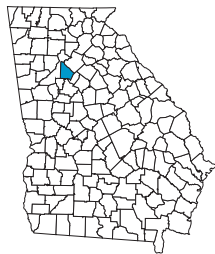


PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK AMID A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

DEKALB COUNTY, GA.



DEMOGRAPHICS:
large urban county;
majority-Black population



UNEMPLOYMENT:
largely mirrored national trends;
nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels



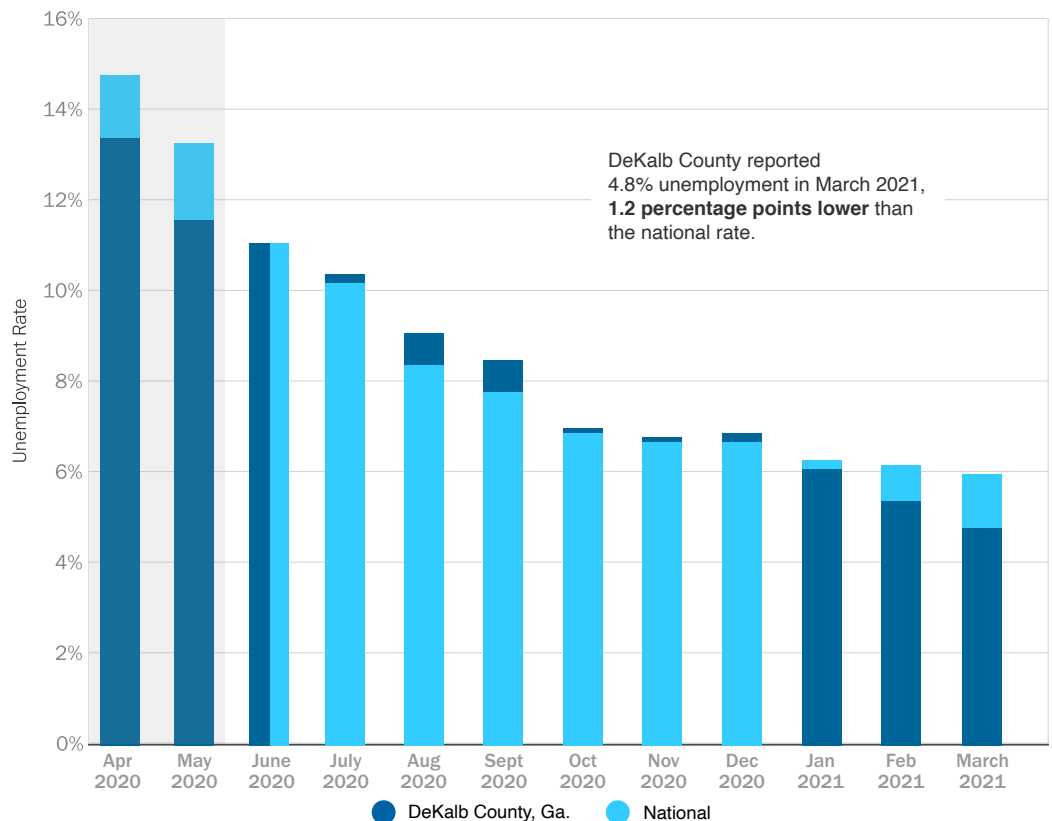
WORKFORCE INITIATIVES:
bridge the digital divide;
public and private employer partnerships;
workforce training programs



PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment in DeKalb County largely follows national trends during the pandemic

Despite the pandemic's disproportional impact on communities of color, unemployment in DeKalb County largely remained on par with national trends. After experiencing a peak in April 2020 of 13.4%, unemployment in DeKalb County trended downwards. As of March 2021, unemployment in DeKalb County has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels - roughly .7 percentage points higher than 12 months prior.



NACo Analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS): Non-seasonally Adjusted, 2021; NACo Analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Current Population Survey: Labor Force Statistics, 2021.

WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

- DeKalb County is committed to bridging the digital divide, particularly for the county's most vulnerable residents.
- DeKalb County is increasingly establishing collaborative partnerships with public and private employers and other agencies.
- By understanding the needs of local industries, the county can ensure workforce training vendors are providing skills which are relevant for county residents in the new labor market through their training programs.
- Addressing workforce priorities benefit both employers and the county, to have a pool of workers with the appropriate skillsets to meet their needs, and workers, who become equipped with sought-after skills for the increased competition in a new local job market.

SERVICE COORDINATION AND DELIVERY

In 2017, CEO Michael L. Thurmond envisioned a comprehensive summer youth training strategy to allow young people the opportunity to “learn and earn” in the DeKalb Works Summer Youth Internship Program. With the support of the Board of Commissioners and with combined use of federal and county funds, this innovative strategy benefited over 1,100 youth through 2019. Youth in DeKalb County were afforded the opportunity to work with a diverse group of private and public employers. By working during the summer, the participants developed employment and job readiness skills which provided them the advantage of becoming more competitive in the labor market.

The three-year success of the DeKalb Works Summer Youth Internship Program provided a foundation for the county's 2020 planning, but an immediate pivot in strategy was required in response to the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. As a result, CEO Thurmond directed the development of a virtual learning strategy, the DeKalb Virtual Career Academy (DVCA). The strategy provided a safe paid summer training/employment opportunity and much needed financial resources for local youth and families during the devastating health and economic pandemic.

The primary focus of DVCA is to close achievement gaps; offer counseling and support to youth and their parents; and provide a positive alternative during the summer months for those who are often idle and more likely to engage in non-constructive activities. The 2020 Academy afforded 850 participants the opportunity to “Learn while they Earn.” The Academy serves a

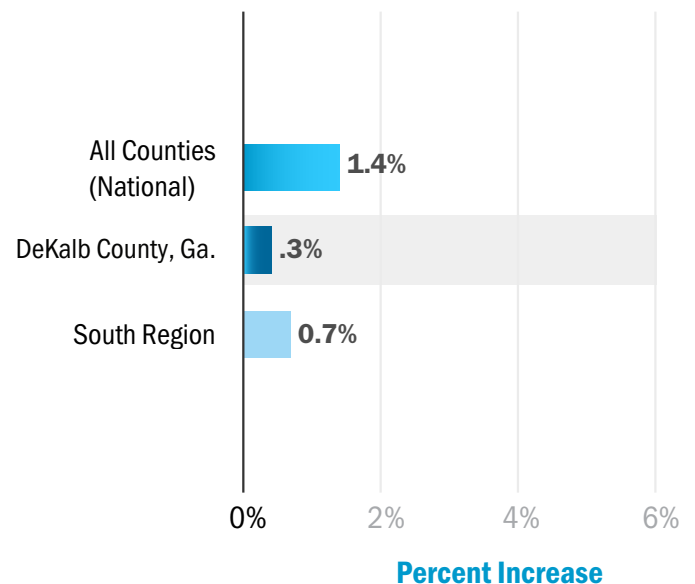
“THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS STIFLED AMERICA'S ECONOMY...THE INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND GEORGIA PIEDMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE INSPIRED US TO REIMAGINE OUR SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM AS A VIRTUAL CAREER ACADEMY. BY WORKING TOGETHER, WE HAVE CREATED MUCH-NEEDED EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR YOUTH.”

-DeKalb County CEO, Michael L. Thurmond

diverse group of youth between the ages of 14-24, providing an opportunity to access enhanced guidance, support and direction in a structured virtual learning environment. Instructors utilize innovative online teaching methodologies and cultivate character through life skills training.

COUNTIES WORK TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN BUSINESSES

The number of business establishments per capita is on par with national and regional growth between 2011 and 2018






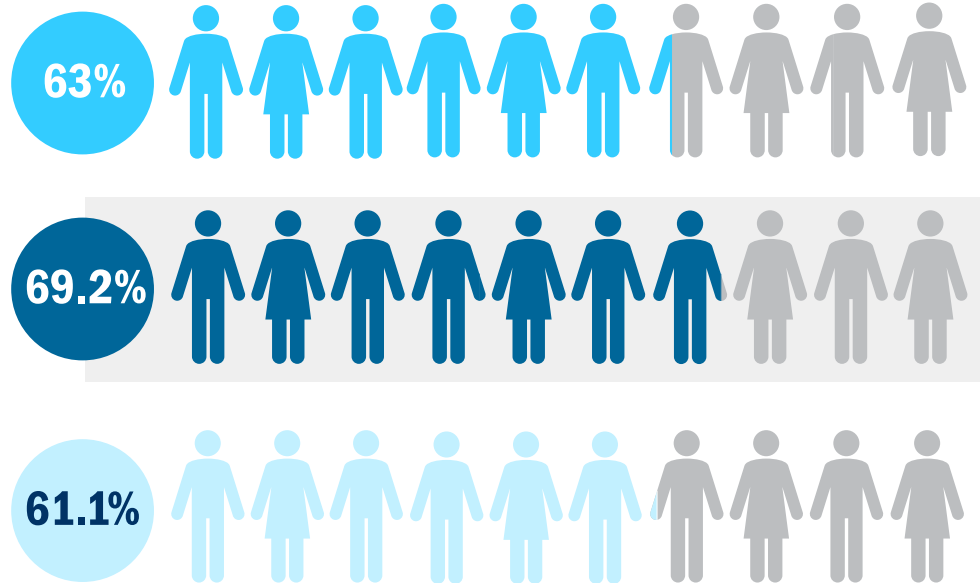
NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau – Business Dynamics Statistics: Establishment Size, 2018; NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau – Population Estimates Program: Population and Housing Units Estimates, 2019.

LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION SIGNALS CONFIDENCE

Labor force participation rate, a measure of working-aged individuals actively working or seeking work, exceeds national and regional trends in 2019

PERCENT ACTIVE WORKERS

-  All Counties (National)
-  DeKalb County, Ga.
-  South Region



NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey: Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over, 2019.

Significantly, the strategy offers a credentialing component, targeted instruction to youth pursuing their GED and an inspiring virtual motivational series to engage, educate and inspire participating youth throughout their summer learning experience. To expand workforce support, the county is working diligently to help many individuals and families dealing with record job loss, food insecurity and threats to their physical and economic health, and as a result, county leadership directed the development of the DeKalb Career Pathway Initiative (DCPI). The Pathway Initiative offers financial

assistance that covers living expenses for students while in the training and retraining programs to transition to occupations in growing industries in the county and region.

DCPI incentivizes dislocated workers who are pursuing retraining or enhanced skills training to prepare for future employment opportunities as a result of the shift in employment industries in the county, state and nation, a residual impact of the pandemic. At the time of this study, **a total of 522 DeKalb County residents have been served through this initiative.**

NACo would like to thank DeKalb County for sharing information on the county's efforts.

This case study was created with support from Walmart as part of the Future of Work, a project that aims to collect data and provide commentary on the new workforce landscape, including the impact of COVID-19 on workplace and workforce policies and practices and key lessons learned that counties should know about rebuilding the workforce in their community in recovery from pandemic and/or recession.

Contact research@naco.org for more information.

¹ Sources: Employment growth (2011-2018) and wage growth (2011-2018) come from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; median household income and share of population ages 25-34 with a Bachelor's degree come from the American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2017; changes in the unemployment rate from 2019 to 2020 come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, February 2021; and ratio of population of 65, ratio of population that is Black, and ratio of population that is Hispanic/Latinx U.S. American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2019.

