



# Greater Akron Comprehensive Community Assessment

*Prepared for Akron Community Foundation*

*March, 2018*

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## Introduction

Many groups in Summit County have worked to understand community conditions in recent years and have shared their findings by publishing reports and plans. Akron Community Foundation sought to build on this substantial body of information and add newly collected data to create a comprehensive assessment of conditions in Greater Akron. The Center for Community Solutions was engaged to compile this report.

Groups in Greater Akron have been leaders in data-driven decision making. There is a culture of quantifying needs, planning strategically, and sharing findings widely. We reviewed more than 50 reports and plans published in the last several years by a variety of agencies on a wide range of topics, pulling out key data points and identifying common themes. Updated data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources was compiled in order to gain a current picture of community conditions. In October, 2017, *On the Table* brought together people throughout Greater Akron to share a meal and have discussions in small groups. The results of *On the Table* were a central component of this analysis. Finally, we sought information from key informants, who helped us interpret the *On the Table* results and described challenges and opportunities facing Greater Akron.

Several themes emerged:

- **Collaboration:** Many initiatives to address community issues include a variety of stakeholders, and key informants almost universally identified collaboration as one of Greater Akron's strengths.
- **Size and Scope:** Akron was alternately described as a "small-big city" or as a "big-small city". The proximity to Cleveland was identified as an asset for economic development, as well as arts and culture. Greater Akron is small enough to form impactful collaborations and implement innovative strategies, yet large enough to serve as an example for other areas of Ohio.
- **Leadership:** In 2008, Brookings identified Akron as a model for economic recovery. Strong leadership, especially in City government, was cited as an asset. However, there has been leadership change in recent years in organizations both large and small, which has presented both challenges and opportunities.
- **Disparities:** There is a growing recognition that racial diversity, equity, and inclusion are issues that should be directly addressed. Secondary data show vast racial disparities, especially in health and educational outcomes.
- **Targeting:** Many local funders have targeted their efforts in recent years. Some key informants saw this as a positive step to tackle previously intractable community issues, while others pointed out that this approach risks leaving some important community organizations behind. A balance is needed.

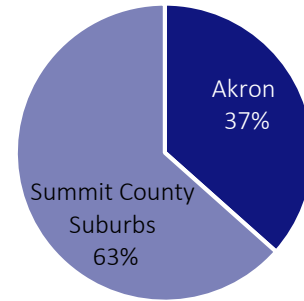
## Demographics

Summit County consists of both urban and suburban municipalities, with some variations in income, race, and education among the City of Akron and suburban communities.<sup>1</sup>

In 2016, 540,300 people lived in Summit County, including 197,634 in Akron and 342,666 in the suburbs.

As shown in the table below, Akron’s population has a higher proportion of young adults than the rest of the county, while the suburbs have a greater proportion of older adults over the age of 65. Across the County, about 53 percent of the population is considered working age, between the ages of 25 and 64.

Summit County Population

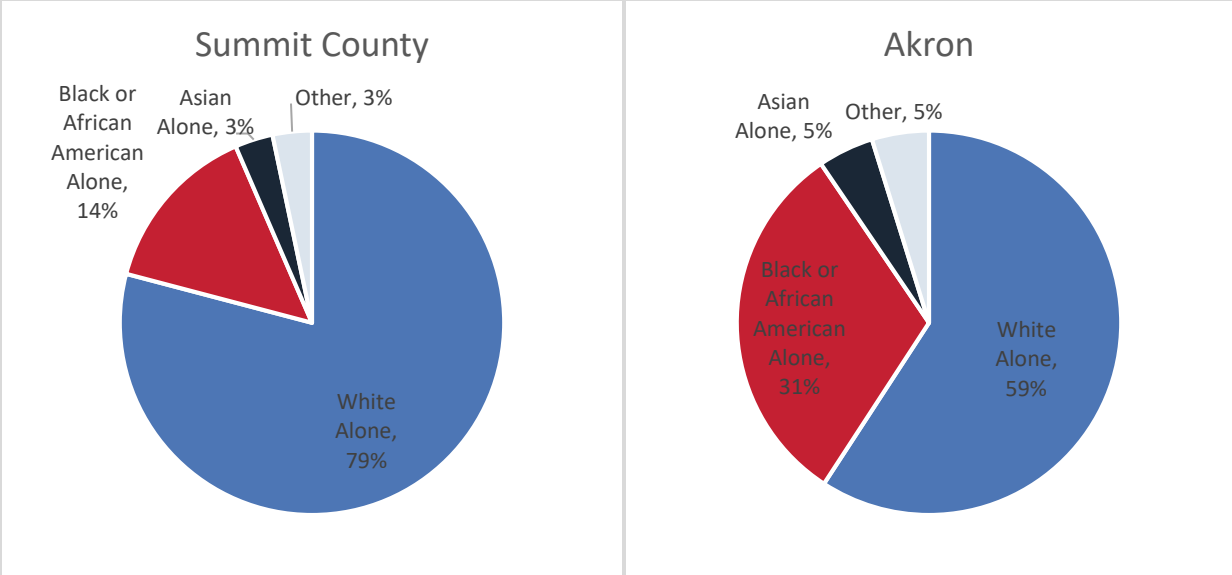


### Share of population by age group

	Summit County	Akron	Suburbs
Under 5 years	5.6%	6.2%	5.3%
School Age (5 to 14 years)	11.7%	11.8%	11.7%
Teenage (15 to 19 years)	6.2%	6.4%	6.1%
Young Adult (20 to 24 years)	6.3%	8.5%	5.0%
Working Age (25 to 64 years)	53.0%	52.5%	53.3%
Older Age (65 years and older)	17.1%	14.6%	18.5%

Four-fifths of Summit County’s population is White, and 14 percent are African American. As shown below, Akron is more racially diverse, while in the suburbs, 91 percent of people are White and 5 percent are African American. Three percent of Summit residents are Asian, and 2 percent are Hispanic/Latino of any race.

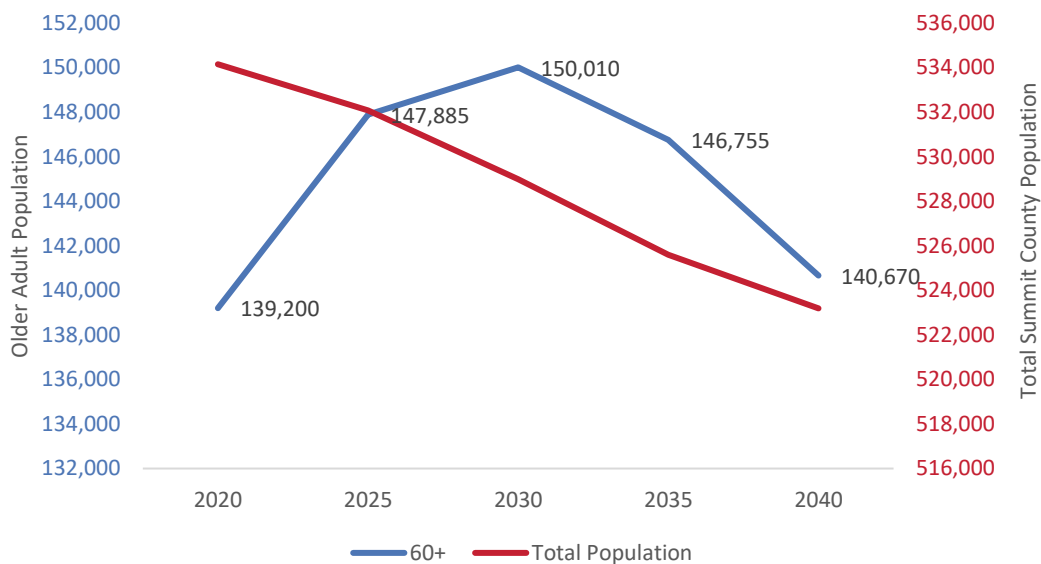
<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, demographic data is compiled from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016 1-year estimates.



	Summit County		Akron		Suburbs	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
White alone	427,390	79.1%	116,967	59.2%	310,423	90.6%
Black or African American alone	77,916	14.4%	61,945	31.3%	15,971	4.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	503	0.1%	378	0.2%	125	0.0%
Asian alone	17,116	3.2%	9,274	4.7%	7,842	2.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	149	0.0%	0	0.0%	149	0.0%
Some other race alone	1,385	0.3%	1,104	0.6%	281	0.1%
Two or more races	15,841	2.9%	7,966	4.0%	7,875	2.3%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	10,695	2.0%	4,909	2.5%	5,766	1.7%

Based on analysis completed by the Ohio Development Services Agency, the older adult population will likely peak in 2030 with over 150,000 older adults expected to be living in Summit County. As the older adult population increases, the total population is expected to decrease which will result in a higher proportion of older adults in Summit County than ever before. Scripps Gerontology Center predicts 30 percent of the Summit County population will be older adults in 2030, 31.5 percent by 2040 and 32.2 percent by 2050.

## Summit County Population Projections Ohio Development Services Agency 2020-2040



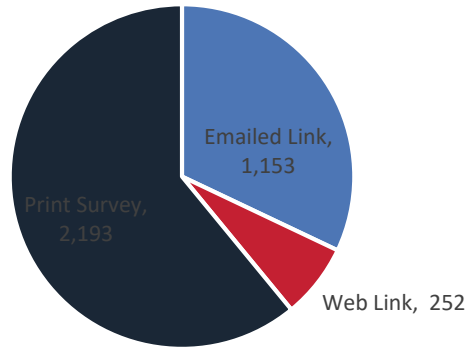
### On the Table Results

Akron was one of ten cities across the country which hosted *On the Table* conversations with support from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. *On the Table Greater Akron* was organized by Akron Community Foundation and held on October 3, 2017. Residents convened for meal time discussions about “how to make their city a better place to live, work, and play.”<sup>2</sup> Following the conversations, participants were invited to complete a survey either on paper or online. The survey was comprised of 27 questions that were common to all *On the Table* cities plus additional questions which were added by organizers in Akron.

There were 3,598 total responses from the survey including 1,153 via an emailed link, 252 through a web link, and 2,193 through the print survey. Respondents were self-selected and participation was voluntary. As described in detail in the *On the Table* report, the makeup of participants generally aligns well with the Greater Akron population overall, with a few notable exceptions. The respondents are more heavily female than the overall population. Higher levels of educational attainment were overrepresented, meaning that there were fewer participants who had a college degree or less than the general population. Black/African-American residents were overrepresented when compared to the Summit County population, but underrepresented when compared to Akron. Nearly one-half of respondents said they live in Akron, with several other communities represented but by smaller numbers of participants.

<sup>2</sup> Information and data in this section was summarized from *On the Table Greater Akron 2017 Impact Report*, The Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement, 2017.

Most of the 3,598 responses came via the print survey.

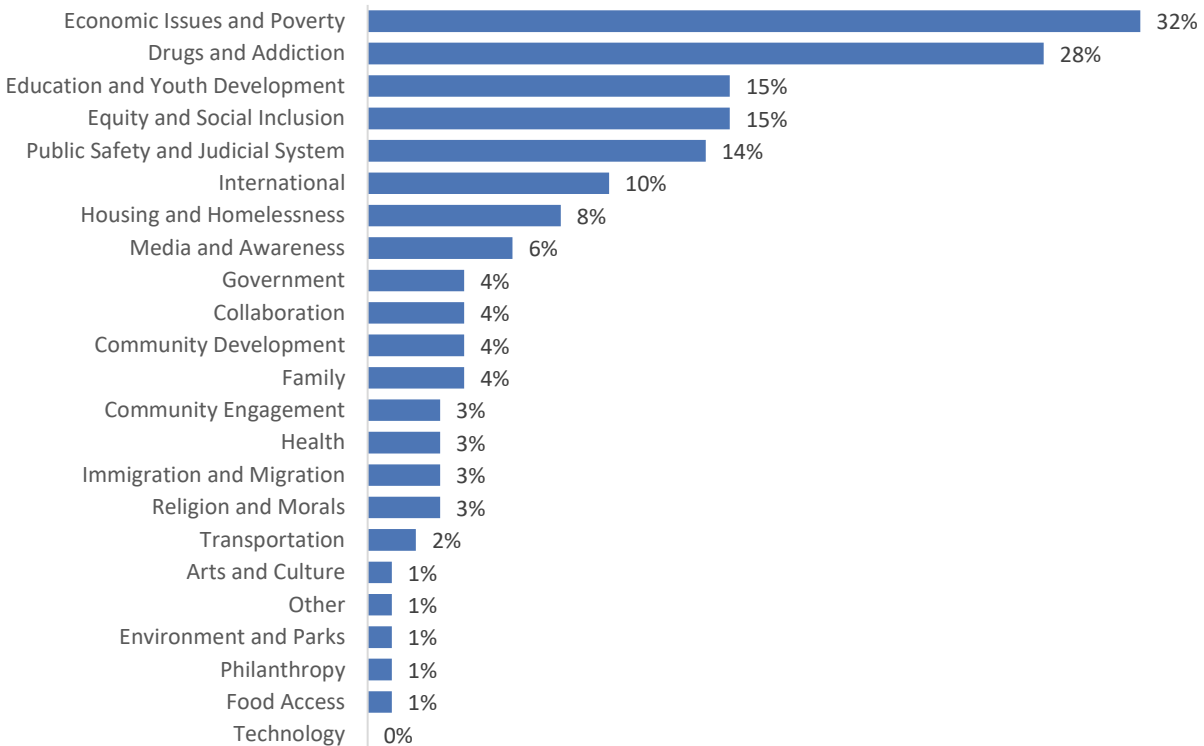


Participants in *On the Table* conversations seemed to be committed to the community. Forty-five percent have lived in Akron for 20 years or more, and a similar proportion (45 percent) said they are very attached to their local community, compared to 19 percent nationally. More than two-thirds (83 percent) said they believe they can have a big or moderate impact on where they live.

Most individuals participated in the conversation because they wanted to discuss and address important issues in their community (65 percent) and/or learn from and listen to others (58 percent). There were no notable differences between people from various parts of the county, by age, or by race to this question.

Participants were asked in one of the custom questions specific to this region to identify “What is the biggest problem facing Greater Akron?” The top 5 issues identified were economic issues and poverty, drugs and addiction, equity and social inclusion, education and youth development, and public safety and the judicial system. For the most part, the key informants also identified these as the important issues facing Akron and Summit County, although some suggested that they should be placed in a different order.

## "What is the biggest problem facing Greater Akron?"



There were notable differences between people of different racial backgrounds in the ranking of top problems identified. Economic issues and poverty was the most commonly identified issue across the board, but the second most common issue identified by Black respondents was public safety and the judicial system, where it was drugs and addiction for Whites.

### Top 5 Most Commonly Identified Problems, Rank, by Race

Problem	All Respondents	Black Respondents	White Respondents
Economic Issues and Poverty	1	1	1
Drugs and Addiction	2	5	2
Education and Youth Development	3	3	4
Equity and Social Inclusion	4	4	3
Public Safety and Judicial System	5	2	5

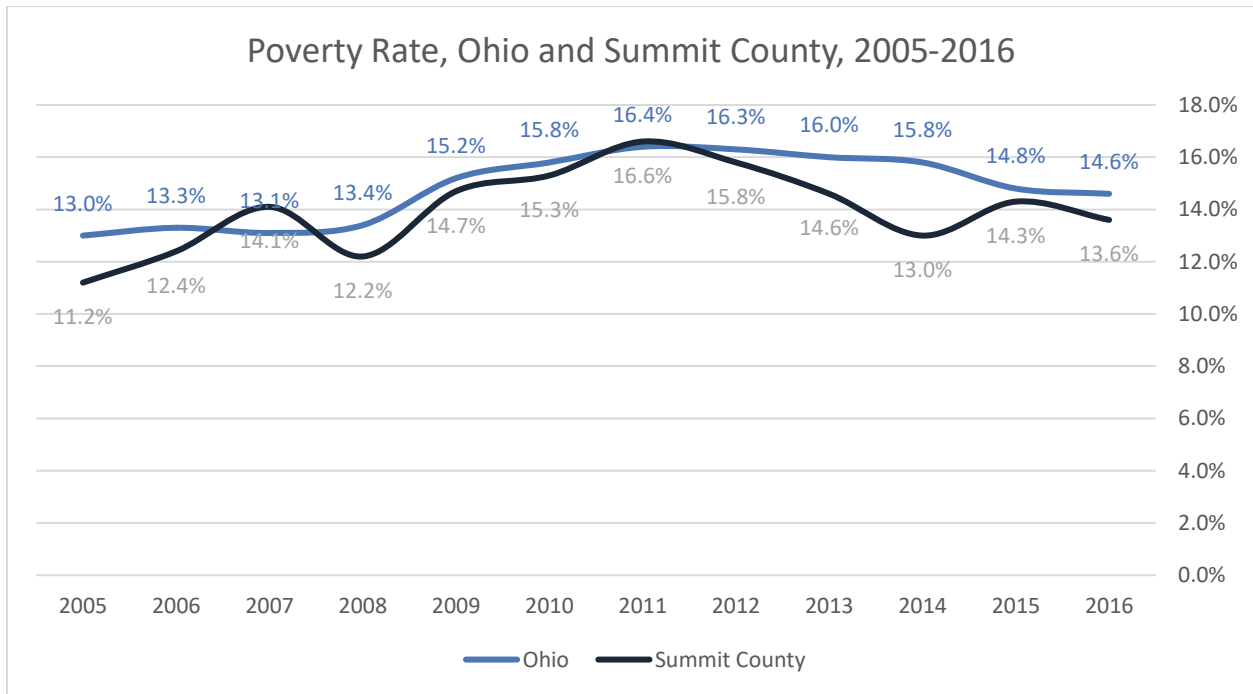
Residents of Hudson were more than twice as likely to identify drugs and addiction as the most important issue facing Greater Akron compared to residents of Akron (52 percent versus 24 percent). This aligns well with observations from key informants, who stated that the recent opioid epidemic is impacting suburban communities. Residents of Akron were more likely than residents of either Hudson or the remainder of Summit County to identify Equity and Social Inclusion as an important issue (17 percent, 10 percent, and 13 percent respectively.)

More than two-thirds of respondents (77 percent) raised an issue of concern during their *On the Table* conversation. Across the board, people were most likely to report having brought up something relating





The number of people living in poverty indicates how many families may need supports and services. In general, Summit County’s poverty rate has been slightly below that of the State of Ohio since 2005.<sup>4</sup> Like in the rest of the state, poverty in Summit County peaked in 2011. People in Akron, in particular, continue to struggle to make ends meet, even though cost of living is low. When 2015 Census data on poverty was released, Akron was one of the few large cities in Ohio where poverty increased. Nearly two-thirds of all individuals below poverty in Summit County reside in the city of Akron, and Akron’s poverty rate, at 23.7 percent, is approaching double the poverty rate of 13.6 percent for the entire county.



More than 22,000 children in Summit County live below poverty. The majority of those live in the city of Akron, where the child poverty rate is 36 percent. In Summit County, the poverty rate for African-Americans is more than three times that of Whites (10.2 percent versus 32.9 percent).

**Child Poverty**

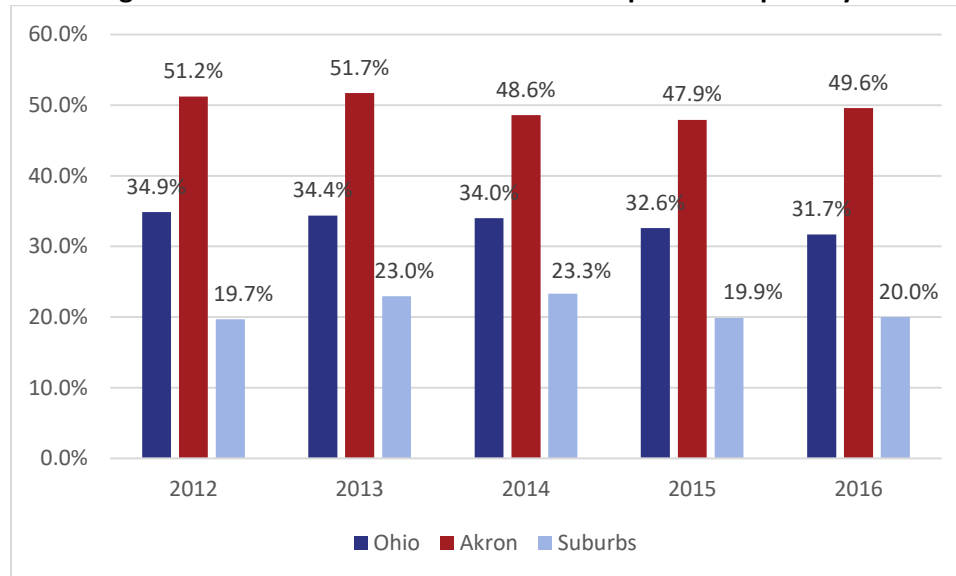
	Summit County		Akron		Suburbs	
Infant to Pre-K (5 and Under)	6,714	19.1%	5,262	37.7%	1,452	6.8%
K to 6th Grade ( 6 to 11 years)	7,735	22.3%	4,849	38.2%	2,886	13.1%
Middle School (12 to 14 years)	4,200	19.3%	2,857	36.1%	1,343	9.7%
High School (15 to 17years)	3,767	18.1%	2,222	30.8%	1,545	11.4%

Individuals and families with incomes between 100 percent and 200 percent of poverty have earnings above the official poverty threshold but still often struggle to make ends meet. Nearly half of Akron residents have incomes below 200 percent of poverty, compared to only one-fifth of Summit County

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, data in this section is from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016 1-year estimates.

suburbanites. Summit County largely mirrors the state household income distribution. Akron, however, has a greater proportion of households with incomes below \$35,000 than the state and county.

**Percentage of Individuals with incomes below 200 percent of poverty**



Some key informants indicated that there are more resources and services available to help low-income residents in Summit County than in other communities. However, inadequate income was cited as a challenge for everything from finding adequate housing to affording high-quality preschool, and was described as exacerbating the problem of drug addiction. Several spoke about a lack of intensive or comprehensive case management, which could help an individual or family work through multiple issues simultaneously. Even with a robust and collaborative social service community, and a well-functioning County government, needs in Greater Akron persist.

Recent research from United Way presents ALICE, which stands for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed.<sup>5</sup> Their study quantifies the growing number of individuals and families who are working, but are unable to afford the basic necessities of housing, food, child care, health care, and transportation. While the official poverty threshold does not vary by geography in the contiguous United States, the ALICE threshold varies by county and uses local data to determine average costs of basic expenses. Where federal poverty guidelines are based solely on family size, ALICE varies by family structure, so that a family with one adult and three children has a different threshold than two adults and two children, even though both are families of four. It is therefore possible to determine the amount different families would need to earn in order to be self-sufficient in a given county.

In Summit County in 2015, 26 percent of households were above the poverty level but below the ALICE threshold. When added to those below poverty, 40 percent were unable to meet their basic needs; in Akron, the combined poverty and ALICE rate was 57 percent of households.

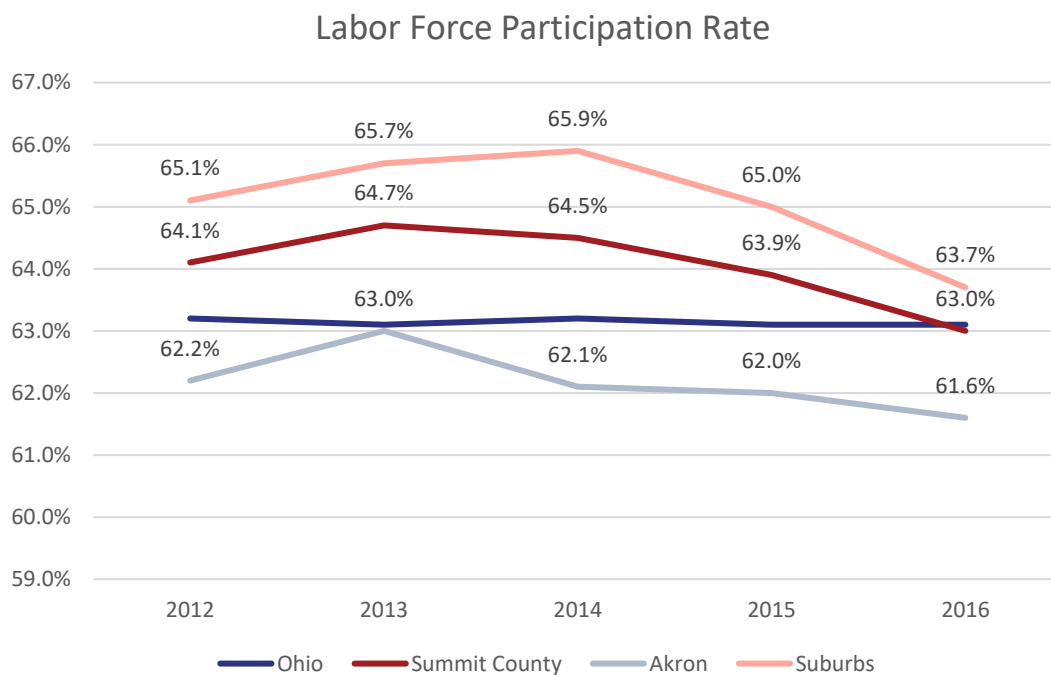
<sup>5</sup> A.L.I.C.E. Study of Financial Hardship, Ohio United Way, 2017.

<b>ALICE Thresholds for Summit County, 2015</b>	<b>1 Adult</b>	<b>2 Adults + 1 Infant + 1 Preschooler</b>
Hourly Wage Needed	\$9.17	\$32.77
Annual Salary Needed	\$18,336	\$65,544

Because poverty is based on income, economic independence is closely related to workforce issues. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of people in the civilian non-institutionalized population, age 16 or older, who are either working or actively seeking work. This indicator identifies the size of the workforce of the community and the number of people who are disconnected from the labor force.

Labor force participation peaked in Summit County at 64.7 percent in 2014, and then declined to 63.0 percent in 2016. Akron's rate peaked in 2013 at 63.0 percent and declined to 61.6 percent in 2016. The suburban rate was higher than Akron's, but also has declined since 2014.

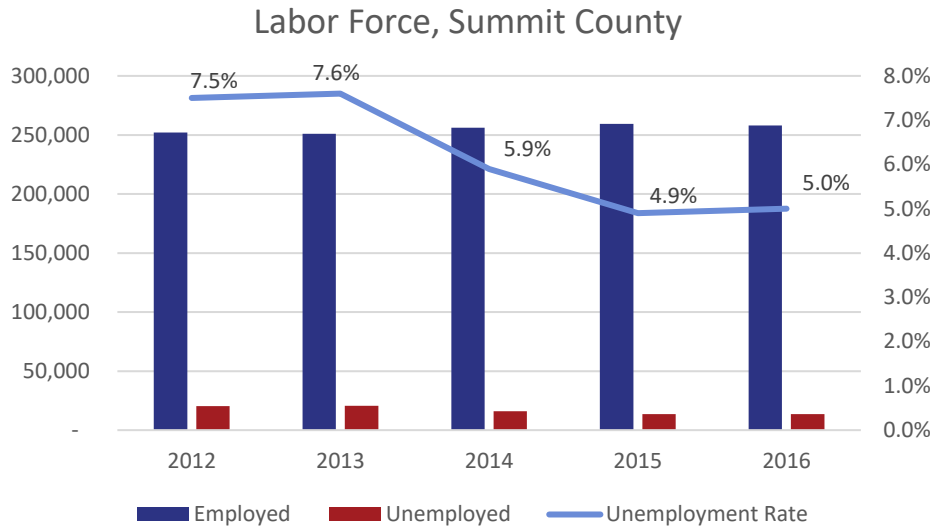
### Labor Force Participation Rate, 2010-2014<sup>6</sup>



Summit County experienced a decrease in the unemployment rate between 2012 and 2016. During this time period, the rate went from 7.5 percent to 5.0 percent. The number of unemployed people in the county was reduced by 6,600 with number of employed increasing by 5,900 between 2012 and 2016.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates.

<sup>7</sup> County Profiles Annual Edition, Ohio Development Services Agency, 2017.



However, a nation-wide study conducted by Brookings found that Summit County has one of the lowest employment rates among Blacks in 2015. Only 59 percent of the working-age black population is employed, versus 74 percent of the total working-age population in Summit County.<sup>8</sup>

Service providing jobs in the private sector employ the most workers in Summit County. The largest number of jobs are within the Trade, Transportation and Utilities industries. With an average annual salary of \$41,236 this industry has seen a 5.5 percent increase in employment since 2010. Employees of federal government earn the highest average wage but make up less than one percent of available jobs. The fastest growing industry is Leisure and Hospitality which increased by 10.9 percent between 2010 and 2015 but has the lowest average salary in the county at \$16,016. Jobs in the Natural Resources and Mining industries saw the steepest decline (36 percent) and make up just .05 percent of employed persons in the county. Today, “Akron is now more involved in knowledge production than goods production.”<sup>9</sup>

Existing reports noted a mismatch between the jobs available and the workforce in Greater Akron. As explained by Greater Ohio Policy Center, “A shift toward a health care- and education-based economy has meant that many workers who have little post-secondary education or workforce training are ill-equipped to participate in the local economy without additional training.”<sup>10</sup> This creates a situation where unemployment persists, yet employers are unable to find suitable candidates to fill their job openings. Lack of job readiness or “soft” skills, candidates missing skills and training specific to the job, and an inability to pass a drug test have been cited by employers as challenges.<sup>11</sup> Key informants noted that opportunity is not available for everyone, and that ex-offenders are a particularly difficult group to connect to the labor force.

The Northeast Ohio Workforce Plan identified barriers to building job skills including literacy and academic skills, lack of information about training and educational opportunities, enrolling in post-

<sup>8</sup> Employment by race and place: Snapshots of America, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Restoring Prosperity: A Case Study, Brookings Institute, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> 61.4 Report: Profile on Urban Health and Competitiveness in Akron, Ohio, Greater Ohio Policy Center, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) Plan, Ohio Means Jobs, 2016.

secondary courses which are not connected to in-demand fields, and a lack of easy-to-access high school equivalency, support services such as child care, and “learn and earn” opportunities like apprenticeships.

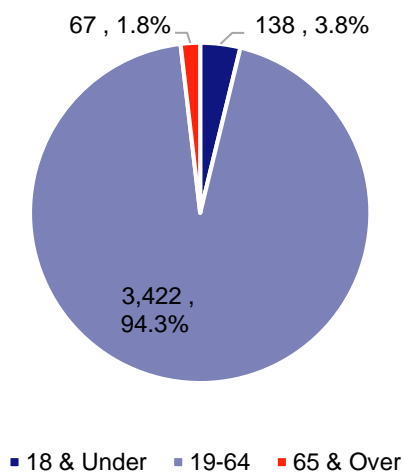
### Drugs & Addiction

Drug overdoses in Summit County and across Ohio rose precipitously in 2016 and remained high in 2017. Sixty-six percent of overdose deaths in 2016 in Summit County were the result of opioids. The opioid epidemic continues to take a toll on the resources of the community behavioral health system in Summit County, with an increased demand for services and a shortage of behavioral health professionals to meet needs.<sup>12</sup> Drugs and addiction was the second most-identified problem by *On the Table* participants, and unlike persistent economic issues, is generally seen as an emerging challenge.

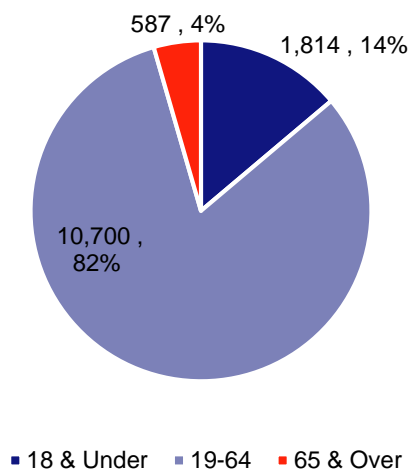
A few key informants brought up the opioid addiction crisis on their own, but more often the conversation turned to drugs and addiction after sharing that it arose as a key issue identified by participants in *On the Table*.

The Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board (ADM) provides prevention and treatment services to all ages via partnerships with agencies throughout the community. In 2015, the vast majority of alcohol and drug treatment services were to individuals between the ages of 19 and 64. Adults in this age range also received the most mental health treatment services (82 percent). Mental health treatment services were provided to 1,814 youth under 18 which comprises 14 percent of overall services provided.<sup>13</sup>

Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services by Age Summit County, 2015



Mental Health Treatment Services by Age Summit County, 2015

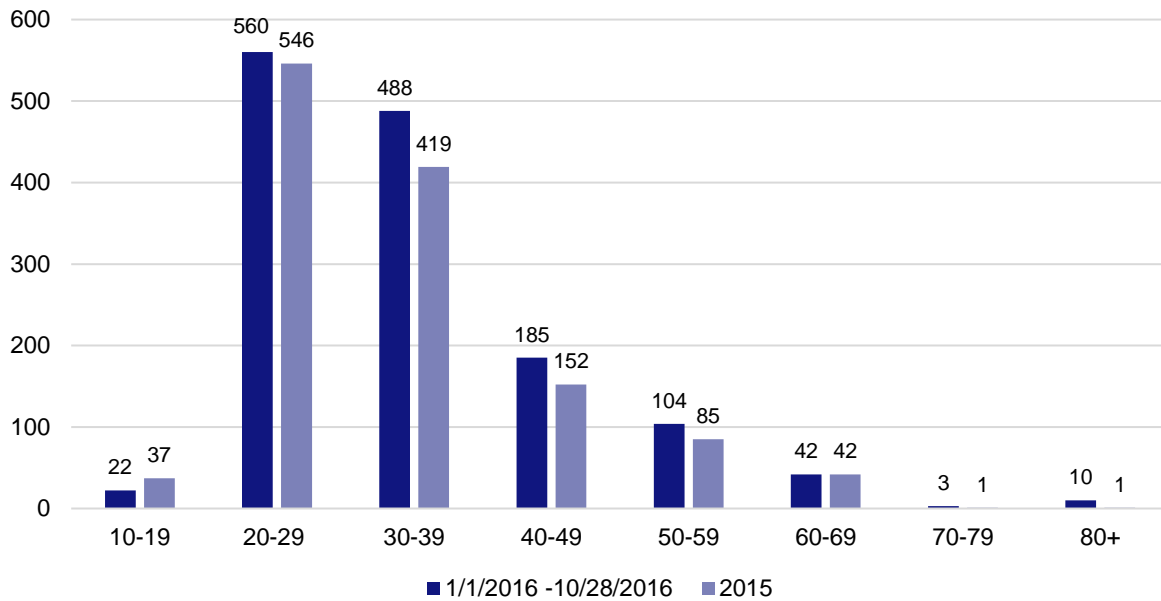


<sup>12</sup> ADAMHS County Plan

<sup>13</sup> Data provided to The Center for Community Solutions by Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board and originally compiled for United Way of Summit County.

Use of opiates has increasingly become a concern for many communities across the state of Ohio. Summit County ADM has seen an increase in the number of clients served who have an opiate/heroin use disorder. These numbers do not include community members using opiates and not engaged with ADM. In all age groups except 10 to 19, numbers through the third quarter of 2016 were higher than total number of clients served in 2015. Data available through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) estimate 11 percent of the Summit County population 12 and older have engaged in illicit drug use in the past month.

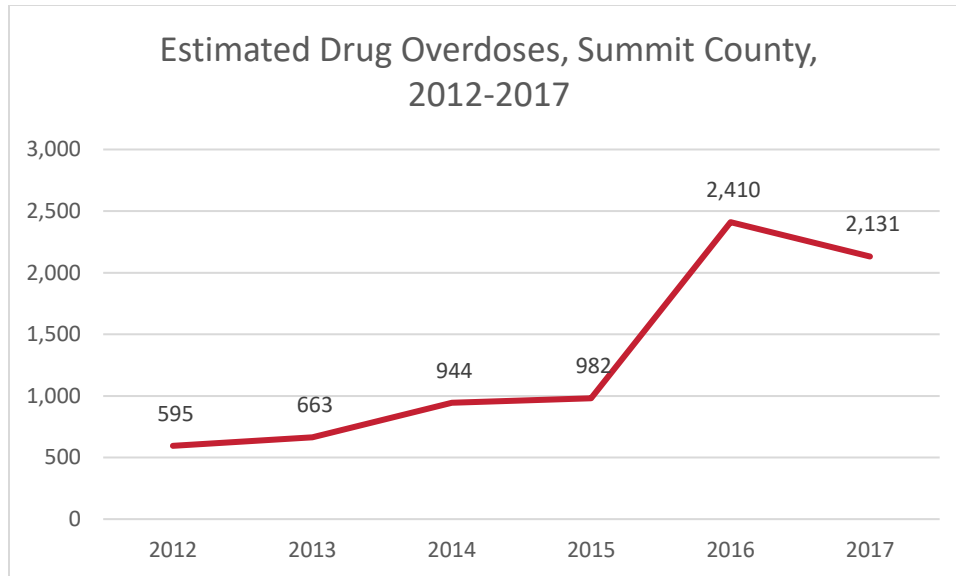
### Summit County ADM Board Clients serviced for Opiates/Heroin



Summit County Public Health compiles data on Hospital Emergency Department (ED) visits due to drug overdoses. According to their report, “overdose cases include all emergency visits to a Summit County medical provider in which drugs were identified as the cause of traumatic injury.... Traumatic injuries due to drugs caused by suicide attempts, allergic reactions to normal medications, or accidental overdoses of everyday drugs (such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen) were removed where identified. Zip codes refer to the zip code of residence of the patient visiting the ER.”

In 2016, there were 2,431 ED visits in Summit County due to drug overdoses, and 2,322 in 2017. About two-thirds of these visits (63.7 percent) were by residents of Akron ZIP codes, although only a little over one-third (36 percent) of Summit County residents lived in Akron. Barberton (44203) and Cuyahoga Falls (44221 and 44223) also had high numbers of drug overdoses resulting in ED visits.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Summit County Public Health Data Dashboard



The widespread nature of the opioid crisis has meant that more resources are being devoted to the issue. One key informant told us that opioids “suck the air out of the room” so that other issues often get overlooked. On the other hand, now there are more treatment resources and they are available for people regardless of drug of choice. Some sensed that the opioid crisis may have already hit its peak thanks to the community response as well as the natural course of an epidemic. Preliminary data from the first months of 2018 seems to suggest that the rate of overdoses has slowed.

Many noted the changing face of addiction, which is now seen as a universal issue impacting people in all communities at all income levels, rather than being an urban issue. Many interviewees pointed out the racial disparities in the response to the opioid crisis versus the crack addiction crisis of several years ago. This has created strains within the community, according to some key informants. Data from Summit Public Health shows that in 2012-2014, Whites surpassed Blacks in the rate of overdoses, with White males ages 25-34 being the most impacted.

The ADM Board identified clinical staff turnover and recruitment as a challenge. There is no youth-focused treatment facility in Summit County for either substance use disorders or mental illness, so youth needing services must often leave the county in order to be served.<sup>15</sup>

There has been a coordinated community response to the opioid epidemic, and there are early indications that interventions are working. One of United Way of Summit County’s Bold Goals is to reduce ER visits due to drug overdose from 2,400 each year to 1,000.<sup>16</sup> The Summit County Opiate Task Force’s plan identified the lack of treatment services, especially for residential treatment, detoxification, and Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) as being of particular concern.<sup>17</sup> Their responses focus on advocacy for additional funding or rule changes to support the community, education, raising awareness, and improving understanding, increasing support and resources for those struggling with addiction and their families, and reducing access to drugs.

<sup>15</sup> Summit County Community Plan, ADM Board, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> United Way of Summit County.

<sup>17</sup> Summit County Opiate Task Force Strategic Plan, 2017.

## Education & Youth Development

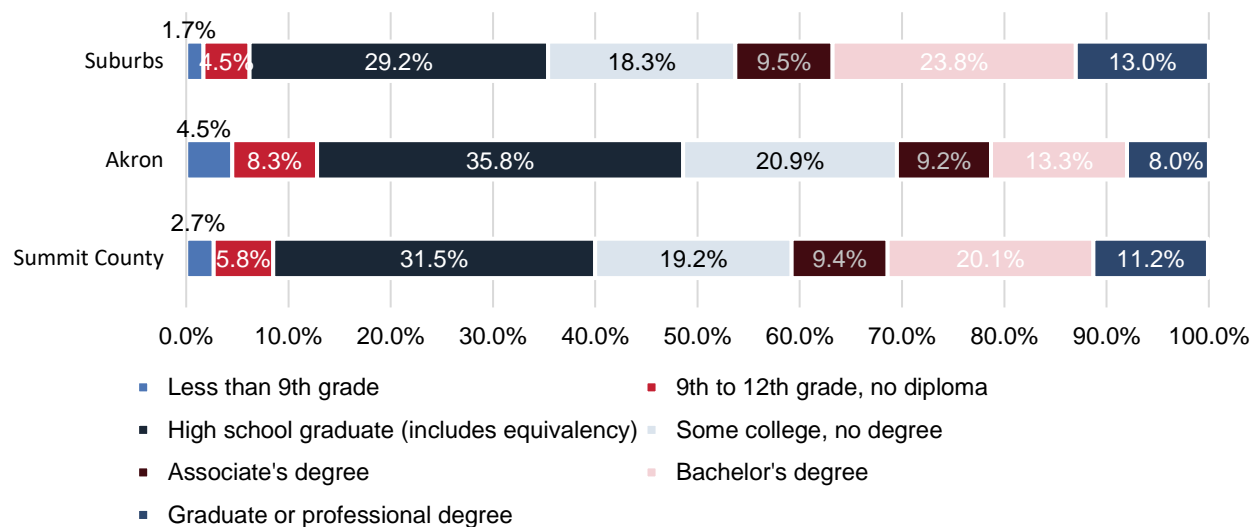
*On the Table* participants identified Education and Youth Development as a top concern in Greater Akron. This topic closely relates to economic development, as the education system is a key component in preparing individuals to join the workforce. Educational attainment remains a particular challenge for individuals in Akron, where about half of adults over age 25 have no education beyond a high school diploma. Individuals with higher levels of educational attainment are typically better prepared with education and skills to obtain and retain good jobs.<sup>18</sup>

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services compile data on annual job openings in the state of Ohio, including median annual wage and level of education required. In most instances, the higher levels of education yield higher median incomes.<sup>19</sup>

Educational Attainment, Population Ages 25 Years and Over, 2016 1-Year Estimates

	Summit County		Akron		Suburbs	
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>		378,788		132,665		246,123
<b>Less than 9th grade</b>	2.7%	10,253	4.5%	5,951	1.7%	4,302
<b>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</b>	5.8%	22,042	8.3%	11,023	4.5%	11,019
<b>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</b>	31.5%	119,225	35.8%	47,458	29.2%	71,767
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	19.2%	72,701	20.9%	27,692	18.3%	45,009
<b>Associate's degree</b>	9.4%	35,719	9.2%	12,247	9.5%	23,472
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	20.1%	76,267	13.3%	17,628	23.8%	58,639
<b>Graduate or professional degree</b>	11.2%	42,581	8.0%	10,666	13.0%	31,915

Educational Attainment, Ages 25+



<sup>18</sup> Unless otherwise noted, data in this section is from the American Community Survey 1-year estimates.

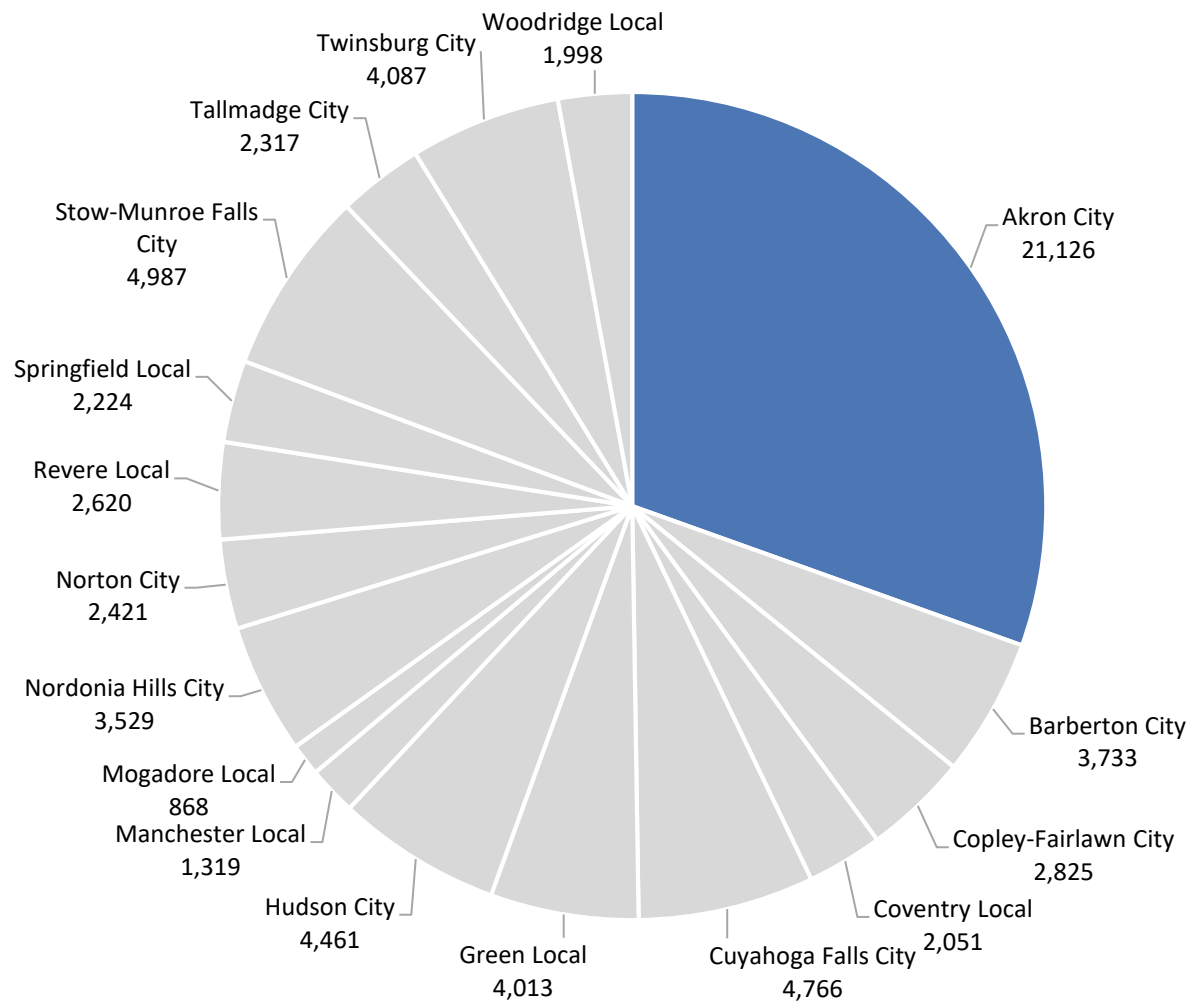
<sup>19</sup> Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Labor Market Information.



Currently, individuals with higher educations in Summit County are more likely to live in the suburbs. As a result, it is likely that wealth in Summit County will continue to be concentrated outside of Akron.

Turning to issues relating to education, about 50 percent of three and four year olds were enrolled in preschool during the 2010-2014 period in Summit County.<sup>20</sup> Akron City Schools is the largest school district in Summit County. Unfortunately, student success in Akron Public Schools is lower than that in other Districts.<sup>21</sup>

School Districts in Summit County, 2015-2016 Enrollment



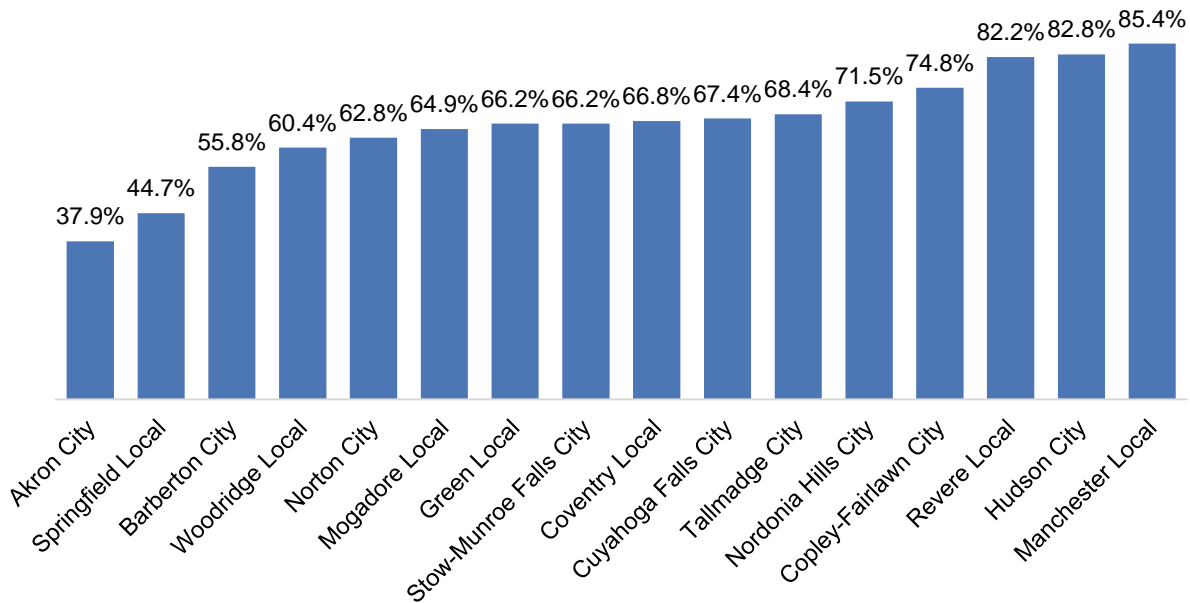
<sup>20</sup> First Things First Progress Report.

<sup>21</sup> Student performance data is from Ohio Department of Education and was first compiled by The Center for Community Solutions by United Way of Summit County.

A few key informants spoke about Akron Public Schools. There seemed to be a general sense from key informants that the perception of the school system and school performance by the general public was worse than reality, and that great strides are being made to address the challenge of education in Akron. Several noted that the school system has been a willing partner in a number of initiatives to improve education and youth development in the community. Summit Education Initiative has reported that Summit County has expanded the number of young children being assessed on key developmental areas, a first step to ensuring that children receive the services and supports need to be successful in school.

School districts' rates of student end of year testing at the proficient, accelerated or advanced level of reading for third grade ranges from 37.9 percent to 85.4 percent within Summit County. The median rate of reading proficiency is 66.5 percent. The Akron and Springfield districts are lower than the average at 37.9 percent and 44.7 percent respectively.

**Students scoring proficient or higher for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade reading, 2015-2016**



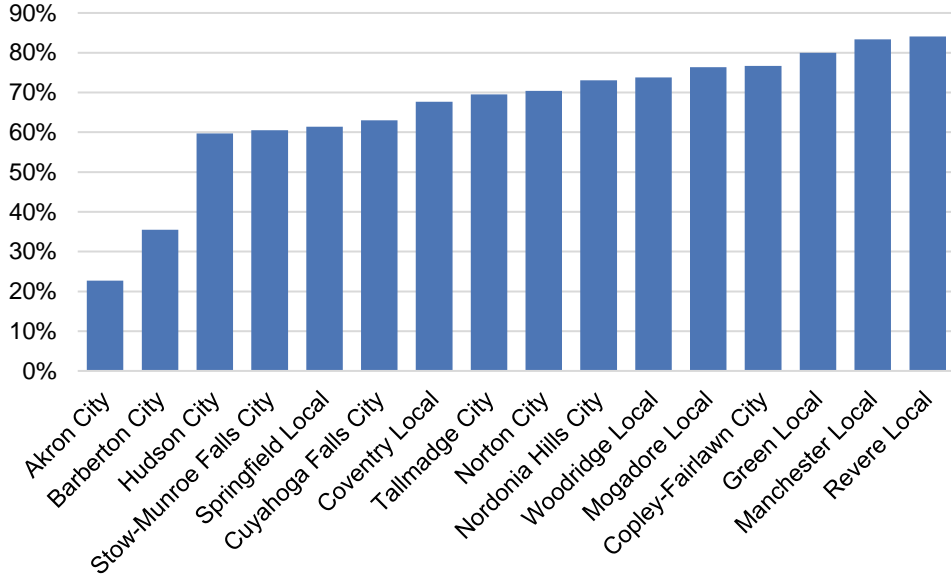
Within the Akron Public Schools, there is wide variation between the school clusters on reading proficiency. The Buchtel cluster has the lowest percentage of third graders reaching reading proficiency at just over 18 percent while Ellet has the highest rate at almost 58 percent.

**Third Grade Reading Proficiency, 2015-2016, by Cluster**

Cluster	Percent
Buchtel	18.4%
Charter	29.0%
East	27.0%
Ellet	57.7%
Firestone	47.2%
Garfield	34.6%
Kenmore	48.3%
North	27.5%

Students who have strong math skills leaving eighth grade are more likely to perform well in high school level mathematics classes, which are an important aspect of college prep. Within Summit County, the Akron and Barberton school districts have low rates of end of year eighth grade math proficiency. Although Hudson often ranks high on other school measurements, they have the third lowest score in this measure. Within the Akron district, the Buchtel, East and Firestone districts have very low rates of proficiency.

**Proficient or Higher, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math, 2015-2016**



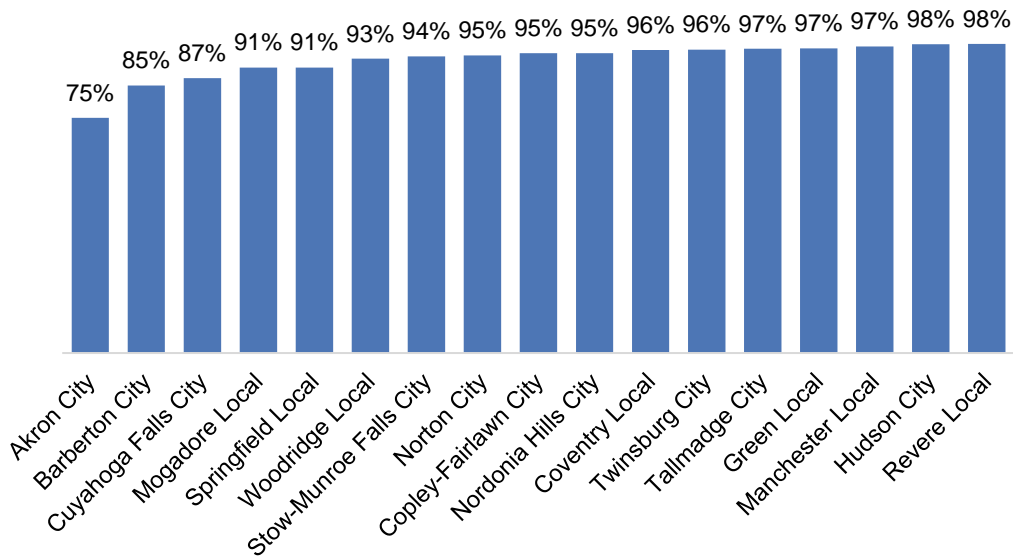
**Proficient or Higher, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math, 2015-2016, by Cluster**

Buchtel	1.80%
Charter	43.20%
East	4.70%
Ellet	54.70%
Firestone	8.90%
Garfield	30.20%
Kenmore	12.10%
North	15.70%
Specialty	51.30%

Graduation from high school is often considered an essential indicator of future economic success. The state reports the four-year and five-year longitudinal graduation rate for each district and school building. Graduation rates indicate the strength and effectiveness of schools, and their ability to prepare youth for the transition into employment or postsecondary education.

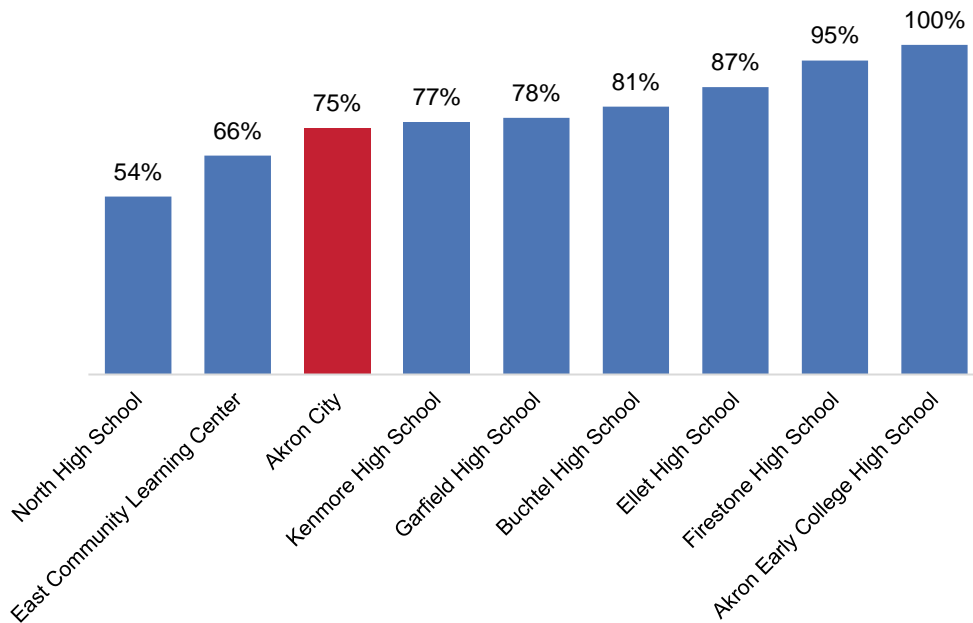
The four-year longitudinal graduation rate for school districts in Summit County range from 75 to 98 percent. Over half of the schools have a graduation rate of over 95 percent. Four districts range between 90 and 94 percent. Three districts have graduation rates below 90 percent: Cuyahoga Falls, Barberton, and Akron.

**Four Year Graduation Rates, 2014-2015**



There is variation in graduation rates within the Akron high schools. The schools in the district range from 54 to 100 percent. North High School and the East Community Learning Center have rates below the district average.

**Four Year Graduation Rate, Akron Public Schools, 2014-2015**

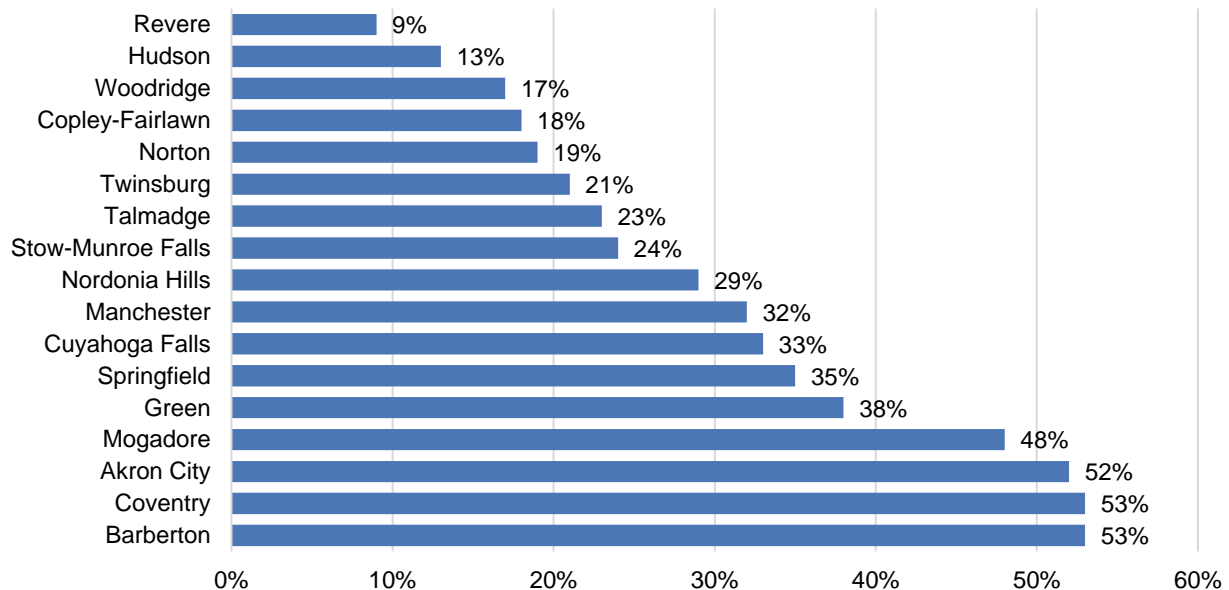


The Urban Region of Ohio, which is comprised of the six largest public school districts in the state and includes Akron Public Schools, contains 8.3 percent of traditional public school students, but accounts for 37.5 percent of traditional public school dropouts. Students in Ohio’s six urban districts are 6.6 times more likely to drop out than public school students in the rest of the state.<sup>22</sup>

Following graduation, most students continue their education by enrolling in college or university. The state reports the percentage of high school graduates from each school enrolled in public universities or community colleges in Ohio as well as the percentage of students enrolled in developmental courses. A high number of students entering the Ohio University System from Summit County are enrolled in either Developmental Math and/or English. Developmental courses are required for students who are not prepared to take college level classes. The developmental courses, also referred to as remedial, allow the students to develop the skills that will be necessary to pass college level courses. Over half of students who have graduated from Akron, Coventry, and Barberton districts pursuing higher education are enrolled in at least one developmental college course. These students enter higher education requiring additional instruction before being able to take regular college-level courses. Developmental math is required more often than developmental English. In ten of seventeen Summit County school districts, over 20 percent of students enrolled in public universities and colleges are taking developmental math; English is required for over 20 percent of students from five of the school districts.<sup>23</sup>

**Percent of Students Attending Ohio Public Higher Education Institutions Taking Developmental Courses**

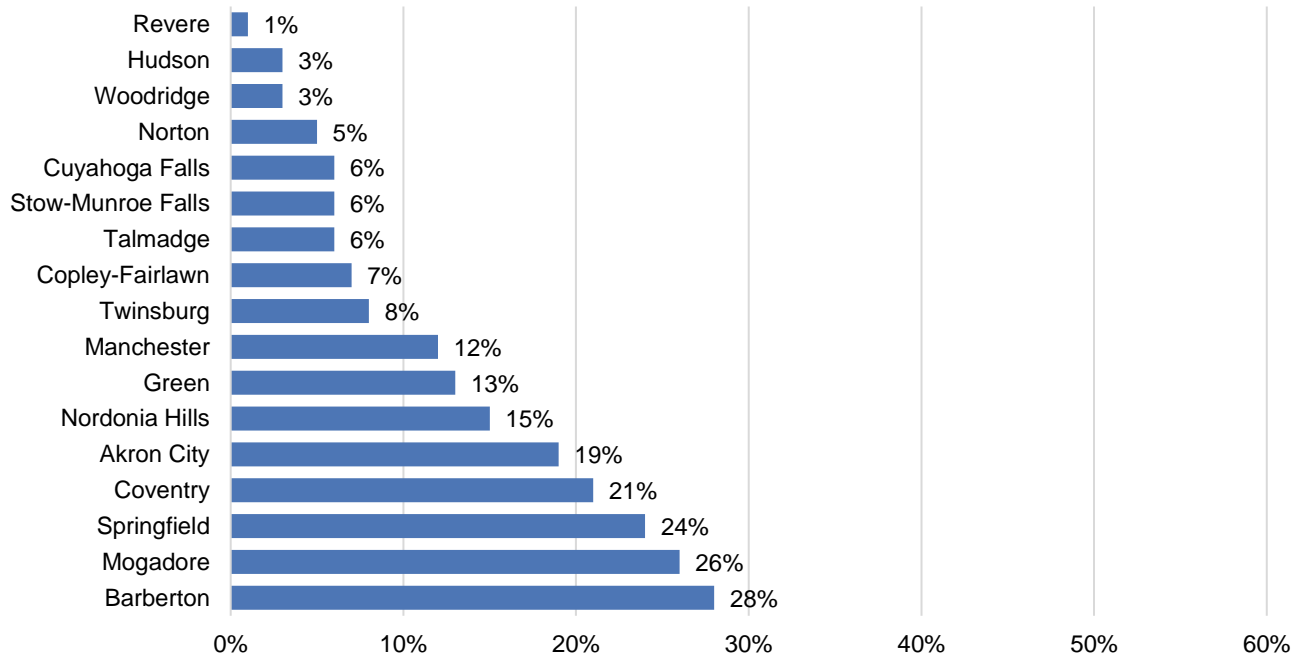
**Either Developmental Math or Developmental English**



<sup>22</sup> Ohio’s Race to the Top Dropout Tracking Report, Ohio Department of Education, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Ohio Remediation Report, Ohio Board of Higher Education, 2015.

## Both Developmental Math and English



Racial disparities in education are stark. On nearly every measure, black students fall at the bottom of educational attainment. Only 15 percent of black students are career and college ready, compared to 42 percent of students overall. Black students are half as likely as white students to be reading proficiently in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or to score proficient or higher on Ohio’s Next Generation Mathematics test in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. White students are 3 times more likely than Black students to have a 3.1 GPA in 9<sup>th</sup> grade after completing 6.5 cumulative credits, and 50 percent of white students graduate with a 21 or higher ACT composite score (or equivalent) compared to only 15 percent of Black students.<sup>24</sup>

In the area of youth development outside of the educational system, the Youth Behavior Risk Assessment provides information about high-school students in Summit County. On this survey, 57 percent of students in Summit County said they have used alcohol, 42 percent have had sexual intercourse, and 37 percent have used marijuana. In the past 12 months, 29 percent have experienced depressive sadness, 25 percent have engaged in physical fighting, and 24 percent have gambled money or personal items. One-in-five texted or emailed while driving. On the other hand, 66 percent saw a doctor or nurse for a checkup, 71 saw a dentist for non-emergency dental care, and 59 percent played on one or more sports teams.<sup>25</sup>

### Equity & Social Inclusion

Summit County is more racially diverse than Ohio as a whole, but People of Color are not evenly spread throughout Summit County. Two municipalities, Twinsburg Township and the City of Akron, have a greater share of the population who are Black or African American than the county as a whole. In contrast, more than half of the municipalities have populations that are more than 90 percent white. While 37 percent of Summit County’s population lives in Akron, 77 percent of the population of Black or

<sup>24</sup> Educational Attainment, Summit Education Initiative, 2016.

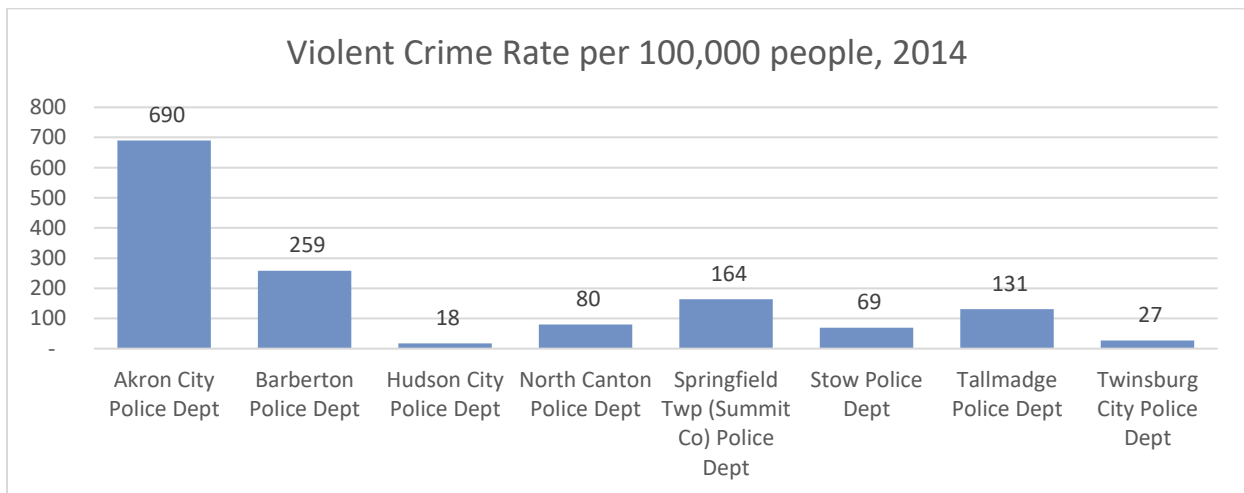
<sup>25</sup> Summit County Youth Behavioral Risk Survey, Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods, 2014.

African American alone or in combination with other races lives in the city (68,161 in Akron out of 88,051 total).

Racial disparities are noted throughout this report, and are especially prevalent in education, health, housing, and criminal justice. Several key informants spoke of a growing community interest in understanding and addressing racial disparities, but there is no concerted effort to address equity and inclusion. This could present an opportunity for Akron Community Foundation to take a leadership role on a critical community issue.

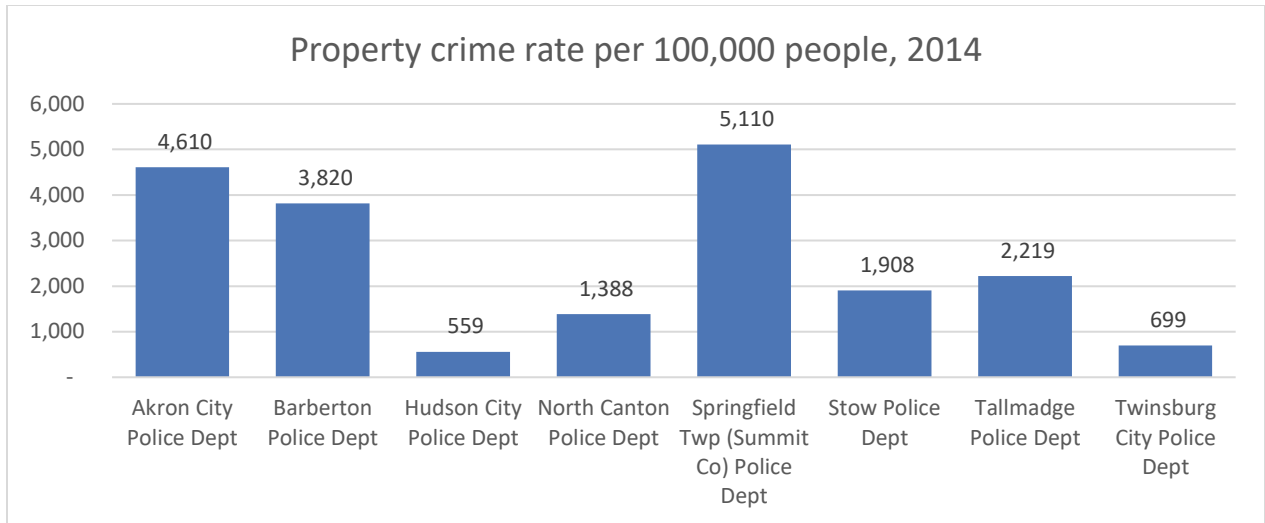
### Public Safety & Judicial System

A limited amount of crime data is available for local jurisdictions from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics (UCR).<sup>26</sup> The latest data available is from 2014, and 11 public safety departments in Summit County are included.<sup>27</sup> Property crime was more common than violent crime. Of the 1,640 violent crimes in Summit County included in the UCR, more than half were aggravated assault. At 690 per 100,000 population, Akron’s violent crime rate was the highest in the county, more than twice that of the next-highest rate, Barberton. Property crime rates were much higher than violent crime rates, and Springfield Township had the highest property crime rate at 5,110 per 100,000 population. This data should be interpreted with caution due to reporting criteria. It also counts the public safety department that responds to a crime, which is not necessarily the jurisdiction where the crime is committed.



<sup>26</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Online Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics.

<sup>27</sup> Akron City Police Department, Barberton Police Department, Cuyahoga Falls City Police Department, Hudson City Police Department, North Canton Police Department, Norton Police Department, Springfield Township Police Department, Stow Police Department, Summit County Sheriff Office, Tallmadge Police Department, and Twinsburg City Police Department.



According to the Summit County Medical examiner, natural cause deaths have decreased, but deaths relating to overdoses and homicides are on the rise.<sup>28</sup> Two-thirds of the 302 accidental deaths were the result of overdoses, while 85 were from falls.

More Black men than White men die from homicide. More than half (28) of the 50 deaths by homicide in 2014-2015 were caused by guns, and 51 suicides were the result of gunshot wounds. Akron has more homicides than any community in Summit County.

Summit County Reentry Network estimates that 2,500 citizens return to Summit County each year from prisons. Racial disparities in incarceration rates are well-documented nationally, and Black youth are “disproportionally overrepresented” in Ohio’s juvenile justice system.<sup>29</sup> Summit is one of 14 counties included in additional data collected on racial disparities in the justice system. Black youth comprised 17 percent of Ohio’s population in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, but represented nearly half of youth felonies and 82 percent of youth transferred to adult court. According to the Ohio Juvenile Justice Association, “In FY 2013 alone, nearly 13,000 fewer Black youth would have had to be arrested to make the arrest rate between White and Black Youth equal.”<sup>30</sup>

Older Adults in Summit County were less concerned about safety than older adults in Cleveland or Franklin County.<sup>31</sup> Nearly 94 percent said they feel safe in their home, 81 percent said their neighbors or neighborhood make them feel safe and protected, and only 11 percent are fearful they will be a victim of crime in their neighborhood.

### Housing & Homelessness

Quality housing in Akron was identified by several key informants as being of particular concern. Property values are low, which helps with affordability, but means that building or improvement

<sup>28</sup> Summit County Medical Examiner Annual Report, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet Series: African American Youth, Ohio Juvenile Justice Association, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The Center for Community Solutions has conducted similar surveys of older adults for projects in three communities: Age-Friendly Cleveland, Age-Friendly Columbus, and Direction Home (Summit County).



projects are not cost-effective. This was confirmed by research conducted by Greater Ohio Policy Center.<sup>32</sup> Others pointed to a perception that Akron is expensive, yet it lacks quality housing. The need to attract reinvestment capital was noted by some key informants. The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Report noted that people move out of Akron due to lack of affordable housing in what are considered “good neighborhoods”, as well as a lack of housing options that are accessible for older adults aging in place and persons with disabilities.<sup>33</sup> Others mentioned the lack of jobs, particularly with the loss of industrial and manufacturing industries, high rates of crime, and Akron’s public school system as reasons why people leave the City. Some of the available housing stock is in poor condition or not “well-suited to the size and lifestyles of middle class families.”<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, recent developments in downtown Akron appear to be attracting more residents to the area. Growth in economic development, specifically downtown, arts and entertainment venues, and quality restaurants are reported to have attracted people back into the city. Care must be taken to ensure that new development does not displace residents. Individuals with criminal records have a particularly difficult time finding suitable housing.<sup>35</sup>

Foreclosures have been a concern across Ohio during the past decade, and Summit County is no exception. Between 2014 and 2015, Summit was the only urban county which experienced a steep rise in foreclosures (21 percent), and has a higher foreclosure rate than the rest of the state. The number of foreclosures and housing sold “for cheap” has caused an increase in “slumlords”.<sup>36</sup>

Median gross rent, at \$744 per month, is higher in Summit County than the state median of \$730. There are only enough federally-subsidized and Ohio Housing Finance Agency-funded rental units to cover 29 percent of low-income renter households in Summit County.<sup>37</sup> The result is long waiting lists for public housing and voucher programs, and more renters living in unaffordable housing.

In fact, renters in Summit County and Akron struggle with housing affordability at a higher rate than homeowners. In these communities almost half of all renters have housing costs higher than 30 percent of their income. Even with a mortgage, homeowners are less likely to have housing costs above 30 percent of their income. Housing is more affordable for both homeowners and renters in the county overall than in the city of Akron.<sup>38</sup> Housing affordability is an indicator of socio-economic status and may indicate a need for financial support services.

Households with Unaffordable Housing				
	Owners with a Mortgage		Renters	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Summit County	22,183	24.5%	34,078	46.0%
Akron	7,371	31.6%	19,270	49.3%
Suburbs	14,812	22.1%	14,808	42.3%

<sup>32</sup> Build in Akron: 2017 Housing Market Assessment, Greater Ohio Policy Center, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice in Akron, Ohio, Housing Research and Advocacy Center, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice in Akron, Ohio, Housing Research and Advocacy Center, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Ohio Foreclosures 2015, Policy Matters Ohio, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016 1-Year Estimates.

In Summit County, renters also have a higher rate of mobility than homeowners. Households with incomes under 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) also have higher rates of mobility. A high rate of mobility can indicate family instability.<sup>39</sup> Children who move frequently may experience disruption in their educational and social development. Mobility is also a concern when measuring the outcomes of programs that are located in a specific geographic area. If that area has high rates of mobility, it becomes difficult to measure programmatic impact for a family or individual.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

### Mobility by Poverty Status

	Total	Moved; within same county	Moved; from different county, same state	Moved; from different state	Moved; from abroad
Population 1 year and over for whom poverty status is determined	522,991	6.4%	2.6%	0.8%	0.4%
Below 100 percent of the poverty level	70,381	9.0%	3.7%	1.0%	2.1%
100 to 149 percent of the poverty level	46,982	11.0%	1.1%	0.7%	0.1%
At or above 150 percent of the poverty level	405,628	5.5%	2.6%	0.8%	0.1%

### Mobility by Housing Tenure

	Total	Moved; within same county	Moved; from different county, same state	Moved; from different state	Moved; from abroad
Population 1 year and over in housing units	523,281	6.5%	2.6%	0.8%	0.4%
Householder lived in owner-occupied housing units	352,390	3.8%	1.5%	0.5%	0.1%
Householder lived in renter-occupied housing units	170,891	12.0%	4.7%	1.4%	0.9%

Segregation and the concentration of poverty was identified as an impediment to fair housing choice in Akron, despite stakeholders' impression that neighborhoods are segregated based on income, rather than race. Probable cause of discrimination based on race was found in 57 percent of fair housing tests between 2008 and 2011.<sup>40</sup> Racial disparities in the rates of mortgage loan denial were also found in Akron. Around one-third (32.5 percent) of mortgage applications by Whites were denied, versus more than half (52.9 percent) of African Americans' applications.

### Community Development

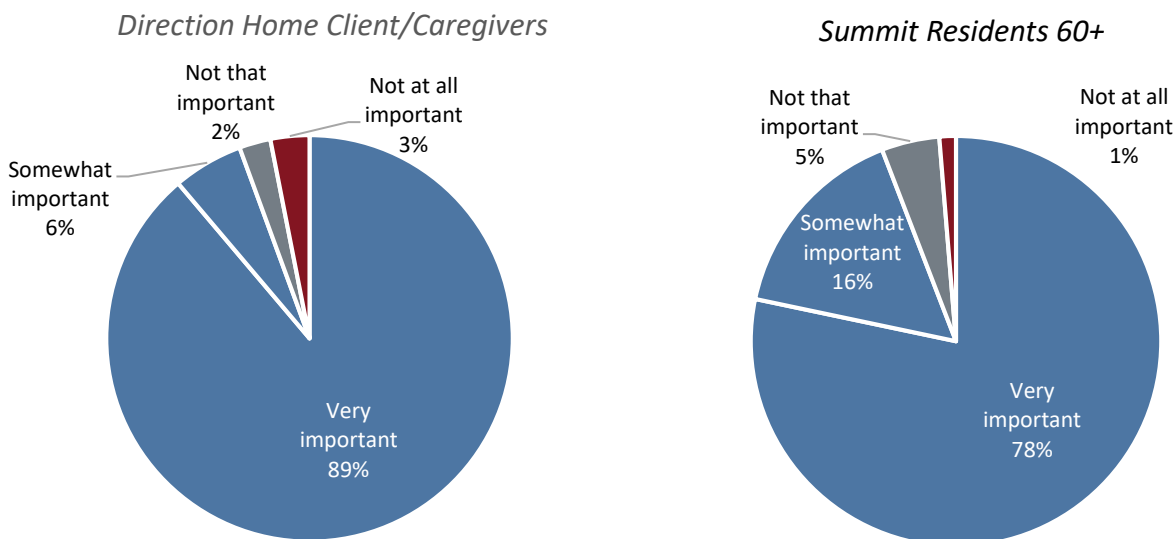
Four percent of *On the Table* respondents identified community development as the biggest problem facing Greater Akron, yet many key informants discussed this topic during interviews. Community development was mostly targeted to downtown Akron or neighborhoods within the city. Creating vibrant neighborhoods and making downtown Akron attractive for visitors and residents was repeatedly identified as something needed in Summit County. Attracting businesses, revitalizing streetscapes, and improving the housing stock were identified as important strategies to improve downtown. Encouraging employers to locate closer to the central city, in places where people live, could help. A vibrant, livable downtown was identified as necessary to attract and retain residents. Currently, a strong economic core to attract people is lacking.

<sup>40</sup> Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice

A few key informants related that people in Akron live through the lens of neighborhoods, yet place-based approaches are scarce. Several mentioned projects announced during the State of the City as a move in the right direction to target efforts and investment for greater impact. At least one informant pointed to a sense of civic pride and engagement in Akron, and a sense that people “buy in” to the sense of positive change. This was echoed in the *On the Table* survey results. Several reports identified downtown development as important to Akron’s future, and most recommend improving housing options as an important component.

Some neighborhoods within Akron have fared better than others. There are eight neighborhoods where the median value of single-family homes is less than \$50,000, more than half less than the median home value for Summit County overall of \$101,970. There are more than 26,000 residents who live in economically stressed neighborhoods, where typical household income and labor force participation are low. On the other hand, there are many neighborhoods identified as “prime for investment,” “poised for growth,” or “future hot spots”.<sup>41</sup>

As Summit County’s population ages, an increasingly important aspect of community development will be creating conditions so residents can age in place. Community Solutions recently completed an assessment of the needs of older adults in Summit County for Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities (Direction Home). Clients and caregivers associated with Direction Home, randomly selected residents of Summit County age 60 and older, and general public callers to Direction Home and Metro Transit were all asked to identify the level of importance they place on remaining in their home as they age. Among all groups, 94 to 100 percent said it is very important or somewhat important to remain in their homes.



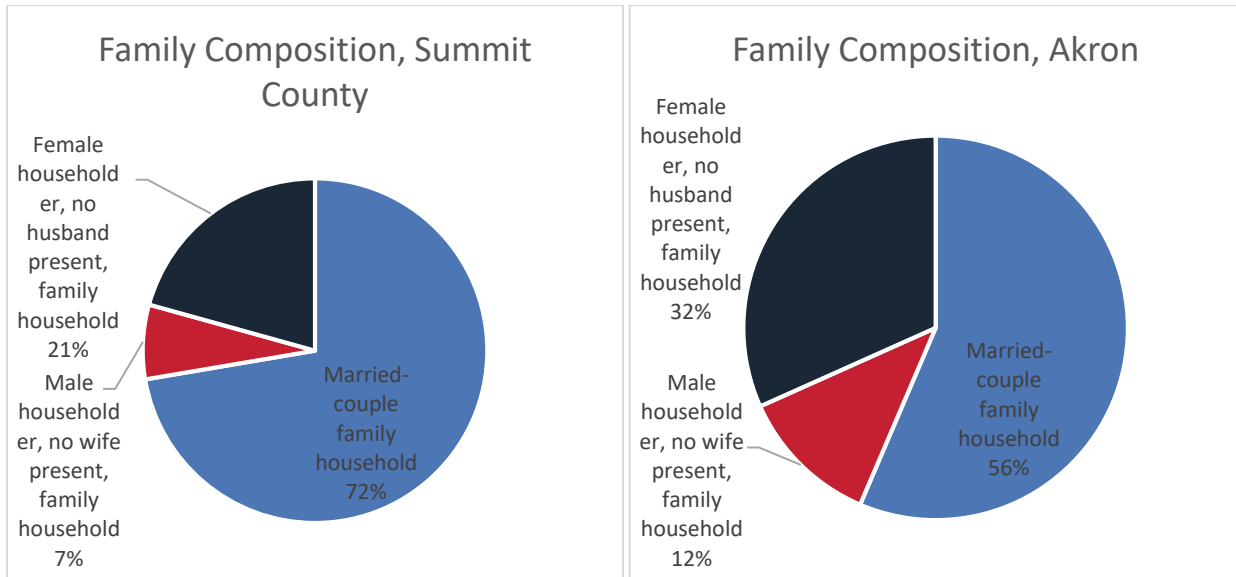
Ninety-five percent of Summit County older adults said they live near amenities they need and want, like shopping, restaurants, parks, and medical facilities.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Akron Economically Distressed Neighborhoods, Fund for Our Economic Future, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Information from forthcoming Assessment of Needs of Older Adults in Summit County.

## Family

There are 222,202 Households in Summit County, of which 62 percent are considered families. In both Akron and Summit County, married-couple families are most common, but nearly one-third of households in Akron are female headed. Female-headed households were more likely to include their own children than married couple families (54 percent versus 34 percent).

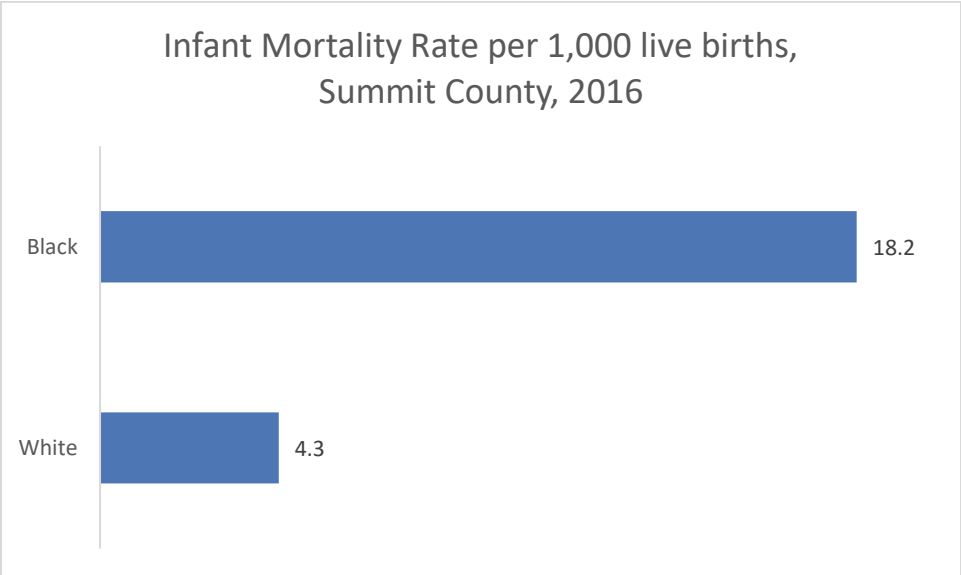
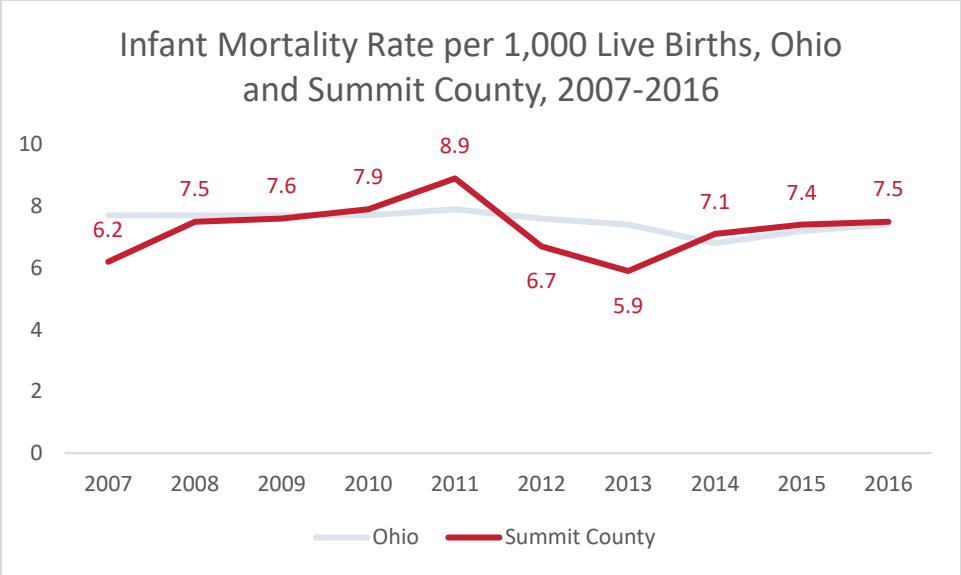


In recent years there has been an increase in grandparents raising grandchildren, and early indications are that the opioid epidemic is speeding up this trend. In 2016, there were 3,207 grandparents in Summit County who were living with, and responsible for their grandchildren, which includes 1,296 grandparents in Akron. Many of these grandparents have not yet reached an age where senior services are available to them. About half (49.4 percent) are under the age of 60. Raising grandchildren presents unique challenges for grandparents, especially if they have not formally gained custody, and “many grandparents often have difficulty getting access to supports for the children and themselves.”<sup>43</sup> Child abuse and neglect and incarceration of a parent are some of the reasons that grandchildren live with grandparents.

Infant mortality is another issue which impacts families in Greater Akron. Birth outcomes for Summit County mothers are generally worse than the State. Summit County’s infant mortality rate of 7.5 deaths for every 1,000 live births is well above the Healthy People 2020 Goal of 6.0.<sup>44</sup> Black babies are more than four times more likely to die before their first birthday than White babies in Summit County.

<sup>43</sup> Northeast Ohio Needs Assessment for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grant, Northeast Ohio Regional Prevention Council, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Ohio Department of Health.



On the opposite end of the lifespan are issues facing older adults. Several key informants mentioned that aging of Summit County’s population was an issue that could benefit from greater attention. They lauded Akron Community Foundation for prioritizing funding for this population. A few were concerned about the community’s capacity to adequately address needs as neighbors age in place. The forthcoming Direction Home assessment largely confirms the perception that the community and its residents are not adequately prepared to successfully age in place.

**Government**

Advocacy to improve public policy is important to shape government responses to community issues. Unfortunately, community members in Greater Akron reported feeling disconnected from policy-makers, even though key informants generally believed that the public sector in Akron and Summit county functions well. Government can be an important partner in addressing community issues and

according to the latest available data, government provided 92 percent of the investments in health and social services in Summit County in 2012.<sup>45</sup>

When asked what they would change if they had a magic wand, several key informants pointed to improving some aspect of the policy environment. In general, these comments related to state and federal level deliberations. The uncertainty of funding was highlighted by a few interviewees as being particularly challenging for the nonprofit and social services community, as well as for local government agencies. The funding for long standing, effective programs is now in doubt. Several key informants lamented that it is a difficult time for nonprofits, and that the state budget no longer provides adequate support for local governments. Federal funding is declining, and it is reasonable to assume there is no more coming.

Resources available to local government to address community issues are declining. The City of Akron lost a net \$15 million per year between 2010 and 2017, the result of reductions in the State's Local Government Fund and changes in tax laws.<sup>46</sup> A drop in human service levy collections is partly responsible for this decline, meaning there are fewer funds for developmental disability, mental health, and children's services. Summit County has the fifth-largest population of older adults, yet is the only large county which does not have a dedicated senior levy or a general human service levy which provides funding for senior services.<sup>47</sup> Revenues in the City of Akron are also declining, and the city lost \$7.3 million from the elimination of the estate tax and \$3.1 million from the phase-out of Tangible Personal Property Tax reimbursements.<sup>48</sup>

### **Community Engagement**

A recent study found that "stronger interpersonal relationships make for more vibrant communities."<sup>49</sup> Looking solely at the *On the Table* responses, residents in Greater Akron are more highly engaged than those in other communities. Local respondents were about twice as likely to report that they were very involved in the community and neighborhood activities where they live, and nearly three-quarters (73 percent) said they donated more than \$25 to a charitable organization in the past year.

There were some interesting differences among various races in civic attitudes and engagement. Black residents were the most likely to indicate that they think people like them can have a big impact in making the community a better place to live, and were more likely than Whites to take specific action or next steps regarding an issue or solution discussed.

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<sup>45</sup> Bigger Bucks, The Center for Community Solutions, 2014.

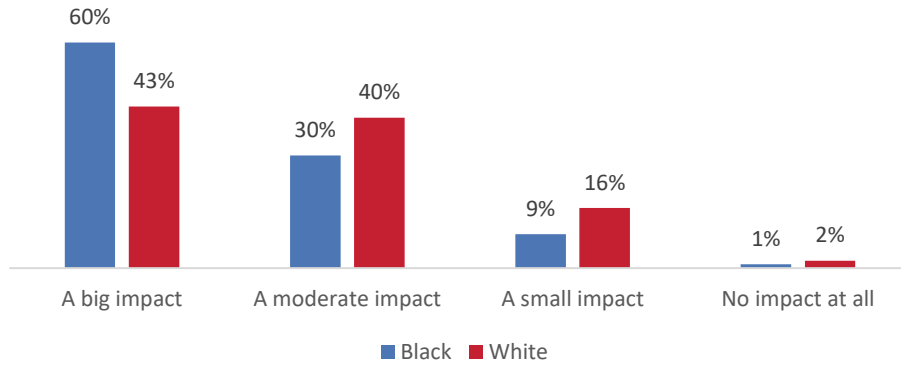
<sup>46</sup> Akron and Summit County Tax Report, Policy Matters Ohio, 2017.

<sup>47</sup> An Analysis of Senior Tax Levies in Ohio, The Center for Community Solutions, 2018.

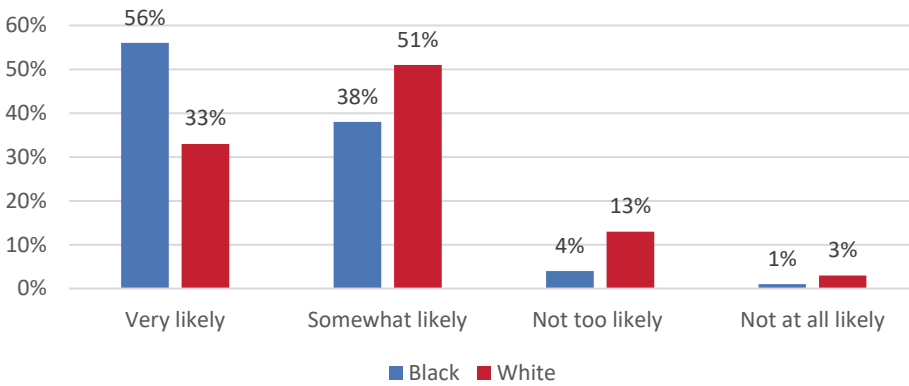
<sup>48</sup> Akron and Summit County Tax Report.

<sup>49</sup> Healthy in All Policies, Healthy Connections Network, 2015.

"How much impact do you think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live?"



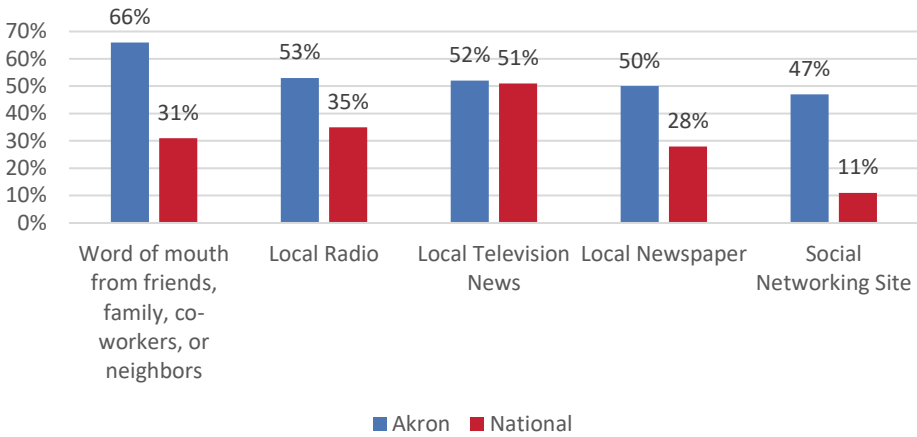
"How likely are you to take specific actions or next steps regarding an issue or solution discussed?"



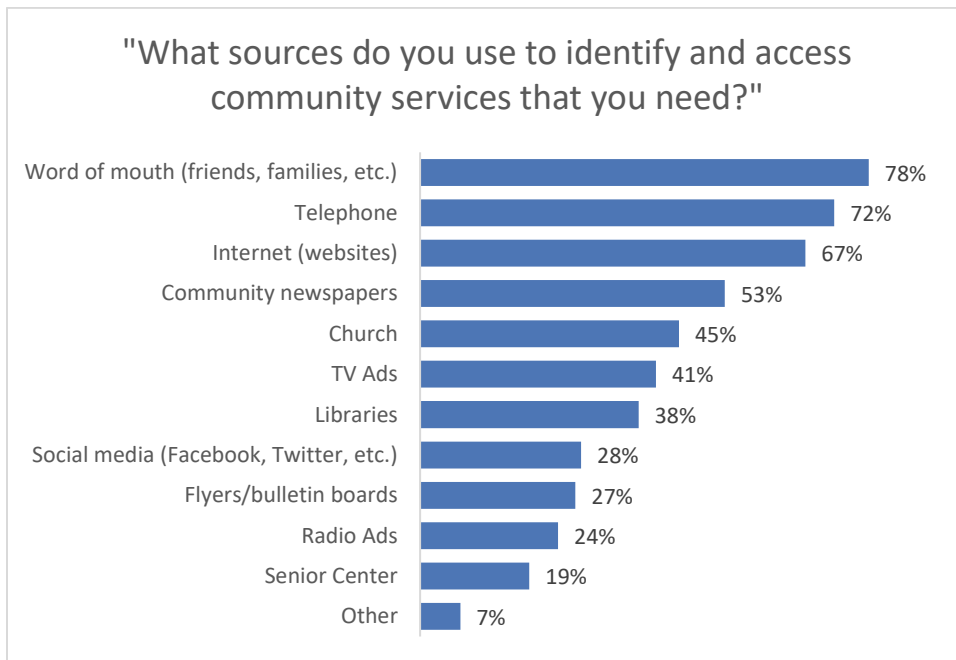
Greater Akron residents are well-informed. In general, individuals locally are more likely to consult a variety of information sources than people nationally, and are twice as likely to rely on word-of-mouth to get information.



### Getting information about local community every day or several times per week, by top sources



In a recent survey conducted for Direction Home, Summit County older adults reported that telephone and word of mouth were the most common sources used to identify and access community services. Twenty-five percent of residents reported they were familiar with the 2-1-1 referral service, and about half of those reported using 2-1-1 to identify a service or get information.



Educating the public and sharing information was a theme that arose during many of the interviews. The importance of word of mouth to communicate with low-income populations was cited by several and is confirmed by other data. People still have a difficult time accessing services and do not always know where to go. Similarly, respondents to the *On the Table* survey said they wanted more information about resources available in the community. It is difficult for agencies to truly know the penetration of their services, so nearly every organization could benefit from widening their reach by

conducting outreach activities. Many key informants lamented that people do not know where to turn when they need help. The recently-announced merge of InfoLine and United Way of Summit County holds promise to improve community use of existing information and referral resources.

One key informant suggested that a centralized service for translation that agencies could utilize when needed would allow organizations to reach more people in need more efficiently and effectively.

## **Health**

Summit County has one of the most engaged Public Health Departments in Northeast Ohio, and Summit County Public Health (SCPH) is an excellent source of information about health conditions in Greater Akron. Summit County has experienced more negative health outcomes and worse access to care than comparable urban Ohio counties, the state as a whole, and the nation, according to several key indicators<sup>50</sup>. One-in-six Summit County residents said their health was fair or poor several key health outcomes are either unsatisfactory or moving in the wrong direction: population in fair or poor health, infant mortality, suicide, communicable disease, and life expectancy. In 2010, the County's life expectancy peaked at 78.3. Since then, life expectancy fluctuated annually, finally dropping by just over one year to 77.2 by 2015. While different types of disparity can be found in one of more subject areas, racial disparities can be found in nearly all subject areas where data is available.<sup>51</sup>

A community health needs assessment conducted by Edwin Shaw Akron General compared Summit County to Montgomery and Hamilton Counties and identified areas of note for Summit county. Medicare beneficiaries are often high consumers of health care. Summit County had more Medicare recipients per 1000 persons in Summit County that depended on emergency departments for healthcare needs than more preventable hospitalizations among Medicare patients in Hamilton and Montgomery counties, the state and nation. The percentage of Medicare population with Alzheimer's disease was higher in Summit County than comparison counties and state and the Medicare population eligible for Medicaid was higher in Summit County than in comparison counties as well as state and nation. Community leaders and focus groups identified access to mental health services as a top health need in Summit County. Percentage of adults with asthma was higher in Summit County in 2012 than in Hamilton County, the state, and nation. Rate of deaths to heart disease higher in hospital service are than comparison counties and the nation. Within Summit County, the Health Resources and Services Administration of U.S. Department of Health & Human Services designated 12 census tracts as Health Professionals Shortage Areas<sup>52</sup>.

Oral diseases still adversely affect a large portion of Summit County residents. Oral health remains the most important unmet health care need for children and low-income adults in Summit County. Access to care is limited by both the availability of dental clinics and the availability to pay for those services. Factors that influence access to dental care are: lack of dental insurance, lack of available dental providers, particularly Medicaid providers, dental care being a low priority compared to other financial issues, and transportation issues. The lack of access to oral health care is strongly associated with low socioeconomic status, and inexorably linked to available payment options for this segment of our community<sup>53</sup>. Central Akron has been identified as a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HSPSA),

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<sup>50</sup> Ediwn Shaw Akron General Community Health Needs Assessment 2012

<sup>51</sup> Summit Community Health Assessment

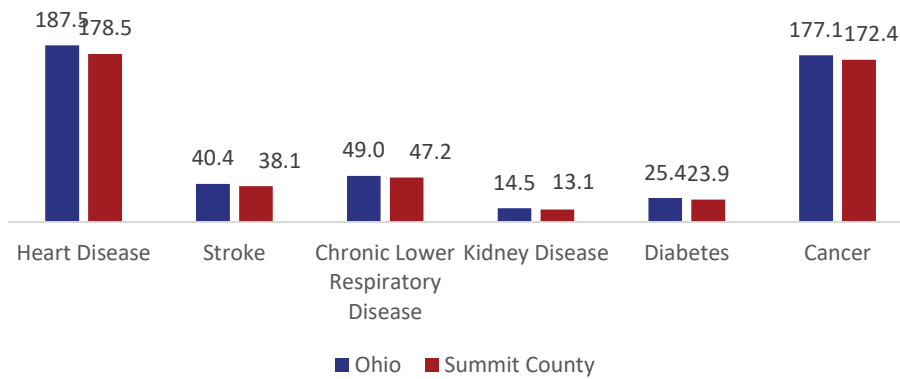
<sup>52</sup> Ediwn Shak Akron General Community Health Needs Assessment 2012

<sup>53</sup> Dental Task Force Report

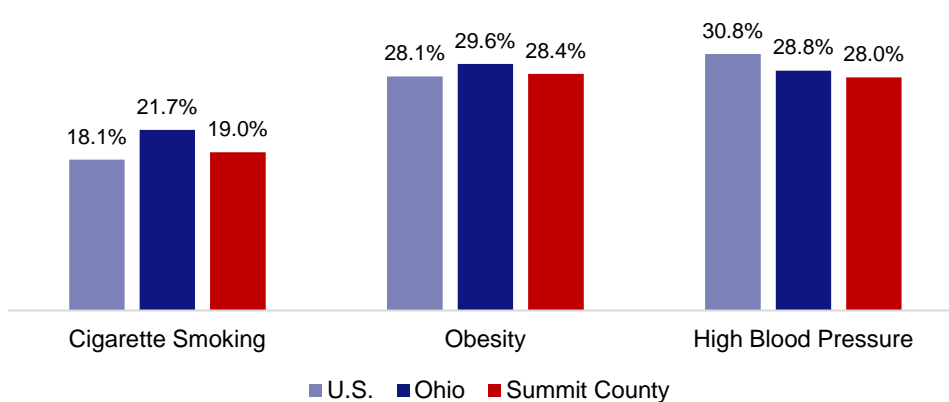
with an HPSA score of 15. The designation is given when a geographic area has less than one dentist per 5,000 residents.<sup>54</sup>

Some data on chronic disease mortality rates and risk factors' contribution to chronic disease are available at the county level from the Ohio Department of Health's Ohio Network of Care. Most of the data originate from the CDC, and sources used by the Ohio Department of Health include the National Health Interview Study, National Vital Statistics Mortality Component, and Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. According to the CDC, "chronic diseases and conditions are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems."

**Chronic Disease Mortality (Age-Adjusted)  
Per 100,000 Population  
2012-2016**



**Chronic Disease Risk Factors, Adults  
2006-2012**



Mortality rates from chronic diseases were slightly lower in Summit County than in the state as a whole, and risk factors were also slightly lower.

Black or African American residents of Summit County were more likely to lack health insurance than Whites. The uninsured rate for Blacks or African Americans is 12.5 percent in Summit County, compared to 6.7 for Whites. Lack of health insurance typically leads to poor health outcomes. African Americans in Summit County were 1.7 times more likely to report being in fair or poor health than whites, and

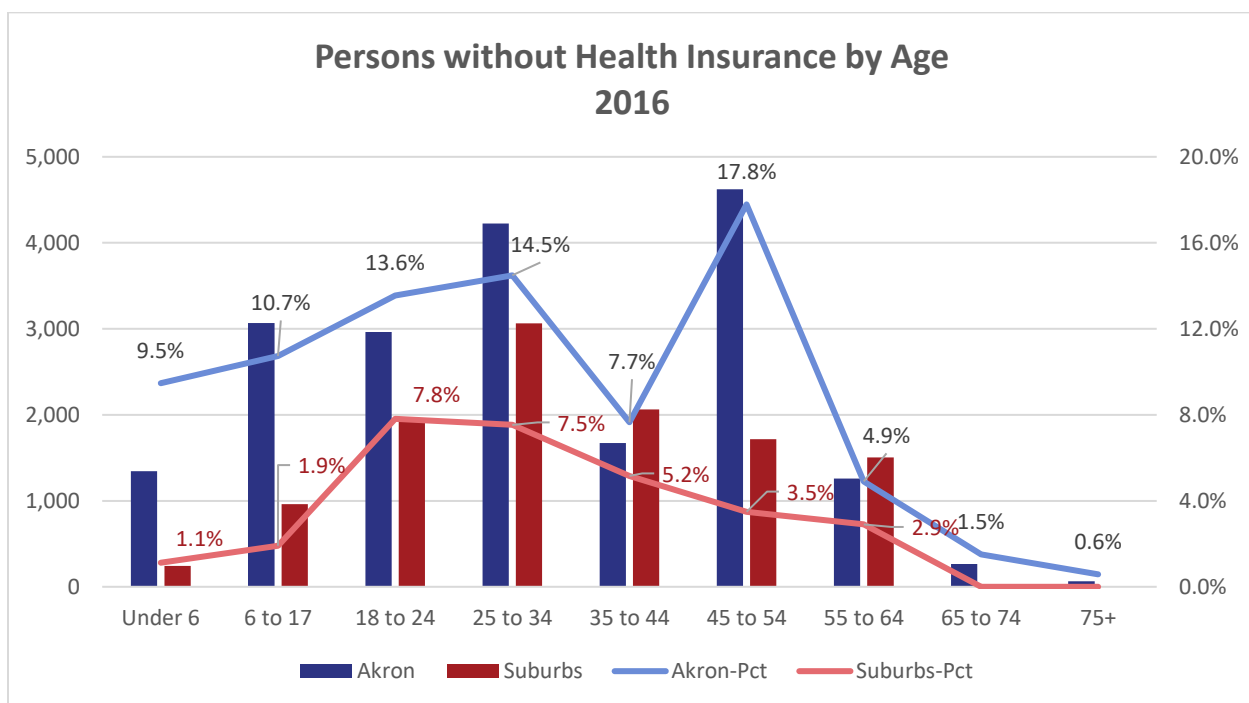
<sup>54</sup> Ohio Statewide Primary Care Needs Assessment

health outcomes for African Americans is generally worse. As an example, diabetes killed African American males in Summit County at much higher rates than their white counterparts, according to data from 2004-2006.<sup>55</sup>

Disadvantage begins at birth and continues through the lifespan. Summit Public Health has identified a number of areas where health conditions and outcomes are worse for non-Hispanic blacks. Lack of early prenatal care, premature birth, and infant mortality are worst for non-Hispanic black mothers. Obesity is highest for Black Adolescents, African Americans adults were most likely to have had a depressive episode, and blacks were most likely to die prematurely.<sup>56</sup>

Individuals and families who have health insurance coverage often have greater ability to obtain needed health care services and health resources. The Affordable Care Act and the expansion of Medicaid in Ohio has substantially reduced the number and rate of people without health insurance coverage. Thanks to Medicaid and Medicare, nearly all children and all older adults are now covered by some health insurance. However, the rates of the uninsured are greater in Akron than in the suburbs. The highest rate of individuals without insurance are between the ages of 45 to 54 and live within the city of Akron.

**Individuals without Health Insurance, by Age, 2016 1-Year Estimates**



Sexually transmitted infections (STI) are also impacting the African American community at higher rates. HIV rates are on the rise for black males in Summit County with new HIV diagnoses highest among 20-29 year-olds and 45-54 year olds, African Americans, and men. HIV diagnosis rate among African American males jumped from 40.6 to 59.9 between 2012 and 2014. The Black male rate of those living with HIV

<sup>55</sup> Local Conversations on Minority Health

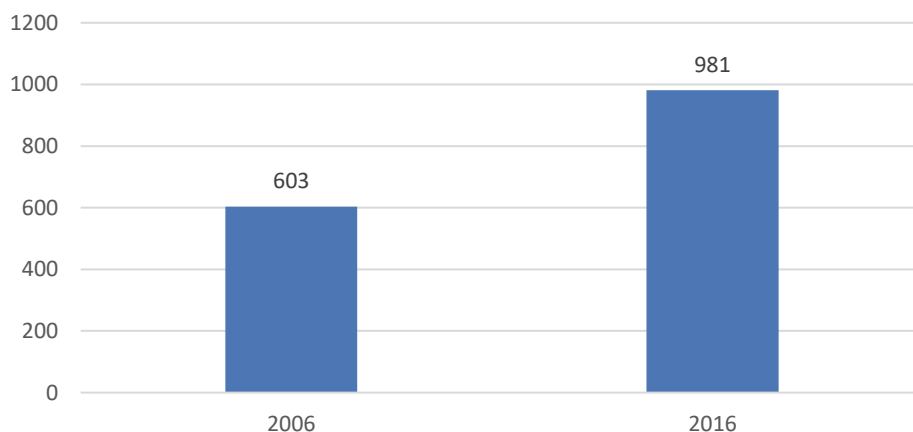
<sup>56</sup> Summit Health Disparities Report

increased from 557.7 in 2011 to 706.6 in 2014. Summit County has also seen other STI increase with chlamydia and gonorrhea most prevalent in African American females.

Overall HIV diagnosis rate remained steady/slightly declining from 13.3 per 100,000 in 2011 to 12.9 per 100,000 in 2014. While diagnosis decreases the rate of persons living with HIV increased from 210.8 per 100,000 in 2011 to 247.7 in 2014. Males continue to have higher rates of infection by HIV/AIDS than females. Seventy eight percent of persons living with HIV in Summit are male, eighty one percent with AIDS are male. Forty seven percent currently living with HIV are black and 46 percent are white. Eighty one percent of male HIV diagnoses in 2015 resulted from male-to-male sexual contact and 15 percent from other/unknown transmission category. Eighty three percent of female diagnoses came from heterosexual contact and 17 percent from other/unknown methods of transmission<sup>57</sup>.

Communicable diseases have seen a significant increase in all Summit County populations across disease types over the last 10 years. Sixty percent of reported communicable disease cases in the county were female. Overall incident of communicable disease cases reported in 2016 were 981 cases per 100,000 people with HIV and Hep C seeing major jumps in 2016. Where race was listed, whites and African Americans represented 33 percent of communicable disease cases each, but 28 percent of cases have

Summit County Infectious Disease per 100,000  
Rate of Infection



race listed as “unknown”.<sup>58</sup> Between 2006 and 2016, incidence of total infectious disease cases increased by 62.6. Incidence rate of STI (chlamydia and gonorrhea) was 680 per 100,000 with 70 confirmed new cases of syphilis and 65 confirmed new cases of HIV reported in Summit County in 2016. More than 60 percent of these cases were reported as resulting from male-to-male sexual contact. Fifty seven percent of STI cases were among African Americans, compared to 35 percent among whites. Incidence rate of enteric infectious diseases in 2016 was 31 per 100,000, an increase of seven percent from 2015. A total of 916 cases reported for blood-borne viral hepatitis, and an 85 percent increase in reported Hep-C chronic cases between 2015 and 2016. There were thirteen confirmed cases of tuberculosis reported in Summit County. Influenza hospitalizations have fluctuated greatly from year to year, but have risen from only two in 2008 to 239 in 2016, including a spike of 404 in 2014. Influenza and

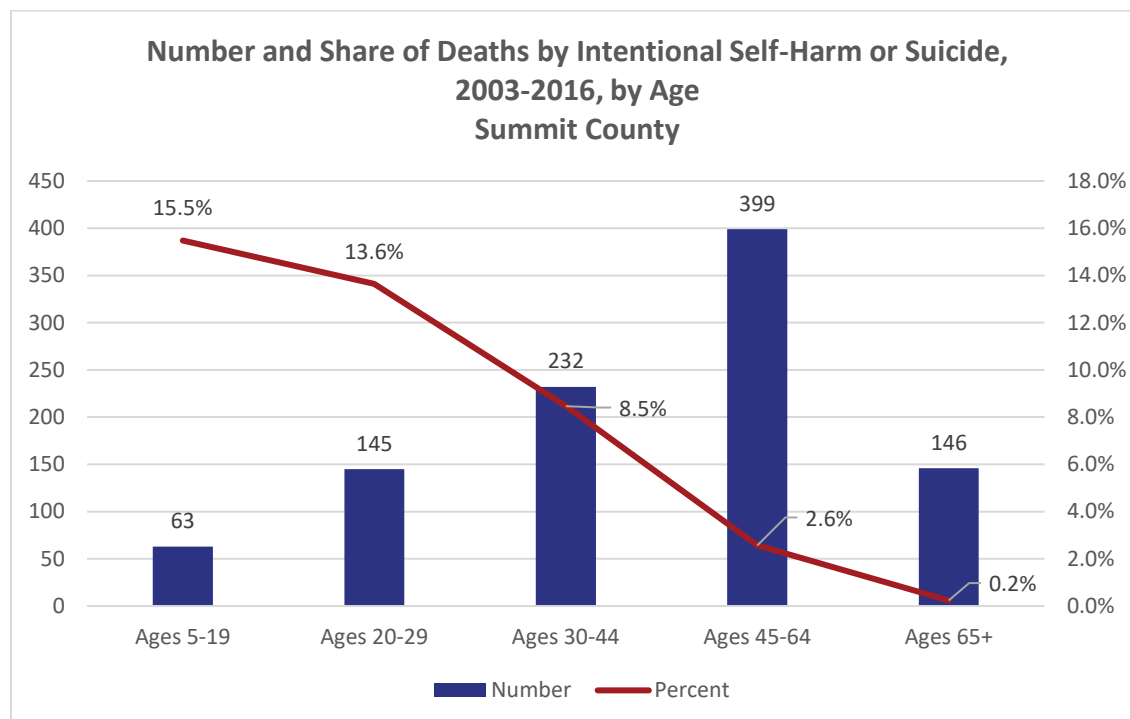
<sup>57</sup> Diagnoses of HIV Infection Reported in Summit County

<sup>58</sup> Annual Summary of Infections Disease 2016

pneumonia death rate per 100,000 in Summit County was well above rates when compared to Montgomery and Hamilton counties and the state<sup>59</sup>.

Death record data provided by Summit County Public Health includes information on death by intentional self-harm or suicide. Because of confidentiality concerns, Summit County Public Health suppresses all counts lower than 10. Therefore, we can gain insight into causes of death by age only by grouping data covering several years.

In the fourteen year period from 2003 to 2016, there were 985 deaths from intentional self-harm or suicide out of 81,803 total deaths in Summit County, representing 1.2 percent of all deaths. However, suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 5-19 and 20-29 years old. More than one in six teenagers who died in Summit County during this period committed suicide.



### Transportation

Increasingly, both older and younger residents express interest in living in communities that are walkable and have convenient public transit. However, Summit County remains largely a community of drivers. According to data from the US Census Bureau, only 2 percent of workers ages 16 and older used public transportation to get to their jobs.<sup>60</sup> People living in Akron and African-Americans are more likely to be relying on public transportation. More than half of the workers who use public transportation to travel to their jobs are African-American, even though this group accounts for only about 11 percent of workers in the County.

For some, public transportation is a necessity. Ninety percent of Akron’s Metro Regional Transit Authority (METRO) bus riders do not have regular access to a private vehicle and have household

<sup>59</sup> Edwin Shaw Akron General Community Health Needs Assessment 2012

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

incomes of less than \$20,000/year.<sup>61</sup> In addition to travel to work, METRO riders use public transit for other reasons such as shopping, medical appointments, and school. Nearly 90 percent of riders walk to the bus stop, and most (85 percent) of them walk three blocks or less to catch the bus, which is exceptionally high percentage for an urban transit agency.

According to the Ohio Statewide Transit Needs Study, over half of funding for transit is raised locally through taxes, a quarter is federal funding, and the remaining one-fifth comes from passenger fares, service contracts, state funding, and other income.<sup>62</sup> The strains on local resources mentioned previously will likely impact public transportation availability in Akron and Summit County.

### **Collaboration**

One of the strengths almost universally identified by key informants was the collaborative nature of organizations within Summit County. People are generally willing to work together to address community issues. Anchor institutions participate in many initiatives, each bringing their unique expertise and resources to bear. Several individuals expressed a feeling that those working in the Summit County community do not realize how much more collaboration happens there than in other places. Collaboration appears to have deepened in difficult times. Partnerships are encouraged at organizations both large and small, and in public and nonprofit agencies. This means that there are generally low barriers for organizations and leaders to pull together on a topic. Several key informants stated that it is easy to get things done and people work well together.

However, some key informants pointed out areas where collaboration could be improved. There is more opportunity to work across sectors to address community conditions. Others spoke about how the same people and organizations are represented in most initiatives, and there is a need to branch out to include different agencies and smaller organizations. This may include people of different ages but especially younger professionals, recipients of services, and people who are racially and ethnically diverse.

Some lamented the amount of time and energy required to build and maintain partnerships. One even explained that to truly collaborate, the business model of many organizations and funders would need to change. Others said that although there is a great deal of collaboration, it often does not result in progress on issues. There is the sense that providers are doing the best they can with the resources they have, but are largely “treading water” on larger community issues. Some said that clients get shuffled around between agencies and it can be confusing for the end users of services to know who is attempting to help them.

Closely related to comments on recent leadership change, a few key informants noted that personality drives collaboration. Key informants were divided as to whether collaboration is happening across traditional silos. While some pointed to a lot of collaboration but little coordination, others stated that community leaders see Akron and Summit County as an ecosystem where everything is interrelated, and leaders are designing solutions in that manner.

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<sup>61</sup> Transit Development Plan Akron, Metro Regional Transit Authority, 2014

<sup>62</sup> Ohio Statewide Transit Needs Study, Ohio Department of Transportation, 2015.

## **Other Issues Raised by Key Informants**

### ***Arts and Culture***

The arts and cultural offerings were noted by several key informants as an asset. Some spoke positively of the recently announced funding available to artists from the Knight Foundation. An assessment of arts and culture found that while most people in Summit County are satisfied with their “arts and culture life”, people go outside the county to gain these experiences. African Americans, in particular, “don’t see what is there for them.”<sup>63</sup> The study also examined the financial health of the arts and culture sector and reported that many organizations are not on strong financial footing.

### ***Philanthropy***

Many key informants spoke of how philanthropic funders in Summit County are identifying their priority issues and targeting funding. GAR Foundation and United Way’s Bold Goals were most often mentioned. Several interviewees spoke of this targeting as a positive, allowing greater community resources to be devoted to intractable community issues. However, others pointed out that some agencies providing services to residents were no longer able to depend on philanthropic support for their work. One key informant even spoke of United Way putting themselves in direct competition with existing community agencies by directly implementing strategies to meet their Bold Goals. Several individuals praised Akron Community Foundation for maintaining a broad approach to grant making.

The need to balance large, transformative investments with a series of smaller grants to support existing organizations was mentioned. The number of community-wide initiatives was seen as positive by most, while others express concern that smaller, less sophisticated agencies were left behind. Encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit by opening up responsive grant making was suggested, and this could spur innovation. Several recommended that philanthropic organizations may need to increase outreach to find lesser-known agencies that are making a difference. One key informant told us that Akron Community Foundation is the best in the community at being responsive to needs and shifting strategies when warranted.

### ***Leadership Change***

The leadership of several large institutions in Akron and Summit County have changed in the past few years. Key informants pointed to the fact that the community has a new leadership at the City of Akron, University of Akron, United Way of Summit County, Summa Health System, and numerous smaller agencies. In general, the new leadership in Summit County was described as an asset to the community, easing the way for new approaches. Others indicated that it is too early to tell if Akron will move in the right direction under this new leadership. In particular, several key informants expressed concern over high-profile leadership change in two anchor institutions: Summa Health System and University of Akron.

Several interviewees spoke of generational change among leaders within the community. New leadership can bring new ideas and break through obstacles to addressing community issues. Often in communities where there have been several high-profile leadership transitions after long careers, we hear that there has been a loss of institutional knowledge. This, it seems, is not the case in Akron. In fact, a number of key informants indicated that generational tension between the current and next generation of leaders was lessening. There are leadership training opportunities available and Torchbearers and Leadership Akron were specifically mentioned, but people need to take advantage of resources which are available.

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<sup>63</sup> Arts and Culture Assessment of Summit County, Knight Foundation and GAR Foundation, 2014.



### ***Akron's Size***

The size of the Akron community was identified as an asset by many of the key informants. One called it “a small big city or a big small city.” Akron has many of the amenities of a larger city, but is small enough to build strong relationships and make impactful change. It is large enough to have resources, but small enough to develop relationships. Culture, parks, and transportation infrastructure were identified as an asset. The size of the community was closely tied to the collaborative spirit that permeates. Most compared Summit County to Cuyahoga County, stating that Summit is more representative of the rest of the state, and therefore a better place for pilot programs. Key informants frequently stated that approaches begun in Summit County to address a variety of community issues should be replicated elsewhere. One said, “Summit is a small enough community to make impactful change, but large enough to set precedents.”

### ***Prevention***

Several key informants described the challenge of addressing root causes of issues, rather than ameliorating the symptoms. Those in low-income families often live in the “crisis of the moment” and face great challenges planning for the future. There is a general desire to intervene early, before an issue becomes a crisis. However, social service agencies are operating at or near capacity. They are meeting immediate needs but unable to help people become economically independent, or able to focus on prevention.

### ***Capacity of Agencies***

There were many comments during the interviews about the capacity of agencies to meet community needs. These ranged from recruiting and retaining staff, to financial acumen, leadership development, and the ability to take time away from immediate tasks to think and work strategically. This is an area where Akron Community Foundation could play an important role.

### ***On the Table***

A few key informants noted that Akron Community Foundation is less known than other philanthropic entities in the community, especially Knight Foundation and GAR Foundation. However, several said that is changing, thanks in part to *On the Table*. At least one interviewee wondered if the *On the Table* discussions would have a long-term impact, or if they were just designed to get people together and talking, without promises that any action would be taken. The need to gather feedback from the most diverse audience was highlighted, especially people of color and recipients of services.

### ***Methodology***

The Center for Community Solutions compiled this report on behalf of Akron Community Foundation. We sought to assess a broad range of needs in Akron and Summit County. We began by building on the substantial work to understand community conditions which has already been undertaken by organizations across Summit County. We then incorporated information collected via community engagement activities, utilized the expertise of community leaders, and pulled in additional secondary data where we identified gaps in information. But utilizing several different data and information inputs, we produced a comprehensive needs assessment in an efficient manner.

### ***Analysis of Existing Reports and Assessments***

Over 50 reports, plans, and assessments were reviewed for this project. All included data and information specific to Akron and/or Summit County, yet they focused on a wide range of topics.

Education, health, economy, transportation, environment, arts, housing, and community development were all covered by these reports. A full list and annotated bibliography is included in the appendix.

In particular, Summit Public Health is an excellent source of information about the health of the community, and the local public health department is ahead of many across the state in publishing high-quality analysis of health data. Summit Education Initiative is also a significant asset. By looking across the educational spectrum, SEI provides high-quality analysis of a series of issues.

Some important topics were underrepresented in the reports reviewed for this assessment. There were few reports specifically focused on behavioral health, yet addiction arose as a top problem facing Greater Akron. A focus on the growing older adult population was notably absent, so the forthcoming assessment from Direction Home will contribute greatly to the body of work about Greater Akron. Finally, there was little information about crime and violence. Community Solutions sought to collect data from other sources to fill these gaps in information.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

The Center for Community Solutions interviewed 16 key informants. These individuals were from organizations throughout Summit County and work on a wide variety of issues. The full list of interviewees is included in the Appendix. Interviews were conducted over the phone by members of Community Solutions' research staff, with most lasting around 45 minutes. Interviews followed a standard set of questions, with personalized questions added based on the expertise of the interviewee or to follow up on comments made during the interview.

#### *Interview Questions:*

1. What does the Akron and Summit County community have going for it? What are some of the assets?
2. What is holding back Akron and Summit County or the residents who live there? What are some of the challenges?
3. How have things changed in the community over the past 5 years? Are these changes positive or negative?
4. What is something you are working on, or your organization is doing, that you are particularly excited about?
5. We shared the top issues from *On The Table* and asked for their reaction.
6. What advice do you have for Akron Community Foundation?
7. If you had a magic wand, what would you change?

Many individuals were sought for interviews based on areas where there was a gap in secondary information. For example, we interviewed several individuals with expertise and knowledge of behavioral health services, and because *On the Table* responses overrepresented highly-educated community members, we purposely interviewed a few people who work directly with residents who have lower levels of educational attainment.

### **Additional Secondary Data Gathering**

As mentioned above, we focused our secondary research on areas that were not as strong in the body of existing reports. This includes a look at racial disparities, information about mental health, and crime statistics, to name a few. In addition, we updated demographic information so that this report contains the latest information available.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Summit County community faces challenges in health, social, and economic conditions. But there are many assets on which to build. Many initiatives in Greater Akron are seeking to impact community problems. In fact, the spirit of collaboration in Summit County means that coalitions are quickly formed after an emerging issue is identified. Akron Community Foundation has been, and should remain, involved in many of these efforts.

There are three topics and two strategies which we recommend could benefit from additional funding from Akron Community Foundation or other philanthropic entities.

### ***Continued Attention to Issues Facing Older Adults***

The population of greater Akron is aging and recent research indicates that neither the community nor older adults are adequately prepared for the supports and services that will be required if residents are to age in place. The demographic shift will impact everything from the composition of the workforce to the attractiveness of neighborhoods, as many older adults find it difficult to maintain the outside of their homes. In addition, Summit County is the largest of the counties that lack a senior service levy. The result is fewer resources devoted to older adults than other communities in Ohio.

Akron Community Foundation has devoted part of its grantmaking to aging for the past several years. By tackling the issue before it became a community crisis, the Foundation has shown foresight and should continue to prioritize these issues.

### ***Focus on Racial Equity and Inclusion***

The data show racial disparities for people in Greater Akron on nearly every measure. Disadvantage for Black and African-American community members begins at birth, continues through school, is found in the workforce, and often ends with premature death. Increasing understanding of these disparities should help more effectively address a wide range of problems facing the community and its residents.

Akron Community Foundation should consider funding projects that operate utilizing a racial equity and inclusion lens. Public events or training opportunities that highlight racial equity could be developed or supported. Unexpected partnerships could be very effective in this effort, and the focus should be on increasing understanding of underlying factors that may prevent programs and services from having their intended impact. This is an underdeveloped area of focus in Akron, and the Community Foundation could establish itself as a leader locally and on a broader stage.

### ***Place-Based Solutions***

Negative health, social, economic, and community conditions tend to group together and neighborhoods and the residents who live in them often face many challenges. Investing in one area can help, but transformative change typically requires addressing many issues simultaneously. A wrap-around strategy where a variety of interventions and supports are provided to people living in a small segment of the community could have great impact. For example: efforts to “beautify” a neighborhood and improve the physical aesthetics could be coupled with intensive work readiness and job placement services which includes identifying and removing barriers to employment. This would help residents to maintain their homes going forward. There are models for this approach nationally and in Ohio.

According to compiled information and data, conditions in Akron are generally worse than those in the rest of Summit County. Therefore, targeting resources toward the county’s central city would be appropriate.

### ***Encouraging Innovation and Entrepreneurship***

Small organizations can make a big difference within their service area. Because of the collaborative spirit in Akron, there is a tendency to gather a large group together to address any community issue which arises. Often this approach is warranted, but there is the danger that the same agencies become involved in every initiative, and that there is not space for small, focused organizations.

There does not appear to be a place in Greater Akron for individuals or groups with an innovative, but somewhat unusual idea to go to find funding. Because of Akron Community Foundation's many family funds, it might be a natural place for such matching to occur. The Foundation could establish a micro-grant program, a pitch competition, or some other mechanism to encourage individual innovation and entrepreneurship in the social service sector.

### ***Providing a Mix of Strategy-Driven and Responsive Grant Making***

As funders have identified their priority areas and focused grant making, some high-quality agencies are being left out. In addition, such targeting presents the danger of losing responsiveness to emerging community issues.

Several key informants told us that Akron Community Foundation was the last major funder in the community providing a wide range of grants. Some believed this was an asset, and others a deficit. We would recommend mix of strategy-driven and responsive grant making.

### ***Capacity of the Nonprofit Sector***

Although not suggested directly by data, we have gotten the impression that there could be a need to support capacity building to improve effectiveness of the nonprofit sector in Greater Akron. This could include leadership development and succession planning, staff development and retention, financial management, and advocacy and public policy.