



INDICATOR REPORT 2021

Together for Beaufort County

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Introduction

The Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Center for Livable Communities at the College of Charleston and the Master of Public Administration Community Assistance Program (CAP) were engaged to work with the Beaufort County Human Services Alliance to develop a scorecard for Beaufort County. The team consisted of the following:

Dr. Kendra Stewart, *Director of the Riley Center*

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This report presents Beaufort County's status on indicators that comprise the Together for Beaufort County (T4BC) framework: health, social wellbeing, economy, environment, and education. T4BC is a volunteer based group that contributes to the community's capacity to address specific societal needs. These indicators were assessed using several characteristics to help us clearly understand what these indicators can tell us about the citizens of Beaufort County and where there are opportunities for improvements to be made. Data from various local, state, and federal databases, as well as additional web-based sources, was collected and analyzed by the team.

Overview of Indicators

Each indicator has selected characteristics that help us understand and measure that respective indicator. The indicators and their characteristics are outlined below.

Health

COVID-19 Pandemic • Healthcare Coverage • Health Risks • Mental Health
Access to Exercise Opportunities

Social Wellbeing

Family/Living Arrangements • Cost of Living • Accessibility to Parks &
Walkability • Crime Rates • Prevalence of Food Insecurity • Military/Veteran
Services

Economy

Poverty • Housing Affordability • Workforce Analysis • Business Analysis

Environment

Environmental Quality Index (EQI) • Water Quality • Air Quality • Flood Risk
Compounding of Environmental Hazards

Education

Student Enrollment • Early Childhood Education • State Standardized Test
Scores • Average SAT and ACT Scores • Graduation Rates • Racial Disparities in
Dropout Rates and Educational Attainment

Overview of Recommendations

Health

- Ensure the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Increase activity programs for children and older adults.
- Increase competitive pricing for healthy foods.
- Create safe opportunities for physical activity.
- Create individually-adapted programs to teach life-long behavioral skills.
- Increase breath testing checkpoints.
- Enhance enforcement of laws prohibiting alcohol sales to minors.
- Limit the concentration of alcohol outlined by area or by populations through licensing or zoning regulations.
- Increase support for federally qualified health centers (FQHCs).

Social Wellbeing

- Support housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs.
- Fast-track permits for affordable housing.
- Reduce the amount of property crimes within Beaufort County, with a specific focus on addressing the City of Beaufort.
- Increase accessibility to large grocery stores, supermarkets, and super-centers.
- Construct and fund community garden programs.

Economy

- Establish locally mandated living wages that are higher than minimum wage levels.
- Support childcare subsidy programs to provide assistance to working parents by covering the cost of childcare.
- Expand inclusionary zoning in key locations.
- Create Community Land Trusts.
- Increase advertisement for job training programs.
- Diversify the current economy.

Environment

- Identify areas of improvement in domestic water use, atmospheric deposition, and drought.
- Support cleaner modes of transportation (biking, walking, using public transit, etc.).
- Update the Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Apply for FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grants.
- Implement recommendations in Beaufort County's Greenprint Plan.

Education

- Strengthen early education programs.
- Evaluate potential ethnic and racial disparities in SC READY scores.
- Implement Individualized instruction and a mentoring/tutoring program.
- Develop a Testing Action Plan.

Demographics & Voter Information

Geographic and Population Data

Beaufort County, South Carolina is the 26th-largest county by area in South Carolina, covering 576.1 square miles. It is bordered by Colleton County, Hampton County, and Jasper County. As of 2019, Beaufort County, South Carolina had a population of 186,095 residents. The population has steadily increased over the past ten years. From 2011 to 2014, the population grew approximately 6% from 159,048 residents to 168,453 residents. From 2014 to 2019, the total grew by another 10.5% to reach 186,095 residents. The race and ethnicity of the population remained relatively constant over this period. In 2019, the population breakdown by race was shown to be 67% white, 18% black or African American, 11% Hispanic, and 4% other. Compared to South Carolina, Beaufort County has a slightly larger white population, a smaller African-American population, and a larger Hispanic population. Please see Table 1 for more information.

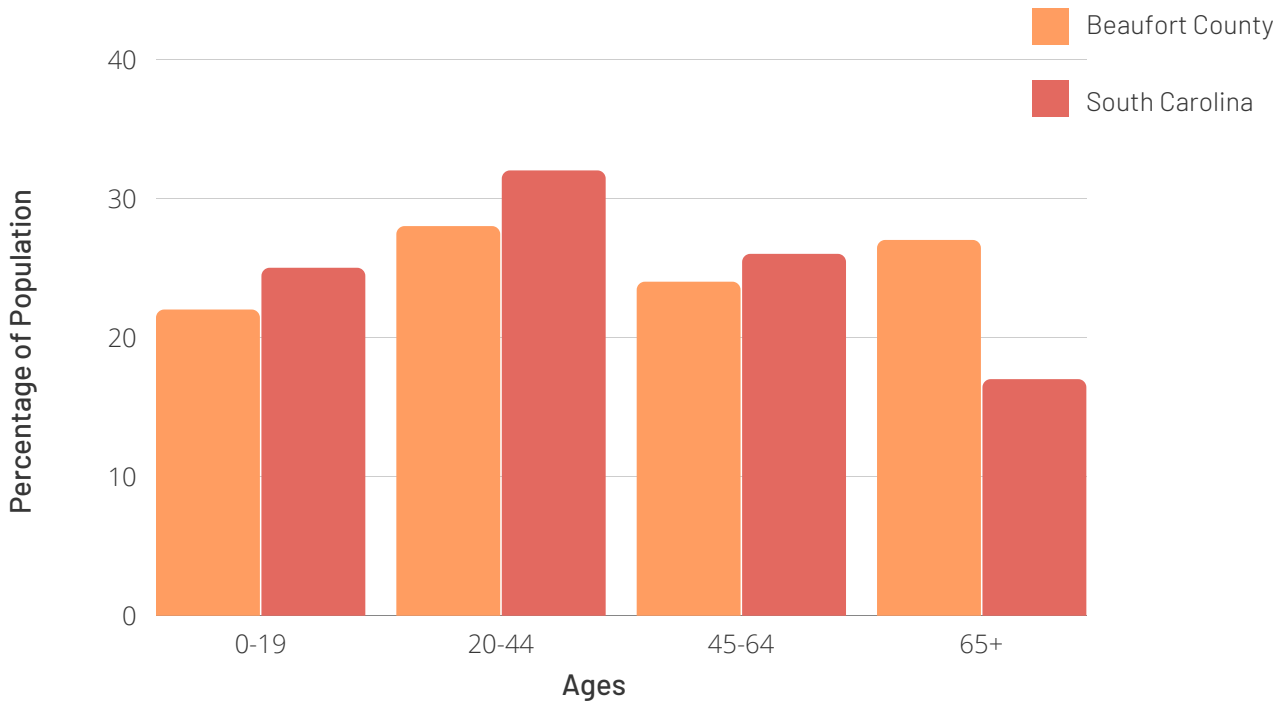
Table 1: Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Beaufort County

	Beaufort County		South Carolina	
	2011	2019	2011	2019
Total Population	159,048	186,095	4,575,864	5,020,806
White Only	66%	67%	64%	64%
Black/African American	19%	18%	28%	27%
Hispanic	12%	11%	5%	6%
Other	3%	4%	3%	3%

Source: Based on data from ACS.

Beaufort County has an older population than the average community in South Carolina, with 27% of their population being 65 or older, compared to South Carolina's average of 17%. The median age in Beaufort County is 46 years old while South Carolina's median age is 39.4 years old. The breakdown of Beaufort County's age groups compared to South Carolina's can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Beaufort County Population by Age



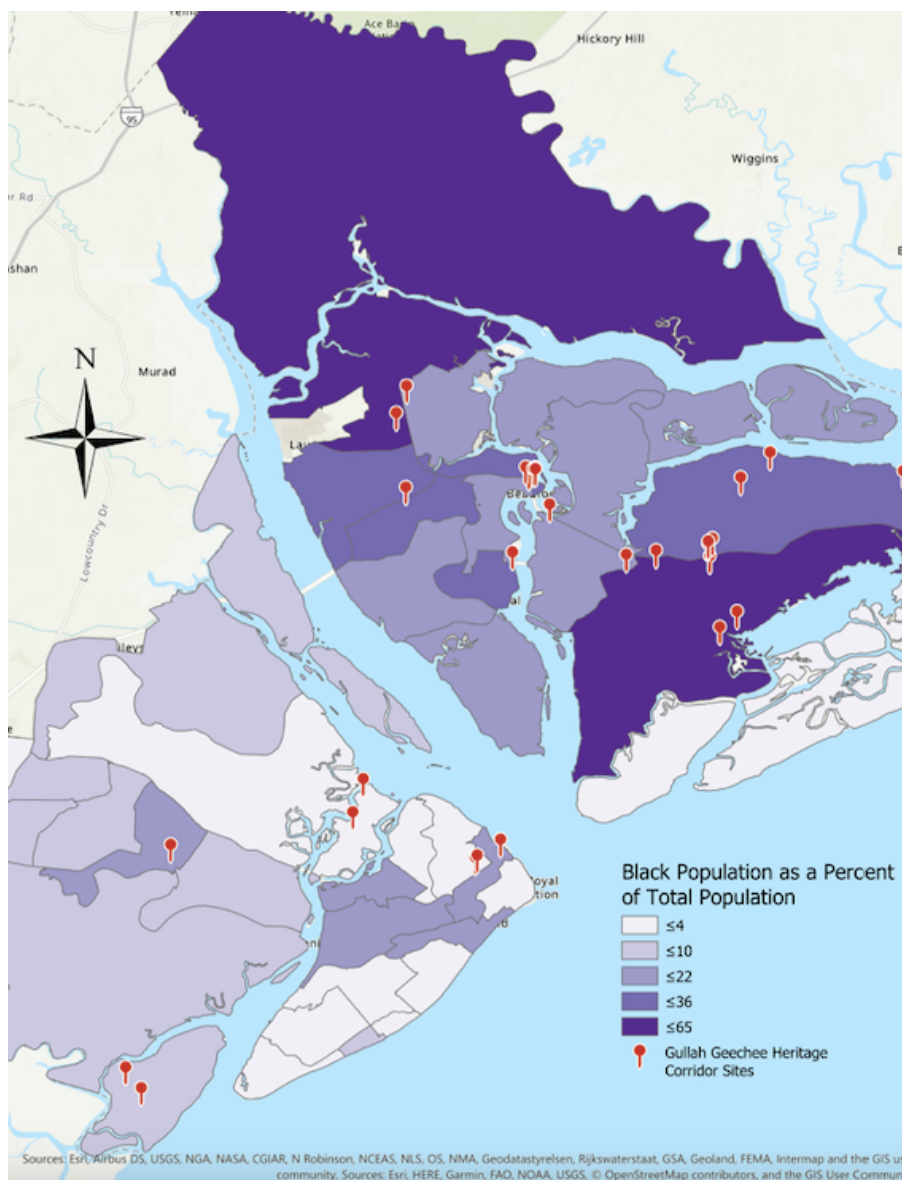
Source: Based on data from 2019 ACS 5-year estimates.

92.8% of the Beaufort County population has graduated high school or higher, compared to 88% of the United States population. This varies widely among racial and ethnic groups in Beaufort County, which will be discussed in the Education portion of this document.

Gullah-Geechee Heritage

Beaufort County is located within the Gullah-Geechee Heritage corridor, a National Heritage Area which is managed by the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission. The purpose of this organization is to preserve, share, and interpret the “history, traditional cultural practices, heritage sites, and natural resources associated with Gullah-Geechee people of coastal North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.” With data from the U.S. Census and the Gullah-Geechee Corridor Commission, the following map highlights the racial breakdown of census tracts alongside the locations of the Gullah-Geechee Heritage sites within Beaufort County.

Figure 2: Beaufort County Population by Race



Source: Based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2019.

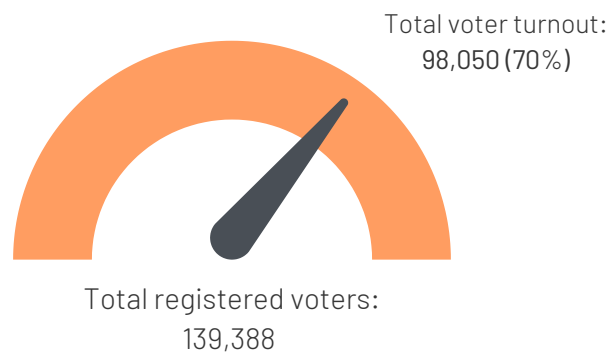
Voter Participation

The South Carolina Election Commission (SCEC) has recently published voter participation and voter registration data for the 2020 general election that is presented at the national, state, and county level. In order for democracy to function properly and for the government to provide fair representation, all eligible Americans must have the right to vote and be encouraged to do so. The 2020 election represented the highest voting turnout since at least 1980, in Beaufort County and nationwide. The voter registration and voter participation data for Beaufort County residents in the 2020 general election is represented in the figure below.

Beaufort County

The data gathered by the SCEC displays that there were 139,388 registered voters in Beaufort County, but only 98,050 (approximately 70%) of those registered voters exercised their voting rights during this national election. 41,338 voters that registered were not present to vote in-person, nor did they complete and submit an absentee ballot.

Figure 3: Beaufort County Voter Participation in 2020 General Election

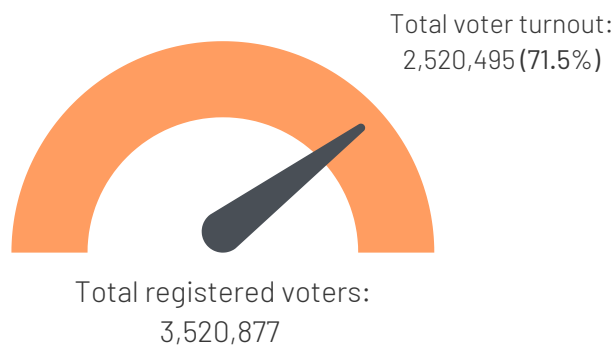


Source: Based on data from South Carolina Election Commission, 2020.

South Carolina

The data gathered by the SCEC displays that there were 3,520,877 registered voters in the state of South Carolina, with 2,520,495 (approximately 72%) of those registered voters exercised their voting rights during this national election. 1,000,382 voters that registered were not present to vote in-person, nor did they complete and submit an absentee ballot. Beaufort County is performing close to the state average in voter registration and participation.

Figure 4: South Carolina Voter Participation in 2020 General Election



Source: Based on data from South Carolina Election Commission, 2020.

Health

COVID-19 Pandemic

A review of the year 2020 would be incomplete without addressing the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to affect the entire world.

All data in regards to COVID-19 is taken from DHEC as of 11:59pm March 21, 2021.

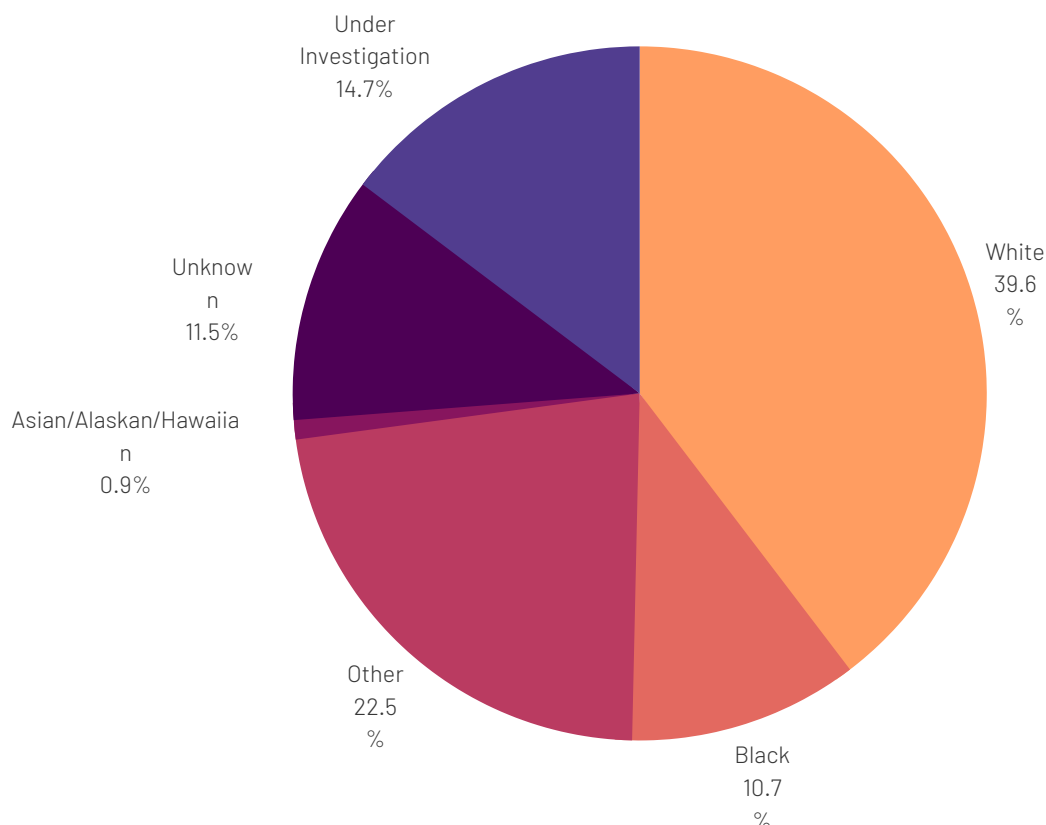
Table 2: Overview of Beaufort County COVID-19 Data

Beaufort County Covid-19 Data as of 11:59pm March 21, 2021			
Tests	Cases	Hospitalizations	Deaths
212,312	16,092	592	195

Source: Based on data from South Carolina DHEC as of March 21, 2021.

The racial breakdown of the 16,092 cases is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Racial Breakdown of COVID-19 Cases in Beaufort County



Source: Based on data from South Carolina DHEC as of March 21, 2021.

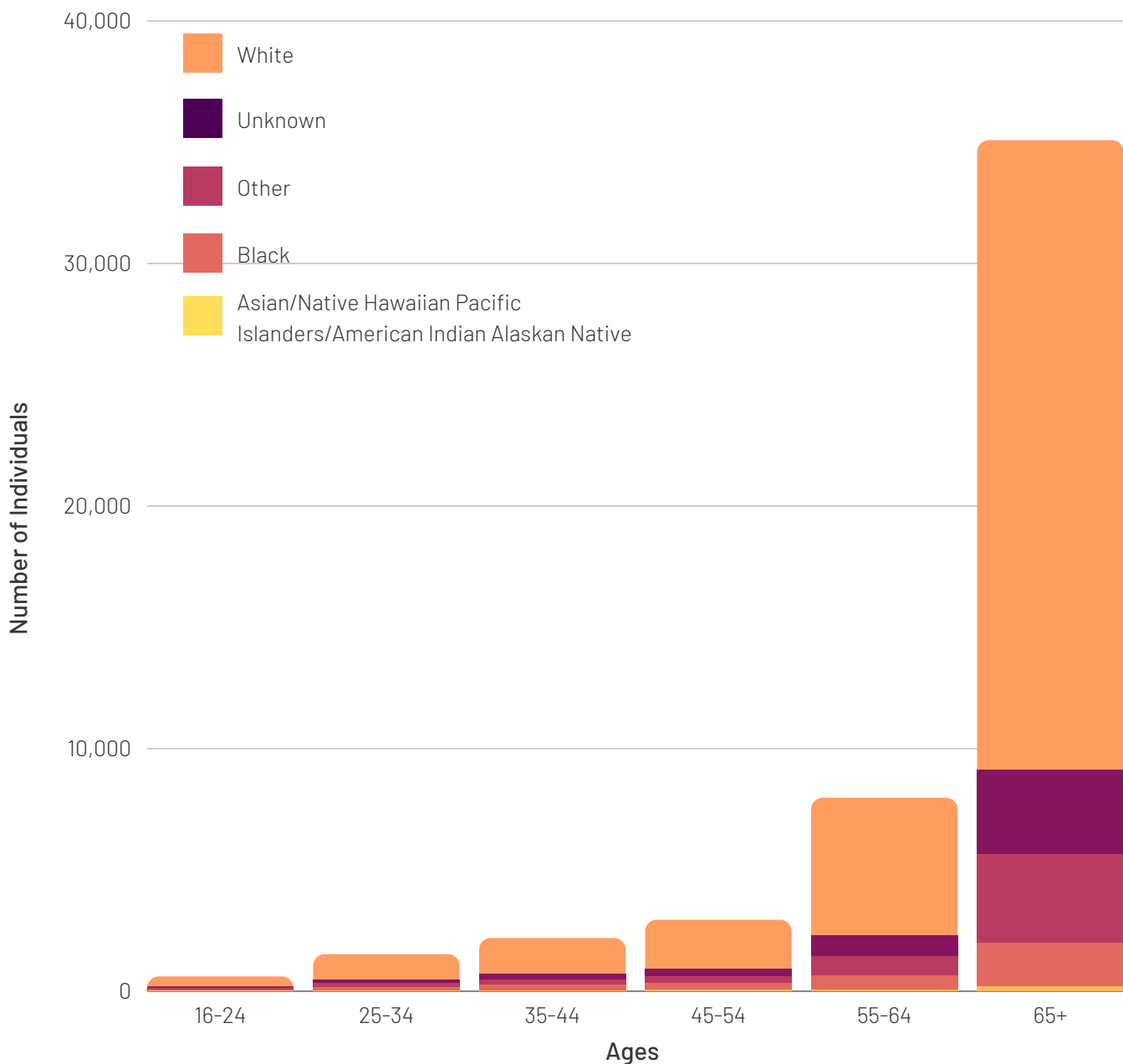
Beaufort County's vaccination effort has been ongoing, please see the vaccination rate and dosage information in the table below:

Table 3: Beaufort County Vaccination Efforts

Rates of Vaccine Recipients & Total Doses			
Vaccine Recipient Rate per 10K Residents (Aged 15+)	Count of Vaccinated Residents	Total Dose Rate per 10K Residents (Aged 15+)	Count of Doses
3,219	50,319	4,890	76,445

Source: Based on data from South Carolina DHEC as of March 21, 2021.

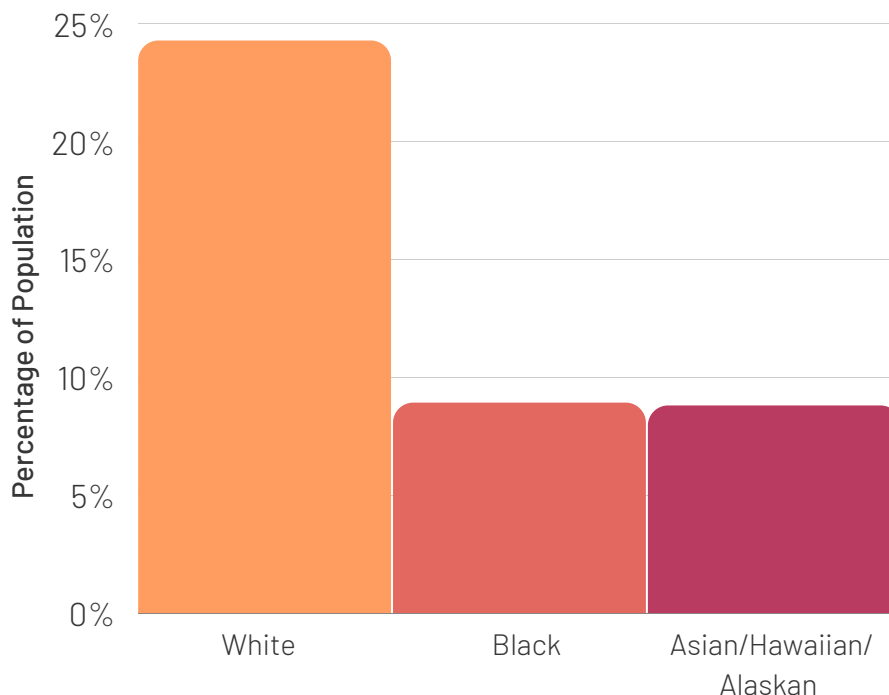
Figure 6: Beaufort County Vaccine Recipients by Age and Race



Source: Based on data from South Carolina DHEC as of March 21, 2021.

As vaccination efforts continue, equitable distribution and access should be top of mind. Currently, vaccination rates are clearly divided along the lines of race as seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Breakdown of COVID-19 Vaccination Rates by Race



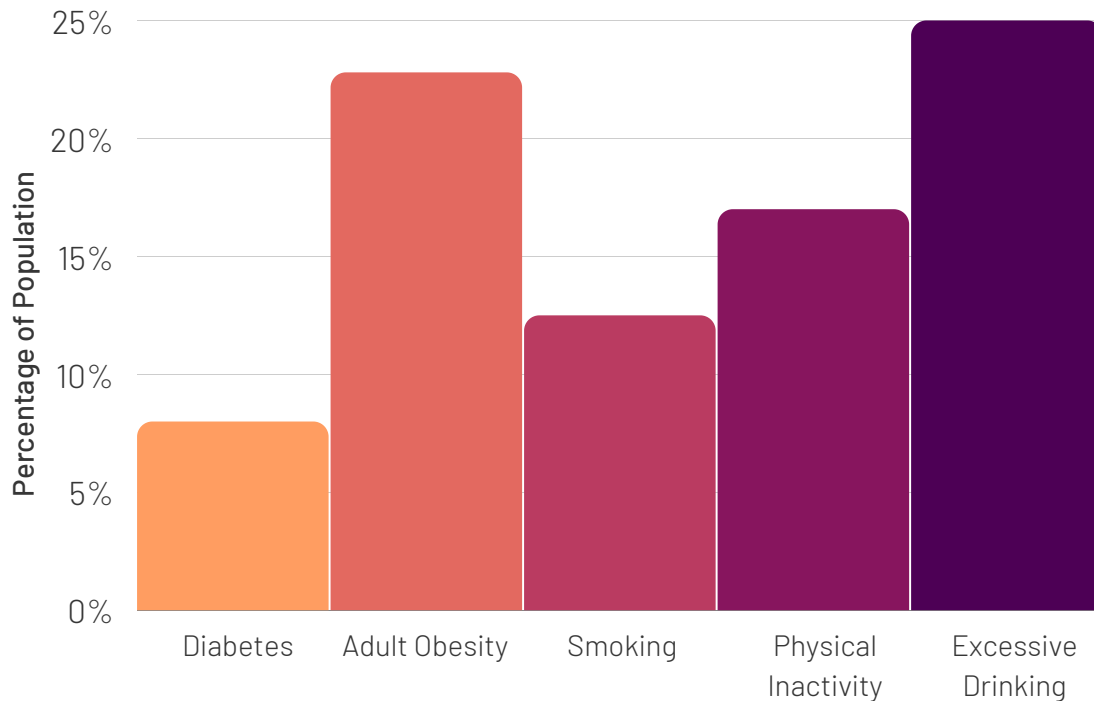
Source: Based on data from South Carolina DHEC as of March 21, 2021.

Analysis of the vaccination numbers from DHEC and the population demographic information from the Census show that only 8.92% of the Black and 8.80% of the Asian/Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander/American Indian/Alaskan Native populations have been vaccinated compared to 24.27% of the white population. Ensuring access to vaccine doses to communities of color is necessary to provide an equitable distribution among all of Beaufort County’s population.

Overall Health Risks

Beaufort County residents face a number of health risks, including but not limited to those outlined in Figure 8. The most prevalent health risks among the adult population are obesity and excessive drinking.

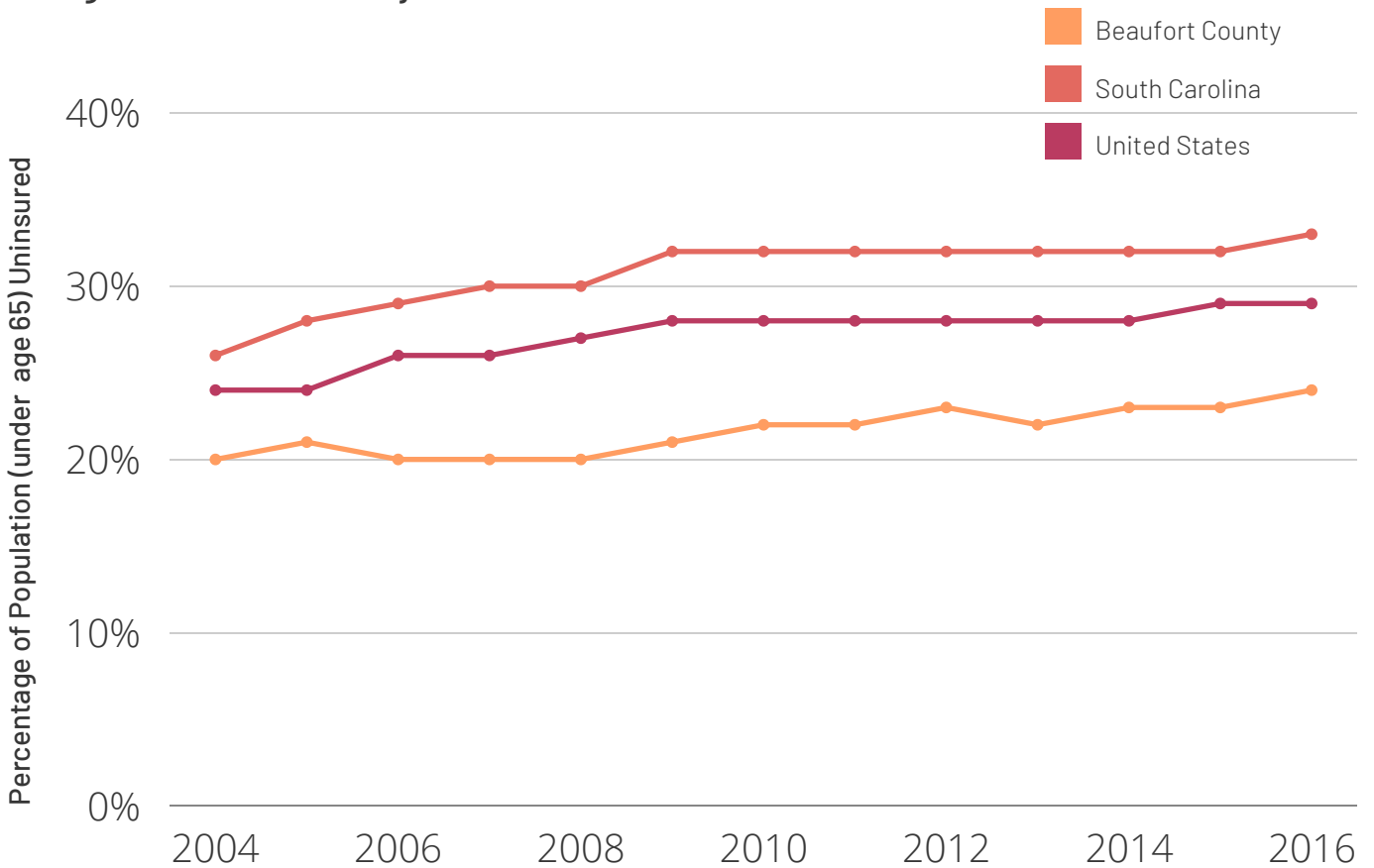
Figure 8: Prevalence of Health Risks in Adult Population



Source: Based on data from County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2017-2018

Obesity in Beaufort County (24%) has been progressively increasing since 2004, as seen in Figure 9. Although it is overall lower in Beaufort than in the state of South Carolina (33%), obesity is likely connected to physical inactivity in Beaufort County (17%). Strategies we recommend to address obesity include increasing activity programs for children and older adults, competitive pricing for healthy foods (accepting SNAP benefits at farmer’s markets, incentives and/or subsidies for healthy foods, etc.), creating safe opportunities for physical activity, and individually-adapted programs that will teach lifelong behavioral skills. Please also see the section entitled “Access to Exercise Opportunities” below.

Figure 9: Adult Obesity Trends

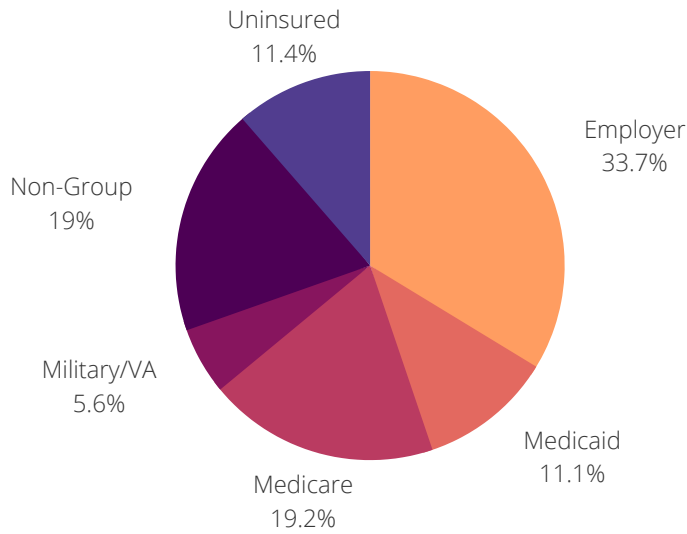


Source: Based on data from County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Each year represents an average around the middle year (e.g. 2015 is the middle year of 2014-2016).

Additionally, a higher percentage of the population of Beaufort County reports excessive drinking (25%), as compared to the state of South Carolina (17%). In order to mitigate the possible negative effects of excessive drinking, we recommend increasing breath testing checkpoints, enhancing enforcement of laws prohibiting alcohol sales to minors, and limiting the concentration of alcohol outlets by area or by population through licensing or zoning regulations.

Healthcare Coverage

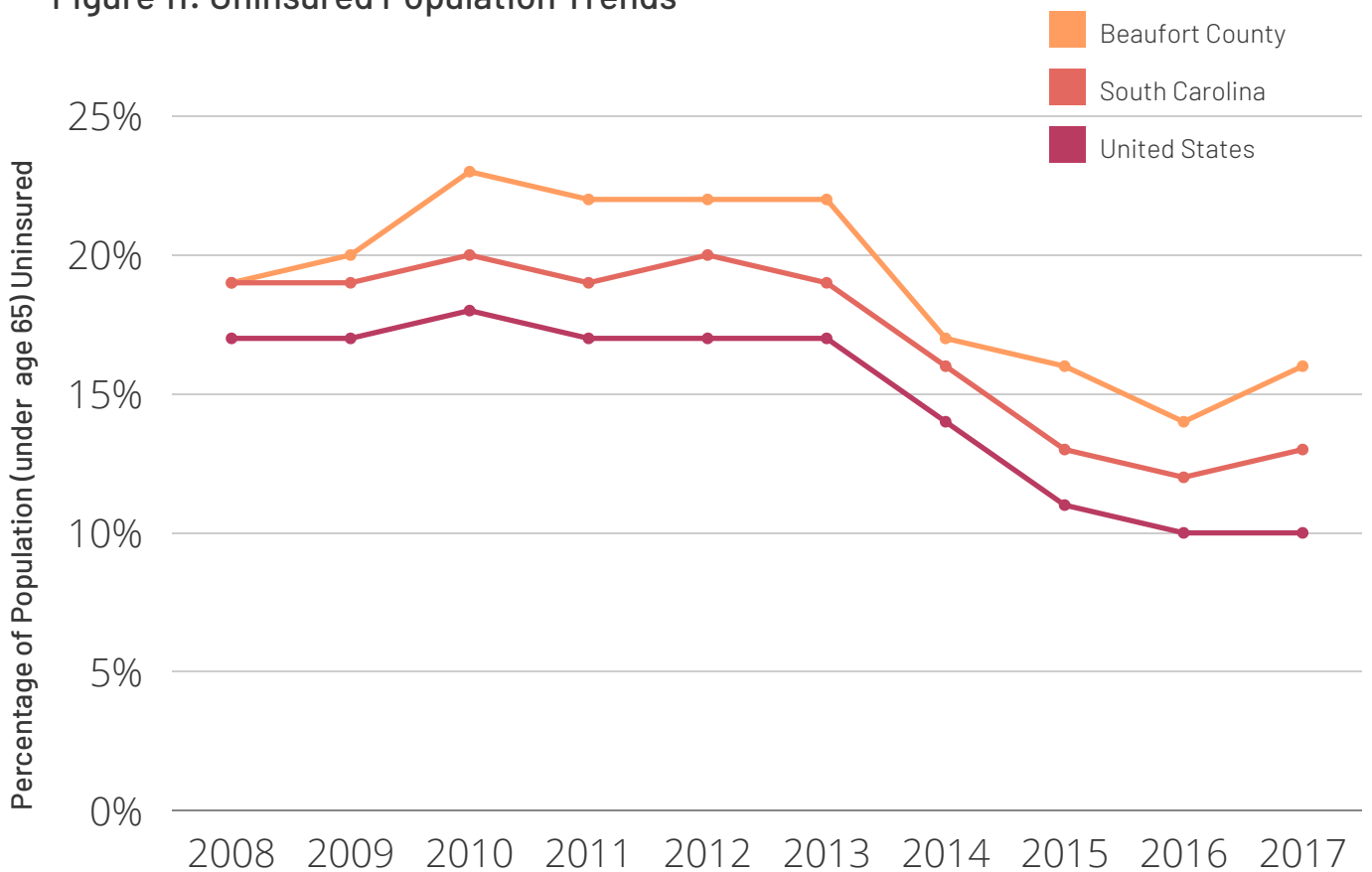
Figure 10: Percentage of Population Insured



A majority of insured Beaufort County residents receive healthcare coverage through their employer; however, 11.4% of the population is uninsured, as seen in Figure 10. Reasons for this will be further discussed under the Economy section.

Source: Based on data from Data USA, 2018.

Figure 11: Uninsured Population Trends



Source: Based on data from County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2017.

As seen in Figure 11, the percentage of the population that is uninsured has been decreasing in recent years. As of 2017, Beaufort County had 15% of their population uninsured. Beaufort County has since improved in this area with the current percentage of population that is uninsured being 11.4%, as previously mentioned.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the main reason individuals lack healthcare coverage is due to the high cost of health insurance (Tolbert et al. 2020). In 2019, 73.7% of uninsured adults indicated that they were uninsured because the cost of coverage was too high (Tolbert et al. 2020). It is important to acknowledge that low income families and people of color are more likely to be uninsured; leading these demographics to have worse access to care for major health conditions and chronic illnesses, including those previously mentioned (Tolbert et al. 2020). Increasing support for non-profit healthcare organizations, or community health centers, who deliver comprehensive care to these vulnerable populations would help Beaufort County provide the uninsured with quality care (County Health Rankings).

Mental Health

Another important area to consider is mental health in Beaufort County. According to the 2019 County Health Rankings, Beaufort County has 660 people per 1 mental health provider, lagging behind the South Carolina state average of 570 people per 1 mental health provider. The top 90th percentile of counties in the U.S. have an even smaller ratio, with 290 people per 1 mental health provider. However, Beaufort County overall has fewer Medicare beneficiaries that struggle with depression (13%) compared to the South Carolina average (16.8%) and far fewer deaths of despair per 100k residents (29.7 in Beaufort County compared to 41.2 in S.C.). Deaths of despair are defined as deaths due to suicide, alcohol-related disease, and drug overdoses. Overall, mental health does not seem to be an emerging crisis in Beaufort County, but it is something that should be measured and efforts should be made to support and increase mental health providers in the area, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its detrimental effect on mental health.

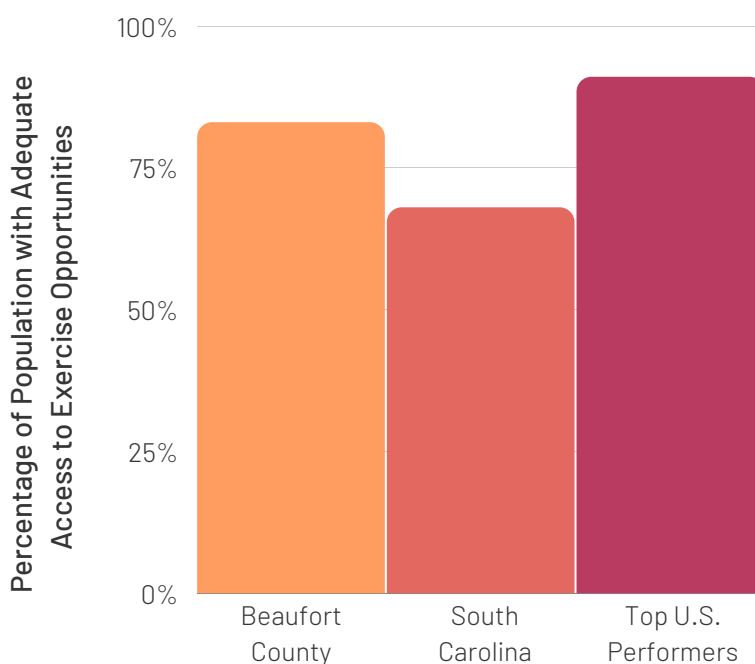
Access to Exercise Opportunities

Research has indicated that proximity to sidewalks, parks, and gyms increases likelihood of physical activity, which in turn is associated with lower risks of type 2 diabetes, cancer, stroke, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and premature mortality, independent of obesity (Cohen et al. 2007). Individuals are considered to have access to exercise opportunities if they:

- reside in a census block that is within a half mile of a park, or
- reside in an urban census block that is within one mile of a recreational facility, or
- reside in a rural census block that is within three miles of a recreational facility.

Beaufort County has been found to outperform the broader state of South Carolina with regards to percentage of the population with adequate access to location for physical activity, as seen in Figure 12. However, Beaufort County is not within the 90th percentile of all US counties, which are considered to be the top performers by County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

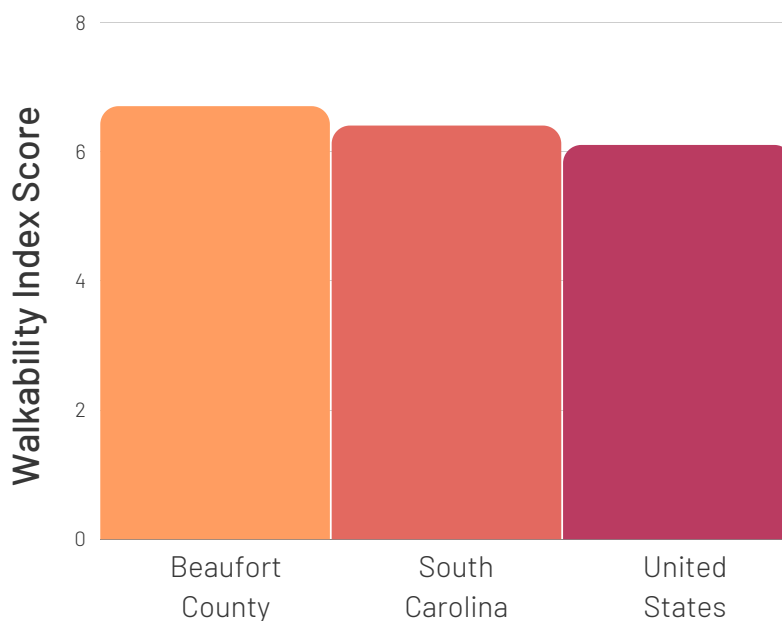
Figure 12: Access to Exercise Opportunities



Source: Based on data from County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2010 & 2019.

Beaufort County has a walkability index of 6.7, which indicates how likely walking trips are to occur within a community and gives more insight into the county's access to exercise opportunities. Higher index scores mean that a walking trip is more likely to occur within the community. Figure 11 compares the walkability index scores of Beaufort County to South Carolina and the United States. The walkability index score of Beaufort County coincides with the county's above average access to exercise opportunities. Beaufort County outperforms South Carolina and the U.S. in walkability, indicating that the county's employment types, occupied housing, street intersection density, and predicted commute mode split are more likely to result in a walking trip. Beaufort County Parks and Recreation denotes 23 active parks, 10 recreation centers, and 5 passive parks present throughout Beaufort County.

Figure 13: Walkability Scores



Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2010-2012

Although Beaufort County ranks very high among South Carolina for positive health indicators, the lack of health insurance is an issue that creates challenges for a significant portion of the population. We also have to assume that many individuals have lost their jobs to COVID-19 related closings, leaving fewer people with access to health insurance and/or healthcare. This population is also more likely to have their hours reduced, reducing expendable income and leading to delayed visits to healthcare providers. COVID-19 will likely exacerbate many of the negative indicators that lead to poor health outcomes (Stewart et al. 2020).

Social Wellbeing

Families/Living Arrangements

There are currently 186,095 residents in Beaufort County. This number is constantly changing as Beaufort County has a positive net migration rate of 11.2%, meaning that more people are entering the area than leaving it. This rate is significantly higher than that of the state of South Carolina as a whole (6.7%). Beaufort County has 71,477 households with an average of 2.5 persons per household.

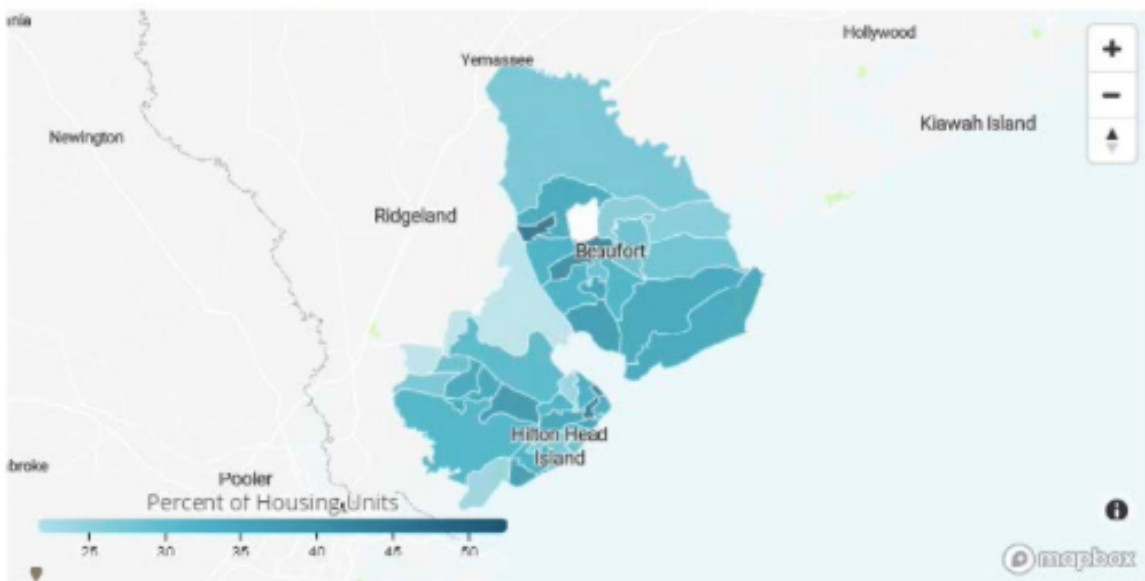


71,447 households

2.5 persons per household

Source: Based on data from U.S. News and the U.S. Census Bureau, 2018

Figure 14: Map of Suboptimal Housing in Beaufort County



Source: Map is from Well Being in the Nation Network, 2013-2017

One concern in the area of social wellbeing is suboptimal housing, meaning the unit lacks plumbing, complete kitchens, or is over-crowded. According to Well Being in the Nation Network, approximately 36% of housing in Beaufort County is considered to be suboptimal, while South Carolina's average in this category is 29%. This will be discussed further in the Economy section of the report.

In order to address the issue of suboptimal housing, we recommend that Beaufort County support housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs which provide funding to repair and improve households, and remove health or safety hazards (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps). This will lead to improved housing conditions, especially for low income families.

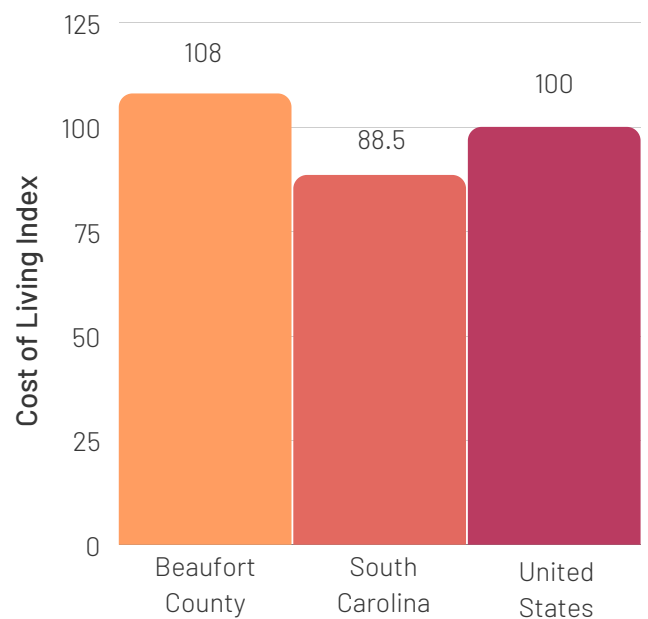
Cost of Living

The residents of Beaufort County face the reality of a high cost of living, indicated by a cost of living index score of 108. This means that it is more expensive to live in Beaufort County than the national and South Carolina state averages (100 US average, 88.5 SC). Residents of Beaufort may find that groceries, utilities, housing, restaurants, entertainment, and clothing cost more than they do in most other parts of the country.

According to local sources, the cost of housing is one of the biggest obstacles for Beaufort County because key workers (defined by the County as:

nurses, teachers, and public service, public safety officials, firefighters and police officers) are being priced-out of the area (Rary 2020). Essential workers struggle to find housing in Beaufort County that they can afford on the wages they earn (Rary 2020). If individuals cannot afford to live in Beaufort County, we may see the net migration rate invert from a positive rate to a negative rate, indicative of people moving out of Beaufort. To address this issue, we recommend that Beaufort County take steps to reduce housing costs to ensure they are more in-line with local wages.

Figure 15: Cost of Living Index Scores



Source: Based on data from BestPlaces.net, 2019

Crime Rate

A majority of the crimes that occur in Beaufort County are property crimes. The rate of property crimes and violent crimes in Beaufort County are below that of South Carolina, but above that of the United States. Some of the most effective techniques to reduce property crime are largely situational crime prevention strategies, such as improving street lighting, increasing private security patrols and/or neighborhood watch, enacting or strengthening physical barriers, and more. The population of Beaufort County can also be encouraged to implement household level measures. We will elaborate more on this in the recommendations.

Figure 16: Crime Rates



Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2014 & 2016

To get a better idea of what the crime looks like in Beaufort County, the crime indices for the cities in Beaufort County were gathered and can be found in Table 4. The City of Beaufort has the lowest crime index (9) which is a cause for concern because that means the City of Beaufort is safer than only 9% of other U.S. cities. Efforts should be made to reduce the amount of property crimes within Beaufort County, with a specific focus on addressing the City of Beaufort.

Table 4: Crime Indices of Cities in Beaufort County

City	Crime Index Score
Beaufort	9
Bluffton	58
Hilton Head Island	45
Ladys Island	34
Okatie	64
Port Royal	28

Source: Based on data from NeighborhoodScout, 2019

Prevalence of Food Insecurity

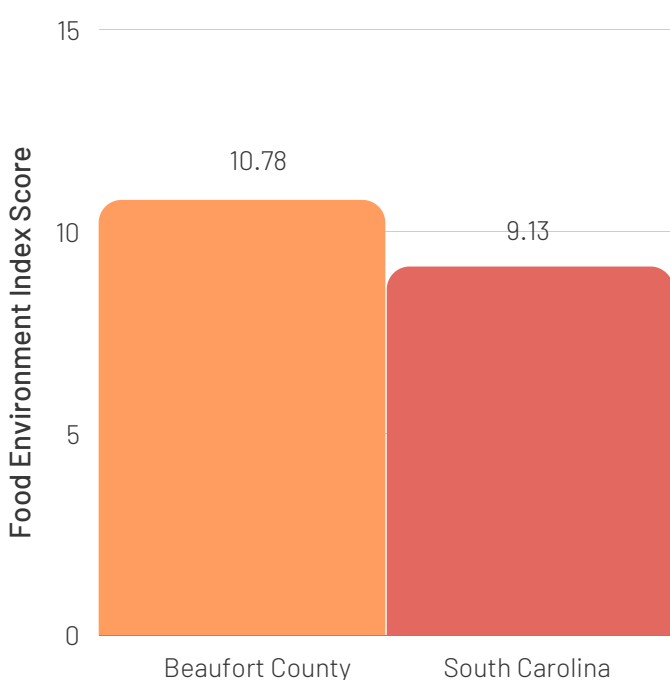
Another area of concern regarding the social wellbeing of Beaufort residents is the prevalence of food insecurity. As defined by Feeding America, food insecurity is “a household’s inability to provide enough food for every person to live an active, healthy life.” 8.6% of Beaufort County residents (approximately 15,640 people or 6,256 households) experience food insecurity.



8.6 % of Beaufort County experiences food insecurity

Source: Based on data from Feeding America, 2018

Figure 17: Food Environment Index Score

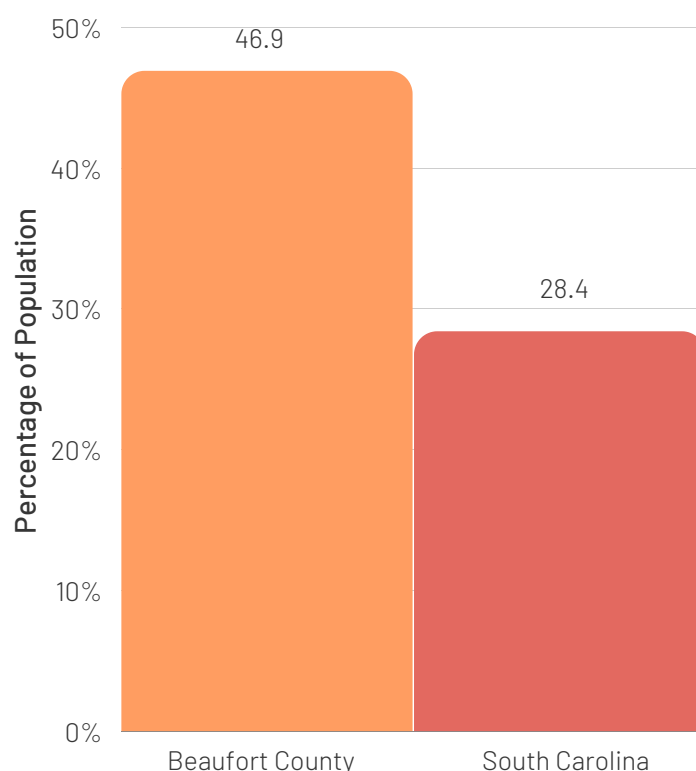


Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2016

To further evaluate the prevalence of food insecurity in Beaufort County, the Food Environment Index Score (FEI) should be considered. The Food Environment Index score reflects the share of total food retailers that are considered healthy based on size and typical food offerings. Healthy retailers include supermarkets, produce markets, and warehouse clubs, while less healthy retailers include fast-food restaurants and convenience stores. Beaufort has an FEI of 10.78, which is higher than the state average (9.13), as seen in Figure 17.

Even though Beaufort County's score is higher than South Carolina's, it seems that there is an issue in Beaufort County concerning grocery store and supermarket access. Stores that report at least "\$2 million in annual sales and contain all the major food departments found in a traditional supermarket, including fresh meat and poultry, dairy, dry and packaged foods, and frozen foods" are defined as supermarkets, super centers or large grocery stores (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2020).

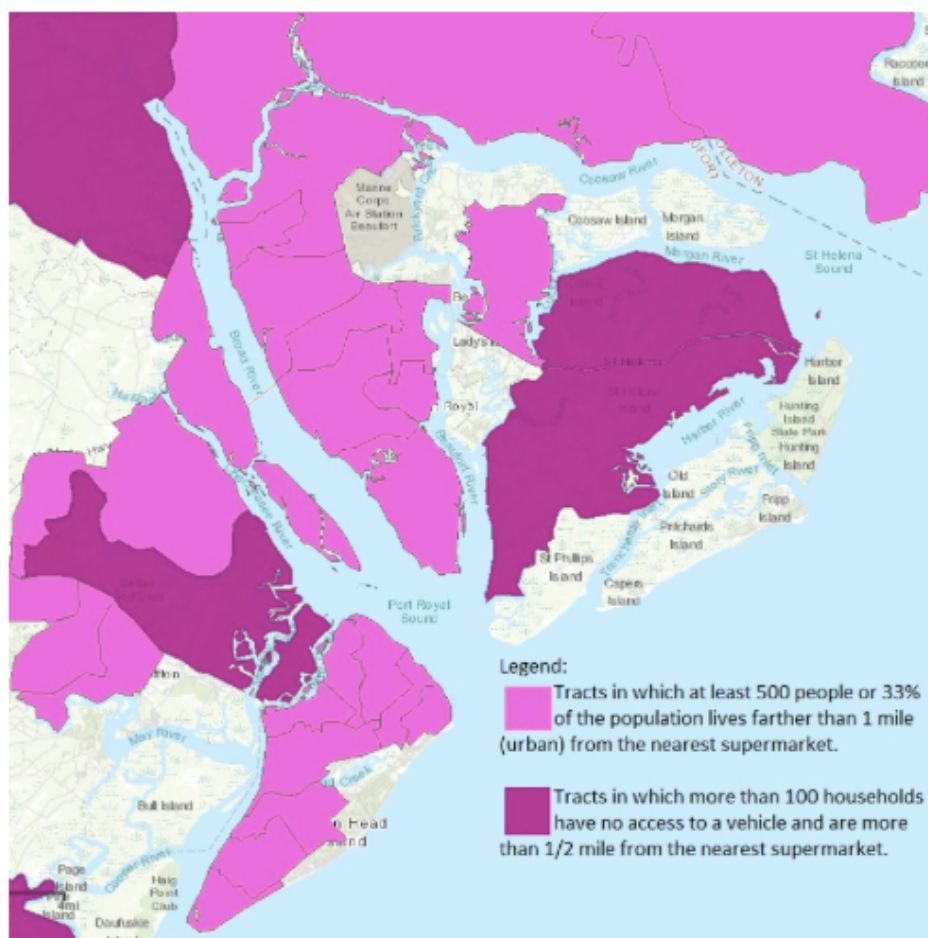
Figure 18: Population without Access to a Large Grocery Store



Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2015

Figure 18 shows 46.9% of Beaufort County residents do not have access to a large grocery store. This is a great cause for concern as this percentage is far greater than that of the state of South Carolina (28.4%). Immediate efforts should be made to identify these food deserts and ensure that all Beaufort residents have access to large grocery stores, supermarkets, and supercenters.

Figure 19: Beaufort County Food Access Map



Source: Based on data from U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018.

As shown in the map above, most of the census tracts in Beaufort County are tracts where at least 33% of the population or 500 people are living farther than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket OR are tracts where more than 100 households have no access to a vehicle and are more than 1/2 mile from the nearest supermarket. Both of these are barriers to food access as defined by the USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Access Research Atlas).

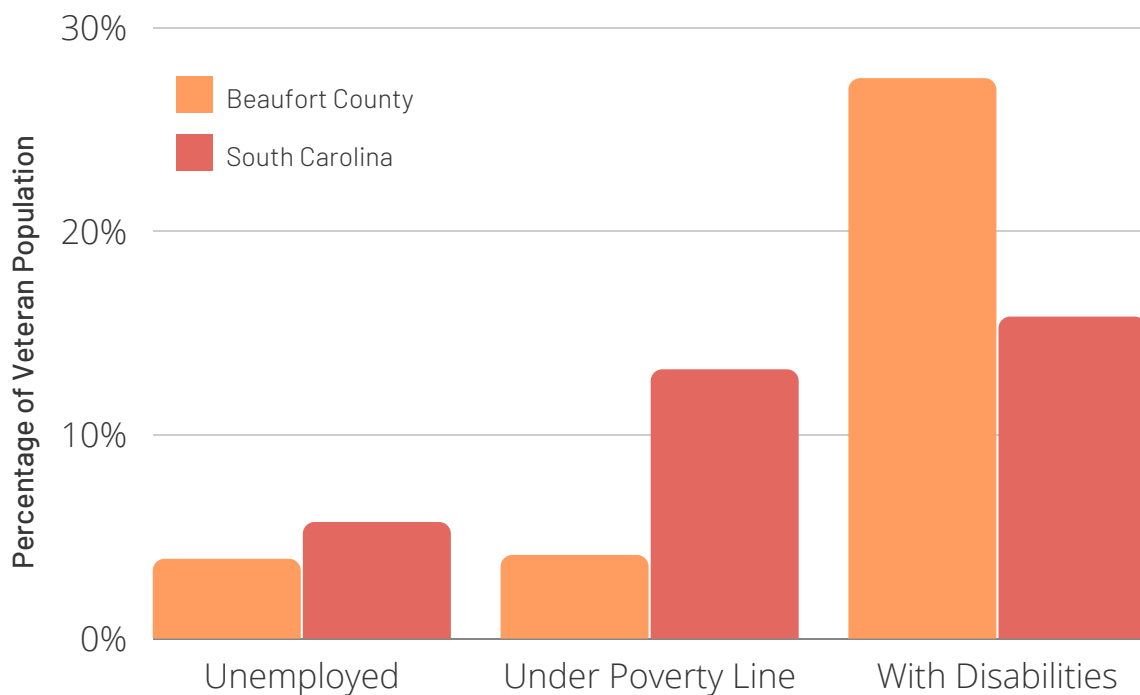
Research has shown that implementing community gardens has reduced food insecurity and improved dietary intake (Carney et al. 2013). It is recommended that Beaufort County construct and support community gardens in areas with limited access to healthy foods.

Military/Veteran Services

There are two military installations located in Beaufort County, the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort and Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island, that contribute to the 6,500 active duty service personnel and 5,400 Marine recruits in Beaufort County (MilitaryOneSource; MAVSA).

In addition, there are approximately 18,000 veterans living in Beaufort County, which amounts to about 12.5% of the total population. Of these 18,000 veterans, the majority of them are over age 55 (74.5%) and are participating in the labor force (77%). This group is better educated than the South Carolina population, with 76.2% of veterans in Beaufort having some college education, and 44.2% having a bachelor's degree or higher. Veterans in Beaufort County are less likely than the general population to be unemployed or live below the poverty line. 3.9% of veterans were unemployed in 2019 and 4.1% were living below the poverty line compared to 5.7% and 13.2% of the general population, respectively. This is whilst they are experiencing higher rates of disabilities, with 27.5% of veterans having some sort of disability compared to 15.8% of the population.

Figure 20: Percentage of Veteran Population Experiencing Unemployment, Poverty, and Disabilities



Source: Based on data from Beaufort, SC and the U.S. Department of Defense, 2019.

The table below shows the two medical facilities in Beaufort County that offer a variety of medical services to military personnel in the area.

Table 5: Medical Facilities in Beaufort County that Serve Military Members

Facility Name and Location	Services Provided
<p style="text-align: center;">Beaufort Naval Hospital</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>1 Pinckney Boulevard Beaufort, SC 29902</i></p>	<p>Primary Care Preventative Care Hospital Care & Surgery Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services Specialty Care Tests & X-Rays Dental Children's Health</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Beaufort VA Center</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>1 Pinckney Boulevard Beaufort, SC 29902</i></p>	<p>Dermatology Emergency Care Gynecology Mental Health Care Nutrition Primary Care Specialty Care Women's Health</p>

Source: Based on information gathered from MilitaryOneSource, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, and Naval Hospital Beaufort.

The Military and Veterans Service Alliance (MAVSA) of the Lowcountry lists a number of organizations that provide various forms of assistance to military service personnel, veterans, retirees, and family members. These organizations assist with accessing information as well as resolving problems related to health, housing, food, clothing, transportation, education, and more. The following organizations are partnered with the MAVSA to provide services to military members, veterans, and their family members:

American Legion Post 185	Military Order of the Purple Heart
American Legion Post 205	NAMI Lowcountry (SC)
American Legion Post 207	Navy League
American Legion Post 9	Navy Marine Corps Relief Society
American Red Cross	Operation Palmetto Employment
AmVets Post 70	Operation R & R
Beaufort County Council	Operation Saving Jake
Beaufort County Veterans Affairs	Palmetto Behavioral Health
Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce	Palmetto Breeze
Coastal Empire Community Mental Health Center	Palmetto Warrior Connection
Companions for Heroes	Patriot Guard Riders
Disabled Veterans Chapter 12	Sun City Veterans Association
Healing Heroes of the Lowcountry Fund	Technical College of the Lowcountry
HHI - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce	Therapy Group
Honor Flight	Transitional Workforce Educational Assistance Collaborative (TWEAC)
Hospice Care of the Lowcountry	University of South Carolina - Beaufort
MCCS-SC Behavioral Health Branch	Vantage Point
Military Enhancement Committee	Veterans Coalition of Hilton Head
Semper Fi Fund	Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8760
Military Officers Association of American	

Economy

Poverty Rate

According to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, poverty thresholds are used to estimate the number of Americans in poverty each year. These thresholds “are dollar amounts set by the U.S. government to indicate the least amount of income an individual or family needs to meet their basic needs” (Institute for Research on Poverty). The Census Bureau will apply these thresholds to a family’s income to determine their poverty status. The weighted average poverty thresholds take into account the number of children under the age of 18 for a family and are shown in Table 6

Table 6: Weighted Average of Poverty Thresholds

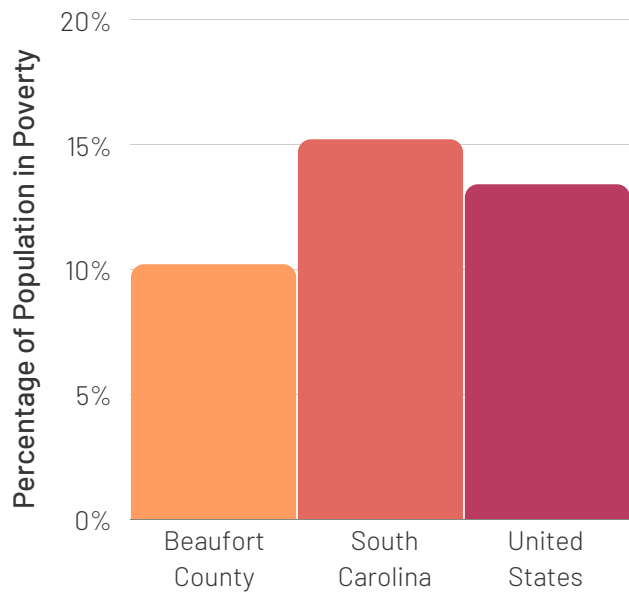
Size of Family Unit	Weight Average Poverty Threshold
One Person	\$13,011
Two People	\$16,521
Three People	\$20,335
Four People	\$26,172
Five People	\$31,021

Source: Based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2019.

According to the 2019 U.S. Census, of the 186,095 Beaufort residents, 18,982 residents live below the poverty line.

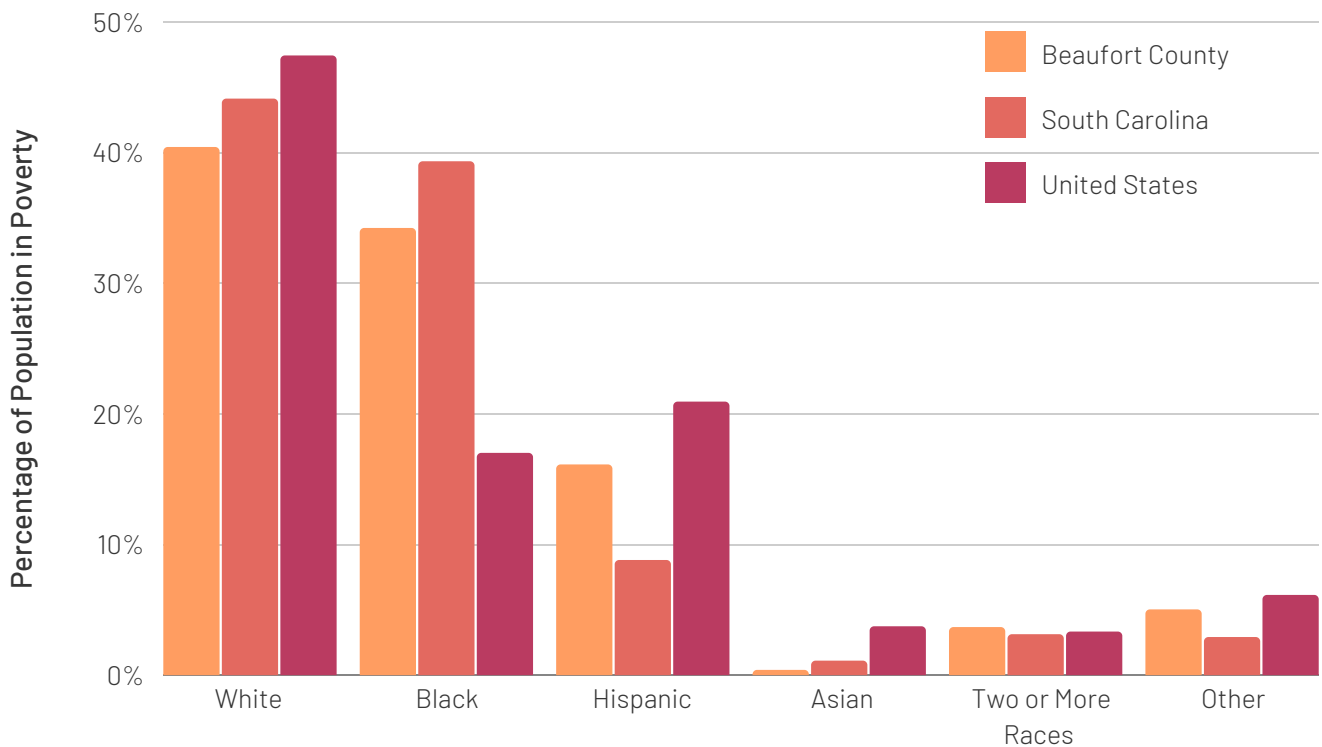
Beaufort County's poverty rate is 10.2%, which is lower than the poverty rate of South Carolina (15.2%) and the US (13.4%). Out of the people in poverty within Beaufort County, 40% are white, 34% are black, and 16% are Hispanic. In South Carolina, we see a lower percentage of white and black individuals in poverty and a higher percentage of Hispanics in poverty than that of Beaufort County.

Figure 21: Poverty Rates



Source: Based on data retrieved from ACS and Census Reporter, 2019.

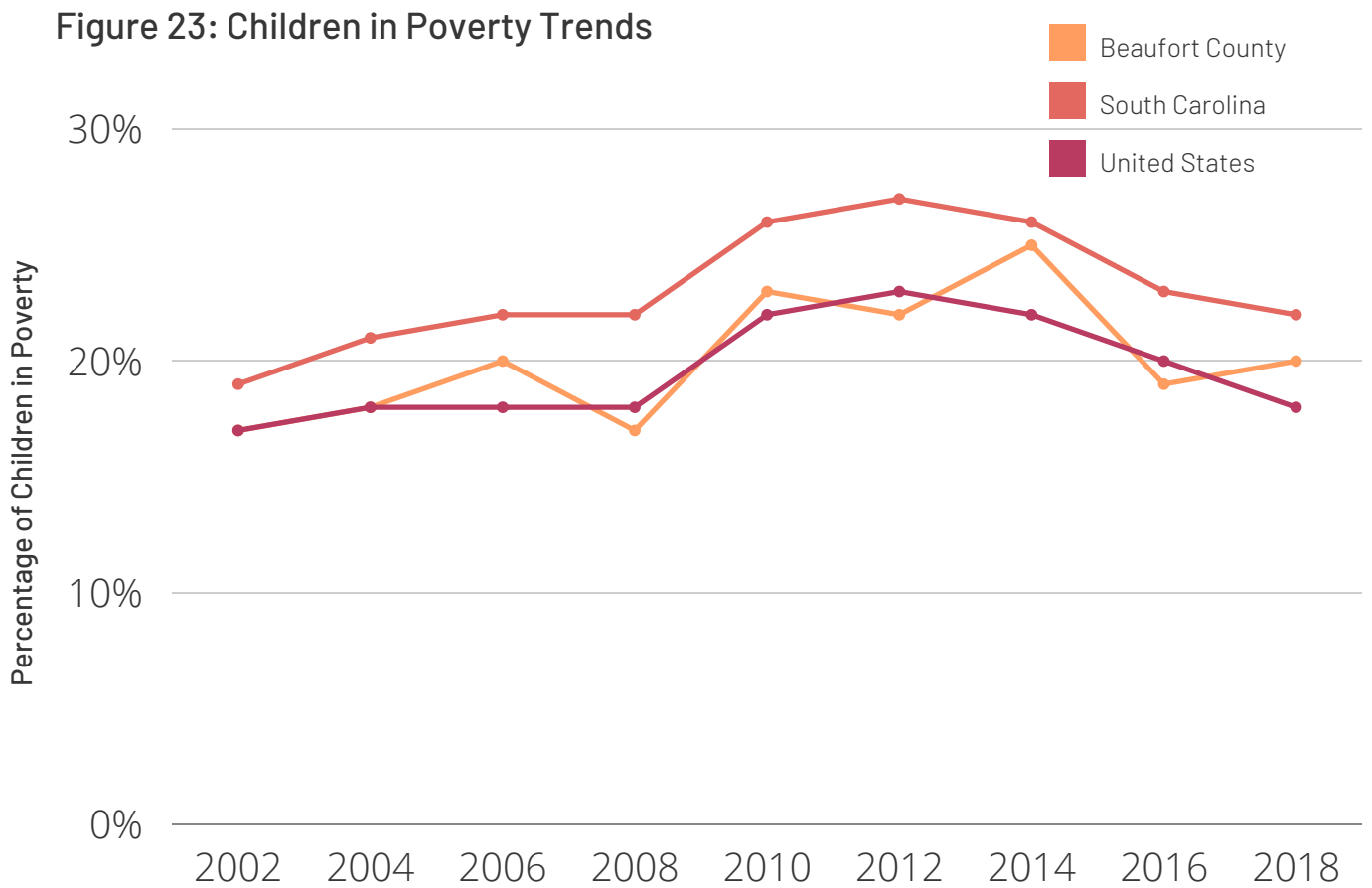
Figure 22: Demographics of Population in Poverty



Source: Based on data retrieved from ACS and Census Reporter, 2019.

Of the 18,982 residents living below the poverty line, there are currently 4,565 children in poverty. While only 9% of white children in Beaufort County are estimated to live in poverty, 39% of African American children and 26% of Hispanic children live in poverty.

Figure 23 below shows the county, state and national trend of the percentage of children experiencing poverty.



Source: Based on data from County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018.

The cost of living in Beaufort County is significantly high, which will be discussed later on in this section. Strategies aimed at decreasing the number of children experiencing poverty tend to focus on the financial strains imposed on the caretakers of these children. In order to address this issue, Beaufort County can establish locally mandated living wages that are higher than minimum wage levels which will increase the earnings of those contributing to the household income. In turn, this can reduce the households experiencing poverty and subsequently decrease the number of children in poverty. Additionally, Beaufort County can support child care subsidy programs to provide assistance to working parents by covering the cost of childcare. This would mitigate the issue of parents being unable to afford childcare for when they need to work, increasing their employment opportunities and earnings (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).

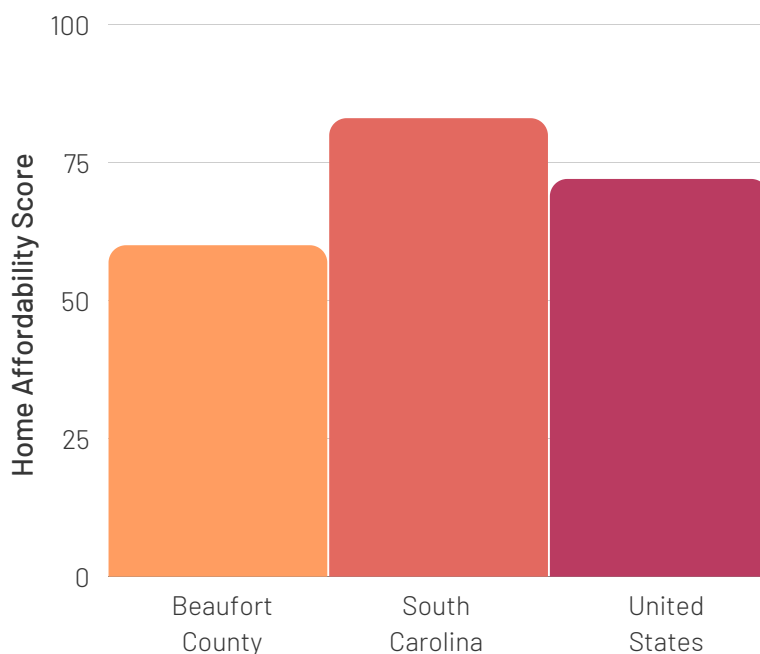
Housing Affordability

The Home Value to Income ratio is a measurement used by real estate agents and homebuyers to determine if a house is affordable. The affordable ratio of home value to household income is roughly 2.6 years of the household income. For example, a household making \$50,000 annually can ideally afford a house priced at \$130,000 (Florida 2018). More information about this ratio can be found [here](#). To compare affordability at the county, state and national levels, this ratio has been converted into a score from 0-100, with 0 being low affordability and 100 being ideal affordability. The equation is:

$$x = \frac{\text{Median Home Value}}{\text{Median Household Income}} \quad Y = \frac{2.6}{x} \quad Z = 100Y$$

Where X is the Home Value to Income ratio, Y is the comparison to the ideal ratio, and Z is the affordability score expressed on a 0-100 scale. Beaufort County has an affordability score of 60, while South Carolina and the United States have affordability scores of 83 and 72, respectively. The median home values and incomes were collected using census data and are shown in the chart below.

Figure 24: Home Affordability Score

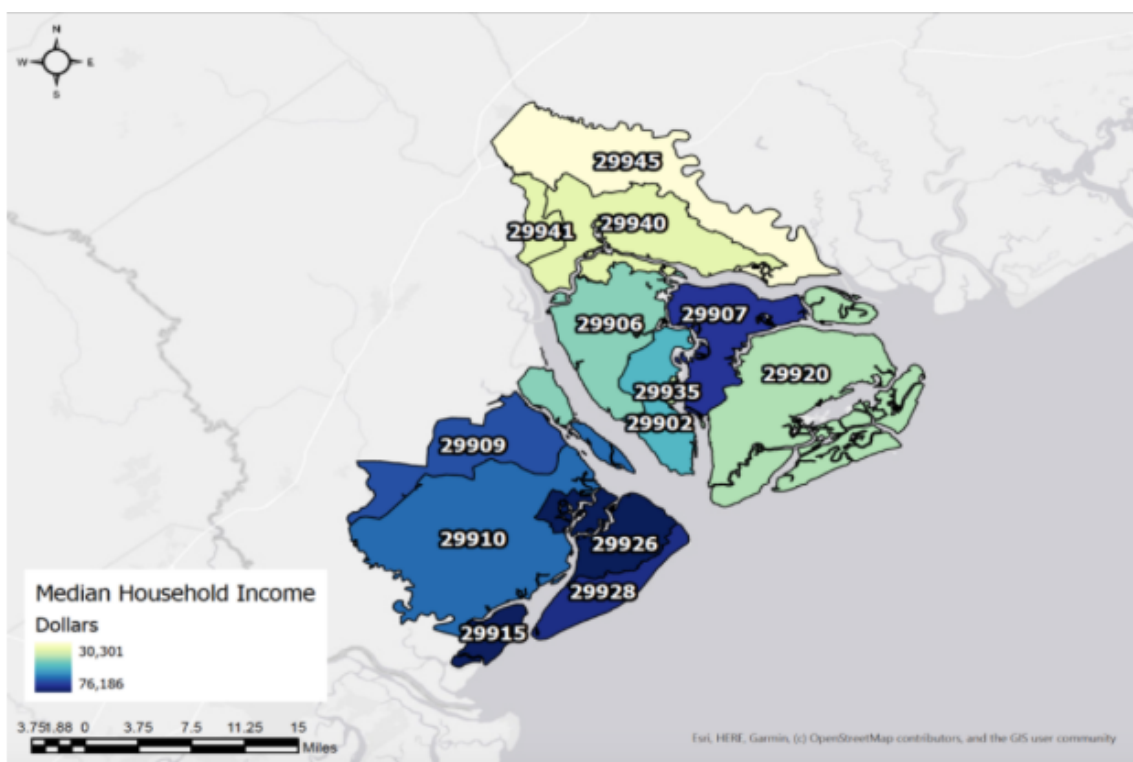


Source: Based on calculations using data from Census Reporter and information from Bloomberg, 2019.

In 2019, the median housing value in Beaufort County was \$298,100, as compared to the national median of \$217,500. The median household income was also higher in Beaufort County (\$68,377) with the national median of \$62,843, and a high homeownership rate (73.3% in Beaufort County) compared to the U.S. (64%). From 2009-2019, Beaufort County increased its number of housing units from 80,306 to 99,204, an incredible increase of 23.5% in ten years.

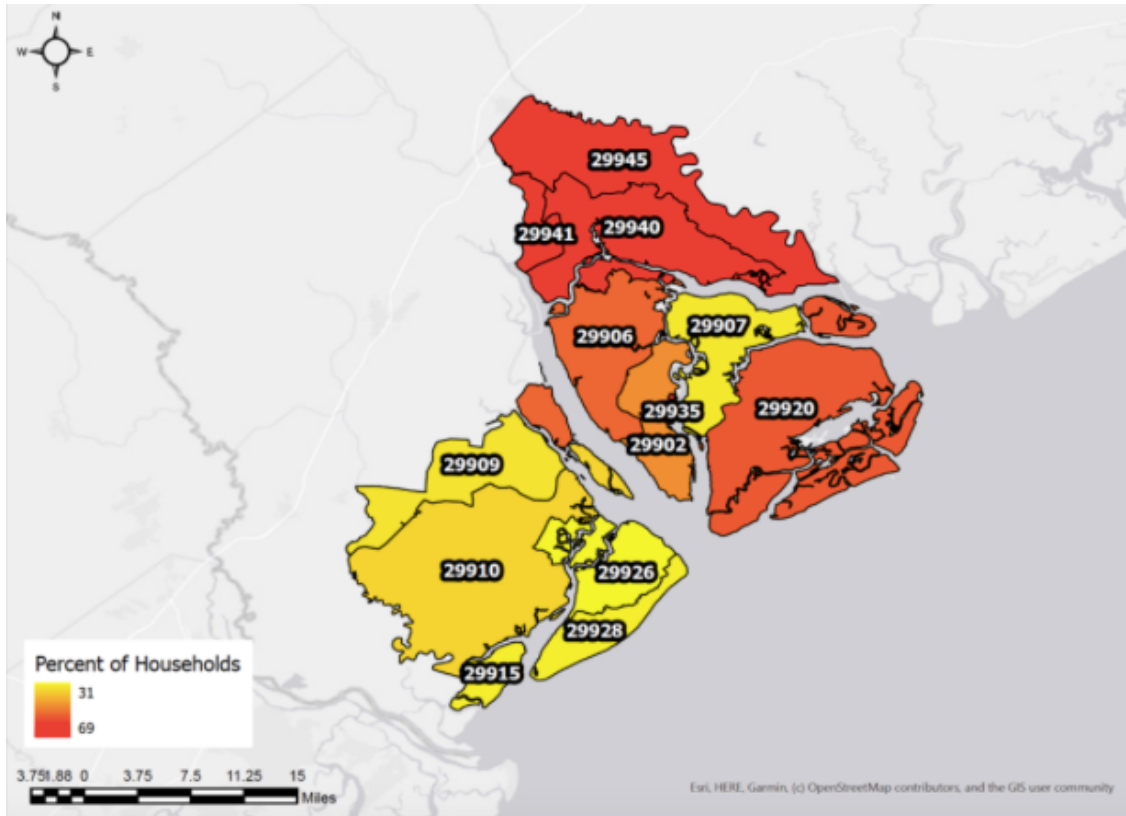
Figure 25 below shows a map of Beaufort County by zip code that identifies the communities with the lowest median incomes and therefore the populations that are most in need of support.

Figure 25: Beaufort County Median Household Income (By Dollars)



Source: Map generated by Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenSourceMap contributors and the GIS user community, 2017.

Figure 26: Beaufort County Median Household Income (By % of Households)

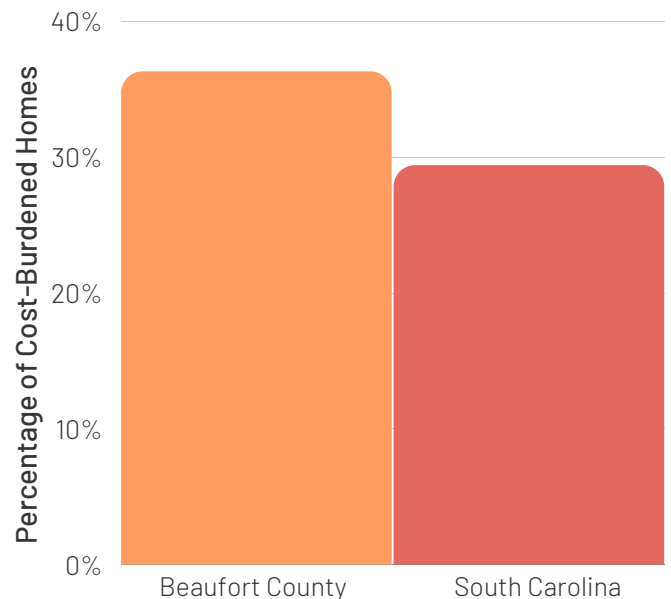


Source: Map generated by Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenSourceMap contributors and the GIS user community, 2017.

As seen in the figures above, the communities in greatest need are those towards the North of Beaufort County, including Yemassee, Seabrook, Lobreco, Sheldon, Dale, and Coosaw.

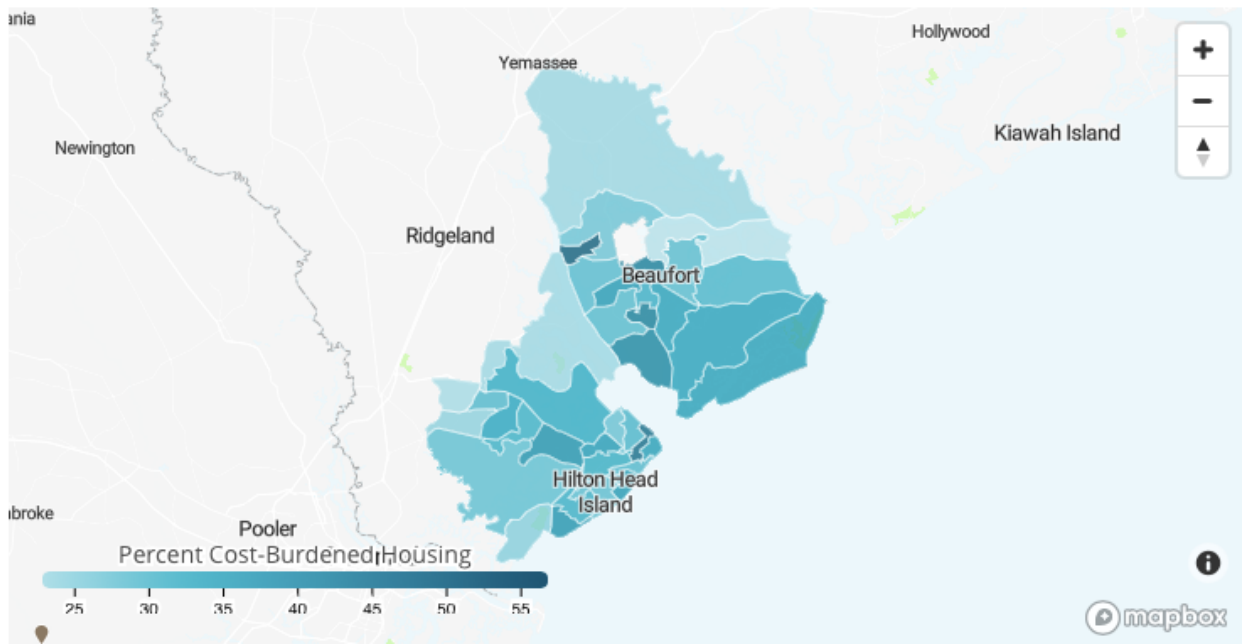
The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a household spending more than 30% of its income on housing as cost-burdened. In Beaufort County, 36.3% of residents are living in household units that are cost-burdened, which is slightly above the average of South Carolina (29.4%).

Figure 27: Cost-Burdened Housing



Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2020.

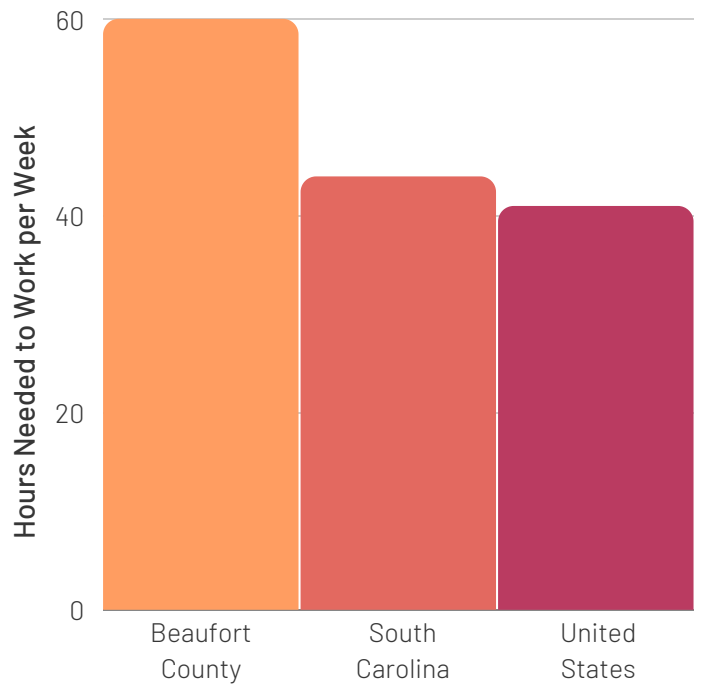
Figure 28: Cost-Burdened Housing



Source: Map from Well Being in the Nation Network, 2014-2018.

Another way to look at housing affordability in Beaufort County is to look at the work hours needed to pay for housing that is considered to be affordable. Figure 29 reflects the number of hours per week a person earning the average hourly wage, among renters in a county, would need to work to afford a one-bedroom unit at HUD-estimated Fair Market Rent rates while spending no more than 30% of their income on housing costs. In Beaufort County, a person would need to work 60 hours to attain affordable housing. This is significantly more than South Carolina at 44 hours and the US with 41 hours (US News).

Figure 29: Working Hours Needed to Attain Affordable Housing



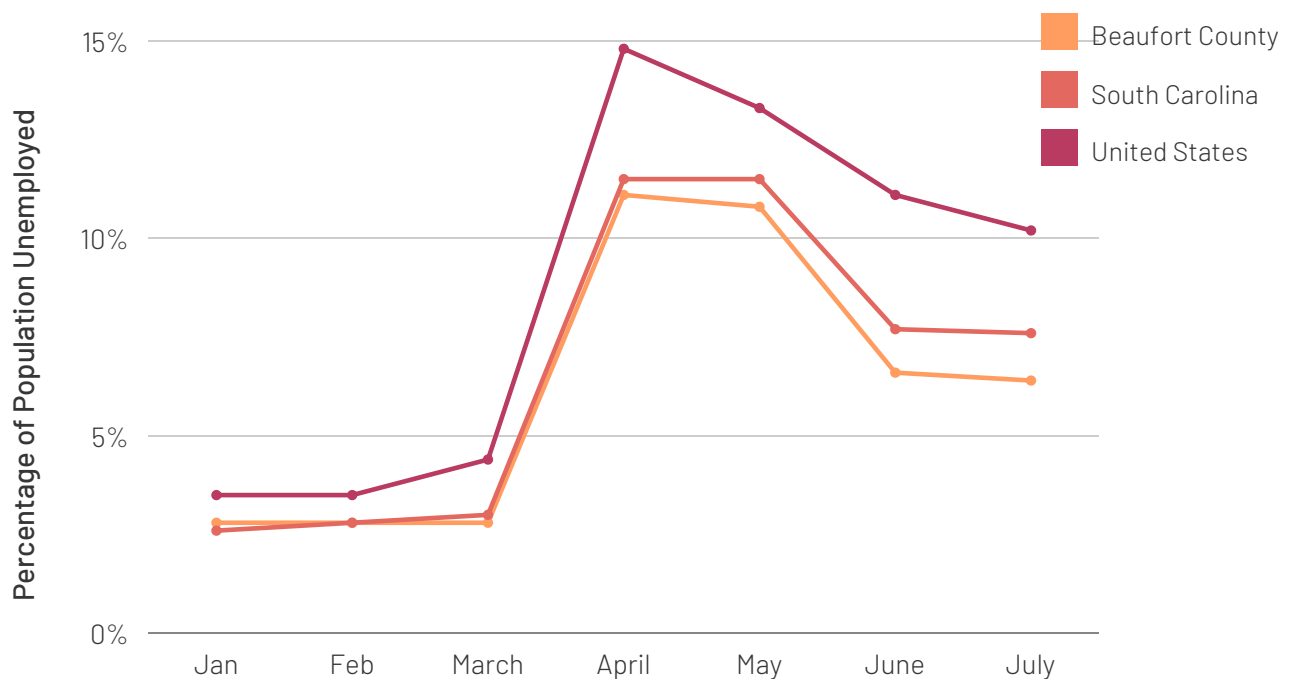
Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2020.

In order to address the housing insecurity issue in Beaufort County, we recommend Beaufort County adopt inclusionary zoning and community land trust strategies. Inclusionary zoning and housing policies require developers to reserve a portion of housing units for low income residents (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps). As a result, this would increase the access to affordable, quality housing (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps). Community Land Trust (CLT) strategies separate the ownership of the household and land; leasing the land to homeowners, who are then required to sell the home back to the CLT or to a low income resident at an affordable price (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps). This will increase the access to affordable housing, improve neighborhood quality and increase housing stability in the area (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).

Workforce Analysis

Beaufort County has an annual unemployment rate of 5.4% for the year of 2020, compared to that of South Carolina at 6.2% and the US at 8.1% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Since the COVID-19 Pandemic significantly impacted the employment of many individuals, we wanted to highlight the resulting trend, as seen in Figure 30. From January 2020 to July 2020, Beaufort County's unemployment rates remained lower than South Carolina and the United States.

Figure 30: Unemployment Rates for 1/2020-7/2020

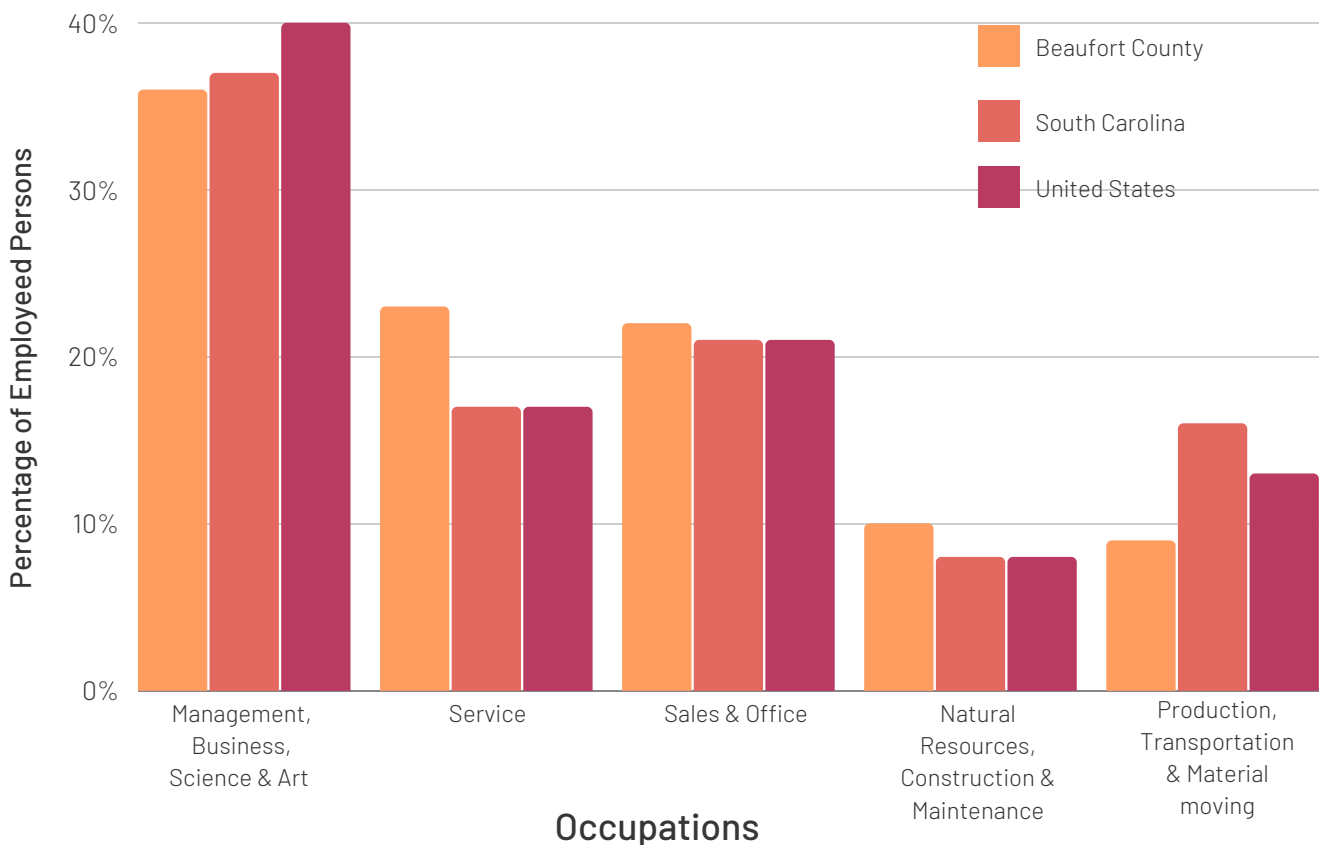


Source: Based on data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020.

Even though the unemployment rate for Beaufort County is low in comparison, we want to emphasize that unemployment rates can be somewhat understated as it only counts those who are completely without any employment. Part-time employees are not counted as unemployed and neither are seasonal employees, nor does it reflect those who are seeking work but may not have legal residency status. Underemployment includes those who wish to work but cannot find full-time employment or have to work several jobs to make ends meet. At this time, there is not an accurate measure available for levels of underemployment, but it is something to be considered.

Figure 31 highlights employment by occupation for Beaufort County, the State of South Carolina, and the United States. A little more than 20% of the workforce in Beaufort County works in service positions while another 20% work in sales. These professions (more than 40% of the total workforce) are traditionally among the lowest paid occupations and are highly impacted by market changes, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, many employers do not offer insurance for employees that are part-time, seasonal, or below certain salary thresholds.

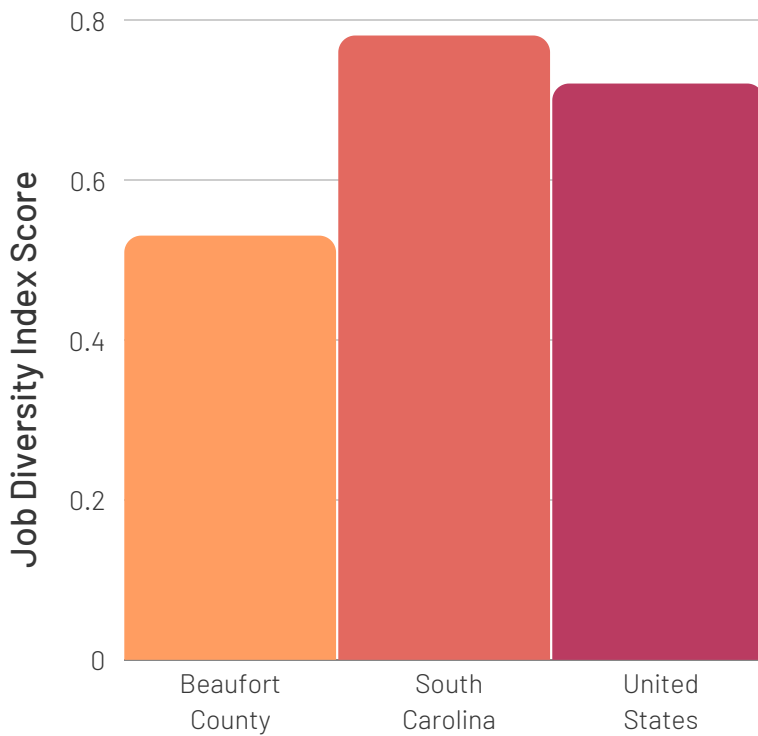
Figure 31: Employment by Occupation



Source: Based on data from Data USA, 2018.

Figure 32 shows the county, state, and national job diversity index scores. The score reflects whether jobs in a community exist in a variety of industries, on a scale of 0 to 1; a score of 1 would be the most diverse (U.S. News). Beaufort’s score is low in comparison to South Carolina and the United States, indicating a job economy that is lacking diversity. Beaufort County would benefit from

Figure 32: Job Diversity Index Score



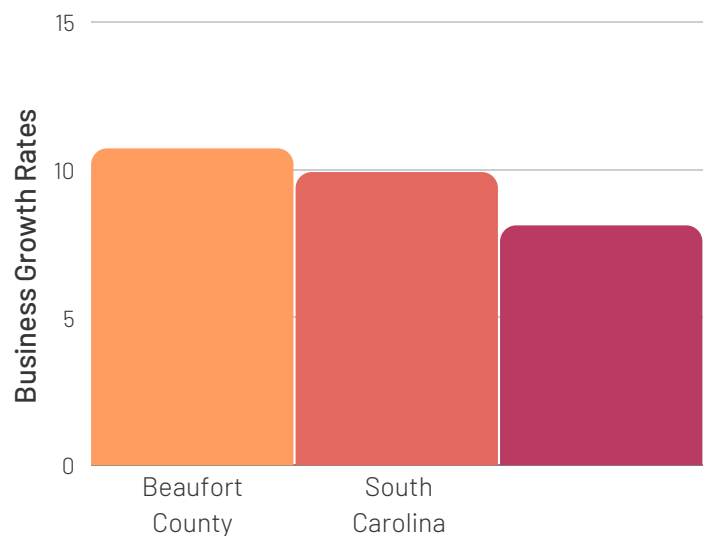
diversifying the local economy through workforce development. The county has programs that provide individuals with training to develop the skills needed for industry-specific jobs; therefore, we recommend increasing the advertisement of these programs so residents are aware of them (National Association of Counties).

Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2020.

Business Analysis

Beaufort County has a favorable business growth rate of 10.7% when compared to SC at 9.9% and the US at 8.1%. The Business Growth Rate is calculated by taking the number of new businesses formed in a year as a percentage of total businesses in a community.

Figure 33: Business Growth Rates



Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2020.

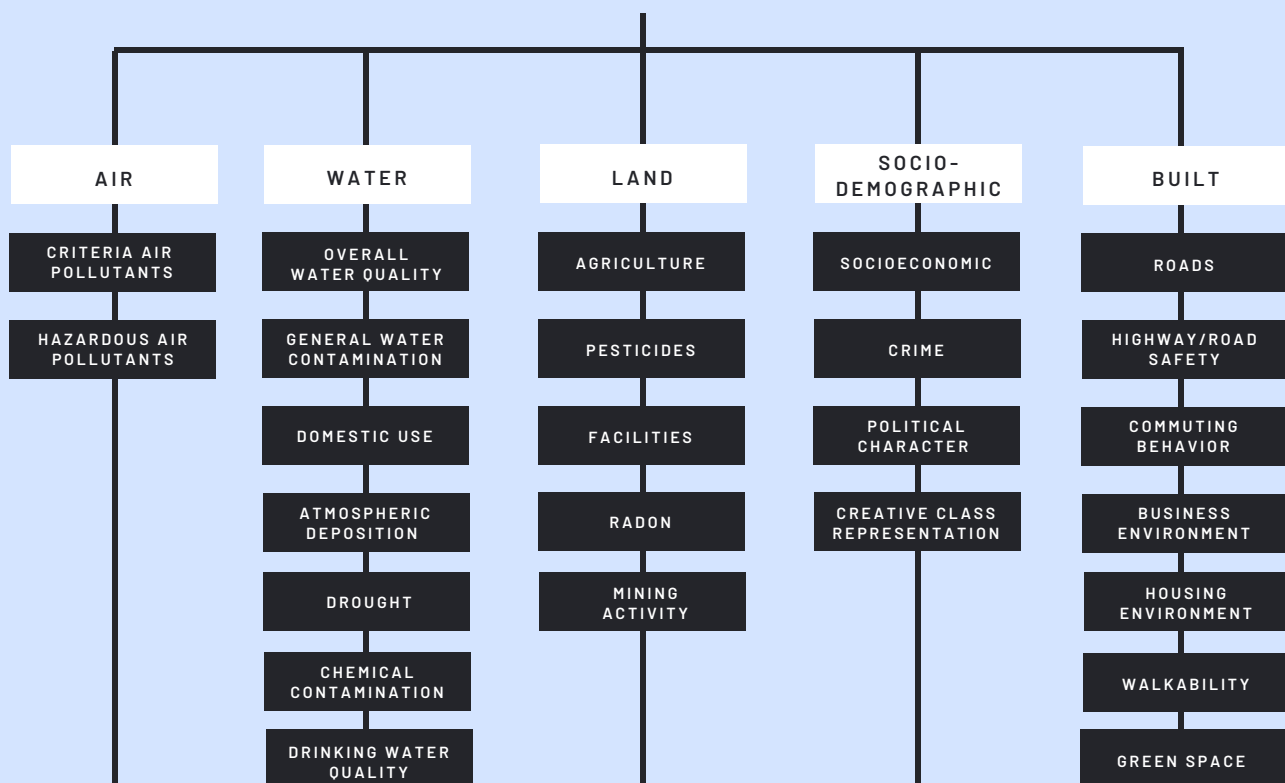
Environment

Environmental Quality Index (EQI) Overview

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently released their Environmental Quality Index (EQI) 2006-2010 Technical Report, which provides a county-by-county snapshot of overall environmental quality across the entire United States. The EQI presents data in five domains: air, water, land, sociodemographic, and built. The constructs of each domain are outlined below.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INDEX (EQI)

Constructs of Domains



Source: Based on data retrieved from U.S. EPA. (Final, 2020). Environmental Quality Index - Technical Report (2006-2010).

The data, gathered by the EPA, highlights counties that are experiencing an increased burden of environmental impacts. These domain-specific indices enable counties to assess the drivers of poor environmental quality in their counties, which provides a foundation for targeted support to address concerns tied to environmental quality (U.S. EPA 2020).

Beaufort County's Environmental Quality Index (EQI)

When looking at the EQI, higher numerical values are associated with a lower environmental quality (U.S. EPA 2020). Beaufort County falls within the 40th-60th percentile of U.S. Counties based on their overall EQI of -0.00, which does not provide much insight at first glance. However, looking into each domain, the highest scores for Beaufort County were in air and water, indicating that these have the lowest environmental quality out of the five domains. As a result, efforts should be focused on improving the water quality and air quality in order to improve Beaufort County's overall environmental quality.



Overall EQI of Beaufort County

Source: U.S. EPA. EQI Report

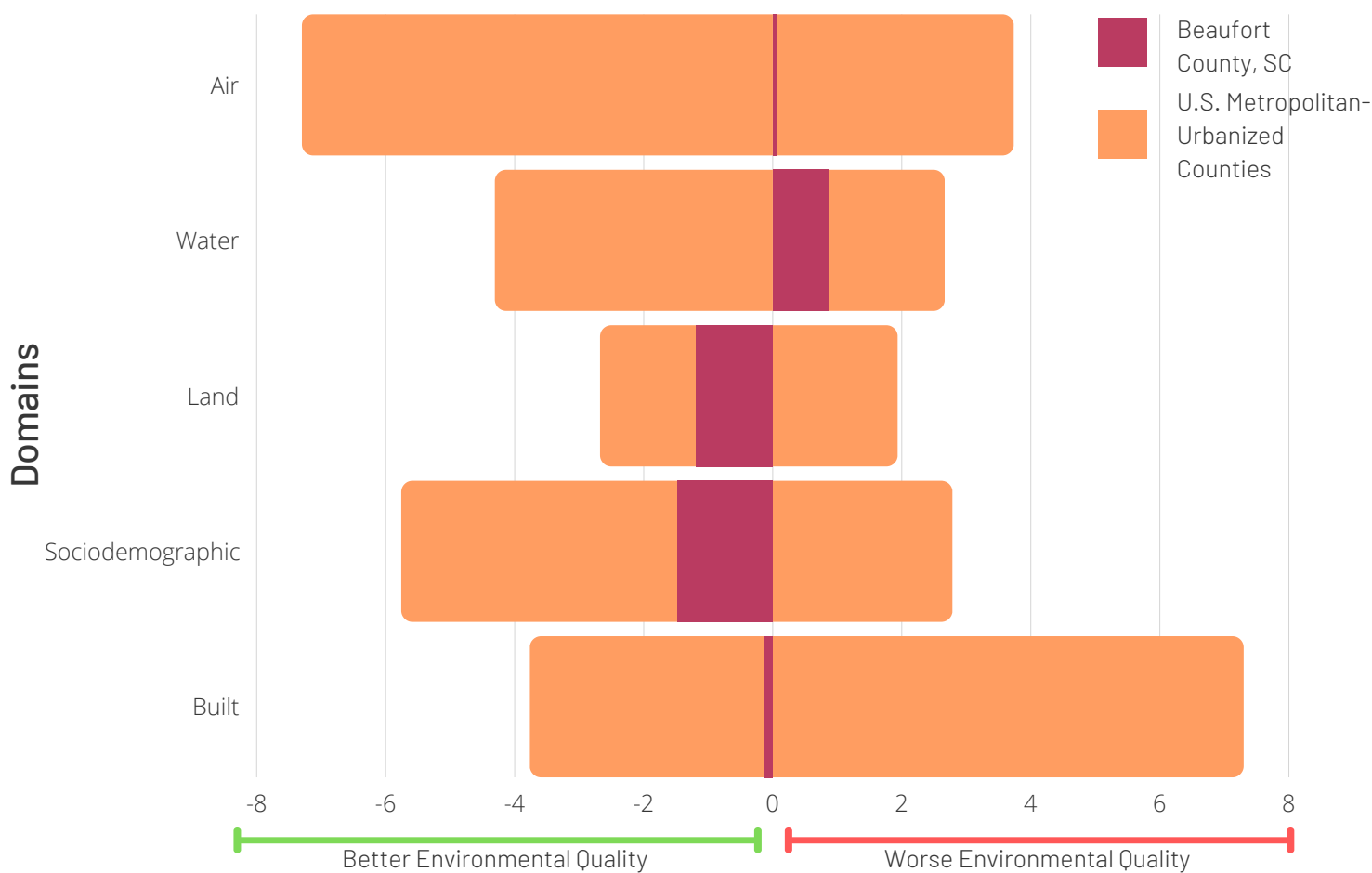
Table 7: Beaufort County's Domain-Specific and Overall Environmental Quality Index

Domain	Beaufort County's Index
Air	0.05
Water	0.86
Land	-1.19
Sociodemographic	-1.47
Built Environment	-0.14
Overall EQI	-0.00

Source: Based on data retrieved from U.S. EPA. (Final, 2020). Environmental Quality Index - Technical Report (2006-2010).

The EPA's study categorized Beaufort County as a metropolitan-urbanized county. Figure 35 identifies where Beaufort County's EQI scores fall along the range of the measured EQI values for all metropolitan-urbanized counties in the United States.

Figure 34: Comparison of Beaufort County's Environmental Quality to Range of Environmental Quality Values of All U.S Metropolitan-Urbanized Counties



Source: Based on data retrieved from U.S. EPA. (Final, 2020). Environmental Quality Index - Technical Report (2006-2010).

Water Quality

The U.S. EPA Environmental Quality Index Technical Report (2006-2010) indicates that efforts to improve the environmental quality of Beaufort County should be primarily focused on improving water quality. Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority (BJWSA) released a Water Quality Report that compares the level of water contaminants in Beaufort County's main water distribution systems to the EPA Water Quality Standards. These Water Quality Standards are representative of safe drinking water; levels of contaminants above these standards are deemed to be unsafe by the EPA (U.S. EPA, Water Quality Criteria).

0.0% of Beaufort County’s drinking water is unsafe (U.S. News). According to the BJWSA 2019 Water Quality Report, the highest level of contaminants detected in Beaufort County’s main water distribution are below the EPA Standards for all water contaminants. In the State of South Carolina, 10.0% of the drinking water is unsafe; therefore Beaufort County is doing well in regards to keeping their water safe for human consumption (U.S. News).

Table 8: 2019 Water Quality of Beaufort-Jasper Main Water Distribution

Water Contaminants	Highest Level Detected in Beaufort County’s	EPA Standards
E. Coli Bacteria	0	0
Nitrate	0.15 ppm	10 ppm
Fluoride	0.77 ppm	4.0 ppm
Copper	0.17 ppm	1.3 ppm
Lead	4.6 ppb	15 ppb
Haloacetic Acids (HAA5)	49.8 ppb	60.0 ppb
Total Trihalomethanes(TTHM)	52.9 ppb	80.0 ppb
Sodium	22 ppm	n/a
Chlorine	2.51 ppm	4.0 ppm

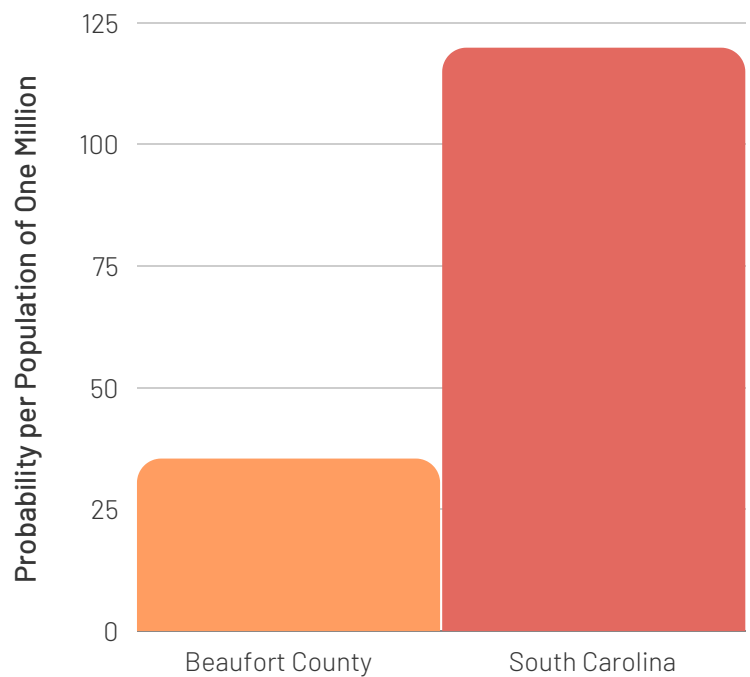
Source: Based on data from Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority (BJWSA) 2019 Water Quality Report.

It is important to keep in mind that the U.S. EPA Environmental Quality Index Technical Report (2006-2010) takes into consideration the overall water quality, general water contamination, domestic use, atmospheric deposition, drought, chemical contamination, and drinking water quality to score the environmental quality of the water domain for the county. Even though the water quality of Beaufort County’s main distribution system is in accordance with EPA Water Quality Standards and safe for its residents, there are other aspects of the water domain that could be contributing to the lower environmental quality of water in Beaufort County. Beaufort County should identify areas of improvement in domestic use of water, atmospheric deposition, and drought to determine how to best improve the environmental quality of the water domain.

Air Quality

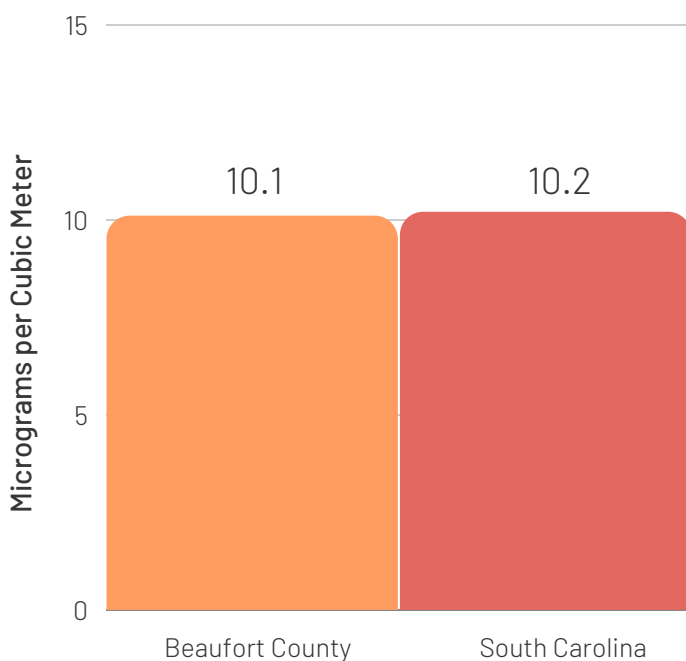
In addition to water quality, the U.S. EPA Environmental Quality Index Technical Report (2006-2010) indicates that efforts can also be focused on improving air quality. Beaufort County is far below the State of South Carolina's airborne cancer risk; however, the average daily density of fine particulate matter for Beaufort County and the State of South Carolina is about the same.

Figure 35: Airborne Cancer Risk



Source: Based on data from U.S. News, Healthiest Communities, 2020.

Figure 36: Average Daily Density of Fine Particulate Matter



Source: Based on data from County Health Rankings, 2014.

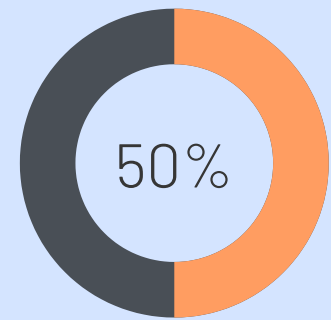
Fine particulate matter is air pollution composed of particles that measure 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter (U.S. EPA, Particulate Matter (PM) Pollution). Studies have shown that exposure to these air pollutants can lead to a multitude of health issues (U.S. EPA, Particulate Matter (PM) Pollution). Many of these pollutants are emitted from power plants, industries, and automobiles; therefore, reducing the fine particulate matter in the atmosphere requires limiting the emissions of these sources (U.S. EPA, Particulate Matter (PM) Pollution).

Flood Risk

A significant concern for coastal communities, like Beaufort County, is the threat of flooding. Storm surge, rain events, and sea level rise all contribute to flooding issues. 50% of the households in Beaufort County, which accounts for 35,304 households, are within flood hazard zones (U.S. News). These flood hazard areas can be identified on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate

Maps as Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) which are areas that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year (FEMA 2020). FEMA defines flood zones according to varying levels of flood risk; each zone reflects the severity or type of flooding within that area (FEMA, Definitions of FEMA Flood Zone Designations). Conducting a vulnerability assessment can help identify which areas are most vulnerable to hazards, as Beaufort County has done. The next step would be to construct a hazard mitigation strategy that would serve as a guide to making the county and its residents more prepared to withstand hazards like flooding.

Percentage of Households in Flood Hazard Zone

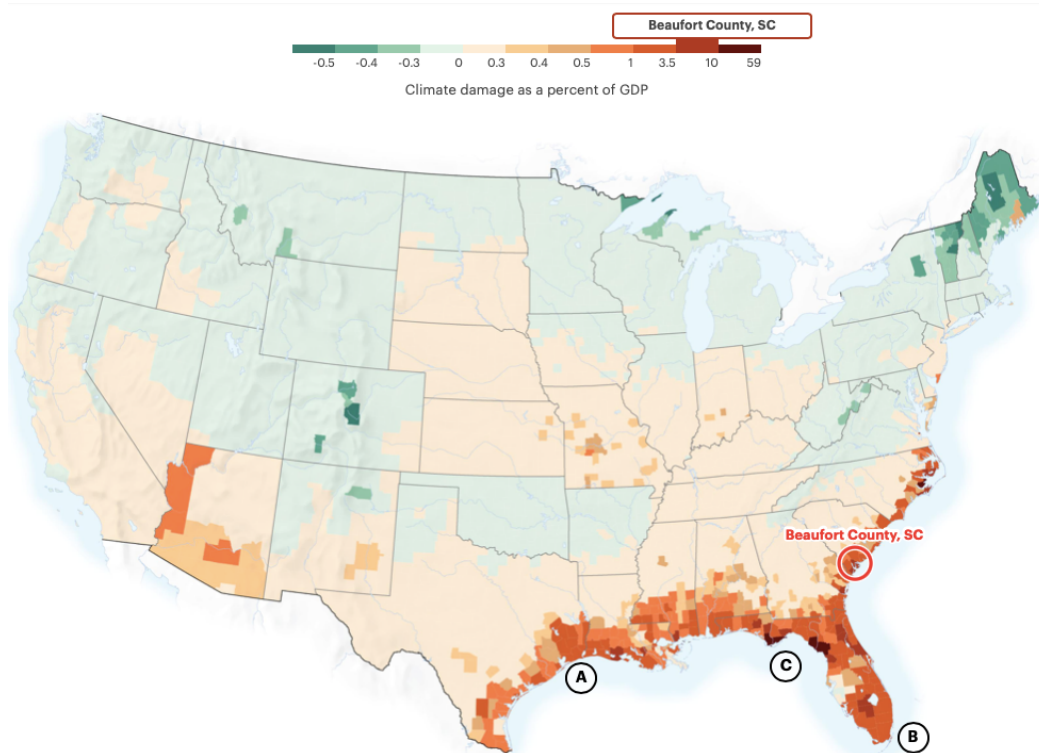


35,304 of the 70,607 households in Beaufort County are in a flood hazard zone

Compounding of Environmental Hazards

While it is important to examine these environmental hazards individually, the reality is that environmental hazards are compounding. As the climate changes, emissions pollute the air, while extreme heat causes crop yields to decrease, and sea levels rise. A recent report has identified Beaufort County, South Carolina as one of the most at-risk counties in the United States when considering the compounding of environmental hazards (Shaw et al. 2020). This report by ProPublic takes into consideration: extreme heat and humidity, large wildfires, sea level rise, farm crop yields, and economic damages from climate (Shaw et al. 2020). Counties are then ranked based on how they score in each category with higher scores being worse across all categories (Shaw et al. 2020). Based on Beaufort County's scoring, it is deemed to be one of the most at-risk counties; scoring the highest (9 out of 10) for economic damages from climate. Figure 37 shows a map of the economic damage from climate across the United States with Beaufort County circled in red.

Figure 37: Climate Damage as Percent of GDP



Source: Map from ProPublica.

Rising energy costs, low labor productivity, and poor crop yields will continue to increasingly drag the economy down, potentially having a larger financial impact than that of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Shaw et al. 2020). Most of this damage will result from storms, sea level rise, and deaths from extreme heat (Shaw et al. 2020).

Additionally, as discussed earlier, Beaufort County has significant sub-optimal housing and cost-burdened housing. Research has demonstrated that people living in substandard housing are at a higher risk of experiencing negative environmental effects. This is putting more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of Beaufort County residents at risk. Since Beaufort County has conducted a flooding vulnerability assessment, the county should update their Hazard Mitigation Plan to include strategies to address the findings of this assessment. The county can also apply for FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grants to help fund hazard mitigation efforts.

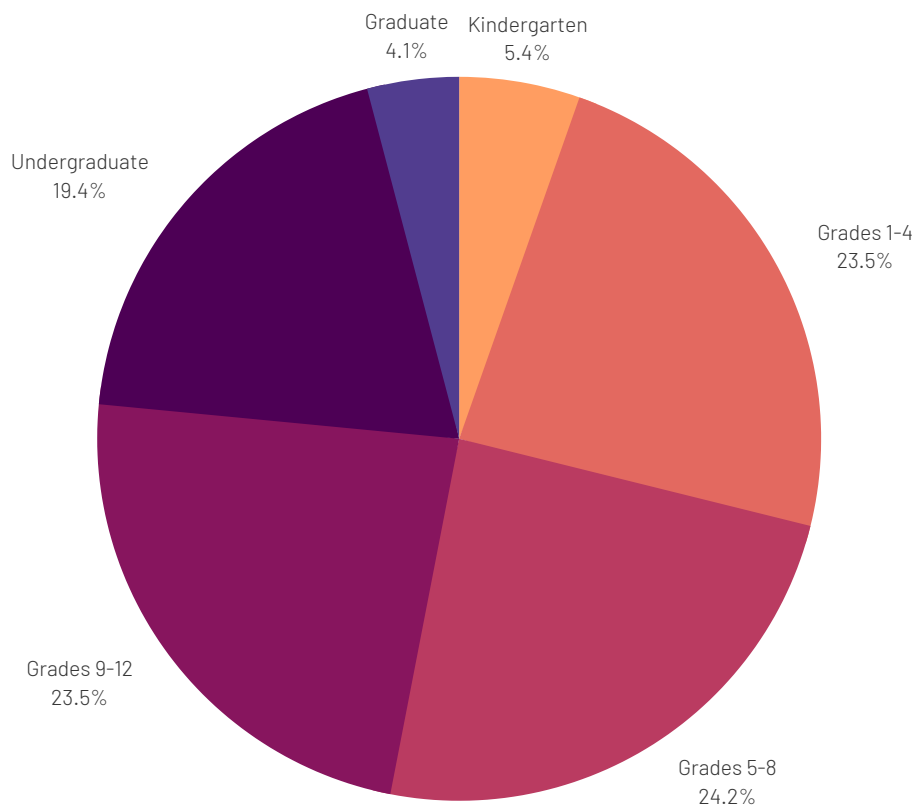
Education

It is important to note that “On March 27, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education approved South Carolina's request to waive spring statewide assessments, accountability ratings, and certain reporting requirements in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for the 2019-2020 school year due to widespread school closures related to the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)” (South Carolina Department of Education). As a result, there is missing data for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Student Enrollment

There are 35,835 students, from preschool to graduate or professional school, in Beaufort County enrolled in an educational institution; a significant majority of which are in grades 1-12 (Town Charts). Of the 35,835 enrolled students in Beaufort County, approximately 27,450 are enrolled in preschool to grade 12. For these grades, Beaufort County has a student to teacher ratio of 13:1 whereas the State of South Carolina has a ratio of 15:1 (Niche).

Figure 38: Enrolled Students in Beaufort County

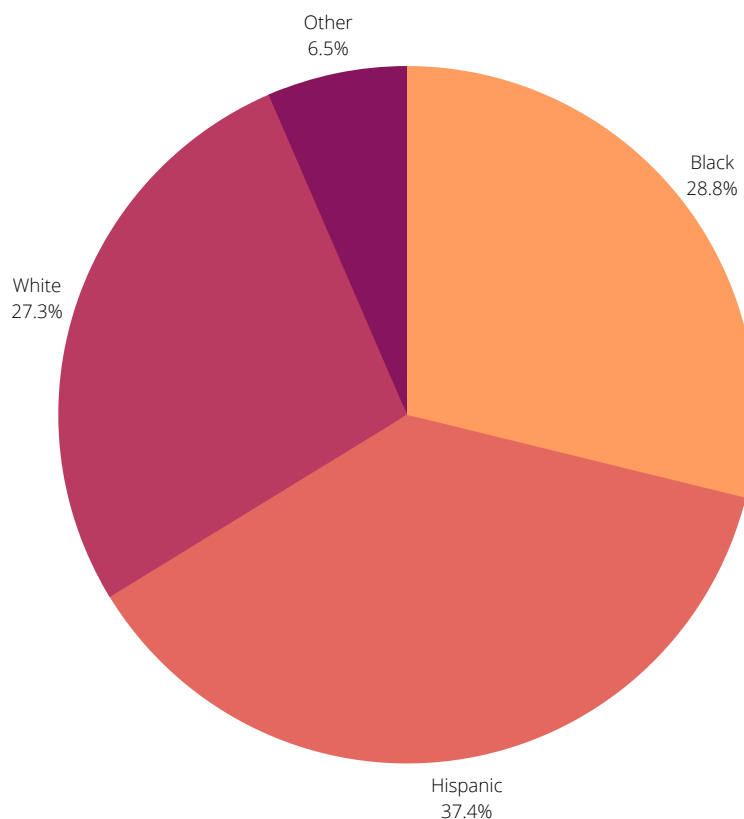


Source: Based on data from TownCharts.com, 2020.

Early Childhood Education

Beaufort County School District (BCSD) offers full day Pre-Kindergarten programs at all elementary school sites. Currently, the County can offer Pre-Kindergarten to 963 students who turn 4 years of age prior to September 1st of the year of entry. For the 2018-2019 school year, there were 1,153 children screened for Pre-Kindergarten Qualification. The two qualifications for Pre-Kindergarten include falling below the 50th percentile based on the DIAL 4 (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning) screening and/or a risk factor score of 40 or higher based upon the County's list of at-risk indicators. Out of the 1,153 children screened, 954 students qualified for Pre-Kindergarten. The figure below shows the demographic breakdown of children qualifying for Pre-Kindergarten.

Figure 39: Percentage of Each Demographic Qualifying for BCSD Pre-K



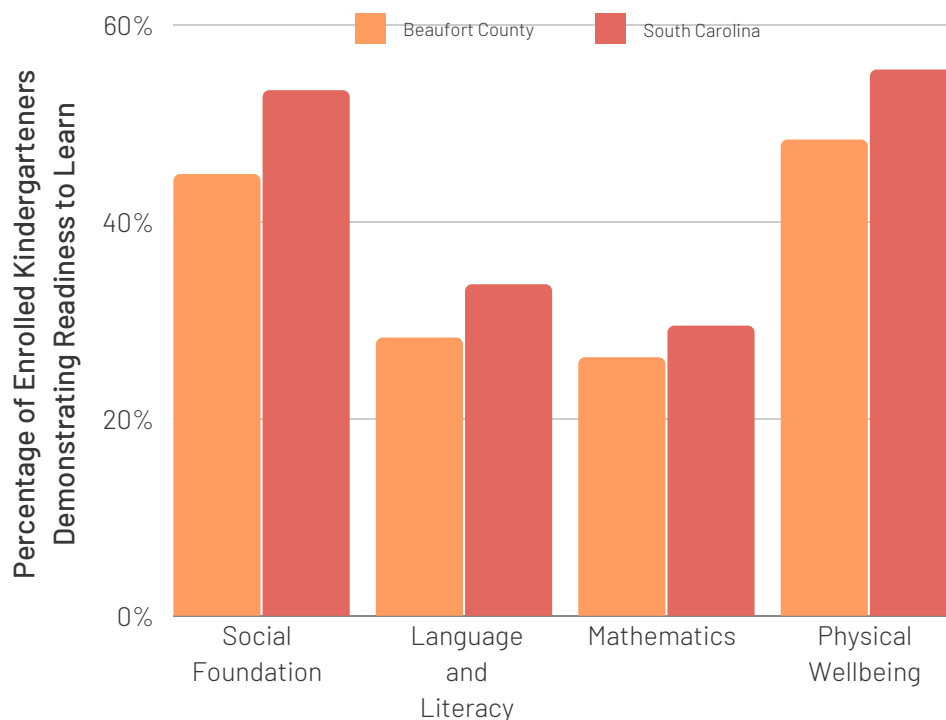
Source: Based on data from Beaufort County School District, 2018-2019.

Hispanic and Black children account for a majority of the students qualifying for Pre-Kindergarten. 94.9 % of Hispanic children screened and 92.6% of Black children screened qualified for Pre-Kindergarten, whereas 65.5% of White children screened qualified.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Kindergarteners account for approximately 1,935 students. These students are required to participate in the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to measure the students' preparedness for kindergarten (South Carolina Department of Education). A student demonstrated readiness by demonstrating "foundational skills and behaviors that prepare them for instruction based on kindergarten standards" (South Carolina Department of Education). Overall, 31.6% of kindergarteners enrolled in Beaufort County School District demonstrated readiness in the 2019-2020 academic year, as compared to 39.2% of kindergarteners statewide. Figure 39 shows the breakdown of the percentage of students demonstrating readiness within the domains that the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment examines.

Figure 40: Kindergarten Readiness Assessment



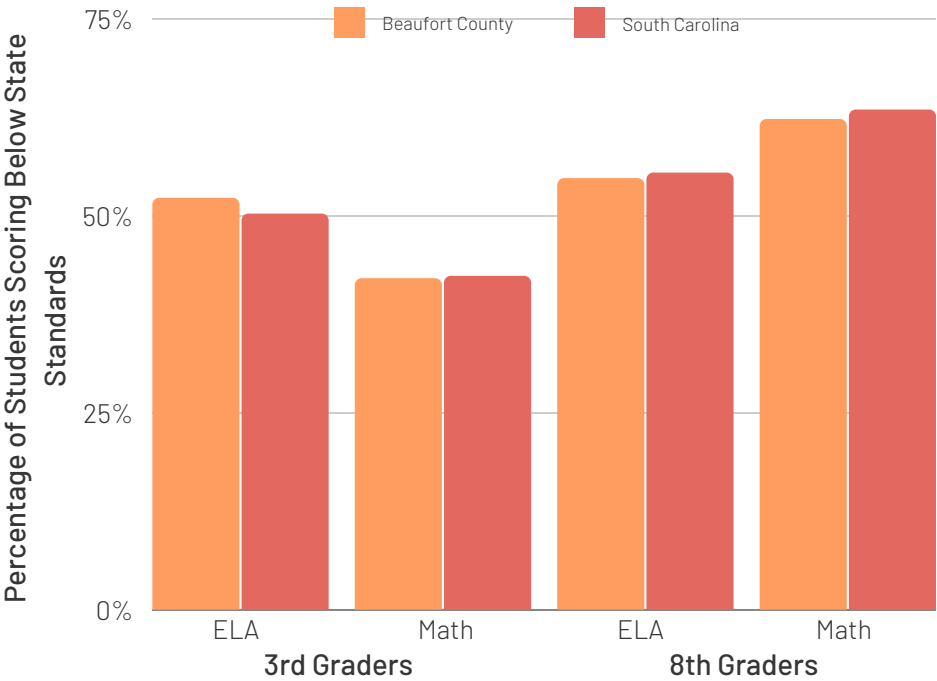
Source: Based on data from the South Carolina Department of Education, 2019-2020.

Beaufort County is below the state of South Carolina across all domains of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, meaning there are improvements to be made. Strengthening early learning education programs, like preschool programs, could improve kindergarteners' preparedness and increase the percentage of student demonstrating a readiness to learn.

Students Testing Below State Standards for SC READY

The South Carolina College- and Career- Ready Assessments (SC READY) program is a statewide assessment in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics that is administered to students in grades 3-8, all of which are required to participate in the assessment unless they qualify for the South Carolina Alternative Assessment (South Carolina Department of Education).

Figure 41: Students Testing Below State Standards for SC READY State Test



Source: Based on data from Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010-2019.

The percentage of students testing below state standards for the SC READY is an area of concern. From 3rd grade to 8th grade, we see an overall increase in students testing below state standards. Over 50% of students within the 8th grade are scoring below state standards in both ELA (54.7%) and mathematics (62.2%).

Low test scores have been linked to over-testing in students; therefore, implementing a Testing Action Plan would be beneficial to ensuring that students in Beaufort County are not over-testing (U.S. Department of Education 2015). Additionally, breaking down these statistics further to identify potential racial disparities in students scoring below state standards would allow for assistance to be targeted to specific groups of students.

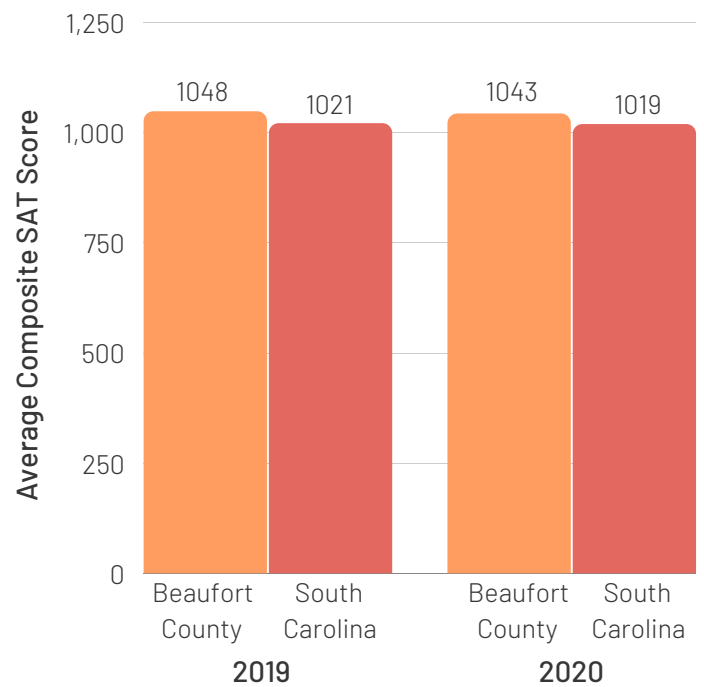
Average SAT and ACT Scores

In Beaufort County and the state of South Carolina, a decrease in the average SAT and ACT scores is observed between the years of 2019 and 2020. As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 Pandemic created a situation in which many students were not required to take standardized tests such as these. In this case, there could be a difference in the number of students taking the test in 2019 and 2020. However, in both years, Beaufort County students score slightly higher than the state average on the SAT and slightly below the state average on the ACT.

In Figure 42, the average composite SAT score for Beaufort County is 1048 in 2019 and 1043 in 2020. In Figure 43, the average composite ACT score for Beaufort County is 18.7 in 2019 and 17.7 in 2020.

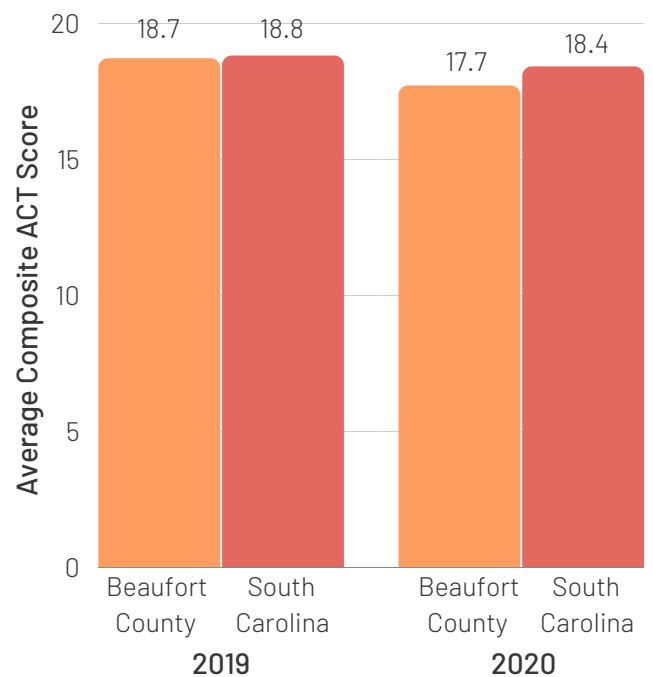
With these test scores playing a role in the admission qualifications for colleges and universities, efforts should be made to set these students up to receive the best scores they can.

Figure 42: 2019-2020 Average SAT Scores



Source: Based on data from South Carolina Department of Education, SAT Data.

Figure 43: 2019-2020 Average ACT Scores

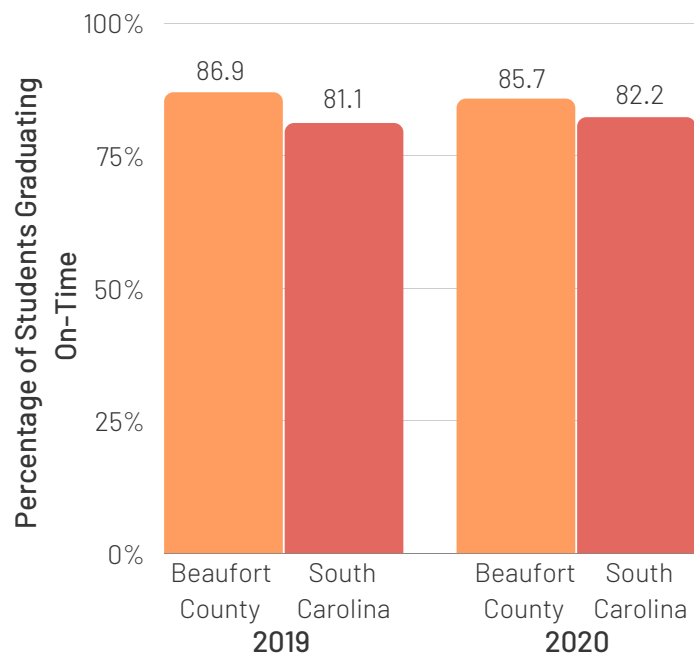


Source: Based on data from South Carolina Department of Education, ACT Data.

Graduation Rates

Beaufort County School District saw a 1.2% decrease in graduation rate from 2019 to 2020, which could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, South Carolina saw a 1.1% increase in graduation rate between 2019 and 2020. The most recent graduation rate nationwide comes from the school year 2017-2018 and was 85%.

Figure 44: On-Time Graduation Rate



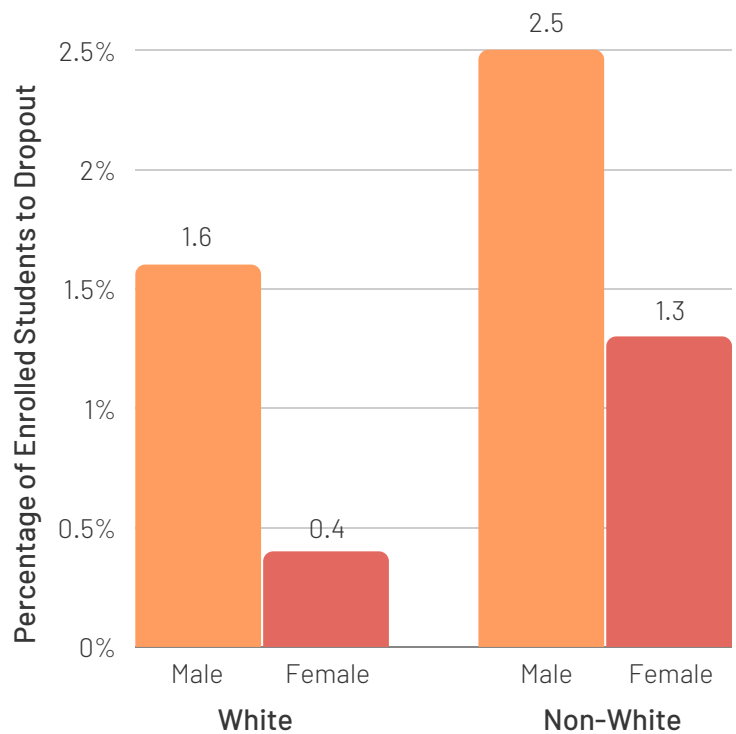
Source: Based on data from South Carolina Department of Education, SC School Report Card.

Racial Disparities in Dropout Rates and Educational Attainment

Of the 6,456 students enrolled in grades 9-12 in Beaufort County School District, 56% are non-white (3,643 students) and 44% are white (2,813 students). There is a significant racial disparity in dropout rates among the grade 9-12 students. Non-white males are far more likely to dropout than non-white females, white males, and white females. 18% of people in Beaufort County who have not completed high school live below the poverty line. Efforts must be focused on supporting the education of non-white males in the Beaufort County School District in order to decrease the number of non-white males dropping out.

The racial disparities seen in Beaufort County School District dropout rates are likely contributing to the racial disparity in overall educational attainment. U.S. News calculates a racial disparity in educational attainment score. This score reflects the relative difference or disparity across racial and ethnic groups in attainment of a bachelor’s degree or higher by adults 25 and older. A higher score on a scale of zero to 1 reflects more disparity.

Figure 45: Beaufort County District Dropout Rate for Grade 9-12

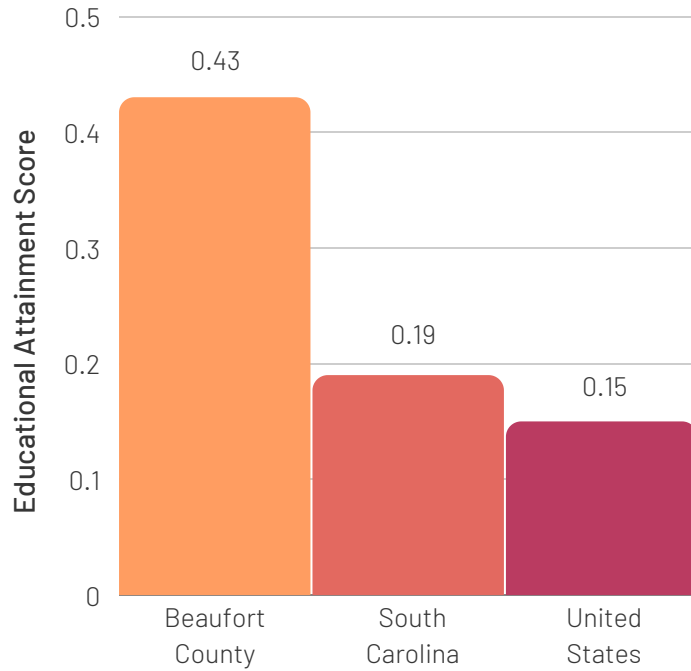


Source: Based on data from South Carolina Department of Education, Dropout Data, 2018-2019.

Beaufort County has a racial disparity in education attainment score of .43, which is over twice that of South Carolina (.19) and the United States (.15). U.S. News also calculates a score based on Beaufort County’s “peer group,” which is a group of similar counties in terms of their urban-rural status as tied to population density and the robustness of their economies. The racial disparity in educational attainment score for similar counties to Beaufort County is .19, still significantly lower than Beaufort County’s score. This indicates that the racial disparity in Bachelor’s degree attainment in Beaufort County is significantly larger than the state average, the national average, and in counties with similar populations and economies (U.S. News).

Similarly, Beaufort County also shows a high disparity in educational attainment based on neighborhood. U.S. News calculates a score to reflect the relative difference or disparity in attainment of a bachelor’s degree or higher by adults 25 and older across census block groups. A higher value reflects more disparity. Beaufort County’s score is 20.5, compared to South Carolina’s score of 18.44 and the United States’ score of 9.23.

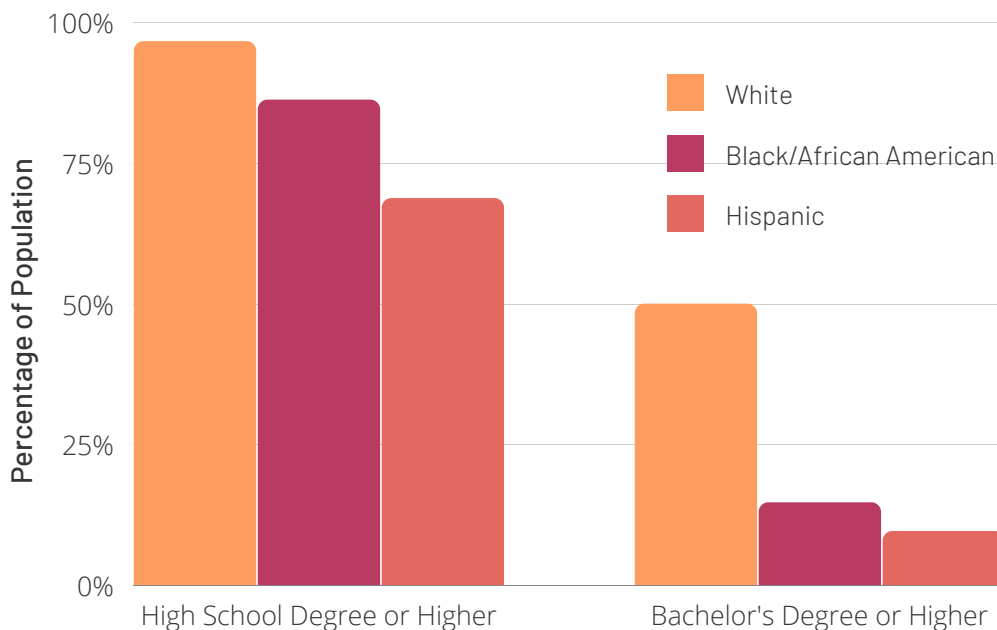
Figure 46: Racial Disparities in Educational Attainment



Source: Based on data from U.S. News, 2020.

The level of education that a person has significantly impacts their income. Having such uneven levels of education among ethnic and racial groups has serious implications for Beaufort County. As seen in the chart below, only 14.7% of the African American population and 9.6% of the Hispanic population have attained a Bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 50% of the White population.

Figure 47: Level of Education by Race



Source: Based on data from ACS, 2019.

Recommendations

Health

- **Ensure the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.** Communities of color are being vaccinated at much lower rates than the white population in Beaufort County. The county should work to ensure that vaccines are available to all residents.
- **Increase activity programs for children and older adults.** Offering physical activities in group settings encourages personal interactions, regular attendance and community involvement. Such programs are likely to improve mental and physical health, reduce isolation, and improve an individual's overall quality of life (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).
- **Increase competitive pricing for healthy foods.** Competitive pricing for healthy foods assigns higher costs to non-nutritious foods, and can include incentives, subsidies, or discounts for healthy foods. This can be implemented in schools, worksites, grocery stores, and other food retail outlets. This is likely to lead to an increase in healthy food sales leading to an increase in health food consumption (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).
- **Create safe opportunities for physical activity.** Ensuring spaces are safe opportunities for physical activity can include increasing street lighting, increasing sidewalk coverage and connectivity, improving bicycling infrastructure, and implementing traffic calming measures. The increased sense of safety can create an environment in which people are more likely to participate in outdoor physical activities (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).
- **Create individually-adapted programs to teach lifelong behavioral skills.** These programs help participants incorporate physical activity into their daily routines that align with their personal interests. As a result, physical activity and physical fitness are increased which can lead to an improvement in mental health and weight status (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).

Health (continued)

- **Increase breath testing checkpoints.** Breath testing checkpoints are used to stop drivers and assess their level of alcohol impairment. Increasing the number of checkpoints can lead to a reduction in impaired driving, alcohol-related crashes, and injuries (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).
- **Enhance enforcement of laws prohibiting alcohol sales to minors.** This can be done by increasing the frequency of retailer compliance checks, which are typically conducted by law enforcement. Violators receive legal or administrative sanctions. The goal is to reduce underage alcohol purchases (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).
- **Limit the concentration of alcohol outlined by area or by populations through licensing or zoning regulations.** These restrictions can apply to on-premise settings, such as bars and restaurants, or off-premise settings, such as liquor stores. Approaches can include regulated alcohol retail licencing, implementing minimum distances between alcohol outlets or from schools, and maximum number of licenses per area. All aim to regulate the concentration of alcohol outlets to reduce excessive drinking (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).
- **Increase support for federally qualified health centers (FQHCs).** These are non-profit healthcare organizations that receive federal funding to deliver comprehensive care to the uninsured, underinsured, and vulnerable populations regardless of their ability to pay (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).

Social Wellbeing

- **Support housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs to repair and improve households by removing health or safety hazards.** Such programs primarily serve families with low to median incomes and provide funding to repair, improve, or modernize homes while removing hazards from them. The focus is to improve housing conditions, health outcomes, and neighborhood quality and stability (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).

Social Wellbeing (continued)

- **Fast track permits for affordable housing.** Creating a fast track permitting for affordable housing can be an incentive for developers to create more affordable housing. To a business time is money, so if enough time can be saved, creating affordable housing can become profitable.
- **Reduce the amount of property crimes within Beaufort County, with a specific focus on addressing the City of Beaufort.** The City of Beaufort has the lowest crime index (9) of all the cities found within Beaufort County, meaning it has the highest crime rate (Neighborhood Scout). There is evidence to suggest that property crime can be prevented significantly by situational crime prevention. Strategies like this would include increasing formal surveillance using electronic alarms, CCTV, or private security patrols; improving street lighting and increasing natural surveillance by removing obstacles to line of sight; restricting access to tools of the crime (like spray paints); and reducing provocation. Most crime prevention initiatives will combine and evaluate more than one of these strategies at a time in order to be most effective (Levy, Santhakumaran, & Whitecross).
- **Identify food deserts in Beaufort County and increase their access to health7 food options.** Food banks and food pantries should be placed in areas that are lacking necessary resources. Additional meal-provider partners can serve as points of outreach for federal nutrition programs and other benefits that serve to help stabilize low-income families (Ratcliffe et al.).
- **Construct and fund community garden programs.** Research has shown that community gardening programs can reduce food insecurity and improve dietary intake (Carney et al. 2013).

Economy

- **Establish locally mandated living wages that are higher than minimum wage levels.** A living wage is a locally mandated wage that is higher than state or federal minimum wage levels. Living wage laws are meant to reduce poverty by increasing the earnings of individuals (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).

Economy (continued)

- Support child care subsidy programs to provide assistance to working parents by covering the cost of childcare. These programs provide financial assistance to working parents or parents attending school to pay for childcare services. This allows for parents to increase their employment and earnings by having an increase in access to childcare (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps).
- Expand Inclusionary Zoning in key locations. Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) requires developers to set aside a certain amount of space to create housing units and typically has restrictions in place to keep the sale of these units at affordable prices.
- Create Community Land Trusts. Community Land Trusts (CLT) are non-profit organizations that purchase land to lease to middle and lower income families. CLT's separate the land and the buildings on them. When a family leaves the home, they are required to sell the home back to the CLT or another family that qualifies at affordable market rates.
- Increase advertisement for job training programs. Human Capital Theory suggests that people acquiring more skills will inherently increase their value in the marketplace which can lead to an increase in hourly pay (Office of the Assistant for Planning and Evaluation 2002). Beaufort County already has job training programs, so the goal needs to be getting more people to use the resources around them.
- Diversify the current economy. Beaufort County has a higher percentage of employees in the service industry when compared to SC and the US. This left Beaufort County at the mercy of the lockdowns of 2020. The areas Beaufort County can further diversify their economy is in Management, Business, Science, Art, Production, Transportation & Material Moving. Attracting companies or assisting start ups with these types of jobs will be the most direct way to diversifying the economy of Beaufort County.

Environment

- Identify areas of improvement in domestic water use, atmospheric deposition, and drought. These aspects of the water domain are not addressed by water quality reports and could be contributing to the lower environmental quality as calculated by the EPA.
- Support cleaner modes of transportation (biking, walking, using public transit, etc.). This can help reduce the amount of emissions being released into the atmosphere which can help improve air quality over time (Freed 2018).
- Update the Hazard Mitigation Plan. The most recent Hazard Mitigation Plan for Beaufort County was for 2015; therefore, it is imperative that this plan be updated. Hazard mitigation planning reduces the loss of life and property by minimizing the impact of disasters on communities (FEMA).
- Apply for FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grants. Funding plays a significant role in a local government's ability to mitigate hazards. These federal grants can help fund hazard mitigation efforts (FEMA).
- Implement recommendations in Beaufort County's Greenprint Plan. Beaufort County's Greenprint Plan promotes ecological health and cultural landscape preservation within the county. Many of the recommendations outlined in this plan connect with recommendations from other county plans (Comprehensive Plan, Stormwater Management Plan) and address concerns brought to attention in this indicator report. We recommend prioritizing strategies that are focused on resiliency to prepare Beaufort County for the impact of potential hazards (Beaufort County, Greenprint Plan).

Education

- **Strengthen early education programs.** Focus on improving preschool programs to help better prepare students for kindergarten.
- **Evaluate potential ethnic and racial disparities in SC READY scores.** Test scores that assess academic achievement, such as reading and mathematics, as well as graduation and dropout rates can be indicators of ethnic and racial disparities in education (American Psychological Association 2012). African-American, American Indian, Latino and Southeast Asian groups have been found to underperform academically in relation to Caucasian and other Asian-American groups (American Psychological Association 2012). Understanding the racial breakdown of the students testing below state standards will identify where targeted efforts need to be made to improve student's academic performance.
- **Implement Individualized instruction and a mentoring/tutoring program.** These programs can facilitate a personalized learning environment that takes into account each student's respective needs to ensure their success (National Dropout Prevention Center).
- **Develop a Testing Action Plan.** Over-testing can contribute to low test scores. Implementing a plan to ensure that students are not over-testing could decrease the percentage of students testing below state standards (U.S. Department of Education 2015).

Final Remarks

The survey mentioned earlier in the report highlighted how having too many non-profit organizations can lead not only to an inefficient system overall, but to confusion on the part of clients and donors.

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