Community Needs Assessment
March 2022

Prepared by The Center for Community Solutions

Contents

Introduction

Since 1966, the Lorain County Community Action Agency (LCCAA) has been serving the residents of Lorain County. LCCAA serves and empowers residents in need across the county by providing services and programs that improve quality of life and promote self-sufficiency. To understand the needs of Lorain County, LCCAA regularly engages the community through a needs assessment. LCCAA worked with The Center for Community Solutions in late 2021 and early 2022 to assess the current needs of the community and anticipate future needs. Findings from the assessment will be carefully considered as future programming and service decisions are made.

The assessment findings in the following pages include secondary data from sources such as the American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census Bureau, Community Health Rankings, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Governor's Office of Workforce Development. These trusted secondary data sources provide an overview of the current community conditions in Lorain County as they relate to income, poverty, employment, education, and health.

Secondary data supplements the primary data collected through a survey mailed to residents, an online survey distributed to community partners, and direct conversations with parents and caregivers of Head Start families. Primary data collection provides the opportunity to query residents and community partners directly about the programs and services offered by LCAAA as well as gaps in service provision found within the county. The combination of secondary and primary data provides a wealth of information that can guide LCCAA as they continuously work toward its commitment to changing people's lives, embodying the spirit of hope, and improving the community.

Lorain County Community Needs

Resident Profile

Lorain County has approximately 307,670 residents living within twenty-eight towns and cities. While the county is less racially diverse than the state overall, **Lorain county has the highest percentage of Hispanic/Latino residents in the state.** Eighty-five percent of residents indicate they are white. The next largest racial category is Black which makes up 8.5 percent of the population. Compared to other counties in the state, Lorain has a higher percentage of Hispanic population with ten percent of residents indicating they are Hispanic or Latino. Seven of the ten percent of Hispanic/Latino residents are of Puerto Rican descent.

Lorain County Race and Ethnicity

1.2% 1.3% 3.6%
0.4%
8.5%
85.0%

■ White ■ Black ■ American Indian and Alaska Native ■ Asian ■ Some Other Race ■ Two or more races
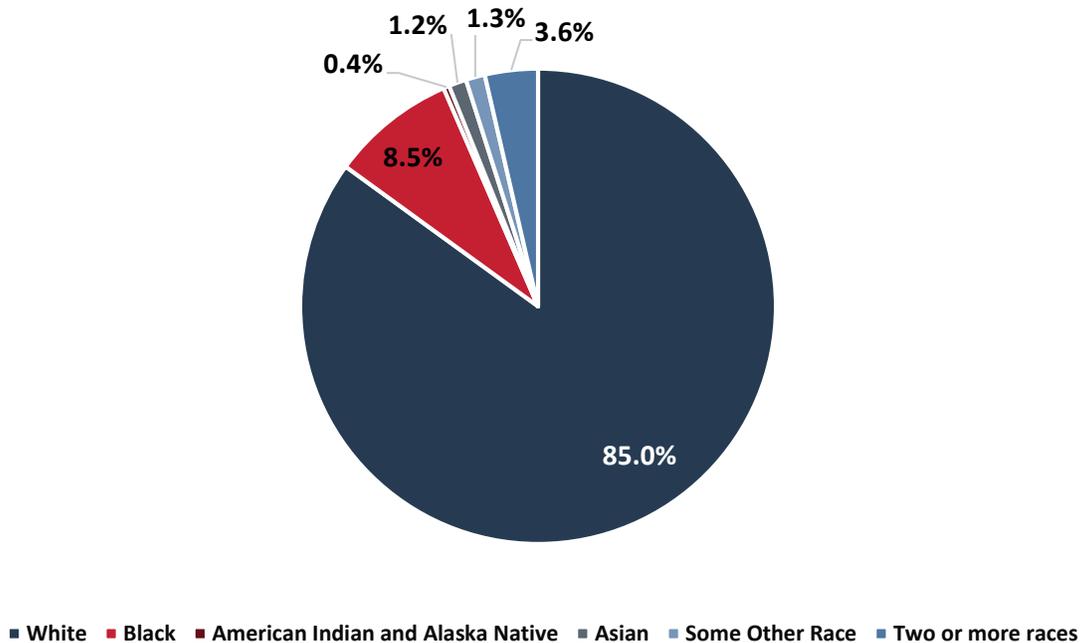
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05

Strengths and Challenges

On the resident survey, participants shared personal strengths that they possess. Those most commonly mentioned included: getting along with neighbors and peers, as well as being friendly, helpful, and compassionate towards others. Respondents listen well and show patience to those they interact with, and many see their faith as a personal strength. Lorain residents also noted their education and being hardworking, and take pride in their parenting skills and hobbies.

Community partners were also asked to share both what they have observed as strengths of Lorain County residents and the greatest challenges facing the residents. The open-ended questions drew several comments from which specific themes emerged.

Greatest strengths of Lorain County residents		Challenges facing residents of Lorain County
Caring		Access to food
Community resources		Access to services
Compliance		Affordable housing
Coordinated efforts across county		Childcare
Cultural diversity		COVID-19
Deep roots		Cost of living
Determination		Distrust
Family-focused		Drug use
Feisty		Families above assistance guidelines
Hard-working		Financial literacy
Helping others		Flexible employment
Homelessness services		Mental health services
Information access		Parental stress
Leadership		Public Safety staff shortages
Location		Returning to work
Loyal		Safety
Metroparks		School transportation
Perseverance		Silos/lack of collaboration
Pride in community		Socialization
Resilient		Teacher shortages
Resourceful		Transportation
Sense of community		
Supportive		
Survival		
Thirst for knowledge		
Working together		

Age and Trends

Approximately half of the residents of Lorain County are between the ages of 20-59, which is typically considered working age. The other half of the county is evenly split between older adults (24.8 percent) and youth under age 19 (24.8 percent). Based on current trends, it can be expected that the percentage of older adults will continue to rise within Lorain county over the next ten years as the Baby Boomer generation continues to age.

Lorain County Population by Age

Age Group	Percentage
85 years and over	2.3%
75 to 84 years	5.2%
65 to 74 years	10.3%
60 to 64 years	7.0%
55 to 59 years	7.4%
45 to 54 years	13.7%
35 to 44 years	12.1%
25 to 34 years	11.1%
20 to 24 years	6.1%
15 to 19 years	6.7%
10 to 14 years	6.4%
5 to 9 years	6.0%
Under 5 years	5.7%
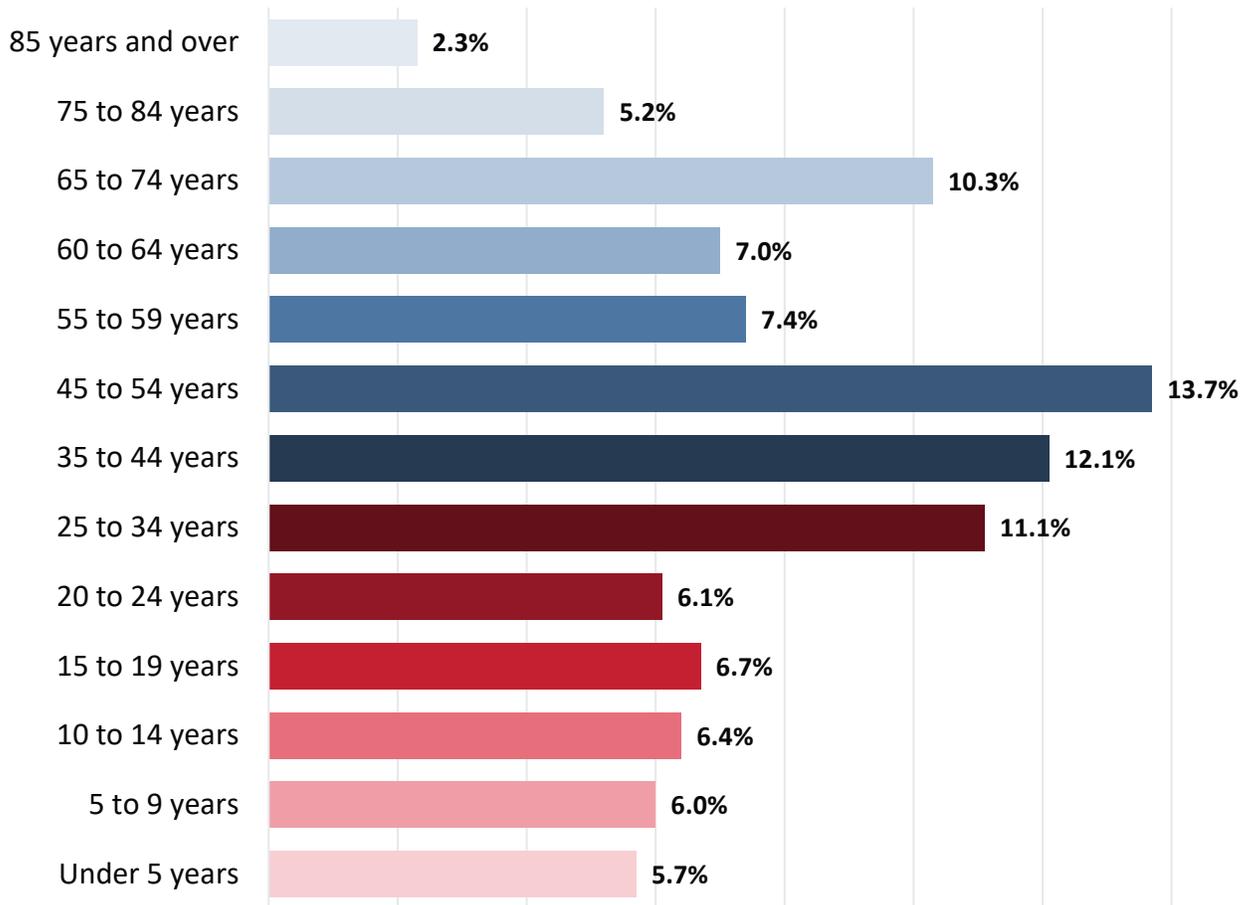
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05

Financial Stability

In Lorain County, **the median household income is $58,427, higher than the Ohio state median income of $55,427**. The median household income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half with incomes above the median, half with incomes below the median. Median incomes vary widely among municipalities within the county. Seven municipalities (in red) have median

incomes below the county median; Sheffield, Lorain City, Elyria City, Brighton, Oberlin and Wellington and Elyria Township. The municipality with the lowest median income is Sheffield Township, $32,983.

Lorain County Median Household Income	
	Median Income
Ohio	$55,602
Lorain County	$58,427
Municipality	Median Income
Sheffield Township	$32,983
Lorain City	$38,291
Elyria City	$44,324
Brighton Township	$50,234
Oberlin City	$50,509
Wellington Township	$52,350
Elyria Township	$56,250
Brownhelm Township	$60,919
Grafton Village	$61,042
Amherst Township	$61,127
Sheffield Lake City	$62,292
Camden Township	$64,904
New Russia Township	$69,141
Amherst City	$71,775
Eaton Township	$73,324
Carlisle Township	$73,516
LaGrange Township	$73,890
Rochester Township	$76,125
Pittsfield Township	$76,198
Penfield Township	$76,865
North Ridgeville City	$77,221
Sheffield Village	$80,000
Henrietta Township	$80,929
Columbia Township	$82,837
Avon Lake City	$83,018
Huntington Township	$85,071
Grafton Township	$92,788
Avon City	$109,916

Poverty, Lorain County, 2019

% at 200% FPL

|	
	5.6% - 9.1%
	10.8% - 14.9%
	16.4% - 22%
	24.2% - 31.1%
	42.1% - 54.6%
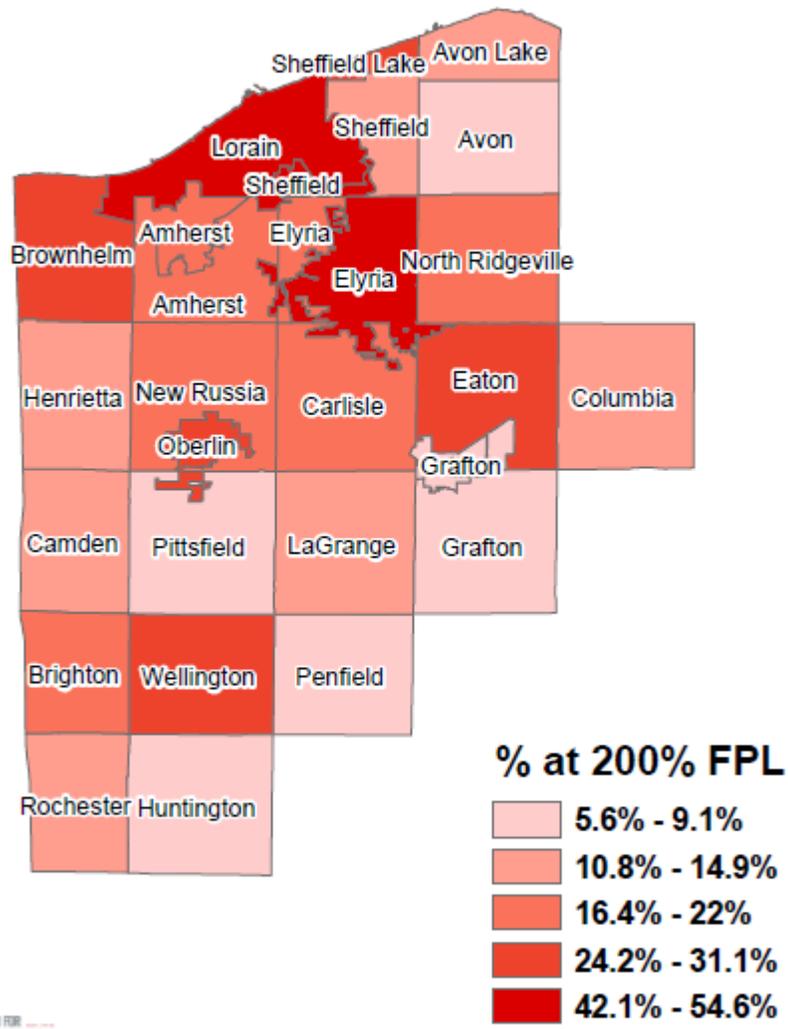
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

About thirteen percent of the county lives at or below the federal poverty level (FPL), which is approximately 16,366 Lorain county residents. Many assistance programs have eligibility requirements between 100% and 200% of FPL. Residents with incomes at or below 200% of the FPL live throughout the county with higher concentrations of households at this income level found in Wellington, Eaton, Elyria, Brownheim, Sheffield, and the city of Lorain. In these communities, twenty-four to fifty-four percent of households may be living at or below a level of income insufficient to meet their needs. Households with incomes at this level often qualify for assistance programs to meet basic needs including housing, food, health insurance and early childhood services.

Housing

Based on resident survey results, it appears that **more than half of Lorain County residents have some concern about their ability to pay their rent or mortgage.** About twenty percent of residents indicated paying rent or mortgage did not apply to them. Of those with a rent or mortgage payment, nearly a quarter have moderate or serious concerns about their ability to make a payment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, thirty-three percent of residents indicated difficulty in affording their utilities with twenty-three percent report still experiencing difficulty.

Are you concerned about paying your rent or mortgage?
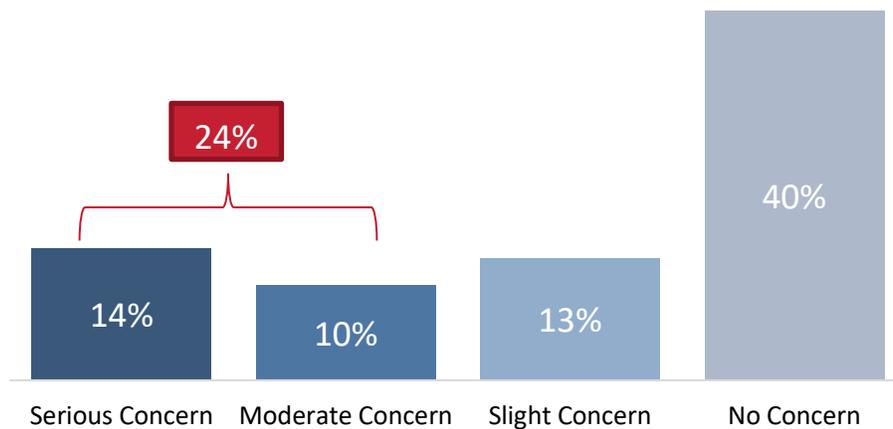
According to the American Community Survey (ACS), **renters in Lorain County experience higher rates of unaffordable housing than homeowners.** Nearly half of all renters in the county are cost-burdened, meaning more than thirty percent of their income goes towards housing costs. While the cost-burdened rate is lower for homeowners in the county, nearly a third of homeowners are in unaffordable housing. Unaffordable housing often leads to housing instability which can have far-reaching impacts on a family's life, including disruptions to employment and education. Utility assistance programs can help reduce housing burden costs for those who meet financial eligibility requirements.
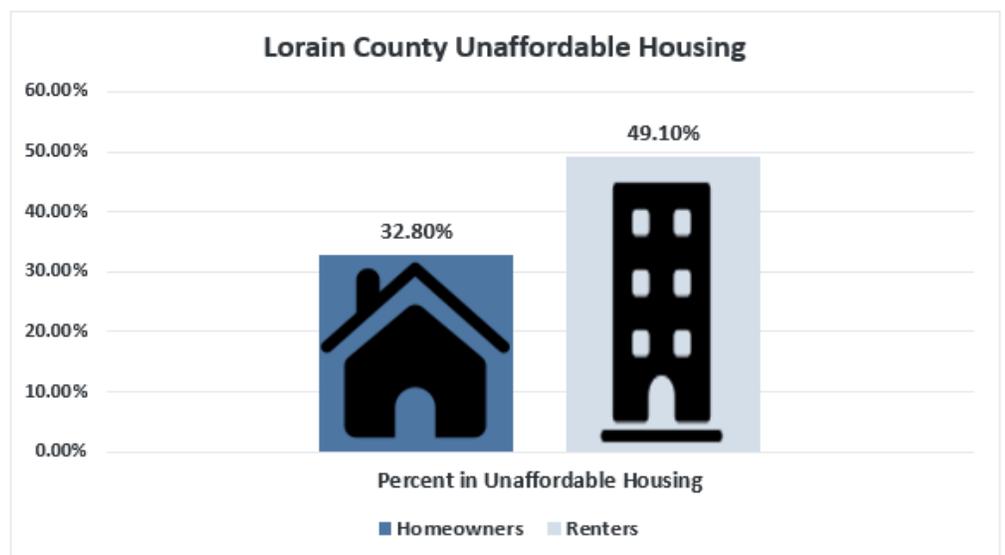

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

Neighborhood and Home Concerns

Resident survey takers were able to indicate whether they had concerns about various aspects of their current housing. The issue that ranked highest among residents' concerns was whether their homes were adequately weatherized. Though the concern ranks high, **just six percent of survey takers have accessed the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) in the past.** Nearly as many were concerned about the safety of their neighborhood. The area that drew the least amount of concern from residents was whether they had enough room for the number of people living in the home.

Concerns about *where they live*

Adequate weatherization	Neighborhood is safe	Safe drinking water	Reliable source of heat	Home is safe	Enough room in home
50.0%	44.6%	39.0%	33.5%	30.5%	21.3%
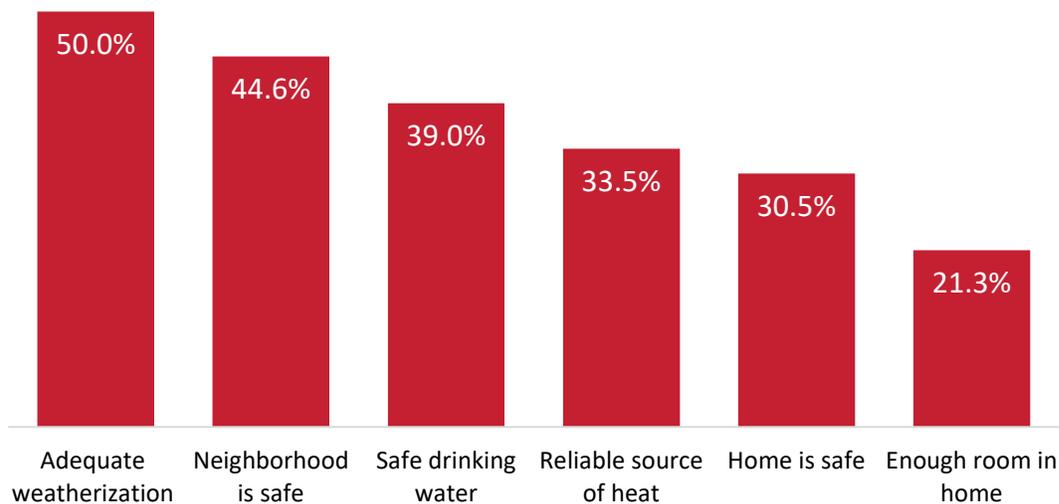
Resident survey participants reported enjoying how safe, clean, and quiet their neighborhoods are in Lorain. The diversity, friendliness, and close-knit feeling in the community allow many to enjoy spending time with and talking to their neighbors. Many shared how they felt that **Lorain is a convenient location to get to stores and restaurants, schools, parks, and lake, and how they enjoyed these amenities.** Examples included walking and biking in the community, as well as shopping, going out to eat, and spending time with family at the beach, lake, and parks. Participants also spend their time enjoying the library, attending church and volunteering. Respondents like that Lorain is affordable and has no income taxes.

Seventy-five percent of those who responded to the resident survey had a computer in their homes and eighty-four percent have internet access. About eighty percent of survey takers indicate they are comfortable using the internet regularly.

Food & Nutrition

During the pandemic, residents surveyed reported high levels of difficulty affording food. During that period, thirty percent reported they experienced challenges affording food. Twenty percent of those who reported difficulty affording food indicated that they continue to experience challenges related to the cost of food.

Did you have *difficulty affording food* during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes and still experiencing , 18%

Yes, but not anymore, 13%

No, 69%

Food Insecurity and Assistance

About thirteen percent of Lorain County residents are considered food insecure, meaning they do not have reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. This rate is slightly lower than the food insecurity rate across the country. Among resident survey takers, about **seven percent of people indicated they do not always have enough to eat.** Food pantries, hot meal programs, SNAP enrollment, and food delivery programs all help reduce the food insecurity rates and ensure people have access to the food they need to nourish their families.

People in my household have *enough to eat*

Strongly Disagree
1.2%

Disagree
6.2%

Strongly Agree
53.5%

Agree
39.2%
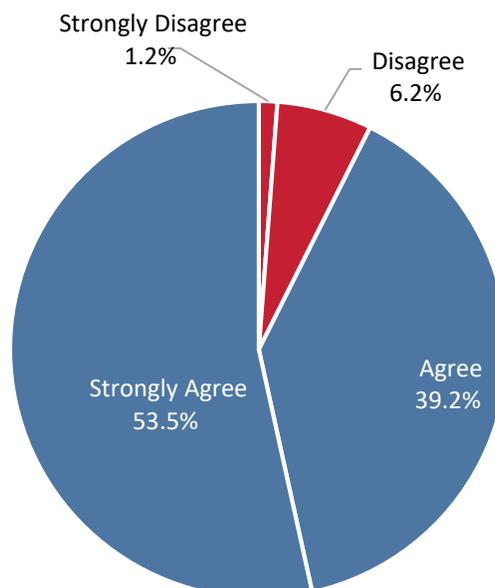
Twelve percent of the estimated 120,281 households in Lorain County are receiving SNAP which represents 14,653 households. Of households receiving SNAP, eighteen percent are married couples, thirty-five percent are non-family households and forty-six percent are single householders. Just under half (48%) of the households receiving SNAP in Lorain County have at least one child under eighteen as part of the household and just over thirty percent of households have a member over the age of sixty.

Lorain County SNAP Eligibility by Household Type

- ■ **Married-couple families**
- ■ **Single householders, no spouse**
- ■ **Nonfamily Households**
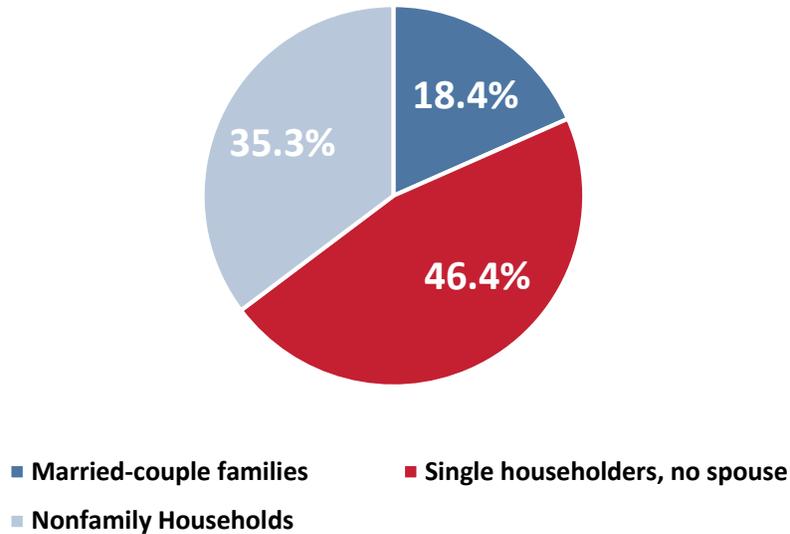
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table S2201

Health

County Health Rankings compares counties across the state and country on various health outcomes and health factors. When compared to the state of Ohio, **Lorain County performs better on access to opportunities to exercise and has a lower percentage of uninsured children.** The high ranking of opportunities exercise is supported by survey results which indicate ninety-three percent of residents have access to a park. In all other areas, Lorain County's health ranking is either the same or worse off than the overall rankings in Ohio.

| HEALTH OUTCOMES:			
Quality of Life			
	Lorain County	**Top US Performer**	**Ohio**
Poor physical health days	4.2	3.4	4.1
Poor mental health days	4.8	3.8	4.8
HEALTH FACTORS:			
Health Behaviors			
Adult obesity	36%	26%	34%
Physical inactivity	26%	19%	26%
Access to exercise opportunities	91%	91%	84%
Food insecurity**	13%	9%	14%
Limited access to healthy foods**	8%	2%	7%
Clinical Care			
Uninsured	7%	6%	8%
Uninsured adults**	8%	7%	9%
Uninsured children**	4%	3%	5%
Primary care physicians	1,830:1	1,030:1	1,300:1
Dentists	1,960:1	1,210:1	1,560:1
Mental health providers	560:1	270:1	380:1
Social & Economic Factors			
Social associations	9.5	18.2	11
(****denotes additional behaviors not included in overall ranking**)			
Source: County Health Rankings. Ohio 2021 rankings: Lorain.			

Access to primary healthcare and dental care may present challenges to residents of Lorain County based on the ratio of providers to residents. When asked in the resident survey, **thirteen percent of respondents indicated they do not have access to dentists and twenty percent do not have dental insurance.** Among resident survey respondents, five percent do not have access to doctors and nine percent do not have access to health insurance. Early childhood, school-based, and community-based programs can help increase access to health and dental care when those services are provided on-site. These types of programs ease barriers to care for families unable to schedule appointments within the structure of traditional care delivery hours. Non-traditional health delivery programs should continue to be supported and expanded when possible.

Do people in your household have access to *Dentists* and *Doctors?*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Dentists	50%	37%	10%	3%
Doctors	55%	40%	3%	2%

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
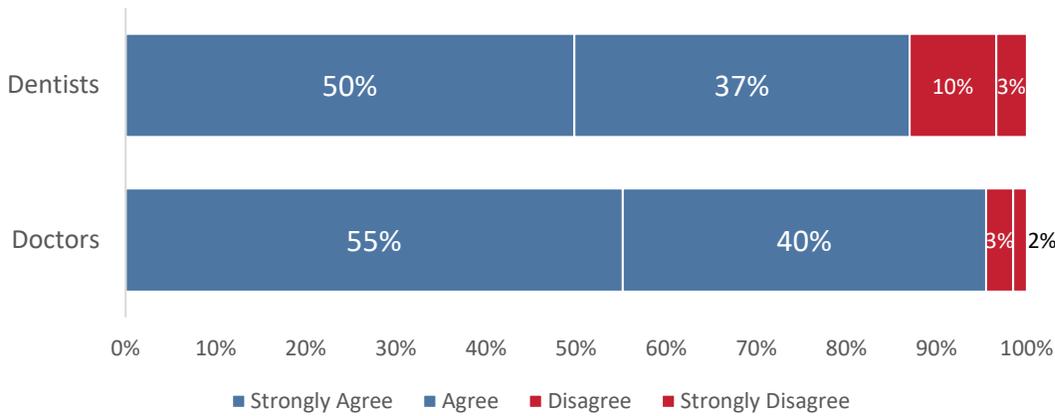
Do people in your household have *Dental* and *Health insurance*?

	Agree	Disagree
Dental Insurance	80%	20%
Health Insurance	91%	9%

- Agree
- Disagree
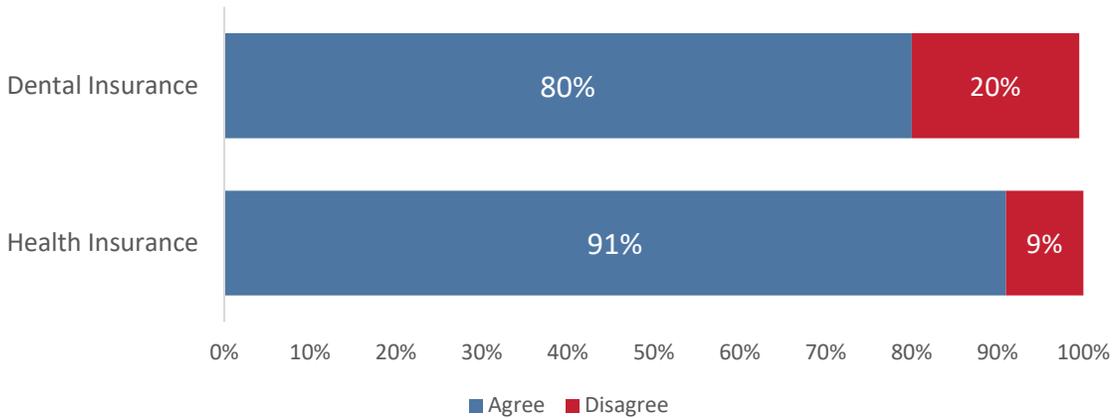
In general, the resident survey found that most residents in Lorain County rate their health in the average range. An equal percentage of people ranked their health as well below or well above average.

Self-Rated Health Status

| Well below average 10% | Little below average 17% | Average 39% | Better than average 24% | Much Better than average, 10% |
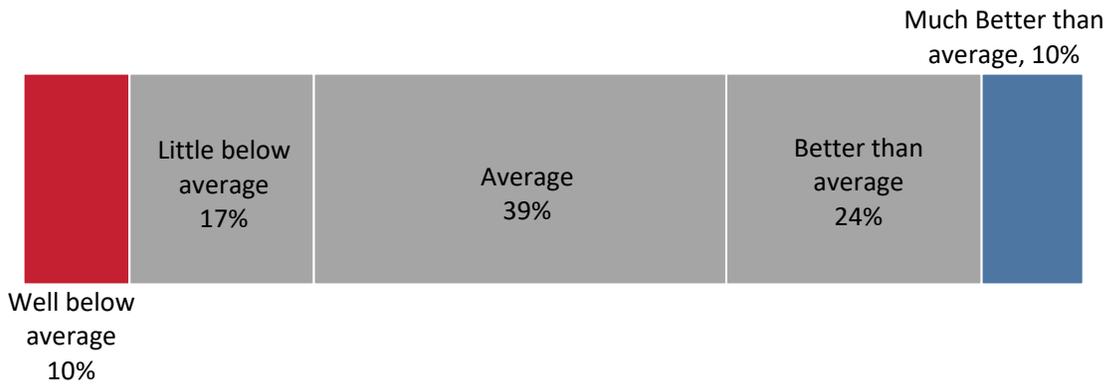
Another area of note within the County Health Rankings is the number of poor mental health days (4.8) paired with the number of social associations (9.5) and the ratio of mental health providers (560:1). The combination of these **three measurements indicates an environment with high mental health needs and low mental health access.** These problems likely increased during COVID-19. According to the resident survey, more than half of residents reported experiencing social isolation, and more than a quarter are still dealing with that isolation during the pandemic. Nearly all (98%) of community partners reported observing social isolation of community members during the pandemic.

Did you experience *Social Isolation* during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Yes, and still experiencing 27%
- No 41%
- Yes, but not anymore 32%
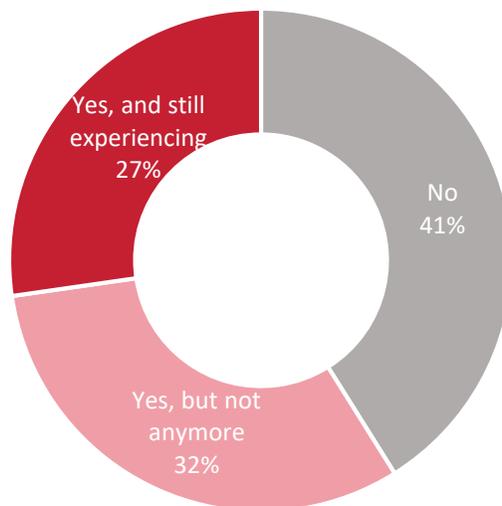
Resident survey takers described feeling isolated from loved ones, while others shared that mental health declined as issues with depression and fear about staying safe and healthy developed. Several issues with vaccinations arose such as, having trouble with scheduling vaccine appointments, interacting with family and neighbors who were not vaccinated, and losing employment due to health issues that prohibited some from being able to get a vaccine.

Families and Children

Families can be defined in many ways and any family structure has the potential to provide enriching environments for children being raised in those families. Some families with single-parent households seek out additional assistance from community agencies to prepare their children for success. Of the **approximately thirty-seven percent of families with children in single-parent households**, eight percent of the households have a male parent and twenty-eight percent have a female parent. Slightly more than six percent of children (4,233 children) in Lorain County are being raised by grandparents. Families with kinship care arrangements may be able to receive assistance through the Lorain County Children's Services.

Percentage of Children in Single Parent Households

Male Householder, no spouse
8.8%

Female Householder, no spouse
28.8%

= 37.6%

Percentage of Children Living with Grandparent

= 6.2%
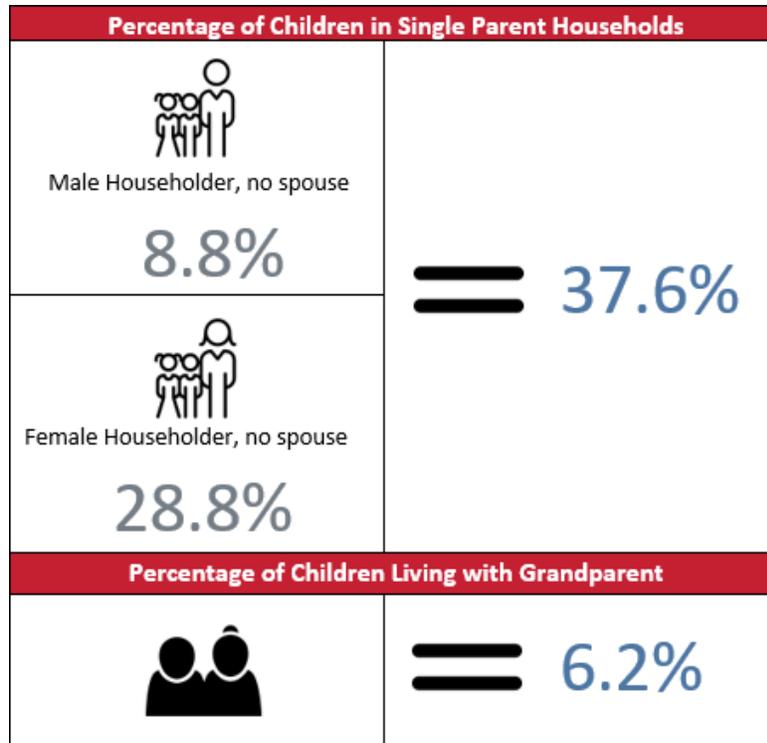
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table S0901

An estimated 3543 women between the ages of fifteen and fifty gave birth in Lorain county in 2019. Of those births, seventy-five percent were to women between the ages of twenty and thirty-four. Twenty-one percent of births were to women aged thirty-five to fifty and four percent were to women between fifteen and nineteen. **Across the county, approximately fifty-four percent of women who gave birth in the past twelve months had incomes below 200% FPL**. The percent of births at this income level varies by smaller geographies within the county. Sheffield Lake and Sheffield Township appear to have the highest rate of women with incomes below 200% FPL who gave birth in the past 12 months. The city of Lorain, Sheffield Village, Amherst Township, the city of Elyria, Eaton Township, and Columbia township all had between sixty and eighty-four percent of births in the past twelve months to women with incomes below 200% FPL.

Rate of Births in the last 12 months Below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line By Lorain County Municipalities

% of Births Below 200% FPL

- 0% - 10%
- 10.1% - 28%
- 28.1% - 60%
- 60.1% - 84%
- 84.1% - 100%
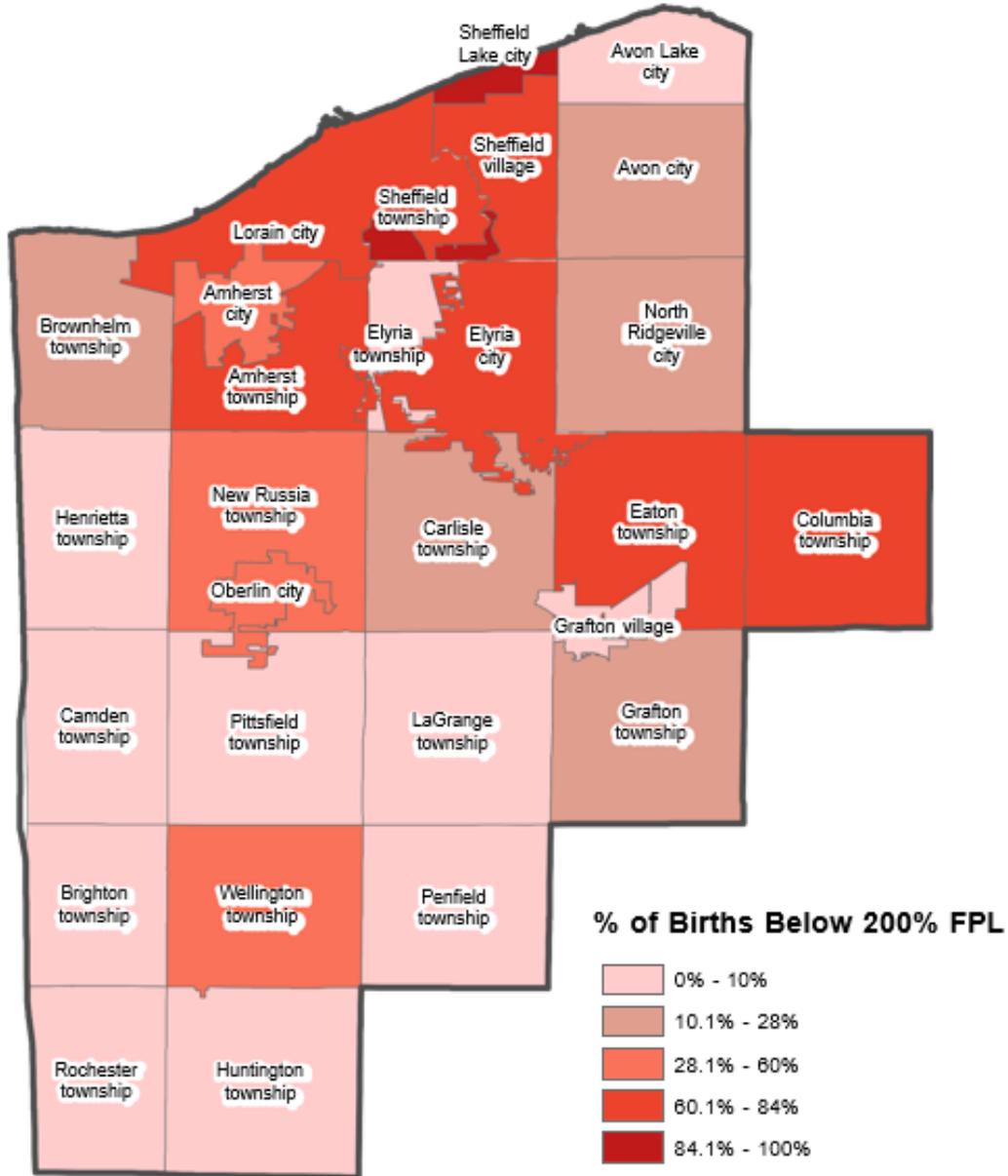
Source: Census American Community Survey 2019 5 year estimates

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Lorain County children living above and below poverty
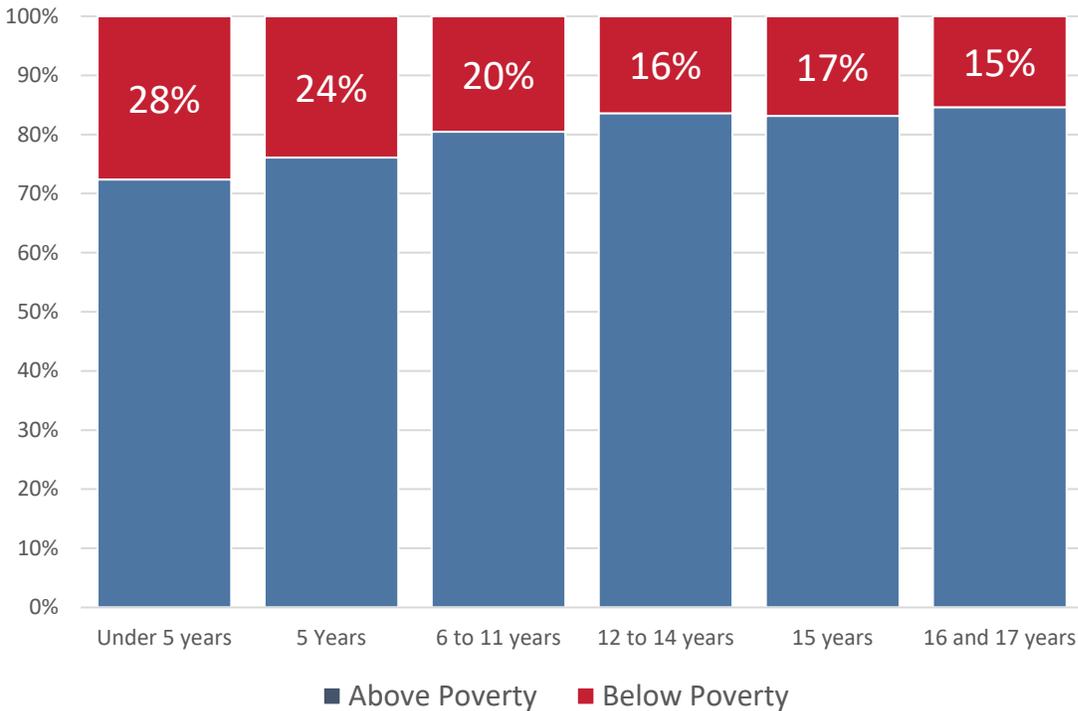
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B17001

Child Poverty

Approximately 13,854 children in Lorain county live at or below the poverty level. The percentage of children living in poverty decreases with age. This is likely an effect of increased family financial stability as childcare needs are reduced and parents' income increases over time. **More than a quarter of all children under five in Lorain County live at or below the poverty level**. This represents approximately 4,750 children. It has been well established that early childhood education programs can provide stability and basic need interventions for families with young children living at or below poverty.

Children Under 5, Lorain County, 2019

% Children Under 5

- 1.5% - 2.4%
- 2.8% - 3.2%
- 3.7% - 4.2%
- 4.8% - 5.4%
- 5.9% - 7.7%
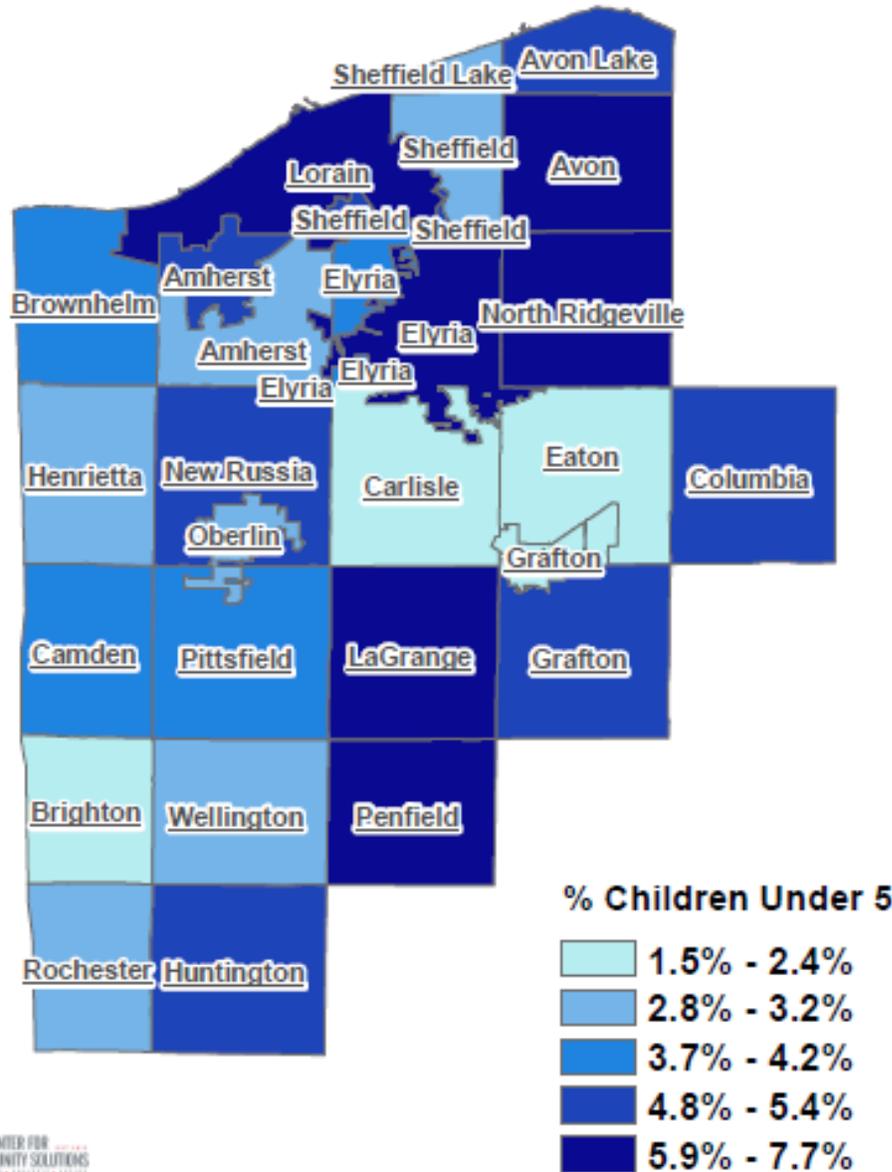
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

Communities within Lorain County that have **the highest rates of children under five include the city of Lorain, Avon, North Ridgeville, Elyria, LaGrange and Penfield.** Communities with the lowest percentage of children under five include Carlisle, Eaton, Grafton and Brighton. Population data paired with indicators that demonstrate need at smaller geographies, such as **school districts can help guide decision regarding location of services that serve young children living in or near poverty.**

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Childcare Access and Quality

Resident survey respondents had the opportunity to indicate whether safe childcare and affordable childcare were a concern for themselves and their families. **About thirty percent of survey takers indicated childcare was of some concern to them.** Of that group, fifty-seven percent did not have concerns about affordable childcare, indicating they do have access to childcare they can afford. However, **forty-three percent do have concerns about the affordability of childcare**, with fifteen percent being very concerned. A similar number of individuals are seriously concerned with safe childcare, and another eighteen percent are moderately or slightly concerned about safety when considering childcare. While many appear to have access to safe and affordable childcare, it also appears to offer an opportunity for improvements to childcare within the community. About nine percent of all survey takers indicated a loss of childcare during the pandemic. Nearly all (98%) of the community partner surveys indicated they observed families having some difficulty with childcare during the pandemic.

Is *Safe* and *Affordable* childcare a concern for your family?

Affordable Childcare: No Concern 57%, Slight Concern 17%, Moderate Concern 11%, Serious Concern 15%

Safe Childcare: No Concern 67%, Slight Concern 12%, Moderate Concern 6%, Serious Concern 15%

■ No Concern   ■ Slight Concern   ■ Moderate Concern   ■ Serious Concern
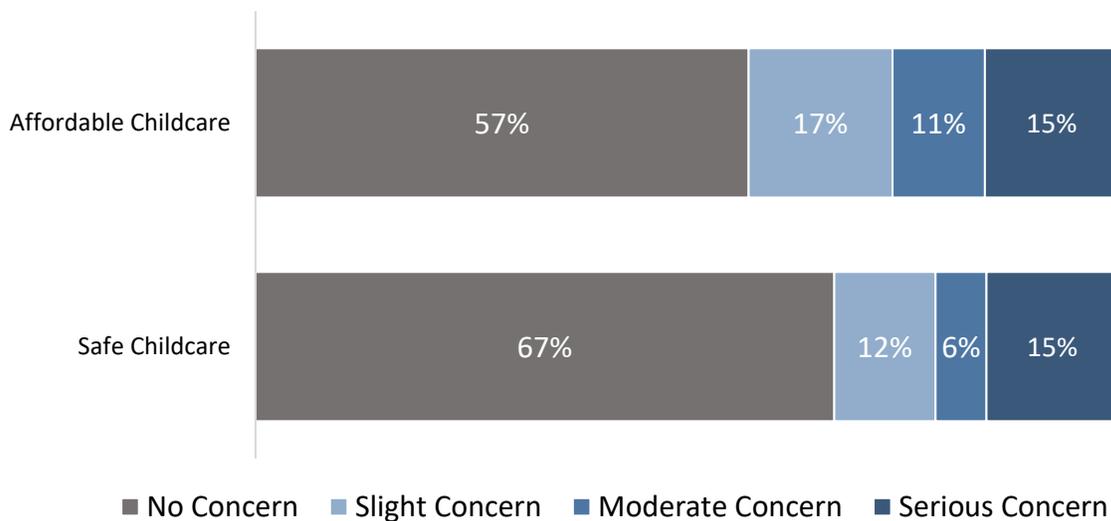
**School district preschool enrollment in most communities dipped in 2021**, likely as parents decided to forgo preschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. 2022 saw enrollment numbers increase at rates similar to those before the pandemic. Parents will likely continue to see the value of early childhood education as young children emerge from their early developmental years spent in relative social isolation.

Lorain County *Preschool Enrollment*

■ FY 2018 (Oct 2017) ■ FY 2019 (Oct 2018) ■ FY 2020 (Oct 2019) ■ FY 2021 (Oct 2020) ■ FY 2022 (Oct 2021)

|	Amherst Exempted Village	Avon Lake City	Elyria City	Lorain City	Midview Local	North Ridgeville City	Oberlin City	Sheffield-Sheffield Lake City
■ FY 2018 (Oct 2017)	60	80	275	284	47	138	32	52
■ FY 2019 (Oct 2018)	72	81	287	310	57	148	31	47
■ FY 2020 (Oct 2019)	72	106	298	306	52	151	33	51
■ FY 2021 (Oct 2020)	70	86	160	196	38	118	23	34
■ FY 2022 (Oct 2021)	74	93	285	287	46	136	32	67

Source: Ohio Department of Education

The resident survey included thirty-five families under the age of five. Of those families, three-quarters had children under the age of three, and a quarter had children between the ages of four and five. When asked if their children were behind in any developmental milestones, sixty-five percent said no, fourteen percent said yes, and seventeen percent said they were not sure. The families who are unsure of whether their children are behind may need additional support or connections to child-serving agencies to make that determination.

Do you prefer services for your child in your home?

No Services — **33%**

Some Services — **41%**

All services — **26%**

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%
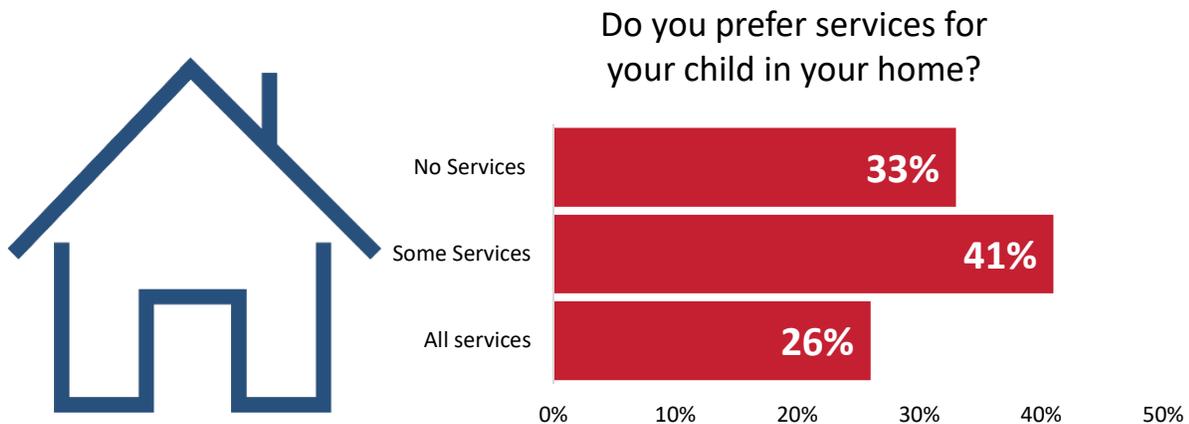
Families with children under five varied in their preference for whether they preferred receiving services for their children in their home and to what extent. The most selected answer demonstrated a preference for some services being provided within the home (41%). About a third of families prefer no services in the home and just more than a quarter would like all the services provided in their home.

Plans to Enroll In Early Head Start/Head Start

Category	4 & 5	0 to 3
I do not believe my child is eligible	~11%	~23%
I have no plans to enroll my child	~44%	~31%
I am considering enrolling my child		~31%
Yes, I plan to enroll in the next 3 months		
My child is already enrolled	~44%	~12%

■ 4 & 5 ■ 0 to 3
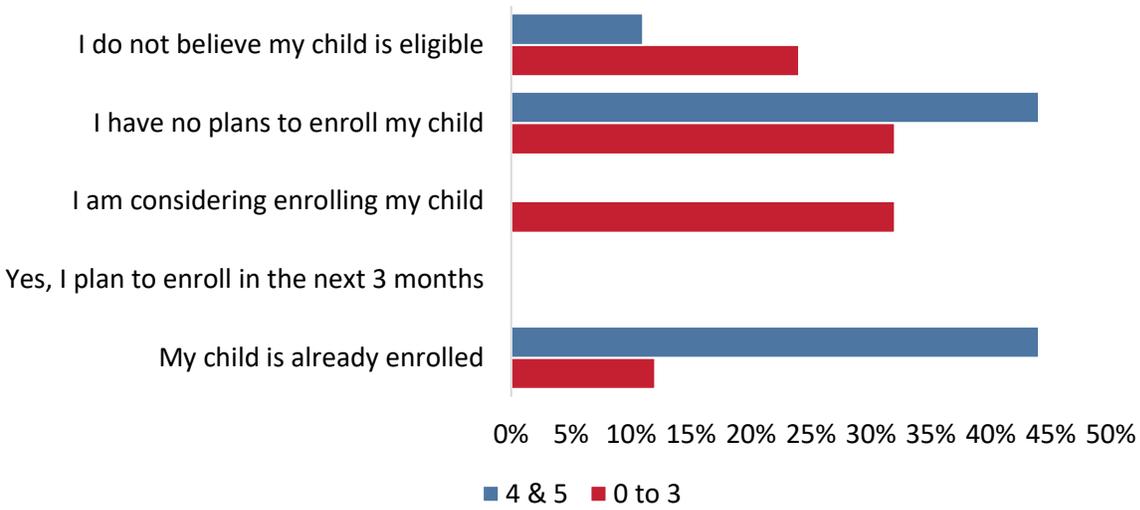
Among those who responded to the resident survey, a higher percentage of four and five-year-olds were already enrolled in Head Start than families enrolled in Early Head Start. **About thirty percent of families with children under three are considering enrolling in an Early Head Start program.** These families may need more information about the program to determine whether it is a good option for their family.

Of those considering or already enrolled in Head Start, resident survey respondents were asked how many hours a day their children would use Head Start; families were able to choose less than 6 hours, 6 - 8 hours, and 8-10 hours and whether they would enroll for a full calendar year or a school year.

How often would you use Head Start?

- 65% — (Less than 6 hours)
- 30%
- 5%
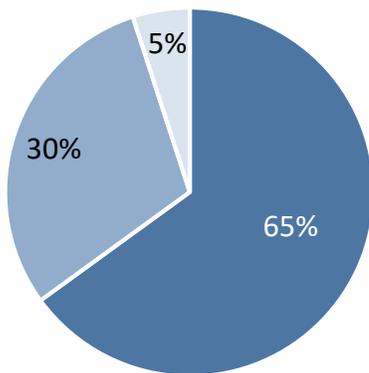
■ Less than 6 hours   ■ 6-8 hours   ■ 8-10 hours

What timeframe would you use Head Start?

- 76%
- 24%
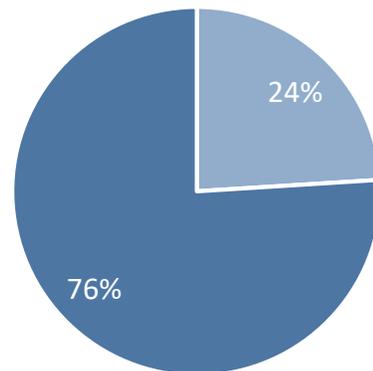
■ School Year   ■ Calendar Year

Parents and caregivers of children enrolled in Head Start programs in Lorain County were invited to share their experiences related to the head start program through conversations with a researcher at The Center for Community Solutions. Notes from conversations were combined and analyzed for themes of which several emerged.

Parents and caregivers are generally quite satisfied with the Head Start program. Many shared that **their child had one or more special needs that were being addressed through the Head Start program that they believe would not have been addressed had the child been in a different type of early childhood care.** Those who had older children who had been in Head Start appreciated the assistance with transitioning their child to Kindergarten and making sure the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) services were maintained.

Social and emotional learning came up often during the conversations. Emerging from the pandemic, some parents felt that the isolation their child had experienced resulted in a skill deficit in this area. They described their children as becoming frustrated easily and not knowing how to successfully interact with their peers. **Head Start teachers were lauded for their patience and skill in working to bring their children** along in this area. All of the parents and caregivers felt their children would be ready for Kindergarten.

Parents and caregivers talked about the additional supports available through the Head Start program as well. They mentioned receiving food and toiletries during the early days of COVID which they found to be very helpful. Although they understand and agree with the lack of parental presence in the buildings during the pandemic**, they miss the opportunities to connect more directly with the staff of the center.** Those who had been engaged with the center before the pandemic fondly recalled family activities at the center. They acknowledged the centers' efforts to continue activities virtually but also look forward to in-person gatherings when it is safe to do so.

Families often found out about the center through word of mouth. **Having a trusted friend or family member who was familiar with the center make a recommendation gave them the push to explore the center as an option.** Once connected, they report positive experiences. Many shared that before a recommendation, they were unaware of the available programming. When asked how Head Start could have a deeper reach into the community, a few suggestions were made. Some mentioned existing billboards were a good idea and should be continued. Others suggested LCCAA could promote the Head Start programming through local Facebook community groups. Others suggested that young parents may not be on Facebook but are more likely to use other social media such as TikTok and Snapchat.

When asked about **potential barriers families may experience that would prevent them from enrolling their child in a Head Start center, transportation was mentioned the most often**. Families without access to a car may not be able to get their child to and from the center. Others mentioned that some preferred to have their child enrolled in their school district's preschool and Pre-K programs. One person thought that the hours might be a barrier. If the parent or caregiver had to work early morning or late evening shifts, they may choose a childcare center that offers hours that work better with their schedule.

School-aged Concerns

Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 2 or more school days a month, can be an indicator of familial instability within a community. **Children whose families do not have economic or housing stability often miss school at a higher rate than their more stable peers.** Chronic health conditions can also lead to increased absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism appears to be higher in the last full year before the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2019-2020 school numbers are likely lower than they would have been before the pandemic. All schools closed under government order in March 2020 and remained closed for the remainder of the year. During this time, school's attendance policies and practices varied greatly and may not be a reliable source of data. In the last full year before the pandemic, **Lorain City had the highest rate of chronic absenteeism followed by Clearview Local and Elyria City.**

Lorain County School Districts: *Chronic Absenteeism*

● **2019-20** ● **2018-19**
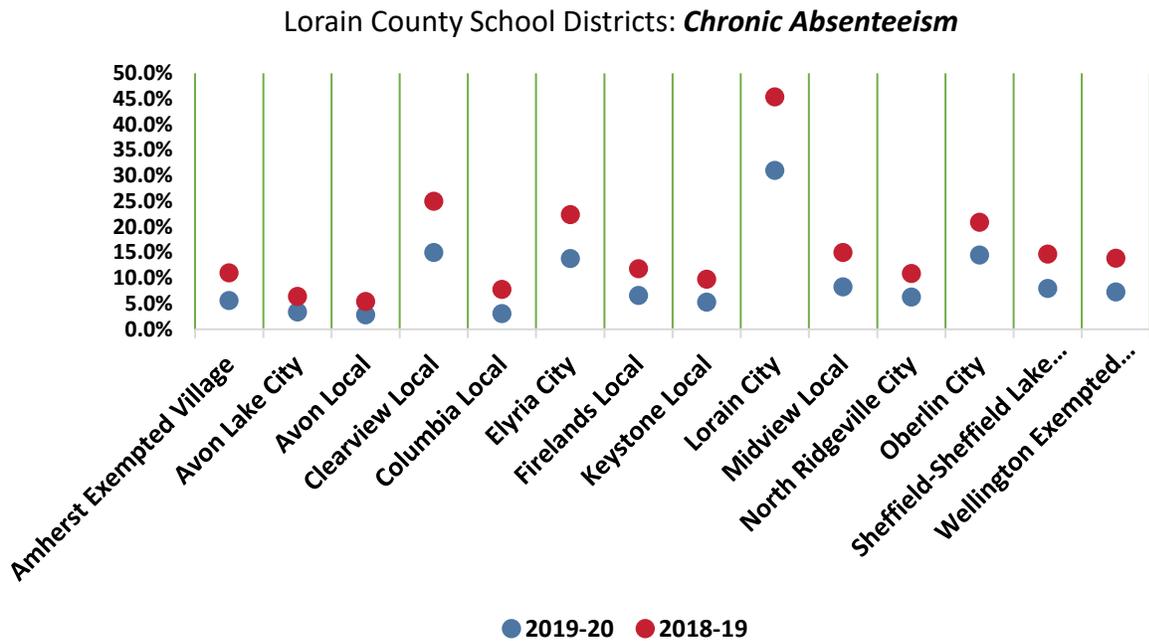
Source: Ohio Department of Education

Schools provide free or reduced-price lunch to students whose household income is at or less than 130% of the USDA established poverty guidelines or if the student receives food stamps or Ohio Works First (OWF) benefit. They may also qualify for free and reduced lunch if they attend a school in a community that qualifies for universal free lunch under the community eligibility provision which applies to schools in high poverty areas. As the table details below, the percent of children eligible for free and reduced lunch varies greatly throughout the county. **Lorain City School District has the highest percentage of children eligible for the benefit.**

2019-2020 Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility	
School District	**Percent Eligible**
Amherst Exempted Village	
Walter G. Nord Middle School	25.53%
Amherst Junior High School	23.52%
Powers Elementary School	25.62%
Marion L Steele High School	19.05%
Avon Local	
Avon Heritage Elementary School	11.47%
Avon East Elementary School	13.40%
Avon Middle School	14.26%
Avon High School	9.83%
Avon Village Elementary School	9.33%
Avon Lake City	
Westview Elementary School	9.47%
Troy Intermediate Elementary School	10.37%
Learwood Middle School	11.06%
Redwood Elementary School	9.62%
Avon Lake High School	9.86%
Erieview Elementary School	6.92%
Eastview Elementary School	6.16%
Clearview Local	
Vincent Elementary School	79.34%
Durling Middle School	67.27%
Clearview High School	54.53%
Columbia Local	
Columbia Middle School	24.65%
Columbia High School	21.45%
Elyria City	
Franklin Elementary School	92.58%
Oakwood Elementary School	84.91%
Crestwood Elementary School	77.39%
Eastern Heights Junior High School	67.11%
Northwood Junior High School	64.38%
Westwood Junior High School	67.07%
McKinley Elementary School	56.74%
Ely Elementary School	59.85%
Elyria High School	51.95%

Prospect Elementary School	56.64%
Windsor Elementary School	43.77%
Spring Valley	-
Elyria Early Childhood Village	41.29%
Firelands Local	
Firelands Elementary School	33.55%
South Amherst Middle School	30.02%
Firelands High School	23.24%
Keystone Local	
Keystone Elementary School	31.74%
Keystone Middle School	27.76%
Keystone High School	16.22%
Lorain City	
Frank Jacinto Elementary	100.00%
General Johnnie Wilson Middle School	89.00%
Tony Wofford Morrison Elementary	72.35%
Helen Steiner Rice Elementary	80.55%
New Beginnings Academy	89.85%
Garfield Elementary School	91.69%
Hawthorne-Irving Elementary	100.00%
Ernest J King Elementary School	95.52%
Larkmoor Elementary School	81.58%
Steven Dohanos Elementary	100.00%
Washington Elementary School	92.84%
Southview Middle School	89.70%
Longfellow Middle School	81.75%
Palm Elementary School	90.98%
Lorain High-Admiral King	69.64%
Lorain County JVS	
Lorain County JVS	37.67%
Midview Local	
Midview North Elementary School	42.76%
Midview West Elementary School	41.96%
Midview East Elementary School	38.46%
Midview Middle School	36.46%
Midview High School	29.04%
North Ridgeville City	
North Ridgeville Academic Center	22.07%
North Ridgeville High School	20.64%
Liberty Elementary School	18.75%
North Ridgeville High Tech Academy	16.43%
North Ridgeville Educ Ctr Ele Sch	8.30%

Oberlin City	
Eastwood Elementary School	69.86%
Langston Middle School	64.15%
Prospect Elementary School	49.42%
Oberlin High School	41.60%
Sheffield-Sheffield Lake City	
Brookside Intermediate School (Bis)	47.54%
Forestlawn Elementary School	51.22%
Brookside High School (Bhs)	40.00%
Brookside Middle School (Bms)	48.06%
Knollwood Elementary School	46.76%
Wellington Exempted Village	
Westwood Elementary School	49.32%
McCormick Middle School	35.73%
Wellington High School	21.39%

Source: Ohio Department of Education FY-2020 Data for free and reduced-price meals.

Employment

The age group with the highest educational attainment in Lorain county are those between the ages of 35 to 44, of which forty-three percent have attained an associate's degree or higher. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates an inverse relationship between educational attainment and unemployment rates. Those with an associate's degree or higher have an unemployment rate of 1.5-3.8%. Non-degreed individuals can expect unemployment rates between 5-8%[1].
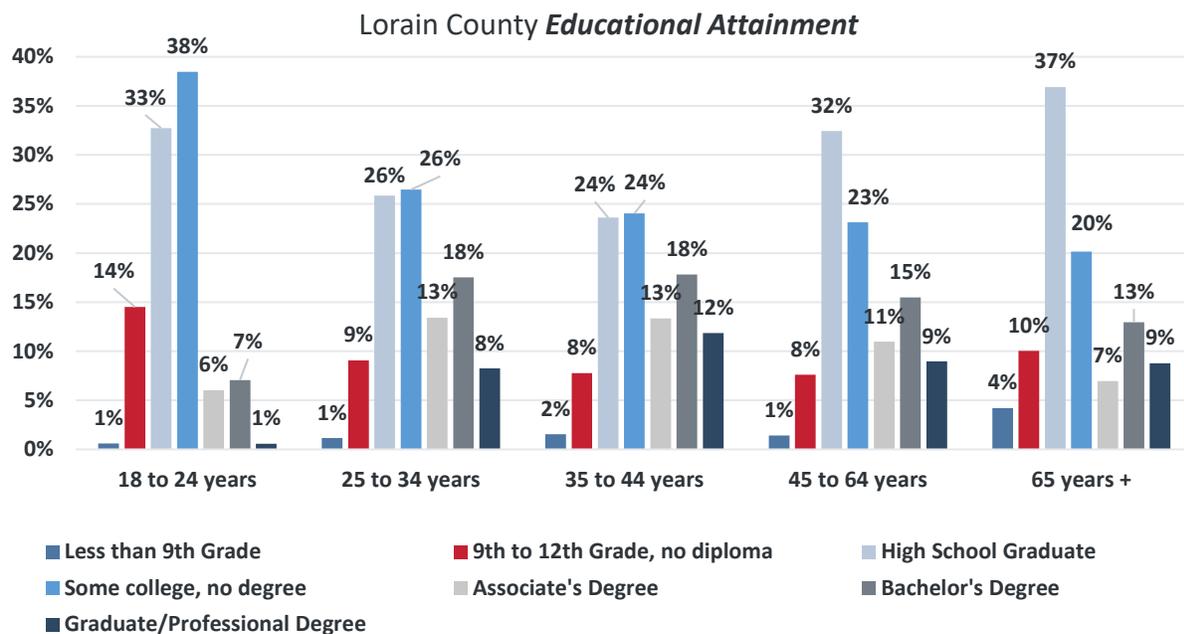
Lorain County *Educational Attainment*

Legend: Less than 9th Grade; 9th to 12th Grade, no diploma; High School Graduate; Some college, no degree; Associate's Degree; Bachelor's Degree; Graduate/Professional Degree

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B15001

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[1] https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/data-on-display/education-matters.htm

Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rate is a measurement of individuals working or actively looking for work. **Lorain County's labor force participation rate largely mirrors Ohio's rates**. There are a few differences to note by age group. Compared to the state, a smaller percentage of 20- to 24-year-old individuals in Lorain County are engaged in the labor force by about three percent. Conversely, three percent more Lorain residents between the ages of 55 and 64 are active in the labor market than the state average. It appears **younger adults are having difficulty breaking into the labor force while older adults are staying engaged longer** in Lorain County.

Lorain County *Labor Force Participation Rate* by Age
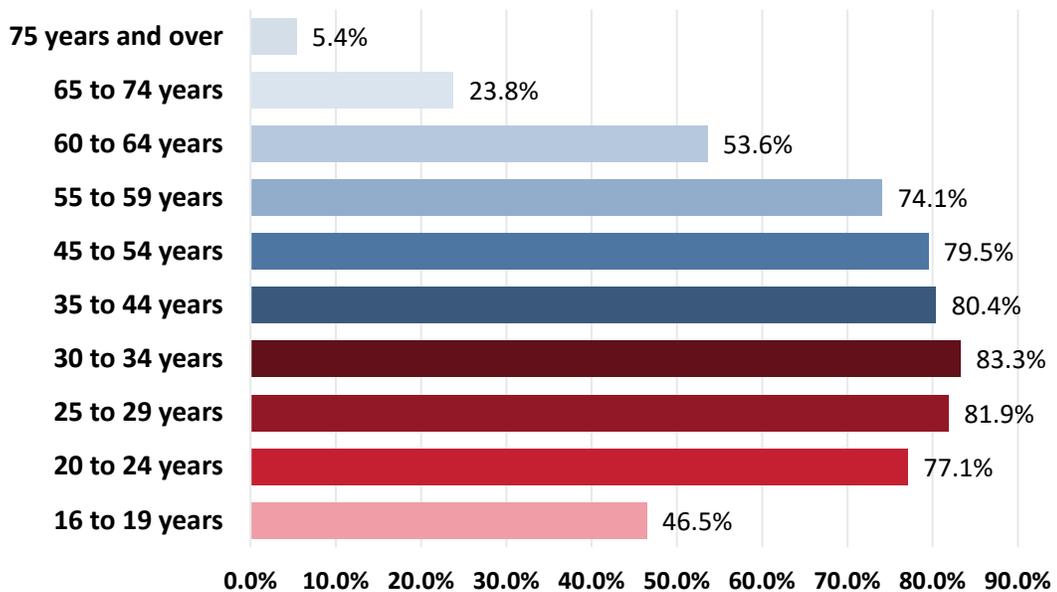
Age Group	Rate
75 years and over	5.4%
65 to 74 years	23.8%
60 to 64 years	53.6%
55 to 59 years	74.1%
45 to 54 years	79.5%
35 to 44 years	80.4%
30 to 34 years	83.3%
25 to 29 years	81.9%
20 to 24 years	77.1%
16 to 19 years	46.5%

Of the resident survey respondents, more than half indicated stable employment was an area that impacted themselves or their families. Of the group impacted by employment, **forty-seven percent had some concerns about the stability of their employment with nearly twenty percent having serious concerns.**

Are you concerned about *Stable Employment*
for you or your family?

No Concern,
53%

Slight Concern,
20%

Moderate
Concern, 8%

Serious
Concern, 19%

47%
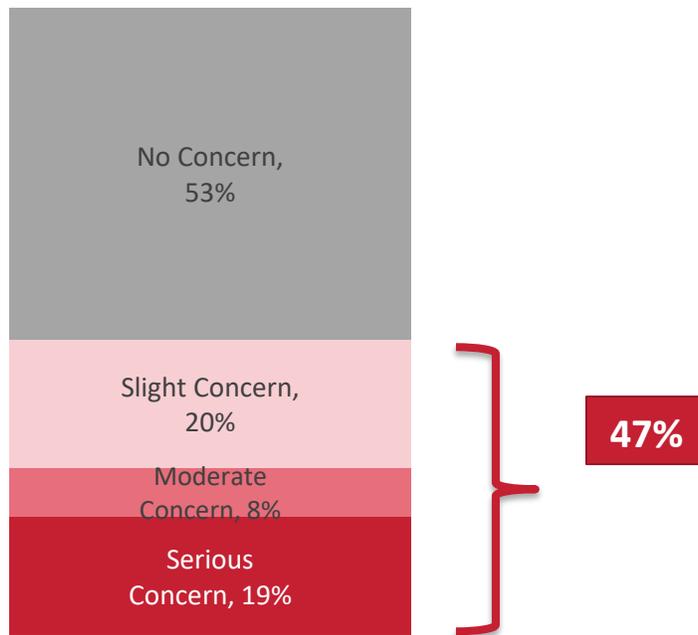
Job Loss and Pandemic Effects

Forty-six percent of community partners reported job loss and a reduction in wages or hours was widely experienced in Lorain County. Resident Survey takers were also asked about how they were impacted by COVID-19, including their employment. While the majority, **sixty-four percent, did not experience job loss, twenty percent of respondents did experience job loss and are still without employment.**

Presumably, the twenty percent who have lost jobs were an active part of the labor force before the pandemic. This indicates a sizable portion of the population with annual incomes under $50,000 may need assistance in finding new positions or additional training for positions with a high number of openings.

Did you experience *Job Loss*
during COVID-19?

Yes and still
experiencing
20%

Yes, but not
anymore
16%

No
64%
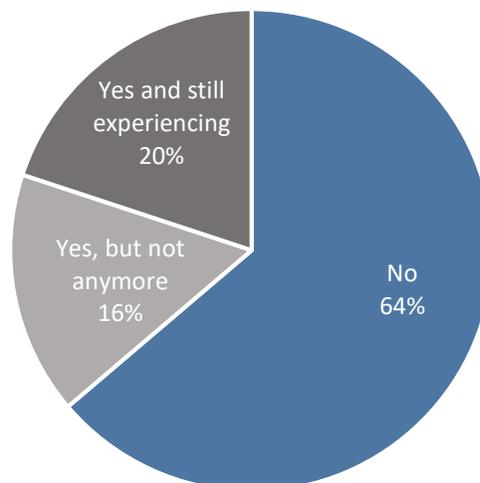
The Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation tracks the top job categories and the median salary for the state of Ohio. In the northeast region of the state which includes Lorain county, **the top five jobs with the most openings are laborers, office clerks, customer service representatives, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, and registered nurses.** Of the jobs with the most openings, only registered nurses have a median salary higher than the current median income within the county.

Top 5 Jobs with Most Openings in Northeast Ohio
Number of Openings

Job Category	Number of Openings
Registered Nurses	2,532
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2,770
Customer Service Representatives	3,825
Office Clerks, General	4,217
Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers	4,527
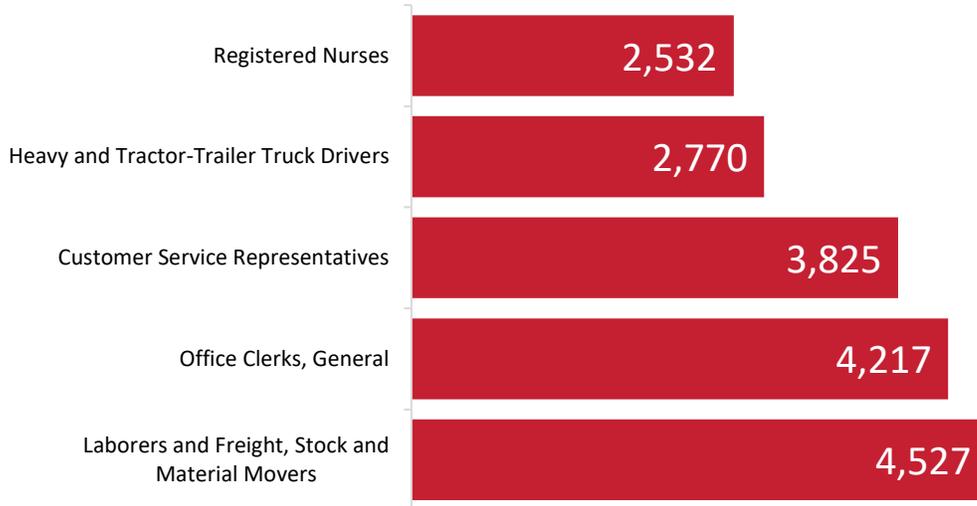
Top 5 Jobs with Most Openings in Northeast Ohio
Median Salary

Job Category	Median Salary
Registered Nurses	$69,000
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	$46,000
Customer Service Representatives	$36,000
Office Clerks, General	$35,000
Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers	$31,000

Lorain County Median Income $58,427
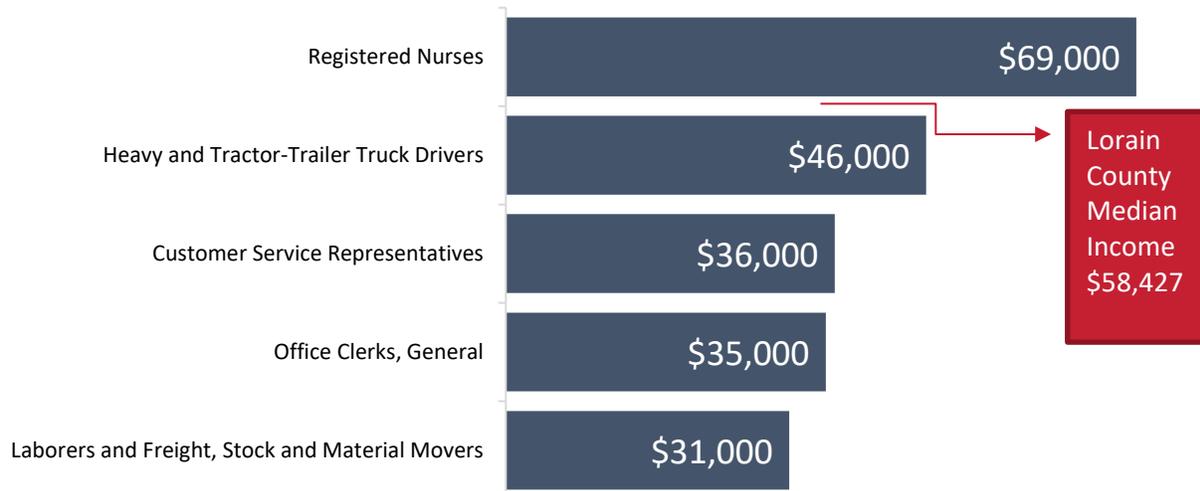
Source: Ohio, The Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation

Within the region, **three of the top five jobs with the most expected annual growth are in health care; personal and home health aides, home health aides, and registered nurses.** Growth is also expected in software developer and construction laborer positions. Of these high growth positions, software developers have the highest median income followed by registered nurses. The two highest growth positions have a median income that is less than half the current median income of the county.

Top 5 Jobs with the *most projected growth* in Northeast Ohio

584 $23,000 Personal and Home Health Aides
498 $23,000 Home Health Aides
298 $69,000 Registered Nurses
198 $91,000 Software Developers, Applications
149 $43,000 Construction Laborers

Median Salary ▬▬ Projected Annual Growth
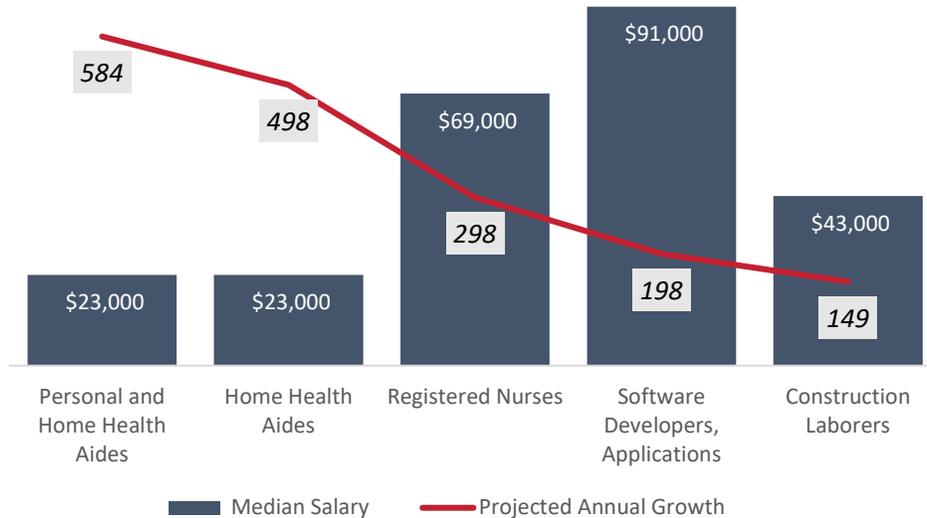
Some residents of Lorain County will need to develop new or enhance existing skills to be competitive in the job market. When asked what LCCAA could provide that would help most with employment, of those interested in assistance, resume review (52%) was the most popular answer followed by job search (48%) and software (44%). Although the numbers were smaller, others were also interested in assistance with interviews, math, writing, and reading skills.

What could LCCAA provide that would *help you the most with employment*?

Reading 8%
Dressing 14%
Writing 14%
Math 20%
Interview 32%
Software 44%
Job Search 48%
Resume 52%
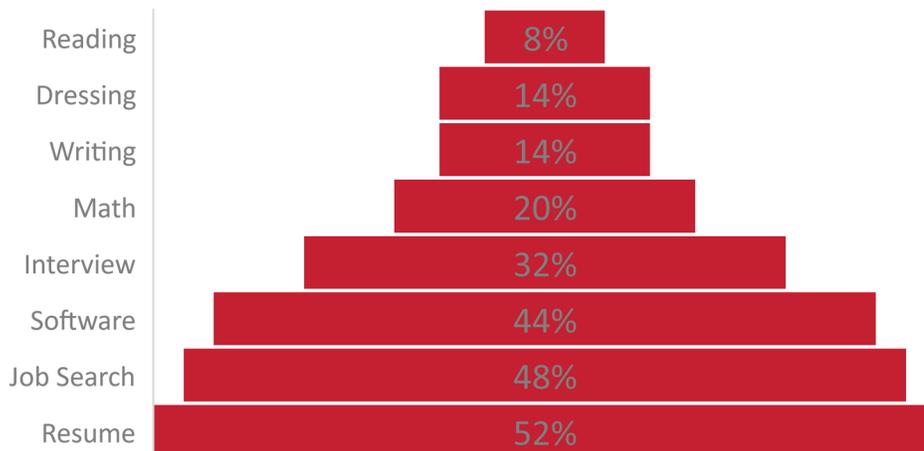
LCCAA Services

When asked about familiarity with LCCAA in the resident survey, the response was evenly split between those who knew about LCCAA and those who had no previous knowledge of the organization. Of the community partners surveyed, the majority (74%) were either very or extremely familiar with LCCAA, another 20 percent were somewhat familiar, and the remaining six percent were not so familiar or not at all familiar with the organization.

The most common way that resident survey respondents learned about LCCAA's programs was through using energy assistance programs for weatherization, HEAP, and PIPP, and the second most common was through Head Start. Residents also learned about services in newspapers or ads, and a few noted outlets like the *Chronicle Telegram*. Mailed letters or word of mouth were other common channels. Some also learned about LCCAA's programs because of where they worked, specifically other nonprofits or schools.

LCCAA services previously used by resident survey takers	
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) or Utility assistance	26.2%
Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)	20.7%
Head Start/Early Head Start	10.7%
Home weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)	5.9%
Emergency Home Repair	4.1%
Others	2.4%
ByCar (Car Purchasing Program)	1.0%
Money Management Classes	0.7%
Technology Training	0.0%

When resident survey takers were asked if they believe LCCAA provides important services, about a third were too unfamiliar with the services to say if they were important. Of those aware of the services nearly all said the services were important.

Resident survey respondents who were not familiar with LCCAA and its programs shared ways that the availability of services could be better

Are services provided by LCCAA *important?*

advertised. Some suggestions offered were speaking at local events, and going to places that residents normally attend such as schools, libraries, churches, senior centers, club meetings, and even home owner associations. Radio, television, and social media were other options that participants shared for advertisements. Lastly, respondents suggested sending annual letters to residents, especially since some may not have the internet to find out about LCCAA.

What Types of Services are Helpful?

Resident survey takers were also asked what types of services someone within their household could use. **Utility assistance and food pantry were the most often selected services followed by computer skills training, car purchasing/repair, and home weatherization.** Services selected least often by survey takers included adult day care, substance abuse services, and foreclosure counseling. Residents also shared ideas on some of the services they would like to see being offered. These included: offering weatherization programs again, transportation services like helping to pay for a car, gas, or other ways of getting around the city, and more services for older adults like, home modification or repairs, medical equipment loans, or help applying for services when medical or transportation issues prevent them from being able to come into the office to apply.

What services could someone in your household use?	
Utility payment assistance	26.90%
Food pantry	24.50%
Computer skills training	24.10%
Car purchasing/repair	21.80%
Home weatherization/insulation	20.70%
Tax return preparation	14.90%
Furnace repair/replacement	14.80%
Emergency home repair	12.80%
Mental health services	12.80%
Transportation for doctors appointments	11.80%
Hot water tank repair/replacement	10.70%
Home health care	7.60%
Matched savings program	7.60%
Homebuyer training	5.90%
Other	5.50%
Help starting a small business	5.20%
GED instruction	4.50%
Head Start/Early Head Start	4.10%
Job-hunting training	3.80%
After school programs	3.80%
Childcare full-day	3.80%
Childcare part-day	3.40%
Childcare with alternative hours	3.40%
Adult daycare	2.40%
Substance abuse services	1.70%
Foreclosure counseling	1.40%

Input from Community Partners

Community partners were asked a similar open-ended question about programs and services in Lorain County. Transportation was the most frequently mentioned service needed. This included increased access to and more public transportation, transportation for youth programs, and guided car repair programs. Another commonly mentioned topic centered around housing. **Community partners**

indicated a need for more affordable housing in the community, home repair programs, reduced water costs, and daytime services for unhoused people. Job training programs are also seen as a need in the community including those that offer retraining. Other less commonly mentioned areas were mental health, legal assistance, and improved customer service within the social service sector.

Community partners were asked to share their observations on how concerning various issues are for residents of Lorain County. **Transportation, affordable housing, stable employment, and affording monthly bills all rank high in areas of concern**. Some of these highly concerning areas have direct matches with services and programming offered by LCCAA while others will be better suited to be addressed by other social service or governmental agencies.

Area of Need	Not a concern for any residents	A concern for a few residents	A concern for some residents	A concern for most residents
Reliable transportation	0%	4%	60%	37%
Affording rent/mortgage	0%	9%	50%	41%
Stable employment	0%	12%	63%	26%
Affording other monthly bills	0%	9%	47%	44%
Safe neighborhood	2%	21%	40%	40%
Affordable childcare	0%	14%	16%	45%
Safe Childcare	0%	16%	52%	33%
Safe home	0%	32%	39%	29%
Adequate home weatherization	3%	34%	39%	19%
A reliable source of heat	2%	38%	45%	16%
Enough room in the home	2%	40%	43%	16%
Safe drinking water	19%	31%	24%	26%

What Process Improvements Should be Made?

Residents who were previously familiar with LCCAA's programs shared some ways that they could be better served by the organization. **Suggestions included: faster service and processing of applications, as well as an easier application process with fewer eligibility restrictions.** One respondent offered that keeping records of information could prevent individuals from having to bring paperwork on multiple occasions. Some participants would like to see better outreach to let people know about services, more help with applying for services, and improved and more frequent follow-ups to those who apply. **A suggestion offered multiples times was sending correspondence or a welcome packet to new residents in the city to let them know about available services.** In addition, residents want to see other options to apply for those without transportation or internet access, as the pandemic caused applications to have to be done on the computer or by drop-in.

Community partners were asked what LCCAA services they have or would be likely to refer someone to use. **Fifty-five percent of community partners refer people to LCCAA often and thirty-three percent refer people occasionally.** Head Start/Early Head Start and HEAP were the two programs that community partners reported they had referred people to in the past. Technology training and money management classes are the programs community partners are most likely to refer someone to in the future. Although the percentages are small, HWAP and Emergency Home Repair programs were the ones that community partners most often selected as programs that were not likely to refer someone.

Referrals from Community Partners

Program	I have made a referral	I am likely to make a referral	I am not likely to make a referral	Does not apply
Technology Training	30%	58%		
Money Management Classes	36%	50%		
ByCar (Car Purchasing Program)	51%	36%		
Home Weatherization Assistance Program…	33%	45%		
Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)	62%	31%		
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) or…	77%	17%		
Head Start/Early Head Start	79%	15%		
Emergency Home Repair	31%	44%		

Legend:
- I have made a referral
- I am likely to make a referral
- I am not likely to make a referral
- Does not apply

Methodology

Secondary Data
Secondary data sources were used to provide a demographic profile of residents of Lorain County. Topics covered include income, poverty, health, educational attainment, labor force participation, employment opportunities, and K-12 education. The data sources used in this report are listed below.

American Community Survey (ACS)
The ACS is a nationwide survey that collects and produces information on social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics of our nation's population every year. This information provides an important tool for communities to use to see how they are changing. Every year, the Census Bureau contacts over 3.5 million households across the country to participate in the ACS. It is a nationwide, continuous survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely social, economic, housing, and demographic data every year. Since its start, the ACS has been providing a continuous stream of updated information for states and local areas and has revolutionized the way statistics are used to understand our communities.

https://www.census.gov/en.html

Ohio Department of Education
The Ohio Department of Education is a diverse team of passionate, education-focused professionals dedicated to fulfilling the vision established in *Each Child, Our Future*, Ohio's strategic plan for education. The vision is, "In Ohio, each child is challenged to discover and learn, prepared to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path, and empowered to become a resilient, lifelong learner who contributes to society." ODE Advanced Reports are available for people interested in taking a deeper look at the Ohio Department of Education's data. With the advanced reports, you can:
- Find data for more than one Ohio school district or building
- Find the "numbers behind the data"
- Print standard reports and graphs
- Download or save the reports on your computer

https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/advanced

County Health Rankings
The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, (CHR&R) a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, works to improve health outcomes for all and to close the health disparities between those with the most and least opportunities for good health. This work is rooted in a deep belief in health equity, the idea that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, income, location, or any other factor. The CHR&R program provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples to build awareness of the multiple factors that influence health and support community leaders working to improve health and increase health equity. The Rankings are unique in their ability to measure the health of nearly every county in all 50 states and are complemented by guidance, tools, and resources designed to accelerate community learning and action.

https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/

The Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation
The Office of Workforce Transformation's mission is to connect Ohio's business, training, and education communities to build a dynamically skilled, productive, and purposeful workforce. The Office is continuing to create opportunities for more Ohioans to earn in-demand skills needed to advance their career while building a stronger workforce for our state. Ohio's Top Jobs List is a customizable, online tool to help guide Ohioans on career pathways that meet their individual needs and goals and allow them to take advantage of employment opportunities available in our state.

https://workforce.ohio.gov/home

Primary Data
Primary data was collected from residents of Lorain County through a resident survey, a community partner survey, and conversations with a researcher.

Conversations
Parents and caregivers of children enrolled in Head Start were invited to two virtual focus groups. They were also invited to call a Community Solutions researcher any time between 8 am and 8 pm on a selected day for a conversation. The conversations were incentivized with a $15 Amazon gift card which was immediately emailed to the participants after the conversation. Five parents/caregivers participated in the conversations.

Resident survey
A seven-page survey was mailed to residents of Lorain County with incomes under $50,000. The mailing list was purchased from Weekly's mail house and addresses were evenly distributed among the zip codes of Lorain County. Survey takers were given the option to complete a form to enter a raffle for a $25 gift card. The entry forms were immediately separated from the survey upon receipt by Community Solutions. Survey responses remain anonymous. Two-hundred and ninety surveys were returned within the allotted time frame for analysis.

Community Partner Survey
A link to an online survey for community partners was sent via email to partners in the following sectors: community based (social service or assistance agency); private (private business); educational institutions (K-12, university, college, vocational school); public (local, regional or state government agency or elected position); and faith-based (church, temple, synagogue or organization with a faith-based mission). Fifty-eight individuals responded to the survey.

Community Partner Survey Response Distribution by Sector

- Community Based — 55.70%
- Educational Institutions — 25.86%
- Public Sector — 8.62%
- Private Sector — 3.45%
- Faith Based — 3.45%
- Other — 3.45%
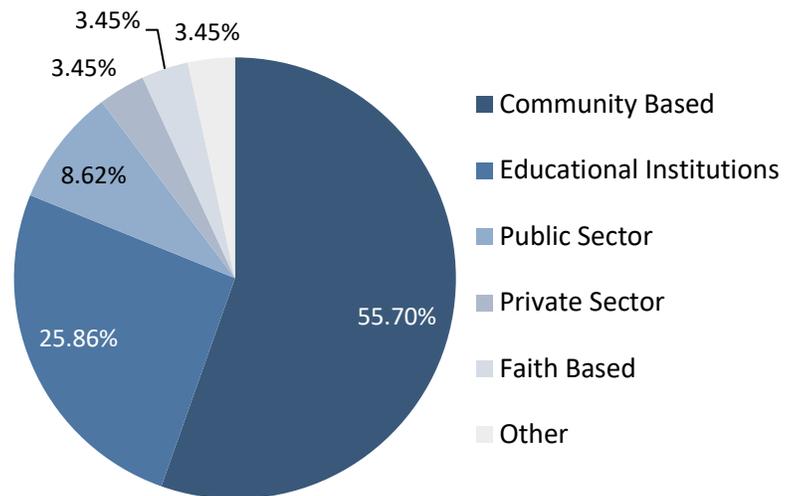
Community Partner Outreach by Sector

Community Based Partners	Private Sector Partners	Educational Institutions	Public Sector Partners	Faith Based Partners
Alcohol & Drug Addiction Services Board of Lorain County	All State Insurance	Academy of Arts and Sciences	Amherst City Council	Catholic Charities
Bellefaire JCB	Edward Jones Financial Advisor	Amherst Exempted Village Schools	Avon City Council	Common Ground Center
Catholic Charities	Emerge Inc	Avon Schools	Avon Lake	Humility of Mary Housing Faith House
Child Care Resource Center	Giardini, Poblar & Mason, LLC	Black River Schools	Camden Township	Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Cleveland Hearing and Speech	Lorain County Chamber of Commerce	Case Western Dental Peds. Outreach Program	City of Amherst	Salvation Army
El Centro	Lorain County Chamber of Commerce	City of Oberlin	City of Avon	St. Jude Helping Hands & Food Pantry
Genesis House Lorain County Safe Harbor	Lorain County Chamber of Commerce	Clearview Schools	City of Avon Lake	
Judge Betleski Common Pleas	Morning Journal	Columbia Local Schools	City of Elyria	
Junior Achievement Greater Cleveland	New Sunrise Properties	Elyria City Schools	City of Lorain	
Kiwanis Clubs	New Sunrise Properties	Educational Service Center of Lorain County	City of North Ridgeville	
Linking Employment Ability and Potential (LEAP)	Ohio Guidestone	Firelands Schools	City of Oberlin	
The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland	Prudential Financial	Horizon Education Centers	City of Sheffield Lake	
Lorain Community Action Agency	Rebman's Recreation	Kent State University	City of Vermillion	
Lorain County Domestic Relations Court	Ross Medical	Keystone Schools	City of Wellington	
Lorain Metropolitan Housing Authority	SEIU District 1199	Lake Ridge Academy	Elyria City Council	
Lucy Idol Center	Simply Elegant Affairs	Lorain City Schools	Elyria Library	
Murray Ridge Center	Terminal Ready-Mix	Lorain County Community College	Judge Betleski Common Pleas	
Nordson Corporation Foundation	United Properties	Lorain County JVS	Judge Ewers Common Pleas	
Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio	WOBL/WDLW Radio	Midview Schools	Judge John Miraldi Common Pleas	
St. Augustine Health		National Head Start	Judge Rothgery	

Ministries		Assoc.	Common Pleas	
Stocker Foundation		North Ridgeville Schools	Lorain County	
Vocational Guidance Services		Oberlin City Schools	Lorain County Board of Commissioners	
YMCA		Oberlin Kids	Lorain County Board of DD	
YWCA		Ohio Business College	Lorain County Board of Mental Health	
		Ohio Head Start Association Inc.	Lorain County Domestic Relations Court	
		Sheffield Schools	Lorain County Health Department	
		Wellington Exempted Village Schools	Lorain County Office on Aging	
		Wellington High School	Lorain County Port Authority	
			Lorain County Sheriff	
			Lorain Health Department	
			Lorain Metropolitan Housing Authority	
			Lorain Municipal Court	
			ODJFS	
			ODSA / OCA	
			Ohio Development of Development	
			Rural Water	
			Sen. Brown	
			Sheffield Village	
			Veterans' Affairs	
			Village of Grafton	
			Village of LaGrange	
			Village of Rochester	
			Village of South Amherst	
			Village of Wellington	
			WIC	

LORAIN COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY
Helping People. Changing Lives.

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