



UNITED WAY
Horry County

Community Needs Assessment Summary 2025



2025 Board of Directors

Joseph Heyd, Chair
Heyd & Co.

Alicia Thompson, Vice-Chair
Mullen Wylie SC, LLC

Dustin Formo, Treasurer
The Jackson Companies

Christy Holder, Immediate Past Chair
Grand Strand Water & Sewer Authority

Darren Alston
City of Conway

Stephanie Burgess
Santee Cooper

Etta Carter
Horry County Schools,
Finklea Community Center

Dr. Daphne Holland
Coastal Carolina University

Patricia Falkowski
Brittain Resorts & Hotels, LLC

Kandi Fleming
Horry County Schools

Shannon Furtick
Myrtle Beach Area
Chamber of Commerce

Josh Kay
Mashburn Construction

Kathryn Lane
K. Lane Strategies

Gary Lee
Mason Temple Church of God
in Christ

Mark Nugent
Horry County Fire & Rescue

Melody O'Neal
Elliott Realty

Carla Pielmeier
Grand Strand Health

Bobby Sunday
Coastal Carolina National Bank

Brian Tucker
City of Myrtle Beach

Jeff Ward
Publix Supermarkets

Wilson Wicker
South Atlantic Bank

Game Plan Task Force

Joseph Heyd
Heyd & Co.

Kathryn Lane
K. Lane Strategies

Gary Lee
Mason Temple Church of God in Christ

Dr. Daphne Holland
Coastal Carolina University

Trevor Bigham
Connect Kids

Dr. Becky Boone
Horry-Georgetown Technical College

Stephen Burton
Your Health

Nettie Eaddy
SC Legal Services

Eileen Fleming-Patonay
SC Department of Employment
& Workforce

Freda Funnye
Habitat for Humanity of Horry County

Rusty Gaskins
Waccamaw Regional Council
of Governments

Joan Grimmatt
Horry County Schools, Retired

Matt Lake
Merrill Lynch

Jessica Piezzo
SC Department of Public Health

Grace Sandoz
Tidelands Health

Michelle Smith
Horry County Government

Anna Stickland
Santee Cooper

Table Of Contents

Our Process	3
Youth Opportunity	6
Healthy Community	8
Financial Security	12
Community Resiliency	16
References	18



UNITED WAY
Horry County



Setting The Course Together

United Way of Horry County is committed to addressing our community's most pressing challenges by listening first. Our previous Community Needs Assessment helped guide our transition to a collective impact model, strengthening collaboration and aligning resources around shared priorities.

This assessment builds on that foundation and is organized around our four impact areas: healthy community, youth opportunity, financial security, and community resiliency. By continuing to seek input from residents, partners, and data, we ensure our work remains focused on the areas of greatest need and opportunity across Horry County.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Blakely J. Roof".

Blakely J. Roof
President & CEO
United Way of Horry County

Assessment Process

A mixed-methods approach was used for this Community Needs Assessment. Consistently engaging with community members and partner organizations to shape our processes and data collection activities was a priority. To accomplish this, we hosted ten Community Conversations in collaboration with community leaders and partner organizations across Horry County. Our aim in hosting these Community Conversations was to create an engaging, safe space for residents to share their needs, concerns, barriers, and ideas within their communities.

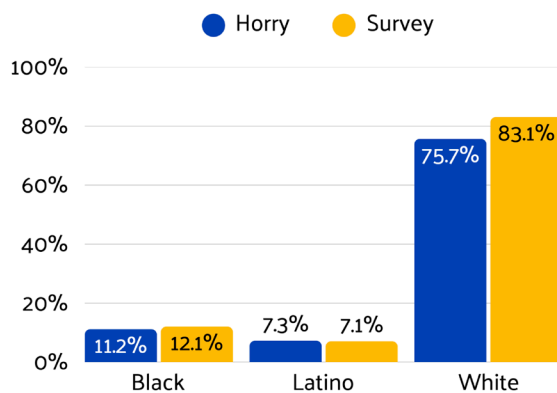
We also distributed an online Community Survey to gather broad feedback on community issues related to youth opportunity, healthy community, financial security and community resiliency. These questions included multiple-choice, scaled, and open-ended responses. The survey was available to community members in English and Spanish, as well as to community service providers.

The feedback from these sessions and survey results guided our secondary data collection and analysis process by identifying potential community priorities, interests, and concerns. Aligning our data collection activities with the initial guidance and clarity from the Community Conversations and survey responses allowed us to focus on data analysis that best reflected community perceptions and needs.

By The Numbers...

3,294 Survey Participants

Survey Response Population Comparison by Race



Top Zip Codes

29579 - 15.7%

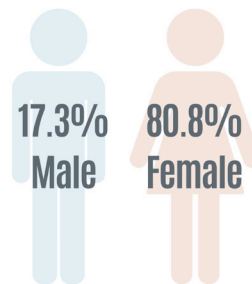
29526 - 15.6%

29588 - 14.4%

29577 - 10.3%

61.1% employed

12% retired



83.5%

had children
living in their
household

10 Community Conversations

198 Participants

We prioritized engagement with populations and communities that are typically marginalized or are under-engaged in data collection and assessment processes. We hosted Community Conversations in partnership with community partners in Green Sea, Burgess, Longs, Aynor, Bucksport, Surfside Beach and downtown Myrtle Beach. We also hosted a Spanish-language conversation to better engage with our Latino neighbors and a session with members of the Horry County Community Collaborative (HC3), which is comprised of more than 60 community organizations, including nonprofits, government agencies, hospitals, and more.

We asked...

What kind of community do you want?

What are your most important community issues or concerns?

Why are these concerns important to you?

How are you personally affected?

What is keeping us from making the progress we want?

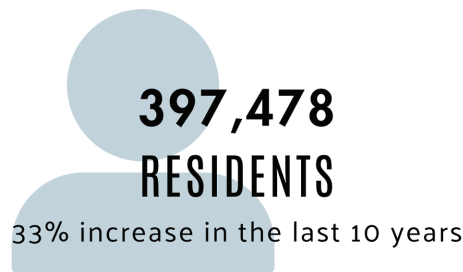
What could make a difference?

Whom do you trust to take action to address your concerns?

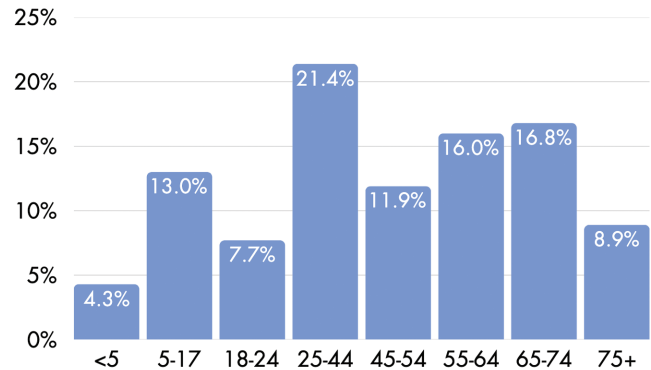
What do you hope to see happen in the next 6 months to a year?

Our Community

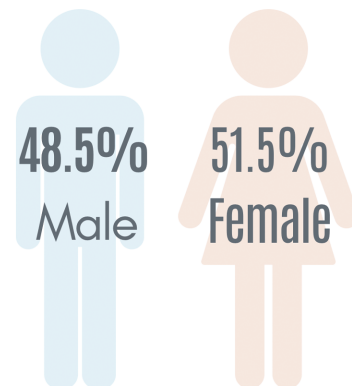
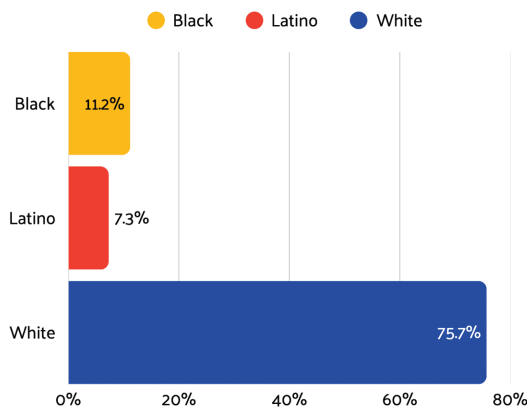
Horry County, South Carolina, situated along the northeastern coast of the state, is best known for being home to Myrtle Beach and the Grand Strand—a 60-mile stretch of Atlantic shoreline that drives much of the county's economy through tourism, hospitality, and retail. The county has experienced rapid population growth over the past two decades, making it one of the fastest-growing areas in the United States. This population change and growth brings a combination of new opportunities and challenges for our community.



Age Distribution



Population by Race



18.1%
of residents are living
with a disability

7.8% of residents
speak a language
other than English
at home

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

44%

44% of survey participants ranked good schools as an important priority for a healthy community, tying for the most important factor.

While concerns related to education and youth opportunity varied, several issues were most likely to be considered moderate or major concerns in the past year. Almost two-thirds of survey participants felt this way about preparing young people for the workforce, and over half said the same about access to after-school and summer programs and access to postsecondary education opportunities. Gaps in after-school programming were specifically noted during Community Conversations in more rural areas like Green Sea and Bucksport.

What is “college or career ready?”

In South Carolina, “college or career-ready” refers to a set of benchmarks, credentials, and experiences that indicate a student is prepared for either postsecondary education (college) or a career path - including technical, vocational, or workforce entry - after high school. For the 2024-2025 school year, **82.5%** of Horry County students in the graduation cohort were college OR career ready.

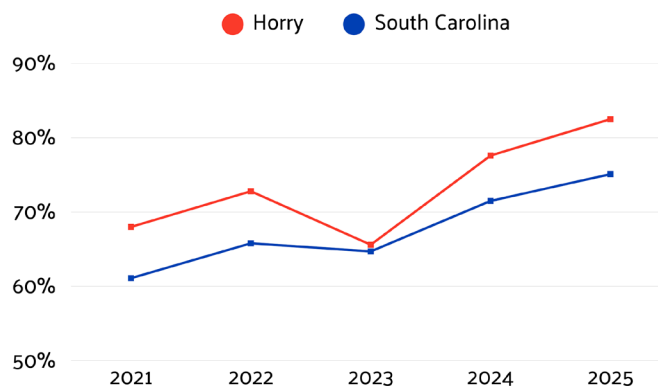
69.2% of Horry County 12th graders in the graduating class of 2025 completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, a **19%** increase from the previous year. Increases in FAFSA applications typically indicate rising interest and enrollment in postsecondary education.

53%

53% of community service providers ranked access to early childhood education as a moderate or major concern, compared to 33% of community residents.

Community Conversations consistently included concerns for the well-being of children and youth across the community - with residents noting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education outcomes, the impact of technology on mental and physical health, and gaps in opportunities for young people to engage in safe and healthy ways outside of school hours.

College or Career Ready



[Ref. 3]

In the 2023-2024 school year, **16%** of Horry County students were considered truant. Students in 6th through 10th grades had higher truancy rates, with 9th graders most likely to be truant at **26%**.

Did You Know?
7% of 16-19-YEAR-olds are
 “disconnected youth” (not attending
 school and are not employed)

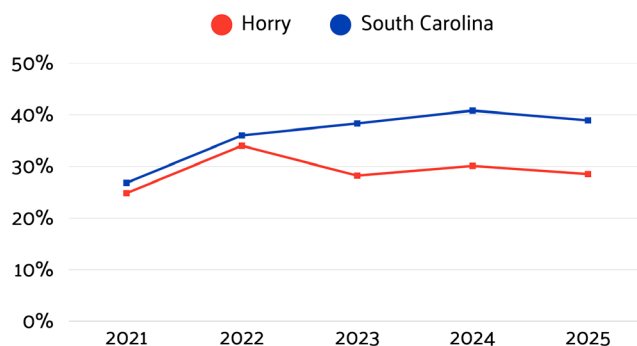
Did You Know?
 In Horry County, the average
 household with two children spends
30% of its income on child care.

Kindergarten readiness is assessed at the beginning of the kindergarten year across several categories, including social foundations, language and literacy, mathematics, physical well-being, and motor development.

In the 2024-2025 school year, only **28.5%** of Horry County students enrolling in kindergarten were demonstrating readiness to learn.

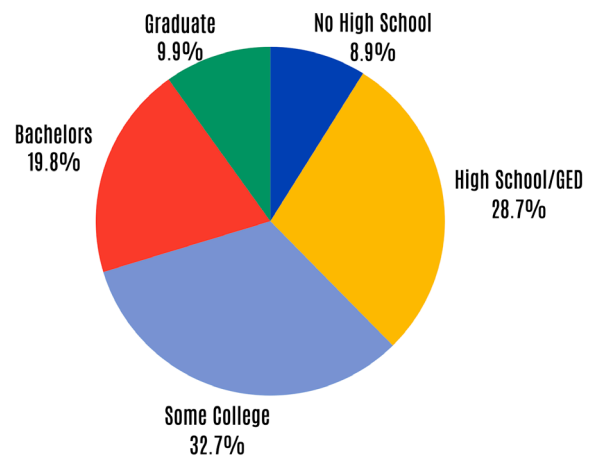
There are over 14,000 0-5-year-olds in Horry County, and while not a complete story, this data gives us some initial insight into the experiences of our community’s children in early childhood.

Kindergarten Readiness

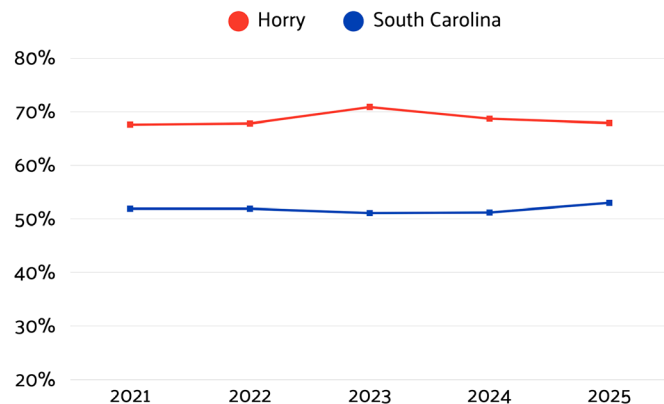


[Ref. 2,3,4,5]

Educational Attainment in Horry County, 2023



Literacy “On Track” at Third Grade



Third-grade literacy is a critical milestone because it marks the shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Students who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school, affecting their long-term education, employment, and health outcomes. Reading proficiency at this stage reflects how well a community supports children and families during the early years—through quality early education, family engagement, and access to resources. Strong third-grade literacy lays the foundation for lifelong learning, economic stability, and overall community well-being.

Did You Know?
 In the 2024-2025 school year, **62%** of
 Horry County 8th graders met or exceeded SC
 READY reading and writing expectations.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY



44%

44% of survey participants ranked access to affordable healthcare as an important priority for a healthy community, tying for the most important factor.

While healthcare coverage was a significant concern across survey respondents, individuals without any coverage were most likely to report barriers to care. Overall, **18.7%** of survey participants reported no healthcare coverage - this was much higher among Spanish-speaking Latino participants at **83.3%**.

Residents shared several consistent concerns around healthcare access during Community Conversations, including delayed wait times for medical appointments, barriers to understanding and using insurance benefits, and lack of options in rural communities and for the Latino population.

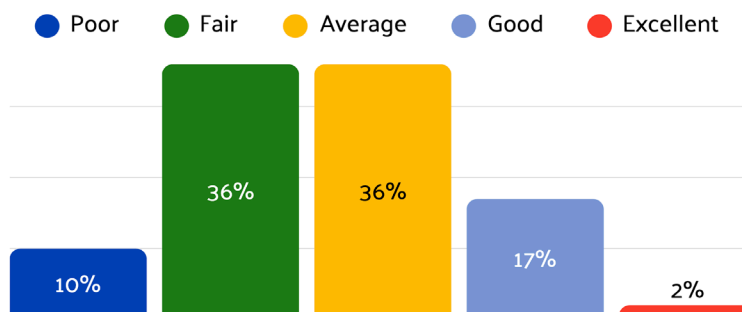
30%

30% of survey participants ranked access to affordable and healthy foods as an important priority for a healthy community.

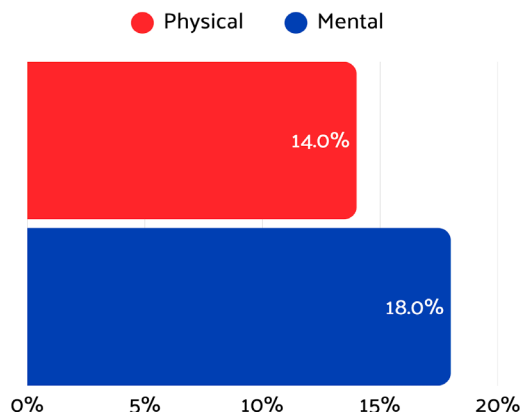
Over **75%** of survey participants noted cost as the top barrier to healthy food access, which was also supported across Community Conversations. Regular fast-food routines and a lack of knowledge about how to cook healthy foods were also major barriers reported by survey participants.

I Would Rate The Health Of My Community As...

Only **19%** of survey respondents rated the health of their community as Good or Excellent.



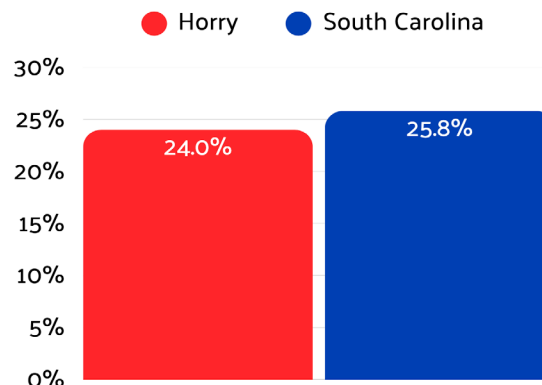
Frequent Distress In Horry County, 2022



Frequent distress is classified when someone reports being in poor physical or mental health for at least half the month.

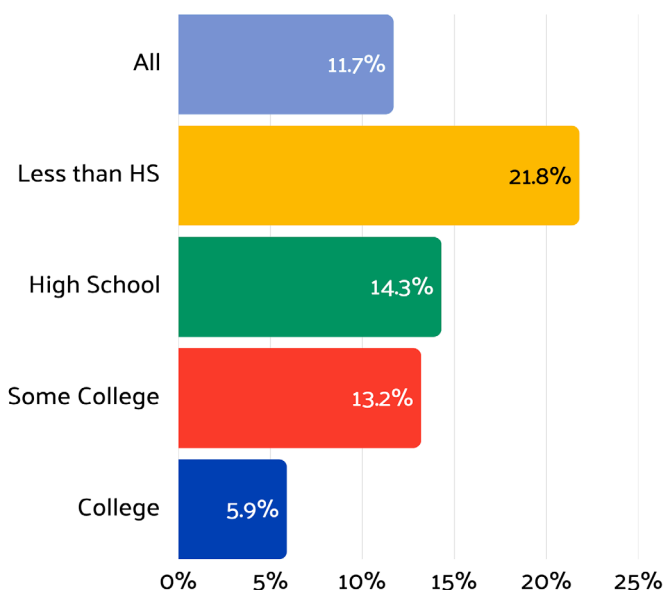
This data allows us to look at the health and well-being of our community through a lens focused on quality of life, not just the presence or absence of certain health conditions.

Percent of Adults Reporting No Leisure Physical Activity, 2023



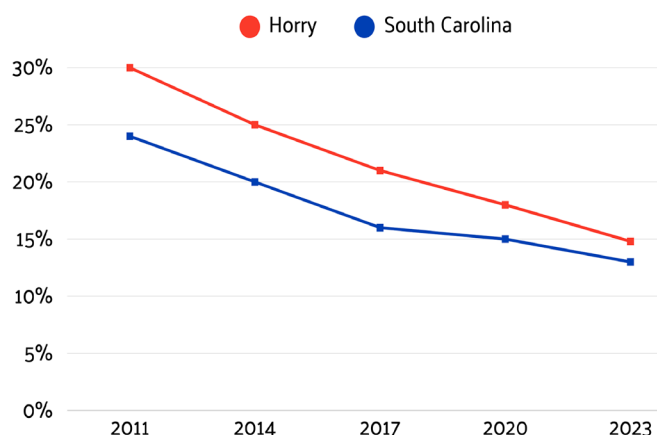
Did You Know?
The average life expectancy in Horry County is **75 years**, though this ranges from **70.8 years** just north of Aynor to **82.6 years** in Conway - a nearly 12-year gap in just a matter of miles.

Delayed Medical Care Due to Cost by Education Attainment In Horry County, 2019-2023



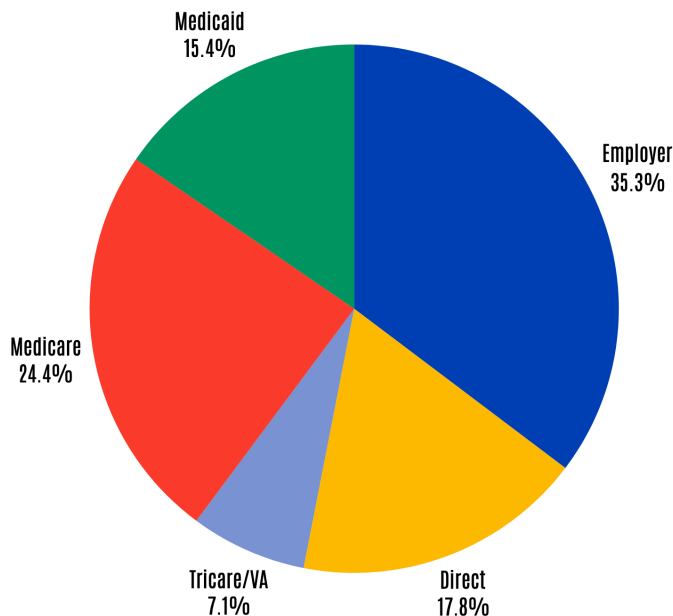
[Ref 1,2,6,7]

Uninsured Population, Ages 18-64



While Horry County's uninsured rate has decreased significantly over the last several years, there are growing concerns that this rate will increase in the coming months with policy changes impacting Medicaid and the ACA Marketplace.

Healthcare Coverage Types In Horry County, 2023

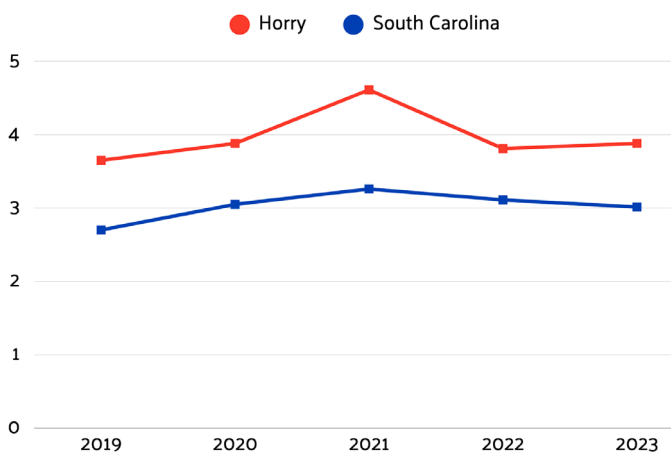


31% of survey participants reported immediate care clinics or urgent care as their go-to when they need healthcare.

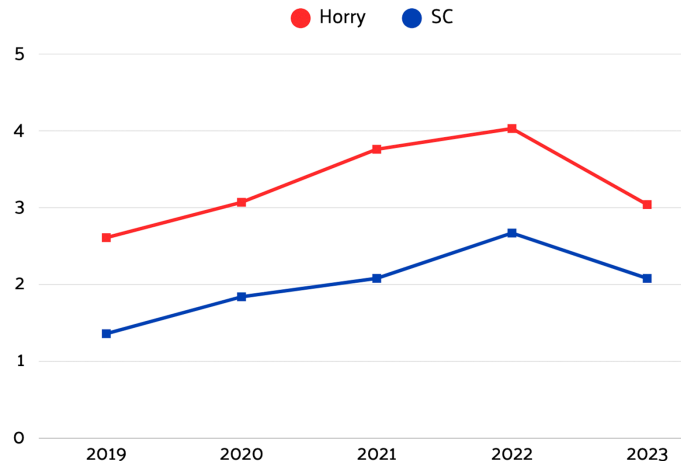
Mental and behavioral health services were the most reported healthcare needs not met in the past year by survey participants.

Did You Know?
The rate of overdoses in Horry County increased by **1.7%** between 2022 and 2023, while it decreased by **6.1%** statewide in the same year.

Overdose Hospitalizations Rate Per 1,000



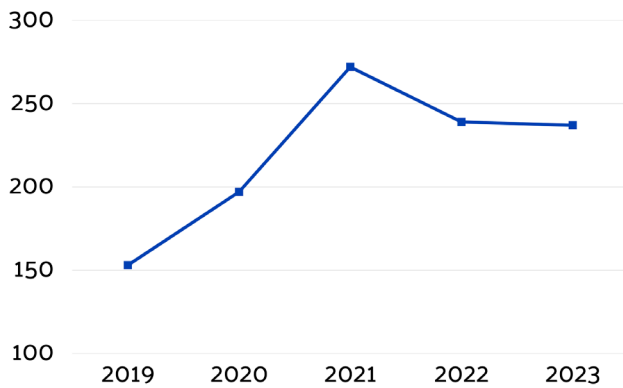
Number of EMS Naloxone Administrations



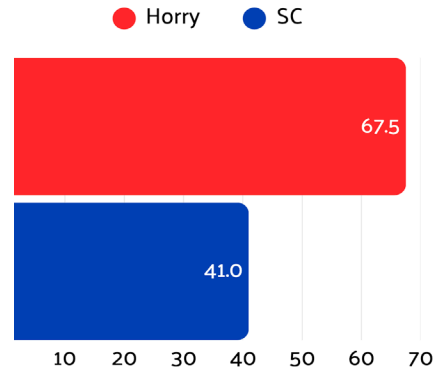
Did You Know?
Horry County had a higher rate of naloxone administration than the state in 2023, at **3.0 per 1,000** and **2.08 per 1,000**, respectively.

[Ref 1,2,8]

Number Of Overdose Deaths In SC



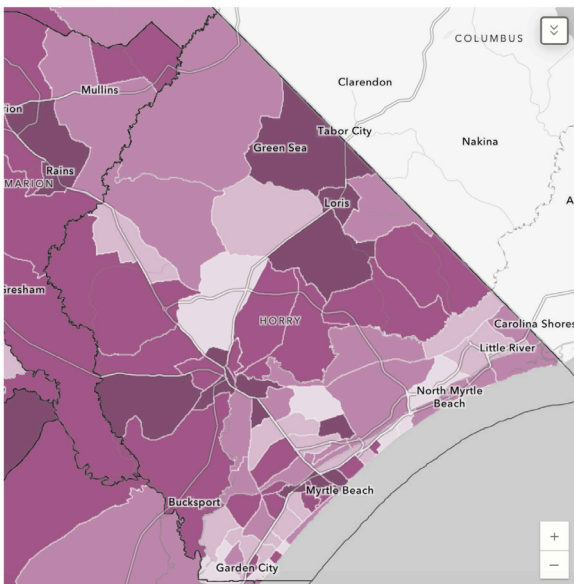
Drug Overdose Deaths, 2023 Rate Per 100,000



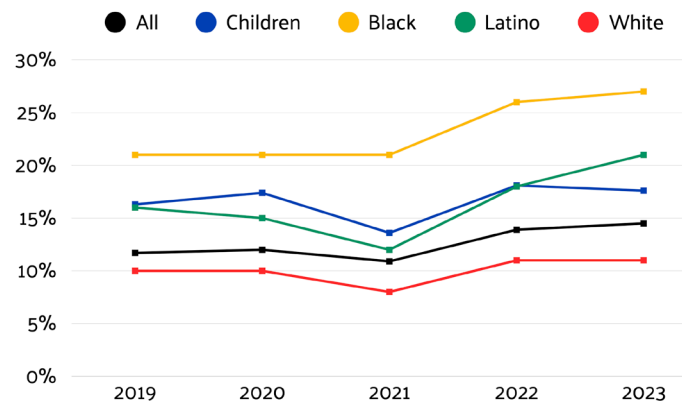
Food Insecurity In Horry County

Gaps in geographic access to healthy foods were noted across Community Conversations. While rural communities like Green Sea and Bucksport have a long drive to a grocery store, residents in downtown Myrtle Beach mentioned that their grocery options, while closer by, are not always accessible due to traffic safety and community mobility concerns.

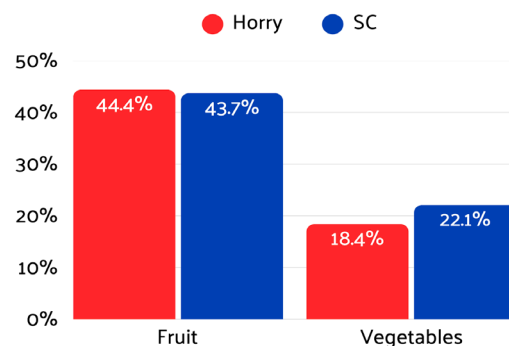
Food insecurity, a lack of consistent access to enough food for a healthy life, has increased in Horry County over the last five years. While this is a critical need countywide, certain parts of the county are most impacted. The map below indicates which communities within the county are at a higher risk for food insecurity, with the lighter shade indicating less risk and the darker shade indicating higher risk.



[Ref 7,8,9,10]



Adults Reporting Not Eating Fruits and Vegetables At Least Once Per Day

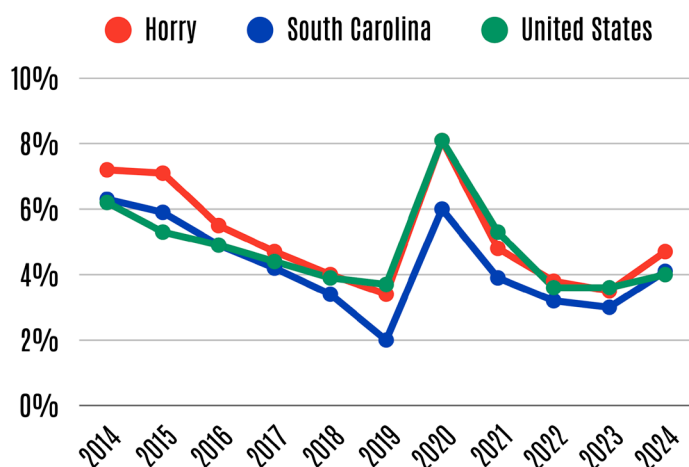


FINANCIAL SECURITY



There were consistent concerns shared during Community Conversations and in survey responses regarding the cost of living and affordability in Horry County. Across the community, residents note increasing concern around rising costs - like housing, healthcare, childcare, and food - outpacing income and economic opportunities.

Annual Unemployment Rate



20% of survey participants said that someone in their household sought education or training to qualify for a higher-paying job in the past year.

Largest Industries In Horry County, 2025

Accommodation and Food Service

- Workforce: 27,755
- Average Annual Wage: \$27,144

Retail Trade

- Workforce: 25,286
- Average Annual Wage: \$36,140

Healthcare and Social Assistance

- Workforce: 18,976
- Average Annual Wage: \$64,376

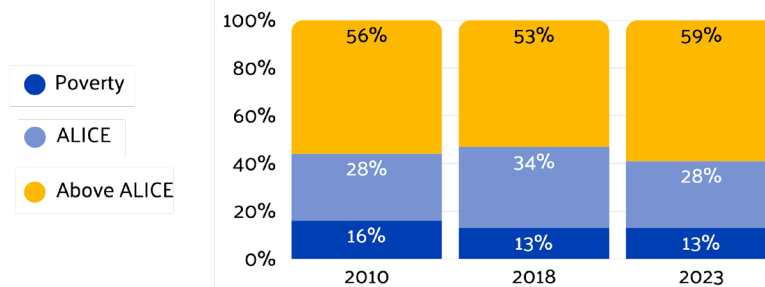
Education Services

- Workforce: 10,109
- Average Annual Wage: \$57,720

28% of survey participants said that job training for adults was a major or moderate concern.

“In 2023, based on the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), **14%** of South Carolina households were defined as being in poverty. Yet this measure failed to account for an additional **28%** of the state’s households – two times as many – that were also experiencing financial hardship. These households are **ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed** – earning above the FPL, but not enough to afford basic expenses in the county where they live.”

Horry County ALICE Households, 2023



Did You Know?
In 2023, the Federal Poverty Level
was **\$14,580** for a single adult
and **\$30,000** for a family of four.

Did You Know?
41% of Horry County
households are below the
ALICE threshold.

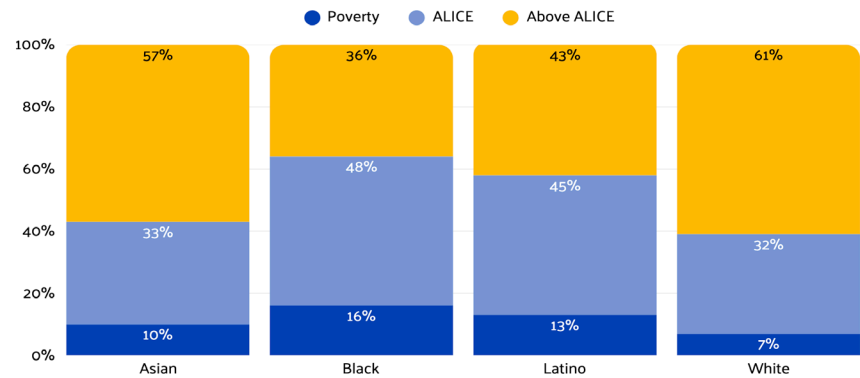
Household Survival Budget, 2023

Monthly Costs	Single Adult	One Adult, One Child	One Adult, One In Child Care	Two Adults	Two Adults Two Children	Two Adults, Two In Child Care	Single Adult 65+	Two Adults 65+
Housing	\$1,063	\$1,090	\$1,090	\$1,090	\$1,255	\$1,255	\$1,063	\$1,090
Child Care	\$0	\$227	\$604	\$0	\$453	\$1,271	\$0	\$0
Food	\$468	\$791	\$710	\$857	\$1,438	\$1,269	\$430	\$789
Transportation	\$438	\$572	\$572	\$677	\$965	\$965	\$367	\$537
Health Care	\$168	\$392	\$392	\$392	\$696	\$696	\$524	\$1,047
Technology	\$86	\$86	\$86	\$116	\$116	\$116	\$86	\$116
Miscellaneous	\$222	\$316	\$345	\$313	\$492	\$557	\$247	\$358
Taxes	\$354	\$288	\$343	\$403	\$397	\$573	\$421	\$739
Monthly Total	\$2,799	\$3,762	\$4,142	\$3,848	\$5,812	\$6,702	\$3,138	\$4,676
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$33,588	\$45,144	\$49,704	\$46,176	\$69,744	\$80,424	\$37,656	\$56,112
Hourly Wage	\$16.79	\$22.57	\$24.85	\$23.09	\$34.87	\$40.21	\$18.83	\$28.06

The chart above reflects the **Household Survival Budget**, which shows the minimum cost of basic needs—such as housing, food, childcare, transportation, and healthcare—for a household to get by. It highlights how many working families earn too much to qualify for assistance but still struggle to afford essential expenses. There is also a Household Stability Budget (not pictured here). The 2023 **Household Stability Budget** incorporates the increased costs required to maintain stability over time and includes a 10% savings category. Under the stability estimates, the annual total for a single adult would be **\$54,564**, and for two adults with two children, it would be **\$111,804**, far above Horry County's median household income of **\$68,988**.

[Ref 12]

Horry County ALICE Households By Race, 2023



ALICE By Zip Code

Highest

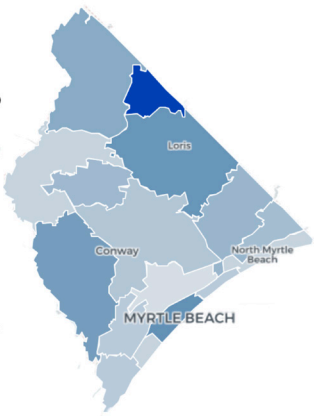
29545: 73%

29577: 56%

Lowest

29511: 33%

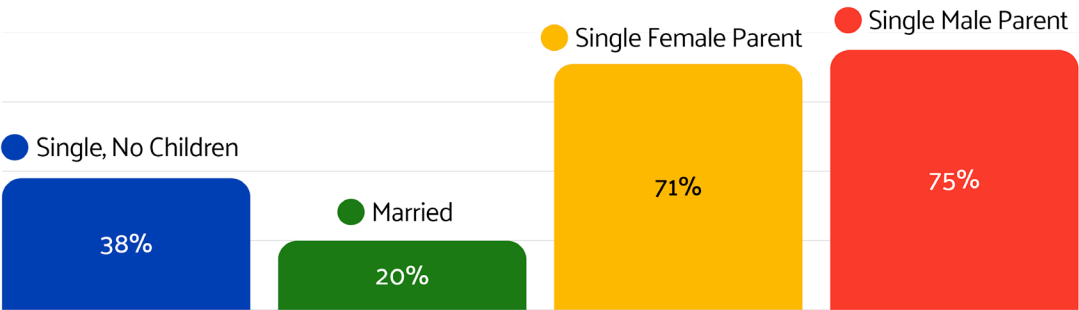
29579: 37%



Most Common Industries For Workers In SC Below ALICE Threshold, 2023

- 1) Accommodation & Food Services
- 2) Retail Trade
- 3) Construction
- 4) Healthcare and Social Assistance

Single-Parent Households Are More Likely To Be ALICE Households



Did You Know?
Across South Carolina,
53% of individuals with a disability
and **27%** of veterans were below
the ALICE threshold in 2023.

ALICE among...

Children	45%
65 and older	47%
Under 25	66%
Full Time Workers	51%

[Ref 12]

Around **1 in 4** survey respondents selected good and adequate housing as a leading factor for a healthy community.

26% of survey participants missed a housing or utilities payment in the past year.

32% of survey participants said that financial or credit counseling was a major or moderate concern.

33.5%

33.5% of survey respondents reported safe and affordable housing as a major or moderate self-sufficiency concern.

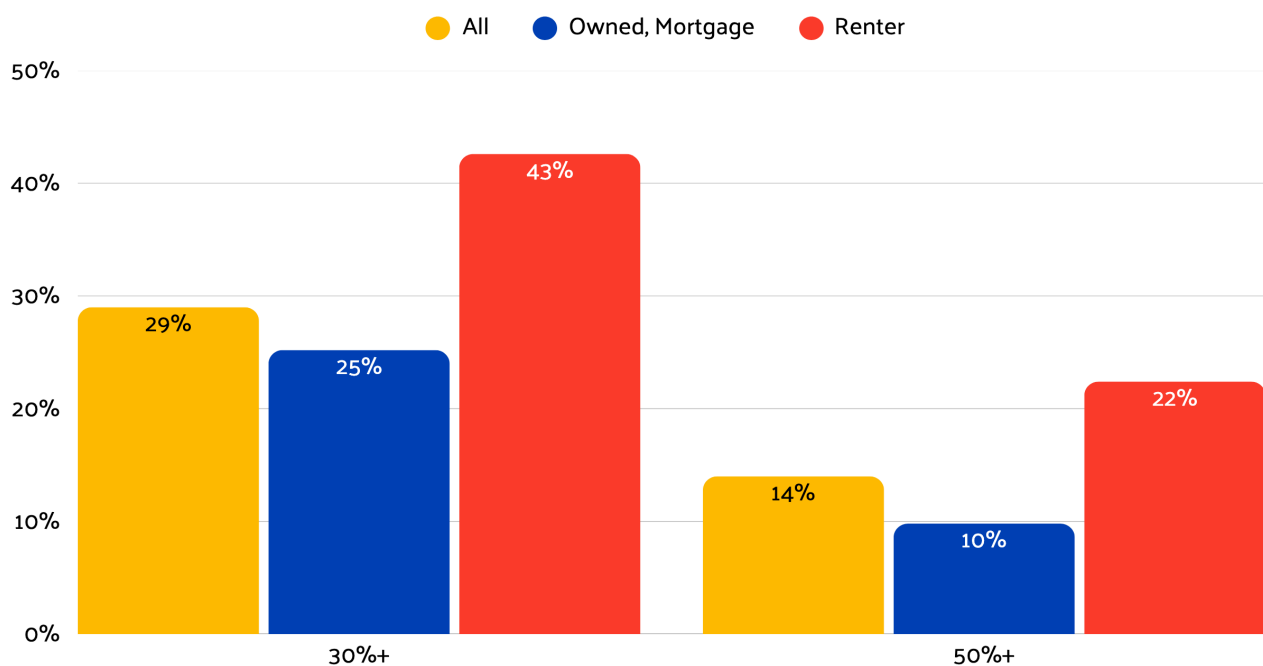
23.3%

23.3% of survey respondents reported worrying that they might not have stable housing in the last year.

Housing Cost Burden

A household is considered to be “housing cost burdened” if they are spending **30% or more** of their income on housing and “severely housing cost burdened” if they are spending **50% or more** of their income on housing.

While **29%** of all Horry County households are considered to be housing cost burdened, and **14%** are severely housing cost burdened, renters are more likely to fall into these categories at **43%** and **22%** respectively.



[Ref 1,2]



COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

As a coastal community, resiliency and environmental health are uniquely important in Horry County. Building community resiliency helps keep people safe, healthy, and prepared for challenges like flooding, hurricanes, and environmental hazards. Horry County faces unique risks related to protecting clean water, land, and air; as well as preparing for and responding to natural disasters. A healthy environment is critical to supporting a healthy community.

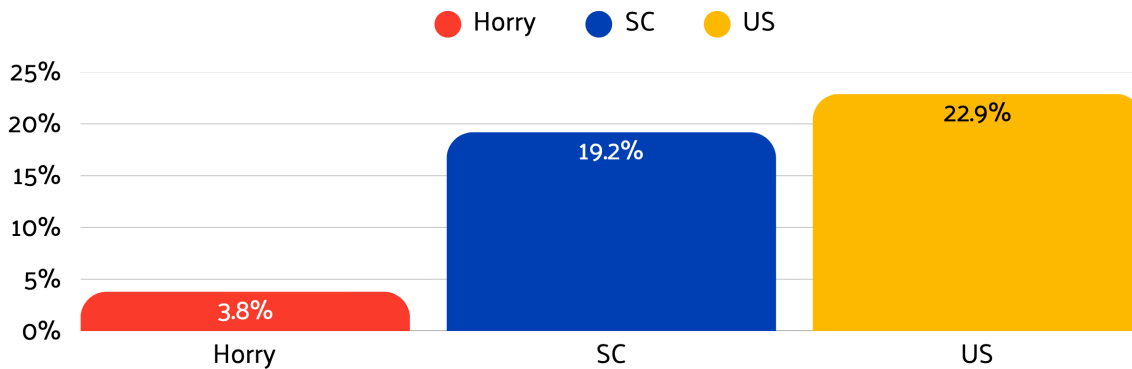
While it's critical to assess and address environmental risks, communities need their basic needs - like housing and utilities - met to be able to foster resiliency, too. In 2025, there were **13,672 website visits and 4,617 phone calls** to the 211 Help Line in Horry County. The top needs reported for our region were rent assistance, shelters, affordable housing, utilities assistance, food assistance and transportation services.

Community Conversations and survey responses noted consistent concerns related to housing affordability, quality, and safety - a key basic need related to community resiliency. Transportation gaps and barriers, particularly in rural parts of the county, were also seen as negatively impactful on community connectivity. Participants also discussed communication barriers and a lack of information about resources flowing from community agencies to residents as a need to strengthen trust, relationships, and awareness.

Both residents and service provider survey participants ranked “current, correct information about available services” as a leading resiliency concern.

27% of survey participants said that disaster response (for events such as hurricanes and fires) was a major or moderate concern.

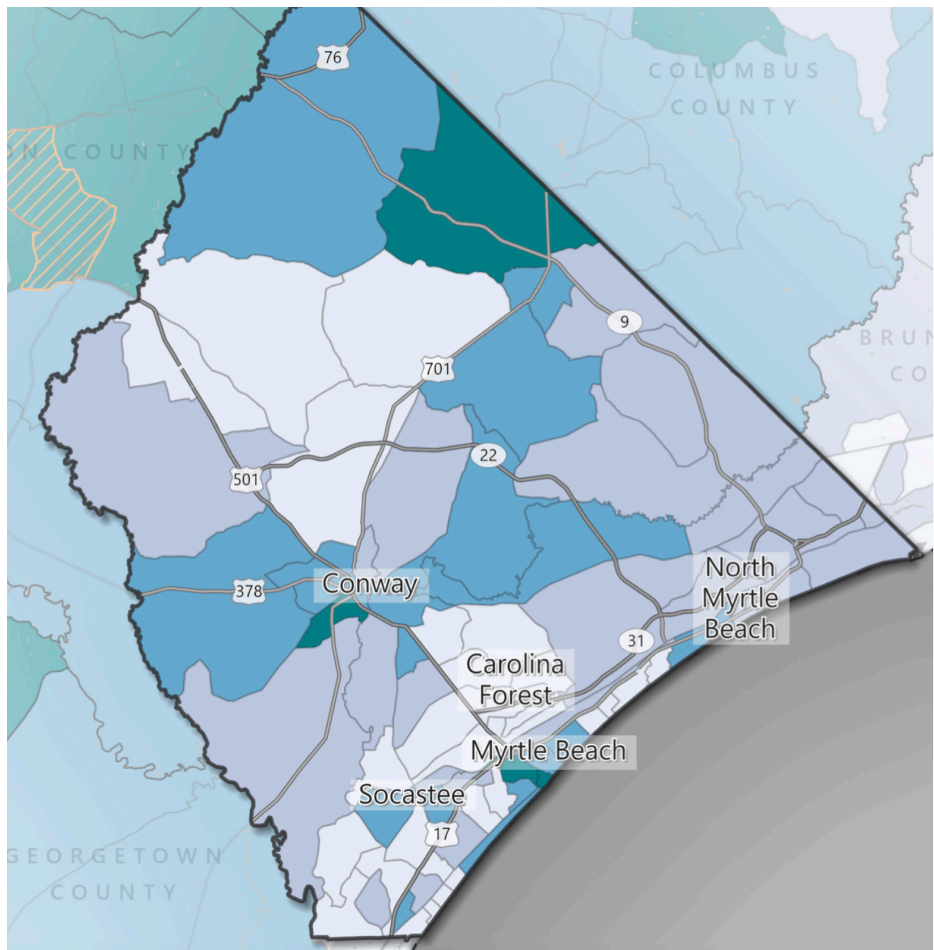
Residents Living In “Highly Burdened” Communities



Horry County has four census tracts that are considered to be “highly burdened” using this measure of environmental health and community resilience, representing **3.8%** of the county population. This is much lower than the percentage of residents statewide (19.2%) and nationally (22.9%).

These tracts are also more at-risk for conditions like heart disease, diabetes, asthma, cancer, and poor mental health.

The Environmental Justice Index (EJI) helps communities understand how environmental conditions and social factors affect people’s health. It looks at things like air and water quality, income, housing, and existing health problems to see which areas face more challenges. A higher score (darker shade on map) means that people in that area may be more affected by pollution or other environmental risks than those in lower-risk communities (lighter shade on map).



Did You Know?

In 2022, there were **1,314** emergency department visits related to asthma in Horry County - a critical community indicator of environmental risk exposure - costing over **\$7 million**.

[Ref 14,15]

References

1. U.S. Census Bureau (2023). American Community Survey 1-year estimates.
2. U.S. Census Bureau (2023). American Community Survey 5-year estimates.
3. South Carolina Department of Education. (2024). SC School Report Cards.
4. South Carolina Department of Education (2024). Truancy, Suspension and Expulsion Data.
5. Living Wage Institute (2025). Benchmark Living Wage Data Series, Childcare Cost Burden.
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024). CDC PLACES, Life Expectancy.
7. South Carolina Department of Public Health (2025). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey.
8. South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (2025). Just Plain Killers: Inside South Carolina's Overdose Epidemic.
9. Feeding America (2025). Map the Meal Gap.
10. University of South Carolina SNAP-Ed (2025). SC Food Insecurity Risk Map.
11. South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (2025). Community Profiles: Horry County, September 2025.
12. United Way of Northern New Jersey (2025). United for ALICE: The State of ALICE in South Carolina.
13. United Way Association of South Carolina (2025). Statewide SC 211 Traffic Overview.
14. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2025). Environmental Justice Index County Map Series.
15. South Carolina Department of Public Health (2025). SC Tracking Asthma Dashboard.



Our Mission

To unite people, ideas, and resources to advance
the common good in Horry County.

unitedwayhorry.org