

THE STATUS OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN SAN ANTONIO

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Executive Summary

According to the United Nation’s latest Sustainable Development Global Progress Report (United Nations 2023), the world lags behind the goal of achieving gender equality by the year 2030. Over the last decade, significant progress has been made in the number of countries that have enacted laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality and addressing discrimination against women and girls—with many of these laws and policies focusing on issues such as equal pay for equal work, access to education, and the elimination of violence against women.

However, critical target areas such as autonomy in decision-making regarding sexual and reproductive health and violence against women and girls were notable areas in which the UN highlighted stagnated global advancement. As expected, the COVID pandemic stunted progress in gender equality efforts for much of the world. Despite the acceleration of policy and societal transformations toward gender equity over the past half-century, progress toward bridging gender gaps in the United States has slowed significantly, with women continuing to lag significantly behind men on a broad variety of measures including political participation, equal pay in the workforce, and economic opportunity.

The City of San Antonio (COSA) commissioned the present report to evaluate the current status of girls and young women in San Antonio. Throughout our assessment, we use various data sources to examine outcomes that assess the quality of life for girls and young women in San Antonio on the following dimensions and subdimensions:

- Demographics and socioeconomic standing
 - Living arrangements
 - Household characteristics
 - Digital divide
 - Median household income and poverty
 - Opportunity youth
 - Work and pay
 - Accelerated adulthood including teenage marriage and/or motherhood
 - Health limitations and vulnerability
 - Infant and child mortality
- Health and well-being
 - Teen mental health
- Education
 - Pre-K enrollment
 - Enrollment in K-12 public schools
 - Graduation and school attrition
- Victimization and crime
 - Child abuse and neglect
 - Juvenile arrests

Across each of the four broad dimensions and multiple subdimensions, we evaluate key indicators to compare outcomes for girls and young women 0 to 17 years of age relative to boys

and young men in San Antonio and compare females across three racial/ethnic groups locally. In addition, based upon the availability of data, we additionally compare girls and young women in San Antonio to their counterparts in Austin, Dallas, and Houston. To our knowledge, the current report commissioned by COSA and carried out here is the first effort to address the status of girls and young women specifically in a given community or geographic locale.

While our analysis of the status of girls and young women in San Antonio reveals promising trends for the well-being of girl youth, city and community leaders should continue prioritizing the implementation of programs and policies aimed at eradicating the gendered and racialized barriers to achieve gender equity in San Antonio. Increased investment in educational resources related to teen pregnancy prevention coupled with widespread access to preventative family planning healthcare has helped reduce the risk of teenage pregnancy in San Antonio. Furthermore, initiatives like the *SASpeakUp* youth survey demonstrate culturally responsive action by city leadership to prioritize youth voice and perspective in conversations centered in youth mental health and wellness.

This report is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the status of women along these four broad dimensions and multiple subdimensions. In doing so, this research can offer city officials a reconnaissance of major issues that limit the full potential of girls and young women in San Antonio from leading rich, successful, and fulfilling lives in our community. As such, the report offers a touchstone for local community leaders as they seek to establish programs and policies to better the lives of girls and young women, and ultimately eliminate gender disparities.

Data and Methodology

Data from a variety of sources were used to obtain a series of indicators for each of the four broad dimensions and multiple subdimensions previously outlined. Much of the information used in the analysis is based on data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates for the 2017-2021 period (obtained from Ruggles et al. 2023). However, numerous other data sources—including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the City of San Antonio, and the Texas Education Agency—are also used in the analysis. Data sources will be introduced in the respective sections of the report in which they are referenced. Our analysis examines outcomes for girls in San Antonio to key comparison groups including boys in San Antonio, girls and young women living in other major metropolitan areas in Texas (Austin, Dallas, and Houston), and diverse racial and ethnic groups of girls and young women in San Antonio.

Key Findings

Our findings presented in this report offer a broad yet revealing snapshot of the status of girls and young women in San Antonio relative to males and across racial/ethnic groups within the city and across the other major metropolitan areas within the state.

As anticipated, our analysis revealed both areas of progress and concern for the improved well-being of girls and young women in our city. A particular outcome area where girls experience an advantage over boys is in pre-K-12 education. For example, preschool girls are more likely to be enrolled in a pre-K program than boys. As in the case of pre-K enrollment,

young women fare better in schools than young men at ages 16 and 17, particularly with respect to school attrition and graduation from high school. Yet, female experiences differ across racial/ethnic groups.

Our analysis predominantly revealed the disparities which exist for girls and young women. Below we highlight significant trends and issues faced by girls and young women in San Antonio, which are examined in greater detail within this report:

- High rates of teenage pregnancy among Latinas (although there has been a significant reduction in birth rates among young women in Bexar County between 2012-2016 and 2017-2021).
- A greater presence of young women in the workforce at age 16 and 17 than young men.
- Acceleration into adulthood through early marriage and motherhood, especially among young women of color.
- A higher prevalence of mental health concerns among girls and young women than boys and young men, with the highest risk among gender-diverse and LGBTQ+ youth.
- A higher incidence of hospitalizations related to mental health crises and self-harm among girls and young women than boys and young men.
- A slightly higher prevalence of disability among Latina girls and young women in San Antonio compared to their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- Girls in San Antonio fare less favorably in educational outcomes compared to girls in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- A greater risk for child abuse and neglect among girls and young women compared to boys and young men in San Antonio.

As mentioned, Latina and Black girls face additional barriers to their health and well-being across the observed dimensions. Some of the major areas where girls of color require significant support include:

- Increased exposure to overcrowded living conditions.
- More limited access to digital technologies, including computer devices and high-speed broadband Internet service.
- Higher likelihood of being an opportunity youth (persons 16 to 17 years of age who are neither enrolled in school nor employed).
- High levels of early marriages among Latina young women.
- Greater risk of teenage pregnancy among Latina young women,
- Higher prevalence of disability among Black girls,
- Higher prevalence of uninsured status among Latina girls.
- Greater infant mortality risk for Black baby girls and childhood mortality risk for Black females 1 to 17 years of age.

While our analysis of the status of girls and young women in San Antonio reveals promising trends for the well-being of girl youth, community leaders should continue prioritizing the implementation of programs and policies aimed at eradicating the gendered and racialized barriers to achieve gender equity in San Antonio. For example, educational initiatives like San Antonio's *Pre-K 4 SA* program, which offers full-day pre-K schooling for families with

four-year-old children, have promoted the early childhood education pipeline by preparing young students for enrollment in elementary school. Additionally, increased investment in educational resources related to teen pregnancy prevention coupled with widespread access to preventative family planning healthcare has helped reduce the risk of teenage pregnancy in San Antonio, although the rate continues to be high among Latina young women.

Empowering girls and young women in their own community is essential to cultivating the unique and crucial value they bring to their families, social networks, and the broader community. Confronting systemic barriers that prevent girls and young women from ultimately realizing their full potential and life goals means investing in girls' access to tools, resources, and opportunities that are key to living full, healthy, and meaningful lives. Ensuring that girls achieve parity with boys will not only enrich their lives and the lives of their community but will promote the sustainability of an equal and just society.

The Status of Girls and Young Women in San Antonio

Societies lose when young girls and women are systematically prevented from achieving their full potential as active participants in their lives, those of their families, and their communities. For young girls to realize their full social, economic, and political potential, global entities must commit to promoting the advancement of laws, policies, and institutions that provide equitable social and economic opportunities (United Nations 2023). While the world has seen significant advancements in gender equality over the last decade, with a growing recognition of the importance of gender equality as a fundamental human right and a key component of sustainable development, there is still much work to be done to ensure that globally all girls and young women have the opportunity to fully realize their rights.

In 2008, the City of San Antonio (COSA) undertook its first study examining the status of women in the city. The report, led by Richard Harris and Juanita Firestone (2008), called attention to gender disparities along the lines of economics and employment, education, training, politics and voting, and health safety. One pressing issue the authors identified with their study concerned the high prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the community. More than 10 years later, the City commissioned its *Status of Women in San Antonio* report prepared by Rogelio Sáenz and Lily Casura (2019).

COSA commissioned the current report to evaluate the present status of girls and young women in San Antonio. Throughout our assessment, we use various data sources to examine outcomes that assess the quality of life for girls and young women in San Antonio on the following four broad dimensions and multiple subdimensions:

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 - Juvenile arrests

Across each of the four broad dimensions and subdimensions, we evaluate key indicators to compare outcomes for girls in San Antonio to boys in the city and to girls in Austin, Dallas, and Houston. Additionally, our analysis compares outcomes for Latina, Black, and White girls in San Antonio along the various dimensions analyzed. To our knowledge, the current report commissioned by COSA and carried out here is the first effort to address the status of girls and young women specifically in a given community or geographic locale.

This report is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the status of women along these four broad dimensions and multiple subdimensions. In doing so, this research can offer city officials a reconnaissance of major issues that limit the full potential of girls and young women in San Antonio from leading rich, successful, and fulfilling lives in our community. As such, the report will provide a touchstone for community leaders as they seek to establish programs and policies to better the lives of girls and young women, and ultimately eliminate gender disparities.

Before delving into our analysis focusing on the status of girls in San Antonio across the four broad dimensions and subdimensions listed above, we provide an overview of the global, national, and state context concerning gender disparities.

The Global Context

Recent global assessments of gender equality across the world report similar findings relative to the critical socioeconomic outcomes of young girls and women which provide a global backdrop for understanding the current status of girls in San Antonio. In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as part of its long-term “blueprint for [global] peace and prosperity” (United Nations 2023). The UN defined gender equality as one of 17 sustainable development objectives that comprise the plan, whose progress could be measured by 9 key target areas spanning the elimination of sex-based discriminatory laws and regulations to the adoption of policies and practices that promote gender equality and female empowerment.

According to the UN’s latest Sustainable Development Global Progress Report (United Nations 2023), the world lags behind the goal of achieving gender equality by the year 2030. UN Secretary General António Guterres revealed to the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2023, gender equality is projected at “300 years away,” according to the latest estimates, in large part due to high rates of maternal mortality, forced child marriages, and violence against girls and women (Subramaniam 2023).

Over the last decade, significant progress has been made in the number of countries that have enacted laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality and addressing discrimination against women and girls—with many of these laws and policies focusing on issues such as equal pay for equal work, access to education, and the elimination of violence against women. However, critical target areas such as autonomy in decision-making regarding sexual and reproductive health and violence against women and girls were notable areas in which the UN highlighted stagnated global advancement. Forced child marriage and female genital mutilation of young girls both remain persistent human rights violations for girls. In 2021, globally, nearly 20 percent of girls and young women were married before the age of 18, with the highest rates of child marriage observed in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.

As expected, the COVID pandemic stunted progress in gender equality efforts for much of the world. While world leadership has demonstrated significant progress toward the increased representation of women in leadership positions, the UN projects another 40 years for women and men to share equal representation in national political leadership given current trends in global gender equality (United Nations 2023).

The National and State Context

In its latest Global Gender Gap Report, the World Economic Forum (2018) released its updated ranking of countries around the world benchmarking the “current state and evolution” of gender equality across economic, educational, health, and political empowerment dimensions. The five countries at the top of the rankings were Iceland, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, and Sweden. The United States ranked 27th among all 146 countries on the composite Global Gender Gap Index, climbing three positions since the 2021 ranking. The United States ranked just behind Latvia and ahead of the Netherlands reflecting progress in economic participation and opportunity, and political empowerment. However, progress in educational attainment and health has remained stagnant since 2021. For each of the four specific indicators of gender parity (or gender equality), the United States ranked 22nd in economic participation and opportunity; 51st in educational attainment; 83rd in health and survival; and 38th in political empowerment.

Despite the acceleration of policy and societal transformations toward gender equity over the past half-century, progress toward bridging gender gaps in the United States has slowed significantly, with women continuing to lag significantly behind men on a broad variety of measures (England et al. 2020; Heydemann and Johnson 2019). In 2018, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (2018) released a report as part of its *Status of Women in the States* series—an ongoing project that tracks and evaluates state laws, policies, and conditions affecting women’s life outcomes in the United States (Institute for Women’s Research Policy 2018). The report presents a comprehensive analysis of six main topic areas impacting women across the country, including 1) political participation; 2) employment and earnings; 3) poverty and opportunity; 4) work and family; 5) health and well-being; and 6) reproductive rights for all 50 states in the United States and the District of Columbia. Overall, Texas earned a ranking of 32 for substandard evaluations across all six areas, with the state’s lowest performance in political participation and poverty and opportunity, ranked 30th and 42nd, respectively (Institute for Women’s Research Policy 2018).

At a more in-depth analysis of children’s health and well-being in Texas, Every Texan’s¹ most recent annual *Texas Kids Count* report on the status of the state’s youth revealed that Texas ranks 45th in overall child well-being in the nation (Rayo-Garza 2023; Torres 2023). This ranking reflects surviving trends related to young people’s poor economic well-being, disadvantaged access to health insurance, educational gaps, and other major opportunity gaps across five health and well-being dimensions.² For example, child poverty in Texas remains

¹ Every Texan (formerly the Center for Public Policy Priorities) is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to strengthen public policy to expand opportunity and equity for Texans of all backgrounds.”

² Every Texan analyzed and report data from a variety of sources in their 2022 *Texas Kids Count* report including the 2021 American Community Survey, Texas Education Agency, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Department of Health and Human Services, the Annie

above the national average with 20 percent of the state's children living in poverty. This trend coincides with the state's lowest national ranking for children's health insurance such that children of color and children of economically disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be insured. Disparities by race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status persist across all dimensions, signifying the deep-rooted inequities that place burdens on children's opportunity and access to critical resources. While the *Texas Kids Count* report provides a comprehensive examination of racial and ethnic disparities for particularly Black and Latino youth, a deeper examination by gender identity is necessary to understand the specific well-being of girls in Texas and San Antonio.

As cited in the *Status of Women in San Antonio* report in 2019 (Sáenz and Casura 2019), a 2012 report by Lewis and Burd-Sharps (2012) ranked the country's largest 25 metropolitan areas on the well-being of women using a multidimensional measure known as the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI reflects three essential areas: "a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living" (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2012, p. 1). The report assessed the HDI scores across metropolitan areas compared to the national average. At the time, San Antonio ranked 24th of the 25 metropolitan areas included in the study, faring best on life expectancy and worst on female human development, female educational attainment, and female earnings (Sáenz and Casura 2019). San Antonio fared particularly poorly on the educational dimension. Not only did women in San Antonio have low percentages of obtaining a high school diploma or college degree, but young children also had low levels of preschool enrollment (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2012). The report points out that "Research shows that a quality preschool for three- and four-year-old children pays huge dividends for children and society for many years, contributing to community gains such as lower dropout rates, fewer students requiring special education classes, higher rates of home ownership, lower incarceration rates, higher earnings, and more tax revenues for public investment" (Lewis and Burd Sharps, p. 14). Additionally, the report highlights the lowest preschool enrollment rates in Houston, San Antonio, and Riverside-San Bernardino. Moreover, these three cities also had the highest percentage of young women between the ages of 16 and 19 neither in school nor working (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2012), a group commonly referred to as "opportunity youth." A recent report focusing on opportunity youth in San Antonio calls attention to the perilous living arrangements and socioeconomic standing of young women and men who are neither in school nor working (Sáenz et al., 2020).

Data and Methodology

Data from various sources were used to obtain a series of indicators for each of the four broad dimensions and multiple subdimensions outlined above. Much of the information used in the analysis is based on data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates for the 2017-2021 period (obtained from Ruggles et al. 2023). However, numerous other data sources—including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the City of San Antonio, and the Texas Education Agency—were also used in the analysis. Data sources will be introduced in the respective sections of the report in which they are referenced. Data are for persons 0 to 17 years of age and are generally based at the county level (Bexar County)

E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center, and more regarding 5 dimensions of child health and well-being in Texas: economic well-being, education, health, safe communities and schools, and environment and health.

although, for the sake of simplicity, we use the designation of city San Antonio—the same is the case for Austin (Travis County), Dallas (Dallas County), and Houston (Harris County).

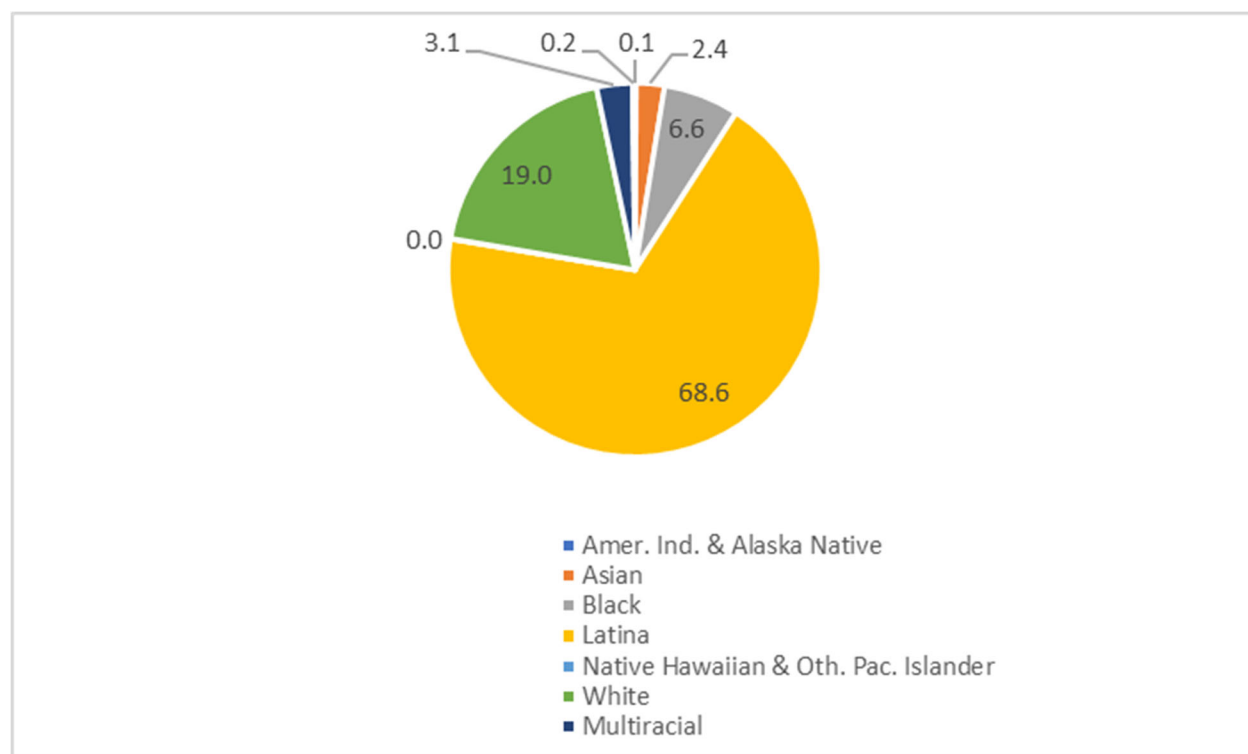
The analysis for each dimension contains three sets of analyses with different comparison groups: first, we compare outcomes for girls and boys in San Antonio across specified indicators within each dimension; second, we compare Black, Latina, and White girls in San Antonio across all indicators; and third, we compare girls in San Antonio and their counterparts in the other three largest cities in the state (Austin, Dallas, and Houston).

The present report details the results of analyses by the four broad dimensions and multiple subdimensions of interest.

Demographics and Socioeconomic Standing

According to the 2021 ACS, there were approximately 250,000 girls and young women less than 18 years of age in Bexar County. Latinas account for the largest segment of the girl population with 68.6 percent while Whites make up 19 percent, Blacks 6.6 percent, and all other racial groups representing 5.9 percent (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Distribution of Bexar County’s Girl Population by Race/Ethnic Group, 2017-2021



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

The analysis below will focus on all females less than 18 years of age when the focus is on the overall population of Bexar County. However, due to the small populations of girls and young women less than 18 years of age in most of the racial and ethnic groups, when racial and ethnic comparisons are made the analysis will be limited to Blacks, Latinas, and Whites.

The median age of the girl population in Bexar County is 9 and nearly all (97%) were born in the United States.

Living Arrangements and Household Characteristics

Given that girls and boys live in the same households, there are no differences along gender lines in their types of living arrangements (**Table 1**). Yet, there are significant differences in the living arrangements and household characteristics of Black and Latina females less than 18 years of age in comparison to White girls. For example, White girls and young women (90.2%) are more likely to live with a parent or parents compared to their Latina (82.7%) and Black (78.5%) peers. Black (15.7%) and Latina (12.2%) girls and young women are also more likely to live with a grandparent or grandparents compared to White females (6.5%). Black and Latina females are also more likely to live with another relative beside a grandparent compared to White girls and young women.

Table 1. Living Arrangements of Persons 0 to 17 Years of Age by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

Living arrangements	Females				
	Females	Males	Black	Latina	White
Pct. living with parent(s)	84.1	84.0	78.5	82.7	90.2
Pct. living with grandparent(s)	11.2	11.3	15.7	12.2	6.5
Pct. living with other relative	2.6	2.6	3.1	3.0	1.1
Pct. living with nonrelative	2.0	1.8	2.6	2.0	2.0
Pct. living as householder/spouse/partner	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
Pct. living as institutional inmate	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

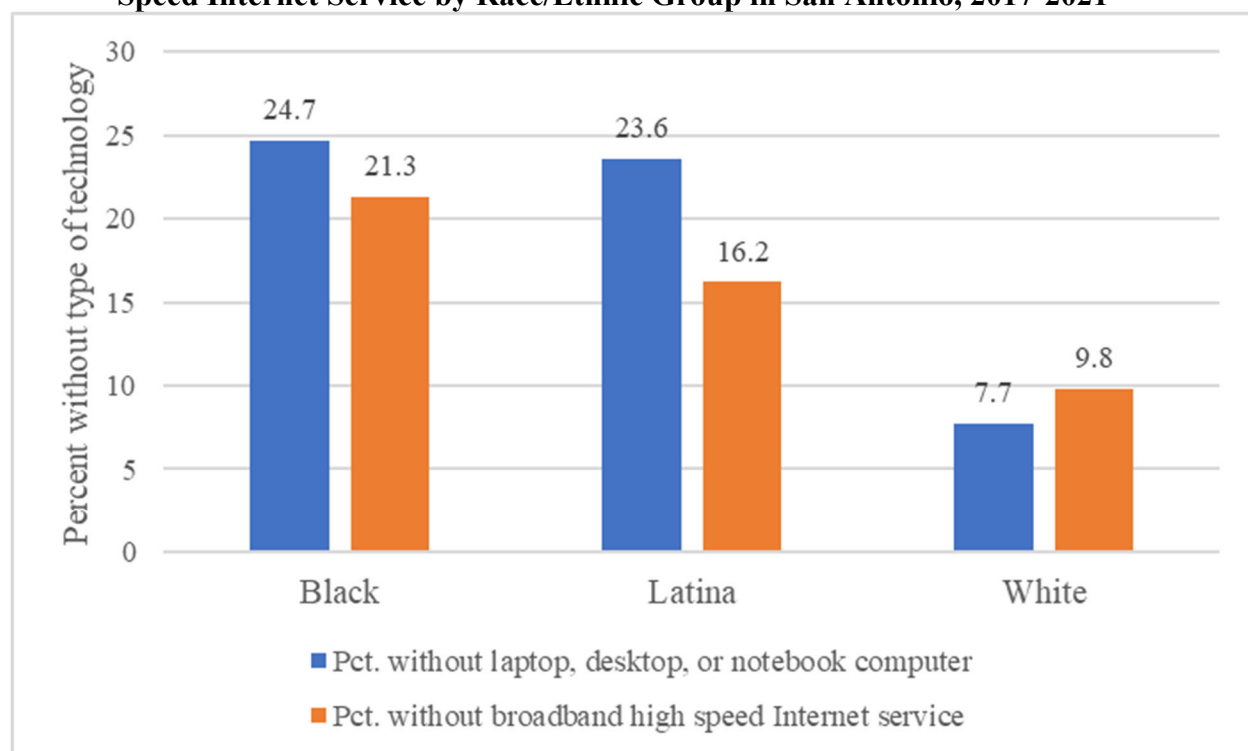
Black and Latina girls are also more likely to live in households consisting of more than one family (Blacks, 13.9%; Latinas, 17.3%) and three or more generations (Blacks, 13.3%; Latinas, 16.7%) compared to White girls (**Table 2**). Given these household arrangements, Black and Latina girls are more likely to live in overcrowded homes with 1.01 or more persons per room. Indeed, one in five (20.4%) Latina girls and one in eight (13.3%) Blacks girls live in an overcrowded home compared to one in 13 (7.5%) White girls.

Furthermore, the households where Black and Latina girls live have much more limited resources compared to those where White girls reside. For example, there is a clear digital divide along racial/ethnic lines (**Figure 2**). Approximately one-fourth of Black and Latina girls live in homes that do not have a laptop, desktop, or notebook computer and more than one-fifth of Latina and one-sixth of Black girls do not have access to broadband high-speed Internet service compared to 1 in 13 and 1 in 10 White girls, respectively.

Table 2. Household Characteristics of Persons 0 to 17 Years by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

Household characteristics	Females				
	Females	Males	Black	Latina	White
Pct. living in households with 1 or more subfamilies	15.1	14.9	13.9	17.3	8.9
Pct. living in households with 3 or more generations	15.2	15.4	13.3	16.7	10.5
Pct. living in household headed by a grandparent	11.2	11.3	15.7	12.2	6.5
Pct. living in overcrowded homes (1.01 or more per room)	17.1	17.6	13.3	20.4	7.5

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

Figure 2. Percent of Girls in Households Without a Computer or Broadband High-Speed Internet Service by Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

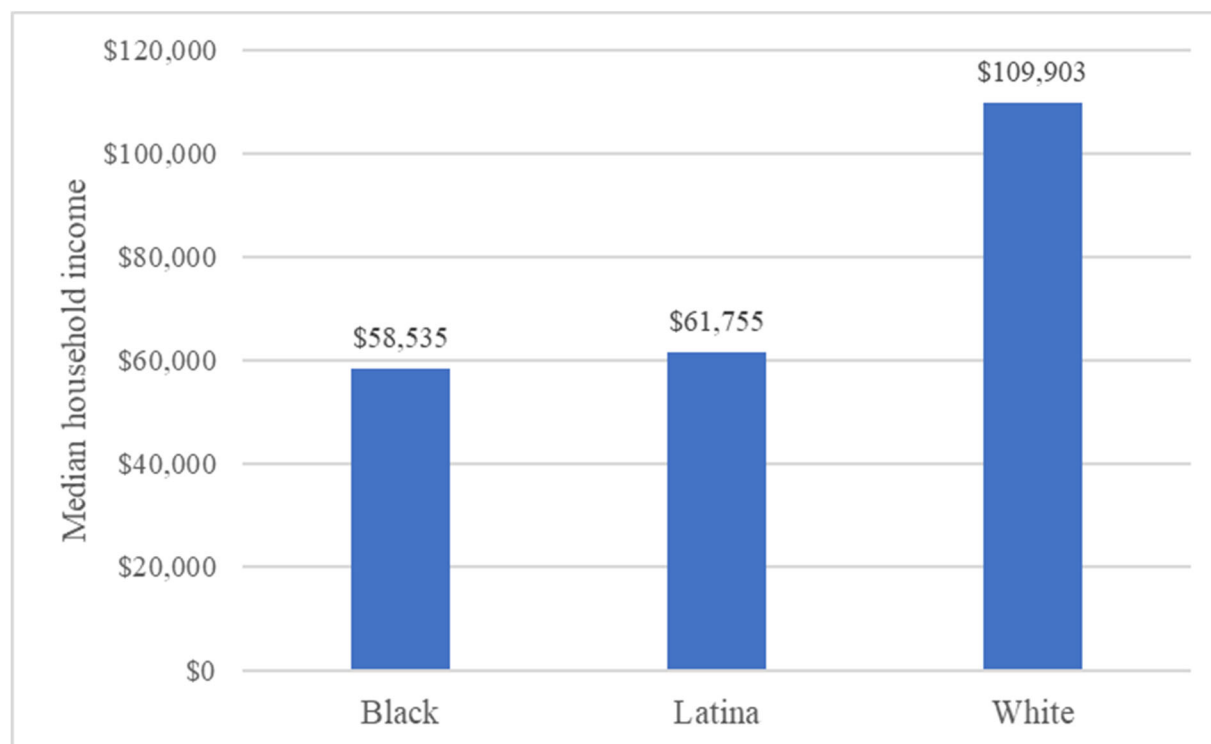
Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

Moreover, Black (7.4%) and Latina (4.4%) girls are, respectively, six and four times more likely to live in a household without an automobile compared to White girls (1.2%) (data not shown).

In addition, there are major differences in the incomes of households where Black and Latina girls reside compared to those where Whites girls live. **Figure 3** shows the median incomes of the households in which Black, Latina, and White girls live. The median household

income of Whites is approximately \$110,000 compared to nearly \$59,000 and \$62,000 for Blacks and Latinas, respectively. The household income gap along racial/ethnic lines is wide. For every \$1 of households where White girls live, those in which Black and Latina girls live earn 53 cents and 56 cents, respectively. Given the greater crowding in the homes where Black and Latina girls live, those fewer dollars are particularly stretched further compared to the income in White households.

Figure 3. Median Incomes of Households with Girls by Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

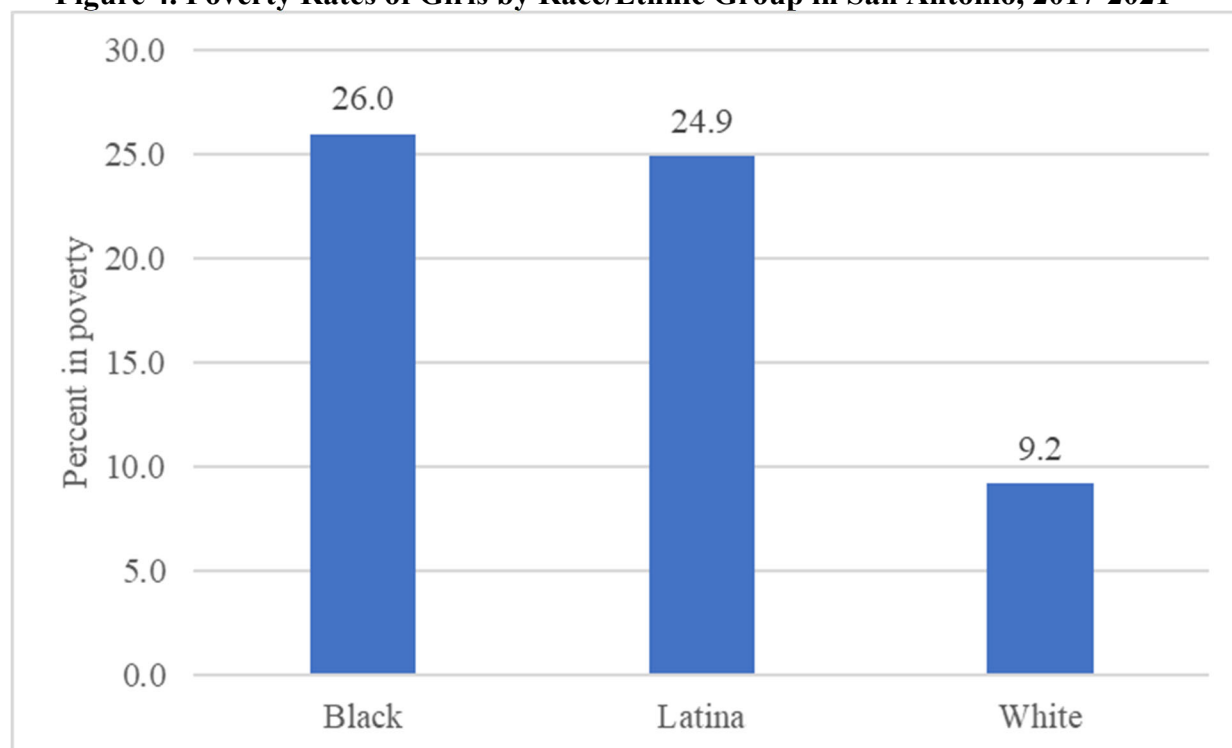
In fact, approximately one-fourth of Black (26%) and Latina (24.9%) girls are living in families with incomes below the poverty threshold compared to 9 percent of White girls (**Figure 4**). Thus, Black and Latina girls are almost three times as likely to be impoverished relative to White girls.

Opportunity Youth

One group of young persons that has gotten the attention of policymakers and specialists concerned with helping young people become integrated into their communities is opportunity youth, a group that consists of persons 16 to 24 years of age who are not currently enrolled in school nor working. The “opportunity youth” term is used to emphasize the potential that these young persons have for bettering their lives and becoming engaged in their communities (American Youth Policy Forum 2023; Aspen Institute 2023; Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2012). Research on opportunity youth in San Antonio has generated a statistical profile of this group and the major issues and impediments they face in gaining a foothold in the city’s educational system and workforce (Sáenz et al. 2020).

We examine here the prevalence of opportunity youth among persons 16 to 17 years of age through the calculation of the opportunity youth rate, which represents the number of persons 16 to 17 years of age who are neither enrolled in school nor working per 1,000 persons of these ages. Young men (25.2 per 1,000) are more likely to be opportunity youth compared to young women (18.6 per 1,000) and Latina young women are much more likely to be opportunity youth with a rate of 22.1, nearly six times higher than the rate of White young women (**Figure 5**). The results show that Black young women did not register any opportunity youth, which could possibly reflect the small number of young women in this age category as well as statistical measurement error.

Figure 4. Poverty Rates of Girls by Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

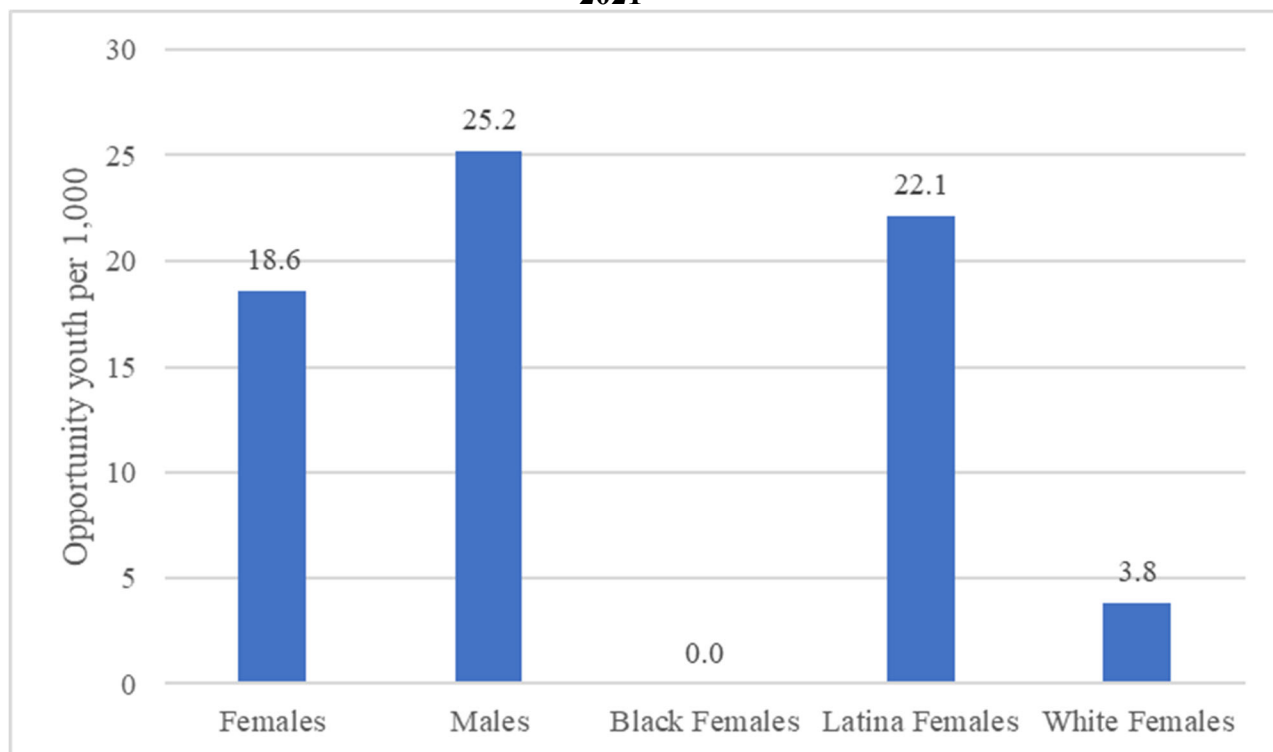


Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

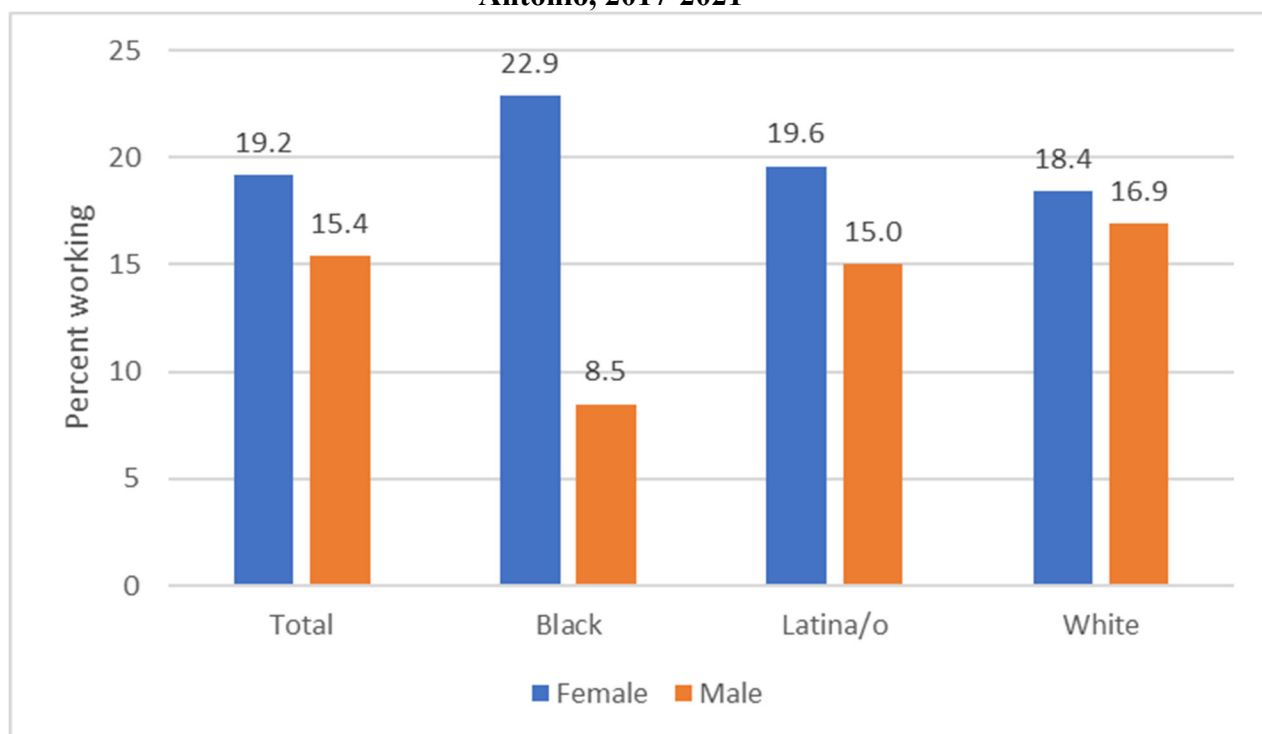
Work and Pay

A segment of young individuals become part of the workforce when they are 16 years of age. These young workers develop work and financial skills through their employment. For those from families with limited resources, they contribute to their family's economic well-being. We examine below the work activities and income levels of persons 16 and 17 years of age.

Overall, nearly one in five young women (19.2%) 16 and 17 years of age are currently working compared to about one in six young men (15.4%). Among females, Black (22.9%) young women are the most likely to be employed followed by Latina (19.6%) and White young women (18.4%) (**Figure 6**). Across the three racial/ethnic groups, young women are more likely to be currently employed compared to young men. However, the gender gaps is greatest among Blacks in which young women are nearly three times more likely to be working compared to young men.

Figure 5. Opportunity Youth Rate by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

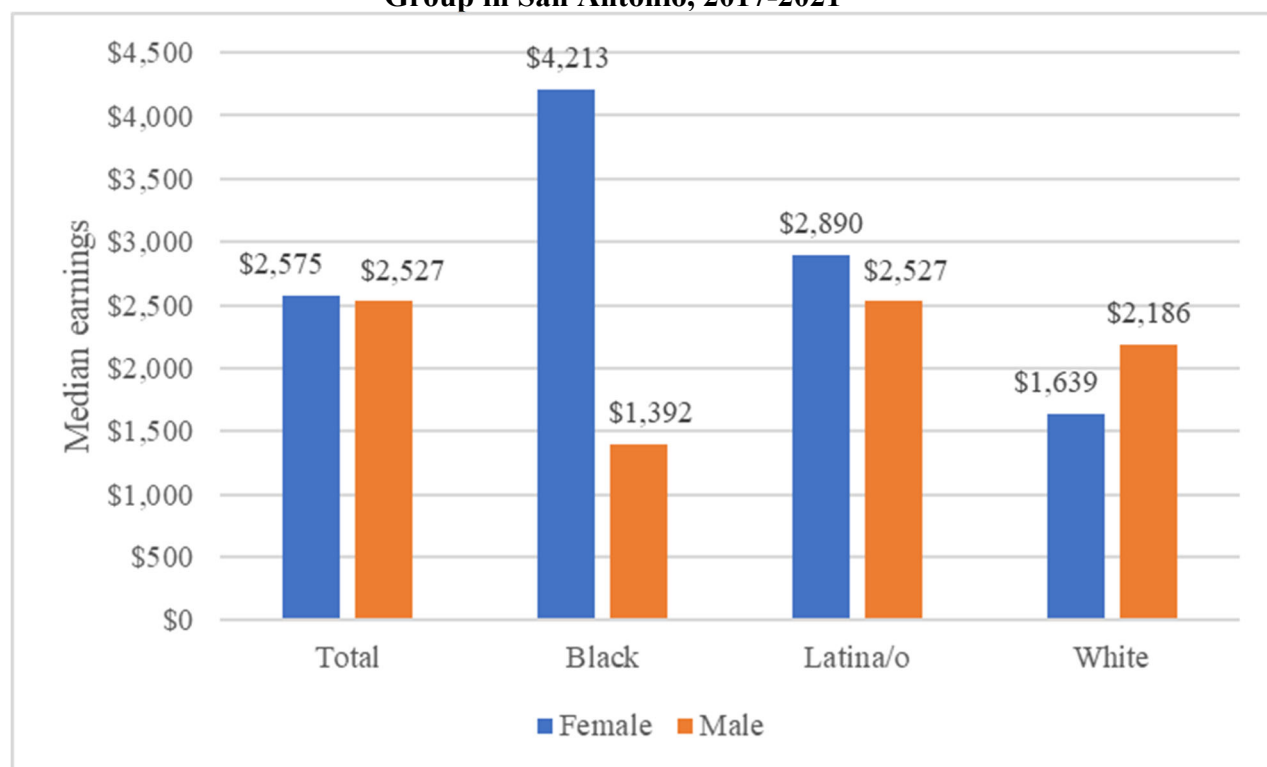
Figure 6. Percent of Persons 16-17 Working by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

We now examine the median earnings of persons who worked. Overall, the median earnings of young women and men are virtually the same, with young women earning \$1.02 for every \$1 earned by young men (**Figure 7**). Of course, the slim earning advantage may reflect the fact that young women are more likely to work compared to young men. Among female workers, Black young women have the highest median earnings at \$4,200, largely reflective of their relatively high levels of work activities—their median of 27-39 weeks worked and median of 24 hours worked per week surpasses those of Latina (14-26 weeks and 20 hours per week) and White (1-13 weeks and 18 hours per week). Latina young women, who have fairly high levels of work activities, have median earnings of \$2,900. White young women, who have the lowest level of employment, have median earnings of \$1,600.

While young women, overall, have a median advantage of 2 cents per dollar earned by young men, Black young women outearn Black young men by a ratio of \$3 to \$1 and Latina young women outearn Latino young men by a ratio of \$1.14 to \$1. On the other hand, White young women earn 75 cents for every \$1 that White young men earn, reflecting, in part, the relatively more limited number of weeks (median of 1 to 13) and hours (18) that White young women worked relative to White young men (14-26 weeks and 20 hours).

Figure 7. Median Earnings of Workers 16 to 17 Years of Age by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

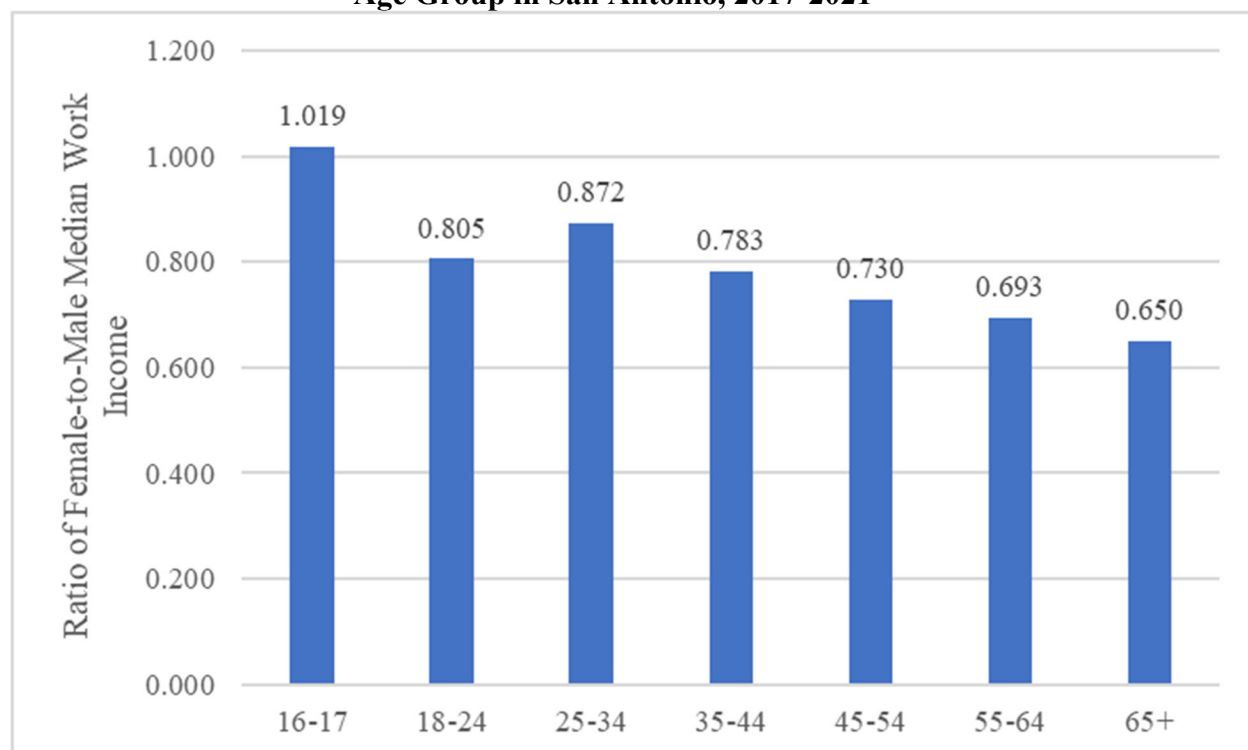


Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

Unfortunately, the wage advantage that young women 16 to 17 years of age have in San Antonio are short-lived. The wage gaps favor men among older ages extending from 18-24 to 65-and-older (**Figure 8**). While young women 16 to 17 years of age earn \$1.02 to every \$1 that young men make, women 18 to 24 years of age earn 81 cents for every \$1 that their male counterparts make. By age 55, the gap expands to women earning less than 70 cents to every

\$1 that men make. These earnings gaps reflect penalties that women pay for labor force exits as they form a family and give birth to their children. This cost, commonly referred to as the “motherhood penalty” (American Association of University Women 2023; Jee et al. 2019; Sandler and Szembro 2020), was particularly apparent during the pandemic as schooling shifted from in-person to virtual instruction. Rising segments of women workers left the labor force during this time with the burden being heavier on women with lower levels of education who did not have the luxury to work from home (Couch et al. 2022; Sáenz, Sparks, and Validova 2021). There is a serious need for family-friendly paid family leave policies that support women for given periods of time following the birth of a child.

Figure 8. Ratio of Median Annual Work Income of Women Relative to That of Men by Age Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

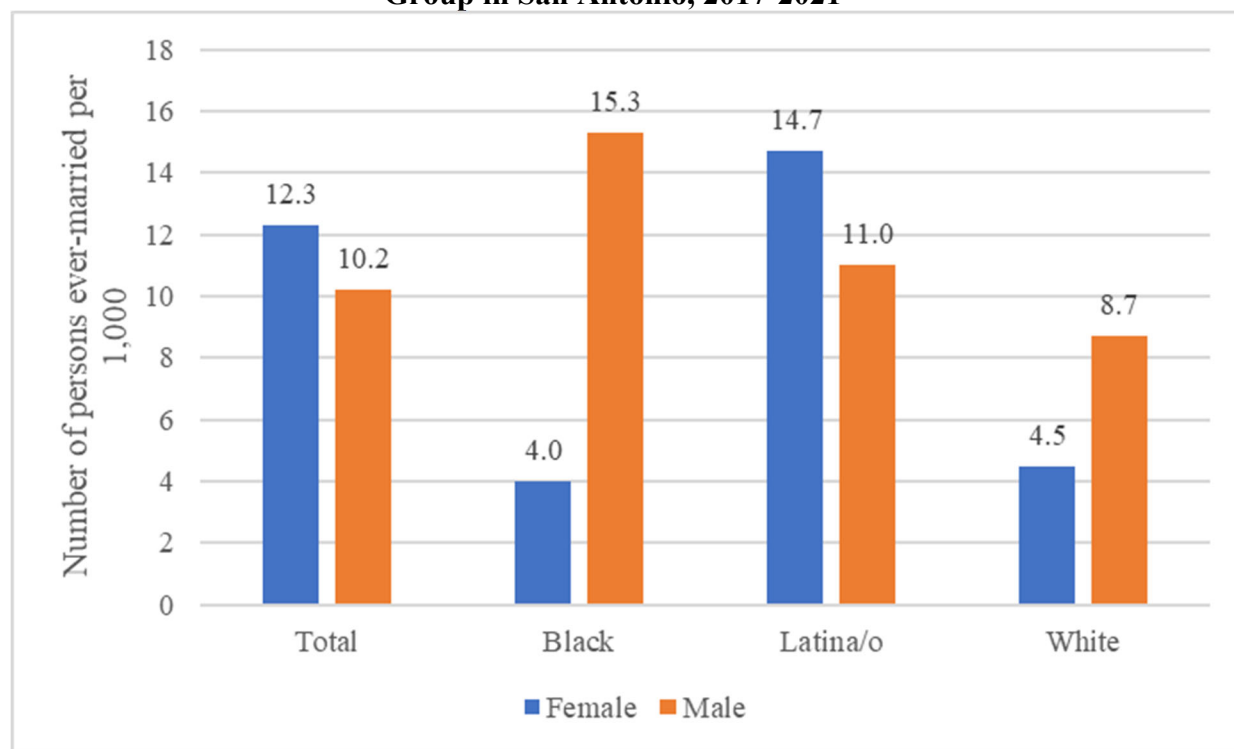
Accelerated Adulthood

Employment and earnings serve as a transition stage toward adulthood for teenage workers who learn responsibilities regarding work obligations and earning and managing money. Other types of roles are associated with more immediate and significant changes into adulthood. For some teenagers, marriage and/or parenthood change their lives abruptly and profoundly. Social scientists who study families and adolescent development refer to these changes as “accelerated adulthood” to describe the early stage in their lives that youth take on adult roles that typically occur at older ages (Lee 2014). In general, youth from families with limited resources tend to be more likely to take on the parenthood and/or spouse/partner role at an earlier age compared to young people with more resources (Lee and Waithaka 2017).

In this section, we examine marriage and parenthood with particular emphasis on young

women 15 to 17 years of age.³ We first use data from the ACS to calculate ever-married rates, which represent the number of persons 15 to 17 years of age who have ever married (currently or in the past) per 1,000 persons in this age group. The results show that, overall, young women (12.3 per 1,000) are more likely than young men to have ever been married (**Figure 9**). However, this pattern is largely driven by the Latina/o population, which represents the largest segment of youth in San Antonio. Latina young women (14.7) are more than three times as likely to have been ever married compared to Black (4.0) and White (4.5) young women. Latina young women are also more likely to have ever been wed than Latino young men (11.0) whereas young Black and White men are more likely to have been married compared to their young women counterparts.

Figure 9. Ever-Married Rates for Persons 15 to 17 Years of Age by Sex and Race-Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

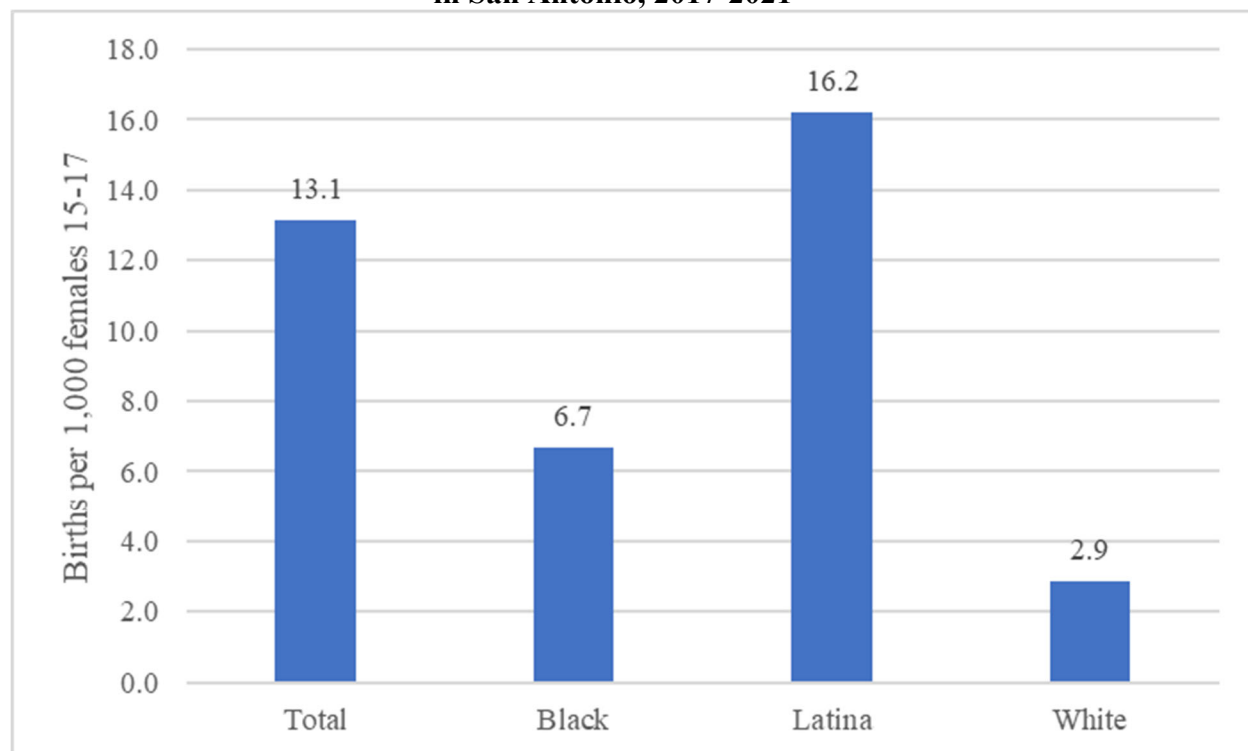
We next use data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (2023a) Natality data base to determine the number of births among females 15 to 17 years of age in the 2017-2021 period. Over this five-year period, young women 15 to 17 years of age in Bexar County gave birth to 2,185 babies, translating to a birth rate of 13.1 births per 1,000 young women 15 to 17 years of age (**Figure 10**).

However, there are major differences in the birth rates across race/ethnic groups. Latinas have the highest birth rate of 16.2 births per 1,000 young women 15 to 17 years of age, a rate that is more than twice as high as that of Blacks (6.7 per 1,000) and nearly six times that of

³ Earlier in the report used the ages of 16 and 17 involving analysis related to education and work. The lower age of 16 is used as this is the youngest age associated with labor force participation and opportunity youth. In analysis related to marriage and fertility, the age of 15 is used as the youngest age.

Whites (2.9 per 1,000) (Figure 10). Yet, the Latina birth rate of 16.2 in San Antonio is lower than the Latina birth rates in Austin (23.6), Dallas (20.9), and Houston (18.5).

Figure 10. Births Rates for Young Women 15 to 17 Years of Age by Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

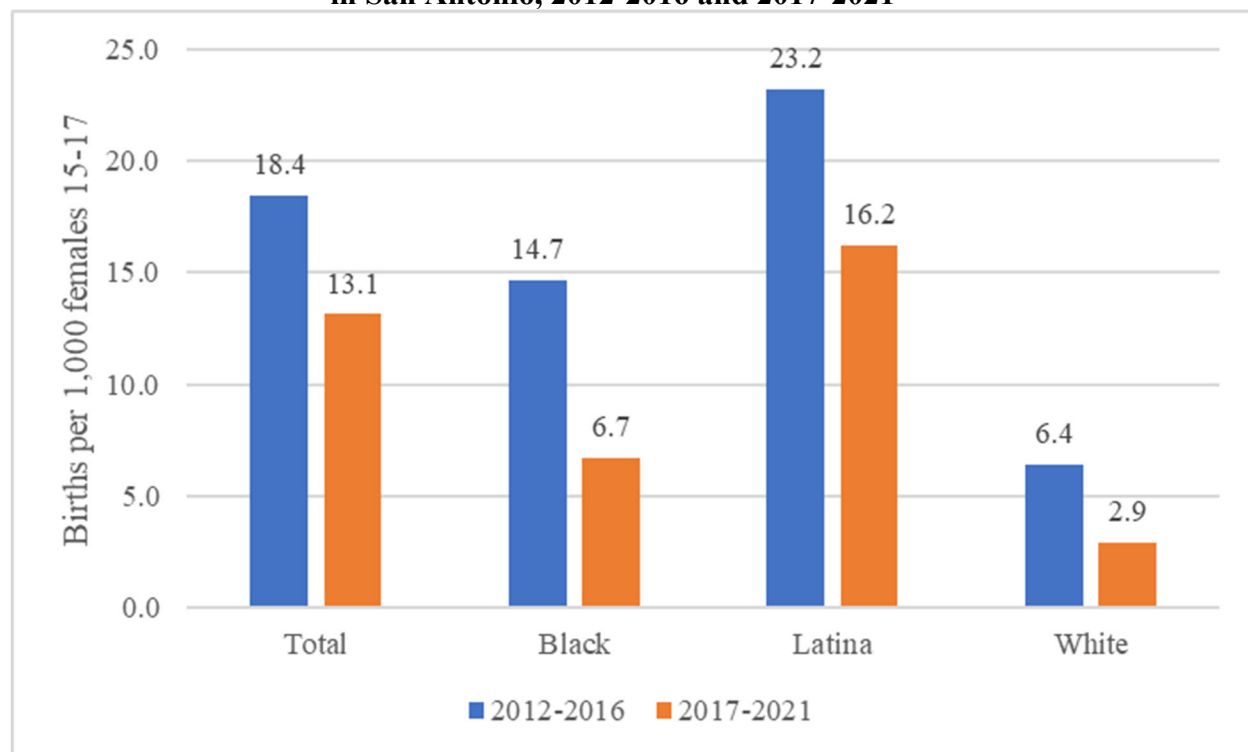


Source: 2021 CDC Wonder: Natality (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023a).

Nonetheless, across the board, there has been a significant reduction in the birth rates of young women 15 to 17 years in Bexar County between the periods of 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 (**Figure 11**). Overall, the birth rate for the Bexar County, as a whole, dropped from 18.4 to 13.1, a decline of 29 percent. Black and White young women more than halved their birth rates over the last five years. The birth rate of Latina young women also declined by 30 percent, dropping from 23.2 in 2012-2016 to 16.2 in 2017-2021.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023a), from where we drew the birth data, allows us to gain a brief sketch of the characteristics of the mothers 15 to 17 years of age who gave birth between 2017 and 2021 in Bexar County. Of the 2,185 births occurring during this time, almost all (98.5%) were born to young women who were not married. In addition, 6.7 percent of births were to young women who had less than 8 years of education, 76.1 percent of births were to those with 9 to 12 years of education without a high school diploma, and 17.2 percent of births were to young women who were high school graduates including a GED equivalency. This profile of young mothers suggests that they face important challenges as they transition at an early age from adolescent to parent responsible for the well-being of an infant. Of primary importance is that young mothers stay in school and complete their high school diplomas and have the opportunity to enroll in higher education.

Figure 11. Births Rates for Young Women 15 to 17 Years of Age by Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2012-2016 and 2017-2021



Source: CDC Wonder: Natality (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023a).

Health Limitations and Vulnerability

The ACS has limited information on the health characteristics of individuals. We use two pieces of information tapping health-related conditions: disability status and health insurance coverage. The ACS asks seven disability-related questions with three sets of questions asked of persons of given age categories: 1) questions asked for persons of all ages: a) vision or hearing difficulty, b) vision difficulty, and c) hearing difficulty; 2) questions asked for persons 5 years of age and older: a) cognitive difficulty, b) ambulatory difficulty, and c) self-care difficulty; and 3) question asked for persons 16 and older: a) independent difficulty. In the analysis below, persons 0 to 17 years of age who had at least one of the seven difficulties were categorized as having a disability.

One in five girls and young women 0 to 17 years of age has a disability, a rate that is below that of their male counterparts (1 in 14) (**Table 3**). Black (6.1%) and Latina (5.7%) females were slightly more likely than White females (4.2%) to have a disability. Among girls and young women in San Antonio with a disability, the following difficulties represented the highest percentage prevalence among persons in each of the three age categories: 1) 63.9 percent of females 5 to 17 years of age with a disability had cognitive difficulty; 2) 45.3 percent of females 16 to 17 years of age with a disability had independent living difficulty; and 3) 36.4 percent of females 0 to 17 years of age with a disability had vision difficulty. Among females and males with a disability, females were more likely to have vision difficulty (36.4%) compared to their male counterparts (21.3%).

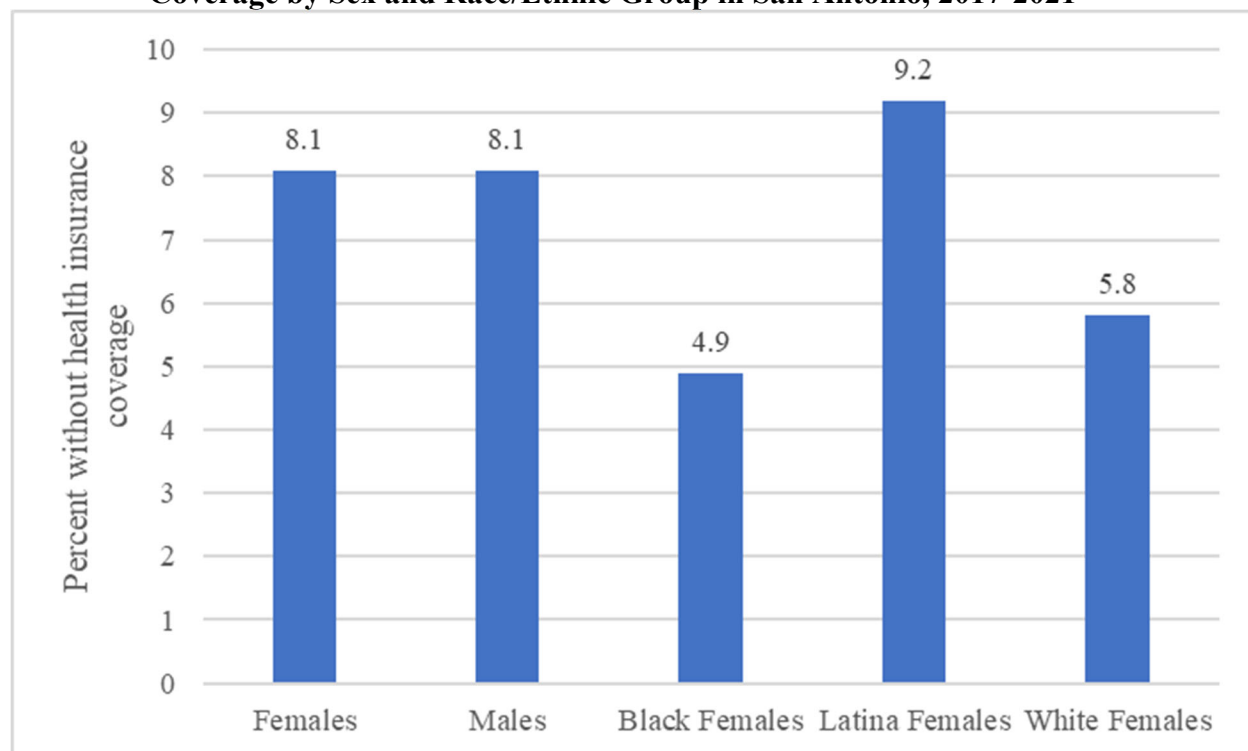
Table 3. Percent of Persons 0 to 17 Years of Age With a Disability by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021

Disability	Females				
	Females	Males	Black	Latina	White
Percent with a disability	5.3	7.0	6.1	5.7	4.2

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

We now turn to the examination of health insurance coverage. The ACS asked a question concerning whether persons had any form of health insurance coverage. For our analysis, we calculated the percent of persons 0 to 17 years of age who did not have any form of health insurance coverage. Overall, 8.1 percent of females and males lacked health insurance coverage (**Figure 12**). Among females, however, 9.2 percent of Latinas did not have any health insurance coverage, a rate that is about twice as high as the percent of Black (4.9%) and White (5.8%) females not having insurance. Among Latina girls and young women 0 to 17 years of age who are not United States citizens, approximately three of five lacked health insurance coverage.

Figure 12. Percent of Persons Less than 18 Years of Age Who Lack Health Insurance Coverage by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2017-2021



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

Infant and Child Mortality

Undoubtedly, one of the most sorrowful events involves the death of an infant or a child. The

first year of life is the most vulnerable period for newborns with the probability of death at age 0 (0.005394) being 17 times higher than the probability of death at age 1 (0.000318) in the United States in 2020 (Arias and Xu, 2022). We use data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (2023b) Linked Birth/Infant Death Records to obtain the infant mortality rate (IMR), which represents the number of deaths of infants before reaching age 1 per 1,000 births in the 2016-2020 period. In addition, we use data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (2023c) Underlying Cause of Death to obtain the child mortality rate, which represents the number of deaths of persons 1 to 17 years of age per 100,000 persons in this age group.

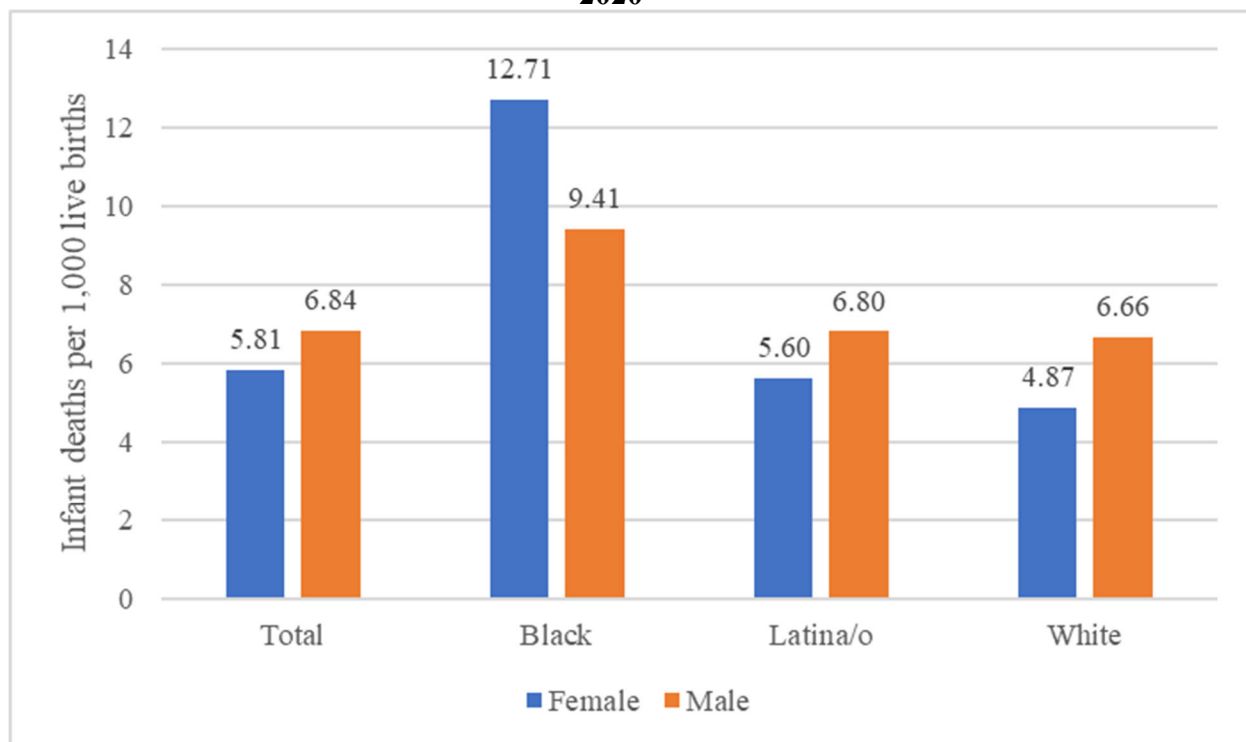
Over the period from 2016 to 2021, 842 babies died before reaching their first birthday in Bexar County, 55 percent being male and 45 being female. As is the consistent pattern with the infant mortality rate and age-specific death rates at all 3ges, the infant mortality rate of males (6.84) is higher than that of females (5.81) (**Figure 13**). Yet, Black babies have the highest infant mortality rates, but, uncharacteristically, it is Black baby girls (12.71) that have a higher infant mortality rate compared to Black baby boys (9.41). This is a very unusual pattern as males consistently have higher death rates from age 0 onward. Black baby girls (infant mortality rate of 12.71) die at more than twice the rate at which Latina (5.60) and White (4.87) infant girls die. The relatively low infant mortality rate of Latina/os, which is much closer to that of Whites than Blacks, reflects the Latino epidemiological paradox (Markides and Coreil 1986; Palloni and Arias 2004) in which Latina/os, despite having lower socioeconomic status levels with a significant share of the population being immigrants, actually have lower death rates and higher life expectancies than Whites.

For the Bexar County infant girl deaths for which a cause of death is available, three-fifths of deaths were due to extreme immaturity (31.0%) and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS, 29.6%). A larger percentage share of deaths among infant girls (29.6%) are due to SIDS compared to deaths among infant boys (16.7%).

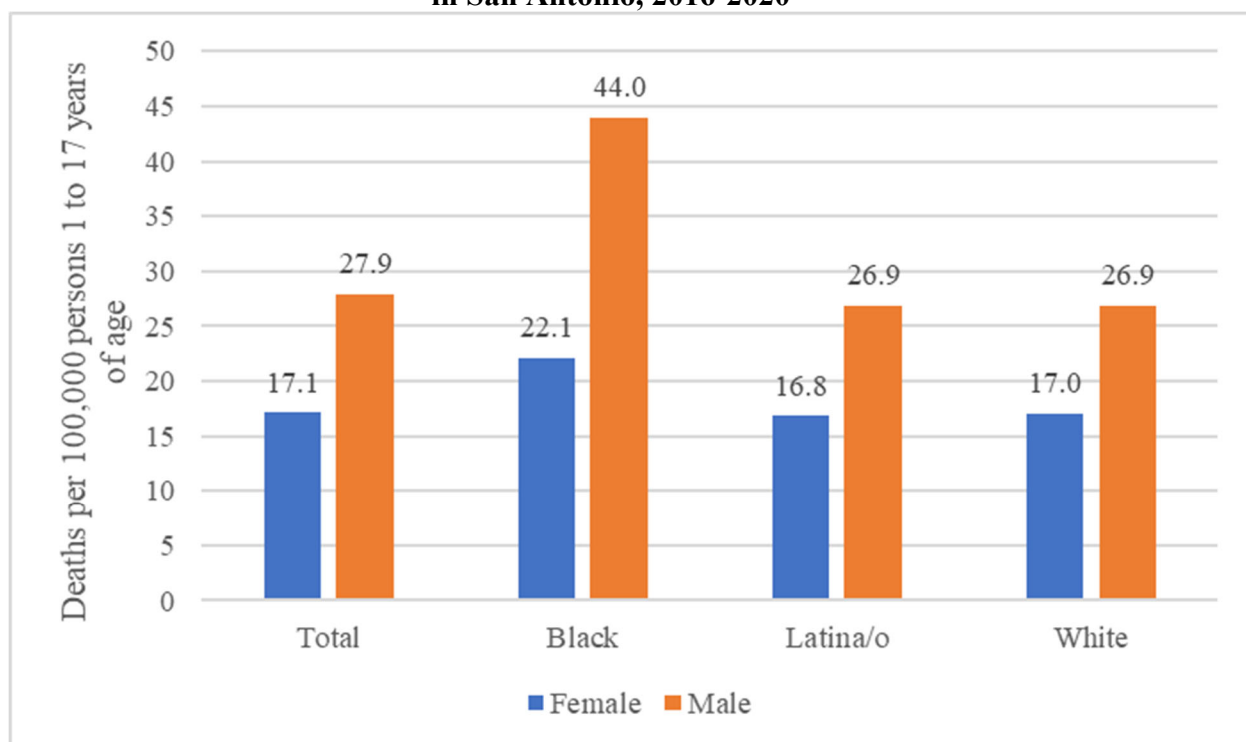
Overall, the death rate for females 1 to 17 years of age is 17.1, signifying that between 2016 and 2021 there were 17.1 female deaths 1 to 17 years of age per 100,000 females in this age group (**Figure 14**). The male death rate was 27.9, 63 percent higher than the female death rate. Among females 1 to 17 years of age, Blacks had the highest death rate at 22.1, about 30 percent higher than the death rates of Latina (16.8) and White (17.0) females. While females had lower death rates than males across all three racial/ethnic groups, the gap is particularly sharp among Blacks where the male death rate is twice as high as the female death rate.

For the deaths to females 1 to 17 years of age for which a cause of death is available, 32.8 percent were due to accidents, 20.3 percent to malignant neoplasms (cancer), 20.3 percent to assault (homicide), 14.8 percent to intentional self-harm (suicide), and 11.7 percent to congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities. Females have a higher percentage of deaths due to malignant neoplasms and congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities compared to males.

In sum, we have seen in San Antonio major racial/ethnic gaps with Latina and Black females, in comparison to their White counterparts, having more limited socioeconomic resources and worse health and related outcomes. We now assess how females in San Antonio fare relative to their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston above.

Figure 13. Infant Mortality Rate by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2016-2020

Source: CDC Wonder: Linked Birth/Infant Death Records (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023b).

Figure 14. Death Rates for Persons 1 to 17 Years of Age by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio, 2016-2020

Source: CDC Wonder: Underlying Cause of Death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023c).

Demographic and Socioeconomic Standing of Girls and Young Women in San Antonio in Comparison to Their Peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston

In this section, we highlight dimensions and statistical indicators in which girls and young women in San Antonio fare worse than their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.

- Black and Latina girls and young women 0 to 17 years of age in San Antonio are somewhat less likely to live with a parent or parents and more likely to live with a grandparent or grandparents compared to their counterparts in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- Latinas in San Antonio are slightly more likely to live in homes with multiple families and three or more generations compared to their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- Latina girls and young women in San Antonio are slightly more likely to have a disability compared to their counterparts in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- Latina young women are more likely to have ever been married compared to their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- Black baby girls are more likely to die before reaching their first birthday compared to their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston, with Latina and White baby girls also having slightly higher infant mortality rates than their respective peers in the other three cities.
- Latinas between the ages of 1 and 17 have slightly higher death rates than their female counterparts in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.

Having provided an overview of the demographic and socioeconomic profile of girls and young women in San Antonio, we now turn to more personal matters affecting them.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Teen Mental Health

The current section also presents findings concerning the *mental health* status of girls and young women⁴ in San Antonio. During the COVID pandemic, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health, explicitly focusing on escalated instances of stress, suicide, depression, anxiety, and other mental health crises among youth exacerbated by the COVID pandemic (American Association of Pediatrics 2021). In 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported findings on teen mental health from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) which captured trends of various health risk behaviors including sex, substance use, exposure to violence, and mental health and suicidality. According to YRBS findings, nearly 1 in 3 high school girls reported seriously considering suicide. These patterns signify a more than 10 percent uptick from 2011.

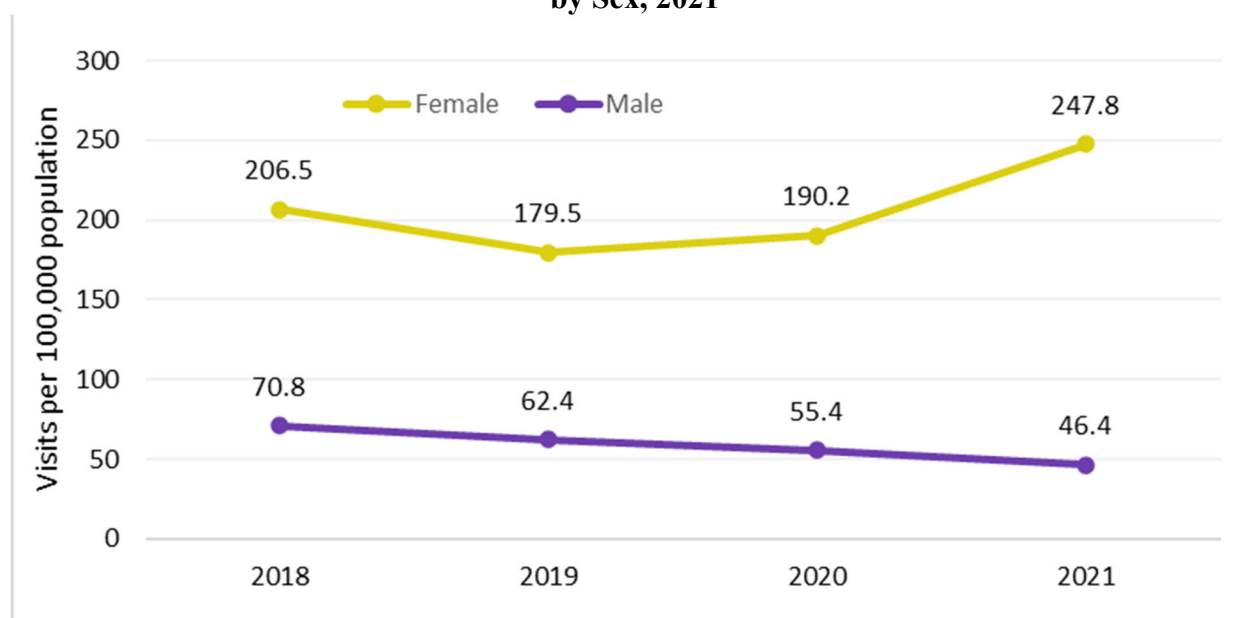
The mental health crisis on the heels of the COVID pandemic has had a direct impact on students' ability to engage in school, with their friends and family, and maintain positive outlooks for their future. According to the 2022 *Texas Kids Count* Data by Every Texan (Rayo-

⁴ While the overall focus of the report is on girls and young women younger than 18 years of age, data collected by the City of San Antonio to their 2023 Teen Mental Health Survey reflects responses from girls and young women ages 12 to 19 in San Antonio.

Garza 2023), one in 5 school-aged children (ages 3-17) have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral condition. Fifty-six percent of these students do not receive treatment or counseling for their condition or illness (Rayo-Garza, 2023).

Mental health issues continue to plague youth locally, particularly among adolescent girls. According to proprietary pediatric health data shared by COSA Community Health and Safety Division with Metro Health, cases of hospital visits for self-harm among girls have been on the rise since 2019. In 2021, nearly 248 hospital admittances for every 100,000 people were adolescent girls who had engaged in self-harm—more than five times the incidence for adolescent boys (47 of every 100,000) (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Bexar County Pediatric Inpatient and Outpatient Self-Harm Emergency Visits by Sex, 2021



Note. Figure on pediatric health data prepared by Morjorie White, Assistant Director of the Community Health & Safety Division with Metro Health.

The *SASpeakUp* Teen Mental Health Survey (TMHS) developed by the San Antonio Youth Commission and Project Worth Teen Ambassadors⁵ was released in Spring 2022 on the City of San Antonio's *SASpeakUp* platform. This community-based research initiative engaged student researchers to survey 1,047 youth in San Antonio, ages 12-19, through an online-based survey. A total of 845 of those records were used in the analysis to present localized findings relative to girls' mental health in San Antonio.

Results from the survey were analyzed on the following measures: 1) mental health status; 2) mental health issues experienced; 3) source for mental health help; and 4) factors impacting mental health. In addition, the following demographic characteristics were analyzed: gender,

⁵ The San Antonio Youth Commission is a collective of 22 high school students appointed by the mayor and city council members. Project Worth Teen Ambassadors is a collective of middle and high school student teen mental health advocates. Together, the SA Youth Commission and Project Worth Teen Ambassadors led the *SASpeakUp* Teen Mental Health Survey in December 2021 as part of a youth participatory action research project.

sexual identity (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, asexual, or exploring or unsure), race and ethnicity (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Middle Eastern, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, and/or other), and council district. Below are key findings from our analysis of data collected and shared by the student researchers:

- Eighty-seven percent of girl and young woman respondents reported having a moderate or proficient knowledge of mental health.
- Among all surveyed factors, the COVID-19 pandemic, school, and family or home life had the most negative impact on girls' and young women's mental health.
- Nearly half of girls and young women who responded to the survey reported their mental health being somewhat or greatly negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Among all respondents, 34% percent of girls and young women reported their mental health was negatively impacted to some degree by their time out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Just under 70 percent of girls and young women reported very frequent use of social media, followed by 16 percent who reported moderate use.
- While most respondents use social media (approximately 90%), a significant percentage of respondents reported social media had no or a positive impact on their mental health.

According to data collected by student researchers, almost 88% of respondents reported having experienced symptoms of poor mental health (6% of respondents while another 6% preferred not to respond) including, symptoms of depression, suicide, physical discomfort, or detriments to personal or familial relationships.

Girl respondents identified 1) smoking, vaping, alcohol, or other substance use (58%), 2) misregulated eating or sleeping habits (43%), 3) having low or no energy (42%), 4) the inability to perform daily tasks (42%), and 5) suicidal ideation (37%) as the top five most common issues for their peers.

As part of a deeper assessment on the specific impacts on teen mental health, we analyzed data collected by six questions on the TMHS which asked respondents to rate the impact of various external factors on their mental health. These items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale with the following assigned values: 1 = '*A lot negatively*'; 2 = '*Somewhat negatively*'; 3 = '*A little negatively*'; 4 = '*Not at all*'; 5 = '*A little positively*'; 6 = '*Somewhat positively*'; 7 = '*A lot positively*'; and an eighth option was excluded from the scale, 0 = '*Does not apply*.' **Table 4** details data collected from girl survey respondents (n = 364) on the median level of impact reported for each of the six impact factors. Thus, the higher the median value for a specific item, the greater negative impact on girls' mental health with respect to the factor or environment specified in the item.

In summary, a greater number of girl respondents found their participation in extracurricular or after-school activities to be more of a positive impact on their mental health than other impact factors. By contrast, a greater number of girl respondents found the COVID-19 pandemic and

school to be greater sources of stress to their overall mental health than other impact variables. Below, we present the major findings from our assessment:

- **COVID-19:** Among all girl and young woman respondents, 56% of youth reported a negative impact of COVID-19 on their mental health.
- **School:** Three of five girl and young woman respondents reported school having a negative impact on their mental health.
- **Work:** One of four girl and young woman respondents reported work having a negative impact on their mental health.
- **Family and Home Life:** Thirty-five percent of girl and young woman respondents reported their family and home life having had a negative impact on their mental health.
- **Social Media:** Among all girl and young woman respondents, 23% of youth reported a negative impact of social media on their mental health.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Extracurricular or after-school activities had a negative impact on 17% of girl and young woman respondents' mental health.

Table 4. Impact of COVID-19, School, Work, Home Life, and Social Media on Teen Mental Health, TMHS, 2023

Item Description	Number Respondents	Median
How much has your mental health been affected by COVID-19?	364	2 (Somewhat negatively)
How much has your mental health been affected by school?	364	2 (Somewhat negatively)
How much has your mental health been affected by work?	364	0 (Does not apply)
How much has your mental health been affected by your family and home life?	364	3 (A little negatively)
How much has your mental health been affected by your use of social media?	364	3 (A little negatively)
How much has your mental health been affected by your participation in extracurricular or after-school activities?	364	4 (Not at all)

Source: 2023 TMHS

Overall, according to the City of San Antonio's (2022) analysis, girls and young women reported higher struggles with mental health compared to their male peers while gender-diverse and LGBTQ+ youth were disproportionately impacted. A greater percentage of gender-diverse youth reported experiencing than both their girl and boy counterparts (**Table 5**).

Girls and young women (27%) were more than twice as likely as boys (11%) to report engaging in self-harming behaviors (**Table 6**). Girls (29%) were almost twice as likely as boys (16%) to engage in suicidal ideation. For gender-diverse youth, the percentage of respondents who

reported engaging in self-harming behaviors (59%) more than doubled that of their girl peers. The same pattern emerges with respect to suicidal ideation such that gender-diverse youth were twice as likely to have engaged in suicidal ideation than their girl peers (COSA 2022).

Table 5. Percentage of San Antonio Youth Experiencing Mental Health Struggles, 2022

	Number	Population Breakdown	Inability to complete daily tasks	Feeling helpless, hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters	Smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol, or using drugs
Total (ages 12-19 years old)	846	100%	37%	49%	24%
Q2 – Gender					
Girl/Woman	473	56%	38%	54%	27%
Boy/Man	219	26%	26%	35%	19%
Gender Diverse	69	13%	65%	75%	32%
Not disclosed	40	5%	20%	20%	5%
Q3 - Sexual Orientation					
Straight/Heterosexual	434	51%	25%	39%	19%
LGBQ+	253	33%	58%	71%	38%
Not disclosed or did not respond	134	16%	25%	37%	11%
Q4 - Ethnicity/Race					
Hispanic	542	64%	38%	52%	27%
White	152	18%	38%	53%	20%
Black or African American	50	6%	38%	48%	22%
Asian or Asian American	29	3%	45%	59%	28%
Another Option Not Listed Here (includes Middle Eastern, AI, AN)	13	2%	46%	31%	23%
I prefer not to Answer	60	7%	12%	13%	5%

AI = American Indian; AN = Alaskan Native

Note: Table borrowed from the 2023 Summary of San Antonio's Teen Mental Health Survey prepared by the COSA Department of Human Services.

Table 6. Survey Results by Behavior or Task and Sex, TMHS, 2023

Behavior/Task	Percent Girls	Percent Boys
Reported inability to complete daily tasks (1)	38%	26%
Reported feeling helpless, hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters (2)	54%	26%
Reported smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol, or using drugs (3)	27%	19%
Reported hurting oneself (4)	27%	11%
Reported suicidal ideation (5)	29%	16%
Don't have anyone to go to for mental	4%	4%

health help (6)		
Don't feel comfortable talking to anyone for mental health help (7)	41%	12%
Use friends for mental health help (8)	43%	38%
Use siblings for family close to their age for mental health help (9)	19%	20%
View school as a negative impact on mental health (10)	61%	46%
View family/home life as a negative impact on mental health (11)	35%	23%
View social media as a negative impact on mental health (12)	23%	16%

Source: 2023 TMHS

Education

Many people claim that education is the “great equalizer.” One of the most effective gateways for upward socioeconomic mobility is through educational attainment. Yet, many observers suggest that the educational system is set up to reproduce inequality with children of educated parents being much more likely to achieve greater educational attainment success than the children of people who have little education (Sáenz et al. 2007). San Antonio, as is the case in cities throughout the nation, has been marked by great disparities in educational opportunities and uneven funding of schools associated with race and class.

This section provides key findings with respect to the *education* status of girls and young women⁶ in San Antonio. The results presented in this report are based on school and student performance and accountability data obtained from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) between the 2018-19 and 2021-22 academic years. We compare the status of girls and young women in San Antonio relative to their counterparts in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.

Education data presented in this report were obtained from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the American Community Survey through IPUMS. In total, we analyzed three education indicators: a) enrollment in K-12 public schools; b) academic performance; and c) graduation and attrition. As previously mentioned, this report considers three analyses: 1) a comparison of education outcomes for girls and boys in San Antonio; 2) a comparison of education outcomes for girls and young women in San Antonio and their counterparts in Austin, Dallas, and Houston areas; and 3) a comparison of education outcomes across race and ethnicity for girls and young women in San Antonio.

⁶ The focus of the analysis is girls and young women younger than 18 years of age.

While this report aims to assess the status of Latina, Black, and Asian girls in San Antonio, specifically, TEA does not publicly report data by intersectional categories. We require a deeper examination of available intersectional education data to determine the differences in certain educational outcomes among Latina, Black, and Asian girls compared to their White female and male peers. Thus, the following findings present analyses by race/ethnicity and sex, separately, across four of the 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs)⁷ in Texas: Region 4 (Houston), Region 12 (Waco), Region 13 (Austin), and Region 20 (San Antonio). Below are key findings from our assessment:

- Latina students represented the majority of all female students (68%) enrolled in San Antonio schools across all racial/ethnic groups during the 2021-22 academic year. This trend has remained consistent since 2019-2020, with Latinas as the predominant racial/ethnic group among all enrolled students in the region.
- Across age groups (10-17 years of age), girls and young women in San Antonio demonstrate a slight advantage over boys in terms of graduation.
- Among the four ESCs examined, Region 20 (San Antonio) demonstrated the widest gap in graduation by race/ethnicity between Black and White students than all other ESCs. Region 20 had the second largest gap concerning Latino students, behind Region 4 (Houston).
- Additionally, Region 20 (San Antonio) demonstrated the widest graduation gap by sex than all other ESCs, with male students 4% less likely than female students to complete their four-year graduation.
- With respect to attrition (dropping out of high school), schools are more likely to retain girls and young women in San Antonio during high school than boys and young men. Recent trends in state attrition data demonstrate females in San Antonio have a 2% lower dropout rate than their male peers.

Pre-K Enrollment

Research has shown the value of pre-school enrollment for children before they began their K-12 schooling, especially for children from families with limited resources. Statewide data reveal that most students enrolled in public Pre-K come from families with limited incomes and of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Rayo-Garza 2023). San Antonio is fortunate to have the tax-supported *Pre-K 4 SA* program that provides full-day pre-kindergarten schooling for 4-year-olds living in San Antonio.

We examine here the schooling enrollment of girls at ages 3 and 4. **Table 7** shows enrollment of 3- and 4-year-olds in pre-K across gender groups and across racial and ethnic groups among girls. Overall, girls are more likely than boys to be enrolled in pre-K at ages 3 and 4. Among girls, at age 3, White girls (46.3%) are much more likely to be enrolled in pre-K than Black (20.9%) and Latina (29%) girls. However, at age 4, slightly more than three-fourths of Black girls attend pre-K schooling compared to about 54 percent of Latina and White girls.

⁷ Regional ESCs support local districts in attaining the missions, goals, and objectives set forth by the TEA by providing services customized to the regional context.

Table 7. Percentage of Children Enrolled in Pre-K by Age, Sex, and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio

Pre-K enrollment by age			Females		
	Females	Males	Black	Latina	White
Pre-K enrollment at age 3	31.9	23.5	20.9	29.0	46.3
Pre-K enrollment at age 4	55.7	51.1	76.6	54.8	53.7

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

The data show that there is a major need for all girls, and boys for that matter, to be enrolled in school at age 3 and to continue their enrollment at age 4. These two years of pre-K will greatly prepare them to do well when they begin their elementary school enrollment.

Enrollment in K-12 Public Schools

According to recent reports by TEA, during the 2021-2022 academic year, 12,000 more male students than female students were enrolled in San Antonio schools across all racial/ethnic groups (**Table 8**). Since 2019-20, this enrollment gap has narrowed. Of all female students enrolled in school districts across San Antonio (Region 20) in 2021-2022, 68% were Latina, 20% were White, 6% were Black, and 2.5% were Asian or Asian American (**Figure 16**).

Table 8. Student Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity and Sex, Region 20 (San Antonio)

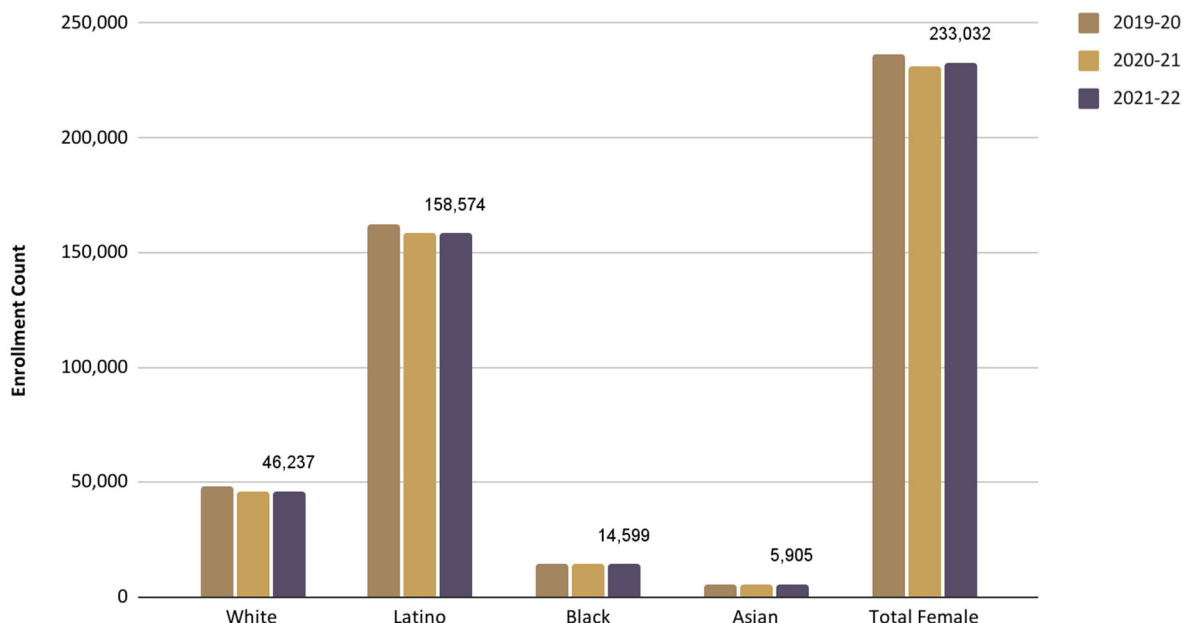
Ethnicity	Sex	Academic Year		
		2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
White	Female	46,237	45,823	47,949
White	Male	50,237	49,524	51,874
White Total		96,474	95,347	99,823
Latino	Female	158,574	158,514	162,474
Latino	Male	165,513	165,545	170,218
Latino Total		324,087	324,059	332,692
Black	Female	14,599	14,335	14,257
Black	Male	15,578	15,341	15,329
Black Total		30,177	29,676	29,586
Asian	Female	5,905	5,551	5,306
Asian	Male	5,947	5,505	5,291
Asian Total		11,852	11,056	10,597
Region Total		477,911	473,945	486,357
Female Total		233,032	230,999	236,700
Male Total		244,879	242,946	249,657

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Standard Reports, 2019-22

Figure 16. Female Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnic Group, Region 20 (San Antonio)

Female Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Region 20 (San Antonio), 2019-2022

Source: TEA PEIMS Standard Reports



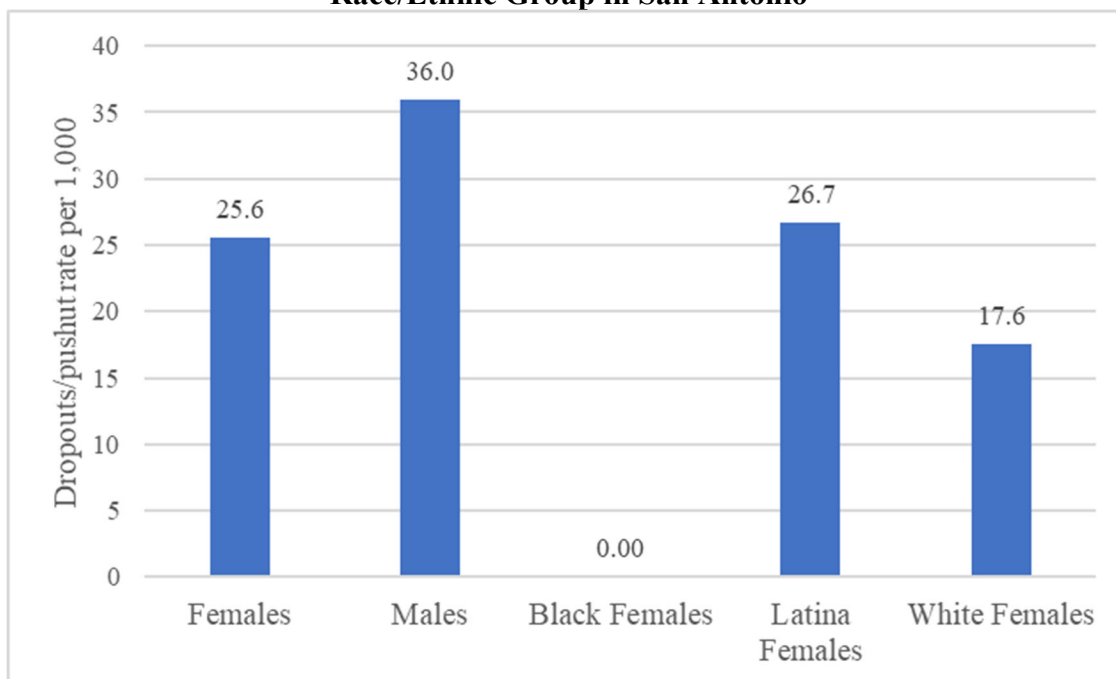
Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Standard Reports, 2019-22

Graduation and School Attrition

We now examine the lack of enrollment among persons 16 to 17 years who have not graduated from high school and are not currently enrolled. This group has variously been referred to as “dropouts” or “pushouts,” the latter term emphasizing the school-related factors that drive away students from continuing their education. The dropout/pushout rate refers to the number of persons 16 to 17 years of age who are not enrolled in school per 1,000 persons of these ages. Since the 2005-2006 academic year, TEA has been using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definition for determining high school “dropouts”, as mandated by state law. According to the NCES criteria, a dropout refers to a student who was enrolled in grades 7-12 in a public school but did not re-enroll in the next year, was not expelled, did not receive a high school equivalency certificate, did not pursue high school education outside the public-school system, did not begin college, or was not deceased.

According to ACS data, for every 1,000 persons 16 to 17 years of age, 36 young men are not enrolled compared to nearly 26 young women (**Figure 17**). Among young women 16 to 17 years of age, Latinas have the highest dropout/pushout rate with approximately 27 per 1,000 not enrolled in school compared to 18 for White girls and Black girls not registering any dropouts/pushouts, although this absence may be due to the small number of young Black women in these ages and sampling error.

Figure 17. Dropout/Pushout Rate among Persons 16 to 17 Years of Age by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group in San Antonio



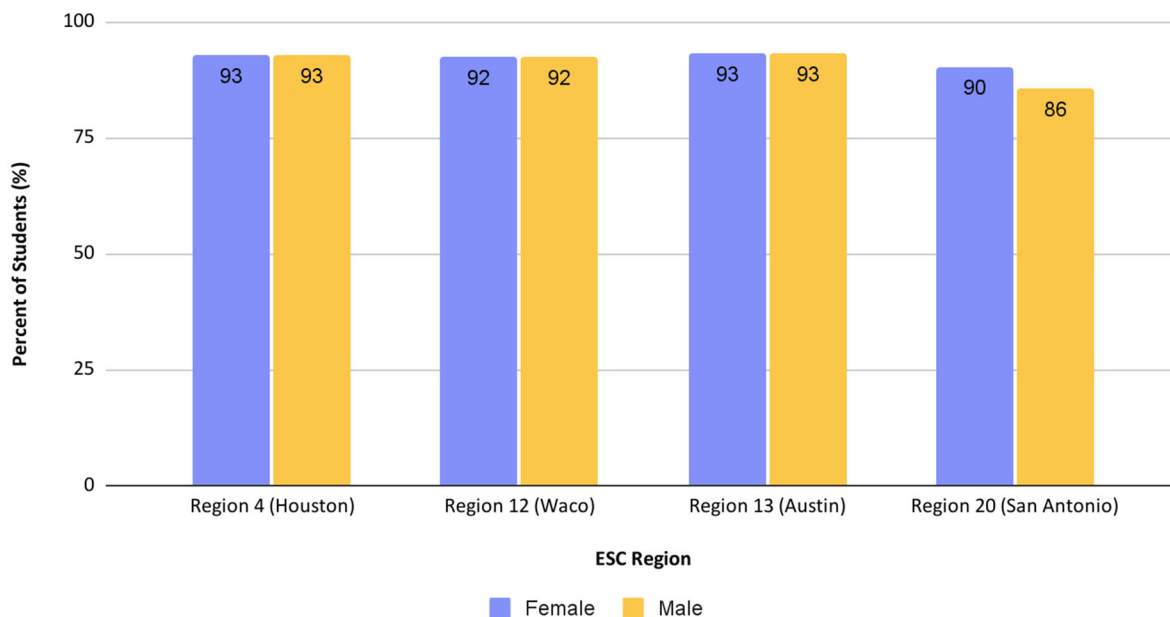
Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Ruggles et al. 2023).

According to TEA data, of the four ESC regions, San Antonio (Region 20) demonstrated the widest graduation gap by sex than all other ESCs. Disaggregated by sex, 4% more female students (90%) from San Antonio in 2021 than their male peers (86%) (**Figure 18**), indicating girls were more likely to graduate from high school than boys. Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, 5% fewer Latino students (87%) and 11% fewer Black students (81%) from Region 20 (San Antonio) graduated in 2021 than their White peers (92%). Asian students graduated at a slightly higher rate (94%) than White students (**Figure 19**).

In examining trends of attrition (dropping out of high school), schools are more likely to retain girls and young women in San Antonio during high school than boys and young men. Recent trends from 2021 indicate females in San Antonio have a 2% lower dropout rate than their male peers (**Figure 20**). Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, San Antonio (Region 20) demonstrated the widest racial disparity in attrition such that Latino and Black students were more likely to drop out of school than their White peers (**Figure 21**).

Figure 18. Four-Year Graduation Rates by Sex and ESC Region, Class of 2021**Four-Year Graduation Rates by Sex and ESC Region, Class of 2021**

Source: TEA Graduation and Dropout Data

**Figure 19. Four-Year Graduation Rates by Race and Ethnicity and ESC Region, Class of 2021****Four-Year Graduation Rates by Race and Ethnicity and ESC Region, Class of 2021**

Source: TEA Graduation and Dropout Data

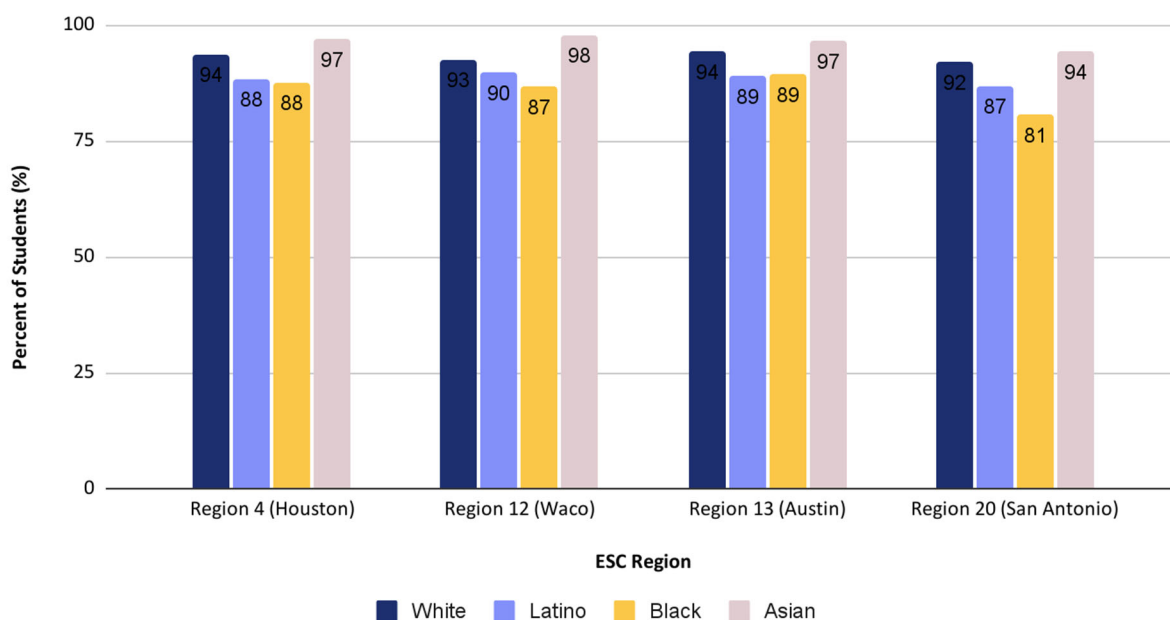
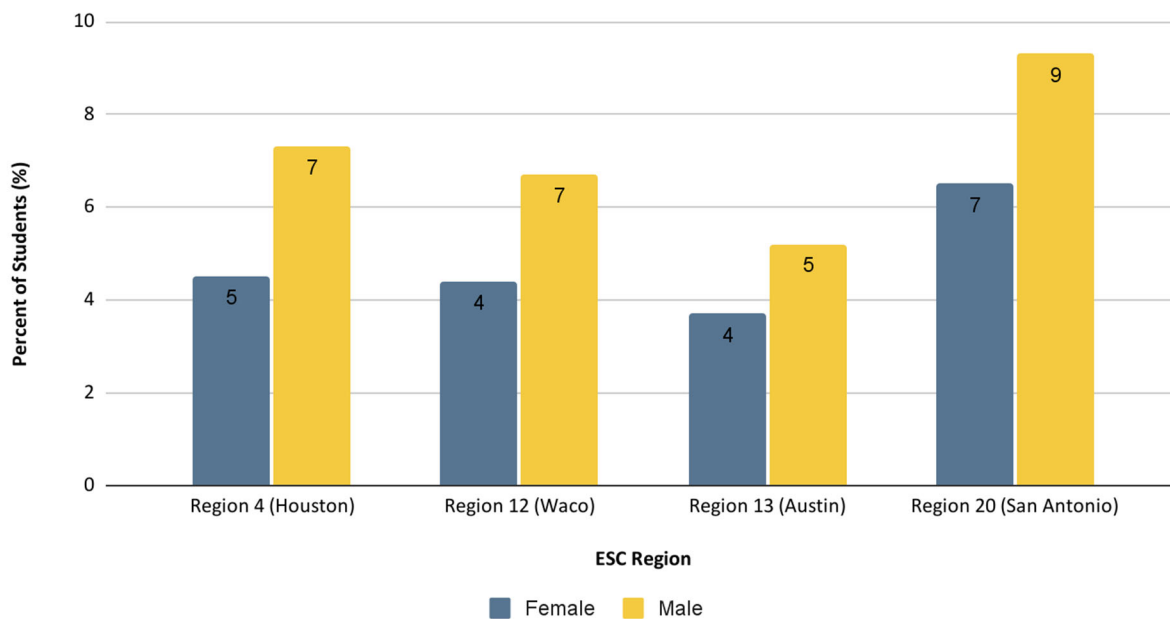
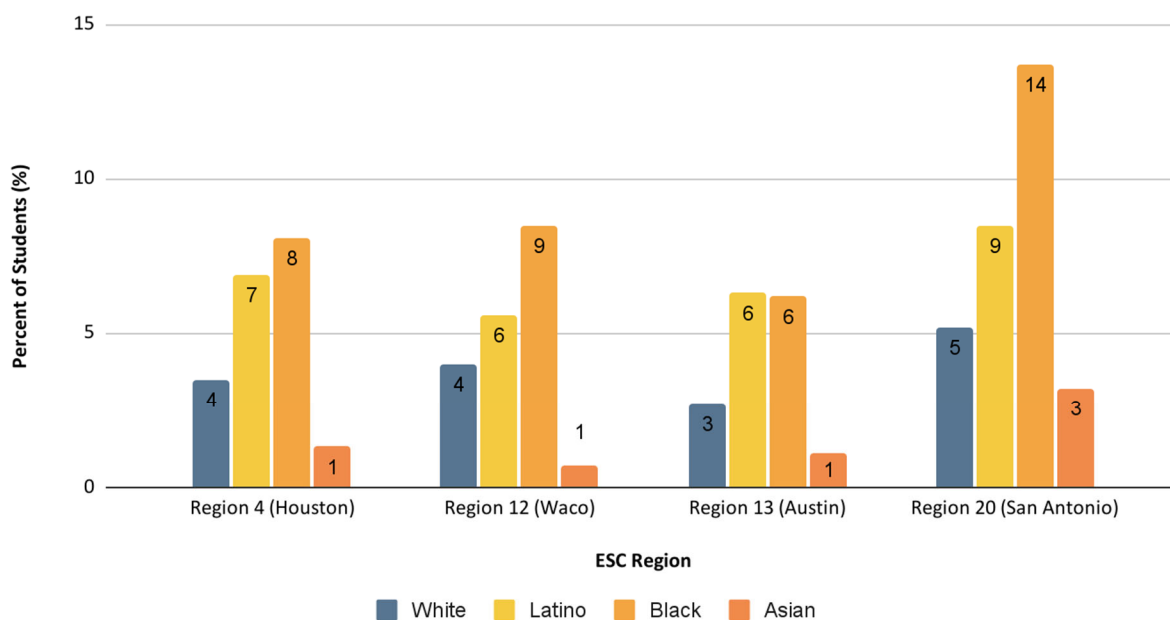


Figure 20. Attrition Rates by Sex and ESC Region, Class of 2021**Attrition Rates by Sex and ESC Region, Class of 2021**

Source: TEA Graduation and Dropout Data

**Figure 21. Attrition Rates by Race and Ethnicity and ESC Region, Class of 2021****Attrition Rates by Race and Ethnicity and ESC Region, Class of 2021**

Source: TEA Graduation and Dropout Data



Victimization and Crime

Another dimension of gender equality analyzed for this report included victimization and crime, particularly trends in child abuse and neglect and juvenile arrests.

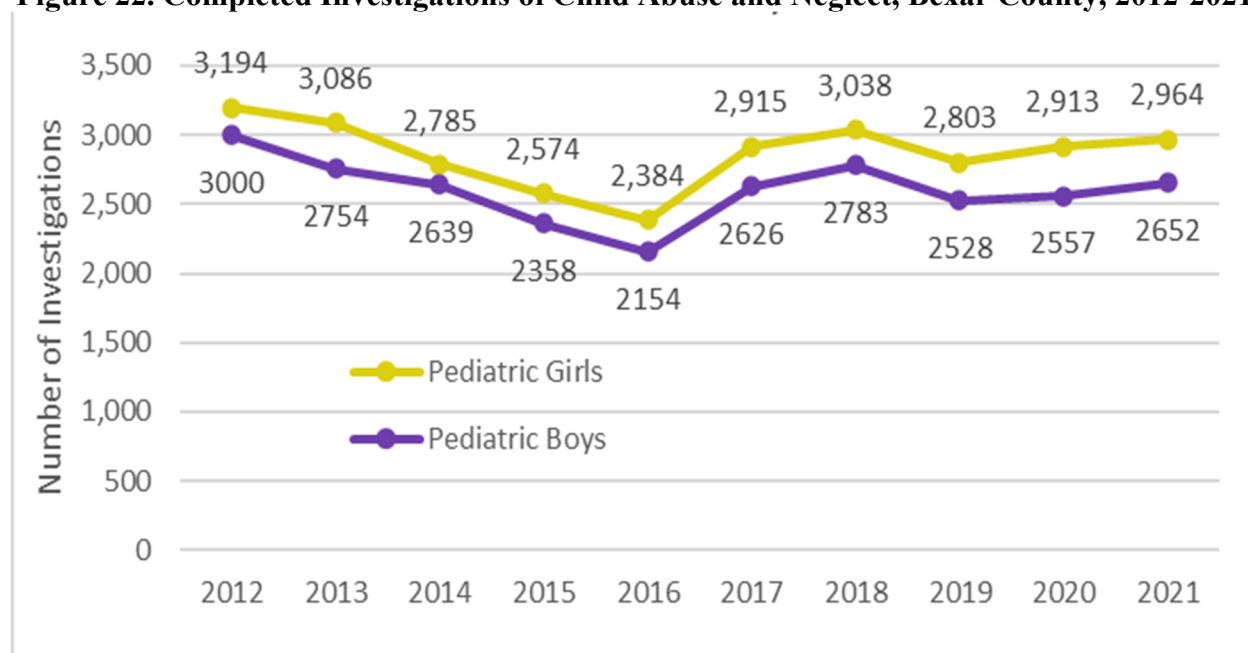
As presented in a prior section on accelerated adulthood, Latina girls ages 15-17 are significantly more likely than their Black and White girl peers to ever enter marriage. Trends in early marriage and forced child marriage are often challenging to disentangle, given the obscure nature of available data on this issue. While commonly perceived as a global issue, forced child marriage remains legal in 43 states, despite the UN recognizing child marriage an abuse of human rights. According to research led by Unchained at Last (2021), the only organization dedicated to ending forced and child marriage in the United States, nearly 300,000 children under the age of 18 were legally married across the country between 2000 and 2018. In the state of Texas, policymakers passed legislation in 2017 that left a loophole in the law by making it legal for emancipated 16- and 17-year-old minors to marry. However, this loophole leaves the door open for parents or guardians to pressure children into forced arrangements, according to Fraidy Reiss, founder and executive director of Unchained at Last (Davies 2023). While little data exists to understand the true breadth of the abuse experienced by child brides and grooms in Texas, girls are disproportionately impacted by the weaponization of loopholes yet to be closed by statute. According to the latest available data, more than 5,000 child marriages involved age differences that would have been constituted as sex crimes (Davies 2023). Eighty-six percent of child marriages in the United States involved minor girls, and 96% of those marriages were girls married to adult men (Unchained at Last 2021).

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and neglect present another facet of the victimization of girls in San Antonio. In analyzing pediatric health data shared by COSA Community Health and Safety Division with Metro Health, slightly more investigations of child abuse and neglect were completed for girls than boys between 2012-2021 (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services 2021). During the COVID pandemic in March 2020, the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) reported an 18 percent increase in family violence related calls compared to March of the previous year—a steady increase since 2019 (**Figure 22**). While child abuse and neglect are present across race, class, and sex, girls from lower socioeconomic households are more likely to be victims.

Juvenile Arrests

According to data on juvenile reports by the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) from 2021, Latina adolescents followed by Black girls were more likely to be charged for probable cause and cite/release (**Table 9**). Moreover, juvenile arrests were more common among Latina 16–17-year-old girls compared to any other racial and ethnic group by age (**Figure 23**). Additionally, just over 73% of girls who were booked by the SAPD in 2021 were Latina followed by Black girls (15.6%). This represents a 64% gap between Latina and White girls in terms of consequential police interactions for youth of color in San Antonio.

Figure 22. Completed Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Bexar County, 2012-2021

Note. Figure on pediatric health data prepared by Morjorie White, Assistant Director of the Community Health & Safety Division with Metro Health.

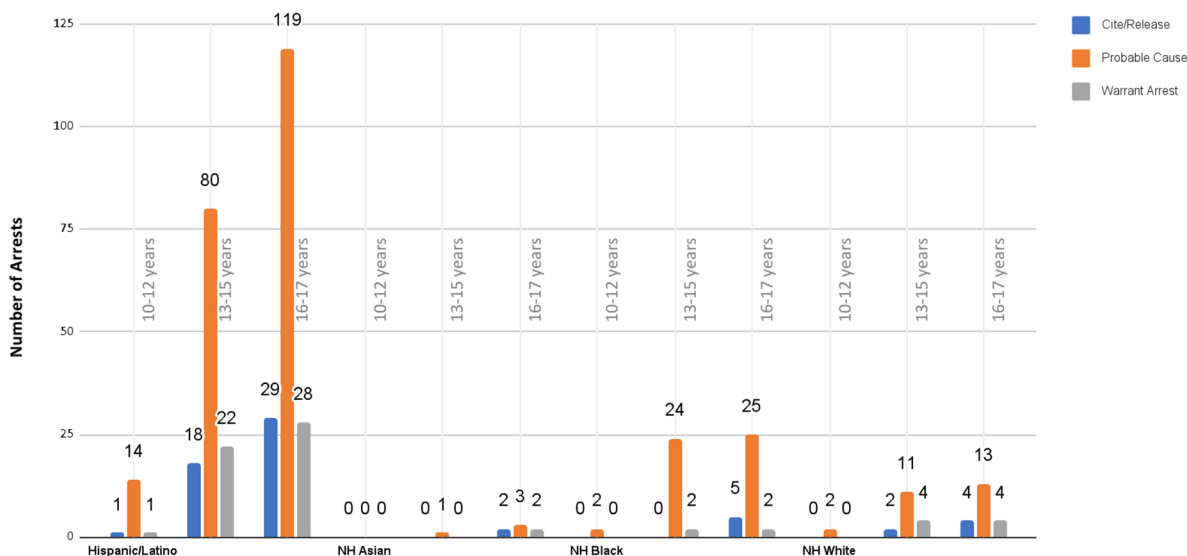
Table 9. Girl Juvenile Arrests by Race/Ethnicity, Age & Charge Type, 2021

		Charge Type			
Race/Ethnicity	Age	Booked	Cite and Release	Detained at Hospital	Released
Hispanic/Latina	10-12	15	1	0	0
	13-15	101	17	0	2
	16-17	128	44	1	3
Hispanic/Latina Total		244	62	1	5
NH Asian	10-12	0	0	0	0
NH Asian	13-15	1	0	0	0
NH Asian	16-17	5	2	0	0
NH Asian Total		6	2	0	0
NH Black	10-12	2	0	0	0
NH Black	13-15	26	0	0	0
NH Black	16-17	24	8	0	0
NH Black Total		52	8	0	0
NH White	10-12	2	0	0	0
NH White	13-15	15	2	0	0
NH White	16-17	14	6	0	1
NH White Total		31	8	0	1
Girls Total		333	80	1	6

Source: 2021-22 SAPD Records, courtesy of Rick Horn, Senior Crime & Intelligence Analyst at SAPD

Figure 23. Girl Juvenile Arrests by Age Group and Charge Type, 2021**Girl Juvenile Arrests by Age and Charge Type**

Source: SAPD Reports, 2021



Source: 2021-22 SAPD Records, courtesy of Rick Horn, Senior Crime & Intelligence Analyst at SAPD

The Overall Mental Health, Educational, and Safety Status of Girls and Young Women in San Antonio

In summary, there exists gendered gaps in the areas of both mental health and education among girls in San Antonio. Girls are more likely than their boy peers to endure the burden of poor mental health and engage in self-harming behaviors to cope. While this section on the report does not assess how girls in San Antonio fare relative to their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston or across diverse racial and ethnic identities with respect to mental health, the youth mental health crisis is a global issue that disproportionately impacts youth of color and of economically disadvantaged backgrounds—a large proportion of the youth demographic presently living in San Antonio.

Educational gaps, however, advantage girls in San Antonio such that girls are more likely than boys to be enrolled in pre-school programs, graduate from high school in four years, and remain enrolled in school. In comparing girls and young women across the major urban regions in Texas, our analysis finds that both girls and boys in San Antonio fare worse than their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston. San Antonio had the second lowest attrition rate gap by sex among all four regions and demonstrated the widest gap in attrition between Black and White students and Latino and White students. While the data used to conduct our analysis presented limitations for more closely examining educational outcomes for girls by region and by race/ethnicity, our findings indicate disproportionate educational outcomes for students of color which signify schools' need for support in retaining and graduating Black and Latino students, specifically.

Finally, as with education, trends in juvenile arrests demonstrate that, generally, boys are

more likely to be charged and booked by local law enforcement than girls. To understand what racial and ethnic heterogeneity exists among the experience of girls with respect to juvenile arrests, we compared the prevalence of juvenile arrest among girls in San Antonio and found that Latina girls ages 16-17 years old were significantly more likely than all racial and ethnic groups to be charged for probable cause and cite/release. A major racial gap exists between Latina and White girls in terms of juvenile arrests in San Antonio. While our findings concerning cases of child abuse and neglect revealed only a slight gap between girls and boys, broader research indicates girls from lower socioeconomic households are more likely to be victims of child abuse and neglect. Thus, a subsequent study on the status of girls and young women in San Antonio would benefit from additional research related to this topic.

Conclusions

Our findings presented in this report offer a broad yet revealing snapshot of the status of girls and young women in San Antonio relative to boys and girls and young women within San Antonio and across the other major metropolitan areas within the state.

As anticipated, our analysis revealed both areas of progress and concern for the improved well-being of girls in our city. A particular outcome area where girls experience an advantage over boys is in pre-K-12 education. For example, preschool girls are more likely to be enrolled in a pre-K program than boys. As in the case of pre-K enrollment, young women fare better in schools than young men at ages 16 and 17, particularly with respect to school attrition and graduation from high school. Yet, experiences differ across girls' racial/ethnic groups.

Our analysis predominantly revealed the disparities which exist for girls and young women. Below, we highlight outstanding trends and issues faced by girls and young women in San Antonio, which are examined in greater detail within this report:

- High rates of teenage pregnancy especially among Latinas (although there has been a significant reduction in birth rates among young women in Bexar County between 2012-2016 and 2017-2021).
- A greater presence of young women in the workforce at age 16 and 17 than boys.
- Acceleration into adulthood through early marriage and motherhood.
- A higher prevalence of mental health concerns among girls than boys, with the highest risk among gender-diverse and LGBTQ+ youth.
- A higher incidence of hospitalizations related to mental health crises and self-harm among girls and young women than boys and young men.
- A greater regional disadvantage with respect to disability, such that Latina girls and young women in San Antonio are slightly more likely to have a disability compared to their peers in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- A greater regional educational disadvantage in San Antonio compared to girls in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- A greater risk for child abuse and neglect among girls and young women compared to boys and young men.

As mentioned, Latina and Black girls face additional barriers to their health and well-being

across the observed dimensions. Some of the major areas where girls of color require significant support include:

- Increased exposure to overcrowded living conditions.
- More limited access to digital technologies, including computer devices and high-speed broadband Internet service.
- Higher likelihood of being an opportunity youth.
- High levels of early marriages among specifically Latina young women.
- Greater risk of teenage pregnancy among specifically Latina young women,
- Higher prevalence of disability among specifically Black girls,
- Higher prevalence of uninsured status among specifically Latina girls.
- Greater infant mortality risk for Black baby girls and childhood mortality risk for Black girls and young women 1 to 17 years of age.

While our analysis of the status of girls and young women in San Antonio reveals promising trends for the well-being of girl youth, city and community leaders should continue prioritizing the implementation of programs and policies aimed at eradicating the gendered and racialized barriers to achieve gender equity in San Antonio. For example, progressive initiatives like San Antonio's *Pre-K 4 SA* program, which offers full-day pre-K schooling for families with four-year-old children, have promoted the early childhood education pipeline by preparing young students for enrollment in elementary school. Additionally, increased investment in educational resources related to teen pregnancy prevention coupled with widespread access to preventative family planning healthcare has helped reduce the risk of teenage pregnancy in San Antonio. Initiatives like the *SASpeakUp* youth survey demonstrate culturally responsive action by city leadership to prioritize youth voice and perspective in conversations centered in youth mental health and wellness. While an important start to assessing the magnitude and depth of the youth mental health crisis, city and community leaders should continue investing in community-centered initiatives and programs aimed at improving the mental health outcomes of girls and LGBTQ+ youth in San Antonio who are disproportionately impacted by these mental and emotional stressors.

Empowering girls and young women in their own community is essential to cultivating the unique and crucial value they bring to their families, social networks, and the broader community. Confronting systemic barriers that prevent girls and young women from ultimately realizing their full potential and life goals means investing in girls' access to tools, resources, and opportunities that are key to living full, healthy, and meaningful lives. Ensuring that girls achieve parity with boys will not only enrich their lives and the lives of their community but will promote the sustainability of an equal and just society.

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