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## Georgetown County Workforce Survey & Assessment

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# **Georgetown County Workforce Survey & Assessment**

Dylan Campbell

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## **Introduction**

The entire workforce in recent years has been changing at drastic rates mostly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Georgetown County has an older population and a workforce that has more jobs to offer than people to fill them. This report and assessment will aim at conducting a survey distributed to businesses in the Georgetown County area. Using that survey data to create an accurate assessment of the county's workforce post Covid-19. Through my internship at the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, I can see that if a workforce assessment is provided to the county, then the county will be better equipped to further Sustainable Development Goals 8, 9, and 11. It fulfills Goal 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth) by showing trends in what the workforce job field is looking for and by promoting a healthy economy through creating workforce opportunities. It fulfills Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) by allowing key industries and infrastructure bodies to view the county's current state. It fulfills Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by assessing the workforce to see how the community is employed and how stable the city/community is. The county will benefit from seeing these trends as they will allow the county to see where the pandemic has altered the workforce the most. The pandemic caused layoffs and forced businesses to close which also caused the workforce to change. The survey itself asks questions to see how they recruit, if they been hiring in the past 12 months, what industry do they work in.

## **Literature Review**

In the literature, there are a variety of resources that will help support this thesis in this report. The resources can help establish what other counties have done with their workforce issues and how a workforce report can be beneficial to the county. The first and most important

source used for this study is the *State of the Workforce 2020 Report* (Billingsworks.org, 2021). Billingsworks in Yellowstone County, Montana created this report and it included two main sections. The first section was primarily demographics that allows for the reader to understand the county and its demographic makeup. The second section included the survey that was completed by the Yellowstone County Chamber of Commerce, and it showed analysis of the results. That report is important because it is what my survey and assessment are modeled after. This report gave Yellowstone County the ability to provide its businesses with a tool that could help them identify what the workforce looks like. This is important because it is what motivated me to create a similar report to provide the county with demographics and trends like Billingsworks. The next paragraphs will focus on literature that can help support this claim that a workforce assessment will benefit the county.

There are baseline statistics that can be important going forward in this study. One source to utilize for this study is the Georgetown County website that has a good amount of open-source data relating to the county that provides factual evidence to support this study (Georgetowncountysc.com 2022). There is another Georgetown County website called Seegeorgetown.com which has workforce specific data, “Georgetown County is committed to being WorkReady ACT Work Ready Communities (WRC) empowers states, regions and counties with data, process and tools that drive economic growth. Participants are leveraging the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC™) to measure and close the skills gap — and building common frameworks that link, align and match their workforce development efforts” (Seegeorgetown.com, 2022). This pinpoints data related to SDG 8 and 9 focused on economic opportunities and infrastructure. Georgetown County and the Chamber of Commerce are

dedicated to providing resources for a strong workforce. The county does its best to support the economy and provide decent work for all.

One of the first main topics to focus on in the literature is the problem of an ageing population and how it affects the county. In a study done by four researchers about ageing populations and their connections to governmental affairs states the following:

The topic of ageing always attracts more interest, not only among governments, institutions and economists, but also among researchers and practitioners focused on production systems. The reason is that, together with the decrease in birth rates and the increase in people's longevity, the average retirement age in many Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries is becoming higher ... A similar trend is observed in the USA, where in 2016, people over 65 years old comprised 18.6% of the adult working population (over 16 years), and this percentage is projected to grow by an average of 0.6% per year until 2026 (Calzavara, et. Al., 2019).

This trend observed in this study is what is seen in Georgetown County. It is important for a survey and assessment in Georgetown County to enumerate what the ageing population in the county looks like because that affects the workforce. An ageing population makes hiring more difficult and has more individuals leaving the workforce at a faster rate, which is important to the businesses in the county. In Georgetown County the median age is 50.1 years old which is much higher than the national rate which is 37.9 years old. And of the population of approximately 62,000 in the county, about 37% of them are 60 years old or over. This happens in Georgetown County because it is comprised of a large retirement-based population with a youth population

that seeks to move out once older. The coastal and calm environment makes it an ideal place to retire too.

The next set of sources is focused on the benefits of providing workforce development and how studies have shown especially in post pandemic environments to be beneficial to provide accurate information within the county. “For those approaching these expansive workforce management reporting systems, what is important to remember is to know exactly what question they’re trying to answer or what problem they’re trying to solve” (Burjek, 2020). This is an informative source relating to the creation of these assessments and how focusing on specific industry questions can benefit businesses in how they utilize reports such as the Georgetown County Workforce Assessment and Survey. Especially because historically Georgetown County has been an industrial based county that relies on industry centered jobs like manufacturing, timber, paper, etc. Another source related to this workforce report creation is done by Mckinsey&Company,

A wholesale reexamination of existing strategies and program administration is needed to enable individuals to pursue new opportunities and fuel the country’s economic growth. Federal and state governments are well positioned to serve as a catalyst for this effort by convening the right parties, aligning goals and incentives, and helping to scale promising efforts through the strategic distribution of funds (Cheng, et. al., 2018).

This demonstrates how Georgetown County can effectively enable a positive change in the workforce by first stating what the workforce looks like and how they can address that using a survey and assessment. The Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce places a lot of value in effectively helping the economy in any way possible and that becomes even more important after

the pandemic. This next source in this category talks about workforce resilience which is a term best defined by the authors, “A resilient workforce is a productive workforce. A resilient workforce is healthy, energetic, durable, and enthusiastic. Furthermore, borrowing from Harvard Business School’s Rosabeth Moss Kantor, resilient workers are ‘fast, friendly, flexible, and focused’.” (Humannatureatwork.com, 2022). Identifying workforce resilience can be done through assessing certain areas of the survey and the answers provided by businesses into how problems can be addressed through the demographics. The final source in this category involves a report that was conducted studying Adams County,

Adams County can be a hopeful example for other counties in a similar position. The intent and purpose of this report is to prepare Adams County’s businesses, County members, and communities for a new workforce, ensuring stability, progress, and understanding. Businesses in Adams County, in collaboration with the county, should consider activating strategies and tools that can attract multigenerational and diverse applicants to inject youth and vitality into a potentially stagnating and linear economy. Employers can review and improve their policies, benefits, and trainings while the county can promote assets and advocate for improving infrastructure the county currently lacks to attract and sustain the growth they seek (Noone, et. al., 2020).

While looking at Adams County’s numbers it shows similarities to areas of Georgetown County and can be a beneficial research model for this survey. It is encouraging to see other studies attempt workforce reports because it shows that a county is trying to improve the workforce.

The last and final set of sources has to do with post pandemic workforce research and data. It is no difficult thing to do to realize that covid-19 has altered the workforce in such a

drastic way that it may never look the same as it did before the pandemic. In the first study done by the National Bureau of Economic Research they used data to evaluate the effect of covid-19 on the economy, “We apply these new data to analyze the economic impacts of COVID-19. We find that COVID-19 induced high-income households to self-isolate and sharply reduce spending in sectors that require physical interaction. This spending shock in turn led to losses in business revenue and layoffs of low-income workers at firms that cater to high-income consumers” (Chetty, et. al., 2020). This study shows direct data that can be seen also in Georgetown County’s economy that has led to a workforce shift. Especially with Georgetown County being a coastal county that relies on tourism. Tourism based occupations saw the most damage in job turnover and layoffs as one of the most hurt industries. The literature supports the study and will be seen in the following data.

## **Empirical Data and Case Study/Observation**

### **Empirical Data**

The data is divided into five main sections that will contain trends for each section that were seen in the survey. The survey itself has five sections as well which is why it will be presented in this way in the following paragraphs. But first, in this paragraph there are a few statistics within the county that need to be stated from the last available census. The population in Georgetown County is 63,404 and of that population people 65 years and over is 28% of the population. The median age within the county is 50.1. Following that age statistic is the civilian labor force participation within the county is at 52% and is a low rate that is comparable to the state average found in the survey. Another census statistic that is important is that approximately 32% of the 25,000 jobs are based around tourism in the county. Those main tourism-based



occupations are Retail, Food Services and Real Estate/Rentals and they make up that 32% with approximately 8,000 jobs of that 25,000 (Census.gov 2021).

The first of the five sections is company information. This section asks four basic questions that aim at obtaining relevant information that help businesses be sorted into distinct categories. Those questions will bring about data that involves size of the company, what industry the company is in, and what benefits the company currently offers their employees. Trends that were seen were that most companies in the county had a general smaller size that was comprised of less than 10 employees. Industries were focused mostly on retail and food services. Benefits were spread out depending on the company's size and the sample size of the survey did not allow for a large enough trend.

The second section is asking the company about their hiring and current practices. This section is one of the longest in the survey with nine questions that both require a selection from a list of answers and yes or no responses. Data that will be useful within the section that will be empirically helpful is through the questions such as "Have you tried to fill or hire a position in the last 12 months?", "What skills do you expect new employees to have?", and "What are some of the reasons for having difficulty filling positions" etc. Trends that were seen was that most businesses had tried to hire in the past twelve months and businesses expected new employees to have basic communication skills. And the most difficulties were seen throughout the workforce that they could not fill positions because workers were not applying and working entry level jobs.

The third section is focused on workforce availability and quality. This section is short with two questions that are yes and no. The two questions will provide answers into whether companies are satisfied with the availability of skilled workers in the state of South Carolina and

whether South Carolina schools adequately prepare students for the workforce. This data is invaluable because it shows the companies faith in the state and schooling systems which is a considerable root problem in workforce issues in counties like Georgetown County. The trend among most businesses seems that they are not satisfied with the availability of skilled workers and that industry-based jobs are the ones looking for most skilled workers. It can also be seen those businesses especially in industry-based jobs do not think South Carolina schools prepare students properly in those fields.

The fourth section includes questions based on Expanding Opportunities. This section has four questions that allow the company to select and fill in any answer they choose too. The questions focus on recruiting techniques and the effectiveness of those techniques. The data here can show the effectiveness within the county to which resources provide the best possible outcomes for hiring and recruiting. Trends were found that online sites like indeed.com tended to be a popular recruiting technique and it tended to be the most successful in finding candidates.

The fifth and concluding section of the survey is about Workforce Development Programs. This section has only two questions that allow the company to choose a variety of reasons/answers. The questions provide data into whether the company has been involved in any state workforce programs and asks the reasoning behind why they either have or have not. The data here is important because it shows specific reasoning that can help the state better target companies and their needs. The trends tended to show that businesses were not aware of a lot of the programs or just thought they did not benefit their specific business.

## **Case Studies**

The first case study will be the Yellowstone County, Montana's chamber of commerce survey that was included in the *State of the Workforce Report: BillingsWorks Program*. This survey was done post-pandemic and will highlight similar trends to Georgetown County generally and is what the current Georgetown County Workforce Survey was based on question-wise. Any county that does a survey like this will receive similar covid-19 responses that are critical to businesses and companies in the counties in question. By receiving similar responses, it can help counties pinpoint root causes of the Great Resignation and life post-pandemic. The workforce has forever changed, and it requires surveys like these in many counties to differentiate the issues that face each of them (Billingsworks.org, 2021).

The second possible case study was also included within the literature review, and it focuses on Adams County which is a county that has an ageing population. I suspect that results in the empirical data will show an ageing population issue with retirements occurring and positions left to fill with no workers to fill them. It is helpful to use Adams County as a case study by looking at their attempts to liven youth engagement and diversity through creating new strategies to help with such needs (Noone, Zbaracki, & Khan, 2020).

## **Observations & Interviews**

One of the first observations I have recorded in my notes is from the Leadership Georgetown County class that is hosted by the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce. During our education day meeting we had the pleasure of touring and meeting with Horry-Georgetown Technical College, Georgetown Local Schools, and Coastal Carolina University. During most of the tours it became apparent that a lot of schools are focusing on making students more workforce and college ready. This observation is important to this study because it shows that schools recognize the state of the workforce in the county and how it is struggling to find

industry-based workers and labors. Even on the tour of the new Horry-Georgetown Technical College's Advanced Manufacturing Center the gentlemen on the tour had explained to the class that companies are coming into the center hiring students right on the spot who have not even finished their training. This dire need for manufacturing jobs is another thing that the county survey can provide data wise to these companies and schools to even further what can be done to provide companies with workforce students (Leadership Georgetown Education Day. 2022).

A second observation that goes along with the first has been taken from a speech from the governor of South Carolina, Henry McMaster, during the South Carolina Tourism Conference. Governor McMaster was advocating very strongly for the benefit of technical colleges and technical training. The importance he spoke about them is that in the first time in history that he can remember that there are more jobs open than people to fill them. This resonates not only in the state but in Georgetown County as well which can be furthered by a survey showing trends in jobs by industry and pay as many people are searching for higher paying jobs and better-quality ones as well during the Great Resignation. Companies may not realize how beneficial a full data report and assessment can provide to this issue (GovCon. 2022).

## **Analysis of SDGs**

### **Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

While working at the Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce for the past few months as an intern I have been able to observe the main targets and local goals that they focus on. Some of those targets and goals observed are aligned with the United Nation's SDGs. Goal number 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is the one of the main goals that is targeted in the county. The Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce does this through promoting local

businesses and by ensuring opportunities for people to work. This survey can benefit those local goals by providing businesses with information on workforce trends that are occurring post-pandemic. Those trends will provide the county with information that can create decent work and economic growth that is outlined in SDG 8. The targets of SDG 8 as outlined by the United Nations can also be connected to local goals within the county. The targets that seem most relevant in Georgetown County are 8.2, 8.3, and 8.9. The county and the chamber both attempt to reach every goal but those targets listed are the most apparent (UN.org 2022).

In this next paragraph the targets will be defined and connected to the local goals of Georgetown County as a coastal community. The first UN target is 8.2, “Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors” (UN.org 2022). This target is being focused on by the county through the importance placed on technical schools like Horry-Georgetown Technical College and other technical training in high schools. This importance placed on that training has provided more opportunities for people to enter the workforce with direct training. The county is attempting on many levels to bring in more workers in labor-intensive fields by working directly with the technical schools to create those opportunities. The county will continue to place value on industry-based jobs and productivity through these incentives. The survey will also provide information to those industry-based businesses and how they can be more effective at recruiting. It also informs the county on how to prepare students effectively for such positions. Target 8.3 is listed as, “Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services” (UN.org 2022). The

county and the Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce both strategize policies that are like targets outlined in 8.3. The Chamber of Commerce works with the community to bring in all types of businesses and provide them with resources to succeed no matter the size of the business. They promote growth and stabilization to these businesses that align with the county. Target 8.9 which is defined as, “By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products” (UN.org 2022). This target is addressed by the county and the Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce a lot. The Chamber of Commerce works through tourism by promoting the Hammock Coast which is the name designated to many of the coastal regions of the county. One of the main values in promoting that tourism is by doing it sustainably by encouraging growth but also balance. The county also promotes many tourism jobs because of the large tourism industry that inhabits the coastal regions. The survey can help the county focus on that local goal by giving data on tourism jobs and businesses.

### **Goal 9: Industries, Innovation, and Infrastructure**

Industries, Innovation, and Infrastructure are important factors that contribute to a healthy economy. Goal 9 and 8 have similarities in their goals and targets because of their overlap to each other. Georgetown County is a county that has a large industrial background that still exists today. An industry-based community needs innovation and infrastructure to achieve the best growth possible. That is where some of the local goals by the county align with SDG 9 and its targets. Those targets that are most relevant in Georgetown County are 9.1 and 9.2. Stating once again that the county does promote every target when possible but 9.1 and 9.2 seem most relevant in county goals.

Those two targets will be defined and connected to the county's goals through experience within the Chamber of Commerce. Target 9.1, "Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all" (UN.org 2022). The county works alongside the Chamber of Commerce to promote sustainable infrastructure to best support the economic needs of the county. Infrastructure provides the county with the ability to achieve economic growth. Without the county's focus on infrastructure then it makes creating positive workforce trends more difficult. The survey's report on demographics and industry data can better provide the county with information to structure future infrastructure goals. Target 9.2, "Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries" (UN.org, 2022). Georgetown County places importance on this target in particular because of its large industrial-based sector. While this UN target is focused on a much larger scale it still is important for the county to promote the best industrialization possible. The survey provides insights into industry-based data as stated before that can help the goal of sustainable industrialization.

## **Conclusion**

A workforce report and survey will provide trends that can benefit the county in many ways. Those trends will help businesses, policymakers, and educators alike because of the survey's ability to point out those trends. Through my internship at the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce I can see that if a workforce assessment is provided to the county, then the county will be better equipped to further Sustainable Development Goals 8, 9, and 11. That assessment has given the county the ability to see demographics within the county all located in one report.

While also containing the survey and its results that show those trends that exist within the workforce. The trends will allow for businesses to adapt to better business models and recruiting techniques. It will help policymakers direct their focus onto issues within the workforce to provide a better economy. It can help education systems by showing the system what workforce needs are needed most and how the education system can improve their workforce ready training. Everything that the assessment will aim at accomplishing will benefit the county through evolving sustainably within goals 8, 9, and 11.

### **Further Research and Recommendations**

In this report and survey the biggest constraint was the timetable that was required with such a survey. This report was completed with primarily initial results and a smaller sample size because of the time constraints. Therefore, the most obvious way to further the research would be to keep the survey up for a longer period to allow for more businesses within the county to fill out the survey. This would improve the survey's results through more and more participation. It would provide the county with a larger sample size of the county to better represent the county. It would provide deeper insights into the trends that exist between certain industries and businesses. I would recommend that the county focus on the trends that appear within the results. These trends in the workforce will show the county where to better allocate resources and where to adjust policies.

There are several recommendations that I have for the county based on the results and trends shown. Firstly, Georgetown County has a large tourism-based industry that has been damaged by the Great Resignation and Pandemic by job turnover. I recommend that the county focus funds and campaigns to help support local tourism industry-based businesses. Secondly,



the county has a large industrial based workforce that is seeking employees even before they are fully certified. I recommend that the county continue to push workforce ready programs that focus on getting students the skills that are necessary to fill these positions that businesses in the county lack. Finally, Georgetown County has a trend of low-job participation in the county. Which means that people aged 16-65 that can work are choosing not to work. This is a trend that appears all throughout South Carolina too. I recommend that the county direct resources at workforce programs in the county. These programs could promote more opportunities for citizens that normally do not have the opportunities because of lack of education and skill development.

Link to Survey: <..\Downloads\Georgetown County Workforce Survey Edited Copy.docx>

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