

# Licensing Barriers for Foreign Trained Behavioral Health Professionals

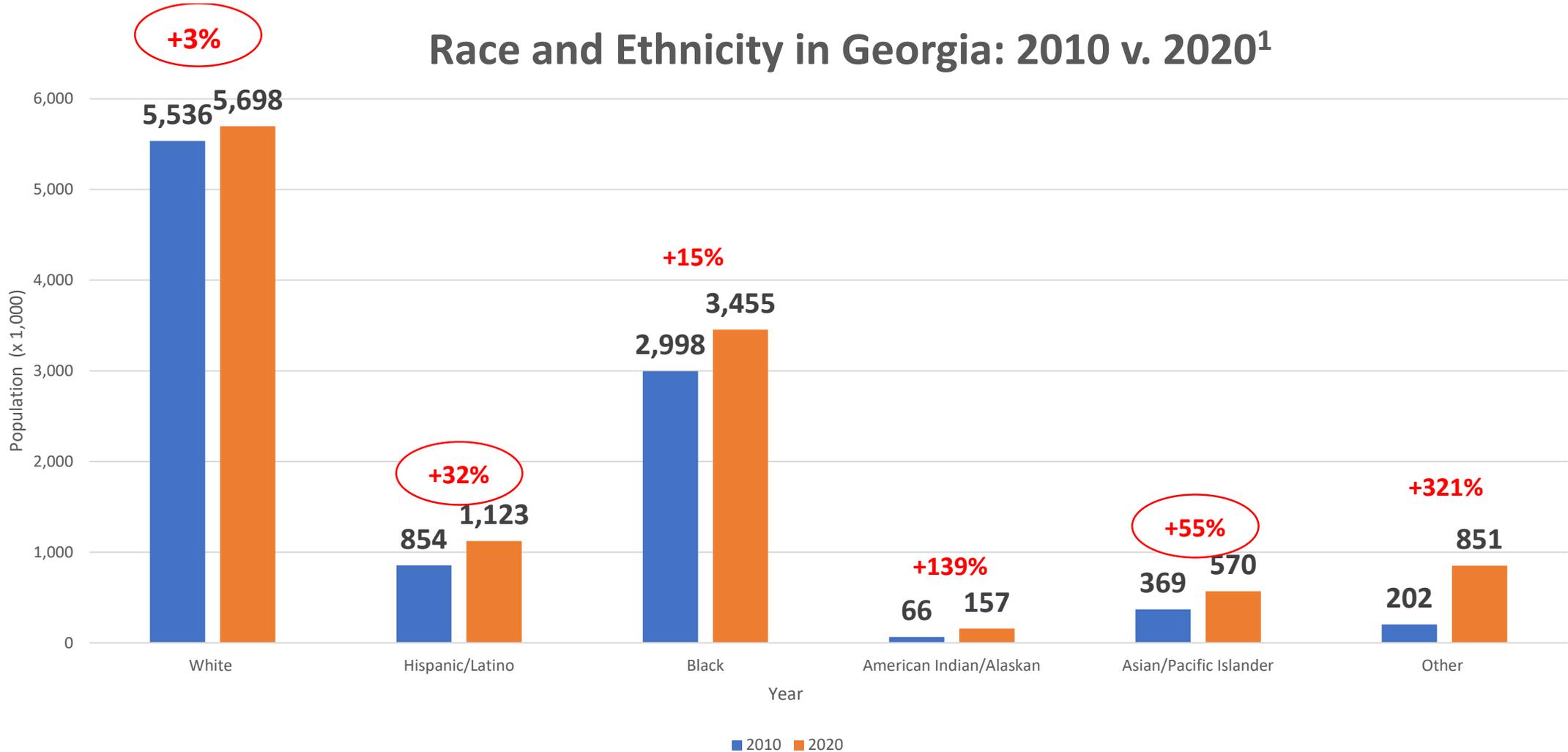
Voices for Georgia's Children  
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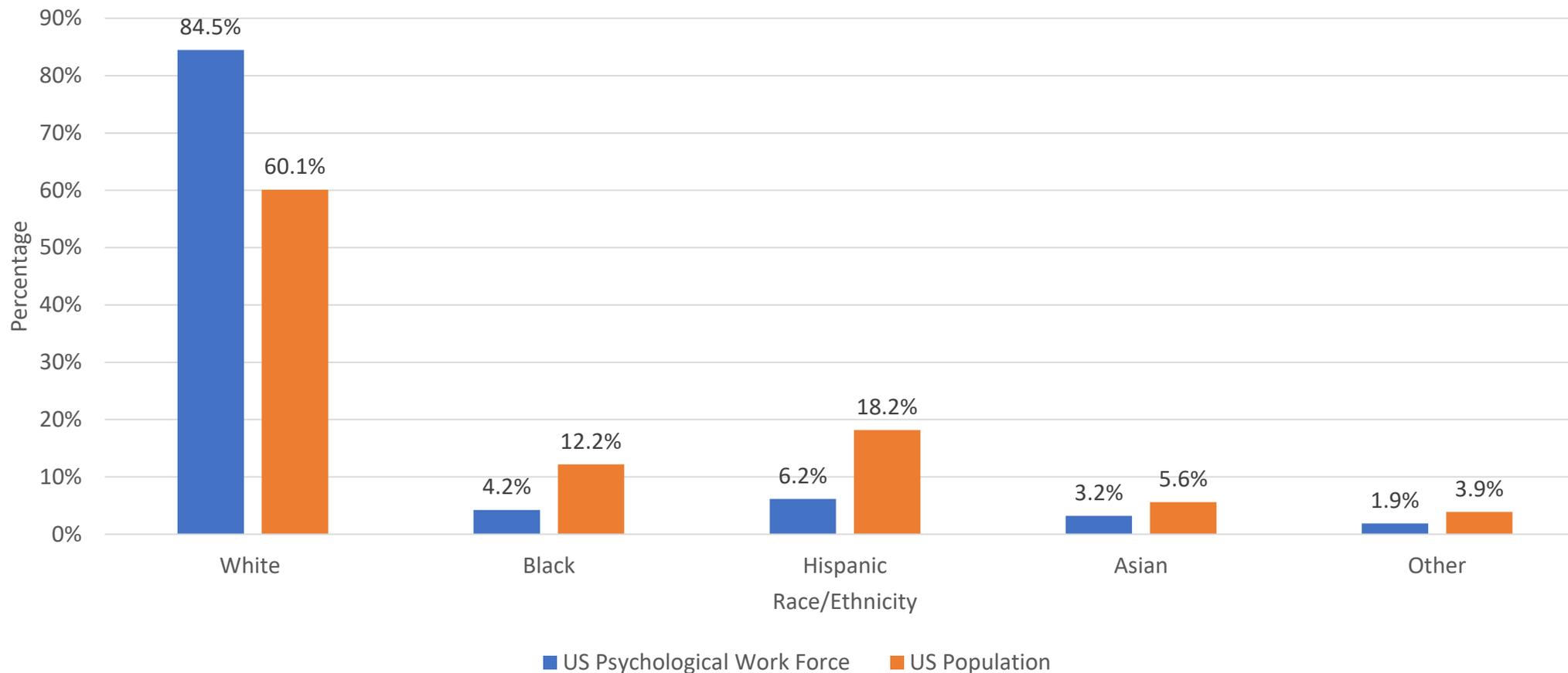
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Over the last 10 years, Georgia's Hispanic and Asian populations have grown by 32% and 55%, respectively, while the White population has grown by only 3%.



**National data show an over-representation of White practitioners in the psychological workforce, and an under-representation of Black, Hispanic, and Asian practitioners.**

**U.S. Psychological Workforce v. U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity: 2020<sup>2</sup>**



**Georgia's healthcare workforce has been shrinking over the last decade, and COVID-19 has exacerbated burnout in many healthcare professions, including behavioral health.**

## Healthcare Shortages

- Between 2009 and 2018, Georgia's Registered Nursing workforce grew by 3%, while population grew by 10%.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 2017 – 2020, there was an overall downward trend in the prevalence of general and specialty practitioners in Georgia.<sup>4</sup>
- Prior to COVID-19, behavioral health providers were already reporting signs of burnout at rates of up to 61%.<sup>5</sup>
- COVID-19 exacerbated exhaustion and burnout among the physical and behavioral healthcare workforce.<sup>6</sup>

**Georgia's Hispanic communities saw an increased need for behavior healthcare during the pandemic, especially for providers who are culturally and linguistically competent to serve them.**

## State of Behavioral Health for Hispanic Communities

- The number of Hispanic youth in Georgia who feel sad or hopeless is much higher than White or Black youth.<sup>7</sup>
- As documented by Ser Familia, the Hispanic community, during the COVID-19 Pandemic:
  - Depression and anxiety has increased.
  - The number of domestic violence victims (most time incidents are witnessed by a child) has doubled.
  - Cases of child sexual and physical abuse has risen by 231% compared to pre-pandemic levels.<sup>8</sup>
- People who speak a second language many times revert to the language in which they learned their feelings in a moment of trauma or distress



**Georgia's Hispanic population is rapidly increasing while barriers to licensure prevent the expansion of an already limited Hispanic behavioral health workforce.**

# Hispanic Behavioral Healthcare Workforce

- The Hispanic population in metro Atlanta, which is now over around 700,000 people, is expected to increase by 153% as per the Atlanta Regional Commission by 2040.<sup>9</sup>
- The number of licensed clinicians (Social Workers, Counselors and Psychologists) in Georgia who are culturally and linguistically proficient to serve the Hispanic community is estimated to be between 100 and 125 (1.1 clinician per 1,000,000 residents).<sup>10</sup>
- Georgia requires more supervised hours than any other state in southeast for Professional Counseling Licensure.
- Supervision requirements can be a barrier to licensure as:
  - Graduates coming from minority communities have greater difficulty completing their licensing, often due to less financial support from their families.
  - Graduates are not paid full salary (since they are not licensed) while also incurring the expense of their supervision, making it impossible for them to complete the process.



# Licensing Rules and Regulations in Georgia<sup>11</sup>

Board	Licensing Pathway for Foreign-Trained Professionals	Accreditation for Foreign Education	Accreditation for Foreign Post-Grad. Experience	Temporary Licensure for Foreign-Trained Professionals
Counseling/Social Work/Marriage and Family Therapists	No	No	No	No
Nursing (Registered Nurses, APRN, PMHRN-BC)	Yes	Yes*	Yes (RN only)**	N/A
Psychology	No	No***	No****	Yes (if Endorsement Applicant)*****
Physician	No	Yes	No	Yes (at discretion of Executive Director)

\* Additional education (Masters/Doctorate) required for advanced nursing licenses must be accredited by one of three agencies that only accredit programs in 6 foreign countries.

\*\* Additional supervision required for advanced nursing licenses and Psychiatric Mental-Health Registered Nurse certifications.

\*\*\* If education is not accredited by APA or CPA, then it is at the Board's discretion to approve.

\*\*\*\* Unless APA or CPA accredited (Puerto Rico is only foreign country, besides Canada, that is accredited by these agencies).

\*\*\*\*\* Licensing by Endorsement is only available to applicants licensed in other states.

Several other states have used policy in the form of Executive Orders, Legislation and Board Rule revision to ease licensing barriers for foreign-trained healthcare professionals.

## State Examples

- Temporary licensure while working to complete full licensure (CO, MA, MO)
- Defined pathways for foreign-trained healthcare professionals (VT, MN, UT)
- Task Force to explore solutions for all healthcare professions (MN, MA, VT)

The following recommendations could help Georgia reduce licensing barriers for foreign-trained health professionals:

## Recommendations



Create a **subcommittee of the Healthcare Workforce Commission** to identify ways to integrate foreign-trained health professionals into Georgia's healthcare workforce.



Create a specific **licensure pathway** for foreign trained health professionals who are licensed in other countries, including the use of credential evaluation services to accredit foreign education and supervised experience.



Allow issuance of **temporary licenses** while foreign trained health professionals work on meeting full licensure requirements.

Additionally, the following recommendations could help Georgia reduce licensing barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse, US-trained professionals:

## Recommendations (Ser Familia)

Create funding opportunities to allow nonprofits to:

- Provide supervised hours at no cost to culturally and linguistically diverse graduates working towards licensing.
- Assist with costs associated with relocation and licensure for culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare workers.



# Contact Us!

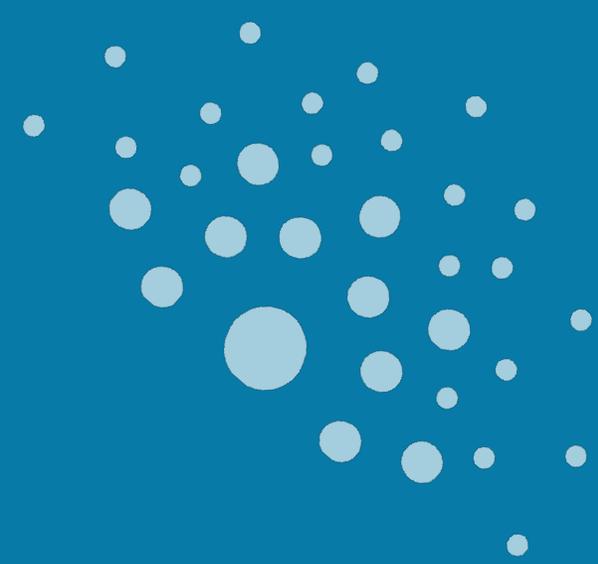
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7. 2019 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)
8. As documented by Ser Familia per victim abuse report for CJCC.
9. Atlanta Regional Commission
10. As documented by Ser Familia
11. All information contained on this slide came from the Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia. [www.rules.sos.ga.gov](http://www.rules.sos.ga.gov)