ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN THE WACCAMAW REGION

Protecting the Economic Health of Our Region by Mitigating Disaster Impacts

Waccamaw Economic Development District

Economic Resiliency and Disaster Recovery Plan

We would like to acknowledge the following organizations for collaborating on the creation of this resiliency plan.

Town of Hemingway

Town of Lane

Williamsburg County Government

Town of Greeleyville

Town of Kingstree

City of Myrtle Beach

Town of Loris

Georgetown County Government

City of Georgetown

Town of Pawleys Island

Town of Atlantic Beach

City of North Myrtle Beach

City of Conway

Horry County Government

The Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation

South Carolina Workforce Development

City of Conway Chamber of Commerce

City of Myrtle Beach Downtown Redevelopment Corporation

Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce

Williamsburg Regional Hospital

Georgetown County School District

Williamsburg Technical College

Horry County School District

Santee Cooper

Coast RTA

Georgetown County Water and Sewer District

Grand Strand Water and Sewer District

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Resiliency in the Waccamaw Region

Resiliency has become a popular topic in recent years. Resilience refers to a community's ability to absorb an event or shock and return to normality following a period of recovery. The path for towns, cities, counties, and regions to return to normality can be greatly influenced by how prepared they are in advance of the shock or stress incurred by the community.

The Waccamaw Economic Development District, which consists of Georgetown County, Horry County, and Williamsburg County, was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the United States Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration in 1970. The Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments provides staff support for the Economic Development District and is responsible for writing the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Plan (CEDS) and the CEDS annual updates. Resilience is included in the CEDS document. However, this Regional Disaster Recovery and Economic Resiliency Plan takes a more in-depth look at the region's ability to bounce back better from disasters.

While the impetus behind the plan was the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting economic impacts, an opportunity was also presented to look at the numerous environmental and man-made events which have occurred in recent years and how they modified various communities within the region. The following statistic relays the importance of addressing economic resilience in terms of natural disasters:

For the ten-year period from 2010 to 2019, the three South Carolina counties to experience the highest numbers of federally declared natural disasters were Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg, with twenty-six, twenty-three, and twenty-three, respectively.

This document is intended to be a regional plan for economic resilience and was made possible by the Economic Development Administration CARES Act Supplemental Grant. It reflects the experiences of the three-county region known

as the Waccamaw Region, made up of Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg counties, and looks to the future through the lens of resilience.

Building Resilience for the Future

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) defines economic resiliency as the ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions, or 'shocks' to its economic base. The South Carolina Office of Resilience currently defines resilience as "the ability of communities, economies, and ecosystems within South Carolina to anticipate, absorb, recover, and thrive when presented with environmental change and natural hazards." The state's resilience plan is currently in production and will be available in mid-2023.

Shocks are identified as sudden events that cause severe, immediate disruption in a community. An example of a shock may be a natural disaster, such as a hurricane. The COVID-19 pandemic may also be seen as a shock. Stresses take place over time, and gradually weaken the overall security of the community. This may include impacts such as persistent high unemployment.

The interrelation between economic resilience and disaster resilience, and their impact on the Waccamaw region, require that these challenges be addressed together. Shocks and stresses are not defined by county borders and are therefore effectively mitigated when evaluating the entire region.

In 2011's National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF), published by FEMA in collaboration with other federal agencies and departments, six Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) were created. The RSFs are Community Planning and Capacity Building; Economic, Health, and Social Services; Housing; Infrastructure Systems; and Natural and Cultural Resources. Each RSF has a Coordinating Agency, as well as primary and support agencies to complete the mission of the RSF.
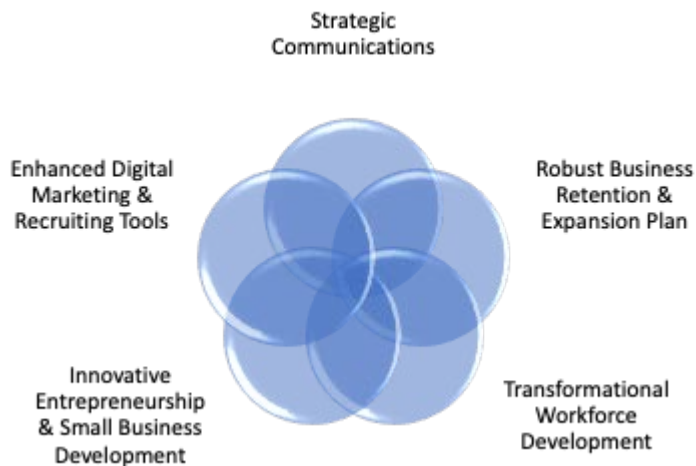
The mission of the Economic RSF is to use the expertise of the Federal Government to assist state, local, and tribal governments as well as the private sector to (1) sustain and/or rebuild businesses and employment, and (2) develop economic opportunities that result in sustainable and economically resilient communities after large-scale and catastrophic events. The Department of Commerce (DOC) is the lead federal agency in the Economic RSF, and the EDA is designated to carry out the mission on behalf of the DOC.

Economic Resiliency

Economic resilience has been brought into focus in recent years due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As economies become more intertwined and interconnected, economic development strategies must focus on how to prepare for and react to global economic disruptors.

One of the core principles of the National Disaster Recovery Framework is Resilience & Sustainability. In <u>Designing for Resilience</u>: <u>Preparing for Extreme Events</u>, the definition of economic resilience is refined to this level: The resilience of a community or an economy is measured by the level of vulnerability present before a disaster, the capacity to respond to and recover from a disaster, and the degree of community preparedness to both reduce vulnerabilities and increase capacities.

In this scenario, it is assumed the pre-disaster baseline represents what is normal for the community. It also implies that resilience is a function of the tipping point between a community's vulnerabilities and their ability to recover to that baseline measure once vulnerabilities are breached. The greater the gap between these two points, the less resilient the community and their economy. To close this range and improve resilience, vulnerabilities must be reduced which will increase safeguards from possible future events.

Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic has forced communities to address resilience with expedience. The Waccamaw region has been adjusting not only to changing community functions, but also to a changing business climate that has forced urgency in balancing new aspects of safety with productivity. This has required a modification in undertaking new economic development actions.

In the Waccamaw region, this has meant creating new opportunities for new businesses and industries while continuing to support and strengthen existing businesses that have experienced severe fluctuations in operations during the pandemic.

In addressing the needs of the region, those involved with economic development must address both steady-state initiatives, such as promoting business continuity plans and preparedness, and responsive initiatives, such as establishing a process for rapid communication to coordinate impact assessments. According to the EDA, "steady-state initiatives tend to be long-term efforts that seek to bolster the community or region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives can include establishing capabilities for the economic development organization to

be responsive to the region's recovery needs following an incident." In examining the region and identifying these initiatives, this will serve to mitigate impacts to the economic health of our region in the future.

Economic resiliency is not limited to an individual organization, business, or industry in the region. Economic resiliency relies on collaboration from a broad collective of stakeholders across every sector and situation. The numerous inputs that contribute to a regional economy create an environment in which economic resilience may only be attained by collective actions in which all stakeholders are working together to mitigate weakness in the system.

It is the ability, capacity, and willingness of these stakeholders to take these collective actions to ensure resilience across the region, regardless of whether the challenge they face is a natural or man-made disaster. To create an environment of collaboration, organizations must not silo their efforts in a micro-community approach but must build trust within the regional collaboration long before the crisis impacts the region.

Regional plans can be beneficial to local communities because many of the "shocks" communities experience do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. In addition, some areas within a region may be incorporated and represented by a governing body such as a town or city, while other unincorporated communities exist under county jurisdiction.

The National Association of Counties has identified three areas public administrators may pursue to create more resilient local economies:

1. Long-Range Planning
2. Support for Targeted Industries, Local Businesses, and Entrepreneurs
3. Workforce Development and Education

Within these three areas, focusing on aspects such as downtown revitalizations, creating a community gathering space, intergovernmental collaboration, diversifying all economic sectors, and leveraging infrastructure to attract private investment are all crucial for economic resilience.

The long-range planning process provides an ideal opening to enlist the guidance of stakeholders engaged in economic development. Organizations that seize the opportunity to bring these local experts together, especially in rural areas, can identify strategies to strengthen economic resilience.

Providing support and investing in targeted industries can be difficult when there is uncertainty concerning the type of industry that will succeed in the region, coupled with limited funding for development and high competition. When looking for potential investment into the region, it is in the interest of the communities to attract manufacturers, businesses, and services that create products to support the established industries that are present in the community.

Public administrators also can build relationships with local educational institutions, other local and state offices, and other institutions that provide targeted job training to improve the local workforce. The Waccamaw region has experienced a shift in the workforce in recent years. Due to instability in the workforce in recent years, support for growing a strong, stable workforce is needed. This will attract new industry and encourage development of the regional economy.
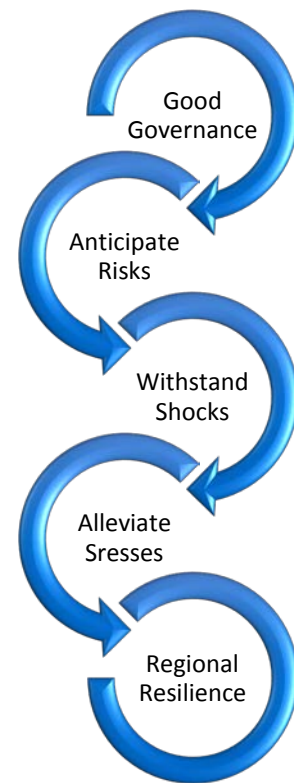
Training individuals or reeducating those who have been displaced in recent years should focus early efforts to fulfill sector-specific needs. In the Waccamaw region, there is currently a labor shortage for healthcare, accommodation and food services, and retail. These sectors are top industries in all three counties that make up the Waccamaw Region.

Resilient Building Codes

One vital area to resilience in the public sector is the ability of local governments to issue building permits, inspect new construction and improvements to buildings, and ensure "minimal safety requirements for construction." (HUD) During the pandemic, it was recognized that the current air circulation patterns throughout buildings were posing a risk due to COVID-19 being an airborne virus. Many buildings, especially health care facilities,

schools, and public buildings, began to retrofit their air circulation systems to reduce impacts from potential virus exposure.

Building codes should not only consider safety, but also begin to incorporate more sustainable design to combat increasing weather impacts. Ensuring that local governments are adhering to resilient building codes will help to mitigate risk for citizens. The National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) published a report in 2021 entitled *Mitigation Saves: Mitigation Saves up to $13 per $1 Invested*.

In this report, NIBS identified several measures to better protect our buildings from disaster:

- Adopting and enforcing current building codes is among the most efficient ways to build a resilient society.
- Model codes make buildings safe, but above-code design can reduce both damage and long-term costs.
- The nation could invest over $500 billion to retrofit existing buildings but save over $2.2 trillion.
- Retrofitting lifelines protects the whole economy, saving up to $31 per $1 invested.
- Federal grants saved $160 billion and cost $27 billion, a 6:1 ratio, with savings in each state.

In addition to these key measures, NIBS quantified the value of resilience to bring more transparency to the economic value of mitigation efforts. The results showed that adopting a base code resulted in $6 to $10 savings for every dollar invested.

National Institute of BUILDING SCIENCES	ADOPT CODE	ABOVE CODE	BUILDING RETROFIT	LIFELINE RETROFIT	FEDERAL GRANTS
Overall Benefit-Cost Ratio	11:1	4:1	4:1	4:1	6:1
Cost ($ billion)	$1/year	$4/year	$520	$0.6	$27
Benefit ($ billion)	$13/year	$16/year	$2200	$2.5	$160
Riverine Flood	6:1	5:1	6:1	8:1	7:1
Hurricane Surge	not applicable	7:1	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable
Wind	10:1	5:1	6:1	7:1	5:1
Earthquake	12:1	4:1	13:1	3:1	3:1
Wildland-Urban Interface Fire	not applicable	4:1	2:1	not applicable	3:1

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Source: **National Institute of Building Sciences**

FEMA conducted a similar study showing the value of mitigation. Evaluating the predicted loss of buildings will help us understand the cost-benefit for mitigation measures.

	NUMBER OF POST-2000 STRUCTURES	MONEY SAVED (ANNUAL AVERAGE)
Flood	786,000	$484 million
Hurricane wind	2.4 million	$60 million
Earthquake	9.2 million	$1.1 billion

Source: **Building Codes Save: A Nationwide Study of Loss Prevention**, FEMA

Building codes are governed at the state and local levels. The State of South Carolina has state-wide requirements for codes in place, and local governments have adopted the International Building Codes. In some states, local governments may add requirements that are necessary to ensure the safety of their citizens. These additional requirements reflect not only protections from natural disasters but are created with a specific geography and building type in mind.

This would be useful in a state like South Carolina, where the lay of the land and the type of natural disaster risk is vastly different from the east coast to the western border of the state. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has created a Resilient Building Codes Toolkit to aid in the creation of codes that will be designed to withstand damage from a variety of natural disasters.

Private Sector

Statistics provided from FEMA show us that sixty percent of small businesses do not have a crisis plan in place, and of those that do, only forty-three percent will successfully reopen and maintain their business after a crisis hits. Businesses will fail for numerous reasons during or after a crisis, such as insufficient financial resources, a lack of knowledge about available support, and/or underestimating the impact of a disaster. Many small business owners often fail to consider as if a disaster could happen to their business, or they may not have the time, skillset, or resources to create a plan for themselves.

It is crucial that these business owners have support, encouragement, and access to information to successfully navigate disaster. Economic development organizations, local chambers of commerce and any additional business support services play an important role in creating an environment of success prior to and after a disaster strikes. In the "Robust Business Retention and Expansion Plan" pillar of the 5 Pillars of Economic Resiliency, there are five actions outlined for supporting local businesses.

- Develop a business and industry outreach plan
- Encourage business continuity planning
- Understand the supply chain and the capabilities of your industries to help them grow
- Provide assistance with access to recovery capital
- Introduce your existing industries to new streams of revenue

Business re-entry plans are a necessity for both business and local governmental organizations. Having a clear and concise understanding of when business owners may access the physical location of their business and resume operations after a disaster is a key to their success. The longer it takes for business owners to access their operations, especially after a natural disaster, the less of a chance that business may have of successfully reopening. During the height of the pandemic, clear communication was necessary for businesses to reopen, to operate safely, and know how much they had to alter or diversify their operations to continue business.

Businesses operating in the region, especially small businesses, would benefit from an individual recovery plan that identifies opportunities for diversifying their

products and/or services to continue operating despite any disruption by a minor or major disaster. While perhaps not organized in a continuity plan, many small business owners found ways to modify their business practices during the pandemic to keep their doors open. Nowhere was this more apparent than in both restaurants and grocery stores, many of whom provided their customers with options for online ordering, curbside pickup, and delivery that had not existed prior to the pandemic.

In addition to diversifying their product distribution and services, creating a continuity plan will help both corporate and small business owners keep a list of available services in the region to assist them with economic resilience and recovery. One area of particular concern is access to both short and long-term financing to aid in the recovery from both minor and major disasters. By having these resources centralized prior to a disaster, business owners will shorten the lead time to complete applications, processing, and receiving of funding.

Equity

One critical piece to whole-region resilience is equity. In considering equitable solutions to both economic and disaster disruptions, it should be acknowledged that the region is made up of many diverse communities with differing needs. This requires that solutions must come from an understanding of the diversity of the region and that a multi-faceted approach must be employed to ensure the solidity of a regional response. As is outlined by FEMA, "achieving equity requires understanding that everyone is not starting in the same place, everyone doesn't have access to the same resources, and everyone doesn't have the same life experiences."

In the evaluation of our region, we must remember to be proactive in cultivating relationships and building trust in vulnerable communities long before a community is impacted by a disaster, especially communities that are historically distressed or disadvantaged. Actively listening and engaging with communities to understand their unique challenges will fill the gaps and share the responsibility of any recovery efforts that take place in that individual community.

For example, when evaluating a historically distressed area such as Bucksport, an unincorporated community located in Horry County, we must consider not only the history of flooding, but the increased frequency of flooding along with the limited resources of several members of the community. Working in Bucksport to build resilience will require a different approach than working in an area with greater access to resources such as more affluent areas within the City of Myrtle Beach. Asking questions relevant to each individual community will lead us to a different set of parameters for resilience in the area.

Moreover, we must consider access to information. During the pandemic, we know that many people relied on the internet or smart phones for information. For many organizations, that may have meant that posting on their social media page or website would be sufficient for reaching a large audience. It is essential to recognize that there are vulnerable populations who do not have access to these forms of communications, and that the dissemination of information must adjust to these individuals. In creating community resilience, we must consider how all populations in the region are consuming information.

Consequently, identification of these vulnerable areas in the Waccamaw Region is essential for region-wide resiliency. The CDC Social Vulnerability Index evaluates regions in four dimensions: Socioeconomic status, household composition/disability, race/ethnicity/language, and housing type/transportation. Social vulnerability refers to a "community's capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events."

In the three counties in the Waccamaw region, each county has areas that have been defined as socially vulnerable by the CDC. In Williamsburg County, the entire county has been designated in levels of moderate to high vulnerability.
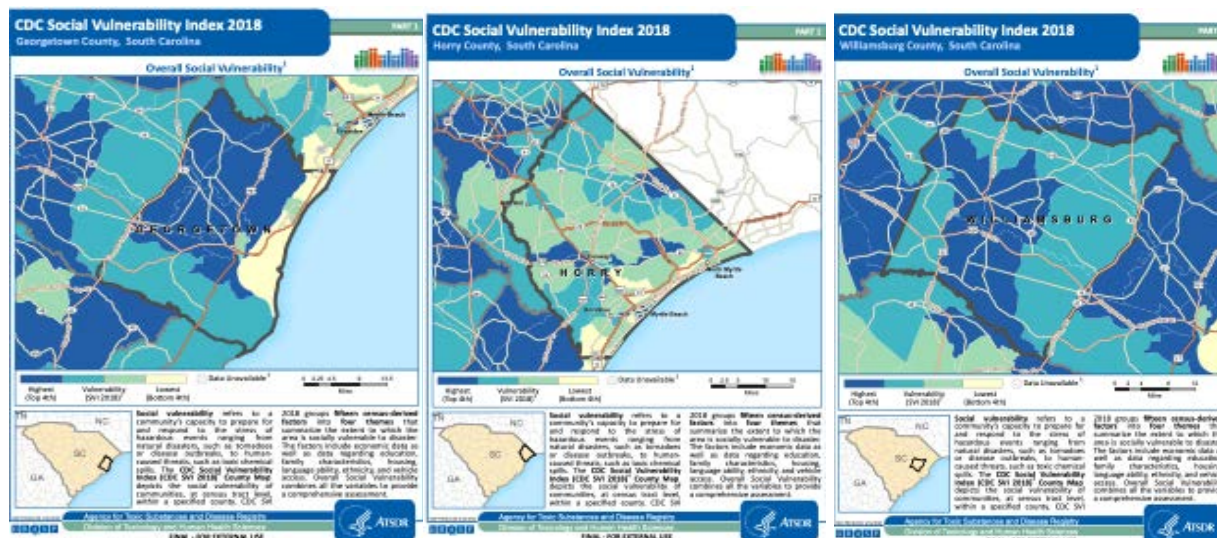
It is imperative that a community's social vulnerability is evaluated alongside their hazard risk, especially natural hazards, when assessing a community's baseline resilience. The more socially vulnerable a community is, the less resilient they will be when a natural disaster strikes.

Pandemic Impacts and Lessons

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unparalleled challenges for modern times across the region and the globe. The pandemic fundamentally altered the way business is conducted, the way students learn, and the way many live in general. It applied pressures on the healthcare systems in unforeseen ways, and it tested the response of government entities across the region and the world.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been imprinted upon the Waccamaw region in various ways. From changes in where tourists stay and eat, to an unimagined ingress of new community members, this region has been altered by this global pandemic event.

Data Collection

Interviews, plans, and documents were collected from strategic partners throughout the three-county region to identify common themes related to recovery and economic resiliency in the Waccamaw Region. Although each county and municipality are different, there are commonalities in their approach to resiliency. Neither disaster recovery nor economic resiliency occur in a vacuum. For the Waccamaw Region to continue to thrive and increase its economic resiliency, the region will need to cooperate, share obstacles, and lessons learned. Moving forward, organizations should continue to collaborate to create strategies together.

Interviews and Surveys

A key part of the development of the Waccamaw Economic Development District Economic Resiliency and Disaster Recovery Plan was data collection. It was important to receive support from each county and for each county to be included in this plan. In September 2020, meetings and interviews were held with administrators in Georgetown County, Horry County and Williamsburg County. The regional disaster recovery and economic resiliency planning process was explained to each administration. During the meetings and interviews, the administrators were asked questions regarding how their county responded to the Coronavirus Pandemic and how the county was impacted. We recognize that the pandemic was still in the early stages when these meetings took place. Questions were asked regarding challenges to continuity, remote work, policies and procedures, economic challenges, and successes.

Next, data was collected from various stakeholders throughout Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg counties. Data was collected in the form of qualitative and quantitative data derived from interviews and surveys. The voices, experiences, and actual planning documents of the interviewees were reviewed and analyzed to determine regional themes regarding the strengths and threats to disaster recovery and economic resiliency in the Waccamaw region. Opportunities for improvement were also determined.

The survey data was collected from the units of local government, emergency management, utilities systems (electricity, water, and sewer), regional transit systems, secondary school districts and post-secondary institutions, chambers of commerce, economic development directors, and regional employment and

workforce development officers from throughout the three-county region. Mitigation plans, comprehensive plans, emergency management response plans, economic development strategic plans, the Waccamaw Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and the Waccamaw Workforce Development Area WIOA Local Integrated Plan were collected and reviewed for the purpose of data collection and assessment of the region's disaster recovery and economic resiliency.

Questions Asked

Interview questions were developed to collect uniform data sets from the interviewed stakeholders. The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions regarding disaster recovery, economic development, and resiliency. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, most interviews were held remotely via the Zoom virtual meeting platform. The interview and survey questions may be found in the appendix.

Government Response

Disasters have impacted local units of government in a variety of ways in the Waccamaw Region. Municipalities often see major financial disruptions to their general revenue funds during disasters. Many areas see a loss of accommodation and hospitality tax revenue, as recent disasters have caused temporary closures and have caused some permanent business closures as well. The cancellation of area events and festivals has also impacted local economies.

Municipalities and utility co-ops often see a loss of revenue from collection of utility services during disasters due to loss of power, closures, or lack of payment options, such as paying online. Local governments have experienced barriers to adequate staffing during disasters. For example, many government employees may live in areas that have flooded roadways or experienced significant commuting delays as major thoroughfares were closed or redirected.

> "The town needs many infrastructure improvements, but we don't have the resources for that. There was a program that Santee Cooper offered where a town would pay them extra and those extra funds would go towards a grant to bury utility lines in that town. However, it would've taken twenty years for that fund to reach maturity, so we did not take part in it. We need to improve our streetscapes as well. All the improvements we would like to make will cost $32 million."

Multiple, consecutive years of disasters such as hurricanes, floods, winter storms, and the pandemic have helped to prepare municipalities for future disasters. Many municipalities have noted areas more prone to flooding and have taken action to mitigate future flooding events by elevating water pumps and/or purchasing new pumps or generators. In addition, many areas have started buy-out programs of land more prone to flooding to prevent new construction. Other municipalities have also been purchasing homes and land that have been flooding over the years to help mitigate damage and financial risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges to municipalities and organizations as social distancing was vital to contain the spread of the virus. Integrating online payment systems, adding to personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies, adding cleaning policies, and implementing policies for work schedules were effective in mitigating the spread of the virus. Adding virtual meeting platforms have helped during pandemic. Many of these strategies should also help mitigate productivity losses for future disasters. Organizations will be able to continue meetings at home or anywhere else if workers are unable to physically commute to work.

All the respondents in the interviews mentioned in the past there had been a need to improve government collaboration with local community agencies. The need is still evident, but the communities are working to be proactive in various ways. The local governments have reached out to local agencies such as chambers of commerce, churches, and community centers to create better plans for emergencies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, local governments created financial support mechanisms to sustain local small businesses or replace funding from larger corporate businesses in the area that were having issues. Local governments are also reaching out to neighboring communities for support and for ideas on how to improve support to their citizens and businesses. Due to emergencies, tax dollars are affected, and the type of support is often limited by the local governments.

The state and federal government agencies were helpful during times of disasters such as hurricanes, fires, or shutdowns due to the pandemic. However, the communities found the federal dollars were not always delved out to areas of need due to restrictive guidelines. This has created the need for local governments to plan for future necessities after a shut down.

As one respondent shared,

> "The federal government also had beneficial programs like PPE and business recovery loans and grants. At the same time, there were some businesses that couldn't get any federal financial aid. It would have been nice if our chamber could also receive some financial aid because it takes time to interview businesses in-person and time is money. If another pandemic like this happens again, we would like some grant funding for our chamber. However, our organization usually doesn't qualify for that kind of funding, so we are in the process of creating a separate business organization that is able to receive that funding."

Emergency response plans and cooperative agreements

Organizations in the region have long recognized that the ability to respond quickly to emergencies and threats is vital to reducing damage. Coastal areas such as Horry and Georgetown counties have experienced major impacts from weather events, and therefore have more detailed plans for emergencies in place. Inland areas in Horry and Georgetown, as well as Williamsburg County, are not immune to impacts from disaster risks and have also implemented more emergency response plans. Cooperative agreements have been put in place between the counties and municipalities to share equipment when needed.

Smaller communities have agreements for assistance with neighboring cities and counties if needed during emergency situations. Rural areas in all three counties have many residents living in areas that are at least thirty minutes away from hospitals or emergency care. Several rural areas depend on volunteer fire department service with limited equipment, and other rural areas have limited or no fire or police protection. These communities must depend on assistance from their counties, which increases response time to emergencies.

Not all the respondents had emergency response plans, but the majority did have plans in place. Local governments have emergency response plans for natural disasters and were aware of the need to constantly update and revise plans as needed over the years. The need for input from the citizens and businesses were limited due to communication issues but as surveying and internet availability improves, the communication avenues will improve.

One respondent explained how they are now addressing emergency guidance and measures:

> "There was no process about emergency plans in the past. Now I have established a chain of command to prevent miscommunication. We have a plan for all natural disasters. We also reached out to Horry County and follow their guidance. We have a system that will inform businesses of emergency procedures in the event of an incoming hurricane or other natural disaster. We have met with the police and fire departments and used their input for the plan. We joined the program called TextMyGov which allows residents to text questions they have for the government. It has an AI that finds keywords in the

> text and responds with information from us automatically based on those keywords. If an answer is not found, it will send relevant officials the question. I tested it by texting information about our Halloween trick or treat times and received thousands of responses. It has a yearly cost, but we have already used some of that company's other products, so we were familiar with it. We would like to do more, but we don't have the funds for it."

Other respondents are more active with their emergency response planning. Plans are continually evaluated, staff are provided with training to manage risk as well as work in emergency centers, and plans are then revisited after the disaster.

> "We have several plans and a comprehensive emergency operations plan that addresses all potential disasters. It is easy to maintain and update, and it was used for the recent cyberattack. We also had a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan that was updated regularly, but the person who was in charge of that left. It will need updated again in 2024."

> "We have an emergency response plan that we update after every disaster. To prepare for hurricanes, we have generators, mobile pumps, and emergency response staff that we dispatch to the most at-risk facilities. We have a recovery and engineering team that prioritizes the environment and the health of our customers during the recovery process. As for the pandemic, we just followed the guidelines that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provided."

Business

In the interviews conducted with local organizations, one important aspect of economic development was repeatedly mentioned: diversification of industries operating in the region. The importance of not only diversifying the types of industries, but also diversifying the different aspects of the existing industries became readily apparent during the pandemic.

When considering an industry such as tourism and considering the individual businesses that make up the tourism industry, we see that many were unprepared for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hotels suffered because they had little means to diversify their business, and therefore could not diversify their income stream. Restaurants, on the other hand, had the ability to move to a take-out or outdoor seating model that created opportunities in their industry.

This inability to vary income streams created opportunities for competitors, with the individual condo and vacation homes seeing record gains in rentals. In identifying additional opportunities that may exist to expand income, even if short-term,

businesses will contribute to the economic health of the region even in times of crisis. Providing support to secure funding, possibly through the Small Business Administration or through United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development program, may offer opportunities to provide training to local business owners who may not have considered that multiple options are available in diversifying the income stream for their business, or perhaps thought those options were cost prohibitive.

Another aspect of business operations that is of great concern are supply chain challenges. Businesses with domestic suppliers have seen fewer challenges in the logistics of receiving the inputs they needed for the operations than those who rely on international imports. Those businesses that have had shorter supply chains have been able to consistently supply their products to consumers. For economic development, this presents an encouraging opportunity, especially with regard to manufacturing.

According to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy update for 2021, the region has drastically improved the unemployment rates that inundated the area during the COVID-19 pandemic. As can be seen in the chart below, unemployment rates have largely returned to pre-pandemic rates in the region.

Unemployment Rates During COVID-19 Pandemic
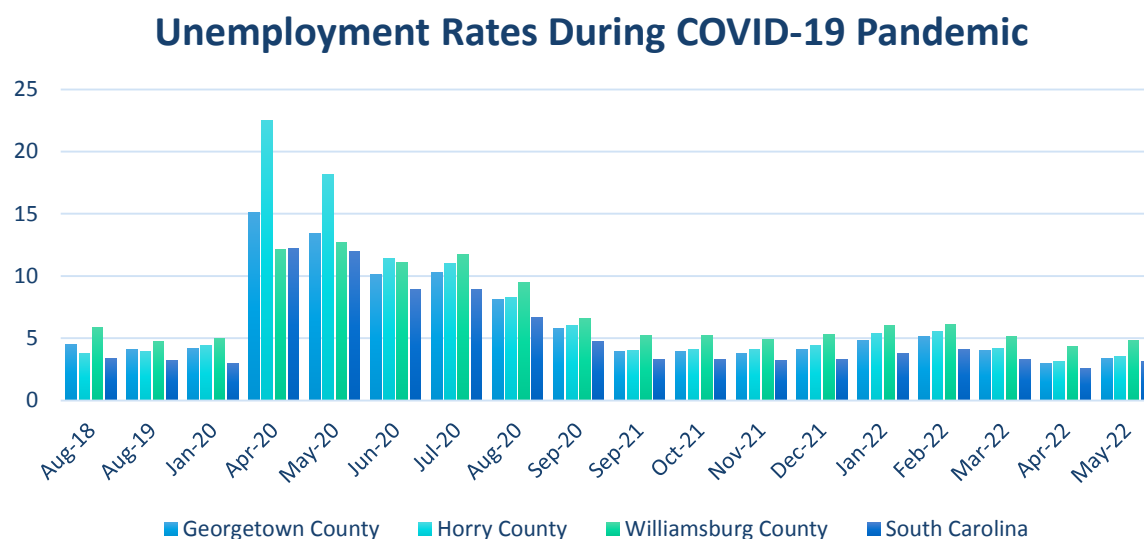
While the unemployment rate is declining, a labor shortage has now been identified. While many believed that this would be alleviated once the federal pandemic unemployment benefits in South Carolina ended, the shortage has continued. Many businesses have altered business hours or shifts to maximize their operating hours while navigating the lack of staff.

All respondents in the interviews mentioned the need to address businesses concerns during emergencies. The frequency of natural disasters over the years has increased, although the severity of the damage has fluctuated. The community organizations and governments have plans in place to make decisions on the opening and closing of businesses and funding to support business needs. The collaboration of local agencies such as the chambers of commerce was mentioned by many respondents. The most recent disaster with the pandemic offered a different set of problems.

> "When the first CARES Act was passed that provided loans to small businesses, we asked them if they had any problems receiving funding and none of them did. The biggest struggles during that time were working with suppliers who were shutting down and dealing with outbreaks among employees. Now almost all our employers have allowed their employees to return."

Many local communities worked to support the businesses during the pandemic shut down whether by buying locally or offering financial support. The aftermath of the pandemic with the supply chain issues and the lack of available employees is a new problem all businesses are facing.

> "So, during disasters we connect with businesses or if a business is shut down or destroyed, we help the laid off employees get another job or direct them to unemployment insurance resources. Recruitment has been a challenge for many businesses because of a decline in labor force participation and incentivizing people not to work through extra unemployment benefits. Childcare was a major issue when schools only held virtual classes but now that school is back in-person that has been largely resolved. To be eligible for unemployment insurance, you have to be employed for a certain amount of time. For example, if someone was unemployed from March of 2020 to June of 2021 and started working in hospitality and is laid off right now, they would not be eligible for unemployment insurance."

Education

As reflected in the interview data, many of the school districts were unprepared for the transition in education. Adding virtual meeting and teaching platforms have helped during the pandemic. Many of these strategies should also help mitigate productivity losses for future disasters.

In March of 2020, the Horry County School District initially believed the shutdown would only last two weeks. When it became apparent that it would be longer before students could safely return to the classroom, the district transitioned to virtual school for the rest of the school year. At the time, the district did not have a plan for a disaster like the pandemic, but now has a comprehensive plan for all

disasters. While Georgetown County School District had not planned for a worldwide pandemic, the district did have a plan available for a flu outbreak.

This plan did not have guidance for transitioning to an online learning environment, and like Horry County School District, Georgetown had to adapt to an online learning environment quickly. Williamsburg also had to adapt quickly, accommodating thirty to thirty-five percent of students who did not have internet access at home. All school districts followed guidance from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) as well as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

School districts quickly changed policies to allow all students to take home (or, in many cases, pick up to take home, as the younger students could only use them at school prior to the pandemic) tablets and laptops so they could work remotely. For the largely rural areas being served, districts deployed school buses with Wi-Fi to communities without internet services.

They also activated cafeteria staffs to make breakfasts, lunches, and even weekend meals that buses could deliver to students who might not otherwise have access to healthy food. When one cafeteria experienced a COVID-19 outbreak, another doubled up to send out additional meals for students. When students were able to return to the classroom, social distancing and masking were followed in line with SCDHEC and CDC guidelines.

Institutions of higher education also took precautions, changing operating procedures on their campuses. Many followed the CDC and SCDHEC guidelines as the school districts had, but also implemented their own restrictions on campus. Like many others, many of their courses were moved to an online setting, especially in the early stages of the pandemic. Unlike the K-12 facilities, many of the higher education courses had been taught online before and the faculty were quickly prepared to move their classes online. Those who had not taught online before were provided with training to adapt their coursework. One college in the area had used these methods prior to the pandemic for classroom continuity during hurricane evacuations, so they were prepared for the move online.

Other processes at the universities and colleges took more time to adapt. Many forms had to be digitized and a way to submit forms online had to be created. Due to education laws requiring the preservation of certain types of paperwork, this presented a challenge that had to be quickly resolved.

Many of the processes that were put in place during the pandemic will continue to be used in various levels of education. School districts often close one to three days in advance before an on-coming hurricane disaster, but with virtual platforms in place, schools and organizations will be able to continue classes or meetings at home if students, faculty, and staff are unable to physically commute.

Education was mentioned by the respondents as part of their own need for planning for disasters, but a few mentioned the need for improved education to address the workforce in the area.

> "When I was being interviewed for this job, I asked what city officials thought was the biggest economic challenge in the city and they said that the town's workforce lacks skills and higher education."

> "We need to be less dependent on tourism and diversify. Right now, we don't have much room for new industry in the city and county. We need some high tech, manufacturing, and service industries. We need more high-wage jobs, [Interstate] 73, improved education, and downtown redevelopment... There's not very many opportunities for young professionals in the area."

The coordination of education and workforce development is paramount to the economic resilience of the region.

Workforce Development

There are extensive regional educational facilities have provided opportunities to educate the talent needed in the workforce. Educational institutions such as Coastal Carolina University (CCU), Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC), and Williamsburg Technical College provide a wide-range of training programs.

Through various state and local workforce development programs, businesses can partner with educational institutions to train the workforce they need for their operations. South Carolina already offers one such program, the Apprenticeship Carolina program. This program is offered through the South Carolina Technical College System, which seeks to provide workforce development to local and growing industries.

As mentioned in the category of education, a skilled workforce was mentioned as a need for workforce development. "We have several industrial parks that are growing. A skilled workforce is the most important for industrial development."

Another respondent stated, "Another issue is that other industry leaders from other places don't believe we have a good enough workforce due to it being a tourist destination."

Technical colleges and Waccamaw employment and workforce agencies quickly respond to train workforce for jobs and industries in high demand by coordinating efforts through the area workforce development board, school districts, state technical college system, and area colleges. The Waccamaw area focuses on Healthcare, Hospitality, and Diversified Manufacturing as these sectors currently have the most demand.

The pandemic did have a major impact on the workforce as employees worked from home and could locate to most any location. This may have an impact of population growth, as the ability to work remotely has created opportunities for those wishing to move to somewhere they want to live, not necessarily settle for somewhere they have to live for work.

The pandemic created other workplace challenges, as employees could be exposed or contract COVID-19 and be out of work for a long period of time. "About twenty of our employees nearing retirement age were forced to retire early. When the COVID-19 leave was revoked it was frustrating for people who caught it and had to be quarantined for a while."

Local agencies used resources to assist with business workforce during the pandemic, but also have a history of supporting businesses in other disasters as well. "So, during disasters we connect with businesses or if a business is shut down or destroyed, we help the laid off employees get another job or direct them to unemployment insurance resources." In the event of disasters, the Waccamaw Region has a direct line of communication to the SC Department of Workforce (SCDEW) which offers assistance for individuals who need to file unemployment claims due to a disaster. During a disaster, SCDEW coordinates at various sites in the region to provide computer access for individual filers. Temporary claim-filing sites are setup after disasters as needed and SCDEW coordinates sites for the SC Career Coach (a mobile unit equipped with ten workstations and ability to set-up in rural areas).

"Our employment services office only provides information about Unemployment Insurance (UI) and offers them information about job opportunities and training. There is a bus that travels to areas hit by natural disasters that is basically a computer lab. People who do not have access to their computer or to internet are able to use the bus for unemployment resources. There is only one bus though, so if there are two natural disasters in two different areas, one would have to be prioritized over another. What was used before was what we called "SC Works in a Box." It is basically a trunk with a bunch of laptops that serves the same purpose of the bus. SC Works usually has to

close during a natural disaster and then they reopen as soon as staff is able to access the building. Many people need help with UI, but that is not the purpose of the SC Works centers and there is not enough staff at the centers who are well versed in UI. UI can only be accessed by internet or phone. The SC Works centers are often thought of as unemployment offices when they are not."

Healthcare

The challenges presented to healthcare facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic were unlike any seen during modern times. The widespread shift of services, required equipment, and staffing demands created a strain on many healthcare operations. In addressing these issues with regional healthcare facilities, many operations expanded their facilities and created new opportunities for care.

Early in the pandemic, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control led a strong response in the state, coordinating with regional hospitals to provide testing sites and support when possible. The coordination of these sites with regional care providers such as McLeod Health and Tidelands Health, provided opportunities for community members to continually be tested for COVID-19 at the height of the pandemic.

Many of these facilities were drive-through facilities, which provided ease in testing for the community members and safety for those providing the tests. It is important to note that the continued testing throughout the pandemic was state-wide, a step that several state health departments did not replicate. This continued

testing was paramount in SCDHEC's ability to provide state-wide guidance in a coordinated response to COVID-19.

The Waccamaw Region has seen an increase in healthcare services throughout the area and is increasing mainly along the coastal areas. Area hospitals including McLeod Health, Tidelands Health, Conway Medical Center, and Grand Strand Health have all seen expansions over the years and have plans to expand in the next few years to keep up with increased population.

Some respondents noted a shortage of nurses and healthcare workers and discussed efforts in the region to train new nurses. Williamsburg Technical College will be renovating the Williamsburg Regional Hospital and moving their Registered Nurse program into the hospital for experiential learning opportunities. There is also a need for more medical support staff, such as administrators, home health workers and medical transportation.

> "... more room for mental health patients is needed. We could also use more home healthcare workers so patients could remain in their homes instead of needing a hospital bed. Another problem is transporting patients home after their treatment. At one point we had to pay for a taxi to pick up a treated patient."

In addition, Williamsburg Regional Hospital in Williamsburg County is in partnership with the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) to open a new hospital in that county. The hospital will offer many upgrades over the old facility which was damaged during flooding in 2015 and closed.

With the increase of retired persons moving to the local communities, there is a concern about healthcare and the issues with healthcare.

> "There is a lot of new growth in the area and the demographics of the incoming population is changing. There are more retirees moving here than ever before. Because of that, we believe that healthcare and medical technology industries can be an area of economic focus. That could also allow us to be prepared for future pandemics."

Others are looking to healthcare as a means of economic development and economic resilience. Respondents expressed that an increase in healthcare facilities will serve as a multiplier for other industries in the region.

> "The provision of healthcare in general is an economic driver. Businesses and new residents like to ensure that quality healthcare is available in the area. It is difficult to recruit businesses and people to an area without any healthcare. We promote our healthcare by performing health screenings for employees of local businesses. For example, we provided Palmetto Synthetics with a nurse two days a week to help employees if they need it and educate them."

While others see healthcare as a community effort, and an opportunity for community building and civic engagement.

> "The biggest challenges deal with preventative healthcare. Ailments caused by poor diet such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer are rampant in the town. A community garden was established as one solution."

Internet Access, Technology, and Cybersecurity

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a shift from in-person activity to online connection. Businesses, health care, educational institutions, and individuals all relied heavily on access to the internet to continue their day-to-day functions. Reliable access to the internet became vital for remote work, telehealth visits, and completing educational course work.

Households with Computing Devices and Internet Subscriptions

Legend:
- Households with Computing Devices
- Households with Internet Subscriptions
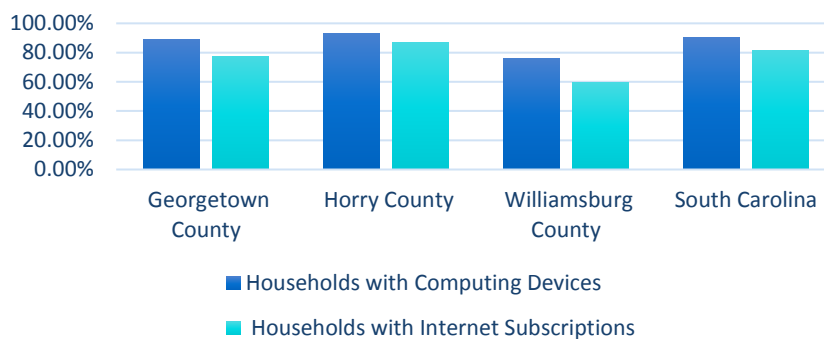
Access to the internet has become a national discussion. According to the Brookings Institute, an increase in access and usage of broadband lead to community benefits, such as higher property values, increased job and population growth, lower unemployment, and new business formation. While Georgetown and Horry

counties come close or exceed the South Carolina percentages for households with internet subscriptions, Williamsburg has under sixty percent.

In the Waccamaw Region during the pandemic, the value of access to the internet became a major concern. As mentioned in the section on education, school districts moved classes to a virtual setting, and this required students to have internet access. For those students without access, school districts quickly found solutions.

From the interviews held with town administrators, local organizations, and school districts, we found that different counties had differing challenges when it came to internet access, technology, and cybersecurity. For example, several organizations identified access to the internet as an issue county-wide. Several communities provide high speed internet access at the community centers, and one town has secured a grant to improve broadband.

Each school district had to adapt quickly to the situation, recognizing that remote learning requires special technology, communication, and internet access. In Horry County, Horry Telephone Cooperative provided free internet to roughly 700 students. Free hotspots were also distributed to 200 students. Tablets and laptops that had previously only been used at school were brought home by students to use for classwork and class meetings. School buses were also used as mobile internet providers to more rural areas of the county. Williamsburg County School District also provided internet to their students, and the technical college provided hotspots and purchased 170 laptops for students.

Many organizations had to reassess technology assets during the pandemic. Smaller towns found that moving various processes online was cost prohibitive. These towns found moving to remote work to be more challenging and in some cases, unproductive. Due to the lack of software and databases with remote access, some towns found that while they were able to work remotely, the cost of doing so was financially straining.

The majority of those interviewed had the ability to quickly move to remote work. One municipality retained old laptops after an upgrade, so those were issued to staff to take home for remote work. Most employees in another municipality have Microsoft Surface Pro laptops they use for remote work.

As more daily functions moved online for many industries, cybersecurity also became a major concern. Several organizations had experienced a cyberattack which impacted the ability to work remotely, and had experienced a ransomware attack, after which cybersecurity became a major priority. Of the organizations interviewed, most either had cybersecurity measures in place or their internet provider had additional measures they provided to their commercial customers.
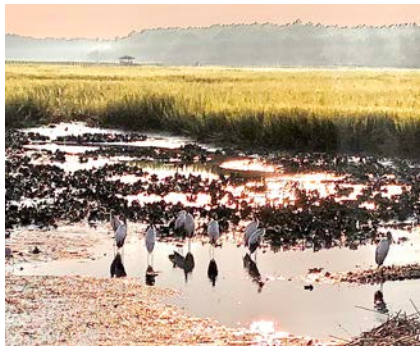
The Waccamaw Region has many natural resources that benefit local communities. Beaches, marshes, rivers, forestland, wildlife, and the ocean all contribute to the industries tied to our natural environment. Horry and Georgetown counties rely on the ocean and beaches which attract tourists and support the hospitality industry. In addition, beaches and marshland are important as they provide natural barriers to storm surge and coastal flooding. Rivers, forests, and wildlife are key resources for Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg counties. Rivers provide recreational access for rural residents as well as for tourists. Rivers and forests provide environments for local wildlife, which encourage some tourism and provides resources for area industry.

Adding to the abundance of natural resources, a new South Carolina State Park is being planned for Williamsburg and Georgetown counties. The Black River Water Trail and Park Network is a seventy-mile stretch of the scenic Black River. This planned natural attraction will contribute to local economies along the Black River, adding to eco-tourism and highlighting the natural beauty for tourists who will take advantage of kayaking, camping, fishing, and more.

Image Source: South Carolina Nature-Based Tourism Association

Opportunities for the Future

Many additional opportunities were identified in the interview process. This list is not exhaustive, and additional opportunities to improve resilience in the region will need to be identified.

- Increase communication and collaboration across the region
- Improve communication between coastal and inland areas
- Increased internet access, cyber security, and access to computers
- Funding for Capital Projects to upgrade aging infrastructure
- Increased funding for roads and other infrastructure projects in areas experiencing high growth
- Infrastructure such as an interstate and upgrades to roads, bridges, and drainage to help address supply chain issues
- Coordinated incorporation of economic resiliency into disaster planning and recovery
- More training and development regarding recovery and economic resiliency
- Continuity planning needed for some
- Increased communication, coordination, and collaboration with businesses, including small businesses and entrepreneurs for emergency preparation, response, recovery, and economic resiliency.
- Find options for diversifying the economy in the region
- Identify ways to attract new business and industry

Disaster Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The Waccamaw region is prone to damaging impacts from major weather events. To reiterate, mitigating the impacts of weather events is crucial to increasing economic resilience in the area. From 2015 to 2021, the region was impacted by twelve separate events that created damage more than a billion dollars. The chart below reflects the NOAA U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather & Climate Disasters but does not account for additional weather events.

NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information Selected Events: U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather & Climate Disasters 1980-2021					
The U.S. has sustained 323 weather and climate disasters since 1980 in which overall damages/costs reached or exceeded $1 billion. Values in parentheses represent the 2022 Consumer Price Index cost adjusted value (if different than original value). The total cost of these 323 events exceeds $2.195 trillion. (NOAA)					
The events listed below impacted the Waccamaw Region					
Year	Event Name	Type of Event	Type of Damage	Total Overall Cost Due to Event	Total Overall Deaths Due to Event
2021	Tropical Storm Elsa	Tropical Cyclone	Flooding, Wind	$1.2B ($1.3B)	1
2020	Hurricane Isaias	Tropical Cyclone	Flooding, Storm Surge, Wind	$4.8B ($5.2B)	16
	Southeast Tornadoes	Severe Storm	Tornado Damage	$1.1B ($1.3B)	10
2019	Hurricane Dorian	Tropical Cyclone	Flooding, Wind	$1.6B ($1.8B)	10
2018	Hurricane Michael	Tropical Cyclone	Flooding, Wind	$25.0B ($28.0B)	49
	Hurricane Florence	Tropical Cyclone	Flooding, Wind	$24.0B ($26.9B)	53
	Central and Eastern Severe Weather	Severe Storm	Tornado Damage	$1.6B ($1.8B)	5
2017	Hurricane Irma	Tropical Cyclone	Flooding, Wind	$50.0B ($57.5B)	97
	Southeast Freeze	Freeze	Crop Damage	$1.0B ($1.2B)	0
2016	Hurricane Matthew	Tropical Cyclone	Flooding, Storm Surge, Wind	$10.0B ($11.7B)	49
2015	South Carolina and East Coast Flooding (Hurricane Joaquin)	Flooding	Severed Flooding	$2.0B ($2.4B)	25

			$3.0B ($3.6B)	
Central and Eastern Winter Storm, Cold Wave	Winter Storm	Freezing conditions		30

County Evacuation Zone Populations

According to the 2020 census, the population of Georgetown County that lives within one of the three hurricane evacuation zone types (A, B, or C) is approximately 49,896 which is 78.7 percent of the total population of 63,404. The population of Horry County that lives within one of the three hurricane evacuation zones is approximately 181,826 which is 51.8 percent of the total population of 351,029. This was compiled using census tracts and since some of the census tracts cover more area than the evacuation zones themselves, the population living in those zones is likely lower than this, hence the use of the word "approximately."

County 100 Year Flood Zone Populations

According to the 2020 census block level data, the population of Georgetown County that lives in a 100-year flood zone is 25,305, or 39.9 percent of the total population of 63,404. The 100-year flood map used for this analysis was adopted in 2012.

The population of Horry County that lives in a 100-year flood zone is 135,648, or 38.6 percent of the total population of 351,029. The 100-year flood map used for this analysis was adopted in 2021.

The population of Williamsburg County that lives in a 100-year flood zone is 8,477, or 27.3 percent of the total population of 31,026. The 100-year flood map used for this analysis was adopted in 2015.

Data Collection and Analysis Methodology

The Top 5 Risk Rating maps were created using the top five risks of the risks outlined in the FEMA Community Report Hazard Type Risk Index. These differed by county apart from lightning and tornadoes, which were a risk in each county. At the parcel level, the risks are rated using the following scale: no rating, very low, relatively low, relatively moderate, relatively high, and very high.

As there are multiple disaster types each within the rating scale, a uniform way of combining them was necessary. A number was assigned to each rating where very low was 1, relatively low was 2, relatively moderate was 3, relatively high was 4, and very high was 5. These numbers were then added up and totaled within a range between five to twenty. Another rating was then assigned to each of these

scores where five to eleven was considered very low, twelve to fourteen was considered relatively low, fifteen to seventeen was relatively moderate, and eighteen to twenty was relatively high. These ratings were then mapped at the census tract level.

Natural Disaster Risks

Georgetown County's top five highest risks are for coastal flooding, wildfires, ice storms, lightning, and tornadoes. Large portions of the central and coastal part of the county have a relatively high risk of these natural disasters. The northern and southern portions of the county and two tracts on the Waccamaw Neck have a relatively moderate risk. Only one tract on the western fringe of the county northeast of Andrews has a relatively low risk.

Over half of the total population lives in the zone with a relatively high risk. Additionally, the population density of that zone is more than three times higher than density of the relatively low and relatively moderate risk zones. This can be attributed to both the populated areas of the Waccamaw Neck and a portion of Georgetown and its surrounding rural areas being covered by the relatively high risk zone.
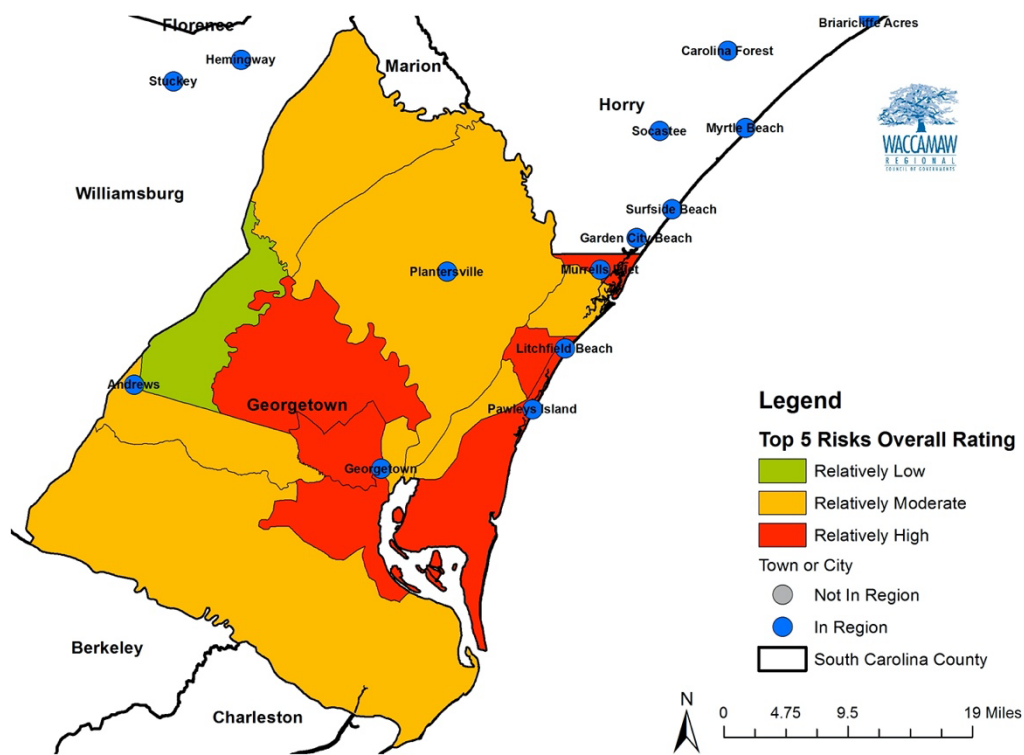
Horry County's top five highest risks are for hurricanes, wildfires, lightning, tornadoes, and winter weather. The county is defined by several concentrations of relatively low and relatively high risk zones surrounded by a relatively moderate risk zone.

There are three concentrations of relatively high risk tracts. One is north of Conway, and it includes the Town of Loris, another one is several miles south of Conway and includes Socastee and Garden City Beach, and another one is in the eastern corner of the county in Little River, North Myrtle Beach, Atlantic Beach, and Briarcliffe Acres. Four concentrations of relatively low risk zones exist in the county. One is a single tract north of Loris, another one is just south of Conway, another one is along the coast between Myrtle Beach and Briarcliffe Acres, and another one is in the southern corner from Surfside Beach to Murrells Inlet.

Only two tracts have a very low rating, one of which contains Myrtle Beach International Airport. About half of Horry County's population lives in the relatively moderate risk zone, with the remaining half split between relatively low risk and relatively high risk. The relatively low risk and the relatively high risk zones have nearly identical population densities while the other two risk zones have much lower densities. This can be attributed to both of those zones covering mostly urban and suburban areas while the other zones cover mostly rural areas.
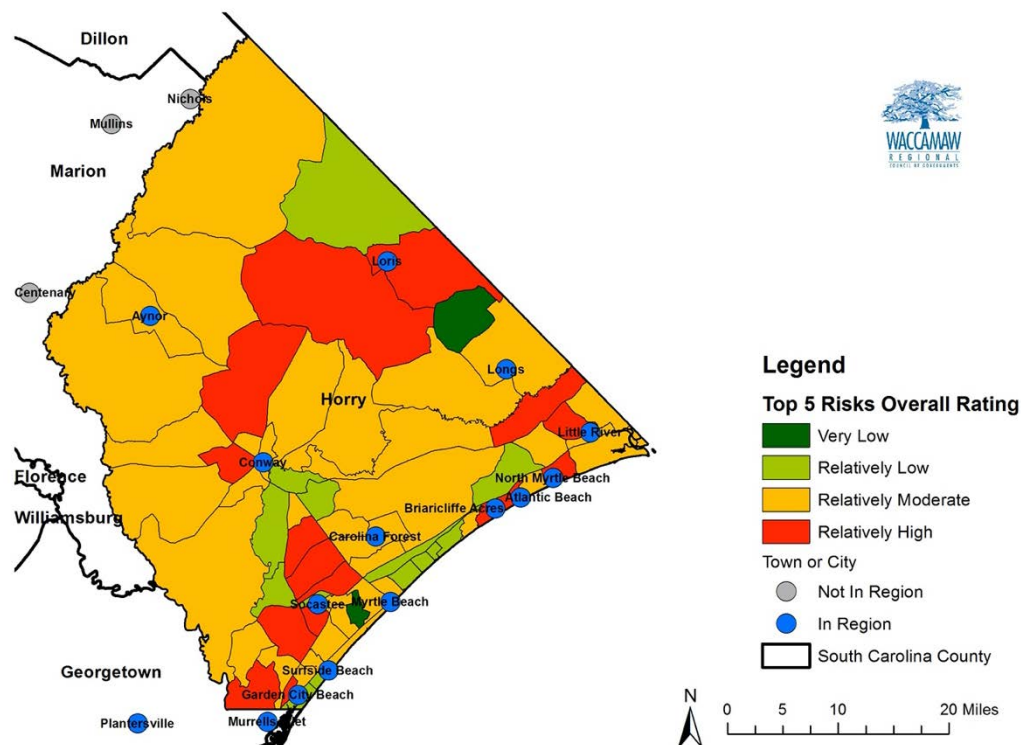
Williamsburg County's top five highest risks are for ice storms, lightning, droughts, strong winds, and tornadoes. Most of the county has a relatively moderate risk of these natural disasters.

Two tracts in the west and northeast encompassing part of Kingstree and both Stuckey and Hemingway have a relatively high risk. One tract north of Lane has a very low risk and a tract in the northern part of the county west of Stuckey has a relatively low risk.

While much of the population lives in the relatively moderate risk zone, the relatively high risk zone has the highest population density. This can be attributed to the relatively high risk zone covering the outer fringe of Kingstree and the towns of Stuckey and Hemingway.
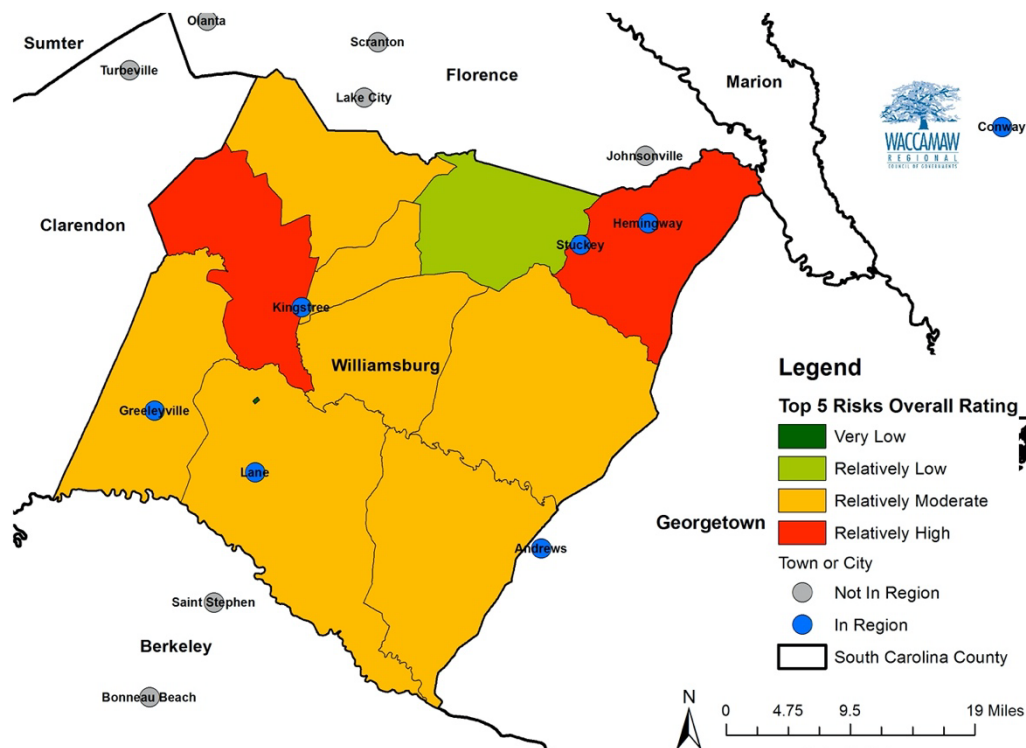
Waccamaw Region

The Waccamaw Region is in the northeastern coastal area of the State of South Carolina and includes Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg counties. The region consists of approximately 2,901 square miles and is bound to the north by the North Carolina state line; the Atlantic Ocean to the east; the Santee River which borders Berkeley and Charleston counties to the south; and Clarendon, Florence, Marion, and Dillon counties to the west.

Waccamaw Region Population by County

9%
16%
75%

- Georgetown County - 60,280
- Horry County - 276,688
- Williamsburg County - 33,942
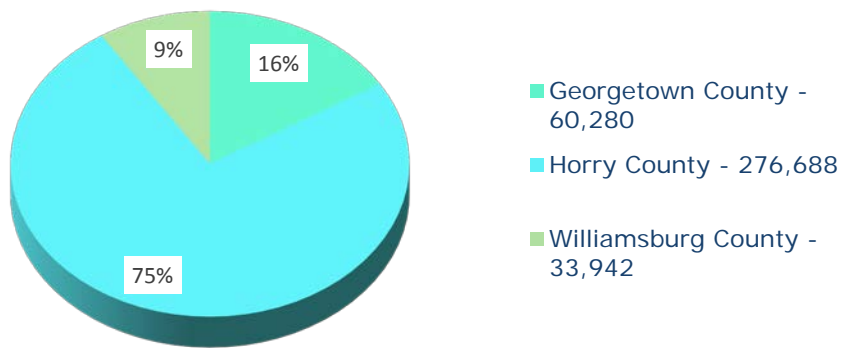
Since 1980, the region's population has grown at more than twice the rate of the state (Waccamaw Region: 151.85 percent, South Carolina: 67.09 percent). Eight of the region's sixteen municipalities lost population between 2000 and 2019. Those losses include all municipalities in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties with the City of Georgetown experiencing a 2.3 percent population decrease.

The Waccamaw region has five major economic assets: favorable geography and climate, a large transportation system, rapid population growth, and high education attainment. The geography of the Waccamaw region is one of its biggest economic assets. It is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean lined with beaches and it has hundreds of thousands of acres of flat and fertile land. Many people prefer to live in climates with mild winters and coastal South Carolina meets this requirement.

Six U.S. highways, twenty state highways, and numerous local roads crisscross the region. In addition to roads, there are also three main railroad lines and two spur railroad lines used for both freight and passengers. Kingstree is the home of an Amtrak station. Myrtle Beach International Airport serves as the region's main commercial airport and six other smaller airports at North Myrtle Beach, Loris, Conway, Georgetown, Andrews, and Kingstree can also be utilized. These transportation systems allow for the movement of freight, commuters, shoppers, and visitors.

Median household and per capita income vary significantly across the region. Historically, income rates for Georgetown and Horry County have been at or just slightly below the state's average, while Williamsburg has historically recorded incomes far below the regional and state average.

Waccamaw Region Economic Overview

Economic clusters are defined as groups of businesses or institutions that have some similarity in industry type, method of operations, technology, or supply chain. Businesses or institutions which fall within a cluster may, in some cases, be competitors within the same industry or directly compete for the same raw and finished materials. The clustering of similar or complementary businesses can be beneficial to the local economy in that they tend to promote a workforce with a compatible skill set, promote focused workforce training programs, and reduce infrastructure expenditures by concentrating needed improvements to smaller geographic areas. Economic clusters can also promote collaboration in production fields leading to greater innovation and efficiency.

According to the 2021 Waccamaw Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update, the regional economic clusters remained consistent. Regional clusters include Hospitality and Retail, Healthcare-Health Science, Manufacturing, Transportation, Warehousing and Logistics, and Agriculture and Forestry.

As of the fourth quarter of 2021, the Waccamaw region has a total of 175,406 employees across twenty industry sectors. The largest industry sector by number of employees is accommodation and food services with 32,985 or 18.8 percent of the total. Retail trade is the second largest and healthcare and social assistance is the

third largest with 28,934 or 16.5 percent of the total and 21,326 or 12.2 percent of the total respectively.

Together, these three sectors make up nearly half of the total jobs. Accommodation and food services, arts and entertainment, real estate, retail trade, construction, and public administration in that order have higher shares of jobs in the region than the United States. These industries are common in both a tourist destination and an area with high rates of population growth. It is important to note that fifteen industry sectors in the region, including the above five, still have fewer employees than they did before the pandemic.

4th Quarter 2021 Region Industry Location Quotient
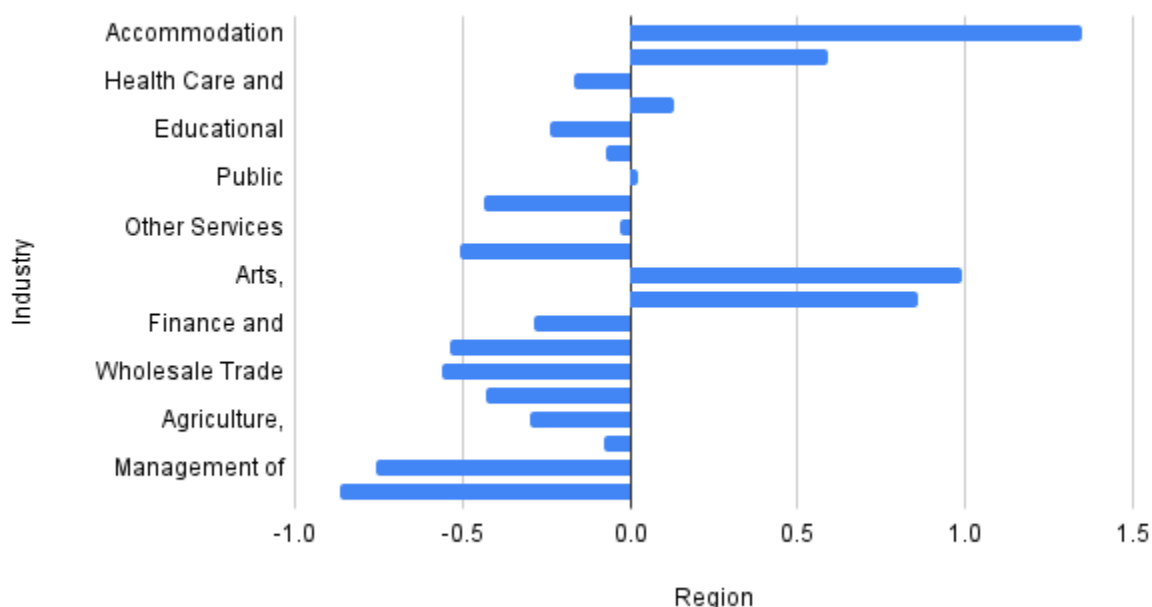
In terms of wages, the average annual wage of accommodation and food service employees in the region is $25,187. For a family of four or greater, this was considered below the federal poverty level in 2021 (which is less than $26,500 per year). Arts and entertainment wages are slightly less than that. The remainder of the industry sectors in the region typically provide higher wages, and the average annual wage for the entire Waccamaw region is $49,081.

In 2020, the unemployment numbers rose steeply throughout the region, state, and country due to the Coronavirus/COVID-19 Pandemic. Statewide work-from-home orders were issued in South Carolina which resulted in business closures and layoffs for thousands of non-essential workers.

Horry County experienced the highest unemployment rate in the region and state at 22.5 percent in April 2020. The unemployment rate for Georgetown County reached a high of 15.1 percent in April 2020 and Williamsburg reached its highest rate in May 2020 at 12.7 percent. The state implemented the Accelerate SC program in

April 2020 to assist with reopening businesses after the statewide work-at-home orders slowly began to be lifted.

Accelerate SC served as the coordinated COVID-19 advisory team to consider and recommend economic revitalization plans for South Carolina. In September 2020, the unemployment rate was down in Horry County falling to 6.0 percent and Georgetown County was slightly lower at 5.8 percent. Williamsburg County had the highest unemployment rate in the region at 6.6 percent. As most businesses have reopened, the unemployment rates have improved significantly.

As of October 2021, the Waccamaw Region averaged 3.8 percent for unemployment, slightly higher than the state average of 3.1 percent, however much lower than the national average of 4.3 percent. Horry County held the lowest unemployment rate in the region for October at 3.8 percent, while Williamsburg County had the highest rate at 4.8 percent. Georgetown County averaged 4.3 percent unemployment in October. Governor McMaster allowed the state of emergency in South Carolina to expire on June 6, 2021. While the region has continued to see fluctuating numbers of COVID-19 cases, the area has seen continued growth in tourism for the coastal regions, while inland areas remained steady.

While the poverty rate for Horry County falls below the State of South Carolina, we see that Georgetown County has a higher rate, and Williamsburg County has a significantly higher rate.

Poverty Rate

- South Carolina: 13.8
- Georgetown County: 15.1
- Horry County: 12.8
- Williamsburg County: 25.4
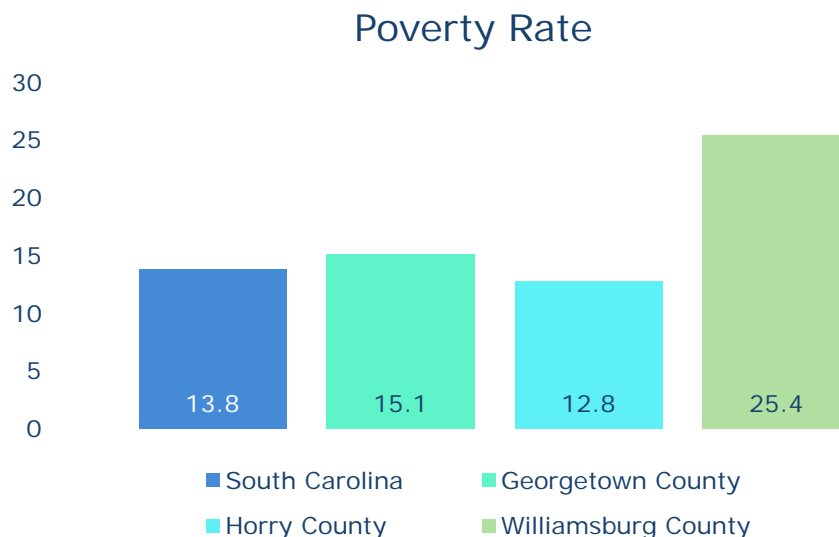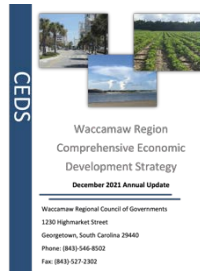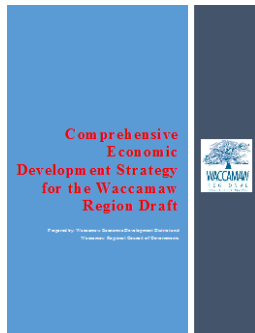
The Waccamaw Economic Development District's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update is designed to guide regional economic growth. This planning process and the 2021 Update provides strategies for job creation, diversified economies, and increase the quality of life in the district. In addition, the CEDS promotes collaboration and coordination between the various individuals and groups, both public and private, engaged in economic development. The CEDS update is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of the Waccamaw Economic Development District.

The Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation (MBREDC) was founded to function as a vital, comprehensive resource for location and expansion assistance to new and existing industries across Horry County. This is accomplished by implementing and supporting activities designed to promote and assist in economic development in Horry County, diversifying the economy of Horry County, and maintaining a quality environment for business and industry to grow and prosper. In order to accomplish this mission, the MBREDC Board of Directors and staff believe it is in the organization's best interest to develop an Economic Development Strategic Plan to guide its efforts. This Economic Development Strategic Plan is a three to five year guide for the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation. It was written by the MBREDC staff and reviewed and approved by the MBREDC Board of Directors.
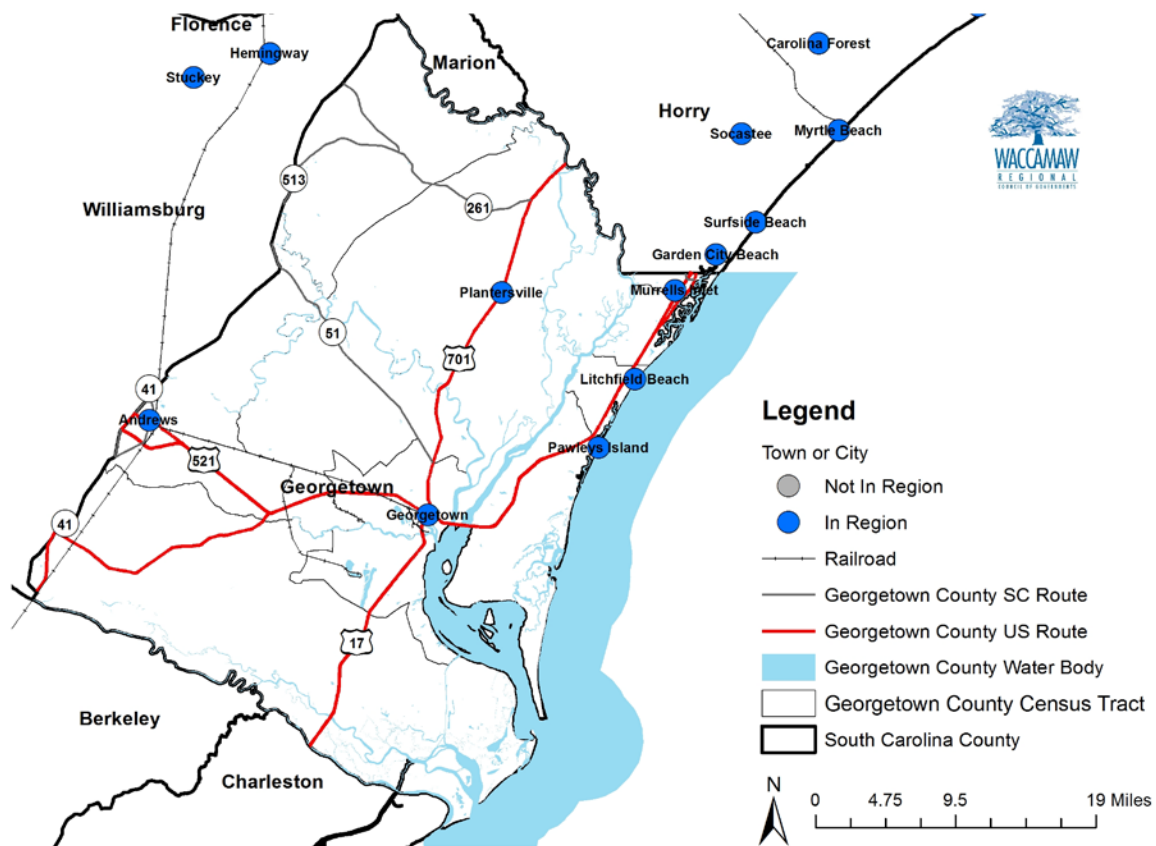
Founded in 1769, Georgetown County is inhabited by approximately 63,921 residents. Georgetown is located on the coast approximately 127 miles southeast of Columbia, South Carolina. Georgetown County has a total area of 1,035 square miles. Of this, 814 square miles is land and 221 square miles is water. US 701 and US 17 run through the City of Georgetown, which serves as the county seat and is the third oldest city in the state. There are currently no major interstates in the county.

Several rivers run through Georgetown County, including the Sampit, Black, Pee Dee, and Waccamaw rivers. The county is bordered to the north by the Great Pee Dee River, Little Pee Dee River, and Bull Creek. It is bordered by the Santee River to the south. According to the South Carolina Port Authority, the second largest seaport in the state is the Port of Georgetown located on the Sampit River. While the port has long served as a breakbulk and bulk cargo port, this port is currently no longer active and is only used for storage. There are plans to redevelop the site. The North-Inlet-Winyah Bay is in the ocean-dominated estuary located in Georgetown. The Waccamaw, Sampit, Black and Pee Dee Rivers drain into Winyah Bay, the third largest watershed on the east coast.

The top five industries in Georgetown County by employment are healthcare and social assistance, accommodation and food services, retail trade, manufacturing, and educational services. Arts and entertainment, accommodation and food services, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, real estate, finance and insurance, healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, other services, and manufacturing in that order have a higher share of employment than the United States. The average annual wage in the county is $44,285.

While Georgetown County does have a diverse economy with manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism, most of the jobs related to tourism are low paying. This combined with retirees moving to the county has resulted in housing becoming unaffordable for much of the population in the eastern part of the county. The labor force decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has been harmful to the county economy.

Georgetown County has the lowest crop output in the region due to the majority of its prime agriculture land being devoted to timber production. In 2021, it had approximately 600 head of cattle which includes beef cows, milk cows, and calves of both types. Approximately 176,300 bushels of corn and 95,800 bushels of soybeans were produced in the county.

Georgetown RISE

One effort unique to Georgetown County is Georgetown RISE. In 2017, Georgetown County partnered with Coastal Carolina University and the North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to create Georgetown RISE - a United National Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development. The only UN RCE in the Southeastern United States, Georgetown RISE promotes "science-based research and decision-making by unifying community members, educators, businesses, elected officials, and youth within the county to initiate a sustainable and resilient future for Georgetown County."

Disruptions and Risks

According to the FEMA National Risk Index, Georgetown County scores 17.54, which is a relatively moderate score on the risk index. Regarding Expected Annual Loss, the score is 16.20 which is relatively low. Comparatively, the score for social vulnerability is relatively high, with a score of 50.49. Community resilience is scored at 53.89, a relatively moderate score according to the index.

This chart demonstrates the relative distribution of hazard type Risk Index scores for Georgetown County, SC. Risk Index scores are plotted for each hazard type included in the National Risk Index. Higher relative risk corresponds to larger shaded areas inside a given hazard type chart slice.
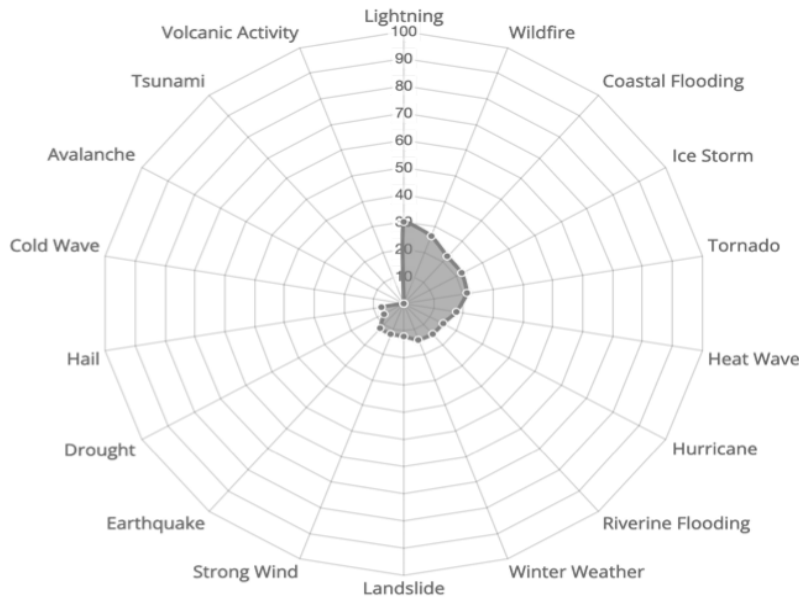
Image: FEMA National Risk Index

Expected Annual Loss

In Georgetown County, SC, expected loss each year due to natural hazards is **Relatively Low** when compared to the rest of the US.
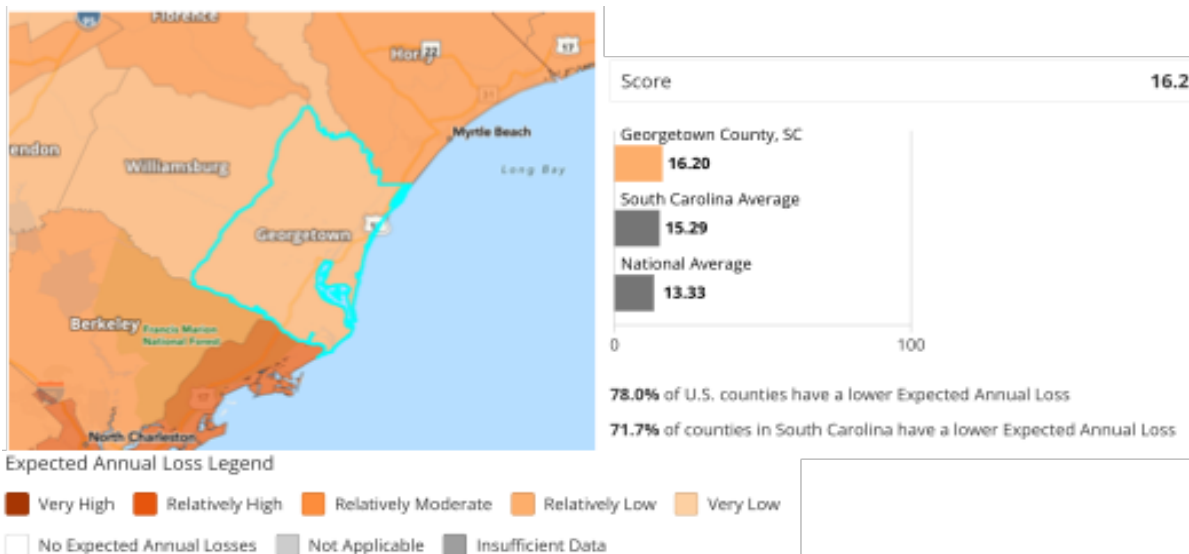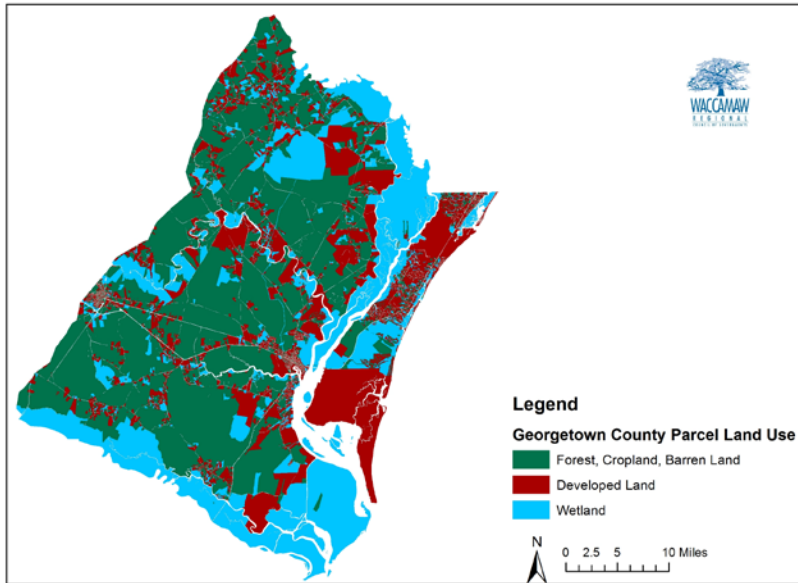

Image: FEMA National Risk Index

The Composite Expected Annual Loss equals $7,939.328.89. Building value accounts for $4,711,532.08, and Agricultural Value accounts for another $150,823.52. The Population Equivalence equals $3,076,973.28.

Land-Use and Demographics

(Note: In the above map, a parcel with any kind of development, including a single house on a thousand-acre tract, is considered developed. A parcel is considered a wetland if more than half of its land area is occupied by one.)

In the above map, the wetlands surrounding the four rivers are clearly visible along with development on the Waccamaw Neck. Of the total amount of land area in the county, twenty-two percent is developed, twenty-eight percent is consisting of wetlands, and fifty percent consists of forests, cropland, or barren land.
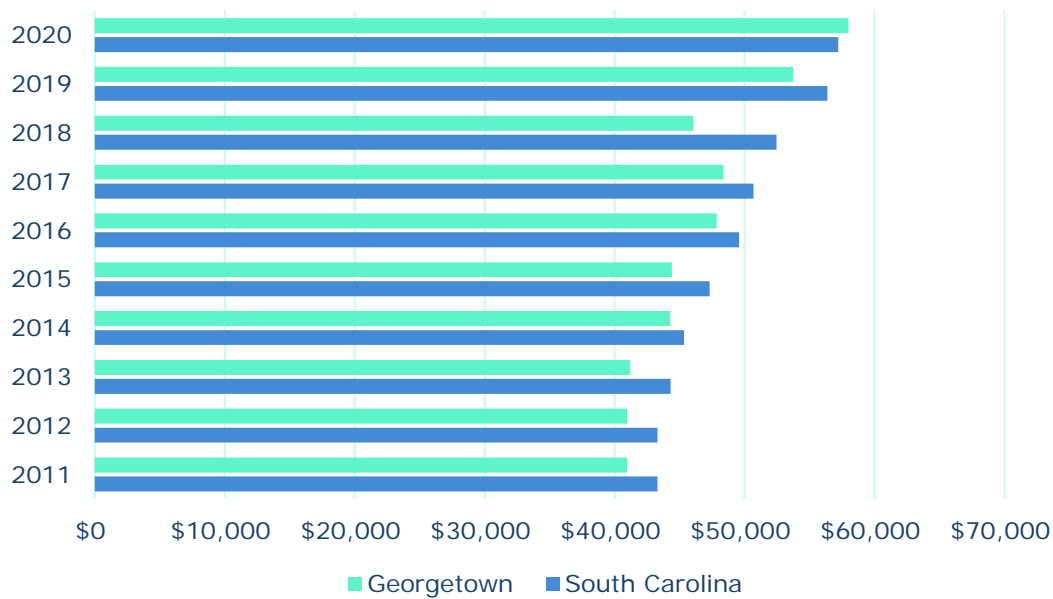
A large percentage of the population in Georgetown County fall somewhere between 50 and 69 years old. Georgetown County is a popular retirement destination, and this is reflected in the age of the population.
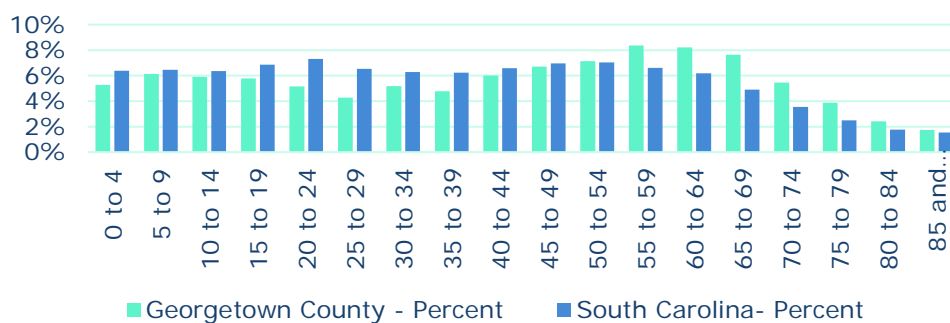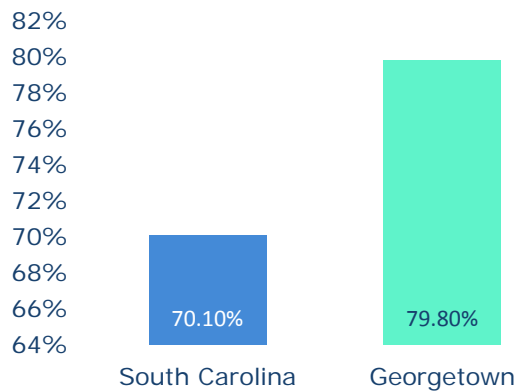
In 2020, Georgetown County had a higher median income than South Carolina.
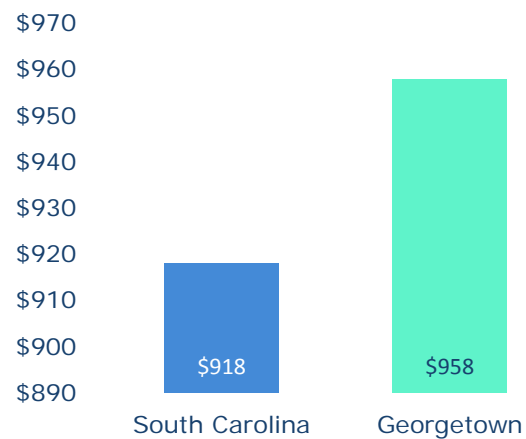
Median Household Income 2011-2020

Legend: Georgetown, South Carolina

Housing

Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2016-2020

South Carolina: 70.10%
Georgetown: 79.80%

Median gross rent, 2016-2020
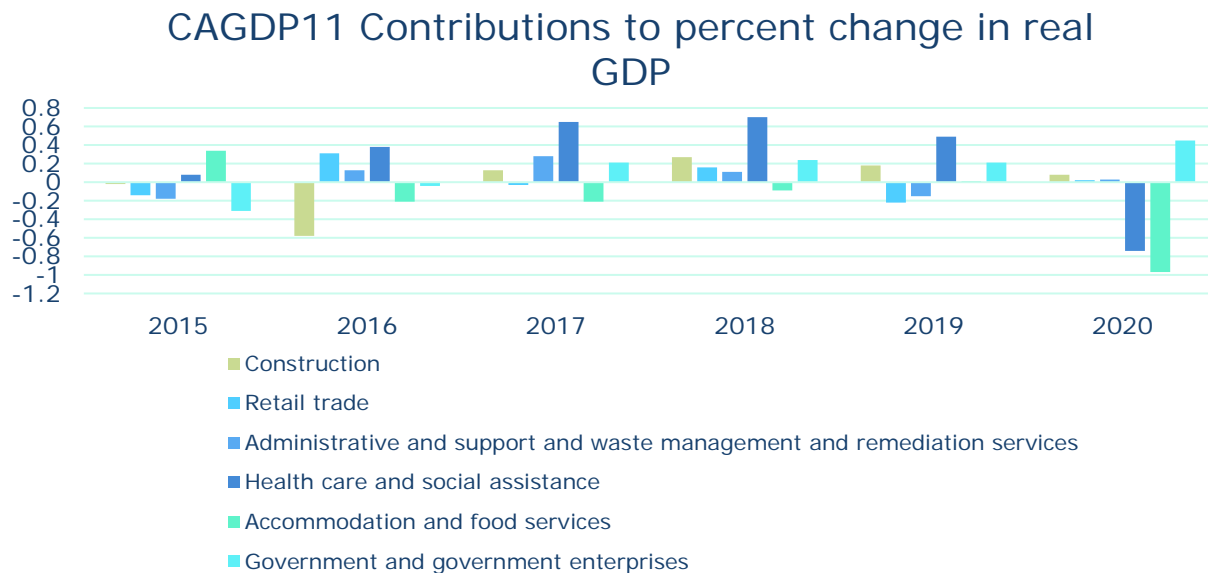
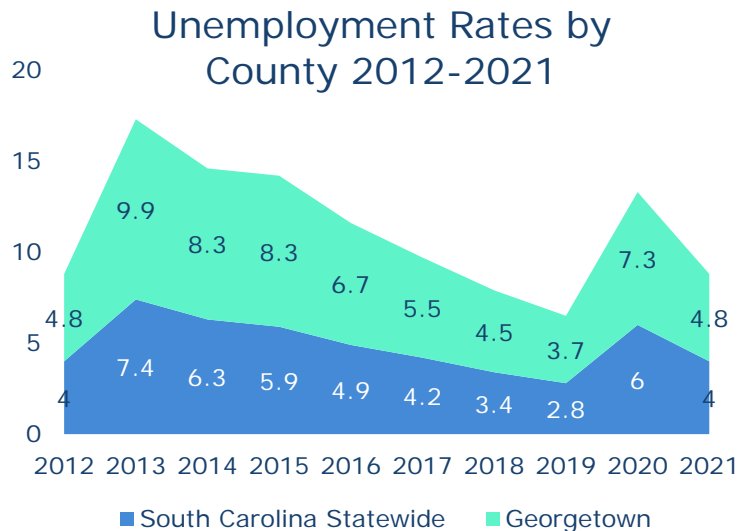

South Carolina: $918
Georgetown: $958

Georgetown County approved 665 building permits in 2021.

Economic Profile

While Georgetown County does have a diverse economy with manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism, most of the jobs related to tourism are low paying. This combined with retirees moving to the county has resulted in housing becoming unaffordable for most of the population in the eastern part of the county. The labor force decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has been harmful to the county's economy.

Real gross domestic product is an inflation-adjusted measure that reflects the value of all goods and services produced by an economy each year, expressed in base-year prices. This chart shows comparisons for both the quantity and value of goods and services. This metric gives a snapshot of the overall economic health of an area. Reviewing the top industries in Georgetown, construction had seen a dramatic decrease in 2016, but had increased in subsequent years until the onset of the pandemic in 2020. Healthcare and social assistance had also increased prior to COVID-19. Government and government enterprises increased in 2020 as demands on programs and support increased.

CAGDP11 Contributions to percent change in real GDP

- Construction
- Retail trade
- Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services
- Health care and social assistance
- Accommodation and food services
- Government and government enterprises

Unemployment Rates by County 2012-2021

According to the South Carolina Census Data Center, there were 25,930 workers in the labor force in Georgetown County 2021. Of those, 24,692 were employed. The county ranked fifth in the state in 2020 at $51,775 per capita personal income. (BEA)

The average weekly wage for the third quarter of 2021 was $863.

Per capita personal income is a measure of the amount of money earned per person in a geographic region. Per capita personal income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population. Georgetown County residents had a higher per capita income than the South Carolina average.
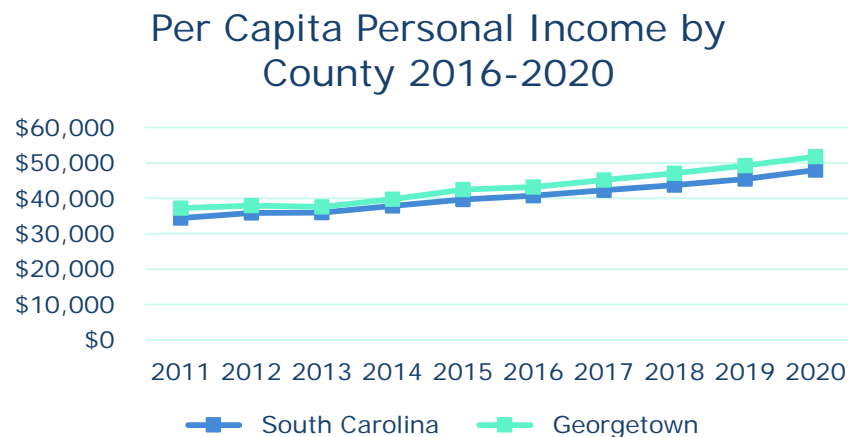
Per Capita Personal Income by County 2016-2020

A location quotient (LQ) is an analytical statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to a larger geographic unit (usually the nation). An LQ is computed as an industry's share of a regional total for some economic statistic (earnings, GDP by metropolitan area, employment, etc.) divided by the industry's share of the national total for the same statistic. For example, an LQ of 1.0 in mining means that the region and the nation are equally specialized in mining; while an LQ of 1.8 means that the region has a higher concentration in mining than the nation. (BEA)

Georgetown County has a higher share of Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, as well as Accommodations and Food services.
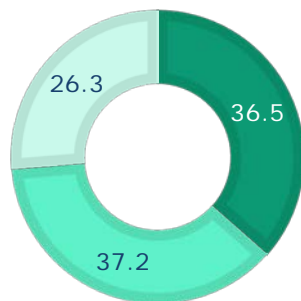
4th Quarter 2021 Georgetown County Location Quotient
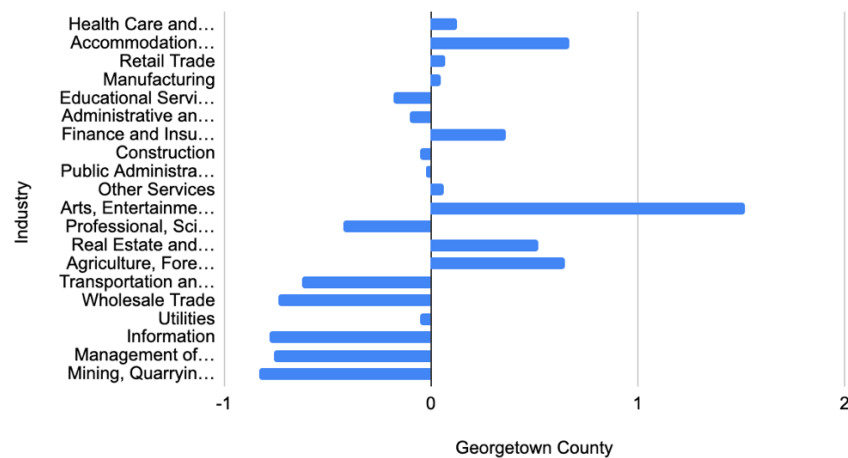
Georgetown County

Commute

Georgetown County Commute Patterns

■ In-commuters ■ Out-Commuters ■ Work and Live in County


26.3
36.5
37.2

Georgetown has the same percentage of in-commuters as out-commuters. Only twenty-six percent of people who live in the county also work in the county.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010

In Georgetown County, the mean travel time to work is between twenty-five and thirty minutes. This is greater than those living in Horry County, but less than those in Williamsburg County.
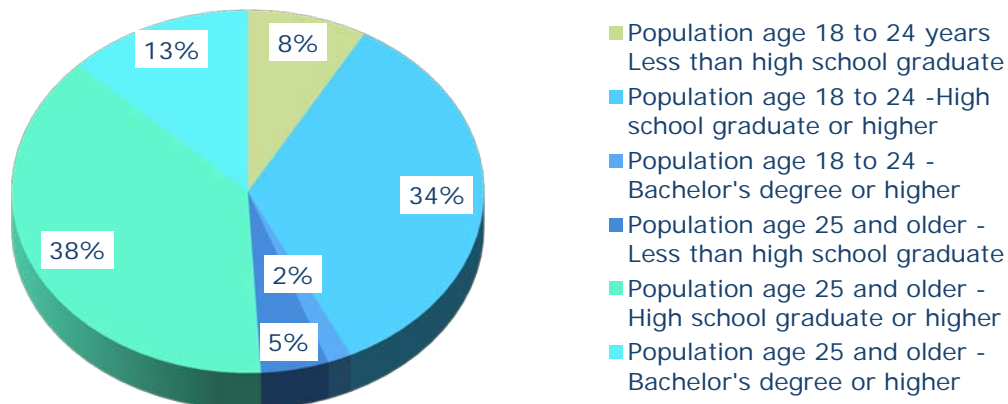
Mean Travel Time to Work (Minutes), Workers Age 16 years+, 2016-2020

County	Minutes
Georgetown County	27.4
Horry County	22.2
Williamsburg County	31.7
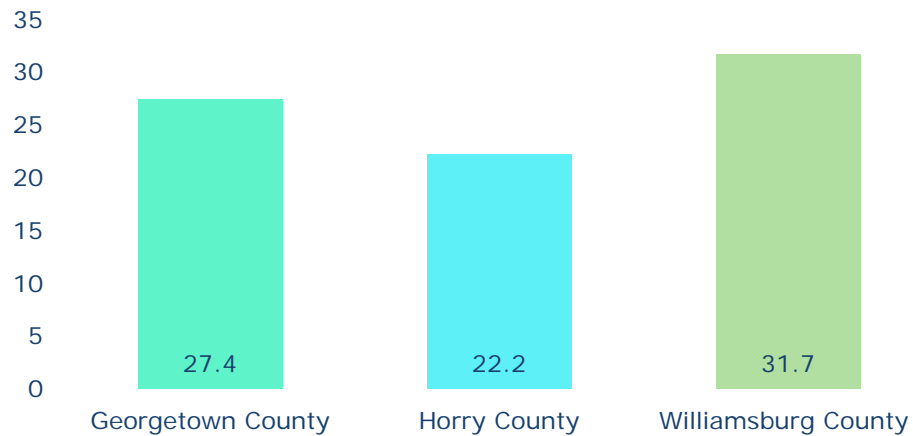
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020

Education

Georgetown County Educational Attainment

- Population age 18 to 24 years Less than high school graduate
- Population age 18 to 24 -High school graduate or higher
- Population age 18 to 24 - Bachelor's degree or higher
- Population age 25 and older - Less than high school graduate
- Population age 25 and older - High school graduate or higher
- Population age 25 and older - Bachelor's degree or higher

8%
13%
34%
2%
5%
38%

Those with higher education typically earn more and have lower rates of unemployment than those with less education.

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2021

Median usual weekly earnings ($)

Educational attainment	Earnings ($)
Doctoral degree	1,909
Professional degree	1,924
Master's degree	1,574
Bachelor's degree	1,334
Associate's degree	963
Some college, no degree	899
High school diploma	809
Less than a high school diploma	626

All workers: $1,057

Unemployment rate (%)

Educational attainment	Unemployment rate (%)
Doctoral degree	1.5
Professional degree	1.8
Master's degree	2.6
Bachelor's degree	3.5
Associate's degree	4.6
Some college, no degree	5.5
High school diploma	6.2
Less than a high school diploma	8.3

Total: 4.7%

Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Local Planning

A Comprehensive Plan is a vital document that offers a vision for a county's future development. It considers the area's existing conditions, future goals and a general vision for what future growth and development within the county will look like over the next 10 to 20 years. Counties are required to update their Comprehensive Plans every 10 years, and Georgetown County is currently in the midst of an update.

This plan is designed to meet the requirements of Title 6, Chapter 29 of the State of South Carolina Code of Laws as it relates to the development, content, and adoption of a comprehensive plan. This plan is divided into nine elements. These include population, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, land use, transportation, and priority investment.

Data Sources

United States Bureau of Economic Analysis

· https://apps.bea.gov/itable/index.cfm

United States Census Bureau

· www.census.gov

South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce

· https://dew.sc.gov/data-and-statistics

South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office

· https://rfa.sc.gov/data-research/population-demographics/census-state-data-center/mhi-county-2011-2020

Georgetown Rise

· https://www.coastal.edu/georgetownrise/

Business Resources

Georgetown County offers a variety of online resources and support for business development. Under their Economic Development web page, they provide information on starting a business-to-business development resource. Georgetown County is also served by the Myrtle Beach Area Small Business Development Center, a resource designed to support small businesses and entrepreneurs in the area. The Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce is also active in the County, providing networking opportunities, training programs, and promoting sustainable tourism.

Georgetown County Economic Development provides information on properties, demographics, and the community in general for businesses seeking to establish a location in the county. They provide web links to resources both in the county and state-wide that are available to assist businesses looking to relocate or improve their established operation.

Horry County
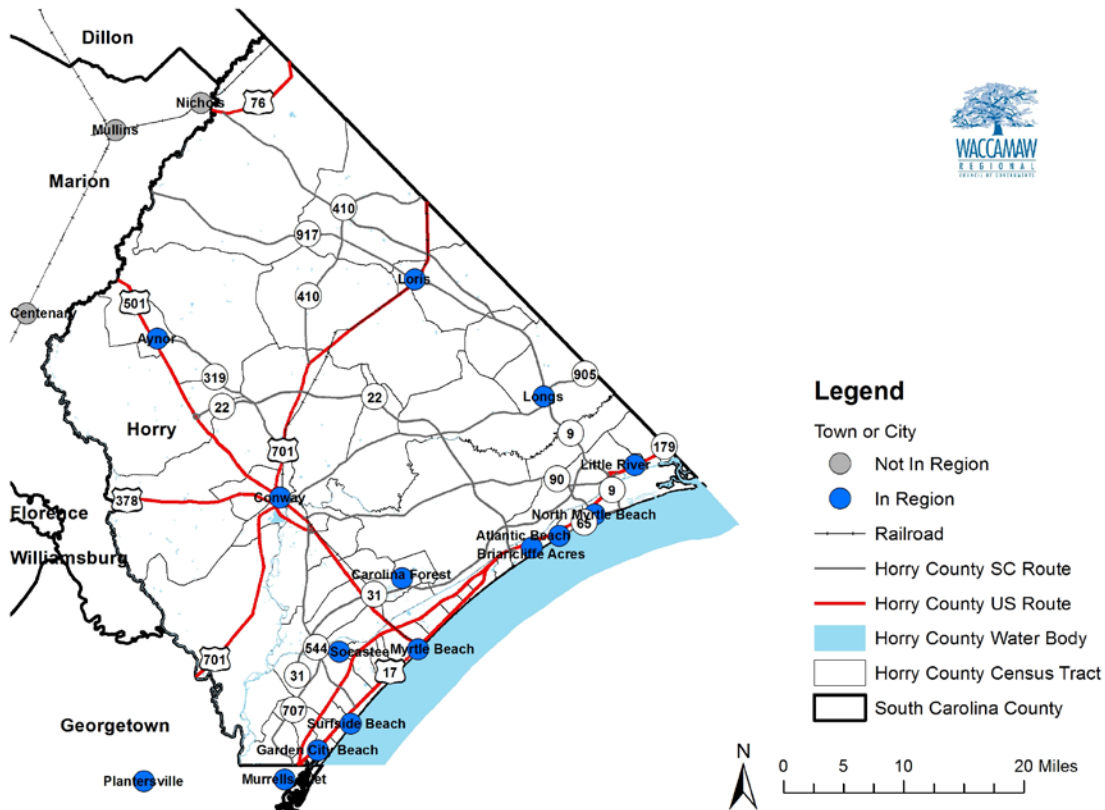
Horry County is rapidly growing, with approximately 365,579 residents.

Horry County is the easternmost county in South Carolina and is located on the coast approximately 140 miles east of Columbia, South Carolina. The Myrtle Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is one of ten MSA's in the state. The MSA includes all of Horry County, which is 1,255 square miles and has a density of 312 people per square mile in 2020. In terms of land mass, Horry County is the largest county in the state. (CEDS 2021) Of this, 1,134 square miles is land, and 121 square miles is water.

The City of Conway serves as the county seat of Horry. US 501 serves as a main ingress into the county, with both US 501 and US 501 Business passing through Conway. Other major connectors in the county include SC 31, SC 22 and US 17 which runs the length of Horry County into North Carolina and down through

Georgetown. An interstate project in the county known as I-73 is proposed. (Horry County Imagine 2040 Comprehensive Plan)

Several rivers run through Horry County, including the Waccamaw River and the Great Pee Dee River. The county is bordered to the north by the Great Pee Dee River, with the northwestern border defined by the Little Pee Dee River and Lumber River, and the southwestern border defined by the Little Pee Dee and Bull Creek. The Intracoastal Waterway cuts through the eastern side of the county and joins the Waccamaw River near Socastee.

The top five industries in Horry County by employment are accommodation and food services, retail trade, healthcare and social assistance, construction, and administrative and support and waste management and remediation services.

Horry County is the most productive county in the region when it comes to agricultural output. In 2021, there were approximately 4,400 head of cattle which includes beef cows, milk cows, and calves of both types. The county produced the fifth most amount of corn in the state and the third most soybeans in the state at 3,144,000 bushels and 1,225,000 bushels respectively. Cotton production amounted to 5,970 bales and 7,990,000 pounds of peanuts were harvested. This production can be tied to a legacy of self-subsistence that was necessary to counter the community's geographic isolation prior to the 1880s.

Disruptions and Risks

According to the FEMA National Risk Index, Horry County scores 26.25, which is a relatively high score on the risk index. Regarding Expected Annual Loss, the score is 25.14 which is relatively moderate. Comparatively, the score for social vulnerability is relatively high, with a score of 49.27. Community resilience is scored at 54.54, a relatively moderate score according to the index.
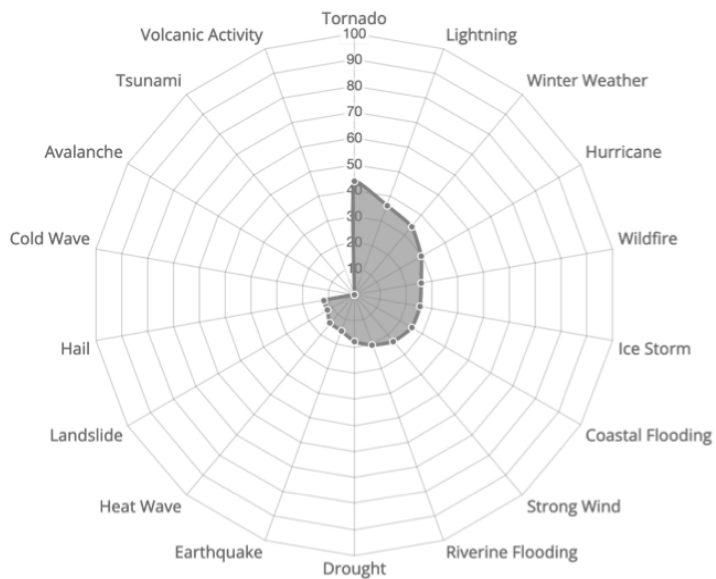
This chart demonstrates the relative distribution of hazard type Risk Index scores for Horry County, SC. Risk Index scores are plotted for each hazard type included in the National Risk Index. Higher relative risk corresponds to larger shaded areas inside a given hazard type chart slice.

Image: FEMA National Risk Index

Expected Annual Loss

In Horry County, SC, expected loss each year due to natural hazards is **Relatively Moderate** when compared to the rest of the US.

Image: FEMA National Risk Index

The Composite Expected Annual Loss for Horry County, SC is estimated at $26,619,651.45. Building value accounts for $15,305,214.60, and Agricultural Value accounts for another $1,741,882.80. The Population Equivalence equals $9,572,554.05.
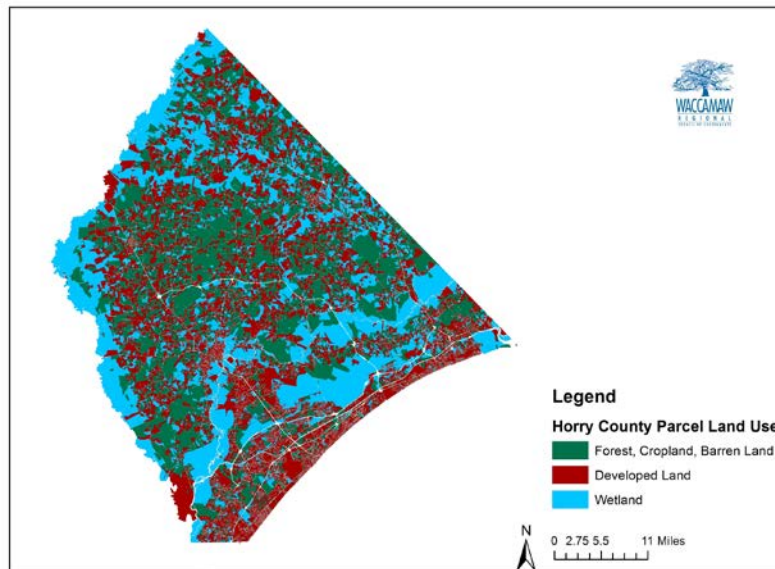
(Note: In the above map, a parcel with any kind of development, including a single house on a thousand acre tract, is considered developed. A parcel is considered a wetland if more than half of its land area is occupied by one.)

In the above map, the urban development of the Myrtle Beach area and Conway is clearly visible. Of the total amount of land area in the county, thirty-eight percent is developed, twenty-eight percent is consists of wetlands, and thirty-four percent consists of forests, cropland, or barren land.
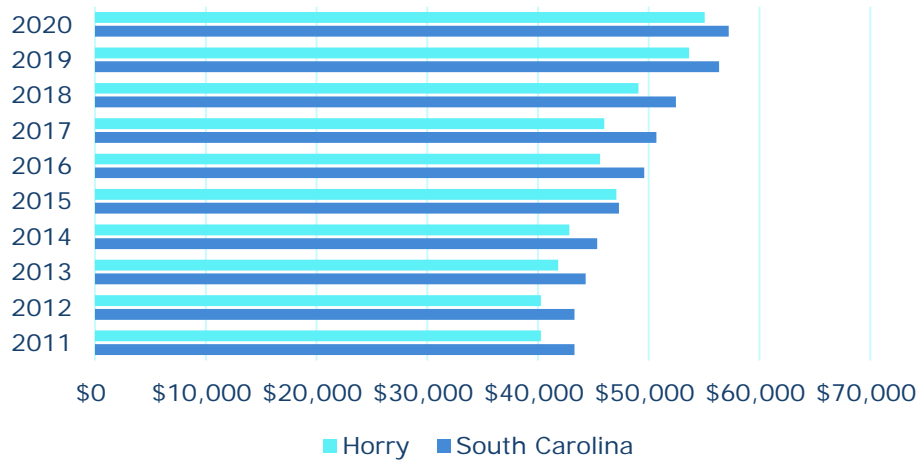
Like Georgetown County, Horry County is a popular retirement destination. This is reflected in the age of the population. One age group in Horry County growing more in line with South Carolina population numbers is the 25 to 34 range, which accounts for younger families and professionals.
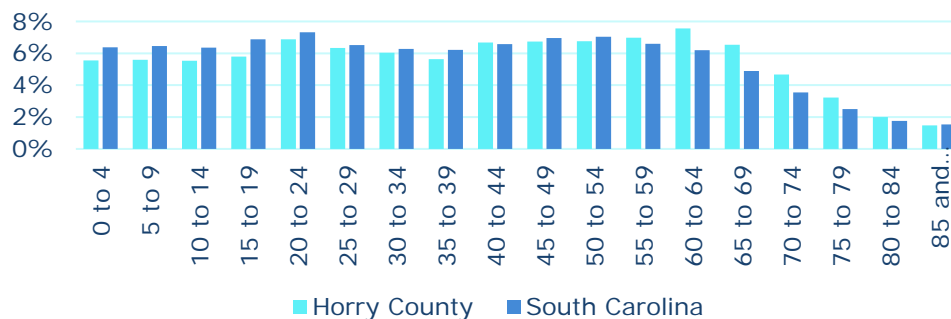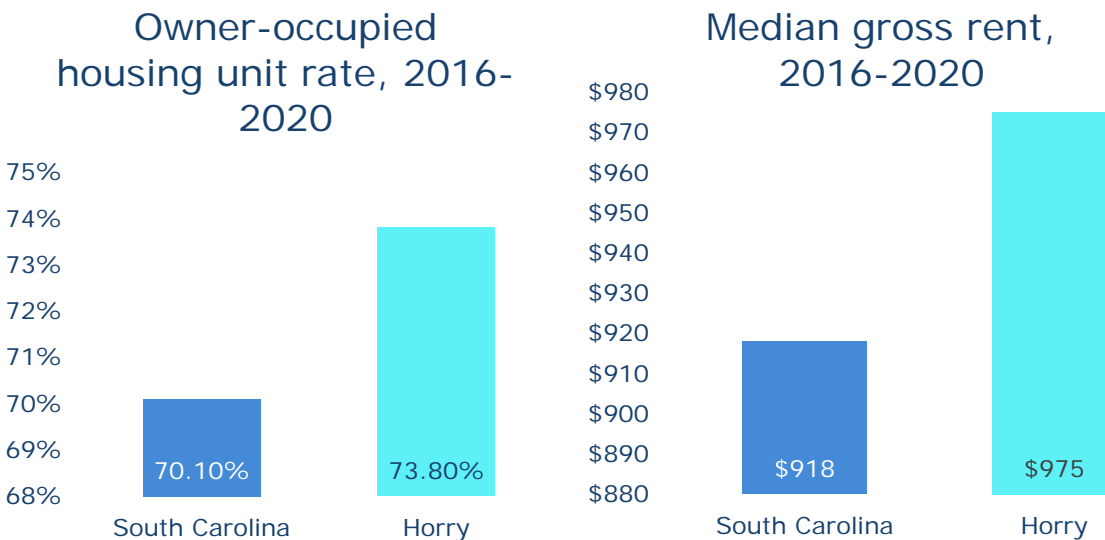

Horry County has consistently had a lower median household income than the South Carolina Average.

Median Household Income 2011-2020

	Horry	South Carolina

Chart showing Median Household Income from 2011 to 2020 for Horry (light blue) and South Carolina (dark blue), with x-axis from $0 to $70,000.

Housing

Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2016-2020

South Carolina	Horry
70.10%	73.80%

Median gross rent, 2016-2020

South Carolina	Horry
$918	$975

Horry County approved 6,970 building permits in 2021.

Economic Profile

Horry County's economy is dependent on tourism and lacks diversity. Population growth is straining the county's infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic created a supply shortage and labor force issues, both of which were harmful for the economy. Hospitality and food service industries that the county is reliant upon have struggled to find enough employees and the supply shortage has burdened housing construction efforts and increased housing prices. Many employers have resorted to increasing their wages to attract more workers.

Real gross domestic product is an inflation-adjusted measure that reflects the value of all goods and services produced by an economy each year, expressed in base-year prices. This chart shows comparisons for both the quantity and value of goods and services. This metric gives a snapshot of the overall economic health of an area. In Horry County, there was consistent growth until the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

CAGDP11 Contribution to Percent Change in real GDP - Horry County, SC

- Retail trade
- Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services
- Educational services
- Health care and social assistance
- Accommodation and food services
- Government and government enterprises

According to the South Carolina Census Data Center, there were 148,763 workers in the labor force in Horry County 2021. Of those, 141,225 were employed. In 2020, Horry County ranked 4th in the state for personal income. (BEA) The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that Horry County had an 11.2 percent gain in average weekly wage gains, the largest gain in the state from the third quarter of 2020 to the third quarter of 2021. The average weekly wage for the third quarter of 2021 was $804.

Unemployment Rates by County 2012-2021
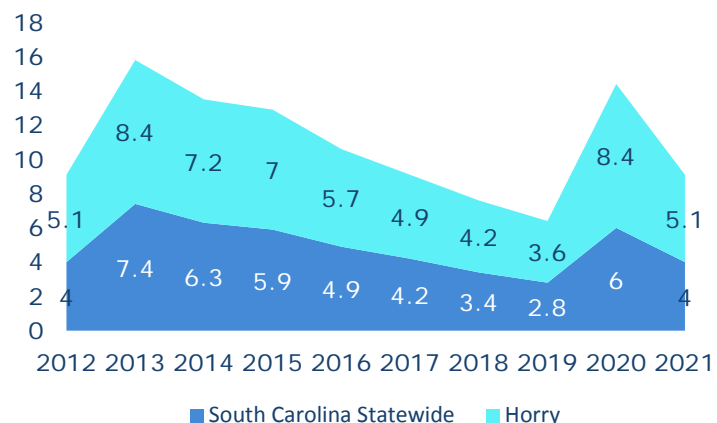
- South Carolina Statewide
- Horry

Per capita personal income is a measure of the amount of money earned per person in a geographic region. Per capita personal income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population. Horry County Residents had a lower per capita personal income than the South Carolina average.
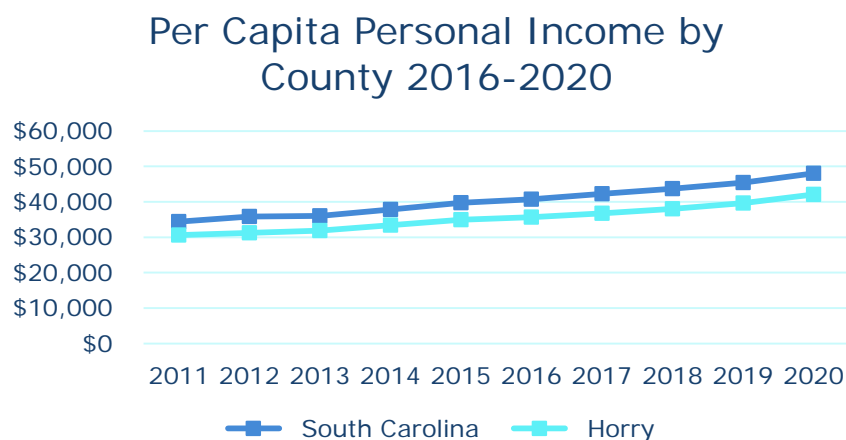
Per Capita Personal Income by County 2016-2020

A location quotient (LQ) is an analytical statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to a larger geographic unit (usually the nation). An LQ is computed as an industry's share of a regional total for some economic statistic (earnings, GDP by metropolitan area, employment, etc.) divided by the industry's share of the national total for the same statistic. For example, an LQ of 1.0 in mining means that the region and the nation are equally specialized in mining; while an LQ of 1.8 means that the region has a higher concentration in mining than the nation. (BEA)

4th Quarter 2021 Horry County Location Quotient
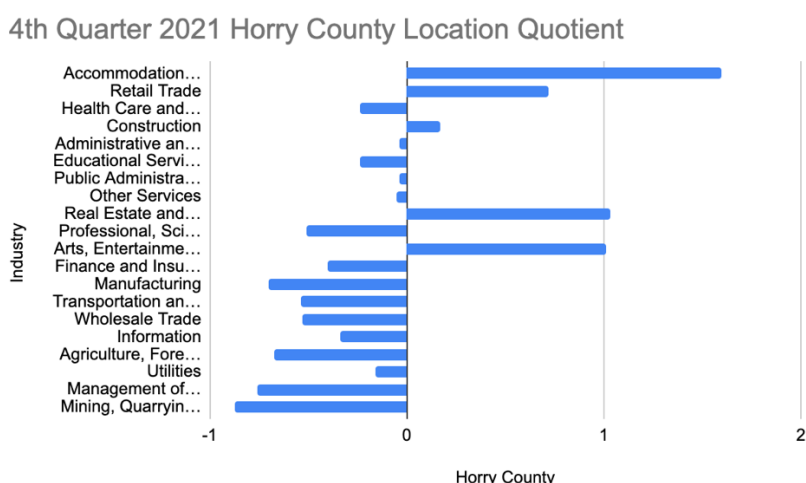
Horry County has a higher share of Accommodations and Food Services, Retail, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing, and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation.

Horry County Commute Patterns

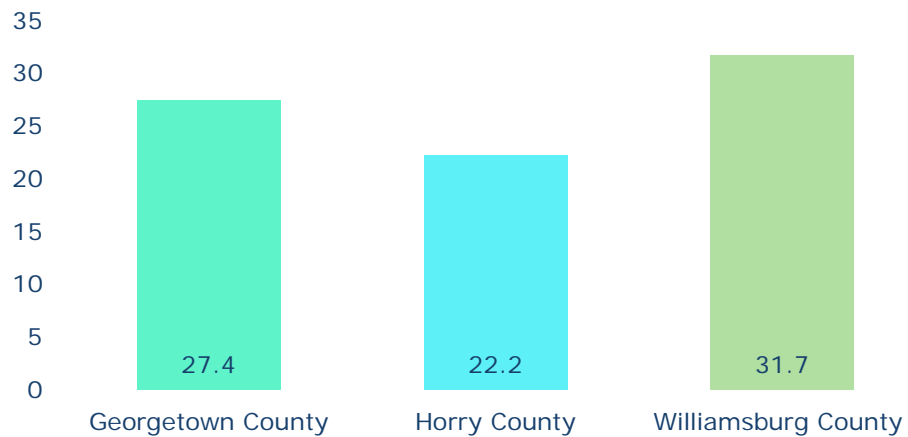■ In-commuters ■ Out-Commuters ■ Work and Live in County

31%

35%

34%
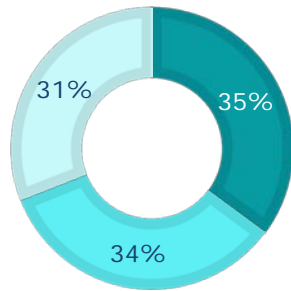
Horry County has a higher number of in-commuters than out-commuters. Only thirty-one percent of the people who live in the county also work in it.

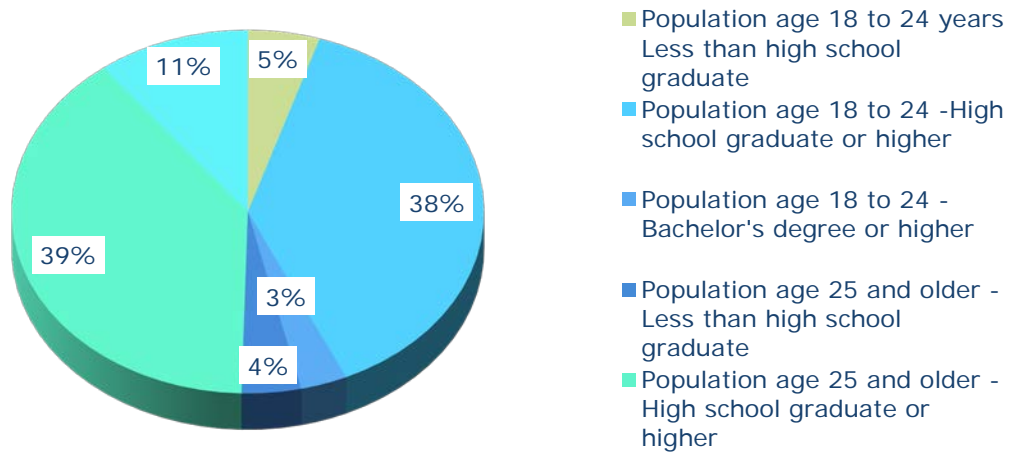Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010

In Horry County, the mean travel time to work is less than twenty-five minutes. This is less than those living in either Georgetown or Williamsburg counties.

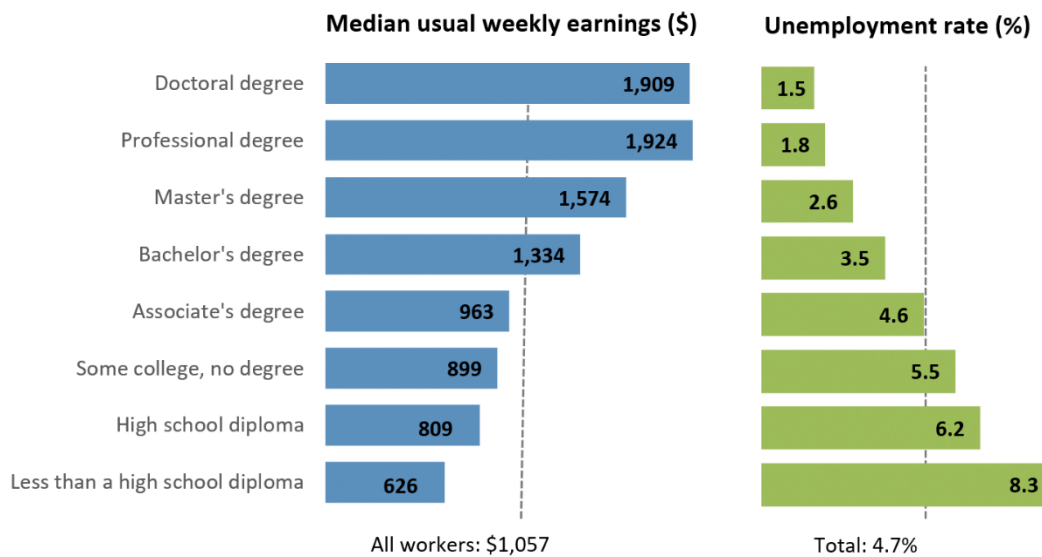Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020

Mean Travel Time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2016-2020

Georgetown County	Horry County	Williamsburg County
27.4	22.2	31.7

Horry County Educational Attainment

Legend:
- Population age 18 to 24 years Less than high school graduate
- Population age 18 to 24 -High school graduate or higher
- Population age 18 to 24 - Bachelor's degree or higher
- Population age 25 and older - Less than high school graduate
- Population age 25 and older - High school graduate or higher

Pie chart values: 5%, 11%, 39%, 4%, 3%, 38%

Those with higher education typically earn more and have lower rates of unemployment than those with less education.

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2021

Median usual weekly earnings ($)

Education	Earnings
Doctoral degree	1,909
Professional degree	1,924
Master's degree	1,574
Bachelor's degree	1,334
Associate's degree	963
Some college, no degree	899
High school diploma	809
Less than a high school diploma	626

All workers: $1,057

Unemployment rate (%)

Education	Rate
Doctoral degree	1.5
Professional degree	1.8
Master's degree	2.6
Bachelor's degree	3.5
Associate's degree	4.6
Some college, no degree	5.5
High school diploma	6.2
Less than a high school diploma	8.3

Total: 4.7%

Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

The Horry County Mitigation Planning Task Force was established by the Horry County Emergency Management Department to enhance the planning process and updates to the plan. The Planning Task Force was led by Horry County Emergency Management. The Task Force included representatives from each participating jurisdiction, interested special purpose districts, and county government department representatives. Prior to the first Mitigation Planning Task Force Meeting, a work plan was formulated.

The City of Myrtle Beach Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) establishes the procedural framework for an effective response and timely restoration of essential services following a disaster or catastrophic event. Recovery initiatives are the activities that take place during and after the disaster response phase of emergency management. Recovery involves meeting both the short-term and long-term needs of the community. Much of the support required for an effective response to community needs and recovery implementation tasks involves the coordination and administration of federal and state disaster assistance. This document should be applicable to any disaster, regardless of scope, size, or classification (e.g., presidentially declared disaster), but should also be scaled appropriately.

Data Sources

United States Bureau of Economic Analysis

·   https://apps.bea.gov/itable/index.cfm

United States Census Bureau

·   www.census.gov

South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce

·   https://dew.sc.gov/data-and-statistics

South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office

·   https://rfa.sc.gov/data-research/population-demographics/census-state-data-center/mhi-county-2011-2020

Business Resources

There are many resources for new and small business owners in Horry County. There are several Chambers of Commerce located in the county. Conway, Loris Little River, Myrtle Beach, and North Myrtle Beach all have their own standing chambers of commerce that work to promote businesses in their community.

Horry County is also served by the Myrtle Beach Area Small Business Development Center, a resource designed to support small businesses and entrepreneurs in the area. The Small Business Development Center is located on the campus of Coastal Carolina University.

Business owners may also utilize Grand Strand SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives), a group designed to mentor young professionals. The 5th T Innovation Group and Conway Innovation Center work with entrepreneurs and small business owners to assist them in their ventures.

The Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation is another invaluable resource for the area. Their work involves attracting new businesses to the region and helping them grow, thrive, and create more jobs, as well as contributing to workforce development.

Williamsburg County
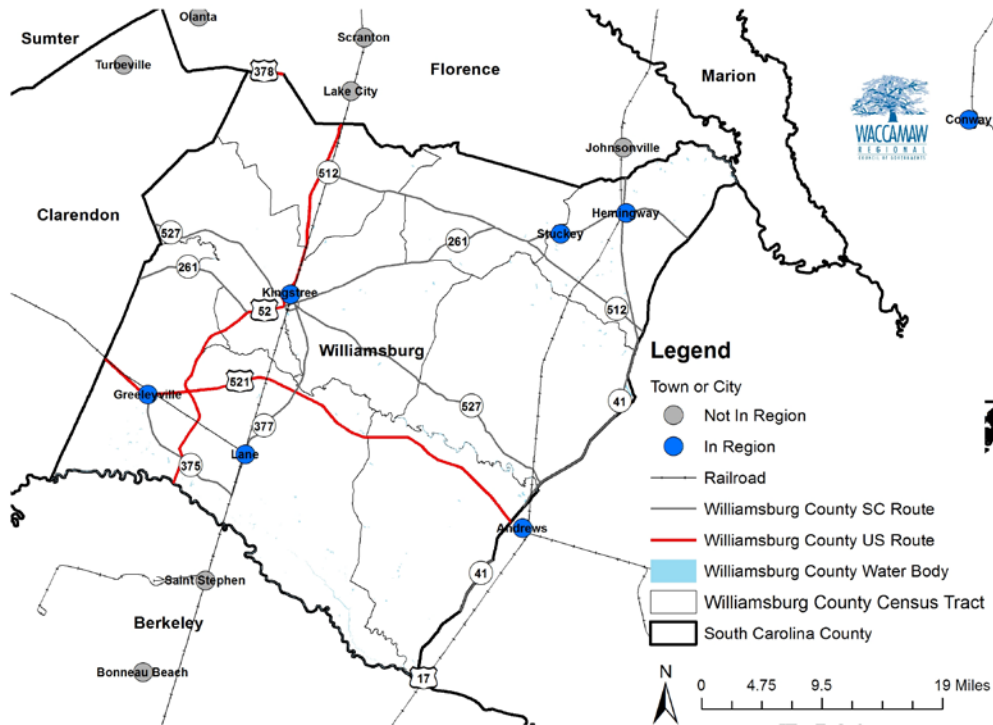
Williamsburg County is the least populous of the three counties in the region. According to Census.gov, the 2021 estimate shows the population at 30,484 people, a decline of 1.7 percent since April 1, 2020. Williamsburg's population has been declining for decades. Since 1980, its population has fallen by 21.98 percent.

Located approximately 83 miles southeast of Columbia, Williamsburg is a picturesque rural community. The county seat is the Town of Kingstree. I-95 is accessible from SC 527, which runs through Kingstree. US 52 also runs through Kingstree and connects it to Charleston to the south and to North Carolina to the north. US 501 runs from east to west through the county and connects it to Georgetown to the east and Manning to the west.

While landlocked, Williamsburg County is connected to both Georgetown and Horry counties via the river systems. Clarks Creek, Muddy Creek, and a section of the Great Pee Dee River form the northeastern boundaries of the county. The Black River cuts through the lower third of the county and flows into Georgetown County. This river and portions of its adjacent swampland will be the future home of the Black River State Park, a riverside trail which will begin in Williamsburg and end in Georgetown. The southern border of the county is defined by the Santee River.

The top five industries in Williamsburg County by employment are manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, public administration, and educational services. Williamsburg County's economy has traditionally been focused on agriculture.

Today, agriculture only accounts for about five percent of the total jobs in the county and the economy has since shifted towards manufacturing and services such as healthcare. Similar to Horry County, Williamsburg County is very agriculturally productive. In 2021, there were approximately 2,600 head of cattle which includes beef cows, milk cows, and calves of both types. Approximately 2,503,000 bushels of corn were produced. The county ranked fourth in the state for soybean production which amounted to 1,203,000 bushels. Cotton production in the county is by far the largest in the region. Some 25,000 bales were harvested, which is more than four times that of Horry County. In 2020, Williamsburg County produced approximately 4,889,000 pounds of peanuts.

Disruptions and Risks

According to the FEMA National Risk Index, Williamsburg County scores 13.16, which is a relatively low score on the risk index. Regarding Expected Annual Loss, the score is 12.32 which is relatively low. Comparatively, the score for social vulnerability is relatively high, with a score of 48.44. Community resilience is scored at 52.39, a relatively low score according to the index.
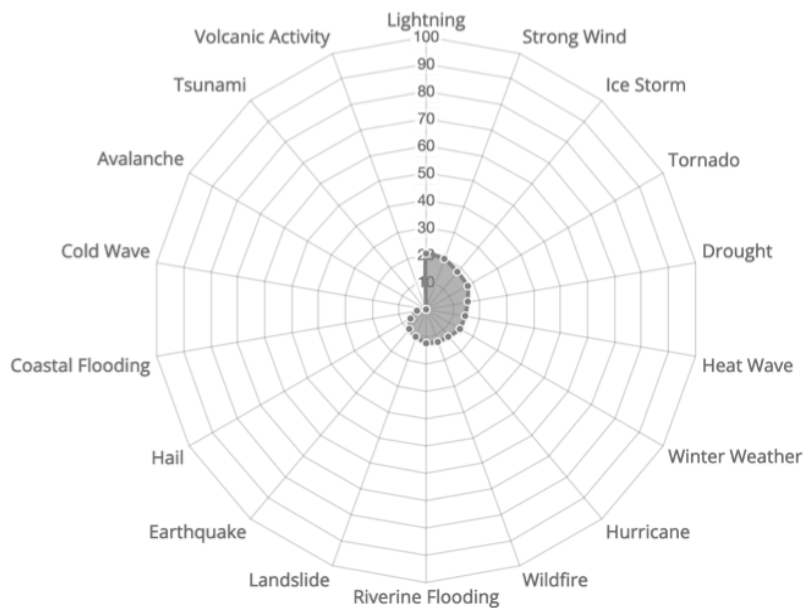
This chart demonstrates the relative distribution of hazard type Risk Index scores for Williamsburg County, SC. Risk Index scores are plotted for each hazard type included in the National Risk Index. Higher relative risk corresponds to larger shaded areas inside a given hazard type chart slice.

Image: FEMA National Risk Index

Expected Annual Loss

In Williamsburg County, SC, expected loss each year due to natural hazards is **Relatively Low** when compared to the rest of the US.
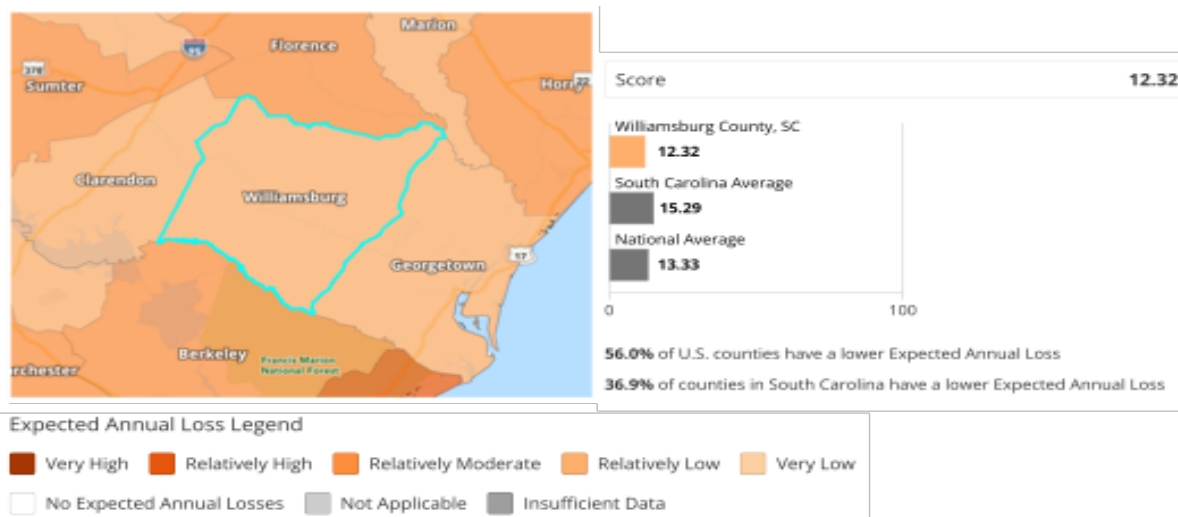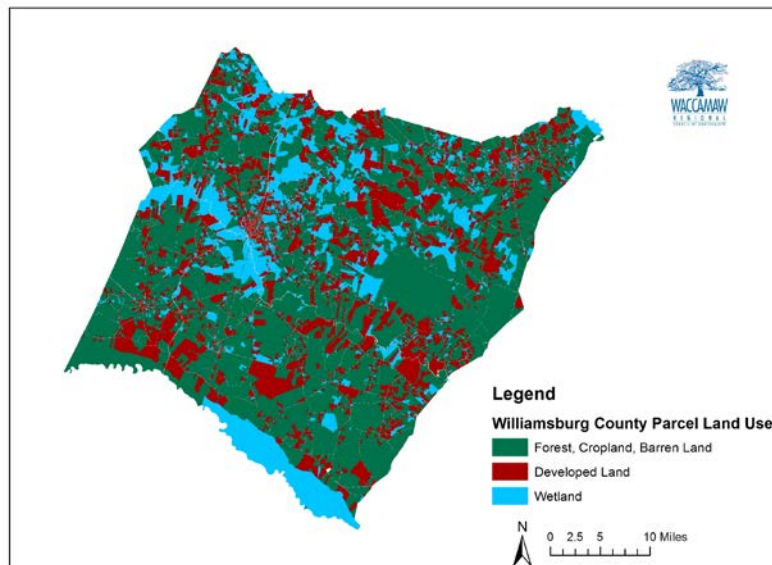

Image: FEMA National Risk Index

The Composite Expected Annual Loss for Williamsburg County equals $3,835.730.39. Building value accounts for $1,678,778.34, and Agricultural Value accounts for another $824,948.03. The Population Equivalence equals $1,332,004.02.

Land-Use and Demographics

(Note: In the above map, a parcel with any kind of development, including a single house on a thousand-acre tract, is considered developed. A parcel is considered a wetland if more than half of its land area is occupied by one.)

In the above map, large agricultural and forested areas are visible along with large tracts of farms with residences. Most of the wetlands are concentrated in the northern half and the southern boundary. Of the total amount of land area in the county, twenty-four percent is developed, seventeen percent consisting of wetlands, and fifty-nine percent consists of forests, cropland, or barren land.
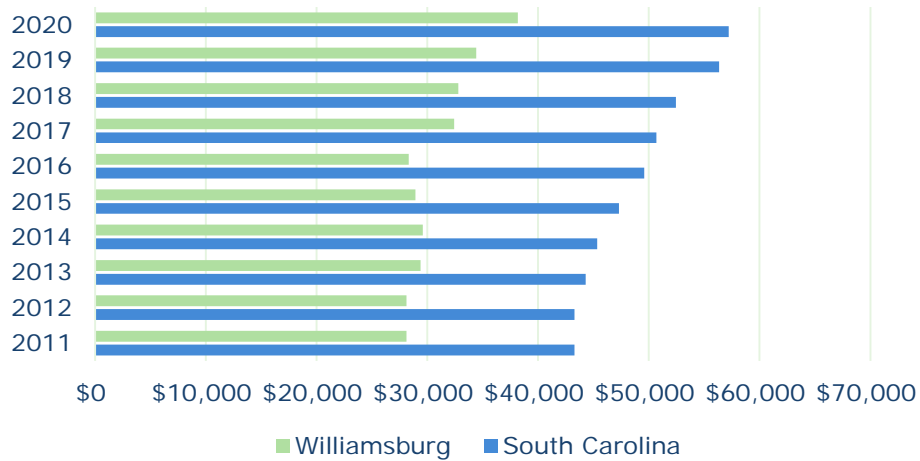
Williamsburg County currently has a declining population, as well as an aging population. One age group that is significantly lower than the South Carolina population numbers is the 20 to 24 range, which accounts for younger workers.
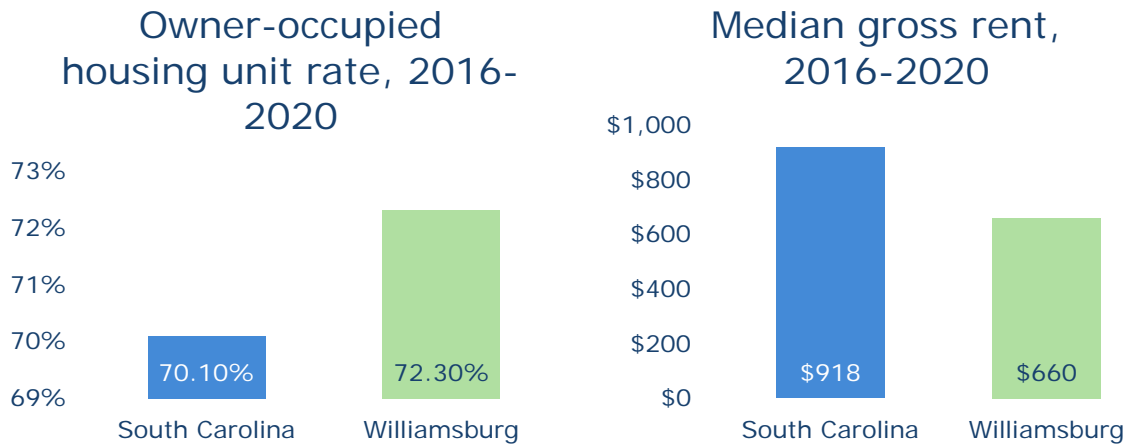
Population by Age

Median Household Income 2011-2020
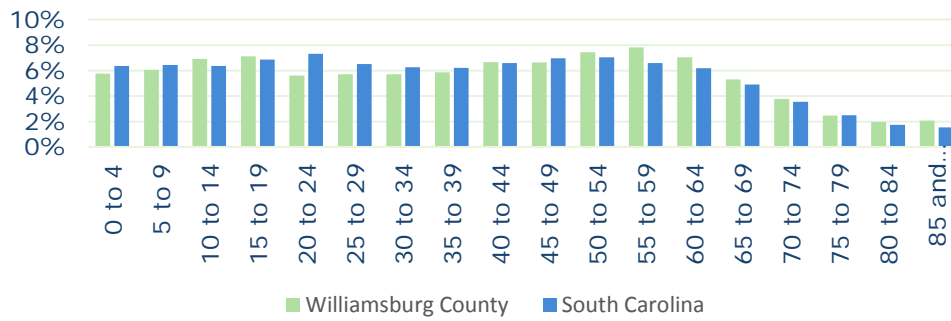
The median household income for Williamsburg County is significantly lower than the South Carolina average for each year.

Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2016-2020

	South Carolina	Williamsburg
Rate	70.10%	72.30%

Median gross rent, 2016-2020

	South Carolina	Williamsburg
Rent	$918	$660

Williamsburg County approved 39 building permits in 2021.

Economic Profile

Williamsburg County has a declining labor force and has an aging population. The COVID-19 pandemic sparked some business closures, exacerbating unemployment and the declining labor force.

Real gross domestic product is an inflation-adjusted measure that reflects the value of all goods and services produced by an economy each year, expressed in base-year prices. This chart shows comparisons for both the quantity and value of goods and services. This metric gives a snapshot of the overall economic health of an area.

In 2020, Williamsburg County ranked thirty-second in the state for current-dollar total GDP, and saw real GDP fall by 3.9 percent. (BEA) Reviewing the top industries in Williamsburg, the county has had years of fluctuation in contribution to real GDP. All industries have experienced a decline since 2018, and those declines deepened further with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CAGDP11 Contributions to Percent Change in Real GDP - Williamsburg County

- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Retail trade
- Educational services
- Health care and social assistance
- Accommodation and food services
- Government and government enterprises

According to the South Carolina Census Data Center, there were 11,170 workers in the labor force in Williamsburg County 2021. Of those, 10,487 were employed.

Per capita personal income is a measure of the amount of money earned per person in a geographic region. Per capita personal income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population.

Unemployment Rates by County 2012-2021


- South Carolina Statewide
- Williamsburg
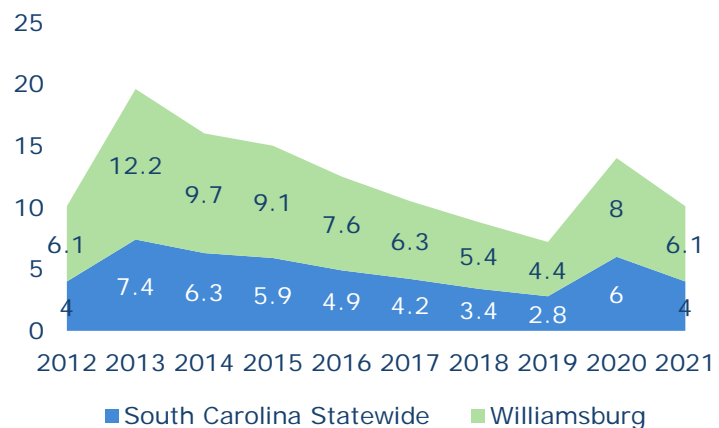
Of the three counties in the region, Williamsburg had the lowest per capita personal income in 2020 ranking thirty-third in the state at $38,528. (BEA) The average weekly wage for the third quarter was $861.

Per Capita Income by County 2016-2020
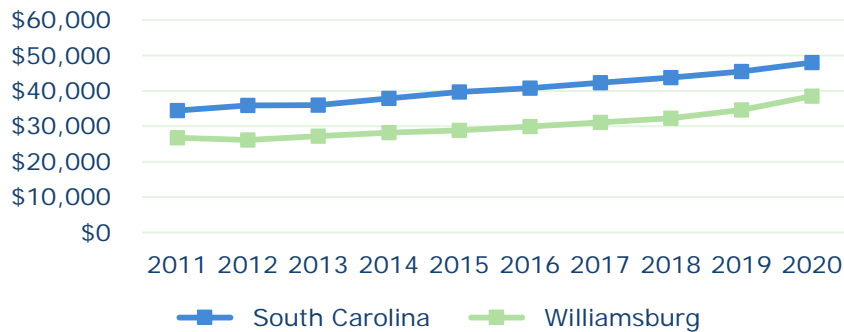

A location quotient (LQ) is an analytical statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to a larger geographic unit (usually the nation). An LQ is computed as an industry's share of a regional total for some economic statistic (earnings, GDP by metropolitan area, employment, etc.) divided by the industry's share of the national total for the same statistic. For example, an LQ of 1.0 in mining means that the region and the nation are equally specialized in mining; while an LQ of 1.8 means that the region has a higher

concentration in mining than the nation. (BEA) Williamsburg County has a higher share of Manufacturing, Retail, Utilities and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting.
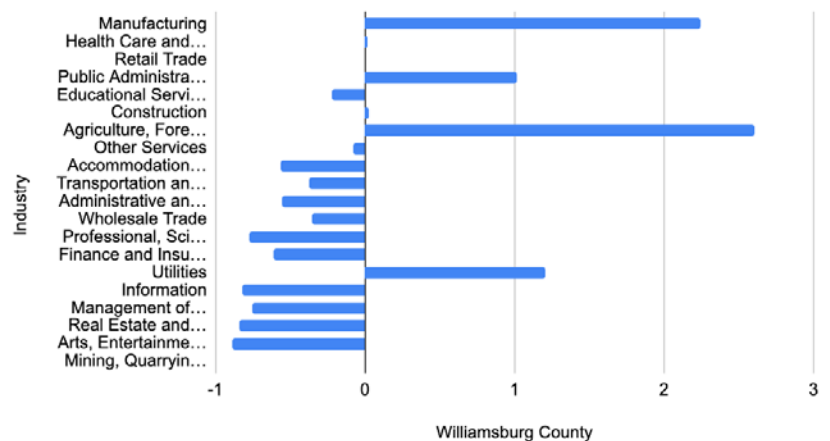
Williamsburg Commute Patterns

■ In-commuters ■ Out-Commuters ■ Work and Live in County
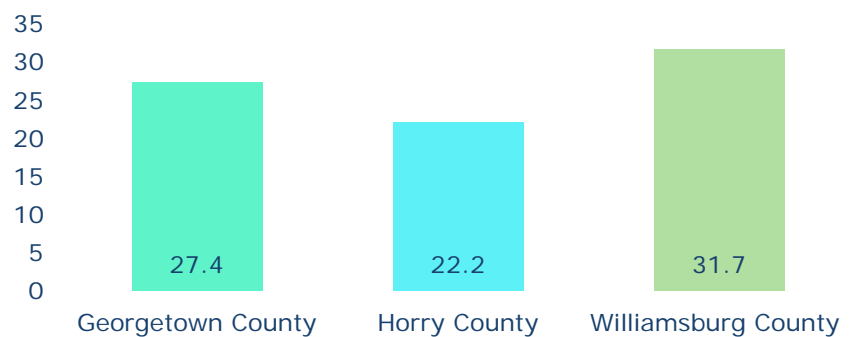

24%
36%
40%
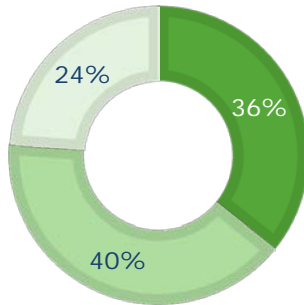
Williamsburg County has forty percent out-commuters and thirty-six percent in-commuters. Only twenty-four percent of workers live and work in Williamsburg County.
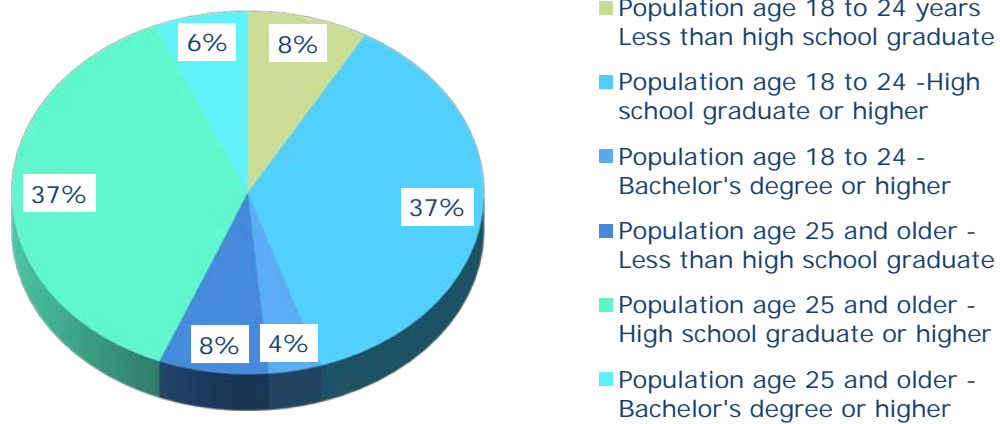
Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010

In Williamsburg County, the mean travel time to work is more than thirty minutes. This is greater than those living in either Georgetown or Williamsburg counties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020

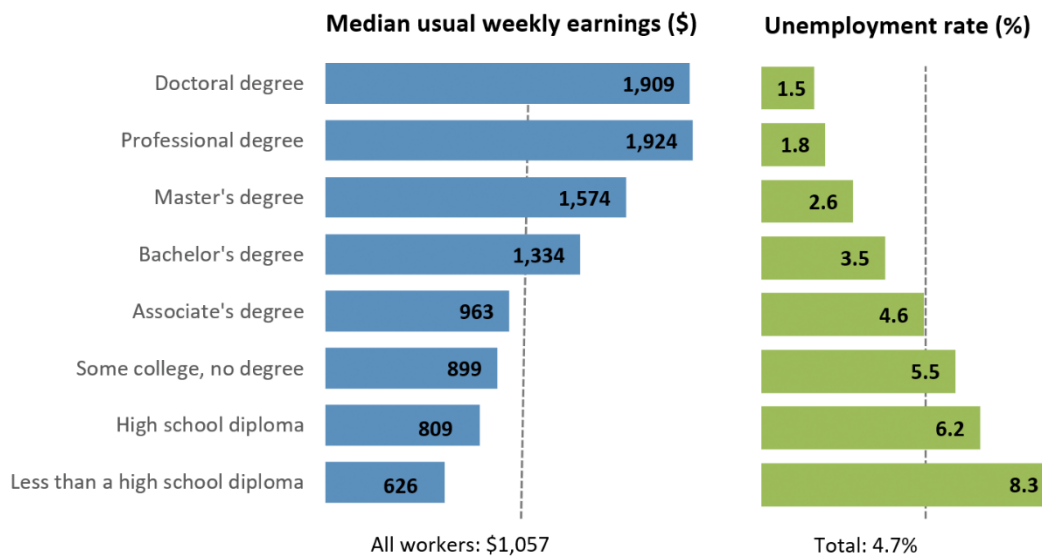## Mean Travel Time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2016-2020

Georgetown County	Horry County	Williamsburg County
27.4	22.2	31.7

Williamsburg County Educational Attainment

Legend:
- Population age 18 to 24 years Less than high school graduate
- Population age 18 to 24 - High school graduate or higher
- Population age 18 to 24 - Bachelor's degree or higher
- Population age 25 and older - Less than high school graduate
- Population age 25 and older - High school graduate or higher
- Population age 25 and older - Bachelor's degree or higher
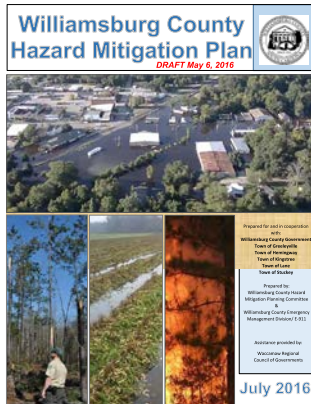
Pie values: 8%, 37%, 4%, 8%, 37%, 6%

Those with higher education typically earn more and have lower rates of unemployment than those with less education.

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2021

Median usual weekly earnings ($)

Education	Earnings
Doctoral degree	1,909
Professional degree	1,924
Master's degree	1,574
Bachelor's degree	1,334
Associate's degree	963
Some college, no degree	899
High school diploma	809
Less than a high school diploma	626

All workers: $1,057

Unemployment rate (%)

Education	Unemployment rate
Doctoral degree	1.5
Professional degree	1.8
Master's degree	2.6
Bachelor's degree	3.5
Associate's degree	4.6
Some college, no degree	5.5
High school diploma	6.2
Less than a high school diploma	8.3

Total: 4.7%

Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

The Williamsburg County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2016, has been prepared so that proactive efforts can be taken to reduce the impact of hazards on the county. The plan addresses the entire county including the towns of Greeleyville, Hemingway, Kingstree, Lane, and Stuckey. The plan identifies the hazards threatening Williamsburg County and provides an assessment of the risks they pose. Based on the capabilities of the county and its five incorporated jurisdictions, the plan recommends coordinated mitigation activities to avoid or minimize those vulnerabilities. This multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan is designed to guide the county towards greater disaster resilience, while recognizing that the capacities and mitigation preferences of each jurisdiction may differ.

Data Sources

United States Bureau of Economic Analysis

- https://apps.bea.gov/itable/index.cfm

United States Census Bureau

- www.census.gov

South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce
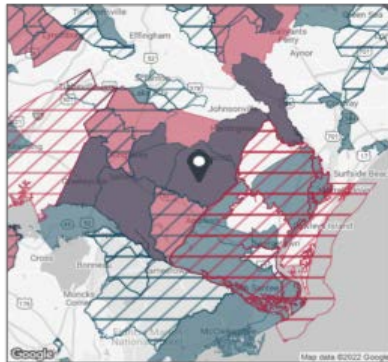
- https://dew.sc.gov/data-and-statistics

South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office

- https://rfa.sc.gov/data-research/population-demographics/census-state-data-center/mhi-county-2011-2020

Williamsburg County Economic Development Board has created The Business Hub, which assists with business planning, access to limited equipment, and sessions with business consultants. Through the Business Hub, small business owners and entrepreneurs have access to a conference room as well as notary services.

Williamsburg County is also part of the Small Business Association's HUBZone program, a federal government program that provides access to "certain contracts to businesses in historically underutilized business zones."

Image: Small Business Association HUBZone

The Williamsburg Hometown Chamber works with area business owners to provide support and networking opportunities. Williamsburg Technical College provides opportunities for training skilled workers working in the major industries in the county.

Goals and Recommendations

Goals and recommendations are divided into Goals for Economic Resiliency, Goals for Disaster Resiliency, and Goals for Overall Resilience in the Region. The last section, Timeframe, identifies related goals that should be taken short-term, midterm, or long-term.

Goals for Economic Resilience

1. Diverse Economy: Diversify the economy to strengthen the tax base, spur entrepreneurship, and offer expanded career pathways.
2. Vibrant Economy: Create policies, programs, and partnerships that enhance the character and culture of the communities.
3. Progressive Economy: Make intentional and innovative investments to make the economy more sustainable, connected, and inclusive.
4. Provide Support for Small Business Owners and Entrepreneurs:
   a. Strengthen relationships across the economic network.
   b. Identify and communicate scalable best practices.
   c. Leverage public-private partnerships.
   d. Utilize investment-based crowdsourcing.
   e. Expand urban services to rural areas.
   f. Hold regular meetings between business owners and governing jurisdictions.
      i. Facilitate open communication and collaboration.
      ii. Provide the opportunity to share information about best practices, disaster planning, reopening.
5. Provide Workshops on Continuity Planning for Businesses:
   a. Offer learning opportunities.
   b. Inform businesses about how to prepare a "Hurricane Box" and what to include within one.
   c. List resources and who to contact for what assistance.
   d. Create a website or other resource to share universal information with businesses that is produced collaboratively by chambers of commerce to encourage cooperation.
   e. Encourage emergency operations centers to include chambers of commerce.
   f. Encourage business owners to register their business with the Secretary of State.
6. Establish a Skilled Workforce:
   a. Start with young students by partnering with secondary schools, businesses/industries, and post-secondary institutions (HGTC, Williamsburg Technical College, and CCU).
      i. For example, the Pathways to Possibilities program is an annual large-scale workforce development hands-on career expo which focuses on 8th graders throughout the region.
      ii. Another example is Career and Technology Education programs.
   b. Offer apprenticeships.

    c. Establish a work-ready workforce.
        i. Establish continuing education and training programs to meet industry and employment needs of the region.
        ii. Partner with technical colleges for training programs.

Goals For Disaster Resilience

(SC Hazard Mitigation Plan 2018)

1. Implement policies and projects designed to reduce or eliminate the impacts of hazards on people and property. Encourage communities to take mitigation actions that address the risks posed by repetitive loss and severe repetitive loss properties.
2. Obtain resources necessary to reduce the impact of hazards on people and property.
3. Enhance training, education, and outreach efforts focusing on the effects of hazards, importance of mitigation, and ways to increase resiliency.
4. Collect and utilize data, including conducting necessary studies and analyses, to improve policymaking and identify appropriate mitigation projects.
5. Improve interagency coordination and planning to reduce the impact of hazards on people and property.
6. Enhance compliance capabilities to reduce the impacts of hazards on people and property.
7. Enhance and encourage the use of natural resource protection measures to reduce the impacts of hazards on people and property.

Goals for Overall Resilience

1. Infrastructure:
    a. Expand affordable broadband access.
    b. Build and modernize rural infrastructure.
    c. With existing urbanized infrastructure, partner with providers to relocate utilities underground.
    d. Incentivize development with the creation of best-in-class infrastructure investment.
    e. Confront the challenges of legacy infrastructure.

2. Equity & Inclusion in Planning:
    a. Enhance mental health resources.
    b. Support essential workers in vulnerable sectors.
    c. Protect landlords and tenants.
    d. Ensure all have access to affordable housing.

3. Resiliency planning for all municipalities:

a. Encourage the creation of documents for any municipality that does not already have them.
b. Provide cross training for economic and disaster resiliency.
c. Provide continuity planning.
d. Policy changes regarding zoning/building should be considered.

1. Short term: Collaborate between business owners across all three counties. Communicate with stakeholders in each county. Share resources and/or information between stakeholders and include local governing offices.
2. Midterm: Public and private sectors should communicate, exchange ideas, and examine individual resiliency plans. Business owners should be trained in sustainability and how to use it to stimulate local economy with long term strategies.
3. Long term: Change policies regarding planning, zoning, and building based on an analysis of individual resiliency plans. Examples include moving/updating infrastructure and/or requiring the installation of resilient infrastructure for new development.

Appendix

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Below is a sample of the questions asked during the interview sessions. Not all organizations were asked identical questions, so responses vary based on organization type and experience.

Interview Questions:
1. What are the historical and current challenges to economic development for your organization?
2. What were the main impediments to your organization's growth **before the pandemic**?
3. What are the main impediments to your organization's growth **currently**?
4. How has the pandemic impacted your organization?
5. How do hurricanes, floods, and other disasters impact your organization?
6. What principles/guidelines should be used to steer investments with the objective of long-term, sustainable growth in the **region**?
7. What principles/guidelines should be used to steer investments with the objective of long-term, sustainable growth in your **industry**?
8. What tools would have helped you to respond more quickly to disruptions, such as hurricanes, floods, or the pandemic?
9. What specific courses of action might encourage economic growth during and after the recovery effort?
10. What is your biggest concern regarding future economic growth for your organization?
11. Have you made changes to your protocol and policies due to the pandemic? If so, please expound.
12. Does your organization have the ability do remote work? How has the pandemic changed the way work is done and do you foresee these as permanent changes, or will they be implemented during emergencies or disasters?
13. Have you coordinated with other entities (regional collaboration) in the past to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters? During the pandemic? If so, what were the benefits and challenges? If you have not, please share the benefits and challenges as well as if you plan to collaborate with others now and in the future.
14. Do you have staff specifically assigned to the task of addressing resiliency? Who are they and do you have a plan developed?
15. What role does your organization play in the region's economic resiliency (steps/plans/actions taken prior to, during, and after and emergency/crisis)?
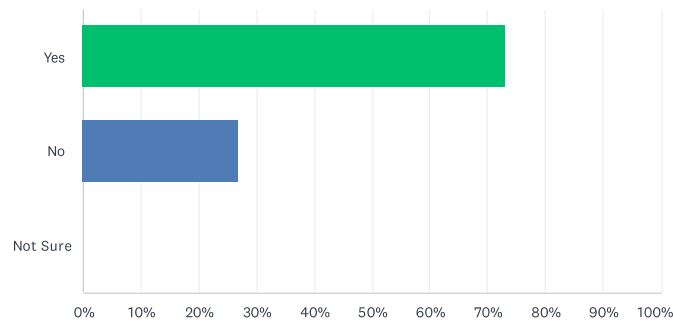
Survey Data

EDA Regional Disaster Recovery and Economic Resilience Plan Survey

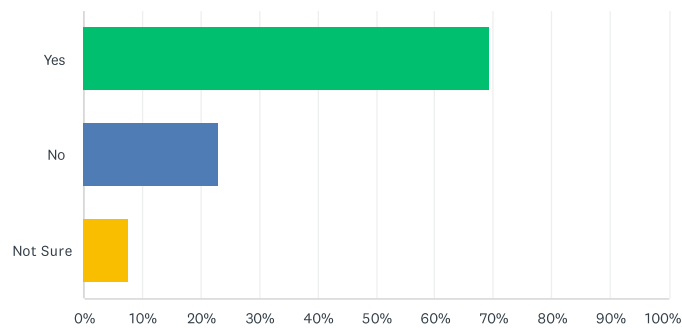### Q1 Does your organization have the ability to work remotely?

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	73.08%	19
No	26.92%	7
Not Sure	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q2 Have you coordinated with other entities (regional collaboration) in the past to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?
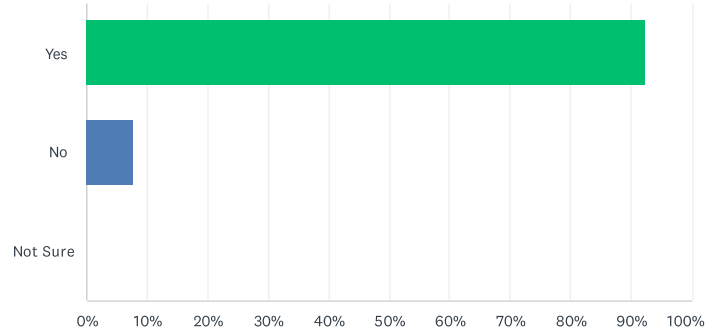
Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	69.23%	18
No	23.08%	6
Not Sure	7.69%	2
TOTAL		26

Q3 Have you coordinated with other entities (regional collaboration) in the past to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters (such as cybersecurity threats, hurricanes, floods, etc.)?
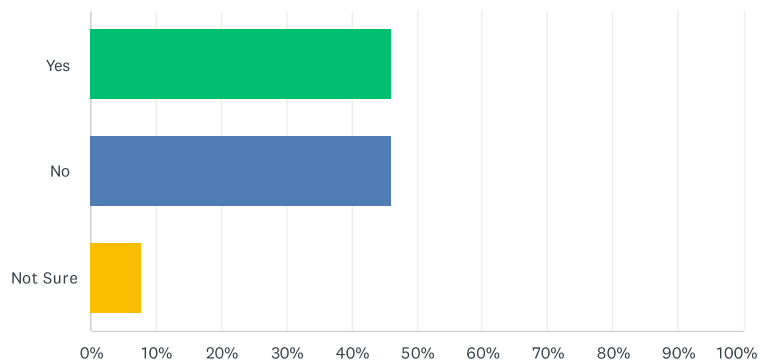
Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.31%	24
No	7.69%	2
Not Sure	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q4 Do you have staff specifically assigned to the task of addressing resiliency?

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	46.15%	12
No	46.15%	12
Not Sure	7.69%	2
TOTAL		26

Q5 Does your organization have a resilience plan?

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
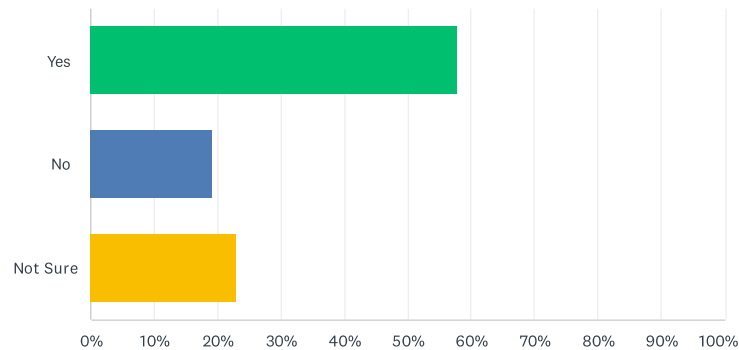
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	57.69%	15
No	19.23%	5
Not Sure	23.08%	6
TOTAL		26

Q6 Does your organization have a way to communicate if a disaster disabled the use of telecommunications?
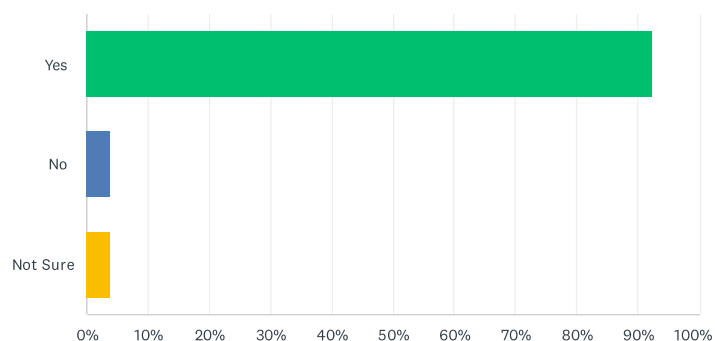
Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
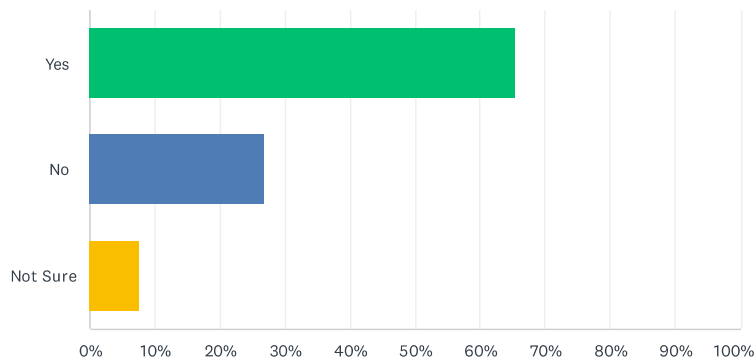
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	65.38%	17
No	26.92%	7
Not Sure	7.69%	2
TOTAL		26

Q7 Does your organization have a communication plan for receiving and disseminating information during and after a disaster?
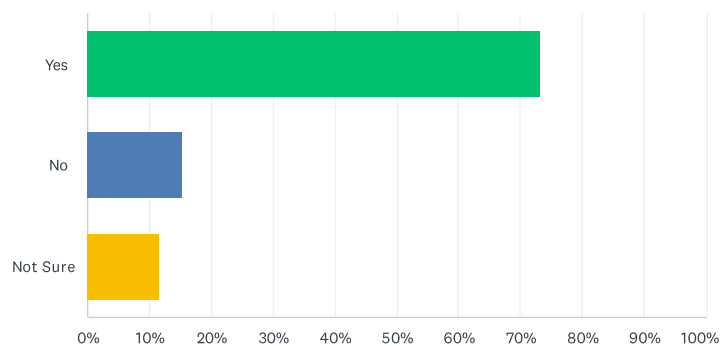
Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.31%	24
No	3.85%	1
Not Sure	3.85%	1
TOTAL		26

Q8 Does your organization have a continuity plan?

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	73.08%	19
No	15.38%	4
Not Sure	11.54%	3
TOTAL		26

Q9 Does your community/local area/county have a plan of re-entry for businesses?

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
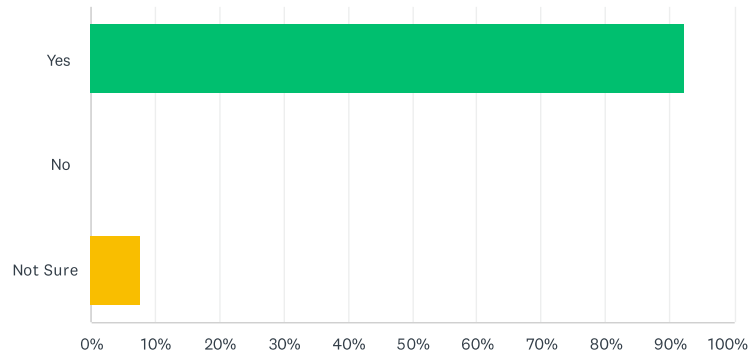
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.31%	24
No	0.00%	0
Not Sure	7.69%	2
TOTAL		26

Q10 Does your organization/business have an evacuation plan?

Answered: 25   Skipped: 1
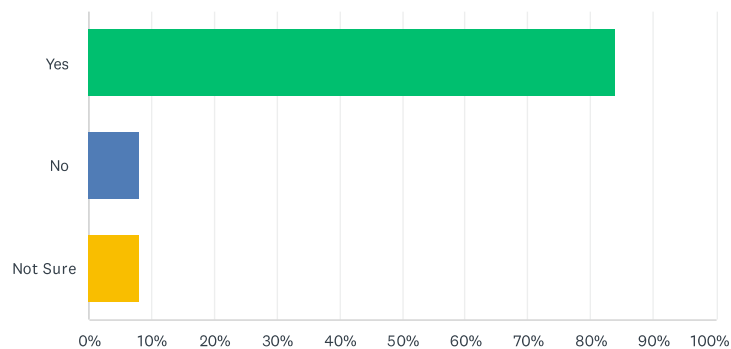
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.00%	21
No	8.00%	2
Not Sure	8.00%	2
TOTAL		25

Q11 Do you know whether or not your organization/business is in a flood zone?

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
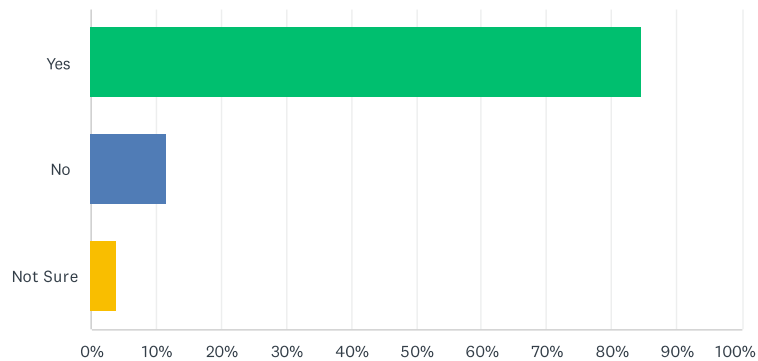
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.62%	22
No	11.54%	3
Not Sure	3.85%	1
TOTAL		26

Q12 Has your organization established coordination mechanisms and leadership succession plans for short, intermediate, and long-term recovery needs?
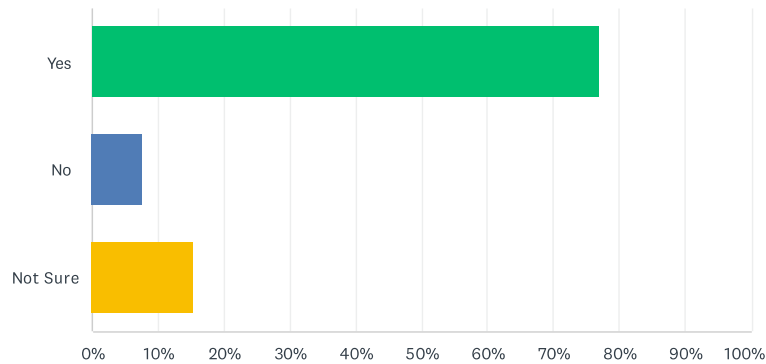
Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
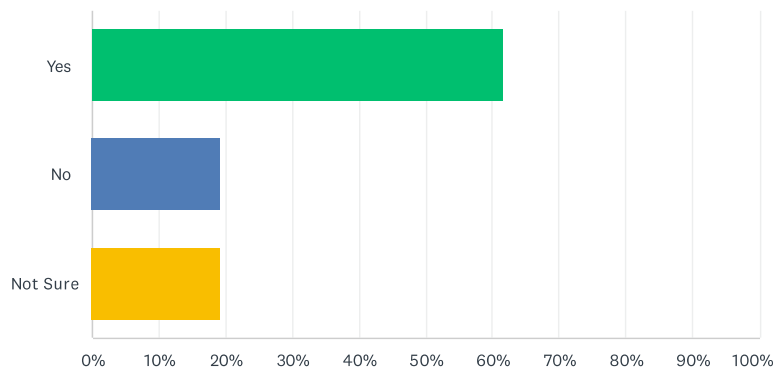
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	61.54%	16
No	19.23%	5
Not Sure	19.23%	5
TOTAL		26

Q13 Has your local area established a process for regular communication, monitoring, and updating of business community needs and issues (which can be used prior to, during, and after an incident)?
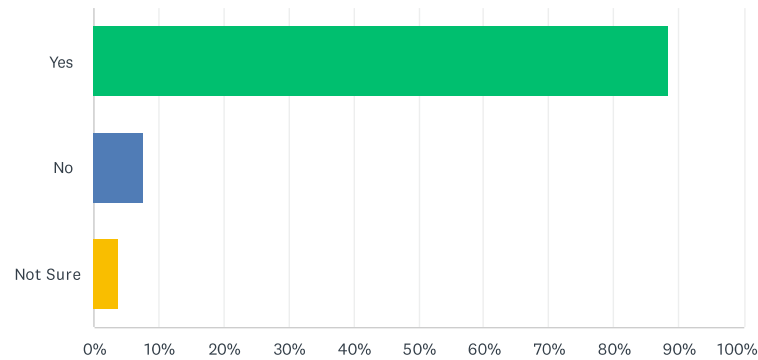
Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	76.92%	20
No	7.69%	2
Not Sure	15.38%	4
TOTAL		26

Q14 Does your local area conduct pre-disaster recovery planning to define key stakeholders, roles, responsibilities, and key actions?
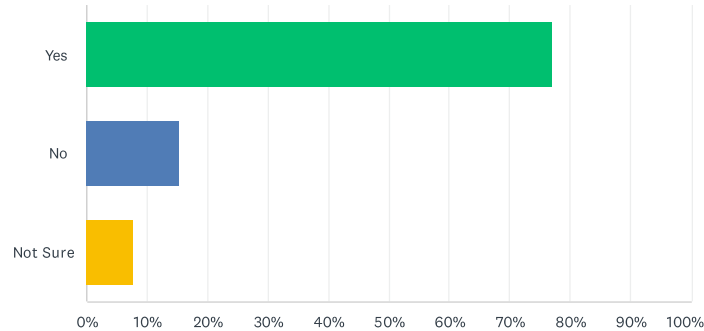
Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	88.46%	23
No	7.69%	2
Not Sure	3.85%	1
TOTAL		26

Q15 Does your organization work with local state employment offices and resources, such as the South Carolina Works or South Carolina OneStop?

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	76.92%	20
No	15.38%	4
Not Sure	7.69%	2
TOTAL		26

Q16 Building resilience is good for the regional economy whether or not an economic shock occurs.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
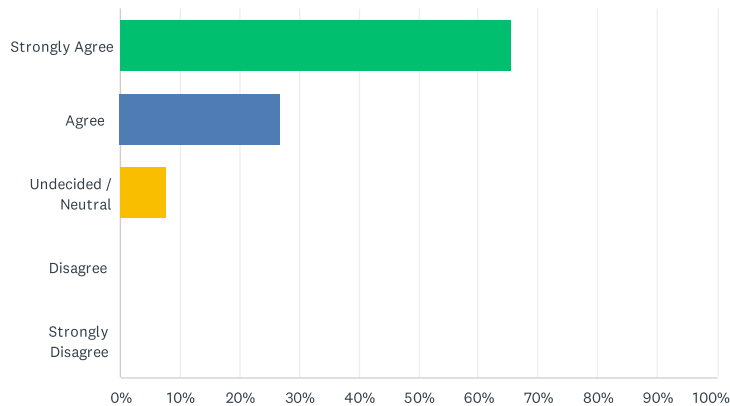
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	65.38%	17
Agree	26.92%	7
Undecided / Neutral	7.69%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

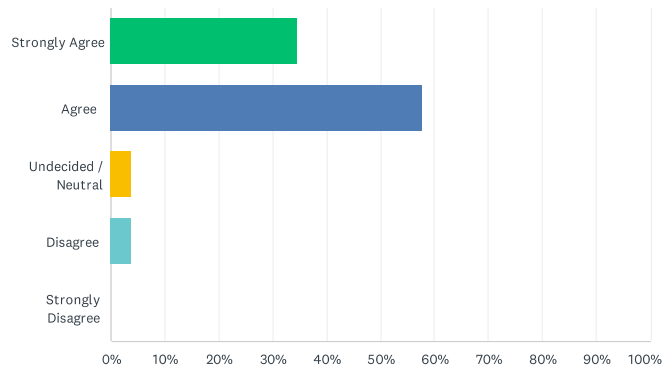## Q17 Your business/organization understands its vulnerabilities, including supply chains, in the face of disruption.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	34.62%	9
Agree	57.69%	15
Undecided / Neutral	3.85%	1
Disagree	3.85%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q18 Economic shocks (natural disasters, pandemics, cyber-attacks) should be used as an opportunity to rebuild the region's economy.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
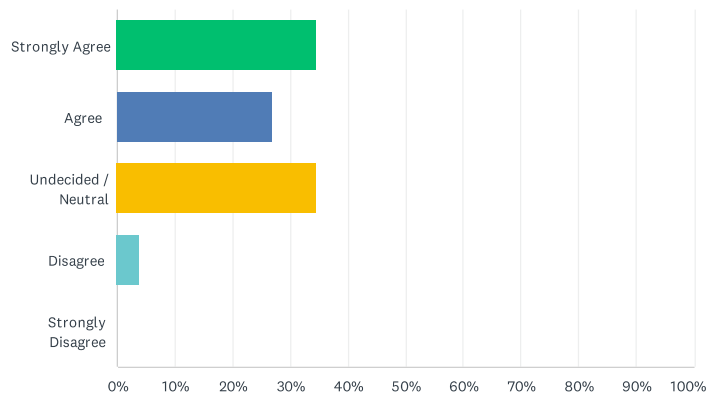
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	34.62%	9
Agree	26.92%	7
Undecided / Neutral	34.62%	9
Disagree	3.85%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q19 Your region has a work-ready workforce.

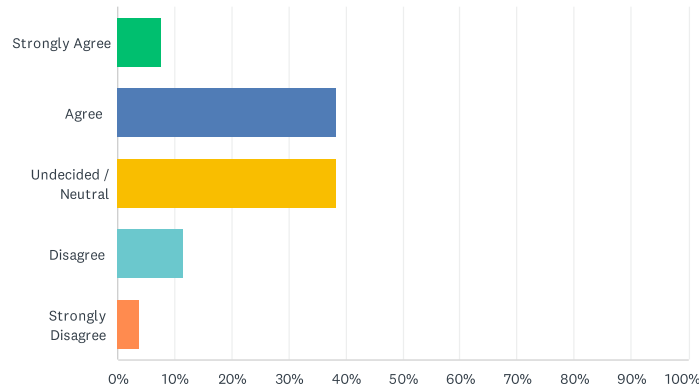Answered: 26   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	7.69%	2
Agree	38.46%	10
Undecided / Neutral	38.46%	10
Disagree	11.54%	3
Strongly Disagree	3.85%	1
TOTAL		26

Q20 The school district provides work-ready education.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
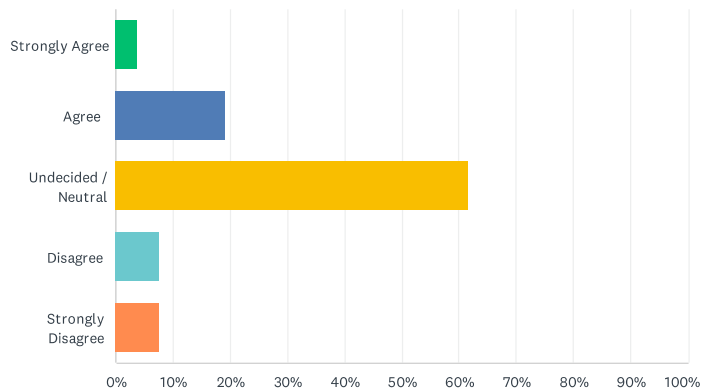
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	3.85%	1
Agree	19.23%	5
Undecided / Neutral	61.54%	16
Disagree	7.69%	2
Strongly Disagree	7.69%	2
TOTAL		26

Q21 Your community/county provides resources to develop a skilled workforce.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
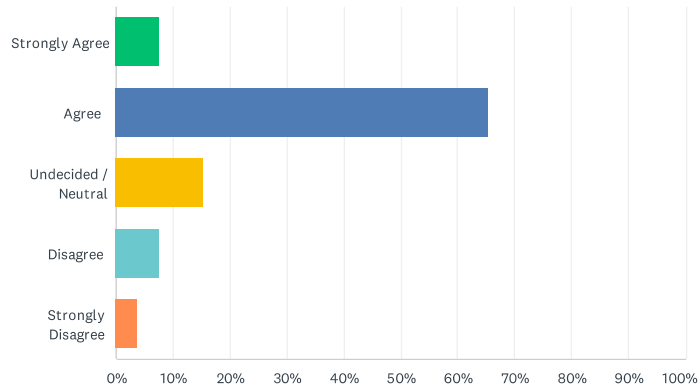
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	7.69%	2
Agree	65.38%	17
Undecided / Neutral	15.38%	4
Disagree	7.69%	2
Strongly Disagree	3.85%	1
TOTAL		26

Q22 Your community/county works proactively to maintain a skilled workforce.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
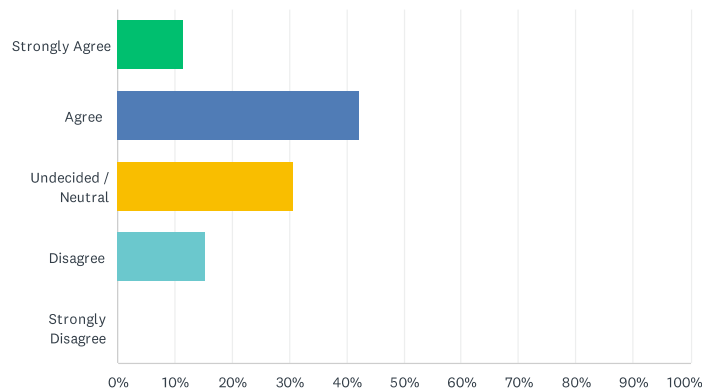
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	11.54%	3
Agree	42.31%	11
Undecided / Neutral	30.77%	8
Disagree	15.38%	4
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q23 Your community has adequate public transportation.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
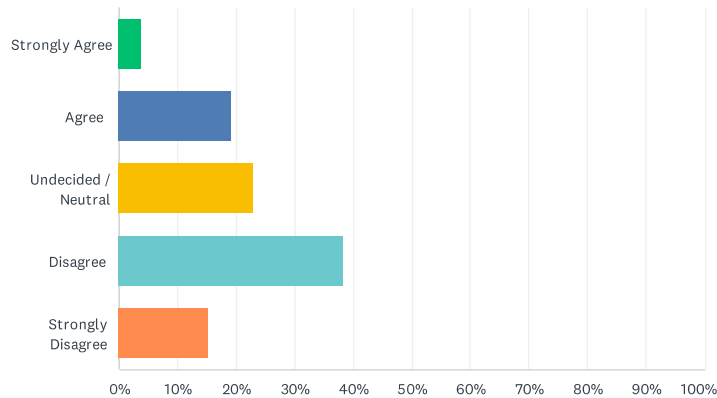
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	3.85%	1
Agree	19.23%	5
Undecided / Neutral	23.08%	6
Disagree	38.46%	10
Strongly Disagree	15.38%	4
TOTAL		26

Q24 You have access to adequate high-speed internet access to complete work, school, or other tasks.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
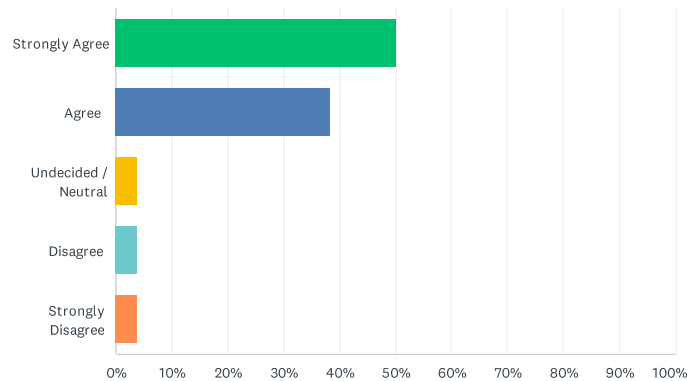
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	50.00%	13
Agree	38.46%	10
Undecided / Neutral	3.85%	1
Disagree	3.85%	1
Strongly Disagree	3.85%	1
TOTAL		26

Q25 Local Economic Developers and Emergency Managers should work together to address the risks identified through hazard mitigation.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
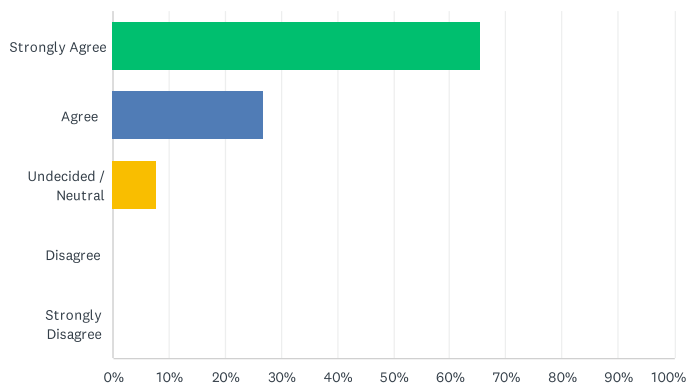
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	65.38%	17
Agree	26.92%	7
Undecided / Neutral	7.69%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q26 Your organization was impacted negatively by the pandemic.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
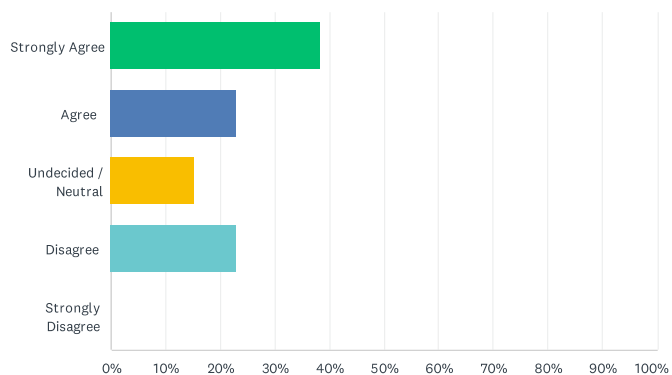
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	38.46%	10
Agree	23.08%	6
Undecided / Neutral	15.38%	4
Disagree	23.08%	6
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q27 Your organization adjusted well in the pandemic.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
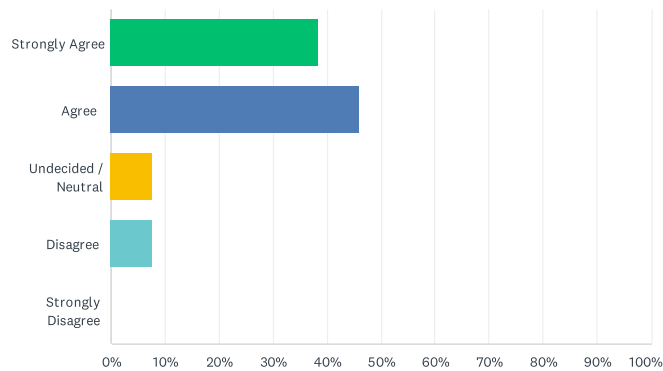
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	38.46%	10
Agree	46.15%	12
Undecided / Neutral	7.69%	2
Disagree	7.69%	2
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q28 Your organization made changes to protocol and policies due to the pandemic.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
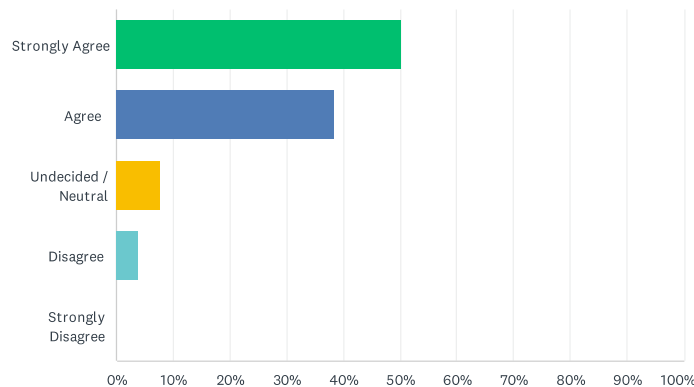
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	50.00%	13
Agree	38.46%	10
Undecided / Neutral	7.69%	2
Disagree	3.85%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q29 The changes your organization made due to the pandemic are permanent.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
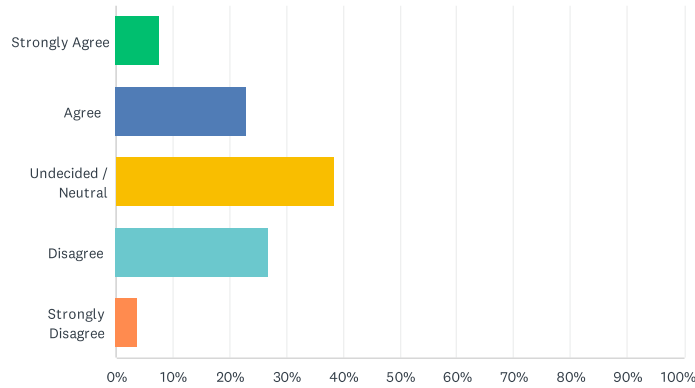
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	7.69%	2
Agree	23.08%	6
Undecided / Neutral	38.46%	10
Disagree	26.92%	7
Strongly Disagree	3.85%	1
TOTAL		26

Q30 Your organization has experienced economic challenges due to hurricanes, floods, and other disasters.

Answered: 26   Skipped: 0
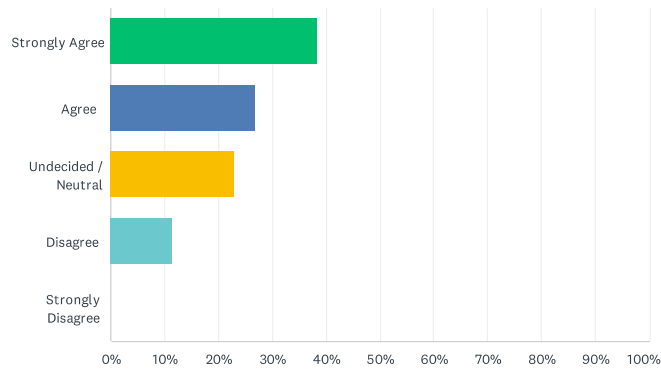
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	38.46%	10
Agree	26.92%	7
Undecided / Neutral	23.08%	6
Disagree	11.54%	3
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		26

Q31 Your organization systematically updates its resilience plan.

Answered: 25   Skipped: 1
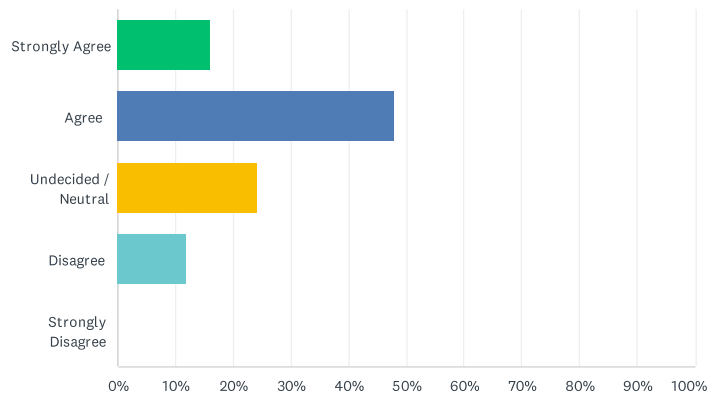
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Agree	16.00%	4
Agree	48.00%	12
Undecided / Neutral	24.00%	6
Disagree	12.00%	3
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		25

Q32 What is your biggest concern regarding future economic growth for your organization? *

Answered: 21   Skipped: 5

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Inclusion of and opportunities for ALL people should be a primary goal.	4/29/2022 7:00 PM
2	Dependability on grants; lack of fundraising	4/27/2022 7:51 PM
3	Making sure we have adequate workforce and funds to cover needs as the growth occurs.	4/27/2022 4:39 PM
4	skilled workforce	4/26/2022 5:03 PM
5	That council and staff will not conduct future strategic planning that will help maintain future economic growth	4/26/2022 3:53 PM
6	N/A	4/26/2022 3:06 PM
7	LABOR SHORTAGE	4/26/2022 2:54 PM
8	Having a adequate workforce, hourly salary	4/26/2022 2:39 PM
9	Continued public support. Without public contributions our efforts would be greatly challenged.	4/26/2022 2:33 PM
10	Having enough talent. Diversify the economy. We are too dependent on tourism dollars.	4/26/2022 2:19 PM
11	Hiring trained and willing employees	4/26/2022 2:16 PM
12	Lack of funds	4/21/2022 1:36 AM
13	Inflation	4/20/2022 4:29 PM
14	People's ability to donate.	4/18/2022 9:50 AM
15	INFLATION	4/14/2022 2:54 PM
16	Slowed rates of growth, impact of new growth to the area and the funds to support the services it requires. Lack of diversity in economy.	4/14/2022 11:00 AM
17	This is non-applicable, we are strictly residential, no businesses.	4/14/2022 10:33 AM
18	Staffing levels are not growing as fast as the community	4/14/2022 9:52 AM
19	n/a	4/13/2022 4:22 PM
20	Attracting and retaining qualified employees; having the revenue to add necessary staff to serve the growing public.	4/13/2022 2:20 PM
21	Lack of affordable housing	4/13/2022 1:37 PM

Q33 Identify some of your county's existing economic assets. *

Answered: 19   Skipped: 7

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	HGTC CCU HCS	4/29/2022 7:00 PM
2	SC Works, Goodwill Joblink, other business partners	4/27/2022 7:51 PM
3	Land to be developed.	4/27/2022 4:39 PM
4	Industrial parks, land availability, area growth	4/26/2022 5:03 PM
5	Residential and industrial growth	4/26/2022 3:53 PM
6	N/A	4/26/2022 3:06 PM
7	EXPERIENCED workforce	4/26/2022 2:54 PM
8	Hospital, Technical School, Business and Industries, Water infrastructure, Some sewer infrastructure	4/26/2022 2:39 PM
9	Individual Donors.	4/26/2022 2:33 PM
10	Ocean	4/26/2022 2:19 PM
11	Excellent industrial parks, rail, waterway	4/26/2022 2:16 PM
12	Tourism	4/21/2022 1:36 AM
13	Atlantic Ocean, Beach, Pier, Highway 17	4/20/2022 4:29 PM
14	Small business	4/18/2022 9:50 AM
15	Beach	4/14/2022 2:54 PM
16	Regional Economic Development Corp, Chambers of Commerce, Area Recovery Council	4/14/2022 11:00 AM
17	Hotels, restaurants, airport, Boardwalk, attractions	4/14/2022 9:52 AM
18	n/a	4/13/2022 4:22 PM
19	Cash Reserves, Properties, Facilities/Structures, natural resources like beaches/ocean/rivers	4/13/2022 2:20 PM

Q34 Identify some of your county's threats to its economic assets. *

Answered: 20   Skipped: 6

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	All students not having equal access. Lack of health care for vulnerable populations. Lack of mental health services for all needing such.	4/29/2022 7:00 PM
2	Lack of adequate infrastructure	4/27/2022 7:51 PM
3	Hurricanes. Pandemics. Floods. Fires.	4/27/2022 4:39 PM
4	labor age, diverse economy	4/26/2022 5:03 PM
5	Staying one minded toward the tourism economy	4/26/2022 3:53 PM
6	Depleting job market in some parts of our region. Which drives away young an upcoming professionals.	4/26/2022 3:06 PM
7	slow growth	4/26/2022 2:54 PM
8	Funding	4/26/2022 2:39 PM
9	Natural disasters. Economic recessions.	4/26/2022 2:19 PM
10	no highway, poor residents, weak workforce pool, no housing	4/26/2022 2:16 PM
11	Pandemics	4/21/2022 1:36 AM
12	Misinformation on social media, lack of citizen involvement, lack of parking	4/20/2022 4:29 PM
13	People not working	4/18/2022 9:50 AM
14	Slowing economy	4/14/2022 2:54 PM
15	Lack of diversity to the economy	4/14/2022 11:00 AM
16	Hurricanes, flooding.	4/14/2022 10:33 AM
17	Storm surge, hurricanes, civil disturbance	4/14/2022 9:52 AM
18	n/a	4/13/2022 4:22 PM
19	Aging structures need constant maintenance, funding for same. Growth outpacing current capacity.	4/13/2022 2:20 PM
20	lack of transportation, a single source economic base	4/13/2022 1:37 PM

Q35 What tools would have helped you to respond more quickly to disruptions, such as hurricanes, floods, or the pandemic? *

Answered: 18   Skipped: 8

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I am blessed to be in an organization that provides and assists residents when natural disasters occur.	4/29/2022 7:00 PM
2	Better communication	4/27/2022 7:51 PM
3	High water vehicles. Personnel.	4/27/2022 4:39 PM
4	Not sure	4/26/2022 5:03 PM
5	more staff	4/26/2022 3:53 PM
6	N/A	4/26/2022 3:06 PM
7	na	4/26/2022 2:54 PM
8	I think we respond adequately to all disasters. We need to invest in more technology that will allow for working from home.	4/26/2022 2:39 PM
9	N/A	4/26/2022 2:19 PM
10	Communications were good. Funding for more police would have been helpful	4/21/2022 1:36 AM
11	Information from outside agencies	4/20/2022 4:29 PM
12	Not sure	4/18/2022 9:50 AM
13	Always have responded quickly.	4/14/2022 2:54 PM
14	having more adaptive technology at the start of the pandemic would have helped us pivot more quickly to provide our services in a virtual manner	4/14/2022 11:00 AM
15	Emergency communication devices when there is no electricity. A generator.	4/14/2022 10:33 AM
16	Improved computer/IT equipment	4/14/2022 9:52 AM
17	n/a	4/13/2022 4:22 PM
18	We instituted a new website that allows us to quickly alert the public of disruptions. That is just one example... however, many rural or underserved areas in the county do not have adequate internet coverage or access to computers.	4/13/2022 2:20 PM

Q36 Has your community/local area/region prepared any "early-warning" tools that will help employers react quickly when confronted with potential disruptions and challenges? If so, describe what they are and how they work. *

Answered: 17   Skipped: 9

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	We have two departments that regularly educate on topics ranging from natural disasters to fraud, etc.	4/29/2022 7:00 PM
2	Not sure	4/27/2022 7:51 PM
3	Protocols and policies. Communications.	4/27/2022 4:39 PM
4	no	4/26/2022 5:03 PM
5	Yes. We currently conduct more social media informational posts and use a software called textmygov that helps us send out mass amounts of information to our citizens by text about emergencies or important information that needs to get out quickly in large numbers.	4/26/2022 3:53 PM
6	Yes, the ability to work remotely and providing tools to do so has been helpful.	4/26/2022 3:06 PM
7	na	4/26/2022 2:54 PM
8	Phone Intercom system, Code Red, NWAS	4/26/2022 2:39 PM
9	Communication well in advance of any events.	4/26/2022 2:19 PM
10	Yes emergency management plans are in place	4/21/2022 1:36 AM
11	No	4/20/2022 4:29 PM
12	We have a VOAD group who keeps us informed	4/18/2022 9:50 AM
13	Local chambers work hard during blue sky days to develop relationships, trainings, and communication with local business owners so they have the ability to reach out quickly pre and post event. They host regular recovery workshops for the business community.	4/14/2022 11:00 AM
14	N/A	4/14/2022 10:33 AM
15	We recently did not renew our Mass Notification contract so that was a major blow. We now rely heavily on social media	4/14/2022 9:52 AM
16	n/a	4/13/2022 4:22 PM
17	N/A	4/13/2022 2:20 PM

Q37 Do you have any other thoughts about the region's economic resiliency that you would like to share with us? *

Answered: 14   Skipped: 12

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	None	4/29/2022 7:00 PM
2	Infrastructure needs to inprove to keep up with growth.	4/27/2022 7:51 PM
3	N/A	4/27/2022 4:39 PM
4	no	4/26/2022 5:03 PM
5	No	4/26/2022 3:53 PM
6	N/A	4/26/2022 3:06 PM
7	na	4/26/2022 2:54 PM
8	N/A	4/26/2022 2:19 PM
9	None	4/21/2022 1:36 AM
10	Need to diversify	4/20/2022 4:29 PM
11	Not at this time	4/18/2022 9:50 AM
12	See City of Myrtle Beach's Disaster Recovery Plan	4/14/2022 9:52 AM
13	none	4/13/2022 4:22 PM
14	There is a strong need for leadership in this area.	4/13/2022 2:20 PM