

# WHO IS ALICE?



United Way of Greater Houston

ALICE is an acronym for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed — families with income above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but not high enough to afford basic household necessities.

ALICE is your child care worker, your parent on Social Security, a recent graduate who can't find work in their field, the cashier at your supermarket, the salesperson at your big box store, a home health aide, an office clerk. At some point, ALICE may have even been you.

With the cost of living higher than what most people earn, ALICE households live in every county in Texas — urban, suburban, and rural — and they include women and men, young and old, of all races and ethnicities. As diverse as ALICE is, single parent families, often with a female head of household, account for 41 percent of the state's households that are ALICE or below the Federal Poverty Level. In Texas, ALICE is 24% Caucasian, 42% Hispanic, 37% Black, and 23% Asian.

ALICE households are working households; they hold jobs, pay taxes, and provide services that are vital to the Texas economy. ALICE workers primarily hold jobs in occupations that build and repair our infrastructure and educate and care for the workforce. This range of jobs is broader than the service sector, and these occupations ensure that the economy runs smoothly.

Texas' workforce faces a future dominated by low-paying jobs requiring few advanced educational credentials. From 2016 to 2026, most of the fastest-growing jobs in Texas (79%) will pay less than \$20 per hour.

**ALICE Household Survival Budget:** The Household Survival Budget is a bare-minimum survival budget, not a "get-ahead" budget. It calculates the actual costs of basic necessities (housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a low-cost smartphone plan) in Texas. It does not allow for dinner at a restaurant, holiday gifts, or any savings.

## TOP FIVE THINGS TO KNOW

1. 42% of Texas households and 40% of Greater Houston area households are ALICE or below and struggle to meet basic needs.
2. The Federal Poverty Level for a family of four is \$24,300, while in Harris County, that family needs \$61,404 just to survive.
3. In Texas, 62% of jobs pay less than \$20 per hour, with two-thirds of those paying between \$10 and \$15 per hour. A full-time job that pays \$15 per hour grosses \$30,000 per year, which is just over half of the Household Survival Budget for a family of four in Texas.
4. The ALICE Income Assessment estimates that ALICE and poverty-level households in Texas earn 47 percent of what is required to meet their needs. Resources from nonprofits and federal, state, and local governments provide \$23.6 billion in goods and services, with an additional \$44.9 billion in health care spending. However, there remains an unfilled gap of \$34 billion, or 18 percent of total need, in order for all households to have enough for the ALICE Survival Budget.
5. United Way of Greater Houston is working to help ALICE meet basic needs and create a pathway to a successful future. If you are ALICE, call the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE to get started.

COMMON ALICE OCCUPATIONS:

|                                |                                  |   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Retail Salespersons            | Customer Service Representatives | Laborers and Movers                       |
| Office Clerks                  | Waiters and Waitresses           | Secretaries and Administrative Assistants |
| Food Prep, Including Fast Food | Stock Clerks                     | Elementary School Teachers                |
| Cashiers                       | Personal Care Aides              | Maintenance Workers                       |

WHO AND WHAT IS BEHIND THE ALICE REPORT?

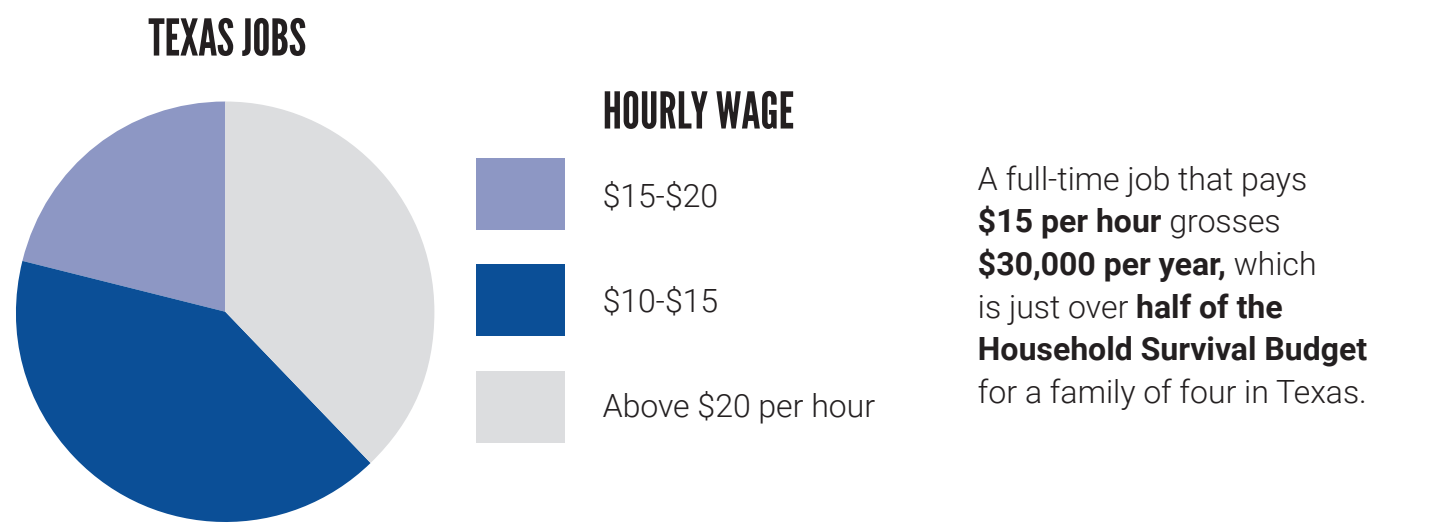
The ALICE Report has grown from a pilot in Morris County, New Jersey in 2009, to the entire state of New Jersey in 2012, and now to 18 states. United Way of Greater Houston and United Ways of Texas join more than 540 United Ways that are working to better understand ALICE’s struggles.

Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D. is director of the ALICE Project and, before joining United Way, taught at Rutgers University-Newark and Columbia University, and at the Universities of Sussex and Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Hoopes has a doctorate degree from the London School of Economics, a master’s degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a bachelor’s degree from Wellesley College.

To produce the ALICE Report for Texas, a team of researchers led by Dr. Hoopes, collaborated with a Research Advisory Committee, composed of 13 representatives from across Texas, who advised and contributed to the report.

This collaborative model, practiced in each state, ensures each report presents unbiased data that is replicable, easily updated on a regular basis, and sensitive to local context.

The Report examines issues surrounding ALICE households from different angles to draw the clearest picture with the range of data available. Sources include the American Community Survey, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Labor Statistics at the U.S. Department of Labor, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Tax Foundation, as well as these agencies’ Texas state counterparts and the Texas Workforce Commission. State,



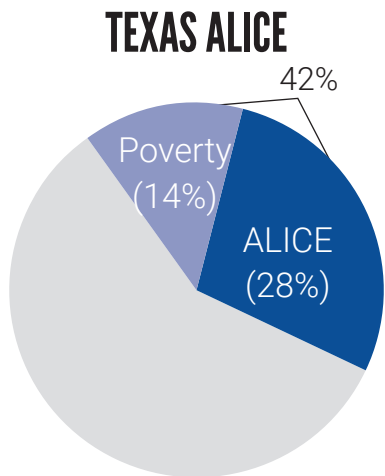
county, and municipal data is used to provide different lenses on ALICE households. Every two years, the ALICE Project engages external experts to scrutinize the ALICE

### WHAT DOES THE ALICE DATA SHOW?

None of the economic measures traditionally used to calculate the financial status of Texas' households, such as the Federal Poverty Level, consider the actual cost of living in each county in Texas or the wage rate of jobs in the state. The ALICE Report provides better measures and language to describe the sector of Texas' population that struggles to afford basic household necessities. It presents a more accurate picture of the economic reality in the state, especially regarding the number of households that are severely economically challenged.

### TEXAS SNAPSHOT

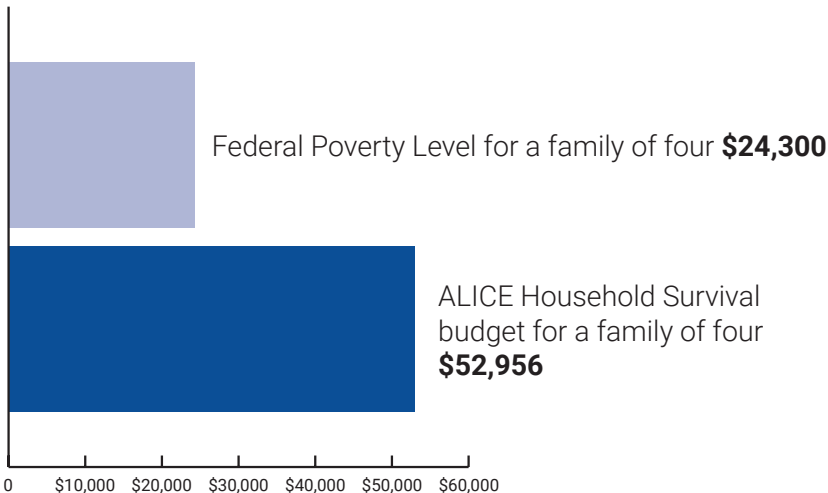
- Population: 27,862,596
- Number of Households: 9,557,706
- Median Household Income: \$56,565
- ALICE Households: 28%
- Households in Poverty: 14%
- Total households struggling to get by: 42%
- Amount needed for Household Survival Budget: \$52,956



methodology and sources and ensure that the best local data is presented. This rigorous process results in enhancements to the methodology and new ideas for how to more accurately measure and present data on financial hardship.

The ALICE Report is about far more than poverty: It reveals profound changes in the structure of Texas' communities and jobs. The ALICE measures show how many households in the state are struggling. In Texas there are 2,648,163 ALICE households that have income above the Federal Poverty Level but below the ALICE Survival Budget. When combined with households below the poverty level, in total, 4,025,176 households in Texas — 42 percent — struggled to make ends meet in 2016.

The ALICE Income Assessment estimates that ALICE and poverty-level households in Texas earn 47 percent of what is required to meet their needs. Resources from nonprofits and federal, state, and local governments provide \$23.6 billion in goods and services, with an additional \$44.9 billion in health care spending. However, there remains an unfilled gap of \$34 billion, or 18 percent of total need, in order for all households to have enough for the ALICE Survival Budget.



## UNITED WAY OF GREATER HOUSTON'S SERVICE AREA

In United Way of Greater Houston's four-county service area (Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery, and Waller counties), **40% of households are ALICE or below.**

In 2018, 1.2 million of our neighbors contacted the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for help. The top needs were: food, utility assistance, medical/prescription assistance, rent/mortgage assistance, and help with disaster recovery.

### HARRIS COUNTY SNAPSHOT

- Population: 4,589,928
- Number of Households: 1,606,399
- Median Household Income: \$56,377
- ALICE Households: 28%
- Households in Poverty: 15%
- Total households struggling to get by: 43%
- Amount needed for Household Survival Budget: \$61,404

In 2018, 409,262 of Harris County residents contacted the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for help. The top needs were: medical care/services, food assistance, disaster recovery services, utility assistance, and rent/mortgage assistance.

### FORT BEND COUNTY SNAPSHOT

- Population: 741,237
- Number of Households: 230,121
- Median Household Income: \$90,680
- ALICE Households: 22%
- Households in Poverty: 8%
- Total households struggling to get by: 30%
- Amount needed for Household Survival Budget: \$61,404

In 2018, 27,583 of Fort Bend County residents contacted the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for help. The top needs were: medical care/services, food assistance, utility assistance, disaster recovery services, and rent/mortgage assistance.

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY SNAPSHOT

- Population: 556,203
- Number of Households: 193,637
- Median Household Income: \$71,123
- ALICE Households: 22%
- Households in Poverty: 10%
- Total households struggling to get by: 32%

- Amount needed for Household Survival Budget: \$61,404

In 2018, 17,382 of Montgomery County residents contacted the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for help. The top needs were: food assistance, medical care/services, utility assistance, disaster recovery services, rent/mortgage assistance.

### WALLER COUNTY SNAPSHOT

- Population: 47,049
- Number of Households: 14,082
- Median Household Income: \$53,508
- Average Annual Household Income: \$45,744
- ALICE Households: 34%
- Households in Poverty: 17%
- Total households struggling to get by: 51%

- Amount needed for Household Survival Budget: \$61,404

In 2018, 2,887 of Waller County residents contacted the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for help. The top needs were: food assistance, medical care/services, utility assistance, disaster recovery services, rent/mortgage assistance.

Household Survival Budgets shown are for a family of four, including an infant and a pre-school aged child. For budgets relevant to other family compositions, visit [unitedwayalice.org/texas](https://unitedwayalice.org/texas).

## MEET ALICE

Christie had a plan. She was going to finish her master's degree, get a job as a librarian and give her family a good life. Then her husband became abusive. Before she knew it, Christie was ALICE.

The night the police came, she borrowed enough money from her mom to rent an apartment, put her three daughters and whatever else would fit into her car, and never looked back.

Suddenly, Christie was struggling just to get by. She had to earn more to survive, so she dropped her graduate classes to part-time and started working full-time while she finished school.

Even after Christie earned her degree and landed a job, she didn't have anything extra. It took everything she had just to make ends meet every month.

United Way of Greater Houston and United Way THRIVE are here to help families, like Christie's, build better futures. Through United Way THRIVE, Christie took budgeting, credit counseling, and homeownership courses. She worked with a financial coach and even enrolled in a matched savings program that provided a match on the money she saved to buy a home.

"I wanted to be able to get a house I could afford on my income so I would never be in that position again," Christie says. "Walking through the doors and being able to tell my children that this is our house, this is where we're going to live, this is our neighborhood, I can't even describe it."

## WHAT IS UNITED WAY OF GREATER HOUSTON DOING ABOUT IT?

United Way of Greater Houston is committed to giving people in our community opportunities to thrive. We know that stronger families mean a strong community for us all and so we work to lift up our neighbors by helping them meet their basic needs and by helping them carve out and move along a path to a more successful future.

A key component of United Way of Greater Houston's work is helping hardworking, lower-income families achieve financial stability through **United Way THRIVE**, a United Way-led community collaborative.

United Way THRIVE is a network of more than 20 nonprofit partners and partners from the business, government, and education sectors that work together to help families become self-sufficient and strong by increasing their income, building savings, and acquiring assets.

United Way THRIVE, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, has helped 211,000 families achieve financial stability, generating \$1.1 billion in value for clients through increased wages, savings, and assets, and maintaining a 10:1 return on investment.

Looking ahead to 2023, community needs are projected to look a lot like they do today – people need help with the basics, like food and housing, and a growing undereducated, underemployed population needs help forging and traveling a path to stability and success.

We know that our work to lift up families and help them become financially stable is more important than ever. Our **Second Century Vision** for our next 100 years is to grow this work and create opportunities for our neighbors to not just survive, but thrive by:

- Helping with basic needs, like food, shelter, and health care, so people can start thinking about the future.
- Helping people achieve and maintain financial stability through services like job training, education, and financial coaching.
- Providing opportunities for people to thrive by helping them with affordable quality child care, before and after school programs, and mental health services.

We will do this work strategically, with a focus on providing solutions our neighbors need now and addressing problems at their root to help prevent need in the future.

Our **2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE** remains one of our community's best resources and the number to call for social service resources from basic needs to help achieving financial stability. It is a 24/7/365 number to call for help and hope and is the primary entry point for United Way's network of services. Last year alone, 2-1-1 connected more than 1.2 million of our neighbors with help.

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If you are ALICE, call our 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE for help with the basics and a path to a more secure future. If you want to help ALICE, monitor and speak out on critical issues, educate your friends and neighbors about the reality many hardworking families face, and watch for important updates on this work from United Way of Greater Houston.

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The ALICE report for the entire state of Texas, including county budgets and scenarios for a variety of family compositions, plus methodology, is available at **[unitedwayalice.org/texas](https://unitedwayalice.org/texas)**.

# A.L.I.C.E.

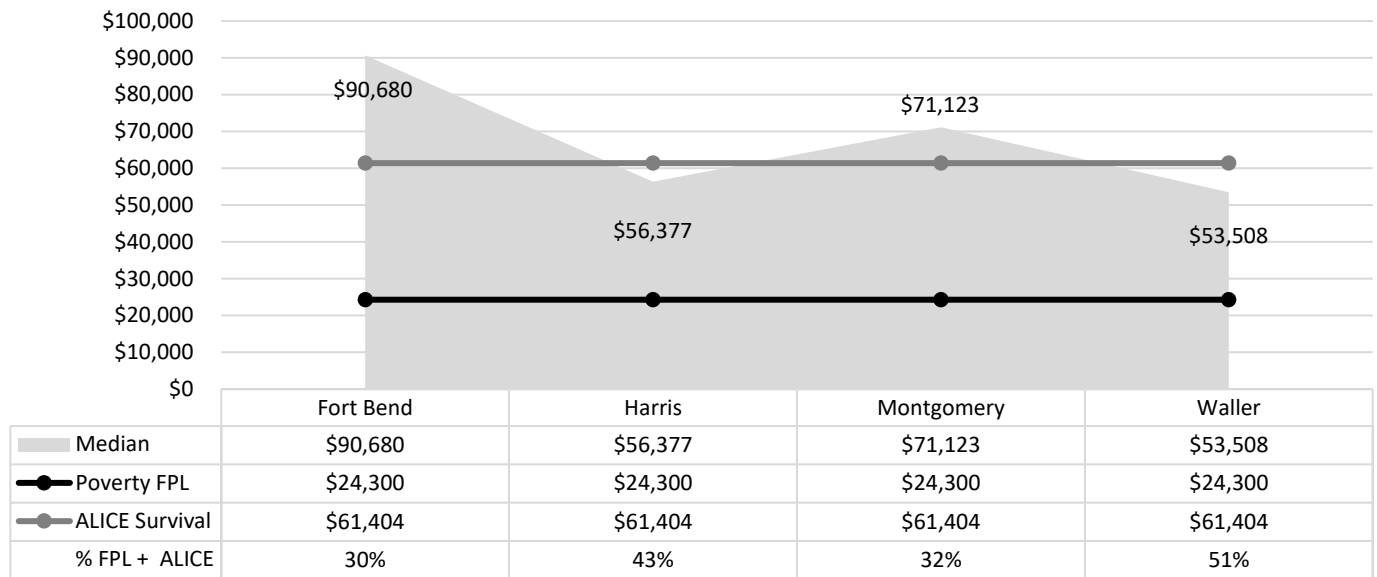
## Four-County Area

**Population:** 5,907,417 • **Number of Households:** 2,044,239

**ALICE Households:** 547,258 - 27% (state average: 28%) • **Households in Poverty:** 278,945 - 14% (state average: 14%)

**ALICE and Poverty Households:** 826,203 – 40% of Households

### ALICE by County



### Household Survival Budget

| Survival Budget | Single Adult | 2 Adults, 1 Infant,<br>1 Preschooler |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Monthly Costs   |              |                                      |
| Housing         | \$684        | \$948                                |
| Child Care      | \$0          | \$1,201                              |
| Food            | \$158        | \$525                                |
| Transportation  | \$386        | \$771                                |
| Health Care     | \$191        | \$704                                |
| Technology      | \$55         | \$75                                 |
| Miscellaneous   | \$172        | \$465                                |
| Taxes           | \$244        | \$428                                |
| Monthly Total   | \$1,890      | \$5,117                              |
| ANNUAL TOTAL    | \$22,680     | \$61,404                             |
| Hourly Wage     | \$11.34      | \$30.70                              |

The survival budget is the same across all four counties and higher than the Texas average of \$19,428 annually for single and \$52,956 annually for four-member households.

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### ALICE by County

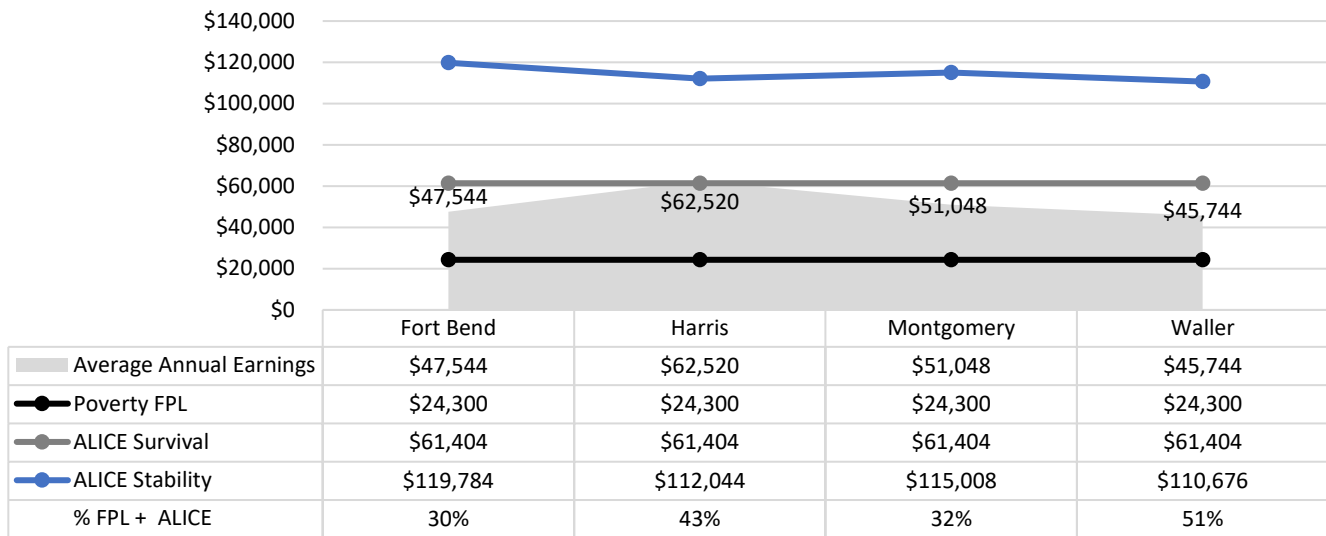


Chart based on four-member households. For more budget scenarios, contact UWGH.

| Household Survival Budget |              |                                   | Household Stability Budget |              |                                   |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Survival Budget           | Single Adult | 2 Adults, 1 Infant, 1 Preschooler | County                     | Single Adult | 2 Adults, 1 Infant, 1 Preschooler |
| Monthly Costs             |              |                                   | Fort Bend                  |              |                                   |
| Housing                   | \$684.00     | \$948.00                          | Monthly Total              | \$3,137      | \$9,982                           |
| Child Care                | \$0.00       | \$1,201.00                        | ANNUAL TOTAL               | \$37,644     | \$119,784                         |
| Food                      | \$158.00     | \$525.00                          | Hourly Wage                | \$18.82      | \$59.89                           |
| Transportation            | \$386.00     | \$771.00                          | Harris                     |              |                                   |
| Health Care               | \$191.00     | \$704.00                          | Monthly Total              | \$3,137      | \$9,337                           |
| Technology                | \$55.00      | \$75.00                           | ANNUAL TOTAL               | \$37,644     | \$112,044                         |
| Miscellaneous             | \$172.00     | \$465.00                          | Hourly Wage                | \$18.82      | \$56.02                           |
| Taxes                     | \$244.00     | \$428.00                          | Montgomery                 |              |                                   |
| Monthly Total             | \$1,890.00   | \$5,117.00                        | Monthly Total              | \$3,137      | \$9,584                           |
| ANNUAL TOTAL              | \$22,680.00  | \$61,404.00                       | ANNUAL TOTAL               | \$37,644     | \$115,008                         |
| Hourly Wage               | \$11.34      | \$30.70                           | Hourly Wage                | \$18.82      | \$57.50                           |
|                           |              |                                   | Waller                     |              |                                   |
|                           |              |                                   | Monthly Total              | \$3,137      | \$9,223                           |
|                           |              |                                   | ANNUAL TOTAL               | \$37,644     | \$110,676                         |
|                           |              |                                   | Hourly Wage                | \$18.82      | \$55.34                           |

The survival budget is the same across all four counties and higher than the Texas average of \$19,428 annually for single and \$52,956 annually for four-member households.

For the budget breakdown information, contact UWGH.



# A.L.I.C.E.

## Harris County

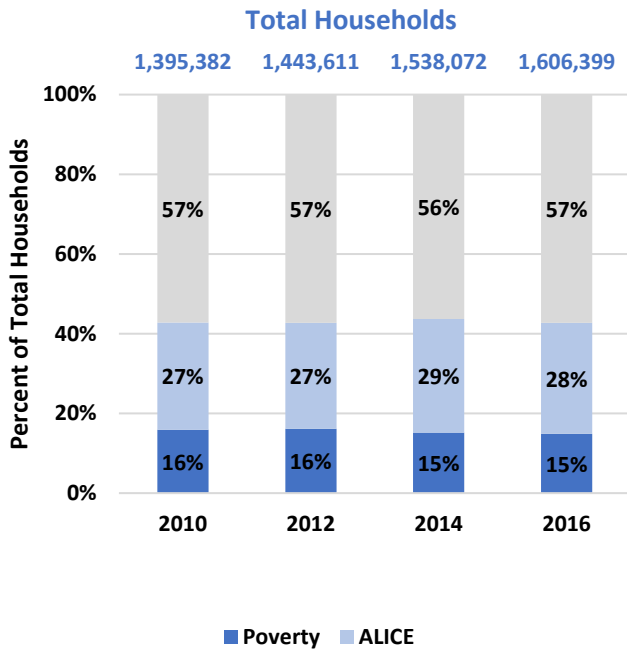
**Population:** 4,589,928 • **Number of Households:** 1,606,399

**Median Household Income:** \$56,377 (state average: \$56,565)

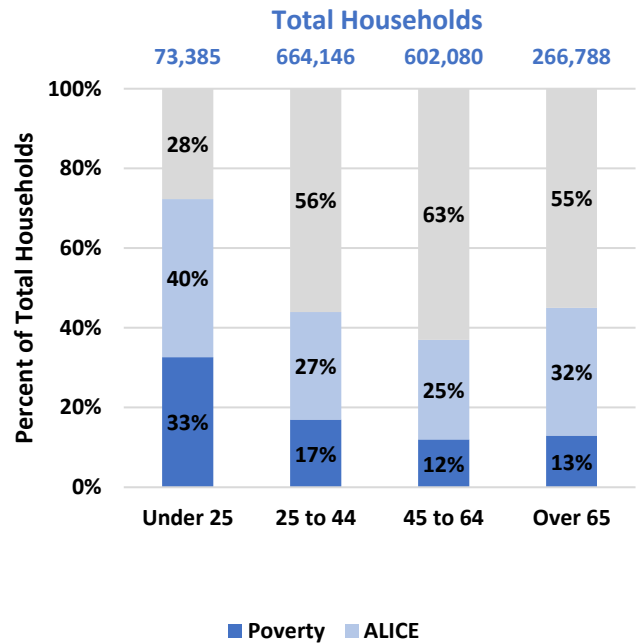
**Unemployment Rate:** 6.5% (state average: 5.6%)

**ALICE Households:** 28% (state average: 28%) • **Households in Poverty:** 15% (state average: 14%)

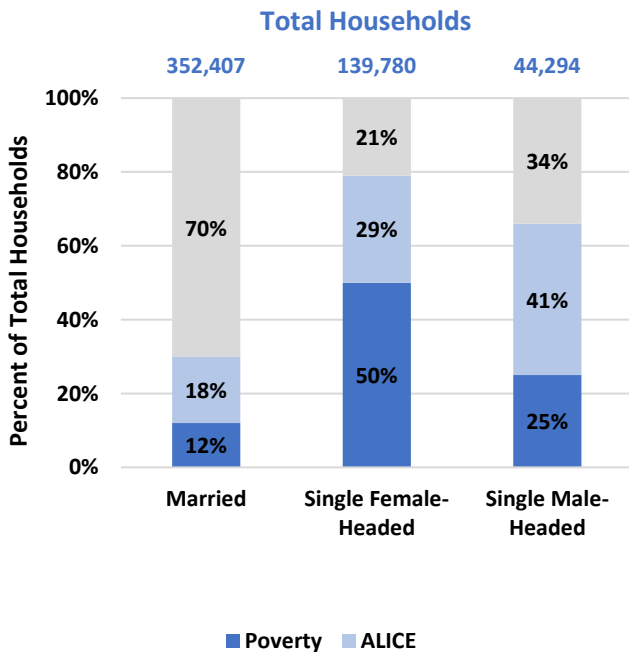
### Households by Income, 2010 to 2016



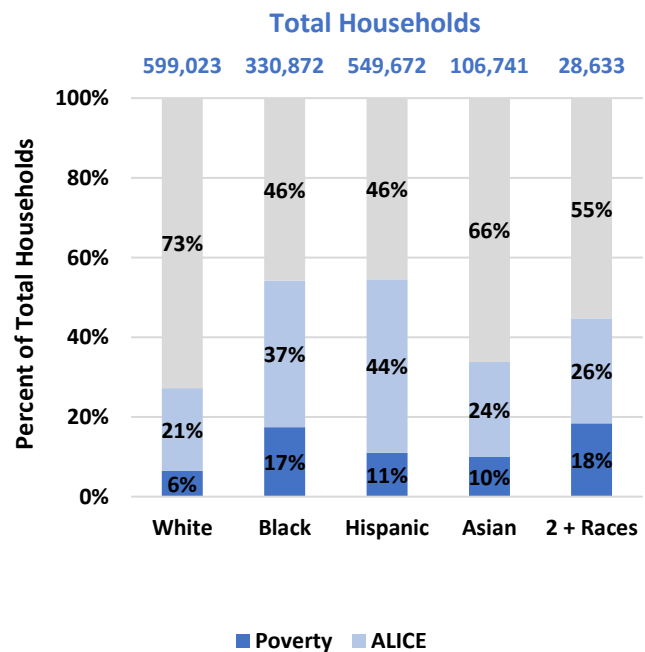
### Households by Age, 2016



### Families with Children, 2016



### Households by Race/Ethnicity, 2016



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## Fort Bend County

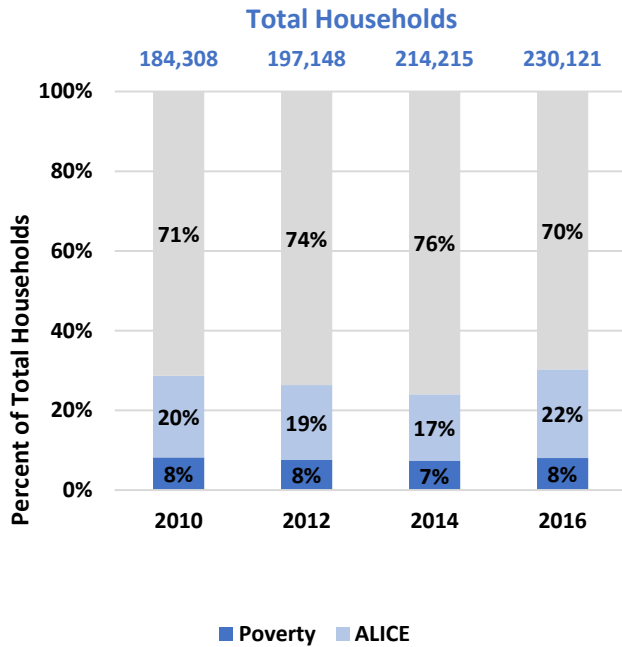
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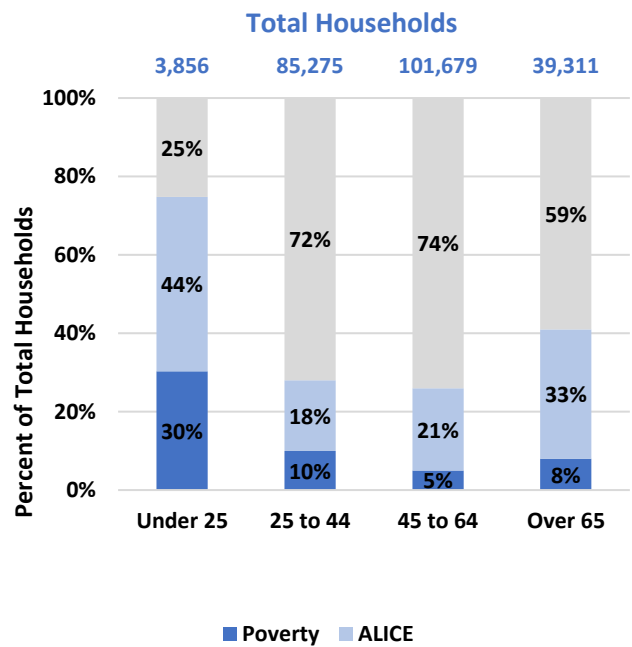
**Unemployment Rate:** 6.5% (state average: 5.6%)

**ALICE Households:** 22% (state average: 28%) • **Households in Poverty:** 8% (state average: 14%)

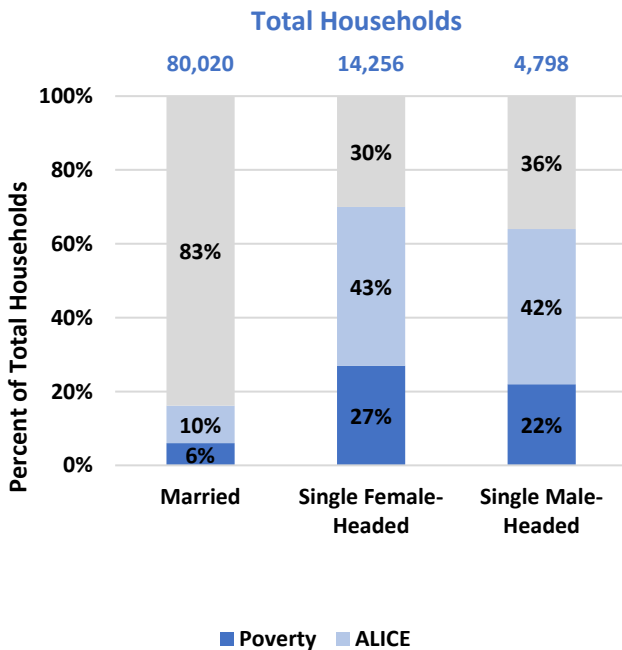
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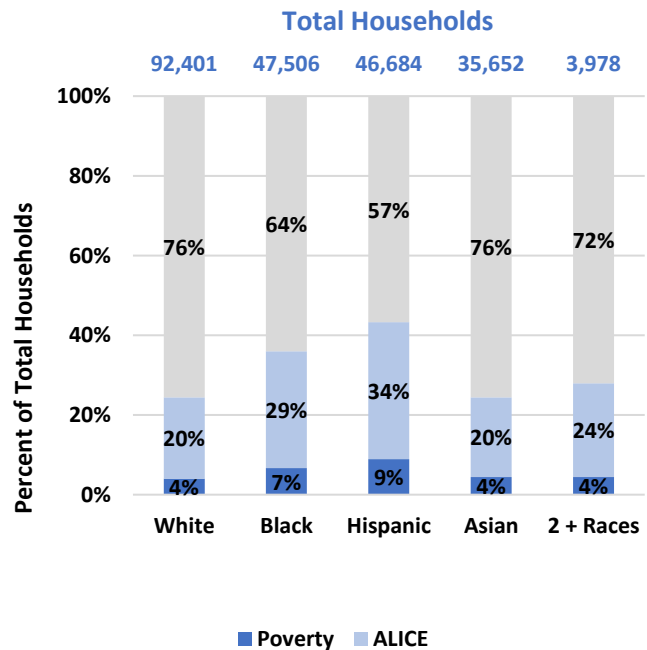
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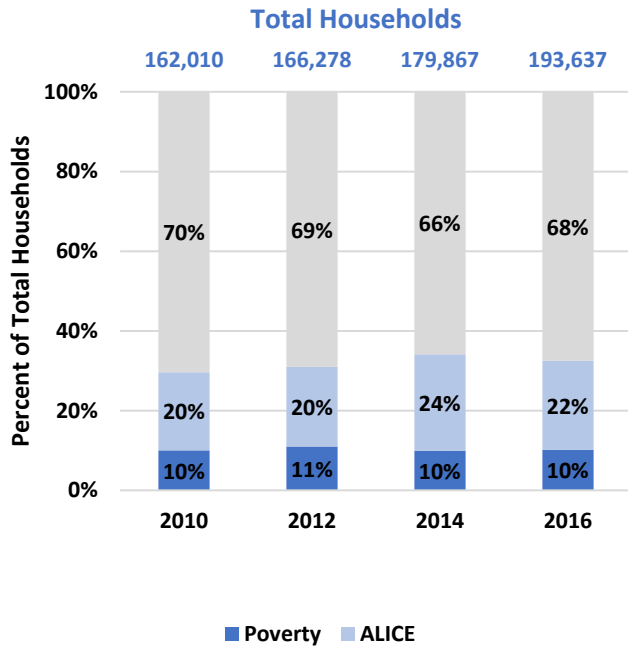
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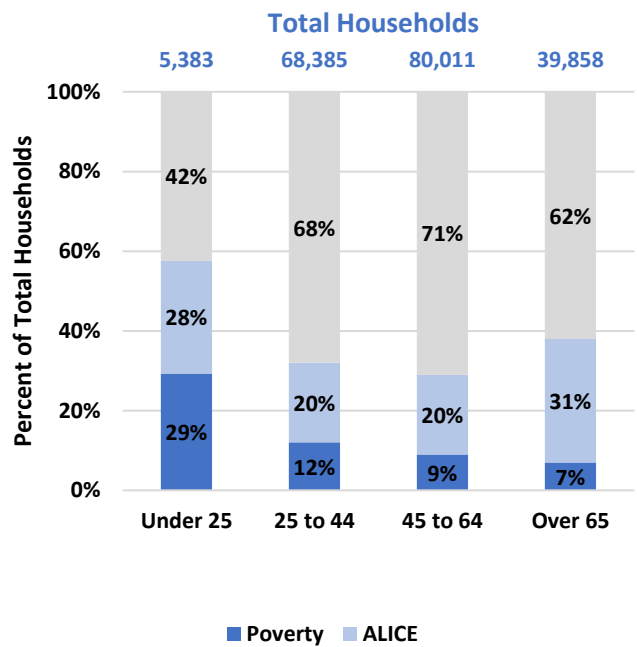
**Unemployment Rate:** 4.7% (state average: 5.6%)

**ALICE Households:** 22% (state average: 28%) • **Households in Poverty:** 10% (state average: 14%)

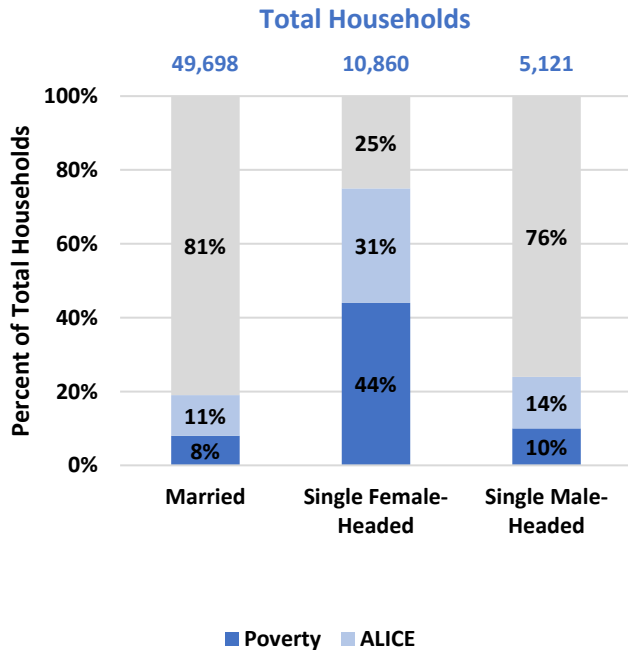
### Households by Income, 2010 to 2016



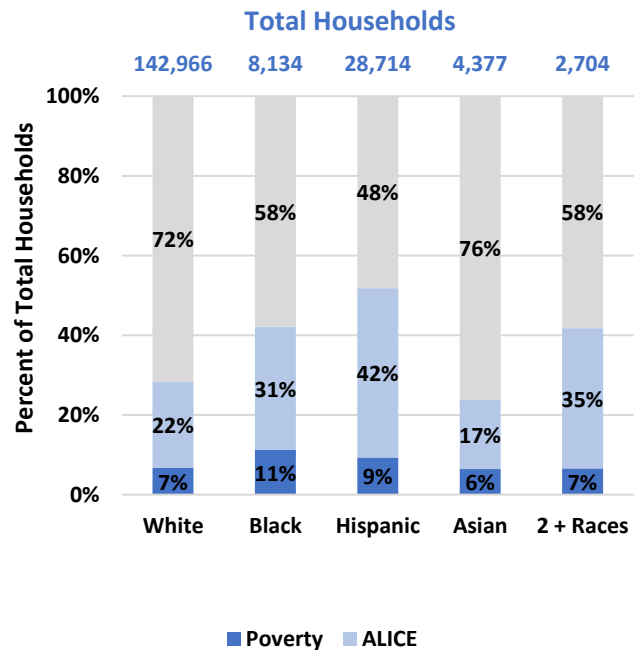
### Households by Age, 2016



### Families with Children, 2016



### Households by Race/Ethnicity, 2016



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## Waller County

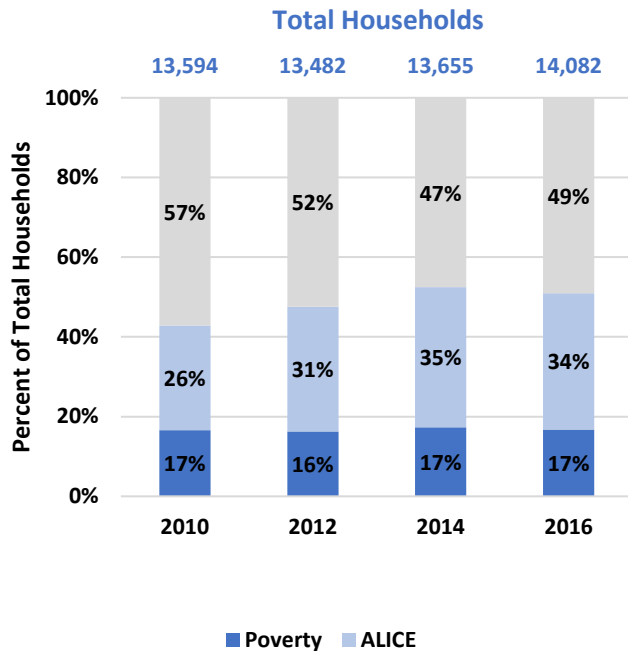
**Population:** 47,049 • **Number of Households:** 14,082

**Median Household Income:** \$53,508 (state average: \$56,565)

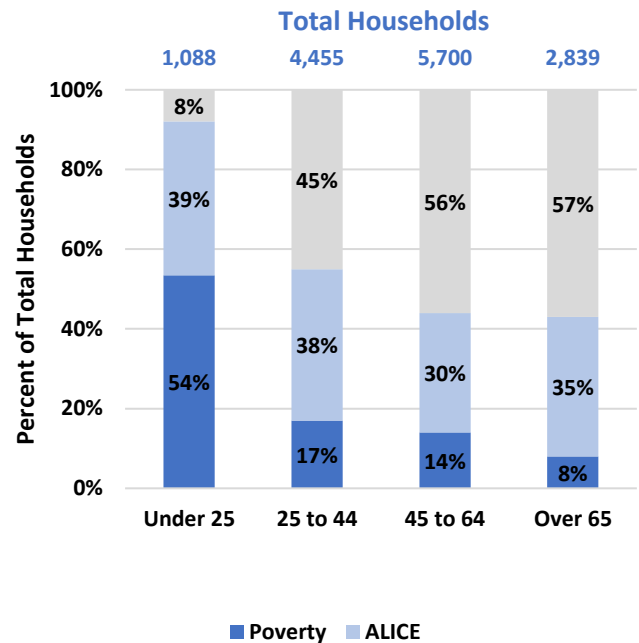
**Unemployment Rate:** 9.0% (state average: 5.6%)

**ALICE Households:** 34% (state average: 28%) • **Households in Poverty:** 17% (state average: 14%)

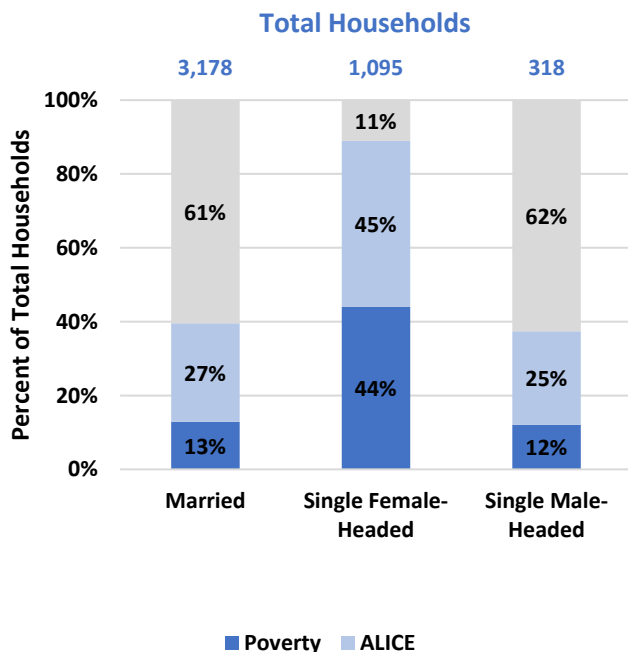
### Households by Income, 2010 to 2016



### Households by Age, 2016



### Families with Children, 2016



### Households by Race/Ethnicity, 2016

