

2022 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

for Beaufort &
Jasper Counties



United Way of the Lowcountry



Prepared by



CRG

May, 2022

Introduction

The following study is a comprehensive analysis of assets and needs in Beaufort and Jasper Counties, South Carolina. The data captured here include quantitative wellbeing data across a wide spectrum of recognized indicators, aggregated and disaggregated variously, as well as qualitative data taken from key informant interviews and local focus groups. Residents, leaders, service providers, consumers, and representatives of special populations provided input. Their voices are captured here as they talk about living in their communities – the good things and the challenges.

The data, quantitative and qualitative taken together, can promote greater awareness and understanding of the depth and breadth of local wellbeing. The findings are intended to spark important conversations and to inform the work of United Way of the Lowcountry and its partners as they design and support programs and policies that will improve community conditions and people's lives.

Any questions may be addressed to the author of this study.

Special thanks are extended to United Way of the Lowcountry for commissioning this study and for their support of this work.

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Part I: Objective Wellbeing Data

The following quantitative data describe the primary wellbeing indicators for Beaufort and Jasper Counties. In so far as possible, county-level data are disaggregated by White and Black race and Hispanic ethnicity, and data are also provided for the four primary municipalities within the county – Beaufort (city), Bluffton (town), Hardeeville (city), and Hilton Head Island (town).

The primary factors that influence wellbeing have been included insofar as data exist or can be generated for them. Data are collected from recognized, valid, and reliable sources such as the U.S. Census, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, S.C. and U.S. Departments of Education, and many more. General information about each indicator and how Beaufort and Jasper Counties fare is provided. It is clearly insufficient to provide a few data points when describing indicators of wellbeing; therefore, multiple measures are reported, and context is provided through longitudinal (trend) measures and state-level comparisons for many measures where helpful and possible.

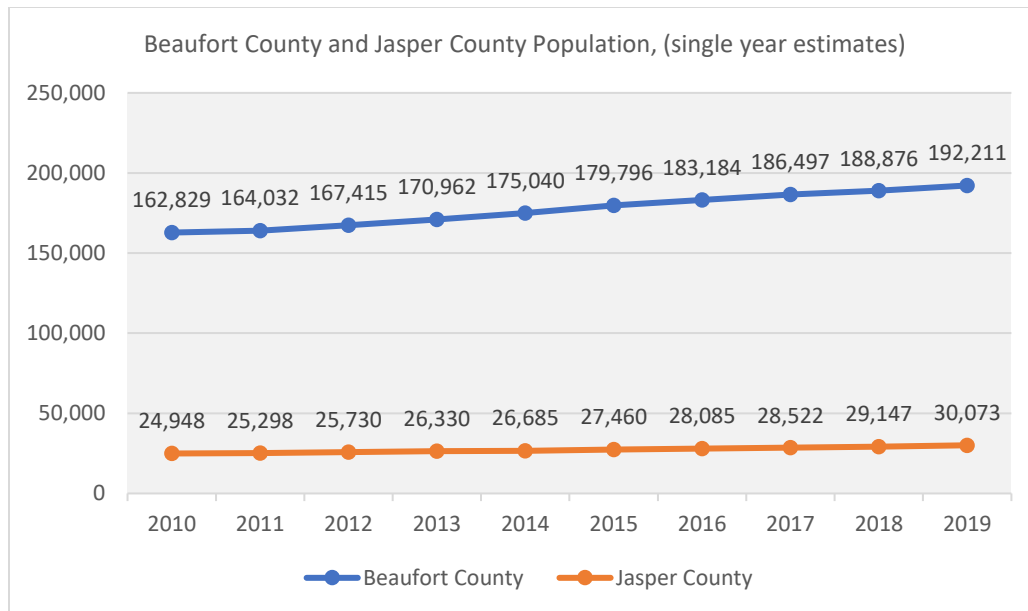
Because these counties and towns within them have relatively small populations, data are typically reported in 5-year average estimates for greater accuracy. Some data are not available below the county level. Very granular data, such as race disaggregation at the sub-county level, may require care in interpretation due to small sample sizes and resulting wider margins of error.

Unless otherwise noted, disaggregations by race / ethnicity are:

- Black alone (single race), non-Hispanic
- White alone (single race), non-Hispanic
- Hispanic of any race

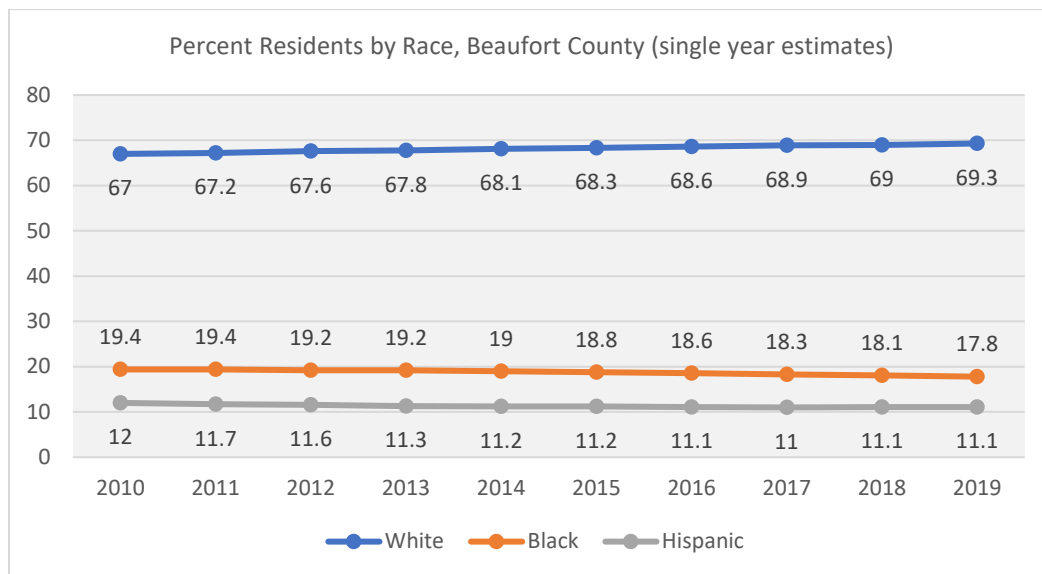
Population and Population Demographics

According to recently released U.S. Census 2020 redistricting tables, the 2020 population of Beaufort County is 187,117. The 2020 population of Jasper County is 28,791. Populations in both counties have grown year-over-year since 2010, although growth in Beaufort County has occurred at a steeper rate than in Jasper County.



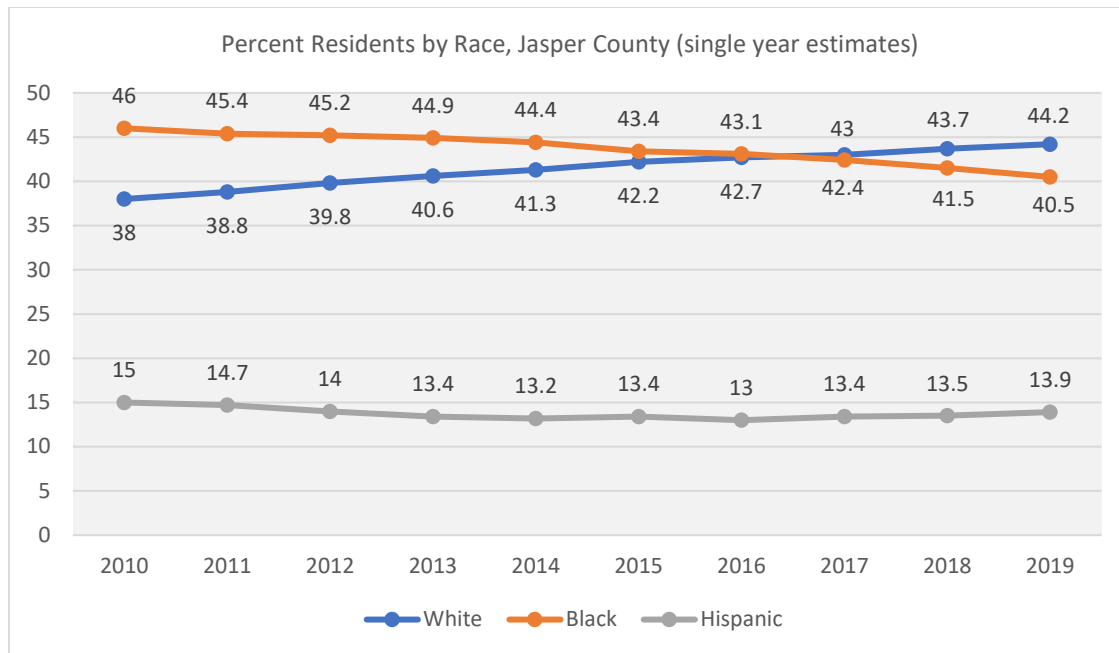
Source: Kids Count Data Center

Since 2010, Beaufort County's population has become less diverse, contrary to state averages. The proportion of White residents has increased each year, while the proportions of Black and Hispanic residents have decreased.



Source: Kids Count Data Center

In Jasper County since 2010, racial demographics have shifted, with the percentage of White residents increasing and the percentage of Black residents decreasing, contrary to state averages. As of 2017, White residents comprise a greater share of the county population than Black residents.

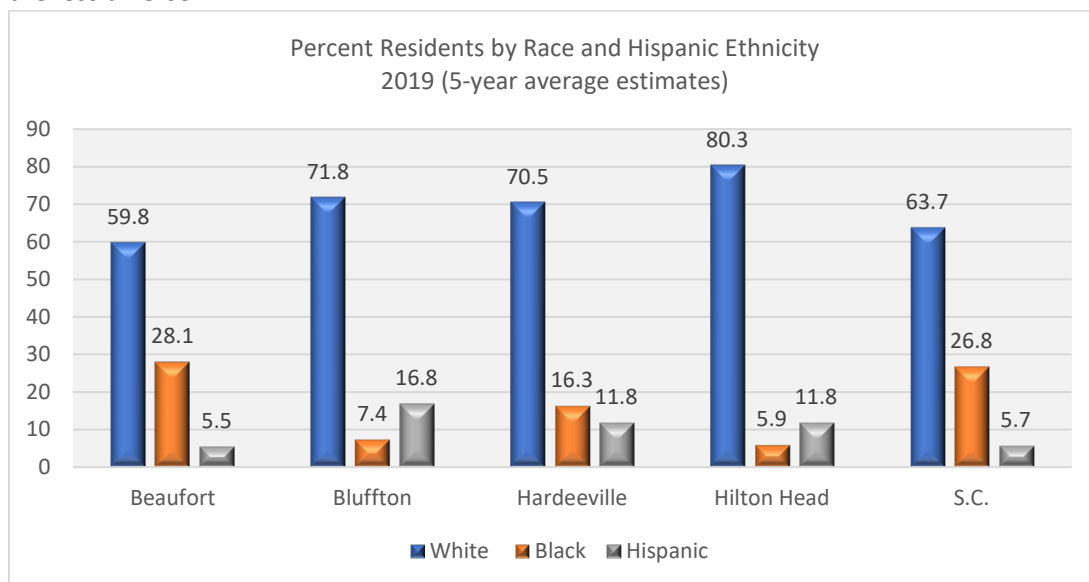


Source: Kids Count Data Center

According to 2020 Census redistricting tables, the populations of primary towns within Beaufort and Jasper Counties are:

- Beaufort (city): 13,607
- Bluffton (town): 27,716
- Hardeeville (City): 7,473
- Hilton Head (town): 37,661

Of these towns, Beaufort is more diverse, in terms of race, than the state average. The other three towns are less diverse.



Source: US Census DP05

Income

Several measures must be considered to obtain a full picture of income in any geography. Although a mean (the statistical average) is often used to describe income, a median is considered a better descriptor since it controls for outlier data (the very rich or the very poor). Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having incomes above the median, half having incomes below the median.

Across all of these measures, income is lower in Jasper County than in Beaufort County. Income in Beaufort County is consistently higher than the state average, and income in Jasper County is lower than the state average, except for White residents. Income also shows significant inequity by race across all measures, with wider equity gaps in Beaufort and Jasper Counties than the state average. Across these income measures, Blacks have less than half the income of Whites.

Select Income Measures, Beaufort and Jasper Counties and S.C. (2019 5-year average estimates)			
	Beaufort County	Jasper County	South Carolina
Per Capita Income	\$38,946	\$24,566	\$29,426
* Black	\$20,112	\$15,837	\$19,606
* White	\$47,952	\$36,189	\$35,069
* Hispanic	\$17,668	\$13,743	\$17,381
Median Household Income	\$68,377	\$45,601	\$53,199
* Black	\$34,663	\$31,566	\$35,092
* White	\$77,060	\$66,338	\$62,388
* Hispanic	\$46,549	\$35,428	\$44,166
Median Family Income	\$79,429	\$53,819	\$66,357
Mean Family Income	\$38,946	\$24,566	\$29,426
* Black	\$20,112	\$15,837	\$19,606
* White	\$47,952	\$36,189	\$35,069
* Hispanic	\$17,668	\$13,743	\$17,381

Source: US Census, S1901, S1902

Per Capita Income

Per capita income is the mean income in the last twelve months computed for every man, woman, and child in a particular group including those living in group quarters such as colleges or prisons. Per capita income in Beaufort County is 132% of the state average, and per capita income in Jasper County is 83% of the state average. Per capita income for Blacks is 42% of White per capita income in Beaufort County and 44% of White per capita income in Jasper County.

Median Household Income

Median household income includes the income in the last twelve months of the householder and all other individuals 15 years old and over in the household, whether they are related to the householder or not. Beaufort County has the highest household income of the 46 South Carolina counties (129% of the state median), while household income in Jasper County is 86% of the state median. Black households

have 45% of White household income in Beaufort County and 48% of White household income in Jasper County.

Median Family Income

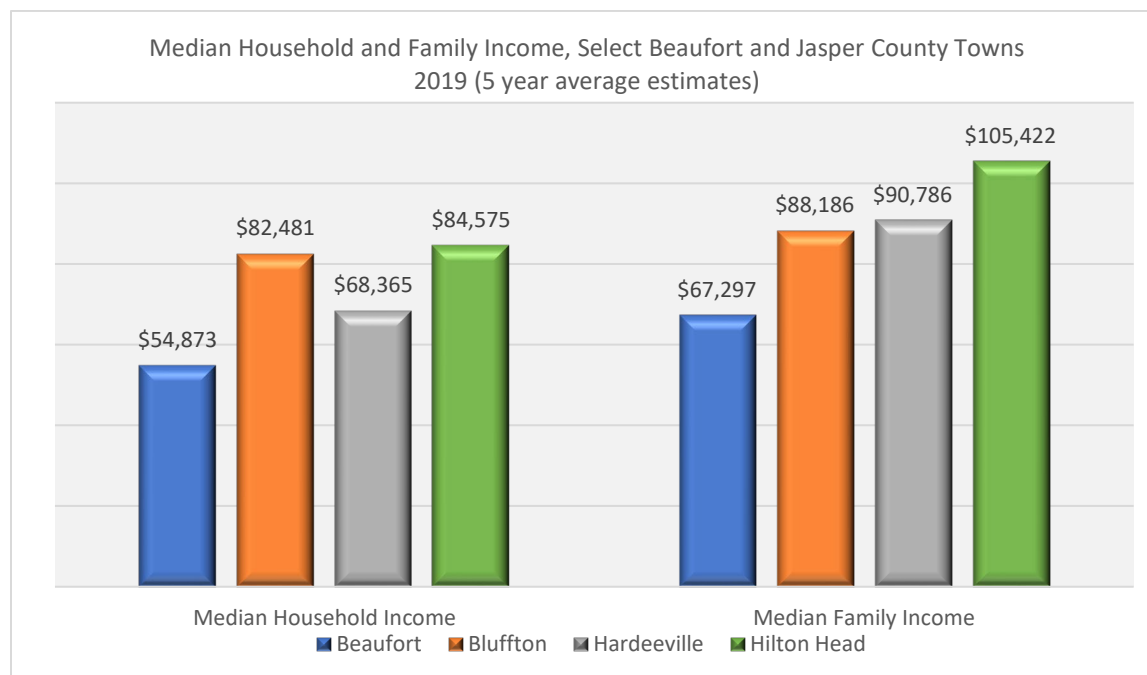
Family income includes the income in the last twelve months of two or more people 15 years old and over (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit, whether calculated on a median or a mean. Median family income in Beaufort County is 120% of the state median family income. Median family income in Jasper County is 80% of the state median family income.

Mean Family Income

Mean family income in Beaufort County is 132% of the state family income mean, and in Jasper County it is 83% of the state family income mean. The mean income for Black families in Beaufort County is 42% of the mean income for White families, and in Jasper County it is 44% of the mean income for White families.

Within-County Breakdown

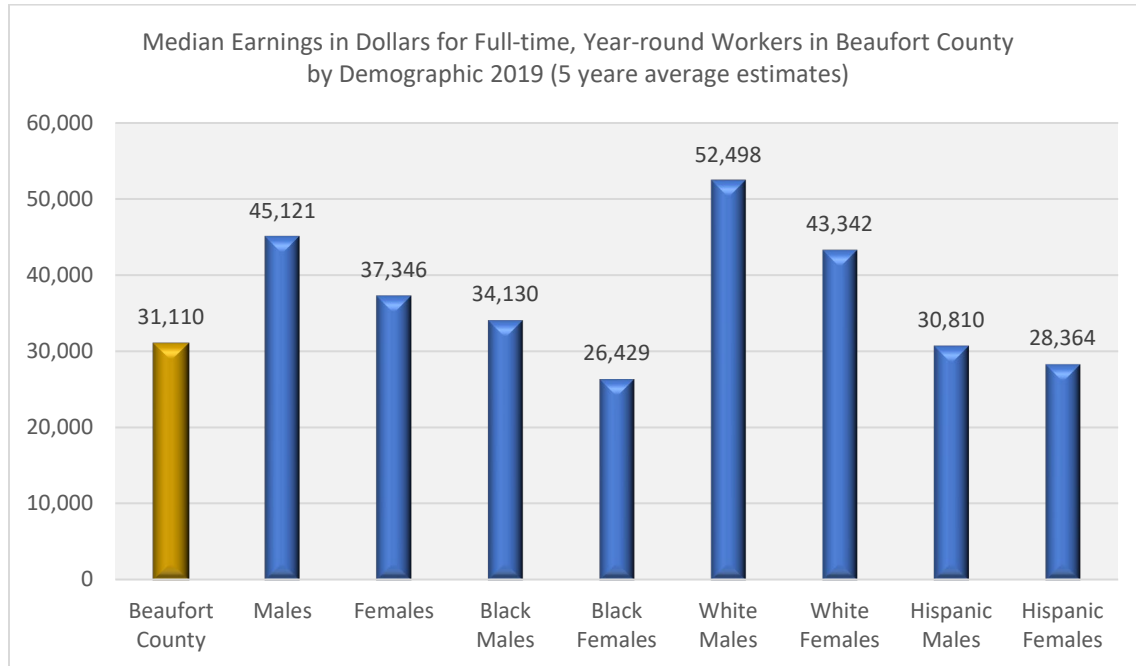
Income measures for the selected communities within Beaufort and Jasper Counties are reported in the following graph.



Source: US Census S1901

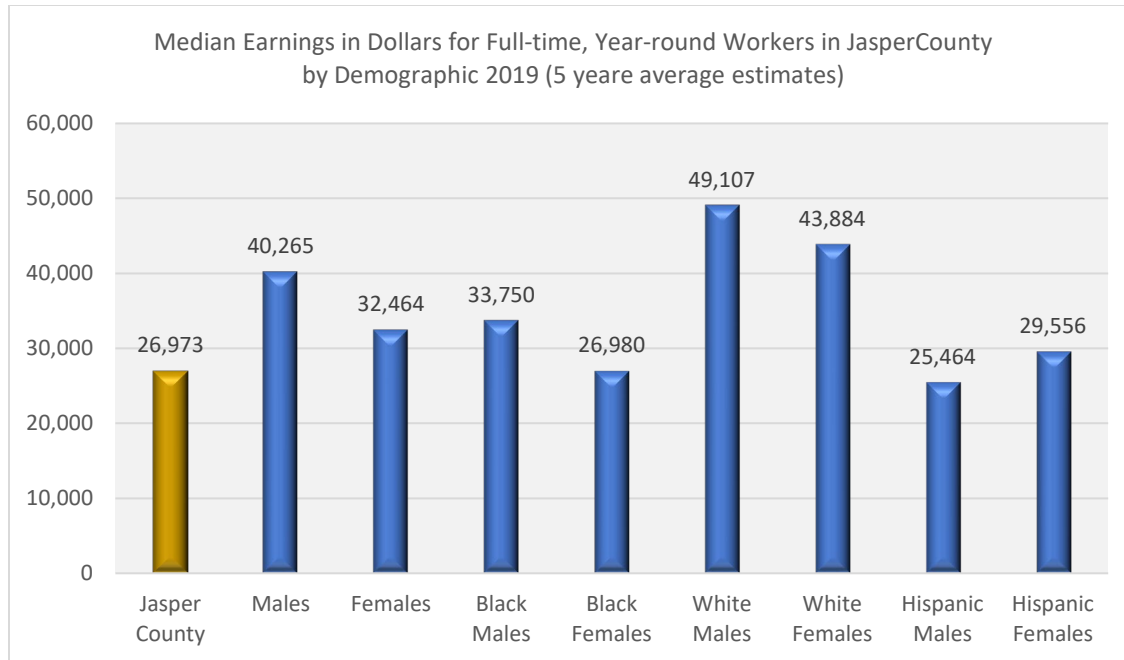
Earnings

Overall median earnings for workers age 16+ in Beaufort County are \$23 higher than the state average. When disaggregated by demographic, there is a clear disparity in earnings among full-time, year-round workers in the county. Males earn more than females, and Whites earn more than Blacks and Hispanics (whether male or female).



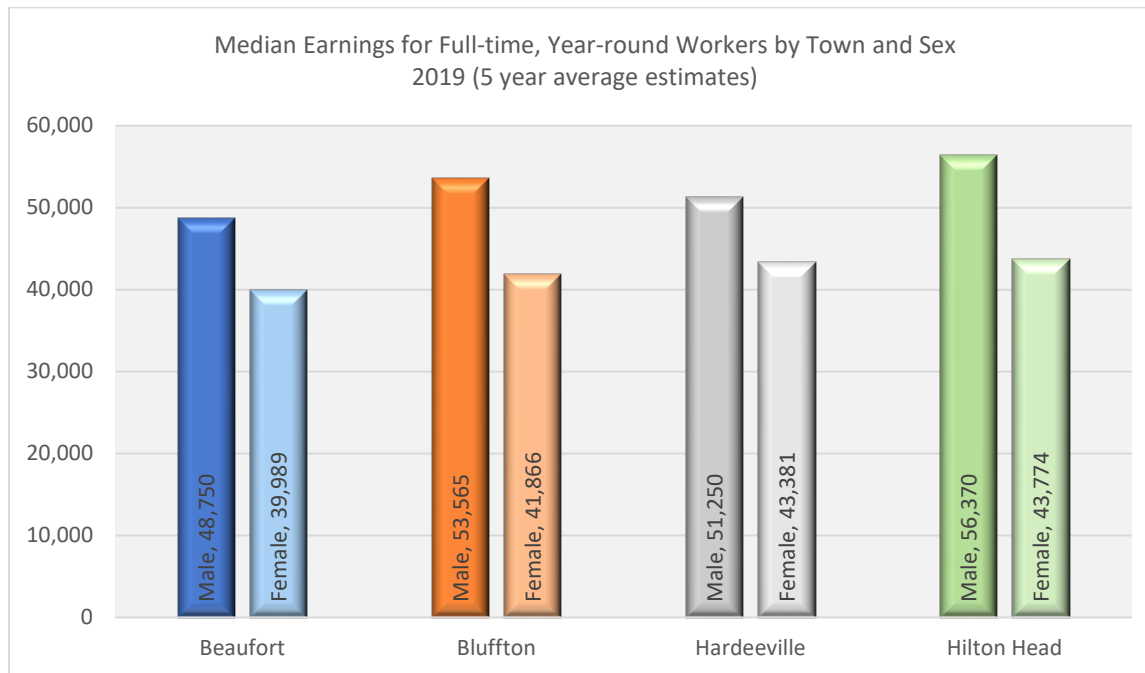
Source: U.S. Census B20017

Overall median earnings for workers age 16+ in Jasper County are approximately 14% lower than the state average. When disaggregated by demographic, there is a clear disparity in earnings among full-time, year-round workers in the county. Males earn more than females, except for Hispanics. Whites earn more than Blacks and Hispanics (whether male or female).



Source: U.S. Census B20017

In all four primary towns within Beaufort County and Jasper County, males earn more than females for full-time, year-round workers. Earnings are highest in Hilton Head and lowest in Beaufort.



Source: U.S. Census B20017

Poverty

Poverty is a multifaceted concept which may also include social, economic, and political elements. At its most basic, poverty is the scarcity or lack of material possessions or money. However, full understanding of poverty requires consideration of asset poverty, an economic and social condition that is more persistent and prevalent than income poverty. Even when income is sufficient to get by, there is frequently the inability to access and build wealth resources such as homeownership, savings, stocks, and business assets. In this case, assets are unavailable to support basic needs in cases of emergency and are unavailable to pass on to children for intergenerational wealth-building.

2022 Federal Poverty Level (GPL) Guidelines for 48 U.S. States* and the District of Columbia	
Family Size	100%
1	\$13,590
2	\$18,310
3	\$23,030
4	\$27,750
5	\$32,470
6	\$37,190
7	\$41,910
8	\$46,630
9	\$51,350
10	\$56,070
For each additional person add:	\$4,720

*Excluding Alaska and Hawaii

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

There are two versions of the federal poverty measure, the Poverty Thresholds and the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines (FPL). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issues the Poverty Guidelines for administrative purposes—for instance, to determine whether a person or family is eligible for assistance through various federal programs. Poverty levels do not differ by place (except for Alaska and Hawaii) regardless of differences in cost of living. Poverty Guidelines for 2022 are reported in the table to the left.

Depending on the program, individuals may qualify for assistance, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), public housing, food stamps, and Medicaid, at multiples of poverty such as 140%, 150% or 200%. The Orshansky Poverty Thresholds continue to form the basis for the current measure of poverty in the U.S. This was the original calculation used by Mollie Orshansky, an economist at the Social Security Administration, to establish poverty guidelines in 1955, based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) economy food plan – the least costly of four nutritionally adequate food plans designed by the USDA. While the poverty threshold is updated for inflation every year, the food plan used to determine what constitutes being deprived of a socially acceptable minimum standard of living has not been updated since 1955. As a result, the current poverty threshold only considers food purchases that were common almost 60 years ago, updating their cost using the Consumer Price Index, despite the fact that consumption patterns have changed. Further, food no longer accounts for one-third of the after-tax income for U.S. residents. Until U.S. policy makers have the political will to update the official definitions of poverty, people with incomes in the multiples of the FPL will still be poor.

Poverty rates can (and should) be examined at several levels: individual poverty, family poverty, household poverty, child poverty, and levels of poverty.

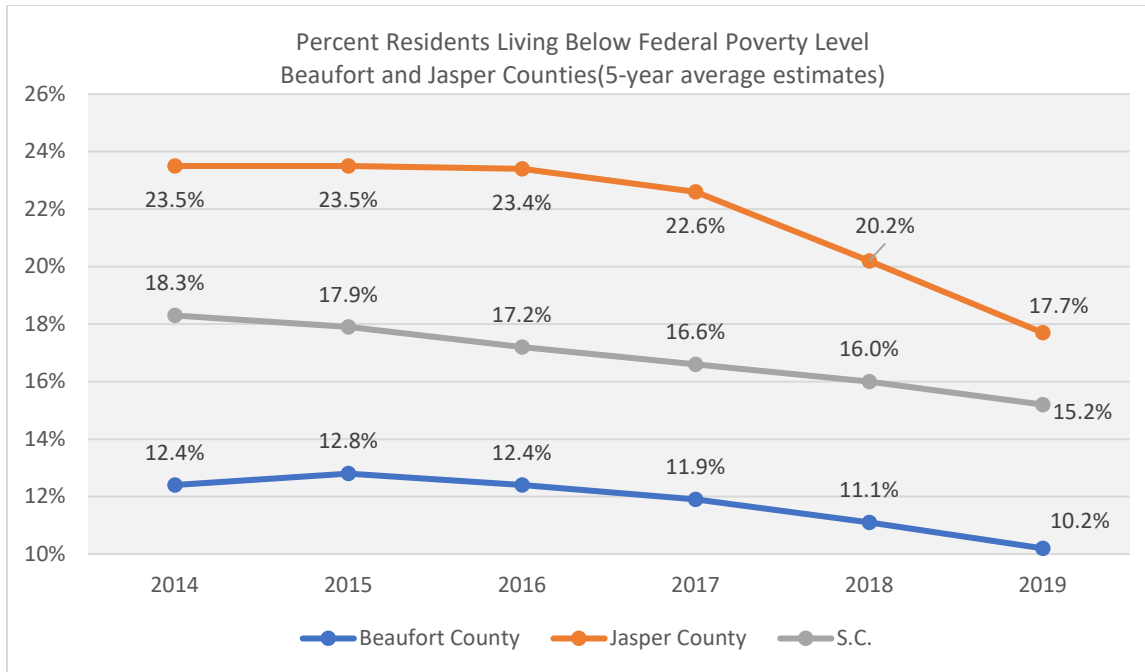
Poverty Rates

Currently, 18,508 residents of Beaufort County (10.2% of the county population) live below Federal Poverty Level (FPL), including 18.5% of the county's children. Both of these rates are below the state average. In Jasper County, 4,960 residents (17.7% of the county population) live below FPL, including 30.3% of the county's children. Both of these rates are above the state average. Further poverty demographics are reported in the following table.

Number and Percent of Residents Living Below Federal Poverty Level by Demographic Beaufort and Jasper Counties and S.C., 2019 (5 year average estimates)						
	Beaufort County		Jasper County		South Carolina	
In Poverty:	#	%	#	%	#	%
All residents	18,508	10.2	4,960	17.7	741,650	15.2
Children	6,472	18.5	1,763	30.3	240,953	22.2
Age 18-64	9,898	10.2	2,708	15.9	420,869	14.3
Age 65+	2,138	4.4	489	9.6	79,828	9.4
Less than high school	1,737	18.3	762	21.8	118,020	28.6
Bachelor's or higher	1,672	3.1	140	3.9	38,969	4.0
Worked full-time year-round	1,455	2.6	515	5.9	53,118	3.2
Did not work	7,654	12.3	1,828	20.2	314,819	21.9

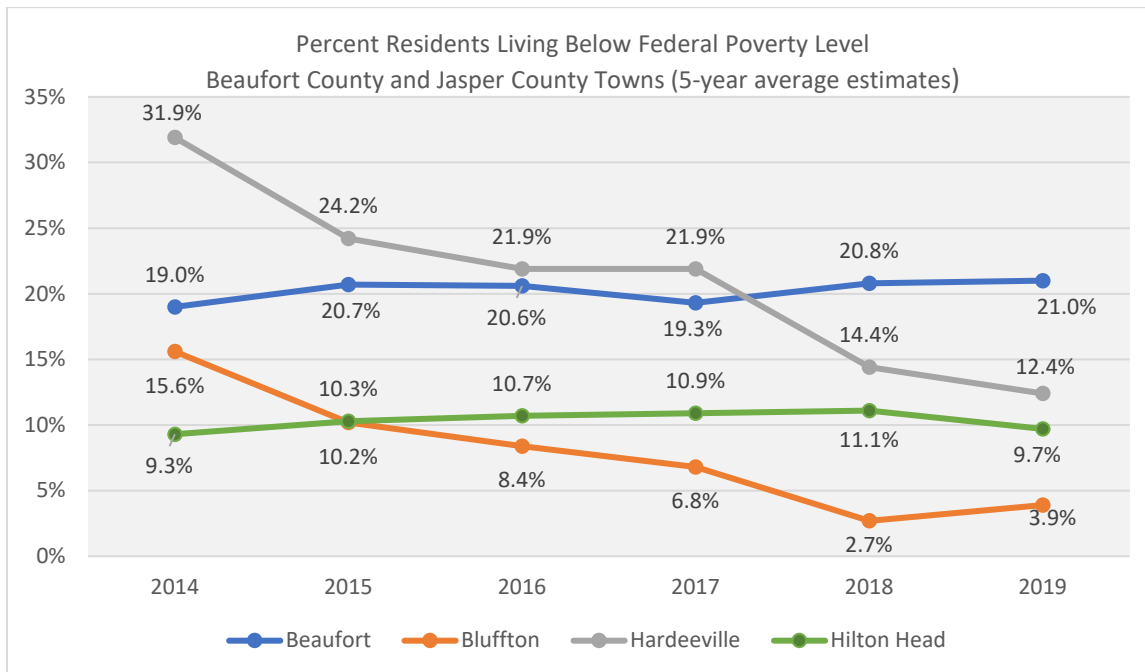
Source: US Census S1701

Historically, poverty in Beaufort County has been below the state average, and poverty in Jasper County has been above the state average. Poverty rates in recent years have declined in both counties and across the state on average.



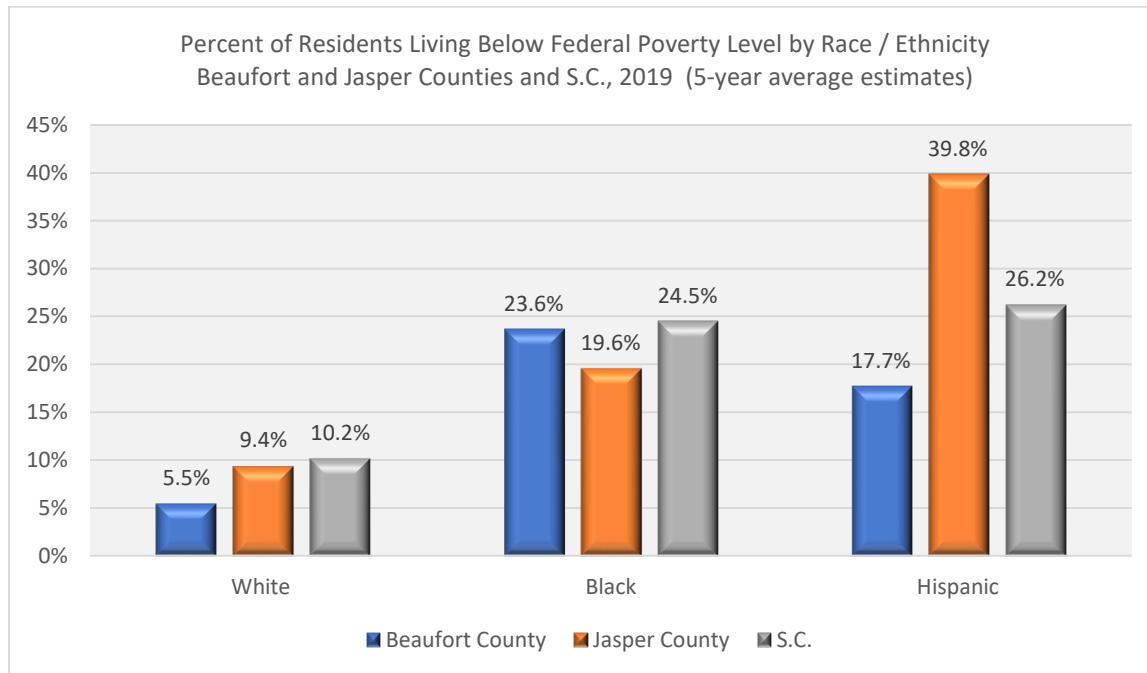
Source: U.S. Census S1701

Poverty rates are lowest in Bluffton and Hilton Head than in Hardeeville and Beaufort. Rates have been stable over the last few years in Beaufort and Hilton Head, while they have decreased substantially in Hardeeville and Bluffton.



Source: U.S. Census S1701

Race-based inequities are evident in poverty rates. Whites have significantly lower poverty rates compared to Blacks and Hispanics in Beaufort and Jasper Counties and across the state.

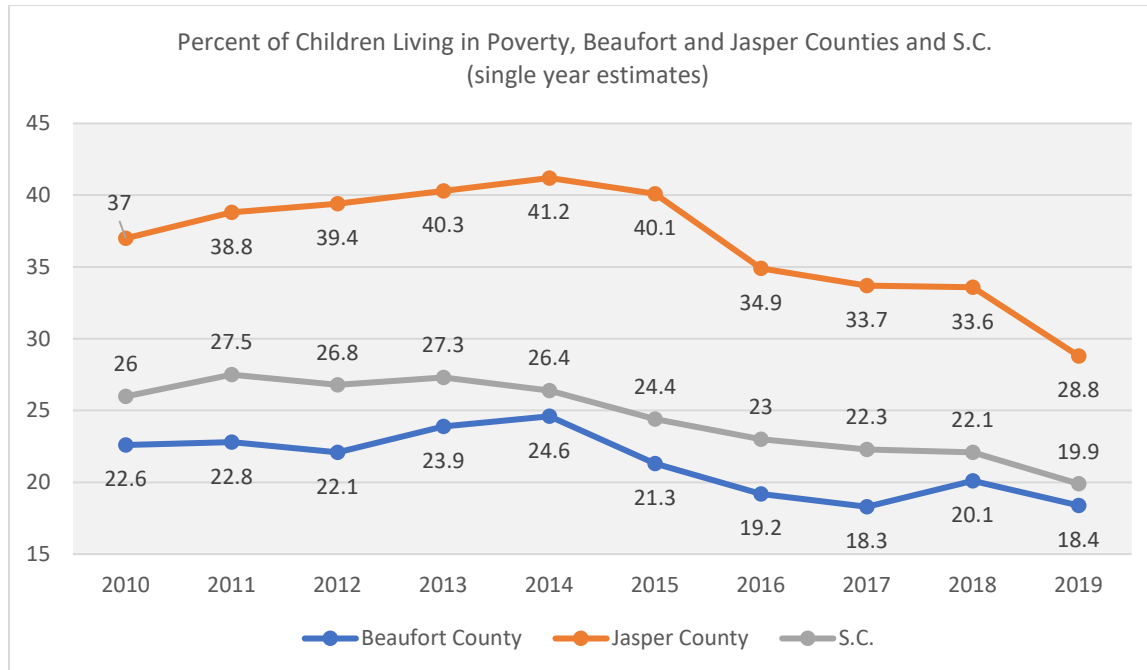


Source: U.S. Census S1701

Child Poverty and Opportunity

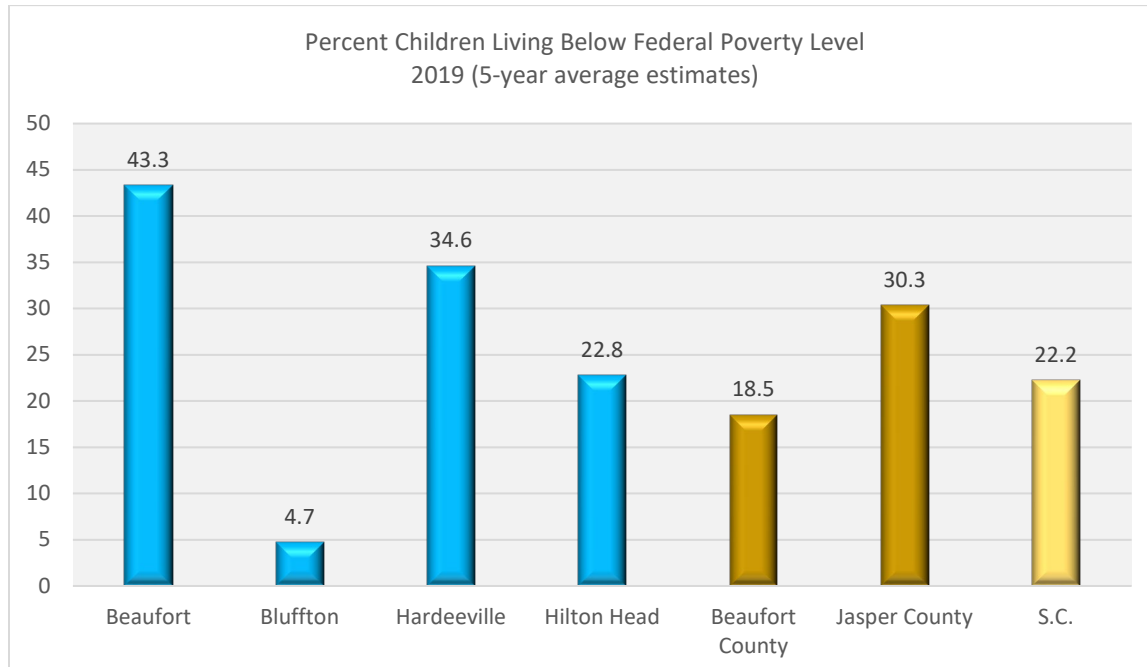
Child poverty is a function of family and household income. Children who live in poverty often experience chronic, toxic stress that disrupts the architecture of the developing brain, resulting in lifelong difficulties in learning, memory, and self-regulation, and poor health outcomes in adulthood. Children in poverty are much more likely to experience exposure to violence, chronic neglect, and the accumulated and synergistic burdens of economic hardship, or “deprivation amplification”.

The rate of child poverty in Beaufort County has been consistently below the state average, whereas the rate of child poverty in Jasper County has been consistently (and significantly) above the state average. Currently (2019) there are 6,310 children living in poverty in Beaufort County and 1,682 children living in poverty in Jasper County.



Source: Kids Count Data Center

Compared to the county and state averages, the towns of Beaufort and Hardeeville have very high child poverty rates. Bluffton has a very low child poverty rate, and Hilton Head's child poverty rate is slightly above the state average.



U.S. Census S1701

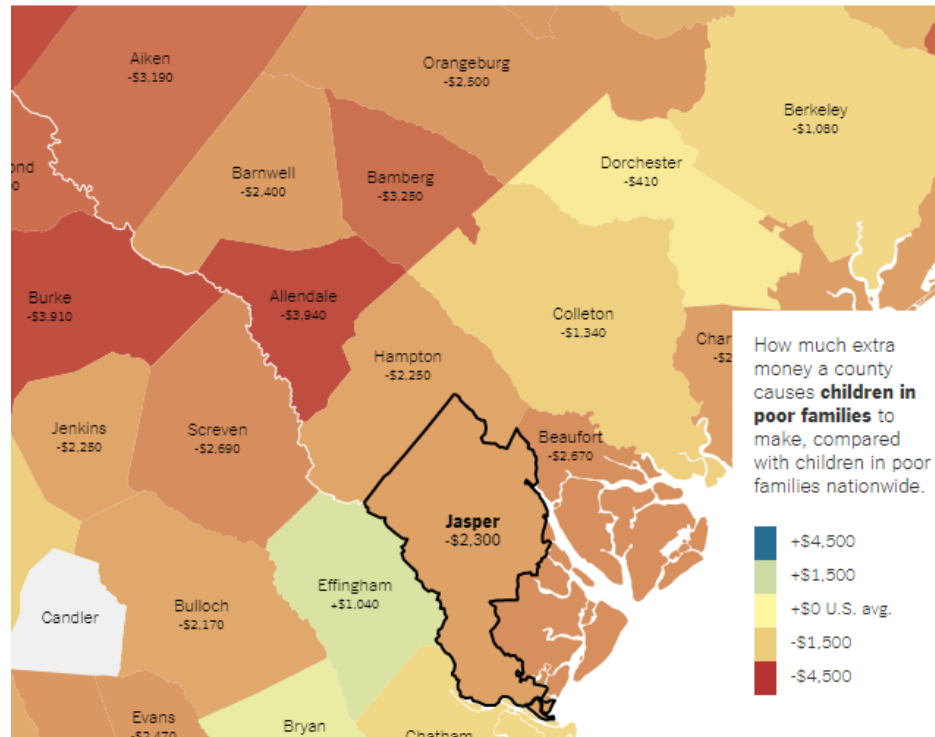
Opportunity

Where a child grows up in the US has a major impact on his or her financial future. Economic mobility has significant relevance for communities of color since they tend to have the lowest income and fewest opportunities to move up on the economic ladder. In their recent Equality of Opportunity Project¹⁸, three Harvard economists used “big data” to map upward mobility across the country. The results showed wide variation among the nation's cities and counties in intergenerational mobility, leading the researchers to conclude that some areas provide significantly more opportunity for children to move out of poverty, and other areas offer children few opportunities for escape. Where children are raised has a significant impact on their chances of moving up economically. The research found that communities with high levels of upward mobility tend to have five characteristics:

- lower levels of residential segregation by race
- a larger middle class (lower levels of income inequality)
- stronger families and more two-parent households
- greater social capital
- higher quality public schools

The latest calculations and comparisons of the 2,478 counties in the U.S. show that South Carolina counties rank among the lowest in the country for chances of upward mobility for poor children. Both Beaufort and Jasper Counties are considered to be “very bad” in helping poor children up the income ladder. Beaufort County ranks 196th worst out of 2,478 U.S. counties, better than about 8% of counties. Jasper County ranks 253rd of the 2,478 U.S. counties, better than about 10% of counties.

If a child in a poor family were to grow up in Beaufort County, instead of an average place, he or she would make \$2,670 (or 10%) less at age 26. If a child in a poor family were to grow up in Jasper County instead of an average place, he or she would make \$2,300 (or 9%) less at age 26.



Source: The Upshot¹

Employment

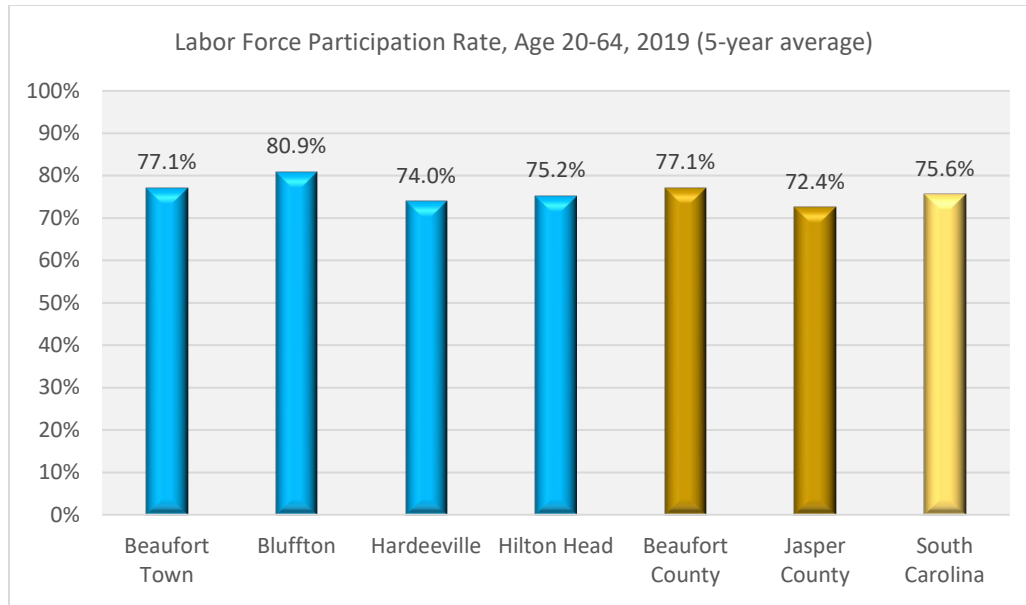
Employment provides opportunities for economic, physical, and mental wellbeing for individuals. Communities characterized by a thriving workforce, good and equitable jobs, and an “ideal” unemployment rate, tend to have higher education attainment, more social cohesion, greater democratic participation, and longer life expectancy.

Labor Force Participation Rate

The labor force participation rate is the percentage of working age individuals who are employed or are looking for work.

The percentage of residents aged 20-64 who are working or looking for work is higher than the state average in Beaufort County and lower than the state average in Jasper County. It is also higher in Beaufort City and Bluffton, but significantly lower in Hilton Head and Hardeeville.

¹ The Upshot. The best and worst places to grow up. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/03/upshot/the-best-and-worst-places-to-grow-up-how-your-area-compares.html>

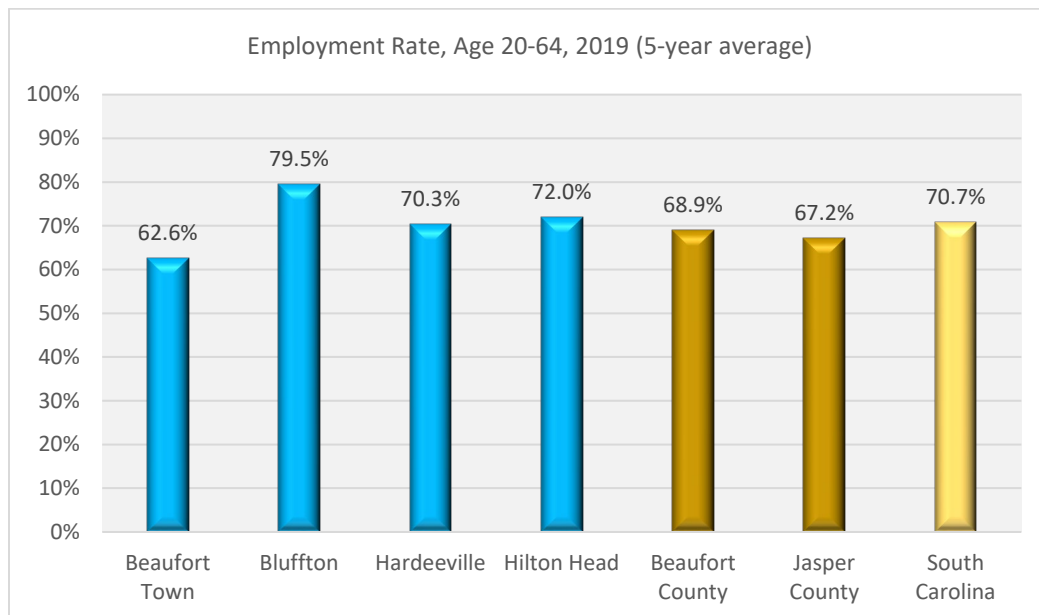


Source: U.S. Census S2301

Employment Rate (Employment-to-Population Ratio)

The employment to population ratio is a measure derived by dividing the total working age population by the number in that population who are working for pay. It is also known as the “employment rate.” The employment rate is considered to be a more representative measure of labor market conditions than the unemployment rate. However, the employment rate does not include unpaid family workers.

Of residents aged 20-64, 69% in Beaufort County are working for pay and 67% in Jasper County are working for pay. Both are lower rates than the state average. Bluffton and Hilton Head have higher rates of employment than the state average.

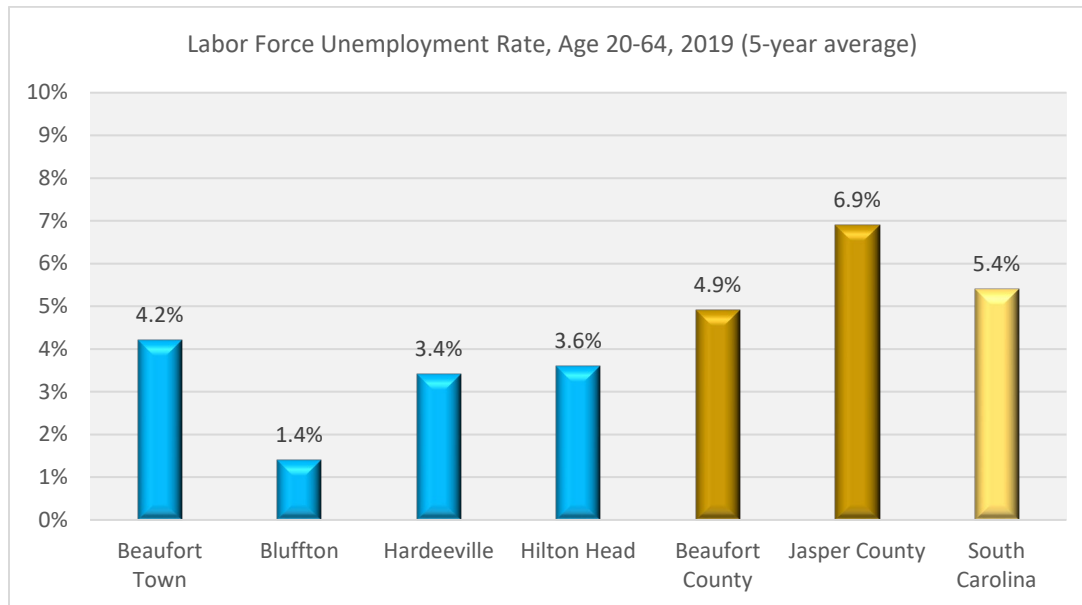


Source: U.S. Census S2301

Labor Force Unemployment Rate

The labor force unemployment rate is that portion of the labor force that is unemployed. One drawback of this measure is that it does not include “discouraged workers” – people who have removed themselves from the labor force but still need work.

In Beaufort County, less than 5% of the labor force is unemployed, slightly lower than the stat average and well with the “healthy” range of 4% to 6%. Jasper County has a 6.9% unemployment rate, higher than a “healthy” rate. Unemployment in the town of Beaufort is within the “healthy” range, but in the other three towns, unemployment is too low to be “healthy”.



Source: U.S. Census S2301

Education

Education has multiple purposes but is always at the foundation of societies characterized by economic wealth, social prosperity, and political stability. Education strengthens democracy by providing citizens the tools that allow them to participate in the governance process. It is an integrative force to foster social cohesion and supports critical thinking, skill development, and life-long knowledge acquisition.

The Children’s Trust of South Carolina ranks Beaufort County 15th ² and Jasper County 38th ³ among the state’s 46 counties for education in 2020.

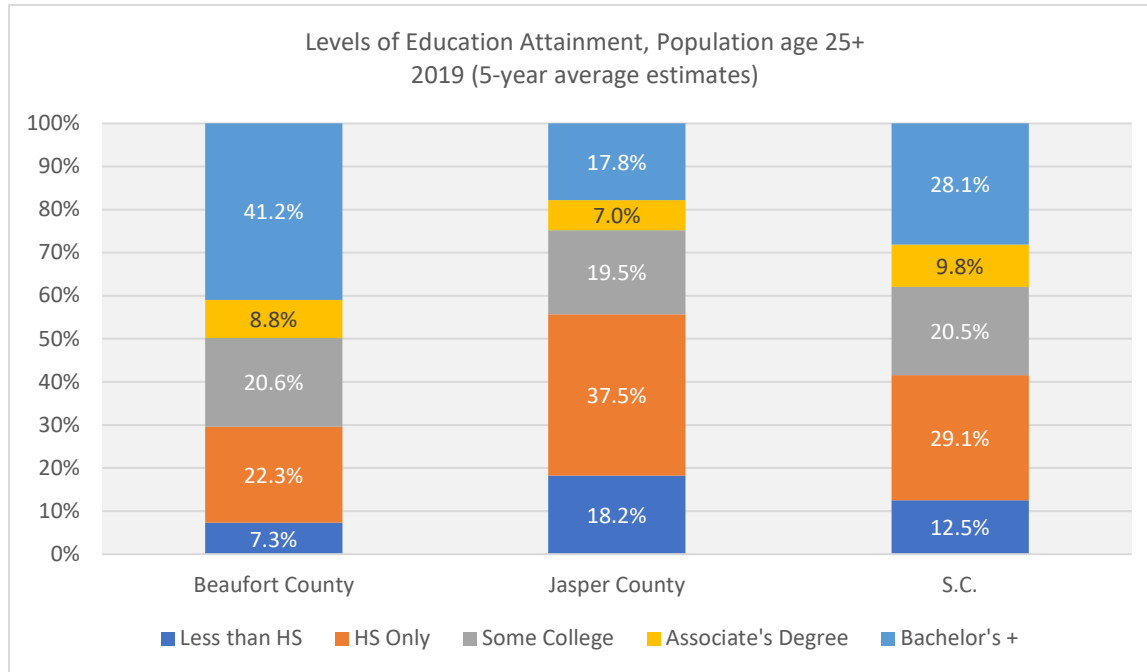
Education Attainment

The future demands higher education attainment of the local workforce if our cities and counties are to be economically competitive. Obtaining a post-secondary credential of some kind is critical to opportunity and positive life outcomes. Compared to the state average, residents in Beaufort County have significantly

² Children’s Trust of South Carolina 2020 Child Well-Being Data Profile. <https://scchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/Beaufort-County-Child-Well-Being-Data-Profile.pdf>

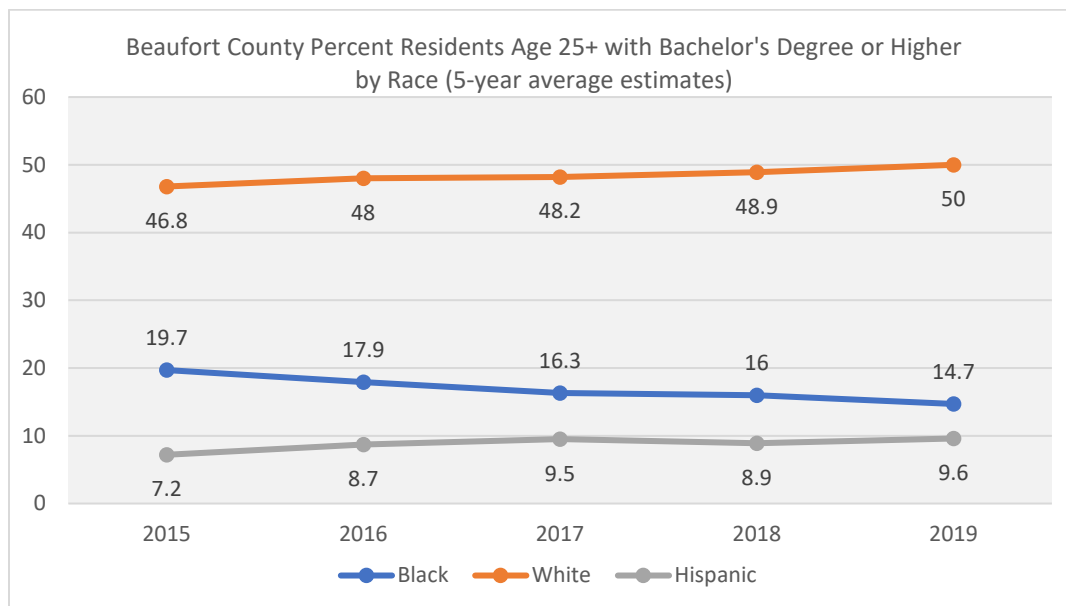
³ Children’s Trust of South Carolina 2020 Child Well-Being Data Profile <https://scchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/Jasper-County-Child-Well-Being-Data-Profile.pdf>

higher education attainment, whereas residents of Jasper County have lower education attainment. In fact, 18% of Jasper County residents (age 25+) did not graduate from high school. Only 25% of Jasper County residents (age 25+) hold a post-secondary credential, compared to 38% of the state's residents. 50% of Beaufort County residents (age 25+) hold a post-secondary credential.



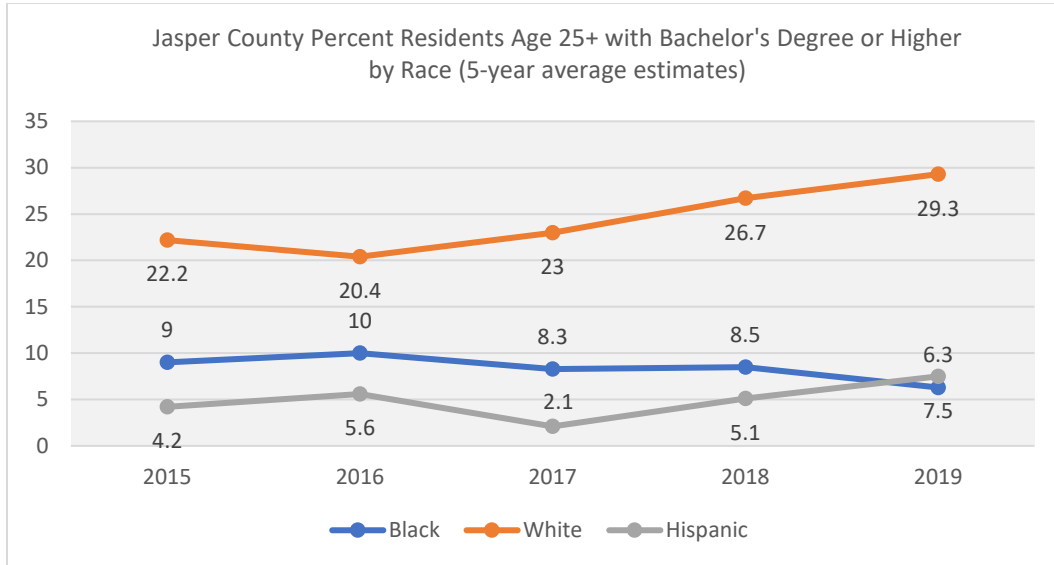
Source: U.S. Census S1501

In Beaufort County, there is significant and persistent race disparity for education attainment. Over the last five years, the percentages of White and Hispanic residents with bachelor's degrees or higher have increased, while the percentage of Black residents with bachelor's degrees has decreased.



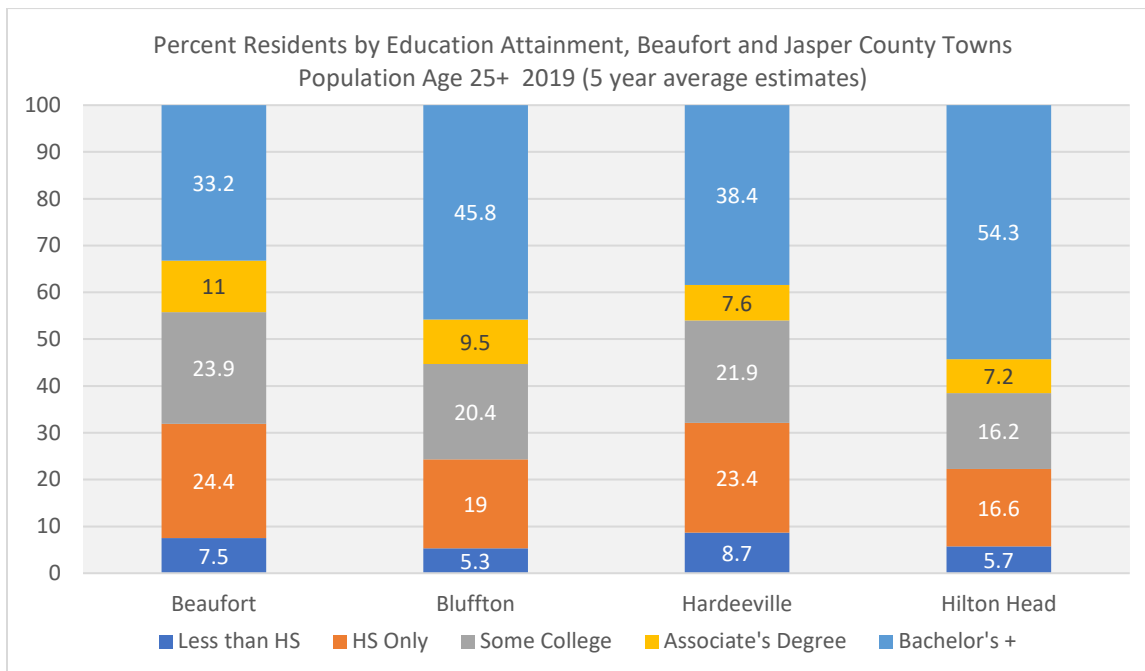
Source: U.S. Census S1501

In Jasper County, there is also significant and persistent race disparity for education attainment, even though education attainment is lower than in Beaufort County. Also in Jasper County over the last five years, the percentages of White and Hispanic residents with bachelor's degrees or higher have increased, while the percentage of Black residents with bachelor's degrees has decreased.



Source: U.S. Census S1501

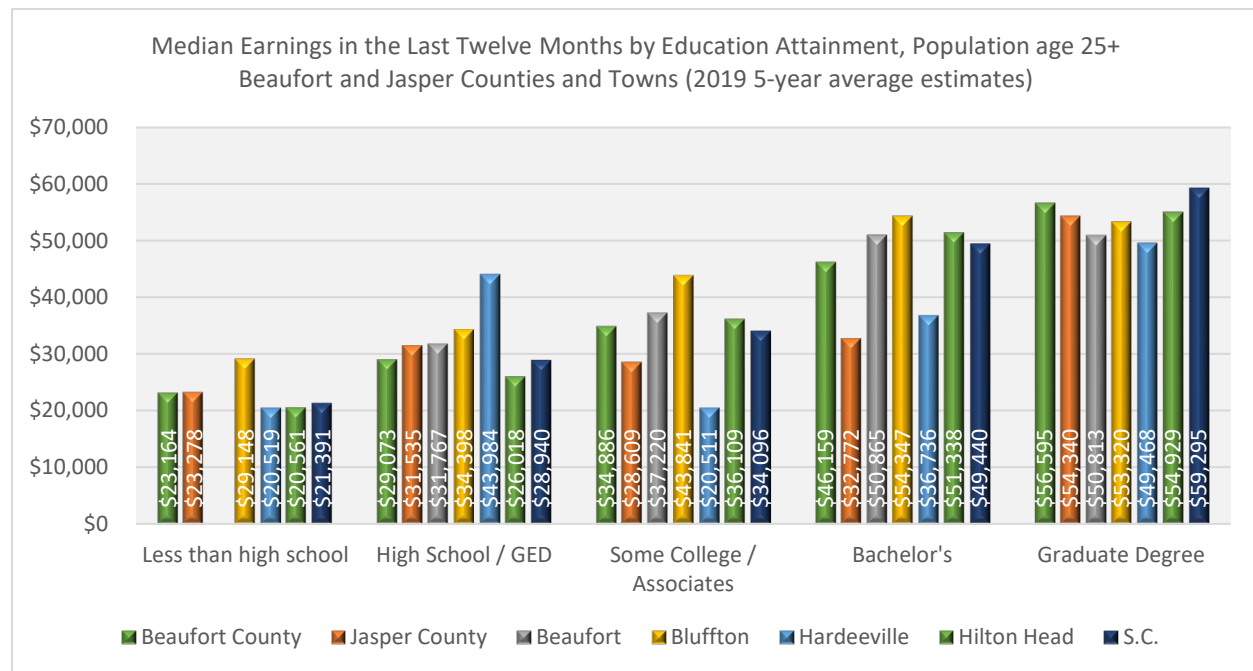
All four selected towns exceed the state average in terms of education attainment. Well over half of adults in Hilton Head and Bluffton hold a post-secondary credential, and over half of adults in Hilton Head hold a bachelor's degree or higher.



Source: U.S. Census S1501

Earnings by Education Attainment

There is a direct correlation between education attainment and earnings, income, and wealth. The following graph demonstrates this fact for Beaufort and Jasper Counties, the primary towns, and the state average, but the same would hold true for almost all U.S. geographies. Generally, the higher the education, the higher the earnings. (Note: there are some outliers and one case of unavailable data for Beaufort town. These are attributable to small populations with earnings at those levels of education attainment.)



Source: U.S. Census S2001

Early Childhood Education

School readiness is a comprehensive connection between children's readiness for school, families' readiness to support their children's learning, and schools' readiness for children. Children are ready for school when they possess the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success as they enter school and for later learning. This requires age-appropriate physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Children's School Readiness is affected by the early care and learning experiences they receive. Research in brain development emphasizes that early learning (especially from birth to five) directly influences a child's ability to succeed in school. These studies have contributed to a growing awareness of the importance of quality early education, pre-kindergarten, and K-4 experiences as predictors of school readiness. Communities do well when they ensure that children have widespread access to these programs, and especially programs like Head Start, targeted to children most at risk. Children's readiness for successful transition into kindergarten is best viewed as a community responsibility.

Compared to the state average, lower percentages of kindergarteners in Beaufort County demonstrate readiness to learn in terms of foundational skills and behaviors that prepare them for instruction based on kindergarten language and literacy and mathematics standards. The same holds true for kindergarten students in Jasper County, but the finding is extreme – only 4.3% of Jasper County kindergarteners demonstrate overall readiness to learn.

Percentage of Students enrolling in Kindergarten and Demonstrating Readiness to Learn, 2020-2021 by District			
	Overall	Language and Literacy	Mathematics
Beaufort County School District	21.5%	25.1%	24.3%
Jasper County School District	4.3%	19.0%	12.3%
S.C. Average	26.8%	32.4%	28.3%

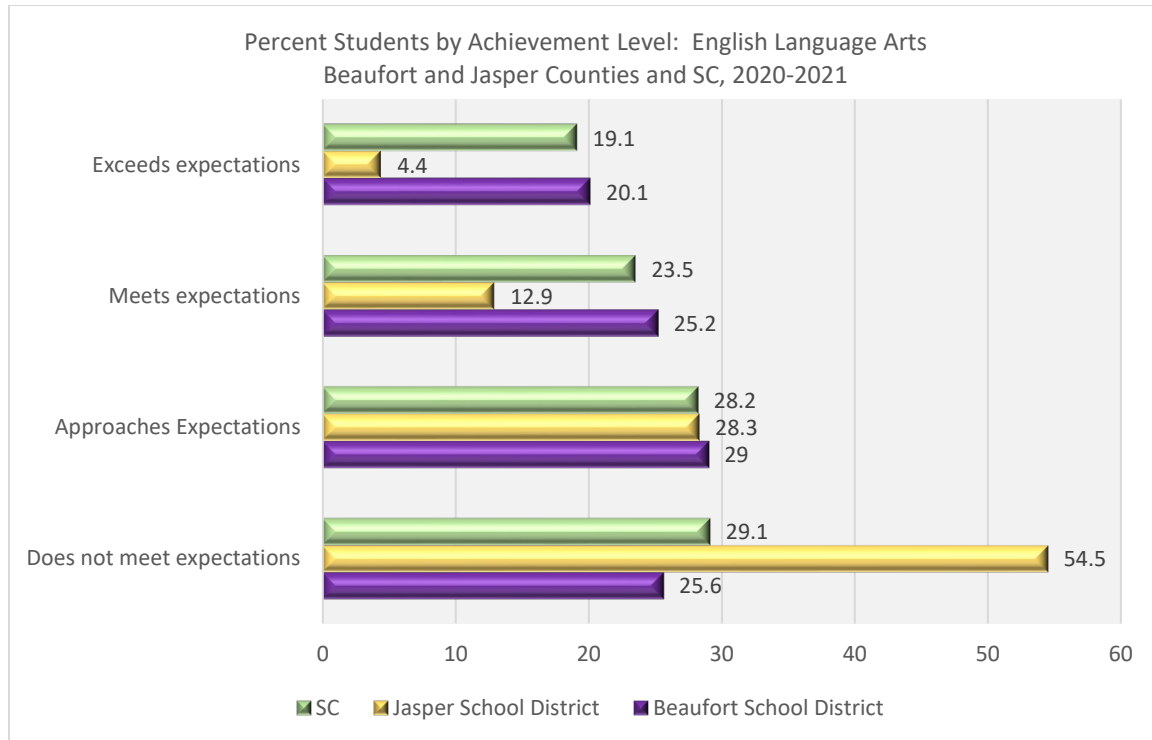
Source: SC DOE School Report Cards

Note that the state does not assess kindergarten students on two other critical domains: social foundation and physical wellbeing.

Academic Achievement

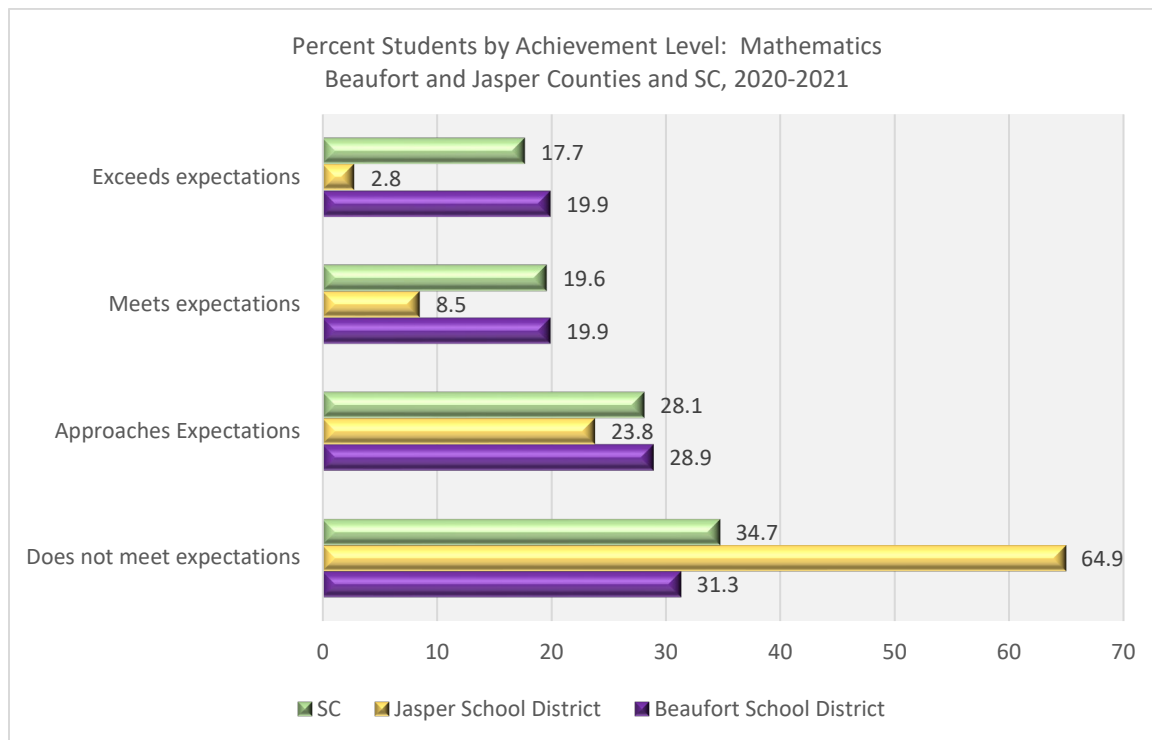
The SC Ready assessments for English Language Arts (reading and writing) and Mathematics are administered in grades 3,4,5,6,7, and 8. Academic performance in the elementary years is predictive of ongoing achievement, graduation from high school, and enrollment in post-secondary education.

Beaufort School District Students demonstrate significantly higher academic achievement compared to Jasper School District students. 45.3% of Beaufort County School District students meet or exceed expectations on for English Language Arts, compared to 42.6% statewide (all grades combined). However, only 17.3% of Jasper County School District students meet or exceed expectations on this measure.



Source: SC DOE School Report Cards

Findings are similar for mathematics achievement, with 39.8% of Beaufort County School District students meeting or exceeding expectations, compared to 37.3% of students across the state (all grades combined). 11.3% of Jasper County School District students meet or exceed expectations on this measure.



Source: SC DOE School Report Cards

On-Time Graduation

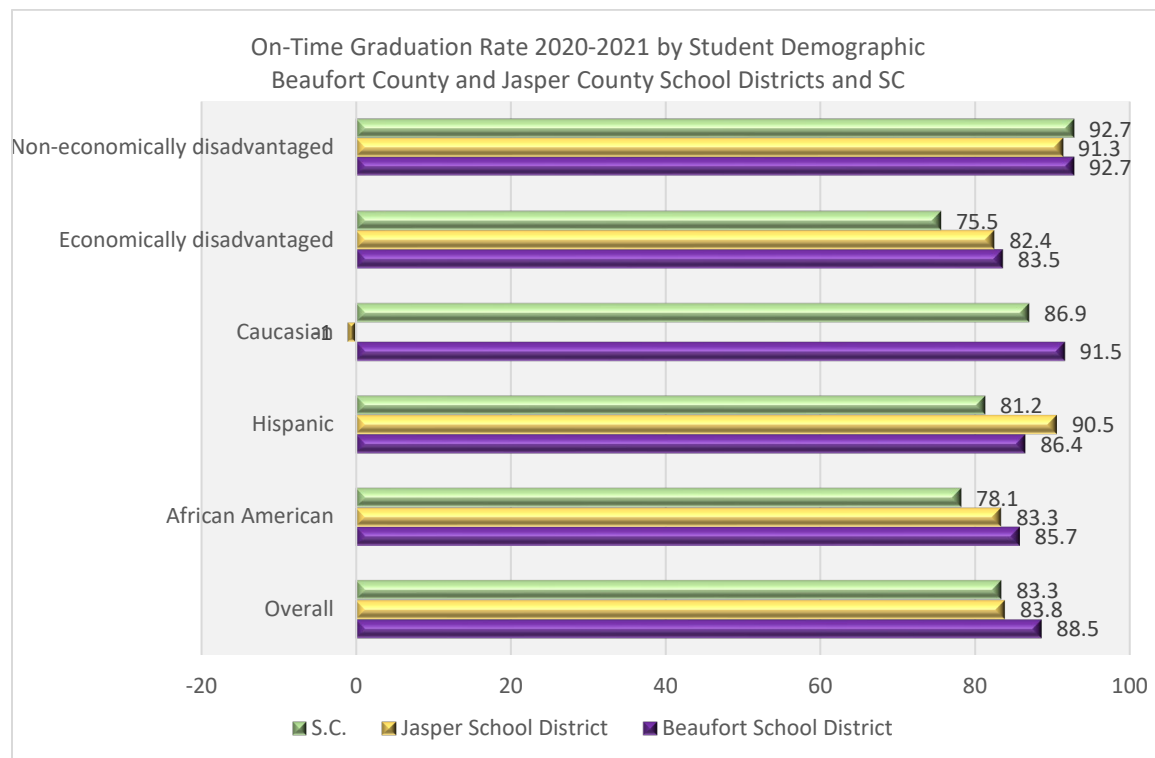
Students who graduate on time – earning a standard high school diploma in four years – are more likely to continue their education at the post-secondary level. Historically, Beaufort County School District has a higher on-time graduation rate compared to the state overall. On-time graduation has improved in Jasper County School District over the last several years and meets or slightly exceeds the state average.

On-time Graduation Rate Trend by District and SC Overall				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Beaufort	86.0	86.9	85.7	88.5
Jasper	71.8	81.6	82.8	83.8
SC	81.0	81.1	82.2	83.3

Source: SC DOE Report Cards

When the 2020-2021 on-time graduation rate is disaggregated by student demographic, however, Caucasians and non-economically disadvantaged students graduated on-time at higher rates in Beaufort County, and economically disadvantaged, African-American and Hispanic students graduated on-time at lower rates.

In Jasper County for the 2020-2021 school year, non-economically disadvantaged and Hispanic students graduated on-time at higher rates. African-American students graduated at about the overall rate, but the on-time graduation rate for Caucasian students was -1. This is likely attributable to small numbers of Caucasian grade 12 students.



Source: SC DOE School Report Cards

Dropout and Teen Idleness

The 2020 South Carolina Child Well-Being Data Profile, produced by the Children’s Trust of South Carolina,⁴ ranks Beaufort County as 14th and Jasper County 11th of the state’s 46 counties for dropout (#1 is best). The latest data show that there were 1.5% dropouts of the total enrollment for grades 9-12 in Beaufort County and 1.0% dropouts in Jasper County in 2018-2019. Both counties below the state average of 1.9%.

Because capturing dropouts is often difficult at the school and district levels, the U.S. Census offers two alternate measures: percent teens not enrolled in school and not a high school graduate, and an “idleness” measure for teenagers – residents ages 16-19 who are not enrolled in school and not working. These may be a more accurate measure of dropout. Because numbers are small, especially in rural counties, 5-year rolling averages are used for this measure.

In Beaufort County, the percentage of teens who are not enrolled in school and not high school graduates is consistently lower (and often significantly lower) than the state average. In Jasper County, however, the opposite is true.

Percent Teens age 16-19 Not Enrolled in School and Not a High School Graduate									
	2007-2011	2008-2012	2009-2013	2010-2014	2011-2015	2012-2016	2013-2017	2014-2018	2015-2019
Beaufort	4.5%	3.1%	3.7%	2.6%	1.9%	1.5%	1.8%	1.6%	1.8%
Jasper	3.4%	1.6%	7.3%	9.0%	23.2%	13.4%	18.6%	4.6%	3.2%
S.C.	6.8%	6.0%	5.8%	5.4%	5.0%	4.4%	4.1%	3.9%	4.0%

Source: Kids Count Data Center

The percentage of “idle” teens, however, is more variable, with Beaufort County often having higher rates of teen idleness than Jasper County. Some years, both counties have had higher rates of teen idleness than the state average.

Percent Teens age 16-19 Not Attending School and Not Working									
	2007-2011	2008-2012	2009-2013	2010-2014	2011-2015	2012-2016	2013-2017	2014-2018	2015-2019
Beaufort	10.6%	8.9%	10.6%	8.8%	7.3%	6.6%	6.0%	5.4%	6.7%
Jasper	6.2%	4.9%	12.3%	8.8%	21.0%	8.7%	15.5%	1.9%	2.0%
S.C.	9.1%	9.1%	9.3%	8.7%	8.5%	7.8%	7.1%	6.9%	6.9%

Source: Kids Count Data Center

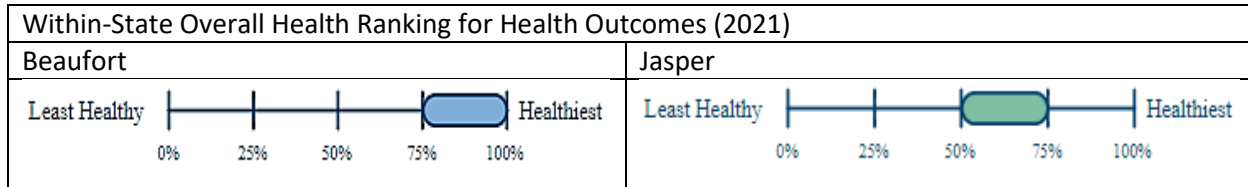
Health

Where health-promoting factors do not exist, the cost to the community is high. Social and economic factors are the strongest determinants of health outcomes. If people do not have access to safe places to live and be active, to healthy food, to clean air and water, and to preventive care and treatment, they will not be healthy. When community conditions are not health-promoting, there is a lower quality of life for everyone.

⁴ 2020 South Carolina Child Well-Being Data Profiles. <https://scchildren.org/resources/kids-count-south-carolina/child-well-being-data-county-profiles/>

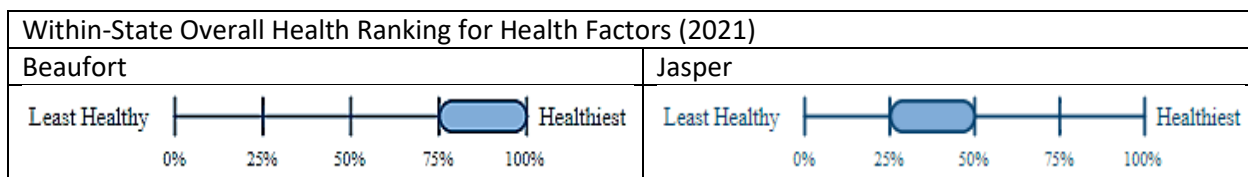
Overall Health

Beaufort County is ranked as the #1 healthiest county in South Carolina for health outcomes, and Jasper County is ranked 23rd, in the higher middle range of counties for health outcomes. These outcomes include length of life / premature death and various quality of life measures.



Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

Beaufort County is ranked the #3 healthiest county in South Carolina for health factors, and Jasper County is ranked 35th, in the lower middle range of counties in South Carolina for health factors. These factors include various health behaviors, clinical care factors, social and economic factors, and measures of the physical environment.



Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

14% of adults in Beaufort County, and 24% of adults in Jasper County report that they are in poor or fair health. Beaufort County fares better on this measure compared to the state average of 18%, and Jasper County fares worse.

Physical Health

Adult residents of Beaufort County reported an average of 3.6 physically unhealthy days in the past 30 days, better than the state average of 4.0. Jasper County residents reported 4.7 days, worse than the state average.⁵

Mental Health

As with poor physical health days, adult residents of Beaufort County fared better than the state average for poor mental health days, and residents of Jasper County fared worse than the state average. Beaufort residents reported an average of 3.9 mentally unhealthy days in the past 30 days, compared to the state average of 4.7, and residents of Jasper County reported 5.0 mentally unhealthy days.⁶

Adverse Childhood Experiences

The Children's Trust of South Carolina ranks Beaufort County number 6 and Jasper County number 31 of the state's 46 counties for child wellbeing.⁷

⁵ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/south-carolina/2021/rankings/outcomes/overall>

⁶ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/south-carolina/2021/rankings/outcomes/overall>

⁷ Children's Trust of South Carolina. Child Well-Being Data County Profiles. <https://scchildren.org/resources/kids-count-south-carolina/child-well-being-data-county-profiles/>

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that occur in a child's life prior to the age of 18. Researchers have recently discovered a dangerous biological syndrome caused by abuse and neglect and other ACEs during childhood. The toxic stress that characterizes childhood adversity can trigger hormones that cause damage to the brains and bodies of children, putting them at a greater risk as adults for disease, homelessness, incarceration, and early death. Further, childhood adversity often harms a child's brain and its development, which can result in long-term negative health and social outcomes.

The latest data show⁸ that 61.8% of South Carolina adults report having experienced at least one ACE, and 56.3% of Beaufort County children and 40.4% of Jasper County children have experienced at least one ACE. The primary ACEs are:⁹

Beaufort County:

Emotional Abuse – 31%
Parental divorce / separation – 26%
Household substance use – 26%

Jasper County:

Parental divorce / separation – 42%
Emotional abuse – 35%
Household substance use – 31%

Children of Color experience higher rates of ACEs. In South Carolina, 58% of White children have experienced at least one ACE, while 65% of Black children and 67% of Hispanic children have experienced at least one ACE.

Deaths of Despair

Beginning in 2014, life expectancy in the US began to decrease for the first time since 1979 due to “deaths of despair”, deaths attributed to suicide, drug or alcohol overdose, and alcoholic liver disease. Mortality associated with these causes has steadily increased and is correlated with poverty. The following table provides overall deaths of despair data for the state, and suicide and overdose data for Beaufort and Jasper Counties. Because of relatively small incidence numbers for Beaufort and Jasper Counties, data should be interpreted with caution.

Jasper County's overdose death rates for all drugs and for opioids, as well as the county's suicide rate, are significantly above the state average, whereas Beaufort County's rates are below the state average.

Age-adjusted Death rates per 100,000 Population				
	2018 Deaths of Despair Rate	Non-Specific Drug Overdose Death Rate	Opioid-Specific Drug Overdose Death Rate	Suicide Rate 2016-2018
Beaufort County (2019)	Unavailable	16.42	9.81	13.1
Jasper County (2019)	Unavailable	35.94	32.21	20.9
South Carolina (2019)	49.54	22.72	17.83	15.8

Source: WIN Network¹⁰ and SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health.¹¹

⁸ Children's Trust of South Carolina <https://scchildren.org/resources/adverse-childhood-experiences/ace-data-county-profiles/>

⁹ Children's Trust of South Carolina. ACE Data County Profiles. <https://scchildren.org/resources/adverse-childhood-experiences/ace-data-county-profiles/>

¹⁰ WIN Network <https://www.winmeasures.org/statistics/winmeasures/us-health>

¹¹ SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health, SC Behavioral Health 2021 Progress Report <https://imph.org/publications/>

Infant Mortality

Infant mortality is a good measure of population health since it reflects the economic and social conditions that impact health in a community. The United States has the highest maternal and infant mortality rates among comparable developed countries. In 2018, the infant mortality rate in the United States was 5.7 deaths per 1,000 live births. South Carolina is among the nine states in the US with the highest infant mortality rates, 9.2 -11.5 per 1,000 live births.

Because numbers of child deaths within the first year of life are relatively low, especially for sparsely populated geographies, multiple year averages are often used to measure infant mortality. For the combined 2013-2019 period, 53 babies died in their first year of life in Beaufort County, equating to an infant mortality rate of 4 per 1,000 live births, the lowest rate in the state.¹² Infant mortality data for this period are unreliable for Jasper County.

It should be noted that there is a significant racial inequity in this measure. Black infants in the U.S. are more than twice as likely to die as White infants – 10.8 per 1,000 Black babies, compared to 4.6 per 1,000 White babies. This racial inequity is wider than in 1850 and in one year constitutes 4,000 inequitable deaths of Black babies. Education and income do not mitigate this inequity – a Black woman with an advanced degree is more likely to lose her baby in its first year of life than a White woman with less than an eighth-grade education. Numbers are too small in Beaufort County to meaningfully disaggregate this measure by race.

Teen Childbearing

Births to teens have substantial implications for educational and socioeconomic outcomes for the teen mother. Parenthood is the leading reason that teen girls drop out of school. More than 50% of teen mothers never graduate from high school, whereas approximately 90% of women who do not give birth during their teenage years will graduate from high school. Additionally, less than 2% of teen moms earn a college degree by age 30. Because many teen mothers live in poverty, care for both mother and child can be publicly funded for years, including assistance programs for food, medical care and childcare. In addition, daughters of teen mothers are more likely to become teen mothers themselves, creating cyclical poverty over generations.¹³

The trend in teen births shows that Beaufort County has a low rate, and Jasper County has a high rate, compared to the state average. Beaufort is in the best tier of the state's 46 counties on this measure, and Jasper County is in the bottom tier.¹⁴

¹² County Health Rankings. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/south-carolina/2021/measure/outcomes/129/data?sort=desc-3>

¹³ Fact Forward: <https://www.factforward.org/news/high-costs-teen-pregnancy>

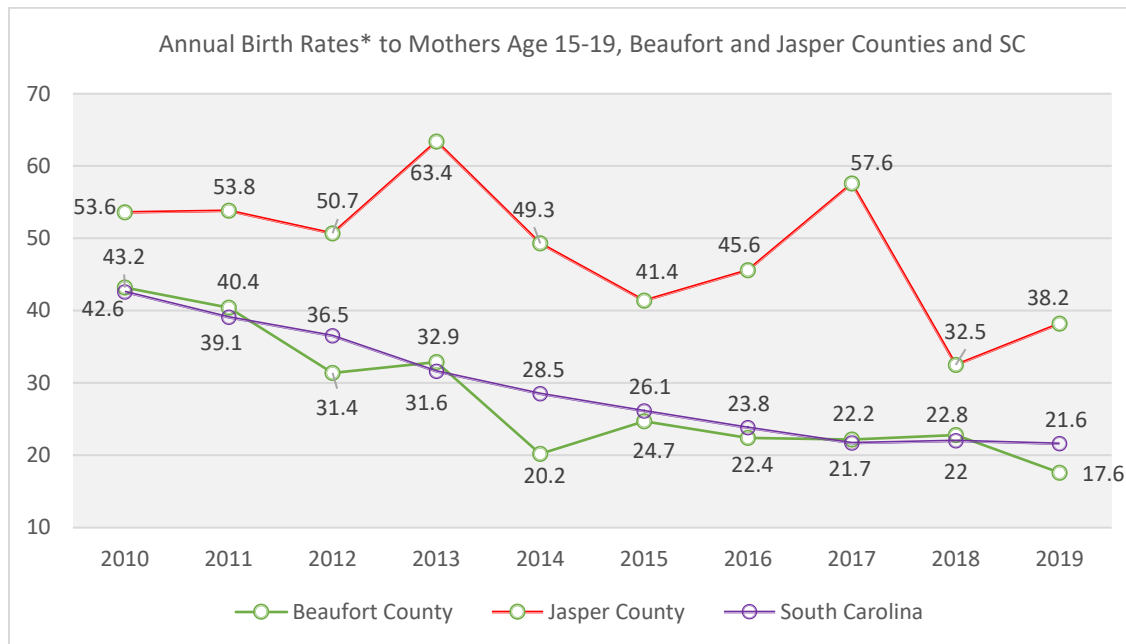
¹⁴ SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, County Health Profiles <https://gis.dhec.sc.gov/chp/>

Teen Birth Rate* age 15-19, Beaufort and Jasper Counties and S.C. (3-year rolling averages)				
	2013-2015	2014-2016	2015-2017	2016-2018
Beaufort County	25.9	22.5	23.1	22.5
County Rank	8	10	13	12
Jasper County	51.6	45.6	48.5	45.3
County Rank	43	42	44	45
South Carolina	28.7	26.1	26.8	22.5

*rate per 1,000 females aged 15-19

Source: County Health Profiles

Teen childbearing has decreased substantially in South Carolina, mirroring the national trend. Single year data for 2019 show that South Carolina has a teen childbearing rate of 21.6 per 1,000 females aged 15-19. Beaufort County has a lower teen childbearing rate at 17.6, and Jasper County has a higher teen childbearing rate at 38.2. Note that single year data are much less reliable for counties with smaller populations and account for much of the year-to-year variability in the data.



Source: Kids County Data Center

*per 1,000 females aged 15-19

In 2019, babies were born to teen mothers in Beaufort County, and 27 babies were born to teen mothers in Jasper County.¹⁵ The following graph from Fact Forward provides more teen childbearing data for both counties. Notably, there has been a 75% decrease in teen childbearing since 1991 in Beaufort County and a 68% decrease in Jasper County.

¹⁵ Fact Forward: <https://www.factforward.org/news/high-costs-teen-pregnancy>

Beaufort County

2019 Teen Birth Rate

TEEN BIRTH RATE
AGES 15-19

17.6
PER 1,000

2018 Rate = 22.8

COUNTY
RANKING

40th

2018 Rank = 33

DECREASE
SINCE 1991

75%

2019 Teen Birth Numbers

BIRTHS TO
15-17 YEAR OLDS = **16**
BIRTHS TO
18-19 YEAR OLDS = **72**
TOTAL BIRTHS
15-19 YEAR OLDS = **88**



Total number of births to South Carolina teens (ages 15-19) = 3,425.

Source: Fact Forward

Jasper County

2019 Teen Birth Rate

TEEN BIRTH RATE
AGES 15-19

38.2
PER 1,000

2018 Rate = 32.5

COUNTY
RANKING

7th

2018 Rank = 12

DECREASE
SINCE 1991

68%

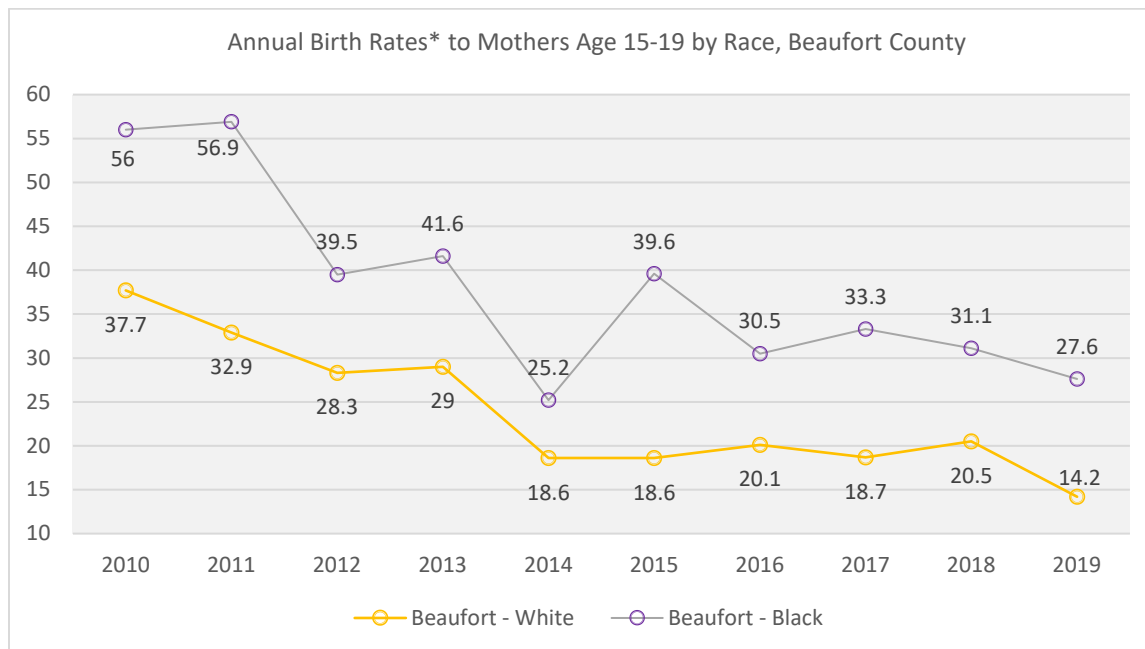
2019 Teen Birth Numbers

BIRTHS TO
15-17 YEAR OLDS = **8**
BIRTHS TO
18-19 YEAR OLDS = **19**
TOTAL BIRTHS
15-19 YEAR OLDS = **27**



Total number of births to South Carolina teens (ages 15-19) = 3,425.

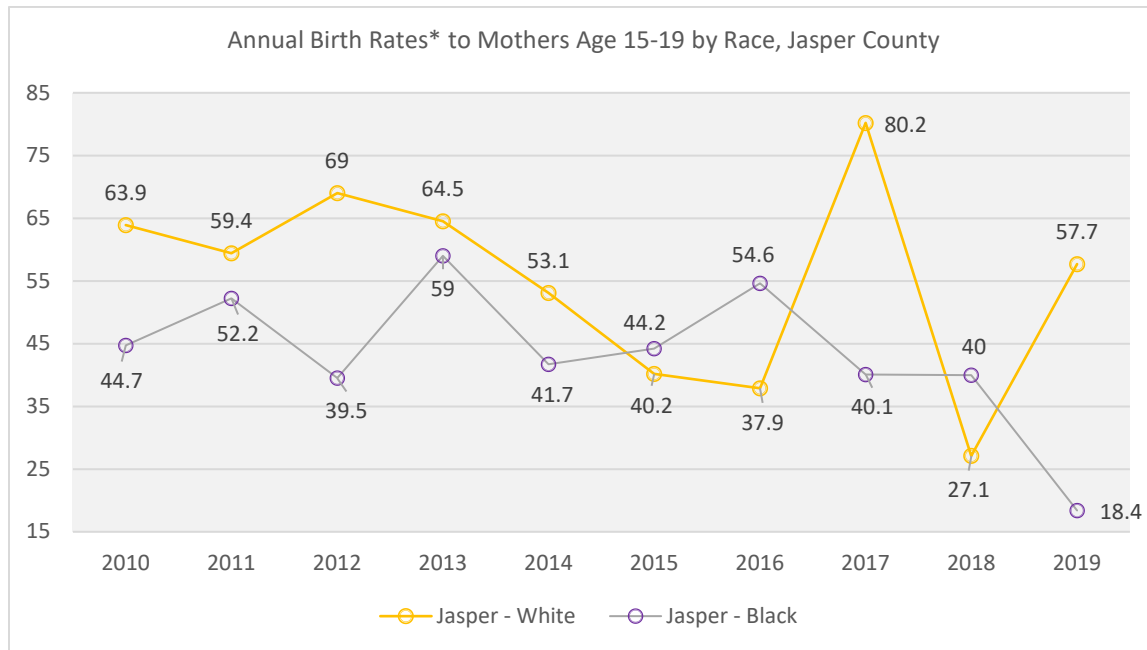
There is obvious inequity in teen childbearing by race. Black teens in Beaufort County have consistently and significantly higher teen childbearing rates compared to White teens. Single year measures of teen childbearing in smaller populations result in variability of the data.



Source: Kids Count Data Center & SC DHEC

*per 1,000 females aged 15-19

Teen childbearing rates by race are highly variable in Jasper County with White teens frequently having higher rates than Black teens. Again, much of the variability is likely attributable to small annual numbers.



Source: Kids Count Data Center & SC DHEC

*per 1,000 females aged 15-19

Predictors of Chronic Disease

Smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity are the primary predictors of chronic disease. As reported by the County Health Rankings:¹⁶

Smoking

Each year approximately 480,000 premature deaths in the U.S. can be attributed to smoking. Cigarette smoking is identified as a cause of various cancers, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory conditions, as well as low birthweight and other adverse health outcomes. The adult smoking rate in Beaufort County is lower than the state average and meets the rate of top U.S. county performers. The adult smoking rate in Jasper County is higher than the state average and is significantly higher than top U.S. county performers.

Obesity

Obesity increases the risk for health conditions such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, hypertension, dyslipidemia, stroke, liver and gallbladder disease, sleep apnea and respiratory problems (such as asthma), osteoarthritis, and poor health status. The adult obesity rate in Beaufort County is significantly lower than the state average and slightly lower than top U.S. county performers. The adult

¹⁶ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model>

obesity rate in Jasper County is higher than the state average and significantly higher than top U.S. county performers.

Physical Inactivity

Decreased physical activity has been related to several disease conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, stroke, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and premature mortality, independent of obesity. Inactivity causes 11% of premature mortality in the United States. Physical activity improves sleep, cognitive ability, and bone and musculoskeletal health, as well as reduces risks of dementia. Physical inactivity is not only associated with individual behavior but also community conditions such as expenditures on recreational activities, access to infrastructure, and poverty. The physical inactivity rate reported by adults in Beaufort County is lower than both the state average and the top U.S. county performers. The physical inactivity rate reported by adults in Jasper County is lower than the state average but higher than top U.S. county performers.

Predictors of Chronic Disease, Beaufort and Jasper Counties with State and National Comparisons				
	Beaufort County	Jasper County	SC	Top U.S. Performers
Adult smoking	16%	23%	19%	16%
Adult obesity	25%	37%	34%	26%
Physical inactivity	17%	25%	26%	19%

Source: County Health Rankings

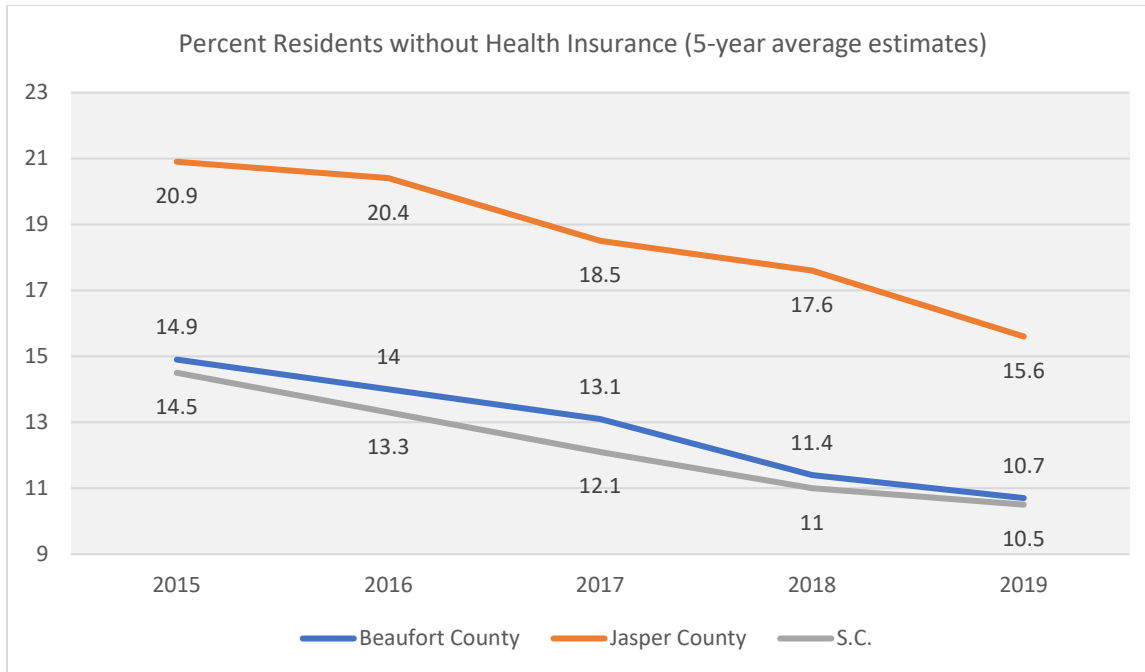
Access to Care

There are many barriers to accessing needed health care. If people are unable to receive preventive care or if care is delayed, health outcomes are worse. Poor health conditions often needlessly develop when preventive care is absent. Delayed care often results in serious illness and costly treatment.

Health Insurance

Health insurance coverage is a strong indicator of access to health care and the likelihood of receiving quality care. Rates of health insurance coverage in a community speak not only to the health status of that community, but also to the economic status of the community and the distribution of well-paying jobs. Further, when health insurance coverage is low, costs to society are often high since the uninsured frequently seek treatment in emergency departments for non-emergent conditions and often do not get timely treatment for chronic illnesses, resulting in higher costs and lost worker productivity.

The following graph shows uninsured rates (for any type of health insurance, public or private) have decreased statewide and for Beaufort and Jasper Counties over the last five years. However, uninsured rates are persistently and significantly above the state average in Jasper County. Currently, an estimated 19,191 Beaufort County residents have no health insurance, and an estimated 4,391 Jasper County residents have no health insurance.

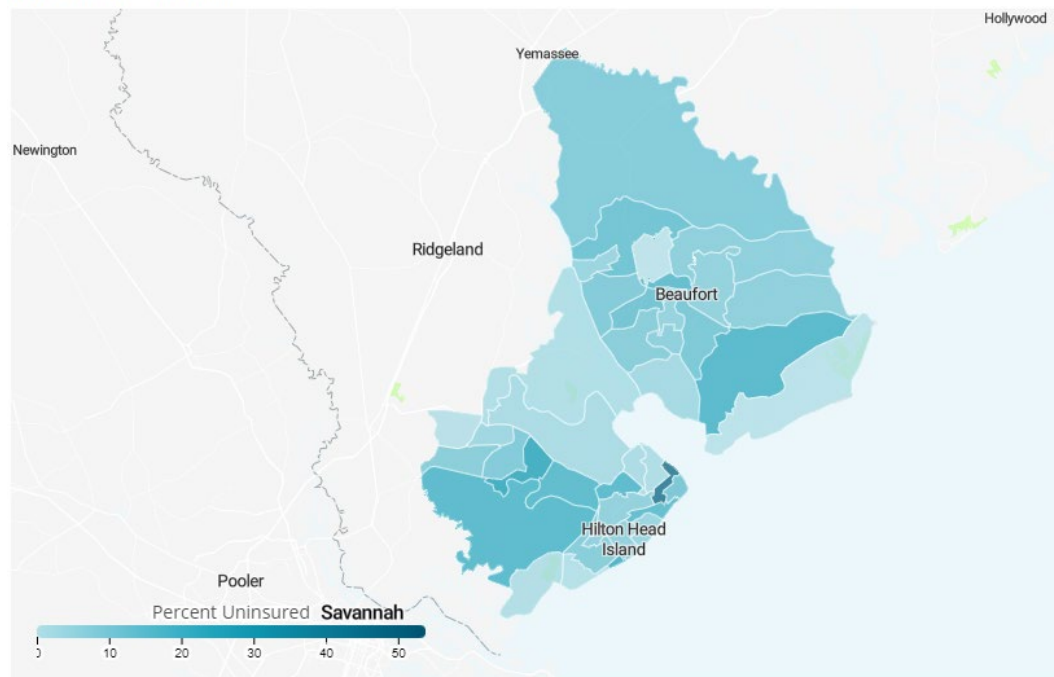


Source: U.S. Census S2701

As with most other measures, health care coverage is strongly correlated with where you live. Lack of coverage ranges in the extreme in Beaufort County by census tract from 0% to 48% (combined years 2014-2018).

Uninsured Rate: by Census Tract

Coverage Status: Uninsured

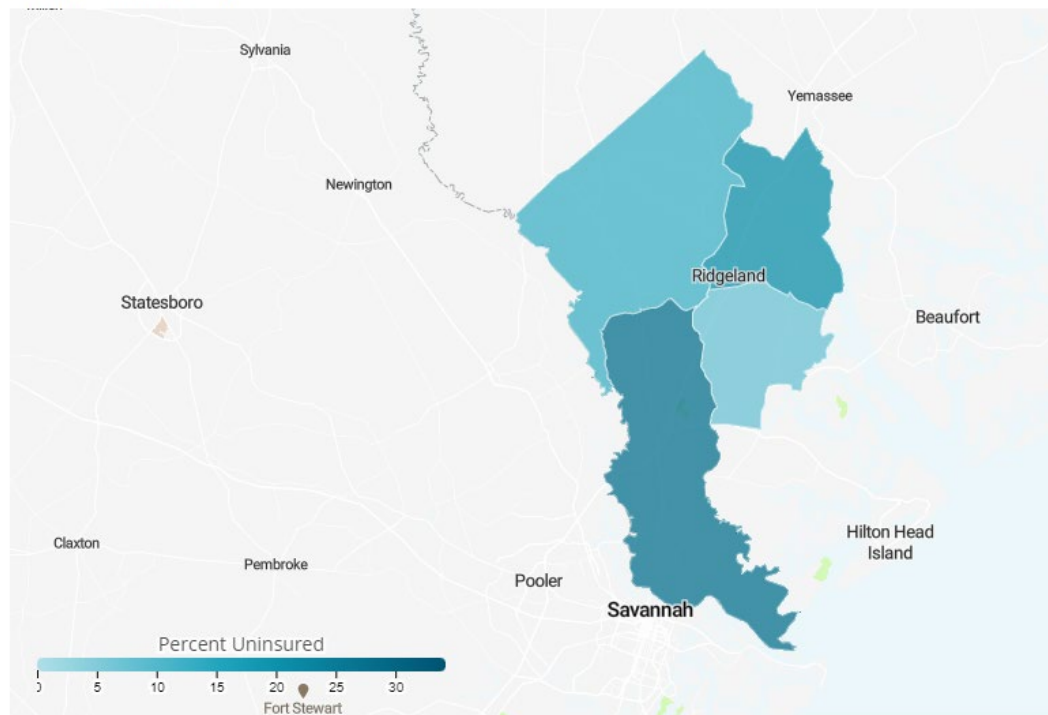


Source: LiveStories

Lack of coverage also ranges widely in Jasper County by census tract from 7% to 27.5%.

Uninsured Rate: by Census Tract

Coverage Status: Uninsured



Source: LiveStories

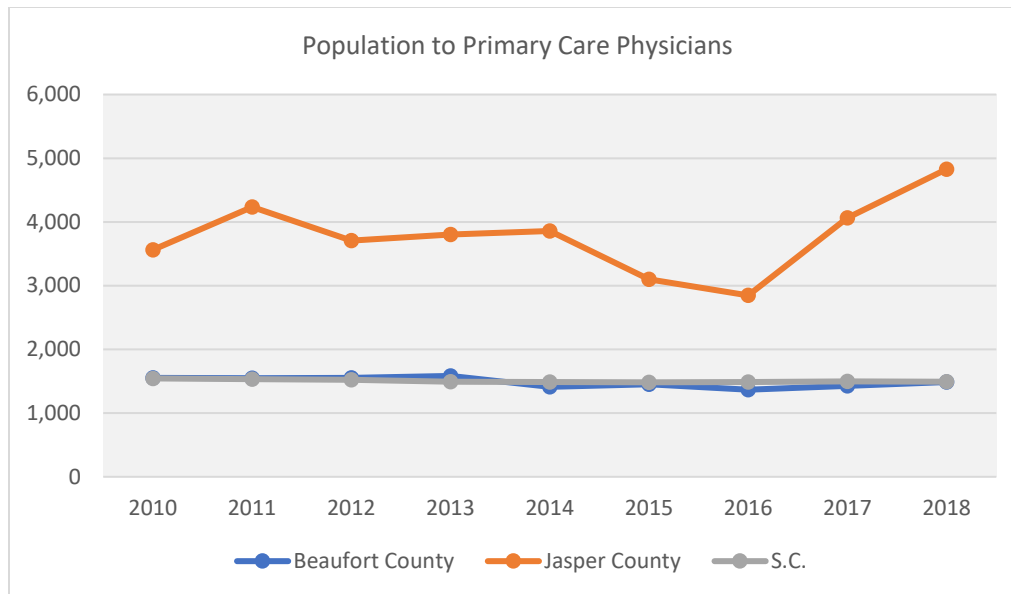
Population to Providers

Lack of health insurance is a primary reason people delay costly medical care, but lack of providers also diminishes lack of access to care.

Primary Care Physicians

Currently (2018) in Beaufort County, there are 127 primary care physicians, constituting a ratio of 1, 490 residents for every one primary care physician. There are six primary care physicians in Jasper County, constituting a ratio of 4,830 residents for every one primary care physician. Beaufort County fares better than the state average on this measure and ranks 8th best. Conversely, Jasper fares worse than the state average and ranks 40th of the state's 46 counties.

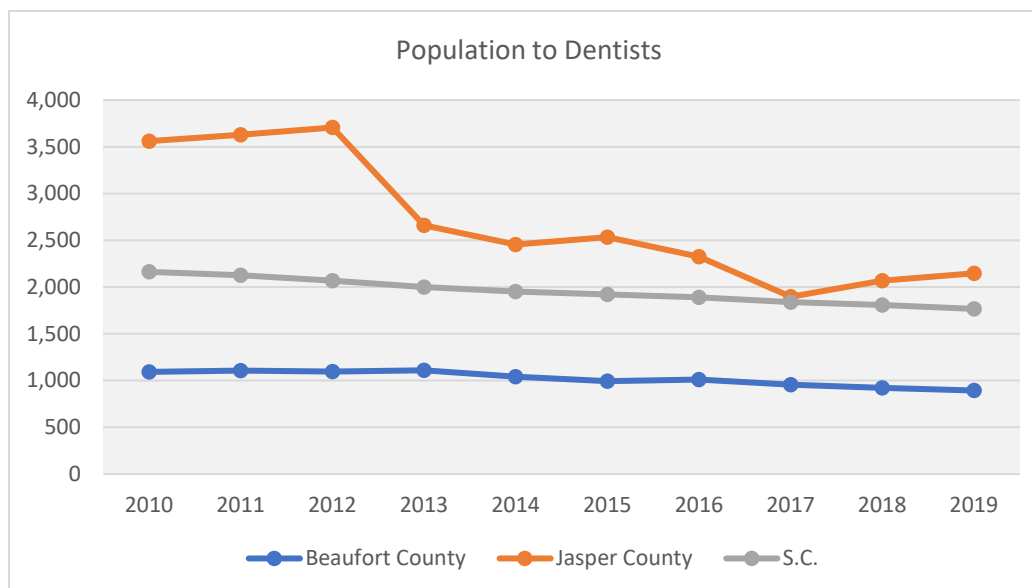
The following graph demonstrates the trend in this measures over time. Historically, Beaufort County has hovered around the state average on this measure, but Jasper County has had a significantly higher population to primary care physicians ratio compared to the state average.



Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

Dentists

Currently (2019), Beaufort County ranks first among the state's counties for population to dentist ratio. The county has 215 dentists, constituting a ratio of 890 residents for every dentist. Jasper County ranks 15th of the state's counties on this measure, with 14 dentists, constituting a ratio of 2,150 residents for every dentist. Jasper County has improved significantly on this measure over time and is now almost at the state average. Historically, Beaufort County has consistently fared better on this measure compared to both the state and the nation.



Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

Mental Health Providers

In South Carolina on average (2020), there is one mental health provider for every 550 residents. Both Beaufort and Jasper Counties have a higher population to provider ratio for this measure with 640 residents for every mental health provider in Beaufort County (ranking it 12th in the state) and 1,370 residents for every mental health provider in Jasper County (ranking it 35th in the state).

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy varies substantially from place to place and across cities, especially for low-income people. The gaps in life expectancy are growing rapidly, with the richest Americans gaining approximately 3 years in longevity between 2001 and 2014, while the poorest Americans having no gain at all. The data show that the poor live longest in affluent, educated cities with amenities that promote healthy behaviors.¹⁷ The U.S. is ranked 42nd in the world for life expectancy.¹⁸ The richest American men live 15 years longer than the poorest men, while the richest American women live 10 years longer than the poorest women.¹¹ South Carolina ranks 42nd of 51 states and the District of Columbia for life expectancy - 74.0 years for males and 79.8 years for females. Clearly, people of color bear a greater burden of low income and poverty; thus, these data align closely with racial inequity.

In 2018, the National Center for Health Statistics and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation released first-of-its-kind neighborhood-level data on life expectancy at birth,¹⁹ demonstrating extreme variation even at the census tract, or neighborhood level. These data show that life expectancy is 82.62 years for Beaufort County and 78.2 years for Jasper County, both higher than the state average of 76.5 years.²⁰

When examined at the census tract level, even though residents of Beaufort County fare better on average than residents in other parts of the state, there are significant differences in life expectancy according to where they live. Residents in Jasper County, although they have lower life expectancy than residents of Beaufort County, also have different opportunities for long life according to where they live. The range (highest minus lowest) of life expectancy at birth for Beaufort County census tracts is 14.9 years; lowest life expectancy is 74.5 years, and the highest is 88.4 years. The range in life expectancy for Jasper County census tracts is 6.0 years; lowest life expectancy is 71.9 years, and the highest is 77.9 years.²¹

¹⁷ Chetty, R, Stepner, M, Abraham, S, Lin, S, Scuderi, B, Turner, N, Bergeron, A, and Cutler, D. The Association Between Income and Life Expectancy in the United States, 2001-2014 https://healthinequality.org/documents/paper/healthineq_summary.pdf

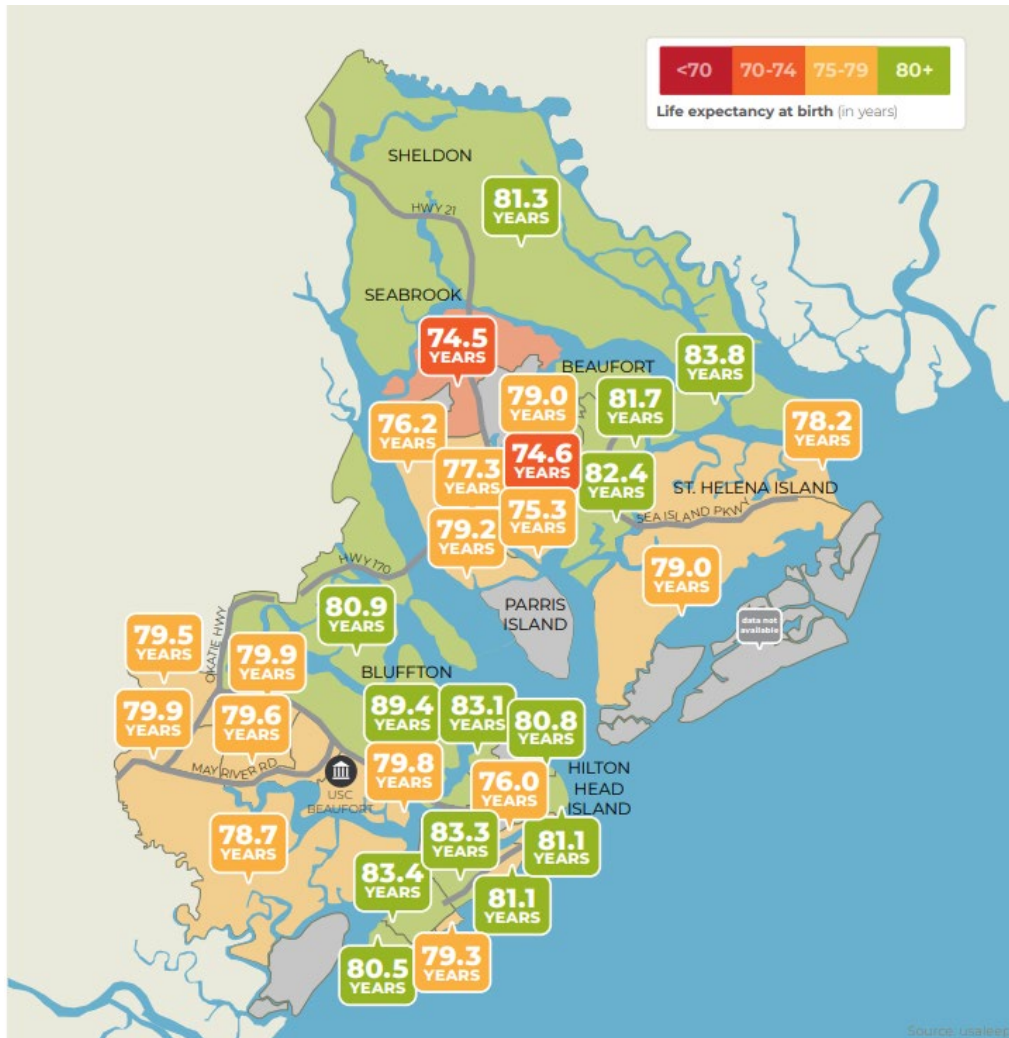
¹⁸ Robert Wood John Foundation: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/interactives/whereyouliveaffectshowlongyoulive.html>

¹⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. USALEEP. [NVSS - United States Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/nvss/lifeexpectancy/)

²⁰ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. [Life Expectancy by ZIP Code: Where You Live Affects How Long You Live - RWJF](https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/interactives/whereyouliveaffectshowlongyoulive.html)

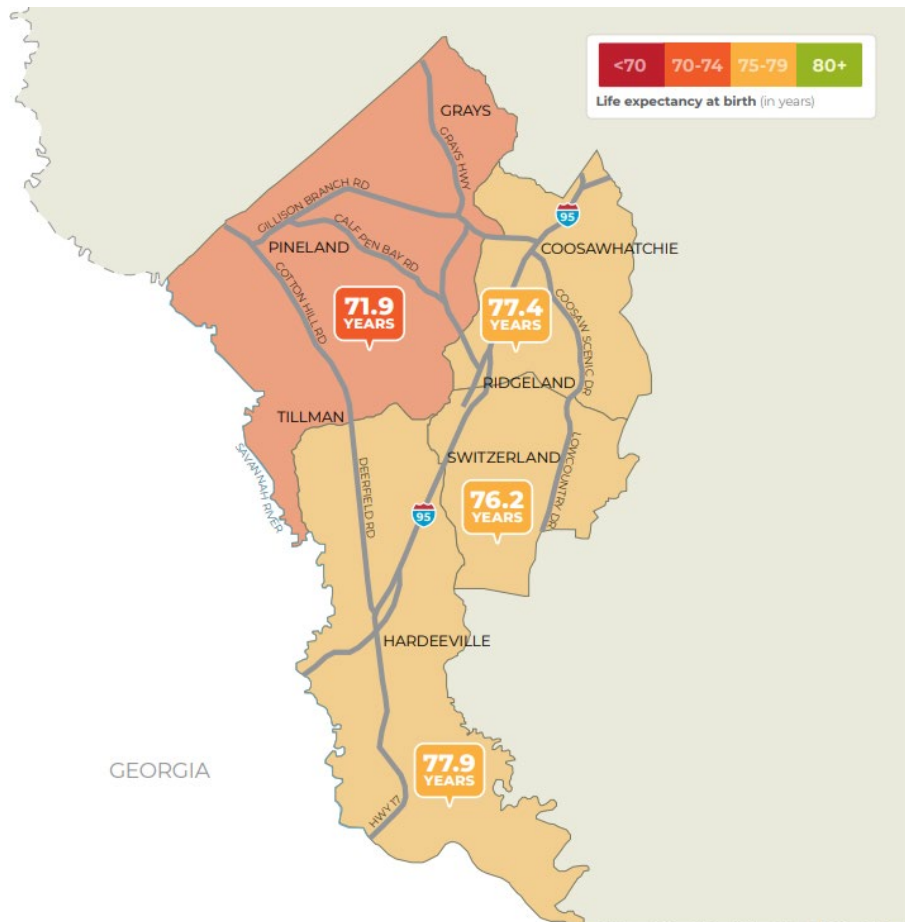
²¹ Live Healthy South Carolina. <https://livehealthy.sc.gov/community>

Beaufort County Life Expectancy by Census Tract



Source: Live Healthy South Carolina

Jasper County Life Expectancy by Census Tract



Source: Live Healthy South Carolina

Premature Death / Years of Potential Life Lost

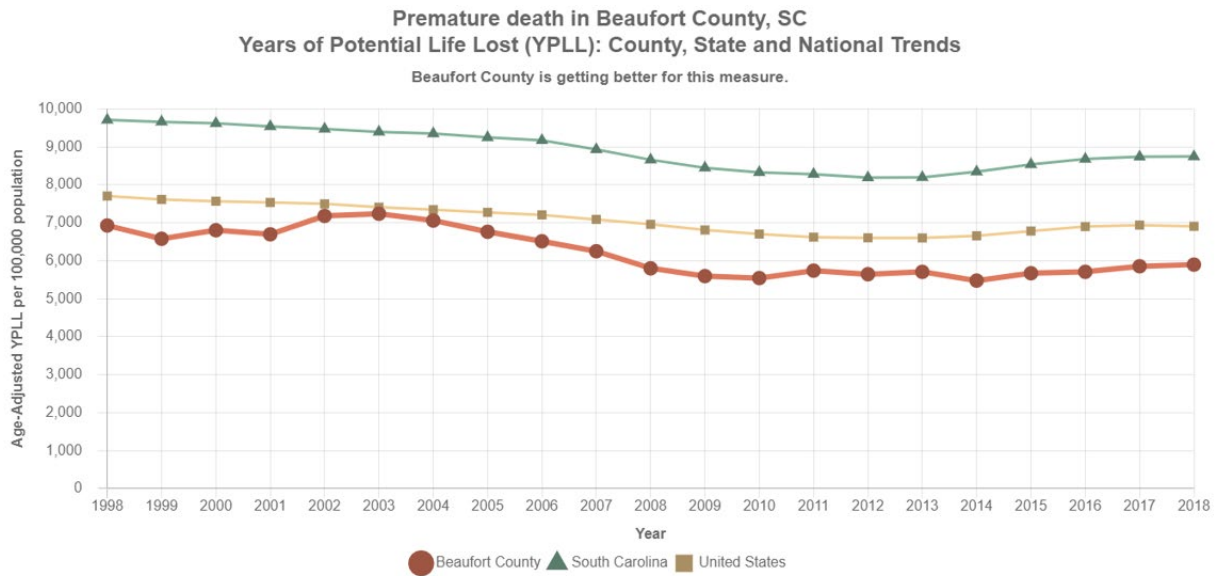
The premature death rate, sometimes termed Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL), is a related measure; however, it quantifies premature mortality, rather than overall mortality, focusing attention on deaths that could have been prevented. This rate is calculated as every death in a given geography occurring before age 75. So, a person dying at age 25 contributes 50 years of life lost, whereas a person who dies at age 65 contributes 10 years of life lost. The YPLL measure is presented as a rate per 100,000 population.

For 2017-2019, Beaufort County ranks best among South Carolina counties for YPLL, and Jasper County ranks 21st. The rate of YPLL for Beaufort County reported in the 2021 County Health Rankings is 5,900 per 100,000 residents, and the rate of YPLL for Jasper County is 9,900. The state's county average is 8,700.²² Within both counties, there is significant racial disparity in YPLL:

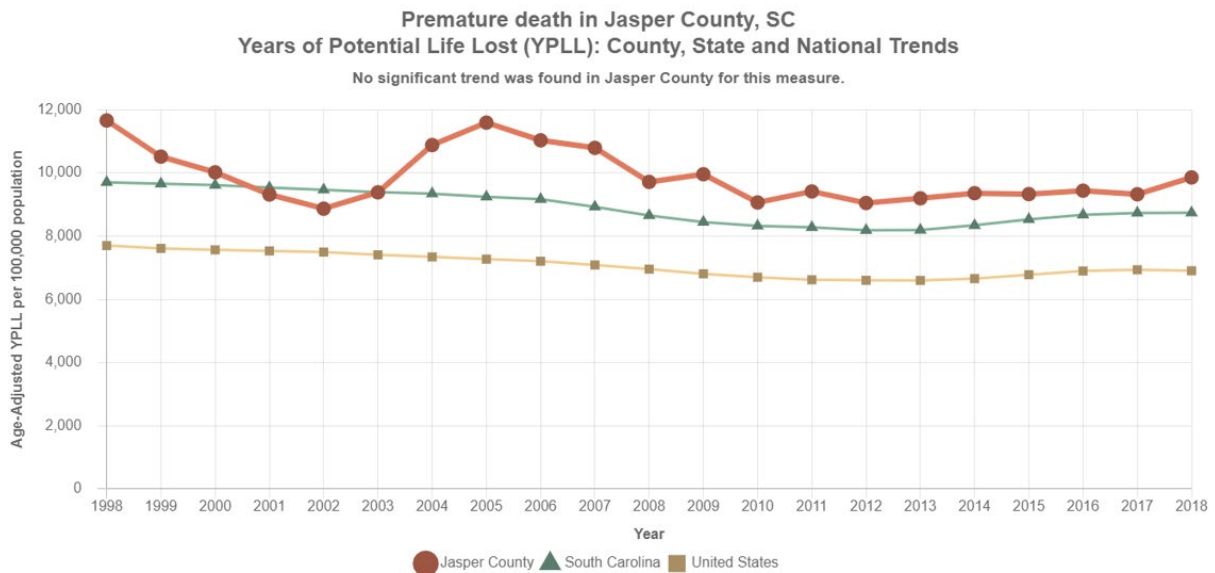
²² County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/measures-data-sources/county-health-rankings-model>

- Beaufort County 2019 3-year average:
 - White YPLL = 5,200
 - Black YPLL = 10,600
 - Hispanic YPLL = 2,700
- Jasper County 2019 3-year average:
 - White YPLL= 10,200
 - Black YPLL = 10,600
 - Hispanic YPLL = N/A

Measuring YPLL allows communities to target resources to high-risk areas and to target causes of premature death. Over time, Beaufort County has fared very well on this measure, below both the state and national averages. Jasper County, however, has generally fared worse than the state average and significantly worse than the national average.



Notes:
Each year represents a 3-year average around the middle year (e.g. 2015 is the middle year of 2014-2016).



Notes:
Each year represents a 3-year average around the middle year (e.g. 2015 is the middle year of 2014-2016).

Source: County Health Rankings

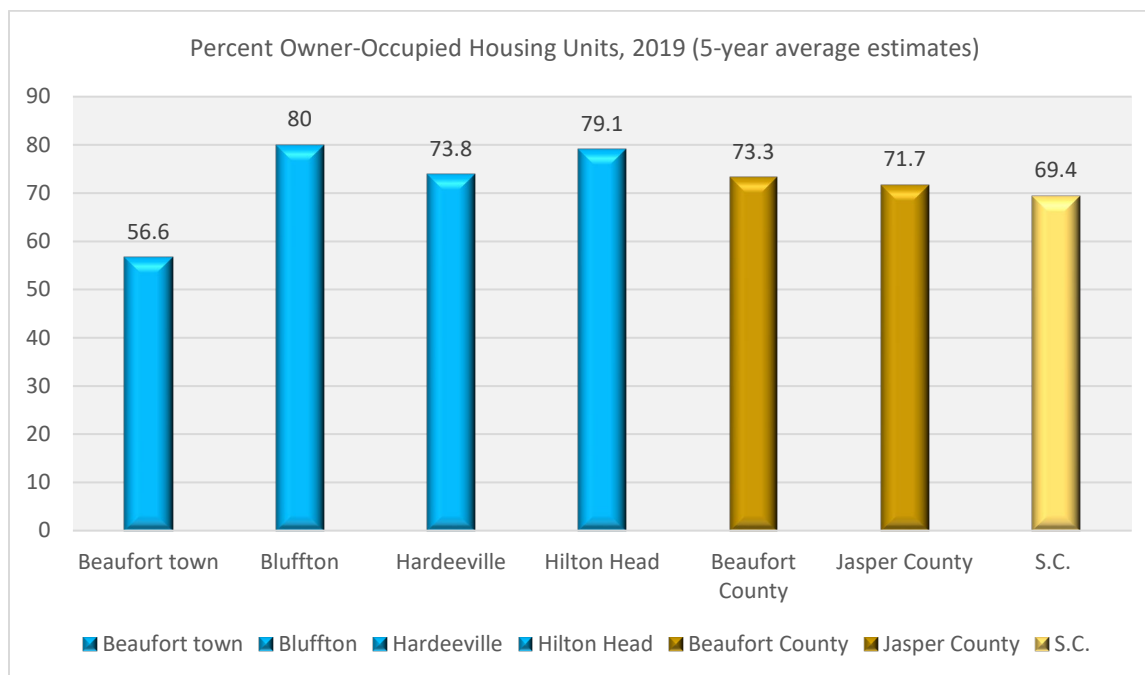
Housing

Housing is the single largest expense for households. Housing has been shown to be as important as education and labor force readiness to economic mobility, especially as it addresses issues of concentrated poverty. Housing conditions impact the wellbeing of the homes' occupants as well as the wellbeing of the surrounding neighborhood. Housing stock, affordability, and quality seem to be equally important considerations. Homeownership can be an important means of achieving residential stability and has been shown to be related to improved psychological health and greater participation in social and political activities.

Home Ownership

Homeowners fare markedly better than renters in terms of proportion of income spent on housing costs. Homeowners spend a much lower proportion of income on housing costs, even at lower levels of income. For both owners and renters, the higher the income, the proportionately less is spent on housing costs. High housing costs put undue stress on household budgets and leave few resources for other expenses, savings, long-term investments, financial cushions for emergencies, and transgenerational wealth-building.

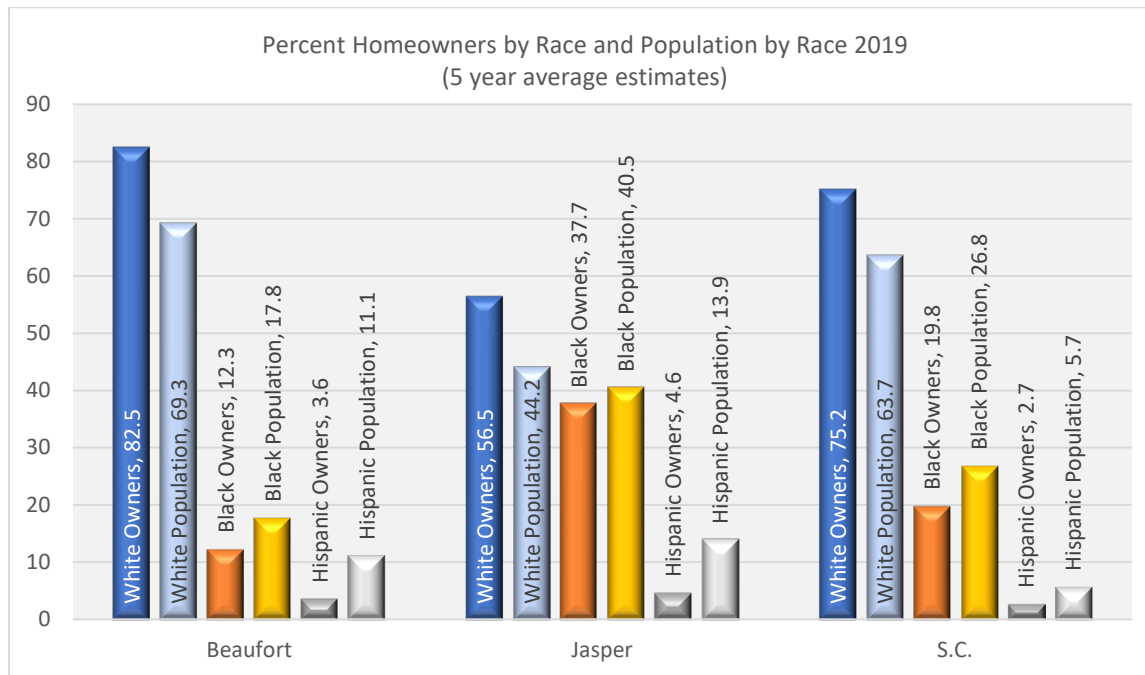
Homeownership rates in Beaufort and Jasper Counties exceed the state average. Of the primary towns, only Beaufort has a lower home ownership rate than the state average.



Source: U.S. Census DP04

In South Carolina and across the U.S., there is a significant racial inequity in home ownership, with Whites significantly more likely to be homeowners compared to People of Color. Further, People of Color are disproportionately low income, and low-income people spend disproportionately more on housing costs.

Whites in Beaufort and Jasper Counties and in South Carolina have higher homeownership rates compared to their proportion in the population. Blacks and Hispanics have lower homeownership rates compared to their proportion in the population.



U.S. Census S2502

Affordability

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the generally accepted definition of affordable housing is that for which the occupants are paying no more than 30% of gross income for housing costs, including utilities. In South Carolina, almost 20% of residents are not in affordable housing situations, spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs.

Householders in both Beaufort and Jasper Counties have higher averages of spending 30% or more of their income on housing, compared to the state average. However, there has been improvement on this measure in both counties over the last several years.

Percent of Housing Units Where Householders Spend at Least 30% of Income on Housing									
	2007-2011	2008-2012	2009-2013	2010-2014	2011-2015	2012-2016	2013-2017	2014-2018	2015-2019
Beaufort	36.1%	35.4%	34.6%	32.8%	33.5%	32.2%	30.6%	28.8%	26.7%
Jasper	31.3%	31.4%	33.7%	32.3%	30.4%	26.8%	27.6%	24.0%	24.6%
S.C.	25.5%	25.1%	24.8%	24.2%	23.1%	21.9%	21.1%	20.4%	19.6%

Source: Kids Count Data Center

Severe Housing Problems

Not all housing meets standards for habitability, primarily because of overcrowding, high cost, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities. The 2021 County Health Rankings²³ reports that 15% of all South Carolina households have at least one of these four “severe housing problems.” Beaufort County exceeds the state average on this measure at 17%, and Jasper County is higher at 18% - among the highest counties in the state on this measure.

Counties within South Carolina range from 9% to 18% on this measure, and the top U.S. county performers are at 9% on this measure. Low income and minority households experience a greater burden of severe housing problems.

Crime

Crime derives from and predicts other factors of wellbeing. There are complex links between crime, the social and built environments, physical and mental health, education, and neighborhood characteristics.

Violent Crimes

Violent crimes involve the element of personal confrontation between the victim and the offender and include murder, sexual battery, robbery, and aggravated assault. South Carolina’s violent crime rate decreased by 45.3% between 1991 and 2020. However, violent crimes increased state-wide by 5.4% from 2019 to 2020. The following graphs show violent crimes by category, including counts, rates per 10,000 population and clearance rates (the percentage of crimes reported that are cleared by arrest or other means) for all South Carolina Counties.²⁴

The state’s murder rate is 1.08 per 10,000 population, its highest since 1993. There were 11 murders in Beaufort County and nine in Jasper County in 2020, placing Beaufort among counties with the lowest murder rates and Jasper among those with the highest murder rates in the state.

²³ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings>

²⁴ All crime data for 2020 provided by SC SLED in the Crime in South Carolina Annual Report. <https://www.sled.sc.gov/forms/statistics/2020%20Crime%20in%20South%20Carolina.pdf>

Murders by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	0	0.00	N/A
Aiken	24	1.42	54%
Allendale	3	3.73	67%
Anderson	16	0.79	69%
Bamberg	1	0.75	0%
Barnwell	11	5.34	55%
Beaufort	11	0.59	64%
Berkeley	17	0.74	77%
Calhoun	7	4.96	86%
Charleston	56	1.37	64%
Cherokee	3	0.53	33%
Chester	13	4.03	39%
Chesterfield	10	2.31	80%
Clarendon	7	2.25	57%
Colleton	6	1.55	67%
Darlington	13	2.07	54%
Dillon	23	8.13	57%
Dorchester	8	0.50	25%
Edgefield	0	0.00	N/A
Fairfield	6	2.86	67%
Florence	26	1.90	62%
Georgetown	8	1.26	100%
Greenville	43	0.82	91%

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Greenwood	6	0.87	100%
Hampton	0	0.00	N/A
Horry	33	0.94	91%
Jasper	9	3.13	44%
Kershaw	8	1.22	100%
Lancaster	3	0.31	67%
Laurens	5	0.74	100%
Lee	6	3.63	0%
Lexington	18	0.61	78%
McCormick	0	0.00	N/A
Marion	11	3.77	82%
Marlboro	5	1.87	40%
Newberry	3	0.80	67%
Oconee	7	0.89	29%
Orangeburg	19	2.26	63%
Pickens	3	0.23	100%
Richland	42	1.01	83%
Saluda	2	1.06	100%
Spartanburg	10	0.30	50%
Sumter	20	1.89	75%
Union	3	1.10	0%
Williamsburg	8	2.58	30%
York	19	0.67	63%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

South Carolina's sexual battery rate decreased from 2019 to 2020 and is the lowest it has been in the last six years. Both Beaufort and Jasper Counties had low rates of sexual battery, compared to other South Carolina counties, with 58 cases in Beaufort and three in Jasper.

Sexual Battery by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	13	5.35	23.1%
Aiken	89	5.27	28.1%
Allendale	3	3.73	0.0%
Anderson	124	6.09	53.2%
Bamberg	2	1.50	0.0%
Barnwell	9	4.37	44.4%
Beaufort	58	3.10	25.9%
Berkeley	86	3.74	33.7%
Calhoun	7	4.96	85.7%
Charleston	208	5.10	19.7%
Cherokee	25	4.45	12.0%
Chester	15	4.64	20.0%
Chesterfield	16	3.70	18.8%
Clarendon	14	4.50	0.0%
Colleton	20	5.18	60.0%
Darlington	30	4.77	30.0%
Dillon	14	4.95	14.3%
Dorchester	49	3.03	18.4%
Edgefield	1	0.39	0.0%
Fairfield	3	1.43	66.7%
Florence	83	6.06	27.7%
Georgetown	29	4.57	27.6%
Greenville	331	6.30	70.4%

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Greenwood	49	7.07	28.6%
Hampton	9	4.85	11.1%
Horry	246	7.01	43.5%
Jasper	3	1.04	0.0%
Kershaw	31	4.74	12.9%
Lancaster	42	4.37	71.4%
Laurens	59	8.74	40.7%
Lee	1	0.60	0.0%
Lexington	114	3.88	20.2%
McCormick	0	0.00	N/A
Marion	11	3.77	27.3%
Marlboro	13	4.87	46.2%
Newberry	12	3.18	100.0%
Oconee	43	5.47	46.5%
Orangeburg	24	2.85	20.8%
Pickens	39	2.97	35.9%
Richland	242	5.82	33.1%
Saluda	11	5.83	54.5%
Spartanburg	93	2.84	52.7%
Sumter	41	3.88	65.9%
Union	6	2.20	16.7%
Williamsburg	21	6.77	4.8%
York	108	3.83	33.3%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

The number and rate of robberies in South Carolina decreased from 2019 to 2020. There were 50 robberies in Beaufort County and 12 in Jasper County in 2020, placing both counties among those with the lowest rates of robbery in the state.

Robbery by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	4	0.24	75.0%
Aiken	88	109.47	23.9%
Allendale	7	0.34	28.6%
Anderson	77	57.85	41.6%
Bamberg	14	6.80	35.7%
Barnwell	10	0.53	20.0%
Beaufort	50	2.18	34.0%
Berkeley	110	77.91	33.6%
Calhoun	4	0.10	50.0%
Charleston	490	87.16	22.2%
Cherokee	9	2.79	22.2%
Chester	12	2.77	16.7%
Chesterfield	15	4.82	26.7%
Clarendon	14	3.63	7.1%
Colleton	18	2.86	22.2%
Darlington	40	14.14	27.5%
Dillon	37	2.29	10.8%
Dorchester	69	26.89	26.1%
Edgefield	1	0.48	0.0%
Fairfield	8	0.58	50.0%
Florence	147	23.18	34.7%
Georgetown	26	0.49	53.8%
Greenville	413	59.55	42.9%

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Greenwood	43	23.17	41.9%
Hampton	1	0.03	0.0%
Horry	194	67.38	42.3%
Jasper	12	1.83	41.7%
Kershaw	17	1.77	47.1%
Lancaster	27	4.00	77.8%
Laurens	26	15.73	26.9%
Lee	7	0.24	28.6%
Lexington	153	160.61	37.9%
McCormick	0	0.00	N/A
Marion	21	7.87	9.5%
Marlboro	15	3.98	40.0%
Newberry	10	1.27	50.0%
Oconee	16	1.90	31.3%
Orangeburg	94	7.15	23.4%
Pickens	23	0.55	43.5%
Richland	500	265.08	32.0%
Saluda	8	0.24	50.0%
Spartanburg	177	16.77	48.6%
Sumter	76	27.90	32.9%
Union	8	2.58	25.0%
Williamsburg	11	0.39	0.0%
York	120	0.23	45.8%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

There has been a five-year upward trend in aggravated assaults across South Carolina. There were 480 aggravated assaults in Beaufort County and 34 in Jasper County in 2020, placing both counties among those with the lowest rates of aggravated assaults in the state.

Aggravated Assault by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	91	37.46	56.0%
Aiken	644	38.15	30.7%
Allendale	51	63.44	15.7%
Anderson	937	45.99	52.0%
Bamberg	64	48.08	25.0%
Barnwell	223	108.31	45.3%
Beaufort	480	25.65	39.2%
Berkeley	534	23.23	50.0%
Calhoun	54	38.25	74.1%
Charleston	1,698	41.59	40.5%
Cherokee	143	25.44	53.1%
Chester	166	51.40	30.7%
Chesterfield	226	52.23	49.1%
Clarendon	144	46.24	24.3%
Colleton	195	50.51	47.7%
Darlington	436	69.31	39.4%
Dillon	345	121.94	31.0%
Dorchester	403	24.95	40.7%
Edgefield	8	3.12	25.0%
Fairfield	144	68.74	68.1%
Florence	1,010	73.69	41.3%
Georgetown	253	39.90	70.4%
Greenville	2,031	38.65	70.4%

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Greenwood	367	52.92	48.2%
Hampton	89	47.95	19.1%
Horry	1,414	40.28	57.9%
Jasper	34	11.81	55.9%
Kershaw	240	36.70	37.9%
Lancaster	260	27.08	79.6%
Laurens	328	48.56	69.5%
Lee	97	58.68	14.4%
Lexington	762	25.92	53.9%
McCormick	14	14.70	35.7%
Marion	195	66.82	44.6%
Marlboro	214	80.25	46.7%
Newberry	201	53.29	78.6%
Oconee	237	30.15	54.0%
Orangeburg	997	118.38	23.8%
Pickens	350	26.64	68.9%
Richland	2,519	60.53	39.7%
Saluda	38	20.15	65.8%
Spartanburg	1,390	42.38	62.4%
Sumter	839	79.48	46.5%
Union	86	31.57	37.2%
Williamsburg	158	50.93	22.2%
York	845	29.95	50.4%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

Property Crimes

Property crimes include the offenses of breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, larceny, and arson. South Carolina's property crime rate decreased by 5.9% from 2019 to 2020. This decrease is the ninth consecutive yearly decrease.

South Carolina's breaking and entering rate decreased for the ninth consecutive year in 2020 to 43.68 per 10,000 residents. There were 415 breaking and entering crimes in Beaufort County and 36 in Jasper County in 2020, placing both counties well under the state rate for breaking and entering.

Breaking and Entering by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance	County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	120	49.39	25.0%	Greenwood	479	69.07	22.5%
Aiken	853	50.53	10.3%	Hampton	87	46.87	10.3%
Allendale	35	43.54	2.9%	Horry	1,184	33.73	22.0%
Anderson	1,004	49.28	18.8%	Jasper	36	12.50	16.7%
Bamberg	109	81.89	13.8%	Kershaw	311	47.55	11.9%
Barnwell	173	84.03	22.0%	Lancaster	343	35.72	50.1%
Beaufort	415	22.18	12.5%	Laurens	433	64.11	25.6%
Berkeley	618	26.89	17.5%	Lee	106	64.12	8.5%
Calhoun	63	44.62	22.2%	Lexington	1,421	48.33	13.7%
Charleston	1,290	31.60	15.4%	McCormick	25	26.24	16.0%
Cherokee	302	53.72	15.6%	Marion	228	78.13	9.6%
Chester	137	42.42	10.9%	Marlboro	126	47.25	18.3%
Chesterfield	321	74.18	21.2%	Newberry	131	34.73	45.8%
Clarendon	207	66.47	8.7%	Oconee	448	56.99	20.3%
Colleton	221	57.25	14.9%	Orangeburg	853	101.28	7.9%
Darlington	504	80.12	12.9%	Pickens	504	38.35	19.2%
Dillon	220	77.76	10.0%	Richland	2,103	50.54	11.6%
Dorchester	409	25.32	10.0%	Saluda	63	33.40	17.5%
Edgefield	40	15.59	5.0%	Spartanburg	1,610	49.09	19.2%
Fairfield	142	67.79	23.2%	Sumter	530	50.21	11.3%
Florence	793	57.86	16.3%	Union	102	37.44	5.9%
Georgetown	211	33.28	23.7%	Williamsburg	158	50.93	9.5%
Greenville	2,122	40.38	21.9%	York	803	28.47	25.5%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

The state's motor vehicle theft rate decreased by 2.1% from 2019 to 2020. Beaufort County had 217 motor vehicle theft crimes in 2020, and Jasper County had 20, constituting rates significantly lower than the state average.

Motor Vehicle Theft by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	47	19.35	31.9%
Aiken	619	36.67	10.0%
Allendale	27	33.59	0.0%
Anderson	894	43.88	24.6%
Bamberg	42	31.55	9.5%
Barnwell	64	31.08	32.8%
Beaufort	217	11.60	11.5%
Berkeley	488	21.23	14.5%
Calhoun	57	40.37	22.8%
Charleston	1,611	39.46	8.8%
Cherokee	170	30.24	15.9%
Chester	74	22.91	23.0%
Chesterfield	105	24.26	16.2%
Clarendon	66	21.19	13.6%
Colleton	124	32.12	21.8%
Darlington	238	37.83	21.8%
Dillon	92	32.52	10.9%
Dorchester	349	21.60	7.7%
Edgefield	36	14.03	0.0%
Fairfield	60	28.64	36.7%
Florence	588	42.90	14.6%
Georgetown	115	18.14	27.0%
Greenville	1,618	30.79	29.4%

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Greenwood	106	15.28	16.0%
Hampton	32	17.24	12.5%
Horry	910	25.92	16.7%
Jasper	20	6.95	20.0%
Kershaw	147	22.48	13.6%
Lancaster	129	13.44	45.0%
Laurens	210	31.09	35.7%
Lee	69	41.74	7.2%
Lexington	1,232	41.91	11.3%
McCormick	6	6.30	50.0%
Marion	67	22.96	6.0%
Marlboro	42	15.75	14.3%
Newberry	41	10.87	65.9%
Oconee	231	29.39	35.9%
Orangeburg	418	49.63	7.2%
Pickens	415	31.58	27.7%
Richland	1,839	44.19	5.5%
Saluda	37	19.62	10.8%
Spartanburg	950	28.96	21.7%
Sumter	238	22.55	21.0%
Union	47	17.25	21.3%
Williamsburg	79	25.46	6.3%
York	442	15.67	24.0%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

Larceny, the unlawful taking of property from the possession of another, is at a 10-year low in South Carolina. There were 2,221 reported cases of larceny in Beaufort County and 202 in Jasper County in 2020, constituting rates significantly lower than the state average.

Larceny by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	358	147.36	17.3%
Aiken	3,650	216.22	16.6%
Allendale	92	114.44	3.3%
Anderson	5,366	263.40	21.6%
Bamberg	237	178.05	11.4%
Barnwell	417	202.54	27.3%
Beaufort	2,221	118.70	20.2%
Berkeley	3,367	146.48	19.6%
Calhoun	218	154.40	22.0%
Charleston	9,660	236.63	14.4%
Cherokee	984	175.04	20.4%
Chester	573	177.43	18.7%
Chesterfield	971	224.39	14.1%
Clarendon	750	240.82	16.5%
Colleton	906	234.69	18.4%
Darlington	1,596	253.72	21.2%
Dillon	722	255.20	23.7%
Dorchester	2,656	164.42	11.4%
Edgefield	104	140.53	1.9%
Fairfield	345	164.69	28.1%
Florence	3,486	254.34	16.9%
Georgetown	1,081	170.49	28.4%
Greenville	11,163	212.41	25.7%

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Greenwood	1,731	249.60	21.4%
Hampton	241	129.84	10.4%
Horry	8,407	239.50	23.7%
Jasper	202	70.16	23.8%
Kershaw	1,256	192.04	14.7%
Lancaster	1,316	137.06	47.1%
Laurens	1,401	207.44	29.1%
Lee	330	199.62	9.4%
Lexington	6,936	235.93	15.5%
McCormick	101	106.03	16.8%
Marion	628	215.19	12.1%
Marlboro	482	180.75	21.2%
Newberry	539	142.90	53.4%
Oconee	1,511	192.22	29.6%
Orangeburg	2,398	284.72	8.5%
Pickens	2,436	185.38	26.2%
Richland	12,037	289.25	9.8%
Saluda	172	91.19	11.6%
Spartanburg	5,142	156.77	20.5%
Sumter	2,106	199.51	26.7%
Union	536	196.74	21.6%
Williamsburg	441	142.14	7.3%
York	4,583	162.47	25.0%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

South Carolina's arson rate increased by 22.7% from 2019 to 2020. There was one case of arson in Jasper County in 2020 and 17 cases in Beaufort County in 2020, constituting rates significantly lower than the state average.

Arson by S.C. County, 2020

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Abbeville	5	2.06	0.0%
Aiken	13	0.77	38.5%
Allendale	1	1.24	100.0%
Anderson	37	1.82	10.8%
Bamberg	0	0.00	N/A
Barnwell	2	0.97	50.0%
Beaufort	17	0.91	29.4%
Berkeley	29	1.26	24.1%
Calhoun	2	1.42	50.0%
Charleston	59	1.45	23.7%
Cherokee	13	2.31	46.2%
Chester	5	1.55	40.0%
Chesterfield	7	1.62	57.1%
Clarendon	6	1.93	33.3%
Colleton	15	3.89	6.7%
Darlington	13	2.07	15.4%
Dillon	8	2.83	0.0%
Dorchester	7	0.43	14.3%
Edgefield	0	0.00	N/A
Fairfield	10	4.77	60.0%
Florence	24	1.75	8.3%
Georgetown	10	1.58	40.0%
Greenville	76	1.45	36.8%

County	Number	Rate	Clearance
Greenwood	17	2.5	64.7%
Hampton	1	0.5	0.0%
Horry	47	1.3	29.8%
Jasper	1	0.3	100.0%
Kershaw	10	1.5	10.0%
Lancaster	10	1.0	30.0%
Laurens	20	3.0	30.0%
Lee	4	2.4	50.0%
Lexington	29	1.0	13.8%
McCormick	1	1.0	0.0%
Marion	8	2.7	12.5%
Marlboro	6	2.2	16.7%
Newberry	2	0.5	50.0%
Oconee	15	1.9	40.0%
Orangeburg	15	1.8	13.3%
Pickens	13	1.0	23.1%
Richland	66	1.6	13.6%
Saluda	3	1.6	33.3%
Spartanburg	60	1.8	38.3%
Sumter	27	2.6	37.0%
Union	1	0.4	0.0%
Williamsburg	8	2.6	0.0%
York	23	0.8	17.4%

Source: SC State Law Enforcement Division

Child Abuse and Neglect

It is difficult to obtain valid and reliable comparative statistics on child abuse and neglect. The data reported in the following table are offered as static information without inference. These are founded investigations; that is, the determination following an investigation by a child protection worker is that, based on available information, it is more likely than not that child abuse or neglect did occur. These investigations are not "unique"; that is, they may include multiple investigations for the same children.

As of 2018, there were 35,023 child residents of Beaufort County and 5,889 child residents of Jasper County.

Total Number of founded Investigations for Child Abuse and Neglect										
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Beaufort	82	77	76	74	108	145	152	147	168	140
Jasper	39	24	37	29	28	41	66	41	52	43

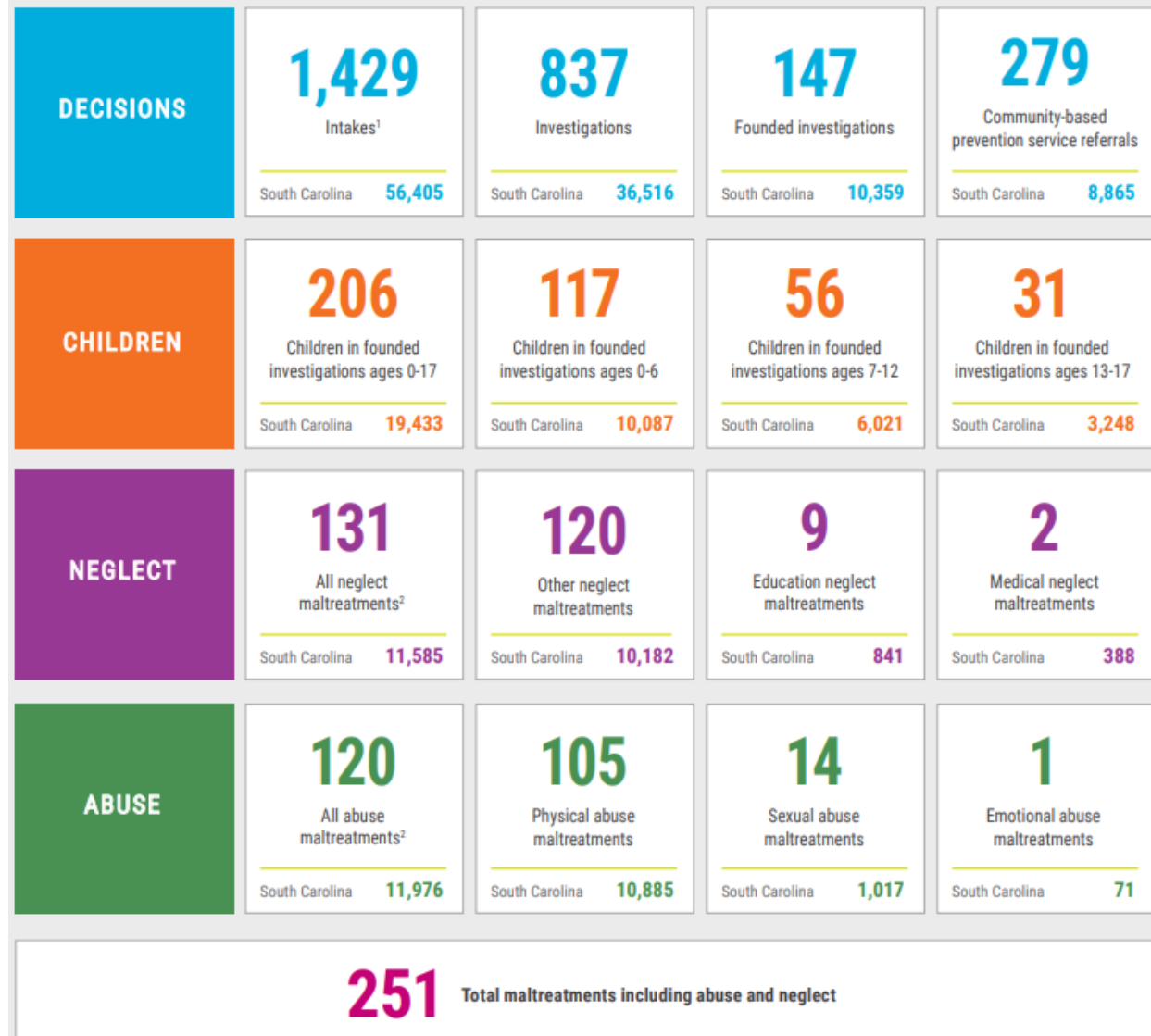
Source: Kids Count Data Center

For more detailed 2018-2019 data regarding child maltreatment, see the following tables, provided by the Children's Trust of South Carolina, for each county.

2018-2019 South Carolina Child Maltreatment Data Profile

BEAUFORT COUNTY

Children under 18 years of age (2018)
Beaufort County 35,023
South Carolina 1,105,945



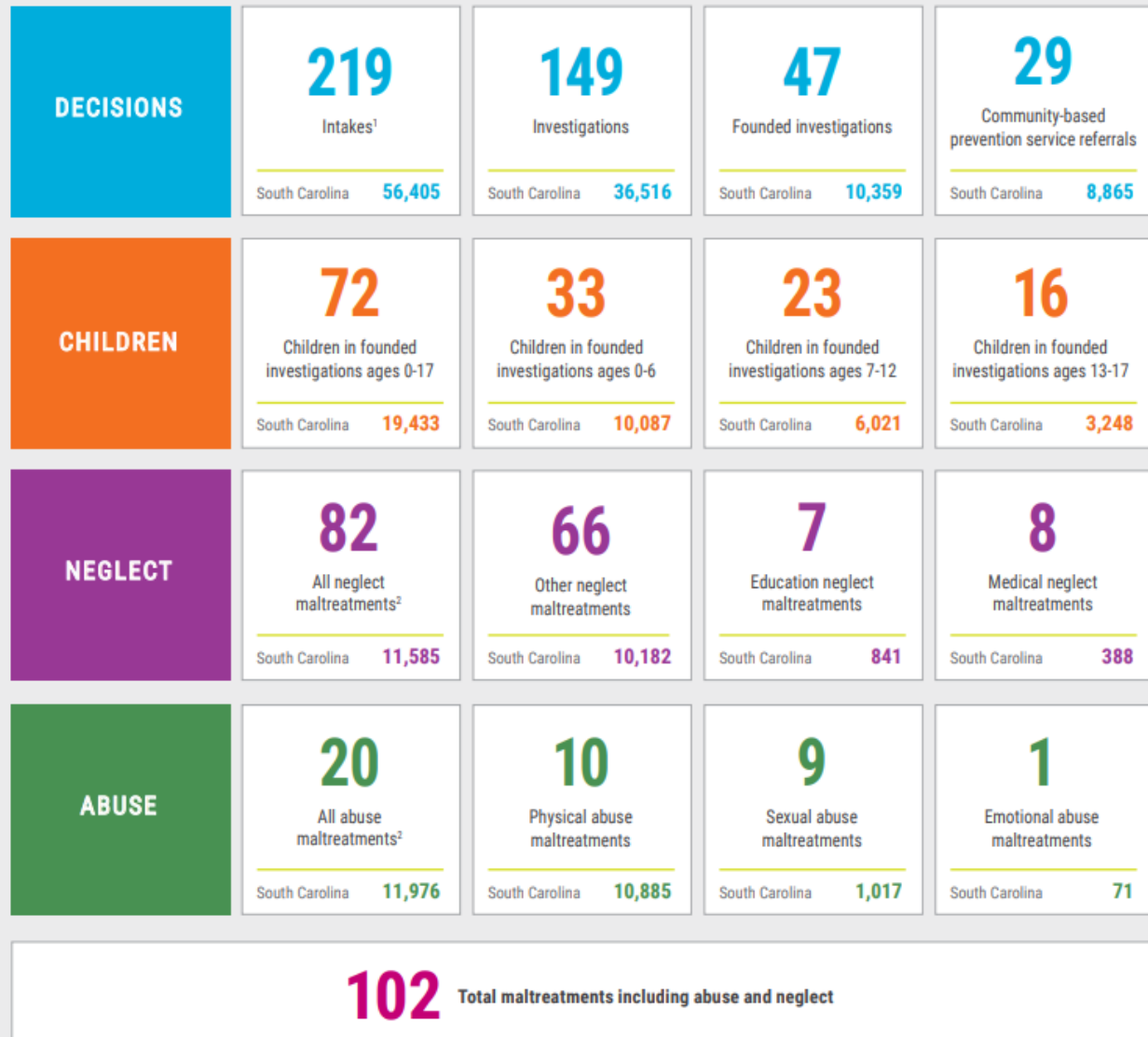
Source: Children's Trust of South Carolina.²⁵

²⁵ Children's Trust of South Carolina. Beaufort County Child Maltreatment Data Profile. <https://scchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/Beaufort-County-Child-Maltreatment-Data-Profile.pdf>

2018-2019 South Carolina Child Maltreatment Data Profile

JASPER COUNTY

Children under 18 years of age (2018)
Jasper County 5,889
South Carolina 1,105,945



Source: Children's Trust of South Carolina.²⁶

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The School to Prison Pipeline refers to the policies and practices that directly and indirectly push students out of school and onto a pathway to prison. Zero tolerance policies that were implemented in the 1980s and 1990s, intended to keep America's school children safe, often require suspension, expulsion, or referrals to law enforcement as school disciplinary tactics. Over the years, these policies have slowly

²⁶ Children's Trust of South Carolina. Jasper County Child Maltreatment Data Profile. <https://scchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/Jasper-County-Child-Maltreatment-Data-Profile.pdf>

broadened their scope and now often include minor offenses such as dress code violations, insubordination, tardiness, and cursing. Zero tolerance policies establish a mandatory or predetermined punishment for certain behaviors without taking into consideration the situational context or mitigating factors. Suspensions skyrocketed after the implementation of zero tolerance policies as did referrals to police or the juvenile justice system, with Black students much more likely to be suspended or referred to police than White students.²⁷ These policies assume that the immediate removal of disruptive students will deter others from similar behavior and improve classroom harmony; however, research shows little evidence that zero tolerance policies improve school climate or discipline. In fact, policies that remove students from the school environment are associated with lower academic performance, failure to graduate on time, increased probability of drop out, and increased probability of incarceration. A high school dropout is eight times more likely to be incarcerated than a high school graduate.²⁸

The data reported through the District Report Cards as of school year 2020-2021, show significant numbers of students in Beaufort County School District are disciplined through in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion. Far fewer students experience these forms of discipline in Jasper County School District as would be expected, given significantly lower enrollment in Jasper County.

School Discipline Data, Beaufort and Jasper County School Districts, 2020-2021					
District	Enrollment	Students with in-school suspension	Students with out-of-school suspensions	Students expelled	School-related arrests and referrals to law enforcement
Beaufort County School District	21,219	1,008	759	4	76
Jasper County School District	2,664	0	48	0	0

Source: SC Department of Education District Report Cards.²⁹

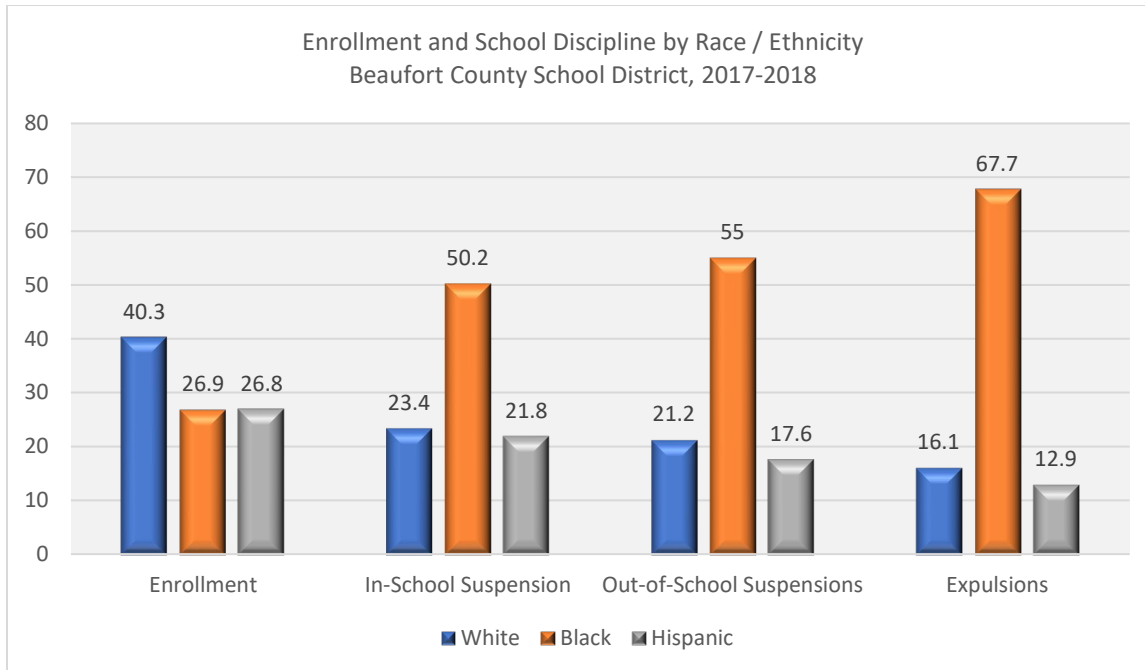
Data provided from school districts to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR)³⁰ provides deeper understanding of school discipline at the district level and at the individual school level and by race and ethnicity. The most recent data release covers the 2017-2018 school year. The following graph shows significant disparities between enrollment demographics and school discipline by race for the 2017-2018 school year in Beaufort County. Although White students (in blue) comprise larger shares of the school population, they comprise a relatively smaller portion of discipline. The opposite is true for Black students (in orange) who experience discipline at higher rates than they constitute in the school population. Although they constitute a very small portion of enrollment, Hispanic students, like White students, experience lower rates of discipline.

²⁷ Giroux, Henry A. Mis/Education and Zero Tolerance: Disposable Youth and the Politics of Domestic Militarization. *Boundary2: an international journal of literature and culture*, Volume 28(3) – Sept 1, 2001

²⁸ School or the Streets: Crime and America's Drop Out Crisis: <https://alabamapartnershipforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/School-or-the-Streets-Crime-and-Americas-Dropout-Crisis.pdf>

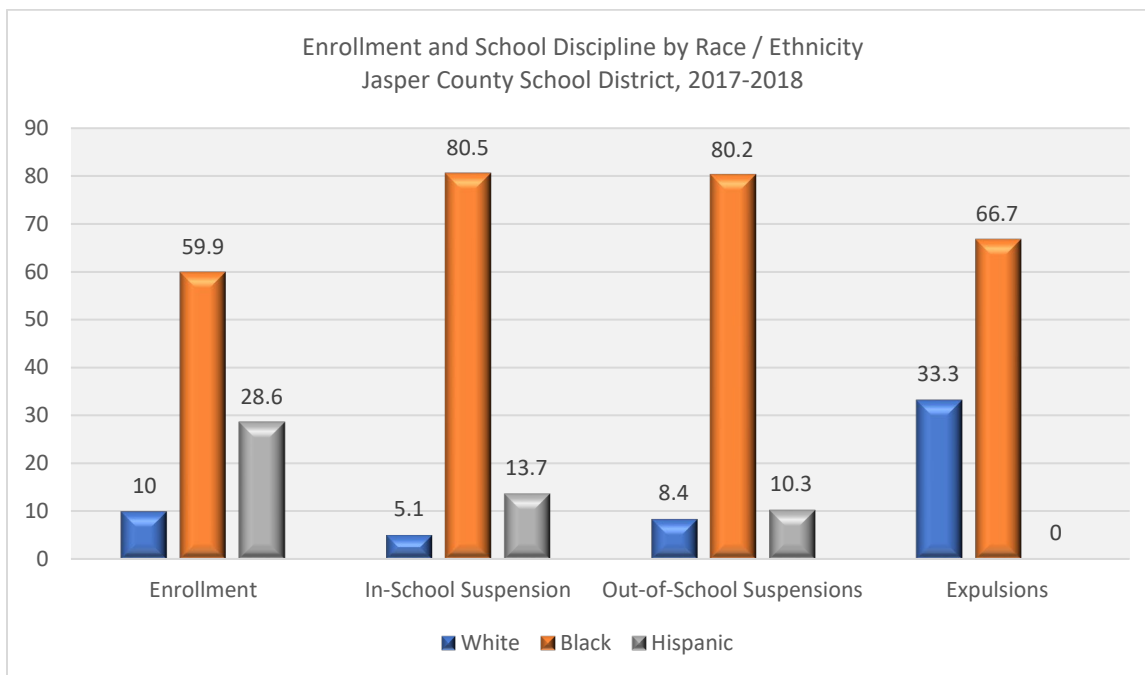
²⁹ SC Department of Education, School Report Cards: <https://www.ed.sc.gov/data/report-cards/sc-school-report-card/>

³⁰ Civil Rights Data Collection: [Civil Rights Data Collection \(ed.gov\)](https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/civildata/)



Source: US DOE Office of Civil Rights

There are also significant disparities between enrollment demographics and school discipline by race for the 2017-2018 school year in Jasper County. Black students comprise the largest share of enrollment, followed by Hispanic students. Black students are also disciplined at higher rates than they constitute in the school population. The opposite is true for Hispanics and Whites (except for expulsion).



Source: US DOE Office of Civil Rights

While it is difficult to establish direct causal links between school discipline and admission to correctional institutions, the literature is replete with research that strongly suggests a correlation between school discipline and the likelihood of dropping out, arrests, and incarceration. Thus, in terms of suspensions and expulsions, these district-level data do call into question the idea of a school-to-prison pipeline for both counties, especially for Black students.

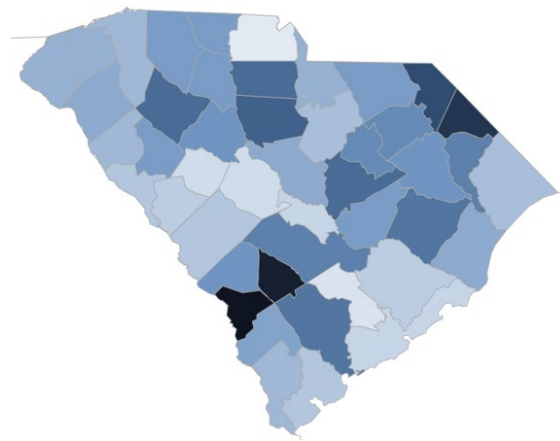
Environment

Environmental factors form the physical context for personal and community health and wellbeing. Where people live, work, play, learn, and interact can provide or inhibit opportunities to thrive.

Food Environment

The Food Environment Index, reported annually by the County Health Rankings,³¹ ranges from 0 (worst) to 10 (best) and equally weights two indicators of the food environment:

- **Limited access to healthy foods:** the percentage of the population that is low income and does not live close to a grocery store.
- **Food insecurity:** the percentage of the population that did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year.



BEST  WORST

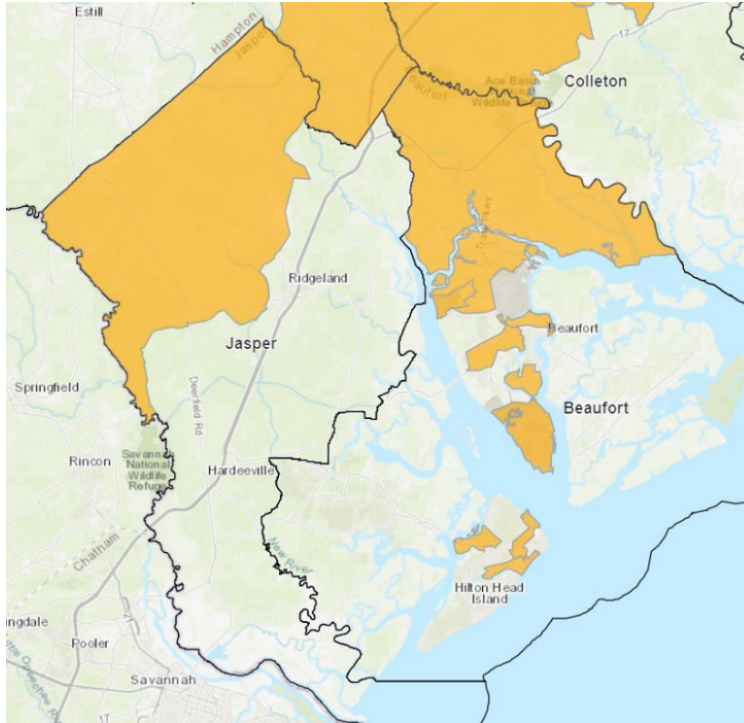
Food Environment Index Data		
	Beaufort	Jasper
Food Environment Index Rating	8.1	7.9
• Limited access to food	11%	5%
• Food insecurity	9%	12%

Although the data are not disaggregated by race, low-income people and People of Color are generally the most at-risk populations for food insecurity and limited access to healthy foods. Beaufort County's 2021 Food Environment Index rating is 8.1, where 9% of residents are food insecure and 11% lack access to healthy foods. This is better than South Carolina's overall Food Environment Index rating (6.7), but not as good as the U.S. top performers (8.7). Jasper County's 2021 Food Environment Index rating is lower than Beaufort's at 7.9, where 12% of residents are food insecure, and 5% lack access to food.

³¹ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

Food Deserts

Certain communities, particularly lower-income or minority communities, often lack supermarkets or other sources of healthy and affordable foods. According 2019 data from Feeding America,³² 555,630 residents of South Carolina (11%) are food insecure, lacking access or resources to purchase enough food for active, healthy life for all household members. In Beaufort County, 15,060 (8.1%) residents are food insecure, and in Jasper County, 2,760 (9.6%) residents are food insecure. Many of these people are minorities and single parent families with young children.

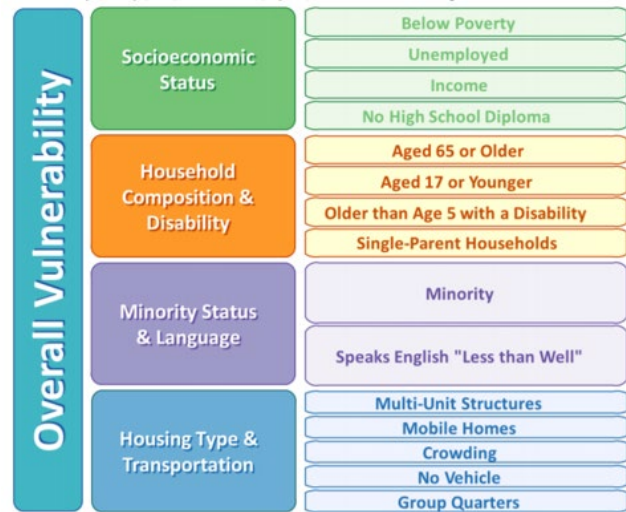


Food deserts, a component measure of food insecurity, is defined as at least 500 people and / or at least 33% of a census tract's population residing more than a mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (more than 10 miles for rural census tracts). Significant portions of Beaufort and Jasper Counties are classified as food deserts, as indicated in the map to the left and marked in orange..³³

³² [Hunger & Poverty in South Carolina | Map the Meal Gap \(feedingamerica.org\)](https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-and-poverty-in-south-carolina)

³³ South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. [SC Food Desert Map \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.scdhec.gov/food-desert-map)

Social Vulnerability Index



Source: CDC

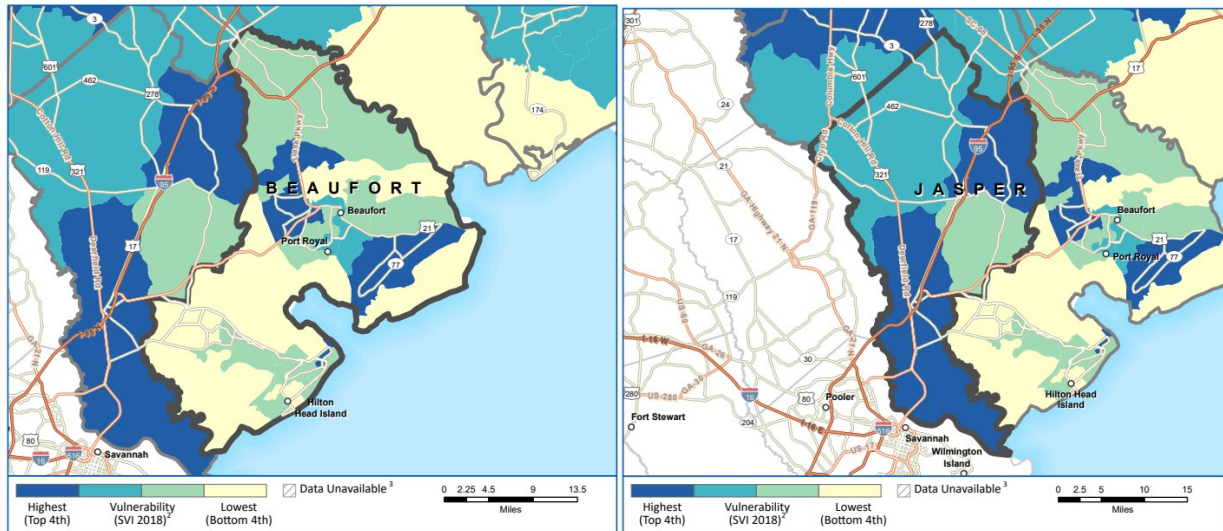
The CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI),³⁴ is a geospatial tool that measures a community's capacity to prepare for and respond to hazardous events ranging from natural disasters and disease outbreaks to human-caused threats, such as toxic chemical spills. The 2018 SVI determines vulnerability at the census tract level, based on 4 themes and 15 factors as illustrated in the following graphic, by assigning an overall SVI score ranging from 0 (lowest vulnerability) to 1 (most vulnerable), as well as scores for each of the themes.

Beaufort County's SVI score is 0.4006, the low to moderate range of social vulnerability. However, Jasper County's SVI score is 0.9449, the high range of social vulnerability. Scores range widely across the themes that comprise the overall SVI score, especially in Beaufort County. Theme scores for vulnerability are:

<p>Beaufort = 0.4006</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.2089 Socioeconomic 0.249 Household composition & disability 0.8128 Minority status & language 0.6059 Housing type & transportation 	<p>Jasper = 0.9449</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.8755 Socioeconomic 0.6116 Household composition & disability 0.9519 Minority status & language 0.9226 Housing type & transportation
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The following heat maps from the CDC's SVI website demonstrate levels of social vulnerability by census tract in Beaufort and Jasper Counties. Significant portions of Jasper County, and some portions of Beaufort County, are areas of highest vulnerability.

³⁴ Social Vulnerability Index: <https://svi.cdc.gov/>

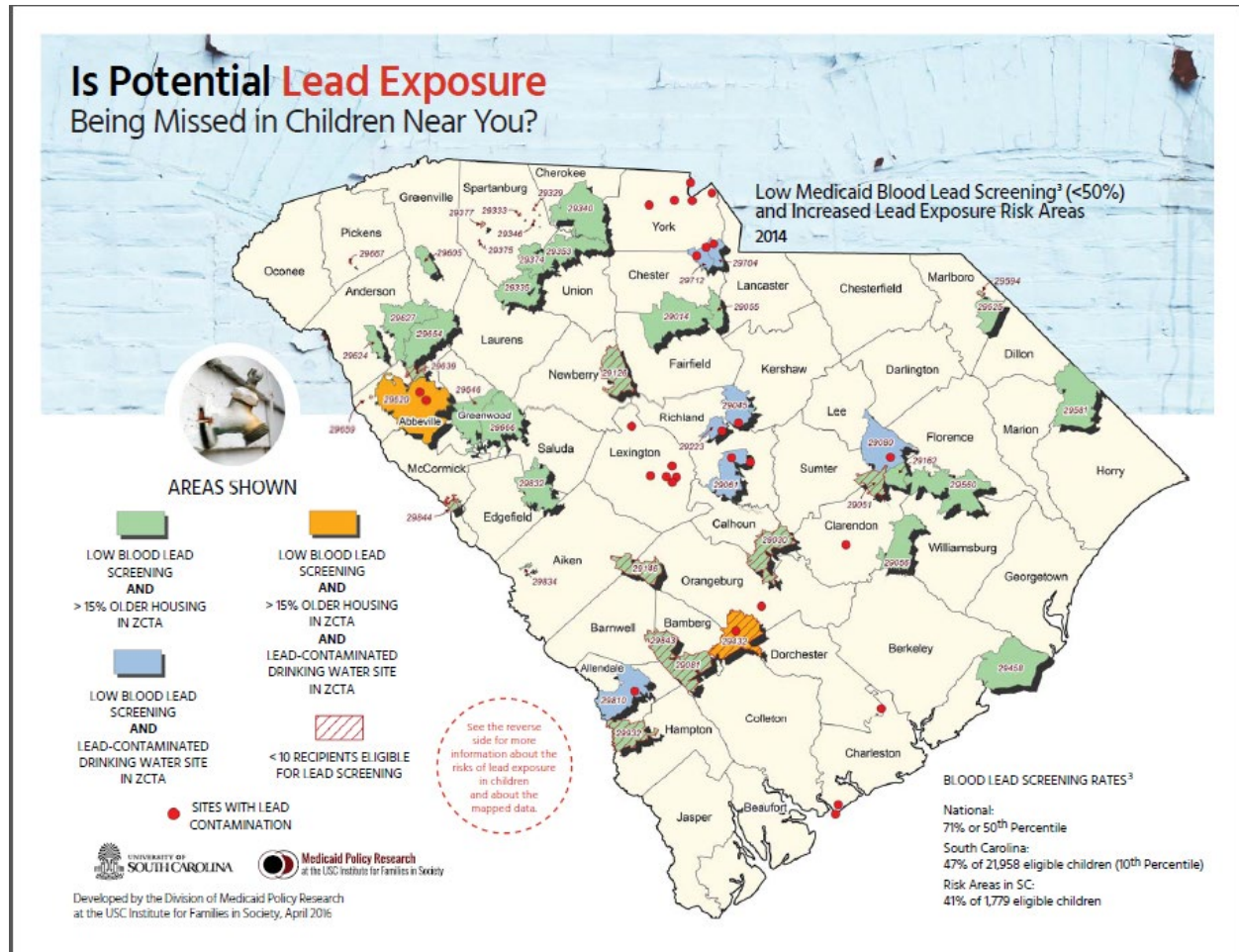


Lead Exposure

Childhood lead poisoning is considered the most preventable environmental disease among young children, yet approximately 500,000 U.S. children have blood levels higher than the acceptable standard of 5 micrograms per deciliter ($> 5\mu\text{g/dL}$). Because their organs and tissues are rapidly developing, and because they tend to have more exposure to potential sources of lead, children are most at risk for lead poisoning. Lead affects the neurological system, and exposure can cause cognitive impairment. Lead poisoning can cause coma, seizures, and death.

Children who grow up in low income and minority communities are at significantly higher risk for lead exposure since these communities frequently have many older and unsafe homes. Older homes are more likely to have lead-based paint that can chip and find its way into the dust and soil surrounding the home, leading to illness. These houses may also be prone to structural problems, mold, or other hazards that put residents at higher risk of other health problems too, such as asthma and injury. The following infographic identifies Beaufort and Jasper Counties as counties without concern for lead contamination.³⁵

³⁵ SC HealthViz (March 2, 2017). Is Lead Exposure Being Missed in Kids? <https://www.schealthviz.sc.edu/sc-healthviz-findings>



Source: SC HealthViz

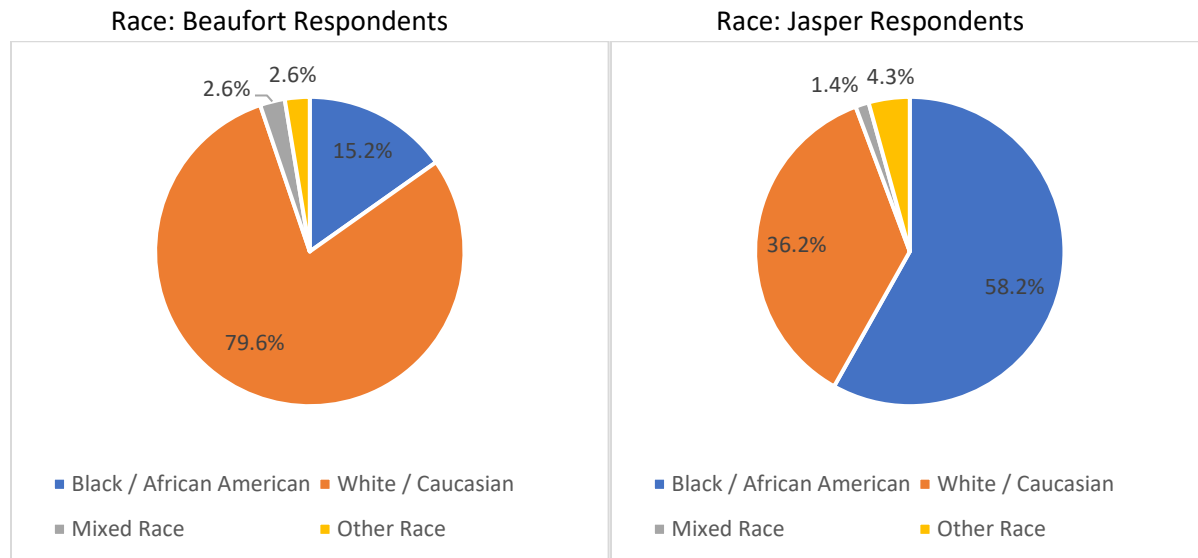
Part II: Community Survey

312 residents of Beaufort County and 148 residents of Jasper County responded to the community-wide survey (an addition 200 residents of other counties responded, but they are not included in this analysis). While these samples are not representative of either county based on population numbers and based on alignment with certain population demographics as follows, the information yielded by survey results is nonetheless compelling and useful.

Respondent Demographics

White respondents from Beaufort County were overrepresented (80% vs. 70% county population), and Black residents were slightly underrepresented (15% vs. 18% county population).

White respondents from Jasper County were underrepresented (36% vs. 44% county population), and Black respondents were overrepresented (58% vs. 41% county population).

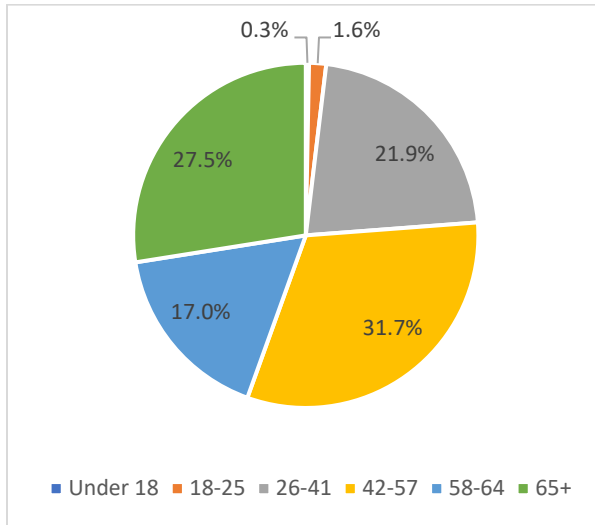


Hispanic residents were underrepresented by survey respondents in Beaufort County (5% vs. 11% county population) and Jasper County (3% vs. 14% county population).

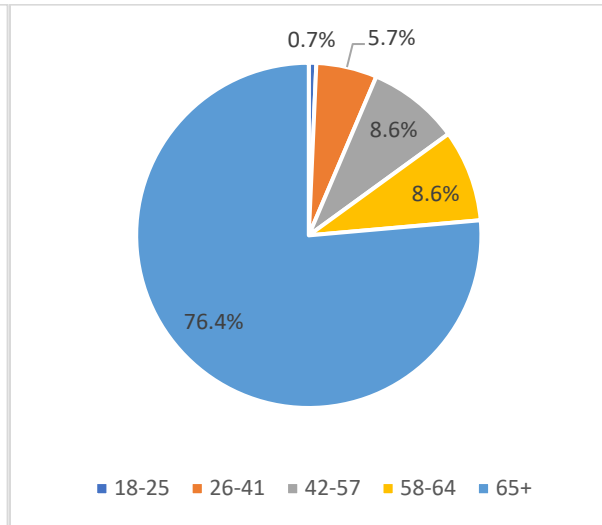
The most frequent age category for respondents in Beaufort County was age 42-57. Only 3 respondents were under age 26.

Respondents in Jasper County were especially skewed to age 65+. Only 9 respondents were under age 42.

Age: Beaufort Respondents

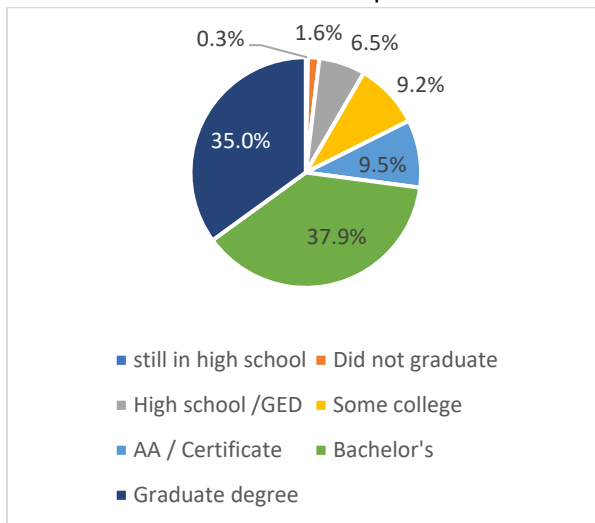


Age: Jasper Respondents

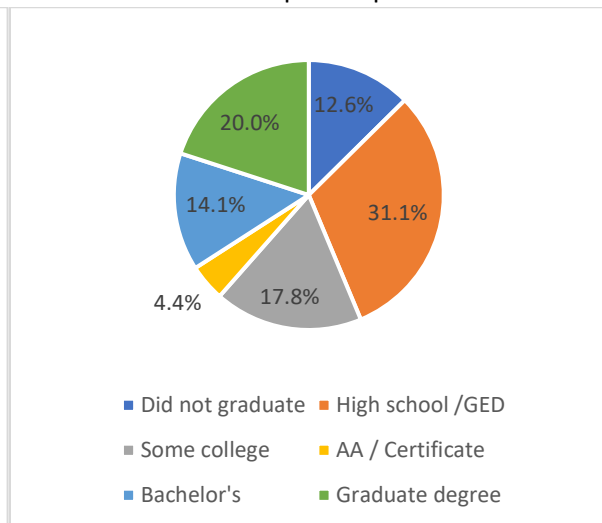


Respondents in both counties have higher education attainment compared to their county populations. Beaufort County respondents have higher bachelor's degree or higher attainment (73% vs. 41% county population). Jasper County respondents also have higher bachelor's degree or higher attainment (34% vs. 18% county population). Likewise, only 8% of Beaufort County respondents have only high school or less attainment vs. 30% of the county population. Jasper County respondents are somewhat more representative at the high school or less level (44% vs. 56% county population).

Education: Beaufort Respondents

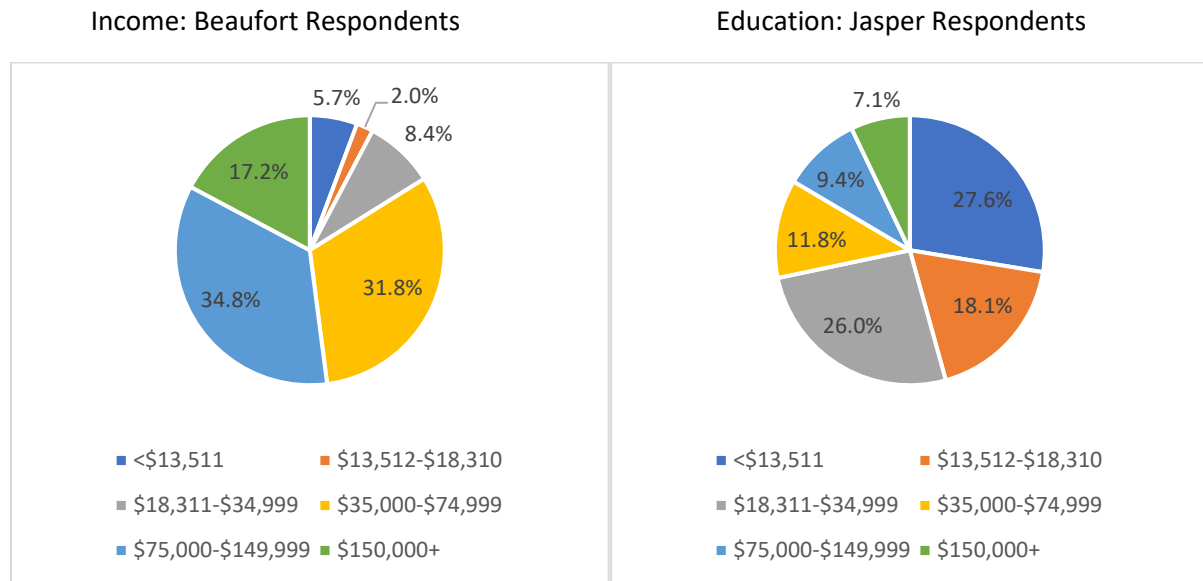


Education: Jasper Respondents



The greatest number of respondents in Beaufort County have annual household incomes in the \$75,000-\$149,999 range. In fact, 52% of respondents have incomes above \$75,000. This is well above the actual Beaufort County median household income of \$68,377.

The greatest number of respondents in Jasper County have annual household income below \$13,511, and 72% have annual household incomes below \$35,000. This is below the actual Jasper County median household income of \$45,601.



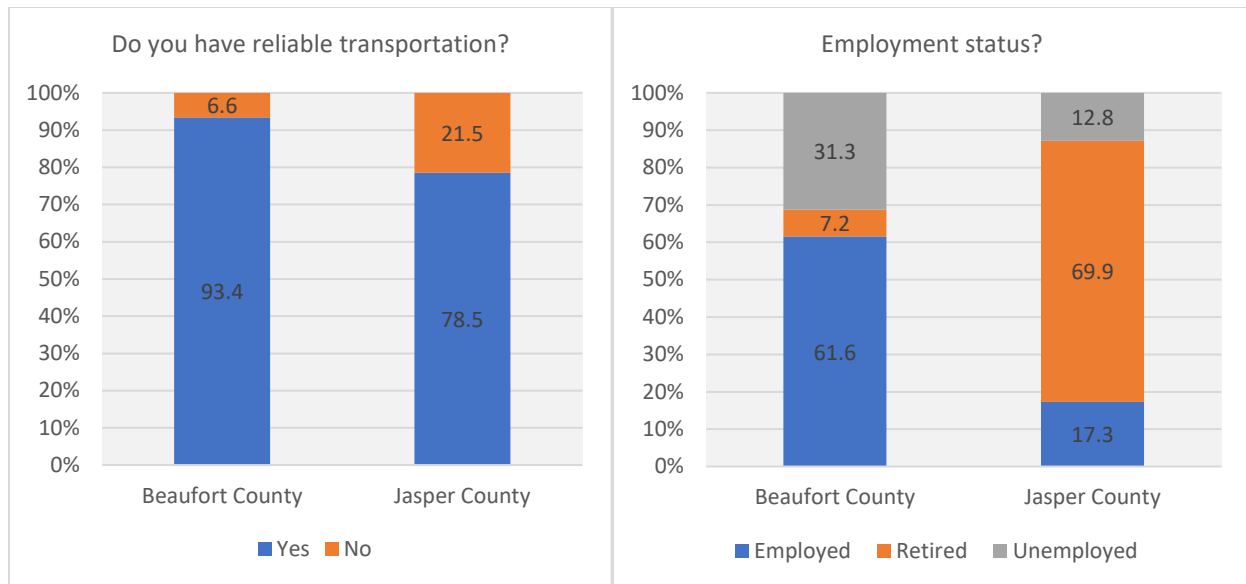
Thus, survey respondents in Beaufort County are Whiter, less Hispanic, richer, and better educated compared to the county population. Survey respondents in Jasper County are Blacker, less Hispanic, poorer, older, and better educated than the county population.

Respondent Needs and Access to Services

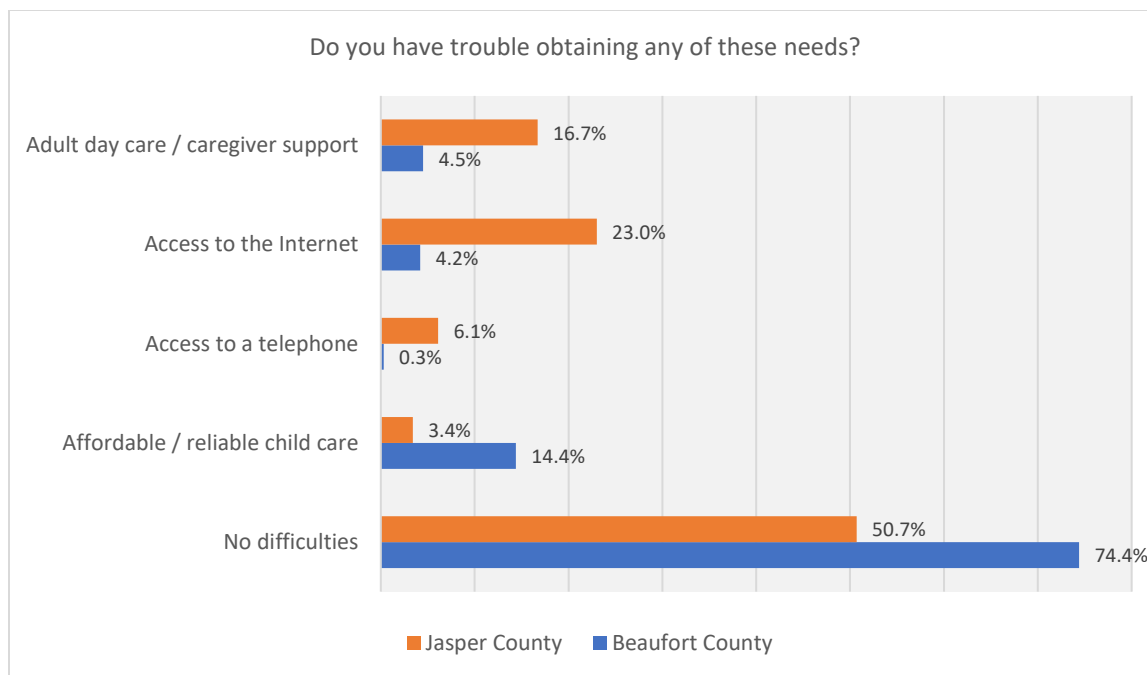
As demonstrated in the following graphs, significantly more Beaufort County respondents, compared to Jasper County respondents, have reliable transportation.

Most respondents in Jasper County are retired, and most in Beaufort County are working. A greater percentage of respondents in Beaufort County are unemployed.

- Of the 96 unemployed respondents in Beaufort County, 4 are looking for work. Of those not looking for work, 11 report they are disabled, 4 are full-time caretakers, 3 are students, and 2 lack childcare
- Of the 17 unemployed respondents in Jasper County, 7 are looking for work. Of those not looking for work, 15 are disabled, and 1 is a caretaker



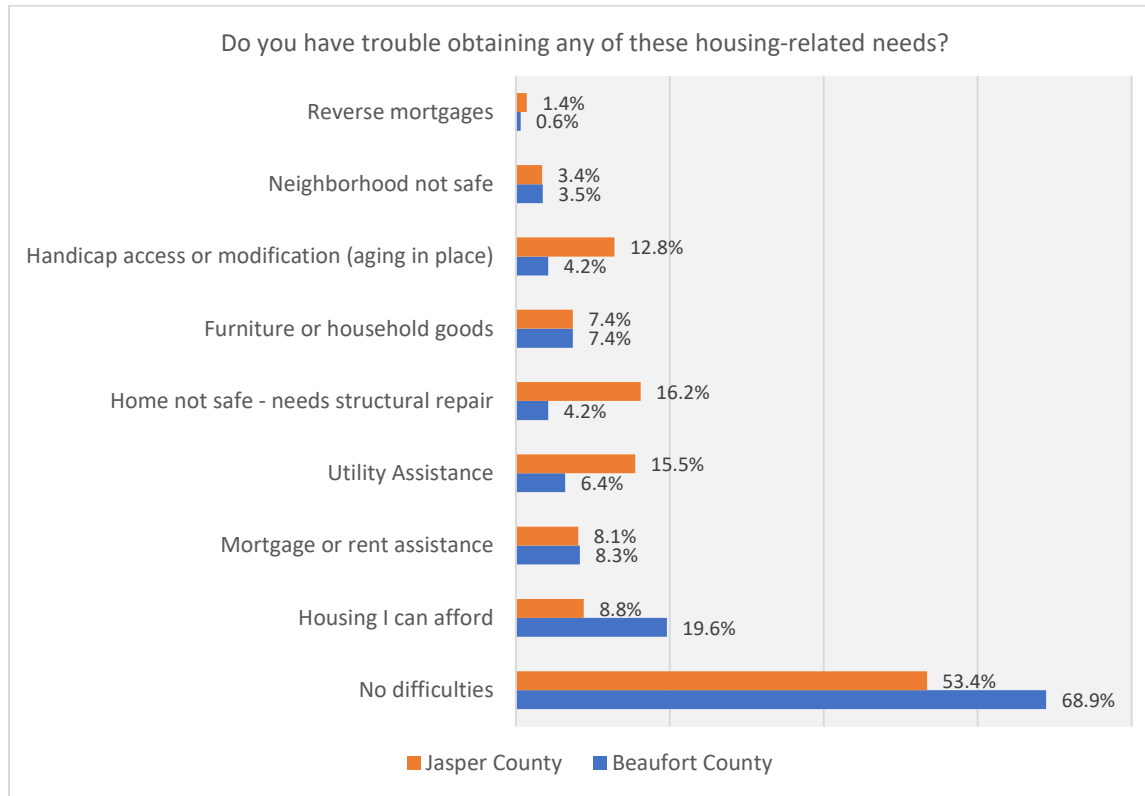
Respondents in Jasper County report fewer difficulties obtaining the needs indicated in the following graph. However, of those who do report having specific needs, Jasper County respondents have significantly more difficulty obtaining adult day care / caregiver support, access to the Internet, and access to telephones. Respondents in Beaufort County have more difficulty obtaining reliable / affordable childcare.



Other needs reported by Beaufort County respondents included housing/affordable housing /special needs housing (n=7), transportation (n=4), home repairs (n= 2), and several others.

Other needs reported by Jasper County respondents included yard work (n=2), specialty care for a special needs child, and transportation.

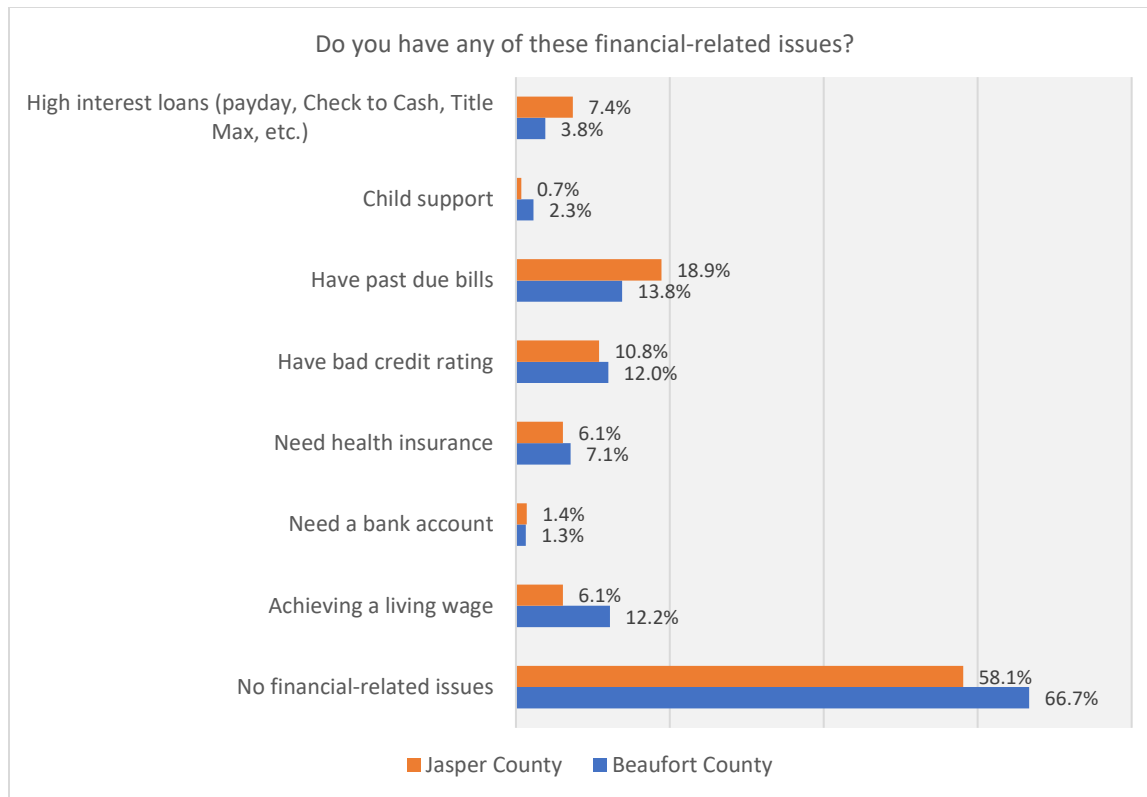
Regarding housing-related needs, a greater proportion of Beaufort County respondents reported no difficulty obtaining these needs. Of respondents who did report housing needs, Jasper County respondents reported greater needs in obtaining home repairs, utility assistance, and handicap access / modification for aging in place. Beaufort County respondents reported greater need in obtaining affordable housing.



“Other” needs identified by Beaufort County respondents include help with specific utilities and other housing costs.

Other needs reported by Jasper County respondents include help with property tax, storm repair, need home built, need hot water heater, and other repairs (n=2).

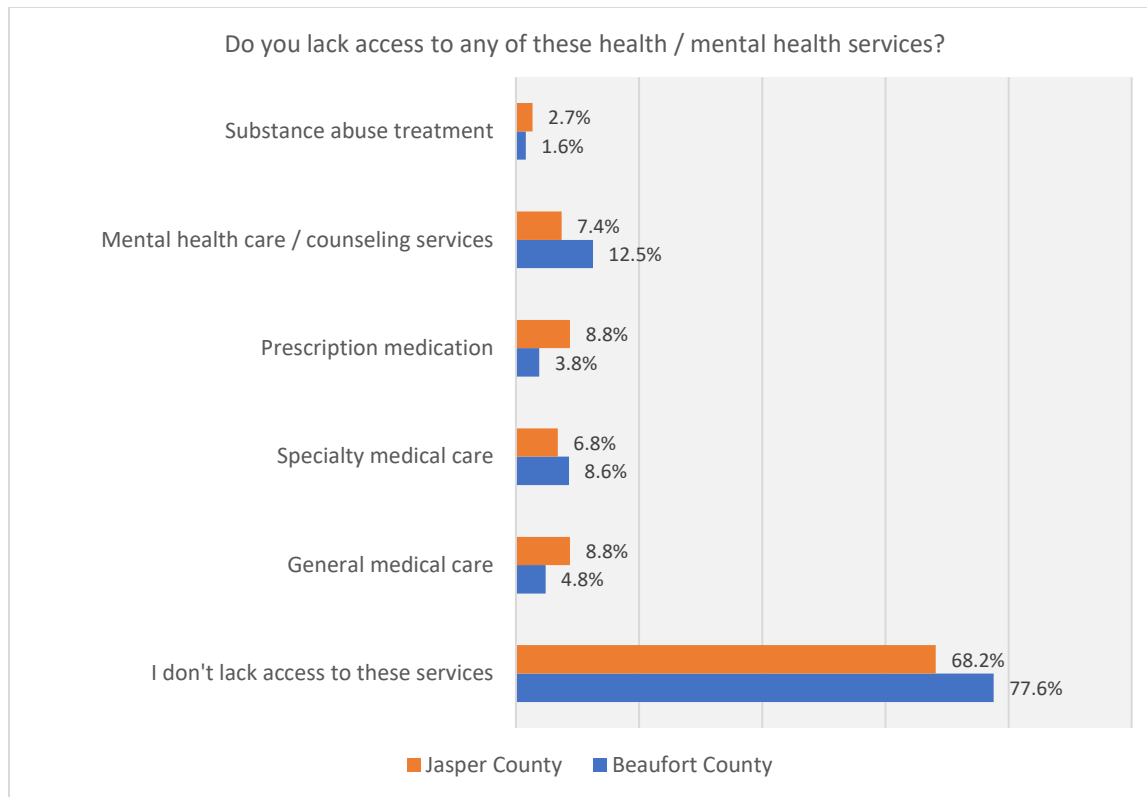
Regarding financial-related issues, a greater proportion of Beaufort County respondents reported having no difficulty with financial-related issues. Of respondents who did report financial-related issues, Jasper County respondents reported proportionately more issues with high interest loans and past-due bills. Beaufort County respondents reported proportionately more issues with achieving a living wage and having bad credit. For both counties, very small percentages of respondents reported that they needed bank accounts and few reported issues with child support.



Other financial-related issues reported by Beaufort County respondents include student loans (n=6), debt-to-income ratio, no savings, hospital / medical bills, legal bills, dependency on others, and taxes.

Other financial-related issues reported by Jasper County respondents include getting help for bills from children / family (n=2), medical bills, and student loans.

Regarding needed health or mental health services, a greater proportion of Beaufort County respondents reported having no difficulty accessing these services. Of respondents who did report difficulty with health / mental health services, Jasper County respondents reported proportionately more lack of access to general medical care and to prescription medication. Beaufort County respondents reported proportionately more lack of access to specialty medical care and mental health /counseling services. For both counties, very small percentages of respondents reported lack of access to substance abuse treatment.



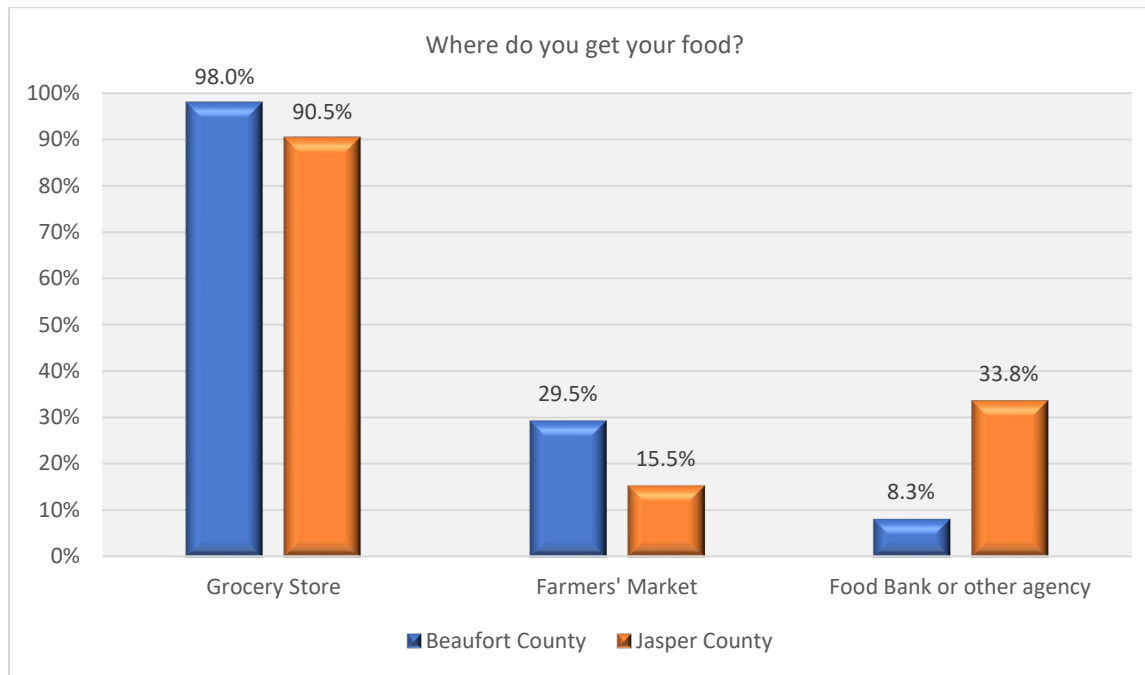
Other needed health / mental health services reported by Beaufort County respondents include dental / dental insurance (n=3), accessing doctors who take Medicaid and primary care providers who are taking new patients (n=3), affordable mental health services (n=4), and primary care services after 5:00 p.m. Reasons given by Beaufort County respondents for being unable to access health / mental health services were:

- Lack of transportation (n=10)
- Service I need is not in the area (n=30)
- I can't afford it (n=38)
- Other: difficult to find physicians who take Medicaid, not enough providers covered by insurance, nowhere to send for mental health evaluation, multiple social needs, long waits for appointments, cannot drive, extremely high prices.

Three respondents in Jasper County reported other health / mental health needs: dental (n=2) and old age. Reasons given by Jasper County respondents for being unable to access health / mental health services were:

- Lack of transportation (n=9)
- Service I need is not in the area (n=8)
- I can't afford it (n=16)
- Other: not eligible (n=1)

Most respondents in both counties indicated that they get food at grocery stores, but clearly, many respondents also access farmers' markets (30% in Beaufort County) and food banks or other agencies (more than 1/3 of respondents in Jasper County).



Beaufort County respondents report that they also obtain food by swapping with friends and neighbors, they grow their own (n=2), or they obtain food from churches, workplace, or on line.

Jasper County respondents report that they also obtain food from Meals on Wheels (n=4), growing their own (n=2), butcher and baker, and family.

Prioritizing Community Needs

In terms of prioritizing community needs, residents of Beaufort County and Jasper Counties ranked the challenges in the following tables least important to most important. The total of the weighted scores is reported in the last column. (Scores in each column are the weights 1-5 multiplied by the number of respondents assigning those weights).

In terms of total scores, Beaufort County respondents ranked affordable places to live highest and child care lowest. Affordable places to live also had the highest “most important” score, and childcare had the lowest “most important” score. However, heirs’ rights and race equity had the highest “least important” scores.

Beaufort County Rankings	1	2	3	4	5	Total
	Least important	→	→	→	→	most important
Job stability and advancement	5	4	153	272	895	1,329
Livable wage	5	2	39	156	1,240	1,442
Early childhood education / development	6	10	120	184	1,040	1,360
Ability to read and write	3	10	66	100	1,255	1,434

Well educated workforce	2	8	150	260	920	1,340
Affordable places to live	4	8	54	116	1,270	1,452
Disaster recovery	5	28	219	252	755	1,259
Race equity	17	20	150	128	985	1,300
Heirs' rights	24	44	234	216	645	1,163
Lack of affordable health care / insurance	6	16	153	228	940	1,343
Lack of mental health / addictions services	7	20	147	232	900	1,306
Not enough doctors / medical providers	3	34	204	236	785	1,262
Child care	13	10	192	208	174	597
Services for seniors	6	16	252	244	700	1,218
Homelessness	6	40	252	212	670	1,180

In terms of total scores, Jasper County respondents ranked early childhood education / development highest and homelessness lowest as community priorities. However, it is instructive to look closely at the 1-5 ranking scores. For example, affordable places to live had the highest “most important” score, and 7 challenges ranked higher than early childhood education / development on the “most important” score.

Jasper County Rankings	1	2	3	4	5	Total
	Least important	→	→	→	→	most important
Job stability and advancement	8	2	36	76	345	467
Livable wage	5	0	21	56	445	527
Early childhood education / development	8	0	28	56	355	537
Ability to read and write	6	2	18	32	430	488
Well educated workforce	2	2	18	36	420	478
Affordable places to live	5	0	9	24	470	508
Disaster recovery	3	4	60	56	325	448
Race equity	7	4	36	48	350	445
Heirs' rights	7	10	66	48	280	411
Lack of affordable health care / insurance	3	2	30	64	380	479
Lack of mental health / addictions services	1	2	33	72	340	448
Not enough doctors / medical providers	6	2	24	84	360	476
Child care	6	2	45	64	345	462
Services for seniors	4	2	36	36	420	498
Homelessness	6	2	48	48	280	384

When asked to rank the top four community needs from this list (1= most important), Beaufort County respondents assigned the most top four points to livable wage and affordable places to live. Livable wage also received the most top rank points and second rank points.

Number of Top Four Rankings by Community Need					
Beaufort County Rankings Top 4	1	2	3	4	Total points
Job stability and advancement	40	35	35	30	140
Livable wage	83	89	41	23	236

Early childhood education / development	20	27	33	41	121
Ability to read and write	26	23	32	26	107
Well educated workforce	7	11	22	24	64
Affordable places to live	73	64	50	38	225
Disaster recovery	3	4	6	10	23
Race equity	8	15	14	13	50
Heirs' rights	3	0	5	7	15
Lack of affordable health care / insurance	10	12	19	25	66
Lack of mental health / addictions services	4	6	8	18	36
Not enough doctors / medical providers	10	7	13	9	39
Child care	8	8	16	23	55
Services for seniors	4	4	9	13	30
Homelessness	13	3	7	11	34

Jasper County respondents assigned the most top four points to livable wage and affordable places to live. Livable wage also received the most top rank points, followed by services for seniors and job stability and advancement.

Number of Top Four Rankings by Community Need					
Jasper County Rankings Top 4	1	2	3	4	Total points
Job stability and advancement	16	8	4	4	32
Livable wage	18	22	5	10	55
Early childhood education / development	6	8	10	6	30
Ability to read and write	6	3	7	13	29
Well educated workforce	3	5	6	8	22
Affordable places to live	13	19	14	8	54
Disaster recovery	0	0	1	1	2
Race equity	3	3	6	3	15
Heirs' rights	1	1	1	0	3
Lack of affordable health care / insurance	2	1	13	9	25
Lack of mental health / addictions services	1	2	2	7	12
Not enough doctors / medical providers	6	4	5	5	20
Child care	0	4	3	4	11
Services for seniors	17	3	5	6	31
Homelessness	0	3	5	5	13

Further Feedback

Respondents from both counties were invited to provide feedback on several open-ended questions. The following is a brief synopsis of answers by question. Full lists of answers are reported in the appendix of this report; they have been edited to more efficiently capture duplicative responses and unintelligible responses.

Tell us who your trust – a person or organization – to act on one or more of the important issues in your community.

Respondents in Beaufort provided twice the number (unduplicated) of trusted people and organizations compared to Jasper County respondents. Elected officials and councils were among the most mentioned. A wide variety of helping organizations and churches were mentioned, several numerous times.

Have you ever received help from any local organizations? If yes, please identify them.

Again, Beaufort County respondents listed more organizations that have provided them help, compared to Jasper County organizations. Across the two counties, many nonprofit and public organizations were cited as having provided help, and many were mentioned multiple times.

What could be done to help make your community better?

Respondents in both counties provided a wide variety of suggestions that would make their communities better including more services generally, more services for elderly and children, transportation, recreation, better roads and infrastructure, affordable housing, better education and educational opportunities, better connectivity, more and better paying jobs, less crime / drugs/ guns. Especially in Beaufort County, there are several suggestions for more collaboration to solve problems, preserve the environment and quality of life, and to address traffic issues.

What do you think United Way of the Lowcountry does for our community?

Many respondents (n=60+) did not know what United Way does / hadn't heard of United Way or were unsure. Many others indicated that United way "helps" or "assists". Others reported that United Way raises money and gives it to helping agencies or organizes agencies. Many indicated that United Way helps with particular needs like early childhood education, disaster relief, and hunger.

What one thing could United Way do to make the community better?

Respondents reiterated many of their previous points. They suggested a variety of things United Way could do to may the community better, both as a coordinator and communicator, as well as an investor in direct services to meet particular needs like homelessness, senior services, education, and youth recreation. They suggest the United Way should play a role in affordable housing.

What have we not asked you about that you feel is important?

Respondents are interested in how to help with community needs and want to make sure all the needs are considered. They appreciate having been able to provide input.

Part III: Key Informant Interviews

We reached out to a large number of community leaders across sectors representing Beaufort and Jasper Counties, and 17 followed through with in-depth interviews regarding assets and challenges in both counties, as well as insights regarding how United Way of the Lowcountry could leverage its position and assist with challenges.

Several very strong themes emerged from these interviews. There was remarkable consistency in key points and discussion across key informants within each county, even though themes were different between the two counties. The following findings are perceptions of key informants as they reported them. They are organized in order by most prevalent. Insofar as possible, we have tried to capture the voices of the key informants, and we provide direct quotes as instructive.

Beaufort County Assets and Challenges

Assets

The primary asset that characterizes Beaufort County is a high quality of life as defined by the natural amenities and “the people”. Common asset themes among key informants were:

Generous People:

All informants mentioned the fact that residents demonstrate a unique and significant level of generosity and collaboration. The community is very responsive to need in terms of donation of time and funds, and “people are loving and receptive”, “kind and compassionate”. Nonprofit leaders report that “families in need get showered with what they need”, “people are extremely charitable”, “so many folks who are wealthy use their wealth to help others”, and even “I get more donations than I can spend, and they are larger now”. There is a high level of volunteerism throughout Beaufort County.

“We speak things into existence. Talk about it in a positive, strong, supportive way, and people are attracted to that. Then people show up to help.”

Natural Beauty, Great Weather:

All informants mentioned the natural beauty of Beaufort County: “this is an amazingly beautiful place – fabulously beautiful all year”. The beautiful views and living near the water were cited as amenities that drive a high quality of life: “living here feels like vacation”; “we live in paradise”. Beaufort was selected as the best small town in the South for 2022 by Southern Living magazine, in large part for the natural beauty. The county invests in parks and natural resources to ensure that this asset is maintained.

Culture:

Beaufort County is very diverse. The area has a rich history, especially African American history, and it is honored - “we respect those who have been here for a long time”; “the Gullah / Geechee culture here is very special”. The Gullah community is seen as a cultural asset as demonstrated by the historic

Mitchellville Freedom Park and the Penn Center. Beaufort County is home to lots of activities, festivals, events, and great food.

Good Leadership:

There are good relationships between municipalities and the county. In Beaufort, the City Manager and Mayor are supportive of efforts to create positive change. Mayors and town managers belong to the Human Services alliance, a network of 120+ organizations and 700+ professionals, that “come together to work on issues”. Although “people who are in positions of authority” are viewed as big picture thinkers, they are good at forging collaborations that attend to specific local issues. “Good things are going on in local government, but there is an old guard that is difficult to deal with”.

Many Helping Organizations:

Leading nonprofits (e.g. Deep Well, Bluffton Self-Help) address safety net issues, providing help with rent, utilities, food, etc. and are flexible in how they help. There are several sources of food assistance – Meals on Wheels, churches, and nonprofits have food programs / pantries, some with home delivery options. The Hunger Coalition ensures that children have fresh fruits and vegetables to take home from school. Habitat for Humanity is active in Beaufort County, addressing the pervasive issue of insufficient affordable housing, and other agencies repair / refurbish homes. Nonprofits became more flexible and changed a lot of rules during the pandemic to be responsive to need.

Challenges

The primary challenges in Beaufort County center on the interplay between high cost of living, lack of affordable housing, and workforce issues. There is also inequity in the services wealthy areas receive compared to the services poor areas receive. Common challenge themes across key informants were:

Unaffordable Housing / Lack of Workforce Housing:

All informants cited the high cost of housing that impacts workers and younger residents who can’t afford to live in Beaufort County, and especially Hilton Head Island. “People are moving away because they can’t find affordable housing”. “There is no affordable housing”. “Sometimes the poor are in very costly rentals”. The housing crisis is affecting the economy since “people can’t afford to live where they work”, so it is getting more difficult to find workers, especially those who support the tourist industry like landscapers, dishwashers, restaurant workers, hotel workers, etc. Because there are few affordable apartments that accommodate workers (“we only have condos, villas, and vacation rentals on HHI”), “people have to drive crazy distances to work”, affecting families and causing stress. People moving into the county are purchasing places initially designed for workers. This has been a persistent problem, and the perception is “all we do is talk about it over and over – no ideas are implemented”; “the Island Council talks about it all the time”. However, the Sea Pines company on Hilton Head Island is building a property to house their workers.

High Cost of Living:

Many jobs in Beaufort County are low wage, compounding the effects of the affordable housing crisis. “Many people work multiple jobs and still can’t get ahead”. “Teachers and other professionals are asking for food because they don’t make enough money”. “It is hard to find a good paying job”. For

many people who support the local economy, living in Beaufort County (especially in Beaufort or on Hilton Head Island) is out of reach. For those who do live and work in Beaufort County, many have second jobs - “even teachers have to have second jobs”. Nonprofit workers struggle too. Long-time members of the community are being displaced due to high taxes and inability to pay them. The living wage is higher in Beaufort County compared to most other parts of South Carolina, and “\$10 and \$12 per hour doesn’t cut it here”. “It all comes down to making a living wage”; “so many social ills would be reduced including domestic violence, substance misuse, etc.” if workers made a living wage. Many believe that the county government needs to step in and address the living wage issue because “let’s let the market handle it doesn’t work” as evidenced by a significant and pervasive worker shortage.

Workforce Challenges:

Tangential to the housing crisis and the high cost of living, Beaufort County, and especially Hilton Head Island, is having a workforce crisis. There are not enough employees to support the tourist economy. As the area grows, better jobs are opening up in Bluffton and Beaufort, taking workers from Hilton Head. However, Beaufort has lower wages, and workers find affordable housing there. The average wage earned in Beaufort County is reportedly only \$1 per hour higher than in Jasper County. Also, worker education is low, so opportunity for better jobs is low. One agency is trying to increase worker education level by getting people enrolled in vocational training in Bluffton and giving scholarships for training in in-demand jobs such as nursing assistant. St. Helena needs more job opportunities so that residents can pay property taxes and thereby preserve their way of life and culture, remaining on the Island.

“It all comes down to a living wage.”

Place-based and Income-based Inequities:

There is a place-based imbalance in amenities and economic opportunity within Beaufort County. Some areas have good roads and public facilities and services, and others do not (e.g., St. Helena Island). Rural areas of the county and poor residents “don’t have much voice”. Better economic development would address this – “services can be provided and overdevelopment avoided at the same time”. Residents are beginning to advocate for remedies and to become more involved in comprehensive planning, although the county’s Comprehensive Plan was recently updated, “but not much changed”. “We need a 25-year incremental plan” to address these issues, and “the people need to be key informants and drivers of the plan”.

Many people are in need:

Even though Beaufort County has many wealthy communities, there are extensive human needs. “People don’t realize that there are a lot of poor people here”. “The mixture of people and socioeconomic status is amazing here”. Hunger and Homelessness are top needs that nonprofits see, along with help with rent and utilities. One non-profit spent \$325,000 to “people’s creditors” in 2021. There is more and more food insecurity and homelessness “because the real estate market is crazy” and cost of living is high. There are “lots of fractured families and single mothers trying to raise kids without support and without good jobs”. Help with mental health issues is lacking, and this exacerbates homelessness and other challenges.

Service Duplication:

Many nonprofits do the same thing / help with the same problems, especially safety net services for food and rent / utilities payments. “We have splintered and uncoordinated efforts”. Agencies partner on large expenses and share clients – “just trying to help the poor together”. Nonprofits need to coordinate their activities.

Other challenges that Come with Growth:

“There are competing interests that come with growth. the challenge is continuing to grow / develop / expand while preserving the reasons people want to live here”. Growth results in infrastructure challenges like stormwater and rising seas mitigation. The county needs revenue from a larger tax base to fix the problems, but many residents don’t want growth, “especially people who recently moved here”. The historic district (Beaufort) doesn’t want growth or development at all; however, growth can be done well through different zoning regulations that offer protection. Hilton Head Island is “lost to development”, but St. Helena is not. Traffic (especially on Hilton Head Island and Bluffton) is “terrible”, especially during the height of the tourist season, causing stress on workers and impacting the native Island community “because of road widening – where do displaced residents go?”.

Challenges for the Latino / Hispanic Community: {note this pertains to both Jasper and Beaufort Counties}

The Latino / Hispanic community is drawn to the area for the same reasons everyone else is – it is beautiful, safe, and quiet. The population is growing: “26% of children under age 5 in Jasper County are of Hispanic origin, and 25% in Beaufort County”. Language barriers are addressed by ESL classes at the Literacy Center, but often people have to stop going. Families want to be independent and contribute, so learning the language is critical. “There are a lot of professionals here who are immigrants – engineers, teachers, etc. - but they don’t have Social Security numbers and they can’t work in their professions”. Many services are unavailable due to legal status, and this creates dependency on programs – “they would prefer to work”. “Rent is horrendous - \$2,000 per month, often, and housing is a huge, huge issue. We need workforce housing. There is no low- or medium-income rent”. By the HUD definition, lots of Latino residents are “homeless” since many families share the same home / apartment. There are not enough medical providers for this population even though there are 9 clinics in Beaufort and Jasper counties, serving three counties. “Providers move in and out”. There are good safety net providers, “especially Bluffton Self Help, Help of Beaufort, and Deep Well” that provide food, clothing and some financial assistance. But this is not enough, especially since help is often limited to one visit per month and rents are so high. Immigrants have special and complex needs, including “lots of broken families”. “Immigrants have it hard – they are just trying to survive”. Transportation is a huge issue.

Other challenges mentioned once or in passing:

- Heirs Rights and Property Taxes: the unintended consequences of “heirs rights” laws is that families are losing the land they have owned for generations. The entire family owns land – “family compound” – which can’t be split up. “We need to help families keep their land”. Because “ancestors were trafficked here and paid for the land with their sweat and blood”, land should be considered “paid in full” so that property taxes aren’t so burdensome to residents

who have trouble paying them, then lose their land. “This should be recognized. The African American population has been dropping every year because they can’t afford to stay here”.

- Few Opportunities for Youth: “young people have to move away to find the jobs they want”; “we need more opportunities for young families and new graduates”; “gangs are starting to form”.
- LGBTQ Challenges {pertains to both Beaufort and Jasper Counties}: There is no LGBTQ oppression (like protests at events) in Beaufort or Jasper, but the LGBTQ community needs more support. PRIDE is trying to build community and will be hosting a parent support group of LGBT kids. Schools have required training in LGBTQ, but many don’t have support groups / Gay-Straight alliances. “We need to help this community feel seen. PRIDE could help”. Need temporary housing for trans teens who have been kicked out of their homes or a center for young adults who are homeless. Charleston has the closest shelter for LGBTQ residents. “Mental Health and counseling service are critical, but therapists in the area have wait lists of 30 days or longer. There are no emergency mental health services”.
- Early Childhood Education: Early childhood education is a challenge, but the county has made some improvements via Together for Beaufort County. Early Head Start, Head Start, and schools worked together. There has been some “back and forth” on progress.

United Way’s Role in Beaufort County

Clearly, United Way of the Lowcountry is a trusted partner among key leaders. Key Informants made many suggestions about how United Way can leverage its reputational capital, primarily as an influencer and coalition-builder, but also as a funder to resolve the area’s most pressing needs. Common themes across key informants were:

Support Agencies:

Stand behind them. Focus on the infrastructure. Don’t try to take thing over. Facilitate agreements between agencies and with providers like landlords and utility companies. There are so many small organizations that need help and support. It is the grass roots organizations that grow into the larger NPOs. They need technical assistance.

Act as a Coordinating Body:

People understand the power of collaborating and have been successful in coming together to work on issues. “We can collaborate better to solve more problems”. United Way can resolve nonprofit duplication and maximize nonprofit resources and reach (Beaufort has 30-40 nonprofits doing good work but taking up property in the city that is non-taxable). United Way has “done a great job and is always cooperative with the city”. “United Way brings focus and coordination to addressing multiple issues – does better than most”. “Get a core group working together and nurture relationships. Don’t force relationships. It burns people, then they won’t trust”. “Pull together people who have capacity to do what you want to get done”. There is a need to address challenges regionally – United way has the capacity to do this.

Do Systems-Level Work:

United Way should play a key role in solving the affordable housing crisis. United Way could “become the primary generator of section 8 housing”, create a “reduced rate utilities” system, manage a low-income housing strategy, and “work on programs for affordable housing and workforce development”, especially for working families with young children. UWL should invest in systems to coordinate help people who struggle. “Change the systems and you will be most impactful in workforce housing, workforce development, and food insecurity”. Help youth find career paths – show them opportunities and connect them.

Create a Seamless and Accessible Service System:

Lots of people can’t read and many Latinos can’t speak English, so they need extra help accessing services. United Way can find more bilingual volunteers. “People here have a lot of pride, especially the Gullah community, that prevents them from asking for help” – find a way to get them the help they need. People without legal status can’t get services, but if they got a little help, they could get ahead. Whether or not they are “illegal”, the reality is that they are here, and they “need out of the ordinary help”.

Charity Tracker is good and is being used.

Invest in Programs that Address the Greatest Needs:

“The main issue for United Way to work on is housing for basic workers, especially on Hilton Head and into Bluffton”. “Maybe fund organizations like Deep Well that pay housing expenses for people who are running short” and Habitat for Humanity that addresses housing. Fund “the basics” like homelessness, food insecurity, rent, utilities, food, and transportation. Help underprivileged residents get living wage and good work so they won’t be homeless.

“Education is important”. Preparing the next generation is important, but we also have an older population (often “nontraditional”) that needs help. Invest in young people through increasing and supporting education opportunities that lead to well-paying job opportunities. Invest in early education like “The Children’s Center – early education from 6 weeks to 5 years”. Having good daycare allows people to work. “Most of these are kids of the minimum wage worker”. Because they are short on staff, they can’t take as many kids.

Other needs include help for people with disabilities, access to the Internet for all children,

Educate the Community:

We have people moving in from all over the country. UWL can bring them up to speed on the local needs and the ways they can help. People don’t always know where to go for help or to volunteer to do the helping. First Call for Help is good at referring people – “the caring people who work / volunteer there know the resources”. “We have the opportunity help, but people don’t always know how. We have coalitions active in Beaufort, but how do we pass the word even more so that people know where to go for help and how to help?”.

Jasper County Assets and Challenges

Assets

The primary asset that characterizes Jasper County, according to key informants, is the amenities afforded by rural coastal living, along with emerging improvements in the economy, school system leadership, and basic safety net assistance. Common asset themes across key informants were:

Rural Lifestyle:

Jasper County is quiet. There are no busy cities and no traffic challenges.

The People:

The people are community minded and “show up” when there is need. Despite lack of resources, residents capitalize on strengths and rally together when there is a need or problems to be solved. Sometimes, leaders are surprised with the amount of response and support given by the community.

Natural amenities:

There are many parks and ample amenities for hunting, fishing, and enjoying nature.

Growth and Increasing Wealth:

Hardeeville is the fastest growing municipality in South Carolina (and the 4th largest town). Along with new retirement communities that are drawing wealthy retirees, there is some industrial growth. An improving tax base has resulted in public improvements, especially in Hardeeville, more volunteerism, and greater philanthropy.

Medical care:

There is good local medical care thanks to Coastal Carolina Hospital and physicians in Hardeeville and Ridgeland.

School Superintendent:

A new school Superintendent is “an absolute dynamo”. “She knows what to do and how to do it” and is addressing the generational failings of the system. The Superintendent is “wonderful and doing good things for the Latino community”.

Helping Organizations:

Jasper County has some nonprofits, and many of the nonprofits in Beaufort County are now “stretching into Jasper”. For example, Deep Well’s Livable Housing Program uses volunteers to repair houses in Jasper County. Local food pantries have been helped by organizations on Hilton Head, and huge food drives have overflowed to Ridgeland. Change / improvement is happening slowly, but “things are getting better”.

Higher Education Opportunities:

Residents of Jasper County have access to a technical college and a branch campus of the University of South Carolina.

Challenges

There are multiple challenges in Jasper County, rooted in high poverty and lack of access to opportunity. Common challenge themes among key informants in Jasper County were:

Poverty and Wealth Disparity:

Jasper County is one of the poorest counties in the state. Poverty is obvious – “lots of blight that can’t be solved without solving social problems”. Wealth disparity is pronounced – there is a “big chasm between the haves and have nots”. Lots of working poor and also new gated communities – this has resulted in a “fragmented” county. There is longstanding generational poverty resulting from undereducation and inability to build wealth; most jobs are minimum wage, and there are lots of struggling single-parent families.

Jobs and Workforce Preparedness:

There are few jobs and especially few well-paying jobs, so young people move out. The county needs more industrial growth. Most people travel to Hilton Head Island for jobs, and this is stressful and costs a lot. Jasper County needs a better equipped and educated workforce to attract better jobs, so people don’t have to travel out of county. Many residents don’t have high school diplomas, so they can’t get good jobs.

Transportation:

Transportation is a huge issue because Jasper is so rural. Larger resources are not housed in Jasper County, so residents have to leave to access them, often 45 minutes away. There is no public transportation, so getting somewhere 45 minutes away is difficult. Resources are clustered in larger towns like Beaufort.

Deep and Overwhelming Problems:

There are “too many challenges”; people have little hope, and problems have persisted for generations. Problems are “so deep and so ingrained”, and help is “spread out and fragmented”. Poverty is deep and widespread.

Siloed and Reactive Organizations:

Helping organizations often work in silos. “We work in a lot of pockets instead of us combining resources and talent in a centralized place”. Helping organizations tend to be more responsive than proactive in addressing problems. “While we do mobilize resources when there is a need, we should be much better at identify potential problems before they reach a crisis. We are smart enough to do that”. “We show up too late”. “There has to be a better way for us to know who everyone is and what everyone else is doing so we can plan together better”.

School Quality:

Schools are poor quality, and there are too many schools to choose from – public, charter, and private. The system is fragmented. There are lots of high school dropouts.

Connectivity:

There is little access to Wi-Fi and / or it is low quality. This means children are unable to learn virtually from home. Cell service is unreliable and sporadic according to where you live. This is a huge problem for unemployed and job-seeking residents, as well as at-risk families. “This is a recognized problem, but has it been addressed?”.

Family Vulnerability:

There is a lack of opportunity to build healthy families. Jasper County is a child care desert. Most jobs are low wage, but childcare is extremely expensive. “Families don’t always recognize the need for early intervention for their children - what they need to grow and thrive - and opportunities to expand their children’s experiences”. Families can’t always meet our expectations without our help. “I wish people would value the struggle of families of young children and figure out a way to support them better”. For example, “parents have to work long hours – they shouldn’t be criticized for not being at parent teacher conferences. Little League games are on Saturday, but PTA is on Wednesday at 5:00.”

“Families can’t always meet our expectations without our help”

United Way’s Role in Jasper County

As in Beaufort County, key informants view United Way of the Lowcountry as having influence that can be leveraged. Common themes among key informants were:

Act as a Coordinator:

Lots of people and nonprofits are working on challenges and solutions in Jasper County, including support for single parent families, addressing poverty, and providing safety net services. However, systems and resources are not robust. United Way could “remake a very fragmented system” that coordinates nonprofit services and resolves duplication. “Each is doing great work, but we need more coordination”. Unlike Beaufort County, Jasper County is not collaborative, and United Way could create meaningful collaboration so that everyone who needs services has access to them.

Invest in Children:

United Way should invest internet access to help children thrive in school, help families access affordable child care and extended child care, and help children develop their creative side by supporting access to the arts.

Other Investments:

In addition to investing sufficiently in social safety net programs, United Way should increase literacy programs in Jasper County and expand the arts and access to them.

Part IV: Focus Groups

Two resident focus groups were held in Beaufort County and two in Jasper County. Many of the attendees were involved in the social services system as recipients of services or providers of services. Other participants included teachers, ministers, elected officials, and grassroots leaders. Participants in all four focus groups were quite vocal and forthcoming.

Several very strong themes emerged from these focus groups in terms of assets, challenges, and advice to United Way of the Lowcountry. The following findings are reported in the voices of the participants, and we provide direct quotes as instructive. They are organized in order by most prevalent theme.

Beaufort County Focus Group Synthesis

Focus groups were held on Hilton Head Island and in Port Royal.

The Positives

Beaufort County (especially Hilton Head Island and Beaufort) is a “beautiful”, “inviting”, “loving” place. The people are great. “This is a wonderful place to live”.

Latinos are welcomed – “we have a great connection with them” - and respected. Head Start and PASOS helps the Latino community.

Lots of history and families who have been here for generations. “It is important to us to preserve culture and tradition”.

There are many good helping organizations in Beaufort County – churches, Salvation Army, Help of Beaufort County, EOC, and Deep Well. Deep Well is celebrating its 50th anniversary. “There is lots of food help”.

Circle of Hope is building an apartment building for homeless individuals with focus first on military homeless.

Mental Health is gaining new focus through Mental Health America and NAMI, providing advocacy, support, and education. The county is trying to establish a Mental Health Court.

The Challenges

Jobs and workforce are complex problems. There is very little business diversity. “It is a tourist economy. We tell our kids to get educated, but then they can’t get a job, so they leave”. The only professional jobs available to our kids who get an education are teacher, law enforcement, and in the medical field. “We have brain drain”. There is no manufacturing economy “on purpose so that we can keep minorities on the farm and helping in hotels”. The county leaders don’t want new industries. This hasn’t improved in 30 years and is “a scar on Beaufort County”. “When you limit industry, you limit people’s opportunity to make better money”.

Cost of living is too high, and wages are too low to meet it. “People don’t make a living wage”. Predatory lenders are taking advantage of this problem. Job turnover is low because people can’t afford to retire and make room for younger people.

Housing is unaffordable except to retirees moving in and the military. There is a huge race disparity in home ownership. Black residents tend to live in mobile homes which depreciate, so they can’t build wealth through home ownership. “Not sure what leaders are doing to address this in-your-face problem”. “Rental companies buy homes then double your rent”. The Comprehensive Plan in Beaufort is “racist – in rural areas you must have three acres of land to be allowed to build a house (so wealthy White people have houses), but if you only have one acre, you can’t build a house unless you have a family compound with 50 years of joint ownership (Black people have these compounds)”.

“Affordable housing is not a \$500K home.”

School quality is low, so parents are home schooling or putting kids in private school. Many people can’t read or speak English. “There are not many education opportunities in the county”.

Mental Health is still a big challenge in Beaufort County. The SC Department of Mental Health office serves five counties with only two psychiatrists and not enough therapists. The cost of psychotropic medications is very high. Services have decreased and associated crime has increased. “The Director of the Jail says that the Jail is the new mental health hospital”, but there is no treatment available there.

Beaufort County needs more low cost or free medical treatment, especially to meet the needs of the Hispanic population. Volunteers in Medicine should be expanded.

Affordable housing is the big problem. “We talk about it, but there are only token efforts to resolve it”. “The people in charge need to be held accountable”.

There is “tons” of homelessness but no homeless shelter in Beaufort (or Jasper) County, except for a halfway house for men exiting prison. Land is too valuable on Hilton Head Island to build one. Lots of Latinos double up or triple up.

Too many silos and too many nonprofit organizations. Need care coordinators. Regarding nonprofits, “we live next door to each other but have never been in each other’s homes” – we don’t really know what each other does. “We have so many organizations. This dilutes the resources”. “There are so many food banks and places for free lunch”. Organizations need closer relationships, including churches that provide social services.

Not enough rental assistance and help for utilities. There is never enough safety net help, and people don’t know where to go to get services. There is a perception that people who seek services are lazy when we are working multiple jobs and trying to get by.

Teens have little to do to keep them busy. “YMCA tries”. There is nothing for older teens. The bowling alley closed, and there is no theater and no recreation center.

Beaufort County is economically diverse – “almost three different counties”. Economically depressed and rural areas don’t have the same access to services and opportunities. “This is the only county that’s not a county”. Living in St. Helena is very different from living in Bluffton. Bluffton has more amenities than Beaufort by design as reflected in the county’s Comprehensive Plan.

We need leaders who are willing to change old policies. Too many “good old boys and good old girls”.

Advice to United Way of the Lowcountry

Be an investigator. Go find out about “the reality of the people here” and make decisions based on that reality. “The fact that we are here tonight speaks volumes – I have never seen a focus group here”. Make life better for the average person.

Be a coordinator. United Way could be a “great convenor”, they have the “most overreaching awareness” of the local human services and the needs. Help build coalitions. “Help build awareness across nonprofits of what we do and how we can work together”. Help dismantle silos and duplication. There is already a Disabilities Coalition but not sure how well it functions. It takes a united effort to solve the problems. We need to pool resources.

Be an educator. Get the word out to the community about how to change systems and policies. For example, the bill proposing to merge DHEC and Mental Health state agencies – how would that affect local services? Need to educate general public about local human services needs and volunteer opportunities. Educate the public on what resources are available and how to access them. For example, use the college’s Human Services Center to host a nonprofit fair.

Be a “Think Tank”. Bring in national leaders and good models to problem solve. Sponsor an event like Renaissance Weekend. Pick the problem that is most dangerous and start there. Look at what has worked before or in other places.

Be a funder. We need a lot more funding and “big money to change things in a big way”. “And make the application easier. It is too arduous, so small organizations don’t apply”.

Be an advocate. Help local leaders understand the needs and advocate for solutions. Start with affordable housing. “Help people voice their opinion. They are tired of trying because they haven’t been heard”.

Help with volunteers. There is a lot of attrition of volunteers because of exhaustion. “Can United Way help with volunteer self-care?”. The statewide suicide hotline (988) is going live 7/16/22 but there is no staff. “Could United Way provide volunteers staff or advocate for paid staff?”. This area has so many retirees who could be recruited to volunteer. “Light a fire under retirees and community organizations”.

Jasper County Focus Group Synthesis

Focus groups were held in Hardeeville and Ridgeland.

The Positives

Jasper County is small, quiet and peaceful. “Everyone keeps to themselves”. It is quiet and rural, “but it won’t stay that way”.

Recently grassroots organizers have been holding community meetings. Three meetings of residents have been held so far. Residents “love it”. People are showing up. Some meetings are being held with the School Board to address the bus transportation issue.

Churches, Agape, Volunteers in Medicine, and EOC are truly helping in Jasper County.

The Challenges

School transportation. Schools don’t have bus drivers, some for the whole year – parents were told about the problem the day before school started last year and were told it would be fixed by Thanksgiving. It has not been fixed. Some kids have bus transportation, but it is sporadic. You leave your kids at the bus stop and hope they get picked up. They get to school at 9:30 and get home at 7:30. Parents have to choose between taking kids to school or going to work. If you are lucky, your employer will let you rearrange your whole work schedule to pick up your kids. “We have to pick – take your kids to school or keep your job – essentially, the choice is educating your kids or feeding them”. People are angry and frustrated. Their taxes have paid for bus transportation, but there is none or very little. School Board isn’t doing enough to resolve the problem and feels attacked by parents. Superintendent and School board are unresponsive. Superintendent is not communicating with the community about this issue. Parents feel “disrespected”. Hispanic families don’t have voice. Many Hispanic kids don’t attend school at all because their parents can’t take them, and they have to choose work because they can’t get any benefits like unemployment or government help since many are undocumented. Kids aren’t being offered field trips or sports. Kids are behind due to no bus transportation, the virus closing schools, and having no Internet so that they can’t attend virtually. “Under these conditions, there is no way these kids will succeed”.

Many places in Jasper County don’t have Wi-Fi, or it is very unreliable and costs an extra \$100 / month. “If kids are lucky enough to have Wi-Fi, they get kicked off 20 times in an hour, so they give up”. So virtual learning is not a solution to the problem with bus transportation. So, kids fall behind – lots of school resources are on line. The laptops provided by schools at \$35 don’t work, and there are not enough of them. However, there is some indication that Spectrum is coming to Jasper County – hopeful that connectivity will improve.

Jasper County lacks resources and conveniences. “There is so much lack (Jasper County) right next to so much wealth (Beaufort County)”. “It makes us feel like we don’t matter”. “We understand that they have a larger tax base, so they have better amenities, but we want a little bit more”.

Needs in Jasper County are “huge”! The greatest challenges are:

- Transportation. It is a big issue! You see lots of people walking to buy groceries – even old people. People commute 45 minutes to 1.5 hours to work. Palmetto Breeze provides a shuttle to Beaufort to work, but there is no public transportation.

- Homelessness. People lose their homes because they can't afford the rent. Also because of mental health issues or transience. We need a homeless shelter (none in Jasper County except for one for men exiting prison). Homeless kids are sleeping in cars.
- Cost of living. Typical pay doesn't match the cost of living. Rent and housing costs are high! Childcare is expensive.
- Recreation opportunities for youth. There is no recreation center, Boys & Girls Club, or after school program in Ridgeland (Hardeeville has some opportunities). No bowling alley, no nice park. There is nothing for kids to do. They are going to get in trouble. School district charges \$800 any time a team uses a school field, so sports teams are unaffordable.
- Unemployment and underemployment. There are few jobs in Jasper County, and no well-paying jobs. We have to work in other counties – Beaufort and Savannah – to make enough money to live.
- Education. Education system is poor. Beaufort's is better because they have more money and parents are more active in the system. Parents want better education for their children here.
- Mental health services. The SC Department of Mental Health doesn't have enough clinical staff to meet the need in Jasper (Coastal Empire serves 5 counties).

There is not enough help, and services are fragmented. Helping organizations do what they can, but a lot of organizations pull from the same pot. Primary needs are utility bills, groceries, medical bills, help with rent (rent is astronomical). Safety net services are in place but under resourced. Every agency has different rules. Have to shop around to get help – a little here and a little there. This is “defeating and frustrating”. If you get government benefits, increase in some benefits decreases other benefits, so “you are still in the same place”.

Jasper County residents lack voice. County meetings in Ridgeland (the county seat) do not accommodate working residents. Communication is not happening. County administrators can't relate (they make good money). They don't respond to emails. No follow up to concerns. Not responsive. We have to follow their rules.

Hispanics don't have anyone to advocate for them. There is no translator in the schools (there is one at the Sheriff's Office). People who don't speak English are so afraid and frustrated.

Sewage is a major issue in Hardeeville. Houses flood with sewage regularly, and especially when it rains. This has been going on for years. The area needs a pump station. It probably hasn't been fixed because it costs money. We get billed for sewage, so it needs to be fixed.

The county is divided – we don't do things together. There are cultural differences within the county – Hardeeville vs. Jasper vs. Ridgeland. “No one collaborates”. Some nonprofits are working in both counties (e.g. Deep Well is providing housing services in Jasper and providing dental assistance by sending residents to Beaufort), but even that is limited. There was a Backpack Buddy program in Jasper schools, but not this year because schools didn't supply a staff person to coordinate it. Philanthropists establish or support Private schools in Jasper, “but who is helping public schools?”.

There is racial divide – Whites vote for Whites and Blacks vote for Blacks. We should vote for the best person. We can't find common ground. Our kids don't play together because parents keep them divided. Businesses donate more to Whites than to Blacks. There is longstanding racism in the police department.

Advice to United Way of the Lowcountry

“Listen to what we need and want!”. Partner with community organizers and have a presence at community meetings. United Way needs to be willing to learn. Advocate for residents.

Teach people how to provide for themselves / access services / be as independent as possible. The trick is how you welcome them, how you talk to them.

People of color turn to churches for help. Support churches and the faith community because they support people in need. Churches are becoming social services agencies.

Coordinate with the School District and with County Council to resolve transportation problems. Don’t add more schools – this takes resources away. Make the schools we have better.

We have to shop around to get help – a little here and there. Lots of people in the community don’t know what services are available. Help facilitate better communication to the people. Hispanics need help understanding and accessing services. “Can you make the system work better?”.

We need more and better safety net services that help with transportation, utilities, and medical bills. Give more funding to Agape and other centers.

Invest in kids. Provide tutoring programs for children in need. Give them something to do - recreation opportunities for children.

Part V: Synthesis and Learnings

The natural amenities in both Beaufort and Jasper Counties are the primary reason residents enjoy living there. People enjoy the views, the weather, and living near the coast. In Beaufort County, there is widespread acknowledgement that people are generous and helpful. Beaufort County and Hardeeville in Jasper County are growing exponentially, and this has both positive and negative effects.

The preponderance of data, quantitative and qualitative, indicate that Beaufort and Jasper Counties have some similar challenges; however, they are much more pervasive and severe in Jasper County. And Jasper County has challenges that Beaufort County does not. Beaufort County has more assets than Jasper County, primarily because Beaufort has significantly more economic advantage. There is economic disparity in both counties, with some very wealthy areas and some very poor areas, but Jasper County is the “forgotten county”, and needs there are deep and wide. Jasper has fewer resources like parks, recreation centers, Wi-Fi access, and little employment opportunity. Quality of life is lower in Jasper County, and families are affected. Needs in Jasper are considered by many to be overwhelming. On the other end of the spectrum, Beaufort County has the highest household income and the best health outcomes of all 46 counties in South Carolina.

Cost of living is high in both counties, and affordable housing seems to be the primary concern, especially in Beaufort County and especially for low and middle wage earners. Generally, wages are too low to meet the cost of living. In Jasper County, most workers travel outside the county to their jobs. Although much of the workforce in both counties supports the tourist and retail economies, employers cannot find enough workers. Transportation is a challenge and especially takes a toll on Hilton Head Island because it is far from where workers live, traffic is problematic, and there are few or no housing options for workers.

Exacerbating the challenges of high poverty and low job opportunities in Jasper County is the fact that the school district has been unable to provide reliable bus transportation to most students this school year. Many parents have had to choose between transporting their children to and from school or keeping their jobs.

Challenges are magnified for Hispanics in both counties since many do not have legal status and many do not speak English. There are also significant disparities by race, despite respect for and support of the Gullah and Geechee culture. Heirs’ Rights laws result in particular property ownership and wealth-building complexity for African American residents.

Safety net services are in high demand in both Jasper and Beaufort Counties, and there are not enough resources to meet needs. This is especially apparent in Jasper County. However, there are many nonprofits, churches, and other helping organizations that are meeting needs as best as they can. Most are highly regarded, and services are appreciated. Both providers and recipients widely acknowledge that there is significant overlap and duplication in services. This means that recipients piecemeal the help they get, going from place to place and attending to vagaries in rules between organizations. For providers, it means that organizations are siloed, and they are not leveraging the resources they have for best impact.

Beaufort is a much more collaborative county, compared to Jasper County – this is recognized by residents in both counties and presents particular challenges for service providers in Jasper County and further entrenches challenges there.

Struggling residents in both counties are frustrated that significant and long-standing problems like housing affordability are widely acknowledged, but local leadership has presented no tangible plan to resolve them. They feel that they have very little voice, although grassroots organizing is taking hold in Jasper County. Some perceptions are very different between residents and county officials. For example, parents are very frustrated with the school superintendent, but county leaders are very positive about her. Residents feel that they are not being heard.

Livable wage and affordable housing emerge as the two highest priorities in each county.

United Way of the Lowcountry is respected by leaders and service providers in both counties. Service recipients and the general public know very little about United Way. Generally, participants in this study would like to see United Way of the Lowcountry play a much larger role as an organizer and convener to facilitate a better system of service provision across nonprofits, churches, and others trying to meet increasing human service needs in Jasper and Beaufort Counties. They believe that United Way of the Lowcountry could leverage its position to advocate for solutions for the biggest problems, taking a leadership role and organizing the decision-makers and promoting community voice. In addition to infrastructure and systems work, constituents feel that United Way of the Lowcountry should address the increasing problems of homelessness and food insecurity, as well as the roots of both – living wage and housing affordability.