Situation: The state of Georgia and Georgia communities has changed socially, economically, and demographically over the last 15 years. The population of Georgia is growing older and more diverse. State population centers are shifting, with a 4% increase in urban areas over the past 10 years (US Census, 2020). The income of Georgians overall is less than the US average, with 42% of households earning less than $50,000 yearly. UGA Extension needs to be ready to respond to these changing needs of Georgians with programming and resources to help today’s individuals, families, and communities thrive.

Response: the UGA FACS Extension program conducted a statewide needs assessment between March 1 and September 30, 2022 through a survey and subsequent focus groups.

Survey
1,200 respondents reflective of Georgia demographics

Focus Groups
13 groups with partner organizations & individuals.

Highlighted Findings
- Young & emerging adults (18–34) are experiencing significant financial and housing stress.
- LatinX and rural residents are reporting lower quality of life.
- Despite the availability and accessibility of healthy foods and places to exercise, Georgians are not eating healthy or getting enough physical activity.
- Parents, particularly those without a college education, are not confident in their ability to raise their children.
- Food choices and finances are inseparable.
- Relationships impact affordability of housing and parenting capacity.

What this means for FACS: This needs assessment suggests the life skills FACS Extension educational programs provides are essential for improving quality of life in Georgia. As one participant noted, Extension teaches difficult topics in user friendly ways, “it’s not rocket science. Even though it’s science-based, it’s very understandable for the layperson and very, very critical.” While FACS Extension remains a vital contribution to communities, this data represents the challenges we have in addressing the needs of a diverse population stemming from a rate of change that is outpacing our capacity to address it.
Survey Demographics

Gender

- Male: 49% (N = 601)
- Female: 51% (N = 631)

Income Levels

- < $50K: 42.3%
- $50K - < $100K: 30.2%
- > $100K: 27.5%

Ethnicity

- Hispanic or Latino: 10%

Race

- White: 60%
- Black: 33%
- Others: 6.6%

Age Groups

- 18-34: 29.0%
- 35-44: 20.2%
- 45-64: 29.5%
- 65+: 21.3%

Rural vs. Urban

- Rural: 21%
- Urban: 79%

Quality of Life

Quality of Life (QOL) was measured on a scale with scores ranging from 16 to 112. An average QOL score for a healthy population is approximately 90.

- Georgians’ average QOL was 81.7

*LatinX individuals reported significantly lower QOL (78.4) than non-LatinX individuals (82.0)*

- Younger and Emerging adults (18-34 y) reported the lowest QOL (80.1) while older adults reported the highest (84.08)
- Those in urban areas reported higher QOL (82.2) compared to those in rural areas (80.2)
- Higher income was associated with higher QOL

*The QOL difference was more pronounced in South Georgia between LatinX (69.0) and non-LatinX (80.5) individuals*
Perceived Stress

Perceived stress scores ranged from 0 to 16. The higher the score, the greater a person’s perceived stress. Average scores for adults in the U.S. and Europe are between 8 and 10.

GEORGIANS’ AVERAGE PERCEIVED STRESS WAS 10.10

- Women were more likely to report stress than men, and low-income individuals (<$50K) reported higher stress than other income levels.
- Emerging & young adults (18–34) were 12% more likely to report stress than all other age groups on average.

Financial Distress

Financial distress was measured on a scale with scores ranging from 0 (low) to 80 (high).

1 OUT OF 3 GEORGIANS ARE FINANCIALLY DISTRESSED

- Emerging & young adults (18-34) report being financially distressed compared to 31% of older groups.
- Women report being financially distressed compared to 34% of men.
- Rural Georgians report being financially distressed compared to 34% of urban Georgians.

Women are 1.5x more likely to be housing insecure than men.

Housing Security

Respondents were asked if they had moved in the last 12 months, as well as questions about affordability, housing stability, & homelessness.

1 OUT OF 5 GEORGIANS DO NOT FEEL CONFIDENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO HANDLE DIFFICULTIES THEY ARE FACING

Mean Self Efficacy Score by Age

LatinX have lower self-efficacy (47.13) than non-LatinX (54.32), as do low-income (<$50k) individuals (51.69).
**Parenting**
Respondents with a child under 18 answered a 6-question parenting scale with scores ranging from 7 (low) to 42 (high)

8% OF GEORGIANS REPORT LOW PARENTING EFFICACY
Parents with a college degree reported a higher score

| With college degree - 35.06 | Without college degree - 27.35 |

Married parents reported more parenting efficacy than unmarried parents. One focus group participant noted this could be... "because they have that partner to kind of take some of that responsibility, and they don't feel entirely responsible for making a situation work, or solving a problem, or raising a child..."

Health & Wellness
Participants rated their health on a scale of poor (1) to excellent (5)

1 IN 5 GEORGIANS REPORT BEING IN POOR HEALTH
There were no differences in reported health by income, region, rurality, or marital status

Physical Activity
Respondents were asked how many days a week they engaged in strength training, exercise, physical activity, and small changes to increase activity levels

1 IN 5 GEORGIANS MEET PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

- Women (31.6%) were more likely than men (19.4%) to report no leisure-time physical activity
- 46% of Georgians report never strength training

% of Georgians who report NEVER doing physical activity*

- $<50K - 34.0$
- $50K - <$100k - 19.0$
- $>100k - 16.7$

*physical activity at work not included
**Food Safety**

Food safety knowledge and information seeking behavior was measured using 7 questions.

1 in 3 Georgians report getting food safety information from cooking shows and friends and family.

- 46% don't own a food thermometer
- 61% use separate plates to handle raw & cooked meat
- 41% "always" wash meat or poultry before cooking
- 16% get food safety info from government websites

**Environmental Health**

Respondents reflected on a series of environmental health symptoms, first indicating frequency of a symptom and then whether they felt it was due to their home environment.

1 in 3 Georgians who report fatigue and headaches believe these symptoms are due to their home environment.

- 40% believe their respiratory symptoms are due to their home environment
- 65% Rural
- 39% Urban

**Community Resources**

Respondents were asked to rank availability and accessibility of several community resources. Focus groups noted specifics about some of the resources assessed, like that maternal health is not available in all communities. As one participant noted,

"our closest OB is 30-45 miles away. Our hospital stopped years ago doing deliveries. I agree transportation is a huge issue for some of these mothers."

- 1/4 of Rural Georgians report eating vegetables (29%) and fruits (24%) daily
- Close to 1/2 of Urban Georgians report eating vegetables (40%) and fruits (44%) daily

2 in 5 Georgians report eating fruit at least once a day excluding potatoes.

60% of Georgians report eating no vegetables daily.

"We have very few Georgians who aren't getting enough calories. We have many Georgians who are over-caloried and undernourished, especially children who are being allowed to eat many 'white' foods - bread, rice, potatoes, cereal."

- Focus Group Participant

1 in 3 Georgians report getting food safety information from cooking shows and friends and family.

1 in 3 Georgians who report fatigue and headaches believe these symptoms are due to their home environment.

40% of respondents reported healthy foods & places to exercise as the most accessible, whereas affordable housing & aging resources were the least accessible. About 15-20% of respondents found these accessible in their communities.

"our closest OB is 30-45 miles away. Our hospital stopped years ago doing deliveries. I agree transportation is a huge issue for some of these mothers."