GREENWOOD COUNTY FIRST STEPS

Getting children ready for school.

Needs and Resources Assessment

February 2023

**Prepared by
ISI Consulting**

Message from the Executive Director

Greenwood County First Steps uses an innovative and creative approach to ensure every dollar received by Greenwood County First Steps is used to its maximum potential. It can be extremely challenging to pinpoint exactly where enhancements are needed. So when you're faced with multiple areas of opportunity, a needs analysis can help identify the best areas for improvement. By Conducting this Needs and Resource Assessment we are able to better identify areas within our organization that may need improvement. Greenwood County First Steps' goal is to offer children and families of Greenwood County comprehensive services for school success.

-Santasha S. Highley

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Executive Director

Greenwood County First Steps

Executive Summary

The Greenwood County First Steps responded to the needs of the families and organizations working "collaboratively to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential with engaged support from their parents, caregivers, and communities." The Needs Assessment was created to serve as a key reference document for Greenwood County First Steps, and other partners implementing data-driven changes to promote school readiness.

The 2023 Needs Assessment was fully funded by the Greenwood County First Steps and would not have been possible without the help of key individuals and organizations. It is our hope that the findings from this Needs Assessment will assist leadership in identifying windows of opportunity and stewarding resources.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected as part of this two-month process from January to February 2023. Detailed analysis of well-being indicators (income and poverty, education, overall-wellbeing, health, teen childbearing, child maltreatment, adverse childhood experiences, affordable housing, and food environment) provide insight into trends occurring over the last seven to ten years. In addition, three key informant interviews with content experts were conducted and six interviews were conducted with mothers and educators to identify root causes of issues that have been identified.

The complexity and nuance of issues surrounding kindergarten readiness and disparities in educational, developmental and health outcomes for children, require systems-thinking and a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Seven individuals met on February 17, 2023 to review the Needs Assessment and determine priorities.

The priorities that emerged from this Needs Assessment include:

- Strengthen relationships with schools, day cares, colleges and community health organizations and create regular feedback loops for quality improvement *(Indicator: Number of meetings and partnership agreements)*

- Focus efforts on the teen population (teen dropouts and pregnant teens) *(Indicator: Evaluation data from teen grant)*

- Build trust among Hispanic families *(Indicator: Number of Hispanic families served)*

- Develop parent and child goal setting to promote emotionally healthy individuals *(Indicator: Number of goal documents created)*

Based on these priorities, the following next steps will be taken.

- Develop a three-year strategic plan based off the Needs Assessment with clear priorities and detailed strategies that can be tracked over time.

- Create action teams which include Greenwood County First Steps team members, Board members, community partners and volunteers.

- Select two to three key performance indicators to track regularly to see if progress is being made.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Primary Wellbeing Predictors

Primary wellbeing indicators, or "root cause indicators" are those factors that drive and predict multiple related outcomes in wellbeing. The primary root causes of poor outcomes for children are low income, poverty, undereducation, and lack of opportunity to thrive. These factors are difficult to tease apart in a "chicken or egg" manner, and typically most of these factors exist together, resulting in "deprivation amplification".

Income and Poverty

Insufficient income, such that wealth cannot be built and transmitted generation to generation, drives poverty. Poverty is a multifaceted concept which may also include social, economic, and political elements. At its most basic, poverty is the scarcity or lack of material possessions or money. However, full understanding of poverty requires consideration of asset poverty, an economic and social condition that is more persistent and prevalent than income poverty. Even when income is sufficient to get by, there is frequently the inability to access and build wealth resources such as homeownership, savings, stocks, and business assets. In this case, assets are unavailable to support basic needs in cases of emergency and are unavailable to pass on to children for intergenerational wealth-building. Children, especially, are vulnerable to the effects of poverty. Children who live in poverty often experience chronic, toxic stress that disrupts the architecture of the developing brain, resulting in lifelong difficulties in learning, memory, and self-regulation, and poor health outcomes in adulthood. Children in poverty are much more likely to experience exposure to violence, chronic neglect, and the accumulated and synergistic burdens of economic hardship, or "deprivation amplification".

Income

Median family income, that measure where half of the income falls above and half below, is a good reflection of the average income in a place, since it controls for outlier data (very low or very high incomes). The follow graph demonstrates that for families with children in Greenwood County, median income is significantly below the South Carolina average. Moreover, income has decreased over several years, and the gap between Greenwood County and the state average has widened.

Median Family Income for Families With Children
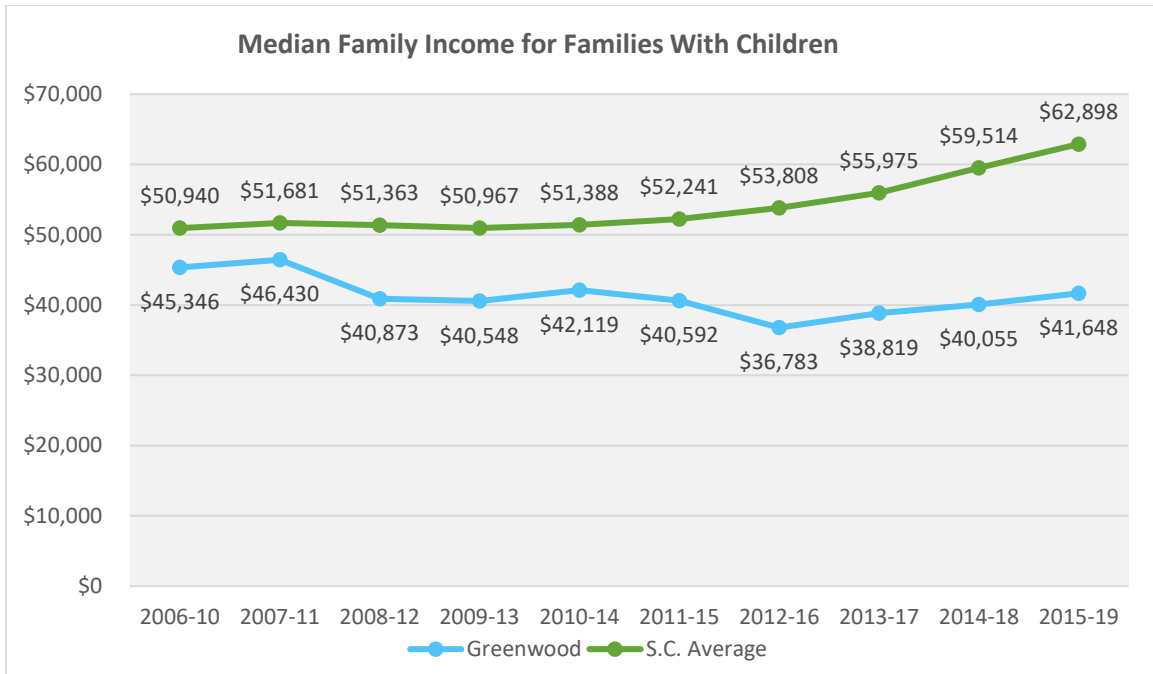

U.S. Census and Kids Count Data Center

Poverty Rates

Poverty rates can (and should) be examined at several levels: individual poverty, family poverty, household poverty, child poverty, and levels of poverty. Poverty metrics should also be disaggregated by race since Black and Hispanic residents have significantly higher poverty rates.

As of 2021, 11,454 residents of Greenwood County (17.1% of the county population) live below Federal Poverty Level (FPL), including 4,583 (29.4%) of the county's children. Both of these rates are higher than the state averages of 14.5% for all residents and 20.8% for children.

Children in Poverty

In most geographies, poverty rates for children are higher than poverty rates for the general population. In Greenwood County, the poverty rate for children has been significantly above the average for the state's children for the last seven years.

Percentage Children Under Age 18 Living Below FPL (5-year average estimates)
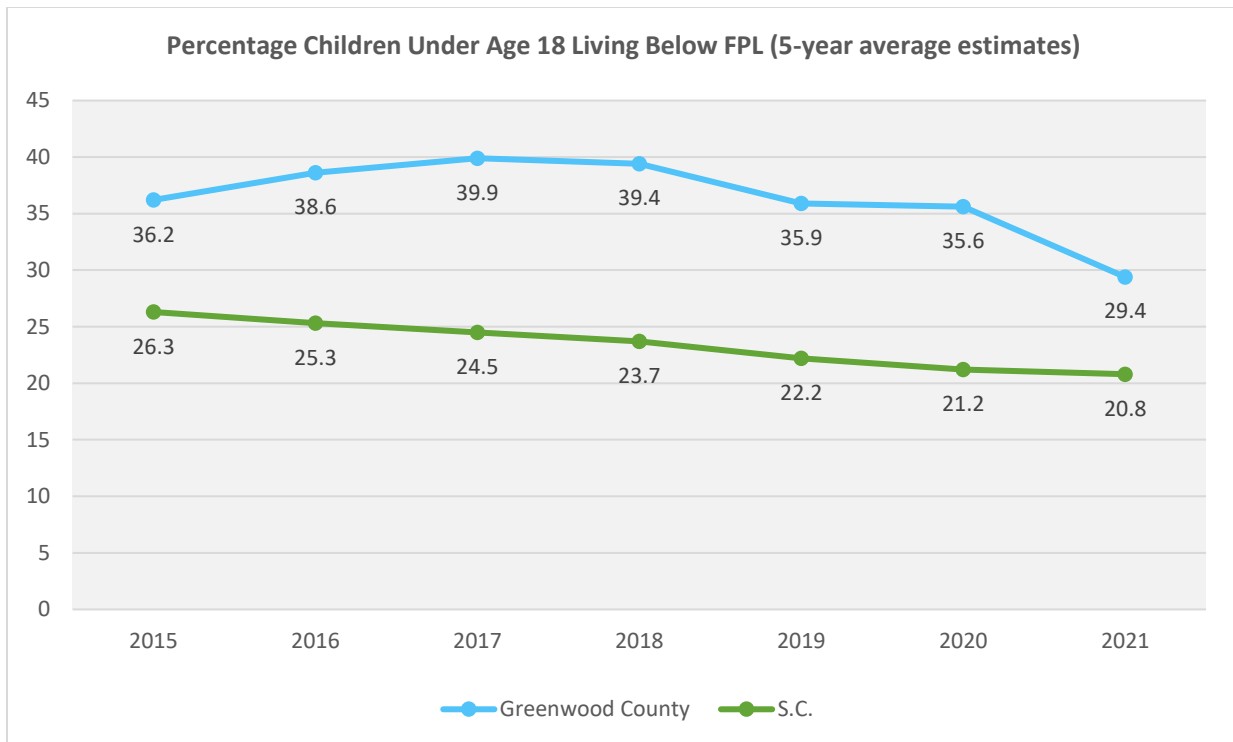
Source: U.S. Census S1701

Children Living in Areas of Concentrated Poverty

Aggregated poverty data do not show how poverty is distributed across geographies. In the report *The Enduring Challenge of Concentrated Poverty in America,*[1] the Federal Reserve and the Brookings Institution studied communities where poverty is geographically concentrated at rates of 40% and above, finding that concentrated poverty is nuanced from place to place, and that place matters. There are common themes across all communities struggling with concentrated poverty: lack of human capital development, high rates of unemployment, and inadequate housing.
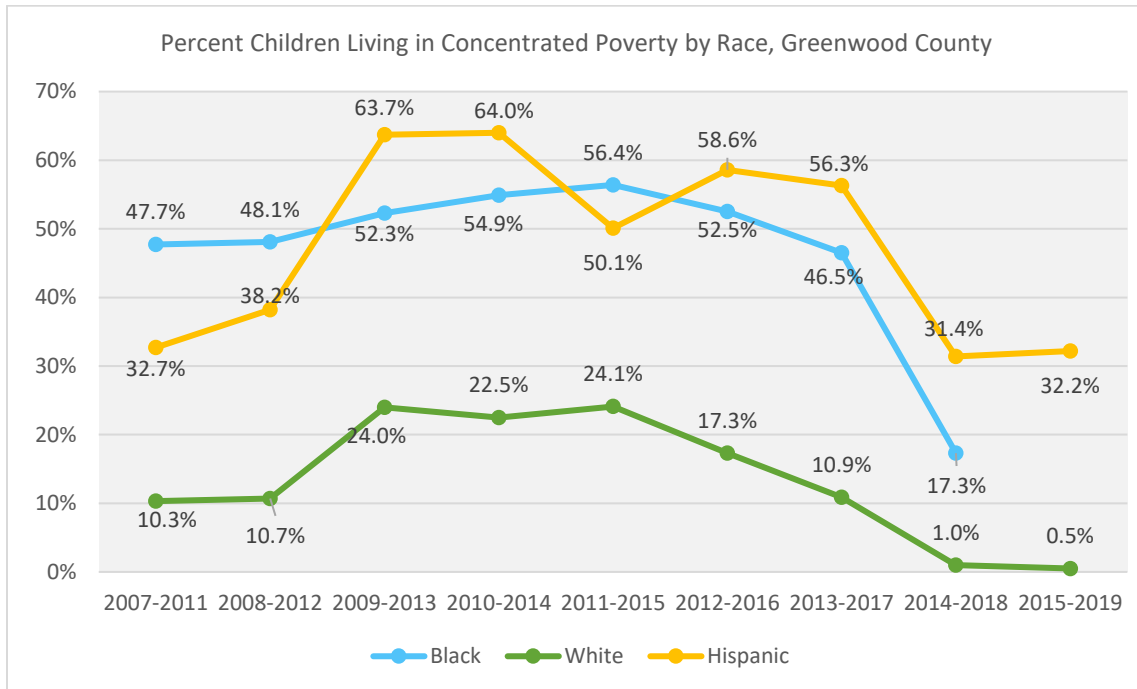
A large middle class is one of the five predictors of communities with good social and economic mobility. Large disparities in income, or income inequality, means that there is a small middle class in a given community. When children live to adulthood in communities with income inequality, lifetime earnings potential is low, and the cycle of poverty endures. Conversely, *t*he literature shows that multiple benefits derive from mixed income housing developments and income-diverse neighborhoods,[2] including safer environments, access to more and improved services, good quality housing, and neighborhood amenities. In addition, as low-income neighborhoods become more economically diverse, poverty is alleviated,

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[1] Federal Reserve and the Brookings Institution. "The Enduring Challenge of Concentrated Poverty in America: Case Studies from Communities Across the U.S." (2008). http://www.frbsf.org/cpreport/
[2] https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/27116/412292-Effects-from-Living-in-Mixed-Income-Communities-for-Low-Income-Families.PDF

property values increase, and residents demonstrate an increased tolerance of diversity for neighbors of all *incomes.*

To provide an accurate picture, these data must be disaggregated by race. The data reported in the following graph show that in Greenwood County, Black and Hispanic children are significantly more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty, compared to White children. This trend is consistent over time, although somewhat variable.

Percent Children Living in Concentrated Poverty by Race, Greenwood County

Year	Black	White	Hispanic
2007-2011	47.7%	10.3%	32.7%
2008-2012	48.1%	10.7%	38.2%
2009-2013	52.3%	24.0%	63.7%
2010-2014	54.9%	22.5%	64.0%
2011-2015	56.4%	24.1%	50.1%
2012-2016	52.5%	17.3%	58.6%
2013-2017	46.5%	10.9%	56.3%
2014-2018	17.3%	1.0%	31.4%
2015-2019	0.5%		32.2%

Source: Kids Count Data Center

Education

Education has multiple purposes but is always at the foundation of societies characterized by economic wealth, social prosperity, and political stability. Education strengthens democracy by providing citizens the tools that allow them to participate in the governance process. It is an integrative force to foster social cohesion and supports critical thinking, skill development, and life-long knowledge acquisition. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between education attainment and earnings, income, and wealth; the more education an individual has (on average) the higher the income.

The Children's Trust of South Carolina ranks Greenwood County 17th among the state's 46 counties for overall education in 2020.

Education Attainment

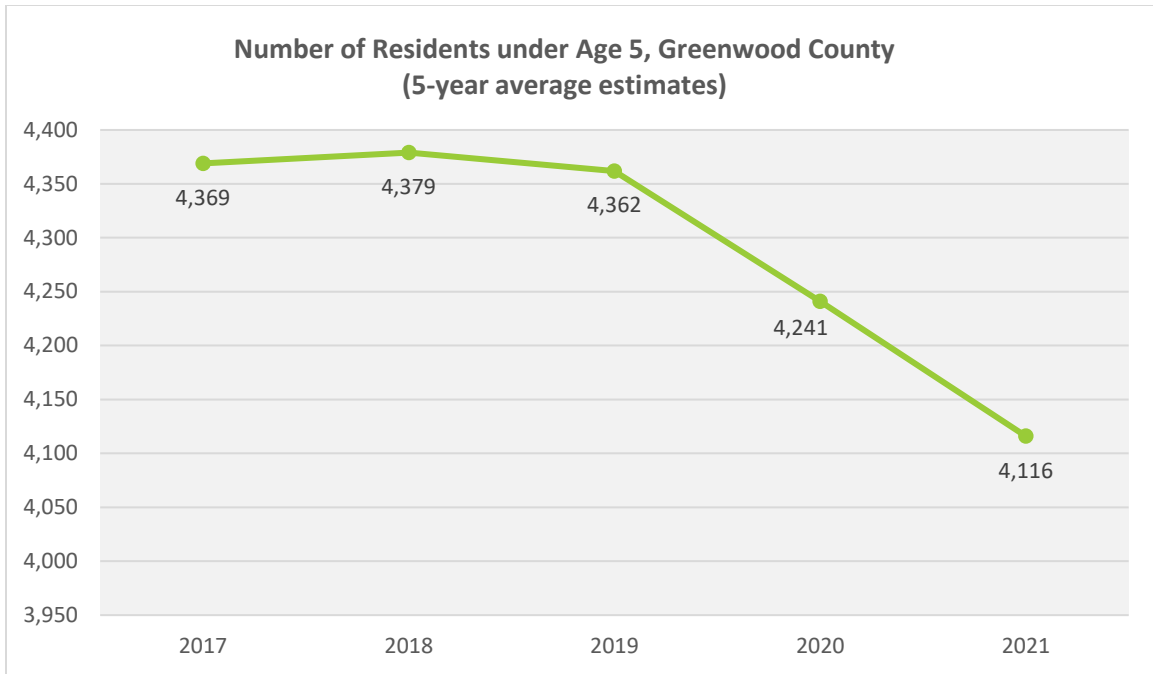The future demands higher education attainment of the local workforce if our cities and counties are to be economically competitive. Obtaining a post-secondary credential of some kind is critical to opportunity and positive life outcomes. Compared to the state average, residents of Greenwood County have lower education attainment at the bachelor's degree and above level. Also, a higher percentage of residents in Greenwood County failed to graduate from high school.

Percent Residents Age 25+ by Level of Education, 2021 (5-year averages)

	Greenwood County	S.C.
Graduate Degree	8.2	10
Bachelor Degree	15.3	17.4
Associate Degree	11.7	9.6
Some College	17.7	20.6
H.S. Only	30.8	29.5
Less than H.S.	16.3	12.9

Legend: Less than H.S. ■ H.S. Only ■ Some College ■ Associate Degree ■ Bachelor Degree ■ Graduate Degree
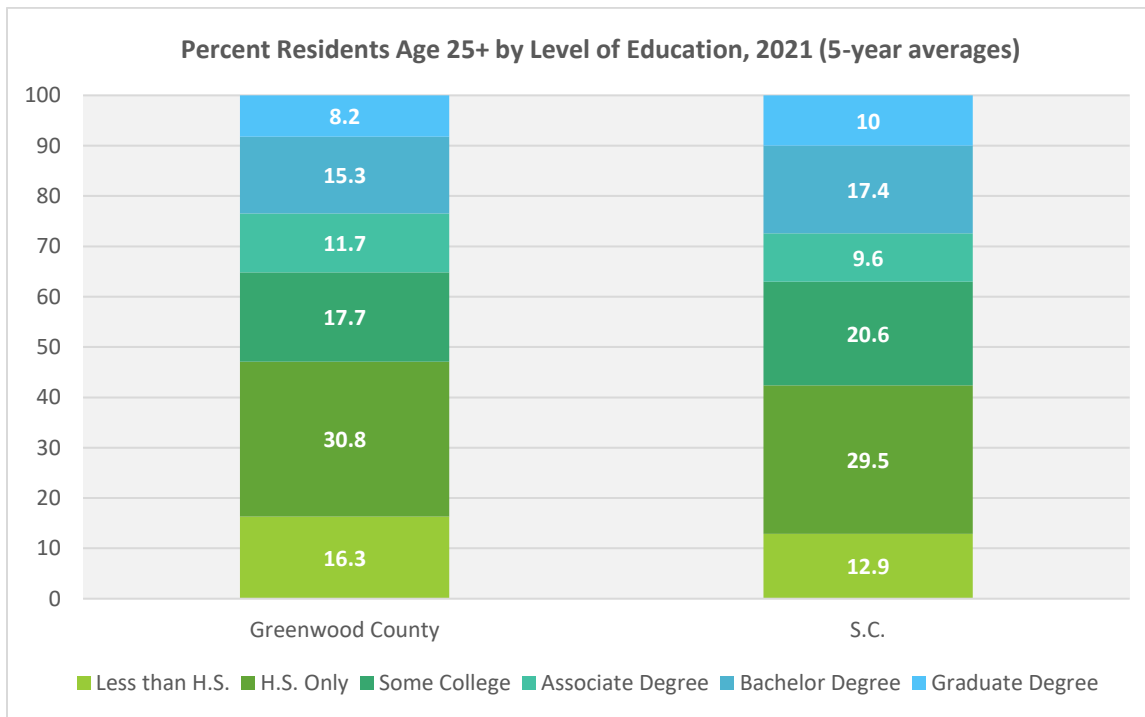
Source: U.S. Census S1501

Daycares

According to SC Department of Social Services, there are 24 licensed or registered childcare facilities in Greenwood County. These include licensed and approved childcare centers, registered faith-based centers, licensed group childcare homes, licensed or registered family childcare homes. The total capacity of these centers is 2,424 children.

**Number of Residents under Age 5, Greenwood County
(5-year average estimates)**

4,369	4,379	4,362	4,241	4,116
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021

Source: US Census DP05

School Readiness

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

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

Compared to the state average, two of Greenwood County's school districts slightly exceed the state average for overall readiness to learn in terms of foundational skills and behaviors that prepare students for instruction. Several other districts hover near the state average. The following table disaggregates this metric for readiness to learn across several domains - language and literacy, mathematics, social foundation, and physical wellbeing. Some of these data are concerning.

Percentage of Students enrolling in Kindergarten and Demonstrating Readiness to Learn, 2021-2022 by District					
	Overall	*Language and Literacy*	*Mathematics*	*Social Foundation*	*Physical Wellbeing*
Greenwood District 50	24.1	13.8	19.0	55.2	47.7
Greenwood District 51	36.1	29.5	26.2	41.0	54.1
Greenwood District 52	36.9	39.8	38.8	37.9	43.7
S.C. Average	*36.0*	*29.8*	*28.1*	*52.2*	*51.5*

Source: SC DOE School Report Cards

Academic Achievement

South Carolina Department of Education monitors academic achievement across the spectrum of grades and via a variety of instruments. The SC Ready assessments for English Language Arts (reading and writing) and Mathematics are administered in grades 3,4,5,6,7, and 8. Academic performance in the elementary years is predictive of ongoing achievement, graduation from high school, and enrollment in post-secondary education.

Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is a crucial marker in a child's educational development. Failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school dropout, which suppresses individual earning potential as well as the nation's competitive-ness and general productivity. Currently, 66.5% of Greenwood County third graders are below standards in reading, above the state average of almost 58%. Over time, Greenwood County students haven't fared as well on this measure compared to the state average.

Percentage of 3rd Graders Testing Below Standards in English / Language Arts (on SC READY)					
	2015-2016	**2016-2017**	**2017-2018**	**2018-2019**	**2020-2021**
Greenwood	61.2	62.1	60.8	58.5	66.5
S.C.	56.3	57.9	54.9	50.2	56.7

Source: Kids Count Data Center

Mathematical performance at the 8th grade is also a critical metric. If a child has received relevant mathematics training and performed well by eighth grade, that child will have a higher likelihood of going to college and will likely be more successful in high school, college, and careers beyond. Currently, 73% of Greenwood County eighth grade students fall below standards in math, above the state average of 70%. Greenwood County does not fare well on this metric over time, compared to the state average.
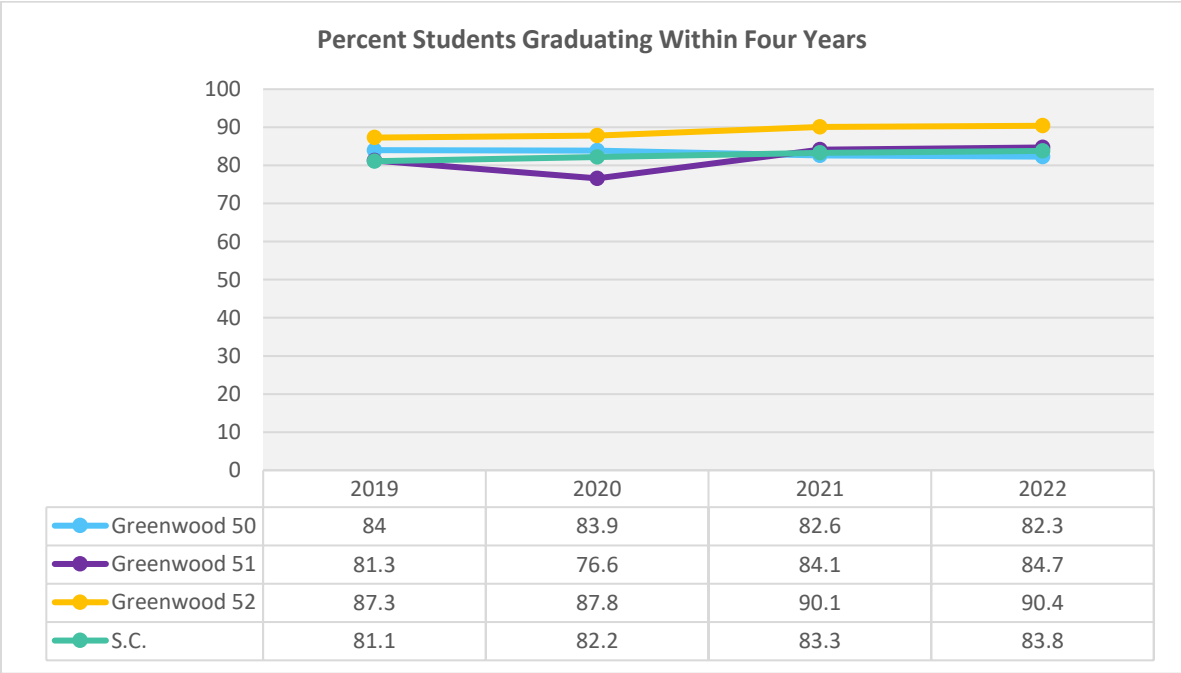
Percentage of 8th Graders Testing Below Standards in Math (on SC READY)					
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2020-2021
Greenwood	73.3	70.2	65.7	68.6	73.1
S.C.	67.6	65.5	63.4	63.4	69.3

Source: Kids Count Data Center

These data and many other academic achievement data, disaggregated for each school district across the state, can be found in the SC Department of Education School Report Cards.

On-Time Graduation

Students who graduate on time – earning a standard high school diploma in four years – are more likely to continue their education at the post-secondary level. Historically, Greenwood School District 52 has a higher four-year graduation rate than the state average. The other two Greenwood School Districts vary around the state average.

Percent Students Graduating Within Four Years

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Greenwood 50	84	83.9	82.6	82.3
Greenwood 51	81.3	76.6	84.1	84.7
Greenwood 52	87.3	87.8	90.1	90.4
S.C.	81.1	82.2	83.3	83.8

Source: SC DOE Report Cards

Generally, when time graduation rates are disaggregated by student demographic, Whites and non-economically disadvantaged students graduate on-time at higher rates, compared to economically disadvantaged, Black, and Hispanic students.

Drop out and Teen Idleness

The 2020 South Carolina Child Well-Being Data Profile, produced by the Children's Trust of South Carolina,[3] ranks Greenwood County as 8th of the state's 46 counties for dropout (#1 is best). The latest data show that there were 0.9% dropouts of the total enrollment for grades 9-12 in Greenwood County in 2018-2019. The state average is 1.9%.

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

The percentage of teens who are not enrolled in school and not high school has improved in Greenwood County since 2007, but it remains significantly above the state average.

Percent Teens age 16-19 Not Enrolled in School and Not a High School Graduate									
	2007-2011	2008-2012	2009-2013	2010-2014	2011-2015	2012-2016	2013-2017	2014-2018	2015-2019
Greenwood	15.5	11.5	11.1	10.9	6.8	9.8	9.7	7.3	7.5
S.C.	6.8	6.0	5.8	5.4	5.0	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.0

Source: Kids Count Data Center

The percentage of "idle" teens in Greenwood County shows a similar improving trend but is still currently above the state average.

Percent Teens age 16-19 Not Attending School and Not Working									
	2007-2011	2008-2012	2009-2013	2010-2014	2011-2015	2012-2016	2013-2017	2014-2018	2015-2019
Greenwood	15.2	11.4	9.7	9.9	8.8	8.7	8.1	8.0	8.9
S.C.	9.1	9.1	9.3	8.7	8.5	7.8	7.1	6.9	6.9

Source: Kids Count Data Center

Opportunity

Where a child grows up in the US has a major impact on his or her financial future. Economic mobility has significant relevance for communities of color since they tend to have the lowest income and fewest opportunities to move up on the economic ladder. In their recent Equality of Opportunity Project[18], three Harvard economists used "big data" to map upward mobility across the country. The results showed wide variation among the nation's cities and counties in intergenerational mobility, leading the researchers to conclude that some areas provide significantly more opportunity for children to move out of poverty, and
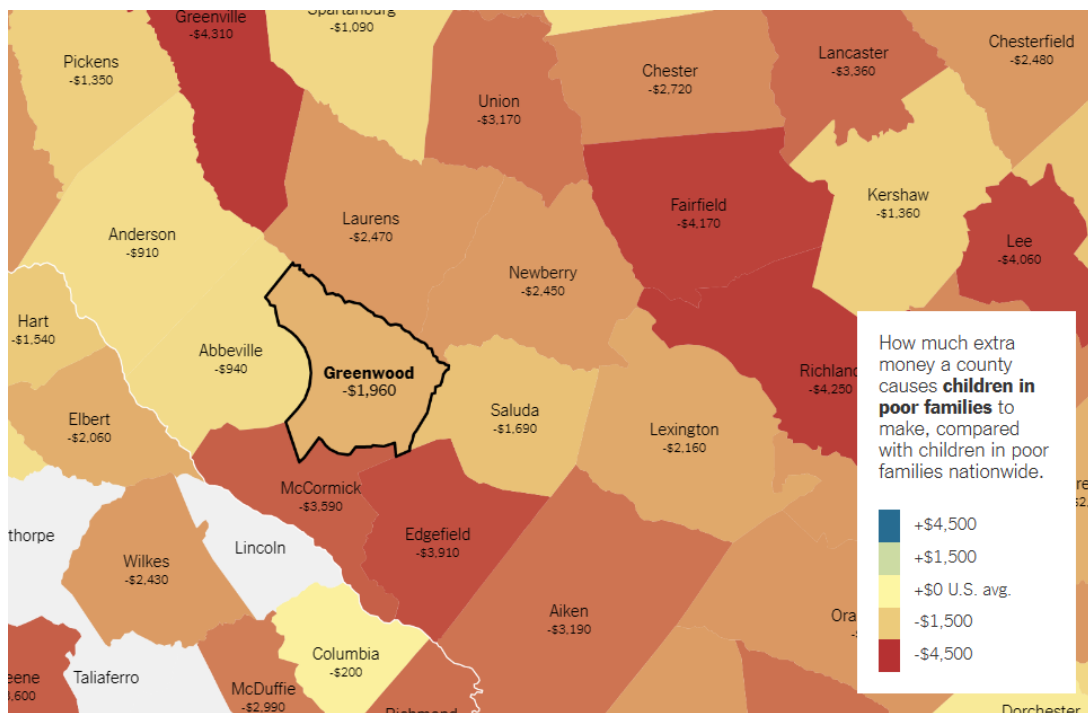
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[3] 2020 South Carolina Child Well-Being Data Profiles. https://scchildren.org/resources/kids-count-south-carolina/child-well-being-data-county-profiles/

other areas offer children few opportunities for escape. Where children are raised has a significant impact on their chances of moving up economically. The research found that communities with high levels of upward mobility tend to have five characteristics:

- lower levels of residential segregation by race

- a larger middle class (lower levels of income inequality)

- stronger families and more two-parent households

- greater social capital

- higher quality public schools

The latest calculations and comparisons of the 2,478 counties in the U.S. show that South Carolina counties rank among the lowest in the country for chances of upward mobility for poor children. Greenwood County is considered to be "very bad" in helping poor children up the income ladder. Greenwood County ranks 321st worst out of 2,478 U.S. counties, better than about only 13% of counties for opportunity for poor children to break out of poverty.

If a child in a poor family were to grow up in Greenwood County, instead of an average place, he or she would make $1,960 (or 8%) less at age 26.

Source: The Upshot[4]

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

Overall Wellbeing

For overall wellbeing for children, Greenwood County ranks 19th best of the state's 46 counties.

RANK 19

2020 South Carolina Child Well-Being Data Profile

GREENWOOD COUNTY

Children under 18 years of age (2018)

Greenwood County	16,012
South Carolina	1,107,050

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING
DOMAIN RANK 16

Children 0-17 in households with incomes below the poverty level	Children under age 18 whose resident parents are not in the labor force	Owner-occupied housing where household spends at least 30 percent of their income on housing	Teens age 16-19 not enrolled in school and not working
31.0%	**10.1%**	**18.4%**	**8.0%**
South Carolina 22.1%	South Carolina 8.6%	South Carolina 20.4%	South Carolina 6.9%
County Ranking 28	County Ranking 24	County Ranking 17	County Ranking 24
IMPROVED	WORSENED	IMPROVED	IMPROVED
2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018

EDUCATION
DOMAIN RANK 17

Cumulative percent of children failing grades 1, 2, or 3	Third graders testing below state standards in English/Language Arts[1]	Eighth graders testing below state standards in math[1]	Dropouts as a percentage of the total enrollment for grades 9-12
1.1%	**58.5%**	**68.6%**	**0.9%**
South Carolina 1.4%	South Carolina 50.2%	South Carolina 63.4%	South Carolina 1.9%
County Ranking 16	County Ranking 25	County Ranking 24	County Ranking 8
IMPROVED	N/A	N/A	IMPROVED
2018	2018 - 2019	2018 - 2019	2018 - 2019

HEALTH
DOMAIN RANK 16

Low-birthweight babies	Infant mortality rate per 1,000	Child deaths, ages 1-14, rate per 100,000	Teen deaths, ages 15-19 rate per 100,000
9.7%	**8.9**	**15.9**	**42**
South Carolina 9.6%	South Carolina 7.2	South Carolina 19	South Carolina 71.9
County Ranking 17	County Ranking 30	County Ranking 26	County Ranking 12
IMPROVED	IMPROVED	WORSENED	IMPROVED
2018	2018	2018	2018

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY
DOMAIN RANK 27

| Children living in single parent families	Families where householder lacks a high school diploma	Children living in concentrated areas of poverty	Births to teens 15 to 19 years of age, rate per 1,000
50.2%	**14.6%**	**10.0%**	**31.1**
South Carolina 40.3%	South Carolina 10.3%	South Carolina 11.0%	South Carolina 1.6
County Ranking 27	County Ranking 29	County Ranking 25	County Ranking 29
IMPROVED	IMPROVED	IMPROVED	WORSENED
2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2018

Source: Children's trust of SC

Other Wellbeing Indicators

Overall Health

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

Greenwood County is ranked in the higher middle range of counties in South Carolina for health outcomes.

These outcomes include length of life / premature death and various quality of life measures. Greenwood County is ranked among the higher middle range of counties in South Carolina for health factors. These factors include various health behaviors, clinical care factors, social and economic factors, and measures of the physical environment.

Within-State Overall Health Ranking, Greenwood County (2022)	
Health Outcomes	Health factors
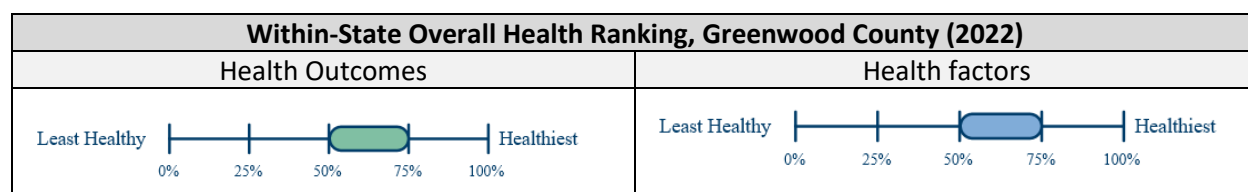
Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

Infant Mortality

Infant mortality is a good measure of population health since it reflects the economic and social conditions that impact health in a community. The United States has the highest maternal and infant mortality rates among comparable developed countries. The current (2022) infant mortality rate in the United States is 5.547 deaths per 1,000 live births. South Carolina is among the states in the US with the highest infant mortality rates, 6.64 per 1,000 live births in 2020, constituting 370 infant deaths in that year.

Because numbers of child deaths within the first year of life are relatively low, especially for sparsely populated geographies, multiple year averages are often used to measure infant mortality. For the combined 2017-2019 period, 21 babies died in their first year of life in Greenwood County, equating to an infant mortality rate of 8.5 per 1,000 live births, higher than the state average rate.

It should be noted that there is a significant racial inequity in this measure. Black infants in the U.S. are more than twice as likely to die as White infants – 10.8 per 1,000 Black babies, compared to 4.6 per 1,000 White babies. This racial inequity is wider than in 1850 and in one year constitutes 4,000 inequitable deaths of Black babies. Education and income do not mitigate this inequity – a Black woman with an advanced degree is more likely to lose her baby in its first year of life than a White woman with less than an eighth-grade education. Disaggregated trend data for infant mortality in Greenwood County and the state averages can be found in the following table. Infant mortality is more than twice as high for Black

babies compared to White babies across South Carolina, and the inequity is even greater in Greenwood County.

		2012-2014	2013-2015	2014-2016	2015-2017	2016-2018	2017-2019
Infant Mortality Rate, * by Race (combined year averages)							
Greenwood County	**Total**	**6.8**	**5.8**	**7.7**	**10.5**	**10.7**	**8.5**
	White	4.4	3.2	4.5	6.4	6.7	5.4
	Black	10.4	10.1	12.8	17.4	16.9	13.1
S.C.	**Total**	**7.0**	**6.8**	**6.8**	**6.8**	**6.9**	**6.8**
	White	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.0	5.0	4.7
	Black	10.7	10.9	10.6	10.5	10.6	11.0

*per 1,000 live births

Source: SC DHEC and Kids Count Data Center

Teen Childbearing

Births to teens have substantial implications for educational and socioeconomic outcomes for the teen mother. Parenthood is the leading reason that teen girls drop out of school. More than 50% of teen mothers never graduate from high school, whereas approximately 90% of teen who do not give birth will graduate from high school. Additionally, less than 2% of teen moms earn a college degree by age 30. Because many teen mothers live in poverty, care for both mother and child can be publicly funded for years, including assistance programs for food, medical care and childcare. In addition, daughters of teen mothers are more likely to become teen mothers themselves, creating cyclical poverty over generations.[5]

For the combined years 2014-2020, there were 30 teen births per 1,000 females in Greenwood County age 15-19. Disaggregated by race, this equates to a rate of 36 for Black teens, a rate of 58 for Hispanic teens, and a rate of 23 for White teens. Greenwood County has a higher rate of overall teen childbearing than the state average of 23 per 1,000 and the national average of 19 per 1,000.

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[5] Fact Forward: https://www.factforward.org/news/high-costs-teen-pregnancy

BEST _____ WORST MISSING
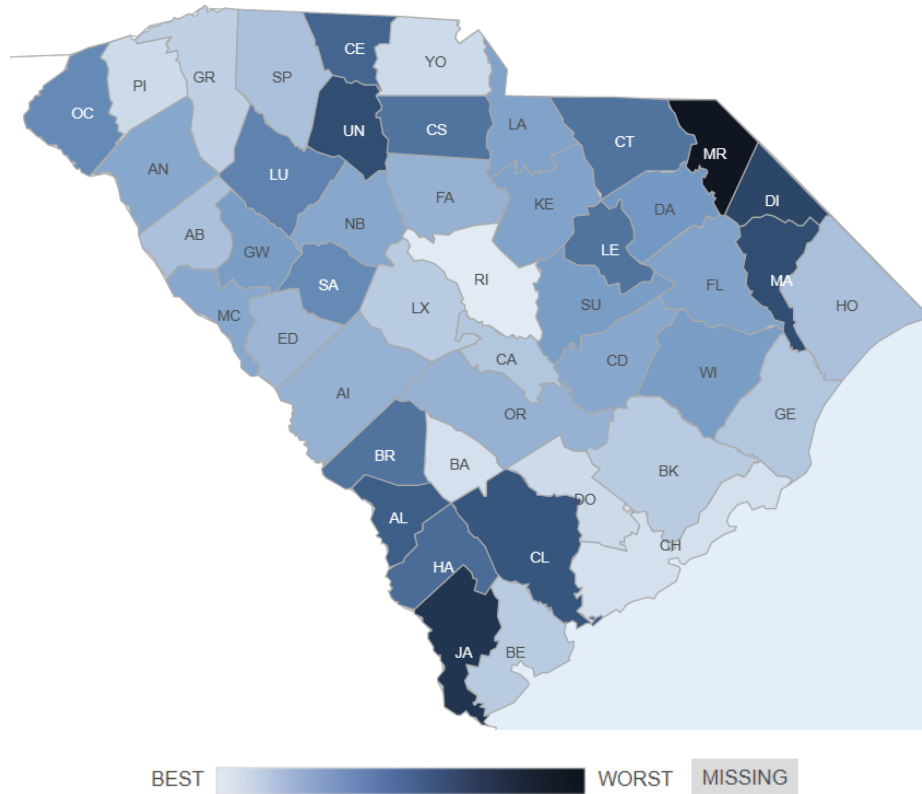
Teen childbearing has decreased substantially in South Carolina, mirroring the national trend.

Health Insurance

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

In Greenwood County, 3.0% of the residents under age 19 are uninsured (neither public or private insurance) in 2021. This equates to 504children and youth.
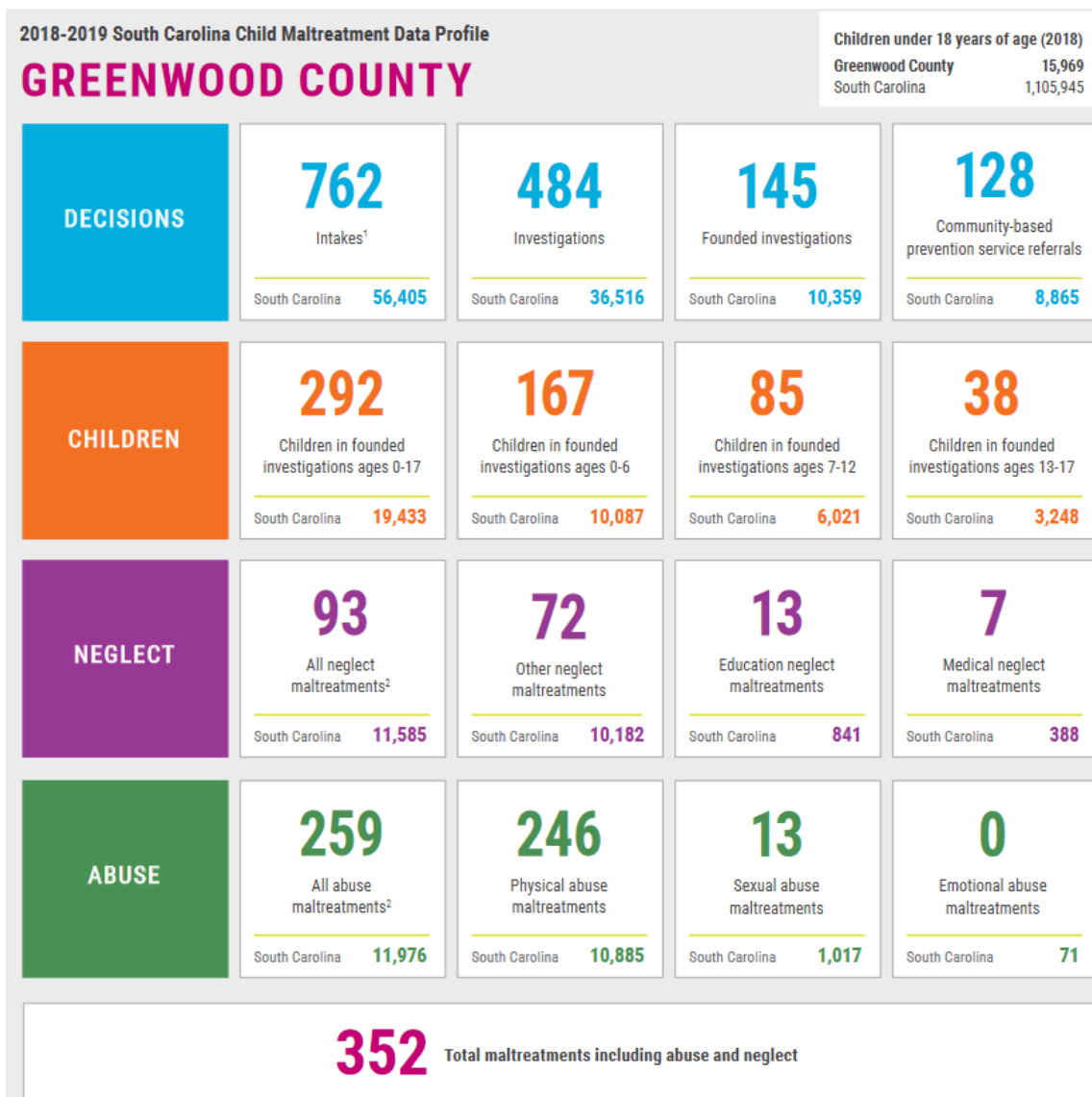
Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment is abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in addition to all forms of neglect, negligence, and exploitation of children. It is difficult to obtain valid and reliable comparative statistics on child abuse and neglect even though it cuts across all communities in South Carolina. The data reported in the following table are offered as static information without inference. These are founded investigations; that is, the

determination following an investigation by a child protection worker is that, based on available information, it is more likely than not that child abuse or neglect did occur. These investigations are not "unique"; that is, they may include multiple investigations for the same children.

Total Number of founded Investigations for Child Abuse and Neglect by SC Fiscal Year										
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Greenwood	47	52	42	61	79	93	88	127	133	133

Source: Kids Count Data Center

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

2018-2019 South Carolina Child Maltreatment Data Profile

GREENWOOD COUNTY

Children under 18 years of age (2018)
Greenwood County 15,969
South Carolina 1,105,945

DECISIONS

762	484	145	128
Intakes[1]	Investigations	Founded investigations	Community-based prevention service referrals
South Carolina 56,405	South Carolina 36,516	South Carolina 10,359	South Carolina 8,865

CHILDREN

292	167	85	38
Children in founded investigations ages 0-17	Children in founded investigations ages 0-6	Children in founded investigations ages 7-12	Children in founded investigations ages 13-17
South Carolina 19,433	South Carolina 10,087	South Carolina 6,021	South Carolina 3,248

NEGLECT

93	72	13	7
All neglect maltreatments[2]	Other neglect maltreatments	Education neglect maltreatments	Medical neglect maltreatments
South Carolina 11,585	South Carolina 10,182	South Carolina 841	South Carolina 388

ABUSE

259	246	13	0
All abuse maltreatments[2]	Physical abuse maltreatments	Sexual abuse maltreatments	Emotional abuse maltreatments
South Carolina 11,976	South Carolina 10,885	South Carolina 1,017	South Carolina 71

352 Total maltreatments including abuse and neglect

Adverse Childhood Experiences

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

The latest data show[6] that 62% of South Carolina adults report having experienced at least one ACE, and 59% of Greenwood County adults also report having experienced at least one ACE. The primary ACEs for Greenwood County are:

- Parental divorce / separation – 32%
- Emotional abuse – 30%
- Household substance abuse – 27%

Children of Color experience higher rates of ACEs. In South Carolina, 59% of White children have experienced at least one ACE, while 65% of Black children and 67% of Hispanic children have experienced at least one ACE.

Affordable Housing

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the generally accepted definition of affordable housing is that for which the occupants are paying no more than 30% of gross income for housing costs, including utilities. In South Carolina, almost 20% of residents are not in affordable housing situations, spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Greenwood County residents fare better than the state average at almost 17% not in affordable housing situations, and the trend suggests that housing affordability is improving in Greenwood County, mirroring the state trend.

Percent of Housing Units Where Householders Spend at Least 30% of Income on Housing									
	2007-11	2008-12	2009-13	2010-14	2011-15	2012-16	2013-17	2014-18	2015-19
Greenwood	23.9	22.7	23.7	24.5	22.8	20.4	19.9	18.4	16.6
S.C.	25.5	25.1	24.8	24.2	23.1	21.9	21.1	20.4	19.6

Source: Kids Count Data Center

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[6] Children's Trust of South Carolina https://scchildren.org/resources/adverse-childhood-experiences/ace-data-county-profiles/
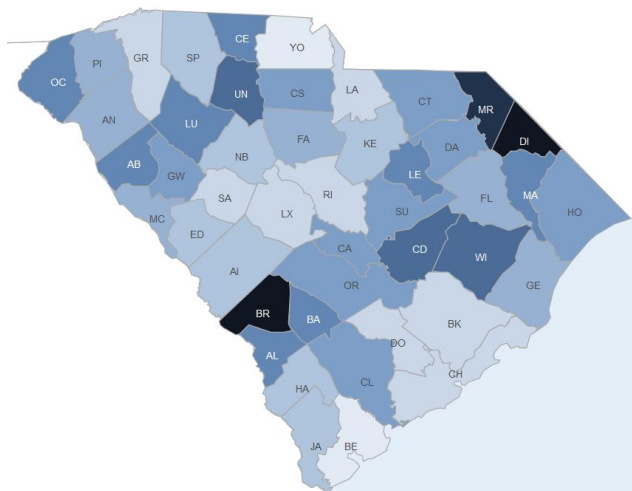
Food Environment

There are two basic measures that comprise the Food Environment Index measure:

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

Although the data are not disaggregated by race, low- income people and People of Color are generally the most at-risk populations for food insecurity and limited access to healthy foods. Compared to the South Carolina averages, Greenwood County fares slightly worse for food insecurity but markedly better for access to healthy foods.

Food Environment, 2019		
	Greenwood County	**S.C.**
Food insecurity:	12%	11%
Limited access to healthy foods	4%	10%

Food Insecurity Map   Limited Food Access Map
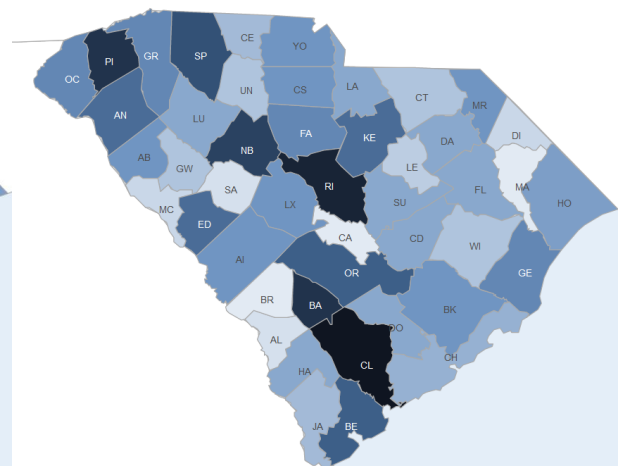
BEST ▢▢▢▢ WORST

Food Deserts

Certain communities, particularly lower-income or minority communities, often lack supermarkets or other sources of healthy and affordable foods. Food deserts, a component measure of food insecurity, is defined as at least 500 people and / or at least 33% of a census tract's population residing more than a mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (more than 10 miles for rural census tracts). The following map show portions of Greenwood County, in orange, that are classified as food deserts.
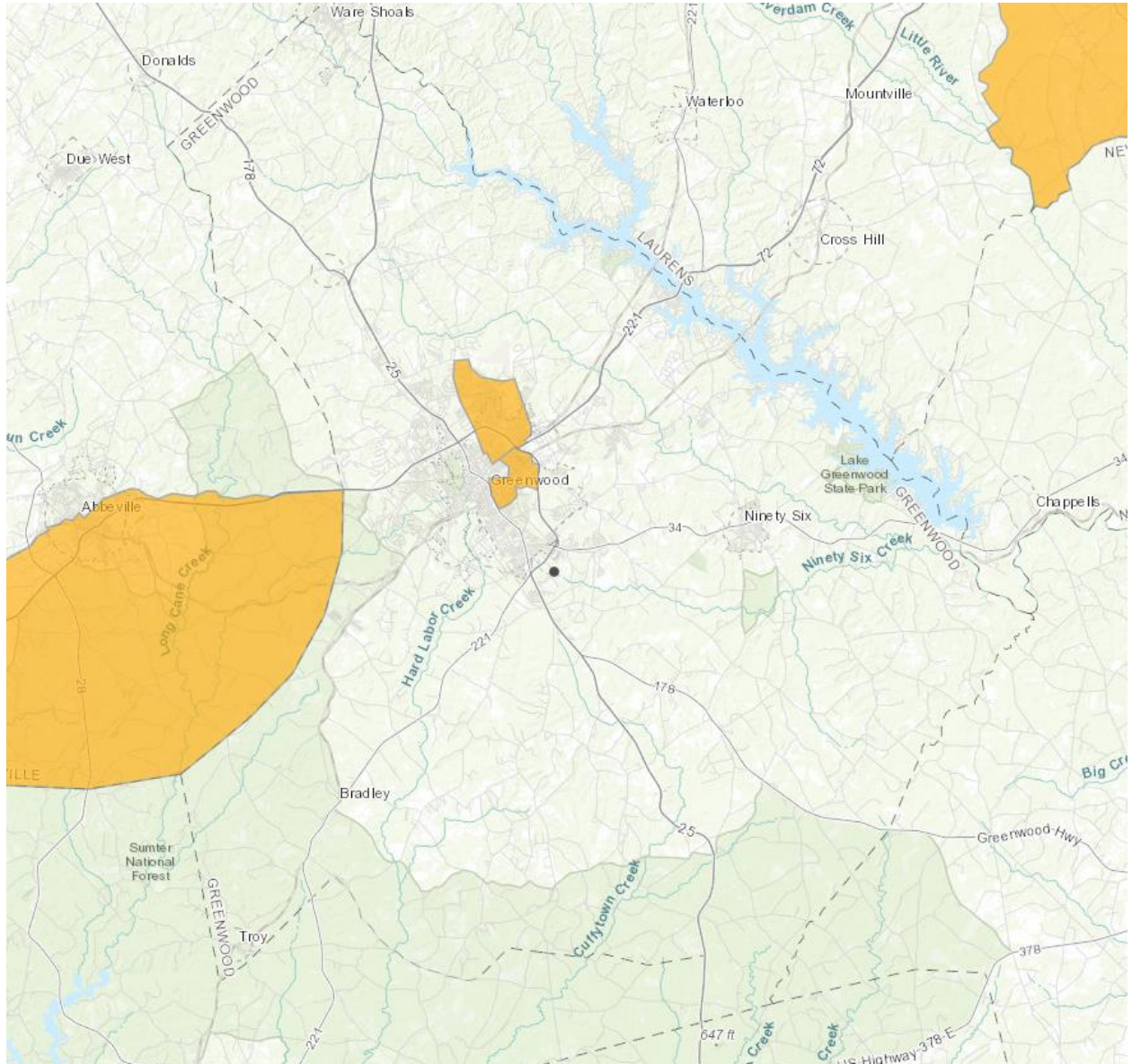
Source: SC DHEC

Qualitative Data Analysis

Key Informant Interviews Report

Executive Summary

ISI Consulting conducted three key informant interviews with content experts identified by Greenwood County First Steps. The informants included two school district personnel and one community liaison. The participants were interviewed over the phone to obtain their perspective as part of the Community Needs Assessment of Greenwood County and ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. Key informants were selected for their knowledge of and proximity to early childhood education or development within the county. Interviews were manually transcribed by the interviewer, and all participants were informed that their name and other identifying information would not be attached to anything they shared.

The major findings from these interviews were as follows:

There needs to be more trust built between families and community service providers.

A lack of trust amongst certain people acts as a barrier to accessing services for some families. One informant said, "We need to build trust. Others are afraid to accept." Reasons for the mistrust were said to vary. The Hispanic population was said to not be interested in or afraid of accepting services due to immigration. For other families it could be the connections with DSS that make receiving services off-putting. To combat this, "one of [Greenwood County's] greatest needs right now to make sure that we are reaching out and going into the community and meeting our community instead of expecting them to come to us. That builds trust," said one interviewee. To reach more families, community outreach and trust building are needed to ease fears and misconceptions about receiving services.

Adequate childcare is inaccessible.

A variety of factors prevent families from accessing quality childcare in Greenwood County. Childcare options are expensive, and those that are affordable, might not properly prepare the kids for kindergarten or require a car to get to. An informant told ISI Consulting, "When you do know about the opportunities, you ask if you can you afford it. It is not a free opportunity. There is a gap for opportunities and places that families can afford." Another one said, "Financially for what it costs for daycare, what [parents] are making doesn't offset it. It is cheaper to stay at home." When parents can find affordable options, the quality of care can become an issue, as said an interviewee, "[Parents] choose the cheaper option, so it isn't [always] the best setting." It was further said that children in 4K are not being taught reading or math adequately, and then the 5K students are testing behind their peers. Additionally, transportation can pose problems to accessing childcare. "There is no public transportation option" to help parents get their children to school, and with rural areas, daycare can be 17 miles away. Within Greenwood County, informants identified the need for more accessible childcare options that adequately prepare their children for kindergarten.

Greenwood needs more Spanish-language services.

The Spanish-speaking population need resources provided in Spanish. It was mentioned that the Hispanic population in Greenwood County is being underserved. No informant shared specific activities led by Greenwood First Steps in engaging Spanish-speaking families. One informant said, "[Services] don't have bilingual community health workers or parenting classes" and that paperwork to apply for services are frequently only provided in English. Making sure that services are available in Spanish as well as English was said to be a great first step to doing outreach into Latino community.

Children's home lives are impacting their early childhood development.

Some households in Greenwood County are not providing a nurturing environment for children. The informants shared many different scenarios in which they have seen children living in unideal situations. Some of the affordable housing in Greenwood was said to be "not a safe place for children or families." In addition, informants provided that sometimes the mom and dad are not present, and the child is being raised by the grandparents, or there is drug abuse in the home, or children could lack structure which leads to discipline issues, and mental health problems in the household could be affecting a child. One informant further shared that these problems "seem to be exacerbated because of the pandemic." These instabilities in the home can impact a child's overall wellbeing as well as development, according to the informants.

Parent and Educator Interviews Report

Executive Summary

In lieu of a focus group, ISI Consulting interviewed four mothers and two educators of young children in Greenwood County who were identified by Greenwood County First Steps. Leadership believed that a phone call with parents would be easier than parents driving to a focus group. Interviews were all conducted by phone and ranged from 15 to 30 minutes in length. Interviews were manually transcribed by the interviewer, and all participants were informed that their name and other identifying information would not be attached to anything they shared.

The major findings from these interviews were as follows:

Adequate childcare is inaccessible.

Many mothers believe the caliber of childcare in Greenwood is low despite being so expensive. The cost of childcare was the main concern with accessing daycare or preschool. As one of the interviewees put it, "A parent is paying $100 a week for one child when they're only making $200 a week. They are paying half of their income to simply keep working." Price is not the only problem, parents and educators noticed. Quality is concern too. Most of the parents interviewed mentioned the caliber of staff at Greenwood County childcare centers can be bad. A mother shared a concerning story that illustrates this, "One time a woman that worked at a daycare in Greenwood was telling me—and others could hear her, too—that a child bit her and she bit the child back. This [daycare] is one [of the ones] that is fully open and takes vouchers." The mixture of cost and quality is a barrier preventing children from receiving quality preschool education because mothers reported that they are not sending their children to daycare because of one or both of those issues.

There are not enough affordable and safe housing opportunities.

Housing in Greenwood County is expensive, and the affordable options have a lot of crime in the area. "There needs to be more affordable housing," said one informant. Section eight housing was reported to have a long waiting list for people to get into. Furthermore, informants shared that they were worried about "all these crimes and shootings, and all the drugs that go rampant through Greenwood." One interviewee shared that they "heard that Greenwood is one of the most dangerous places to live in South Carolina." This presents an issue for low-income families because one mother shared that she "got $500 voucher [for Section eight] but there's no way [she] would want to live there because of the crime. Housing is a problem for households in Greenwood who need both safe and affordable options for their family.

Technology is a big part of early childhood.

Children are spending a lot of time using technology now, noted parents and educators. Participants ultimately believed technology is a good tool in moderation, but too much can be bad for the kids due to disrupted socialization. Parents and educators alike loved the easy teaching methods that technology

provides but worry that children are not getting enough time outside or interacting with other people. One informant put it as, "I think it can be good but difficult with being able to adjust to a healthy amount of screen time and knowing the difference when to identify when it's helping or hindering a child's health, mental and emotional, and when it's taken away. They need organic one on one, natural development that comes from one-on-one interaction." Finding the balance with technology usage is something that parents and educators alike are still navigating.

There is a stigma that prevents some from seeking help.

Some mothers reported that many people were not wanting to receive services because of the stigma against "handouts" and fears of being reported. There is a stigma in Greenwood County against receiving assistance. This is tied to a fear of being judged as an unfit parent or a recipient of welfare. Additionally, fear that someone will report parents to DSS is preventing some from reaching out or accepting services. It was said that things like more liberal marijuana usage amongst young mothers is contributing to that fear. Commenting on this, one parent said, "I think [parents] would be more willing to get involved if there wasn't such a stigma of getting help. A hand up is not a handout." Building trust within the community could get more families into programs and receiving the help they need.

Community Engagement Session

After a formal presentation of the quantitative and qualitative data by ISI Consulting on February 17, 2023, seven Greenwood County First Steps team members and partners from the Greenwood Children's Place, Lander University, and Play Works discussed the findings and its implications. Small groups were formed, and participants completed a worksheet to identify gaps and areas of needed focus for the local First Steps. ISI Consulting facilitated the conversations between the small group to reach shared agreement.

The priorities that emerged from this Needs Assessment include:

Strengthen relationships with schools, day cares, colleges and community health organizations and create regular feedback loops for quality improvement.
(Indicator: Number of meetings and partnership agreements.)
Leadership discussed the importance of having regular meetings with schools and day cares to more fully understand needs and advocate for the importance of reading, kindergarten Readiness and wrapping around the entire child. Most regular meetings were suspended with COVID and have not been re-established.

Focus efforts on the teen population (teen dropouts and pregnant teens).
(Indicator: Evaluation data from teen grant.)
Greenwood County First Steps has received funding to focus on this population with a new grant.

Build trust among Hispanic families.
(Indicator: Number of Hispanic families served.)
Consider partnering with Lander and their ESL (English as a Second Language) course. Once trust is established, leadership believe that Hispanic families will refer other families in need.

Develop parent and child goal setting to promote emotionally health individuals.
(Indicator: Number of goal documents created.)
Leadership discussed that integrating goal setting into all activities will be important.

Greenwood County Asset Map

- BabyNet
- Greenwood County DSS
- Carolina Health Centers
- Beckman MHS
- Greenwood County Food Bank
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Meg's House
- Beyond Abuse Counseling Center
- Greenwood County Health Department
- Family Connections
- Piedmont Technical College
- Lander University
- GLEAMNS
- Self Regional Healthcare

GREENWOOD COUNTY
FIRST STEPS
Getting children ready for school.

Kathleen Brady, PhD

Elizabeth Carpenter

Holly Hayes

Diana Kimmich

CONSULTING