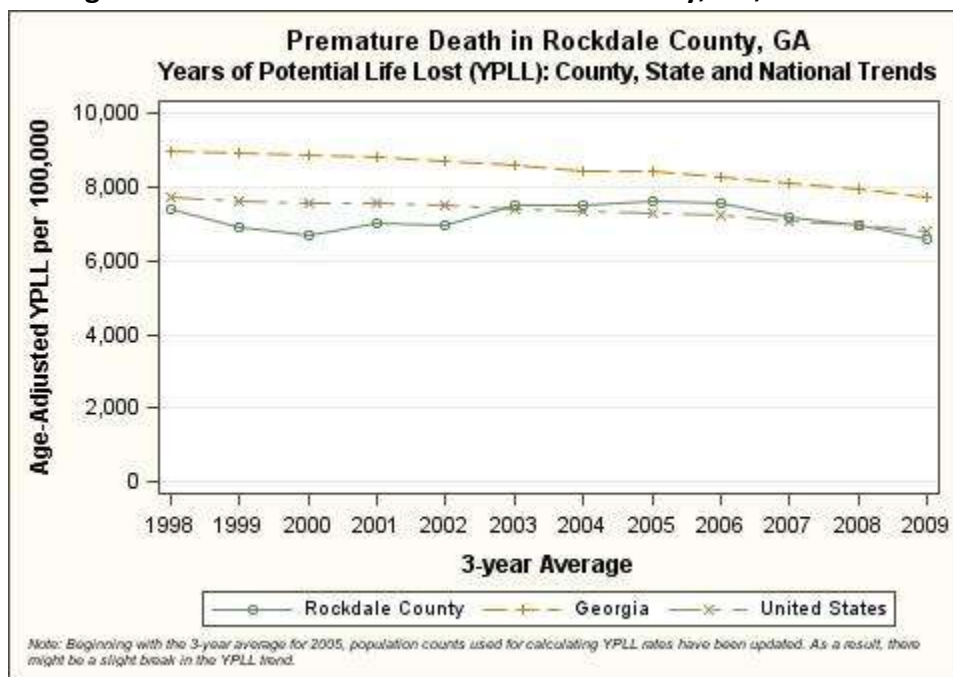
The Rockdale County Task Force on Family Violence is a long-standing organization that works to end family violence in the county “by changing the attitudes and systems, which prevent meaningful improvements and resolution of this chronic community problem by a lack of a unified approach.”⁸²

Section Two: Health Status

Overall Health

Rockdale County is relatively healthy compared with other counties in Georgia, but still has a great deal of room for improvement. According to the 2013 County Health Rankings, Rockdale County ranked 10th among the 159 Georgia counties in terms of overall health outcomes.⁸³ The county ranked 16th by measures of illness and disability (morbidity) and 13th by a measure of premature death (mortality). In 2013, Rockdale County had 6,569 age-adjusted years of potential life lost per 100,000 residents, which was lower than the state rate of 7,697 per 100,000 (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Premature Death in Rockdale County, GA, 1998-2009



Source: County Health Rankings

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

⁸² Rockdale County Task Force Against Family Violence <http://www.rockdaleaware.com/Articles/about-us.html>

⁸³ County Health Rankings for Rockdale County, Georgia <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

An estimated 13% of Rockdale County residents reported their health to be poor or fair, which was lower than the statewide rate of 16%.⁸⁴ Similarly, Rockdale County residents reported an average of 2.7 days of poor physical health per month, which was also lower than the Georgia figure (3.5 days). Rockdale County residents also reported a lower average number of poor mental health days (2.7 per month) than did statewide residents (3.4 days).

Access to Health Services

Clinical care is an important part of maintaining good health. The County Health Rankings estimates that about 20% of a community's health status can be attributed to clinical care. This organization ranks Rockdale County's clinical care as 23rd out of the 159 Georgia counties.⁸⁵

Whether a person has health insurance is a major factor in whether they have access to health services. From 2010-2012, an estimated one in five (21%) Rockdale County residents lacked health insurance.⁸⁶ Eleven percent of children under 18 years were uninsured compared with a national average of 7%. More than one in four (28%) adults age 18-64 years were uninsured, which was well above the national average of 17%. Non-Hispanic White residents (15%) were less likely to be uninsured than Black residents (18%) and Hispanic residents (54%). Nearly half (46%) of residents age 25 to 34 years were uninsured compared with 1% of residents 65 years and older (Figure 20).

⁸⁴ County Health Rankings for Rockdale County, Georgia

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

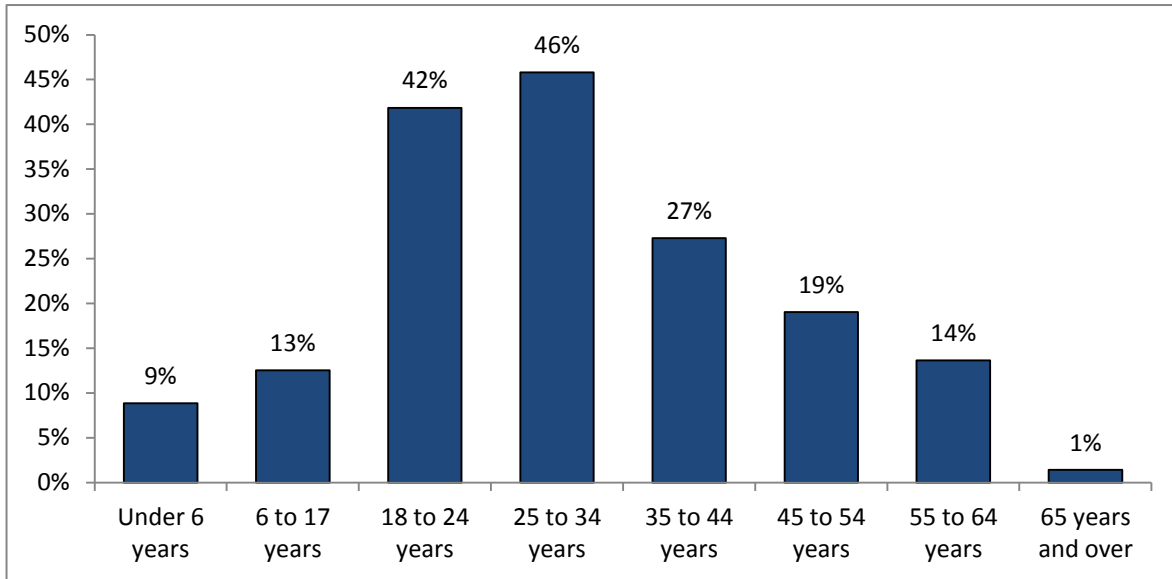
⁸⁵ County Health Rankings for Rockdale County, Georgia

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

⁸⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

Figure 20. Percentage of Residents that Are Uninsured (Estimated) by Age Group, Rockdale County, 2010-2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2012 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

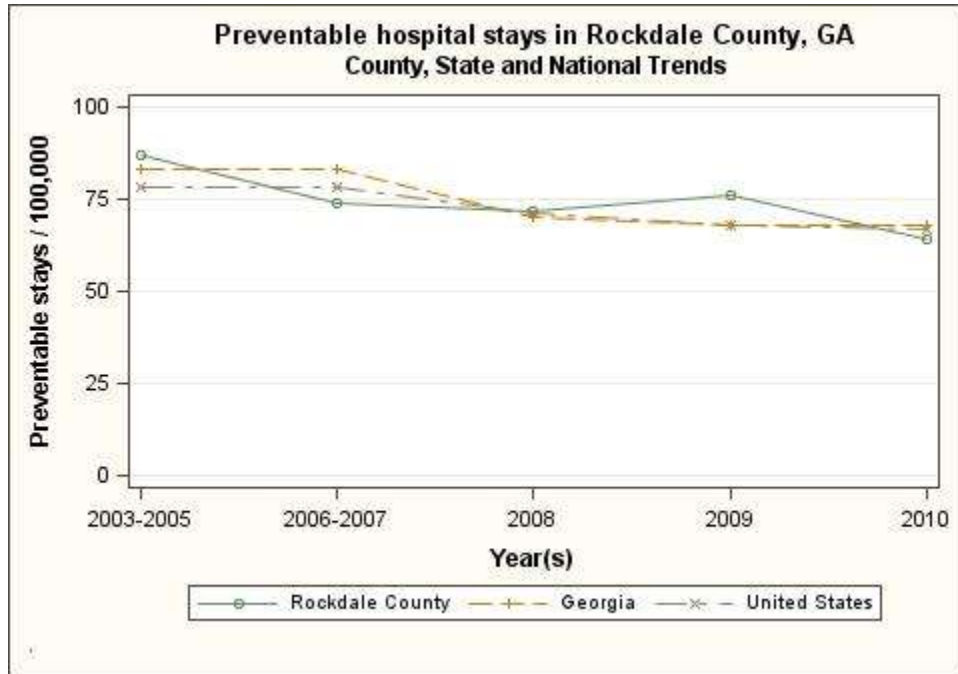
The ratio of residents to primary care physicians was 1,275:1, which was lower than the statewide ratio of 1,611:1, suggesting that primary care services are accessible in the county, at least to residents with health insurance and transportation. Similarly, there was an estimated 1 dentist per 1,370 residents, or approximately twice as many dentists as the statewide ratio of 1 dentist per 2,249 residents.⁸⁷

Rockdale County had a similar rate of preventable hospital stays as the state and the nation (Figure 21). A higher percentage of diabetic Medicare enrollees in the county (88%) were screened with an HBA1c test—which is important for monitoring blood sugar control—than diabetic Medicare enrollees throughout Georgia (84%).⁸⁸ A similar percentage of female Medicare enrollees received mammography screening in the county (63%) as the overall rate in Georgia (64%).

⁸⁷ County Health Rankings for Rockdale County, Georgia
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

⁸⁸ County Health Rankings for Rockdale County, Georgia
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

Figure 21. Preventable Hospital Stays in Rockdale County, Georgia, 2003-2010



Source: County Health Rankings

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

Access to Care Resources and Improvement Plan

A sizeable portion of Rockdale County residents are uninsured, limiting their access to health care. It is unclear to what extent changes in the health insurance system will affect Rockdale County residents at this time. For residents with health insurance, a variety of medical providers exist within the county, and the county appears to have an adequate number of primary care physicians and dentists compared with the state as a whole.

Rockdale County has one major hospital: Rockdale Medical Center.⁸⁹

The Rockdale Health Education and Linkages to Help (HEALTH) SafetyNet, of which the health department is a member, meets at the Rockdale Medical Center and works to “promote the health and wellness of the residents of our community, especially the medically under-served, by working together to ensure access to a full range of coordinated health services.”⁹⁰ The HEALTH SafetyNet’s goals include “weaving a healthcare safetynet of medical providers, social service providers, and concerned citizens;” connecting the uninsured to available health care resources, assisting the hospital in securing non-emergency medical care for the indigent population, and developing a medical transportation plan for the indigent population in Rockdale.” The health department was actively involved with the Rockdale Coalition in formalizing the Health SafetyNet Rockdale Action Map (RAM). The RAM was drafted as a

⁸⁹ Rockdale Medical Center <http://www.rockdalemedicalcenter.org/>

⁹⁰ Rockdale HEALTH SafetyNet <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/safetynet/>

formal plan to meet the goals of the SafetyNet through clearly identified activities, inputs, outputs and outcomes.

The Rockdale Coalition and the health department also take part in the Local Interagency Planning Team (LIPT), which works to coordinate care for children and youth with severe emotional disorders and substance abuse issues.

The Rockdale Coalition’s Community Resource List includes information on dental assistance programs (pages 34-35), care for people with disabilities—including many programs run by the health department—(pages 37-41), medical resources (pages 59-64).⁹¹

The Health Department provides a range of health care services, including immunizations, family planning, child health exams, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, and breast and cervical cancer screening.⁹²

Health Behaviors

As noted in the background section, most of the top ten risk factors for premature death, disease, and disability in the United States are health behaviors—or are closely linked to health behaviors—that lead to chronic diseases.⁹³ For this reason, we must focus attention on health behaviors to make the biggest improvements in health in Rockdale County. We must also recognize that people’s health behaviors are strongly influenced by biological factors like addiction, as well as the environment and public policy.⁹⁴

Rockdale County does relatively well when it comes to health behaviors. The county’s health behavior ranking (**20th of 159 counties**) places it in the top quartile of Georgia counties.

Tobacco Use

According to CDC, smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and it accounts for nearly one of every five deaths each year in the United States.⁹⁵ A lower percentage of Rockdale County adults smoke

Top 10 Risk Factors for Illness and Premature Death

- Poor diet (dietary risks)
- Smoking (tobacco)
- Overweight and obesity
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes and pre-diabetes
- Physical inactivity
- Alcohol use
- High cholesterol
- Drug use
- Air pollution (specifically particulate matter)

⁹¹ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>

⁹² Gwinnett Newton Rockdale County Health Departments <http://www.gnrhealth.com/services>

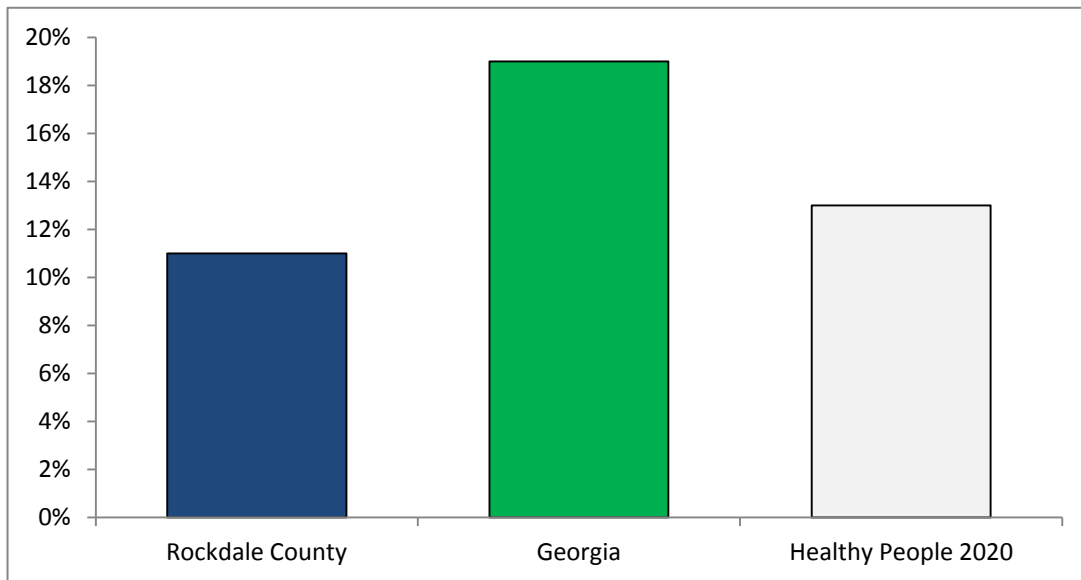
⁹³ IMHE <http://www.healthmetricsandevaluation.org/gbd/visualizations/gbd-arrow-diagram>

⁹⁴ Health and Behavior: The Interplay of Biological, Behavioral, and Societal Influences. National Academy of Sciences http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=9838

⁹⁵ CDC http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/index.htm

cigarettes (11%) than do adults statewide (19%, Figure 22).⁹⁶ This percentage is also below the Healthy People 2020 target of 12%. The percentage of adults who smoked in Rockdale County was half the percentage for neighboring Newton County (22%).

Figure 22. Percent Adults Who Smoke Cigarettes in Rockdale County and Georgia Compared with Healthy People 2020 Target, 2005-2011



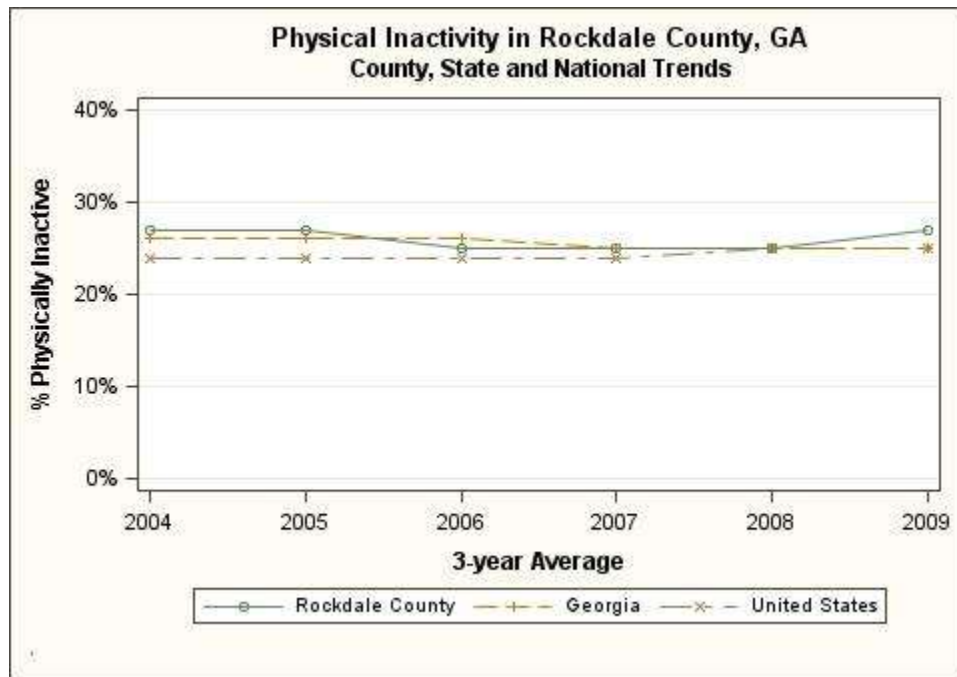
Source: County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/home>)

Physical Activity

An estimated 27% of Rockdale residents get no leisure-time physical activity compared with a state average of 24% (Figure 23). Lack of physical activity is a major risk factor for premature death and can contribute to an unhealthy body weight.

⁹⁶ County Health Rankings for Rockdale County, Georgia
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

Figure 23. Physical Inactivity in Rockdale County, Georgia, 2004-2009



Source: County Health Rankings

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

Excessive Drinking and Drug Abuse

According to the Guide to Community Preventive Services, excessive alcohol consumption is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States. In 2006, the estimated economic cost of excessive drinking in the U.S. was nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars.⁹⁷

An estimated 15% of Rockdale residents drank alcohol excessively during the time period 2005-2011 compared with a statewide average of 14%.⁹⁸ According to the Community Guide, evidence-based interventions that can further reduce the level of excessive drinking include increasing alcohol taxes, maintaining limits on the days and hours of alcohol sales, and enhanced enforcement of laws prohibiting alcohol sales to minors.⁹⁹

Data are not available specific to Rockdale County, but prescription drug abuse is a growing epidemic in the United States. Nationwide, deaths from prescription painkiller overdoses have increased 265% among men and 400% among women from 1999 to 2013.¹⁰⁰ Every 3 minutes, a woman goes to the emergency department for prescription painkiller misuse or abuse.

⁹⁷ Guide to Community Preventive Services <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/index.html>

⁹⁸ County Health Rankings for Rockdale County, Georgia
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

⁹⁹ Guide to Community Preventive Services <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/index.html>

¹⁰⁰ CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/PrescriptionPainkillerOverdoses/>

In 2008-2009, an estimated 617,000 (8%) of Georgians age 12 years and older used illicit drugs and an estimated 361,000 (5%) used misused prescription pain relievers. About one in seven (14%) of the 361,000 abusers of prescription drug abusers were 12-17 years old and another third (33%) were 18-25 years old.¹⁰¹

The Georgia Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Initiative is focused on four priority areas (education, monitoring, proper medication disposal, and enforcement) to reduce prescription drug abuse.¹⁰² According to this organization, Rockdale County has a drop box location¹⁰³ for safe prescription drug disposal that is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10 AM to 6PM:

Rockdale County Sheriff's Office
911 Chambers Drive
Conyers, GA 30012

Health Behaviors Improvement Plan

Tobacco

Given that one in nine residents of Rockdale County smokes, including about one in seventeen pregnant women (and one in six White pregnant women), interventions to reduce smoking in Rockdale County are needed at the individual, family, and community levels. Tobacco shortens lives, causes debilitating disease, and is associated with premature birth and low birth weight.

The Georgia Tobacco Quit Line, a statewide public health service is “a free and effective service that helps Georgians quit smoking and using tobacco products.”¹⁰⁴ The quit line offers free quitting tips, techniques, and support.

The Guide to Community Preventive Services provides a list of evidence-based interventions to reduce tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure.¹⁰⁵ These interventions include measures to increase the price of tobacco products, mobile phone-based cessation interventions, and smoke-free policies. The Rockdale County Health Department, in collaboration with the Georgia Tobacco Use Prevention Program¹⁰⁶ (GTUPP), is formally assessing (1) how the Tobacco Free Policy covering all Rockdale County schools is currently communicated to students, staff, and the community at large and (2) how effectively this policy is being enforced. Students within 5 Rockdale County High Schools are doing this assessment

¹⁰¹ State of Prescription Drug Use in Georgia: A Needs Assessment

<http://www.stoprxabuseinga.org/fileadmin/files/NeedsAssessment2.pdf>

¹⁰² Georgia Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Initiative <http://www.stoprxabuseinga.org/>

¹⁰³ Prescription Drug Disposal Locations <http://www.stoprxabuseinga.org/prescription-drug-disposal.html>

¹⁰⁴ Georgia Tobacco Quit Line <http://dph.georgia.gov/georgia-tobacco-quit-line> (1-877-270-STOP)

¹⁰⁵ Guide to Community Preventive Services <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/Tobacco/index.html>

¹⁰⁶ Georgia Tobacco Use Prevention Program <http://dph.georgia.gov/georgia-tobacco-use-prevention-program>

under the direction of school staff advisors. The Health Department is aiding in this assessment by providing educational materials and technical assistance to these student groups. Each student group will report on their school's assessment to school's administrators.

Physical Activity

The Georgia SHAPE program works to reduce childhood obesity by partnering with schools, the health department, and other community organizations to implement Georgia SHAPE activities.¹⁰⁷

The health department has begun an initiative called “Weight for US,” composed of a community-wide social media conversation about healthy eating and physical activity that allows residents to share their experiences working to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.¹⁰⁸ This conversation began in January 2014 and new topics are scheduled to begin in February, March, and April on the role of physical activity, policy, and the environment.

Excessive Drinking and Drug Abuse Improvement Plan

The Rockdale Drug-Free Community Coalition works to develop and implement community-wide environmental strategies that address the greatest drug issues facing youth in Rockdale.¹⁰⁹

As noted in the section on Safety, Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and Teens in the Driver's Seat clubs in high schools do alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) education. The county also has a Responsible Alcohol Sales and Service (RASS) training program¹¹⁰ for alcohol vendors.

Chronic Diseases

Rockdale County faces a growing burden of chronic disease. As noted in the Background section, interventions to foster healthy behaviors, prevent chronic disease, and treat these diseases in their early stages have huge potential impacts on health.

Adult Obesity

An estimated 32% of Rockdale County adults are obese (defined as a body mass index [BMI] of 30 or higher) compared with a statewide percentage of 28% (Figure 24). This level of obesity puts nearly one-third of adult residents at higher risk for serious conditions like diabetes, heart disease, cancer, osteoarthritis, respiratory problems, and stroke. It is important to note that this degree of obesity is a

¹⁰⁷ Georgia SHAPE <http://www.georgiashape.org/>

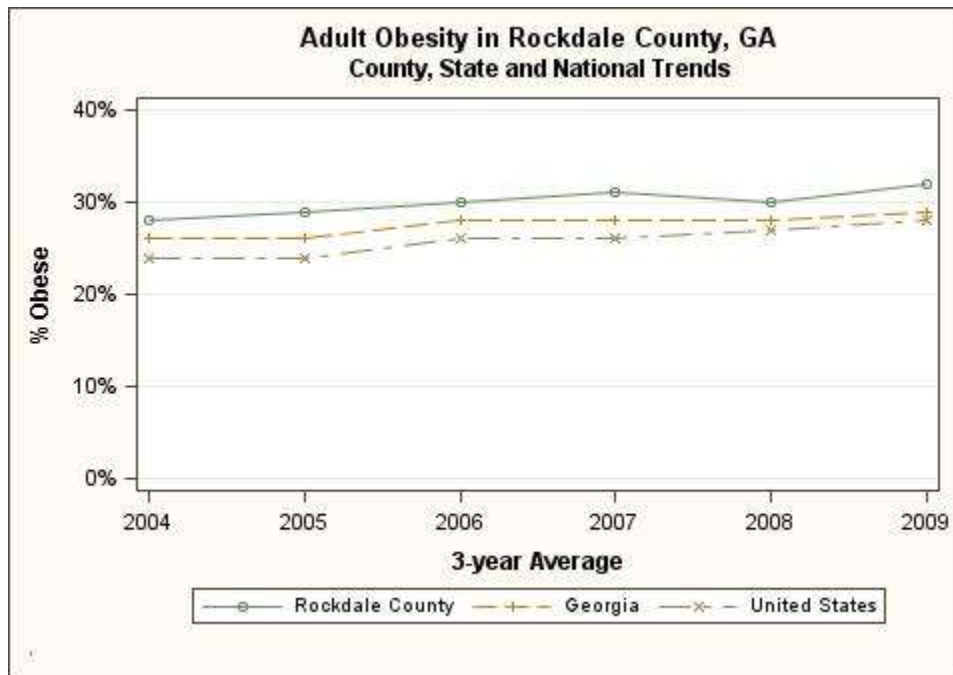
¹⁰⁸ Weight for US <http://www.weightforus.com/>

¹⁰⁹ Rockdale Coalition Collaborations <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/collaborative-participation/>

¹¹⁰ Georgia Responsible Alcohol Sales and Service Program
http://www.livedrugfree.org/fileadmin/files/Underage_Drinking_Initiative/Underage_Drinking_Info/RASS_PSA_-_Rockdale_County_-_Final_Version.pdf

relatively new for both Rockdale County and Georgia. For instance, back in 1990, Georgia’s obesity rate was only 10%. Obesity carries significant economic costs to the community due to increased health care spending (\$1,429 per person annually compared with those of normal weight) and lost earnings.

Figure 24. Adult Obesity in Rockdale County, Georgia, 2004-2009



Source: County Health Rankings

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

From 2009-2011, an estimated one in seven (15%) Rockdale low-income children in preschool (ages 2-4) were obese compared with a nationwide county average of 14%.¹¹¹ Obesity this early in life carries both immediate and potentially severe long-term risks. Nationwide, childhood obesity has increased dramatically in recent decades,¹¹² raising concern that many of today’s children might live shorter lives than their parents. In Georgia, obesity-related hospitalizations of children cost \$2.1 million a year and continue to rise.¹¹³

Diabetes

Diabetes affects nearly all of the body’s organ systems and can lead to disability and early death. In 2010, an estimated 14% of Rockdale adults (8,128 residents) had been diagnosed with diabetes, which

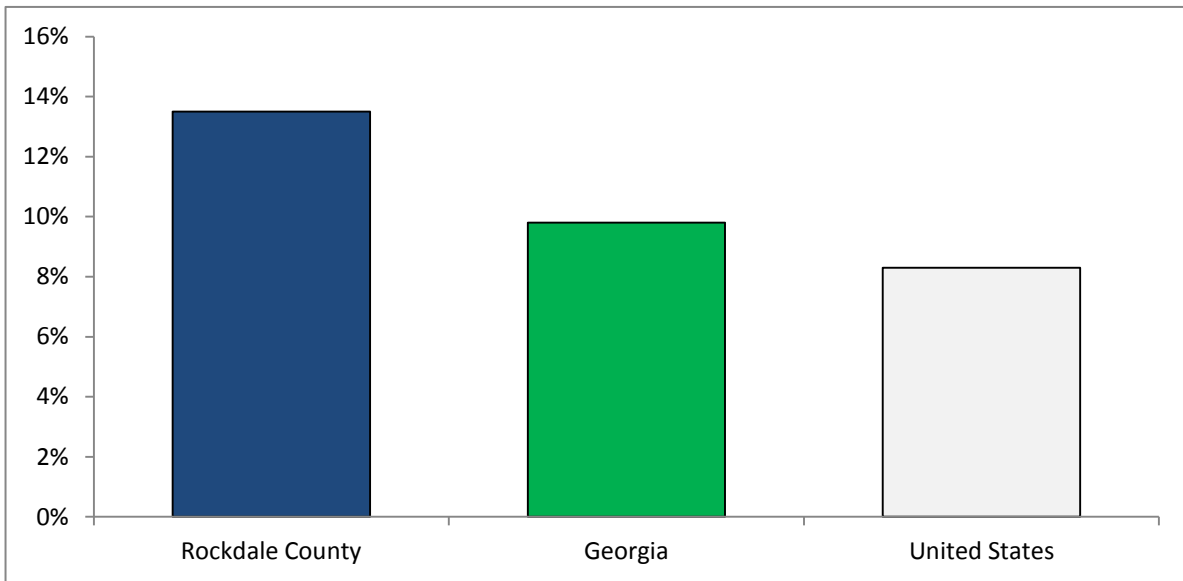
¹¹¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx#.Um68NnC-qtE>

¹¹² CDC Childhood Obesity Facts <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

¹¹³ Georgia Department of Public Health: Obesity in Children and Youth http://dph.georgia.gov/sites/dph.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/2010%20Child%20and%20Youth%20Obesity%20Data%20Summary.pdf

was higher than the Georgia estimate of 10% (Figure 25).¹¹⁴ Diabetes is part of the growing chronic disease trend. From 1996 to 2010, the percent of Georgians with diabetes has more than doubled from 4% to 10% and the number of people with the disease has more than tripled (Figure 26).¹¹⁵ In Rockdale County, from 2004 to 2010, the number of diabetic residents grew by 79% (Figure 27).

Figure 25. Estimated Percentage of Residents with Diagnosed Diabetes, Rockdale County, Georgia, 2010

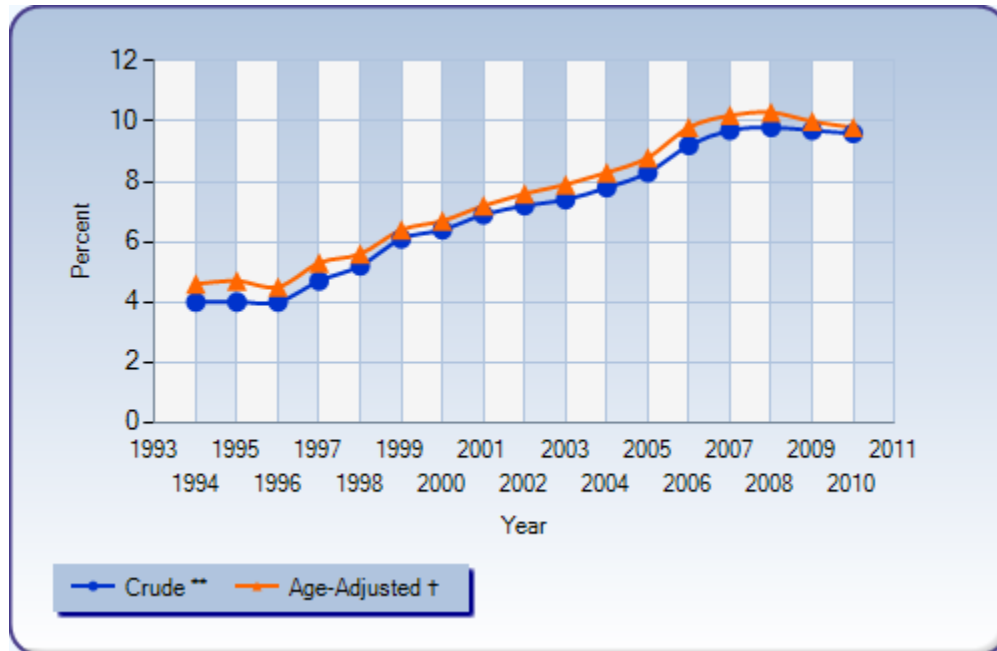


Source: CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/atlas/>

¹¹⁴ CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/atlas/>

¹¹⁵ CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/atlas/>

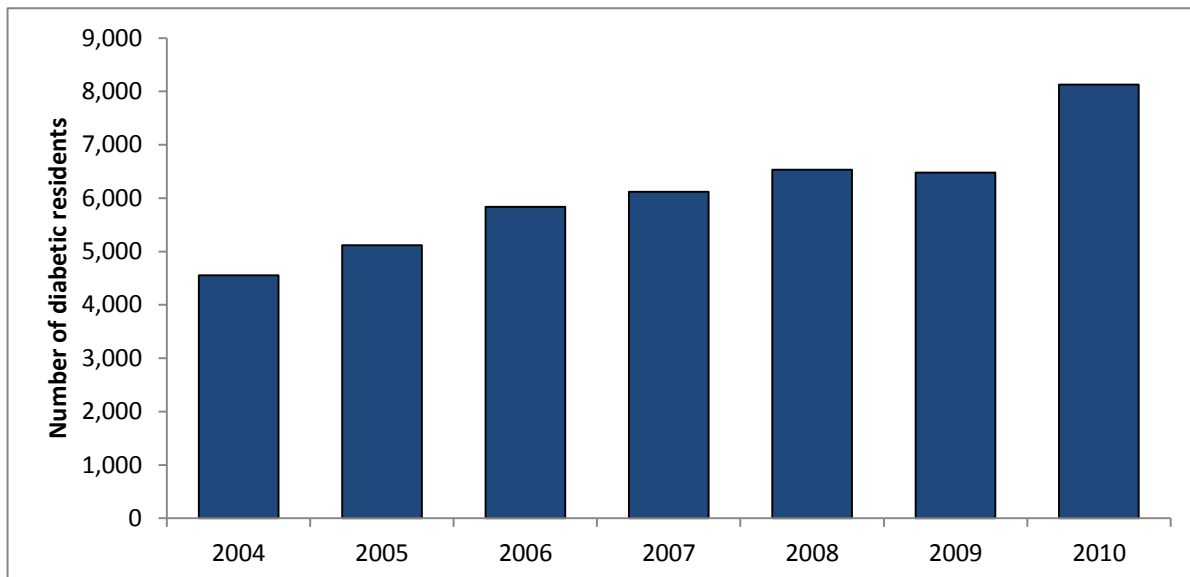
Figure 26. Percentage of Adults (18 years or older) with Diagnosed Diabetes in Georgia, 1994-2010



Source: CDC

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/ddtstrs/Index.aspx?stateId=13&state=Georgia&cat=prevalence&Data=data&view=TO&tr end=prevalence&id=1>

Figure 27. Total Number of Adults (age 18 years and older) with Diagnosed Diabetes, Rockdale County, Georgia, 1994-2010



Source: CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/atlas/>

The age-adjusted death rate from 2009-2011 due to diabetes in Rockdale County was 19.8 per 100,000 population compared with a statewide rate of 23.8 per 100,000. Men died from diabetes at a higher

rate than women (23.6 per 100,000 vs. 17.1 per 100,000). African-Americans had a higher age-adjusted death rate from diabetes (39.9 per 100,000) compared with non-Hispanic White residents (14.7 per 100,000). These data suggest that diabetes prevention through environmental changes that promote physical activity and better eating habits and early treatment are needed, particularly among African-American residents.

Why Age-Adjusted?

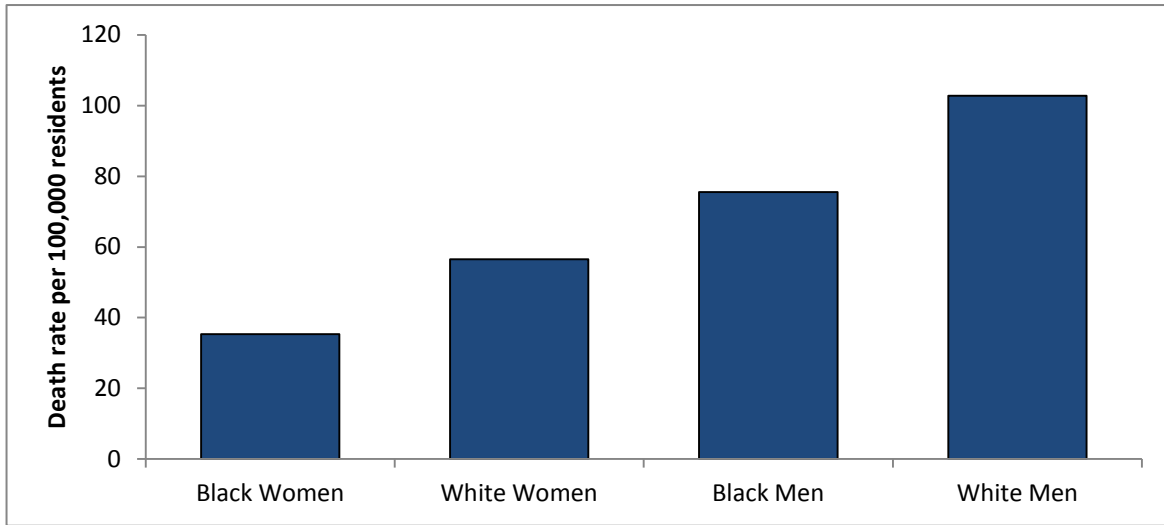
Death rates due to many diseases are adjusted for age to make it possible to compare counties or population groups. For example, two counties might have the same death rate due to diabetes after age is taken into account. But if age had not been adjusted for, the county with the older population would likely have a higher death rate because older people are more likely to die from diabetes.

Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke

Cardiovascular disease and stroke were directly responsible for over a quarter of the deaths in Rockdale County from 2007-2011. These diseases are strongly related to obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and tobacco use. Although Rockdale's age-adjusted rates of heart disease and stroke are below the statewide averages, they remain important health threats in the county, just as they are nationwide. Smoking, lack of physical activity, poor diet, high cholesterol, diabetes, and high blood pressure are all risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

The age-adjusted death rate due to "obstructive" heart disease (which includes heart attacks) in Rockdale County was 64.4 per 100,000 from 2009-2011, which was lower than the statewide rate of 87.1 per 100,000. Women had lower rates than men and Non-Hispanic Black residents had lower rates than non-Hispanic White residents of the same gender (Figure 28; data were insufficient to calculate rates for Hispanic residents).

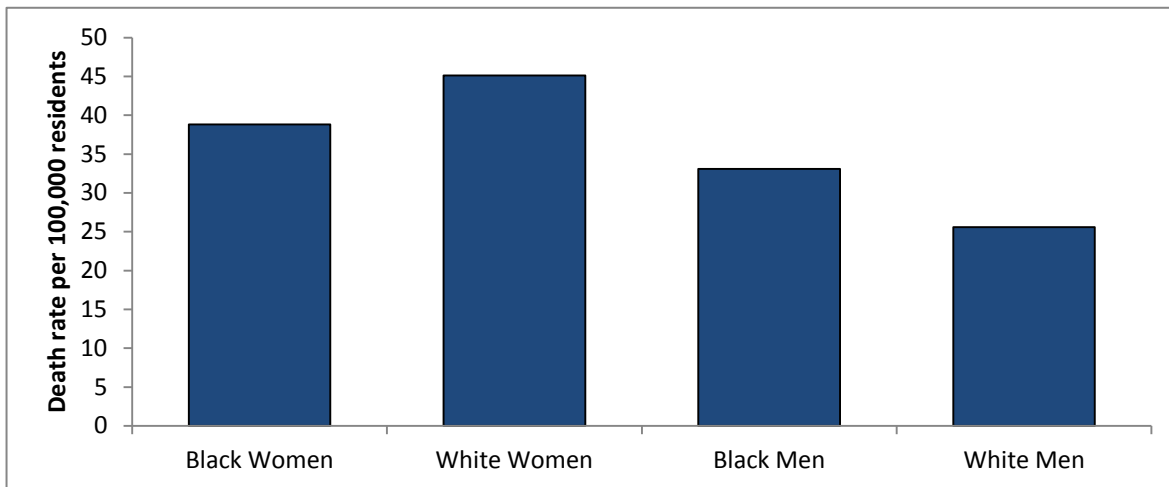
Figure 28. Age-Adjusted Death Rate Due to “Obstructive” Heart Disease among Non-Hispanic Residents, Rockdale County, Georgia, 2009-2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Strokes, sometimes referred to as “brain attacks,” are one of the leading causes of death in the United States. The age-adjusted death rate due to stroke in Rockdale County from 2009-2011 was 37.1 per 100,000, which was lower than the Georgia rate of 44.5 per 100,000. White women had a higher age-adjusted rate of stroke than Black women and both White and Black men (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Age-Adjusted Death Rate Due to Stroke among Non-Hispanic Residents, Rockdale County, 2009-2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Emphysema and Chronic Bronchitis

Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are the third leading cause of disability and death in the United States. Tobacco smoke is a key factor in the development and progression of these diseases. The age-

adjusted death rate from emphysema and chronic bronchitis from 2007-2011 in Rockdale County was 49.7 per 100,000, which was higher than the Georgia rate of 44.5 per 100,000.¹¹⁶ Avoiding tobacco smoke is the key way to prevent both emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Chronic Disease Resources and Community Improvement Plan

The three most important behavioral factors in preventing the chronic diseases presented above are (1) smoking cessation, (2) good nutrition, and (3) increased physical activity. These behavioral factors also influence blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and cholesterol, which also affect chronic diseases. Resources and plans to improve these behavioral factors are described in the Health Behaviors section.

Improving nutrition and physical activity also require a coordinated community effort. Education is a key part of the equation, but needs to be part of a larger effort. Changes in the built environment—like sidewalks and developments that encourage walking to schools—and the food environment—like increasing access to healthy foods—are promising strategies for helping all residents attain a healthy body weight.

The Rockdale County Health Department will do the following to address the growing burden of chronic diseases in the community:

- Continue to promote tobacco cessation, healthy eating, physical activity to help lower residents' risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and stroke (for example, the health department website includes a list of local farmers markets)
- Collaborate with the Rockdale Coalition on a social media initiative, 'Weight for US,' which will promote communication about healthy eating and physical activity
- Participate in Georgia Department of Public Health SHAPE program to fight childhood obesity
- Continue Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program that includes nutrition counseling and promotion of healthy foods and breastfeeding (since breastfeeding has been shown to reduce the risk of obesity)
- Continue to reach out to populations at highest risk of chronic illness

Cancer

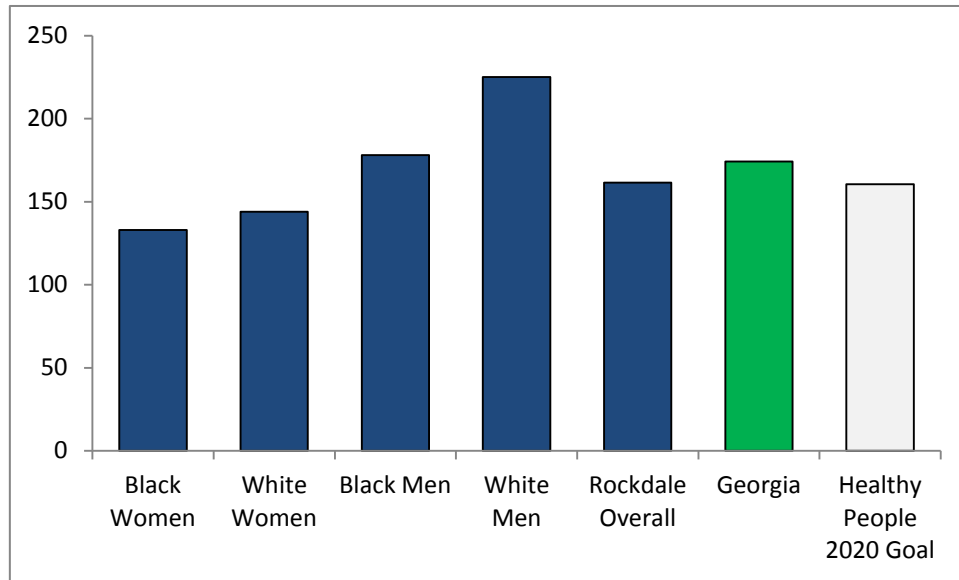
Cancer caused more than one in five deaths in Rockdale County from 2007-2011.

In 2007-2011, the overall age-adjusted death rate due to cancer in Rockdale County was 162 deaths per 100,000 population, which was below the Georgia average of 174 per 100,000 and nearly met the Healthy People 2020 target of 161 per 100,000.¹¹⁷ Men had substantially higher rates than women and non-Hispanic White residents had a higher rate than non-Hispanic Black residents (Figure 30).

¹¹⁶ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

¹¹⁷ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 30. Age-Adjusted Death Rate Due to Cancer by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, Rockdale County, 2007-2011

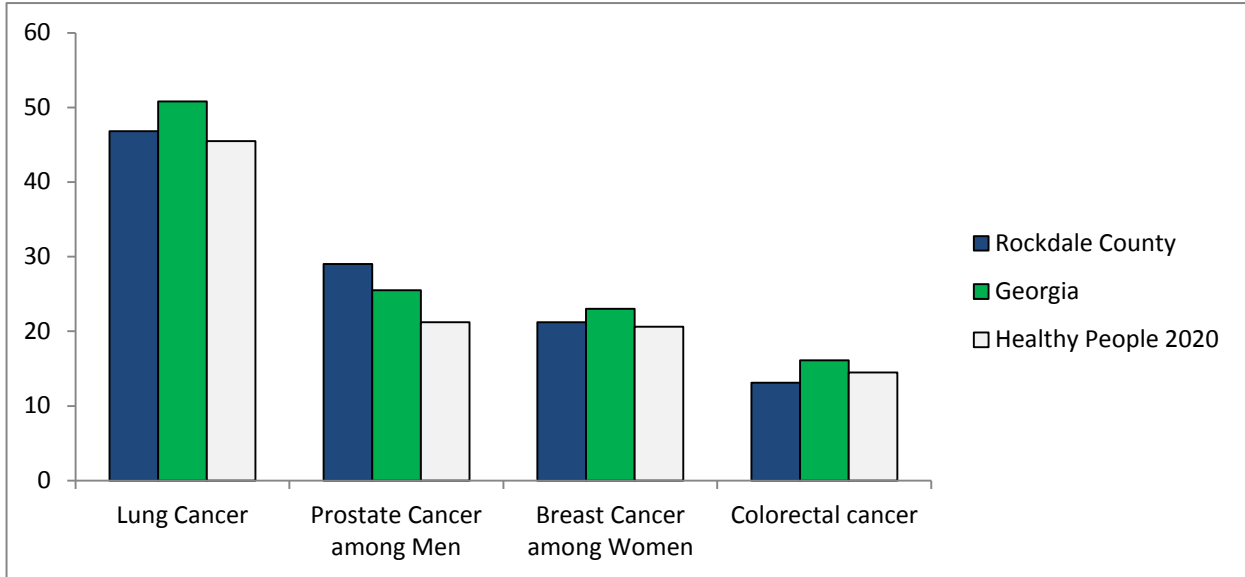


Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

White and Black categories include only non-Hispanic residents; insufficient data were available to report rates for Hispanics

Lung cancer, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, and prostate cancer are the four most common types of cancer in Rockdale County and nationwide. Rockdale County age-adjusted death rates due to these cancers were below statewide rates except for prostate cancer (Figure 31). Rockdale County rates for these cancers were slightly above Healthy People 2020 targets for lung, prostate, and breast cancer; the rate of colorectal cancer was below the Healthy People 2020 target.

Figure 31. Age-Adjusted Death Rate Due to Four Most Common Cancers in Rockdale County and Georgia, 2007-2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Cancer Community Improvement Plan

Some of the most important ways to prevent cancer are tobacco cessation, maintaining a healthy body weight, and physical activity. Evidence-based screenings like pap smears for cervical cancer and mammograms for breast cancer are also important. Quality clinical care for those with cancer is critical.

The Rockdale County Health Department provides evidence-based screening for breast and cervical cancer. These services are funded in part by grants from the Susan G. Komen Foundation. The health department also provides human papilloma virus (HPV) screening and vaccines, which can also help prevent cervical cancer.

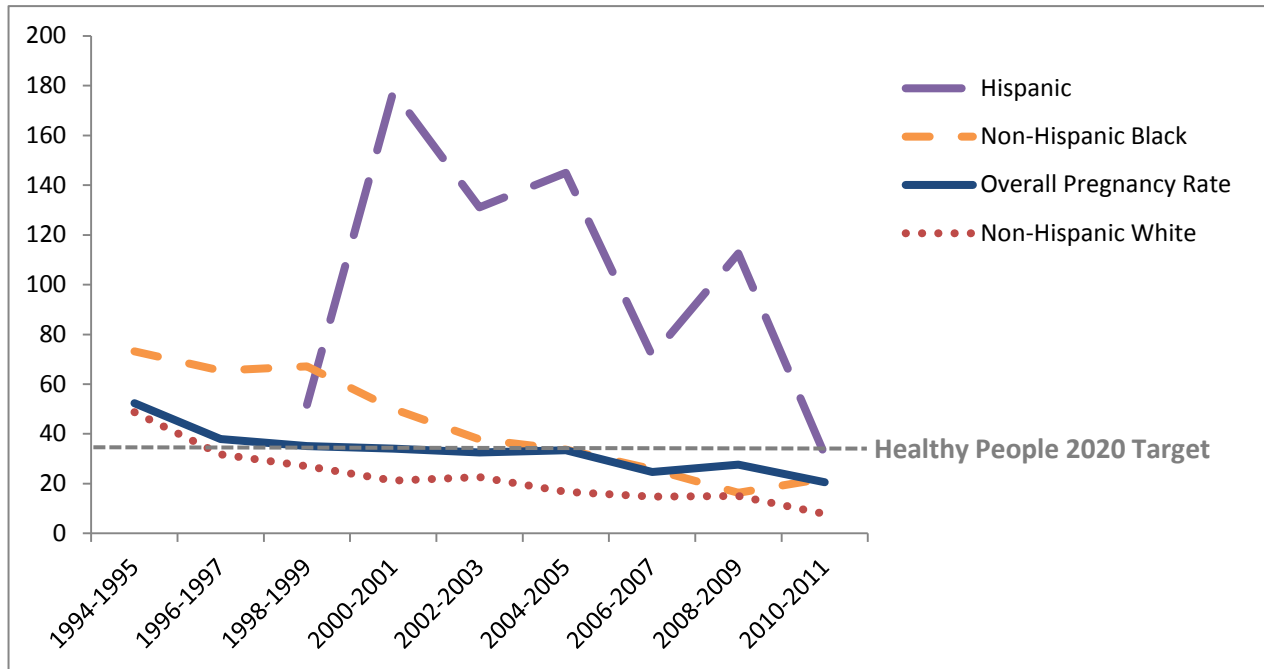
Teen Pregnancy

According to the Healthy Communities Institute, teen pregnancy and childbearing have substantial social and economic impacts for communities, contributing to high school dropout and increased health care and foster care costs. Teen pregnancy has declined substantially in Rockdale County and Georgia as a whole over the past decade, but still remains high compared to other industrialized countries where rates are much lower.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/reproductive-health/teen-pregnancy/trends.html>

In 2011, the teen pregnancy rate in Rockdale County was 17.5 per 1,000 girls age 15-17, which was well below the Georgia statewide rate of 25.3 per 1,000 and the Healthy People 2020 target of 36.2 per 1,000.¹¹⁹ In 2000, the rate was nearly twice as high. In 2010-2011, the teen pregnancy rates for Hispanic, White, and African American girls in Rockdale County were all below the Healthy People 2020 target (Figure 32).¹²⁰

Figure 32. Teen Pregnancy Rate (per 1,000 girls age 15-17) for Rockdale County Residents, 1994-2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Teen Pregnancy Community Improvement Plan

Although the rate of teen pregnancy is declining, room for improvement exists. Rates of sexually transmitted infections among teens are increasing, further suggesting that teens in Rockdale County continue to be sexually active.

The Rockdale County Health Department will continue work to prevent teen pregnancy by

- Providing teen pregnancy prevention education in clinics
- Collaborating with community partners like the organization More Than Conquerors, Inc,¹²¹ which promotes good decision-making and healthy relationships for adolescents and teens

¹¹⁹ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

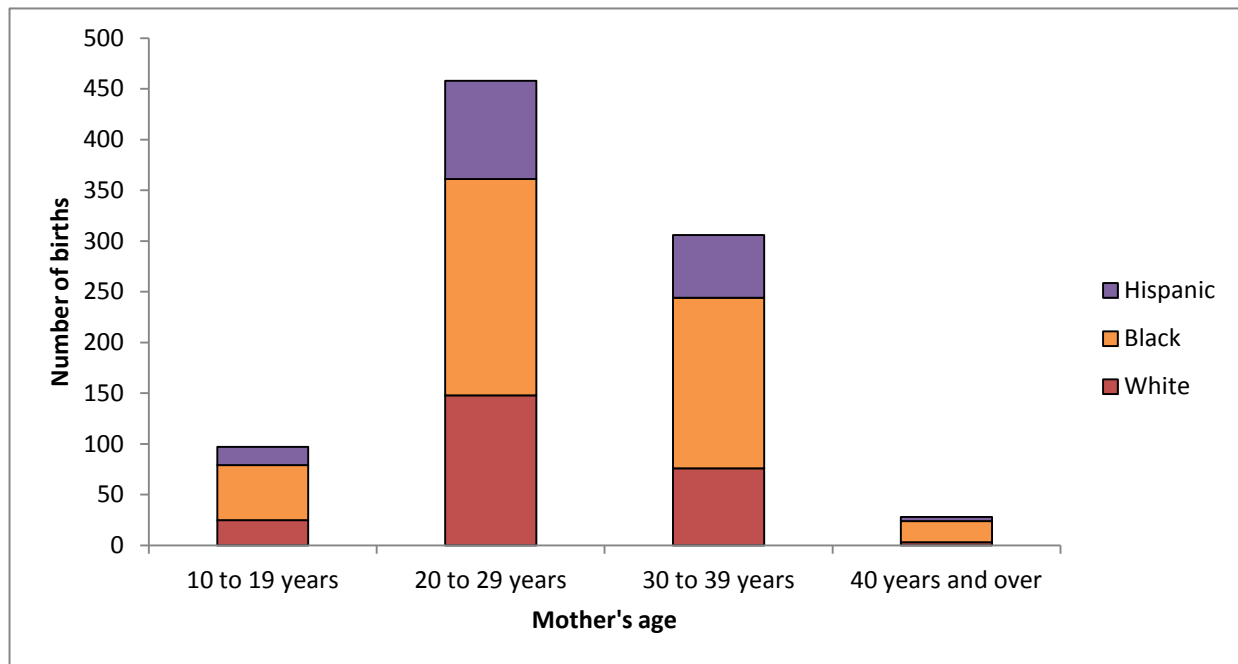
¹²⁰ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

¹²¹ Rockdale News on More Than Conquerors, Inc, May 1, 2013 <http://www.rockdalenews.com/archives/15174/>

Maternal and Infant Health

Of the 985 births to Rockdale County mothers in 2011, over half (52%) were to women age 20-29 years, about a third (34%) were to women 30-39 years, about one in ten (11%) were to girls and women 10-19 years, and 3% were to women 40 years and older (Figure 33). Three-quarters (75%) of the births to mothers in their 40s were to African-American mothers compared with 56% of births for mothers 10-19 years, 55% for mothers in their 30s, and 47% for births to mother in their 20s.

Figure 33. Mother's Age and Race/Ethnicity for Rockdale County Births, 2011

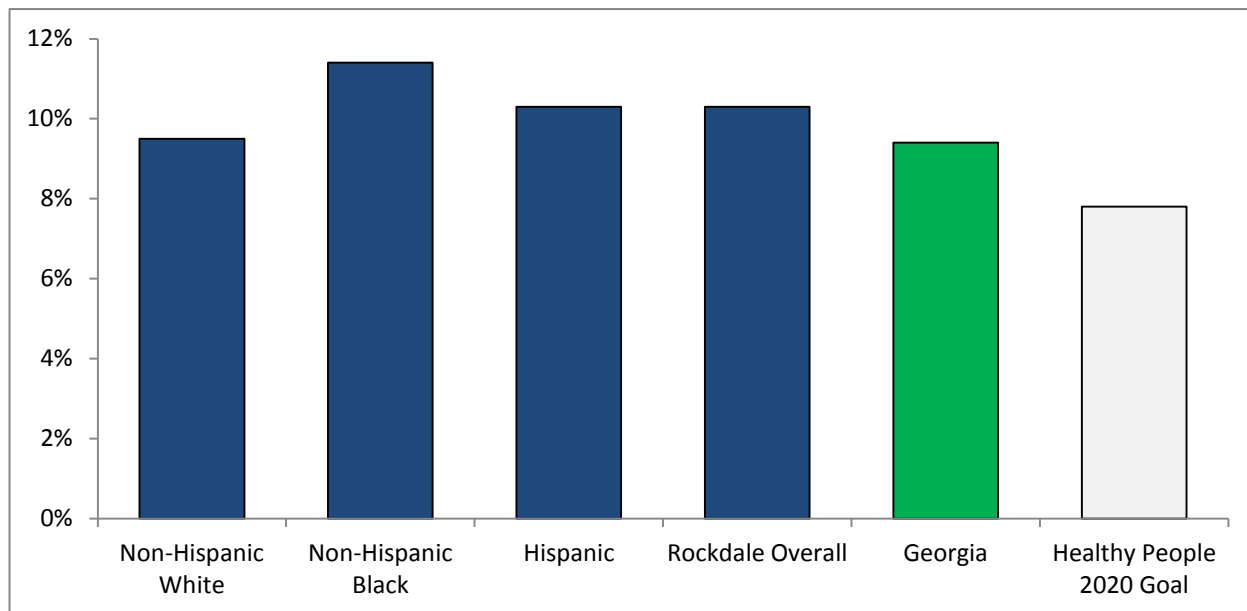


Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Among the 985 births to Rockdale County mothers in 2011, 12.7% of infants were born premature or preterm (defined as birth before the end of the 37th week of pregnancy). This percentage was slightly higher than the statewide average of 11.6%. Preterm birth is a leading cause of infant death and disability and may be influenced by smoking, alcohol use, stress, and lack of prenatal care and vitamins. In Rockdale County in 2011, women in their 40s had the highest rates of preterm delivery. Among race/ethnic groups, Hispanic women were most likely to have preterm birth (16.0%), followed by African-American women (12.9%) and non-Hispanic White women (9.1%).

Low birth weight is closely related to preterm birth, but may be caused by other factors. About 10.3% of babies born in Rockdale County in 2011 had low birth weight (less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces), which was higher than the statewide average of 9.4% and the Healthy People 2020 target of 7.8%. Low birth weight was most common among women over 40 years, and African-American women (Figure 34).

Figure 34. Percent of Newborns with Low Birth Weight born to Rockdale County Mothers, 2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

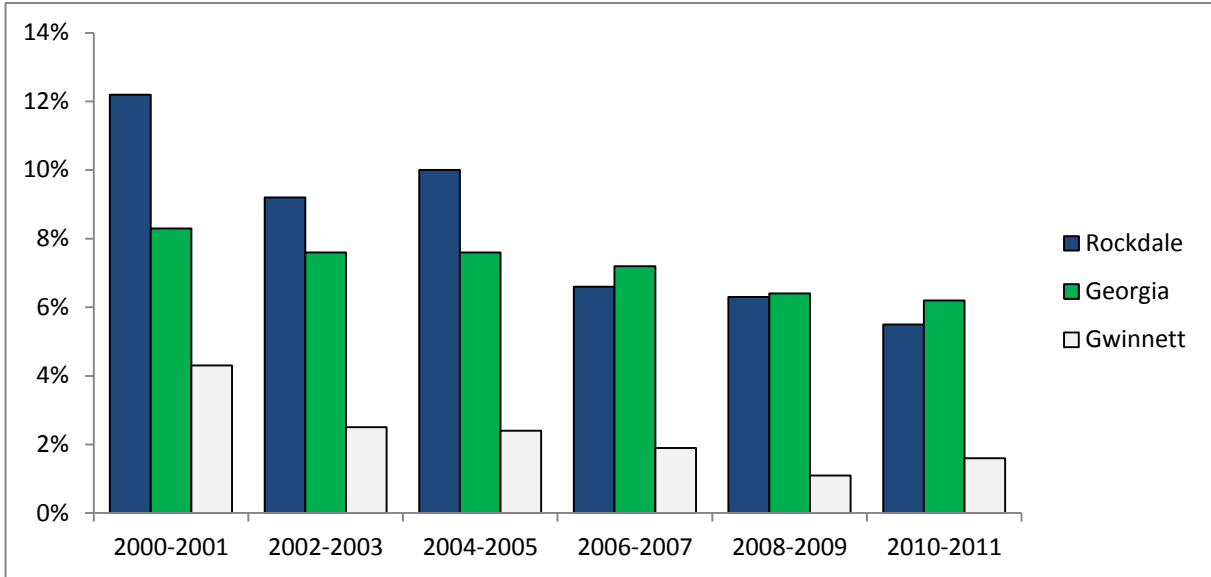
Babies born at very low birth weight (less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces) are at high risk of complications like infection, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), breathing problems, and bleeding inside the brain. About 1.8% of babies born in Rockdale County in 2011 had very low birth weight. This percentage was the same as the state average of 1.8% but higher than the Healthy People 2020 target of 1.4%. Risk factors for very low birth weight are similar to those for low birth weight.

Mothers who Smoked During Pregnancy

Smoking during pregnancy poses significant risks to both the mother and the fetus, including an increased risk for preterm birth and low birth weight. From 2009-2011, 5.8% of pregnant women in Rockdale County smoked (Figure 35).¹²² This percentage was slightly lower than the statewide percentage of 6.3% but nearly four times the percentage in nearby Gwinnett County (1.6%). On the positive side, smoking rates among pregnant women have declined substantially since 2000-2001. Smoking during pregnancy was far more common among non-Hispanic White women (16.3%) than non-Hispanic Black women (1.8%) and Hispanic women (1.1%). In terms of age groups, pregnant women age 20-24 years (8.1%) and 15-19 years (7.2%) had the highest smoking rates (Figures 36 and 37).

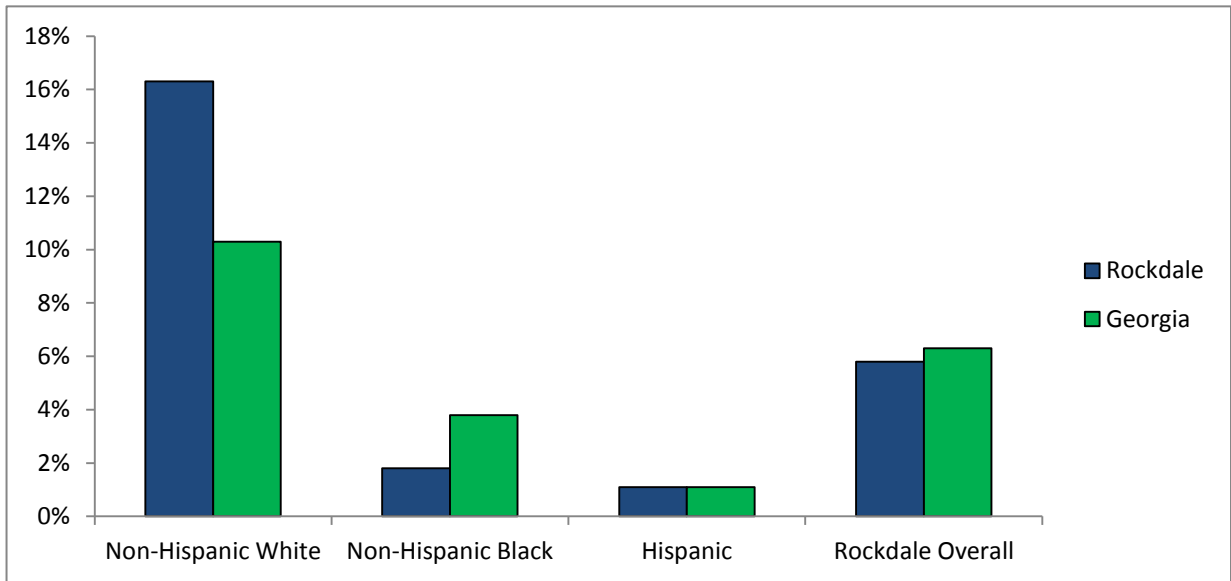
¹²² OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMCH.aspx>

Figure 35. Percentage of Mothers Who Smoked During Pregnancy, Rockdale County, Gwinnett County, and Georgia, 2000-2011



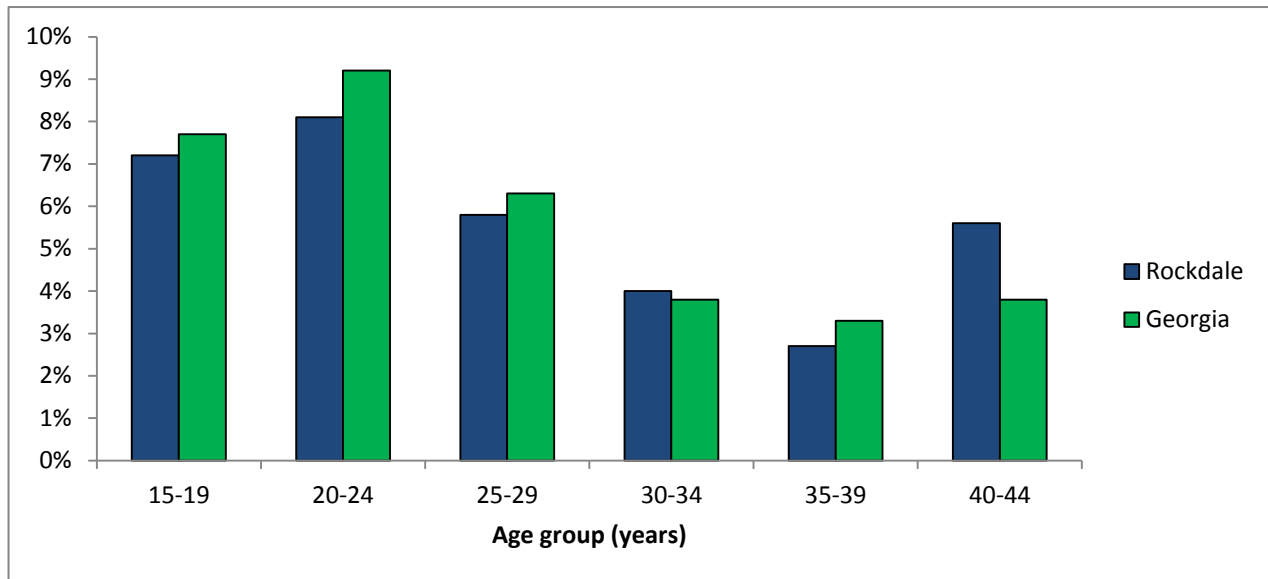
Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 36. Percentage of Mothers Who Smoked During Pregnancy by Race/Ethnicity, Rockdale County, Georgia, 2009-2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 37. Percentage of Mothers Who Smoked During Pregnancy by Age Group, Rockdale County, Georgia, 2009-2011



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Maternal and Infant Health Community Improvement Plan

To improve the health of pregnant women and infants, the Rockdale County Health Department will

- Continue to provide essential maternal and child health services
- Continue teen pregnancy prevention efforts outlined above
- Collaborate with community groups in activities to reduce smoking among teens and women
- Support smoke-free legislation to reduce maternal smoking and second-hand smoke exposure

Work done to reduce overall smoking rates may reduce the risk of preterm birth and low birth weight in the community.

Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases, including influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis, HIV, hepatitis, and sexually transmitted infections, remain a threat to Rockdale County’s health. Ongoing vigilance is critical in our increasingly interconnected world. Infectious diseases do not respect national—or county—borders.

According to the National Foundation for Infectious Disease, each year, on average, in the U.S. more than 50,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases. A number of diseases and infections are easily prevented in both children and adults through adequate immunizations including diphtheria*, *Haemophilus influenzae* type B* (Hib), hepatitis A, hepatitis B*, measles*, mumps*, pertussis* (whooping cough), polio*, rubella* (German measles), *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, tetanus* (lockjaw) and varicella*

(chickenpox). Georgia law requires vaccination for the diseases marked with an asterisk (*) for children who attend daycare and prior to entry into school.

Influenza and Pneumonia

Influenza and pneumonia rank eighth among the leading causes of death in the United States, and vaccines for influenza and pneumonia can help prevent serious illness and death. In Rockdale County, the 2009-2011 age-adjusted death rate due to influenza and pneumonia was 17.5 per 100,000 population. By comparison, the statewide rate was 18.1 per 100,000, but the rate in nearby Gwinnett County was 9.4 per 100,000.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS affects people in Rockdale County. In 2010, there were 82 people reported to be living with HIV in Rockdale County, which yielded a prevalence of 117 per 100,000 residents. This figure was lower than the statewide prevalence of 429 per 100,000.¹²³ Of the 82 people reported to be living with HIV/AIDS in the county in 2010, 52% were Black and 40% were White; 77% were male. A majority of these residents were age 45 years or older; 9% were 13-24 years, 10% were 25-34 years, 28% were 35-44 years, 32% were 45-54 years, and 21% were age 55 years or older. From 2008 to 2011, fewer than 20 new cases of HIV were diagnosed and reported to the state health department. However, an estimated one in five people with HIV nationwide are unaware of their status, suggesting that rates of HIV are likely higher, particularly among young people.¹²⁴

Hepatitis

Hepatitis is a viral disease that causes inflammation of the liver. Transmission and/or treatment differ depending on which virus causes the illness. There are five possible viruses named hepatitis: A, B, C, D and E viruses. Other viruses may cause hepatitis but are very rare. In Georgia, hepatitis A, B and C are reportable diseases; hepatitis D is not reportable as it only occurs among individuals already infected with hepatitis B; hepatitis E is not monitored as it is not found in the U.S. Vaccines are available for both hepatitis A and B; however, no vaccine is available for hepatitis C.

Each type of hepatitis can be spread in different ways. Hepatitis A virus is spread from person to person by putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with the stool of a person with hepatitis A. Casual contact, as in the usual office, factory or school settings, does not spread the virus. Hepatitis B virus is spread when blood from an infected person enters the body of a person who is not infected. For example, hepatitis B is spread through having unprotected sex with an infected person, by sharing drugs, needles or other paraphernalia, through needle sticks or sharps exposures on the job, or from mother to her baby during birth. Hepatitis C virus is also spread when blood from an infected person

¹²³ AIDSvu www.aidsvu.org

¹²⁴ AIDS.gov <http://aids.gov/federal-resources/policies/care-continuum/>

enters the body of a person who is not infected. However, it is rare for hepatitis C to be spread through unprotected sexual activities.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Georgia's rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia, are among the highest in the country (Table 1).

Table 1. States with the 10 Highest Rates of Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia, United States, 2012

Rank	Syphilis		Gonorrhea		Chlamydia	
	State	Rate*	State	Rate*	State	Rate*
1	Georgia	9.5	Mississippi	230.8	Mississippi	774
2	California	7.8	Louisiana	194	Alaska	755.8
3	Louisiana	7.4	Alabama	193	Alabama	637.6
4	Maryland	7.4	South Carolina	163.2	Louisiana	597.9
5	Florida	7.2	Georgia	156.1	South Carolina	580.2
6	Texas	6.3	North Carolina	148.3	New Mexico	571.4
7	New York	6.3	Arkansas	146.6	Arkansas	565.4
8	Illinois	6.2	Ohio	142.9	Georgia	534
9	Arkansas	5.9	Tennessee	142.1	Illinois	526.1
10	Oregon	5.5	Illinois	141	North Carolina	524

Source: CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm>

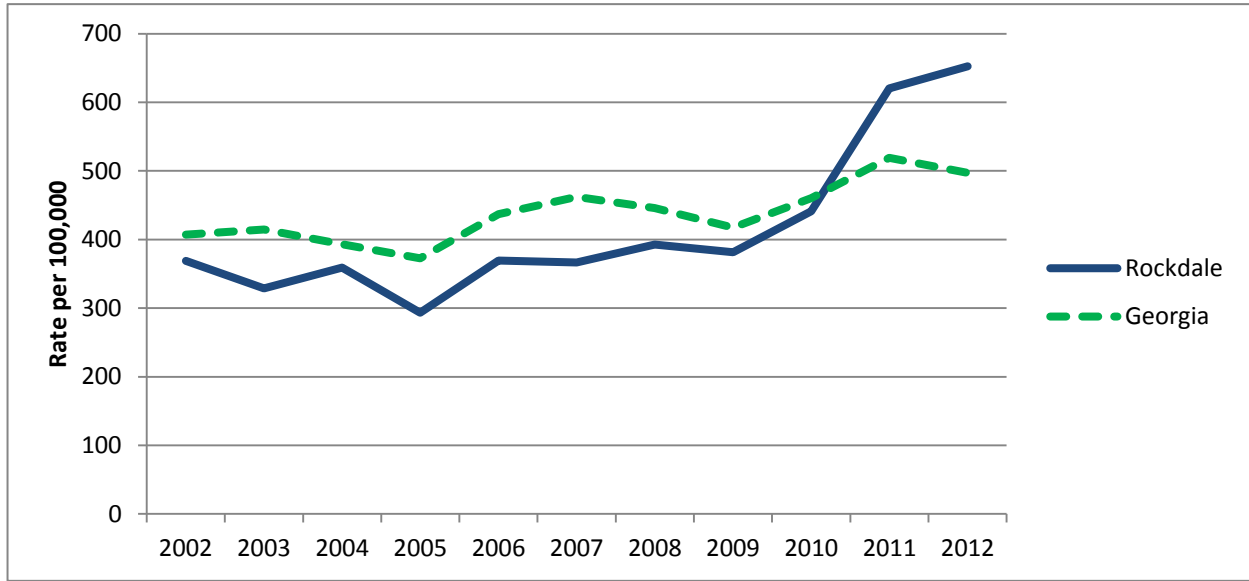
*Rate per 100,000 residents

Chlamydia

Like elsewhere in Georgia, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a health problem in Rockdale County. In 2012, there were 653 cases of Chlamydia per 100,000 people, representing a more than 70% increase from 2009, when the rate was 382 per 100,000 (Figure 37).¹²⁵ The statewide rate was 497 per 100,000 in 2012. The reported incidence of Chlamydia in Rockdale County was highest among non-Hispanic Black residents and women (Figures 39 and 40).

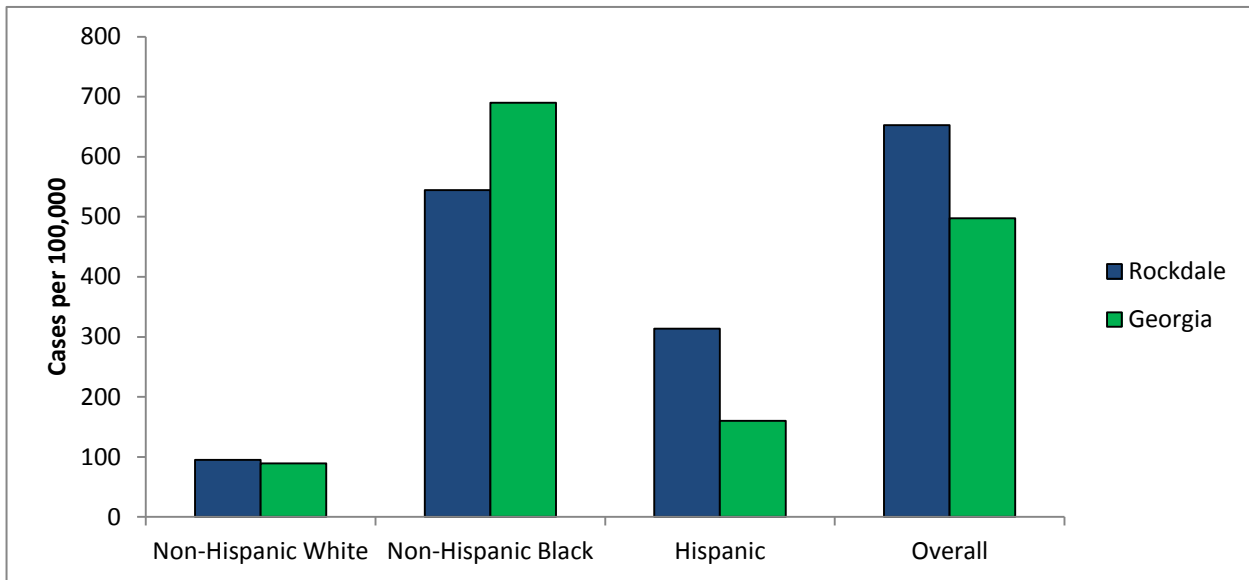
¹²⁵ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 38. Chlamydia Cases per 100,000 in Rockdale County and Georgia, 2002-2012



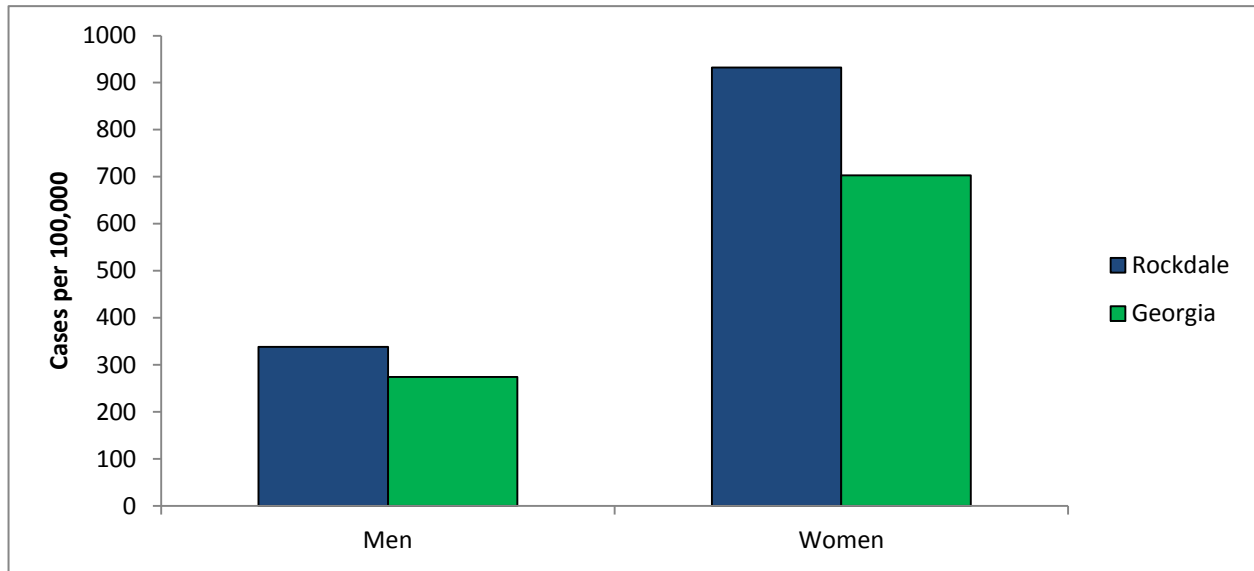
Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 39. Chlamydia Cases per 100,000 by Race/Ethnicity in Rockdale County and Georgia, 2012



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 40. Chlamydia Cases per 100,000 by Sex in Rockdale County and Georgia, 2012



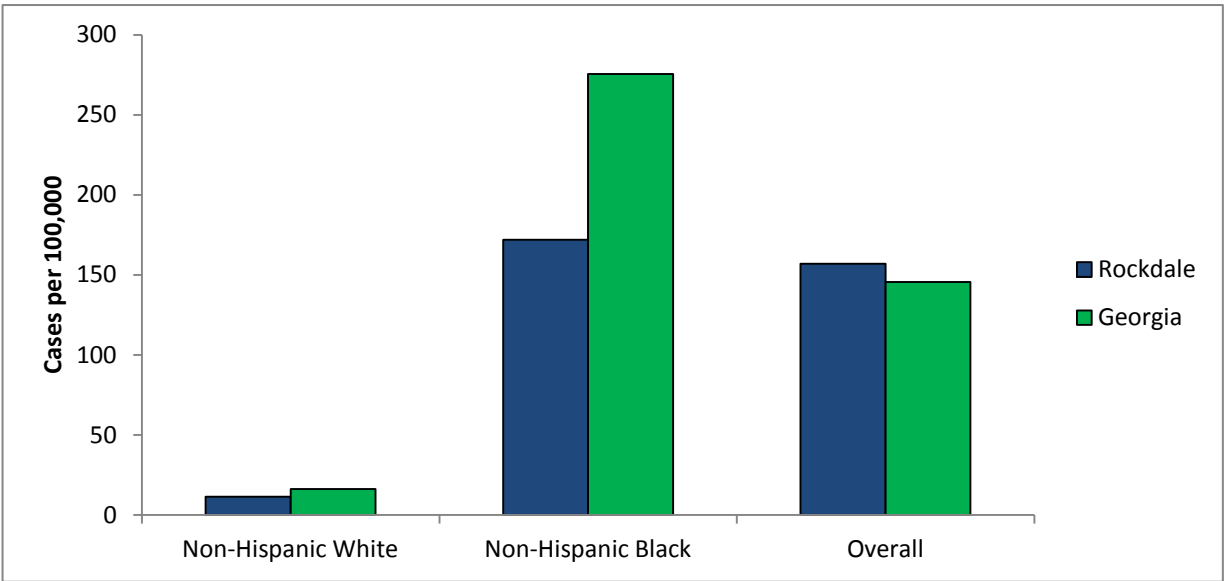
Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Gonorrhea

Like Chlamydia, Gonorrhea can cause serious and permanent health problems in women and men. The 2012 Gonorrhea rate for Rockdale County was 157 per 100,000 compared with a statewide rate of 146 per 100,000.¹²⁶ The Gonorrhea rate for black residents (172 per 100,000) was fifteen times the rate for Whites (11 per 100,000) (Figure 41) and the rate for women (85 per 100,000) was higher than the rate for men (50 per 100,000) (Figure 42). Rates were highest among young adults age 20-29 years.

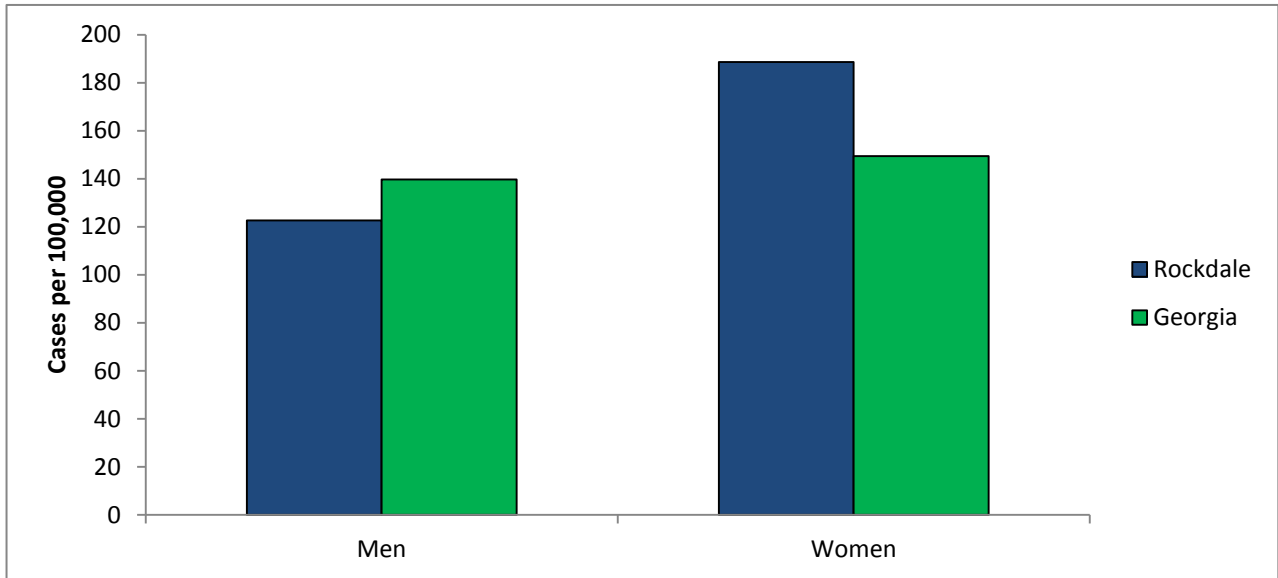
¹²⁶ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 41. Gonorrhea Cases per 100,000 by Race/Ethnicity in Rockdale County and Georgia, 2012



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Figure 42. Gonorrhea Cases per 100,000 by Sex in Rockdale County and Georgia, 2012



Source: OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

Syphilis

The 2012 rate for Syphilis, another STD, was 18 per 100,000 in Rockdale County compared with a statewide rate of 25 per 100,000 (the rate of primary and secondary Syphilis statewide was 9.4 per

100,000).¹²⁷ Twelve of the 15 cases reported in 2012 in Rockdale County were among African-Americans.

STD Community Health Improvement Plan

Despite decreases in teen pregnancy, rates of STDs, particularly Chlamydia, are rising in Rockdale County. Rates were highest among teenagers and young adults, suggesting that education interventions are warranted. African-Americans have the heaviest burden of STDs; prevention and treatment efforts should be focused accordingly.

To decrease the rate of new STD cases, the Rockdale County Health Department will

- Continue contact investigations and treatment of STDs
- Collaborate with community groups on interventions to reduce sexual activity among teens and to promote protection against STDs among adults, particularly among African-Americans who have a high burden of disease

Mental Health and Social Support

In 2005-2011, Rockdale County residents reported an estimated 2.7 days of poor mental health in the 30 days before interview compared with a Georgia average of 3.4 days.¹²⁸ From 2005-2010, 20% of adults reported that they did not get the social and emotional support they needed, similar to the overall Georgia percentage of 21%. This indicator is important for overall health because research has shown that people with social and emotional support experience better health outcomes (including recovery from cardiac surgery, coping with cancer pain, and overall longevity) compared with people who lack such support.

Mental Health Care Providers

From 2011-2012, there was an estimated 1 mental health care provider per 7,118 residents in Rockdale County, suggesting that there were fewer mental health care providers in the county compared with the state average (3,504:1).¹²⁹

Suicide

Suicide is a major, preventable public health problem, and was the tenth leading cause of death in the United States in 2010. In Rockdale County, it was the seventh leading cause of premature death in

¹²⁷ OASIS <http://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/oasis/qryMorbMort.aspx>

¹²⁸ County Health Rankings

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

¹²⁹ County Health Rankings

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/2013/rockdale/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot/by-rank>

terms of years of potential life lost. The 2009-2011 age-adjusted death rate due to suicide in Rockdale was 10.8 per 100,000, which was slightly lower than the statewide rate of 11.4 per 100,000 but higher than the Healthy People 2020 target of 10.2 per 100,000. The age-adjusted rate for males (19.4 per 100,000) was nearly six times the rate for women (3.1 per 100,000).

People 65+ Living Alone

People over age 65 years who live alone may be at risk for social isolation, limited access to support, and institutionalization. In Rockdale County, 21.6% of people over age 65 years live alone compared with the U.S. rate of 27.9%.¹³⁰

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States among adults 65 years and older. In Rockdale County, the age-adjusted death rate due to Alzheimer's in 2009-2011 was 23.6 per 100,000, which was lower than the statewide rate of 27.6 per 100,000. No specific actions have been clearly shown to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease. However, diabetes, smoking, and depression have been associated with cognitive decline (or worsening mental function), and cognitive engagement and physical activity have been associated with a *lower* risk of cognitive decline. Since smoking cessation, physical activity, social and cognitive engagement, and prevention of diabetes have many other positive health benefits, promoting these activities is clearly worthwhile and might help prevent Alzheimer's disease.

Mental Health Community Resources and Improvement Plan

To assist residents in dealing with mental health issues, the Rockdale Coalition has compiled a list of mental health care providers in Rockdale County and beyond (pages 13-28) as well as a list of support groups (pages 84-87).¹³¹

View Point Health, "a public agency created by state law to provide mental health, developmental disabilities, and addictive disease services," has an office in Conyers.¹³² The agency "provides a single point of entry for care where Master's level clinicians determine a person's immediate needs and offer support, evaluation and referral when appropriate."¹³³

¹³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau <http://factfinder2.census.gov/>

¹³¹ Rockdale Coalition Community Resource List <http://www.rockdalecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CRN-Resource-List-04-13.pdf>, pp. 13-28

¹³² View Point Health -- Rockdale County <https://www.myviewpointhealth.org/rockdale-county.da>

¹³³ View Point Health – Access View Point Health Services <https://www.myviewpointhealth.org/access-vph-services.da>

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities provides a free Crisis and Access Line (800-715-4225) and searchable database of resources for people with mental health problems, developmental disability, and addictive diseases.¹³⁴

Emergency Preparedness

Rockdale County has several agencies and organizations that plan for and respond to emergencies, which include natural disasters (e.g., floods), man-made accidents (e.g., a train wreck involving a chemical spill), disease epidemics or pandemics, and intentional acts of terrorism involving chemical, biological, or radiological devices. These groups include the Emergency Preparedness Department of the Health Department,¹³⁵ the Rockdale County Emergency Services Department,¹³⁶ the Rockdale County Sheriff's Office,¹³⁷ hospitals, emergency medical services (EMS), and volunteer groups, such as the Medical Reserve Corps.¹³⁸ Other partners include the Georgia Department of Public Health, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency, CDC, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).



Emergency Preparedness Gear

Source: Gwinnett Newton Rockdale County Health Departments
(<http://www.gnrhealth.com/services/emergency-preparedness>)

The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is a national storehouse of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals maintained by CDC and local health departments, including the Rockdale County Health Department. It is deployed during an emergency situation in which a chemical or biological agent, such as anthrax or plague, is released into our community, which might happen by accident or as part of a terrorist attack.¹³⁹ For the past two years, the Health Department's Emergency Preparedness Department has received the top score (100%) from the CDC on a review of SNS emergency preparedness levels.

¹³⁴ Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities ResourceBase
<https://bhlweb.com/tabform/Default.aspx>

¹³⁵ Rockdale County Health Department <http://www.gnrhealth.com/services/emergency-preparedness>

¹³⁶ Rockdale County Emergency Services Department <http://www.rockdalecounty.org/main.cfm?ID=3824>

¹³⁷ Rockdale County Sheriff's Office <http://www.rockdalesheriff.com/>

¹³⁸ Medical Reserve Corps <https://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/MrcUnits/UnitDetails/71>

¹³⁹ Partners in Preparedness <http://www.gnrhealth.com/services/emergency-preparedness/pip-vol2-2#secret>

Information for Rockdale County residents on preparing themselves and their families for emergencies, including specific situations like floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes, as well as links to other organizations, is available through the Health Department¹⁴⁰ and other community sources.

¹⁴⁰ Local Preparedness and Safety Information <http://www.gnrhealth.com/services/emergency-preparedness/local-preparedness-safety>