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# Scott County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Figure 1. Devils Bathtub, Scott County, VA

## Identified Issues Within Scott County

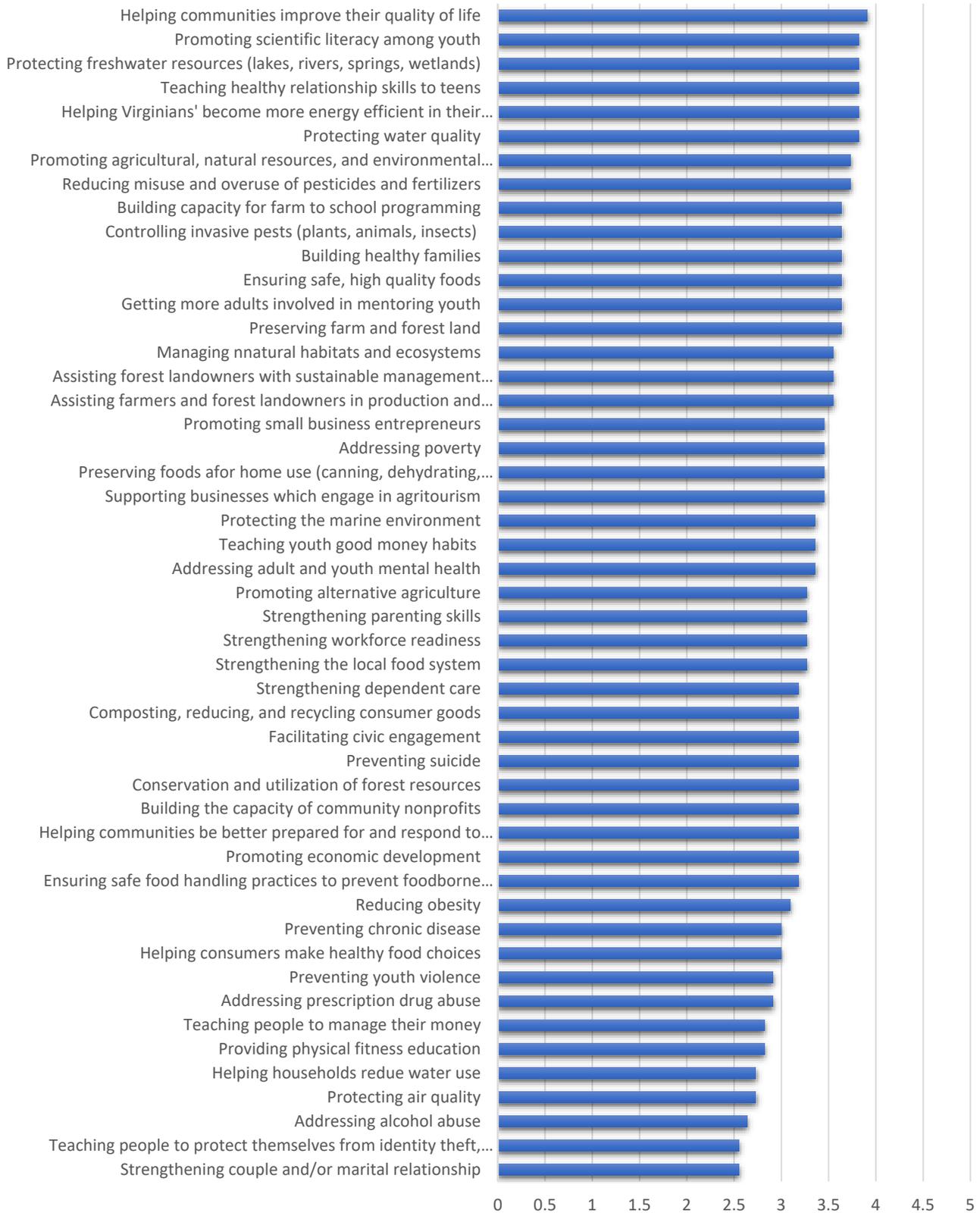


Table 1. Ranking of issues identified by the Scott County Situation Analysis survey.

# Introduction

The situation analysis conducted in Scott County, Virginia was designed to evaluate both internally and externally influenced opportunities and challenges related to the areas of agriculture, youth development, and family and consumer science. Utilizing the state sanctioned survey, widespread public distribution included local meetings, Facebook, county website, and county-wide distribution list. Demographic data in the Situation Analysis of 2023 was reviewed in contrast to the updated demographic data from the US Census 2020 and US Census of Agriculture 2017 in order to familiarize itself with trends and shifts in trends that could be addressed through educational programming provided by Virginia Cooperative Extension

## Unit Profile

Scott County is a rural, largely agrarian county located within the Appalachian Valley of Southwest Virginia. This southwestern county covers 539 square miles and is on the Tennessee border. Because of the location, Scott County's population is considered part of the Johnson City, Kingsport, and Bristol Combined Statistical Area (CSA).

## Demographics

### Population

The United States Census Bureau statistics reports the Scott County 2021 population as 21,576. This indicates a decrease (8%) compared to the 23,334 cited in the 2018 Situation Analysis. The population decline contrasts Virginia's growth of 2% from 2017 to 2022 as shown by data in the US Census. The population decline seems to be moderating when rates of 4.27% and 6.92% in 1970 and 1980, respectively, are compared. Six incorporated towns are within the county boundaries in 2023; the county seat, Gate City (pop. 1910), Clinchport (pop. 66), Duffield (pop. 65), Dunganon (pop. 309), Nickelsville (pop. 360), and Weber City (pop. 1,591). The trend was a reduction in populous within city limits with the exception of Weber City.

### Age Distribution

- The median age of Scott County residents in 2022 is 47.2 indicating an increase compared to 33.4 in 1980 and 41.4 in 2000.
- Age distribution in 2021 was 30.51% under the age of 25 years; 43.61% ages 25-59; and 25.88% 60 years and older.
- Compared to 2018 those in the 25-59 age bracket increased approximately 3.3% while the 60+ decreased approximately 1%.

### Racial Composition

- The racial composition of Scott County remains relatively unchanged at 96.4% white and 3.6% non-white.

### Household Data

- According to the American Community Survey, per capita income as of 2021 was \$24,214. An increase from \$20,501 from the data cited in the 2018 situation analysis, but still only 51% per capita of other Virginians. The percentage of population (all ages) living below the poverty level decreased from 18.3% during the 2007-2011 timeframe compared to 15.37% in 2023. These levels still indicate a poverty level higher than others in Virginia (10.4%). Children (ages 5-17) in poverty saw similar decreases from 25% in 2013 to 20.4% in 2023.
- 16.8% of households are in poverty compared to the state average of 10.6%
- Unemployment remains a concern standing at a rate of 3.2% compared to the state average of 2.9%. Statewide and county unemployment is nearly half the 2018 levels.

- Median value of owner-occupied housing increased 16% from \$90,400 (2011) to \$108,100 (2022).
- Persons listed as disabled follow a trend higher than the State of Virginia as shown for those less than 65 (24.6% vs. 11.8%)

### **Medical Conditions**

- Premature deaths (yrs. lost before age 75 per 100k) decreased from 10,984 in 2018 to 9,200 in 2021 but trended upward in 2023 to 10,000. This trend is higher than the averages for Virginia and National levels.
- Adult obesity has increased from 28% to 35%, slightly higher than the state average of 32%.
- Excessive drinking remains comparable to state and national levels.
- Teen birth rates have decreased from 49 per 1000 females ages 15-19 in 2018 to 26 per 1,000 females ages 15-19 in 2023, though still higher than the state average of 15 per 1000 females ages 15-19.
- Healthcare is limited both geographically and economically in Scott County. Uninsured persons decreased five percent, from 14.1% to 9% comparable to the rest of the Commonwealth. Primary care physician ratios (3,090:1) are approaching 2.5 times the ratio for the State (1310:1), however this statistic should be evaluated with discretion due to patient access to physicians in the Kingsport, Bristol, and Johnson City, Tennessee area.
- Drug overdose deaths decreased dramatically from 23.7 per 100,000 in 2018 to 4.6 per 100,000 in 2022 compared to the state average of 29 per 100,000.

### **Education**

- 77.33% of children receive free/reduced lunches compared to Virginia's rate of 55.11%
- Population with a high school diploma or higher is 81.4% compared to Virginia's 91.38%, however bachelor degrees or above show higher levels of separation from 13.32% to 41.81%.

### **Agricultural Data**

- Total farms have decreased 18% to 1,138 while acreage in farm land (125,354) decreased 18%.
- An increase in farmer age from 57 to 58.3 was observed.
- Cattle numbers slipped slightly to 24,296 head, goat numbers almost halved (2,201 to 1,164), sheep numbers have decreased since the loss of Food City direct sales (4,417 to 2,677), and laying hens increased from 1,952 to 2,790.
- Corn crops have increased for both silage and grain corn, while tobacco acreage dramatically decreased by 300% following the tobacco quota "buyout" of 2004. Forage acreage remains steady. Vegetable acreage remains consistent.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

Based on the community surveys conducted during 2023, key individuals were identified to send electronic surveys along with public distribution on the county website, tourism email list, and VCE-Scott County Facebook page. Individuals completing these surveys ranked the published questions on a Likert scale with labels of No Effort, Low Effort, Moderate Effort, High Effort, and Very High Effort. Numeric values from 1-5 were assigned to the rankings and mean values assigned to responses. Representatives from county leadership, agriculture, youth and education, and health care were some of the facets of the county that responded. Issues were then grouped based on the mean score. The highest scoring issues were placed by importance and the ability of Virginia Cooperative Extension to address. Surveys completed, also found 100% of respondents had heard of Virginia Tech, 18% Virginia State University, and 82% Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE). Eighty-two percent had participated in extension educational programs or had received information from VCE. The demographics were evenly split with 45 % female and 55 % male respondents. All respondents were residents of the county for 6 years or more, predominantly spoke English, ranging from the age of 35-84 years, all being white and of non-Latino descent.

## **Community Issues**

Top ranking priorities identified were divided into the three service areas provided by VCE.

### **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

- Protecting water quality

- Protecting freshwater resources (lakes, rivers, springs, wetlands)

### **4-H Youth Development**

- Promoting scientific literacy among youth

- Teaching healthy relationship skills to teens

### **Family and Consumer Sciences**

- Helping communities improve their quality of life

- Helping Virginians become more energy efficient in their homes, farms, and businesses

## **Future Programming to Address Community Issues**

Water resources ranked highest among the agriculture and natural resources community issues. Specifically, preserving and protecting freshwater sources. Emphasis will be placed on promoting programs available through the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Soil and Water Conservation Office, and by promoting methods to reduce erosion and overuse of fertilizers and pesticides that might lead to pollution. Home well water testing will also be offered to determine a baseline level of drinking water quality for future programming. Additionally, by promoting agricultural, natural resources, and environmental literacy in the schools, emphasis on the biodiversity of local rivers and conservation efforts will be addressed.

4-H Youth Development is currently addressing scientific literacy through STEM based programming within the schools and after school activities. These programs will continue to be offered in an effort to increase scientific literacy. Partnering with FCS can improve relationship skills, and to be successful in the future, relationships must be developed to address the changing economic and cultural future of the county through leadership development. Emphasis could be placed in areas of leadership skills through programs already offered (4- H, FFA, FCCLA, etc). For adults, similar programs such as the Horizons Leadership class can assist in developing these skills. Additional programs or activities to keep school

age children involved and busy in the community may assist in their desire to be involved with community events and activities in the future.

In an effort to improve the quality of life, programming emphasizing chronic diseases will be given. Specifically, obesity, heart disease, COPD, and diabetes remain among the highest chronic illnesses in the county. Educational programming to assist in managing these diseases through diet, lifestyle choices, and activity would be beneficial. To address energy efficiency, programming with the ANR agent on home energy efficiency, alternative power sources, and resources for power outages will be utilized.

## References

United States Census Bureau., <https://www.census.gov/data>

Virginia Department of Health., <https://apps.vdh.virginia.gov/HealthStats/stats.htm>

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture. Complete data available at [www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus).

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