

Student Mobility in Georgia

Establishing Patterns and Predictors

Executive Summary

Each school year, thousands of Georgia students transfer schools for reasons other than grade promotion. Student mobility not only affects the individual student but also the teacher and students in his or her classes. This report utilizes data from the new statewide longitudinal data system, [GA•AWARDS](#), to assess mobility patterns in Georgia public schools during the 2012-13 academic year.

To count as “mobile” for the purposes of this analysis, students must have entered or withdrawn from a school between October 2 and May 1. October 2 is the Georgia Department of Education’s (GaDOE) fall enrollment count date. May 1 represents a consistent date that is prior to the end of the school year in all Georgia districts. Students who withdrew and reentered the same school within seven days are not counted as mobile.

To assess mobility at the school and district level, the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) calculated a churn rate for each school and district, which represents the number of student entries and exits during the school year divided by the number of students in the school on the Georgia Department of Education’s fall count date of October 2. In 2012-13, the average school churn rate was 23.0%, but the median rate was 16.9%. The rates ranged from 1.1% (Newton County Theme School at Ficquett) to 756.3% (DeKalb Alternative School). At the district level, the average churn rate was 17.5%, and the median rate was 14.8%.

Controlling for the region of the state, the presence of a military base, and demographic characteristics of the districts, regression analysis on school churn rates finds:

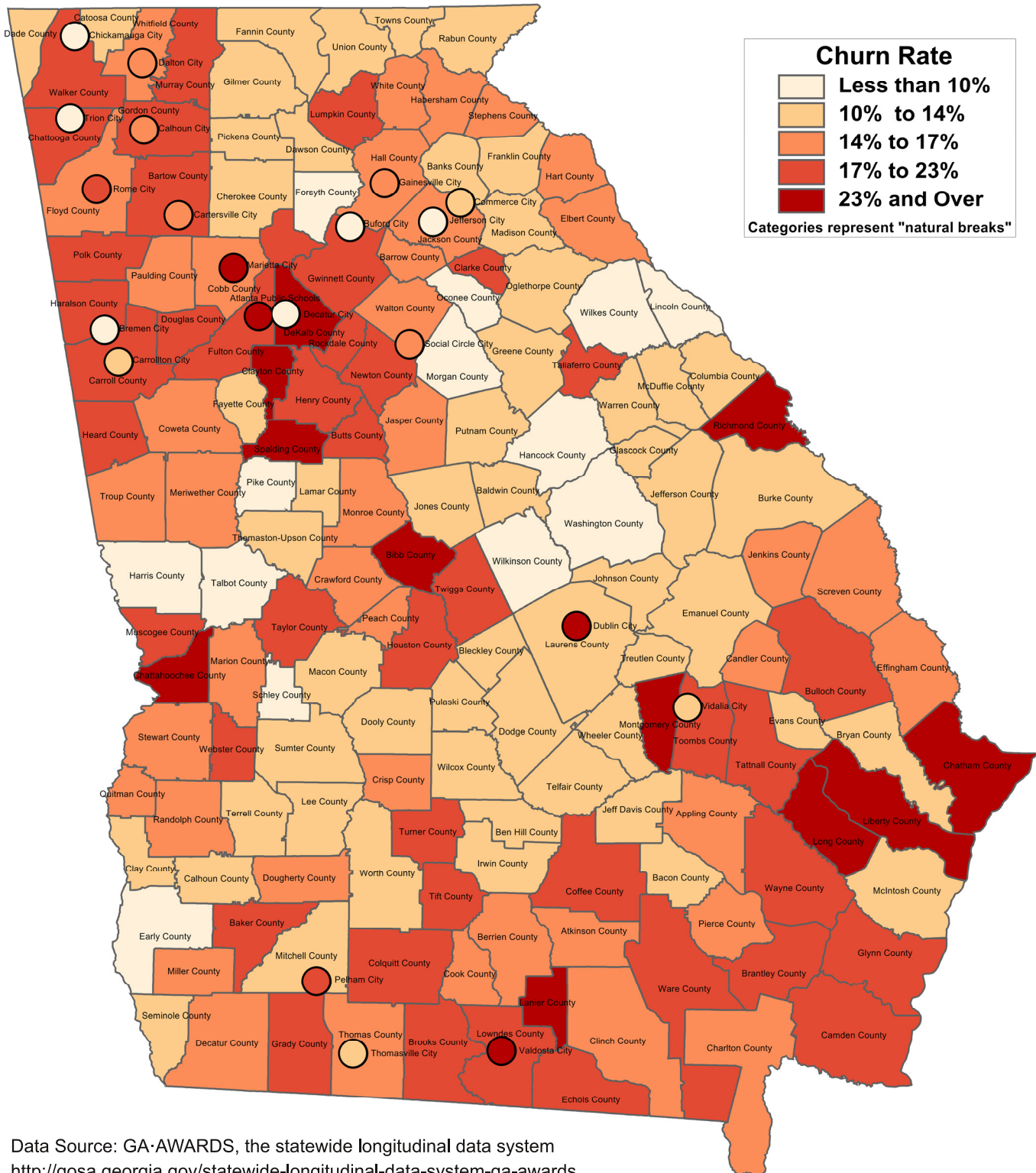
- As the percentage of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Free/Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) students increased, a school’s churn rate also increased.
- As the percentage of gifted students and the percentage of English Language Learner (ELL) students increased, the school’s churn rate decreased.
- The percentage of minority students, the region of the state, and the presence of military bases did not have a statistically significant relationship with school churn rates when holding constant other factors.

At the student level, of the 1.7 million public school students in the 2012-13 academic year, approximately 176,000 students, or 10.3%, were mobile during the school year. Among mobile students, 59.0% transferred to another public school within Georgia. Regression analysis on the likelihood an individual student was mobile finds:

- Students who qualified for FRL were 3.9% more likely to be mobile than non-FRL students.
- Differences in student mobility by race/ethnicity were minimal once other factors, such as FRL status, were held constant.
- SWD were 1.3% more likely to be mobile than non-SWD.
- Gifted students were 11.3% less likely to be mobile than non-gifted students.

While this study provides information on patterns in student mobility, many questions remain regarding the effects of student mobility. In particular, future studies should examine the relationship between student mobility and academic achievement and whether mobile students are moving to better, worse, or comparable schools.

2012-13 District Churn Rates



The churn rate is defined as the number of students who enter or exit a school between 10/2/2012 and 5/1/2013 and do not reenter the same school within 7 days, divided by the number of students in the district on 10/2/2012.



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