

Housing & Poverty:

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.

Income & Jobs:

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.

Availability of Services & Transportation:

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.

Safety & Crime:

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.