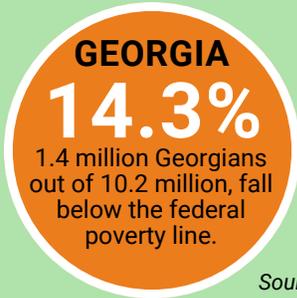
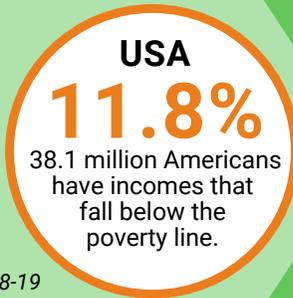


# Energy Equity in Georgia

YOUR ENVIRONMENT | YOUR HOME | YOUR HEALTH



COMPARED TO



Source data: Talk Poverty, 2018-19

## What is Energy Efficiency?

Energy efficiency means using less energy to perform the same function. It can refer to the character of individual appliances as well as an entire home. For example, an LED light bulb uses less energy to provide the same amount of light as a traditional incandescent light bulb.

## Energy Efficiency Benefits



### Lower Utility Bills

Families can reduce their power costs and lower utility bills by using less energy over time through efficiency measures.



### More Local Jobs

There are more than 3,900 solar jobs in Georgia at more than 230 companies.



### Greater Financial Stability

Energy efficiency improvements can reduce struggling families' utility bills and help them avoid risky, predatory loans.



### Improved Individual Health

Energy efficiency can reduce the need to cut back on necessary heating and cooling to improve the health of families.



### Improved Community Health

Energy efficient homes and access to community solar can reduce the reliance on dirty energy.



### Backup Power During Emergencies

Solar-powered backup generators can help families manage power outages associated with natural disasters.

## What is Energy Equity?

Energy equity refers to the fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of the ways we produce and consume energy. In practice, this means reducing mounting energy costs to ensure that families are able to meet their basic needs, making homes and communities healthier for all by increasing access to energy efficiency and clean energy, and ensuring that decision-making around energy policy is more reflective of the needs of all communities.

## Why is Energy Equity Important?

- Increases in health problems lead to more emergency room visits and more medical bills, a significant financial burden for already cash-strapped families.
- High energy bills exacerbate the financial instability of struggling families, making housing unaffordable.
- Most electric utilities have energy efficiency and solar programs that provide financial incentives and rebates for customers looking to participate in such programs. However, few electric utilities provide robust energy efficiency and solar incentives specifically targeted to low and moderate-income customers.



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## ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND YOUR HEALTH

Data shows that extreme financial instability can often trigger **anxiety** and **depression** among low-income families. As a result of extreme financial instability, the threat of utility disconnections leaves parents fearing for removal of their children by Child Protective Services, due to utility service non-payment. In attempt to save money, cutting back on necessary heating and cooling further worsens existing respiratory conditions like asthma, which can lead to more emergency room visits. All of which, produces **chronic stress**, putting low-income families at a greater risk of physical illness.

Energy efficiency can benefit individual health by easing financial instability and improving the overall living conditions of the home. Studies also show that due to the buildup of pollutants, like mold and carbon dioxide, the lack of proper ventilation in energy inefficient homes result in poor indoor air quality, which adversely impacts respiratory health and can trigger **asthma attacks**. Meanwhile, families living in energy-efficient homes show lower incidences of asthma symptoms, **allergic reactions**, and **respiratory illnesses**. Living in an energy efficient home, low-income families have proven to better manage their energy needs and, as a result, experience lower incidences of anxiety and depression related to financial stress.



## A POVERTY CRISIS IN GEORGIA

Georgia ranks near the top for the following:

- ⚡ Number of people without health insurance,
- ⚡ Number of people in poverty,
- ⚡ Lack of affordable housing,
- ⚡ High energy burden, and
- ⚡ Unemployment



## ENERGY EQUITY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

Low income communities disproportionately tend to be located near polluting power generation facilities like coal plants. In particular, African-American families are more likely to live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant. This can have a significant impact on overall community health. For example, coal power plants produce harmful particulate matter that can cause or worsen respiratory problems.

## What Can You Do Now to Reduce Your Energy Bills?

While we need more robust programs to address the energy needs of Georgians, programs do exist to help you better manage your utility bills. If you are unable to afford your utility bill, visit [www.georgiawatch.org](http://www.georgiawatch.org) for more resources and assistance. If your utility bills are currently manageable, but you would like to lower them, contact your utility or electric municipal cooperative to learn how you can get a free energy audit to determine your energy efficiency and weatherization needs.



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