

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

2024 REPORT ON POVERTY



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
<i>PURPOSE</i>	4
<i>METHODOLOGY</i>	4
<i>CONCLUSION</i>	5
<i>PRIMARY CONDITIONS OF POVERTY EXPLAINED</i>	6
<i>PRIMARY CAUSES OF POVERTY EXPLAINED</i>	11
SECTION 2: KEY FINDINGS	15
SECTION 3: COMPLIANCE	24
SECTION 4: COMMUNITY ACTION	34
SECTION 5: THE AGENCY	37
<i>SERVICE AREA</i>	38
<i>GOVERNANCE</i>	39
<i>PROGRAMS</i>	39
SECTION 6: COUNTY PROFILES	42
<i>APPLING COUNTY</i>	43
<i>ATKINSON COUNTY</i>	52
<i>BACON COUNTY</i>	61
<i>BRANTLEY COUNTY</i>	70
<i>BULLOCH COUNTY</i>	79
<i>CANDLER COUNTY</i>	90
<i>CHARLTON COUNTY</i>	99
<i>CLINCH COUNTY</i>	108
<i>COFFEE COUNTY</i>	117
<i>EFFINGHAM COUNTY</i>	127
<i>EVANS COUNTY</i>	137
<i>JEFF DAVIS COUNTY</i>	146
<i>LONG COUNTY</i>	155
<i>PIERCE COUNTY</i>	164
<i>TATTNALL COUNTY</i>	175
<i>TOOMBS COUNTY</i>	184
<i>WARE COUNTY</i>	195
<i>WAYNE COUNTY</i>	206
SECTION 7: REGIONAL PROFILE	215
<i>DEMOGRAPHICS</i>	216
<i>INCOME & POVERTY</i>	252
<i>EMPLOYMENT & INDUSTRY</i>	274
<i>SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS</i>	290
<i>CHILD/YOUTH EDUCATION</i>	301
<i>CHILDCARE AND EARLY EDUCATION</i>	311
<i>HOUSING AND ENERGY</i>	327
<i>HEALTH & WELL-BEING</i>	354
<i>NUTRITION</i>	399
<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>	409

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

<i>FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS</i>	418
<i>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</i>	428
SECTION 8: DATA SOURCES.....	444
<i>RESEARCH AND STATISTICAL DATA</i>	445
<i>SURVEY DATA</i>	454
<i>FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS</i>	474
SECTION 10: ANALYTICS.....	489



SECTION 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Purpose

This document has been meticulously crafted to serve as a reliable, up-to-date source of actionable insights regarding the barriers to economic stability and self-sufficiency faced by the low-income populations within the Georgia communities of Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Bulloch, Candler, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Effingham, Evans, Jeff Davis, Long, Pierce, Tattnall, Toombs, Ware, and Wayne counties. Developed in alignment with principles from the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system of organizational management and the Mission Aligned Data Driven (MADD) Approach to Organizational Excellence, this document is designed to act as the cornerstone for all programs and initiatives rendered by the organization. It aims to propel the entity to become an influential force in strategically unifying community resources to effectively address the causes and conditions of poverty and enhance the residents' journey towards self-reliance and an improved quality of life.

Methodology

In order to provide the organization with the most comprehensive assessment possible, a variety of data types were collected and analyzed during the development of this product. Below is a summary of these data types, their sources, and the process used to translate the data into meaningful information.

- **Statistical Research**

Statistical information was gathered through online research from more than five dozen unique data sources (see section 8) demonstrating federal, state, and local data. All data used in the study was the most recent available at the time of project development. Organizational data from the most recently completed CSBG Annual Report was integrated into quantitative research to provide statistics concerning the needs of individuals and families requesting assistance.

- **Community Member Surveys**

Surveys were administered to residents of the local community served by the organization, with a total of 148 being collected. These respondents were primarily non-Hispanic (95.80%), Black (55.71%) and White (43.71%), individuals residing in single person households (33.33%) or adult households without children (29.63%), who were between the ages of 25 to 44 (38.85%) and 65+ (29.50%). Less than half of the community members polled (41.10%) stated that they considered themselves to be low-income. A strong majority (98.58%) reported that they were familiar with the organization, 69.78% stating that they had been assisted by the organization at some point within the past year.

- **Agency Team Member Surveys**

A total of 120 staff members participated in surveys. This included two members of the executive team, 4 finance staff, 2 human resource staff, 2 public relations staff, 22 program management staff, 86 program staff, and 1 facilities/maintenance staff. Among these, 41.74% reported that they considered themselves to be low-income. Responding staff members were primarily non-Hispanic (98.33%), White (63.03%) or Black (35.29%), individuals residing in traditional households with children (33.62%) or single female parent households (21.55%), between the ages of 25 to 44 (36.67%), 45 to 54 (19.17%), and 55 to 59 (18.33%). More than one-fifth (21.28%) stated that they had pre-school aged children. More than one-third (38.66%) reported having been served by the organization in the past year.

An additional 3 individuals participating in surveys identified themselves as agency volunteers. Among these, 2 stated that they were low-income, 1 of which reported having been served by the organization during the past year.

- **Board Member Surveys**

A total of 14 surveys were collected from the organization's governing body, representing the public (28.57%), Private (14.29%), and target (51.14%) sectors.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- **Key Informant Surveys**

Key Informants provided a total of 47 surveys. The organization types represented include public sector (27.66%), private sector (4.26%), education (12.77%), faith-based (8.51%), and other community services (46.80%)

- **Focus Groups**

A total of 15 focus groups were conducted as a part of the research. A total of 98 individuals participated in these sessions, including 34 local residents, 39 members of the agency team, and 25 representatives of local businesses, organizations, and government entities.

- **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted utilizing a variety of descriptive processes by two Six Sigma Black Belts and a Data Driven Decision-Making Specialist, with enhanced evaluations provided by artificial intelligence software. Analytical processes include comparative, trend, and exploratory evaluations, with priority consensus ranking used to identify the greatest concerns among the local population based on survey input. Prioritization tables are provided in Section 10.

Conclusion

Data indicates that 81,243 of the region's 453,979 local residents (20.60%) have incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. Over the past five years, the area's poverty rate has decreased by 15.84% and the median income has increased by 22.84%, which is faster than the rate of inflation (+16.50%) during the same period of time.

Primary Conditions of Poverty

Although poverty may impact every household and community in a different way, survey data indicates that the following community needs are the highest priority:

- (1) Individuals are housing insecure (F)
- (2) Individuals are food insecure (F)
- (3) Individuals are at risk of utility disconnection (F)
- (4) Individuals have poor mental health (F)
- (5) Individuals have poor physical health (F)

Primary Causes of Poverty

The cause of the poverty problem in the county cannot be attributed to any single factor, but a complex combination of barriers that are deeply rooted in the lives of local residents and the infrastructure of the community. The most prevalent barriers preventing access to basic household needs, as identified by survey respondents, include the following:

- (1) Individuals have inadequate income to secure basic needs (F)
- (2) The community lacks an adequate number of safe and affordable housing units (C)
- (3) Individuals lack adequate financial skills to manage the resources available (F)
- (4) Individuals are unemployed (F)
- (5) Individuals lack the skills and qualifications to secure meaningful employment (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Primary Conditions of Poverty Explained

Individuals are housing insecure (F)

Housing insecurity emerged as the predominant concern impacting families in the local community. An estimated 37,932 households were identified as spending more than 30% of their income solely on housing and utilities, a financial burden that often leads to utility disconnection, eviction, and foreclosure. Although the region's eviction rate stands at a modest 7.68%, compared to the 14.10% on a state level, the threat remains a concern for many families.

With a margin of error of +/- 5.45%, survey data reveals housing insecurity as a top concern for the community, with 245 out of 323 respondents prioritizing this concern above all other poverty-related conditions.

While there are 118 providers of subsidized affordable housing in the region, this is likely inadequate when set against the backdrop of 37,932 households grappling with large number of residents who are housing cost burdened. This mismatch reveals a pressing gap in the provision of affordable housing options to meet the needs of the community. Furthermore, the Point In Time (PIT) Homeless Count compounds this concern, reporting 474 homeless individuals, with a staggering 90% lacking shelter, further accentuating the critical shortfall in accessible housing solutions.

It should also be noted that more than 41,000 homes were determined to be sub-standard, posing significant health and safety risks to occupants and contributing to elevated utility expenses.

Out of 35 respondents who noted specific problems, 57.1% reported openings in walls, ceilings, or floors, 45.7% faced inadequate heating units, and 40% struggled with both inadequate insulation and rodent or insect infestations. Broken windows or doors were a concern for 34.3%, while sagging or leaking roofs, and mold issues each were reported by 22.9% of respondents. Foundation issues were identified by 17.1%, exposed wiring by 8.6%, and missing siding by 5.7%. Finally, 2.9% mentioned the presence of lead-based paint, and the same percentage cited asbestos—conditions that can have serious long-term health implications. These figures not only highlight the unsuitability of available housing but also underscore the urgent need for comprehensive improvements to ensure safe and adequate living conditions.

The voice of the community, collected through qualitative comments, echoes the statistical findings. Residents note a stark shortage of low-income housing options, as one resident poignantly articulates, "Living in a tent in this cold weather isn't good." The comments reflect a consensus that affordable, quality housing is a linchpin for broader community development, potentially attracting businesses and services like transportation to the area.

Furthermore, the qualitative insights shed light on the ripple effects of housing insecurity, from the exacerbation of physical and mental health issues to the obstruction of economic opportunities. A community professional emphasized, "The number one problem we see in our office is housing insecurity...we are in the midst of a true housing crisis."

Housing insecurity predominantly affects low-income renters, who are spending a disproportionate amount of their income on housing, and homeless residents lacking shelter. With nearly 38,000 households burdened by housing costs and 474 individuals reported as homeless, the need for rental assistance is well established. Targeted demographics should include families with children, the elderly, and single-parent households, as these groups are often most vulnerable to the risks associated with housing affordability and stability.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Individuals are food insecure (F)

Data indicates that 13.47% of the population, which translates to approximately 57,130 residents, struggle with food insecurity. This prevalence surpasses the state average, suggesting an acute local issue. Particularly vulnerable are the 14,660 children and 5,272 seniors identified as food insecure, representing 14.57% and 8% of their respective demographic populations. This condition poses risks to their health and development, with children at risk of adverse developmental outcomes and seniors vulnerable to exacerbated health disparities.

Agency data from 2022 further underscores the issue, with 8,634 households containing 13,409 individuals reporting reliance on food subsidies. The average income for these recipients was notably low, at \$13,293.70, with an overwhelming 82.42% living below the poverty line. A majority (55.62%) were single-person households, and a significant portion (34.16%) were single-parent households. Additionally, 24.83% of SNAP recipients reported disabilities, highlighting the intersection of food insecurity with other vulnerabilities.

Community data reinforces the statistics, with 202 out of 323 survey respondents ranking food insecurity as one of their top three concerns. Among 114 low-income residents surveyed, 28 had experienced food insecurity in the past year. Twelve of these reported receiving services from local organizations, with six stating that they were unable to identify any assistance. These numbers, with a margin of error of 5.45%, reflect both the prevalence of the issue and the gaps in service provision.

Residents' voices offer qualitative support to the quantitative data. Descriptions of food handouts not being well-advertised and people resorting to begging on the streets illustrate the dire situation. Statements such as "Food will always be an issue to those who have trouble making ends meet" and "People cannot afford healthy food" encapsulate the everyday struggles faced by the community. The fact that many have to choose less expensive but unhealthy food options due to financial constraints is a recurring theme. For instance, one resident shared, "I selected food insecurity because I personally have experienced this with my family. The price of groceries has increased tremendously making it more difficult to purchase better quality foods."

Based on the data, targeted populations for interventions should include children, seniors, single-parent households, individuals with disabilities, and those with dietary restrictions due to health conditions. The high cost of food relative to income particularly affects these groups, and they are frequently mentioned as recipients of food assistance or as those struggling with obtaining adequate nutrition.

Individuals are at risk of utility disconnection (F)

The pervasive issue of utility disconnection in the communities served is a glaring symptom of the broader housing insecurity crisis. The data indicates a dire situation where a significant portion of the population is burdened with utility costs that are unsustainable relative to their income.

Statistical data underscores the gravity of this issue, with utility costs in Georgia ranking as the fourth highest in the nation, putting a strain on residents who already struggle to make ends meet. The average utility bill in Georgia stands at \$7,404 annually—markedly higher than the national average. This high cost of utilities is not just a number; it translates into real-world consequences, such as the risk of disconnection for many residents.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Agency data from the fiscal year 2022 sheds light on the financial challenges faced by the community. Renters are particularly vulnerable, with average housing and utility costs consuming over 62% of their median annual income. Homeowners are similarly affected, with nearly half of their income going towards housing and utilities. With 7,500 individuals enrolled in utility assistance programs, the demand for support is clear.

Survey data further illuminates this issue, revealing that utility disconnection ranks as the third most significant poverty condition, with 171 out of 323 respondents acknowledging it as a major concern. Among 114 low-income respondents, 59 reported struggling to afford utilities, and 23 experienced disconnections, illustrating the precarious nature of their situation.

Community member quotes provide qualitative insights into the daily realities behind these statistics. One resident's statement, "Rates at utility companies just keep going higher, making it hard to keep on track to pay bills," highlights the escalating costs that many are unable to keep up with. Another compelling testimonial, "The loss of food stamps in our area has taken a huge toll on our senior citizens along with all other families," showcases the compounding effect of inadequate assistance on the ability to pay for basic necessities like utilities.

Based on the data, the target populations for agency focus should include low-income renters, homeowners in substandard housing, the elderly, and families with children. These groups are most at risk of utility disconnection due to the high percentage of income required to cover utility bills. The agency's efforts should aim to expand utility assistance programs, improve access to energy efficiency measures such as the Weatherization Program, and advocate for more equitable utility billing practices.

Individuals have poor mental health (F)

Survey data, with a 5.45% margin of error, reveals that poor mental health is a prominent issue, noted by 117 out of 323 respondents as a major condition of poverty. This is a significant finding, considering that 17% of the region's adults reports frequent mental distress, surpassing the state average of 15%.

The local narrative provides a deeper understanding of these statistics. Community members express an urgent need for more resources associated with mental health. As one resident suggests, "We need more knowledge and resources for mental health issues," a sentiment that is echoed across various local residents. Support groups, particularly those addressing addictions and pathways to recovery, are seen as beneficial yet are scarce, with the community facing difficulties in finding leaders for such initiatives.

The community identifies a broad range of social determinants impacting health, including poverty, limited access to healthy food, and a general lack of awareness about how lifestyle factors such as diet impact overall well-being. Mental health is seen as the culmination of these determinants, and as one member put it, "Many people have no hope."

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, increasing the prevalence of mental health conditions and leaving many families in need of training on how to handle grief and loss. The current healthcare system, strained and with high patient-to-provider ratios, is ill-equipped to deal with the rising tide of mental health concerns, leaving many without access to necessary care. Among the 114 low-income residents surveyed, 23 reported feeling depressed, with a significant number unable to find help.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The community's comments paint a vivid picture of the mental health landscape, with calls for increased awareness and de-stigmatization of mental health conditions. There is a clear need for more accessible services, including therapists, support groups, and health education resources. The prevalence of mental health issues among children and the elderly is particularly concerning, with a need for early intervention and specialized care.

In addressing mental health concerns within our community, it is essential to recognize the diverse demographics impacted by these issues. Young adults, aged 18 to 25, emerge as a particularly vulnerable group, grappling with the stresses of life transitions and societal pressures, including those intensified by the pandemic. Adolescents, too, face mounting mental health challenges, with the advent of social media and academic pressures contributing to an increase in anxiety and depression—a situation further exacerbated by the isolation and disruptions caused by COVID-19. Similarly, the elderly population confronts significant mental health risks, often stemming from isolation, the loss of loved ones, and chronic health conditions, with these issues potentially heightened during the pandemic due to increased loneliness and reduced access to support networks.

The mental health landscape also reveals disparities across racial and ethnic lines, with minority groups such as Black, Hispanic, and Native American populations facing heightened challenges due to socioeconomic inequalities and systemic barriers to accessing care. Men and women experience these mental health challenges differently, with men being less likely to seek help but more likely to succumb to suicide, and women facing higher rates of depression and anxiety. The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably intensified these issues across all demographics, bringing to light the urgent need for targeted, culturally sensitive mental health interventions that address the broad spectrum of needs within our community. Addressing these concerns requires a nuanced approach that considers the specific vulnerabilities of each demographic group, ensuring access to effective mental health resources and support systems in the wake of the pandemic's widespread impact.

Individuals have poor physical health (F)

Physical health in the community presents significant challenges that impact a wide demographic, with around 19.74% of adults reporting their health status as poor to fair, notably higher than the state average of 15%. This is a telling statistic that underscores the prevalence of physical health issues, which is particularly acute in Clinch and Atkinson counties, where poor health reports reach 27% and 26%, respectively, suggesting a need for targeted health interventions.

The community experiences a substantial rate of physical distress, with 13% of residents reporting severe health concerns for more than 14 days each month, exceeding the state average by 3%. This heightened level of physical distress not only hampers daily functioning but also impacts the quality of life and productivity of individuals.

Poor physical health, as indicated by 76 out of 323 survey respondents, is recognized as a significant condition of poverty. This is compounded by the fact that 6.94% of individuals cite poor health as a barrier to securing employment, which could perpetuate a cycle of poverty and ill health.

Healthcare access exacerbates these challenges, as evidenced by the high patient-to-provider ratios. There are 4,605 patients per physician, significantly above state averages, indicating substantial barriers to accessing care. The lack of insurance, reported by 67,929 individuals, and inadequate insurance coverage are major obstacles, often preventing residents from receiving preventive care and managing chronic conditions effectively.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Life expectancy in the community is a concerning indicator, standing at 74 years, considerably lower than the state average of 77.30 years. This reduced life expectancy points to various health and social determinants requiring strategic attention to improve health outcomes and extend lifespan.

The statistical data is echoed by the voices of community members participating in surveys, who highlight a range of factors impacting health. From the high cost of medical care to the shortage of primary care providers and the inaccessibility of services for disabled persons, these issues create a complex web that hinders health improvement efforts. The community has identified specific needs, including the high cost of medical care and insufficient mental health services, which are crucial to addressing physical health concerns.

Among the 114 low-income residents surveyed, 25 reported that a family member required medical care during the past year, with a significant number unable to find assistance.

The qualitative comments further illuminate the struggles faced by the community. A resident's observation, "People cannot afford needed medication and cannot afford to go to the dentist or eye doctor," highlights the financial barriers to maintaining physical health. The stress of everyday life, the toll of caring for sick or disabled family members, and the lack of affordable, nutritious food options are all cited as factors that deteriorate physical health.

To address these pressing concerns, there is a critical demand for a multifaceted approach that increases the availability and affordability of healthcare, improves the distribution and accessibility of healthcare providers, and expands insurance coverage and support services. Tailored interventions, community education on health and nutrition, and the development of support structures for caregivers are essential to enhance physical health outcomes for the population.

For physical health interventions, the target population is diverse, encompassing adults who report a poor to fair health status, with a heightened focus on elderly residents and those with chronic conditions. Clinch and Atkinson counties, in particular, should be prioritized due to their higher reports of poor health. Demographically, this includes a cross-section of the community, but given the higher prevalence of certain chronic diseases in specific racial and ethnic groups, interventions may need to tailor approaches for these populations. Gender-specific health concerns, such as women's health issues, may also need to be addressed. Additionally, individuals who are uninsured or underinsured, which could disproportionately affect certain demographic groups, represent a critical target for initiatives aimed at expanding access to preventive and ongoing medical care.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Primary Causes of Poverty Explained

Individuals have inadequate income to secure basic needs (F)

In the local community, inadequate income stands as a primary barrier to securing basic needs, a condition affecting an estimated 81,243 residents or 20.60% of the population. This prevalence of poverty surpasses state (13.50%) and national (12.50%) averages, with extreme poverty rates in Clinch (32.50%) and Bacon (27.50%) counties, highlighting regional disparities. Despite an overall 15.84% reduction in poverty over the past five years, this positive trend does not alleviate the immediate struggles faced by many, particularly as the cost of living continues to rise.

Survey data reinforces this, with 62.50% of respondents identifying the lack of adequate income as the leading barrier to meeting their basic needs. This financial strain manifests in difficult choices for the community, such as deciding between paying for utilities, securing food, or affording medications, as described in the poignant testimonials from the residents. The elderly often have to choose between meals and medicine, and many families, especially those headed by single mothers, are living in conditions that compromise both their mental and physical health due to financial constraints.

These hardships are further exemplified by the demographic breakdown, with females, particularly those with young children, facing higher risks of poverty. Pacific Islanders and Black/African American populations exhibit the highest poverty rates among racial groups, and the presence of children in a household correlates with increased poverty rates.

The median income shows an increase outpacing inflation, yet a significant gap remains, especially for single mothers, between actual earnings and the living wage required for a family of four. Agency data from Fiscal Year 2022 indicates that services are utilized predominantly by African American senior citizens and school-aged children from primarily single-person or single-parent households, with the vast majority living below traditional poverty benchmarks.

The voices of the community members bring to life the statistics, encapsulating the daily reality of those caught in the throes of financial hardship. As one resident insightfully put it, "The middle group of people who have Social Security and SSI are falling through the cracks." This sentiment is echoed by many who see the elderly forced to choose between "nutritional meals and medications," underlining the precarious balancing act between essential health requirements and financial viability. Another resident highlights the domino effect of financial stress, stating, "If one cannot care for their basic needs, then how much more are they unable to care for any mental health or physical needs." The economic pressures are not only about survival but also about dignity and health, with an overwhelming number of individuals forced into untenable positions, often having to choose between food, housing, or utilities.

The target population for the organization's efforts in addressing this pervasive income inadequacy includes the most vulnerable and affected segments of our community. This encompasses senior citizens and school-aged children, particularly those from African American and single-parent households, who are living below the poverty line. The demographic data suggests a focused approach to aid single mothers, who face a disproportionate burden, and ethnic minorities such as Pacific Islanders and Black/African American populations, who experience higher rates of poverty. With many families, including those with young children, enduring the harsh realities of poverty, the organization is tasked with not just providing immediate assistance but also with empowering these individuals through financial education, job training, and more sustainable support systems that can help bridge the gap between current incomes and the living wage.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The community lacks an adequate number of safe and affordable housing units (C)

The community-level need for safe and affordable housing is starkly evident in the local region, where a significant portion of residents grapple with the dual pressures of housing affordability and quality. Statistics reveal that 37,932 households are housing cost-burdened, representing 23.49% of the population. Further, an estimated 41,300 homes were noted as having at least one substandard condition.

Survey data amplifies this issue, with 152 individuals acknowledging the critical shortage of affordable housing as a primary obstacle to financial security. The community feedback paints a vivid picture of the hardship faced, with residents expressing concerns over the challenging conditions. One resident poignantly remarked, "With rental housing skyrocketing, many are barely scraping by financially to keep a roof over their family's heads." This statement underscores the financial precarity that high housing costs impose on residents.

Another direct quote from the community insight, "There is a shortage of affordable housing in this area. We need more housing authority options in Pierce and Ware counties," highlights the need for systemic change, suggesting a call to action for increased housing options. Similarly, another resident's observation, "Housing in Toombs County is limited for low-income people and most available housing is out of budget," reinforces the disconnect between the current housing market and the economic realities of the community. One community member clearly stated the importance of the condition of homes, "Many in each county may have their own home but it is not in code and falling apart," highlighting the deteriorating state of existing housing stock and reinforcing the need for improvements.

To address this barrier, strategic planning and investment are required to enhance the local housing stock both in quantity and quality. This involves a concerted effort from housing authorities, community development organizations, and local government to implement policies and programs that support the creation of affordable housing and the renovation of substandard housing. The collective goal is to build a foundation for economic stability and improved quality of life for all community members.

Individuals lack adequate financial skills to manage the resources available (F)

Addressing the lack of financial management skills is critical in combating poverty in the community, as evidenced by survey data where 100 out of 328 respondents identified this as a primary barrier to securing basic needs. This issue ranks as the third most significant obstacle, highlighting the gap in essential financial knowledge and skills.

The quantitative data reveals that within the low-income resident group surveyed, 25 out of 114 admitted to personal financial mismanagement in the past year. Notably, 10 of these individuals reported an inability to find resources to assist them. This suggests that while there is an acknowledgement of financial mismanagement, there is also a lack of accessible resources to address the issue.

The target population for financial literacy programs would, therefore, include the elderly, who often juggle fixed incomes with rising costs, as well as young adults and parents who may lack the experience and education to manage household finances effectively. Additionally, those who have acknowledged mismanagement represent a direct audience for such initiatives.

To address this barrier, the organization may consider provision of comprehensive financial education. This could involve workshops on budgeting, one-on-one financial coaching, and the integration of financial literacy into existing support services. By equipping individuals with the skills

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

to manage their finances, the community can work towards breaking the cycle of poverty and enhancing the economic well-being of its residents.

Individuals are unemployed (F)

The community faces significant challenges related to unemployment, as evidenced by key statistical indicators and survey responses. The labor force count stands at 186,148 residents, representing 52.08% of individuals aged 16 to 64 in the region. Despite this sizable workforce, the unemployment rate remains at 5.76%, with 10,714 individuals actively seeking employment. This is slightly higher than both the state (5.21%) and national (5.28%) averages. Over the past five years, the labor force has seen a modest increase of 5.07%, while the unemployment rate has decreased by 15.17%.

Survey data provides further insights into the factors contributing to unemployment. Lack of transportation emerged as the most common barrier, cited by 62.28% of respondents, followed by limited job opportunities (52.78%), lack of required qualifications (51.39%), childcare constraints (45.83%), and criminal records (29.17%).

Based on statistical data and survey insights, it is evident that certain demographic groups within the community are disproportionately affected by unemployment. According to recent labor force statistics, low-income residents experience higher unemployment rates, with the local low-income unemployment rate standing at 18.84%, compared to the overall community unemployment rate of 5.76%. This discrepancy highlights the significant challenges faced by economically disadvantaged individuals in accessing employment opportunities. Survey responses support this data, with 19.30% of all low-income respondents stating that they had struggled with job search during the past year.

When considering demographic factors such as age, race, ethnicity, and gender, disparities in unemployment rates become even more pronounced. For example, individuals between the ages of 16 and 19 experience the highest unemployment rate at 12.12%, indicating challenges faced by young job seekers. Additionally, unemployment rates vary among different racial and ethnic groups, with Black/African American individuals experiencing higher unemployment rates (8.90%) compared to White (4.40%) and Asian (4.40%) individuals. Furthermore, gender disparities persist, with females (5.32%) facing slightly higher unemployment rates compared to males (4.58%).

Individuals lack the skills and qualifications to secure meaningful employment (F)

Based on a comprehensive analysis of both quantitative data and survey responses, it's evident that the lack of education and skills presents a significant barrier to employment and economic stability within the community. Statistical data reveals that 16.52% of adults aged 25 and older in the region have not completed high school. This population faces economic challenges, as evidenced by an average poverty rate of 30.50% among individuals without a diploma. Furthermore, their median earnings are relatively low, averaging \$27,223 annually.

Survey data corroborates these findings, with 85 out of 328 respondents identifying the lack of education and skills as a leading barrier impacting residents' ability to secure basic needs. In responses to specific survey questions, poor literacy skills, lack of a high school diploma, and lack of relevant technical skills were identified as top concerns, with significant numbers of respondents highlighting these barriers.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Additionally, low-income respondents reported personal struggles with securing employment due to a lack of education and skills, with 14 individuals out of 114 citing this challenge in the past year. Two respondents specifically mentioned difficulties in finding resources to assist them in overcoming these barriers.

The statistical data reveals disparities in educational attainment and employment outcomes across different demographic groups, with Black/African American individuals and Hispanics experiencing higher rates of unemployment and lower levels of educational attainment compared to their White counterparts. Additionally, seniors face challenges in adapting to technological advancements, which can hinder their access to educational resources and employment opportunities. By targeting interventions towards these vulnerable populations, addressing language barriers, promoting digital literacy among seniors, and providing tailored support for marginalized communities, the community can strive towards greater equity and social inclusion. This targeted approach not only fosters individual empowerment but also contributes to a more equitable and thriving society for all residents.



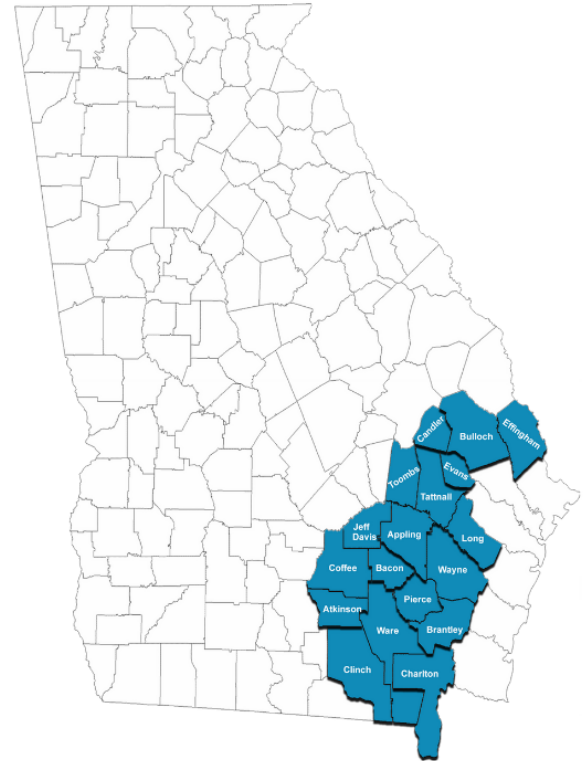
SECTION 2

KEY FINDINGS

Key Point Summary

Prioritized Needs and Barriers:

1. *Housing Insecurity*
2. *Food Insecurity*
3. *Lack of Income*
4. *Risk of Utility Loss*
5. *Lack of Affordable Housing*



Demographics

- 2022 Population: 453,979 (+2.18%)
- 2022 Households: 161,492 (+3.12%)
- 2022 Births: 5,619
- 2022 Deaths: 5,313
- 2022 Inward Migration: 32,082
- 2022 Outward Migration: 28,516



Population Summary:

38 year-old, White (68.26%), Non-Hispanic (92.64%), Males (50.40%)

Income & Poverty

- Low-Income individuals: 81,243 (-15.84%)
 - Deep Poverty: 39,076
 - 125% Poverty: 108,338
 - 200% Poverty: 180,337
- Poverty Rate: 20.56%
- Median Income: \$49,634 (+22.84%)
- Inflation: +13.43%
- Cost of Living
 - 1 Adult/0 Child: \$31,861
 - 1 Adult/2 Child: \$79,123
 - 2 Adult/0 Child: \$51,634
 - 2 Adult/2 Child: \$74,585

Employment

- Labor Force: 186,148 (+5.07%)
- Unemployed: 10,714 (-15.17%)
- Unemployment Rate: 5.21%
- Jobs: 130,234
- Median Wage: \$45,234
- Working Poor: 15,576

Highlights

- No Diploma: 48,600
- Literacy Deficient: 134,680
- Numeracy Deficient: 203,534
- Average School Proficiency: 74.50 (C)
- Childcare Deficit: 14,952 (2.19:1)
- Safe/Affordable Housing Deficit: 14,792
- Housing Cost Burdened HH: 37,932
- Median Rent: \$8,736
- Median Mortgage: \$14,100
- Median Utilities: \$7,404
- Homeless: 474
- Poor Health: 68,235
- Frequent Physical Distress: 44,103
- Frequent Mental Distress: 60,273
- Disabled: 67,929
- Uninsured: 66,101 (-3.57%)
- Food Insecure: 57,130 (-11.79%)
- No Vehicle HH: 10,056 (+6.89%)





POVERTY PERSONAS



Emily Thompson

Emily is a 33-year-old white female living in the region’s rural community. She is a high school graduate and works two part-time jobs, one in a local diner and one cleaning homes, to provide for her two children, aged 6 and 8. Despite her relentless effort to make ends meet, Emily faces the perpetual challenge of securing affordable childcare, which significantly impacts her ability to work fixed hours and consider further education that could lead to better employment opportunities. The stress of her financial situation is a constant burden, yet Emily remains resilient, motivated by her deep love for her children and the hope for a better future. She values community support, often relying on neighbors and local church programs for occasional assistance. She dreams of a stable job that could offer the means to move her family to a safer, more comfortable home and cover the costs of her children’s education.

The Johnson Family

The Johnson family, consisting of Mark and Sara, both in their late 30s, and their three children, aged 10, 8, and 5, represent a traditional family unit facing economic challenges common in the region. Mark works in construction, while Sarah is a part time librarian, a job she took primarily for its flexibility to be available for the children after school. The family lives in a modest home that they have been struggling to maintain and upgrade due to limited financial resources. Despite both parents working, making ends meet and saving for their children’s education remains a constant struggle, exacerbated by the high cost of living and unexpected expenses, such as car repairs and healthcare bills. The Johnsons are active in their community, with the children participating in sports and school activities as much as they can with the limited resources available to the family.



Margaret “Maggie” Wilson

Maggie is a 75-year-old African American widow who has become an embodiment of resilience and adaptability in her golden years. Having lived in the same small town within the region for decades, Maggie has seen the community evolve, with many of her contemporaries either passing away or relocating to be with family. After her husband’s death five years ago, she has been living on a fixed income, derived from his pension and her Social Security benefits, which she meticulously manages to cover her modest living expenses. Despite these financial constraints, Maggie maintains a positive outlook on life.

Living alone, Maggie faces dual challenges of managing her chronic health conditions and combating the loneliness that often accompanies aging. She finds solace and companionship from community activities, particularly at the local senior center where she participates in various social events from book clubs to gardening groups. Maggie values her independence fiercely, but is pragmatic about the realities of aging, often sharing her concerns about the accessibility and affordability of healthcare, the need for more senior-friendly transportation options, and the lack of social services tailored to the elderly in her community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Demographics

Throughout the region served by the organization, there are an estimated 453,979 individuals residing in 161,492 households. The largest counties are Bulloch County (17.47%), Effingham (14.29%), and Coffee (9.42%).

Examining migration trends reveals a noteworthy 2.18% population increase over the past five years, primarily fueled by inward migration, constituting 92.10% of the growth. The majority of new residents originated from other counties within Georgia (73.26%), followed by out-of-state (24.18%) and international (2.56%) migrants.

The community was noted as being predominantly male, albeit gradually moving towards gender balance (-0.07% over five years). Racially, residents primarily identified as White (68.26%), followed by Black/African American (24.94%), with much smaller populations of other groups. Notable shifts include increases in multi-Race (+160.69%), Pacific Islanders (+22.22%), American Indian (+7.20%), and African American (0.76%) populations, contrasting with a slight decrease among White individuals (-2.09%).

The median age in the region is 37.63 years, with the largest population cohort falling within the 35 to 54 age bracket (114,641 individuals). While there's a decline in the share of young children (-6.33%), adults between the ages of 25 and 34 (-2.60%), and middle-aged adults (-1.21%), there are increases among school-aged children (+0.23%), young adults (+0.71%), older adults (+1.19%), and seniors (+5.99%).

The median household size in the service area was identified as 2.64. Married households constitute a substantial portion (75,022 individuals), followed by those headed by single females (48,684 individuals), single males (28,891 individuals), and cohabitating adults (8,895 individuals). Current trends indicate that the number of households with seniors will overtake the number of households with children by 2030.

Poverty Analysis

An estimated 81,243 local residents (20.60%) were identified as living in poverty, surpassing both state (13.50%) and national (12.50%) averages. Extreme poverty rates are observed in Clinch (32.50%) and Bacon (27.50%) counties, while Effingham boasts a notably low rate at 6.60%.

Over the past five years, poverty has decreased by 15.84%, a rate similar to the state (-15.63%) but faster than the national average (-11.35%). Significant reductions were seen in Candler (-44.21%), Brantley (-32.37%), and Pierce (-29.49%) counties, while increases were noted in Appling (+8.58%) and Jeff Davis (+9.71%) counties.

Demographically, females, especially those with young children, face higher poverty risks. Pacific Islanders exhibit the highest poverty rates among racial groups (38.22%), followed by those identifying as Black/African American (29.09%) and Hispanics (23.94%). Households with children (12.49%) are at greater risk compared to those who have no children (7.71%), with poverty rates increasing with the number of children residing in the home.

The median income stands at \$49,634 annually, showing a noteworthy increase of 22.84%, outpacing inflation (+16.50%). However, the living wage for a family of four is \$75,585, with a single mother of two requiring \$79,123 annually indicating a gap in income for households with children.

The poverty persona in the region is a White (55.36%) or Black (31.37%), non-Hispanic (87.40%), female (55.75%) between the ages of 35 and 64 (28.89%) or between 18 and 34 (27.52%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment

A total of 186,148 individuals were identified as being a part of the local labor force, representing 52.08% of the 16-64-year-old populace. Over the past five years, this workforce has experienced an increase of 5.07%, closely tracking state trends (+5.22%) and outpacing national averages (+2.59%). However, despite this activity, unemployment persists, impacting 10,714 individuals, equating to a 5.76% unemployment rate. While in line with state (5.21%) and national averages (5.28%), this rate marks a significant 15.17% decrease over the past five years, signaling positive strides in employment opportunities.

Demographic disparities are evident in unemployment rates, with higher figures observed among certain racial and ethnic groups. For instance, unemployment rates are higher for individuals identifying as Black (8.90%), American Indian (8.50%), and Pacific Islander (7.50%). Hispanics face a 3.67% rate compared to 4.33% for non-Hispanics. Gender and age also play significant roles, with younger individuals and females experiencing higher unemployment rates.

Despite the availability of 130,234 jobs, a gap persists between job opportunities and those who are in need of work. With an estimated 175,434 individuals currently employed, it is evident that a portion of the labor force are traveling outside of the region for work.

Nearly one-in-ten (9.82%) of the region's jobs offer annual salaries below \$20,000. As a result, an estimated 15,576 local residents are classified as 'working poor'.

Adult Education & Skills Development

An estimated 51,933 residents were noted as holding college degrees. These individuals were found to experience lower poverty rates (4.90%), higher median incomes (\$48,672 to \$62,262), and extremely low unemployment rates (1.88%). Efforts to expand access to education have led to notable increases in the number of individuals with associate degrees (7.15% increase) and bachelor's degrees or higher (18.56% increase), contributing to human capital development within the community. Additionally, a majority of the population (92.59%) reports English proficiency, facilitating communication and integration.

While this is encouraging, there remains an estimated 48,600 local residents without a diploma. These individuals face high poverty rates (30.50%), low median earnings (\$27,223), and elevated unemployment rates (5.81%).

An estimated 134,680 local adults were noted as having literacy barriers, with 203,534 reported as being numeracy deficient. Language barriers impact 12,783 adults, predominantly Spanish speakers (11,098 individuals), limiting their integration and participation in the community.

Child/Youth Education

There are 118 schools in the region available to serve the 80,763 school-aged children. It should be noted that the region has experienced a 9.79% increase in the number of children over the past five years, with low-income children decreasing by 5.19%.

The region maintains a graduation rate of 90.51%, with Jeff Davis County experiencing the highest rate in the area at 97.38%. However, concerns were noted in association with academic performance and educational quality. The average school proficiency score in the region (74.5) equates to a grade of C or average, indicating room for improvement. Three school systems, including Evans, Tattall, and Toombs, scored below the average, indicating areas of underperformance and potential disparities in educational opportunities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Only 67.72% of all graduates were identified as being college and career ready. This underscores the need for enhanced academic preparation and career readiness initiatives to better equip students for future success.

Language proficiency barriers affect 5,044 children, potentially hindering their academic progress and social integration, necessitating targeted support. Additionally, 1,229 children with disabilities may require specialized resources to address their unique learning needs and ensure equitable access to educational opportunities.

Childcare/Early Education

There is a substantial deficit of available childcare, with only 12,604 slots accommodating the region's 27,556 young children. This shortage creates barriers for families seeking employment and educational opportunities and is especially troubling for the 17,198 children with all parents in the labor force. Additionally, nearly half of the local census tracts are classified as childcare deserts, indicating limited or no access to quality childcare services, particularly affecting underserved communities.

The high cost of childcare exacerbates these challenges, with annual expenses surpassing even college tuition fees. The financial burden, representing 15.50% of the median income, exceeds recommended standards (7%) and strains family budgets.

Transportation

Transportation is a critical factor influencing self-sufficiency, social mobility, and overall quality of life in the region. Its impact on access to employment, education, healthcare, and basic necessities cannot be understated. While a vast majority of the region's households (93.77%) have access to at least one vehicle, an estimated 10,056 individuals do not own a vehicle. Among these, 3,011 include members of the labor force. Additionally, 5,491 households have more workers than vehicles, exacerbating transportation challenges for families. The increase in households without a car over the past five years (+6.89%) underscores growing transportation inequities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

Moreover, a significant number of individuals in the labor force commute outside of their county of residence for work (82,431), with reliance on long-distance commuting contributing to increased travel times, costs, and environmental impacts.

Housing

Data indicates that there is a surplus of 26,508 homes in the region, ensuring an ample supply of housing units to meet the needs of local residents. Unfortunately, more than 41,000 of the region's homes were noted as having sub-standard conditions, which not only can impact the health and safety of occupants but may also result in increased utility costs.

A notable portion of the region's households (37,932) spend more than 30% of their income on housing and utilities alone. This strain on the household budget can limit resources for other essential needs, leading to utility disconnection, eviction, and foreclosure. Fortunately, the local eviction rate of 7.68% is significantly lower than the state average of 14.10%.

Although the number of individual units available is no longer published, data indicates that there are 118 providers of subsidized affordable housing units in the region.

During the most recently reported Point In Time (PIT) Homeless Count, an estimated 474 homeless individuals were identified in the region, the majority (90%) of which were unsheltered.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health

A notable proportion of the population, approximately 19.74% of all adults (68,235 individuals), report poor to fair health status. This percentage exceeds the state average of 15%, indicating a higher prevalence of health-related issues within the community. Clinch (27%) and Atkinson (26%) counties report particularly high rates of poor health, suggesting localized disparities that may require targeted health interventions and resources.

Additionally, a concerning number of residents experience frequent physical distress, with 13% of the population reporting more than 14 days of severe health concerns each month. This figure surpasses the state average of 10%, indicating a higher prevalence of physical health challenges that may impact daily functioning and quality of life for individuals in the community.

Similarly, frequent mental distress is prevalent among 17% of the population, exceeding the state average of 15%. Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, and the higher prevalence of mental distress underscores the need for increased access to mental health services, support resources, and stigma reduction efforts within the community.

These issues may be related to exhausted healthcare systems in the region, with a high patient-to-provider ratio across various specialties. For instance, there are approximately 4,605 patients for every physician, 7,469 patients per dentist, and 4,771 patients per mental health provider. These ratios exceed the state averages by significant margins, indicating potential challenges in accessing timely and quality healthcare services within the community.

Also, a substantial portion of the population (67,929 individuals) was noted as being uninsured. Lack of health insurance coverage can hinder access to essential healthcare services, preventive care, and treatment, posing barriers to addressing health needs and managing chronic conditions effectively.

Finally, the community exhibits a lower life expectancy of 74 years compared to the state average of 77.30 years. A shorter life expectancy can be indicative of various health and social determinants, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to address underlying factors contributing to premature mortality and improve overall population health outcomes.

Nutrition

There are an estimated 57,130 residents, or 13.47% of the population, experiencing food insecurity. This rate is higher than the state average of 10.70%. Among these, an estimated 14,660 children, representing 14.57% of the individuals in this age group, are food insecure. Children experiencing food insecurity are at risk of adverse health outcomes and may face challenges in their physical, cognitive, and emotional development.

A total of 5,272 seniors, comprising 8% of the senior population, are affected by food insecurity. Older adults experiencing food insecurity may be more susceptible to chronic health conditions and nutritional deficiencies, further exacerbating health disparities and reducing their quality of life.

The high cost of food relative to income poses a significant barrier to food access and affordability for many residents. With the average cost of a meal at \$3.34 per person, families may face financial strain in meeting their dietary needs, particularly those living on limited incomes. For example, the cost of food for an average family of four accounts for 29.47% of the median income and a staggering 97% of a minimum wage income, underscoring the financial burden of food expenses on households with limited financial resources.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Family Relationships

Over the past five years, there has been a slight decrease in single-parent births (-0.07%) and teen births (-1.53%), indicating positive trends in reproductive health and family planning. These reductions suggest improved access to education and resources, as well as greater awareness and support for young parents in the community. Moreover, there has been a decrease in custodial grandparent households (-1.75%), reflecting potential improvements in family stability and support networks.

Additionally, the community has witnessed a notable reduction of 6.46% in the number of foster children. This decline may signify enhanced child welfare services, preventive measures, and family support programs aimed at keeping families intact and providing necessary assistance to prevent children from entering the foster care system.

Domestic violence remains a growing concern in Georgia, with an alarming increase of 24.52% in domestic abuse-related deaths. This rise underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions and support services to address underlying issues and protect vulnerable individuals and families from harm.

Finally, the prevalence of single-parent households (13,049), teen mother households (451), and custodial grandparent households (6,050) highlights ongoing challenges related to family structure and support.

Community

The community demonstrates several strengths that contribute to its social fabric and cohesion. Notably, 46% of all Georgia residents engage in charitable giving, showcasing a spirit of generosity and altruism within the community. This percentage reflects an increase from the 45% reported in 2019, indicating a growing commitment to supporting charitable causes and initiatives. Furthermore, 24% of all Georgia residents report participating in groups, marking an improvement from the state's previous rank and highlighting increased community engagement and involvement.

The state boasts a commendable voter participation rate of 70%, an increase from the 62% documented in 2010. This significant participation in the electoral process underscores the community's dedication to shaping its collective future through informed decision-making and advocacy. Additionally, with 77.09% of all Georgia residents spending time with family and friends, the community values social connections and relationships, promoting a sense of belonging and interconnectedness among its members.

The community has a moderate crime rate (12.26%), which contributes to a sense of safety and security for residents.

Finally, there are 25,439 veterans in the region, reflecting an ultimate form of community engagement.

Despite its strengths, the community also faces certain challenges that impact social cohesion and community engagement. The decline in volunteerism from 24.91% in 2019 to 19.90% is a concerning trend earning a rank as 45th in the nation. This underscores the need for renewed efforts to encourage and support volunteer initiatives within the community.

Additionally, the relatively low percentage (14.50%) of Georgia residents working with neighbors to improve the community, compared to the national average of 18%, suggests a potential lack of grassroots community involvement and collaboration. Similarly, the lower rates of exchanging favors

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

(7.7%) and social engagement with neighbors (19.7%) further highlight challenges in fostering strong interpersonal connections and collective action at the local level.



SECTION 3

COMPLIANCE

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Background

As the primary entity designated by the United States government to identify and eliminate the causes of poverty in local communities through the direct provision of services and coordination with other organizations, Community Action Agencies are held to a high standard of excellence through an accountability framework documented in the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) that requires state funders to establish “performance goals, administrative standards, financial management requirements, and other requirements” (42 U.S.C. 9914). In order to fulfill their required oversight duties, state funding administrators are tasked with adopting, communicating, and evaluating each organization’s ability to meet these basic standards on an annual basis.

Community Needs Assessment Standard Compliance

The following standards are directly associated with the development of a community assessment.

CSBG Standard 1.2: The organization analyzes information collected directly from low-income individuals as part of the community assessment.

During the assessment process, surveys were distributed online and administered directly to low-income individuals. A total of 117 individuals participated in the process that classified themselves as “low-income”. This included 3 members of the governing body, 48 staff members, 1 volunteer, 5 local organization representatives, and 60 community members. These individuals were predominantly between the ages of 25 and 44 (40.19%), over the age of 65 (20.56%), and between the ages of 60 and 64 (14.95%). A large majority (99.07%) reported being non-Hispanic, with 53.27% identifying as Black and 46.73% identifying as White. These individuals lived primarily in single parent homes (33.90%), person homes (32.20%), traditional families with adults and children (18.64%), households with adults and no children (8.47%), single male parent homes (3.39%). A total of 14.49% stated that they had pre-school aged children living in the home.

CSBG Standard 2.2: The organization utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors would include at minimum: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions.

Multiple individuals representing community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions were invited to participate in the project. The table below provides a summary of the final number of participants representing each group that chose to participate.

Sector Represented	Focus Groups	Surveys
Public Sector	12	16
Private Sector	2	2
Faith-Based	3	4
Educational Institution	3	7
Other Community-Based	5	20

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

CSBG Standard 3.1: The organization conducted a community assessment and issued a report within the past 3 years.

The Community Needs Assessment was completed in partnership with SA Howell, LLC. through a contractual agreement, monitored by the organization's leadership team. The assessment was finalized and approved by the Board of Directors on May 20, 2024. The final report will be posted on the organization's website.

CSBG Standard 3.2: As part of the community assessment, the organization collects and includes data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for their service area.

During the process of quantitative research, statistical data was collected that identified the impact of poverty on individuals based on gender, age, and race/ethnicity. This data can be found throughout Section 7 of the document.

CSBG Standard 3.3: The organization collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on its geographic service area(s) in the community assessment.

Also known as statistical or numerical data, quantitative data was collected through intensive research of more than 5 dozen unique data sources in ten domains of self-sufficiency. These categories include Income, Employment, Education, Childcare, Housing, Health, Nutrition, Transportation, Community Engagement, and Family Relationships. Data includes statistics for the local communities, the entirety of the service area, Illinois, and the United States. Data sources include but are not limited to the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, National Low-Income Housing Coalition, M.I.T., U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Disease Control, and multiple-choice questions on locally administered surveys.

Qualitative data, often referred to as descriptive or narrative data, was collected through open ended survey questions and focus groups. This included feedback from agency staff, board members, community partners, and residents of the region served, including those with limited incomes.

Data analysis was conducted by SA Howell staff members utilizing a variety of descriptive processes and tools, including Artificial Intelligence (AI). Processes used include comparative, trend, and exploratory evaluations. Prioritization of needs was determined using a priority consensus ranking based on data obtained from surveys. Prioritization tables are provided in section 10.

The geographic area served by the organization includes the following counties:

- *Appling*
- *Atkinson*
- *Bacon*
- *Brantley*
- *Bullock*
- *Candler*
- *Charlton*
- *Clinch*
- *Coffee*
- *Effingham*
- *Evans*
- *Jeff*
- *Long*
- *Pierce*
- *Tattnall*
- *Toombs*
- *Ware*
- *Wayne*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

CSBG Standard 3.4: The community assessment includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs of the communities assessed.

A report of the key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty can be found in Section 2 of this document. Agency (A) level needs will be documented separately by the organization upon completion of the SWOT Analysis during the development of the strategic plan.

CSBG Standard 3.5: The governing board formally accepts the completed community assessment.

The finalized document was presented to the Board of Directors on May 20, 2024. A formal acceptance was approved with a vote of 100%.

Head Start 1302.11-b.i: The number of eligible infants, toddlers, pre-school aged children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicities, and languages they speak.

An estimated 27,556 children under the age of 5 were identified in the local community. This is a decrease of 6.07% over the past five years, demonstrating a loss of 1,247 children in this age group. Among these, an estimated 5,526 were under the age of 1, 5,458 were one year of age, 5,458 were two years of age, 5,556 were three years of age, and 5,558 were four years of age. Breakouts by county and additional information can be found on page 221 of this document. Based on average birth records over a period of five years, it is estimated that 5,604 pregnant women reside in the county.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Head Start 1302.11-b.i.A: The number of children experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness among children is a pressing issue that carries implications far beyond the immediate lack of shelter. Homeless children face a higher risk of emotional and behavioral problems, which can impact their long-term development and educational success. For example, children who experience homelessness are more likely to see disruptions in their schooling, repeat grades, be expelled or drop out of school, and demonstrate lower academic performance.

Furthermore, the instability of homelessness can lead to increased health problems for children. The stress and trauma of being without a home can exacerbate or trigger physical and mental health issues. Access to healthcare becomes challenging, which, coupled with the aforementioned stress, can lead to serious health complications that might not be properly addressed or treated in a timely manner.

While school systems have reported limited statistics after 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, eliminating the number of homeless children in their published data, the number of students identified as homeless during the 2019-2020 school year highlights the importance of addressing this issue at the local level. Throughout the region, a total of 2,018 children were identified as being homeless according to the McKinney Vento definition, with the largest portions residing in Coffee (661) and Ware (389) counties. The highest homeless rates for children were identified in Coffee (8.50%), Ware (6.30%), Evans (4.80%), and Bacon (3.80%) counties.

Additionally, it's worth noting that homelessness does not just impact housing stability but also impacts family dynamics, with the potential for increased vulnerability to domestic violence and neglect within the community. This underscores the interconnectedness of housing security with broader familial and social well-being.

Area	Total Students	Homeless	Homeless %
<i>Appling</i>	3,567	71	2.00%
<i>Atkinson</i>	1,707	3	0.20%
<i>Bacon</i>	2,110	80	3.80%
<i>Brantley</i>	3,455	60	1.70%
<i>Bulloch</i>	10,902	195	1.80%
<i>Candler</i>	2,227	6	0.30%
<i>Charlton</i>	1,689	39	2.30%
<i>Clinch</i>	1,336	14	1.00%
<i>Coffee</i>	7,769	661	8.50%
<i>Effingham</i>	12,966	64	0.50%
<i>Evans</i>	1,933	92	4.80%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	3,084	17	0.60%
<i>Long</i>	3,876	12	0.30%
<i>Pierce</i>	3,610	76	2.10%
<i>Tattnall</i>	3,783	34	0.90%
<i>Toombs</i>	5,522	98	1.80%
<i>Ware</i>	6,206	389	6.30%
<i>Wayne</i>	5,373	107	2.00%
Region	81,115	2,018	2.49%

Source: Georgia Department of Education

It should also be noted that no children served in 2022 through programs documented in the Easytrak software were identified as being homeless. Two children enrolled in Head Start were noted as experiencing homelessness during the year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Head Start 1302.11-b.i.B: The number of children in Foster Care

Children in foster care face unique challenges that can significantly affect their development and ability to break out of poverty. When a child enters foster care, it often follows trauma or instability in their family environment. This can lead to issues with attachment, trust, and emotional well-being, which are foundational to a child's development. Research suggests that early experiences of adversity and instability can have long-term impacts on cognitive development, educational attainment, and social-emotional skills — all key factors in a person's ability to succeed and be financially stable as an adult.

For instance, children in foster care may move between multiple homes and schools, leading to educational disruption and difficulties in forming lasting relationships with peers and adults outside their biological family. Such instability can hinder their academic performance and lead to lower graduation rates compared to their peers. This educational disruption is a significant barrier, as a solid educational foundation is closely linked to economic opportunities and the ability to secure employment that can lift individuals out of poverty.

Moreover, children in foster care might have limited access to extracurricular activities and support services that foster talents and skills, which are often vital for personal development and future job prospects. They may also face stigmatization and low expectations, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and aspirations.

In 2023, a total of 929 children were reported as being in foster care. Although an additional 329 children were removed from their homes in 2023, the total number of children in care during the year was reduced to 869. Each transition can be a setback in terms of stability and continuity, which are crucial for a child's sense of security and ability to focus on education and personal growth.

Area	2022 In Care	2023 In Care	2023 Removals
Appling	28	43	20
Atkinson	6	8	3
Bacon	36	40	22
Brantley	76	56	21
Bulloch	37	34	19
Candler	8	5	3
Charlton	43	33	14
Clinch	21	21	12
Coffee	261	216	45
Effingham	69	41	1
Evans	13	22	12
Jeff Davis	28	27	1
Long	15	13	2
Pierce	59	76	33
Tattnall	19	20	9
Toombs	20	22	13
Ware	151	154	80
Wayne	39	38	19
Region	929	869	329

Source: Fostering Court Improvements

A total of 10 children enrolled in Early Head Start and 16 children enrolled in Head Start during FY22 were noted as being in foster care at some point during the year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Head Start 1302.11-b.i.C: The number of children with disabilities, including the types of disabilities and relevant services and resources to these children by community agencies.

Disabilities can present substantial barriers to a child's educational attainment by affecting their cognitive, physical, sensory, or social-emotional development. Children with disabilities may encounter challenges in accessing and participating in educational programs and activities, hindering their opportunities for learning and skill development. This can perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage, as limited educational achievement is closely linked to reduced earning potential and increased likelihood of poverty later in life. Furthermore, disabilities can impact a child's social inclusion and emotional health, potentially leading to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and mental health challenges. Addressing the needs of children with disabilities requires a comprehensive approach that considers not only their educational requirements but also their broader social, emotional, and developmental needs to ensure equitable opportunities for success and well-being.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that an estimated 356 young children under the age of 5 within the region were identified as having a disability of some type. Among these children, 134 were reported to have hearing disabilities, while 228 were noted to have vision disabilities. The largest concentration of these kids was found in Jeff Davis (32.02%), followed by Ware (22.75%), Tattnall (15.73%), and Bulloch (11.80%) counties.

Area	Total Disabled	Hearing Disability	Vision Disability
Appling	24	24	0
Atkinson	6	6	0
Bacon	0	0	0
Brantley	0	0	0
Bulloch	42	42	0
Candler	0	0	0
Charlton	0	0	0
Clinch	0	0	0
Coffee	0	0	0
Effingham	27	0	27
Evans	6	6	6
Jeff Davis	114	0	114
Long	0	0	0
Pierce	0	0	0
Tattnall	56	56	0
Toombs	0	0	0
Ware	81	0	81
Wayne	0	0	0
Region	356	134	228

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1810)

These statistics underscore the importance of understanding the prevalence and distribution of disabilities among young children within the community. Such data can inform the development of targeted interventions and support services to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities and their families. Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity of collaborative efforts among community agencies to ensure that comprehensive services and resources are available to support the optimal development and well-being of all children, regardless of their abilities.

A total of 46 children enrolled in the organization's early childhood education programs during FY22 were referred for disability evaluations, 13 of which were diagnosed with a disability.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Head Start 1302.11-b.ii: The education, health, nutrition, and social services needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being.

While the entirety of this document focuses on the needs of low-income community members, including parents of eligible children, survey data was specifically isolated for low-income families with young children to allow for a deeper understanding of the needs impacting this portion of the population.

When examining the challenges faced by low-income families with young children, certain issues emerge as more prevalent, indicating the critical areas where support and intervention are most urgently needed. Among the challenges identified among the parents of young children responding to surveys, financial struggles loom large, with 70% of respondents reporting difficulty paying off loans/debt. Financial stability is crucial for ensuring that families can adequately provide for their children's basic needs, including food, shelter, and healthcare. Without this stability, families may face constant stress and uncertainty, which can have detrimental effects on children's well-being and long-term development.

Utility payments were another pressing issue, with 50% of respondents reporting struggles with utility payments and 10% experiencing disconnections. Access to utilities such as electricity, water, and heating is essential for maintaining a safe and comfortable living environment. Without reliable access to utilities, families may face hardships such as extreme temperatures, food spoilage, or inability to perform basic daily tasks. Ensuring affordable utility services and providing assistance to families in need can alleviate financial burdens and prevent utility disconnections, safeguarding children's well-being and stability at home.

Another concern identified was budget mismanagement, cited by 40% of these respondents. Lack of budgeting skills can lead to financial instability and exacerbate existing challenges, such as difficulty paying bills or accessing essential services. Addressing this issue through financial education programs can empower families to make informed financial decisions and better manage their resources, ultimately promoting long-term self-sufficiency and stability.

Childcare emerged as a significant challenge, with 30% of respondents struggling to find affordable childcare. Access to quality childcare is essential for working parents to maintain employment and support their families financially. Moreover, high-quality early childhood education has been shown to have long-term benefits for children's academic achievement and social-emotional development. By addressing barriers to childcare access and affordability, communities can support parents in their efforts to provide the best possible start for their children and promote their long-term success.

Housing conditions were also a significant concern, with 20% of respondents struggling with poor housing conditions. Adequate housing is fundamental for creating a stable and supportive environment for children to thrive. Poor housing conditions, such as overcrowding, unsafe living conditions, or lack of insulation, can negatively impact children's health, safety, and overall well-being. By addressing housing issues and ensuring access to safe and affordable housing, communities can create a foundation for children's healthy development and success.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation limitations were reported by 20% of respondents, highlighting the importance of reliable transportation for accessing essential services, employment opportunities, and educational resources. Lack of transportation can isolate families and limit their access to critical resources, exacerbating existing challenges such as unemployment or healthcare access. By improving transportation infrastructure and providing affordable transportation options, communities can enhance families' mobility and ensure equitable access to opportunities, ultimately promoting their self-sufficiency and well-being.

Head Start 1302.11-b.iii: Typical work and training schedules of parents with eligible children.

When asked about the ideal time for dropping off their children for childcare, 50% of the survey respondents with young children responded that they preferred 7:00 am, while 30% preferred 6:00 am. These drop-off times likely reflect the work schedules of parents who need to start their workday early to accommodate job requirements or commute times. Additionally, 10% of respondents indicated 8:00 am as the ideal drop-off time, suggesting some flexibility in scheduling for a minority of parents, possibly those with later start times for work or school.

Similarly, when asked about the ideal time for picking up their children from childcare, 60% of respondents indicated 5:00 pm, while 20% preferred 3:00 pm. These late pick-up times likely correspond to the end of the typical workday for many parents, allowing them to complete their work commitments before retrieving their children from childcare. Additionally, 10% of respondents indicated 4:00 pm as the ideal pick-up time, and 10% preferred 1:00 pm, indicating some variability in scheduling needs among respondents.

Overall, these survey responses highlight the importance of flexible childcare services that can accommodate the diverse work schedules of low-income parents. By offering early drop-off and late pick-up options, childcare providers can better meet the needs of working parents and support their efforts to balance employment, education, and childcare responsibilities. Additionally, understanding parents' preferred drop-off and pick-up times can inform program planning and scheduling to ensure that childcare services are accessible and convenient for families, ultimately promoting parental engagement and participation in early childhood education programs.

Head Start 1302.11-b.iv: Other child development, childcare centers, and family childcare programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of children served.

There are 12,604 childcare slots available to serve the county's 27,556 young children, leaving a deficit of 14,952. This is equivalent of 2.19 children for every childcare slot available. Among the community's census tracts, more than 54% are classified as childcare deserts. A full listing of all childcare centers can be found on pages 309-314.

Head Start 1302.11-b.v: Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families.

Resources are listed in the assessment by both county (pages 45, 53, 61, 70, 81, 89, 98, 107, 117, 127, 136, 145, 154, 163, 173, 183, 193, and 203) as well as domain (pages 261, 277, 288, 298, 341,

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Head Start 1302.11-b.vi: Strengths of the community

While data concerning community strengths are documented under each domain in Section 7, highlights are provided below.

- The poverty rate has decreased by 15.68% over the past five years, which is faster than the national change (-11.35%) during the same period of time.
- The poverty gap between genders has improved by 11.01% over the past five years.
- The median income has increased by 22.84% over the past five years, outpacing inflation (+16.50%).
- The Gini coefficient decreased from 0.4679 to 0.4571 over the past five years, indicating a more equitable distribution of wealth.
- The region's unemployment rate decreased by 15.17% over the past five years.
- The unemployment rate for individuals of a Hispanic ethnicity has decreased by 41.37% over the past five years.
- The unemployment rate for individuals aged 16-19 has decreased by 52.19% over the past five years.
- The number of adults with a college degree has increased by 18.56% over the past five years.
- The region's graduation rate is 90.51%, with individual county rates as high as 97.38% (Jeff Davis).
- While the number of school-aged children has increased by 9.79%, the poverty rate among this age group has decreased by 5.19%.
- There is a surplus of 26,508 homes in the region, indicating an adequate supply of housing units to accommodate the population.
- The majority (64.18%) of homes in the region are less than 40 years old.
- There are 118 subsidized housing providers in the region.
- The eviction rate in the region (7.68%) is notably lower than the state average (14.10%).
- The statewide homeless rate has improved by 49.04% since 2011.
- Many of the leading causes of death in the region are preventable through lifestyle changes and public health interventions.
- There has been a decrease of 3.57% in the uninsured population over the past five years.
- The number of food insecure residents has decreased by 11.79% over the past five years.
- The number of food insecure children has decreased by 37.57% over the past five years.
- A vast majority of households, totaling 151,436 or 93.77% of the population, have access to at least one vehicle.
- Over the past five years, there has been a significant increase (+10.66%) in the number of households with access to vehicles.
- The region has experienced a decrease in single-parent births (-0.07%) and teen births (-1.53%) over the past five years.
- The number of custodial grandparent households has decreased by 1.75% over the past five years.
- The number of children in foster care has decreased by 6.46% over the past year.
- Nearly half (46%) of all Georgia residents participate in charitable giving, an increase of 45% from 2019.
- Nearly one-quarter (24%) of all Georgia residents report participation in groups.
- The statewide voter participation rate is 70%.
- More than three-quarters (77.09%) of all Georgia residents spend time with family and friends.
- The region has a moderate crime rate of 12.26%.



SECTION 4
COMMUNITY ACTION

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



In January of 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson declared unconditional war on poverty. His strategy consisted of a new cooperative relationship between local citizens, community organizations, local government officials, state legislators, and national leaders.

The flagship of this new initiative was a small program known as Urban and Rural Community Action, whose task was to stimulate a better focusing of all available local, State, private, and Federal resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families, and low-income individuals of all ages, in rural and urban areas, to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.

To carry out this mission, Community Action Agency (CAA) leaders were asked to develop both long-range strategies and specific, short-range plans for using resources (both allocated and leveraged). These plans were to take into account the areas of greatest need, the availability of community resources, and its own strengths and limitations.

One unique element of the Economic Opportunity Act, the law that created the Community Action Network, was a requirement to develop plans and programs with the maximum feasible participation of the residents of the areas and members of the groups served. This requirement was established to ensure that the organization's activities were responsive and relevant to the low-income citizens to whom they were addressed.

In 1967, amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act led to additional guidance from the national network by means of the document "Organizing Communities for Action." In this document, specific guidance was provided reminding Community Action Agencies that they are not to be simply a dispenser of welfare or social services to the poor, but to be a source of leadership in identifying and eliminating the causes of poverty in the local community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In 1973, the network faced its first major battle as President Richard Nixon ordered all Community Action Agencies to close by June. The network joined together and fought a legal battle that resulted in a victory for Community Action, as well as the families and communities it serves.

Realizing that they could not simply close the program down, the Ford Administration focused their attention on reducing the impact of the network by eliminating the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and, thus, the cabinet level position over-seeing the program. Administration of the program was moved to the Department of Health Education and Welfare's Community Service Administration. While the mission of the network remained "to make the entire community more responsive to the needs and interests of the poor by mobilizing resources and bringing about greater institutional sensitivity", the reduction in federal support and public opinion associated with the name change (Economic Opportunity to Community Services) was damaging.

In 1981, President Reagan proposed a \$0 budget for Community Action, this time with the support of Congress. In response to this crisis, David Bradley, a former student of Sargent Shriver, stepped on the scene to negotiate a compromise that led to the creation of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Through CSBG, administrative authority was shifted to the states, which were allocated 5% of program funding for administrative duties. An additional 5% was allocated for discretionary anti-poverty purposes. The remaining 90% was to be used to fund Community Action Agencies.

During the Clinton Administration, several major laws were passed to reduce and reform anti-poverty efforts in the nation. Among these was the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), enacted due to waste and inefficiency in Federal programs that had led to a lack of confidence of the American people in the government. In this law, multiple new requirements were enacted to ensure accountability among organizations receiving government monies. It was this law, in part, that led to the development of the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system as the mandated management framework for Community Action Agencies, effective in 2001.

In 2010, the GPRA Modernization led to additional guidance focusing on the coordination of services among community partners, customer satisfaction, and data quality. It was this law that led to the development of a new performance management framework that includes Organizational Standards, State Accountability Measures, Federal Accountability Measures, and ROMA: Next Generation. While the framework does include some new regulations, it primarily holds the network accountable for returning to its roots with a focus on community level activities, an emphasis on addressing the causes of poverty, and ensuring organizations work together to truly impact the lives of customers and the community as a whole rather than simply delivering emergency services.

Today, more than 1,000 organizations across the nation join Action Pact to fulfill the mission of this amazing network.

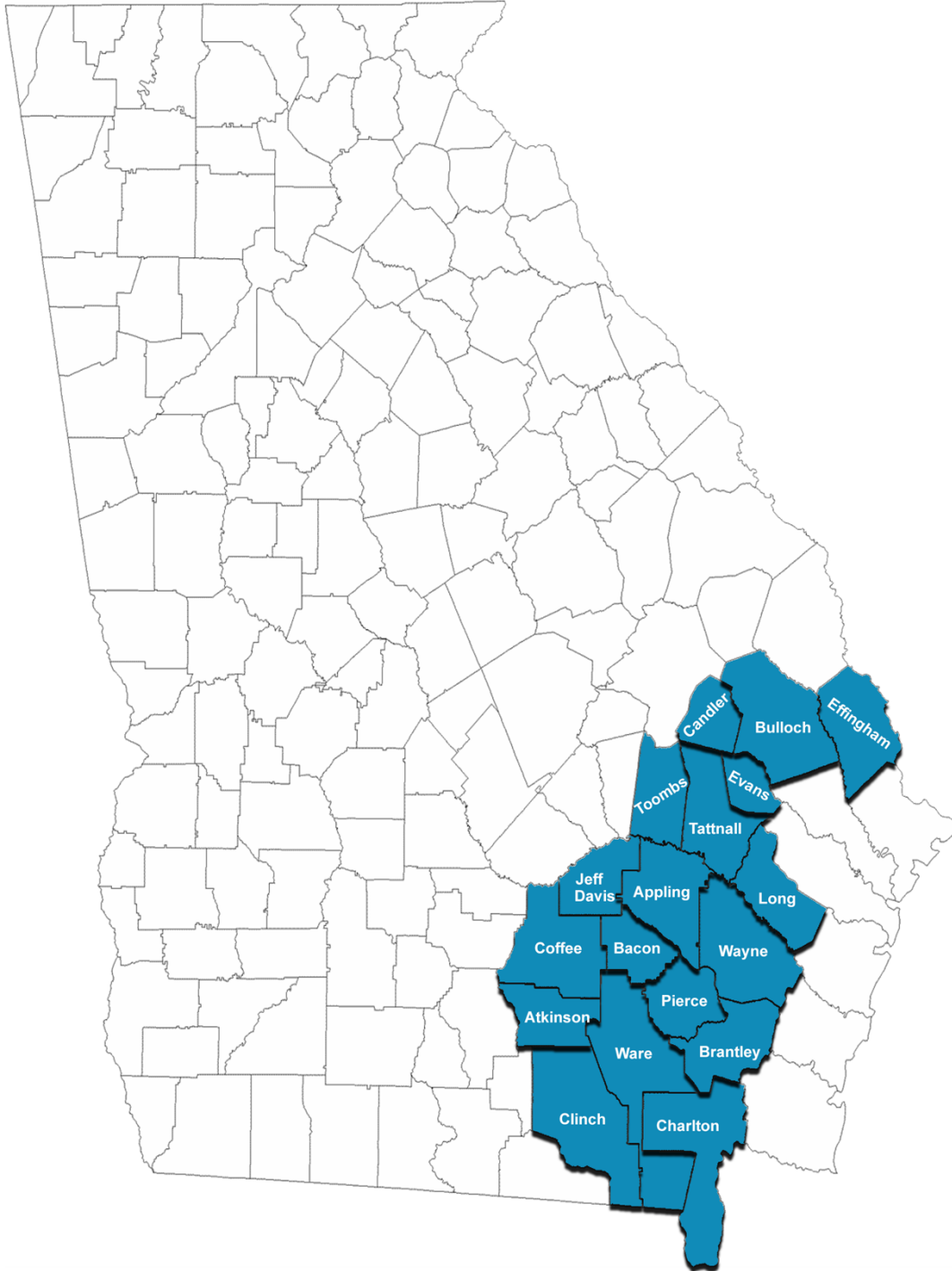


SECTION 5
THE AGENCY

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Service Area

Located in the southeastern region of Georgia, Action Pact, Inc. is committed to creating equal opportunities for all residents of Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Bulloch, Candler, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Effingham, Evans, Jeff Davis, Long, Pierce, Tattnall, Toombs, Ware, and Wayne counties by prioritizing the progress of the customers over the programs provided.



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Governance

Action Pact, Inc. operates under the guidance of a twenty-one-member tri-partite board. This board comprises a balanced representation of the community, with one-third elected officials, one-third representing the interests of the business sector, and one-third voicing the perspectives and concerns of the low-income population. Their collaborative efforts lead the organization towards its vision of communities full of neighbors who can support their families, boost their education, and have meaningful impact.

Programs

Action Pact administers a suite of robust programs underpinned by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and other funding sources, all aimed at empowering economically disadvantaged individuals and families:

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program

The CASA program utilizes volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children in the foster care system and stay with each case until the child is placed in a safe and secure home. Advocates bring a sense of urgency to these children's needs and speak up for their best interests. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their life.

Georgia SHIP Program

Through the Georgia SHIP Program, the organization provides free, unbiased, and factual information and assistance to beneficiaries and their caregivers about Medicare, Medicaid, and related health issues, including long-term care insurance and prescription assistance programs.

Financial Literacy Program

The Financial Literacy Program provides under-resourced families with the skills necessary to manage their money by increasing their knowledge concerning banking, credit scores, and personal budgeting.

Senior Health and Nutrition Programs

The organization provides senior citizens with nutritious meals, nutritious counseling, health and nutrition activities, exercise instruction to help improve independence and quality of life.

Family Health and Nutrition Programs

This program, targeting families with children enrolled in Head Start, helps families establish medical and dental homes, and promotes health and nutrition through classroom gardens, parent health and wellness training, and nutritious cooking activities.

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

These programs support the school readiness of young children from low-income families and/or with disabilities. In addition to education services, children and their families are provided with health, nutrition, social, and other services. Relationships are built with enrolled families that support positive parent-child relationships, family well-being, and connections to peers and the community.

Early Head Start services are available to pregnant women, infants, and toddlers until they reach three years of age and are ready to transition into Head Start, which serves ages three and four.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Georgia Pre-K Program

Georgia's Pre-K Program is a lottery funded educational program designed to help Georgia's four-year old children prepare for kindergarten. Pre-K services are available in Ware and Coffee counties.

Educational Talent Search (ETS) Program

ETS is an outreach and early intervention program that serves middle and high school students. The primary goal of the program is to motivate and encourage low-income, potential first-generation college students to graduate from high school and enroll in and graduate from a post-secondary educational institution.

Career Exploration Program

Through the Career Exploration Program, students work with counselors to plan their educational future. Aptitude assessments and career exploration services are used to help develop personalized goals and outcomes for each customer enrolled.

College Selection Program

Agency staff work with students through the College Selection Program to help identify post-secondary options for their chosen career. Field trips are provided to help participants learn more about college life prior to enrollment.

Tuition Assistance Program

Action Pact, Inc. provides customers with assistance associated with the navigation of college admissions and financial aid. Counselors monitor deadlines, review paperwork, and ensure no scholarship opportunity is missed.

Child Literacy Program

The organization promotes literacy in a fun and engaging way to help young children develop a love for reading. The program incorporates songs, crafts, cooking, and other activities to promote literacy.

The Powerful Parenting Program

Through the Powerful Parenting Program, Action Pact, Inc. uses a family-centered approach to build nurturing parenting skills while incorporating literacy for the entire family. Instruction includes topics such as ages and stages of development, positive discipline, and dealing with emotions.

Home Energy Assistance Program

Action Pact, Inc. provides under-resources residents with supplemental payments with home heating bills using funding allocated by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services.

Cooling Assistance Program

The organization provides assistance with summer cooling bills for residents with limited resources though funding allocated by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services.

Emergency Assistance Program

Through the Emergency Assistance Program, residents struggling to secure basic household needs are provided with rent, utility, and/or food assistance.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Weatherization Assistance Program

The Weatherization Assistance Program provides free energy-related repairs to income-eligible households to ensure the homes they are living in are energy-efficient. Homes that have been weatherized require less energy to heat and cool, resulting in reduced utility bills and a safer standard of living.

Congregate Nutrition Program

The Congregate Nutrition Program provides meals to individuals aged 60 or older in a group setting. In addition to meals, nutrition education, nutrition risk screening, and nutrition counseling services are provided.

Home Delivered Nutrition Program

Through the Home Delivered Nutrition Program, Action Pact, Inc. delivers warm meals to seniors five days each week. In addition to the promotion of improve nutrition, the program seeks to reduce the social isolation generally associated with being homebound.

Community Engagement Program

The organization provides members of the community an opportunity to promote long-term economic security and improved quality of life through volunteer positions with children, senior citizens, or other populations through the various programs and initiatives operated by Action Pact, Inc.

Community Care Services Program

Action Pact, Inc. provides services associated with home health, alternative living, emergency response, personal support, and adult daycare to older and/or functionally impaired residents. Eligible individuals work with a care coordinator to develop a consumer-focused plan of care and arrange for delivery of services.



SECTION 6
COUNTY PROFILES

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Appling County

Founded: 1818

Total Area: 508.3 square miles

County Seat: Baxley



County Overview

Appling County, situated south of the Altamaha River in southeast Georgia, was established in December 1818 by the state legislature. Initially, its borders stretched from the Altamaha River to the St. Mary's River. The county's land was acquired from the Creek Indians following their cession to Georgia in the treaties of Fort Jackson (1814) and the Creek Agency (1818). Named in honor of Colonel Daniel Appling, a renowned figure in the War of 1812, Appling County also served as the founding county for parts of Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Echols, Jeff Davis, Pierce, Telfair, Ware, and Wayne counties.

Despite its remote location in Georgia's pine barrens region, Appling County's population reached 1,264 by the 1820 census. This growth was spurred by its inclusion in the state land lottery draws of 1820, 1821, 1827, and 1832, attracting settlers from South Carolina and Tattnall County, Georgia.

The selection of a county seat in Appling County, a process that began in 1819, involved the inferior court justices and later five county commissioners. This process, marked by disagreements, concluded in 1828 with the legislative designation of Holmesville as the county seat.

The county's early economy revolved around small-scale farming, supplemented by the sale of livestock, timber, and naval stores to Darien and Savannah. Cotton emerged as a significant crop in the 1860s, declining between 1972 and the mid-1980s. Present-day agriculture in Appling includes cotton, tobacco, dairy, and blueberries, alongside slash and loblolly pine cultivation.

The Altamaha River was a key transport route for early settlers, used for shipping goods to coastal towns. The 19th century saw steamboats and pole boats carrying cotton, fertilizer, lumber, turpentine, and local produce. The county, once known as the world's turpentine capital, also had a unique rafting culture. This heritage was commemorated in 1982 with Project Raft, celebrating the skills and culture of that era.

The completion of the Macon and Brunswick Railroad in 1870 connected Appling to more populous areas of Georgia, leading to the establishment of Surrency, Graham, and the relocation of the county seat to Baxley in 1874. Baxley, named after storekeeper Wilson Baxley, was officially incorporated in 1875.

Notable figures from Appling County include John Comas, a Barcelona-born storeowner, his grandson Philip H. Comas, physician and political leader, and H. Clifton McCracken. Other influential residents were Seaborn Hall, a delegate to the Georgia Secession Convention and state constitutional convention, and Alfred le Sesne Jenkins, a State Department official who accompanied President Nixon to China in 1972.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The county gained literary recognition through Caroline Miller's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, "Lamb in His Bosom" (1934), and Janisse Ray's works, "Ecology of a Cracker Childhood" (1999) and "Wild Card Quilt: Taking a Chance on Home" (2003), which reflect the unique local culture and environmental concerns.

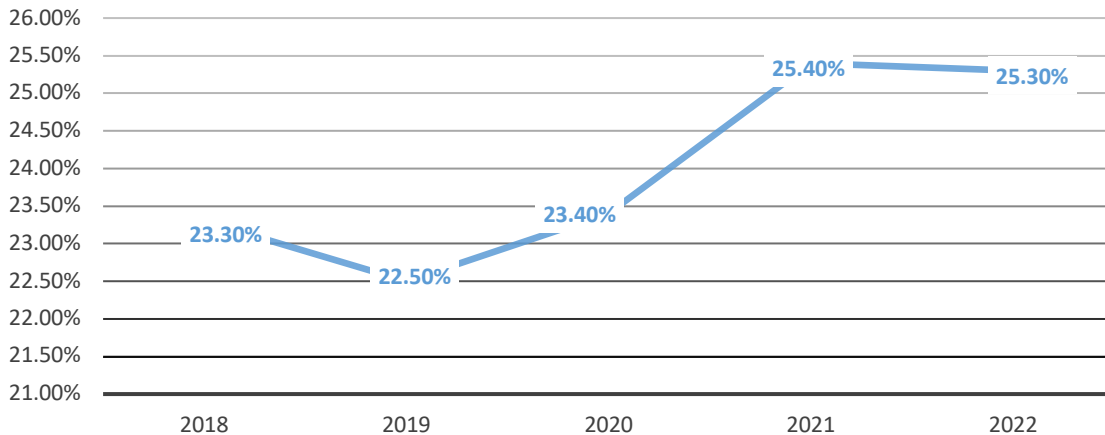
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 18,441 individuals residing in 6,980 households in Appling County. This is a decrease of 0.07% from the 18,454 individuals documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher male population (9,309) compared to females (9,132), a sex ratio of 102 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 40 years, with 3,232 residents being age 65 and older, and 1,146 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (13,032), followed by African Americans (3,349), Asians (105), American Indians (105), multi-racial (1,185), and other racial groups not specifically identified in the survey (665). More than one-tenth of the population (1,898) were noted as having a Hispanic ethnicity, with the remainder (16,543) being non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Appling County, there are an estimated 4,577 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 25.30% of the local population, which is significantly higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has increased by 8.58%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 2,585 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 5,480 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 9,464 being under 200%.

Chart 1: Appling County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Males (25.40%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than females (25.20%), with individuals identifying as multi-racial (50.50%), other race (42.90%), and Black/African American (35.40%) being much more likely to be in poverty than those identifying as White (20.00%) or American Indian (2.90%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (45.90%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic (19.40%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (39.50%) than adults (22.60%) or senior citizens (14.00%).

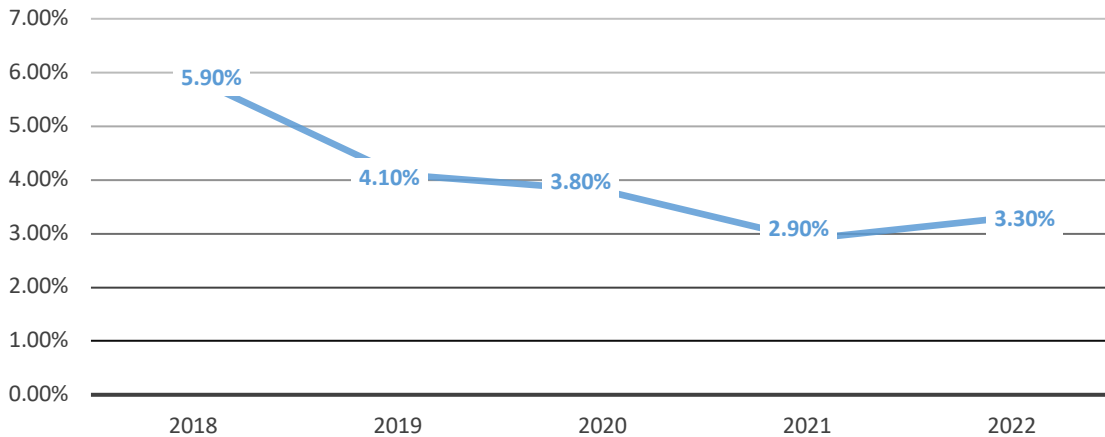
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The county's household median income is \$54,028 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$65,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Appling County in 2022 was 6,863, a decrease of 4.72% from the 7,203 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 192 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a significant decrease of 57.14% from the 448 documented five years ago. This is demonstrated in an unemployment rate improvement of 44.07%. While this is encouraging, it should be noted that the rate has worsened by 13.70% over the past year.

Chart 2: Appling County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total of 5,902 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 961 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$44,779 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 625 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 9.11% of the labor force and 20.92% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industries in the county are retail, accounting for 19.91% of all jobs with a median wage of \$41,288 annually, and local government, accounting for 19.32% of all jobs with a median wage of \$40,468.

An estimated 77.53% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually. Only 68 jobs in the community were noted as paying an average wage below \$20,000.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 1: Appling County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	272	\$47,892
Construction	436	\$50,180
Manufacturing	705	\$57,252
Wholesale	227	\$48,516
Retail	1,175	\$41,288
Information	32	\$53,664
Finance/Insurance	143	\$48,256
Real Estate	10	\$14,664
Professional/Technical	107	\$82,108
Administrative/Waste	58	\$19,396
Health/Social	406	\$32,084
Accommodation/Food	873	\$37,024
Federal Government	46	\$61,308
State Government	102	\$40,404
Local Government	1,140	\$40,468
Other/Unclassified	170	\$41,652
TOTAL	5,902	\$44,779

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Appling County, an estimated 2,649 adults over the age of 25 (21.57%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-15.85%) from the 3,148 adults documented in 2018. An additional 4,675 local residents (38.06%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 1.00% from the 4,722 individuals (38.32%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 1,231 local residents (10.02%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 3.19% from the 1,193 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 6,086 members of the adult population (33%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 8,852 individuals (48%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 670 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 3,401 school-aged children residing in the local community, 1,338 of which (39.34%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 3,219 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (2,190) or high school (1,029) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Appling County School System is 72.8 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 91.98%, with 69.34% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 16.31:1, which is within the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 11.70% students were noted as having language barriers, with 15.60% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the schools in the county, three were documented as being average, with one being above average (Fourth District Elementary School) and one being below average (Appling County Elementary School). All schools were at or below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 2: Appling County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Altamaha Elementary School	GA-601-1050	13.81:1	71.1	C
Appling County Elementary School	GA-601-0177	12.10:1	69.4	D
Appling County High School	GA-601-0103	16.53:1	76.2	C
Appling County Middle School	GA-601-0195	13.18:1	75.4	C
Fourth District Elementary School	GA-601-5050	13.81:1	84.7	B

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 392 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 1,146 young children, a deficit of 754. This is a ratio of 2.92 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, a total 80% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 3: Appling County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9501	N/A	Yes
9502	31.67:1	Yes
9503	0.91:1	No

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9504	N/A	Yes
9505	N/A	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

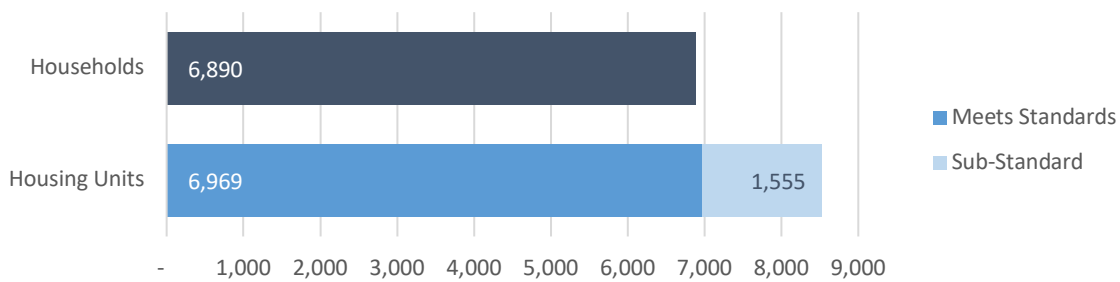
Table 4: Appling County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Appling Christin Academy	Baxley	(912) 367-3004	3y-5y
Appling County Head Start	Baxley	(912) 367-4321	0y-5y+
Camp Grow	Baxley	(912) 339-0072	5y-12y
Childz World	Baxley	(912) 367-4513	0y-5y+
Kidz Academy	Baxley	(912) 705-5437	0y-5y+
Reddy Free Day Care, Inc.	Baxley	(912) 367-0921	3y-5y

Housing Profile

In Appling County, there are an estimated 8,524 housing units available to accommodate the 6,890 local households, a surplus of 1,634 units. However, 1,555 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 53,38% of which are severe.

Chart 3: Appling County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,012 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$728 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 1,399 households (19.43%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 47.89% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 5: Appling County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Donnie Lane Villas	Sections 515/521	Baxley
Elderwood Homes	Section 202	Baxley
Pine Street Development	Public Housing	Baxley
Speer Homes	Public Homes	Baxley
Westwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Baxley

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 22% of the county’s adult population (3,057 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,985 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 2,501 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.9 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 2,432 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 1,199 were senior citizens, 1,152 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 57 were school-aged children, and 24 were under the age of five.

There are an estimated 3,050 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than double the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 9,240 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Mental health service capacity was also noted as a concern, with 1,160 patients per provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

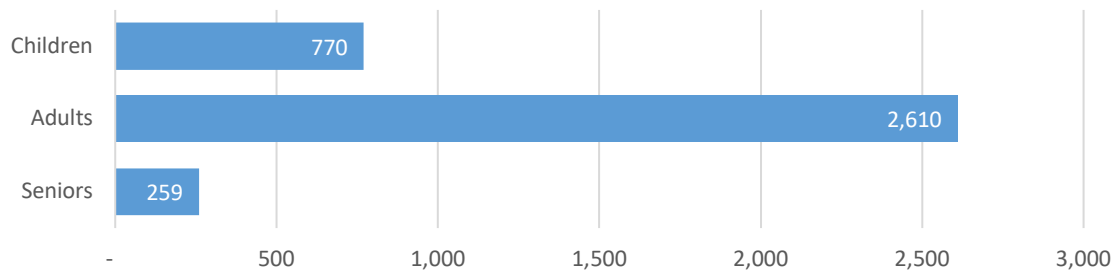
An estimated 2,579 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 15,502 with insurance, 9,615 reported use of a private plan and 7,932 had public coverage.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 2,610 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 770 are children, 259 are senior citizens, and 1,561 are working-aged adults. An estimated 1,378 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 20.00% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.36 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$306.60 per person each month, or 24.40% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,226.40 per month, equal to 97.59% of minimum wage.

Chart 4: Appling County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 508 local households (7.37%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 106 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 164 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 28.91% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Appling County, there are 2,328 households with children. An average of 218 children are born each year. An estimated 116 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 3 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 163 are headed by single males, 333 are headed by single females, and 185 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 43 foster children were in care during 2023, with 20 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 637 veterans in the local community, the largest portion of which (52.12%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 16.39, which is higher than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 305 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 2 murders, 4 rapes, 4 robberies, and 29 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Appling County lacks comprehensive anti-poverty case management services to coordinate efforts aimed at assisting residents in overcoming poverty. The absence of these services hinders the community's ability to provide tailored support and resources to individuals and families in need, limiting their opportunities for economic empowerment and stability.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

There is a significant gap in financial management counseling services in Appling County, particularly regarding budgeting education. Without access to these vital resources, residents may struggle to effectively manage their finances, leading to financial insecurity and challenges in meeting their daily needs.

Appling County faces challenges in providing sufficient resources for emergency rent, utility, and medication payments to residents experiencing financial crises. The scarcity of these essential services may leave vulnerable individuals and families at risk of housing instability, utility disconnection, or inadequate access to necessary medications.

The county experiences a shortage of childcare slots, with a deficit of 754 slots. The lack of available childcare, particularly during second and third shifts, creates barriers for working parents who require childcare outside of traditional hours, limiting their ability to maintain employment and support their families.

Appling County struggles with an insufficient number of available jobs, reflecting a gap in economic opportunities for residents. The deficit of 961 jobs contributes to unemployment and underemployment rates, impeding financial stability and economic growth within the community.

The county faces a shortage of affordable housing units, with 1,399 households experiencing housing cost burdens. This deficit highlights the need for increased investment in affordable housing initiatives to address housing insecurity and ensure access to stable housing for all residents.

Appling County experiences a shortage of healthcare professionals, including physicians, dentists, and mental health providers. With 3,050 patients for each physician, 9,240 patients for each dentist, and 1,160 patients for each mental health provider, residents may encounter challenges in accessing timely and adequate healthcare services, impacting their overall health and well-being.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent income (F)
4. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)
5. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Appling County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Appling County Food Bank	912-366-3663	Food Pantry Tuesday-Thursday 10am-2pm. (APPLING)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Baxley Church of God	912-367-2085	Emergency food pantry. Call for hours. (APPLING)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Midway Baptist Church	912-367-2893	Emergency food pantry and soup kitchen Wednesday at 6pm. (APPLING)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Upper Room Temple	912-876-0630	Provides a food pantry every 3rd Saturday 8-11am (APPLING)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Atkinson County

Founded: 1917
Total Area: 342.7 square miles
County Seat: Pearson



County Overview

Atkinson County, the 153rd county established in Georgia, spans 338 square miles. Formed in 1917, it was created from parts of Clinch and Coffee counties by Georgia's state legislature. The county is named in honor of William Y. Atkinson, a former Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives and Governor of Georgia in the late 1890s.

Originally, Creek Indians inhabited the area and developed a path through its southern region. This path, later named the "Kinnaird Trail" after Jack Kinnaird's trading post at its western end, became a vital trade route connecting the Flint River to the coastal town of St. Mary's. Post-Revolutionary War (1775-83), this trail saw the arrival of the first European settlers from middle Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The Brunswick and Albany Railroad, following the Civil War (1861-65), laid tracks along this trail, reaching Pearson, now the county seat, in the 1870s.

Pearson was officially recognized as a town in December 1890, and its courthouse, constructed in 1920, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Atkinson County also includes the towns of Axson, Kirkland, and Willacoochee. Axson, previously known as McDonald's Mill, was renamed to honor Ellen Axson Wilson, Woodrow Wilson's first wife, upon the county's establishment. Willacoochee, founded in 1889 and the first town in the county to be chartered, is home to McCranie's Turpentine Still, a historic site listed on the National Register of Historic Places, operational from 1925 to 1949.

Initially, Atkinson County's economy relied on its extensive pine forests, with timber floated down the Satilla River to the coast. Over time, agriculture (tobacco, corn, and poultry farming) superseded logging as the main economic driver. Today, poultry farming remains significant, alongside the cultivation of peanuts, cotton, corn, and tobacco.

Local attractions include the historic Columbus Salt Road, the Kinnaird Trail, and the Minnie F. Corbitt Memorial Museum. Established in 1955, the museum is housed in Pearson's first residence, built in 1873.

County Demographics

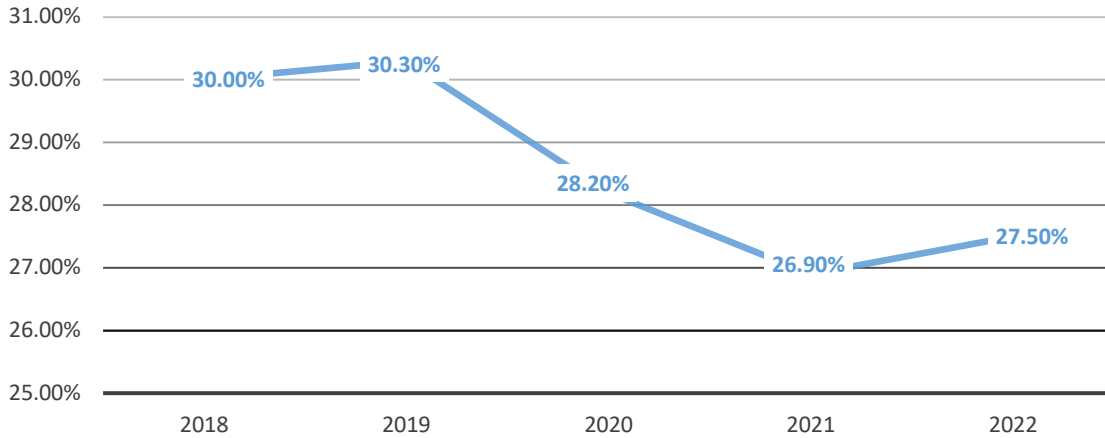
The United States Census Bureau identified 8,265 individuals residing in 3,063 households in Atkinson County. This is unchanged from the number of residents documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (4,183) compared to males (4,082), a sex ratio of 98 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 36 years, with 1,099 residents being age 65 and older, and 512 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (5,517), followed by African Americans (1,259), multi-racial (578), and other races not included in the survey (911). More than one-tenth of the population (1,898) were noted as having a Hispanic ethnicity, with the remainder (16,543) being non-Hispanic.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty Profile

In Atkinson County, there are an estimated 2,266 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 27.50% of the local population, which is significantly higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 15.00%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 722 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 3,087 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 4,541 being under 200%.

Chart 5: Atkinson County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Males (28.50%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than females (26.50%), with individuals identifying as multi-racial (63.30%), other race (42.20%), and Black/African American (39.60%) having higher rates than those identifying as White (18.60%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (47.40%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic (13.00%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (45.50%) than adults (30.60%) or senior citizens (15.80%).

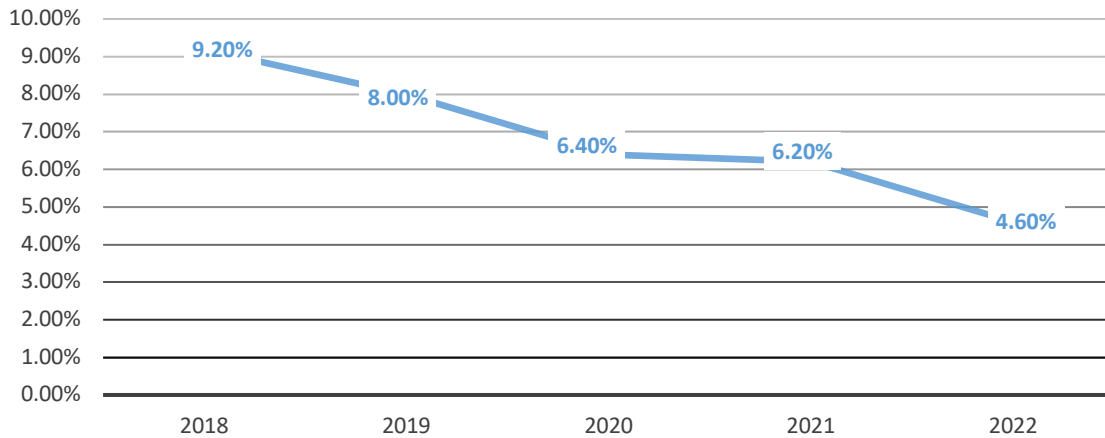
The county's household median income is \$51,037 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Atkinson County in 2022 was 3,420 an increase of 3.86% from the 3,293 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 172 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 46.25% from the 448 documented five years ago. This is demonstrated in an unemployment rate improvement of 50.00%.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 6: Atkinson County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 2,110 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 1,310 to accommodate the local labor force. The county’s median wage was identified as \$45,150 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 574 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 16.78% of the labor force and 42.61% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is manufacturing, accounting for 54.36% of all jobs with a median wage of \$47,320 annually.

An estimated 93.51% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 56 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

Table 6: Atkinson County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	Jobs	Avg. Wage
Agriculture	47	\$39,364
Construction	23	\$48,828
Manufacturing	1,147	\$47,320
Wholesale	54	\$66,820
Retail	132	\$30,680
Transportation	114	\$48,568
Finance/Insurance	55	\$56,940
Real Estate	10	\$14,664
Professional/Technical	12	\$113,620
Health/Social	26	\$28,288
Accommodation/Food	46	\$11,804
Federal Government	16	\$52,572
State Government	28	\$40,716
Local Government	391	\$40,872
Other/Unclassified	9	\$36,192
Total	2,110	\$45,150

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Adult Education Profile

In Atkinson County, an estimated 1,617 adults over the age of 25 (29.57%) have not completed high school. This is a slight increase (+0.12%) from the 1,615 adults documented in 2018. An additional 1,899 local residents (34.73%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 9.96% from the 2,109 individuals (40.33%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 621 local residents (11.36%) reported having a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is an increase of 19.65% from the 519 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 3,306 members of the adult population (40%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 4,628 individuals (56%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 1,183 residents continue to struggle with the community’s predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 1,611 school-aged children residing in the local community, 739 of which (45.87%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 1,513 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (917) or high school (596) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Atkinson County School System is 76.8 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 95.20%, with 62.50% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 13.70:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 21.00% students were noted as having language barriers, with 13.40% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the four schools in the county, three were documented as being average with one being above average (Pearson Elementary School). All schools were below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

Table 7: Atkinson County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Atkinson County High School	GA-602-0103	14.62:1	76.7	C
Atkinson County Middle School	GA-602-0111	14.19:1	73.6	C
Pearson Elementary School	GA-602-0190	12.95:1	81.0	B
Willacoochee Elementary School	GA-602-0187	13.36:1	75.1	C

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 170 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 512 young children, a deficit of 342. This is a ratio of 3.01 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, a total 66% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 8: Atkinson County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	1.50:1	No	9603	N/A	Yes
9602	5.97:1	Yes			

Source: Center for American Progress

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

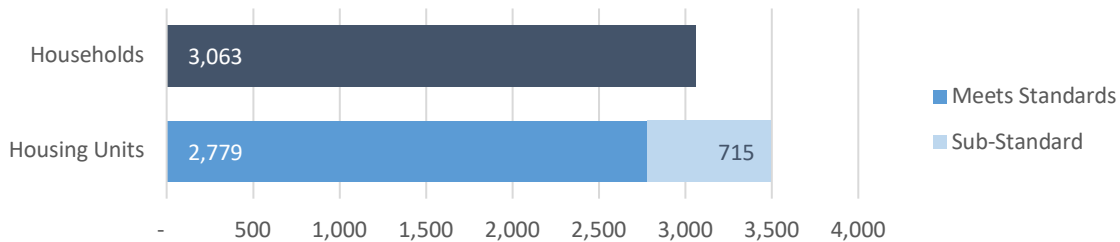
Table 9: Atkinson County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Atkinson County Head Start	Willacohee	(912) 534-6035	0y-4y
Cradle 2 Crayola Academy	Willacohee	(229) 237-1647	1y-5y+
Pearson Head Start	Pearson	(912) 422-3493	3y-5y+
Precious Jewels Early Learning Center	Pearson	(912) 393-5130	0y-5y+
Telamon Corporation-GA31	Pearson	(478) 365-4798	0y-5y

Housing Profile

In Atkinson County, there are an estimated 3,494 housing units available to accommodate the 3,063 local households, a surplus of 431 units. However, 715 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 62.94% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 284 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 7: Atkinson County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,012 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$566 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 559 households (18.25%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 46.33% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 10: Atkinson County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
134 Vickers St S	Public Housing	Willacohee
Carlisle Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Pearson
Country Place	LIHTC, Sections 515/21	Maysville
CRC Manor Place	HOME	Baldwin
Cypresswood Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 8/538	Pearson
Evergreen Apartments	Sections 515/521	Pearson
Fulcher-Comer Homes	Public Housing	Public
Ridgecrest Apartments	Section 515	Lula
Rosewood Village	LIHTC, Sections 515/532	Willacohee
Whispering Pines	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Pearson
Wildwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Willacohee

Source: Affordable Housing Online

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health Profile

Data indicates that 26% of the county's adult population (1,597 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 983 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 1,167 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.1 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 1,059 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 414 were senior citizens, 539 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 100 were school-aged children, and 6 were under the age of five.

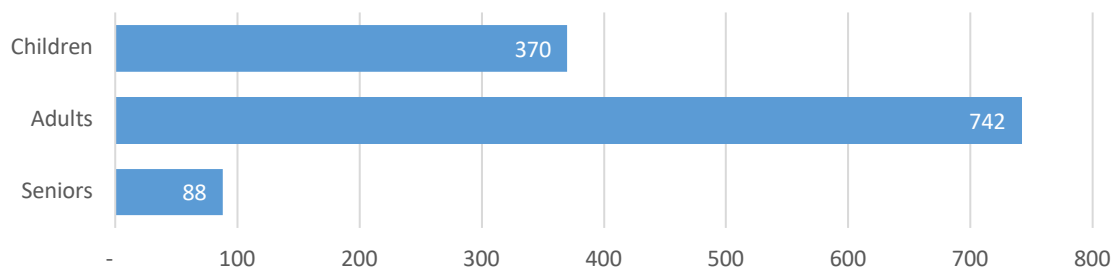
No data was available concerning the number of patients per primary care physicians or mental health providers in Atkinson County. Dentists, however, were noted as a concern with 8,390 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level.

An estimated 1,917 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 6,319 with insurance, 3,415 reported use of a private plan and 3,670 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 1,200 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 370 are children, 88 are senior citizens, and 742 are working-aged adults. An estimated 660 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 21.55% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.24 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$295.65 per person each month, or 23.53% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,182.60 per month, equal to 94.11% of minimum wage.

Chart 8: Atkinson County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 134 local households (4.37%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 56 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 201 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 47.83% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Atkinson County, there are 3,063 households with children. An average of 126 children are born each year. An estimated 61 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 4 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 43 were headed by single males, 176 were headed by single females, and 183 were headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 8 foster children were in care during 2023, with 3 new children being removed from their homes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Profile

There are 313 veterans in the local community, the largest portion of which (58.79%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 4.46, which is significantly lower than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 38 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 1 robbery and 7 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Atkinson County lacks dedicated anti-poverty case management services, hindering efforts to address poverty-related issues comprehensively. The absence of such services limits the county's ability to provide targeted support and resources to individuals and families in need, potentially prolonging cycles of poverty and economic hardship.

The county faces a shortage of financial management counseling services, particularly in the area of budgeting and financial literacy education. Without access to these critical resources, residents may struggle to effectively manage their finances, leading to increased financial insecurity and challenges in meeting basic needs.

Atkinson County experiences limitations in providing emergency assistance for rent, utilities, and medication. The lack of sufficient resources for emergency support may leave vulnerable residents at risk of housing instability, utility disconnection, or inadequate access to essential medications during times of financial crisis.

The county confronts a deficit of childcare slots, with a shortage of 342 slots, especially during second and third shifts. This shortage of childcare options poses challenges for working parents, impacting their ability to secure employment and access childcare services that align with their work schedules.

Atkinson County struggles with a deficit of available jobs, resulting in a shortage of 1,310 employment opportunities. The lack of job opportunities contributes to unemployment and underemployment rates, hindering economic growth and financial stability within the community.

The county faces shortages in both safe and affordable housing units, with deficits of 284 safe housing units and 559 cost-burdened households. These shortages underscore the need for increased investment in housing infrastructure and affordability initiatives to address housing insecurity and ensure access to safe and affordable housing options for residents.

Atkinson County experiences challenges in accessing dental care, with a high patient-to-practitioner ratio of 83,390 patients per dental practitioner. This shortage of dental providers limits residents' access to essential dental services, impacting oral health outcomes and exacerbating disparities in dental care access within the community.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent income (F)
4. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
5. Individuals have poor mental health (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Atkinson County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.glsr.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Pearson Senior Center	912-422-7422	Provides socialization for senior citizens and/or persons with a disability (ATKINSON)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Willacoochee Senior Center	912-534-5450	Provides socialization for senior citizens (ATKINSON)

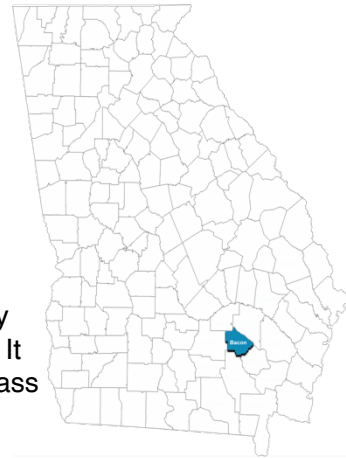
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Bacon County

Founded: 1914

Total Area: 286 square miles

County Seat: Alma



County Overview

Bacon County, located in southeast Georgia, derives its name from Augustus Octavius Bacon, a four-term U.S. senator and the Senate's president pro tempore in 1912. Spanning 285 square miles, the county was formed in 1914 from parts of Appling, Pierce, and Ware counties. It became Georgia's 151st county, necessitating an amendment to surpass the state's previously set limit of 145 counties in 1904.

Originally part of the wiregrass region, Creek Indians first inhabited the area, followed by settlers from the Carolinas in search of more affordable land. The county's early economy centered around naval stores and turpentine. Alma, the county seat, was established in 1906, and its courthouse, constructed in 1919, is still operational and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Alma's name origin is debated: Bernice McCullar's 1966 book, "This Is Your Georgia," suggests it's an acronym of Georgia's early capitals—Augusta, Louisville, Milledgeville, and Atlanta. However, Kenneth Krakow's "Georgia Place-Names" (1975) proposes it was named after Alma Sheridan, the wife of a Macon salesman. Other communities in Bacon County include Rockingham, named after Rockingham, North Carolina, by settlers from that area, and Sessoms.

In addition to the courthouse, the Alma Depot and the Rabinowitz Building on West 11th Street are also on the National Register of Historic Places. The depot, listed in 1983, is currently a private warehouse. Points of interest include the historical Old Dixon Hotel and the early 1800s Camp Ground Methodist Church.

Bacon County is home to two wildlife management areas, the Bacon Area and Whitehead Creek Area, offering hunting opportunities. Along with local parks, they provide ample recreational activities. The county hosts several annual events, including the Day of the Child in April, the Georgia Blueberry Festival in June, the Guysie Mule Roundup, the Big Buck Contest in October, and the Christmas Parade in December.

The county is also the birthplace of novelist Harry Crews, who was born in 1935 and depicted his early life in the area in his renowned memoir, "A Childhood: The Biography of a Place," published in 1978.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

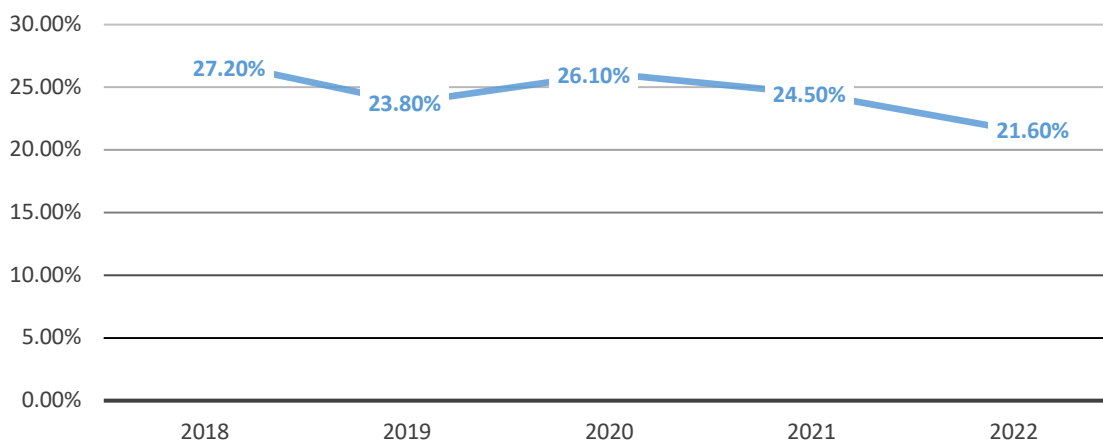
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 11,138 individuals residing in 3,909 households in Bacon County. This is a decrease of 0.08% from the 11,228 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (5,613) compared to males (5,525), a sex ratio of 98 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 38 years, with 1,887 residents being age 65 and older, and 779 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (8,229), followed by African Americans (1,679), and smaller populations of American Indians (28), Asians (70), multi-racial (908), and 224 who identify with a race not included in the survey. There are 968 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 10,170 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Bacon County, there are an estimated 2,278 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 21.60% of the local population, which is significantly higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 20.59%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 975 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 3,328 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 5,267 being under 200%.

Chart 9: Bacon County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Males (23.20%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than females (20.20%), with individuals identifying as multi-racial (49.90%) or Black/African American (22.90%) having higher rates than those identifying as White (19.10%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (44.40%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic (18.40%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (29.20%) than adults (20.60%) or senior citizens (13.10%).

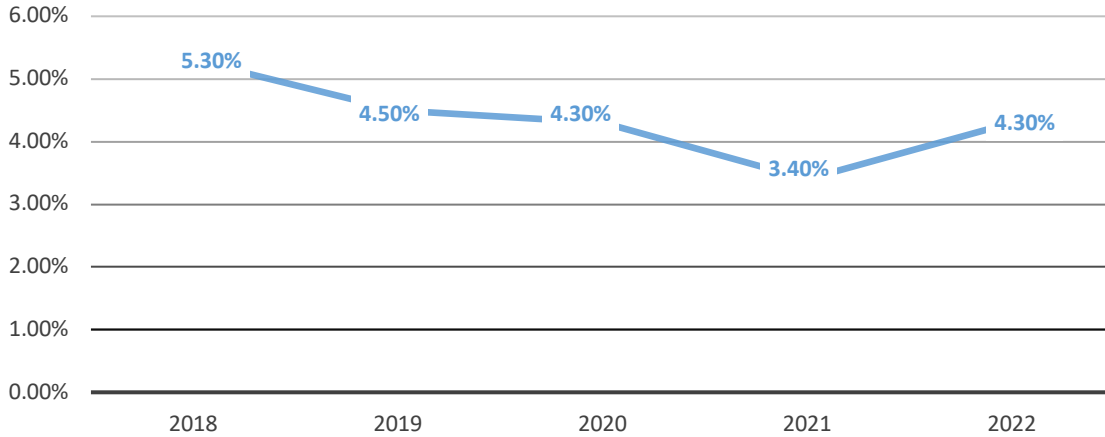
The county's household median income is \$43,938 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Bacon County in 2022 was 3,918 a decrease of 4.97% from the 4,123 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 189 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 15.25% from the 223 documented five years ago. While the unemployment rate has improved by 18.87% over the past five years, an upward trend of 26.47% occurred during the past year.

Chart 10: Bacon County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 2,977 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 941 to accommodate the local labor force. The county’s median wage was identified as \$39,856 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 414 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 10.57% of the labor force and 27.20% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is manufacturing, accounting for 23.01% of all jobs with a median wage of \$46,696 annually.

An estimated 85.19% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 161 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

Table 11: Bacon County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	Jobs	Avg. Wage
Agriculture	27	\$36,348
Manufacturing	685	\$46,696
Wholesale	85	\$52,260
Retail	315	\$27,872
Transportation	57	\$42,380
Finance/Insurance	126	\$56,472
Professional/Technical	49	\$39,676
Health/Social	513	\$45,812
Accommodation/Food	161	\$17,056
Federal Government	46	\$41,912
State Government	102	\$39,364
Local Government	510	\$40,768
Other/Unclassified	71	\$31,512
Total	2,977	\$39,856

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Adult Education Profile

In Bacon County, an estimated 1,617 adults over the age of 25 (29.57%) have not completed high school. This is a slight increase of 0.12% from the 1,615 adults documented in 2018. An additional 1,899 local residents (34.73%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 9.96% from the 2,109 individuals (40.33%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 621 local residents (11.36%) reported having a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is an increase of 19.65% from the 519 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 2,896 members of the adult population (26%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 4,567 individuals (41%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 1,183 residents continue to struggle with the community’s predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 2,069 school-aged children residing in the local community, 604 of which (29.19%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 2,039 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (1,381) or high school (6,58) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Bacon County School System is 81.50 (B), indicating the schools in the area are above average. The graduation rate is 92.86%, with 78.99% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 13.37:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 7.70% students were noted as having language barriers, with 18.10% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the four schools in the county, all were noted as having average scores, the highest being Bacon County Middle School at 85.0. All schools were at or below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

Table 12: Bacon County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Bacon County Elementary School	GA-603-3050	12.19:1	80.0	C
Bacon County High School	GA-603-0302	14.38:1	81.4	C
Bacon County Middle School	GA-603-0202	13.97:1	85.0	C
Bacon County Primary School	GA-603-0102	12.89:1	81.5	C

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 610 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 779 young children, a deficit of 169. This is a ratio of 1.27 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, a total 33% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 13: Bacon County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	N/A	Yes	9702.02	0.48:1	No
9702.01	2.20:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

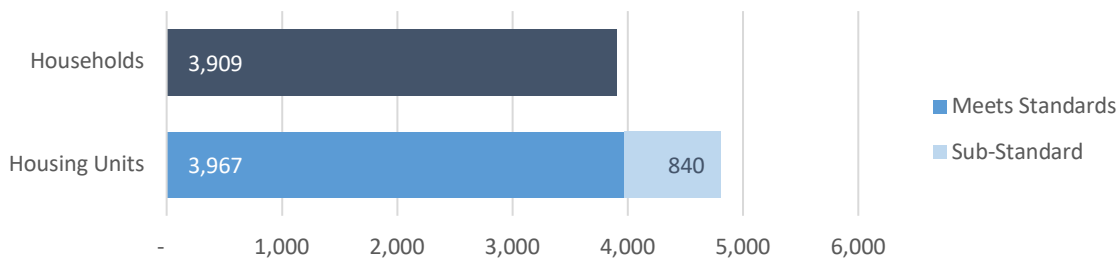
Table 14: Bacon County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
ABC Child Development Center	Alma	(912) 632-0130	0y-5y+
Bacon County Northside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0774	3y-4y
Bacon County Southside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0284	3y-4y
New Vision Learning Center of Alma	Alma	(912) 632-2922	0y-5y+

Housing Profile

In Bacon County, there are an estimated 4,807 housing units available to accommodate the 3,909 local households, a surplus of 898 units. However, 840 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 75.00% of which are severe.

Chart 11: Bacon County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,019 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$685 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 690 households (9.98%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 68.84% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 15: Bacon County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Albert Pitts Homes	Public Housing	Alma
Azalea Court	LIHTC, Sections 151/521	Alma
Heritage Villas of Alma	Sections 515/521	Alma
Queen City Heights	Public Housing	Alma
Wilfred Smith Terrace	Public Housing	Alma

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 21% of the county's adult population (1,741 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,161 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 1,492 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 72.5 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

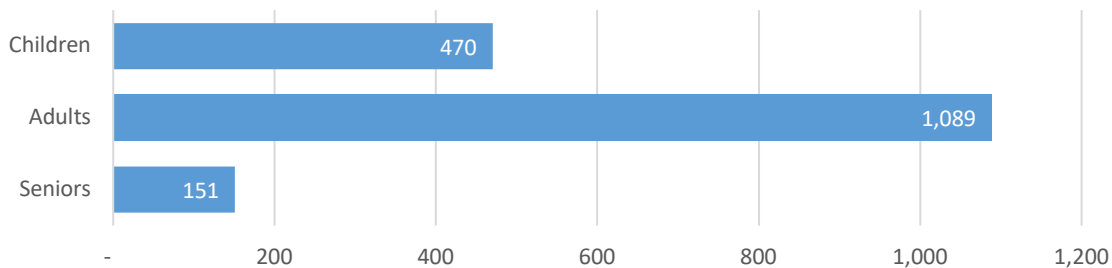
A total 2,356 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 907 were senior citizens, 1,176 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 273 were school-aged children.

There are an estimated 1,840 patients for every physician in the community, which is higher than the state average of 1,490. Dentists were also a concern with 3,690 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, mental health service capacity noted as being insufficient, with 11,080 patients per provider as compared to 660 on a state level. An estimated 1,627 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 8,922 with insurance, 5,615 reported use of a private plan and 4,495 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 1,710 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 470 are children, 151 are senior citizens, and 1,089 are working-aged adults. An estimated 662 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 16.94% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.24 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$295.65 per person each month, or 23.53% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,182.60 per month, equal to 94.11% of minimum wage.

Chart 12: Bacon County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 289 local households (7.39%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 76 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 123 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 38.62% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Bacon County, there are 1,293 households with children. An average of 141 children are born each year. An estimated 68 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 1 of which was under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 55 were headed by single males, 364 were headed by single females, and 175 were headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 40 foster children were in care during 2023, with 22 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 548 veterans in the local community, the largest portion of which (52.37%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 7.13, which is lower than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 79 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 2 robberies and 9 assaults.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Bacon County lacks dedicated anti-poverty case management services, which are essential for addressing the root causes of poverty and providing comprehensive support to individuals and families in need. Without these services, there may be limited coordination and access to resources, hindering efforts to alleviate poverty and promote economic stability within the community.

The county faces a shortage of financial management counseling services, particularly in the areas of budgeting and financial planning. Access to such services is crucial for empowering residents with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage their finances, reduce debt, and achieve long-term financial stability.

Bacon County experiences gaps in emergency food assistance and support for rent, utilities, and medication payments during times of crisis. The absence of sufficient resources for emergency assistance may leave vulnerable residents at risk of food insecurity, housing instability, and inadequate access to essential medications, exacerbating financial hardships and social inequities.

The county confronts a deficit of available jobs, resulting in a shortage of 941 employment opportunities. The lack of job opportunities limits economic mobility and financial security for residents, particularly those seeking stable employment to support themselves and their families.

Bacon County experiences a deficit of childcare slots, with a shortage of 169 slots available. This shortage of childcare options presents challenges for working parents, making it difficult to secure affordable and reliable childcare services that align with their work schedules.

The county faces shortages in affordable housing units, with 690 households experiencing housing cost burdens. The lack of affordable housing options contributes to housing insecurity and affordability challenges for residents, particularly those with low to moderate incomes.

Bacon County encounters challenges in accessing dental and mental health care, with high patient-to-provider ratios of 3,690 patients per dental practitioner and 11,080 patients per mental health provider, respectively. These shortages of healthcare providers limit residents' access to essential dental and mental health services, impacting overall health outcomes and well-being within the community.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
4. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent income (F)
5. Individuals have poor mental health (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Bacon County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Alma Church of God	912-632-4793	Food pantry Monday 4-5pm. (BACON)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Bacon County Senior Adult Center	912-632-8954	Provides socialization for senior citizens (BACON)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Community Shelf	912-632-4710	(BACON)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Fifth Street Food Pantry	912-632-4288	(BACON)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services. Home Modification - wheelchair ramps. Coordinate transportation for aging, TANF, and mental health clients (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Brantley County

Founded: 1920

Total Area: 447 square miles

County Seat: Nahunta



County Overview

In 1920, Brantley County was established as Georgia's 158th county, located in the southeastern portion of the state.

Before its creation, the area's residents, who were part of Charlton, Pierce, and Wayne counties, felt disconnected from their county governments due to the remoteness of their rural locations. In 1919, a citizens' committee, led by state senator J. K. Larkins, formed to advocate for a new county. This committee successfully rallied local support and persuaded the state legislature to establish Brantley County.

The county was initially home to the Creek Indians and later became a site of territorial disputes between the Spanish and the English during the colonial period. These disputes ended with the English's victory in the Battle of Bloody Marsh in 1742. The county's namesake is either Benjamin Daniel Brantley, a local merchant who promoted cotton ginning and turpentine manufacturing, or his son, William Gordon Brantley, who served in both the Georgia legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives.

The selection of the county seat sparked controversy. The citizens' committee, mostly from Hoboken, favored this western town due to its thriving community, railway access, and more industrially viable land. However, eastern residents felt disenfranchised as the initial voting took place exclusively in Hoboken. Following legal disputes and an election, the Georgia General Assembly designated Nahunta, located in the east, as the county seat.

Nahunta, incorporated in 1925, replaced an older railroad stop named Old Nahunta. The original depot, built on stilts due to swampy terrain, was a social hub where prominent figures like U.S. Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Dwight Eisenhower, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor passed through.

Hoboken, incorporated in 1920, prospered early on due to its proximity to the railroad. Its name possibly originates from a New Jersey city, inspired by a coworker of town founder William A. Martin. The town is recognized for its unique "Hoboken style" of Sacred Harp singing, documented in the Library of Congress Local Legacies project.

Other towns in Brantley County include Atkinson, Hickox, Hortense, Lulaton, Trudie, and Waynesville. Hortense, a nineteenth-century timber and turpentine town, became notable when railroads reached it in 1902 and later for hosting the Georgia State Prison Camp in the 1930s.

Up until 1950, forests covered 80 percent of the county, with the economy heavily dependent on forest products. An early 1900s initiative to cultivate large Leconte pear orchards failed due to blight.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Local attractions include Confederate Soldiers' Park in Waynesville, the extensive Dixon Memorial State Forest, Harrington Tract Wildlife Management Area, Rayonier Wildlife Management Area, and the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness Area. Additionally, the Gibson Family Pioneer Home in Waynesville and the historic Trail Ridge, used by Native Americans and early settlers, are notable. The county was even featured on maps for Fort Mudge, a Revolutionary War fort popularized in Walt Kelly's Pogo comic strips, until the 1950s.

Brantley County hosts special events like a biannual bluegrass festival and the Hoboken Trojan Fest.

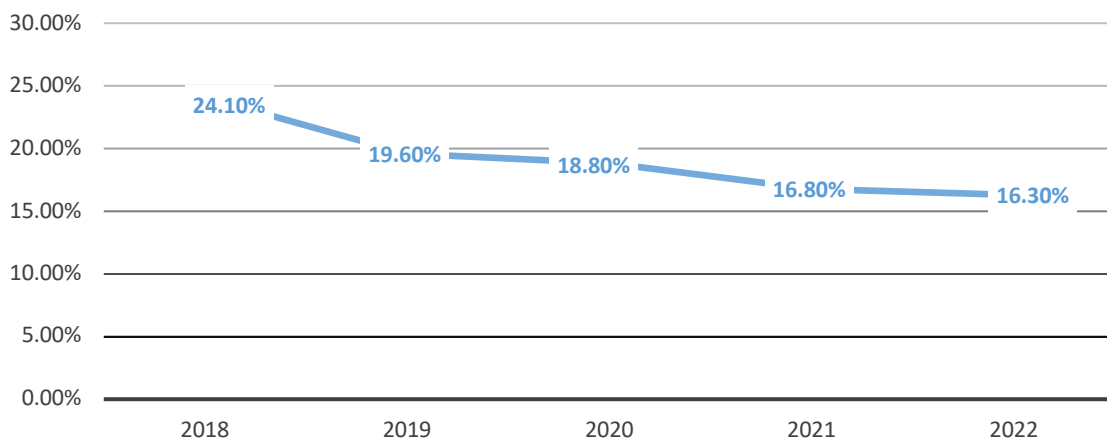
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 18,105 individuals residing in 6,649 households in Brantley County. This is a decrease of 2.46% from the 18,561 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (9,135) compared to males (8,970), a sex ratio of 98 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 40 years, with 2,994 residents being age 65 and older, and 1,077 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (16,805), followed by Black/African American (667), multi-racial (390), and Asian (126). An estimated 117 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 474 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 17,631 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Brantley County, there are an estimated 2,933 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 16.30% of the local population, which is notably higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 32.37%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,591 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 4,528 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 8,594 being under 200%.

Chart 13: Brantley County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

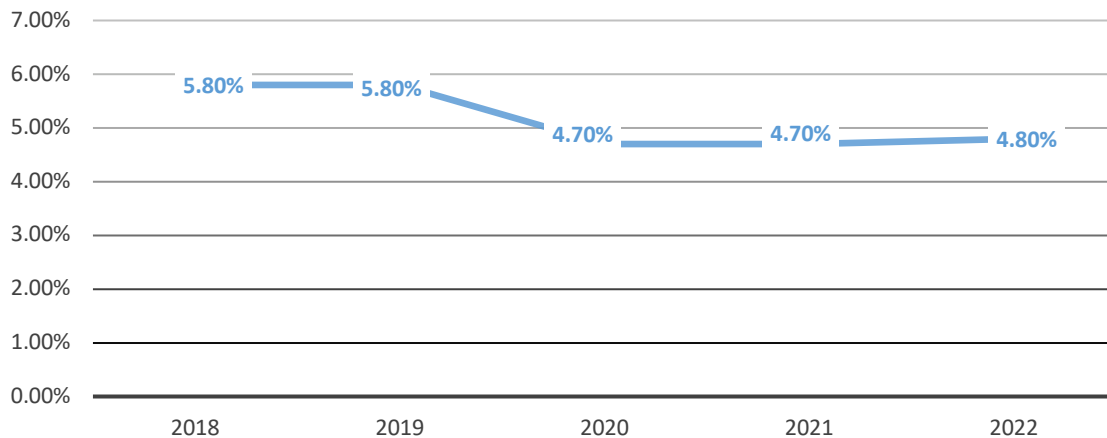
Females (18.10%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than males (14.50%), with individuals identifying as Asian (100.00%) having significantly higher rates than those identifying as multi-racial (20.80%), White (16.00%) and Black/African American (8.20%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (20.70%) than adults (15.70%) or senior citizens (12.40%).

The county's household median income is \$40,166 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$65,499) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$76,918).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Brantley County in 2022 was 6,838 an increase of 3.26% from the 6,622 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 238 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 37.37% from the 380 documented five years ago. While the unemployment rate has improved by 17.24% over the past five years, an upward trend of 2.13% occurred during the past year.

Chart 14: Brantley County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 2,490 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 4,348 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$40,316 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 337 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 4.93% of the labor force and 15.91% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 31.69% of all jobs with a median wage of \$44,512 annually.

An estimated 75.62% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 112 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 16: Brantley County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	140	\$54,652
Constructions	255	\$45,136
Manufacturing	188	\$54,132
Wholesale	254	\$75,608
Retail	270	\$24,648
Transportation	125	\$49,192
Finance/Insurance	34	\$29,744
Real Estate	4	\$22,932
Professional/Technical	27	\$30,264
Administrative/Waste	26	\$40,092
Health/Social	170	\$30,212
Accommodation/Food	112	\$18,460
Federal Government	26	\$32,500
State Government	25	\$57,772
Local Government	789	\$44,512
Other/Unclassified	45	\$35,204
Total	2,490	\$40,316

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Brantley County, an estimated 1,123 adults over the age of 25 (15.33%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-18.15%) from the 1,372 adults documented in 2018. An additional 2,800 local residents (38.23%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 10.03% from the 3,112 individuals (41.89%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 799 local residents (10.91%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 6.68% from the 749 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 4,526 members of the adult population (25%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 7,242 individuals (40%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 172 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 3,012 school-aged children residing in the local community, 589 of which (19.56%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 2,669 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (1,840) or high school (829) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Brantley County School System is 76.4 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 88.84%, with 63.31% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 13.86:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 0.78% of students were noted as having language barriers, with 13.70% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the seven schools in the county, two were noted as being average, one was noted as being below average (Brantley County High School), three were above average (Brantley County Middle School, Hoboken Elementary School, and Waynesville Primary School), and one (Nahunta Primary School) earned the ranking of excellent. All schools were at or below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 17: Brantley County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Atkinson Elementary School	GA-613-0110	13.46:1	74.2	C
Brantley County High School	GA-613-1050	16.62:1	68.5	D
Brantley County Middle School	GA-613-0194	13.04:1	80.7	B
Hoboken Elementary School	GA-613-2050	12.75:1	82.2	B
Nahunta Elementary School	GA-613-0294	13.45:1	75.7	C
Nahunta Primary School	GA-613-3050	12.10:1	91.9	A
Waynesville Primary School	GA-613-0101	13.96:1	89.1	B

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 380 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 1,077 young children, a deficit of 690. This is a ratio of 2.83 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, a total 66% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 18: Brantley County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	7.64:1	Yes	9603	9.35:1	Yes
9602	1.13:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 19: Brantley County Childcare Centers

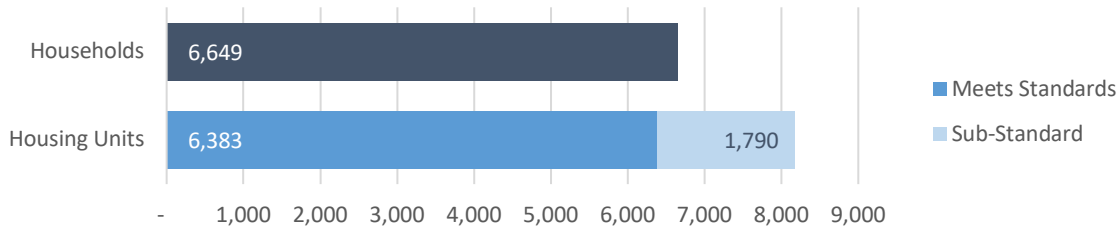
Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Brantley County Early Head Start	Nahunta	(912) 462-5482	0y-2y
Brantley County Head Start	Nahunta	(912) 462-5520	3y-4y
Kidz Kountry Daycare	Waynesville	(912) 778-5434	0wk-5y+
Melissa's Little Friend's Daycare	Hortense	(912) 473-2688	0wk-5y+
Nahunta Y-Time	Nahunta	(912) 462-5179	0wk-5y+
Susie's Daycare	Hoboken	(912) 458-2863	0wk-5y+
Wee Kids Childcare LLC	Nahunta	(912) 462-6492	0wk-5y+
Young Learners Day Care	Hoboken	(912) 458-2223	0wk-5y+

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Housing Profile

In Brantley County, there are an estimated 8,173 housing units available to accommodate the 6,649 local households, a surplus of 1,524 units. However, 1,790 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 48.60% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 266 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 15: Brantley County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,146 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$728 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 1,695 households (25.49%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 43.95% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 20: Brantley County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Satilla Pines	Public Housing	Nahunta

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 21% of the county’s adult population (2,943 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,962 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 2,663 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.9 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 2,921 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 858 were senior citizens, 1,872 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 191 were school-aged children.

There are an estimated 6,400 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than double the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 18,100 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Mental health service capacity was also worrisome, with 9,050 patients per provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

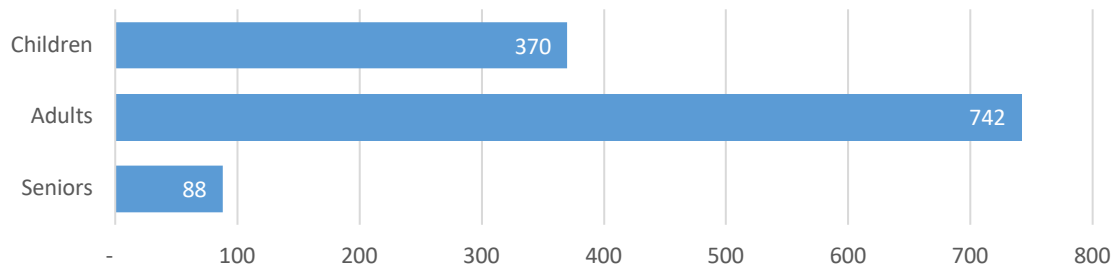
An estimated 2,866 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 15,169 with insurance, 8,391 reported use of a private plan and 8,256 had public coverage.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 2,310 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 390 are children, 240 are senior citizens, and 1,680 are working-aged adults. An estimated 1,340 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 20.15% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.27 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$298.39 per person each month, or 23.74% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,193.55 per month, equal to 94.98% of minimum wage.

Chart 16: Brantley County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 434 local households (6.53%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 146 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 121 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 74.26% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Brantley County, there are 1,935 households with children. An average of 214 children are born each year. An estimated 105 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 3 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 11 are headed by single males, 217 are headed by single females, and 332 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 56 foster children were in care during 2023, with 21 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 867 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (49.25%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 12.21, which is comparable to the regional average of 12.26. A total of 228 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 2 murders, 1 rape, 2 robberies, and 16 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Brantley County lacks essential anti-poverty case management services to coordinate efforts aimed at moving residents out of poverty. Without this crucial support, there is a gap in providing comprehensive assistance to individuals and families in need of guidance and resources to improve their financial stability and quality of life.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

There is also a notable absence of financial management counseling services in Brantley County, particularly regarding budgeting education. Residents may lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively manage their resources, leading to financial insecurity and challenges in meeting their basic needs.

Brantley County faces challenges in providing adequate resources for emergency rent, utility, and medication payments to residents facing financial crises. The scarcity of these essential services may leave vulnerable individuals and families at risk of homelessness, utility disconnection, or untreated medical conditions.

The county experiences a shortage of childcare slots, with a deficit of 690 slots. Moreover, there are no identified slots available for second and third shift workers, creating barriers for parents who require childcare during non-traditional hours to maintain employment.

Brantley County struggles with an insufficient number of available jobs, reflecting a gap in economic opportunities for residents. The deficit of 4,348 jobs contributes to unemployment and underemployment rates, hindering financial stability and upward mobility within the community.

The county faces a shortage of safe housing units, with a deficit of 266 units. It should also be noted that 1,695 residents are housing cost burdened, indicating a lack of affordable housing options for low-income individuals and families.

Brantley County experiences a scarcity of healthcare professionals, including physicians, dentists, and mental health providers. With 6,400 patients for each physician, 18,100 patients for each dentist, and 9,050 patients for each mental health provider, residents may encounter challenges in accessing timely and quality healthcare services, impacting their overall well-being.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
4. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent income (F)
5. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Brantley County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Akin Memorial United Methodist	912-266-5599	Food pantry 2nd Sunday 8:30-10:30 (BRANTLEY)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Bay Harbor Church of God	912-258-3283	Food pantry 2 ND and 4 th Thursdays 11-1 (BRANTLEY)
Brantley Senior Center	912-462-6525	Provides socialization for senior citizens (BRANTLEY)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.glr.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Hickox Baptist Church	912-462-6310	Food pantry Wednesday 10-11:30 (BRANTLEY)
Magnolia House	912-285-5850; 800-33-HAVEN	Shelter for abused women and their children. (BRANTLEY, PIERCE, WARE)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Riverside Christian Center	912-288-4803	Food pantry 3rd Saturday 7:30-12p (BRANTLEY)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services. Home Modification - wheelchair ramps. Coordinate transportation for aging, TANF, and mental health clients(ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Waynesville Baptist	912-778-4320	Clothing & Food Pantry 2 nd and 4 th Tuesday 9-12pm (BRANTLEY)
Waynesville Church of God	912-778-4884	(BRANTLEY)

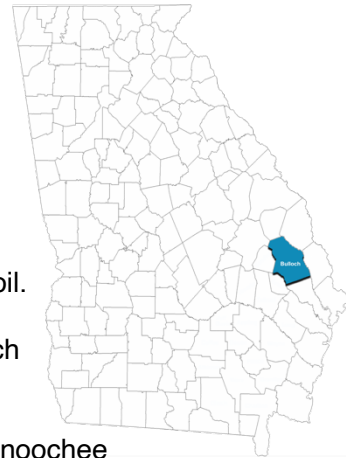
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Bulloch County

Founded: 1796

Total Area: 682 square miles

County Seat: Statesboro



County Overview

Bulloch County, established in 1796 as Georgia's twenty-first county, initially encompassed over 500,000 acres of pine forests and sandy soil. Over time, the county ceded parts of its territory to form neighboring counties like Candler, Emanuel, Evans, and Jenkins. Presently, Bulloch County spans an area of 682 square miles.

The county is bordered by the Ogeechee River to the east and the Canoochee River to the west. In the 19th century, it attracted planters, timbermen, and turpentine distillers, many of whom had ancestors from Northern Ireland and England. Other settlers traced their origins to France, Germany, Scotland, Wales, and West Africa. They transformed Native American paths into wagon trails and cleared lands for farming and plantation.

Bulloch County was often referred to as the "State of Bulloch" by its early settlers to commemorate Archibald Bulloch, Georgia's president and commander-in-chief in 1776.

In 1849, George White observed in "Statistics of the State of Georgia" that despite the poor quality of the land, the industrious and economical residents of Bulloch County managed to sustain themselves. He noted their reliance on game, orchard produce, and their minimal needs. However, White didn't mention the significant roles of cotton production and slavery in the county's pre-Civil War economy. In 1850, enslaved people constituted about a third of the population, a figure that nearly doubled by 1860. This increase was attributed to a decline in the white population and a rise in the number of enslaved individuals, primarily engaged in cotton cultivation.

Settlers initially established their farms along the Old River Road near the Ogeechee or along the county's western border. By 1880, Bulloch County had a population of 8,053, with only 1,036 living in Statesboro. The lack of railroads at the time meant farmers had to transport their crops to distant markets in Savannah and Augusta.

From 1890 to 1910, Bulloch County transformed into a significant agricultural and commercial center, thanks to the efforts of new, ambitious leaders. These newcomers established railroad connections and developed infrastructure, turning Statesboro into a bustling regional hub. Jewish merchants and other businessmen created a strong retail market serving farmers.

In 1906, the county and city raised \$125,000 to support a new state Agricultural and Mechanical School in Statesboro, which evolved into a teacher's college and later Georgia Southern University.

Religiously, Bulloch County has a significant number of Primitive Baptist churches, the largest congregation of this denomination globally being in Statesboro. These churches, adhering to traditional practices and Calvinist teachings, often feature a cappella singing of psalms and Sacred Harp hymns.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Bulloch County offers a plethora of natural spaces for outdoor activities, including hunting, fishing, golf, and walking or running in scenic parks like Mill Creek Regional Park, which spans 155 acres with facilities for softball, soccer, and other sports. The Statesboro–Bulloch County Parks and Recreation Department organizes a variety of programs for both adults and children throughout the year.

The county's administration comprises a diverse group of seven elected commissioners and an appointed county manager. Bulloch County's other municipalities, besides Statesboro, include Brooklet, Portal, and Register.

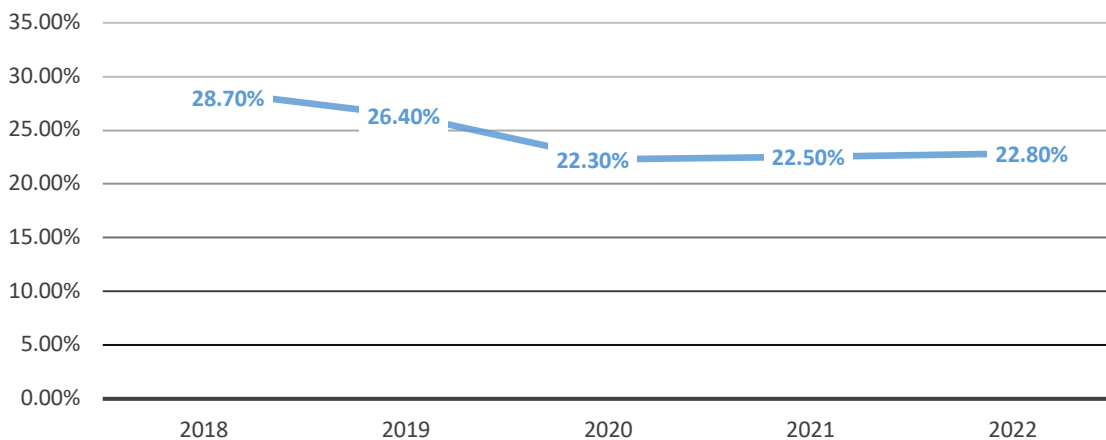
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 79,829 individuals residing in 29,634 households in Bulloch County. This is an increase of 6.75% from the 74,782 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (40,953) compared to males (38,876), a sex ratio of 95 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 30 years, with 9,408 residents being age 65 and older, and 4,524 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (50,820), followed by Black/African American (22,101), multi-racial (4,303), Asian (1,247), and Pacific Islander (271). An estimated 753 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 3,550 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 76,279 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Bulloch County, there are an estimated 16,576 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 22.80% of the local population, which is significantly higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 20.56%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 8,462 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 20,321 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 32,153 being under 200%.

Chart 17: Bulloch County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

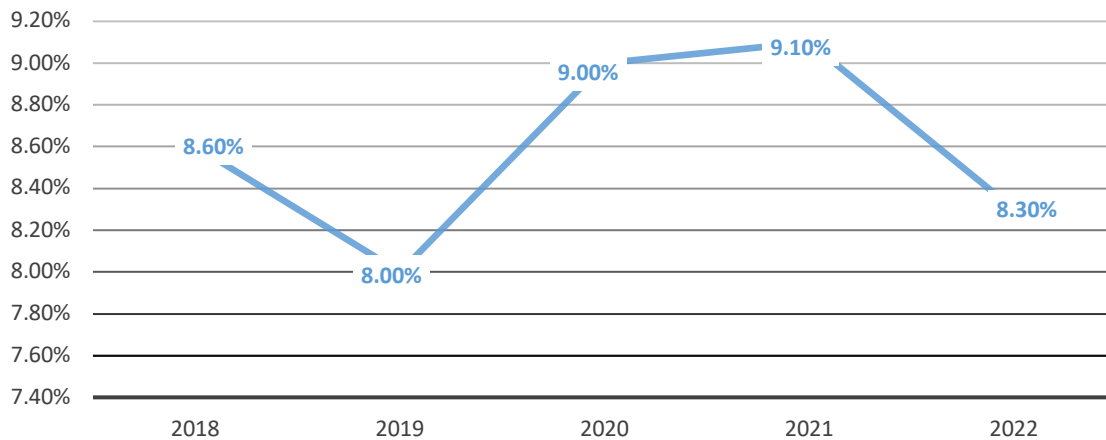
Females (24.00%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than males (21.50%), with individuals identifying as Pacific Islander (91.10%) having much higher rates than those identifying as Black/African American (31.60%), multi-racial (23.00%), Asian (19.30%), White (18.80%), or American Indian (5.50%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (26.10%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic (18.70%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates for adults (25.00%) and children (24.00%) were higher than for senior citizens (9.20%).

The county's household median income is \$43,938 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$64,833) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$75,026).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Brantley County in 2022 was 37,323 an increase of 8.36% from the 34,445 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 3,142 individuals were noted as being unemployed, an increase of 4.70% from the 3,001 documented five years ago. While the unemployment rate has improved by 3.49% over the past five years, it should be noted that an upward trend of 13.75% between 2019 and 2021 slowed progress. The improvement resumed in 2022 at a rate of 8.79%, which is faster than the rate of change experienced in 2019.

Chart 18: Bulloch County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 26,886 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 10,437 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$48,738 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 5,056 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 13.55% of the labor force and 37.95% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is accommodation and food services, accounting for 13.70% of all jobs with a median wage of \$17,107 annually. This was followed by retail (12.94%), health and social services (12.93%), and state government (12.78%).

An estimated 67.36% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 3,683 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 21: Bulloch County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	136	\$37,960
Construction	1,274	\$62,920
Manufacturing	2,330	\$53,300
Wholesale	335	\$64,272
Retail	3,478	\$32,396
Transportation	1,517	\$41,080
Information	268	\$85,696
Finance/Insurance	569	\$65,416
Real Estate	593	\$42,900
Professional/Technical	819	\$49,140
Administrative/Waste	877	\$38,064
Education	142	\$37,076
Health/Social	3,476	\$47,372
Arts/Entertainment	279	\$47,580
Accommodation/Food	3,683	\$17,107
Federal Government	139	\$65,364
State Government	3,437	\$58,864
Local Government	2,868	\$44,564
Other/Unclassified	243	\$34,944
Total	26,886	\$48,738

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Bulloch County, an estimated 5,087 adults over the age of 25 (11.29%) have not completed high school. This is a reduction of 6.57% from the 5,445 adults documented in 2018. An additional 12,931 local residents (28.71%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, an increase of 14.12% from the 11,331 individuals (27.32%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 13,344 local residents (29.63%) reported having a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is an increase of 17.48% from the 11,359 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 19,957 members of the adult population (25%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 31,932 individuals (40%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 11,91 residents continue to struggle with the community’s predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 11,393 school-aged children residing in the local community, 2,617 of which (22.97%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 10,815 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (7,107) or high school (3,708) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Bulloch County School System is 73.7 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 85.02%, with 59.07% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 15.68:1, which is between the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 3.60% of the students were noted as having language barriers, with 15.90% having a disability of some type.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Statesboro STEAM Academy School District, also in Bulloch County, has a rating of 73.7 (C), with a graduation rate of 60.70% and a college and career readiness rate of 95.00%. The 171 students enrolled in the school enjoy an 11.03% student to teacher ratio, with no students noted as having language barriers. An estimated 18.80% of the student body were documented as having a disability of some type that could negatively impact education.

When looking specifically at the sixteen schools in the county, six were noted as being average, with Langston Chapel Elementary School, Langston Chapel Middle School, and Portal Elementary School ranked as below average and the Mattie Lively Elementary School being ranked as failing with a score of 57.8.

Six schools received rankings of above average. This included Julia P Bryant Elementary School, Nevils Elementary School, Sallie Zetterower Elementary School, Stilson Elementary School, William James Middle School, and the Statesboro STEAM Academy. All schools were at or below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

Table 22: Bulloch County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Brooklet Elementary School	GA-616-0200	15.89:1	75.3	C
Julia P. Bryant Elementary School	GA-616-2050	15.50:1	80.8	B
Langston Chapel Elementary School	GA-616-0199	13.45:1	62.6	D
Langston Chapel Middle School	GA-616-0299	16.22:1	62.8	D
Mattie Lively Elementary School	GA-616-5050	13.84:1	57.8	F
Mill Creek Elementary School	GA-616-0100	13.26:1	71.9	C
Nevils Elementary School	GA-616-0107	13.41:1	82.6	B
Portal Elementary School	GA-616-0399	13.04:1	62.3	D
Portal Middle/High School	GA-616-4052	14.40:1	76.0	C
Sallie Zetterower Elementary School	GA-616-5054	13.91:1	85.0	B
Southeast Bulloch High School	GA-616-0203	19.64:1	79.0	C
Southeast Bulloch Middle School	GA-616-0300	15.77:1	78.6	C
Statesboro High School	GA-616-2054	20.63:1	71.2	C
Stilson Elementary School	GA-616-3054	14.13:1	82.0	B
William James Middle School	GA-616-0198	14.08:1	80.0	B

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Table 23: Statesboro STEAM District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Statesboro STEAM Academy	GA-7830103-0103	11.03:1	82.0	B

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 1,851 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 4,524 young children, a deficit of 2,673. This is a ratio of 2.44 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, a total 50% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 24: Bulloch County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
1101	4.00:1	Yes	1105	0.77:1	No
1102	1.19:1	No	1106.01	2.29:1	No
1103	6.70:1	Yes	1106.02	3.91:1	Yes
1104.01	0.88:1	No	1107	2.23:1	No
1104.03	N/A	Yes	1108	N/A	Yes
1104.04	0.35:1	No	1109	4.06:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 25: Bulloch County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Averitt Center for the Arts	Statesboro	(912) 212-2787	5y-10y
Boys & Girls Clubs of Bulloch County (Evira)	Statesboro	(912) 764-9696	5y-17y
Boys & Girls Clubs of Bulloch County (Main)	Statesboro	(912) 764-9696	5y-17y
Bright Beginnings Day Care & Learning Ctr	Statesboro	(912) 764-3704	0wk-5y+
Bright Minds Playhouse LLC	Register	(912) 259-9899	0y-4y
Brooklet 4th & 5th Afterschool	Brooklet	(912) 489-9053	6y-12y
Brooklet Afterschool	Brooklet	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Brooklet UMC Preschool and Learning Ctr	Brooklet	(912) 842-2922	0wk-5y+
Bulloch Academy	Statesboro	(912) 764-6297	4y-5y
Bulloch Co Day Camp	Statesboro	(912) 489-9058	4y-13y
C & E Family Community Center	Statesboro	(912) 678-2645	5y-17y
C & E Learning Academy	Statesboro	(912) 225-4343	0wk-5y+
Camp Adventure & JPB	Statesboro	(912) 489-9058	4y-11y
Camp Invention - Mattie Lively Elementary	Statesboro	(912) 212-8760	5y-12y
Camp Invention - Langston Chapel Middle	Statesboro	(308) 849-6901	5y-11y
Childcare Network #137	Statesboro	(912) 489-3464	6wk-12y
Coman Gymnastics Academy	Statesboro	(912) 764-4300	3y-5y
Creative Kids	Brooklet	(912) 842-9272	0wk-5y+
Eagle's Nest Learning Center	Statesboro	(912) 764-2925	0wk-5y+
First Baptist Church Weekday Preschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-7926	0y-5y
First United Methodist Church Preschool	Statesboro	(912) 764-1876	1y-4y
Georgia Southern University CDC	Statesboro	(912) 478-5809	0wk-5y+
Georgia Southern University - Statesboro	Statesboro	(912) 478-1301	6y-15y
Graduation Performance Academy	Statesboro	(912) 212-8610	14y-16y
Higher Learning Christian Daycare LLC	Statesboro	(912) 512-5985	0wk-5y+
Julia P. Bryant Elementary	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-9y
Kid's World Learning Center	Statesboro	(912) 764-4298	0wk-5y+
Kidovations	Statesboro	(912) 871-3366	0wk-5y+
Kids Zone	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-9y
Kidz R Kidz Childcare and Learning Center	Statesboro	(912) 681-5439	0wk-5y+
Langston Chapel Afterschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Langston Chapel Elementary 21st CCLC	Statesboro	(912) 212-8700	4y-13y
Little Rascals	Statesboro	(912) 690-1165	0wk-4y
Little Stingers	Statesboro	(912) 536-6873	0wk-5y+
Love's Childcare Services, Inc.	Statesboro	(912) 764-8020	0y-4y
Mattie Lively Afterschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Nevils Afterschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Pamper Me Day Care	Statesboro	(912) 839-2033	13mo-4y

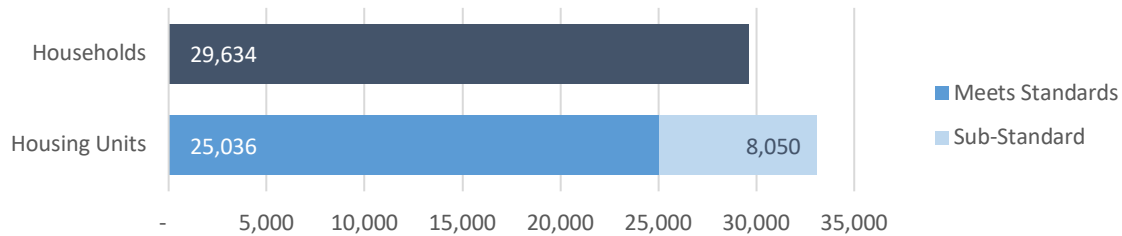
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Pineland Women Services	Statesboro	(912) 871-7355	0y-13y
Pittman Park Education Center	Statesboro	(912) 681-6503	0y-4y
Portal Afterschool	Portal	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Roosevelt's Character Development Center	Statesboro	(912) 541-2082	5y-17y
Safe Haven Children's Program	Statesboro	(912) 764-4605	5y-17y
SHINE Clubhouse/Pineland BHDD	Statesboro	(912) 764-1964	8y-14y
Smiles, Giggles, and Hugs CDC	Statesboro	(912) 681-1100	0wk-5y+
Statesboro Family YMCA	Statesboro	(912) 225-1962	5y-12y
Statesboro Head Start	Statesboro	(912) 764-5330	3y-4y
Steps To the Future Daycare/Learning Ctr	Statesboro	(912) 764-3435	0wk-5y+
Stilson Afterschool	Brooklet	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Super Kids Childcare Center, LLC	Statesboro	(912) 764-2726	0y-4y
Sweet & Tenderhearted Childcare	Portal	(912) 865-2556	0wk-5y+
The Exploreum	Statesboro	(912) 259-9500	0wk-5y+
Tiny Treasures Learning Academy	Statesboro	(912) 243-9195	0wk-5y+
Trilogy Achievement Academy	Statesboro	(912) 243-9123	0wk-5y+

Housing Profile

In Bulloch County, there are an estimated 33,086 housing units available to accommodate the 29,634 local households, a surplus of 3,452 units. However, 8,050 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 57.89% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 4,598 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 19: Bulloch County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,348 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$931 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 7,719 households (26.05%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 54.07% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 26: Bulloch County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
24 East Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Statesboro
Blakewood Apartments	Sections 8/236	Statesboro
Braswell – Grover Homes	Public Housing	Statesboro
Brookhaven Apartment	Sections 515/521	Brooklet
Eastview Apartments	Sections 515/521	Statesboro
Fox Ridge Apartments	Section 8	Statesboro
Laurel Pointe Apartments	HOME, LIHTC	Statesboro
Little Lotts Creek Apartments	LIHTC	Statesboro
Madison Meadows Apartments	LIHTC	Statesboro
Morris Heights	LIHTC, Sections 8/236	Statesboro
Statesboro Asn Housing, Inc.	Section 202	Statesboro
Statesboro Summit	LIHTC, Section 8	Statesboro
Wildwood Villas Apts	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Statesboro
Wildwood Villas Apts Phase II	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Statesboro

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 18% of the county’s adult population (11,504 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 7,669 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 10,865 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 77.2 years, which is comparable to the state (77.3), but slightly lower than the national (78.5) average.

A total 11,459 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 3,497 were senior citizens, 6,501 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 1,419 were school-aged children, and 42 were under the age of five.

There are an estimated 1,920 patients for every physician in the community, which is slightly higher than the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 2,750 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 920 mental health providers per provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

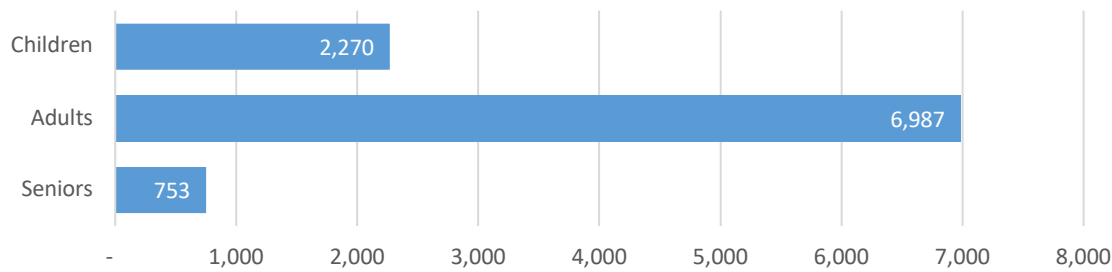
An estimated 9,400 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 69,806 with insurance, 53,093 reported use of a private plan and 24,081 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 10,010 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 2,270 are children, 753 are senior citizens, and 6,987 are working-aged adults. An estimated 4,268 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 14.40% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.44 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$313.90 per person each month, or 24.98% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,255.60 per month, equal to 99.91% of minimum wage.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 20: Bulloch County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 1,610 local households (5.43%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 716 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 1,037 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 31.45% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Bulloch County, there are 9,264 households with children. An average of 881 children are born each year. An estimated 437 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 8 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 345 are headed by single males, 2,239 are headed by single females, and 970 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 34 foster children were in care during 2023, with 19 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 3,468 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (40.97%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 15.24, which is higher than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 1,277 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 2 murders, 23 rapes, 24 robberies, and 70 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Bulloch County lacks an adequate amount of anti-poverty case management services, which are essential for addressing the underlying causes of poverty and providing comprehensive support to individuals and families in need. Without access to case management, there may be limited coordination of resources and interventions to help residents move out of poverty and achieve financial stability.

The county faces a shortage of financial management counseling services, particularly in the areas of budgeting and financial planning. Access to these services is crucial for empowering residents with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively, reduce debt, and make informed financial decisions for their future.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Bulloch County experiences gaps in emergency assistance for rent, utilities, and medication payments during times of crisis. The absence of sufficient resources for emergency assistance may leave vulnerable residents at risk of housing instability, utility disconnections, and inadequate access to essential medications, exacerbating financial hardships and social inequalities.

The county has a shortage of 10,437 employment opportunities. The lack of job opportunities limits economic mobility and financial security for residents, particularly those seeking stable employment to support themselves and their families.

Bulloch County has a shortage of 2,673 slots available. This shortage of childcare options presents challenges for working parents, making it difficult to access affordable and reliable childcare services that align with their work schedules and meet their children's needs.

The county faces shortages in both safe and affordable housing units, with deficits of 4,598 safe housing units and 7,719 households experiencing housing cost burdens. The lack of safe and affordable housing options contributes to housing insecurity and affordability challenges for residents, impacting overall quality of life and well-being.

Bulloch County encounters challenges in accessing dental care, with high patient-to-dentist ratios of 2,750 patients per dentist. This shortage of dental providers limits residents' access to essential dental services, potentially leading to unmet oral health needs and negative health outcomes within the community.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
4. Individuals lack financial management skills (F)
5. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent income (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

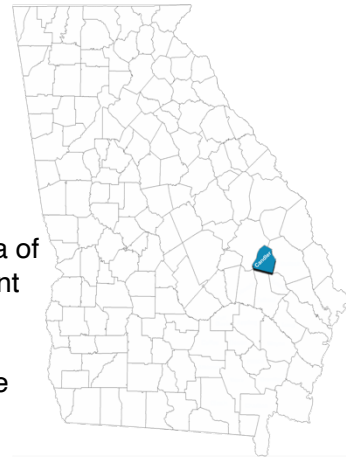
Bulloch County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Action Pact - Bulloch County Senior Center	912-489-1604	Provides socialization for senior citizens (BULLOCH)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
City of David	912-682-8181	Food Pantry 3rd Thursday 12-2 (BULLOCH)
Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	912-514-1593; coastalrc.ga.gov/aging	In-home services, respite care (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Eastern Heights Baptist Church	912-764-9151	Food Pantry 2nd Saturday 9-11am (BULLOCH)
Emergency Shelter by Safe Haven	912-764-4605	Provides a safe place and emotional support for victims of domestic violence. (BULLOCH, CANDLER, EFFINGHAM)
Emergency Shelter Program by Citizens Against Violence	912-764-4605	Provides a safe place and emotional support for victims of domestic violence. (BULLOCH)
Food Bank Inc	912-489-3663	Food pantry Mon-Fri 11-4; Soup Kitchen Tues & Thurs 12-1pm (BULLOCH)
Friendship Baptist Church	912-865-4165	Wednesday 11-2pm (BULLOCH)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease, and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.glsr.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
General Public Transport	866-543-6744	A demand-response, advance reservation service that provides transportation for those who live in the coastal region. (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Georgia Southern University	912-478-4636	(BULLOCH)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Guyton Community Food Pantry	912-722-3478	Tues & Thurs 10-1pm (BULLOCH)
Med Connect Program	912-764-9500	Provides assistance with the acquisition of prescription meds, insurance consults, and assistance with applications (BULLOCH)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Ogeechee River Baptist	912-489-2407	Food Pantry Monday 1-5pm (BULLOCH)
Ogeechee Technical College	912-681-5500	(BULLOCH)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Willacoochee Senior Center	912-534-5450	Provides socialization for senior citizens (ATKINSON)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Candler County

Founded: 1914
Total Area: 247 square miles
County Seat: Metter



County Overview

Candler County, designated as Georgia's 150th county, spans an area of 247 square miles. It was formed in 1914 by a constitutional amendment from portions of Bulloch, Emanuel, and Tattnall counties. Situated in southeastern Georgia, the county is named after Allen D. Candler, a former governor of Georgia. Remarkably, Candler County is one of the twenty-five counties in Georgia that have retained their original boundaries since their inception.

Metter serves as the county seat of Candler. The courthouse in Metter, constructed in 1921, is recognized on the National Register of Historic Places since 1980. Additionally, two other buildings in the county were listed on the National Register in 2002: the Candler County Jail and the old Metter High School. The Candler County Jail, a two-story brick structure built in 1916, initially served as both a jail and the sheriff's residence. It now accommodates various county services, including the emergency management agency. The old Metter High School, erected in 1910, was later acquired by the Candler County Historical Society to be repurposed as a museum. The Metter Advertiser holds the unique distinction of being the only newspaper in the United States once owned and published by a municipality.

Pulaski, located approximately six and a half miles from Metter, is the only other incorporated town in Candler County. The presence of the Central of Georgia Railway made Pulaski a desirable location for white settlers to establish a community.

Before World War II (1941-45), Candler County's economy was purely agricultural, driven by industries such as timber, cotton, tobacco, and poultry. In recent times, the county has shifted its economic focus predominantly to the service industry.

Candler County hosts the annual Another Bloomin' Festival every Easter weekend. Among its notable residents is evangelist Michael Guido, known for his global radio broadcasts spanning all seven continents and a widely published newspaper column. His chapel and garden in Metter are accessible to the public.

County Demographics

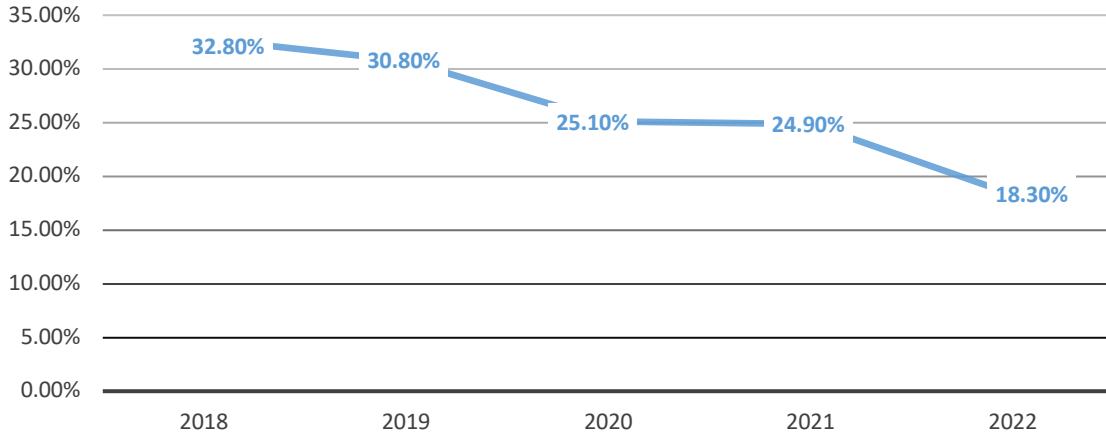
The United States Census Bureau identified 10,946 individuals residing in 4,103 households in Candler County. This is an increase of 1.1% from the 10,827 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (5,612) compared to males (5,334), a sex ratio of 95 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 42 years, with 2,020 residents being age 65 and older, and 724 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (6,824), followed by Black/African American (2,465), multi-racial (598), Asian (92), and American Indian (36). An estimated 930 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 1,338 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 9,608 who identify as non-Hispanic.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty Profile

In Candler County, there are an estimated 1,947 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 18.30% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 44.21%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,036 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 3,407 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 4,584 being under 200%.

Chart 21: Candler County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Males (18.70%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than females (17.90%), with individuals identifying as multi-racial (31.40%) or Black/African American (26.60%) having higher rates than those identifying as White (16.10%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (9.30%) were noted as being less likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (16.20%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (29.80%) than adults (15.40%) or senior citizens (11.20%).

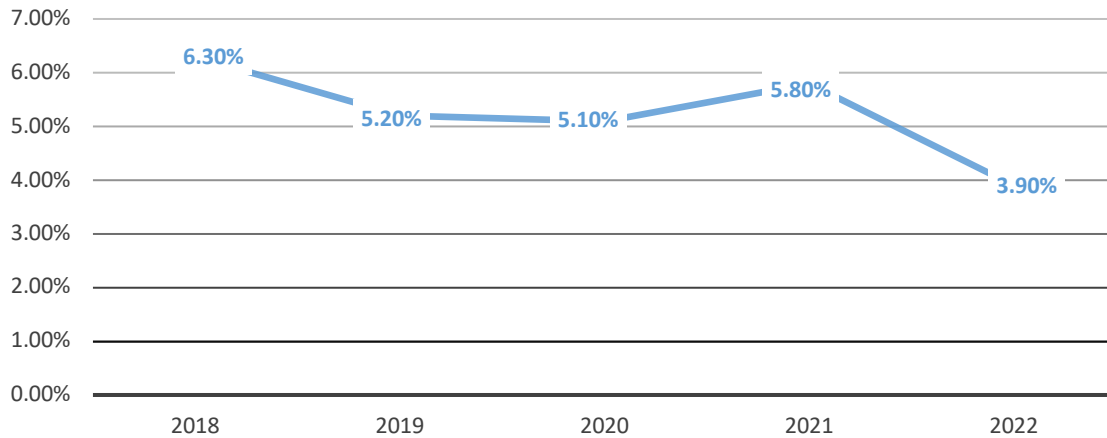
The county's household median income is \$45,519 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Candler County in 2022 was 4,324 an increase of 3.92% from the 4,161 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 181 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 37.15% from the 288 documented five years ago. While the unemployment rate has improved by 38.10% over the past five years, it should be noted that an upward trend of 13.73% between 2020 and 2021 slowed progress. The improvement resumed in 2022 at a rate of 32.76% annually, which is significantly faster than the -17.46% rate of change experienced in 2019.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 22: Candler County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 2,803 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 1,521 to accommodate the local labor force. The county’s median wage was identified as \$40,525 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 402 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 9.30% of the labor force and 32.60% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 24.01% of all jobs with a median wage of \$45,292 annually. This was followed by retail (15.77%), and accommodation/food service (11.45%).

An estimated 97.07% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually.

Table 27: Candler County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	Jobs	Avg. Wage
Agriculture	62	\$30,316
Construction	251	\$47,008
Manufacturing	232	\$40,456
Wholesale	126	\$47,268
Retail	442	\$31,772
Transportation	36	\$48,932
Finance/Insurance	75	\$40,092
Professional/Technical	128	\$43,472
Administrative/Waste	146	\$32,188
Health/Social	206	\$35,932
Accommodation/Food	321	\$20,852
Federal Government	20	\$51,480
State Government	23	\$36,088
Local Government	673	\$45,292
Other/Unclassified	62	\$56,732
Total	2,803	\$40,525

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Adult Education Profile

In Candler County, an estimated 1,646 adults over the age of 25 (22.49%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-2.20%) from the 1,683 adults documented in 2018. An additional 2,601 local residents (35.54%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 0.19% from the 2,596 individuals (36.12%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 895 local residents (12.23%) reported having a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is a decrease of 11.65% from the 1,013 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 3,831 members of the adult population (35%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 5,582 individuals (51%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 612 residents continue to struggle with the community’s predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 1,954 school-aged children residing in the local community, 631 of which (32.29%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 1,840 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (1,366) or high school (474) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Candler County School System is 68.80 (C), indicating the schools in the area are on the lower end of the average spectrum. The graduation rate is 94.38%, with 61.65% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 15.27:1, which is within the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 4.20% students were noted as having language barriers, with 16.70% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the four schools in the county, no data was reported for Metter College and Career Academy or the Metter High School. The scores for both the Metter Elementary School (64.6) and Metter Middle School were noted as being below average. All schools were at or below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

Table 28: Candler County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Metter College and Career Academy	GA-621-0303	16.17:1	No Data	No Data
Metter Elementary School	GA-621-0302	14.98:1	64.6	D
Metter High School	GA-621-0101	16.68:1	No data	No Data
Metter Middle School	GA-621-0102	14.43:1	60.9	D

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 169 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 724 young children, a deficit of 555. This is a ratio of 4.28 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, a total 66% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 29: Candler County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9501	2.10:1	No
9502	8.43:1	Yes

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9503	20.83:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

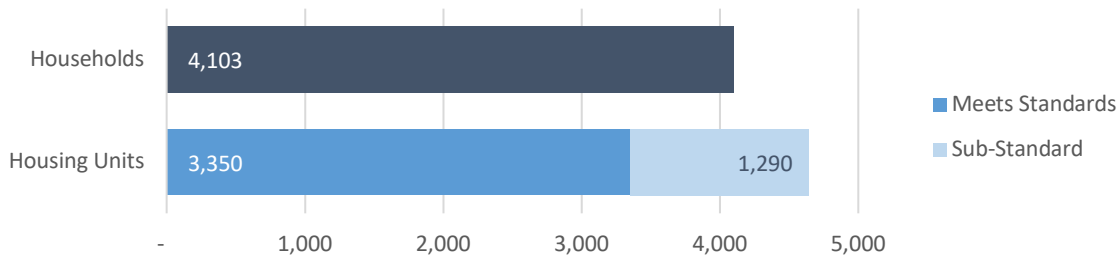
Table 30: Candler County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
21 st Century Leaders, Inc.	Metter	(404) 373-7441	14y-17y
Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Georgia	Metter	(912) 685-2900	5y-17y
Candler County CDC	Metter	(912) 685-5050	0y-4y
Candler County Head Start	Metter	(912) 685-3383	1y-5y+
Rashida's Day Care	Metter	(912) 536-1418	0y-5y+
Wiggles and Giggles Learning Center	Metter	(912) 685-2010	0y-5y+

Housing Profile

In Candler County, there are an estimated 4,640 housing units available to accommodate the 4,103 local households, a surplus of 537 units. However, 1,290 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 53.88% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 753 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 23: Candler County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,134 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$682 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 1,070 households (26.08%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 43.46% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 31: Candler County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
240 S Terrell Street	Public Housing	Metter
Candler Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Metter
Colonia Villas	LIHTC	Metter

Source: Affordable Housing Online

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health Profile

Data indicates that 23% of the county's adult population (1,902 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,158 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 1,488 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 72.4 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 1,946 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 769 were senior citizens, 1,064 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 113 were school-aged children.

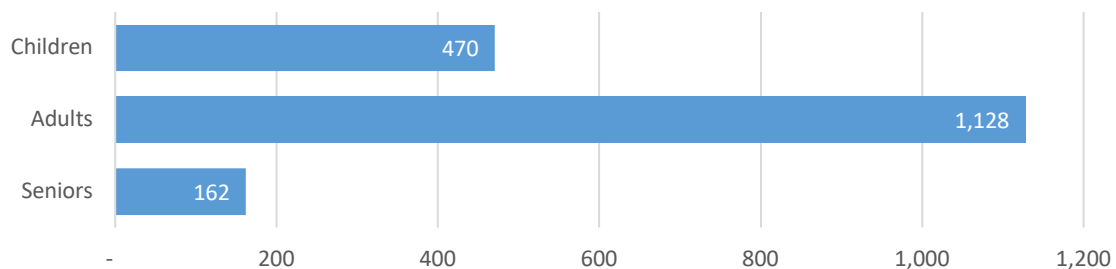
There are an estimated 5,490 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than three times the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 11,040 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 1,100 patients for every mental health provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 2,127 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 8,476 with insurance, 5,523 reported use of a private plan and 4,267 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 1,760 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 470 are children, 162 are senior citizens, and 1,121 are working-aged adults. An estimated 693 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 16.89% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.44 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$313.90 per person each month, or 24.98% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,255.60 per month, equal to 99.91% of minimum wage.

Chart 24: Candler County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 245 local households (5.97%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 150 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 101 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 47.53% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Candler County, there are 1,028 households with children. An average of 140 children are born each year. An estimated 70 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 4 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 25 were headed by single males, 191 were headed by single females, and 149 were headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 5 foster children were in care during 2023, with 3 new children being removed from their homes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Profile

There are 586 veterans in the local community, the largest portion of which (57.85%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 16.65, which is higher than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 185 index crimes were committed in 2022, 7 rapes, 5 robberies, and 22 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Candler County lacks an adequate number of anti-poverty case management services, which are crucial for addressing the root causes of poverty and providing comprehensive support to individuals and families in need. Without access to case management, there may be limited coordination of resources and interventions to help residents overcome barriers to economic stability and self-sufficiency.

The county faces a shortage of financial management counseling services, particularly in the areas of budgeting and financial planning. Access to these services is essential for empowering residents with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively, reduce debt, and make informed financial decisions for their future.

Candler County experiences gaps in emergency assistance for rent, utilities, and medication payments during times of crisis. The absence of sufficient resources for emergency assistance may leave vulnerable residents at risk of housing instability, utility disconnections, and inadequate access to essential medications, exacerbating financial hardships and social inequalities.

The county has a shortage of 1,521 employment opportunities. The lack of job opportunities limits economic mobility and financial security for residents, particularly those seeking stable employment to support themselves and their families.

Candler County has a shortage of 555 childcare slots available. This shortage of childcare options presents challenges for working parents, making it difficult to access affordable and reliable childcare services that align with their work schedules and meet their children's needs.

The county faces shortages in both safe and affordable housing units, with deficits of 753 safe housing units and 1,070 households experiencing housing cost burdens. The lack of safe and affordable housing options contributes to housing insecurity and affordability challenges for residents, impacting overall quality of life and well-being.

Candler County encounters challenges in accessing healthcare services, with high patient-to-provider ratios of 5,490 patients per physician, 11,040 patients per dentist, and 1,100 patients per mental health provider. These shortages of healthcare providers limit residents' access to essential medical and mental health services, potentially leading to unmet healthcare needs and negative health outcomes within the community.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
4. Individuals lack financial management skills (F)
5. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent income (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

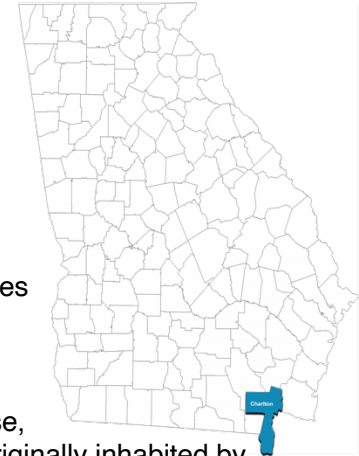
Candler County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Emergency Shelter by Safe Haven	912-764-4605	Provides a safe place and emotional support for victims of domestic violence. (BULLOCH, CANDLER, EFFINGHAM)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease, and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Metter Presbyterian	912-685-9293	Food Pantry Wednesday 10-12 (CANDLER)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
The Bridge Candler Co Outreach	912-685-2900	Food Pantry M-Thurs 9-11 (CANDLER)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Charlton County

Founded: 1854
Total Area: 781 square miles
County Seat: Folkston



County Overview

Charlton County, located in southeast Georgia, is the state's 111th county. Spanning 781 square miles, it shares a border with Florida and encompasses a large portion of the Okefenokee Swamp. The county was formed from Camden County in 1854, with additional territory added from Ware County in 1855. It is named after Robert Milledge Charlton, a notable nineteenth-century jurist, U.S. senator, and mayor of Savannah. The current courthouse, constructed in 1928, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Originally inhabited by Creek Indians, the area's first European settlers came from neighboring Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Folkston, named after William Brandon Folks of Waycross, was established as the county seat since 1901, and developed into a significant transportation hub following the arrival of railroads in the 1880s. It grew to be Charlton County's largest city by the late nineteenth century, serving as a key stop for railroad passengers traveling between Florida and northern destinations. This led to the development of several hotels near the train depot. The restored depot now hosts the Okefenokee Chamber of Commerce and the Folkston–Charlton County Development Authority.

The Okefenokee Swamp is the county's major attraction. Within the swamp is Floyds Island Hammock, also known as the Hebard Cabin, a site once used by naturalists and writers in the 1930s. The Folkston Train Depot and the “Folkston Funnel” Train Viewing Platform offer a unique opportunity for rail enthusiasts to witness up to sixty trains in a single day. The Old Folkston Grammar School, built in 1926 and recently renovated, now houses the Okefenokee Education and Research Center. This center, supported by the City of Folkston and the Georgia Wildlife Federation, features a 2,700-square-foot exhibit area and the Okefenokee Heritage Garden. Additionally, the William Mizell House, a two-story wood-frame house with a greenhouse and pavilion, is also on the National Register of Historic Places. Sardis Church, built around 1821 and located on Route 2, is the oldest church in the county.

Charlton County, with over 98 percent of its land covered in forests, is the most timbered of all Georgia's counties. It also has rich titanium deposits adjacent to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. In 1997, local residents successfully protested against the DuPont Company's plans for a titanium strip mine, leading to the company's donation of 16,000 acres to the people of Georgia, marking the largest land preservation gift in the state's history.

The county hosts several annual events, including Sandhill Crane Awareness Day, Wings over the Swamp, National Wildlife Week and Earth Day Art Festival, the Okefenokee Festival, the Folkston Rail Watch, the Cherokee of Georgia Council Spring Pow Wow, and the Mizell House Gala. These events celebrate the unique natural and cultural heritage of Charlton County and its communities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

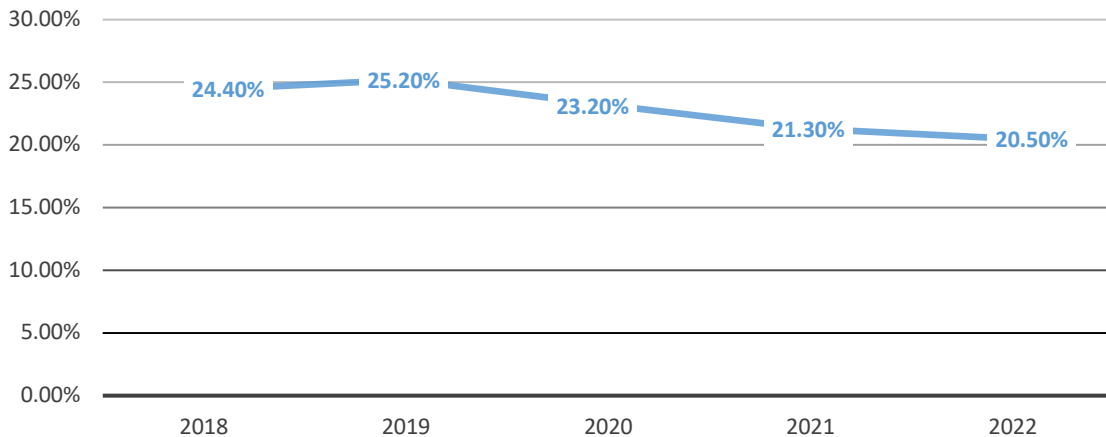
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 12,547 individuals residing in 4,043 households in Charlton County. This is a decrease of 3.36% from the 12,983 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher male population (7,331) compared to females (5,216), a sex ratio of 141 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 39 years, with 2,061 residents being age 65 and older, and 575 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (7,897), followed by Black/African American (3,601), multi-racial (729), Asian (99), and American Indian (75). An estimated 146 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 754 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 11,793 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Charlton County, there are an estimated 2,381 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 20.50% of the local population, which is significantly higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 15.98%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,806 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 3,126 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 5,063 being under 200%.

Chart 25: Charlton County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (28.50%) were noted as being much more likely to be in poverty than males (14.10%), with individuals identifying as Black/African American (32.20%) and Asian (24.40%) having higher rates than those identifying as White (16.10%) and multi-racial (12.40%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (5.70%) were noted as being less likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (16.00%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (36.40%) than adults (18.80%) or senior citizens (8.90%).

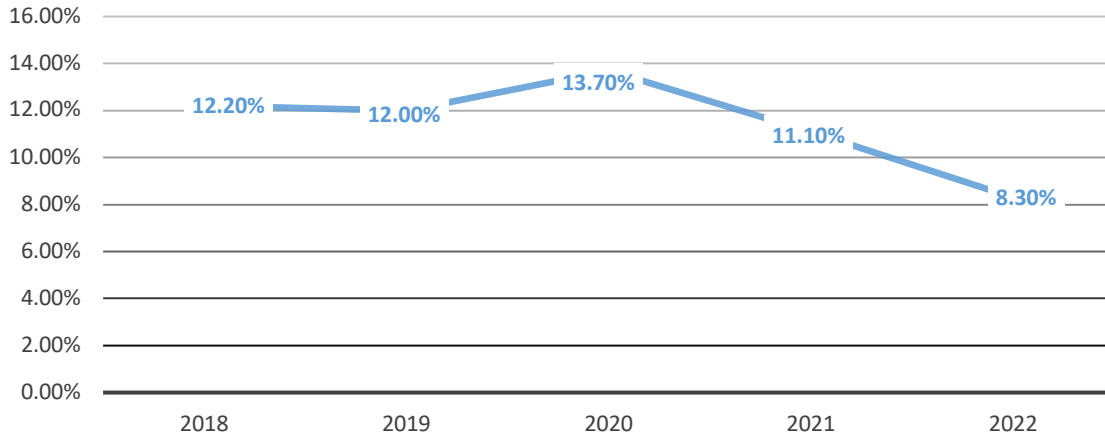
The county's household median income is \$45,770 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Charlton County in 2022 was 5,077 an increase of 9.82% from the 4,623 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 452 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 20.98% from the 572 documented five years ago. While the unemployment rate has improved by 31.97% over the past five years, it should be noted that an upward trend of 14.17% between 2019 and 2020 slowed progress. The improvement resumed in 2021, with an average annual improvement of 22.11%. This is significantly faster than the 1.64% rate of improvement prior to the pandemic.

Chart 26: Charlton County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 1,982 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 3,095 to accommodate the local labor force. The county’s median wage was identified as \$48,360 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 309 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 6.09% of the labor force and 18.76% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is manufacturing, accounting for 20.53% of all jobs with a median wage of \$50,232 annually. This was followed by local government (19.73%), and administrative/waste services (14.73%).

An estimated 60.09% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 195 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 32: Charlton County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	110	\$46,436
Construction	64	\$37,700
Manufacturing	407	\$50,232
Wholesale	49	\$45,448
Retail	235	\$26,780
Finance/Insurance	37	\$36,348
Professional/Technical	43	\$36,140
Administrative/Waste	292	\$57,980
Health/Social	67	\$138,268
Accommodation/Food	195	\$18,928
Federal Government	32	\$74,724
State Government	30	\$36,868
Local Government	391	\$40,456
Other/Unclassified	37	\$30,732
Total	1,982	\$48,360

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Charlton County, an estimated 1,432 adults over the age of 25 (15.91%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-40.75%) from the 2,417 adults documented in 2018. An additional 4,070 local residents (45.21%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, an increase of 15.23% from the 3,532 individuals (39.07%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 1,092 local residents (12.13%) reported having a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is a decrease of 8.47% from the 1,193 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 3,137 members of the adult population (25%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 5,019 individuals (40%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 322 residents continue to struggle with the community’s predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 1,720 school-aged children residing in the local community, 504 of which (29.30%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 1,634 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (1,116) or high school (518) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Charlton County School System is 80.2 (), indicating the schools in the area are above average. The graduation rate is 97.09%, with 73.63% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 14.78:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 0.30% students were noted as having language barriers, with 18.20% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the four schools in the county, one was noted as being average (Charlton County High School, with three being ranked above average (Bethune Middle School, Folkston Elementary School, St. George Elementary School). All schools were at or below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 33: Charlton County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Bethune Middle School	GA-624-0112	15.88	81.8	B
Charlton County High School	GA-624-0287	15.32	70.9	C
Folkston Elementary School	GA-624-0199	13.43	84.4	B
St. George Elementary School	GA-624-4050	14.14	80.2	B

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 158 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 575 young children, a deficit of 417. This is a ratio of 3.64 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 100% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 34: Charlton County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
101	3.00:1	Yes	102	N/A	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

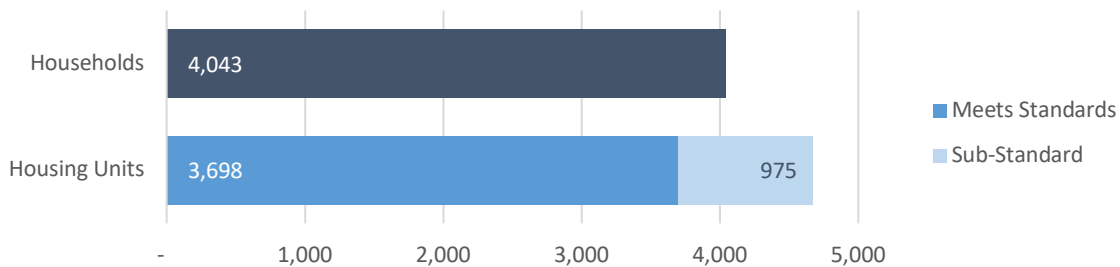
Table 35: Charlton County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Charlton County Head Start	Folkston	(912) 496-3041	0y-5y+
Roberson Day Care	Folkston	(912) 496-3620	0y-5y+
Small Smiles Learning and Childcare Center	Folkston	(912) 496-3654	0y-5y+

Housing Profile

In Charlton County, there are an estimated 4,673 housing units available to accommodate the 4,043 local households, a surplus of 630 units. However, 975 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 59.49% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 345 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 27: Charlton County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,168 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$704 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 895 households (22.14%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 55.87% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 36: Charlton County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Charlton Court	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Folkston
Folkston Housing	Public Housing	Folkston
Pine Point Apartments	LIHTC, HOME, Sections 515/521	Folkston

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 22% of the county’s adult population (2,255 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,435 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 1,743 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 75.4 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 2,179 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 764 were senior citizens, 1,286 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 129 were school-aged children.

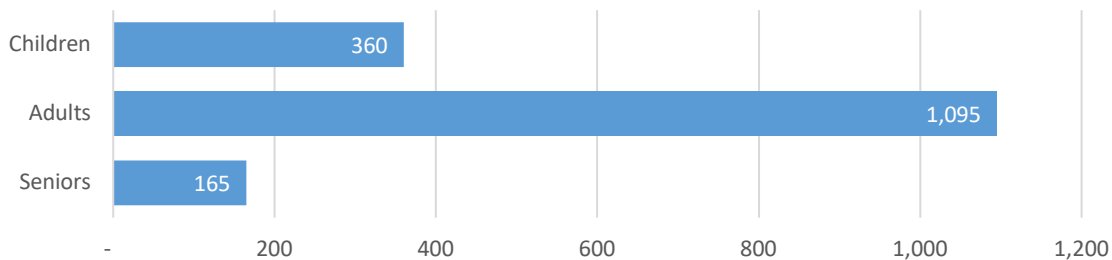
There are an estimated 3,360 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than double the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 12,770 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 4,260 patients for every mental health service provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 2,104 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 9,585 with insurance, 6,303 reported use of a private plan and 4,789 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 1,620 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 360 are children, 165 are senior citizens, and 1,095 are working-aged adults. An estimated 986 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 24.39% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.62 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$353.14 per person each month, or 28.10% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,412.55 per month, equal to 112.40% of minimum wage.

Chart 28: Charlton County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 227 local households (5.61%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 38 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 172 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 58.11% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Charlton County, there are 1,116 households with children. An average of 110 children are born each year. An estimated 59 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 3 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 162 were headed by single females and 137 were headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 33 foster children were in care during 2023, with 14 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 871 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (45.12%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 4.83, which is significantly lower than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 63 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 6 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Charlton County lacks an adequate number of anti-poverty case management services, which are essential for coordinating efforts to address poverty and support individuals and families in achieving economic stability and self-sufficiency. Without targeted case management, there may be limited coordination of resources and interventions to address the root causes of poverty and provide comprehensive support to those in need.

The county faces a shortage of financial management counseling services, particularly in areas such as budgeting and financial planning. Access to these services is crucial for empowering residents with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively, reduce debt, and make informed financial decisions for their future.

Charlton County experiences gaps in emergency assistance for rent, utilities, and medication payments during times of crisis. The absence of sufficient resources for emergency assistance may leave vulnerable residents at risk of housing instability, utility disconnections, and inadequate access to essential medications, exacerbating financial hardships and social inequalities.

The county has a shortage of 3,095 employment opportunities. The lack of job opportunities limits economic mobility and financial security for residents, particularly those seeking stable employment to support themselves and their families.

Charlton County has a shortage of 417 slots available. This shortage of childcare options presents challenges for working parents, making it difficult to access affordable and reliable childcare services that align with their work schedules and meet their children's needs.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The county faces shortages in both safe and affordable housing units, with deficits of 345 safe housing units and 895 households experiencing housing cost burdens. The lack of safe and affordable housing options contributes to housing insecurity and affordability challenges for residents, impacting overall quality of life and well-being.

Charlton County encounters challenges in accessing healthcare services, with high patient-to-provider ratios of 3,360 patients per physician, 12,770 patients per dentist, and 4,260 patients per mental health provider. These shortages of healthcare providers limit residents' access to essential medical and mental health services, potentially leading to unmet healthcare needs and negative health outcomes within the community.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
4. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
5. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

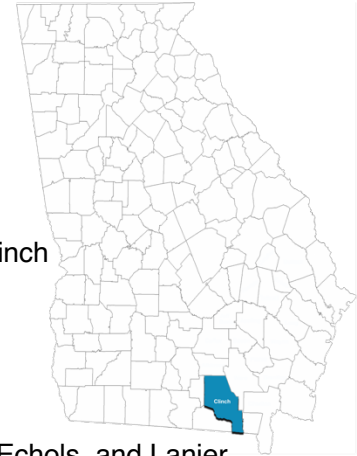
Charlton County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
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Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Folkston COG	912-496-3500	(CHARLTON)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease, and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.glr.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Papa & Nana's Food Pantry & More	904-534-7777	(CHARLTON)
Salvation Army	912-285-7237	Food, clothing, financial services Mon-Thurs 8:30-2:30 (CHARLTON, PIERCE, WARE)
Second Harvest	912-261-7979	(CHARLTON)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
WWLTC Outreach Ministry	912-496-1019	Food Pantry 1st Saturday 9-12 (CHARLTON)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Clinch County

Founded: 1850
Total Area: 809 square miles
County Seat: Homerville



County Overview

Clinch County, in southeast Georgia, is the state’s third largest county. Clinch comprises 809 square miles and includes a portion of the Okefenokee Swamp, which extends over the eastern border of the county.

Clinch County was formed in 1850 from land that came from parts of Lowndes and Ware counties; portions also came from Appling County. (In subsequent years Clinch lost some of its territory to Atkinson, Coffee, Echols, and Lanier counties.) The county was named for Duncan Lamont Clinch, a veteran of the War of 1812 (1812-15) and later a Georgia congressman who was defeated in the 1847 gubernatorial campaign.

The region was originally inhabited by Oconee Indians. The first white settlers established small farms, but by the nineteenth century, the county’s economy focused on timber products, with a very active turpentine distillation industry.

The county seat is Homerville, which began as a stagecoach stop and was first incorporated in 1869. The town became important to the developing turpentine industry, and several major sawmills were established in and around Homerville after the Civil War (1861-65). The current county courthouse, built in 1896, was extensively renovated and extended in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration. During the Great Depression, Company 1413 of the Civilian Conservation Corps was encamped at Homerville, where its members worked in forestry and photography. In the late twentieth century, the town established a thriving honey industry, based on a deeply aromatic honey from bees who gather their nectar in the Okefenokee Swamp.

There are three other incorporated towns in Clinch County—Argyle, DuPont, and Fargo. Established in 1885, Argyle was first known as Saussy, after Clement Saussy, an heir to Gasper J. Fulton of Savannah, who had previously owned the land. The town was located on the A.C.L. Railroad and in its first years was little more than a railroad station. In 1899 the town took its current name, which honors Fort Argyle, the earliest of James Oglethorpe’s coastal forts, and in 1901 the town was incorporated. DuPont was first known as Suwannoochee, after a nearby creek. Settled in 1858 by Captain J. P. A. DuPont of Darien, the town was renamed Lawton. It did not take its current name until 1874, when it was incorporated. The town of Fargo was established on the banks of the Suwannee River and incorporated in 1992.

Notable residents of Clinch County have included U.S. congresswoman Iris Faircloth Blicht, who was the first woman to serve two terms in the Georgia senate, actor Ossie Davis, and Methodist bishop Arthur J. Moore.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Places of interest include Stephen C. Foster State Park, inside the Okefenokee Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is home to numerous mammals, birds, and reptiles and amphibians, many of which can be seen from the trails. The largest festival in the county is the Timberland Jubilee, held each spring to showcase the contributions the timber industry has made to the local economy.

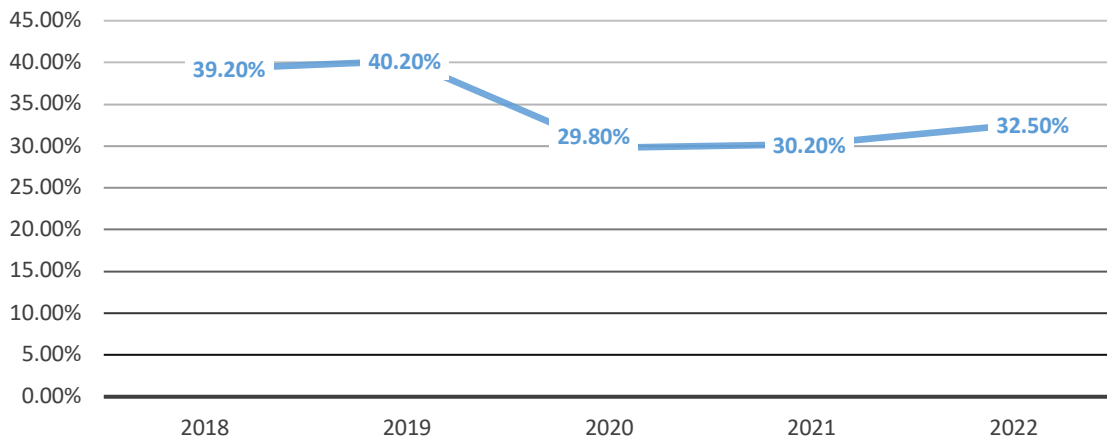
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 6,713 individuals residing in 2,385 households in Clinch County. This is a decrease of 0.44% from the 6,743 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (3,376) compared to males (3,337), a sex ratio of 99 males for every 100 females. The median age is 38 years, with 1,041 residents being age 65 and older, and 432 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (4,383), followed by Black/African American (1,778), multi-racial (240), American Indian (173), and Asian (11). An estimated 128 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 384 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 6,329 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Clinch County, there are an estimated 2,149 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 32.50% of the local population, which is significantly higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 17.09%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,373 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 2,297 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 3,407 being under 200%.

Chart 29: Clinch County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (32.60%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than males (32.40%), with individuals identifying as American Indian (88.40%) having higher rates than those identifying as Black/African American (45.70%), multi-racial (45.40%), and White (23.10%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (70.10%) were noted as being much more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (23.20%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (44.60%) than senior citizens (28.90) or adults (28.20%).

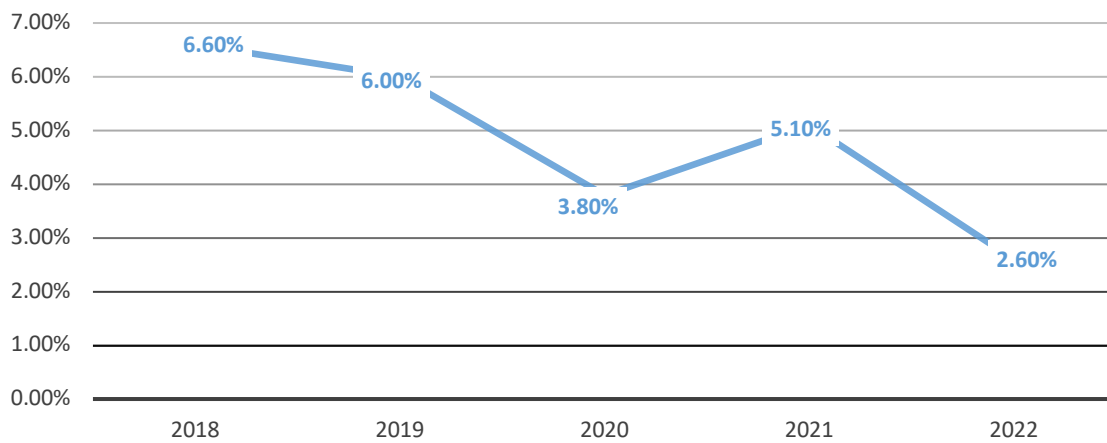
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The county's household median income is \$53,350 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Clinch County in 2022 was 2,435 an increase of 8.71% from the 2,240 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 68 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 50.00% from the 136 documented five years ago. While the unemployment rate has improved by 60.61% over the past five years, it should be noted that an upward trend of 34.21% between 2020 and 2021 slowed progress. The improvement resumed in 2022, with an average annual improvement of 49.02%. This is significantly faster than the annual improvement rate of 9.09% in 2019 and 36.67% in 2020.

Chart 30: Clinch County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 2,415 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 20 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$36,364 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 309 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 12.69% of the labor force and 24.61% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is manufacturing, accounting for 41.95% of all jobs with a median wage of \$36,364 annually.

An estimated 58.05% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 125 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 37: Clinch County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	179	\$45,656
Construction	25	\$45,084
Manufacturing	1,013	\$54,080
Wholesale	67	\$41,496
Retail	164	\$28,704
Transportation	14	\$39,156
Information	30	\$30,472
Finance/Insurance	12	\$33,332
Professional/Technical	23	\$40,300
Administrative/Waste	135	\$34,372
Health/Social	83	\$36,140
Accommodation/Food	125	\$10,764
Federal Government	16	\$43,784
State Government	30	\$37,908
Local Government	472	\$37,544
Other/Unclassified	27	\$23,036
Total	2,415	\$36,364

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Clinch County, an estimated 1,174 adults over the age of 25 (26.03%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-29.23%) from the 1,312 adults documented in 2018. An additional 1,659 local residents (36.78%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, an increase of 16.18% from the 1,428 individuals (31.75%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 581 local residents (12.88%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 16.20% from the 500 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 2,484 members of the adult population (37%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 3,759 individuals (56%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 354 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 1,250 school-aged children residing in the local community, 543 of which (43.44%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 1,235 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (760) or high school (475) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Clinch County School System is 71.60 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 85.00%, with 56.12% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 14.93, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 3.30% students were noted as having language barriers, with 13.30% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the three schools in the county, one was noted as being above average (Clinch County High School), with two being below average (Clinch County Elementary School and Clinch County Middle School). All schools were at or below the preferred student to teacher ratio range of 15-25.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 38: Clinch County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Clinch County Elementary School	GA-632-0101	16.24:1	68.2	D
Clinch County High School	GA-632-1050	14.15:1	80.4	B
Clinch County Middle School	GA-632-0201	13.97:1	64.2	D

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 200 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 432 young children, a deficit of 232. This is a ratio of 2.16 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 50% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 39: Clinch County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	3.80	Yes	9702	1.81:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

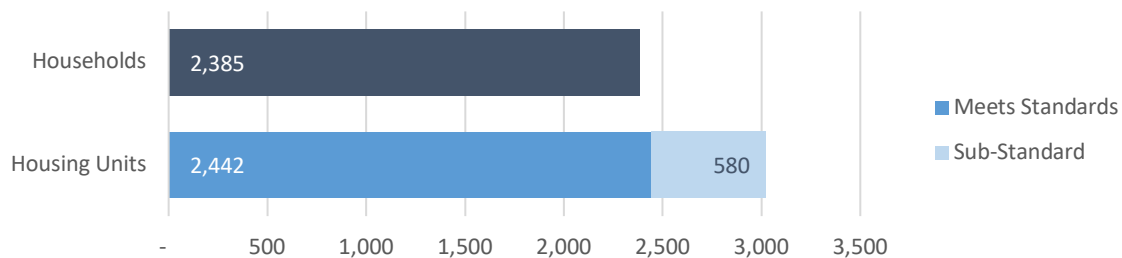
Table 40: Clinch County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Clinch County Elementary Tutoring	Homerville	(912) 487-5385	8y-11y
Clinch County Head Start	Homerville	(912) 487-5304	0y-5y+
Jesus and Jam	Homerville	(912) 337-5342	5y-9y
K-South	Homerville	(912) 385-0208	5y-12y
Tiny Tots of Homerville	Homerville	(912) 487-5115	0y-5y+

Housing Profile

In Clinch County, there are an estimated 3,022 housing units available to accommodate the 2,385 local households, a surplus of 637 units. However, 580 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 59.48% of which are severe.

Chart 31: Clinch County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,053 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$547 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 514 households (21.55%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 44.55% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 41: Clinch County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Brookwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Homerville
Homerville	Public Housing	Homerville
Quail Hollow Apartments I	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Homerville
Quail Hollow Apartments II	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Homerville

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 27% of the county’s adult population (1,358 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 805 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 1,006 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 71.5 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 1,093 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 376 were senior citizens, 550 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 167 were school-aged children.

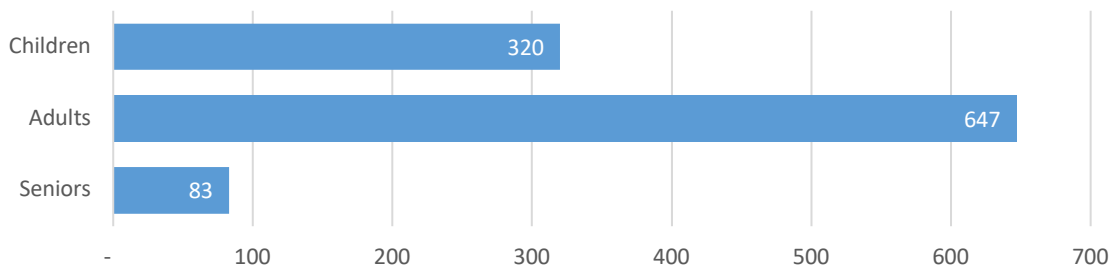
There are an estimated 6,580 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than four times the state average of 1,490. Dentists were also a concern with 6,730 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 6,730 patients per mental health provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 1,398 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 5,223 with insurance, 3,850 reported use of a private plan and 2,808 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 1,050 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 320 are children, 83 are senior citizens, and 647 are working-aged adults. An estimated 463 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 19.41% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.27 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$298.39 per person each month, or 23.74% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,193.55 per month, equal to 94.98% of minimum wage.

Chart 32: Clinch County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 255 local households (10.69%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 53 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 72 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 32.36% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Clinch County, there are 732 households with children. An average of 93 children are born each year. An estimated 49 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, none of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 45 are headed by single males, 123 are headed by single females, and 67 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 21 foster children were in care during 2023, with 21 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 225 veterans in the local community, the largest portion of which (50.22%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 8.89, which is lower than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 60 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 2 rapes and 10 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Clinch County lacks an adequate number of anti-poverty case management services, which are essential for coordinating efforts to address poverty and support individuals and families in achieving economic stability and self-sufficiency. Without targeted case management, there may be limited coordination of resources and interventions to address the root causes of poverty and provide comprehensive support to those in need.

The county faces a shortage of financial management counseling services, particularly in areas such as budgeting and financial planning. Access to these services is crucial for empowering residents with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively, reduce debt, and make informed financial decisions for their future.

Clinch County experiences gaps in emergency assistance for rent, utilities, medication payments, and food allocations during times of crisis. The absence of sufficient resources for emergency assistance may leave vulnerable residents at risk of housing instability, utility disconnections, inadequate access to essential medications, and food insecurity, exacerbating financial hardships and social inequalities.

Despite a relatively small deficit of 20 jobs, Clinch County still faces challenges in providing sufficient employment opportunities for its residents. The availability of job opportunities is crucial for promoting economic mobility and financial security within the community.

The county lacks adequate adult education services, including GED programs and literacy initiatives. Access to adult education services is essential for individuals seeking to improve their educational qualifications, enhance their job prospects, and achieve greater economic self-sufficiency.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Clinch County has a shortage of 232 slots available. This shortage of childcare options presents challenges for working parents, making it difficult to access affordable and reliable childcare services that align with their work schedules and meet their children's needs.

The county faces a significant number of households experiencing housing cost burdens, with 514 households struggling to afford housing expenses. The lack of affordable housing options contributes to housing insecurity and affordability challenges for residents, impacting overall quality of life and well-being.

Clinch County encounters challenges in accessing healthcare services, with high patient-to-provider ratios of 6,580 patients per physician, 6,730 patients per dentist, and 6,730 patients per mental health provider. These shortages of healthcare providers limit residents' access to essential medical and mental health services, potentially leading to unmet healthcare needs and negative health outcomes within the community.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
4. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
5. Individuals have poor mental health (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Clinch County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Coffee County

Founded: 1854
Total Area: 603 square miles
County Seat: Douglas



County Overview

Coffee County, nestled in Georgia's Lower Coastal Plain, was formed from parts of Clinch, Irwin, Telfair, and Ware counties on February 9, 1854. The county is named after John E. Coffee, a distinguished planter and politician from Telfair County who served in both the Georgia state legislature and the U.S. Congress. He was also a notable frontiersman, recognized for his role in the Indian wars of the region.

The County is characterized by the prevalence of wiregrass among the Georgia pines, particularly in the Lower Coastal Plain. In the early nineteenth century, the area's abundant game, rivers, woods, and wildlife attracted many white settlers, although it was only the boldest pioneers who chose to settle there.

Originally, Creek Indians inhabited the area. By 1827, conflicts between early settlers and the Creeks, coupled with treaties that led to the Creeks' forced removal and departure from the region. Today, their legacy remains only in the names of local water bodies like the Oconee River, Ocmulgee River, and the Okefenokee Swamp, which still bear their original Indian names.

Following the Indian removal and the development of roads, the area saw an influx of larger family units, ushering in social change and economic growth for white settlers. This period saw the establishment of churches, schools, and new roads. Farmlands were fenced and cultivated into prosperous plantations, primarily growing cotton. The introduction of tobacco cultivation also brought enslaved labor to the area, albeit on a smaller scale.

Coffee County remains predominantly rural, with the majority of its residents, particularly in larger towns like Broxton, Ambrose, and Nicholls, engaged in agriculture. Tobacco remains a significant crop, contributing to the county's robust tobacco market. The county has also experienced growth in the manufacturing sector, leading to employment levels that rival the state average and exceed those in many other developing counties.

Douglas, established in 1858 as the county seat, was named in honor of U.S. Senator Stephen Arnold Douglas of Illinois, famous for his presidential contest against Abraham Lincoln. Douglas is the location of South Georgia College, the oldest two-year institution in the University System of Georgia, renowned for hosting one of the state's largest Elderhostel programs. Douglas features two National Register Districts: the downtown historic district and the Gaskin Avenue historic residential district, both showcasing impressive turn-of-the-century architecture. Other historical sites in Douglas include the Heritage Station Museum, Douglas City Cemetery, and the Martin Centre, a restored 1950s movie theater.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Just five miles east of Douglas lies General Coffee State Park, a 1,511-acre park highlighting the county's pioneer history and natural environment. A key feature of the park is Meeks Cabin, circa 1830, one of the oldest log structures in South Georgia. The park also maintains an environmental reserve that is home to various endangered animal and plant species. Another ecological treasure is the Broxton Rocks Preserve, a unique sandstone outcrop extending nearly four miles. This preserve is known for its more than 500 native plant species, including several rare and endangered varieties.

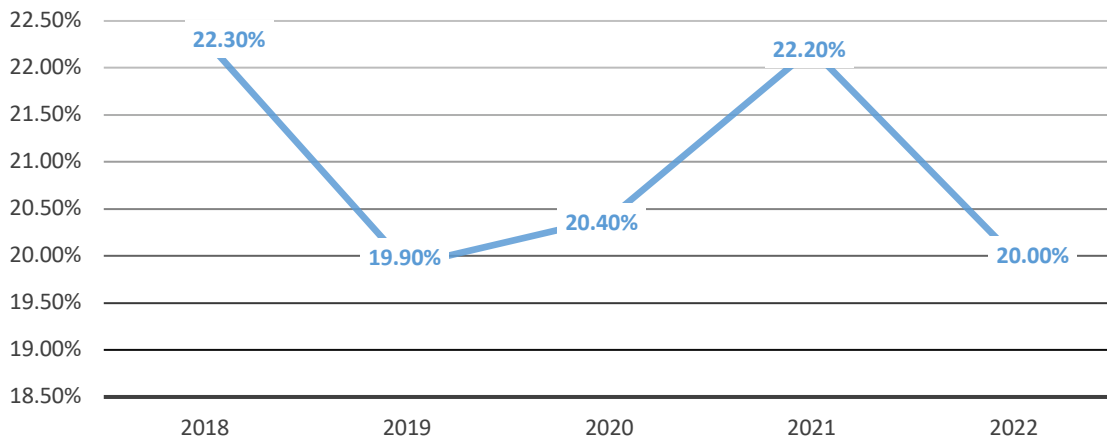
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 43,056 individuals residing in 14,894 households in Coffee County. This is an increase of 0.22% from the 42,961 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher male population (22,197) compared to females (20,859), a sex ratio of 106 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 36 years, with 6,325 residents being age 65 and older, and 2,882 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (26,766), followed by Black/African American (12,375), multi-racial (2,734), Asian (330), and American Indian (96). An estimated 755 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 5,297 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 37,759 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Coffee County, there are an estimated 8,063 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 20.0% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 10.31%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 3,788 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 11,099 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 18,719 being under 200%.

Chart 33: Coffee County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (23.10%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than males (16.90%), with individuals identifying as American Indian (32.90%) having higher rates than those identifying as multi-racial (28.10%), Black/African American (22.80%), and White (18.30%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (35.20%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (15.70%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (28.00%) than senior citizens (17.80) or adults (17.30%).

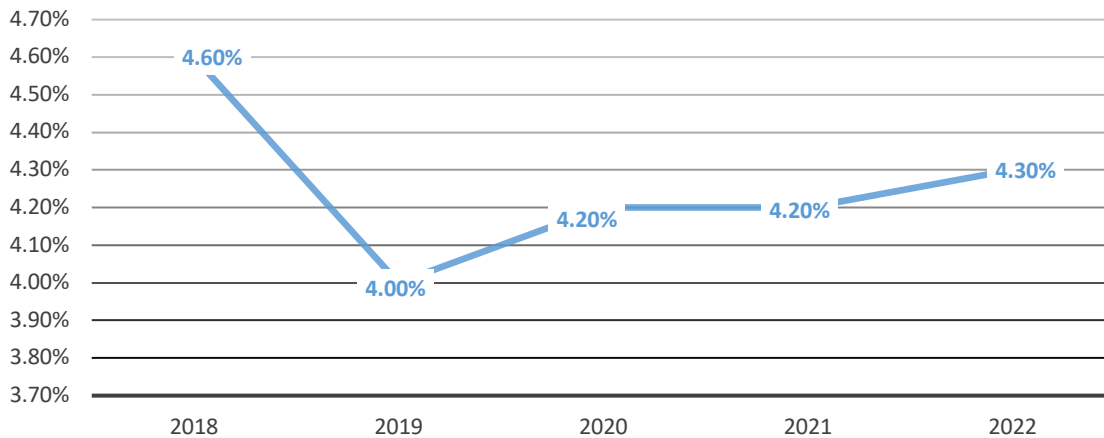
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The county's household median income is \$48,398 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Coffee County in 2022 was 17,207 an increase of 6.54% from the 16,151 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 754 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 2.84% from the 776 documented five years ago. While the unemployment rate has improved by 6.52% over the past five years, it should be noted that an upward trend of 7.50% began in 2019. Although not as severe as the one-year increase of 5.00% in 2020, the 2022 rate of increase (+2.38%) is significant compared to the unchanged employment data between 2020 and 2021.

Chart 34: Coffee County Unemployment Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 17,446 jobs were identified in the community, a surplus of 239 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$46,800 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 1,282 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 7.45% of the labor force and 23.73% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is manufacturing, accounting for 18.27% of all jobs with a median wage of \$49,192 annually. This was followed by retail sales (14.47%), and health/social services (11.73%).

An estimated 74.33% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 1,491 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 42: Coffee County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	536	\$47,268
Utilities	66	\$50,128
Construction	831	\$50,544
Manufacturing	3,187	\$49,192
Wholesale	566	\$65,156
Retail	2,525	\$39,988
Transportation	1,572	\$40,456
Information	73	\$37,284
Finance/Insurance	309	\$60,164
Real Estate	109	\$37,024
Professional/Technical	322	\$64,792
Management	79	\$52,728
Administrative/Waste	753	\$35,828
Health/Social	2,047	\$54,548
Accommodation/Food	1,491	\$18,304
Federal Government	106	\$65,000
State Government	779	\$45,344
Local Government	1,791	\$37,492
Other/Unclassified	151	\$37,960
Total	17,446	\$46,800

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Coffee County, an estimated 6,207 adults over the age of 25 (21.72%) have not completed high school. This is a reduction of 1.65% from the 6,311 adults documented in 2018. An additional 11,269 local residents (39.43%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, an increase of 4.62% from the 10,771 individuals (38.60%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 3,683 local residents (12.89%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is unchanged from the number documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 13,778 members of the adult population (32%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 20,667 individuals (48%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 2,336 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 7,598 school-aged children residing in the local community, 2,136 of which (28.11%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 6,698 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (4,480) or high school (2,218) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Coffee County School System is 77.0 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 92.59%, with 73.08% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 14.57:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 11.40% of all students were noted as having language barriers, with 12.80% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the twelve schools in the county, nine were noted as being average, with one (Nicholls Elementary School) being ranked as above average and one (Westside Elementary School) being ranked below average. All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 43: Coffee County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Ambrose Elementary School	GA-634-0102	14.44:1	No Data	No Data
Broxton-Mary Hayes Elementary	GA-634-0191	13.16:1	72.3	C
Coffee County High School	GA-634-0195	13.63:1	74.1	C
Coffee Middle School	GA-634-0108	15.32:1	75.4	C
Eastside Elementary School	GA-634-0282	13.66:1	75.3	C
George Washington Carver	GA-634-0308	14.38:1	78.6	C
Indian Creek Elementary	GA-634-0100	14.42:1	79.9	C
Nicholls Elementary School	GA-634-0291	15.44:1	85.8	B
Satilla Elementary School	GA-634-0182	15.44:1	74.7	C
West Green Elementary School	GA-634-3052	14.77:1	73.6	C
Westside Elementary School	GA-634-5050	14.32:1	68.5	D
Wiregrass Reg. College/Career Academy	GA-634-0114	17.68:1	74.6	C

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 989 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 2,882 young children, a deficit of 1,893. This is a ratio of 2.91 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 67% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 44: Coffee County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
101	1.81:1	No
102	N/A	Yes
103	N/A	Yes
104	45.33:1	Yes
105	4.07:1	Yes

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
106	N/A	Yes
107	7.40:1	Yes
108.01	1.67:1	No
108.02	0.72:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 45: Coffee County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
ABC Child Development Center	Alma	(912) 632-0130	6wk-12y
Akim Academy	Douglas	(912) 384-0876	13mo-5y+
All About Kids Early Learning Center	Douglas	(912) 381-1210	0wk-5y+
Bacon County Northside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0774	3y-4y
Bacon County Southside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0284	3y-4y
Citizens Christian Academy	Douglas	(912) 384-8862	5y-17y
Coffee County Head Start	Douglas	(912) 720-1007	0y-4y
Coffee County HS/EHS at Peterson Ave.	Douglas	(912) 720-1007	3y-4y
Douglas First Methodist Church Preschool	Douglas	(912) 384-4404	2y-5y
Kuntry Kids Daycare and Learning Center	Douglas	(229) 569-0948	0wk-5y+
LCC Day Camp	Douglas	(912) 384-7659	5y-12y
Lollipop Childrens Center	Douglas	(912) 384-7659	0wk-5y+
Mary Hayes Center	Douglas	(912) 381-0564	5y-13y
Michelle's Day Care	Douglas	(912) 260-1451	0wk-5y+
Precious Jewels Early Learning Center	Douglas	(912) 381-1210	0wk-5y+
Precious Possessions	Douglas	(912) 384-5750	0wk-5y+

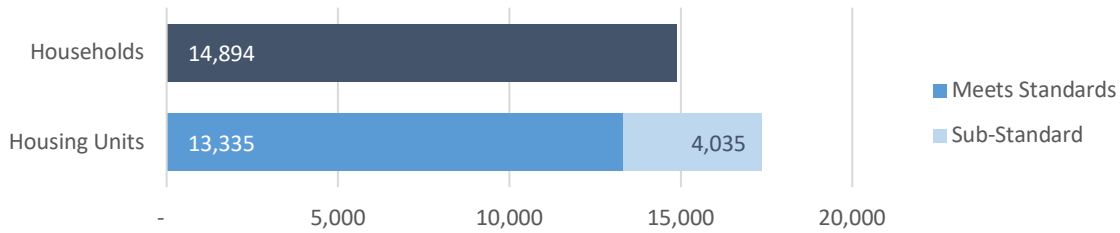
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Sugarville	Douglas	(912) 592-8151	0wk-5y+
Teachers Too Early Childcare & Learning Ctr	Douglas	(912) 384-5329	0wk-5y+
The Eastside Baptist Church	Douglas	(912) 384-7606	2y-5y

Housing Profile

In Coffee County, there are an estimated 17,370 housing units available to accommodate the 14,894 local households, a surplus of 2,476 units. However, 4,035 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 51.92% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 1,559 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 35: Coffee County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,191 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$702 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 3,635 households (24.41%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 42.78% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 46: Coffee County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Aesthetic Housing II	Section 202	Douglas
Amberwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Douglas
Coffee County Resources	Section 202	Douglas
Deerfield Apartments	HOME, LIHTC	Douglas
Deerfield II Apartments	LIHTC, Section 515/521	Douglas
Estes Park Apartments	LIHTC, Section 538	Douglas
Georgian Woods	Section 8	Douglas
Heritage Pointe	LIHTC, Section 538	Douglas
Hunters Run Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Douglas
Nicholls HA	Public Housing	Nicholls
Oak Terrace	Sections 515/521	Douglas
Park View Court	Public Housing	Douglas
Pine Meadows Apartments	Home, LIHTC	Douglas
Thrasher Nest Village	Public Housing	Douglas
Trowell Housing	Section 202	Douglas

Source: Affordable Housing Online

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health Profile

Data indicates that 22% of the county's adult population (7,167 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 4,561 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 5,864 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.5 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 6,881 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 2,687 were senior citizens, 3,484 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 710 were school-aged children.

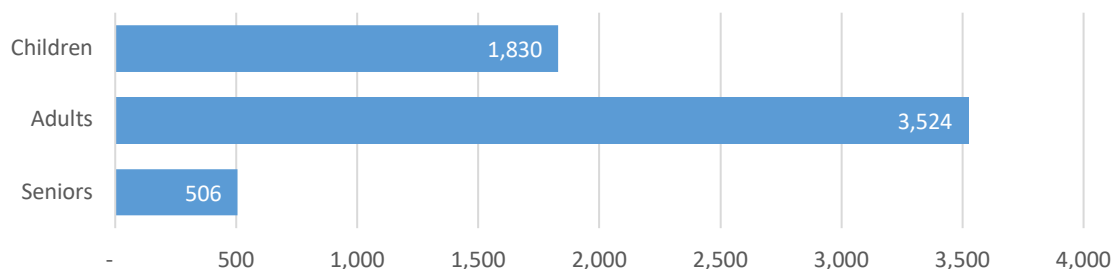
There are an estimated 1,730 patients for every physician in the community, which is higher than the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 2,710 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 3,100 patients identified for every mental health provider in the county as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 7,264 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 33,510 with insurance, 21,048 reported use of a private plan and 16,304 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 5,860 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 1,830 are children, 506 are senior citizens, and 3,524 are working-aged adults. An estimated 2,432 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 19.41% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.24 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$295.65 per person each month, or 23.53% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,182.60 per month, equal to 94.11% of minimum wage.

Chart 36: Coffee County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 947 local households (6.36%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 370 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 507 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. An estimated 16.19% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Family Relationship Profile

In Coffee County, there are 5,824 households with children. An average of 566 children are born each year. An estimated 336 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 21 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 240 are headed by single males, 1,340 are headed by single females, and 845 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 216 foster children were in care during 2023, with 45 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 1,998 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (32.33%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 12.12, which is comparable to the regional average of 12.26. A total of 532 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 1 murder, 11 rapes, 3 robberies, and 106 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Coffee County has an adequate number of anti-poverty case management services, which are essential for coordinating efforts to address poverty and provide comprehensive support to individuals and families in need. Without targeted case management, there may be limited coordination of resources and interventions to address the underlying causes of poverty and assist residents in achieving economic stability.

The county faces a shortage of financial management counseling services, particularly in areas such as budgeting and financial planning. Access to these services is crucial for empowering residents with the skills and knowledge needed to manage their finances effectively, reduce debt, and make informed financial decisions.

Coffee County experiences gaps in emergency assistance for rent, utilities, medication payments, and food allocations during times of crisis. The absence of sufficient resources for emergency assistance may leave vulnerable residents at risk of housing instability, utility disconnections, inadequate access to essential medications, and food insecurity, exacerbating financial hardships and social inequalities.

The county lacks adequate adult education services, including GED programs and literacy initiatives. Access to adult education services is essential for individuals seeking to improve their educational qualifications, enhance their job prospects, and achieve greater economic self-sufficiency.

Coffee County has a shortage of 1,893 slots available. This shortage of childcare options presents challenges for working parents, making it difficult to access affordable and reliable childcare services that align with their work schedules and meet their children's needs.

The county experiences shortages in both safe and affordable housing options, with deficits of 1,559 safe housing units and 3,635 households experiencing housing cost burdens. The lack of adequate housing options contributes to housing insecurity and affordability challenges for residents, impacting overall quality of life and well-being.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Coffee County encounters challenges in accessing dental and mental health services, with high patient-to-provider ratios of 2,710 patients per dentist and 3,100 patients per mental health provider. These shortages of healthcare providers limit residents' access to essential dental and mental health services, potentially leading to unmet healthcare needs and negative health outcomes within the community.

Transportation gaps within the community pose significant challenges, particularly in rural and dispersed areas. These gaps impede access to essential services like healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve transportation infrastructure and accessibility in rural communities.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
4. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)
5. The community lacks safe and affordable housing units ©

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Coffee County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Effingham County

Founded: 1777

Total Area: 483 square miles

County Seat: Springfield



County Overview

Effingham County, situated along Georgia's eastern border, is one of the state's original eight counties. The county's earliest inhabitants were Creek Indians, who lost their lands due to treaties signed with the English in 1733, 1735, and 1736. In 1777, Effingham County was established from the parishes of St. Matthew and St. Philip, covering an area of 479 square miles. It was named in honor of Thomas Howard, the third Earl of Effingham, known for his support of the American colonies before the Revolution.

Springfield, the county's fourth seat, was founded in 1799 and incorporated in 1838. In 2007, the old courthouse, originally built in 1908, was replaced by the Effingham County Judicial Complex. Previous county seats were Tuckasee King (1784-87), Elberton (1787-97), and Ebenezer (1797-99). Tuckasee King was a river-landing community in Clyo, while Elberton and Ebenezer are no longer active. Other incorporated towns in Effingham include Guyton and Rincon.

The first white settlers, Lutherans from Salzburg, Austria, were exiled to Augsburg, Germany, in the early 18th century. Attracted by the Georgia Trustees' offers, they migrated to Georgia in 1734 as the "First Salzburger Transport" led by pastors Johann Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau. They initially settled in a low-lying area near Savannah, naming their community Ebenezer. Facing hardships, they relocated to a ridge overlooking the Savannah River, informally known as New Ebenezer.

The Salzburger established farms, mills, and a silk filature in the county, building the Old Salzburger Church, or Jerusalem Church, in 1769. They also founded Georgia's first Sunday school in 1734 and the first orphanage in 1737. Other Salzburger settlements in Effingham included Abercorn, Bethany, and Goshen. After Boltzius's death in 1765 and the disruption of the American Revolution, the Salzburger community began to dissolve, with Ebenezer, Abercorn, and Goshen eventually becoming ghost towns. However, many Salzburger descendants remain in Effingham, with some active in the Georgia Salzburger Society, founded in 1925.

The Civil War brought hardship, with Union General William T. Sherman's troops passing through in 1864. They occupied Jerusalem Church and engaged in skirmishes on the grounds.

The late 19th century saw economic growth with the advent of railroads. Rincon, established in 1891, prospered with the South Bound Railroad's expansion. Incorporated in 1927, Rincon experienced further growth in the 1980s with the arrival of large companies and factories. Springfield, however, faced challenges post-Civil War. Historic buildings were lost to fires, and the town had to adapt when the Highway 21 bypass diverted traffic away from its business district in the late 1990s. This led to the relocation of several county offices to Rincon and the closure of many Springfield businesses.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Notable figures from Effingham County include John Adam Treutlen, Georgia’s first elected governor; Georgia superior court judge Richard H. Clark, who contributed to writing the Georgia Code in the 1860s; and Herschel V. Jenkins, owner and publisher of the Savannah Morning News and Evening Press.

Places of interest in Effingham County include the Effingham Museum in Springfield, the Ebenezer Townsite and Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Guyton Historic District, Mossy Oak Music Park in Guyton, and Veterans Park. These sites showcase the rich history and cultural heritage of the county.

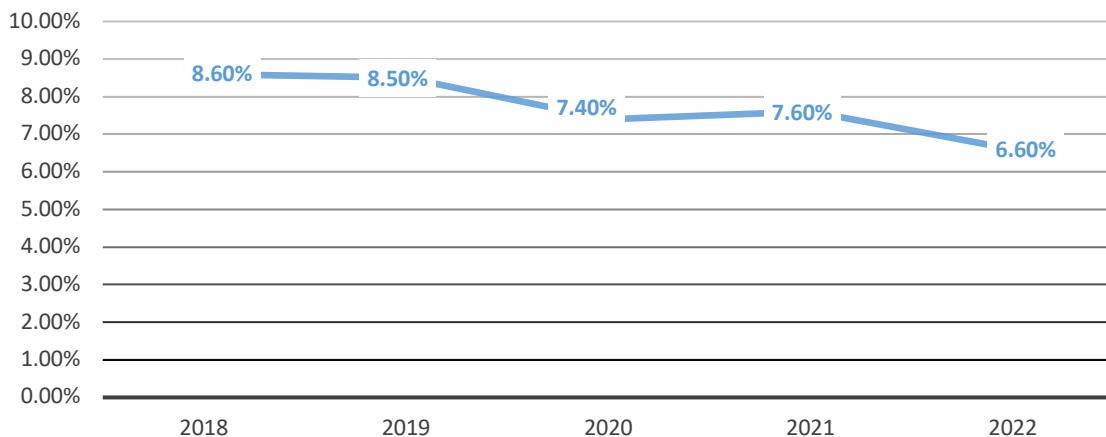
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 65,314 individuals residing in 22,820 households in Effingham County. This is an increase of 11.29% from the 58,689 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (32,932) compared to males (32,382), a sex ratio of 98 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 36 years, with 7,771 residents being age 65 and older, and 4,188 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (50,603), followed by Black/African American (8,968), multi-racial (3,827), Asian (443), Pacific Islander (109), and American Indian (86). An estimated 1,278 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 3,597 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 61,717 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Effingham County, there are an estimated 4,290 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 6.60% of the local population, which is significantly lower than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 23.26%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 2,329 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 7,327 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 13,825 being under 200%.

Chart 37: Effingham County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

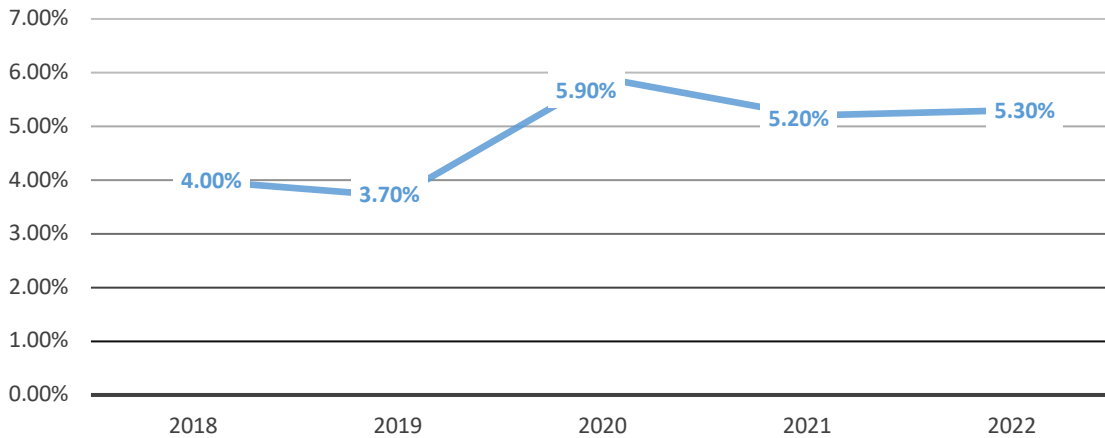
Females (6.80%) were noted as being slightly more likely to live in poverty than males (6.40%), with individuals identifying as Black/African American (10.30%) having higher rates than those identifying as Asian (9.30%) and White (5.80%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (10.90%) were noted as being much more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (5.90%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for senior citizens (11.90%) than for children (6.50%) or adults (5.70%).

The county's household median income is \$79,474 per year, which is notably lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages. While this amount is sufficient to meet the financial obligations of a single parent with one child (\$69,388), the traditional family of four (\$79,580) would more than likely struggle once taxes were taken into account.

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Effingham County in 2022 was 31,055 an increase of 12.47% from the 27,613 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 1,666 individuals were noted as being unemployed, an increase of 72.82% from the 964 documented five years ago. Over the past five years, the unemployment rate has increased by 32.50%. After a sharp increase of 59.46% correlating with the COVID-19 Pandemic, a decrease of 11.86% was experienced between 2020 and 2021. This was followed by an increase of 1.92% in 2022.

Chart 38: Effingham County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 11,605 jobs were identified in the community, a surplus of 19,450 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$52,617 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 691 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 2.23% of the labor force and 19.88% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 25.92% of all jobs with a median wage of \$48,880 annually. This was followed by manufacturing (15.33%).

An estimated 62.45% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 1,041 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 47: Effingham County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	115	\$53,092
Utilities	162	\$125,840
Construction	741	\$51,792
Manufacturing	1,779	\$71,292
Wholesale	190	\$72,852
Retail	1,361	\$30,368
Transportation	503	\$50,076
Information	29	\$57,824
Finance/Insurance	169	\$57,772
Real Estate	73	\$42,588
Professional/Technical	580	\$56,004
Management	28	\$81,432
Administrative/Waste	485	\$37,960
Education	21	\$25,064
Health/Social	689	\$45,864
Arts/Entertainment	21	\$28,496
Accommodation/Food	1,041	\$19,968
Federal Government	62	\$61,828
State Government	96	\$45,760
Local Government	3,008	\$48,880
Other/Unclassified	452	\$40,196
Total	11,605	\$52,617

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Effingham County, an estimated 4,209 adults over the age of 25 (9.86%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-7.86%) from the 4,568 adults documented in 2018. An additional 14,343 local residents (33.60%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 0.31% from the 14,388 individuals (37.80%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 10,753 local residents (25.19%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 40.62% from the 7,647 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 12,410 members of the adult population (19%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 19,594 individuals (30%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 726 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 13,070 school-aged children residing in the local community, 810 of which (6.20%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 12,060 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (8,314) or high school (3,746) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Effingham County School System is 83.8 (B), indicating the schools in the area are above average. The graduation rate is 91.80%, with 68.92% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 15.46:1, which is within the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 3.40% of all students were noted as having language barriers, with 16.60% having a disability of some type.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When looking specifically at the thirteen schools in the county, eight were noted as being average, with one (Springfield Elementary School) being ranked as below average and two (Marlow Elementary School and South Effingham Elementary School) being ranked below average. All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

Table 48: Effingham County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Blandford Elementary School	GA-651-0107	13.92:1	88.8	B
Ebenezer Elementary School	GA-651-0296	14.54:1	88.3	B
Ebenezer Middle School	GA-651-0203	14.35:1	80.2	B
Effingham County High School	GA-651-0390	17.82:1	79.7	C
Effingham County Middle School	GA-651-0290	14.53:1	79.1	C
Guyton Elementary School	GA-651-0190	14.16:1	80.6	B
Marlow Elementary School	GA-651-0105	15.37:1	90.5	A
Rincon Elementary School	GA-651-4050	14.83:1	87.5	B
Sand Hill Elementary School	GA-651-0196	13.48:1	83.6	B
South Effingham Elementary School	GA-651-0186	18.21:1	92.7	A
South Effingham High School	GA-651-0197	18.10:1	80.8	B
South Effingham Middle School	GA-651-0297	14.93:1	82.6	B
Springfield Elementary School	GA-651-0103	12.50:1	69.8	D

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 1,689 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 4,188 young children, a deficit of 2,499. This is a ratio of 2.48 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 40% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 49: Effingham County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
301	N/A	Yes	303.03	23.33:1	Yes
302.02	1.65:1	No	303.04	1.88:1	No
302.03	7.06:1	Yes	303.05	1.10:1	No
302.04	4.78:1	Yes	304.01	1.78:1	No
303.01	1.16:1	No	304.02	2.11:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 50: Effingham County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Ambra's Preschool	Rincon	(912) 856-7295	13mo-5y+
Bartley's Family Learning Center LLC	Clyo	(912) 655-7483	3y-5y+
Building Blocks Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 295-2511	0wk-5y+
Effingham Christian Learning Center	Meldrim	(912) 988-3586	0y-4y
Effingham County High School Athletics	Clyo	(912) 754-6404	14y-17y
Effingham County YMCA	Clyo	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
Effingham Head Start Center	Guyton	(912) 728-9621	3y-4y
Effingham YMCA	Rincon	(912) 826-2199	0y-13y
Everyday Bible School	Meldrim	(912) 344-0312	5y-12y
First Baptist Church of Rincon Preschool	Rincon	(912) 826-2213	3y-6y

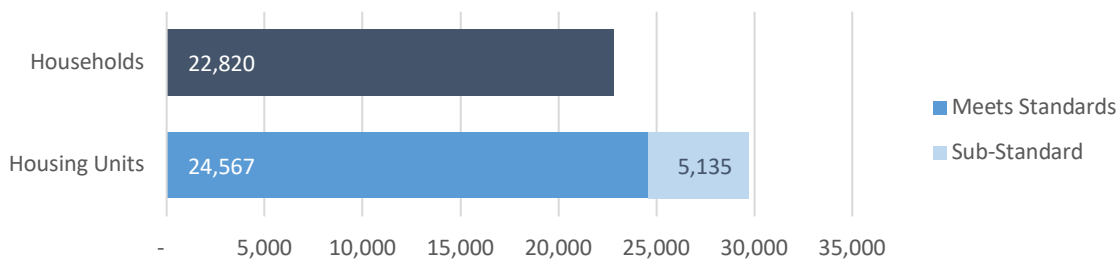
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Georgia Institute of Technology	Meldrim	(404) 894-4682	4y-17y
Georgia Southern University-Camp RAD	Clyo	(912) 478-0889	10y-17y
Happy Days Pre-School	Clyo	(912) 772-3896	4y-5y
Kids Connection Preschool	Guyton	(912) 728-3253	3y-4y
LEAP Youth Development Program	Guyton	(912) 777-8128	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Program - GES	Guyton	(912) 772-3384	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Program - RES	Rincon	(912) 826-5523	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Program - SHES	Guyton	(912) 728-5112	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Prgm - Waterford	Rincon	(912) 308-6619	3y-5y+
Little Miracles Learning Center	Meldrim	(912) 748-3686	0wk-5y+
Merry Hearts Daycare	Rincon	(912) 826-9753	5y+
New Direction Christian Fellowship Ministries	Rincon	(912) 295-3137	5y-12y
New Ebenezer Day Camp	Clyo	(912) 754-9242	8y-15y
Planet 82 After-school & Summer Camp	Guyton	(912) 728-3810	3y-5y+
Raising Stars Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 295-2859	0wk-5y+
Raising Stars Learning Center #2	Rincon	(912) 826-7752	3y-5y+
Savannah-Chatham County Public School	Meldrim	(912) 395-3680	8y-11y
Start Smart Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 826-0062	0wk-5y
Stepping Stones Child Learning Center	Guyton	(912) 728-8942	0wk-5y+
Teach, Love & Care Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 826-7370	0wk-5y+
The Learning Treehouse	Rincon	(912) 826-2893	0wk-5y+
The Learning Treehouse Summer Camp	Rincon	(912) 826-2893	5y-12y
The Learning Treehouse Too	Rincon	(912) 826-0204	0wk-5y+
Weekday Ministries - FBC	Rincon	(912) 826-2213	0wk-5y+
Wonderful Wednesday	Clyo	(912) 754-6646	4y-11y
YBASE at Blandford Elementary	Rincon	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
YBASE at Ebenezer Elementary	Clyo	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
YBASE at South Effingham Elementary	Guyton	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
YBASE at Springfield Elementary	Clyo	(912) 667-6651	3y-5y+
YMCA Pryme Tyme Rincon Elementary	Rincon	(912) 663-2465	3y-5y+

Housing Profile

In Effingham County, there are an estimated 24,567 housing units available to accommodate the 22,820 local households, a surplus of 1,747 units. However, 5,135 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 39.73% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 3,388 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 39: Effingham County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,562 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$1,098 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 4,795 households (21.01%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 34.72% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 51: Effingham County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Fair Oaks Lane Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Rincon
Goshen Crossing Apartments	LIHTC	Rincon
Goshen Crossing Apartments Phase II	LIHTC	Rincon
Silverwood Place	LIHTC	Rincon
Spring Hollow Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Springfield
Towne Park Commons	HOME, LIHTC	Rincon
Veranda Village	HOME, LIHTC, Section 538	Rincon
Willowpeg Lane Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Rincon
Willowpeg Village	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Rincon

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 14% of the county’s adult population (6,728 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This rate is comparable to the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 4,806 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 7,689 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 76.7 years, which is slightly lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 7,105 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 2,749 were senior citizens, 3,983 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 346 were school-aged children, and 27 were under the age of five.

There are an estimated 4,700 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than three times the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 5,560 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 2,090 patients for every mental health provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

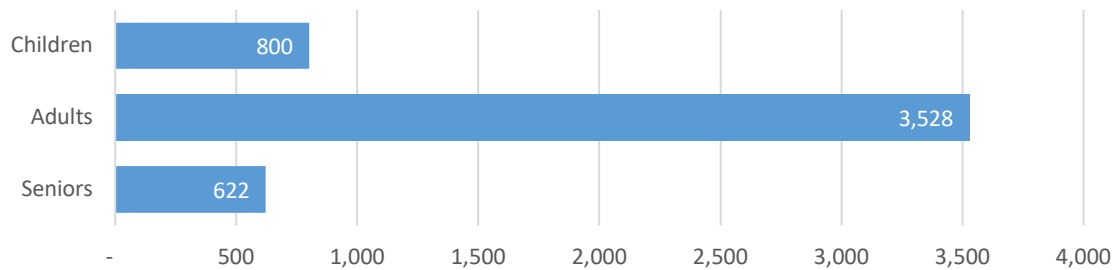
An estimated 6,161 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 58,486 with insurance, 49,328 reported use of a private plan and 16,810 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 4,950 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 800 are children, 622 are senior citizens, and 3,528 are working-aged adults. An estimated 1,642 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 7.20% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.49 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$318.46 per person each month, or 25.34% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,273.85 per month, equal to 101.37% of minimum wage.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 40: Effingham County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 553 local households (2.42%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 305 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 566 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 63.74% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Effingham County, there are 7,678 households with children. An average of 825 children are born each year. An estimated 277 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 4 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 307 are headed by single males, 1,054 are headed by single females, and 596 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 41 foster children were in care during 2023, with 1 new child being removed from their home.

Community Profile

There are 5,550 veterans in the local community, with a large portion (38.22%) being between the ages of 35 and 54.

The official crime rate for the county is 6.12, which is significantly lower than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 420 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 2 murders, 8 rapes, 5 robberies, and 34 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Effingham County lacks sufficient antipoverty case management services, which are essential for coordinating efforts to uplift individuals and families out of poverty. These services typically provide comprehensive support, including assessing needs, connecting individuals with resources, and developing personalized plans to address barriers to economic stability.

The absence of financial management counseling services in Effingham County hampers residents' ability to effectively manage their finances and make informed decisions regarding budgeting, saving, and debt management. Such counseling can empower individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their financial well-being and achieve long-term economic security.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The lack of resources for emergency assistance in meeting rent, utility, and medication payments leaves vulnerable individuals and families at risk of housing instability, utility disconnection, and inadequate access to essential medications. These emergency payments play a crucial role in preventing homelessness and ensuring basic needs are met during times of financial crisis.

Effingham County faces a significant deficit in childcare slots (2,499), particularly for families needing care during non-traditional hours such as second and third shifts. Insufficient access to affordable and high-quality childcare can impede parents' ability to work or pursue education, ultimately hindering economic mobility and family well-being.

The shortage of safe housing units in Effingham County, estimated at 3,388 units, presents a serious challenge for residents' health and well-being. Addressing this gap is essential for ensuring that all residents have access to secure and healthy living environments.

Effingham County struggles with a high number of households experiencing housing cost burdens, with approximately 4,795 households spending more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. Closing this gap is critical for promoting housing affordability and addressing disparities in housing access within the county.

Effingham County grapples with a shortage of healthcare providers, resulting in high patient-to-provider ratios across various specialties. With 5,590 patients per physician, 5,560 patients per dentist, and 2,090 patients per mental health provider, residents may experience delays in accessing essential medical care. Addressing this gap is essential for improving healthcare access and promoting better health outcomes for residents of Effingham County.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
3. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)
4. Individuals are food insecure (F)
5. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

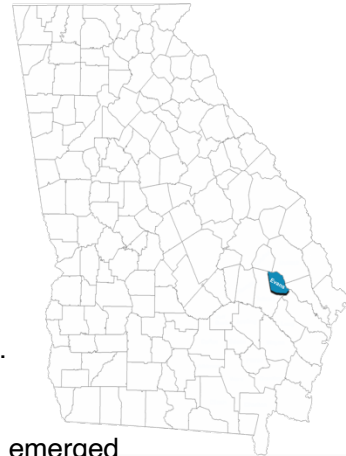
Effingham County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	912-514-1593; coastalrc.ga.gov/aging	In-home services, respite care (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Compassion Christian Effingham	912-925-9657	Food Pantry Saturdays 10-12 (EFFINGHAM)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov ; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Effingham County Senior Citizens Center	912-754-2138	Provides socialization for senior citizens (EFFINGHAM)
Emergency Shelter by Safe Haven	912-764-4605	Provides a safe place and emotional support for victims of domestic violence. (BULLOCH, CANDLER, EFFINGHAM)
General Public Transport	866-543-6744	A demand-response, advance reservation service that provides transportation for those who live in the coastal region. (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Glow Ministries	912-826-3966	Food Pantry Monday & Wednesday 9-12 (EFFINGHAM)
God's Mission House	912-754-0840	Food Pantry Mon-Wed 9-11:45am (EFFINGHAM)
Manna House Ministries	912-826-2037	Food Pantry Monday 12-3, Thursday 10-3 (EFFINGHAM)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Pregnancy Resource Center	912-826-1133	Helps those facing an unplanned pregnancy by providing free and confidential pregnancy services. (EFFINGHAM)
Prescription Drug Discount Card by The City of Rincon	912-826-5745	Offers prescription assistance to those whose prescription is not covered by insurance. City of Rincon only. (EFFINGHAM)
St. Boniface Outreach	912-754-7473	Food Pantry, Emergency. Call for hours. (EFFINGHAM)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Evans County

Founded: 1914
Total Area: 187 square miles
County Seat: Claxton



County Overview

Evans County, nestled in southeast Georgia, holds the distinction of being the state's 152nd county. Carved out of sections of Bulloch and Tattnall counties in 1914, it spans 185 square miles. The county is named in honor of Clement Evans, a general in the Confederate army.

Claxton, the county seat of Evans County, owes its inception to the advent of the Savannah and Western Railroad in the 1890s. The town emerged when store owner Remer Hendricks and his parents, Glenn and Nancy Hendricks, granted the railroad a right-of-way across their land. They further enticed the railroad company to build a station by offering a free well for water. Nancy Hendricks played a pivotal role in the town's growth, offering free lots to the first settlers who committed to building homes. Known as "the Fruitcake Capital of the World" for its renowned Christmas cake production, Claxton was incorporated in 1911, and its original courthouse, constructed in 1923, still stands today.

The county also encompasses three other incorporated towns: Bellville, Daisy, and Hagan. Bellville's growth was initially driven by agriculture, the naval stores industry, and timber harvesting, following the construction of the railroad in 1890. A devastating fire in 1901 nearly obliterated the town's business district. Bellville, incorporated in 1959, is one of Georgia's most recently established towns. The town has since restored its historic railroad depot and celebrates annual Railroad Days. Folk singer Tom T. Hall's song "God Came through Bellville, Georgia" is said to have been inspired by the town.

Daisy benefited from the railroad's arrival, which significantly boosted its cotton ginning and turpentine production. The town has recently focused on restoring some of its charming original buildings.

Hagan developed around a sawmill built by the Perkins family in the 1890s. An economic downturn in the early 20th century led to the mill's closure in 1910, causing many residents to leave. Today, Hagan is experiencing growth, adjoining Claxton and located along a newly expanded U.S. Highway 280 and near the Claxton–Evans County Industrial Park. The town has established two civic parks, the Bradley Memorial Park and the Maggie Lee Lewis children's park, and restored the 19th-century home of pioneer G. Wesley DeLoach for community and civic use.

Notable individuals from Claxton include Curtis Gordon Hames, a renowned cardiologist recognized for his early studies on HDL cholesterol, and Albert Parker, a civic leader and philanthropist known for popularizing the Claxton Fruit Cake.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

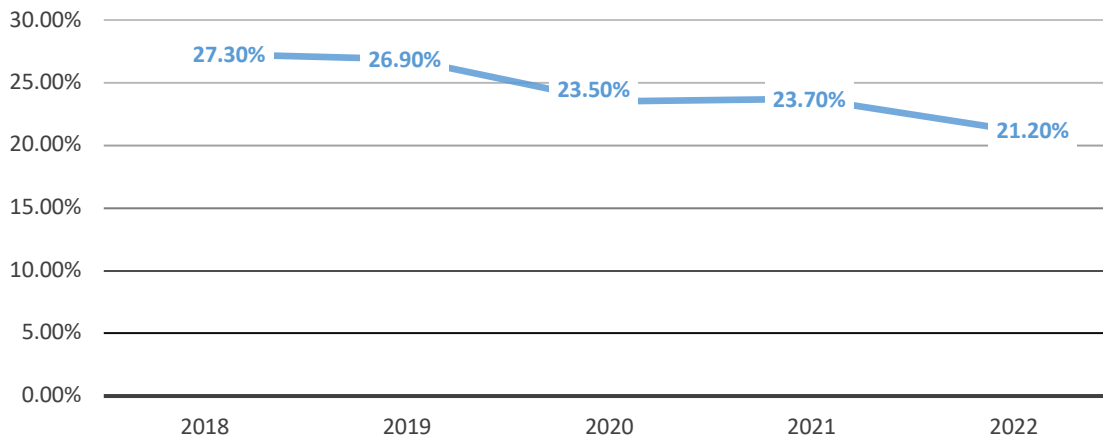
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 10,759 individuals residing in 3,914 households in Evans County. This is an increase of 5.44% from the 10,204 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher male population (5,425) compared to females (5,334), a sex ratio of 102 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 37 years, with 1,819 residents being age 65 and older, and 646 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (6,059), followed by Black/African American (2,947), multi-racial (751), Asian (104), and American Indian (33). An estimated 865 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 1,298 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 9,461 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Evans County, there are an estimated 2,177 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 21.20% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 22.34%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 985 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 2,884 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 4,226 being under 200%.

Chart 41: Evans County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (23.10%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than males (19.40%), with individuals identifying as Black/African American (34.00%) having higher rates than those identifying as multi-racial (20.50%) or White (19.40%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (38.20%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (12.10%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (26.90%) than adults (19.20%) or senior citizens (18.90%).

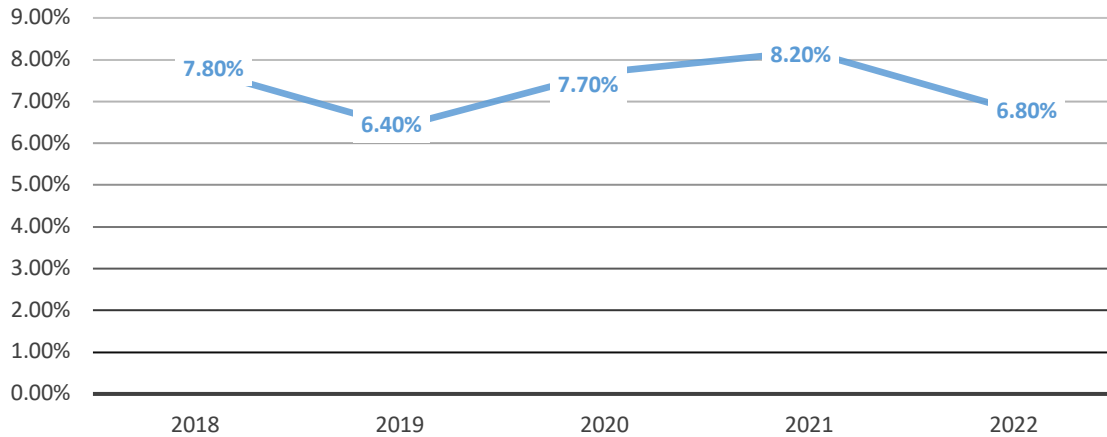
The county's household median income is \$55,222 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Evans County in 2022 was 4,486 an increase of 5.65% from the 4,246 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 320 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 3.61% from the 332 documented five years ago. Over the past five years, the unemployment rate has decreased by 12.82%. It should be noted that the community experienced an increase of 28.13% between 2019 and 2021. This was followed by a decrease of 17.07%.

Chart 42: Evans County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 2,740 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 1,746 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$43,238 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 535 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 11.93% of the labor force and 36.35% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 17.73% of all jobs with a median wage of \$37,908 annually. This was followed by retail sales, accounting for 16.17% of all jobs with a median wage of \$34,008.

An estimated 87.85% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 306 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 52: Evans County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	138	\$41,548
Construction	173	\$52,780
Wholesale	50	\$47,632
Retail	443	\$34,008
Transportation	152	\$35,984
Finance/Insurance	59	\$53,924
Professional/Technical	62	\$54,964
Administrative/Waste	217	\$29,796
Health/Social	377	\$47,476
Accommodation/Food	306	\$17,836
Federal Government	39	\$75,244
State Government	156	\$41,808
Local Government	486	\$37,908
Other/Unclassified	82	\$34,424
Total	2,740	\$43,238

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Evans County, an estimated 1,463 adults over the age of 25 (20.97%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-21.22%) from the 1,857 adults documented in 2018. An additional 2,665 local residents (38.21%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 1.62% from the 2,709 individuals (37.47%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 1,141 local residents (16.36%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 1.97% from the 1,119 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 3,766 members of the adult population (35) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 5,595 individuals (52%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 525 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 2,164 school-aged children residing in the local community, 521 of which (24.08%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 2,129 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (1,335) or high school (794) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Evans County School System is 67.1 (D), indicating the schools in the area are below average. The graduation rate is 91.87%, with 79.82% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 13.40:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 16.40% students were noted as having language barriers, with 14.30% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the four schools in the county, two were noted as being below average (Claxton Elementary School and Claxton Middle School), with one being ranked as average (Claxton High School). No data was available for Second Chance School. All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 53: Evans County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Claxton Elementary School	GA-654-0196	11.50:1	66.1	D
Claxton High School	GA-654-2050	16.32:1	74.9	C
Claxton Middle School	GA-654-3050	15.92:1	63.4	D
Second Chance	GA-654-0197	7.00:1	No Data	No Data

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 153 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 646 young children, a deficit of 493. This is a ratio of 4.22 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 67% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 54: Evans County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	N/A	Yes
9702	1.69	No

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9703	11.80:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

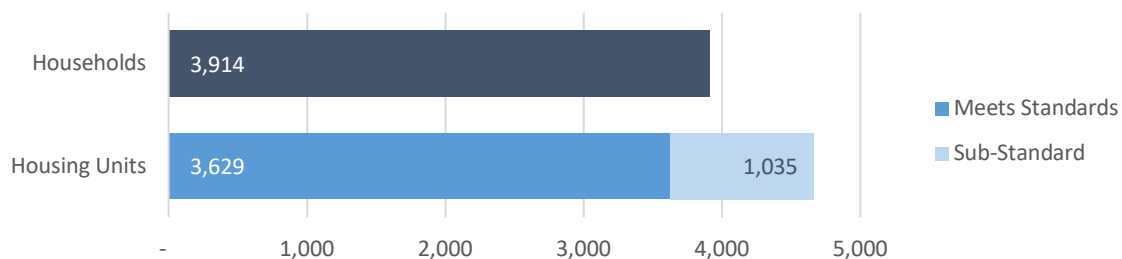
Table 55: Evans County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Camp Horizons	Hagan	(912) 739-4700	5y-12y
Evans County Head Start	Claxton	(912) 739-4576	0y-5y+
Olive Tree Early Learning Center	Claxton	(912) 739-4700	0y-5y+
Pinewood Christian Academy	Bellville	(912) 739-1272	4y-5y
S.T.A.R.S.	Claxton	(912) 334-5063	4y-13y
Wee Ones Morning School	Claxton	(912) 739-2055	2y-5y

Housing Profile

In Evans County, there are an estimated 4,664 housing units available to accommodate the 3,914 local households, a surplus of 750 units. However, 1,035 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 69.57% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 285 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 43: Evans County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,083 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$715 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 913 households (23.33%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 60.13% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 56: Evans County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Nancy Hendrix Cedar Creek	Public Housing	Claxton
Rolling Oaks Family	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Claxton

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 23% of the county’s adult population (1,828 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,113 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 1,431 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 74.0 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 1,675 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 653 were senior citizens, 886 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 130 were school-aged children, and 6 were under the age of five.

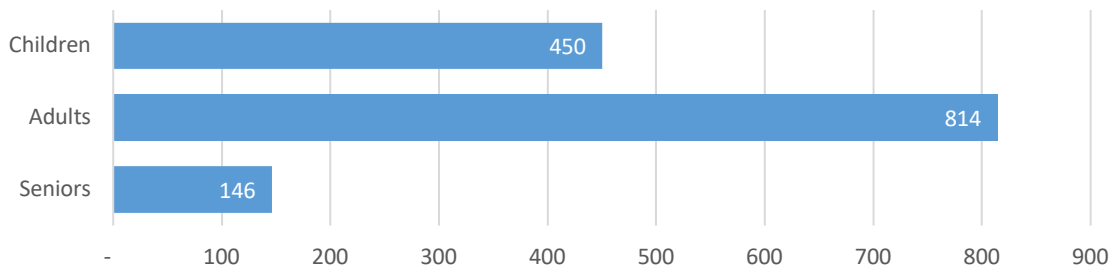
There are an estimated 2,130 patients for every physician in the community, which is higher than the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 3,560 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were an estimated 10,670 patients for every mental health provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 1,680 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 8,577 with insurance, 4,901 reported use of a private plan and 4,819 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 1,410 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 450 are children, 814 are senior citizens, and 146 are working-aged adults. An estimated 833 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 21.28% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.36 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$306.60 per person each month, or 24.40% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,226.40 per month, equal to 97.59% of minimum wage.

Chart 44: Evans County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 159 local households (4.06%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 62 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 239 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 44.67% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Evans County, there are 1,301 households with children. An average of 127 children are born each year. An estimated 75 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 4 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 137 are headed by single males, 329 are headed by single females, and 77 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 22 foster children were in care during 2023, with 12 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 574 veterans in the local community, the majority of which (55.40%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 12.14, which is comparable to the regional average of 12.26. A total of 129 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 1 murder, 2 rapes, 1 robbery, and 11 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Evans County faces a significant gap in antipoverty case management services, with limited resources available to support individuals and families living in poverty. With a poverty rate of 21.20%, many residents may struggle to access essential resources and navigate complex social service systems without adequate case management support. Addressing this gap is essential for providing comprehensive assistance and empowering residents to overcome economic challenges.

The absence of financial management counseling services in Evans County leaves residents without essential guidance in managing their personal resources effectively. With a poverty rate of 21.20%, many individuals may lack the necessary skills and knowledge to budget effectively and plan for the future. Closing this gap is crucial for promoting financial literacy and helping residents achieve greater economic stability.

Evans County experiences a shortage of resources for emergency assistance, leaving vulnerable households at risk of housing instability and inadequate access to essential utilities and medications. Closing this gap is vital for preventing homelessness and ensuring that residents have access to the support they need in emergencies.

The lack of public transportation options in Evans County presents a significant barrier to mobility for residents, particularly those without access to private vehicles. With limited transportation options, individuals may face challenges accessing employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services. Addressing this gap is essential for promoting equitable access to opportunities and improving quality of life for all residents.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Evans County grapples with a deficit of job opportunities, with approximately 1,746 fewer jobs available than needed to meet the demands of the population. With a poverty rate of 21.20%, unemployment and underemployment may contribute to economic hardship for many residents. Closing this gap requires strategic efforts to attract new businesses, support local entrepreneurs, and provide workforce development programs to enhance employment opportunities in the county.

The community has approximately 493 fewer slots available than needed to meet the demand from families with young children. Closing this gap is essential for supporting working parents and ensuring that children have access to quality care and education that can set a foundation for breaking the cycle of poverty as they approach adulthood.

The shortage of safe housing units in Evans County, estimated at 1,035 units, poses a significant challenge for residents' health and well-being. Addressing this gap requires investment in affordable housing initiatives and improvements to existing housing stock to ensure that all residents have access to secure and healthy living environments.

Evans County struggles with a high number of households experiencing housing cost burdens, with approximately 913 households spending more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. Limited affordable housing options exacerbate housing insecurity and economic hardship for many residents. Closing this gap is essential for promoting housing affordability and reducing disparities in housing access within the county.

The community grapples with a shortage of healthcare providers, resulting in high patient-to-provider ratios across various specialties. With 2,130 patients per physician, 3,560 patients per dentist, and 10,670 patients per mental health provider, residents may face challenges in accessing timely and quality healthcare services. Addressing this gap is critical for improving healthcare access and promoting better health outcomes for residents of Evans County.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
3. Individuals are food insecure (F)
4. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
5. Individuals have poor mental health (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

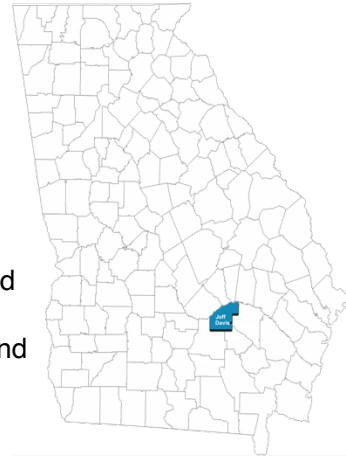
Evans County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Action Pact – Evans County Senior Center	912-739-1705	Provides socialization for senior citizens (EVANS)
Atlantic Area CASA	912-722-7672; 912-876-3816	Support abused and neglected children in court. (EVANS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, WARE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Evans County Food Pantry	912-290-1375	Food Pantry Tuesdays 3-5pm (EVANS)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.glr.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Power Pack Outreach Ministries	912-334-0399	Food Pantry 2nd Saturday 10-2pm (EVANS)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Jeff Davis County

Founded: 1905
Total Area: 335 square miles
County Seat: Hazlehurst



County Overview

Jeff Davis County, situated in central Georgia, is the state's 142nd county. Established in 1905, it was carved from portions of Appling and Coffee counties and is named after Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president. The county is geographically significant as the Ocmulgee and Oconee rivers converge on its northeast border to form the Altamaha River.

Hazlehurst, the county seat, was named in honor of George H. Hazlehurst, a civil engineer responsible for surveying the Macon and Brunswick Railroad. In 1870, railroad lines were constructed simultaneously from Macon southward and from Brunswick northward, meeting near the midpoint of the two cities. This junction, where Hazlehurst Depot was later established, grew into a community and was incorporated in 1891.

With the formation of Jeff Davis County in 1905, Hazlehurst became the obvious choice for the county government's seat. Its courthouse, built in 1907 and subsequently renovated in 1975 and 1994-95, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. The Hazlehurst Depot continues to serve the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The city is also a participant in the Better Hometown Program. Other communities within the county include Denton (incorporated in 1911), Roper, and Snipesville.

While tobacco was once the dominant crop in Jeff Davis County, its cultivation has diminished, giving way to cotton and peanuts. Timber also plays a significant role in the local economy. Tourism has been encouraged as a means of economic growth, highlighting the area's attractions.

Jeff Davis County boasts various outdoor recreational areas. The Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area, managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, spans nearly 14,000 acres of forested river floodplain and swamplands, shared with Appling and Montgomery counties. It offers outdoor sports and camping facilities. The county fairgrounds feature an amphitheater, a lake, a livestock arena, a walking track, an environmental park, and an 1890 homestead. Events, including the annual county fair in October, are held at the fairgrounds. The Outback Range and Recreation Center and several public parks, like Mary McClean, Buddy Spann, Three Rivers, and Weatherly, provide additional recreational options.

The Hazlehurst Jeff Davis Museum, situated in the Pace House, a gabled ell cottage built in 1900 by one of the town's original aldermen, is a local historical highlight. Acquired by the Hazlehurst-Jeff Davis County Historical Museum Society in 1996, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

Altamaha Technical College also has a satellite campus in Hazlehurst, contributing to the educational and skill development opportunities in the county.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

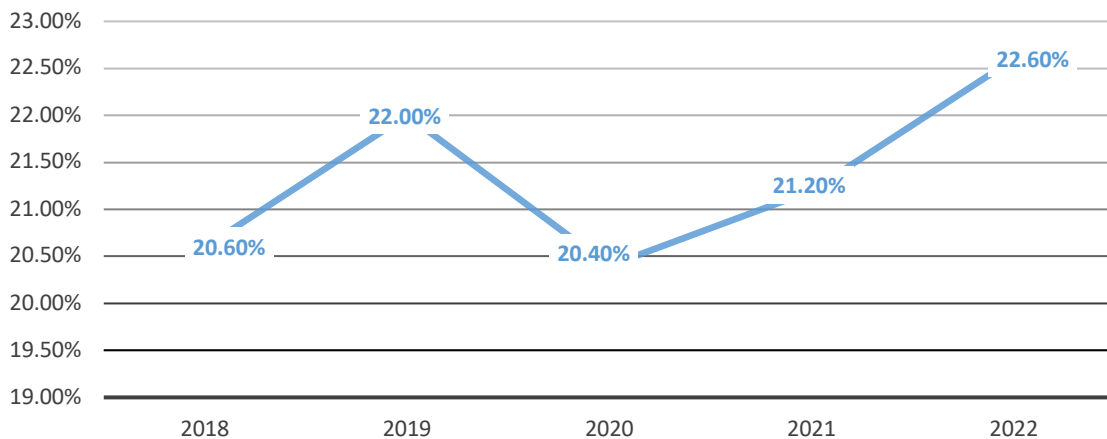
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 14,791 individuals residing in 5,365 households in Jeff Davis County. This is a decrease of 1.33% the 14,991 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (7,402) compared to males (7,389). The median age in the county is 39 years, with 2,215 residents being age 65 and older, and 829 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (10,535), followed by Black/African American (2,304), multi-racial (1,553), Asian (38), and American Indian (36). An estimated 325 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 1,946 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 12,845 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Jeff Davis County, there are an estimated 3,326 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 22.26% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has increased by 9.71%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,483 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 3,868 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 7,701 being under 200%.

Chart 45: Jeff Davis County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (27.80%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than males (17.40%), with individuals identifying as White (23.80%), Black/African American (22.60%), and American Indian (20.60%) having higher rates than those identifying as multi-racial (16.70%) and Asian (13.20%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (21.60%) were noted as being slightly less likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (22.80%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (31.90%) than senior citizens (19.90%) or adults (19.20%).

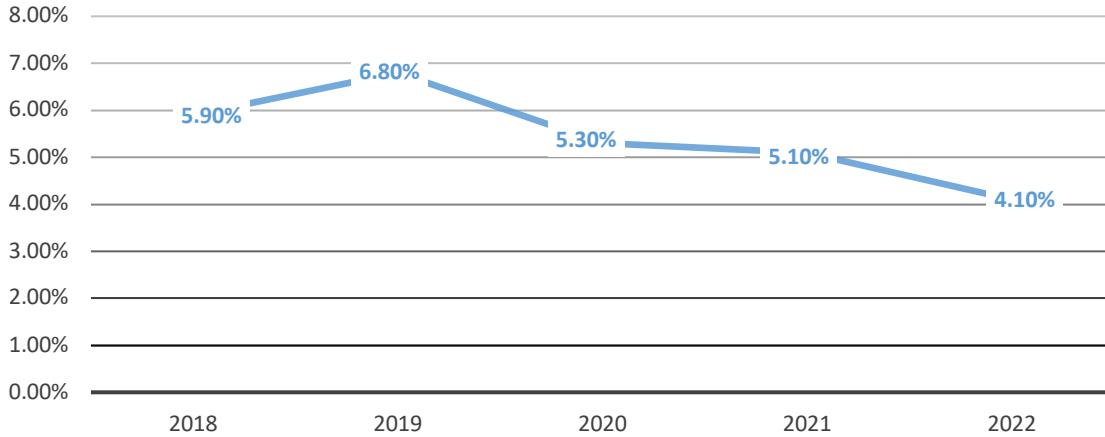
The county's household median income is \$41,780 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,986).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Jeff Davis County in 2022 was 5,832 an increase of 4.44% from the 5,584 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 228 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 30.06% from the 326 documented five years ago. After a one-year increase of 15.25%, the county's unemployment rate decreased by 39.71% to a five year low of 4.10%. This is an overall decrease of 30.51% during the period evaluated.

Chart 46: Jeff Davis County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 4,144 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 1,688 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$45,892 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 497 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 8.52% of the labor force and 22.27% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is manufacturing, accounting for 29.25% of all jobs with a median wage of \$48,828 annually. This was followed by local government, accounting for 21.77% of all jobs with a median wage of \$38,168.

An estimated 81.25% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 292 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 57: Jeff Davis County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	395	\$59,540
Utilities	26	\$85,852
Construction	18	\$35,152
Manufacturing	1,212	\$48,828
Wholesale	166	\$63,752
Retail	553	\$28,132
Transportation	129	\$52,156
Finance/Insurance	71	\$43,160
Real Estate	9	\$51,220
Professional/Technical	26	\$45,344
Administrative/Waste	121	\$31,668
Health/Social	107	\$38,012
Accommodation/Food	292	\$16,796
Federal Government	26	\$54,184
State Government	26	\$54,548
Local Government	902	\$38,168
Other/Unclassified	65	\$33,644
Total	4,144	\$45,892

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Jeff Davis County, an estimated 1,887 adults over the age of 25 (19.42%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-12.84%) from the 2,165 adults documented in 2018. An additional 3,710 local residents (38.18%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 5.36% from the 3,920 individuals (40.39%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 1,118 local residents (11.51%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 15.38% from the 969 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 4,585 members of the adult population (31%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 6,508 individuals (44%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 594 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 3,015 school-aged children residing in the local community, 963 of which (31.94%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 2,717 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (1,662) or high school (1,055) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Jeff Davis County School System is 70.8 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 97.38%, with 63.92% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 15.60:1, which is within the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 13.40% students were noted as having language barriers, with 12.70% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the four schools in the county, three were noted as being average, with one being ranked below average (Jeff Davis Elementary School and Jeff Davis Primary School). All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 58: Jeff Davis County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Jeff Davis Elementary School	GA-680-0175	13.68:1	65.9	D
Jeff Davis High School	GA-680-0199	16.57:1	74.1	C
Jeff Davis Middle School	GA-680-0111	15.92:1	76.9	C
Jeff Davis Primary School	GA-680-0105	16.06:1	61.4	D

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 674 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 829 young children, a deficit of 155. This is a ratio of 1.23 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 33% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 59: Jeff Davis County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	1.44:1	No	9603	N/A	Yes
9602	1.12:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

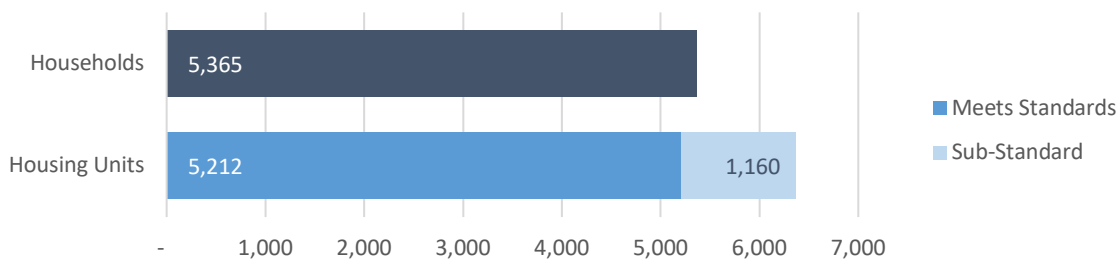
Table 60: Jeff Davis County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Jeff Davis Head Start	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-2258	3y-4y
Jeff Davis Learning Center	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-3636	1y-5y+
Kiddie Korner	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-5539	0y-5y+
Love in Action	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-2689	0y-5y+
Mt. Zion Learning Center	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-7429	0y-5y+

Housing Profile

In Jeff Davis County, there are an estimated 6,372 housing units available to accommodate the 5,365 local households, a surplus of 1,007 units. However, 1,160 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 53.88% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 153 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 47: Jeff Davis County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,188 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$626 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 1,065 households (19.85%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 43.66% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 61: Jeff Davis County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Cloverset Place	LIHTC, Section 538	Hazlehurst
Greenbrier Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Hazlehurst
Hammock Homes	Public Housing	Hazlehurst
Hillcrest Apartments	Sections 515/521	Hazlehurst

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 22% of the county’s adult population (2,408 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,533 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 1,970 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.6 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 3,027 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 1,001 were senior citizens, 1,592 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 320 were school-aged children, and 114 were under the age of five.

There are an estimated 7,610 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than five times the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 14,870 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. There were also 14,870 patients for every mental health provider, as compared to 660 on a state level.

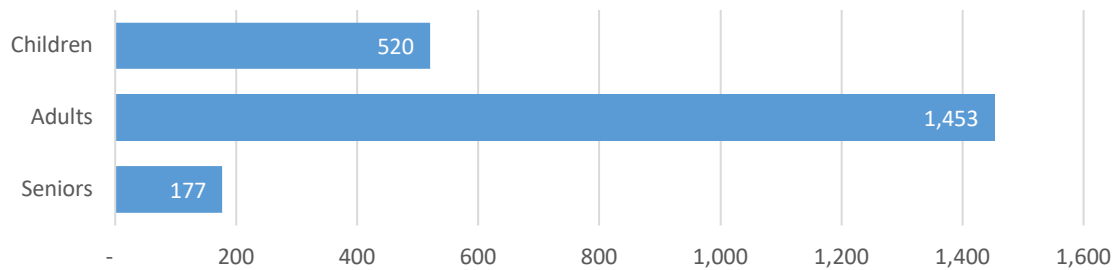
An estimated 3,292 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 11,419 with insurance, 6,940 reported use of a private plan and 5,860 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 2,150 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 520 are children, 177 are senior citizens, and 1,453 are working-aged adults. An estimated 993 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 18.51% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.24 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$295.65 per person each month, or 23.53% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,182.60 per month, equal to 94.11% of minimum wage.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 48: Jeff Davis County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 412 local households (7.68%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 98 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 261 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 39.05% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Jeff Davis County, there are 2,119 households with children. An average of 180 children are born each year. An estimated 90 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 2 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 75 are headed by single males, 431 are headed by single females, and 77 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 27 foster children were in care during 2023, with 1 new child being removed from their home.

Community Profile

There are 964 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (49.27%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 12.05, which is comparable to the regional average of 12.26. A total of 181 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 1 murder, 1 robbery, and 18 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Jeff Davis County faces a significant gap in antipoverty case management services, leaving many residents without the essential support needed to navigate complex social service systems effectively. With a poverty rate of 22.26%, addressing this gap is crucial for providing comprehensive assistance and empowering residents to overcome economic challenges.

The absence of financial management counseling services further compounds the economic difficulties faced by residents. Without access to guidance on budgeting and financial planning, individuals may struggle to manage their resources effectively, hindering their ability to achieve greater economic stability.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A shortage of resources for emergency assistance puts vulnerable households at risk of housing instability and inadequate access to utilities, medications, and emergency food allocations. Closing this gap is vital for preventing homelessness and ensuring that residents have access to the support they need during crises.

Jeff Davis County grapples with a deficit of job opportunities, with approximately 1,688 fewer jobs available than needed to meet the demands of the population. With a high poverty rate, addressing unemployment is crucial for improving economic prospects and enhancing residents' financial well-being.

The scarcity of childcare slots poses challenges for working families, impacting their ability to access reliable childcare services. With a shortage of 155 slots, addressing this gap is essential for supporting parents in the workforce and ensuring that children receive quality care and early education.

The deficit of safe housing units in Jeff Davis County, estimated at 153 units, poses a significant challenge for residents' health and well-being. Closing this gap requires investment in affordable housing initiatives and improvements to existing housing stock to ensure secure and healthy living environments.

A high number of households experiencing housing cost burdens highlights the need for more affordable housing options in the county. With 1,065 households struggling to afford housing expenses, addressing this gap is crucial for promoting housing affordability and reducing disparities in housing access.

The scarcity of healthcare providers results in high patient-to-provider ratios, posing challenges in accessing timely and quality healthcare services. With 7,610 patients per physician, 14,870 patients per dentist, and 14,870 patients per mental health provider, addressing this gap is critical for improving healthcare access and promoting better health outcomes for residents.

The lack of public transportation options further compounds the challenges faced by residents, limiting mobility and access to essential services. Closing this gap is essential for promoting equitable access to opportunities and enhancing residents' quality of life in Jeff Davis County.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
4. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
5. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

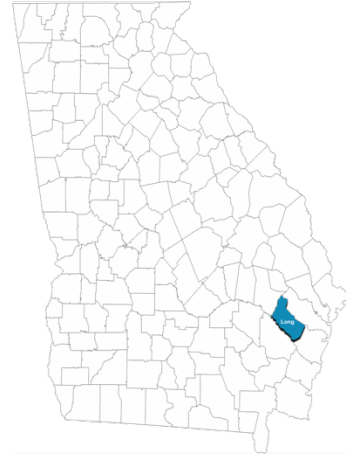
Jeff Davis County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Action Pact – Jeff Davis County Senior Center	912-375-3603	Provides socialization for senior citizens (JEFF DAVIS)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of child care while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Hazlehurst Housing Authority	912-375-7299	Emergency Pantry. Call for details (JEFF DAVIS)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Helping Hands	912-240-0181	Food Pantry Tues & Thurs 10-2 (JEFF DAVIS)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
St. Matthews AME Church	912-375-3516	Food Pantry Last Sunday 11-12 (JEFF DAVIS)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Long County

Founded: 1920
Total Area: 404 square miles
County Seat: Ludowici



County Overview

On August 14, 1920, the Georgia state legislature proposed a constitutional amendment to create Long County from Liberty County, which was one of the original eight counties established in Georgia in 1777. The amendment was ratified by Georgia voters on November 2, 1920, leading to the formation of Long County as the state's 159th county.

Named after Dr. Crawford Long, the physician credited with the first use of ether as an anesthetic in 1842, Long County is located in southeast Georgia. Spanning 404 square miles, it is part of the Atlantic Coast Flatwoods and is bordered by Liberty, McIntosh, Tattnall, and Wayne counties. The county's southwestern boundary is formed by the Altamaha River.

This area, originally the western part of St. John's Parish, was an essential frontier boundary, protecting the Georgia colony from Spanish and Native American threats. General James Oglethorpe established forts like Beards Bluff Fort and Fort Barrington along the river. Early roads in the region, including the Old Barrington Road (also known as the Old Post Road), evolved from paths created by Creek Indians. Inns such as Archibald Baggs's Sandiford Inn and Timothy Barnard's trading post at Beards Creek served travelers on these routes.

The county seat, Ludowici, originated in the 1840s as a railroad stop called "Four and a Half" on the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad. The town developed around a station and was originally known as Johnston Station. In 1903, William Ludowici established the Dixie plant of his Ludowici Celadon Company in the area, chosen for its quality ceramic clays and transportation facilities. In appreciation of his contributions, including a donation for a new schoolhouse in 1905, the town was renamed Ludowici. It was incorporated that year, though briefly renamed Liberty City during World War I due to anti-German sentiment.

Ludowici is managed by a traditional commission government and remains the only incorporated municipality in Long County. The county courthouse, a two-story brick Neoclassical Revival building completed in 1926 and designed by G. M. Harrington, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Ludowici News serves as the legal organ for the county government.

Historically, Long County has been a rural, agricultural area. While cotton was once the primary crop, it has been replaced by tobacco, corn, soybeans, and cattle since the 1970s. The region's pine forests have long been significant to the economy, with logs floated down the Altamaha River to Darien for export, a practice that persisted through the 19th century. The 20th century saw the opening of five large paper mills within fifty miles of Ludowici, dramatically improving the local economy with new job opportunities and increased demand for timberlands.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Fort Stewart, the largest military installation east of the Mississippi River, occupies the northern tip of Long County. The post spans 280,000 acres across several counties, offering civil service jobs to local residents and including forestlands and hunting preserves. Altamaha Technical College, providing workforce training, has a satellite campus in Ludowici.

Annual events in Long County include Old South Farm Days in March, the Catfish Festival in April, and the Long County Wildlife Festival in October. Notable sites include the Ludowici Well Pavilion, built in 1907 and a social hub for the county listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and historic churches like Jones Creek Baptist Church (1856) and Walthourville Presbyterian Church (1884), both recognized as state historic sites.

The Altamaha River offers recreational activities such as fishing, boating, and various water sports. Near the southern border of the county, a marble monument commemorates the Franklinia alata, a flowering plant discovered in 1765 by botanists John and William Bartram. This plant, last seen in the wild near the Altamaha River in 1803, holds a special place in botanical history.

County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 16,804 individuals residing in 5,547 households in Long County. This is a decrease of 7.45% from the 18,156 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher male population (8,679) compared to females (8,125), a ratio of 107 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 34 years, with 1,544 residents being age 65 and older, and 990 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (9,781), followed by Black/African American (3,966), multi-racial (1,623), Asian (130), Pacific Islanders (58), and American Indian (38). An estimated 1,208 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 1,965 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 14,839 who identify as non-Hispanic.

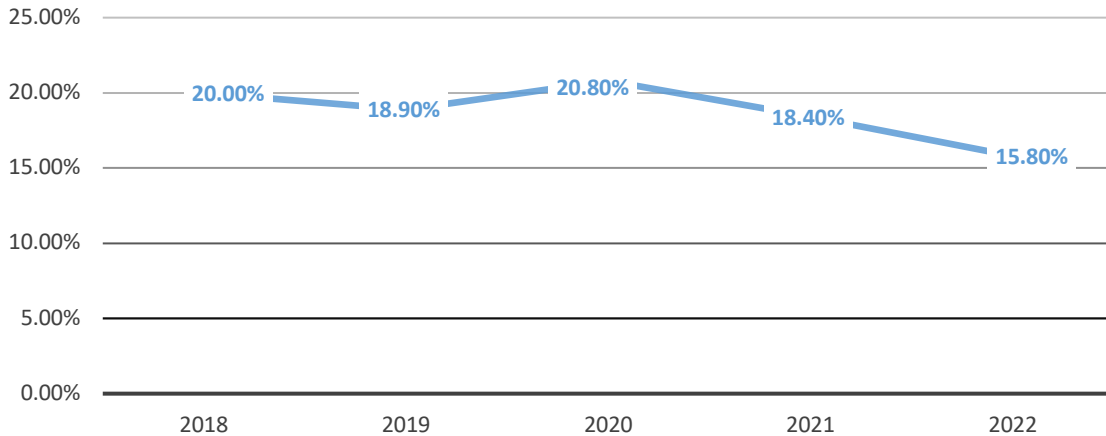
Poverty Profile

In Long County, there are an estimated 2,594 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 20.00% of the local population, which is significantly higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 21.00%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,057 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 3,204 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 6,807 being under 200%.

Females (20.70%) were noted as being significantly more likely to be in poverty than males (11.10%), with individuals identifying as American Indian (36.80%) having higher rates than those identifying as multi-racial (16.60%), Black/African American (15.80%) and White (14.30%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (20.80%) were noted as being more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (14.10%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for adults (16.60%) and children (16.00%) than senior citizens (8.70%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 49: Long County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



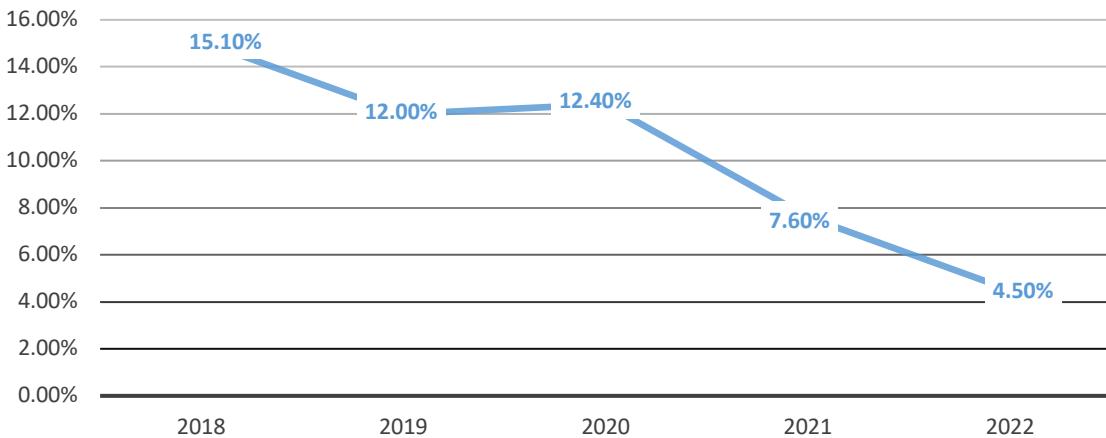
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

The county’s household median income is \$56,819 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$63,273) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$74,693).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Long County in 2022 was 6,988 a decrease of 0.78% from the 7,043 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 322 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 70.89% from the 1,106 documented five years ago. Over the past five years, the county’s unemployment rate has decreased by 70.20%. Although temporarily impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the current average annual rate of improvement (-38.71%) is nearly double the rate of improvement reported between 2018 and 2019.

Chart 50: Long County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 993 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 5,995 to accommodate the local labor force. The county’s median wage was identified as \$41,792 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 843 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 12.06% of the labor force and 42.15% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 68.58% of all jobs with a median wage of \$42,432 annually.

An estimated 97.08% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 42 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

Table 62: Long County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Construction	71	\$28,496
Retail	72	\$24,492
Finance/Insurance	9	\$67,652
Real Estate	20	\$37,908
Professional/Technical	6	\$64,428
Health/Social	43	\$39,416
Accommodation/Food	42	\$16,692
Federal Government	14	\$62,452
Local Government	681	\$42,432
Other/Unclassified	35	\$33,956
Total	993	\$41,792

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Long County, an estimated 1,747 adults over the age of 25 (16.18%) have not completed high school. This is an increase of 3.93% from the 1,681 documented in 2018. An additional 4,487 local residents (41.55%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, an increase of 25.72% from the 3,569 individuals (31.52%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 1,400 local residents (12.96%) reported having a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is a decrease of 20.27% from the 1,756 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 4,033 members of the adult population (24%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 6,217 individuals (37%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 506 residents continue to struggle with the community’s predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 3,625 school-aged children residing in the local community, 641 of which (17.68%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 3,162 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (2,300) or high school (862) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Long County School System is 75.4 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 96.12%, with 68.26% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 17.70:1, which is within the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 5.10% students were noted as having language barriers, with 14.40% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the four schools in the county, two were noted as being average, with two being ranked above average (Long County Middle School and Smiley Elementary School). All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 63: Long County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Long County High School	GA-691-0205	18.02	78.0	C
Long County Middle School	GA-691-0288	18.30	83.8	B
McClelland Elementary School	GA-691-0289	16.40	70.1	C
Smiley Elementary School	GA-691-0100	17.96	81.2	B

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 224 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 990 young children, a deficit of 766. This is a ratio of 4.42 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 100% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 64: Long County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	7.76:1	Yes	9702	4.87:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

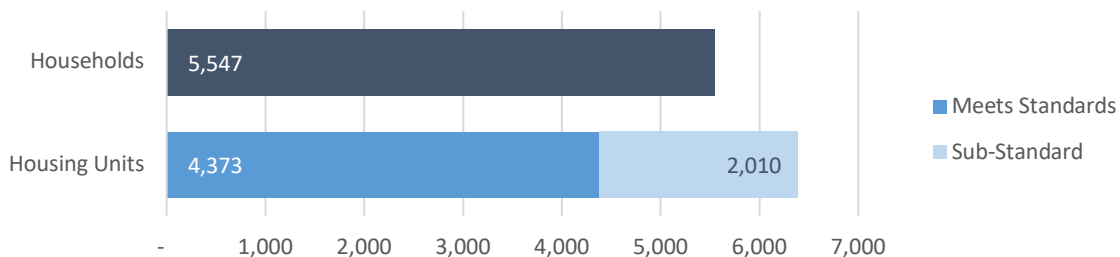
Table 65: Long County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Grace Academy	Ludowici	(912) 545-9255	0y-5y+
K.I.A. Club	Ludowici	(912) 302-4638	3y-5y+
Long County Head Start	Ludowici	(912) 545-2155	3y-5y+
The Norman Academy	Ludowici	(912) 256-2177	0y-5y+
Smiley Elementary	Ludowici	(912) 545-2639	3y-5y+
Wonder Years Academy	Ludowici	(912) 318-8559	0y-5y+

Housing Profile

In Long County, there are an estimated 6,383 housing units available to accommodate the 5,547 local households, a surplus of 836 units. However, 2,010 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 34.33% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 1,174 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 51: Long County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,460 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$846 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 1,914 households (34.51%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 27.12% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 66: Long County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Sandalwood Terrace	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Ludowici
Sam’s Twin Oaks	LIHTC	Ludowici
Twin Oaks Apartments	HOME, LIHTC, Section 538	Ludowici

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 21% of the county’s adult population (2,560 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,585 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 2,072 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 80.7 years, which is higher than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 3,452 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 763 were senior citizens, 24,17 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 272 were school-aged children.

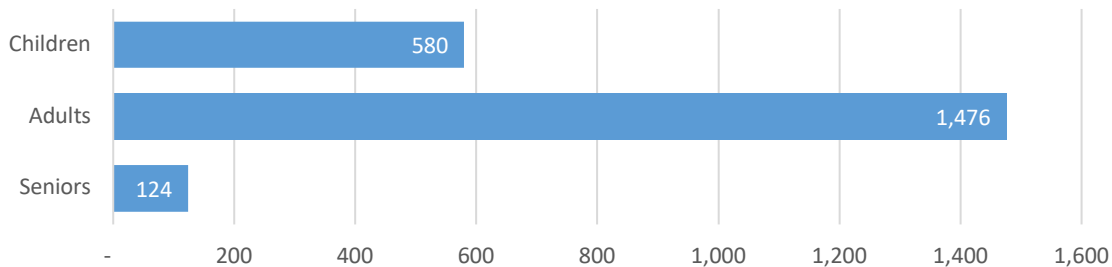
There are an estimated 20,170 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than thirteen times the state average of 1,490. While no data was published concerning dental providers, there were 3,430 residents for each mental health provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 2,079 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 13,860 with insurance, 10,194 reported use of a private plan and 5,367 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 2,180 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 580 are children, 124 are senior citizens, and 1,476 are working-aged adults. An estimated 936 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 16.87% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.21 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$292.91 per person each month, or 23.53% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,171.65 per month, equal to 93.23% of minimum wage.

Chart 52: Long County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 440 local households (7.93%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 158 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 314 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 76.72% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Long County, there are 2,054 households with children. An average of 288 children are born each year. An estimated 109 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 2 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 90 are headed by single males, 382 are headed by single females, and 109 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 13 foster children were in care during 2023, with 2 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 1,781 veterans in the local community, the largest portion of which (57.50%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 4.30, which is significantly lower than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 78 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 2 rapes and 5 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Long County faces a significant gap in antipoverty case management services, leaving many residents without the essential support needed to navigate complex social service systems effectively. With a poverty rate of 20%, addressing this gap is crucial for providing comprehensive assistance and empowering residents to overcome economic challenges.

The absence of financial management counseling services further compounds the economic difficulties faced by residents. Without access to guidance on budgeting and financial planning, individuals may struggle to manage their resources effectively, hindering their ability to achieve greater economic stability.

A shortage of resources for emergency assistance puts vulnerable households at risk of housing instability and inadequate access to utilities, medications, and emergency food allocations. Closing this gap is vital for preventing homelessness and ensuring that residents have access to the support they need during crises.

Long County grapples with a significant deficit of job opportunities, with approximately 5,995 fewer jobs available than needed to meet the demands of the population. With a high poverty rate, addressing unemployment is crucial for improving economic prospects and enhancing residents' financial well-being.

The scarcity of childcare slots poses challenges for working families, impacting their ability to access reliable childcare services. With a shortage of 766 slots, addressing this gap is essential for supporting parents in the workforce and ensuring that children receive quality care and early education.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The deficit of safe housing units in Long County, estimated at 1,174 units, poses a significant challenge for residents' health and well-being. Closing this gap requires investment in affordable housing initiatives and improvements to existing housing stock to ensure secure and healthy living environments.

A high number of households experiencing housing cost burdens highlights the need for more affordable housing options in the county. With 1,914 households struggling to afford housing expenses, addressing this gap is crucial for promoting housing affordability and reducing disparities in housing access.

The scarcity of healthcare providers results in high patient-to-provider ratios, posing challenges in accessing timely and quality healthcare services. With 20,170 patients per physician and 3,430 patients per mental health provider, addressing this gap is critical for improving healthcare access and promoting better health outcomes for residents.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
3. Individuals are food insecure (F)
4. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
5. Individuals have poor mental health (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

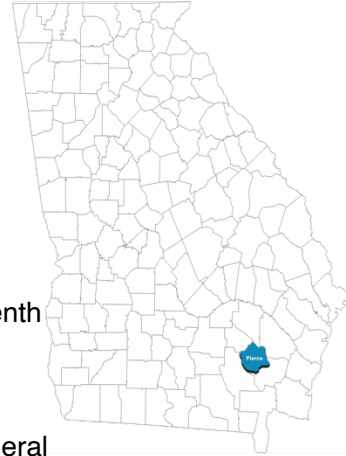
Long County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
A New Beginning Church	912-545-3141	Food Pantry 3rd Saturday 9-12 (LONG)
Action Pact – Long County Senior Center	912-545-2435	Provides socialization for senior citizens (LONG)
Atlantic Area CASA	912-722-7672; 912-876-3816	Support abused and neglected children in court. (EVANS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, WARE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	912-514-1593; coastalrc.ga.gov/aging	In-home services, respite care (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Diversity Health Care Medical Services	912-877-2227	Provides a variety of healthcare services for families/individuals at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. (LONG, WAYNE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov ; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
General Public Transport	866-543-6744	A demand-response, advance reservation service that provides transportation for those who live in the coastal region. (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; dec.al.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Pierce County

Founded: 1857
Total Area: 433 square miles
County Seat: Blackshear



County Overview

Covering 343 square miles in southeast Georgia, Pierce County is the state's 120th county. It was established in 1857, created from parts of Appling and Ware counties and named for Franklin Pierce, the fourteenth President of the United States and an anti-abolitionist from New Hampshire.

Originally inhabited by Creek Indians, the land was taken over by General David Blackshear under U.S. government orders after the War of 1812 began. Blackshear also constructed a military road through the area in 1814-15. Over time, parts of Pierce County were used to form Bacon County in 1914 and Brantley County in 1920.

Blackshear, the county seat, was named by the state legislature prior to its establishment. In 1858, the community was built around a depot constructed by the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad in 1857. The first courthouse, built in 1858, burned down in 1875 and was replaced; the current courthouse, built in 1902, was remodeled in the 1970s with an addition in 1975 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Pierce County also includes the incorporated towns of Offerman and Patterson.

The Civil War, starting soon after Pierce County's formation, saw many of its young men go to war. During this time, Blackshear hosted a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp from November 1864 to January 1865, holding nearly 5,000 Union captives to prevent their release by General William T. Sherman.

Agriculture and the timber industry were central to Pierce County's nineteenth-century economy. The county's pine forests were sources for timber and turpentine, stimulating growth and attracting new residents and businesses. The railroad facilitated the transport of people and goods, including cotton, a major crop until a boll weevil infestation in the 1920s. Farmers then shifted to tobacco, which became the county's primary agricultural product until the late twentieth century.

Blackshear Presbyterian Church, built in 1874, is the county's oldest Presbyterian church. Shiloh Primitive Baptist Church, with its cemetery dating back to the 1830s, holds the graves of civilians and veterans of American conflicts up to the Vietnam War.

The Brantley Brick Warehouse, one of Georgia's oldest brick tobacco warehouses, now serves as retail and office space. The Pierce County Jail, built in 1894 and nicknamed "Hanging Jail" for its tall tower, was used until the 1920s and is also on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Heritage Museum in the Blackshear Depot displays local history, including agriculture, church histories, and the Civil War. The Pierce County Chamber of Commerce is located in a historic Atlantic Coastline Railroad depot, added to the National Register in 2000.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Marian Anderson Library Rosenwald School in Blackshear, completed in 1926, was part of the Rosenwald schools' initiative for African American education. It now serves as storage for a local business, but previously it was a vital educational and cultural center for African American children in the area. Its historical collection was moved in the 1950s to the Lee Street Resource Center, which now offers youth mentoring programs.

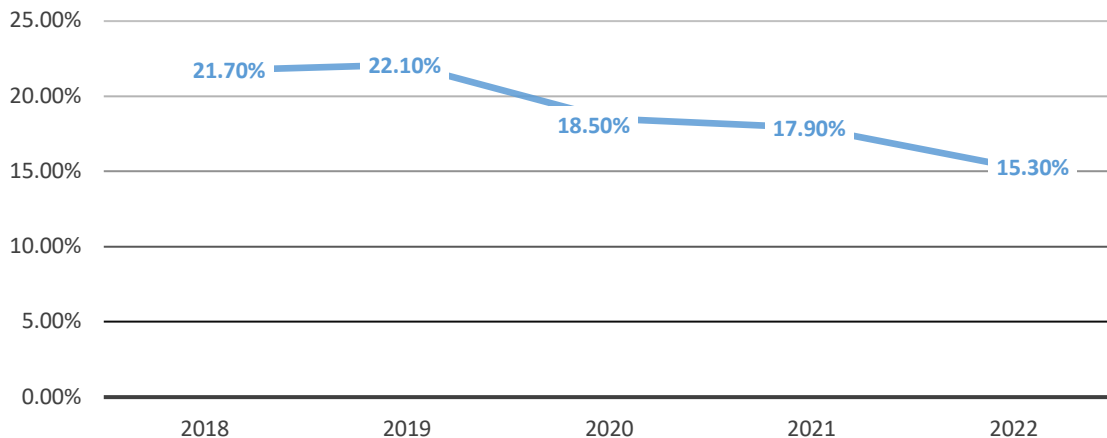
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 19,822 individuals residing in 7,460 households in Pierce County. This is an increase of 3.43% from the 19,164 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher male population (9,942) compared to females (9,880), a ratio of 101 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 40 years, with 3,389 residents being age 65 and older, and 1,262 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (16,954), followed by Black/African American (1,929), multi-racial (504), and American Indian (27). An estimated 408 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 1,005 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 18,817 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Pierce County, there are an estimated 2,992 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 15.30% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Over the past five years, the poverty rate for this community has decreased by 29.49%. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,171 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 4,858 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 7,909 being under 200%.

Chart 53: Pierce County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (15.80%) were noted as being more likely to be in poverty than males (14.70%), with individuals identifying as Black/African American (42.00%) having higher rates than those identifying as multi-racial (18.50%) and White (14.70%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (34.50%) were noted as being significantly more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (10.90%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (24.10%) than adults (12.50%) and senior citizens (12.00%).

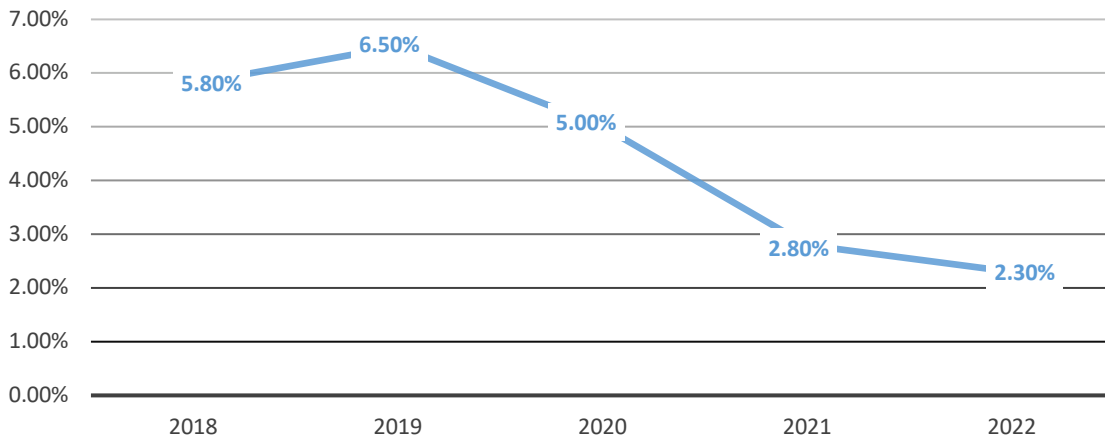
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The county's household median income is \$54,863 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$63,774) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$74,173).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Pierce County in 2022 was 8,164 an increase of 8.87% from the 7,499 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 183 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 58.3% from the 439 documented five years ago. Over the past five years, the county's unemployment rate has decreased by 60.34%. Although the rate increased by 12.07% between 2018 and 2019, decreases experienced between 2019 and 2022 resulted in a five-year low that is less than half of the rate published in 2018.

Chart 54: Pierce County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total 4,398 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 3,766 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$41,739 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 358 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 4.39% of the labor force and 18.58% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 17.26% of all jobs with a median wage of \$42,120 annually. This was followed closely by retail sales, accounting for 16.03% of the county's jobs, with a median wage of \$34,112.

An estimated 87.86% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 333 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 67: Pierce County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	260	\$45,292
Construction	404	\$46,904
Manufacturing	445	\$45,968
Wholesale	472	\$47,840
Retail	705	\$34,112
Transportation	250	\$58,188
Information	14	\$50,336
Finance/Insurance	96	\$58,864
Real Estate	19	\$36,868
Professional/Technical	123	\$50,752
Administrative/Waste	72	\$30,940
Education	31	\$23,400
Health/Social	233	\$31,140
Accommodation/Food	333	\$14,248
Federal Government	51	\$55,848
State Government	36	\$40,976
Local Government	759	\$42,120
Other/Unclassified	95	\$37,492
Total	4398	\$41,739

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Pierce County, an estimated 1,762 adults over the age of 25 (13.30%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-16.85%) from the 2,119 adults documented in 2018. An additional 5,718 local residents (44.03%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, an increase of 2.92% from the 5,556 individuals (41.94%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 2,252 local residents (17.00%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 45.29% from the 1,550 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 4,956 members of the adult population (25%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 7,731 individuals (39%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 214 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 3,622 school-aged children residing in the local community, 865 of which (23.88%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 3,355 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (2,339) or high school (1,016) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Pierce County School System is 83.40 (B), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 93.86%, with 71.81% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 14.56:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 4.40% students were noted as having language barriers, with 15.50% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the five schools in the county, two were noted as being average, with two being ranked above average (Pierce County High School and Pierce County Middle School), and one being ranked as excellent (Patterson Elementary School). All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 68: Pierce County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Blackshear Elementary School	GA-713-0297	13.52:1	71.5	C
Midway Elementary School	GA-713-0112	14.51:1	79.2	C
Patterson Elementary School	GA-713-4050	13.92:1	92.5	A
Pierce County High School	GA-713-0182	15.98:1	86.8	B
Pierce County Middle School	GA-713-0197	14.28:1	80.4	B

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 529 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 1,262 young children, a deficit of 733. This is a ratio of 2.36 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 50% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 69: Pierce County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	3.06:1	Yes	9603	2.38:1	No
9602	N/A	Yes	9604	1.63:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 70: Pierce County Childcare Centers

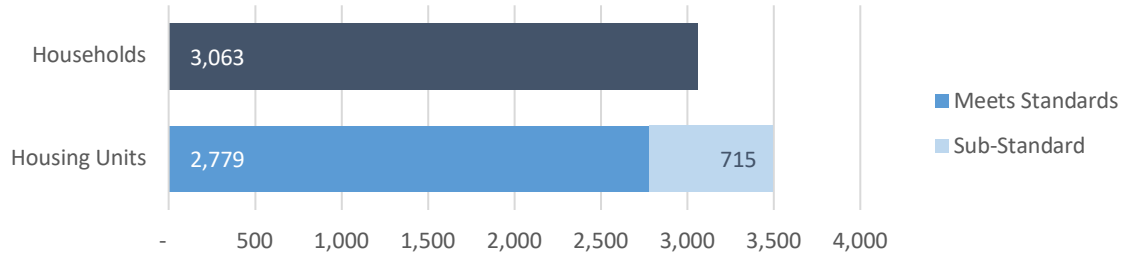
Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Blackshear Elementary School	Blackshear	(912) 449-2088	3y-4y
Blackshear Presbyterian Childcare, Inc.	Blackshear	(912) 449-0799	0wk-5y+
Crossroads Christian Academy	Blackshear	(912) 490-2224	3y-4y
Heartstrings Private Preschool	Patterson	(912) 670-1587	2y-5y
Lollipop Kids, Inc	Blackshear	(912) 449-6765	0wk-5y+
Patterson Y-Time	Patterson	(912) 647-5373	3y-5y+
Pierce County Head Start	Blackshear	(912) 449-0004	0wk-4y
Pierce County Head Start/Early Head Start	Blackshear	(912) 449-0004	0wk-5y+
Pierce Cubs	Blackshear	(912) 807-0488	0wk-5y+
Sugar's House	Patterson	(912) 647-2042	0wk-5y+
The Growing Patch	Patterson	(912) 228-2469	0wk-5y+

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Housing Profile

In Pierce County, there are an estimated 8,389 housing units available to accommodate the 7,460 local households, a surplus of 929 units. However, 1,470 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 44.22% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 541 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 55: Pierce County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,168 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$764 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 1,375 households (18.43%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 40.36% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 71: Pierce County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Central Walnut Village	Section 202	Waycross
Colonial Homes	Sections 515/521	Blackshear
Country Manor Apartments	Sections 515/521	Blackshear
Garlington Heights	Public Housing	Waycross
Lee Darling Homes	Public Housing	Blackshear
Ocean Breeze Park	LIHTC	Waycross
Northside Homes	Public Housing	Waycross
Peachwood Place Apartments	LIHTC	Waycross
Satilla Solutions	Section 811	Waycross
Village at Blackshear	LIHTC, Sections 8/538	Blackshear
Windover Manor Apartments	HOME, LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Blackshear
Ware Hotel	LIHTC	Waycross
Ware Manor	LIHTC, Sections 8/236	Waycross
Ware Terrace	Section 202	Waycross
Waring Apartments	LIHTC	Waycross
Waring Apartments II	Home, LIHTC	Waycross
Waycross VOA Housing	Section 811	Waycross
Waycross II VOA Housing	Section 811	Waycross
Westport Village	Home, LIHTC	Waycross

Source: Affordable Housing Online

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health Profile

Data indicates that 18% of the county's adult population (2,689 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 1,793 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 2,689 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.3 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 2,595 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 1,382 were senior citizens, 1,095 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 118 were school-aged children.

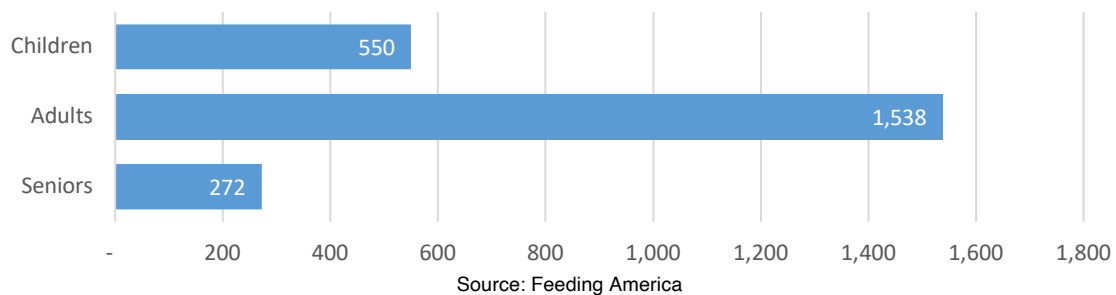
There are an estimated 3,900 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than double the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 9,990 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 4,000 patients identified for every mental health provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 2,752 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 16,870 with insurance, 11,186 reported use of a private plan and 7,845 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 2,360 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 550 are children, 272 are senior citizens, and 1,538 are working-aged adults. An estimated 1,140 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 15.28% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.27 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$298.39 per person each month, or 23.74% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,193.55 per month, equal to 94.98% of minimum wage.

Chart 56: Pierce County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 245 local households (3.28%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 69 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 161 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 61.35% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Pierce County, there are 2,345 households with children. An average of 246 children are born each year. An estimated 116 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 10 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 57 are headed by single males, 297 are headed by single females, and 172 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 76 foster children were in care during 2023, with 33 new children being removed from their homes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Profile

There are 1,027 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (55.11%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 16.99, which is higher than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 345 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 10 rapes, 2 robberies, and 43 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Pierce County faces a gap in antipoverty case management services, essential for supporting individuals and families living in poverty. With a poverty rate of 15.30%, addressing this gap is crucial for providing comprehensive assistance and empowering residents to overcome economic challenges.

The absence of financial management counseling services further exacerbates economic difficulties for residents. Without access to guidance on budgeting and financial planning, individuals may struggle to manage their resources effectively, hindering their ability to achieve greater economic stability.

A shortage of resources for emergency assistance puts vulnerable households at risk of housing instability and inadequate access to utilities, medications, and emergency food allocations. Closing this gap is vital for preventing homelessness and ensuring that residents have access to the support they need during crises.

Pierce County grapples with a significant deficit of job opportunities, with approximately 3,766 fewer jobs available than needed to meet the demands of the population. Addressing unemployment is crucial for improving economic prospects and enhancing residents' financial well-being.

The scarcity of childcare slots poses challenges for working families, impacting their ability to access reliable childcare services. With a shortage of 733 slots, addressing this gap is essential for supporting parents in the workforce and ensuring that children receive quality care and early education.

The deficit of safe housing units in Pierce County, estimated at 541 units, poses a significant challenge for residents' health and well-being. Closing this gap requires investment in affordable housing initiatives and improvements to existing housing stock to ensure secure and healthy living environments.

A high number of households experiencing housing cost burdens highlights the need for more affordable housing options in the county. With 1,375 households struggling to afford housing expenses, addressing this gap is crucial for promoting housing affordability and reducing disparities in housing access.

The scarcity of healthcare providers results in high patient-to-provider ratios, posing challenges in accessing timely and quality healthcare services. With 3,900 patients per physician, 9,990 patients per dentist, and 4,000 patients per mental health provider, addressing this gap is critical for improving healthcare access and promoting better health outcomes for residents.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
4. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
5. Individuals have poor mental health (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Pierce County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Action Pact – Pierce County Senior Center	912-449-0145	Provides socialization for senior citizens (PIERCE)
Al-Anon	912-283-6916	Support for families of alcoholics (PIERCE, TOOMBS, WARE)
Alcoholics Anonymous	912-287-8023	help solve the common problem (PIERCE, WARE)
Atlantic Area CASA	912-722-7672; 912-876-3816	Support abused and neglected children in court. (EVANS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, WARE)
Autism Parent Group	912-287-2306	Support, information, and awareness to those who love someone diagnosed with autism. (PIERCE, WARE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Bethesda House of Mercy	912-283-8580	Addiction Recovery for women (PIERCE, WARE)
Boys to Men and Swans	912-281-2622	Works with boys and girls ages 8-18 to help transition to adulthood. Offers workshops, fieldtrips, & mentoring. (PIERCE, WARE)
Calvary Baptist Church	912-283-5051	Clothing Closet (PIERCE, WARE)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Consolidated Men's Club	912-449-8800	(PIERCE, WARE)
Cord Of Three	912-282-0992	Mental Health Counseling (PIERCE, WARE)
Creative Outreach Solutions	912-282-1400	Educational and outreach programs. (PIERCE, WARE)
D.A.W.G.S (diabetes support)	912-283-6086	Diabetes Support Group (PIERCE, WARE)
DC Downtown	301 Brunei St, Waycross, GA	Food and Clothing, Tuesdays 4-8pm (PIERCE, WARE)
Diversified Resources (SOURCE)	912-285-3089; 800-283-0041	Community based services like meals, caregiver respite, personal care support, adult day health services, etc. (PIERCE, WARE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Easter Seal's Southern GA	912-283-4691; 877-541-7325	Services for individuals with developmental disabilities, respite home, residential options for adults, vocational training, and job placement. (PIERCE, WARE)
First Christian Church	912-283-5818	Food Pantry Thursdays 1-3 (PIERCE, WARE)
First Presbyterian Church	912-283-5077	Minimal groceries available throughout the week. Financial assistance Monday 10-11 (PIERCE, WARE)
First United Methodist Church	912-283-2077	Food Assistance Wed 9:30-11, Financial Assistance and clothing dependent on availability (PIERCE, WARE)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia	912-236-1571; 912-988-8658	Helping girls discover their strengths, passions, and talents (PIERCE, WARE)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Hooves to Freedom	912-550-3608	Therapeutic horsemanship (PIERCE, WARE)
HOPE Circle: Teen	912-816-5317	Support group for pregnant teens and teen parents. (PIERCE, WARE)
Kingdom Care	912-287-4434	Free healthcare clinic for the uninsured or underinsured. (PIERCE, WARE)
Magnolia House	912-285-5850; 800-33-HAVEN	Shelter for abused women and their children. (BRANTLEY, PIERCE, WARE)
Mary Street Mission	912-0338-8940	Offers assistance with food, utilities, medication, rent, gas Wednesdays 1-4 (PIERCE, WARE)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Okefenokee Heritage Center	912-285-4260	Exhibits, programs, and activities. (PIERCE, WARE)
Perinatal Health Partners	912-284-2571	Perinatal Case Management offered to pregnant females. (PIERCE, WARE)
Pierce County Family Connection	912-230-7835	(PIERCE)
Pierce County Food Pantry	711 Hendry St. Blackshear, GA	Food distributions Mon, Wed, & Fri (PIERCE)
Pierce County health Dept	912-449-2033	Health services at low or no cost (PIERCE)
Pierce County Transit	912-449-1825	Transportation in Pierce County (PIERCE)
Salvation Army	912-285-7237	Food, clothing, financial services Mon-Thurs 8:30-2:30 (PIERCE, WARE)
Satilla Advocacy Services	912-285-7355; 912-283-0987	Rape Crisis and Child Advocacy Center; Prevention education. (PIERCE, WARE)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
St. Joseph Catholic Church Loaves & Fishes	912-283-5221	Food, Clothing, financial services Thursdays 10-11:30. Call Monday for appt (PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
The Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter	1-866-8REFUGE	Works with domestic violence victims and their children and sexual assault victims (PIERCE, WARE)
The Sycamore Tree	912-807-4673	Food Pantry Tues & Thurs 10-12 & 2-6 (PIERCE)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Waycross House of Hope	912-287-0377	Offers food and financial assistance Tuesdays 9-12 (PIERCE, WARE)
Winona Park United Methodist Church	912-283-7793	Canned and dry foods as needed (PIERCE, WARE)
YMCA	912-285-8660	Recreational facility for all ages. (PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Tattnall County

Founded: 1801

Total Area: 484 square miles

County Seat: Reidsville



County Overview

Located in the Lower Coastal Plain of southeast Georgia, Tattnall County is Georgia's 25th county, spanning 484 square miles. It was formed in 1801 from Montgomery County and named after Governor Josiah Tattnall, a Savannah native and former brigadier general in the state militia.

Subsequently, parts of Tattnall County were used to establish Toombs County in 1905, Candler County in July 1914, and Evans County in August 1914. Originally, Creek Indians inhabited this land. Many of the first white settlers, including veterans of the Revolutionary War, came from North Carolina and Virginia. Land was allocated through the headright system, granting families up to 1,000 acres of farmland. The region is characterized by timber and wiregrass, making it more suitable for cattle raising than farming.

Reidsville serves as the county seat. Initially, county business was conducted at Zacharia Cox's home near Drake's Ferry on the Ochopee River. Around 1807 or 1808, a log cabin for county business was built near this location. Later, a new courthouse was constructed in a more central location. In 1832, when the first post office was established, the area was named Reidsville. The original courthouse was replaced circa 1854, and again in 1902 by the current courthouse, which underwent remodeling and renovation in 1991.

Other towns in Tattnall County include Cobbtown, Collins, Glennville, and Manassas. Cobbtown, originally called Quince and incorporated in 1905, emerged before the arrival of railroads in 1890. Collins, also incorporated in 1905, began as a train depot on the Savannah and Montgomery Railroad and developed into a small rail center. Manassas, named after Washington Manassas Foy, was founded in the late nineteenth century. Glennville, the largest city in the county, was founded in 1890.

By 1849, Tattnall County had numerous mills and was also producing other feed crops, cotton, and livestock, with enslaved labor playing a significant role. Despite initial resistance to secession, the county sent four regiments to fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Union soldiers under General Sherman commandeered the courthouse at the end of the war. Post-war recovery was slow, but the arrival of the Savannah and Montgomery Railroad in the 1890s provided a significant economic boost, nearly doubling the population between 1890 and 1900.

Agriculture remains a key economic driver in Tattnall County, with forestry being a major sector. The county is one of the top poultry producers in South Georgia, with over 41 million broilers produced annually. It is also known for its Vidalia onions, celebrated with an annual onion festival each May. The state prison in Reidsville, a significant employer, houses many of Georgia's maximum-security inmates.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In recent years, Tattall County has been collaborating with the Georgia Institute of Technology's Economic Development Institute to enhance its economy through technology-driven solutions.

Attractions in the county include the Alexander Hotel in Reidsville, now serving as the Greater Tattall County Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center; the Glennville Museum, showcasing art, local history, and science; Gordonia-Alatamaha State Park; Big Hammock Natural Area and Wildlife Management Area, offering wildlife watching and hunting; and Beaver Creek Plantation in Cobbtown, a popular site for wild fowl hunting.

Brewton-Parker College has a satellite campus in Glennville, offering associate degrees and upper-division courses to both traditional and nontraditional students.

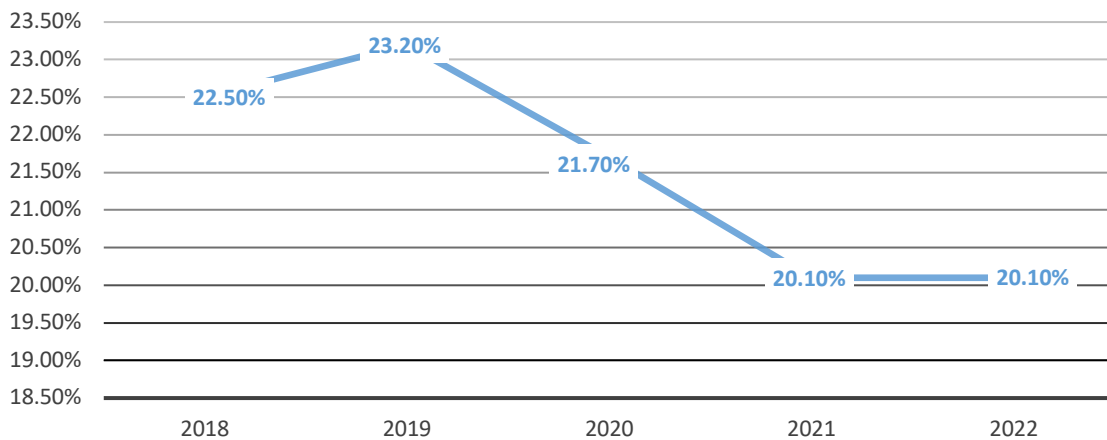
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 24,309 individuals residing in 7,552 households in Tattall County. This is a decrease of 4.12% from the 25,353 documented in 2018. The community has a notably higher male population (14,137) compared to females (10,172), a ratio of 139 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 38 years, with 3,485 residents being age 65 and older, and 1,095 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (13,808), followed by Black/African American (6,855), multi-racial (1,055), Asian (69), and American Indian (38). An estimated 2,484 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 3,039 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 21,270 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Tattall County, there are an estimated 3,684 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 20.10% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Although the poverty rate has decreased by 10.67% over the past five years, it should be noted that no change was reported over the past year. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 1,534 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 5,380 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 8,070 being under 200%.

Chart 57: Tattall County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

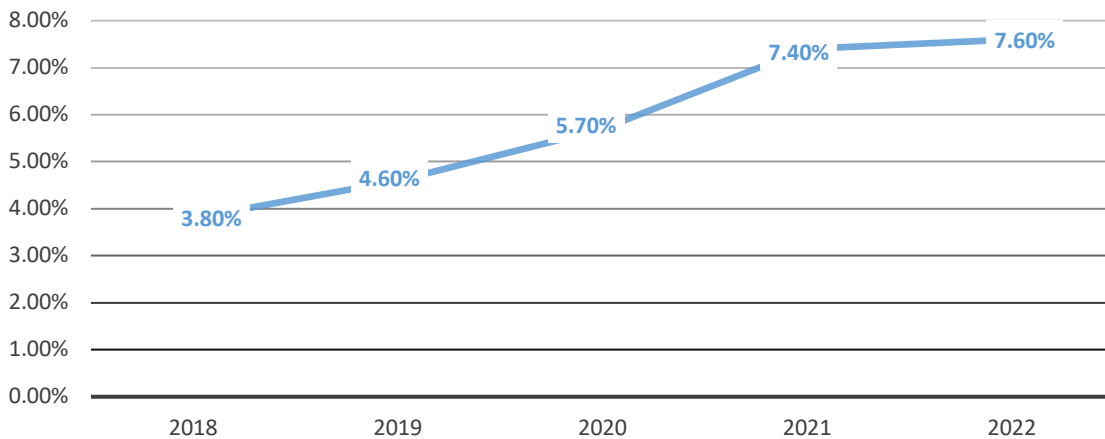
Females (23.10%) were noted as being more likely to be in poverty than males (16.80%), with individuals identifying as Black/African American (23.10%) having higher rates than those identifying as White (16.60%), multi-racial (7.10%), and Asian (1.60%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (33.60%) were noted as being significantly more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (16.50%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (23.90%) and senior citizens (22.20%) than adults (17.80%).

The county's household median income is \$51,868 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,985).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Tattnall County in 2022 was 7,970 an increase of 5.72% from the 7,539 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 235 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 46.47% from the 439 documented five years ago. Although the upward trend was maintained throughout the five-year period, the annual rate of change slowed drastically to 2.70% in 2022 after years of growth with an average annual increase of 25.93%. This indicates that the county's employment situation is improving to some degree.

Chart 58: Tattnall County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total of 5,167 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 2,803 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$41,863 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 599 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 7.52% of the labor force and 21.26% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 17.79% of all jobs with a median wage of \$36,660 annually. This was followed by agriculture (14.57%) and health/social services (14.24%).

An estimated 77.70% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 327 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 72: Tattnall County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	753	\$46,020
Construction	303	\$51,376
Wholesale	399	\$42,380
Retail	478	\$24,076
Transportation	72	\$56,056
Finance/Insurance	161	\$45,188
Real Estate	16	\$35,360
Professional/Technical	204	\$46,956
Administrative/Waste	146	\$34,580
Education	2	\$22,620
Health/Social	736	\$57,824
Accommodation/Food	327	\$16,900
Federal Government	41	\$75,504
State Government	513	\$44,980
Local Government	919	\$36,660
Other/Unclassified	97	\$33,332
Total	5,167	\$41,863

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Tattnall County, an estimated 3,686 adults over the age of 25 (21.72%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-15.86%) from the 4,381 adults documented in 2018. An additional 6,732 local residents (39.66%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 3.50% from the 6,976 individuals (39.12%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 2,372 local residents (13.98%) reported having a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is an increase of 1.11% from the 2,346 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 8,751 members of the adult population (36%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 12,641 individuals (52%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 781 residents continue to struggle with the community’s predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 3,836 school-aged children residing in the local community, 942 of which (24.56%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 3,988 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (2,485) or high school (1,503) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Tattnall County School System is 69.5 (D), indicating the schools in the area are below average. The graduation rate is 92.24%, with 58.69% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 14.31:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 8.60% students were noted as having language barriers, with 15.50% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the three schools in the county, one was ranked as above average (South Tattnall Middle School), with two being ranked below average (North Tattnall Middle School and Tattnall County High School). All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 73: Tattnall County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
North Tattnall Middle School	GA-732-0101	13.46:1	66.7	D
South Tattnall Middle School	GA-732-0201	12.76:1	82.2	B
Tattnall County High School	GA-732-0194	15.65:1	66.0	D

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 554 childcare slots to accommodate the community’s 1,095 young children, a deficit of 541. This is a ratio of 1.98 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 60% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 74: Tattnall County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9501	4.44:1	Yes
9502.01	2.49:1	No
9502.02	13.42:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

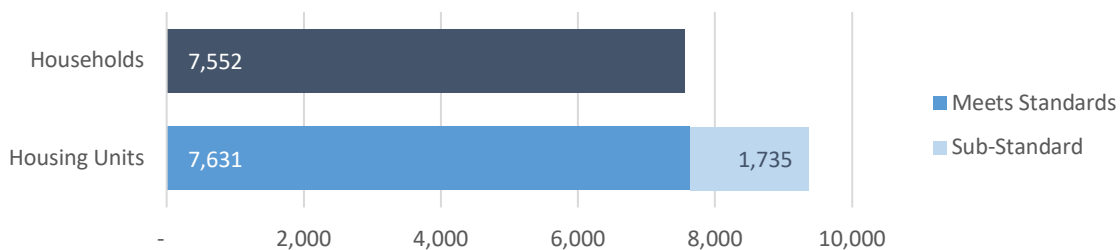
Table 75: Tattnall County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
AnchorPointe Christian Daycare	Glennville	(912) 654-1474	0wk-5y+
Busy Little Beavers Christian Preschool	Glennville	(912) 237-3761	3y-5y
Connect Kids Academy	Reidsville	(912) 394-1126	0wk-5y+
Glennville Head Start	Glennville	(912) 654-1170	3y-4y
Glennville-Migrant EHS	Glennville	(912) 654-2182	13mo-5y+
New Horizon Community Outreach Center	Reidsville	(912) 454-0897	4y-15y
Reidsville Head Start	Collins	(912) 693-2207	3y-5y
Telamon Corporation the Glennville Center	Glennville	(912) 386-1163	0wk-5y+
Tiny Tots Learning Center	Reidsville	(912) 557-6776	0wk-5y+

Housing Profile

In Tattnall County, there are an estimated 9,366 housing units available to accommodate the 7,552 local households, a surplus of 1,814 units. However, 1,735 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 60.52 of which are severe.

Chart 59: Tattnall County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,170 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$609 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state’s average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 1,429 households (18.92%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 48.64% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 76: Tattnall County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Burns Village	Public Housing	Glennville
Country Estates	Sections 515/521	Glennville
Qual Run Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Reidsville
Qual Village Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Reidsville
Sunset Circle – Ohooppee Heights	Public Housing	Reidsville
Tattnall Evans Housing	Section 202	Glennville
Volunteers of America Housing	Section 811	Reidsville

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 22% of the county’s adult population (4,263 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 2,519 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 3,294 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 75.9 years, which is lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 3,460 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 1,539 were senior citizens, 1,580 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 285 were school-aged children, and 56 were under the age of five.

There are an estimated 4,230 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than double the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 7,680 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 2,880 patients for every mental health provider in the county as compared to 660 on a state level.

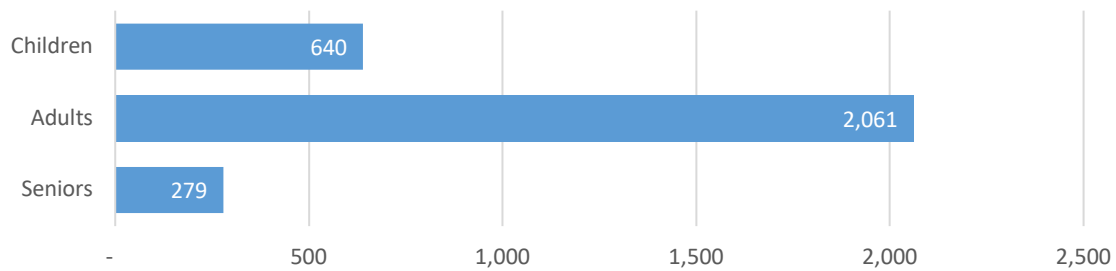
An estimated 2,917 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 16,328 with insurance, 11,177 reported use of a private plan and 7,851 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 2,980 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 640 are children, 279 are senior citizens, and 2,061 are working-aged adults. An estimated 1,371 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 18.15% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.36 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$306.60 per person each month, or 24.40% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,226.40 per month, equal to 97.59% of minimum wage.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 60: Tattall County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 468 local households (6.20%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 61 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 323 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 44.04% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Tattall County, there are 3,292 households with children. An average of 254 children are born each year. An estimated 128 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 8 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 157 are headed by single males, 474 are headed by single females, and 514 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 20 foster children were in care during 2023, with 9 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 1,460 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (36.85%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 8.96, which is lower than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 209 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 4 rapes and 15 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Tattall County lacks sufficient antipoverty case management services, essential for supporting individuals and families grappling with poverty. With a poverty rate of 20.10%, addressing this gap is crucial for providing comprehensive assistance and empowering residents to overcome economic challenges.

The absence of financial management counseling services further compounds economic difficulties for residents. Access to guidance on budgeting and financial planning is essential for helping individuals manage their resources effectively and achieve greater economic stability.

A shortage of resources for emergency rent, utility, and medication payments leaves vulnerable households at risk of housing instability and inadequate access to essential utilities and medications. Closing this gap is vital for preventing homelessness and ensuring that residents have access to the support they need during crises.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Tattnall County faces a gap in public transportation services, particularly affecting the 468 households without access to a vehicle. Improved public transportation infrastructure is essential for promoting mobility and ensuring equitable access to employment, healthcare, and other essential services.

With approximately 2,803 fewer jobs available than needed, Tattnall County struggles to provide sufficient employment opportunities for its residents. Addressing this deficit is crucial for reducing unemployment rates and enhancing residents' economic prospects.

The shortage of childcare slots, estimated at a deficit of 541 slots, presents challenges for working families in accessing reliable childcare services. Addressing this gap is essential for supporting parents in the workforce and ensuring that children receive quality care and early education.

A significant number of households in Tattnall County experience housing cost burdens, with 1,429 households struggling to afford housing expenses. Increasing the availability of affordable housing options is essential for promoting housing affordability and reducing financial strain on residents.

The scarcity of healthcare providers in Tattnall County results in high patient-to-provider ratios, making it challenging for residents to access timely and quality healthcare services. Improving access to physicians, dentists, and mental health providers is crucial for enhancing healthcare access and improving health outcomes for residents.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are food insecure (F)
2. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
3. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
4. Individuals lack financial management skills (F)
5. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Tattnall County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Atlantic Area CASA	912-722-7672; 912-876-3816	Support abused and neglected children in court. (EVANS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, WARE)
Atlantic Area CASA	912-722-7672; 912-876-3816	Support abused and neglected children in court. (EVANS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, WARE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Believers Church Reidsville	912-237-1246	Food Pantry Last Thursday 6-7:30pm (TATTNALL)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
First United Pentecostal Church	912-347-5047	Food Pantry 1st & 3rd Tuesday 6pm (TATTNALL)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Reidsville Baptist Church	912-557-6204	Food Pantry 3rd Thursday 9-11 (TATTNALL)
Reidsville United Methodist	912-557-6744	Food Pantry 1st & 3rd Friday 8-9:30am (TATTNALL)
Springfield Missionary Baptist	912-237-8578	Food Pantry 4th Saturday 7:30-10:30am (TATTNALL)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Toombs County

Founded: 1905
Total Area: 367 square miles
County Seat: Lyons



County Overview

Toombs County, nestled in southeast Georgia, is the state's 144th county, encompassing 367 square miles. It was formed in 1905 from parts of Emanuel, Montgomery, and Tattnall counties and is named after Robert Toombs, a U.S. congressman and senator who later served the Confederacy as secretary of state and brigadier general.

Originally the land was inhabited by Creek Indians. Many of the early white settlers were Scots Highlanders, with a significant number having previously resided in North Carolina before relocating to Georgia.

Primarily a land of forests and wiregrass, Toombs County was characterized by small farms focusing on livestock, corn, and cotton during the 19th century. The arrival of railroads in the 1890s attracted settlers from nearby counties and North Carolina, who were interested in exploiting the area's timber and naval stores. These settlers built homes along the railroad lines, leading to the establishment of towns.

Lyons, the county seat, was incorporated in 1897, named in honor of the individual responsible for bringing the Seaboard Air Line Railway to the town. The first courthouse, completed in 1906, was rebuilt in 1919 after a fire. The current courthouse dates back to 1964.

Other incorporated towns in Toombs County include Santa Claus and Vidalia. Santa Claus, incorporated in 1941, was named by a farmer seeking to attract tourists. Vidalia, incorporated in 1890, was initially called Jenkins Station after local landowner Warren T. Jenkins. The name "Vidalia" likely originated from a daughter of Samuel Hawkins, president of the Savannah, Americus and Montgomery Railroad. Unincorporated communities in the county include Cedar Crossing, Johnson Corner, Normantown, and Ohoopee.

Despite the hardships of the Great Depression, Toombs County rebounded during World War II, benefiting from a U.S. Army Air Force field in Vidalia and thriving industries supporting the war effort. Post-war, Vidalia evolved into a regional trade center.

Tobacco was a significant early crop, but Toombs County is best known for the sweet Vidalia onion, leading to its nickname "Sweet Onion Capital of the World." The Vidalia Onion Festival annually draws visitors to the area.

Notable residents have included Iris Faircloth Blicht, a former Georgia senator and U.S. Congresswoman; Mel Blount, a professional football player with the Pittsburgh Steelers; James T. McIntyre, Director of the Office of Management and Budget under Jimmy Carter; and Sema Americus Wilkes, known for her Savannah restaurant, Mrs. Wilkes' Dining Room. The John E. Ladson Genealogical and Historical Library, established in the 1940s, is maintained by the Ohoopee Regional Library System in Vidalia.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Toombs County features several National Register of Historic Places sites, including the Altama Museum of Art and History in the Brazell House, Vidalia, with collections of Staffordshire porcelain and John James Audubon prints, and the history of the Girl Scouts. The Lyons Seaboard Air Line Railway Depot, built in 1930 and renovated in 1990, now serves as a community center.

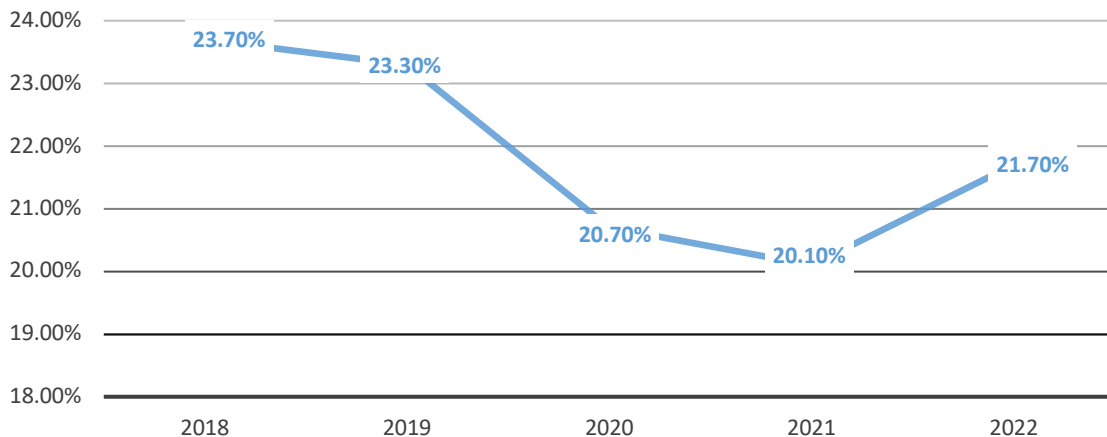
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 26,946 individuals residing in 9,754 households in Toombs County. This is a decrease of 0.38% from the 27,048 documented in 2018. The community has a notably higher female population (14,127) compared to males (12,819), a ratio of 91 males for every 100 females. The median age in the county is 38 years, with 4,573 residents being age 65 and older, and 1,869 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (17,345), followed by Black/African American (6,436), multi-racial (1,741), Asian (229), and American Indian (72). An estimated 1,123 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 3,254 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 23,692 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Toombs County, there are an estimated 5,760 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 21.70% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Although the poverty rate has decreased by 8.44% over the past five years, it should be noted that the rate has actually increased by 7.96% over the past year. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 2,667 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 6,983 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 12,496 being under 200%.

Chart 61: Toombs County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (23.70%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than males (19.60%), with individuals identifying as Black/African American (46.20%) having higher rates than those identifying as multi-racial (12.70%), and American Indian (2.80%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (23.90%) were noted as being significantly more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (11.70%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (29.10%) than adults (20.20) and senior citizens (15.40%).

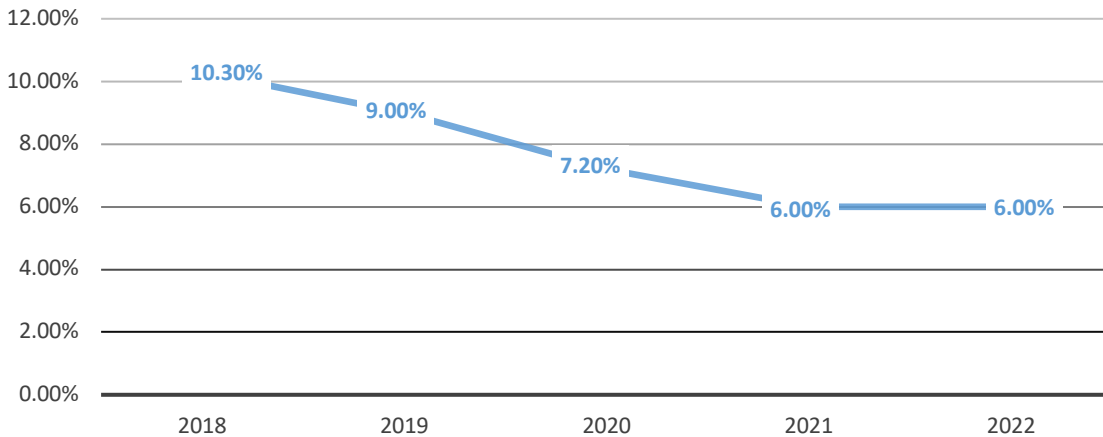
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The county's household median income is \$47,310 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,985).

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Toombs County in 2022 was 10,209 a decrease of 6.65% from the 10,936 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 647 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 45.03% from the 1,177 documented five years ago. Over the past five years, the unemployment rate has decreased by 41.75%. It should be noted, however, that the rate has not changed over the past year.

Chart 62: Toombs County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total of 12,117 jobs were identified in the community, a surplus of 1,908 to accommodate the local labor force. The county's median wage was identified as \$43,105 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 918 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 8.99% of the labor force and 23.28% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is health/social services, accounting for 15.95% of all jobs with a median wage of \$48,360 annually. This was followed by manufacturing (15.54%) and retail sales (14.33%).

An estimated 83.48% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 1,095 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 77: Toombs County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	513	\$34,060
Utilities	131	\$79,560
Construction	503	\$57,044
Manufacturing	1,883	\$45,760
Wholesale	508	\$50,544
Retail	1,736	\$30,784
Transportation	273	\$66,040
Information	42	\$29,172
Finance/Insurance	306	\$55,484
Real Estate	42	\$33,124
Professional/Technical	241	\$37,180
Administrative/Waste	890	\$32,032
Education	111	\$27,768
Health/Social	1,933	\$48,360
Accommodation/Food	1,095	\$17,316
Federal Government	68	\$62,556
State Government	317	\$38,584
Local Government	1,218	\$38,636
Other/Unclassified	94	\$34,996
Total	12,117	\$43,105

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Toombs County, an estimated 2,947 adults over the age of 25 (17.04%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-12.34%) from the 3,362 adults documented in 2018. An additional 6,320 local residents (36.54%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 6.84% from the 6,784 individuals (38.48%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 2,831 local residents (16.37%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 1.47% from the 2,790 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 8,084 members of the adult population (30%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 12,395 individuals (46%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 1,296 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 5,222 school-aged children residing in the local community, 1,587 of which (30.39%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 5,054 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (3,259) or high school (1,795) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Toombs County School System is 72.8 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 93.05%, with 50.00% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 13.70:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 13.00% students were noted as having language barriers, with 17.70% having a disability of some type.

The Vidalia City Schools, also located in Toombs County, were noted as having a much lower rating, at 65.7 (D). The graduation rate for the school, however, was relatively high at 93.75%, with nearly three-quarters (72.99%) of the students being college and career ready after they graduate. The

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

student to teacher ratio was 14.87, with only 2.90% of the students enrolled having language barriers, and 14.60% having a disability of some type that could potentially impact their education.

When looking specifically at the nine schools in the county, three were ranked as average with two ranked as above average (Lyons Primary School and Toombs Central Elementary School), two below average (Toombs County Middle School and J.R. Trippe Middle School), and one failing (Sally Dailey Meadows Elementary). All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

Table 78: Toombs County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Lyons Primary School	GA-738-0104	13.92:1	80.4	B
Lyons Upper Elementary	GA-738-0204	12.02:1	75.1	C
Toombs Central Elementary School	GA-738-4050	13.39:1	82.5	B
Toombs County High School	GA-738-0192	15.15:1	71.3	C
Toombs County Middle School	GA-738-0103	13.46:1	67.4	D

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Table 79: Vidalia City District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
J. D. Dickerson Primary School	GA-793-2050	14.41	77.3	C
J. R. Trippe Middle School	GA-793-0173	14.43	66.8	D
Sally Dailey Meadows Elementary	GA-793-5050	15.43	57.7	F
Vidalia Comprehensive High School	GA-793-0273	15.02	77.4	C

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 1,570 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 1,869 young children, a deficit of 299. This is a ratio of 1.19 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 17% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 80: Toombs County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	3.91:1	Yes	9704	1.30:1	No
9702	1.64:1	No	9705	1.24:1	No
9703	0.72:1	No	9706	1.27:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 81: Toombs County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
21st Century CLC - J. R. Trippe Middle	Vidalia	(912) 537-3813	11y-15y
21st Century CLC - Lyons Upper Elementary	Lyons	(912) 526-5816	5y-10y
21st Century CLC - Toombs County Middle	Lyons	(912) 526-8363	11y-14y
Boys & Girls Clubs - J.D. Rabun Unit	Lyons	(912) 538-8899	5y-17y
Boys & Girls Clubs - Vidalia Unit	Vidalia	(912) 538-8899	5y-17y
Calvary's Kinder Academy	Vidalia	(912) 537-4868	0wk-5y+

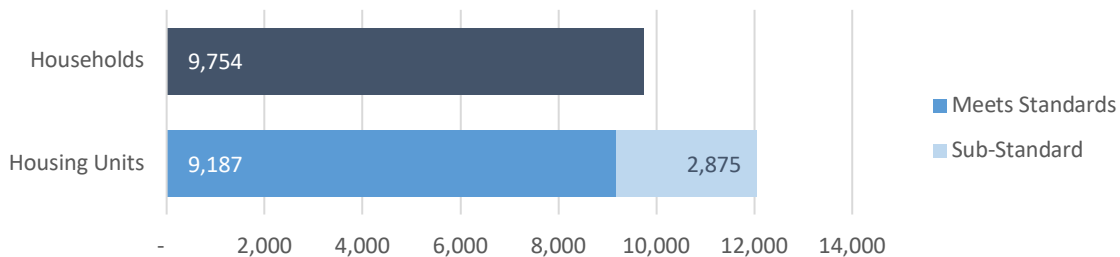
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chapel Christian Academy	Lyons	(912) 403-3096	0wk-5y+
Cornerstone Children's Center	Vidalia	(912) 535-7521	0wk-5y+
First Steps Infant / Toddler Center	Vidalia	(912) 538-8811	0wk-5y+
Jolly Juggles Day Care Center	Vidalia	(912) 537-0045	0wk-5y+
Kid City USA Vidalia	Vidalia	(912) 386-1438	0wk-5y+
Learning Tree Childcare and Learning Ctr	Vidalia	(912) 537-1119	0wk-5y+
Lighthouse Early Start Academy One	Vidalia	(912) 538-8811	0wk-5y+
Little Folks Farm & Childcare	Lyons	(912) 454-0249	0wk-5y+
Lyons Center	Lyons	(912) 526-4340	0wk-5y+
Lyons-Migrant EHS	Lyons	(912) 526-4340	13mo-5y+
Meadows Wellness Center (Kidz Klub)	Vidalia	(912) 277-2056	0wk-10y
Nip & Tuck Nursery and Kindergarten	Lyons	(912) 526-6774	0wk-5y+
North Thompson Christian Learning Center	Vidalia	(912) 537-2373	4y-12y
Onion Sprouts Daycare	Vidalia	(912) 537-7777	0wk-5y+
Robert Toombs Christian Academy	Lyons	(912) 526-8938	3y-4y
Sherea Collins Group Day Care	Vidalia	(912) 537-0733	13mo-5y+
Step by Step Child Care and Learning Center	Lyons	(478) 494-6386	0wk-5y+
Step by Step Childcare and Learning Ctr #2	Lyons	(478) 697-0882	0wk-5y+
Supper Program	Lyons	(912) 524-3209	13y-17y
Toombs County Board of Education	Lyons	(912) 524-3212	0wk-4y
Toombs County Head Start	Lyons	(912) 526-9228	0wk-4y
Vidalia City Schools - J.D. Dickerson	Vidalia	(912) 537-3421	4y-13y
Vidalia City Schools - S.D. Meadows	Vidalia	(912) 537-4755	5y-13y
Vidalia Heritage Academy	Vidalia	(912) 245-4206	3y-4y

Housing Profile

In Toombs County, there are an estimated 12,062 housing units available to accommodate the 9,754 local households, a surplus of 2,308 units. However, 2,875 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 54.09% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 567 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 63: Toombs County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,217 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$661 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 2,520 households (25.84%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 45.44% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 82: Toombs County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Harry Thompson Homes	Public Housing	Lyons
Jt Lyons Properties	Section 8	Lyons
Lakeview Apartments	LIHTC, Section 538	Lyons
Lakeview Townhomes	Section 538	Lyons
Toombs-Lyons Housing, Inc.	Section 811	Lyons
West Columbia Apartments	Section 8	Lyons

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 20% of the county’s adult population (3,971 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 2,581 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 3,574 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.3 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 4,751 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 2,036 were senior citizens, 2,281 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, and 434 were school-aged children.

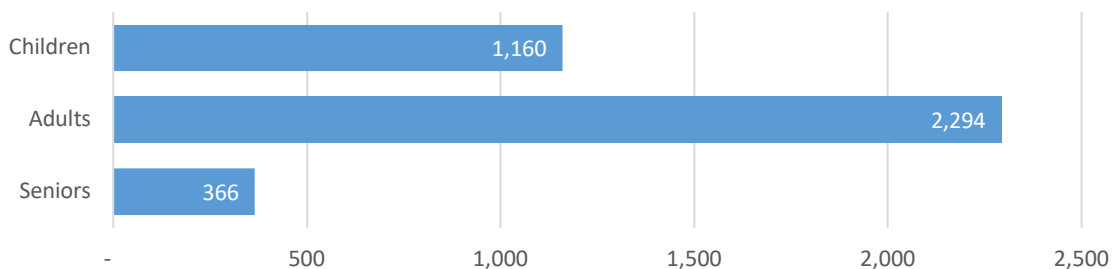
There are an estimated 1,120 patients for every physician in the community, which is lower than the state average of 1,490. Dentists were somewhat of a concern with 1,920 patients per practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, there were 1,420 patients for every mental health provider which is significantly higher than the 660 on a state level.

An estimated 4,520 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 22,126 with insurance, 12,504 reported use of a private plan and 12,912 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 3,820 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 1,160 are children, 366 are senior citizens, and 2,294 are working-aged adults. An estimated 2,249 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 23.06% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.26 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$297.48 per person each month, or 23.67% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,189.90 per month, equal to 94.69% of minimum wage.

Chart 64: Toombs County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Source: Feeding America

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 1,008 local households (10.33%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 55 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 363 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 29.66% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Toombs County, there are 3,292 households with children. An average of 375 children are born each year. An estimated 208 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 12 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 148 are headed by single males, 641 are headed by single females, and 514 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 22 foster children were in care during 2023, with 13 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 1,350 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (49.33%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 23.27, which is significantly higher than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 625 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 3 murders, 2 rapes, 8 robberies, and 66 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Toombs County lacks sufficient antipoverty case management services to support individuals and families affected by poverty. With a poverty rate of 21.70%, addressing this gap is crucial for providing comprehensive assistance and helping residents navigate resources to improve their economic well-being.

The absence of financial management counseling services leaves residents without essential guidance on budgeting and financial planning. Access to these services is crucial for helping individuals manage their resources effectively and achieve greater financial stability.

Toombs County faces a shortage of resources for emergency rent, utility, and medication payments, leaving vulnerable households at risk of housing instability and inadequate access to essential services during crises. Closing this gap is essential for ensuring that residents have the support they need in emergencies.

The deficit of childcare slots, estimated at 299, presents challenges for working families in accessing reliable childcare services. Addressing this gap is essential for supporting parents in the workforce and ensuring that children receive quality care and early education.

Toombs County grapples with a deficit of safe housing units, with 567 units needed to meet the demand. Increasing the availability of safe housing options is essential for promoting residents' health and well-being and reducing housing insecurity.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A significant number of households in Toombs County experience housing cost burdens, with 2,250 households struggling to afford housing expenses. Increasing the availability of affordable housing options is crucial for promoting housing affordability and reducing financial strain on residents.

Toombs County lacks adequate public transportation options, particularly affecting the 1,008 households without access to a personal vehicle. Improving public transportation infrastructure is essential for promoting mobility and ensuring equitable access to essential services and opportunities for all residents.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)
3. Individuals are food insecure (F)
4. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
5. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Toombs County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Action Pact – Toombs County Senior Center	912-537-0453	Provides socialization for senior citizens (TOOMBS)
Al-Anon	912-283-6916	Support for families of alcoholics (PIERCE, TOOMBS, WARE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Behavioral Counseling and Intervention Management	478-494-2314	Behavioral Counseling and Intervention Management
Blount Youth Home	912-537-7758	Services for at-risk male youth 10-18 years old. (TOOMBS)
Boy Scouts of America	912-856-5902	(TOOMBS)
Cabbage Patch Program	912-524-4000	A free program for expecting mothers. (TOOMBS)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Dream Center Outreach	912-293-4618	Food Pantry Thursday 1-3pm (TOOMBS)
Emergency Shelter by the Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc	912-538-9935	Provides shelter for victims and their children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (TOOMBS)
Evergreen True Vine	912-583-4428	Food Pantry 3rd Saturday 9-11 (TOOMBS)
Family Intervention Center	912-526-3553	Serves at-risk youth aged 11-18 (TOOMBS)
First Choice Georgia Pregnancy Clinic	912-538-0762	Free, confidential services to women with unplanned pregnancy (TOOMBS)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
God's Storehouse	912-538-1730	Clothing, household items, spiritual counseling. Food Pantry 2nd & 3rd Wed 9-3pm (TOOMBS)
Hand to Hand Heart to Heart	912-537-9280	Programs for at-risk youth. (TOOMBS)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Logisticare	888-224-7988	Transportation for Medicaid patients (TOOMBS)
Lyons Free Will Baptist Church	912-526-4320	Food Pantry Monday 10-12 (TOOMBS)

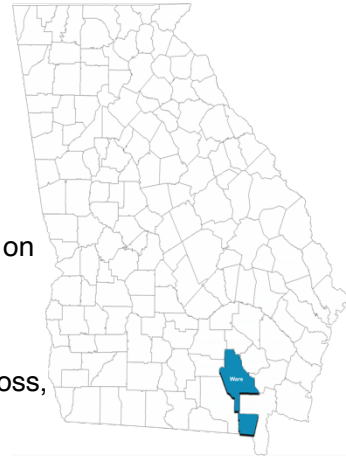
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Oasis Church of God	912-526-5060	Food Pantry Mon & Tues 3-5pm; Friday 8-2pm (TOOMBS)
Paul Anderson Youth Home	912-537-7237	Offers a Christian alternative to correctional facilities for youth men 16-21 years old (TOOMBS)
Southeast Georgia Community Projects	912-526-5451	Food Pantry Tues - Thurs 9-11:30 (TOOMBS)
Southeastern Technical College	912-538-3100	(TOOMBS)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
The Jesus Inn Shelter	300 McIntosh Street, Vidalia, GA 30474	Homeless Shelter/Recovery Center. 7:00pm-8:00am(TOOMBS)
The Mercy Ministries	912-293-1476	Help uninsured, low-income individuals with free medical and dental care, counseling (TOOMBS)
Wings of Hope Outreach	912-526-6078	Food Pantry Thursday 10-12 (TOOMBS)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Ware County

- Founded:** 1824
- Total Area:** 903 square miles
- County Seat:** Waycross



County Overview

Ware County, located in extreme southeast Georgia, was established on December 15, 1824, when Appling County was divided by the state legislature. The county was named after Nicholas Ware, a prominent politician noted for his extravagant lifestyle. A significant portion of the county encompasses the Okefenokee Swamp. Its county seat, Waycross, is situated approximately 100 miles northwest of Jacksonville, Florida.

The establishment of Ware County's boundaries did not resolve conflicts with Native Americans in the region. The Wildes Massacre, the last known Native American attack in Georgia, occurred in Ware County in 1838 during the Second Seminole War, where nine people were killed by Creek warriors who then fled into the Okefenokee Swamp.

The Satilla River, one of the county's borders, was a hub for rafting yellow longleaf pine to coastal sawmills in the mid to late 1800s. The Okefenokee Swamp, rich in cypress trees, was home to the Hebardville Cypress Mill, once the world's largest cypress mill. The county also had a unique narrow-gauge railroad from Hebardville to Billy's Island in the Okefenokee, used for transporting cypress to the mill.

Known as a convergence point of trails and roads, Ware County's county seat of Waresboro was a major stagecoach relay station at Peter Bedford's Tavern. The county continued to evolve as a transportation hub with the arrival of the railroad and the formation of Waycross in 1874, which later became the new county seat.

Ware County has contributed to educational growth with institutions like Waycross College and Okefenokee Technical College, offering various community-beneficial programs. The county also boasts attractions like Southern Forest World, the Okefenokee Heritage Center, the Okefenokee Swamp Park, and Obediah's Okefenok, providing educational and recreational opportunities.

Efforts by the Downtown Waycross Development Authority have revitalized the downtown area, attracting new businesses. The Trembling Earth Recreation Complex is undergoing expansion through multiple phases. Ware County serves as a regional retail hub in southeast Georgia, drawing shoppers from surrounding counties. New construction and expansion plans are underway in what is affectionately known as "This Magic Wilderness."

The county, covering 903 square miles, has been home to several notable figures in the arts, including Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Caroline Miller, actors Pernell Roberts and Ossie Davis, and musician Gram Parsons.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

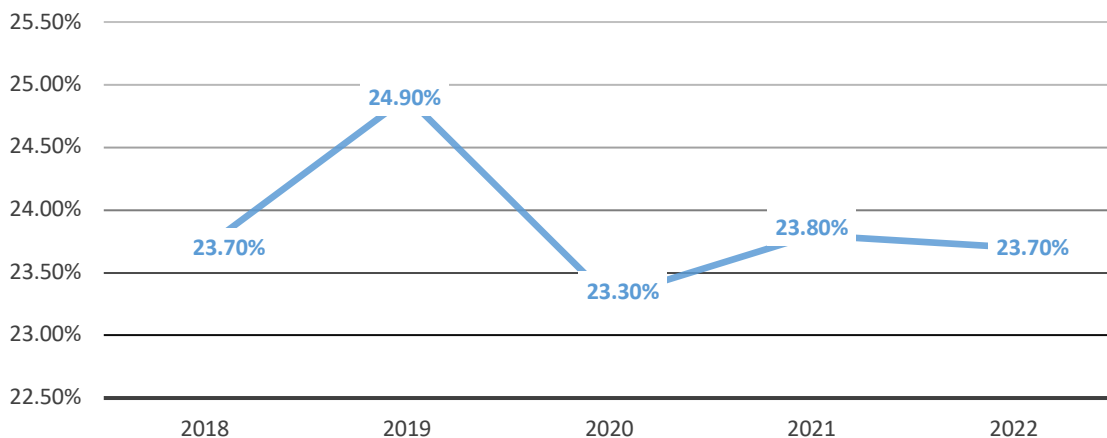
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 35,917 individuals residing in 12,756 households in Ware County. This is an increase of 0.89% from the 35,599 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher male population (17,975) compared to females (17,942). The median age in the county is 38 years, with 46,135 residents being age 65 and older, and 2,318 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (22,600), followed by Black/African American (10,832), multi-racial (1,484), Asian (443), American Indian (161), and Pacific Islander (26). An estimated 371 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 1,633 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 34,284 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Ware County, there are an estimated 7,920 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 23.70% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Although the poverty rate has remained the same over the past five years, it should be noted that it has decreased by 4.82% from the five-year high experienced in 2019. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 2,785 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 10,063 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 15,289 being under 200%.

Chart 65: Ware County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (26.50%) were noted as being slightly more likely to be in poverty than males (20.60%), with individuals identifying as multi-racial (56.40%), Black/African American (32.40%), and Asian (28.90%) having higher rates than those identifying as White (17.70%) and American Indian (7.40%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (55.30%) were noted as being significantly more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (17.10%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (38.00%) than adults (19.50), and senior citizens (16.00%).

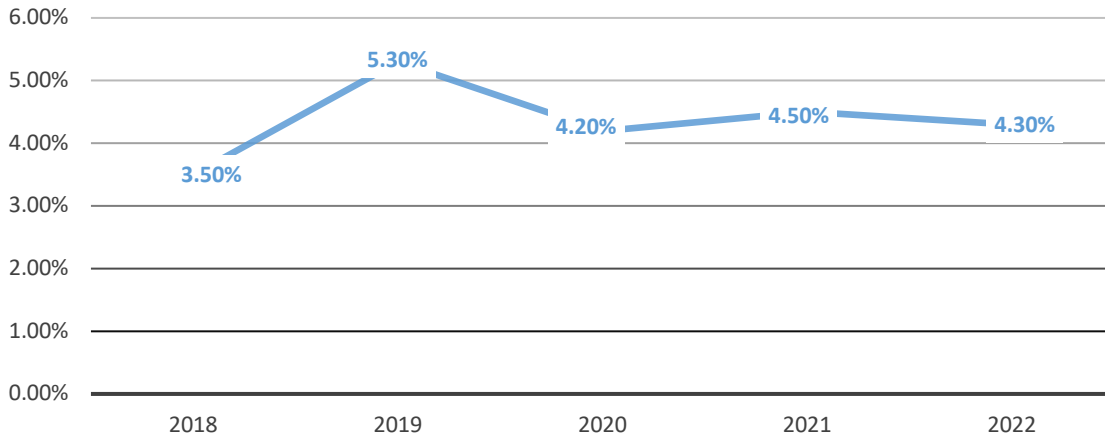
The county's household median income is \$44,138 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,920) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$74,318).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Ware County in 2022 was 12,909 an increase of 0.18% from the 12,886 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 578 individuals were noted as being unemployed, an increase of 29.02% from the 448 documented five years ago. Over the past five years, the unemployment rate has increased by 22.86%. It should be noted, however, that the rate peaked at 5.30% in 2019, partially recovering to 4.20% in 2020 and remaining someone unchanged over the past three years.

Chart 66: Ware County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total of 15,714 jobs were identified in the community, a surplus of 195 to accommodate the local labor force. The county’s median wage was identified as \$44,884 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 976 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 7.56% of the labor force and 20.45% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is health/social services, accounting for 16.03% of all jobs with a median wage of \$54,028 annually. This was followed by retail sales, accounting for 14.56% of all jobs with a median wage of \$33,644.

An estimated 69.26% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 1,788 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 83: Ware County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	833	\$43,316
Construction	1,115	\$57,980
Manufacturing	937	\$48,724
Wholesale	561	\$55,016
Retail	2,288	\$33,644
Transportation	702	\$46,488
Information	74	\$49,504
Finance/Insurance	277	\$60,788
Real Estate	96	\$41,964
Professional/Technical	200	\$51,012
Management	80	\$57,460
Administrative/Waste	528	\$38,532
Health/Social	2,520	\$54,028
Arts/Entertainment	178	\$15,548
Accommodation/Food	1,610	\$18,304
Federal Government	86	\$62,660
State Government	1,311	\$44,408
Local Government	1,659	\$43,368
Other/Unclassified	659	\$30,056
Total	15,714	\$44,884

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Ware County, an estimated 4,450 adults over the age of 25 (18.41%) have not completed high school. This is an increase of 7.83% from the 4,127 adults documented in 2018. An additional 9,638 local residents (39.87%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, a reduction of 2.44% from the 9,879 individuals (40.86%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 3,659 local residents (15.14%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 8.96% from the 3,358 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 10,416 members of the adult population (29%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 16,163 individuals (45%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 698 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 6,550 school-aged children residing in the local community, 2,350 of which (35.88%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 6,089 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (4,056) or high school (2,033) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Ware County School System is 75.8 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 86.45%, with 59.89% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 13.53:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 3.00% students were noted as having language barriers, with 18.70% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the nine schools in the county, five were ranked as average, two were ranked as above average (Wacona Elementary School and Ware County High School), and two were ranked as failing to meet state standards (Center Elementary School and Ruskin Elementary School). All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 84: Ware County School District

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Center Elementary School	GA-748-0296	12.64:1	59.9	F
Memorial Drive Elementary School	GA-748-3050	10.71:1	77.9	C
Ruskin Elementary School	GA-748-0396	11.17:1	51.1	F
Wacona Elementary School	GA-748-5050	18.97:1	89.5	B
Ware County High School	GA-748-0195	14.32:1	82.8	B
Ware County Middle School	GA-748-0395	12.90:1	78.4	C
Waresboro Elementary School	GA-748-3052	12.49:1	74.6	C
Waycross Middle School	GA-748-0295	13.51:	74.8	C
Williams Heights Elementary School	GA-748-0196	11.78:1	79.2	C

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 1,847 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 2,318 young children, a deficit of 471. This is a ratio of 1.26 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 33% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 85: Ware County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9501	N/A	Yes	9506	1.27:1	No
9502	4.25:1	Yes	9507	0.53:1	No
9503	2.24:1	No	9508	24.00:1	Yes
9504	0.21:1	No	9509	0.83:1	No
9505	0.80:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 86: Ware County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Be Bold Go Gold Refuel Program	Manor	(912) 287-2351	14y-17y
Be Bold Go Gold Refuel Program	Waycross	(912) 287-2351	14y-17y
Center Elementary Gator All-Star Academy	Waycross	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Center Y-Time	Waycross	(912) 287-2366	3y-5y+
Children First	Waycross	(912) 584-3271	0y-5y+
Clinch County Elementary Tutoring	Manor	(912) 487-5385	8y-11y
Clinch County Head Start	Manor	(912) 487-5304	0wk-5y+
Discovery Montessori School	Waycross	(904) 556-2028	13mo-5y+
GASA All-Star Academy WCMS	Pearson	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Hazzard Hill Early Head Start	Waycross	(912) 490-0201	3y-4y
Jesus and Jam	Manor	(912) 337-5342	5y-9y
K-South Martial Arts Academy Excite!	Manor	(912) 385-0208	5y-12y
K-South Martial Arts Academy Excite!	Pearson	(912) 385-0208	5y-12y
New Vision Learning Center of Alma Inc.	Pearson	(912) 632-2922	0wk-5y+
Pearson Head Start	Pearson	(912) 422-3493	3y-5y+
Precious Jewels Early Learning Center	Pearson	(912) 393-5130	0wk-5y+
Precious Little Jewels Daycare	Waycross	(912) 282-2662	0wk-5y+
River Kids - Student Ministries	Waycross	(912) 283-8773	3y-17y
Rochelle's Day Care Center	Waycross	(912) 283-7568	0wk-5y+

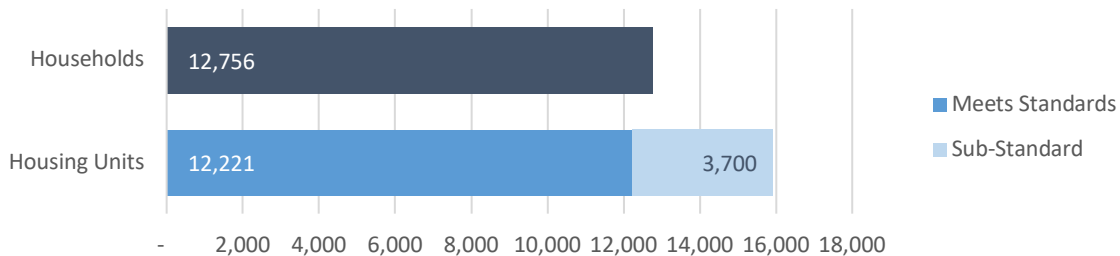
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Ruskin Elementary Gator All-Star Academy	Manor	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Ruskin Elementary School Y-Time	Manor	(912) 285-8662	5y+
Second Baptist Church Childcare	Waycross	(912) 283-0436	0wk-5y+
Southside Christian School	Waycross	(912) 285-5438	4y-5y
Summer Academy, The	Waycross	(912) 548-0513	8y-17y
Telamon Corporation-GA 31 Pearson	Pearson	(478) 365-4798	0wk-5y
The YMCA A.V. Kennedy Learning Center	Waycross	(912) 282-9951	13mo-5y+
The YMCA of Waycross Child Dev Center	Waycross	(912) 584-3831	0wk-5y+
Tiny Tots of Homerville	Manor	(912) 487-5115	0wk-5y+
Unison Behavioral Health-Garden Gate	Waycross	(912) 449-7869	0wk-13y
Unison BH-ROOTS Clubhouse	Waycross	(912) 449-7171	6y-17y
Ware County Head Start Center	Waycross	(912) 285-1844	3y-4y
Ware County Recreation Department	Waycross	(912) 287-4491	5y-15y
Waresboro Elementary All-Star Academy	Manor	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Waresboro Elementary Y-Time	Manor	(191) 228-5866	5y+
Waycross Middle Refuel Program	Waycross	(912) 285-8660	11y-17y
Williams Heights All-Star Academy	Waycross	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
YMCA Central Y-Time	Waycross	(912) 285-8660	3y-5y+
Young Men's Christian Association	Waycross	(912) 285-8660	5y-12y

Housing Profile

In Ware County, there are an estimated 15,921 housing units available to accommodate the 12,756 local households, a surplus of 3,165 units. However, 3,700 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 48,38% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 535 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 67: Ware County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$992 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$760 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 3,560 households (27.91%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 45.51% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 87: Ware County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Grove at Oakmont	LIHTC, Section 811	Waycross

Source: Affordable Housing Online

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health Profile

Data indicates that 21% of the county's adult population (5,680 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 3,516 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 4,869 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 72.4 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 4,630 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 1,757 were senior citizens, 2,455 were adults between the ages of 18 and 64, 337 were school-aged children, and 81 were under the age of five.

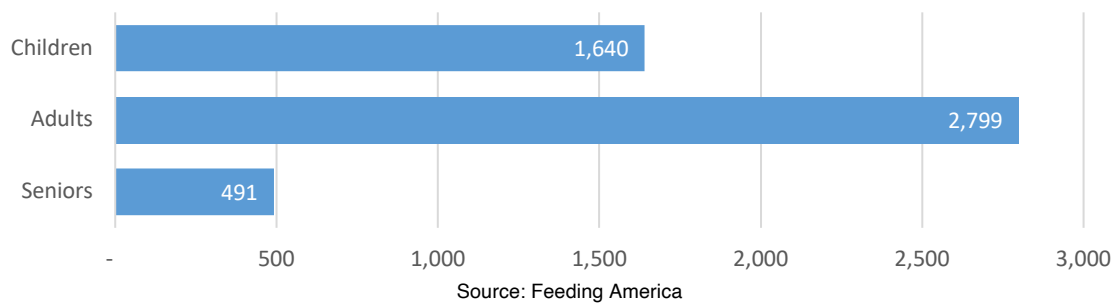
There are an estimated 1,560 patients for every physician in the community, which is somewhat comparable to the state average of 1,490. Among dentists, there were 1,900 for each provider, which is slightly higher than the state average of 1,880. Finally, there were 680 patients for every mental health provider as compared to 660 on a state level.

An estimated 5,911 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 27,797 with insurance, 15,683 reported use of a private plan and 15,369 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 4,930 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 1,640 are children, 491 are senior citizens, and 2,799 are working-aged adults. An estimated 2,376 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 18.63% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.36 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$298.39 per person each month, or 23.74% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,193.55 per month, equal to 94.98% of minimum wage.

Chart 68: Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 1,391 local households (10.90%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 172 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 400 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 21.37% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Family Relationship Profile

In Ware County, there are 3,802 households with children. An average of 470 children are born each year. An estimated 264 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 7 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 276 are headed by single males, 1,143 are headed by single females, and 290 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 154 foster children were in care during 2023, with 80 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 1,664 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (46.09%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 24.21, which is higher than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 871 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 8 murders, 13 rapes, 25 robberies, and 103 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

Ware County lacks sufficient antipoverty case management services to support individuals and families affected by poverty. With a poverty rate of 23.70%, addressing this gap is crucial for providing comprehensive assistance and helping residents navigate resources to improve their economic well-being.

The absence of financial management counseling services leaves residents without essential guidance on budgeting and financial planning. Access to these services is crucial for helping individuals manage their resources effectively and achieve greater financial stability.

Ware County faces a shortage of resources for emergency rent, utility, and medication payments, leaving vulnerable households at risk of housing instability and inadequate access to essential services during crises. Closing this gap is essential for ensuring that residents have the support they need in emergencies.

The deficit of childcare slots, estimated at 471, presents challenges for working families in accessing reliable childcare services. Addressing this gap is essential for supporting parents in the workforce and ensuring that children receive quality care and early education.

Ware County grapples with a deficit of safe housing units, with 535 units needed to meet the demand. Increasing the availability of safe housing options is essential for promoting residents' health and well-being and reducing housing insecurity.

Ware County lacks adequate public transportation options, particularly affecting the 1,391 households without access to a personal vehicle. Improving public transportation infrastructure is essential for promoting mobility and ensuring equitable access to essential services and opportunities for all residents.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent income (F)
4. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
5. Individuals are at risk of utility loss (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Ware County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Action Pact – Wayne County Senior Center	912-427-7797	Provides socialization for senior citizens (WARE)
Al-Anon	912-283-6916	Support for families of alcoholics (PIERCE, TOOMBS, WARE)
Alcoholics Anonymous	912-287-8023	help solve the common problem (PIERCE, WARE)
Atlantic Area CASA	912-722-7672; 912-876-3816	Support abused and neglected children in court. (EVANS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, WARE)
Autism Parent Group	912-287-2306	Support, information, and awareness to those who love someone diagnosed with autism. (PIERCE, WARE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Bethesda House of Mercy	912-283-8580	Addiction Recovery for women (PIERCE, WARE)
Boys to Men and Swans	912-281-2622	Works with boys and girls ages 8-18 to help transition to adulthood. Offers workshops, fieldtrips, & mentoring. (PIERCE, WARE)
Calvary Baptist Church	912-283-5051	Clothing Closet (PIERCE, WARE)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Coastal Pines Technical College	912-287-6584	(WARE)
Consolidated Men's Club	912-449-8800	(PIERCE, WARE)
Cord Of Three	912-282-0992	Mental Health Counseling (PIERCE, WARE)
Creative Outreach Solutions	912-282-1400	Educational and outreach programs. (PIERCE, WARE)
D.A.W.G.S (diabetes support)	912-283-6086	Diabetes Support Group (PIERCE, WARE)
DC Downtown	301 Brunei St, Waycross, GA	Food and Clothing, Tuesdays 4-8pm (PIERCE, WARE)
Diversified Resources (SOURCE)	912-285-3089; 800-283-0041	Community based services like meals, caregiver respite, personal care support, adult day health services, etc. (PIERCE, WARE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Easter Seal's Southern GA	912-283-4691; 877-541-7325	Services for individuals with developmental disabilities, respite home, residential options for adults, vocational training, and job placement. (PIERCE, WARE)
First Christian Church	912-283-5818	Food Pantry Thursdays 1-3 (PIERCE, WARE)
First Presbyterian Church	912-283-5077	Minimal groceries available throughout the week. Financial assistance Monday 10-11 (PIERCE, WARE)
First United Methodist Church	912-283-2077	Food Assistance Wed 9:30-11, Financial Assistance and clothing dependent on availability (PIERCE, WARE)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gls.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia	912-236-1571; 912-988-8658	Helping girls discover their strengths, passions, and talents (PIERCE, WARE)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Hooves to Freedom	912-550-3608	Therapeutic horsemanship (PIERCE, WARE)
HOPE Circle: Teen	912-816-5317	Support group for pregnant teens and teen parents. (PIERCE, WARE)
Kingdom Care	912-287-4434	Free healthcare clinic for the uninsured or underinsured. (PIERCE, WARE)
Magnolia House	912-285-5850; 800-33-HAVEN	Shelter for abused women and their children. (BRANTLEY, PIERCE, WARE)
Mary Street Mission	912-0338-8940	Offers assistance with food, utilities, medication, rent, gas Wednesdays 1-4 (PIERCE, WARE)
Okefenokee Heritage Center	912-285-4260	Exhibits, programs, and activities. (PIERCE, WARE)
Perinatal Health Partners	912-284-2571	Perinatal Case Management offered to pregnant females. (PIERCE, WARE)
Salvation Army	912-285-7237	Food, clothing, financial services Mon-Thurs 8:30-2:30 (PIERCE, WARE)
Satilla Advocacy Services	912-285-7355; 912-283-0987	Rape Crisis and Child Advocacy Center; Prevention education. (PIERCE, WARE)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
St. Joseph Catholic Church Loaves & Fishes	912-283-5221	Food, Clothing, financial services Thursdays 10-11:30. Call Monday for appt (PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
The Refinery	912-816-3806	Food Pantry 4th Tuesday 6-6:30pm (WARE)
The Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter	1-866-8REFUGE	Works with domestic violence victims and their children and sexual assault victims (PIERCE, WARE)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Unity Church of God	912-294-0462	Food Pantry Tuesday 1:30-3:30 (WAYNE)
Vocational Rehab	912-285-6078	Helps eligible individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities obtain and/or maintain employment. (WARE)
Ware County Food Bank	912-283-8634	(WARE)
Ware County health dept	855-473-4374	Health services at low or no cost (WARE)
Ware County Recreation Dept	912-287-4488	Programs and facilities for all residents (WARE)
Ware County Senior Center	912-285-9800	Provides socialization for senior citizens (WARE)
Ware County Transit	912-283-7800	0-10 miles \$3; 11+ miles \$3 +\$.50/mile (WARE)
Ware Ferst Foundation	912-288-6684	Provide books for all Ware County children from birth to 5 (WARE)
Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc	912-285-5850	Helps victims of family violence achieve safety and self-sufficiency. (WARE)
Waycross House of Hope	912-287-0377	Offers food and financial assistance Tuesdays 9-12 (PIERCE, WARE)
Winona Park United Methodist Church	912-283-7793	Canned and dry foods as needed (PIERCE, WARE)
YMCA	912-285-8660	Recreational facility for all ages. (PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Wayne County

Founded: 1803
Total Area: 645 square miles
County Seat: Jesup



County Overview

Georgia's twenty-seventh county, Wayne County, was established in 1803 in the southeastern part of the state, formed from land acquired from the Creek Indians through the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson in 1802. Encompassing 645 square miles, the county is named in honor of "Mad" Anthony Wayne, a general in the Revolutionary War.

Originally part of St. David's Parish when Georgia was an English colony, the area that now comprises Wayne County was predominantly pine barrens and wiregrass country. Despite being less desirable for settlement, some white settlers, including Jacob and Mary Musgrove, established a trading post at Fort Mount Venture as early as 1737. This fort, on the Sansavilla Bluff of the lower Altamaha River, was attacked and burned by Yamasee Indians in 1742, an event known as the Fort Mount Venture Massacre. Immigration was slow, and by 1810, Wayne County's population was only 676, consisting mainly of families who had settled for its isolation and less fertile land.

Jesup, the county seat, was incorporated in 1870, evolving from earlier county seats, Tuckersville and Waynesville. The first official courthouse was built northwest of Waynesville in 1860, while the current courthouse in Jesup was constructed between 1902 and 1903 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Jesup developed around a railway station and was named after General Thomas Jesup, known for his role in the Creek Indian War. Other incorporated towns in Wayne County include Odum, incorporated in 1907, originally a sawmill site, and Screven, also incorporated in 1907, known as Station Seven on the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad. Notable unincorporated communities are Broadhurst, Doctortown, Gardi, Grangerville, Madray Springs, McKinnon, and Mount Pleasant.

Doctortown, established on an old Indian settlement, became known after a post-Revolutionary stockade, Fort Defense, was built there. During the Civil War, Union General Sherman unsuccessfully tried to destroy the railroad trestle in Doctortown. Gardi's name is attributed either to a broken signpost of the Gardner family or to an adventurous naming story. McKinnon started as a Finnish settlement in 1921.

Wayne County's economy has long been rooted in forestry. Logs were historically rafted down the Altamaha River, and today, railroads transport timber, making Jesup an active railroad town. The Wayne County Historical Society's Heritage Center, situated in a restored railroad section house, showcases this history. Local pulpwood processing mills also contribute to the economy, and new housing developments are emerging in the forested areas.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Wayne County offers abundant activities. The Altamaha River and Lake Lindsay Grace provide water sports, fishing, and camping opportunities. Additionally, the county is home to three wildlife management areas: Little Satilla, Rayonier (shared with Brantley County), and Tyler Tract, spanning 105,000 acres of wilderness.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

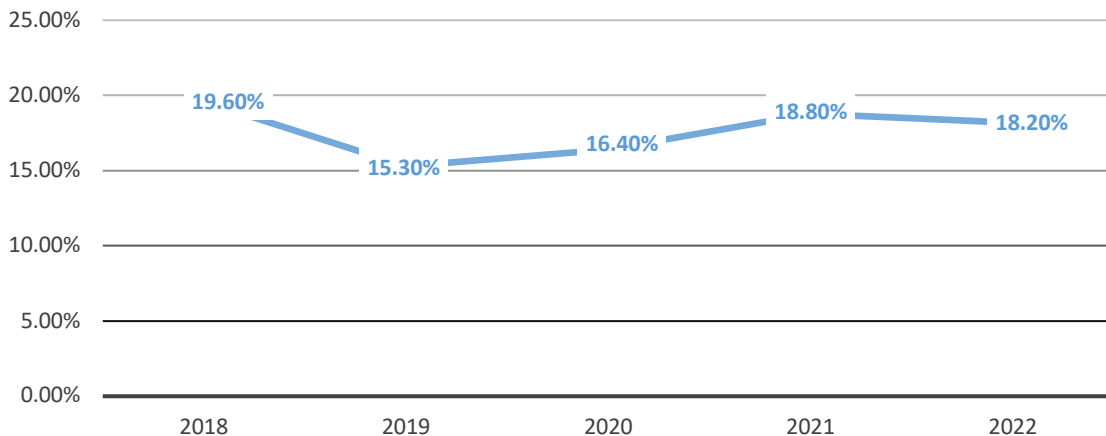
County Demographics

The United States Census Bureau identified 30,277 individuals residing in 10,754 households in Wayne County. This is an increase of 1.71% from the 29,767 documented in 2018. The community has a slightly higher female population (15,164) compared to males (15,113). The median age in the county is 39 years, with 4,906 residents being age 65 and older, and 1,708 being under the age of five. The largest portion of the population identifies as White (21,946), followed by Black/African American (6,112), multi-racial (828), Asian (293), American Indian (77), and Pacific Islander (9). An estimated 1,012 residents identified with a race not specified in the survey. There are 1,966 local residents that identify as Hispanic, as compared to 28,311 who identify as non-Hispanic.

Poverty Profile

In Wayne County, there are an estimated 5,150 individuals living in poverty based on the officially recognized income levels. This represents 18.20% of the local population, which is higher than the state (13.20%) and national (12.50%) averages. Although the poverty rate is 7.14% lower than the number reported in 2018, an increase of 22.88% was experienced between 2019 and 2021, potentially in association with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Data indicates that the community has once again started to recover, with a one-year improvement of 3.19% during the most recently reported year. Among the local residents living in poverty, an estimated 2,176 have incomes below 50% of the official poverty level, correlating with the definition of deep poverty. Expanding the count to program eligibility benchmarks, data indicates that 7,446 residents have incomes below 125% of the designated poverty threshold, with 12,637 being under 200%.

Chart 69: Wayne County Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

Females (20.90%) were noted as being more likely to be in poverty than males (15.10%), with individuals identifying as Pacific Islanders (100.00%) and Asian (87.90%) having higher rates than those identifying as Black (31.60%), White (14.60%), and multi-racial (2.10%). Likewise, residents with a Hispanic ethnicity (9.50%) were noted as being less likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanics (14.70%). Among the various age groups in the region, the rates were noted as being higher for children (26.10%) than adults (16.60%), and senior citizens (11.20%).

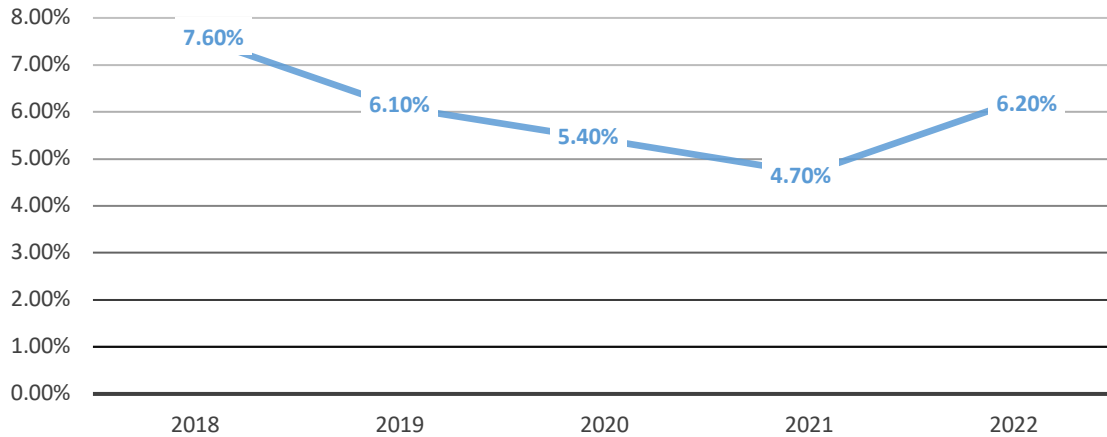
The county's household median income is \$49,847 per year, which is significantly lower than the state (\$86,169) and national (\$92,646) averages and inadequate to meet the financial needs of a single parent with one child (\$62,566) or traditional two-parent/two-child family (\$73,985).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Profile

The annual labor force estimates for Wayne County in 2022 was 11,130 an increase of 1.56% from the 10,959 documented in 2018. Among these, a total of 741 individuals were noted as being unemployed, a decrease of 13.33% from the 855 documented five years ago. The current unemployment rate of 6.20% is 18.42% lower than the rate of 7.60% documented in 2018. It should be noted, however that the rate has increased by 31.91% over the past year after four years of improvement.

Chart 70: Wayne County Labor Force/ Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

A total of 8,345 jobs were identified in the community, a deficit of 2,785 to accommodate the local labor force. The county’s median wage was identified as \$44,310 annually. Among the members of the labor force who are working, an estimated 801 were noted as having incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level. This accounts for 7.20% of the labor force and 22.16% of all low-income residents aged 16 or older.

The leading industry in the county is local government, accounting for 19.66% of all jobs with a median wage of \$44,310 annually. This was followed by manufacturing (16.72%) and retail sales (14.92%).

An estimated 64.78% of all jobs pay a wage lower than \$50,000 annually, with 789 paying less than \$20,000 each year.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 88: Wayne County Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Avg. Wage</i>
Agriculture	93	\$34,684
Utilities	30	\$92,820
Construction	805	\$58,084
Manufacturing	1,395	\$71,656
Wholesale	119	\$43,472
Retail	1,245	\$30,940
Transportation	110	\$50,232
Information	54	\$18,356
Finance/Insurance	230	\$50,336
Real Estate	73	\$34,788
Professional/Technical	166	\$37,908
Administrative/Waste	179	\$34,892
Health/Social	855	\$43,524
Arts/Entertainment	44	\$21,320
Accommodation/Food	735	\$17,524
Federal Government	369	\$80,912
Local Government	1,641	\$45,968
Other/Unclassified	202	\$30,160
Total	8,345	\$44,310

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adult Education Profile

In Wayne County, an estimated 2,945 adults over the age of 25 (14.53%) have not completed high school. This is a notable reduction (-18.78%) from the 3,626 adults documented in 2018. An additional 9,049 local residents (44.66%) secured a high school diploma without attending college, an increase of 11.28% from the 8,132 individuals (40.56%) documented in 2018. Finally, an estimated 2,862 local residents (14.12%) reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. This is an increase of 10.97% from the 2,579 documented in 2018.

Additional barriers include functional illiteracy, a barrier experienced by 8,175 members of the adult population (27%) and numeracy deficiencies, experienced by 12,716 individuals (42%). Although a strong majority of the local population speaks English proficiency, an estimated 462 residents continue to struggle with the community's predominate language.

Child/Youth Education Profile

There are an estimated 5,651 school-aged children residing in the local community, 1,580 of which (27.96%) live in homes with incomes below the federally recognized poverty level. Among these, 5,252 were noted as being enrolled in elementary (3,690) or high school (1,562) at some point during the year, with the remainder being enrolled in kindergarten.

The school system rating for the Wayne County School System is 73.2 (C), indicating the schools in the area are average. The graduation rate is 90.10%, with 67.47% of all students being college and career ready after they graduate. The student to teacher ratio is 14.36:1, which is below the preferred 15-25 range. An estimated 3.80% students were noted as having language barriers, with 16.50% having a disability of some type.

When looking specifically at the eight schools in the county, two were ranked as average, two were ranked above average (Odum Elementary School and Screven Elementary School), and three were ranked below average (Arthur Williams Middle School, Jesup Elementary School, and Martha Puckett Middle School). All student to teacher ratios were between or below the preferred range.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 89: Ware County District Schools

School Name	School ID	Ratio	Score	Grade
Arthur Williams Middle School	GA-751-0294	14.24:1	68.6	D
Bacon Elementary School	GA-751-0494	13.63:1	77.7	C
Jesup Elementary School	GA-751-1050	13.94:1	67.8	D
Martha Puckett Middle School	GA-751-0194	14.87:1	67.1	D
Martha Rawls Smith Elementary School	GA-751-0394	13.15:1	72.2	C
Odum Elementary School	GA-751-3050	15.80:1	81.7	B
Screven Elementary School	GA-751-1052	11.03:1	85.9	B
Wayne County High School	GA-751-0101	15.62:1	74.9	C

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Childcare/Early Education Profile

Data indicates that there are only 445 childcare slots to accommodate the community's 1,708 young children, a deficit of 1,263. This is a ratio of 3.83 children for every slot available. When looking at the specific census tracts within the county, 83% were labeled as childcare deserts, meaning that there are more than three children for every slot available.

Table 90: Wayne County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	22.25:1	Yes	9704	N/A	Yes
9702	25.59:1	Yes	9705	N/A	Yes
9703	0.73:1	No	9706	57.50:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

For those who are able to secure childcare, cost presents a secondary barrier. The average cost of infant care is \$8,530 per year, which is 56.56% of the minimum wage, and 15.50% of the median wage. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is only considered affordable if it is below 7% of the household income. Based on this standard, only 16.80% of all households in the state can afford childcare.

Table 91: Wayne County Childcare Centers

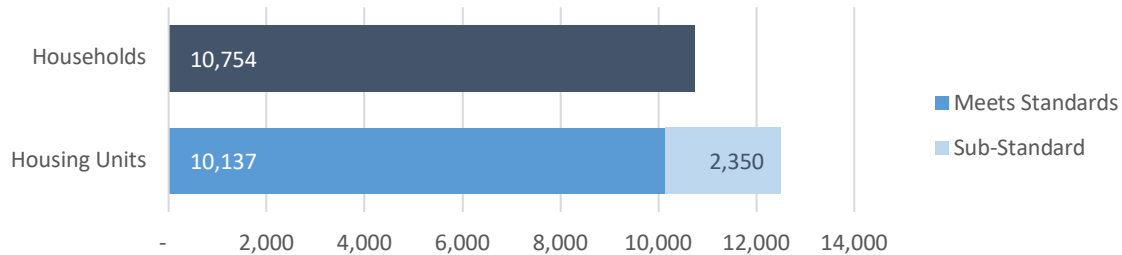
Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Barcello Fairyland Learning Academy	Jesup	(912) 559-2887	0wk-5y+
Boys & Girls Clubs of Altamaha Area	Jesup	(912) 588-0022	5y-13y
Boys and Girls Club of Altamaha Area	Jesup	(912) 294-1091	5y-17y
Country Kids Daycare	Jesup	(912) 530-9750	0wk-5y+
Elite Sports	Jesup	(912) 294-6323	5y-17y
Janie Little Gems Daycare	Jesup	(912) 385-2033	0wk-5y+
Kidz Express, Inc.	Jesup	(912) 256-3668	0wk-5y+
Little Light of Mine	Jesup	(912) 530-8100	0wk-5y+
Little Miracles Daycare	Jesup	(912) 588-0110	0wk-5y+
MyNana's Clubhouse	Jesup	(912) 559-2559	0wk-5y+
Solid Rock Christian Academy	Jesup	(912) 424-8316	4y
The Learning Place, Inc.	Jesup	(912) 588-0042	0wk-5y+
Wayne Christian Academy	Jesup	(912) 424-8316	4y-5y
Wayne Head Start	Jesup	(912) 427-4527	3y-4y
World Class Karate, Inc.	Jesup	(912) 427-0435	5y-17y

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Housing Profile

In Wayne County, there are an estimated 12,487 housing units available to accommodate the 10,754 local households, a surplus of 1,733 units. However, 2,350 of these housing units were noted as having substandard conditions, 47.02% of which are severe. Taking the sub-standard housing units out of consideration, it is estimated that a minimum of 617 households are living in homes that are not conducive to their well-being.

Chart 71: Wayne County Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

When considering the cost of housing, homeowners paid an average of \$1,227 monthly, which is lower than the state average of \$1,640. Rental costs were notably lower than mortgages at \$805 monthly, which is also more affordable than the state median (\$1,221). The financial strain for households is compounded by the state's average monthly utility bill of \$474.86. A total of 2,185 households (20.32%) were noted as being cost burdened, with 39.82% of these spending more than 50% of their household income on housing and utilities alone.

Table 92: Wayne County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Briarwood Apartments	Section 8	Jesup
Distinctive Care Homes	Section 811	Jesup
Dogwood Estates	Public Housing	Jesup
Fox Run Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Jesup
Sunset Pointe Apartments	LIHTC, HOME, Section 538	Jesup
Wildridge	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Jesup

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Health Profile

Data indicates that 20% of the county's adult population (4,584 individuals) report having poor to fair health. This number is higher than both the state (15%) and national (12%) averages. Among these, 2,979 local adults state that they have more than 14 days of physical distress each month, with 3,896 reporting more than 14 days of mental distress. The life expectancy for residents of the community is 73.3 years, which is notably lower than the state (77.3) and national (78.5) averages.

A total 4,908 local residents were identified as having a disability of some type, among these 1,584 were senior citizens, 3,023 were adults between the ages of 18 and 301 were school-aged children.

There are an estimated 2,500 patients for every physician in the community, which is more than double the state average of 1,490. Dentists were even more of a concern with 6,080 patients for every practitioner as compared to 1,880 on a state level. Finally, mental health was also noted as a concern with 3,800 patients being identified for every provider.

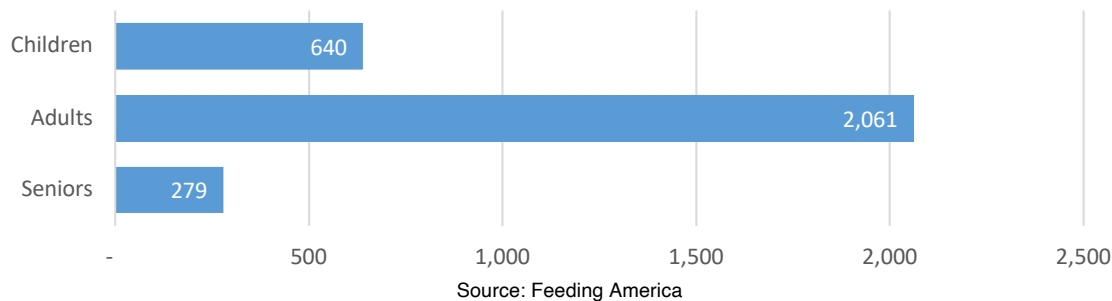
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

An estimated 5,462 local residents were noted as being uninsured. Among the 22,926 with insurance, 15,518 reported use of a private plan and 11,226 had public coverage.

Nutrition Profile

There are an estimated 4,220 food insecure residents in the county. Among these, 1,070 are children, 392 are senior citizens, and 2,758 are working-aged adults. An estimated 1,909 local households report receipt of SNAP benefits, representing 17.75% of the population. The average cost of food is \$3.21 per person, per meal. This is the equivalent of \$292.91 per person each month, or 23.31% of minimum wage. For a family of four, this is \$1,171.65 per month, equal to 93.23% of minimum wage.

Chart 72: Wayne County Food Insecure Individuals by Age (2022)



Transportation Profile

Data indicates that there are an estimated 731 local households (6.80%) without a vehicle in the county. Among these, 320 have at least one household member who is working. Further, an additional 366 households own a vehicle, but have more workers than vehicles, presenting a barrier to the establishment of employment. Transportation is critical for members of the labor force, as 27.47% of all workers travel outside of the county for work.

Family Relationship Profile

In Wayne County, there are 3,651 households with children. An average of 344 children are born each year. An estimated 168 of the births in 2022 were to unwed mothers, 9 of which were under the age of 18. Among the households with children, 253 are headed by single males, 726 are headed by single females, and 674 are headed by custodial grandparents. A total of 38 foster children were in care during 2023, with 19 new children being removed from their homes.

Community Profile

There are 1,556 veterans in the local community, a large portion of which (42.29%) are over the age of 65.

The official crime rate for the county is 14.42, which is higher than the regional average of 12.26. A total of 443 index crimes were committed in 2022, including 1 murder, 16 rapes, 3 robberies, 37 assaults.

Identified Service Gaps

Although it is acknowledged that additional gaps may exist, the items below represent significant areas where essential services and resources are lacking or insufficient when comparing prominent community needs and the resources available to address them.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Wayne County, with a poverty rate of 18.20%, faces significant gaps in essential services and resources. Firstly, anti-poverty case management services are lacking, leaving individuals and families without comprehensive support to navigate out of poverty.

Residents of Wayne County lack access to essential financial management counseling services, depriving them of guidance on budgeting, savings, and long-term financial planning. Closing this gap is crucial for empowering individuals to manage their resources effectively and achieve greater financial stability.

The shortage of resources for emergency rent, utility, and medication payments in Wayne County poses significant challenges for vulnerable households during times of crisis. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that residents have access to vital support services when facing unforeseen emergencies.

With a deficit of 2,785 jobs, Wayne County struggles to provide sufficient employment opportunities for its residents. Closing this gap is vital for reducing unemployment rates, improving economic prospects, and fostering financial independence among community members.

Wayne County faces a deficit of 1,263 childcare slots, making it challenging for working parents to secure reliable childcare services. Closing this gap is essential to support workforce participation and ensure the well-being and development of young children.

The shortage of 2,350 safe housing units in Wayne County highlights the pressing need for adequate housing options. Closing this gap is essential to address homelessness, improve living conditions, and promote community well-being.

With 2,185 households experiencing housing cost burdens, Wayne County lacks sufficient affordable housing options. Closing this gap is crucial to ensure housing affordability and prevent financial strain on residents.

Wayne County grapples with high patient-to-provider ratios across healthcare specialties, indicating limited access to healthcare services. Addressing this gap is critical to improve healthcare access, promote preventive care, and address the healthcare needs of residents.

The lack of public transportation options, particularly affecting 731 households without personal vehicles, limits mobility and access to essential services in Wayne County. Improving public transportation infrastructure is essential for promoting equity and enhancing community connectivity.

Need Prioritization

Based on feedback from members of the community, the organization consider focusing resources on the following issues over the next three-year period:

1. Individuals are housing insecure (F)
2. Individuals are food insecure (F)
3. The community lacks affordable housing units (C)
4. Individuals have poor mental health (F)
5. Individuals lack a Living Wage Equivalent Income (F)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Wayne County Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
America's Second Harvest of Coastal GA	912-261-7979	(WAYNE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Diversity Health Care Medical Services	912-877-2227	Provides a variety of healthcare services for families/individuals at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. (LONG, WAYNE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids. Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
Fair Haven - Domestic Violence Shelter	912-588-9999	12-bed emergency shelter for victims and children. (WAYNE)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	833-4GACAPS; decal.ga.gov	Assists low-income families with the cost of childcare while they work or go to school. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.glr.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Grace Assembly of God	912-427-9223	2nd Saturday 10-12 (WAYNE)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
New Life Pentecostal Church	912-256-6296	Food Pantry 3rd Saturday 9-12 (WAYNE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
Tabitha's Place	912-256-2113	Food, Soup Kitchen (WAYNE)



SECTION 7
REGIONAL PROFILE

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Demographics

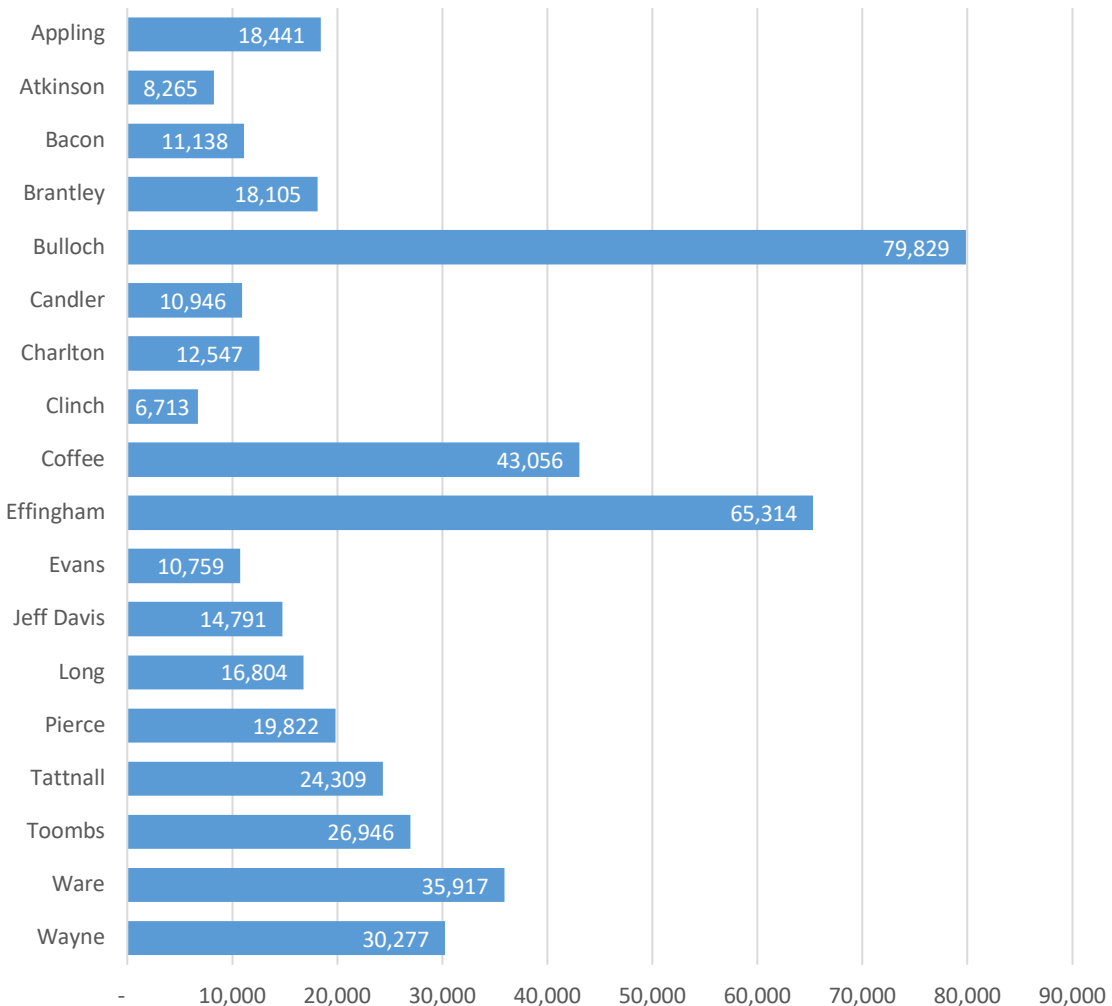
Introduction:

Assessing the demographics of a community's residents is a fundamental step in conducting comprehensive research. These demographic insights serve as a foundation to which all other elements can be compared, and a cornerstone for understanding the multifaceted dynamics of the community. Examining population counts, trends in population change, migration patterns, and the distribution of residents by gender, age, race, and ethnicity provides critical context. This data offers a lens through which we can gain valuable insights into how poverty intersects with the broader community, helping to inform targeted strategies and policies that are sensitive to the diverse needs and circumstances of local residents.

Total Population:

According to the most recent data published by the U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey), an estimated 453,979 individuals reside in 161,492 households throughout the region served. The largest communities included Bulloch (17.47%), Effingham (14.29%), Coffee (9.42%), Ware (7.86%), and Wayne (6.63%) counties.

Chart 73: Regional Population by County (2022)



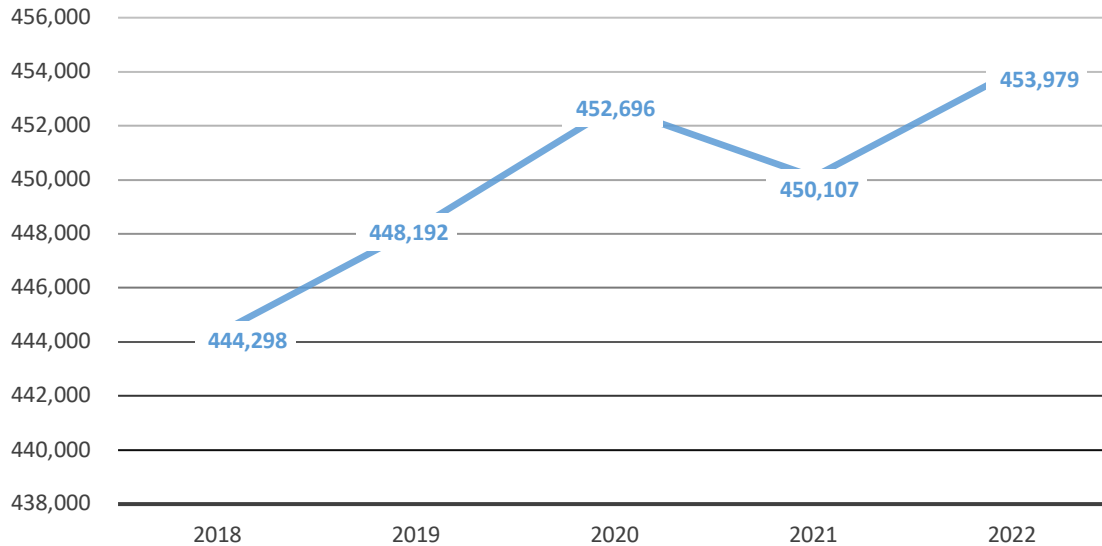
Source: U.S. Census Bureau APS (DP02)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Population Change:

Over the past five years, the region has experienced an overall population increase of 2.18% from the 2018 estimate of 444,298. While the population decreased by 2,589 individuals between 2020 and 2021, the upward trend resumed in 2022 at a rate of 0.86% annually, slightly below the average annual rate of 0.94% established prior to the population decrease.

Chart 74: Five Year Population Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

Population change is a significant indicator of a community's health and can have profound implications for its socio-economic fabric. An increase in population, as experienced in the service area, typically signals a vibrant economy capable of attracting new residents, potentially through job opportunities, affordable living, or other amenities. However, it's essential to scrutinize the nature of this growth. If the increase is primarily due to new births within the community, it can imply a younger demographic that will require investment in education and child services. Conversely, if migration—whether from other states or counties—is driving growth, it could mean a demand for more housing, adjustments in the job market, and additional infrastructure development.

Population growth has the potential for straining local resources, from schools and healthcare systems to transportation networks and public utilities. It can also stimulate the economy by expanding the labor force and creating more demand for goods and services, which can lead to job creation and business expansion. Moreover, demographic changes within this growth can affect community services and planning. For instance, an increase in diverse ethnic populations may necessitate cultural competence training for public service providers and educational systems to address the needs of a changing demographic.

In contrast, a decline in population, like the one experienced between 2020 and 2021, can lead to challenges such as economic contraction, loss of talent, and a reduction in the tax base, which can impact public services and funding. It might also reflect broader issues such as outmigration due to lack of opportunities, a decrease in birth rates, or other socio-economic stresses.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Population Change Analysis:

To better understand the population change, two major factors must be evaluated: migration and natural growth.

According to the most recently published data, the region experience total increase of 3,872 residents between 2021 and 2022, with the majority of this growth (92.10%) being attributed to migration. Although 32,082 residents relocated to the community during this one-year period, it was offset to a great degree by outward migration.

Natural growth, which is calculated by comparing births and deaths within an area during a specified timeframe, resulted in a regional population change of 306 residents, with 5,619 children being born and 5,313 local residents passing away.

Table 93: One Year Population Change Analysis (2021-2022)

Area	Total Change	Births	Deaths	Moved In	Moved Out
Appling	-68	216	229	438	493
Atkinson	-4	133	110	227	254
Bacon	-25	137	149	477	490
Brantley	+33	213	232	165	113
Bulloch	+194	878	708	10,558	10,534
Candler	+61	142	176	829	734
Charlton	+131	111	144	1,172	1,008
Clinch	-24	86	75	271	306
Coffee	+8	580	503	1,446	1,515
Effingham	+1,866	843	615	4,504	2,866
Evans	-2	122	121	894	897
Jeff Davis	+38	167	209	667	587
Long	+406	307	149	1,899	1,651
Pierce	+178	261	259	458	282
Tattnall	+1,098	276	272	3,567	2,473
Toombs	-10	393	368	2,014	2,049
Ware	-167	428	559	1,152	1,188
Wayne	+159	326	435	1,344	1,076
Region	+3,872	5,619	5,313	32,082	28,516

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02) | Georgia Public Health

On a county level, population increases occurred in eleven communities, with negative change occurring in the remaining seven. The most significant change was noted in Tattnall County, with an overall percentage increase of 4.73%, which was driven primarily by inward migration. This was followed by an increase of 2.94% in Effingham County, an increase of 2.48% in Long County, and an increase of 1.06% in Charlton County. The largest decrease was experienced in Ware County, at -0.46%, followed by Appling (-0.37%), Clinch (-0.36%), Bacon (-0.22%), Atkinson (-0.05%), Toombs (-0.04%), and Evans (-0.02%) counties.

Eight of the communities in the region experienced negative natural change, with the number of deaths outpacing births. These communities include Ware (-131), Wayne (-109), Jeff Davis (-42), Candler (-34), Charlton (-33), Brantley (-19), Appling (-13), and Bacon (-12) counties.

Negative migratory patterns were experienced in Coffee (-69), Appling (-55), Ware (-36), Toombs (-35), Clinch (-35), Atkinson (-27), Bacon (-13), and Evans (-3).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Population Migration:

Focusing on inward migration patterns, data indicates that the largest portion of new residents (73.26%) moved to their current county from another community in Georgia, with 24.18% coming from another state, and the remaining 2.56% relocating from another county.

Table 94: One-Year Population Migration Analysis (2021-2022)

<i>Area</i>	Change	Another County	Another State	Another Country
<i>Appling</i>	+438	364	62	12
<i>Atkinson</i>	+227	224	3	0
<i>Bacon</i>	+477	386	73	18
<i>Brantley</i>	+165	142	12	11
<i>Bulloch</i>	+10,558	8,748	1,687	123
<i>Candler</i>	+829	505	276	48
<i>Charlton</i>	+1,172	393	642	137
<i>Clinch</i>	+271	166	18	87
<i>Coffee</i>	+1,446	984	441	21
<i>Effingham</i>	+4,504	2,769	1,678	57
<i>Evans</i>	+894	791	98	5
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	+667	379	279	9
<i>Long</i>	+1,899	991	874	34
<i>Pierce</i>	+458	400	46	12
<i>Tattnall</i>	+3,567	3,252	253	62
<i>Toombs</i>	+2,014	1,477	506	31
<i>Ware</i>	+1,152	569	482	101
<i>Wayne</i>	+1,344	963	326	55
Totals	+32,082	23,503	7,756	823

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Gender:

The region’s current population is predominately male (228,822 individuals), with a ratio of 102 males for every 100 female residents. It should be noted that this ratio is higher than both the state (96) and national (98) averages.

Chart 95: County Populations by Gender (2022)

Area	Male	Female	Gender Ratio
Appling	9,309	9,132	102:100
Atkinson	4,082	4,183	98:100
Bacon	5,525	5,613	98:100
Brantley	8,970	9,135	98:100
Bulloch	38,876	40,953	95:100
Candler	5,334	5,612	95:100
Charlton	7,331	5,216	141:100
Clinch	3,337	3,376	99:100
Coffee	22,197	20,859	106:100
Effingham	32,382	32,932	98:100
Evans	5,425	5,334	102:100
Jeff Davis	7,389	7,402	100:100
Long	8,679	8,125	107:100
Pierce	9,942	9,880	101:100
Tattnall	14,137	10,172	139:100
Toombs	12,819	14,127	91:100
Ware	17,975	17,942	100:100
Wayne	15,113	15,164	100:100
Region	228,822	225,157	102:100
State	5,244,476	5,477,849	96:100
Nation	164,200,298	166,897,295	98:100

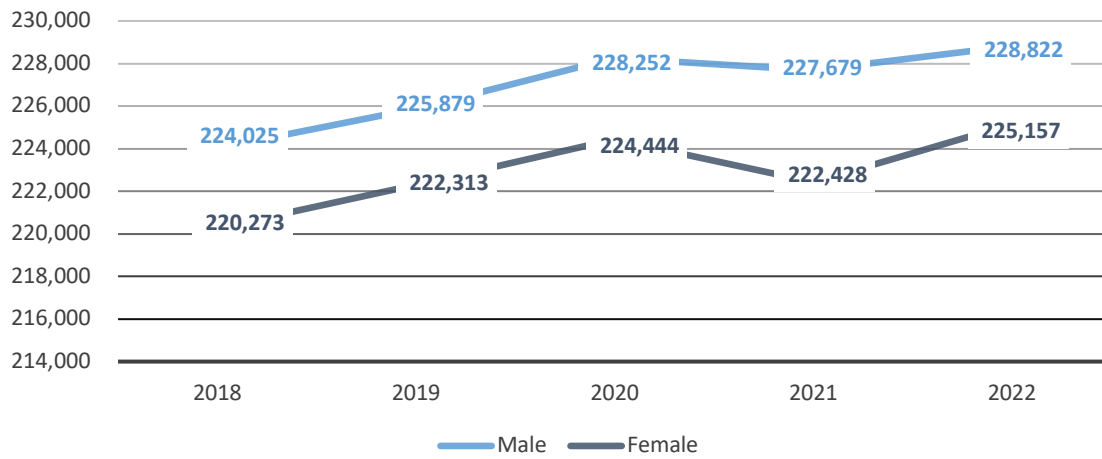
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

More than half (55%) of the region’s communities were noted as having gender ratios higher than 100, indicating that more males live in the area than females. The highest ratios were identified in Charlton (141:100) and Tattnall (139:100) counties, with the lowest being found in Toombs (91:100). Near equality was noted in Ware (100:100), Wayne (100:100), and Clinch (99:100) counties.

Over the past five years, the gender composition of the population has experienced a slow but steady trend towards balance. Initially, in 2018, the male population outnumbered the female population by 3,752. This gap has gradually narrowed, with recent reports demonstrating a smaller difference of 3,665. This gentle shift toward gender parity, marked by a 0.07% decrease in the gender gap, holds significance in several areas of community planning and development. It may influence the provisioning of gender-focused services, impact long-term economic trends, and shape policy decisions in sectors like health care and education. Recognizing and adapting to these changes ensures that programs and policies remain equitable and effectively meet the nuanced needs of the community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 75: Gender Population Trend (2018-2022)



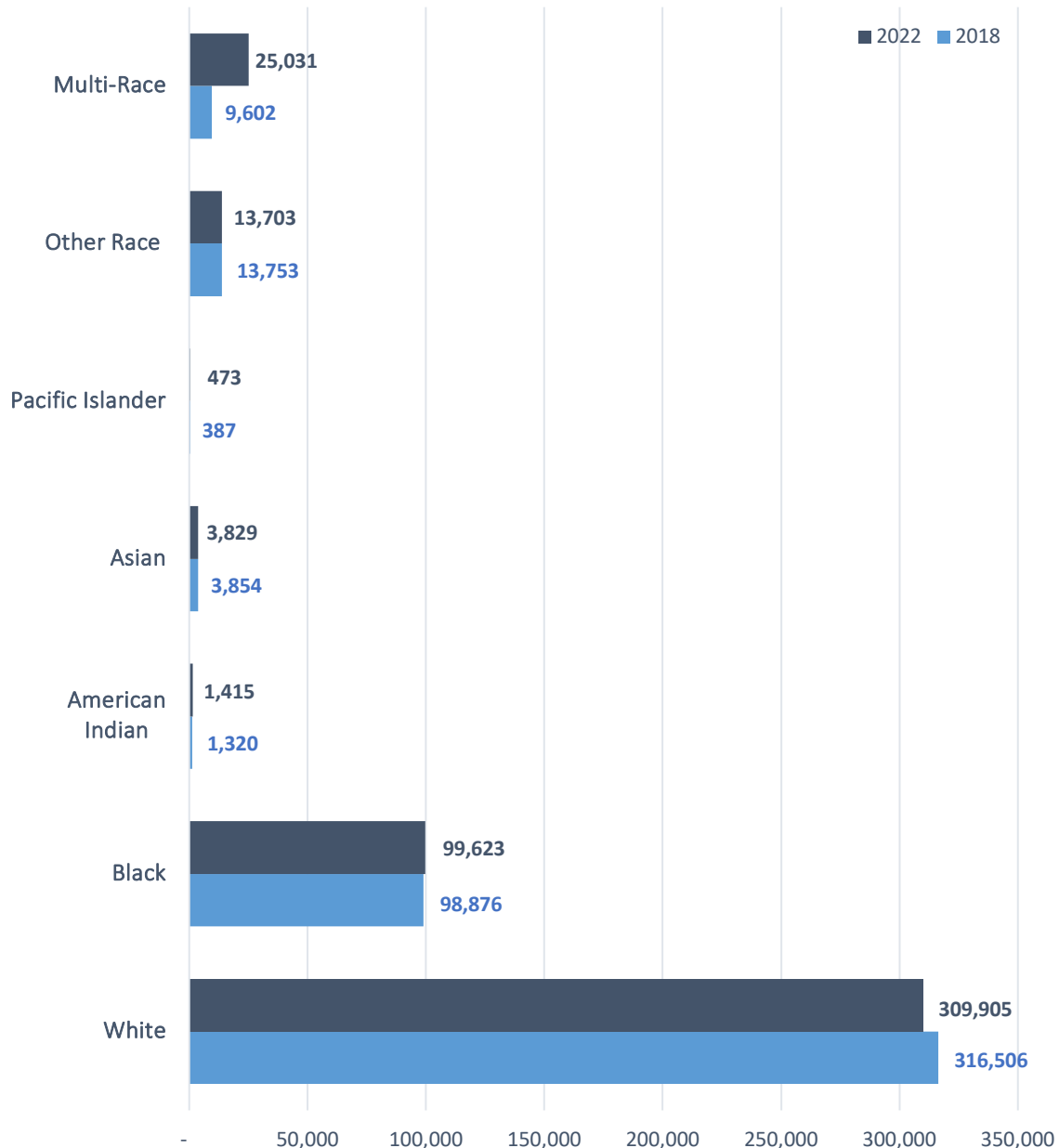
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Race:

Race, as a social construct, is an integral aspect to consider in poverty studies due to its profound impact on an individual's access to resources, opportunities, and equitable treatment within societies. Historically and contemporaneously, racial groups have experienced varying degrees of systemic advantage or disadvantage, which can be reflected in differing poverty levels. Establishing a baseline of racial groups among all residents allows researchers to discern patterns and disparities in socio-economic conditions that are often closely linked with race. This baseline is critical for developing targeted interventions and policies aimed at reducing poverty and promoting community-wide economic opportunity. By understanding the racial demographics of a population, stakeholders can better identify and serve the specific needs of each racial group, ensuring that poverty alleviation efforts are both fair and effective.

Chart 76: Racial Profile (2018/2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The most predominant racial demographic in the region are individuals who identify as White (68.26%), followed by Black/African American (24.94%), multi-racial (5.51%), Other Race (3.02%), Asian (0.84%), American Indian (0.31%), and Pacific Islander (0.10%).

Over the past five years, all racial groups other than White (-2.09%), Asian (-0.65%), and Other Race (-.36%) experienced increases. The largest population increases in the region were experienced by individuals identifying as multi-racial (+160.69%), followed by Pacific Islanders (+22.22%), and American Indian (+7.20%). Although increases were experienced by the African American population (+0.76%), the changes were modest.

Among the 1,415 individuals identifying as American Indian, majority reported an association with the Cherokee Tribe (247), followed by the Chippewa (114), and Sioux tribes (24).

Residents identifying as Asian, primarily reported association with Asian Indian (1,310), Chinese (675), Filipino (577), Japanese (230), Korean (259), and Vietnamese (213), with the remaining 565 associating with another Asian group.

Pacific Islanders were primarily noted as being Native Hawaiian (78) and Chamorro (49), with 346 stating they were associated with another area.

Among the growing multi-racial demographic, the largest portion identified as White and another unidentified race (10,312), followed by White and Black (5,319), White and American Indian (3,433), White and Asian (1,401), Black and another unidentified race (903), and Black and American Indian (513).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

While all counties in the region are predominantly White, some communities were noted as being more diverse than others. The most racially diverse community in the region was Evans County, with 44% of the community identifying with a race other than White. This was followed by Tattnall (43%), Long (42%), Candler (38%), Coffee (38%), Charlton (37%), Ware (37%), Bulloch (36%), Toombs (36%), Clinch (35%), and Atkinson (33%) counties. The least diverse communities were Brantley (7%), Pierce (14%), Effingham (23%), Bacon (26%), Wayne (28%), Appling (29%), and Jeff Davis (29%) counties.

Chart 96: Racial Profile by County (2022)

Area	White	Black	Am Indian	Asian	Multi-Race	Other
Appling	13,032	3,349	105	105	1,185	665
Atkinson	5,517	1,259	0	0	578	911
Bacon	8,229	1,679	28	70	908	224
Brantley	16,805	667	0	126	390	117
Bulloch	50,820	22,101	334	1,247	4,303	753
Candler	6,825	2,465	36	92	598	930
Charlton	7,897	3,601	75	99	729	146
Clinch	4,383	1,778	173	11	240	128
Coffee	26,766	12,375	96	330	2,734	755
Effingham	50,603	8,968	86	443	3,827	1,278
Evans	6,059	2,947	33	104	751	865
Jeff Davis	10,535	2,304	36	38	1,553	325
Long	9,781	3,966	38	130	1,623	1,208
Pierce	16,954	1,929	27	0	504	408
Tattnall	13,808	6,855	38	69	1,055	2,484
Toombs	17,345	6,436	72	229	1,741	1,123
Ware	22,600	10,832	161	443	1,484	371
Wayne	21,946	6,112	77	293	828	1,012
Region	309,905	99,623	1,415	3,829	25,031	13,703
State	5,820,019	3,373,948	37,920	465,487	638,881	378,659
Nation	218,123,424	41,288,572	2,786,431	19,112,979	29,142,780	20,018,544

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

Diversity is generally a vital element associated with a healthy community, as it fosters a rich tapestry of ideas, perspectives, and experiences. Diverse backgrounds and viewpoints promote innovation and creativity, as people with different problem-solving skills and approaches collaborate, leading to more effective and holistic solutions.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Ethnicity:

Ethnicity refers to the shared cultural, linguistic, or ancestral characteristics of a group of people. Unlike race, which is associated primarily with physical traits, ethnicity is tied more to social identity and is often linked with a common geographic origin, shared language, religious traditions, and historical experiences. Within the scope of this project, we will narrow our focus to the Hispanic ethnic group, a diverse collection of individuals with cultural and linguistic bonds to Spain and Latin American countries. The Hispanic identity is not defined by race but by a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, including language, traditions, and a collective history. The term Hispanic is inclusive of a vast array of cultural backgrounds and nationalities, each with distinct traditions and historical narratives.

Chart 97: Hispanic Population Trend (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%
Appling	1,803	9.77%	1,898	10.29%
Atkinson	2,031	24.57%	2,258	27.32%
Bacon	940	8.37%	968	8.69%
Brantley	392	2.11%	474	2.62%
Bulloch	2,894	3.87%	3,550	4.45%
Candler	1,252	11.56%	1,338	12.22%
Charlton	1,103	8.50%	754	6.01%
Clinch	345	5.12%	384	5.72%
Coffee	4,926	11.47%	5,297	12.30%
Effingham	2,483	4.23%	3,597	5.51%
Evans	1,256	11.71%	1,298	12.06%
Jeff Davis	1,754	11.70%	1,946	13.16%
Long	2,043	11.25%	1,965	11.69%
Pierce	966	5.04%	1,005	5.07%
Tattnall	2,779	10.96%	3,039	12.50%
Toombs	3,133	11.58%	3,254	12.08%
Ware	1,460	4.10%	1,633	4.55%
Wayne	1,853	6.23%	1,966	6.49%
Region	33,413	7.52%	36,624	8.07%
State	968,463	9.40%	1,078,457	10.06%
Nation	57,517,935	17.18%	61,755,866	18.65%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

According to the United States Census Bureau, an estimated 36,624 local residents reported having a Hispanic ethnicity. This represents 8.07% of the region's total population, an increase of 7.31% from the data published five years ago. This increase was comparable to the state (+7.02%), but slightly slower than the national trend. Increases in this demographic throughout the community could influence various sectors, including education, healthcare, and public services, necessitating a strategic approach to ensure that these services are culturally responsive and linguistically accessible.

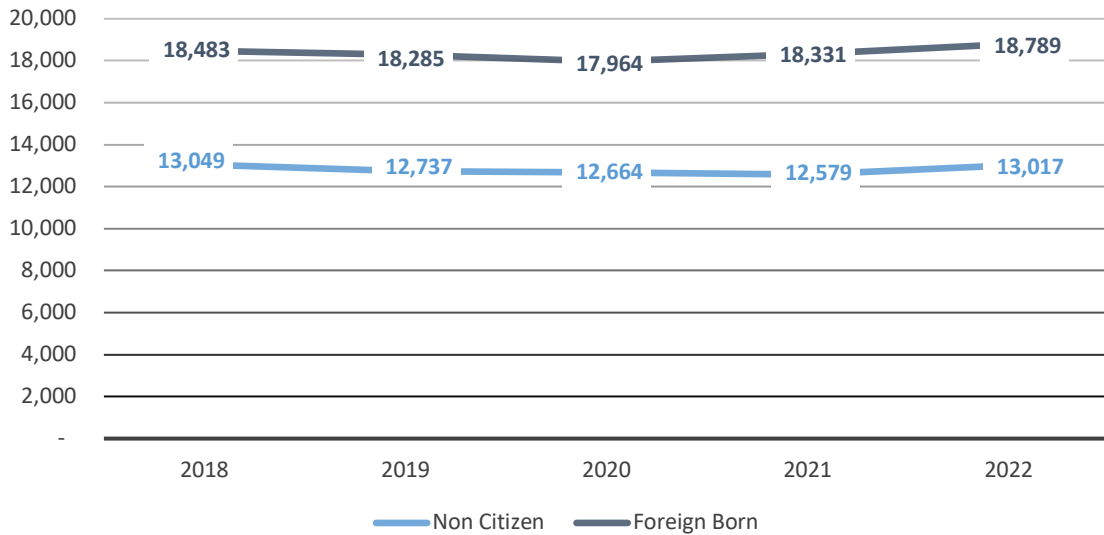
Among those who consider themselves Hispanic, more than half (69.06%) report that they were from Mexico, with smaller populations identified from Puerto Rico (10.86%), Cuba (4.41%), and other, non-identified, Latino countries (15.67%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Foreign-Born Residents:

Tracking data on foreign-born individuals and non-citizens can be crucial in poverty research due to the unique socio-economic challenges these groups may face. Foreign-born residents, including non-citizens, often encounter systemic barriers to employment, healthcare, and education, which can predispose them to higher poverty rates. Their legal status may limit access to public assistance programs and influence their ability to secure stable, well-paying jobs. Additionally, language barriers and unfamiliarity with the host country's cultural and legal systems can further complicate their integration into the economy. By examining the circumstances of these populations, researchers can better understand the full landscape of poverty, identify the specific needs of these vulnerable groups, and inform policies aimed at reducing poverty among all residents.

Chart 77: Foreign Born Resident and Citizenship Trends (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

The most recently published data indicates that an estimated 18,789 local residents, representing 0.42% of the regional population, were born in a country outside of the United States. Among these, well more than half (69.23%) were noted as being non-citizens.

While the number of foreign-born residents decreased by 2.81% between 2018 and 2020, an increase of 4.59% between 2020 and 2022 more than eliminated the decreases experienced. Overall, the number of foreign-born residents increased by 1.66% over the past five years.

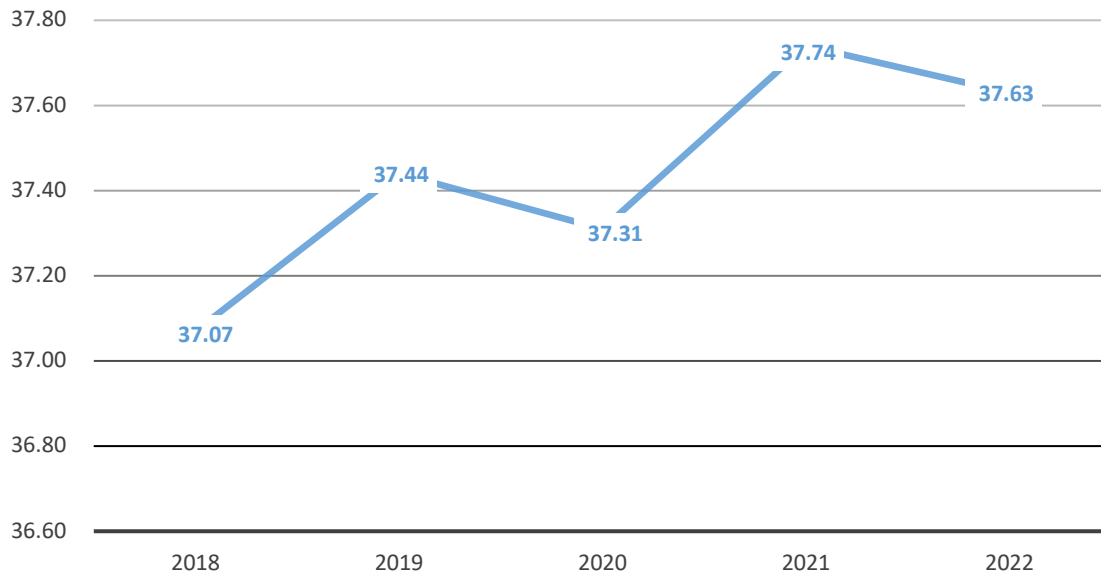
Similarly, the number of non-citizen residents decreased by 3.6% between 2018 and 2021, with an increase of 3.48% between 2021 and 2022. While the overall five-year change is a decrease of 0.25% over the past five years, the metric should be monitored closely as recent data indicates an upward trend.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Age:

Age, as a demographic variable, plays a critical role in understanding the dynamics of a population. It can provide insights into the stage of life most residents are in, which in turn affects housing, education, employment, and healthcare needs. Median age serves as a pivotal starting point, offering a snapshot of the population's age distribution by pinpointing the exact middle of the age spectrum.

Chart 78: Regional Median Age Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

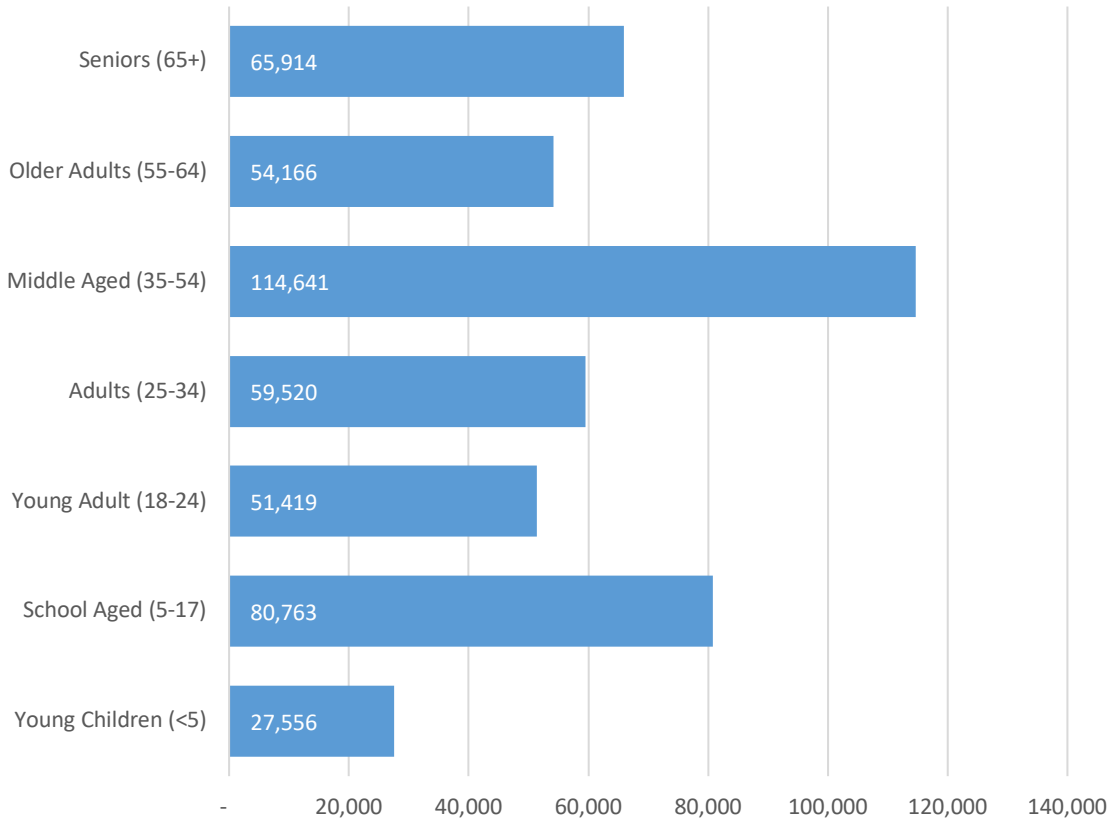
From 2018 to 2022, the median age in the region has experienced a subtle upward trend from 37.07 to 37.63 years, a percent increase of approximately 1.51%. This incremental rise in the median age suggests a gradually aging population. Such a trend can have several potential impacts on the region:

- **Healthcare:** A rising median age could lead to increased demand for healthcare services, particularly those related to age-related conditions. Healthcare providers and policymakers may need to adjust resources to meet these demands.
- **Workforce:** An aging population might indicate a shift in the workforce, potentially leading to labor shortages in certain sectors. This could necessitate retraining programs for older workers or efforts to attract younger individuals to the region.
- **Housing:** There may be a growing need for housing options that cater to older adults, including downsizing opportunities and assisted living facilities.
- **Social Services:** As the population ages, there could be a greater need for social services that support senior living, including transportation, community engagement programs, and in-home care services.
- **Economic Impact:** The consumption patterns may shift as the population ages, affecting local economies and possibly prompting a change in the types of businesses and services that are successful in the region.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Based on the provided data, the region seems to have a reasonably balanced age demographic, with a notable concentration of individuals in the middle-age bracket. The largest segment of the population falls within the 35 to 54 age range, accounting for over a quarter of the population, which may suggest a mature workforce and a stable residential community. The presence of school-aged children as the second largest group indicates a significant number of families with children, which often correlates with an active educational system and community services geared toward youth. Senior citizens and older adults together form over a quarter of the population, which points to an established elderly community, possibly indicating a need for healthcare and senior services.

Chart 79: Population by Age Group (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

Overall, the age distribution points towards a diverse community, with a strong presence of working-age individuals that could be contributing to a stable local economy, alongside vibrant youth and substantial elderly populations that add to the social fabric of the region.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The age group percentage trend from 2018 to 2022 suggests the region has a population that is gradually aging, with seniors increasing and young children decreasing. This data for each age group will be evaluated in more depth on the following pages.

Chart 80: Age Group Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



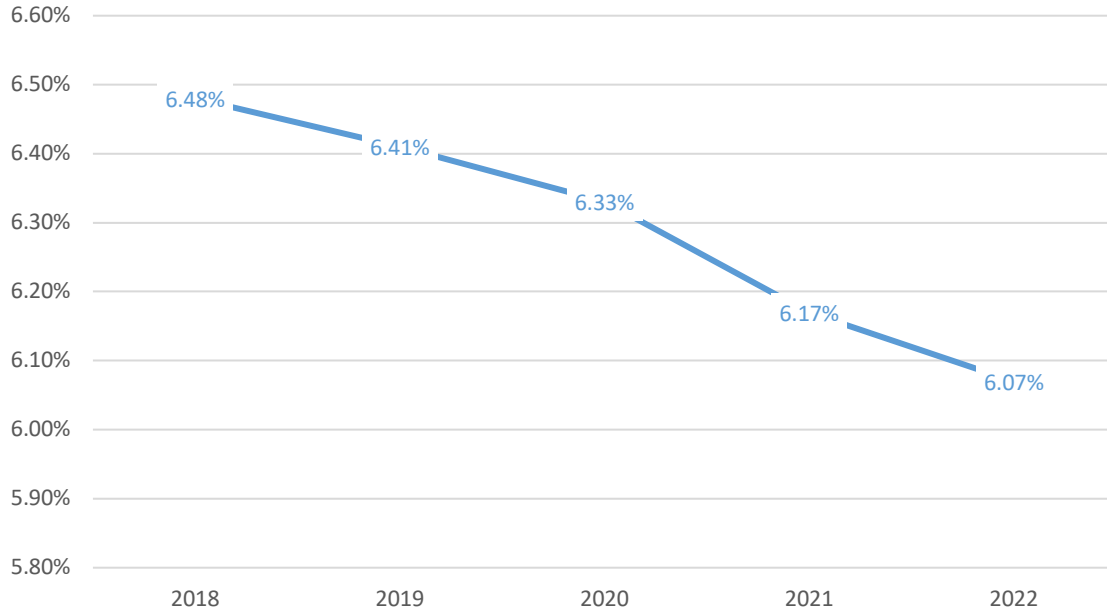
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Young Children (Age 0-4):

Between the ages of birth and four years of age, young children experience rapid cognitive, emotional, and physical development, laying the foundation for future learning and growth. This crucial stage is marked by significant milestones in language acquisition, social skills, and early education, making it a vital period for nurturing and structured learning experiences.

Chart 81: Young Children Population Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

Over the past five years, the young child population has decreased by 6.33%. This decrease has remained consistent throughout the five-year period evaluated, with a faster rate of change (-2.53%) being experienced in 2021 than in 2022 (-1.62%), 2019 (-1.25%), and 2018 (-1.08%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

While the negative trend may be concerning, it should be noted that the regional change (-6.33%) is slower than those observed on state (-6.91%) and national (-6.51%) levels.

Chart 98: Young Children Population Trend by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%	Change
Appling	1,206	6.54%	1,146	6.21%	-5.05%
Atkinson	527	6.38%	512	6.19%	-2.98%
Bacon	809	7.21%	779	6.99%	-3.05%
Brantley	1,106	5.96%	1,077	5.95%	-0.17%
Bulloch	4,235	5.66%	4,524	5.67%	+0.18%
Candler	629	5.81%	724	6.61%	+13.77%
Charlton	670	5.16%	575	4.58%	-11.24%
Clinch	565	8.38%	432	6.44%	-23.15%
Coffee	2,914	6.78%	2,882	6.69%	+1.33%
Effingham	3,936	6.71%	4,188	6.41%	-4.47%
Evans	781	7.28%	646	6.00%	-17.58%
Jeff Davis	1,027	6.85%	829	5.60%	-18.25%
Long	1,423	7.84%	990	5.89%	-24.87%
Pierce	1,207	6.30%	1,262	6.37%	+1.11%
Tattnall	1,376	5.43%	1,095	4.50%	-17.13%
Toombs	1,919	7.09%	1,869	6.94%	-2.12%
Ware	2,411	6.77%	2,318	6.45%	-4.73%
Wayne	2,062	6.93%	1,708	5.64%	-18.61%
Region	28,803	6.48%	27,556	6.07%	-6.33%
State	655,810	6.37%	635,299	5.93%	-6.91%
Nation	19,836,850	6.14%	19,004,925	5.74%	-6.51%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

On a county level, more than three quarters (77.78%) of the communities in the region experienced decreases, with significant changes occurring in Long (-24.87%), Clinch (-23.15%), Wayne (-18.61%), Jeff Davis (-18.25%), Evans (-17.58%), Tattnall (-17.13%), and Charlton (-11.24%) counties.

Among the four counties experiencing increases, Candler had the highest rate of change (+13.77%), followed by Coffee (+1.33%), Pierce (+1.11%), and Bulloch (+0.18%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Although exact official age breakdowns are not available, estimates can be obtained by comparing the number of children in the young child age group to the number of births recorded in the region over the past five years. Although not exact, this method provides a statistical approximation to understand the age composition within this critical developmental category.

Table 99: Estimated Young Children by Age Counts (2022)

<i>Area</i>	<1	1	2	3	4
<i>Appling</i>	228	225	222	235	236
<i>Atkinson</i>	108	91	99	111	103
<i>Bacon</i>	146	153	175	140	165
<i>Brantley</i>	214	208	209	203	243
<i>Bulloch</i>	906	885	883	924	926
<i>Candler</i>	147	159	143	145	130
<i>Charlton</i>	116	121	115	113	111
<i>Clinch</i>	80	89	94	95	74
<i>Coffee</i>	591	574	559	570	588
<i>Effingham</i>	856	871	820	823	817
<i>Evans</i>	124	120	143	141	118
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	154	146	174	192	163
<i>Long</i>	211	195	184	192	208
<i>Pierce</i>	268	245	228	247	275
<i>Tattnall</i>	238	229	210	207	210
<i>Toombs</i>	392	361	386	374	357
<i>Ware</i>	422	447	475	490	484
<i>Wayne</i>	323	341	339	354	350
Region	5,526	5,458	5,458	5,556	5,558

Source: U852.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05) | Georgia Public Health

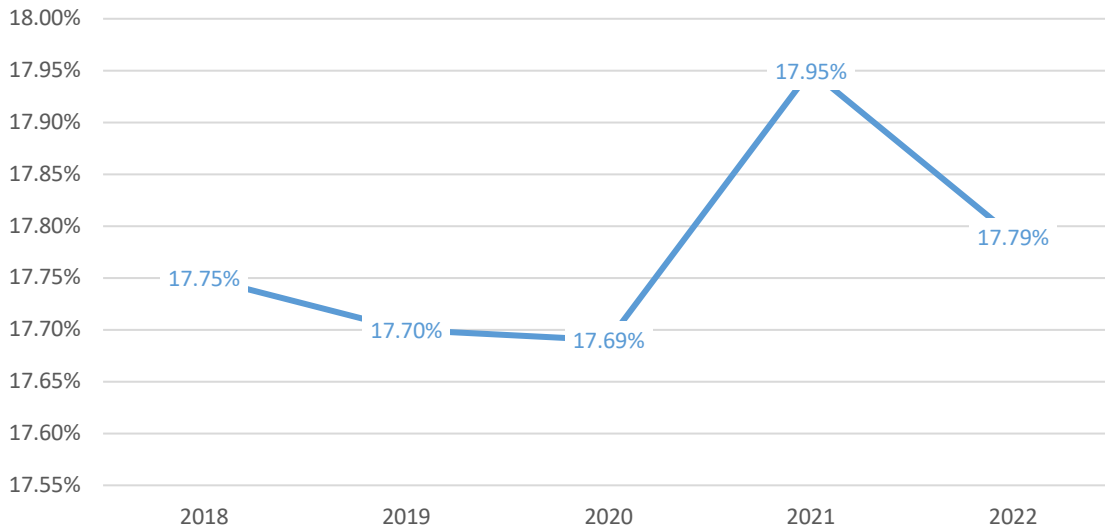
According to these estimates, the young child distribution is somewhat equally distributed by age, with a slightly higher number being ages 4 (20.17%) and 3 (20.16%) than under the age of 1 (20.05%), or ages 1 and 2 (19.81% each).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

School-Aged Children (Age 5-17):

As children transition from early childhood into their school-age years, they enter a dynamic period of growth that encompasses educational, social, and emotional development. Between the ages of five and eighteen, children embark on a journey through primary and secondary education, where they not only acquire fundamental academic knowledge but also develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a sense of identity. It's a transformative era where peer relationships, extracurricular activities, and increasing autonomy play pivotal roles in shaping their understanding of the world and their place within it. This age group's experiences in the classroom and beyond are instrumental in laying the groundwork for their future endeavors in higher education, vocational pursuits, and personal development.

Chart 82: School-Aged Children Population Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP 05)

An estimated 3880,763 school-aged children reside in the region served by the organization. After several years of decreases (-0.34%), the region experienced a notable increase of 1.47% in 2021. These were mostly negated by a decrease of -0.89% in 2022, leaving the community with a five-year increase of only 0.23%.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A deeper analysis of the data reveals that while the age group experienced a slight increase (+0.23%) over the past five years when compared to the total population, decreases were experienced on state (-2.29%) and national (-1.62%) levels.

Chart 100: School-Aged Children Population Trend by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%	Change
Appling	3,403	18.44%	3,401	18.44%	No Change
Atkinson	1,737	21.02%	1,611	19.49%	-7.28%
Bacon	2,060	18.35%	2,069	18.58%	+1.25%
Brantley	3,376	18.19%	3,012	16.64%	-8.52%
Bulloch	10,757	14.38%	11,393	14.27%	-0.76%
Candler	2,087	19.28%	1,954	17.85%	-7.42%
Charlton	1,805	13.90%	1,720	13.71%	-1.37%
Clinch	1,245	18.46%	1,250	18.62%	-0.87%
Coffee	7,636	17.77%	7,598	17.65%	-0.68%
Effingham	11,796	20.10%	13,070	20.01%	-0.45%
Evans	2,059	19.19%	2,164	20.11%	+4.79%
Jeff Davis	3,019	20.14%	3,015	20.38%	+1.19%
Long	3,680	20.27%	3,625	21.57%	+6.41%
Pierce	3,609	18.83%	3,622	18.27%	-2.97%
Tattnall	3,863	15.24%	3,836	15.78%	+3.54%
Toombs	5,297	19.58%	5,222	19.38%	-1.02%
Ware	6,135	17.23%	6,550	18.24%	+5.86%
Wayne	5,308	17.83%	5,651	18.66%	+4.66%
Region	78,872	17.75%	80,763	17.79%	+0.23%
State	1,845,485	17.92%	1,877,246	17.51%	-2.29%
Nation	53,716,390	16.64%	54,208,780	16.37%	-1.62%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

On a county level, decreases were experienced in more than half (55.56%) of the communities in the region. The largest decrease was identified in Brantley County (-8.52%), followed closely by Candler (-7.42%) and Atkinson (-7.28%) counties.

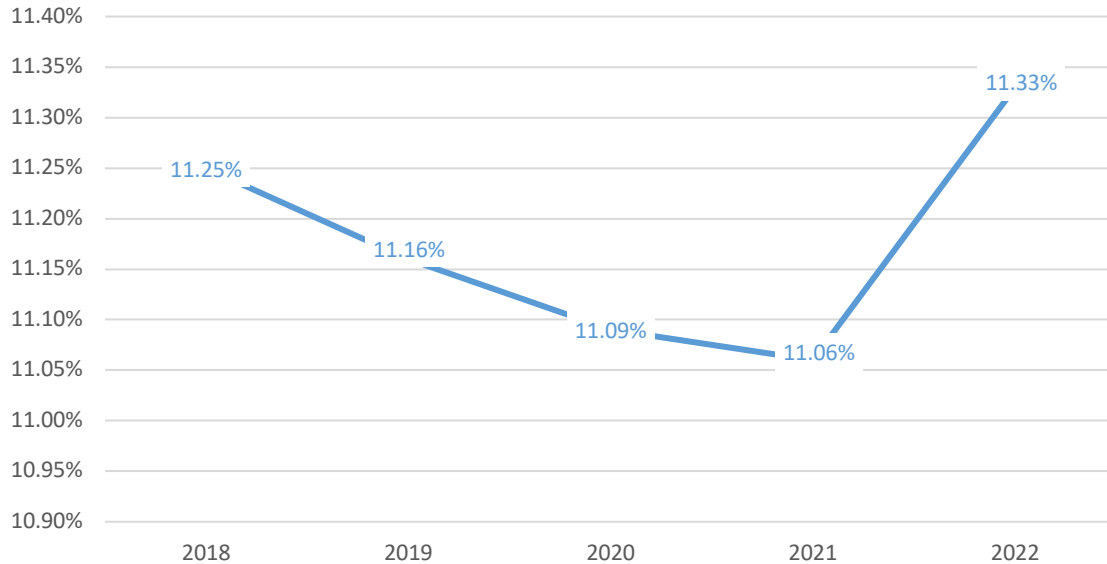
The communities experiencing increases included Long (+6.41%), Ware (+5.86%), Evans (+4.79%), Wayne (+4.66%), Tattnall (+3.54%), Bacon (+1.25%), and Jeff Davis (+1.19%) counties. No change occurred in Appling County.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Young Adults (Age 18-24):

The years from eighteen to twenty-four are a significant transition phase from adolescence to full-fledged adulthood. Young adults navigate complex life decisions regarding their careers, higher education, and personal relationships. During this pivotal time, they often experience newfound independence, leaving the structured environment of school for the wider arenas of university life or the workforce. It's a time characterized by exploration, self-discovery, and the initial steps towards long-term life goals. The choices made and the experiences gained in this life stage can profoundly shape their future paths and identities.

Chart 83: Young Adult Population Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

Data indicates that there are an estimated 51,419 young adults residing in the evaluated region, representing 11.33% of the total population, an increase of 0.71% over the five-year period evaluated. It should be noted that the increase was not consistent throughout the period evaluated. Between 2018 and 2021, the percentage actually decreased by 1.69%, with an upward change of 2.44% occurring in 2022.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

On a state level, no percentage change was experienced among this population during the period evaluated, however, the national data indicates a negative trend (-1.25%) contrary to the positive regional trend (+0.71%).

Chart 101: Young Adult Population Trend by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%	Change
Appling	1,522	8.25%	1,611	8.74%	+5.94%
Atkinson	771	9.33%	674	8.15%	-12.65%
Bacon	930	8.28%	966	8.67%	+4.71%
Brantley	1,547	8.33%	1,434	7.92%	-4.92%
Bulloch	18,318	24.50%	18,874	23.64%	-3.51%
Candler	924	8.53%	950	8.68%	+1.76%
Charlton	1,468	11.31%	1,250	9.96%	-11.94%
Clinch	435	6.45%	520	7.75%	+20.16%
Coffee	4,504	10.48%	3,997	9.28%	-11.45%
Effingham	4,892	8.34%	5,365	8.21%	-1.56%
Evans	658	6.13%	974	9.05%	+47.63%
Jeff Davis	1,240	8.27%	1,230	8.32%	+0.60%
Long	1,730	9.53%	1,389	8.27%	-13.22%
Pierce	1,361	7.10%	1,691	8.53%	+20.14%
Tattnall	2,282	9.00%	2,405	9.89%	+9.89%
Toombs	2,200	8.13%	2,558	9.49%	+16.73%
Ware	2,874	8.07%	2,876	8.01%	-0.74%
Wayne	2,347	7.88%	2,655	8.77%	+11.29%
Region	50,003	11.25%	51,419	11.33%	+0.71%
State	1,009,642	9.80%	1,051,160	9.80%	No Change
Nation	30,903,719	9.57%	31,282,896	9.45%	-1.25%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

On a county level, several large changes were identified. The most extreme change was noted in Evans County, with an increase of 47.63% over the past five years. This was followed by increases in Clinch (+20.16%), Pierce (+20.14%), Toombs (+16.73%), Wayne (+11.29%), Tattnall (+9.89%), Appling (+5.94%), Bacon (+4.71%), Candler (+1.76%), and Jeff Davis (+0.60%) counties.

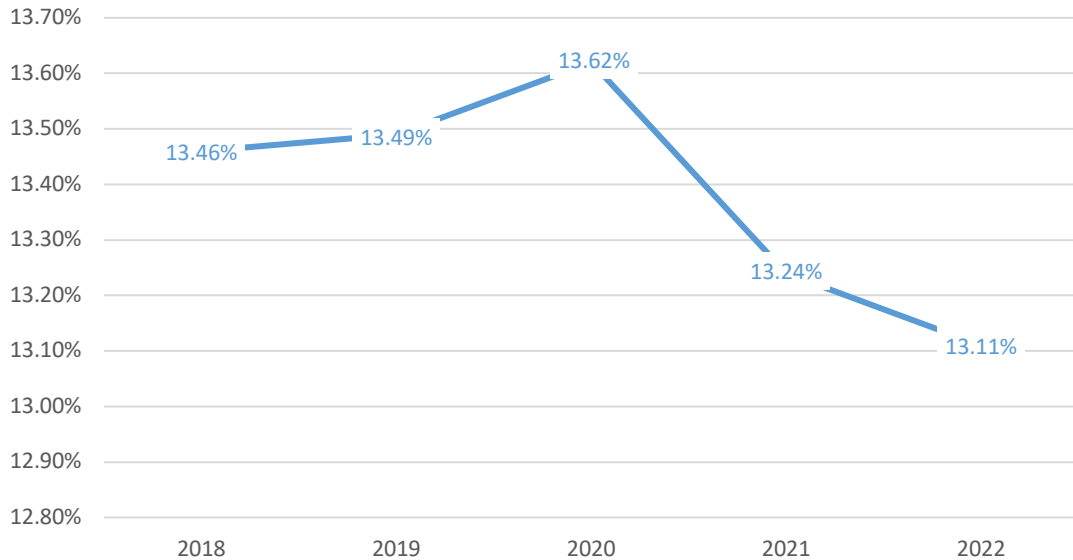
The most significant decrease was identified in Long County (-13.22%, followed by Atkinson (-12.65%), Charlton (-11.94%), Coffee (-11.45%), Brantley (-4.92%), Bulloch (-3.51%), Effingham (-1.56%), and Ware (-0.74%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Adults (Age 25-34):

This decade in life typically involves significant milestones for many individuals, such as advancing in careers, forming long-term partnerships, or starting families. Adults in this age group are often settling into their chosen career paths, looking for stability, and making strides towards financial independence. This period is also marked by a deeper understanding of personal and professional relationships, as well as the impact of their contributions to society. The focus often shifts towards building a sustainable future and laying down roots, whether through homeownership, community involvement, or starting a family.

Chart 84: Adult Population Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

Although this age group experienced an increase of 1.19% as a portion of the total population between 2018 and 2020, a notable decrease between 2020 and 2022 of 3.74% resulted in an overall five-year trend of -2.60%.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When compared to changes on a state (-0.22%) and national (-0.65%), the regional trend (-2.60%) was determined to be notably faster, with several communities being drastically higher.

Chart 102: Adult Population Trend by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%	Change
Appling	2,248	12.18%	2,054	11.14%	-8.54%
Atkinson	1,059	12.81%	1,239	14.99%	+17.02%
Bacon	1,503	13.39%	1,229	11.03%	-17.63%
Brantley	2,122	11.43%	2,055	11.35%	-0.70%
Bulloch	10,218	13.66%	10,848	13.59%	-0.51%
Candler	1,260	11.64%	1,082	9.88%	-15.12%
Charlton	1,538	11.85%	1,976	15.75%	+31.91%
Clinch	963	14.28%	896	13.35%	-6.51%
Coffee	5,878	13.68%	6,401	14.87%	+8.70%
Effingham	7,908	13.47%	8,673	13.28%	-1.41%
Evans	1,550	14.45%	1,303	12.11%	-16.19%
Jeff Davis	1,938	12.93%	1,848	12.49%	-3.40%
Long	2,963	16.32%	2,613	15.55%	-4.72%
Pierce	2,186	11.41%	2,181	11.00%	-3.59%
Tattnall	4,082	16.10%	3,582	14.74%	-8.45%
Toombs	3,673	13.58%	3,052	11.33%	-16.57%
Ware	4,686	13.16%	4,965	13.82%	+5.02%
Wayne	4,043	13.58%	3,523	11.64%	-14.29%
Region	59,818	13.46%	59,520	13.11%	-2.60%
State	1,419,784	13.79%	1,475,136	13.76%	-0.22%
Nation	44,567,976	13.80%	45,388,153	13.71%	-0.65%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

Among the region's 18 counties, 14 experienced decreases. The largest decrease was found in Bacon County (-17.63%), followed by Toombs (-16.57%), Evans (-16.19%), Candler (-15.12%), Wayne (-14.29%), Appling (-8.54%), Tattnall (-8.45%), Clinch (-6.51%), Long (-4.72%), Pierce (-3.59%), Jeff Davis (-3.40%), Brantley (-0.70%), and Bulloch (-0.51%) counties.

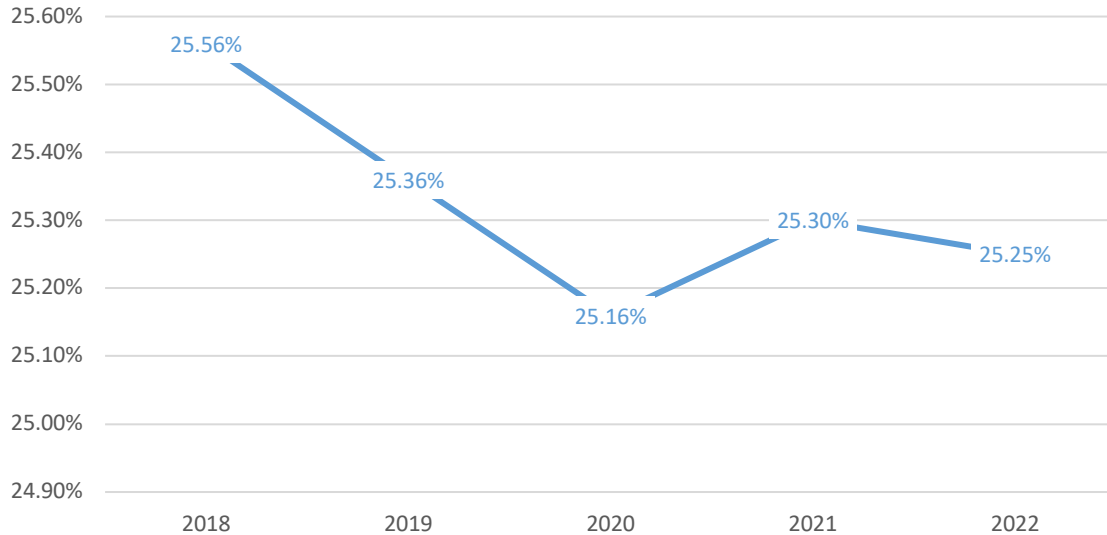
Increases were identified in Charlton (+31.91%), Atkinson (+17.02%), Coffee (+8.70%), and Ware (+5.02%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Middle-Aged Adults (35-54):

Often considered the backbone of the workforce and family units, middle-aged adults carry substantial responsibilities in supporting younger and older generations alike. This stage is characterized by peak career development, leadership roles, and the nurturing of families. It's a time where the balance between personal aspirations and commitments to others is finely managed. Health and well-being often come to the forefront, as the effects of aging become more apparent. Community engagement, financial planning for retirement, and supporting children's education or caring for aging parents are common themes in this life stage.

Chart 85: Middle-Aged Adult Population Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

Data indicates that there are approximately 114,641 individuals in this age group throughout the region, representing more than one-quarter (25.25%) of the total population. It should be noted however, that this age group has decreased by 1.21% over the past five years, a slightly slower pace than the state (-2.52%) and national (-1.82%) averages.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When evaluating county-level data, half of the communities in the service area experienced decreases, the most significant of which was Charlton (-11.22%). This was followed by Ware (-5.33%), Atkinson (-4.72%), Coffee (-4.52%), Pierce (-4.17%), Evans (-1.60%), Effingham (-1.41%), Tattnall (-0.45%), and Appling (-0.32%) counties.

Chart 103: Middle Aged Adult Population Trend by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%	Change
Appling	4,551	24.66%	4,532	24.58%	-0.32%
Atkinson	2,173	26.29%	2,070	25.05%	-4.72%
Bacon	2,843	25.32%	2,918	26.20%	+3.48%
Brantley	4,883	26.31%	5,005	27.64%	+4.94%
Bulloch	15,669	20.95%	16,858	21.12%	+0.81%
Candler	2,674	24.70%	2,777	25.37%	+2.71%
Charlton	4,015	30.93%	3,446	27.46%	-11.22%
Clinch	1,663	24.66%	1,688	25.15%	+1.99%
Coffee	11,398	26.53%	10,904	25.33%	-4.52%
Effingham	16,600	28.28%	18,209	27.88%	-1.41%
Evans	2,678	24.97%	2,643	24.57%	-1.60%
Jeff Davis	3,736	24.92%	3,705	25.05%	+0.52%
Long	4,884	26.90%	4,537	27.00%	+0.37%
Pierce	5,281	27.56%	5,234	26.41%	-4.17%
Tattnall	7,304	28.81%	6,972	28.68%	-0.45%
Toombs	6,351	23.48%	6,514	24.17%	+2.94%
Ware	9,010	25.31%	8,604	23.96%	-5.33%
Wayne	7,851	26.37%	8,025	26.51%	+0.53%
Region	113,564	25.56%	114,641	25.25%	-1.21%
State	2,779,806	27.00%	2,821,598	26.32%	-2.52%
Nation	83,352,783	25.81%	83,897,716	25.34%	-1.82%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

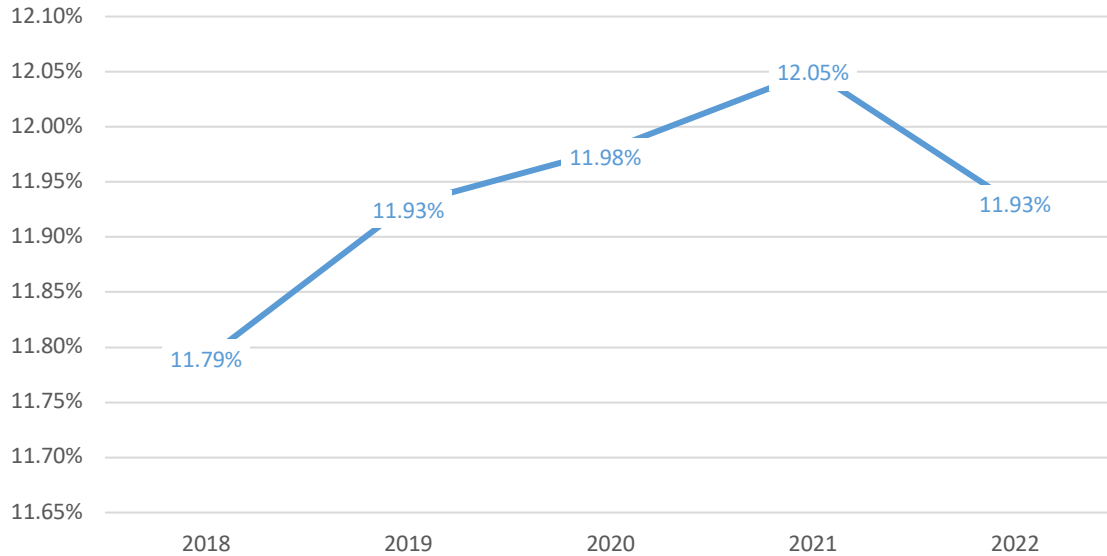
In contrast, increases were noted in Brantley (+4.94%), Bacon (+3.48%), Toombs (+2.94%), Candler (+2.71%), Clinch(+1.99%), Bulloch (+0.81%), Wayne (+0.53%), Jeff Davis (+0.52%), and Long (+0.37%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Older Adults (55-64):

As they approach the traditional retirement age, older adults begin to contemplate life beyond the workforce. It's a phase often associated with reflection on past achievements and the anticipation of a slower-paced life, with a focus on leisure, personal interests, and family. For many, it's also a time to plan earnestly for retirement, both financially and emotionally, and to make adjustments to living arrangements that accommodate changing mobility or health concerns. Despite these changes, many continue to contribute significantly to the workforce, their families, and society, offering experience, wisdom, and mentorship.

Chart 86: Older Adult Population Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

The most recent Census data indicates that there are 54,166 older adults in the region served by the organization. After an increase of 2.21% between 2018 and 2021, the portion of the population in this age group decreased by 1.00% in 2022. Overall, the older adult population has increased by 1.19% during the period evaluated, which is slower than the increase on a state level (+2.75%), but faster than the national average (+0.55%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When looking at the specific communities in the region, increases were identified in Long (+21.30%), Jeff Davis (+13.92%), Atkinson (+12.25%), Clinch (+4.85%), Effingham (+2.67%), Wayne (+1.86%), Tattnall (+1.60%), Candler (+1.15%), Charlton (+0.75%), Coffee (+0.70%), Pierce (+0.25%), and Bulloch (+0.20%) counties.

Chart 104: Older Adult Population Trend by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%	Change
Appling	2,472	13.40%	2,465	13.37%	-0.22%
Atkinson	945	11.43%	1,060	12.83%	+12.25%
Bacon	1,383	12.32%	1,290	11.58%	-6.01%
Brantley	2,674	14.41%	2,528	13.96%	-3.12%
Bulloch	7,410	9.91%	7,924	9.93%	+0.20%
Candler	1,408	13.00%	1,439	13.15%	+1.15%
Charlton	1,560	12.02%	1,519	12.11%	+0.75%
Clinch	849	12.59%	886	13.20%	+4.85%
Coffee	4,903	11.41%	4,949	11.49%	+0.70%
Effingham	7,038	11.99%	8,038	12.31%	+2.67%
Evans	1,289	12.02%	1,210	11.25%	-6.41%
Jeff Davis	1,734	11.57%	1,949	13.18%	+13.92%
Long	1,875	10.33%	2,106	12.53%	+21.30%
Pierce	2,346	12.24%	2,433	12.27%	+0.25%
Tattnall	3,012	11.88%	2,934	12.07%	+1.60%
Toombs	3,225	11.92%	3,158	11.72%	-1.68%
Ware	4,588	12.89%	4,469	12.44%	-3.49%
Wayne	3,677	12.35%	3,809	12.58%	+1.86%
Region	52,388	11.79%	54,166	11.93%	+1.19%
State	1,234,668	11.99%	1,321,441	12.32%	+2.75%
Nation	41,286,731	12.79%	42,577,475	12.86%	+0.55%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

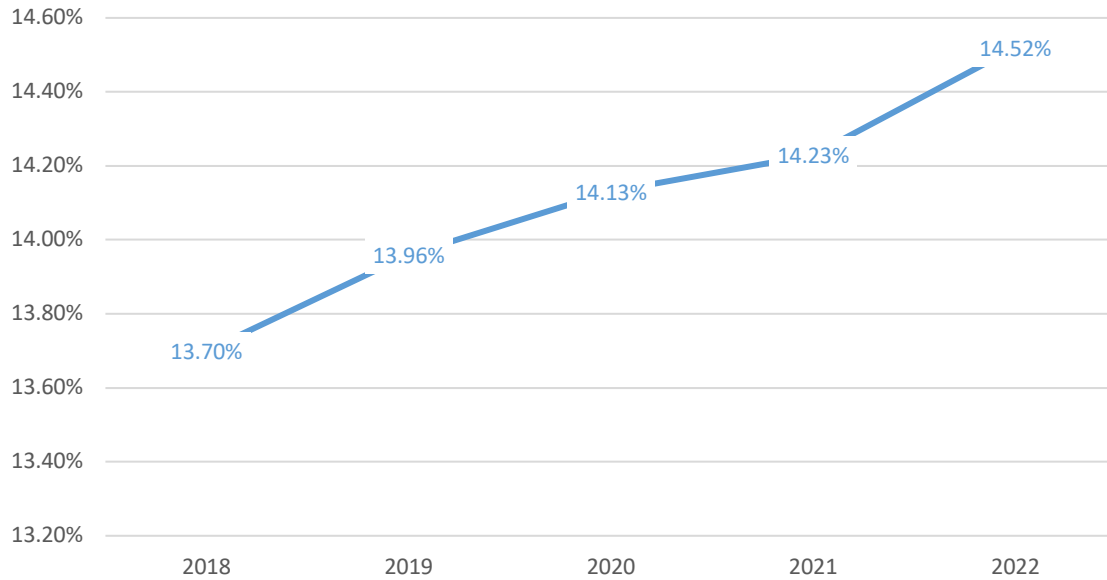
The remaining six communities experienced decreases. The largest decrease, -6.41%, was found in Evans County. This was followed by Bacon (-6.01%), Ware (-3.49%), Brantley (-3.12%), Toombs (-1.68%), and Appling (-0.22%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Senior Citizens (Age 65+):

Entering the senior years, individuals often experience significant lifestyle changes with retirement, changes in health status, and shifts in social dynamics. It's a period that can bring more leisure time and opportunities for travel, hobbies, and community involvement. Seniors may also face challenges such as managing health care needs, maintaining independence, and adjusting to the loss of peers and partners. This age group contributes to society through volunteerism, the transmission of knowledge and cultural values, and as active participants in the lives of their families and communities. Their well-being is influenced by the degree of their social support, economic security, and the quality of health care services they receive.

Chart 87: Senior Citizen Population Percentage Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

According to the most recent estimates, there are presently approximately 65,914 senior citizens living in the region, accounting for 14.52% of the local population. This is an increase of 5.99% from the percentage recorded five years ago. The region's rate of change is slower than both the state (+9.44%) and national (+8.39%) averages. This rise indicates a growing senior population that will likely lead to increased demands for age-specific healthcare, housing, and social services, necessitating strategic planning in community services to accommodate this change.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

On a county level, all communities in the evaluated area experienced increases, the most significant were found in Bacon (+11.89%), Charlton (+10.71%), and Coffee (10.20%) counties. The slowest increases were noted in Jeff Davis (+2.22%), Clinch (+2.24%), Ware (+3.14%), and Pierce (+3.56%) counties.

Chart 105: Senior Citizen Population Trend by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018 #	2018 %	2022 #	2022%	Change
Appling	3,052	16.54%	3,232	17.53%	+5.99%
Atkinson	1,053	12.74%	1,099	13.30%	+4.40%
Bacon	1,700	15.14%	1,887	16.94%	+11.89%
Brantley	2,853	15.37%	2,994	16.54%	+7.61%
Bulloch	8,175	10.93%	9,408	11.79%	+7.87%
Candler	1,845	17.04%	2,020	18.45%	+8.27%
Charlton	1,927	14.84%	2,061	16.43%	+10.71%
Clinch	1,023	15.17%	1,041	15.51%	+2.24%
Coffee	5,728	13.33%	6,325	14.69%	+10.20%
Effingham	6,519	11.11%	7,771	11.90%	+7.11%
Evans	1,712	15.96%	1,819	16.91%	+5.95%
Jeff Davis	2,297	15.32%	2,215	14.98%	+2.22%
Long	1,601	8.82%	1,544	9.19%	+4.20%
Pierce	3,174	16.56%	3,399	17.15%	+3.56%
Tattnall	3,434	13.54%	3,485	14.34%	+5.91%
Toombs	4,383	16.20%	4,573	16.97%	+4.75%
Ware	5,895	16.56%	6,135	17.08%	+3.14%
Wayne	4,479	15.05%	4,906	16.20%	+7.64%
Region	60,850	13.70%	65,914	14.52%	+5.99%
State	1,352,289	13.13%	1,540,445	14.37%	+9.44%
Nation	49,238,581	15.25%	54,737,648	16.53%	+8.39%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Households:

A household, as defined by the Census Bureau, consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit, whether they are related or not. This unit could be a house, an apartment, a mobile home, or even a group of rooms or a single room that is intended as separate living quarters.

The data from 2022 indicates that there are approximately 161,492 households within the region, an increase of 3.87% from 2018's estimate of 156,608. Although not insignificant, it should be noted that the region's rate of change is significantly lower than the state (+6.39%) and national (+5.02%) averages.

Table 106: Number of Households (2018/2022)

Area	2018	2022	Change #	Change %
Appling	6,682	6,890	+208	+3.11%
Atkinson	2,785	3,063	+278	+9.98%
Bacon	3,966	3,909	-57	-1.44%
Brantley	6,564	6,649	+85	+1.29%
Bulloch	26,955	29,634	+2,679	+9.94%
Candler	3,965	4,103	+138	+3.48%
Charlton	3,559	4,043	+484	+13.60%
Clinch	2,502	2,385	-117	-4.68%
Coffee	14,298	14,894	+596	+4.17%
Effingham	20,489	22,820	+2,331	+11.38%
Evans	4,006	3,914	-92	-2.30%
Jeff Davis	5,270	5,365	+95	+1.80%
Long	5,601	5,547	-54	-0.96%
Pierce	7,072	7,460	+388	+5.49%
Tattnall	8,237	7,552	-685	-8.32%
Toombs	10,403	9,754	-649	-6.24%
Ware	13,901	12,756	-1,145	-8.24%
Wayne	10,353	10,754	+401	+3.87%
Region	156,608	161,492	+4,884	+3.12%
State	3,709,488	3,946,490	+23,7002	+6.39%
Nation	119,730,128	125,736,353	+6,006,225	+5.02%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

The greatest increases in the region were noted in Charlton (+13.60%), Effingham (+11.38%), Atkinson (+9.98%), and Bulloch (+9.94%) counties. Decreases were identified in Tattnall (-8.32%), Ware (-8.24%), Toombs (-6.24%), Clinch (-4.68%), Evans (-2.30%), Bacon (-1.44%), and Long (-0.96%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The average household size for the region is 2.69, which is notably lower than the 3.00 reported on state and national levels. While the data indicates that the region has experienced a change of -0.74% over the past five years, large increases were experienced on a national (+10.70%) and national (+14.07%) level.

Table 107: Average Household Size Comparison (2018/2022)

Area	2018	2022	Change %
Appling	2.68	2.61	-2.61%
Atkinson	2.95	2.69	-9.15%
Bacon	2.65	2.70	+1.89%
Brantley	2.82	2.71	-3.90%
Bulloch	2.47	2.47	No Change
Candler	2.66	2.60	-2.26%
Charlton	3.31	2.90	-12.39%
Clinch	2.51	2.60	-3.59%
Coffee	2.73	2.72	-0.37%
Effingham	2.85	2.85	No Change
Evans	2.55	2.62	+2.75%
Jeff Davis	2.82	2.74	-2.84%
Long	3.22	3.00	-6.83%
Pierce	2.68	2.63	-1.87%
Tattnall	2.30	2.54	+10.43%
Toombs	2.56	2.71	+5.86%
Ware	2.38	2.63	+10.50%
Wayne	2.67	2.64	-1.12%
Region	2.71	2.69	-0.74%
State	2.71	3.00	+10.70%
Nation	2.63	3.00	+14.07%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

On a county level, the largest household size was 3.00 in Long County, with the smallest being found in Bulloch. The most significant changes were identified in Charlton (-12.39%), Ware (+10.50%), Tattnall (+10.43%), Atkinson (-9.15%), Long (-6.83%), and Toombs (+5.86%) counties. No change occurred in Bulloch and Effingham counties during the five-year period evaluated.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Household Profiles:

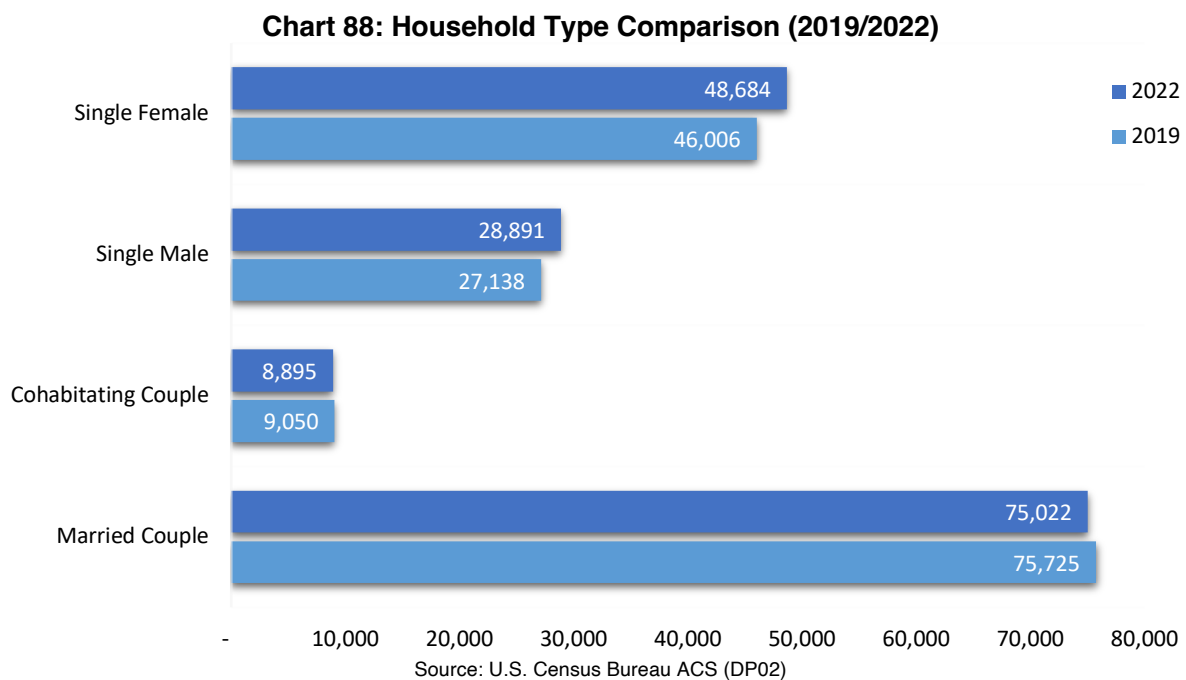
In the analysis of poverty, understanding household composition is critical because different household types often have varying levels of vulnerability and resource needs. It should be noted that this dataset is only available for the past four years.

Single Female-Headed Households refer to homes where a female adult is the sole provider and decision-maker. In 2022, data indicates that 48,684 of the region's households fit this classification, an increase of 1.47% since 2019.

Single Male-Headed Households have grown to 28,891, marking an increase of 6.46% from 2019. Though they typically have lower poverty rates than single female-headed households, the growth in this segment might signal a need for targeted social programs specifically for single fathers.

Cohabiting Couple Households consist of two adults living together in a partnership without being married. This group experienced a decrease of 1.71% to the current count of 8,895. This group can often share resources and may have dual incomes, which can offer more economic stability than single-adult households. However, they might not have the same legal protections or benefits as married couples.

Married Couple Households are composed of two adults legally bound by marriage. This is the largest grouping, at 75,022 households. It should be noted, however, that married couple households have decreased over the past four years by 0.93%. This remains the most economically stable household type, but the decline might reflect societal shifts that could influence community planning and policy, particularly in housing and tax benefit structures.



Overall, the region has experienced an increase in single-adult households and a slight decrease in married couples. These trends, especially the increased rate of single-adult households, can affect the community associated with the need for housing, healthcare, and employment services tailored to smaller household sizes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Households with Children:

Among the various household types in the region, an estimated 53,959 were noted as including at least one child under the age of 18. This is a decrease of 458 households, or -0.84%, over the past five years. This change is in contrast to data reported from the state (+1.13%) and national (+1.02%) levels.

The largest decreases were identified in Candler (-23.00%), Long (-20.36%), Ware (-11.44%), and Toombs (-10.42%) counties. Increases were experienced in Coffee (+23.49%), Atkinson (+20.40%), Charlton (+10.71%), Wayne (+6.54%), and Bulloch (+6.36%) counties.

Table 108: Households with Children by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018	2022	Change #	Change %
Appling	2,227	2,328	+101	+4.54%
Atkinson	1,049	1,263	+214	+20.40%
Bacon	1,298	1,293	-5	-0.39%
Brantley	2,233	1,935	-298	-13.35%
Bulloch	8,710	9,264	+554	+6.36%
Candler	1,335	1,028	-307	-23.00%
Charlton	1,008	1,116	+108	+10.71%
Clinch	773	732	-41	-5.30%
Coffee	4,716	5,824	+1,108	+23.49%
Effingham	7,967	7,678	-289	-3.63%
Evans	1,408	1,301	-107	-7.60%
Jeff Davis	2,183	2,119	-64	-2.93%
Long	2,579	2,054	-525	-20.36%
Pierce	2,556	2,345	-211	-8.26%
Tattnall	2,980	2,934	-46	-1.54%
Toombs	3,675	3,292	-383	-10.42%
Ware	4,293	3,802	-491	-11.44%
Wayne	3,427	3,651	+224	+6.54%
Region	54,417	53,959	-458	-0.84%
State	1,265,807	1,280,171	+14,364	+1.13%
Nation	37,574,321	37,956,469	+382,148	+1.02%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Households with Seniors

During the same time period, the number of households containing seniors increased from 42,972 to 3246,252 (+7.63%). Although significant, this is a slower change than those experienced on state (+15.65%) and national (+12.73%) levels.

Table 109: Households with Seniors by County (2018/2022)

Area	2018	2022	Change #	Change %
Appling	2,104	2,136	+32	+1.52%
Atkinson	709	812	+103	+14.53%
Bacon	1,224	1,369	+145	+11.85%
Brantley	2,055	2,261	+206	+10.02%
Bulloch	6,199	7,029	+830	+13.39%
Candler	1,130	1,442	+312	+27.61%
Charlton	1,180	1,343	+163	+13.81%
Clinch	728	720	-8	-1.10%
Coffee	4,190	4,432	+242	+5.78%
Effingham	4,653	5,124	+471	+10.12%
Evans	1,304	1,326	+22	+1.69%
Jeff Davis	1,597	1,710	+113	+7.08%
Long	905	1,033	+128	+14.14%
Pierce	2,311	2,304	-7	-0.30%
Tattnall	2,485	2,459	-26	-1.05%
Toombs	3,039	3,359	+320	+10.53%
Ware	4,245	4,150	-95	-2.24%
Wayne	2,914	3,243	+329	+11.29%
Region	42,972	46,252	+3,280	+7.63%
State	951,751	1,100,720	+148,969	+15.65%
Nation	34,395,751	38,775,247	+4,379,496	+12.73%

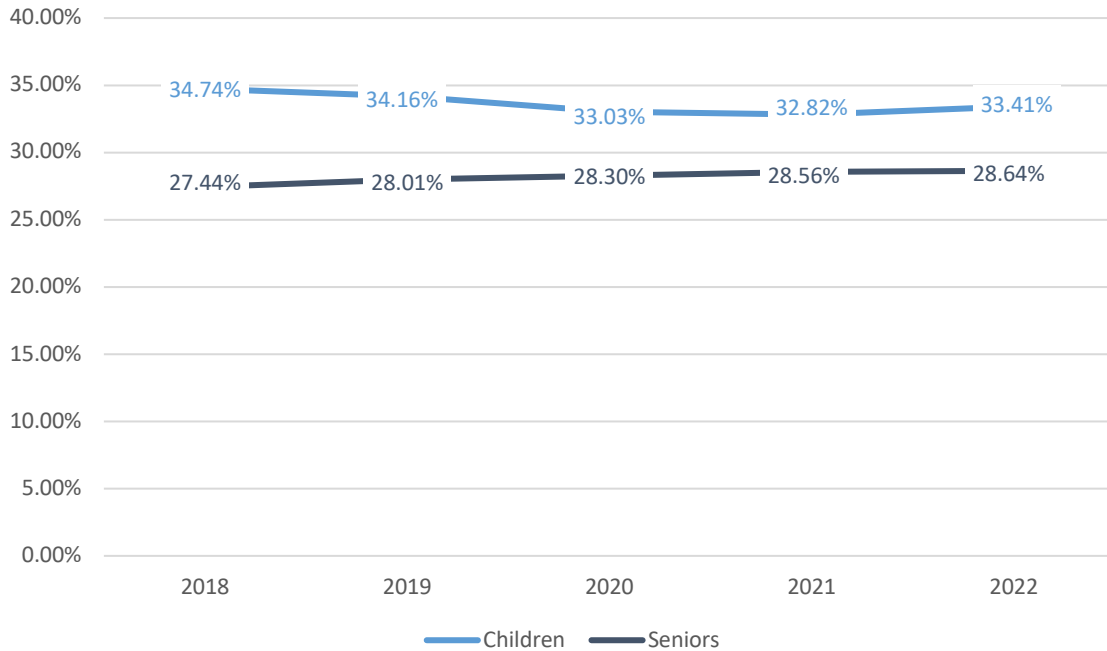
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

The largest increases among this demographic were experienced in Candler (+27.61%), Atkinson (+14.53%), Long (+14.14%), Charlton (+13.81%), Bulloch (+13.39%), Wayne (+11.29%), Toombs (+10.53%), and Brantley (+10.02%) counties. Decreases were identified in Ware (-2.24%), Clinch (-1.10%), Tattnall (-1.05%), and Pierce (-0.30%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

To further demonstrate the scope of the community's aging population, the chart below provides the percentages of households in the region with children as compared to those with senior citizens. Between 2018 and 2022, the gap between the number of households with children and the number of households with seniors has decreased by 34.66%.

Chart 89: HH with Seniors vs. HH with Children Trend Comparison (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP02)

With an average annual change of -0.95% for households with children and an average annual change of 1.08% for households with seniors, it is estimated that the community will experience a demographic shift, in which the number of households with seniors exceeds the number of households with children around the year 2030.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

General Observations:

Throughout the region served by the organization, there are an estimated 453,979 individuals residing in 161,492 households. The largest counties are Bulloch County (17.47%), Effingham (14.29%), and Coffee (9.42%).

Examining migration trends reveals a noteworthy 2.18% population increase over the past five years, primarily fueled by inward migration, constituting 92.10% of the growth. The majority of new residents originated from other counties within Georgia (73.26%), followed by out-of-state (24.18%) and international (2.56%) migrants.

Demographic breakdowns highlight a predominantly male population, albeit gradually moving towards gender balance (-0.07% over five years). Racially, the population is predominantly white (68.26%), followed by African American/Black (24.94%). Notable shifts include increases in multi-Race (+160.69%), Pacific Islanders (+22.22%), American Indian (+7.20%), and African American (0.76%) populations, contrasting with a slight decrease among White individuals (-2.09%).

Age distribution trends indicate a median age of 37.63 years, with the largest population cohort falling within the 35 to 54 age bracket (114,641 individuals). While there's a decline in the share of young children (-6.33%), adults between the ages of 25 and 34 (-2.60%), and middle-aged adults (-1.21%), there are increases among school-aged children (+0.23%), young adults (+0.71%), older adults (+1.19%), and seniors (+5.99%), underscoring evolving age dynamics within the population.

Finally, household structures reveal insights into familial arrangements, with a median household size of 2.64. Married households constitute a substantial portion (75,022 individuals), followed by those headed by single females (48,684 individuals), single males (28,891 individuals), and cohabitating adults (8,895 individuals). Additionally, there's a notable presence of households with children and seniors, with an anticipated shift towards more households with seniors by 2030.

Opportunities:

The demographic shifts in the region present a wealth of opportunities for development and growth. The increase in the senior citizen demographic heralds a chance to become a leading locale for age-friendly initiatives, potentially transforming into a hub for retirement living with appropriate healthcare facilities, senior-centric recreational programs, and housing tailored to the needs of the elderly. The diversification in race and ethnicity, particularly the rise in the Hispanic population, opens the door for vibrant cultural exchanges, enrichment of community services with multilingual capabilities, and new ethnic businesses.

Concerns:

The decline in the young child population may signal future challenges for the education sector, with potential school consolidations and reallocations of resources becoming necessary. The aging population, while presenting opportunities, also poses the risk of straining healthcare systems, pension funds, and social services, potentially leading to increased healthcare costs and a need for more caregiver. The increasing ethnic diversity, while enriching, also requires careful planning to ensure inclusivity and prevent community division, ensuring that all residents have equitable access to opportunities and services.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Income & Poverty

Introduction

Poverty is simply defined as a state or condition in which a person lacks sufficient financial resources to maintain a minimum standard of living. This insufficiency hinders an individual's ability to secure adequate housing, access clean water, procure healthy food, and receive necessary healthcare. Determining poverty rates involves quantifying this deficit relative to established benchmarks. For the context of this project, these rates will be assessed based on the poverty threshold set by the United States government. This monetary benchmark varies depending on family size and composition to objectively measure and compare the economic well-being of community members.

Poverty Rates

The poverty rate is a statistical measure used to assess the prevalence of poverty within a specific population or geographic area. It quantifies the proportion of individuals or households living below a certain income threshold, known as the poverty line.

During the most recently completed Census study, an estimated 81,243 members of the region's population, or 20.60% of all individuals, were identified as having incomes below 100% of the national poverty level. It should be noted that this rate is higher than both the state (13.50%) and national (12.50%) averages.

Chart 110: Poverty Rates by County (2022)

Area	Poverty Count	Poverty Rate
Appling	4,577	25.30%
Atkinson	2,266	27.50%
Bacon	2,278	21.60%
Brantley	2,933	16.30%
Bulloch	16,576	22.80%
Candler	1,947	18.30%
Charlton	2,381	20.50%
Clinch	2,149	32.50%
Coffee	8,063	20.00%
Effingham	4,290	6.60%
Evans	2,177	21.20%
Jeff Davis	3,326	22.60%
Long	2,594	15.80%
Pierce	2,992	15.30%
Tattnall	3,864	20.10%
Toombs	5,760	21.70%
Ware	7,920	23.70%
Wayne	5,150	18.20%
Region	81,243	20.56%
State	1,415,573	13.50%
Nation	40,521,584	12.50%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP03)

When considering the individual communities in the region, the highest rate was identified in Clinch County (32.50%). This was followed by Atkinson (27.50%), Appling (25.30%), Ware (23.70%), Bulloch (22.80%), and Jeff Davis (22.60%) counties. The lowest rate, by far, was found in Effingham County (6.60%).

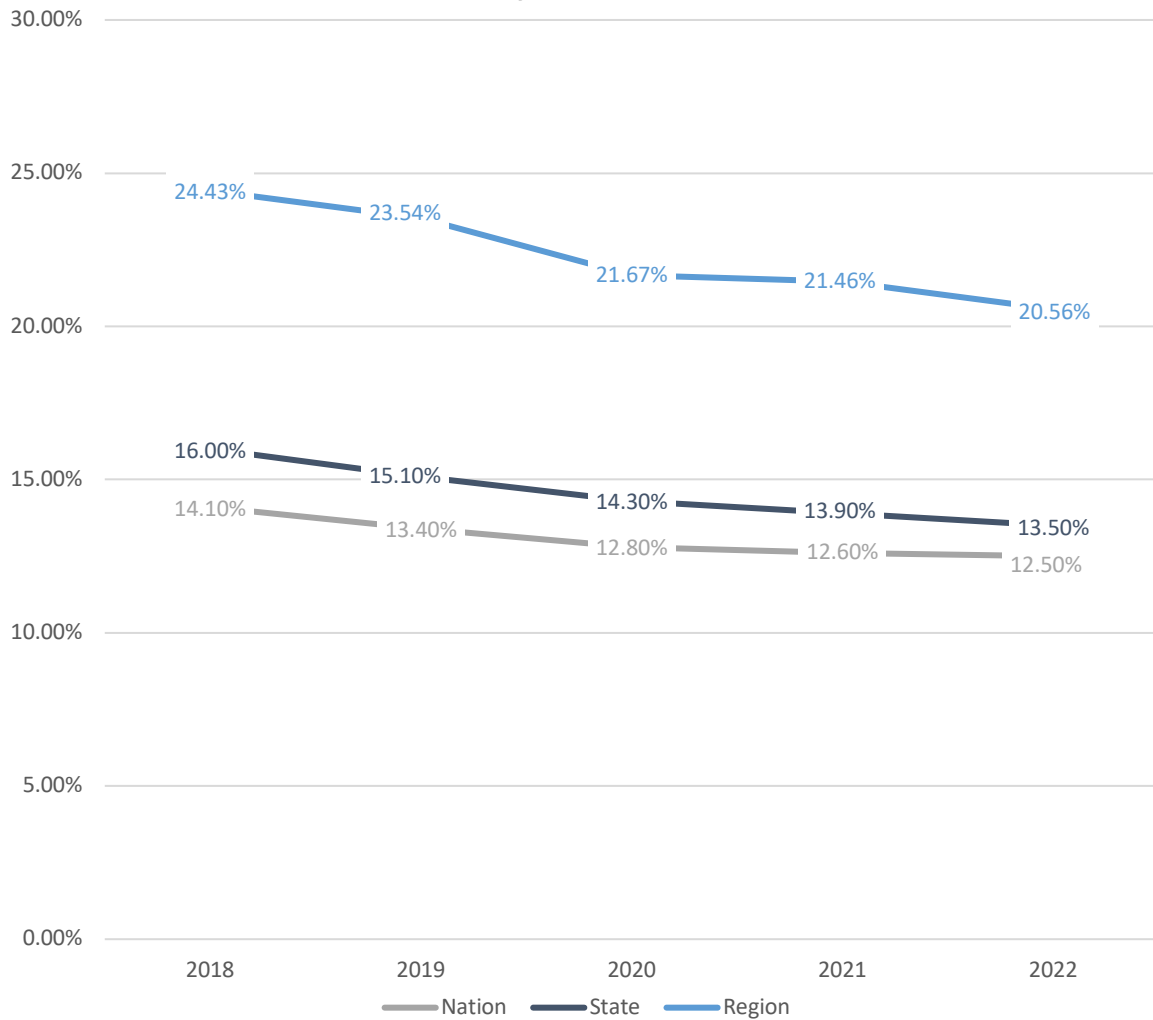
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty Trend

Monitoring poverty trends is essential, not only for grasping the current economic challenges, but also for forecasting future conditions. Historic data on poverty can reveal patterns and trajectories, enabling predictions on whether economic circumstances for low-income populations are likely to improve or worsen. By analyzing these trends, we can proactively address potential issues, adapt strategies to emerging needs, and set in motion effective solutions aimed at reducing poverty. This foresight is critical for shaping policies and programs designed to improve economic stability and uplift those in need.

Between 2018 and 2022, the regional poverty rate experienced a net decrease of 15.84%, lowering from 24.43% to 20.56%. This rate of increase is similar to the change on a state level (-15.63%) and significantly faster than the change on a national (-11.35%) level.

Chart 90: Poverty Rate Trend (2018—2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

When considering at the specific counties in the region, the most significant improvement was identified in Candler County (-44.21%), followed by Brantley (-32.37%), and Pierce (-29.49%) counties. Increases were noted in Appling (+8.58%) and Jeff Davis (+9.71%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 111: Poverty Rate Trends by County (2018-2022)

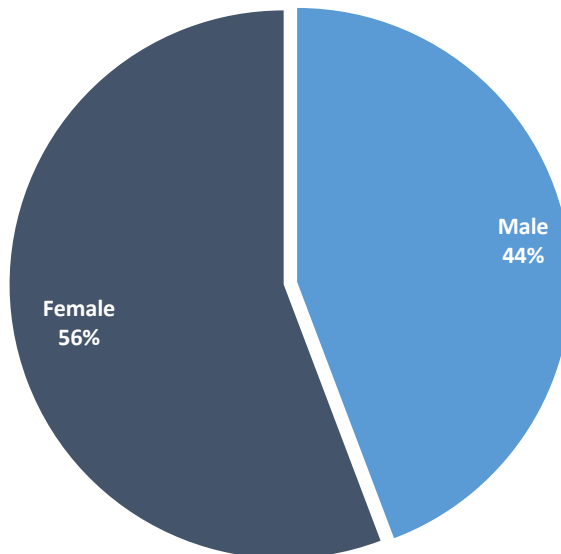
Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Change %
Appling	23.30%	22.50%	23.40%	25.40%	25.30%	+8.58%
Atkinson	30.00%	30.30%	28.20%	26.90%	27.50%	-8.33%
Bacon	27.20%	23.80%	26.10%	24.50%	21.60%	-20.59%
Brantley	24.10%	19.60%	18.80%	16.80%	16.30%	-32.37%
Bulloch	28.70%	26.40%	22.30%	22.50%	22.80%	-20.56%
Candler	32.80%	30.80%	25.10%	24.90%	18.30%	-44.21%
Charlton	24.40%	25.20%	23.20%	21.30%	20.50%	-15.98%
Clinch	39.20%	40.20%	29.80%	30.20%	32.50%	-17.09%
Coffee	22.30%	19.90%	20.40%	22.20%	20.00%	-10.31%
Effingham	8.60%	8.50%	7.40%	7.60%	6.60%	-23.26%
Evans	27.30%	26.90%	23.50%	23.70%	21.20%	-22.34%
Jeff Davis	20.60%	22.00%	20.40%	21.20%	22.60%	+9.71%
Long	20.00%	18.90%	20.80%	18.40%	15.80%	-21.00%
Pierce	21.70%	22.10%	18.50%	17.90%	15.30%	-29.49%
Tattnall	22.50%	23.20%	21.70%	20.10%	20.10%	-10.67%
Toombs	23.70%	23.30%	20.70%	20.10%	21.70%	-8.44%
Ware	23.70%	24.90%	23.30%	23.80%	23.70%	No Change
Wayne	19.60%	15.30%	16.40%	18.80%	18.20%	-7.14%
Region	24.43%	25.54%	21.67%	21.46%	20.56%	-15.68%
State	16.00%	15.10%	14.30%	13.90%	13.50%	-15.63%
Nation	14.10%	13.40%	12.80%	12.60%	12.50%	-11.35%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP03)

Poverty by Gender

Evaluating poverty rates by gender is essential because it sheds light on gender-specific barriers that contribute to economic disparities. This knowledge can inform the development of targeted policies and programs that address unique challenges faced by men and women, such as wage gaps, employment opportunities, access to education, and healthcare. Recognizing these nuances ensures that anti-poverty strategies are equitable and effective, promoting gender equality and empowering all individuals to achieve financial stability and self-sufficiency.

Chart 91: Percentage of Population in Poverty by Gender (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In the area served by the organization, more than half of the individuals living in poverty (55.75%) identified as female, representing 45,297 individuals. The remaining 35,946 residents (44.25%) identified as male.

Not only did females account for the largest portion of the low-income population, but females also (22.50%) were more likely to live in poverty than males (18.70%). The heightened risk among the female population was noted in fourteen the region’s communities. The most significant discrepancy in poverty rates by gender was identified in Charlton County (F: 28.50, M: 14.10).

Males were noted as having a higher risk of living in poverty in Atkinson (M: 28.50%, F: 26.60%), Bacon (M: 23.20%, F: 20.20%), Candler (M: 18.70%, F: 17.90%), and Appling (M: 25.40%, F: 25.20%) counties.

Chart 112: Gender Poverty Rate Trends by County (2022)

Area	LI Male #	LI Male %	LI Female #	LI Female %
Appling	2,297	25.40%	2,280	25.20%
Atkinson	1,154	28.50%	1,112	26.60%
Bacon	1,154	23.20%	1,124	20.20%
Brantley	1,288	14.50%	1,645	18.10%
Bulloch	7,721	21.50%	8,855	24.00%
Candler	977	18.70%	970	17.90%
Charlton	918	14.10%	1,463	28.50%
Clinch	1,068	32.40%	1,081	32.60%
Coffee	3,330	16.90%	4,733	23.10%
Effingham	2,063	6.40%	2,227	6.80%
Evans	997	19.40%	1,180	23.10%
Jeff Davis	1,279	17.40%	2,047	27.80%
Long	939	11.10%	1,655	20.70%
Pierce	1,447	14.70%	1,545	15.80%
Tattnall	1,543	16.80%	2,321	23.10%
Toombs	2,472	19.60%	3,288	23.70%
Ware	3,277	20.60%	4,643	26.50%
Wayne	2,022	15.10%	3,128	20.90%
Region	35,946	18.70%	45,297	22.50%
State	620,973	12.20%	794,600	14.80%
Nation	18,109,332	11.30%	22,412,252	13.70%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP03)

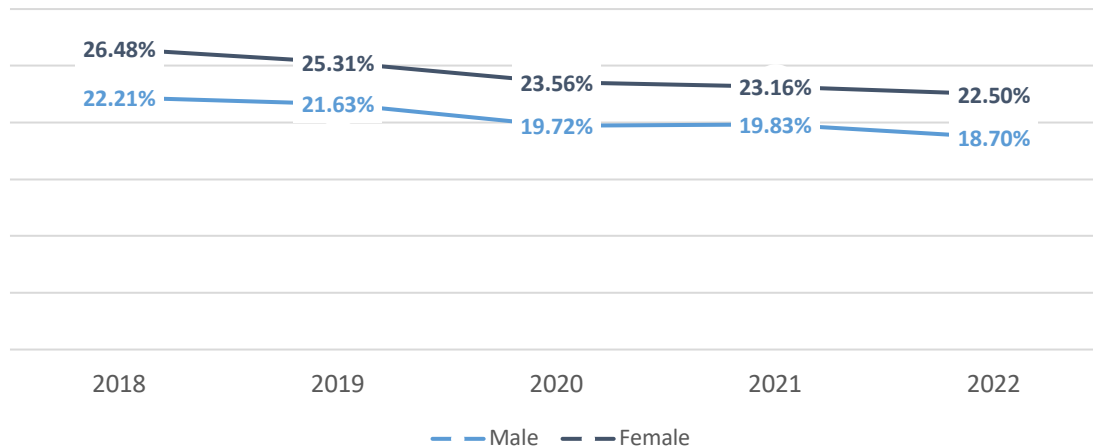
These gender disparities highlight critical areas for intervention, especially in supporting female-centric economic opportunities and addressing systemic barriers that disproportionately affect women. The data underscores the importance of tailored, community-specific strategies to combat poverty, with an emphasis on addressing the unique challenges faced by women in these communities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty Trend by Gender

From 2018 to 2022, the poverty rate trend for males in the region improved by 15.80% from 22.21% to 18.70%. For females, the rate of improvement was slightly slower at 15.03%, from 26.48% to 22.50%.

Chart 92: Gender Poverty Rate Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

The gap between the poverty rates of males and females has narrowed slightly over the five-year period, from a 4.27 percentage point difference in 2018 to a 3.80 percentage point difference in 2022. Despite this reduction in the gender poverty gap, females in the region continue to experience poverty at a rate that is notably higher than that of males. The trends indicate that while there is some convergence in poverty rates between genders, significant disparities persist, suggesting that females still face structural economic disadvantages that require focused attention and remediation.

Poverty by Age

Understanding poverty rates by age is crucial as it highlights the distinct economic vulnerabilities experienced at different life stages. Young children in poverty may face developmental challenges, while working-age adults may struggle with employment stability. Elderly individuals may confront inadequate retirement resources, affecting their quality of life. By analyzing poverty through an age-based lens, interventions can be designed to provide age-appropriate support, such as child nutrition programs, job training for adults, and income security for seniors, ensuring that each age group receives the focused assistance they need to overcome the specific challenges of poverty they face.

The population with the highest poverty rates in the region were identified as young children under the age of five, at 29.01%. This was followed by school-aged children (28.85%), adults between the ages of 18 and 34 (21.24%), adults between the ages of 35 and 64 (16.68%), and senior citizens (14.86%).

The largest portion of the low-income population, however, identified as being between the ages of 35 and 64 (28.89%) and ages 18 to 34 (27.51%). The smallest portion of the low-income population were young children under the age of five (8.12%) and senior citizens (10.90%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 113: Poverty Data by Age Group Comparison (2018/2022)

<i>Age Group</i>	2018		2022		Change	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
<5	9,868	39.73%	6,598	29.01%	-3,270	-26.98%
5-17	22,396	32.43%	19,960	28.85%	-2,436	-11.04%
18-34	26,606	27.96%	22,357	21.24%	-4,249	-24.03%
35-64	26,144	19.16%	23,470	16.68%	-2,674	-12.94%
65+	7,990	14.89%	8,858	14.86%	+868	-0.20%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701)

Over the past five years, the poverty rates for all age groups have improved, with the greatest changes being experienced by young children (-26.98%) and adults between the ages of 18 and 34 (-24.03%). Although the rate for senior citizens improved by 0.20%, the number of individuals over the age of 65 living in poverty actually increased by 868 due to the total population change for this age group.

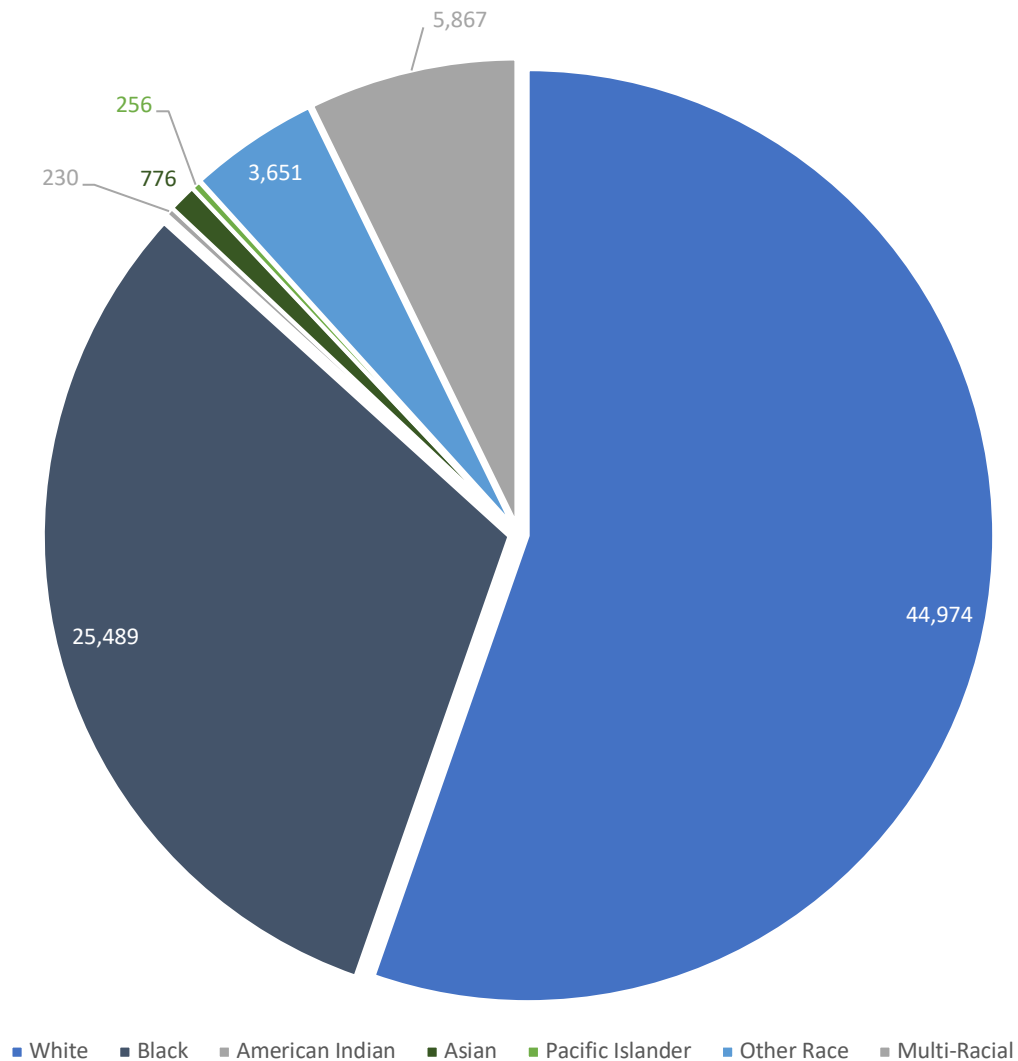
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty by Race

Analyzing poverty rates by race reveals the systemic inequalities that contribute to disparate economic conditions among different racial groups. This data can guide targeted policies and programs to address the specific barriers that minority populations often face, including discrimination, unequal access to education, and job opportunities. It helps in ensuring that efforts to alleviate poverty are equitable and effective, promoting social justice and economic inclusivity.

When considering the race of those living in poverty, the largest portion identified as White (55.36%), followed by Black (31.37%), and much smaller portions identifying as multi-racial (7.22%), Asian (0.96%), Pacific Islander (0.32%), and American Indian (0.28%). An estimated 4.49% identified with a race not included in the survey.

Chart 93: Population in Poverty by Race (2022)

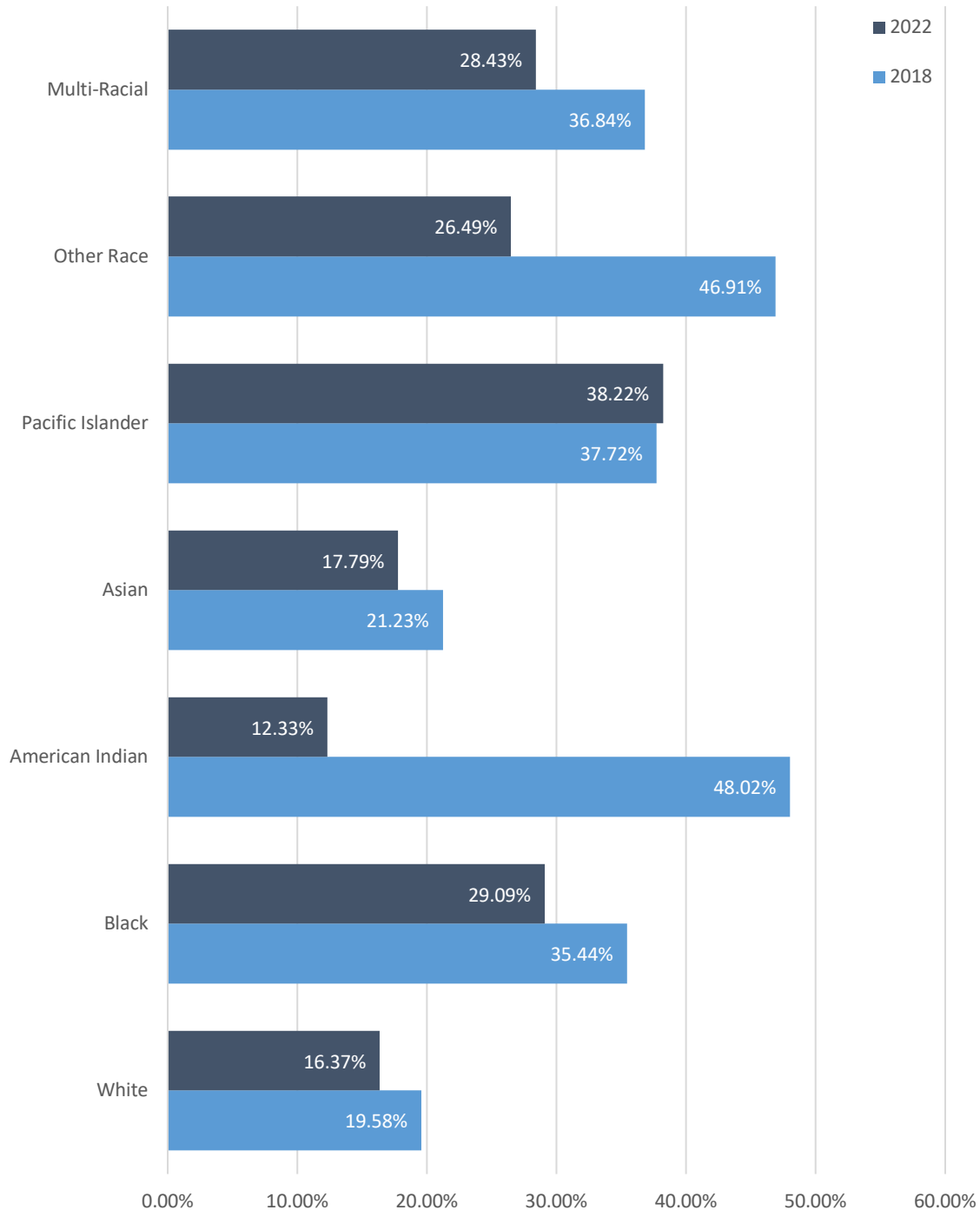


Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The poverty rates by race in the region for 2022 reveals significant disparities. Pacific Islanders were noted as having the highest rate at 38.22%. This was followed by those identifying as Black/African American (29.09%), multi-racial (28.43%), Other Race (26.49%), Asian (17.79%), White (16.37%), and American Indian (12.33%).

Chart 94: Average Poverty Rates by Race (2018/2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Over the past five years, the most significant improvement was identified among American Indians (-74.32%) and those identifying with a race not documented in the surveys (-43.53%). Improvements were also noted among those identifying as multi-racial (-22.83%), Black/African American (-17.92%), White (16.39%), and Asian (-16.20%). Pacific Islanders experienced a worsening poverty situation, with an increase in the poverty rate of 1.33%.

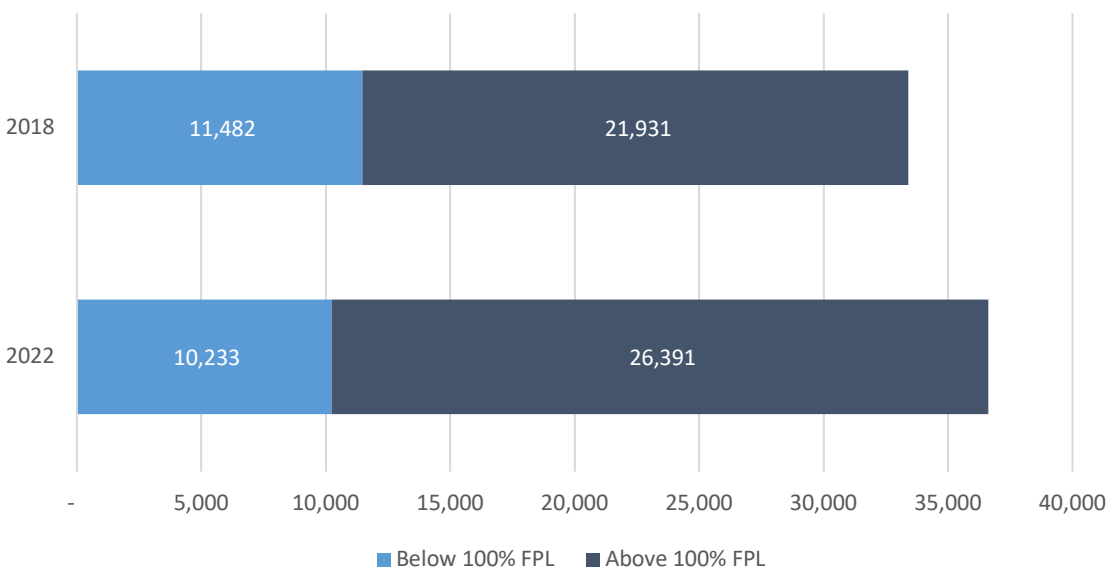
These findings emphasize the importance of considering both the absolute numbers and the rates when assessing poverty's impact. Smaller populations with high poverty rates may require targeted interventions to address their specific economic challenges. This data underscores the need for nuanced, race-conscious strategies in poverty alleviation efforts to ensure that even the smallest communities are not overlooked, and that economic support reaches all who are in need.

Poverty by Ethnicity

Studying poverty rates by ethnicity is important as it sheds light on the economic disparities that may not be visible when analyzing racial data alone. Ethnic groups can experience unique challenges and cultural factors that influence their economic status.

According to the most recently published data, there are currently 10,233 low-income residents with a Hispanic ethnicity. This represents a poverty rate of 27.94% for this demographic, which is nearly three times the rate for non-Hispanic residents (10.10%).

Chart 95: Low-Income Hispanic Count Comparison (2018/2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701)

Over the past five years, the number of Hispanics with low incomes decreased by 1,249, with the rate decreasing from 34.36% to 27.94%, a reduction of 16.25%.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty Benchmarks

An estimated 39,076 local residents were noted as living in deep poverty. Defined by incomes below 50% of the nationally recognized poverty level, these individuals are known to live in a state of severe economic hardship where residents struggle to afford basic necessities. Over the past five years, the number of individuals in this income category decreased by 5,110, or 11.56%.

Table 114: Poverty Benchmark Count Comparison (2018/2022)

Poverty %	2018	2022	Change
< 50%	44,186	39,076	-11.56%
50 - 100%	48,818	42,167	-13.62%
100 - 125%	25,416	27,089	+6.58%
125 - 150%	26,623	27,324	+2.63%
150 - 200%	45,260	44,681	-1.28%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701)

For those between 50-100% FPL, who are considered to be living in poverty, there has been a considerable decrease in count by 13.62%, from 48,818 to 42,167. Although decreases were noted in the 150-200% range (-1.28%), increases occurred in both the 100-125% range (+6.58%) and the 125-150% range (+2.63%).

Overall, there are an estimated 108,332 residents in the region that qualify for CSBG based on the traditional 125% level, with 180,337 qualifying based on the 200% level that has been utilized since the aware of CARES funding.

Chart 115: Poverty Benchmarks by County (2022)

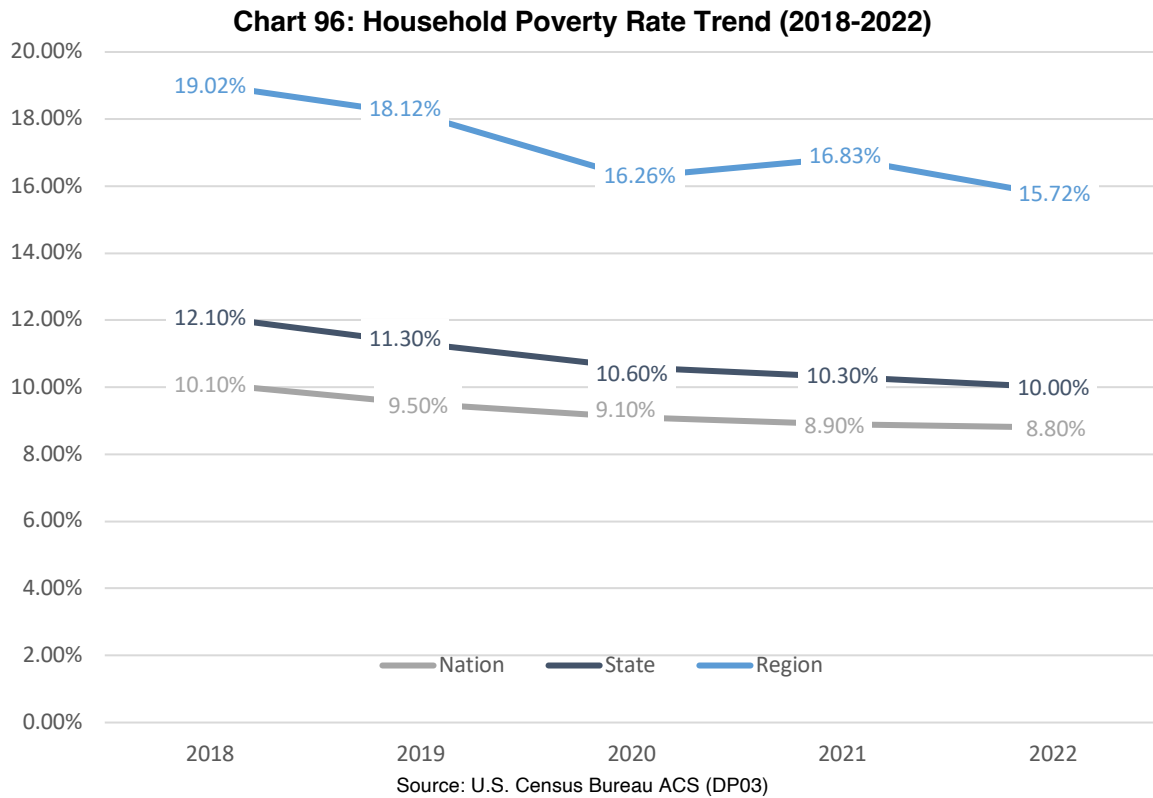
Area	>50%	>100%	>125%	>200%
Appling	2,585	4,577	5,480	9,464
Atkinson	722	2,266	3,087	4,541
Bacon	1,526	2,278	2,974	4,852
Brantley	1,591	2,933	4,528	8,594
Bulloch	8,462	16,576	20,321	32,153
Candler	1,036	1,947	3,407	4,584
Charlton	1,806	2,381	3,126	5,063
Clinch	1,373	2,149	2,297	3,407
Coffee	3,788	8,063	11,099	18,719
Effingham	2,329	4,290	7,327	13,825
Evans	,985	2,177	2,884	4,226
Jeff Davis	1,483	3,326	3,868	7,701
Long	1,057	2,594	3,204	6,807
Pierce	1,171	2,992	4,858	7,909
Tattnall	1,534	3,864	5,380	8,070
Toombs	2,667	5,760	6,983	12,496
Ware	2,785	7,920	10,063	15,289
Wayne	2,176	5,150	7,446	12,637
Region	39,076	81,243	108,332	180,337
State	658,872	1,415,573	1,866,442	3,284,036
Nation	18,860,708	40,521,584	53,120,911	93,118,710

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1701)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Households in Poverty

When looking at households, as opposed to individuals, there is a clear downward trend in poverty rates in the nation, decreasing from 10.10% to 8.80%, a reduction of 12.87%. In the state of Georgia, the downward trend was more pronounced at -17.36%.

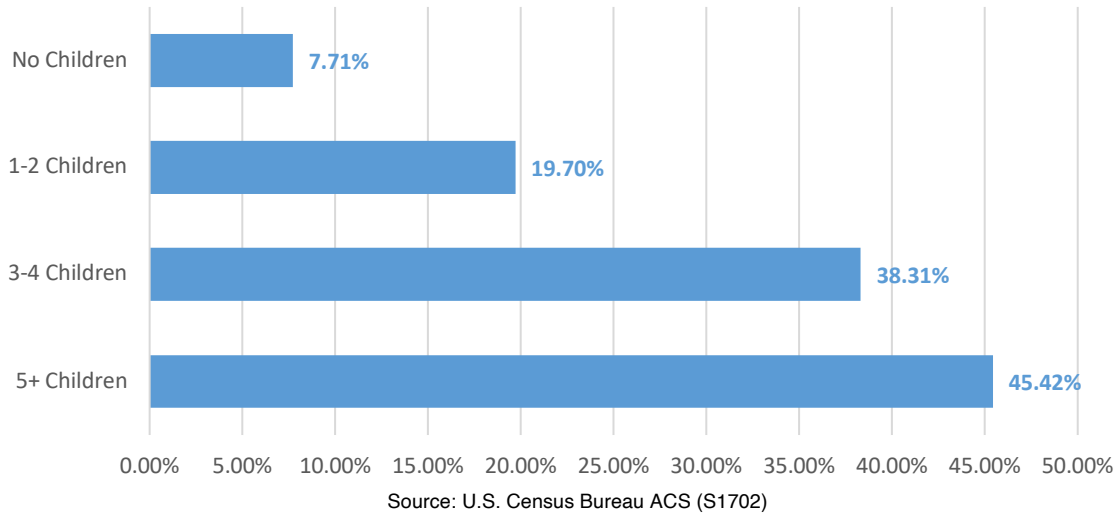


While the regional household poverty rate has decreased at a similar pace to the state of Georgia (-17.35%), it remains significantly higher (15.72%) than the data published on a state (10.00%) and national (8.80%) level. Based on this data, it is estimated that 25,387 of the 161,492 local households are living in poverty, a reduction of 4,399 households from the 29,786 estimated in 2018.

Not only were households with children (12.49%) noted as having significantly higher poverty rates than those without children (7.71%), but poverty rates were also noted to have a correlation with the number of children living in the home. Data indicates that the likelihood of poverty increases by more than 155.51% for households with 1-2 children as compared to those without children. For those with 3-4 children, the poverty rate increases by another 48.58%. Households with five or more children have 45.42% chance of living in poverty, 18.56% higher than those with 3-4 children and 489.11% higher than those without children.

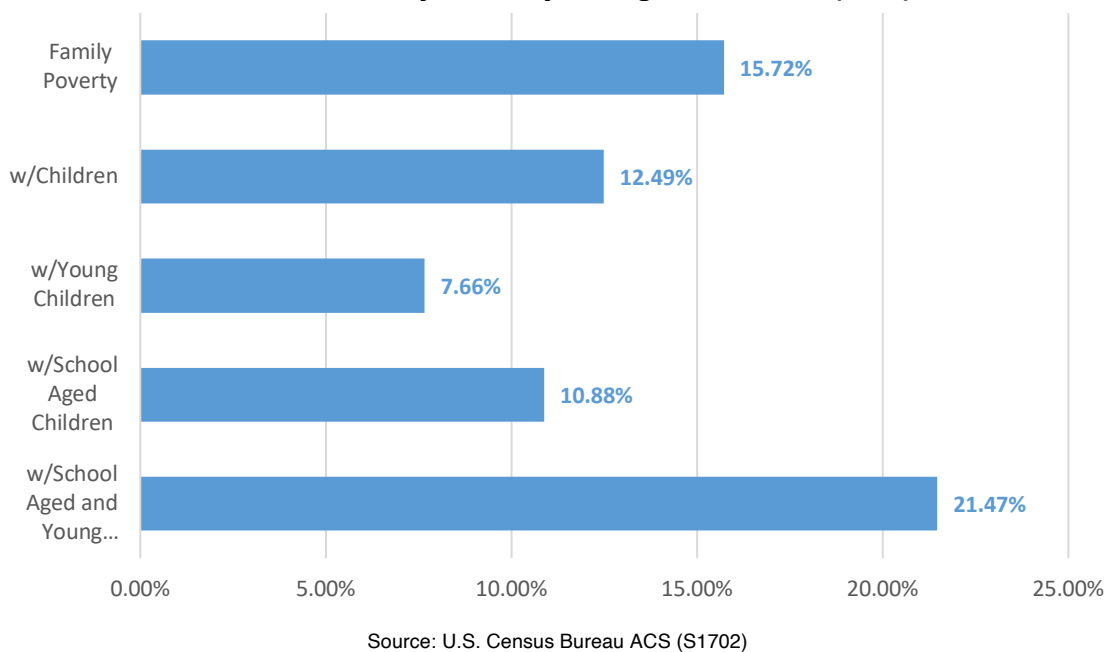
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 97: Poverty Rates by Number of Children (2022)



A secondary correlation was noted in association with the age of these children. Households with children under the age of 5 were 29.60% less likely to live in poverty than those with school-aged children alone. Households with both school aged and young children experienced the highest rate, at 21.47%.

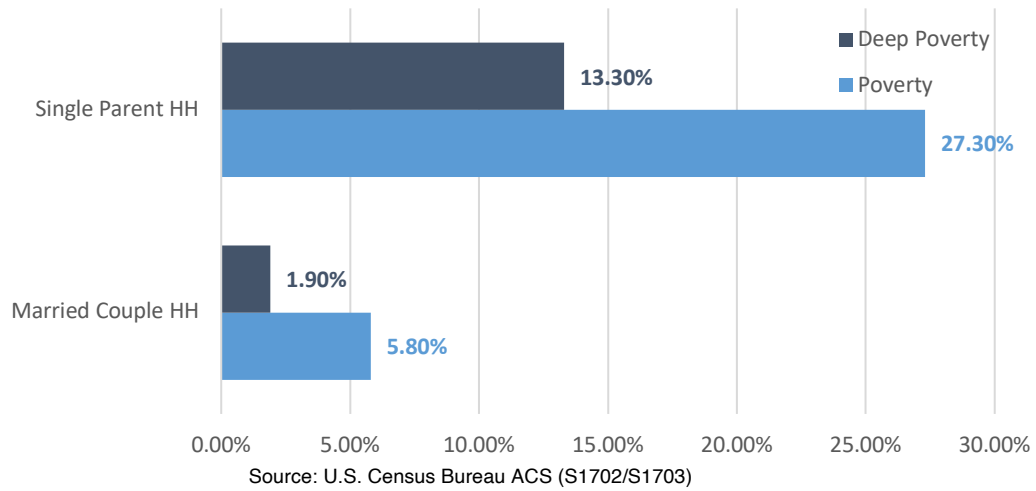
Chart 98: Poverty Rates by the Age of Children (2022)



Although county-level data was limited in the region, statewide data indicates that the structure of the household is also a risk factor associated with the likelihood of living in poverty. According to Census Bureau data, single-parent households were nearly five times as likely to live in poverty and more than seven times as likely to live in deep poverty than married-couple households with children.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 99: State Poverty Rates by Household Types with Children (2022)



Given these insights, programs and policies aimed at poverty alleviation could benefit from focusing on single-parent households, providing additional resources and support systems to address their specific challenges. Enhancing access to affordable childcare, job training, and educational opportunities for single parents, as well as considering the impact of policies on household composition, could be key steps in mitigating poverty and deep poverty in this demographic.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Median Income

Median Income reflects the middle point of income distribution in a given area, as documented by the U.S. Census Bureau. Unlike the mean income, which calculates the average by adding all incomes and dividing by the number of residents, the median income identifies the income level that divides the population into two equal groups: half of the population earns above this amount, and the other half earns below. This measure is often preferred over mean income because it is less skewed by extremely high or low values and provides a more accurate representation of typical earnings.

The median income for the region is \$49,634 annually. While this is an increase of 22.84% over the past five years, the amount remains significantly lower than the state (\$71,355) and national (\$75,149) averages.

Table 116: Median Income Change Comparison (2018/2022)

<i>Area</i>	2018	2022	\$ Change	% Change
<i>Appling</i>	\$39,561	\$43,268	+\$3,707	+9.37%
<i>Atkinson</i>	\$34,877	\$38,007	+\$3,130	+8.97%
<i>Bacon</i>	\$36,964	\$43,938	+\$6,974	+18.87%
<i>Brantley</i>	\$37,031	\$40,166	+\$3,135	+8.47%
<i>Bulloch</i>	\$41,789	\$53,675	+\$11,886	+28.44%
<i>Candler</i>	\$32,937	\$45,519	+\$12,582	+38.20%
<i>Charlton</i>	\$40,283	\$45,770	+\$5,487	+13.62%
<i>Clinch</i>	\$25,236	\$53,350	+\$28,114	+111.40%
<i>Coffee</i>	\$38,266	\$48,398	+\$10,132	+26.48%
<i>Effingham</i>	\$65,153	\$79,474	+\$14,321	+21.98%
<i>Evans</i>	\$39,701	\$55,222	+\$15,521	+39.09%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	\$36,531	\$41,780	+\$5,249	+14.37%
<i>Long</i>	\$55,439	\$56,819	+\$1,380	+2.49%
<i>Pierce</i>	\$44,167	\$54,861	+\$10,694	+24.21%
<i>Tattnall</i>	\$38,034	\$51,868	+\$13,834	+36.37%
<i>Toombs</i>	\$36,575	\$47,310	+\$10,735	+29.35%
<i>Ware</i>	\$39,887	\$44,138	+\$4,251	+10.66%
<i>Wayne</i>	\$44,869	\$49,847	+\$4,978	+11.09%
Region	\$40,406	\$49,634	+9,228	+22.84%
State	\$55,679	\$71,355	+\$15,676	+28.15%
Nation	\$60,293	\$75,149	+\$14,856	+24.64%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP03)

Looking at the individual counties within the region, the highest income was found in Effingham County at \$79,474. Not only is this amount higher than the regional average, but it also surpasses the state and national averages as well.

The most significant income growth was identified in Clinch County, at 111.40%. While the lowest income in the region was found in Atkinson County (\$38,007), the slowest growth was in Long County (+2.49%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Living Wage Equivalent (LWE)

While the U.S. Census Bureau determines poverty status by using an official poverty measure (OPM) that compares pre-tax income against a threshold that is set at three times the cost of a minimum food diet in 1963 and adjusted for family size, a more accurate reflection of economic hardship of local residents can be found by comparing the median income to living wage amounts.

The living wage takes into account the average cost for food, childcare, medical care, housing, transportation, and other necessary expenses within a specific community.

Table 117: Median Income vs. Living Wage (2022)

<i>Area</i>	Min Wage FT	Median Income	1 Adult 0 Child	1 Adult 1 Child	1 Adult 2 Child	2 Adult 0 Child	2 Adult 1 Child	2 Adult 2 Child
<i>Appling</i>	\$15,080	\$43,268	\$31,200	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,794	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Atkinson</i>	\$15,080	\$38,007	\$31,366	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,939	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Bacon</i>	\$15,080	\$43,938	\$30,410	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$51,854	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Brantley</i>	\$15,080	\$40,166	\$34,029	\$65,499	\$81,182	\$53,581	\$66,685	\$76,918
<i>Bulloch</i>	\$15,080	\$53,675	\$32,510	\$64,834	\$81,744	\$52,062	\$64,813	\$75,026
<i>Candler</i>	\$15,080	\$45,519	\$31,200	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,794	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Charlton</i>	\$15,080	\$45,770	\$31,907	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$51,854	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Clinch</i>	\$15,080	\$53,350	\$31,200	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,794	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Coffee</i>	\$15,080	\$48,398	\$31,907	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$51,501	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Effingham</i>	\$15,080	\$79,474	\$36,379	\$69,389	\$86,299	\$56,742	\$69,368	\$79,581
<i>Evans</i>	\$15,080	\$55,222	\$31,366	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,939	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	\$15,080	\$41,780	\$31,200	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,794	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Long</i>	\$15,080	\$56,819	\$32,323	\$63,274	\$78,957	\$51,917	\$64,459	\$74,693
<i>Pierce</i>	\$15,080	\$54,861	\$31,366	\$62,774	\$78,458	\$50,960	\$63,960	\$74,173
<i>Tattnall</i>	\$15,080	\$51,868	\$31,907	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$51,854	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Toombs</i>	\$15,080	\$47,310	\$30,992	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,586	\$63,752	\$73,986
<i>Ware</i>	\$15,080	\$44,138	\$31,242	\$62,920	\$78,582	\$50,856	\$64,085	\$74,318
<i>Wayne</i>	\$15,080	\$49,847	\$30,992	\$62,566	\$78,250	\$50,586	\$63,752	\$73,986
Region	\$15,080	\$49,634	\$31,861	\$63,304	\$79,123	\$51,634	\$64,355	\$74,585

Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator | Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP03)

The analysis of the median income versus the living wage requirements in the region demonstrates a significant disparity, particularly for single-parent households. For a single mother with two children, the living wage required is \$79,123 annually. Given the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, she would need to work 209.88 hours each week to reach the living wage amount, which clearly an impossible scenario given that there are only 168 hours in a week. It should also be noted that this does not account for any other activities, including sleep, meals, or family time.

This situation is emblematic of the struggles faced by households earning the minimum wage, where even full-time employment falls drastically short of providing a living wage. The regional median income of \$49,634, while above the minimum wage, still does not satisfy the living wage requirement for families with children, leading to potential budget deficits.

These financial constraints are exacerbated when considering additional necessities and unforeseen expenses such as school supplies, healthcare costs, and other emergencies. The current living wage model illustrates that many residents face economic hardships far beyond what the official poverty measures may suggest, highlighting the need for policy interventions that consider the actual costs of living and aim to raise income levels to meet these needs.

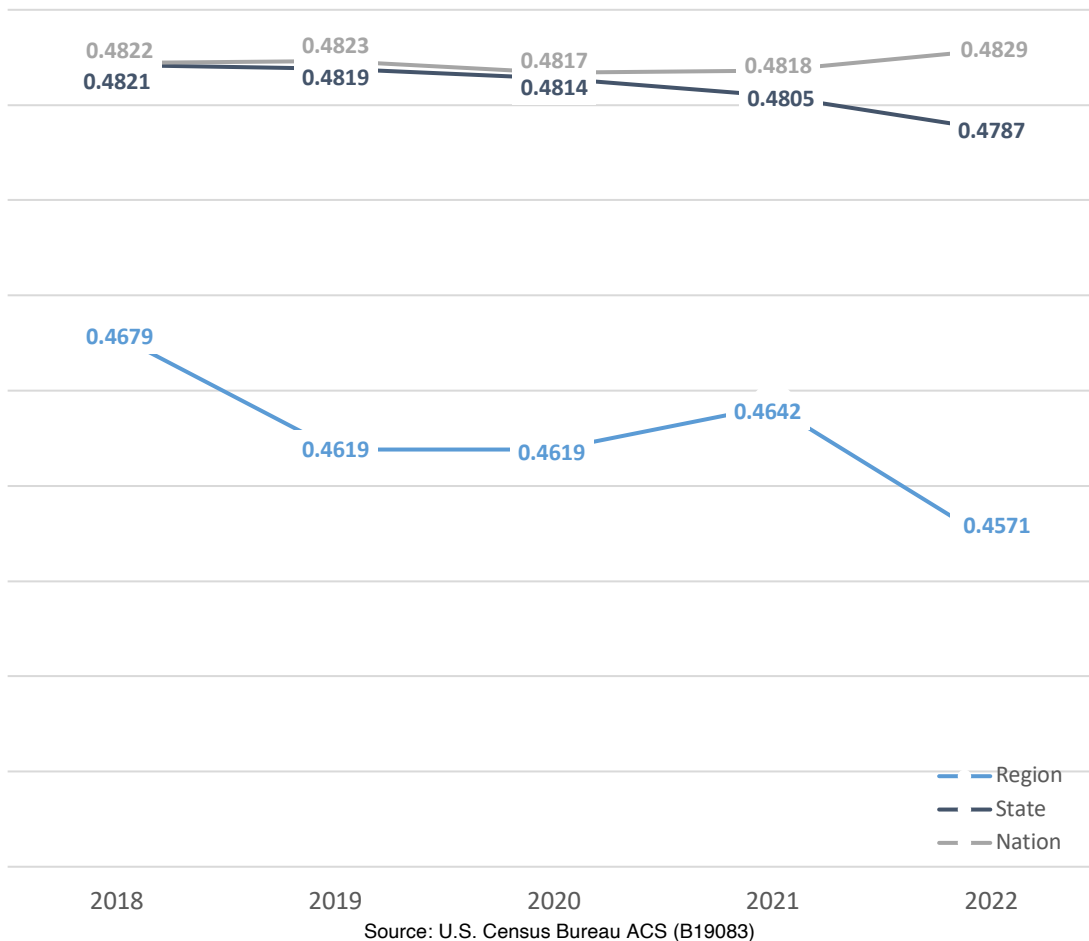
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Income Inequality

The Gini Coefficient is a key economic metric used to gauge income inequality within a community. It is expressed as a value between 0 and 1; where 0 represents perfect equality (everyone has the same income), and 1 signifies maximum inequality (all income is possessed by a single individual). Its importance in poverty research stems from its ability to quantify income disparities and provide a clear depiction of wealth distribution. Analyzing the Gini Coefficient helps researchers understand the depth and severity of inequality, informing policy decisions aimed at fostering economic equity and assessing the effectiveness of social programs designed to reduce poverty and redistribute income more evenly.

Nationally, the Gini Coefficient shows a slight fluctuation but maintains a trend around 0.48, indicating a relatively stable state of income inequality. The state's coefficient, while similar to the national trend, shows a marginal decrease from 0.4821 in 2018 to 0.4787 in 2022, suggesting a slight improvement in income distribution over these years.

Chart 100: Income Inequality Trend (2018-2022)



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

For the region, the Gini Coefficient exhibits a more notable decline of the same time period, starting at 0.4679 in 2018 and decreasing to 0.4571 in 2022. This reduction suggests that income inequality has somewhat lessened in the region, indicating that income is become more evenly distributed among its residents. The regional Gini Coefficient remains consistently lower than both the nation and the state throughout the five-year span, which could imply that the region has a comparatively more equitable distribution of income. This trend may be the result of effective local economic policies, community initiatives aimed at supporting lower-income residents, or the presence of industries and employment opportunities that offer more uniform compensation levels.

These trends allow for a better understanding of the underlying economic dynamics and is essential for crafting interventions aimed at reducing income inequality. In order to help visualize the significance of this data, the table below documents the number of people with income levels at three thresholds. According to living wage data, any household with children making less than \$50,000 would experience difficulty meeting financial obligations. Any single person living in the county would struggle to meet financial obligations with an income below \$25,000. Incomes lower than \$15,000 represents households earning less than the amount that which is normally paid by a full-time job at the nationally mandated minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour).

Table 118: Household Income Benchmarks (2022)

<i>Area</i>	\$25K - \$50k	\$15k - \$25k	< \$15k
<i>Appling</i>	1,445	1,457	1,079
<i>Atkinson</i>	990	466	385
<i>Bacon</i>	979	561	728
<i>Brantley</i>	1,348	1,312	1,516
<i>Bulloch</i>	6,779	3,631	3,990
<i>Candler</i>	931	740	758
<i>Charlton</i>	844	746	604
<i>Clinch</i>	537	273	615
<i>Coffee</i>	3,827	2,020	2,768
<i>Effingham</i>	4,702	1,466	1,527
<i>Evans</i>	952	522	706
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	1,871	468	971
<i>Long</i>	1,401	762	772
<i>Pierce</i>	1,773	1,156	811
<i>Tattnall</i>	2,420	1,103	1,132
<i>Toombs</i>	2,694	1,404	1,677
<i>Ware</i>	3,968	1,933	2,562
<i>Wayne</i>	2,630	1,405	1,721
Region	40,091	21,425	24,322

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP03)

Among the 161,492 total households living in the region, approximately 15.06% or 24,322 households earn less than \$15,000 annually, which is below what would typically be earned by a full-time job at the federally mandated minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. This indicates a significant portion of the population is not even reaching the income level that full-time employment at minimum wage would provide.

An estimated 13.27% of households earn between \$15,000 and \$25,000, which is below the living wage for a single person without children. This suggests that a substantial number of individuals could struggle to meet their basic financial obligations, even without the added responsibility of children.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering households with incomes less than \$50,000, approximately 53.15% of the population may be at risk of economic hardship, particularly when unexpected expenses arise or if there is a loss of income. This larger percentage includes all households earning less than \$25,000, as they too would find it difficult to cover expenses typically associated with a family or household.

The analysis reflects the significant economic challenges faced by many in the region. A large proportion of households are not earning enough to meet the living wage standards, which include basic needs such as housing, food, and healthcare. The data underscores the importance of targeted interventions to assist those earning below these thresholds, emphasizing the need for wage policies and social programs that address the gap between current incomes and the cost of living.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Income Types

When considering the types of income received by households in the area, it is evident that wages from employment constitute the primary source of income for a majority of the population. Approximately 72.80% of the region's households earn their income through wages, with an average amount of \$60,820, which is indicative of employment being the mainstay for the economic sustenance of the region.

Table 119: Income Types (2022)

<i>Measure</i>	Wages	SSA	Retirement	SSI	TANF
<i>Number</i>	117,559	52,988	28,453	12,073	2,560
<i>Avg. Amount</i>	\$60,820	\$18,098	\$24,318	\$9,080	\$2,564

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP03)

Social Security benefits are received by 32.81% of the households, signifying the importance of this program for nearly one-third of the population, particularly for those who are retired or disabled. The average amount received from Social Security is \$18,098. Retirement income, distinct from Social Security, is received by 17.62% of households, with an average amount of \$24,318, highlighting the reliance on accumulated retirement savings and pension plans for a significant portion of the elderly and retired populace.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income, is received by 7.48% of households, with an average amount of \$9,080, reflecting the critical support it provides to the most vulnerable segments. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a form of government cash assistance, is received by 1.59% of households, with a notably lower average amount of \$2,564 annually, underscoring its role as a temporary safety net for those in dire financial need.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

In the domain of income and poverty, the community's feedback paints a picture of profound challenges intertwining with various facets of daily life. Survey data underscore the prevalent issue of income inadequacy, with a large number of residents struggling with the basic necessities due to insufficient income. The struggle is compounded by a high cost of living, limited employment options, and a general lack of financial literacy. Quotes from the focus groups serve to humanize these statistics, revealing the real-world dilemmas faced by residents. An individual from the focus groups encapsulated this sentiment, simply stating, "You can't do anything without money."

Underemployment and unemployment emerge as key contributors to this instability, not merely as economic measures but as factors that erode the community's spirit. Qualitative insights from focus group discussions offer a granular view of the despair ingrained in the community consciousness. There's an expressed frustration over the cyclical nature of poverty, with one resident remarking on the penalties that come with aging and attempting to work: "If you work, they penalize you as a senior. They will take your Medicare and Medicaid and your check will decrease."

However, beyond the direct aid, there's a call for empowerment and sustainable solutions. The focus groups echo the surveys' sentiments, suggesting a path forward through financial education and resources that go beyond immediate relief. People are looking for interventions that would equip them with the skills to navigate their financial landscape better, as they emphasize the importance of initiatives for budgeting, emergency savings, and credit building. It's a community in need of tools to break free from poverty, to restore a belief in improvement, and to rekindle hope.

Agency Data

In Fiscal Year 2022, the organization reported serving 17,552 low-income individuals residing in 10,051 households. These individuals were primarily female (65.49%), non-Hispanic (98.38%), African Americans (71.38%) senior citizens (29.81%) and school-aged children (22.29%). These individuals lived primarily in single person households (61.02%) or single parent households (20.65%) with an average household size of 1.74 individuals. Although eligibility for the reported year had been increased to 200%, a strong majority (82.50%) were below the 125% poverty level traditionally adopted by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Well more than half (67.65%) were under the 100% poverty benchmark, with 2,475 households (24.62%) meeting the definition of deep poverty. This simply means that they have less than half of the officially recognized poverty level.

The leading income sources reported by customers included Social Security Retirement (55.57%), wages (19.43%), Supplemental Security Income (16.83%), and pension (3.99%). Only 21 customers reported receipt of TANF benefits.

Customers were assisted with services such as case management, financial coaching, and benefit coordination and advocacy. As a result, 32 individuals reported securing child support, 58 individuals reported improving their financial well-being, and 3 reported that they had achieved a living wage equivalent income that was sufficient to meet their household needs for a period of at least 90 days.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Income Assistance Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (ALL COUNTIES)
First Presbyterian Church	912-283-5077	Minimal groceries available throughout the week. Financial assistance Monday 10-11. (PIERCE, WARE)
First United Methodist Church	912-283-2077	Food Assistance Wed 9:30-11, Financial Assistance and clothing dependent on availability. (PIERCE, WARE)
Salvation Army	912-285-7237	Food, clothing, financial services Mon-Thurs 8:30-2:30 (PIERCE, WARE)
Waycross House of Hope	912-287-0377	Offers food and financial assistance Tuesdays 9-12 (PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

Over the past five years, the community has made significant strides in addressing poverty, as evidenced by several notable strengths in poverty reduction efforts. First, there has been a substantial decrease in poverty rates, with an impressive 15.68% decline observed. This is faster than the national improvements (-11.35%) during the same period. It should be further noted that the poverty gap between genders has improved by 11.01%, with all age groups also experiencing lower rates during the observed period.

The community has witnessed a commendable increase in median income, rising by 22.84% over the past five years. This improvement outpaces the rate of inflation (+16.50%) over the past five years.

Finally, the reduction in the Gini coefficient from 0.4679 to 0.4571 indicates a more equitable distribution of income within the community. This suggests that income disparities have lessened, contributing to a more inclusive and fair economic landscape. Overall, these strengths in poverty reduction efforts reflect the community's commitment to fostering economic opportunity, social mobility, and shared prosperity for all residents.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

Despite notable progress in poverty reduction, the community still faces significant challenges and weaknesses in addressing economic disparities and ensuring the well-being of all residents. First, the persistently high poverty rate remains a concern, with more than one-fifth of the population (20.60%) living below the poverty line. This rate exceeds both state and national averages, indicating a pressing need for targeted interventions to alleviate poverty and improve economic conditions.

Furthermore, specific regions within the community, such as Clinch County, exhibit alarmingly high poverty rates, with nearly one-third of residents (32.50%) living in poverty. The high concentration of poverty in certain areas underscores localized economic challenges that require tailored strategies and support mechanisms.

Moreover, the sheer number of individuals living in poverty (81,243) and deep poverty (39,076) highlights the magnitude of the issue and the urgency of addressing underlying factors contributing to economic insecurity.

While the median income has increased faster than inflation, individuals on fixed incomes face challenges due to the high inflation increases (+16.50%). This indicates a potential mismatch between income growth and the cost of living, posing difficulties for vulnerable populations, especially those relying on fixed incomes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment & Industry

Introduction

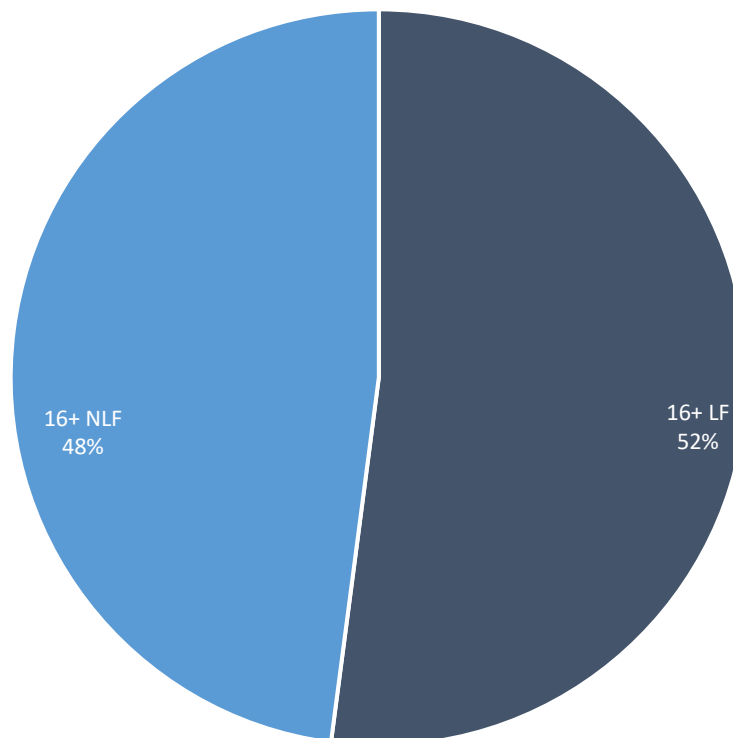
The study of employment is a fundamental aspect of poverty research because job availability and the nature of employment directly influences economic stability. By examining employment patterns, researchers can pinpoint where job scarcity or low-wage employment may be perpetuating poverty. This evaluation can help to shed light on the structural and systemic factors affecting the labor market, guiding effective policymaking to foster job creation, skill development, and equitable economic growth, ultimately aimed at poverty alleviation.

Labor Force

Understanding the number of individuals in the labor force within a community is pivotal for gauging its economic health and workforce potential. It allows for an assessment of the active working population that contributes to the local economy and is a key indicator of labor market strength. This knowledge aids in identifying the level of unemployment, underemployment, and the need for workforce development programs. It also helps in planning for future economic development strategies, including education and training programs, which are essential for matching skills with job opportunities and promoting sustainable economic growth.

In the local service area, a total of 186,148 local residents were noted as being a part of the labor force. This represents 52.08% of all individuals between the ages of 16 and 64.

Chart 101: Labor Force (2022)



Source: : U.S. Census Bureau (C18120/DP05)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Over the past five years, the regional labor force has increased by 5.07%. While this is slower than the state average of +5.22%, it is significantly faster than the national average of +2.59%. It should be noted that a slight decrease of 0.82% was experienced in 2021, potentially associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic, however the 2.11% increase in 2022 surpassed the average annual gains of 1.86% experienced prior to the decrease.

Table 120: Labor Force Trend by County (2018-2022)

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Change
Appling	7,203	6,875	7,044	6,908	6,863	-4.72%
Atkinson	3,293	3,294	3,472	3,271	3,420	+3.86%
Bacon	4,123	4,051	4,062	4,088	3,918	-4.97%
Brantley	6,622	6,552	6,456	6,263	6,838	+3.26%
Bulloch	34,445	35,364	36,890	36,547	37,323	+8.36%
Candler	4,161	4,284	4,363	4,310	4,324	+3.92%
Charlton	4,623	4,472	4,722	5,018	5,077	+9.82%
Clinch	2,240	2,194	2,118	2,252	2,435	+8.71%
Coffee	16,151	16,487	16,907	16,876	17,207	+6.54%
Effingham	27,613	28,543	29,661	29,947	31,055	+12.47%
Evans	4,246	4,304	4,356	4,526	4,486	+5.65%
Jeff Davis	5,584	5,495	5,582	5,781	5,832	+4.44%
Long	7,043	7,162	7,501	6,520	6,988	-0.78%
Pierce	7,499	7,369	7,820	7,922	8,164	+8.87%
Tattnall	7,539	7,804	8,235	8,390	7,970	+5.72%
Toombs	10,936	10,680	10,531	10,303	10,209	-6.65%
Ware	12,886	13,113	13,060	12,655	12,909	+0.18%
Wayne	10,959	11,014	11,021	10,804	11,130	+1.56%
Region	177,166	179,057	183,801	182,301	186,148	+5.07%
State	4,754,849	4,820,015	4,880,684	4,939,672	5,003,141	+5.22%
Nation	151,490,405	152,331,540	153,022,839	154,547,536	155,407,171	+2.59%

Source: : U.S. Census Bureau (DP03)/Bureau of Labor Statistics

The region's largest labor force increase was identified in Effingham County, at +12.47%. This rate of growth is more than double the reported rates on a regional and state levels, and more than four times the national average. While this is encouraging, it should be noted that decreases were experienced in Toombs (-6.65%), Bacon (-4.97%), Appling (-4.72%), and Long (-0.78%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate is a key economic indicator that measures the percentage of people within the labor force who are actively seeking employment but currently do not have jobs. It reflects the extent to which individuals in the workforce are able to secure meaningful employment. A high unemployment rate suggests a larger portion of the labor force is experiencing joblessness, potentially leading to financial hardships.

Assessing the current unemployment rate holds significant importance because it directly impacts poverty levels within a community. Elevated unemployment rates often result in higher poverty rates as individuals without jobs may struggle to meet their basic needs due to a lack of financial resources.

Comparing local unemployment rates to state and national averages provide valuable context for understanding the economic conditions of a specific community within a broader framework. This comparison aids in determining whether a locality is performing better or worse than larger regions, influencing decisions regarding resource allocation, job development initiatives, and employment support services.

According to the United States Census Bureau, there are 10,714 unemployed individuals in the region, a rate of 5.76%. This rate is slightly higher than the state average of 5.21% and the national average of 5.28%.

Table 121: Annual Unemployment Rate Estimates by County (2022)

<i>Area</i>	<i>Labor Force</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Rate</i>
<i>Appling</i>	6,863	192	2.80%
<i>Atkinson</i>	3,420	172	5.03%
<i>Bacon</i>	3,918	189	4.82%
<i>Brantley</i>	6,838	238	3.48%
<i>Bulloch</i>	37,323	3,142	8.42%
<i>Candler</i>	4,324	181	4.19%
<i>Charlton</i>	5,077	452	8.90%
<i>Clinch</i>	2,435	68	2.79%
<i>Coffee</i>	17,207	754	4.38%
<i>Effingham</i>	31,055	1,666	5.36%
<i>Evans</i>	4,486	320	7.13%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	5,832	228	3.91%
<i>Long</i>	6,988	322	4.61%
<i>Pierce</i>	8,164	183	2.24%
<i>Tattnall</i>	7,970	641	8.04%
<i>Toombs</i>	10,209	647	6.34%
<i>Ware</i>	12,909	578	4.48%
<i>Wayne</i>	11,130	741	6.66%
Region	186,148	10,714	5.76%
State	5,003,141	260,859	5.21%
Nation	155,407,171	8,202,587	5.28%

Source: : U.S. Census Bureau (C18120)

The region’s highest unemployment rates were identified in Charlton (8.90%), Bulloch (8.42%), and Tattnall (8.04%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 122: Low-Income Unemployment Rate (2022)

<i>Area</i>	<i>LI Labor-Force</i>	<i>LI Unemployed</i>	<i>Rate %</i>
<i>Appling</i>	668	43	6.44%
<i>Atkinson</i>	604	30	4.97%
<i>Bacon</i>	526	112	21.29%
<i>Brantley</i>	348	11	3.16%
<i>Bulloch</i>	6,304	1,248	19.80%
<i>Candler</i>	513	111	21.64%
<i>Charlton</i>	577	268	46.45%
<i>Clinch</i>	411	52	12.65%
<i>Coffee</i>	1,807	525	29.05%
<i>Effingham</i>	883	192	21.74%
<i>Evans</i>	627	92	14.67%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	545	48	8.81%
<i>Long</i>	938	95	10.13%
<i>Pierce</i>	394	36	9.14%
<i>Tattnall</i>	814	215	26.41%
<i>Toombs</i>	1,029	111	10.79%
<i>Ware</i>	1,189	213	17.91%
<i>Wayne</i>	1,015	214	21.08%
Region	19,192	3,616	18.84%
State	390,338	78,277	20.05%
Nation	11,346,200	2,416,316	21.30%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701, S2301)

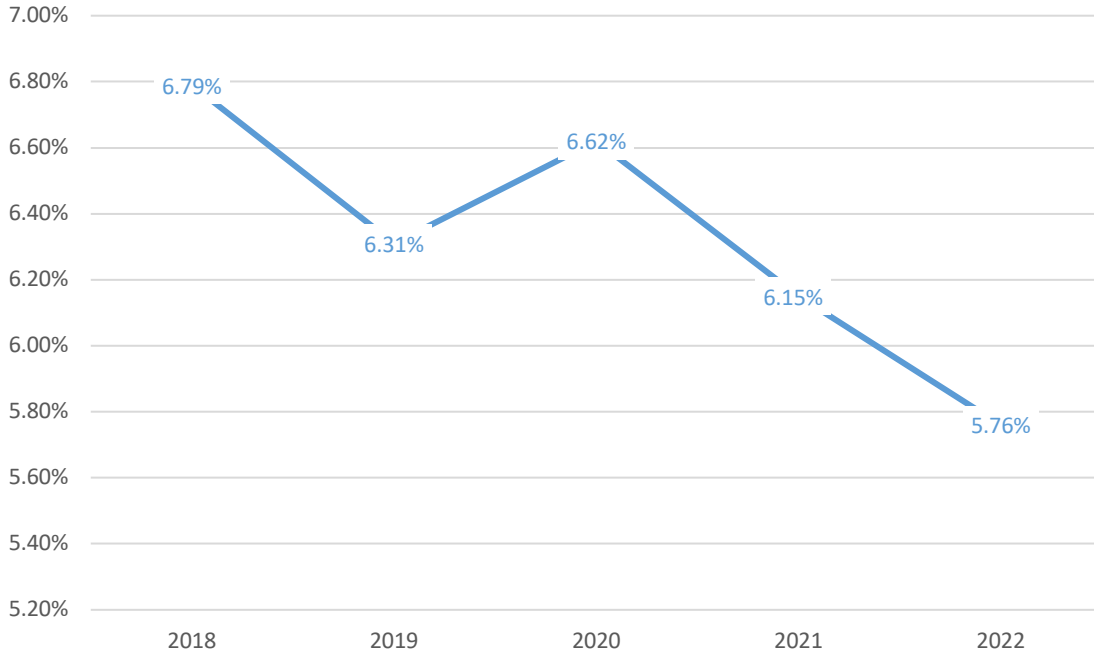
When considering only the 19,192 members of the labor force with incomes below the poverty level, the poverty rate was noted as being significantly higher, at 18.84%, than the population as a whole (7.13%). This highest unemployment rate for low-income residents was found in Charlton (46.45%), with the lowest being found in Brantley (3.16%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Unemployment Trend

Over the past five years, the unemployment rate for the region has decreased by 15.17%. Although a temporary increase of 4.91% was experienced in 2020, potentially associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic, the rate decreased by 12.99%. It should be noted that the annual rate of improvement between 2020 and 2022 (-6.34%) is only slightly slower than the 2019 improvement of -7.07%.

Chart 102: Regional Unemployment Trend (2018-2022)



Source: : U.S. Census Bureau (DP03)/Bureau of Labor Statistics

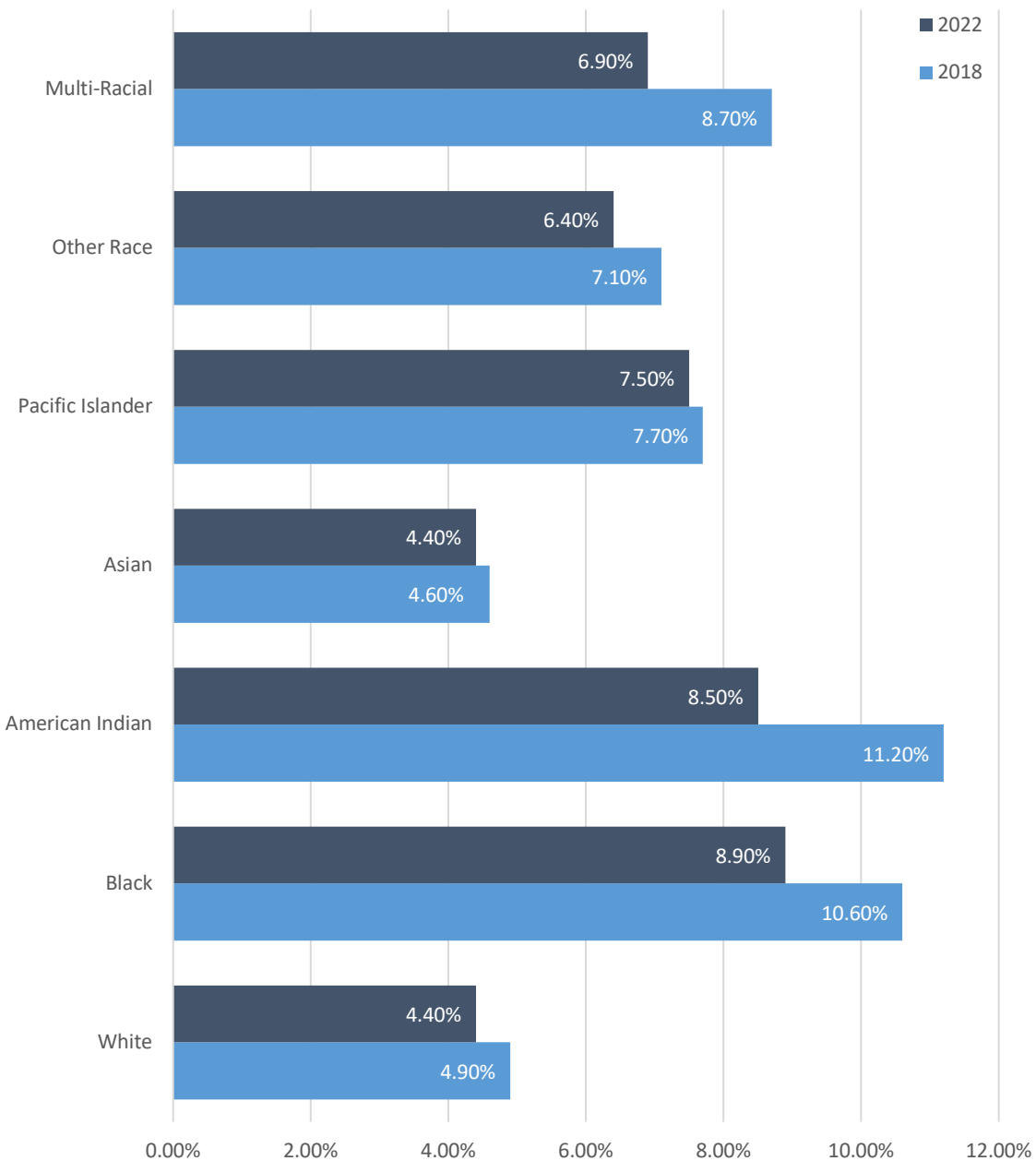
This trend is a positive signal, indicating the underlying strength of the local economy and the potential for further improvement as it adapts to post-pandemic conditions. The analysis must acknowledge, however, that while the unemployment rate is an essential indicator, it does not fully capture the quality of employment, underemployment, and the lived experience of those who remain in low-paying or insecure jobs.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Unemployment Rates by Race

Comparing unemployment rates for select demographics such as age, race, ethnic groups, and gender is critical as it sheds light on the inequalities and challenges faced by different segments of the population. This knowledge can guide the development of targeted employment programs and policies that address specific barriers to workforce entry or advancement. It can also reveal systemic issues that contribute to unemployment disparities, such as access to education, discrimination, or economic shifts impacting certain industries. By examining these rates, stakeholders can work towards creating a more equitable labor market that offers equal opportunities for all community members.

Chart 103: Unemployment Rates by Race (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2301)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

According to the most recently published data, individuals identifying as Black/African American had the highest risk of unemployment at 8.90%. This was followed by American Indians (8.50%), and Pacific Islanders (7.50%). The lowest risk was noted among those identifying as White (4.40%) and Asian (4.40%).

While every racial demographic experienced improvement over the past five years, the most significant change was experienced among those identifying as American Indian (-24.11%) and multi-Racial (-20.69%). This was followed by those identifying as Black/African American (-16.04%), White (-10.20%), Other Race (-9.86%), Asian (-4.35%), and Pacific Islander (-2.60%).

Unemployment Rates by Ethnicity

When evaluating the ethnicity of unemployed residents, data indicates that while residents identifying as Hispanic were more likely to be unemployed in 2018, this is no longer the case in 2022. Over the past five years, labor force participants with a Hispanic ethnicity were noted as experiencing a 41.37% reduction in unemployment rates as compared to a 29.82% improvement among non-Hispanics. As a result, the current unemployment rate among Hispanic residents is lower, at 3.67%, than non-Hispanics, at 4.33%.

Table 123: Regional Unemployment Rates by Ethnicity (2022)

<i>Area</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>% Change</i>
<i>Hispanic</i>	6.26%	3.67%	-41.37%
<i>Non-Hispanic</i>	6.17%	4.33%	-29.82%

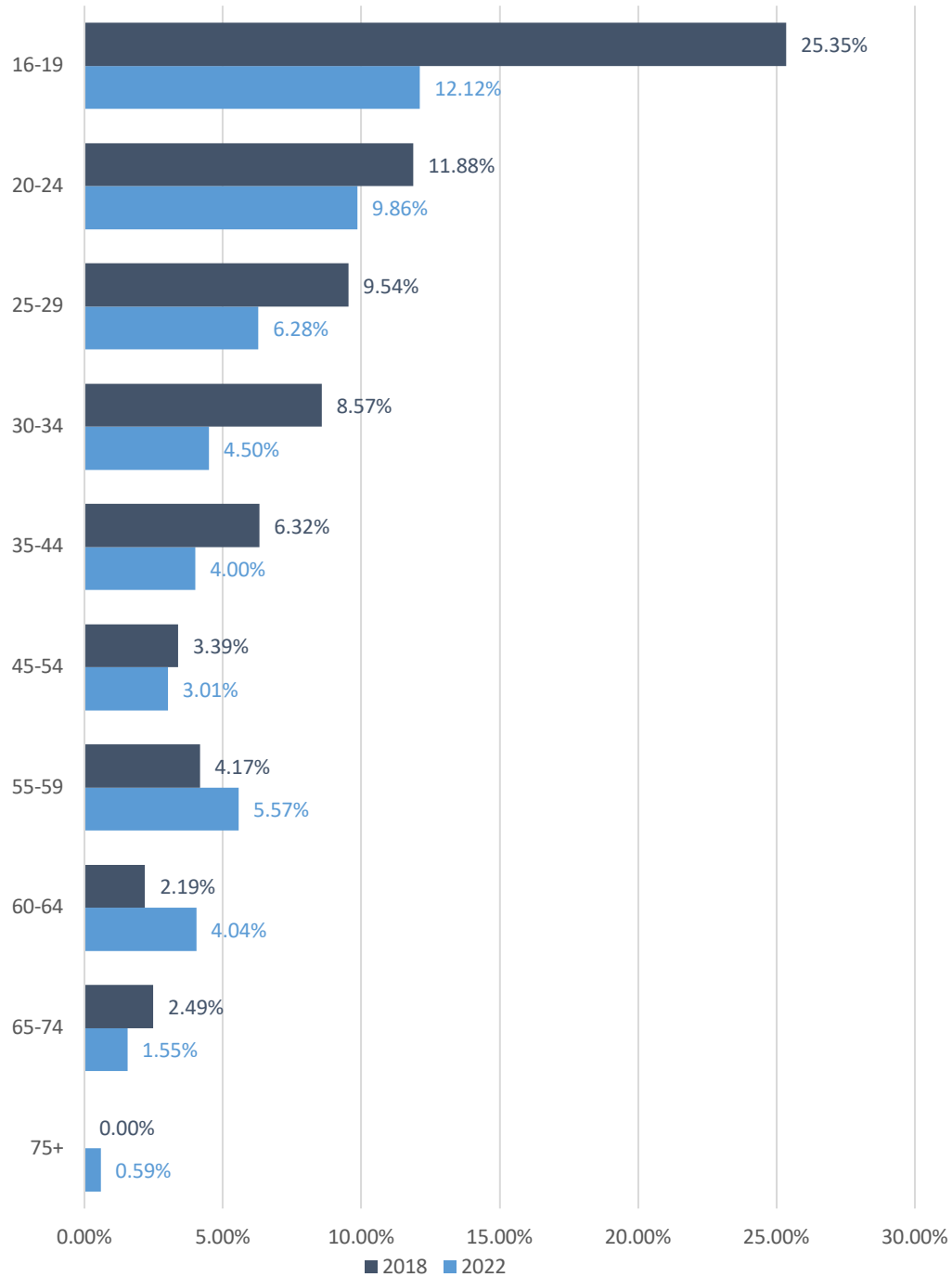
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2301)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Unemployment Rates by Age

When considering age as a factor, the group most impacted by unemployment was identified as residents between the ages of 16 and 19, at 12.12%. This rate could be attributed to a combination of factors such as lack of experience, higher student populations within this age bracket, and a competitive entry-level job market. It should be noted, however, that this age group also experienced that most significant improvement during the evaluated period (-52.19%).

Chart 104: Unemployment Rates by Age (2022)

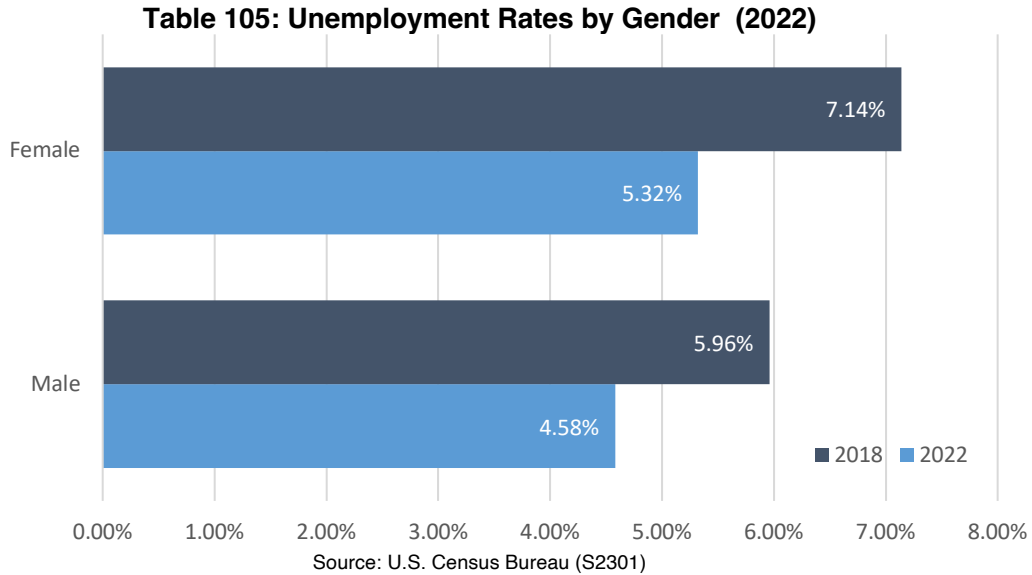


Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2301)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Unemployment Rates by Gender

Gender disparities in the labor market are a persistent issue, with varying rates of unemployment often reflecting broader societal and economic factors. These disparities can be influenced by a range of issues, including but not limited to gender discrimination, occupational segregation, and differences in industry growth or decline where genders are not equally represented.



The unemployment rates by gender for 2022, as shown in the provided chart, reveal that 5.32% of females were unemployed compared to 4.58% of males. This disparity suggests that women in the labor market faced greater challenges in securing employment than their male counterparts.

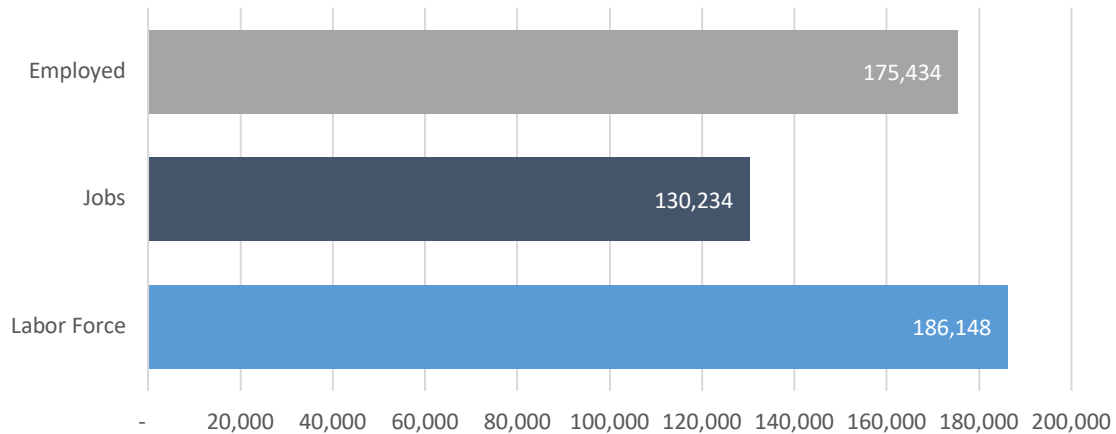
It should also be noted, however, that the rate for females has improved at a slightly faster rate (-25.49%) than for males (-23.15%), indicating improved gender equality associated with employment.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Job Availability

Job availability is a crucial component of a healthy economy, demonstrating the capacity of a community to provide suitable employment for its local labor force. Failure to provide an adequate number of employment opportunities indicates a need for residents to travel outside of the area for employment, often increasing the impact of transportation and childcare barriers.

Chart 106: Employment Infrastructure vs Labor Force (2021)



Source: US Census Bureau (DP02) | Bureau of Labor Statistics

In the region served by the organization, there is a deficit of 55,914 jobs to accommodate the local labor force. While data indicates that there are more residents employed than jobs available, the necessity for outward commuting can have several implications. It may indicate robustness in surrounding economies or more competitive industries in adjacent areas, drawing talent and labor resources from the region. However, this pattern also has its drawbacks, such as increased travel times, higher transportation costs, and the potential drain of local talent, which can affect the regional economy's ability to grow and sustain itself.

Additionally, the commuting of workers can impact community cohesion and family dynamics, as longer travel times may reduce the time individuals can spend at home or participating in local community activities. It also places pressure on infrastructure and can lead to congestion and increased wear and tear on road networks.

Strategically, this information is pivotal for regional economic development planning. It highlights the importance of creating a diverse and robust job market within the community that can provide employment opportunities close to home. This may require a multifaceted approach, including incentives for businesses to set up in the region, support for local start-ups, and investment in sectors that have the potential for job creation. Ensuring that the workforce has the necessary skills to meet the demands of these new opportunities is equally important, emphasizing the role of local education and training initiatives. By addressing these challenges, the region can work towards achieving a balanced job market that supports its economic health and the well-being of its residents.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Industry and Wage Study

The study of industry and wage dynamics is paramount for a comprehensive socioeconomic analysis. It offers insights beyond mere job availability, diving into whether the employment opportunities in a community adequately support its residents' economic welfare. Examining the variety of industries present and analyzing the wages they offer sheds light on the economic viability and the potential for sustainable livelihoods within the county. This nuanced understanding is critical, as it pinpoints sectors that underpin the local economy and identifies gaps where economic interventions could be most effective.

Table 124: Industry and Wage Study (2022)

<i>Industry</i>	Jobs	Avg. Wage
Agriculture	4,839	\$43,732
Utilities	415	\$86,840
Construction	7,292	\$48,648
Manufacturing	17,545	\$52,326
Wholesale	4,228	\$54,725
Retail	17,617	\$30,816
Transportation	5,626	\$48,332
Information	616	\$45,812
Finance/Insurance	2,738	\$51,107
Real Estate	1,074	\$34,308
Professional/Technical	3,138	\$52,448
Management	187	\$63,873
Administrative/Waste	4,925	\$35,221
Education	307	\$27,186
Health/Social	14,487	\$47,462
Arts/Entertainment	522	\$28,236
Accommodation/Food	12,788	\$18,105
Federal Government	1,203	\$61,395
State Government	7,011	\$43,196
Local Government	20,298	\$40,950
Other/Unclassified	1,702	\$35,195
Total	130,234	\$45,234

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Local government is the leading job provider with 20,298 positions and an average wage of \$40,950, indicating its substantial contribution (15.59%) to the region's employment and economic health. This was followed by retail sales (13.53%), manufacturing (13.47%), health/social services (11.12%), and accommodation/food (9.82%).

The highest wage in the community was found in the utility sector (\$86,840), although it represented 415 jobs (0.32%). The lowest rate was found in accommodation/food sector (\$18,105), representing 12,788 jobs (9.82%).

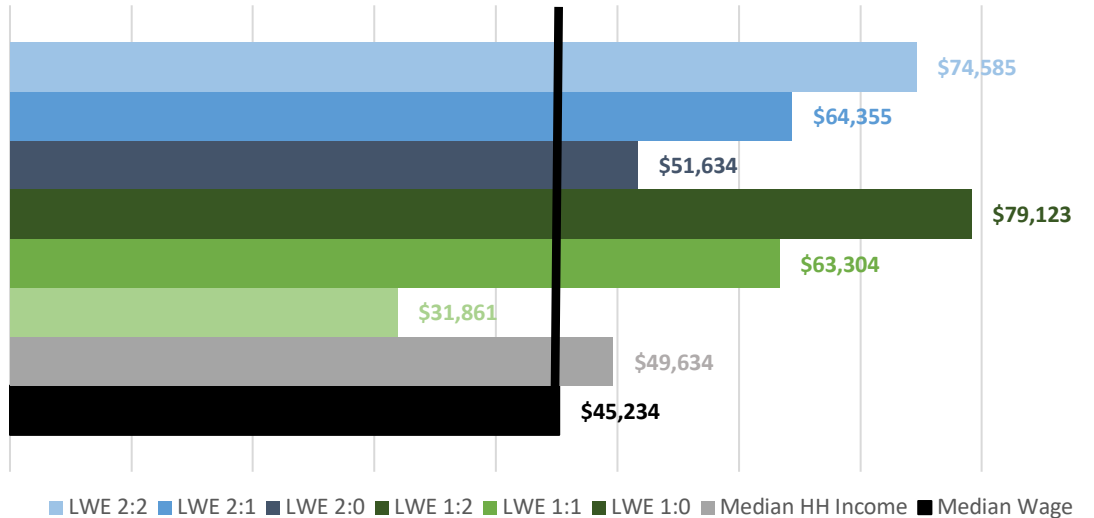
Overall, there are 99,104 local jobs paying wages below \$50,000 annually (76.10%), with 9.82% paying lower than \$20,000 annually.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Under-Employment

Under-employment is a critical yet often overlooked aspect of labor statistics. It occurs when individuals are working, yet the income they earn is insufficient to meet the cost of living in their community. Although a community's employment rates may appear robust, under-employment may signal a mismatch in the labor market, highlighting the need for economic strategies that foster job creation in line with the living wage standards and skill levels of the workforce.

Chart 107: Median Wage vs. Cost of Living (2022)



Source: US Census Bureau (S1903) , MIT Living Wage Calculator

Analyzing the median annual wage in relation to the cost of living reveals a complex picture of the economic well-being for residents within the region. With the median wage standing at \$45,234, a single adult without children comfortably exceeds the living wage requirement of \$31,861, suggesting that many individuals in this demographic enjoy a level of economic security.

However, the adequacy of this median wage diminishes sharply as family size increases. This is especially a concern for single parents. For single parent households with child, the living wage of \$63,304 reflects a deficit of \$18,070 annually. This is the equivalent of a full-time job paying \$8.68 per hour. For single parents with two children, the amount of money needed is \$79,123, a deficit of \$33,889 annually, or the equivalent of a full-time job paying \$16.29 per hour.

While dual-income earners may be better equipped, the deficit for the traditional family of four is \$29,351 annually, or the equivalent of a full-time job paying \$14.11 per hour. It should also be noted that the median household income of \$49,634 is only slightly higher than the median wage of \$45,234.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

As a result, data indicates that 15,576 members of the local labor force earn wages below the nationally recognized poverty level. This represents 8.39% of all workers, more than three-quarters (81.16%) of all able-bodied adults who are living the poverty level, and 27.19% of all low-income residents over the age of 16 in the region.

Table 125: Working Poor by County (2022)

<i>Area</i>	Number of Working Poor	% of Workers	% of Low Income Labor Force	% of Low Income Residents (16+)
<i>Appling</i>	625	8.45%	93.56%	20.92%
<i>Atkinson</i>	574	15.92%	95.03%	42.61%
<i>Bacon</i>	414	9.73%	78.71%	27.20%
<i>Brantley</i>	337	4.82%	96.84%	15.91%
<i>Bulloch</i>	5,056	14.56%	80.20%	37.95%
<i>Candler</i>	402	9.01%	78.36%	32.60%
<i>Charlton</i>	309	6.19%	53.55%	18.76%
<i>Clinch</i>	359	14.27%	87.35%	24.61%
<i>Coffee</i>	1,282	7.26%	70.95%	23.73%
<i>Effingham</i>	691	2.24%	78.26%	19.88%
<i>Evans</i>	535	12.14%	85.33%	36.35%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	497	8.59%	91.19%	22.27%
<i>Long</i>	843	12.27%	89.87%	42.15%
<i>Pierce</i>	358	4.22%	90.86%	18.58%
<i>Tattnall</i>	599	7.57%	73.59%	21.26%
<i>Toombs</i>	918	9.04%	89.21%	23.28%
<i>Ware</i>	976	7.45%	82.09%	20.45%
<i>Wayne</i>	801	7.06%	78.92%	22.16%
Region	15,576	8.39%	81.16%	27.19%
State	312,061	6.18%	79.95%	31.42%
Nation	8,929,884	5.65%	78.70%	30.01%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701, S2301, C18120)

The regional portion of workers who are living in poverty (8.39%) is significantly higher than both the state (6.18%) and national (5.65%) averages. Within the region served, the community with the highest percentage of workers earning poverty wages was Atkinson, at 15.92%. This was followed by Bulloch (14.56%), Clinch (14.27%), Long (12.27%), and Evans (12.14%). The lowest rate was identified in Effingham County, at 2.24%.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

The community's employment struggles are multi-dimensional and deeply felt across various demographics. The surveys provide a quantitative backdrop with 26.63% of respondents naming unemployment as a core concern, and low-income residents particularly affected, as 19.30% state they have personally experienced unemployment in the past year. Additionally, underemployment emerges as another layer of hardship, identified by 14.02% as a principal cause of poverty.

The obstacles to meaningful employment are diverse and substantial. Transportation issues pose the greatest barrier, according to 65.28% of survey respondents, while over half, at 52.78%, point to a scarcity of job opportunities. Slightly more than half, 51.39% attribute employment difficulties to a lack of necessary qualifications. Childcare emerges as another significant barrier for 45.83%, with nearly one-third (29.67%) stating that criminal records are somewhat to blame.

The survey's qualitative feedback deepens our understanding of these statistics. Phrases like "Wages are not keeping up with the high prices," highlight the pervasive concern about the insufficiency of wages relative to the cost of living. This sentiment correlates with focus group reflections, where the stark dichotomy between paying for basic utilities or purchasing groceries illustrates the harsh realities of inadequate income.

Direct quotes from the community, such as "You can't pay rent of \$600 on \$10 per hour," from focus group participants, add human voices to the statistical framework, emphasizing the dire need for jobs that pay a livable wage. This collective feedback underscores the interrelation between employment, economic stability, and the broader social welfare.

The qualitative feedback aligns with the quantitative data to portray a community in need of systemic change. The voices of the community members, supported by the statistical evidence, call for interventions that address both the availability and the quality of jobs. Employment opportunities that provide equitable wages, along with support systems to overcome barriers like transportation and childcare, are integral to fostering a thriving community. Together, these data points urge the development of sustainable strategies that empower individuals to secure not just any job, but one that can provide financial stability and facilitate community growth.

Agency Data

During the most recently reported program year, a total of 1,953 households (19.43%) served by the organization were noted as receiving employment income. This included 1,346 individuals who were working full-time with an average annual wage of \$20,299.89 and 538 who were employed part-time with an average annual wage of \$11,017.75.

In 2022, a total of 177 local residents requested assistance with securing employment and 126 requested assistance with career advancement. Services provided to these individuals included job readiness training, resume' development, employment supplies, and job placement assistance.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Christian Women's Job Corps	912-548-2147	Free classes in job preparation, computer basics, math and language skills, money management. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

The community demonstrates several strengths associated with employment, reflecting positive trends and improvements in labor market dynamics over the past five years. First, the current unemployment rate of 5.76% marks a significant improvement of 15.17% compared to the rate five years ago. Also, the low-income unemployment rate of 18.84% is notably lower than both state (20.03%) and national (21.30%) averages.

The substantial improvement in unemployment rates for specific demographic groups underscores the community's commitment to inclusivity and equal access to employment opportunities. The impressive 41.37% reduction in the unemployment rate for the Hispanic population indicates progress in addressing barriers to employment faced by minority groups, promoting diversity and inclusion in the workforce. Additionally, the remarkable 52.19% improvement in the unemployment rate for individuals aged 16-19 reflects efforts to enhance youth employment prospects and provide meaningful opportunities for career development and skill-building among younger residents.

Finally, the observed improvement in gender equality associated with employment is another noteworthy strength of the community. The slightly faster rate of improvement in unemployment rates for females (-25.49%) compared to males (-23.15%) signals progress towards narrowing gender disparities in the labor market, promoting equal access to employment and opportunities for professional growth and advancement for all genders.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

Despite some positive trends, the community also faces several weaknesses and challenges related to employment, which require attention and targeted interventions to address effectively.

First, the relatively high unemployment rate of 5.75%, representing 10,714 unemployed individuals, is a concern, especially considering that it surpasses both state (5.21%) and national (5.28%) averages. Particularly alarming are the elevated unemployment rates in certain counties within the region, such as Clinch (8.90%), Bulloch (8.42%), and Tattnall (8.04%), indicating localized economic challenges and disparities in employment opportunities.

Also, the unemployment rate among the low-income labor force stands at 18.84%, with 3,616 individuals unemployed. This highlights the vulnerability of low-income workers to job insecurity and underemployment, exacerbating financial hardships and perpetuating cycles of poverty within the community.

Furthermore, the substantial job deficit of 55,914 positions underscores the mismatch between job supply and demand within the region, posing significant barriers to employment and economic growth. As a result, individuals are required to travel outside of the community, negatively impacting those with transportation barriers.

Additionally, the median wage of \$45,234 falls below the living wage requirements for households with children, rendering it inadequate to meet basic needs, particularly for single-parent households. This underscores the prevalence of low-wage work and the challenges faced by workers in earning a livable income, further perpetuating economic insecurity and inequality.

Finally, the prevalence of low-paying jobs is concerning, with 9.82% of all jobs paying less than \$20,000 annually. This highlights the need for policies and initiatives aimed at improving wages and working conditions to ensure economic security for all workers.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Skills and Qualifications

Adult Education levels

Adult education levels serve as a significant indicator of a community's potential for economic development and individual success. High educational attainment often correlates with better job prospects, higher incomes, and more robust economic growth. By assessing the educational qualifications of adults, stakeholders can identify gaps and design targeted interventions to enhance skill sets, thereby improving employability and economic self-sufficiency. This metric is crucial not only for matching individuals to current job opportunities but also for preparing the workforce for future industry demands, fostering a versatile and adaptable labor force that can contribute to and benefit from the community's prosperity.

In 2022, the local unemployment rate for individuals with a high school diploma was 6.37% lower, on average, than a person who had not completed high school. Individuals securing a bachelor's degree or higher were noted as having an unemployment rate 65.44% lower than a person who completed high school without attending college, and 67.64% lower than a person who did not secure a diploma.

Table 126: Educational Impact on Employment/Wages (2022)

<i>Education Level</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>Median Earnings</i>	<i>Poverty Rate</i>
<i>Graduate Degree</i>	1.88%	\$62,262	4.90%
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>		\$48,671	
<i>Associate degree</i>	4.34%	\$37,619	14.50%
<i>Some College (No Degree)</i>			
<i>High School Diploma/GED</i>	5.44%	\$34,077	17.50%
<i>No High School Diploma</i>	5.81%	\$27,223	30.50%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1501, S2301, S1701)

Many jobs have a minimum educational requirement. Regardless of their abilities, unless a person meets these basic requirements, they will more than likely not even be invited to an interview. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 18 of the 30 fastest growing industries in the United States require some type of college education.

A secondary observation, as noted in the table above, is the impact of education on salaries of employees. For example, a person who completes high school is estimated, on average, to have an income of \$6,854 per year more (+25.18%) than a person who does not obtain a high school diploma or GED. This average is increased by an additional \$3,542 per year (+10.39%) for those who attend college. Completing college and securing a bachelor's degree resulted in an additional increase of \$11,052 per year (+29.38%) from those who simply attended college. As would be assumed, individuals who earn a graduate degree have the highest median income at \$62,262 annually. This is an increase of \$13,591 per year from those securing a bachelor's degree (+27.92%) and \$28,185 more than those who complete high school, but do not pursue college (+82.71%).

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 16.52% of the region's residents aged 25 and older (48,600 individuals) have less than a high school education. An additional 109,856 individuals (37.34% of the adult population) have completed high school but have no post-secondary education. Although more competitive for employment opportunities than those without a high school education, data indicates that wages earned by this population are generally lower than is required to meet basic needs.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In the service area, nearly one-third (30.50%) of those without a diploma are living in poverty, as compared to 17.50% of those with a diploma, 12.30% with a college education, and 4.90% with a degree.

Table 127: Adult Educational Attainment Level (2022)

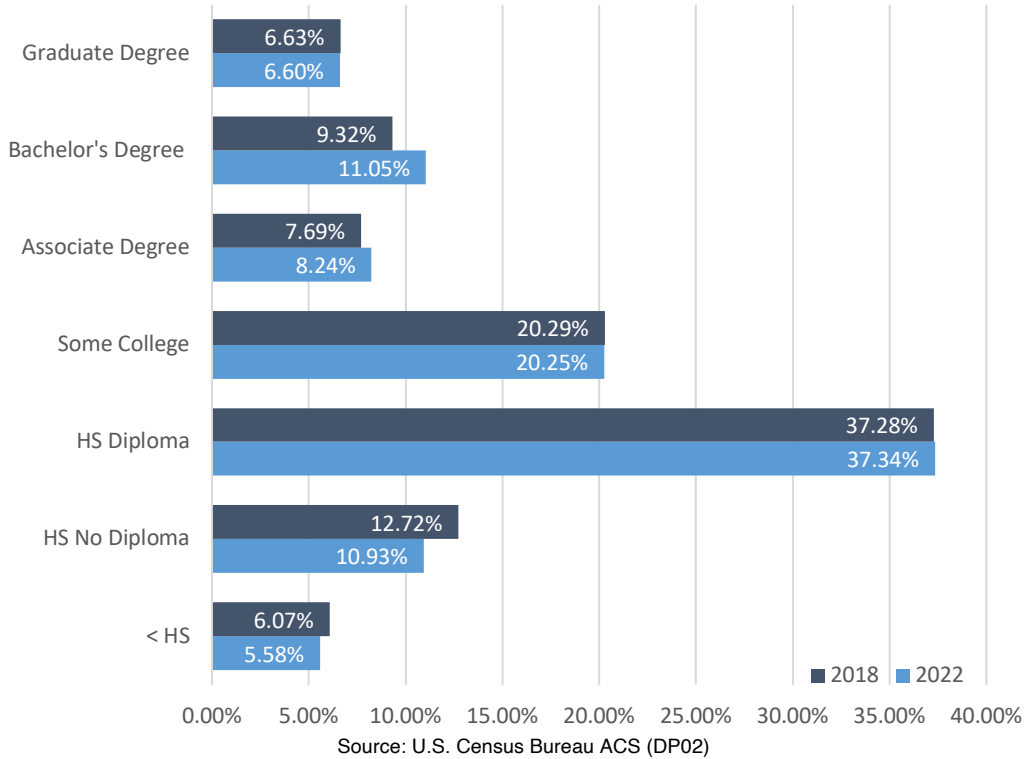
<i>Area</i>	No HS	Some HS	HS Diploma	Some College	Assoc. Degree	Bach. Degree	Grad. Degree
<i>Appling</i>	989	1,660	4,675	2,630	1,098	676	555
<i>Atkinson</i>	931	686	1,899	946	385	306	315
<i>Bacon</i>	436	687	2,800	1,949	653	373	426
<i>Brantley</i>	711	1,858	5,452	2,193	1,069	589	710
<i>Bulloch</i>	1,057	4,030	12,931	9,734	3,942	8,064	5,280
<i>Candler</i>	785	861	2,601	1,737	439	590	305
<i>Charlton</i>	644	788	4,070	1,834	574	870	222
<i>Clinch</i>	459	715	1,659	810	287	412	169
<i>Coffee</i>	2,298	3,909	11,269	5,130	2,290	2,268	1,415
<i>Effingham</i>	942	3,267	14,343	9,337	4,049	7,658	3,095
<i>Evans</i>	479	984	2,665	1,368	338	731	410
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	463	1,424	3,710	2,211	791	814	304
<i>Long</i>	275	1,472	4,487	2,226	940	848	552
<i>Pierce</i>	779	983	5,556	2,337	1,340	1,244	1,008
<i>Tattnall</i>	1,499	2,187	6,732	2,979	1,204	1,288	1,084
<i>Toombs</i>	1,259	1,688	6,320	3,845	1,354	1,511	1,320
<i>Ware</i>	1,428	3,022	9,638	4,669	1,757	2,561	1,098
<i>Wayne</i>	995	1,950	9,049	3,658	1,749	1,713	1,149
Region	16,429	32,171	109,856	59,593	24,259	32,516	19,417
State	305,721	502,918	1,943,296	1,404,339	594,639	1,464,589	943,118
Nation	10,742,781	13,853,917	59,741,825	44,692,390	19,815,732	47,391,673	30,359,674

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP02)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When compared to data published five years ago, there are indications of educational growth. During this time, notable decreases were identified among those who did not attend high school (-8.07%) and who obtained a diploma without attending college (-14.07%), while increases were noted among those who obtained an associate degree (+7.15%) and bachelor's degree (+18.56%).

Chart 108: Adult Educational Attainment Change Comparison (2018/2022)



When analyzing education levels by age group, data indicates that senior citizens were less likely to have a high school diploma (20.07%) than individuals between the ages of 45 to 64 (16.03%), 35 to 44 (15.93%), 18 to 24 (15.19%), or 28 to 34 (14.06%).

Table 128: Educational Attainment by Age Group (2022)

Education Level	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Less Than High School	7,824	8,366	9,443	17,559	13,232
High School Diploma	41,020	41,439	37,081	72,904	42,284
College Degree	2,575	9,715	12,736	19,084	10,398
TOTAL POPULATION	51,419	59,520	59,260	109,547	65,914

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1501)

College degrees were most common among residents between the ages of 35 and 44 (21.49%). This was followed by those between the ages of 45 and 64 (17.42%), 25 to 34 (16.32%), and ages 65+ (15.78%). Only 5.01% of the region's adults between 18 and 24 were noted as having a degree.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

While the largest portion of the population without a diploma identified as White (59.44%), these individuals were the most likely (13.71%) to have a diploma. Individuals identifying as a race not specifically identified in the survey were the least likely to have a diploma (50.74%). This was followed the Pacific Islanders (48.88%), American Indians (29.48%), multi-racial (29.07%), Asians (19.76%), and Black/African American (19.24%).

Table 129: Educational Attainment by Race (2022)

<i>Race</i>	Less Than High School	HS Diploma	College Degree	TOTAL
White	28,890	140,137	41,638	210,665
Black	11,753	41,748	7,588	61,089
American Indian	329	635	152	1,116
Asian	492	1,052	946	2,490
Pacific Islander	87	91	0	178
Other Race	3,775	3,351	314	7,440
Multi-Racial	3,274	6,694	1,295	11,263

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S1501)

The population most likely to have a college degree were individuals identifying as Asian (37.99%), followed by White (19.77%), American Indian (13.62%), Black/African American (12.42%), and multi-racial (11.50%). None of the Pacific Islanders living in the region were noted as having a college degree, and only 4.22% of those identifying with a race not specifically identified in the Census survey.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Literacy

Literacy is a fundamental skill essential for employment and economic mobility. High literacy levels are correlated with a greater likelihood of securing quality employment, as many jobs require the ability to read, write, and understand complex information. Conversely, low literacy can limit job opportunities, confine individuals to lower-paying roles, and increase the risk of unemployment, thereby exacerbating the cycle of poverty. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), adults with lower literacy skills are more likely to report being out of the labor force, have lower median weekly earnings, and face higher rates of poverty. These statistics underscore the critical role literacy plays in an individual's capacity to engage effectively in the workforce and achieve financial independence.

Table 130: Literacy Deficient Individuals/Rate (2013-2017 Avg.)

<i>Area</i>	%	#
<i>Appling</i>	33%	6,086
<i>Atkinson</i>	40%	3,306
<i>Bacon</i>	26%	2,896
<i>Brantley</i>	25%	4,526
<i>Bulloch</i>	25%	19,957
<i>Candler</i>	35%	3,831
<i>Charlton</i>	25%	3,137
<i>Clinch</i>	37%	2,484
<i>Coffee</i>	32%	13,778
<i>Effingham</i>	19%	12,410
<i>Evans</i>	35%	3,766
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	31%	4,585
<i>Long</i>	24%	4,033
<i>Pierce</i>	25%	4,956
<i>Tattnall</i>	36%	8,751
<i>Toombs</i>	30%	8,084
<i>Ware</i>	29%	10,416
<i>Wayne</i>	27%	8,175
<i>Region</i>	30%	134,680

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics

In the region served by the organization, the largest portions of the literacy deficient population reside in Bulloch (14.82%), Coffee (10.23%), Effingham (9.21%), and Ware (7.73%) counties. The highest rates, however, were noted in Atkinson (40%), Clinch (37%), Tattnall (36%), Candler (35%), and Evans (35%) counties.

This regional issue reflects a broader national challenge where, according to PIAAC, one in five U.S. adults, or 43 million people, possess low literacy skills with a substantial number functionally illiterate in English. These adults, particularly those below level 1, may struggle with fundamental tasks such as completing forms or understanding sentences, which are critical for employment. Notably, non-U.S.-born adults and certain racial/ethnic groups, like Hispanics, are over-represented in the low-literacy skill set, necessitating tailored educational programs that address these demographic nuances.

To enhance employment prospects and promote economic progress, there is an urgent call for comprehensive adult literacy programs. These initiatives must be especially sensitive to the needs of non-U.S.-born residents and must span across various racial and ethnic communities, reflecting the diversity of the adult population with low literacy. Such programs would not only improve individual literacy levels but also contribute to the region's overall economic resilience by equipping its workforce with the essential skills needed in a competitive job market.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Pro-Literacy, a national advocacy group, reports that 43% of all individuals with low literacy levels live below the federal poverty guidelines. This strong correlation between literacy and economic hardship underscores the fact that individuals with low literacy skills are significantly more likely to live below the poverty line.

The economic implications of low literacy extend beyond individual circumstances. Low literacy levels in the adult population cost the U.S. economy a staggering amount each year. The figures reported by the same source indicate that low literacy costs the United States at least \$225 billion annually due to non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue from unemployment. Additionally, an excess of \$230 billion a year in healthcare costs is linked to low adult literacy, as individuals struggle to understand and use health information effectively.

It's also noteworthy that literacy issues are intertwined with education and employment. According to data, about 50 percent of the 2 million immigrants coming to the U.S. each year lack a high school education and proficient English language skills, which severely limits their access to jobs and increases their vulnerability to poverty. The high incidence of low literacy rates in prisons is another profound aspect, where seventy-five percent of state prison inmates did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Numeracy

Numeracy is critical skill set that encompasses the ability to count or perform simple arithmetic. It can also involve the ability of a person to access, interpret, and communicate mathematical information and ideas to meet the complex demands of various situations in adult life. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), adults who are classified as below level 1 are not considered functionally numerate, meaning they struggle with tasks like counting, sorting, and identifying elements of simple graphs and spatial representations. This lack of numeracy skills can significantly impact a person's employability and financial management capabilities, as it affects their ability to perform tasks that are essential for many jobs and to manage household budgets effectively. It is also a factor that can contribute to an individual's likelihood of experiencing poverty, as it limits their job opportunities and ability to engage with financial and economic systems. Numeracy is integral to understanding and making informed decisions based on numerical data, which is an essential part of daily life and work in the modern world.

Table 131: Numeracy Deficient Individuals/Rate (2013-2017 Avg.)

<i>Area</i>	%	#
<i>Appling</i>	48%	8,852
<i>Atkinson</i>	56%	4,628
<i>Bacon</i>	41%	4,567
<i>Brantley</i>	40%	7,242
<i>Bulloch</i>	40%	31,932
<i>Candler</i>	51%	5,582
<i>Charlton</i>	40%	5,019
<i>Clinch</i>	56%	3,759
<i>Coffee</i>	48%	20,667
<i>Effingham</i>	30%	19,594
<i>Evans</i>	52%	5,595
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	44%	6,508
<i>Long</i>	37%	6,217
<i>Pierce</i>	39%	7,731
<i>Tattnall</i>	52%	12,641
<i>Toombs</i>	46%	12,395
<i>Ware</i>	45%	16,163
<i>Wayne</i>	42%	12,716
Region	45%	203,534

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics

While the regional rate of 45% is concerning, the percentage of community members impacted by this barrier was more than half of the adult population in Atkinson (56%), Clinch (56%)Evans (52%), Tattnall (52%), and Candler (51%) counties. The lowest rate was identified in Effingham County, at 30%.

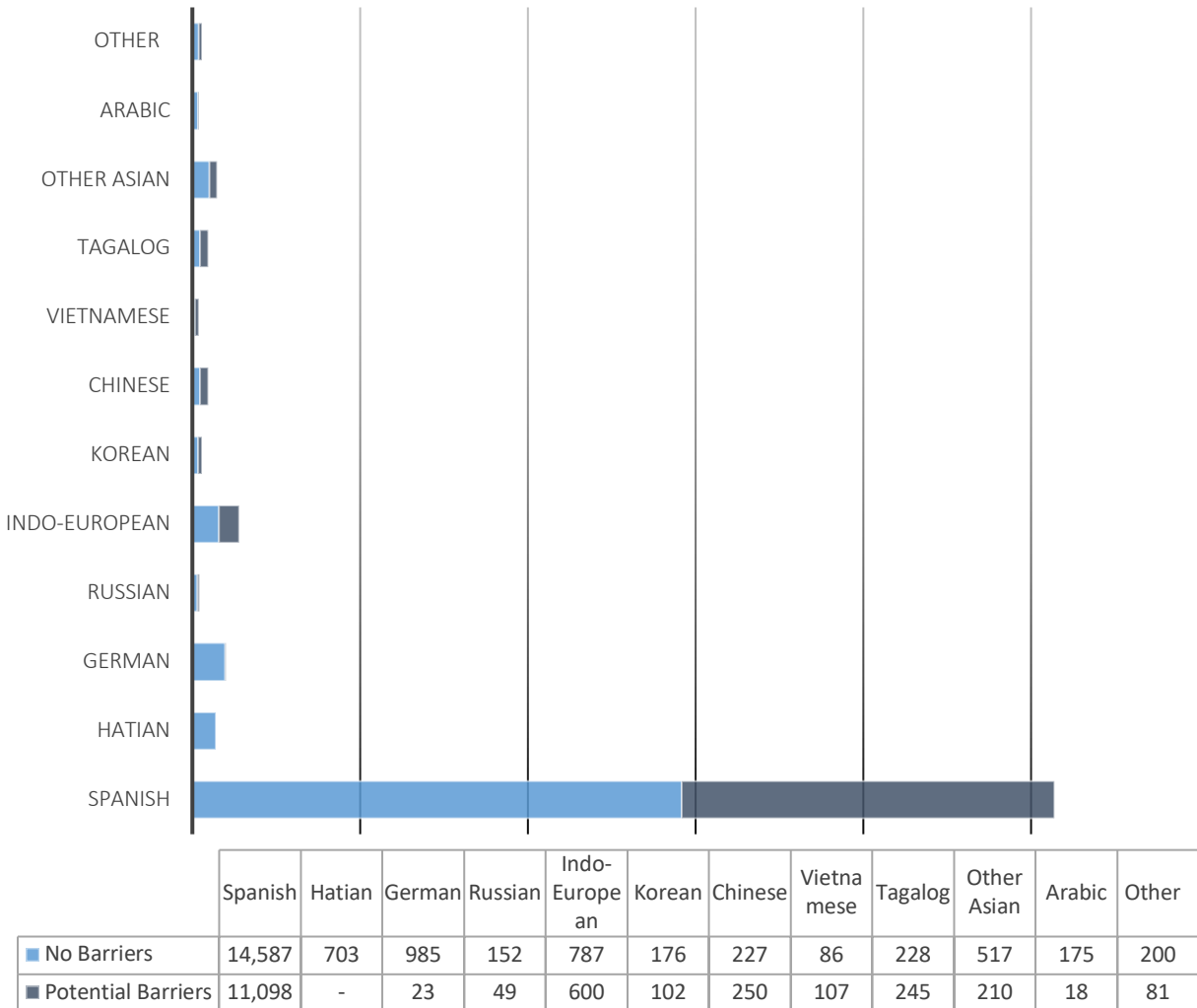
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

English Proficiency

A study conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau concluded that people who speak languages other than English at home are less likely to be employed, less likely to find full-time work when employed, and even having found full-time employment, experience lower median earnings than those who speak English. In addition, among those who speak another language, employment, work status, and earnings vary in direct correlation with their language proficiency. On average, workers who speak English earn \$5,600 more than those who speak another language.

In the organization’s service area, an estimated 92.59% of the population reports that English is their primary language, with the remainder (31,606 individuals) stating that English is not their primary language. Although the majority (59.56%) those who state that English is not their primary language are able to communicate effectively, an estimated 12,783 individuals have limited English proficiency. Among those with limited English proficiency, the largest portion (86.82%) spoke Spanish. It should be noted, however, that individuals who speak Vietnamese (55.44%), Chinese (52.41%), and Tagalog (51.80%) were more likely to have language barriers than to not have language barriers.

Chart 109: Resident Primary Language with Proficiency Barriers (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (C16001)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

In the domain of adult education and skills, the survey data reveals a critical need for educational advancement and skill development within the community. Not only was the lack of skills identified as a barrier to employment (51.39%), 25.91% reported that it was one of the leading barriers to economic security, ranking fifth among all factors. Among the low-income residents participating in surveys, 12.28% stated that skills and qualifications had personally impacted them, 2 of the 14 reporting that they were unable to find any resources to assist them.

The data uncovers five primary educational barriers: poor literacy skills (64.44%), absence of a high school diploma (51.11%), insufficient technical skills (51.11%), a shortage of soft skills (48.89%), and the lack of a college degree (42.22%). These challenges are compounded by issues in resource availability and awareness, each accounting for 57.78% of the responses, followed by the financial inaccessibility of resources (51.11%), transportation issues (48.89%), and childcare needs (37.78%).

Focus groups offered contextualization to local challenges. In Bulloch, one participant reported that efforts to partner with a technical school to enhance resident education met with low turnout, suggesting potential disconnects between program offerings and community engagement or awareness. In Wayne County, a resident explained that everything is online now, signaling a need for digital literacy along conventional educational programs, especially in senior centers.

By integrating focus group insights with survey data, the narrative becomes clear: Addressing the skills and education gap is pivotal for the community's economic empowerment. The community's voice reinforces the need for tailored adult education programs, vocational training, and soft skills development. This approach is vital for breaking the cycle of poverty, fostering economic resilience, and enabling individuals to maximize their economic potential, ultimately enriching the fabric of the community.

Agency Data

According to data reported during the most recently completed program year, more than 30% of all adults over the age of 25 served by the organization lack a high school diploma. An additional 55.79% reported completion of high school but had not obtained a degree. A total of 5.91% had completed college but were still economically unstable enough to require assistance by the organization.

Among the customers assisted, 261 were enrolled in programs to assist with the securing of a GED, 52 were enrolled in certification/vocational skills programs, and 895 were enrolled in programs promoting the securing of a college degree. Services provided included literacy classes, GED classes, post-secondary education preparatory classes, and assistance with college applications.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Adult Education/Skills Development Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Coastal Pines Technical College	912-287-6584	(WARE)
Creative Outreach Solutions	912-282-1400	Educational and outreach programs. (PIERCE, WARE)
Easter Seal's Southern GA	912-283-4691; 877-541-7325	Services for individuals with developmental disabilities, respite home, residential options for adults, vocational training, and job placement. (PIERCE, WARE)
Georgia Dept of Labor	dol.georgia.gov	Employment, training, rehab, and support services. (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Southern University	912-478-4636	(BULLOCH)
Ogeechee Technical College	912-681-5500	(BULLOCH)
Okefenokee Heritage Center	912-285-4260	Exhibits, programs, and activities. (PIERCE, WARE)
Southeastern Technical College	912-538-3100	(TOOMBS)
South Georgia State College	912-260-4200	(COFFEE)
The Mercy Ministries	912-293-1476	Help uninsured, low-income individuals with financial management & work-readiness classes. (TOOMBS)
Vocational Rehab	912-285-6078	Helps eligible individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities obtain and/or maintain employment. (WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

A substantial number of local residents (51,933) were noted as having a college degree. This indicates a commitment to higher education and lifelong learning among community members, providing individuals with valuable skills, knowledge, and qualifications for employment and career advancement. These individuals experienced an average poverty rate of 4.90%, indicating a correlation between educational attainment and economic well-being. Additionally, individuals with higher levels of education, such as those with bachelor's or master's degrees, enjoy higher median incomes, ranging from \$48,672 to \$62,262, further highlighting the economic benefits associated with advanced education levels. The low unemployment rate of 1.88% among this demographic underscores the positive impact of education on employment outcomes, with higher educational attainment often associated with greater job security and career opportunities.

The community has experienced notable increases in the number of individuals with advanced education, with a 7.15% increase in individuals with associate degrees and an 18.56% increase in those with bachelor's degrees or higher. These increases reflect efforts to expand access to higher education and promote educational attainment among residents, contributing to the overall educational landscape and human capital development within the community.

Finally, a strong majority of the community (92.59%) of the population reported speaking English as a primary language, with a significant portion of individuals who do not speak English as their primary language report proficiency in English (59.56%).

Conclusion: Weaknesses

A significant proportion of the region's adults (48,600 individuals) lack a diploma, representing 16.52% of the adult population. These individuals have an average poverty rate of 30.50%, indicating a correlation between educational attainment and economic vulnerability. Additionally, their median earnings are relatively low, averaging \$27,223, further exacerbating financial challenges. Also, the unemployment rate among adults without a diploma is relatively high, standing at 5.81%, highlighting the barriers to employment and economic mobility faced by individuals with limited educational credentials.

A considerable number of adults in the community experience literacy, numeracy, and language barriers, which impede their ability to access educational opportunities and participate fully in the workforce. Specifically, 134,680 adults face literacy barriers, while 203,534 adults experience numeracy barriers, indicating challenges in basic reading, writing, and math skills.

Finally, 12,783 adults encounter language barriers, with a significant portion being Spanish speakers (11,098 individuals). These barriers limit individuals' access to educational resources, employment opportunities, and social integration, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and marginalization within the community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Child/Youth Education

Introduction

The importance of education in alleviating long-term poverty cannot be overstated. Access to quality education from a young age equips children with critical skills, increasing their future economic opportunities and potential to break the cycle of poverty that may have affected their families. The Urban Institute reports that education is a crucial element in disrupting the persistence of poverty across generations. By providing the tools for academic and personal success, society can create pathways for children to not only achieve financial stability but also contribute to the broader economic health of their communities.

School-Aged Children (Age 5-17)

In the agency’s service area, the Census Bureau identified 80,763 school-aged children (ages 5-17). The largest portion of these children were noted as being between the ages of 10 and 14 (39.57%), somewhat correlating with middle-school enrollment. This was followed by those who were between the ages of 5 and 9, somewhat correlating with elementary-school enrollment (37.25%) and those between the ages of 15 and 17, somewhat correlating with high-school enrollment (23.18%).

Table 132: School-Aged Children by Age Group/County (2022)

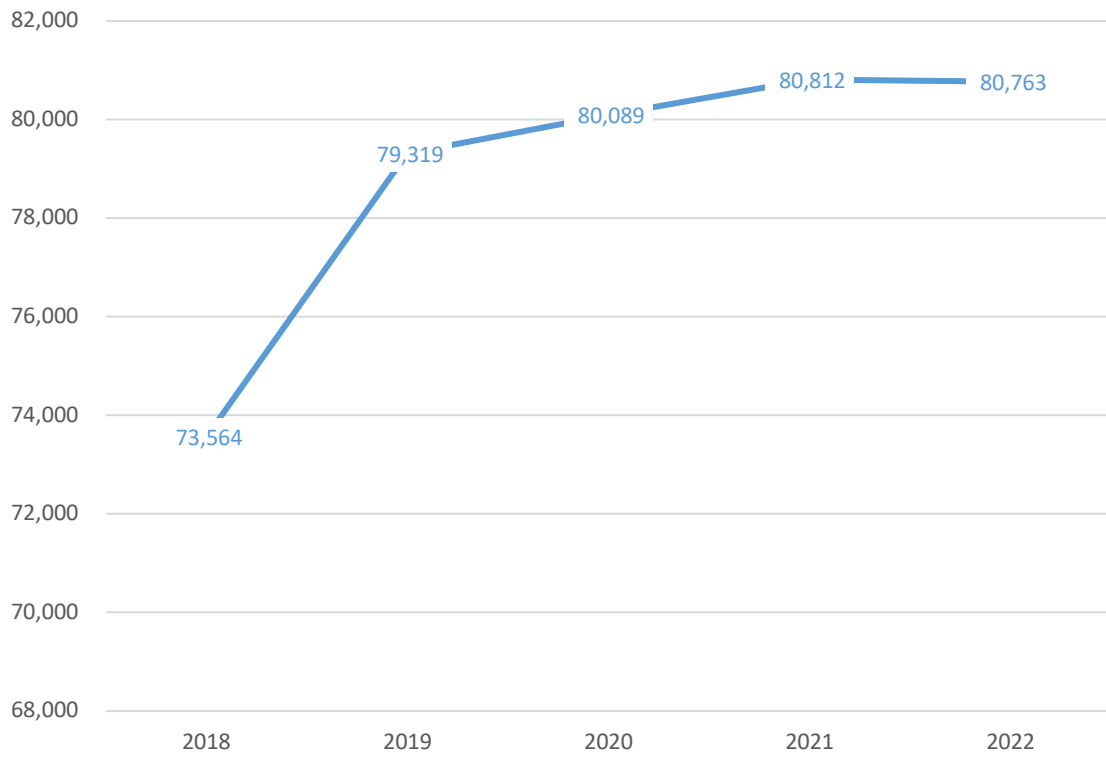
<i>Area</i>	5-9 Years	10-14 Years	15-17 Years	TOTAL (5-17)
<i>Appling</i>	1,300	1,284	817	3,401
<i>Atkinson</i>	704	529	378	1,611
<i>Bacon</i>	856	707	506	2,069
<i>Brantley</i>	1,112	1,171	729	3,012
<i>Bulloch</i>	3,591	5,111	2,691	11,393
<i>Candler</i>	612	949	393	1,954
<i>Charlton</i>	597	734	389	1,720
<i>Clinch</i>	472	376	402	1,250
<i>Coffee</i>	3,523	2,328	1,747	7,598
<i>Effingham</i>	5,109	4,894	3,067	13,070
<i>Evans</i>	721	928	515	2,164
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	1,008	1,197	810	3,015
<i>Long</i>	1,505	1,372	748	3,625
<i>Pierce</i>	1,126	1,721	775	3,622
<i>Tattnall</i>	1,471	1,500	865	3,836
<i>Toombs</i>	1,573	2,421	1,228	5,222
<i>Ware</i>	2,701	2,360	1,489	6,550
<i>Wayne</i>	2,101	2,373	1,177	5,651
Region	30,082	31,955	18,726	80,763

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP05)

Over the past five years, the number of school-aged children in the region has increased by 9.79%, with a large increase of 7.82% occurring between 2018 and 2019. Although the growth continued through 2021, the annual rate of change was much lower, averaging at +0.935. In 2022, the number of school aged children decreased slightly (-0.06%) from 80,812 to 80,763.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 110: School-Aged Population Trend (2018-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP05)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

School-Aged Children in Poverty (Ages 5-17)

The implications of poverty on education are multifaceted. Children from impoverished backgrounds often have limited access to educational resources, such as books and technology, which are essential for learning in today's digitized world. They may also experience unstable living conditions, food insecurity, and insufficient healthcare, all of which can lead to absenteeism, concentration difficulties, and lower academic performance. Additionally, the stress of financial insecurity can take a toll on a child's mental health and well-being, further hindering their ability to learn and succeed in school.

The most recent data published by the United States Census Bureau indicates that 19,960 low-income children reside in the local community, this is a decrease of 5.19% from the 2018 count of 21,053.

Table 133: School-Aged Children in Poverty by County Comparison (2018/2022)

Area	2018	2022	Change
<i>Appling</i>	907	1,338	+47.52%
<i>Atkinson</i>	867	739	-14.76%
<i>Bacon</i>	728	604	-17.03%
<i>Brantley</i>	988	589	-40.38%
<i>Bulloch</i>	3,301	2,617	-20.72%
<i>Candler</i>	959	631	-34.20%
<i>Charlton</i>	629	504	-19.87%
<i>Clinch</i>	572	543	-5.07%
<i>Coffee</i>	2,399	2,136	-10.96%
<i>Effingham</i>	1,300	810	-37.69%
<i>Evans</i>	693	521	-24.82%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	688	963	+39.97%
<i>Long</i>	909	641	-29.48%
<i>Pierce</i>	1,123	865	-22.97%
<i>Tattnall</i>	1,252	942	-24.76%
<i>Toombs</i>	1,582	1,587	+0.32%
<i>Ware</i>	2,156	2,350	+9.00%
<i>Wayne</i>	1,343	1,580	+17.65%
Region	21,053	19,960	-5.19%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701)

In addition to the overall regional decrease, improvements were identified in 72.22% of all counties in the service area. The most significant positive changes were identified in Brantley (-40.38%), Effingham (-37.69%), and Candler (-34.20%) counties.

Increases in child poverty were noted in five local counties, including Appling (+47.52%), Jeff Davis (+39.97%), Wayne (+17.65%), Ware (+9.00%), and Toombs (+0.32%).

While the regional decrease in child poverty is encouraging, continuous efforts are required to provide support systems that can mitigate the educational disadvantages faced by these children. Interventions such as after-school programs, access to nutritious meals, and health services are vital to create an environment that fosters learning and development. By investing in these areas, the community can lay a stronger foundation for these children, enhancing their prospects for higher education and economic mobility, and ultimately contributing to the breaking of the poverty cycle.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Educational Infrastructure

A strong educational infrastructure serves as the cornerstone of societal progress and individual development. It is the engine that drives economic growth, innovation, and workforce readiness, creating a skilled and adaptable labor force that can compete in a globalized world. Furthermore, education is the primary pathway to breaking the cycle of poverty, offering individuals the knowledge and skills needed to secure better job opportunities and higher incomes. Beyond its economic role, a robust educational system fosters informed and engaged citizens, strengthening democratic societies and promoting social cohesion. It also contributes to improved public health outcomes, as education correlates with healthier lifestyles and access to better healthcare.

Data indicates that there are a total of 118 schools separated into 20 districts within the 18-county service area. To help residents understand the proficiency of local schools, the Georgia Department of Education provides a score to each school system. This score ranges from 0 to 100 using a combination of educational indicators. Scores are grouped into grades of A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), and F (0-59). It should be noted that scores have not been updated since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Understanding these scores is crucial as they reflect the educational quality and outcomes that directly influence the socioeconomic trajectory of students. High-scoring schools, categorized as 'A', generally indicate a strong educational foundation, leading to better college and job prospects, thereby reducing the risk of poverty. Conversely, schools with lower scores may not provide the same level of academic preparedness, potentially limiting future opportunities for students and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

Table 134: School District Proficiency Scores (2019)

<i>County</i>	<i>School System</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Grad %</i>	<i>College/Career Ready</i>
Appling	Appling County	72.8	C	91.98%	69.34%
Atkinson	Atkinson County	76.8	C	95.20%	62.50%
Bacon	Bacon County	81.5	B	92.86%	78.99%
Brantley	Brantley County	76.4	C	88.84%	63.31%
Bulloch	Bulloch County	73.7	C	85.02%	59.07%
Bulloch	Statesboro STEAM	73.7	C	60.70%	95.00%
Candler	Candler County	68.8	C	94.38%	61.65%
Charlton	Charlton County	80.2	B	97.09%	73.63%
Clinch	Clinch County	71.6	C	85.00%	56.12%
Coffee	Coffee County	77.0	C	92.59%	73.08%
Effingham	Effingham County	83.8	B	91.80%	68.92%
Evans	Evans County	67.1	D	91.87%	79.82%
Jeff Davis	Jeff Davis County	70.8	C	97.38%	63.92%
Long	Long County	75.4	C	96.12%	68.26%
Pierce	Pierce County	83.4	B	93.86%	71.81%
Tattnall	Tattnall County	69.5	D	92.24%	58.69%
Toombs	Toombs County	72.8	C	93.05%	50.00%
Toombs	Vidalia City	65.7	D	93.75%	72.99%
Ware	Ware County	75.8	C	86.45%	59.89%
Wayne	Wayne County	73.2	C	90.10%	67.47%
Regional Average		74.5	C	90.51%	67.72%

Source: Georgia Department of Education

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Based on this data, there were some concerns identified associated with the proficiency of area schools. Not only were no systems noted as achieving excellence, only four systems ranked above average, with the majority (72.22%) ranked as average. While no school systems were noted as failing, Vidalia City Schools in Toombs County (65.7), Evans County Schools (67.1) and Tattnall County Schools (69.5) ranked below average.

Graduation rates serve as pivotal indicators of a community's educational health, reflecting the success of its school systems in keeping students engaged through the completion of their high school education. High graduation rates are often associated with greater opportunities for higher education and employment, setting a foundation for a robust workforce and thriving economy.

The region's graduation rate averaged as 90.51%, indicating that 9.49% of all students drop out of school prior to completion. The highest dropout rate was noted at the Statesboro STEAM Academy (39.30%) in Bulloch County. The highest graduation rate was found in Jeff Davis County, at 97.38%.

College and career readiness is a critical measure that indicates how well a school prepares its students for the demands of post-secondary education and the workforce. This metric often determines how seamlessly students can transition into college or vocational pursuits and is a strong predictor of future economic stability and growth.

In the area served by the organization, an average of 67.72% of all students were noted as being college and career ready after leaving school. The lowest rate was identified in Toombs County (50.00%), followed by Clinch (56.12%), Tattnall (58.69%), Bulloch (59.07%), and Ware (59.89%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Children often face various personal barriers that can significantly impact their educational journeys. Among these, disabilities and limited English proficiency are two key challenges that require thoughtful and strategic educational accommodations to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed.

Table 135: Student Barriers to Educational Success by County (2022)

<i>Area</i>	Total Students	Limited English	Disabled Children
<i>Appling</i>	3,401	398	531
<i>Atkinson</i>	1,611	338	45
<i>Bacon</i>	2,069	159	29
<i>Brantley</i>	3,012	21	3
<i>Bulloch</i>	11,393	404	64
<i>Candler</i>	1,954	82	14
<i>Charlton</i>	1,720	5	1
<i>Clinch</i>	1,250	41	5
<i>Coffee</i>	7,598	866	111
<i>Effingham</i>	13,070	444	74
<i>Evans</i>	2,164	355	51
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	3,015	404	51
<i>Long</i>	3,625	185	27
<i>Pierce</i>	3,622	159	25
<i>Tattnall</i>	3,836	330	51
<i>Toombs</i>	5,222	440	76
<i>Ware</i>	6,550	197	37
<i>Wayne</i>	5,651	215	35
Region	80,763	5,044	1,229

Source: Georgia Department of Education

Disabilities can greatly affect a child's education in multiple ways. They may require specialized instructional strategies and tools, as well as additional support services. Disabilities can range widely in severity and type, including learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and cognitive impairments, each presenting unique challenges. Children with disabilities may find it difficult to keep up with the standard curriculum and may struggle with traditional assessment methods. They often benefit from Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), which tailor the learning experience to their specific needs.

In reviewing the data from the provided chart, we see that Appling County has the highest reported number of disabled children (531), which is a significant portion when compared to its total student population (3,401). This suggests that Appling County's schools likely require substantial resources dedicated to special education. Across the region, there are 1,229 disabled children, indicating that a strategic, region-wide approach to special education could be beneficial. Such an approach would ensure resource sharing, expertise development, and standardized practices that could help all children with disabilities across the counties.

Limited English proficiency (LEP) is another barrier that can prevent children from fully accessing and benefiting from their education. LEP students may struggle with understanding instructions, participating in class, or completing assignments if the curriculum is not adapted to their language needs. These challenges can lead to gaps in learning and academic performance. Schools can support LEP students through English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, bilingual education, and culturally responsive teaching practices.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The chart shows that Coffee County has the highest number of students with limited English proficiency (866), which is a considerable figure in relation to its total student population (7,598). This indicates a need for strong ESL programs and support systems within Coffee County. The regional data points to 5,044 LEP students, highlighting the importance of language support services in these communities. Addressing language barriers through comprehensive ESL programs can help LEP students achieve academic success equivalent to their English-speaking peers.

While it is acknowledged that additional barriers may exist among local students, it should be noted that the reporting by Georgia school systems has been limited in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, current metrics are not available.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

The feedback from the focus groups provides varied insights into the state of child and youth education across different communities. In Atkinson County, a parent noted that despite their daughters having college degrees, there were areas of knowledge they were lacking when they began their higher education journey. This may point to gaps in the school curriculum or in the reinforcement of foundational skills and knowledge.

Bacon County stands out with commendations for its school system, which is noted for high graduation rates and proactive involvement in children's education. However, there are concerns that family attitudes towards education can sometimes undervalue its importance, potentially leading to a cycle of disinterest in educational attainment among the youth.

In Bulloch County, there are criticisms about the education system where some believe it is part of a "school to prison pipeline," and concerns are raised about the low graduation rates and quality of education. A poignant remark from this county is that some youth cannot complete basic job applications or write their names, indicating deep educational shortcomings.

Candler County reports innovative efforts like building a new academy for skills at the high school to engage students and foster interest in completing their education. However, there's an acknowledgment that schools might not be fully preparing students for real-world challenges, including filling out resumes and communicating effectively.

Clinch County brings a critical perspective, with a former student feeling unprepared for college upon graduation, despite the county producing great athletes who may not be academically equipped for college demands.

Efforts are being made in various communities to address these challenges. Evans County, for instance, is in the second year of running a College and Career Academy to prepare non-college-bound youths for the workforce, and there's praise for the training provided. A local foundation in Evans has pledged to pay for any high school senior's technical college tuition, reflecting a commitment to educational support beyond traditional schooling.

The feedback underscores a common theme: while some communities are making strides in education, there remains a critical need for comprehensive approaches that address gaps in foundational learning, practical life skills, and pathways to employment. The focus groups reveal that the success of such initiatives often relies on community engagement and resources that may currently be inadequate or misaligned with the needs of the youth.

Agency Data

During the most recently completed program year, the agency served 3,912 school-aged children. Among the 2,477 households documented as containing children, 81.23% were headed by single female parents, 2.58% were headed by single male parents, 12.96% were two parent households, and 3.19% were multi-generational households. The remaining 0.04% were classified as another situation not covered in the survey data.

An estimated 1,060 high school students were enrolled in agency programs designed to improve academic success. Among these, 1,045 reported that they were achieving at basic grade level requirements.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Other Child/Youth Educational Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Creative Outreach Solutions	912-282-1400	Educational and outreach programs (PIERCE, WARE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody.(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

There are a total of 118 schools serving the 80,763 school-aged children in the region. While the number of children has increased by 9.79% over the past five years, the poverty rate among these children has decreased by 5.19%.

The region's graduation rate is 90.51%, with individual county rates as high as 97.38% (Jeff Davis).

Conclusion: Weaknesses

The average school proficiency in the community is 74.5, equivalent to a grade of C or average. This indicates a need for improvement in academic performance and educational quality across schools within the community. Particularly concerning is the performance of three school systems, namely Evans, Tattall, and Toombs, which received scores below the average, signifying areas of underperformance and potential disparities in educational opportunities.

The community struggles with ensuring that graduates are adequately prepared for college and careers, with only 67.72% of graduates being deemed college and career ready. This suggests gaps in readiness for post-secondary education and workforce participation, highlighting the need for enhanced academic preparation and career readiness initiatives to better equip students for future success.

An estimated 5,044 children were reported as facing language proficiency barriers. Language barriers can hinder students' academic progress, communication skills, and social integration, necessitating targeted support and resources to address language needs effectively.

Additionally, 1,229 children in the community have disabilities that could impact their learning experiences and academic outcomes. These children may require specialized support, accommodations, and resources to address their unique learning needs and ensure equitable access to educational opportunities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Childcare and Early Education

Introduction

Childcare plays a crucial role in shaping employment outcomes, educational achievements, and the prevalence of poverty, with a significant impact on individuals, families, and society. Accessible and affordable childcare services are closely intertwined with these pivotal aspects of human development and socio-economic well-being, as demonstrated in several studies.

First and foremost, the availability of quality childcare services profoundly influences employment, particularly for parents and predominantly mothers. Research from the Center for American Progress underscores how a lack of affordable childcare can hinder mothers' participation in the labor force. High childcare costs and the unavailability of suitable arrangements have been identified as key factors leading mothers to make career sacrifices, reduce working hours, or exit the workforce entirely. Consequently, this wage gap and the career interruptions experienced due to childcare responsibilities can have long-term implications for mothers' earnings and economic security.

Second, the impact of childcare on educational attainment is notable, particularly for parents seeking to advance their education or job skills. CAP's research indicates that accessible and affordable childcare services enable parents to engage in educational opportunities that enhance their qualifications, leading to improved career prospects and higher earning potential. Conversely, the lack of adequate childcare options can be a significant barrier for parents aspiring to pursue further education or skill development, limiting their upward economic mobility.

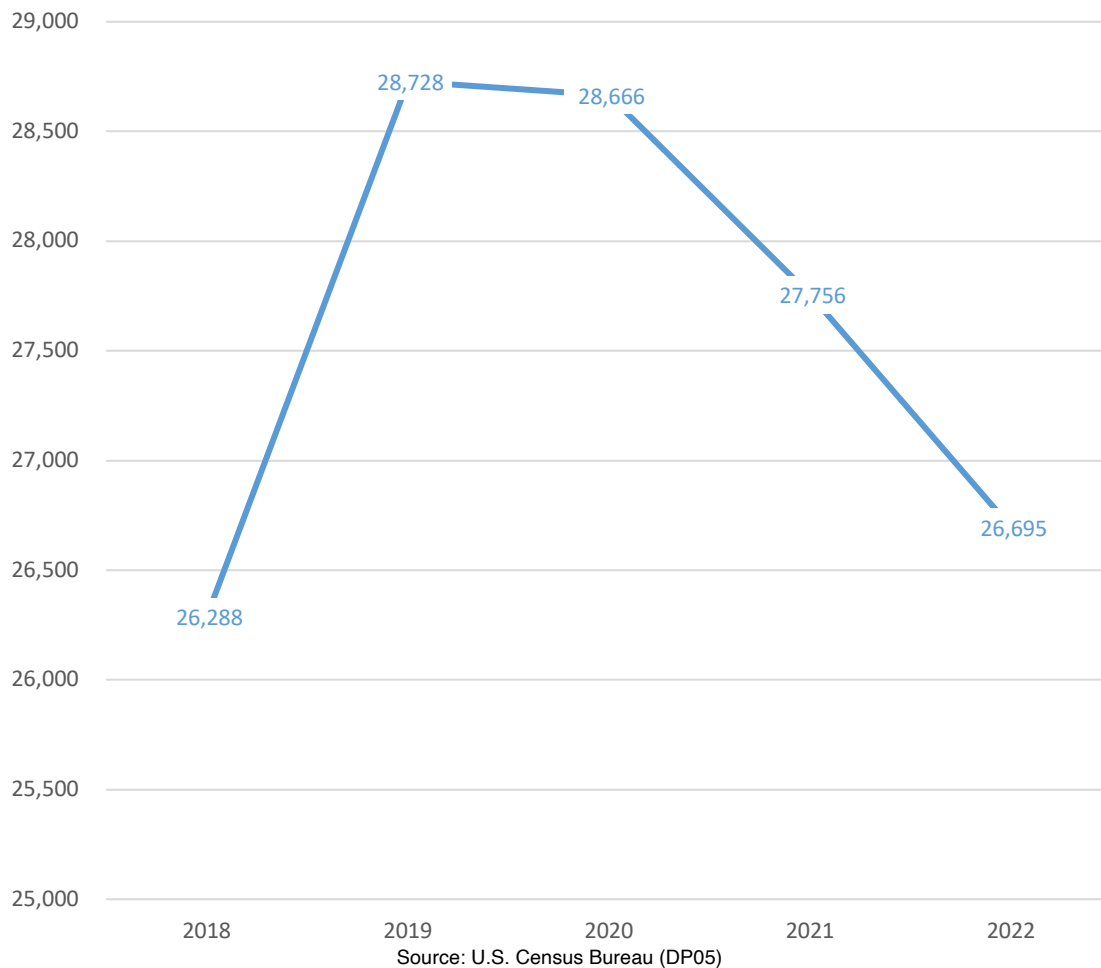
Finally, the relationship between childcare and poverty is evident, with significant implications for families' economic well-being. Data from the Institute for Women's Policy Research highlights how caregiving responsibilities, including difficulties in securing affordable childcare, contribute to financial hardship for families with young children. High childcare costs can strain family budgets, potentially pushing them into poverty. Additionally, parents who are compelled to leave the workforce or reduce working hours due to childcare challenges may experience a substantial decline in their income, exacerbating the persistence of poverty among families with young children.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Pre-School Children

Data indicates that there are presently 26,695 children under the age of five living in the area served by the organization. While this is 1.55% higher than the number reported in 2018, it should be noted that the region experienced a drastic one-year increase (+9.28%) in 2019, followed by a slight decrease of 0.22%, with an average change of -3.495% in the 2021 and 2022.

Chart 111: Young Child Count Trend (2018-2022)



While this pattern may reflect a natural population correction after an unusual surge, other factors, such as changes in economic or social conditions or a declining birth rate in certain communities could be partially to blame. This rate should be monitored closely, as continuation of this pattern could impact the local education system and other services designed for children in this age group.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Young Children in Poverty

Census data indicates that 6,598 of the 27,556 young children (23.94%) living in the county are in households with incomes lower than 100% of the official poverty rate. This rate is higher than the state average of 20.03% and substantially exceeds the national average of 17.73%, indicating a more pronounced issue with child poverty within the region.

Among the counties in the region, Charlton was noted as having the highest young child poverty rate at 51.83%. This was followed by Clinch (47.92%), Atkinson (44.34%), Ware (39.60%), and Appling (38.92%) counties.

Table 136: Young Children in Poverty (2022)

Area	Children	Low-Income	Rate
<i>Appling</i>	1,146	446	38.92%
<i>Atkinson</i>	512	227	44.34%
<i>Bacon</i>	779	218	27.98%
<i>Brantley</i>	1,077	245	22.75%
<i>Bulloch</i>	4,524	1063	23.50%
<i>Candler</i>	724	166	22.93%
<i>Charlton</i>	575	298	51.83%
<i>Clinch</i>	432	207	47.92%
<i>Coffee</i>	2,882	687	23.84%
<i>Effingham</i>	4,188	296	7.07%
<i>Evans</i>	646	229	35.45%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	829	257	31.00%
<i>Long</i>	990	69	6.97%
<i>Pierce</i>	1,262	297	23.53%
<i>Tattnall</i>	1,095	226	20.64%
<i>Toombs</i>	1,869	423	22.63%
<i>Ware</i>	2,318	918	39.60%
<i>Wayne</i>	1,708	326	19.09%
Region	27,556	6,598	23.94%
State	635,299	127,255	20.03%
Nation	19,004,925	3,369,529	17.73%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S1701)

Childcare and early education are particularly critical for young children in low-income families, as they lay the foundation for lifelong learning and development. For these children, high-quality early childhood programs are not just a service, but an essential support that can significantly influence their cognitive and social development. These programs offer structured learning environments that foster language, numeracy, and social skills, which are vital for school readiness.

However, for the 23.94% of young children in the region living below the poverty line, access to such services can be limited by cost, availability, and transportation issues. This lack of access is especially detrimental as early education plays a pivotal role in leveling the playing field, offering children from low-income families the opportunity to begin their education on the same level as their peers from higher-income households. Without the benefits of early learning experiences, these children may enter school at a disadvantage, with gaps that can persist and widen over time, affecting their educational trajectory and long-term economic outcomes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Childcare Infrastructure

Research identified a total of 12,604 pre-school and childcare slots in the county. When compared to the total number of young children in the county (27,556), the data indicates that there are 2.19 children for every slot available. This is a deficit of 14,952 slots.

While the lack of childcare can be a concern for all families with children, households in which all adults are working have the greatest need for childcare. In the region served the organization, 62% of all young children (17,198) live in households in which all parents work.

Table 137: Childcare/Pre-School Facilities & Capacity Count by County (2022)

Area	Children	Slots	+/-	Ratio	Deserts
<i>Appling</i>	1,146	392	-754	2.92:1	4/5
<i>Atkinson</i>	512	170	-342	3.01:1	2/3
<i>Bacon</i>	779	610	-169	1.27:1	1/3
<i>Brantley</i>	1,077	380	-697	2.83:1	2/3
<i>Bulloch</i>	4,524	1,851	-2,673	2.44:1	6/12
<i>Candler</i>	724	169	-555	4.28:1	2/3
<i>Charlton</i>	575	158	-417	3.64:1	2/2
<i>Clinch</i>	432	200	-232	2.16:1	1/2
<i>Coffee</i>	2,882	989	-1,893	2.91:1	6/9
<i>Effingham</i>	4,188	1,689	-2,499	2.48:1	4/10
<i>Evans</i>	646	153	-493	4.22:1	2/3
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	829	674	-155	1.23:1	1/3
<i>Long</i>	990	224	-766	4.42:1	2/2
<i>Pierce</i>	1,262	529	-733	2.39:1	2/4
<i>Tattnall</i>	1,095	554	-541	1.98:1	3/5
<i>Toombs</i>	1,869	1,570	-299	1.19:1	1/6
<i>Ware</i>	2,318	1,847	-471	1.26:1	3/9
<i>Wayne</i>	1,708	445	-1,263	3.83:1	5/6
Region	27,556	12,604	-14,952	2.19:1	49/90

Source: Center for American Progress | National Center for Educational Statistics

According to the Center for American Progress (CAP), a childcare desert is defined as any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no childcare providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed childcare slots. In the area served by the organization, 49 of the 90 census tracts (54.44%) were identified as childcare deserts.

This scarcity of childcare slots can hinder children's social, emotional, and cognitive development, delay parents' return to work or education, and ultimately perpetuate the cycles of poverty that the region is striving to break.

In the tables below, the N/A ratios highlight tracts where there are no childcare providers at all, further exacerbating the challenge for families living there. The presence of tracts with fewer than fifty children where the desert classification is "no" suggests that while childcare is not a concern in these areas due to the lower population of young children, for the majority of communities, the lack of accessible childcare is a significant barrier.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 138: Appling County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9501	N/A	Yes	9504	N/A	Yes
9502	31.67:1	Yes	9505	N/A	Yes
9503	0.91:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 139: Atkinson County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	1.50:1	No	9603	N/A	Yes
9602	5.97:1	Yes			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 140: Bacon County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	N/A	Yes	9702.02	0.48:1	No
9702.01	2.20:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 141: Brantley County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	7.64:1	Yes	9603	9.35:1	Yes
9602	1.13:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 142: Bulloch County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
1101	4.00:1	Yes	1105	0.77:1	No
1102	1.19:1	No	1106.01	2.29:1	No
1103	6.70:1	Yes	1106.02	3.91:1	Yes
1104.01	0.88:1	No	1107	2.23:1	No
1104.03	N/A	Yes	1108	N/A	Yes
1104.04	0.35:1	No	1109	4.06:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 143: Candler County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9501	2.10:1	No	9503	20.83:1	Yes
9502	8.43:1	Yes			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 32: Charlton County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
101	3.00:1	Yes	102	N/A	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 144: Clinch County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	3.80	Yes	9702	1.81:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 145: Coffee County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
101	1.81:1	No	106	N/A	Yes
102	N/A	Yes	107	7.40:1	Yes
103	N/A	Yes	108.01	1.67:1	No
104	45.33:1	Yes	108.02	0.72:1	No
105	4.07:1	Yes			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 146: Effingham County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
301	N/A	Yes	303.03	23.33:1	Yes
302.02	1.65:1	No	303.04	1.88:1	No
302.03	7.06:1	Yes	303.05	1.10:1	No
302.04	4.78:1	Yes	304.01	1.78:1	No
303.01	1.16:1	No	304.02	2.11:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 147: Evans County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	N/A	Yes	9703	11.80:1	Yes
9702	1.69	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 148: Jeff Davis County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	1.44:1	No	9603	N/A	Yes
9602	1.12:1	No			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 149: Long County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	7.76:1	Yes	9702	4.87:1	Yes

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 150: Pierce County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9601	3.06:1	Yes	9603	2.38:1	No
9602	N/A	Yes	9604	1.63:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 151: Tattnall County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9501	4.44:1	Yes	9503	79.83:1	Yes
9502.01	2.49:1	No	9504	0.49:1	No
9502.02	13.42:1	Yes			

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 152: Toombs County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9701	3.91:1	Yes	9704	1.30:1	No
9702	1.64:1	No	9705	1.24:1	No
9703	0.72:1	No	9706	1.27:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 153: Ware County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	
9501	N/A	Yes	
9502	4.25:1	Yes	
9503	2.24:1	No	
9504	0.21:1	No	
9505	0.80:1	No	

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9506	1.27:1	No
9507	0.53:1	No
9508	24.00:1	Yes
9509	0.83:1	No

Source: Center for American Progress

Table 154: Wayne County Childcare Desert Classification and Ratio by Census Tract (2020)

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert	
9701	22.25:1	Yes	
9702	25.59:1	Yes	
9703	0.73:1	No	

Tract	Ratio (:1)	Desert
9704	N/A	Yes
9705	N/A	Yes
9706	57.50:1	Yes

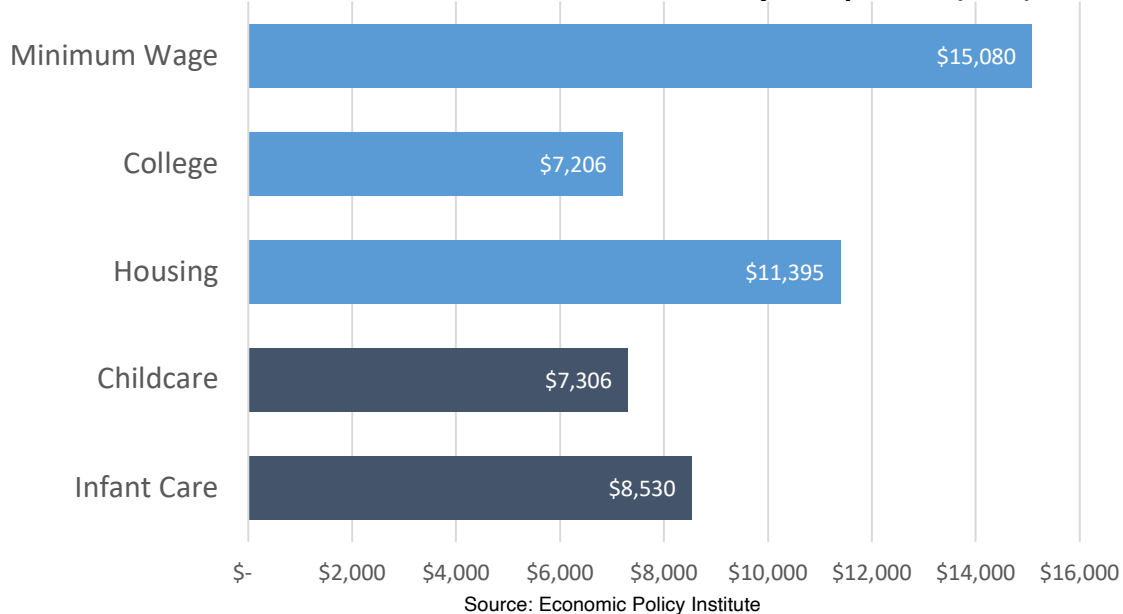
Source: Center for American Progress

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Childcare Affordability

The financial burden of childcare in Georgia is a significant economic stressor for families, particularly underscored by the comparison of childcare costs to other major expenses. The average annual cost of infant care in the state is \$8,530, which breaks down to \$710.83 per month. This cost is 18.40% more than the annual tuition for a four-year public college, illuminating the substantial investment required for early childcare. Georgia is just one of 33 states in which infant care is more than college.

Chart 112: Statewide Childcare Affordability Comparison (2022)



For a family with a median income in Georgia, infant care for one child consumes a notable 15.50% of their earnings, which is more than double the 7% threshold that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines as affordable. In practical terms, only 16.80% of Georgia families can comfortably afford infant care without it being a financial strain.

The economic impact deepens with the addition of a second child. The cost for two children, an infant and a 4-year-old, rises to \$15,836 annually—28.00% higher than the average rent in the state. This means typical families must allocate 28.70% of their income to childcare, which is a significant portion of their financial resources.

For those earning minimum wage, the cost of childcare is even more prohibitive. A minimum wage worker would need to work from January to July, roughly 29 weeks, to cover the cost of childcare for just one infant.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

The survey data reveals that almost half of the respondents, 45.83%, cite inadequate childcare as a critical barrier to maintaining employment, with 37.78% acknowledging it impedes their skills development and 15.55% viewing it as a leading contributor to poverty.

These statistics come to life through the voices of community members. One survey respondent poignantly highlights the dire state of affairs: "There is no daycare available, and the little there is has waiting lists that are months or years long." Another recounts personal impacts, "I have experienced not having a place to take my child that has caused less pay because the hours I missed at work." The problem of availability was emphasized by a focus group resident of Bacon County who mentioned the loss of work hours due to the lack of childcare services.

Among the low-income residents participating in surveys, 11.40% stated that they had personally struggled to afford childcare during the past year. This sentiment is echoed in the focus group discussions, where the paucity of childcare options and the mismatch of service hours with work schedules emerge as key issues. "Who can afford \$130/week for 1 child?" a Ware County participant questioned, drawing attention to the affordability crisis.

In essence, the survey results, coupled with focus group insights, paint a compelling picture of a community in need of a robust, adaptable childcare infrastructure. It must be affordable, reliable, and suitably scheduled to support the working parent. Addressing this gap is essential for the community's economic vitality and the well-being of its youngest members, who depend on quality childcare for a strong start in life.

Agency Data

During the most recently completed program year, the organization served 1,341 children ages 5 and younger. Among these, 566 were enrolled in Head Start and 203 were enrolled in Early Head Start, both of which are designed to promote school readiness and break the cycle of poverty.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 155: Appling County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Appling Christin Academy	Baxley	(912) 367-3004	3y-5y
Appling County Head Start	Baxley	(912) 367-4321	0y-5y+
Camp Grow	Baxley	(912) 339-0072	5y-12y
Childz World	Baxley	(912) 367-4513	0y-5y+
Kidz Academy	Baxley	(912) 705-5437	0y-5y+
Reddy Free Day Care, Inc.	Baxley	(912) 367-0921	3y-5y

Table 156: Atkinson County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Atkinson County Head Start	Willacoohie	(912) 534-6035	0y-4y
Cradle 2 Crayola Academy	Willacoohie	(229) 237-1647	1y-5y+
Pearson Head Start	Pearson	(912) 422-3493	3y-5y+
Precious Jewels Early Learning Center	Pearson	(912) 393-5130	0y-5y+
Telamon Corporation-GA31	Pearson	(478) 365-4798	0y-5y

Table 157: Bacon County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
ABC Child Development Center	Alma	(912) 632-0130	0y-5y+
Bacon County Northside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0774	3y-4y
Bacon County Southside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0284	3y-4y
New Vision Learning Center of Alma	Alma	(912) 632-2922	0y-5y+

Table 158: Brantley County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Brantley County Early Head Start	Nahunta	(912) 462-5482	0y-2y
Brantley County Head Start	Nahunta	(912) 462-5520	3y-4y
Kidz Kountry Daycare	Waynesville	(912) 778-5434	0wk-5y+
Melissa's Little Friend's Daycare	Hortense	(912) 473-2688	0wk-5y+
Nahunta Y-Time	Nahunta	(912) 462-5179	0wk-5y+
Susie's Daycare	Hoboken	(912) 458-2863	0wk-5y+
Wee Kids Childcare LLC	Nahunta	(912) 462-6492	0wk-5y+
Young Learners Day Care	Hoboken	(912) 458-2223	0wk-5y+

Table 159: Bulloch County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Averitt Center for the Arts	Statesboro	(912) 212-2787	5y-10y
Boys & Girls Clubs of Bulloch County (Evlira)	Statesboro	(912) 764-9696	5y-17y
Boys & Girls Clubs of Bulloch County (Main)	Statesboro	(912) 764-9696	5y-17y
Bright Beginnings Day Care & Learning Ctr	Statesboro	(912) 764-3704	0wk-5y+
Bright Minds Playhouse LLC	Register	(912) 259-9899	0y-4y
Brooklet 4th & 5th Afterschool	Brooklet	(912) 489-9053	6y-12y
Brooklet Afterschool	Brooklet	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Brooklet UMC Preschool and Learning Ctr	Brooklet	(912) 842-2922	0wk-5y+
Bulloch Academy	Statesboro	(912) 764-6297	4y-5y
Bulloch Co Day Camp	Statesboro	(912) 489-9058	4y-13y
C & E Family Community Center	Statesboro	(912) 678-2645	5y-17y
C & E Learning Academy	Statesboro	(912) 225-4343	0wk-5y+
Camp Adventure & JPB	Statesboro	(912) 489-9058	4y-11y
Camp Invention - Mattie Lively Elementary	Statesboro	(912) 212-8760	5y-12y
Camp Invention - Langston Chapel Middle	Statesboro	(308) 849-6901	5y-11y
Childcare Network #137	Statesboro	(912) 489-3464	6wk-12y
Coman Gymnastics Academy	Statesboro	(912) 764-4300	3y-5y
Creative Kids	Brooklet	(912) 842-9272	0wk-5y+

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Eagle's Nest Learning Center	Statesboro	(912) 764-2925	0wk-5y+
First Baptist Church Weekday Preschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-7926	0y-5y
First United Methodist Church Preschool	Statesboro	(912) 764-1876	1y-4y
Georgia Southern University CDC	Statesboro	(912) 478-5809	0wk-5y+
Georgia Southern University - Statesboro	Statesboro	(912) 478-1301	6y-15y
Graduation Performance Academy	Statesboro	(912) 212-8610	14y-16y
Higher Learning Christian Daycare LLC	Statesboro	(912) 512-5985	0wk-5y+
Julia P. Bryant Elementary	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-9y
Kid's World Learning Center	Statesboro	(912) 764-4298	0wk-5y+
Kidovations	Statesboro	(912) 871-3366	0wk-5y+
Kids Zone	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-9y
Kidz R Kidz Childcare and Learning Center	Statesboro	(912) 681-5439	0wk-5y+
Langston Chapel Afterschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Langston Chapel Elementary 21st CCLC	Statesboro	(912) 212-8700	4y-13y
Little Rascals	Statesboro	(912) 690-1165	0wk-4y
Little Stingers	Statesboro	(912) 536-6873	0wk-5y+
Love's Childcare Services, Inc.	Statesboro	(912) 764-8020	0y-4y
Mattie Lively Afterschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Nevils Afterschool	Statesboro	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Pamper Me Day Care	Statesboro	(912) 839-2033	13mo-4y
Pineland Women Services	Statesboro	(912) 871-7355	0y-13y
Pittman Park Education Center	Statesboro	(912) 681-6503	0y-4y
Portal Afterschool	Portal	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Roosevelt's Character Development Center	Statesboro	(912) 541-2082	5y-17y
Safe Haven Children's Program	Statesboro	(912) 764-4605	5y-17y
SHINE Clubhouse/Pineland BHDD	Statesboro	(912) 764-1964	8y-14y
Smiles, Giggles, and Hugs CDC	Statesboro	(912) 681-1100	0wk-5y+
Statesboro Family YMCA	Statesboro	(912) 225-1962	5y-12y
Statesboro Head Start	Statesboro	(912) 764-5330	3y-4y
Steps To the Future Daycare/Learning Ctr	Statesboro	(912) 764-3435	0wk-5y+
Stilson Afterschool	Brooklet	(912) 489-9053	4y-11y
Super Kids Child Care Center, LLC	Statesboro	(912) 764-2726	0y-4y
Sweet & Tenderhearted Childcare	Portal	(912) 865-2556	0wk-5y+
The Exploreseum	Statesboro	(912) 259-9500	0wk-5y+
Tiny Treasures Learning Academy	Statesboro	(912) 243-9195	0wk-5y+
Trilogy Achievement Academy	Statesboro	(912) 243-9123	0wk-5y+

Table 160: Candler County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
21 st Century Leaders, Inc.	Metter	(404) 373-7441	14y-17y
Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Georgia	Metter	(912) 685-2900	5y-17y
Candler County CDC	Metter	(912) 685-5050	0y-4y
Candler County Head Start	Metter	(912) 685-3383	1y-5y+
Rashida's Day Care	Metter	(912) 536-1418	0y-5y+
Wiggles and Giggles Learning Center	Metter	(912) 685-2010	0y-5y+

Table 161: Charlton County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Charlton County Head Start	Folkston	(912) 496-3041	0y-5y+
Roberson Day Care	Folkston	(912) 496-3620	0y-5y+
Small Smiles Learning and Childcare Center	Folkston	(912) 496-3654	0y-5y+

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 162: Clinch County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Clinch County Elementary Tutoring	Homerville	(912) 487-5385	8y-11y
Clinch County Head Start	Homerville	(912) 487-5304	0y-5y+
Jesus and Jam	Homerville	(912) 337-5342	5y-9y
K-South	Homerville	(912) 385-0208	5y-12y
Tiny Tots of Homerville	Homerville	(912) 487-5115	0y-5y+

Table 163: Coffee County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
ABC Child Development Center	Alma	(912) 632-0130	6wk-12y
Akim Academy	Douglas	(912) 384-0876	13mo-5y+
All About Kids Early Learning Center	Douglas	(912) 381-1210	0wk-5y+
Bacon County Northside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0774	3y-4y
Bacon County Southside Head Start	Alma	(912) 632-0284	3y-4y
Citizens Christian Academy	Douglas	(912) 384-8862	5y-17y
Coffee County Head Start	Douglas	(912) 720-1007	0y-4y
Coffee County HS/EHS at Peterson Ave.	Douglas	(912) 720-1007	3y-4y
Douglas First Methodist Church Preschool	Douglas	(912) 384-4404	2y-5y
Kuntry Kids Daycare and Learning Center	Douglas	(229) 569-0948	0wk-5y+
LCC Day Camp	Douglas	(912) 384-7659	5y-12y
Lollipop Childrens Center	Douglas	(912) 384-7659	0wk-5y+
Mary Hayes Center	Douglas	(912) 381-0564	5y-13y
Michelle's Day Care	Douglas	(912) 260-1451	0wk-5y+
Precious Jewels Early Learning Center	Douglas	(912) 381-1210	0wk-5y+
Precious Possessions	Douglas	(912) 384-5750	0wk-5y+
Sugarville	Douglas	(912) 592-8151	0wk-5y+
Teachers Too Early Childcare & Learning Ctr	Douglas	(912) 384-5329	0wk-5y+
The Eastside Baptist Church	Douglas	(912) 384-7606	2y-5y

Table 164: Effingham County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Ambra's Preschool	Rincon	(912) 856-7295	13mo-5y+
Bartley's Family Learning Center LLC	Clyo	(912) 655-7483	3y-5y+
Building Blocks Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 295-2511	0wk-5y+
Effingham Christian Learning Center	Meldrim	(912) 988-3586	0y-4y
Effingham County High School Athletics	Clyo	(912) 754-6404	14y-17y
Effingham County YMCA	Clyo	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
Effingham Head Start Center	Guyton	(912) 728-9621	3y-4y
Effingham YMCA	Rincon	(912) 826-2199	0y-13y
Everyday Bible School	Meldrim	(912) 344-0312	5y-12y
First Baptist Church of Rincon Preschool	Rincon	(912) 826-2213	3y-6y
Georgia Institute of Technology	Meldrim	(404) 894-4682	4y-17y
Georgia Southern University-Camp RAD	Clyo	(912) 478-0889	10y-17y
Happy Days Pre-School	Clyo	(912) 772-3896	4y-5y
Kids Connection Preschool	Guyton	(912) 728-3253	3y-4y
LEAP Youth Development Program	Guyton	(912) 777-8128	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Program - GES	Guyton	(912) 772-3384	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Program - RES	Rincon	(912) 826-5523	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Program - SHES	Guyton	(912) 728-5112	3y-5y+
LEAP Youth Development Prgm - Waterford	Rincon	(912) 308-6619	3y-5y+
Little Miracles Learning Center	Meldrim	(912) 748-3686	0wk-5y+
Merry Hearts Daycare	Rincon	(912) 826-9753	5y+
New Direction Christian Fellowship Ministries	Rincon	(912) 295-3137	5y-12y
New Ebenezer Day Camp	Clyo	(912) 754-9242	8y-15y
Planet 82 After-school & Summer Camp	Guyton	(912) 728-3810	3y-5y+

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Raising Stars Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 295-2859	0wk-5y+
Raising Stars Learning Center #2	Rincon	(912) 826-7752	3y-5y+
Savannah-Chatham County Public School	Meldrim	(912) 395-3680	8y-11y
Start Smart Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 826-0062	0wk-5y
Stepping Stones Child Learning Center	Guyton	(912) 728-8942	0wk-5y+
Teach, Love & Care Learning Center	Rincon	(912) 826-7370	0wk-5y+
The Learning Treehouse	Rincon	(912) 826-2893	0wk-5y+
The Learning Treehouse Summer Camp	Rincon	(912) 826-2893	5y-12y
The Learning Treehouse Too	Rincon	(912) 826-0204	0wk-5y+
Weekday Ministries - FBC	Rincon	(912) 826-2213	0wk-5y+
Wonderful Wednesday	Clyo	(912) 754-6646	4y-11y
YBASE at Blandford Elementary	Rincon	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
YBASE at Ebenezer Elementary	Clyo	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
YBASE at South Effingham Elementary	Guyton	(912) 826-2199	3y-5y+
YBASE at Springfield Elementary	Clyo	(912) 667-6651	3y-5y+
YMCA Pryme Tyme Rincon Elementary	Rincon	(912) 663-2465	3y-5y+

Table 165: Evans County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Camp Horizons	Hagan	(912) 739-4700	5y-12y
Evans County Head Start	Claxton	(912) 739-4576	0y-5y+
Olive Tree Early Learning Center	Claxton	(912) 739-4700	0y-5y+
Pinewood Christian Academy	Bellville	(912) 739-1272	4y-5y
S.T.A.R.S.	Claxton	(912) 334-5063	4y-13y
Wee Ones Morning School	Claxton	(912) 739-2055	2y-5y

Table 166: Jeff Davis County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Jeff Davis Head Start	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-2258	3y-4y
Jeff Davis Learning Center	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-3636	1y-5y+
Kiddie Korner	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-5539	0y-5y+
Love in Action	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-2689	0y-5y+
Mt. Zion Learning Center	Hazlehurst	(912) 375-7429	0y-5y+

Table 167: Long County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Grace Academy	Ludowici	(912) 545-9255	0y-5y+
K.I.A. Club	Ludowici	(912) 302-4638	3y-5y+
Long County Head Start	Ludowici	(912) 545-2155	3y-5y+
The Norman Academy	Ludowici	(912) 256-2177	0y-5y+
Smiley Elementary	Ludowici	(912) 545-2639	3y-5y+
Wonder Years Academy	Ludowici	(912) 318-8559	0y-5y+

Table 168: Pierce County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Blackshear Elementary School	Blackshear	(912) 449-2088	3y-4y
Blackshear Presbyterian Childcare, Inc.	Blackshear	(912) 449-0799	0wk-5y+
Crossroads Christian Academy	Blackshear	(912) 490-2224	3y-4y
Heartstrings Private Preschool	Patterson	(912) 670-1587	2y-5y
Lollipop Kids, Inc	Blackshear	(912) 449-6765	0wk-5y+
Patterson Y-Time	Patterson	(912) 647-5373	3y-5y+
Pierce County Head Start	Blackshear	(912) 449-0004	0wk-4y
Pierce County Head Start/Early Head Start	Blackshear	(912) 449-0004	0wk-5y+
Pierce Cubs	Blackshear	(912) 807-0488	0wk-5y+
Sugar's House	Patterson	(912) 647-2042	0wk-5y+

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Growing Patch	Patterson	(912) 228-2469	0wk-5y+
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Table 169: Tattnall County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
AnchorPointe Christian Daycare	Glennville	(912) 654-1474	0wk-5y+
Busy Little Beavers Christian Preschool	Glennville	(912) 237-3761	3y-5y
Connect Kids Academy	Reidsville	(912) 394-1126	0wk-5y+
Glennville Head Start	Glennville	(912) 654-1170	3y-4y
Glennville-Migrant EHS	Glennville	(912) 654-2182	13mo-5y+
New Horizon Community Outreach Center	Reidsville	(912) 454-0897	4y-15y
Reidsville Head Start	Collins	(912) 693-2207	3y-5y
Telamon Corporation The Glennville Center	Glennville	(912) 386-1163	0wk-5y+
Tiny Tots Learning Center	Reidsville	(912) 557-6776	0wk-5y+

Table 179: Toombs County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
21st Century CLC - J. R. Trippe Middle	Vidalia	(912) 537-3813	11y-15y
21st Century CLC - Lyons Upper Elementary	Lyons	(912) 526-5816	5y-10y
21st Century CLC - Toombs County Middle	Lyons	(912) 526-8363	11y-14y
Boys & Girls Clubs - J.D. Rabun Unit	Lyons	(912) 538-8899	5y-17y
Boys & Girls Clubs - Vidalia Unit	Vidalia	(912) 538-8899	5y-17y
Calvary's Kinder Academy	Vidalia	(912) 537-4868	0wk-5y+
Chapel Christian Academy	Lyons	(912) 403-3096	0wk-5y+
Cornerstone Children's Center	Vidalia	(912) 535-7521	0wk-5y+
First Steps Infant / Toddler Center	Vidalia	(912) 538-8811	0wk-5y+
Jolly Juggles Day Care Center	Vidalia	(912) 537-0045	0wk-5y+
Kid City USA Vidalia	Vidalia	(912) 386-1438	0wk-5y+
Learning Tree Child Care And Learning Ctr	Vidalia	(912) 537-1119	0wk-5y+
Lighthouse Early Start Academy One	Vidalia	(912) 538-8811	0wk-5y+
Little Folks Farm & Childcare	Lyons	(912) 454-0249	0wk-5y+
Lyons Center	Lyons	(912) 526-4340	0wk-5y+
Lyons-Migrant EHS	Lyons	(912) 526-4340	13mo-5y+
Meadows Wellness Center (Kidz Klub)	Vidalia	(912) 277-2056	0wk-10y
Nip & Tuck Nursery and Kindergarten	Lyons	(912) 526-6774	0wk-5y+
North Thompson Christian Learning Center	Vidalia	(912) 537-2373	4y-12y
Onion Sprouts Daycare	Vidalia	(912) 537-7777	0wk-5y+
Robert Toombs Christian Academy	Lyons	(912) 526-8938	3y-4y
Sherea Collins Group Day Care	Vidalia	(912) 537-0733	13mo-5y+
Step by Step Child Care and Learning Center	Lyons	(478) 494-6386	0wk-5y+
Step by Step Childcare and Learning Ctr #2	Lyons	(478) 697-0882	0wk-5y+
Supper Program	Lyons	(912) 524-3209	13y-17y
Toombs County Board of Education	Lyons	(912) 524-3212	0wk-4y
Toombs County Head Start	Lyons	(912) 526-9228	0wk-4y
Vidalia City Schools - J.D. Dickerson	Vidalia	(912) 537-3421	4y-13y
Vidalia City Schools - S.D. Meadows	Vidalia	(912) 537-4755	5y-13y
Vidalia Heritage Academy	Vidalia	(912) 245-4206	3y-4y

Table 180: Ware County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Be Bold Go Gold Refuel Program	Manor	(912) 287-2351	14y-17y
Be Bold Go Gold Refuel Program	Waycross	(912) 287-2351	14y-17y
Center Elementary Gator All-Star Academy	Waycross	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Center Y-Time	Waycross	(912) 287-2366	3y-5y+
Children First	Waycross	(912) 584-3271	0y-5y+
Clinch County Elementary Tutoring	Manor	(912) 487-5385	8y-11y

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Clinch County Head Start	Manor	(912) 487-5304	0wk-5y+
Discovery Montessori School	Waycross	(904) 556-2028	13mo-5y+
GASA All-Star Academy WCMS	Pearson	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Hazzard Hill Early Head Start	Waycross	(912) 490-0201	3y-4y
Jesus and Jam	Manor	(912) 337-5342	5y-9y
K-South Martial Arts Academy Excite!	Manor	(912) 385-0208	5y-12y
K-South Martial Arts Academy Excite!	Pearson	(912) 385-0208	5y-12y
New Vision Learning Center of Alma Inc.	Pearson	(912) 632-2922	0wk-5y+
Pearson Head Start	Pearson	(912) 422-3493	3y-5y+
Precious Jewels Early Learning Center	Pearson	(912) 393-5130	0wk-5y+
Precious Little Jewels Daycare	Waycross	(912) 282-2662	0wk-5y+
River Kids - Student Ministries	Waycross	(912) 283-8773	3y-17y
Rochelle's Day Care Center	Waycross	(912) 283-7568	0wk-5y+
Ruskin Elementary Gator All-Star Academy	Manor	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Ruskin Elementary School Y-Time	Manor	(912) 285-8662	5y+
Second Baptist Church Childcare	Waycross	(912) 283-0436	0wk-5y+
Southside Christian School	Waycross	(912) 285-5438	4y-5y
Summer Academy, The	Waycross	(912) 548-0513	8y-17y
Telamon Corporation-GA 31 Pearson	Pearson	(478) 365-4798	0wk-5y
The YMCA A.V. Kennedy Learning Center	Waycross	(912) 282-9951	13mo-5y+
The YMCA of Waycross Child Dev Center	Waycross	(912) 584-3831	0wk-5y+
Tiny Tots of Homerville	Manor	(912) 487-5115	0wk-5y+
Unison Behavioral Health-Garden Gate	Waycross	(912) 449-7869	0wk-13y
Unison BH-ROOTS Clubhouse	Waycross	(912) 449-7171	6y-17y
Ware County Head Start Center	Waycross	(912) 285-1844	3y-4y
Ware County Recreation Department	Waycross	(912) 287-4491	5y-15y
Waresboro Elementary All-Star Academy	Manor	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
Waresboro Elementary Y-Time	Manor	(191) 228-5866	5y+
Waycross Middle Refuel Program	Waycross	(912) 285-8660	11y-17y
Williams Heights All-Star Academy	Waycross	(912) 283-8656	5y-15y
YMCA Central Y-Time	Waycross	(912) 285-8660	3y-5y+
Young Men's Christian Association	Waycross	(912) 285-8660	5y-12y

Table 181: Wayne County Childcare Centers

Center Name	City	Telephone	Ages Served
Barcello Fairyland Learning Academy	Jesup	(912) 559-2887	0wk-5y+
Boys & Girls Clubs of Altamaha Area	Jesup	(912) 588-0022	5y-13y
Boys and Girls Club of Altamaha Area	Jesup	(912) 294-1091	5y-17y
Country Kids Daycare	Jesup	(912) 530-9750	0wk-5y+
Elite Sports	Jesup	(912) 294-6323	5y-17y
Janie Little Gems Daycare	Jesup	(912) 385-2033	0wk-5y+
Kidz Express, Inc.	Jesup	(912) 256-3668	0wk-5y+
Little Light of Mine	Jesup	(912) 530-8100	0wk-5y+
Little Miracles Daycare	Jesup	(912) 588-0110	0wk-5y+
MyNana's Clubhouse	Jesup	(912) 559-2559	0wk-5y+
Solid Rock Christian Academy	Jesup	(912) 424-8316	4y
The Learning Place, Inc.	Jesup	(912) 588-0042	0wk-5y+
Wayne Christian Academy	Jesup	(912) 424-8316	4y-5y
Wayne Head Start	Jesup	(912) 427-4527	3y-4y
World Class Karate, Inc.	Jesup	(912) 427-0435	5y-17y

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

There are a total of 12,604 opportunities for children to access quality care and early education programs.

The community demonstrates low child-to-slot ratios in several local Census Tracts, indicating a favorable balance between childcare capacity and the number of children in need of care. For instance, areas such as Appling County 9503, Bacon County 9702.02, Bulloch 1105, Effingham County 108.02, Tattnall 9504, Toombs County 9703, Ware County 9504, 9505, 9507, 9509, and Wayne County 9703 exhibit notably low child-to-slot ratios, ensuring that there are sufficient childcare resources to meet the needs of the local population.

These low child-to-slot ratios signify that families in these areas have access to adequate childcare options, reducing wait times and ensuring that children can enroll in early education programs without facing significant barriers.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

There is a significant deficit (14,952) of available childcare, with only 12,604 slots accommodating a total of 27,556 young children in need of care. This shortage of childcare slots creates barriers for families seeking employment and improvement of their own education levels. This is especially a concern for the 17,198 children in which all parents are working.

As a result of this disparity, nearly half of the local census tracts, specifically 49 out of 90, are classified as childcare deserts, indicating areas with limited or no access to quality childcare services. These childcare deserts disproportionately affect families in underserved communities, exacerbating disparities in childcare access and perpetuating inequities in early childhood development.

The high cost of childcare further compounds the challenges faced by families, with the average annual cost for infant care reaching \$8,530, surpassing even college tuition expenses. This financial burden represents 15.50% of the median income, significantly exceeding the recommended standard set by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, which recommends a family spend no more than 7% of household income on childcare expenses. Additionally, the cost of childcare for two children exceeds the average regional rent by 28%, further straining family budgets and limiting access to affordable childcare options.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Housing and Energy

Introduction

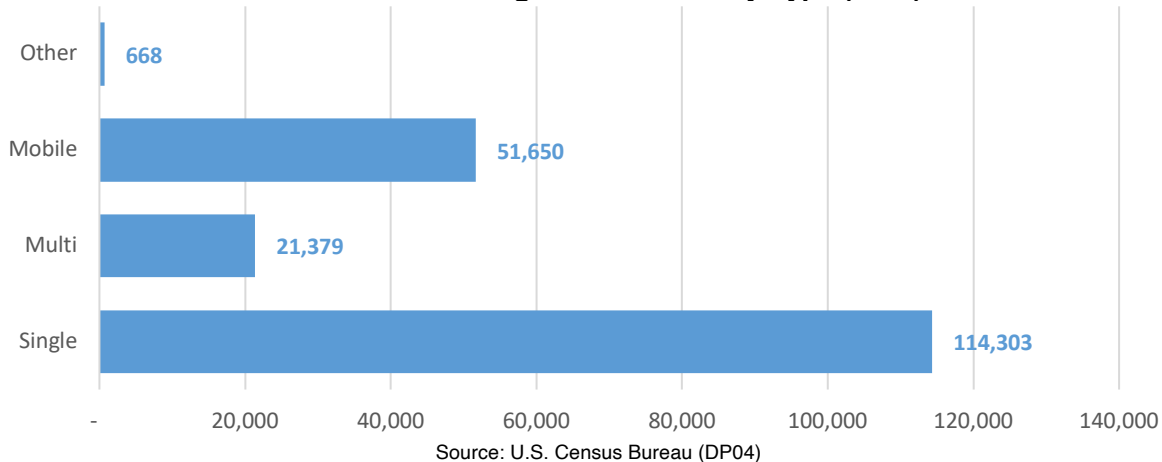
Housing and energy are fundamental pillars of a household's well-being and economic security, playing pivotal roles in determining the quality of life and overall stability of individuals and families. Adequate housing provides shelter, security, and a sense of belonging, while access to affordable energy sources is essential for maintaining a comfortable living environment. However, the relationship between poverty and these basic needs is intricate and mutually reinforcing. Poverty often leads to inadequate and unstable housing arrangements, causing individuals and families to face homelessness or live in substandard conditions.

Recognizing the profound impact of poverty on housing and energy is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies aimed at improving the well-being of vulnerable populations, addressing disparities, and fostering economic security for all. This research explores the intricate interplay between poverty, housing, and energy, shedding light on the challenges faced by marginalized communities and proposing strategies to enhance their living conditions and economic prospects.

Housing Availability

The U.S. Census Bureau identified a total of 188,000 housing units available to accommodate the region's 161,492 households in 2022, leaving surplus of 26,508 homes available. An estimated 85.90% of these units were occupied at the time of the survey, with a strong majority (60.80%) being single occupancy homes. Other primary residence types included both multi-family units (11.37%) and mobile homes (27.47%). The remaining 668 units (0.36%) included campers, boats, and other places not generally designed for long-term housing.

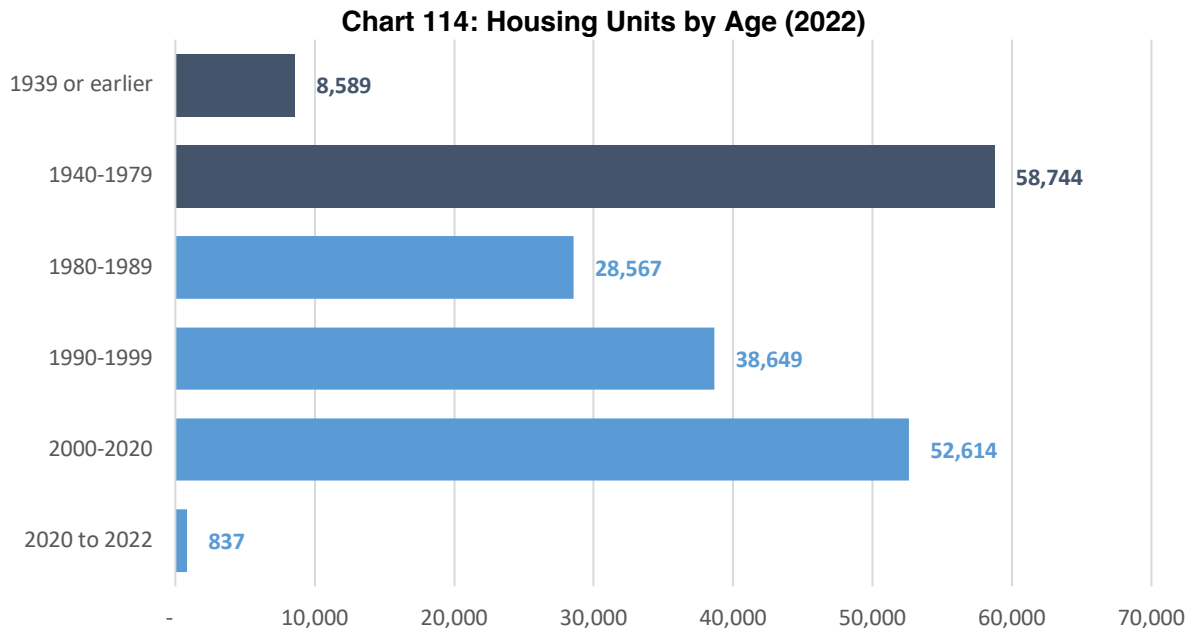
Chart 113: Housing Infrastructure by Type (2022)



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Housing Condition

While this is encouraging, it is always important to consider the condition of these homes. This is especially important in counties with a large number of older homes. According to Money Crashers, as a general rule of thumb, homes less than 40 years of age are considered “newer”, and homes built before 1920 are considered “antique.” In the agency’s service area, an estimated 35.82% of all housing units were found to be more than 40 years old, with 64.18% being considered “newer”.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP04)

Money crashers explains that housing age can be subjective but are generally based on a number of factors. The most important of these factors include:

- **Construction style and quality.** Prefabricated and mobile homes are generally constructed to lower quality standards than solidly built Tudors, craftsman, or colonial styles. Mass-produced houses, which tend to be newer, can have quality issues as well. However, custom-built new homes may be constructed even more solidly and durably than older homes. Ultimately construction quality comes down to the quality of the materials used and the skill of the builder.
- **Climate and Geology.** Climate, particularly humidity, temperature extremes, and storms, accelerate the aging process. Homes in the eastern half of the United States are more likely to experience problems attributable to these issues, such as roof damage and basement or foundational moisture, than homes in coastal California cities like San Francisco and Oakland. Geological factors that can accelerate the aging process include seismic activity, sinkholes, limestone geology, and high water tables.
- **Renovations.** In some cases, antique homes are updated so dramatically that it is difficult to define their age any longer. In some cases, the only original components may be the foundation or basement and a few structural supports rising above the home’s footprint. For these homes, it may not be accurate to attribute the construction to its original build date.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

According to Money Crashers, even well-maintained older homes can present problems that owners of newer homes do not have to worry about. These include health hazards (asbestos, mold, etc.), serious pest problems that can lead to structural issues, and issues with utility systems (wiring, plumbing, etc.).

1. **Lead and Asbestos**

Lead and asbestos are two hazardous materials that were used in residential applications until relatively recently. Lead is a neurotoxic metal that's particularly harmful to children. It is commonly found in exterior and interior paint made before 1978. It is also found in substantial quantities in pre-World War II plumbing systems and in smaller quantities in waterpipes installed before the mid 1980s.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material that causes a serious form of lung cancer and other respiratory problems. It was used in insulation and fireproofing materials until the mid-1970s. Although the EPA banned most asbestos applications by the 1980s, they never required building owners to remove existing asbestos. Accordingly, many older crawlspaces, walls, and pipes may still contain asbestos insulation.

2. **Termite Damage**

Over time, termites can devastate the wooden components of a home, including floors, structural supports, and drywall. The problem is particularly acute in the southern half of the country, where termites are active for most or all of the year. Older homes are more likely to have termite infestations due to compromised foundations or drywall.

Depending on the length and severity of the infestation, termite damage repairs can range from cosmetic fixes that cost a few hundred dollars to structural remediation costing \$10,000 or more.

3. **Mold and Mildew Damage**

Over time, homes exposed to excessive moisture often develop mold and mildew problems. Though particularly common in basements and bathrooms of wet-climate homes, moisture-related microorganism growth can occur anywhere. The problem is more likely to occur in older homes because moisture more readily seeps through cracked foundations and leaky pipes. However, since infestations can start inside of walls, it is possible to walk through a mold-infested home without realizing there is a problem.

While small amounts of indoor mold growth are permissible and even expected, uncontrolled growth can exacerbate allergies and existing respiratory problems (such as asthma) in healthy children and adults. More serious infections can develop in the very young, the very old, and those with compromised immune systems.

Also, mold eats away at its host surfaces, particularly wood, drywall, grout, and other porous or semiporous substances. Unchecked infestations can cause structural damage and render a home uninhabitable.

4. **Plumbing Problems**

The biggest danger of an old or substandard plumbing system is the possibility of a pipe failure that floods the home or causes major water damage in the walls and floors. A serious failure can temporarily render the home uninhabitable and cost tens of thousands of dollars to clean up, though the damage is often covered by homeowners' insurance if the occupants are able to afford it. It can also lead to longer-term issues, such as mold infestations.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Understanding the materials used in the construction of the home is important. While brass and copper pipes typically last 50 years or more, steel pipes can wear out after as little as 20 years. Pipes made from PEX, an increasingly common plastic material, typically last 40 to 50 years.

Root damage is another issue attributed to many older homes, especially those in heavily vegetated neighborhoods. Over time, tree roots work their way into older drainage pipes under or outside of the home's foundation, busting through pipe joints and tapping the year-round supply of water.

5. **Foundation or Structural Problems**

Older homes are prone to a variety of foundational and structural problems. This may include major cracks in the slab or perimeter foundation wall, corrosion, dry rot, or moisture damage in pilings or concrete foundation supports, damaged piers/support footings, and dry rot/moisture damage in above-ground studs. Signs of foundation or structural damage include doors that fail to latch, visible cracks in walls, cracked tile or concrete floors, persistently stuck windows, and floors that are uneven.

6. **Radon**

Radon is a radioactive gas that occurs naturally in certain types of bedrock. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that radon tends to persist at higher concentrations in the Northeast, Midwest, and Intermountain West, but can occur anywhere.

Radon enters homes through cracks in the foundation perimeter and basement walls, which are more common in older homes. The gas then circulates throughout poorly ventilated houses over time. Though it is not toxic when encountered intermittently and in small doses, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer for nonsmokers, and exposure over the generally accepted safe concentration is not recommended for a longer period.

7. **Roof Problems**

Older homes generally have older, possibly deteriorating roofs. This presents numerous problems, including pest infestations, interior water damage, and less-effective insulation. Problems stemming from a compromised roof, particularly once interior leaks begin occurring regularly, can cost tens of thousands of dollars to fix and may not be covered by homeowners' insurance.

8. **Inefficient Windows**

Old homes are more likely to have older, inefficient windows. The primary downside of inefficient windows is a higher electricity bill because the home's climate control system has to work harder to compensate for leaks. According to the Federal Government's Energy Star program, installing the most efficient class of windows in your entire home can reduce your electric bill by as much as \$600, depending on the size of your home and where you live.

9. **Inadequate or Unsafe Electrical Systems**

Electrical problems generally fall into two categories: convenience and safety.

Unless electrical systems have been updated, older homes may lack sufficient numbers of electrical outlets to address the resident's electronic devices.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

More importantly, the lifespan of electrical wiring itself is limited by the lifespan of the wire's insulation. Wiring installed before 1960 lasts roughly 70 years, while newer wiring is estimated to last at least 100 years. Once the insulation deteriorates to the point that the actual wire is exposed, the risk of an electrical fire, shocks, short circuits, and localized power failures increase dramatically.

Electrical service panels and circuit breakers are also prone to deterioration. Service panels last 60-70 years, while breakers last 30-40 years. Failing panels and breakers can cause shock, power failure, fire, and other dangers.

It should also be noted that water damage, fire, pest infestation, and other unusual events can harm some or all of an electrical system's components, necessitating repair or replacement long before they reach their life expectancy.

10. **Failing or Inefficient Mechanicals and Appliances**

Older homes are more likely to have old mechanical equipment, such as water heaters, furnaces, and air conditioning units, as well as older household appliances. Mechanical and appliance lifespan varies by item, brand, and workload. Equipment near the end of its useful life is more prone to failure, raising the possibility of an inconvenient or dangerous situation – such as the loss of heat in winter or an electrical fire. It should also be noted that older equipment is generally less energy efficient, resulting in high utility costs.

11. **Unhelpful, Unfinished, or Outdated Updates**

While many older homes retain the charm and function of their original construction, others have experienced a host of unhelpful or anachronistic updates that detract from the homeowner's experience and potentially add to the cost of ownership.

As long as updates are unsafe, residents can often live with outdated features. Unfortunately, the cost of repairs can often be costly. Residents should be aware of the safety concerns associated with the home and consider how it may impact young children, senior citizens, or disabled residents. Some unfinished projects also provide easy access to insects and rodents, which can impact the health of those living in the home.

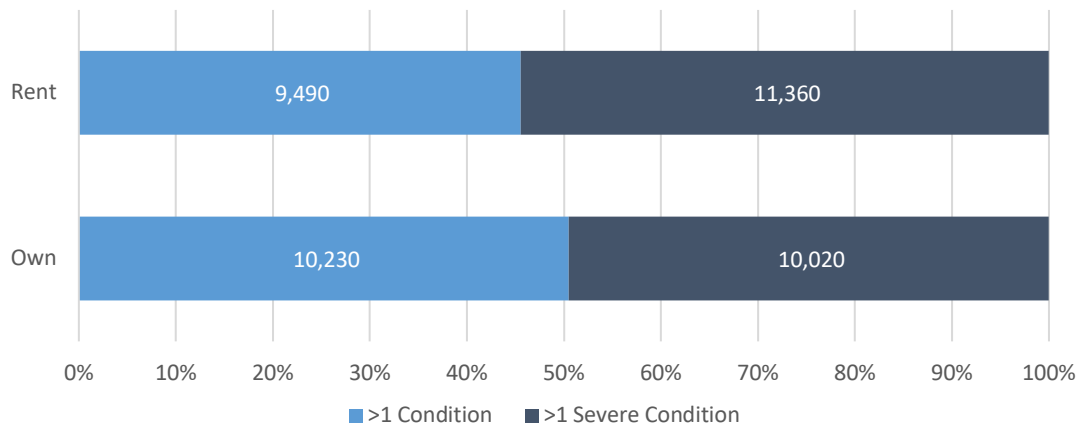
12. **Substandard or Unsafe Features**

Depending on the style, location, and history of the home, some original features may be obsolete, not up to building codes, or simply unsafe. These may include laundry chutes, servant staircases, staircases leading to nowhere, steep staircases, low ceilings, blocked off chimneys, and non-working fireplaces.

While research documenting details of these particular conditions is not available, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in coordination with the U.S. Census Bureau, publishes annual estimates of housing units with substandard conditions. In the service area, an estimated 41,300 housing units (18.43%) were noted as having at least one substandard condition. A further observation is that renters (37.88%) are nearly twice as likely to live in homes with sub-standard conditions than those in owner occupied residences (19.02%). Among the housing units that were reported as having substandard conditions, more than half (51.77%) were noted as having at least one severe sub-standard condition.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

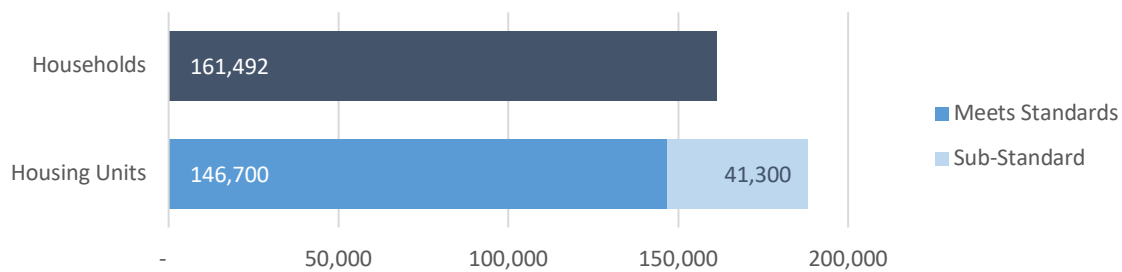
Chart 115: Regional Substandard Housing Count by Occupancy Type (2020)



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Overall, it is estimated that a minimum of 14,792 local residents are living in homes with poor conditions throughout the region.

Chart 116: Regional Housing Units vs Households (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP05)/ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Among the conditions specifically identified as problematic, the lack of cooking facilities in an estimated 1,113 homes is a significant concern. This deficiency hampers residents' ability to prepare nutritious meals, potentially leading to a reliance on more expensive and less healthy food options, which can contribute to a range of diet-related health issues.

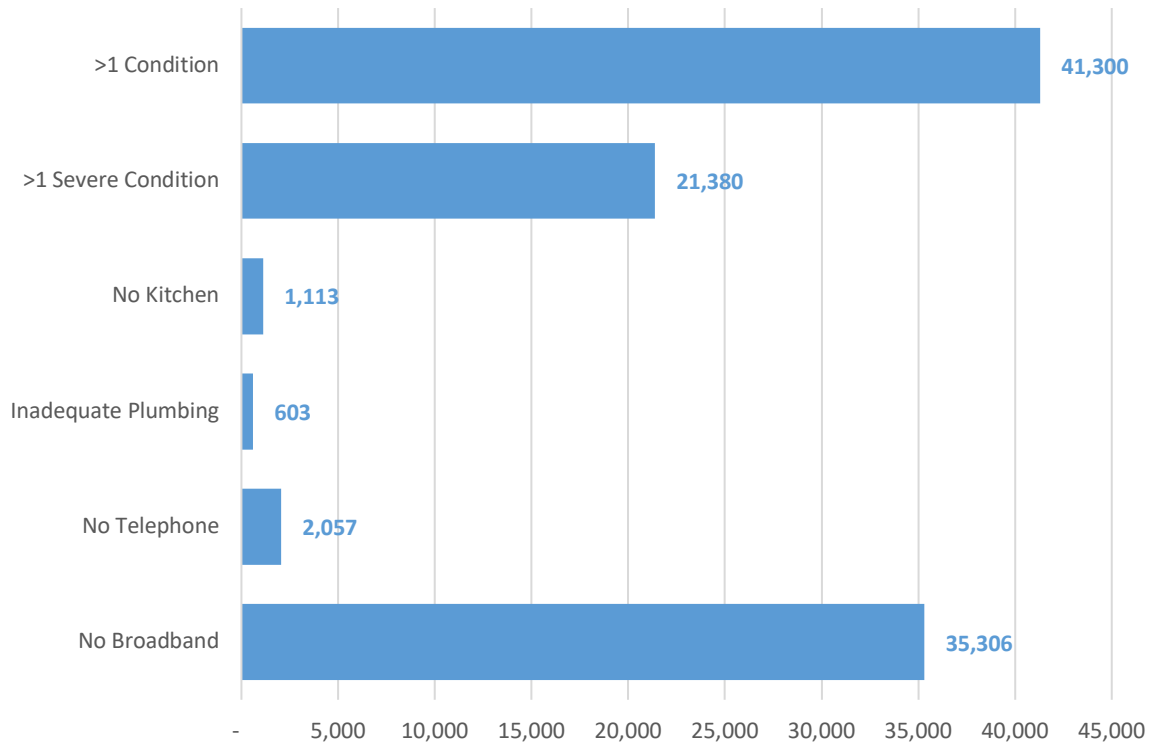
Additionally, inadequate plumbing in 603 homes is not only a basic sanitation issue but also impedes residents' ability to maintain cleanliness, which is fundamental to preventing illness. The impact extends to public health concerns, especially in densely populated areas where diseases can spread more rapidly due to poor hygiene conditions.

The absence of telephone services in about 2,057 households presents barriers to communication that are vital for emergency services, healthcare access, and employment opportunities. In our modern society, where timely communication is crucial, being without a phone can isolate individuals and limit their ability to engage fully with the community and essential services.

Furthermore, the lack of broadband internet in 35,306 households puts these residents at a significant disadvantage in numerous ways. In the current era, where education, employment, and even healthcare are increasingly conducted online, not having internet access can severely restrict educational and economic opportunities. It can hinder children's learning, adults' job searches, and the general ability to participate in a society where digital literacy is integral to success.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 117: Notable Housing Conditions (2022)



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development | US Census Bureau (DP04)

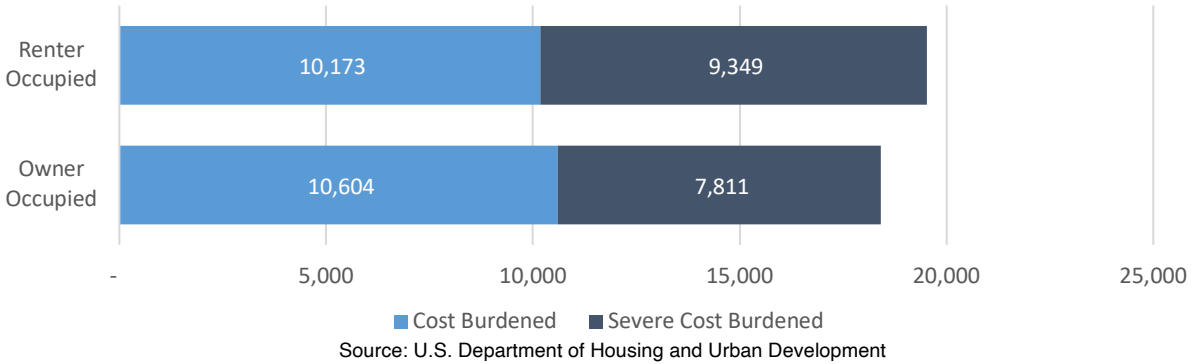
Each of these issues can contribute to the perpetuation of poverty by limiting access to opportunities and resources that could otherwise help households improve their socio-economic standing. Addressing these gaps is vital for the community's overall health, education, and economic development.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Housing Affordability

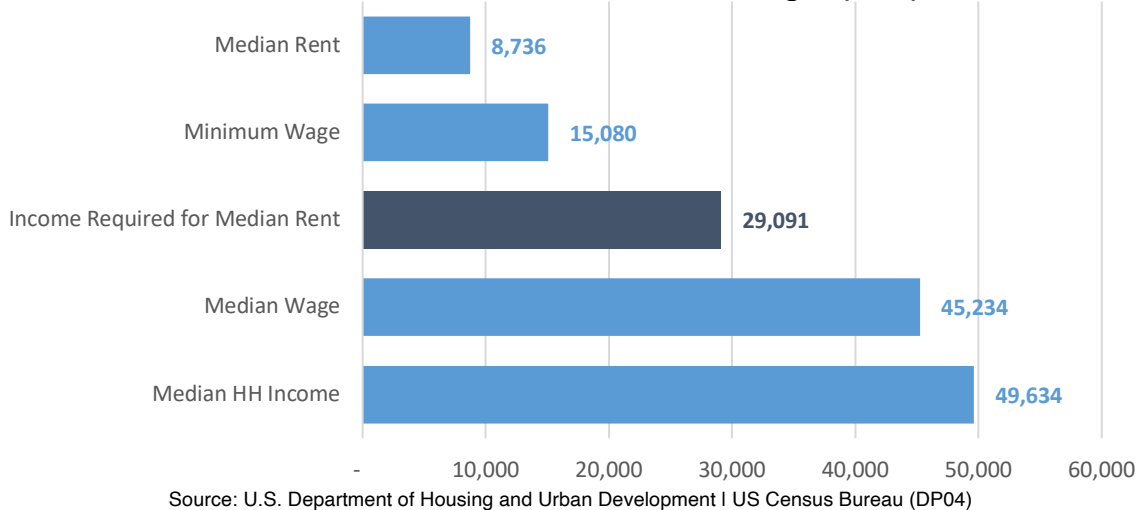
In addition to housing availability and condition, the factor of affordability must also be taken into consideration when evaluating the housing infrastructure in a local community. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, an estimated 37,932 families are currently housing cost burdened. This simply means that they spend more than 30% of their household income on rent/mortgage and utilities combined. To put this number in perspective, it accounts for 23.49% of the total population, which is significantly higher the number of households who are living in poverty (15.72%). This data also tells us that renters (35.47%) are much more likely to be cost burdened than owners (17.30%). Among those that were cost burdened, nearly half (45.23%) were classified as severe cost burdened, meaning that they spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs.

Chart 118: Cost Burdened Resident Count by Occupancy Type (2020)



Expanding on this data, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition’s Out of Reach 2021 Report indicates that the average 2-bedroom Fair Market Rent (FMR) for residents in Georgia is \$1,287 per month, or \$15,444 annually. In the region evaluated for this project, housing costs were noted as being slightly more affordable at \$825 per month, or \$9,902 annually. Although lower than the statewide average, the cost of a home in this price range accounts for 65.66% of the amount that would be earned by a full-time minimum wage job. In fact, affording rent in this range would require a salary of approximately \$33,007 annually, or \$14.53 per hour. This translates to an unsustainable requirement of working around 88 hours per week at the minimum wage, highlighting the disconnect between wages and living costs.

Table 119: Median Rent vs Income and Wages (2022)



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering larger family units, the financial burden becomes more pronounced. A 4-bedroom unit at the regional average FMR costs \$1,247 monthly, necessitating an annual income of \$49,898. This indicates that larger families in the region may face significant affordability issues unless they have income well above the minimum wage. It should be noted that this amount is also higher than the median wage (\$45,234) and household median income (\$49,634).

Table 182: Median Rent Cost by Unit Size and County (2022)

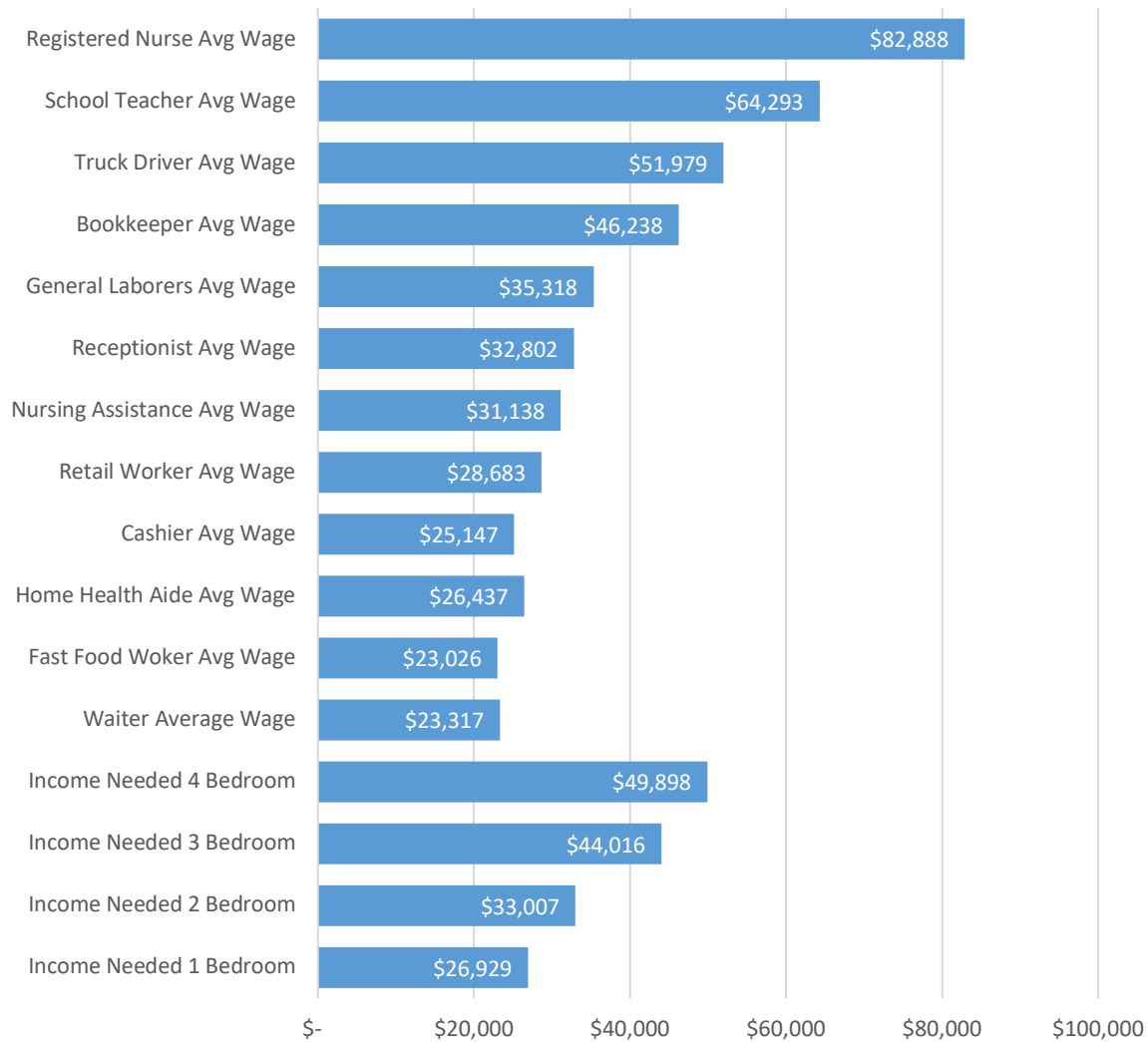
<i>Area</i>	1 Bdrm	2 Bdrm	3 Bdrm	4 Bdrm	Median
<i>Appling</i>	\$606	\$772	\$1,097	\$1,123	\$683
<i>Atkinson</i>	\$612	\$772	\$1,060	\$1,123	\$566
<i>Bacon</i>	\$684	\$772	\$969	\$1,123	\$685
<i>Brantley</i>	\$815	\$998	\$1,348	\$1,633	\$728
<i>Bulloch</i>	\$711	\$887	\$1,206	\$1,313	\$931
<i>Candler</i>	\$606	\$772	\$1,095	\$1,114	\$682
<i>Charlton</i>	\$684	\$772	\$1,097	\$1,140	\$704
<i>Clinch</i>	\$606	\$772	\$1,091	\$1,123	\$547
<i>Coffee</i>	\$610	\$772	\$940	\$1,037	\$702
<i>Effingham</i>	\$1,112	\$1,256	\$1,715	\$2,008	\$1,098
<i>Evans</i>	\$635	\$772	\$953	\$1,037	\$715
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	\$606	\$772	\$940	\$1,113	\$626
<i>Long</i>	\$721	\$814	\$1,150	\$1,387	\$846
<i>Pierce</i>	\$643	\$819	\$997	\$1,119	\$764
<i>Tattnall</i>	\$676	\$772	\$1,097	\$1,315	\$609
<i>Toombs</i>	\$586	\$772	\$1,084	\$1,266	\$661
<i>Ware</i>	\$619	\$815	\$992	\$1,239	\$760
<i>Wayne</i>	\$586	\$772	\$970	\$1,241	\$805
Region	\$673	\$825	\$1,100	\$1,247	\$728

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition | US Census Bureau (DP04)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When comparing regional median wages by occupation against the cost of housing, a stark contrast emerges, particularly for those in lower-wage occupations. For instance, waiters and waitresses earning an annual wage of \$23,317 are confronted with significant affordability challenges, as even the regional average rent for a one-bedroom apartment at \$8,079 annually would consume around 35% of their income, well above the recommended 30% housing cost to income ratio. This proportion becomes even more disproportionate for larger housing units, reflecting a critical gap between earnings and living costs.

Chart 120: Position Specific Median Wage vs Housing Wage (2022)



Source: US Census Bureau (DP04)

Home health aides and personal care assistants, with an annual wage of \$26,437, face similar constraints, where the cost of housing remains a substantial part of their income, leaving less for other essentials such as food, transportation, and healthcare. Even for occupations earning around the \$30,000 mark annually, such as nursing assistances, receptionists, and customer service representatives, the financial burden of housing remains a significant concern. This gap illustrates the pressing need for wage growth, affordable housing initiatives, and supportive policies to ensure that housing costs align more closely with regional incomes, particularly for those in essential service roles that often pay less.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

While the number of individual units associated with each affordable housing are no longer published, data indicates that there are 118 affordable housing providers in the region.

Table 183: Appling County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Donnie Lane Villas	Sections 515/521	Baxley
Elderwood Homes	Section 202	Baxley
Pine Street Development	Public Housing	Baxley
Speer Homes	Public Homes	Baxley
Westwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Baxley

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 184: Atkinson County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
134 Vickers St S	Public Housing	Willacoochee
Carlisle Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Pearson
Country Place	LIHTC, Sections 515/21	Maysville
CRC Manor Place	HOME	Baldwin
Cypresswood Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 8/538	Pearson
Evergreen Apartments	Sections 515/521	Pearson
Fulcher-Comer Homes	Public Housing	Public
Ridgecrest Apartments	Section 515	Lula
Rosewood Village	LIHTC, Sections 515/532	Willacoochee
Whispering Pines	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Pearson
Wildwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Willacoochee

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 185: Bacon County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Albert Pitts Homes	Public Housing	Alma
Azalea Court	LIHTC, Sections 151/521	Alma
Heritage Villas of Alma	Sections 515/521	Alma
Queen City Heights	Public Housing	Alma
Wilfred Smith Terrace	Public Housing	Alma

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 186: Brantley County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Satilla Pines	Public Housing	Nahunta

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 187: Bulloch County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
24 East Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Statesboro
Blakewood Apartments	Sections 8/236	Statesboro
Braswell – Grover Homes	Public Housing	Statesboro
Brookhaven Apartment	Sections 515/521	Brooklet
Eastview Apartments	Sections 515/521	Statesboro
Fox Ridge Apartments	Section 8	Statesboro
Laurel Pointe Apartments	HOME, LIHTC	Statesboro
Little Lotts Creek Apartments	LIHTC	Statesboro
Madison Meadows Apartments	LIHTC	Statesboro
Morris Heights	LIHTC, Sections 8/236	Statesboro
Statesboro Asn Housing, Inc.	Section 202	Statesboro
Statesboro Summit	LIHTC, Section 8	Statesboro
Wildwood Villas Apts	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Statesboro

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Wildwood Villas Apts Phase II	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538 Source: Affordable Housing Online	Statesboro
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Table 188: Candler County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
240 S Terrell Street	Public Housing	Metter
Candler Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Metter
Colonia Villas	LIHTC	Metter

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 189: Charlton County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Charlton Court	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Folkston
Folkston Housing	Public Housing	Folkston
Pine Point Apartments	LIHTC, HOME, Sections 515/521	Folkston

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 190: Clinch County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Brookwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Homerville
Homerville	Public Housing	Homerville
Quail Hollow Apartments I	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Homerville
Quail Hollow Apartments II	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Homerville

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 191: Coffee County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Aesthetic Housing II	Section 202	Douglas
Amberwood Apartments	Sections 515/521	Douglas
Coffee County Resources	Section 202	Douglas
Deerfield Apartments	HOME, LIHTC	Douglas
Deerfield II Apartments	LIHTC, Section 515/521	Douglas
Estes Park Apartments	LIHTC, Section 538	Douglas
Georgian Woods	Section 8	Douglas
Heritage Pointe	LIHTC, Section 538	Douglas
Hunters Run Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Douglas
Nicholls HA	Public Housing	Nicholls
Oak Terrace	Sections 515/521	Douglas
Park View Court	Public Housing	Douglas
Pine Meadows Apartments	Home, LIHTC	Douglas
Thrasher Nest Village	Public Housing	Douglas
Trowell Housing	Section 202	Douglas

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 192: Effingham County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Fair Oaks Lane Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Rincon
Goshen Crossing Apartments	LIHTC	Rincon
Goshen Crossing Apartments Phase II	LIHTC	Rincon
Silverwood Place	LIHTC	Rincon
Spring Hollow Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Springfield
Towne Park Commons	HOME, LIHTC	Rincon
Veranda Village	HOME, LIHTC, Section 538	Rincon
Willowpeg Lane Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Rincon
Willowpeg Village	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Rincon

Source: Affordable Housing Online

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 193: Evans County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Nancy Hendrix Cedar Creek	Public Housing	Claxton
Rolling Oaks Family	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Claxton

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 194: Jeff Davis County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Cloverset Place	LIHTC, Section 538	Hazlehurst
Greenbrier Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Hazlehurst
Hammock Homes	Public Housing	Hazlehurst
Hillcrest Apartments	Sections 515/521	Hazlehurst

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 195: Long County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Sandalwood Terrace	LIHTC, Sections 515/521/538	Ludowici
Sams Twin Oaks	LIHTC	Ludowici
Twin Oaks Apartments	HOME, LIHTC, Section 538	Ludowici

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 196: Pierce County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Central Walnut Village	Section 202	Waycross
Colonial Homes	Sections 515/521	Blackshear
Country Manor Apartments	Sections 515/521	Blackshear
Garlington Heights	Public Housing	Waycross
Lee Darling Homes	Public Housing	Blackshear
Ocean Breeze Park	LIHTC	Waycross
Northside Homes	Public Housing	Waycross
Peachwood Place Apartments	LIHTC	Waycross
Satilla Solutions	Section 811	Waycross
Village at Blackshear	LIHTC, Sections 8/538	Blackshear
Windover Manor Apartments	HOME, LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Blackshear
Ware Hotel	LIHTC	Waycross
Ware Manor	LIHTC, Sections 8/236	Waycross
Ware Terrace	Section 202	Waycross
Waring Apartments	LIHTC	Waycross
Waring Apartments II	Home, LIHTC	Waycross
Waycross VOA Housing	Section 811	Waycross
Waycross II VOA Housing	Section 811	Waycross
Westport Village	Home, LIHTC	Waycross

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 197: Tattnall County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Burns Village	Public Housing	Glennville
Country Estates	Sections 515/521	Glennville
Qual Run Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Reidsville
Qual Village Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Reidsville
Sunset Circle – Ohooppee Heights	Public Housing	Reidsville
Tattnall Evans Housing	Section 202	Glennville
Volunteers of America Housing	Section 811	Reidsville

Source: Affordable Housing Online

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 198: Toombs County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Harry Thompson Homes	Public Housing	Lyons
Jt Lyons Properties	Section 8	Lyons
Lakeview Apartments	LIHTC, Section 538	Lyons
Lakeview Townhomes	Section 538	Lyons
Toombs-Lyons Housing, Inc.	Section 811	Lyons
West Columbia Apartments	Section 8	Lyons

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 199: Ware County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Grove at Oakmont	LIHTC, Section 811	Waycross

Source: Affordable Housing Online

Table 200: Wayne County Affordable Housing

Facility Name	Programs	City
Briarwood Apartments	Section 8	Jesup
Distinctive Care Homes	Section 811	Jesup
Dogwood Estates	Public Housing	Jesup
Fox Run Apartments	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Jesup
Sunset Pointe Apartments	LIHTC, HOME, Section 538	Jesup
Wildridge	LIHTC, Sections 515/521	Jesup

Source: Affordable Housing Online

HOME Investment Partnership (HOME)

In projects with five or more HOME-assisted units, at least 20% of the units must be occupied by families earning 50% or less of the area median income (AMI). All other HOME-assisted units must be occupied by families earning 80% or less of the AMI, but in practice most are reserved for families earning 60% or less of the AMI.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

Since the property has received funding in part through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, a certain number of units are set aside for lower income households. Households must earn either less than 50% or 60% of the area median income (AMI), depending on the set-aside option chosen by the property owner to qualify for the units. Rents in these units are capped at a maximum of 30% of the set-aside area median income (adjusted for unit size). Some rental units in the property may not be subject to LIHTC and therefore have higher rents and no maximum household income requirements.

Public Housing

Since the property is owned and managed by a Public Housing Authority, all of the rents at the property are based off of tenant incomes. Tenants will make a monthly contribution toward the rent equal to 30% of their adjusted income. A housing authority may establish a minimum rent of up to \$50.

Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance

Since the property has a Project-Based Section 8 contract with HUD, some or all of the rents at this community are based on tenant incomes. Tenants leasing units participating in the Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance program typically contribute less than 30% of their adjusted income towards rental costs.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Section 202 (Supportive Housing for the Elderly)

Since the property was built or renovated using funding from HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program, residency is usually restricted to households earning 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or less with at least one member aged 62 years or older. Tenants pay rent based on household income. This rent is usually the highest of the following three amounts: either 30% adjusted monthly income, or 10% unadjusted monthly income, or, if receiving welfare assistance, the housing costs portion of this assistance.

Section 515 Rural Rental Housing

This property has received funding in part through the Section 515 Rural Rental Housing (Section 515) program. Very low-, low-, and moderate-income families, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities are eligible to live at this property. Persons or families living in substandard housing have priority for tenancy.

Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance Program

The Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance program is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's initiatives to help very low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities afford rent in rural areas. It is applicable in properties financed by Section 515 Rural Rental or Section 514/516 Farm Labor Housing programs. The assistance covers the gap between 30% of a tenant's income and the monthly rental rate, ensuring that housing remains affordable. For more detailed information, you can visit the Housing Assistance Council's overview of the program at ruralhome.org.

Section 538 Rural Rental Housing

The Section 538 Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program (GRRHP) is designed to support the development of affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families in eligible rural areas. It offers loan guarantees to private lenders for loans made to eligible borrowers, which can include state and local governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, and federally recognized tribes. These loans can finance the construction, improvement, and purchase of multi-family rental housing. Rent is capped based on income levels relative to the area median income, and complexes must have at least five units.

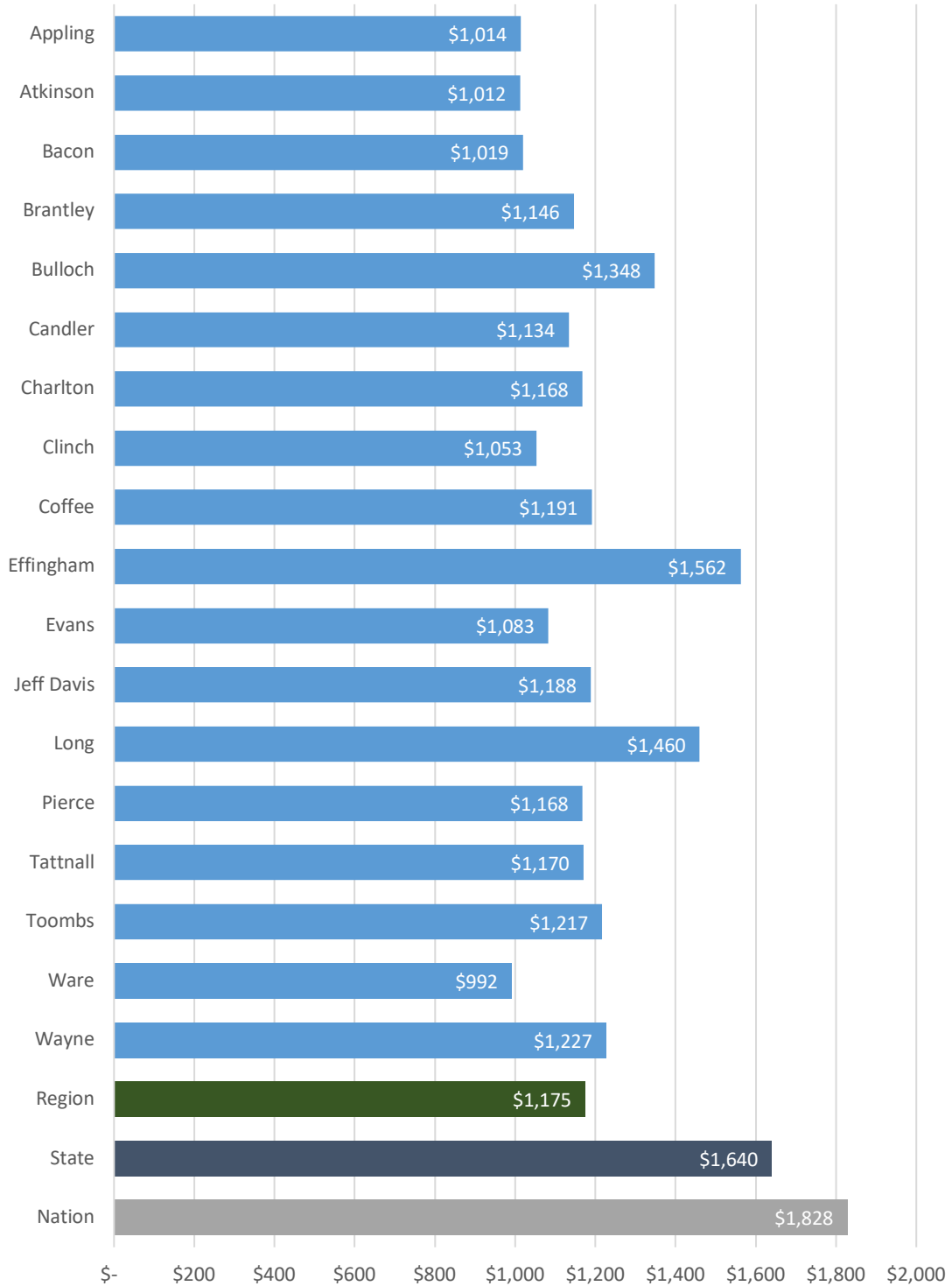
Section 811 Rural Rental Housing

The Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program provides funding to develop rental housing with supportive services for very low- and extremely low-income adults with disabilities. This can include the development of group homes, independent living complexes, and other housing models that provide coordinated support. The goal is to allow individuals to live as independently as possible while receiving the services they need.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

For individuals who own their homes, the financial landscape of home ownership in the region presents its own set of economic challenges. The median monthly mortgage cost in the region stands at \$1,175, which, while lower than both the state average of \$1,640 and the national average of \$1,828, still constitutes a significant financial commitment for homeowners.

Chart 121: Median Mortgage Amounts by County (2022)

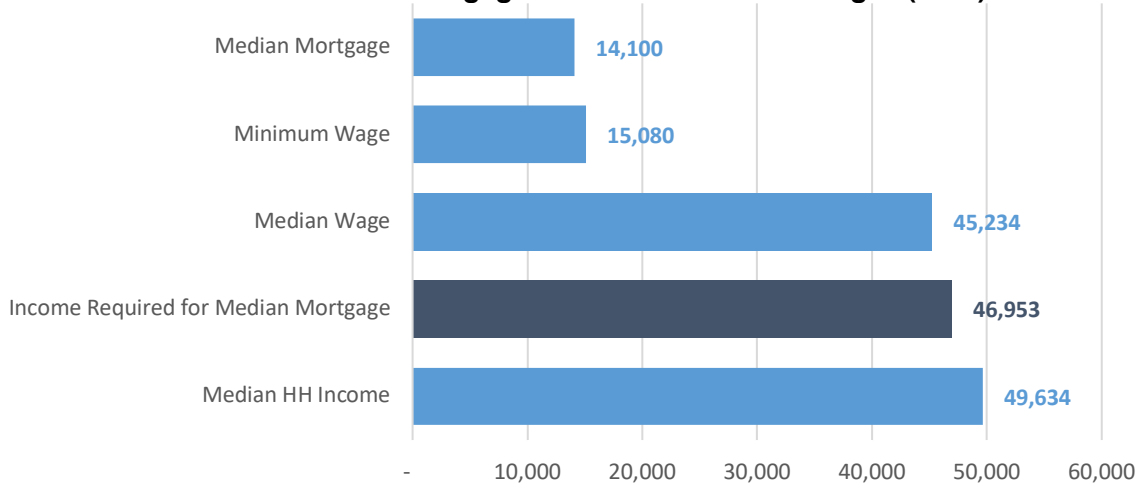


Source: US Census Bureau (DP04)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Comparing the median mortgage amount of \$14,100 annually to the minimum wage, it is evident that low wage workers are not financially equipped for home ownership. In fact, the region’s median wage of \$45,234 is less than the income required to avoid housing insecurity for a home of this rate (\$46,953). Even the median household income of \$49,634 is only slightly adequate to afford a mortgage.

Table 122: Median Mortgage Cost vs Income and Wages (2022)



Source: US Census Bureau (DP03, DP04), Bureau of Labor Services

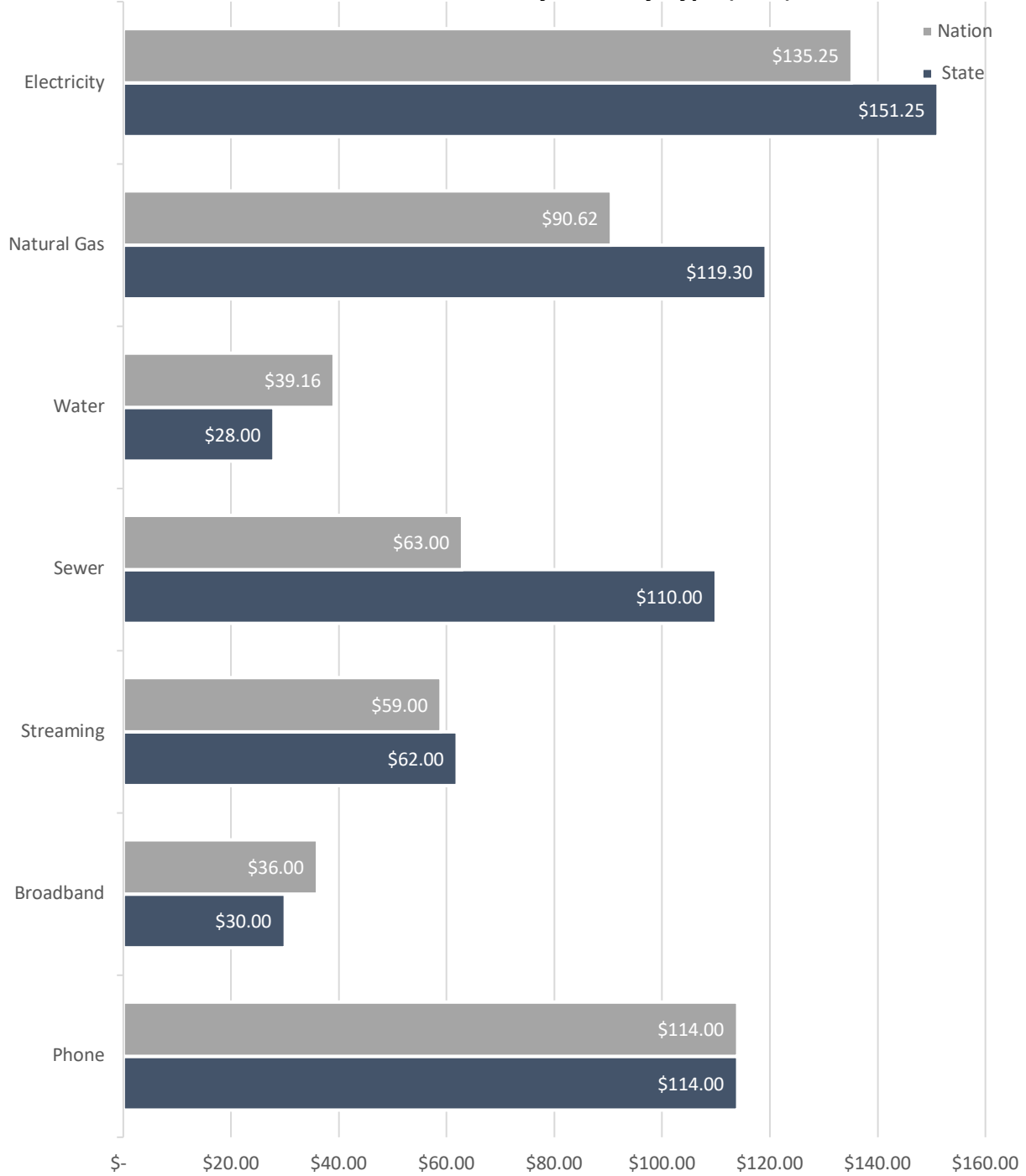
In addition to rent and mortgage amounts, the average cost of utility bills is a significant factor in a household’s financial stability. In Georgia, residents face the fourth highest utility bills in the nation, averaging \$7,404 annually — \$936 more than the national average. This includes costs for essential services such as electricity, natural gas, water, and sewer, alongside modern necessities like broadband and streaming services. While some utilities like water and broadband are slightly less expensive in Georgia compared to national averages, the costs for electricity, sewer, natural gas, and streaming are notably higher, often outweighing the lower expenses and contributing to the overall higher utility bills in the state.

Electricity is essential for lighting homes, powering appliances, and providing heating and cooling, among other uses. In Georgia, the average monthly cost is \$151.25, while the national average is \$135.25. Annually, this amounts to \$1,815 in Georgia and \$1,623 nationally. When compared to the annual minimum wage of \$15,080, Georgia's electricity costs consume about 12.03%, while nationally, it's approximately 10.76%. In terms of the median income of \$49,634, it represents around 3.66% in Georgia and 3.27% nationally. To decrease these costs, homeowners can improve insulation, install energy efficient appliance and LED lighting, turn off lights and appliances are not in use, and utilize smart thermostats to optimize energy use. Electric costs can also be impacted through programs such as Weatherization, that insulate homes and reduce heating costs.

Natural gas is primarily used for heating and cooking. In Georgia, residents pay on average \$119.30 per month, higher than the national average of \$90.62. This equates to \$1,431.60 annually in Georgia, versus \$1,087.44 across the nation. This utility accounts for 9.49% of the annual minimum wage in Georgia and 7.21% nationally. With respect to the median income, it's about 2.89% in Georgia and 2.19% nationally. Regular maintenance of gas appliances and weatherization of homes are effective ways to reduce natural gas expenses.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 123: Statewide Utility Costs by Type (2022)



Source: Move.Org

Water is indispensable for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and sanitation. Georgians pay a lower monthly average for water at \$28.00, compared to the national average of \$39.16. Annually, this is \$336 in Georgia and \$470.52 nationally. When calculated against the minimum wage, it's approximately 2.23% in Georgia and 3.12% nationally. Against the median income, the percentages are 0.68% and 0.95% respectively. Conserving water by fixing leaks and installing low-flow fixtures can help reduce these costs.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Sewer services are crucial for public health and sanitation. The monthly average in Georgia is \$110, significantly higher than the national average of \$63.00. This results in a yearly cost of \$1,320 in Georgia and \$756 nationally. For a minimum wage earner, sewer costs represent 8.75% of annual income in Georgia and 5.01% nationally. In terms of median income, these figures are 2.66% and 1.52%, respectively. Reducing water usage overall also decreases sewer costs.

Broadband is critical for work, education, and maintaining personal connections. Georgians pay an average of \$30 per month, which is lower than the national average of \$36. The annual cost in Georgia is \$360, compared to \$432 nationally. As a percentage of the minimum wage, it's 2.39% in Georgia and 2.86% nationally, and regarding the median income, it's 0.73% in Georgia and 0.87% nationally. Households can lower broadband costs by choosing plans that align with their actual usage and needs.

Streaming services provide entertainment and access to a wide range of media. In Georgia, the cost is \$62 monthly, just above the national average of \$59. On an annual basis, Georgians spend \$744 on streaming services versus the national average of \$708. This expense accounts for 4.93% of the annual minimum wage in Georgia and 4.69% nationally, and 1.50% and 1.43% of the median income respectively. To reduce streaming costs, families can share plans or select fewer services.

Phone services are vital for communication and emergency purposes. Both in Georgia and nationally, the monthly average cost is \$114. This amounts to an annual expense of \$1,368, taking up 9.07% of the annual minimum wage and 2.76% of the median income both in Georgia and across the nation. To manage phone expenses, consumers can consider family plans or prepaid services that may offer better rates for their specific usage patterns.

As Georgia households navigate the complexities of balancing utility costs, which are among the highest in the nation, the importance of efficient resource management becomes increasingly evident. Mindful utility use not only ensures the provision of essential services but also fortifies the household against financial strain, laying the groundwork for long-term residential stability.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Evictions

The most significant impact of housing insecurity is the loss of housing. Eviction filings represent the initiation of legal proceedings by landlords to remove tenants, which can occur for a variety of reasons including non-payment of rent or breach of rental agreement terms. The filing rate, expressed as a percentage, is the proportion of rental households against which such actions are initiated. An eviction count, on the other hand, signifies the actual number of evictions carried out, which might be lower than the filings due to resolutions or dismissals. The eviction rate reflects the percentage of these filings that result in the tenant being legally compelled to leave their residence.

Table 201: Eviction Filings (2018)

<i>Area</i>	Filing Count	Eviction Count	Filing Rate	Eviction Rate
<i>Appling</i>	129	123	5.90%	5.60%
<i>Atkinson</i>	37	35	3.00%	2.90%
<i>Bacon</i>	199	127	13.30%	8.50%
<i>Brantley</i>	142	136	8.30%	7.90%
<i>Bulloch</i>	2,000	1700	14.50%	12.50%
<i>Candler</i>	97	91	6.20%	5.80%
<i>Charlton</i>	90	81	7.80%	7.00%
<i>Clinch</i>	35	34	3.80%	3.70%
<i>Coffee</i>	534	445	9.50%	8.00%
<i>Effingham</i>	721	600	12.80%	10.60%
<i>Evans</i>	122	109	7.40%	6.60%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	153	138	7.50%	6.80%
<i>Long</i>	305	267	10.80%	9.50%
<i>Pierce</i>	194	164	9.60%	8.10%
<i>Tattnall</i>	129	121	4.00%	3.70%
<i>Toombs</i>	503	438	11.00%	9.60%
<i>Ware</i>	788	634	14.60%	11.70%
<i>Wayne</i>	416	368	11.10%	9.80%
Region	6,594	5,611	8.95%	7.68%
State	284,000	212,000	18.80%	14.10%

Source: Eviction Lab

In the region evaluated, the eviction filing rate is 8.95%, with an eviction rate also at 7.68%. Both rates are significantly lower than the state averages of 18.80% and 7.68%, respectively. While this is encouraging, it should be noted that 5,611 households were impacted by eviction during the most recently reported year. This indicates that the region continues to demonstrate a need for rental assistance, rental counseling, and landlord mediation services.

The highest eviction rate in the region was found in Bulloch County (12.50%), impacting 1,700 households. This was followed by Ware (11.70%) and Effingham (10.60%) counties. The rates in all counties were lower than the statewide average.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Foreclosures

Foreclosure rates in the United States have seen a significant rise in 2022 compared to the previous year, with predictions indicating a continued increase into 2023. Current data indicates that there is a 36% year-over-year increase, with one in every 4,425 housing units experiencing foreclosure filings for that month. Notably, states with the highest foreclosure rates included New Jersey, Maryland, and Nevada.

While county-level data is limited, Georgia's foreclosure landscape shows a concerning trend with foreclosures increasing by 148.1% from the first half of 2021 to the same period in 2022. With 5,731 homes in foreclosure, the state has a rate of one in every 770 homes, placing it ninth in the nation for foreclosures. This rate suggests a considerable portion of Georgia's homeowners are at risk, indicating broader economic or financial challenges within the state. The rising foreclosure rates could have significant implications for the state's housing market and overall economic health, potentially leading to more available homes but also pointing to potential financial distress among homeowners.

Table 202: State Foreclosure Rates (2022)

<i>State</i>	Foreclosure Rate	Homes in Foreclosure	Homes with a Mortgage	Median Home Value
<i>Illinois</i>	1:385	14,086	62.8%	\$202,100
<i>New Jersey</i>	1:410	9,177	66.0%	\$343,500
<i>Ohio</i>	1:475	11,028	62.4%	\$151,400
<i>Delaware</i>	1:497	903	64.7%	\$258,300
<i>South Carolina</i>	1:513	4,568	57.7%	\$170,100
<i>Florida</i>	1:560	17,624	56.7%	\$232,000
<i>Nevada</i>	1:567	2,259	67.5%	\$290,200
<i>Indiana</i>	1:606	4,822	65.2%	\$148,900
<i>Georgia</i>	1:770	5,731	64.5%	\$190,200
<i>Michigan</i>	1:773	5,913	59.6%	\$162,600
<i>Connecticut</i>	1:773	1,979	67.4%	\$279,700
<i>Oklahoma</i>	1:824	2,120	54.5%	\$142,400
<i>Maryland</i>	1:863	2,934	72.5%	\$325,400
<i>California</i>	1:881	16,340	69.5%	\$538,500
<i>Iowa</i>	1:899	1,571	60.4%	\$153,900
<i>Alabama</i>	1:925	2,475	55.7%	\$149,600
<i>North Carolina</i>	1:958	4,917	62.5%	\$182,100
<i>Arizona</i>	1:961	3,207	63.3%	\$242,000
<i>Texas</i>	1:1,005	11,527	56.8%	\$187,200
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	1:1,038	5,531	59.9%	\$187,500

Source: TGV News

The challenges for those navigating the foreclosure process are multifaceted. It involves complicated legal proceedings and can be difficult to halt or reverse once it begins. For families going through this process, the impact is profound, extending beyond the loss of their home to include long-term credit damage, potential deficiency judgments, and the psychological stress associated with housing instability. The data underscores the importance of proactive interventions and support systems to assist homeowners in maintaining their housing security.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Homelessness

The ultimate consequence of a housing cost burden is the loss of housing. Not only does homelessness impact the quality of a person’s life, but a lack of housing can impact health and the ability to secure meaningful employment.

In the most recently published Point-In-Time (PIT) Count a total of 427 homeless individuals were identified in the local service area. While 47 of these individuals were residing in an emergency shelter, a strong majority (90.08%) were unsheltered. Overall, data indicates that 4.43% of the state’s homeless population resides in the evaluated service area.

Table 203: Homeless Count by County (2022)

<i>Area</i>	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
<i>Appling</i>	7	0	7
<i>Atkinson</i>	3	0	3
<i>Bacon</i>	33	0	33
<i>Brantley</i>	0	0	0
<i>Bulloch</i>	66	27	93
<i>Candler</i>	14	0	14
<i>Charlton</i>	68	0	68
<i>Clinch</i>	32	0	32
<i>Coffee</i>	39	0	39
<i>Effingham</i>	3	0	3
<i>Evans</i>	33	0	33
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	2	0	2
<i>Long</i>	3	0	3
<i>Pierce</i>	8	0	8
<i>Tattnall</i>	4	0	4
<i>Toombs</i>	14	12	26
<i>Ware</i>	82	8	90
<i>Wayne</i>	16	0	16
Region	427	47	474

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

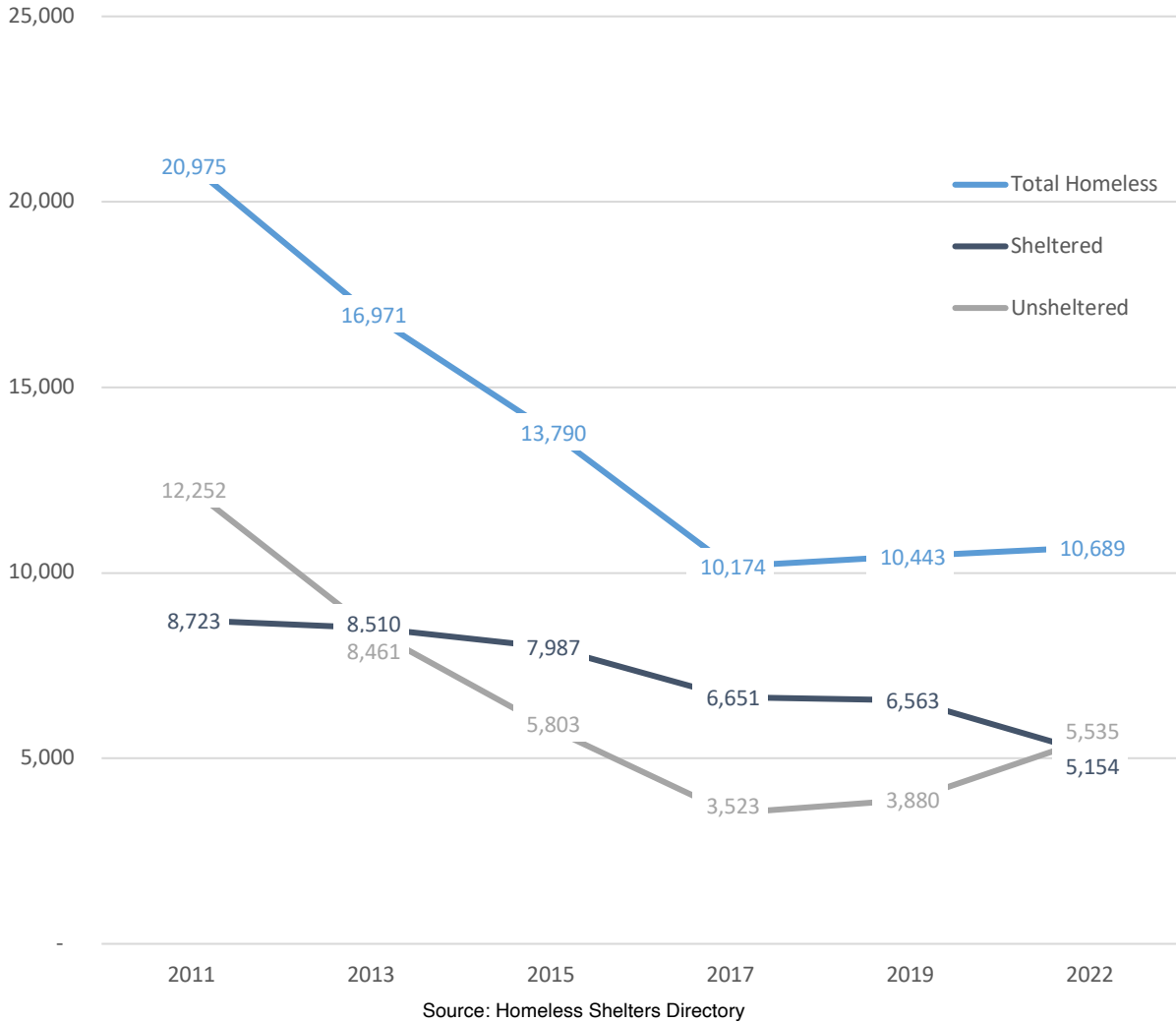
Although county-level demographic data was not available, the 2022 statewide report shows that a majority of the homeless population are adults over the age of 24, predominantly male, and primarily non-Hispanic/Latino. A significant portion of the unsheltered population is facing serious mental illness, with a notable increase in chronic homelessness over recent years. These trends underscore the need for targeted support services addressing mental health, substance use disorders, and tailored assistance for veterans and individuals with HIV/AIDS. The data demonstrates the growing challenge of addressing chronic homelessness, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive strategies to mitigate this trend.

Among the homeless individuals residing in shelters, data indicates that 31% are adult survivors of domestic violence. Substance use disorder and serious mental illness are also prevalent challenges, indicating a need for integrated support services within shelters. Notably, the majority of the sheltered population are over the age of 24, and a significant percentage are minors, highlighting the broad age range homelessness affects.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

According to the statewide report, the total homeless population saw a decline from 2011 to 2017 but has been on a slight increase since that time. The most prominent subpopulations among the homeless are adult survivors of domestic violence and those with chronic conditions, serious mental illnesses, or substance use disorders. These trends emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the complex needs of these vulnerable groups, including increased mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and support for domestic violence survivors.

Table 124: Georgia Homeless Trend (2011-2022)



The data reveals that the balance of the homeless population is shifting toward unsheltered individuals, which could be a consequence of the pandemic's long-term effects. The demographics indicate a majority of the unsheltered individuals are white males over 24 and non-Hispanic/Latino, while the sheltered population is predominantly Black or African American females over 24. The rising trend in chronic homelessness and domestic violence survivors indicates the urgent need for preventive measures and robust support networks to address this worrying trend.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

The survey responses point to housing insecurity as the most critical condition of poverty, with 245 out of 323 individuals highlighting it as a primary concern, followed closely by the risk of utility loss reported by 171 respondents.

The qualitative feedback paints a stark picture of the housing landscape. One individual's statement, "Toombs Co. is lacking in affordable housing. Based on the population's income, the income has not increased but the rent has increased by 40% in this area," underscores the growing disparity between income levels and housing costs. This affordability crisis is further evidenced by 152 respondents citing a lack of affordable housing as a key factor impacting their ability to meet basic needs. Not only did 42.98% of all low-income residents state that they had struggled with housing payments during the past year, 7.89% reported that they personally experienced eviction or foreclosure.

The situation is exacerbated by the condition of the available housing, with reports of poor housing quality from 61 individuals. Among the low-income residents polled, 13.16% reported that they had personally lived in substandard housing at some point during the past year. These substandard living conditions not only impact health, but contribute to a higher energy burden for residents, as they struggle with inefficient homes that lead to increased utility costs. One focus group participant explained, "We just don't have a lot of rental properties and the ones we have are not the best."

Energy concerns are a significant source of stress, with the risk of utility loss being a prevalent issue. This is not only due to the cost of utilities but also due to the poor quality of housing which often requires more energy to maintain comfortable living conditions. The high cost of utilities is a recurring theme in the comments, with many community members expressing frustration at the unpredictability and unaffordability of their bills. 51.75% of all low-income survey respondents stated that they had struggled with energy costs, 20.18% of which reported that they had lost at least one utility during the past year.

Homelessness and housing instability are acute problems, as indicated by the community's feedback. The absence of shelters and services to support those without homes exacerbates the issue, leaving individuals and families vulnerable to the elements and the uncertainty of temporary living situations. Among the low-income residents polled, 4.39% stated that they had personally experienced homelessness during the year. A local school board member explained that while there are children identified as homeless according to McKinney Vento standards, there is a strong belief that these numbers are under-reported, a concern that is currently being evaluated.

In summary, the housing and energy domain presents a multifaceted challenge that requires comprehensive solutions. The community urgently needs more affordable and quality housing options, alongside supportive services to prevent homelessness, evictions, and foreclosures. Simultaneously, addressing the high energy burden through utility assistance programs and improving housing conditions can significantly impact residents' quality of life. These steps are critical for fostering a stable, healthy, and secure living environment for all community members.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Agency Data

During the most recently reported program year, the largest portion of the customers served (55.14%) reported that they rented their place of residence, with 40.00% reporting home ownership. Only 7 customers served were identified as being homeless.

Housing services were a major emphasis of the organization, with 553 individuals being enrolled in programs to avoid eviction, 56 being enrolled in programs to avoid foreclosure, 27 being enrolled in programs designed to help residents secure temporary shelter, 40 enrolled in programs designed to assist homeless individuals with the securing of safe and affordable housing units, 40 enrolled in home energy efficiency programs, and nearly 7,500 enrolled in utility assistance programs. Services provided include rent payments, mortgage payments, utility payments, vendor mediation, emergency shelter placement, and home repairs.

Among the customers served in Fiscal Year 2022, the average rental cost was \$471.57, with mobile homes rates (\$491.31) being slightly more expensive than apartments (\$445.33). With utilities adding an additional \$229.97, renters in the service area were noted as spending an average of \$701.54 per month, or \$8,418.48 annually. This is the equivalent of 62.69% of the median annual income for renters served by the entity (\$13,428.66).

Residents owning their homes were not significantly more impacted overall, with an average cost of \$485.61. It should be noted, however that individuals owning a house (\$546.23) paid much higher housing costs than those owning mobile homes (\$395.28). In addition to mortgage payments, homeowners paid an average of \$253.40 monthly for utility bills. Overall, the cost of homeownership was \$739.01 monthly, or \$8,868.12 annually. This is the equivalent of 48.19% of the median annual income for homeowners served by the entity (\$18,402.19).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Housing Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Creative Outreach Solutions	912-282-1400	Educational and outreach programs (PIERCE, WARE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	Academic support services for children & youth in DFCS custody.(ALL COUNTIES)
Harrell Learning Center	912-285-6191	Day school serving children and youth (ages 5-21) with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

According to the United States Census Bureau, there is a surplus of 26,508 homes in the region, indicating an adequate supply of housing units to accommodate the population.

Additionally, the majority of homes in the region (64.18%) are less than 40 years old. This relatively young housing stock reflects ongoing investment and development in the housing sector, ensuring that residents have access to modern and well-maintained housing options with updated amenities and infrastructure.

Furthermore, the presence of 118 providers of subsidized affordable housing underscores the community's commitment to addressing housing affordability challenges and supporting low-income and vulnerable populations. Subsidized affordable housing programs play a crucial role in expanding access to safe and affordable housing for individuals and families facing financial constraints.

The eviction rate in the region, standing at 7.68%, is notably lower than the state average of 14.10%. This lower eviction rate reflects greater housing stability and tenant protections in the community, reducing the risk of displacement and homelessness for residents.

Finally, the state's homeless rate has improved by 49.04% since 2011, indicating progress in addressing homelessness and providing supportive services and resources for individuals experiencing housing insecurity. This improvement underscores collaborative efforts between government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders to address homelessness and promote housing stability for all residents.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

Despite several positive aspects, the community also faces significant challenges in the housing sector, which can impact residents' quality of life and well-being.

First, a concerning 35.82% of all housing units are older, potentially leading to safety hazards and increased heating/cooling costs. Aging housing stock may require extensive repairs and maintenance, posing financial burdens for homeowners and renters alike.

As a result, an estimated 41,300 homes in the region exhibit at least one sub-standard condition, accounting for 18.43% of all housing units. Alarmingly, over half (51.77%) of these homes are in severe condition, posing serious health and safety risks for occupants. When comparing these numbers to the local population counts, it is estimated that at least 14,792 households are living in sub-standard homes, highlighting the prevalence of inadequate housing conditions and the urgent need for interventions to improve housing quality and safety.

Data indicates that there are 37,932 households in the region who are considered housing cost burdened, with a staggering 45.23% spending more than half of their income on housing and utilities. High housing costs relative to income can strain household budgets, limiting resources for other essential expenses such as food, healthcare, and education.

Finally, homelessness remains a pressing issue in the community, with 474 individuals experiencing homelessness. Alarmingly, only 47 individuals are accommodated in shelters, indicating a significant gap in access to emergency housing and supportive services for homeless individuals.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health & Well-Being

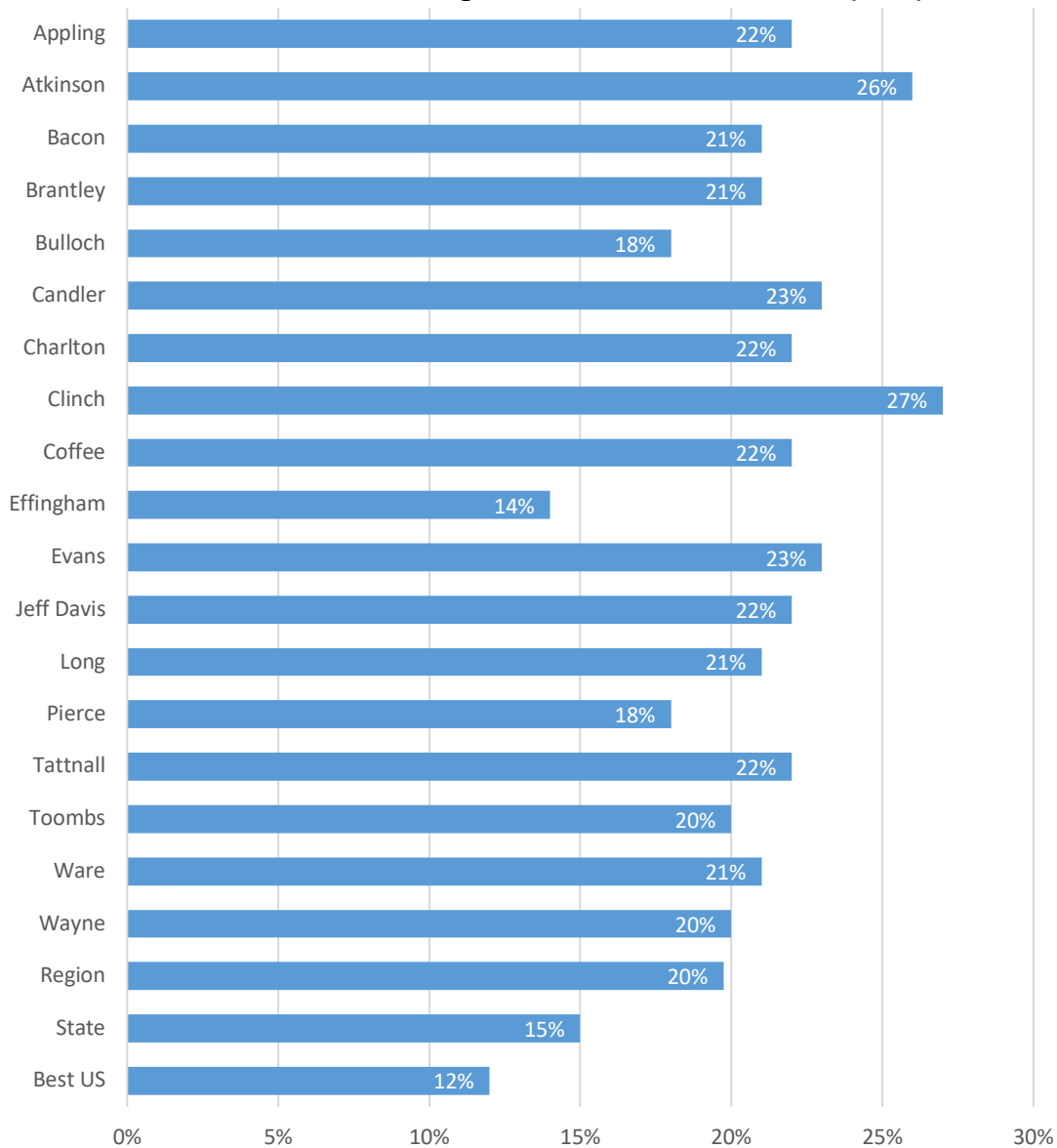
Introduction

Access to healthcare and overall well-being are critical components in the fight against poverty. Good health is a fundamental building block for economic stability and prosperity, enabling individuals to work, learn, and engage fully in their communities. Unfortunately, poverty often exacerbates health issues and can lead to inadequate housing, food insecurity, and limited access to preventative care—all factors that contribute to poorer health outcomes.

General Health

In the region served by the organization an estimated 19.74% of all local adults (68,235 individuals) adults were noted having poor to fair health. In comparison, the statewide average is 15%, with the best communities in the country averaging at 12%.

Chart 125: Percentage of Adults with Poor Health (2022)

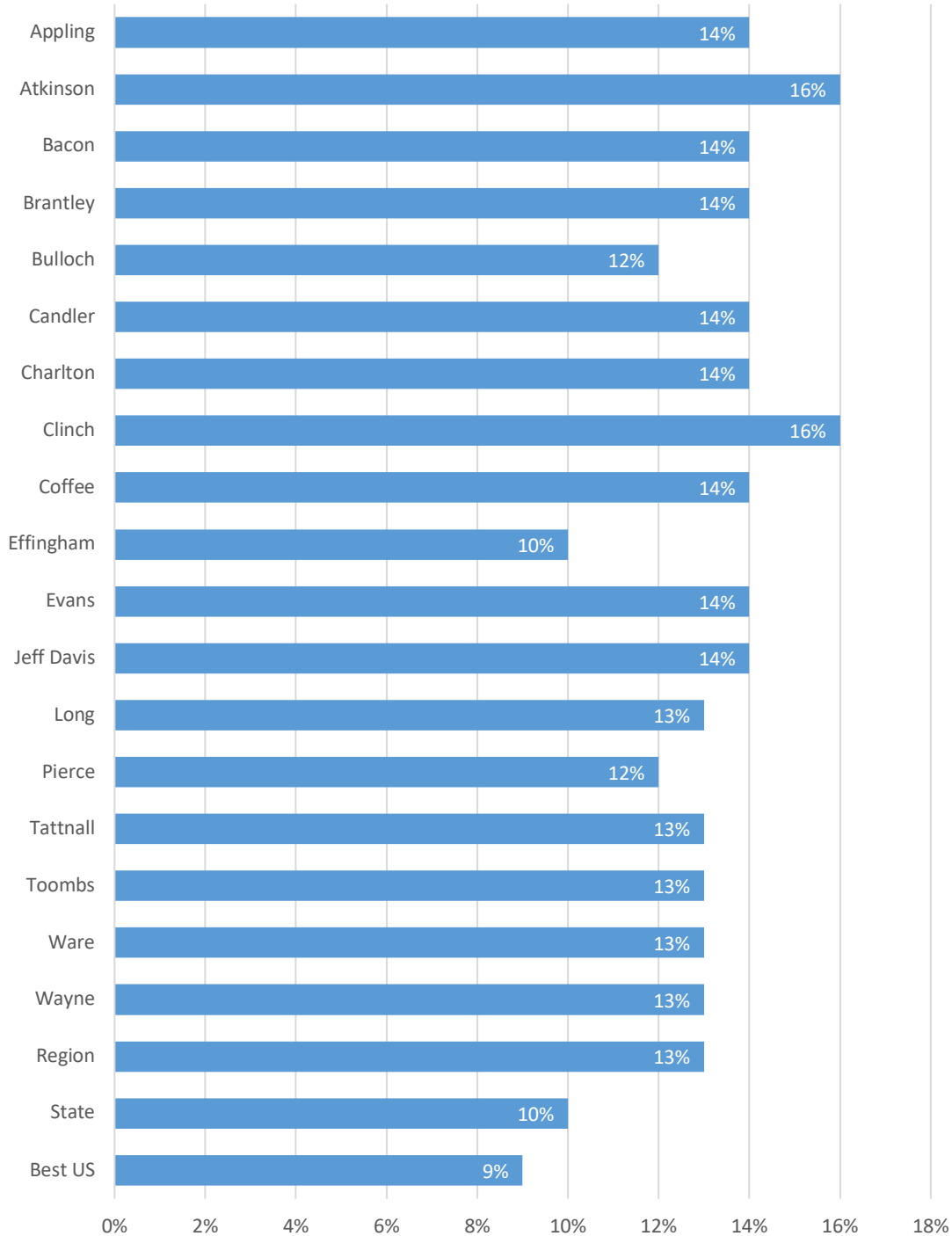


Source: County Health Rankings (CDC BRFSS)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

While this rate is concerning, more than one-quarter of the adults Clinch (27%) and Atkinson (26%) counties were noted as having poor to fair health. Further, among those with poor health, data suggests that 13% of the region's adults experience physical health distress more than 14 days each month. The highest rates in the region were found in Atkinson and Clinch counties, at 16%. For comparison purposes, the statewide average is 10% and the nation's best communities average at 9%.

Chart 126: Percentage of Adults with Frequent Physical Health Distress (2022)



Source: County Health Rankings (CDC BRFSS)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering the factors that promote poor physical health, obesity is one of the greatest influencing factors. While the term simply implies that a person has too much body fat, a diagnosis of obesity is actually based on a Body Mass Index calculation of 30 or higher. With more than 38.56% of the county’s adults (133,299 individuals) suffering from obesity, it ranks as a tremendous health concern in the county. It should be noted that this rate is higher than the state average of 34%.

Not only does obesity in itself lead to a general feeling of poor health, but it also increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high cholesterol, joint problems, trouble breathing (including sleep apnea), and gallstones.

Obesity is a complex condition that can impact anyone. Contributing factors to obesity include social and physical environments, genetics, medical history, and behaviors such as poor diet and physical inactivity. Childhood maltreatment has also been identified as a risk factor for obesity. The prevalence of obesity is highest among adults ages 45-64, those with lower levels of educational attainment, and with incomes of less than \$25,000 per year.

Table 204: Major Health Conditions (2022)

Area	Obesity	Diabetes	STI Infections
<i>Appling</i>	5,280	1,945	66
<i>Atkinson</i>	2,580	983	26
<i>Bacon</i>	3,316	1,078	31
<i>Brantley</i>	5,326	1,682	27
<i>Bulloch</i>	24,287	8,309	529
<i>Candler</i>	3,390	1,158	40
<i>Charlton</i>	4,408	1,435	30
<i>Clinch</i>	2,214	805	42
<i>Coffee</i>	13,030	4,561	162
<i>Effingham</i>	17,781	4,806	188
<i>Evans</i>	3,180	1,113	55
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	4,050	1,423	60
<i>Long</i>	4,632	1,706	42
<i>Pierce</i>	5,527	1,793	72
<i>Tattnall</i>	7,557	2,713	97
<i>Toombs</i>	7,942	2,581	171
<i>Ware</i>	10,549	3,787	201
<i>Wayne</i>	8,250	2,979	182
Region	133,299	44,855	2,023
State	2,791,325	903,076	48,388
Nation	87,680,522	23,209,550	1,241,195

Source: County Health Rankings (CDC BRFSS, NCHHSTP)

High Blood pressure, also known as Hypertension, is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Although county-level data was not available, the American Heart Association reports that nearly one-half (46.7%) of all adults in the United States and nearly 40% of Georgia residents have been diagnosed with Hypertension. The most recent report states that the death rate associated with high blood pressure has increased by 91.2% over the past decade. Data indicates that a person’s age, income, education, employment, and social status are directly linked to the risk of high blood pressure. Populations with higher prevalence of hypertension include men (as compared to women), adults ages 65 and older, individuals identifying as Black (likely associated with socio-economic stress factors), and low-income individuals.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

An estimated 13.50% of all adults (44,855 individuals) in the organization's service area have been diagnosed with Diabetes. This disease occurs when a person's blood glucose (blood sugar) is too high. Blood glucose is a person's main source of energy and is generated by food. This disease can not only put a person's life at risk, but it is also often associated with fatigue, decreased ability to heal, reduced sex drive, erectile dysfunction, urinary tract infections, yeast infections, and dry skin. Of the three types of Diabetes, Type 2, is directly associated with obesity and is more common among individuals with low incomes.

With an estimated 2,023 adults impacted, sexually transmitted infections are not a prominent concern in the county, however, it is important to monitor these conditions closely on an ongoing basis as they can often spread quickly when left unchecked, impacting the economic well-being of infected persons and, in some cases, the health of community members they come in contact with.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Mental Health

Mental health is the level of psychological well-being that allows a person to maintain an appropriate functioning of their emotional and behavioral abilities. Mentalhealth.org, a service of the U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services, reports that mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood, as it impacts how a person thinks, feels, acts, handles stress, relates to others, and makes informed decisions. The 2019 report states that there are many factors that contribute to mental health problems, including biological factors (brain chemistry), life experiences (trauma and/or abuse), and family history of mental health problems.

The mental health of Georgia's residents emerges as a critical concern with implications for the state's overall well-being and prosperity. The Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality's report on Georgia highlights that over 36.6% of adults over the age of 18 accessed mental health services in 2019.

Among the state's adults, data indicates that 4.2% suffer from serious mental illness, with 3.8% having serious thoughts of suicide.

Table 205: Georgia Residents Reporting Mental Health Concerns by Age Group (2019)

Ages	Rcvd Services	Serious Mental Illness	Major Depressive Ep.	Suicidal Thoughts
12-17	No Data	No Data	12.1%	No Data
18+	36.6%	4.2%	No Data	3.8%

Source: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality – Georgia Behavioral Health Barometer (Volume 6)

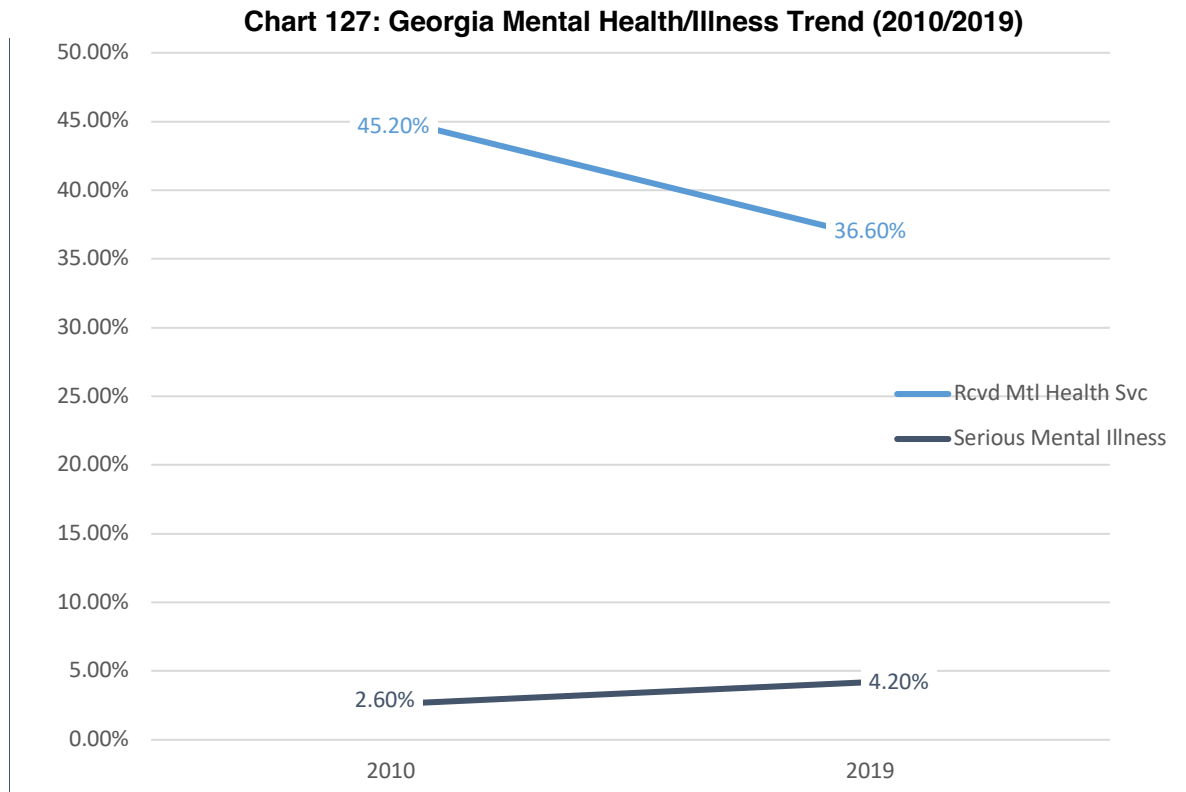
The situation among the younger demographic is equally concerning, albeit less transparent due to data limitations. Approximately 12.1% of minors in Georgia have experienced a major depressive episode, characterized by a persistent state of sadness or hopelessness, and often accompanied by significant changes in weight, sleep, or interest in activities. This high prevalence of depressive episodes among youth is a stark reminder of the vulnerability of this age group and the potential long-term impacts on their development and quality of life.

It is essential to acknowledge that mental health issues do not exist in a vacuum; they are intricately linked with socio-economic determinants such as poverty, education, and healthcare accessibility. Therefore, the community should consider an integrative strategy that addresses the multifaceted nature of mental health. Such a strategy should aim not only to provide immediate mental health interventions but also to tackle the root causes that predispose individuals to mental health challenges.

Comparatively, Georgia's statistics resonate with the regional and national trends, suggesting that the mental health issues observed are reflective of a broader national concern. The alignment in prevalence rates across different regions advocates for shared learning and possibly the implementation of successful intervention strategies across state lines.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering data trends, it should be noted that the number of Georgia has experienced a decrease of 19.03% Interestingly, the percentage of residents with serious mental illness has increased by 61.54%.



The proportion of individuals who seriously considered suicide also saw an increase, from 2.1% to 3.8%. This 80.95% rise is particularly alarming as it points to an escalation in mental health crises that could potentially lead to an increase in suicide rates if not adequately addressed. It underscores the urgency of enhancing preventive measures, crisis intervention, and post-crisis support.

In essence, the trends in Alabama over nearly a decade highlight the growing need for comprehensive mental health strategies that are not only reactive but also proactive. There is a clear demand for early intervention programs, continued public education to combat stigma, and policies that address the underlying societal contributors to mental distress. Understanding these trends is crucial for stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare providers, and community leaders, to allocate resources effectively and tailor interventions that can reverse these concerning trajectories.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Within the organization’s service area, data indicates that 6,0273 adults (17%) suffer from frequent (more than 14 days per month) mental distress. This rate is higher than the state average (15%), and slightly above America’s best communities (14.00%).

Table 206: Adults with Frequent Mental Distress (2022)

<i>Area</i>	Number	Percent
<i>Appling</i>	2,501	18%
<i>Atkinson</i>	1,167	19%
<i>Bacon</i>	1,492	18%
<i>Brantley</i>	2,663	19%
<i>Bulloch</i>	10,865	17%
<i>Candler</i>	1,488	18%
<i>Charlton</i>	1,743	17%
<i>Clinch</i>	1,006	20%
<i>Coffee</i>	5,864	18%
<i>Effingham</i>	7,689	16%
<i>Evans</i>	1,431	18%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	1,970	18%
<i>Long</i>	2,072	17%
<i>Pierce</i>	2,689	18%
<i>Tattnall</i>	3,294	17%
<i>Toombs</i>	3,574	18%
<i>Ware</i>	4,869	18%
<i>Wayne</i>	3,896	17%
Region	60,273	17%
State	1,231,467	15%

Source: County Health Rankings (CDC BRFSS, NCHHSTP)

Frequent mental distress, characterized by extended periods of stress, depression, and emotional problems, can severely impact an individual’s ability to function and contribute to their community. The higher rates in the region’s counties suggest a greater need for mental health resources and interventions tailored to these communities’ specific needs. The data underscores the importance of considering local nuances when planning health services and allocating resources.

It should also be noted that according to the Mental Health National Outcome Measures (NOMS) Report for calendar year 2019, the 143,475 Georgia residents accessing mental health care were predominately female (50.90%) as compared to male (49.00%), White (48.90%) and Black (43.10%), between the ages of 25 to 44 (40.40%) and 45 to 64 (34.60%), with smaller populations being ages 21 to 24 (6.60%), 13 to 17 (5.40%), birth to 12 (4.20%), 65 to 74 (4.10%), 18 to 20 (3.90%), an 75 or older (0.70%).The majority (51.40%) were not in the labor force, with 32.4% being unemployed and 16.10% actively working.

These individuals predominately lived in private residences (85.00%), with smaller portions living in residential care facilities (8.20%), homeless shelters (5.00%), jail (0.40%), foster homes (0.30%), and residential treatment facilities (0.10%).

Well more than half (63.20%) of the residents served paid though non-Medicaid sources, with 29.50% using Medicaid, and 7.30% using a combination of Medicaid and other insurance types.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Disability Status

Data indicates that an estimated 16.63% of the local population, or 67,929 individuals, were classified as disabled in 2022. This rate is significantly higher than the state (12.70%) and national (12.90%) averages.

Table 207: Disabled Individuals by Age Group and County (2022)

Area	Young Children	School-Aged Children	Adults	Seniors	TOTAL	Percent
<i>Appling</i>	24	57	1,152	1,199	2,432	13.50%
<i>Atkinson</i>	6	100	539	414	1,059	12.90%
<i>Bacon</i>	0	273	1,176	907	2,356	22.30%
<i>Brantley</i>	0	191	1,872	858	2,921	16.20%
<i>Bulloch</i>	42	1,419	6,501	3,497	11,459	14.50%
<i>Candler</i>	0	113	1,064	769	1,946	18.30%
<i>Charlton</i>	0	129	1,286	764	2,179	18.60%
<i>Clinch</i>	0	167	550	376	1,093	16.50%
<i>Coffee</i>	0	710	3,484	2,687	6,881	16.90%
<i>Effingham</i>	27	346	3,983	2,749	7,105	11.00%
<i>Evans</i>	6	130	886	653	1,675	16.30%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	114	320	1,592	1,001	3,027	20.60%
<i>Long</i>	0	272	2,417	763	3,452	21.70%
<i>Pierce</i>	0	118	1,095	1,382	2,595	13.20%
<i>Tattnall</i>	56	285	1,580	1,539	3,460	18.00%
<i>Toombs</i>	0	434	2,281	2,036	4,751	17.80%
<i>Ware</i>	81	337	2,455	1,757	4,630	13.70%
<i>Wayne</i>	0	301	3,023	1,584	4,908	17.30%
Region	356	5,702	36,936	24,935	67,929	16.63%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP02, S1810)

Within the region, Bacon (22.30%), Long (21.70%), and Jeff Davis (20.60%) counties report notably higher disability rates, which exceed not only the regional average but also the state and national figures. This elevated rate suggests that these counties might face greater barriers to accessibility and inclusion for disabled individuals and may require additional resources to ensure equitable services and support.

When compared to the figure from five years ago, the regional total of disabled individuals has increased by 5.32%, from 64,495 to 67,929, underscoring a growing need to address the factors contributing to this rise. The increase calls for an examination of the resources allocated for disability services and potentially indicates a need for enhanced healthcare provision, improved accessibility infrastructure, and stronger community support systems.

As would be expected, a large portion of the disabled population (36.71%) is over the age of 65. This accounts for more than one-third (37.83%) of all seniors living in the county. For these individuals, a disability can decrease their quality of life and increase medical expenses.

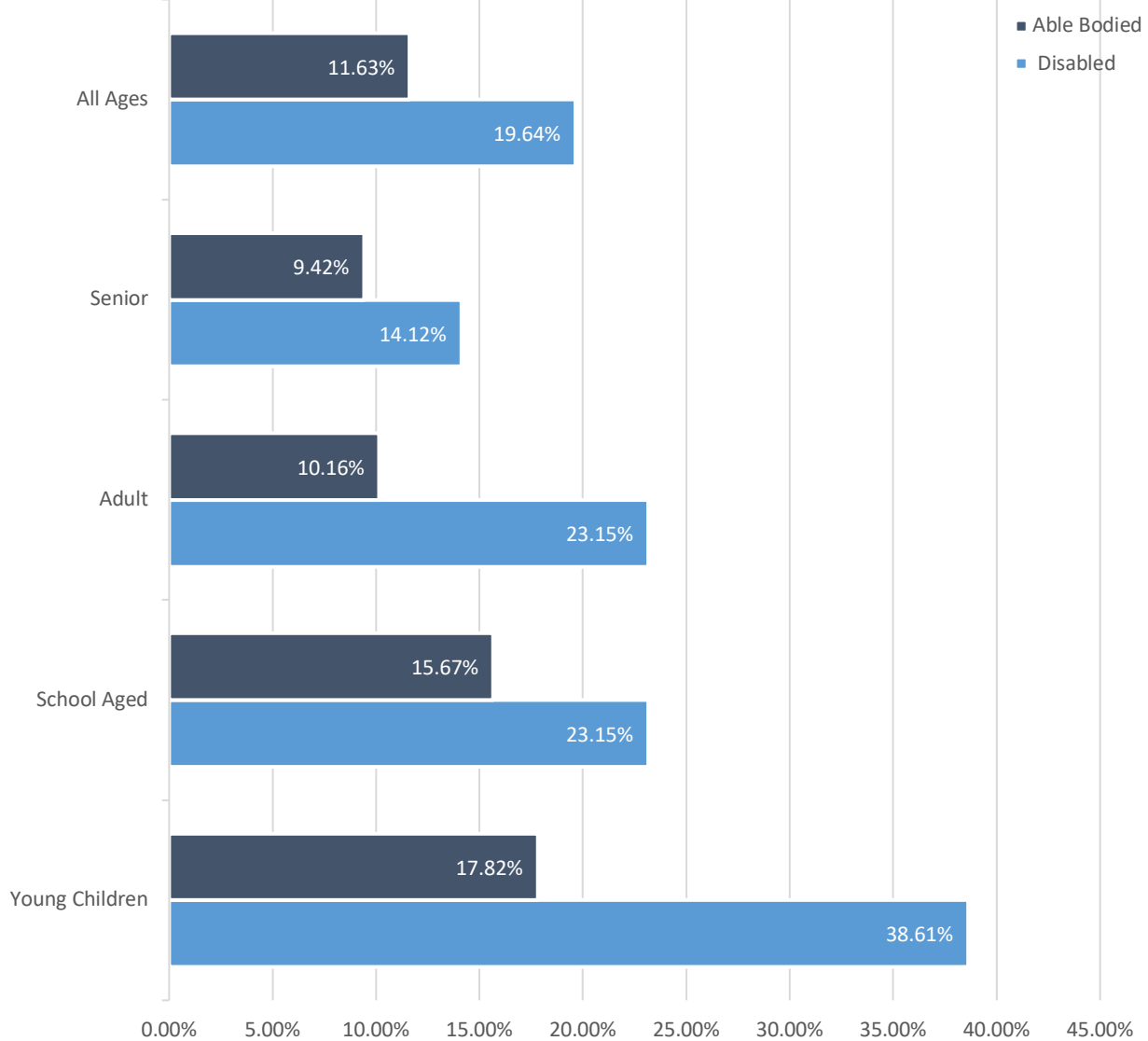
Slightly more than half of all disabled individuals (54.37%) are between the ages of 18 and 64. This accounts for 13.20% of the total population in this age group. For this portion of the population, a disability status not only impacts the quality of life, but also hinders the ability to secure meaningful employment that would help to promote economic security. As this age group is more likely to have dependents, it also has the potential of impacting the economic well-being of an entire family.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Although disabilities in children do not specifically impact the ability to secure income, the additional medical costs associated with the condition can impact the financial well-being of the household. Additionally, a long-term disability puts children at a higher risk of living in poverty once they reach adulthood. An estimated 3,247 children (6.25% of the child population) in the county were identified as being disabled. Among these, only 128 were under the age of five.

Data indicates that nearly one-quarter (20.67%) of all individuals in poverty have at disability of some type. Further, the poverty rate for individuals with a disability (19.64%) is higher than those without a disability (11.63%). This is even more evident for young children, with 38.61% of those with a disability being in poverty compared to 17.82% without a disability. For school-aged children, the poverty rate is 23.15% among those with a disability, but only 15.67% for those who are able bodied. Adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who were disabled (23.15%) more than twice as likely to be in poverty than able bodied individuals in the same age group (10.16%). Finally, senior citizens with disabilities experienced a poverty rate of 14.12% as compared to 9.42% for those without a disability.

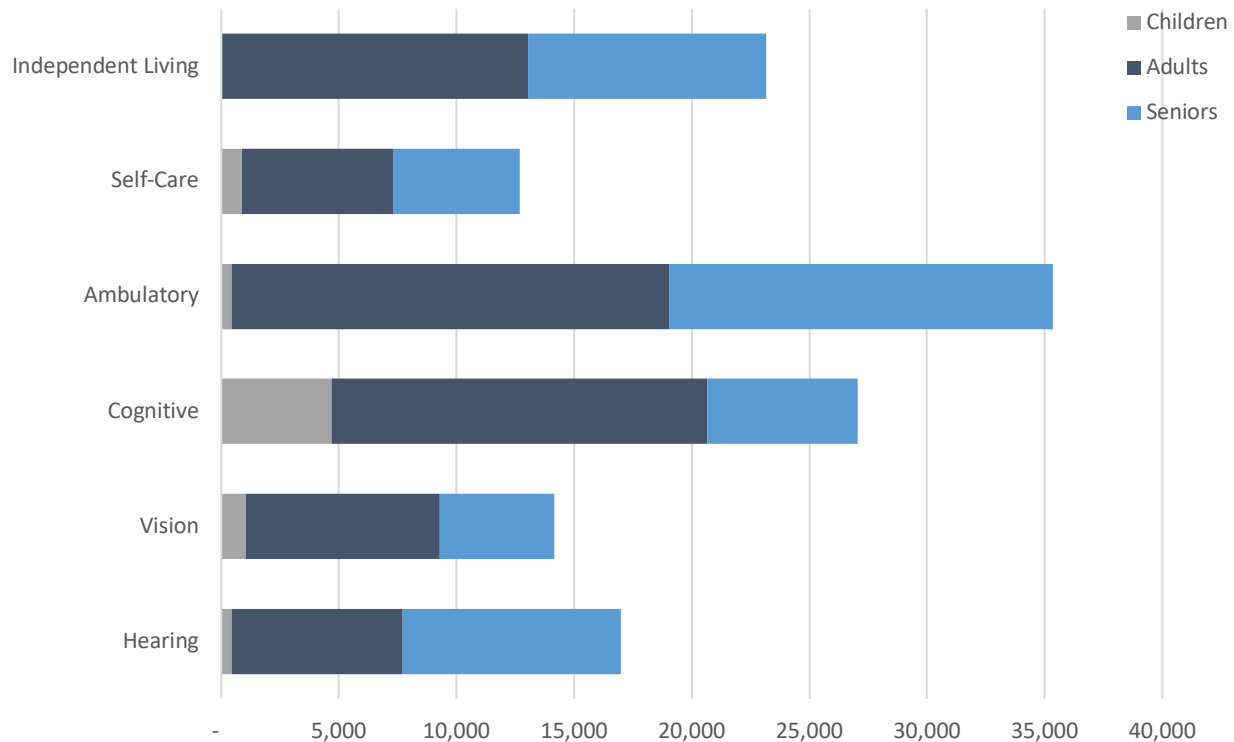
Chart 128: Statewide Poverty Status by Age Group and Disability Status (2022)



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When considering individuals of all ages who were classified as disabled, more than one-quarter suffered from ambulatory disabilities (27.33%), more than one-fifth suffered from cognitive disorders, 17.89% suffered from independent living disabilities, 13.13% suffered from hearing disabilities, 10.94% suffered from vision disabilities, and 9.80% reported having self-care disabilities.

Chart 129: Disability Counts by Type (2022)



	Hearing	Vision	Cognitive	Ambulatory	Self-Care	Independent Living
■ Children	456	1,054	4,694	447	890	-
■ Adults	7,261	8,235	15,961	18,603	6,404	13,041
■ Seniors	9,266	4,864	6,400	16,303	5,382	10,105

Source: US Census Bureau (S1810)

Hearing disabilities affect 456 children, 7,261 adults, and 9,266 seniors in the dataset. This type of disability can lead to communication barriers from a young age, which can impact educational outcomes for children and employment or social interaction for adults. For seniors, hearing loss is often linked to a higher risk of isolation and can contribute to cognitive decline.

Vision disabilities are noted in 1,054 children, 8,235 adults, and 4,864 seniors. In children, such disabilities can impede developmental and educational progress. Adults may experience limitations in their ability to perform certain jobs or engage in everyday activities safely. Seniors with vision impairments often face challenges that affect their independence and increase the risk of injury.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Cognitive disabilities, encompassing a variety of conditions that affect mental processes, are present in 4,694 children, 15,961 adults, and 6,400 seniors. For children, these disabilities can require special educational adaptations. Adults with cognitive disabilities may struggle with employment and managing daily tasks, while seniors often encounter additional difficulties due to age-related cognitive changes.

There are 447 children, 18,603 adults, and 16,303 seniors living with ambulatory disabilities. This type of disability can limit physical activity and social engagement in children, restrict employment and daily living activities in adults, and increase dependency on others in seniors due to a higher risk of falls and related health complications.

Self-care disabilities are reported for 890 children, 6,404 adults, and 5,382 seniors. These disabilities may necessitate greater care requirements for children, affect personal and professional life for adults, and often lead seniors to require assisted living services.

Independent living disabilities, which were not assessed for children, affect 13,041 adults and 10,105 seniors. Adults with these disabilities might struggle with maintaining independence and may be unable to live alone or maintain full-time employment. For seniors, these disabilities typically mean a need for in-home support or alternative living arrangements to ensure safety and care.

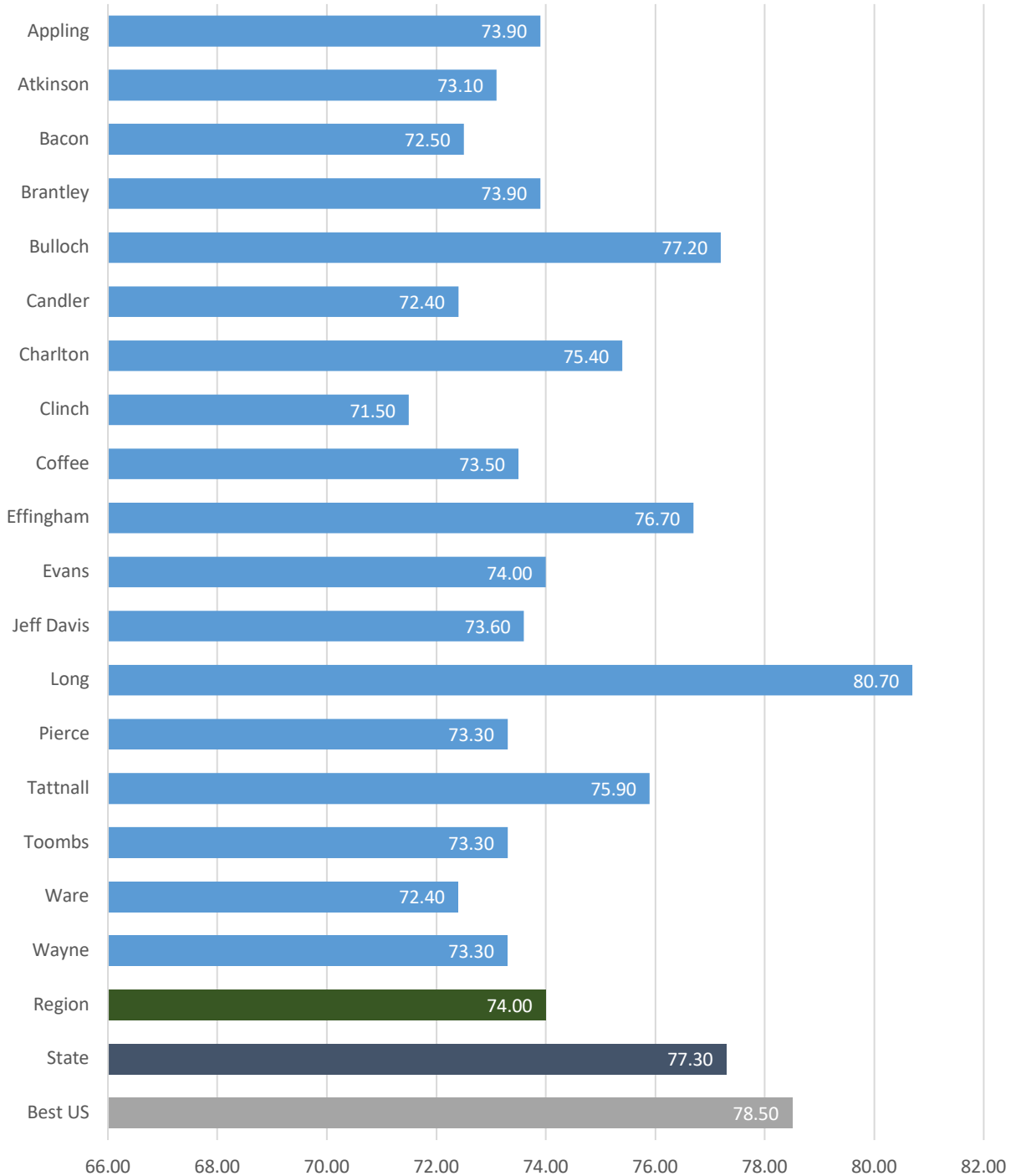
For young children under the age of five, 134 were noted as having a hearing difficulty and 228 had vision difficulty throughout the region.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Life Expectancy

One potential consequence of poor health is a shortened life span. By exploring a county's data related to the length of life along with environmental and behavioral health factors, communities can isolate factors that can help improve the quality of life for its citizens on a long-term basis. The average life expectancy for the service area is 74.00 years. This is significantly shorter than the statewide average of 77.30 and the national average of 78.50 years.

Chart 130: Three-Year Average Life Expectancy by County (2018-2020)



Source: County Health Rankings

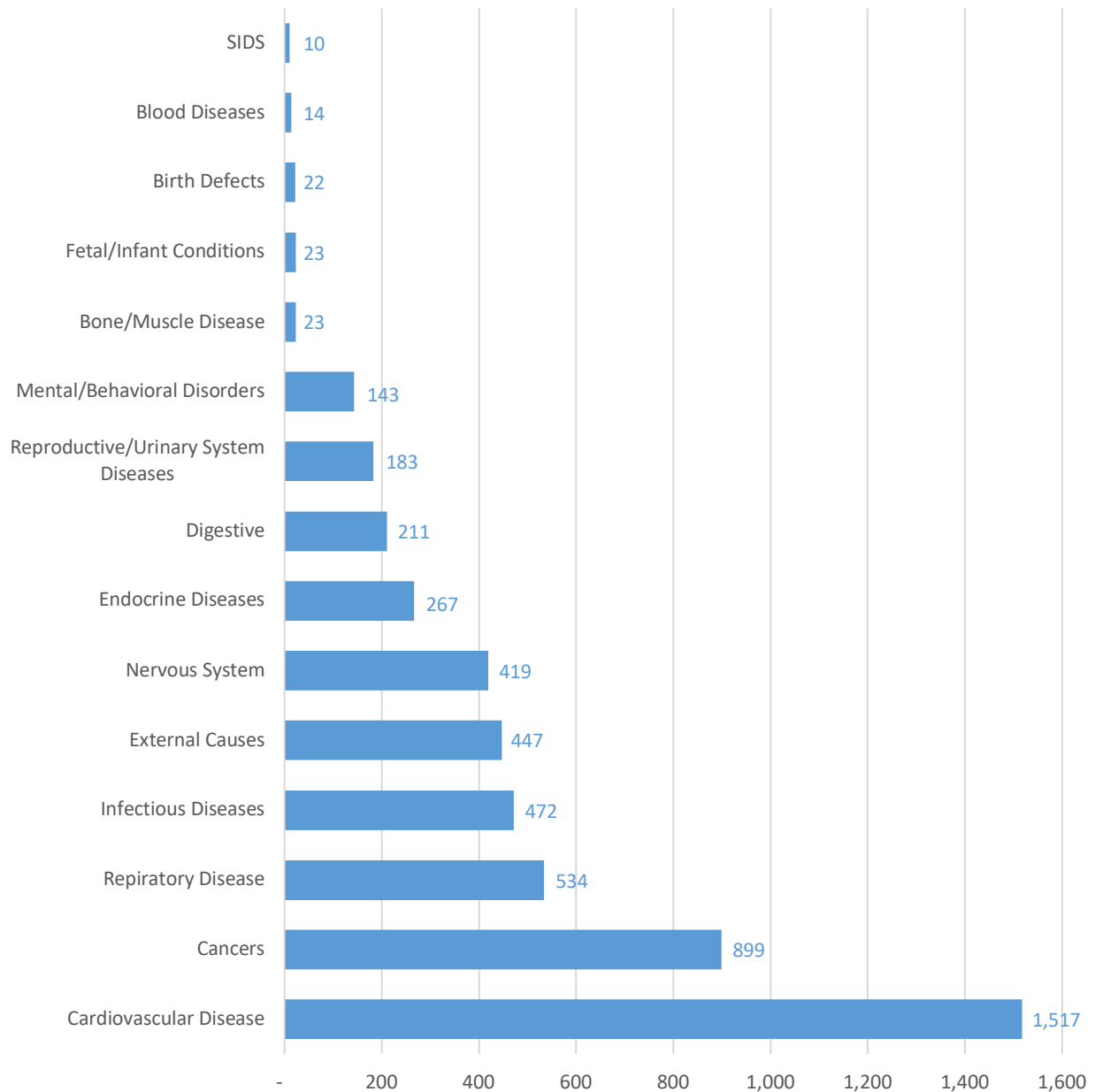
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

On the county level, Clinch County reports the lowest average life expectancy at 71.50 years, closely followed by Candler (72.40), Ware (72.40), and Bacon (72.50) counties. These figures not only fall below the regional average but also starkly contrast with the national benchmark, suggesting that there may be localized issues affecting health and lifespan that need urgent attention. The highest life expectancy was found in Long County, at 80.70 years. This is higher than the state and national averages.

Causes of Death

In the analysis of mortality data within the region, it is evident that many of the leading causes of death are potentially avoidable with modifications in lifestyle and preventive health strategies. Over the past five years, the death trend has increased by 19.50% from 4,446 in 2018 to 5,313 in 2022.

Chart 131: Leading Causes of Death (2021)



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In 2022, major cardiovascular diseases were the foremost cause of mortality, accounting for 1,517 deaths. This category, which includes a range of conditions related to the heart and circulatory system, is a significant public health concern. The high incidence of these diseases indicates a critical need for public health interventions aimed at prevention, early detection, and management.

- High blood pressure, or hypertension, stands out as a common yet serious condition that can lead to further cardiovascular issues if left unmanaged. As a silent disease, it often manifests with no symptoms but leads to detrimental effects on the heart and blood vessels over time, making regular monitoring essential for early intervention.
- Rheumatic fever and subsequent heart diseases, typically resulting from untreated streptococcal infections, can cause lasting damage to the heart valves. This is particularly concerning for children, as the long-term effects can severely impact their quality of life. These conditions necessitate the need for adequate treatment of initial infections and monitoring for potential heart complications.
- Hypertensive heart disease, which results from high blood pressure affecting the heart muscle, can progress to heart failure if not properly treated. This condition exemplifies the importance of managing blood pressure to prevent the heart from becoming weakened or enlarged.
- Obstructive heart diseases, including ischemic heart diseases and heart attacks, are caused by blockages that impede the blood supply to the heart muscle. These blockages are often due to a buildup of plaque in the arteries, which can be influenced by diet, lifestyle, and genetics. Interventions to reduce risk factors, such as cholesterol and obesity, are crucial.
- Stroke, characterized by the sudden loss of brain function due to a disturbance in blood supply, continues to be a leading cause of death and disability. The critical nature of stroke treatment underscores the need for rapid and accessible emergency care.
- Arteriosclerosis, the hardening of the arteries, can narrow the blood vessels and decrease blood flow, potentially leading to heart attacks and strokes. Lifestyle modifications and medications are pivotal in managing this condition.
- Aortic aneurysm and dissection involve the aorta, the body's main artery. These conditions can be immediately life-threatening, highlighting the importance of surveillance in individuals at risk.
- The broader category of other heart and circulatory system diseases includes a variety of conditions that affect the heart's functionality and the vascular system's integrity. These diseases collectively contribute to the high cardiovascular mortality rate and call for a wide-ranging approach to cardiovascular health that includes education, lifestyle modifications, and improved healthcare access.

The causes of heart disease are often a combination of genetic predisposition and modifiable lifestyle factors. High blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels, obesity, diabetes, and tobacco use are significant risk factors. Lifestyle modifications such as adopting a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, engaging in regular physical activity, quitting smoking, and maintaining a healthy weight can play a crucial role in prevention. Additionally, medical interventions including medications to manage blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as measures to control blood sugar in diabetes, are critical in managing the risks associated with heart disease.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Cancer remained a major health challenge in 2022, with 899 deaths recorded across various types. The diversity of cancers reflects the complexity of the disease and the range of tissues and organs that can be affected.

- Oral cancers, with 23 deaths, involve abnormal tissue growth in the mouth, affecting areas like the pharynx and tongue. This type of cancer highlights the importance of early detection, often through dental visits, and is associated with risk factors like tobacco use and HPV infection.
- Throat cancer, responsible for 21 deaths, refers to malignant tumors in the esophagus. These cancers are particularly concerning due to their impact on essential functions like swallowing and are strongly linked to smoking and alcohol consumption.
- Stomach cancer, with 12 deaths, is a malignant tumor in the stomach lining. Its treatment and prognosis often depend on the stage at which it is diagnosed, underscoring the need for attention to digestive health symptoms that may otherwise be overlooked.
- Colon cancer, the second leading cause of cancer death with 82 fatalities, arises from the large intestine's lining. The high incidence of colon cancer underscores the critical role of screening procedures like colonoscopies for early intervention.
- Liver cancer, resulting in 42 deaths, involves malignant tumors in the liver and is often related to chronic liver diseases, such as cirrhosis or hepatitis.
- Pancreatic cancer, with 64 deaths, is known for its aggressive nature and poor prognosis, making research into early detection methods a high priority.
- Lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer mortality, with 243 deaths. As a disease often associated with smoking, it serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of tobacco use and the benefits of smoking cessation programs.
- Skin cancer accounted for 14 deaths, with malignant melanoma being the most dangerous form. Public health efforts emphasize the importance of skin protection and regular skin examinations to catch any changes early.
- Breast cancer claimed 54 lives. As one of the most common cancers among women, it reinforces the value of regular mammograms and awareness of breast health.
- Cervical cancer, with 6 deaths, and uterine cancer, with 8 deaths, affect the female reproductive organs and are areas where regular gynecological screenings can have a significant impact on outcomes.
- Ovarian cancer, resulting in 21 deaths, is particularly challenging to detect early, which is why ongoing research into symptoms and risk factors is essential.
- Prostate cancer also accounted for 54 deaths, and while it is typically a slow-growing cancer, its prevalence among men makes it a significant area of focus for screenings like PSA tests.
- Bladder cancer led to 20 deaths and is notable for its potential to recur, meaning that patients often require ongoing surveillance.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Kidney cancer, with 35 deaths, occurs in the kidneys' cells, and ongoing research into its causes is crucial to develop better prevention strategies.
- Brain cancer, resulting in 22 deaths, can have a devastating impact on function and highlights the need for advancements in neuro-oncology.
- Lymph cancer, including Hodgkin's disease, had 2 deaths. Despite being rare, it is a reminder of the critical nature of the lymphatic system and the body's immune response.
- Leukemia, with 27 deaths, involves the uncontrolled proliferation of white blood cells and is a focus of intense research into genetic and environmental risk factors.

Respiratory diseases accounted for 534 deaths, signifying their substantial impact on public health. The spectrum of conditions causing these deaths ranges from acute infections to chronic obstructive pulmonary disorders, each presenting its unique challenges in both treatment and prevention.

- Influenza, commonly known as the flu, contributed to these statistics and is marked by symptoms such as respiratory inflammation, fever, and muscle pain. The flu can often be prevented by annual vaccinations, which are critical in reducing the spread and severity of the disease. Public health campaigns that encourage vaccination can significantly mitigate the impact of seasonal flu outbreaks.
- Pneumonia was a leading cause of respiratory disease deaths. As an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs, it can be caused by a variety of pathogens, including viruses and bacteria. Vaccinations, especially for the elderly and other high-risk groups, along with prompt treatment of respiratory infections, are vital preventive measures.
- Bronchitis, particularly chronic bronchitis, is an inflammation of the lining of the bronchial tubes. Preventive strategies for bronchitis include avoiding smoking, reducing exposure to pollutants, and managing existing respiratory conditions with appropriate medical care.
- Emphysema, a type of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), is characterized by damage to the air sacs in the lungs, leading to difficulty breathing. Smoking is the most significant risk factor for developing emphysema, and smoking cessation is the most effective preventive measure. Additionally, occupational safety measures can prevent exposure to industrial pollutants that may contribute to the condition.
- Asthma is a chronic condition that narrows and inflames the airways, causing wheezing, shortness of breath, and coughing. While not always preventable, the management of asthma includes avoiding triggers, such as allergens and irritants, and using prescribed medications to control symptoms and prevent attacks.
- The category of other chronic lower respiratory diseases, predominantly chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), reflects conditions where airflow is obstructed. Preventive lifestyle changes include smoking cessation, avoidance of secondhand smoke, maintaining good indoor air quality, and regular exercise to strengthen respiratory muscles.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Infectious diseases were responsible for 472 deaths, underscoring their persistent threat to public health despite advances in medical science.

- Blood Poisoning, or Septicemia, accounted for a significant number of these fatalities. Septicemia occurs when a bacterial infection enters the bloodstream, leading to widespread inflammation, potentially rapid organ failure, and death. Prevention of septicemia involves rigorous infection control practices in hospitals and medical facilities, including proper sterilization of medical equipment, hand hygiene, and rapid treatment of infections before they become severe.
- HIV/AIDS continued to impact the population, although advancements in antiretroviral therapy have transformed it into a manageable chronic condition for many. Preventative measures for HIV/AIDS include safe sex practices, needle exchange programs, and the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in high-risk populations. These strategies, coupled with public education about the virus and access to regular testing, remain the cornerstone of reducing the incidence of new infections.
- Tuberculosis (TB), particularly affecting the lungs, contributed to the death toll. TB is a highly communicable disease that requires long-term treatment with antibiotics. Prevention focuses on early detection through skin testing and treating latent infections before they become active, as well as improving ventilation in living spaces to reduce transmission.
- Meningitis, an inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord, usually bacterial in origin, can lead to severe complications and death if not treated promptly. Vaccinations against meningitis are highly effective and are recommended for certain age groups and populations at risk.
- COVID-19, identified through laboratory testing, was a significant infectious disease cause of death. The prevention of COVID-19 is multifaceted, involving vaccinations, mask-wearing in high-risk settings, social distancing, and good hygiene practices. Timely testing and isolation of affected individuals are also key in controlling outbreaks.

The mortality associated with infectious diseases emphasizes the importance of sustained public health efforts in vaccination, education, and infrastructure to prevent and treat these diseases effectively. These measures not only save lives but also prevent the spread of infections, thereby protecting the health of the community at large.

External causes were responsible for 447 deaths, drawing attention to the critical role of safety and preventative measures in public health.

- Motor Vehicle Crashes, including accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists, were a significant external cause of death. Preventative strategies include promoting vehicle safety through design and technology, enforcing traffic laws, improving road conditions, and advocating for pedestrian and cyclist safety measures. Public campaigns focused on safe driving behaviors, such as avoiding distracted or impaired driving, are also crucial.
- Falls, particularly among the elderly, are a leading cause of accidental injury. Prevention can be achieved through community-based fall prevention programs, the design of safer environments, and education on personal safety practices, especially for older adults.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Accidental Shootings, often involving the mishandling of firearms, highlight the importance of firearm safety education, secure gun storage practices, and the implementation of safety features on firearms themselves.
- Drowning deaths emphasize the need for water safety education, the presence of lifeguards, and the use of personal flotation devices. Programs that teach swimming and water survival skills are essential, especially for children.
- Fire & Smoke Exposure fatalities underscore the necessity of smoke detectors in homes, public education on fire safety practices, and the importance of fire-resistant materials in construction.
- Poisoning, which includes accidental poisoning by drugs and alcohol, calls for robust public education on the dangers of substances, proper medication storage and disposal, and the availability of treatment for substance misuse.
- Suffocation incidents can be mitigated through the use of proper safety equipment, regulations on food and toy sizes for children, and education on safe sleeping practices for infants.
- All Other Unintentional Injury categories cover a wide range of incidents, with prevention focusing on addressing the specific risks associated with each type of exposure.
- Suicide prevention requires a multifaceted approach, including access to mental health care, community support systems, and national hotlines. Efforts to control access to lethal means among individuals at risk are also part of comprehensive suicide prevention strategies.
- Homicide, often involving firearms, reflects broader societal issues that can be addressed through violence prevention programs, conflict resolution education, and community policing efforts.
- Legal Intervention-related deaths, although less common, point to the need for ongoing training and community engagement in law enforcement to minimize these occurrences.

Overall, the deaths from external causes represent a diverse array of preventable incidents. Effective prevention strategies often involve cross-sector collaboration, public policy, education, and community engagement to create environments where safety is prioritized, and risks are minimized.

Diseases of the nervous system were responsible for 419 deaths, reflecting the profound impact of neurological disorders on the community.

- Alzheimer's Disease was a prominent cause within this category, a severe neurological disorder that is characterized by progressive dementia and atrophy of the cerebral cortex. Alzheimer's leads to the gradual loss of cognitive functions, including memory and reasoning, and ultimately the ability to perform simple tasks. While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, prevention strategies focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, which may include engaging in physical and mental activities, eating a balanced diet, and managing cardiovascular health to possibly delay the onset of symptoms.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Parkinson's Disease is another progressive neurological condition, marked by symptoms such as muscle tremor, slowed movement, facial paralysis, and changes in gait and posture. Although the exact cause of Parkinson's is unknown, risk reduction may be associated with regular exercise, a balanced diet rich in antioxidants, and potentially caffeine consumption, according to some studies. Research into the disease's pathophysiology is ongoing to better understand potential preventative measures and treatments.
- The category of All Other Diseases of the Nervous System includes various conditions, with a notable portion attributed to senile degeneration of the brain, which is not classified elsewhere. These conditions often involve the progressive loss of neuronal function or structure, leading to various degrees of disability. Preventative health measures for these diseases are complex and not fully understood but may include maintaining social connections, mental stimulation, and management of overall health to preserve neurological function.

The impact of nervous system diseases on individuals and families is significant, often requiring long-term care and support services. This underscores the importance of healthcare systems and community services that can provide comprehensive care and support for those affected by these debilitating conditions. Additionally, ongoing research into the causes, mechanisms, and potential preventive strategies for nervous system diseases remains a high priority in the medical and scientific community.

Along with these prominent causes of death, several other categories contributed to the community's mortality rate to a lesser degree:

Endocrine Diseases: These include disorders like diabetes, thyroid conditions, and adrenal issues, which are often related to hormonal imbalances and can be managed with lifestyle changes and medication.

Digestive System Diseases: Fatalities here may involve conditions such as chronic liver diseases, including cirrhosis and hepatitis, or gastrointestinal diseases like pancreatitis or peptic ulcers, highlighting the need for dietary management and alcohol moderation.

Reproductive/Urinary System Diseases: These deaths could be due to chronic kidney disease or complications from reproductive health issues, underscoring the importance of regular health screenings.

Mental/Behavioral Disorders: Conditions such as severe depression, schizophrenia, or substance abuse disorders fall into this category, necessitating a focus on mental health services and support.

Bone/Muscle Diseases: Such diseases often include chronic conditions like osteoporosis or rheumatoid arthritis, which can lead to complications that increase the risk of mortality.

Fetal/Infant Conditions: Infant mortality can result from congenital anomalies, preterm birth, and low birth weight, among others, indicating a need for improved prenatal and postnatal care.

Birth Defects: These are structural abnormalities present at birth that can significantly impact an infant's survival and quality of life, pointing to the necessity of genetic screening and early interventions.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Blood Diseases: This category covers conditions like anemia or clotting disorders, which can sometimes lead to life-threatening complications.

SIDS: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome remains a cause for infant mortality, with research ongoing to understand and prevent these tragedies.

Each of these causes of death, while less prevalent than the leading categories, represents specific challenges and opportunities for public health intervention. By addressing each with tailored strategies, such as promoting health education, improving access to healthcare, and supporting medical research, the community can work towards reducing the overall mortality rate and enhancing the quality of life for its members.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Behavioral Risks

Data indicates that many of the county's health concerns, including the causes of death, can be greatly impacted by behavioral change.

Table 208: Common Behavioral Risks (2022)

<i>Area</i>	Smoking	Excessive Drinking	Insufficient Sleep	Physically Inactive
<i>Appling</i>	25%	16%	38%	33%
<i>Atkinson</i>	26%	15%	38%	38%
<i>Bacon</i>	25%	17%	39%	33%
<i>Brantley</i>	26%	17%	37%	33%
<i>Bulloch</i>	20%	17%	38%	28%
<i>Candler</i>	24%	16%	40%	34%
<i>Charlton</i>	25%	16%	40%	33%
<i>Clinch</i>	29%	14%	40%	38%
<i>Coffee</i>	25%	15%	38%	34%
<i>Effingham</i>	18%	18%	36%	25%
<i>Evans</i>	24%	15%	40%	34%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	25%	16%	32%	33%
<i>Long</i>	23%	16%	39%	32%
<i>Pierce</i>	23%	17%	37%	30%
<i>Tattnall</i>	23%	16%	41%	33%
<i>Toombs</i>	22%	16%	38%	33%
<i>Ware</i>	24%	16%	38%	34%
<i>Wayne</i>	23%	16%	37%	31%
Region	23%	16%	38%	33%
State	16%	16%	36%	25%
Nation	16%	19%	33%	22%

Source: County Health Rankings

One behavior that heightens the risk of poor health and premature death is the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Although socially accepted, the most commonly abused substance in the county is tobacco. Throughout the service area, an estimated 77,842 adults (23%) smoke tobacco. According to the CDC, smoking can contribute to health conditions that impact a person's quality of life and is directly associated with many of the leading causes of death (Heart Disease, Stroke, Respiratory Disease, Diabetes, Cancer).

National statistical also indicate that people with low incomes are more likely to smoke, and generally smoke more heavily, than individuals in higher income brackets. Unfortunately, due to the lack of access to healthcare, low-income individuals are also much less likely to receive a diagnosis of major health conditions until late stages of the illness. This results in a higher cost of treatment which, in addition to the average cost of \$117 to \$243 per month to maintain the habit, can severely impact the household's economic security.

The cost of smoking itself is not the only contributing factor associated with poverty. Data indicates that smokers are 24% less likely to obtain a job within a year than non-smokers, even when other factors are eliminated, and earn an average of 20% less. Employers attribute this to the loss of productivity among smokers, resulting in an additional average annual cost of more than \$3,000 per employee using the substance. This rate is higher than the state average of 16%.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

An estimated 56,711 individuals, or 16% of the region’s adult population, are estimated to regularly drink alcohol excessively. As alcohol consumption impacts problem solving skills, judgement, concentration, reaction times, and coordination, excessive use can cause and/or increase risks associated with physical, mental, economic, and social health. This rate is comparable to the state average of 16%.

While the cost of supporting an alcohol addiction can be a contributing factor to poverty on its own, studies indicate that employers are hesitant to hire excessive drinkers, as they are more likely to be involved in accidents, tend to be more aggressive, are more likely to be absent, and produce lower quality work at a lower quantity than those who do not consume alcohol. Those who do secure employment often find themselves in low-paying jobs.

Healthcare costs are also a concern for drinkers, as illness and injury are more likely to occur. Long-term risks include Heart Disease, Hypertension, Liver Disease, Cancer, multiple mental health issues, poisoning, violence, and vehicle accidents.

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), drug use can have a wide range of health consequences. The impact of the drug, however, can differ drastically based on the specific substance that is used, the method of use, the dosage, existing health conditions, and other factors. Short-term impacts may include a loss of appetite, changes in sleep patterns, increased/decreased heart rate and blood pressure, mood changes, heart attack, stroke, psychosis, overdose, and death. Unfortunately, the user may experience one or more of these side effects after only a single use.

Extended exposure can lead to Heart Disease, Lung Disease, Cancer, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, multiple types of mental illness and, while addiction is not experienced by all users, it is a major risk associated with long-term use, which changes the way brain circuits work. This can interfere with how a person experiences normal pleasures in life, such as food and sex, their ability to control stress levels, basic decision making, their ability to learn and remember, etc. These changes make it much more difficult to stop using the substance, even when they are aware of the negative impact on their lives, and they want to quit.

Table 50: Self-Reported Substance Abuse Rates (2021)

Ages	Marijuana	Cocaine	Heroin	Meth	Prescriptions
12-17	8.83%	0.18%	No Data	0.20%	1.60%
18+	18.12%	1.77%	0.36%	0.85%	3.78%

Source: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality

Marijuana emerges as the primary drug of choice across both age groups in Georgia, with 18.12% of adults and 8.83% of individuals aged 12-17 reporting use. Its prevalent use can have varied health effects, including potential impacts on cognitive development in adolescents, mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, and in some cases, it may affect lung health due to smoke inhalation. The use of marijuana often intersects with socioeconomic factors, with some evidence indicating higher usage rates in lower-income neighborhoods.

Prescription drug misuse, particularly opioids, is the second most reported category for adults in Georgia at 3.78% and also significant for those 12-17 years at 1.60%. Misuse of these drugs can lead to addiction, overdose, and chronic health problems, including neurological and gastrointestinal issues. The opioid crisis has particularly affected impoverished areas where healthcare and addiction support services may be less accessible.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Cocaine use is reported by 1.77% of adults, reflecting its presence as a substance of abuse. Cocaine can lead to serious health issues, including heart attacks, stroke, and mental health disorders. Its use is often higher in urban settings and can be associated with both poverty and affluence, impacting a wide range of demographic groups.

Meth use, although less prevalent than marijuana and prescription drugs, is reported by 0.85% of adults. Methamphetamine is highly addictive and can cause severe dental decay, skin sores, and increased risk for infectious diseases. It's often associated with lower socioeconomic status due to its relatively low cost and high availability. Methamphetamine use is also linked to significant strain on healthcare resources, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Heroin use in Georgia is the least reported among the substances listed for adults at 0.36%, but it carries a high risk of overdose and infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis. Heroin use is often tied to prior prescription opioid misuse, reflecting the broader opioid epidemic. It can affect all socioeconomic groups; however, the impacts and recovery options might differ significantly, with some racial groups facing more barriers to accessing treatment than others.

Each of these substances has complex social determinants and a range of health implications. Addressing their use requires a multifaceted approach that includes public health interventions, accessible treatment programs, and policies that consider the socioeconomic and racial disparities related to substance use and healthcare.

When looking specifically at the impact of these substances in the workplace, Quest Diagnostics, the world's leading provider of diagnostic information services, recently reported that positive drug tests experienced a consistent rate of 4.6% for two consecutive years, matching the rate of 2021. The report details positivity rates across different workforce categories, with the general U.S. workforce showing a higher positivity rate (5.7% in 2022) compared to the federally mandated, safety-sensitive workforce (2.4% in 2022). The report also breaks down positivity rates by the reason for testing, indicating the highest rates in the 'for cause' category, especially in the general workforce (38.6% in 2022).

Marijuana continues to be the leading substance identified in urine drug tests, with a noticeable increase in positivity rates over recent years, now at 0.98% for safety-sensitive workers and 4.3% for the general workforce in 2022. Amphetamine and methamphetamine use also shows an increase, especially in the general U.S. workforce, with rates reaching 1.5% in 2022. Cocaine and oxycodone positivity rates remain relatively stable, with a slight increase or stabilization in the general workforce. The report underscores the ongoing challenges of addressing substance use within varied work environments.

A publication by Robert Kaestner at the National Bureau of Economic Research also explains that there is a connection between drug use and poverty. While drug use has negative impacts on physical and cognitive abilities, resulting in lower productivity, the greater connection is related to the determinants of poverty: education, human capital investments, marriage, and fertility. Interestingly, data also indicates that drug use is encouraged by reduced education levels, poor returns on human capital, and lack of meaningful relationships. Thus, areas with limited economic opportunity generally have higher usage rates and more affordable drugs.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A secondary behavioral concern in the region, contributing to the predominate obesity epidemic experienced by more than one-third (39%) of the adult population, is physical inactivity. County Health Rankings reports that 107,316 individuals (33%) report a lack of physical activity on a regular basis. The CDC reports that these individuals are at an increased risk of Heart Disease, Type 2 Diabetes, multiple cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon), Hypertension, high cholesterol, Stroke, Liver Disease, Gallbladder Disease, Sleep Apnea, Osteoarthritis, and gynecological problems (abnormal periods, infertility, etc.).

Ensuring children are physically active is extremely important to promote development of strong bones and muscles. The CDC also documents an association between physical activity in children and cognition (i.e., academic performance, and memory) performance. Some studies also indicate that regular exercise reduces the likelihood of depression.

The CDC reports that one-third of all U.S. adults are sleep deprived. Local statistics confirm the issue, finding that 38% of the region's citizens (130,630) are not receiving the amount of rest necessary for proper functioning of the body. Not only does a lack of sleep contribute to vehicle accidents and mistakes at work that lead to injury, but studies also indicate that there are direct links between sleep and conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes, Heart Disease, and depression.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Provider Access

Access to medical providers is a fundamental component of a robust healthcare system. Primary care physicians are often the frontline in healthcare, providing essential services such as routine check-ups, health-risk assessments, vaccination, screening tests, and counseling on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They are also pivotal in managing chronic illnesses and coordinating care with specialists.

Table 209: Medical Providers to Population Ratio (2022)

Area	Physicians	Dentists	Mental Health Professionals
<i>Appling</i>	3,050:1	9,240:1	1,160:1
<i>Atkinson</i>	No Data	8,390:1	No Data
<i>Bacon</i>	1,840:1	3,690:1	11,080:1
<i>Brantley</i>	6,400:1	18,100:1	9,050:1
<i>Bulloch</i>	1,920:1	2,750:1	920:1
<i>Candler</i>	5,490:1	11,040:1	1,100:1
<i>Charlton</i>	3,360:1	12,770:1	4,260:1
<i>Clinch</i>	6,580:1	6,730:1	3,730:1
<i>Coffee</i>	1,730:1	2,710:1	3,100:1
<i>Effingham</i>	4,700:1	5,560:1	2,090:1
<i>Evans</i>	2,130:1	3,560:1	10,670:1
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	7,610:1	14,870:1	14,870:1
<i>Long</i>	20,170:1	No Data	3,430:1
<i>Pierce</i>	3,900:1	9,990:1	4,000:1
<i>Tattnall</i>	4,230:1	7,680:1	2,880:1
<i>Toombs</i>	1,120:1	1,920:1	1,420:1
<i>Ware</i>	1,560:1	1,900:1	680:1
<i>Wayne</i>	2,500:1	6,080:1	3,800:1
Regional Avg	4,605:1	7,469:1	4,779:1
State	1,490:1	1,880:1	660:1
Nation	1,310:1	1,380:1	340:1

Source: County Health Rankings

In Georgia, the current ratio of 1,490 individuals per primary care physician suggests a challenge in meeting the healthcare demands of the population, particularly when compared to the national average of 1,310:1. This disparity may result in longer wait times for appointments, reduced time per patient visit, and potentially overwhelmed healthcare providers, which can all impact the quality of care received.

In the region served by the organization, the problem is significantly more concerning at 4,605 patients for every physician, with Long County reporting a rate of 20,179:1. Comparatively, some states have set benchmarks to ensure better access to healthcare. For instance, Arizona mandates that its medical facilities maintain a provider-to-patient ratio of no more than 1,200:1. This policy is aimed at ensuring that residents have better access to primary healthcare services and can receive more timely and effective medical interventions. Such benchmarks are critical in setting standards for healthcare provision and ensuring that communities have the necessary number of healthcare providers to meet the needs of their residents.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The ratio of dentists to the population in a region is a significant indicator of the quality and reach of oral healthcare services available to its residents. Oral health is a key component of overall health and well-being, with poor oral health linked to various chronic conditions, including heart disease and diabetes. In the region being assessed, the dentist-to-patient ratio stands at a concerning 7,469:1. This is markedly higher than both the state average of 1,880:1 and the national average of 1,380:1, signaling a substantial gap in the provision of dental care services.

Furthermore, the scarcity of dental care providers can lead to increased emergency room visits for dental issues that could have been preventable with routine care. This not only places additional strain on emergency medical services but also represents a more costly and less efficient use of resources.

The availability of mental health professionals is a barometer of a region's capacity to address the psychological well-being of its population. Mental health services are vital for the diagnosis, treatment, and management of mental disorders and for providing support to those experiencing acute or chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. The region's current mental health professional-to-patient ratio of 4,779:1 starkly contrasts with the state average of 660:1 and is more than fourteen times the national average of 340:1. This disparity is a clear indication of a significant shortage of mental health providers in the region.

Such a deficit in mental health services can have profound implications for community health. It limits access to care, increases wait times for services, and can leave many without the support they need, potentially leading to worsening mental health conditions and a greater likelihood of crises. This shortage may also overburden existing providers, leading to burnout and further reducing the quality of care.

These figures not only reflect on the current state of healthcare availability but also underscore the necessity for strategic planning and resource allocation to meet the community's healthcare needs effectively. The increased ratios indicate potential barriers to healthcare access, which could lead to unmet health needs, delayed diagnoses, and untreated conditions, contributing to the overall burden of disease in the community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

There are 127 health centers located throughout the region, with an estimated 1,074 hospital beds.

Table 210: Appling County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Altamaha Homecare, Inc	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
Appling Healthcare	Hospital	Short Term	165
Appling Medical Group	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Appling Nursing and Rehabilitation Pavilion	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Appling Pediatrics	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Baxley Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Centro De Salud Del Este De Georgia	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Comfort Care Hospice, LLC	Hospice	Hospice	0
South Georgia Medical Associates	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
TOTAL			165

Table 211: Atkinson County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Atkinson Visiting Nurses Service, Inc	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
South Central Primary Care Center, Inc	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
TOTAL			0

Table 212: Bacon County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Bacon County Community Care Center	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Bacon County Hospital	Hospital	Critical Access Hospitals	113
Fresenius Kidney Care Alma	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
McKinney Community Health Ctr, Inc.	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Twin Oaks Convalescent Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
TOTAL			113

Table 213: Brantley County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Bayview Nursing Home	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Charlton Visiting Nurses Service	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
McKinney Community Health	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
TOTAL			0

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 214: Bulloch County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Brown's Health & Rehab Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Eagle Health & Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
East Georgia Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
East Georgia Regional Medical Center	Hospital	Short Term	142
FMC Bulloch County	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Heritage Inn Health And Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Kindred At Home	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
Ogeechee Area Hospice, Inc.	Hospice	Hospice	0
Statesboro Ear, Nose, & Throat	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Statesboro Pediatrics and Family Healthcare Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Westwood Healthcare and Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Women's Surgery Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
TOTAL			142

Table 215: Candler County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Azalea Health And Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Candler County Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Candler County Hospital	Hospital	Critical Access Hospitals	25
Candler Medical Group	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
East Georgia Healthcare Center, Inc	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Optim Primary Care- Metter	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Orchard Health And Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Pleasant View Nursing Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Sjc Medical Group Inc	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
TOTAL			25

Table 216: Charlton County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Folkston Park Care and Rehabilitation Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
McKinney Community Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
McKinney Community Health Center Inc	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
McKinney Medical Center, Inc.	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
TOTAL			0

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 217: Clinch County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Clinch Memorial Hospital	Hospital	Short Term	15
Folkston Park Care and Rehabilitation Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
McKinney Community Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
TOTAL			15

Table 218: Coffee County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Coffee County Center For Digestive Disease	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Coffee Regional First Care	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Coffee Regional Medical Center, Inc	Hospital	Short Term	82
Douglas Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Douglas Family Health	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Douglas Home Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Nicholls Family Healthcare	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Nicholls Family Healthcare	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Psychiatry And Counseling Services	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Southeastern Orthopedics Surgery Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Vista Park Health and Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Westside Surgery Center, LLC	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
TOTAL			82

Table 219: Effingham County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Effingham Care & Rehabilitation Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Effingham Family Medicine at Goshen	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Effingham Family Medicine at Guyton	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Effingham Family Medicine at Twenty-One	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Effingham Health System	Hospital	Critical Access Hospitals	130
Effingham North Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Mobile Medical Imaging of Coastal Georgia, LLC	Portable X-Rays Supplier	X-Ray	0
Rincon Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Suncare Hospice, LLC	Hospice	Hospice	0
TOTAL			130

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 220: Evans County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Bethany HSPC & Palliative Care of Coastal Georgia,	Hospice	Hospice	0
Camellia Health & Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Evans Health And Wellness Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Evans Memorial Hospital	Hospital	Short Term	59
FMC Dialysis of Claxton	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
TOTAL			59

Table 221: Jeff Davis County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Hazlehurst Court Care and Rehabilitation Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Jeff Davis Family Medical Group	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Jeff Davis Hospital	Hospital	Critical Access Hospitals	35
Trinity Therapy Services Inc	Outpatient Physical Therapy/Speech Pathology	Opt or Speech Pathology	0
TOTAL			35

Table 222: Long County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Coastal Manor	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Diversity Health Center, Inc	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
TOTAL			0

Table 223: Pierce Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
McKinney Community Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
TOTAL			0

Table 224: Tattnall County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
East Georgia Healthcare Center, Inc	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Glennville Eye Surgery Center, LLC	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Glenvue Health & Rehab	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Optim Medical Center - Tattnall	Hospital	Critical Access Hospitals	25
Optim Primary Care- Glennville	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Optim Primary Care- Reidsville	Rural Health Clinic	Rural Health Clinic	0
Tattnall Healthcare Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
TOTAL			25

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 225: Toombs County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Affinis Hospice, LLC	Hospice	Hospice	0
Amedisys Home Health	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
CHSGA Home Health	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
Coastal Pain Center, LLC	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
East Georgia Healthcare Center, Inc	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Endoscopy Ctr of Southeast Ga	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Fresenius Medical Care of Toombs County	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Meadows Park Health and Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Memorial Health Meadows Hospital	Hospital	Short Term	57
Oaks - Bethany Skilled Nursing	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Oxley Park Health and Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Solace Hospice	Hospice	Hospice	0
Southern Community Hospice, Inc.	Hospice	Hospice	0
Three Rivers Home Health Services, Inc	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
Vidalia First Street Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
TOTAL			57

Table 226: Ware County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Affinis Hospice LLC	Hospice	Hospice	0
Amedisys Home Health	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
Baptist Village, Inc.	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Fresenius Kidney Care Waycross	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Harborview Satilla	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Hospice Satilla of Mem Hosp	Hospice	Hospice	0
Institute For Corr Surg Foot & Ankle, Inc	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
McKinney Community Health Center, Inc	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Memorial Satilla Health	Hospital	Short Term	138
Renue Surgery Center of Waycross, LLC	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Satilla River Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
South Georgia Endoscopy Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Ware County Family Practice Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Ware Visiting Nurses Service, Inc	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
Waycross Health And Rehabilitation	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
TOTAL			138

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 227: Wayne County Medical Facilities

Facility Name	Category	Sub-Category	Beds
Altamaha Healthcare Center	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Community Home Care	Home Health Agency	Home Health Agency	0
Diversity Health Center, Inc.	Federally Qualified Health Center	Federally Qualified Health Center	0
Ghc-Jesup LLC	Hospice	Hospice	0
Harborview Health Systems Jesup	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Hospice Of South Georgia, Inc.	Hospice	Hospice	0
Jesup Dialysis	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Jesup Health And Rehab	Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility (Dually Certified)	Title 18/19	0
Jesup Home Kidney Care	End Stage Renal Disease Facility	End Stage Renal Disease	0
Surgery Center of Bji, LLC	Ambulatory Surgical Center	Ambulatory Surgical Center	0
Wayne Memorial Hospital	Hospital	Short Term	88
TOTAL			88

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Ambulatory Surgical Center:

These are modern health care facilities focused on providing same-day surgical care, including diagnostic and preventive procedures that do not require an overnight hospital stay.

End Stage Renal Disease Facility:

This type of facility provides life-sustaining dialysis treatment to patients suffering from severe kidney failure, also known as end-stage renal disease.

Federally Qualified Health Center:

These are community-based healthcare providers that receive funds from the HRSA Health Center Program to provide primary care services in underserved areas. They offer sliding fee scales for individuals with limited financial means.

Home Health Agency:

Organizations under this category provide in-home medical services for individuals recovering from an illness or injury, or those needing special medical care at home.

Hospice:

A service that provides palliative care for the terminally ill and support to their families, focusing on quality of life rather than curative treatment.

Hospital:

A complex healthcare institution that provides patient treatment with specialized medical and nursing staff and medical equipment.

Intermediate Care Facility:

This facility caters to individuals who require a level of care between hospital acute care and lower levels of residential care, often for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Outpatient Physical Therapy/Speech Pathology:

These centers offer therapeutic and rehabilitation services for individuals recovering from physical injuries or dealing with speech and language disorders.

Rural Health Clinic:

A clinic located in a rural, medically underserved area that provides primary care services; it may also offer additional services such as on-site lab and x-ray services.

Skilled Nursing Facilities/Nursing Facility:

Facilities that provide a high level of medical care provided by licensed nurses, including both short-term rehabilitative services and long-term care for chronic conditions or disabilities.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Insurance Coverage

Health insurance coverage is an essential determinant of healthcare access, influencing both the affordability and the timeliness of care received. As of 2022, the uninsured rate in the region stood at 15.13%, a decrease of 3.57% from the 15.69% documented in 2018. Although encouraging that a decrease was experienced, it should be noted that the current rate is higher than both the state (12.93%) and national (8.68%) averages. Further, the rate of change for the region is slower than those experienced on state (-5.96%) and national (-7.46%) levels.

Table 228: Uninsured Population (2018/2022)

<i>Area</i>	2018 Count	2018 Rate	2022 Count	2022 Rate	Rate +/-
<i>Appling</i>	2,813	15.63%	2,579	14.26%	-8.77%
<i>Atkinson</i>	2,049	24.87%	1,917	23.28%	-6.39%
<i>Bacon</i>	2,002	19.03%	1,627	15.42%	-18.97%
<i>Brantley</i>	3,531	19.12%	2,866	15.89%	-16.89%
<i>Bulloch</i>	9,905	13.40%	9,400	11.87%	-11.42%
<i>Candler</i>	2,219	21.01%	2,172	20.40%	-2.90%
<i>Charlton</i>	2,501	21.13%	2,104	18.00%	-14.81%
<i>Clinch</i>	1,412	21.24%	1,398	21.11%	-0.61%
<i>Coffee</i>	7,582	19.16%	7,264	17.82%	-6.99%
<i>Effingham</i>	5,684	9.79%	6,161	9.83%	+0.41%
<i>Evans</i>	1,711	16.78%	1,680	16.38%	-2.38%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	2,950	19.75%	3,292	22.38%	+13.32%
<i>Long</i>	2,563	14.80%	2,079	13.04%	-11.89%
<i>Pierce</i>	3,132	16.49%	2,752	14.03%	-14.92%
<i>Tattnall</i>	2,566	13.47%	2,917	15.16%	+12.55%
<i>Toombs</i>	4,448	16.62%	4,520	16.96%	+2.05%
<i>Ware</i>	5,113	15.39%	5,911	17.54%	+13.97%
<i>Wayne</i>	4,920	17.77%	5,462	19.24%	+8.27%
Region	62,171	15.69%	66,101	15.13%	-3.57%
State	1,389,541	13.75%	1,361,380	12.93%	-5.96%
Nation	29,752,767	9.36%	28,315,092	8.68%	-7.46%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2701)

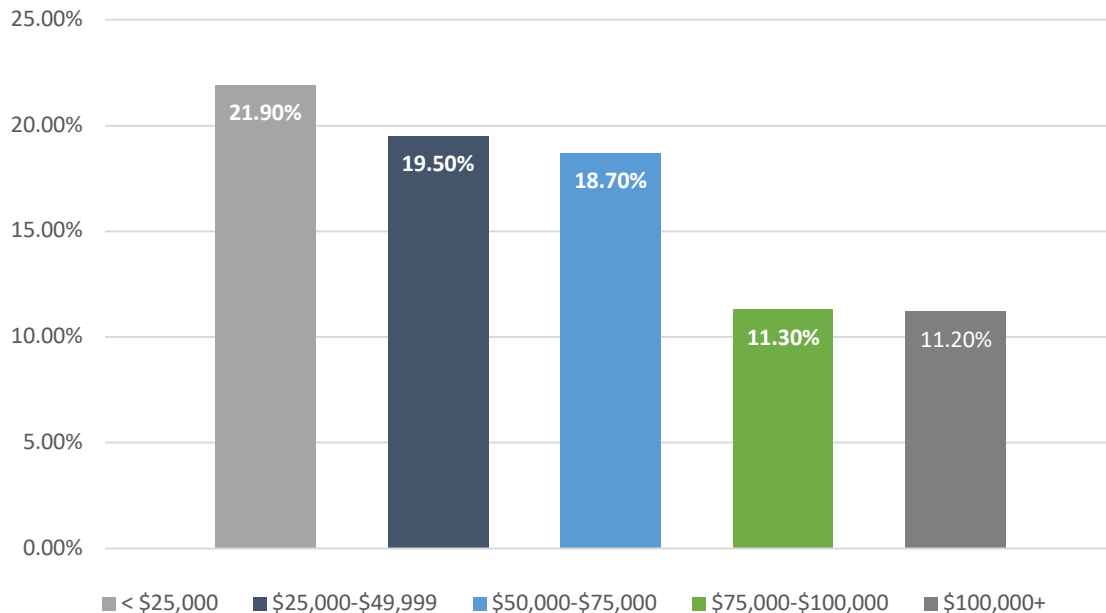
The highest rate in the region was identified in Atkinson County (23.28%). This was followed by Jeff Davis (22.38%), Clinch (21.11%), and Candler (20.40%) counties. In each of these communities, more than one-fifth of the population lacked health insurance coverage.

The greatest improvement in the region was experienced in Bacon County, where the rate dropped by 18.97%. Strong improvements were also identified in Brantley (-16.89%), Pierce (-14.92%), and Charlton (-14.81%) counties, all of which experienced decrease double the statewide average. Six counties in the region experienced increases in the rate, indicating a worsening condition. The largest increase was noted in Ware County (+13.97%), closely followed by Jeff Davis County (+13.32%). Other communities impacted include Tattnall (+12.55%), Wayne (+8.27%), Toombs (+2.05%), and Effingham (+0.41%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The uninsured rates by income level present a telling gradient that underscores the correlation between economic status and health insurance coverage. Individuals earning less than \$25,000 a year exhibit the highest uninsured rate at 21.90%, which is significantly higher than any other income bracket. This high percentage points to the affordability barrier that low-income individuals face in securing health insurance, which is a fundamental component of accessing healthcare services.

Chart 132: Uninsured Rates by Income Level (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2701)

As income levels increase, there is a notable decline in the uninsured rate, with those earning between \$25,000 and \$49,999 showing a rate of 19.50%, a reduction of 10.96%. The trend continues downward for middle-income earners in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range, who have an uninsured rate of 18.70%, or 4.1% lower than the previous category.

For residents with incomes between \$75,000 and \$100,000, the rate is 37.57% lower than for those in the previous category and 48.40% lower than for individuals with incomes below \$25,000.

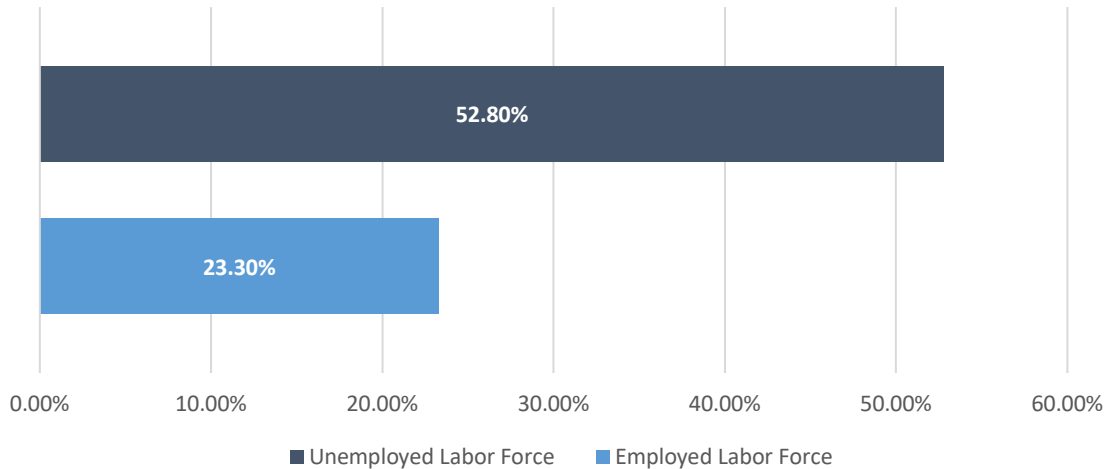
The lowest uninsured rate is found among those earning over \$100,000, at 11.20%, a slight improvement (-0.88%) from the \$75,000 to \$100,000 category.

This data suggests that economic factors play a crucial role in health insurance coverage, with lower-income individuals facing greater challenges in obtaining coverage. These challenges may result in increased risks of health complications due to delayed or missed healthcare services. The data underscores the need for policies that address the insurance coverage gap, particularly for lower-income populations, to ensure equitable access to healthcare services and improve overall public health outcomes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Employment status was identified as a contributing factor associated with the lack of insurance. While the 23.30% uninsured rate for employed individuals was somewhat high, the rate for unemployed members of the labor force was 52.80%. This indicates that individuals who are unemployed are more than twice as likely to be uninsured than those who are working.

Chart 133: Uninsured Rates by Employment Status (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2701)

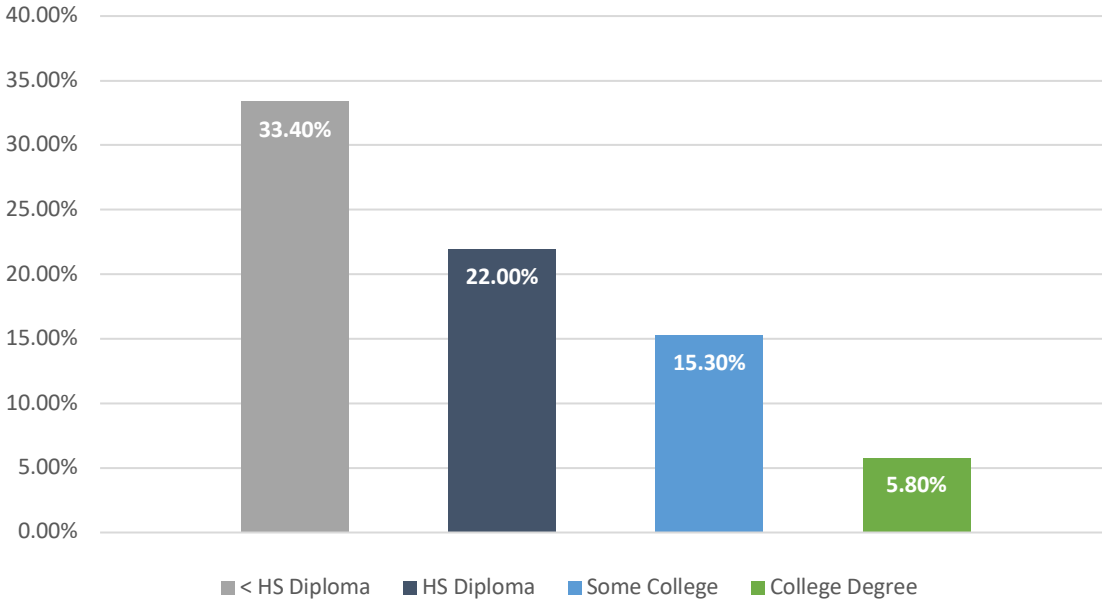
Unemployment often results in the loss of employer-sponsored health insurance and the lack of financial means to afford private insurance or out-of-pocket medical costs. Even with programs like COBRA or the Affordable Care Act marketplaces intended to help bridge this gap, the cost can be prohibitive without an income.

The significantly higher uninsured rate among the unemployed labor force is concerning because it suggests that individuals who are already facing the economic hardship of unemployment are also the most vulnerable to the health and financial risks associated with being uninsured. This situation may lead to a cycle of health disparities where the unemployed, who may need medical care the most due to stress and other factors associated with job loss, are the least able to access it.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Data suggests that adult education levels are also, to some degree, associated with insurance coverage. Those with less than a high school diploma have the highest uninsured rate at 33.40%, which suggests that a lack of formal education may correlate with reduced access to jobs that offer health insurance or the financial resources to afford private insurance.

Chart 134: Uninsured Rates by Education Level (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2701)

Individuals who have completed high school experience a decrease in the uninsured rate to 22.00%. A further reduction is observed among those with some college education, dropping to 15.30%. This trend continues, showing that as educational levels increase, the likelihood of being uninsured decreases, culminating in the lowest uninsured rate of 5.80% among those with a college degree. This suggests that higher education is associated with better employment opportunities, potentially offering employer-sponsored health insurance or higher incomes that make health insurance more affordable.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In the region, children under 6 years have an uninsured rate of 5.20%, which is higher than the national average of 4.40%, indicating a more concerning condition in the region for this age group than on a national level. The rate for school-aged children is higher than for young children, at 7.20%. It should be noted that this is also higher than the national average for this age group at 5.70%. Overall, there were 1,305 young children and 5,627 school-aged children identified in the region served by the organization.

Table 229: Uninsured Rates by Age Group and Disability Status (2022)

Area	<6 Years	6-18 Years	19-64 Years	65+ Years	Disabled
Region	5.20%	7.20%	26.00%	0.70%	11.20%
State	5.70%	7.80%	18.10%	1.00%	9.50%
Nation	4.40%	5.70%	12.20%	0.80%	9.10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2701)

For the working-age group of 19-64 years, the region's uninsured rate jumps to 26.00%, which is not only more than double the national average of 12.20% but indicates that more than one-in-four adults lack insurance in the region. This rate represents 58,886 individuals.

Senior citizens experienced a relatively low rate of 0.70%, representing 283 local residents. It should be noted that this rate is lower than both the state (1.00%) and national (0.80%).

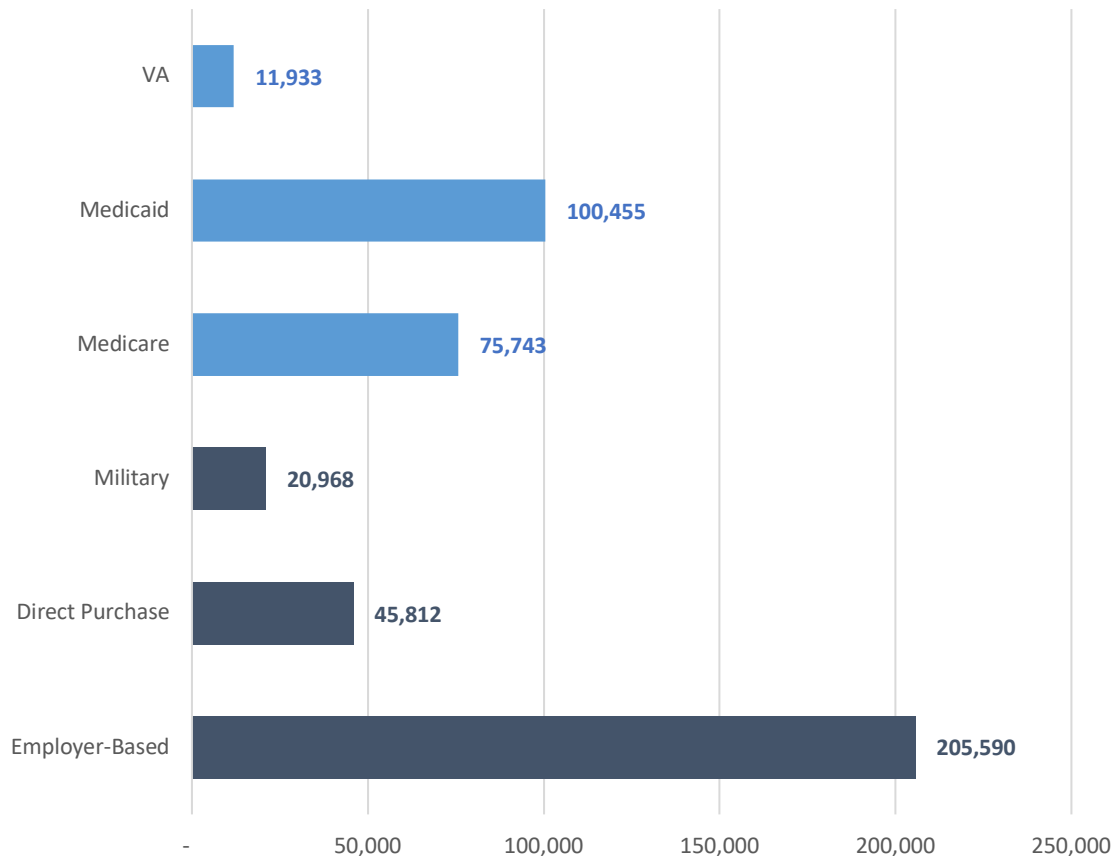
Finally, the disabled population in the region faces an uninsured rate of 11.20%, higher than the national average of 9.10%. This indicates that despite programs designed to assist individuals with disabilities, there remains a gap in coverage that needs to be addressed to ensure they have access to the necessary medical care. This rate represents a total of 7,722 individuals who, despite a potentially higher demand for medical care, may be limited in their ability to access it.

Overall, the data points to a disparity in health insurance coverage, with the most significant gap seen in the working-age population. This highlights the need for focused interventions to increase health insurance coverage, especially for working-age adults and individuals with disabilities, to ensure equitable access to healthcare services.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In the local region, public health insurance programs cover a significant portion of the insured individuals, with 164,661 people receiving benefits. These programs cater to various segments of the population based on eligibility criteria, which often include income levels, age, and specific needs such as disabilities or veteran status.

Chart 135: Population Receiving Insurance by Type (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (C27010, S2701, S2703)

Medicare, a federal program, provides healthcare coverage primarily to individuals aged 65 and over, with 75,743 local beneficiaries. It also extends to younger people with disabilities and certain conditions. In the local region, 782 individuals under 19 and 12,954 aged 19 to 64 are covered under Medicare.

Medicaid and other means-tested public coverage support those in financial need across all age groups, with the largest segment being under 19, including 58,571 individuals locally. This program also supports 30,499 individuals aged 19 to 64 and 11,385 seniors aged 65 and over in the region.

VA health care coverage, designed for military veterans, covers 11,933 individuals, including veterans across different age groups, with 356 under 19, 6,163 aged 19 to 64, and 5,414 who are 65 and over.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Private health insurance is a form of health coverage provided through various plans, often organized by employers or purchased directly by individuals. In 2022, within the local region, private insurance covered 254,284 individuals.

Employer-based health insurance is the most common form of private insurance, covering 205,590 individuals locally, extending across all age groups, offering benefits through workplaces. Direct-purchase insurance, chosen by individuals in the market, covered 45,812 people, while Tricare, for military personnel and their families, served 20,968 individuals.

The majority of those with private health insurance were above the poverty threshold, signifying a correlation between higher income levels and private insurance coverage. Employer-based plans were particularly prevalent among full-time, year-round workers aged 19 to 64. Private insurance alone, without public coverage, was the norm for 196,579 local residents.

Understanding these insurance sources is vital as they reflect the community's economic diversity and access to healthcare services. Each source has distinct eligibility requirements, coverage benefits, and limitations, shaping the healthcare landscape of the region.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

According to survey data, poor health is considered one of the most critical conditions of poverty, with both mental (36%) and physical (24%) aspects being noted as concerns. To further complicate matters, a total of 13.41% stated that they felt poor health was a major factor contributing to the inability of residents to secure basic needs.

A number of respondents highlight the need for more hospitals and health-related services, while others point out that the current staffing levels are too low to handle the load, indicating a strain on existing healthcare facilities. Mental health issues are particularly noted, with the rise in mental health conditions becoming more prevalent in the community. Individuals express concern over the lack of resources and knowledge regarding mental health, which is often exacerbated by the stigma attached to such conditions. In focus groups, one Bacon County participant stated, "We don't have full-time providers in our county... kids aren't really getting all of the services they need."

Dental care also emerges as a particularly acute need. In Bacon County, for example, one participant reveals the challenges families face: "The dentist issue is really bad here... Many of these families are just not able to travel out of town".

Addictions are mentioned as a considerable concern, with 15.24% individuals identifying it as having the greatest impact on residents' ability to secure basic needs and enjoy a high quality of life and 20.83% reporting that addictions were a factor impacting the ability of residents to secure meaningful employment. The most critical addictions, according to survey respondents, were drugs (95.83%), alcohol (85.42%), tobacco (20.83%), internet/video games (16.67%), and work/career obsession (14.58%). One community member stated, "We are getting a lot of homeless people due to drug abuse and most of them don't know of a starting point to get back on track."

Major factors noted as barriers to health service access include a lack of insurance (62.50%), inadequate insurance (50%), insufficient mental health services in the community (50%), a high cost of medical care (50%), and a shortage of primary care providers (37.50%). One community member addressed this in the statement, "Many do not have insurance and do not seek medical attention until they have no other choice but go to the E.R."

In closing, the community is concerned with the health of local residents and the ability of the community to meet their healthcare needs. The community calls for increased healthcare facilities, improved access to mental health services, and supportive measures for those battling addictions.

Agency Data

In 2022, the agency reported that 6,238 customers were uninsured, while 11,314 had some form of insurance. A minimal number (2) benefited from Affordable Care Act subsidies. Among those who were insured, the majority were covered by Medicaid (6,388) and Medicare (4,428), with a smaller number receiving benefits from the State Children's Healthcare Program (74) and State Health Insurance for Adults (146). There was also a significant number whose insurance type was unspecified (6,516).

A notable portion of the customer base, 4,385 individuals, were identified as disabled, with \$1,695 stating that they received SSI benefits, 56 reporting Social Security Disability, and 36 receiving VA Disability benefits.

In order to promote improved health and well-being within the region, the organization enrolled 76 individuals in programs to improve physical health, 769 in programs designed to improve caregiver

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

skills, 1,277 in programs promoting independent among senior residents, and 1,283 in programs promoting independence among disabled residents.

Services provided to these individuals included immunizations, physicals, developmental delay screenings, vision screenings, medication purchases, doctor visit payments, in-home care sessions for seniors or disabled individuals, health insurance counseling, dental exams, wellness classes, and exercise/fitness classes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Health Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Alcoholics Anonymous	912-287-8023	help solve the common problem (PIERCE, WARE)
Babies Can't Wait	912-284-2552	Early Intervention Program (ALL COUNTIES)
Behavioral Counseling and Intervention Management	478-494-2314	Mental Health Agency (TOOMBS)
Bethesda House of Mercy	912-283-8580	Addiction Recovery for women (PIERCE, WARE)
Calvary Baptist Church	912-283-5051	Clothing Closet (PIERCE, WARE)
Children's Medical Services	912-285-6304; 800-320-9839	Provides or coordinates specialty medical care services for children with chronic conditions in Georgia (ALL COUNTIES)
Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	912-514-1593; coastalrc.ga.gov/aging	In-home services, respite care (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Cord Of Three	912-282-0992	Mental Health Counseling (PIERCE, WARE)
Diversified Resources (SOURCE)	912-285-3089; 800-283-0041	Community based services like meals, caregiver respite, personal care support, adult day health services, etc. (PIERCE, WARE)
Diversity Health Care Medical Services	912-877-2227	Provides a variety of healthcare services for families/individuals at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. (LONG, WAYNE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov ; 877-423-4746; 711	Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids (ALL COUNTIES)
Easter Seal's Southern GA	912-283-4691; 877-541-7325	Services for individuals with developmental disabilities, respite home, residential options for adults, vocational training, and job placement. (PIERCE, WARE)
First Choice Georgia Pregnancy Clinic	912-538-0762	Free, confidential services to women with unplanned pregnancy (TOOMBS)
First United Methodist Church	912-283-2077	Food Assistance Wed 9:30-11, Financial Assistance and clothing dependent on availability (PIERCE, WARE)
Georgia Dept of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities	912-303-1670; dbhdd.georgia.gov	Public mental health, developmental disabilities, addictive disease and prevention services (ALL COUNTIES)
Georgia Substance Abuse	1-844-326-5400	(ALL COUNTIES)
Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	888-367-9913; hogarc.org/services/area_agency_on_aging.php	In-home services, respite care, personal care services (APPLING, CANDLER, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
Hooves to Freedom	912-550-3608	Therapeutic horsemanship (PIERCE, WARE)
Kingdom Care	912-287-4434	Free healthcare clinic for the uninsured or underinsured. (PIERCE, WARE)
Mary Street Mission	912-0338-8940	Offers assistance with food, utilities, medication, rent, gas Wednesdays 1-4 (PIERCE, WARE)
Med Connect Program	912-764-9500	Provides assistance with the acquisition of prescription meds, insurance consults, and assistance with applications (BULLOCH)
Perinatal Health Partners	912-284-2571	Perinatal Case Management offered to pregnant females. (PIERCE, WARE)
Pierce County health Dept	912-449-2033	Health services at low or no cost (PIERCE)
Pregnancy Resource Center	912-826-1133	Helps those facing an unplanned pregnancy by providing free and confidential pregnancy services. (EFFINGHAM)
Prescription Drug Discount Card by The City of Rincon	912-826-5745	offers prescription assistance to those whose prescription is not covered by insurance. City of Rincon only. (EFFINGHAM)
Salvation Army	912-285-7237	Food, clothing, financial services Mon-Thurs 8:30-2:30 (CHARLTON, PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Satilla Advocacy Services	912-285-7355; 912-283-0987	Rape Crisis and Child Advocacy Center; Prevention education (PIERCE, WARE)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Elderly & Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP); Wellness programs; Adult Day Care (ADC), Personal Care Services, Homemaker Services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Suicide Hotline	988	(ALL COUNTIES)
The Mercy Ministries	912-293-1476	Help uninsured, low-income individuals with free medical and dental care, counseling (TOOMBS)
Unison Behavioral Health	912-449-7100	Provides mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services (ATKINSON, BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Ware County health dept	855-473-4374	Health services at low or no cost (WARE)
Waynesville Baptist	912-778-4320	Clothing 2 nd and 4 th Tuesday 9-12pm (BRANTLEY)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

Many of the leading causes of death in the community are preventable through lifestyle changes and public health interventions. For example, there were 1,517 deaths attributed to heart disease and 899 deaths attributed to cancer. Encouraging healthier lifestyles, promoting regular physical activity, and facilitating access to nutritious foods can help mitigate the risk factors associated with these diseases, ultimately reducing mortality rates and improving population health.

There has been a commendable decrease of 3.57% in the uninsured population over the past five years. Increased access to health insurance can lead to improved healthcare utilization, preventive services, and overall health outcomes for residents. This reduction in the uninsured population demonstrates progress in expanding access to healthcare coverage and reducing financial barriers to medical care.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

A notable proportion of the population, approximately 19.74% of all adults (68,235 individuals), report poor to fair health status. This percentage exceeds the state average of 15%, indicating a higher prevalence of health-related issues within the community. Clinch (27%) and Atkinson (26%) counties report particularly high rates of poor health, suggesting localized disparities that may require targeted health interventions and resources.

Additionally, a concerning number of residents experience frequent physical distress, with 13% of the population reporting more than 14 days of severe health concerns each month. This figure surpasses the state average of 10%, indicating a higher prevalence of physical health challenges that may impact daily functioning and quality of life for individuals in the community.

Similarly, frequent mental distress is prevalent among 17% of the population, exceeding the state average of 15%. Mental health is a critical component of overall well-being, and the higher prevalence of mental distress underscores the need for increased access to mental health services, support resources, and stigma reduction efforts within the community.

These issues may be related to exhausted healthcare systems in the region, with a high patient-to-provider ratio across various specialties. For instance, there are approximately 4,605 patients for every physician, 7,469 patients per dentist, and 4,771 patients per mental health provider. These ratios exceed the state averages by significant margins, indicating potential challenges in accessing timely and quality healthcare services within the community.

Also, a substantial portion of the population (67,929 individuals) was noted as being uninsured. Lack of health insurance coverage can hinder access to essential healthcare services, preventive care, and treatment, posing barriers to addressing health needs and managing chronic conditions effectively.

Finally, the community exhibits a lower life expectancy of 74 years compared to the state average of 77.30 years. A shorter life expectancy can be indicative of various health and social determinants, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to address underlying factors contributing to premature mortality and improve overall population health outcomes.

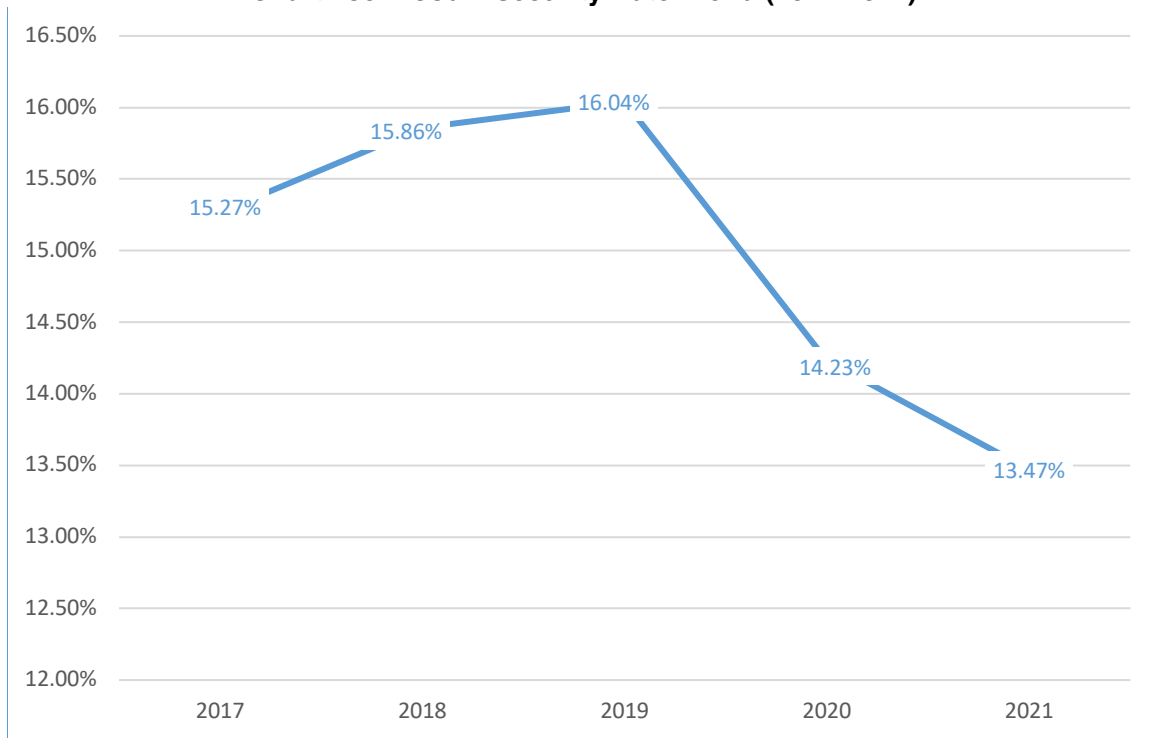
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Nutrition

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity, defined as a household's inability to provide adequate nutritional foods for every member to lead an active, healthy life, is intimately connected with health outcomes. Studies have consistently shown that individuals and families grappling with food insecurity are disproportionately affected by various health conditions, including Type 2 Diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and obesity. Furthermore, the consequences extend beyond physical health, with psychological and behavioral health issues also prevalent among family members in food-insecure households. At present, it is estimated that 57,130 local residents are food insecure.

Chart 136: Food Insecurity Rate Trend (2017-2021)



Source: Feeding America

Between 2017 and 2021, the most recent data available, food insecurity has improved by 11.79% after peaking at 16.04% in 2019. Although encouraging, the current rate is still higher than the state average of 10.70%.

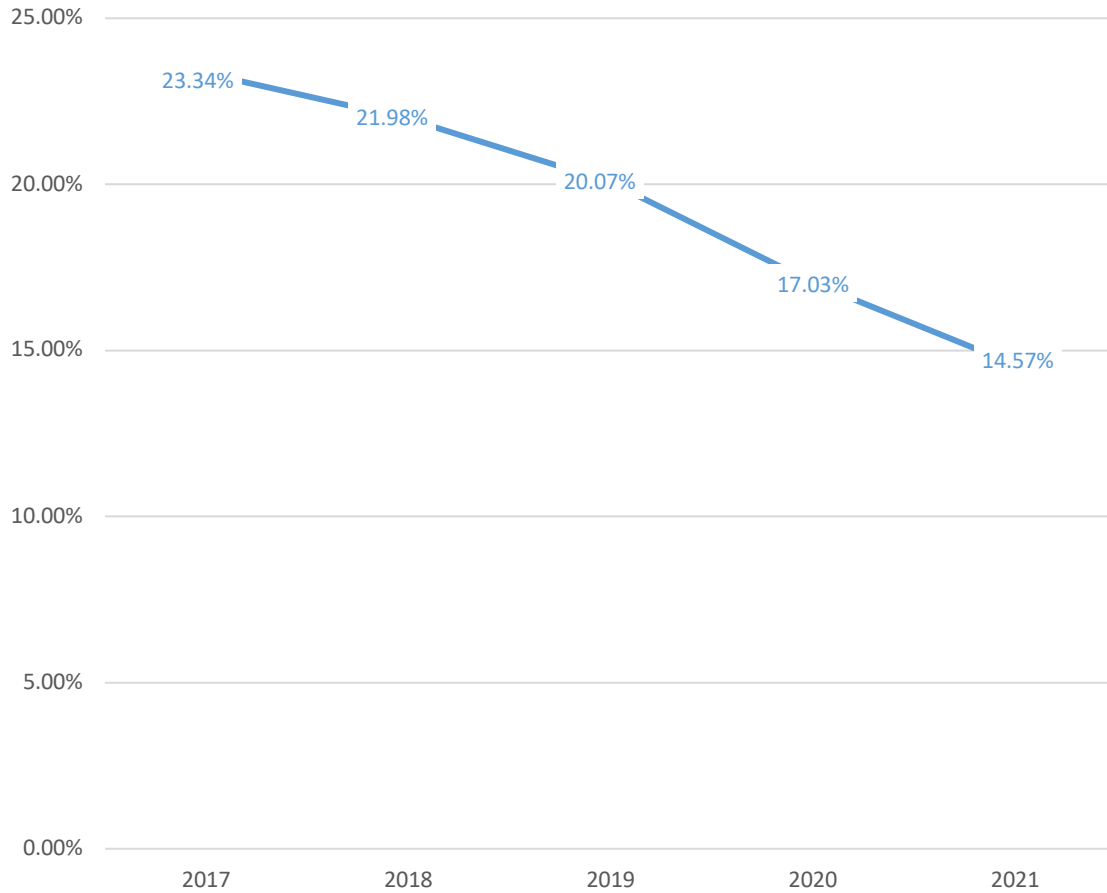
Individuals identifying as Black were noted as experiencing a significantly higher food insecurity rate (17%) than those identifying as White (7%). An estimated 12% of those identifying as Hispanic were found to be experiencing food insecurity.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Child Food Insecurity

For children, food insecurity can be even more damaging. Not only can a lack of nutrition lead to health concerns such as asthma and anemia, but it can also impact their future education through developmental delays (language, motor skills, etc.). Feeding America reports that food insecure children are more likely to fail a grade in school, and often have behavioral problems that lead to difficulty in social interactions with others.

Chart 137: Child Food Insecurity Trend (2017-2021)



Source: Feeding America

In 2021, approximately 14,660 children, equivalent to 14.57% of the child population, experienced food insecurity. This is a decrease of 37.57% from the rate of 23.34% reported in 2017.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Senior Food Insecurity

Another vulnerable population that should be considered when looking at the possibility of food insecurity is senior citizens. According to national statistics, nearly 1 in every 4 seniors in America faces the threat of hunger and/or malnutrition. This applies to those who aren't sure where their next meal is coming from as well as those who do not have access to healthy food options. The issue is so severe that the AARP reports that seniors face healthcare costs of more than \$130 billion each year due to medical issues stemming from hunger.

Although limited data is available for this age group, Feeding America reports that 8.00% of Georgia seniors (171,536) were food insecure in 2021. This means that Georgia is ranked in the top 10 in the number of food insecure seniors in the nation.

According to research, food insecure seniors are 233% more likely to suffer from depression, 90% more likely to experience asthma, 57% more likely to experience congestive heart failure, 32% more likely to experience limitations in activity, and 19% more likely to experience high blood pressure.

Estimated Food Insecurity Counts (All Ages)

Overall, it is estimated that among the 57,130 food insecure residents, 5,273 are senior citizens, 14,660 are children, and 37,197 are adults.

Table 230: Food Insecurity Estimates by Age (2022)

Area	Children	Adults	Senior	Total
<i>Appling</i>	770	1,581	259	2,610
<i>Atkinson</i>	370	742	88	1,200
<i>Bacon</i>	470	1,089	151	1,710
<i>Brantley</i>	390	1,680	240	2,310
<i>Bulloch</i>	2,270	6,987	753	10,010
<i>Candler</i>	470	1,128	162	1,760
<i>Charlton</i>	360	1,095	165	1,620
<i>Clinch</i>	320	647	83	1,050
<i>Coffee</i>	1,830	3,524	506	5,860
<i>Effingham</i>	800	3,528	622	4,950
<i>Evans</i>	450	814	146	1,410
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	520	1,453	177	2,150
<i>Long</i>	580	1,476	124	2,180
<i>Pierce</i>	550	1,538	272	2,360
<i>Tattnall</i>	640	2,061	279	2,980
<i>Toombs</i>	1,160	2,294	366	3,820
<i>Ware</i>	1,640	2,799	491	4,930
<i>Wayne</i>	1,070	2,758	392	4,220
Region	14,660	37,197	5,273	57,130

Source: Feeding America

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Food Affordability

The average cost per meal per person in the county is \$3.34. To put this cost into perspective, an average family of four spending this amount for each household member would need to budget an estimated of \$1,219 per month on food, or \$14,629 per year. This is nearly one-third (29.47%) of the median household income and 97.00% of the minimum wage salary.

At these rates, economically disadvantaged households are forced to seek outside subsidies in order to survive. The primary subsidy, utilized by 26,331 households, or 16.30% of the population, is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Formerly known as Food Stamps, this program provides low-income residents with a monthly allocation of funds that can be used exclusively for the purchase of food. It should be noted that the number of SNAP recipients has increased by 46 households, or 0.48%, over the past five years.

Table 231: SNAP Recipient Households (2022)

<i>Area</i>	SNAP Recipients	SNAP Recipients%
<i>Appling</i>	1,378	20.00%
<i>Atkinson</i>	660	21.55%
<i>Bacon</i>	662	16.94%
<i>Brantley</i>	1,340	20.15%
<i>Bulloch</i>	4,268	14.40%
<i>Candler</i>	693	16.89%
<i>Charlton</i>	986	24.39%
<i>Clinch</i>	463	19.41%
<i>Coffee</i>	2,432	16.33%
<i>Effingham</i>	1,642	7.20%
<i>Evans</i>	833	21.28%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	993	18.51%
<i>Long</i>	936	16.87%
<i>Pierce</i>	1,140	15.28%
<i>Tattnall</i>	1,371	18.15%
<i>Toombs</i>	2,249	23.06%
<i>Ware</i>	2,376	18.63%
<i>Wayne</i>	1,909	17.75%
Region	26,331	16.30%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (S2201)

Of the households receiving SNAP benefits, 34.51% have at least one worker in the home, 49.41% have at least one child in the home, 47.54% have at least one disabled household member, and 32.29% have at least one senior citizen in the home. The median income for all recipients was determined to be \$23,110 annually.

SNAP recipients in the community were noted as being predominately White (54.24%) and Black (37.15%), with much smaller portions of individuals identifying with other races. Only 2,081 individuals (7.90% of all SNAP recipients) identified as Hispanic.

Although SNAP subsidies are extremely beneficial for low-income families, the average benefit is \$1.40 per person per meal. This is less than half of the amount needed to sustain the nutritional needs of a person. For senior citizens the average benefit is slightly lower at \$1.16 per person per meal, with an estimated 20% having a benefit of \$0.17 per person per meal. This leaves those with the greatest income barriers with a need for additional subsidies.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

Food insecurity emerges as a substantial challenge, with 62.54% of all respondents identifying it as a critical condition of poverty. The implications of inadequate nutrition are far-reaching, impacting physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

Community feedback underscores the struggle to afford and access nutritious food. While several individuals addressed the issue, it was well explained in the comment, "The price of groceries has increased tremendously making it more difficult to purchase better quality foods." While there are some resources available to assist food insecure residents, respondents did not feel that they adequately meet the need. One person explained, "Many of our elderly only receive \$50 or less in food stamps and rely on food banks/family/church for meals." This statement highlights the plight faced by seniors, who often have to make tough choices due to limited resources. There were also concerns noted about the food distributed by local food banks, as residents stated that they give out the same food items each month."

Among the low-income residents polled, 24.56% stated that they had personally struggled with food insecurity during the past year.

The focus group discussions on nutrition echo the survey's findings on food insecurity, portraying a community deeply concerned with the quality and availability of food. In Effingham County, the statement "It's tough just making sure that everyone gets the proper nutrition and has the healthy food choices," reflects the broader challenge of accessing healthy options, particularly for those managing health conditions like diabetes .

Residents across the counties share their struggles, such as in Jeff Davis, where the inadequacy of SNAP benefits is evident: "I get a big ol' \$23 a month in Food Stamps," a sentiment that is shared by a resident in Long who points out the stark choice: "It's either pay your bills or buy your groceries" . Another significant insight comes from Pierce, where a resident points out the long waiting times and bureaucracy involved in getting food stamp approval: "It's taking longer for clients to get approved or reapproved for food stamps". One focus group participant expressed concerns with the ability to afford diabetic foods, explaining that they are also generally not available at local food pantries.

Although seniors expressed gratitude for the food offerings at local centers, there were concerns noted at a few locations. In Tattnall County, one consumer explained, "I wish we could get some different food in the senior center. We get the same things over and over again. Baked beans, raw beans, beans, beans, and more beans." Another resident of Wayne County stated, "We get meals at the senior center, but they have to haul in our meals. By the time we get them they are cold." It should be noted that this center is currently in a temporary location and is expected to have its own kitchen in the future.

In summary, the focus groups amplify the survey data, providing a vivid and human perspective on the community's fight against food insecurity. They reveal a clear necessity for more substantial and targeted interventions to enhance food assistance programs, ensure diversity in food offerings, and improve access to fresh and nutritious food for all, especially seniors and those with health conditions.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Agency Data

In 2022, a total of 8,634 households containing 13,409 individuals who were served by the organization reported receipt of food subsidies, with average monthly amount of \$295.46. The average household income for those receiving food subsidies was \$13,293.70, with a poverty percentage rate of 82.42%. Among these, more than half (55.62%) were single-person households, followed by single parent households (34.16%), adults without children (6.27%), and two-parent households (3.95%).

The median age for recipients was 37.37 years, with 2,968 being seniors (22.13%), 3,711 being school-aged children (27.68%), and 777 being young children (5.79%). A total of 3,329 SNAP recipients served by the organization (24.83%) reported having a disability.

A strong majority of the SNAP recipients identified as Black/African American (72.95%), with 22.57% identifying as White. When considering gender, slightly more were female (66.01%) as opposed to male (33.99%).

During Fiscal Year 2022, 735 customers were enrolled in programs designed to provide access to food. Food was provided through prepared meals and grocery allocations.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Food and Nutrition Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
A New Beginning Church	912-545-3141	Food Pantry 3rd Saturday 9-12 (LONG)
Action Pact - Bulloch County Senior Center	912-489-1604; myactionpact.org	Daily activities, meals, socialization (BULLOCH)
Action Pact - Evans County Senior Center	912-739-1705	(EVANS)
Action Pact - Jeff Davis County Senior Center	912-375-3603	(JEFF DAVIS)
Action Pact - Long County Senior Center	912-545-2435	(LONG)
Action Pact - Pierce County Senior Center	912-449-0145	(PIERCE)
Action Pact - Tattnall County Senior Center	912-557-6032	(TATTNALL)
Action Pact - Toombs County Senior Center	912-537-0453	(TOOMBS)
Action Pact - Wayne County Senior Center	912-427-7797	(WAYNE)
Akin Memorial United Methodist	912-266-5599	Food pantry 2nd Sunday 8:30-10:30 (BRANTLEY)
Alma Church of God	912-632-4793	Food pantry Monday 4-5pm. (BACON)
America's Second Harvest of Coastal GA	912-261-7979	(WAYNE)
Appling County Food Bank	912-366-3663	Food Pantry Tuesday-Thursday 10am-2pm. (APPLING)
Bacon County Senior Adult Center	912-632-8954	(BACON)
Bay Harbor Church of God	912-258-3283	Food pantry 2 nd and 4 th Thursdays 11-1 (BRANTLEY)
Baxley Church of God	912-367-2085	Emergency food pantry. Call for hours. (APPLING)
Believers Church Reidsville	912-237-1246	Food Pantry Last Thursday 6-7:30pm (TATTNALL)
Bethesda House of Mercy	912-283-8580	Addiction Recovery for women (PIERCE, WARE)
Brantley Senior Center	912-462-6525	(BRANTLEY)
C.E. Weir Senior Citizens Center	912-384-5978	(COFFEE)
City of David	912-682-8181	Food Pantry 3rd Thursday 12-2 (BULLOCH)
Community Shelf	912-632-4710	(BACON)
Compassion Christian Effingham	912-925-9657	Food Pantry Saturdays 10-12 (EFFINGHAM)
DC Downtown	301 Brunei St, Waycross, GA	Food and Clothing, Tuesdays 4-8pm (PIERCE, WARE)
Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS)	Georgia.gov; 877-423-4746; 711	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, provides monthly funds for families to purchase groceries. (ALL COUNTIES)
Dream Center Outreach	912-293-4618	Food Pantry Thursday 1-3pm (TOOMBS)
Eastern Heights Baptist Church	912-764-9151	Food Pantry 2nd Saturday 9-11am (BULLOCH)
Effingham County Senior Citizens Center	912-754-2138	(EFFINGHAM)
Evans County Food Pantry	912-290-1375	Food Pantry Tuesdays 3-5pm (EVANS)
Evergreen True Vine	912-583-4428	Food Pantry 3rd Saturday 9-11 (TOOMBS)
Fifth Street Food Pantry	912-632-4288	(BACON)
First Christian Church	912-283-5818	Food Pantry Thursdays 1-3 (PIERCE, WARE)
First Presbyterian Church	912-283-5077	Minimal groceries available throughout the week. Financial assistance Monday 10-11 (PIERCE, WARE)
First United Methodist Church	912-283-2077	Food Assistance Wed 9:30-11, Financial Assistance and clothing dependent on availability (PIERCE, WARE)
First United Pentecostal Church	912-347-5047	Food Pantry 1st & 3rd Tuesday 6pm (TATTNALL)
Folkston COG	912-496-3500	(CHARLTON)
Friendship Baptist Church	912-865-4165	Wednesday 11-2pm (BULLOCH)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Food Bank Inc	912-489-3663	Food pantry Mon-Fri 11-4; Soup Kitchen Tues & Thurs 12-1pm (BULLOCH)
Glow Ministries	912-826-3966	Food Pantry Monday & Wednesday 9-12 (EFFINGHAM)
God's Mission House	912-754-0840	Food Pantry Mon-Wed 9-11:45am (EFFINGHAM)
God's Storehouse	912-538-1730	Food Pantry 2nd & 3rd Wed 9-3pm (TOOMBS)
Grace Assembly of God	912-427-9223	2nd Saturday 10-12 (WAYNE)
Guyton Community Food Pantry Db The Fillin' Station	912-722-3478	Tues & Thurs 10-1pm (BULLOCH)
Hazlehurst Housing Authority	912-375-7299	Emergency Pantry. Call for details (JEFF DAVIS)
Helping Hands	912-240-0181	Food Pantry Tues & Thurs 10-2 (JEFF DAVIS)
Hickox Baptist Church	912-462-6310	Food pantry Wednesday 10-11:30 (BRANTLEY)
Lyons Free Will Baptist Church	912-526-4320	Food Pantry Monday 10-12 (TOOMBS)
Manna House Ministries	912-826-2037	Food Pantry Monday 12-3, Thursday 10-3 (EFFINGHAM)
Mary Street Mission	912-0338-8940	Offers assistance with food, utilities, medication, rent, gas Wednesdays 1-4 (PIERCE, WARE)
Metter Presbyterian	912-685-9293	Food Pantry Wednesday 10-12 (CANDLER)
Midway Baptist Church	912-367-2893	Emergency food pantry and soup kitchen Wednesday at 6pm. (APPLING)
Mobile Food Pantry	912-651-7730	Brings fresh produce and pantry items to remote and underserved areas (APPLING, BACON, BRANTLEY, BULLOCH, CANDLER, CHARLTON, EFFINGHAM, EVANS, JEFF DAVIS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, TOOMBS, WAYNE)
New Life Pentecostal Church	912-256-6296	Food Pantry 3rd Saturday 9-12 (WAYNE)
Oasis Church of God	912-526-5060	Food Pantry Mon & Tues 3-5pm; Friday 8-2pm (TOOMBS)
Ogeechee River Baptist	912-489-2407	Food Pantry Monday 1-5pm (BULLOCH)
Papa & Nana's Food Pantry & More	904-534-7777	(CHARLTON)
Pearson Senior Citizens Center	912-422-7422	(ATKINSON)
Pierce County Family Connection	912-230-7835	(PIERCE)
Pierce County Food Pantry	711 Hendry St. Blackshear, GA	Food distributions Mon, Wed, & Fri (PIERCE)
Power Pack Outreach Ministries	912-334-0399	Food Pantry 2nd Saturday 10-2pm (EVANS)
Reidsville Baptist Church	912-557-6204	Food Pantry 3rd Thursday 9-11 (TATTNALL)
Reidsville United Methodist	912-557-6744	Food Pantry 1st & 3rd Friday 8-9:30am (TATTNALL)
Riverside Christian Center	912-288-4803	Food pantry 3rd Saturday 7:30-12p (BRANTLEY)
Salvation Army	912-285-7237	Food, clothing, financial services Mon-Thurs 8:30-2:30 (PIERCE, WARE)
Second Harvest	912-261-7979	(CHARLTON)
Southeast Georgia Community Projects	912-526-5451	Food Pantry Tues - Thurs 9-11:30 (TOOMBS)
Springfield Missionary Baptist	912-237-8578	Food Pantry 4th Saturday 7:30-10:30am (TATTNALL)
St. Boniface Outreach	912-754-7473	Food Pantry, Emergency. Call for hours. (EFFINGHAM)
St. Joseph Catholic Church Loaves & Fishes	912-283-5221	Food, Clothing, financial services Thursdays 10-11:30. Call Monday for appt (PIERCE, WARE)
St. Matthews AME Church	912-375-3516	Food Pantry Last Sunday 11-12 (JEFF DAVIS)
Tabitha's Place	912-256-2113	Food, Soup Kitchen (WAYNE)
The Bridge Candler Co Outreach	912-685-2900	Food Pantry M-Thurs 9-11 (CANDLER)
The Refinery	912-816-3806	Food Pantry 4th Tuesday 6-6:30pm (WARE)
The Sycamore Tree	912-807-4673	Food Pantry Tues & Thurs 10-12 & 2-6 (PIERCE)
Unity Church of God	912-294-0462	Food Pantry Tuesday 1:30-3:30 (WAYNE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Upper Room Temple	912-876-0630	Provides a food pantry every 3rd Saturday 8-11am (APPLING)
Ware County Food Bank	912-283-8634	(WARE)
Ware County Senior Center	912-285-9800	(WARE)
Waycross House of Hope	912-287-0377	Offers food and financial assistance Tuesdays 9-12 (PIERCE, WARE)
Waynesville Church of God	912-778-4884	(BRANTLEY)
Waynesville Missionary Baptist	912-778-4320	Food pantry 2 nd and 4 th Tuesday 9-12 (BRANTLEY)
Willacoochee Senior Center	912-534-5450	Congregate and home delivered meals. (ATKINSON)
Wings of Hope Outreach	912-526-6078	Food Pantry Thursday 10-12 (TOOMBS)
Winona Park United Methodist Church	912-283-7793	Canned and dry foods as needed (PIERCE, WARE)
WWLTC Outreach Ministry	912-496-1019	Food Pantry 1st Saturday 9-12 (CHARLTON)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

The community has made notable progress in addressing food insecurity, with significant improvements observed over the past few years. First, there has been a marked decrease in overall food insecurity, with rates declining by 11.79%. This positive trend suggests that efforts to improve food access and affordability have been effective, leading to a reduction in the number of individuals and households experiencing food insecurity within the community.

Moreover, child food insecurity has seen a substantial decrease of 37.57%, indicating targeted interventions and programs aimed at supporting vulnerable children and families have been successful. Ensuring food security for children is essential for their growth, development, and overall well-being, and the significant reduction in child food insecurity reflects positive outcomes for the community's youngest members.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

Despite some progress in addressing food insecurity, the community still faces significant challenges in ensuring access to an adequate and nutritious diet for all residents. First, the prevalence of food insecurity remains high, with an estimated 57,130 residents, or 13.47% of the population, experiencing food insecurity. This rate is higher than the state average of 10.70%, indicating a heightened level of food insecurity within the community compared to the broader region.

Of particular concern is the significant number of vulnerable populations affected by food insecurity. For example, 14,660 children, representing 14.57% of all children in the community, are food insecure. Children experiencing food insecurity are at risk of adverse health outcomes and may face challenges in their physical, cognitive, and emotional development.

Similarly, 5,272 seniors, comprising 8% of the senior population, are affected by food insecurity. Older adults experiencing food insecurity may be more susceptible to chronic health conditions and nutritional deficiencies, further exacerbating health disparities and reducing their quality of life.

Additionally, a substantial number of working-aged adults, totaling 37,197 individuals, are food insecure. Food insecurity among working adults underscores the challenges faced by low-income individuals and families who may struggle to afford basic necessities despite being employed, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems and economic opportunities to address underlying factors contributing to food insecurity.

Finally, the high cost of food relative to income poses a significant barrier to food access and affordability for many residents. With the average cost of a meal at \$3.34 per person, families may face financial strain in meeting their dietary needs, particularly those living on limited incomes. For example, the cost of food for an average family of four accounts for 29.47% of the median income and a staggering 97% of a minimum wage income, underscoring the financial burden of food expenses on households with limited financial resources.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation

Transportation Availability

While transportation can be a major barrier to self-sufficiency by limiting access to employment and education, it can also impact a person’s quality of life by preventing them from securing healthcare, food, and other life necessities. An article in the New York Times titled “Transportation Emerges as Crucial to Escaping Poverty” reports that the impact of transportation on social mobility is stronger than many other factors, such as crime, elementary-school test scores, or the percentage of two-parent families in a community.

The article, based on studies conducted by Harvard University and New York’s Rudin Center of Transportation, emphasized the strong link between the availability of public transportation systems and income. Researchers compared neighborhoods by accessibility to mass transit and the number of jobs within an hour’s commute. Residents of the areas least served by mass transit relied on personal vehicles. Those with some, but insufficient, access to transportation had the highest unemployment rates and the lowest incomes.

In 2022, the U.S. Census Bureau identified 10,056 households in the service area without a vehicle. Although 4,804 of those without a vehicle (77.82%) do not contain a member of the labor force, these households could struggle to obtain basic needs. For the remaining 1,369, the lack of transportation impacts their ability to secure/maintain employment.

Table 232: Number of Vehicles per Household (2022)

Area	0	1	2	3	4+
<i>Appling</i>	508	1,996	2,582	1,261	543
<i>Atkinson</i>	134	1,214	862	455	398
<i>Bacon</i>	289	1,174	1,233	859	354
<i>Brantley</i>	434	2,402	2,414	961	438
<i>Bulloch</i>	1,610	9,903	10,776	4,896	2,449
<i>Candler</i>	245	1,506	1,364	720	268
<i>Charlton</i>	227	1,322	1,248	809	437
<i>Clinch</i>	255	614	810	574	132
<i>Coffee</i>	947	4,779	5,514	2,594	1,060
<i>Effingham</i>	553	4,661	11,282	4,512	1,812
<i>Evans</i>	159	1,713	1,147	647	248
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	412	1,938	1,877	693	445
<i>Long</i>	440	1,594	2,039	989	485
<i>Pierce</i>	245	2,113	2,977	1,529	596
<i>Tattnall</i>	468	2,664	2,529	1,460	431
<i>Toombs</i>	1,008	3,366	3,238	1,330	812
<i>Ware</i>	1,391	5,119	4,324	1,331	591
<i>Wayne</i>	731	3,612	3,813	1,565	1,033
Region	10,056	51,690	60,029	27,185	12,532

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (B08203)

An additional 51,690 households were identified as having only one vehicle in the home. Of these, an estimated 3,011 had at least one family member working in the home. While these households would have access to basic necessities unless the condition of the vehicle produced a barrier of some type, secondary household members may face difficulties improving education/skills and securing employment due to a lack of transportation. Overall, an estimated 5,491 households have more workers than vehicles in the home and 8,502 total households (5.26%) have a transportation employment barrier of some type. Based on the average household size of 2.69, an estimated 22,870 local residents may be impacted overall.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The data indicates a 6.89% rise in households lacking a vehicle over the past five years. However, there's a more pronounced 10.66% increase in the number of households owning one or more vehicles. Despite the increase in households without a vehicle, the portion of households in the community without a vehicle has actually decreased by 3.11% as a result of population change.

Chart 138: Vehicle Ownership Trend (2018-2022)



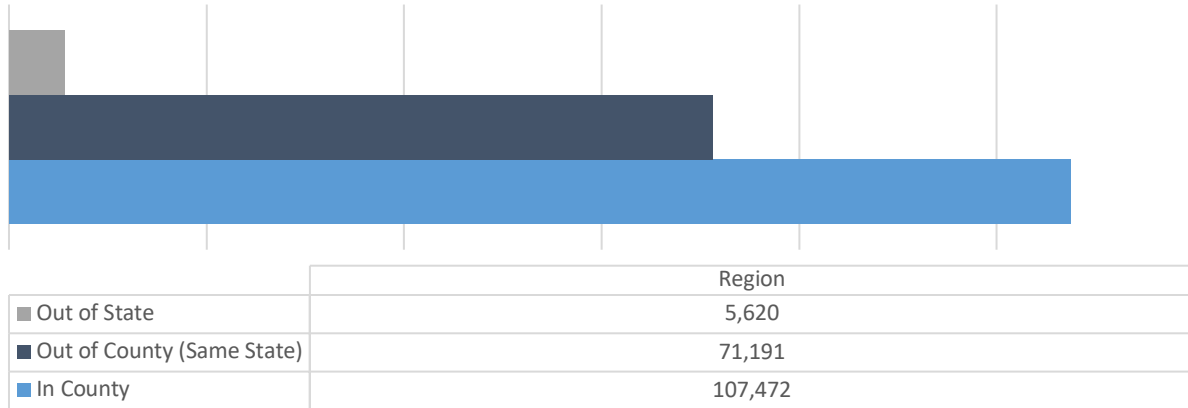
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (B08203)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Commutes

Commuting patterns significantly influence the daily lives of residents, particularly those with restricted access to transportation or living in poverty. For such individuals, the distance between home and work can represent not just a physical journey but a barrier to employment opportunities, potentially limiting their access to higher-paying jobs that are often located farther away. This can perpetuate the cycle of poverty by confining job seekers to a smaller pool of local, possibly lower-wage employment options. Moreover, lengthy commutes can lead to increased expenses, time away from family, and stress, further impacting the quality of life and work-life balance.

Chart 139: Worker Commutes (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (B08007)

In the service area, an estimated 76,811 individuals (41.68%) travel outside of their county of residence for employment, with 5,620 of these having to travel out of state for work. The remaining 107,472 residents work in their county of residence. Over the past five years, the number of residents commuting out of the county for work has increased by 17.61%.

Table 233: Worker Commutes by County (2022)

Area	Total Workers	In County	Out of County	Out of State
<i>Appling</i>	7,195	5,115	1,960	120
<i>Atkinson</i>	3,523	1,838	1,673	12
<i>Bacon</i>	4,213	2,586	1,547	80
<i>Brantley</i>	6,865	1,767	4,815	283
<i>Bulloch</i>	34,969	23,972	10,390	607
<i>Candler</i>	4,429	2,324	2,079	26
<i>Charlton</i>	4,961	2,078	1,215	1,668
<i>Clinch</i>	2,512	1,699	588	225
<i>Coffee</i>	17,589	14,742	2,578	269
<i>Effingham</i>	30,689	11,129	18,042	1,518
<i>Evans</i>	4,262	2,358	1,904	0
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	5,757	3,509	2,196	52
<i>Long</i>	7,445	1,733	5,512	200
<i>Pierce</i>	8,446	3,264	5,098	84
<i>Tattnall</i>	7,609	4,258	3,298	53
<i>Toombs</i>	9,940	6,992	2,927	21
<i>Ware</i>	12,933	10,169	2,547	217
<i>Wayne</i>	10,946	7,939	2,822	185
Region	184,283	107,472	71,191	5,620

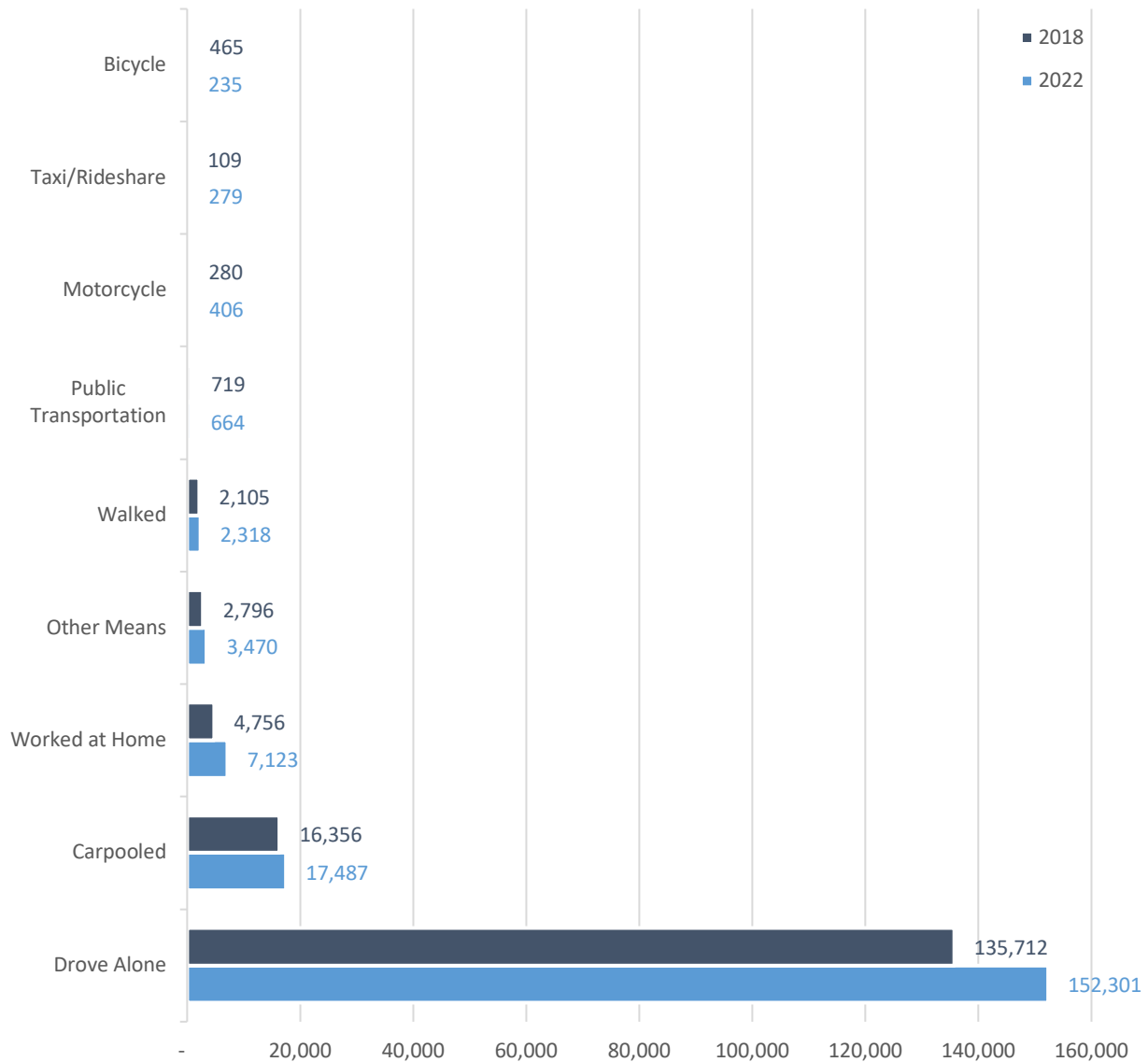
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (B08203)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When looking at specific communities within the larger region, the largest percentage of residents commuting outside of their county of residence was found in Long County, at 76.72%. This represents more than one-third of the local labor force. This was followed by Brantley (74.26%), Effingham (63.74%), and Pierce Counties. The lowest rate was identified in Coffee County, at 16.19%.

In 2022, the predominant method of commuting in the region was driving alone, with 152,301 individuals using this mode of transportation. Carpooling was the next most popular choice, with 17,487 individuals sharing rides. An estimated 7,123 members of the labor force reported working from home, reflected a modern shift toward telecommuting.

Chart 140: Commute Method (2018/2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (B08301)

Over the past five years, the region experienced an increase of 49.77% in workers who worked from home. There was also an increase of 12.22% who drove alone, and 6.91% who utilized carpooling. Decreases were experienced among those who used bicycles (-19.46%) and public transportation (-7.65%).

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In 2022, the average commute time in the region was recorded at 25.04 minutes. This is shorter than both the national (26.70) and state (28.40) averages, although representing an increase of 4.38% from the 23.99 median in 2018. The communities with the longest commute times include Brantley (31.10 minutes), Long (31.00 minutes), and Effingham (30.00 minutes) counties. The shortest commute was found in Coffee County (18.00 minutes).

Chart 234: Average Commute Times by County (2018/2022)

<i>Area</i>	2018	2022	% Change
<i>Appling</i>	22.80	22.50	-1.32%
<i>Atkinson</i>	22.50	25.40	+12.89%
<i>Bacon</i>	19.40	22.00	+13.40%
<i>Brantley</i>	29.60	31.10	+5.07%
<i>Bulloch</i>	21.70	24.50	+12.90%
<i>Candler</i>	21.20	23.60	+11.32%
<i>Charlton</i>	32.50	26.10	-19.69%
<i>Clinch</i>	18.00	23.50	+30.56%
<i>Coffee</i>	19.60	18.00	-8.16%
<i>Effingham</i>	32.00	30.00	-6.25%
<i>Evans</i>	24.80	24.10	-2.82%
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	22.50	23.20	+3.11%
<i>Long</i>	30.20	31.00	+2.65%
<i>Pierce</i>	25.40	26.00	+2.36%
<i>Tattall</i>	24.90	27.00	+8.43%
<i>Toombs</i>	19.90	24.60	+23.62%
<i>Ware</i>	20.20	21.40	+5.94%
<i>Wayne</i>	24.70	26.80	+8.50%
Region	23.99	25.04	+4.38%
State	28.40	28.40	No Change
Nation	26.60	26.70	+0.38%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (DP03)

Increases were identified in thirteen of the eighteen (72.22%) communities within the region. The most significant increase was identified in Clinch (+30.56%), followed by Toombs (+23.62%). Decreases were identified in Charlton (-19.69%), Coffee (-8.16%), Effingham (-6.25%), Evans (-2.82%), and Appling (-1.32%) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

Transportation emerges as a critical domain within the community, with 23.78% of the survey respondents indicating that a lack of personal transportation presents a formidable barrier to meeting basic needs and accessing employment opportunities.

The community comments vividly illustrate the daily struggles faced by residents due to inadequate transportation infrastructure. One respondent explained, "Many people do not have reliable transportation to much-needed doctor visits," expressing the essential role transportation plays in accessing healthcare services. Also, the lack of transportation emerged as the leading barrier to meaningful employment, with 65.28% of respondents naming it as a major concern in this regard.

When asked about the inadequacies of public transportation, 80.56% stated that there was no public transportation available, 30.56% stated that the service was unreliable, and 16.67% claimed that the local systems had limited routes, high costs, and a lack of disability accommodations.

Survey respondents also noted a number of concerns associated with personal transportation, including the high cost of repairs (54.31%), many having minor mechanical issues (41.62%), many having major mechanical issues (41.62%), frequent breakdowns (39.09%), and the lack of valid insurance (35.03%).

The qualitative feedback provided additional information concerning these issues, especially where the high cost of automobiles and maintenance puts a strain on already tight household budgets. The sentiment, "People with low incomes can't afford reliable vehicles," shared by a community member, echoes the broader challenge of affordability and reliability in transportation.

Focus group discussions highlight the gravity of transportation challenges in the community. A resident from Atkinson County voices a common issue: "Not having transportation to get to work is a big issue." This sentiment is echoed in Bacon County, where unreliability of Medicaid Transportation services is cited, emphasizing the unpredictability residents face: "You can call weeks in advance, and they may show up and they may not show up." The concern is further magnified by a candid revelation from another Bacon resident, stating, "I would say that reliable transportation is the biggest barrier for people trying to escape poverty."

The inadequacy of transportation options is not just about accessibility but also about safety and practicality. As a senior in Brantley County shares, "I have a neighbor that has a car, but he shouldn't be driving." The issue extends beyond seniors, with a Pierce County resident highlighting the broader social impact: "Transportation is really the biggest issue in our community. If you don't have a job, how are you going to get a job if you can't get there?"

In conclusion, the community feedback, reinforced by the survey data, clearly indicates the need for improved and affordable transportation solutions. Addressing this need is vital for enhancing the community's overall well-being and economic vitality. A well-designed transportation system would not only provide critical access to employment and services but would also empower residents to be more self-sufficient, reduce isolation, and contribute to the social and economic fabric of the community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Agency Data

In 2022, 411 of the organization's customers (2.81%) lacked access to any transportation, with a strong majority (74.94%) owning a vehicle, 22.99% primarily relying on others, 1.31% reported walking, and 0.77% using public transportation (112 individuals).

The average cost of transportation among the customer served was \$171.90 per month, with the cost being higher among those that owned a vehicle (\$206.47), and significantly less for those who walk (\$56.55). Residents who use public transportation paid an average of \$99.51 monthly, with those relying on others paying an average of \$85.93.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Transportation Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia Area Agency on Aging	912-514-1593; coastalrc.ga.gov/aging	Access to public services. (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
General Public Transport	866-543-6744	A demand-response, advance reservation service that provides transportation for those who live in the coastal region. (BULLOCH, EFFINGHAM, LONG)
Logisticare	888-224-7988	Transportation for Medicaid patients (TOOMBS)
Mary Street Mission	912-0338-8940	Offers assistance with food, utilities, medication, rent, gas Wednesdays 1-4 (PIERCE, WARE)
Pierce County Transit	912-449-1825	Transportation in Pierce County (PIERCE)
Southern GA Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging	888-73-AGING; sgrc.us/aaa.html	Coordinate transportation for aging, TANF, and mental health clients. (BACON, BRANTLEY, CHARLTON, CLINCH, COFFEE, PIERCE, WARE)
Ware County Transit	912-283-7800	0-10 miles \$3; 11+ miles \$3 +\$.50/mile (WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

A vast majority of households, totaling 151,436 or 93.77% of the population, have access to at least one vehicle. This high rate of vehicle ownership indicates a widespread ability to travel independently, enhancing mobility and accessibility to various destinations within and outside the community.

Over the past five years, there has been a significant rise of 10.66% in the number of households with access to vehicles. This upward trend reflects improving accessibility to personal transportation options, which can positively impact residents' ability to commute, run errands, and participate in social and recreational activities.

A substantial portion of the community's workforce, comprising 107,472 individuals or 58.32% of commuters, engages in intra-county commuting. This suggests a reliance on local transportation networks for daily travel needs, contributing to reduced traffic congestion and shorter commute times within the county.

Coffee County stands out for its low average commute time, with commuters experiencing an average travel duration of just 18 minutes. This efficient commute time reflects well-developed transportation infrastructure and effective traffic management practices, allowing residents to save time and enjoy a smoother commuting experience.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

The community faces significant challenges in providing accessible and reliable transportation options for residents, particularly those who lack access to private vehicles. Firstly, a considerable portion of the population, totaling 10,056 individuals, do not own a vehicle, with 3,011 of them being part of the workforce. Among those with a vehicle, 5,491 households have more workers than available cars, further exacerbating transportation challenges for families reliant on limited vehicles. Overall, it is estimated that 8,502 local households have transportation barriers impacting their ability to secure and maintain employment.

The increase of 6.89% in households without a car over the past five years underscores the growing transportation inequities within the community, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges and improve transportation accessibility for all residents.

Finally, a significant number of individuals in the labor force, totaling 76,811 members, commute outside of their county of residence for work, with 5,620 individuals commuting out of state. This reliance on long-distance commuting may contribute to increased travel times, transportation costs, and environmental impacts, underscoring the need for improved local employment opportunities and transportation infrastructure to reduce reliance on long-distance commuting and enhance economic resilience within the community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Family Relationships

In 2017, the National Institute of Health reported that family relationships play a central role in the shaping of an individual's well-being. Family members are linked in important ways through each stage of life, and these relationships are an important source of social connection and social influence. The quality of these relationships can influence well-being through psychosocial, behavioral, and physiological pathways. Further, the article explains that negative relationships can produce stress, which undermines the health and well-being by impairment of immune function, impacting cardiovascular health, and increasing the risk of depression.

Domestic Violence

The study concludes that romantic relationships are one of the most important types of relationships, defining life context and impacting well-being throughout adulthood. A happy relationship is generally associated with increased mental and physical health due to strong social support, enhanced self-esteem, improved health behaviors, and a better ability to cope with stress. Individuals in relationships full of conflict, however, are more likely to report depressive symptoms and poor health. In fact, a number of studies suggest that the negative aspects of poor relationships have a stronger impact on well-being than the positive aspects of good relationships.

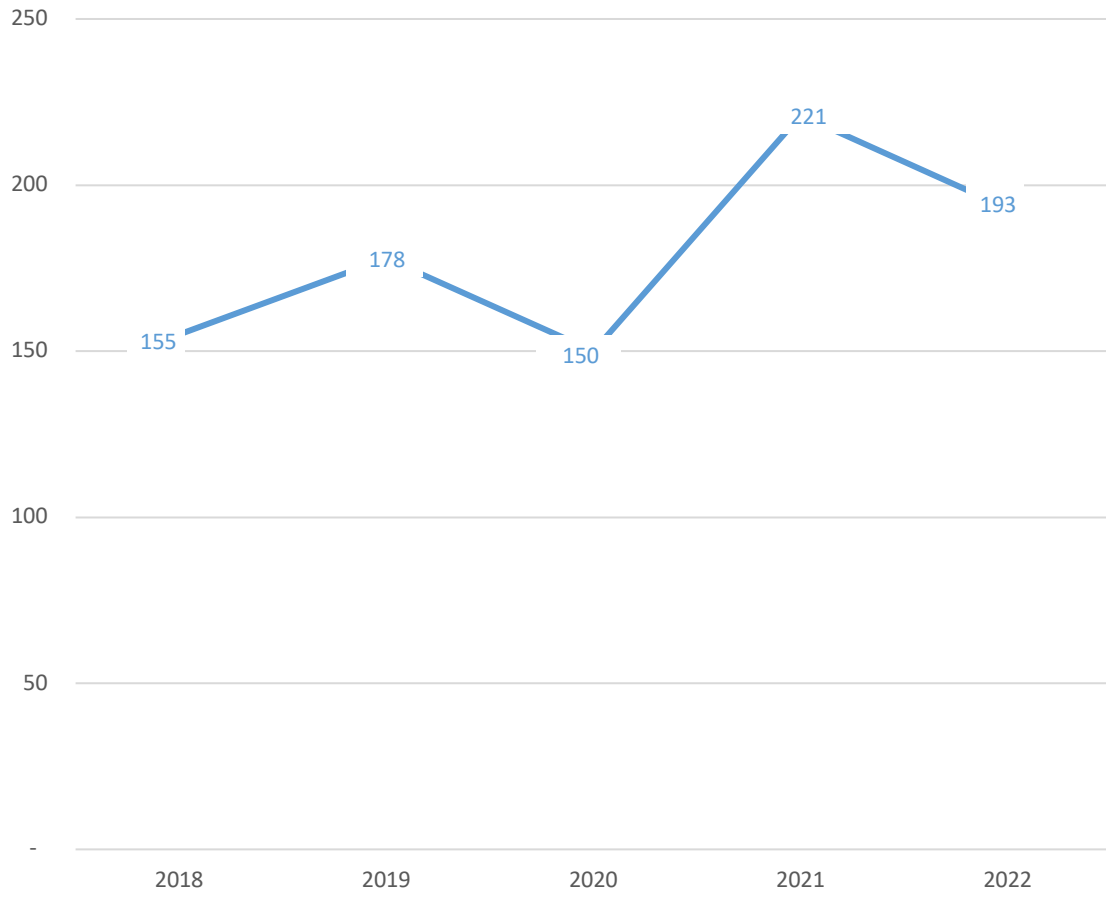
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A 2023 study conducted by the Georgia Commission on Family Violence found that there were 129,528 crisis calls to Georgia's certified family violence and sexual assault agencies, a 13% increase from 2021 crisis calls. Further, there were 17,682 family violence and Ex Parte Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs) issued during this year.

The report continued to explain that 897 Georgia citizens lost their lives due to domestic violence in the past five years. While the data indicates that the number of deaths fluctuates, the overall trend shows an increase of 24.52% during this time. Firearms were the cause of death in 81% of these cases.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 141: Georgia Domestic Violence Deaths (2018-2022)



Source: Georgia Commission on Family Violence

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Parenting

Even in the strongest of relationships, couples who have children often struggle to provide a healthy environment that meets a child’s need for emotional, social, cultural, educational, and relational security. The National Institute of Health specifically addressed the complexities of parent-child relationships, finding that parenthood generates rewards and stressors, both of which have important implications for well-being. While parenthood can increase social integration, it also has the potential of producing stress and diminishing well-being. In the service area, a total of 53,959 households (33.41%) have at least one child under the age of 18 living in the home.

Births

The Georgia Department of Public Health documented a total of 5,619 births in 2022. Based on five-year averages, it is estimated that 5,604 women are pregnant during any given year.

Table 235: Annual Births (2018-2022)

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average
<i>Appling</i>	224	223	211	214	216	218
<i>Atkinson</i>	126	136	121	112	133	126
<i>Bacon</i>	155	132	165	114	137	141
<i>Brantley</i>	242	202	208	207	213	214
<i>Bulloch</i>	901	899	865	861	878	881
<i>Candler</i>	126	140	138	154	142	140
<i>Charlton</i>	106	108	110	116	111	110
<i>Clinch</i>	80	103	101	96	86	93
<i>Coffee</i>	577	559	549	563	580	566
<i>Effingham</i>	805	811	808	858	843	825
<i>Evans</i>	116	138	140	118	122	127
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	170	209	189	159	167	180
<i>Long</i>	303	279	268	284	307	288
<i>Pierce</i>	268	241	222	239	261	246
<i>Tattnall</i>	244	240	244	266	276	254
<i>Toombs</i>	358	375	387	362	393	375
<i>Ware</i>	490	497	481	453	428	470
<i>Wayne</i>	353	357	342	344	326	344
Region	5,651	5,649	5,549	5,550	5,619	5,604

Source: Georgia Department of Public Health

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Single Parent Households

For single parents, especially those without a strong external support system, the emotional and financial stress can be overwhelming. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are an estimated 13,049 single parents in the local service area, a strong majority of which (81.40%) are headed by a female householder.

Table 236: Single Parent Households (2022)

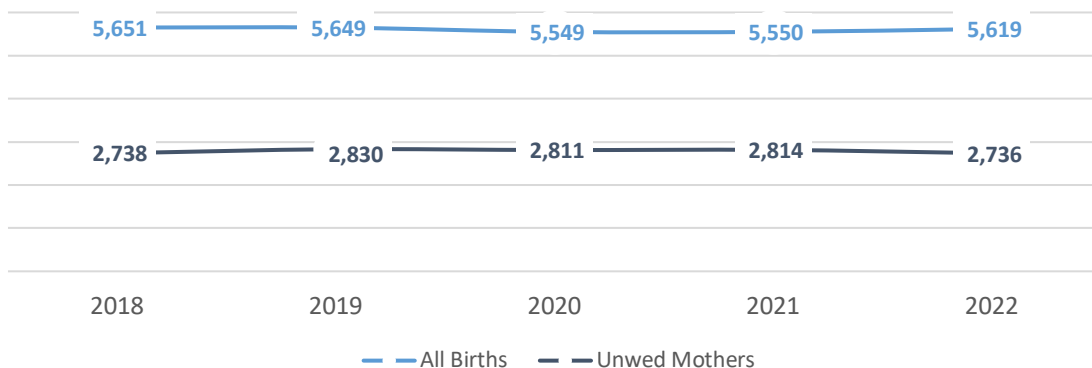
Area	Male Householder	Female Householder	Total
<i>Appling</i>	163	333	496
<i>Atkinson</i>	43	176	219
<i>Bacon</i>	55	364	419
<i>Brantley</i>	11	217	228
<i>Bulloch</i>	345	2,239	2,584
<i>Candler</i>	25	191	216
<i>Charlton</i>	0	162	162
<i>Clinch</i>	45	123	168
<i>Coffee</i>	240	1,340	1,580
<i>Effingham</i>	307	1,054	1,361
<i>Evans</i>	137	329	466
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	75	431	506
<i>Long</i>	90	382	472
<i>Pierce</i>	57	297	354
<i>Tattnall</i>	157	474	631
<i>Toombs</i>	148	641	789
<i>Ware</i>	276	1,143	1,419
<i>Wayne</i>	253	726	979
Region	2,427	10,622	13,049

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (DP02)

These households have a heightened poverty risk due to employment barriers that are generally associated with childcare. Although single parent households can be caused by a variety of circumstances (divorce, death of a spouse, etc.), it should be noted that unwed mothers account for nearly half (48.69%) of all births in the county. These households are generally much more likely to have no prenatal care than married couple parents and are significantly more likely to use Medicaid to pay for birthing than married couple parents.

While the number of total births has decreased by 0.57% in the region over the past five years, the number of unwed mother births has remained relatively unchanged, with a decrease of only 0.07%.

Chart 142: Trend of Total Births and Unwed Mother Births (2018-2022)



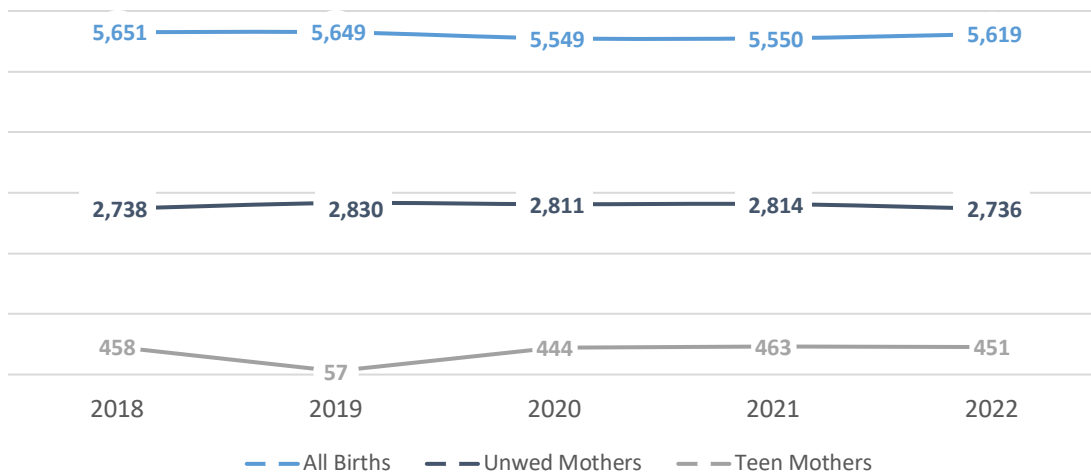
Source: Georgia Department of Public Health

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Teenage Mother Births

While it is often assumed that a large number of single parent births are associated with teenage mothers, data indicates that this is not necessarily the case in the area served by the organization. According to state records, an estimated 16.48% of unwed mother births in the community are to adolescents. Although accounting for a small number of births each year (8.02%), research indicates that these children have a heightened risk of health complications (low-birth rate, anemia, high blood pressure, infant mortality, and cephalopelvic disproportion) and long-term academic deficiencies. Further, young mothers are more likely to suffer from mental health issues such as depression, substance abuse, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These families are also more likely to be impoverished and reside in communities that are socially and economically disadvantaged. Over the past five years, the number of teen births has decreased by 1.53%, or 0.86% as they relate to the total births in the community.

Chart 143: Teenage Birth Trend as compared to Unwed Mother and Total Births (2017-2021)



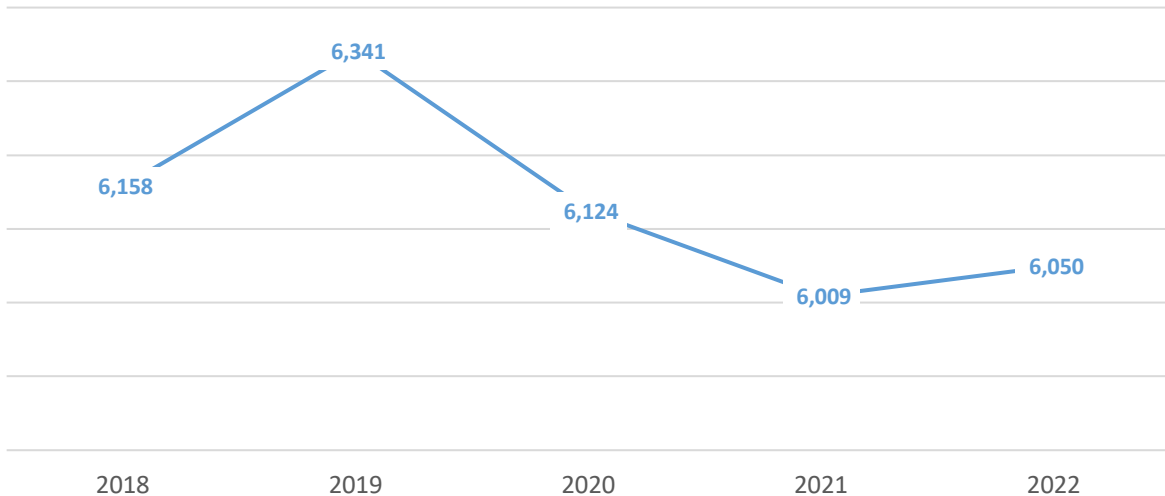
Source: Georgia Department of Public Health

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Custodial Grandparents

Grandparents who take on the primary caregiving role often face unique challenges, including financial strain, as they may be living on fixed incomes or retirement savings. Furthermore, they may encounter health issues related to aging and experience increased stress from managing the demands of raising children later in life. This situation can also affect the children involved, as they may require additional support to cope with the absence of their parents and adjust to living with older caregivers. In the service area, data indicates that 6,050 grandparents are solely responsible for raising children.

Chart 144: Custodial Grandparent Trend (2018-2022)



Source: US Census Bureau (DP02)

Over the past five years, the number of custodial grandparents has decreased by 1.75%. Peaking in 2019 at 6,341, the number dropped by 5.24% between 2019 and 2021 to 6,009. A slight rebound was experienced in 2022, with an increase of 0.68%

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Foster Children

For some children, the lack of nurturing relationships leads to an advanced level of instability due to removal from their home. Although in the best interest of the child, the removal from a home can be devastating and confusing. Once in foster care, data indicates that 54% of all children are in placement for more than 12 months. The longer the child is in placement, the more likely they will be moved from one home to another, placing them at risk of multiple negative social and emotional outcomes due to disrupted relationships with siblings and other relatives, friends, classmates, teachers, coaches, and religious leaders. Studies have proven that these early experiences can impact a child’s brain development and lead to stress disorders that will continue into adulthood.

In 2023, data suggests that a total of 329 children were removed from their homes into foster care, with 27 re-entries, 12 of which occurred within twelve months from leaving the system. Overall, 869 children were in care during 2023, a reduction of 6.46% from the 929 documented in 2022.

Chart 237: Foster Children Counts by County (2023)

<i>Area</i>	<i>2022 In Care</i>	<i>2023 In Care</i>	<i>2023 Removals</i>
<i>Appling</i>	28	43	20
<i>Atkinson</i>	6	8	3
<i>Bacon</i>	36	40	22
<i>Brantley</i>	76	56	21
<i>Bulloch</i>	37	34	19
<i>Candler</i>	8	5	3
<i>Charlton</i>	43	33	14
<i>Clinch</i>	21	21	12
<i>Coffee</i>	261	216	45
<i>Effingham</i>	69	41	1
<i>Evans</i>	13	22	12
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	28	27	1
<i>Long</i>	15	13	2
<i>Pierce</i>	59	76	33
<i>Tattnall</i>	19	20	9
<i>Toombs</i>	20	22	13
<i>Ware</i>	151	154	80
<i>Wayne</i>	39	38	19
Region	929	869	329

Source: Fostering Court Improvements

The largest portion of the children removed from their homes were entered into the foster care system due to caretaker substance abuse (174). This was followed by neglect (129), inadequate housing (88), caretaker inability to cope (41), physical abuse (33), caretaker incarceration (32), child behavior (22), abandonment (22), and sexual abuse (6).

Chart 238: Regional Reasons for Removal (2023)

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Count</i>
<i>Caretaker Substance Abuse</i>	174
<i>Neglect</i>	129
<i>Inadequate Housing</i>	88
<i>Caretaker Inability to Cope</i>	41
<i>Physical Abuse</i>	33
<i>Caretaker Incarceration</i>	32
<i>Child Behavior</i>	22
<i>Abandonment</i>	22
<i>Sexual Abuse</i>	6

Source: Fostering Court Improvements

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

In the family domain, the community faces a spectrum of challenges that deeply affect the fabric of households and the well-being of its members. Abuse and neglect were not only identified as a leading condition of poverty (22.60%), but also a contributing factor that hinders residents from securing their basic needs (3.35%).

A crucial aspect highlighted by the surveys is the impact of domestic instability on children. Concerns over child abuse are rising, with some of the abuse attributed to the lack of housing, which forces families to live in shared or inadequate conditions, placing children in potential danger. A total of 22.22% of all low-income survey respondents with children reported that they had personally struggled with parenting skills during the past twelve months.

The surveys also reveal the burden of elder care falling on families, with some elderly suffering abuse and neglect, often from within their own family as they take on the role of raising grandchildren and sometimes even great-grandchildren.

The complexities of family dynamics are further complicated by the presence of drug use in homes, which not only affects adults but also creates unsafe environments for children. A poignant reflection from the surveys: “Many of our children are from homes with drug use. I’m thankful that we are able to provide safe childcare for some of these children.” This underscores the critical need for support systems that offer relief and protection for the most vulnerable.

The recurring theme within the family domain is one of cycles of neglect and abuse continuing without proper resources to address these deep-seated issues. Stakeholders in the community express a need for interventions that can break these cycles, provide support for custodial grandparents, and address the root causes of domestic violence.

In essence, the surveys point to a community that is acutely aware of its struggles within the family domain and is seeking ways to support its members across generations. The need for strategic, compassionate, and multifaceted approaches to family support is clear, aiming not just to alleviate immediate distress but also to foster environments where every family member can thrive.

Agency Data

In 2022, the organization served a total of eight customers who reported living in a domestic violence situation. These individuals were predominantly Black/African American (62.50%) females with a median age of 48 years.

A total of 3,074 single-parent households received services. Parents for these households were predominantly Black/African American (80.17%) females (96.03%) without a disability (88.44%).

An additional 112 households were classified as multi-generational. A multi-generational household includes more than two generations living under the same roof. These homes might comprise grandparents, parents, and children. This living arrangement is often chosen for cultural reasons, economic benefits, caregiving for the elderly or young, or a combination of these factors. The structure can provide a supportive environment but may also present unique challenges, such as ensuring privacy and meeting the diverse needs of different age groups.

Organizational reports indicate that 769 families were enrolled in programs designed to improve parenting/caregiver skills.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Family Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Al-Anon	912-283-6916	Support for families of alcoholics (PIERCE, TOOMBS, WARE)
Atlantic Area CASA	912-722-7672; 912-876-3816	Support abused and neglected children in court. (EVANS, LONG, PIERCE, TATTNALL, WARE)
Autism Parent Group	912-287-2306	Support, information, and awareness to those who love someone diagnosed with autism. (PIERCE, WARE)
Blount Youth Home	912-537-7758	Services for at-risk male youth 10-18 years old. (TOOMBS)
Boy Scouts of America	912-856-5902	(TOOMBS)
Boys to Men and Swans	912-281-2622	Works with boys and girls ages 8-18 to help transition to adulthood. Offers workshops, fieldtrips, & mentoring. (PIERCE, WARE)
Cabbage Patch Program	912-524-4000	A free program for expecting mothers. (TOOMBS)
Consolidated Men's Club	912-449-8800	(PIERCE, WARE)
Creative Outreach Solutions	912-282-1400	Educational and outreach programs. (PIERCE, WARE)
D.A.W.G.S (diabetes support)	912-283-6086	Diabetes Support Group (PIERCE, WARE)
Emergency Shelter by Safe Haven	912-764-4605	Provides a safe place and emotional support for victims of domestic violence. (BULLOCH, CANDLER, EFFINGHAM)
Emergency Shelter by the Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc	912-538-9935	Provides shelter for victims and their children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (TOOMBS)
Emergency Shelter Program by Citizens Against Violence	912-764-4605	Provides a safe place and emotional support for victims of domestic violence. (BULLOCH)
Fair Haven - Domestic Violence Shelter	912-588-9999	12-bed emergency shelter for victims and children. (WAYNE)
Family Intervention Center	912-526-3553	Serves at-risk youth aged 11-18 (TOOMBS)
Georgia Learning Resources System	912-338-5998; www.sc.gllrs.org	Provide training and resources to school personnel, parents of students with disabilities, and others to support achievement, graduation, and post-secondary success of students with disabilities. (ALL COUNTIES)
Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia	912-236-1571; 912-988-8658	Helping girls discover their strengths, passions, and talents (PIERCE, WARE)
God's Storehouse	912-538-1730	Clothing, household items, spiritual counseling (TOOMBS)
Hand to Hand Heart to Heart	912-537-9280	Programs for at-risk youth. (TOOMBS)
HOPE Circle: Teen	912-816-5317	Support group for pregnant teens and teen parents. (PIERCE, WARE)
Magnolia House	912-285-5850; 800-33-HAVEN	Shelter for abused women and their children. (BRANTLEY, PIERCE, WARE)
Paul Anderson Youth Home	912-537-7237	Offers a Christian alternative to correctional facilities for youth men 16-21 years old (TOOMBS)
Satilla Advocacy Services	912-285-7355; 912-283-0987	Rape Crisis and Child Advocacy Center; Prevention education. (PIERCE, WARE)
The Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter	1-866-8REFUGE	Works with domestic violence victims and their children and sexual assault victims (PIERCE, WARE)
Ware County Recreation Dept	912-287-4488	Programs and facilities for all residents (WARE)
Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc	912-285-5850	Helps victims of family violence achieve safety and self-sufficiency. (WARE)
YMCA	912-285-8660	Recreational facility for all ages. (PIERCE, WARE)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

Over the past five years, there has been a slight decrease in single-parent births (-0.07%) and teen births (-1.53%), indicating positive trends in reproductive health and family planning. These reductions suggest improved access to education and resources, as well as greater awareness and support for young parents in the community. Moreover, there has been a decrease in custodial grandparent households (-1.75%), reflecting potential improvements in family stability and support networks.

Additionally, the community has witnessed a notable reduction of 6.46% in the number of foster children. This decline may signify enhanced child welfare services, preventive measures, and family support programs aimed at keeping families intact and providing necessary assistance to prevent children from entering the foster care system.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

Domestic violence remains a growing concern in Georgia, with an alarming increase of 24.52% in domestic abuse-related deaths. This rise underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions and support services to address underlying issues and protect vulnerable individuals and families from harm.

Additionally, the prevalence of single-parent households (13,049), teen mother households (451), and custodial grandparent households (6,050) highlights ongoing challenges related to family structure and support. Also, the persistently high number of children in foster care (869), including 329 new removals, indicates ongoing challenges in local families.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

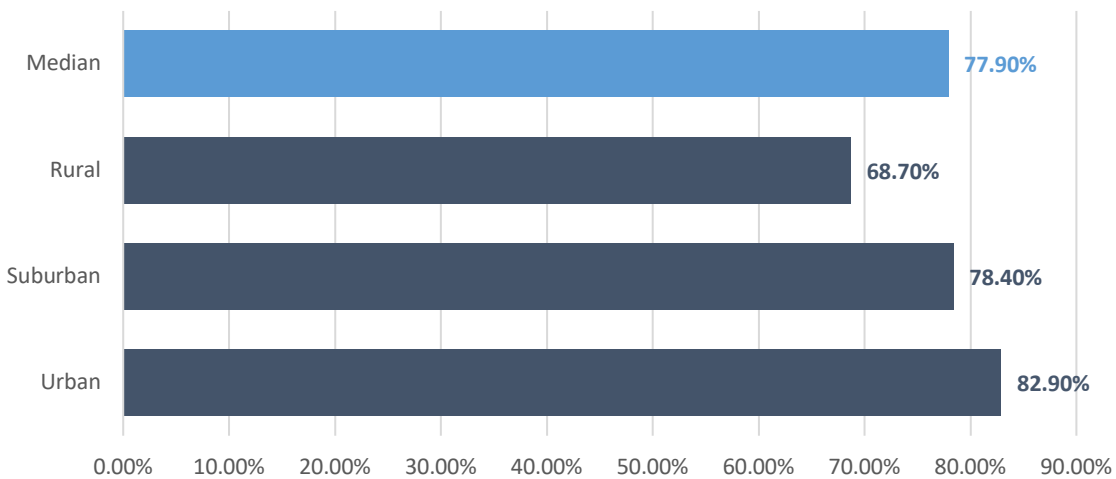
Community Engagement

The National Conference on Citizenship conducted a study on civic health in Georgia during 2023, building on the foundation set by earlier editions in 2013 and 2019. This report dives into the dynamics of how Georgians engage within their communities and political spheres, revealing changes in civic participation patterns and how these vary by demographics and geography. It benchmarks Georgia's civic engagement against other states and national averages, serving as a catalyst for discussions and actions aimed at enhancing civic life. The report covers social connectedness, community involvement, political action, and confidence in institutions, underscoring the importance of civic participation for societal and community welfare.

Social Connectedness

Engagement with friends and family is a key indicator of social connectedness. In Georgia, a high percentage of individuals (77.90%) frequently spend time with their social circles, suggesting strong personal relationships. This pattern of interaction plays a vital role in fostering community bonds and individual well-being. Urban residents, with an 82.9% engagement rate, tend to interact more than their suburban (78.4%) and rural (68.7%) counterparts. Females were also slightly more inclined to spend time with family and friends (79.80%) than males (75.80%).

Chart 145: Georgian's Spending Time with Family and Friends (2023)



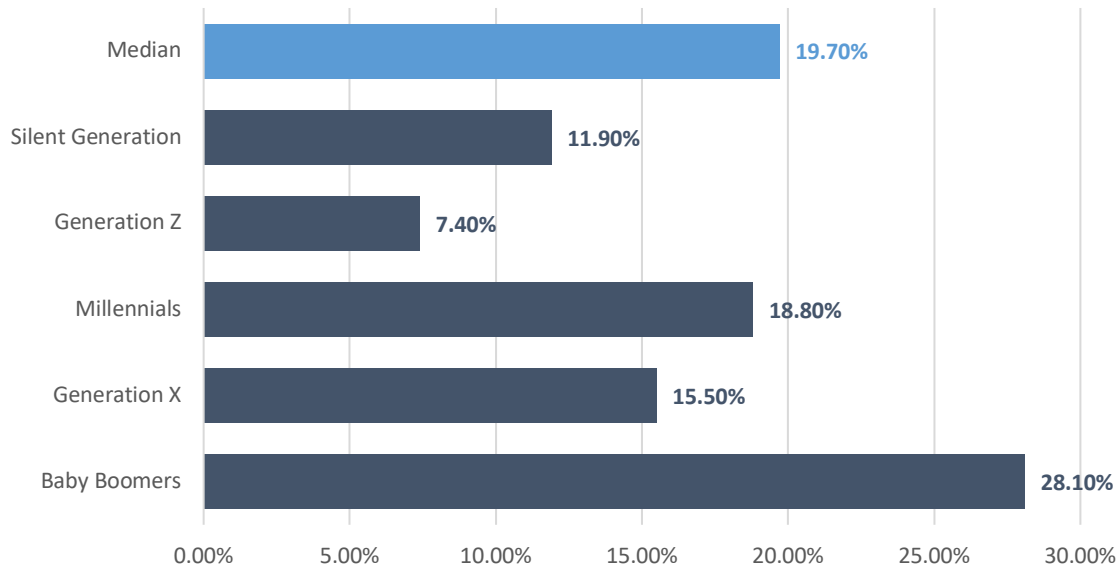
Source: Georgia Civic Health Index

Income levels were also noted as a factor, with 72.80% of individuals and families with incomes below \$35,000 reporting frequent time with family and friends as opposed to 82.1% of those with incomes greater than \$75,000.

In Georgia, social engagement with neighbors is lower than the national average, with 19.7% interacting frequently compared to 26.9% nationally. The older generations report more neighborly interaction, particularly those born between 1931-1945, with 29.6% engaging with neighbors. This rate declines across younger generations. Geographically, rural residents (20.2%) interact more with neighbors than urban (16.4%) and suburban (18.1%) counterparts. Lower-income individuals tend to have slightly more neighborly engagement than those with higher incomes.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Chart 146: Georgia Neighborly Interactions by Age Group (2023)



Source: Georgia Civic Health Index

Georgia residents were noted as being less likely to discuss political, societal, or local issues with neighbors than they are with family and friends. Only 6.2% of the Georgian's report frequent engaging with neighbors in this way, compared to 31.60% who discuss these issues with family and friends.

The practice of exchanging favors with neighbors was noted as being less common, with only 7.7% reporting they often do so. This is slightly lower than the 10% seen nationally. The older, Silent Generation is more inclined to help out neighbors (13.80%) than Baby Boomers (12.00%), Generation X (6.80%), Generation Z (4.6%), and Millennials (4.3%). Exchanging favors was also more common among those in rural areas (12.70%) than those in urban (8.00%) and suburban (5.50%) communities.

An estimated 14.50% of all residents were noted as working with neighbors to improve the community, which is lower than the national average of 18.00%. Education levels were noted as being a factor for this indicator, with nearly one-quarter (24.30%) of college graduates reporting engagement of this type as compared to 15.90% of those who attend some college and 8.90% of those who have a high school diploma, but without any college education.

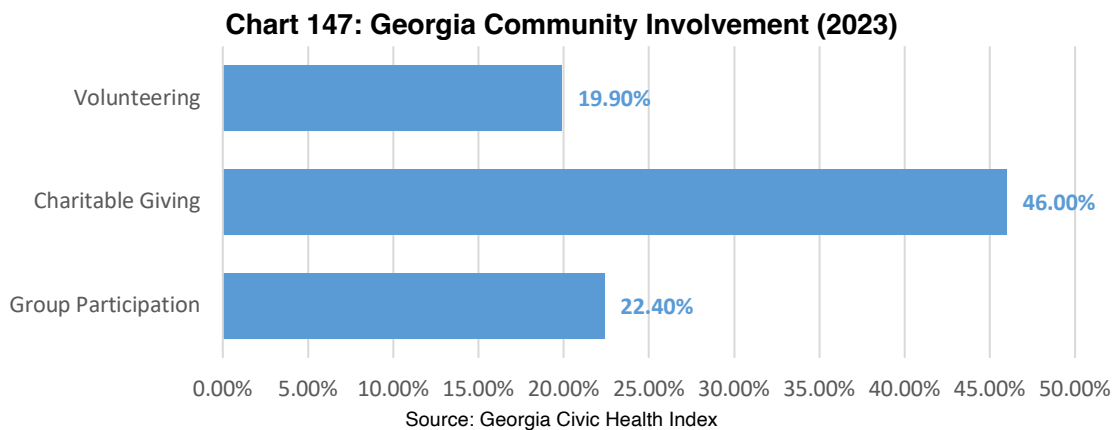
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Involvement

Community involvement refers to the efforts of local residents to contribute to the welfare and progress of their communities through volunteerism, charitable giving, and group participation. Georgia's engagement levels fall below the national average, highlighting an opportunity for innovative strategies to motivate and enable residents to actively shape their communities into more connected and dynamic environments.

The data suggests that Georgia ranks 45th in the nation for volunteerism, a decrease from the previous report when the state ranked 44th. Only 19.90% of the state's residents report involvement in volunteer activities, a 24.91% decrease from the 26.5% documented in the 2019.

Volunteerism was noted as varying across demographics. Generation X leads with 27.1% participation, outpacing Millennials and Generation Z, who volunteer at rates of 19.7% and 18.3%, respectively. Women are more active volunteers at 22.3%, compared to 17.2% of men. By race, 21.9% of White citizens volunteer, slightly more than the 17% of those identifying as Black/African American. Geographically, suburban residents volunteer the most at 22.1%. This reflects a shift from 2017, where urban volunteerism was higher.



Charitable giving in Georgia, encompassing financial support to various organizations and causes, increased slightly from 45% in the previous report to 46% in 2023. Despite the improvement, Georgia is ranked 41st nationally in this area. Notably, the state has a marginally higher rate of political donations than the national average. Contributions are more prevalent among the Silent generation and higher-income, more educated demographics, with females donating slightly more than males.

Older generations, particularly the Silent Generation, demonstrates a higher propensity for donating, with 58.2% contributing to charitable or religious organizations, in contrast to just 18.2% of Generation Z. Gender differences are also evident, with 48.7% of females donating compared to 43% of males. Finally, 49.9% of White residents donate, a higher rate than the 36.7% of those identifying as Black/African American.

Group participation in Georgia stands at 22.4%, ranking 38th nationally and showing improvement from 49th in 2017. Participation trends upwards with increases in age, income, and education. Women are slightly more likely to be involved in groups than men, 23% versus 21.6%. Also, there's a notable difference in participation based on race and location, with 25.9% of White, non-Hispanic residents involved in groups compared to 15.2% of Black, non-Hispanic residents, and suburban areas showing higher participation rates than rural and urban areas.

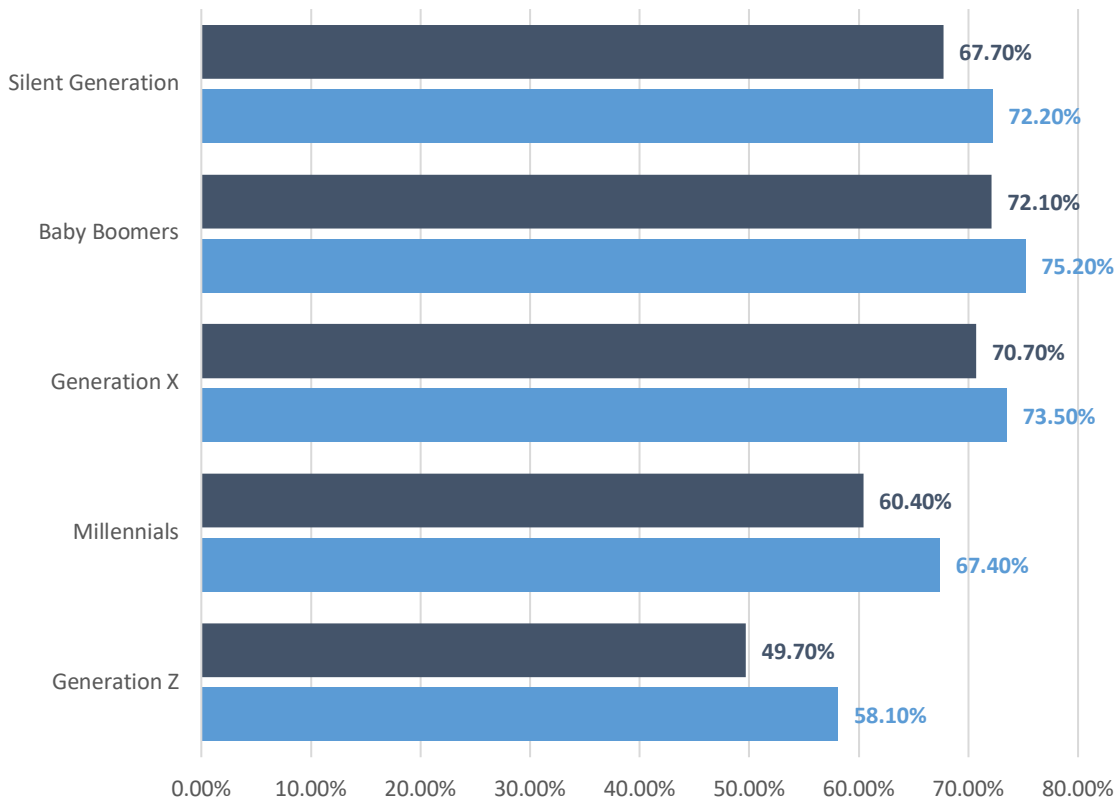
2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Political Action

Georgia's political action, including voter registration and turnout, has aligned with national averages this year, marking an improvement. However, Georgians show lower engagement in consuming political news and using consumer power for political or societal reasons. Political engagement correlates positively with higher education and income levels. There's notable variation in political activities among different generations and urbanization levels, with mid-life generations showing the most engagement.

The recent report revealed significant progress in Georgia's voter engagement, with registration at 70.7%, up from 62% in 2010, and a 66.1% voting rate. These figures align closely with national averages and mark an improvement in state rankings for both voter registration and turnout. Voter engagement correlates with higher income and education levels. Notably, older generations exhibit higher turnout rates, with variances across demographics indicating diverse participation patterns.

Chart 148: Georgia Voting by Age Group (2023)

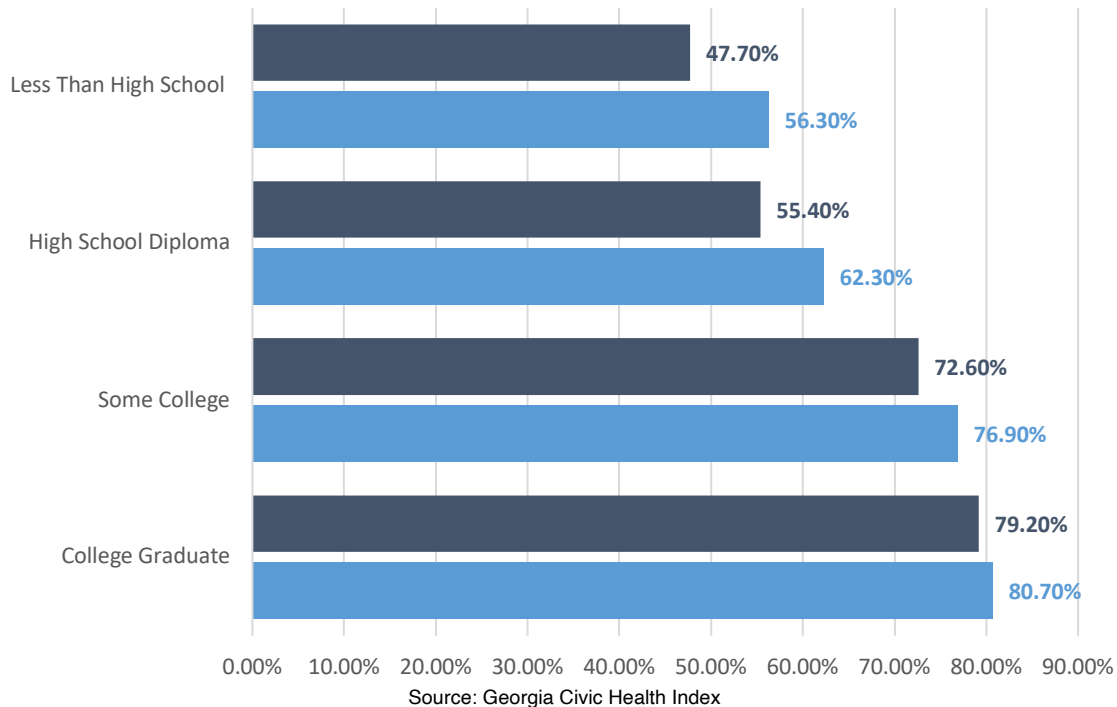


Source: Georgia Civic Health Index

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Education levels were also noted as a factor, with college graduates being much more likely to register (80.70%) and vote (79.20%) than those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Chart 149: Georgia Voting by Education Level (2023)



An estimated 8.2% of residents attend public meetings, aligning with the national average. Engagement in contacting public officials rose to 9.6% in the latest report, improving Georgia's rank from 49th to 35th nationally. Trends show higher participation among those with more education and income. The state faces challenges in digital access, affecting communication with officials. Demographic trends reveal variations in engagement, with higher rates among older generations, men contacting officials more than women, and suburban residents being more active than their urban and rural counterparts.

Data indicates that more than half (54.3%) of the state's residents participate in local elections. Voting in local elections correlates with age, education, income, and urbanization. Baby Boomers exhibit the highest participation rate (61.7%), while Generation Z shows the lowest (30.1%). Similarly, individuals with higher education levels and incomes are more likely to vote locally, with 74% of those holding a bachelor's degree or higher participating compared to 42.9% of high school diploma holders. Additionally, those earning \$75,000 or more have a higher local election turnout (64.8%) compared to those earning less than \$35,000 (40.9%). Notably, rural residents demonstrate lower participation rates (51%) compared to their urban (69.5%) and suburban (57.4%) counterparts.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

In recent years, Georgia's engagement in sharing political, societal, or local views online or on social media has mirrored or fallen below the national average. Only 5.4% of Georgians frequently engage in this manner, compared to 6.2% nationally, ranking Georgia 35th in this indicator. Similarly, Georgia lags behind the national average in frequently reading, watching, or listening to news about political, societal, or local issues, with only 60% engaging in this activity compared to the national rate of 67.6%. This places Georgia 51st in the nation for this indicator. Engagement in these activities tends to increase with age, income, and education levels.

Among generational groups, Generation Z is more likely to post and share political information frequently (7.8%) compared to Millennials (4.1%) and Generation X (3.9%). However, Baby Boomers (6.4%) and the Silent Generation (5%) exhibit higher rates of frequent online posting compared to some younger generations. Education level also plays a role, with those holding a bachelor's degree (5.7%) more likely to post frequently than those with a high school diploma (3.2%). Additionally, urban residents (6%) are more likely to post frequently than suburban (4.8%) or rural residents (4.6%).

In terms of consuming news about political, societal, or local issues, suburban residents are more active than urban or rural residents, with white residents (65.5%) more likely to engage in this manner compared to black residents (51.1%). These trends suggest variations in online engagement based on demographic factors such as age, education, race, and urbanization.

In Georgia, there is a slightly lower rate of engaging in political actions such as buying or boycotting a product or service compared to the national average. Approximately 14.4% of Georgians report participating in this form of political action, ranking the state 42nd nationally, while the national average stands at 17.1%. The likelihood of buying or boycotting a product or service tends to increase with income and education levels. For instance, 8.2% of residents with a high school education engage in this activity, whereas 24.5% of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher do so.

There are notable differences based on race, with white Georgians (16.4%) being more likely to participate in buying or boycotting compared to black Georgians (10.4%). Geographically, urban residents are the most likely to engage in this form of political action, with 15.8% reported participation, while rural Georgians are the least likely, at 8.5%.

These patterns may be influenced by factors such as age and education, with younger and more educated individuals potentially being more inclined to participate. Additionally, access to information and resources in rural areas and among lower-income populations may play a role in their lower rates of engagement in buying or boycotting as a political action.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

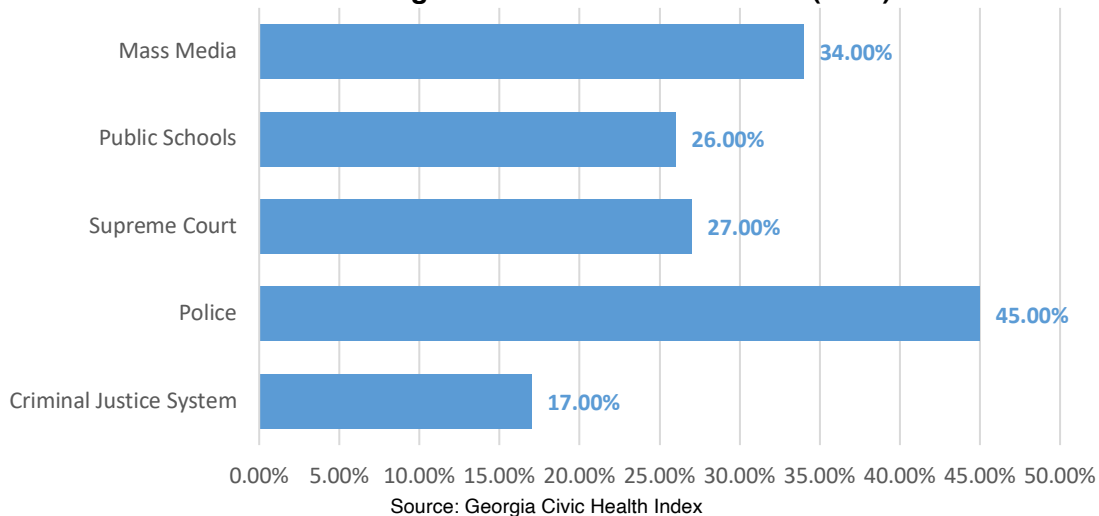
Confidence in Institutions

Over the past two decades, public trust in institutions has been on a decline, reaching an all-time low in 2023. Particularly, confidence in the federal government has seen a significant dip, with all three branches—presidency, Congress, and the U.S. Supreme Court—reaching record lows. Despite modest improvements in 2023, none of these institutions experienced substantial shifts.

Furthermore, trust in other key institutions, including big business, large technology, police, and public schools, either tied or dipped below their previous record lows in 2023.

According to Gallup data, Americans' confidence in public and private institutions declined significantly in 2022, with no improvements observed in 2023. Confidence in Congress dropped from 12% in 2021 to 7% in 2022, showing only a slight improvement to 8% in 2023. Similarly, confidence in the U.S. Supreme Court and the presidency experienced significant declines from 2021 to 2022 but rebounded slightly in 2023.

Chart 150: Georgia Confidence in Institutions (2023)



Polling by the Pew Research Center highlights public dissatisfaction with the U.S. government's handling of taxpayer money and its responsiveness to the needs of ordinary Americans and specific demographic groups. The majority of Americans feel that the government does too little for middle- and lower-income individuals, children, retired people, people with disabilities, and rural residents. Conversely, most believe that the federal government does too much for higher-income individuals. Despite widespread dissatisfaction with the federal government, trust in state and local governments remains relatively higher. Gallup data show that Americans are much more trusting of their state and local governments compared to any branch of the federal government. This trend is consistent with perceptions of how things are going at the state and local levels, where satisfaction levels are significantly higher than those at the national level.

Pew data also reveal skepticism among Americans regarding political candidates' motivations for seeking office, with a majority believing that many candidates run for office to serve their own interests rather than the community's. These trends underscore the challenges faced in rebuilding public trust in institutions and restoring confidence in the political process.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

From 2021 to 2022, confidence in the criminal justice system dropped by six percentage points, from 20% to 14%, with a slight rebound to 17% in 2023. Similarly, confidence in the police experienced an eight-point decline over the same period, falling from 51% in 2021 to 43% in 2023. This represents an all-time low in confidence in the police since Gallup began measuring it.

The U.S. Supreme Court also saw a significant decline in public confidence, with only 25% of Americans expressing "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in 2022, the lowest percentage on record. While there was a slight improvement to 27% in 2023, this is down from 36% in 2021 and a high of 56% in 1988. Additionally, a growing number of Americans, 45% in 2022, believe the Supreme Court has too much power, compared to 25% in 2020.

The data further reveal notable disparities in opinion about the U.S. Supreme Court across political, racial, and age groups. The partisan gap in favorable views of the Supreme Court is at its widest point in 35 years of polling, with only 38% of black Americans holding a favorable view compared to 52% of Hispanics, 49% of whites, and 46% of Asians. Moreover, older adults are more likely than younger adults to have favorable views of the Supreme Court, with approximately six in 10 Americans aged 50 and older viewing the court favorably, compared to 44% of those aged 30 to 49 and 32% of adults under 30. These disparities underscore the deepening divisions in public perception of key institutions and highlight the challenges in restoring public trust and confidence.

Confidence in public schools experienced a significant decline in recent years, particularly following a double-digit increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. After reaching a peak of 41% in 2020, confidence dipped to 28% in 2022 and further decreased to tie an all-time low of 26% in 2023. This represents a notable decrease of 15 percentage points from 2020 and six percentage points from 2021. Historically, the highest level of confidence in public schools was recorded in 1975 at 62%, while the lowest level was observed in 2014.

The data also reveal a stark partisan divide regarding confidence in public schools. In 2023, only 9% of Republicans expressed "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in public schools, compared to 43% of Democrats. This disparity underscores the polarization surrounding perceptions of public education and highlights the challenges in fostering widespread trust and support for educational institutions.

Confidence in mass media, including newspapers, television, and radio, experienced a decline in recent years, with just 34% of Americans expressing "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of confidence in their reporting of the news in 2022. Additionally, more than one-third of Americans (38%) reported having no confidence in the media that year. This trend highlights a significant level of skepticism and mistrust among the public regarding the accuracy and fairness of media reporting.

The data also reveal a substantial partisan gap concerning confidence in mass media. In 2022, while 70% of Democrats reported having high levels of confidence in mass media, only 14% of Republicans expressed the same sentiment. Furthermore, a majority of Republicans indicated that they had no trust at all in the media for the third consecutive year. This polarization underscores the challenges in fostering trust and credibility across different political ideologies.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

When examined by medium, confidence in newspapers and TV news saw declines, with only 16% of Americans expressing confidence in newspapers and 11% in TV news in 2022. While there was a slight rebound in confidence for TV news in 2023 (14%), it remained below the levels reported in 2021. These percentages represent all-time lows for both institutions, highlighting a broader trend of declining confidence in traditional media sources. Despite historical peaks of confidence in newspapers (51% in 1979) and TV news (46% in 1993), the recent data indicate a notable erosion of trust in these mediums over time.

Veterans

Although not included in the Civic Health Index Report, there can be no greater form of civic engagement than participation in military services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 25,439 veterans reside in the service area. This accounts for 7.39% of all adults in the county. Among the veterans living in the county, 62.27% participated in the Gulf Wars, 29.06% participated in Vietnam, 3.25% participated in the Korean Conflict, and 1.13% participated in World War II.

Table 239: Veteran Counts by Age Group (2022)

Area	18-34	35-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
<i>Appling</i>	3	250	52	172	160	637
<i>Atkinson</i>	18	14	97	100	84	313
<i>Bacon</i>	14	130	117	159	128	548
<i>Brantley</i>	160	162	118	191	236	867
<i>Bulloch</i>	458	1,044	545	849	572	3,468
<i>Candler</i>	35	56	156	235	104	586
<i>Charlton</i>	14	334	130	235	158	871
<i>Clinch</i>	14	23	75	44	69	225
<i>Coffee</i>	425	520	407	429	217	1,998
<i>Effingham</i>	956	2,121	1,259	973	241	5,550
<i>Evans</i>	21	115	120	141	177	574
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	13	343	133	200	275	964
<i>Long</i>	64	1,024	390	229	74	1,781
<i>Pierce</i>	38	180	243	354	212	1,027
<i>Tattnall</i>	47	556	319	327	211	1,460
<i>Toombs</i>	141	253	290	370	296	1,350
<i>Ware</i>	139	485	273	432	335	1,664
<i>Wayne</i>	87	418	393	330	328	1,556
Region	2,647	8,028	5,117	5,770	3,877	25,439

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (S2101)

The region's veterans were primarily male (88.51%), White (73.54%), non-Hispanics (72.61%) with a median age of 59.5 years.

The largest age group is 35 to 54, representing 31.56% of the total veteran population. This was followed by those who were between 65 and 74 (22.68%), and 55 and 64 (20.11%). Smaller populations were over the age of 75 (15.24%) and under the age of 35 (10.41%).

The median income for veterans was \$39,653 annually, leaving 2,102 with incomes below the nationally recognized poverty level.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Crime Rates

Crime rates are a critical aspect intertwined with poverty, reflecting the complex interplay between socioeconomic factors and community well-being. High crime rates often coincide with areas experiencing economic hardship, exacerbating the challenges faced by individuals and families living in poverty. This correlation arises from various underlying factors, including limited access to educational and employment opportunities, inadequate social services, and strained community resources. Also, crime can perpetuate a cycle of poverty by hindering economic development, deterring investment, and eroding social cohesion.

Beyond its direct impact on individuals and families, crime rates also significantly influence community engagement. Heightened concerns about safety and security can undermine residents' trust in local institutions, dampen civic participation, and impede efforts to foster a sense of belonging and collective responsibility within neighborhoods. Therefore, understanding and addressing this barrier is an essential component of comprehensive strategies aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting thriving, inclusive communities.

According to the most recent Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) Crime Index Report, there is one crime index offence occurring every 2 minutes and 35 seconds in the state. When broken down by category, the report highlights the prevalence of both violent and non-violent crimes, with a violent crime occurring approximately every 14 minutes and 19 seconds, while a non-violent crime occurs roughly every 3 minutes and 10 seconds. The report further dives into specific types of crimes, such as murder, robbery, rape, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, arson, and human trafficking, providing insights into the frequency of each offense.

For instance, murder incidents are reported at a rate of approximately one every 10 hours and 37 minutes, while robberies occur approximately every 2 hours and 4 minutes. Similarly, aggravated assault incidents happen at a rate of about one every 18 minutes and 48 seconds, highlighting the prevalence of violent crimes in the state. On the other hand, property crimes like burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson also contribute significantly to the overall crime index, occurring at various intervals throughout the day.

The data further breaks down the reported crimes by type and provides the percentage of total crimes represented by each category, along with the rate per 100,000 residents. For example, murder accounts for 0.41% of total crimes, with a rate of 8.2 per 100,000 residents. Rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, arson, and human trafficking are also analyzed in a similar manner, offering a comprehensive overview of the crime landscape in Georgia. Overall, the data underscores the importance of addressing crime rates to ensure public safety and enhance community well-being.

The crime rate is a statistical measure that represents the number of reported crimes per 100,000 population within a specified area over a given period, typically a year. A higher crime rate suggests a greater risk of criminal incidents occurring, which can negatively impact residents' safety and overall well-being. Conversely, a lower crime rate indicates a safer environment with fewer reported criminal offenses.

The regional crime rate of 12.26. This is slightly lower than the median rate of 13.03 for all Georgia counties, suggesting the region is somewhat more safe than other areas in the state. Crime rates were noted as higher in Ware (24.21) and Toombs (23.27) counties, with much lower rates found in Long (4.30), Atkinson (4.46), and Charlton (4.83) counties.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Table 240: Crime Rates and Index Crimes (2022)

<i>Area</i>	<i>Crime Rate</i>	<i>Index Crimes</i>
<i>Appling</i>	16.39	305
<i>Atkinson</i>	4.46	38
<i>Bacon</i>	7.13	79
<i>Brantley</i>	12.51	228
<i>Bulloch</i>	15.24	1,277
<i>Candler</i>	16.65	185
<i>Charlton</i>	4.83	63
<i>Clinch</i>	8.89	60
<i>Coffee</i>	12.12	532
<i>Effingham</i>	6.12	420
<i>Evans</i>	12.14	129
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	12.05	181
<i>Long</i>	4.30	78
<i>Pierce</i>	16.99	345
<i>Tattnall</i>	8.96	209
<i>Toombs</i>	23.27	625
<i>Ware</i>	24.21	871
<i>Wayne</i>	14.42	443
Region	12.26	6,068

Source: GBI Crime Index Report

Index crimes, often referred to as "Part I" crimes, are a collection of eight specific crimes that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has designated for inclusion in its Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program to serve as an indicator of the overall crime rate in the United States. These crimes are divided into two categories: violent crimes and property crimes. A total of 6,068 index crimes were committed in the region during 2022, the largest single concentration (1,277) being in Bulloch County.

Violent crimes, a serious category of offenses within the index crimes, are characterized by the use of force or the threat of force. These offenses not only threaten the safety of individuals but also the stability of communities. The impact of such crimes can be seen in the statistical data collected across various regions, which emphasizes the prevalence and distribution of these criminal acts.

Murder and non-negligent manslaughter, the most severe of violent crimes due to the irreversible act of taking a life, have been reported a total of 23 times in the region. Ware County recorded the highest incidence with 8 murders, indicating a critical area of focus for law enforcement. Meanwhile, Bulloch County reported 2 instances, with numerous other areas reporting 1 or 2 cases, and some, such as Atkinson and Bacon, reporting none, highlighting the disparities in the occurrence of such grave crimes across different regions.

Rape, an invasive crime that severely impacts the lives of survivors, had 105 reported instances. The highest number of these disturbing violations were reported in Bulloch County, with 23 cases, while Wayne County reported 16. The variation in numbers across different areas underscores the need for targeted interventions and support services, especially in the regions with higher reports of such violations.

Robbery, an offense combining theft with the element of fear or force, was reported 86 times across the region. Once again, Ware County recorded the highest number of such offenses at 25, with Bulloch County close behind at 24. These numbers point to a need for vigilant security measures and community awareness programs, especially in areas with higher robbery rates.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Assault, representing attacks intended to cause serious bodily harm, stands out as the most frequently reported violent crime, with a regional total of 607 instances. Coffee County reported an alarming 106 assaults, followed by Ware County with 103 and Bulloch County with 70. The high frequency of assaults reflects ongoing challenges within these communities and underscores the importance of proactive violence prevention and enforcement strategies.

Overall, the distribution of these violent crimes across different areas reveals patterns that law enforcement and community leaders must address. The data not only helps in understanding the prevalence of such crimes but also aids in the allocation of resources, planning of crime prevention measures, and the implementation of community support systems designed to reduce the incidence of these crimes and assist the victims affected by them.

Table 241: Violent Index Crimes by Type and County (2022)

<i>Area</i>	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault
<i>Appling</i>	2	4	4	29
<i>Atkinson</i>	0	0	1	7
<i>Bacon</i>	0	0	2	9
<i>Brantley</i>	2	1	2	16
<i>Bulloch</i>	2	23	24	70
<i>Candler</i>	0	7	5	22
<i>Charlton</i>	0	0	0	6
<i>Clinch</i>	0	2	0	10
<i>Coffee</i>	1	11	3	106
<i>Effingham</i>	2	8	5	34
<i>Evans</i>	1	2	1	11
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	1	0	1	18
<i>Long</i>	0	2	0	5
<i>Pierce</i>	0	10	2	43
<i>Tattnall</i>	0	4	0	15
<i>Toombs</i>	3	2	8	66
<i>Ware</i>	8	13	25	103
<i>Wayne</i>	1	16	3	37
Region	23	105	86	607

Source: GBI Crime Index Report

Property crimes represent a category of offenses that primarily involve the unlawful appropriation of property belonging to another, typically without force or threat against the victim. These crimes, which are integral to the index crimes tracked for statistical purposes, consist of four main types:

Burglary is the unlawful entry into a structure, such as a home or business, with the intent to commit a theft or felony. This crime is considered a severe violation due to the breach of privacy and the sanctity of personal or commercial premises. In the area served by the organization, a total of 983 offenses occurred in 2022, the largest concentration being in Bulloch County (168).

Larceny-Theft is characterized by the illegal taking of property from another person without direct confrontation or the use of force. This category is quite broad and includes various forms of theft, such as shoplifting, stealing from a building, and bicycle thefts, but excludes person-to-person crimes like pickpocketing or purse snatching. In the region, a total of 3,799 instances of larceny-theft were reported. Bulloch County had a notably high number of larceny-theft cases at 909, while Appling County reported 210 cases, and Ware County reported 551 cases.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Motor Vehicle Theft entails the unauthorized taking or attempted taking of a motor vehicle, such as cars, motorcycles, and trucks. The impact of these thefts is significant due to the value of vehicles and their role in personal and commercial activities. The regional data shows a total of 432 motor vehicle thefts, with Ware County experiencing 53 instances, indicating that this type of property crime is a considerable concern in that area.

Arson involves the intentional setting of fire to structures, vehicles, or other personal property, potentially motivated by reasons ranging from vandalism to insurance fraud. This crime is particularly dangerous due to the risk it poses to human life and property. The region reported a total of 31 arson cases, with Bulloch County reporting 5 instances, which is the highest among the counties listed.

Each of these property crimes, while not necessarily involving violence, constitutes a serious infringement on property rights and personal security. They disrupt the social fabric and can lead to significant financial losses and emotional distress for the victims.

Table 242: Property Index Crimes by Type and County (2022)

Area	Burglary	Larceny	Motor Theft	Arson
<i>Appling</i>	41	210	14	1
<i>Atkinson</i>	7	21	2	0
<i>Bacon</i>	15	51	2	0
<i>Brantley</i>	49	131	26	1
<i>Bulloch</i>	168	909	76	5
<i>Candler</i>	38	92	20	1
<i>Charlton</i>	16	37	4	0
<i>Clinch</i>	16	32	0	0
<i>Coffee</i>	67	307	31	4
<i>Effingham</i>	97	239	31	4
<i>Evans</i>	24	82	7	1
<i>Jeff Davis</i>	21	118	21	1
<i>Long</i>	22	37	12	0
<i>Pierce</i>	67	186	33	4
<i>Tattnall</i>	61	104	24	1
<i>Toombs</i>	86	420	37	3
<i>Ware</i>	114	551	53	4
<i>Wayne</i>	74	272	39	1
Region	983	3,799	432	31

Source: GBI Crime Index Report

Index crimes are used to compile national crime statistics and allow for the comparison of crime rates across different areas and periods. They provide a snapshot of crime trends and are critical in law enforcement planning, policy formulation, and public awareness. The UCR's focus on these specific crimes helps to standardize crime reporting across the country, making it possible to gauge the safety of different regions and to identify patterns or changes in criminal activity over time.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Feedback

While limited information was provided by community members associated with community engagement in surveys, 7.01% reported that they felt criminal records were a factor contributing to economic security, with 12.20% reporting that a lack of social support was a concern. Among the low-income respondents polled, 17.54% stated that they felt socially isolated and 5.26% reported limitations associated with criminal backgrounds.

In focus groups, the concern of social isolation was highlighted. One participant from Long County shared, "The senior center saved my life," which underscores the lifeline that social structures can provide, especially for the elderly residents.

A Ware County resident observed a decline in church attendance and voter turnout, pointing towards a need for greater civic participation and community building . Also, participants from Pierce and Tattnall expressed concerns about the availability of activities for youth and the elderly.

Agency Data

In 2022, the organization served a total of 90 veterans, 30 of which were disabled. The median age for veterans was 60.43 years. A strong majority (67.78%) were noted as being male. Further, the largest portion (66.67%) were Black/African American, with 30% being White, and much smaller portions identifying as other races. Only 1 veteran reported having a Hispanic ethnicity.

Among the 12,963 customers over the age of 18, 5,031 reported being active voters (38.81%). Voters were primarily male (82.85%) African Americans (76.64%), non-Hispanics (98.59%), with a median age of 62.21 years.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Community Engagement Resources

Resource Name	Contact Information	Description
Action Pact - Bulloch County Senior Center	912-489-1604	Provides socialization for senior citizens (BULLOCH)
Action Pact – Evans County Senior Center	912-739-1705	Provides socialization for senior citizens (EVANS)
Action Pact – Jeff Davis County Senior Center	912-375-3603	Provides socialization for senior citizens (JEFF DAVIS)
Action Pact – Long County Senior Center	912-545-2435	Provides socialization for senior citizens (LONG)
Action Pact – Pierce County Senior Center	912-449-0145	Provides socialization for senior citizens (PIERCE)
Action Pact – Toombs County Senior Center	912-537-0453	Provides socialization for senior citizens (TOOMBS)
Action Pact – Wayne County Senior Center	912-427-7797	Provides socialization for senior citizens (WARE)
Bacon County Senior Adult Center	912-632-8954	Provides socialization for senior citizens (BACON)
Brantley Senior Center	912-462-6525	Provides socialization for senior citizens (BRANTLEY)
Effingham County Senior Citizens Center	912-754-2138	Provides socialization for senior citizens (EFFINGHAM)
Pearson Senior Center	912-422-7422	Provides socialization for senior citizens and/or persons with a disability (ATKINSON)
Ware County Senior Center	912-285-9800	Provides socialization for senior citizens (WARE)
Willacoochee Senior Center	912-534-5450	Provides socialization for senior citizens (ATKINSON)

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Conclusion: Strengths

The community demonstrates several strengths that contribute to its social fabric and cohesion. Notably, 46% of all Georgia residents engage in charitable giving, showcasing a spirit of generosity and altruism within the community. This percentage reflects an increase from the 45% reported in 2019, indicating a growing commitment to supporting charitable causes and initiatives. Furthermore, 24% of all Georgia residents report participating in groups, marking an improvement from the state's previous rank and highlighting increased community engagement and involvement.

The state boasts a commendable voter participation rate of 70%, an increase from the 62% documented in 2010. This significant participation in the electoral process underscores the community's dedication to shaping its collective future through informed decision-making and advocacy. Additionally, with 77.09% of all Georgia residents spending time with family and friends, the community values social connections and relationships, promoting a sense of belonging and interconnectedness among its members.

The community has a moderate crime rate (12.26%), which contributes to a sense of safety and security for residents.

Finally, there are 25,439 veterans in the region, reflecting an ultimate form of community engagement.

Conclusion: Weaknesses

Despite its strengths, the community also faces certain challenges that impact social cohesion and community engagement. The decline in volunteerism from 24.91% in 2019 to 19.90% is a concerning trend earning a rank as 45th in the nation. This underscores the need for renewed efforts to encourage and support volunteer initiatives within the community.

Additionally, the relatively low percentage (14.50%) of Georgia residents working with neighbors to improve the community, compared to the national average of 18%, suggests a potential lack of grassroots community involvement and collaboration. Similarly, the lower rates of exchanging favors (7.7%) and social engagement with neighbors (19.7%) further highlight challenges in fostering strong interpersonal connections and collective action at the local level.

Addressing these weaknesses requires concerted efforts to promote community engagement, foster a culture of volunteerism, and strengthen social ties among residents. By leveraging existing strengths and implementing targeted interventions, the community can work towards building a more cohesive, connected, and resilient community for all its members.



SECTION 8

DATA SOURCES

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Research and Statistical Data

County History

History and Geography Profiles: New Georgia Encyclopedia

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/>

County Data: Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org>

Demographic Profile

Personal Demographics: Census Bureau ACS Tables DP02-DP05

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Household Demographics: Census Bureau ACS Tables DP02, S1101

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Senior Citizen Demographics: Census Bureau ACS Tables DP02, S0103

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Median Age: Census Bureau ACS Table DP05

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Citizenship Status: Census Bureau ACS Table DP02

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Population Migration: Census Bureau ACS Table DP02

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Birth Statistics: Georgia Oasis

<https://oasis.state.ga.us>

Death Statistics: Georgia Oasis

<https://oasis.state.ga.us>

Income and Poverty

Poverty Data: Census Bureau ACS Tables S1701-1703

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Household Poverty Data: Census Bureau ACS Tables S1901-1903, S2201

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Median Income: Census Bureau ACS Table S1903

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Living Wage: MIT University

<https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

Income Inequality: US Census Bureau ACS Table B19083

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Household Incomes: Census Bureau ACS Table DP03

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Senior Poverty: Census Bureau ACS Table S0103

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Gender Wage Studies: US Census Bureau PUMS

<https://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/pums.html>

Child Poverty Consequences: Urban Institute

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/65766/2000369-Child-Poverty-and-Adult-Success.pdf>

Deep Poverty: The Urban Institute

<https://www.urban.org/features/unwaged-war-deep-poverty>

Employment & Industry

Labor Force/Employment Statistics: Bureau of Labor Statistics

<https://www.bls.gov/data/#employment>

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<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

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2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Survey Data

Question 1: How would you classify yourself? – 332 Responses

Board of Directors	14
Staff	120
Volunteers	3
Community Members	148
Other (Business, Organization, Govt, etc.)	47

Question 2: Which of the following sector do you represent on the body (Board only) – 14 Response

Community Members	8
Government	4
Local Businesses or Organizations	2

Question 3: Which option best classifies your role in the organization? (Staff only) – 119 Responses

Executive/Administrative Team	2
Finance	4
Human Resources	2
Public Relations	2
Technology/Analytics	0
Program Management	22
Program Staff	86
Facilities/Maintenance	1

Question 4: Which community/communities do you reside in and/or serve? – 333 Responses

Appling	51
Atkinson	26
Bacon	35
Brantley	42
Bulloch	23
Candler	28
Charlton	35
Clinch	40
Coffee	65

Effingham	10
Evans	19
Jeff Davis	45
Long	11
Pierce	54
Tattnall	28
Toombs	46
Ware	99
Wayne	21

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Question 5: What is the name of your organization? (Stakeholders Only) – 53 Responses

- Appling County Government
- Brantley County Board of Education
- Brantley County Government
- Brantley County School System
- Called to Love, Inc.
- Child Advocacy Services
- City of Alma Police Department
- City of Claxton
- City of Folkston
- City of Hazlehurst
- City of Lyons Housing Authority
- City of Nahunta
- City of Statesboro
- Claxton-Evans Chamber of Commerce
- Clinch County School System
- Clinch Memorial Hospital
- Coastal Pine Technical College
- Evans County Board of Commissioners
- Family Connection
- Ferst Readers
- First African Missionary Baptist Church
- Georgia DFCS
- Georgia Department of Education
- Georgia Legal Services Program
- Greater Vidalia Chamber of Commerce
- Hearts and Hands Clinic
- His Eternal Atoning Touch Chapel International Ministries
- Legacy Link
- Life, Inc.
- Lyons Police Department
- Middle Flint Council on Aging
- Okefenokee Alliance for Homeless
- Outreach Center and Prevent Child Abuse
- River of Life Church
- Satilla Rural EMC
- South Georgia Broadcasters
- Statesboro Regional Public Library
- Steel and Metal Systems
- Tattnall County Commissioners

Question 6: Which of the following best describes your organization? (Stakeholders Only) – 49 Responses

Federal Government	1
State Government	1
Local Government	12
Law Enforcement	2
Faith Based	4
Educational Institution	7
Medical Facility	3
Business	2
Other Community Program	17

Question 7: What type of services do you provide? (Stakeholders Only) – 38 Responses

Case Management	8
Income Management	2
Employment Assistance	7
Adult Education Assistance	7
Adult Skills Development	2
Child/Youth Education	8
Emergency Housing/Utility Payments	3
Homeless/Transitional Housing	9
Housing Repairs	3

Mental Health Services	6
Behavioral Health Services	4
Domestic Violence Services	1
Food Assistance	10
Resource Coordination/Referrals	13
Resource Application Assistance	4
Parent Supports	7
Clothing	1
Physical Health Services	4

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Question 8: Do you consider yourself to be low-income?– 325 Respondents

Classification	Yes	No
Board of Directors	3	11
Staff	48	67
Volunteers	1	2
Community Members	60	86
Other (Business, Organization, Govt, etc.)	5	42
TOTAL	117	208

Question 9: What is your age range?– 268 Respondents

18-24 years	15
25-44 years	99
45-54 years	36
55-59 years	27
60-64 years	29
65+ years	56

Question 10: Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic? – 266 Responses

Yes	8
No	258

Question 11: What is your race?– 261 Responses

Black	121
White	138
Native American	1
Multi-Racial	1

Question 12: What is your family type? – 114 Responses

Single Individuals	33
Adults with Children	13
Two Adults, No Children	27
Single Parent (Female)	30
Single Parent (Male)	3
Multi-Generational	5
Other	3

Question 13: Do you have any pre-school aged children? – 69 Responses

Yes	10
No	59

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Question 14: Are you familiar with Action Pact? – 188 Responses

Yes	184
No	4

Question 15: Do you consider yourself to be a partner with Action Pact (Stakeholders Only) – 47 Responses

Yes	36
No	11

Question 16: Have you ever been assisted by Action Pact (Low-Income Only)? – 113 Responses

Yes	79
No	34

Question 17: Please select any services that you have received from the organization over the past twelve months? (Customers Only) – 42 Responses

CASA Services	1	Head Start	14
Senior Home Health Services	1	Early Head Start	7
Home Delivered Meals	1	Pre-Kindergarten	4
Senior Centers	5	Child Literacy	1
Senior Field Trips	2	Rental Assistance	1
Benefit Application Assistance	1	Mortgage Assistance	2
Financial Literacy/Budget Counseling	1	Utility Assistance (Including EAP)	42
Food Assistance	5	Referrals	1
Home Weatherization	1	Other	2

Question 18: How would you rate the services provided by Action Pact? (Customers Only) – 63 Responses

1 Star	1	4 Stars	5
2 Stars	0	5 Stars	57
3 Stars	3		

Average Rating: 4.86/5.00

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Question 19: From your perspective, what are the most critical conditions of poverty in your community? – 323 Responses (+/- 5.45%)

Housing Insecurity	245	Poor Physical Health	76
Food Insecurity	202	Abuse/Neglect	73
Risk of Utility Loss	171	Inadequate Clothing	33
Poor Mental Health	117	None/Unknown	7

Question 20: From your perspective, which of the following situations impacts the ability of local residents to meet these basic needs? – 328 Responses

Inadequate Income	205	Under-Employment	46
Lack of Affordable Housing	152	Childcare Costs	46
Lack of Financial Mgmt. Skills	100	Poor Health	44
Unemployment	86	Lack of Community Support	40
Lack of Education/Skills	85	Inadequate Health Service Access	24
Lack of Personal Transportation	78	Criminal Records	23
Poor Housing Quality	61	Discrimination	13
Inadequate Public Transportation	53	Domestic Abuse	11
Lack of Childcare	51	None/Unknown	5
Addictions	50		

Question 21: From your perspective, which of the following barriers have the GREATEST impact on a person’s ability to secure meaningful employment in your local community? – 72 Responses

Lack of Transportation	47	Addictions	15
Lack of Job Opportunities	38	Insufficient Networking Opportunities	12
Lack of Required Qualifications	37	Discrimination	6
Lack of Childcare	33	Poor Health	5
Criminal Records	21	Lack of Motivation	1

Question 22: Which skills and/or qualifications do you feel present the biggest barrier to employment for individuals in your community? – 45 Responses

Poor Literacy Skills	29	Lack of Certifications/Licenses	12
Lack of High School Diploma	23	Lack Computer/Digital Skills	10
Lack of Relevant Technical Skills	23	Lack of Office Skills	9
Lack of Soft Skills	22	Poor Language Proficiency	8
Lack of College Degree	19	Unknown	3

Question 23: Which, if any, of the following barriers do adults encounter when trying to improve their qualifications for local jobs? – 45 Responses

Lack of Resources	26	Inadequate Computer/Internet Access	16
Lack of Resource Awareness	26	Discrimination	4
Inability to Afford Resources	23	Lack of Time	3
Lack of Transportation	22	Lack of Remote Learning Options	3
Lack of Childcare	17	Lack of Motivation	2

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Question 24: Which, if any, of the following health and safety concerns have you seen in the homes in your community? - 35 Responses

Openings in Wall/Ceilings/Floors	20	Mold	8
Inadequate Heating Units	16	Foundation Issues	6
Inadequate Insulation	14	Exposed Wiring	3
Rodent/Insect Infestations	14	Missing Siding	2
Broken Windows/Doors	12	Lead-Based Paint	1
Sagging/Leaking Roof	8	Asbestos	1

Question 25: What aspects of community transportation are inadequate in your area? - 36 Responses

No Public Transportation	29	Limited Hours of Operation	5
Unreliable Service	11	Poorly Maintained Vehicles/Stations	3
Limited Routes	6	None/Unknown	2
High Cost	6	Safety Concerns	1
Lack of Disability Accessibility	6	Lack of Non-Medical Transportation	1

Question 26: Which types of addictions have the greatest impact on the ability of residents to secure basic needs and enjoy a high quality of life? - 48 Responses

Drugs (Prescription or Illegal)	46	Gambling	5
Alcohol	41	Food	5
Tobacco	10	Pornography	2
Internet/Video Games	8	Shopping	1
Work/Career	7	Other/Unknown	3

Question 27: What barriers most contributed to inadequate health service access? - 16 Responses

No Insurance	10	Long Waits for Appointments	3
Inadequate Insurance	8	Lack of Specialized Medical Services	3
Insufficient Mental Health Services	8	Inaccessibility for Disabled Persons	3
High Cost of Medical Care	8	None/Unknown	1
Shortage of Primary Care Providers	6		

Question 28: Based on your work and/or school schedule, what would be the ideal time for dropping your children off for childcare? (Low-Income with Children Only) – 10 Responses

6:00 am	30%
7:00 am	50%
8:00 am	10%
9:00 am	10%

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Question 29: Based on your work and/or school schedule, what would be the ideal time for picking up your children from childcare? (Low-Income with Children Only) – 10 Responses

1:00 pm	10%
3:00 pm	20%
4:00 pm	10%
5:00 pm	60%

Question 30: Which of the following situations are relevant to personal transportation used by low-income residents? - 197 Responses

Repair costs impact HH finances	107	No trustworthy/affordable mechanic	47
Many have minor mechanical issues	82	Lack of safety features/fuel efficiency	39
Many have major mechanical issues	82	Most are in good working condition	22
Frequent breakdowns	77	Unable to afford gas prices	2
Lack of valid insurance	69	No driver's license	2

Question 31: Which of the following situations have you personally struggled with over the past twelve months? (Low-Income Only) – 114 Respondents

Situation	Total Experienced	Assisted	No Resources
Job search	22	12	6
Need for uniforms/tools to work	6	2	3
Budget mismanagement	25	6	10
Lack of education/skills to work	14	7	2
Inability to pay off loans/debt	49	9	27
Difficulty affording rent	31	9	15
Eviction	5	3	1
Difficulty affording mortgage	18	9	4
Foreclosure	4	2	0
Homelessness	5	3	1
Relation due to cost	9	3	5
Difficulty affording utilities	59	35	15
Loss of a utility service	23	13	5
HH mbr. needed medical care	25	9	8
Felt socially isolated	20	5	7
Struggled with depression	23	7	8
Seriously considered suicide	4	2	0
Needed bnft. application help	18	11	1
Experienced abuse/neglect	4	2	0
Poor housing condition	15	3	8
Poor home insulation	15	2	7
Transportation limitations	17	3	9
Food insecurity	28	12	6
Unable to find childcare	13	6	3
Unable to afford childcare	18	6	6
Struggled with parenting skills	6	1	2
Limited by criminal record	6	2	3
Struggled with an addiction	5	2	1

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

General Income and Poverty Comments:

- The middle group of people who have Social Security and SSI are (again) falling through the cracks.
- Stop just giving and require clients to take some responsibility for their own acts if helped.
- Many of our elderly have to choose between nutritional meals and medications.
- No other issues will be important to a person who is hungry and homeless. They will be concerned about their safety but won't be able to do anything about it while hungry and homeless.
- When parents mishandle their funds, the children suffer.
- People below the poverty line sometimes have to choose between utility bills, drugs, and food.
- More Senior Adult Assistance such as energy, adult day care, transportation, food security, wellness checks on clients in county
- Applying has limited resources available.
- We need funding to be available all year long.
- People are having trouble paying bills, buying clothes, buying essential things they need to live.
- Families need services that are affordable and able to help them keep up with inflation. Included would be housing assistance, transportation help, access to adequate food and medical care.
- This is a low-income poor community which needs a lot of mental and physical help.
- Many people believe that living in housing that costs them \$14 a month and collecting disability and SNAP benefits is a normal way of life. To better themselves by adding education and better paying jobs would keep them from accessing affordable food and housing, so they never make the decision to do anything better for themselves.
- If one cannot care for their basic needs, then how much more are they unable to care for any mental health or physical needs. The stressors associated with poverty are often untenable and often times lead to all types of abuse and neglect.
- Most of the people are suffering due to lack of income so they have to choose between food, housing or utilities.
- Housing is poor, good income jobs are scarce and people who live on fixed incomes are always in danger of having to choose between food, bills or meds. Transportation is another area that lacks in Appling Co.
- It's due to the lack of jobs and health insurance and the cost of living. Poverty is everywhere, not just in my community.
- Incomes are not enough to cover food, utilities, and rent/mortgage like before, so people are struggling.
- The limited income of the populations that we serve provides crisis level concerns especially in times of extreme heat or extreme cold. Citizens have to choose whether to care for their long-term health or their immediate energy concerns.
- I think with the way the economy is and the inflation level being high, it puts a burden on people/households.
- Maybe more training to help those help themselves to be in a better position so they can in turn help others. Training along with help can and will go a long way, to see how to come out of the place you are in, give them hope things can be better.
- In Pierce County we have seen a rise in Home and Food insecurity. Homes that are living with income that does not get the bills paid. Even more, they're in living conditions that compromise their mental and physical health both in the adults and the children because they don't feel like they can make ends meet on their own.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- There is a local food bank and a clothing outreach program to assist with those areas of need. Many people will forgo making a utility payment to ensure they have food to eat. Mental health issues are on the rise. We are seeing this becoming more prevalent in our community. Additionally, overall physical health has always been an issue in our community and surrounding communities.
- With prices going up many of our elderly are unable to afford adequate food and shelter. Most of our elderly rent from other folks and they are being put out because they cannot afford the rent anymore.
- Inadequate clothing is due to no income/low income. This is making a big difference in mental health as well.
- There are so many people in our community who are unable to provide full meals for their families daily and there are many living in homes that are not appropriate for living standards because it is all they can afford. People have to choose between groceries and paying bills are buying appropriate clothing for their families.
- We are seeing more homelessness, food insecurities and poor health in our communities than before. Some of families don't have the funds to make sure they have everything they need so they try to get their needs met by any means necessary.
- Food and Housing are getting harder for many people to keep.
- When considering the hierarchy of needs, a person must have their most basic needs met first before they can then tackle any other unmet needs. Because of this, food, housing, and utilities are of the highest priority.
- The Community could need more affordable housing for the elderly and the cost of food expenses has made it hard for people to eat.
- Food, utilities and lack of housing in gone up and very little income to keep up the payments.
- People are facing challenges with the inflation increase of which bills to pay. Everything is going up except wages and pay. Having to choose whether to eat or keep the utilities on, or to pay the rent to have a roof over your head and still have no utilities. Not sure of what the fix is when so many are affected.
- Since I have started working with families, some families need extra resources in certain areas. Many families struggle with finding reliable affordable housing. Some families also have trouble finding mental health resources in this area.
- Continued food and housing cost makes it unaffordable for lots of family members which create additional stress leading to abuse, neglect and other unsafe home issues.
- Some families must choose between paying power bills, food, and rent on a monthly basis. It's a juggling game for some families.
- I feel that there are a lot of people in the community that have trouble obtaining proper clothing (Especially in the winter months). Children are going to school without jackets and proper clothes/shoes.
- We have a lot of veterans that are not getting the proper help they need as far as clothing, food, physical and mental health.
- Low-income families are the ones who suffers the most in food and housing and the ability to pay utilities. Therefore, we need more funding from the federal government.
- People do not want to ask for help, especially the elderly - poverty affects all of these answers especially on fixed income or no income.
- Coffee county is in need of many various services for the disadvantaged and elderly.
- Housing is too expensive, and jobs don't pay enough.
- most seniors have to live on fixed income makes it hard for them with their food and paying their bills.
- Action Pact, Inc. serves the rural southeast. There is no lack of need in our communities. Highest and best use would likely be in the areas of getting people where they need to be

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

(non-emergency medical transport) and continuing to provide hubs (senior centers/centers for disabled) where they are able to benefit from the support that occurs within a center environment.

- I believe we need to provide financial empowerment (budgeting, establishing an emergency fund, helping clients improve their credit rating, etc.).
- There are more people experiencing crisis than funds or available resources in small rural communities.
- If we had a one stop shop, where people can apply for all the services that they need in one place.
- The elderly are a big percentage of our clients and I appreciate that Action Pact serves them first during LIHEAP. Somewhere along the way between the Elderly and Single Parent households, the Veterans get lost in between. I would like to see Disabled Veterans have a time period that they are served due to the fact that they sacrificed their lives for our freedom. They are just as important in our community as the rest if not more. Maybe having a program just for them.

Employment Comments:

- Wages are not keeping up with the high prices.
- The lack of higher paying jobs will cause adults to choose between food and bills.
- We need more jobs.
- We have a lack of good jobs to pay support expenses.
- Being in a small community, there isn't a lot of good job opportunities.
- Some jobs don't pay very well so maintaining your household bills sometimes is not doable.
- Our community needs more industrial jobs to help sustain income for families. This would help with meeting the needs of food and utility needs as well. It would also help people with healthcare coverage. More jobs with competitive pay would help families pay for housing.
- There are people who work, but they do not make enough to supply their needs.
- Most of our families struggle with keeping a job due to not having transportation or support for childcare.
- Higher wages, minimum wage should at least be \$12.50 an hour.
- One of the other factors that is critical in our communities is the lack of higher paying jobs for individuals with limited education. People are having to settle for minimum wage jobs, and this does not help them pay all their necessary bills.
- There are not many job opportunities in Clinch.
- I think the hiring process is extremely long for all businesses. This long process is causing some serious issues within families.
- Not sure that employers are able to keep up with the increase of goods and services.

Adult Education/Skills Comments:

- Seniors have a hard time with computers and internet making it difficult for them to get information needed from social security, its knowledge needed instead of them having travel to the social security office.

Housing Comments:

- There is little housing for low-income people.
- Living in a tent in this cold weather isn't good.
- With rental housing sky rocketing, many are barely scraping by financially to keep a roof over their family's heads.
- If there was quality housing, we might have better companies in our local area and that would help with income, possibly transportation would come to the area as well.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Housing in Toombs County is limited for low-income people and most available housing is out of budget.
- The Weatherization Program is needed in Charlton County.
- It appears in the smaller communities there is a lack of affordable housing.
- We are getting a lot of homeless people due to drug abuse and most of them don't know of a starting point to get back on track.
- We have poor physical health and mental health because we have unsafe homes.
- The number one problem we see in our office is housing insecurity. Even when a client is able to find a home, many times it may be unlivable or in need of repairs. We, along with the rest of the nation, are in the midst of a true housing crisis.
- There is a shortage of affordable housing in this area. We need more housing authority options in Pierce and Ware counties.
- There are families that are living in homes that need repair and maintenance. There are people always looking for somewhere to live. Now many are making do where they are or move because there is nothing available in this area.
- I have seen homeless people holding signs asking for money, food, diapers for their baby. Whatever the need maybe I feel like people who are homeless didn't choose to be in their own will, everyone deserves a home, and a home is what you make it. I think it would be great if the community could provide homeless people with a shelter over their head, a soft bed to sleep in, a warm shower, a warm meal. And provide them with information about how to obtain a home, job, drugfree life, mental health services, safe childcare, whatever it may be. They may not have the knowledge or mental compacity to know how to have a healthy life with a home. Maybe hotels around town would be willing to let a homeless person stay for free in a room just to have a bed, roof and a warm shower.
- There are not many options for affordable housing.
- Quality housing is needed in this community.
- I hear, from people of all ages and economic positions, that the housing market in our area is very difficult for them. I think people are having to make very tough and unfortunate decisions to cover their base costs for housing.
- Citizens are concerning about the rising cost of housing and power. There is also an ever-increasing homeless population in most counties.
- Our community seems to have a lack of affordable good quality housing. We have at least one local landlord who rents substandard housing. Our local housing authority units are better but many need renovations.
- Most areas have little to no housing for low-income families.
- Homelessness is a major problem in rural areas. Most of the homeless populations seem to have mental issues that needs to be addressed, and Community Action Agencies do not have people trained to handle the issue.
- Our communities do not have enough low-income housing to meet all of the needs of low-income families.
- Clinch County needs better housing opportunities. It is very hard to find housing in our community.
- We need homeless shelters in our community.
- Low-income housing is the most critical need for this community. The housing that we do have are over-priced according to our incomes.
- Statesboro is a college town, and the rent here tends to be high because of that. Income-based housing is limited, and DCA housing choice vouchers are hard to come by. When people living in poverty are spending a disproportionate amount of their income for rent, housing instability is a natural consequence, and the threat of homelessness is always looming.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Rates at utility companies just keep going higher, making it hard to keep on track to pay bills.
- Housing is ridiculous if you don't own your own home. It costs more to rent than to buy in some areas.
- Plus, with the City of Douglas utility service, you never know what your bill might be even if you do things the same every month.
- We need more affordable housing.
- In Coffee County, landlords seem to be charging whatever they want for rent. A lot of households here have incomes that do not support the cost of rent.
- Housing and rentals are increasing, and clients are having to decide whether to pay rent, electric, groceries, or medicines.
- Charlton County needs another apartment complex like Charlton Courts.
- Clients are constantly worrying about their electric getting disconnected for failure to pay their bills. LIHEAP does help, but sometimes there are extenuating circumstances which even LIHEAP cannot help.
- Family is having a hard time to keep up with paying high rental assistance and price on new home is too high to get approval. Electric service is also hard to pay.
- The clients I serve live in poorly kept low-income housing due to the lack of available low-income housing that is up to standard.
- In the Ware County area, we are seeing more homeless people, and those people have mental health concerns.
- There is very little decent affordable housing in our area. There are a lot of people here that don't work and will move when the rent is due, so the landlords are leery of renting. I've talked to several that have water leaks or items that need to be repaired and the landlord refuses to make the repairs for them so they can't afford the electric or water bills.
- Low-income housing is very limited in our area with long wait list.
- More homelessness is occurring in the areas. Mental Health is part of the homeless population also.
- Housing in my community is lackluster. I know of multiple individuals who have a house they rent, but the home is in shambles. They are literally paying rent for a home that is crumbling away. Renters don't care to do better, and the housing market is horrendously overpriced in terms of purchasing.
- Cost of living is continuing to increase. Utility loss is always a threat for individuals on a fixed income.
- There is a lack of affordable housing in the community.
- Affordable housing is non-existent.
- Appling County is in need of more affordable housing in a neighborhood that people can be proud to call home.
- There isn't a homeless shelter in our community.
- There is not enough housing for the growing community causing housing insecurity.
- I feel that housing is very limited here and can be better.
- There are a lot of people in our community who benefit from utility assistance. Some need more help than we can offer.
- Light billing is too high in different communities. Billing rates should be the same across the board for everyone.
- More grants should be given to the lower income people to bring their home up to standards.
- I hear more complaints about utility bills.
- Some complaints on inadequate housing.
- We need housing. Affordable Housing for elderly and Single Families.
- We have excessively high utility bills.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- There is a large homeless or housing insecure population in most of these counties. There are just as many needing energy assistances.
- There is not affordable housing for low-income families.
- Unfortunately, many people are only "one paycheck away" from homelessness.
- There is a need for additional low rental housing. I also help those who cannot pay their electricity if they cannot be served by Action Pact for any reason.
- Affordable housing is a consistent problem in the poor rural counties. The housing authorities have limited availabilities for those seeking low-income housing. The elderly are living on fixed incomes, and most cannot afford the rent on non-income-based housing.
- The availability for assistance with utilities is limited and is only given twice a year to those who manage to qualify.
- Many in each community may have their own home but it is not in code and falling apart.
- The city of Broxton (coffee county) needs affordable housing for low-income families.
- Most often the housing that is offered to renters is in poor condition and the rent is high.
- Several families are not secure in their housing as they are finding it hard to keep paying rental. Rental rates are outrageous and hard to keep up with payments on time. Charlton county, GA is in desperate need of more low-income housing such as Charlton Courts. New apartments were built in 2023 but their monthly rental rates are too much for the low-income person to afford.
- Even with utility assistance some folks are still having trouble keeping up with their utility bills such as electric, water, gas. OREMC does help fund their clients but there is not assistance for GA Power other than LIHEAP twice a year. Some of the senior adult's income barely pays for 4 months at the rate they are now.
- We have a shortage of housing (rental and low income assisted) availability in Clinch County.
- There are not enough homes to rent for low-income people. Many people have to stay with relatives or friends who physically or mentally abuse them. This causes mental health issues.
- Our families have a hard time finding adequate housing that they can afford and in a safe neighborhood.
- We see a need for more stable low-income housing in our area. Many of the people that reach out to us (typically several a week) are looking for rental assistance or utility assistance. We also have many clients who are living in substandard homes that are not up to code.
- In regard to homeless families with children, they are often "couch-surfing", which leads to more increased instances of abuse, both physical and sexual, especially relating to children.
- Clients often complain of lack of support for utilities, they find it difficult to get through to the energy assistance lines.
- There is a lack of adequate low-income housing for families, most housing is at a greater rate than families can afford. Most of the low-income housing is not safe and decent for the families we serve.
- Utilities are at an all-time high and it is almost impossible for low-income families to afford it. Families with little to no health insurance is also part of the issues in our communities.
- Statesboro need more resources when it comes to housing assistance and utility assistance.
- Rent is outrageous in our county. Often times a HH income does not support what they are paying in monthly rent. But the income is considered too high to receive SNAP benefits, so you have families that are having to make choices whether to buy food for their family or pay the rent.
- We get calls and walk in's every day all day, asking for utility assistance. The cost of utilities in certain areas within the city is ridiculous.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Toombs Co. is lacking in affordable housing. Based on the population's income, the income has not increased but the rent has increased by 40% in this area. Housing market for low-income families is not feasible.
- The homelessness has become an acute problem for Toombs County. The county is lacking in shelters and services to assist those in need.
- The community is growing. This community needs housing to grow with the growing community.
- There's a homeless problem in Statesboro.
- A lot of homes need updating.
- Our communities would benefit from more affordable low-income housing that is in good condition.
- I think the City of Douglas should have some kind of incentive program like Ga Power where the elderly can apply for discounts that helps lower their utility bill.
- A large number of government assistance housing in the city of Broxton.
- The cost to make repairs to any home is expensive, most people are not capable of making repairs for themselves.
- Our county needs more resources for rental assistance.
- So, the homes go down fast once they are not repaired properly.

Childcare Comments:

- There is no daycare available, and the little there is have waiting lists that are months or years long.
- the price of childcare is high, and a lot of times parents don't have the means to pay it, or they are only working to pay just that.
- I have experienced not having a place to take my child that has caused less pay because the hours I missed at work. I have experienced not being able to pay childcare. Also not having a reliable safe place to take my child.
- People don't have the money to afford childcare if they can find an opening.
- Parents need to work, but do not have reliable childcare.
- We have families where both parents need to work, but because of the high cost of childcare, one parent must stay home.

Health Comments:

- We need more hospitals and health related services.
- Lots of people are not aware of the services available and staffing levels are too low to handle the load.
- We need more knowledge and resources for mental health issues.
- Having support groups, or groups to be a part of online throughout the community that focus on addictions and how to overcome them would be beneficial for the community. I would imagine that finding an instructor to lead the group would be difficult to find. Hopefully after a few addicts complete the course or attend so many meetings would then go on to become an instructor themselves to educate addicts like they once were.
- We also have a lot of people with mental health and substance abuse issues and due to being a rural community there are not a lot of local resources for them.
- Mental health appears to be correlated to poverty – loss of employment, under-employment, and no social network/support system.
- Higher drug issues cause greater poverty and child abuse due to neglect.
- My granddaughter attended Ware Head Start. Many of the parents suffer from drug addiction. The cycle of addiction produces poor mental health.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Health is impacted by a broad range of social determinants. This includes poverty, availability of healthy food, and ignorance of how diet impacts health. Mental health is a result of every determinant combined.
- Many people have no hope.
- I feel like every adult in this world probably has a mental health condition. Having a mental health condition and knowing how to properly treat it is very detrimental to anyone's health. I don't feel like enough information is publicized about mental health because it has been so "hush- hush" for years. Maybe some people who do suffer from a mental health condition is aware that something is not right with them, but they do not know how to address it with a doctor, therapist, advocate to receive the help they need. Extra support for someone during this time could lead them to a healthier and happier lifestyle. Individuals may feel "embarrassed or ashamed" that they have a mental disorder and don't feel confident enough to go to the doctor alone so then it is suggested to them to take a family member or friend to the appointment. Also providing parents with information about possible signs of autism, ADD/ADHD, separation anxiety, addiction, appropriate coping mechanisms and so on in young children so the children can receive services that would only benefit them. Having pamphlets that are made with different types of mental health disorders, possible signs, how to ask for help, what kind of help is available for them, contact information of therapists, support groups, pastors, or nurses dispersed throughout the community. In doing so I feel like it would only leave a lasting positive mark on someone who has been struggling with a mental health disorder.
- Mental health is a struggle almost anywhere in our nation. We need options for their families, which may include community care aides to assist those individuals with daily activities (shopping, interacting with others, etc.).
- With COVID impacting many families, training families how to handle death/dying and how to handle grief is essential.
- Since COVID we have seen so much more mental health conditions.
- People cannot afford needed medication and cannot afford to go to the dentist or eye doctor. This inability to access needed medication and services significantly diminishes their quality of life.
- I think stress brings on a lot of mental and physical health.
- We need better care in mental health due to several people wandering around town that talk to themselves and look homeless.
- Home environments are bad due to drug abuse.
- Inability to buy food is a big problem in Brantley County. The SNAP office is closed a lot, and they are often behind, so many times people have issues with the ability to consistently buy food.
- Just the stress of everyday life and wondering how you're going to make it takes a toll on one's mental state.
- Mental Health is a main reason of underemployment.
- Individuals struggle with physical health greatly. I see everyday people that have waited until they couldn't move to start trying to do better in terms of daily moving about. Elderly especially, but not just them. No one seems to understand the importance of maintaining good physical health in more ways than just moving as well, such as diet.
- Mental health is a problem worldwide and certainly is true for our community. People are raised in homes that don't know or understand the importance of mental health. An estimated 12.3 million American adults thought about suicide, and 1.7 million attempts in 2021 alone.
- People cannot get health insurance because there are no jobs that most can work at to be able to pay the cost of the insurance.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- I don't think there's enough services out there for people that struggle with mental health.
- More can be done to help with mental health as well maybe offer more services for the people.
- Mental Health is a big issue in this community. Many of our families are clients of Unison Behavioral Health.
Drug use in Brantley County is extremely horrible.
- We have a large senior population with health issues.
- Mental Health issues seem to be more prevalent than in prior years. Children are having behavioral/mental health issues at younger ages.
- Health care is unaffordable for many, and mental health issues are still taboo and/or there are no resources to help.
- Lack of Mental Health facilities seems to be needed more as time goes along.
- Unfortunately, mental health is a big problem in most areas.
- Many do not have insurance and do not seek medical attention until they have no other choice but to go to the E.R.
- From my perspective I have witnessed many who have no jobs, not able to work due to limited physical or mental capacity and are afraid of being homeless or are homeless.
- A lot of clients talk to me about their home life and that they are taking care of a family member who is sick or disabled and it takes a toll on their mental health and often makes them depressed. Especially if the family member passes away.

Nutrition Comments:

- Food handouts are held at several places, but it seems as if they may not be well advertised.
- People are begging for food on the streets.
- I see and hear people asking for food assistance all the time. It is a big need in Brantley County.
- I think our community does a good job with free food resources.
- Food will always be an issue to those who have trouble making ends meet. The Senior Adults have little on their food stamp cards and many do not have because they are too proud to ask for help! Younger families tend to qualify for more and end up selling them for cash.
- People cannot afford healthy food.
- I selected food insecurity because I personally have experienced this with my family. The price of groceries has increased tremendously making it more difficult to purchase better quality foods. Healthier groceries like fresh fruit and vegetables, organic foods, items that may be gluten free, egg free, soy free whatever the special diet is those are more expensive and someone with that allergy may not be able to purchase the item that has dietician restrictions. Forcing them to buy the one with the allergy, then having an allergic reaction, followed by treatment and so on. I was thankfully able to reach out to my child's social worker at his school and she gave me some resources to approach. I was able to ask the church I attend in Waycross for help. I certainly felt blessed during this trying time because there are so many people that do want to serve and make a positive difference in someone's life.
- Even though the communities we serve receive SNAP benefits, we see families that still need food before the month is over.
- Many people in poverty in Bulloch County face food insecurity, especially senior citizens living on fixed incomes and the working poor. These populations receive woefully inadequate SNAP benefits. Not surprisingly, this has negative impacts on their health and well-being.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Food has become so very expensive that you can hardly buy it.
- With the City of Douglas utility service, you never know what your bill might be even if you do things the same every month.
- Many of my senior clients only receive \$50 or less in food stamps and rely on food banks/family/church for meals.
- Families don't have the income to buy healthy food to feed their family's which then leads to unhealthy lifestyle. It's cheaper to get unhealthy and this is what most people have to do.
- Food is expensive and Healthy choices are hard to find.
- Food is extremely expensive.
- The loss of food stamps in our area has taken a huge toll on our senior citizens along with all other families.
- Groceries are ridiculously high prices right now.
- The food bank gives out the same food each month, should give vouchers so each individual can purchase the food they like to eat.
- With the different food banks, I do not hear about the food supply as much.
- I assist in providing a blessing food box for the community which is always low in contents.
- The elderly's average food stamps is around \$23.00 a month, which in this day and time does not go far.
- Many poverty level do not receive much help from food stamps to provide food then you have some people that can't afford or not able to cook a hot meal.
- A lot of senior adults do not get enough food and need more assistance in obtaining food they need to stay nourished and healthy. The senior adults are the ones who are short-changed on food assistance.
- The rising cost of food has affected the ability to obtain good quality food at a reasonable cost.
- Clients that I serve lack in food security due to physical limitations they are unable to shop or lack the money to provide food for themselves.
- We have people come in the center all the time saying they do not get SNAP benefits or that their SNAP benefits have been delayed, because they did not turn in their paperwork. But the client says that the paperwork was submitted on time.
- The food cost has increased, there's been an outreach of people inquiring about food.

Transportation Comments:

- Many individuals do not have reliable transportation.
- People struggle to find transportation to much needed doctors' visits.
- Jobs are not that accessible because of transportation.
- People are frequently left at doctor's offices (sometimes out of their county and even state) with no transportation back home because of the inefficient and unreliable transportation system as it is presently contacted through Medicare.
- Transportation is a huge area of need in our rural area.
- We need public transportation.
- I think we are in serious need of public transportation. Our seniors and other clients are not able to take advantage of a lot of services because of the lack of being able to afford transportation.
- A stable public transportation service in Ware County, or in our tri-county area would be most beneficial to assist with people being able to gain and maintain employment.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Our communities would benefit from affordable public transportation.
- The ones that can't drive are having issues finding reliable transportation even transit that bills Medicaid does not show up to some of these in the very rural areas.
- We have a lack of public transportation.
- I see and talk to a lot of clients on a daily basis, and when I am completing assessments on them, I often ask about income and the ones that have to fill out the no income form state that its due to no transportation or no ride to work.
- Some of our kids don't come to school because of transportation issues. We recently had one to drop because she didn't have a way to bring her and pick her up.
- The lack of dependable transportation and maintenance costs put families even further behind in their pursuit of a quality life.
- Charlton County is a poor county and most of the low-income are living within the city limits. Some type of taxi-like company which could help them navigate to get where they need to go would be beneficial. For the longer trips like to PCP appointments out of town, there is a transit van affiliated with the Charlton County Senior Center that provides this service.
- Many people cannot afford the higher cost for automobiles.
- Transportation is a major barrier for many of the clients that Action Pact serves. Most clients do not have good credit, and this often prevents them from being able to buy a pre-owned vehicle from more reputable dealerships. They end up having a high monthly payment for an unreliable vehicle. These vehicles break down often, and the clients are unable to get to work. If they scrape together the money to have a temporary-fix repair made, they do not have the money for their car payment. Then, the vehicle gets repossessed, and they have nothing except even worse credit than they started out with.
- People with low incomes can't afford reliable vehicles.
- Charlton County could benefit from a type of taxi service to help folks get around if their automobile breaks down!
- Some clients may have a personal vehicle, but their health, vision or hearing make it dangerous for them to attempt using. Clients are forced to put themselves and the lives/health of other drivers at risk when they attempt to drive to MD appts or for shopping because of having limited finances to pay for public transportation and having limited support systems.
- We have one taxi service, and it is very expensive. Uber is available very seldom and there are no public transportation vans for the county.
- I know that several families have stated that they have car maintenance problems/ or the repairs are expensive and although they have jobs, they are low paying jobs.
- Very hard to find a reliable affordable vehicle.
- Most of my clients have to request transport via private transportation companies as they don't have the option or ability to drive themselves and no form of public transportation is available.
- Many of our elderly cannot afford a vehicle and others to have a vehicle cannot afford to have them repaired when they break down. Most of their vehicles are older models.
- It is hard to keep good reliable transportation on the road.
- From my personal experience and the people, I am serving in this county many have already issues this year with being able to bring their children to school. I have maybe a handful of guardians with new model cars.
- Many people just can't afford transportation.
- The city should have city busses. Travel should be available for anyone.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- Transportation is just not available, and it hinders mobility to receive services. Lack of funds keep them unable to get where they need to be.
- Affordability is the issue.
- Ware county does not have a public transportation system if we had one, I think it would really be a great help for people that don't have their own transportation.
- A low-income taxi service would be beneficial for many senior adults in Charlton County, GA. Some folks do not have enough money to buy gas and/or their automobile may not be in the best of conditions.
- Without transportation it is hard to find work. Without work you can't afford transportation. Most transportation that is affordable is not dependable.
- Families finding reliable transportation ties into their ability to find quality job opportunities. I really believe if better job opportunities come to our areas, then families can afford reliable transportation.
- Affordable and reliable transportation is a challenge for many families in our service area.
- Many of our clients are living below the poverty level and cannot afford transportation repairs.
- Most of our clients have transportation that will get them to work, having gas maybe the bigger problem.
- I have had clients come in for one service or another, maybe a LIHEAP appointment and be late to their appointment due to their car not operating correctly or not having transportation at all and waiting for their "ride" to show up. On numerous occasions I have witnessed few clients not being able to leave the Service center due to car issues. Due to mechanical problems, maybe not cranking up or actually running hot, clients having to wait around in the parking lot.
- Transportation is a big issue in the counties we service. We have elderly clients that can't get to doctor appointments and the grocery store. We have parents that can't get to work when their vehicles break down. Public transportation is not ideal or in some areas it is completely nonexistent.
- Low wages making it impossible for families to afford personal transportation.
- The "other" situation is the one I've personally encountered as an employer.
- Because our community is small, we only have a few repair shops and repairs and parts can be too expensive for residents who are struggling financially.

Family Comments:

- You can tell that some children do not live in very good homes.
- I chose unsafe home environment over poor physical or mental health because abuse in the home often speaks to not only poverty, but also the need to protect one of the most vulnerable populations, children. They are unable to self-protect therefore the risk and the damage of poverty is greater.
- Child abuse is on the rise in Appling and some of it is due to lack of housing. It causes families to share housing and therefore puts them in danger.
- Many of our children are from homes with drug use. I'm thankful that we are able to provide safe childcare for some of these children.
- Cycles of neglect continue without proper resources to address family needs.
- The home environments are often unsafe for the children because of the location, the abuse in the home--both physical and drug related.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- The elderly suffer from abuse and neglect which a lot of the time comes from their own family members while the elderly are trying to raise their grand kids and some even great grand kids.
- Clients are taking care of children in school along with elderly parents.
- I also believe there is a lot of child and elder abuse and domestic violence in the community.

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Focus Group Highlights

In addition to qualitative data gathered in surveys, a total of 98 individuals participated in a series of 15 focus groups. This included 34 local residents, 39 members of the agency team, and 25 representatives of local businesses, organizations, and government entities.

Community Members

*Pat Austin
Barbara Bentley
Chavron Conely
Louise Doomes
Tony Douglas
Tommy Fain
Margaret Goodins
Judy Hughey
Clint Hutchinson
Faye Ingersoll
James Kent
Eugenia Klezaras*

*Joe Lisbon
Farleen Long
Christen Mayers
Alex McNeely
Almaree Miller
Mary Ogden
George Paul
Josephine Reddish
Shirley Reynolds
Keith Sharp
Sherry Sharp*

*Valerie Slocum
Liz Smith
Michael St. John
Nadeen Summer
Jane Toth
Tip Vongsaona
Carolyn Wade
Vera Wallace
Joyce Wiggins
Carrie Williams
Annette Woods*

Team Members

*Shasta Allen
Tiffany Altman
Cheryl Baggett
Jo-Lee Burton
Russel Cooper
Patrice Ellis
Dawn Garcia
Anna Goodson
Cathaleen Graves
Janice Griffiths
Noel Guinn
Deborah Horton
Shelly Hyers*

*Cassarria Johnson
Delois Johnson
Juan Johnson
Angela Jones
Dana Lee
Lori Leverett
Saleeta Mizell
Adelia Moody
Rhonda Moore
Joyce Mooney
Catreia Moser
Tanjaneke Newton
Angie Patel*

*Meniece Parker
Lynn Platt
Elizabeth Porter
Lisa Rigdon
Joann Robinson
ShaKami Servant
Sarah Simmons
Alex Smith
Sheri Sowell
Heather Thigpen
Brianna Wilcox
Danielle Woods
Katria Woods*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Business, Government, and Organizational Representatives

<i>Patricia Ballard</i>	<i>City of Pearson</i>
<i>Terry Branch</i>	<i>City of Claxton</i>
<i>Peggy Brown</i>	<i>Union Mission</i>
<i>Irene Burney</i>	<i>Evans County Government</i>
<i>Laura Crozier</i>	<i>Bacon County Family Connection</i>
<i>Jason Hall</i>	<i>City of Lyons</i>
<i>Tammy Hall</i>	<i>Evans County Chamber of Commerce</i>
<i>Clint Hutchinson</i>	<i>Mercy Clinic</i>
<i>Caroline Johnson</i>	<i>Statesboro-Bulloch Library</i>
<i>Beth Kadlec</i>	<i>ACTS</i>
<i>Adam Kennedy</i>	<i>Evans County Chamber of Commerce</i>
<i>Bill Lee</i>	<i>Evans County Hospital</i>
<i>Alys Marsicano</i>	<i>City of Lyons</i>
<i>Yvette McCall</i>	<i>Bulloch County NAACP</i>
<i>Kat Montgomery</i>	<i>Georgia Legal Services</i>
<i>Ann Owens</i>	<i>Greater Vidalia Chamber</i>
<i>Elizabeth Porter</i>	<i>Evans County Community Center</i>
<i>Jordan Robins</i>	<i>TRAN Technologies</i>
<i>Dr. Alison Rushing</i>	<i>Georgia State University - Statesboro</i>
<i>Bryan Taylor</i>	<i>Bacon County Board of Education</i>
<i>Diane Vazquez</i>	<i>Telamon</i>
<i>Wendy West</i>	<i>Good Health and Heartbeat</i>
<i>Rev. Alvin Williams</i>	<i>First African Missionary Baptist Church</i>
<i>Edye Williams</i>	<i>Bacon County Health Department</i>
<i>Paige Williamson</i>	<i>Toombs County Family Connection</i>

Guiding Questions:

1. What basic needs do you feel are the most difficult for local residents to secure?
2. What are the biggest barriers that prevent local residents from escaping poverty?
3. Do you feel that local schools are adequately preparing students for adulthood?
4. To what degree is the public transportation system in your county meeting or not meeting resident needs?
5. Do you feel that local residents are actively engaged in the community?

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Poverty and Income

- *You can't do anything without money. (Appling)*
- *If you work, they penalize you as a senior. They will take your Medicare and Medicaid, and your check will decrease. (Appling)*
- *If you get to a certain age, you are allowed to work so much. If you are medically disabled, you can't do nothing. You can't make no money. (Appling)*
- *We are a good two hours from any major city. Referring people to Savannah or Jacksonville for help is just not feasible. The nearest towns are Waycross and Douglas. They are still small towns; they are just bigger than we are. (Bacon)*
- *I live on Social Security, and I recently saw I got a raise. I thought Praise God, Hallelujah. (Brantley)*
- *Usually when you get a raise, that Medicaid goes up and eats that raise they give you. (Brantley)*
- *We just have to stick to the basics, the things that we have to get to survive. (Brantley)*
- *To rent a house you have to show 3xs the income. Even the new plants paying \$23/hr can't meet that. (Bulloch)*
- *It's either pay your bill or buy groceries. You can't pay a \$300-400 light bill every month and have kids and a family and still provide food for those kids and family and school clothes and shoes. They have to pick and choose. (Candler)*
- *I believe the greatest needs in our area is food and probably rent. (Clinch)*
- *With our seniors the problems are food, housing, and transportation (Clinch)*
- *In Clinch County, a thing that we have noticed is that it is generational poverty. People are just learning to live off the government in a sense. (Clinch)*
- *We do see some generational poverty. It isn't a high count, but it is noticeable (Clinch)*
- *We have a good number of migrant workers in our area, but they won't come to the offices for help because they don't trust us. They see us as DFCS and are afraid to ask for help. (Coffee)*
- *Inflation is a problem. Everything is going up except for income. (Coffee)*
- *I feel that DFCS really needs to start promoting a little more the resources. I was over there last week, and a man was there, and the young lady didn't even give him resources for our community. That is very offensive to me. I pulled him to the side. I told him where to go and what he needed to do. There needs to be retraining in our area specifically for people that work at these. (Toombs)*
- *DFCS is very hard to get a hold of. You can't even call and get responses. That's a major issue for these families that are in need. That is their first contact. (Toombs)*
- *You have to have a 2- or 3-income home now adays. People are prorated during the summer. (Ware)*
- *I think if we had higher paying jobs then there would be less people on poverty. Even with students coming out of college they can't find jobs and choose to go to Atlanta or even Jacksonville. (Ware)*

Employment

- *In our area there are few job offers available. (Atkinson)*
- *Most of our jobs, people drive about 15 miles away to Douglas, Georgia. (Atkinson)*
- *In our community, wages are standing still while everything else goes up. They aren't matching up. (Atkinson)*
- *The wages aren't that great. You can't pay rent of \$600 on \$10 per hour. (Atkinson)*
- *A lot of our customers come in and they may be working 20 hours, they may even be working 40 hours, but they don't have any benefits. They are trying their best; they just can't make ends meet. (Bacon)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *Most of the jobs in Brantley County are minimum wage. To get a job that pays a good wage, you have to travel a good 30 minutes. (Brantley)*
- *Most of these jobs just want people to work part time. (Brantley)*
- *As we speak right now, I will say that we need more right now. (Bulloch)*
- *Minimum wage doesn't provide a livable wage. (Bulloch)*
- *Most of our jobs, unless you work for the school system or Lindsor, are fast food so they're not making enough to afford rent much less make a vehicle payment. (Candler)*
- *The highest one I've seen is McDonald's and that's \$11. McDonald's is on the higher end. (Candler)*
- *We are getting some of the spin off from the Hyundai plant. (Candler)*
- *Most of the time at the factory jobs they train you. (Candler)*
- *A lot of it you're standing up for 8-12 hours a day and using power tools. (Candler)*
- *There is a big lack of work ethic. We notice that people do not stick with jobs, there is no stability. We have noticed with our parents they will work just a little bit and then they won't work to make sure they can get their taxes. (Clinch)*
- *I have been here for more than 20 years and I'm seeing more of our parents that are working. (Clinch)*
- *Our factories pay really good in Clinch. They start out at around \$15 per hour, which is pretty good. We see kids coming out of high school making \$15-\$17 per hours. (Clinch)*
- *Some of our fast-food places can't find enough workers and they have to close after lunch because of that. We are a small area, and they can't match the pay in the surrounding areas, so they have a problem keeping people. They also only let people work 20-30 hours per week. (Clinch)*
- *Our hospital employs around 100 people. It is a big employer in our area. (Clinch)*
- *Livable wages are the biggest problem. Everything is going up, but the pay isn't keeping up. (Coffee)*
- *It's like the rich get richer and those who aren't rich just have to increase their hustle and bustle to keep up. (Coffee)*
- *With the language barrier there is a number you can call but everyone doesn't have access to that. (Evans)*
- *There are jobs for people if they want to work. (Evans)*
- *How can you get to a job when there's no transportation. We're stuck. (Long)*
- *A lot of the younger people are moving out and selling out. (Long)*
- *There's no jobs in this community. (Long)*
- *Georgia Department of Labor. Have any of you all even gone in there? It's a nightmare. You can't get a job through them. (Toombs)*
- *We are struggling keeping our Head Start agencies at capacity. I don't know what's going on with that. (Ware)*

Adult Education/Skills

- *As an agricultural community, I don't think there is as big of a stigma associated with trade school as in other communities. (Bacon)*
- *We partnered with Tech school for classes and very few showed up. (Bulloch)*
- *We are trying to do an adult literacy initiative to assist with reading. It's new. Offered in evening through Friends of the Library. (Bulloch)*
- *We've recently seen a Haitian population in the community. There is a language barrier. (Evans)*
- *Age doesn't matter. The economy prices are going up. If you don't know how to manage money you're always going to be in a bad situation. (Long)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *We have a technology need in our county. We aren't all computer smart, and everything is online now. (Wayne)*

Child/Youth Education

- *I have two daughters, and both have college degrees. When they started, they were lacking in areas that I think they should have known. (Atkinson)*
- *I think people would be surprised as to how involved our school system is in helping our kids. We have some of the highest graduation rates in the area. We are still growing, but I think we have a really good system. (Bacon)*
- *A lot of kids are raised in families where education wasn't important to them, so it isn't important to the kids. (Bacon)*
- *When you consider how small our community is, our school system really makes an effort to make as much of a difference as they can. (Bacon)*
- *A lot of people want to home school, but a lot of parents don't understand what it really takes to home school these kids. When they get to 7th or 8th grade and they want to come back, sometimes there is an educational gap that puts them behind. (Bacon)*
- *They have a low graduation rate and many of them are just passed along. (Bulloch)*
- *I have young people coming in to fill out applications and can't even fill out the application or write their name. (Bulloch)*
- *It is absolutely a school to prison pipeline. We got situations where the schools have been intentionally zoned. (Bulloch)*
- *It's bad when our STEAM Academy is out pacing our public school system. What are they doing that's working and what are they doing that we need to do for everyone? (Bulloch)*
- *One of the problems we going to run into these plants not going to be able to staff. (Bulloch)*
- *You go to school hungry kids are not going to be able to learn. You can't focus when you're hungry. (Candler)*
- *Our high school is building a new academy for skills. I think it will help the kids be more interested in obtaining their high school education. (Candler)*
- *I don't feel like any school necessarily is preparing kids. I do like the push for life skills in high school. (Candler)*
- *Most of them don't know how to fill out a resumé. Communication would be huge issue and just entitlement itself. I feel like that's for all kids. (Candler)*
- *Jesus and Jam provides after school tutoring programs. It is a really good program that really helps out our local students. (Clinch)*
- *For Clinch County, I think we are lacking in the education area sometimes. When I graduated, I was not prepared for college like I thought I should have been. We have some great athletes that come out of our schools, but when they do go to college, they usually can't keep up academically. (Clinch)*
- *I think that Coffee County is one of the best school systems I've worked with through CASA. They are very supportive. I've seen issues in other counties, but I feel like these children are set up for success. (Coffee)*
- *We're proud of the school system we have in Evans County. (Evans)*
- *We are in the second year of the College and Career Academy. They are preparing our young people that don't want to go to college to be workforce ready. (Evans)*
- *I think they are doing an excellent job training the students. (Evans)*
- *Just this year we have a local foundation that has pledged to pay for any high school senior to go to the technical college. (Evans)*
- *I feel like the schools should teach the children some financial tools and basic things. (Long)*
- *We need to get back to the basics, so they know how to live. (Long)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *We fill like the school has decided to push the children through. They aren't educating. It's more about numbers. When you talk to one of them, they can't read, they can give you change back without the calculator on the register. (Long)*
- *I think that the school system has great pathways. It's really like a first come first serve with all the kids they have. I feel like that we stray so much from things being simple. I don't feel like it's setting them up to be successful. (Pierce)*
- *We would love it if our schools could go back to teaching some home ec type things like budget, credit, cooking, basic home repairs. (Pierce)*
- *I think there has been a lot of effort over the past 5-6 years around literacy and the schools have done a lot of work implementing resources. (Toombs)*
- *The limitations are associated with special education options and post-graduation support as students transition to the workforce. (Toombs)*
- *I do think they try to teach more about financial literacy. That's helpful. (Ware)*
- *No one wants you without experience and you can't get experience. (Ware)*
- *We don't have the parent participation like we did before COVID. (Ware)*

Childcare

- *We do have daycares, but it is hard to afford when you are making minimum wage. (Bacon)*
- *Many local families don't have a family member who can watch their kids and they end up having to quit their job or cut back on their hours. Most daycare providers are only available Monday through Friday until around 5pm, and the jobs available often require them to work nights and weekends, which they can't do without someone to watch their kids. (Bacon)*
- *It's \$225 for a child over age of 11 months and \$250 under 11 months per week. A lot of people are getting kicked off support. (Bulloch)*
- *COVID shut down a lot of centers. (Bulloch)*
- *Childcare is a big thing here. We have Head Start, but we are limited about how many we can take, and it is based on income. We have one private daycare, but some people can't afford it, if they are lucky enough to get in. (Clinch)*
- *We don't have any childcare for second and third shift in our county. (Clinch)*
- *We do not have a childcare facility at this time. (Evans)*
- *Basically none. (Evans)*
- *You may have someone keeping 2 or 3 in their home but nothing of any number. (Evans)*
- *A lot of time they are over income for childcare assistance, so they don't work. (Pierce)*
- *Lollipop has no space for infants. We have Early Head Start but only 2 classes. (Pierce)*
- *If you're a CNA or some of those positions, it's a struggle. (Pierce)*
- *With them only holding 30 infants at a time it puts a big damper here. They are having to look over to Waycross. They either need to find a job in Waycross or travel back. That's why a lot of my clients refuse to work. Traveling back and forth will take most of their paychecks. (Pierce)*
- *We had one girl that had finished her training as a medical assistant, but she had two babies and could never find childcare. It was like \$200 per week. (Toombs)*
- *Who can afford \$130/week for 1 child? (Ware)*
- *I don't know of anyone for 2nd or 3rd shift workers. (Ware)*
- *We used to offer before and after childcare that was a huge help for parents. (Ware)*

Housing

- *We just don't have a lot of rental properties and the ones we have are not the best. We have a lot of mobile homes that rent for \$400 to \$600 per month and people are not even making the money to afford that. (Atkinson)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *Buying a home or renting a home is very difficult for our residents. (Bacon)*
- *Finding temporary housing is even impossible. There is just nothing available. The affordable housing units all have waiting lists. (Bacon)*
- *Housing is the number one call we get at Family Connection. I hate to get these calls because there is really nothing that we can do to help them. Even for people of means, it is very hard to find a place to rent or even to buy. (Bacon)*
- *Long-term residences are a problem. We have some rental assistance programs in the county from time to time, but you have to be on a court ordered eviction list in order to qualify for that. (Bacon)*
- *This time of years we have a lot of migrants. I see a lot of families that are piling up in one residence. (Bacon)*
- *We have about 35 kids classified as homeless through McKinney Vento, which is in no way accurate. A lot of the migrant population won't fill out the papers because they are afraid. Some don't really understand what it means on the forms. We are working to help make sure that the numbers are more accurate. (Bacon)*
- *We don't really have a lot of people living in the streets, but our homeless people do not have a home, but they may have a roof over their head because they are staying with friends and family. Of course, this is only short-term. It is a hidden population because you don't see them, but it is far from being a permanent solution for them. (Bacon)*
- *We are currently working on a regional approach to homelessness because a small county like ours is just not in a position to address it on our own. We can't afford a dog pound; we definitely can't afford a shelter. (Bacon)*
- *There's a lot of homeless people wondering around. (Brantley)*
- *We have never had to pay so much for our water bills. They have gone up and for the first time we are having to pay \$90 to \$100 per month, and I'm a senior living by myself. (Brantley)*
- *There's not enough low-income housing for the people who need it. You can work full time in Bulloch County and not get a roof over your head. (Bulloch)*
- *Everything is geared towards assisting with utilities, but we need more things that can help with rent. (Bulloch)*
- *The housing market is out pacing income. (Bulloch)*
- *There's no homeless shelter here. (Bulloch)*
- *Union Mission received 3-year grant to house homeless. (Bulloch)*
- *There are homes with leaks and poor conditions resulting in utility bills that can't be paid. (Bulloch)*
- *We do not have a lot of low-income housing. Our rental property is outrageous and most of the rental property you wouldn't want your animals living in much less your family or friends. (Candler)*
- *A lot of our rental property is run down trailers with holes in the floors, holes in the walls. I'm surprised their energy bills isn't even more just because a lot of them don't have proper heating or cooling in the housing either. (Candler)*
- *In Charlton County they don't really have anything at all to help homeless people. We have tossed around an idea, but we don't know how to approach it. There is an old hospital that isn't being used and I'm not sure why we can't fix it up to use it as a shelter. (Charlton)*
- *Rent in Folkston probably runs between \$500 and \$2,000 per month. (Charlton)*
- *Even in motels, they are wanting charge homeless people an outrageous price. (Charlton)*
- *We have a man who is staying in a hotel, and it is taking all he has just to stay there. (Charlton)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *Housing is an issue. We have a few public housing units, but one is getting really old. We hear a lot of people trying to get out of them into something nicer, but we are really limited here. (Clinch)*
- *We have a lot of requests for rent, and I usually refer them to the Georgia Community Affairs. (Clinch)*
- *Whenever funds are available, we help with rent with CSBG. We used to have EFSP, but that has been a while now. (Clinch)*
- *There is no housing, and what is available is too expensive for the people we serve to get it. (Coffee)*
- *One of the biggest things that we have a problem with is when people are in need of housing there are no resources. I lost a (Head Start) family just a few weeks ago because there were no houses and they had to move to Jacksonville. (Coffee)*
- *Many of our homeless people are women who moved from other areas. They were lured here for love by some guy. Once they are here, it doesn't work out and they are left without money or food, and they are at the mercy of the community. (Coffee)*
- *There are so many people that need help with rent, and we are seeing a large number of people who are homeless. (Coffee)*
- *A lot of the places people are trying to rent are really not that great. (Coffee)*
- *Housing is a big concern in Effingham County. For myself, I had a rent increase from \$700 to almost \$1,000. (Effingham)*
- *The waiting list for the apartment complex in our county has 250 people on it, I was told. Their rent also was recently raised from around \$700 to \$1,000 and is expected to go up to \$1,100 next year. (Effingham)*
- *I moved here in 2023 and I had to look and look because there is no one to help you. I was lucky to find this place. (Effingham)*
- *Sometimes it gets hard to pay for our utility bills. The heating program really helps. We are grateful for this program. (Effingham)*
- *There seems to be a lot of people who make just a little over on the heating program because they use the gross income. We don't live on gross. (Effingham)*
- *There are no resources to help people find income-based housing, and there isn't a lot of senior based housing. (Effingham)*
- *If you're working making \$300-400 a week and your rent is \$500-600 a month is sort hard to juggle that out of there. You've got children in school. They can't afford to pay their rent. Some of them has went up to \$600 a month. (Evans)*
- *We have a natural gas in Claxton and it's a big help to refer people to Action Pact for heating assistance. (Evans)*
- *A lot of the housing and mobile homes are not even fit to be living in because of age of the mobile homes and the conditions they are in. The landlords don't want to fix them up or do anything about it. (Evans)*
- *Water leakage from the rain. Damage from wear and tear over the years. Some of them have holes in the floors. (Evans)*
- *We've even had to deal with one with infestation (roach). Flooring. Windows and leakage around windows. One I was in was electrical with small children. Open outlets. What they had to go through to get it handled was insane. (Evans)*
- *We've seen an uptick in patients with bedbugs recently. (Evans)*
- *Some light bills are between \$200-300 per month. The ones that are struggling are the ones having a high light bill. (Pierce)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *The conditions of the home not being well insulated is keeping their light bills higher. You also see them trying to cut back. They don't run their air condition and plug stove or fridge up for a couple hours a day and still looking at \$300 light bill. (Pierce)*
- *I don't see as many seniors struggling housing wise or utility wise. (Pierce)*
- *I partner with several people around here trying to get the low end. I would love to rent out for 450-500 a month but the only people I attract are those who don't take care of it then I end up in the hole or in debt so now you're seeing several landlords charging \$900 a month. (Pierce)*
- *Utility payments are hard because prices keep going up. (Tattnall)*
- *There are programs to help people, but I make like \$2 to \$3 too much and I don't get it. (Tattnall)*
- *I live alone and don't have anyone to help me, but I pay my tithes at church and the Lord always come through for me. (Tattnall)*
- *We have no housing for people of a certain poverty level. You can either apply for housing, and you get in your housing, or you have astronomical amounts of rent in an area that doesn't even pay the people what they're worth. So, people here, the rent is \$1,200 to \$1,500 per month. How can people afford that? This is a major issue. (Toombs)*
- *The houses aren't even up to par in our area. (Toombs)*
- *I have a client that her apartment flooded. They had to move her to another apartment. Her power went up and she has had to deal with all of that. There really isn't any help for her, and there is no empathy. (Toombs)*
- *The housing options are very limited for people that are in poverty, people working in jobs that pay very little. While the housing authority is helpful for some families, there just isn't enough of it. (Toombs)*
- *There are a lot of returning citizens from prisons in our community, like many others, and maybe they have had a past that includes felonies or misdemeanors, that kind of thing. They are very limited on housing. (Toombs)*
- *Our community has been focusing on developing new properties for the new Hyuantai plant coming in Pooler. These are priced for middle class families. There isn't anything for the lower-income families. (Toombs)*
- *There aren't any multi-family housing units in our county. (Toombs)*
- *Everything has blown up so tremendously and it's hard for the people on fixed income. (Ware)*
- *I don't think there's enough. (Ware)*

Health

- *The dentist issue is really bad here. When kids go to Pre-K, there are many kids that would have to travel to Savannah or Valdosta to get the procedures they need, and they are just not able to get there. Many of these families are just not able to travel out of town. (Bacon)*
- *We are starting to work with Lighthouse, but before that we had so many kids that couldn't afford glasses because nobody takes Medicaid. Lighthouse came in and set their program up and it has been a tremendous help. (Bacon)*
- *The dentists we have don't take Medicaid. (Bacon)*
- *Mental health is an issue we are dealing with locally. We have an MOU with Unison, but they are the only service available. We don't have full-time providers in our county, we have to share someone with other communities. They are only here maybe twice a month, so the kids aren't really getting all of the services they need. (Bacon)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *Our mental health programs are walk-in, but you just walk in to set an appointment. You have to be there at 7am, but you may have to wait until 3pm that day and have to wait until you can be seen. Sometimes you can't be seen at all. (Bacon)*
- *My neighbor was diagnosed with a health condition and the doctor told us that he needed to be on a multi-vitamin. Can you believe our drugstore didn't even have them? I'm going to have to take him somewhere else to try to find them. I can't believe that any drugstore wouldn't carry those. (Brantley)*
- *There are no mental health services. (Bulloch)*
- *Pineland is the only facility and is poorly staffed, horrible care. Pay scale is not competitive. (Bulloch)*
- *We have had several churches that have really stepped up to help folks. We do have some people, like our Senior Center Director, that help people get the medication they need and give trips to the doctor. (Charlton)*
- *If it weren't for our Senior Center Director, they call her day and night – not just those that come to the Senior Center – I don't know what they would do. (Charlton)*
- *One of the biggest barriers that needs to be addressed is lack of access to care through insurance. With the lack of expansion of Medicaid, the hospital absorbed last year alone, almost \$1million in uninsured care. It is very stressful and straining on the hospital. It is unsustainable and have seen a growth month over month. We are at the highest in 20 years. (Evans)*
- *There are no pediatricians in Evans County. There are no mental health providers in Evans County. (Evans)*
- *Last week we had 7 10-13s that we then had to find placement and work with the sheriff's dept on. Mental Health is a pandemic now. (Evans)*
- *The closest that we can find for routine mental health care is Reidsville. (10-12 miles) (Evans)*
- *I know people who don't have Tricare have trouble with specialists. If you don't have secondary insurance, you have to pay out of pocket. (Long)*
- *There are no doctors' offices in this county. The health department and there's a new walk-in clinic. (Long)*
- *A lot of our specialist come to Waycross. If they need to see them in their offices, we are looking at Jacksonville or Brunswick which is 60-110 miles. (Pierce)*
- *I see a lot that are nor in network for insurance. (Ware)*
- *I think there's a decent amount of mental health. Now I will say there's a shortage of OB/GYN doctors. The one in Waycross that's recommended is extremely busy. (Ware)*
- *I would like our center to offer exercise equipment..and cornhole. (Wayne)*

Nutrition

- *The Food Stamp office takes all of your information and then they only give you \$10. You have to run to the bank and get all these documents, and sometimes you have some money saved up for hard times. That's a waste of my time and theirs too. (Appling)*
- *We can only get help at the food pantry once per month. (Appling)*
- *The food pantries don't provide food that some of us can eat with diabetes and such. (Appling)*
- *The rising cost of food has been a big issue. When you are living on a low-income budget and everything you buy is twice as expensive as it was just, not long ago, it eats up your check. (Atkinson)*
- *There are two food pantries in our county. One is operating on an occasional basis, so we are hurting in this area. (Bacon)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *When you go to the grocery store, the food is sky high, so you really can't buy what you need. (Brantley)*
- *I only get \$23 per month in Food Stamps. What can you get with that, a jar of coffee? (Brantley)*
- *It's either pay your bills or buy your groceries. (Candler)*
- *I think it is pretty hard for seniors to be able to eat proper like they should because of the prices coming in. They just keep going up and up, and the benefits aren't increasing. (Charlton)*
- *We have some food resources foodwise, like Food Stamps, but I think it is the living area that is the problem. Where they live at...(Clinch)*
- *We have the Clinch County Food Bank here. (Clinch)*
- *Jesus and Jam provides sack lunches and food boxes for students on weekends. (Clinch)*
- *Seniors in our area only get around \$23 in Food Stamps and that isn't enough. They really need to get more. (Coffee)*
- *Meat and proteins are very expensive, even the basic necessities...break, rice, butter, and eggs. It's tough just making sure that everyone gets the proper nutrition and has the healthy food choices. (Effingham)*
- *Sometimes kids and seniors are not getting the nutrition they need. (Effingham)*
- *If you are diabetic, it is hard to afford the foods you can eat because it is so expensive. (Effingham)*
- *Sometimes us diabetics have to decide whether to buy our medicine or food. It is hard to determine which one will hurt us most not to have. (Effingham)*
- *We have 2 organizations that help address that issue. I think we do a fair job. (Evans)*
- *They have food. It may not be food of their choice, but they have food. (Evans)*
- *The amount that seniors receive for SNAP, the case worker makes more for an hour than the seniors get approved for. What can you really go to a grocery store and buy for a whole month. They need to step back and re-evaluate that whole situation. (Jeff Davis)*
- *I get a big ol' \$23 a month in Food Stamps. (Jeff Davis)*
- *When you have a condition like diabetes, you can't afford the special things you need with these small amounts of food stamps. (Jeff Davis)*
- *We have a couple of local churches that you can go to for food, but you can only use them once every couple of months. What are our seniors supposed to do in between. (Jeff Davis)*
- *Food prices are so high, and I don't think there's enough of those places that have food giveaways. (Long)*
- *We have only 1 grocery store that can basically charge you what they want to charge. The next place is a 20–30-minute drive. If you don't have transportation you have to walk from your community. (Long)*
- *Information and access are a concern. You don't know what's going on or where. (Long)*
- *A local paper would be good. (Long)*
- *People call and come here just about every week needing household items and food. They need cleaning supplies, too. (Long)*
- *It's things that people don't really use. (Long)*
- *Food vouchers would work better too so you can go to the store. (Long)*
- *Food vouchers and one for household goods would be good. (Long)*
- *A lot of people can't afford the basics. A 5lb thing of flour is \$6. It's high. (Pierce)*
- *It's taking longer for clients to get approved or reapproved for food stamps. One lady has been without food stamps for 2 months. (Pierce)*
- *The food stamps averages 500 people in Pierce County. (Pierce)*
- *We have families that have 6 people in the home getting \$1000 in food stamps. (Pierce)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *Somewhere between \$18 and \$23 is what seniors are getting. (Pierce)*
- *I wish we could get some different food in the Senior Center. We get the same things over and over again. Baked beans, raw beans, beans, beans, and more beans. All the day it's beans. (Tattnall)*
- *I know some people can't have salt, but it would be nice if they put seasoning on some of the food they serve at the center. And soup. . have you ever had soup on a flat plate? It runs from here to yonder and yonder to here. I guess they are doing the best they can. I'm not complaining. (Tattnall)*
- *The cost of food is going up. It makes it hard. (Wayne)*
- *We get meals at the senior center, but they have to haul in our meals. By the time we get them they are cold. I hope when we get our new center we get our own cook. (Wayne)*
- *Sometimes we don't get much for food help. Sometimes it is just like \$16 for old people. (Wayne)*

Transportation

- *We have transportation issues in our community. (Atkinson)*
- *Not having transportation to get to work is a big issue. (Atkinson)*
- *I have a lot of clients that when they come in, they have to talk up here. They just have no transportation. (Atkinson)*
- *The southeast Georgia Council in Aging has a public transportation system. A lot of counties around here have that. It is a sliding scale kind of thing. They will take you to doctors appointments and shopping, but it is not a reliable source of transportation for someone who is working. It is more of an occasional thing. (Bacon)*
- *Medicaid Transportation is very unreliable. You can call weeks in advance, and they may show up and they may not show up. (Bacon)*
- *I would say that reliable transportation is the biggest barrier for people trying to escape poverty. (Bacon)*
- *One of our larger employers in the community started a program where they were providing transportation because they were having such a hard time getting employees. (Bacon)*
- *I have a neighbor that has a car, but he shouldn't be driving. He goes 25 miles an hour on the highway. I have to pass his house when I come to the senior center, so I tell him I'll just bring him out with me when I come and then he can ride back home with me when I'm done. Otherwise, he wouldn't really have a way to get around safely. (Brantley)*
- *The transportation system is very new, not well advertised, and very limited. (Bulloch)*
- *It's free. It doesn't run weekends and end at 6pm and only in Stateboro. (Bulloch)*
- *Transportation is a huge issue to help families get back and to a job if they were to get one. (Candler)*
- *A vehicle payment now a days is as much as a house payment for the most part, even a used vehicle. We don't have public transportation in Candler County. (Candler)*
- *Just because you have a vehicle, it doesn't mean that you should drive it. Some people are just not able to drive anymore. (Charlton)*
- *The funds for RMS are low, and the senior center is not providing transportation until they get more grant money in. (Charlton)*
- *I don't have a car, and the Senior Center van really helps people like me. Have transportation really means a lot for people. (Charlton)*
- *The RMS bus can go anywhere in the state of Georgia. (Charlton)*
- *We don't have any kind of cab, Uber, or nothing. (Charlton)*
- *Transportation is a big issue. Just recently we have run out of state funding for transportation. We used to be able to take them out of town for doctors and bring them back*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

and forth to the center, but at this point they have just run out, so it is a big issue for our seniors. We still have three or four months left in this fiscal year that no one will have transportation. (Clinch)

- *We are starting to see contractors that charge individual insurance for rides in our area. (Clinch)*
- *In our area, Clinch County, there is no transportation to get people to work. (Clinch)*
- *We work with our parents to help them get their GED, but sometimes transportation is an issue for them getting to the class. (Clinch)*
- *We don't have any public transportation at all, and I think that is something that desperately needed here. (Coffee)*
- *We have kids to miss school a lot because of transportation. (Coffee)*
- *It is hard to pay for gas, and without gas we can't get to and fro. Just because you have a car doesn't mean you can afford to get around (Effingham)*
- *We don't have any transportation programs. There is one operated by the county, but they aren't reliable. They don't always pick people up, and some have been stuck at places. (Effingham)*
- *We have Uber, but it is expensive. (Effingham)*
- *One of our biggest concerns for anybody that needs specialty service is a concern. (Evans)*
- *It is definitely an issue with patients' follow-up appointments. There is 1 taxi service in the city and no other transportation. It is a horrible, horrible problem people face making it to appointments and follow up. It's been voiced. It's a lack of resources. (Evans)*
- *There's public transportation, no taxi, no uber. (Evans)*
- *It was hard for a client to find transportation to appointments. (Evans)*
- *For people who don't have transportation they have to find someone. (Long)*
- *I don't drive to Savannah or Brunswick, so I have to find someone and pay them to take me. (Long)*
- *Everybody struggles with gas costs. (Long)*
- *This is the year 2024, how can we not have transportation? (Long)*
- *With the seniors a lot of them rely on the senior center. They got 20% cut so now we are having to go pick up the seniors and they find a ride home. (Pierce)*
- *Even just general population can't afford the amounts they're asking for. A lot of the transits are charging \$3 a ride. (Pierce)*
- *Even without the money, transportation here has so little help that their turnaround time for pick up is 3, 4, 5 hours. (Pierce)*
- *Transportation is really the biggest issue in our community. If you don't have a job, how are you going to get a job if you can't get there? (Pierce)*
- *I'm from a little town called Collins, Georgia. We have problems with transportation. The bus we have is very small on the inside., and some people can't get on it. We have a lot of stroke victims in the area, and it is hard for them to get on. (Tattnall)*
- *Our bus isn't expensive, but they are in bad shape. They are all outdated. (Tattnall)*
- *I've had a stroke and I'm paralyzed on my right side. The busses don't have anything to hold on to when you get in them. (Tattnall)*
- *We have transit buses, but I don't think there's many. (Ware)*
- *You do have to call in advance and they are looking for people with Medicaid or Medicare. (Ware)*
- *We have a transit but that brings some of us back to the center. Sometimes it's late. We have to tell them about a month ahead of time if we need a ride. It's only like \$13 round trip to a doctor out of town. It's only like \$2 to go somewhere in town. (Wayne)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *Our transit is really short staffed, and it is often running behind. It makes it difficult getting our guests to come in for presentations and exercises. (Wayne)*
- *Some of us don't have automobiles or they aren't in good enough shape to get us to town. (Wayne)*
- *The main problem here is transportation (Wayne)*

Family

- *It's hard to raise a family or better yourself when you don't have someplace decent to go home to. (Candler)*
- *It's not that you don't care. It's either go to the parent conference or lose out on 3 hours of work or lose your job altogether. (Candler)*
- *We see parent involvement slack off as the kids get older. (Clinch)*

Community

- *I was in an organization where we used to go to the nursing homes and spend time with the people once per month, but since COVID they won't let people do that anymore. (Appling)*
- *Our senior center is great. Sister Angie finds anything that will benefit senior citizens and she will get it for us. We have a great senior center. She fights for us. She asks us what we want to do when she makes the calendar. We thank God for her. She needs a raise. (Appling)*
- *This year we have had 2-3 people who were dead in their house for several days. I would like a program that would check on senior citizens every day to make sure they are ok. (Appling)*
- *Our senior centers are engaged with school clubs, 4-H, Head Start, and Kids USA. (Atkinson)*
- *We do have a big need for our seniors. Especially since COVID our seniors are very isolated. We only have 20 that comes to our center. I know a lot of seniors that are either homebound or can't get out. I feel like the general population is engaged. (Candler)*
- *We do a parent night for the 0-5 population, and we try to have it at night so the parents can come. You can't always get off and be a participant in that if you have one of those jobs. I feel like they're engaging in what they can engage in. (Candler)*
- *There's absolutely nothing for them to do in Candler County outside of their sports. (Candler)*
- *We have seen a huge drop off in the number of kids participating in the Rec Department. (Candler)*
- *Our city and county government do not participate in trying to help our community. (Candler)*
- *I don't think our county or city realizes how much their support is needed. (Candler)*
- *I think for me, the Senior Center is a lot of help because of the depression and all of the events going on in your life. It gives life a meaning to be around people. It has been helpful for me, they are my home. I am closer to them than I am my family. (Charlton)*
- *Our rides have been cut out to the doctors, so people rely on each other to get around or they don't go to the doctor. We rely on each other. (Charlton)*
- *I really love how people step up and help each other out. (Charlton)*
- *The Senior Center is really important to me. I love all of the people. (Charlton)*
- *We have a close-knit community. Outsiders may not feel that, because they aren't always open to outsiders, but community-wise, our people help each other. Our Jesus and Jam Program, our churches, and Family Connection really help bring things together and helps us to thrive a little bit. (Clinch)*
- *Many of our seniors are pretty isolated, but that often goes back to the lack of transportation. They are probably more inclined to go to church than anything if they have a way to get there. (Clinch)*

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

- *I think we have all really forgotten about the importance of humanity. That's why we are more likely to pull our phones out and record when someone is getting beat up then try to help. (Coffee)*
- *I feel like kids around here don't have a lot of activities. They had a basketball court at one place, but they tore it down because they said the kids were tearing things up around it. Now they don't have anything to do. (Effingham)*
- *Some churches have activities for kids, but they are more worried about getting you to join the church than about letting the kids have a good time. They will make you fill out a whole lot of papers about everything in your life just so your kids can go hunt a few eggs. (Effingham)*
- *Everybody has their own niche of what they want to be involved in. Overall, I think that's a plus. (Evans)*
- *I often see the same people involved in things in the community. I think we have a decent support system. (Evans)*
- *While there are active participants in the community. The school system is working to increase stakeholder engagement. The school system has trouble sometimes getting the parents who need to attend, you can't get them there. They are planning to have a meeting to discuss how stakeholder engagement may be increased. (Evans)*
- *Both of our private and public school systems require so many community service hours from the high school students. (Evans)*
- *We are based on volunteers. It's the same ones so getting the word out and seeking out new volunteers, you have to always do that. (Evans)*
- *I think they try to get the community involved it's just that some attend and some do not. (Ware)*
- *A lot of the people here are military. (Long)*
- *The senior center saved my life. (Long)*
- *I think that we're small enough that they are connected in the community. I also think Pierce County Schools Systems does great outreach with community. The Better hometowns does great with outreaches for the community as well. (Pierce)*
- *We do a lot of activities here and outreach. We offer stuff on Saturdays. We're up to 50 seniors that come here. (Pierce)*
- *There's not a whole lot for youth to get into here in Pierce County. (Pierce)*
- *This is a nice area, people are kind, and we get on pretty good with everybody. (Tattnall)*
- *We are on top of socialization. When it is nice outside, we walk together on the trail. We have games and exercises. Boy, I like exercises. I can't do them all, but I do what I can. Ms. Jane plays the piano. My Lord she brings good music. (Tattnall)*
- *If we didn't have our senior center, we would be stuck at home. We go home after a day here with our friends and we think of things we said and did earlier. Then we laugh about it until we go to bed. Then we get up the next day and do it all over again. (Tattnall)*
- *People just don't get out and attend church like they used to. The voter turnout sometimes is not that high. (Ware)*



SECTION 9

ANALYTICS

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Region	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent	
334	1	Lack of Income (F)	62.50%	Housing Insecurity (F)	75.85%	Housing Insecurity (F)	75.85%	
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	46.34%	Food Insecurity (F)	62.54%	Food Insecurity (F)	62.54%	
	3	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	30.49%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	52.94%	Lack of Income (F)	62.50%	
	4	Unemployment (F)	26.22%	Poor Mental Health (F)	36.22%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	52.94%	
	5	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	25.91%	Poor Physical Health (F)	23.53%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	46.34%	
	6	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	23.78%	Unsafe Home Environments (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	22.60%	Poor Mental Health (F)	36.22%	
	7	Poor Housing Quality (C)	18.60%	Inadequate Clothing (F)	10.22%	Unemployment (F)	26.22%	
	8	Inadequate Public Transportation (C)	16.16%			Lack of Education/Skills (F)	25.91%	
	Confidence	9	Lack of Childcare (C)	15.55%			Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	23.78%
		10	Addictions (F)	15.24%			Poor Physical Health (F)	23.53%
95.55%								

Applying	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
51	1	Lack of Income (F)	66.67%	Housing Insecurity (F)	74.00%	Housing Insecurity	74.00%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	54.90%	Food Insecurity (F)	68.00%	Food Insecurity	68.00%
	3	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	43.14%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	56.00%	Lack of Income	66.67%
	4	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	35.29%	Poor Mental Health (F)	40.00%	Risk of Utility Loss	56.00%
	5	Inadequate Public Transportation (C)	31.37%	Unsafe Home Environments (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	34.00%	Lack of Affordable Housing	54.90%

Atkinson	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
26	1	Lack of Income (F)	53.85%	Housing Insecurity (F)	65.38%	Housing Insecurity (F)	65.38%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	53.85%	Food Insecurity (F)	61.54%	Food Insecurity (F)	61.54%
	3	Addictions (F)	42.31%	Poor Mental Health (F)	50.00%	Lack of Income	53.85%
	4	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	38.46%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	38.46%	Lack of Affordable Housing	53.85%
	5	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	34.62%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	34.62%	Poor Mental Health (F)	50.00%

Bacon	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
35	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	62.86%	Housing Insecurity (F)	80.00%	Housing Insecurity (F)	80.00%
	2	Lack of Income (F)	60.00%	Food Insecurity (F)	62.86%	Food Insecurity (F)	62.86%
	3	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	40.00%	Poor Mental Health (F)	54.29%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	62.86%
	4	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	34.29%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	40.00%	Lack of Income (F)	60.00%
	5	Unemployment (F)	31.43%	Unsafe Home Environments (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	34.29%	Poor Mental Health (F)	54.29%

Brantley	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
42	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	69.05%	Housing Insecurity (F)	85.71%	Housing Insecurity (F)	85.71%
	2	Lack of Income (F)	50.00%	Food Insecurity (F)	71.43%	Food Insecurity (F)	71.43%
	3	Addiction (F)	45.24%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	47.62%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	69.05%
	4	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	40.48%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	47.62%	Lack of Income (F)	50.00%
	5	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	35.71%	Poor Mental Health (F)	45.24%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	47.62%

Bulloch	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
23	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	60.87%	Housing Insecurity (F)	95.65%	Housing Insecurity (F)	95.65%
	2	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	56.52%	Food Insecurity (F)	69.57%	Food Insecurity (F)	69.57%
	3	Lack of Income (F)	43.48%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	43.48%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	60.87%
	4	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	21.74%	Poor Mental Health (F)	43.48%	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	56.52%
	5	Addictions (F)	21.74%	Poor Physical Health (F)	21.74%	Lack of Income (F)	43.48%

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Candler	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
28	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	67.86%	Housing Insecurity (F)	78.57%	Housing Insecurity (F)	78.57%
	2	Lack of Income (F)	60.71%	Food Insecurity (F)	75.00%	Food Insecurity (F)	75.00%
	3	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	53.57%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	42.86%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	67.86%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	42.86%	Poor Mental Health (F)	42.86%	Lack of Income (F)	60.71%
	5	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	35.71%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	42.86%	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	53.57%
Charlton	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
35	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	65.71%	Housing Insecurity (F)	82.86%	Housing Insecurity (F)	82.86%
	2	Lack of Income (F)	57.14%	Food Insecurity (F)	71.43%	Food Insecurity (F)	71.43%
	3	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	42.86%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	48.57%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	65.71%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	37.14%	Poor Mental Health (F)	42.86%	Lack of Income (F)	57.14%
	5	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	37.14%	Unsafe Home Environments (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	42.83%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	48.57%
Clinch	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
40	1	Lack of Income (F)	55.00%	Housing Insecurity (F)	70.00%	Housing Insecurity (F)	70.00%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	52.50%	Food Insecurity (F)	62.50%	Food Insecurity (F)	62.50%
	3	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	40.00%	Poor Mental Health (F)	47.50%	Lack of Income (F)	55.00%
	4	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	40.00%	Unsafe Home Environments (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	47.50%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	52.50%
	5	Addictions (F)	30.00%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	40.00%	Poor Mental Health (F)	47.50%
Coffee	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
65	1	Lack of Income (F)	66.67%	Housing Insecurity (F)	83.61%	Housing Insecurity (F)	83.61%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	55.56%	Food Insecurity (F)	68.85%	Food Insecurity (F)	68.85%
	3	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	28.57%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	59.02%	Lack of Income (F)	66.67%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	26.98%	Unsafe Home Environments (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	29.51%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	59.02%
	5	Addictions (F)	23.81%	Poor Mental Health (F)	26.23%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	55.56%
Effingham	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
10	1	Lack of Income (F)	70.00%	Housing Insecurity (F)	100.00%	Housing Insecurity (F)	100.00%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	50.00%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	70.00%	Lack of Income (F)	70.00%
	3	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	40.00%	Food Insecurity (F)	60.00%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	70.00%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	30.00%	Poor Mental Health (F)	50.00%	Food Insecurity (F)	60.00%
	5	Inadequate Public Transportation (C)	30.00%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	40.00%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	50.00%
Evans	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
19	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	63.16%	Housing Insecurity (F)	88.89%	Housing Insecurity (F)	88.89%
	2	Lack of Income (F)	52.63%	Food Insecurity (F)	61.11%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	63.16%
	3	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	36.84%	Poor Mental Health (F)	38.89%	Food Insecurity (F)	61.11%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	31.58%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	33.33%	Lack of Income (F)	52.63%
	5	Unemployment (F)	21.05%	Poor Physical Health (F)	33.33%	Poor Mental Health (F)	38.89%
Jeff Davis	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
45	1	Lack of Income (F)	73.33%	Housing Insecurity (F)	81.40%	Housing Insecurity (F)	81.40%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	57.78%	Food Insecurity (F)	79.07%	Food Insecurity (F)	79.07%
	3	Unemployment (F)	26.67%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	46.51%	Lack of Income (F)	73.33%
	4	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	26.67%	Poor Mental Health (F)	34.88%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	57.78%
	5	Addictions (F)	26.67%	Poor Physical Health (F)	30.23%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	46.51%

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Long	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
11	1	Lack of Income (F)	72.73%	Housing Insecurity (F)	90.91%	Housing Insecurity (F)	90.91%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	63.64%	Food Insecurity (F)	63.64%	Lack of Income (F)	72.73%
	3	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	45.45%	Poor Mental Health (F)	54.55%	Food Insecurity (F)	63.64%
	4	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	45.45%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	45.45%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	63.64%
	5	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	45.45%	Poor Physical Health (F)	36.36%	Poor Mental Health (F)	54.55%

Pierce	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
54	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	62.96%	Housing Insecurity (F)	79.63%	Housing Insecurity (F)	79.63%
	2	Lack of Income (F)	46.30%	Food Insecurity (F)	64.81%	Food Insecurity (F)	64.81%
	3	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	37.04%	Poor Mental Health (F)	46.30%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	62.96%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	33.33%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	46.30%	Lack of Income (F)	46.30%
	5	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	33.33%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	40.74%	Poor Mental Health (F)	46.30%

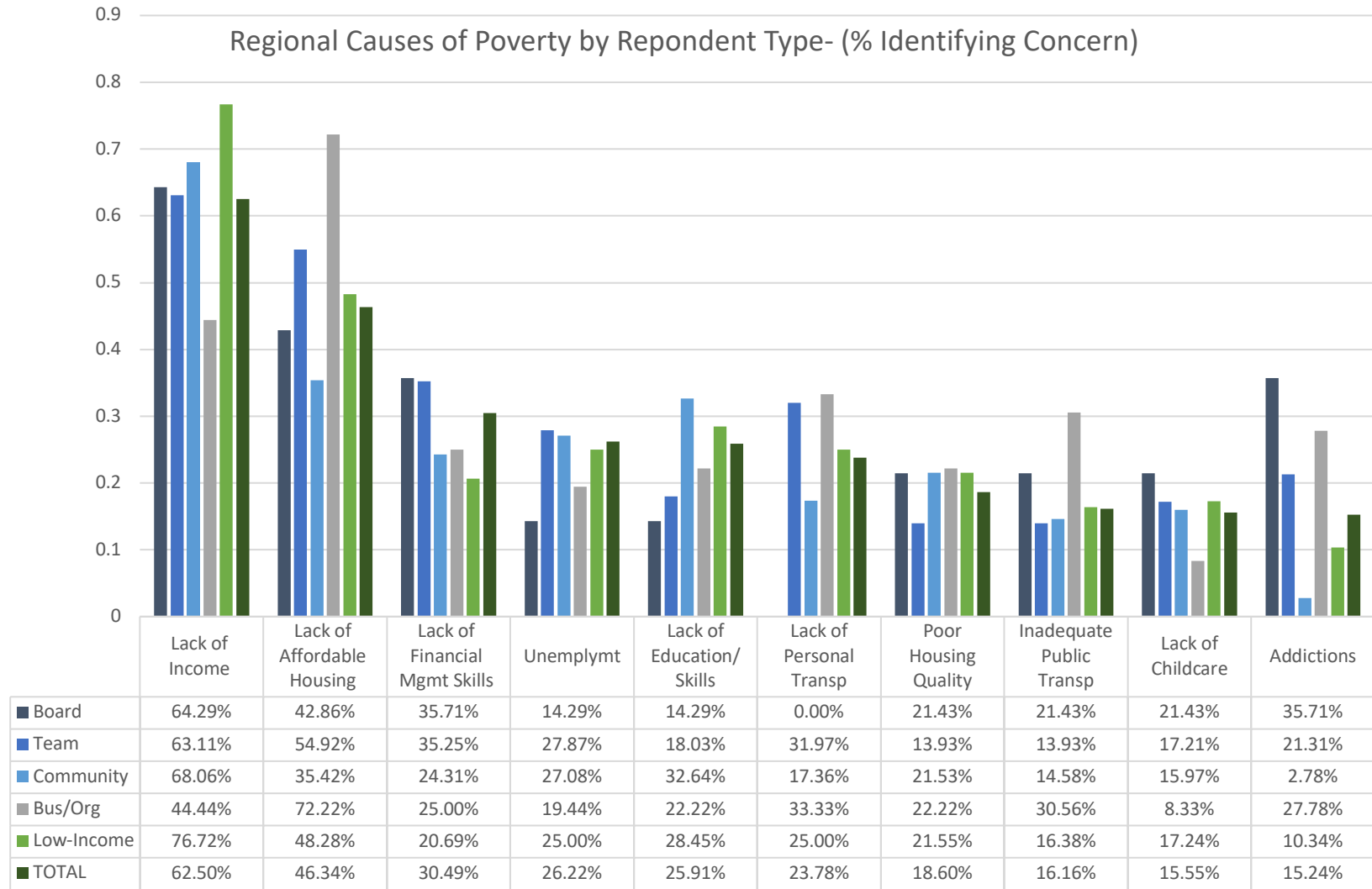
Tattnall	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
16	1	Lack of Income (F)	62.50%	Food Insecurity	87.50%	Food Insecurity	87.50%
	2	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	56.25%	Housing Insecurity	81.25%	Housing Insecurity	81.25%
	3	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	43.75%	Risk of Utility Loss	43.75%	Lack of Income (F)	62.50%
	4	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	25.00%	Poor Mental Health	43.75%	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	56.25%
	5	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	25.00%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	31.25%	Risk of Utility Loss	43.75%

Toombs	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
46	1	Lack of Income (F)	71.74%	Housing Insecurity (F)	73.91%	Housing Insecurity (F)	73.91%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	50.00%	Food Insecurity (F)	69.57%	Lack of Income (F)	71.74%
	3	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	34.78%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	47.83%	Food Insecurity (F)	69.57%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills	32.61%	Poor Mental Health (F)	39.13%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	50.00%
	5	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	32.61%	Poor Physical Health (F)	32.61%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	47.83%

Ware	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
99	1	Lack of Income (F)	63.54%	Housing Insecurity (F)	74.23%	Housing Insecurity (F)	74.23%
	2	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	51.04%	Food Insecurity (F)	65.98%	Food Insecurity (F)	65.98%
	3	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	36.46%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	45.36%	Lack of Income (F)	63.54%
	4	Lack of Education/Skills (F)	33.33%	Poor Mental Health (F)	38.14%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	51.04%
	5	Unemployment	31.25%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	24.74%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	45.36%

Wayne	#	Cause	Percent	Condition	Percent	Overall	Percent
21	1	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	57.14%	Housing Insecurity (F)	85.71%	Housing Insecurity (F)	85.71%
	2	Lack of Income (F)	52.38%	Food Insecurity (F)	71.43%	Food Insecurity (F)	71.43%
	3	Addictions (F)	47.62%	Poor Mental Health (F)	57.14%	Lack of Affordable Housing (C)	57.14%
	4	Lack of Financial Management Skills (F)	42.86%	Risk of Utility Loss (F)	52.38%	Poor Mental Health (F)	57.14%
	5	Lack of Personal Transportation (F)	42.86%	Unsafe Home Environment (Abuse/Neglect) (F)	38.10%	Lack of Income (F)	52.38%

2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

