



**DELTA HEALTH  
ALLIANCE**

**Leflore County**

**Head Start/Early Head Start  
Needs Assessment**

**Summer 2021**

[www.dhaheadstart.org](http://www.dhaheadstart.org)

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Leflore County,  
Mississippi

## Head Start/Early Head Start Needs Assessment

# Executive Summary

The Delta region and Leflore County are unique geographically, historically, and demographically. Population loss combines with global economic changes and nationwide cultural issues like mass incarceration to exacerbate and preserve historic racial inequalities, so that almost all children in poverty are Black and most Black children are in poverty. Childcare is vital in the county to close health and education gaps and to allow parents to work. Projected programming sites appear to be located where the children in need live, but will need expand their capacity to meet the need for at-risk children in the county.

### **Issues of special consideration include:**

- flexible scheduling for children whose parents combine multiple service jobs with odd hours;
- coordination with or provision of transportation services, there being no public transportation infrastructure in the county and families being heavily reliant on cars;
- continued coordination with healthcare providers for screenings and services for participating children;
- continued provision of healthy meals, as many children live in food deserts on top of lacking money for fresh foods;
- recreation and exercise indoors or in safe, shaded areas, as children need play but the Delta environment is especially harsh to outdoor recreation and parents' awareness of crime can keep children indoors much of the time.

# Introduction

## Methodology

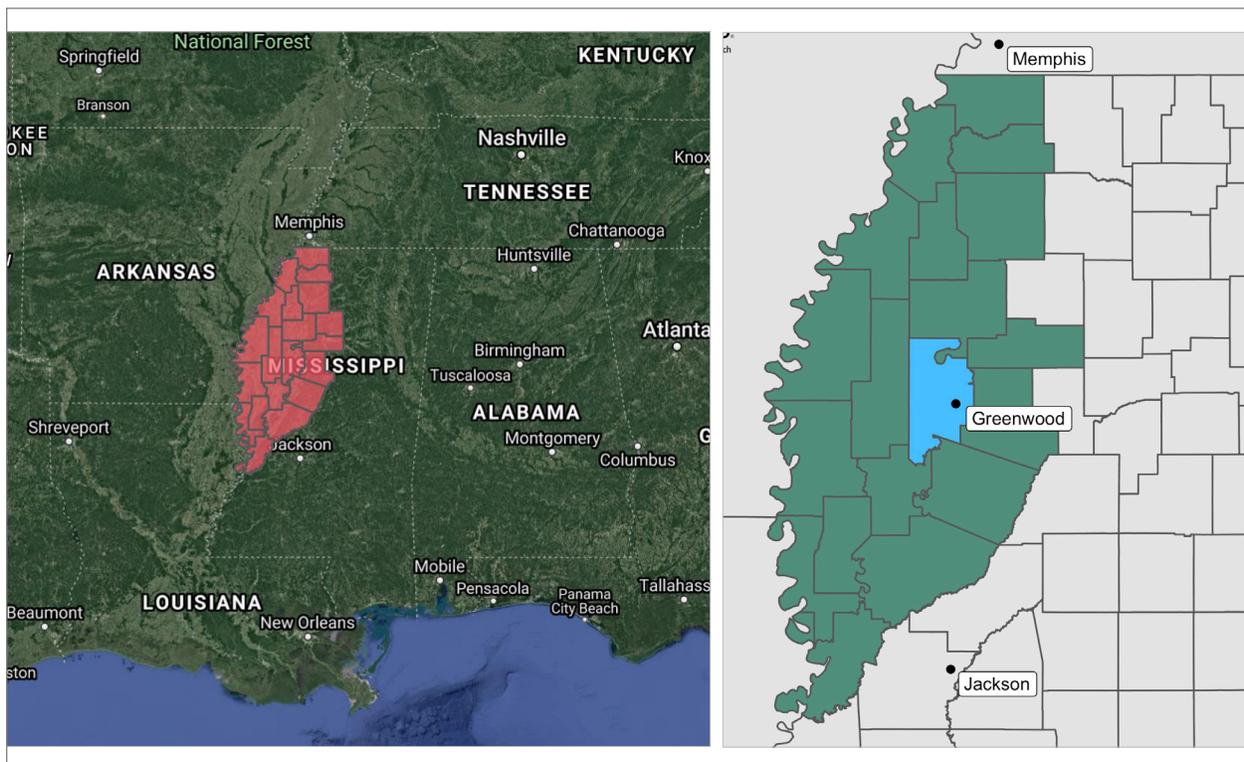
In each section of this report, we move sequentially by topic. In each topic, we start with an overview of the service area (county) and how it compares with higher levels of geography, using public secondary data. We try to make connections between items and explain trends here where possible. Next, we examine breakdowns within the county using secondary data, by subgroup and by different geographical areas inside the county, including maps and charts. Finally, we include relevant data from other applicant agency programs where applicable, and personal responses from one large staff interview in July 2021. We include a summary and SWOT analysis for each section.

We begin with a quick historic, descriptive overview of the region and the communities in the service area. The next section examines socioeconomic trends in the region, including an analysis of local poverty and racial representation. After that comes a section examining the quality of schools in the county, the availability of childcare, and educational attainment in the population. Next is a section on employment patterns, with a focus on job opportunities and households with young children. Following that is a section on health outcomes, healthcare access, and environmental risks in the county. Then, we examine housing patterns for county residents and quality and nature of housing. Finally, the last section looks at transportation patterns and access in the county.

## The Region

Leflore County, Mississippi is located near the eastern edge of what is known as the Mississippi Delta region, a large alluvial plain in the northwest corner of the state of Mississippi. The Delta, covering about 7,000 square miles of land area, encompasses more land than four U.S. states and is around the size of the states of New Jersey and Massachusetts (Barry, 1997:96). The region has strong geographic borders, with the Mississippi River to the west and northwest and a series of bluffs to the east and southeast. Once comprised of primarily hardwood forests and cypress swamps, the landscape is now dominated by miles of flat, often uninterrupted farmland, with small towns scattered throughout.

**Figure 1. Mississippi Delta region.**  
**Figure 2. Leflore County within the region**



## The geography of the Delta strongly influenced the political economy that developed in the region.

The geography of the Delta strongly influenced the political economy that developed in the region following the dislocation of Creek tribes, who had used the land primarily for hunting and gathering from settlements on higher ground, and the westward expansion of U.S. settlers (Stahr, 2018). The labor and capital required to clear the forests and drain the swamps of the Delta made it unsuitable for independent, small hold farming, not to mention the hazards of seasonal floods of the Mississippi River and its tributaries (Baptist, 2016). But, for those with enough money and manpower to exploit economies of scale and withstand floods, the land was extremely fertile and became the most productive region in the world for growing cotton for several decades (ibid.). While much of the rest of the state of Mississippi was settled by small hold and tenant farmers of Scots-Irish, German, and Acadian descent, traveling southwest from Appalachia and northeast from Louisiana, the wealthy planters of the Delta region were primarily of English descent, from areas of coastal plains like Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia (ibid.). And, because the enslaved were the largest source of wealth in the antebellum South, and performed the coordinated, large-scale labor required to drain Delta swamps and plant and pick vast sums of cotton, people of African descent soon became the largest demographic group in the region.

Since the early 20th century, the Delta region has been caught at the intersection of two major global and national trends: the depopulation and marginalization of rural areas, and the legacy and continuation of racial inequality (Cobb, 1992). Depopulation has come in waves. The First and Second Great Migrations happened during almost a century of Jim Crow exclusion of Black residents from economic and political life in the region. Since the Civil Rights Movement, the region has continued to lose population as rural communities nationwide have struggled to shift from agricultural to service, industrial, or tech economies, and locals have sought more secure livelihoods elsewhere (ibid.). At the same time, mass incarceration and episodic recessions have disproportionately affected communities of color nationwide and, as a result, have disproportionately affected areas like Leflore County that are majority Black.

Since the early 20th century, the Delta region has been caught at the intersection of two major global and national trends.

In this assessment, we examine local measures and historical trends to determine specific areas of strength and need in the community and identify local resources leveraging those strengths or meeting those needs. We do this to better understand the roles the Leflore County Head Start/Early Head Start needs to play as one more vital resource in the community meeting needs and increasing collaboration between other resources.



The majority of children in Leflore County live with one parent, making childcare essential.

## Demographics & Population Trends

The Mississippi Delta region is unique nationally for its racial makeup, rural character, and current trend of population loss. Leflore County exhibits all of these qualities, along with high levels of segregation within its cities and towns. Because few white children in the county qualify for EHS/HS programs, the funded sites will almost definitely lack racial diversity as well. The majority of children live with one parent, making childcare essential.

**Strengths:** Childcare sites appear to be located where children are, for the most part. Households are larger than average despite only one parent living in the household usually, indicating a larger-than-average amount of non-parental support.

**Weaknesses:** On paper, it appears there is not currently enough capacity to enroll all of the children in poverty in the county.

**Opportunities:** The ACS indicates that there are many unreached children in the county. These children are mostly Black but there are also pockets of limited English speakers south of Greenwood and north of Itta Bena.

**Threats:** Emigration and a declining birth rate mean fewer children to enroll each year. The lack of diversity in the service population could create “resentment” among other groups and cause extra risk for funding.

## Population in Leflore County

Leflore County's estimated population in 2019 of 29,222 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019b) is spread out across 606.4 square miles of land (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). At 14,040 people, almost half this population lives within about 12.3 square miles in Greenwood (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a), the county's largest city and cultural and political center, with another 1,544 in nearby Itta Bena, the only other community in the county with more than 1,000 residents. The county is classified as rural-urban continuum code 5 by the USDA (nonmetro, urban population 20,000+, not adjacent to a metropolitan area; USDA, 2020b), which indicates both the relatively dense population in Greenwood but also the isolation of the county relative to any major metropolitan areas. The Census Bureau combines Leflore County with Carroll County, to the east, to make up the Greenwood, Mississippi Micropolitan Area with a population of 39,292 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). The Jackson, MS metropolitan area is the closest, with Jackson being about 100 miles away. The Memphis, TN metropolitan area is the closest with a population of one million or more and is approximately 130 miles away. Shown in Figure 3, the land outside Greenwood's immediate vicinity and Itta Bena is sparsely populated, mostly held by privately-owned, large-scale industrial agriculture.

Like many rural places nationwide, the county has been undergoing rapid population loss. Since 1960, the county has lost 38% of its population (Figure 4). The population loss stopped from 1990-2000, but the county has lost roughly 500 people per year since then. Greenwood reached a peak population of 22,400 in 1970, but fell to 15,205 by 2010, and has lost another 1,100 since then.

Figure 3. Population Density by Census Block Group.

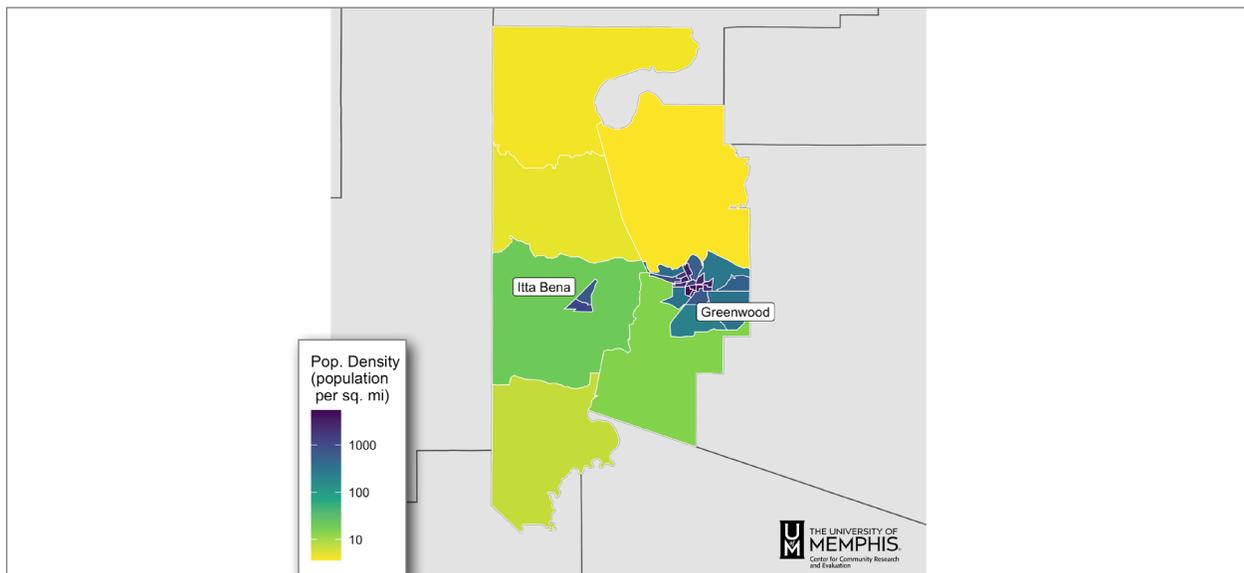
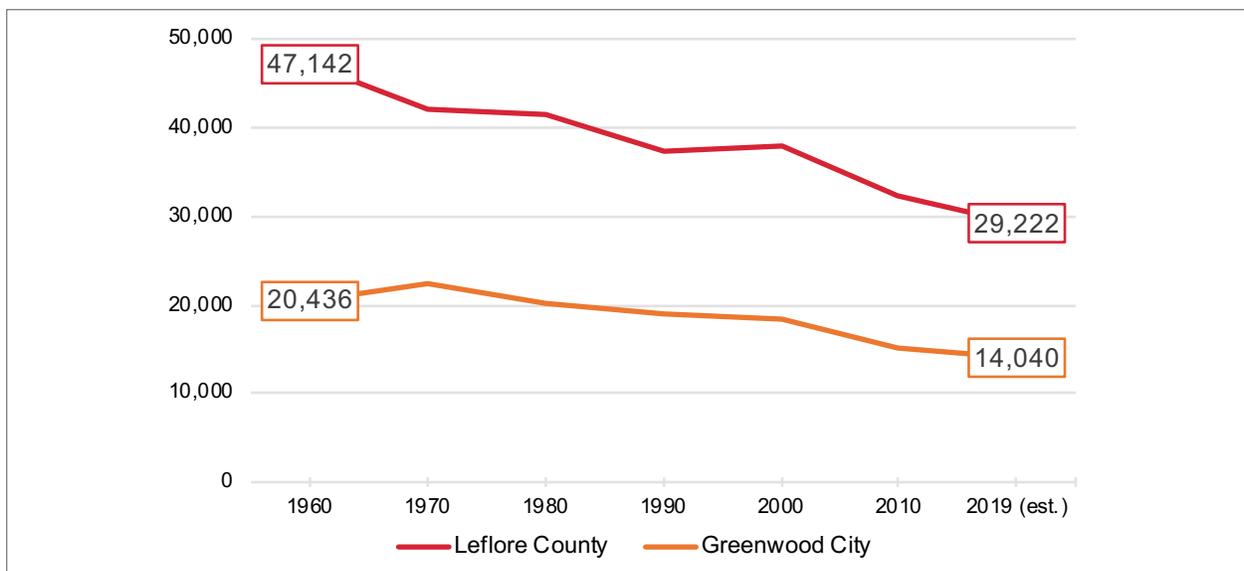


Figure 4. Leflore County Population, 1960-2019

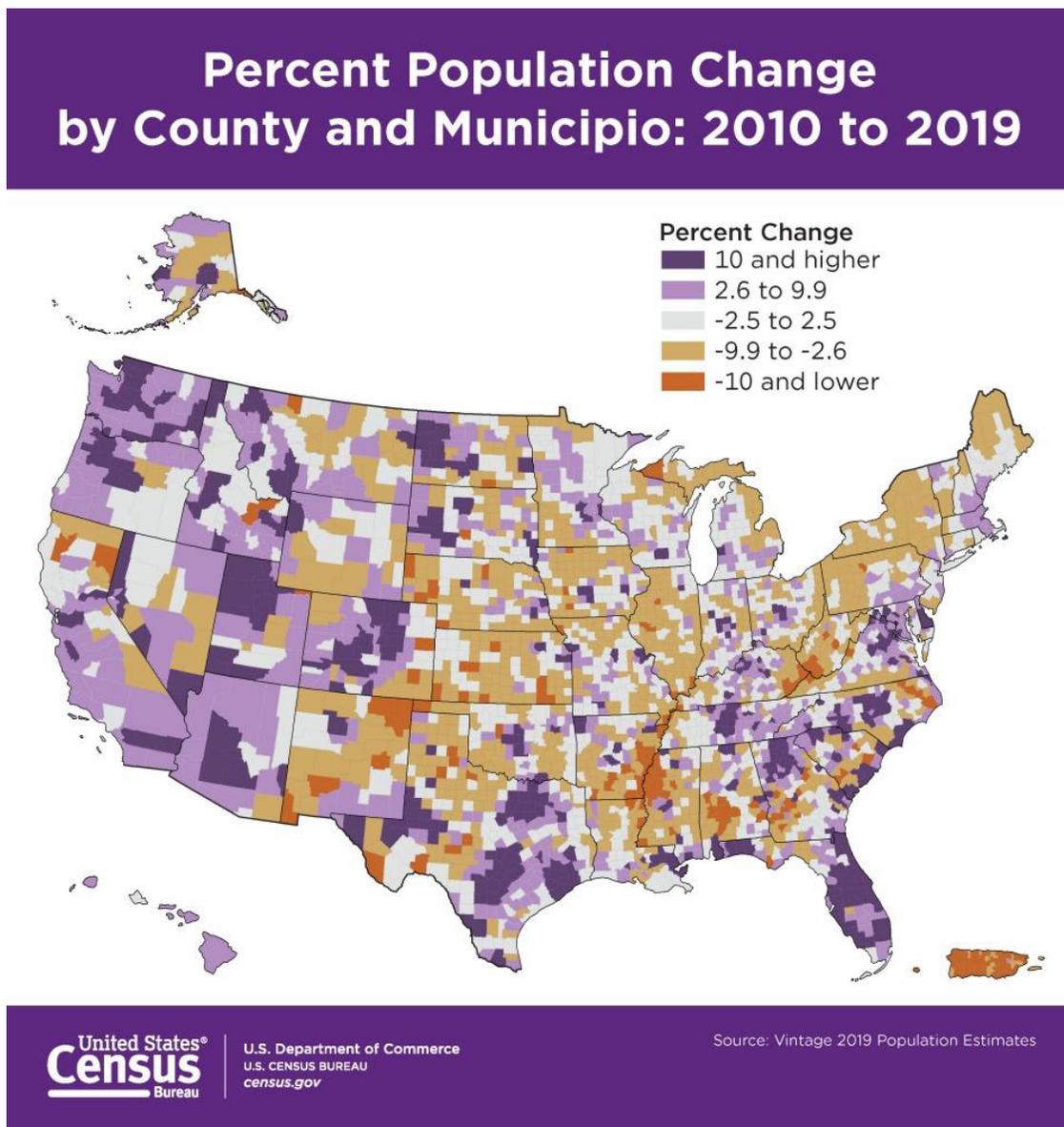


In a group interview, staff shared extensively about the phenomenon of people moving into and out of the county. They said that jobs and crime were the main reasons people left the county, with jobs including both a lack of positions and poor pay. One staff member who had left (to the Washington, D.C. area) and returned mentioned the high cost of living in other places and another brought up social support as a reason people stay:

*“I can stay here and work this job and I can go next door and get something to eat if I run out of food... my momma is across the street, and my auntie is right here.”*

Another reason mentioned was a lack of recreational opportunities, also due in large part to crime. The trend of population loss extends beyond the county to the region. Figure 5 shows population change in a national context, with Leflore County as part of the orange group of counties around the Arkansas-Mississippi-Louisiana border that have lost 10% or more of their respective populations since 2010 (Leflore County has lost 9.6%). The orange cluster in the northwestern corner of Mississippi almost perfectly delineates the Mississippi Delta region, and in combination with the cluster on the west bank of the Mississippi River makes up possibly the largest cluster in the nation. This phenomenon, called “rural flight,” can leave rural areas struggling to sustain tax revenues, maintain community programs, and attract businesses (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2015).

Figure 5. Nationwide Population Change by County, 2010-2019.

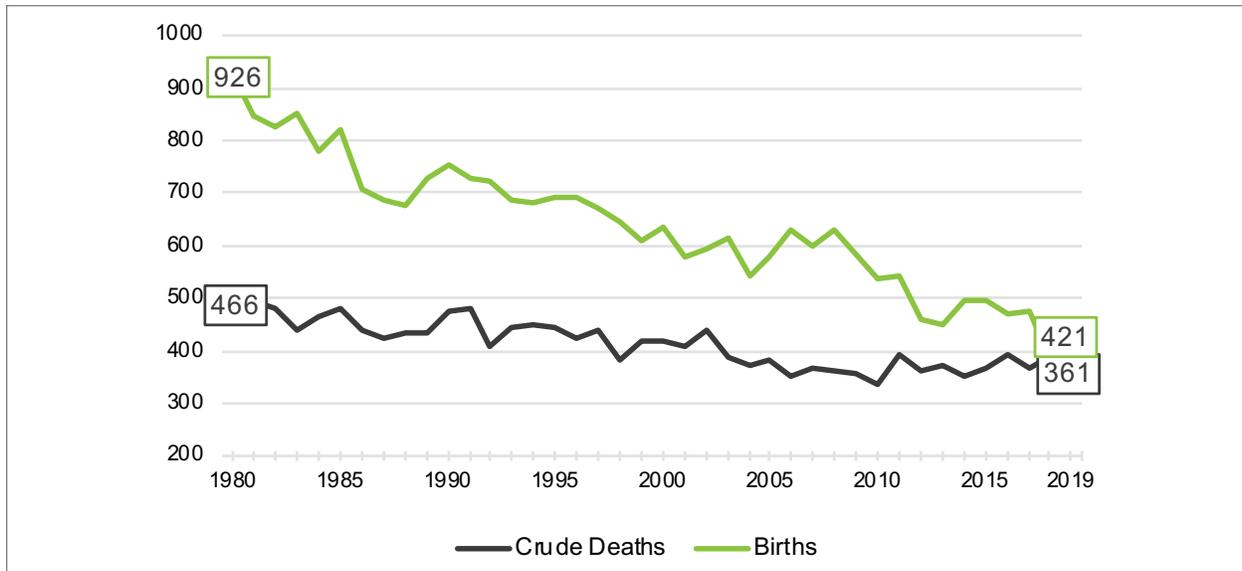


Between 2014-19, the ACS estimated the county lost 225 residents to DeSoto County, MS in the Memphis metropolitan area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020a). The second-largest loss was 164 residents to Manatee County, FL, in the Sarasota-Bradenton area, and surprisingly the ACS estimated major losses to this county in 2010-14 as well. The county was also estimated to have lost at least 100 residents to Cobb County, GA (Atlanta), Tarrant County, TX (Fort Worth), and Grenada and Hinds counties in Mississippi, Grenada being an adjacent county with its seat (Grenada) on Interstate 55 and Hinds County being in the Jackson metropolitan area. The county was estimated to have gained 192 residents from Holmes County, on its border to the southeast, and another 66 from Carroll County on its eastern border.

Population transitions occur either through migration or through internal changes in death and birth rates. In Leflore County, it appears both external and internal transitions are occurring simultaneously. The number of births in Leflore County dropped by 55% from 926 in 1980 to 421 in 2019 (Mississippi State Department of Health, 2021b). This reflects a birth rate that has dropped from 22.3 births per 1,000 to 14.9, a 33% decline. At the same time, the death rate has increased slightly from 11.2 per 1,000 to 12.8. In 1980, there were 2.2 times more births than deaths in the county. The declining birth rate and comparatively stable death rate almost overlapped for the first time in 2018, with 391 births and 387 deaths. In the past, even though many were leaving the county for other places, the high birth rate relative to the death rate meant that the population was being replaced. Now that births and deaths have almost equalized in the county, this is no longer the case. If working-age adults continue to leave and the ones who stay continue to have fewer children, that could contract the Head Start population in the future.

The median age in the county is 33.8 years, about 4 years younger than the national median of 37.9 (Table 1; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019b). This is because 27.8% of the population is less than 18 years of age despite the declining birth rates, 22% higher than the U.S. rate of 22.8%. Despite a low proportion of seniors, the dependency ratio in the county is 70 children and seniors per 100 working-age adults (18-64), 14% higher than the U.S. ratio of 61.4. This means that working age adults in Leflore County carry a heavier burden than they do elsewhere, making it that much more important to help them through programs like affordable childcare.

**Figure 6. Leflore Co. Crude Deaths and Births, 1980-2019**

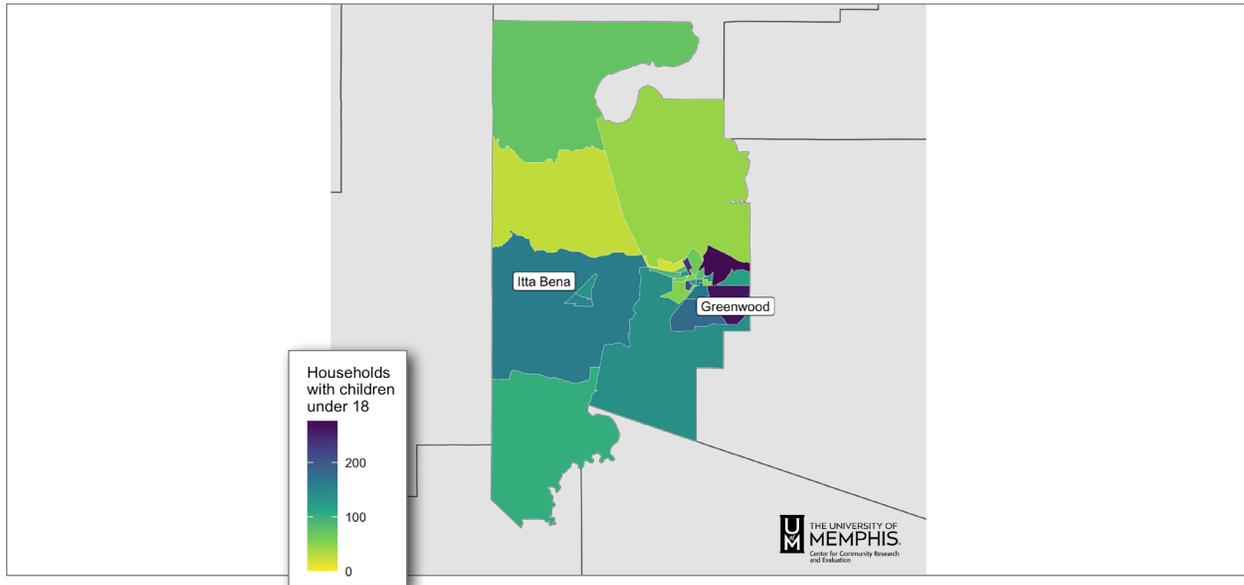


**Table 1. Age in National Context.**

Geography	Median Age	% Under 18	% 65+	Dependency Ratio
Leflore Co.	33.8	27.8%	13.4%	70.1
Mississippi	37.2	24.1%	15.0%	64.3
Census South	37.7	23.2%	15.2%	62.3
United States	37.9	22.8%	15.2%	61.4

Figure 7 shows where the households with children are in the county. This map is similar to the population density map, but shows that some of the dense areas around the center of Greenwood have almost no children while others, like the small area in the northern part of the city, and the areas on the eastern edge of town, have many households with children. Also, although the area around Itta Bena is sparsely populated, there are some households with children there, while there are almost none north of Greenwood and Itta Bena. This should be used in identifying ideal locations for Head Starts.

**Figure 7. Number of Households with Children, by Block Group.**



## Racial Demographics

Regionally and nationally, wealth accumulation has been hampered and by some measures prevented altogether for the population that makes up the racial majority in Leflore County (Emmons, Kent, and Ricketts, 2019). Researchers debate the extent to which this has developed especially because of racial politics (Rothstein, 2017), but disparities remain nonetheless. Here, and below, we present race as distinct from poverty or social class, because Black poverty and white poverty can have different causes and effects in need of different remedies (Wilson, 2009). Race also matters for the benign or positive cultural traditions associated with it, such as wider kinship structures or stronger oral traditions for Black families (Lofton and Davis, 2015).

Like many counties in the Mississippi Delta region, Leflore County has a majority minority population, with 73% of the population identifying as Black, non-Hispanic (Table 2). About 23% of the county identified as white, non-Hispanic. Like the state of Mississippi overall, the county is not very diverse beyond a white/black binary, with only 2.6% identifying as Hispanic and 1.6% having another racial classification, most of them identifying as multiple races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a).

**Table 2. Race in National Context.**

Geography	% non-Hispanic Black	% non-Hispanic White	% Hispanic	% Other
Leflore Co.	73.3%	22.5%	2.6%	1.6%
Mississippi	37.5%	56.8%	3.0%	2.7%
Census South	18.9%	57.2%	17.6%	6.3%
United States	12.3%	61.1%	17.8%	8.8%

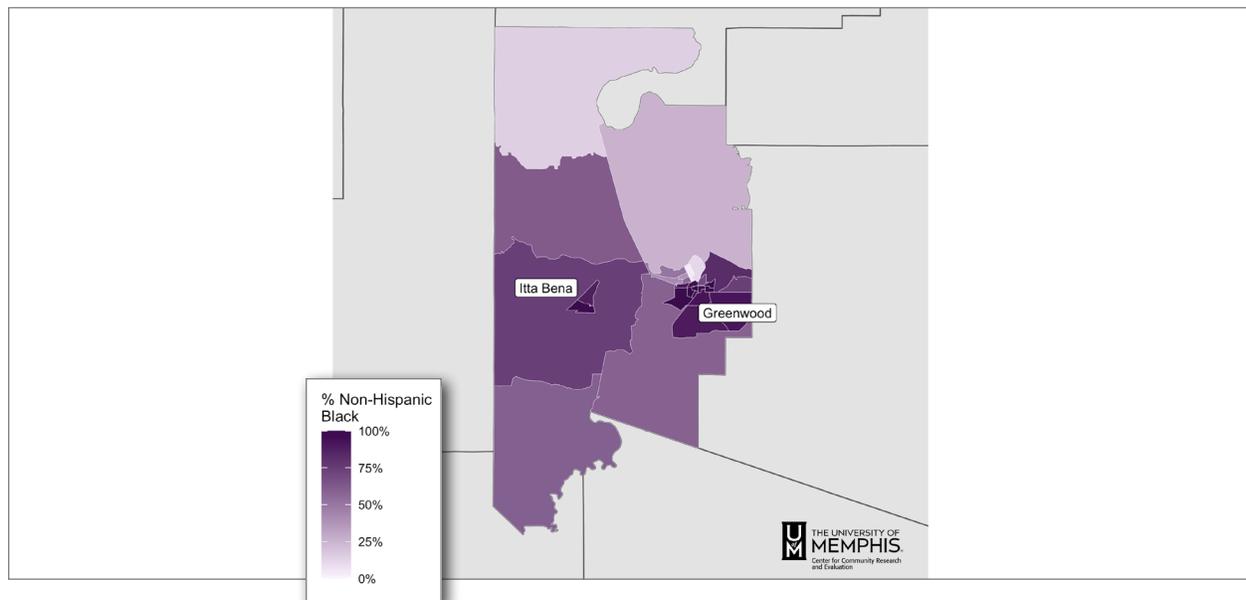
Figure 8 shows the extent to which racial groups in the county are not distributed evenly. In the racial dot maps, each dot represents one person: green for non-Hispanic Black, blue for non-Hispanic white, orange for Hispanic, red for Asian, brown for other (Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service Demographics Research Group, 2017). The empty curve cutting through the middle of the Greenwood dot map is the Yalobusha River. There are almost no green dots on the north side of the river, and almost no blue dots south of the river except for a few outside the city limits, north and east of Main Street. The city proper is 73% Black and 25% white according to the 2014-19 ACS. In Itta Bena, which is 90% Black, almost all the white residents live along the main street, Schley Street, north of a railroad cutting through downtown and on the town's eastern edge. The cluster of green to the town's northwest, across U.S. Highway 82, is the Mississippi Valley State University campus, a historically Black university. The map also shows two clusters of orange dots (Hispanic) to the north of Itta Bena and the university campus. These appear to be housing near the grounds of two catfish processing plants in the county, America's Catch and Heartland. There are no other similar clusters in the county.

Figure 9 shows the percentage of each block group in the county that is Black, non-Hispanic. The area around Itta Bena is about the same percentage Black as the county (73%). The rest of the rural areas, especially to the north, are much whiter than the rest of the county excluding north Greenwood.

**Figure 8. Racial Dot Density Maps of Greenwood and Itta Bena.**



**Figure 9. Percentage of Population non-Hispanic Black by Census Block Group.**

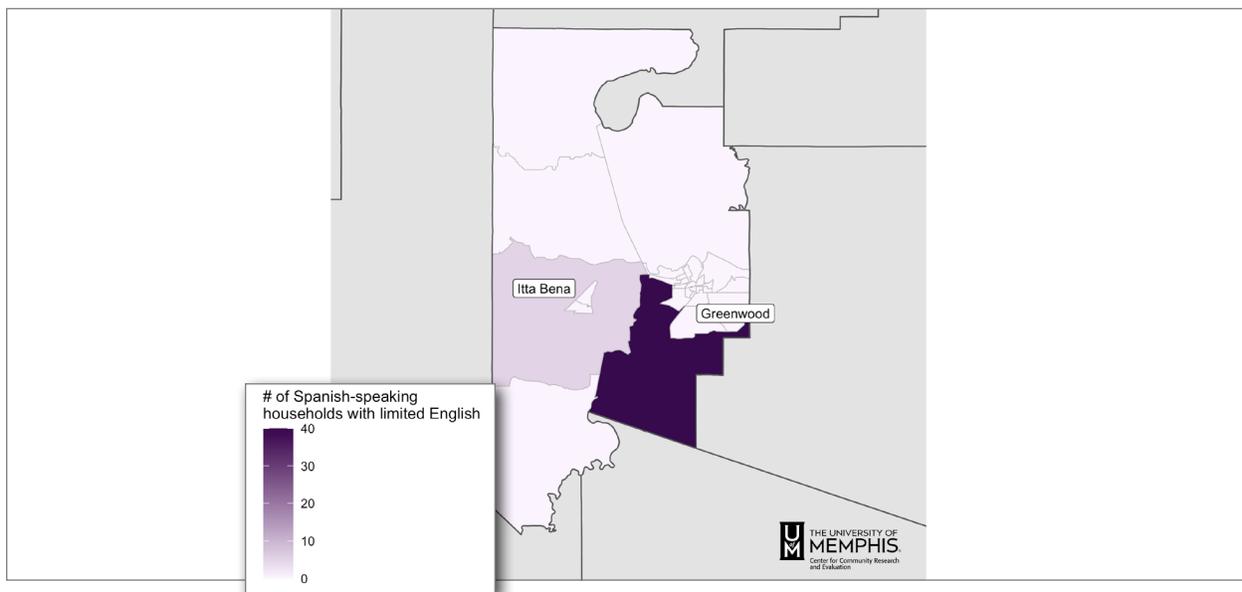


## Language within the County

The ACS estimated 78 naturalized citizens, 456 non-citizens, 396 residents born in Latin America, and 3.1% speaking a language other than English in their homes in 2019, mostly Spanish. Only about 1% of all households, or about a quarter of the households speaking some other language, are estimated to be limited in English. Seventy percent of those born outside the U.S. entered between 2000 and 2009, compared to 27% for the country overall, with only 6% entering since 2010.

Figure 10 shows the percentage of school-age children, by block group, who speak Spanish at home. These children only make up about 5% of the children in the county as a whole, but are concentrated in a couple of areas making up 40% of the school age population in the rural area around Itta Bena and 30% in the southeast corner of the county. These appear to be the children of migrant workers who were originally housed at catfish processing plants in the 2000s, who have since had children who have entered the school system (Trice, 2006). Several of these plants are around Itta Bena. Most of those households are not limited in English, according to the ACS, but about 40 of the ones in the southeastern corner of the county are limited. This may be an area of special concern for the Head Starts.

**Figure 10. Percentage of School-Age Children Who Speak Spanish at Home.**



## Family Composition

Most of the children in the county live in families with only a mother present (Table 3). This is double the rate in Mississippi and three times the rate in the nation. Three-fourths of all births are to women who are unmarried, compared to 54% in Mississippi and 40% across the country. Families in the county are slightly larger than elsewhere, and slightly more than half of women with a birth in the past year are working or seeking work. There were only 25 foster children estimated in the ACS in 2019. 7.3% of the households with children in the county had grandparents living in the household, compared to 3.9% nationally. In summary, childcare is essential because two-parent homes are not the norm and many mothers are working; residents may be trying to address this need through non-parental support structures like older siblings or grandparents. Staff members validated these observations in the group interview.

**Table 3. County Family Composition in National Context.**

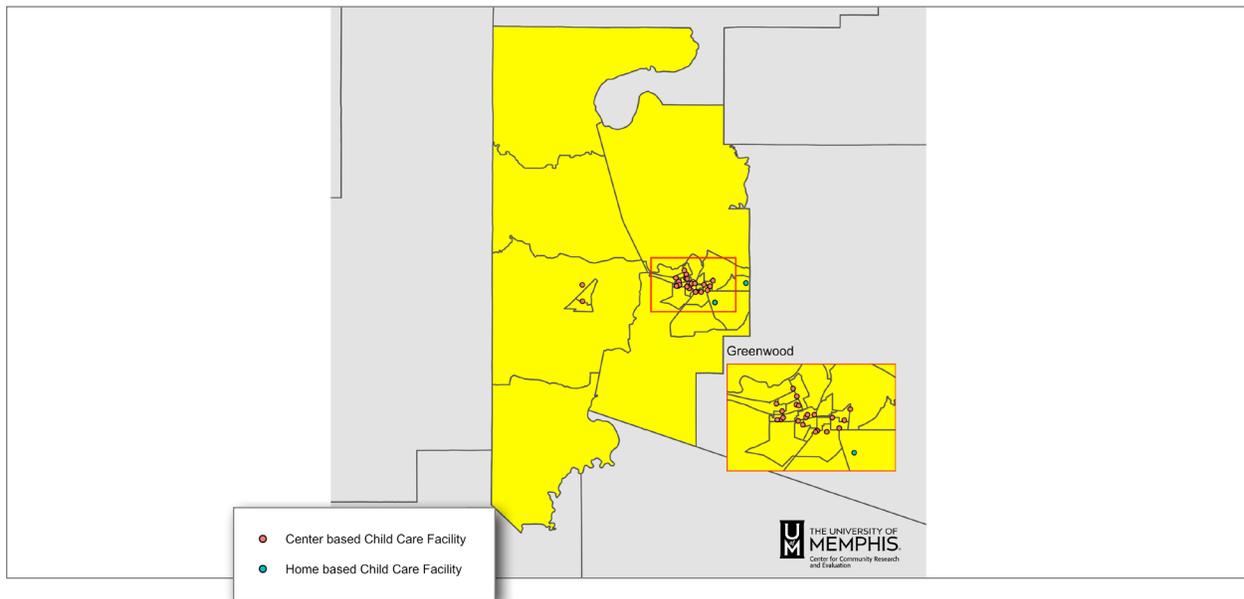
Geography	% children in single-mother families	% nonmarital births	Average family size (# people)	% women w/ recent birth, in labor force
Leflore Co.	60.0%	75.5%	3.78	54.5%
Mississippi	32.7%	54.1%	3.24	65.5%
Census South	23.7%	---	3.25	61.7%
United States	20.9%	39.6%	3.23	63.3%

## Inferences about eligible children not in program

For 2021, Mississippi Department of Health website shows a capacity of 510 at Head Start sites (Mississippi Department of Health, 2021a). In total, the ACS estimates the county has 2,193 children under 5 years of age, but all of these children would not meet the eligibility requirements to take spots in the programs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). We discuss economic and social issues in the county in the next section, but using ACS poverty estimates for 2019, about 1,176 children in the county live below the federal poverty threshold, and slightly more than this would meet the income eligibility guidelines (< 130% federal poverty level) to participate in Head Starts. By these estimates, there are many children in the county who need Head Start but currently cannot enroll. The ACS estimates that virtually all of the children under 5 in poverty in the county are Black, non-Hispanic (ibid.).

Figure 11 shows the locations of all the MSDH-monitored childcare providers in Leflore County. Almost all of these sites are in and around Greenwood, with two near Itta Bena.

**Figure 11. MSDH-Monitored Childcare Locations in Leflore County.**





Leflore County is in the top 20 most impoverished counties nationwide, and more children live in poverty in the county than do not.

## Social & Economic Status

The Mississippi Delta region has had perhaps the most persistent poverty in the entire country. Leflore County is in the top 20 most impoverished counties nationwide, and more children live in poverty in the county than do not. Combined with crime and mass incarceration, social and economic conditions have been extremely challenging for qualifying families in the area.

**Strengths:** By enrolling the children in poverty in Leflore County, the HS/EHS program can keep children safe and well-fed during the day and help allow parents to earn incomes and spend less of what they earn on childcare and food.

**Weaknesses:** Poverty alleviation efforts in the region can be siloed and unorganized. One challenge will be coordinating referrals and partnering with organizations in the community to prevent duplication of services.

**Opportunities:** While the COVID-19 pandemic has had mostly negative effects on everything and everyone, layoffs and working at home have given some parents more time with children, and aid payments have more than doubled the wages of some of the poorest families.

**Threats:** The COVID-19 pandemic has taken family members away from many Mississippians, reducing familial support for parents, and the recession has hit poorer areas extremely hard. Tightened tax revenues will create renewed scrutiny of all government spending, including on Head Starts. The national WIC program is closing local offices nationwide for virtual services, which may affect service provision but also removes another point of coordination for social services for families with young children.



Figure 12. Storefronts in Downtown Itta Bena, Mississippi (Solis, 2020).

## Income and Poverty

Similar to other Delta communities, almost a third of families in Leflore County are below the poverty line. This is more than double the statewide rate and more than three times the national rate (Table 4). Family income summaries are consistent with this – median family income is less than half the national average, with a fifth of Leflore County families earning less than \$10,000 annually, and over half of families less than \$35,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b).

**Table 4. Selected Economic Characteristics.**

Item	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
Median family income	\$33,519	\$54,933	\$73,965
% families <\$10,000 income	21.5%	6.6%	3.9%
% families <\$25,000 income	39.6%	21.0%	13.1%
% families <\$35,000 income	51.2%	31.6%	20.9%

Poverty is especially concentrated among families with Black householders, with a Black family poverty rate of 43%. As Table 5 indicates, already stark national racial disparities in poverty status are aggravated in Leflore County, with the Black poverty rate in the county nearly double the national rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). Meanwhile, the poverty rate for white families is barely more than half the national average. Segmentation analysis also revealed especially high poverty rates among families with an unmarried, female householder: the poverty rate for these households is 59% overall, and 61% for those with a Black householder. Again, these rates well exceed the state and national averages, except for white households where the rate is just 23.3%.

**Table 5. Poverty Status of Families.**

Family Status	Race of primary householder	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
All Families	All Races	31.7%	15.5%	9.5%
	Black, non-Hispanic	43.1%	27.4%	19.2%
	White, non-Hispanic	4.0%	8.8%	7.5%
Families with Female Householder, no Spouse Present	All Races	58.7%	37.9%	26.5%
	Black, non-Hispanic	60.5%	42.8%	31.7%
	White, non-Hispanic	23.3%	28.5%	19.7%

Median household income (all households, not just families) reveals an equally stark picture, especially when segmented by race (Table 6; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). Median income in householders with a Black head of household is a shockingly low \$17,079, less than one-third that of white households. While white households exceed the state average with respect to household income, Black households lag behind the state average significantly. As one staff member said, “whenever you apply for a program, we’re always below [the] poverty [line].”

**Table 6. Median Household Income by Race.**

Group	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
All races	\$26,052	\$43,567	\$60,293
White, non-Hispanic	\$57,964	\$54,459	\$65,912
Black, non-Hispanic	\$17,079	\$29,690	\$40,155
Hispanic	\$39,625	\$43,128	\$49,225

Income differences are often countered with the assumption that a lower cost-of-living automatically offsets lower income in the area, and the cost-of-living in Mississippi is the lowest in the country (Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, 2021). But the cost-of-living in Mississippi is 85% of the cost-of-living in the U.S. as a whole, while household income is only 72% of income in the U.S., meaning the burden of paying the cost-of-living is much higher in Mississippi. Data for

overall cost-of-living is not available at the county level, but housing burden (average cost of rent or mortgage relative to income) is and is included in the housing section below. It is important to note that in the cost-of-living data, housing is the cost category that makes Mississippi affordable more than any other, at 67% the cost in the U.S. as a whole. Other items required to live, like food, utilities, and transportation, all cost around 90% of what they cost elsewhere in the country (ibid.).

Within the county, poverty appears to be concentrated in the denser areas of Greenwood and Itta Bena, with some Census block groups reaching 60% or more in poverty (Figure 13).

**Figure 13. Poverty Rate by Census Block Group.**

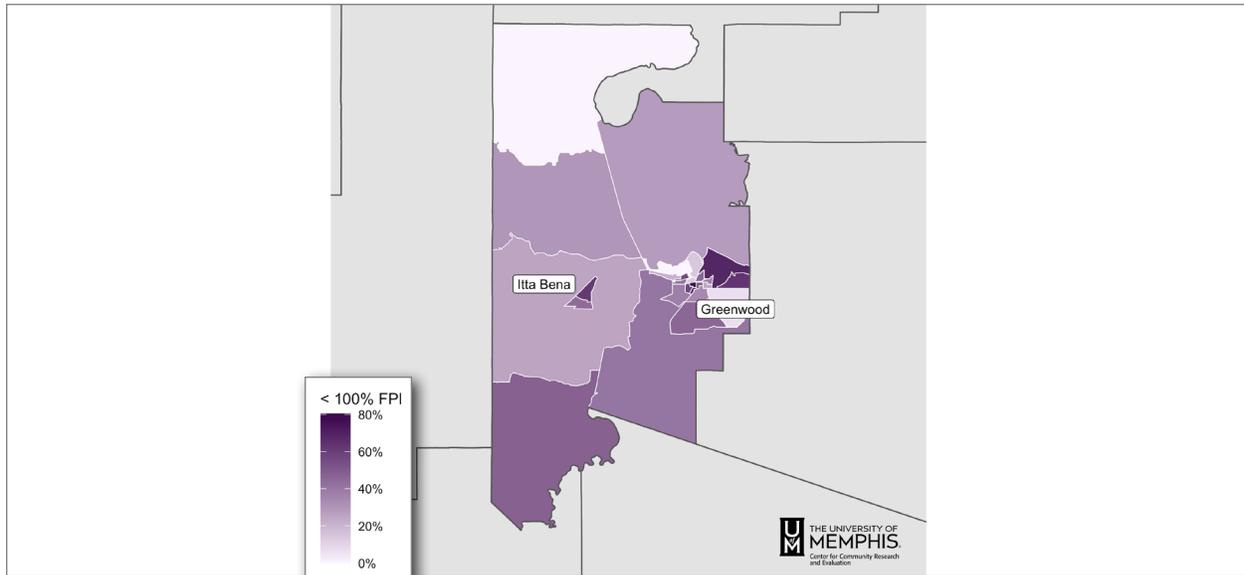


Figure 14 shows Leflore County’s childhood poverty in a regional context. The area along the Lower Mississippi River in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana has the largest concentration of unbroken counties in poverty in the country, with Leflore County at the eastern edge of that group, connecting it with another line of impoverished counties at the Mississippi-Alabama state line.

**Figure 14. U.S. childhood poverty rates by county.**

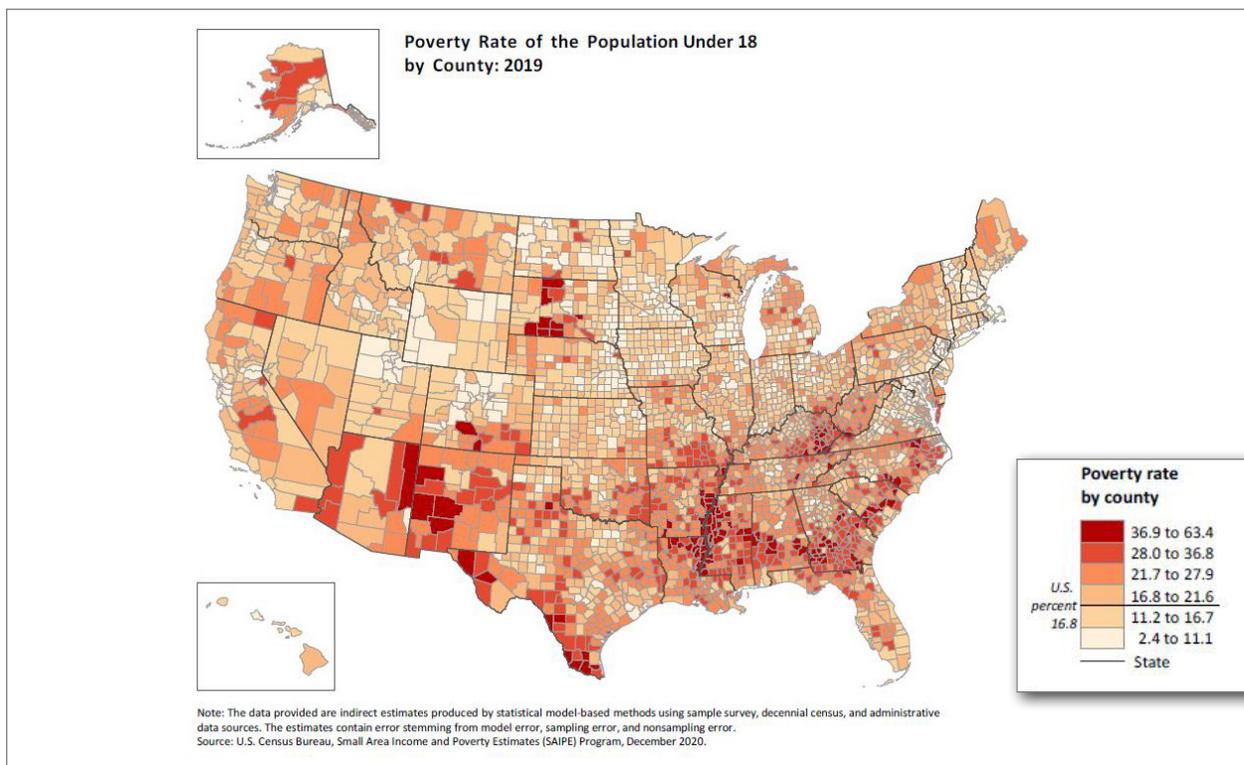


Figure 15 shows the county's poverty rates over time, relative to the country. Leflore County's poverty rate fell by almost half to 34.9% from 1960 to 1980 but has never dropped again. Meanwhile, Mississippi's poverty rate has continued to drop since 1980. The county has had one of the 100 highest rates of poverty in the United States since at least 1960 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020b). In 1990 the county had the 62nd highest rate of poverty in the U.S., was 38th in 2000, and was the 15th most impoverished county in the whole country in 2010. Its current rate of 36.8% is three times the U.S. rate of 12.3%.

**Figure 15. Leflore County Poverty Rates, 1960-2019**

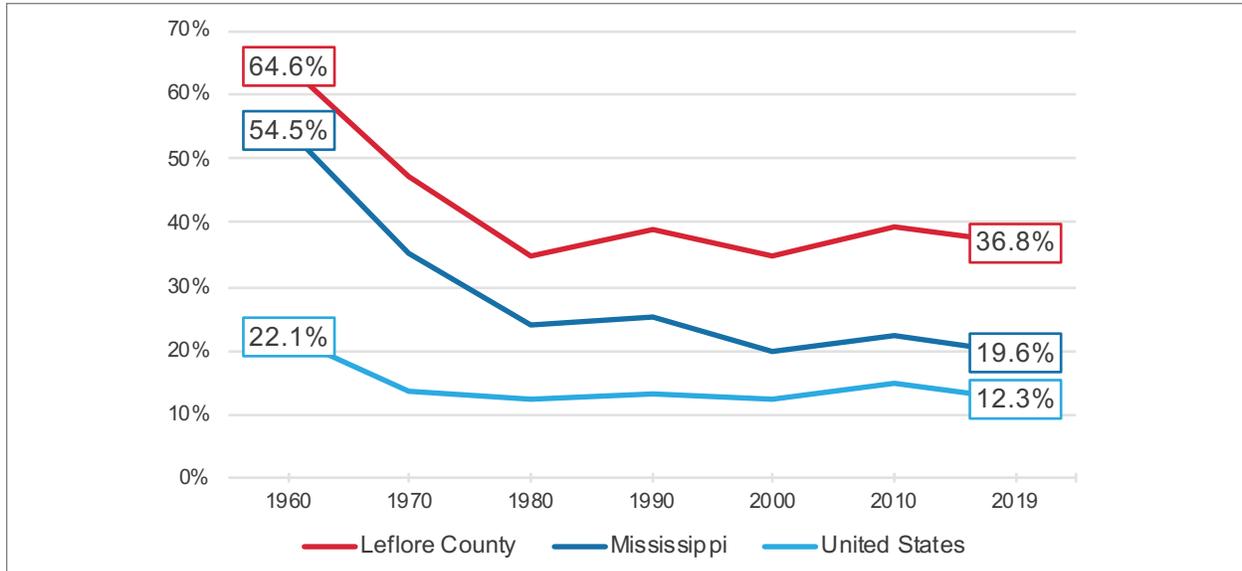


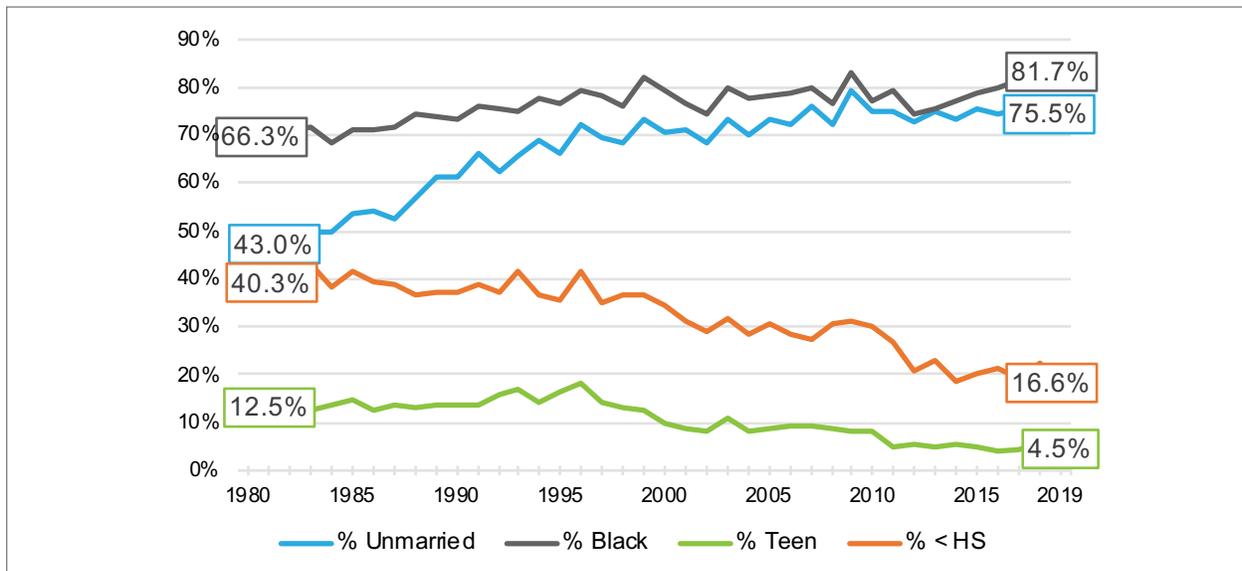
Figure 16 shows the poverty burden in the county by different age groups, over time. The burden of poverty has always been highest for children, but in 1990 the rate for seniors was much closer to the rate for children than it is now (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1991). Childhood poverty has basically stayed the same since 1990, at 51.2%, while the rate for seniors has dropped by 14 percentage points to 22.5%. Children in the county now have a rate of poverty that is more than double the rate for seniors (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a).

**Figure 16. Leflore Co. Poverty by Age, 1990-2019**



Among the public, poverty is often regarded as an effect of changes in traditional family structures, and not a cause. Even scholars are divided on the subject (Garis, 1998), but a growing proportion now take the view that a strong family structure is usually the result of a stable economic foundation, and not its cause (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson, 2014). Figure 17 shows the percentage of births to unmarried mothers in Leflore County every year since 1980, alongside the rate of births to teens under 18, mothers who have not graduated from high school, and the percentage born to Black mothers. The year 1984 was the last in which fewer than half of all births were to unmarried mothers, rising to 61% by 1990 and then steadily rising to 79% in 2009 and staying between 75% and 80% since (Mississippi Department of Health, 2021b). Meanwhile, the rate of births to mothers younger than 18 has plummeted by 75% from a high of 18.2% in 1996 to 4.5% in 2019 and has not been higher than 6% since 2010. In 1983, 43% of all births were to mothers who had not graduated from high school, but by 2019 this rate had dropped by 61% to 16.6%, its lowest rate to date.

**Figure 17. Characteristics of Births in Leflore County, 1980-2019**



As shown in Figure 16 above, the poverty rate in Leflore County has essentially stayed flat since 1980. Childhood poverty is still above 50%, as it was in 1990, while poverty has dropped for seniors. If poverty were the result of irresponsibility or lack of preparation on the part of women, we should expect the rate of births to uneducated, young mothers to at least have mirrored poverty rates in staying flat, but we definitely would not expect those rates to plummet, in the case of teen births to less than five percent. We reject racist notions of “culture” being the cause of poverty on principle, but even if we were to allow ourselves to consider this, the racial makeup of births in the county has not changed markedly since 1980 and is almost identical to what it was in the mid 1990s. From these trends, it seems much more likely that economic and other social instabilities (e.g., mass incarceration, below; employment opportunities, housing, healthcare, and educational policy in subsequent sections) are the cause of both poverty and family instability. At any rate, fewer and fewer children are being born to uneducated, young mothers, but the vast majority are still entering the world without family stability on paper, and without the household economic resources to succeed.

## Crime and Incarceration

Crime, specifically gun violence, was very much on the minds of staff members in the group interview. Gun violence was mentioned as one major reason for people leaving the county, as the main reason there were not more recreational activities, and as one important factor limiting outdoor physical activity.

The data agrees that Leflore County is faced with high crime and rates of violence. Homicide rates in the county are more than double the state average. Segmentation analysis reveals that incidence of death by homicide or legal intervention is 49% higher among the Black population in Leflore County than statewide, and 57% higher for the white population in the service area relative to the white population statewide (Mississippi State Department of Health, 2021b). Men were much more likely to die from homicide. Differentiating by age group, homicide death occurred much more likely for the 15-34 age group, with this phenomenon being much more pronounced in the county than in the state as a whole.

**Table 7. Deaths Due to Homicide or Legal Intervention per 100,000 (Crude Rate, 5-Year Average).**

Group	Overall		Black, non-Hispanic		White, non-Hispanic	
	Leflore County	Mississippi	Leflore County	Mississippi	Leflore County	Mississippi
Overall	29.2	12.6	36.6	24.5	8.5	5.4
Male	56.4	21.0	71.1	44.0	17.5	7.8
Female	5.1	4.7	6.8	7.2	0.0	3.1
Age 15-24	64.9	20.4	72.2	41.0	30.6	4.7
Age 25-34	68.1	28.2	87.3	55.8	0.0	9.0
Age 35-44	47.3	20.7	47.8	36.6	50.1	10.8
Age 45-54	18.7	11.8	25.0	19.9	0.0	7.1

FBI crime data can be difficult to analyze as reporting practices varies across law enforcement agencies but is nevertheless a useful barometer of community trends. This data substantiates the high incidence of violent crime. Rates of violent crime for the two largest law enforcement agencies in the county, the Leflore County Sheriff's Office and the Greenwood Police Department, saw violent crime rates that exceeded the state and national averages (FBI, 2020; FBI, 2021). Interestingly, the sheriff's office, which focuses more on the rural areas of the county rather than the denser service area of the Greenwood Police Department, reported by far the higher violent crime rate, nearly double the national average. The data also report a much lower clearance rate, suggest that the law enforcement agencies are relatively ineffective at leveraging the resources and community buy-in to maintain safe communities in Leflore County. Interestingly, property crime rates are closer to the national average, only being relatively high in the dense service area of the Greenwood Police Department. However, like with violent crimes, property crime clearance rates are only a fraction of what would be expected nationwide.

**Table 8. Violent and Property Crime Rates among Local Law Enforcement Agencies.**

Item	Leflore County Sheriff's Office	Greenwood Police Department	Mississippi	United States
Rate, violent crimes	713.1 (2019)	422.9 (2018)	277.9 (2019)	379.4 (2019)
% violent crimes cleared	19.4% (2019)	29.3% (2018)	N/A	45.5% (2018)
Rate, property crimes	1,917.0 (2019)	3,784.5 (2018)	2,375.8 (2019)	2,109.9 (2019)
% property crimes cleared	12.8% (2019)	9.8% (2019)	N/A	17.6% (2018)

Juvenile court referrals, a useful barometer of adolescent deviance, are also elevated in Leflore County relative to state averages, with 2.1 juvenile court referrals reported in 2019 in the service area, about 75% higher than the state average (Mississippi Department of Human Services, n.d.). Segmentation analysis, as shown in Table 9, reveals higher juvenile court referrals for all races and sexes, with the rate for males particularly elevated relative to state averages. However, there are not notable differences with the state average with respect to the age distribution of referrals.

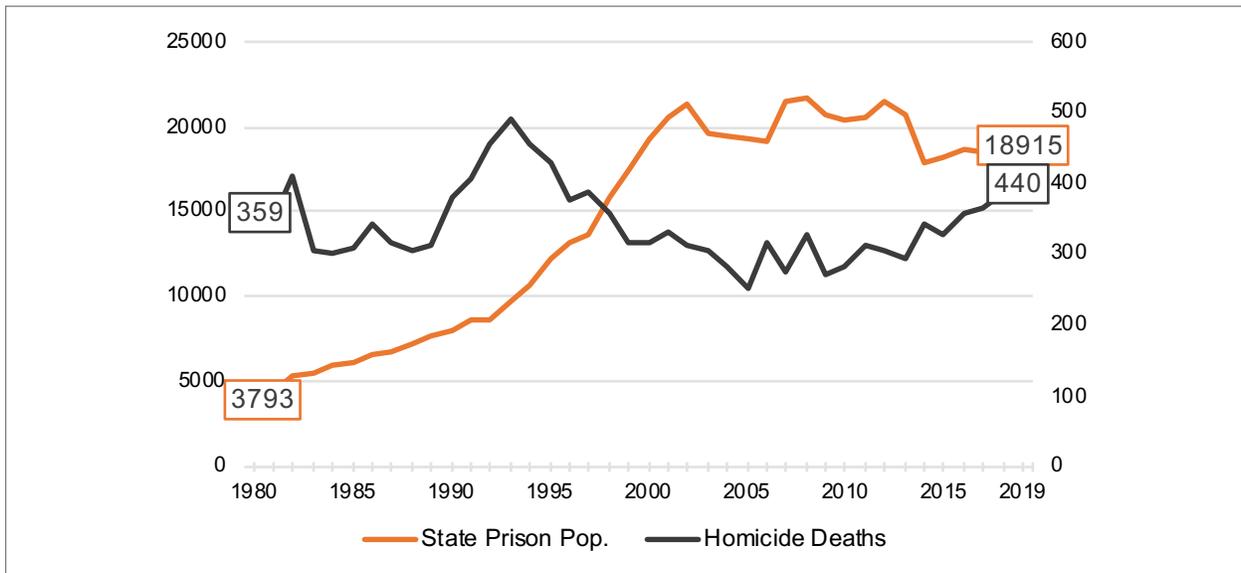
**Table 9. Juvenile Court Referrals, 2019.**

Item	Leflore County	Mississippi
Rate of juvenile court referrals per 100 population, aged 0-17	2.1	1.2
White, non-Hispanic	1.0	0.7
Black	2.5	1.8
Male	2.8	1.5
Female	1.3	0.8
Rate of juvenile court referrals per 100,000 population, aged 0-17, offense-level		
Domestic violence / simple assault	553	494
Runaway	430	257
Disorderly conduct / malicious mischief	294	483
Drug offenses	86	128
Weapons offenses	135	67
Burglary / petit larceny	258	315
Contempt of court	86	111
Percentage of referrals before age 15	32.2%	33.9%

The trends observed relating to crime in the service area are part of a regional trend, leading to a cycle of incarceration that reflects and furthers community dysfunction. Mississippians are incarcerated at the 3rd highest rate of any state, at 1,039 prisoners per 100,000 residents, 49% higher than the national rate (698 per 100,000; Wagner & Sawyer, 2018). Correctional facilities in the state hold a total of 32,305 prisoners, and the rate of citizens in state prisons is also the 3rd highest in the country at 626 per 100,000 (The Sentencing Project, 2020a). Another 37,000 are on probation or parole, and 11,575 were in local jails in 2013, with 6,378 of them being held there in lieu of state prisons (Aiken, 2017). The Black imprisonment rate for state prisons is 1,052 per 100,000, three times higher than the white imprisonment rate of 346 per 100,000. Nationally, Black men are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white men, and about 1 in 12 Black men in their 30s is in prison or jail on any given day (The Sentencing Project, 2020b). Greenwood was the site of one for-profit prison in the state, Delta Correctional Facility, that closed in 2012 (Mississippi Department of Corrections, 2011).

Figure 18 shows the Mississippi state prison population over time, alongside the number of deaths due to homicides as a rough proxy for violent crime. The number of people in state prisons almost quadrupled from 1980 to 2000, peaking at 21,698 in 2008. At the same time, deaths due to homicide in the state basically stayed flat, hitting an all-time high of 491 in 1993 but dropping to 252 in 2005 and then rising again in recent years. The lines do not appear to be correlated because, as of 2019, 38% of the prison population was incarcerated for non-violent or drug offenses, and these offenses represented 73% of new admissions in the 2018-19 fiscal year (Mississippi Department of Corrections, 2020).

Figure 18. MS State Prison Pop. & Homicide Deaths, 1980-2019

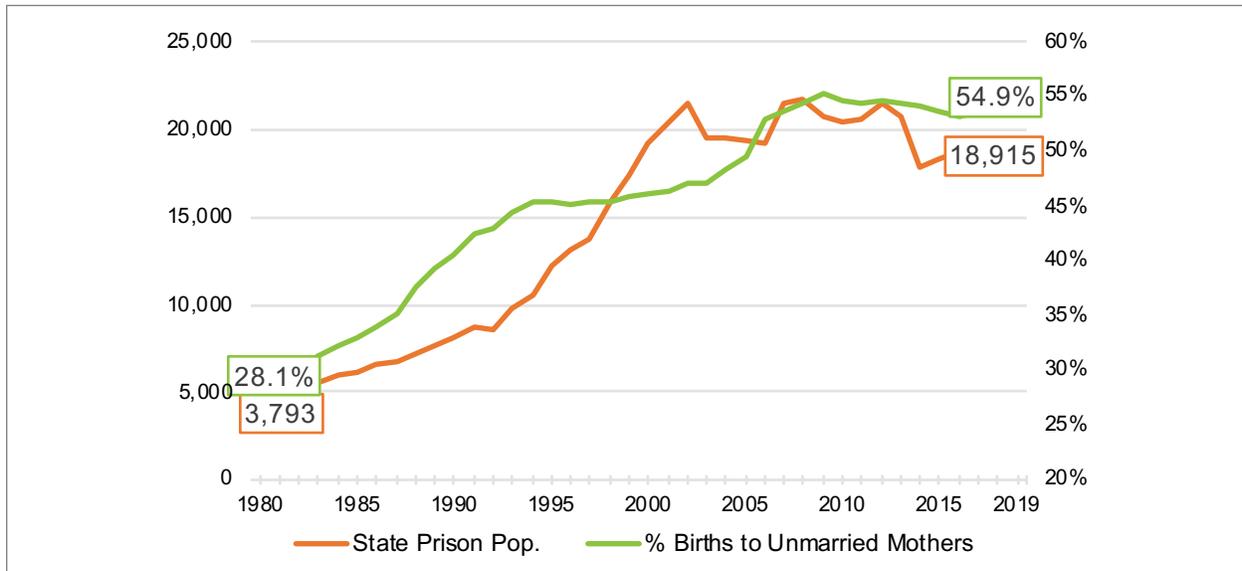


Nationally, the lifetime likelihood of being imprisoned for Black men is one in three (Bonczar, 2003). The rate of felony disenfranchisement in the state reflects this. Fully 16% of the Black adults in the state were disenfranchised in 2020 (The Sentencing Project, 2020a). If we assume that the disenfranchised are made up of the same proportion of men to women as the incarcerated population in the state (93% men), that would mean 29.8% of the Black male population is disenfranchised. This may be inflated slightly, but even 25% would mean that one in four Black men in the state cannot vote, cannot own firearms, and are forced to report felonies when seeking employment. This also does not include those affected by incarceration, fines and other fees, or flagging due to background checks of lesser offenses, which would most likely include vastly more of the population and disproportionately include Black men. As noted above, 73% of new admissions to Mississippi prisons in the 2018-19 fiscal year were for non-violent offenses, and that only includes the prison population, not local jails. As of 2021, failing to pay or appear in court for minor traffic citations can result in bench warrants in Mississippi, which are then misdemeanors that can result in arrests, incarceration, and even felony charges (Holley, 2019). Advocates against mass incarceration call these laws a criminalization of poverty (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

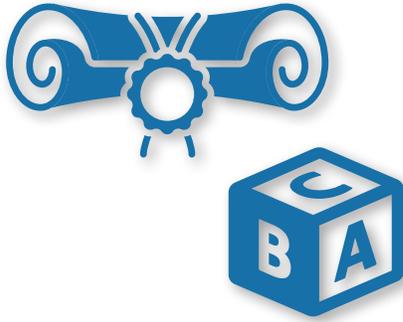
These interactions with the criminal justice system often create a cycle of dysfunction and disruption that make gainful employment and normal family life practically impossible (Goffman, 2014; Lopoo and Western, 2005; Western, Kling, and Weiman, 2001). Where incarceration happens, such interactions harm the entire Black community through increased mental and physical health risks to Black men, their families, and others with whom they interact, especially when the rates of incarceration are as high as one in four (Nowotny and Kuptsevych-Timmer, 2018). Mass incarceration also contributes greatly to social instability even for those who are not directly or even secondarily affected by it. Where mating markets are segmented by race, age, and location, as they are almost everywhere in the United States, every departure from “equilibrium” in heterosexual markets (one male for one female) affects the likelihood of relationships being established, with whom they will be established, and even the stability of relationships and quality of interactions once they are established. Charles and Luoh (2010) demonstrated the quantitative effects of Black male incarceration, specifically that rising rates of incarceration accounted for between 18% and 27% of the drop in overall marriage rates for Black women from 1980 to 2000, but also that these effects were concentrated in communities affected more by incarceration spatially and by age. They also argue (and demonstrate quantitatively) that incarceration increased the “bargaining power” of the Black males who had not been incarcerated, thus forcing women to improve their “marketability” in competition with one another, driving up college participation and employment for Black women (Charles and Luoh, 2010). Schneider, Harknett, and Stimpson (2018) used longitudinal data from 1969 to 2013 to test this hypothesis further and found that while declining income and employment security explained about one-fifth of the delay in marriage for men across the time period, they were almost unaffected by incarceration, state-level incarceration rates accounted for 29% of the delay

in first marriage for Black women and 28% of the delay for women of all races without a high school diploma. Dauria and colleagues (2015) observed these processes on the ground, including pressure on Black women to engage in more frequent and sometimes riskier sexual activity to please men where they are scarce. Figure 19 shows births to unmarried mothers in the state alongside the prison population from 1980 to 2019 (CDC, 2021b).

**Figure 19. MS Prison Pop. & Births to Unmarried Mothers, 1980-2019**



Assessments from Head Starts in a neighboring, demographically similar county show that, despite more than two-thirds of children resulting from unplanned (but accepted) pregnancies and the resource deficiencies in the households, most children have parents who are nurturing, supportive of their development, and use age-appropriate discipline, if often inconsistent. About 80% of children’s parents in the program have supportive family relationships and at least a few close friends they can count on for support. About 40% have fathers or a mother’s partner who is very involved and supportive, another quarter are emotionally distant but supportive, and another quarter are either hostile or not involved at all.



In the face of enormous need, childcare and early childhood education seem to be strong positives in the community and probably factor into why children are doing well in school in the early grades.

## Public Schools & Childcare Programs

Educational attainment is very low in the county. This is partly due to the many factors listed in the above sections but is also a function of brain drain, with those who do attain a higher education level leaving. Educational outcomes are highly segmented by race, as are the schools themselves. Younger children in the district are slightly outperforming the state, but graduation rates are very low and while graduates enroll into higher education at high rates, they are not finishing. In the face of enormous need, childcare and early childhood education seem to be strong positives in the community and probably factor into why children are doing well in school in the early grades.

**Strengths:** Childcare capacity is high in the county, programs appear to be well-located, and children are outperforming state norms in early grades.

**Weaknesses:** Pre-K enrollment seems lower than it should be, given enrollment rates for preschool, Head Start, kindergarten, and 1st grade. School facilities are characteristically old and poorly maintained.

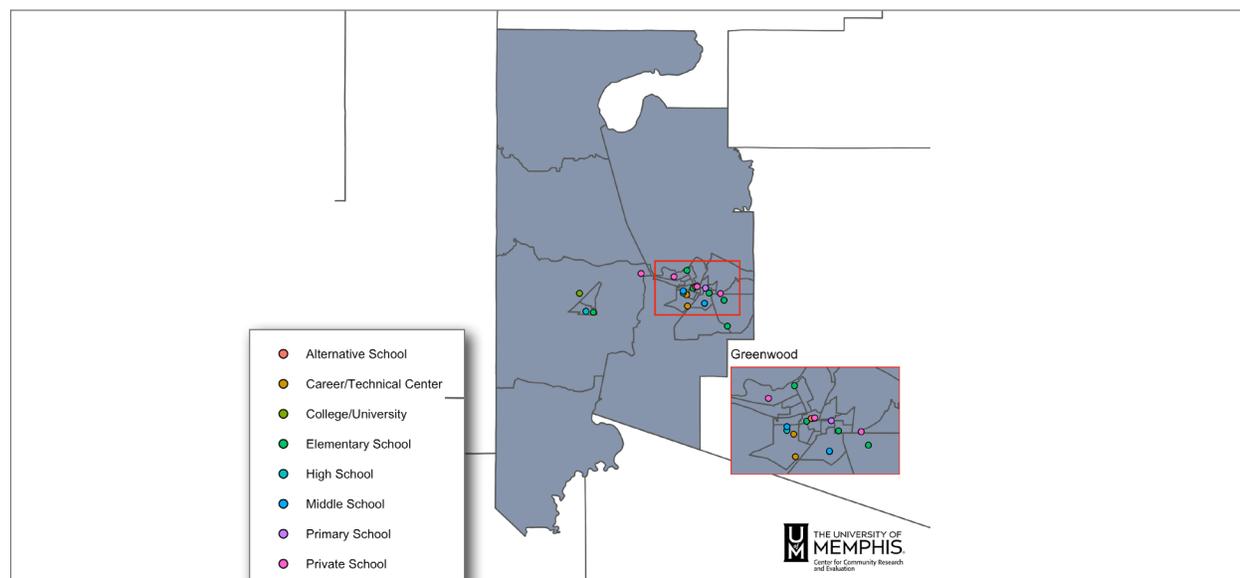
**Opportunities:** Using EHSCCP and HS/EHS to align children with pre-K programs could help increase enrollments and help children outperform the state even further in early grades. Increased HS/EHS capacity and enrollment could allow more young adults to finish degrees.

**Threats:** The above problems, including the lack of good career openings and strife in the community, create a scenario where the community does not always reap the rewards of investing into the education of its children because they leave. Early childhood programs appear to have great momentum in the county right now, but the political will could evaporate and people could lose their enthusiasm if the community is not able to see the early childhood successes spill over into success in other areas.

## Educational Attainment in the County

Here, we look at educational attainment and the state of the educational system in the county, to understand the population in the service area and examine the schools to which Head Start graduates will matriculate. Until recent decades, leaders in the Delta region benefited from maintaining a poorly educated Black labor force (Baptist, 2016; Cobb, 1992). Since the 1960s, federal oversight, civil rights activism and New South boosterism have pushed the educational system forward (Cobb, 1992). One way this is illustrated is through the relatively large network of community colleges in the state (Mississippi Community College Board, 2019). Still, the state is far behind the nation in educational outcomes and the schools in the Delta region remain highly segregated.

**Figure 20. Schools in Leflore County.**



Despite the presence of Mississippi Valley State University, a public, historically Black university in Itta Bena, educational attainment in the county for all adults 25 and older lags several percentage points behind state averages, with fewer county residents receiving high school diplomas or college degrees relative to the state average (Table 10; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). In fact, the percentage who have not attained a high school diploma is almost double the U.S. rate, and while almost 1 in 3 Americans have a bachelor's degree or higher, in Leflore County only a little more than 1 in 6 do. This gap may be worsening, as across the country younger people are more likely to have a bachelor's degree (35.1% of those 25-34), in Leflore County they are less likely than older residents to have a bachelor's degree (15.6%). Since only 16% of 25-34 year-olds in the whole county have bachelor's degrees, it is unlikely that anything more than a handful of Head Start parents will.

**Table 10. Educational Attainment by Age Group.**

Attainment	Age Group	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
Less than high school degree	Age 25-34	12.0%	12.9%	9.7%
	All 25+	21.2%	16.1%	12.4%
Bachelor's degree or more	Age 25-34	15.6%	23.2%	35.1%
	All 25+	17.5%	21.8%	31.5%

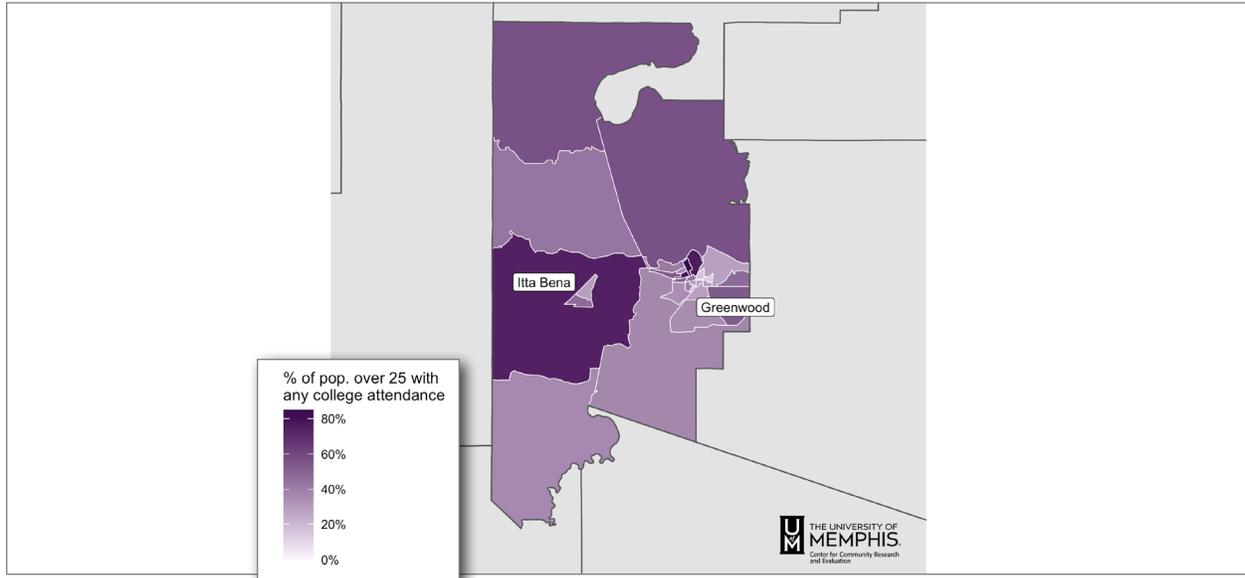
About three-fourths of Black residents 25 and older have graduated from high school, similar to state rates but about 9 percentage points lower than the U.S. rate of 85.4% (Table 11). The rate for white residents in the county is 12 percentage points higher. Fewer than one in seven Black residents in the county has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to more than one in four white residents. The county rate for obtaining a bachelor's degree is higher than the state rate for white residents, but lower than the state rate for Black residents.

**Table 11. Educational Attainment by Race (25+).**

Attainment	Group	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
At least high school degree	White	87.4%	87.8%	92.6%
	Black	76.7%	78.8%	85.4%
Bachelor's degree or more	White	28.7%	25.5%	35.2%
	Black	13.4%	15.3%	21.1%

College attendance rates are highest within the census block group capturing Mississippi Valley State University, and are also high in the predominantly White neighborhoods of Greenwood, as well as the northern rural regions of the county (Figure 21).

**Figure 21. College Attendance Rates by Block Group.**



College enrollment for Greenwood and Leflore County students was higher than the state average in 2018-19, despite the poor rates for educational attainment above (Table 12; Mississippi Department of Education, 2021). Furthermore, a greater proportion of Greenwood and Leflore County students were enrolled in four-year institutions. The trends are encouraging as they suggest strong opportunities for college access among the target population and may indicate that access is not the problem for local parents, but the ability to withstand life events (such as childbirth) and finish a degree.

**Table 12. Local Postsecondary Enrollment Rates (2018-19).**

School District	Overall	Public MS College Enrollment	Four Year College Enrollment	Two Year College Enrollment
	College Enrollment %	%	%	%
Greenwood	79.3%	73.6%	43.2%	24.0%
Leflore	72.5%	56.9%	32.9%	18.5%
MS	64.9%	60.6%	14.1%	48.8%

## Early Childhood Education

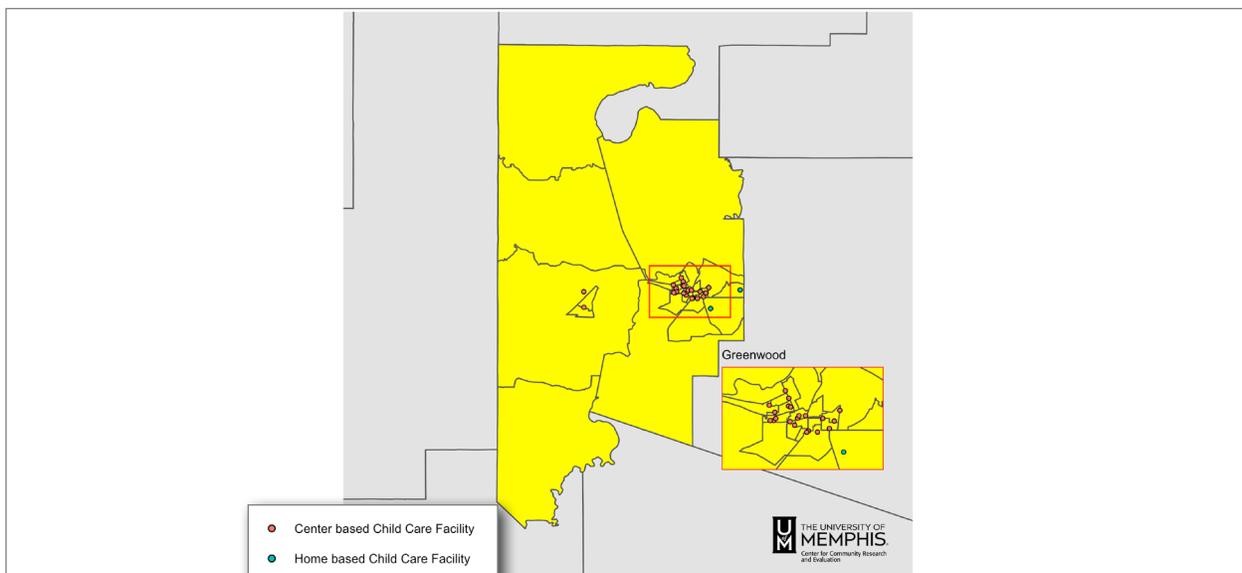
Families in Leflore County have an extreme need for childcare. Almost two-thirds of all households with small children have a female householder with no spouse present, more than double the rate in the state and three times the rate in the country (Table 13; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). Yet, the rate of women with young children being in the workforce is about the same in the county as it is elsewhere. This means many women with no spousal support are also working. And, almost 60% of young children are living in households below the federal poverty line, again almost double the state rate and almost three times the national rate. So, not only do many households have one parent, who is working or seeking work, but also have intense resource deficiencies. Possibly as a result, almost two-thirds of 3- and 4-year-olds in the county are enrolled in childcare programs, 35% higher than the national rate.

**Table 13. Childcare Need in National Context.**

Geography	% Single-Mother Families, w/ Children < 5	% Women in Workforce, w/ Children < 6	% Below FPL, w/ Children < 5	% 3-4 Year-Olds in School
Leflore Co.	65.0%	66.8%	59.4%	64.9%
Mississippi	31.9%	73.3%	31.1%	51.7%
Census South	23.3%	64.8%	24.1%	46.1%
United States	20.8%	71.2%	21.5%	47.9%

The Center for American Progress (CAP) has defined a “childcare desert” as any place where the ratio of children under five years of age to childcare provider capacity is higher than three-to-one (Center for American Progress, 2020). In Leflore County, the ACS estimates 2,193 children under 5, and the Mississippi Department of Health lists a capacity of 1,797 childcare slots across 26 childcare providers, a ratio for the county of 1.22:1, a capacity that is more than double what would be considered a childcare desert (Mississippi State Department of Health, 2021a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). But Figure 22 shows that all but two of these sites are within the city limits of Greenwood, with another two centers in Itta Bena and two low-capacity home care sites just outside Greenwood (Mississippi State Department of Health, 2021a). This is where most of the children in Leflore County live and where most of their parents work, but by the CAP definition all of the outlying areas to the north and southwest of the county would be considered childcare deserts. Taken together, the capacity in Greenwood is encouraging given the need, but a qualitative study would be required to know if the lack of providers in the other parts of the county prevents parents from having access to childcare. For example, input from the Women’s Advisory Council of Leflore County confirmed that parents continue to report access to childcare being a key need for the community.

**Figure 22. MSDH-Monitored Child Care Locations in County.**



There has been a growing effort to increase Pre-Kindergarten enrollment in Mississippi (e.g., WLBT-3, 2013). As of March 2020, there are four schools in Leflore County with a total of eleven classrooms participating in the state-funded Early Learning Collaborative program (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d.). In 2020-21, these sites had a total Pre-K enrollment of 99 children. Lacking numbers for the population of every single integer age, we estimate from the population under 5 that there are about 440 4 year-olds in the county. This would mean that only 22% of 4 year-olds in the county attend Pre-K in the public district. Looked at another way, 271 and 276 children enrolled in kindergarten and 1st grade in the district, respectively, almost three times as many children as attended Pre-K. By any metric, enrollment is low and may now indicate a need for outreach and awareness more than an increase in capacity.

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## Facilities

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It is common for Mississippi schools, especially Delta schools, to experience problems with the adequacy of school buildings. In many cases, Mississippi Delta public schools experience “crumbling” building infrastructure and malfunctioning facilities linked to decades of underfunding and neglect (Betz, 2019). In addition to problems with buildings, such as leaking roofs and structural cracks in exterior walls, there are wide reports of broken equipment, such as heating and cooling systems, restrooms, and ventilation. This affects the quality of education in Leflore County, with over 40% of parents find that their school is not a clean, well-maintained, pleasant place for learning, according to a 2020 student survey. The school district is well aware of the problems and repairs needs. In 2020, the Greenwood Leflore Consolidated School District developed a proposal to address concerns with roofing, energy efficiency and mechanical and electrical systems (Herrit, 2020).

Funding for large scale improvements spanning multiple elementary middle and high schools is often unavailable and, in many cases is raised from local sources. This results in equity gaps with schools serving disadvantaged students getting less funding to make improvements (Harris, Kolodner, and Morton, 2020). Furthermore, schools serving Black and Latino students from low-income families in areas like the Mississippi Delta are much more likely to remain closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, in part because old buildings are deemed unsafe for both children and teachers (e.g., poor ventilation). While teachers create makeshift solutions to better accommodate students, such as purchasing space heaters for classrooms, problems with school buildings are linked to poor student attendance and lowered enrollment rates, which negatively impact schools’ prospects for attaining future funding. Problems associated with dilapidated schools has also presented problems in Greenwood with recruiting and retaining classroom teachers (Betz, 2019).

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## School Demographics

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Racial segregation in the schools is more extreme than in the community at large (Table 14). The demographic differences in schools in most Delta counties are less informed by proportions in neighborhoods and more by the choice of white families to opt out of public schools altogether (Carr, 2012). Immediately following court-ordered integration of schools, many private schools opened across the Delta region, including Pillow Academy just outside Greenwood, with the often-expressed purpose not of improving academics, but of maintaining segregation (Rubin, 1998). Out of around 800 students at Pillow in 1997-98, there were zero Black students. In 2017-18, there were 19. Three other private schools participated in the National Center for Educational Statistics’ Private School Universe Survey (PSS) in 2017-18 (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). North New Summit, on Greenwood’s northern edge, was also majority white but more diverse than Pillow with 28% of its students being Black. St. Francis of Assisi, a Catholic elementary school, was 62% Black but also had 54 Hispanic students, one-third of its student body. Delta Streets Academy holds grades 7-12 and is also majority Black but more diverse than Pillow or most of the public schools.

**Table 14. School Demographics, 2019-20 School Year.**

School	Grades Enrolled	Number of Students	% non-Hispanic Black	% non-Hispanic White	% Hispanic	% Female
Mississippi, Statewide	PreK-12	465,913	47.7%	43.7%	4.2%	49.0%
Greenwood-Leflore Consolidated (district)	PreK-12	4,717	93.4%	2.3%	3.9%	49.9%
Threadgill Primary	PreK-1	260	97.7%	Suppressed	Suppressed	52.7%
Claudine F. Brown Elem.	PreK-2	309	93.2%	Suppressed	4.9%	48.9%
Leflore Co. Elem.	PreK-6	372	89.8%	Suppressed	8.6%	51.1%
Bankston Elem.	K-6	379	67.3%	15.6%	13.7%	50.7%
Davis Elem.	K-6	475	Suppressed	Suppressed	0%	52.4%
Threadgill Elem.	2-6	464	Suppressed	Suppressed	Suppressed	47.2%
East Elem.	3-5	343	94.5%	Suppressed	Suppressed	47.5%
Amanda Elzy Jr. High	6-8	368	92.7%	Suppressed	Suppressed	47.6%
Greenwood Middle	7-8	381	96.9%	Suppressed	Suppressed	48.3%
Leflore Co. High	7-12	333	95.8%	0%	4.2%	49.0%
Amanda Elzy High	9-12	375	93.6%	Suppressed	5.1%	49.9%
Greenwood High	9-12	658	97.1%	Suppressed	1.5%	52.4%
Pillow Academy (private)	PreK-12	702	2.7%	93.4%	2.7%	N/A
St. Francis of Assisi (private)	PreK-7	164	61.6%	2.4%	32.9%	N/A
North New Summit (private)	K-12	150	28.0%	64.7%	3.3%	N/A
Delta Streets Academy (private)	7-12	55	78.2%	3.6%	12.7%	N/A

The schools in the Greenwood-Leflore Consolidated School District are becoming less white but possibly more diverse due to the Hispanic population. Among the public schools, only Bankston Elementary had a less than 90% Black student body in 2019-20 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2021). Bankston is the only public school in the northern part of the city, on the north side of the Yalobusha River, which is residentially almost entirely white, and was originally a de jure white school and de facto white well into the 1990s when a Department of Justice program supported Black students who wanted to cross the river and attend the school (United States of America v. Greenwood Municipal Separate School District et al., 1969). As recently as 2009-10, Bankston was plurality white, with 49% of its students being white and 47% being Black. Now, Bankston has not only the largest white population (16%) but also the largest Hispanic population in the district, at 14%. Leflore County Elementary, in Itta Bena, is the most diverse of the other elementary schools with 9% of its students being Hispanic. Claudine F. Brown, in unincorporated Rising Sun, south of Greenwood on U.S. Highway 49E, is 5% Hispanic. Threadgill Elementary and Davis Elementary in Greenwood were so overwhelmingly Black that all their categories were suppressed in 2019-20 for having fewer than 10 students in the other categories: Threadgill and Davis were 99.7% and 98.9% Black, respectively, in 2009-10. Greenwood High, historically de jure white, was 97% Black in 2019-20. Amanda Elzy High, just south of Greenwood, and Leflore County High in Itta Bena follow the trend of the former county schools being more diverse than the city schools sans Bankston, with 6% of Elzy High and 4% of Leflore County High's students being white.

There was one new addition to the choices of local schools in 2020-21. Leflore Legacy Academy, a new charter school, opened on the grounds of a Southern Baptist church downtown, near the southern bank of the Yazoo. This school enrolled 123 students in 2020-21, all in 6th grade, with zero Hispanic students and suppressed results for white and Black students; after checking their website it appears this indicates that fewer than 10 white students attended (Leflore Legacy Academy, 2021). The school plans to enroll grades 6-8 (Associated Press, 2019).

The Greenwood Public School District and the Leflore County School District officially merged on July 1, 2019. The consolidated district has a student population of around 4,800 students and consists of seven elementary schools, two middle/junior high schools and three high schools. There are also two alternative schools (Leflore County Alternative School and Greenwood Alternative School) as well as two Career and Technical Education centers (Career and Technical Center and Leflore County Vocational Center).

## School Performance

Staff talked at length about the quality of education in the school system in the county. They were much more positive about early childhood and postsecondary education than K-12 education in the county, some going so far as to rate early childhood education with a “6 out of 5” overall. In the K-12 system, they mentioned the poor quality of teachers (in some cases referencing their own experiences) due to low wages for teachers.

Graduation rates for Greenwood, Leflore County and the state are presented in Table 15 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2021). The overall state rate is higher than the Greenwood and Leflore rates and the Greenwood rate is higher than Leflore. Across subcategories, females had higher graduation rates than males. Black students and economically disadvantaged students from Greenwood almost matched the state graduation rates.

**Table 15. High School Graduation Rates by Subgroup.**

School District	Overall	Female	Male	Black	White	Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged
Greenwood	79.9%	87.1%	72.6%	81.7%	<i>Suppressed</i>	<i>Suppressed</i>	81.2%
Leflore Co.	74.6%	85.2%	65.9%	74.3%	<i>Suppressed</i>	<i>Suppressed</i>	74.3%
Mississippi	85.0%	85.5%	79.6%	81.9%	83.3%	83.1%	82.2%

Table 16 shows the kindergarten Readiness benchmarks for students in Greenwood and Leflore school districts (ibid.). Both districts and the state of Mississippi were below the fall benchmark of 530. However, the spring scores for Greenwood County and the state were above the spring scale score benchmark for being on track for meeting Grade 3 requirements. Fall scores indicate the preparation that children receive in childcare and pre-K programs before they enter school.

**Table 16. Kindergarten Readiness Scaled Scores.**

School District	K Readiness Scaled Score (2018-19 fall)	K Readiness Scaled Score (2018-19 spring)
Greenwood	505	699
Leflore	483	649
State Average	501	711

The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment provides parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school. Students with a score of 498 at the end of pre-kindergarten are proposed to have mastered 70% of early literacy skills and are on track to reach beginning of kindergarten benchmarks. The most recent PreK assessment data (2018-19) is available for the Greenwood and Leflore consolidated school district in which the average score was 444, below the 498 cutoff but above the average score for collaborative school districts (425) (ibid.).

Seventy percent mastery of knowledge and skills in early literacy and numeracy at the beginning of kindergarten is used to determine kindergarten readiness in Mississippi. Literacy and numeracy skills provide both a measurable distinction between Pre-K and Kindergarten skills on STAR Early Literacy assessment and a strong prediction of proficiency as measured by the STAR Reading test used in Grade 3. The minimum beginning-of-year kindergarten scale score associated with 70% mastery is 530. Based on extensive research, 85% of students scoring 530 or higher at the beginning of kindergarten are proficient in reading at the end of Grade 3. A spring scale score of 681 places students on a trajectory to meet end of grade 3 reading expectations. The 3rd Grade MAAP ELA Assessment, known in the state as the “Reading Gate”, is a key assessment in Mississippi education.

Per the Literacy Based Promotion Act (LBPA), students who do not pass the MAAP ELA assessment are at risk of failing the third grade. In 2018-19, a student who scored at Performance Level 3 or above was deemed to have met the requirements of the and eligible to move to Grade 4; students performing below this level are given two additional attempts on a similar assessment to be promoted.

Table 17 shows that Greenwood and Leflore passing rates were well below the MS State average of 74%. Passing rates were also notably lower in Leflore schools than Greenwood schools.

**Table 17. 3rd Grade MAAP ELA Pass Rates, 2018-19.**

School District	% Passed (Met LBPA Requirements)
Greenwood	49%
Leflore	38%
Mississippi Total	74%

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## COVID-19

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Even though pre-pandemic data from 2019 showed that around two-thirds of Mississippi’s five-year-old children were not ready to enter Kindergarten, the current COVID climate threatens to further increase gaps in kindergarten readiness (Harris, 2020). Closures and reduced operations to public libraries, community-based childcare, preschool and Head Start are likely to have broadened deficits in academic and skills needed to start school. Applicant agency data for Neighborhood Surveys conducted in the Leland and Hollandale school districts (summer 2020) and Sunflower County school district (November 2020) show record low levels of center-based care and learning since the onset of the pandemic. Limited access to early child learning and care combined with the stresses families face with isolation, lack of income and food insecurity place many young MS children at significant risk for future educational success as well as physical and emotional wellbeing.

In addition to academic impact, research indicates that the COVID lockdown and social distancing may have a negative impact on the social and emotional development of children (Singh et al., 2020). Symptoms of distress are broad ranging, include disturbed sleep, changes to eating habits, inattention, agitation, and separation anxiety. Research has shown the pandemic has led to limitations in time spent outside for children, leading to less physical activity and more sedentary behavior (Moore et al., 2020). As with the academic gaps, scholars argue that the pandemic highlights inequalities in systems of care regarding children’s social and emotional health, especially among students from low-income or underprivileged backgrounds (Styx, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic and home-based schooling has placed parents at the forefront of their child’s education as evidenced by findings from a parent focus group conducted by the applicant agency in fall 2020. Parents of elementary, middle, and high school students attending schools in the Mississippi Delta described their role as home educators who are trying to help their children learn at home. It is clear that the parents interviewed were highly committed to their child’s education and had become engaged in their child’s learning and collaborations with school and teachers. Applicant agency data for Neighborhood Surveys conducted in the Leland and Hollandale, MS School Districts (summer 2020) and Indianola, MS School District (November 2020) concur with parental views of increased learning support at home. Both Neighborhood Survey assessments showed record high levels of reading with and to kindergarten through 8th grade students in 2020 over previous program years.

However, the focus group revealed parents’ concerns regarding children falling behind academically, socially and emotionally as well as their uncertainty as to how to support their child as they learn remotely. Even though students in some districts surveyed were provided Chromebooks and hotspots for Internet access for the fall 2020 semester and were expected to log in each day to learn with the teacher, parents commented that children often required supervision to ensure they engaged in schoolwork and followed instructions. Parents also reported being overwhelmed about spending several hours a day or evening going over schoolwork with their child, following up with classroom teachers and being unsure about the effectiveness of the help they provided. In the 2020 school district survey in Leflore County, parents reported high levels of interest in parenting classes in the area of parent/child communication (47%), parent-to-school relationships (48%), and college preparation (47%) and college readiness standards (49%).



Employment in Leflore county is characterized by high unemployment and low wages, especially for Black residents.

## Employment Patterns

Leflore County is part of a larger regional economy still transitioning from post-industrial agriculture to information and services. Employment in the county is characterized by high unemployment and low wages, especially for Black residents.

**Strengths:** The mere existence of the HS/EHS program will allow parents to compete in the job market more effectively. The service area is somewhat of a sub-regional employment hub, with the caveats included below.

**Weaknesses:** Mothers of young children have high labor force participation rates but are the group with the highest unemployment of those listed, at around 25%. Higher skilled jobs in the county appear to be being filled by commuters from nearby counties.

**Opportunities:** Pre-COVID, job growth was projected, and coordination with and referrals to local agencies could be especially fruitful for mothers of young children. The emergence of remote work during COVID-19 could give parents more opportunities outside the immediate area.

**Threats:** Jobs are highly centralized in Greenwood and Itta Bena, and jobs like catfish processing were some of the hardest hit by COVID-19. Even manufacturing jobs have been reeling from huge swings in demand and supply chain problems.

## Labor Force Participation

We begin a section on employment patterns within Leflore County by examining labor force participation and unemployment rates. Participation in the labor force, which is the percentage of working-age adults who are either employed or actively looking for work, is lower in Leflore County than in Mississippi or in the nation as a whole. Only 46% of Leflore County adults are in the labor force, which is 11% less than the state average and 17% less than the national average (Table 18; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). This is usually an indication that job seekers have given up finding jobs due to poor options in the labor market.

**Table 18. Labor Force Participation Rates.**

Group		Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
Overall		46.2%	57.4%	63.3%
Race/Ethnicity	White, non-Hispanic	57.2%	57.2%	62.3%
	Black, non-Hispanic	42.1%	57.2%	62.5%
	Hispanic	57.0%	62.3%	67.4%
Sex	Male	58.9%	74.7%	82.2%
	Female	63.1%	67.6%	72.6%
Female with child <6		66.8%	73.3%	71.2%

The difference in labor force participation does not appear attributable to physical abilities to work, as the percentage of residents with a disability is lower in Leflore County (10%) than in Mississippi (16%) or nationwide (13%) (Table 19; *ibid.*).

**Table 19. Percent with a Disability.**

Group	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
Overall	10.4%	16.3%	12.6%
White, non-Hispanic	12.2%	17.5%	13.9%
Black, non-Hispanic	9.5%	15.3%	14.0%
Hispanic	6.9%	9.0%	8.9%

The problem is much more evidently a problem of the availability and accessibility of employment for residents, as suggested by Leflore County's 11% unemployment rate, more than double the national average (Table 20; *ibid.*). This means that job seekers are about half as likely to find a job in Leflore County as they are elsewhere.

**Table 20. Unemployment Rates.**

Group		Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
Overall		11.3%	8.2%	5.9%
Race/ Ethnicity	White, non-Hispanic	2.3%	5.7%	4.7%
	Black, non-Hispanic	15.8%	12.3%	10.6%
	Hispanic	0.0%	8.0%	6.8%
Sex	Male	9.9%	7.5%	5.5%
	Female	14.8%	7.9%	5.4%
Female with child <6		25.5%	10.3%	6.4%
Educational Attainment	Less than HS degree	12.7%	14.8%	9.0%
	High school graduate	15.3%	8.3%	6.3%
	Some college	6.7%	6.0%	4.8%

Nationally and statewide, there are not significant racial differences in labor force participation, but within the county white residents have the same labor force participation as in the state overall while Black residents have a rate that is 15 percentage points lower. This is not a matter of physical ability – as Black residents have lower rates of disability than white residents – but one of systematic fractional and structural unemployment. The Black unemployment rate of 15.8% in Leflore County exceeds state and national averages by a considerable margin, meaning that even when Black residents are in the labor force they have a much harder time of finding stable jobs. Men have lower labor force participation rates than women but have an unemployment rate that is about 50% lower than the rate for women. A severe need for employment among women with children was evident in the data: while women with children under 6 have the highest labor force participation rates, they also had an astounding 25.5% unemployment rate, indicating that this population is very much searching for but unable to find employment. Interestingly, both male and female workers in the county are more likely to work full-time, year-round if they do find work (Table 21; *ibid.*).

**Table 21. Workers with Full-Time, Year-Round Employment**

Group	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
All workers	72.4%	67.6%	65.6%
Male workers	75.8%	72.1%	71.5%
Female workers	69.3%	62.9%	59.1%

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## Job Market Conditions

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The major employment sectors in Mississippi are healthcare, manufacturing, retail, leisure, and education (Table 22; Mississippi Department of Employment Security, n.d.). Wages differ strongly across and within these sectors. Almost 60,000 healthcare workers work at hospitals, paying an average of about \$50,000, with another 55,000 working in “ambulatory services” paying an average of \$59,000, but 32,000 work in nursing and residential care earning an average of only \$28,000. Numbers of employees by individual firm are not published officially by the BLS, but the largest employer in this sector is probably Sta-Home Health and Hospice, with a reported 17,000 employees (Zippia, 2021). The University of Mississippi Medical Center has a reported 10,000 employees, as well (CareerOneStop, 2021).

The manufacturing sector is large and spread out across multiple industries, with about 28,000 jobs in transportation equipment, mostly tied to the Nissan plant in Canton, MS (Nissan, 2021). These jobs pay an average of \$62,000. The next largest subsector is food manufacture, mostly animal slaughter and processing, with 24,000 employees earning an average of \$34,000. There are several catfish processors in the region and one large Tyson processing plant in Carthage, east of the Delta (CareerOneStop, 2021). Furniture production is another large industry in the state, employing 18,000 people at an average salary of \$36,000. This includes an Ashley Furniture factory in northeastern Mississippi, the largest upholstery producer in the world (Mississippi Development Authority, 2021), and an appliance manufacturer inside the service area, in Greenwood (Greenwood Leflore Carroll Economic Development Foundation, 2021).

In retail, a plurality of jobs is in general merchandise (35,000) earning an average of \$23,000, with Walmart reporting 23,000 associates in the state, likely the state’s largest single employer (Walmart, 2021). There are 18,000 employed at automotive and parts dealers in the state earning \$42,000 on average, and another 18,000 working in food sales, mostly grocers, earning just \$20,000 on average. The state has a large accommodation and food service sector, with 97,000 employees working in food service, mostly restaurants, and earning very low wages, \$15,000 on average. The accommodation subsector pays \$27,000 on average and includes casinos, with several in the Delta in Tunica, Lula, Greenville, and Vicksburg. The vast majority of education jobs in the state (77,000) are in local schools at the elementary and secondary level, paying an average of \$36,000. Community and junior colleges employ another 8,000 at an average of \$40,000, and colleges and universities employ 22,000 in the state at \$63,000 on average.

**Table 22. Major Employment Sectors in Mississippi.**

Sector (by NAICS Group)	# Employees	# Firms	Mean Yearly Wage
Healthcare & Social Assistance	178,400	7,509	\$43,287
Manufacturing	146,901	2,398	\$50,040
Retail	135,904	11,469	\$26,466
Accommodation & Food Service	128,372	5,757	\$17,867
Education	109,646	1,420	\$41,545

The local economy mirrors that of the Delta region, in that many of the major sectors and largest employers predominate around the provision of social services (Mississippi Department of Employment Security, n.d.). The sector with the most employees is healthcare and social assistance, structured around the Greenwood Leflore Hospital, as well as an associated ecosystem of healthcare firms. Other significant employers include the consolidated school district, as well as Mississippi Valley State University. Workers in both sectors receive wages several thousand dollars lower than state averages, matching observations from Head Start staff in interviews. Both the healthcare and education sectors appear to be primed for industry growth in the region, according to Delta-region projections from the Mississippi Department of Economic Security (n.d.).

**Table 23. Major Employment Sectors in Leflore County.**

Sector	# employees (employers)	Major Employers	Average Annual Wage, Leflore County	Average Annual Wage, State	Projected Industry Growth in Region
Healthcare & social assistance	3,252 (97)	Greenwood Leflore Hospital	\$34,718	\$43,287	+30%
Manufacturing	2,737 (25)	Heartland Catfish America's Catch Viking Range Corp. Milwaukee Electric Tool	\$28,428	\$50,040	+9%
Education	1,587 (26)	MS Valley State Univ. Public School Districts	\$34,756	\$41,545	+23%
Retail	1,579 (137)	Wal-Mart	\$24,707	\$26,466	+15%
Accommodation & food service	1,125 (65)	Food & lodging firms	\$15,015	\$17,867	+36%

Other key sectors include low-paying retail and accommodation and food service jobs, in addition to manufacturing. However, manufacturing positions in the service area are low-paying relative to the state-average, paying an average wage of only \$28,428, compared to a state average of \$50,040. This category includes catfish processing, once a source of employment for many Black residents who, following attempts to unionize, have been supplanted in recent years by newly arriving Hispanic migrants (Trice, 2006). Other, more traditional major manufacturers in the area include Viking Range Corporation and Milwaukee Electric Tool.

Despite local underemployment, particularly in the African American community, Leflore County is to some extent a regional hub, sharing a micropolitan statistical area with neighboring Carroll County. This is reflected in the county's commuting patterns: 54% of Leflore County's workers commute in from neighboring counties, with several thousand more in-commuters (7,994) than out-commuters (4,637) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Trends appear similar across available differentiating factors, such as age of worker or wages paid, although the ratio of in-commuters to out-commuters is highest for goods-producing industries than other industries, such as trade, transportation, and utilities.



Leflore County has poor health outcomes on nearly every metric, culminating in very poor summary outcomes like life expectancy and birth weight.

## Medical & Environmental Health

Leflore County has poor health outcomes on nearly every metric, culminating in very poor summary outcomes like life expectancy and birth weight. Outcomes appear to be worse than healthcare access or behaviors would predict them to be. The county is not as polluted as much of the country, but does have challenges related to the climate.

**Strengths:** The county is younger and disabled less often than the rest of the country. The population being heavily centralized in Greenwood could make healthcare, fresh produce, and greenspaces easier to access.

**Weaknesses:** All the summary health measurements show that the county is extremely unhealthy relative to the rest of the country. Despite the presence of medical professionals, primary care access is low. Almost the entire county counts as a food desert by the strictest definition. There are few recreational spaces in the areas where children live.

**Opportunities:** Having a single coordinator of Head Starts in the community, to align their services and solidify their network with local healthcare providers, creates a unique opportunity for ensuring the health of children moving forward and tracking them as they matriculate. Many parents are simply unaware of the services available to them.

**Threats:** Program families in neighboring communities almost entirely use Medicaid, which is constantly under threat by the state legislature. After refusing federal funds to expand Medicaid, the unemployed have extremely low rates of insurance relative to the rest of the country. A specific threat is poor women lacking healthcare for themselves, and then having poor birth outcomes despite being proactive in pregnancy due to lacking preconception care.

## Healthcare Access

Head Start staff were mostly positive about healthcare access in the county for young children on Medicaid, but were much less positive about care for parents. Affordability of insurance, care, and medications were particular concerns for staff. Mandatory charity care was mentioned as one way poor families could access care, but staff members were divided over whether this care would be provided, in practice. Care was considered to be very inconsistent and person-dependent, especially for adults. Staff also talked at length about how person-dependent the benefits themselves could be, with some saying their benefits were stopped for no reason, because they were not working or, in other cases, because they were working. For children, visits to specialists were one item of concern, with staff saying parents would have to travel to Ruleville, Grenada, or much farther to Jackson or Memphis for basic surgeries like ear tubes. There was disagreement about the usefulness of transportation services for medical care: Medicaid does provide transportation, but it may not be usable in all cases, with one staff member saying that one parent had to wait 8 hours to be returned home from a visit to a clinic. For dentistry, staff mentioned a lack of access for anything more than basic cleaning, but also said that many parents do not perceive dental care to be necessary for their children since they will lose their baby teeth.

The statistics on healthcare access are mostly promising. The rate of insurance for young children is very high, even relative to the country, at 94.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). The rate of insurance overall is much lower, at 85%, five percentage points lower than the national rate of 90.6%. The largest point of departure in coverage is for the unemployed. In Leflore County, only 56.2% of the unemployed are covered, versus 70% in the U.S. These differences in coverage are due to differences in Medicaid eligibility (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019). Mississippi is one of twelve states to oppose Medicaid expansion, and one of seven to request a work requirement provision (Commonwealth Fund, 2021). Work requirements would not cover ineligible mothers of young children who are unable to find work, 90% of whom are already in the labor force. There are slightly more primary care providers per capita in Mississippi than in the U.S. overall, and both primary care and mental health providers are overrepresented in Leflore County relative to the state and country (County Health Rankings, 2021; Hing and Hsiao, 2014; Larson, Patterson, Garberson, and Andrilla, 2016).

**Table 24. Healthcare Access in National Context.**

Geography	% Insured	% Insured, Age < 6	% Insured, Unemployed	Primary Care Providers (per 100,000)	Mental Health Providers (per 100,000)
Leflore Co.	85.0%	94.8%	56.2%	75.0	476.0
Mississippi	87.3%	96.2%	49.1%	52.9	158.7
Census South	87.6%	94.8%	59.6%	---	---
United States	90.6%	95.8%	70.3%	46.1	221.2

Despite the information in Table 24, measures from other sources are not as promising for Leflore County. The county is a 2020 designated Health Professional Shortage Area (Health Resources & Services Administration, n.d.). Scores range on a continuum from 0 to 26, with higher scores representing greater areas of need in determining priorities for assigning clinicians. For primary care, the city of Greenwood exhibits a score of 23 and the rest of the county a 16, signifying a tremendous need for more primary care across all areas of Leflore County. The average score nationally is 8, and 41% of counties and county sub-units have no shortage. In Mississippi, the average HPSA Primary Care score is 10.5, once again, well below that of Leflore County. The formal ratio of population to primary care health providers in Leflore County is 3,125:1. Leflore County is also designated as an area of need for mental health and dental practitioners.

According to 2019-20 HRSA data, Leflore County has 58 active MDs serving a population of 28,183 residents, a rate of roughly 486 people (potential patients) per provider. The state of Mississippi has a slightly higher population to provider ratio, at 514:1. Nationally, the number is much lower; 346 potential patients per active MD. For pediatricians, the U.S. ratio is 1,209 persons under age 18 per pediatrician. In Mississippi, the ratio is 2,024:1, and in Leflore County there are only 3 pediatricians for a population of 8,370 residents under the age of 18, a ratio of 2,790:1. This is indicative of a greater problem in Leflore County with children potentially having a low likelihood of having a medical home.

**Table 25. Ratios of Medical Professionals to Population, 2019-20.**

Geography	# of Active MD	Total Population	Pop:MD Ratio	# of Pediatrician	<18 Population	Pop:Ped. Ratio
Leflore Co.	58	28,183	486:1	3	8,370	2,790:1
Mississippi	5,791	2,976,149	514:1	347	702,371	2,024:1
U.S. Avg.	957,612	331,601,364	346:1	60,033	72,571,689	1,209:1

## Health Outcomes

Chronic diseases have long been the leading causes of death in the United States, particularly heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and diseases of the respiratory system. Mississippi, and Leflore County in particular, experience a disproportionate burden of these diseases, as evidenced in Table 26 below (CDC, 2020). The rate of heart disease and stroke deaths per 100,000 in Leflore County are high for Mississippi standards, and are more than twice that of the national rates. The disparity in diabetes rates is even higher, as Leflore County exhibits a death rate more than twice as high as the state and three times that of the nation. Cancer deaths are also substantially higher in Leflore County than the state and nation.

**Table 26. Mortality Rates per 100,000 in National Context (CDC Wonder).**

Geography	Heart Disease	Cancer	Stroke	Diabetes	Respiratory Diseases
Leflore County	369.4	230.7	81.2	67.3	77.5
Mississippi	250.6	196.8	49.6	32.0	100.3
United States	176.8	165.4	36.9	21.1	71.7

Mississippi often ranks at the bottom of health and quality of life metrics nationwide, and Leflore County is among the worst areas in the state. Table 27 shows life expectancy and obesity and diabetes rates for Leflore County, Mississippi, and the U.S. Leflore County's life expectancy lags 8 years behind the rest of the country, a difference of 10%. More than 15% of the adults in Leflore County are estimated to be diabetic by the CDC, a little higher than the state rate and almost double the U.S. rate (CDC, 2021a; CDC, n.d.; County Health Rankings, 2021; Hales, Carroll, Fryar, and Ogden, 2020; World Bank, 2021a).

**Table 27. Adult Health Outcomes in National Context.**

Geography	Life Expectancy	Adult Obesity Rate	Adult Diabetes Rate
Leflore Co.	70.5	37%	15.3%
Mississippi	74.9	40.8%	12.4%
United States	78.5	42.4%	9.1%

Figure 23 shows life expectancy across the country by Census tract, in quintiles. Tracts in the bottom quintile are shaded red, and two regions stand out for a concentration of red tracts: Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia, and the two north-south strands on each side of Mississippi.

Figure 23. U.S. life expectancy by census tract, 2010-15 (Tejeda-Vera, Bastian, Arias, Escobedo, and Salant, 2020).

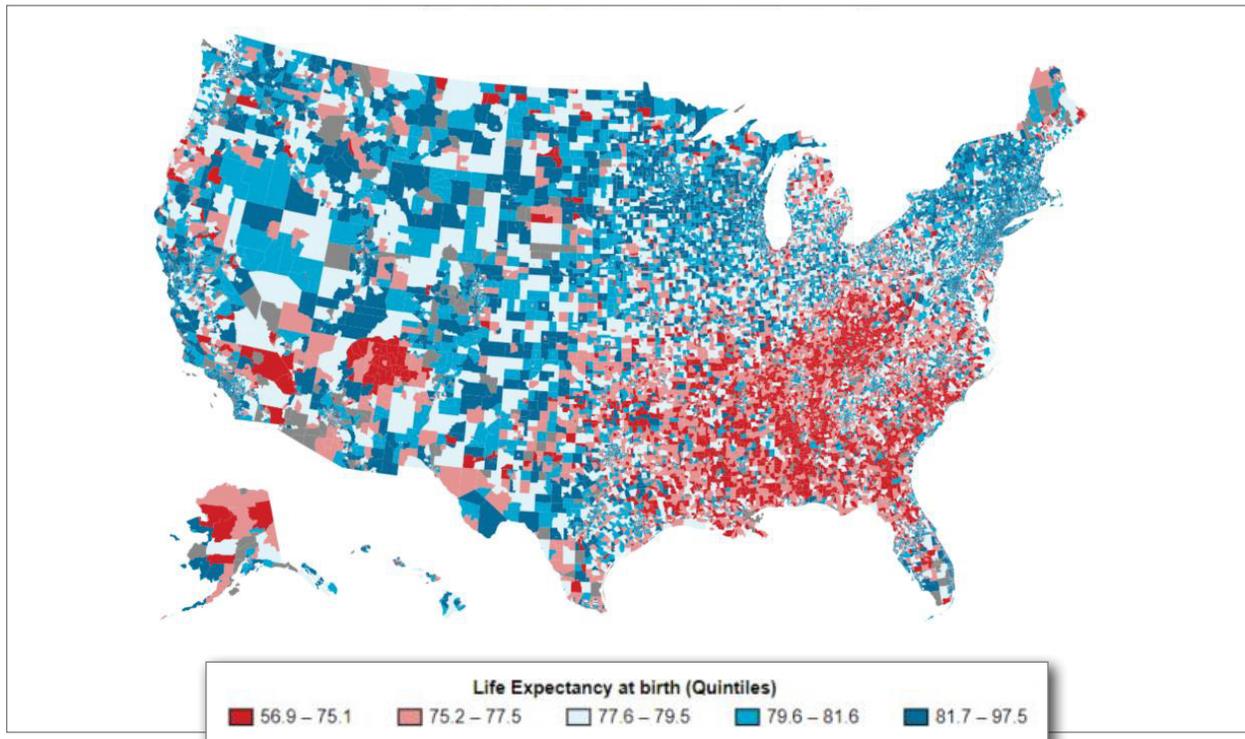
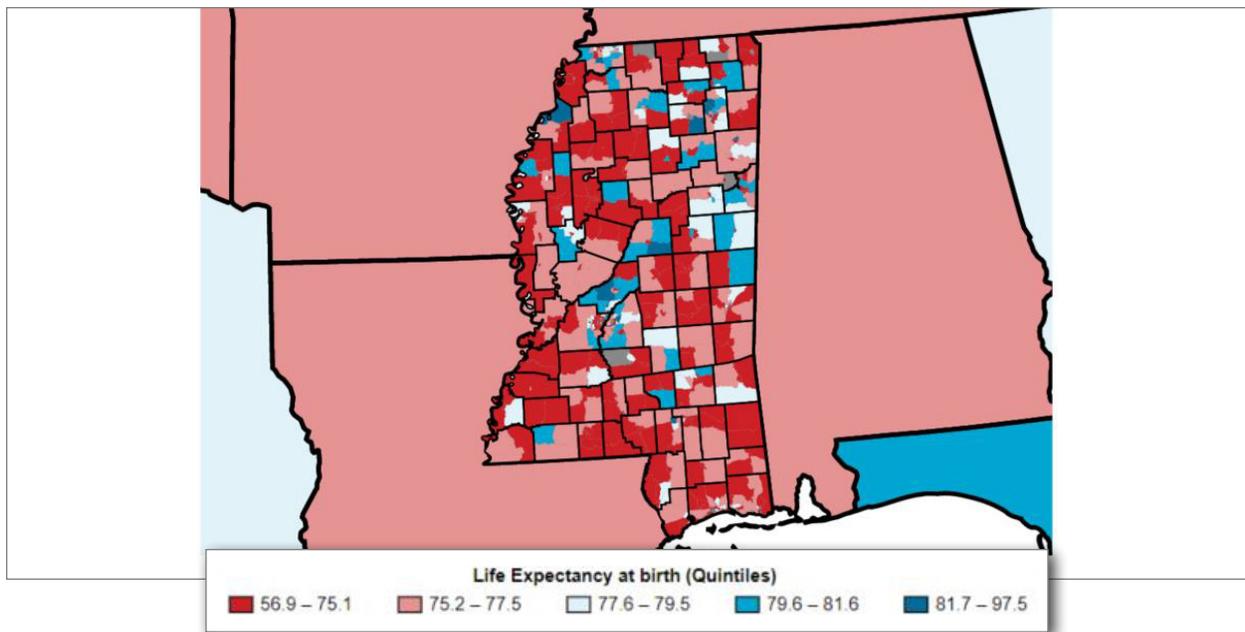


Figure 24 offers a tighter view of Mississippi. Mississippi is the only state in which the overall life expectancy puts the whole state in the bottom quintile. Leflore County is one of a handful of counties in the state in which every tract in the county is red. Every adjacent county is also mostly red except Humphreys County, to the southwest.

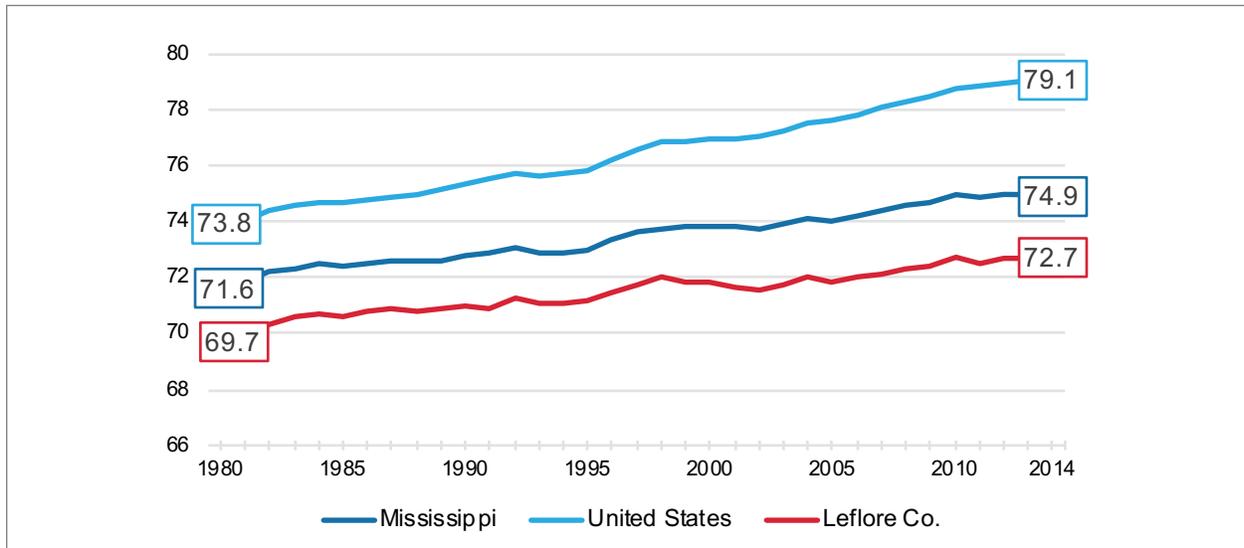
Figure 24. Mississippi life expectancy at birth by census tract, 2010-15 (Tejeda-Vera et al., 2020).



Geographic areas with no data available are filled in gray.

Life expectancy in the county was a little closer to the state and nation 40 years ago (Figure 25; Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2021). In 1980, Leflore County’s life expectancy was about four years lower than the rest of the country and two years lower than life expectancy in the state. Since then, life expectancy in the county has increased by three years while the U.S. has gained more than five years and the state has gained more than three.

**Figure 25. Leflore Co. Life Expectancy at Birth, 1980-2014**

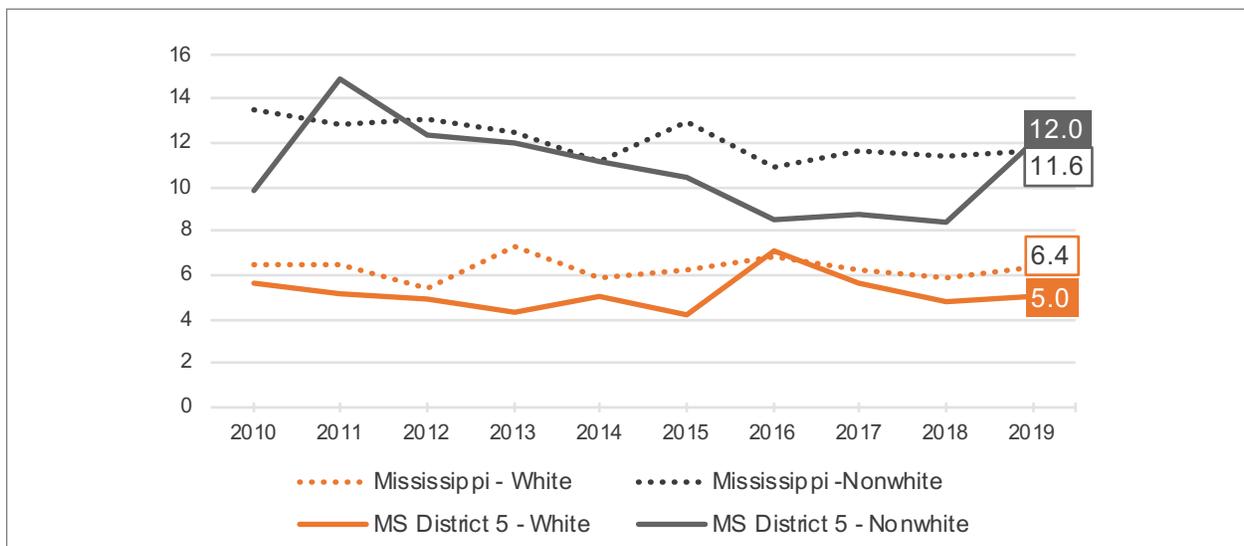


Mississippi also routinely ranks at the bottom of all states for birth outcomes, and Leflore County’s rates are worse than the state’s (Table 28; Collier et al., n.d.; Ely and Driscoll, 2020). The infant mortality rate is double the rate in the country. If Leflore County were a country, its infant mortality rate of 11.9 per 1,000 would give it the same rate as Colombia, El Salvador, Belize, and Armenia (World Bank, 2021b). Shown in Figure 26 by the state’s public health region that includes Leflore County (individual counties are suppressed by race), the Black infant mortality rate has been about double the white rate since 2010, although both rates are close to state rates.

**Table 28. Birth Outcomes in National Context.**

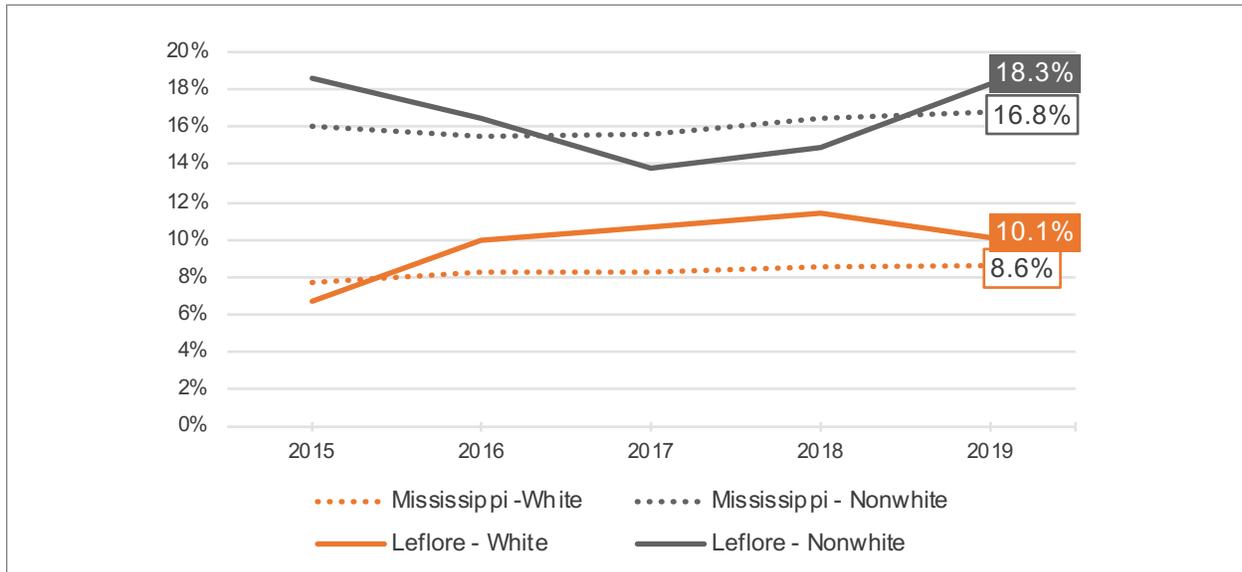
Geography	Infant Mortality Rate	Preterm Birth Rate	Low Birthweight Rate
Leflore County	11.9	15.0%	13.9%
Mississippi	8.3	14.3%	12.3%
United States	6.0	10.0%	8.3%

**Figure 26. Infant Mortality Rate (per 100,000) by Year**

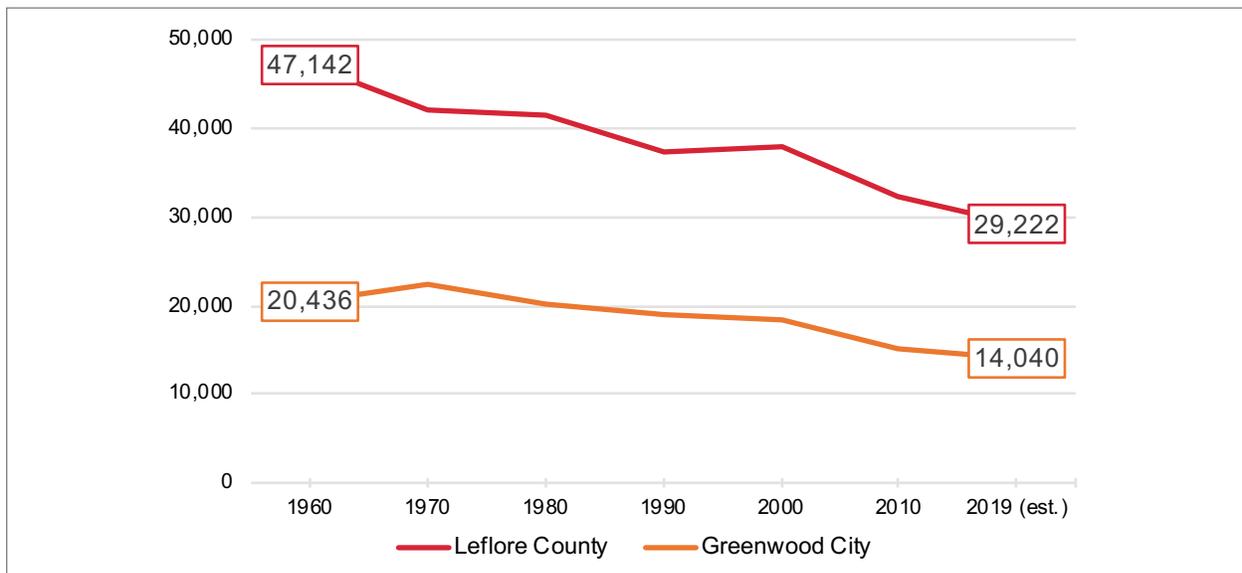


The low birth weight (less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces) and preterm birth rates (births before the 37th week of gestation) were also about 50% higher in the county than in the country overall (Table 28; Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, and Driscoll, 2021; Mississippi State Department of Health, 2021b). The low birth weight rate in the state is about twice as high for nonwhite babies as it is for white babies, and after a tightening of the gap in this disparity from 2016 to 2018 the gap reemerged in the county in 2019 (Figure 27). Preterm birth rates were lower for nonwhite babies than white babies in the county from 2016 to 2018, but spiked to be 4 percentage points higher than the white rate in 2019 (Figure 27).

**Figure 27. Low Birth Weight Rates by Year**



**Figure 28. Rates of Preterm Birth by Year**



Racial disparities in birth outcomes are driven at three different levels including the patient, provider, and system (Kilbourne et al., 2006). A patient's perception of the quality of care they are receiving, the quality of the relationship they have with their provider, and perceptions of health and illness they have from their sociocultural context all contribute to disparities. Additionally, the way a patient interprets illness and their sense of control over treatment can all represent barriers to quality healthcare. Unconscious (implicit) and conscious (explicit) provider biases exist and contribute to the stark differences we see in outcomes. Finally, on a structural level, lack of transportation, lack of or inadequate health insurance, scarcity of providers, and inconvenient health services locations all lead to the stark contrasts seen in Leflore County.

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## Environmental Concerns

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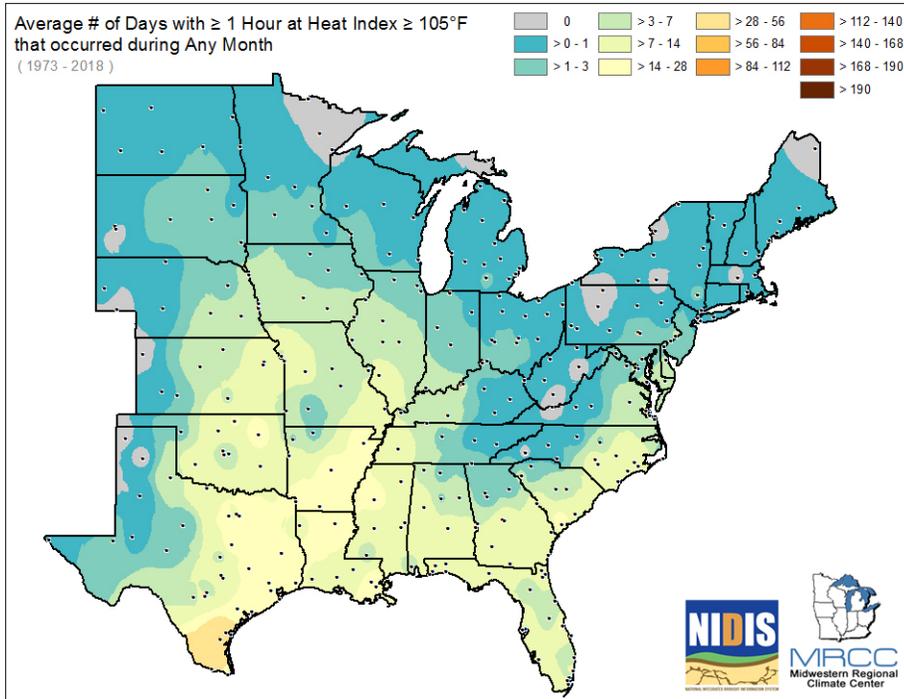
Like the rest of the state, Leflore County has a humid subtropical climate, with hot, humid summers with high temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit almost every day and occasionally above 100 degrees. Summer lasts from the end of May until the end of September. Mild, relatively short winters have daily high temperatures that average in the 50s Fahrenheit and rarely dip below freezing. The county averages 53 inches of rainfall each year, with late summer and autumn being slightly dryer than the rest of the year (NOAA, 2021). Severe thunderstorms and flash floods are common during spring and early summer, as are tornadoes.

Geologically, the Delta region consists almost entirely of alluvial floodplain. The flora originally included mixed deciduous forest and cypress swampland that has been cleared and drained for farming. The land is very flat and is now only rarely broken by stands of trees. A series of bluffs to the east of Leflore County serves as the eastern edge of the Delta. The Yazoo River is the main drainage of the region. It begins in downtown Greenwood, at the confluence of the Tallahatchie and Yalobusha rivers.

There are several natural risks in Greenwood and Leflore County. The primary risk to property is probably flooding. Greenwood had flooding that included evacuations as recently as June 2021 (Kalich, 2021). There was also a major flood in 2019 (Sims, 2019). The weather and topography of the region mean that flooding happens both as a result of swelling rivers, including the Mississippi River, and high local rainfall. 2018 and 2019 were two of the five wettest years on record for the county (NOAA, 2021). The county has had two major tornadoes. In 1971, a major regional tornado outbreak killed 14 and injured 192 in the county (NOAA, n.d.). The last time any fatalities or injuries were recorded from a tornado in the county was in 1984, and no tornadoes have been recorded since 2011 (ibid.).

Other natural hazards in the county include often extreme heat indices due to high heat and humidity in the summer, high UV indices in the summer, and periodically high dust, dander, and pollen exposures. Figure 29 shows heat indices in the Delta in a subnational context (Midwestern Regional Climate Center, 2021). The northwestern corner of Mississippi has as many days (14-28) with a heat index of 105 degrees Fahrenheit or higher as anywhere else in the eastern half of the country except southern Texas. The hot days in summer place everyone at higher risk of heat exhaustion, limit the time children can spend outdoors, and make air conditioning a necessity. The average UV index in the county is moderate or higher (3+) in every month except November, December, and January, and very high (8) from late May to mid-August (EPA, 2020). High UV exposure can cause skin cancers, cataracts and immune system damage (World Health Organization, 2021), and the EPA recommends protection for exposure at level 3 or higher (EPA, 2004). Finally, in their annual report of “asthma capitals” (the most challenging places to live with asthma), the Asthma and Allergies Foundation of America ranked Jackson, MS 15th and Memphis, TN 29th worst on a list of 100 metropolitan areas (Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, 2019). Both Jackson and Memphis ranked in the top 10 for asthma-related deaths, with Jackson having the worst death rate in the country. Further, Memphis ranked 10th highest for people affected by pollen, and Jackson had the highest rate of long-term asthma controller medication use nationwide. It seems most of the asthma problems in the region are due to human causes, as Jackson and Memphis rank above average for seasonal allergy exposure (ibid.).

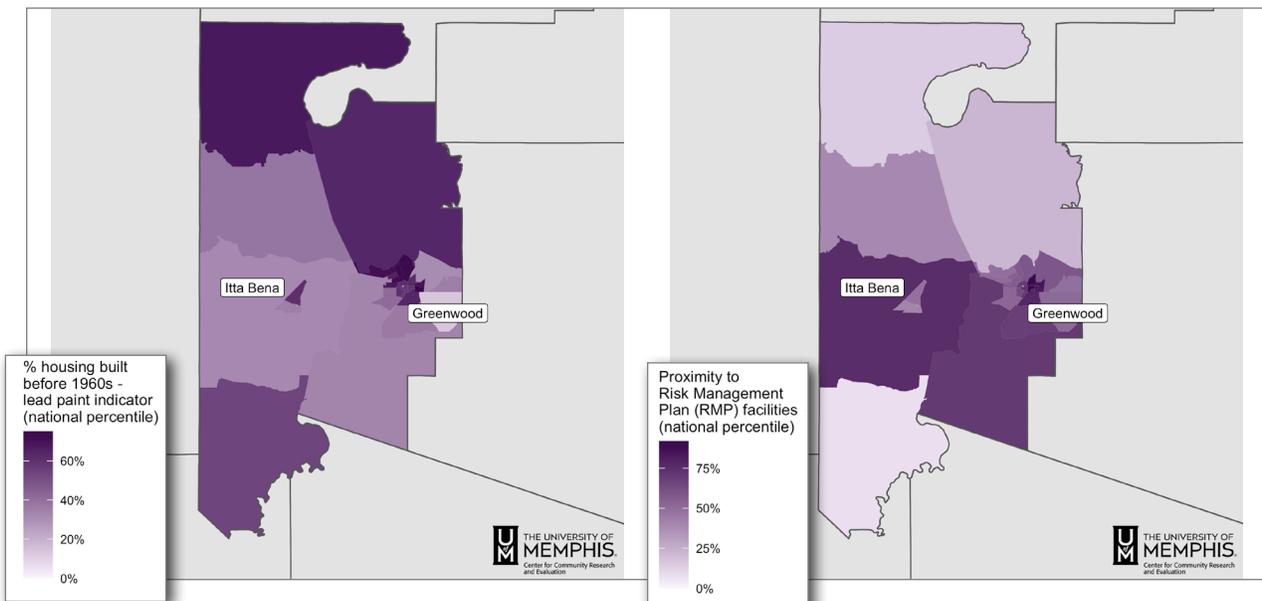
**Figure 29. Heat Index Map, Eastern U.S.**



Greenwood and the surrounding areas have decent air quality readings from the EPA, in a national context (EPA, 2021). Air particulate and diesel exposure readings are at the 57th percentile or below for every census tract in the county. Particulate exposures may be more time sensitive in the Delta than in other areas, potentially resulting from field burns and/or occasional droughts instead of industrial pollution or seasonal allergens.

Other items in EPA data show elevated risk in some parts of the county. Figure 30 shows the percentage of homes built before 1960 as a proxy for the risk of lead paint exposure (EPA, 2021). Most of Greenwood is at the 50th percentile or higher nationally, as are the sparsely populated northern parts of the county. Another measure that shows risk more than actual exposure is the proximity to sites with an EPA-mandated risk management plan for hazardous materials, or “RMP sites.” Residents in east-central Greenwood are above the 80th percentile for proximity to RMP sites, with the ag-industrial areas around Itta Bena and Rising Sun also ranking above the national median (Figure 31).

**Figure 30. Housing Built Before 1960 by Block Group (Proxy for Lead Paint).  
Figure 31. Proximity to EPA RMP Sites by Block Group.**



## Food Security

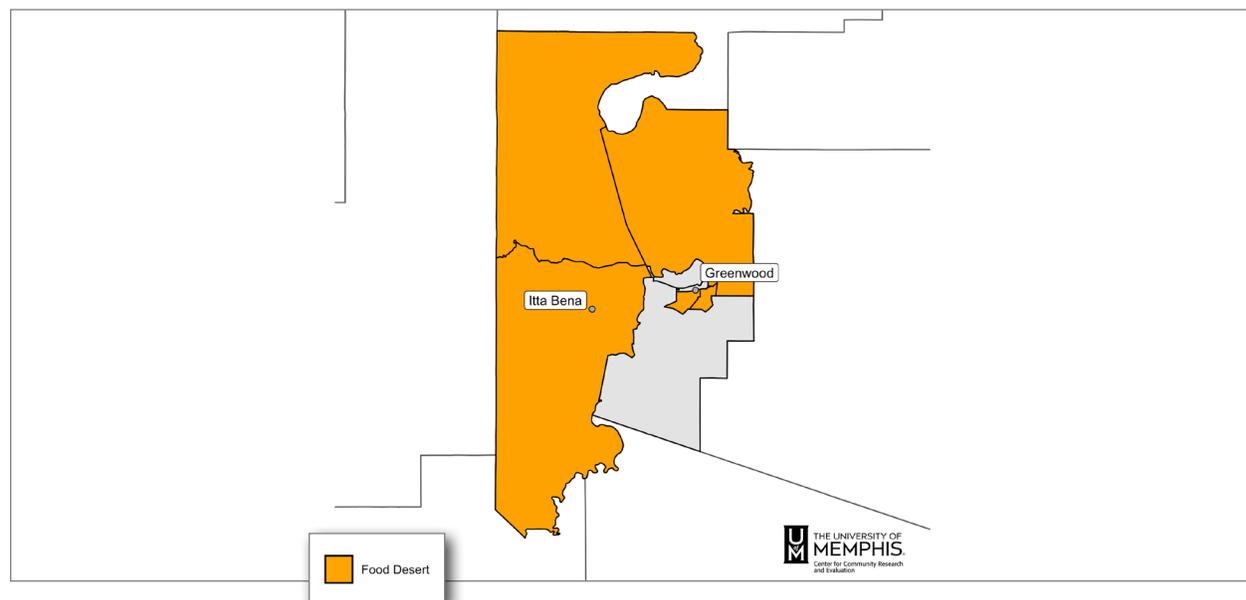
Households in Leflore County also have a difficult time obtaining healthy, fresh food. The percentage of households receiving SNAP benefits is several percentage points above the national average, including among working households (Table 29; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). A lack of resources for food is particularly acute among Black households, with almost a third relying on SNAP to pay for groceries. Further, in 2018-19 all students in the Greenwood and Leflore County school districts were eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. This is a regional trend. A 2019 survey of Medicaid-enrolled patients at the nearby Leland Medical Clinic reflects the general sense of food insecurity for the poorest residents of the Delta region: 47% of respondents ran out of food within the previous twelve months and did not have money to buy more (internal data).

**Table 29. SNAP Assistance in National Context.**

Item	Leflore County	Mississippi	United States
% working households receiving SNAP	21.9%	15.7%	11.8%
% households receiving SNAP	22.0%	16.5%	12.2%
% among white households	4.7%	8.9%	8.3%
% among African-American households	29.4%	29.2%	26.1%
% among Hispanic households	4.7%	17.2%	20.7%

In poor, rural communities, the inability to afford food is often compounded by the inability to access nutritious food sources. Figure 31 highlights the census tracts in the county that classify as food deserts. Here a tract counts as a food desert if it is a) low income (poverty rate higher than 20%) and b) at least one-third of the population would have to travel more than one mile to find fresh produce in a densely populated area (Greenwood tracts), or ten miles in a sparsely populated area (all other tracts; USDA, 2020a). This is the most exclusive criteria that the USDA uses to identify food deserts. By this definition, the northern and western halves of the county count as food deserts, including Itta Bena, as well as the southern half of Greenwood...where many of the children in the county live.

**Figure 32. Food Desert Census Tracts in Leflore County.**

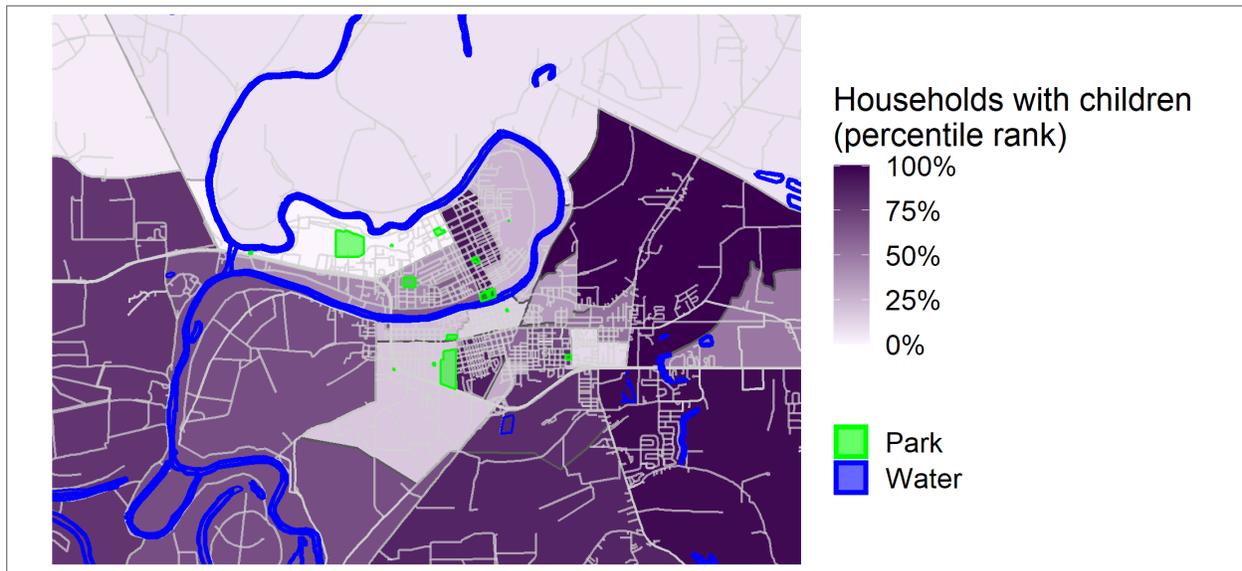


Activity levels are also likely low in the county. From the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, only 40.6% of Mississippi high school students participated in the recommended 60 minutes of exercise at least 5 days of the week, and 20% were not active for 60 minutes at all in the week preceding the survey (CDC, n.d.). Further, 43% reported averaging 3 hours or more of playing computer games or social media use on school days. This is substantiated by the 2020 Leflore County school district survey, in which 40% of parents advocated for Title IV funds to be used for programs that support a healthy, active lifestyle, including nutritional and physical education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, rates

have exercise have likely declined due to remote schooling and social restriction limitations, as well as cancellation of sporting activities.

These trends are aggravated by the relative few parks located near where children live, particularly in Greenwood. Figure 32 shows the locations of green spaces overlaying the percentage of households with children in a particular census block group. There are many green spaces north of the Yalobusha River, but south of the river there is much more space with children and only two green spaces. Access to green space has increasingly been recognized as an important factor in childhood outcomes, both mental and physical (Engemann et al., 2019). In the group interview, staff were divided as to whether parents and children could easily stay physically active. One staff member said gyms and health centers exist, but are expensive, while another said that the recreation center at Mississippi Valley State University is free and open to anyone who comes as long as they have identification...others were unaware of this. Similarly, when one staff member said there were walking trails and parks in the neighborhoods where parents and children live, another countered that they are not usable because of the threat of gun violence.

Figure 33. Green Spaces in Greenwood, by Ratio of Households with Children.



## COVID-19 Impact

As of June 2020, the CDC reported that 21.8% of COVID-19 cases in the United States were Black and 33.8% were Hispanic, even though these groups comprise only 13% and 18% of the US population, respectively (CDC, n.d.). This is likely explained in part by the disproportionate burden of chronic illness among these minority groups. Preliminary data show that diabetes mellitus, hypertension, renal disease, and obesity increase a patient's risk for severe COVID-19 disease and mortality. Black and Hispanic residents have a disproportionately high prevalence of such comorbidities, including diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and coronary artery disease (Rogers et al., 2020). Minority groups also comprise a disproportionate percentage of workers in essential industries during the pandemic. Only 20% of Black workers have the privilege of working from home compared to 30% of whites. To this point, none of the major strains of COVID-19 have been hazardous to young children, but childcare programs may face hesitancy with enrollment and consistent in-person attendance due to the added potential of transmission among young children. Programs will probably need to take added precautions to keep not only children but also their families and workers safe.



Housing quality is a concern, as much of the housing stock in Leflore County is aging and modern utilities like wired Internet are sparse in some areas.

## Housing Patterns

Rents and home values are low in a national context. Few are homeless, but many live with extended family. Housing quality is a concern, as much of the housing stock is aging and modern utilities like wired Internet are sparse in some areas.

**Strengths:** Very few participants in Head Starts in neighboring counties lack housing altogether. Housing costs are low relative to the state and very low relative to the country.

**Weaknesses:** The spatial distribution of wired internet probably illustrates stark contrasts in housing quality that correspond to race. Despite many homes sitting vacant, few are up for sale at any given time.

**Opportunities:** Referrals to financial literacy programs have been touted as effective by program staff in neighboring counties. Connecting these families to reliable real estate lenders while land values are low could be a way to help families create wealth.

**Threats:** The lack of new construction restricts housing markets, as does racial segregation that segments those markets. There is a spatial correlation between new construction and heating with propane, suggesting that many new structures are manufactured housing in remote areas. These structures would have higher risk of storm damage, fire, and carbon monoxide poisoning for children.

## Housing Market

In November 2020, the entire city of Itta Bena was at risk of losing power after the city had accumulated, over the course of a decade, over \$800,000 in debt with its electrical provider (Waller, 2020). While the city was spared, a permanent solution has yet to be reached. This anecdote is characteristic of the degree of the lack of credible housing infrastructure in much of rural Leflore County. In some census tracts, over half of residents exclusively use bottled, tank, or liquified petroleum gas rather than using utility gas or electricity, as shown in Figure 34. Inadequate home heating can be a public health concern in its own right (Krieger and Higgins, 2002), but it also serves as an ad-hoc indicator of the quality and modernity of infrastructure in the county. Almost all of the houses in Greenwood have electric or gas heat, but fewer than 50% of the homes in the rural northern half of the county do.

**Figure 34. Households Without Gas or Electric Heating.**  
**Figure 35. Housing Built Since 2000, by Block Group.**

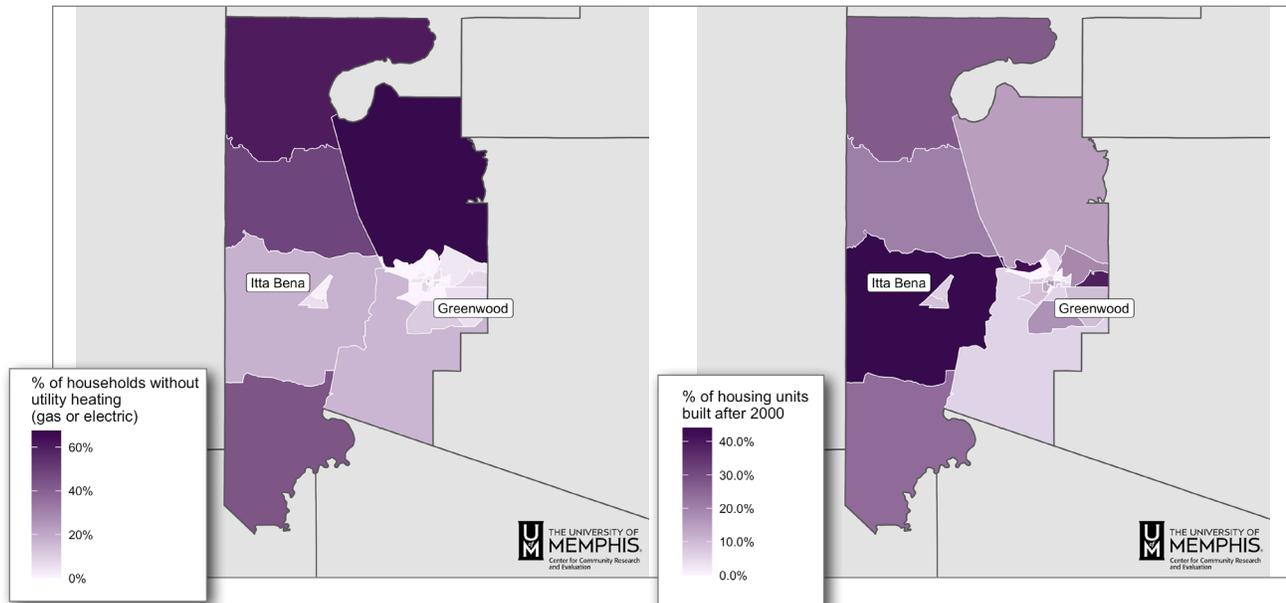


Figure 35 shows the percentage of housing structures built since 2000 by block group. The area around Itta Bena has shown the most construction. Forty-four percent (44%) of housing units in this group have been built since 2000. Of the 317 housing units built in this block group since 2000, 276 (87.1%) were built from 2000-2009. Many of these homes may represent housing built for laborers at catfish processing plants. One small area to the east of Greenwood, outside the city limit, and one to the northeast inside the city, represent a handful of homes in subdivisions developed between 2000-09.

Homeownership gives residents more autonomy over the quality of their housing. Real estate is also the most common form of generational wealth in America (Boehm and Schlottmann, 2002). Family homes, bought with loans that are underwritten by financial institutions, can be passed down through generations. Such real estate can defray some housing costs for inheritors or serve as collateral to secure other capital for other investments. However, poor and minority communities have often been shunned by traditional financial institutions, and independent institutions are becoming rare in rural areas. For example, only one bank branch remains in Itta Bena, which has been called a “banking desert” (Ross, 2019).

Renting, on the other hand, does not provide such enduring financial gifts. The percent of renter-occupied housing units is almost 20% higher in Leflore County than in Mississippi overall (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). Census block groups in which the population is more than 75% Black in Leflore County have roughly double the percentage of renter-occupied housing units. Mississippi displays the same trend, although less pronounced.

**Table 30. Renter-Occupied Households by Neighborhood Racial Demographics.**

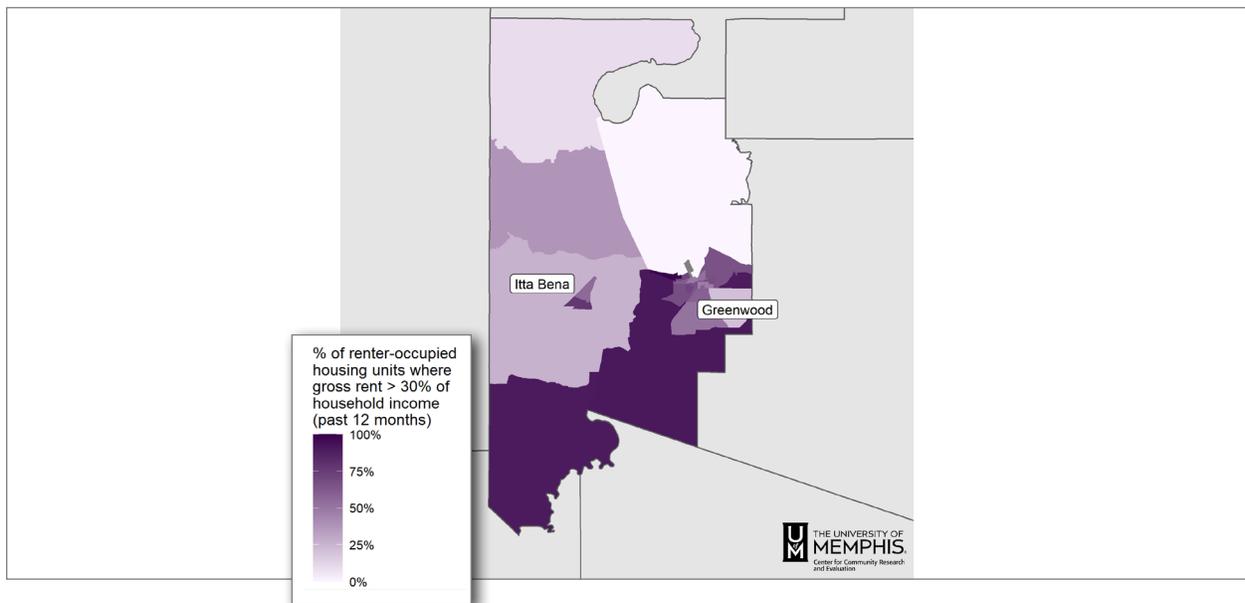
Racial Proportions of Block Group	Leflore County	Mississippi
Overall	49.4%	31.7%
> 75% Black	58.8%	47.5%
< 75% Black	35.7%	28.5%

It is widely accepted that “affordable housing” should consume at most 30% of household income. This has been the statutory standard for rental programs since the 1981 update to the Housing and Urban Development Act (Schwartz and Wilson, n.d.), 57.4% of renter-occupied housing units in Leflore County spend more than 30% of household income on rent (Table 31; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). That number is slightly higher in census block groups whose population is more than 75% Black. Figure 36 shows those households by census block group; the newer neighborhoods east of Greenwood and the large rural areas in the southern part of the county are made up almost entirely of households with a high housing burden. HUD currently reports 420 units of low-income multifamily housing units for families in the county, housing 617 children (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021). The median income of these households is less than \$6,000. There are another 751 children housed in single-family public housing and 342 children in housing being paid for with housing choice vouchers. Public housing has an occupancy rate of 93%, with 85% of section 8 vouchers being used, so there is probably a waiting list of participants for both programs.

**Table 31. Households with High Housing Cost Burden by Neighborhood Racial Demographics.**

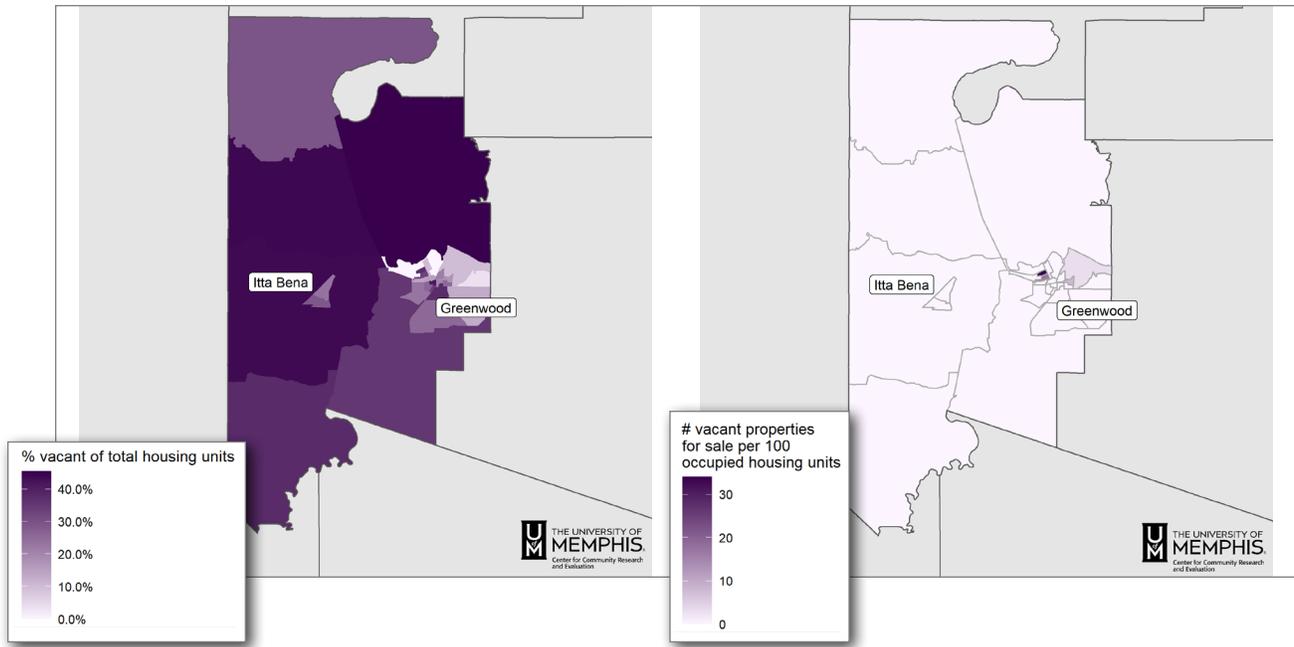
Racial Proportions of Block Group	Leflore County	Mississippi
Overall	57.4%	49.2%
> 75% Black	59.7%	57.3%
< 75% Black	51.1%	46.5%

**Figure 36. High Housing Burden by Block Group.**



The high rates of renting in the county are combined with a large proportion of vacant structures in some places (Figure 37). Overall, 20% of housing units are vacant in the county, compared to 16% in the state and 12% nationally. In areas with high land values this would be an indication of speculation, possibly from investors outside the area, but low property values in Leflore County suggest this is not the case here. Instead, it may be that landowners have no “penalty” from the cost of holding land and structures empty, and little incentive to sell from low land values, and so are willing and able to hold from simple inertia. Figure 38 shows how few of the vacant structures in different areas are being placed up for sale. Even those with the capital or financing to purchase a home would find doing so difficult in an environment in which so much property is being held empty. For Head Start families, this creates a huge barrier to homeownership and wealth creation.

**Figure 38. Ratio of Properties for Sale by Block Group.**  
**Figure 37. Vacant Housing Units by Block Group.**



## Internet Access

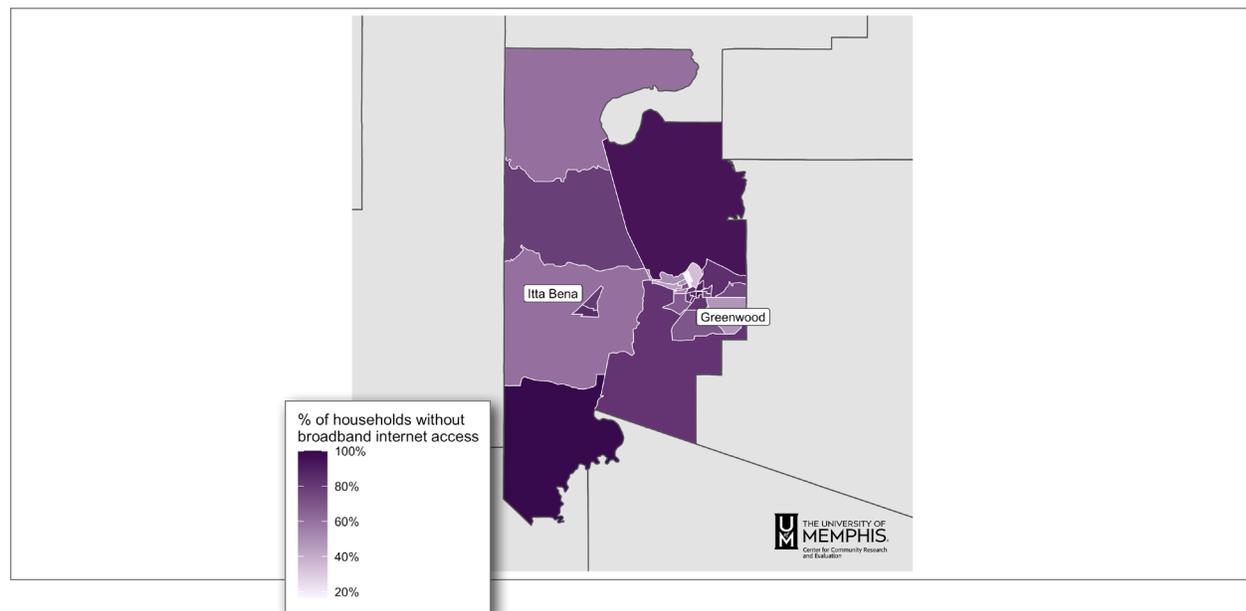
There increasingly is evidence to suggest that Internet-based platforms play an important role in students' learning, even though traditionally, they were thought to distract children and be limited in access to students from low-income households (Chaudhuri, Flamm, and Horrigan, 2005) and non-metropolitan areas in the South (Mills and Whitacre, 2003). School-provided technology is becoming widely available in contemporary approaches to learning, especially in the COVID-19 era in which students were mandated to learn from home and provided technology to learn via the Internet. Also, research points to positive learning outcomes for Internet-related schoolwork involving African American children from low-income households (Jackson et al., 2006). This research also showed that Internet use at home was associated with higher scores on standardized reading tests and grade point averages.

Yet, 47.3% of households in Leflore County report having no internet access (Table 32; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). This lack of access is particularly concentrated in southern Greenwood, in an area whose population is over 75% Black (Figure 39). 14.2% of households in the US report no internet access and 24.4% in Mississippi. In areas (block groups) where the population is more than 75% Black, these figures get worse. In Mississippi, 34.8% of households in these areas report no internet access, compared to 22.3% of households living in areas whose population is less than 75% Black. In Leflore County, those percentages are 54.3% and 37.0% respectively. Stable connectivity not only makes education more accessible to children and parents, it also prepares children for virtual careers and makes those careers available to parents.

**Table 32. Households without Internet Access, by Neighborhood Racial Demographics.**

Racial Proportions of Block Group	Leflore County	Mississippi	U.S.
Overall	47.3%	24.4%	14.2%
> 75% Black	54.3%	34.3%	---
< 75% Black	37.0%	22.3%	

**Figure 39. Households without Broadband Internet Access, by Block Group.**





Personal cars are far and away the primary mode of transportation for Leflore County residents.

## Transportation Patterns

Personal cars are far and away the primary mode of transportation for Leflore County residents. There are several private and nonprofit partnerships trying to fill a public transit need in the area with buses for commuting. Residents can leave the county by car, plane, or train.

**Strengths:** The small-town character of Greenwood and the types of roads create shorter commutes for county residents than are typical in the rest of the country.

**Weaknesses:** Across about half the city, a quarter of the population does not have access to a vehicle. The rural northeast corner of the county also has around 20% of residents without vehicles. Virtually none of the population uses public transit or bikes to get to work.

**Opportunities:** To the extent that services exist, the Head Start program could help connect families to them. The Head Start could also serve as a connection point for some sort of carpool or ride share system for families without cars.

**Threats:** Young children who live in remote parts of the county have no way to get to programs without cars. Parents and children traveling on foot in Greenwood are more exposed to extreme heat and cold, storms, and criminal activity.



Figure 40. Historic Greyhound Station in Downtown Greenwood (Out of Service).

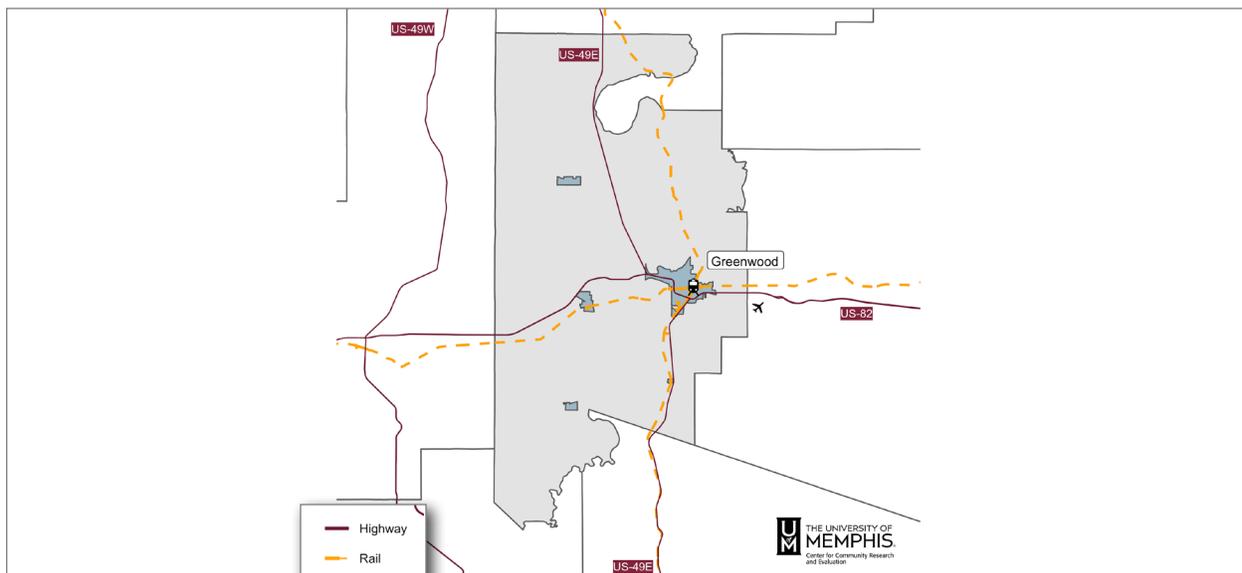
## County in Context

The Mississippi Delta region is characterized by wide open, flat spaces connected by straight highways with high speed limits. Two U.S. Highways connect near Greenwood, U.S. 49E and U.S. 82 (Figure 41). Highway 82 is a major divided four-lane route connecting Greenwood to Interstate 55 to the east, and Indianola, Greenville, and eventually the Mississippi River and Arkansas to the west. There is no interstate access in the county. U.S. 49E is a graded two-lane highway, like many state highways in the region. State highway 7 runs southwest-to-northeast through the county and connects it to Belzoni, the Holmes County seat to the southwest, and Grenada and I-55 to the northeast.

Because of the low density of most of the communities in the region, there is not much in the way of reliable public transit infrastructure. Some regional entities have their own bus or shuttle systems, but most municipalities do not. Delta Rides is a collaborative of several nonprofits providing public transit (Delta Rides Regional Coordinated Group, n.d.). This includes one east-west bus route from Greenwood, through Indianola, to Greenville on weekdays (Delta Rides, n.d.). Another Delta Rides partner is the Bolivar County Council on Aging, who offers transportation to the general public by request for certain needs (Bolivar County Council on Aging, Inc., 2017). Downtown Greenwood was once home to a Greyhound station that connected regional passengers to a north-south Amtrak route running from New Orleans to Chicago; now, only the Amtrak remains, with the closest Greyhound stops in Indianola and Belzoni. Greenwood is one of only two cities in the Delta with Amtrak service (Yazoo City being the other). There are also very few taxi services. As of April 2020, both Uber and Lyft are operable in Leflore County, but wait times may be extreme as Lyft support is based out of Oxford, a two-hour drive away. Residents can travel by air through a regional airport seven miles east of Greenwood, and larger international airports are in Memphis and Jackson.

Leflore County and Greenwood are served by the Illinois Central Railroad, a Class I north-south freight line maintained by Canadian National Railway, connecting Greenwood to the national economy via New Orleans, Memphis, Chicago, and St. Louis. The county is also bisected by the Columbus and Greenville Railway, a 151-mile east-west short line route operated by CAGY Industries that extends across the state. This railway has interchanges with two Class I carriers near Columbus, Mississippi near the Alabama state line. Greenwood is also within 120 miles of Memphis International Airport, the largest cargo airport in North America.

**Figure 41. Major Transportation in Leflore County.**



Less than 1% of county residents use public transit as means of transportation to work (Table 33; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). This lack of public transportation is despite the intense need for transportation among the most impoverished Delta residents. In a study of Medicaid patients in Washington County conducted by the applicant agency and evaluated by the University of Memphis, over a quarter of respondents reported being kept from meetings, work, healthcare, or other activities of daily living due to lack of reliable transportation. Lack of transportation was confirmed by stakeholders in the county,

with transportation to health appointments being reported as a key need of the county’s parents by the Women’s Advisory Council. Staff in the group interview were divided, with some saying that people could “get a ride” if they needed it (possibly from neighbors, friends, or family), but others arguing that establishing those networks could be difficult or impossible for some parents.

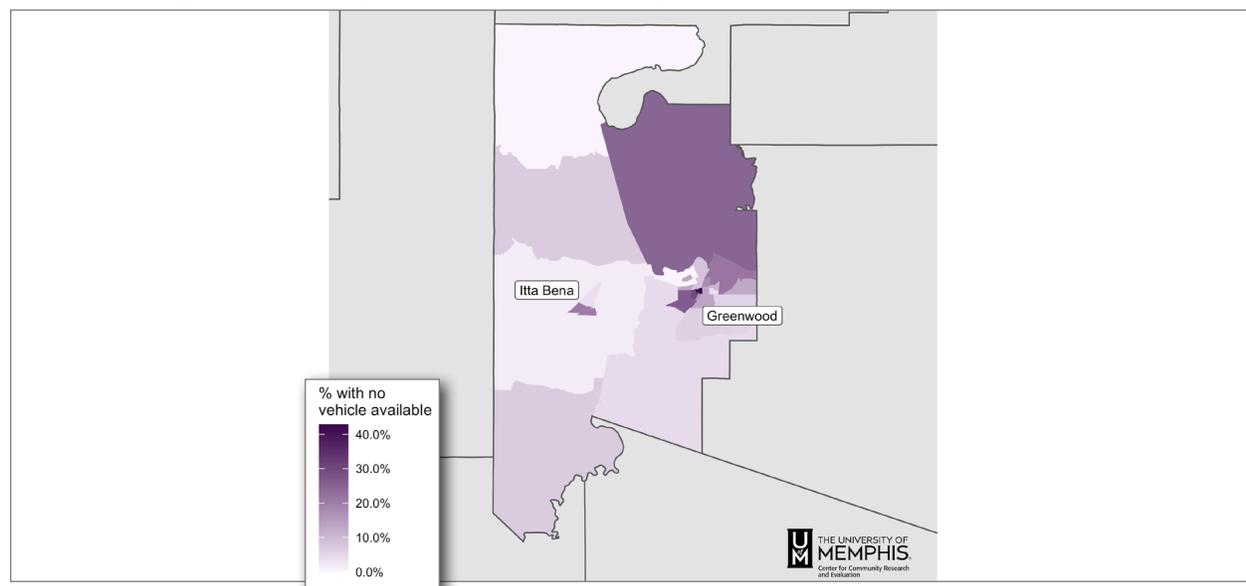
Table 33 shows the extent to which workers in the county are dependent on cars for travel to work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). Of those who worked, more than 86% drive their own car alone to work, despite almost all county residents working inside the county and 80% (double the U.S. rate) having a commute of less than 20 minutes. Only 2.5% used public transit, walked, or biked to work, with almost all of these walking. Despite the necessity of a car in the county, 13.3% reported not having access to a personal vehicle, double the rate in Mississippi overall. Only 1.3% reported working at home, compared to 5% in the U.S. At this point, we do not know how this rate has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the length of commutes and the centrality of goods, services, and residences in the county, it seems like any transportation assistance could be especially beneficial to local residents.

**Table 33. Commuting in National Context.**

Geography	% Drove Own Car Alone to Work	% No Vehicle Available	% Worked Outside County	% Used Public Transit, Walked, Biked to Work	% Travel Time to Work <20 Minutes	% Worked at Home
Leflore Co.	86.8%	13.3%	11.0%	2.5%	79.7%	2.9%
Mississippi	85.3%	6.5%	36.7%	1.8%	46.9%	2.3%
Census South	80.2%	6.6%	29.7%	4.3%	40.5%	4.7%
United States	76.4%	8.7%	27.7%	8.3%	40.4%	4.9%

The people lacking access to a vehicle are not dispersed evenly throughout the county (Figure 42). In Greenwood south of the Yalobusha River, almost 30% of residents lack access to a vehicle. Across the river in the northern side of Greenwood, the rate is 3.3%. These sections of Greenwood are walkable, in comparison to other parts of the county, but it is unlikely that anyone can do everything necessary to work and live within a walkable zone, with no public transit options. Also, the sparsely populated northeast quarter of the county has around 20% of residents lacking a vehicle. This is difficult to imagine for an area so remote and no doubt would hinder the ability of any parents living there to transport their children to and from a Head Start in Greenwood. By comparison, in the northwest quarter of the county the rate is 2.6%.

**Figure 42. Percentage with No Vehicle Available by Census Tract (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a).**



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