

## 5. Social Determinants of Health

### Ranked AL's Fifth Health Indicator

Social determinants of health (SDOH) topics are a collection of factors identified as the fifth highest health indicator for AL. While SDOH are upstream objectives influencing all health indicators in this SHA, the community partners wanted to highlight and discuss specific methods to create opportunities for AL residents.

According to Healthy People 2030, the five SDOH topics are economic stability, education access and quality, healthcare access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social/community context.<sup>1</sup>

SDOH differs from access to care for they are a more permanent, societal structure that prevents adequate health factors. They can affect a wide range of physical health, mobility, and quality of life outcomes.

#### Vulnerable Populations

SDOH plays a significant role in AL's citizens' health, well-being, and quality of life and contributes to health disparities and inequities. Income disparities, education, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, housing, and family social support services need to be addressed as a system to build environments that contribute to wellness and support opportunities for healthy choices.<sup>1</sup>

#### Geographic Variation

While there are some lifestyle and behavioral choices, each individual is located within a specific community with local policies and government that impact how they can access health opportunities. For example, AL is primarily a rural state, which can create physical barriers to care, and social stigmas can prevent individual's knowing or feeling comfortable accessing a service.

#### Topics Addressed for This Indicator are:

- AL Black Belt.
- Income disparities.
- Education and poverty.
- Unemployment rate.
- Food insecurity.
- Housing assistance.

- Family and social support.
- Social Vulnerability Index (SVI).

#### Highlights

Data is from collaborating state agencies such as the ALDOL and ALSDE. Data are also retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau, University of AL, and CDC Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR):

- According to USHUD, as of January 2019, it was estimated 3,261 persons experienced homelessness on any given day in AL.
- In 2019, 16.3 percent of AL households were unable to provide adequate food for one or more household members due to lack of resources compared to the 12.3 percent in U.S. households.<sup>2</sup>

#### Risk Factors:

- Rural areas.
- Low income housing.
- High school education attainment or below.
- Incarceration.
- Unemployment.

## The Alabama Black Belt

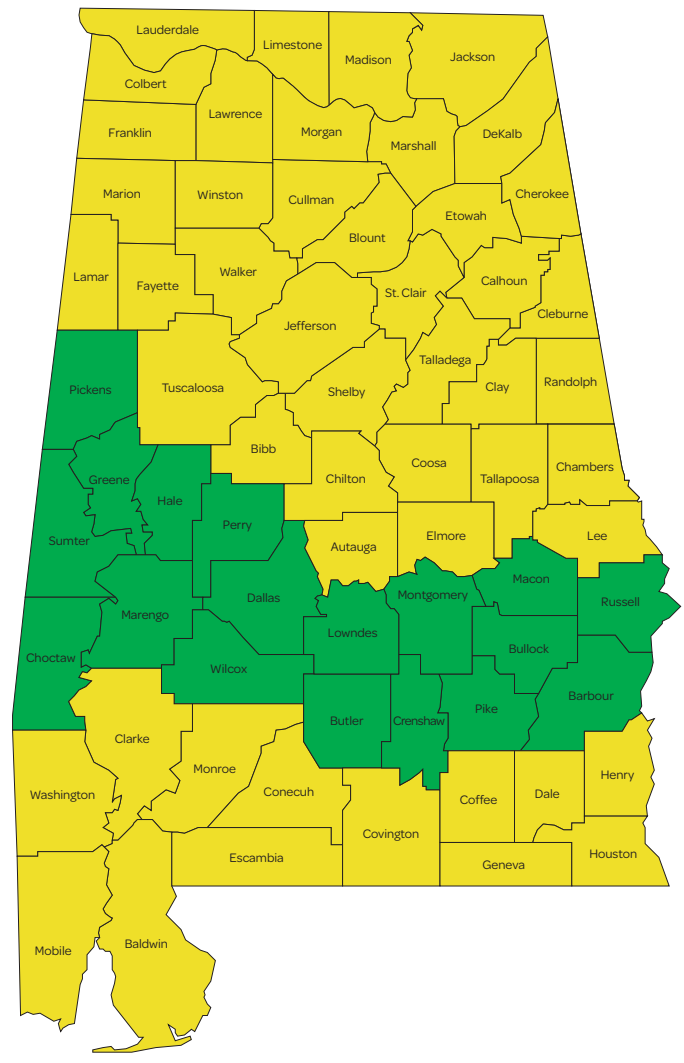
SDOH can create disparities with care delivery and health outcomes. One area in AL with a high SDOH burden is called the Black Belt.

Once named for the color of its fertile soil and later for the high percentage of AA/black residents, 11 states make up the Black Belt throughout the southeast.

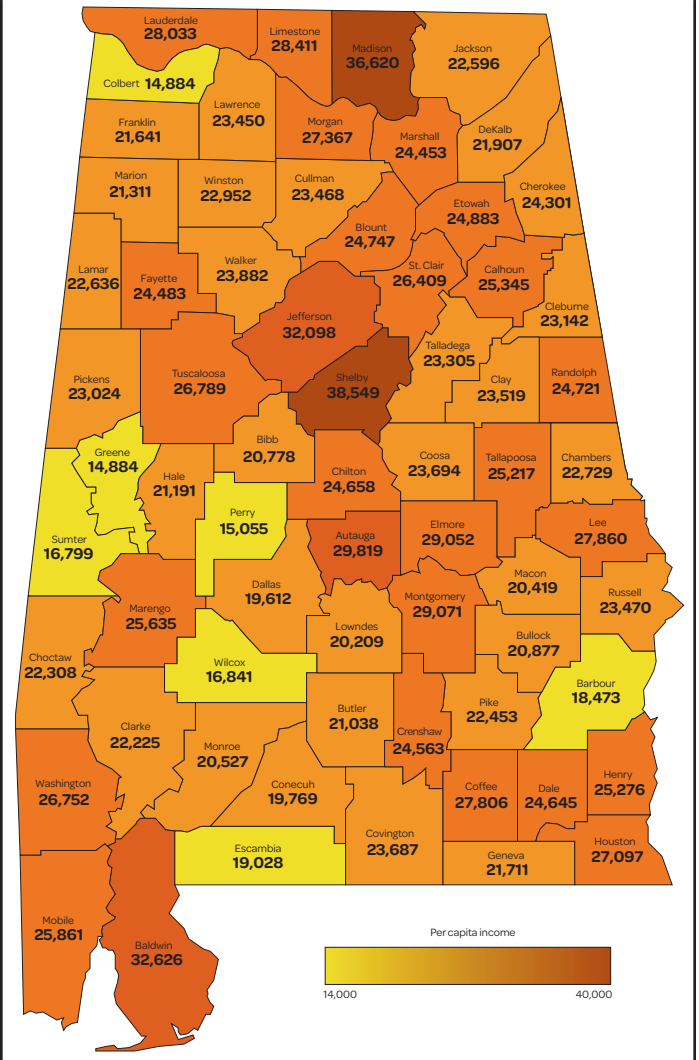
The AL Black Belt consists of 18 counties: Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Crenshaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Sumter, and Wilcox:

- In 2019, the AL Black Belt had a 40 percent white and 56 percent AA/black population.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2019, almost 1 in 4 residents lived below the poverty rate (23.7 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- The per capita income in this region was \$24,387.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 5.1** – The AL Black Belt contains 18 counties (highlighted green on the map). Source: University of AL in Tuscaloosa.



**Figure 5.2** – This map describes income variation throughout AL. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



## Income Disparities

Income equality is how finances are distributed throughout a population. About 15 percent of AL’s population lives below the 200 percent poverty rate:<sup>3</sup>

- In 2019, AL’s poorest counties were Dallas, Perry, Greene, and Bullock, respectively. These counties are located within the AL Black Belt.
- The average poverty rate is slightly higher for rural areas at 18.4 percent compared to urban areas at 16.1 percent for 2019. Alabama households in urban areas have per capita incomes that are roughly \$6,000 more per home.<sup>3</sup>
- Madison and Shelby counties have the highest per capita income.

## Education and Poverty

Education is an indicator for chronic disease because it helps understand employment options, income mobility, and basic literacy.<sup>4</sup> For adults below the poverty status, income was correlated with education level:

- Two out of every five people with less than a high school education live below the federal poverty line.
- Approximately 17.6 percent of individuals who have an educational achievement of a high school diploma or GED live below the poverty line.

**Figure 5.3** – The distribution of poverty level by education group. Source: ALSDE, 2018 and County Health Rankings, 2019.

|                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| U.S. poverty rate       | <b>10.5%</b> |
| Overall AL poverty rate | <b>15.5%</b> |
| Less than 9th grade     | <b>40.4%</b> |
| Less than 9th grade     | <b>17.6%</b> |
| Some college            | <b>11.8%</b> |
| College graduate        | <b>4.5%</b>  |

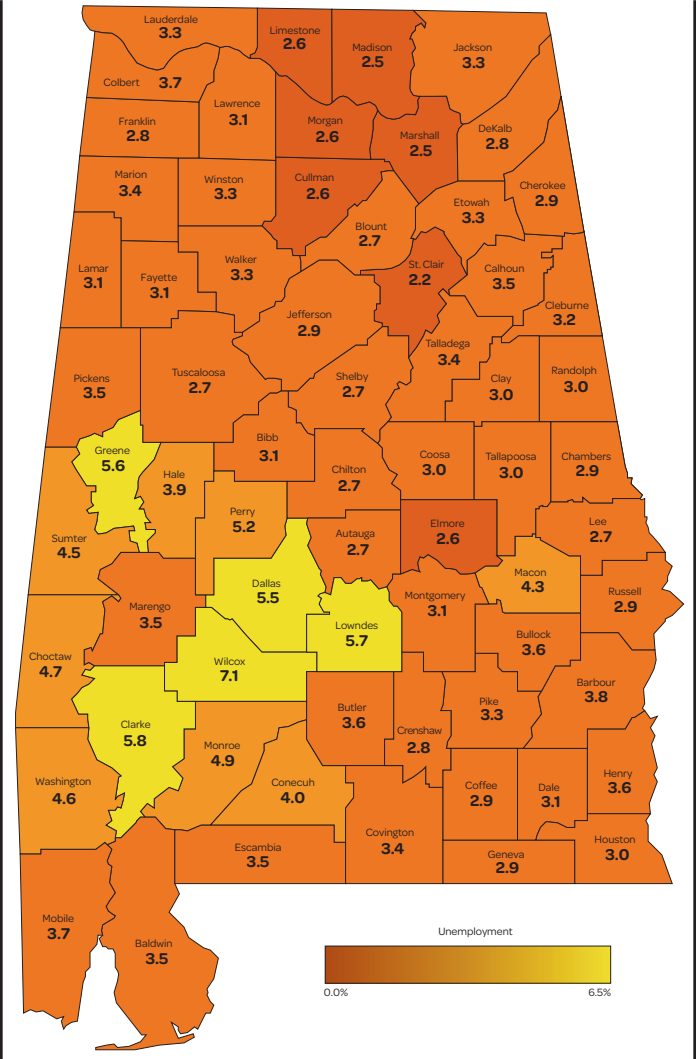
## Unemployment Rate

Employment is another indicator for SDOH. Good working conditions, employee benefits, and work stability often contribute to wellness and support opportunities for healthy choices.<sup>5</sup>

The AL labor force is a way to determine perceived economic stability:

- During the early Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the unemployment rate was 7.7 percent (as of July 22, 2020).<sup>6</sup>
- For 2019, the average unemployment rate was 3.0 percent, with 67,883 individuals out of work.
- In 2019, the unemployment rate in rural areas was 4.6 percent compared to urban areas with 4.3 percent.
- Wilcox County had the highest unemployment rate at 7.2 percent in 2019.
- The Southwestern Public Health District had the most counties with high unemployment rates.

**Figure 5.4** – This map describes the percent of unemployed throughout AL in 2019. Source: ALDOL.



## Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is defined as “a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.”<sup>7</sup> Lacking constant access to food can lead to binge eating, malnutrition, and mineral deficiencies.

In 2019, 16.3 percent of AL households were unable to provide adequate food for one or more household members due to lack of resources compared to the 12.3 percent in U.S. households.<sup>2</sup> This is a decrease from 2015 where it was 16.7 percent in AL.

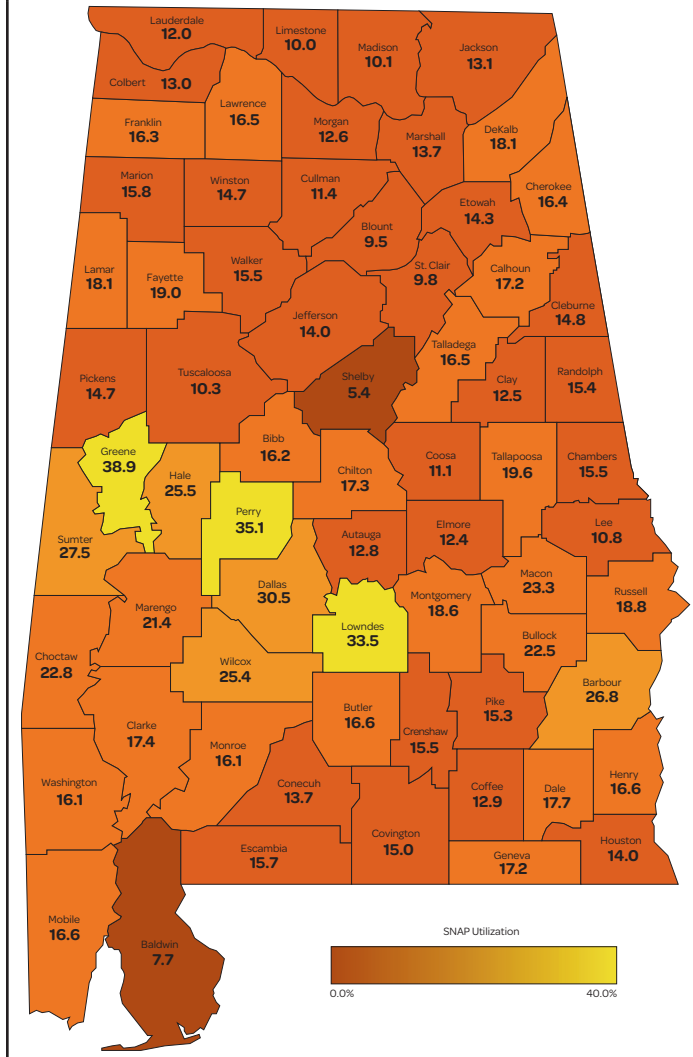
According to USDA, AL was the sixth largest food insecure area in the U.S. in 2017-2019.<sup>7</sup> Food insecurity is particularly high among:

- Low income households.
- Households with children, especially those with a single parent.

- Single person dwelling homes.
- AA/black and Hispanic households.

Food insecurity was measured by Food Stamps or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) utilization. In 2019, 14 percent of households in AL received Food Stamps/SNAP. The median income among households that received food stamps was \$18,515.<sup>3</sup>

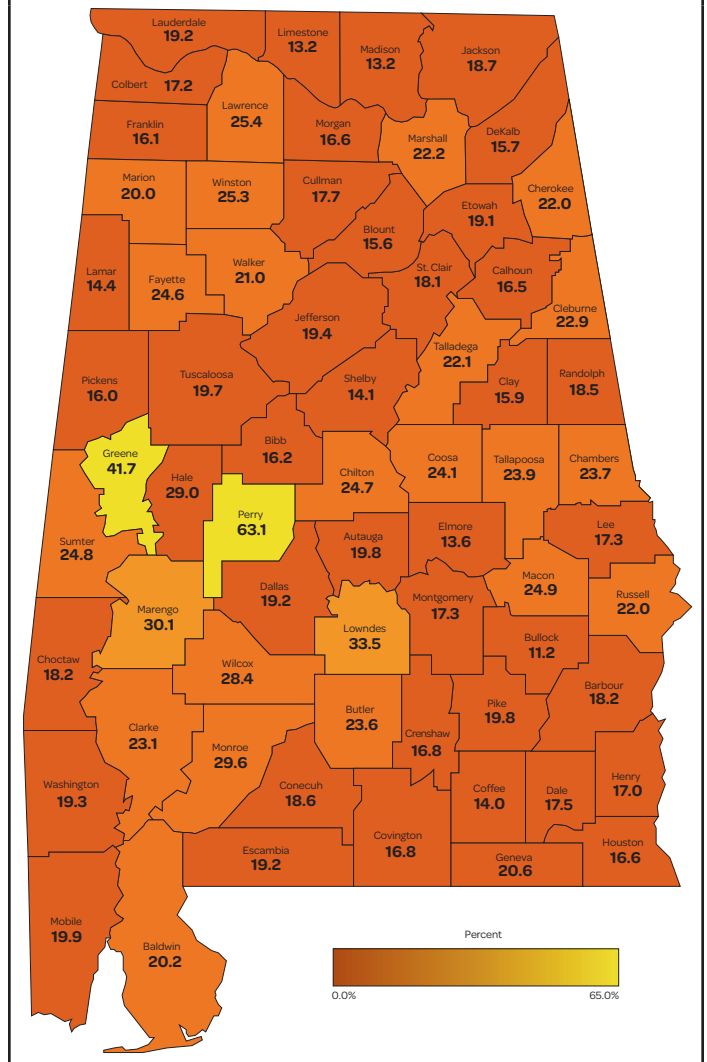
**Figure 5.5** – This map describes the food insecurity throughout AL by percentage of households SNAP utilization. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



- According to U.S. Census Bureau, 19.1 percent of AL households have over one-third of their household income devoted to monthly mortgage or rent payments in 2018.
- Perry County had the highest percentage with an average 63.1 percent of its population with a mortgage higher than one-third their income between 2015-2019.<sup>8</sup>
- There was an average of 1,867,893 households between 2015-2019 with 31.2 percent of units used for renting.<sup>8</sup>

Federal Housing Assistance gives aid to seniors, children, and people living with disabilities. The largest rental assistance support is through housing choice vouchers and public housing.

**Figure 5.6** – This map describes the percentage of homeowners with a high cost burdened mortgage. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



## Housing Assistance

According to USHUD, as of January 2019, it was estimated 3,261 persons experienced homelessness on any given day in AL.

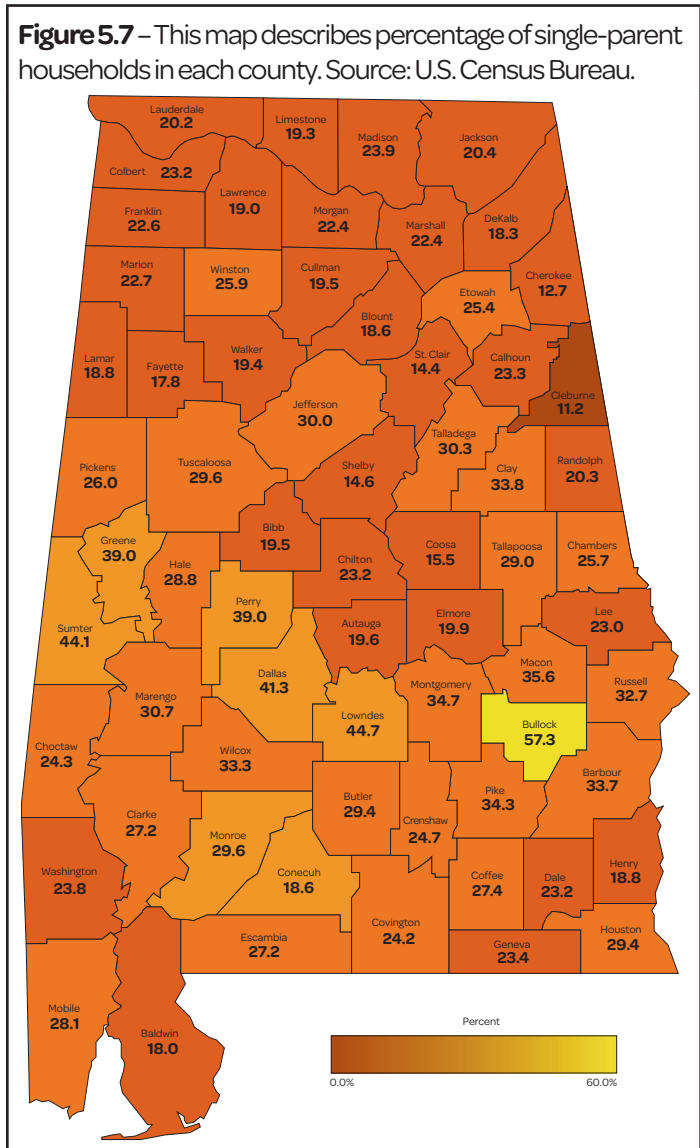
In Figure 5.6, the map shows a distribution of individuals whose monthly mortgage is greater than 35.0 percent of the household income.

## Family and Social Support

Positive relationships at home, at work, and in the community can help families find support and improve their well-being. Social capital refers to the interpersonal support and trust between other civic associations.<sup>9</sup>

In Figure 5.7, the indicator for this section is the percentage of single-parent household for children under 18 years old:

- Between 2015-2019, approximately 1 out of every 4 children (25.2 percent) lived in a single-parent household in AL.<sup>10</sup>
- Adults and children living in single-parent households have a higher risk of stress and adverse health outcomes.<sup>9</sup>



## Social Vulnerability Index

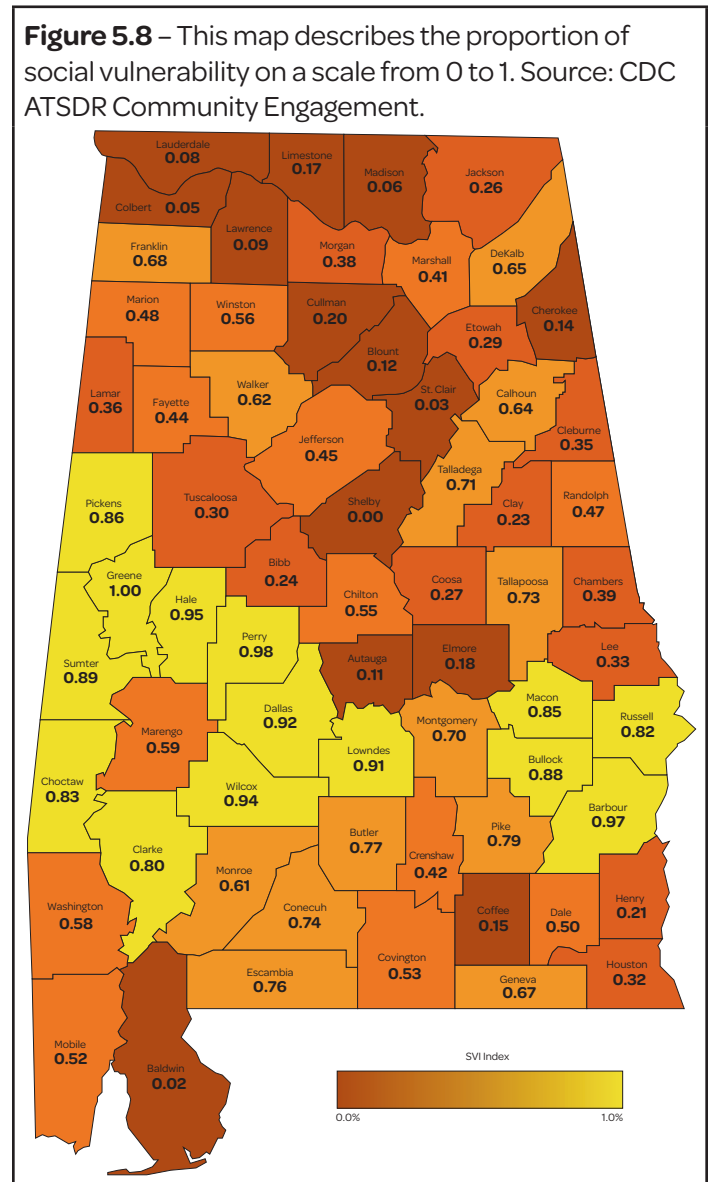
Geospatial determinants of health include neighborhood infrastructures and how a person’s

community affects an individual. CDC created a risk score based on multiple environments, including natural, built, population connectivity, social/behavioral, and health policy.<sup>11</sup> This can provide crucial information for emergency preparedness and address endemic SDOHs in a community.

The 15 social factors are calculated within a score that combines the following factors: poverty, unemployment, income, education status, lack of vehicle access, multiunit structures, mobile housing units, crowded housing, group quarters, adults living with disabilities, children, older population, single-parent households, minority groups, and primary language other than English.<sup>11</sup>

The scores are ranked from 0 to 1, where a score closer to 1 indicates an area of high vulnerability:

- The West Central Public Health District had a higher average of SVIs for 2018.





## Data Sources

**Figure 5.1 – AL Black Belt Counties.** University of AL in Tuscaloosa, 2019. Data requested March 2021.

**Figure 5.2 – AL Per Capita Income, 2019.** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Quick Facts Table County Level V2019, 2019. Data requested December 2020.

**Figure 5.3 – AL Below-Poverty Status by Education Level, 2019.** ALSDE, 2018 and County Health Rankings, 2019. Data requested July 2020.

**Figure 5.4 – Unemployment Rate, 2019.** ALDOL, 2019. Data requested July 2020.

**Figure 5.5 – Food Stamp/SNAP Utilization, 2015-2019.** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Selected Social Characteristics Table DP03, 2019. Data requested December 2020.

**Figure 5.6 – Monthly Mortgage Greater than 35 Percent of Income, 2015-2019.** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates Selected Housing Characteristics DP04, 2019. Data requested December 2020

**Figure 5.7 – Children in Single Parent Households, 2019.** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Selected Social Characteristics Table DP02, 2019. Data requested December 2020.

**Figure 5.8 – SVI, 2018.** CDC, ATSDR Community Engagement. Data requested March 2021.

## Written Sources

1. Healthy People 2030, SDOH, 2020.
2. AL Food Bank Association, Hunger in AL, 2019.
3. U.S. Census Data, American Community Survey, 1 Year Estimate Quick Tables V2019, 2019.
4. Healthy People 2030, Education, Access, and Quality, 2020.
5. Healthy People 2030, Employment, 2020.
6. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020.
7. U.S. Census Data, American Community Survey, KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2020.
8. U.S. Census Data, American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimate Table DP02, 2019.
9. CDC, Adverse Childhood Experiences Risk and Protective Factors, 2020.
10. U.S. Census Data, American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimate Table DP04, 2019.
11. CDC, SVI, 2020.

## Community Resources

### Action for Healthy Kids

Location: Montgomery County, AL  
Type: Advocacy Program

### Adult Vocational Rehabilitation

Location: Etowah County, AL  
Type: Educational Facility

### AL Community Foundation

Location: Montgomery County, AL  
Type: Nonprofit Organization

### AL Possible

Location: Statewide  
Type: Non-profit Organization

### Continuums of Care

Location: Statewide  
Type: Federal Program

### Dothan Rescue Mission

Location: Houston County, AL  
Type: Homeless Shelter

### East AL United Way

Location: Montgomery County, AL  
Type: Nonprofit Organization

### FQHC

Location: Statewide  
Type: Medical Centers

### Firehouse Ministries

Location: Jefferson County, AL  
Type: Homeless Shelter

### Habitat for Humanity

Location: Montgomery County, AL  
Type: Nonprofit Organization

### Healthy People 2030

Location: Nationwide  
Type: Advocacy Program

### USDHHS

Location: Washington, DC  
Type: Federal Government