

# COUNTIES IN FOCUS 2012

A COMMUNITY INDICATORS REPORT  
FOR SOUTH ALABAMA



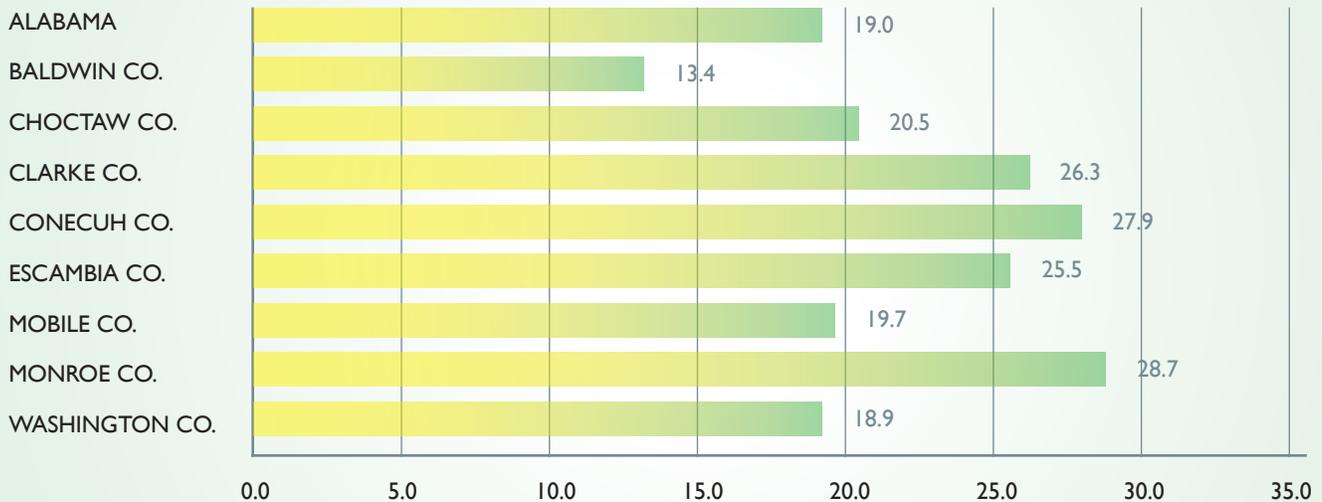
community foundation<sup>SM</sup>  
South Alabama



# POVERTY

In 2011, the poverty threshold for a family of four that included two related children under age 18 was \$22,811. The poverty threshold for a single person under age 65 was \$11,702. If a family's pre-tax income is below the poverty threshold, then that individual or related individuals in the household are in poverty. There is a direct correlation between educational attainment and likelihood of poverty in the region.

## TOTAL POVERTY RATE IN 2011



Source: Custom search of U.S. Census Bureau data at U.S. Economic Development Administration, Innovation Index at [http://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/innovation\\_index/region-select.html](http://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/innovation_index/region-select.html).

## DID YOU KNOW?

- With the exception of Baldwin County, all of the counties in the CFSA eight-county region have a median household income less than the state average of \$42,934.
- In our eight-county region adults age 25 and over with less than a high school degree or equivalency faced poverty at a rate of about 29 percent, which is ten points higher than the statewide average of 19 percent.

## HOW DO WE ADDRESS IT?

- The region's current anti-poverty strategies should be re-evaluated to both comprehensively examine the nature of poverty in each geographic area and to measure the effectiveness of the current approaches.
- Strategies should include a strong focus on educational efforts, should also take into account the region's diverse economic and demographic profiles, and should emphasize cross-sector collaboration.



# HEALTH & WELLNESS

In an effort to assist communities to improve health, researchers used two categories- length of life (mortality) and quality of life (morbidity) -to determine health outcomes.

## HEALTH RANKINGS (OF 67 ALABAMA COUNTIES)

	HEALTH OUTCOME RANK	HEALTH FACTOR RANK	OVERALL RANK
BALDWIN CO.	3	3	1
CHOCTAW CO.	40	26	4
CLARKE CO.	10	50	3
CONECUH CO.	43	58	8
ESCAMBIA CO.	34	48	6
MOBILE CO.	45	30	5
MONROE CO.	38	59	7
WASHINGTON CO.	11	31	2

## PERCENT UNINSURED

	DATA	OVERALL RANK
ALABAMA	16.9%	N/A
BALDWIN CO.	19.1%	7
CHOCTAW CO.	17.9%	2
CLARKE CO.	16.6%	1
CONECUH CO.	18.6%	4 (TIE)
ESCAMBIA CO.	19.5%	8
MOBILE CO.	18.6%	4 (TIE)
MONROE CO.	18.4%	3
WASHINGTON CO.	19.0%	6

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Of the 67 counties in Alabama, only Baldwin County ranked in the top ten for both categories at number three for each.
- While no county ranked in the bottom quarter for both measures, the region's health care outcomes ranged in rank from three to 45 (of 67), while the health factors ranged from three to 59.
- With the exception of Clarke County, all of the counties in the region have uninsured rates that exceed the state rate of 16.9%

## HOW DO WE ADDRESS IT?

- Current resources and efforts to address poor health and wellness outcomes should be evaluated and, if appropriate, deployed to target the health behaviors in specific counties.
- Local health resources and reform efforts should be on service delivery to those involuntarily uninsured who might not otherwise be able to obtain needed care. One approach might be to seek federal waiver authority to utilize, and when necessary, establish retail health clinics as primary care providers to the region's uninsured through public-private partnerships.



## Economic Stability:

The long-term employment goals of governments and communities should be an economy that is dynamic – and resilient to economic shocks. In the broadest terms, policymakers should, to the extent possible, create a business environment conducive to job creation and economic expansion. However, since 2008, this region has faced seemingly intractable unemployment. This has created economic stagnation among families in the region and bolstered income inequality, which economic analysts agree can have crippling effect on the long-term economic stability of the region.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE			MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME			INCOME EQUALITY (GINI INDEX)		
2011	DATA	OVERALL RANK	2011	DATA	OVERALL RANK	2011	DATA	OVERALL RANK
ALABAMA	9.0	N/A	ALABAMA	\$ 42,939	N/A	ALABAMA	0.470	N/A
BALDWIN CO.	8.1	1	BALDWIN CO.	\$ 51,321	1	BALDWIN CO.	0.437	1
CHOCTAW CO.	11.4	4	CHOCTAW CO.	\$ 32,188	4	CHOCTAW CO.	0.468	4
CLARKE CO.	15.2	7	CLARKE CO.	\$ 29,668	7	CLARKE CO.	0.513	7
CONECUH CO.	14.8	6	CONECUH CO.	\$ 27,977	8	CONECUH CO.	0.536	8
ESCAMBIA CO.	10.5	3	ESCAMBIA CO.	\$ 31,638	5	ESCAMBIA CO.	0.461	3
MOBILE CO.	10.1	2	MOBILE CO.	\$ 42,187	2	MOBILE CO.	0.471	5
MONROE CO.	15.3	8	MONROE CO.	\$ 29,849	6	MONROE CO.	0.484	6
WASHINGTON CO.	14.0	5	WASHINGTON CO.	\$ 40,286	3	WASHINGTON CO.	0.444	2

### DID YOU KNOW?

- With the exception of Baldwin County, all of the counties in the region have unemployment rates that surpass the state average of 9.0.
- Only Baldwin County at \$51,321 had a median household income above the state average of \$42,934 for 2011. Conecuh County ranked the lowest at \$27,977.
- Clarke, Conecuh, Mobile, and Monroe counties have a greater distribution of wealth among families and individuals resulting in less income equality. Baldwin County has the highest level of income inequality in the eight-county region.

### HOW DO WE ADDRESS IT?

- The area's local governments should continuously re-evaluate their tax burdens and how they might impact decisions to form, expand, and relocate businesses to the area.
- Given the potentially negative effects of persistent income inequality on future generations, local governments should seek to make strong investments in education and other tools and resources to help families move up the economic ladder.



# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The importance of educational attainment to a community’s economic and social well-being cannot be overstated. The long-term repercussions of an educational system that fails to keep pace with the demands of a global economy, much less fails to provide the basic skills for language and math, will be catastrophic for the region. Furthermore, an inadequate education will greatly diminish those students’ prospects for economic success and personal cultural enrichment throughout their lifetimes.

LESS THAN H.S. GRADUATE OR EQUIVALENCY		
AGES 18-24	DATA	OVERALL RANK
ALABAMA	19.8%	N/A
BALDWIN CO.	20.1%	1
CHOCTAW CO.	28.2%	5
CLARKE CO.	34.8%	6
CONECUH CO.	39.2%	8
ESCAMBIA CO.	36.1%	7
MOBILE CO.	20.9%	3
MONROE CO.	20.7%	2
WASHINGTON CO.	24.2%	4

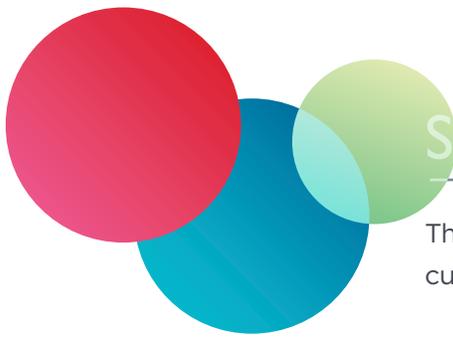
BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR HIGHER		
AGES 25 PLUS	DATA	OVERALL RANK
ALABAMA	14.0%	N/A
BALDWIN CO.	18.4%	1
CHOCTAW CO.	6.3%	7 (TIE)
CLARKE CO.	8.3%	3
CONECUH CO.	6.3%	7 (TIE)
ESCAMBIA CO.	8.0%	4
MOBILE CO.	13.2%	2
MONROE CO.	7.7%	5
WASHINGTON CO.	7.0%	6

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Not only do all eight of the region’s counties have a higher proportion of their 18- to 24-year-old population lacking a high school degree or equivalency, the rates exceed the state average of 19.8 % – or about one in five young adults.
- The South Alabama region is facing a severe educational crisis. At present, little is known about if and how poor outcomes are due to inadequate government spending on education or the distribution of those resources because that information is not made widely available.
- At 18.4%, only Baldwin County had a higher proportion of adults age 25 and older with a Bachelor’s degree than the state average of fourteen percent.

## HOW DO WE ADDRESS IT?

- An important first step in any educational reform will be to allow academics, business leaders and research organizations to study the relationships between school performance and funding.
- Educational institutions in the South Alabama region, as well as private organizations, should begin to explore and cultivate new approaches to publicly-supported higher education opportunities in this area.
- A comprehensive performance review of the area’s higher education institutions should be conducted to evaluate operational costs, student assessments, educational outcomes, student debt burden, and job placement.



## SUMMARY

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The South Alabama region has enormous potential to be a regional economic and cultural powerhouse – providing many opportunities and benefits to its residents.

Living Cities founder, Ben Hecht, lays out four principles for dynamic collaboration that aim to “take full advantage of both the individual and collective expertise and influence of participating institutions to accelerate social progress” and to use “local collaboration across sectors and issues [to] produce enduring change for low-income people.”<sup>1</sup> Living Cities<sup>2</sup> operates on four basic principles:

**CREATE A RESILIENT CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE:** Problems such as stunted economic growth are complex and require long-term solutions. Yet often cities’ responses are technical and short-term, focused, for example, on supporting a better after-school program in one school or renovating buildings on one block. We need to require key decision makers from government, philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, and the business community to come together formally to drive long-term, more adaptive change processes.

**DISRUPT OBSOLETE AND FRAGMENTED APPROACHES:** Essential systems, such as education and transportation, were built decades ago and are based on now-outdated assumptions, such as the imperative of a nine-month school year to accommodate summer harvests. We need to give local leaders space to innovate and propose bold approaches that cut across traditional silos. We can’t “nonprofit” our way out of our problems—nor can we fix them solely through government grants or market forces.

**ENGAGE PRIVATE MARKETS ON BEHALF OF LOW-INCOME PEOPLE:** If we’ve learned anything in two decades, it is that engagement of private markets and capital is critical to sustainability and scale. We need to support solutions that combine grants with debt to attract private sector money and bring mainstream market goods and services, such as grocery stores and financial services, to underserved people.

**ESTABLISH A NEW NORMAL:** We must establish a new way to mainstream successful innovation. We need government and business, in particular, to commit permanently to driving public and private sector funding streams away from obsolete approaches and applying them to proven solutions.<sup>3</sup>

The cornerstone of the regional economy and area’s social wellbeing will be determined, in large part, by the willingness of all of the region’s partners — government, business, education, charitable organizations, and faith and community leaders — to commit to long-term engagement and hard work in addressing the region’s most pressing problems.

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Hecht, “Revitalizing Struggling American Cities,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Fall 2011 at [http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/revitalizing\\_struggling\\_american\\_cities](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/revitalizing_struggling_american_cities).

<sup>2</sup> Living Cities is a collaboration of 22 leading foundations and financial institutions working towards urban revitalization. To learn more about Living Cities, visit: <http://www.livingcities.org/about/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*