



Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Situation Analysis Report



Lee County Extension Office

2018

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Introduction

Lee County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the summer and early fall of 2018. Using the 2013 Situation Analysis as a starting point, the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) met three times to discuss past issues and identify present ones. A community survey was created using QUALTRICS, online survey tool. Emails containing the survey link were distributed by all unit staff to their work/personal contacts, including ELC members, with a request that the survey be completed before December 31, 2018. A public service announcement was also run in the Powell Valley News, giving the reason for the situation analysis and the link for the survey. In addition, unit staff posted the public service announcement to their work Facebook. Hard copies of the survey were made available at the Extension Office. Staff and ELC Members also had surveys available at events such as Farm & Family Day. Fifty-nine surveys were submitted.

Lee County Profile

Lee County is a rural county located in extreme Southwest Virginia. It borders Bell and Harlan Counties in Kentucky, Hancock and Claiborne Counties in Tennessee and Wise and Scott Counties in Virginia. The county contains 438 square miles and has an abundance of natural resources that include timber, coal, limestone, crude oil, and natural gas. Lee County is located 396 miles from Richmond, the state capitol. There are three incorporated towns located within the county: Jonesville (the county seat), Pennington Gap, and St. Charles.

Basic Demographics

The 2010 Census data indicated a total population of 25,587 for Lee County. According to the Virginia Employment Commission Community Profile, Lee County's population projections forecast a decline of approximately 2.05% in total population by 2020. The forecast of population for 2040 is a decline of approximately 4.22%. Lee County's 2010 Census showed that 52.18% of the population was male and 47.82% female. The forecast for the future shows a slight change with female percentage increasing to 48.86% by 2040 and male percentage decreasing to 51.14%.

Youth of 19 years old and younger make up 22.55% of Lee County's population according to the 2010 Census. The main working class population of ages 20-55 years old makes up 47.56% of the population. Early retirement ages of 55-74 makes up about 23.45% and 75 years old and older make up about 6.44% of the population. The 2040 population forecast shows interesting changes with youth of 19 years old and younger making up only 19.61% of the population. The main working class population of ages 20-55 years old will change to 40.68% according to the forecast. The early retirement ages of 55-74 years old will change to 28.99% and the 75 years old and older will increase to 10.72% of the population.

According to the 2010 Census, Lee County was 94.16% white. The minority races of Lee County included 3.7% African American, 0.04% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.22%

Asian, 0.03% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.57% other, and 0.92% multiple races. The Virginia Employment Commission Community Profile forecasted that by 2040 Lee County's population would decrease to 89.05% for white and increase to 4.83% for African American. Other minorities would also increase with 0.63% Asian and 5.49% other.

Economics & Employment

Lee County was formerly known for coal, cattle, and tobacco and with economic downturns in the coal and tobacco industry the county has struggled. According to the Virginia Employment Commission, the largest employers in Lee County include the Lee County School Board in first place, U.S. Department of Justice as second, third as Wal-Mart, fourth as Glass Machinery and Excavation, and fifth Lee Nursing & Rehabilitation. Lee County is home to the federal prison known as UPS Lee that appears second on this list. Early in 2018, England Furniture decided to open a sewing factory in Lee County. 70.53% of those living and working in Lee County are commuting outside of Lee County for work. Only 29.47% live in Lee County and actually work in Lee County. The unemployment rate for Lee County, as of February, 2018, was 5%, compared to 3.3% in Virginia, and 4.4% for the United States. In 2016, Lee County had a median household income of \$31,577, per capita income of \$17,820, and a poverty rate of 29.9%. Overall, Lee County is a county that struggles economically.

Education

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 75.4% of the population graduated from high school or higher and 11.6% obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. 80% of Lee County Schools are fully accredited with 20% having partial accreditation from the Virginia Department of Education. For the 2017 school year, Lee County Schools had a dropout rate of 17.9%. Due to the higher than average number of students and families who qualify for free and reduced lunches, coming in at 91.63% for 2017-18 school year, Lee County Schools received grant funding through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year for free lunch for all students in the school system, due to income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced lunch. Project 365 has also been taking place in this county as a way to provide students with three meals a day at school, food for weekends and school breaks, resources for those in need during the summer break, and nutrition education programs. All schools were involved in Lee County during the 2017-18 school year, however, there are certain treatment schools within the county that will also be receiving the same program during the 2018-19 school year. Lee County Public School facilities are also struggling. Several schools are in need of new roofing and many have issues well beyond, including improperly functioning coal furnaces, technological issues, and air conditioning malfunctions. In February of 2018, the Lee County School Board Office's roof collapsed due to a snow storm leading to the relocation of the entire school board to an older section of the Lee County Career & Technical Center.

Health & Wellness

According to the “County Health Rankings & Roadmaps for 2017” by the Department of Health, 20% of Lee County’s residents have poor to fair quality of health. 29% of the population are considered obese and 31% are physically inactive. 20% of the population are smokers and 84% have the potential for diabetes. According to a health survey completed by the Department of Health, Lee County residents see substance abuse, cancer, and chronic disease as the most important health problems in the community. Increased issues with substance abuse have occurred in the community with many deaths and related crimes. Overall, Lee County ranks 117 out of 133 in the state for overall health by the Department of Health.

Agriculture

Lee County has been known for coal, tobacco, and cattle for almost hundred years. The county is now faced with a declining coal industry and less demand for burley tobacco. Lee County has always been heavy in agriculture use since settlement; however, with the availability of coal industry jobs, the majority of farms have been maintained for tradition or additional income. With the downturn in the coal industry, there is renewed interest in farming. With no infrastructure or knowledge of other cash crops, farmers are left primarily with cattle for the main source of income. Many farmers are afraid to invest in new commodities due to lack of knowledge.

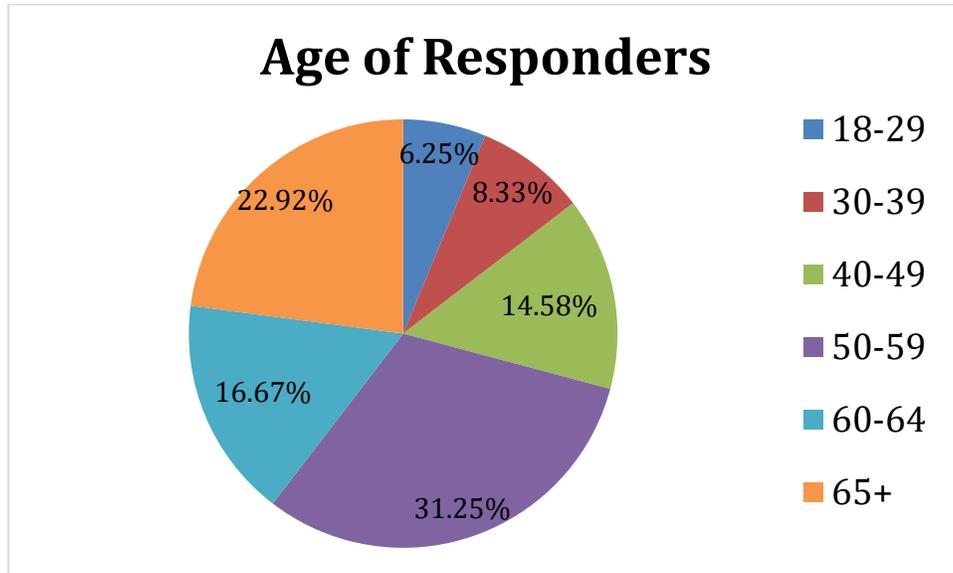
Lee County does have a history of production systems other than tobacco and cattle. In 1919, the county produced 53 acres of strawberries and only 18 acres of burley tobacco. It was not until the New Deal during the Great Depression that tobacco took a stronghold in Lee County with 2,022 acres of burley tobacco being produced in 1939. In the same year, Lee County produced 70 acres of strawberries that were marketed in Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. In 1919, Lee County had 92,963 apple trees, 40,533 peach trees, 654 acres of potatoes, 131 acres of sweet potatoes, and 148 acres in other vegetables. Lee County grew only 315 acres of burley tobacco and 58 acres of vegetables in 2012, showing a decrease of 84% in tobacco production from 1939. Lee County has an estimated 2,000 acres of prime farmland once used for tobacco and vegetable production, which is not being utilized to its highest potential.

According to the 2012 Agriculture Census, Lee County’s agriculture receipts were \$18,242,000. Livestock sales dominate Lee County’s production, with 76% of the total cash receipts of crops producing only 24%. The average farm size in Lee County was 116 acres and there were 1,012 farms, which is a decrease of 3% since the 2007 Agriculture Census. The county had an inventory of 28,378 cattle and calves, making it the 20th in the state for production. Lee County also had 2,221 head of sheep in the 2012 Census, giving a ranking of 10th in the state. Though considerably down from before tobacco production, it still makes up 315 acres, meaning Lee County is 10th in the state for tobacco production. Overall, Lee County has a strong agricultural industry that could be enhanced in the future.

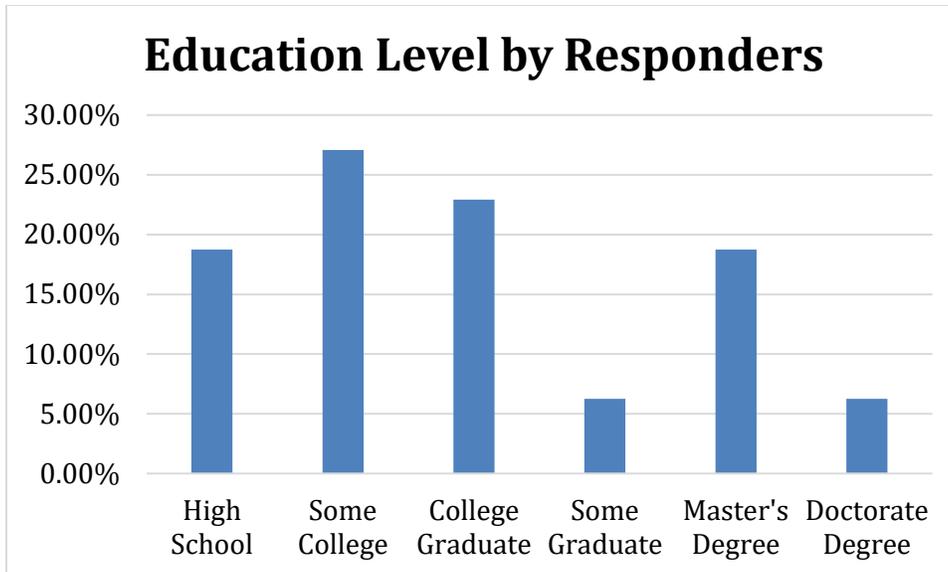
Survey Results

Survey Demographics

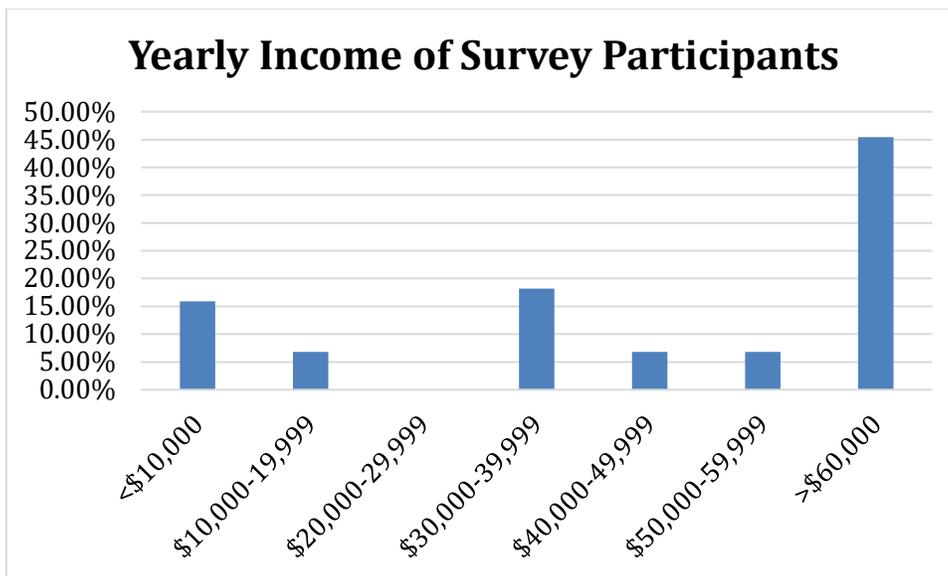
Lee County had fifty-nine surveys returned. The responders were 52.08% male, 45.83% female, and 2.09% preferred not to disclose. Those who responded to the survey 93.75% were white, 4.17% selected other, and 2.08% were Native American. Lee County's residents predominately are white and that reflects in the surveys returned. Additional demographic information is exhibited in the below charts with comments.



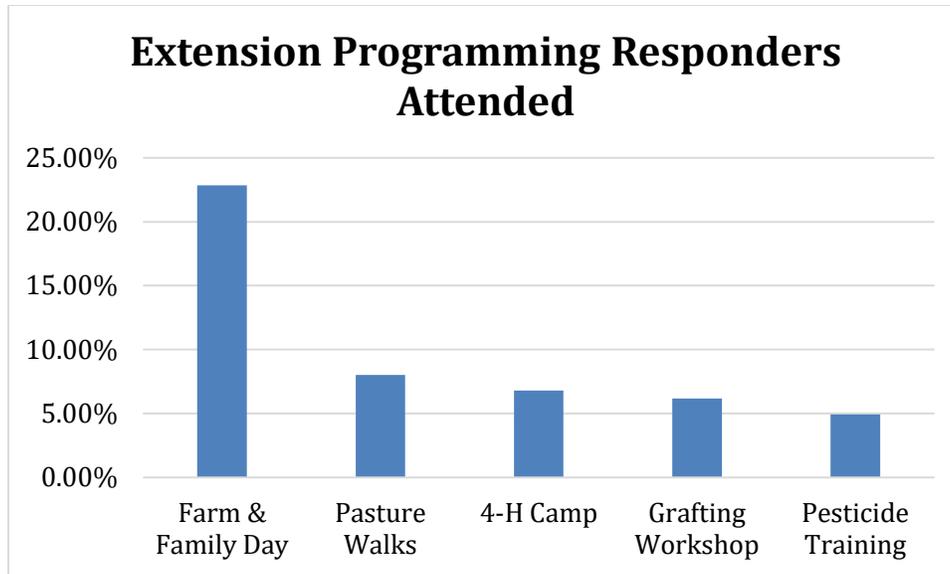
The survey responders were predominantly 50 years old and older. This may be a function of having more time to focus on their community due to retirement or slowing down with children being older.



A high percent of the responders had obtained college degrees or had some college. This is slightly unproportioned to the demographics of Lee County, with only around eleven percent of the population obtaining a college degree.



Responders predominately had an annual income of \$60,000 or more. This may be a reflection that over half of the survey participants were fifty years old or older.



The survey listed programs that the Lee County Extension Office had offered in the last five years and ask for those taking the survey to indicate if they had attended a program. The top programs attended are reflected in the above chart.

Priority Issues Identified

The responders were presented with a long list of issues and asked if the issue was unimportant, somewhat important, very important, or if they had no opinion on the issue. From this, five issues were identified as priorities and another five tied for sixth. Those tying for sixth are listed below as issues of concern.

Priority Issue 1: Employment Options

Employment in Lee County has become a major issue and the survey results show this with 87.76% selecting employment options as a very important issue. Lee County's residents predominately travel outside the county for employment. Many higher paying jobs with the mining industry have disappeared and many have found jobs that do not pay as well. Higher level science-based jobs have been reduced due to loss of the hospital in the county and the mining industry.

Priority Issue 2: Water Quality/Quantity

Water quality and quantity was identified as the second priority issue with 86.54% responding that it was a very important issue. LENOWISCO Planning District and the localities have been working to expand public water throughout the county. However, many Lee County residents are not on public water and use wells or springs. In addition, there are areas in Lee County that wells are very deep and do not have a good flow of water. Lee County Extension has held two water testing clinics and plans to continue this programming in the future.

Priority Issue 3: Agriculture Production/Profitability

Agriculture is a major economic contributor in Lee County and 84.62% said that agriculture production and profitability is a very important issue. Agriculture's cash receipts were over eighteen million dollars for the 2012 Census. Agriculture had a major price peak in 2014, but recently has suffered from depressed markets. Lee County Extension Office offers extensive programming for agriculture producers.

Priority Issue 4: Youth Activities

As youth is our future, 82.69% said that youth activities were very important. Youth development can be an issue for rural counties with limited opportunities. 4-H is key to offering activities to foster opportunities and growth for youth. Lee County Extension offers a 4-H program that includes camping, in-school enrichment, agricultural interest clubs, and leadership opportunities.

Priority Issue 5: Aging Population/ Long Term Care

Resources for older populations and long term care is a major issue for Lee County with 80.77% stating it was a very important issue. With the increase of medical costs and the closing of the hospital in Lee County, the aging population and their care givers are dealing with a lot of stress and financial burdens. Lee County's Family and Consumer Science position has been open for two years, but the county would benefit from programming focused on the aging population.

Issues of Concern

All of the following had 80.39% of the participants' state that they were very important issues:

- Agriculture Sustainability/Preservation
- Animal/Livestock Production
- Career Awareness/Development
- Parenting
- Small Business/Entrepreneurism