



COASTAL PLAIN AREA
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AUTHORITY

Community Needs Assessment Report

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Executive summary

To comply with the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Act,¹ all funded CSBG entities are required to complete regular Community Needs Assessments and to file Community Action Plans (CAPs). The Coastal Plain Area Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA) has been in existence since 1966 and has had a substantial, positive impact on South Georgia for decades. To date, the organization has invested \$215 million of local, state, and federal funds to serve the poor and elderly in the region and to mitigate the hardships stemming from poverty. The end result of these efforts has been to support economic and social development for the more than 250,000 residents who call this region home.

The Coastal Plain Area oversees numerous programs throughout South Georgia. The organization operates a Weatherization program, Head Start, and multiple Community Service Block Grant-funded (CSBG) programs. The CSBG efforts include the following: Food Voucher, Utility (Water) Assistance, Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Minor Car Repair, G.E.D. Training, Prescription Drug, and Minor Home Repair programs. Combined, these programs provide valuable support to counter the causes and conditions of poverty in the organization's 10-county service region—Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Tift, and Turner.

Despite the Coastal Plain Area EOA's extensive work over five decades, there remains a need for ongoing poverty alleviation measures. Several of the counties included in this study trail state averages when it comes to 2023 unemployment rates, median household income, the number of persons living below the poverty line, and the percentage of individuals who completed high school. The survey responses summarized in succeeding sections reinforce the ongoing and pervasive economic need for CSBG programs.

The report concludes with a discussion of Coastal Plain's Community Action Plan (CAP). The primary conclusions in this report are based on survey findings, secondary data sources, and additional research based on the area, all of which represent the empirical foundation for the CAP. This plan commits to the long-term social and economic success of this region through the aforementioned, well-established CSBG programs. These programs, and with the continued financial support from local, state, and federal governments, will provide many in this region with the resources needed to overcome the challenges of persistent poverty.

¹ Public Law 105-285, 42 U.S.C. 9908 (a)(11)

Organizational background

Coastal Plain Area Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA) traces its roots in South Georgia to 1965, when it secured a grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity.² A year later, the initial body incorporated thus creating the Coastal Plain Area Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc. on April 8, 1966. This new organization was set to serve residents in 10 Georgia Counties (see Figure 3). Since then, the organization has administered numerous antipoverty programs to help those in poverty and the elderly.

The Valdosta, Georgia-based entity, has affiliates throughout its network. The county-based community action agency has affiliate sites in all 10 counties. These offices maintain regular business hours³ and those in need of assistance can seek help by going into these offices in person or can get help via email, phone, or fax.⁴ Together, these offices support Coastal Plain Area EOA's mission of "Building Generational Success: Evolving For Our Future."

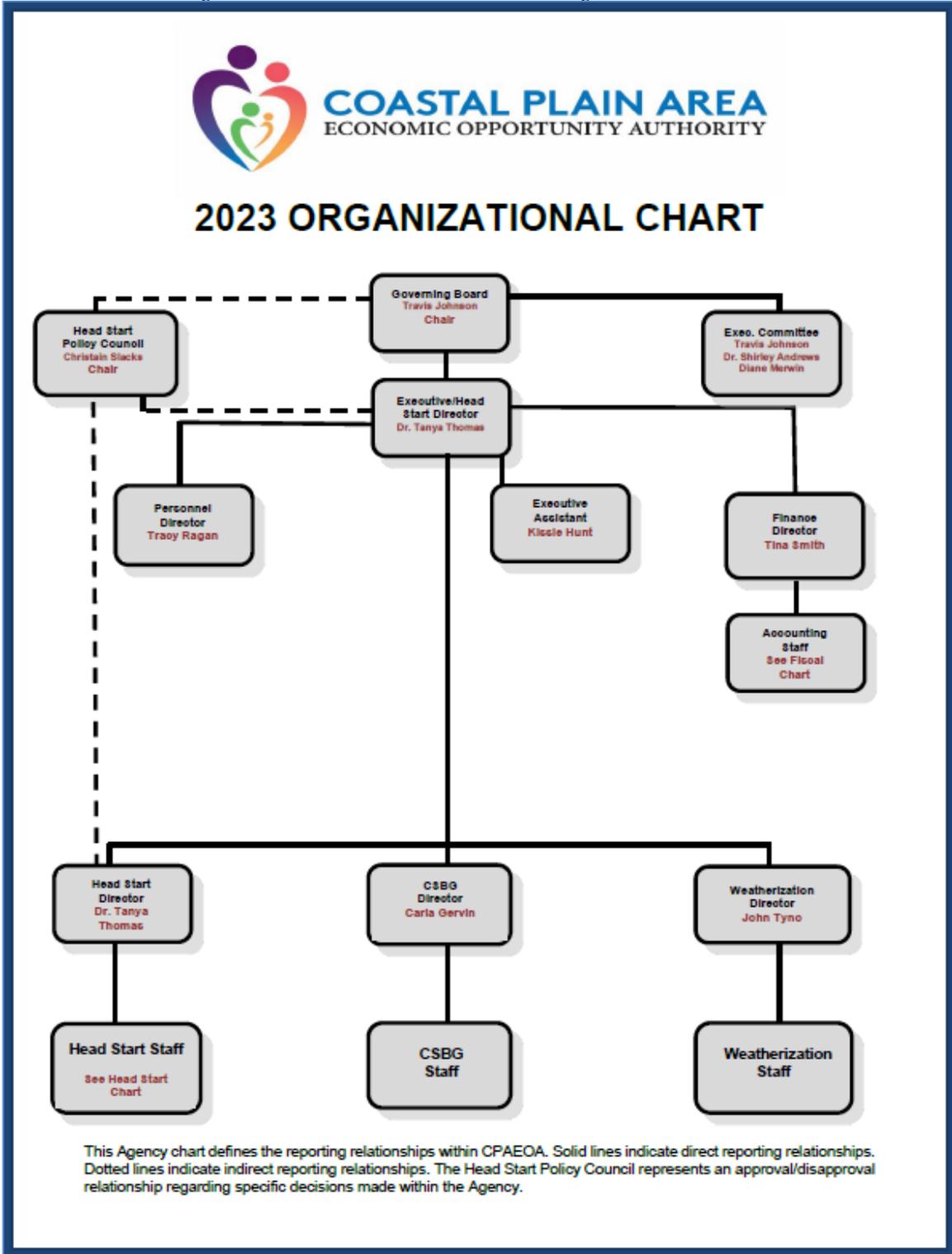
The organizational structure is oriented around their primary initiatives, which is depicted in the chart below. The leadership structure includes 12 officials, eight of which are listed in Figure 1. The three main initiative areas—CSBG, Head Start, and Weatherization—have their own directors and each area has its own staff. The staff associated with these programs is instrumental in executing the major functions of the agency, which operate federal, state, and local social service programs.

² <https://www.coastalplain.org/about-us/>

³ <https://www.coastalplain.org/csbg/>

⁴ <https://www.coastalplain.org/csbg/>

Figure 1: Coastal Plain Area EOA Organizational Chart



Consistent with the CSBG Act, Coastal Plain’s primary intent is the reduction of poverty through partnerships between states and community groups, religious organizations, or charitable groups. Coastal Plain’s mission and affiliated programs directly support antipoverty measures throughout South Central Georgia. According to the 2022-2023 Annual Report, Coastal Plain’s CSBG revenue was \$1.54 million. These funds provided much-needed resources to support community service programs in the affiliate counties for employment skills training, management counseling, and crisis intervention.

Organizational programs overview

Coastal Plain Area EOA empowers residents through several different antipoverty services. Examples of these programs include:

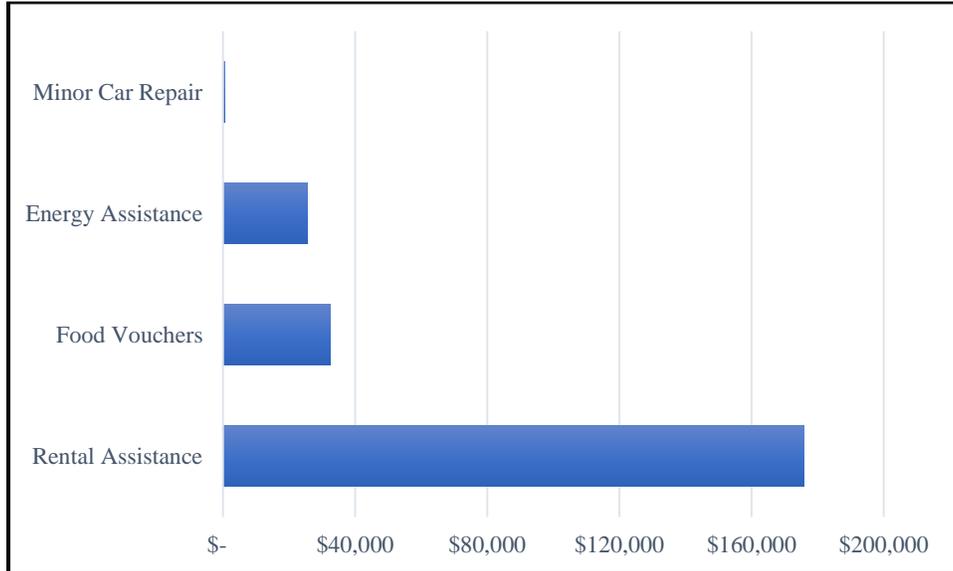
Table 1: Coastal Plain EOA CSBG Programs

| Program | Description |
|---|---|
| Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) | In its first year of operation through Coastal Plain EOA, the LIHWAP supported 2,602 families throughout South Georgia. |
| Minor car repair | Provides support for those employed in a job for at least six months who are experiencing vehicle problems that would preclude them from getting to work; served three clients in 2022-2023. |
| Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) | Helps qualifying households to cover heating or cooling energy costs, weatherization, energy crisis assistance, or energy-related home repairs; served more than 10,000 clients in 2022-2023. |
| Food vouchers | Provides support to individuals with an emergency food need, such as loss of job through no fault of their own; reduction in hours or wages; or insufficient food stamp support; served more than 300 clients in 2022-2023. |
| Rental assistance | Offers emergency assistance for those facing eviction or homelessness; served 141 clients in 2022-2023. |

Figure 2 below summarizes the 2022-2023 assistance provided through the various programs listed in the table above. Rental assistance comprises the largest expenditure category with food vouchers and energy assistance representing the next two largest categories. As noted above, these programs serve hundreds of clients across South Georgia in the previous year alone. The energy assistance program impacted thousands of clients in 2022-2023 while more than 300 individuals sought assistance from the food vouchers program.⁵

⁵ Figures based on Coastal Plain’s annual report.

Figure 2: Coastal Plain CSBG Assistance Provided, 2022-2023



The Weatherization program is another important initiative for the region. Weatherization funding is made possible through Department of Energy and Department of Health and Human Services monies. The primary goal of this program is to improve energy conservation or efficiency for low-income families. Energy efficiency is sought through checking for ductwork leakages, air infiltration, and pressure imbalances within homes. Combustion safety testing and air quality testing are two additional features of this program that, collectively, help ensure homes are safe, healthy, and energy efficient. Total program operations surpassed \$345,650 in 2022-2023 and Brooks and Lowndes Counties received the largest disbursements from the Weatherization program in 2022-2023 at \$75,748 and \$128,721, respectively.

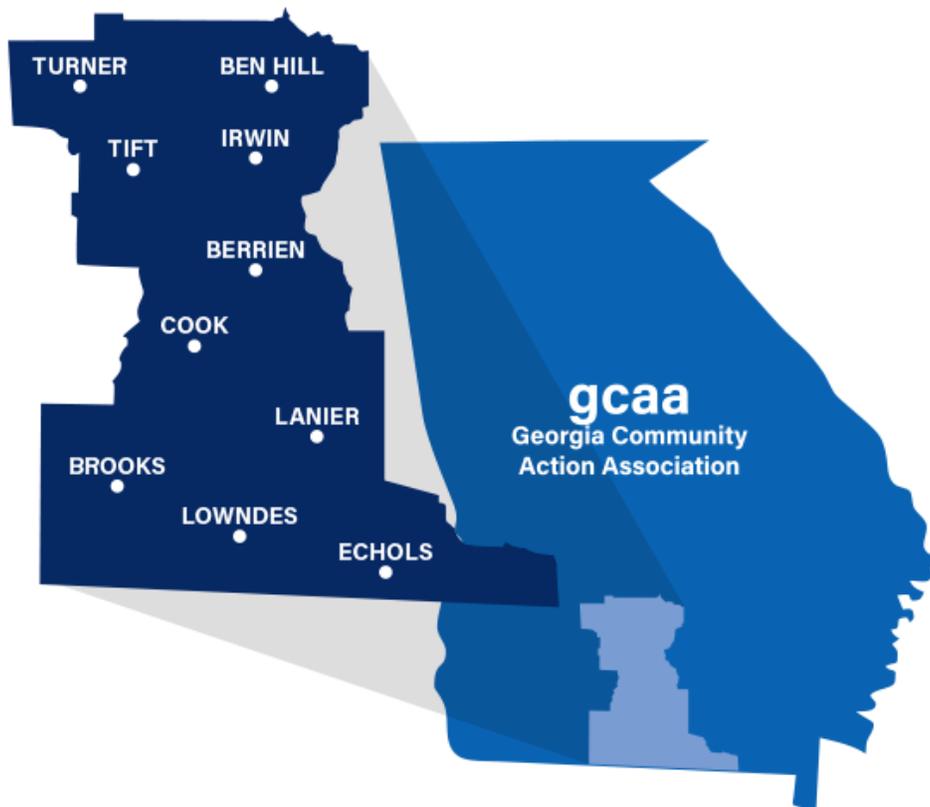
The final program under Coastal Plain's purview is Head Start. The long-running program provides comprehensive early childhood development at no cost to qualifying families. The services provided through Head Start benefit both young children as well as their families. For the purposes of this report, nine of the 10 counties have Head Start Service Areas across 12 centers and 39 classrooms. According to Coastal Plain's 2022-2023 Annual Report, more than 800 children were funded through this program (though actual enrollment was slightly lower, at 668). The largest age group served during this time period was three-year olds, while Lowndes, Tifton, and Turner Counties had the largest income-eligible populations for the program. Among the Head Start students in this area, 81% were from one-parent households.⁶

⁶ Coastal Plain Area EOA 2022-2023 Annual Report.

Service area

Coastal Plain currently serves a region encompassing 264,113 residents across a 10-county region shown in Figure 3. The table below presents the counties, their 2023 populations, and the population growth between 2020 and 2023. The smallest county in the area is Echols County (3,709), while the largest is Lowndes County (120,712). The area's population growth ranges from a decline of nearly 6% in Irwin County, to an increase of nearly 6% in Lanier County.

Figure 3: Coastal Plain's Service Area



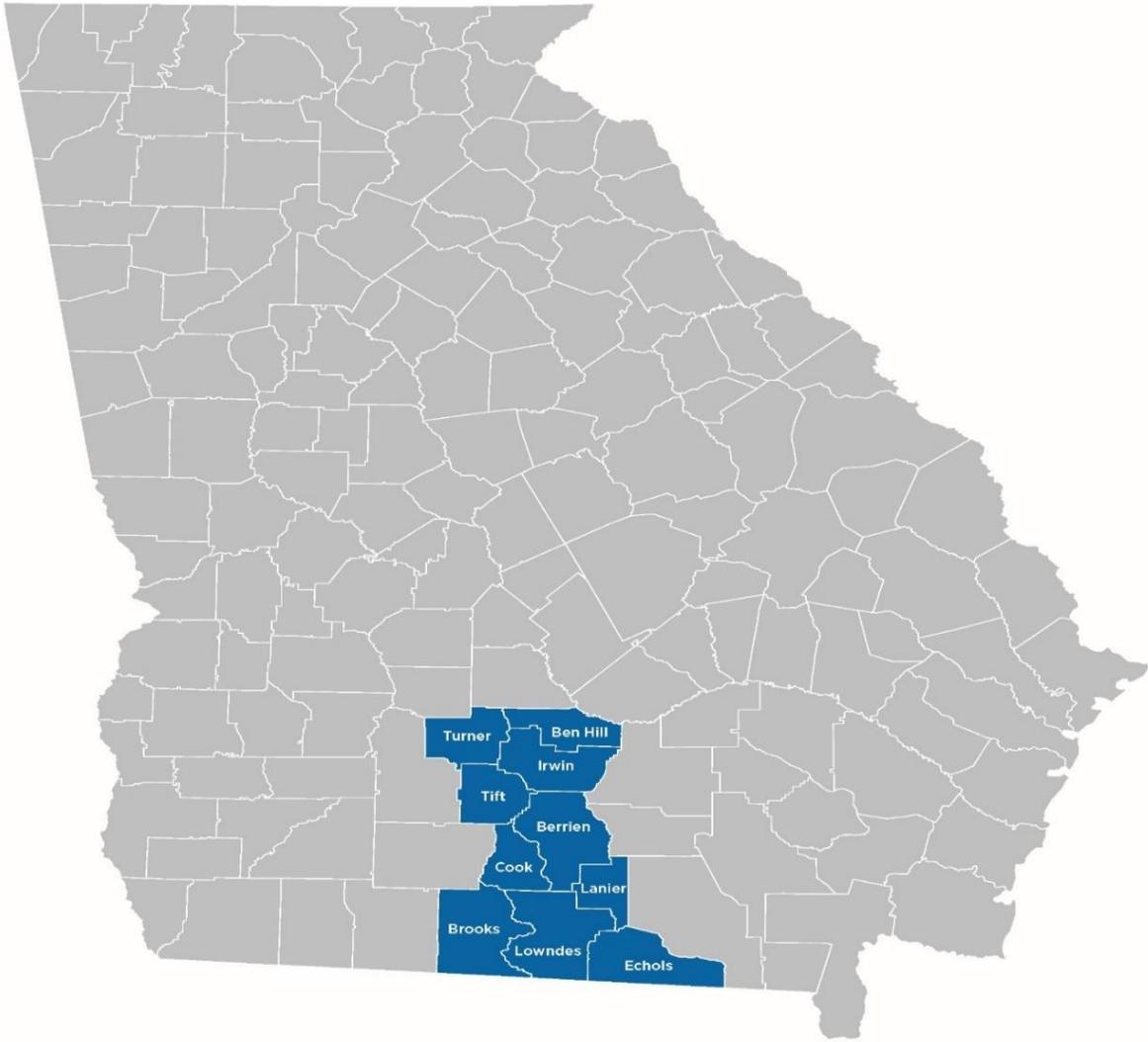


Table 2: Counties in Coastal Plain’s Service Area⁷

| County | Population | Population Growth, 2020-2023 | Pct. Rural Residents | Pct. White | Pct. Black | Pct. Hispanic or Latino |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Ben Hill | 17,128 | -0.4% | 34 | 59.4 | 37.0 | 6.8 |
| Berrien | 18,570 | 2.3% | 76.1 | 85.0 | 11.3 | 6.0 |
| Brooks | 16,245 | -0.3% | 71 | 60.8 | 34.0 | 8.2 |
| Cook | 17,714 | 2.8% | 59.4 | 68.0 | 27.9 | 7.4 |
| Echols | 3,709 | 0.1% | 100 | 84.3 | 8.3 | 30.6 |
| Irwin | 9,120 | -5.6% | 64.7 | 72.3 | 25.2 | 4.5 |
| Lanier | 10,452 | 5.8% | 71.1 | 72.0 | 22.7 | 8.4 |
| Lowndes | 120,712 | 2.1% | 27.2 | 56.6 | 38.0 | 6.7 |
| Tift | 41,554 | 0.5% | 40.8 | 65.3 | 31.0 | 13.1 |
| Turner | 8,909 | -1.0% | 49.7 | 57.4 | 39.5 | 5.2 |
| <i>Georgia avg.</i> | <i>11,029,227</i> | <i>2.9%</i> | <i>39.7</i> | <i>59.0</i> | <i>33.1</i> | <i>10.5</i> |

Overall, the counties listed above present some differences to Georgia averages, which impacts the needs for those living in this region. The state of Georgia’s growth rate between 2020 and 2023 is 2.9%, which outpaces U.S. national growth rates.⁸ Many of the counties listed in the table above are below the state average. Lanier County is the lone exception, with a 5.8% growth rate between 2020-2023. The average county population for the region is 26,411, which is impacted by two outliers—Echols and Lowndes Counties.

The region is predominantly rural, with a large agricultural presence. Percentage-wise, 24.9% of the state of Georgia is rural whereas 59.4% of the 10-county region is rural.⁹ It is no surprise that agriculture is one the leading industries in South Georgia. Indeed, the region is home to lucrative tree nut, cotton, vegetable, and melon farming. Livestock trade, especially poultry, is another economic anchor for the region—and the state as a whole. As shown above, Echols, Berrien, Brooks, and Lanier Counties are the areas with the largest percentage of rural residents.

The region is also a diverse one. Some counties are predominantly white (e.g., Berrien and Echols), but the ethnic make-up across these counties varies considerably. Ben Hill, Lowndes, and Turner Counties are home to the largest Black populations. These three counties’ Black populations are higher than Georgia’s 2022 average (33.1%). Meanwhile, Echols and Tift are home to the largest Hispanic and Latino populations, with 30.6% and 13.1%, respectively. However, Echols and Tift Counties are the only counties in this region with a Hispanic or Latino population above the state average (10.5%). It is important to note that the U.S. Census Bureau does not treat these demographic categories as mutually exclusive, which is why some of the racial/ethnic categories exceed 100%.

⁷ United States Census Bureau Quick Facts. County-specific URLs are supplied in the References section.

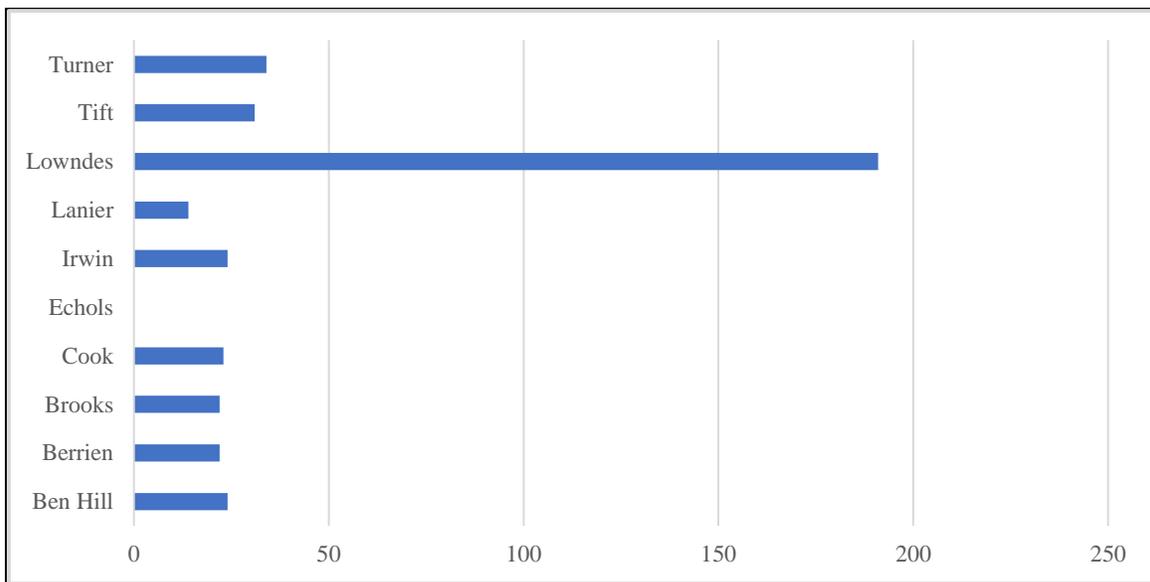
⁸ United States Census Bureau Quick Facts. County-specific URLs are supplied in the References section.

⁹ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/georgia?year=2024>.

Head Start affiliates

Coastal Plain Area EOA has a wide network of affiliates and service providers. For Head Start locations, there were 12 facilities in the region—with some counties having multiple locations.¹⁰ There were also some counties without Head Start locations, according to the 2023 Annual Report. The 12 facilities included 12 centers and 39 classrooms in operation across the nine counties represented. These centers are particularly important for the Black or African American population, which was the largest racial group served by the area’s Head Start facilities in the past year. Head Start programs can be a great boon for one-parent households, which are more prevalent in Ben Hill, Cook, Tift, and Turner Counties. Enrollment in the region’s Head Start programs is summarized in the figure below.

Figure 4: Head Start enrollment by county, 2022-2023¹¹



Childcare facilities are another important element to life in this region. Families depend on early age childcare to care for their children while they go to work. In other instances, families rely on after-school programs to care for their children in the gap between school dismissal and when working men and women are at their jobs. In the Appendix, we have assembled a directory of childcare facilities across the area. There is a potential need for additional childcare facilities in areas such as Brooks and Berrien counties, which are home to nearly twice as many residents as in Lanier and Irwin counties, yet have roughly the same number of childcare facilities.

¹⁰ The Coastal Plain COA Annual Report indicates that there were four Lowndes County Head Start locations. Meanwhile, Echols County did not have a Head Start location in 2023.

¹¹ Information based on the 2023 Coastal Plain EOA Annual Report.

External data assessment and reporting

This section examines a series of indicators for the counties and populations in Coastal Plain Area EOA’s region. The section first examines aggregate economic indicators before reviewing housing, education, health, and other miscellaneous indicators. The general takeaway from this section is that economic need persists but that notable variations exist throughout this area.

Table 3: Economic conditions in Coastal Plain’s Service Region (2022)

| County | Median Household Income | Unemployment Pct. | Pct. of Persons Below Poverty line | Pct. of Children Below Poverty Line | Pct. of Persons 65+ Below Poverty Line |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Ben Hill | \$ 39,863 | 5.2 | 26.5 | 34 | 16.7 |
| Berrien | \$ 46,404 | 3.7 | 23.2 | 28 | 15.9 |
| Brooks | \$ 40,936 | 3.7 | 26.5 | 36 | 19.7 |
| Cook | \$ 44,995 | 3.4 | 21.8 | 31 | 28.3 |
| Echols | \$ 42,241 | 2.7 | 15 | 32 | 17.1 |
| Irwin | \$ 44,540 | 4.5 | 22 | 30 | 10.9 |
| Lanier | \$ 47,789 | 3.8 | 32.1 | 31 | 28.8 |
| Lowndes | \$ 46,565 | 4.1 | 14 | 33 | 14.5 |
| Tift | \$ 48,717 | 3.4 | 21 | 32 | 10.8 |
| Turner | \$ 37,477 | 6.4 | 22.4 | 40 | 18.8 |
| <i>Georgia avg.</i> | <i>\$ 66,507</i> | <i>3.9</i> | <i>12.7</i> | <i>21</i> | <i>11.1</i> |

The economic indicators listed above offer glimpses into the overall economic conditions in this service region. Overall, median household incomes lag behind the Georgia average (\$66,507). For instance, Turner and Ben Hill County median household incomes are nearly \$30,000 below the state’s average. Similarly, the population share of those living below the poverty line is another area that is behind the state average (12.7%). Ben Hill, Brooks, Lanier, and Turner Counties have far more residents living below the poverty line than we see on average across the state. These trends persist when one considers the percentage of children and seniors living below the poverty line. Here again, those same four counties have more impoverished youth and seniors than seen elsewhere in the state. It is worth noting that Irwin and Tift Counties both have more youth living in poverty than the state average but are below the state average when it comes to the percentage of aged residents living below poverty. The final indicator in this table—unemployment rate—is one area where the disparities between the counties and the state averages aren’t as great. Indeed, Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Echols, Lanier, Lowndes, and Tift all have unemployment rates that are close to the 2022 state averages.

Economic conditions throughout this region impact the quality of life in many ways. This can include the ability to provide healthcare and medicine for one’s family, have sufficient food for the household, and obtain safe, secure housing. The table below reviews housing data for the area under consideration.

Table 4: Housing indicators in Coastal Plain’s Service Region (2022)

| County | Pct. Homeowners | Pct. Households with Severe Cost Burden | Pct. Residents with Severe Housing Prob. | Pct. Households with Broadband Access | Residential Segregation Index |
|---------------------|-----------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ben Hill | 59 | 12 | 12 | 61 | 32 |
| Berrien | 69 | 10 | 12 | 71 | 31 |
| Brooks | 69 | 17 | 16 | 64 | 34 |
| Cook | 64 | 16 | 16 | 71 | 17 |
| Echols | 71 | 5 | 10 | 51 | 57 |
| Irwin | 73 | 9 | 10 | 74 | 55 |
| Lanier | 65 | 13 | 19 | 70 | 22 |
| Lowndes | 54 | 16 | 17 | 71 | 54 |
| Tift | 61 | 13 | 16 | 71 | 58 |
| Turner | 67 | 14 | 18 | 71 | 55 |
| <i>Georgia Avg.</i> | <i>65</i> | <i>14</i> | <i>15</i> | <i>86</i> | <i>56</i> |

On average, most Georgians own their homes. U.S. Census Bureau data for 2022 indicate that 65% of Peach State residents own their homes. Compared with the state average, six counties were at or above the state average. Across the service area, a majority of families in these counties owned their homes. Home ownership alone may not be the only indicator worth reviewing when it comes to safe, secure housing. The table also includes measures for the percentage of households with severe cost burdens and the percentage of residents with severe housing problems. The former captures the population share of those who report having high housing costs. Meanwhile, the latter refers to whether or not a household faces one or more of the following challenges: overcrowding, high housing costs, or lack of kitchen or plumbing facilities. In 2022, 14% and 15% of Georgia households reported having severe cost burdens or severe housing problems, respectively. Brooks, Cook, and Lowndes Counties all reportedly had higher than average shares of their populations with severe cost burdens. These three counties, along with Lanier, Tift, and Turner, all reported higher than average severe housing problems. Moreover, Echols, Lanier, and, to a lesser extent, Tift County had a sizable gap between these two measures. Put differently, the percentage of homes in these three counties reported more severe housing problems than just severe cost alone. Thus, the challenges present in these counties, and the others noted above, speak to the need for many of the programs offered by organizations such as Coastal Plain.

Table 4 also presents information on the percentage of households with broadband access and the Residential Segregation index. Broadband access across the state is quite high (i.e., 86% in 2022), but this is one area where several counties in South Georgia lag behind. All of the counties listed in Table 4 are well below the state average.

Access to affordable and safe housing can be a major hurdle to many residents throughout this region and beyond, but it is not the only concern. Community health often presents challenges to residents as well.

Table 5: Threats to Community Health in Coastal Plain’s Service Area (2022)

| County | Pct. Adult Smoking | Pct. Adult Excessive Drinking | Pct. of Adult Obesity | Pct. of Food Insecurity | Sexually Transmitted Infections |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ben Hill | 25 | 15 | 44 | 17 | 103 |
| Berrien | 24 | 16 | 37 | 16 | 87 |
| Brooks | 23 | 15 | 40 | 14 | 79 |
| Cook | 24 | 16 | 40 | 14 | 109 |
| Echols | 23 | 17 | 39 | 14 | 4 |
| Irwin | 24 | 16 | 41 | 14 | 32 |
| Lanier | 24 | 15 | 41 | 17 | 47 |
| Lowndes | 19 | 16 | 40 | 14 | 1,060 |
| Tift | 21 | 17 | 41 | 14 | 203 |
| Turner | 25 | 15 | 43 | 18 | 72 |
| <i>Georgia Avg.</i> | <i>16</i> | <i>16</i> | <i>34</i> | <i>11</i> | <i>6,2582</i> |

Table 5 sums up the region’s health challenges. Using conventional indicators such as adult smoking population, the percentage of excessive drinkers, obesity rates, food insecurity prevalence, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), we are able to understand some of the leading ailments in South Georgia. Cigarette use in all 10 counties is higher than the state average (16%). An estimated quarter of the populations in Ben Hill and Turner counties reportedly smoke cigarettes. Although the rates reported in Lowndes are the lowest in this service area, they are still higher than Georgia’s mean. Alcohol consumption is also higher than the state average in all but four counties, though just marginally. Echols and Tift counties have the region’s highest excessive drinking rates (both at 17%), but these are in line with the state’s average. STIs are reported in the table above. The figures in the table above represent the absolute infections represented in the most recent year. Relative metrics offer more insight into variations across the region. As a percentage of the county’s population, Lowndes, Cook, and Tift Counties had the highest STI rates. Conversely, Echols, Irwin, and Lanier reported the lowest rates in the region.

The final two metrics from Table 5 are inversely related: obesity rates and food insecurity measures. Obesity is a serious issue in South Georgia (and in much of the United States). Roughly one-third of Georgia’s population is obese. All 10 counties in this report have higher-than-average obesity rates, and eight counties in this study have obesity rates above 40%. Although obesity is a serious health concern in the region so, too, is food insecurity. Just over 10% of Georgians suffer from food insecurity, which refers to those individuals who did not have access to reliable sources of food in the previous year. As Table 5 indicates, all of the counties underperform the state mean. Food insecurity is most severe in Ben Hill, Lanier, and Turner Counties (ranging from 17 to 18%). These different metrics and their implications pose different public policy challenges for the region but certainly encapsulate ongoing issues to address.

Table 6: Miscellaneous Indicators for the Coastal Plain’s Service Area (2022)

| County | Pct. Persons with Disability | Income Inequality Ratio | Mental Health Provider Ratio | Pct. Uninsured Adults | Pct. Uninsured Children | Violent Crime Rate per 100k ¹² |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Ben Hill | 12 | 5.6 | 2,860:1 | 22 | 6 | 361.3 |
| Berrien | 17.3 | 5.5 | 6,049:1 | 22 | 6 | 224.2 |
| Brooks | 17 | 6.5 | 3,254:1 | 19 | 7 | 527.2 |
| Cook | 16.2 | 6.5 | 2,461:1 | 22 | 6 | 301.8 |
| Echols | 10 | 6.3 | 3,699:0 | 29 | 14 | 86.3 |
| Irwin | 9.1 | 4.9 | 4,809:1 | 19 | 8 | 258.3 |
| Lanier | 14.3 | 6.2 | 2,477:1 | 20 | 7 | 383.4 |
| Lowndes | 11.3 | 6.2 | 512:1 | 21 | 6 | 280.0 |
| Tift | 10.8 | 4.6 | 1,114:1 | 25 | 9 | 564.9 |
| Turner | 19.5 | 4.5 | 8,966:1 | 23 | 8 | 1,307.0 |
| <i>Georgia Avg.</i> | <i>13.3</i> | <i>4.9</i> | <i>591:1</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>7</i> | <i>364.3</i> |

The full scope of a community’s current and future needs extends beyond the indicators discussed thus far. Other features and attributes of this region warrant consideration. Mental health is of great interest to citizens throughout the country. Statewide, there are an average of nearly 600 residents for every mental health provider. This ratio is not as favorable for most of the region under review. Lowndes County, notwithstanding, the other nine counties in Coastal Plain’s service area have far fewer mental health providers per capita than the state average. Other healthcare issues present challenges to address as well. The percentage of uninsured adults and children across the region generally outpace state averages. Indeed, in all 10 counties there are more uninsured adults than seen, on average, statewide. There were six counties who had more uninsured children than seen statewide. The uninsured populations is particularly a concern in Echols and Tift Counties, where the rates are substantially higher than in other counties.

¹² County-level data obtained from *U.S. News and World Report*. The Georgia violent crime rate data was collected from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Complete source information, along with website addresses, is listed in the References section.

The three final indicators in the table above are income inequality, the percentage of disabled persons, and the occurrence of violent crime. The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps site defines income inequality as the “ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to income at the 20th percentile.”¹³ This measure can exacerbate class and social standing tensions, which can undermine community support and social connectedness. The Georgia average (4.9) is noticeably lower than what is present in most of the counties in the region, as eight counties had inequality levels higher than the state average. Meanwhile, only Tift and Turner counties’ inequality levels were lower than the state average. Disabled person population data is listed in the table as well. Table 6 shows considerable variation throughout the area, with populations ranging from 9.1% (Irwin) to 19.5% (Turner). Overall, half of the counties in this study had disabled person populations above the Georgia mean. The final indicator in the table is each county’s violent crime rate occurrence frequency (per 100,000 citizens). The highest occurrence of violent crime was reported in Turner, Tift, and Brooks Counties—all of which surpassed the state’s violent crime rate (364.3 per 100,000 citizens). The counties with the lowest violent crime rate in our study were Berrien, Echols, and Irwin—all of which had crime rates below the Georgia average.

Table 7: Education metrics across Coastal Plain’s Service Region

| County | Pct. Completed HS | High School Graduation Rate ¹⁴ | Pct. Children in Free or Reduced Lunch Prog. | School Spending Per Pupil | Reading Scores | Math Scores |
|---------------------|-------------------|---|--|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Ben Hill | 84 | 94 | 83 | \$ 12,000 | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| Berrien | 81 | 83 | 66 | \$ 10,175 | 3.2 | 3.1 |
| Brooks | 82 | 98 | 99 | \$ 13,085 | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| Cook | 81 | 98 | 75 | \$ 10,587 | 2.4 | 2.5 |
| Echols | 79 | 96 | 91 | \$ 11,296 | 2.8 | 2.5 |
| Irwin | 79 | 92 | 75 | \$ 12,199 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| Lanier | 85 | 92 | 86 | \$ 11,449 | 3.1 | 3.0 |
| Lowndes | 89 | 95 | 65 | \$ 10,284 | 3.0 | 2.9 |
| Tift | 84 | 93 | 40 | \$ 11,075 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| Turner | 80 | 91 | 100 | \$ 13,502 | 2.9 | 2.8 |
| <i>Georgia Avg.</i> | 88 | 84 | 56 | \$ 11,649 | 3.0 | 2.9 |

¹³ “Income Inequality,” <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/health-factors/social-economic-factors/income/income-inequality?year=2024>

¹⁴ County-level High School graduation rate data was collected from the educational report cards from the U.S. News and World Report. The Georgia state average for high school graduation rate data was from the Georgia Department of Education. All sources are listed in the references section.

Education has a powerful, transformative effect on upward mobilization and thus we include related metrics in this section to highlight the region’s standing, vis-à-vis the rest of the state. The percentage of county residents who have completed high school falls below the state average (88%) in all counties except for Lowndes (89% completion rate). This method is one way to evaluate the education level in a given county. Another metric is high school graduation rates, which provide information on a given high school’s success in facilitating student diploma completion. As Table 7 shows, this second measure for educational performance shows that the region’s high school graduation rates in nine of the 10 counties outperform the state average (84%).

To assess school-aged children’s academic proficiency, we include measures for reading and math scores. These measures gauge 3rd graders’ performance on standardized tests. Thus, scores below 3.0 indicate that the average pupil in each county is below the average 3rd grader while scores above 3.0 indicate that students in these counties outperformed national averages. The average reading scores for the region were slightly higher than the average math scores (2.86 versus 2.76) and a slight majority of counties fell just below national averages with both metrics. Additional educational support could be quite beneficial to Ben Hill, Brooks, and Cook counties.

The table above also reports data on the intersection between economics and education. Education spending per pupil in this region ranges from \$10,175 (Berrien County) to \$13,502 (Turner County). About half of the counties in the area under review fall below the state average in per pupil spending. Meanwhile, given the preceding discussion of economic hardships facing several areas under review, it is not surprising that several counties have an above average share of students participating in free or reduced lunch programs. In fact, nine of the 10 counties had more students receiving free or reduced lunches than seen in the average Georgia county. Brooks, Echols, and Turner counties all reportedly had over 90% of their school children in need of this support. Interestingly, multiple counties with the area’s highest Reading and Math scores also had below-average per pupil support (e.g., Berrien, Lanier, and Tift counties) while others with above average spending fell short of national testing averages (e.g., Ben Hill, Brooks, Irwin counties).



Coastal Plain’s community impact is extensive

Survey details and analysis

An original, electronic survey was drafted and administered throughout the service region starting in June 2024 and ending in late August of the same year. The survey was reviewed and approved by Valdosta State University’s IRB Office.¹⁵ The survey was distributed electronically and promoted throughout, and by, Coastal Plain Area EOA’s network throughout its service region. Respondents completed the survey by visiting Valdosta State University’s Qualtrics site and the results were subsequently analyzed by the report’s authors. A total of 815 surveys were submitted, though not all respondents answered every survey question. The counties surveyed were Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lowndes, Lanier, Tift, and Turner. A copy of the survey instrument is included in the appendix of this report.

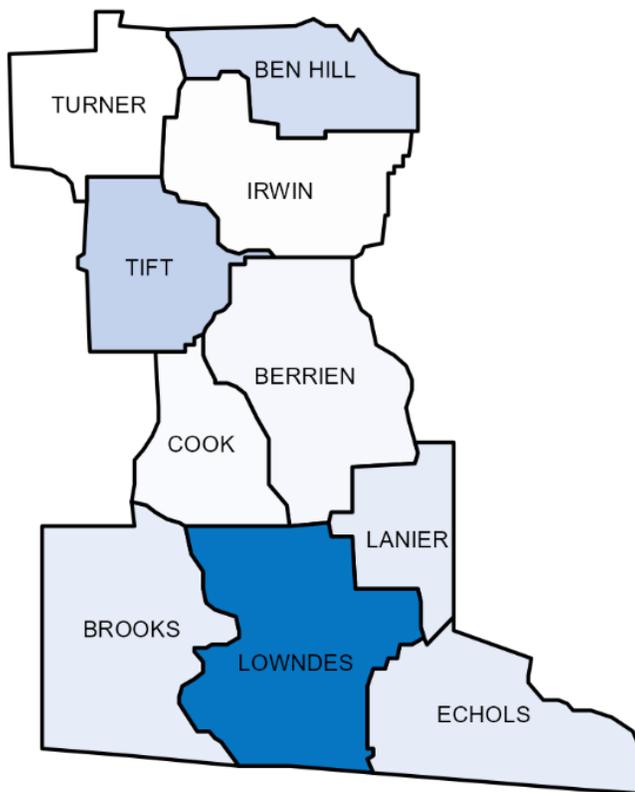
Table 8: Survey Response Breakdown by County (2024)

| | Number of Responses | Response Pct. | Population Pct. |
|----------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Berrien | 27 | 4 | 6 |
| Ben Hill | 94 | 13 | 7 |
| Brooks | 49 | 7 | 6 |
| Cook | 18 | 2 | 7 |
| Echols | 43 | 6 | 1 |
| Irwin | 44 | 6 | 3 |
| Lanier | 49 | 7 | 4 |
| Lowndes | 288 | 39 | 46 |
| Tift | 97 | 13 | 16 |
| Turner | 11 | 1 | 3 |

Table 8 provides a breakdown of the completed surveys by county. The largest response rate was from Lowndes County respondents while the lowest response rate was from Turner County. Table 8 provides information about each county’s relative weight in the sample as it includes the population and survey response share as a percentage of the entire 10-county region. This information can show to what extent a county’s survey responses were statistically equivalent to their population share of the region. Thus, for instance, in Ben Hill, Echols, and Irwin Counties, the table shows that the percentage of responses was greater than one might expect, given their population share of Coastal Plain’s service area. Conversely, Cook, Lowndes, and Turner Counties had somewhat smaller responses given the size of their respective populations, vis-à-vis the region. Figure 5 shows which counties had more survey responses (those shaded darker blue) than others in the region.

¹⁵ The IRB Protocol Number is 04519-2024 and was received on 5 June 2024.

Figure 5: Responses by county



***darker blue shading represents counties with a greater share of survey responses.*

Respondent profile

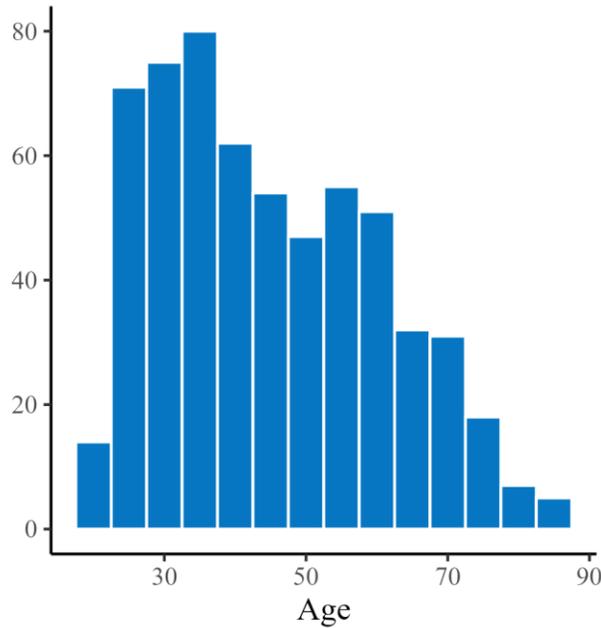
The survey respondents reflect a diverse cross-section across South Georgia. Table 9 offers a breakdown of the demographics of our survey sample. A majority of respondents identified as Black or African American (57.8% of the sample), while the second largest racial category was those who identified as White (29.8%). In terms of marital status, a plurality of the respondents reported being never married (38%) while married respondents (35%) were the next largest group in the sample. A majority of respondents (57%) also reported having a full-time job. Around 11% of our sample consisted of retirees, which was the second largest category of respondents. The sample's household income is reflective of the broader region, as 79% of participants reported incomes below \$50,000. Further, 54% reported household incomes below \$30,000, which is well below the county income averages listed in Table 3.

Table 9: Respondent Demographics

| Marital Status | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Married | Widowed | Divorced | Separated | Never Married |
| 35% | 8% | 14% | 5% | 38% |
| Age | | | | |
| 18 – 29 | 30 – 39 | 40 – 49 | 50 – 59 | 60+ |
| 22% | 24% | 18% | 16% | 20% |
| Household Income | | | | |
| <\$30,000 | \$30,001 - \$50,000 | \$50,001-\$70,000 | \$70,001-\$90,000 | >\$90,000 |
| 54% | 24% | 10% | 4% | 8% |
| Education | | | | |
| Some High School | High School | Some College | College | Advanced Degree |
| 9% | 29% | 36% | 16% | 10% |
| Race | | | | |
| African American | White | | Other | |
| 64% | 33% | | 3% | |

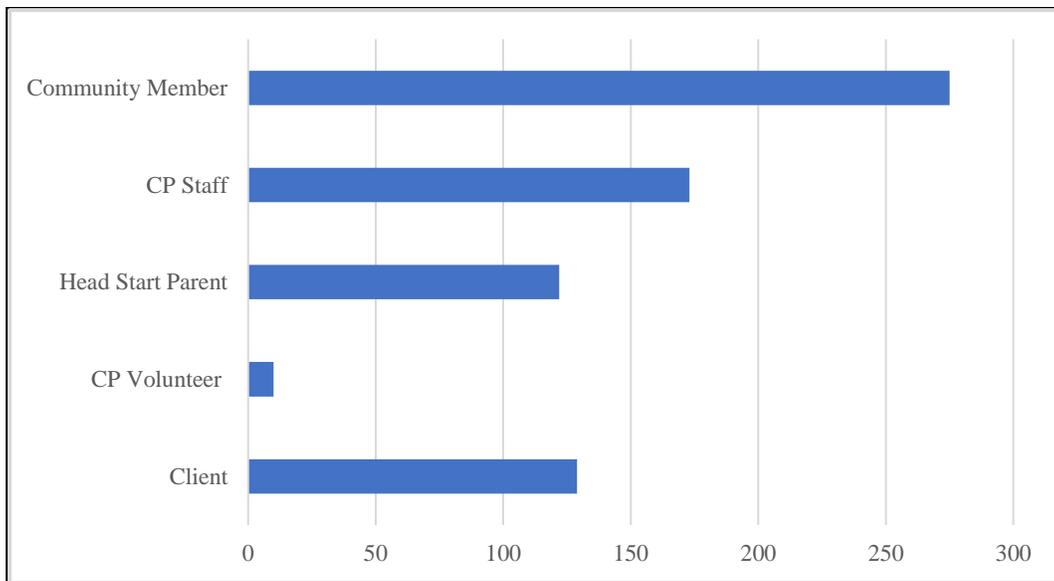
The figure below displays the age distribution of our respondents. The bulk of the survey respondents are between 25 and 60 years old, with the largest age group represented in the survey being adults in their 30s. The youngest and oldest adults represent the smallest age group in the sample, a trend that aligns with the age distribution in these counties.

Figure 6: Age distribution of survey respondents



Survey participants were also asked to share their background or connection to Coastal Plain Area EOA. Respondents could select more than one category of the following: community member or resident, Coastal Plain staff member, parent of a student in the Head Start program, Coastal Plain volunteer, Coastal Plain client, Coastal Plain board member, Coastal Plain business partner, or other (unspecified). Figure 7 shows the percentage of respondents' based on the aforementioned background categories. Most of those surveyed were community members (38%), staff (24%), client (18%), and/or a parent of a student in the Head Start program (17%). The sample represents different stakeholders in the Coastal Plain Area EOA programs, which is valuable for assessing the organization's performance and ability to meet community needs.

Figure 7: Respondent background connection with Coastal Plain Area EOA



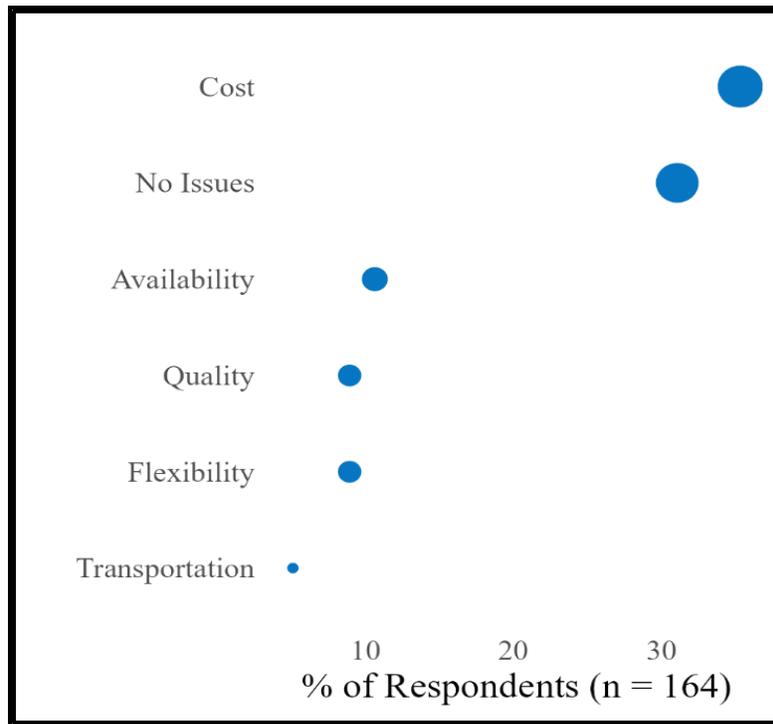
Head Start and childcare responses

Education remains a need for this area. Fortunately, the region has a strong presence and connection with Head Start. Out of those in our sample, 105 survey respondents currently have a child in one of the area's Head Start facilities. When considering those who currently have, or who have had, a student in one of the region's Head Start programs, 266 respondents (32.6%) fell into one of these categories. Of the various childcare services available through Coastal Plain Area EOA, Head Start was by far the most popular, with 76% of sample participants reportedly only using this program for their childcare needs. As Table 11 below shows, participants who have utilized this service have been very pleased with it, as 87.8% expressed being satisfied with this program.



In addition to Head Start, participants in our sample were also asked to share their thoughts on childcare in the region. Childcare remains a need for South Georgia and beyond. In the sample, 93 respondents claimed to have at least one child under the age of three years old in their home and 28 respondents reportedly had two children younger than three years old. Meanwhile, 134 respondents had a three or four-year-old child while 20 respondents had two children in this age group. Thus, childcare is a need for many in the sample—and many more across the region.

Figure 8: Obstacles to securing childcare



Although many respondents reportedly need childcare services, several residents reported challenges with securing suitable care. As Figure 8 shows, cost was the leading obstacle to survey participants. Licensed or certified childcare providers were in use by 37% of the sample, whereas a majority (51%) relied on family, friends, or neighbors to take care of their children. The high number of participants relying on family, friends, and neighbors may be a matter of convenience, or it may be due to the high costs and lack of available, quality care facilities. Indeed, the lack of quality, available care and limited hours of operation were mentioned as an issue for several in our sample. To further illustrate this point, we have compiled a directory of childcare centers in Coastal Plain’s network, and this is provided in the Appendix. The limited number of childcare providers in some areas underscores the need for additional facilities.

Given the concerns about widely available—and affordable—care, the survey also asked participants whether they were a grandparent caring for a child that is not theirs. Just 11% of those surveyed reported being a grandparent caring for a child that is not theirs. The survey also asked about the various childcare services used and only 24% of the sample had used any childcare service other than Head Start.



Children attend daycare at a Coastal Plain Area EOA affiliate.

Overall satisfaction with Coastal Plain Area EOA

Coastal Plain’s services have been utilized by many in the community. A large number (70%) of survey respondents have experience with, or have used, one or more of the organization’s services. The most commonly used services by those in the survey were: Head Start (44% of respondents benefitted from this program), Utility (water) assistance (35%), food vouchers (12%), weatherization (7%), educational assistance (5%), and, employment assistance (5%). In other words, the sample consists of many individuals who have at least some knowledge of the programs offered by the organization.

The views expressed by survey respondents indicate a great deal of satisfaction with the programs in question. Table 10 reports respondent satisfaction level while considering their background interaction with Coastal Plain. The highest satisfaction level reported in the table is from Head Start parents. The program is very popular within the sample, as more than 95% of these individuals were satisfied with the program. Clients—or those whom have used one or more programs—were also effusive in their support of the organization’s offerings. More than 82% of clients were satisfied with the programs that they have used. Coastal Plain staff members and citizens from the organization’s 10-county area also had positive views of the entity. All told, Coastal Plain was viewed very positively by the survey sample, as more than 72% of those surveyed held positive impressions.

Table 10: Overall ratings of Coastal Plain Area EOA (Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Dissatisfied)

| All Respondents | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 55.3% | 17.8% | 21.3% | 2.54% | 3.12% |
| Head Start Parents | | | | |
| 85.1% | 10.8% | 2.7% | 1.35% | - |
| Clients | | | | |
| 67.6% | 15.5% | 5.63% | 4.23% | 7.04% |
| Community Members | | | | |
| 40.1% | 13.6% | 39.5% | 2.26% | 4.52% |
| Staff | | | | |
| 65.3% | 25.0% | 6.94% | 1.39% | 1.39% |

Respondents were also asked about their views on those programs they have personally used. The survey asked clients to respond to whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied (or were neutral) on Coastal Plain’s programmatic offerings. Consistent with the discussion above, Table 11 shows that Head Start clients expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program. Nearly 90% of Head Start clients were satisfied with the early childhood development services. Respondents who have sought food vouchers had a similarly positive satisfaction level: more than 85% of food voucher beneficiaries were pleased with this program. Prescription drug and utility assistance clients reported high satisfaction levels as well (83.3% and 87%, respectively). The survey results indicate some potential areas for improvement moving forward. Those individuals who utilized minor home repair were mostly satisfied, but nearly 30% were neutral or indifferent on the program.

Table 11: Program Satisfaction

| | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| Head Start | 87.8% | 10.3% | 1.88% |
| Food Vouchers | 85.4% | 12.2% | 2.44% |
| GED Training | 75.0% | 12.5% | 12.5% |
| Minor Home Repair | 57.1% | 28.6% | 14.3% |
| Prescription Drug | 83.3% | 16.7% | - |
| Utility Assistance | 87.0% | 10.3% | 2.74% |
| Weatherization | 66.7% | 25.9% | 7.41% |



Coastal Plain staff conduct personal hygiene drive for area residents

Future and unmet needs

The needs assessment survey also asked participants to share their thoughts on both unmet and future needs. This question was an open-ended question and thus summarizing responses to these questions is more complicated than the discussions from the preceding sections. Consequently, we have created word clouds to capture the expressed future and unmet needs. Terms in larger fonts indicate those issues that were mentioned more often by survey participants.

Figure 9: Unmet needs word cloud



The most commonly referenced unmet needs focused on housing, childcare, and factors linked with economic strain. Affordable housing is the issue most often cited by survey participants. Related to this, several individuals raised concerns about homelessness as well as the ability of some to complete home repairs. Childcare was mentioned by several people in the sample as well. This is consistent with the preceding section where survey respondents shared concerns about the high cost and lack of available licensed childcare providers. Economic stressors were listed as the other broad category of unmet needs. Respondents identified utility costs, healthcare, and access to quality, good-paying jobs as additional unmet needs in their respective communities.

Figure 10: Future needs word cloud



The final survey question asked participants to identify upcoming or future community needs. The open-ended responses show some overlap with the unmet needs discussion. Individuals anticipate that affordable and safe housing will continue to be a community need in the future. Likewise, childcare services are expected to be a persistent need for many communities in the sample area. Mental healthcare was listed as both an unmet and future need by many of those who took part in the survey. Access to quality, good-paying jobs is another issue for organizations like Coastal Plain to continue to address in the future based on the responses in both Figures 9 and 10.

Community Action Plan

For the upcoming cycle, Coastal Plain Area EOA has put together a multifaceted Community Action Plan (CAP) that relies on its 10-county network to revitalize local communities, remove obstacles to self-sufficiency, and empower residents throughout South Georgia. Coastal Plain will do this through focusing their efforts on:

- Employment strategies
- Education and cognitive development
- Income, infrastructure, and asset-building
- Housing
- Health and social/behavioral development
- Services supporting multiple domains

Employment strategies

External data for the region show room for growth, particularly with respect to unemployment levels, the number of individuals living below the poverty line, and median household income. Thus, programs designed to augment jobseekers' skillsets and capabilities can greatly enhance the economic outlook for those across the 10-county region. Coastal Plain recognizes this and plans to continue supporting employment strategies through three programs. Coastal Plain Area EOA has supported vocational training classes, which seek to boost the education and employment skills of those in their service area and plans to continue these efforts. These efforts largely come in the form of Coastal Plain's G.E.D. assistance program, where individuals are allowed a maximum of \$160 to assist with G.E.D. testing or acquiring related materials (Coastal Plain Community Development Block Grants, 2024). Coastal Plain Area EOA also offers job coaching or employment counseling programs. Job coaching or employment counseling programs are defined as providing program participants with interview coaching, resume evaluation, and skills development, and represent ongoing efforts to support rural Georgia economic development. The third area in which Coastal Plain plans to continue supporting employment strategies is through the provision of employment supplies. This includes providing support for the acquisition of uniforms, clothing, and other supplies that support employment in their service area.

The combined, intended effect of these programs speaks directly to the obstacles and challenges facing those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. Investing in the aforementioned programs can help participants secure financial stability by reducing employment barriers thus fostering sustained economic independence.

Education and cognitive development

Education and cognitive development are growth opportunities for many areas of the country and Georgia is no exception. The area under review has third grade math and reading scores comparable to that of the rest of the state. However, South Georgia's high school graduation rates and the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree fall behind the rest of the state. In 2022, around 33.6% of Georgians who were 25 years old or older possessed a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Quick Facts, 2024). Conversely, just 16.2% of those living in the 10 counties in this study had earned a bachelor's degree. Consequently, Coastal Plain Area EOA's CAP includes Postsecondary Education services that include scholarship payments to cover the purchase of supplies necessary to increase adult education, which can result in gainful employment upon successful completion.

Income, infrastructure, and asset-building

Empowering individuals through income, infrastructure, and asset-building is a major need area for many residents throughout the U.S.—South Georgia is no exception to this. The tables above tell this story. There are more individuals facing food insecurity in the 10-county service region than on average in Georgia. Likewise, the percentage of individuals in poverty in this region surpasses the state average. The average median household income for all 10 counties (\$43,953) in this study is well below the state average (\$66,507) by more than \$20,000. To address the financial challenges facing many in the area, Coastal Plain Area EOA will support counseling services to empower individuals to identify strategies to increase household income, reduce household expenses, and thus strengthen their overall financial health. This may take the form of budget counseling, credit counseling, or other lessons to support individuals' overall financial well-being.

Housing

Another component of the CAP includes multiple initiatives to support stable and secure housing for South Georgia residents. Coastal Plain Area EOA will continue two housing programs—rental assistance and the City of Valdosta Housing Payment program—that comply with CSBG guidelines to alleviate stress associated with higher rent and housing prices. Housing support is particularly necessary in this region as the percentage of residents facing housing burdens is greater than the state average in six out of the 10 counties in Coastal Plain Area EOAs' service network. Related to this, the homeownership population in five of the 10 counties lags behind the Georgia average. Three of the five counties below the state average are among the largest counties in terms of population in Coastal Plain's network (i.e., Lowndes, Tift, and Ben Hill Counties).

The housing programs run by Coastal Plain are “designed to assist low-income families with the establishment and retention of safe and affordable housing.” The first of these programs is the Rental Assistance program, which includes two different elements—(1) financial assistance for rent/mortgage payments to those qualified individuals facing a housing crisis and (2) the City of Valdosta Housing Payment program, which delivers financial assistance in the form of deposits, rent payments, and mortgage payments to help individuals establish or retain housing. Housing support also takes the form of utility payment assistance, which provides emergency support to avoid interruption in utility services. A third area of assistance comes in

the form of housing counseling services, which seek to empower homeless individuals to secure and retain permanent housing arrangements.

Health and social/behavioral development

Coastal Plain Area EOA is committed to furthering health and social/behavioral development through the food card program. This initiative aligns with the CSBG guidelines on these services as it can help prevent the development of long-term illnesses, increase resources for independent living conditions, and provide emergency food allocations. The food cards program will authorize case managers to provide financial assistance to those experiencing food insecurity.

Services supporting multiple domains

To further enhance its commitment to serving South Georgians' needs, Coastal Plain Area EOA will remain committed to accurate and up-to-date case management efforts to develop and oversee customers' individualized case management plans. Case management will allow for reliable tracking of individual customers to ascertain whether they have achieved or maintained the capacity to meet basic needs for 90 days. Steps will be taken to maintain accurate eligibility determination. Basic demographic data will be collected and entered into the Easytrak Organizational Management System to not only identify household needs, but also to identify eligibility for other Coastal Plain Area EOA programs. Overseeing services that support multiple domains aligns with the CSBG's guidelines "to ensure the all-encompassing coordination of activities that promote economic stability and...self-sufficiency," while utilizing the "Easytrak Client system ensures a consistent and unbiased collection" of household demographic data.

Conclusion

Coastal Plain Area EOA's Community Action Plan is a multifaceted response to the current and ongoing needs facing the residents throughout South Georgia. Operating programs that improve job readiness, increase the region's overall education levels, and boost financial literacy will be valuable efforts to address the economic needs and overcome the economic strains that were revealed from the external data and survey responses. These programs will also go a long way in mitigating unmet and future needs for the organization's 10-county service area.

Furthermore, the housing situation in the area needs continued redress. The survey results underscore this need, as many participants identified affordable housing availability as a serious issue in the region. Home repairs and ensuring the safety and security of homes in the area also remain opportunities to improve the lives of many South Georgians. Existing Coastal Plain programs like Weatherization can be important resources to address these community needs.

Lastly, the Community Action Plan (CAP) drafted by Coastal Plain speaks to another acute need for the region: short-term resources for food insecurity and/or utility assistance. The programs and services proposed in the CAP offer much-needed support for residents to overcome these challenges. Indeed, the organization's overall mission goes to great lengths to empower South Georgians to not only survive short-term obstacles but also to flourish in the long-term.

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Appendices

Figure 11: Weighted averages for greatest concerns to the community

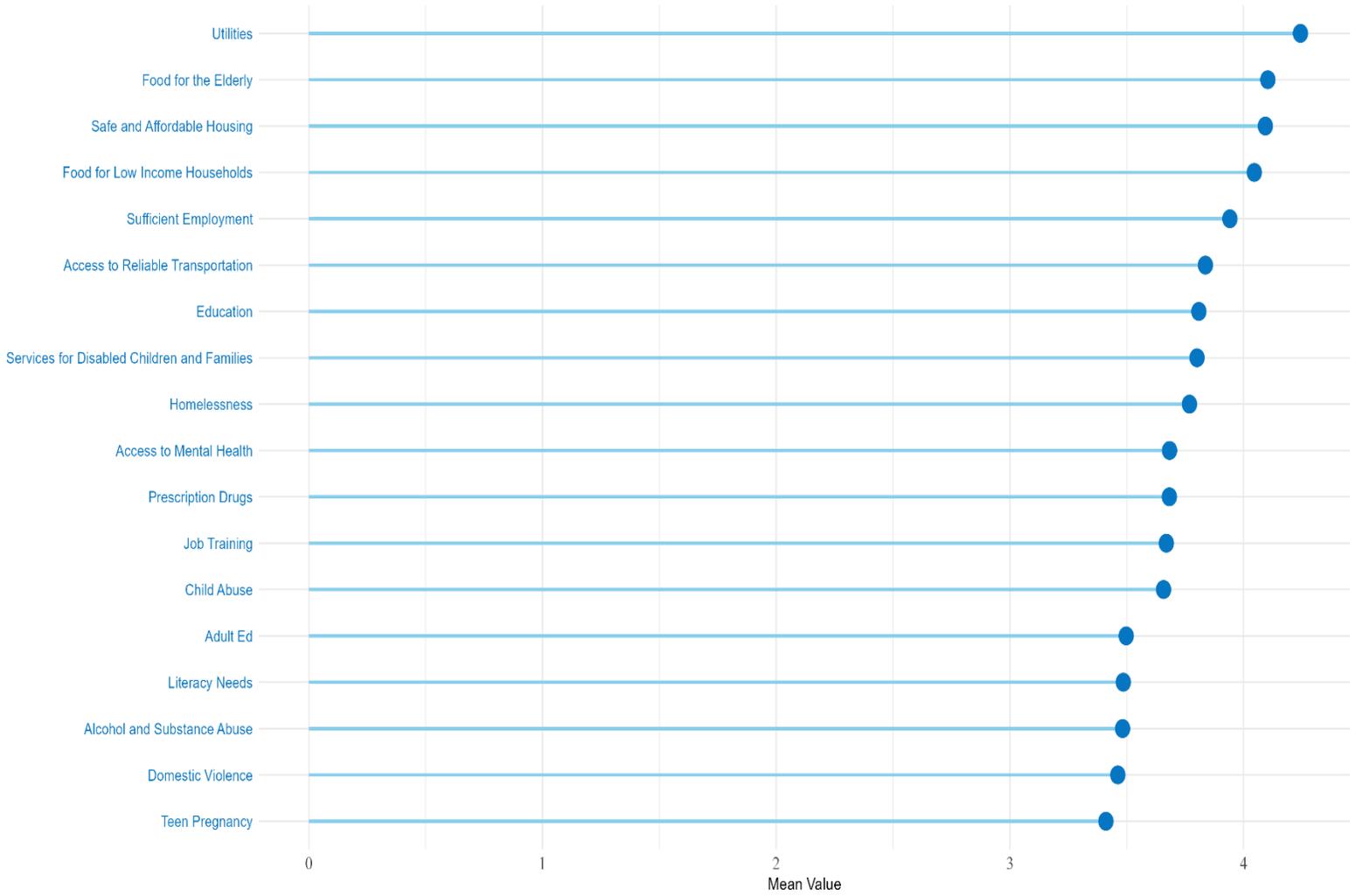
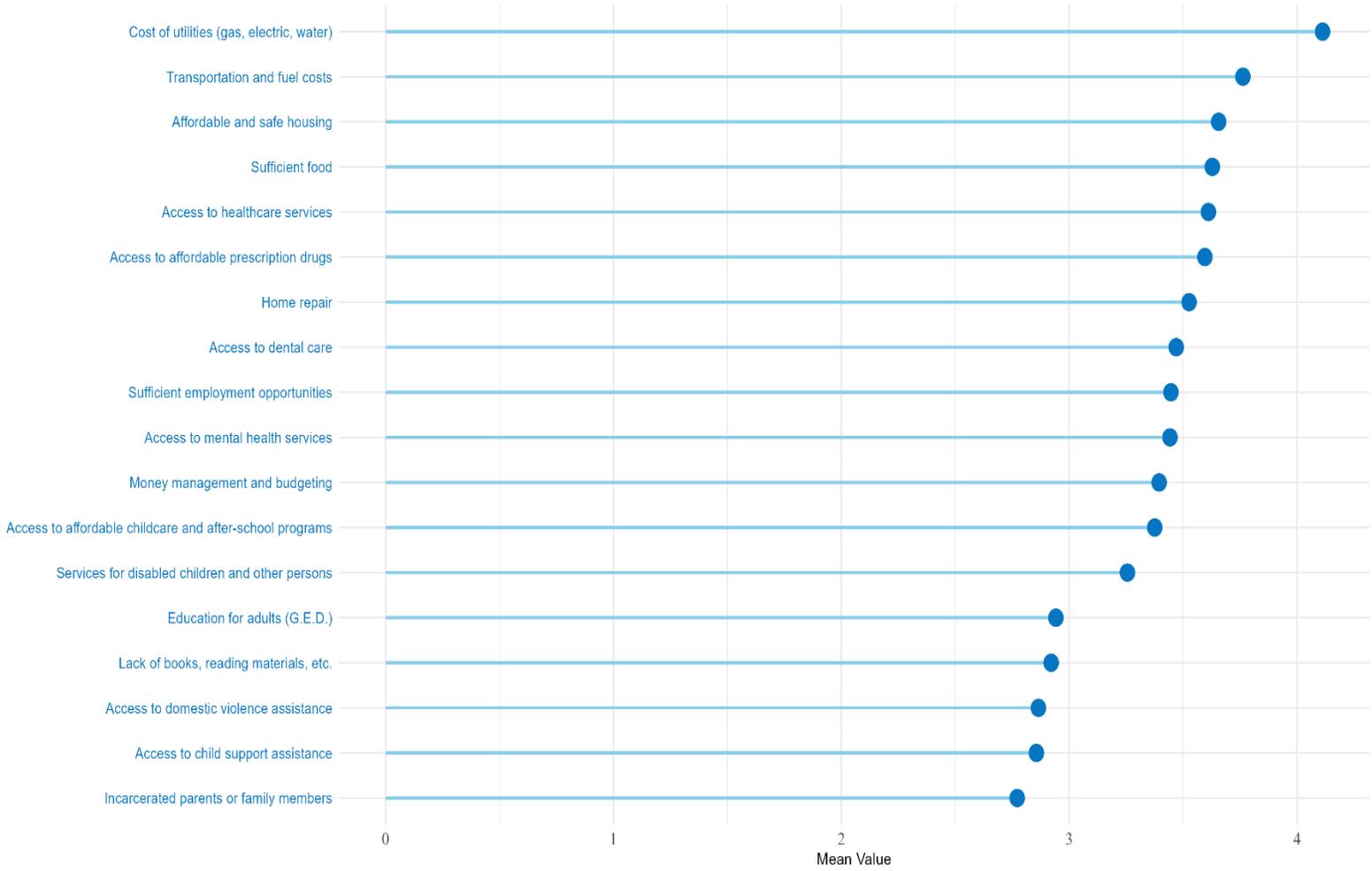


Figure 12: Weighted averages for greatest concerns to the community



Childcare inventory by county

Ben Hill County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------|
| Bright Ones Learning Center Inc. | Childcare Center | 143 Mayes St | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 409-0808 | |
| Lil Munchkins Daycare | Childcare Center | 149 Paulk Park Rd | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 423-8525 | |
| Play to Learn Daycare and Learning Center | Childcare Center | 408 N Grant St | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 409-2219 | |
| Buddy Bear Academy | Childcare Center | 308 Dewey McGlamry Rd | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 423-7788 | |
| Ben Hill Coastal Head Start | Early Childhood Development Program | 401 E Altamaha St | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 423-3191 | |
| Ms. Pam's Playhouse | Daycare | 1079 W Roanoke Dr | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 423-5169 | |
| The Learner's Guide | Daycare | 609 E Central Ave | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 380-8033 | |
| Ben Hill County Pre-Kindergarten | Preschool | 405 N Longstreet St | Fitzgerald, Ga 31750 | (229) 409-5598 | |

Berrien County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|--|------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Heavenly Hands Daycare | Daycare | 404 Hull Ave | Nashville, Ga 31639 | (229) 237-3396 | |
| Faith Pre-School and Learning Center | Preschool | 302 E Marion Ave | Nashville, Ga 31639 | (229) 686-7977 | |
| Joyful Noise Childcare and Learning Center | Childcare Center | 302 E Marion Ave | Nashville, Ga 3139 | (229) 686-7977 | Might be the same as Faith Pre-School |
| Jesus Loves Me Daycare LLC | Daycare | 342 Pauline Ave | Ray City, Ga 31645 | (229) 455-3333 | |
| Nashville Methodist Pre-School | Preschool | 304 S Berrien St | Nashville, Ga 31639 | (229) 686-3006 | |
| Small World Education Center | Childcare Center | 617 E Marion Ave | Nashville, Ga 31639 | (229) 494-9044 | |

Brooks County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|---|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------|
| Brooks County Early Learning Center | Preschool | 1081 Barwick Rd | Quitman, Ga 31643 | (229) 588-2350 | |
| Preparing For The Future Childcare Center | Childcare Center | 1210 S Lee St | Quitman, Ga 31643 | (407) 454-1467 | |
| Amazing Angels Childcare Center, LLC | Childcare Center | 504 E Lafayette St | Quitman, Ga 31643 | (229) 939-9091 | |
| Motivation Daycare | Daycare | 210 E Lafayette St | Quitman, Ga 31643 | (804) 517-1519 | |
| All 4 Kids Future | Daycare | 1010 N Jefferson St | Quitman, Ga 31643 | (229) 605-9903 | |

Cook County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-------|
| Nurtured Roots Learning Center | Childcare Center | 518 S Elm St | Adel, Ga 31620 | (229) 896-5579 | |
| Little Blessings | Childcare Center | 802 North Cleveland Ave | Adel, Ga 31620 | (229) 507-3594 | |
| Holy Community Day Care Center | Daycare | 501 W 8 th St | Adel, Ga 31620 | (229) 896-5250 | |
| Candy Cane Learning Center | Childcare Center | 404 S Martin Luther King Jr Dr | Adel, Ga 31620 | (229) 375-0020 | |
| Little Sunshine's Daycare and Learning Center LLC | Daycare | 305 Adams St | Sparks, Ga 31647 | (229) 251-2856 | |
| Cook Head Start | Early Childhood Development Program | 504 W 1 st St | Adel, Ga 31620 | (229) 896-7322 | |
| Be Happy Daycare | Daycare | 603 N Hutchinson Ave | Adel, Ga 31620 | (229) 896-5345 | |

Irwin County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-------|
| Irwin County Head Start | Early Childhood Development Program | 310 Vo Tech Rd | Ocilla, Ga 31774 | (229) 468-5712 | |

Lanier County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| Carol's Kidz | Daycare | 75 S Mill St | Lakeland, Ga 31635 | (229) 569-0706 | |
| Lanier County Head Start | Early Childhood Development Program | 104 S Oak St | Lakeland, Ga 31635 | (229) 482-3467 | |
| Youth IMPACT Center | Afterschool Center | 25 W Murrell Ave | Lakeland, Ga 31635 | (386) 984-6304 | |

Lowndes County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| O2B Kids Valdosta | Childcare Center | 3440 Old U.S. 41 N | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 213-9616 | |
| Tender Years Learning Center | Daycare | 1902 Barack Obama Blvd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 242-7130 | |
| Little Einstein's Learning Center | Childcare Center | 4323 Dasher Grove Rd | Hahira, Ga 31632 | (229) 247-2557 | |
| Bright Start Preschool Learning Center | Daycare/Afterschool Program | 109 Barack Obama Blvd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 658-4760 | |
| Angel Learning Center | Daycare/Afterschool Program | 426 Murray Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 244-8010 | |
| Azalea Academy | Daycare/Afterschool Program | 3460 Jimmy Rodgers Way | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 252-8232 | |
| Kidz 'R' Kidz Learning Academy | Childcare Center | 2900 N Oak St | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 474-4478 | |
| Watch Me Grow Learning Place | Daycare | 500 E M.L.K. Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 262-2967 | |
| Tee Tee' Learning Center | Daycare | 940 Lakeside Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 232-5659 | |
| Bree's Creative Learning Childcare Center | Childcare Center | 508 University Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 469-7254 | |
| Brilliant Minds Academy of Georgia | Childcare Center | 2408 Bemiss Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 469-4074 | |
| Kreative Kidsz Academy | Childcare Center | 1794 E Park Ave | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 300-5747 | |

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|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| Glorified Learning Academy | Childcare Center | 1521 Cypress St | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 469-4946 | |
| Little Angels Pre-School and Childcare Center Inc. | Childcare Center | 512 Barrack Obama Blvd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 253-0083 | |
| First Step Learning Daycare | Daycare | 1123 Dunwoody Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (850) 779-0171 | |
| SGMC Childcare | Childcare Center | 2306 Bemiss Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 253-0509 | |
| Home 2 Childcare and Development | Childcare Center | 633 E Gordon St | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 244-4300 | |
| Brookfield Academy | Daycare | 409 Brookfield Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 253-1329 | |
| Children's Friend Learning Center | Childcare Center | 1902 Barack Obama Blvd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 242-7130 | |
| Oma's Learning Center and Daycare | Daycare | 1345 W Hill Ave | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 247-2313 | |
| Christine's Daycare | Daycare | 1024 Johnson St | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 506-5212 | |
| Childcare Network | Daycare | 424 Connell Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 247-7230 | |
| Childcare Network | Daycare | 3584 Mt Zion Church Rd | Valdosta Ga 31601 | (299) 242-1895 | |
| K&H Learning Academy | Childcare Center | 4112 Aslan Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 671-4949 | |
| Childcare Network | Daycare | 519 St Augustine Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 242-7089 | |
| Mrs. Neka's Creative Hearts Childcare | Childcare Center | 1670 A Mercury Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31605 | (229) 462-8387 | |
| Precious Treasures Daycare | Daycare | 409 Connell Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 244-4672 | |
| Happy Feet Academy Preschool | Preschool | 1112 N Patterson St | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 506-9196 | |
| Coastal Plain Head Start | Early Childhood Development Program | 1613 Ulmer Ave | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 244-6300 | |
| Creative Learning Preschool & Tutoring | Childcare Center | Moody AFB | Valdosta, Ga 31605 | (229) 352-3619 | |
| Bree's Creative Preschool | Preschool | 3905 Inner Perimeter Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31605 | (229) 232-5036 | |

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|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| Red Trolleys Daycare Services | Daycare | 1212 S Patterson St #6350 | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 469-7923 | |
| Bemiss Academy | Daycare | 5111 Bemiss Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31605 | (229) 474-4004 | |
| Loving Arms Childcare | Childcare Center | 213 Breckenridge Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31605 | (229) 269-3530 | |
| Simons Daycare | Daycare | 313 Webster St | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 740-0587 | |
| Tender Years Learning Center | Daycare | 469 Lakes Blvd | Lake Park, Ga 31636 | (229) 559-8880 | |
| Rainbow Learning Center | Daycare | 200 North Forrest St | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 244-9523 | |
| Our Little Blessing Preschool | Preschool | 3737 Inner Perimeter Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 293-7996 | |
| Integrity Builders Childcare | Childcare Center | 2213 S Sherwood Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229)444-7168 | |
| Open Doors Child Development Center | Childcare Center | 2686 James Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 262-2179 | |
| Higher Heights Learning Center | Childcare Center | 507 W Hill Ave | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 244-4420 | |
| Miss Mothers Kiddie Care | Childcare Center | 213 N Nelson St | Hahira Ga 31632 | (229) 796-3766 | |
| Carter's Family Home Childcare | Childcare Center | 822 Lausanne Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 241-0077 | |
| Josiah Christian School | Daycare | 1307 W Alden Ave | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 585-1892 | |
| Kids Depot | Daycare | 702 W Cranford Ave A | Valdosta, Ga 31602 | (229) 241-7321 | |
| Tender Moments Family Childcare | Childcare Center | 5707 Railroad Ave | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 356-8044 | |
| Kesha's Kiddie Care | Daycare | 4930 White Water Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 559-3787 | |
| Kat's Happytime Preschool | Preschool | 104 Kelly Dr | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 242-0232 | |
| Patricia's Daycare & Learning | Daycare | 2597 Loch Laurel Rd | Valdosta, Ga 31601 | (229) 242-7264 | |

Tift County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|-------|
| Childcare Network | Childcare Center | 1925 Whiddon Mill Rd | Tifton, Ga 31793 | (866) 521-5437 | |
| High Hope Academy | Childcare Center | 2732 Central Ave S #F | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 373-1388 | |
| Maggie Campbells Gingerbread House | Daycare | 719 Ridge Ave S | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 388-9494 | |
| Potter's House Childcare Center | Childcare Center | 1800 Central Ave | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 382-4418 | |
| Little Miracles Daycare | Daycare | 334 E Golden Rd | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 382-2853 | |
| Miss Daisy's Darlings Daycare | Daycare | 3004 U.S. 41 S | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 387-7172 | |
| Lollipop Learning Center | Childcare Center | 609 Timmons Dr | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 445-3955 | |
| Bundles of Love Daycare Center | Daycare | 315 16 th St E | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 382-2820 | |
| Tiny Tots Childcare | Childcare Center | 212 Victor Dr | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 283-2657 | |
| Childcare Network | Childcare Center | 3148 Fullwood Rd | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 382-5588 | |
| Tifton Head Start Center | Early Childhood Development Program | 65 Tifton Eldorado Rd | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 382-5110 | |
| Grace Childcare Learning Center | Childcare Center | 111 11 th St | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 445-3663 | |
| First Choice Preparatory Academy | Preschool | 1938 Old Ocilla Rd | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 396-5339 | |
| Kids Advocacy Coalition | Childcare Center | 1815 Chestnut Ave #4699 | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 382-9919 | |
| Pam's Precious Moment | Daycare | 212 Victor Dr | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 238-2657 | |
| Auntie Marie's Family Home Childcare | Daycare | | Tifton, Ga 31794 | (229) 339-3965 | |

Turner County childcare center inventory

| Organization/Provider | Description | Address | City/St/Zip | Phone | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Lil' Blessings Inc | Daycare | 527 E College Ave | Ashburn, Ga 31714 | (229) 567- 4788 | |
| Dream Builders Learning Center II | Childcare Center | 767 Teresa Dr | Ashburn, Ga 31714 | (912) 312- 2189 | |
| Doodle Bugs Preschool | Preschool | 240 E Monroe Ave | Ashburn, Ga 31714 | (229) 567- 9311 | |
| Coastal Plains Head Start | Early Childhood Development Center | 524 Martin Luther King Jr Dr | Ashburn, Ga 31714 | (229) 567- 9233 | |