



Head Start / Early Head Start Community Needs Assessment

2025

**Sunflower County,
Mississippi**



www.dhaheadstart.org

Head Start / Early Head Start Community Needs Assessment

Sunflower County, Mississippi

Center for Community Research and Evaluation
University of Memphis

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Quick Facts

	Sunflower County, Mississippi	Mississippi	South Region	United States
Population	25,328	2,951,438	127,631,012	332,387,540
10-Year Population Change	-11.8%	-0.9%	10.0%	6.7%
Median Age	37.6	38.4	38.5	38.7
Median Household Income	\$40,265	\$54,915	\$72,265	\$78,538
Poverty Rate	29.9%	19.1%	13.6%	12.4%
Child Poverty Rate	44.7%	26.4%	18.5%	16.3%
% Food Stamps	33.6%	13.6%	12.1%	11.8%
% Single Mother Households	56.7%	34.5%	26.8%	24.8%
% Uninsured	11.4%	11.6%	11.7%	8.6%
% with HS+ Degree	75.8%	86.6%	88.6%	89.4%
% in Labor Force	48.3%	57.2%	62.3%	63.5%
Unemployment Rate	10.9%	6.0%	5.0%	5.2%
% Homes Owner-Occupied	56.3%	69.5%	66.3%	65.0%
% Homes with Internet Access	34.4%	58.3%	72.6%	74.8%
% Houses Built >2000	10.8%	28.7%	31.4%	24.0%
% Without Vehicle	2.7%	2.3%	2.8%	4.3%

Executive Summary

Sunflower County faces serious and ongoing challenges that affect young children and their families. Nearly half of children under five live in poverty. Many new mothers rely on public assistance, and fewer adults in the county have completed high school or college compared to state and national levels. Good jobs are hard to find, especially full-time work, and many families struggle to meet basic needs. In this context, Head Start programs are not just helpful—they are essential. They give children a strong start in learning and health, while also helping parents work and stay stable.

Some problems need special focus. Many children in Head Start are deemed chronically absent, likely due to issues like transportation or parents' work schedules. There is no public transportation in the county, and many families do not have reliable cars. Health care is hard to access, and many people don't have insurance, so Head Start's health services are very important. Finally, as more Hispanic families move into the area, especially in towns like Drew, it will be important for programs to include support in Spanish and meet the needs of immigrant families.

This community needs assessment aims to analyze demographic data to help highlight the socioeconomic challenges in Sunflower County, with a particular eye towards those of the Head Start eligible population. This report was prepared by the Center for Community Research and Evaluation (CCRE) at the University of Memphis.

General Area Description - Demographics

Figure 1: Proposed Service Area in Sunflower County

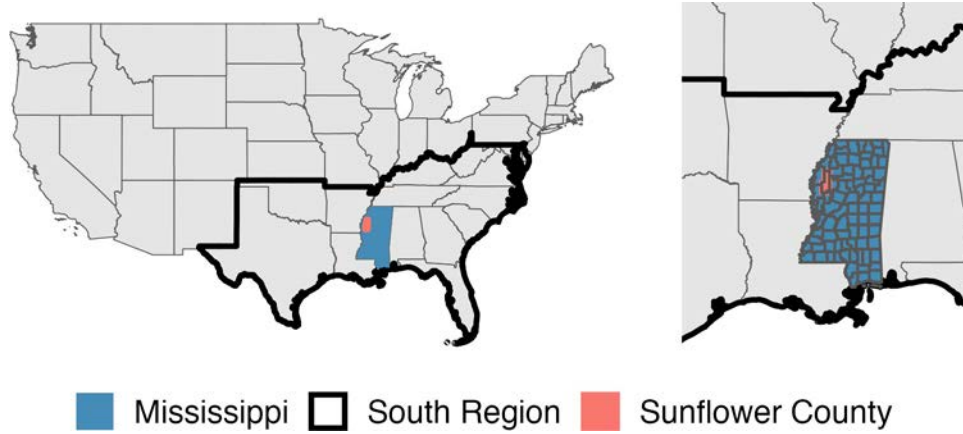
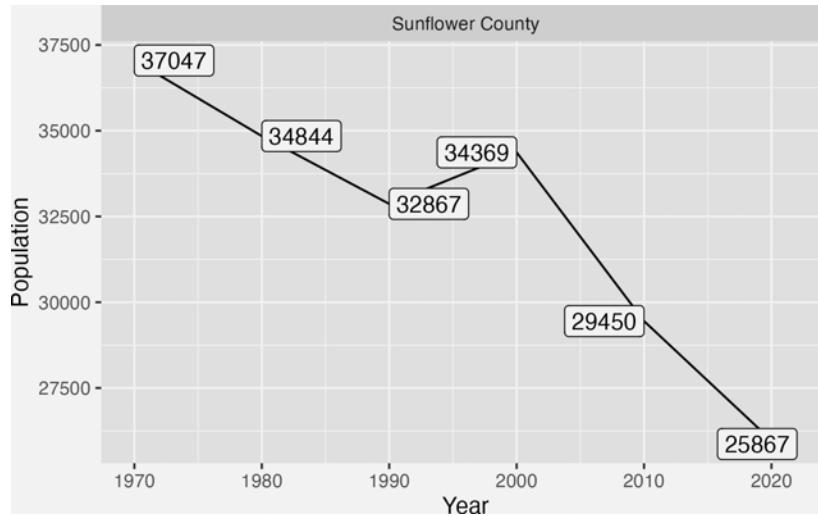


Figure 2: Population of Sunflower County: 1970 to present

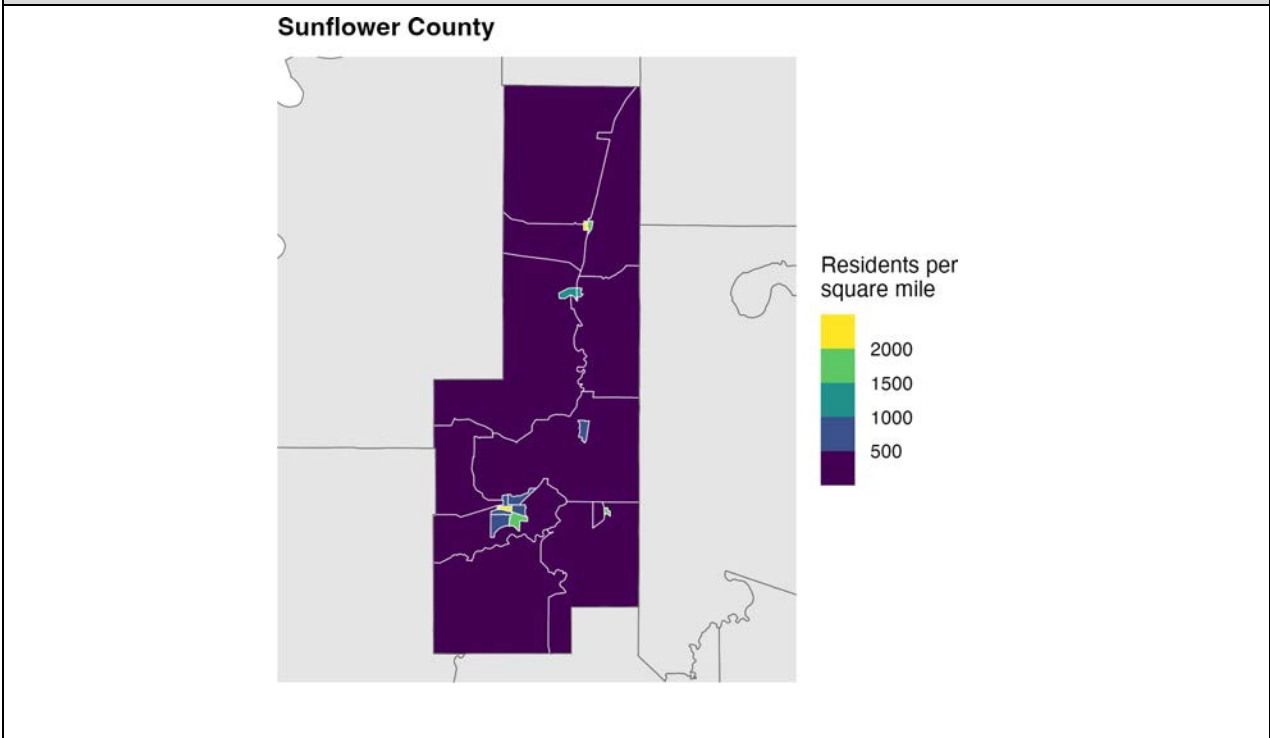


Sunflower County has experienced a steady decline in population over the past five decades. From a peak of 37,047 residents in 1970, the population has fallen to 25,867 in 2022—a loss of more than 30%.¹ A sharp drop occurred recently between 2000 and 2010, when the county lost nearly 5,000 residents.²

¹ Steven Manson, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riperine Knowles, Tracy Kugler, Finn Roberts, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 18.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. 2023. <http://doi.org/10.18128/D050.V18.0>. Data from decennial censuses (1970-2010) and American Community Survey five- year estimates (2020, 2022).

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012 and 2023, 5-year estimates, table B01003.

Figure 3: Population Density by Census Block Group, Sunflower County



Population density in Sunflower County is concentrated in a few small areas, while most of the county remains sparsely populated. The highest densities appear in parts of Indianola and Ruleville, with several block groups having more than 1,700 residents per square mile. One block group near downtown Indianola has over 2,300 residents per square mile.³ By contrast, large sections of the county—particularly in the north and west—had fewer than 50 residents per square mile. These lower-density areas make up the majority of the land in the county and are primarily rural farmland.

Geography	Black, Non-Hispanic (%)	White, Non-Hispanic (%)	Hispanic (%)	Other (%)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	73.0%	23.3%	2.6%	1.2%
Mississippi	37.0%	55.4%	3.6%	4.0%
South Region	18.8%	54.4%	19.0%	7.8%
United States	12.4%	58.2%	19.0%	10.5%

About 73% of people in Sunflower County identify as Black and non-Hispanic, which is much higher than in the state or the country overall.⁴ Around 23% of residents are White and non-Hispanic, while Hispanic and other racial groups make up only small parts of the population—2.6% and 1.2%, respectively. This is in stark contrast to the rest of Mississippi and the U.S.

³ Population density calculated using data from: (1) U.S. Census Bureau, 2023, TIGER/Line Shapefiles, and (2) U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, table B01001.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, tables B01001, B01001B, B01001H, B01001I.

Figure 4: Population Percentage by Race in National Context

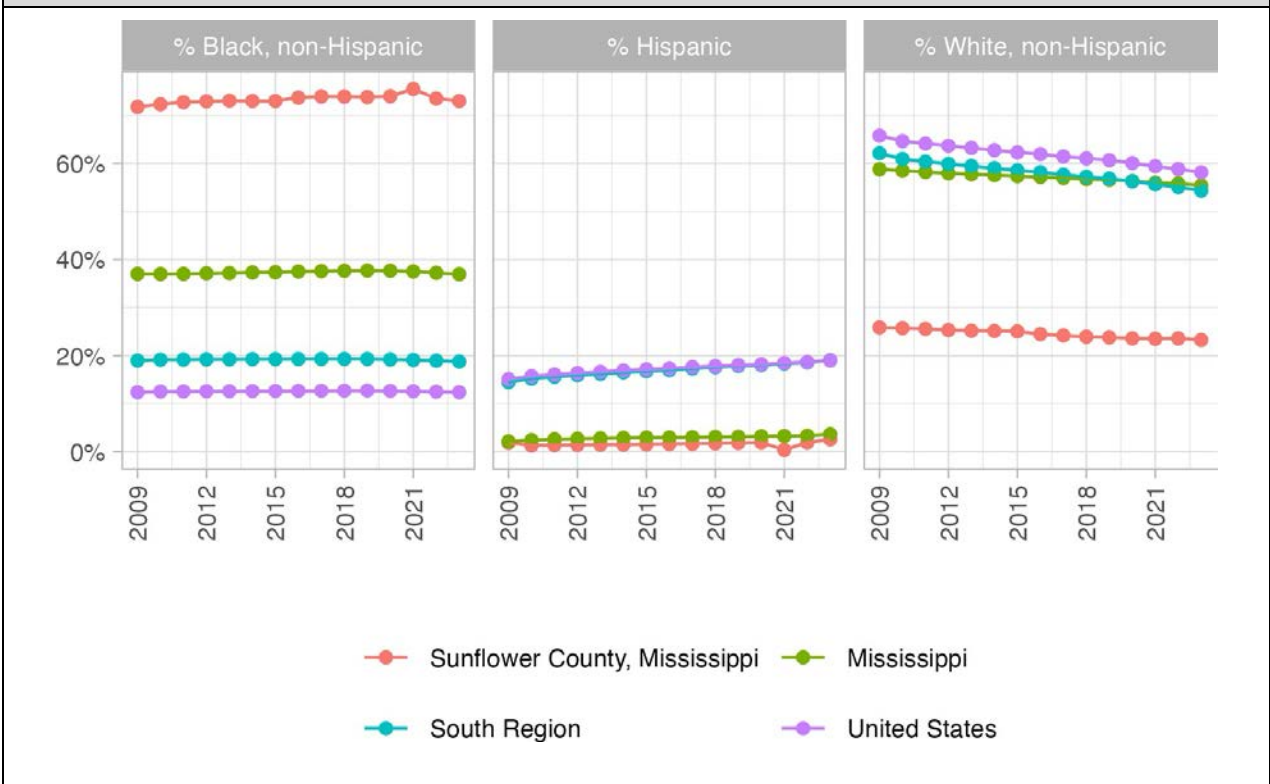


Figure 4 shows how the racial and ethnic makeup of Sunflower County has changed from 2009 to 2023, compared to Mississippi, the South, and the U.S. Sunflower County stayed mostly Black, non-Hispanic during this time, with this group making up between 72% and 76% of the population.⁵ This is much higher than the rest of the state or country. The percentage of White, non-Hispanic residents in the county slowly went down, from about 26% to 23%. The Hispanic population stayed very small—usually under 2%—except for one year in 2021 when the number dropped unusually low. Meanwhile, the Hispanic population in the rest of the country kept growing, reaching almost 19% nationwide by 2023.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, years 2009-2023, 5-year estimates, tables B01001, B01001B, B01001H, B01001I.

Figure 5: Non-Hispanic Black Population Percentage by Census Block Group, Sunflower County

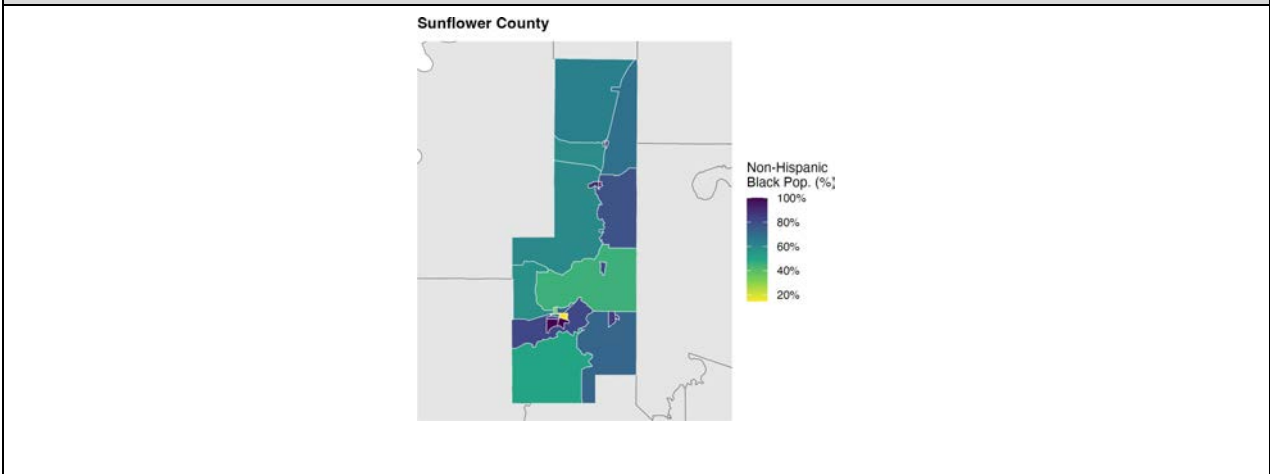


Figure 5 shows the distribution of the non-Hispanic Black population in Sunflower County, measured as the percent of the population in each census block group. Most areas in the county fall between 60% and 90% Black, with several block groups—especially in and around Indianola and Drew—exceeding 95%.⁶ Two block groups, both in the southeastern part of Indianola, are 100% Black. The few areas with a lower Black population include the center of Indianola, at 15%, and a block group east of Ruleville, at 34%. The largest rural areas are between 60% and 80% Black. As in other Delta counties, residential segregation is clearest within towns. Indianola contains some of the most racially divided areas, with three block groups—each nearly 100% Black—separated by a small, whiter area around downtown.

Figure 6: Age Distribution

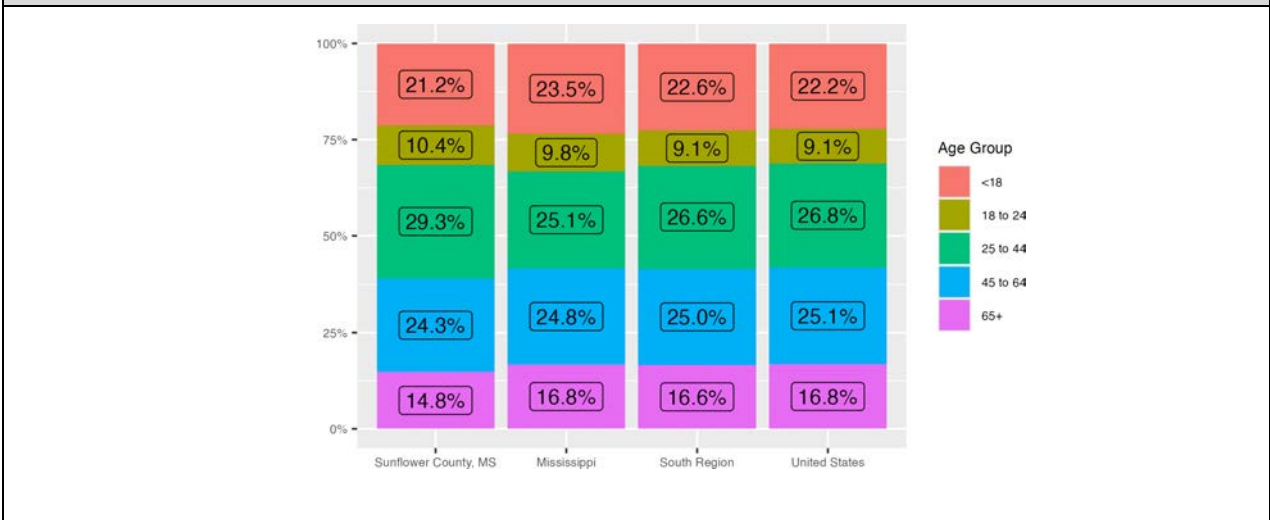


Figure 6 shows the age distribution in Sunflower County compared to the state, region, and nation. Sunflower County has a higher share of residents between the ages of 25 and 44, at 29.3%, compared to 25.1% in Mississippi and 26.8% nationally.⁷ The next largest group is adults aged 45 to 64, at 24.3%, which is nearly identical to the state and national percentages. The share of children under 18 is lower in Sunflower County, at 21.2%, compared to 23.5% statewide. Older adults aged 65 and over make up a smaller share of the population—14.8% in Sunflower County, compared to 16.8% in Mississippi and the U.S. overall.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, tables B01001 and B02009.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, table S0101.

Geography	Household Led by Single Mother (%)	Household Led by Single Mother #	Average Family Size (#)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	56.7%	1,597	3.48
Mississippi	34.5%	122,814	3.15
South Region	26.8%	4,012,114	3.15

Table 3 shows the share of households led by single mothers, along with the average family size. Sunflower County stands out, with 56.7% of households led by a single mother—well above the state rate of 34.5%, the regional rate of 26.8%, and the national rate of 24.8%.⁸ Average family size is also higher in Sunflower County, at 3.48 people per family, compared to 3.15 across the state, region, and nation.⁹ The high share of single-mother households, combined with larger families, suggests increased demand for supportive services, especially those related to child care, food assistance, and employment.

Geography	% Change, Employees	% Change, Establishments	% Change, Average Annual Pay	Average Annual Pay, 2023
Sunflower County, Mississippi	-2.1%	-5.8%	+40.6%	\$41,228
Mississippi	+5.3%	+21.6%	+32.4%	\$49,128
U.S.	+12.1%	+26.8%	+40.9%	\$72,360

Employment in Sunflower County declined slightly between 2014 and 2023, with the number of jobs falling by 2.1% and the number of business establishments dropping by 5.8%.¹⁰ Over the same period, average annual pay rose by 40.6%, reaching \$41,228 in 2023. This increase in wages is nearly identical to the national rate of growth and higher than the state's, though pay in the county remains well below both the state average of \$49,128 and the national average of \$72,360.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate. Table B11005

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate. Table S1101.

¹⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023 annual averages.

Table 5: Establishments, Employment, Wages per Industry in Sunflower County			
Industry	# Establishments	# Employees	Annual Pay
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting	78	349	\$38,954
Construction	27	475	\$54,625
Manufacturing	17	295	\$52,860
Retail trade	88	831	\$27,224
Transportation, warehousing	40	1,193	\$42,200
Information	10	28	\$53,782
Finance, insurance	36	160	\$56,958
Real estate, rental, leasing	13	23	\$50,103
Professional, scientific, technical services	20	60	\$48,852
Management of companies, employees	3	92	\$43,857
Administrative, support, waste management	10	46	\$36,491
Educational services	19	791	\$41,616
Health care, social assistance	6	748	\$52,903
Arts, entertainment, recreation	4	40	\$28,817
Accommodation, food services	38	480	\$15,664
Other services (except public administration)	23	151	\$37,488
Public administration	11	1,322	\$44,459

The biggest employers in the county are public administration, with 1,322 workers across 11 offices, and transportation and warehousing, with 1,193 workers across 40 businesses.¹¹ Retail trade also has a large presence, with 831 workers and the highest number of businesses (88). Pay varies a lot depending on the industry. Finance and insurance pays the most, at about \$57,000 a year, followed by health care and manufacturing, both around \$53,000. The lowest pay is in accommodation and food services, which employs nearly 500 people but pays only about \$15,700 a year. Most other industries pay between \$35,000 and \$50,000.

¹¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023 annual averages, NAICS sectors with at least ten employees in county. Private and governmental employment aggregated.

Industry	Sunflower County, MS	Mississippi	U.S.
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting	4.9%	1.0%	0.8%
Mining, quarrying, oil & gas extraction	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%
Utilities	0.0%	0.8%	0.5%
Construction	6.7%	4.4%	5.3%
Manufacturing	4.2%	12.5%	8.4%
Wholesale trade	0.0%	3.1%	4.0%
Retail trade	11.7%	12.0%	10.2%
Transportation, warehousing	16.8%	5.8%	4.8%
Information	0.4%	1.0%	2.0%
Finance, insurance	2.3%	2.9%	4.1%
Real estate, rental, leasing	0.3%	1.0%	1.6%
Professional, scientific, technical services	0.8%	3.6%	7.1%
Management of companies, employees	1.3%	1.0%	1.7%
Administrative, support, waste management	0.7%	5.9%	6.2%
Educational services	11.1%	9.3%	8.4%
Health care, social assistance	10.5%	15.8%	15.2%
Arts, entertainment, recreation	0.6%	1.0%	1.8%
Accommodation, food services	6.8%	10.9%	9.2%
Other services (except public administration)	2.1%	1.9%	3.0%
Public administration	18.7%	5.5%	5.0%
Unclassified	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%

Employment in Sunflower County is concentrated in just a few industries. Public administration accounts for the largest share of employment, at 18.7%, followed by transportation and warehousing at 16.8%. Both of these are well above the state and national averages.¹² Manufacturing and health care—two of the biggest industries statewide—are smaller in Sunflower County, at 4.2% and 10.5%. Information (0.4%), professional services (0.8%), and administrative support services (0.7%) are barely represented.

¹² Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023 annual averages, NAICS sectors. Private and governmental employment.

Industry	Sunflower County, MS	Mississippi	U.S.
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting	\$38,954 (85.5%)	\$47,666	\$45,558
Construction	\$54,635 (71.1%)	\$61,811	\$76,878
Manufacturing	\$52,860 (64.0%)	\$59,236	\$82,634
Retail trade	\$27,224 (66.2%)	\$32,468	\$41,127
Transportation, warehousing	\$42,200 (64.7%)	\$53,095	\$65,257
Information	\$53,782 (35.8%)	\$58,663	\$150,089
Finance, insurance	\$57,333 (42.3%)	\$71,944	\$135,611
Real estate, rental, leasing	\$50,103 (67.4%)	\$46,889	\$74,300
Professional, scientific, technical services	\$48,852 (40.4%)	\$71,210	\$120,984
Management of companies, employees	\$43,857 (29.8%)	\$105,359	\$146,963
Administrative, support, waste management	\$35,700 (63.5%)	\$36,556	\$56,260
Educational services	\$41,616 (67.1%)	\$49,088	\$62,052
Health care, social assistance	\$52,903 (82.1%)	\$53,064	\$64,432
Arts, entertainment, recreation	\$21,817 (45.1%)	\$25,285	\$48,333
Accommodation, food services	\$15,664 (54.4%)	\$21,892	\$28,817
Other services (except public administration)	\$37,488 (73.9%)	\$44,815	\$50,759
Public administration	\$44,609 (55.5%)	\$51,181	\$80,352

Workers in Sunflower County earn less than workers in most other places, across almost every industry. The biggest gaps are in higher-paying fields like management, finance, and professional services, where local wages are less than half the national average.¹³ Even in lower-paying sectors like food service, retail, and the arts, wages in Sunflower County are still lower than average. Only a few industries, like real estate and agriculture, come close to matching state wages.

Geography	Poverty Rate (%)	Child Poverty Rate (%)	Receiving Food Stamps (%)	Median Household Income (\$)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	29.9%	44.7%	33.6%	\$40,265
Mississippi	19.1%	26.4%	13.6%	\$54,915
South Region	13.6%	18.5%	12.1%	\$72,265
U.S.	12.4%	16.3%	11.8%	\$78,538

Table 8 shows how Sunflower County compares to the state, region, and nation on key economic measures. Almost 30% of people in the county live in poverty,¹⁴ and nearly 45% of children do¹⁵—both much higher than the rates for Mississippi and the U.S. About one in three households receive food stamps¹⁶, compared to about one in eight across the state and country. The median household income in the county is \$40,265, which is more than \$14,000 below the state median and nearly \$40,000 below the national median.¹⁷

¹³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023 annual averages, NAICS sectors with at least ten employees in county. Private and governmental employment.

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, table C17002.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, table B17020.

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, table B22003.

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates, table B19013.

Figure 7: US Child Poverty Rate, 2023

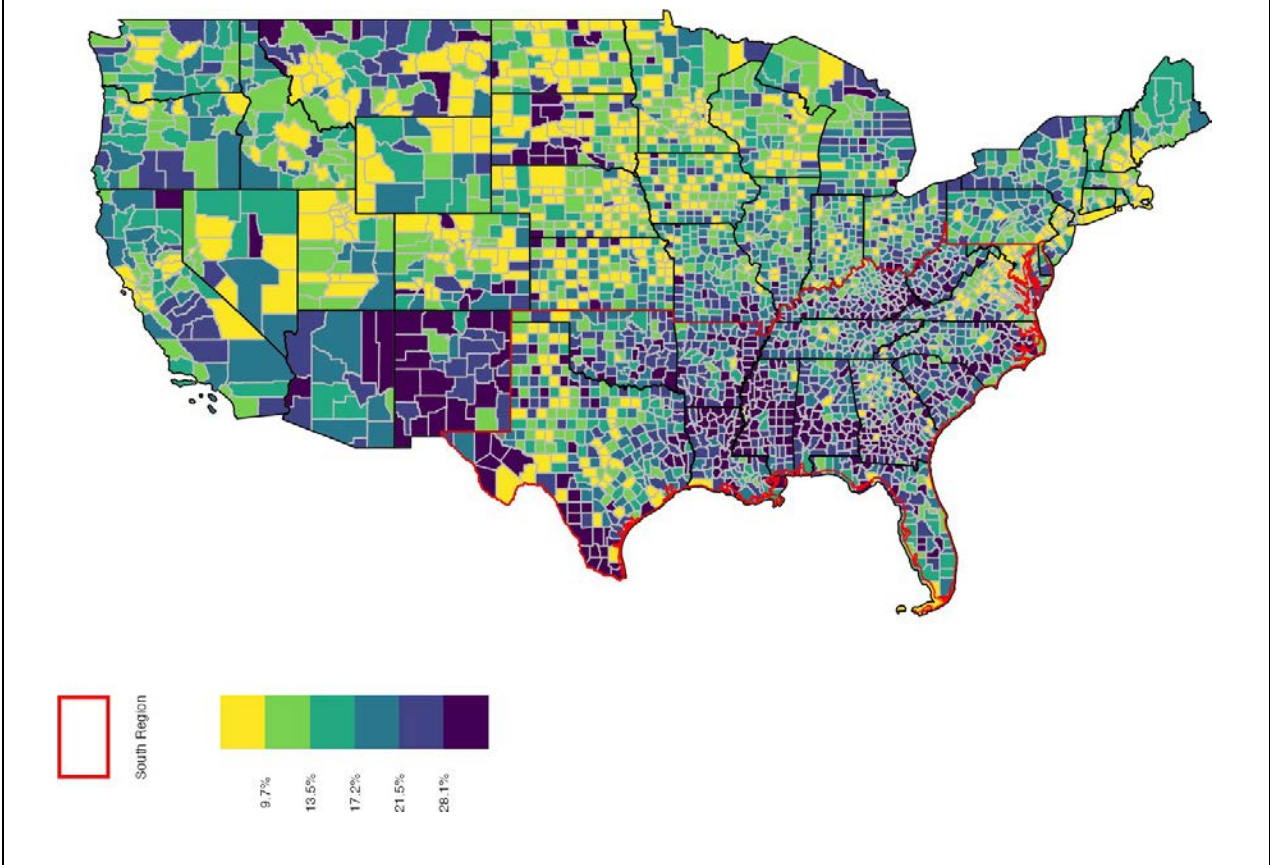


Figure 8: Poverty Rate in National Context, 1970-2023

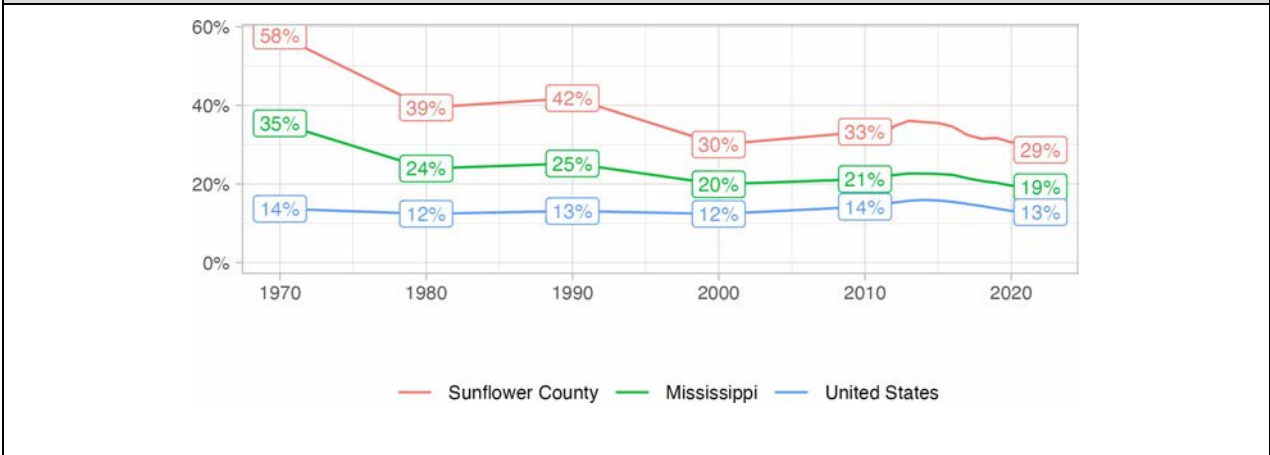


Figure 8 shows the poverty rate over time in Sunflower County, alongside state and national trends. In 1970, 58% of Sunflower County residents lived in poverty, compared to 35% in Mississippi and 14% across the United States. The county's rate dropped sharply by 1980, to 39%, and continued to fall (on average) in the decades that followed, settling at 29% in 2022. Over the same period, Mississippi's poverty rate fell from 35% to 19%, and the national rate dropped slightly, from 14% to 13%.¹⁸

¹⁸ Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Annie Chen, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rogers, and Megan

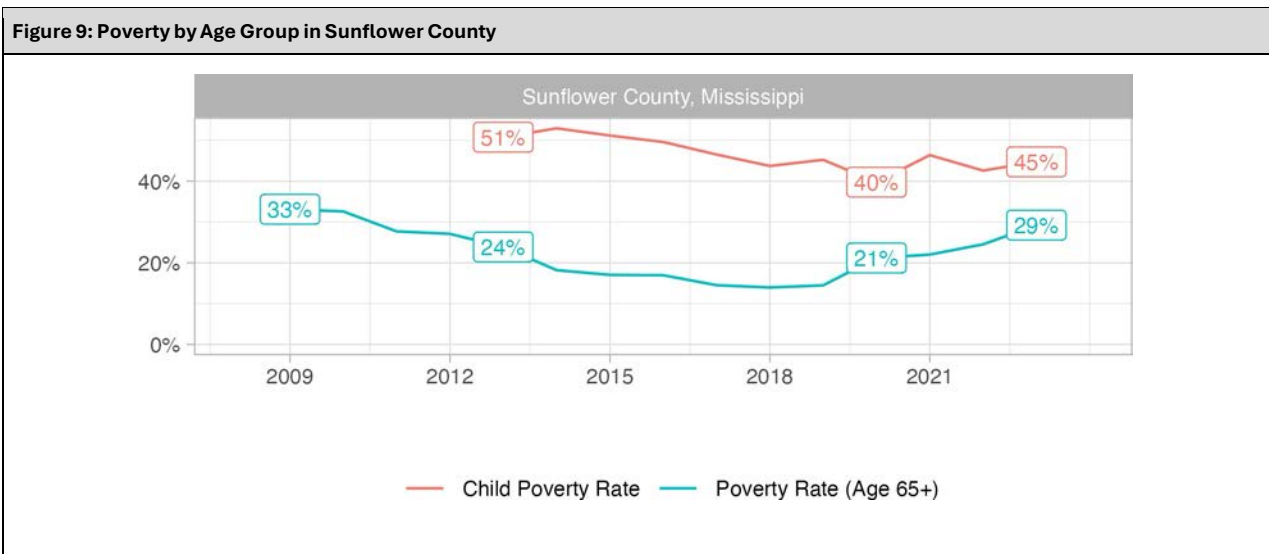


Figure 9 shows poverty trends among children and older adults in Sunflower County from 2009 to 2023. The child poverty rate has remained high throughout the period, ranging from 40% to 53%¹⁹, with the highest value recorded in 2014. The rate declined slightly over the following years, reaching a low of 40% in 2020, before rising again to 45% in 2023. In contrast, the poverty rate among residents age 65 and older fell steadily from 33% in 2009 to 14% in 2018. Since then, it has increased each year to 29% in 2023.²⁰

Table 9: Economic Status by Race/Ethnicity in Sunflower County (2023)

County	Race	Poverty Rate (%)	Receiving Food Stamps (%)	Median Household Income (\$)
Sunflower County, MS	Black Non-Hispanic	35.3%	43.0%	\$31,902
Sunflower County, MS	White Non-Hispanic	11.8%	2.7%	\$80,720

Note: Other smaller demographic subgroups have been excluded, as statistical samples were too small to be reliable.

Table 9 shows racial disparities in economic status in Sunflower County. As of 2023, the poverty rate for Black, non-Hispanic residents was 35.3%²¹, with 43% receiving food stamps.²² In contrast, only 11.8% of white, non-Hispanic residents were in poverty, and just 2.7% received food stamps. The median household income for white residents was \$80,720—more than double the median income for Black households, which was \$31,902.²³

Schouweiler. IPUMS USA: Version 15.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V15.0>. Fields AX6AA and CL6AA used. Data sources include decennial censuses (1970- 2000) and American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2010-2023).

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table B17020.

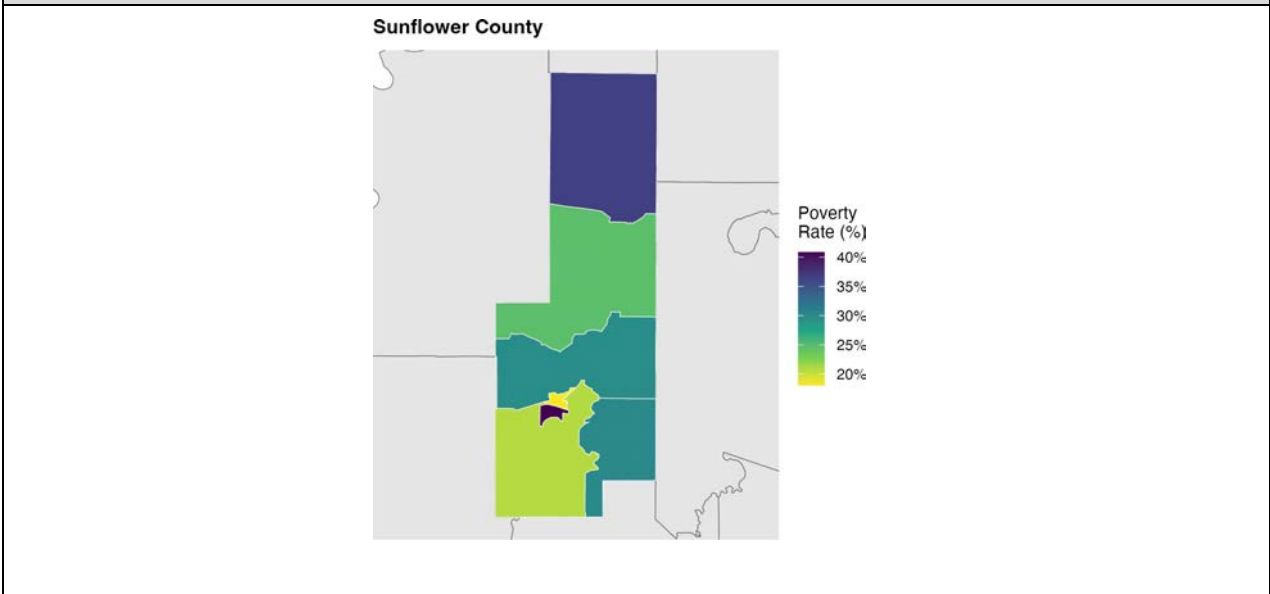
²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table B17001.

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate. Tables B17001B, B17001H.

²² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate. Tables B22005B, B22005H.

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate. Tables B19013B, B19013H.

Figure 10: Poverty Rate by Census Tract, Sunflower County



The map above shows poverty rates by census tract in Sunflower County. The highest rate appears in the tract that covers the south-central part of Indianola, where just over 40% of residents live below the poverty line. Right next to it, the northern half of Indianola has the lowest rate in the county, at around 18%. Most other tracts fall in the range of 25% to 35%, including the areas around Ruleville, Drew, and Moorhead. The northernmost tract, covering a large rural area, has a poverty rate of about 37%, while the southernmost tract, also largely rural, has a much lower rate at around 21%.²⁴

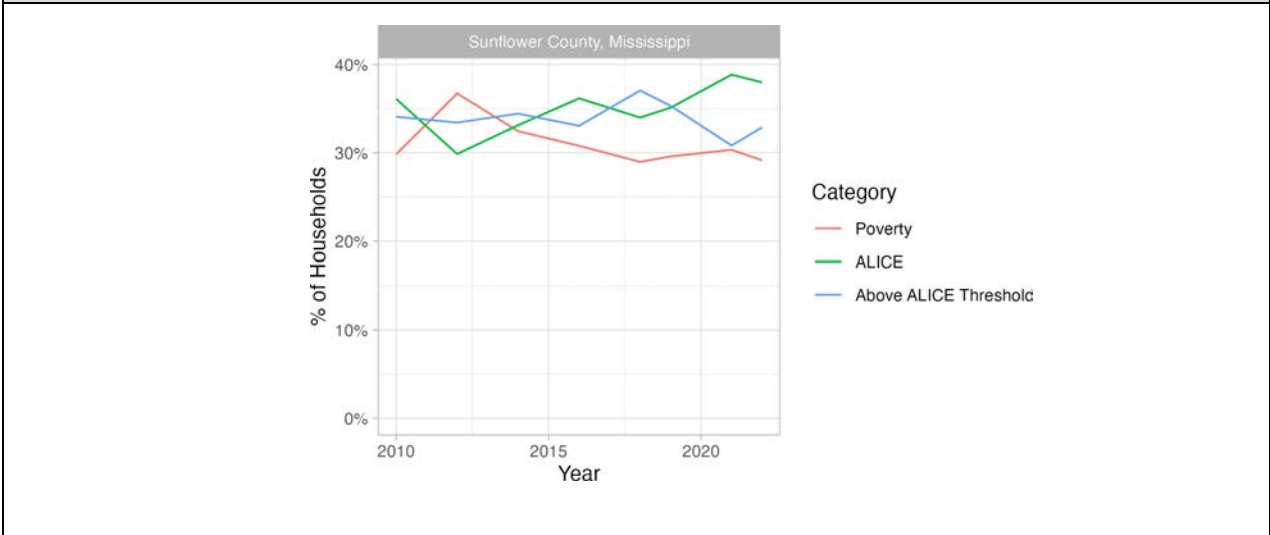
In 2023, many households in Sunflower County were struggling to afford basic needs. About 29% were living below the poverty line, and another 38% were earning more than that but still not enough to cover essentials like housing, food, and childcare (ALICE - Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).²⁵ This means only about one-third of households were financially stable. Compared to the state as a whole, where nearly half of households were above the ALICE threshold, Sunflower County had a much higher share of families facing financial hardship.

Geography	Household Below Poverty Level (%)	Above Poverty, ALICE (%)	Above ALICE (%)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	29.2%	38.0%	32.9%
Mississippi	19.3%	32.6%	48.1%

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate. Tables C17002.

²⁵ United for ALICE. (2022). Research Center: National Overview. United Way of Northern New Jersey. Retrieved from www.UnitedForALICE.org/national-overview

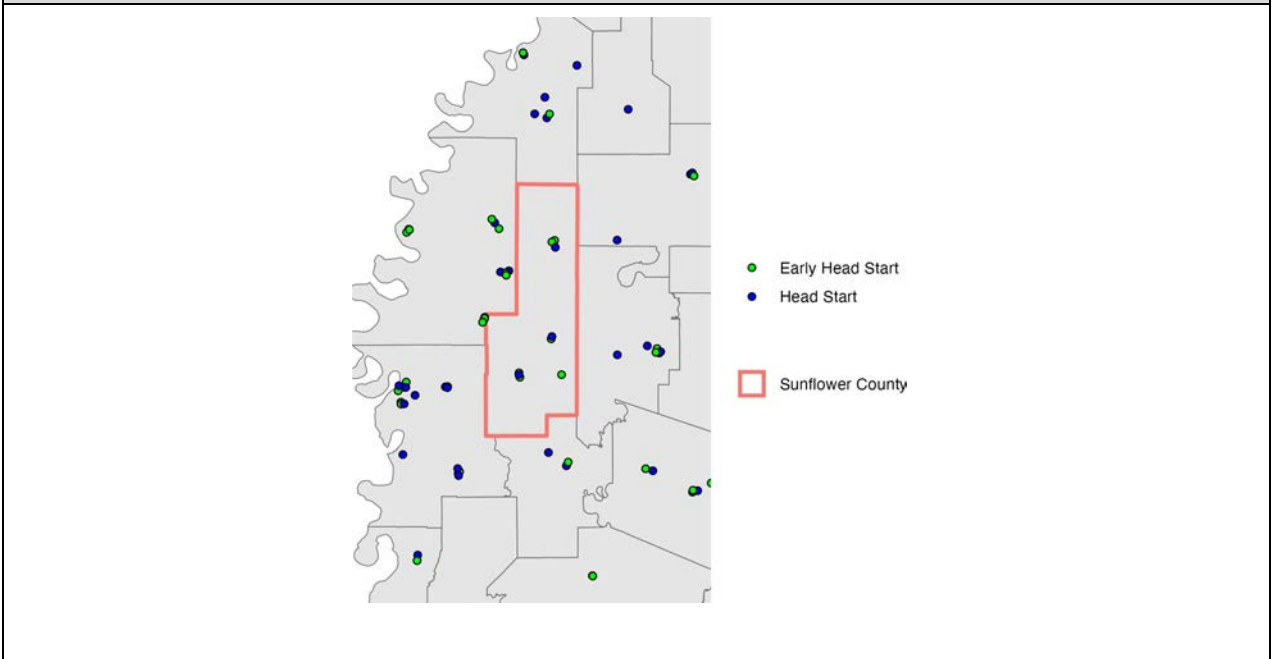
Figure 11: ALICE Threshold in Sunflower County



From 2010 to 2022, the share of households in poverty in Sunflower County stayed about the same, between 29% and 37%. The percentage of ALICE households—those earning above the poverty line but still struggling to afford basic needs—dropped in 2012 but went up again after that, reaching its highest point in 2021. The percentage of households earning enough to cover basic costs stayed around one-third for most years, with a dip in 2021. By 2022, about two-thirds of households were either in poverty or ALICE, showing that most families in the county continue to face financial challenges.

Child Care Availability

Figure 12: HS/EHS Centers Sunflower County



Head Start **Enrolled** Children and Families

Table 11: Head Start Enrollment in National Context

Geography	Total Enrollment	Below Poverty Level	Public Assistance	Foster Care	Homeless	Other	<130% Poverty Level
Sunflower County	487	19.1%	67.8%	2.5%	0.4%	5.3%	4.9%
Mississippi	18,460	55.4%	35.6%	0.7%	2.8%	3.8%	1.7%
South Region	306,356	36.8%	47.6%	2.0%	5.4%	4.5%	3.7%
United States	765,116	33.4%	46.4%	2.7%	7.3%	5.4%	4.8%

In Sunflower County, only 19.1% of children in Head Start come from families below the poverty line, which is much lower than the state rate of 55.4% and the national rate of 33.4%. Most children in the program—67.8%—come from families receiving public assistance, a much higher share than in the state or nation. Children are not often enrolled due to being homeless (0.4%) or in foster care (2.5%). Another 5.3% qualify under other categories, and 4.9% come from families earning less than 130% of the poverty line but not getting public assistance.²⁶

Table 12: Eligibility for Enrollment

	#04CH011162 (HS)	#04CH011162 (EHS)	#04HP000517 (EHS)
Total enrollment	237	107	143
Income at or below 100% of FPL	32	21	40
Public assistance	168	81	81
Foster care	9	0	3
Homeless	1	0	1
Other	13	2	11
Income between 100% and 130% of FPL	14	3	7

Table 12 shows how children are enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Sunflower County. Grant #04CH011162 is a DHA-operated Head Start and Early Head Start, and Grant #04P000517 is an Early Head Start childcare partnership administered by DHA. Altogether, 487 children are enrolled across the three programs. Most enrollment is tied to public assistance rather than income limits. Most children qualify because their families receive public assistance—this includes 168 children in the main Head Start program and 81 in each of the two Early Head Start programs. Fewer children qualify based on income alone, with 32 in Head Start and a total of 61 in Early Head Start coming from families living at or below the poverty line. Very few children are enrolled due to being in foster care or experiencing homelessness. A small number qualify for other reasons or come from families slightly above the poverty line.²⁷

²⁶ Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), Office of Head Start, 2024

²⁷ Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), Office of Head Start, 2024

Figure 13: Ages of Enrolled Children, Sunflower County

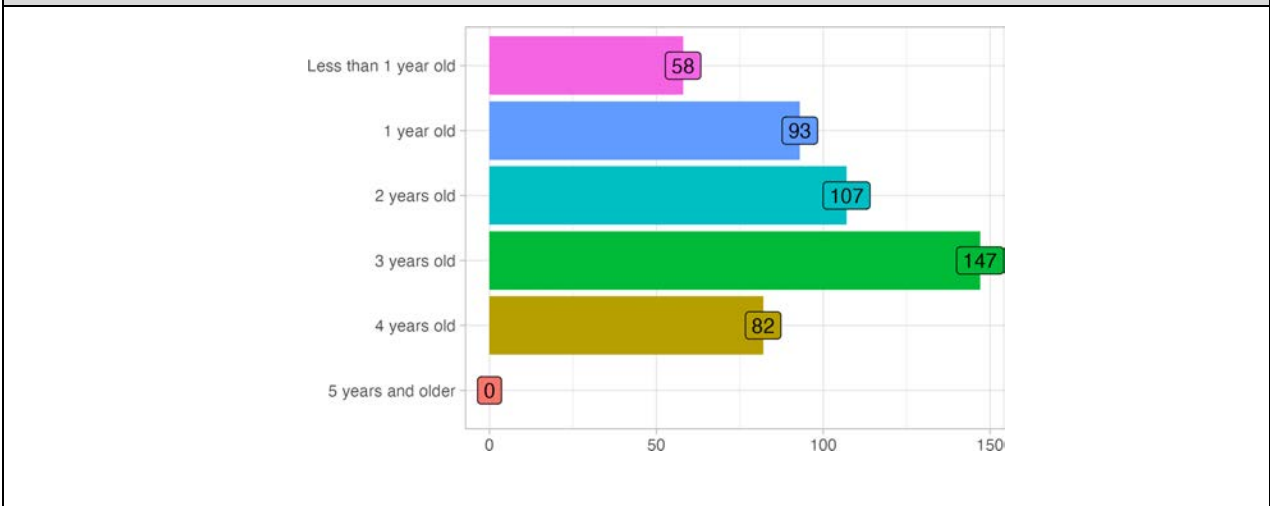


Figure 13 shows the ages of children enrolled in early childhood programs in Sunflower County. Enrollment rises steadily from 58 children under the age of one to 93 at age one and 107 at age two, peaking at 147 children at age three. The number then drops to 82 at age four, with no children enrolled at age five or older. These figures reflect standard age eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start programs.²⁸

Table 13: Demographics of Enrollment

Category		Number
Race		
	American Indian/Alaska Native	0
	Asian	0
	Black or African American	475
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0
	White	0
	Biracial or Multi-Racial	9
	Other	3
Ethnicity		
	Hispanic or Latino Origin	7
	Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino Origin	480
	Dual-Language Learners	3

Table 13 shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of children currently enrolled in Head Start programs in Sunflower County. Of the 487 enrolled children, 475 (97.5%) are identified as Black or African American. Only nine children are reported as biracial or multi-racial, and three fall into the “Other” category. No children are identified as White, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Just seven children are of Hispanic or Latino origin, while the remaining 480 are non-Hispanic or non-Latino. Only three children are classified as dual-language learners.²⁹

²⁸ Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), Office of Head Start, 2024

²⁹ Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), Office of Head Start, 2024

Category	Number
Health Impairment	0
Emotional Disturbance	0
Speech Impairment	7
Intellectual Disabilities	0
Hearing Impairment	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0
Visual Impairment	0
Specific Learning Disabilities	0
Autism	0
Traumatic Brain Injury	0
Non-Categorical/Developmental Delay	8
Multiple Disabilities	0
Deaf-blind	0

The most common needs for disability services among Head Start enrollees nationally are for speech impairment and non-categorical developmental delays. This pattern holds true for Sunflower County Head Starts as well.³⁰ Training for disability support is of particular interest to DHA Head Start staff - when surveyed, 39% of staff selected this as one of their top areas for future training.³¹

Geography	# Enrollment	# Chronically Absent	% Chronically Absent
Sunflower County	487	320	66%
Mississippi	17,947	10,845	60%
South Region	293,737	169,644	58%
United States	688,475	419,255	61%

Table 15 shows chronic absenteeism rates for Head Start programs in Sunflower County, Mississippi, the South Region, and the United States. In Sunflower County, 66% of enrolled children were chronically absent, which is higher than the state rate of 60%, the regional rate of 58%, and the national rate of 61%. Although chronic absenteeism is common across all levels, the rate in Sunflower County is the highest. The data do not explain why absenteeism is more common in the county, but the gap suggests local families may face greater challenges getting children to school regularly.³²

³⁰ Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), Office of Head Start, 2024

³¹ Delta Health Alliance, 2024 Head Start Teacher Survey

³² Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), Office of Head Start, 2024

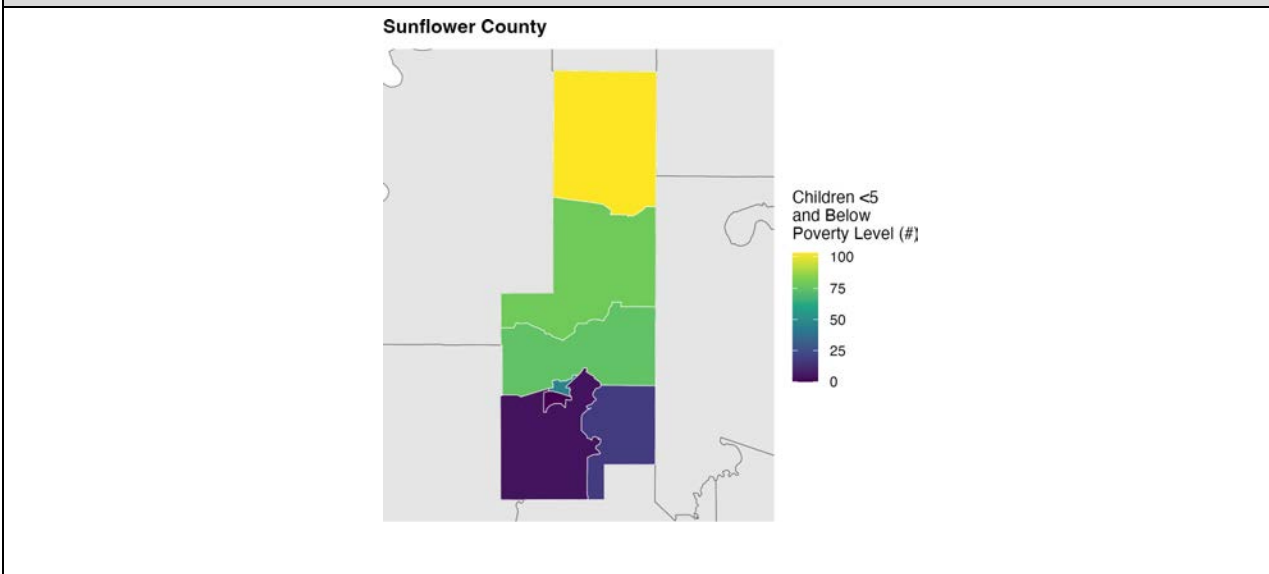
Head Start Eligible Children and Families

Table 16: Head Start Eligible Children

Geography	Recent Mothers (past 12 mos.) Receiving Public Assistance (%)	Poverty Rate, Children <5 (%)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	10.1%	43.9%
Mississippi	3.7%	28.7%
South Region	3.1%	20.2%
United States	3.9%	17.6%

Like other Delta communities, a large percentage of children under 5 in Sunflower County live under the poverty line (47.1%). More than double the percentage of newer mothers (within the last 12 months) receive public assistance in Sunflower County (10.1%) compared to the rest of the state.³³ The rate of children under 5 living under the poverty line is also more than double the regional and national rates (20.2% and 17.6%). Because of this, many of these families face issues with food insecurity, lack of stable housing, and difficulty accessing healthcare, among other things. Through Head Start, these families can access free childcare and early childhood education, which would otherwise be an added financial and time burden for them.

Figure 14: Children Under 5 Years Old and Below Poverty Level, Sunflower County



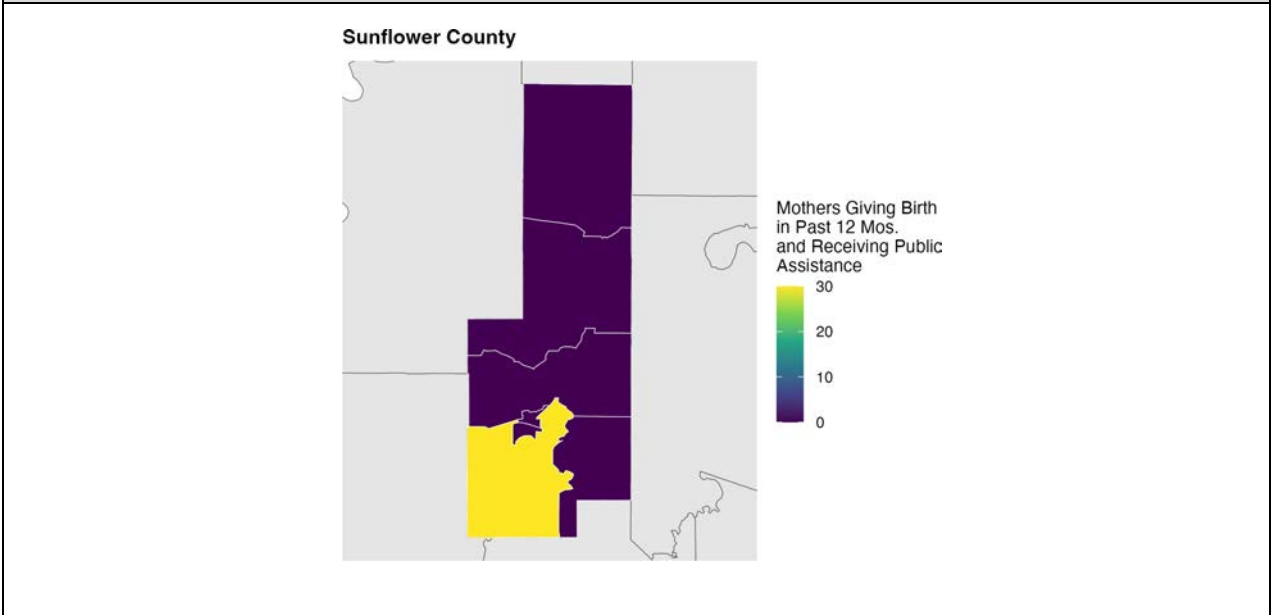
While Figure 10 demonstrates where poverty levels are concentrated throughout Sunflower County, Figure 14 identifies where and how many children under 5 live under poverty within the county. The north of Sunflower County, which incorporates Drew, MS, and the area of Sunflower, the town in the middle-lower census-designated areas of the county, have a higher concentration of children under 5 living below the poverty level, while the rest of the county has varied rates of this particular population. Drew, MS and its surrounding areas have a notable Black population that is five times the rate of any other race or ethnicity.³⁴ The Black population of Sunflower is also >80%—both higher rates than the county as a whole.³⁵ Notably, the area of Indianola, the county seat of the county, reports having no children under 5 living below the poverty level.

³³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate. Tables B13015

³⁴ Data USA. (2023a). Drew, MS. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/drew-ms>

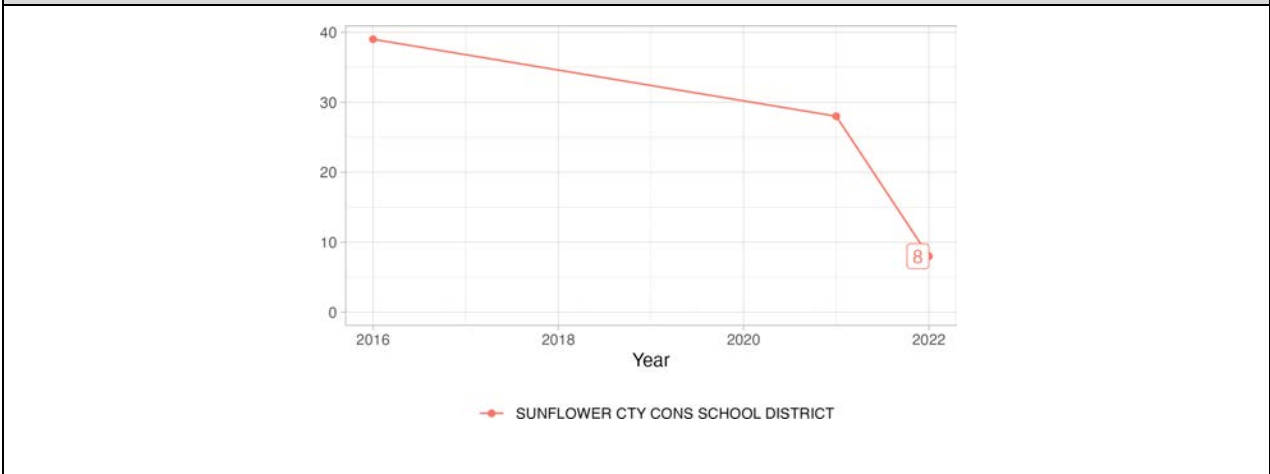
³⁵ Jones, J. A. (2019). *The browning of the New South* (1st ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Figure 15: Mothers Who Gave Birth in Past 12 Months and Received Public Assistance, Sunflower County



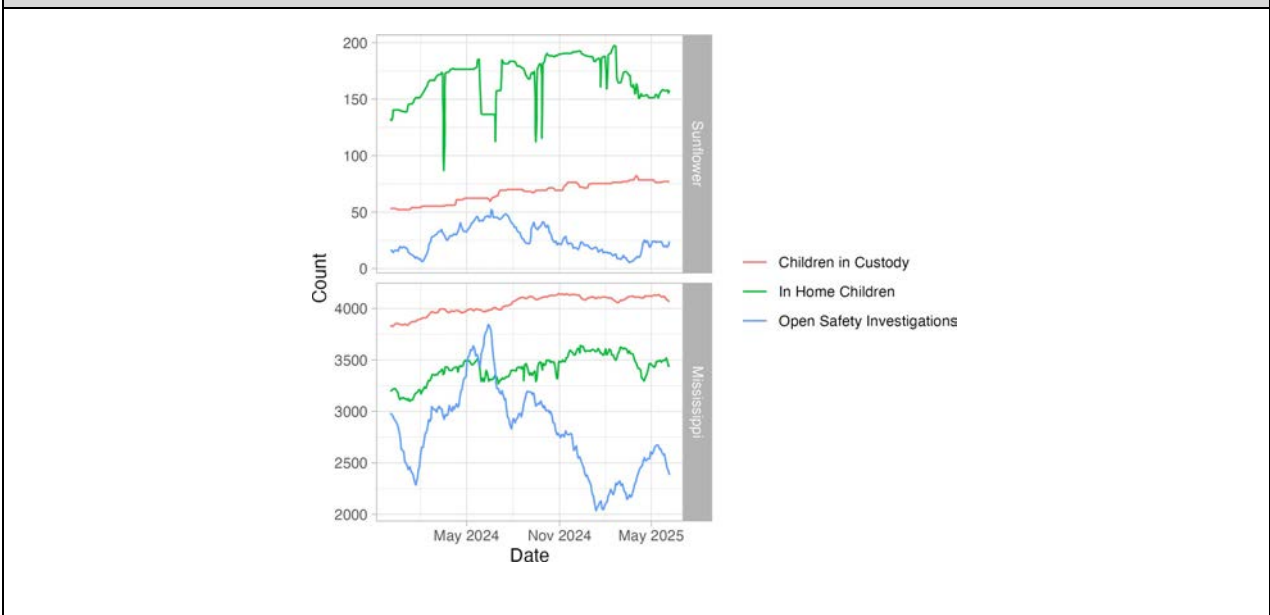
Notably, only in the census-designated areas south of Indianola in Sunflower County are there mothers (N >20) who have given birth in the past 12 months and who are receiving public assistance. No other mothers in Sunflower County were identified as receiving public assistance and having given birth within the past 12 months.

Figure 16: Number of Homeless Students, Sunflower County



The numbers from McKinney-Vento grant reporting appear to show very low rates of student homelessness in Sunflower County, but there is very high likelihood of under-identification. Mississippi on the whole has an issue with under reporting homeless students, with 47 districts identified by SchoolHouse Connection as “Likely Under-Identifying Homeless Students” (Sunflower among them).³⁶

Figure 17: Number of Children in Foster Care, Sunflower County



The number of children in state custody in Sunflower County went up from 53 in December 2023 to 77 in June 2025. In-home cases also increased, starting at 138 and reaching a high of 191 in November 2024, then dropping slightly to 157 by June 2025. Open safety investigations changed more month to month, with a low of 8 in March 2025 and a high of 46 in June 2024. While Sunflower makes up a small part of the state total, its numbers followed the same overall pattern as the rest of Mississippi. The steady rise in all three areas—custody, in-home cases, and investigations—shows that the local child welfare system has faced growing demand over the last two years.³⁷

³⁶ Data obtained from McKinney-Vento Act reporting at EdDataExpress.ed.gov

³⁷ Daily counts are available from MDCP at <https://gis.mdcp.ms.gov/data/CountyCountPublic.csv>. Historical data is interpolated from MDCP charts using automeris.io.

Geography	Labor Force Participation	Unemployment Rate (%)	Unemployment Rate, < HS degree (%)	Workers Employed Full-Time, Year-Round (%)	Working Families Receiving Food Stamps (%)
Sunflower County, MS	48.3%	10.9%	19.3%	38.7%	25.6%
Mississippi	57.2%	6.0%	11.1%	40.6%	12.7%
South Region	62.3%	5.0%	7.1%	40.5%	12.2%
United States	63.5%	5.2%	7.6%	39.7%	11.4%

Participation in the labor force, which is the percentage of working-age adults who are either employed or actively looking for work, is moderately lower in Sunflower County (48.3%) than in Mississippi (57.2%) and in the nation overall (63.5%).³⁸ The unemployment rate (10.9%) in Sunflower County is also double the national rate (5.2%). This unemployment trend is especially pronounced among those without a high school diploma (19.3%). Further, the unemployment rate of Black, non-Hispanic residents (13.1%) is double that of White, non-Hispanic residents (7.5%) (see Table 13). Notably, the labor force participation rate is higher in 2023 than in 2019 projections (46.1%). The unemployment rate, thus, is also declining, whereas in 2019 the rate (16.0%) was almost quadrupled the national rate at the time (4.7%). This could indicate positive changes occurring in the labor force and opportunities in Sunflower County. However, interestingly, the rate of workers employed full-time, year-round has declined by almost half from 65.7% in 2019 to 38.7% in 2023. This drop follows state and national trends, indicating a general instability around and lack of year-round, full-time work opportunities followed by the need for residents to take on multiple, exploitative part-time gigs to make ends meet.^{39 40}

County	Race	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	Unemployment Rate (%)
Sunflower County, MS	Black, Non-Hispanic	46.1%	13.1%
Sunflower County, MS	White, Non-Hispanic	52.1%	7.5%

County	Sex	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	Unemployment Rate (%)
Sunflower County, MS	Male	48.0%	9.4%
Sunflower County, MS	Female	69.7%	12.2%
Sunflower County, MS	Female w/ child < 6 years	82.2%	26.7%

In Sunflower County, only 48% of all men participate in the labor force, while 9.4% of all men are unemployed in the county.⁴¹ On the other hand, 69.7% of women in the county participate in the labor force, but with an unemployment rate of 12.2%. While unemployment rates for both groups have gone down since the 2021 analysis (for men, a staggering decline from 17.8%), the low labor-force participation numbers among males compared to females in the same county could be cause for further investigation.

³⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate, table S2301.

³⁹ Data USA. (2023a). Drew, MS. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/drew-ms>

⁴⁰ Jones, J. A. (2019). *The browning of the New South* (1st ed.). University of Chicago Press.

⁴¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimate, table S2301. Outcomes by sex are calculated on ages 20-64, while outcomes overall and by race are calculated on ages 16+.

Education Needs of Eligible Families

Table 20: Number of Students in School District by Race

Sunflower County		
Race	# of Students	% of Students
Black	2,739	95.7%
Hispanic	56	2.0%
White	43	1.5%
Two or more races	25	0.9%

Sunflower County’s school district is almost entirely comprised of Black students (95.7%), a ~23% increase compared to the proportion of Black residents in the county as a whole (see Table 2).⁴²

The following table provides aggregated data for Sunflower County school-level demographics.⁴³ Across public schools in Leflore County, half the student population is female and more than 90% identify as Black. Racial identifiability within the school district is even more extreme than in the county, with several schools reaching rates of 95% Black, non-Hispanic students. Specifically, both schools that offer Pre-K classes have high levels of disproportionate Black-White differences. Notably, schools with no white students (AW James Elementary and Moorhead Central School) have higher rates of Hispanic students (3.4% and 4.1%, respectively) than the rest of the county (2.6%). Importantly, in Drew, MS, where AW James Elementary School is located, they are seeing an increase in the Hispanic population (8.28%), which is more than double the rate from the previous year⁴⁴. This indicates a need for further attention from Head Start on a growing Hispanic and immigrant population in the “New Latino South”^{45 46}.

Table 21: Sunflower County School-Level Demographics

Geography	# Teachers	# Students	% Male	% Female	% White	% Black	% Hispanic
Rosser Early Learning Center (Pre-K to KG)	6	91	48.4%	51.6%	1.1%	97.8%	1.1%
Lockard Elementary (KG to 3)	27	382	50.3%	49.7%	2.9%	91.6%	1.8%
A W James Elementary (Pre-K to 5)	18	203	49.8%	50.2%	0.0%	94.1%	3.4%
Ruleville Central Elementary (KG to 5)	19	270	44.8%	55.2%	1.5%	96.3%	0.4%
Carver Elementary (4 to 6)	23	257	52.5%	47.5%	1.9%	96.1%	1.9%
Ruleville Middle (6 to 8)	11	143	45.5%	54.5%	3.5%	95.8%	0.0%
Drew Hunter Middle (6 to 8)	7	79	43.0%	57.0%	2.5%	92.4%	5.1%
Moorhead Central (KG to 8)	22	220	51.8%	48.2%	0.0%	95.9%	4.1%
Robert L Merritt Junior High School (7 to 9)	28	376	49.5%	50.5%	2.1%	96.0%	1.9%
Thomas E. Edwards Sr. High School (9 to 12)	30	337	52.2%	47.8%	1.5%	96.1%	2.4%
Gentry High School (10 to 12)	38	505	51.9%	48.1%	40.0%	98.2%	1.4%

⁴² National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2023.

⁴³ National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2023.

⁴⁴ Data USA. (2023a). Drew, MS. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/drew-ms>

⁴⁵ Jones, J. A. (2019). *The browning of the New South* (1st ed.). University of Chicago Press.

⁴⁶ Kochhar, R., Suro, R., & Tafoya, S. (2005, July 26). *The new Latino South: The context and consequences of rapid population growth*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2005/07/26/the-new-latino-south/>

Geography	Student-Teacher Ratio
Sunflower Co Cons School District	11.8
Mississippi	13.0
South Region	15.0
United States	15.1

The average teacher to student ratio in the Sunflower City Consolidated School District is 11.8, which is below the national rate of 15.1 and the state average of 13.1.⁴⁷

Geography	% < High School	% Some College Credit (or more)	% Bachelor's Degree (or more)
Sunflower County, MS	24.2%	44.9%	16.9%
Mississippi	13.4%	56.7%	24.2%
South Region	11.4%	61.4%	33.0%
United States	10.6%	63.2%	35.0%

Educational attainment in Sunflower County for all adults 25 and older lags behind state, regional, and national averages, with fewer county residents receiving high school diplomas, some college credit, or Bachelor's degrees. For example, just over 10% of people aged 25+ lack a high school diploma in the United States, but that average jumps to 24.2% in Sunflower County, which is a higher discrepancy than in counties like Leflore and Warren, MS. Further, 63.2% of adults in the United States have some college credit, but that number drops to 44.9% in Sunflower County. Lastly, over a third of adults in the United States have obtained a Bachelor's degree but only 16.9% have done so in Sunflower County.⁴⁸ Notably, these rates have increased slightly since the last analysis done in 2021.

Educational Attainment Category	Sunflower County, Mississippi
% with at least HS degree (Black, non-Hispanic)	74.2%
% with at least HS degree (White, non-Hispanic)	83.6%
% with at least 4-year degree (Black, non-Hispanic)	14.9%
% with at least 4-year degree (White, non-Hispanic)	23.5%
% with at least HS degree (Male)	71.9%
% with at least HS degree (Female)	80.2%
% with at least 4-year degree (Male)	10.0%
% with at least 4-year degree (Female)	24.9%

When disaggregating educational attainment by racial groups, there are some notable disparities. In Sunflower County, almost ten percentage points separate Black and White residents who have at least a high school diploma. The same is true for when it comes to residents who have at least a 4-year degree, indicating disproportional access to higher education and later impacting labor participation and unemployment rates amongst both groups (see Table 12). Regardless of race, though, the percentage of residents who have at least a high school diploma vs. those with at least a 4-year degree drops significantly. For example, while 74.2% of Black residents acquire a high school degree, only 14.9% of Black residents acquire a 4-year degree, and while 83.6% of white residents acquire a high school degree, only 23.5% of white residents acquire a 4-year degree.⁴⁹ These percentages have increased slightly since the 2021 analysis.

⁴⁷ National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2023. Enrollment divided by full-time-equivalent number of teachers.

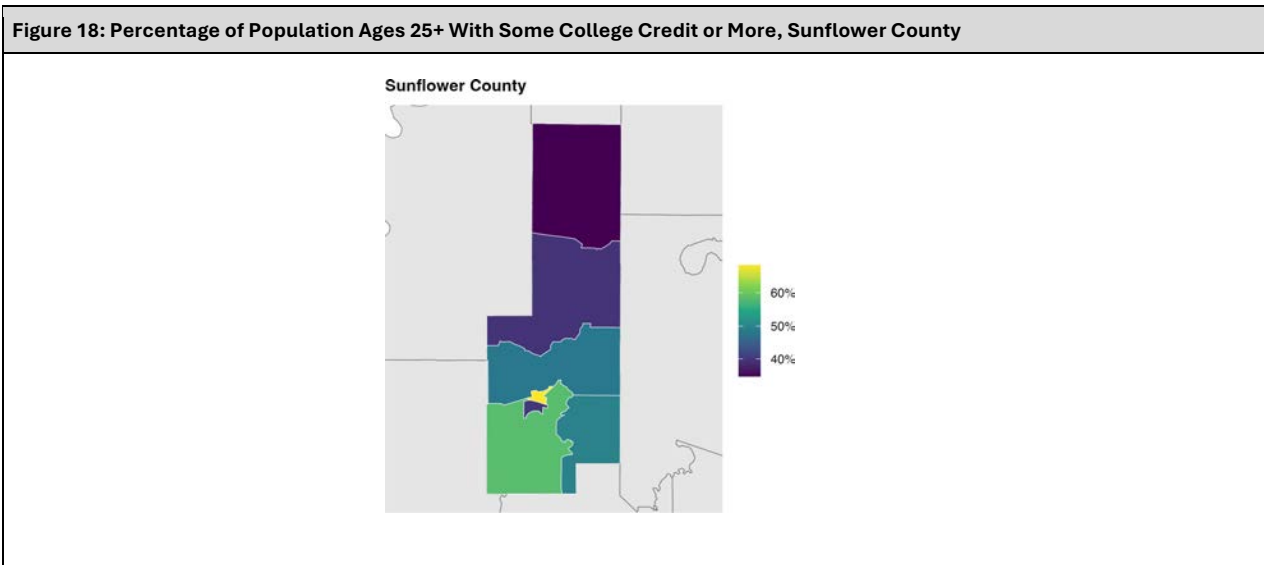
⁴⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimate, 2023. Table S1501.

⁴⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimate, 2023. Table S1501.

Geography	Median Income, < High School	Median Income, High School	Median Income, Some College or Associate's	Median Income, Bachelor's	Median Income, Graduate or Professional
Sunflower County, Mississippi	\$24,738	\$24,600	\$35,123	\$47,049	\$51,664
Mississippi	\$26,749	\$34,315	\$38,500	\$52,657	\$64,563
South Region	\$30,079	\$36,858	\$43,573	\$63,903	\$82,781
United States	\$31,492	\$38,789	\$45,840	\$67,849	\$88,719

Median Income, < High School	78.6%
Median Income, High School	63.4%
Median Income, Some College or Associate's	76.6%
Median Income, Bachelor's	69.3%
Median Income, Graduate or Professional	58.2%

The median income for adults across all education levels in Sunflower County were noticeably lower than state, regional, and national levels. Those who do not have a high school diploma make around \$6-7,000 less than the national average. This gap widens as educational attainment increases. For example, those who have a high school diploma make around \$15,000 less than the national average. This discrepancy fluctuates to around \$11,000 less for those with some college credit; \$21,000 less for those with a Bachelor's degree; and \$37,000 less for those with a graduate or professional degree. In other words, the median income of those with a high school diploma in Sunflower County, is only 63.4% of the median income for those with the same education at the national level (Table 21). The most notable discrepancy between Sunflower and national levels is amongst those with a graduate degree, where the median income level is only 58% of the national rate.⁵⁰



In general, Sunflower County has moderate to low rates of adults 25+ with some college credit, with locations north of Indianola having the lowest rates at <50%. Indianola, the county seat of Sunflower County, has the highest concentration of adults ages 25+ who have some college credit at 70%.⁵¹

⁵⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimate, 2023. Table S1501.

⁵¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimate, 2023. Table B15003.

Health and Social Service Needs of Eligible Families

The following table explores different pregnancy and negative birth statistics at the county and state levels. Rates of these occurrences per 1,000 individuals were generally higher at the county level. For example, teenage pregnancy rates in both Sunflower County occur at a rate of 6-7 more people per 1,000 than at the state level. Unintended death rates were significantly higher in Sunflower compared to the state (124.9 per 1,000 vs. 80.6). Low and premature birth rates were higher at the county level compared to the state level (20.5 vs. 14.8). Overall, Sunflower County had poor outcomes regarding pregnancy and birth statistics when compared to state levels.⁵²

	Sunflower County, Mississippi		Mississippi	
	#	Rate (per 1,000)	#	Rate (per 1,000)
Teenage Pregnancy	37	22.2	3,098	15.7
Unintended Injury Death	31	124.9	2,371	80.6
Suicide Death	3	12.1	419	14.3
Low Birth Weight	49	18.6	4,409	12.7
Very Low Birth Weight	11	4.2	749	2.2
Premature Birth	54	20.5	5,127	14.8
Inadequate Prenatal Care	18	6.8	2,628	7.6
Smoking During Pregnancy	5	1.9	1,773	5.1

Geography	Life Expectancy (years)	Obesity (%)	Diabetes (%)	Low Birthweight (%)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	70.95	47.5%	17.4%	15.0%
Mississippi	74.69	40.1%	13.8%	12.2%
United States	79.09	33.5%	10.0%	8.4%

Table 28 shows that people in Sunflower County have worse health outcomes than in Mississippi overall and the rest of the country. Life expectancy in the county is about 71 years,⁵³ which is lower than both the state and national averages. Nearly half of adults in the county are obese,⁵⁴ and over 17% have diabetes—both higher than the state and U.S. rates. The share of babies born with low birthweight is also higher in Sunflower County, at 15%, compared to 12% in Mississippi and 8% across the country.⁵⁵

⁵² Mississippi Department of Health, MSTAHRS, birth data, 2022. <https://mstahrs.msdh.ms.gov/>

⁵³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. U.S. Life Expectancy at Birth by State and Census Tract, 2010-2015.

⁵⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2021. Obtained from: University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2024.

⁵⁵ National Center for Health Statistics, Natality Files; Census Population Estimates Program, 2016-2022. Obtained from: University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2024.

Figure 19: Life Expectancy in United States, 2010-2015

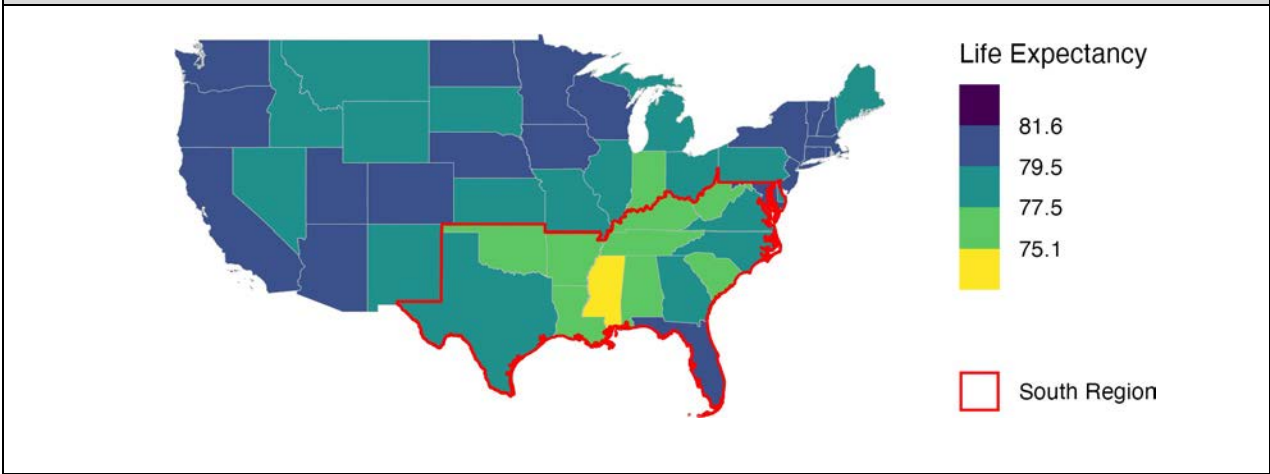
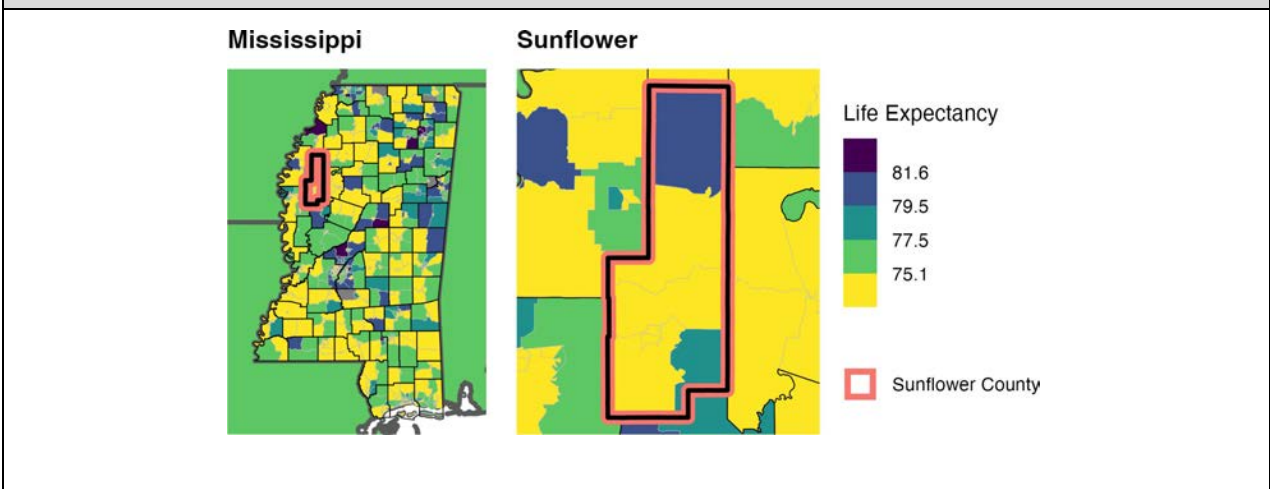
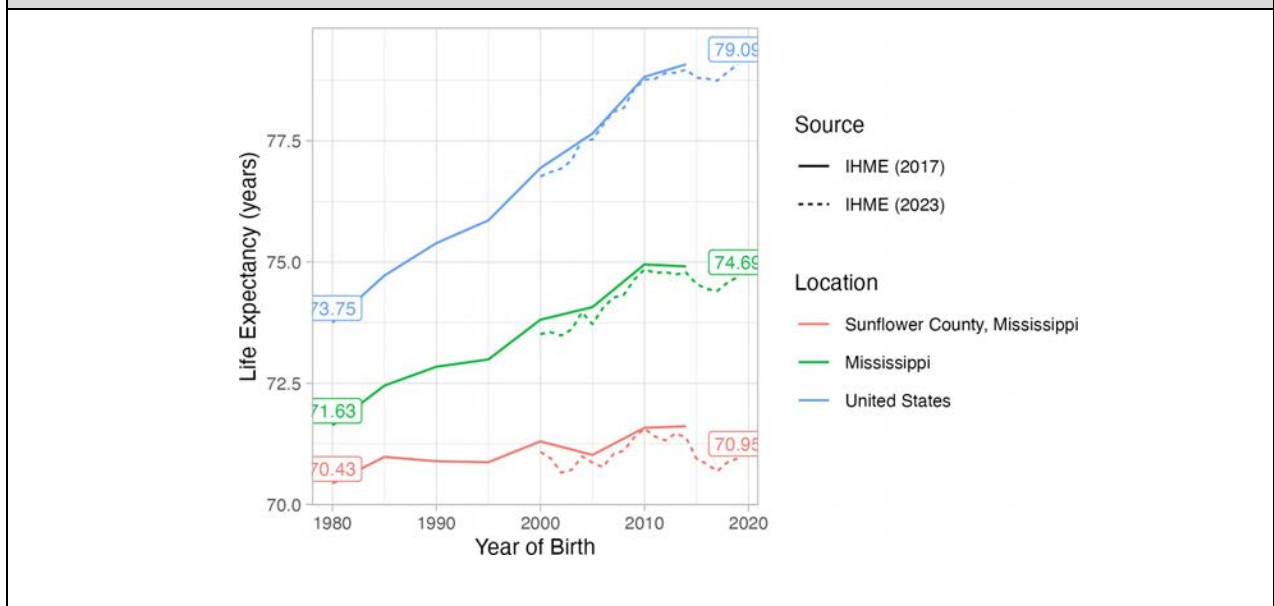


Figure 20: Life Expectancy by Census Tract, 2010-2015



Most of Sunflower County falls into the lowest life expectancy category, below 75.1 years. The central parts of the county are almost entirely yellow, with a few green or teal areas scattered at the edges. The areas with lower life expectancy overlap with many of the more densely populated places, including parts of Indianola and Ruleville.

Figure 20: Life Expectancy at Birth in National Context, 1980-2019



The life expectancy at birth between 1980 and 2019, in the United States and the state of Mississippi showed persistent disparities rooted in socioeconomic and health related challenges. Nationally, life expectancy rose from approximately 73.7 years in 1980 to 79.9 years in 2019, driven by advancements in medical care, public health improvements, and reductions in smoking.⁵⁶ However, in recent years, national gains have slowed, with some declines due to rising deaths from drug overdoses, suicide, and chronic diseases. Mississippi, consistently among the states with the lowest life expectancy, improved from around

71.63 years in 1980 to 74.69 years by 2015, yet remained several years behind the national average. These trends were shaped by higher poverty rates, limited healthcare access, and a greater burden of chronic illness. Within Mississippi, Sunflower County experienced even more significant health disparities. In 1980, life expectancy was about 70.43 years, and by 2014, it had only modestly improved, with women living on average 74.8 years and men 68.7 years. The county's low life expectancy reflects long standing challenges including socioeconomic disadvantages, limited medical infrastructure, and elevated mortality from preventable and chronic causes.

⁵⁶ Data pooled from: (1) Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. 2023. United States Mortality Rates by Causes of Death and Life Expectancy by County, Race, and Ethnicity, 2000-2019. (2) Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. 2017. United States Life Expectancy and Age-Specific Mortality Risk by County, 1980-2014. We report both due to technical differences in how data is calculated each year.

Housing

Table 29: Housing in National Context

Geography	Median Rent (\$)	Apartments (%)	Housing Stock Built Since 2000 (%)	Homes with Utility Heating (Gas or Electric)	Households with Wired Internet (%)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	\$670	18.7%	10.8%	90.7%	34.4%
Mississippi	\$923	14.10%	28.70%	88.00%	58.30%
South Region	\$1,274	21.90%	31.40%	93.10%	72.60%
United States	\$1,348	26.00%	24.00%	87.60%	74.80%

Sunflower County has a significantly lower median rent at \$670 compared to Mississippi (\$923), the South (\$1,274), and the United States (\$1,348).⁵⁷ A larger percentage of the housing stock in Sunflower County is apartments (18.7%) than in Mississippi (14.1%), though it's still lower than the South (21.9%) and the US (26.0%).⁵⁸ Notably, Sunflower County has a much smaller proportion of newer housing, with only 10.8% of the stock built since 2000, lagging behind Mississippi (28.7%), the South (31.4%), and the nation (24.0%). While a high percentage of homes in Sunflower County have utility heating (90.7%), the percentage of households with wired internet access (34.4%) is considerably lower than Mississippi (58.3%), the South (72.6%), and the United States (74.8%).⁵⁹

Table 30: Homeownership in National Context

Geography	Median Mortgaged Home Value (\$)	Owner-occupied (%)	Mortgaged Home Value < 2x Yearly Household Income (%)	Owned Outright Worth < \$100k (%)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	\$121,300	56.3%	55.7%	56.9%
Mississippi	\$194,700	69.50%	44.50%	43.10%
South Region	\$296,200	66.30%	30.60%	24.80%
United States	\$337,900	65.00%	28.70%	20.30%

The median value of mortgaged homes in Sunflower County is notably lower at \$121,300 compared to Mississippi (\$194,700), the South (\$296,200), and the US (\$337,900).⁶⁰ Interestingly, the rate of owner-occupied housing in Sunflower County (56.3%) is lower than all the comparison groups: Mississippi (69.5%), the South (66.3%), and the United States (65.0%). A significant portion of mortgaged homes in Sunflower County (55.7%) have a value less than two times the yearly household income, a much higher percentage than Mississippi (44.5%), the South (30.6%), and the nation (28.7%).⁶¹ Furthermore, a substantial 56.9% of owned homes in Sunflower County are valued at less than \$100,000, considerably higher than Mississippi (43.1%), the South (24.8%), and the United States (20.3%).⁶²

⁵⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table B25064.

⁵⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table S2504.

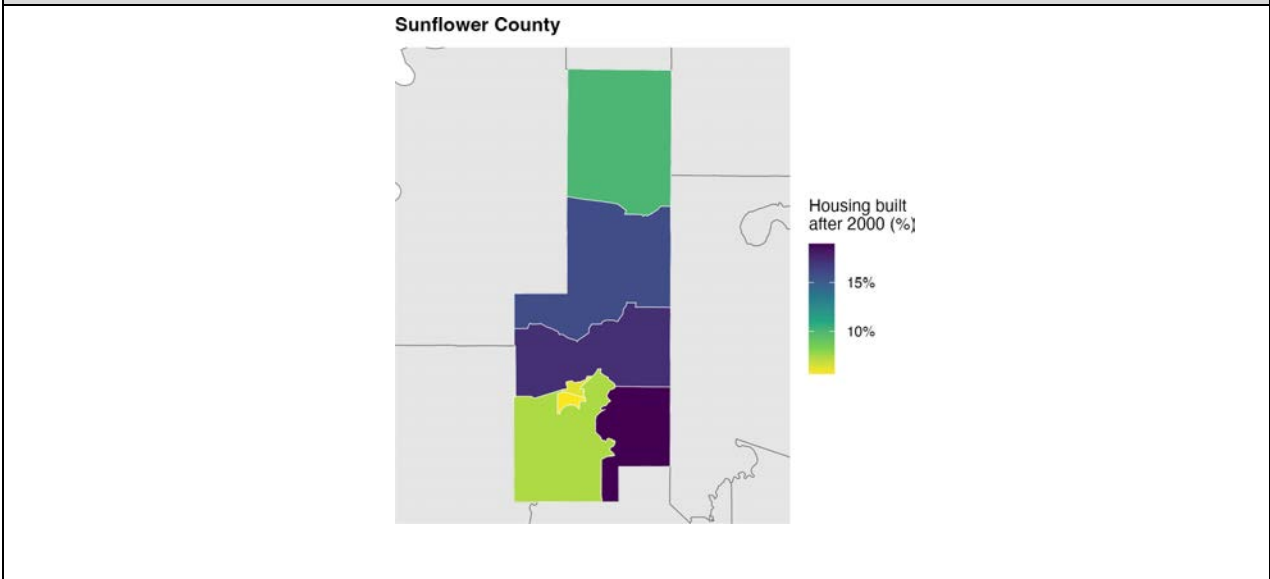
⁵⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table S2801.

⁶⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table S2506.

⁶¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table S2506.

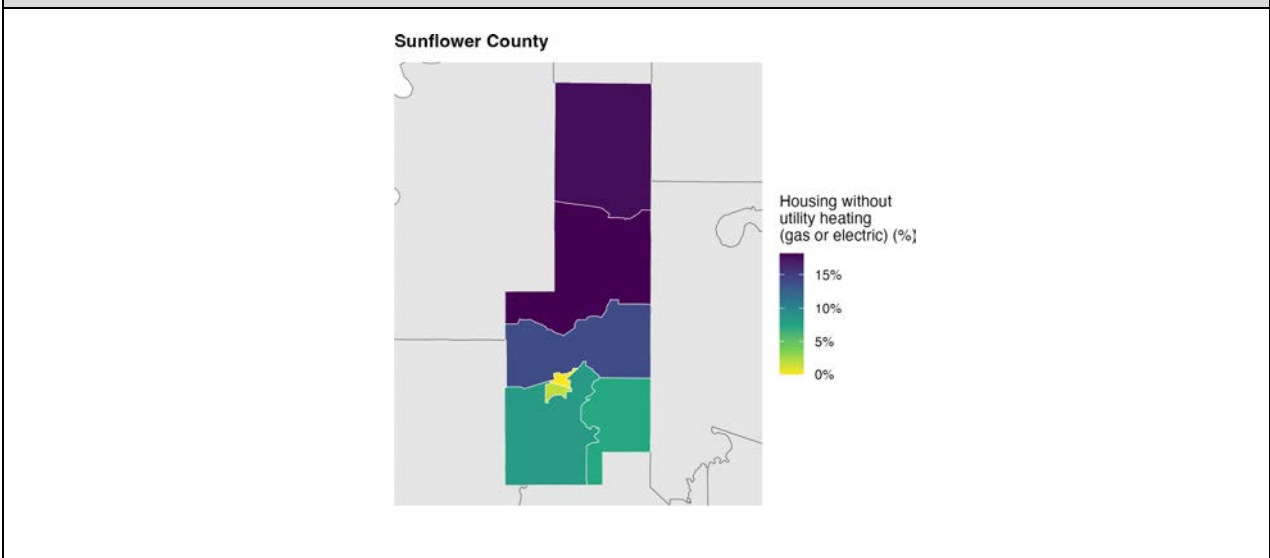
⁶² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table S2507.

Figure 22: Percentage of Housing Built After 2000 by Census Tract, Sunflower County



The majority of census tracts in Sunflower County have a relatively low percentage of housing built after 2000. However, there are a few tracts, particularly in the southern and central areas, that show more recent development, with a higher percentage of newer housing.⁶³

Figure 23: Percentage of Housing without Utility Heating by Census Tract, Sunflower County



Most homes in Sunflower County have utility heating. However, there is a noticeable census tract in the northern part of the county with a higher percentage of homes without utility heating. This suggests some localized areas within the county where a significant portion of homes may rely on alternative heating sources or lack central heating altogether.⁶⁴

⁶³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table B25034.

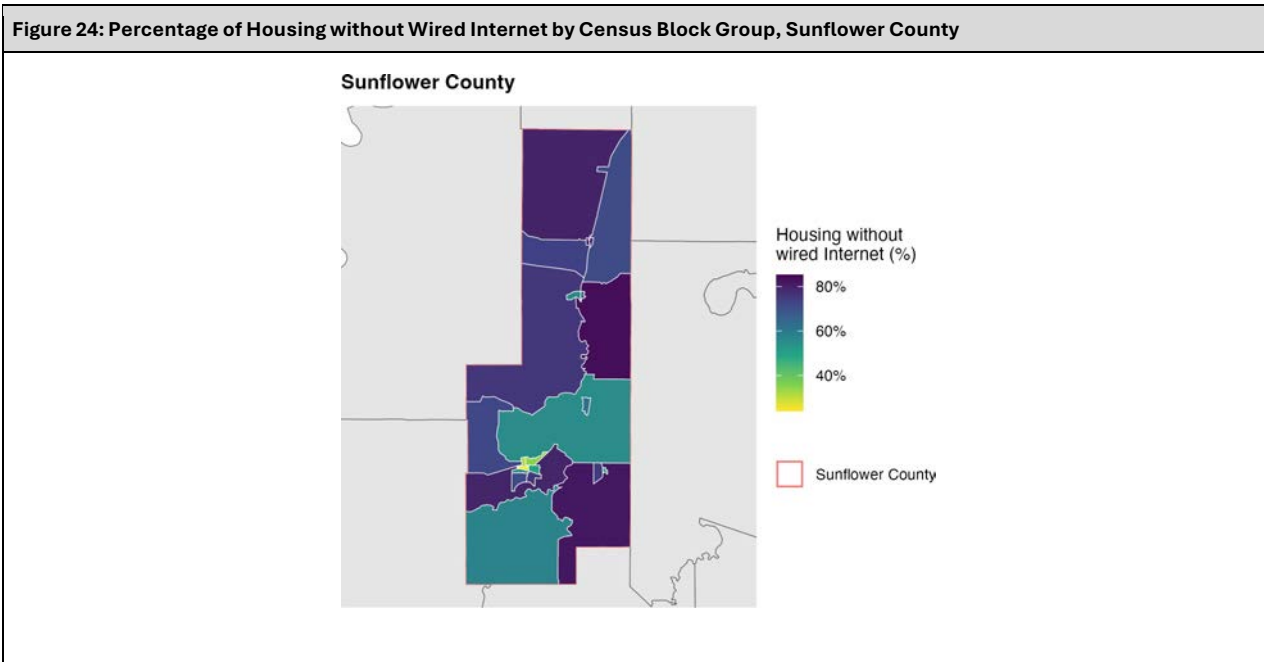
⁶⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table B28040.

Transportation and Communication

Table 31: Commuting in National Context

Geography	Drove Own Car Alone to Work (%)	No Vehicle Available (%)	Worked Outside County of Residence (%)	Used Public Transit, Walked, or Biked (%)	Average Commute Time (mins)	Worked from Home (%)
Sunflower County, Mississippi	81.3%	2.7%	31.1%	0.3%	19.1	5.4%
Mississippi	82.5%	2.3%	28.3%	0.3%	25.6	5.3%
South Region	73.7%	2.8%	24.0%	1.3%	26.7	12.7%
United States	70.2%	4.3%	22.0%	3.5%	26.6	13.5%

Commuting in Sunflower County is characterized by heavy reliance on driving alone, involves a significant out-of-county workforce, has minimal use of alternative transportation, features shorter commute times, and has a lower prevalence of working from home compared to regional and national averages.⁶⁵



There is a significant disparity in wired internet access across Sunflower County. A substantial portion of the county lacks wired internet connectivity. However, a few areas concentrated in the southern part of the county, have ample wired internet connectivity.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table S0802.

⁶⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2023, 5-year estimates. Table B28002.

Resources available to address needs of eligible children and families

Table 33: Healthcare Access in National Context

Geography	Uninsured (%)	Uninsured, <6 years old (%)	Primary Care Providers per 100k	Mental Health Providers per 100k
Sunflower County, Mississippi	11.4%	4.2%	35.43	36.78
Mississippi	11.6%	4.5%	53.32	229.45
South Region	11.7%	5.7%	67.66	237.79
United States	8.6%	4.5%	74.94	332.49

Over the past decade, healthcare access in the United States has generally improved, with the uninsured rate nationally declining from about 13.3% in 2013 to around 8.6% in 2023,⁶⁷ largely due to policies like the Affordable Care Act. However, significant disparities remain, especially in Mississippi and Sunflower County. Mississippi’s uninsured rate remains higher than the national average, with approximately 14.8% of women of childbearing age uninsured in 2023. In Sunflower County, uninsured rates among low-income adults have been even higher, reaching around 21.7% between 2017 and 2022. For children under six, the uninsured rate nationally is about 4.5%, which is reflected in Mississippi, though specific data for Sunflower County is limited. Access to primary care providers also varies widely. The U.S. averages 75 primary care physicians per 100,000 people, while Mississippi has fewer, about 53 per 100,000.⁶⁸ Sunflower County, with its rural status and higher uninsured population, faces even lower provider availability. Mental health care provider density shows a similar pattern, with the national average increasing to nearly 332 providers per 100,000, Mississippi lagging behind at 229 per 100,000, and Sunflower at just 37 per 100,000.⁶⁹ Overall, these trends highlight ongoing challenges in healthcare access, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address insurance coverage gaps and provider shortages in Mississippi and rural areas like Sunflower County.

⁶⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimate, 2023. Table S2701.

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Area Health Resource Files, 2022-2023. Obtained from: University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2024.

⁶⁹ Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. National Provider Identification (NPI) Registry. Obtained from: University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2024.