

# Giles County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Figure 1: Angel's Rest in overlooking the town of Pearisburg.

# Introduction

Giles County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis throughout 2023. The situation analysis process was led by the Giles County Extension faculty, staff, and Extension Leadership Council. The purpose of this situation analysis is to identify important issues to residents of Giles County. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, the Extension Leadership Council met to discuss situation analysis and distribution of the surveys. To collect responses, we created an online survey and a paper version. The paper copies were available in our office and in local government offices. Paper copies were also distributed in the February trash bill, Pearisburg Festival Around Town, and in donation letters for 4-H camp. The online version was distributed via Facebook and the local paper, the Virginian Leader. We began accepting responses on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and stopped accepting responses on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023. We have used our survey results, previous situation analysis (2018), unit profile, Census data, and Virginia Department of Health data, and the 2017 Census of Agriculture to inform our situation analysis report.

## Unit Profile

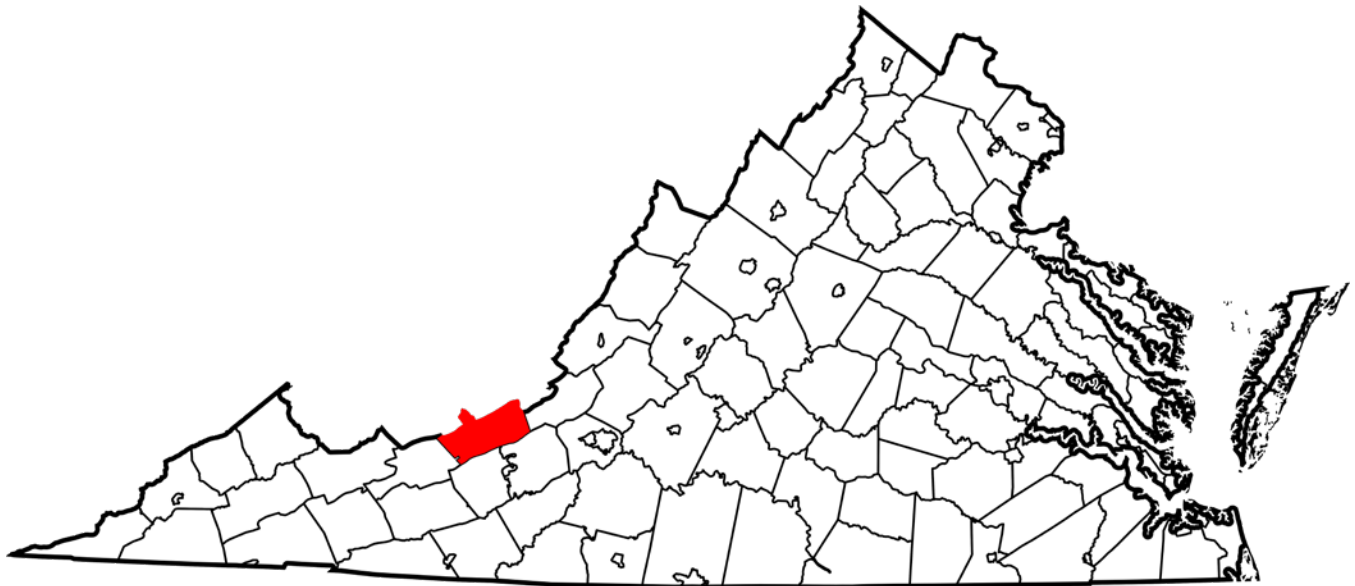


Figure 2: Giles County highlighted on the map of Virginia counties.

Giles County is located in the southwestern part of Virginia, approximately 25 miles from Blacksburg and approximately 60 miles from Roanoke (Figure 2).

Giles County is home to an estimated 16,453 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. According to Census Reporter, 20% of residents are 18 and under, 58% are between the ages of 18 and 64, and 21% are 65 and older, compared to Virginia's 22% of residents are 18 and older, 63% are between the ages of 18 and 64, and 16% are 65 and older. The median age of Giles County residents is 45.1, which is about 20% higher than Virginia's median age of 38.5.

The racial composition of Giles County is 94% white, 2% black, 2% being of two or more races, and 2% Hispanic, compared to Virginia's percentages of 61% of residents being white, 19% black, 4% being of two or more races, and 10% Hispanic, according to Census Reporter.

18.5% of the Giles County population age 25 and older that have completed a bachelor's degree or higher is 18.5%, compared to Virginia's 40.3%. 33% of the Giles County population age 25 and older has completed some college or an Associate's degree, compared to Virginia's 27%, according to Census Reporter. 89.9% of the Giles County population age 25 and older has graduated high school or pursued higher education, compared to Virginia's 90.8%.

The median household income in Giles County is \$57,911, compared to Virginia's median household income of \$87,249, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The percentage of the population from Giles County living below poverty level is 11.8%, compared to Virginia's population living below poverty level being 10.6%.

The unemployment rate in Giles County has decreased from 4.3% in January of 2018 to 2.2% in 2022, compared to Virginia's 2.7% unemployment rate in 2022, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. According to the Giles County Comprehensive Plan (2018), the top three industries in Giles County in terms of employment are manufacturing with 876 employees, retail trade with 712 employees, and health care and social assistance with 625 employees.

The percent of uninsured people between the ages 18 and 64 in Giles County has decreased from 11% in 2016 to 9.98% in 2021, compared to Virginia's 9.32% in 2021, according to the Virginia Department of Health.

56.12% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches in Giles County for the 2022-2023 school year, compared to Virginia's overall 55.11%, according to the Virginia Department of Health.

Adult obesity in Giles County has increased from 30% in 2018 to 35.70% in 2021, remaining above the Virginia average of 34.45% and national average of 33%, according to the Virginia Department of Health. According to U.S. News in 2022, 28.4% of Giles County residents were physically inactive, compared to 26.3% in Virginia being physically inactive.

The teen pregnancy rate in Giles County was 21 pregnancies per 1,000 females age 15 through 19 in 2021, compared to the teen pregnancy rate in Virginia being 17 pregnancies per 1,000 females, according to the Virginia Department of Health.

Giles County had a rate of 24.6 deaths per 100,000 population for drug overdose deaths, compared to a rate of 19.3 deaths per 100,000 population in Virginia, according to the Virginia Department of Health. Giles County also had a rate of 180.04 hospitalizations for drug overdose per 100,000 population, compared to 89.92 hospitalizations per 100,000 population in Virginia.

The leading causes of death in Giles County are diseases of heart with 348.86 deaths per 100,000 population and malignant neoplasms with 305.44 per 100,000 population, compared to Virginia's averages for diseases of the heart being 180.81 deaths per 100,000 population and malignant neoplasms being 179.13 deaths per 100,000 population, according to the Virginia Department of Health.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Giles County has had a farm increase of 3% since 2012, making the current number of farms 389. The amount of land used for agriculture has stayed nearly the same at 65,387 acres; however, the average size of farms has decreased by 3%. 75% of farms have internet access, and 99% of farms are family farms. Livestock, poultry, and products make up 86% of the market sales for Giles County. The market value of products sold has increased 20% since 2012.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

We received 156 responses to our situation analysis survey. Of the respondents that reported demographics, 70.5% of respondents were at least moderately familiar with Virginia Cooperative Extension; 59% of respondents were female; 69% of respondents have 2-year degree or higher; 69% of respondents were 60 years of age or older; 95% of respondents identified themselves as white; and 56% of respondents have a household income of less than \$80,000.

## **Community Issues**

We identified four top program areas in Giles County and asked respondents to rank them based on importance. These program areas are youth programs, community health, community development, and agriculture. The results are as follows (Figure 3).

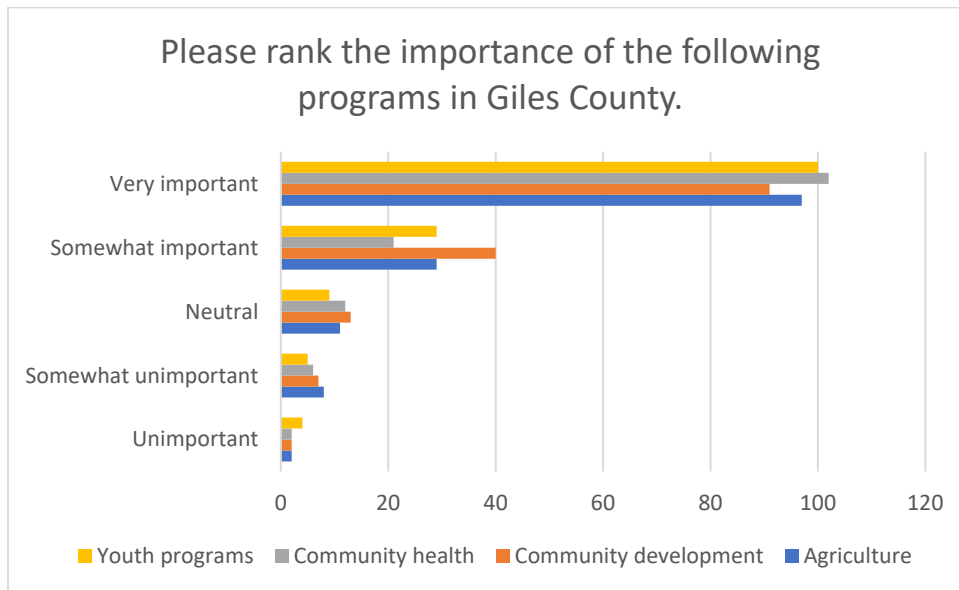


Figure 3: Program importance responses from our situation analysis survey.

Within these program areas, we asked respondents to identify specific issues that they feel are important. The top issues we plan to address are as follows:

- Agriculture literacy and education
- Livestock production
- Pest management
- Family activities
- Nutrition
- Youth educational opportunities

## Future Programming to Address Community Issues

**Agriculture Literacy and Education:** The ANR and 4-H agents will participate in Ag Literacy Week and spend time educating elementary school students in Giles County about the agriculture industry. The ANR and 4-H Agents will also host day camps for youth to learn about various agricultural topics. The ANR Agent will assist with career days at elementary schools, and programming days in the schools.

**Livestock Production:** The ANR Agent will help administer the Virginia Quality Assured (VQA) program in conjunction with the other Planning District 4 counties (Pulaski, Montgomery, and Floyd). VQA promotes uniformly treated, high-quality beef to maximize profits for producers. The ANR agent will also host and promote herd health education events focused on relevant issues in livestock. The ANR Agent will also hold farm management meetings with various professionals in the industry who will speak on relevant issues in livestock. The ANR Agent will also conduct farm visits and assist producers with any farm needs.

**Pest Management:** The ANR Agent and Soil Testing Laboratory will administer soil testing to reduce pests in soil. The ANR agent will also administer the Multiflora Rose Cost-Share Program to help homeowners manage multiflora rose at a reduced cost. The ANR Agent will also administer private pesticide applicator certification and recertification. The ANR Agent and Insect Identification Laboratory will also assist homeowners with insect identification and diagnosis.

**Family Activities:** The FCS Agent, ANR Agent, and SNAP-ED/FNEP Program Assistant will conduct the Family Meal Time program, where families pick up complete meal kits and cook healthy meals together. Agents

will also host low-income housing cooking classes. Agents will participate in family reading night and encourage literacy in their program areas. Agents will also participate in the Giles County Bike Rodeo program.

**Nutrition:** The FCS Agent and SNAP-ED/EFNP Program Assistant will conduct food demonstrations in schools and teach elementary through high school-aged children about nutrition, wellness, and healthy eating habits. FCS also offers opportunities for individuals to learn about effective and nutritional shopping at the grocery store, how to make healthy choices at restaurants, and how to incorporate more physical activity into daily routines.

**Youth Education Opportunities:** The 4-H Agent will administer Junior Summer Camp. This is an opportunity for youth to learn new topics through classes taken at camp and develop life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and communication. The Agents will also help administer the Summer Garden Program at the Giles Community Garden. This program will teach youth about gardening, healthy eating, personal hygiene, and physical activity. The Agents will also help administer summer educational library programs at the Pembroke Public Library. FCS provides educational programs that teach culinary skills, economics, and finances.

## Appendix

Giles County Board of Supervisors, Giles County Planning Commission, Giles County Staff, Giles County Constitutional Officers, and New River Valley Regional Commission Staff. "Giles County Comprehensive Plan 2018," 2018.

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