

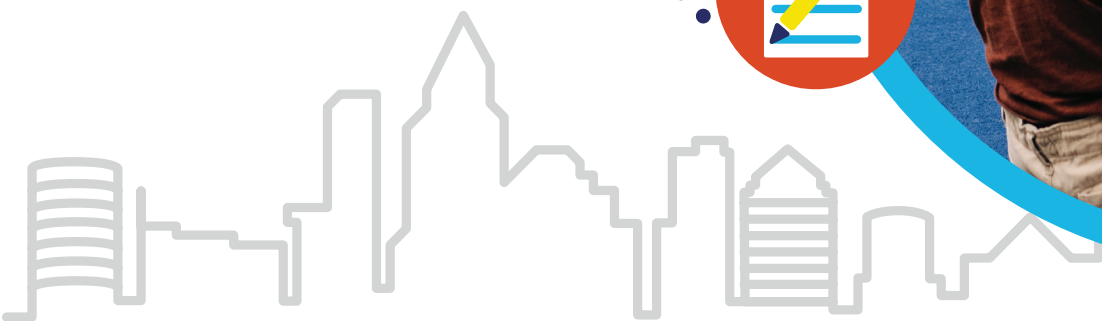


EARLY LEARNING
COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY



Community Needs Assessment

December 2023



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Acknowledgment

Research conducted and report authored by Dr. Cathleen Armstead of Sunshine Nonprofit Solutions, Consulting for Nonprofits in Florida.

Introduction

Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County

This community needs assessment (CNA) for Hillsborough County was requested by the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County (ELCHC) to provide data for assessment, evaluation, strategic planning, the setting of objectives and goals, and the design of interventions to expand and enhance services to children and families. The ELCHC, a 501(c)3, supports the early education and care of children in Hillsborough County. Focusing on early childhood education and care, the ELCHC works to ensure all our community's youngest children grow up to achieve anything they can imagine by providing the best possible early learning experiences and supporting the families and teachers who care for them.

The ELCHC is one of thirty local coalitions, along with Redlands Christian Migrant Community, which provide support and resources and administer funding for early childhood programs in the state of Florida. Early learning coalitions are nonprofit organizations, governed by a board of directors with local and government-appointed members. The ELCHC funds three primary programs: the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK), the School Readiness Program (SR), and the Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R) program. Additionally, the ELCHC emphasizes professional development for providers, financial incentives and scholarships for teachers, and resources for families.

Florida created the VPK in 2005, funding a high-quality early childhood development program for all four-year-old children in the state. The 540-hour program (approximately three hours a day during a ten-month period) is funded solely through state funds and administered by thirty early learning coalitions, with a mixture of local schools, federal programs such as Head Start, and private centers providing services.

Florida's SR program offers financial assistance to eligible low-income families for early education care to ensure low-income children have high-quality early education opportunities and to ensure families become self-sufficient. The federal Childcare and

Development Fund Block Grant primarily funds the program. Subsidies are distributed to qualified providers based on families' needs. Services range from early development care for children from birth to age four, extended day care, after-school care, and school-age care.

CCR&R provides families with valuable information about the characteristics of high-quality care, available resources, and information about local early care centers in the community.

Community Needs Assessment: Purpose

A CNA is the collection and analysis of data related to the needs and characteristics of children and families in a community—in this case, Hillsborough County. A CNA provides important community demographic data to use for recruiting children and families, along with providers and teachers. A CNA helps to identify and understand the most significant issues and trends affecting children and families within the area. Ultimately, the information from this CNA will be used to inform programmatic decisions, including planning, service delivery, and evaluation to be used by the board of directors, the leadership, and staff at the ELCHC. Most importantly, findings from the CNA will shape long-range goals, short-term objectives, interventions, and approaches to early childhood education.-

Guiding Questions

This CNA will guide the overall direction of the ELCHC for the next three to five years. It will identify the challenges related to early childhood learning, discuss the channels through which childcare is administered, and discuss future trends that shape early education and care.

This CNA will first describe how the early childhood education landscape has changed after COVID-19 by providing a detailed description of the Hillsborough community. This detailed description will examine the age and racial/ethnic demographics of the population. Furthermore, economic trends, along with income and poverty data, will be shared.

This CNA will then turn to a discussion of the childcare industry and the challenges faced by providers, teachers, and families. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, the early childhood education and care industry had significant challenges; nationally, it was fragmented, inequitable, inaccessible, and underfunded. Funding streams for early education derive from various sources with different requirements, and each state has varying policies and regulations. Children of color and children from low-income families are less likely to be enrolled in high-quality, structured childcare programs. For many families in the United States, access to affordable, high-quality programs is not an option. Providers are also leaving the field, restricting parental choice even further. This is particularly true for families of color, families living in rural areas, and children with special needs. Finally, when compared to other developed countries, the United States lags in public spending for childcare. **Currently, the United States only spends less than 0.5% of its gross domestic product on early education and care.**

During the pandemic, there was a concerted federal response involving multiple pieces of legislation and funding sources to stabilize the early childhood education and care industry, as well as to stabilize child poverty. Such measures provided some success. Childhood poverty reached historic lows and remained at 5.1% throughout the height of the pandemic. Yet, this stabilization was only temporary. With the ending of the pandemic relief funds, childhood poverty rose from the historic low of 5.1% to 12.4% in the latter part of 2023 and is expected to rise further.

Despite the concerted effort to stabilize the early education and care system, the challenges that existed prior to COVID-19 were exacerbated by the pandemic. Some children experienced COVID-related anxiety, depression, and trauma and presented severe and persistent challenging behaviors. Teachers left the industry in record numbers, citing low wages and high stress. Classrooms remained empty with the lack of teachers, and estimates indicate that 9% of all providers closed their centers. This CNA will conclude with a discussion of exceptional considerations that impact early learning, including the major trending medical and psychological diagnoses for children under the age of five, the

identification of developmental issues, and the availability of information and resources for providers and families.

Methodology

Secondary source data provide the foundation for this CNA. Statistical data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 three-year estimates were supplemented by the US decennial census of 2020. Other statistical data were drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Pew Research Center, UnitedforALICE ([Assets-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed](#)), FRED, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, and the Florida Policy Institute. Data on the well-being of children were drawn from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the KIDS COUNT interactive database, and the KIDS COUNT Florida state profile. Data specific to Hillsborough County were also gathered from the February 2021 Early Learning County of Hillsborough Community Needs Assessment, the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County 2019 Community Health Assessment (updated July 2021), and the 2019 Hillsborough County Community Needs Assessment prepared for the Hillsborough County Social Services Department, along with internal data from the ELCHC.

Secondary statistical data were supplemented with surveys distributed to families, contracted providers, and community partners. Qualitative data were also gathered from interviews with selected staff who provided their perspectives and perceptions of children's and family needs.

Florida

Florida, located in the southeastern United States, has a population exceeding twenty-one million and is the third-most populous state in the nation. Florida ranks eighth in population density as of 2020. The major metropolitan areas in Florida include the Miami-Fort Lauderdale area, Jacksonville, Tampa, and the state capital, Tallahassee. Since the mid-twentieth century, Florida has experienced rapid demographic and economic growth. Florida's economy, with a gross state product of \$1.4(M or B), is the fourth largest of any US state and the sixteenth largest in the world; the main sectors are tourism, hospitality, agriculture, real estate, and transportation. Florida is a popular destination for

migrants, and for both domestic and international migrants; it hosts nine out of the ten fastest-growing communities in the United States. The state's location, history, and successive waves of migration are reflected in its African, European, Indigenous, Hispanic, and Asian influences.

Florida is in one of the poorest regions of the United States, along with Appalachia and the Southwest; as such, it is associated with lower socioeconomic rankings. The median income of Florida residents is \$63,602, compared to the median national income, which is \$74,580.¹ The poverty rate of Florida is also high, with 12.7% of Florida residents in poverty, compared to the national poverty rate of 11.5%.

The median rent in Florida is \$1,301, compared to the median national rent of \$1,163. The percentage of people without health insurance in Florida is 13.95%, compared to 9.3% at the national level. The percentage of adults with a high school diploma in Florida is 89%, in line with the 88.9% of adults with a high school diploma at the national level. However, the percentage of college graduates in Florida, at 31.5%, is lower than the 33.7% of college graduates at the national level. Last, there is a longer commute to work, at 27.9 minutes, compared to the national level of 26.8 minutes. Florida is also the forty-ninth worst state for income inequality.² Income inequality is measured by several data points: the average difference in median incomes between the top 1% of earners and the bottom 99% of earners; the percentage of the 1% of earners who live in the geographic area; and different median incomes of the economic tiers.

The racial demographics are different in Florida compared to the other states, partly due to immigration and partly due to the history of Florida. The non-Hispanic White population is 58.9% in the United States, while in Florida, it is 52.3%. The Black³ population

¹ These socioeconomic statistics are largely drawn from the ACS 2022 three-year estimates. These are the latest data, and they have a reasonable margin of error. Where statistics are drawn from another source, it is noted.

² Florida Policy Institute (August 2018). Florida Ranks forty-ninth for the worst income inequality in the United States.

³ The term Black is used to capture the considerable proportion of African Americans in the United States along with growing Afro-Caribbean communities.

is 13.6% in the United States, while in Florida, it is 17%. While American Indians and Alaskan natives comprise 1.3% of the US population, they comprise only .5% of the Floridian population. Asians comprise 6.3% of the US population and only 3.1% of the state's population. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders comprise 3% of the US population and .1% of the state's population. Individuals from two or more racial communities comprise 3% of the US population and 2.4% of the state's population. Hispanic individuals comprise 19.1% of the US population and 27.1% of the state's population.

Child Well-Being in Florida

Each year, the Annie E. Casey Foundation publishes reports and an interactive database on the welfare of children in the United States, with data reports and rankings presented for each state. The overall ranking of child well-being encompasses four distinct but interrelated categories: economic well-being, education, health, family, and community. Each category is comprised of four key indicators. These indicators represent the best available data to measure the status of children's well-being at the state and national levels. The country's racial inequalities remain deep, systemic, and stubbornly persistent. Data show that American Indian, Black, and Hispanic children do not have the same opportunities as their White counterparts and experience significant barriers, resulting in systemic disparate outcomes. Florida rose in the KidsCount rankings from thirty-five in 2022 to thirty-one in 2023, a significant increase, although it remains one of the worst states for raising a child.

Hillsborough County

Hillsborough County is in the west-central portion of Florida. In the 2020 census, the population was 1,459,762, making it the fourth-most populous county in Florida and the most populous county outside the Miami metropolitan area. A 2021 estimate places the population of Hillsborough County at 1,512,070 people, with a yearly growth rate of 1.34%. With a startling growth in state population in 2015–2018, there has been a 20.3% growth in population in Hillsborough County since 2010. The county seat and largest city is Tampa.

Hillsborough County is characterized by two distinct but interrelated economic trends: gentrification and economic inequality. **Gentrification** is an urban, socioeconomic process in which a lower-income community changes through the influx of more affluent residents and businesses. **Gentrification often increases the economic value of a neighborhood, particularly through rising real estate values.** The shift in average economic income is often accompanied by a shift in the racial and ethnic composition of the community. While many urban areas throughout the nation are experiencing gentrification, **Hillsborough County is unique in that wealthier neighborhoods are juxtaposed with low-income enclaves within the same area.** It is common in Hillsborough County for bordering residential communities to have vastly different demographic and economic characteristics. The data presented below illustrate select aspects of Hillsborough County; the comprehensive report delineates the six regions of the county and dissects each region by zip code.

The median income of Florida residents is **\$63,602**, compared to the higher median income of Hillsborough County, **at \$65,905**. Still, the poverty rate of Hillsborough County is also higher, at 14.3%, compared to 13.3% in Florida, suggesting an uneven distribution of income in the county. The median **rent** in Hillsborough County is **\$1,259**, compared to **\$1,301 in the state**. The percentage of people without health insurance in Hillsborough County is 13.7%, which is comparable to the state level of 13.9%, although the percentage is still much higher compared to that of the nation. Hillsborough County residents are better educated than the average Floridian; 89.2% of adults have earned a high school diploma, which is in line with the Florida population. However, **35% of adults in Hillsborough County have earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 31.5% of Floridian adults.**

The racial demographics in Hillsborough County are significantly different than those of the state. **Non-Hispanic whites comprise 46% of the county's population,** compared to 52.3% of the state's population **The Black population is 18.5%,** compared to 17% of the state's population. American Indians and Alaskan natives comprise .6% of the county's population and .5% of the state's population. The Asian population has grown in

the past decade, to 4.8%, and is higher than the state's 3.1% Asian population. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders comprise 1% of the county's population, which is equal to the state's percentage. **A slightly higher population of multiracial residents (3.1%) live in Hillsborough County compared to the 2.4% who live in Florida.** The county's **Hispanic population comprises 30.5%** of the population in the county and 27.1% in the state.

COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19, including on health, loss of life, socioeconomics, the social and emotional development of children and adults, the cognitive development of children, and children's progress in school, was devastating. Mask mandates and social distancing contributed to political polarization in the United States, and especially in Florida, where the reporting of contested data was coupled with difficulties associated with the state's responses. **The federal government's response with an influx of economic and health resources stabilized families who had lost employment. The rapid development of a vaccine, the effective deployment of that vaccine, and federal subsidies led to a new normal.** The impact on early childhood education and care was devastating; children were sent home to learn, compounding families' economic stress and furthering delays in children's social and emotional growth. When children returned to the classroom, many teachers had left the industry, and classrooms were once again closed. **The federal subsidies ended on September 30, 2023,** and the impact is now beginning to be visible. This CNA compares data pre-COVID and current data and draws some recommendations from the changes that have occurred to the early childhood industry based on their impact on Florida.

Population Demographics: Florida and Hillsborough County

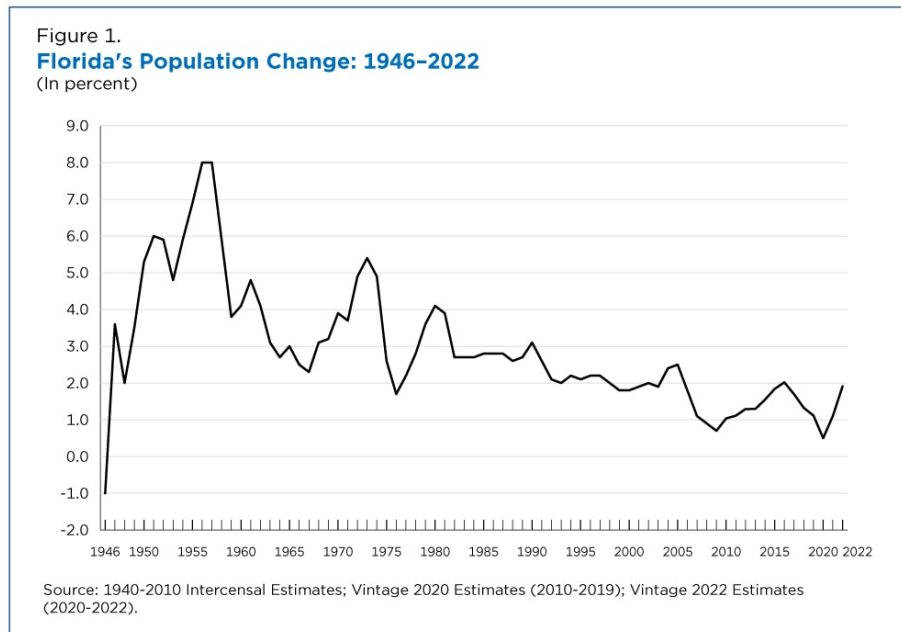
Since the mid-20th century, Florida has experienced rapid demographic and economic growth. Florida has a population exceeding 21 million and is the third most populous state in the nation, ranking eighth in population density as of 2020. Demographic growth is primarily fueled by migration from other states and from international

immigration. **Florida is the recipient of the largest number of out-of-state movers in the country as of 2020.**

After Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, a large population of Puerto Ricans migrated to escape the widespread destruction; nearly half settled in Orlando, while large populations moved to Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach. Cities throughout the state have continued to see population growth. The Miami metropolitan area, anchored by the cities of Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach, is the largest metropolitan area with a population of 6.138 million. Florida's other major population centers include Tampa Bay, Orlando, and the state capital of Tallahassee.

After decades of rapid population increase, Florida is now the nation's fastest-growing state for the first time since 1957, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Vintage 2022 population estimates. Its population increased by 1.9% to 22,244,823 between 2021 and 2022. Florida's percentage gains since 1946 have been impressive: its 2022 population was just over nine times its 1946 population of 2,440,000. For the third most populous state to also be the fastest growing is notable, because it requires significant population gains. In the post-World War II era after 1946, Florida's population increases fluctuated each year but were always positive. In the 1950s, as air conditioning became more prevalent in warmer parts of the United States, Florida's annual population growth averaged 6.1% (Table 1). It hit 8% in both 1956 and 1957, near the peak of the baby boom, marking the last time Florida was the fastest-growing state — until now.

During that decade, Florida's growth far outpaced the national rate, which was between 1.5% and 2.0% each year. Annual population growth of 8% is exceptionally rapid and translates to the population doubling roughly every nine years. The baby boom (1946–64) came to an end in the 1960s, and Florida's extraordinary growth during the 1950s slowed. However, "slowed" is a bit of a misnomer since, between 1960 and 1989, Florida's average annual growth remained above 3.0%. Generally, Florida's population grew at a rate of about double the national average.



In the 2000s, the slowing trend continued, with Florida averaging an annual growth of 1.7%. During the same period, national growth hovered around 1.0% a year, and that trend has continued since 2010. Between 2010 and 2020, national growth dipped from 0.9% to 0.5% each year, while Florida's increases ranged from 1.0% to 2.0%. In 2022, Florida's growth was nearing that previous decade's high at 1.9% and was among the fastest growing of the 50 states.

The population of Hillsborough County, Florida was 1.5 million in 2022, 22.7% up from the 1.2 million who lived there in 2010. For comparison, the national population grew by 7.7%, while Florida's population grew by 18% during the same period. Hillsborough County's population increased in 11 of the 12 years between year 2010 and year 2022. Its largest annual population increase was 2.5% between 2015 and 2016. The county's largest decline was between 2019 and 2020, when the population dropped 0.7%. Between 2010 and 2022, Hillsborough County grew by an average of 1.7% per year.

Age of Residents in Hillsborough County

Among the different age groups in Hillsborough County, older citizens (65+) were the fastest-growing age group between 2010 and 2022, with their population increasing by

56.7%. The proportion of the population over 65 increased from 11.9% in 2010 to 5.7% in 2022. Conversely, the youngest age group, 0 to 5, grew the least, increasing by 6.6% between 2010 and 2022. Further, the share of the population younger than five decreased from 6.5% in 2010 to 5.7% in 2022. The following chart details the number of children in each zip code and region by chronological age.

Hillsborough County Children by Age and Region						
Source: 2022 ACS: 3-Year Estimates						
Region	0 To 1	1 To 2	2 To 3	3 To 4	4 To 5	#< 5
1	2,781	2,998	2,989	3,064	3,175	15,007
2	2,200	2,306	2,250	2,048	1,994	10,798
3	1,687	1,748	1,754	1,571	1,567	8,327
4	2,708	2,752	2,674	2,514	2,577	13,225
5	3,652	3,868	3,921	3,963	3,872	19,276
6	3,112	3,246	3,282	3,202	3,082	15,924
Totals	16,140	16,918	16,870	16,362	16,267	82,557

In 2022, the largest racial or ethnic group in Hillsborough County was the White (non-Hispanic) group, which had a population of 696,336. Between 2010 and 2022, the Hispanic/Latino population had the most growth, increasing by 153,389 from 308,805 in 2010 to 462,194 in 2022. In 2022, Hillsborough County was more diverse than it was in 2010. In 2022, the White (non-Hispanic) group made up 46.0% of the population, compared with 53.8% in 2010. Between 2010 and 2022, the Hispanic/Latino share of the population grew the most, increasing 5.5 percentage points to 30.5%. The White (non-Hispanic) population had the largest decrease, dropping 7.8 percentage points to 46%. A further discussion of the racial and ethnic composition follows.

Racial and Ethnic Composition of Hillsborough County

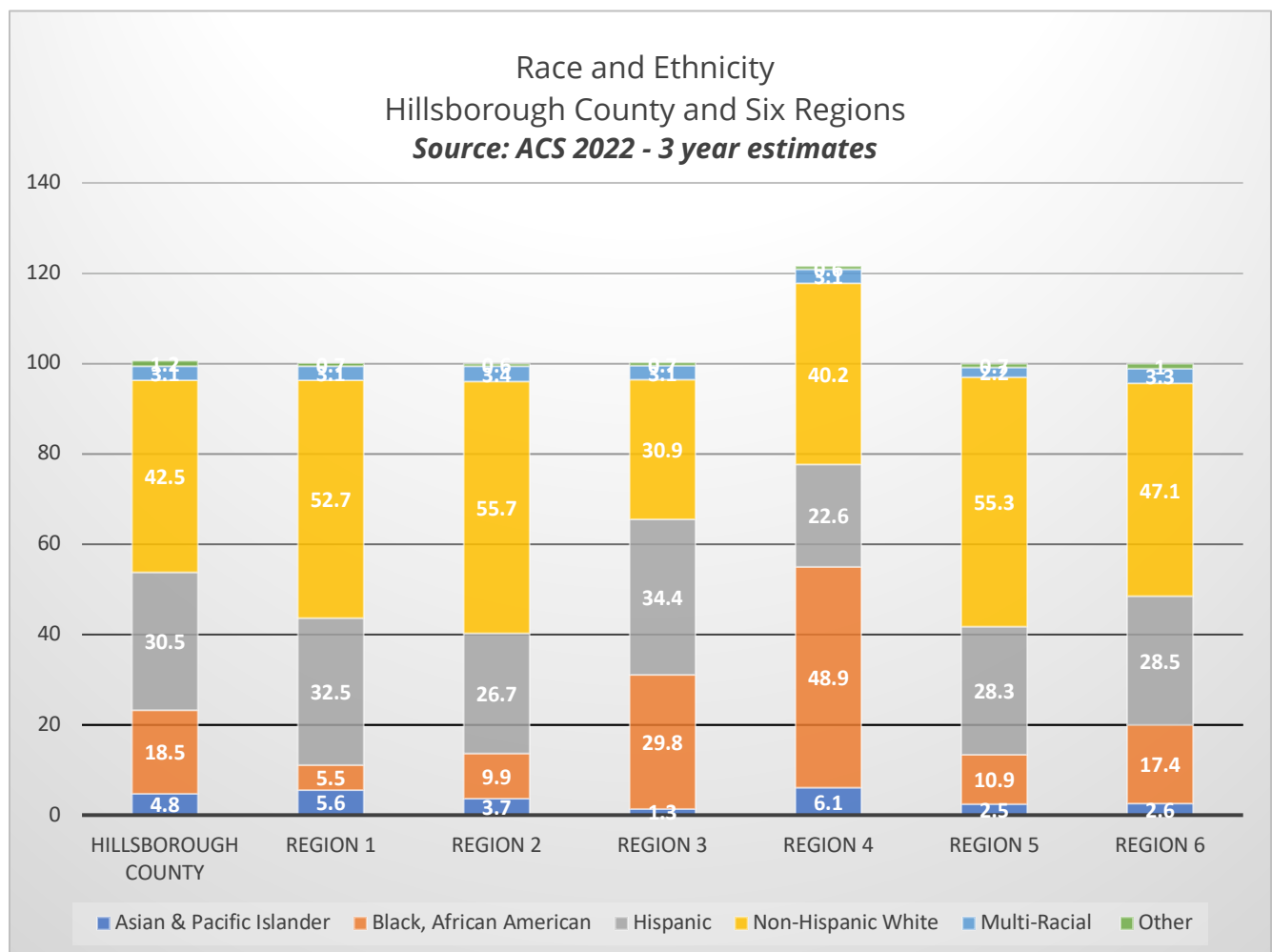
As of 2022, Florida had a population of 22,661,577, an increase of 1.9%, with an anticipated 3.3% increase in 2022. Florida has a diverse population, especially in the major metropolitan areas of 1) Tampa – St. Petersburg – Clearwater, 2) Orlando – Kissimmee – Sanford, 3) Jacksonville, 4) North Port – Sarasota – Bradenton, 5) Cape Coral – Fort Myers, 6) Lakeland – Winter Haven, and 7) Deltona – Daytona Beach – Ormond Beach. This is reflected in the demographics presented below.

	Total	Asian & Pacific Islands	Black, African American	Hispanic	Non- Hispanic White	Multi- Racial	Other
<i>Source: U.S. Census: American Community Survey 2021 (3-Year Estimates)</i>							
United States	338,287,557	6.3%	13.6%	19.1%	56.7%	3.0%	1.3%
Florida	21,538,226	3.1%	17%	27.1%	49.9%	2.4%	0.5%
Hillsborough County	1,459,773	4.8%	18.5%	30.5%	42.5%	3.1%	1.2%

A second comparison illustrates the differences within the six regions of Hillsborough County.

	Total	Asian & Pacific Islands	Black, African American	Hispanic	Non- Hispanic White	Multi- Racial	Other
<i>Source: U.S. Census: American Community Survey 2021 (3-Year Estimates)</i>							
Hillsborough County	1,459,773	4.8%	18.5%	30.5%	42.5%	3.1%	1.2%
Section 1	299,887	5.6%	5.5%	32.5%	52.6%	3.1%	0.7%
Section 2	204,804	3.7%	9.9%	26.7%	55.6^	4.5%	0.2%
Section 3	124,659	1.3%	29.8%	34.4%	30.9%	3.3%	0.7%

	Total	Asian & Pacific Islands	Black, African American	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White	Multi-Racial	Other
<i>Source: U.S. Census: American Community Survey 2021 (3-Year Estimates)</i>							
Section 4	267,234	5.8%	27.4%	21.2%	40.2%	3.1%	0.6%
Section 5	250,005	2.5%	10.9%	28.3%	55.3%	2.2%	0.7%
Section 6	287,031	2.6%	17.4%	28.5%	47.1%	3.3%	1.0%

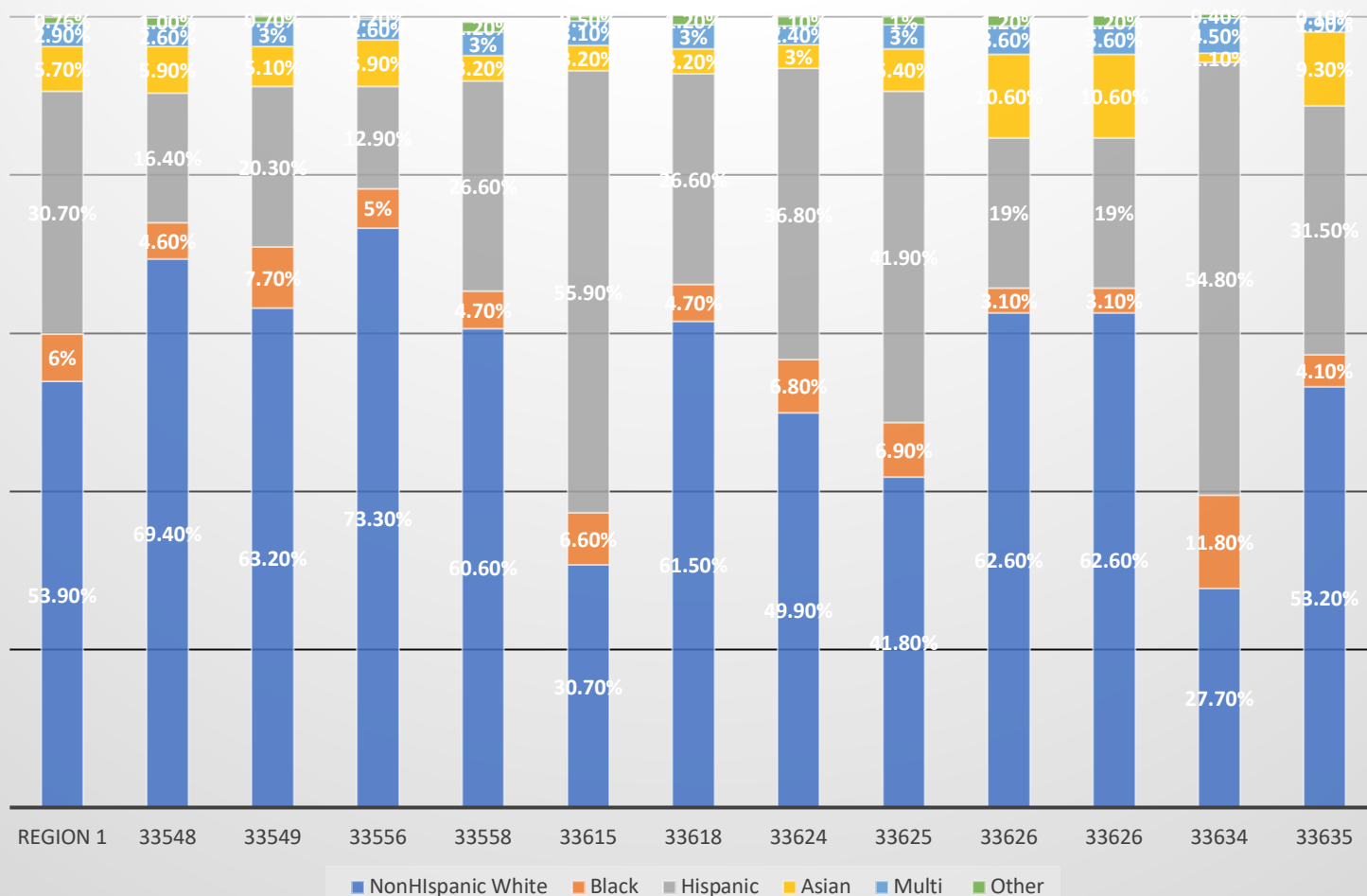


Region One: Differences by Zip Code

Region one has a slightly higher population of Asian and Pacific Islanders (5.6%) and a significantly lower percentage of Blacks or African Americans (5.5% compared to a county-wide population of 18.5%). The population of Hispanics in region 1 mirrors that of Hillsborough County (32.5% and 30.5%, respectively). Region 1 has 10% more non-Hispanic Whites (52.7%) than Hillsborough County (42.5%). The percentages of multi-racial residents and residents of another race or ethnicity are similar to the county as a whole. Within the different regions, specific zip codes have significantly different racial and ethnic

Region 1: Race & Ethnicity by Zip Code

Source: ACS 2022 - 3 Year Estimates

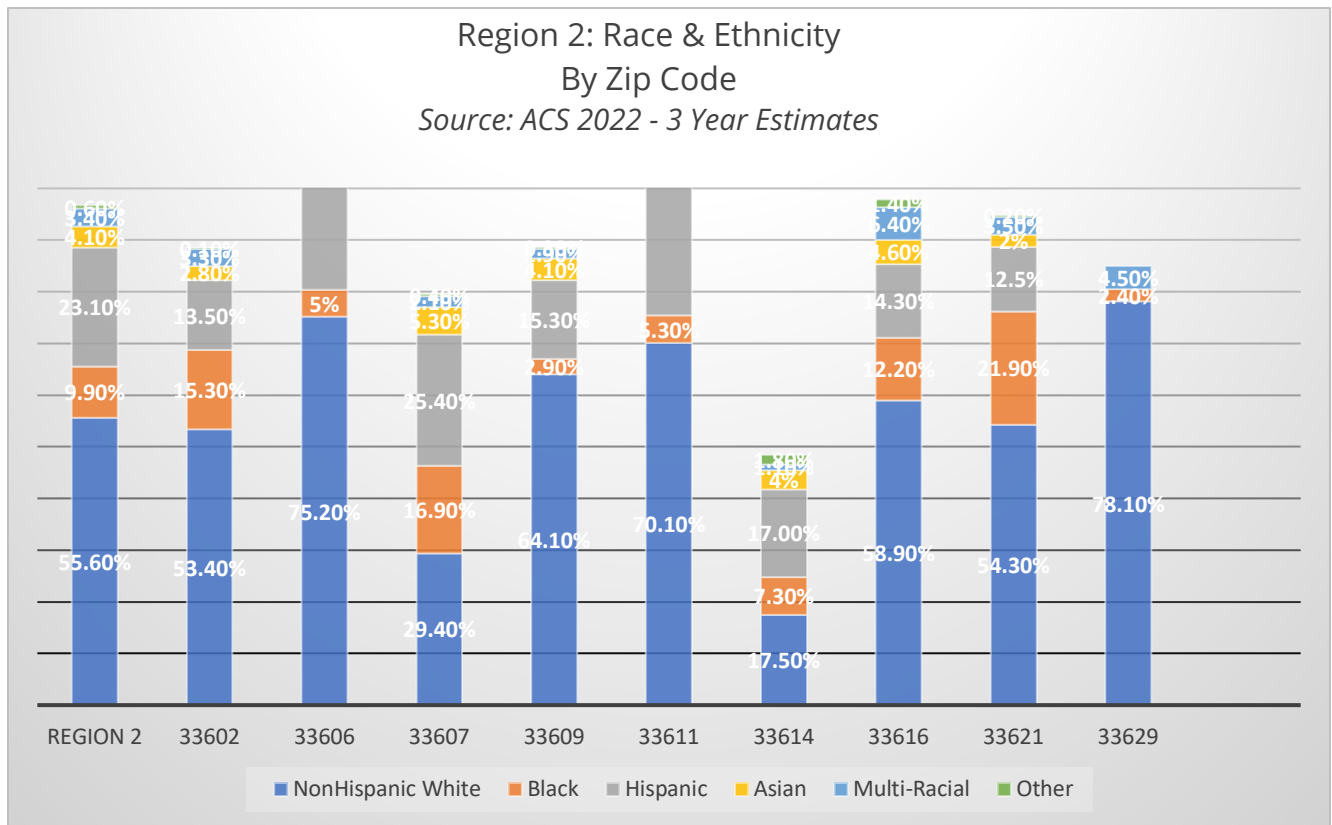


compositions. In region 1, the non-Hispanic White population ranges from 30.7% in zip code 33615 to 69.4% in zip code 33548. The Black or African American population ranges from 3.1% to 11.8% (zip code 33614). In region 1, the Hispanic population ranges from 16.4% to 55.9% (zip code 33615). The Asian population ranges from 3.0% to 10.6% in zip code 33626. The multi-racial population ranges from 1.9% to 4.8% in zip code 33503. The population of residents from another race or ethnicity ranges from 0% to 1.2%.

Region Two: Differences by Zip Code

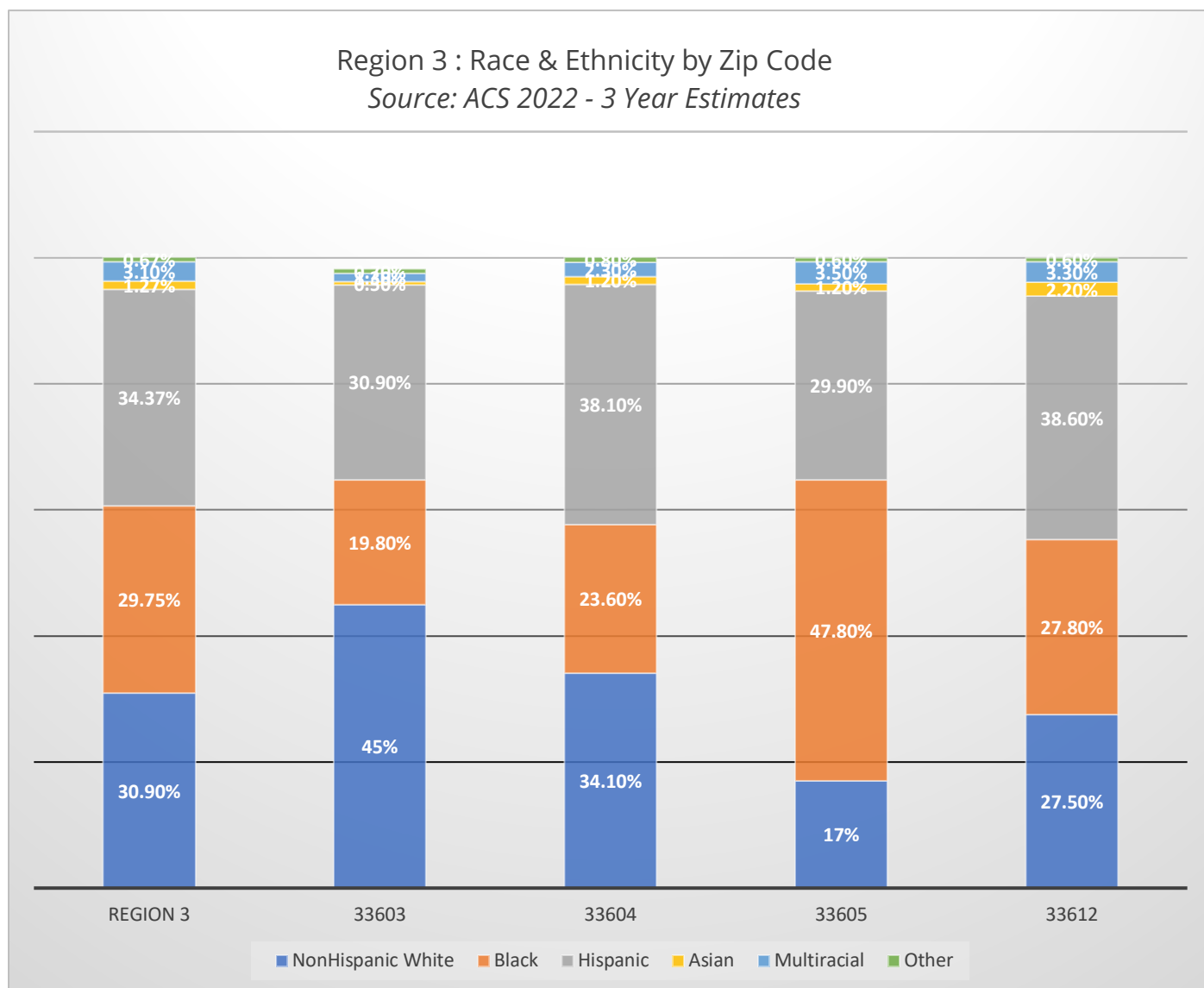
Region two has fewer Asian Pacific Islanders (3.7%) than Hillsborough County (4.8%), and a significantly lower percentage of Blacks or African Americans (9.9% compared to 18.5% of Hillsborough County). There is a lower Hispanic population in region 2 (26.7%) than in Hillsborough County (30.5%). Non-Hispanic Whites comprise 55.7% of the population in region 2, with only 42.5% in Hillsborough County. The percentage of multi-racial residents and those of another race or ethnicity is similar to the county as a whole. Region two also has zip codes that vary from the average within the region. The non-Hispanic White population ranges from 29.4% in zip code 33607 to 75.2% in zip code 33606. The Black or African American population ranges from 2.4% in zip code 33629 to 21.9% in zip code 33621. The Hispanic population ranges from 12.5% in zip code 33629 to 70.9% in zip code 33614. The Asian and Pacific Islander population ranges from 2.3% to

5.3% in zip code 33609. The multi-racial population ranges from 1.9% to 6.4% in zip code 33616. The percentage of residents who identify as other ranges from 0.1% to 1.8%.



Region Three: Differences by Zip Code

Region three has a significantly larger Black or African American population than Hillsborough County (29.7% and 18.5%, respectively). The Hispanic population of 30.9% is similar to Hillsborough County at 30.5%. Less than a third of the population (30.9%) is non-Hispanic White, compared to 42.5% of non-Hispanic Whites in Hillsborough County. Again, the percentages of multi-racial residents and those of another race or ethnicity are similar to the county as a whole.

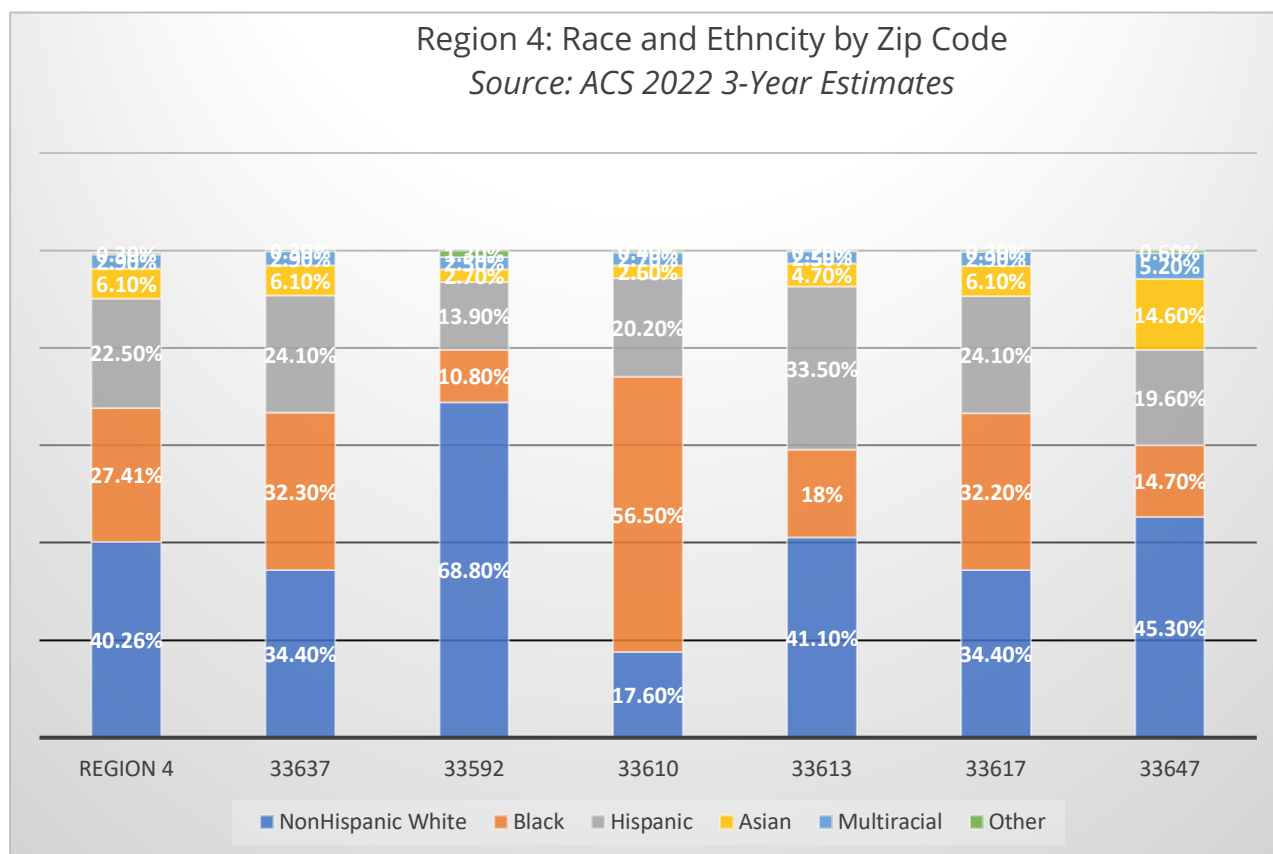


There are only four zip codes in region 3, with the percentage of Black or African Americans ranging from 19.8% in zip code 33603 to 47.8% in zip code 33605. Within the zip codes of 33604 and 33612, approximately a quarter of the population is Black or African

American (23.6% and 27.8%, respectively). The non-Hispanic White population ranges from 17% in zip code 33605 to 45% in zip code 33603. The Hispanic population is similar to the county in zip codes 33603 and 33605, but jumps to 38.1% in zip code 33604 and 38.6% in zip code 33612. The Asian or Pacific Islander population is lower in region 3, ranging from 0.5% to 2.2%.

Region Four: Differences by Zip Code

Region four has a significantly larger percentage of Blacks when compared to the county. Blacks comprise 27.4% of the population in region 4 and 18.5% in Hillsborough County. In region 4, 43.7% of the population are non-Hispanic Whites, which is similar to 42.5% in Hillsborough County. In contrast, only 22.5% of the population in region 4 are Hispanic, while the county is comprised of 30.5% Hispanic residents. The percentage of



multi-racial residents and those of another race or ethnicity is similar to the county as a whole.

There is a small number of zip codes (6) in region 4. The non-Hispanic White population ranges from 17.6% in zip code 33610 (which is predominantly Black or African American) to 68.8% in zip code 33592. The Black or African American population ranges from 10.8% in zip code 33592 to 56.5% in zip code 33610. The Hispanic population of 22.5% is lower in region 4 than the county's Hispanic population of 30.5%. The Asian population of 6.1% is higher than the Asian population of the county, which is 4.8%.

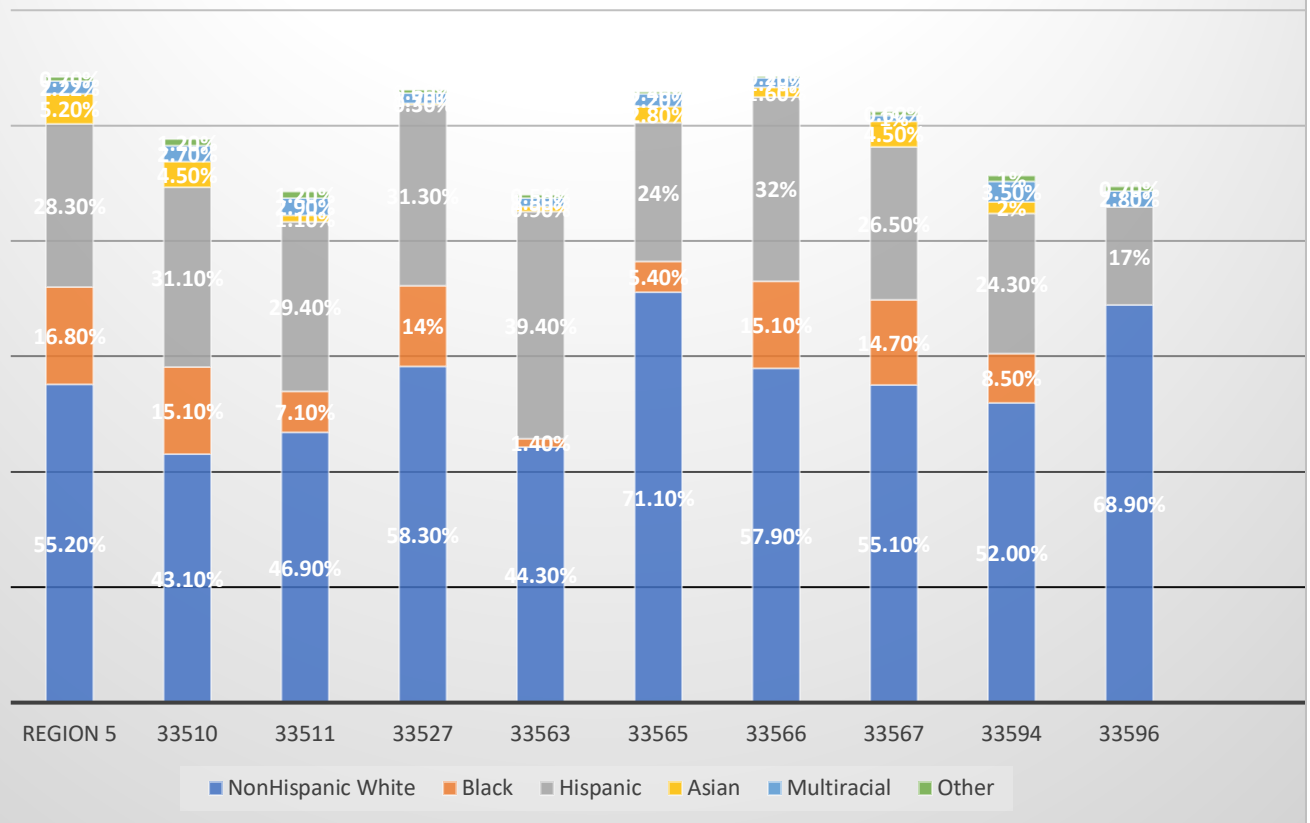
Region Five: Differences by Zip Codes

More than half of the population in region five is non-Hispanic White (55.3%), which is significantly higher than the percentage of non-Hispanic Whites in the county (42.5%). The Black or African American population of 10.9% is almost half of the Black or African American population in the county (18.5%). The percentages of multi-racial residents and those of another race or ethnicity are similar to the county.

The zip codes in region five vary significantly in terms of race and ethnic composition. The non-Hispanic White population ranges from 43.1% to 71.1% in zip code 33565. The Black or African American population ranges from 5.4% to 16.8%. The Hispanic population ranges from 17% (compared to 30.5% in Hillsborough County) to 39.4% in zip code 33563. The Asian or Pacific Islander population ranges from 0.3% to 5.2% in zip code 33510.

Region 5: Race & Ethnicity by Zip Code

Source: ACS 2022 3 Year Estimates



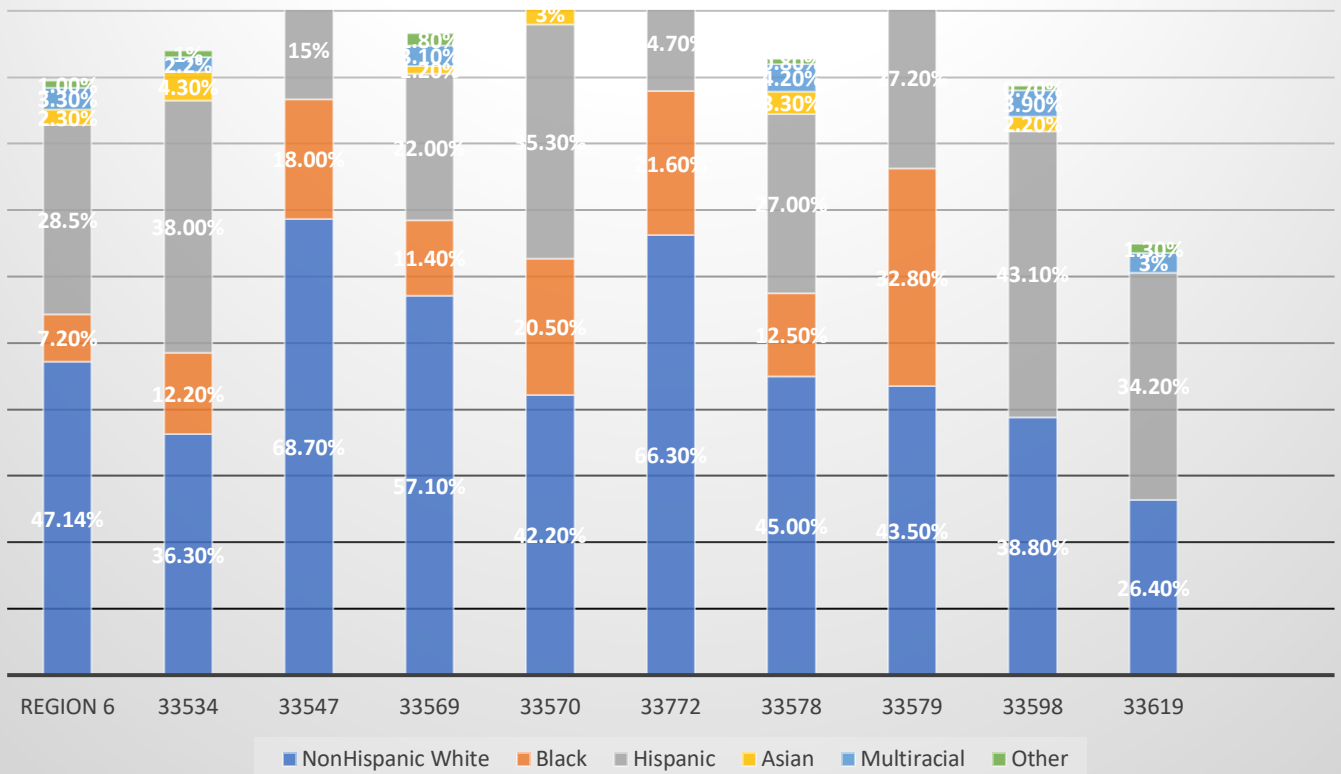
Region Six: Differences by Zip Code

Region six has a less diverse population than the county. The percentage of Asian and Pacific Islanders (2.6%) is half that of the county (4.8%). The percentage of Blacks or African Americans is similar to the county (17.4% and 18.5%, respectively). The proportion of the Hispanic population is significantly less in region 6 (28.5%) than in the county (42.5%). At 47.1%, the non-Hispanic White population is higher than the non-Hispanic White population in the county. The percentages of multi-racial residents and residents of another race are similar to the county.

There is less variation among the zip codes in region 6 than in other regions. Zip code 33619 has a lower population of non-Hispanic Whites (26.4%), a higher proportion of Blacks or African Americans (32.8%), and a higher population of Hispanics (34.2%) than the county.

Region 6: Race & Ethnicity by Zip Code

Source: ACS 2022 - 3-year estimates



Immigration

Florida is also a site for large-scale international immigration, much of it from the Caribbean islands, including Cuba and Haiti. Other populations have also begun immigrating to the state; Florida hosts nine of the ten fastest-growing communities in the United States, including communities from Honduras, Guatemala, and subcontinental India.

In 2020, Florida's immigrant population was 4.23 million, about 20.6% of its total population. Nearly half of the nation's immigrants live in three states: California (24%), Texas (11%), and Florida (10%). Most immigrants live in major metropolitan areas; the largest centers for immigrants in Florida are Tampa, Orlando, and Miami. As one of the fastest-growing states in the U.S., Florida has seen a recent increase in foreign-born residents to 21.2% of their 22 million. Immigrants from India are the fastest-growing

population in the United States (6%), and in Hillsborough County (6%). Most immigrants (77%) are in the country legally, while almost a quarter (23%) are unauthorized. The largest population of unauthorized immigrants originates from Mexico; however, the population of unauthorized Mexican immigrants is declining, while there are increasing numbers of unauthorized immigrants from other Central American countries.

Approximately 670,000 immigrants in the United States are eligible for temporary protective status (TPS). TPS offers temporary protection from deportation for qualifying immigrants who live in the U.S. and come from a designated list of sixteen countries with active TPS designations, including Afghanistan, Cameroon, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Syria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen. This has implications for both Florida and Hillsborough County. Hillsborough County has a sizable Haitian population (14%), and a growing population of immigrants from El Salvador (6%), Honduras (3%), Nicaragua (2%), and Venezuela (6%). Importantly, refugees from El Salvador and Honduras often speak a Central American dialect, such as Quechua, rather than Spanish.

Country of Origin	Asian	Latin American	Europe & N American	Caribbean	Middle East Africa
<i>Source: Pew Research Center: Key Findings About U.S. Immigration Statistics 2021</i>					
U.S.	28.1%	39.2%	13.4%	10.6%	9.1%
Florida	10.4%	72.7%	6.3%	9.2%	1.2%
Hillsborough County	19.3%	65.2%	5.2%	10.1%	0.8%

Florida's Economy

Florida's economy quickly recovered from the COVID-19 recession due to the impact of federal funds transferred to the state in the forms of unemployment compensation supplements, the expansion of childcare tax credits, small business financial supports, and investments in municipal governments. Despite the rapid recovery of both the national and Florida's economy, women, especially those of color, have experienced declining

employment rates, along with a significant decrease in weekly wages. This decrease in both employment and wages is projected to worsen as federal support for affordable, accessible, and high-quality early childhood education and care ends in September 2023.

Florida's Major Industries

Florida's economy has significantly recovered for all metro areas, except the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metro area and the Sebring metro area. Still, the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metro area continues to account for 30% of employment for Florida workers. At the height of the pandemic, the employment rate decreased by 949,000 workers between January and April 2020. Yet Florida recovered all loss of employment by January 2022; employment has increased by 332,000 jobs over prepandemic levels, and much of this new growth is in new sectors, primarily professional, scientific, and technical occupations.

Health care, early childhood education, public sector employment, and other social assistance service industries were experiencing challenges prior to the pandemic. However, the onset of COVID-19 exacerbated the low wages, coupled with elevated levels of stress and overwork in these industries. These industries have not recovered; many economists do not expect full recovery without substantial government (federal or state) investment.

Economic forecasts do project employment growth in most of the 11 major industries in Florida. High-employing industries will remain within trade, transportation and utilities, professional and business services, leisure, and hospitality.

Florida Employment Projections by Industry

Source: Florida Dept. of Economic Opportunity

	2021	Jan-22	Apr-22	Jul-22	2029
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	1,759,811	189,700	1,934,100	1,945,000	1,918,151
Professional & Business Services	1,406,993	1,504,000	1,525,400	1,558,500	1,622,363
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,250,410	1,171,700	1,178,700	1,204,000	1,453,434
Leisure & Hospitality	1,117,432	1,212,500	1,217,000	1,258,300	1,403,375
Government	1,110,665	1,096,200	1,096,100	1,101,700	1,168,873
Financial Industries	599,344	638,600	653,800	655,400	660,161
Construction	567,180	586,100	592,700	595,600	637,964
Manufacturing	380,990	396,100	406,000	412,200	418,197
Public Administration	339,067	342,200	352,300	361,500	383,107
Education	186,850	179,400	179,100	184,700	218,860
Information	131,313	143,700	145,600	151,500	145,263

With the lower employment rates in the health assistance, early childhood education, and social service industries, they are facing, and will continue to face, heightened levels of attribution. Improving the working conditions in these critical industries is necessary to increase the share of work with college and advanced degrees in Florida.

Florida's Unemployment Rate

The overall rate of unemployment in Florida is 3.7%. Current data show that the unemployment rate for women is at 3.6%, higher than the prepandemic level of 3.3%. Conversely, the unemployment rate for men is 2.8%, lower than the prepandemic rate of 3% and women's unemployment rate. At the height of the pandemic, Hispanic workers experienced a peak unemployment rate of 17.5%, while Black workers experienced a high rate of 15.2%. Workers from other races and ethnic groups had a high percentage of unemployment at 13.6%, while non-Hispanic white workers had a lower rate of 12.7%. The unemployment rate of Black workers prior to the pandemic was more than twice the rate of any other demographic. Women in Florida experienced a pandemic high of 16.2% unemployment rate in May 2020, three percentage points higher than men.

Racial economic disparities are more pronounced when disaggregated by gender. While median wages have declined for all women, the decline is most severe for non-Hispanic White women (13%) and Hispanic women (18%). In contrast, Black women experienced a 3% wage decline – in part due to already low wages.

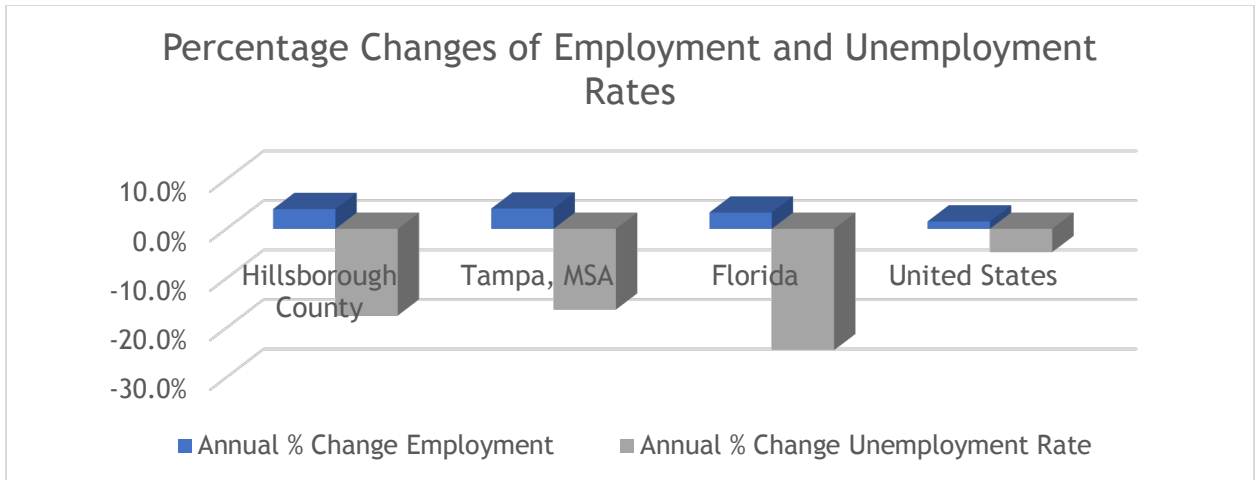
Men's hourly wage increased from \$21.50 to \$22.78. Hispanic and non-Hispanic White men had modest increases in wages (3% and 4%, respectively). However, Black men's hourly wages increased by 29% (an increase of \$4.29 an hour) due to the increase in union coverage for Black men. Although the AFL-CIO is the largest union in Florida, it is the Service Employees International Union that has had the largest gain in union workers in the past two years. The increase in hourly wages for Black men reduced, but did not eliminate, the racial wage gap between Black and non-Hispanic White men.

The median wage for women declined by \$2.32 per hour (from \$18.25 to \$15.93) between January 2020 and July 2022. The wages of Hispanic women have declined by 18%, while non-Hispanic white women's wages have declined by 13% since January 2022. An important fact to consider is that 46% of women in the labor force have children. The high share of female workers with children, coupled with a decrease in wages, will have significant impacts on family economic stability and the current and future well-being of children.

Hillsborough County: Economic Data

Annual economic development indicators are collected at the national, state, and county levels, as well as for metropolitan statistical areas such as the Tampa-St. Petersburg MSA. The rapid economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic found in Florida was mirrored in Hillsborough County. Within the county, employment has grown by 4.0%, with more than 4,800 new professional, scientific, and technical jobs created in 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. The unemployment rate in the county decreased dramatically from a peak of 12.0% in April 2020 to 4.3% in April 2022.

Labor Force				
<i>Source: Florida DEO/U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics</i>				
Location	Labor Force	Annual Percentage Change	Unemployed	Annual Percentage Change 2
Hillsborough County	812,239	4.0%	17,369	-17.5%
Tampa, MSA	1,661,495	4.1%	36,390	-16.3%
Florida	10,862,301	3.3%	250,216	-24.5%
United States	166,178,000	1.5%	6,465,000	-4.7%



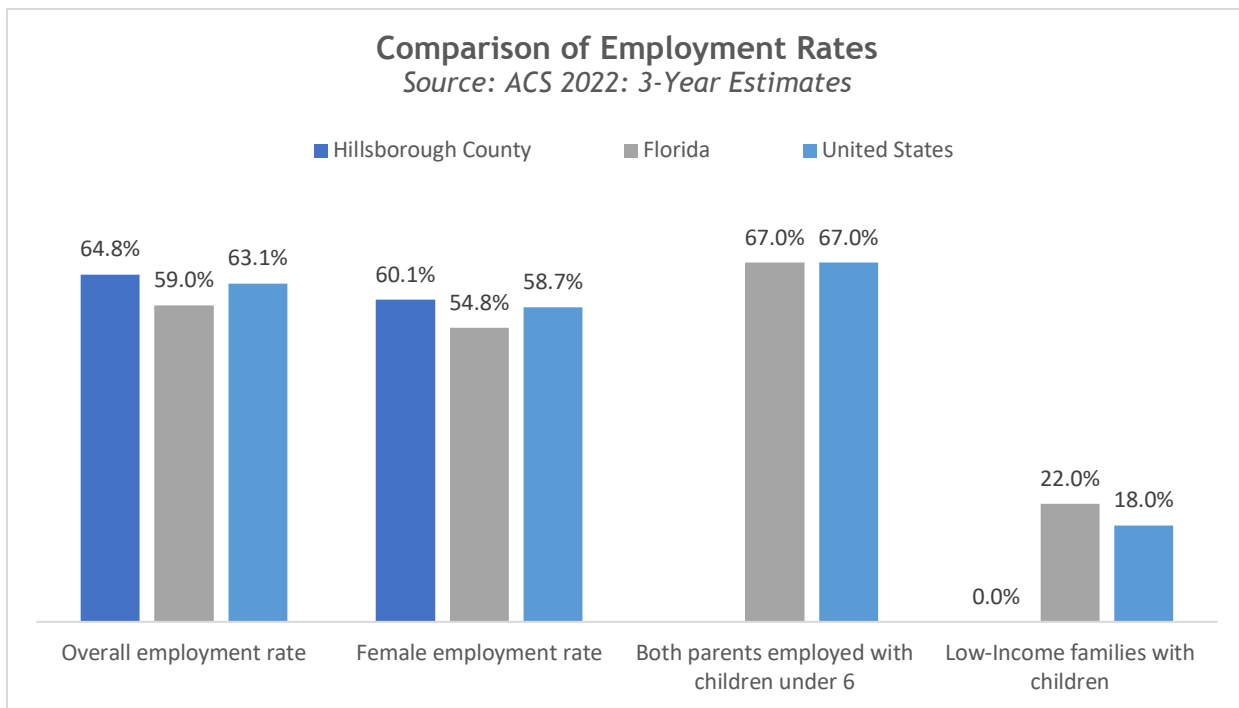
A closer examination of specific industries within Hillsborough County indicates that economic growth occurred in all but two industry sectors. Specifically, there was a 4.2% decrease in agriculture, forest, fishing, and hunting occupations, and there was a slight decrease (1.9%) in finance and insurance. Similarly, all but three occupations showed an increase in average annual wages. Wages in construction decreased by 8.8%, the average annual wage in administrative and waste services decreased by 1.5%, and average annual wages in accommodation and food services decreased by 11.3%.

Changes in Employment and Average Wage by Industry
Quarter 3, 2022

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics/Jobs EQ

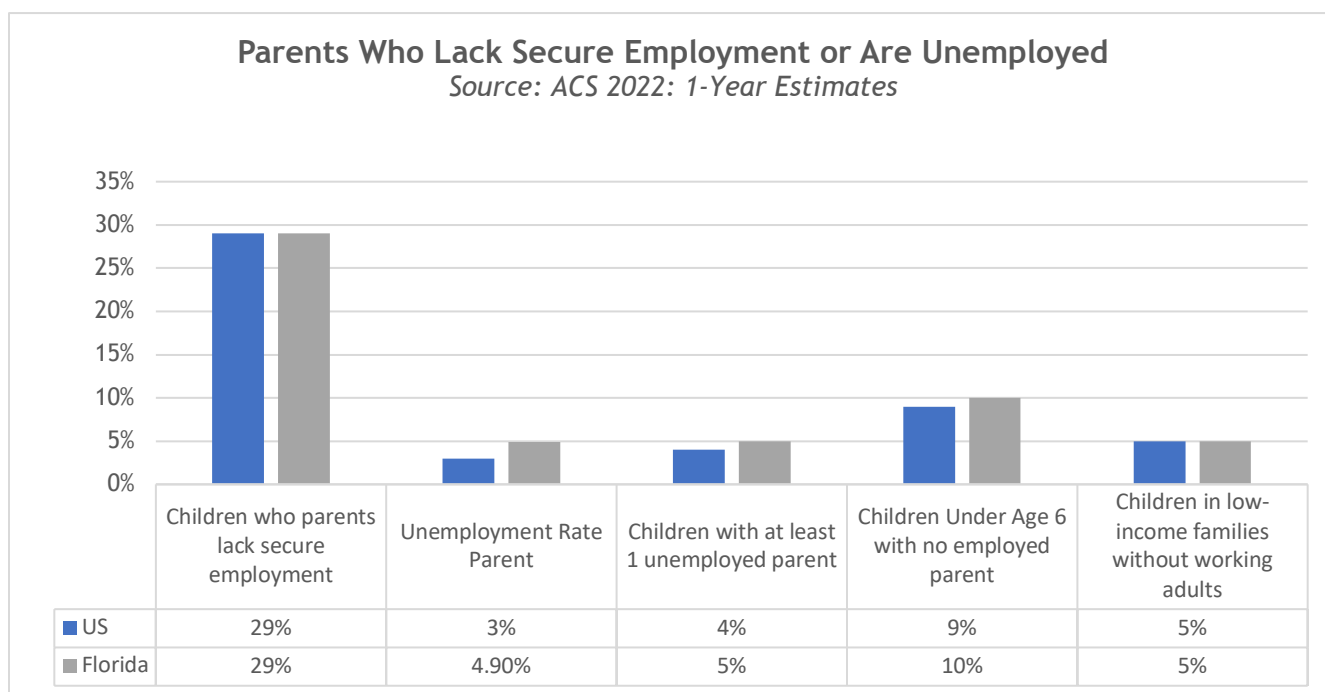
Industry	Employment	Annual Percentage Change Employment	Average Annual Wage	Annual Percentage Change Wages
Agriculture, Forest, Fishing & Hunting	4,045.00	-4.2%	\$ 35,776	15.6%
Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas Extraction	85.00	-1.2%	\$ 71,344	24.8%
Construction	3,213.00	10.2%	\$ 91,780	-8.8%
Manufacturing	48,606.00	7.1%	\$ 69,888	11.7%
Wholesale Trade	30,424.00	7.8%	\$ 70,772	12.6%
Retail Trade	34,503.00	4.5%	\$ 87,256	9.4%
Transportation & Warehousing	73,360.00	2.1%	\$ 43,732	4.9%
Information	30,358.00	20.1%	\$ 56,420	8.9%
Finance & Insurance	15,196.00	-1.9%	\$ 105,404	1.2%
Real Estate Rental & Leasing	64,492.00	5.3%	\$ 97,708	10.8%
Professional & Technical Services	16,929.00	9.6%	\$ 70,252	5.1%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	76,465.00	6.8%	\$ 103,116	9.2%
Administrative & Wase Services	11,504.00	10.0%	\$ 107,900	-1.5%
Educational Services	60,523.00	4.2%	\$ 54,028	14.8%
Health Care & Social Assistance	13,258.00	12.1%	\$ 49,608	6.0%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	93,616.00	4.3%	\$ 67,965	7.0%
Accommodation & Food Services	13,503.00	8.7%	\$ 3,092	-11.3%
Other Services	3,155.00	6.4%	\$ 28,808	10.6%
Public Administration	9,102.00	8.7%	\$ 46,540	11.9%
Unclassified	20,113.00	-1.2%	\$ 61,568	9.6%

The overall growth of Hillsborough County's economy includes the growth in employment, the creation of high-wage jobs, and an increase in average annual wages, which is coupled with a significant decrease in the unemployment rate. The overall economy of the county has recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, with several indicators exceeding prepandemic levels. Employment rates in the county are higher than in Florida or the United States. Additionally, the employment of women is significantly higher than in Florida or the nation. Employment is not sufficient to lift families out of poverty, and the data indicate that 22% of low-income families with children in Florida are working.



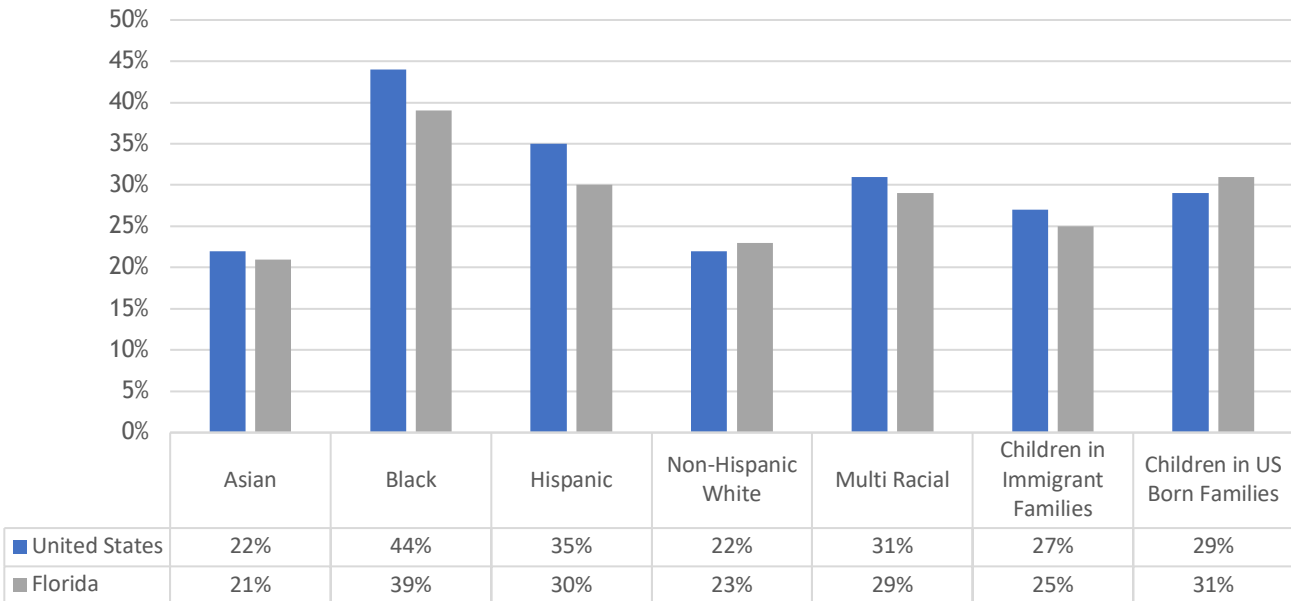
Unemployment and Lack of Secure Employment

The unemployment rate, which has significantly declined as the economy recovers, is not even distributed. First, almost one-third of families with children have parents who lack secure employment. Families in this precarious situation are economically challenged and frequently report anxiety and depression. The following chart details unemployed families and families who lack secure employment, in Florida and the United States.



The unemployment rate varies by family structure; families with children under six and single, female-headed families are more likely to be unemployed or lack secure employment in Florida. Hispanic and Black families, along with immigrant families, are more likely to be unemployed or lack secure employment. The following data examine the disproportionate rate of unemployment among families of color when compared to non-Hispanic White families. Further, the unemployment rates of adults in immigrant families are provided.

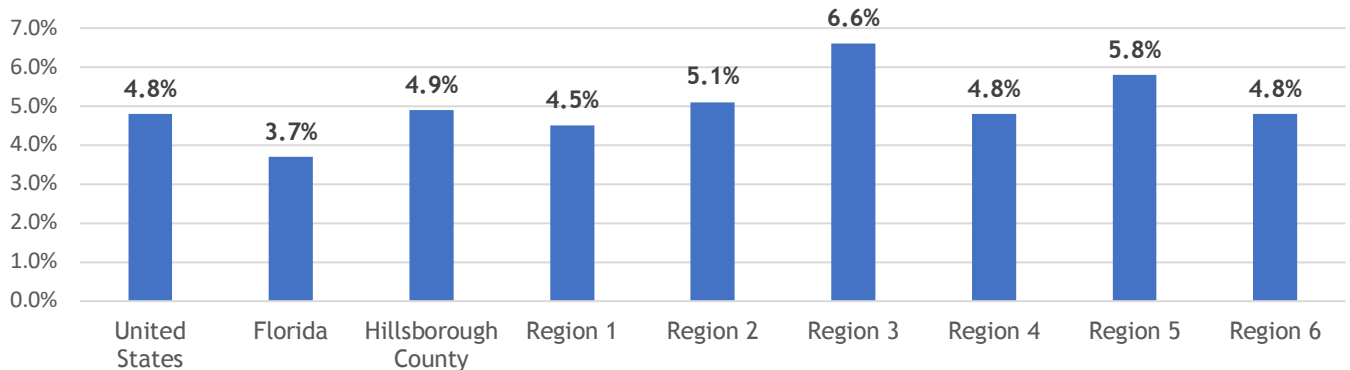
Children in Families with Unemployed Adults
Race, Ethnicity & Immigrant Status
Source: ACS 2022: 1-Year Estimates



Unemployment Data by Region – Hillsborough County

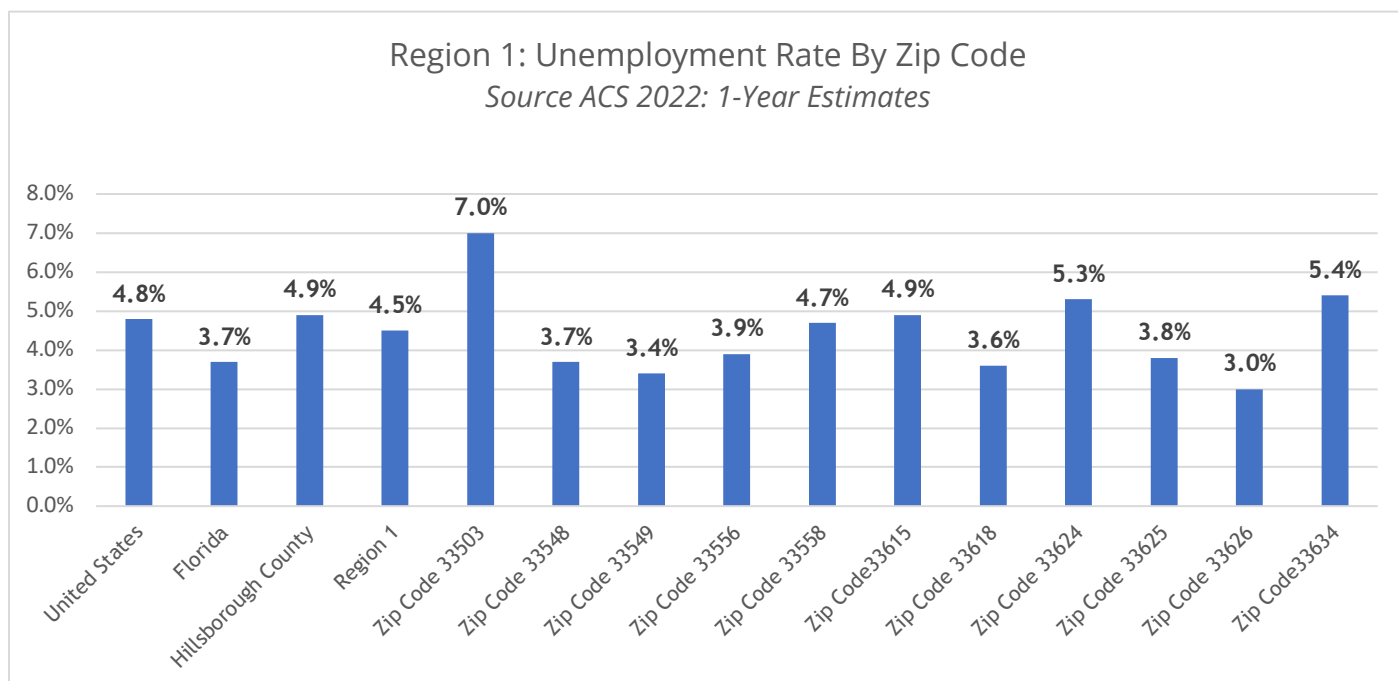
The data on unemployment rates in Hillsborough County vary significantly by region, as illustrated in the chart below. Region 3 of Hillsborough faces deep challenges with access to employment and is predominantly Black, with almost half of the residents in zip code 33605 identifying as Black or African American. Regions 2 and 5, with significantly higher unemployment rates (5.1% and 5.8%, respectively), have large Hispanic populations.

Unemployment Rates: Hillsborough County
Source: ACS 2022: 3-Year Estimates



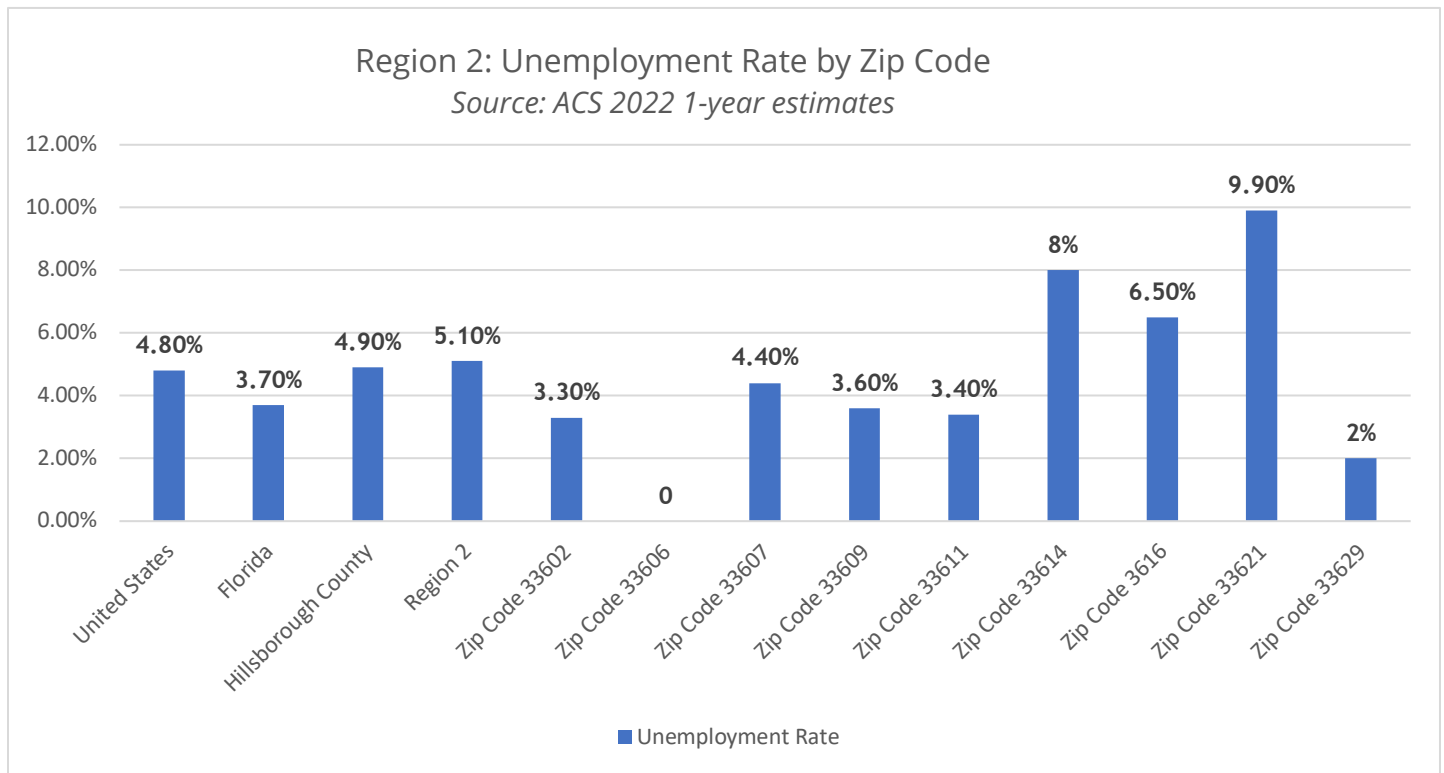
Region One: Differences by Zip Code

A more detailed look at the specific zip codes that comprise the regions reveals deeper disparities between zip codes, especially those zip codes where a sizable percentage of people of color reside. More than half of the residents in zip code 33503, where the unemployment rate is 7% or twice the rate of the county, identify as Hispanic.



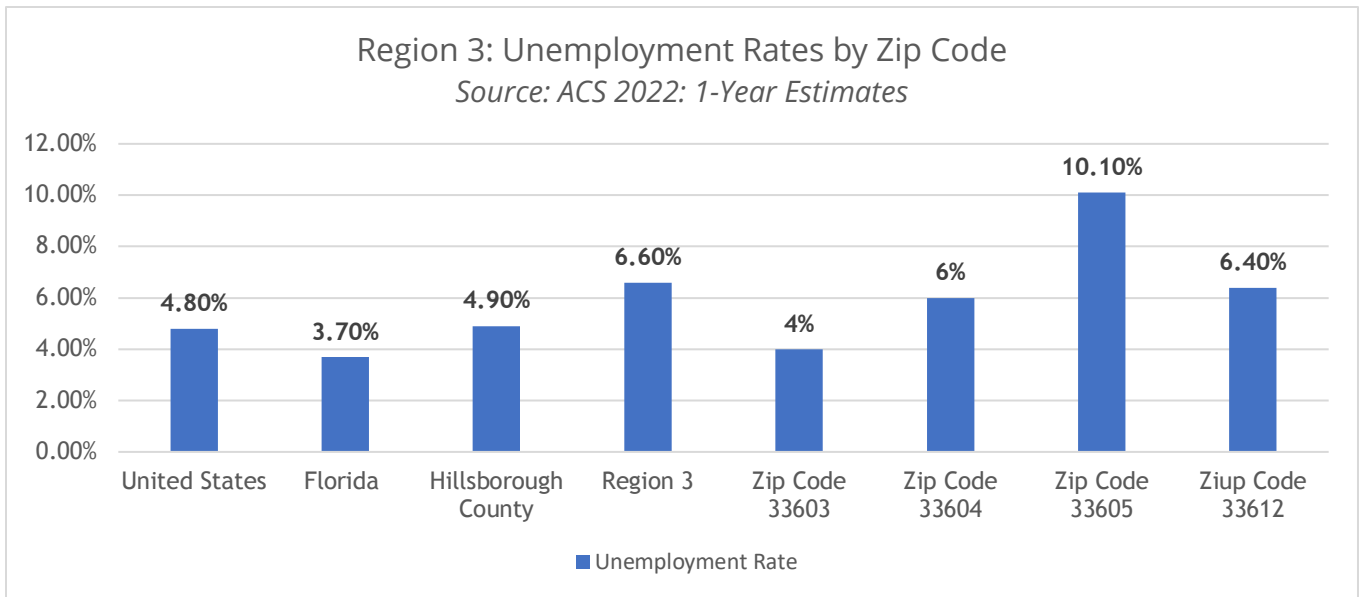
Region Two: Differences by Zip Code

Most zip codes found in region two have unemployment rates equivalent to Hillsborough County. However, Zip Codes 33615 and 33621 have almost one and half times the unemployment rate (8% and 9.9%, respectively) as Hillsborough County, while 33616 has a significantly higher unemployment rate (6.5%).



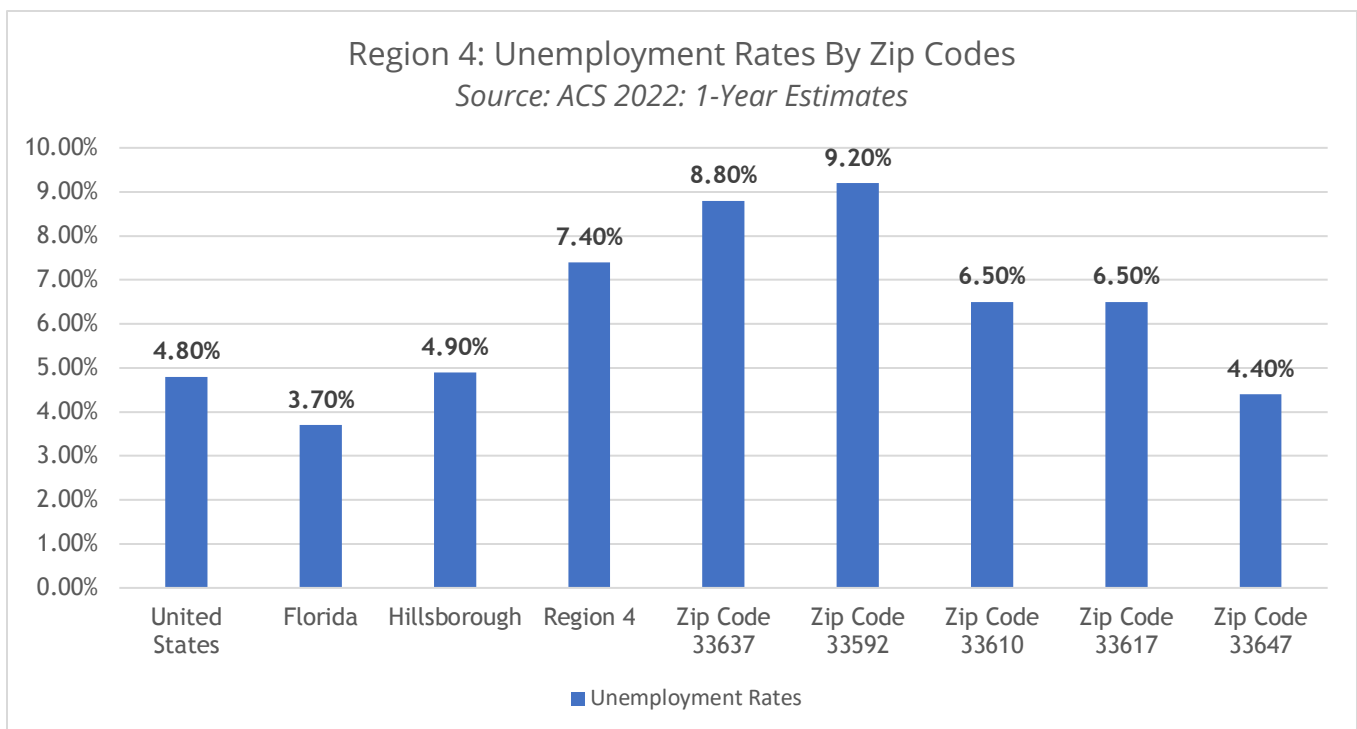
Region Three: Differences by Zip Code

Region three has significant unemployment in all four of the zip codes found there. The average unemployment rate for region three is 6.6%, significantly higher than the county rate of 4.9%. Further, unemployment rates range from 4% in zip code 33603 to a high of 10.1% in zip code 33605. Within zip code 33605, Blacks comprise almost half the population (47.8%), while Hispanics comprise almost another third (29.9%). All zip codes have significant Black populations ranging from 19.8% to 47.8%, and significant numbers of Hispanic residents, ranging from 29.9% to 38%. This is in stark contrast to the racial and ethnic composition of the county, which has a majority of non-Hispanic White residents (67%), a small population of Blacks (17%), and 23% of Hispanic residents.



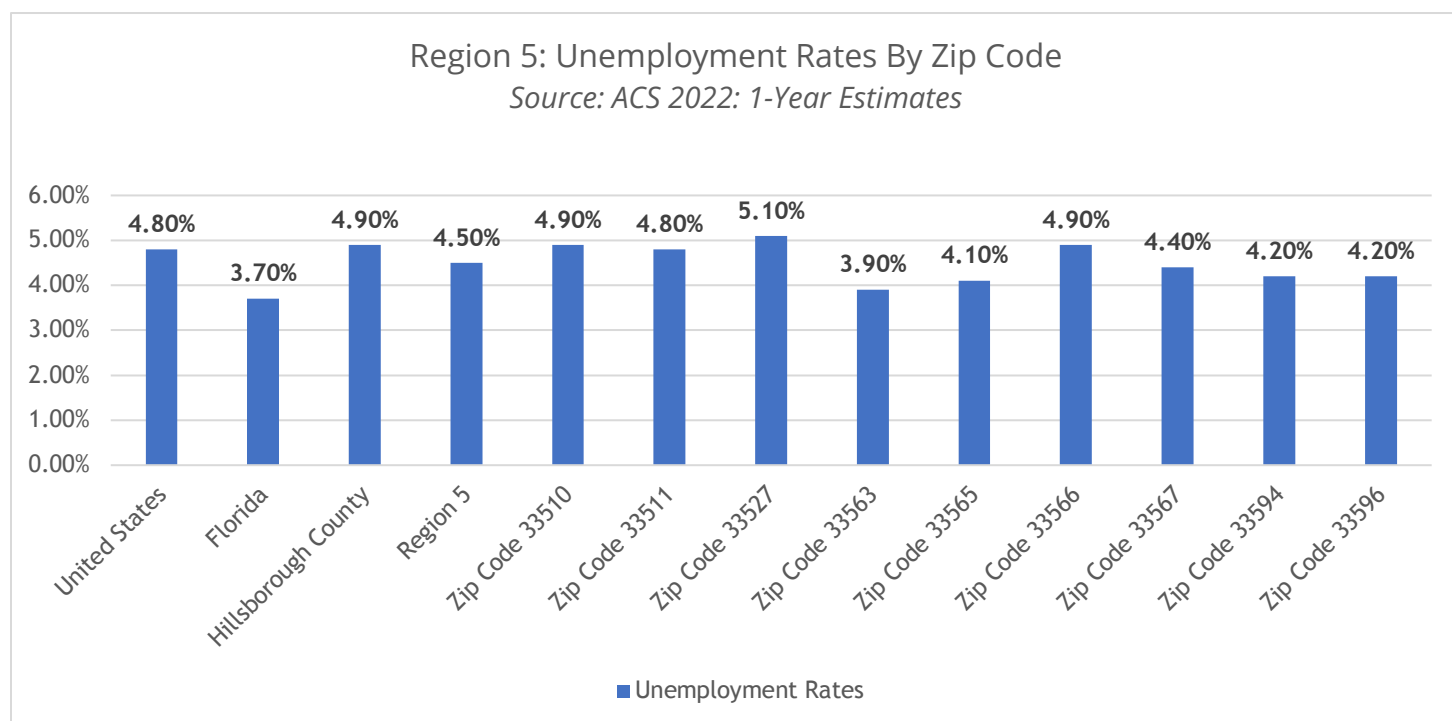
Region Four: Differences by Zip Code

Region four has the highest overall unemployment rate, with five of the six zip codes found there reporting unemployment rates that are one and half times the unemployment rate of the county.



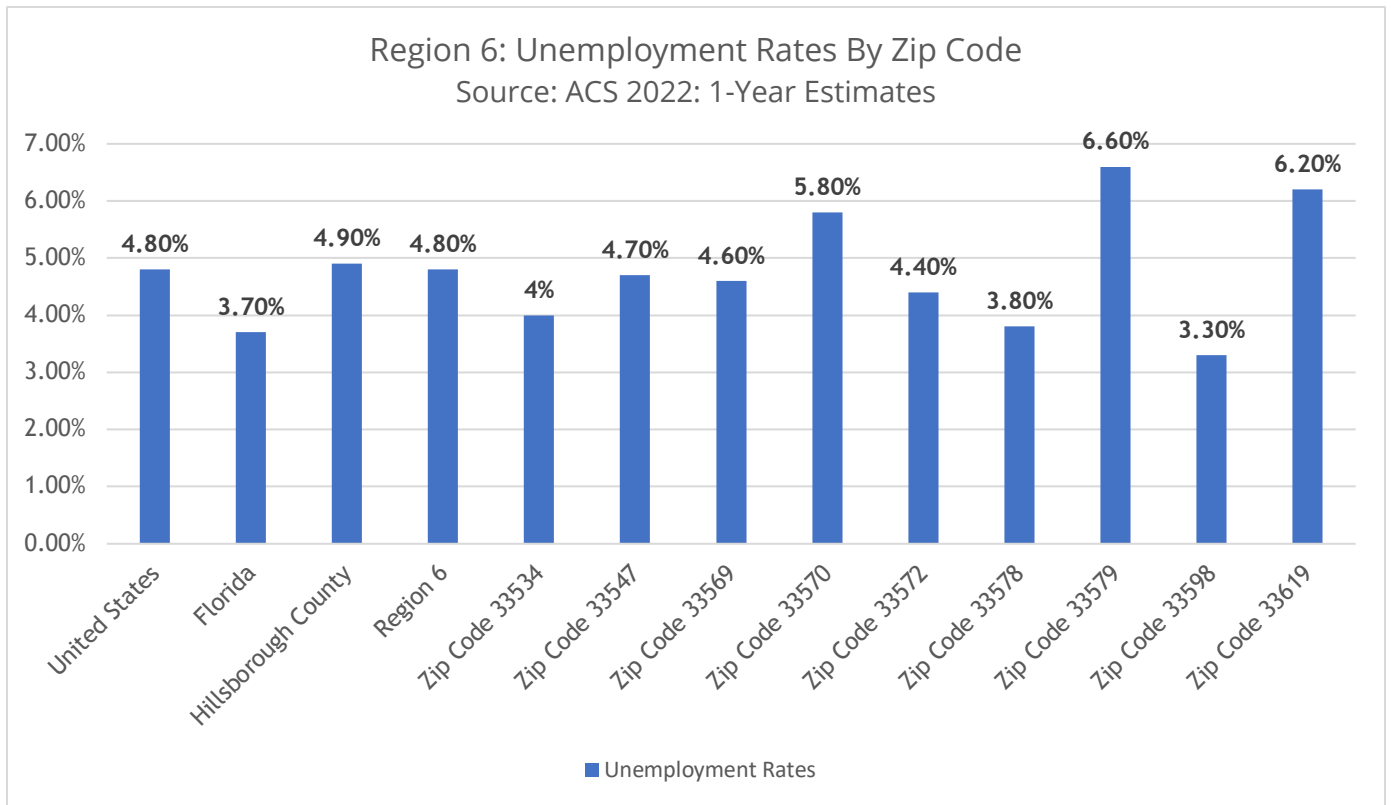
Region Five: Differences by Zip Code

Region five is comprised of nine zip codes with unemployment rates ranging from 3.9% to 4.9%, roughly equivalent to the county unemployment rate. Conversely, each zip code has a predominantly non-Hispanic White population ranging from 43.1% to 71.1%, with a small Black population (1.4% to 16.8%) and a somewhat sizeable Hispanic (17% to 39.4%) population.



Region Six: Differences by Zip Code

Similarly, Region 6 has a relatively low unemployment rate. The unemployment rates range from a low of 3.3% to 6.6%, which is a broad range. Still, most zip codes within this region are equal to or lower than the county rate of 4.9%. Three zip codes, 33570, 33579, and 33619, have higher unemployment rates than the county rate (5.8%, 6.6%, and 6.2%, respectively).



Children's Economic Well-Being

The overriding purpose of early childhood education and care is to ensure that children reach their full potential, grow into fully productive members of society, and become innovative thinkers to solve technological and productive problems. For our democracy to survive, children must also grow into critical thinkers with the ability to participate in civil discussions that present opposing viewpoints and learn to compromise without losing sight of their convictions.

To ensure that children thrive in their early years, parents need employment that provides sustainable pay and access to affordable housing so that they can invest in their children's futures. Such an investment encompasses high-quality early childhood education, including home-school activities, particularly reading aloud, and enrichment activities. When parents are unemployed or earn low wages, their access to resources that will support their children's development is limited, which often undermines their children's

health and prospects for success in school and beyond. The negative effects of poverty on children can extend into their teenage years and young adulthood, as they are more likely to contend with issues such as teen pregnancy and failing to graduate from high school.

The COVID-19 pandemic and related federal policies affected child well-being nationally. The most recent data available show that fewer parents were economically secure, educational achievement declined, and more children died at a young age than ever before⁴. Even so, during these trying times, more children than ever were insured, which demonstrates the impact of policy on child well-being. Improvements in the economic well-being domain over the past 10 years have stalled with the pandemic. Notably, the child poverty rate remained steady throughout the pandemic, while more children lived with parents who lacked secure employment. Policies such as the child tax credit helped families and kept poverty stagnant during a time when people were struggling to find living-wage jobs. Successful federal policies include the Childcare Tax Credit and expanded access to Medicaid and other forms of insurance, coupled with eviction moratoriums. Unfortunately, these federal and state policies have expired and within the past year child poverty has increased from 5.1% to 12.4% and other economic indicators show signs of declining also. According to the November 2023 release of the Robert Wood Johnson economic report, child poverty rose 2.5 times from a historic low of 5.1% to 12.4% between June 2023 and November 2023. Although the national rate of 12.4% is equivalent to child poverty rates prior to COVID-19, the rapid rise shows no signs of abating. Moreover, a rising rate of 2.5 times will be disastrous for Hillsborough communities, which had some of the highest child poverty rates in the county.

Overall, the positive strides in some areas of child well-being, specifically the child poverty rate, were driven by effective policies suggesting that the nation can make different choices about children. However, Florida ranks 37th among the 50 states in terms of child economic well-being, as indicated by the following key variables:

1. Children in poverty

⁴ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2023). 2023 Kids Count Data Book: State Trends in Child Well-Being.

2. Children whose parents lack secure employment
3. Children living in households with a high housing cost burden
4. Teens not in school and not working

Moreover, the country's racial inequities remain deep, systemic, and stubbornly persistent. The data suggest that our nation fails to provide American Indian, Black, and Hispanic children with the opportunities and support they need to thrive and fails to remove the obstacles they encounter disproportionately on their journey to adulthood. Children from ethnic minority populations were more likely to live in single-parent families and in poverty. American Indian children were more than twice as likely to lack health insurance and almost three times as likely to live in neighborhoods with more limited resources than average. It is not only individual households that impact children's potential but also the overall community's economic status.⁵

Racial inequities are particularly apparent in regions three and four in Hillsborough County. Both have a substantial percentage of Black residents, including African Americans and recent immigrants from Caribbean nations. Whereas the county proportion of Black residents is between 12% and 18%, the population of Black residents in regions three and four ranges from 25% to 40%. Regions three and four also have significantly lower median incomes, higher percentages of residents in the lower income ranges, and a significantly higher percentage of poverty rates.

This section of the community assessment examines the economic conditions of each region and focuses on different facts and definitions of low-income status and poverty levels. The first focus on the economic well-being of children and families will describe median incomes within the various zip codes of Hillsborough County. This section argues for the inclusion of additional zip codes in targeted areas for ELCHC special initiatives.

The second focus will examine the percentages of the population within income tiers. Absolute poverty is a term that encapsulates children and families below federal

⁵ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2023). 2023 Kids County Data Book: State Trends in Child Well-Being.

poverty levels. Relative poverty is measured by income inequalities and disparities within specific geographic communities, such as zip codes. Relative poverty is thought to have a significant impact on children's economic well-being.

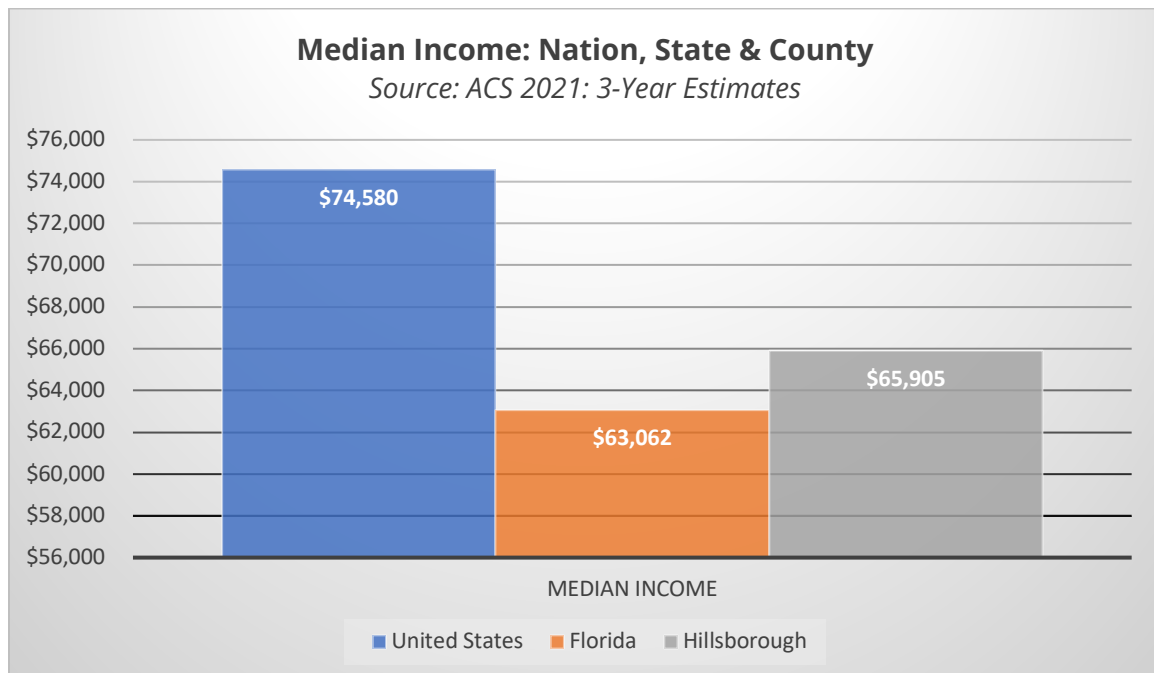
The third focus will examine families and children living below poverty levels according to federal guidelines. The poverty threshold is a calculation constructed in 1963 that assumes that families spend approximately 30% of their budget on adequate nutrition, 30% on household costs (primarily rent or mortgage), and 30% on other costs. The poverty threshold is sensitive to family structure but not regional differences. There is widespread consensus that this threshold severely undercuts those living in poverty, but it remains the official poverty threshold used to determine access to federal, state, and local benefits.

The fourth and final focus will examine families above 150% of the poverty line. A newer measure, assets limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE), was devised by the United Way to better measure poverty. ALICE seeks to capture a more accurate depiction of poverty that considers housing cost burden and cost of living to determine poverty. ALICE's categories of poverty include those above the federal poverty structure and those below. Using the ALICE measurement, almost half of Hillsborough County's population is struggling economically. ALICE measures do not distinguish between the regions of Hillsborough County and are not delineated by zip code. However, the threshold of 150% above the poverty level is roughly equivalent to the ALICE thresholds and will be used to describe families with incomes above the poverty level whose incomes do not allow for sustainable family budgets that can provide basic necessities, including high-quality early education and care.

These four areas of focus will provide a detailed picture of low-income and poverty-stricken families in Hillsborough County while considering that economic barriers significantly impact children's brain structure and thus their life chances.

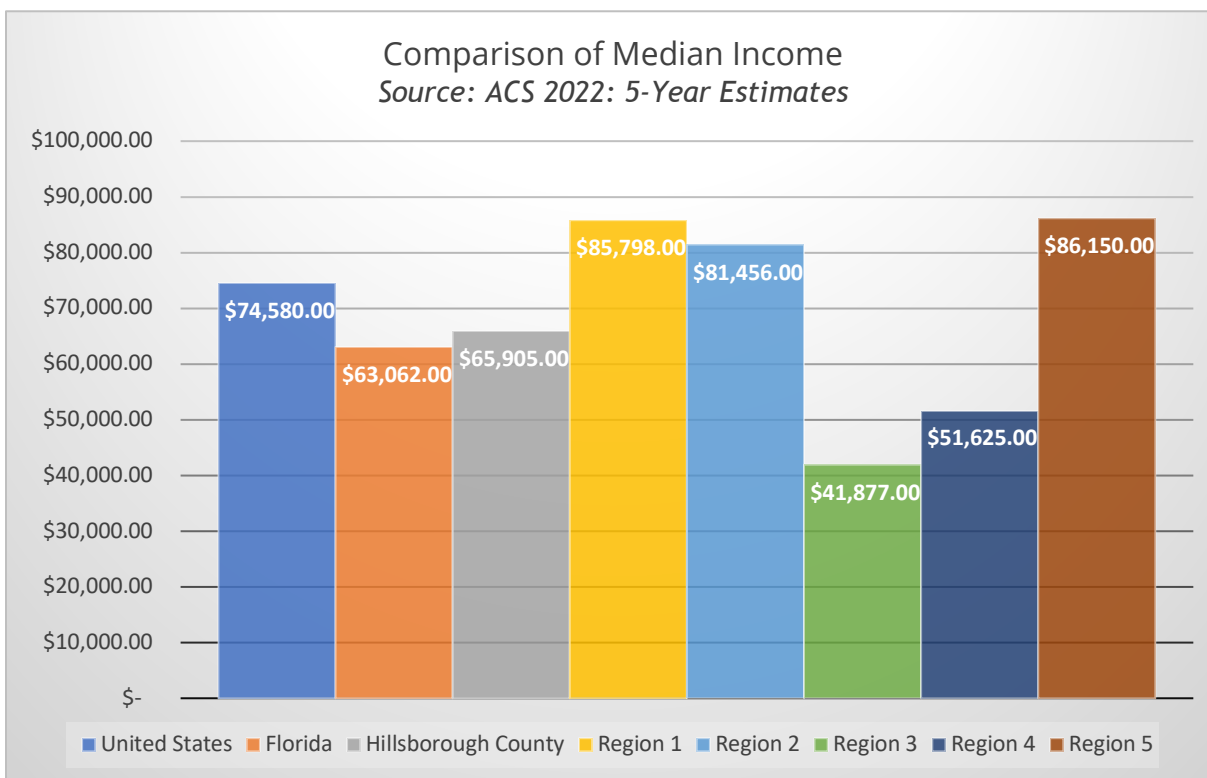
Income

The median income in the United States, \$74,580, decreased by 2.3% during the COVID-19 pandemic. The median income in Florida is significantly lower (\$63,062), and it has decreased by 1.47% since 2020. The median income in Hillsborough County, \$65,905, is higher than that of Florida but lower than the national median income. Further, Hillsborough County's median income decreased by only 0.89% during the COVID-19 years.



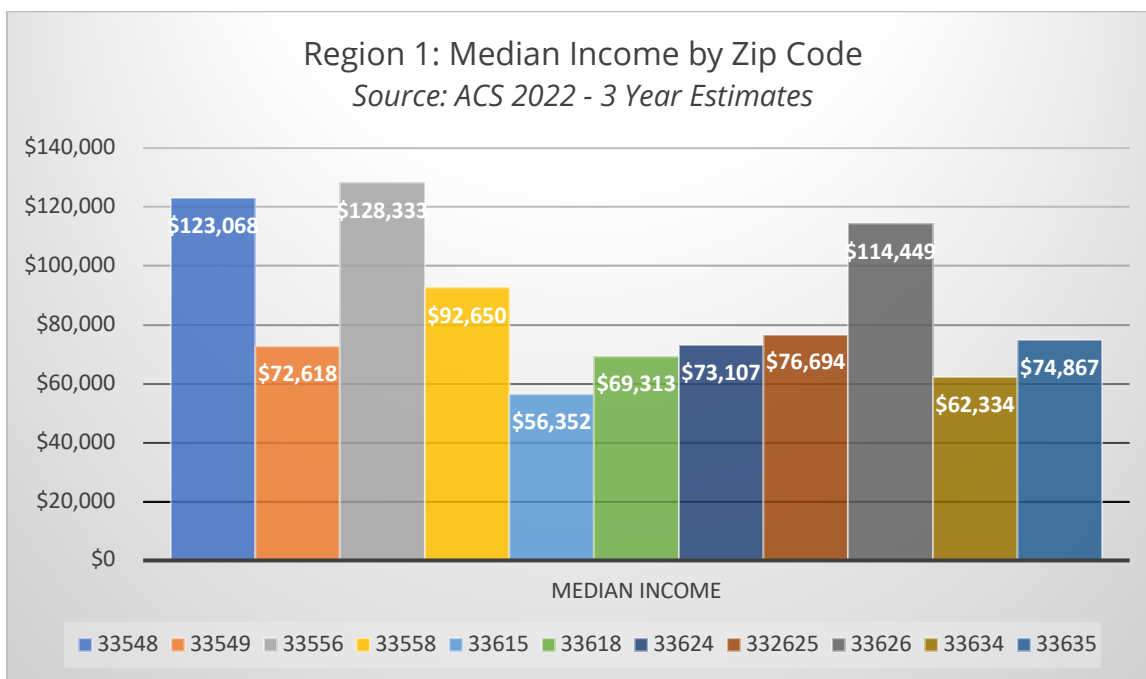
Hillsborough County: Regional Differences in Median Income

The overall median income differs markedly between the regions of Hillsborough County. Regions one, two, and six have median incomes (\$85,798, \$81,456, and \$79,011 respectively) well above the median income of Hillsborough County, Florida, and even the nation. The median income in region five is slightly higher than the median income of the county, at \$69,905. However, the median income of region 3 is \$41,877 and the median income of region four is \$51,625. Income differences vary significantly by race when examining aggregated data at the regional level. While regions one, two, and six are predominantly non-Hispanic White (averaging 70% of the population), Region 3 has a very high proportion of Black residents (29.75%) and a corresponding high proportion of Hispanics (34.37%), with Whites comprising another 30.9%. The difference is less pronounced in region four, but it is still significant: non-Hispanic Whites comprise 40.26% of the population, Blacks comprise 27.41% of the population, and the Hispanic population is 22.56%.



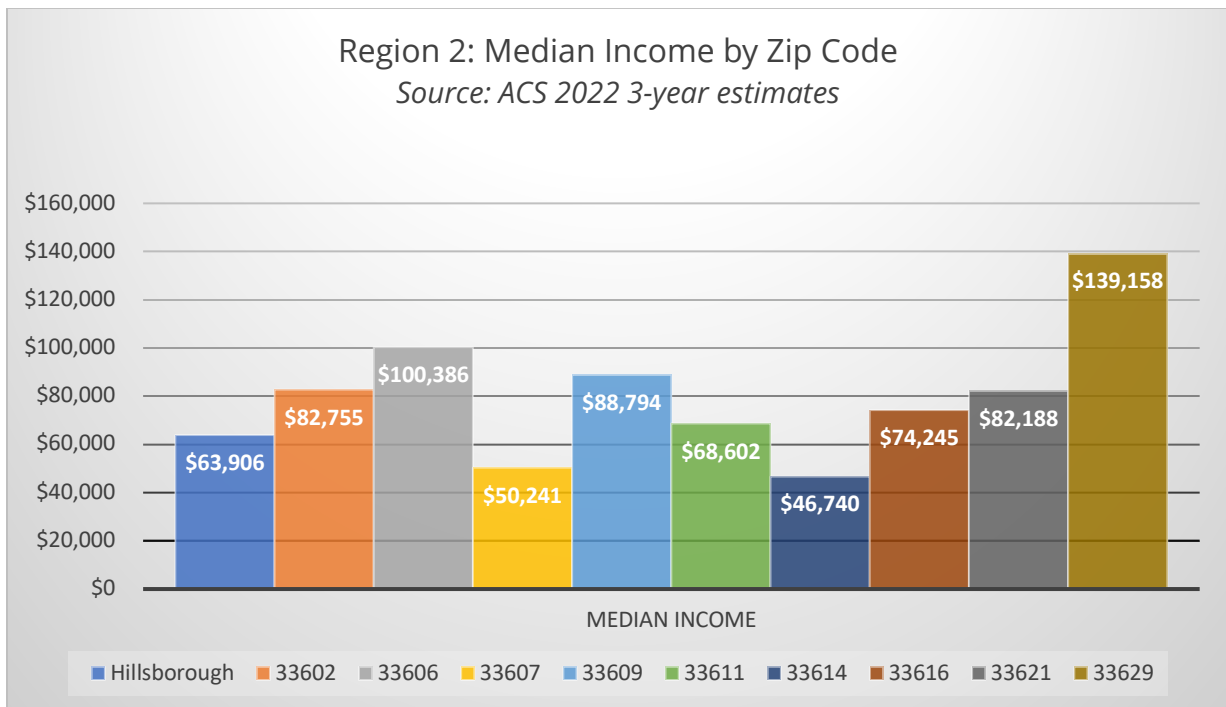
Region One: Differences by Zip Code

Region one of Hillsborough County has the second-highest median income in the county, second only to region six. Within region one, there are significant differences between the zip codes. Zip code 33615 has a median income of \$56,352; zip code 33634, \$62,334; and zip code 33618, \$69,313. In contrast, zip code 33626 has a median income of \$114,449; zip code 33548, \$123,068; and zip code 33556, \$128,333, more than twice the amount for the zip code with the lowest median income. A more complete illustration is presented below.



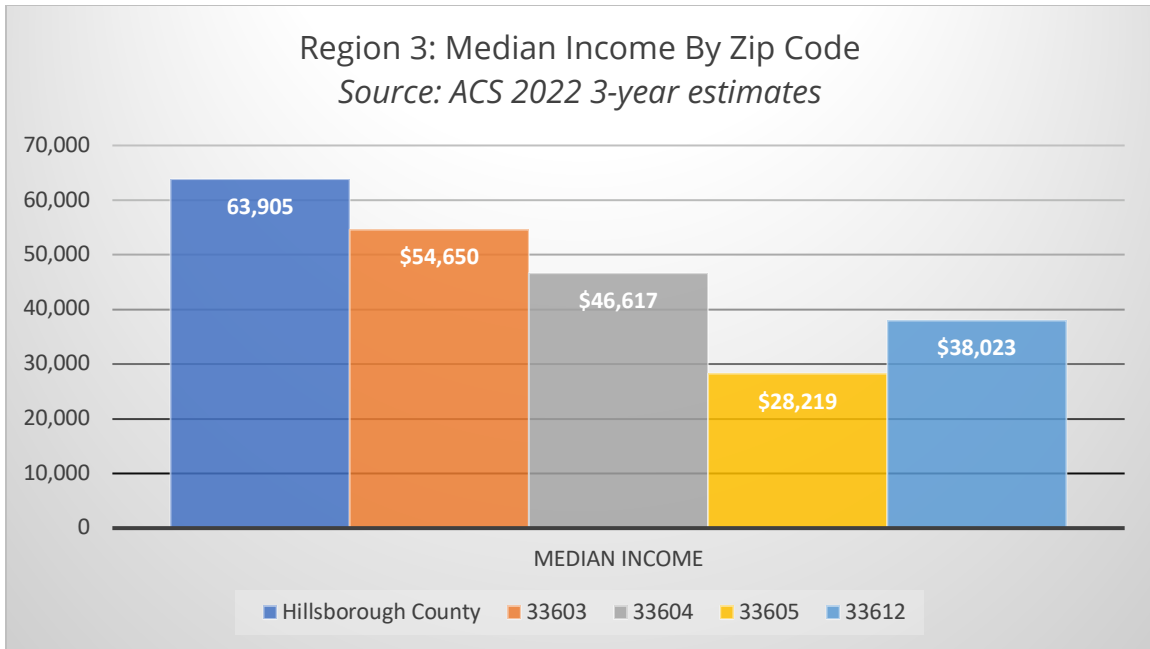
Region 2: Differences by Zip Code

The overall median income within Hillsborough County and Region 2 mask significant differences within the region. The overall median income of region 2 is \$81,456 which is significantly higher than that of Hillsborough County, Florida, and the United States. The range of median income amounts is very wide: the highest earning median income was \$139,158, in zip code 33629, while the lowest median income of \$46,740 is in zip code 33614; the highest median income is three times the lowest median income.



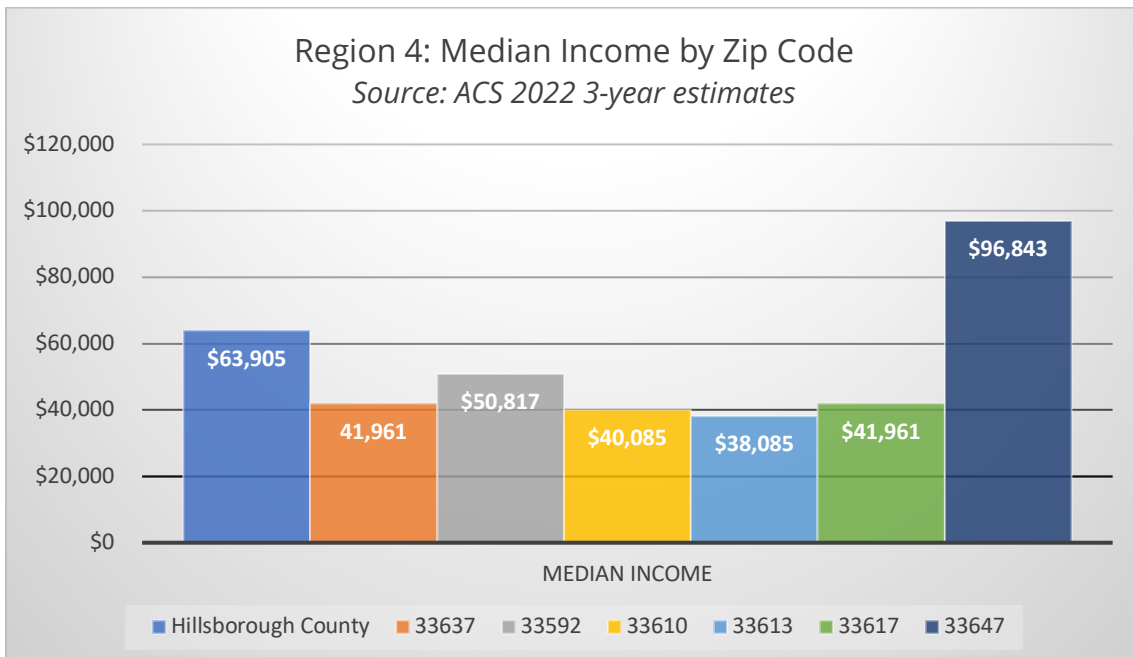
Region 3: Differences by Zip Code

Region three is the poorest region in Hillsborough County through an examination of different data points: the region has the lowest median income, the highest poverty rate, and the highest percentage of residents in the two bottom tiers of income distribution. The median income of \$41,877 is almost 30% less than the overall median income of the county. Even within a low-income area, there are significant disparities between zip codes within region three. The median income of residents in zip code 33603 is almost twice that of residents in zip code 33605, with a median income of \$28,219.



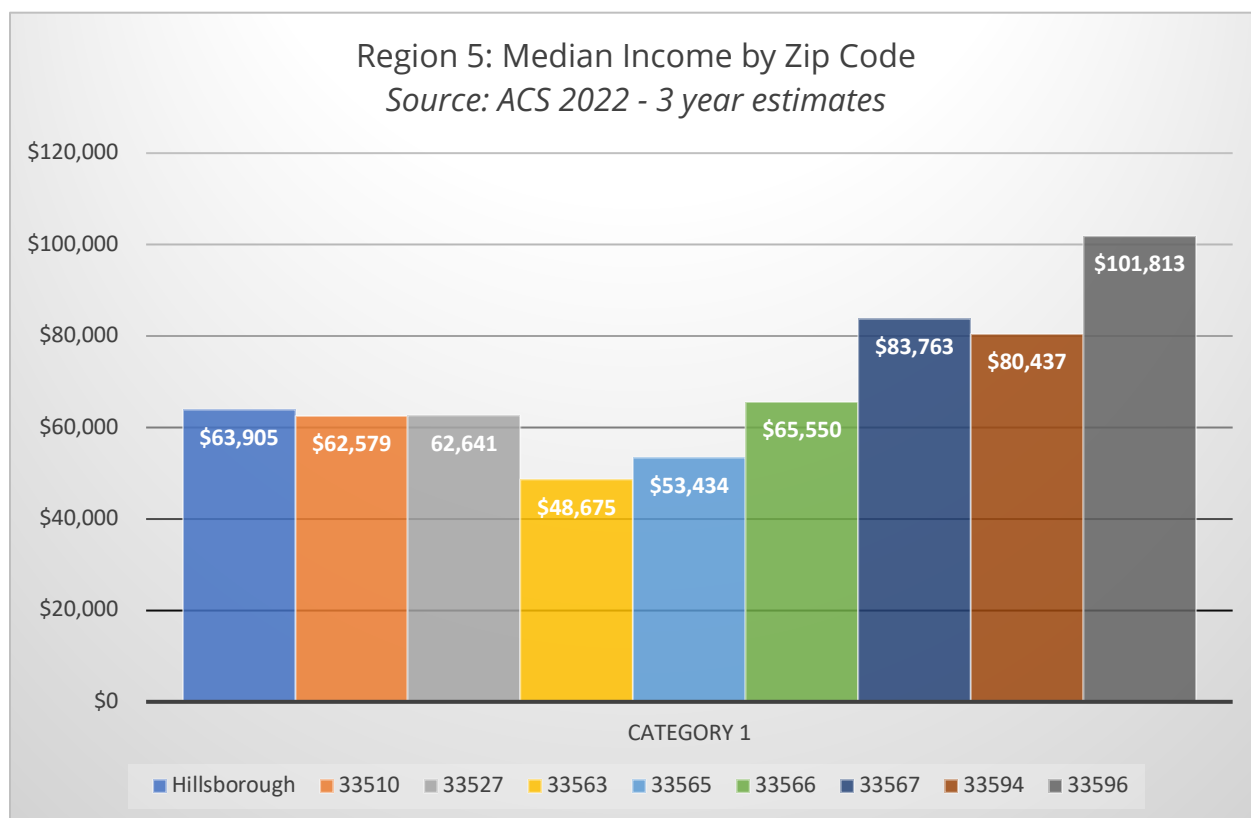
Region Four: Differences in Zip Codes

Region four is also a low-income area in Hillsborough County. As in region three, the median income of region four, \$51,625, is lower than the median income of the county. There is a wide range of income levels in this region. The median income ranges from a low of \$38,085 in 33613 to a high median income of \$96,843 in 33647.



Region Five: Differences in Zip Codes

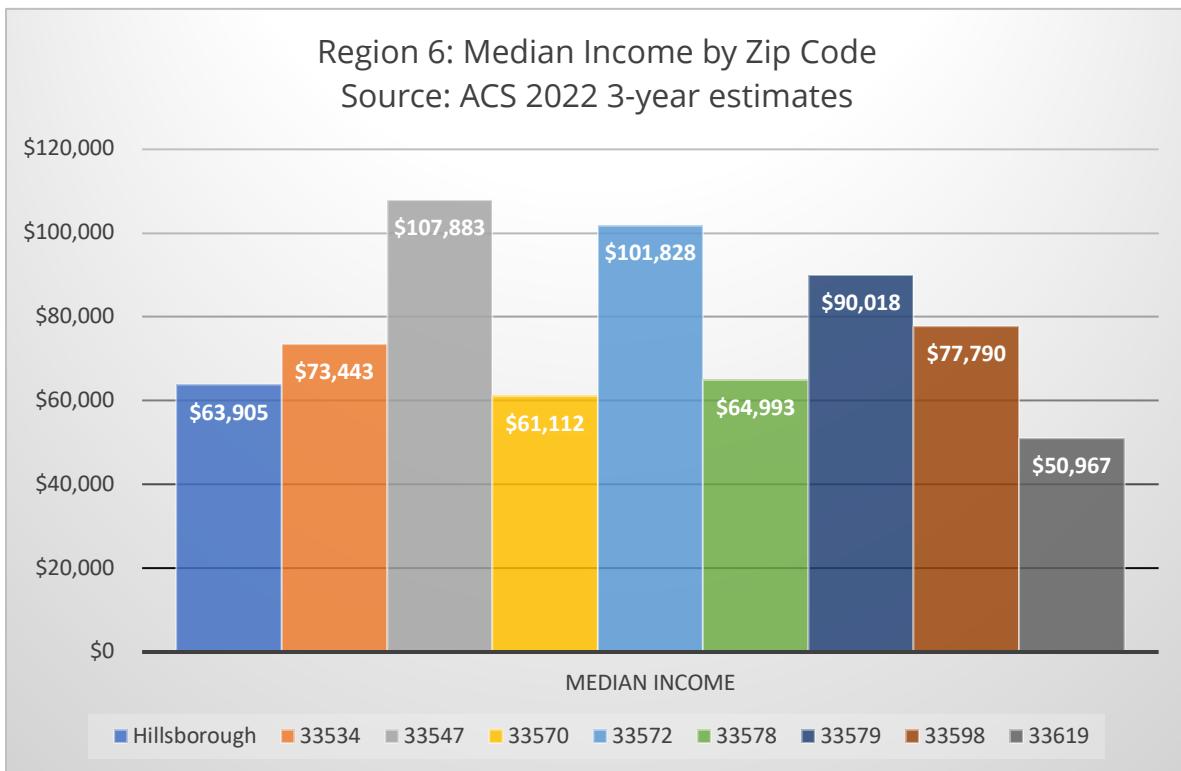
Region five has a median income of \$69,195, which is more aligned with the median income of the county. Many households within multiple zip codes in this region earn an income that is similar to the overall median income of the county. Yet Region five, like all other regions, has significant differences in median income, and the range of income is wide. Zip code 33563 has the lowest median income of \$48,675, which is less than half the median income of the zip code with the highest value (\$101,813).



Region Six: Differences in Zip Codes

Region six is a wealthier neighborhood compared to regions three, four and five. However, it has a lower median income than regions one and two. As with all regions, region six has significant differences between households living in the different zip codes. The range of median income is very wide – with residents in the poorest zip code, 33619,

earning \$50,967. In contrast, residents living in zip code 33547 earn twice as much, with a median income of \$107,883.



Low-Income Communities in Hillsborough County

The range of median income in Hillsborough County is wide, reflecting a vast disparity in income equality; median income ranges from \$28,219 in zip code 33605 to \$139,158 in zip code 33629. Residents in zip code 33629 earn almost five times as much as residents in zip code 33605. There are 16 zip codes that have median incomes below \$55,000.

Low-Income Communities Hillsborough County Source: ACS 2022: 3-Year Estimates		
Zip Code	Region	Median Income
33605	3	\$28,219
33612	3	\$38,023
33613	4	\$38,085
33610	4	\$40,085
33617	4	\$41,961
33637	4	\$41,961
33540	3	\$43,569
33604	3	\$46,617
33614	2	\$46,740
33563	5	\$48,675
33607	2	\$50,241
33592	4	\$50,817
33619	6	\$50,967

Recommendation

The ELCHC currently targets five zip codes, focusing on areas with the highest concentrations of poverty. Expanding the areas of concentration to the 16 zip codes with the lowest median incomes would significantly alter the lives of children within these areas – especially those children whose families earn over the federal poverty threshold and yet do not have adequate funds for basic necessities, such as high-quality early childhood education and care.

Income Inequality

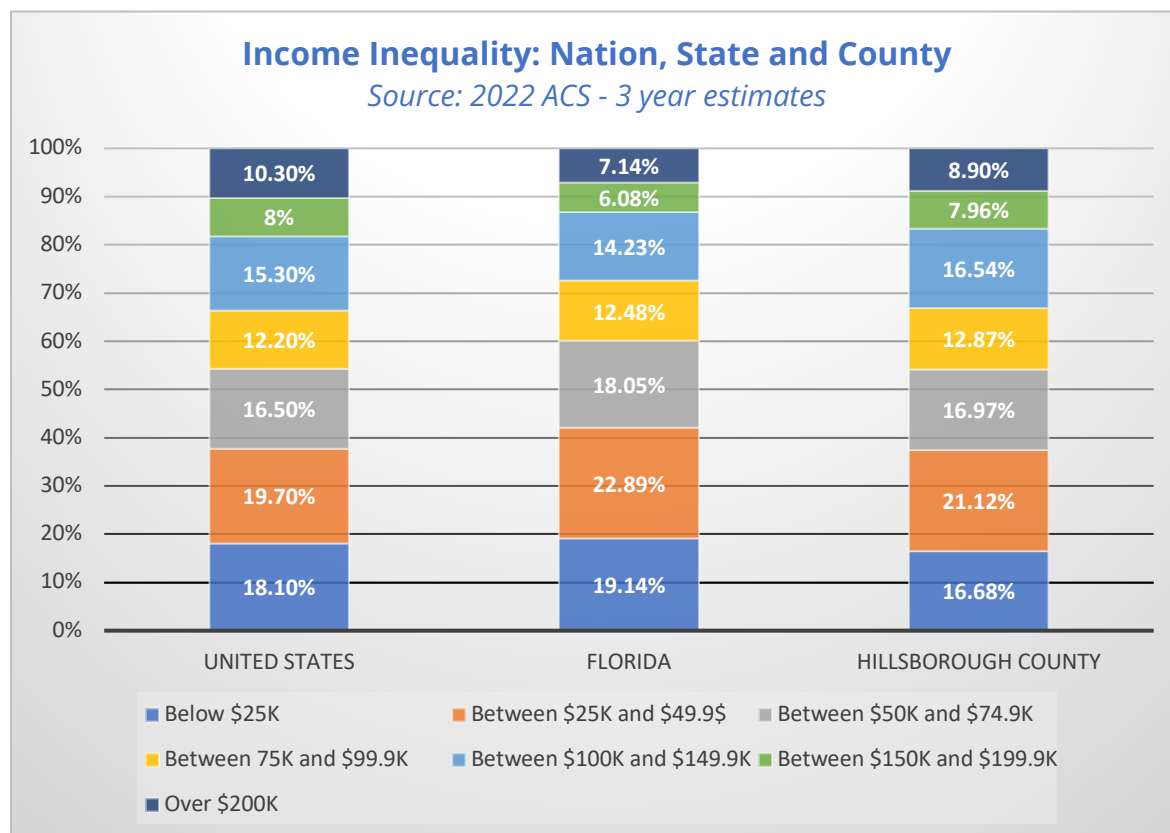
Growing income inequality concerns are becoming increasingly challenging to address. Wealthier countries tend to have lower income inequality than developing countries, measured by the Gini coefficient of income (which is a measure of inequality within a country).¹ The Gini coefficient measures how far an economy is from a situation in which everyone has the same level of income. The range of this coefficient goes from zero to one, with zero indicating perfect equality and one indicating perfect inequality. Income inequality in the U.S. is large, despite the U.S. having one of the highest levels of income per capita. The Gini coefficient of the U.S. was 0.4811 in 2019, closer to the average Gini coefficient of developing countries in Africa. Furthermore, the top 20% of the United States population earns more than half of the country's total income; this 20% is expected to benefit more from economic recovery than the bottom earners will.

High income inequality has negative consequences for a country's political stability and economic growth in the long run. Economic inequality has an immediate impact on public education and early childhood education and care. Communities comprised of wealthy families can provide financial support to schools and enrich resources for their children, such as tutors, second-language education, arts and music, and travel. At the same time, communities comprising families with lower incomes are increasingly separated from middle-class families, and public education is less adequate, further exacerbating income inequality. While complete inequality is detrimental to a nation's political and social environment, complete equality is equally detrimental to long-term economic growth. Still, a high amount of inequality or relative poverty impacts children in ways similar to absolute poverty.

Florida is the 49th worst state in the nation when measuring income inequality, with a Gini coefficient of 0.5024⁶. Income inequality is higher in the state than in the nation. The

⁶ Census Bureau, Income Inequality in Hillsborough County, FL retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/2020RATIO012057>, October 30, 2023.) <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/2020RATIO012057>

average income of the top 1% of families was \$1,543,124, compared to the average income of \$39,094 for the rest of the population in Florida. Florida has a large share of individuals in the top 1%; 7.89% of the United States' residents with incomes in the top 1% reside in Florida. The data below illustrate income inequality by examining the percentage of the population within the different income tiers and comparing the nation, state, and county.

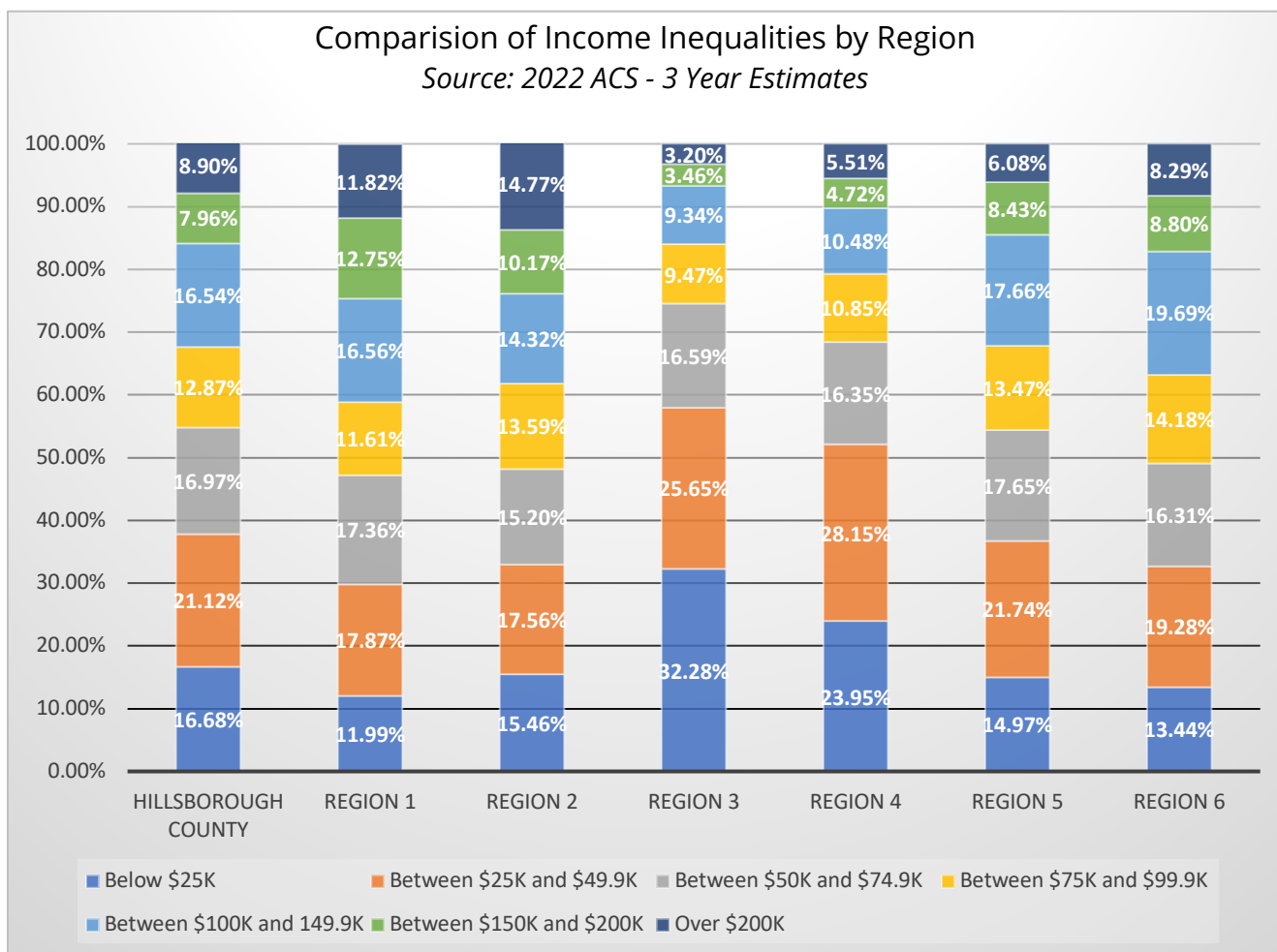


Regional Differences

The overall income inequality in Hillsborough County can be better understood by examining regional differences. As noted, regions three and four are much poorer communities, with poverty rates at approximately double those of all other regions. Further, the percentages of household income that is less than \$50,000 are high in regions three, and four (25.65% and 28.15%, respectively). Households with annual incomes below \$50,000 do not have the wherewithal to fund their basic expenses; high-quality early

childhood education and care is the largest expense after rent or mortgage for families with small children.

The percentage of individuals earning high incomes is approximately half that of other regions. Regions one and two are relatively wealthy regions. There is a higher percentage of top earners residing in regions one and two (11.82% and 14.77%, respectively) than in the state or even in the nation.

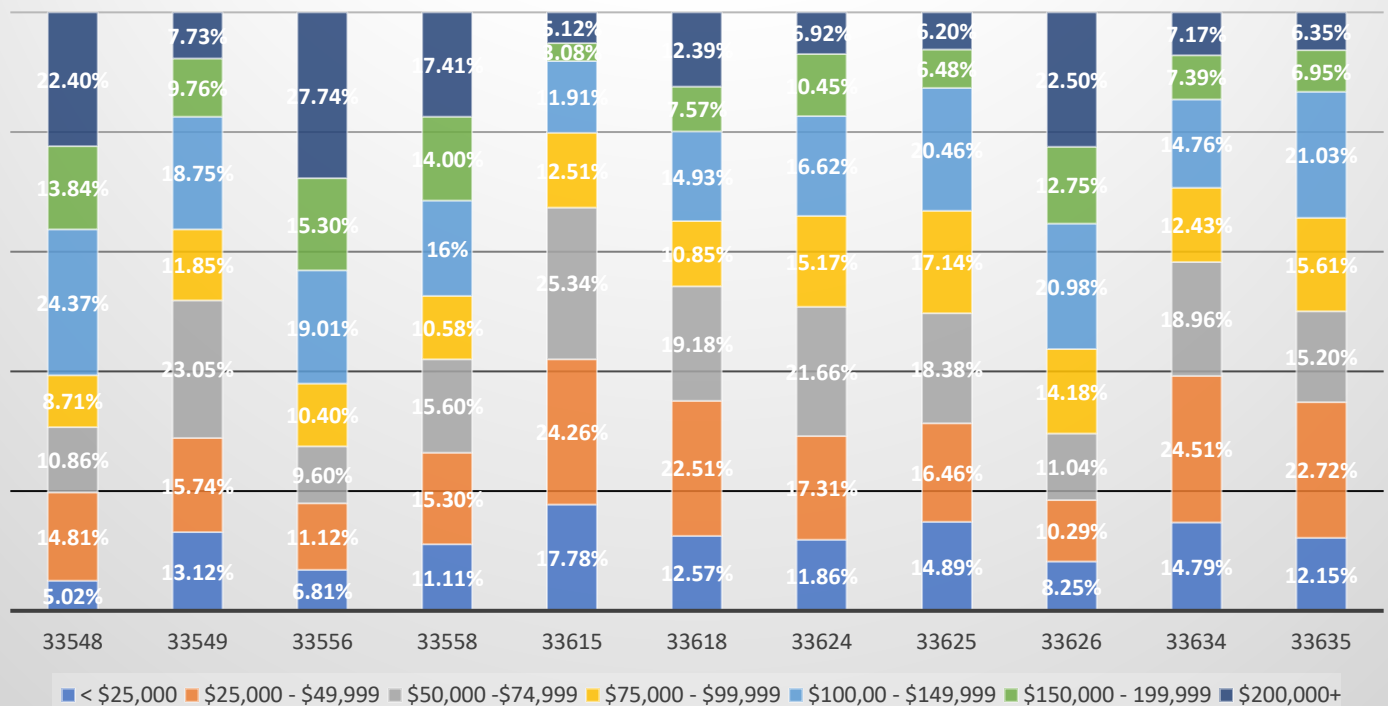


Region One: Differences by Zip Codes

Region one has the lowest poverty rate among all the regions in Hillsborough County, with 11.99% of residents living below the poverty line. There is an additional 17.87% living below 150% of the federal poverty level and eligible for state subsidies for early childhood care. Importantly, residents with an average income of 150% of the poverty

level do not have a sustainable income that allows for basic necessities, including rent/mortgage, utilities, basic phone service, food, and early childhood care. Taken together, the poor and the working poor represent 29.86% of the population. At the same time, 11.82% of the population are among the top earners, with 12.75% of residents

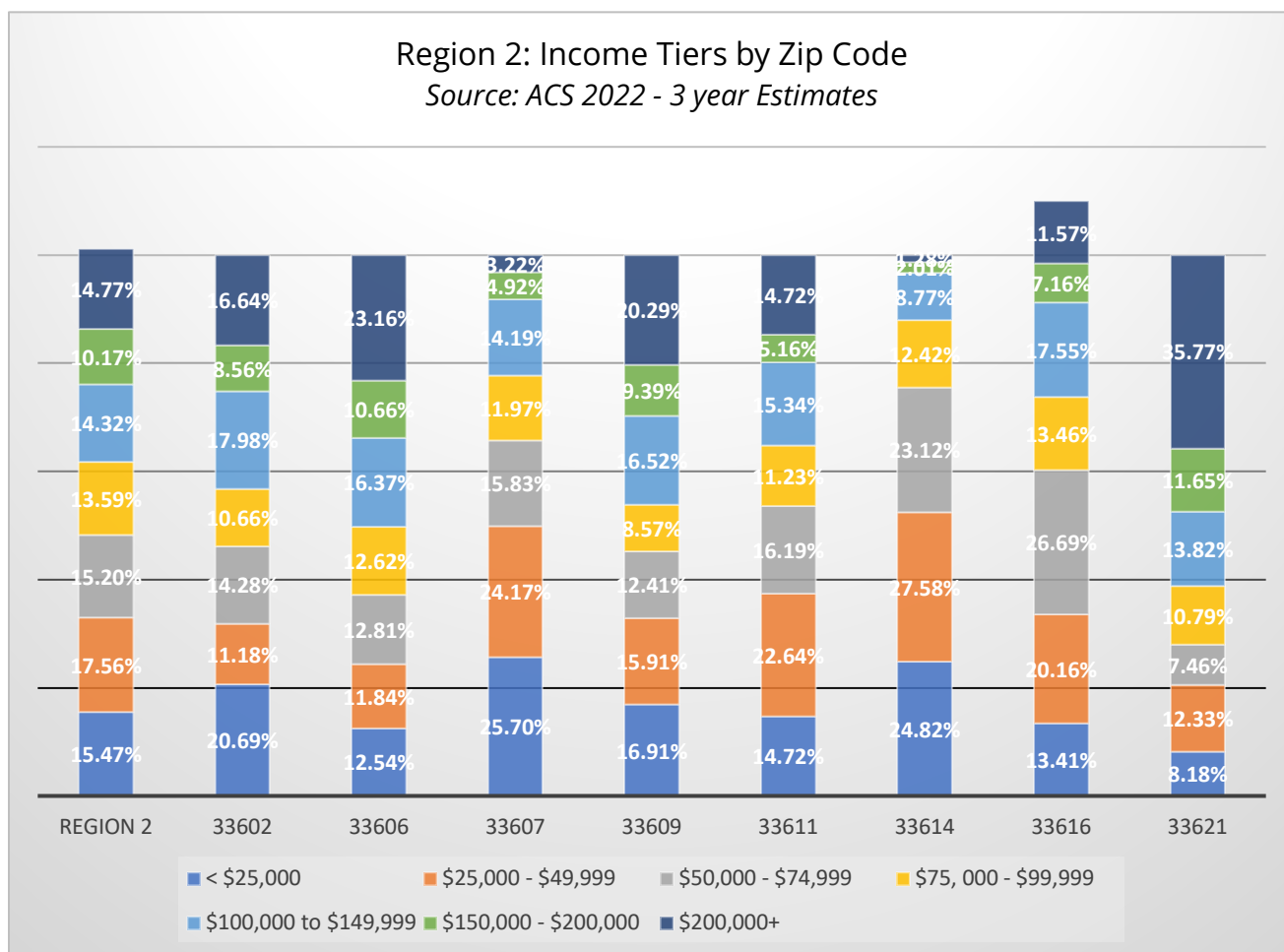
Region 1: Income Tiers by Zip Code
Source: 2022 ACS - 3 Year Estimates



earning over \$150,000. While 29.86% of the residents were unable to afford basic necessities, 24.57% of the residents were wealthy. Zip code 33548 has the lowest level of poverty at 5.02%, with the highest percentage of top income earners: 22.4% earn over \$200,000. Zip code 33556 has a low poverty rate of 6.81% and a high level of top earners at 27.49%. Zip code 33626 also has a low poverty rate of 8.25% and a high rate of top-earning residents (22.5%). The remaining zip codes have a poverty rate ranging from 11.11% to 14.79%.

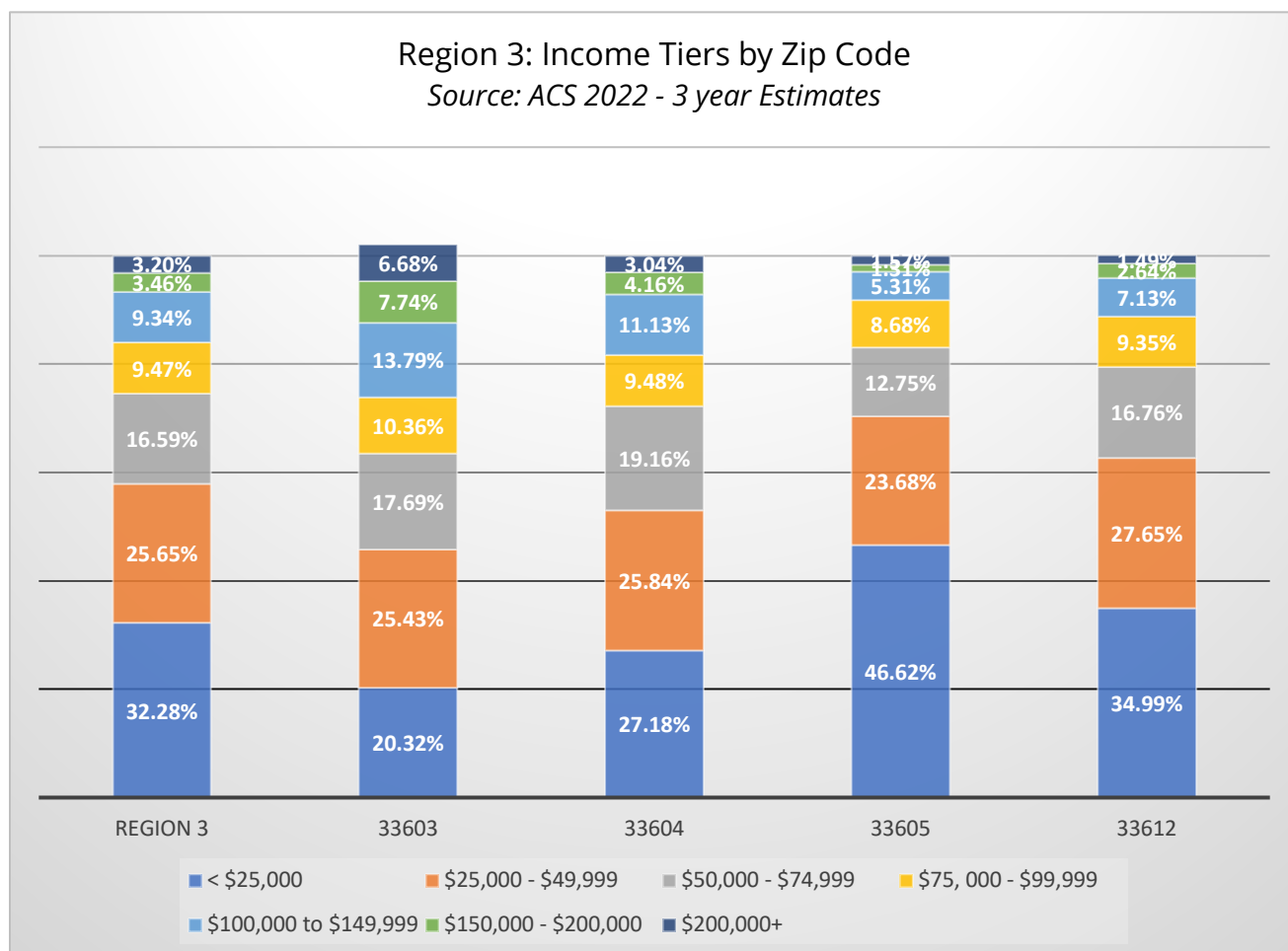
Region Two: Differences by Zip Codes

Region two has a higher percentage of residents in poverty than Region 1. In all but one zip code (33621), the rate of poverty is higher in region two than in the county; the poverty rate ranges from 8.18% (33621) to 25.7% (33607). The proportion of high-income earners varies greatly between zip codes, ranging from a very low rate of 3.22% (33607) to 35.77% (in 33621). The economic inequalities in zip codes 33621, 33602, 22306, 33609, and 33611 are very high, with sizable numbers of people in poverty coupled with high proportions of high-income earners. Further, in each zip code, there are large percentages of individuals in the working poor, ranging from 11.18% (33602) to 27.58% (33614).



Region Three: Differences by Zip Codes

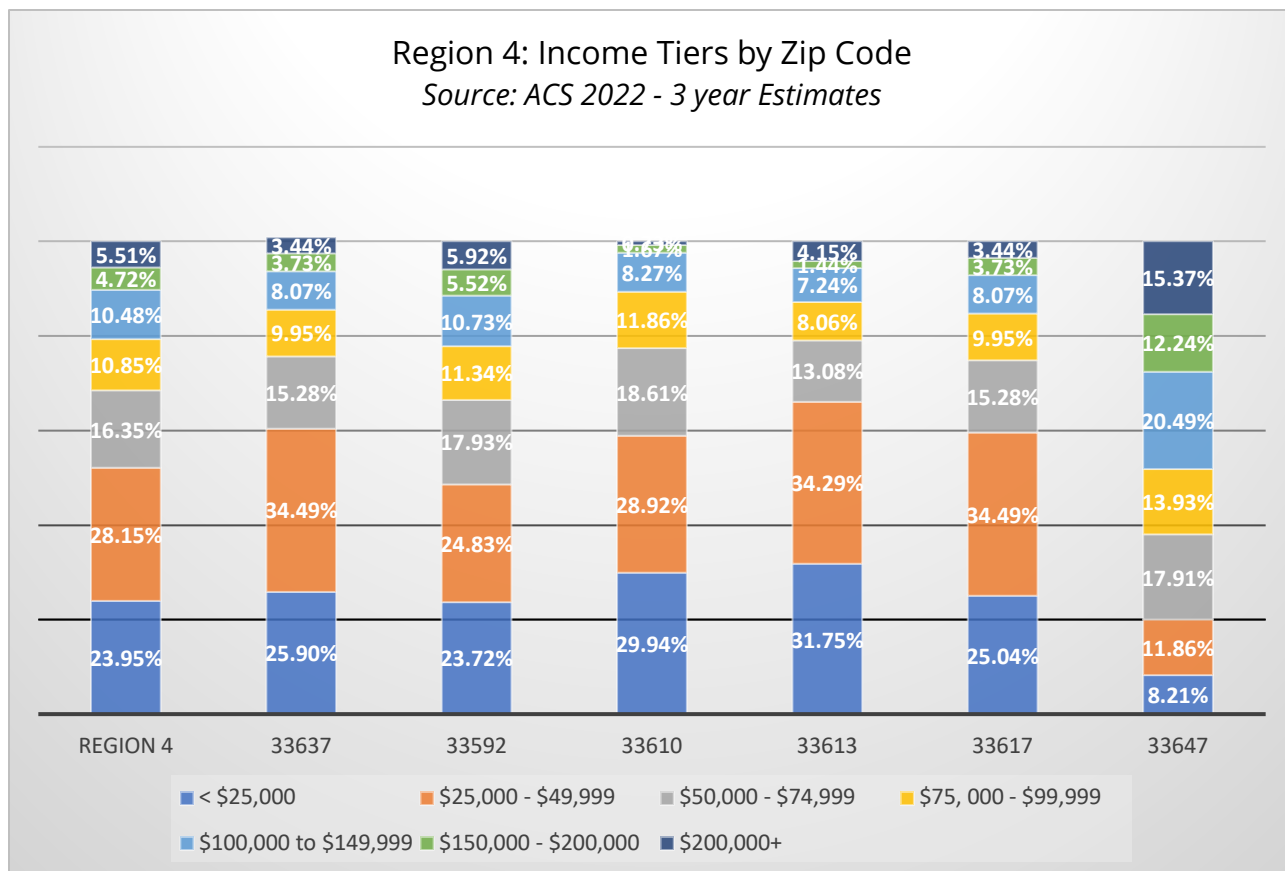
Region three is the poorest region in Hillsborough County and encompasses the zip code with the highest poverty and the lowest median wage (33605). The most current data (November 2023) indicate that childhood poverty is rising, and that this increase will be devastating in region three. The area is comprised of a large proportion of families in poverty and an equally large proportion of families just above the poverty line. At the same time, there are individuals who are high-income earners residing in this region. Within zip code 33603, almost 7% of the population are high-income earners. Still, there are fewer economic inequalities in region three, in part due to the impoverishment of so



many families. Region three, with its high proportion of families in poverty, would benefit from federally funded programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

Region Four: Differences by Zip Codes

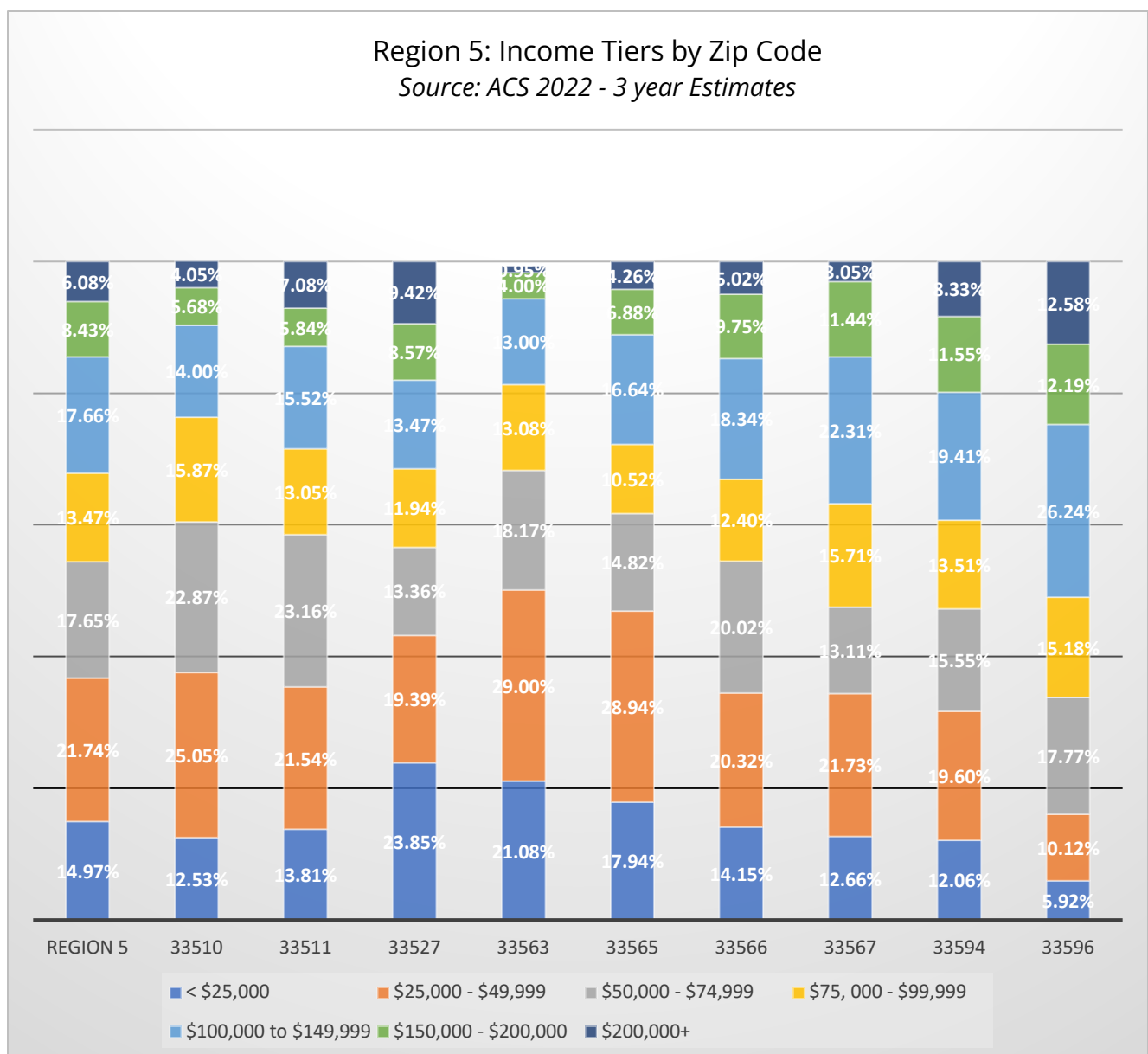
Region four is also a poor region in Hillsborough County. Of the six zip codes within region four, five have close to 25% of the families living in poverty. Within these five zip codes, combining those families living under the poverty level, and those living below 150% of the poverty level, results in half of the population not earning a sustainable income. At the same time, there are very few top-earning families within five of the six zip codes. Zip code 33647 is an anomaly within region four. Less than 10% (8.21%) of families are in poverty, with almost twice as many (15.3%) families earning above \$200,000. Thus, five of the zip codes exhibit poverty but are relatively equal. Yet the sixth zip code, 33647, has a



sizable number of top earners and still retains 8.21% of families in poverty. Region 4, with its high proportion of families in poverty, would benefit from federally funded programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

Region Five: Differences by Zip Codes

Region five is a wealthier neighborhood than regions three and four but does not contain the same economic inequalities found in regions one and two. Of the nine zip codes, seven have a level of poverty aligned with the county average, ranging from 12.06%

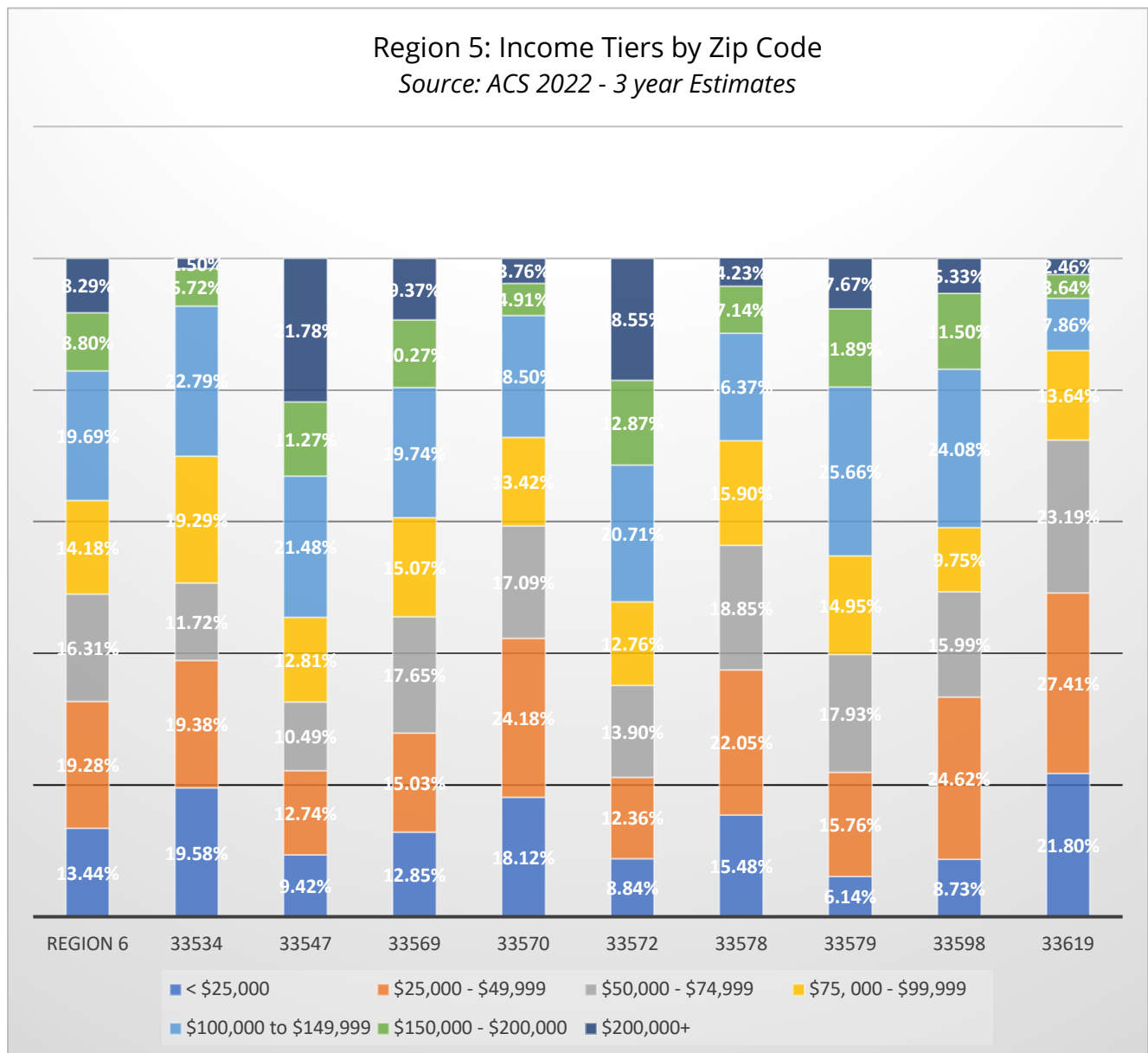


to 21.08%. However, zip code 33596 has a much lower proportion of families in poverty (5.92%), while zip code 33527 has a much higher proportion (23.85%). For seven of the nine zip codes, most of the people residing in region five are among the working poor, earning more than the FPL but less than enough to afford basic necessities. The number of people in this income tier ranges from 19.39% to 29%, except for zip code 33596, which has 10.12% of the population earning more than \$25,000 but less than \$49,000. Zip code 33596 also has 12.58% of its families earning above \$200,000 compared to all other zip codes in this region, where less than 10% of families are top earners. There is a large proportion of families earning above the FPL but below \$50,000 in each zip code, ranging from 12.36% (33572) to 27.41% (33619). Region 5 has fewer families in poverty and fewer families with high incomes, but it is comprised of many families earning below 150% FPL; these families are eligible for childcare subsidies. Providing information on school readiness funding and VPK programs would be beneficial in these communities.

Region Six: Differences by Zip Codes

Region six, like the other regions, has a great deal of variation between each of its zip codes. For example, zip code 33547 has 21.78% of its families earning over \$200,000, and zip code 33572 has 18.55% of its high-income earners. Yet, all other zip codes within the range have a proportion of high-earning families ranging from a low of 1.5% to a high of 9.37%. The level of poverty also differs among the zip codes. Four of the nine zip codes have poverty levels about the county average (33534, 33570, 33578, and 33619) ranging

from 15.48% to 21.8%. Furthermore, there is a large proportion of families earning above the FPL but below \$50,000 in each of the zip codes, ranging from 12.36% (33572) to 27.41% (33619). Region six, like region 5, has fewer families in poverty and fewer families with high incomes, but it is comprised by many families earning below 150% FPL. These families are eligible for childcare subsidies. Providing information on school readiness funding and VPK programs would be beneficial in these communities.



Poverty

States in the southeast and southwest remain at the bottom of the Kids Count rankings. These states also tend to fall to the lower end of the median income spectrum and to the lower ends of other economic metrics. For children to develop into prepared, productive adults, families need employment with sustainable pay and access to affordable housing so that they can invest in their children's futures. Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development. It increases the likelihood that a child will be exposed to factors that impair brain development and lead to poor academic, cognitive, and health outcomes. Furthermore, stunted brain growth in early childhood can result in high rates of risky health-related behaviors among adolescents.

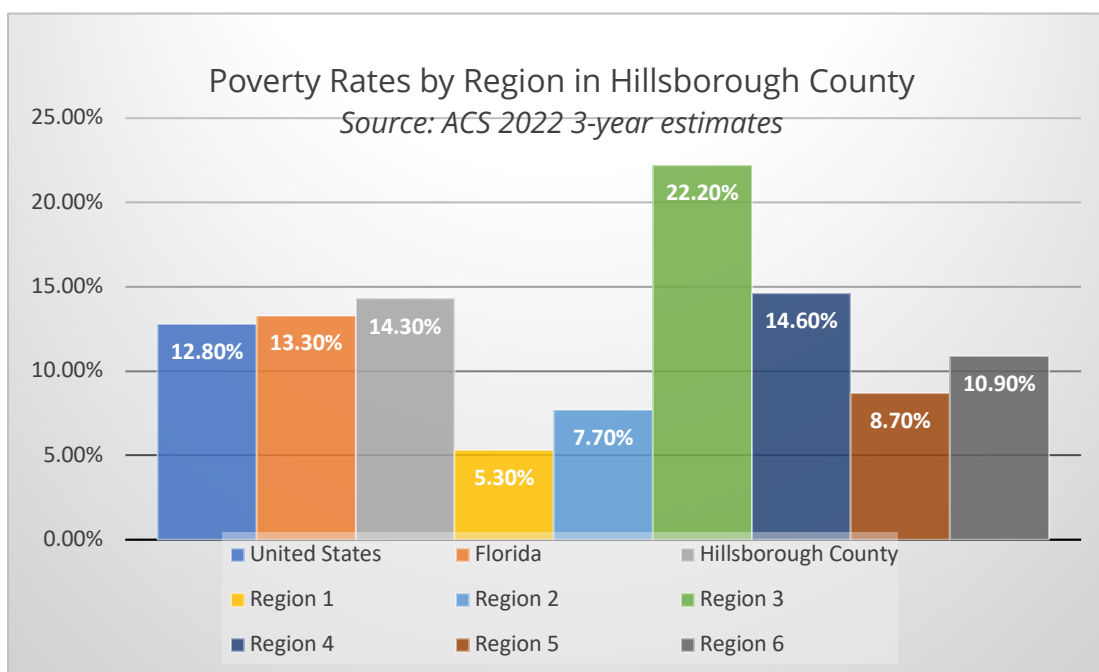
The poverty rate among Black and American Indian children (31% and 28%, respectively) is double the rate for non-Hispanic White, Asian, and Pacific Islander children (11%). The poverty level for Hispanic children is also high, at 23%. The official poverty level in 2021 was \$27,479 for a family with two adults and two children. Nationally, 17% of children (12.2 million) lived in families below the poverty line. COVID-19 federal funds stabilized the poverty rate for children at 5.1%. However,, this poverty rate differs markedly among states, ranging from a low of 8% in Utah to a high of 28% in Mississippi, while 55% of children in Puerto Rico live in poverty. Furthermore, with the expiration of federal funding and assistance programs, the poverty rate among children rose 2.5 times in the past year (2023).⁷

Poverty Rates in Hillsborough County by Region and Zip Code

Poverty in Hillsborough County is a critical concern, impacting 14.3% of the population, which is higher than the state of Florida at 13.3% and higher than the U.S. average of 12.8%. Within Hillsborough County, the poverty rate varies among each of the six regions. Importantly, the poverty rate also varies significantly among zip codes within each region.

⁷ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2023). 2023 Kids Count Data Book.

The chart below illustrates the differences in poverty rates between the nation, state, and county. Furthermore, the poverty rates of the different regions are displayed. Within Hillsborough County, Regions one, two, and five have significantly lower poverty rates than the county, state, and nation. Region six also has a lower poverty rate than the county, state, and nation, although this difference is not as great. In contrast, the poverty rate in region three is significantly greater than in the county and almost twice as high as in the nation. Region four has a poverty rate that is aligned with the county but remains the second-poorest region in the county.

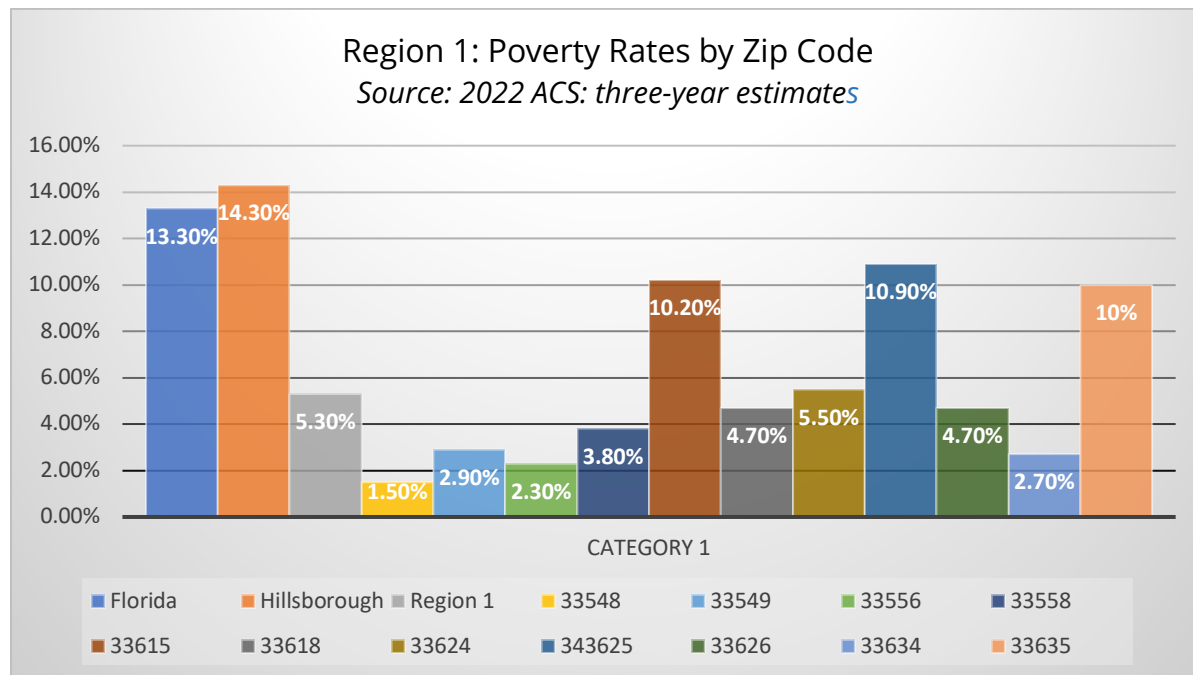


Economic disparities are more pronounced in communities of color. In Region 3, there is a significant population of Black residents, both African American and African Caribbean, at 30%, and an equally high proportion of Hispanic residents, at 30%. Non-Hispanic Whites comprise 54% of the population in region one, 55% of the population in region two, and 55% of the population in region five.

Region One: Differences by Zip Code

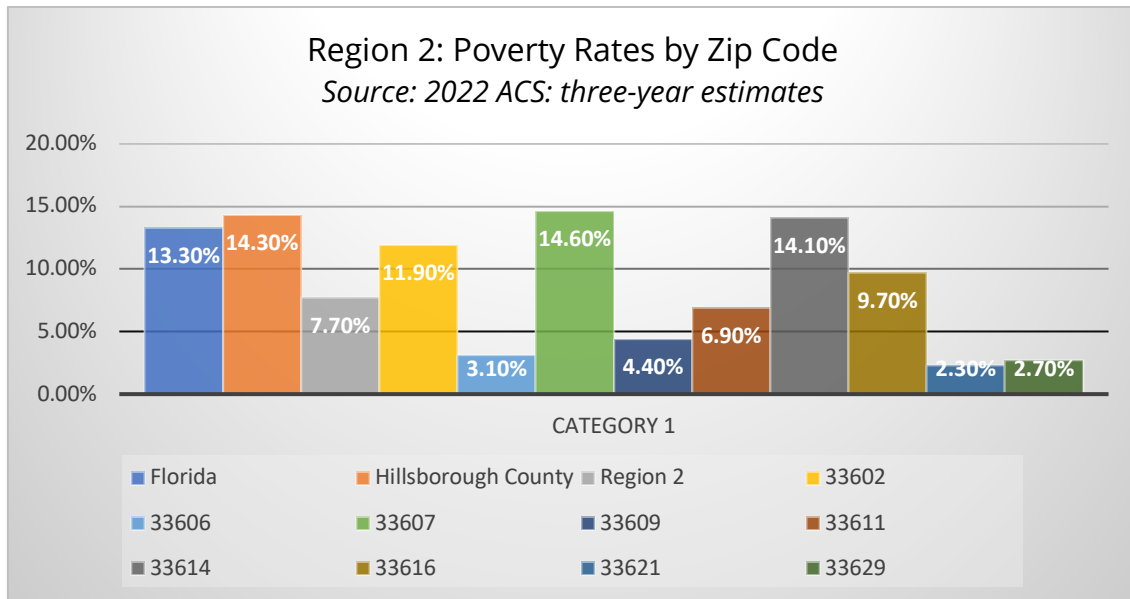
The variation in poverty ranges by zip code within each region is significant. The chart below illustrates the differences among the zip codes in region one. The low poverty rate in region one is among the lowest in both the state and the county. Three zip codes

have significantly different and higher rates of poverty: 3615 at 10.2%, 33618 at 10.9%, and 33624 at 10%. However, this is a lower rate than for the county, state, or nation.



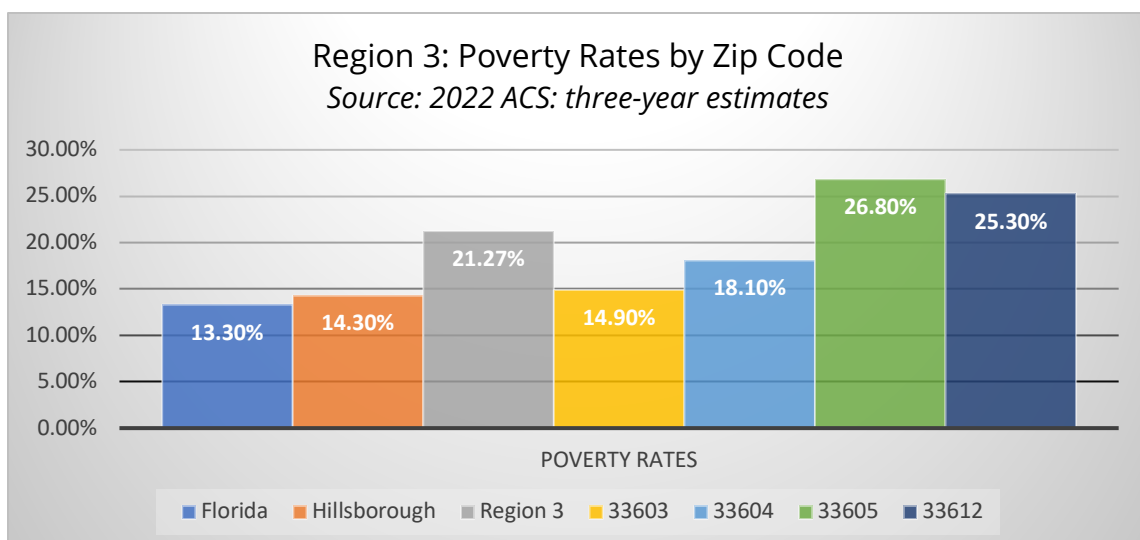
Region Two: Differences by Zip Code

Region two has a similar pattern of low poverty rates across its zip codes, although there are neighborhoods with higher poverty rates. Again, there are zip codes with very low poverty rates, such as 33606, 33621, and 33629, at 3.1%, 2.3%, and 2.7%, respectively. However, 33607 has a 14.60% poverty rate, and 33629 has a 14.10% poverty rate.



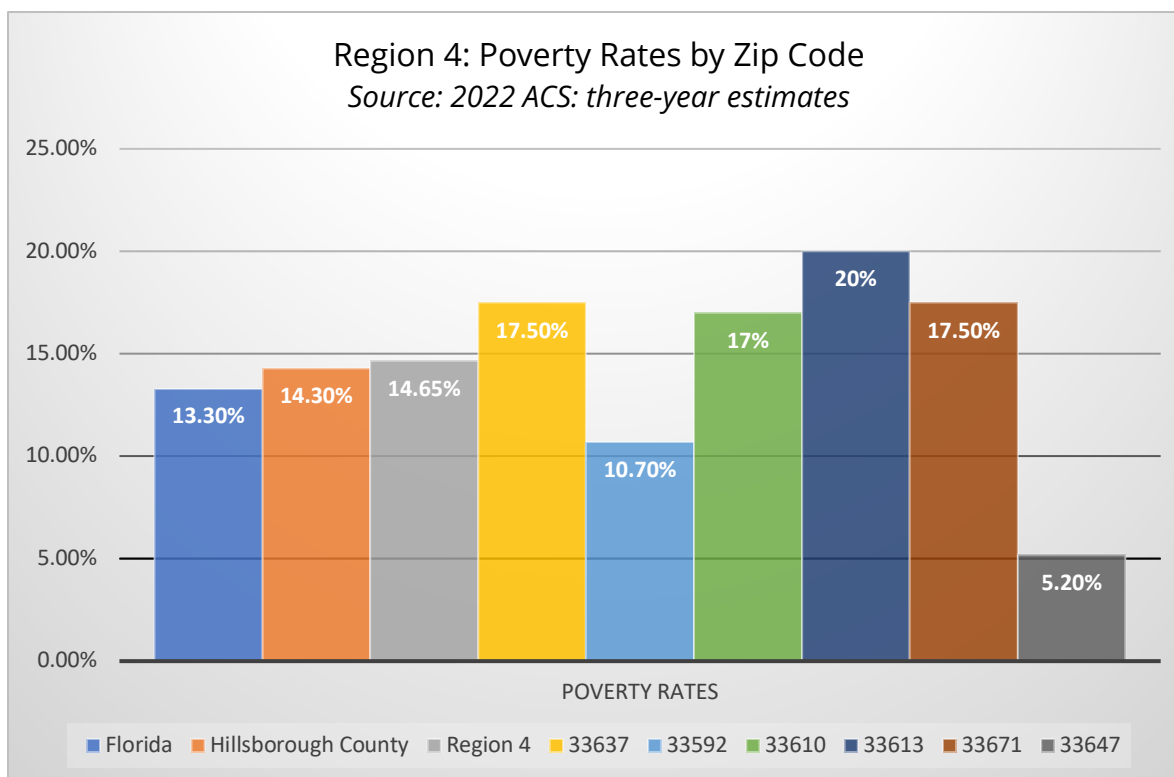
Region Three: Differences by Zip Code

Region three is the poorest region in the county and has an average poverty rate of 22.2%, which is significantly higher than the county rate and almost twice as high as the national rate. There are significant differences among the various zip codes in this region, and 33605 and 33612 have the highest poverty rates in the county, at 26.8% and 25.3%, respectively. More than one-quarter of region 3's population lives under the poverty threshold. This is projected to grow exponentially as COVID-19 relief funding and social assistance programs expire.



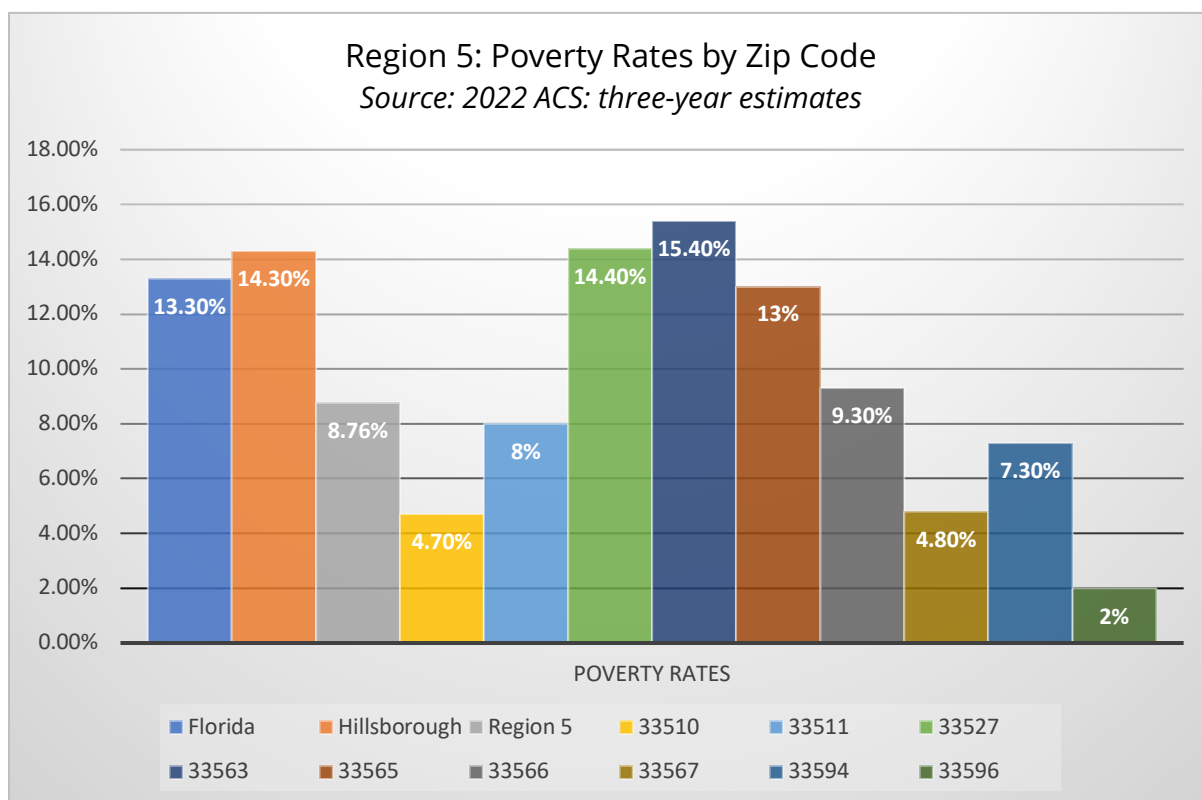
Region Four: Differences by Zip Code

Region four has a moderate average poverty rate of 14.65%, which is aligned with Hillsborough County's average poverty rate of 14.3%. However, this average masks significant differences in zip codes. For example, 33647 has a very low poverty rate of 5.2%, and its proportion of non-Hispanic Whites is 45.3%. Asians comprise 14.6% of the population in this zip code. Additionally, 33592 has a moderate poverty rate of 10.7%. However, the remaining zip codes of 33637, 33610, 33613, and 33617 have poverty rates that range from 17% to 20%. Notably, 33610 has a 17% poverty rate, and half of the population is Black (56.5%). Similarly, 33617 has a poverty rate of 17.5%, and 32.2% of the population is Black. Finally, 33613 has a high poverty rate of 20%, and 33.5% of the population is Hispanic, while 18% is Black. It is important to reiterate that high poverty rates are correlated with race and ethnicity in Hillsborough County.



Region Five: Differences by Zip Code

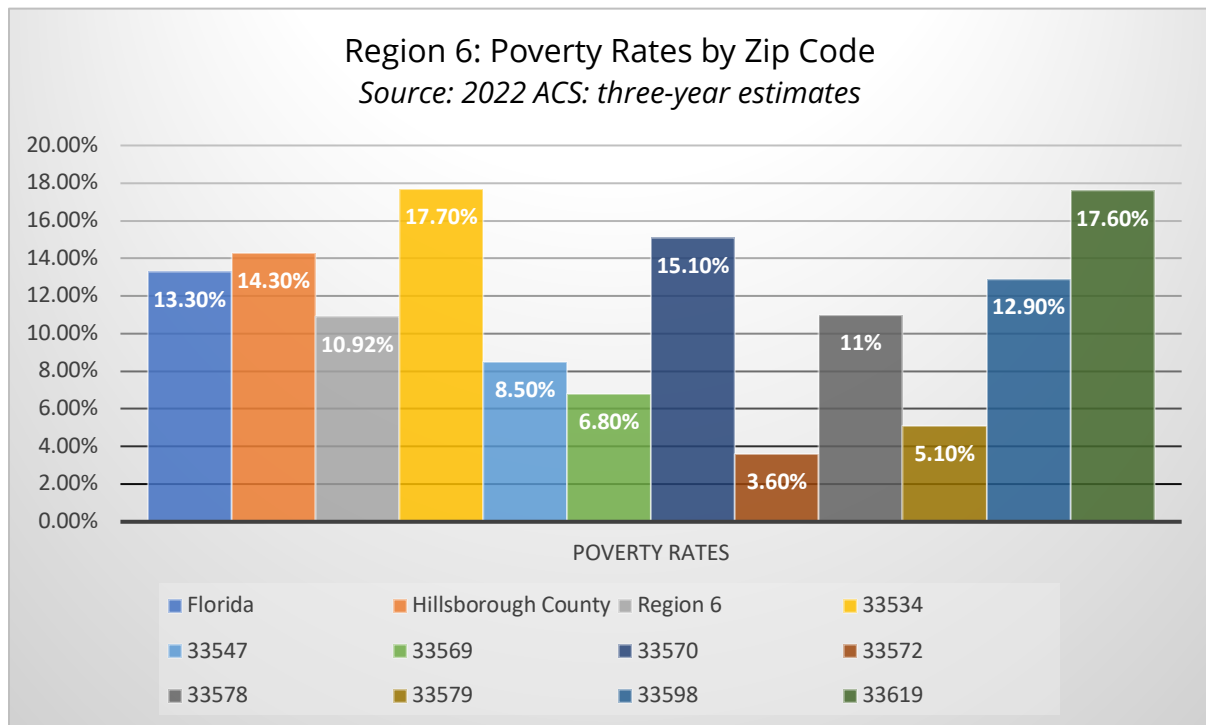
Region five resembles regions one and two with its relative wealth and low poverty rates. The average poverty rate of region 5 is 8.76%, which is lower than that of the county and the nation. Moreover, the poverty rates in 33510, 33567, and 33596 are very low, at 4.7%, 4.8%, and 2%, respectively. However, the poverty rate in the remaining zip codes range from



7.3% to 15.4%. Finally, 33563 has a poverty rate of 15.4% and a Hispanic population of 39.4%, illustrating the connections between poverty and race and ethnicity.

Region Six: Differences by Zip Code

Region six has an overall average poverty rate of 10.92%, which is lower than that of both Hillsborough County and the nation. The lowest poverty rate in region 6 can be found in 33572, at 3.6%. Other zip codes with low poverty rates include 33547 (8.5%), 33569 (6.8%), and 33579 (5.1%). The remaining zip codes range from 11% to 17.7%.



The Working Poor: 150% of the Federal Poverty Level

ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

ALICE is a measure of poverty developed by the United Way that expands the definition of poverty beyond the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). ALICE households are those that earn above the FPL but cannot afford the basic cost of living in the county. Two pillars of the ALICE measures are household costs and income. The Household Survival budget calculates the cost of household essentials for each county in Florida and relies on a wide range of sources for budget items of housing childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, and smartphone plan, plus taxes. For household income, ALICE measures rely on the US Census bureau American community survey. ALICE measures are calculated at the state and county level.

The FPL is inadequate for counting families that are economically struggling. The FPL is not based on the cost of household necessities, nor is it adjusted to reflect cost of living differences across the nation. The FPL does not account for different ages of household members. Despite its documented inadequacies, the FPL continues to be the standard for determining the number and proportion of people in poverty, and for determining eligibility and amount of available social welfare benefits. The use of the FPL measure dramatically undercounts the number of poor in our nation.

According to united way's research the number of households in financial hardship in Florida continues to be undercounted in official measures. Using the ALICE measures, 3.9 million households, 45% of all households are below the ALICE threshold, which includes those below the FPL and those below the ALICE measures.

ALICE households are especially vulnerable to national economic disruptions. The number of ALICE households in Florida increased after the Great Recession (2007-2010) and continued to increase throughout the next decade, even as the number of households below the FPL decreased. The onset of COVID-19 resulted in a 6% increase in the number of households below the FPL, and a corresponding 5% increase in the number of

households below the ALICE threshold. More families in Florida experienced economic hardships both during and after the pandemic.

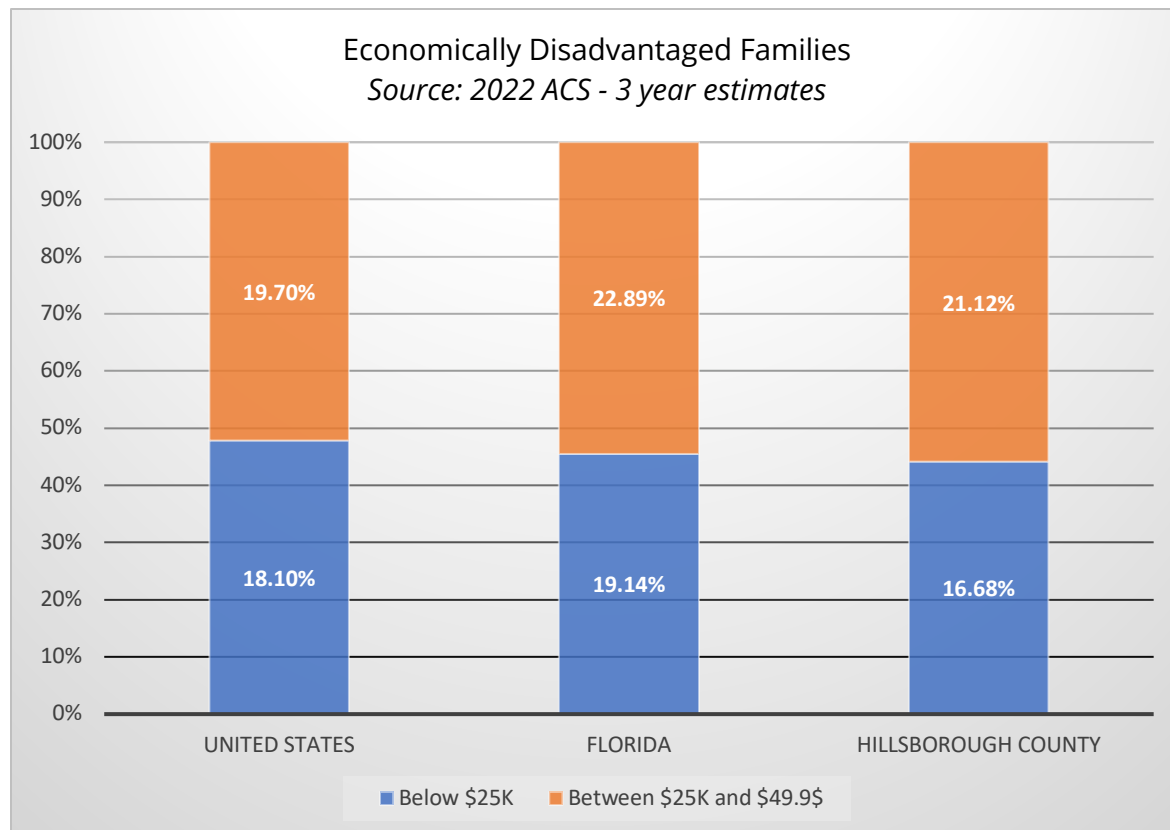
Disparities exist in the rate of financial hardship, centering on race and ethnicity, but also on family structure. For example, 59% of Black households, 52% of American Indian/Alaskan Native households, 52% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander householders, and 51% of Hispanic households fall below the ALICE threshold. In contrast, 40% of non-Hispanic White households and 38% of Asian households fall below the ALICE threshold. Similarly, single-parent households headed by women are more likely to fall under the ALICE threshold than married couples, couples without children, or single, male-headed households.

Public assistance programs were temporarily expanded in 2021, including the Expanded Child Tax Credit, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and Economic Impact benefits were successful at keeping many families from falling into poverty. However, these benefits were not sufficient to raise families above the ALICE thresholds. Thus, while these benefits were important in reducing or mitigating poverty, the benefits were not sufficient to reduce economic hardship. With pandemic assistance effectively over, there are significant remaining challenges. Further, there are disturbing signs that the economic situation for households below the FPL and for households above the FPL, but below the ALICE threshold are worsening in 2023 and may deteriorate further in 2024. There is evidence of sustained elevated levels of food insufficiency, continued difficulties in paying bills, medical debt, and severe and persistent experiences of anxiety and depression.

150% of the Federal Poverty Level

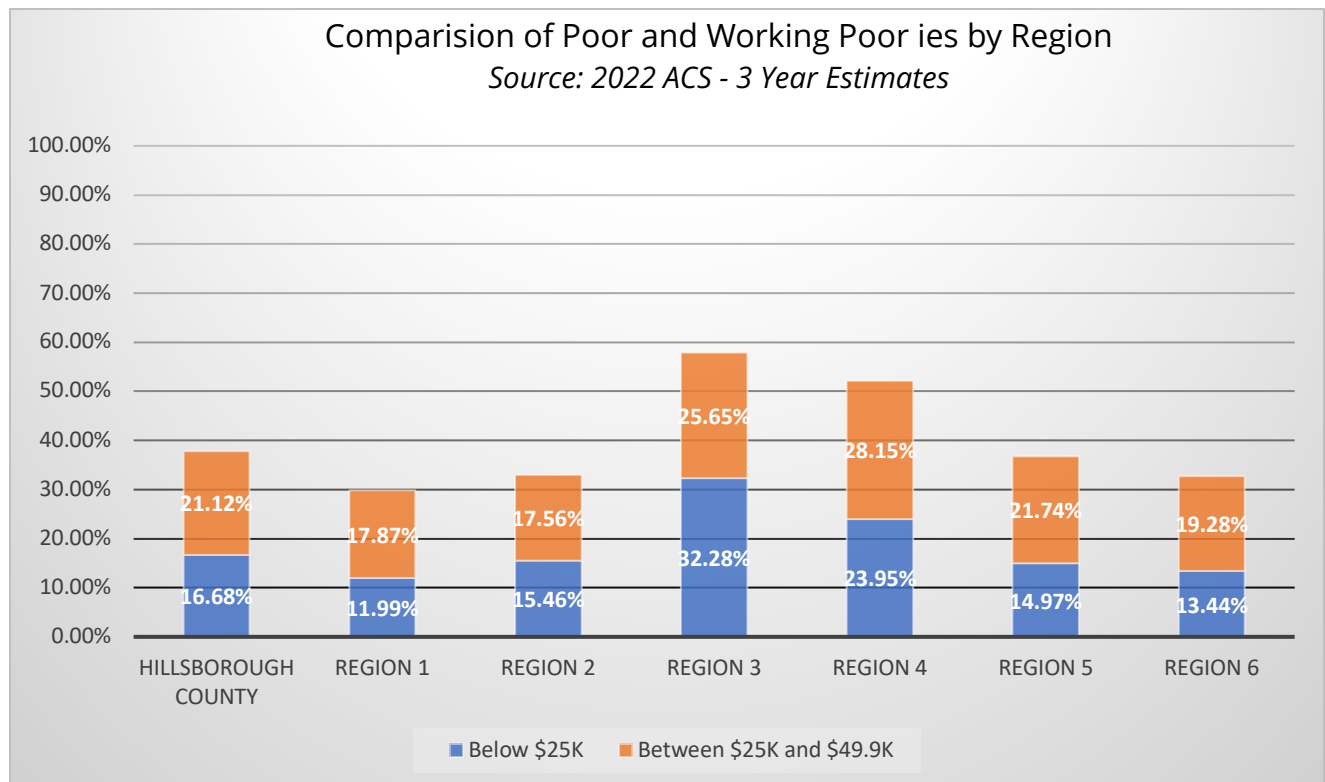
The ALICE measure is extremely important and provides a much-needed corrective to the official poverty level established by the federal government. Currently, ALICE data is not available at the zip code level. However, data on income tiers is collected and available for each of the six regions of Hillsborough County, and for each zip code within these regions. Data on families earning at or below 150% of the FPL (less than \$50,000) will be presented to identify and locate those families who are economically struggling yet are not

eligible for most federal benefits. Families earning below 150% FPL are eligible for school-readiness funding and an examination of this data can help determine where to focus ELCHC efforts beyond families in poverty.



Regional Differences

The overall number of families who struggle economically, both below the FPL, and below 150% of FPL can be better understood by examining regional differences. As noted, regions 3 and 4 are much poorer communities with poverty rates at approximately double that of all other regions. Further, the percentages of household income that is less than \$50,000 are high in regions three and four (25.65% and 28.15% respectively). Households with annual incomes below \$50,000 do not have the wherewithal to fund their basic expenses; high-quality early childhood education and care is the largest expense after rent or mortgage for families with small children.

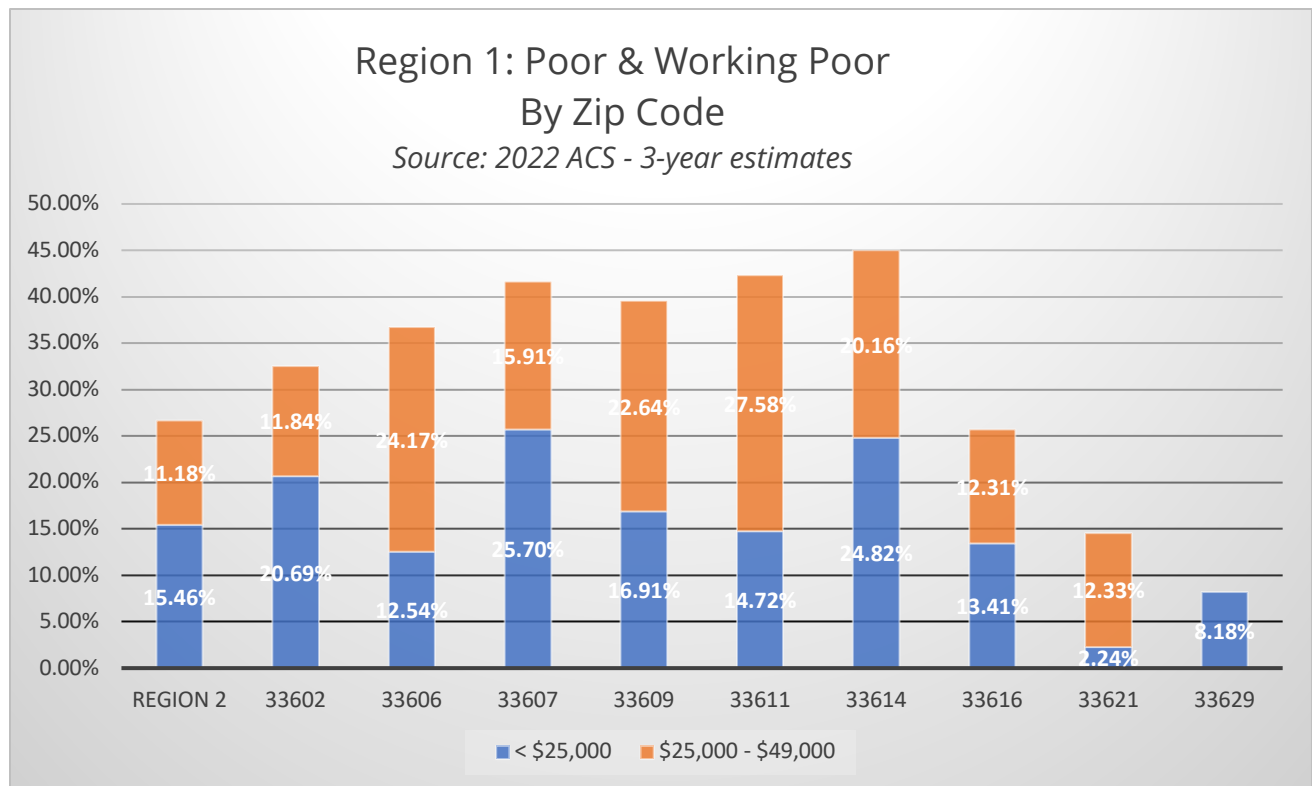


Region One: Differences by Zip Codes

Region one has the lowest poverty rate among all the regions in Hillsborough County with 11.99% of residents living below the poverty line. There is an additional 17.87% living below 150% of the federal poverty level and eligible for state subsidies for early childhood care. Importantly, residents with an average income of 150% of the poverty level do not have a sustainable income that allows for basic necessities, including rent/mortgage, utilities, basic phone service, food, and early childhood care. Taken together, the poor and the working poor represent 29.86% of the population.

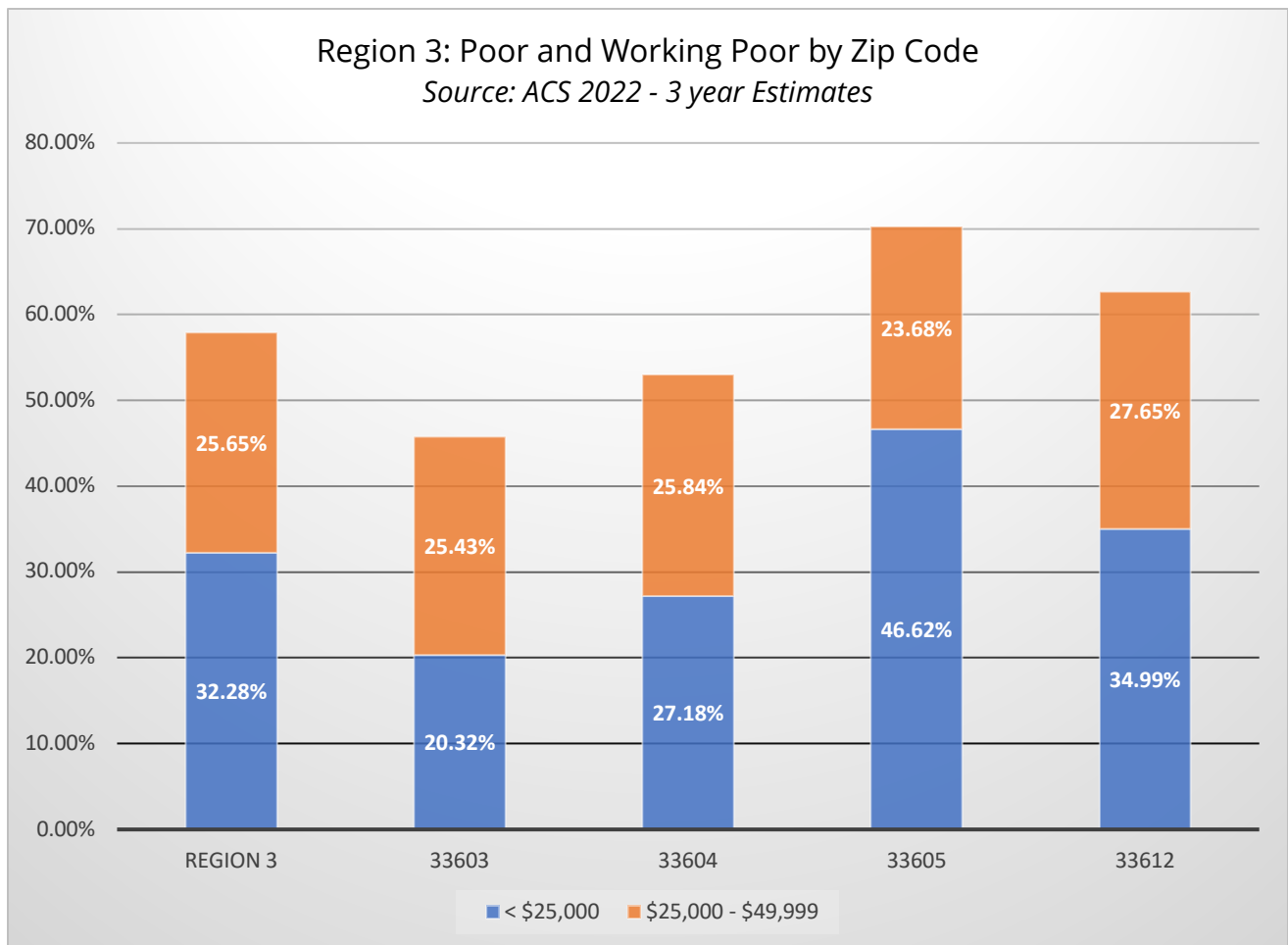
Region Two: Differences by Zip Code

Region two has a higher percentage of residents in poverty than region one. Additionally, region two has more families earning above the FPL, but below 150% of the FPL, thus many families, while not eligible for federal benefits may be eligible for childcare subsidies.



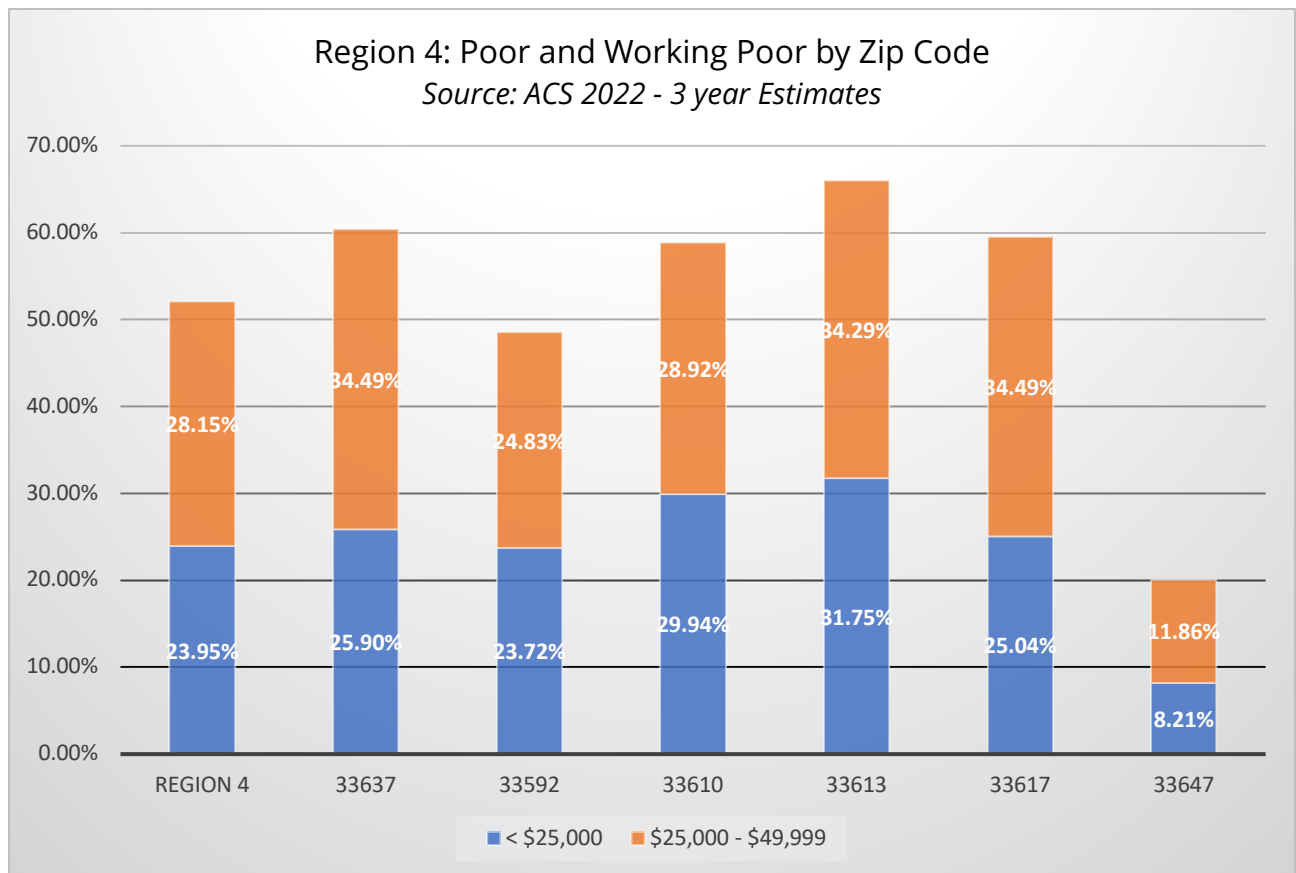
Region Three: Differences by Zip Code

Region three is the poorest region in Hillsborough County and encompasses the zip code with the highest poverty and the lowest median wage (33605). The most current data (November 2023) indicates that childhood poverty is rising, and this increase will be devastating to region three. The area is comprised of a substantial proportion of families in poverty, and an equally sizable proportion of families just above the poverty line. Region three, with its high proportion of families in poverty, would benefit from federally funded programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start.



Region Four: Differences by Zip Code

Region four is also a poor region in Hillsborough County. Of the six zip codes within region four, five of the zip codes have close to 25% of the families living in poverty. Within these five zip codes, combining those families living under the poverty level, and those living below 150% of the poverty level results in half of the population not earning a sustainable income. Region four with its high proportion of families in poverty would benefit from federally funded programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

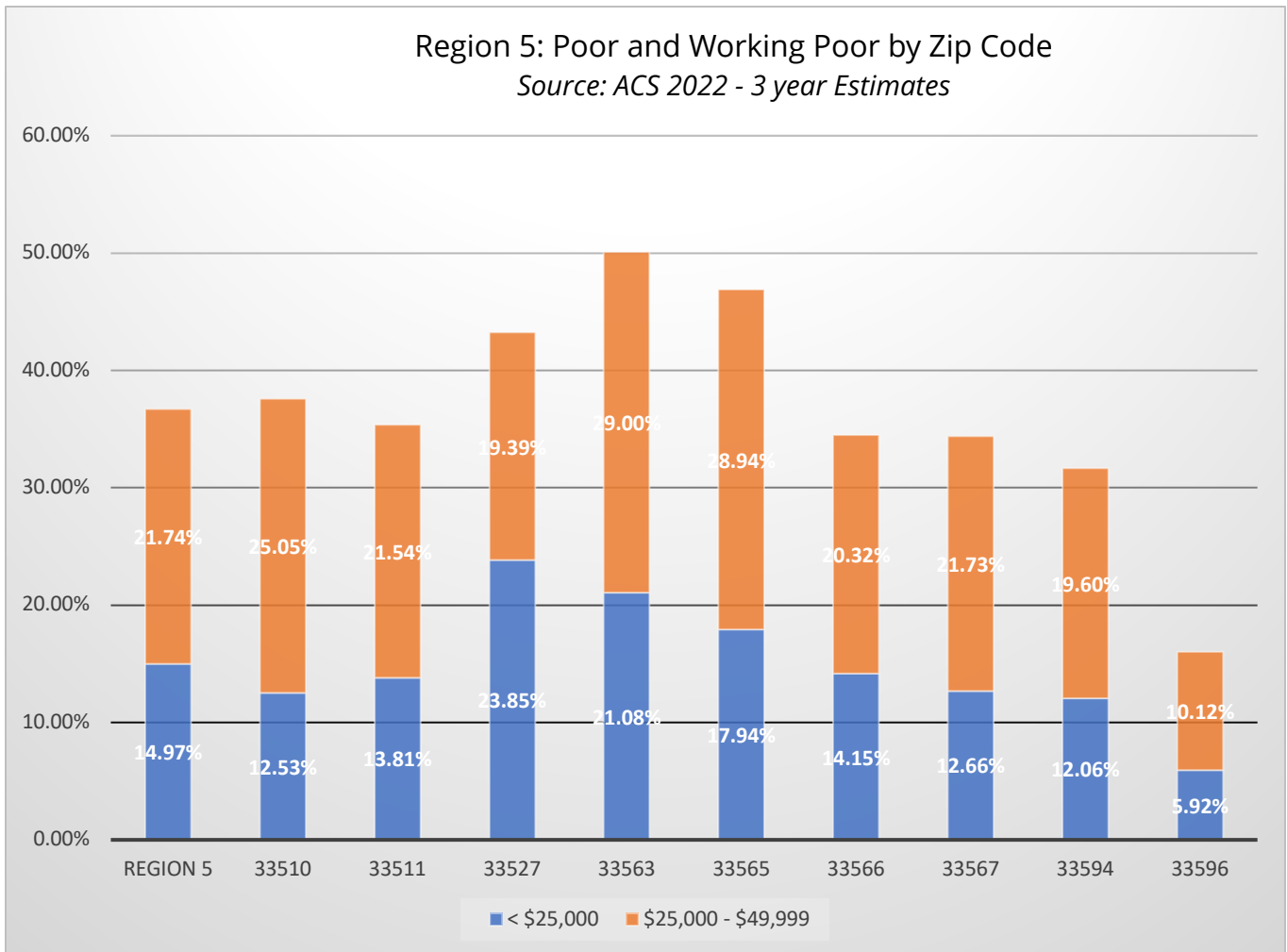


as. Region four, with its high proportion of families in poverty, would benefit from federally funded programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

Region Five: Differences by Zip Code

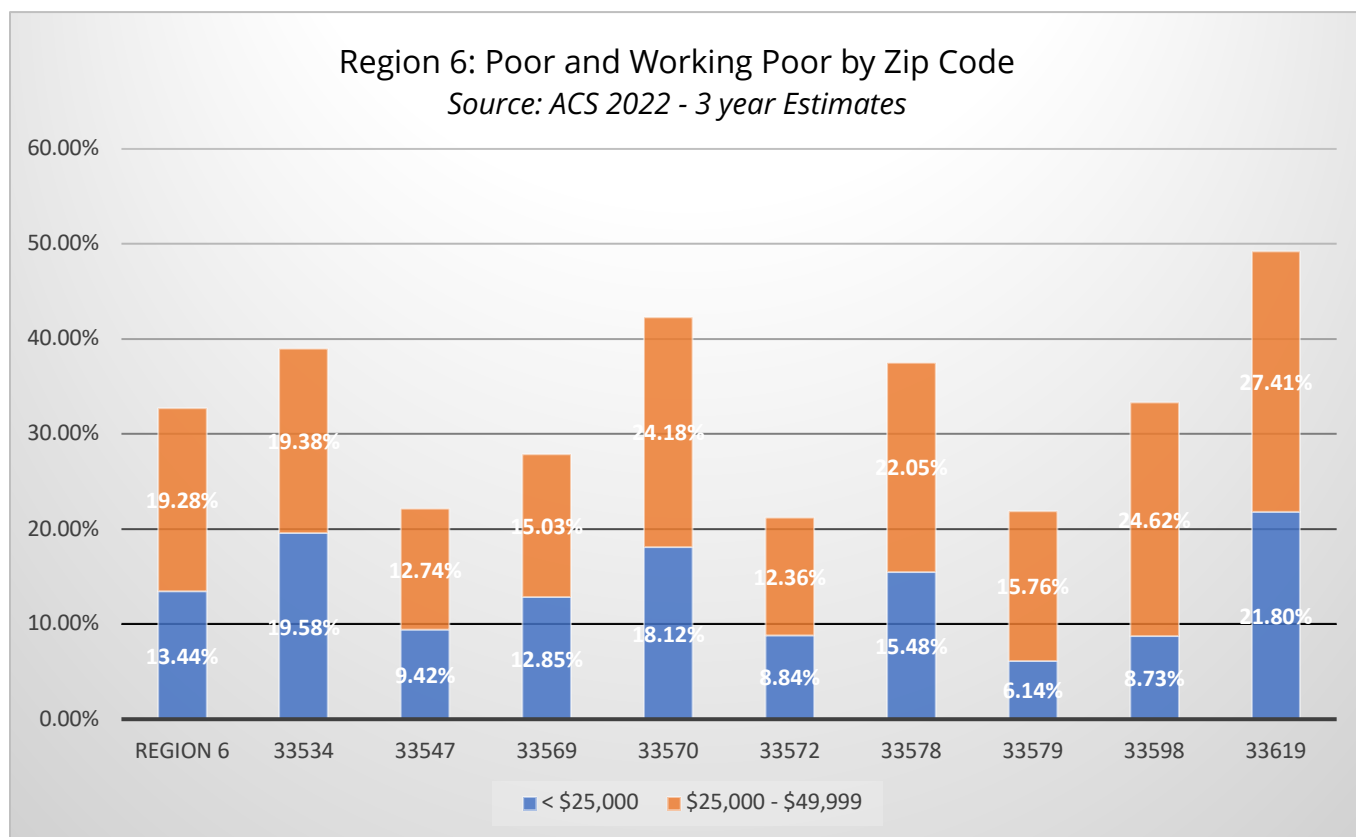
Region five is a wealthier neighborhood than region three or four but does not contain the same inequities found in regions one and two. Of the nine zip codes, seven of those zip codes have a level of poverty aligned with the county average, ranging from 12.06% to 21.08%. However, zip code 33596 has a much lower proportion of families in poverty (5.92%) while zip code 33527 has a much higher proportion of families in poverty (23.85%). For seven of the nine zip codes, most of the people residing in region 5 are among the working poor, earning more than the federal poverty level, but less than enough to afford basic necessities (less than 150% of the FPL). The number of people in this income tier

ranges from 19.39% to 29%), except for zip code 33596, which has 10.12% of the population earning more than \$25,000 but less than \$49,000. Region five has fewer families in poverty, and fewer families with high incomes, but it is comprised with many families earning below 150% FPL and these families are eligible for childcare subsidies. Providing information on school readiness funding and VPK programs would be beneficial in these communities.



Region Six: Differences by Zip Code

Region six, like the other regions, has a great deal of variation between each of the zip codes in the region. The level of poverty differs among the zip codes also. Four of the nine zip codes have poverty levels above the county average (33534, 33570, 33578, and 33619), ranging from 15.48% to 21.8%. Further, there is a substantial proportion of families earning above the FPL, but below \$50,000 in each of the zip codes ranging from 12.36% (33572) to 27.41% (33619). Region six, like region 5, has fewer families in poverty, and fewer families with high incomes, but it is comprised by many families earning below 150% FPL, these families are eligible for childcare subsidies. Providing information on school readiness funding and VPK programs would be beneficial in these communities.



Challenges to Early Childhood Education and Care: Post-COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a strain on most aspects of American life, including our early childhood education and care industry. Long before COVID-19, the industry had multiple challenges. Such challenges included: 1) inequities in early childhood care, 2) a fragmented system, 3) inaccessible early education centers marked by a sharp decrease in providers, 4) unaffordable care, 5) the shortage of teachers, and 6) the cost of providing high-quality care. These challenges became a crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic both exacerbated and made visible the limitation of early childhood care and education in the United States. The United States lost an estimated 20,000 childcare programs in the first two years of the pandemic, nearly 10% of the nation's supply, representing a devastating loss for children, families, and early educators who lost their jobs.

Inequities

Children of color and children from low-income families were less likely to be enrolled in high-quality, structured childcare programs due to in part to the difficulties in navigating the differing requirements, the lack of information about opportunities, and inaccessible early childhood education and care centers. Further, children of color and children from low-income families often receive subsidies for their children; these subsidies can place an additional burden on families who must meet recertification requirements and deadlines.

Children of color and children from low-income families are more likely to live in communities with fewer early education and care centers, are less likely to have access to high-quality care, are less likely to interact with educated and qualified teachers, may have difficulties in transportation, and often experience barriers to attendance such as unexpected shifts in family work hours. The challenges that impact early childhood education centers disproportionately impact children of color and children from low-income families.

Fragmented

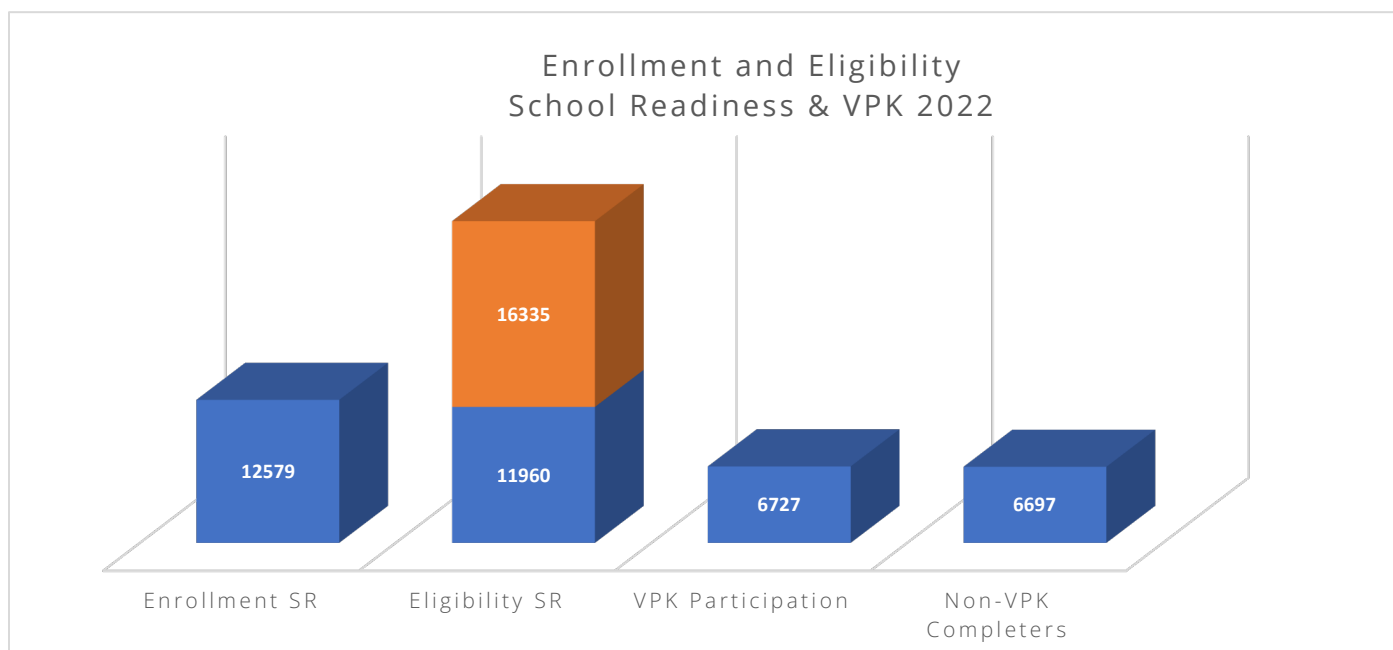
Funding streams for early childhood education resulted from various sources with different requirements. Each state has a distinct set of childcare policies. In Florida, voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) is state-funded and universal. Still, VPK is a free program, but funding is allocated for three hours a day; families struggle with wraparound care and high co-payments for the remainder of the day. School Readiness funds are federal funds from the Childcare Development Block Grant) and are administered by the states with multiple regulations, including work requirements and income eligibility, along with frequent recertification. The community needs assessment survey found that 15% of families, without early care, had difficulties with paperwork. The internal data from the ELCHC also found that a sizable number of families had difficulties with recertification (184), failed to provide adequate documentation (9), contact information was no longer valid (11), a change in guardianship of the child resulted in a lack of paperwork (78) and agency referrals were no longer valid (212). Additionally, families were disenrolled from the program due to strict eligibility requirements; families lost care due to increase in income (89), families no longer had a valid reason for care (289), and seasonal variations in employment (430).

Further, the federally funded Head Start/Early Head Start, along with the Early Head Start – Childcare Partnership grants existed, although data exists to show that only 40% of Head Start/Early Head Start children are eligible for care. This fragmented system is confusing to navigate for families and families often cannot maintain both valid information, eligibility requirements, and meet recertification deadlines. The frequent changes in providers and teachers dilutes the quality of early education, is detrimental to children, and results with families who struggle with stop-gap measures and a patchwork of care.

Inaccessible

Declining Enrollment

For many families in the U.S., access to affordable, high- quality childcare is not an option, and this is reflected both in the enrollment data and the childcare capacity data. The lack of enrollment in both VPK and state subsidies for children (school-readiness funds) seems to suggest that early childhood education and care are inaccessible or unaffordable. Approximately 50% of children eligible for VPK (four-year old children living in Hillsborough County) are enrolled. The Florida VPK program is moderately successful in preparing children for kindergarten; 64% of VPK completers⁸ were assessed as ready, compared to 37% of children who did not attend pre-kindergarten. Further, families reported t overwhelmingly that VPK is necessary for children to be ready for school; 95.1% of families surveyed felt that pre-kindergarten was necessary for school-readiness, 88.14% of families surveyed felt that early childhood education for birth to three-year-old children was necessary for school readiness. Given these results, it is unclear why 50% of children are not enrolled in a VPK program. This is an area which needs further research.



⁸ Fall 2022 Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST). Progress Monitoring 1. District Report. Available at <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/best/k-ready.html>

Early Childhood Education Centers: Temporary & Permanently Closed

The number of early childhood education centers declined by 18% and the rate of family childcare homes declined by 25% over the past decade despite significant demand. The closing of early childhood education centers and family day care homes was exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. According to ChildCare Aware of American⁹, the supply of childcare in many states may not fully recover without significant dedicated support from federal and state governments; 17 of 32 states lost more than 25% of their childcare capacity in 2020, representing over 16,000 childcare spaces.¹⁰ In Hillsborough County, 312 of the county's 679 centers were closed at the height of COVID.¹¹ It is important to note that the costs to re-open including hiring (or re-hiring) staff, licensing, and repairs are prohibitive in many cases. Internal data from the ELCHC noted that 27 centers closed during the past year.

Childcare Deserts

Slightly more than half the country lived in a childcare desert defined a census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no childcare providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children in licensed care slots. Within Florida 38% of families live in a childcare desert. childcare centers. Of the families who participated in the community needs assessment survey and did not have their child enrolled in an early education center, 27% reported they did not have access to high quality care.

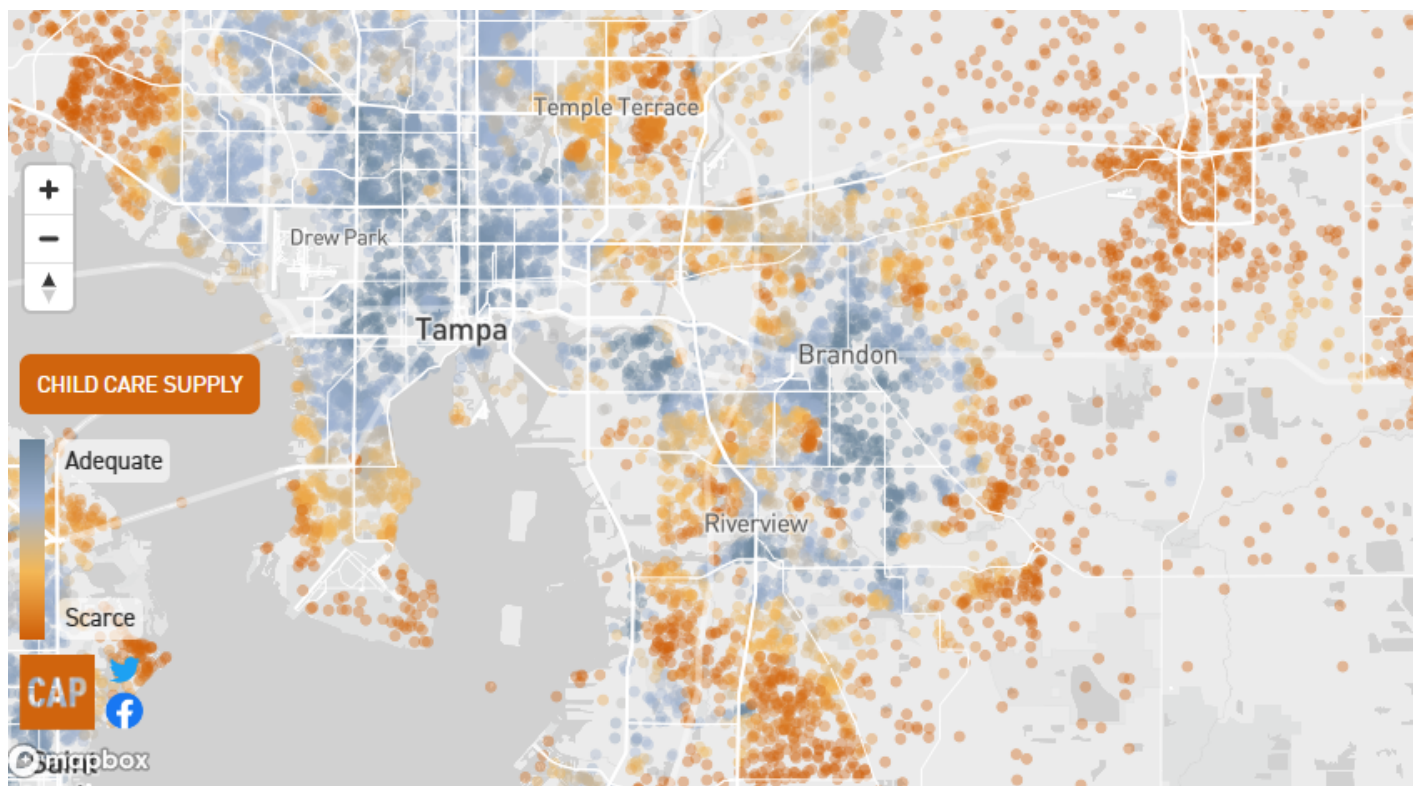
Childcare deserts are frequently found in rural areas and communities of low-income families. Within Hillsborough County, childcare deserts are predominantly located in Temple Terrace (northeastern), Brandon and Riverview (southeastern).¹² The capacity for childcare is depicted on the heatmap below.

⁹ ChildCare Aware of American (2020). Picking Up the Pieces: Building a Better Childcare System Post Covid.

¹⁰ The Center for American Progress (August 31, 2022). *The Economic Realities of Childcare*.

¹¹ Childcare Centers Reopen in Hillsborough County. (June 8, 2020). ABC Action News, WFTS, Tampa Bay.

¹² U.S. Childcare Deserts. (Interactive Database). Available at <https://childcaredeserts.org/>



Unaffordable

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, childcare is affordable if it costs households no more than **7% of their income**. Currently, families in every major city and every state pay more than 7% of their income for childcare. The average cost of childcare was not affordable for families making less than \$75,000. The lack of quality childcare centers is complicated by high tuition costs. The average annual care for an infant in the United States is \$12,272, or \$236 weekly. For an infant in Florida, the average annual cost is \$9,238 or \$177 weekly. However, the annual cost for infant care in Hillsborough County is \$11,232 or \$216 per week.¹³ Preschool early childhood care and education is less expensive. In the United States, annual cost for preschool is \$11,544 or \$222 weekly. In

¹³ Winnie. Cost of Care in Florida, by City and Type of Care. Available at <https://winnie.com/resources/cost-of-child-care-in-florida-by-age-city-type>

Florida, the annual cost is \$9,287 or \$176 per week while in Hillsborough County the average annual cost for preschool is \$10,400 or \$200 weekly.

For families, increasing high tuition costs represent almost 17.1 percent of the median household income. However, for low-income families, the cost of tuition represents 51.3 percent of their household income. Families below the poverty level are eligible for subsidies either through federally funded programs such as Head Start or state-supported early childcare programs. However, Head Start funds and state-subsidies account for only 40 percent of eligible children. Just as importantly, families who are above the poverty levels, but remain financially unstable are not eligible for benefits. The table below indicates the median cost of care for family and center-based care for infants and preschool children. Further, this table illustrates the percentage of income spent on childcare for families who earn the median income, and for families below poverty.

Percentage of Annual Income Childcare Costs by Age and Type			
Hillsborough County	Annual Price ¹⁴	% of Median income (Families)	% of Median Income (Low-Income)
Infant Care (Family Based)	\$9,600	15.1%	34.2%
Infant Care (Center Based)	\$12,000	18.8%	42%
Pre-Kindergarten Care (Family Based)	\$8,088.00	12.7%	28.8%
Pre-Kindergarten Care (Center Based)	\$8,888.00	13.9%	31.6%

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Labor. The National Database of Childcare Prices. Available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/featured-childcare>

Shortage of Teachers

The Workforce

Demographic data on early childhood educators is limited to national statistics. Nationally, the overwhelming number of early childhood educators are women: 92% of early childhood educators are women, while 8% are men. Non-Hispanic Whites comprise 62.3% of the population, 18.3% are Hispanic, and 8.7% are Black or African American., and 5.4% are Asian. Early childhood educators are older than the median age of workers; almost half (48%) are over 40, with 27% between 30 and 40 years and 23% between 20 and 30 years. This suggests that early childhood education is not an attractive option for young adults and indicates that as the largest proportion of the workforce retires, the current shortage of early childhood educators will intensify.

The most common educational attainment for an early childhood teacher is a bachelor's degree, with more than half (58%) earning a four-year degree. Only 16% have an associate degree, while 14% have a master's degree. Not surprisingly, teachers with higher educational attainment earn more; moreover, early childhood educators with higher educational attainment are more likely to work for a school district (66%) rather than a private childcare center (22%).

Nationally, early childhood teacher tenure is low. Almost a quarter (22%) of early childhood teachers leave the field in less than a year, while 33% of teachers leave the field within two years. An additional 14% leave within three to four years. Thus, 69% of early childhood teachers leave before five years in the industry, again portending a significant intensification of the shortage of early childhood teachers.

Although the average educational attainment of early childhood teachers is a bachelor's degree, the educational requirements for an early childhood teacher in Florida are significantly lower than this. Early childhood educators can be hired with only a high school diploma in Florida if they begin their credential requirements within 90 days and complete the credential within one year of beginning. The first part of the credential process is a 40-hour course provided by the Department of Children and Families that covers rules and regulations of childcare facilities, health and safety, and developmentally

appropriate practices. Additionally, training in fire extinguishers and safe sleeping practices are required, again such courses can be taken on-line.

Early childhood educators for the voluntary pre-kindergarten program require a more extensive credential, a Child Development Associate (C.D.A.), or an associate degree in early childhood education. A combination of early childhood coursework and experience can be substituted. A C.D.A. requires 120 hours of course work, 480 hours of practicum, and the submission of a portfolio. The C.D.A. (or appropriate educational equivalent) is required for a Staff Credential; one staff credential is required for every 20 children in the center.

The exceptionally low tenure of early childhood educators coupled with the aging of the workforce indicate that early childhood education is declining in appeal to a younger generation. The low education requirements in Florida suggest a low commitment to high-quality education for young children, despite an increasing body of research that demonstrates the capabilities and needs of young children.

Low Wages

Many childcare providers are finding it increasingly difficult to hire and retain passionate, educated, and qualified staff given the low wages of early childhood educators. In the United States the hourly rates for an early childhood educator range from \$14.18 an hour to \$18.51 an hour, while the average rate is \$16.38 an hour. Annually, the average salary in the United States ranges from \$36,518 to \$45,244 with an average annual salary of \$45,504. In contrast, kindergarten teachers in the United States can earn an annual salary that ranges from \$37,000 to \$68,440 with an average salary of \$50,368.

The wages for early childhood educators in Florida ranges from \$37,240 to \$46,127; the average annual salary in Florida for an early childhood educator is \$41,928. The average annual salary for a kindergarten teacher is \$56,828. The wages for an early childhood educator in Hillsborough County range from a low of \$39,200 to a high wage of \$54,958 with an average annual wage of \$43,572.¹⁵ (

¹⁵ All wage data is drawn from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupation Employment and Wage Statistics. (May 2022). Occupation: Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education (SOC code 252011).

The ELCHC conducted a survey of teachers and providers and found strong support for financial incentives for the professional development of teachers (68.72%) and for longevity benefits (81.56%). Further, providers were supportive of health benefits for teachers (72.73%). Importantly both providers and teachers felt that training for special needs (50%) and professional development on mental health and behavioral health supports (53.89%) were important.

There were some interesting challenges that arose with the provider surveys. First, although stipends and bonuses were cited as important, not all providers utilized these benefits. New hire stipends were used by 43.35% of providers, training stipends were used by 60% of providers, recruitment bonuses were used by 29.59%, while longevity grants were used by 65.34%. The reason for the lack of full utilization is a question that remains to be answered.

Cost of Providing High-Quality Early Childhood Education

A final contributing factor to inaccessible and unaffordable high-quality childcare is the actual cost of providing high-quality. Tuition, subsidies, and family co-pays are applied to the price of early childhood education and care. However, the actual costs of high-quality childcare are a different amount. The price of childcare, what providers receive, is approximately 69% of the actual cost. This impacts teacher wages, high-quality environments, high-quality materials and curriculum, and provider's profit. Below is a comparison of actual price of early childhood education and care in Hillsborough County compared to the cost as determined by the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator, published by the Administration of Children and Families, within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Comparison of Price and Cost Early Childhood Education and Care Hillsborough County

Available at:

<https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/occGeo/One%20occupation%20for%20multiple%20geographical%20area>

Hillsborough County	Annual Price ¹⁶	Annual Cost ¹⁷
Infant Care (Family Based)	\$9,600	\$13,913.40
Infant Care (Center Based)	\$12,000	\$17,391.00
Pre-Kindergarten Care (Family Based)	\$8,088.00	\$11,721.74
Pre-Kindergarten Care (Center Based)	\$8,888.00	\$12,869.57

Economic Impact: Lack of High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care

Research continues to indicate that children who attend high-quality childcare programs have positive long-term outcomes in later childhood and beyond. The long-term benefits include high school completion, higher income, better physical health, and stronger families. These outcomes also benefit the country, because they are associated with reduced crime rates, a stronger economy, lower public expenditures for financial assistance programs and healthier communities. Price-benefit analyses of high-quality programs such as the Perry Preschool Project, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers program, and the Carolina Abecedarian Project show returns of between \$4 and \$16 for every dollar spent.

In 2018, ReadyNation studied the economic impact of insufficient childcare on working families and businesses and estimated annual losses of \$57 billion in earnings, productivity, and revenue due to the nation's childcare crisis. That \$57 billion in losses included:

- A loss of \$37 billion due to reduced productivity at work, and in more time looking for work for working parents.
- A loss of \$13 billion from reduced revenue and extra recruitment costs for

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Labor. The National Database of Childcare Prices. Available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/topics/featured-childcare>

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Administration for Children Families. Provider Cost of Quality Calculator. Available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/pcqc>

business.

- A loss of \$7 billion due to working parents being in lower income tax brackets and paying less sales tax for the community.

Expiration of Federal Funding: Post COVID

The American Rescue Plan Action (ARPA) passed in 2021 and provided states with nearly \$40 billion in emergency relief funds for early childhood care and education. These funds ensured an immediate, although temporary, stabilization of early childhood care and education. Almost \$24 billion in relief funds were distributed to states which enabled the continuing care of 9.6 million children. By 2023, the number of childcare centers returned to pre-pandemic levels, and the trend of declining family childcare homes slowed. States benefited from the funding, providing grants to childcare centers and family childcare homes to support (temporarily) increased ages, support for rent, mortgage and utilities, investment in profession development and classroom materials.

In November 2021, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation that would have significantly expanded the supply of early learning options, reaching an estimated 16 million children. The stabilization funds were enacted while Congress was moving this legislation forward, with the expectation this legislation would replace the ARPA funds. However, the legislation did not pass the Senate, and there is no replacement funding source for early childhood care and education. The ARPA funds will expire on September 30, 2023. The loss of federal funding will reverse the progress towards a better resourced childcare system in the nation, there will again be a sharp decline in the quantity of early childhood centers and family childcare homes; there will be a further decline in quality in the remaining early childhood care and education providers.

With the loss of federal funds at the end of September, more than 70,00 childcare programs are projected to close, and more than 3 million children will lose access to care. Families will be forced to leave or change jobs, reduce work hours, or create piecemeal childcare options. The impact on children's education and development will be drastic. The impact on family income is just as drastic. Families are projected to lose \$9 billion in earnings per year.

There is an economic impact for states, the loss in tax and business revenue will likely result in a loss of \$10.6 billion annually in economic activity the nation Florida anticipates 2,196 childcare programs expected to close with 212,721 children set to lose childcare. Florida families are projected to lose \$604 million in earnings. Further, 15,824 childcare jobs are expected to be lost in Florida, with childcare classrooms having to close without an adequate supply of early childcare educators.

Recommendations

Further Research

1. Determine through focus groups and surveys of families with VPK completers and non-VPK participants the reasons for non-participation. Engage providers in similar conversations.
2. Determine reasons for the full lack of utilization of ELCHS benefits and stipends during the pandemic.
3. Nationwide, teachers report that they leave the job because “it is too little pay for too much work/stress,” suggesting two variables need to be modified. An analysis of teacher’s daily work across multiple sites could provide data on how to improve the workload and stress of teachers’ workday.

Advocacy and Partnerships

4. Advocate for federal funding to supplement state funding and encourage policy makers and the public to conceive of early childhood education as a public good for children, families, and the overall economy.
5. Partner with educational institutions to offer more specific training to each childhood educators and ensure public scholarships and funding is provided to teachers. Further, ensure that high-quality, face-to-face instruction is provided to early childhood educators.
6. Engage the business community in an intentional way to advocate for high-quality early childhood education and care.

Changes

7. Modify and ensure the eligibility and recertification processes are less onerous for families and providers.

8. Explore ways to fund re-certification specialists and family navigators for assistance with eligibility requirements.
9. Ensure providers and teachers have access and knowledge on using the ELCHC provided platform, myTeachstone. Providers and teachers requested CLASS specific training but were unaware of the availability of myTeachstone for CLASS purposes and for social and emotional behavior. A hybrid model that relies on on-line training and regular meetings of teacher cohorts may be more useful than individual on-line work.
10. Explore modern technology to decrease workload of attendance, collecting child outcomes data, and CLASS assessments of teachers.

Children with Special Needs

A specific challenge that impacts early childhood education and care are children with special needs, including speech delays, developmental difficulties, and children with challenging behaviors. According to the Centers for Disease Control,¹⁸ recent estimates in the United States show that about one in six, or about 17%, children have one or more developmental disabilities. Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and can last throughout a person's lifetime.

There are known risk factors and causes for some developmental disabilities, but more needs to be learned to understand the causes of developmental delays, shape prevention efforts and develop effective treatments. The CDC is currently engaged in a large study on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in pre-school children, which includes researching risk factors and behavioral characteristics.

¹⁸Centers for Disease Control. CDC's Work on Developmental Disabilities. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/about.html>

Census data¹⁹ indicates there has been a rise in childhood disabilities in the past decade. It is unclear if this is due to an actual change in conditions or a result of better screening and diagnostic tools along with better resources and information. Census data also show that boys are more likely to be identified with a developmental disability or delay when compared to girls, and non-Hispanic Black children are more likely to be identified with a developmental disability or delay than their non-Hispanic White counterparts. Furthermore, there is more identification of children with disabilities in the south and northeast, with the fewest number of identified children in the west.

A key early finding is that early identification of children with ASD and other developmental delays is central for a positive impact. Early identification is best accomplished with developmental and behavioral screenings, along with continued developmental monitoring so children and families can receive appropriate services and support.

The term "special needs" often refers to any behavioral, physical, emotional, or learning difficulties that require specialized accommodations of any sort at school, work, or in the community. While the list of possible diagnoses included under the label "special needs" is enormous, some of the most common relate to academic settings and can include:

- Autism
- ADD/ADHD
- Learning disabilities (dyslexia, dysgraphia)
- Disorders that incorporate intellectual disabilities, such as Down syndrome
- Disorders that make physical activity challenging, including cerebral palsy, blindness, or deafness,
- Speech and language disorders ranging from apraxia of speech to stuttering.

¹⁹ U.S. Census Research Brief. March 25, 2021. Childhood Disability in the United States: 2019. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/acs/acsbr-006.html>

- Emotional and behavioral disorders including anxiety, depression, oppositional-defiant disorder,
- Physical differences such as amputated limbs or dwarfism

In contrast, the term “disability” has a specific and legal definition, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. A disability, determined by the state-appointed agency (Early Steps for younger children, and the school district for children three and older) entitles the individual to specialized services and additional funding to obtain such services. These services are detailed in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for children three and older, or an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) for children younger than three.

Early identification of children’s potential concerns or difficulties is essential to ensure prompt determination of an IEP/IFSP as regulated by ADA and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act). Early identification is also important for children and families to receive the best possible care; moreover, early identification often mitigates and reduces problems in the classroom. The ELCHC uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ³) for developmental screening, and the ASQ – Social and Emotional Screening Tool (ASQ-SE). The process is designed for parents and teachers to jointly conduct the ASQ³ and the ASQ-SE to identify concerns, describe triggers, evaluate behaviors, and create effective strategies for both home and school. While the screening tool requires less than 20 minutes, conversations can last for an hour, but the initial time investment is invaluable.

Most of the research on adverse childhood experiences (ACES) suggests that developmental disabilities, especially behavioral challenges, can be linked to adverse childhood experiences. Initially, ACES were defined as family violence, death or incarceration of a close family member, chronic pain and illness, substance abuse in the family and other individual or family events. More recently, ACES have been expanded to include community traumas such as poverty, racism, or violence in the community. A toxic

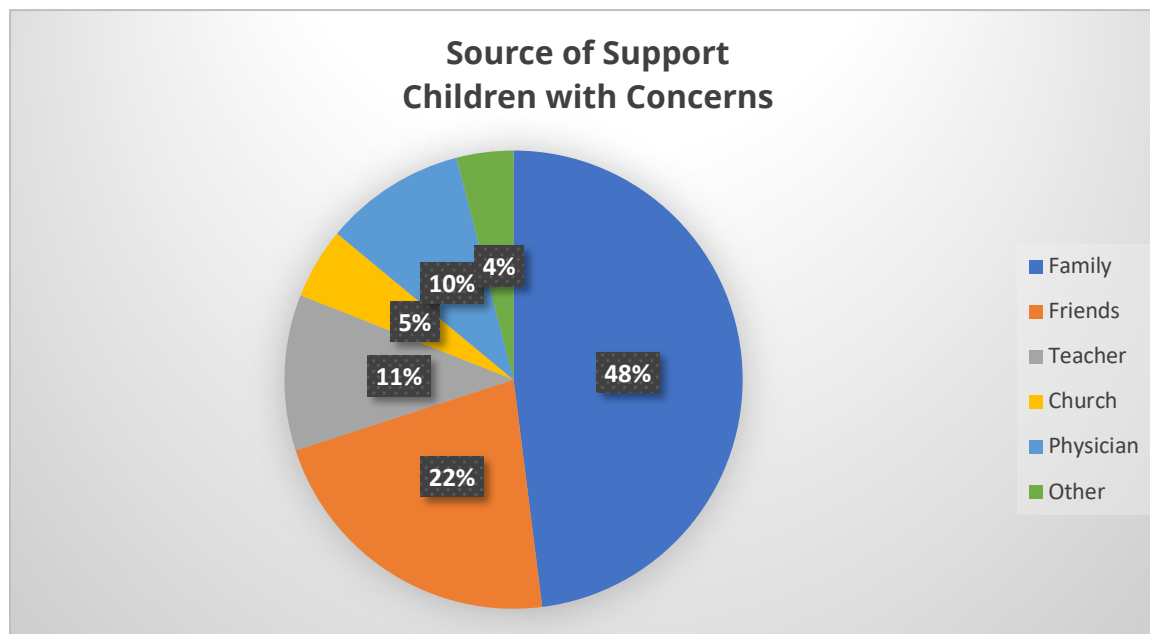
stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. Toxic stress is a key contributor to behavioral challenges and developmental delays. Prolonged activation of the stress response systems can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment, well into the adult years.

The onset of COVID-19, the resulting isolation, social distancing, concurrent uncertainty, and anxiety about individual and familial health along with the economic hardships have contributed to a decrease in the mental wellness of adults as documented through numerous surveys, polls, increased anxiety, and depression medication, and increase therapeutic visits with professionals. There have been numerous resources available for early childhood educators for developing their own resilience. Although research has not conclusively documented a link between the pandemic and developmental delays or behavioral difficulties, teachers and families often make that link and describe children’s speech and developmental delays and behavioral challenges as part of being a “COVID-baby.”

In the family survey distributed as part of the community needs assessment, 37% of families reported their child had a special need as detailed in the table below.

Family Survey: Family Identification Children with Special Needs	
Vision	2.%
Hearing	1%
Speech	12%
Developmental Delays	8%
Challenging Behaviors	8%
Physical	1%
Other	5%

As part of the survey, parents also reported where they found information and resources for working with their child. The results are reported below.



The national data indicates that 17% of children have developmental disabilities (as determined by IEP/IFSP) and are entitled to benefits from IDEA. There were 156 children below the age of three who were referred to Early Steps for a possible evaluation, or 1.5% of the average enrolled children. Similarly, there were 190 children (3-5) identified as having a potential concern (or 2.8%). While 60.45% of providers indicated they served children with special needs, only 25.89% were aware of special funding for children with additional needs.

Children's Challenging Behavior, Exclusion and Expulsion

A frequent source of stress for teachers is children's challenging behaviors. Children's challenging behaviors are correlated to both speech and developmental delays. It is a truism, but stressed teachers are unable to deescalate a child's behaviors, thus the interaction between teacher and child can quickly spiral. One of the results of this negative spiral is the frequency of exclusion and expulsion of preschool children. The American Academy of Pediatrics recent research found that preschool children who are expelled or excluded:

- Are expelled at three times the rate of high school students.
- Are ten times more likely to not graduate from high school.
- Are three times more likely to go to jail or prison.
- Half of all expelled children are Black.

Through the family survey, 8.6% of families reported their child had been asked to leave a center due to challenging behavior. This is a disturbing statistic. Taken together with the other information, extensive support and professional development on inclusion, special needs and working with children with challenging behaviors is of utmost importance.

Recommendations

1. Provide targeted training on social and emotional development through myTeachstone.
2. Develop clear policies on suspension and expulsion with subsequent tracking of data and the goal of eventually eliminating these practices.
3. Teachers and providers should be trained on how to manage behavior, recognize implicit bias, and promote social emotional regulation in preschoolers.
4. Early childhood teachers benefit from support, such as improved working conditions, behavior support specialists, and access to mental health consultation.
5. Families and early educators should partner to develop alternatives to preschool expulsion by accessing appropriate resources.

Recommendations

Further Research

1. Determine through focus groups and surveys of families with VPK completers and non-VPK participants the reasons for non-participation. Engage providers in similar conversations.
2. Determine reasons for the full lack of utilization of ELCHS benefits and stipends during the pandemic.
3. Nationwide, teachers report that they leave the job because “it is too little pay for too much work/stress,” suggesting two variables need to be modified. An analysis of teacher’s daily work across multiple sites could provide data on how to improve the workload and stress of teachers’ workday.

Recruitment and Enrollment

4. The ELCHC currently targets five zip codes, focusing on areas with the highest concentrations of poverty. Expanding the areas of concentration to the 16 zip codes with the lowest median incomes would significantly alter the lives of children within these areas.
5. Modify and ensure the eligibility and recertification processes are less onerous for families and providers.
6. Explore ways to fund re-certification specialists and family navigators for assistance with eligibility requirements.

Expansion

7. Region three, with its high proportion of families in poverty, would benefit from federally funded programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start.
8. Region four, with its high proportion of families in poverty, would benefit from federally funded programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start

9. Region five has fewer families in poverty, and fewer families with high incomes, but it is comprised with many families earning below 150% FPL and these families are eligible for childcare subsidies. Providing information on school readiness funding and VPK programs would be beneficial in this community.
10. Region six has fewer families in poverty, but it is comprised of many families earning below 150% FPL and these families are eligible for childcare subsidies. Providing information on school readiness funding and VPK programs would be beneficial in this community.
11. Build supply of childcare providers in areas where the concentration of poverty is greater than 30% (6 zip codes) with teacher apprenticeship programs.
12. Build supply of childcare providers in areas where the concentration of poverty is greater than 30% by partnering with Small Business Association and banks who fund minority and women-owned business in areas where the concentration of poverty is greater than 30%.
13. Partner with local businesses and quality providers to open early education and care sites at the workplace.

Special Needs

14. Ensure providers and teachers have access and knowledge on using the ELCHC provided platform, myTeachstone. Providers and teachers requested CLASS specific training but were unaware of the availability of myTeachstone for CLASS purposes and for social and emotional behavior. A hybrid model that relies on on-line training and regular meetings of teacher cohorts may be more useful than individual on-line work.
15. Provide targeted training on social and emotional development through myTeachstone.
16. Develop clear policies on suspension and expulsion with subsequent tracking of data and the goal of eventually eliminating these practices.

17. Teachers and providers should be trained on how to manage behavior, recognize implicit bias, and promote social emotional regulation in preschoolers.
18. Early childhood teachers benefit from support, such as improved working conditions, behavior support specialists, and access to mental health consultation.
19. Families and early educators should partner to develop alternatives to preschool expulsion by accessing appropriate resources.

Advocacy and Partnerships

20. Advocate for federal, state, and local spending to improve teacher wages.
21. Advocate for federal funding to supplement state funding and encourage policy makers and the public to conceive of early childhood education as a public good for children, families, and the overall economy.
22. Partner with educational institutions to offer more specific training to each childhood educators and ensure public scholarships and funding is provided to teachers. Further, ensure that high-quality, face-to-face instruction is provided to early childhood educators.
23. Engage the business community in an intentional way to advocate for high-quality early childhood education and care.



Community Needs Assessment

December 2023



EARLY LEARNING
COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

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