

Washtenaw County Community Needs Assessment: Executive Summary



Highlighting Key Findings: Overview

The Washtenaw County Community Needs Assessment presents data for a total of 54 indicators (including 13 placeholders for which data isn't available) that met the Washtenaw County Community Needs Assessment Committee's criteria for inclusion in the report. In addition we surveyed three groups of people to determine their perceptions of the major issues and adequacy of resources to address those issues. This included two groups of county residents (one telephone survey and one written survey), and one group of community and nonprofit leaders. Not every indicator documented has perception data (see page 13 for more detail about these surveys and their results). This executive summary highlights key findings in five areas: community and economic development; education; health; environment; and community connections.

Looking across the indicator data raises the issues of regional equality. While some county-wide data shows improvement over time, data for areas within our county often highlights significant disparities among cities and townships and between individuals from different races. Hopefully knowing what these disparities are will help community leaders and residents address them as a county. Other community indicator efforts around the country encourage leaders and residents to "own" and address issues regionally. There is a risk of local level data being used to divide a region or county.

It is also very important to remember that the indicator data presented here portrays only a partial picture of community life. Every community in this county has a wealth of assets to contribute. These include: multicultural richness and diversity, youth leaders with time energy and talent, strong kinship and neighborhood networks, to mention a few.

In Washtenaw County multiple collaborations are engaged in developing and implementing creative and innovative solutions for a wide range of issues. Major assets in this county identified by community leaders included our universities, green space and parks, nonprofits, intellectual capital, and concerned, involved residents. Clearly, there is a base for working toward solving county-wide issues and improving the quality of life for everyone in Washtenaw County.

Highlighting Key Findings: Overview (continued)

Data can be interpreted in many ways. We hope that this report stimulates fruitful discussion among residents and community leaders from all the sectors in this county who are working to make a difference. Hopefully, having indicator and perception data together in one place will facilitate the types of collaborative and integrative solutions across issue areas that some groups have already begun to develop. It can point to additional data we need to start collecting and areas where indicator data and people's perceptions of issues differ. Funders can work together to support work that is already making a difference, in addition to addressing new areas of concern.

Over time, trends are moving in “positive directions” for eleven indicators (i.e., towards a desirable outcome) and in a “negative” direction (away from a desirable outcome) for eleven indicators. There is no change in the data for four other indicators. This does not mean that these are not important issues that need to be addressed; it simply means that there is no real movement in any direction. The direction of change is undetermined for eight indicators where there is current data but no previous data. Mixed trends exist for seven indicators (i.e, trends are moving in different directions for people living in various parts of the county or for different racial groups). These indicators highlight the disparities that exist within our county and among our cities, villages, and townships. This report tracks data over time for key indicators with the intent of measuring progress locally. While indicators cannot tell the whole story about the quality of life in our community, they do point to areas that are:

1. major issues of concern;
2. issue areas where findings demonstrate systematic inequities among residents;
3. assets, such as collaborative efforts and partnerships to be built upon; and
4. progress to be celebrated!

Highlighting Key Findings: Community & Economic Development Indicators

Community & Economic Development

Job growth finally increased in 2005 and is projected to continue to expand. While Washtenaw County's unemployment rates are lower than state and national levels, the percent of unemployed people in our county increased from 2000 to 2005 (2.4% to 4.2%). The discrepancy between the increase in new jobs available and the increase in unemployed people raises the question as to whether residents are able to access the new jobs, either because of lack of training or transportation.

Affordable housing (housing that costs no more than 30% of gross income) has decreased. In 2004, almost half (49%) of renter-occupied households paid 30% or more of their household income in rent, as did 30% of owner-occupied households. Indicator data shows that the affordability of housing is a key issue. Correspondingly, more residents (especially leaders) identified affordable housing and jobs paying a living wage as major issues than any other issue.

In 2000, the disparity in poverty rates for communities within our county ranged from 4.0% to 25.8%. Overall, county level poverty rates are decreasing slightly. Similarly, median household income ranges from \$28,610 in the City of Ypsilanti to \$86,797 in Ann Arbor Township. Washtenaw County's rate of poverty for children is half the national rate. Data on children's free and reduced cost lunches, often used as a proxy for children in poverty, ranges from 4% to 56%. The numbers of eligible students in Willow Run is nearly double state levels, with Ypsilanti close behind. Less than a third of community residents and leaders viewed hunger as a major issue, while 35% of residents and 51% of community leaders viewed poverty as a major issue. In this case people's perceptions do not match what the indicator data shows.

Existing indicator data does not yet present a clear trend on the issue of homelessness. The three groups of survey respondents clearly do not agree on the severity of homelessness in this county, ranging from 37% of residents (telephone) to 75% of residents (written) viewing this as a major issue.

Transportation and public transit services was identified as a major issue by almost half of all groups. Ridership increased on Ann Arbor Transportation Authority buses, but there is no data about residents who need transit services but are unable to obtain them.

Overall, violent and nonviolent crime rates have remained fairly stable. Domestic violence victim rates have dropped by a quarter from 2000 to 2003 while confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect rose slightly in 2004. Reliable data on elder abuse and neglect is not currently available. The area of most concern is the disparity in juvenile arrest rates. In 2003 African-American juveniles were 3.5 times (double the 2000 rates) more likely to be arrested than Caucasian juveniles.

Highlighting Key Findings: Community & Economic Development Indicators

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS	
<u>Housing & Homelessness</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Homelessness	Positive
Housing Affordability	Negative
<u>Work & Employment</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Unemployment	No Change
Job Growth	Positive
Living Wage Jobs	Placeholder: No Data
<u>Income</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Poverty Rates	Positive
Child Poverty Rates	Negative
Income & Wealth Distribution	No Change

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS	
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Use of Public Transportation	Positive
<u>Safety & Crime</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Violent Crime Rate	Negative
Non Violent Crime Rate	Positive
Juvenile Crime	Mixed
Racial Disparities for Juvenile Arrest Rate Index	Negative
Child Abuse & Neglect Rates	Negative
Domestic Violence	Positive
Hate Crimes	No Change
Elder Abuse & Neglect	Placeholder: No Data

Highlighting Key Findings: Education Indicators

Education

Starting with the care and education of our youngest community members, child care costs rose from 2001 to 2005. While the number of licensed and accredited childcare centers and homes has remained fairly consistent, the decreasing affordability of childcare has implications for the strategies that households, especially lower income ones, use to care for infant and preschool children. Quality affordable childcare was viewed as a major issue by survey respondents although it varied. Nearly 75% of community leaders viewed this as a major issue. This is an area where a major community concern is supported by data.

As mentioned previously, there is a great disparity between the number of free and reduced cost lunches for school age children in different parts of the county ranging from 4% to 56%. Average student teacher ratios are fairly consistent countywide (from 16.1 to 19.7). For students completing high school fully 86% plan to attend college.

Community leaders and residents taking the written survey rated the achievement gap between students, and students dropping out of school as major issues without adequate resources. Currently reliable indicator data is not being collected about these issues over the entire district. The high school drop out rate was a major issue to two-thirds (67%) of residents taking the written survey, but only 41% of community residents responding to the phone survey. Employment assistance and job training emerged as the major issues for adult education.

EDUCATION INDICATORS	
<u>Early Childhood Education & Care</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Childcare Affordability	Negative
Number of Licensed & Accredited Childcare Centers/Homes	Mixed
Head Start Enrollment Gap	Placeholder: No Data
<u>Children & Youth</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Free & Reduced Price Lunches	Negative
High School Completion Rate	Placeholder: No Data
Public School Attendance Rates	Placeholder: No Data
Student Teacher Ratio	Mixed
Plans after School	No Change
Disconnected Youth	Negative

Highlighting Key Findings: Health Indicators

Health

Highlights from the indicator data for health include:

- ◆ Infant death rates and low birth weights are higher for African American babies than for Caucasian babies and vary throughout the county.
- ◆ An increasing percentage of children are covered by public health plans.
- ◆ While the rate of teen pregnancy is dropping, there is still a rate of 31.7 per 1,000 females ages 15-19.
- ◆ The number of adults defined as “working poor” without health care insurance is rising in the county.
- ◆ The HIV incidence rate almost doubled between 2001 and 2004 (5.3 to 9.6)

All three groups surveyed ranked many aspects of health as some of the most important issues in Washtenaw County with the least adequate resources available. Adults without health insurance and affordable health care were consistently rated as major issues by all three groups (76%-94%). A slightly lower percent of respondents ranked affordable prescription medicine and affordable dental care as an issue. Community residents completing the written survey had a very different perception of dental care – 82% believed it was a major issue, and 70% believed resources were not adequate. Teen pregnancy was viewed as a major issue by 71% of residents (written), but not by the other two groups (29% and 39%). Children without health insurance and substance abuse were rated as major issues by most respondents (62%-80%). In contrast, only 12% of residents believed that infant mortality was a major issue, and 78% believed resources were adequate.

HEALTH INDICATORS

HEALTH INDICATORS	
<u>Healthy Kids</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Infant Death Rate	Mixed
Infant Low Birth Rate	Mixed
Child Immunization Rate	Positive
Asthma	Negative
Overweight Children	Placeholder: No Data
Children Insured by Public Health Plans	Positive
Children Who Have a Primary Health Provider	Placeholder: No Data
Adolescent Childbirth	Positive
<u>Healthy Adults</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Healthy Behaviors	Mixed
Years of Life Lost (YLL) to Heart Disease	Mixed
YLL to Breast Cancer	Positive
Uninsured Adults	Placeholder: No Data
HIV Incidence Rates	Negative
Adults Who Have a Primary Health Care Provider	Undetermined
Diabetes Rates	Placeholder: No Data
Access to Substance Abuse Services	Placeholder: No Data
Access to Mental Health Svces	Placeholder: No Data

Highlighting Key Findings: Environment & Community Connections Indicators

Environment

Indicator data shows that the percentage of days with good air quality has decreased from 67% in 2000 to 42% in 2005. However, over a third (38%) of residents did not believe that air quality was an issue, and 62% believed resources were adequate to address this issue. Fewer community leaders (39%) believed resources were adequate, and only 18% of residents (written) believed this.

The recycling rate varies by community, but overall our community recycles or diverts 29% of our waste. Approximately a third of residents and leaders believe recycling is a major issue.

Community Connections

Washtenaw County has not yet systematically collected much data about civic engagement and arts and culture in the County. Nevertheless the County has abundant resources in this area.

With the exception of voting rates which have increased from 62.3% in 2000 to 69.5% in 2004 (both presidential election years) the other indicators in this study have data for only one point in time. There is a recently completed study of the economic impact of the arts in Washtenaw County and Youth Empowered to Act (YEA) is currently conducting a county-wide youth asset mapping project. These studies are first time efforts. If they continue they can provide us with valuable data. A next step could be to conduct a qualitative case study and map the arts resources and civic engagement opportunities in the county. This would be a first step in identifying potential data sources that could be developed and reported in the future.

ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

<u>Natural & Built Environment</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Recycling & Waste Diversion	Undetermined
Air Quality	Negative
Bike Lanes and Sidewalks	Undetermined
<u>Land Use & Recreation</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Acres of Protected Land	Undetermined

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS INDICATORS

<u>Arts & Culture</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Residents Taking Part in Arts & Cultural Activities	Undetermined
Classroom Arts Instruction	Placeholder: No Data
Dollars Donated to Arts & Cultural Orgs.	Placeholder: No Data
<u>Civic Engagement</u>	<u>Our County's Trend</u>
Volunteer Rates	Undetermined
Money Donated	Undetermined
Involvement in Organizations	Undetermined
Voting	Positive

Highlighting Key Findings: Community Perceptions Survey Findings

Community Perceptions Surveys

Three surveys were designed and implemented to collect data from community residents about our community’s issues and assets. They included:

1. A statistically representative random telephone survey of 402 county residents, conducted by Wayne State University’s Center for Urban Studies.
2. A written survey of 65 residents was conducted to obtain input from residents who were likely to be systematically excluded from the telephone survey (e.g., individuals who are homeless, low income and youth who are likely to have cell phones, no land line, or no phone at all).
3. An online survey of 185 Nonprofit, Business, Educational, and Political leaders.

Issues identified as major by 75% or more of any one of the respondent groups are listed below. Other issues that followed closely behind with less than 75% of the respondents identifying them as major were affordable childcare, the achievement gap, job growth and obesity. It should be noted that on many issues perceptions among the three groups varied. Often the perceptions of community leaders and residents responding to the written survey (those unlikely to have a land line telephone) were similar while the perceptions of the larger group of residents, who responded to the telephone survey, were different.

<u>Major Issues</u>	<u>Residents (telephone)</u>	<u>Residents (written)</u>	<u>Leaders</u>
Affordable health care	77%	79%	94%
Adults without health insurance	76%	83%	87%
Children without health insurance	71%	77%	74%
Affordable housing	61%	77%	86%
Affordable prescription medication	73%	65%	81%
Youth substance abuse	62%	80%	64%
Availability of jobs paying a living wage	57%	75%	63%
Affordable dental care	53%	82%	59%
Homelessness	37%	75%	50%

Highlighting Key Findings: Community Perceptions Survey Findings (continued)

Major Issues in County

Survey respondents were asked what they saw as the three major ISSUES in Washtenaw County for residents. These responses were coded into categories, presented below. If the percentage of respondents who named an item as an issue is above 10% (19 of 185 respondents), the item is included in the following two pages, along with several examples of the verbatim comments. They will total more than 100% due to the fact respondents could name up to three issues. There were a large percentage of miscellaneous comments which did not fit in any category.

- ◆ Economy (45%) including good jobs and wages, Michigan's economy, auto industry problems, and loss of locally owned businesses
- ◆ Affordable Housing (38%)
- ◆ Transportation (23%) including public transportation and traffic and road congestion
- ◆ Sprawl/green space (19%) including land use, environmental quality, traffic impacts, and loss of sense of place and community
- ◆ Access to affordable health care (18%)

Major Assets in County

Survey respondents were asked what they saw as the three major ASSETS in Washtenaw County for residents. Responses were coded into categories, presented below. If the percentage of respondents who named an item as an asset is above 10% (19 of 185 respondents), the item is included in the following two pages, along with two examples of the verbatim comments. They will add up to more than 100% due to the fact respondents could name up to three assets.

- ◆ Universities (41%)
- ◆ Green Space & Parks (22%)
- ◆ Nonprofits (21%)
- ◆ Concerned & Involved Residents (21%)
- ◆ Intellectual Capital (18%)

Highlighting Key Findings: Review of Existing Reports

Purposes

The key purposes for reviewing existing reports were to: 1) review community needs assessment and state of the community reports done elsewhere in the country; 2) review existing county level reports on Washtenaw County; and 3) identify the types of information already collected and the gaps in what we know. An annotated list of reports and where they can be accessed is provided in the full review in Appendix B.

Key Findings

Review of reports for other areas of the country and interviews with four individuals with up to 20 years experience conducting this type of study revealed that: 1) these types of reports are used in many different ways and are considered highly useful; 2) other reports focus either on indicators or community perceptions of needs but not both, as does this report. Washtenaw County's document is also unique in that it presents a review of existing reports.

FERA's review of existing reports for Washtenaw County revealed that while a wealth of data about the county exists, there is no central location where one can find out who is collecting what information. County level data is collected and reported at different points in time for different years. Surveys are conducted for many different purposes, but for the most part these are one-time data collections, making it impossible to track trends over time. It is also clear from our review that this county has a wealth of organizations (both governmental and nonprofit), coalitions of organizations and individuals, and community members that have already developed goals and action plans for specific issue areas. Some efforts are highly data-driven and draw from national research and effective practices from various fields. Others focus on planning for the future. Until now, there has been no comprehensive report for Washtenaw County tracking indicators for multiple issue areas over time. In the reports reviewed, some data is compared to state and/or national data, other data is not. Different formats and levels of data collection (e.g., county, city, and zip code level) make it difficult to compare data and trends across issue areas. Some reports identify important indicators but do not present any data, while others are focused on specifying goals and the necessary actions for achieving those goals.

Collecting, analyzing and reporting data requires time, effort and resources. Efficiencies of scale can be achieved by consistently collecting and reporting data for the same set of indicators over time. The Washtenaw County Community Needs Assessment Report done regularly (every two years) will build upon the extensive work already being done by organizations and citizen groups by consistently tracking trends over time and making existing data easily accessible across issue areas. It will be an effort that builds upon, brings together, and facilitates the work that others are doing.

Next Steps

This report is the just the beginning. Community residents and leaders need to take the information and use it. Some of the value of this report will be in continuing to track the indicator data into the future. Currently, the plan is to update the data every two years. This time the indicator data was paired with a study of residents' and community leaders' perceptions of major issues and adequacy of resources to address them. Next time, a study focused on assets would compliment both the ongoing indicator data and the current issues-focused perception data.

Key barriers to working together as a county to improve the quality of life, as identified by community leaders, are lack of:

- ◆ Coordination and collaboration
- ◆ Sufficient economic resources
- ◆ A strong regional focus

Key successful innovations for improving the quality of life, as identified by community leaders, include:

- ◆ Collaborative efforts to solve health and human service problems
- ◆ Cross sector partnerships (e.g, between funders, nonprofits and businesses)
- ◆ Efforts around open space

Interestingly, collaborative efforts are one of the major barriers, as well as one of the successes, for working together as a county. Perhaps this report will serve as a catalyst for developing a strong regional focus, developing coordinated and collaborative efforts and investing our economic and social resources in ways that improve the quality of life for all people throughout the county now and in the future.