

Taking the Pulse of our Community: 2023 *On The Table*, Middle Georgia Region, overall results.

Community Outlook:

82% of participants feel hopeful about the future of our community (up 2% from 2020), with **76%** of respondents feeling their community is the “perfect place” for people like them (no change from 2020). **64%** report that community residents have shared goals and priorities, and **60%** believe that their community provides opportunities for everyone (a significant increase from 47% in 2020).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be resolving, with dramatic increases in overall assessments of quality of life. Nearly **31%** of respondents report that overall quality of life is better than one year ago (up from 20% in 2020), while just **22%** (down from 41% in 2020) reported a downturn on this dimension.

Top areas that have gotten *better* compared with the previous year:

Public parks, trails and green spaces (**46%** reported gotten better, same ranking as 2020)

Cleanliness and Blight (**41%**, newly ranked in this category!)

Private sector leadership (e.g. business and nonprofit leadership, **36%**)

Job availability (**37%**)

Variety of arts and cultural offerings (**37%**)

These represent many of the classic benefits of community life – shared recreation spaces clean and attractive living environments, and opportunities for creative enjoyment. A strong business and nonprofit community is also recognized.

Top areas that have gotten *worse* compared with the previous year:

Crime and public safety (**57%**, 53% said so in 2020)

Poverty (**51%**, 58% reported gotten worse in 2020)

Availability of Affordable Housing (50%, first time ranking in this category)

Physical health of residents (35%, 53% said so in 2020)

Healthcare accessibility (28%)

Community resources for homelessness, hunger and/or abuse (25%)

Notable improvements from 2020:

Job availability (23%, down from 46% in 2020)

Race relations (20%, down from 42% in 2020)

Crime and public safety is a big concern, as are issues surrounding poverty and the availability of affordable housing. Physical health and access to healthcare are also highlighted as top community concerns. Notable improvements are observed in the perception of race relations and job availability since 2020.

Priority issue areas:

Priority issues were identified by assigning a weighted score for each respondent's most highly-ranked issues. There were **21** issue areas to select from among.

#1 Crime, violence, and public safety (**37%** ranked this issue 1st, 2nd or 3rd most important; **#2 ranked priority in 2020**)

#2 Housing issues (e.g. affordable housing, reducing homelessness) (**28%**; **ranked #4 issue in 2020**)

#3 Mental health/illness (**26%**; **new to the list of top priorities**)

#4 Poverty, economic security, and upward economic mobility (**25%**, **this was the #1 ranked priority in 2020**)

#5 Good-paying jobs and economic development (**19%**; **#3 ranked priority in 2020**)

(#6, not far behind #5 is reducing hunger and food insecurity coming in at **17%** - same ranking as 2020)

Race relations, racism, and racial discrimination has fallen out of the Top 5 priorities (**was ranked #5 in 2020**)

Least priority issues/areas (bottom 3):

More and better parks and recreational areas

More opportunities to participate in arts and culture

Services for the elderly and aging population

Path to change:

Participants were asked to rank the relative effectiveness of 17 different strategies to enact change in our community. The top five strategies identified were to 1. Increase access to mental health resources, 2. Offer more workforce training and financial education for unemployed and low-income citizens, 3. Increase access to affordable healthcare, 4. Increase access to healthy food, and 5. Increase access to youth programming.

About the participants:

Participants (n=664, double the number from Fall 2020 OTT) for the On The Table survey were: 70% female, 49% Black or African-American, 46% White, 3% of Hispanic heritage, 54% under the age of 50, 68% do not currently have children at home, 64% have lived in their community for 11 or more years, 24% have a high school education or less, 22% have an undergraduate degree, and 38% hold graduate degrees. Participants hailed from dozens of zip codes, with the highest participation rates (in rank order) found in North Macon-Bibb (22% of survey respondents), Downtown Macon (18%), South Macon-Bibb (15%), East Macon (11%), Houston County (11%), and Baldwin County (8%).

In terms of engagement, more than 74% of respondents indicated they were either very or somewhat involved in community and neighborhood activities (down from 80% in 2020).

Community Comparisons

| Community Outlook | <u>Baldwin Co.</u> | <u>Houston Co.</u> | <u>Macon-Bibb Co.</u> | <u>Downtown Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>North Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>South Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>East Macon-Bibb</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Feel Hopeful | 70% | 88% | 83% | 82% | 89% | 76% | 82% |
| Perfect Place | 57% | 83% | 77% | 77% | 83% | 70% | 76% |
| Shared Goals | 68% | 67% | 63% | 66% | 65% | 61% | 56% |
| Opportunities for All | 57% | 57% | 59% | 60% | 65% | 52% | 58% |
| Quality of Life Better vs. 1 yr | 30% | 32% | 32% | 37% | 28% | 34% | 32% |

| Better vs. 1 yr: Top 3 | <u>Baldwin Co.</u> | <u>Houston Co.</u> | <u>Macon-Bibb Co.</u> | <u>Downtown Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>North Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>South Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>East Macon-Bibb</u> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Cleanliness/ Blight | Private/nonprofit Leadership | Public Parks | Public Parks | Public Parks | Cleanliness / Blight | Cleanliness/ Blight |
| | Homelessness/ Hunger/Abuse | Job availability | Cleanliness/ Blight | Cleanliness/ Blight | Cleanliness/ Blight | Public Parks | Public Parks |
| | K-12 Education; Job Availability | Public Parks | Arts & Culture | Government Leadership | Arts & Culture | Arts & Culture | Job Availability |

| Worse vs. 1 yr: Bottom 3 | <u>Baldwin Co.</u> | <u>Houston Co.</u> | <u>Macon-Bibb Co.</u> | <u>Downtown Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>North Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>South Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>East Macon-Bibb</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Poverty | Affordable Housing | Crime | Crime | Crime | Crime | Crime |
| | Crime | Poverty | Poverty | Affordable Housing | Affordable Housing | Affordable Housing | Poverty |

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|--|--------|-------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| | Blight | Crime | Affordable Housing | Poverty | Poverty | Poverty | Affordable Housing |
|--|--------|-------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|

| Top 3 Priorities | <u>Baldwin Co.</u> | <u>Houston Co.</u> | <u>Macon-Bibb Co.</u> | <u>Downtown Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>North Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>South Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>East Macon-Bibb</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Crime | Mental Health | Crime | Crime | Crime | Crime | Crime |
| | Poverty | Crime | Housing | Housing | Poverty | Housing | Housing |
| | Affordable Healthcare | Housing | Mental Health | Poverty | Mental Health | Mental Health | Mental Health |

| Bottom 3 Priorities | <u>Baldwin Co.</u> | <u>Houston Co.</u> | <u>Macon-Bibb Co.</u> | <u>Downtown Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>North Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>South Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>East Macon-Bibb</u> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Drug and Alcohol Addiction | Elderly/Aging Services | Arts & Culture | Non-profit Resources | Parks | Parks | Public Transportation |
| | Arts & Culture | Arts & Culture | Parks | Public Transportation | Elderly/Aging Services | Arts & Culture | Blight |
| | Elderly/Aging Services | Entrepreneur Resources | Elderly/Aging Services | Arts & Culture | Entrepreneur Resources | Entrepreneur Resources | Arts & Culture |

| Plan of Action: Top 3 | <u>Baldwin Co.</u> | <u>Houston Co.</u> | <u>Macon-Bibb Co.</u> | <u>Downtown Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>North Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>South Macon-Bibb</u> | <u>East Macon-Bibb</u> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Workforce Training | Mental Health Resources | Mental Health Resources | Mental Health Resources | Mental Health Resources | Workforce Training | Workforce Training |
| | Mental Health Resources | Healthy Food Access | Workforce Training | Workforce Training | Affordable Healthcare | Mental Health | Healthy Food Access |
| | Improve Race Relations | Workforce Training | Affordable Healthcare | Race Relations | More Law Enforcement | Race Relations | Mental Health Resources |

