

GEAUGA COUNTY 2019-2022

United Way Services of Geauga County, with the support of United Way of Greater Cleveland, is committed to finding solutions to help residents of the communities we serve move from poverty to prosperity. For over 100 years, we have helped people in crisis with immediate relief for basic human needs. To get out of crisis mode, people need to reach a level of wealth and influence that will withstand a crisis – no longer living one crisis away from falling back into poverty. **Every few years, a Community Needs Assessment is conducted in partnership with the Center for Community Solutions to gather and analyze data.**

The assessment is organized into three community strategies: **Economic Mobility, Health Pathways, and Housing Stability.** This executive summary provides a synopsis of the assessment.

Each section includes secondary data, most of which is based on U.S. Census data and is therefore trackable over time. Some data points reflect Mobility Metrics from the Urban Institute, part of a framework for conditions that boost upward mobility and narrow racial inequalities. This year's report highlights key findings from complementary local assessments to create a fuller picture of our shared regional understanding. Finally, sections conclude with United Way 211 data from January 2018 through March 2023. As pandemic-related supports cease and the region's economy adjusts to post-pandemic norms, United Way 211 social need data can serve as an early indicator of stabilization or emerging challenges.

This Needs Assessment is a starting point and limited to data sets that do not reflect identities like disability status, sexual orientation, or gender. Incorporation of stakeholder voices, assessment of community assets, and policy analysis are also necessary for finding workable systems-level solutions.

Key Findings

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Economic mobility focuses on early childhood development and income progression, emphasizing the need to improve kindergarten readiness and address income disparities. **One third of Geauga children are not ready for kindergarten** at the start of the school year, starting school at a disadvantage. The disparity varies by school district. The county benefits from low rates of student mobility within the school year, with a high of 8.2% in Cardinal Local School District, the same district with the highest rate of students (61%) that are not ready for kindergarten.

Young adults, in particular, need support to identify and pursue pathways to financial stability and success. While the county has a high rate of residents obtaining advanced degrees and high wages, **fewer residents complete high school compared to the rest of Ohio. Black residents are less likely to obtain a bachelor's degree, a key driver of income in the county.**

HEALTH PATHWAYS

The Health Pathways section discusses health disparities, food insecurity and behavioral health. **Geauga County has an overall life expectancy of 80.9 years**, above the state and national averages. **Disparities exist for some residents.** Women experience increasing high incidents of breast cancer and older adults have rising rates of atrial fibrillation, increasing the risk of stroke and congestive heart failure. Some health trends are more pronounced among minority residents, such as higher infant mortality among Black families.

Community health includes the built environment and access to quality food. While food insecurity has decreased from 2017 to 2021, early 2023 data from United Way 211 indicates a greater need for food, especially after the expiration of expanded SNAP benefits in March 2023.

Specific to behavioral health, while drug overdoses have fallen, **Geauga residents experience more behavioral health needs than the state average.** Residents have higher rates of depression among adults (21.5% versus 18.4% state average), smoking (17.7% versus 14.3% state average) and adults with poor mental health days (14.4% versus 13.5% state average). Finally, children have lower rates of insurance coverage compared to the state as a whole, which may keep kids from necessary well child and sick care. Over 16 percent of children ages 5 and younger in Geauga County were uninsured in 2021, more than 3.5 times the uninsured rate for young children across Ohio.

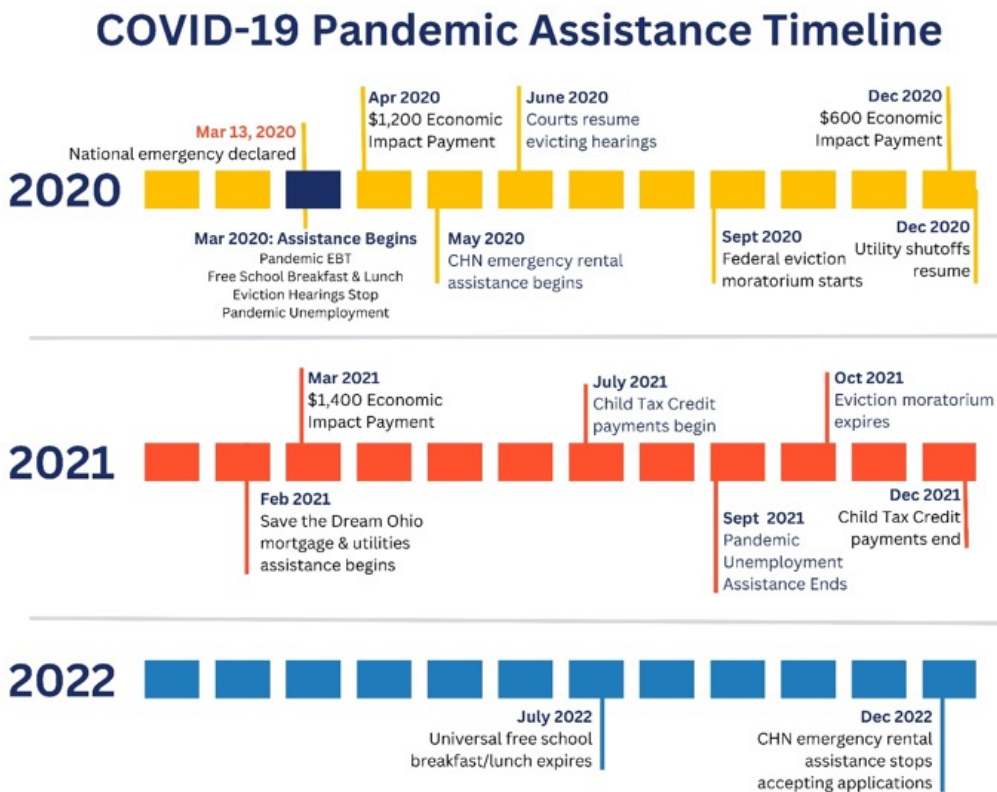
HOUSING STABILITY

The Housing Stability section reveals high rates of unaffordable housing, especially among female household renters and older adults. While homelessness is low, resources are needed to help families stabilize. Regarding housing, the area is fortunate to have newer housing stock with fewer contaminants like lead and asbestos. Nevertheless, housing affordability is particularly challenging for renters. Renters continue to be less likely to live in affordable housing, compared to homeowners. **Only 49% of older adults who rent have affordable housing, compared to 83% of older adult homeowners.** This is particularly challenging for the growing population of older adults in the county and those who may wish to downsize to a rental unit.

National and Local Context

COVID-19 exposed deep health disparities in the community, with some children excelling in remote learning while others struggled. Mental health issues reached an all-time high, and social isolation became a nearly universal experience. Unemployment rates soared, and many people sought assistance for basic needs for the first time. The pandemic brought issues of race and racism to the forefront of public consciousness, and the United Way of Greater Cleveland intensified its commitment to identify and dismantle systemic racism.

The pandemic also led to positive changes which staved off economic crisis for many residents. Moratoriums and emergency assistance for renters and mortgage holders kept people housed. Economic Impact stimulus payments and the enhanced Child Tax Credit put money in the pockets of everyday people when working adults left the workforce to care for children. As the pandemic slowly receded, labor market forces caused many companies to raise wages and improve benefits to attract workers. Additionally, the swift distribution of COVID-19 vaccines included targeted efforts to ensure that low-income individuals and communities of color, who are often underserved in healthcare, had access to the vaccines. These changes offer a hopeful glimpse at potential systems-level solutions to some of the community's most pressing issues.



When comparing Geauga County to the state of Ohio, we can see that county residents are less diverse than the rest of the state, have similar labor force participation, and are less likely to live in poverty across age groups. In Geauga County, less than 6% of the population live in poverty, with another 12% near poverty (18.2%), compared to the state

averages of 13.4% in poverty and 30% in or near poverty. **Approximately 5,500 people live below the poverty level in Geauga County**, with approximately **12,000 additional people in or near poverty**.

COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	Geauga		Ohio
Population	95,408		11,769,923
Under age 18	21,883	22.9%	22.3%
Ages 18-64	53,957	56.6%	60.6%
Ages 65+	19,568	20.5%	17.0%
Race	Count	%	%
White	90,648	95.0%	79.6%
Black/African-American	1,043	1.1%	12.3%
Asian-American/Pacific Islander	509	0.5%	2.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	65	0.1%	0.2%
Other race reported	478	0.5%	1.2%
Two or more races	2,665	2.8%	4.3%
Ethnicity	Count	%	%
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	1,572	1.6%	4.3%
Disability Status	Count	%	%
With a disability	9,376	9.9%	13.9%

Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Income, Employment & Poverty	Geauga		Ohio
Median Household Income	\$90,285		\$61,938
Employment (Ages 16 and older)	%		%
Labor Force Participation	65.2%		63.3%
Unemployment Rate	3.1%		5.3%
Income & Poverty	Count	%	%
Persons living below poverty	5,502	5.8%	13.4%
Children (Ages 0-17) below poverty	1,228	5.7%	18.6%
Families w/children living below poverty	504	4.8%	15.6%
Older Adults (Ages 60+) below poverty	1,625	6.3%	9.3%
Persons in deep poverty (under 50% of poverty)	2,445	2.6%	6.1%
Persons in or near poverty (under 200% of poverty)	17,168	18.2%	29.9%

Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Older adults living in Geauga County are more likely to live in poverty than other age group, compared to the state of Ohio as a whole, where children are more likely to be in poverty than older adults.

In Geauga, poverty affects individuals across the county. Regarding White residents, only 5.4% live in poverty or 4,826 individuals. Poverty impacts 19% of Black residents or 212 individuals and 65% of residents who identify as another race, or 221 individuals.

Gauga County is home to a significant Amish population. The Geauga Amish Community extends to portions of Portage, Trumbull and Ashtabula counties. Within Geauga County, most members of the Amish community live in Middlefield and Parkman townships, followed by Huntsburg, Troy, and Burton. Finally, a smaller number of families reside in Montville and Claridon. Local service providers estimate that perhaps 2,400 families who are Amish live in Geauga County.

