



Forward Together

Community Assets & Challenges 2020

Scott County, Indiana





APPLIED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST

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Applied Research and Education Center

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The Applied Research and Education Center (AREC) is an outreach project of Indiana University (IU) Southeast. The AREC provides research, consulting and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, foundations, government agencies and local businesses. The student staff enhances classroom learning through applied research projects as it actively engages every stage of each community-based project. The AREC combines learning, teaching and doing to support and empower community organizations in the IU Southeast service region.

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Scott County
Community Foundation

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Executive Summary

Two decades into the 21st century Scott County, Indiana finds itself with the opportunity to capitalize on its location, natural beauty, and strong sense of community to build a prosperous future. Historically, agriculture and manufacturing provided a strong economic backbone able to support local small business: shops and restaurants. Economic restructuring of both agriculture and manufacturing left the community with too few economic opportunities, poor health and mental health, and the need to increase educational attainment to create and attract 21st century jobs. Farms and factories are still present but no longer provide the same economic base.

This story is not unique to Scott County, nor are the problems these changes have engendered. Scott County has “good bones,” as people often say of a house with a good structure in need of significant renovation. Strong social ties, a location with access to diverse occupational opportunities, a good and improving school system with nearby access to higher education, and natural beauty and rural character all position the community for a prosperous future. Prosperity will not just happen, however. Scott County needs to align its resources, and build on its strengths to plan for deliberate and sustainable development, from health, home building, and quality of place initiatives to workforce and small business development.

The Scott County Community Foundation worked with the Indiana University Southeast Applied Research and Education Center to

establish a baseline of data on the community and perceptions of strengths, priorities, and challenges to guide development efforts. The research team conducted individual interviews with a half dozen community leaders. These interviews lasted between 35 minutes and 2.5 hours and revolved around each respondent’s ideas about the community’s greatest assets and most significant challenges. The team distributed paper surveys throughout the community and sent a link out through mailing lists of local business and nonprofit organizations. Researchers hosted survey events to encourage completion of paper surveys and additional conversation on topics community members wanted to highlight. Community members completed 407 surveys.

Economy

Scott County maintains significant employment in manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, accommodation and food service, and retail.¹ The median household income of \$47,123 lags well behind state and national medians.² Median earnings for women are a low \$27,551 compared to \$42,993 for men and the county’s per capita income sits at a low \$22,688 compared to \$28,461 statewide.³ Women’s low earnings shape the prevalence of child poverty. While female-headed households comprise only 10.9% of Scott County households, they make up 33.2% of the community’s poor households.⁴ Poverty rates exceed state and national figures, with the largest gap among those aged five to seventeen with a

poverty rate of 24.3% compared to 18.7% statewide.⁵ The top priorities for personal finance are living wages and affordable housing.

While unemployment rates in Scott County do not appear to be drastically different from state rates, a closer look reveals a low employment ratio. A smaller share of Scott County's prime working age adult population (age 25-64) works for pay than for the state or country. This is true in every age group with the largest gaps among workers over age 55 and those age 30-34.⁶ The low employment rate and relatively low earnings, especially among those with little education, contribute to challenges in health, education and housing, and provide little discretionary income to help support small businesses like restaurants and shops. In addition, low incomes generate few public resources with which to build strong infrastructure and quality of place. The top priorities for economic development are living wages and sustainable development strategies that support families and protect the county's natural assets.

Health, Education, & Housing

Health, education, and housing are among the basic needs and precursors required for development. Productive engagement with the workforce and local decision-making requires wellness, literacy, and reasoning skills that promote effective problem solving.

Health

Scott County ranks 90 of 92 Indiana counties for health outcomes and 80 of 92 for health factors.⁷ With a clean environment, a local YMCA facility, and recently built multi-use paths, the community has some assets with which to work. However, residents report inadequate healthcare and for some, poor access to healthy food, opportunities for physical activity, and affordable medication. Respondents rate facilities for physical activity the top priority followed by access to healthy food and affordable health care.

Mental health drives physical well-being and ability to engage productively in school, work, recreation, and community building. Scott County has too few mental health providers, and with relatively high reported rates of childhood trauma, faces significant challenges in supporting mental

wellness and preventing substance abuse. The 2015 HIV outbreak, resulting from a high prevalence of injection drug use, along with high prescription and overdose rates, all point to a complex combination of factors shaping poor mental and physical health in the area.

Progress will require finding resources to support access to healthcare providers, and preventing and mitigating the effects of childhood trauma. Local government, business, and nonprofits all have roles to play in creating a trauma-informed community and in maximizing access to health and mental health care for Scott County residents. The local economy cannot flourish without a physically and mentally healthy population.

Education

The county has significant opportunities for growth in education from cradle to career. The county has only a handful of high quality early care and education spots and most children under the age of five with working parents are cared for through informal arrangements or providers not registered with the state. A majority of respondents rated the quality of birth to five childcare "poor" or "very poor" and access to it even worse. Lack of childcare options may limit workforce participation, decrease reliability of the labor force, and leave a large share of young children without developmentally appropriate sleep, nutrition, stimulation, or a language rich environment. The absence of these key elements of a quality early childhood experience leads children to show up for kindergarten already behind in pre-literacy and quantitative reasoning skills and, more importantly, in social emotional development. Educational attainment lags well behind state and national college attainment rates with 11.9% of adults holding a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 25.9% statewide and 31.5% nationally.⁸

The schools in Scott County are an institutional hub for social activity and community support. Youth and adults alike see high school sports as a great source of entertainment and social engagement. The majority of adults (58.8%) rate the quality of schools as "good" and another 5.4% "excellent." A majority "agree" or "strongly agree" (58.8% and 11.7% respectively) that they are satisfied with local schools. Objective measures

from the state note room for improvements in both Austin and Scottsburg. Austin's schools (graded a C by the state Department of Education) manage the challenges of a lower income student population with a high drop-out rate, but still manage to build strong community ties that are well reflected in the comments of high school students. Scottsburg is more affluent, but still, 56% of students are economically disadvantaged. A larger share of students take the honors track and graduate with college and career readiness credentials, but ACT and SAT performance falls short of benchmarks for college readiness.⁹ Respondents see trade certificates, high school completion, early care and education and after school programs as top priorities.

Housing

Homeownership rates are high in Scott County and according to public sources, but this fact masks a more complicated housing dynamic. A driving tour of the community and conversations with locals suggest that a portion of the housing stock is substandard and either vacant or rented out at prices that may be higher than their condition and safety warrant. The number of units may seem appropriate to the size of the community, but many of those units are uninhabited, creating scarcity in housing supply.

New housing developments appeal to young families with moderate to higher incomes, but they are in short supply. Locals explain that across all price points housing supply that is safe and habitable is limited. Many would like to see dilapidated homes removed from areas of Austin and Scottsburg and replaced with affordable new construction. Others hope to see more growth of new neighborhoods outside the town center, but recognize the need to take care to maintain natural amenities and rural character. Respondents expressed an interest in smart, intentional housing development.

Quality of Place

Quality of place refers to factors in the external environment such as programs, parks, trails, and natural amenities that contribute to quality of life (physical, mental, and social well-being). Sustainability refers to environmental and economic health, and social well-being. These categories necessarily overlap. The Forward

Together survey assessed a number of items related to quality of place and sustainability that provide the structures, opportunities, and relationships for quality of life. Respondents felt most positively about opportunities to volunteer. People believe Scott County is a beautiful and safe place to raise children, where people feel pride in the community's shared accomplishments and help each other out in times of need. The greatest dissatisfaction is with availability of recreational opportunities, healthcare, and economic opportunity. Still, a strong sense of community prevails among respondents across age groups.

Public Service and Infrastructure

Scott County residents rate a wide range of public services as "good" or "excellent". Strong social ties between community members and those who work in public service engender positive feelings. This small rural community is home to three public libraries! This is an enormous asset to the community, providing free access to information and public spaces for meetings and activities (including showcasing art and hosting cultural activities).

The community also shares consensus on where they need to do better in the area of public service. More than 50% of survey respondents rate the following public services "poor" or "very poor": code enforcement for private properties (70.7%), internet access (59.5%), road maintenance (59.0%), and crime prevention activities (58.9%).

From Youth to Old Age

While much of the economic and educational data refer to the prime working age population, a community's responses to youth and to the elderly are important bookends to generating strong quality of life and a thriving community. For so many families, social ties emerge from engagement in youth development activities from organized sports to 4-H and theater. As residents age, they look once again to the community for social ties, structured activities, and needed supports for health, well-being and quality of life.

The Forward Together study draws from conversations with youth and from respondents' perceptions of top priorities. More than 80% of respondents see prevention of youth drug or alcohol use as a top priority for supporting children and

youth, followed by preventing and responding to child physical and sexual abuse, treatment for youth drug or alcohol use, addressing bullying, and prevention of teen pregnancy.

Among the aging, affordable housing and assisted living options are a significant concern. In addition, caregiver support, access to daily meals, day programs, and access to low impact exercise options are among the top priorities.

Arts and Creativity

Across the life course, arts and opportunities for creative self-expression provide entertainment, support strong mental and physical health, and nurture the creativity necessary for entrepreneurship and innovation. Nurturing creativity is essential to developing strong critical thinking and problem solving skills essential to success across all fields and throughout the community.

Local youth enjoy school based theater and visual arts programs, but would like to see those programs expand into the community to serve younger kids and engage adults. Survey respondents recognize a dearth of opportunities to enjoy arts and cultural activities in the schools and more broadly. The community celebrates its history and culture and these activities may provide structures and venues for expanding opportunities for performance and craft.

Forward Together

Home to strong community ties and pride in its history and culture, Scott County offers benefits of small town rural life, but with ready access to amenities and opportunities in Columbus, Madison, Jeffersonville, and Louisville. A bedroom community alone does not produce a thriving community, however. A manufacturing base, good schools, and a regional hospital provide a foundation for growing more local economic activity. The Mid-America Science Park offers prime space for education, training, convening, and for nurturing small business development.

However, Scott County cannot grow its local economy without improving the health and education of the local population. Housing is essential to accomplishing both of these—safe and

affordable housing provides needed stability for health, well-being and consistent engagement in education. This report's snapshot of local resources, performance, and perceptions provides some guidance on potential leverage points for community and economic development in Scott County.

- Build public-private partnerships to bring more primary care physicians and behavioral health providers to Scott County (with clear plans for addressing the needs of the uninsured and underinsured).
- Expand public, nonprofit, and business partnerships to invest in high quality early care and education for every child from birth to age five.
- Pursue strategies to create a trauma informed community that can effectively prevent and mitigate the impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- Increase safe housing supply across price points: tear down dilapidated housing and infill with new construction. Strategically add neighborhoods, taking care not to encroach too much on the natural assets of the County.
- Engage public and private resources, build on and expand school-based arts programs, and develop a community arts program that brings together people of all ages in a space that fosters creativity through visual and performing arts and activities.
- Develop public transportation (with plans and resources coming from all sectors) that facilitates engagement from youth to old age in education, recreation, and employment. In a rural community, transportation is a major barrier to making full use of existing amenities and services. As one respondent noted, "Transportation to medical appointments doesn't help much if you can't get to work."

These recommendations target major changes in key areas that can have strong direct impacts. Addressing the core issues of health, education, and housing in these and other ways, recommended throughout the report, will have ripple effects in other areas that will generate economic growth and support a thriving community.

Introduction

Two decades into the 21st century Scott County finds itself with the opportunity to capitalize on its location, natural beauty, and strong sense of community to build a prosperous future. The shift to industrial agriculture and outsourced manufacturing, however, left the community with too few economic opportunities, poor health and mental health, and the need to increase educational attainment to create and attract 21st century jobs. Historically, agriculture and manufacturing provided a strong economic backbone able to support local small business: shops and restaurants. Those same industries, while still present, no longer provide the same economic base. This story is not unique to Scott County, nor are the problems these changes engendered. Scott County has “good bones,” as people often say of a house with a good structure in need of significant renovation. Strong social ties, a location with access to diverse occupational opportunities, a good school system with nearby access to higher education, and natural beauty and rural character, all position the community well for a prosperous future.

Data sources

This study uses semi-structured individual and group interviews, surveys, and publicly available data on Scott County to assess the current status across key areas of economy, health and wellness, education, housing, support for youth and the aging, arts and creative self-expression, public services and infrastructure, and quality of place. For full documentation of research methods, see Appendix A. The research team triangulates data sources to arrive at an assessment of strengths, opportunities for improvement, aspirations for the future, and recommendations for ways to build on the community’s assets to address its greatest challenges in each area. These findings are not comprehensive; they simply provide a starting place for thinking about potential areas for community action. Any planning efforts that emerge from this work should bring together diverse stakeholders to carefully examine the findings, share information, and fill gaps in information to develop specific plans of action. The full report and topical research briefs provide common reference points for the community

conversations that will need to happen to build the future that Scott County residents imagine.

Systems Thinking

The research team uses a *systems thinking* approach that recognizes that all of the topics addressed are part of a community system. “A system is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something.”¹⁰ According to a systems thinking framework, the system is perfectly designed to produce exactly the outcomes we see and experience within that system. This means we can identify the aspects of the system that are producing undesirable outcomes and can redesign the system to produce desirable outcomes. Scott County and its leaders do not have control over all of the factors that shape the county system—macro-economic changes, state, and national policy are beyond their control—but the community controls how it responds to macro-level changes. Moreover, the local community has the ability to shape systems that operate within the county governed by local policy and decision-making.

Systems are comprised of feedback loops. Feedback loops are responsible for consistent patterns over time—patterns that reproduce themselves. For example, health and education exist in a feedback loop. When people are healthier, their brains are developing well and they are able to learn more effectively, they learn more and their higher education helps them make good health choices, but may also lead to higher earnings, which facilitate good health choices and provide access to quality medical care, which helps them stay healthy and continue to learn and grow. This is a virtuous feedback loop—positive outcomes in A generate positive outcomes in B which then feed back into positive outcomes in A. When A is high so is B. When A is low, so is B.

When community planners can identify the feedback loop driving a pattern, then it becomes easier to also identify “leverage points” for either balancing the vicious feedback loop (stopping its reinforcing nature), or reversing it and creating a virtuous feedback loop. A balancing loop might include programs that ensure that people with low levels of education still have access to healthy food, the capacity to make healthy choices, and quality

medical care. Reversing the loop to a virtuous cycle would mean increasing education and good health to generate better outcomes in both.

In this report, we will use these terms and direct attention to places where feedback loops or reinforcing cycles may be generating outcomes. When we use the term “leverage,” we refer to places in the system where a change could have significant impact by stopping a vicious feedback loop (bad) and/or generating a virtuous feedback loop (good). Just remember that “leverage” indicates actions where the community is likely to get the greatest bang for its buck, so to speak. We are most interested in *leverage points* where community members express interest or energy.



Consensus and Variation

In interpreting data from the Scott County Forward survey, it is important to understand that the survey measures perceptions. One’s own lived experiences and observations shape perceptions. One of the things we look for in aggregating responses from a diverse sample is consensus. In what areas does a large portion of respondents agree on the quality of a service or local resource? Whether good or bad, if 60% or more of the sample seems to rate something in the same direction that is a perception that warrants attention. More than 50% but less than 60% may mean people have very different experiences of that resource or service. The second thing we look for is meaningful variation. In cases where we see little consensus, it is useful to ask about what may be driving differences.

In the case of priorities, we asked respondents to choose 3-5 priorities based on the length of the list of options provided. In many areas, we found little consensus. This means we did not see a majority choosing any particular item—responses spread across the full list of options. In other areas, we saw very clear consensus on a couple of top priorities and then responses spread across the options. Low consensus suggests there are lots of needs and priorities across the population.

To explore factors that shape perceptions, we split the group by income into those from households with income less than \$50,000 per year and those with household incomes of \$50,000 or more. In some cases, we see more consensus within an income group than in the population as a whole. We also looked at responses from those over the age of 65, particularly when assessing needs in the area of aging services.

Using the Data

The full report document contains triangulated findings from public data sources, interviews, and surveys. These data present a snapshot of a moment in time. The data provide a shared reference for strategic planning, applying for particular grant monies, and setting a baseline against which to establish benchmarks and measure progress. The data represent a place to start community conversations, but they do not replace the need for ongoing opportunities to engage diverse actors in taking ownership in how this community will build on its assets, develop, and respond to the challenges it faces over time.



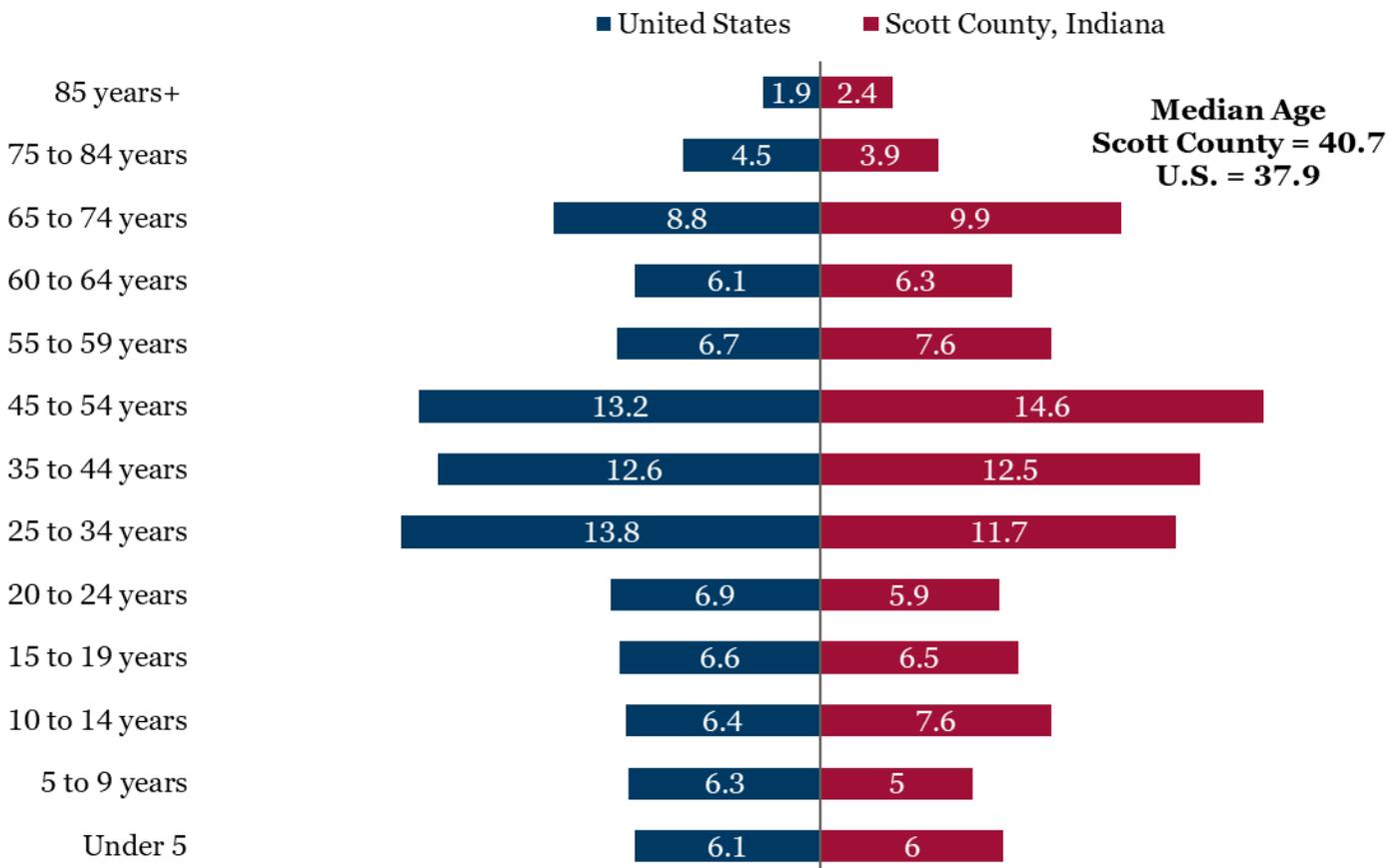
Overview

Scott County is home to an estimated 23,928 people.¹¹ The county's roots are in agriculture. Local farmers grew tomatoes, green beans and sweet corn that went into the soups produced by Morgan Packing Company (now Morgan Foods, Inc.).¹² Scott County's greatest growth, however, came with the emergence of the manufacturing economy from 1940-1980, when it more than doubled in size, growing from 8,978 to 20,422.¹³ The community made another jump between 1990 and 2010 when it surpassed 24,000 people and has remained relatively steady since then.

Scott County is a rural community, home to two population centers in Austin and Scottsburg, with recent growth in the Lexington area. Blocher, Nabb, Vienna, and Leota are smaller unincorporated towns that dot the rural landscape. Five townships comprise the county: Finley, Jennings, Johnson, Lexington, and Vienna. Each township has a Trustee with limited funds to distribute for assistance to those in need.

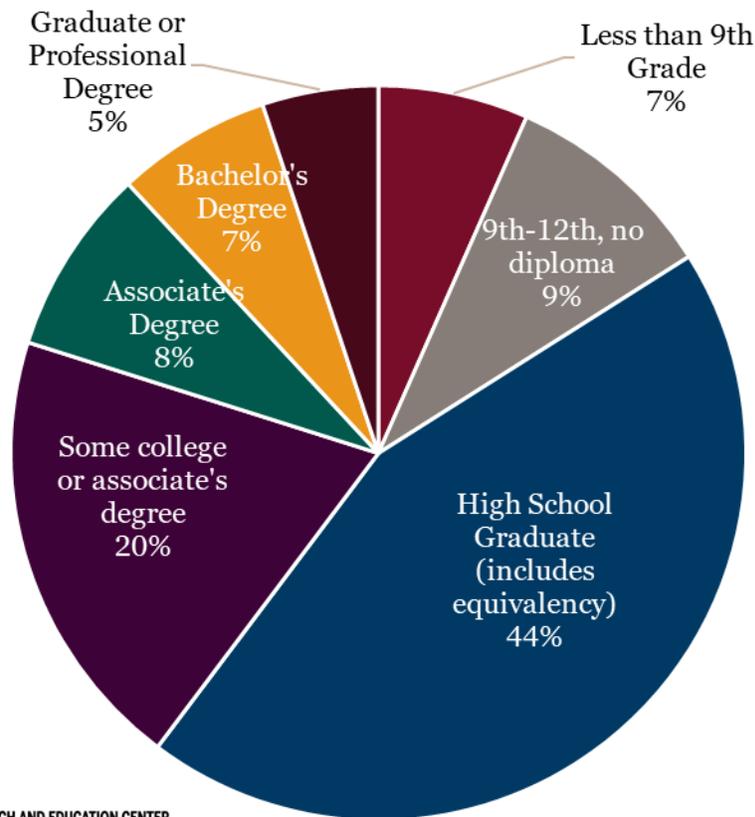
The County sits 30 miles north of Louisville, Kentucky, 110 miles west of Cincinnati, and about

Figure 1: Age Distribution in Scott County and the U.S., 2014-2018



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Table DP05:ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates." *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018*. www.data.census.gov.

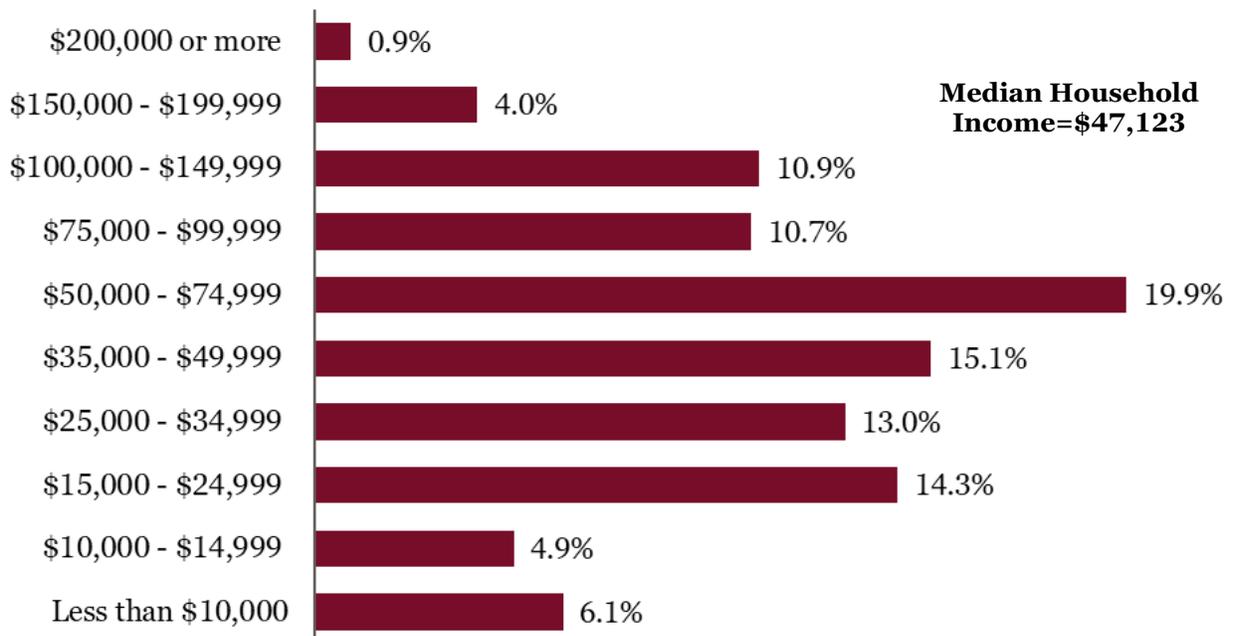
Figure 2: Scott County Educational Attainment



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Table DP05:ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates." American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018. www.data.census.gov.

Figure 3: Scott County Household Income Distribution, 2014-2018



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. "Table DP05:ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates." American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018. www.data.census.gov.

80 miles south of Indianapolis, right along Interstate 65. This location offers small town living within an easy commute to Madison, Jeffersonville, New Albany, Columbus, and Louisville, Kentucky. Residents can opt for a longer commute to Indianapolis (about 60-75 minutes). This makes Scott County a good location for families with two earners who may work in different locations.

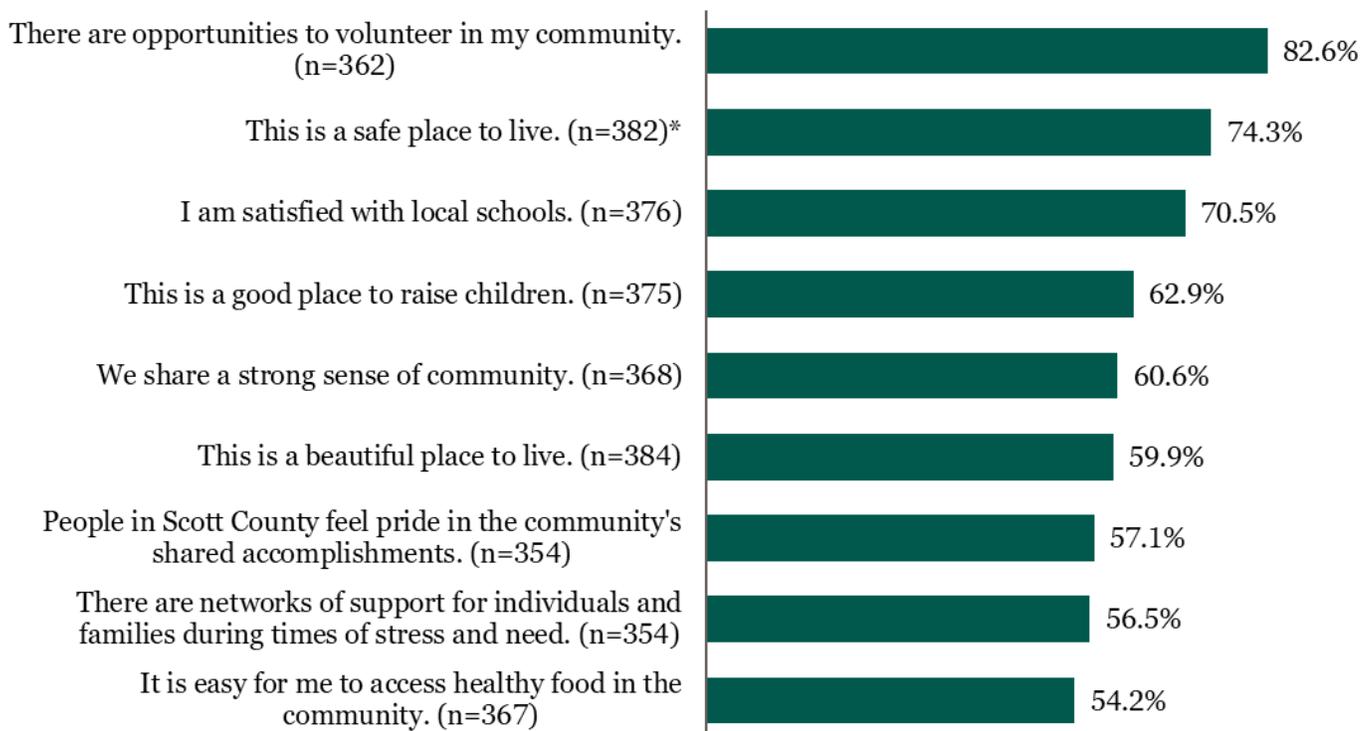
Home to the Mid-America Science Park, a regional hospital, and two school districts, manufacturing remains the largest employment sector, with retail and food service a strong second. Healthcare, local government (of which schools are the largest employers), and social services comprise a large portion of the area's professional employment.

The annual county fair highlights strong 4-H and other youth development programs that highlight both the community's agricultural heritage and its high tech present, with a strong robotics program for area youth. The county seat of Scottsburg is home to the county courthouse, which sits at the center of the town square. The Leota Coun-

try Frolic, hosted by the Finley Township Volunteer Fire Department, offers a local heritage festival and Lexington hosts the Lexington Old Settler's Festival.

Like many rural communities across the country, Scott County is aging. Despite a relatively low life expectancy, the median age of 40.7 is nearly three years higher than the national median of 37.9 (Figure 1). Young people who leave the area to attend college increasingly opt to settle elsewhere. This brain drain contributes to low educational attainment (Figure 2) and economic challenges in the community (Figure 3). Geographic mobility would be easier to withstand if the community were able to attract businesses and educated professionals, but here the area struggles as well. Recent housing development in Lexington Township may be responsible for some signs of lower poverty among families with young children and may signal some success in attracting young professionals and people working in skilled trades. This bright spot may indicate opportunities for growth.

Figure 4: Greatest Assets--Areas where 50% or more "agree" or "strongly agree" with statements about quality of life and place



The people of Scott County care deeply for their community. Conversations at survey events and interviews, as well as comments on the Forward Together Survey, reflect a deep tension between love for the community and frustration with the issues and challenges that keep the county from thriving. This study triangulates publicly available data on Scott County with asset mapping interviews and responses from 407 community members to a community-wide survey. The survey asked respondents to rate and prioritize aspects of life in Scott County including: social issues, community building, health, education, support for children and youth, support for the aging, transportation, public services, personal finance, economic development, and the arts.

The research team approaches the data with an eye toward community strengths, opportunities for growth and improvement, and aspirations for a vibrant future. The project seeks to identify potential places for leverage—areas the research suggests are essential to community vitality and resilience—where local residents demonstrate an interest in seeing action.

Greatest Assets, Top Priorities, and Challenges

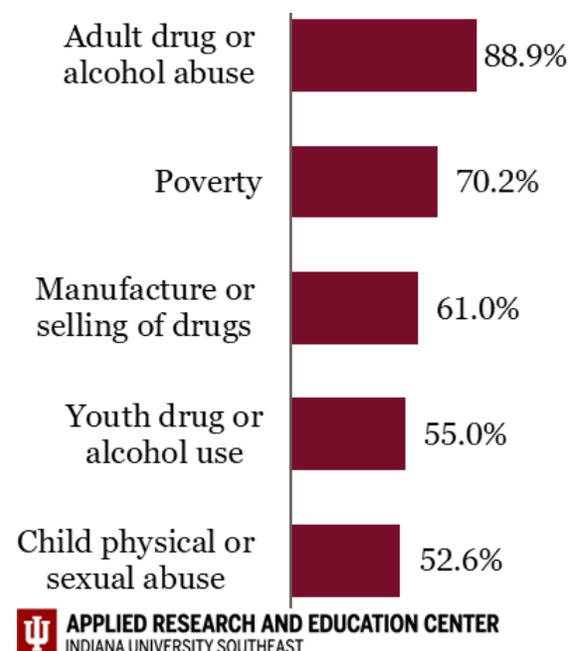
According to those who live here, Scott County’s greatest asset is its people: their compassion for one another and their dedication to the community. “Scott County is full of people that help others. Even if they don’t have much, the generosity of the people [is an asset].” The people we spoke with feel a strong sense of place. Among youth who spoke with us, those who plan to leave for college want to return to Scott County after college to give back and raise their families. They want to be part of building a vibrant community that capitalizes on its beauty and strong social ties.

Survey responses confirm some very strong community assets. Among all the items we asked respondents to rate, either through agreement with statements of quality (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) or rating of performance (Excellent, Good, Poor, or Very Poor), more than 50% of respondents agreed or rated performance positively on nine items (Figure 4). The top six assets, defined in this way, include:

Figure 5: Highest Priorities (based on percent responding to the item) across all categories

Adult drug or alcohol abuse (N=328)	88.9%
Prevention of youth drug or alcohol use (N=328)	80.3%
Trade certificates (N=311)	74.3%
Getting and keeping good teachers (N=313)	70.6%
Children's mental health services (N=325)	60.0%
Living wages (Economic Development) (N=300)	59.9%
Neighborhood activities (Community Building). (N=159)	57.9%
Provide maintenance and improvements to existing roads and bridges (N=305)	57.7%
Affordable assisted living options for older adults (N=308)	56.0%
Variety of affordable housing options (n=299)	50.2%
Facilities for physical activity (N=335)	50.1%

Figure 6: What are the top five social issues that are of most concern in your community? (N=369)



- There are opportunities to volunteer in my community.
- This is a safe place to live.
- I am satisfied with local schools.
- This is a good place to raise children.
- We share a strong sense of community.
- This is a beautiful place to live.

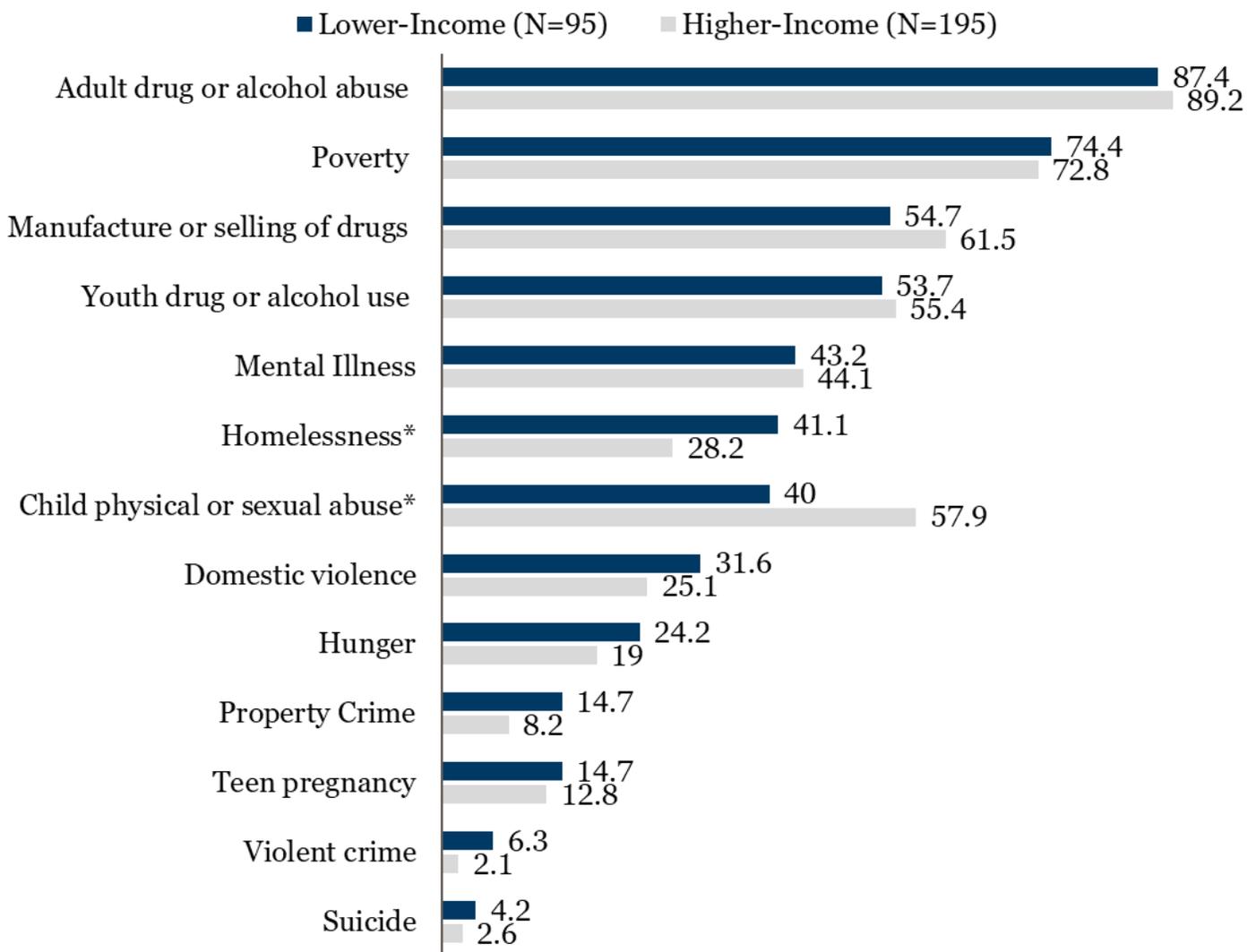
Scott County residents support one another and support their local schools.

Across all issue areas, the largest share of respondents indicated the following as priorities

within an item's area of concern (Figure 5 for all those where 50% or more of those who responded selected the item as a priority or need):

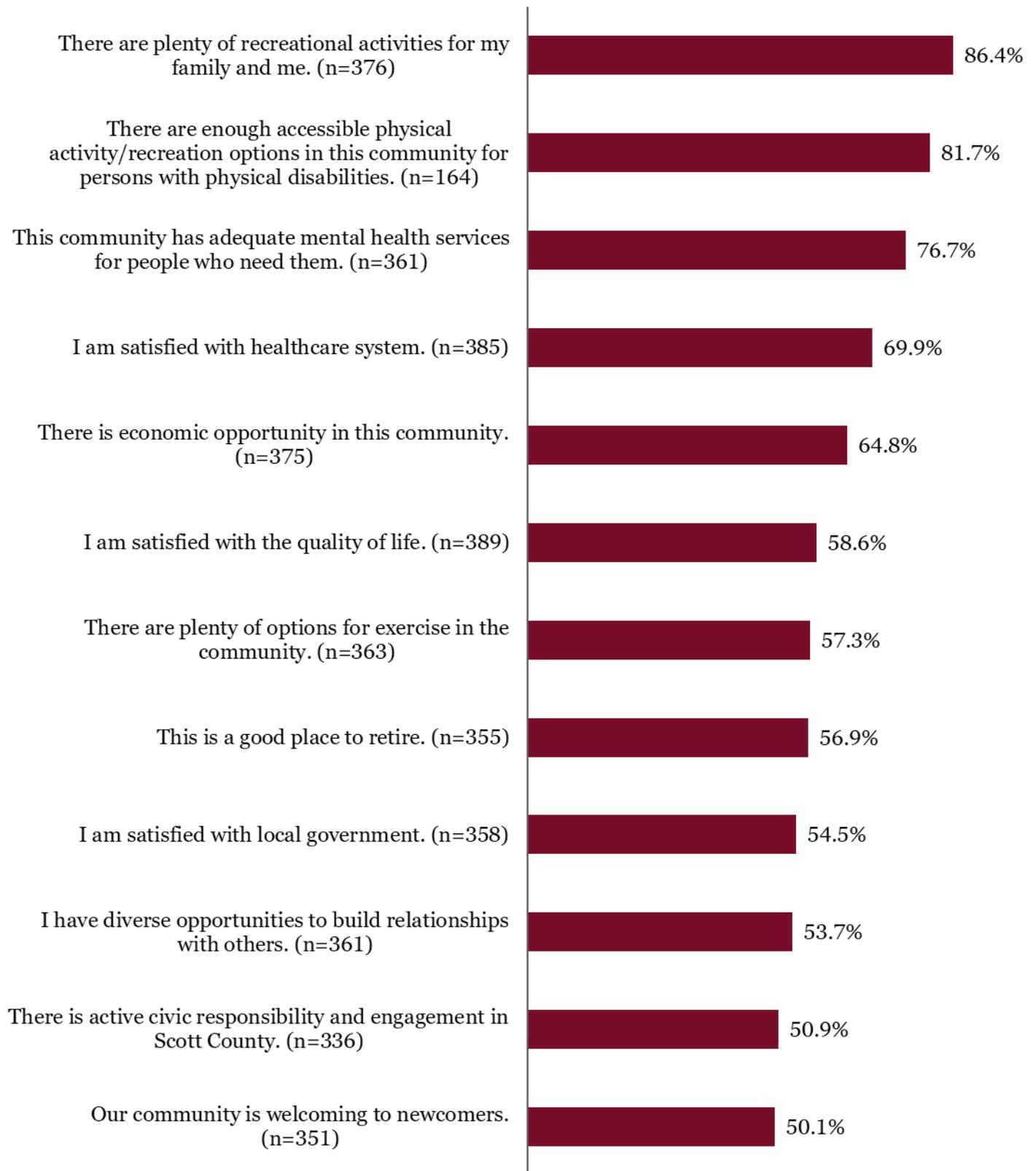
- Adult drug or alcohol abuse (88.9%, n=371)
- Prevention of youth drug or alcohol use (80.3%, N=320)
- Trade Certificates (74.3%, N=311)
- Getting and keeping good teachers (74.3%, N=313)
- Children's mental health services (60.0%, N=325)

Figure 7: Percent that Chose as a Top Five social issue of most concern in your community, by income level



Note: Respondents selected an income category into which their household income falls. The research team recoded responses based on whether the respondent chose a category below \$50,000 per year (gold in the chart above) or a category at or above \$50,000 (blue in the chart above).

Figure 8: Quality of Life and Place--Percent of Respondents who "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the statement



These priorities suggest that community members recognize that health/mental health and education are essential building blocks on which progress in all areas rests. Peoples' ideas within each area covered by the survey vary and the sample as a whole did not achieve resounding consensus in most areas, but 60.0% or more of those responding to the items, recognize substance abuse prevention and treatment, children's mental health, and quality teachers and training as top priorities.

Consensus about the social issues of greatest concern (Figure 6) matches the top overall priorities (Figure 5). Drug related concerns occupy three of the top five social issues of concern. Nearly 90% of respondents selected adult drug or alcohol abuse as one of the top five social issues of concern. The consensus declined in the number four and five spots so we looked more closely at differences in responses by income group. Lower-income households were significantly less likely ($p < .05$) to include child physical or sexual abuse in the top five issues of concern and they were more likely to include homelessness ($p < .05$). Mental illness took the spot held by child physical or sexual abuse among higher income respondents and despite being more likely to select it, homelessness did not make the top five for lower income households (Figure 7).

To identify key challenges, we look at those areas where 50.0% or more of respondents “disagree” or

“strongly disagree” with statements about quality or describe an area as “poor” or “very poor” in items where they were asked to rate “Excellent,” “Good,” “Poor,” or “Very Poor.” The top five areas for improvement had significant consensus with more than 60.0% of respondents negatively rating the community's performance in each area (Figure 8).

Forward Together

Taken together, the consensus around strengths suggests that Scott County can build on its strong social capital, strong schools, and natural beauty as it seeks to:

- Create more opportunities for physical and mental health through recreation and physical activity.
- Prevent substance abuse by building stronger social ties and active civic engagement.
- Attract and keep good teachers and support greater success in education and training.
- Develop and attract living wage jobs.
- Build safe and affordable housing, without sacrificing the community's natural resources.





Economy

Scott County first developed as a farming community, but saw its greatest growth come with manufacturing in the post WWII era. Scott County’s enormous growth from 1940-1980 included some driven by employment at the Charlestown Ammunition Plant, which once employed 21,000 workers, and at the U.S. Army Ammunition Proving Ground near Madison, Indiana. The decline in manufacturing and the end of major military conflict brought the decline and eventual closure of the ammunition plant. Today, however, that property is home to River Ridge Industrial Park, which has the potential to, once again, generate thousands of jobs. The quality of those jobs, and the ability of the region’s labor force to fill them, will determine the economic impact on Scott County’s economy.

Community Profile

Scott County remains a manufacturing community with strong employment in retail trade, accommodation and food services, and healthcare and social services. While more than a quarter of Scott County employment is in manufacturing (25.8%, 2,759 jobs), that figure is down from around 35% (nearly 3,500 jobs) in 1970.¹⁴ Declines in factory employment likely brought declines in other aspects of blue-collar community.¹⁵ Many workers had to leave the local

community to find work, which meant either moving or replacing social and civic engagement time with a commute. In addition, low wage retail and service jobs, that offer fewer benefits and generate less economic activity in the community, replaced well-paid manufacturing jobs. Among those who remain in manufacturing, wages have not kept pace with an increasing cost of living over the last 40 years. The top employers today are Austin Tri-Hawk Automotive, Walmart, Morgan Foods, Samtec, and Scott Memorial Health.

Despite a strong agricultural history that fed a regional cluster in food production through Morgan’s cannery, farms today comprise only 2.8% of employment in Scott County, and earnings in the industry are negative.¹⁶ In recent decades, farms in the area closed or shifted to soybean and feed corn production as part of the national shift to

Top 5 Employers
Austin Tri-Hawk Automotive Inc.
Walmart Supercenter
Morgan Foods Inc.
Samtec Inc.
Scott Memorial Health

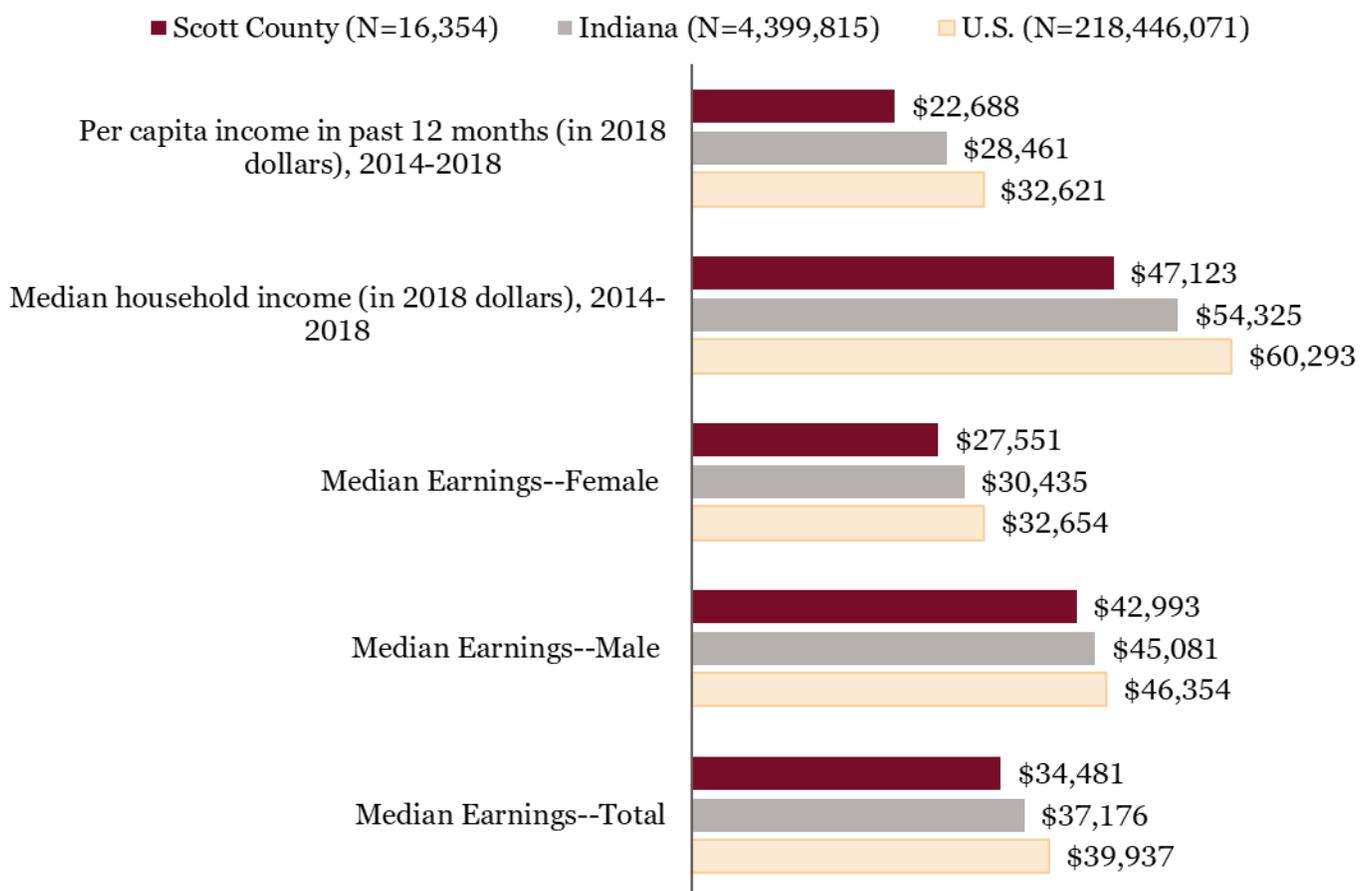
industrial agriculture. In conversation with a group that included two individuals whose families have been farming Scott County for generations, both shared that their fathers and grandfathers farmed full-time, but now area farmers cannot survive on farming alone. They have other jobs and farm part-time in their “off” hours. In terms of locally owned business, seventeen percent of Scott County employment is proprietor employment with the majority of that in nonfarm sectors.¹⁷

Today, median income in Scott County lags behind state and national averages. The median represents the halfway point in a population. Half of Scott County households have an income less than \$47,123 and half have higher incomes (Figure 9). That figure does not control for household size. “Per capita income in the last 12

months” indicates income per person and provides a measure of overall economic well-being. Scott County lags well behind the state and nation with a per capita income of \$22,688 compared to \$28,461 for Indiana and \$32,621 nationally (Figure 9).

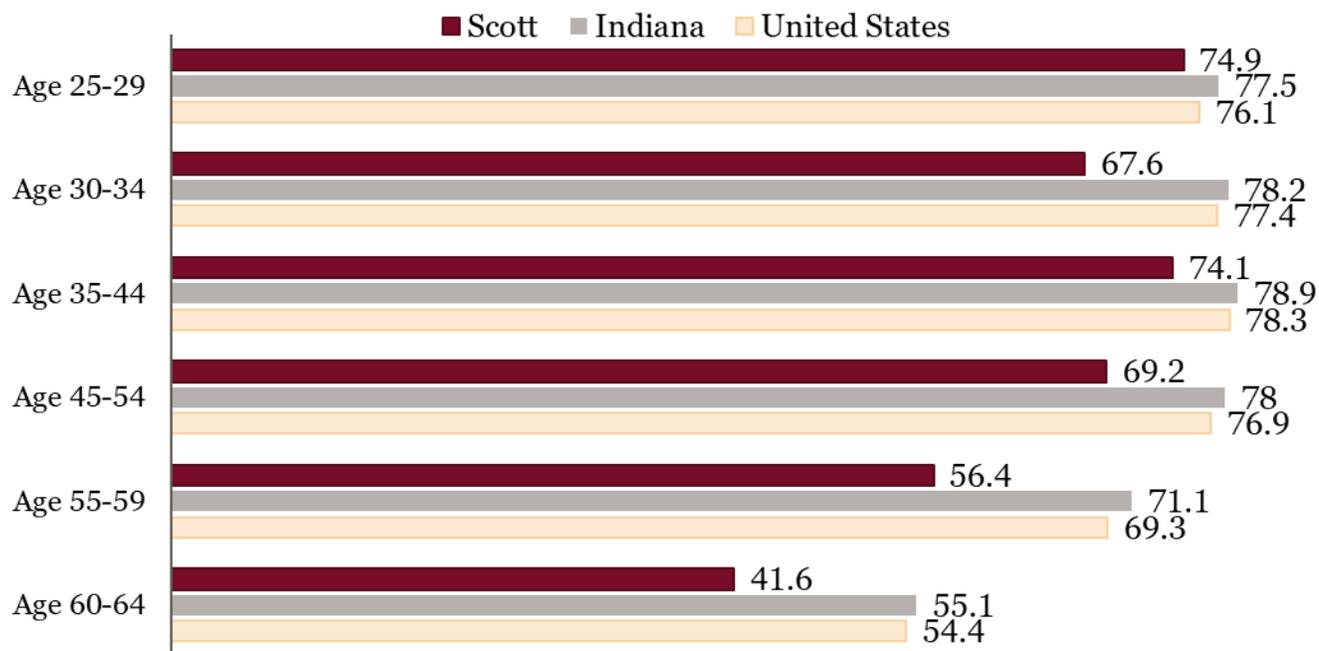
In interviews, group conversations, and open-ended responses on the survey, residents suggest that well-paid manufacturing jobs are available in Scott County, but that portions of the working age population who might be well-served by those jobs, are not engaging the opportunity. Anecdotally, respondents suggest that local employers have to recruit workers from elsewhere. Commuting data indicate the county imports roughly 13.6% of the Scott County workforce (N=12,533).¹⁸ Among surrounding counties, Washington County is the largest

Figure 9: Income Dynamics 2014-2018, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S.



U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Quickfacts." American Community Survey 5-Year Data 2014-2018. Retrieved 08/13/2020 (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/IN,scottcountyindiana,US/PST045219>)

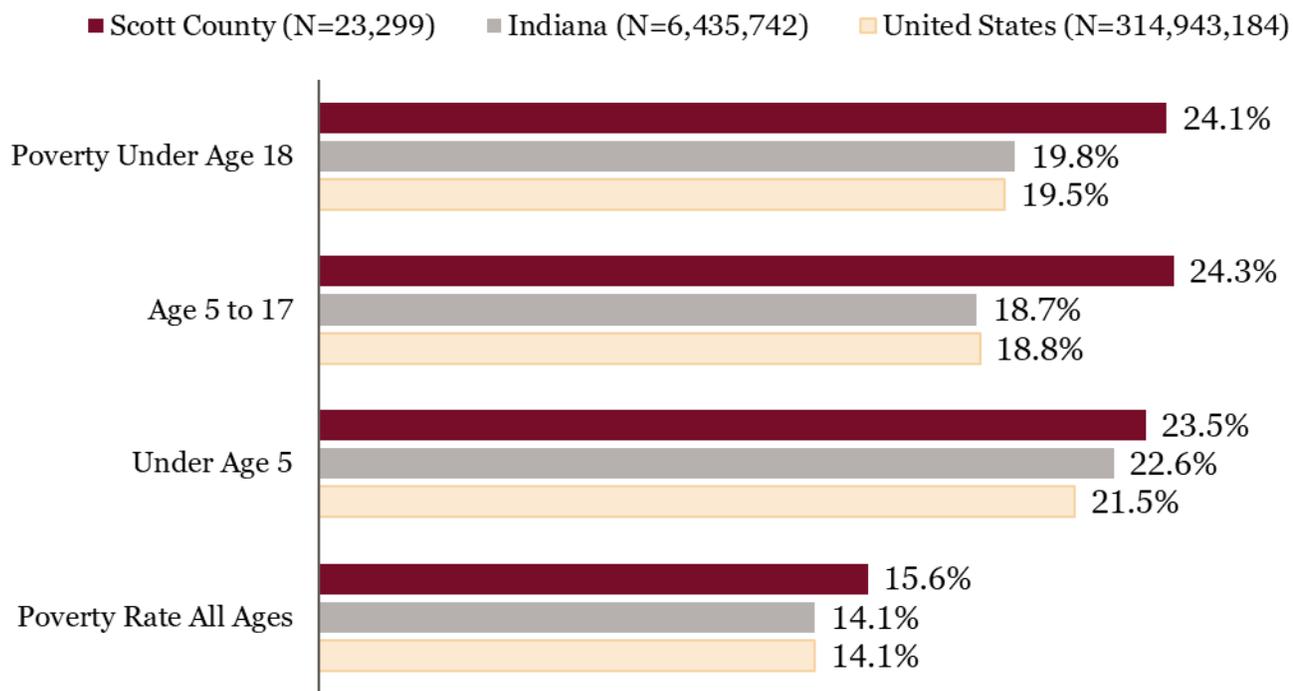
Figure 10: Employment to Population Ratios by age group for those of prime working age (25-64), Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S.



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U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S2301: Employment Status." and "Table S1701: Poverty Status Last 12 Months *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*." retrieved 09-06-2020 (www.census.gov).

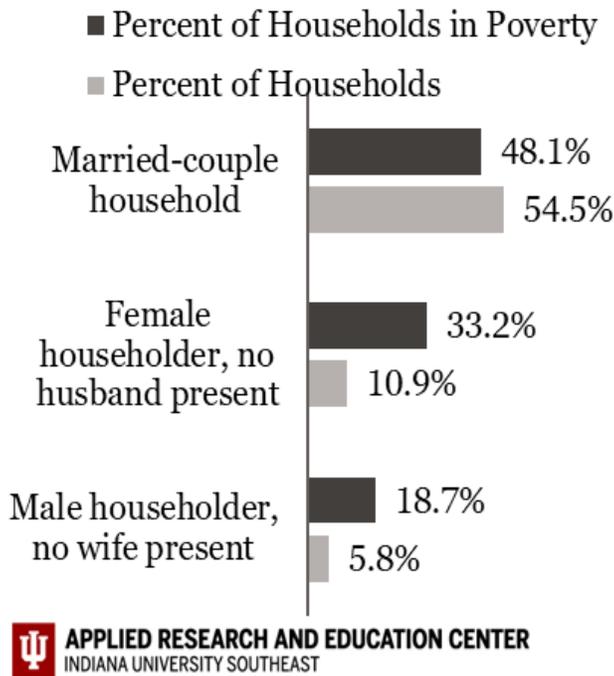
Figure 11: Percent of persons in poverty, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S. 2014-2018



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U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S2301: Employment Status." and "Table S1701: Poverty Status Last 12 Months *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*." retrieved 09-06-2020 (www.census.gov).

Figure 12: Poverty by Family Household Type, Single and Married-Couple Parents



supplier of workers, with Clark County not far behind, and Jackson County in the number three spot. Scott County is a net exporter of labor with 3,768 residents working outside the county.

In order to assess employment patterns, the research team chose to use the employment ratio rather than the unemployment rate. The employment ratio is the number of people employed divided by the total number of people in the age group. The unemployment rate, only counts those who have been unemployed for six months or less and are actively seeking work. This means it undercounts discouraged workers and those who are not engaging the labor force. Scott County’s unemployment numbers are only slightly higher than state and national figures. In 2019, for example, the average monthly “unemployment” in Scott County was 3.9% compared to a state rate of 3.3% and a national average of 3.6%.¹⁹ From 2014-2018, the estimated unemployment rate in Scott County was 5.0%.²⁰ If you add 5 points to the employment ratio figures to explain the 5 percent that may be recently unemployed, you are still left with a gap between Scott County’s labor force participation (employed + unemployed) and state and national employment rates for most age



groups (Figure 10). Keep in mind that the Indiana and U.S. figures operate the same way, but with a lower employment ratio, Scott County still has a larger share of working age adults out of work.

The employment ratio combined with a poverty rate higher than both the state and national rates indicates an underemployment problem (Figure 11). This dynamic is consistent with what we heard in interviews and survey event conversations. People believe there is a portion of the adult population that simply is not engaging. They also suggest that some raised in households where no one held stable employment lack key skills and motivation for work. The fact that the employment ratio data indicate underemployment among all age groups within the prime working age population (ages 25-64) supports the claim that this problem is multigenerational in some cases. This does not appear to be a “young people” problem.

The overall poverty rate for the period 2014-2018 is 15.6% (Figure 11). The figures are considerably higher when we look at children. Families with children have to make the dollars go further. The census accounts for household size when it calculates poverty. Nearly a quarter of Scott County children under the age of 18 lived in households earning poverty wages 2014-2018 (Figure 11). In most places, poverty rates are highest for families with children under the age of five. Parents of children under five are usually younger and have not been earning as long so their

wages tend to be lower. Those who have children without acquiring more education or training may be stuck in low-skilled, low-wage jobs during their children’s early years. Interestingly, in Scott County, this is not the case in the 2014-2018 data. Among those ages five to seventeen, poverty rates are just a little bit higher than for those under five.

Based on interview data, this may be the result of growth in the Lexington and Vienna areas of Scott County. New housing developments and strong elementary schools in the Lexington and Vienna areas have attracted higher earning families with young children. To the extent that higher earnings generate additional benefits in health and education, attracting young families whose earnings are above the poverty level could shift these figures over time.

Among family households with children under 18, those headed by a couple are less likely to be in poverty than their single parent counterparts. Single parent households comprise a far greater share of poor households than they do of households generally (Figure 12). For low-wage workers, children are a challenging expense for two parent households, but for single parents, a single low wage to support two or more people means living in poverty. Teen pregnancy rates in Scott County are relatively high (see health and wellness section), and this can contribute to childhood poverty as teen mothers have relatively low earning potential.

Figure 13: Top Five Needs for Personal Finance Aspects of Economic Well-Being (N =300)



Community Perceptions: Personal Finance & Economic Well-Being

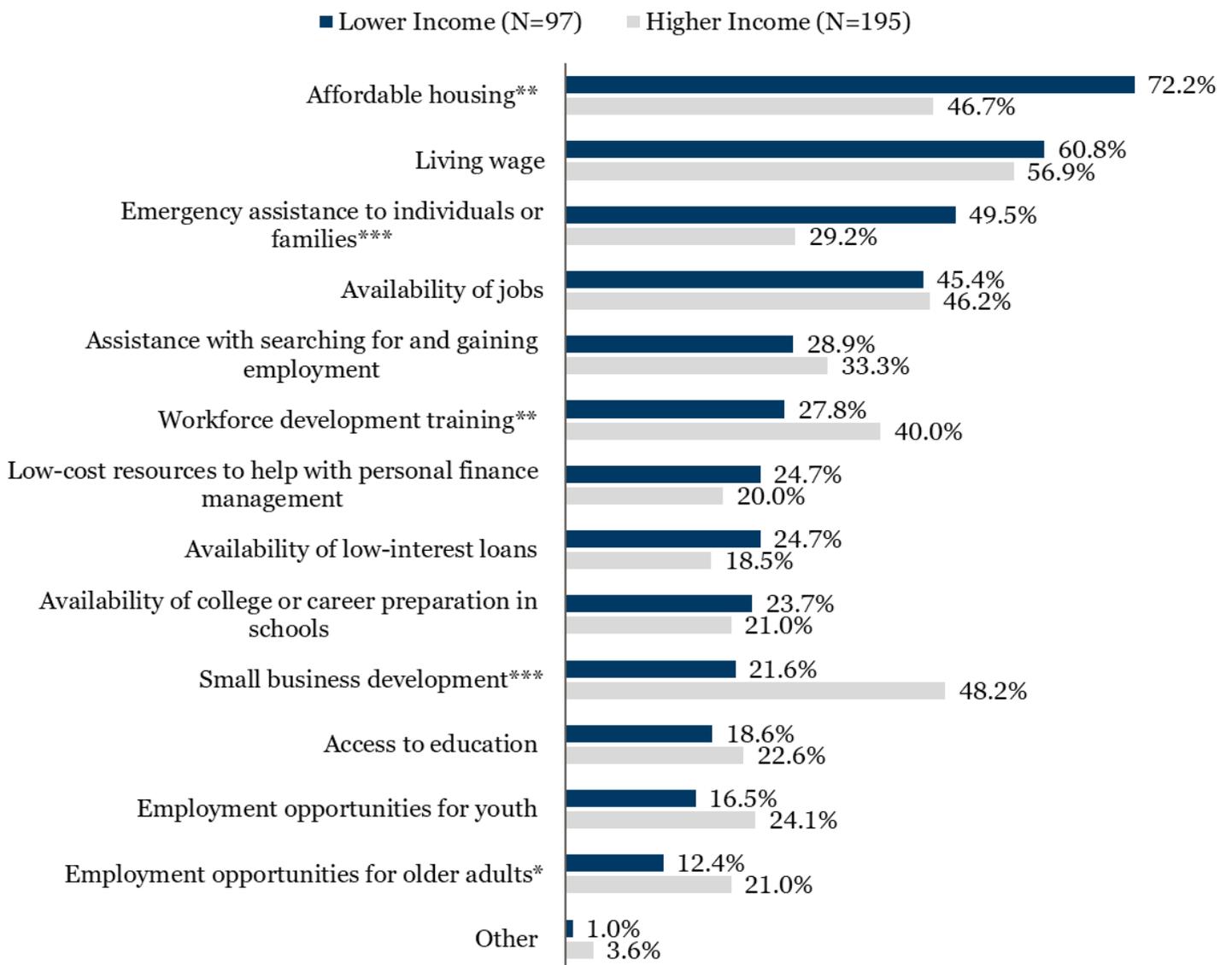
Among responses to the question of top five needs in personal finance aspects of the economy, only two items garnered selection from more than half of respondents: living wage and affordable housing (Figure 13) and not one was selected by 60% or more. Interviews confirm shared focus on wages and housing.

When we break responses down by income

grouping we don't see a strong pattern, but some key differences between higher income respondents and lower income respondents emerge (Figure 14). Lower income respondents are significantly more likely to select affordable housing and emergency assistance to individuals or families as priorities for personal financial/economic well-being. Higher income respondents are significantly more likely to select workforce development training, small business development, and employment opportunities for older adults.

These differences reflect the ways that social

Figure 14: Percent that selected each item as a top economic/personal finance need by income (N=292)



position shapes perspective. For people in need, basic necessities are paramount. For those for whom the economic system delivers returns that support self-sufficiency, the answer to the problem is to offer activities and programs that will help others become self-sufficient. People who are financially secure, whether by virtue of education or experience, may have more knowledge about the relationship between small business development, employment, and local economic vitality. Whereas lower income people want jobs and may not be particularly concerned about whether those jobs are in locally owned small businesses or with national chains.

Both of these perspectives are worth paying close attention to. All agree that good jobs and assistance in getting them (through training or job search assistance) are important. Lower-income respondents, however, note that filling the gaps in difficult times still has to be a priority. Higher income people recognize that more fast food and big chain retail jobs will not reduce poverty and build a vibrant, sustainable, local economy.

Community Perceptions: Economic Development

Small businesses are an important component of sustainable rural development. Most of the people we spoke with expressed frustration at the difficulty of maintaining locally owned businesses in a market with too little discretionary income. Small businesses, if they succeed, can be a key to increasing employment and raising wages. Given these dynamics, Scott County needs to find ways to import revenue by attracting visitors. Some believe the community's natural assets are a potential pathway, others want to see the Mid-America Science Park more effectively developed for such purposes, and still others want to pursue a sports complex or other means of

attracting visitors.

In a conversation with a small group of veterans and service members, most of whom grew up in Scott County, participants noted that among their own peers, those who did well for themselves either joined the military or went into government work as teachers or civil servants. Military service is a gateway to skills and to higher education for Scott County residents. In a community where other opportunities are limited, those who serve may be more likely to become leaders. Business ownership data confirm this perception. The data available are dated (2012), but they suggest that a larger share of Scott County businesses are owned by veterans (11.9%) than is the case statewide or nationally.

At the same time, however, women are under-represented as business owners in Scott County (26.8%) compared to state (34.0%) and national figures (35.8%). These figures may suggest opportunities to develop the potential of local women entrepreneurs (an area where unique public and private resources may be available).

Most of the youth who spoke with us imagine returning to raise their families in Scott County, but they assume they will need to work in a neighboring county. One youth interested in



Figure 15: Top Priorities for Economic Development (N=294)



becoming a physical therapist assumes they will need to work in Columbus or Jeffersonville to make a good living, but hopes they can offer the small-town life of Scott County for their children. Creating a community that can build and attract better jobs and make it possible for working professionals to live, work, and raise their kids in Scott County will require a focus on economic development leverage points: health, education, and housing.

The survey asked respondents to choose three top priorities for economic development. While responses do not reflect overwhelming consensus, the top three selected items for the full sample are the same as the top three for lower income and higher income respondents. Scott County residents agree that living wages, sustainable development strategies that balance economic return and protection of natural resources, and locally owned businesses are the top priorities. In conversations with Scott County residents, the community’s history of locally owned companies as major employers is important to their shared identity. Residents also recognize that these businesses provide more lasting economic benefits than businesses whose owners have no relationship to or with the Scott County community. Local or not, living wages are

essential to building a thriving community.

Local residents report feeling conflicted by the costs of hosting Wal-Mart, for example. Several mention how useful it is to have Wal-Mart in the community, but then comment on relatively low wages and the proliferation of part-time jobs without benefits. One interviewee commented on the need for jobs beyond “Mayo Alley”—the stretch of Scottsburg’s main drag off the interstate that is home to fast food, gas stations, and Wal-Mart. Multiple respondents expressed the desire for nicer restaurants. Locals say that restaurants that have tried to make a go of it on the square struggle and fail.

[E]veryone wants more restaurant choices; a new restaurant will come in, heavily visited in the beginning and then shortly closes due to lack of customers. Support of local businesses needs to be more of a priority to help grow the county. It would be great to be part of a movement that helped bring customers locally and outside of the county to support business within the county and for the support to be able to be sustained.

Interviews echoed this frustration. Income

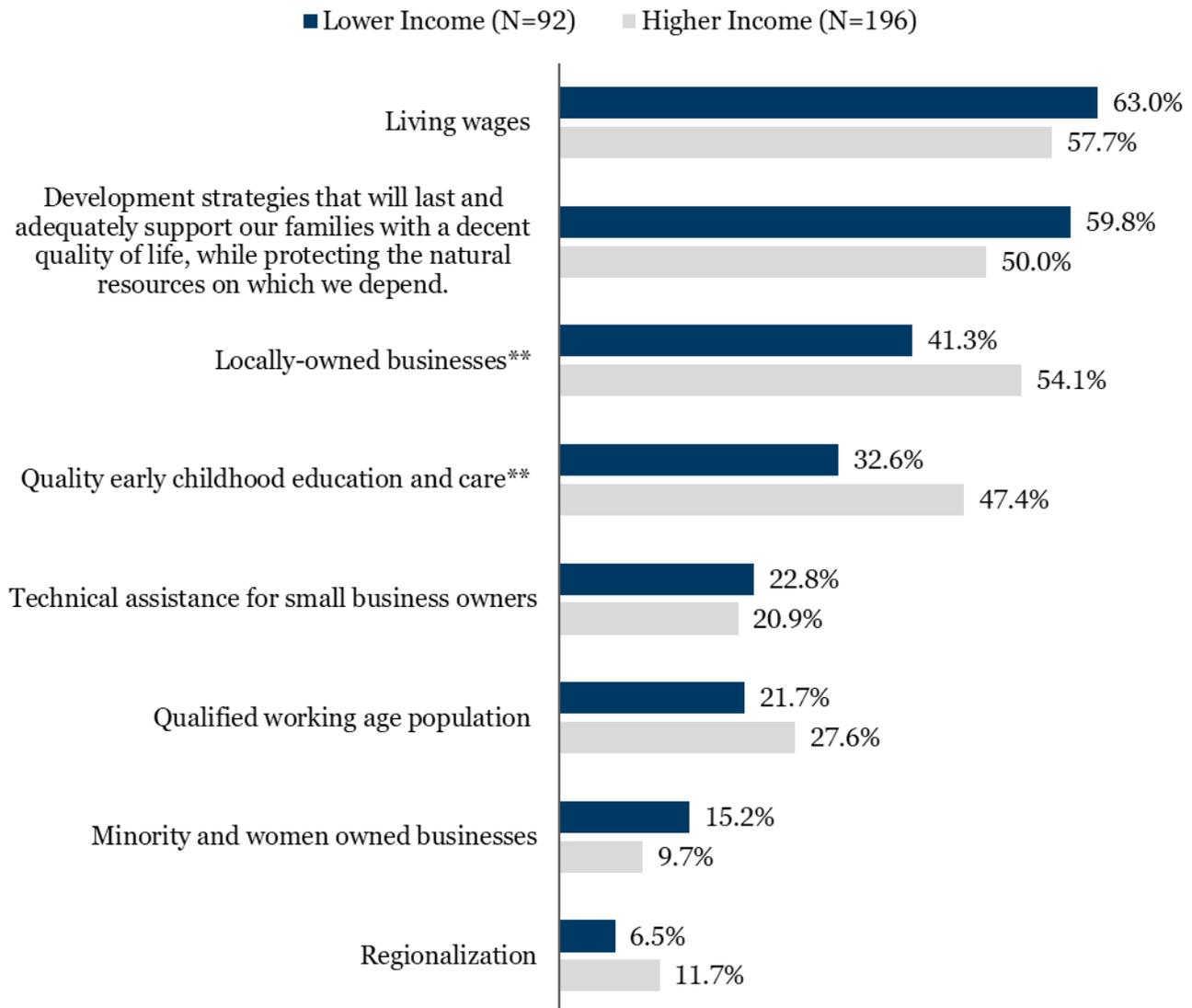
figures, however, suggest that the problem is not a lack of will to support local businesses, but rather, a lack of discretionary income to do so. A larger share of the community needs to have income to spend on lunches and dinners out in order to support nicer restaurants. Good jobs with good wages create more jobs and more wages. Low wages and part-time jobs, for people who want and need full-time work, limit spending in the community, which constrains job growth.

While lower and higher income households have a shared sense of the top three priorities for economic development, they vary significantly in

the priority they place on locally owned business and quality early childhood education and care. Those with higher incomes are more likely to support both of these as top priorities. This may simply reflect that those with higher levels of education are more familiar with data that suggest both locally owned businesses and high quality early care and education are leverage points for sustainable economic development.

High quality early care and education (ECE) has among the highest economic development multipliers of any sector.²¹ High quality ECE supports parents entering the labor force,

Figure 16: Highest priorities for economic development (choose 3), by income (N=288)



increases worker reliability, lowers absenteeism, and increases productivity (over low quality ECE).²² In addition, high quality ECE provides good jobs as ECE workers with more training and education must be paid more and provided better benefits, thus expanding job opportunities for a predominately-female labor force. Finally, high quality ECE reduces spending on special education, remediation, juvenile justice, criminal justice, welfare, and healthcare. Children who receive language rich developmentally appropriate care from birth to age five experience enormous benefits in intellectual, social, and emotional development that carries over into every aspect of their lives, including educational attainment and earnings.²³

Unfortunately, providing high quality ECE costs more and most parents cannot pay more for childcare. Wages are not high enough to support choosing high quality care so people do not make that choice and because people do not make that choice there is no functional market for high quality care so it is mostly not available. Low-income parents are happy if they can find any option and they do not have the luxury of considering the cost of not having their child in higher quality care.

Forward Together

Overall, Scott County residents recognize that the pieces of economic development and financial security work together. Scott County economic development efforts must:

- Support education and training necessary for residents to fully engage the labor force, and attract and build living wage jobs.
- Provide high quality early care and education so that residents can fully engage the labor force, and attract and build living wage jobs.
- Identify and invest in opportunities to import revenue by attracting visitors and/or through internet commerce.
- Support local small business development. Consider opportunities to focus on female entrepreneurs.
- Build housing that is safe and affordable at local wage levels.
- Engage smart, intentional, and sustainable development strategies that protect the natural resources and natural beauty of Scott County.





Health & Wellness

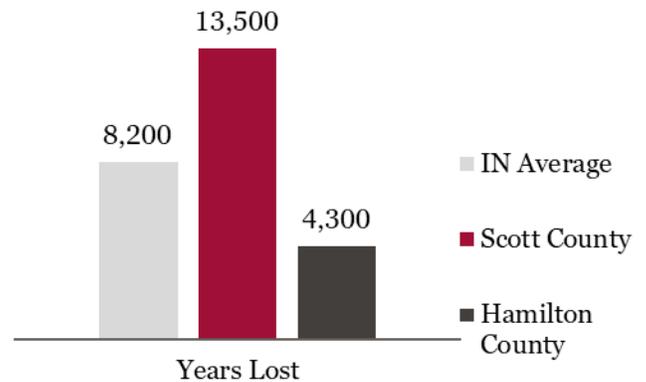
Economic development requires a healthy community. Health includes physical and mental health, and access to the means to maintain both. Scott County residents want more opportunities to be healthy and maintain wellness. They want better access to quality health care that accepts both Medicaid and private insurance. Residents want affordable medications, access to healthy food, and healthier restaurants, preferably locally owned. Respondents consistently comment on the need for quality mental health care, particularly for children and youth. Residents know that health is a foundation for a strong and vibrant community and they know this is an area of great opportunity for Scott County.

Community Profile

Scott County ranks 90 of 92 Indiana counties for health outcomes and 80 of 92 for health factors.²⁴ Residents lack adequate access to healthcare and

have a number of negative health behaviors. Scott County is not distinctive among Indiana counties in terms of its challenges. In order to place county figures in the context of some higher standard for health behaviors and outcomes, the research team compares Scott County to both the state of Indiana and the Indiana county that rates #1 for health outcomes, Hamilton County. This juxtaposition illuminates the role that socioeconomic factors play in shaping health outcomes as Hamilton County’s median household income is twice that of Scott County (\$94,644 compared to \$47,123); and 57.8% of Hamilton County adults over age 25 have Bachelor’s degrees compared to 11.9% of Scott County adults over age 25. Confounded in this comparison is also the difference in ready access to healthcare between rural communities and

Figure 18: Life Expectancy--years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 persons



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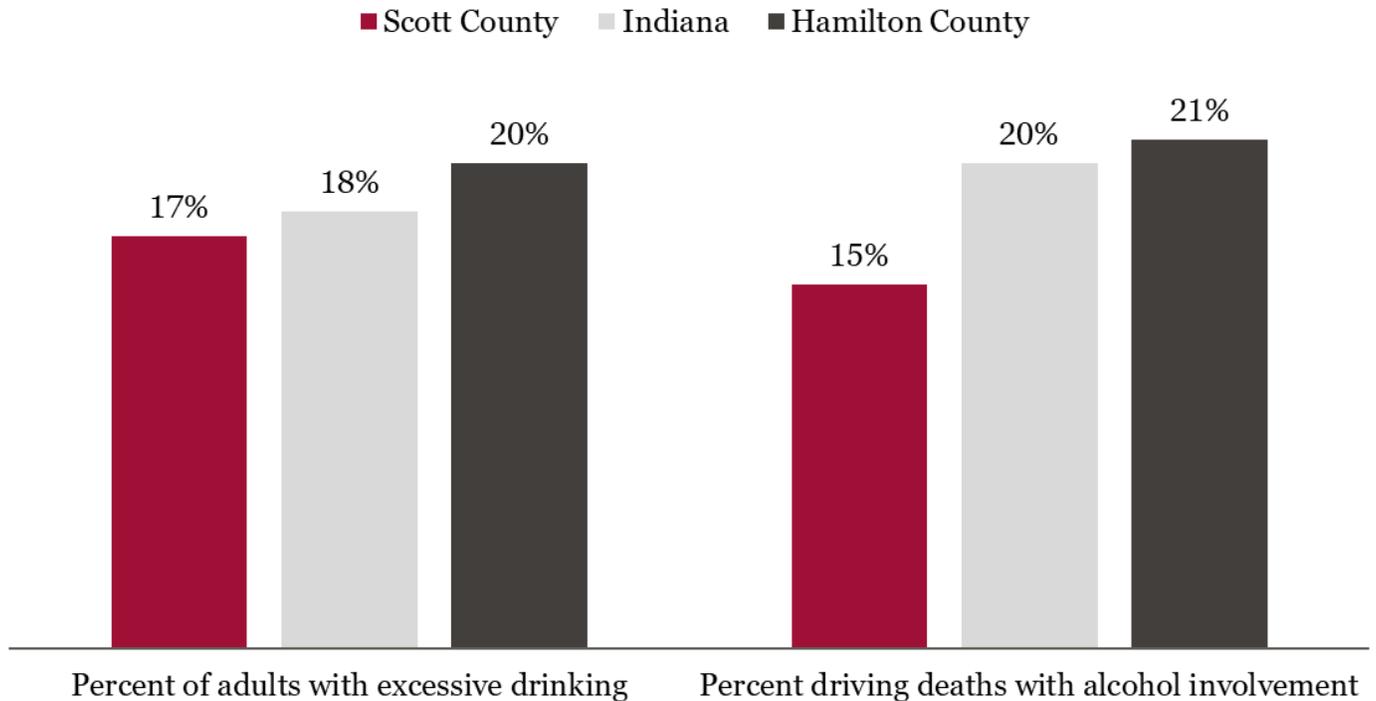
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. 2020. *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. Retrieved August 2020 (<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>).

Figure 17: County Health Ranking Index Rankings for Scott County

County Health Ranking Indexes	Rank out of 92
Length of Life	91
Clinical Care	84
Quality of Life	83
Social and Economic Factors	81
Health Behaviors	66
Physical Environment	24

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. 2020. *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. Retrieved August 2020 (<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>).

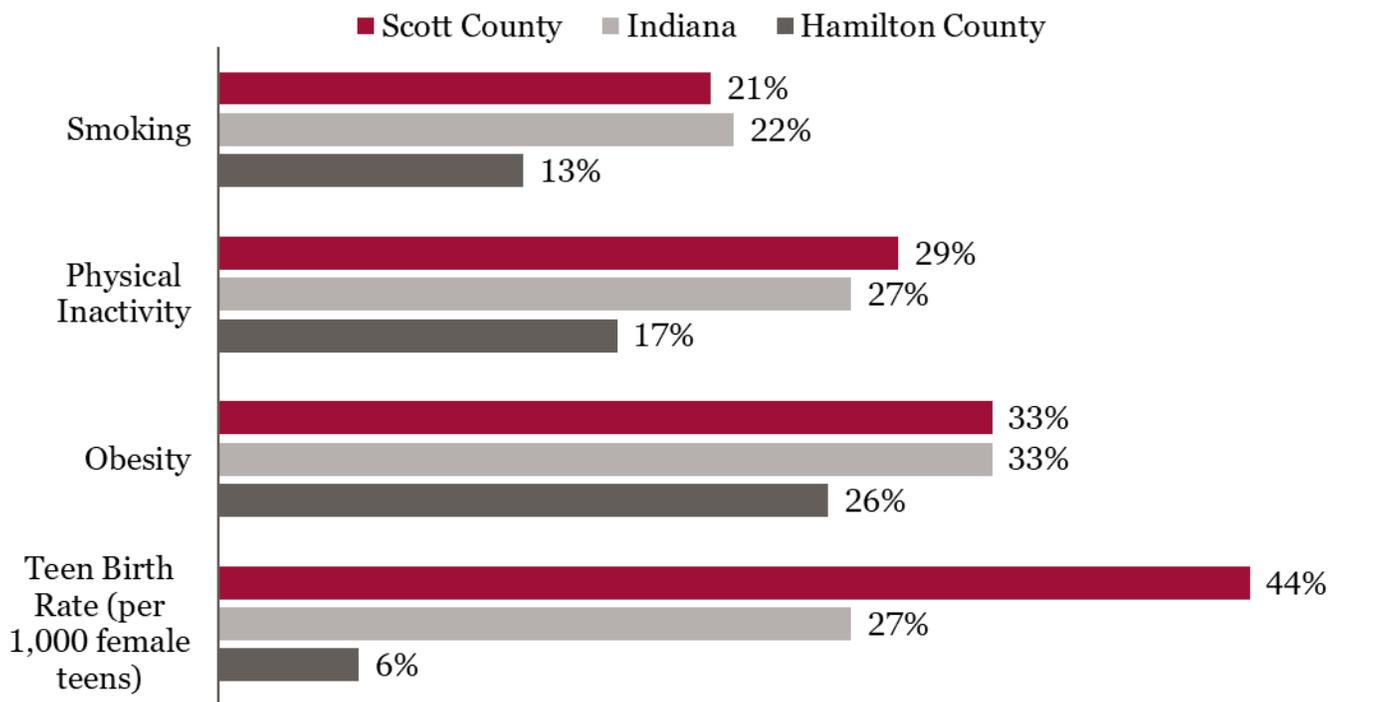
Figure 19: Excessive Drinking and Alcohol Related Driving Deaths



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Sources: Excessive drinking refers to percent of adults that report binge or heavy drinking as reported by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2017) and alcohol impaired driving deaths as documented in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (2014-2018 : both sets of figures reported here as they appear in Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. 2020. *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. Retrieved August 2020 (<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>).

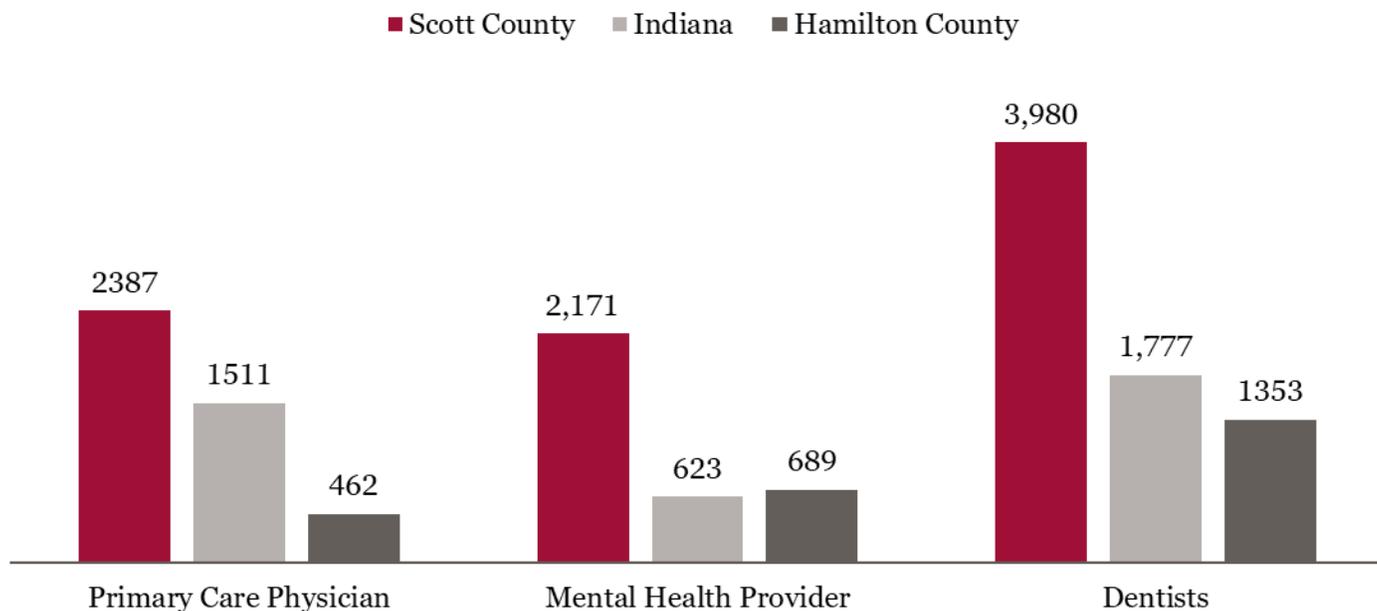
Figure 20: Selected Health Behaviors and Outcomes, County Health Rankings 2020



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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. 2020. *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. Retrieved August 2020 (<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>).

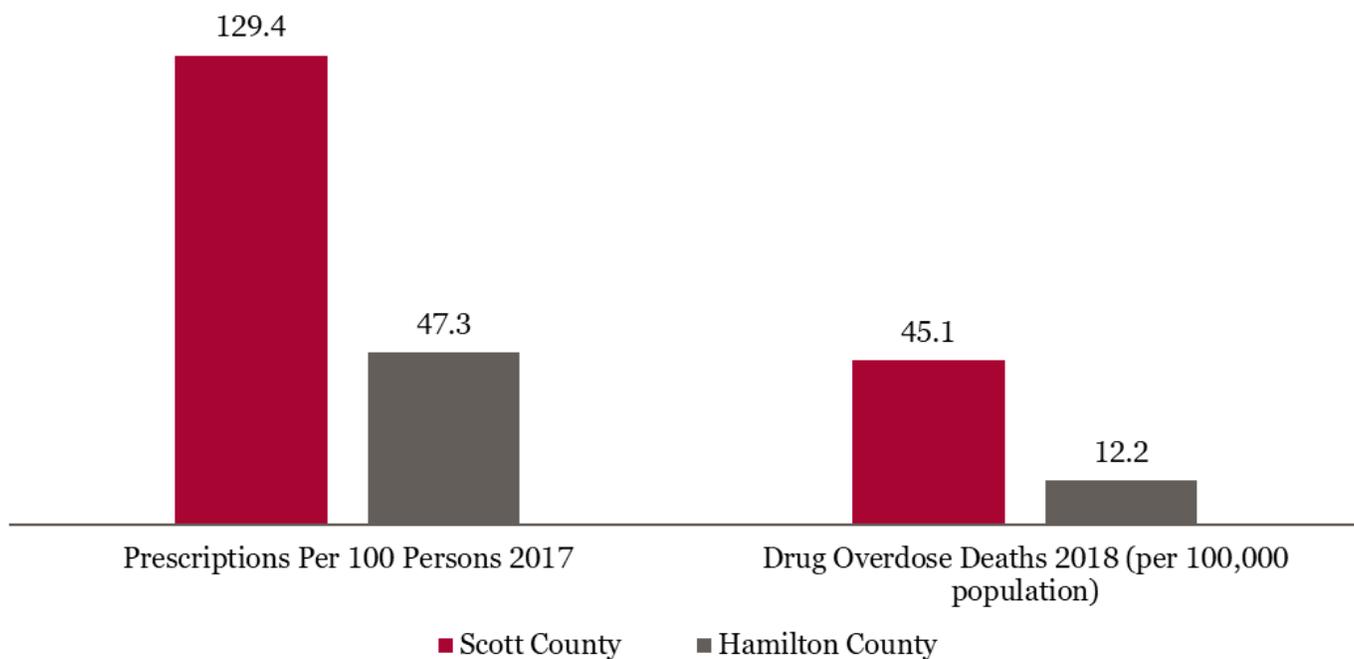
Figure 21: Number of residents per provider



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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. 2020. *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. Retrieved August 2020 (<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>).

Figure 22: Prescriptions and drug overdose deaths



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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2020. *U.S. County Prescribing Rates, 2017*. Retrieved 09-02-20 (<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/maps/rxcounty2017.html>). Indiana Department of Health. 2020. "Deaths." *Indiana Drug Overdose Dashboard*. <https://www.in.gov/isdh/27393.htm>.

suburban communities. Income and education contribute to health behaviors and they fundamentally shape access to care and compliance with prescribed treatment.

Scott County ranks below the midpoint of Indiana counties on all County Health Ranking Indexes except “Physical Environment,” where clean country air moves them up to #24 of 92. Scott County ranks #91 for length of life (Figure 17). This ranking reflects the high incidence of overdose deaths in the last six years. Interestingly, Scott County has lower rates of excessive drinking and alcohol related driving deaths than does Hamilton County or Indiana as a whole (Figure 19).²⁵ Issues with substance use disorder, however, significantly reduce life expectancy (Figure 18) and impact health in myriad other ways that show up in these data.

According to the County Health Rankings 19% of Scott County residents are in poor or fair health. Residents report an average 4.2 physically unhealthy days per month and 4.7 mentally unhealthy days per month, compared to 3.0 and 3.5, respectively, for Hamilton County. Scott County’s average reported unhealthy days were right in line with state averages. The county rates fairly well on access to healthy food, 8.3 on a scale where 0 is worst and 10 is best. One-third of adults are obese and 29 percent report that they are physically inactive (Figure 20). This is partly a function of accessibility. Only 52 percent report that they have access to exercise opportunities.²⁶ While not as high as the smoking rate in Indiana, more than one fifth of Scott County adults report that they smoke.

In 2015, Scott County had the largest HIV outbreak the U.S. has seen in a rural community, with a 5% infection rate. The outbreak was largely the result of widespread injection of Opana, a prescription painkiller. The county is under-served by medical providers and over-prescribed (Figure 20). As a result, Scott County is a ground zero of sorts for the opioid epidemic. As the community has worked to identify the sources of their struggles and effective responses, activists and service providers have increasingly looked to the literature on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

In 1998, doctors working with individuals suffering from obesity found that those who

relapsed and seemed unable to keep the weight off, despite using treatment strategies that worked well with others, had something in common: they all had traumatic childhood experiences in their personal histories.²⁷ The physicians followed this finding, studied the social histories of thousands of patients, and found ten childhood traumas whose relationship with obesity was statistically significant.

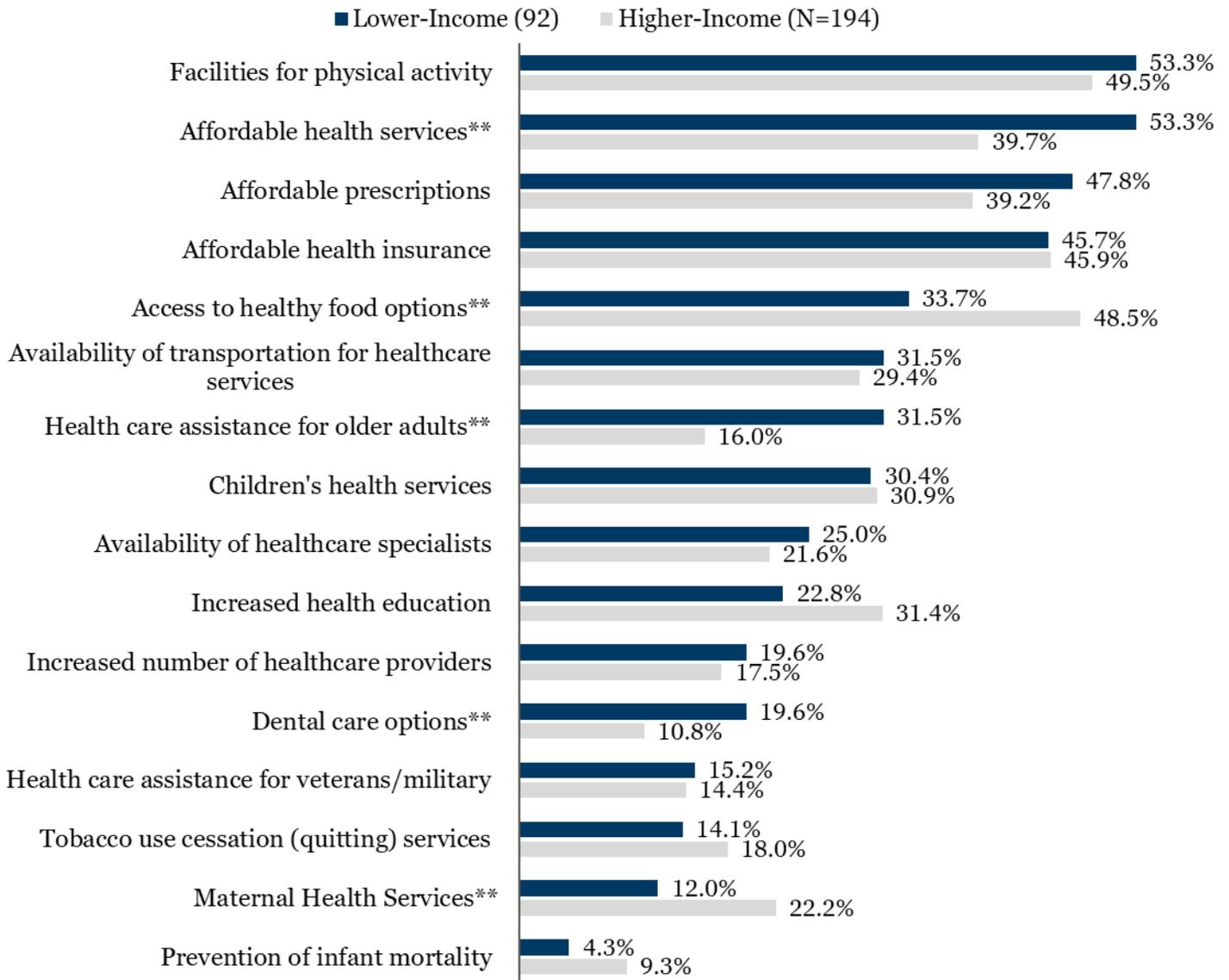
They developed an instrument to hone in on the ten ACEs that seemed to be correlated with negative outcomes. They tested the instrument and a whole line of research has emerged demonstrating that people with multiple ACEs (from among the list of 10) are more likely to experience a wide range of negative outcomes in education, employment, health, and mental health. The mechanism: toxic stress. The chemicals released by the body in stressful situations are useful for temporary concerns, but when the fight or flight reflex remains in the “on” position for long periods, this has a negative impact on the body.²⁸ It actually causes the brain to develop differently. In one study, those of low socioeconomic status with four or more ACEs had a 7-fold increase in risk for substance abuse compared to those with zero ACEs.²⁹ They were also 1.5 times more likely to be physically inactive and suffer from severe obesity.

With this research in mind, in 2019 the Coalition to Eliminate the Abuse of Substances (CEASE) of Scott County commissioned the IU Southeast Applied Research and Education Center (AREC) to conduct a community-wide ACEs survey. The sample skewed toward higher income and education levels, but still produced an average ACE score of 4.1 with a median of four.³⁰ The correlation between income and the ACE score was statistically significant; lower incomes are associated with higher ACE scores in the Scott County sample. These findings suggest that childhood trauma may be playing a significant part in physical and mental health, substance abuse, and wellness in Scott County. The impacts likely do not stop there. Histories of childhood trauma are associated with low school performance and behavior issues. These issues may well explain at least some portion of the low educational attainment (see Education section) and low employment ratio (see Economy section) in Scott County.

Figure 23: Percent that Indicated Each as a Top Five Physical Health Priority (N=335)



Figure 24: Percent selecting physical health priorities by income level



Community Perceptions

The top five physical health priorities identified in responses to the Forward Together survey point back to the economy (Figure 23). Every one of the top five items improves in a thriving economy with living wage jobs that provide good benefits. Higher earning communities can support facilities for physical activity. Good jobs include affordable health insurance, which makes health services and prescriptions affordable. People who earn more have an easier time accessing transportation and using their earnings to purchase healthful food.

A closer look at income-related differences in responses shows that low-income respondents are significantly more likely to select “affordable health services,” “health care assistance for older adults,” and “dental care options” as top priorities (Figure 24). Higher income respondents are significantly more likely to identify “access to healthy food options” and “maternal health services” as top priorities. Higher income respondents may see the leverage in prevention through healthy food and maternal

health. Lower-income respondents are concerned with how to respond to pressing health needs—which usually takes the form of responding to illness. A strong plan will address both immediate needs and will build effective systems to prevent health problems and promote wellness.

The only health related item (not specifically related to children and youth) where more than 50% agreed with a statement of quality was, “It’s easy for me to access healthy food in this community” (Figure 25). In comments and interviews, several people voiced disagreement with this statement. Residents repeatedly cited the lack of a full service grocery store in Austin. In addition, those with limited transportation struggle to access healthy food options. County Health Rankings rates the county an 8.3 out of 10 for access to healthy food. Those who live closer to shopping in Scottsburg, and for whom transportation is not a barrier, are able to access healthy food.

For the other items, the majority expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities for exercise

Figure 25: Agreement with statements about the quality of health and mental health resources in Scott County

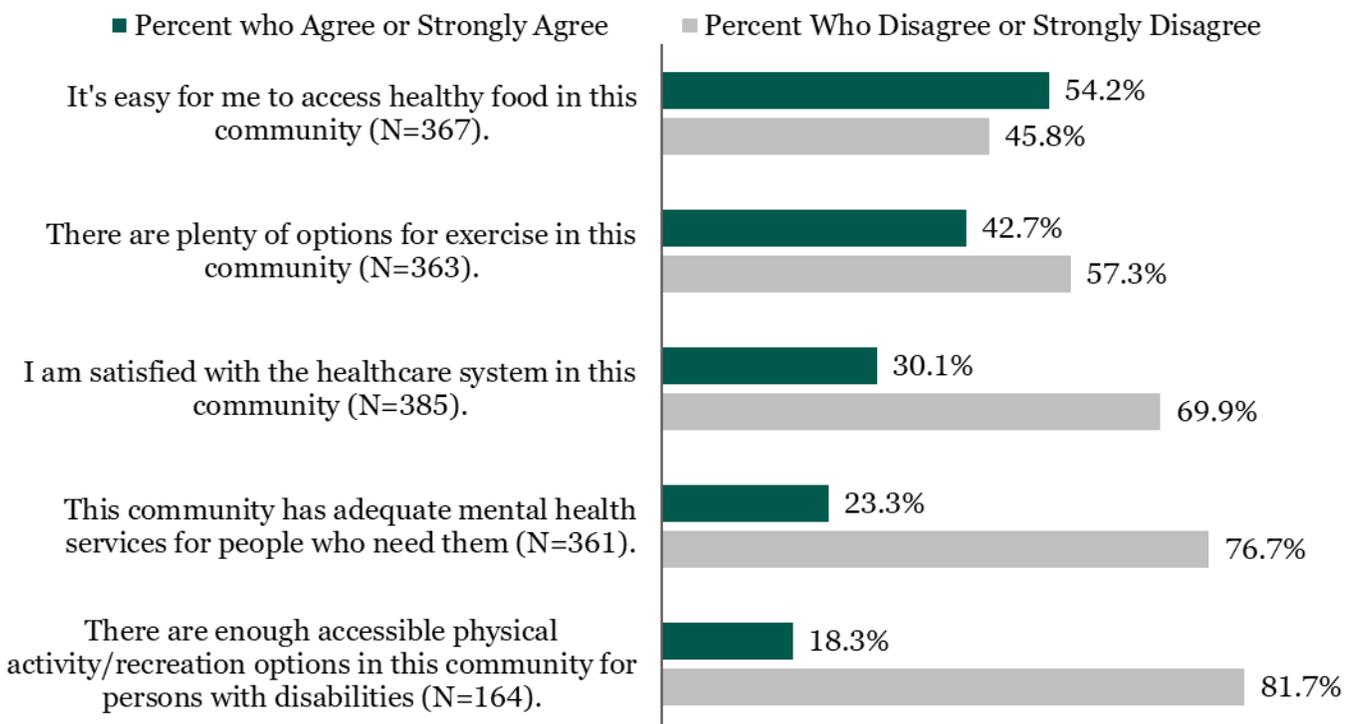


Figure 26: Priorities for Mental Health Services (N=325)



and recreation and with the quality and supply of healthcare and mental health services. Objective data from County Health Rankings and state sources confirm these sentiments.

Mental health is an area with some consensus around the top priorities of children’s mental health services, substance abuse prevention, and high quality mental health services. Open-ended comments suggest these priorities are closely tied to the perception that childhood trauma is all too common and that the best method of prevention is to work with kids from an early age to develop coping mechanisms for managing these experiences and the toxic stress they generate.

I believe we strongly need mental health services available for children at their pediatrician or available to come

into the home. Especially for ACEs children.

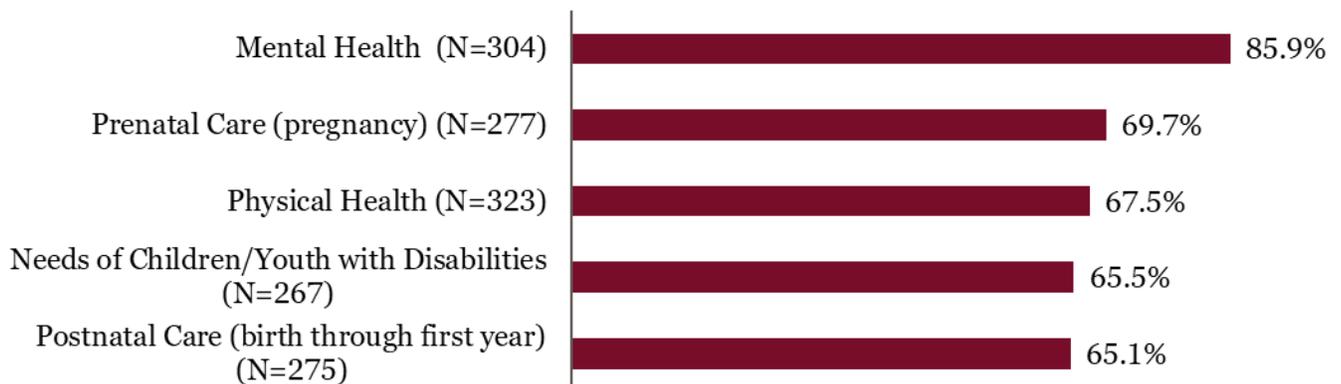
If we could work on dealing with trauma then it could help prevent more cycles of addiction, abuse, etc.

People are also concerned with access to high quality mental health without leaving the county.

I am tired of having to go out of county for mental health care. We need providers that take insurance other than Medicaid and more that take Medicaid.

I feel like we need better (high quality) mental health professionals in our area. I know lots of people travel outside of our community to receive better mental

Figure 28: Health-related aspects of support for children and/or adolescents rated "poor" or "very poor"



healthcare than they could in our county as well as to get the medications necessary for their mental health.

The only priority where lower and higher income people had a marginally significant difference in response was “Inpatient/residential treatment for substance abuse.” Lower income respondents were more likely to choose this as a priority (53.2% compared to 42.1%). Higher income people undoubtedly have better access to inpatient treatment than do lower income people. One respondent took issue with the insistence on outpatient treatment programs for substance abuse among those who afford in-patient treatment:

Insistence on outpatient programs for substance abuse. Most of the people I work with have additional needs (housing, transportation, get away from old friends, etc.) that would be better addressed as inpatient but it's too expensive, so we keep sending them to outpatient programs that don't work.

A closer look at the priorities for mental health by income shows lower income respondents were also marginally more likely to prioritize “Affordable prescriptions” (Figure 25).

The most robust difference between lower and higher income respondents’ priorities was for the item “increased prevention of mental health issues through education.” While education is an important component to promoting mental wellness, for those who may be struggling or may have less access to services, this is likely to be a lower priority than responding to existing needs.

A significant portion of the survey section on supports for children and/or adolescents included health related items that respondents rated “Excellent,” “Good,” “Poor,” or “Very poor.” A majority of respondents rated dental health as good or excellent (56.1%), but positive sentiment dropped off from there.

Overall, ratings of health-related support for children and adolescents indicate that residents do not feel Scott County is doing a good job of supporting healthy children and adolescents (Figure 26). Nearly 86% believe that mental health supports for children and adolescents are poor or

very poor. Between 65% and 70% have negative ratings of support for prenatal care, postnatal care, physical health and the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

Forward Together

A healthy community is a prerequisite for economic success and yet, without economic success it is difficult to build a healthy community. Health and wellness must be a top priority. Scott County residents prioritize affordability and access, recognizing that social and economic factors are a bigger barrier to health than health behaviors in Scott County (Figure 17).

In light of the research on ACEs, evidence of high prevalence of ACEs in the adult and child populations (see From Youth to Old Age section), and adult outcomes consistent with the impacts of toxic stress on health and development, preventing and responding to ACEs is likely a leverage point for health, education, and economic development in Scott County. The ACEs work underway in the community may have the capacity to disrupt cycles of childhood trauma producing dysfunctional behavior and poor mental and physical health that reproduces childhood trauma in the next generation. Scott County residents and the objective data suggest the need to prioritize the following:

- Increase access to affordable, high quality, trauma informed mental health care in order to interrupt the cycle of dysfunction and abuse that produces negative physical and behavioral health outcomes.
- Expand access to affordable trauma informed physical health care and medications vital to disease prevention and reduction of self-medicating behaviors.
- Provide opportunities to maintain good physical and mental health through physical fitness activity and recreation.



Education

Scott County residents see schools as the center of community activity and they take pride in committed teachers and staff. Residents recognize the need to focus attention on workforce development through education and training and favor a focus on trade certificates as an important path forward. Lower income residents place high school completion as a top priority, understanding its importance to basic self-sufficiency and the extent to which the community struggles with this essential benchmark. Lower-income families experienced first-hand the realities of a changed environment over the last 40 years. They know their kids will need the high school diploma in order to pursue further training to prepare them for manufacturing jobs that were once the next stop after high school.

Among the community's greatest assets is the Mid-America Science Park (MASP)—a facility backed by local leaders, including Samtec (a large high tech manufacturing firm that produces computer connectors). MASP reflects a vision for creating a qualified technology driven workforce. Ivy Tech, Indiana's community college system, teaches some classes out of the facility, but it has not reached the potential envisioned at its opening. This asset, however, has significant capacity for community programming, education, workforce development, and business incubation.

Economic diversification and success requires growth in education and training across the board.

Data suggest the community lags well behind the state and nation in educational attainment beyond high school. The trades certainly pay well, and interest in training for the trades is justified. In order to generate growth in good jobs, however, the county also needs to increase significantly the number and percent of adults with bachelors, graduate, and professional degrees. Widespread positive regard for the local schools and the MASP facility make this an area where the community can gain traction. The schools cannot do it alone, and the community has learned that workforce development is not an "If you build it they will come" proposition. More intentional planning and coordination needs to create a cradle to career pipeline.

Community Profile: Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an area of great opportunity for Scott County. The community lags behind state and national figures for college, graduate, and professional degree attainment. A far higher share of Scott County residents (44.2%) than state (33.5%) and national (27.1%) percentages earn no more than a high school diploma (Figure 29 & Figure 30). In a community with a strong history of farming and manufacturing, this is not surprising. In Scott County's stronger days, one could certainly raise

a family on a thriving farm or a union wage from a local factory. Manufacturing remains a mainstay of the Scott County economy, but today traditional factory jobs seldom provide a family wage and high tech manufacturing requires significant training.

Highly educated people in Scott County experience a good return on their education. Those with graduate or professional degrees have a median income nearly \$5,000 higher than the same group in Indiana as a whole (Figure 31). Those with bachelor's degrees also have a higher median income than in the state as a whole. Interviews suggest that this group includes local medical professionals, teachers and school administrators, nonprofit, business, and government leaders. Others commute to Bartholomew, Jefferson, or Clark County or they

work in Louisville, KY. Those with High School diplomas or equivalency also earn more than the state average. This may be the result of well-paid manufacturing employment and trades both in Scott County and in the surrounding area.

Interestingly, however, those with some college or an associate's degree do not fare much better than those with high school diplomas or equivalency, and they lag behind the median income for their level of education at the state and national levels. This may explain reluctance to invest time and resources in trade certificates and two-year degrees. Without a high school diploma or equivalency, the Scott County median earnings fall well below the state and national median. As noted in the *Economy* section of the report, graduating from high school is essential to escaping poverty (Figure 32).

Figure 29: Detailed Educational Attainment, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S., 2014-2018

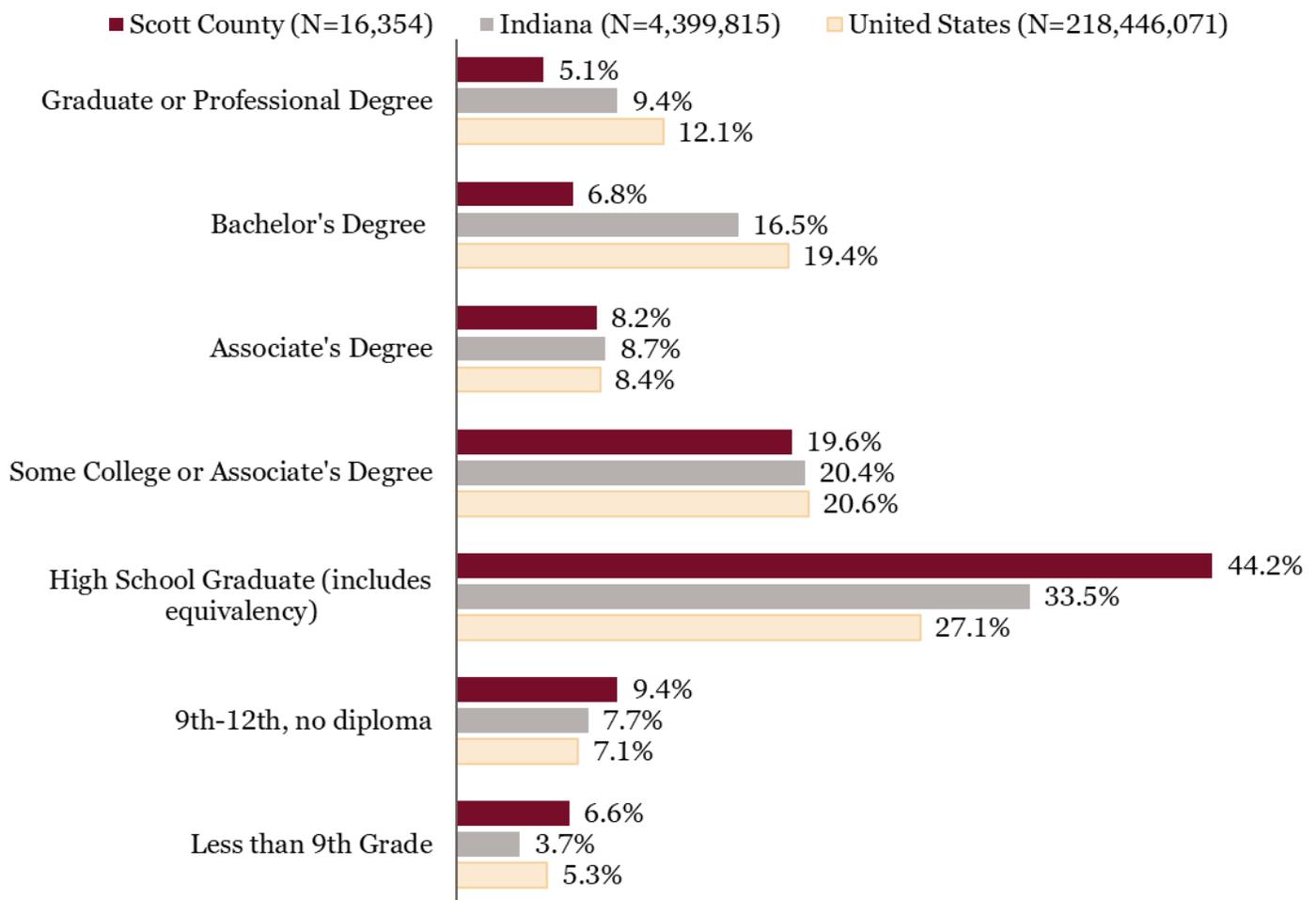
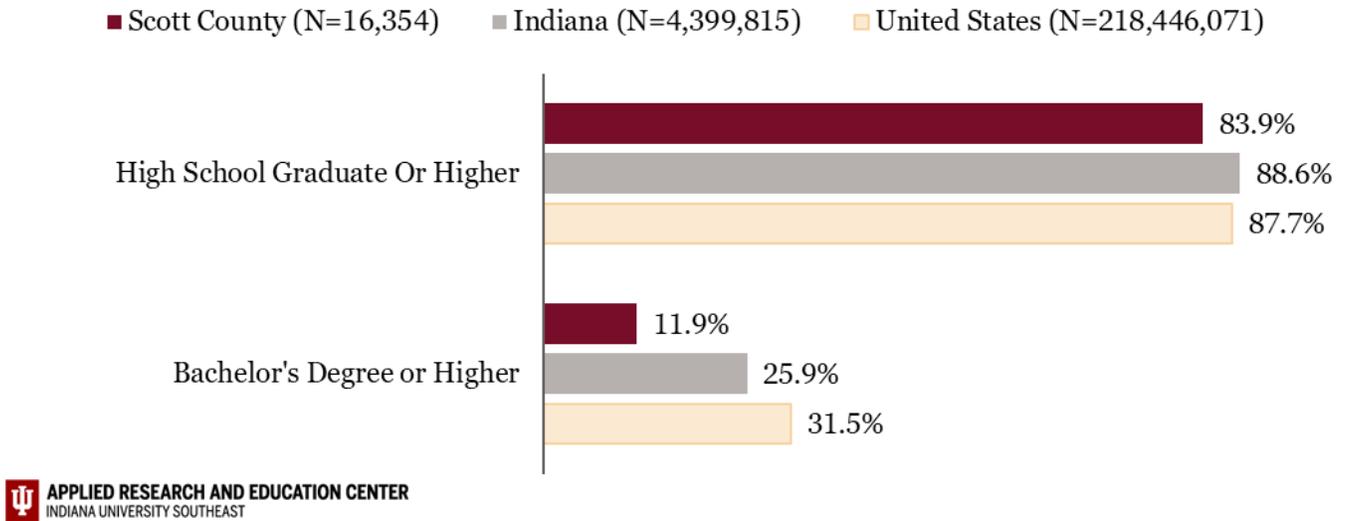
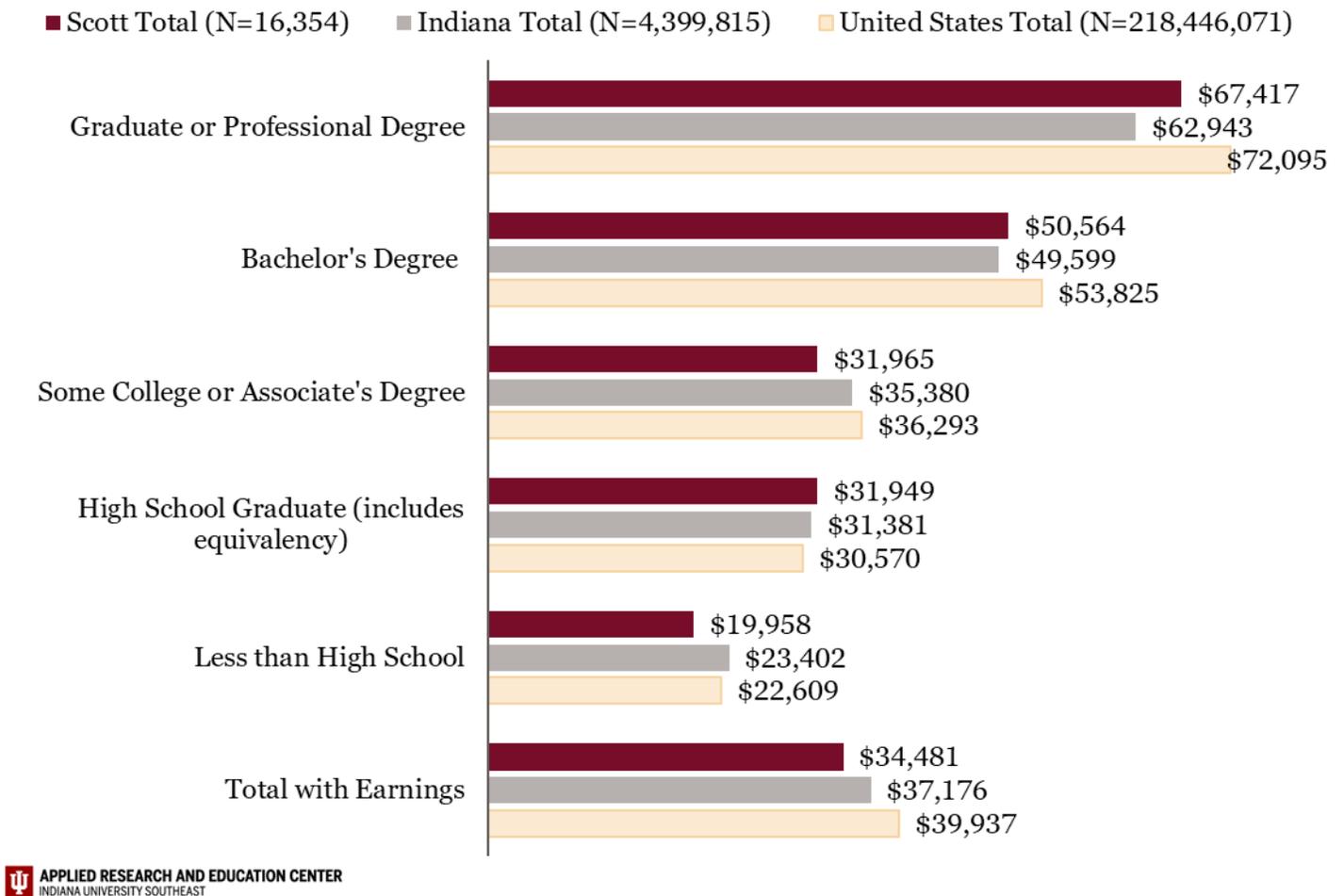


Figure 30: Educational Attainment, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S., 2014-2018



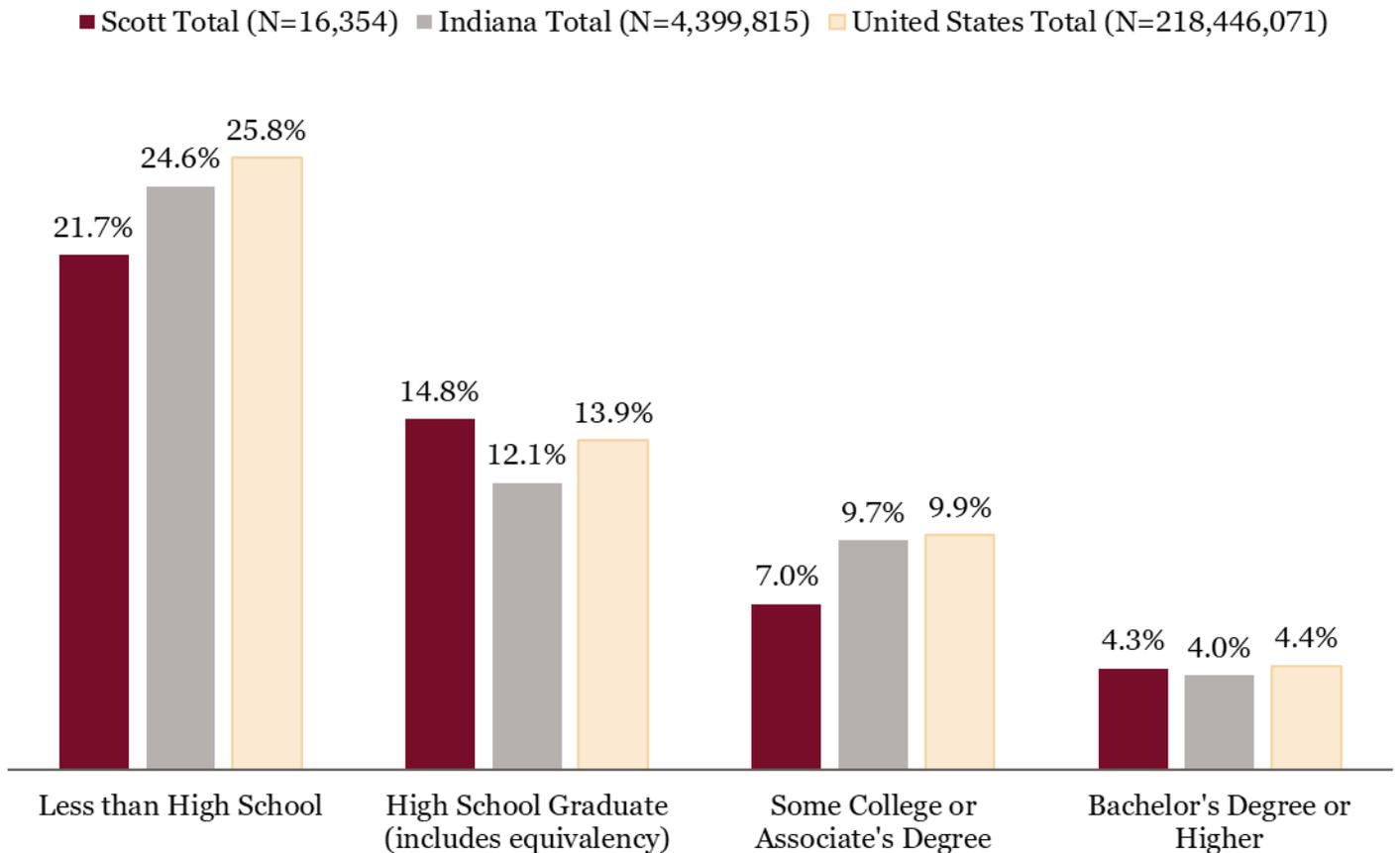
U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S1501: Educational Attainment." *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*. Retrieved 10-20-2020 (www.census.gov).

Figure 31: Median Income by Educational Attainment, Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S. 2014-2018



U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S1501: Educational Attainment." *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*. Retrieved 10-20-2020 (www.census.gov).

Figure 32: Poverty Rates by education level, Scotty County, Indiana, and the U.S. 2014-2018

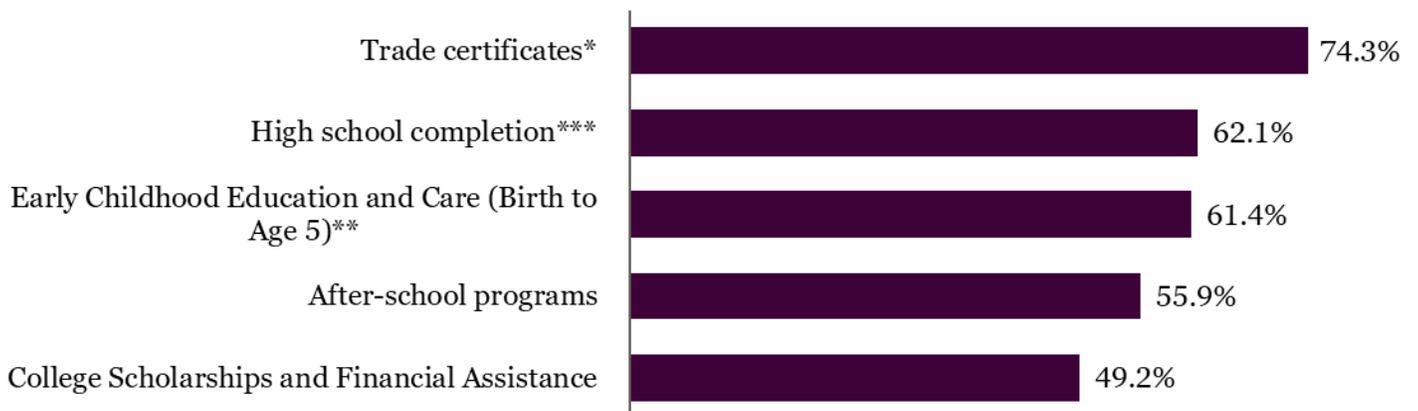


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U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Table S1501: Educational Attainment." *American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2014-2018*. Retrieved 08-20-2020 (www.census.gov)

Community Perceptions

Figure 33: Education Priorities (N=311)



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The top five priorities for education cover a spectrum from birth to career. The strongest consensus is around trade certificates and high school completion. A closer look at income differences in responses shows that higher income respondents were more likely to identify “Trade certificates” as a top priority (the difference was marginally significant) and early care and education (significant $p < .05$). Trade certificates were not the most-frequently-selected priority for lower income respondents. Their top priority is

high school completion and they were significantly more likely to prioritize it than were higher income respondents ($p < .001$). Despite very low college attainment rates in the county, four-year degree completion was the least frequently selected item. Some who spoke with us at survey events explained that if the other priorities succeed, college attainment rates will increase so it makes sense to prioritize those precursors.

Scott County residents feel good about the quality of education in their community. The

Figure 34: Percent that selected the item as a priority for education, by income level

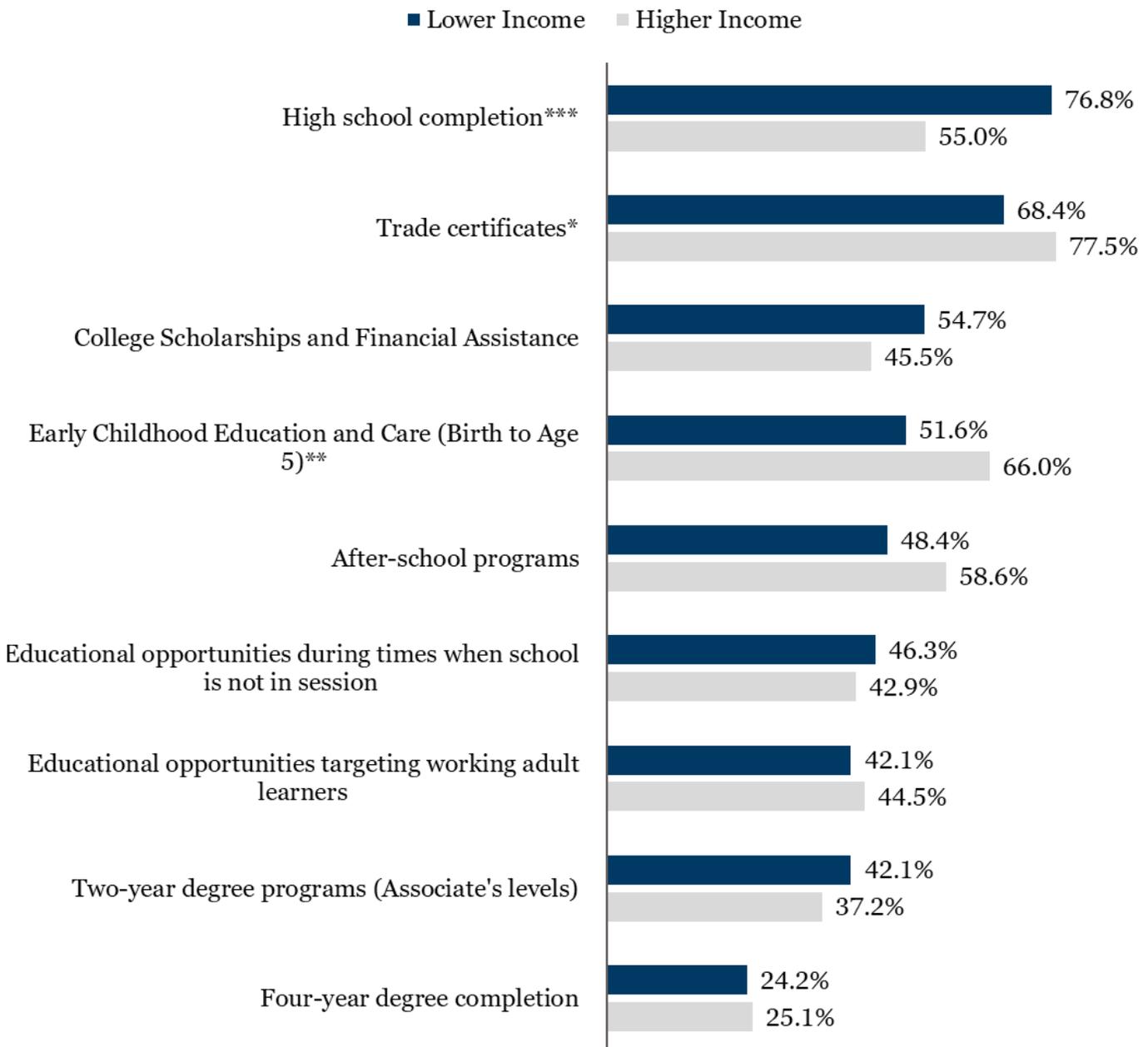
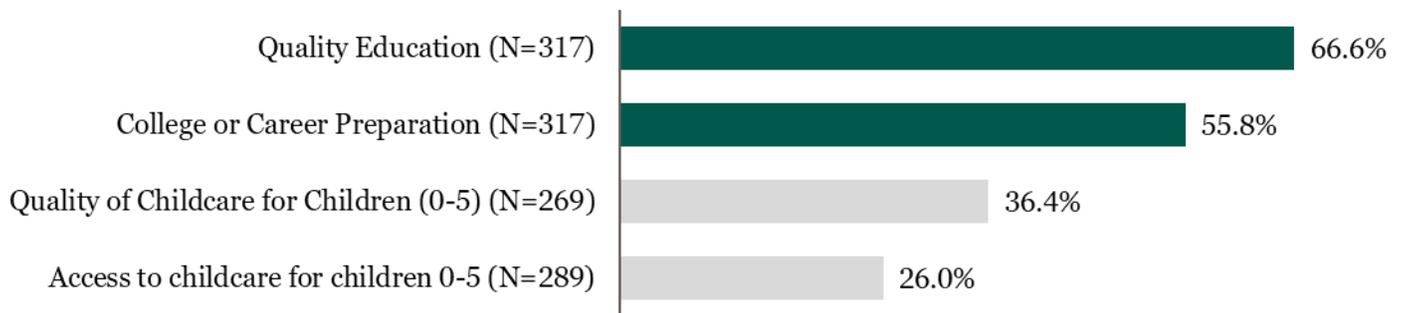


Figure 35: Percent of Respondents that rated aspects of education "Good" or "Excellent"



majority of respondent rate college or career preparation “good” or “excellent,” but that is where the positive consensus ends. Respondents share concern about the quality of childcare for children birth to age five (63.6% rate it “poor” or “very poor”) and an even larger 76% think access to childcare for children birth to age five is “poor” or “very poor.”

A local early childhood coalition took a close look at early care and education in a five county southern Indiana region. The data indicate that in 2017, an estimated 70% of Scott County children with all parents in the labor force did not enroll in

known programs (Figure 36).³¹ This means that their childcare providers were not registered, licensed, or engaging the state’s quality rating and improvement system.

Among the reasons that only 34 kids enrolled in high quality care in 2017 was that more high quality ECE was not available in Scott County. According to the 2017 figures from the region’s resource and referral agency, and population figures from the Census Bureau, Scott County had an estimated 4.1 high quality ECE spots for every 100 children birth to age five (Figure 37).³²

Figure 36: Estimated early care and education enrollments by quality for children with all parents in labor force, 2017³³

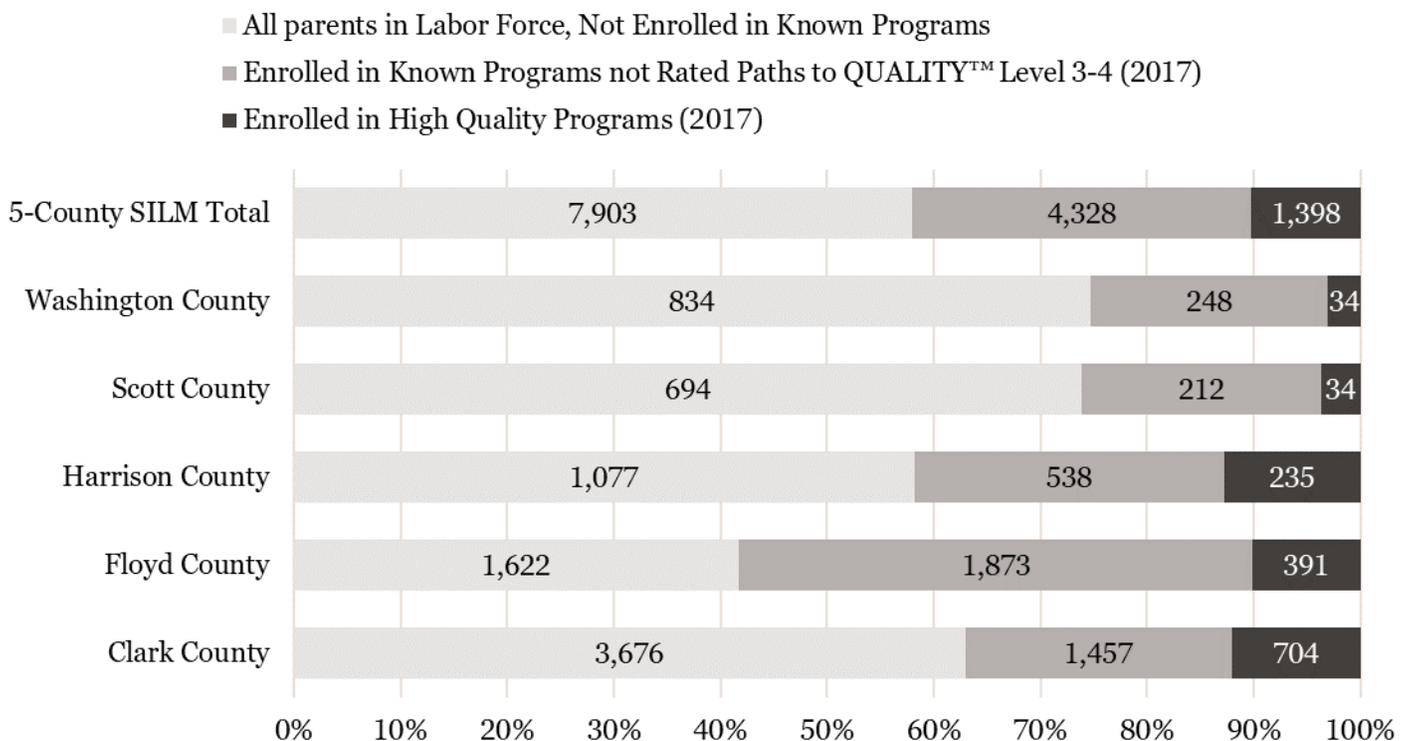


Figure 37: Number of high quality ECE slots per 100 children under age 5, Southern Indiana Louisville-Metro 2017 (Source: AREC 2019)

	Population Under Age 5	High Quality Slots Available	Number of High Quality Slots (PTQ™ Levels 3 and 4) per 100 Children Under Age 5
Clark County	7,273	515	7.1
Floyd County	4,542	492	10.8
Harrison County	2,279	280	12.3
Scott County	1,370	56	4.1
Washington County	1,577	40	2.5
Totals	17,041	1,383	8.1

Our school systems and support networks for education are quite good in our county. However, the endemic generational poverty and associated health and drug risks for our children is ever present [sic]. Our CASA cases are huge and continue to grow from a poor social economic perspective. We unfortunately do not have solid industries or high paying jobs to support our 'best and brightest' future residents. Most college bound youth will never come back to live here. Our bottom 20% of students who may or may not graduate from HS mostly will remain in our county. Unless our county can attract businesses that need highly skilled workers, then we are subject to this repeat cycle of maintaining (on average) a very low flow of highly educated young professionals.

Community Profile: Schools

Scott County is home to two public school districts, Scott County School District 1 (SCSD 1) in Austin and Scott County School District 2 (SCSD 2) in Scottsburg, and Grace Christian Academy (pre-K-12). The public two school districts serve distinct student populations, reflecting economic dynamics across Scott County. SCSD 1 is a smaller school district and has a larger share of students from low-income households (Figure 38). A larger share of students in SCSD 1 pursue a general or Core 40 diploma, and drop out of high school short of completion (Figure 40 and Figure 41). A large share of SCSD 1 students (70.9%) graduate with a college or career credential, the district demonstrates lower performance in areas of college readiness.

SCSD 2 has fewer economically disadvantaged students and stronger performance in college readiness, though lower rates earning a college or career credential before graduation. Strong student participation in the Honors diploma and far lower dropout rates reflect strength of engagement, but performance in meeting college- and career-readiness benchmarks on the ACT and SAT, among those who take these exams, suggests room for growth. Demographic differences drive district needs and priorities in somewhat divergent ways, but both districts seek to increase college and career readiness among their student populations and recognize that parent and community engagement are essential to improving outcomes. Both districts have strong support from the community.

Figure 38: School District Profiles, 2018-2019

	Scott County School District 1 Austin	Scott County School District 2 Scottsburg
Grade	C	B
Number of Students (19-20)	1,208	2,691
Per pupil expenditures	\$8,613.19	\$9,168.12
Percent economically disadvantaged	64.7%	56.0%
English Learners	0.30%	0.50%
Percent with disabilities	20.0%	20.1%

Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 1." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072300000/profile>); Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 2." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072550000/profile>).



Figure 39: Aspects of College and Career Readiness, 2018-2019

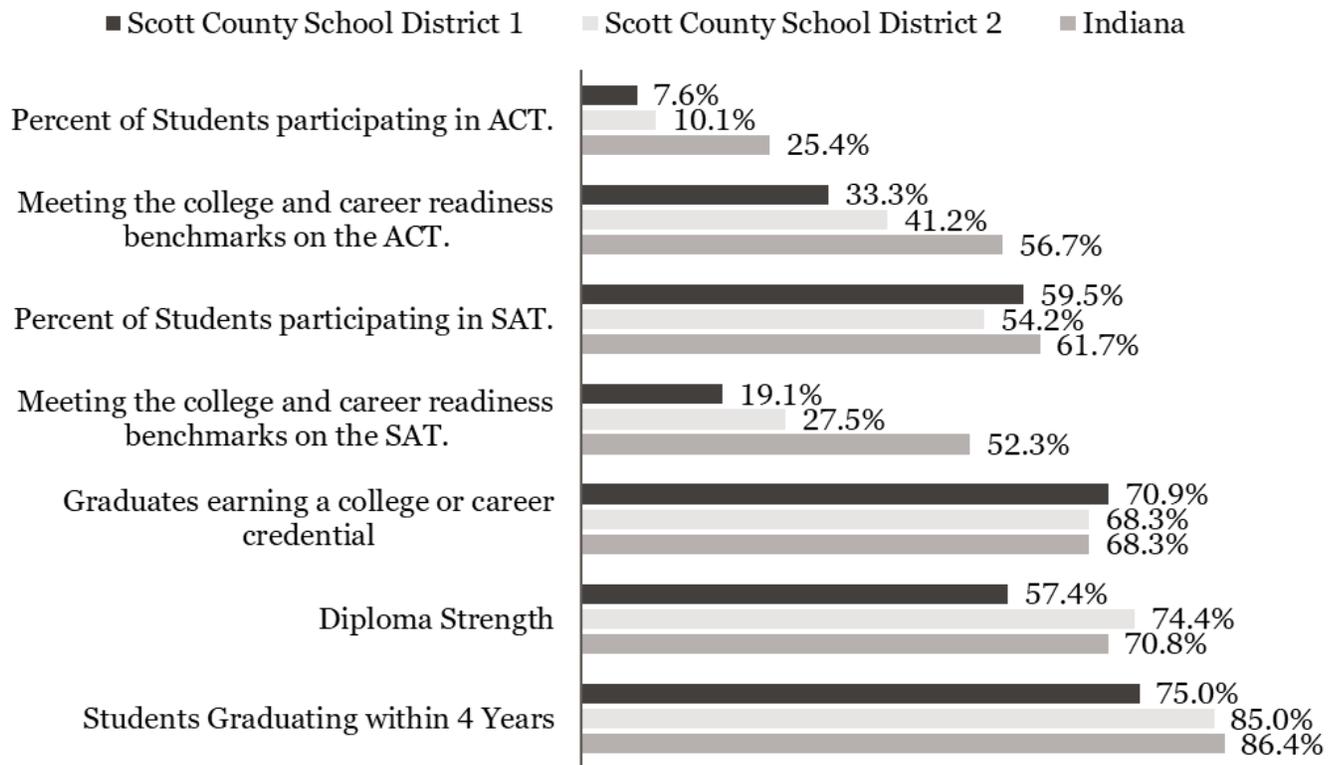
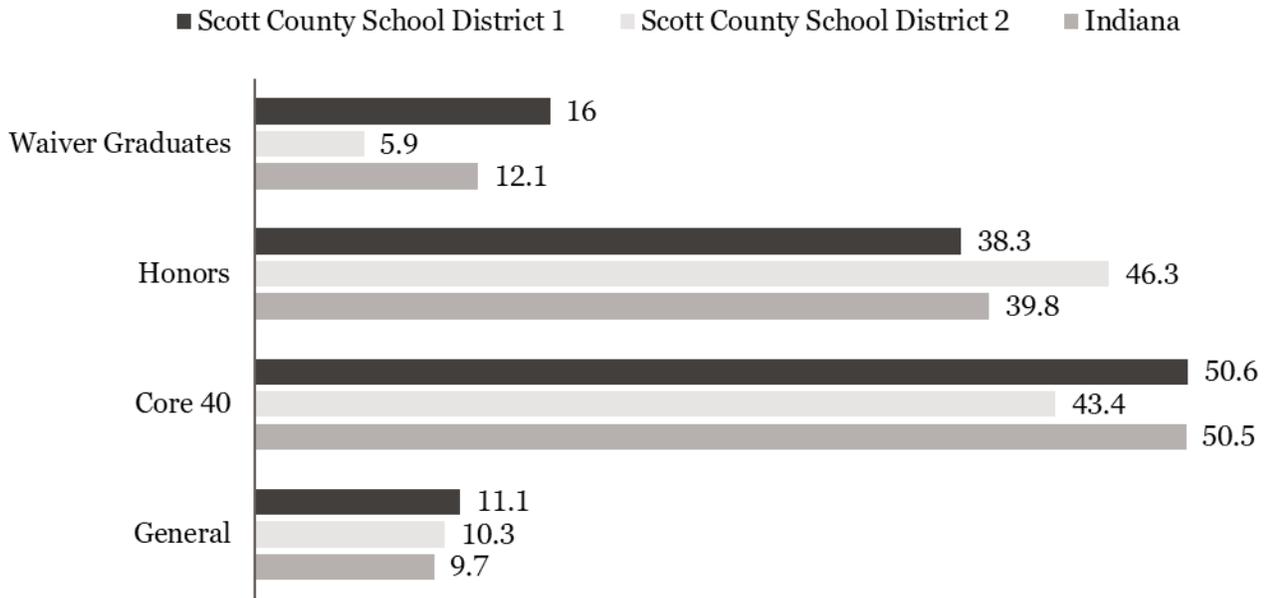


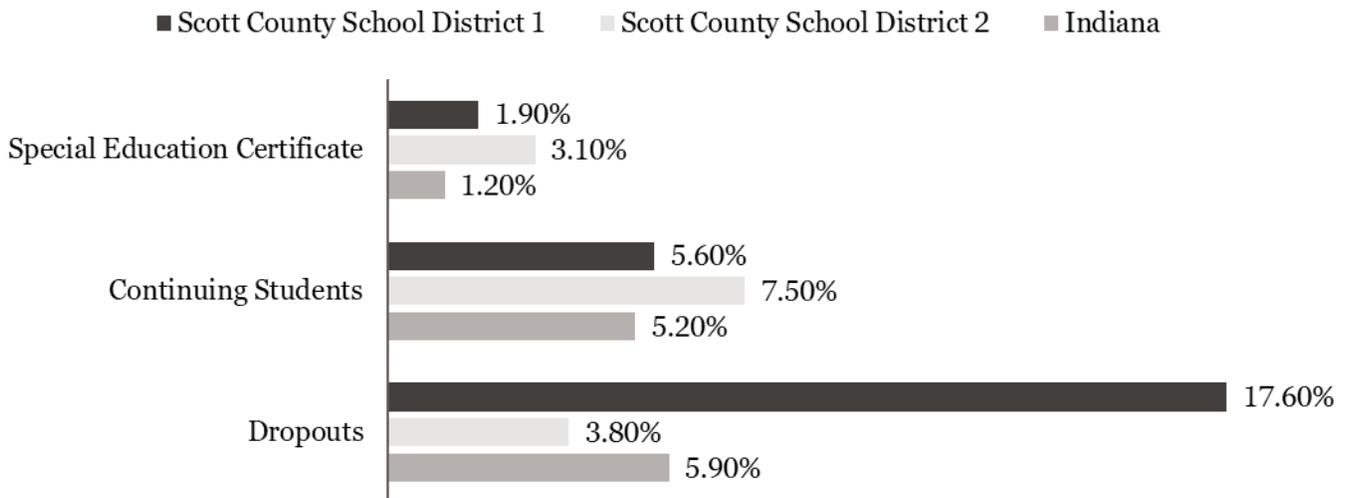
Figure 40: Percent Earning Each High School Diploma Type, 2018-2019



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Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 1." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072300000/profile>); Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 2." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072550000/profile>).

Figure 41: Outcomes for those who did not graduate in four years, 2018-2019



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Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 1." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072300000/profile>); Indiana Department of Education. 2020. "Scott County School District 2." *INView*. Retrieved September 2, 2020 (<https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1072550000/profile>).

Note: These data provide a reasonably accurate record of those who did not graduate in four years, but were still in contact with the schools during their senior year. High school dropout data are necessarily incomplete as there is no system for tracking individual students nationally so when a student stops attending, a school may not know whether the child moved or dropped out. In small communities, the data are likely more accurate than in more densely populated areas where even local moves can cause a change in school.

Figure 43: Percent that Identified the Issue as a Concern Related to Education (N=313)



Community Perceptions

Community members support the local schools. When asked to identify their top concerns, “Getting and keeping good teachers” topped the list with 70.6% indicating it is a concern. The second most frequently selected concern was the need to increase parental involvement. These were the only two items selected by 50% or more of respondents.

Comments suggest that respondents see that schools play an essential role providing stability for children who come from households that struggle. Several comments suggest the need for schools to become “trauma informed” environments. This idea is rooted in the ACEs research mentioned in the Health and Wellness section. With an understanding of the extent to which trauma is the root cause of behavior issues, this approach seeks to shift the response to common behavior issues from “what’s the matter with you?” to “what happened to you?”³⁴ This approach creates safe spaces for those who have experienced trauma to experience trust and acceptance, and to learn more about how their own experiences have led them to a way of thinking and behaving that may be hurting them. The approach then works to help youth develop healthier coping skills.

A lot of people here, myself included, deal with violence, poverty, drugs, abuse, etc. at home. It's a common lifestyle here. As sad as it is, schools should be a safe place for kids. Issues like bullying need to be better dealt with. More opportunities for children that are growing up in poverty and might not otherwise be able to afford being in sports or clubs that will help them

to find friends/confidence/a support system.

The third priority concern, with just under 50% uptake, is “increase availability of artistic and musical activities.” Scott County youth have too few opportunities for creative self-expression. Schools struggle with high stakes performance requirements implemented over the last two decades and have eliminated many enrichment activities seen as “extras.” This conceptualization of “extras” reflects both fiscal realities and a misunderstanding of how we learn and develop key critical thinking and problem solving skills.³⁵ Research suggests that nurturing creativity through the arts improves these skills and develops the habits of mind that lead to entrepreneurship and innovation.³⁶ Youth echoed a desire to see more opportunities to pursue the arts.

Forward Together

Educational success and attainment is a cornerstone of a healthy and thriving community. Community and economic development will require developmentally appropriate and stimulating environments from birth to career. With this in mind, the community needs to consider the following strategies:

- Develop public, business, and nonprofit partnerships to increase access to affordable high quality early care and education for all children under age 5.
- Increase support and encouragement for pursuing trade certificates.

- Create trauma informed schools where faculty and staff approach student behavior issues with an eye toward the possibility that such behaviors are the result of toxic stress.
- Seek out resources for more intensive in school and after school programs to support youth engagement throughout their K-12 experience

(include targeted attention to dropout prevention in SCSD 1).

- Support strategies for attracting and keeping good teachers.
- Pursue resources to provide more opportunities to experience and pursue the arts in local schools.



Housing

Housing, like education and health, is essential to economic development. Residents who do not have stable housing struggle to maintain employment. Kids who live in families with housing instability (couch surfing with family and friends or moving frequently to manage rent and unstable income) often struggle with regular school attendance. People in Scott County believe there need to be more affordable housing options at all income levels. Residents want to be able to attract young professionals with nice housing, but also believe much of the older, poorly maintained housing stock needs to be replaced with housing that is safe and affordable for lower income families.

Community Profile

Scott County was home to an estimated 10,704 housing units in 2019.³⁷ The County claims a high owner occupancy rate of 72.7% compared to 68.9% in Indiana and 63.8% nationally (Figure 44). The median home value is \$99,600, well below the state median of \$135,400 and the national median of \$204,900.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines housing as affordable if a household spends no more than 30% of monthly income on mortgage or rent plus utilities. The median mortgage plus ownership costs total \$1,039 and the median gross rent over the same 2014-2018 period was \$783.³⁸ If one estimates total utilities at roughly \$200 per month, then a person would need to earn roughly \$34,000 per year to be able to afford the \$783 rent. Based on the income distribution for the same 2014-2018 period, an estimated 38.3% of households had earnings below \$35,000 and only those with a bachelor's degree or higher had median household earnings at or above \$35,000. Low educational attainment and low wage work combine to create a mismatch between the average cost of housing and income levels.

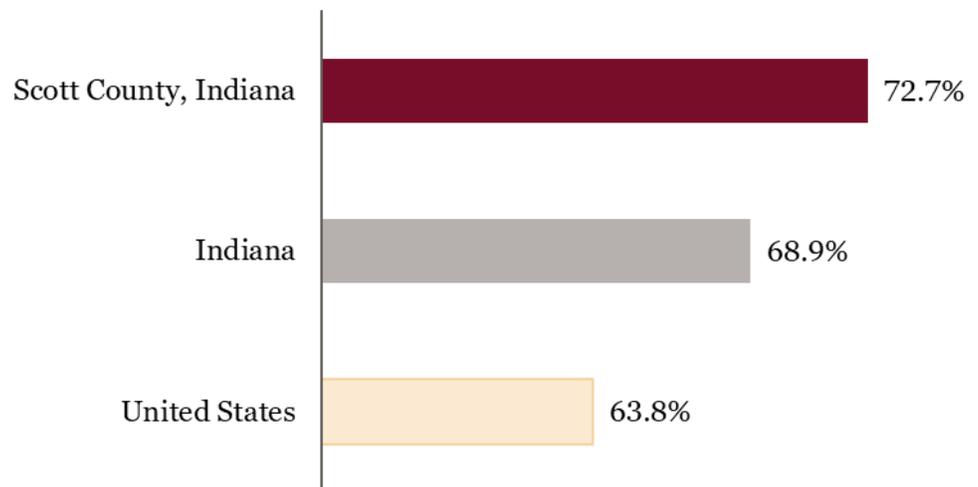
The 2020 fair market rate for a two-bedroom unit in Scott County is \$799.³⁹ A couple with two earners working full-time at \$10 per hour can "afford" this but will need to avoid any unexpected expenses throughout the month. A single person earning \$10 per hour in take home pay, working 40 hours per week, can "afford" to pay \$500 each

month for rent plus utilities. That is not enough for the fair market rate for an efficiency in Scott County; and that leaves the individual with \$1,167 to cover all other expenses for the month (transportation—including insurance, food, clothing, cell phone, internet access, healthcare, and medications). Hence, the quotes around the word “afford.” At very low wages, even 30 percent of household income can be a stretch if it simply leaves too little for remaining expenses.

The 2020 Point-In-Time (PIT) Count of the homeless documented 61 homeless individuals in Scott County.⁴⁰ The PIT count is widely cited as a substantial undercount of the homeless population.⁴¹ Researchers claim that homeless populations may be as much as 2-3 times the size of the count if we include those who are couch surfing, or may have been in jail, hospitalized, not found, or unwilling to participate the night of the count. Among the region’s homeless, reported issues with mental illness, substance abuse, and HIV increased significantly from 2019 to 2020.⁴²

Median earnings suggest that a sizable share of residents can afford the fair market rate for at least a two bedroom or can manage the median mortgage plus utilities. However, a large portion

Figure 44: Owner-Occupied Housing Rates, 2014-2018



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U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Quickfacts." American Community Survey 5-Year Data 2014-2018. Retrieved 08/13/2020 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/IN.scottcountyindiana.US/PST045219>.

may struggle to make housing costs work. Low vacancy rates are likely driving up prices and creating challenges throughout the market. From 2014-2018, an estimated 12 percent of households suffered from “severe housing cost burden,” which means the household spends 50 percent or more of monthly income on housing.⁴³ This figure reflects both low employment rates and the prevalence of part-time and low-wage employment.

Community Perceptions

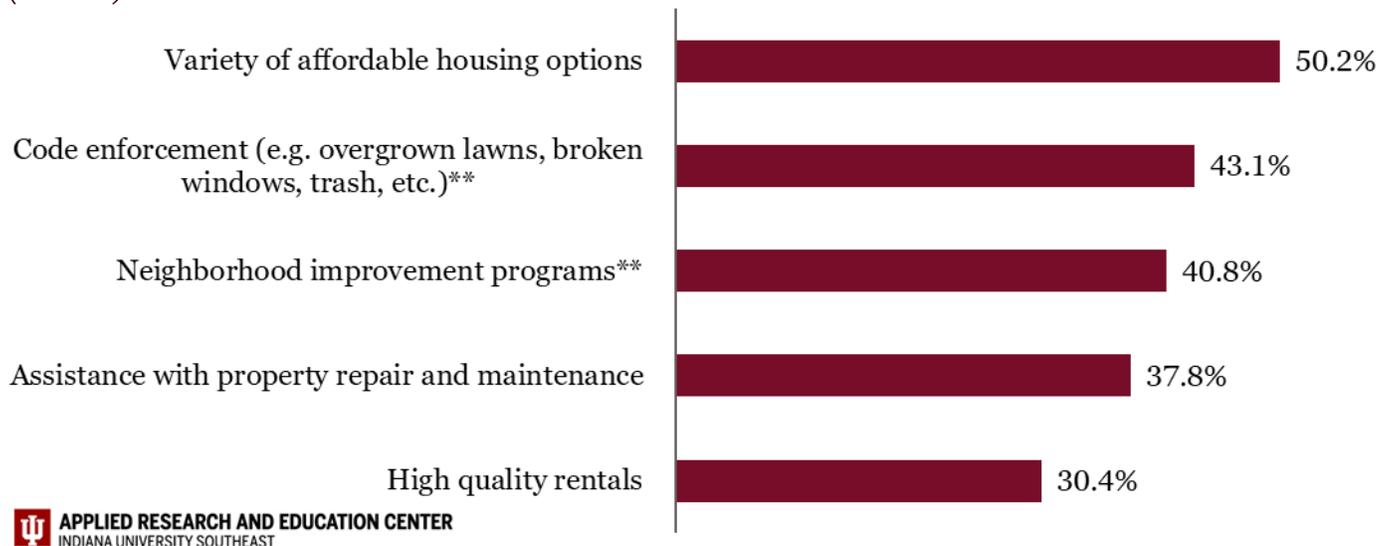
Survey findings on top needs for housing are consistent with interview data. Interviews indicate that Scott County has housing needs across the spectrum. The community needs to replace sub-standard housing, some of which is vacant or

Figure 45: Fair Market Rate (FMR) Figures for Scott County, IN 2020-2021

Final FY 2021 & Final FY 2020 FMRs By Unit Bedrooms					
Year	Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Four-Bedroom
FY 2021 FMR	\$600	\$645	\$850	\$1,068	\$1,153
FY 2020 FMR	\$564	\$607	\$799	\$1,025	\$1,134

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2020. “The FY 2021 Scott County, IN HUD Metro FMR Area FMRs for all Bedroom Sizes.” FY 2021 Fair Market Rent Documentation System. HUD User (https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2021_code/2021summary.odn).

Figure 46: Percent who indicate the item was one of three top needs related to housing in the community (N=299)



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should be, and it needs to build housing that targets a variety of price points. The area wants to attract working professionals looking for small town or rural living, and it needs to provide safe, quality housing for residents who work in the community’s retail and service sectors at relatively low wages.

One key informant explained that he could not believe people were paying such high prices for run down and unsafe housing conditions. The rental market, he argued, is filled with property owners who are not keeping rentals up to code. Others expressed frustration at unkempt houses as eyesores, rather than hazards to renters. This sentiment is widely shared. The issue of homes behind on maintenance comes out in two ways that seem to fall along income lines. Higher income respondents see code enforcement as a priority need. Lower income respondents see assistance with property repair and maintenance as a priority need. These two approaches are addressing the same problem, one from a punitive perspective, and the other from the assumption that the reason people are not keeping their properties up better is that they cannot afford to.

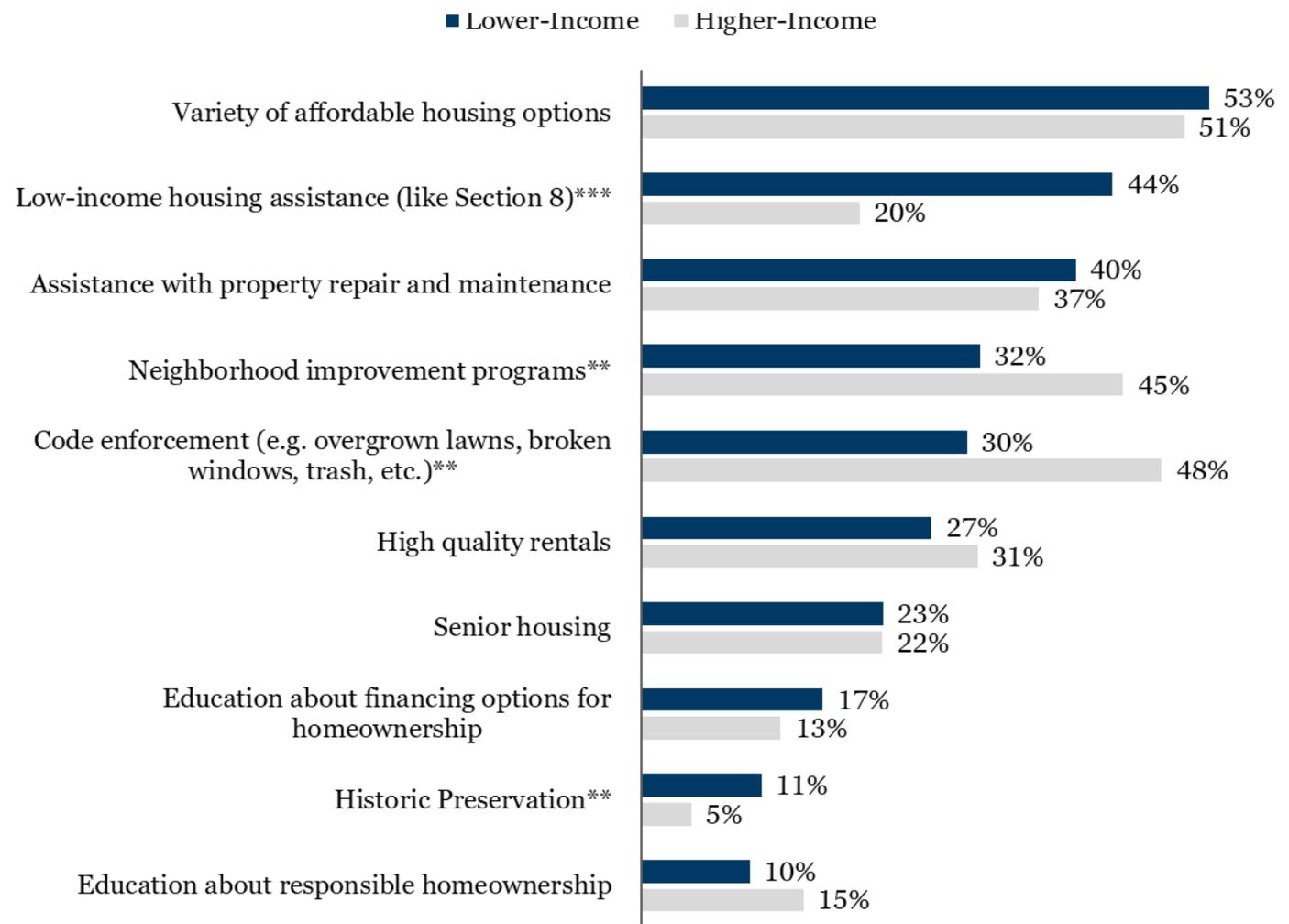
“I wouldn’t be able to afford that same land today. I mean it’s good for me in that my property’s value has gone up, but I feel for those who are trying to enter the ownership market now. It’s more expensive. Much harder to get in today.”

Lower income respondents most frequently selected the following priority needs: variety of affordable housing options, low-income assistance (like Section 8, now called housing choice vouchers), and assistance with property repair and maintenance. They were more than twice as likely

as their higher income counterparts to select “Low-income housing assistance.” While higher income respondents also had the highest percent selecting the “variety of affordable housing options” item, their next two priority needs were code enforcement and neighborhood improvement programs, both of which lower income respondents were statistically less likely to select. These differences in responses reflect a shared desire to have better kept homes and nicer looking neighborhoods, but the two groups of respondents come at the issue differently based on their experiences and assessments of the cause.

While less than a quarter of respondents in each of these groups cites senior housing as a need here, when asked about priorities for older adults, affordable housing for seniors and affordable assisted living were the only two priority areas selected by 50% or more of respondents. More than 60% of respondents over age 65 selected “affordable assisted living” as a priority.

Figure 47: Housing needs by income level



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Forward Together

Residents do not share a strong consensus on the top needs relating to housing, but when we triangulate their responses with community profile and interview data, a few priority needs stand out and suggest directions for action.

- Ensure access to affordable, safe, high quality housing for people at all income levels in Scott County.
- Increase access to safe affordable housing that meets the support needs of the elderly.
- Replace and/or rehabilitate uninhabitable housing stock.

- Develop an intentional strategic sustainable development plan for new housing that protects the area’s natural resources and amenities.

Investments in safe stable affordable housing for low- to moderate-income households supports employment and educational success. Creating diverse, affordable housing options for middle to upper income families may attract young families and encourage upwardly mobile locals to remain in Scott County. Planning with an eye toward mixed income development has the capacity to build stronger communities with more diverse social connections that will affect outcomes across the areas addressed in the Forward Together study.



From Youth to Old Age

Thriving communities provide support and opportunities from youth to old age. Attracting young families is important to a vibrant economy and provides great opportunity to build social ties around youth activities. As residents age, finding support, housing, and opportunities to maintain social ties and activity are important to health, well-being, and longevity. Interviews and surveys indicate that Scott County has a wealth of strong social ties and some essential resources for residents across the life course, but it also faces some key challenges in supporting youth and the elderly.

Community Profile: Youth

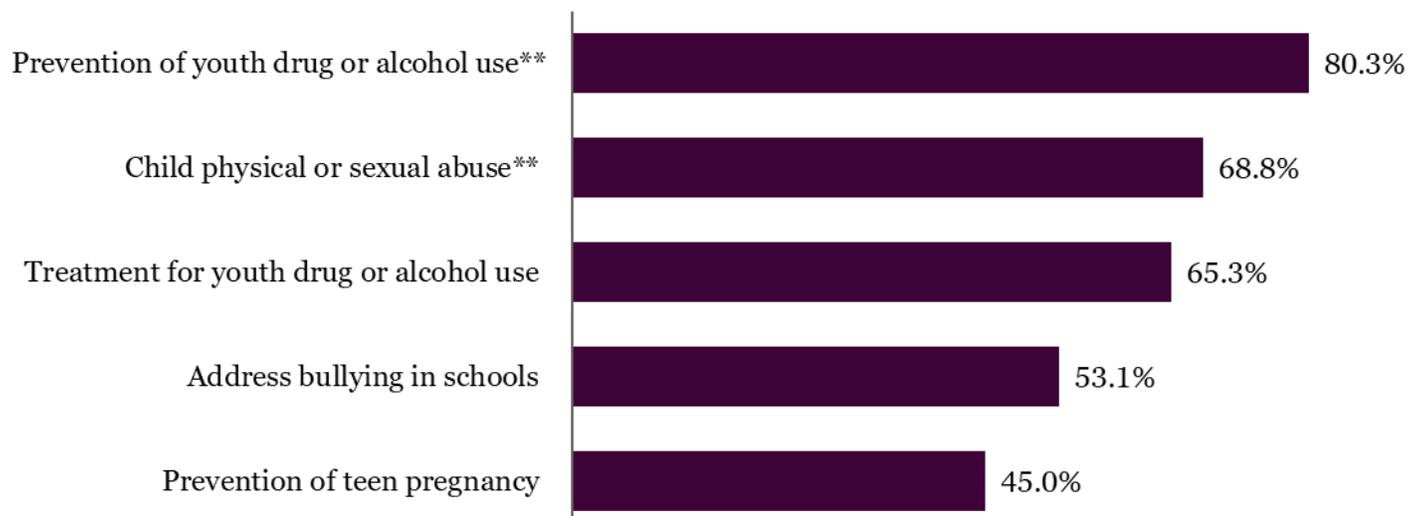
Childhood fundamentally shapes adult outcomes. Ninety percent of brain development occurs in the first five years of life and significant neural pathways form during the rapid cell division of early life.⁴⁴ When children lack adequate sleep, nutrition, and age appropriate stimulation, brain development does not reach its full potential. Moreover, experiences of chronic stress in these early years affect a child's health and educational performance. Children's access to trusting relationships with adults is essential to developing healthy coping strategies that foster resilience in the face of life's challenges. Youth development from birth through the teen years is essential to producing strong, healthy, and successful adults.

In 2018, Scott County ranked number one in the state for low birthweight babies (11.3% compared to only 6.7% just 3 years earlier and a state rate of 8.1%) and 14.4% of babies were born prematurely compared to 10.7% in 2015.⁴⁵ Scott County ranked 76 out of 92 counties for prenatal care, with only 63% of mothers accessing prenatal care during the first trimester. In 2018, 21.8% of mothers reported smoking during pregnancy, down from 28.0% in 2015, but still more than twice the state rate of 11.5%. Seven children died from drug poisoning involving an opioid. Fifty-five students were homeless and five youth were committed to the Department of Corrections in 2018. Scott County ranked number one in the state for the rate of Children in Need of Services (CHINS) (71.3 per 1,000 children under the age of 18) and had a child abuse and neglect rate of 45.6 per 1,000 children under 18 compared to a statewide rate of 17.2.

Community Perceptions of Issues Related to Children and Youth

The people of Scott County appreciate that the future is in the hands of the community's young people. The schools are the center of community arts and athletic activities for youth. The community is home to 4-H, which includes a Robotics program that had a team qualify for the VEX Robotics World Championship in 2020. In

Figure 48: Priorities for supporting children and youth



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addition, youth participate in the Youth Grantmaking Council, the Kiwanis Club’s Builders Clubs and Key Clubs in both school districts as well as K-Kids in elementary schools, EMPOWER youth (part of CEASE of Scott County), Key Club, SADD, student council, and active church youth programs. The youth we spoke with cited the close-knit community and supportive people as the things they like most about living in Scott County. “There’s always someone to turn to” and “Everyone is nice and comes together during games.”

The survey was for adults, but the research team conducted two conversations with youth. These groups are not a representative sample of youth in the area, but represent a mix of kids who have lived in Scott County their whole lives and others who are new to the area. All are actively engaged in



school and community activities. They range in age from high school freshmen to seniors preparing to leave for college. We quote heavily from these conversations in an effort to give voice to local youth and place their comments in the context of adult perceptions of strengths, opportunities, and priorities.

We met with a group from each high school and in both cases they said the school was more like a family, “We all love each other. It’s safe. We know each other.” One student noted, “Everyone in the town knows each other—people are related, they literally have family at school.” Another student commented, “People in the community have relationships with local government. It’s easy to be connected to local leaders.”

When asked about the community’s assets, they list the YMCA, Mid-America Science Park, Hardy Lake, City Hall, and local forests. One youth referenced commuting patterns as a sign of quality of life in the community, “successful people from the county who go elsewhere for work still live in the county. They don’t leave Scott County for living—this speaks to how good the community is.”

Survey respondents prioritize drug and alcohol prevention and treatment for youth, prevention of child physical and sexual abuse, and the need to address bullying in schools (Figure 48). The youth we spoke with recognize the importance of these priorities, but would like to have the county be known for something other than the drug problem.

Figure 49: Supports for children and/or adolescents rated "good" or "excellent" by 50% or more of respondents



They want to address these problems by building strength and resilience, not by focusing too much on drugs and dysfunction.

Adult ratings of strengths in supports for children and youth fit what we heard from the youth with whom we spoke (Figure 49). Volunteer opportunities and schools are good. The youth we heard from are all very actively engaged in a wide range of sports, student clubs, and activities. One opportunity they spoke about as perhaps most life changing, is the Best Buddies program that pairs youth with peers who have disabilities. The youth discuss this as a transformational program that helps people become more comfortable with disability and reduces stigma and fear. They made new friends and valued their experiences. Volunteer opportunities are plentiful and the youth we spoke with are among those who step up and engage.

We asked youth what they would do in Scott County if they could do anything and money and politics were not obstacles. For youth in Austin, their ideas were simple:

A movie theater or something would be good. Something for youth to do. Keep people off the streets and doing good things instead of things they think are the only option.

A market. We don't have fresh produce, fresh groceries. We have to go to

Scottsburg Wal-Mart. We have gas stations and DQ, but that's it.

We need some entertainment.

Scottsburg youth echoed the need for “more places to go to do whatever.” One person mentioned enjoying going to shop in Clarksville and that the 30-minute kick boxing place is fun.

A pool. We lost our pool two years ago. It would be nice to have a pool instead of going to Madison.

Renovate the YMCA to be like the sports park they are building in Louisville—nice basketball gym and a track to run on.

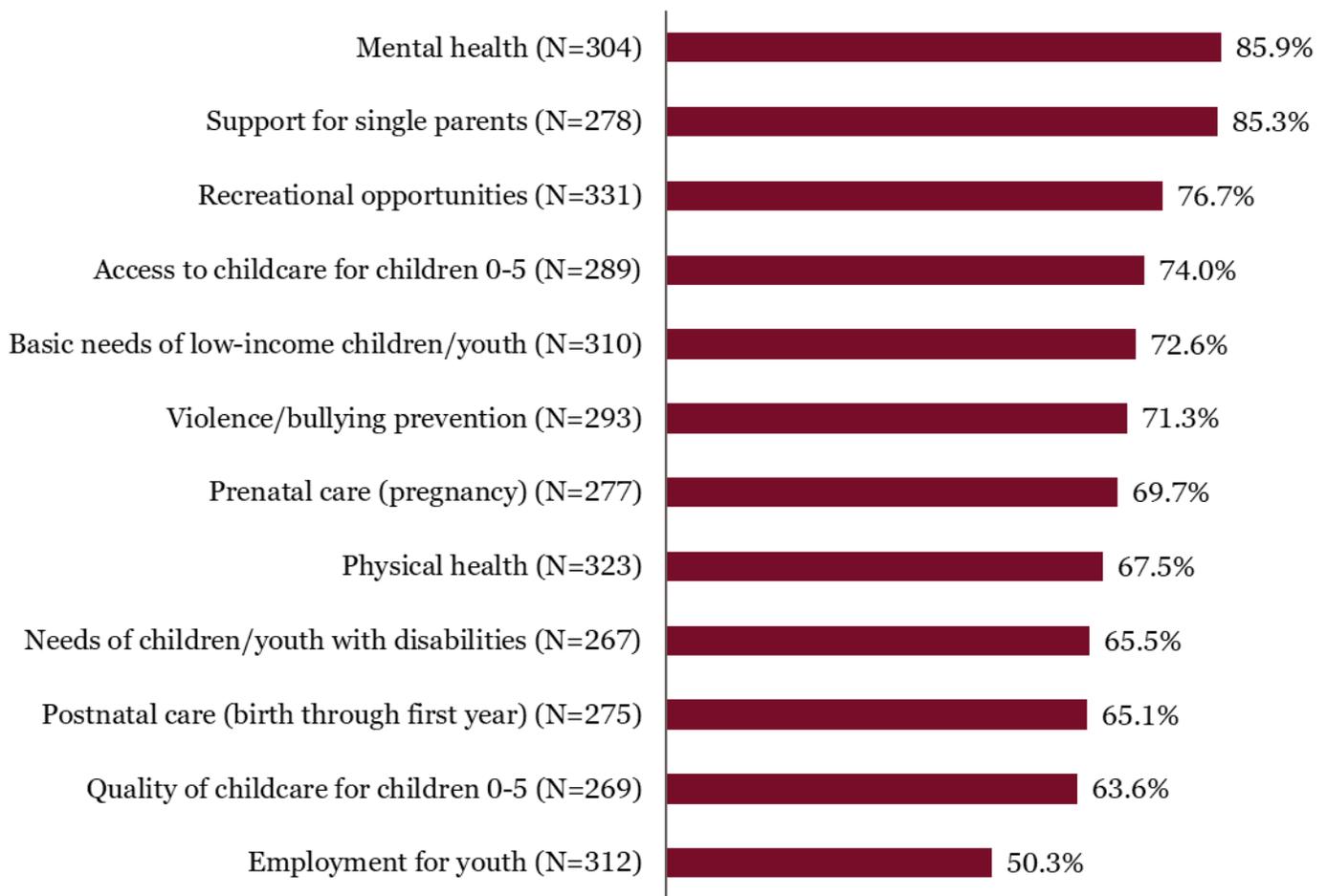
The arts—we need a healthy balance. Arts have a lot of benefits. A facility that people could use for musical productions and concerts—like a sports complex, but for the arts.

E-sports arena—maybe in the arts center. Lots of people would like to go watch.

Another youth chimed in about the appeal of “a place to learn—art lessons, dance lessons.”

The youth we spoke with are kids who are doing well, but public data and community perceptions reflect the reality that many youth in Scott County are not doing well. When we asked survey respondents (adults) to rate supports for children

Figure 50: Supports for children and/or adolescents rated "poor" or "very poor" by 50% or more of respondents



and youth, 50% or more rated most areas (12 out of 16) “poor” or “very poor” (Figure 50). That is a strong consensus that reflects the realities presented in the community profile data.

Mental Health topped the list of concerns followed closely by support for single parents (Figure 50). Both of these are basic needs. Recreational opportunities had the third highest percentage rating the resource “poor” or “very poor.” Access to childcare and basic needs of low-income children and youth and violence/bullying prevention were rated poor by more than 70% of respondents. The youth we heard from were also well aware of these basic needs.

Money is the biggest barrier. There’s money out there, just not here.

Not enough people. Entrepreneurs and business owners are reluctant because they

would not have enough business. If we could convince people there is a market, we could have more businesses.

It’s a poor community. Not a strong enough customer base for the things we want. The way it is now is also a barrier. Who wants to put a Ruth’s Chris next to ARBY’S and BK?

Several of the youth we heard from plan to return to Scott County after college. A couple of them want to teach in Scott County schools. Others say they want to live in Scott County, but assume they will need to work outside the county. One youth has no plan to live here—the small town just is not her thing.

As the Scottsburg group came to a close, one of the students shared a parting comment:

A few years ago, I was with a group of about

45 students and we were asked how many of us had traveled outside of Scott County and where to. There were about 15 kids in the group who had never left Scott County. I think this is common here and it limits peoples' ability to imagine anything different from what they know. People in Scott County don't like change. I think they are afraid of it because they know nothing else.



The parting comment from the Austin group:

Don't listen to the people who don't live here. We are nothing like what the news says about us. We're a big family: that's the best way to put it.

Adults and youth alike recognize the need to do more for children and youth. Community Profile data confirm community perceptions and put stark numbers to local concerns about child abuse. In order for Scott County to prosper, childhood must get better. As noted in the Health and Wellness section of the report, the average Adverse Childhood Experiences score among a sample of Scott County adults is 4.1.⁴⁶ The data on Scott County children suggests this figure will remain high in the current generation of children. Scott County will continue to struggle with health and education (the base requirements for economic development) as long as this pattern continues. This makes prevention and mitigation of childhood trauma an enormous leverage point for Scott County. Among the strategies for preventing and mitigating the effects of childhood trauma are the following⁴⁷:

Strengthen economic supports to families.

- Strengthen household financial security.
- Family-friendly work policies.

Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity.

- Public education.

- Bystander prevention.
- Reduce corporal punishment.

Ensure a strong start for children.

- Early childhood home visitation.
- High-quality early care and education.
- Preschool enrichment with family engagement.

Teach skills

- Social-Emotional Learning.
- Safe dating and health relationship skills programs.
- Parenting skills and family relationship approaches.

Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

- Mentoring programs.
- After-school programs.

Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms

- Enhance primary care.
- Victim-centered services.
- Treatment to lessen the harms of ACEs.
- Treatment to prevent problem behavior and future involvement in violence.
- Family-centered treatment for substance use disorders.

In Scott County, the Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Substances (CEASe) is hard at work with local service providers and public schools to adopt trauma informed approaches to working with youth and adults. Coalition members seek to break the cycle whereby children of trauma grow up to become parents who, without better skills and often suffering from financial stress, depression, anxiety, and/or substance abuse, perpetrate traumas on the next generation. Scott County now has several people certified to train others in trauma informed practices.

Youth offer good ideas as well. Not all prevention work will need to focus specifically on concerns about drugs and alcohol (and in fact, many youth would like to focus on other things). Kids need more options for activities and they need more opportunities to build trusting and safe relationships with adults. These opportunities need to be realistically available to the youth least likely to engage them. This will require aggressive efforts to remove invisible barriers including cost, transportation, and any needed supplies or gear. These efforts need to find ways to move beyond the usual joiners to reach the youth who may be in greatest need. Mentoring, creating social norms, and nurturing social and emotional development can come through a wide range of activities. An important base for all such work is high quality early care and education.

Community Perceptions: Older Adults

As the baby boomers enter old age, the senior population is growing all across the country. Rural communities that have seen young people leave often find themselves with a disproportionate share of older people. Scott County is not too far off of the national age distribution. Still, the boomers are creating increased demand for housing and services for the elderly.

In the survey sample, the top two needs are housing-related: affordable assisted living options and affordable housing (Figure 51). The consensus drops off after those top two and just over a third selected caregiver support and access to daily meals as priorities. Day programs rounded out the top five, but only 22.3% selected it. In part, this is because the list of priority options was long. Tests for differences based on income indicate affordable housing is the only area where the two income groups differ significantly. Lower income respondents were more likely to identify affordable housing as a priority.

When we pull out just those survey respondents over age 65, the top four items are mostly the

Figure 51: Priorities for older adults, percent of full sample that selected items as top priorities (N=309)

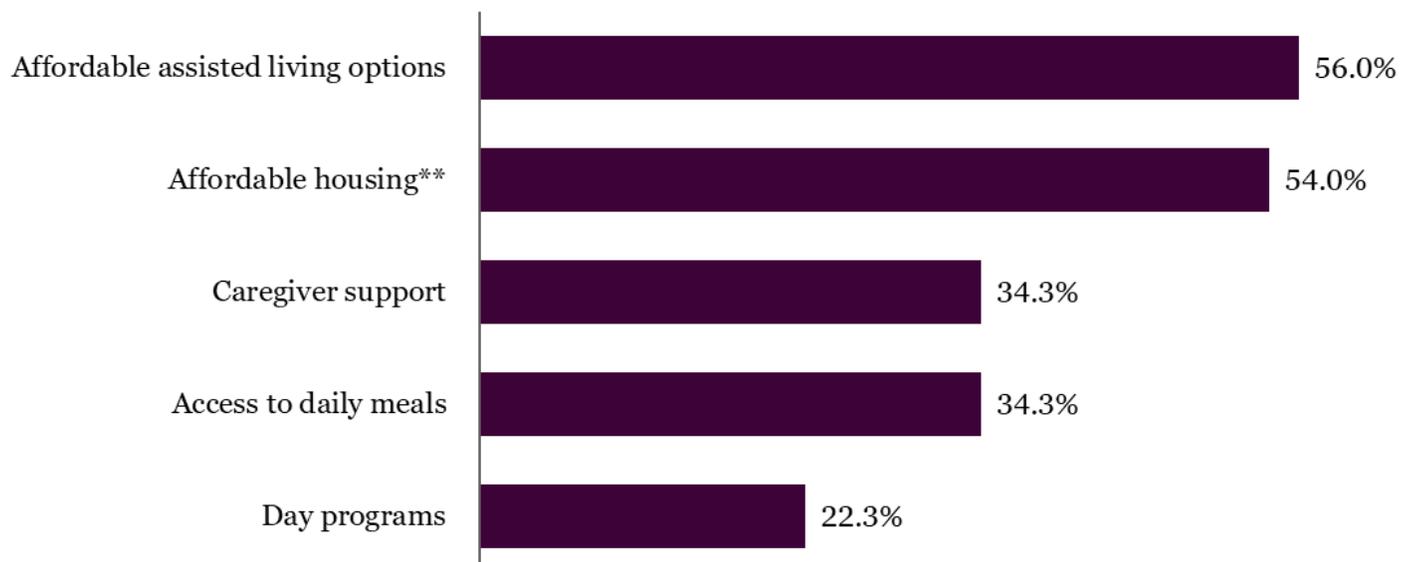
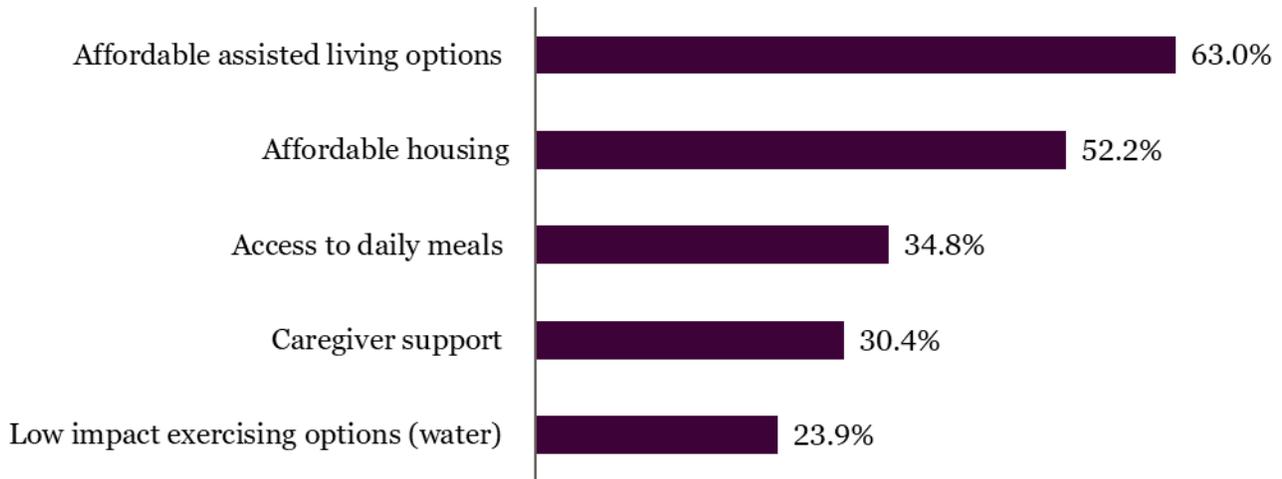


Figure 52: Top five priorities among seniors (N=46)

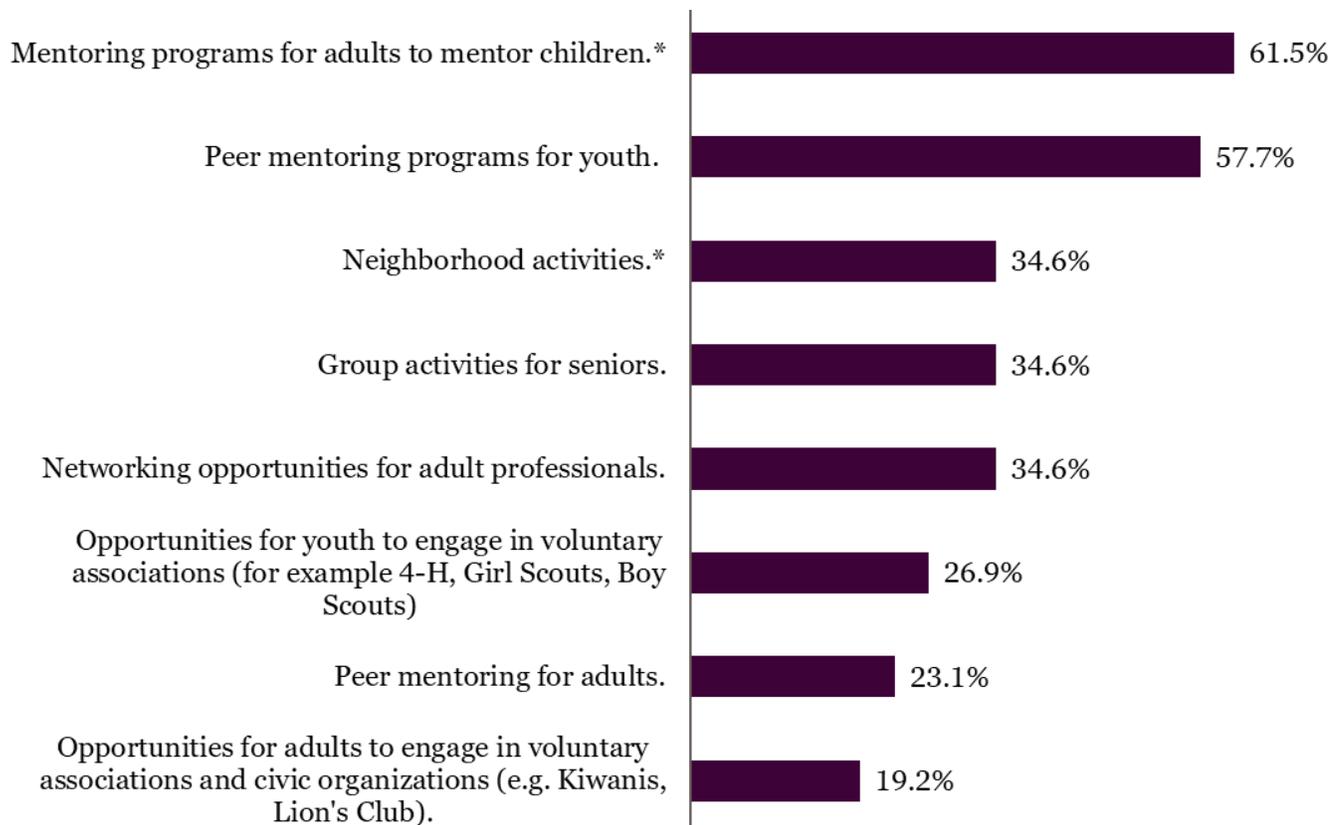


same with even stronger consensus around affordable assisted living, but the number five item is low-impact exercise options (water), rather than day programs (Figure 52). This issue came up in open-ended responses as well. The closure of the YMCA pool has eliminated a community resource important to senior health and wellness. Aquatic

exercise is low impact, easy on the joints, and adjustable to the speed and ability of the group.

In the list of overall quality of life/place items, 56.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “This is a good place to retire” (N=355). Among seniors, however, 80.0% agreed or strongly agreed that Scott

Figure 53: Priorities for Community Building, respondents 65 and over





County was a good place to retire and 20.0% disagreed. None of the elderly respondents who responded to the question strongly disagreed (N=50). One might speculate that among the elderly, those who thought it was not a good place to retire already left the area. Alternatively, there may be a cohort effect where those who are elderly now believe that Scott County is a good place to retire, but younger respondents are looking for something different. They may or may not come to see it as a good place to retire as they age.

When asked about priorities for community building, the senior respondents prioritized youth. Only 34.6% selected “Group activities for seniors” (Figure 53).

The group agrees however, that affordable housing and assisted living are issues for seniors in Scott County. Based on interview conversations, younger people are a bit unclear about what all is available, but those who are older or who have helped their parents look for a place to live are keenly aware of limitations. In a survey event discussion, one woman indicated that she feels she will need to leave the area in the next few years because she will need more readily accessible healthcare and a setting that requires less driving.

Forward Together

Like others, Scott County seniors prioritize a local focus on youth. Nevertheless, they also identify the need for more support for basic needs among the elderly. Ideas for improving quality of life and place for youth and the elderly will have important indirect benefits for the whole community.

- Establish more opportunities for youth to engage in recreation, healthy activities, and entertainment during non-school hours.
- Build on school-based theater and performing arts programs to establish a community arts center where high school kids can work with adults and younger kids to provide more arts performances, gallery shows, classes, and creative spaces in the community.
- Increase supply of housing to support seniors aging in place (include attention to walkability) and consider ways to encourage intergenerational interaction and opportunities for seniors to mentor, or at least befriend, young people.
- Expand affordable options for assisted living to accommodate the baby boomer cohort.
- Ensure that seniors have access to daily meals.
- Expand availability of respite support for those caring for seniors.



Quality of Place

“Quality of Place,” “Quality of Life,” and “Sustainability” are concepts used in planning, community and economic development, and public policy. Quality of Life tends to reflect physical, mental, and social well-being. Quality of Place studies often focus on factors in the external environment that contribute to quality of life.⁴⁸ Sustainability is a term used by developers to refer to the health of environmental, economic, and social systems. The factors used to measure these concepts exist in the interlocking systems described throughout this report. Historically, researchers observed that communities struggling economically focused first on quality of life—meeting basic needs for food, shelter, health, and education. When communities started to thrive, then they turned their attention to recreational, physical, and social amenities associated with quality of place. Today, researchers and community development experts recognize how intertwined all of these factors are and increasingly embrace the notion that investments in quality of place can and do improve and enhance quality of life. A local example for Scott County might be the recent addition of paved trails to promote physical recreation, health, and well-being.

The Forward Together Survey is all about the interconnected elements of sustainability, quality of life and place. A systems approach recognizes the relationships between amenities, health, social capital, and safety and how all of these relate

directly to each of the topics covered in the survey. Still, a series of questions on quality of life and place, and sections on public services and infrastructure, arts and creative expression, and community building provide a useful way to assess quality of life and place.

Among the overall quality of life and place items, 50% or more of respondents expressed positive sentiments in seven of the 14 areas (Figure 54). Responses confirm that elements of community and natural beauty are strong and a majority of people feel good about the schools, and think it is a good place to raise children. Consensus shifts to disagreement around issues of civic engagement, satisfaction with local government, economic opportunity, and satisfaction with healthcare. The greatest dissatisfaction is with available recreational opportunities. Respondents see too few options for recreation.



Figure 54: Quality of Life and Place in Scott County

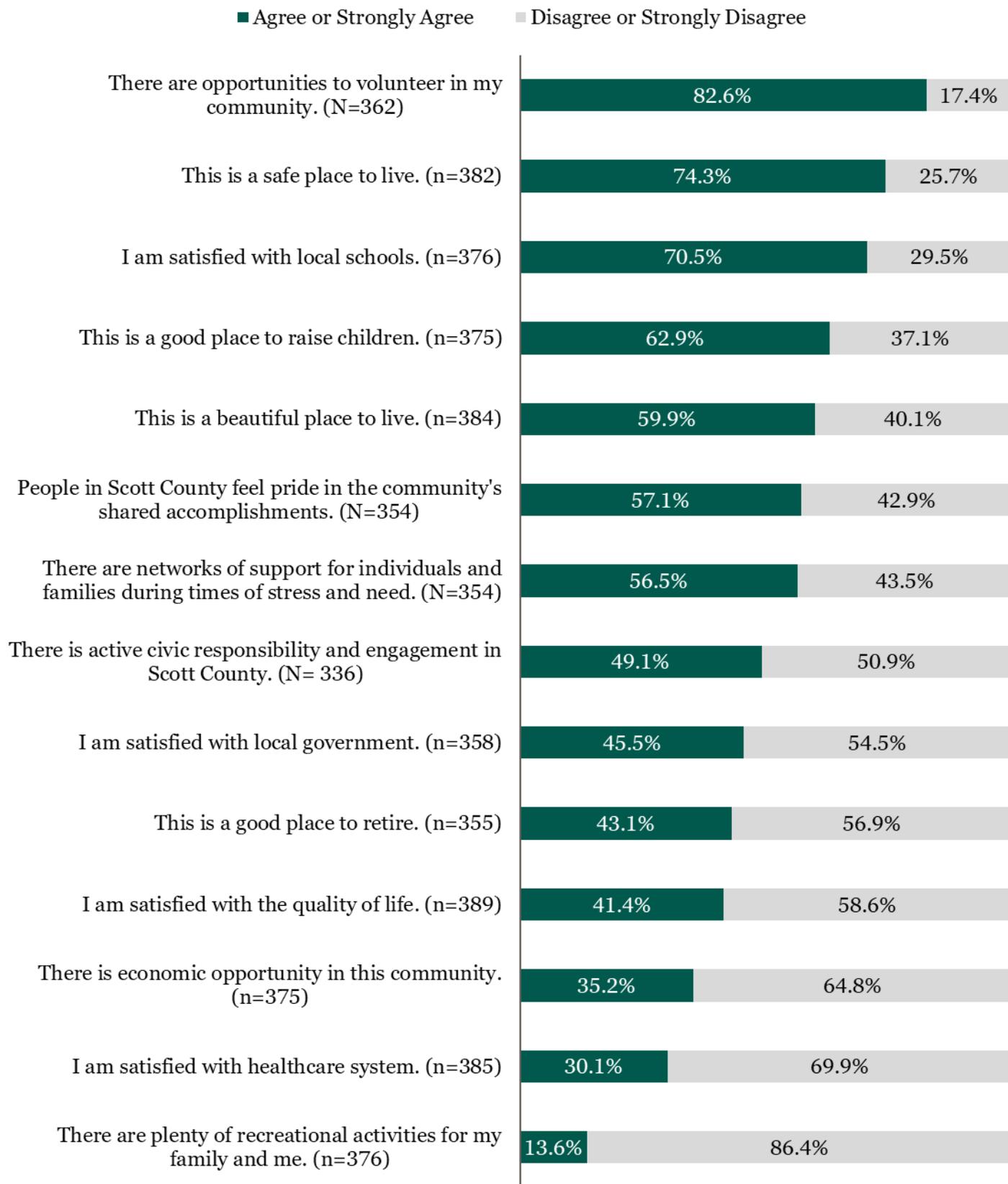
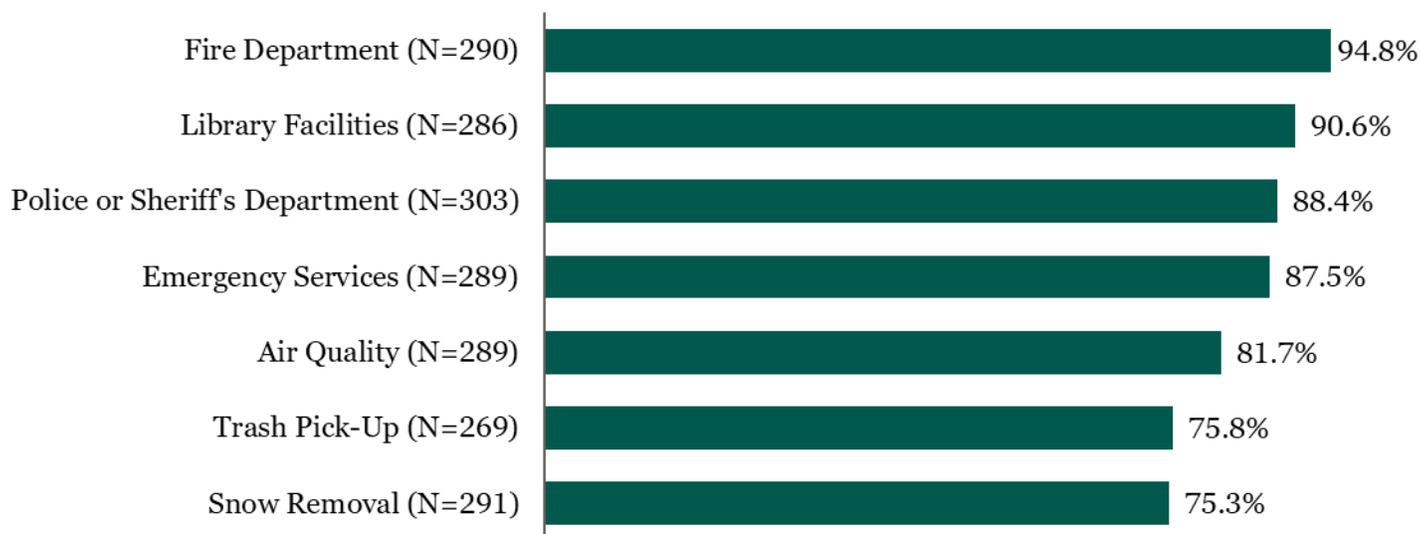


Figure 55: Percent of respondents who rate each public service as "good" or "excellent"



Public Service And Infrastructure

Scott County residents rate a wide range of public services as “good” or “excellent” (Figure 55). Strong social ties between community members and those who work in public service engender positive feelings. This small rural community is home to three public libraries! This is an enormous asset to the community, providing free access to information and public spaces for meetings and activities (including showcasing art and hosting cultural activities). The community also shares consensus on where they need to do better in the area of public service.

More than 50% of survey respondents rate the following public services as “poor” or “very poor”: code enforcement for private properties (70.7%), internet access (59.5%), road maintenance (59.0%), and crime prevention activities (58.9%).

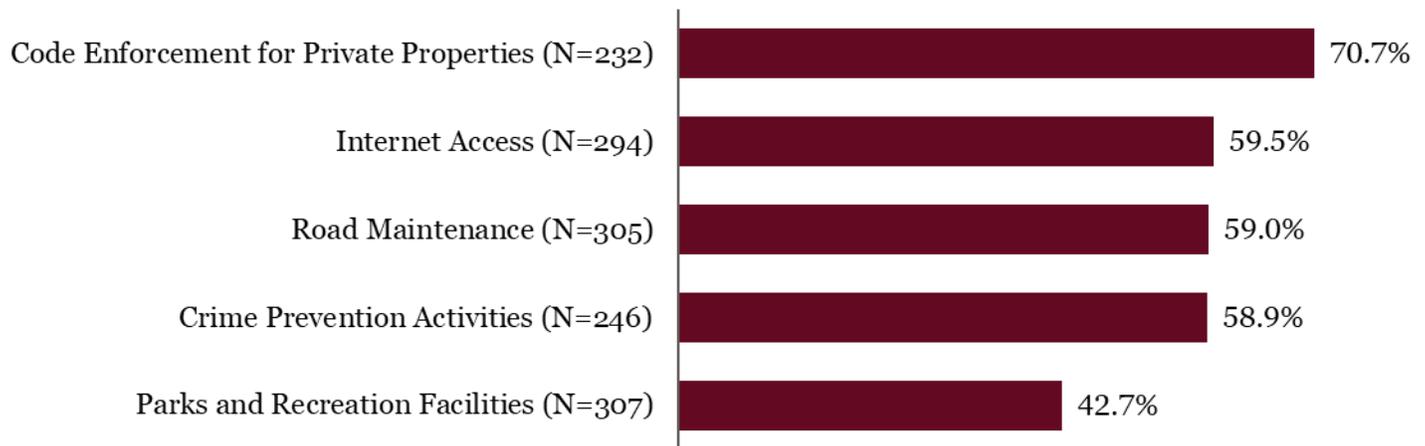
Code Enforcement for Private Properties

The highest level of disagreement was with “code enforcement for private properties.” As noted in the section on “Housing,” this is a place where the economic challenges of the community create an issue that needs attention. In interviews, we heard about two aspects to the code enforcement issue: 1) code enforcement for poorly kept rental properties and 2) code enforcement for poorly maintained owner occupied properties.

One interview respondent said, “I can’t believe what they charge in rent for places that I’m not sure people should even be living in. Too much of the housing is unsafe and that doesn’t help our residents stay healthy or be productive.” In other conversations, residents expressed frustration with the number of run down properties and wanted to see major neighborhood revitalization efforts. Community groups work to improve a handful of properties each year, but they also recognize their efforts are insufficient to solve the problem.

Lower income respondents indicate the need for assistance with home repair and maintenance. These responses suggest that community members across income levels recognize the same problem, but may see different paths to solving the problem. Code enforcement in the case of owners who rent their properties is likely an important step to improving the quality of housing. On the other hand, enforcing codes for home and property maintenance may place burdensome fines on families who would like to maintain their property better, but do not have the resources to do so. Addressing this issue will require bringing together public officials, property owners, and residents in struggling neighborhoods to develop strategies.

Figure 56: Percent that rate the public service "poor" or "very poor"

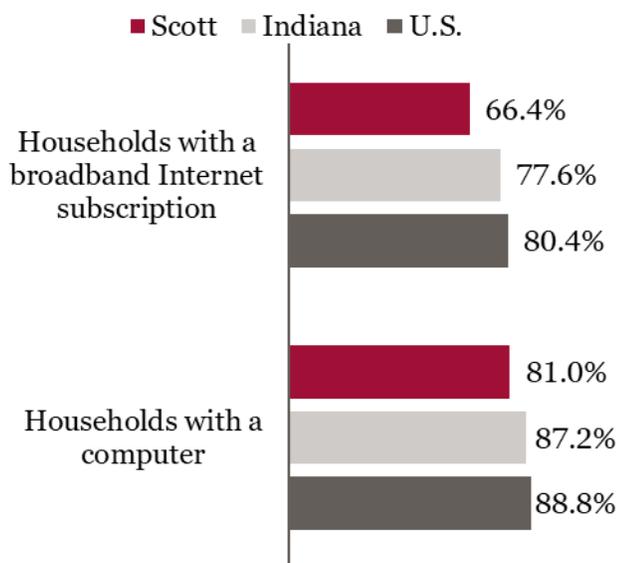


Internet

Interviews confirm the need to continue expanding broadband high-speed internet and finding ways to ensure that all residents can access it. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this need even more urgent. According to American Community Survey data, in the years from 2014 to

2018, an estimated 81.0% of residents had a computer in their household and a significantly lower 66.4% had a broadband internet subscription. Local leaders have worked to expand infrastructure to provide broadband, but the economic challenges in the community continue to hamper access. Internet and cell phone companies have expanded free access to some (students, for example) during the pandemic. Scott County, like communities all across the country, needs to find ways to continue free or very low cost access to internet.

Figure 57: Computer and internet access in Scott County, Indiana, and the U.S., 2014-2018



Roads

In interviews, several local leaders expressed the importance of road maintenance to attracting and building successful businesses, improving safety, and limiting damage to residents' vehicles. Respondents support these efforts and interviewees suggest this as an area where state and federal resources can play a significant role. Local roads present a greater struggle, but there are opportunities for rural communities to get needed support for these efforts.

Crime Prevention

A majority of respondents rated crime prevention activities as poor or very poor. In conversations, this issue became more complicated. The community is somewhat divided. Some believe the police need to do more to prevent the crime of drug use. Some suggested that recent



U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. "Quickfacts." American Community Survey 5-Year Data 2014-2018. Retrieved 08/13/2020 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/IN.scottcountyin diana.US/PST045219>.

efforts of the sheriff's department have made an important difference. Others believe law enforcement has a role to play in the community's response to drug use, but they question the impacts of a punitive approach. In one interview, a respondent suggested that jailing locals for drug use and sales is not a deterrent. For some, "when they go to jail, they meet up with family and friends." If those engaged in these activities already feel socially isolated from the community and have normalized movement in and out of the jail, this response may not produce any change in the pattern of behavior and does nothing to address the root of the behavior.



The challenge of addressing this reinforcing cycle of economic struggle, drug use, incarceration, difficulty gaining employment, and continued economic struggle is enormous. Law enforcement has a role to play and they must protect the community from violent offenders. But if the data from the health and wellness section of this study point to childhood trauma as a driver of community-wide challenges, then a different approach to nonviolent offenders struggling with substance use disorder may be essential to disrupting the feedback loop that is hindering education, employment, health, and wellness in Scott County.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

Residents of Scott County have mixed responses to questions about parks and recreation. People agree that the community needs more opportunities for recreation. Some point to the fact that the community has some very nice parks that sit largely unused. When parks host too little activity, they can become sites for problem activities.⁴⁹ This happened several years ago with a local park in Austin. The community cleaned up and refurbished parts of the park, but generating consistent use still poses challenges.

In a similar way, new trails provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. In many communities, simply building trails generates widespread use (they exemplify the "if you build it

they will come" philosophy). However, in a community that struggles with mental and physical health issues and where many families are just struggling to make ends meet, taking the step of getting out and using this resource is less likely. Physical activity has the capacity to improve mental and physical health, but problems in those same areas keep people from engaging such activities. Existing parks, trails, Hardy Lake, and local forests are strong assets that, when more fully activated, may be essential to promoting, achieving, and maintaining physical and mental health and wellness and meeting recreational and entertainment needs.

Transportation

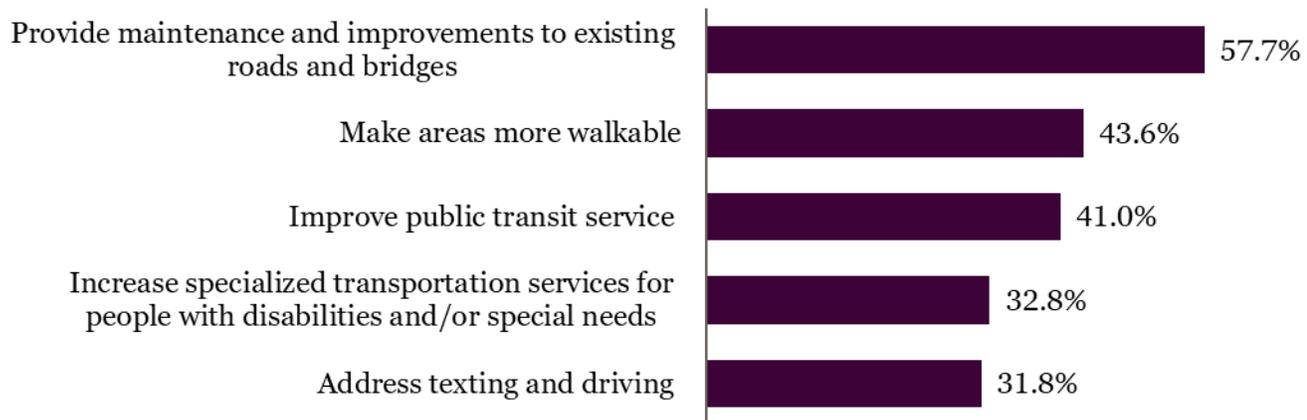
Transportation is a common challenge for rural communities. Asked to prioritize issues related to transportation, a majority of survey respondents placed road maintenance and improvements among their top priorities. The consensus dropped off after that. Transportation came up in comments across multiple topics (e.g. health, community building, employment) and was a topic of discussion in interviews.

I believe transportation is often a barrier for youth and adults to participate in our existing community building activities.

Need for more public transportation for the elderly that is widely available.

I had a family member that lived with us. We

Figure 58: Priorities for transportation (N=305)



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had great difficulty getting transportation to Dialysis that was 6 miles away.

Transportation is a major problem.

[T]ransportation to health appointments do[es] not help if there is no transportation for employment, groceries, and education [sic].

Needs to be professional vision/planning for transportation and growth in every way.

One person wrote in “Transportation” as a top five economic/personal finance priority. Conversations and comments suggest the community needs public transportation to support youth and adult engagement in community

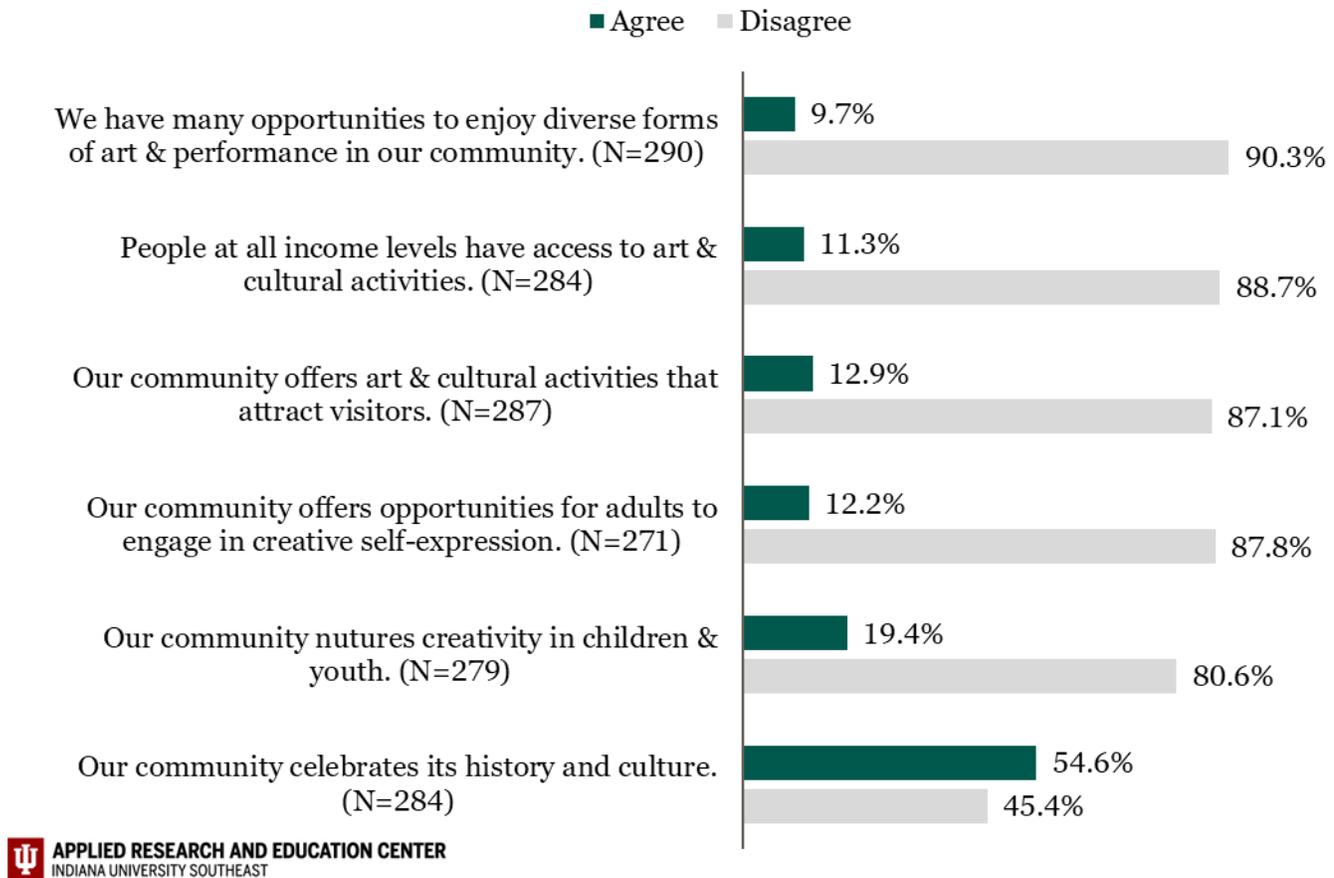


activities, employment, educational activities, recreation, and to support access to physical and mental health care. Local providers shared comments about the extent to which providing transportation has been essential to keeping people in treatment for substance use disorder and getting them to physical health appointments. Yet only 41.0% of respondents selected “improve public transit service” as a priority. People may not associate public transportation with rural communities or some may feel like they cannot improve what they do not have.

Public transportation is a challenge throughout the southern Indiana region and across the U.S. We have a few notable exceptions in major cities, but most of our communities are underserved. Public transportation will not pay for itself in fares.

Public subsidies to transportation, however, can produce savings in health, mental health, and unemployment, and can generate tax revenue as the result of higher and more stable employment. To the extent that public transportation can increase engagement in employment, educational activities, recreation, extracurricular activities and can support access to physical and mental health, it may be a significant leverage point for community and economic development in Scott County. In order for public transportation to achieve these goals, however, it has to be frequent and reliable, and it has to offer good coverage of the community. Achieving a system that meets these criteria requires significant funding and effective planning.

Figure 59: Agreement with statements about art and creative expression opportunities in the community



Art and Creative Self-Expression

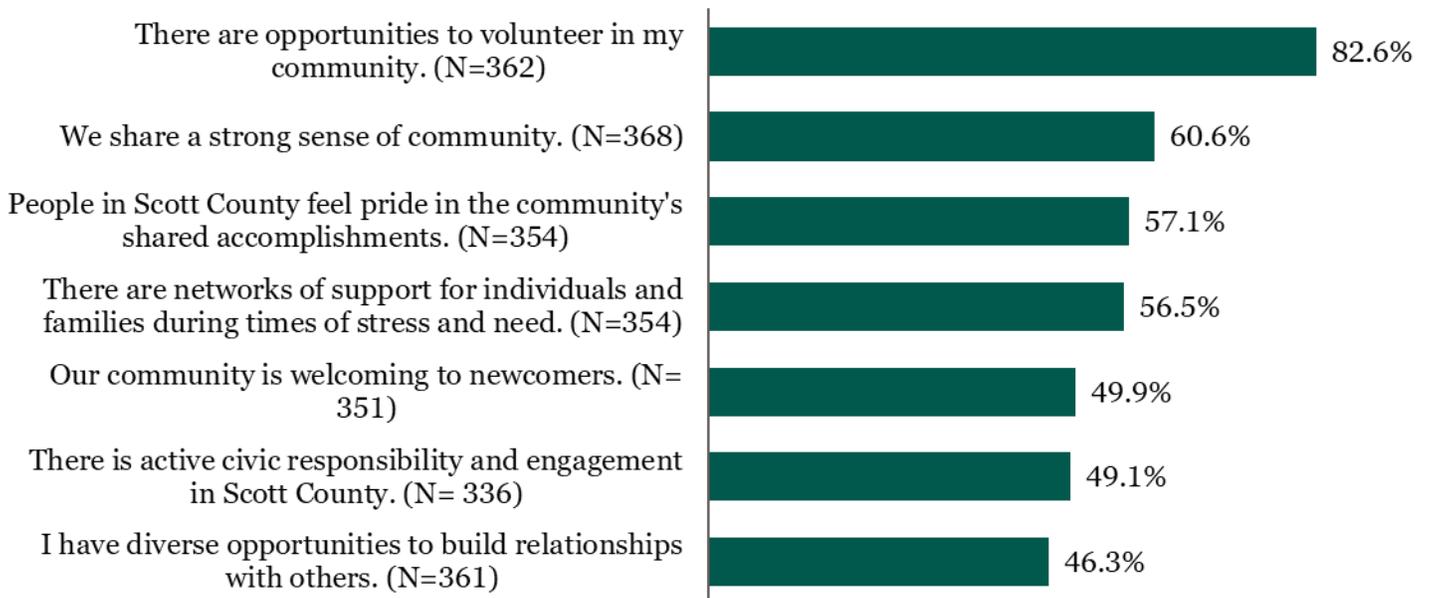
Art and creative self-expression can provide entertainment, but the benefits of thriving support for arts and creativity go far beyond entertainment. Nurturing creativity in children is essential to developing strong critical thinking and problem solving skills.⁵⁰ The arts are essential to nurturing entrepreneurship and innovation.⁵¹ Attending theater events helps open the eyes of youth to creative industry and career paths, but is also essential to teaching tolerance and perspective taking.⁵² Theater and fiction reading help people develop habits of thinking that allow them to better understand the experiences of others and to see issues and experiences through the eyes of people different from themselves. In addition to these vital functions for learning and building strong and welcoming communities, the arts enrich peoples' lives and bring pleasure to those who view, listen, or otherwise experience the arts.

Adults we spoke with mentioned that their only arts opportunities are through the schools—they

enjoy them, and recognize room for growth. Survey respondents shared overwhelming consensus that Scott County is lacking in the arts. Youth value the art and music programs in their schools and see the opportunity to build on what they have. They would like to see a more public venue for youth music and theater, as well as community productions. Youth envision opportunities for a multi-use space to house an e-sports arena that could provide entertainment for all ages. They also mentioned the need for Scott County to think more strategically about their ability to be a hub of entertainment for surrounding rural communities.

Lower income respondents are significantly more likely to perceive opportunities for arts, creative expression, and cultural activities. These findings likely reflect varied expectations. Higher income residents may be more likely to pursue arts entertainment and enjoyment in nearby Louisville, Columbus, or Indianapolis, giving them a different frame of reference than residents who do not travel to access art and cultural activities.

Figure 60: Social capital aspects of quality of place: percent who "agree" or "strongly agree"



Even with these significant differences, however, very few respondents see significant opportunities. The exception is in response to the item, “Our community celebrates its history and culture.” Among lower income respondents, 64.9% agree or strongly agree and 48.6% of higher income respondents agree. Celebration of local history and culture is not simply a cultural asset, but also builds a strong sense of community, which is Scott County’s greatest asset. These activities may be assets to build on in expanding arts and cultural opportunities.

Community Building and Social Capital

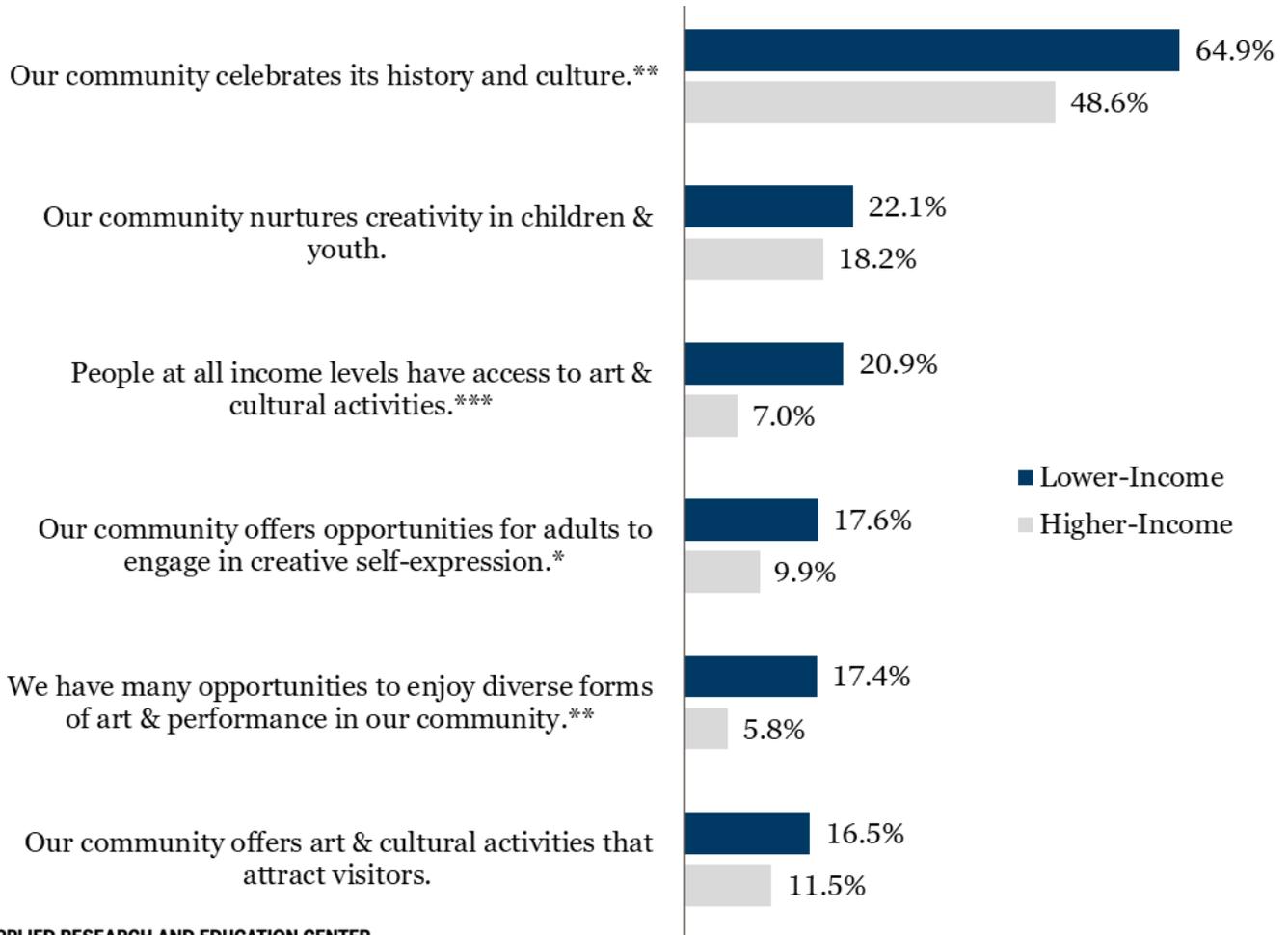
Scott County appears moderately strong in social capital, a key component of quality of place. A central theme running through this study, and embedded in perceptions of quality of life and place, is *community*. Community includes the extent to which people identify as part of an in-group as the result of living together in Scott County and the extent to which they draw strength and positive energy and association from their social interactions and relationships in this location. Healthy community and strong social capital provide this kind of belonging. *Social capital* refers to people’s relationships and personal networks, which, like financial capital,

function as an important resource for achieving certain ends.⁵³

The Forward Together community assessment found *social capital* and a strong sense of community to be Scott County’s greatest asset (Figure 60). The strength of a population’s social ties and their identification with their local community are important to quality of life and engender feelings associated with quality of place. These ties have the capacity to support children and youth in ways that nurture developmental assets that build resilience—a set of coping skills, outlooks, and attitudes that help people succeed in life and manage its challenges in healthy and constructive ways.

Social capital items on the survey had a strong consensus, but the findings reflect differences between lower and higher income respondents (Figure 61). A majority of higher income respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “People in Scott County feel pride in the community’s shared accomplishments,” but a marginally significant larger share of lower income respondents agreed. For the item “our community is welcoming to newcomers,” lower income respondents were significantly more likely to “agree” or “strongly agree” (66.7% compared to 55.6% for higher income respondents). In response to the statement, “There are networks of

Figure 61: Perceptions of social capital by income, percent that "agree" or "strongly agree"



support for individuals and families during times of stress and need,” there was a marginally significant difference between the groups, with lower income respondents less likely to agree. For many of these items, just over 50% agree. These are not overwhelming figures, but they reflect stronger consensus than many other items and they do so consistently across items measuring social capital.

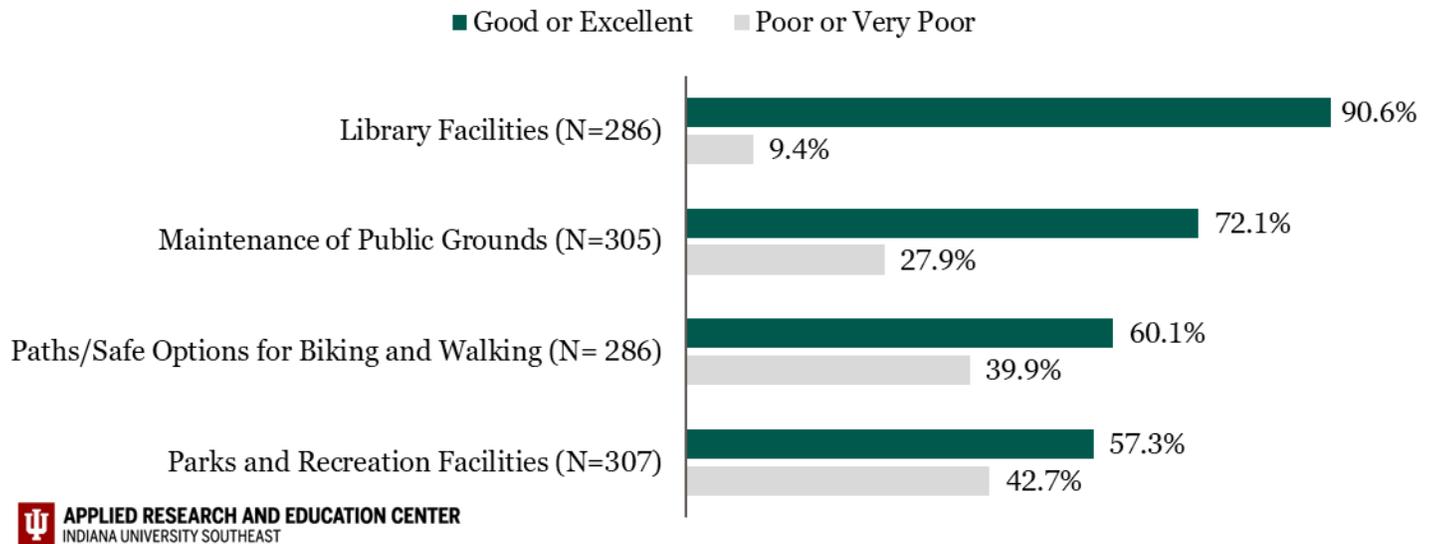
Close-knit communities with strong in-group identification can also engender challenging social dynamics for those who do not quite fit in or those the in-group chooses to exclude.⁵⁴ One group of young people at a survey event mentioned that it is difficult for teens who do not fit in or who do not feel like they fit in. When a community is tight knit with strong social capital, if one does something to place themselves outside of the in-group, feelings of isolation or rejection may be even more intense than in a community with weaker social ties.⁵⁵ Finding ways to decrease social isolation among those who may not always fit in is an important

step in building resilience and expanding community.

Efforts to build a strong recovery community are an example of residents using their social capital assets to engage people to address local challenges



Figure 62: Ratings of the quality of social infrastructure



and reintegrate people who may be experiencing isolation. The next step is to reduce stigma to reintegrate people in recovery into the larger community, not just the recovery community. These efforts are well underway in Scott County, and will need to continue.

In general, high levels of civic engagement engender higher levels of tolerance. The few exceptions tend to be in cases of more exclusionary voluntary associations and fundamentalist religious organizations. Like communities all across the United States, Scott County saw voluntary associations and social institutions decline along with strong manufacturing jobs and family wages.⁵⁶

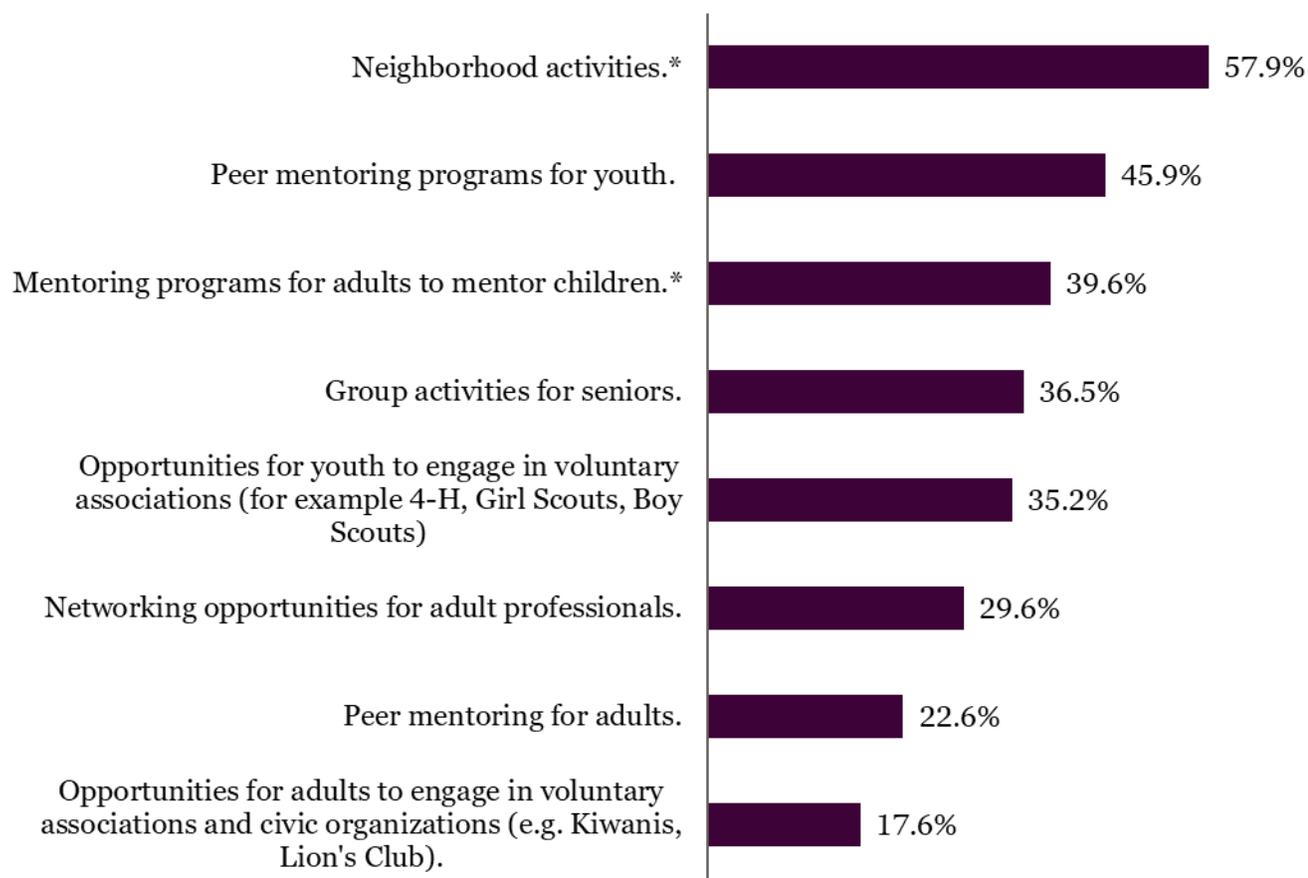
Respondents diverge, however, on perceptions of current civic engagement in Scott County. Our conversations suggest that while churches in the area remain active, attendance at other voluntary association meetings has declined.

Survey respondents split on the item, “There is active civic responsibility and engagement in Scott County.” As some pointed out in their comments, strengthening the community will require greater engagement. Community development efforts will need to create spaces for traditional and new forms of voluntary activity to flourish.

Social infrastructure refers to spaces and



Figure 63: Community building, percent that selected item as top three priority (N=159)



structures that facilitate social engagement.⁵⁷ A majority of respondents rated library facilities, public grounds maintenance, paths for biking and walking, and parks and recreation facilities “good” or “excellent” (Figure 62). In addition, the Finley Firehouse hosts a weekly Euchre night that the research team hears is a strong draw for a portion of the community. On the other end of the county, karaoke at Leroy’s is the Saturday night happening. Scott County has some strong social infrastructure, but many remain concerned about insufficient recreational opportunities and facilities. Survey and interview comments suggest that the area needs more of these spaces for varied activities and the transportation that would facilitate widespread use.

In a community where lower income residents may be juggling multiple part-time jobs whose schedules change weekly, and teens may be working to help pay the family’s bills, providing spaces for social activity and civic engagement will not necessarily generate widespread engagement.

Movement on education, health, housing, and employment, will be important to also creating the time, mental space, and discretionary income for stronger engagement, which will then feed back into progress in education, health, employment, and housing stability. The key is to try to determine what leverage points could build on existing strengths to shift areas of need in a positive direction.

The survey asked respondents to select three top priorities for community building (Figure 63). The majority agree that neighborhood activities should be a priority. About one-third of respondents included opportunities for youth to engage in voluntary associations and group activities for seniors among their priorities.

Mentoring programs and, in some cases neighborhood activities, can use the existing social infrastructure for events and engagement opportunities. Activation of these spaces, while building social connections at the individual and



neighborhood level, can help spur participation in other activities. Scott County has a number of hardworking and effective youth and adult voluntary organizations. The primary task is to expand participation, to reach those not currently participating. This is a challenge. Those who participate maintain social ties to one another and those who do not may feel and be isolated, or may have other personal barriers—anything from transportation to mental health challenges—that deplete motivation to engage.

Social capital and some aspects of community are among Scott County's greatest strengths, but concerns about health and mental health and relatively low employment ratios suggest that for those who are not feeling that strong sense of connection, there is room for growth. Stable health and housing are basic needs that can allow people to devote time and mental energy to social engagement. The schools present a hub from which activity spokes may emerge—youth we spoke with see real potential to build in the area of the arts and gaming. Among adults not connected to the schools, activating other public social spaces will be important to building community.

While community engagement and strong social ties do not eliminate all problems, they protect the community from far more significant damage when crises occur.⁵⁸ In 2015, Scott County was home to a substantial HIV outbreak. Strong social networks generated a quick and effective community response that included changes in health department policy, establishment of a one-stop treatment and needle exchange facility, and growth in support for and attention to the recovery community and all it could do to help heal and provide safe harbor to those struggling with substance use disorder. Strong social ties and positive regard for the community made this response possible.

The outbreak spurred action on economic and health concerns in other parts of the community as well. Re-energized support for the farmer's market and intentional efforts to engage long-term community and economic development planning reflect a strong commitment to generating positive cycles of health and development. When we asked interview respondents to map local assets, they had no trouble identifying community leaders they see as movers and shakers who can help lead this community into a strong future.

Forward Together

Quality of Place is about the community's shared resources and amenities, and about the social relationships they foster. Scott County's greatest strength is its people and their sense of connection to one another. Challenging times, however, create hardship and social isolation for many. Much of the community feels very close knit, but leaders recognize the need to engage community members in healthy activities, educational opportunities, and creative pursuits that build happier, healthier lives and a stronger community. Scott County can use its assets to address gaps and areas of need.

- Identify short and long-term strategies for preventing and responding to substance abuse and the crime engendered by use and an active drug trade.
- Use local libraries and public parks, in collaboration with schools and nonprofit

organizations, to support increased access to arts and cultural, physical, and civic activities.

- Work with state representatives, schools, healthcare providers, and local employers to develop a long-term strategy to develop public transportation that can effectively serve diverse needs in the community and can promote full use of the community's existing assets.
- Harness the energy of youth, and the adults who work with them in the schools, to nurture the arts in younger children through summer, school break, and after school programs, and draw in collaboration with area adults with interest and talent.⁵⁹
- Build on strong celebration of local history and culture, using local festivals to showcase new programs and recruit participation.
- Support & organize neighborhood activities that offer opportunities for fellowship, physical activity, and mentoring: tutoring, block parties, walking groups, sports and games.



Conclusions

Scott County is a community of people invested in one another, who embrace their shared history and culture, and who want to create greater opportunity for local people to thrive. The County boasts an attractive traditional Midwestern county seat town square, three public libraries, three high schools, a thriving robotics program, and substantial youth development programs from 4-H to Scouts, school sports, and theater. Hardy Lake State Park provides access to hiking, swimming, hunting, camping, and a beach and picnic area. The Mid-America Science Park provides 112,000 square feet of space that can be used for large events, educational programs, business incubation, and training in high-tech manufacturing. While residents recognize that civic engagement has waned, those who engage are committed to building a prosperous future for the community.

Like so many communities across the country, both rural and urban, economic restructuring hit Scott County hard. As the economy shifted away

from family wage manufacturing and farming, the area's low educational attainment presented significant challenges to economic progress and success. Stagnant and declining local purchasing power caused many businesses to shutter and unemployment and underemployment have eroded foundations for health, mental health, education, and innovation. Social isolation and economic challenges combine to provide fertile ground for depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, all of which make progress difficult.

Current data on Scott County in combination with perceptions of those who live, work and otherwise engage in Scott County can help the community identify key leverage points for generating progress across areas of need and activating positive cycles of growth and success. Identified assets, opportunities, and priorities suggest several areas for attention and investment.



Economy

- Provide high quality early care and education, as well as workforce training so that residents can fully engage the labor force, and attract and build living wage jobs.
- Identify and invest in opportunities to import revenue by attracting visitors.
- Support local small business development. Consider opportunities to focus on female entrepreneurs.
- Build housing that is safe and affordable at local wage levels.
- Engage smart, intentional, and sustainable development strategies that protect the natural resources and natural beauty of Scott County.

Health and Wellness

- Increase access to affordable, high quality, trauma informed mental health care is essential to interrupting the cycle of dysfunction and abuse that is producing negative physical and behavioral health outcomes.
- Increase access to affordable trauma informed physical health care and medications is vital to disease prevention and reducing self-medicating.
- Provide access to physical fitness activity and recreation to support good physical and mental health.

Education

- Develop public, business, and nonprofit partnerships to increase access to affordable high quality early care and education for all children under age 5.
- Increase support and encouragement for pursuing trade certificates.
- Create trauma informed schools where faculty and staff approach student behavior issues with an eye toward the possibility that such behaviors are the result of toxic stress.
- Seek out resources for more intensive in school and after school programs to support SCSD 1 youth engagement throughout their K-12 experience.
- Support strategies for attracting and keeping good teachers.
- Pursue resources to provide more opportunities to experience and pursue the arts in local schools.

Housing

- Ensure access to affordable, safe, high quality housing for people at all income levels in Scott County.
- Increase access to safe affordable housing that meets the support needs of the elderly.
- Replace and/or rehabilitate uninhabitable housing stock.
- Develop an intentional strategic sustainable development plan for new housing that protects the area's natural resources and amenities.

From Youth to Old Age

- Establish more opportunities for youth to engage in recreation, healthy activities, and entertainment during non-school hours.
- Build on school-based theater and performing arts programs to establish a community arts center where high school kids can work with adults and younger kids to provide more arts performances, gallery shows, classes, and creative spaces in the community.
- Increase supply of housing to support seniors aging in place (include attention to walkability) and consider ways to encourage intergenerational interaction and opportunities for seniors to mentor, or at least befriend, young people.

- Expand affordable options for assisted living to accommodate the baby boomer cohort.
- Ensure that seniors have access to daily meals.
- Expand availability of respite support for those caring for seniors.

Quality of Place

- Identify short and long-term strategies for preventing and responding to substance abuse and the crime engendered by use and an active drug trade.
- Use local libraries and public parks, in collaboration with schools and nonprofit organizations, to support increased access to arts and cultural, physical, and civic activities.
- Work with state representatives, schools, healthcare providers, and local employers to develop a long-term strategy to develop public transportation that can effectively serve diverse needs in the community and can promote full use of the community's existing assets.
- Harness the energy of youth, and the adults who work with them in the schools, to nurture the arts in younger children through summer, school break, and after school programs, and draw in collaboration with area adults with interest and talent.
- Build on strong celebration of local history and culture, using local festivals to showcase new programs and recruit participation.
- Support neighborhood activities that offer opportunities for fellowship, physical activity, and mentoring: tutoring, block parties, walking groups, sports and games.

“Get people together in committees to plan a strategy and make it all happen. Ask questions of yourselves. What kind of communities should Scottsburg, Austin, Scott County be? A mixture of business, industry, and residential or mostly residential? What should it offer and look like? Make it a 50-year plan.... Begin the job at square one. Start over..... Rebuild this community. Tear down the old, rotten homes in Scottsburg and Austin. Build better, affordable housing.”

- Public-private partnerships to bring more primary care physicians and behavioral health providers to Scott County (with clear plans for addressing the needs of the uninsured and underinsured).
- Pursue strategies to create a trauma informed community that can effectively prevent and mitigate the impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
 - Public, nonprofit, and business partnerships to invest in high quality early care and education for every child from birth to age five.
 - Increase safe housing supply across price points: tear down dilapidated housing and infill with new construction. Strategically add neighborhoods, taking care not to encroach too much on the natural assets of the County (local informants and survey respondents want a well-thought out plan).
- Engage public and private resources, build on school-based arts programs, and develop a community arts program that brings together people of all ages in spaces that foster creativity through visual and performing arts and activities.
- Public transportation (with plans and resources coming from all sectors) that facilitates engagement from youth to old age in education, recreation, health, and employment. In a rural community transportation is a major barrier to making full use of existing amenities and services. As one respondent noted, “Transportation to health appointments doesn’t help if there is no transportation for employment, groceries, *and education.*”

Finding Leverage

Taken together, the study suggests several leverage points for improving the foundations for economic growth, quality of life, quality of place, and sustainability.

Forward Together

APPENDIX A: METHODS

The Looking Forward Scott County committee used Lilly Endowment Gift VII planning grant funds to hire the IU Southeast Applied Research and Education Center (AREC) to conduct a community assessment with attention to and identifying key assets and challenges. The study triangulates objective public data, community perceptions of assets, priorities, and challenges, asset maps completed by locals identified as leaders or key informants, and interviews with those same local leaders and informants.

Dr. Melissa Fry conducted interviews with community members representing local government, law enforcement, social services, local business, and the faith community. Respondents first completed a community asset map, identifying community assets in the areas of education, employers and employment, food systems, health and wellness, housing, leadership, natural resources, political and public services, recreation, arts and culture, and social networks. Asset maps provided an opportunity for respondents to think about several aspects of the community before beginning the conversation (they functioned as a warm-up). Interviews lasted between 35 minutes and 2.5 hours. Respondents identified community assets and the challenges that may get in the way of fully realizing the potential of those assets. The team designed the interviews to provide an opportunity to learn more about how local leaders and engaged community members describe Scott County and think about its future. The findings from the interviews provide texture and context for the survey data that reached a far larger sample of the local population.

With findings from the interviews in mind, the AREC launched the Forward Together survey, making paper surveys available at Colwell's, Health Department Offices in Scottsburg and Austin, LeRoys, the Scott County Clearinghouse, the Scottsburg Bacala Senior Center, the Scottsburg, Austin, and Lexington Public Libraries, and the YMCA. The research team posted flyers that included a QR Code for accessing the online survey at the locations listed as well as the Scott County Partnership and the Java Station. In addition, the research team hosted survey events at the Finley Firehouse, Colwell's, LeRoys, and Grace Covenant

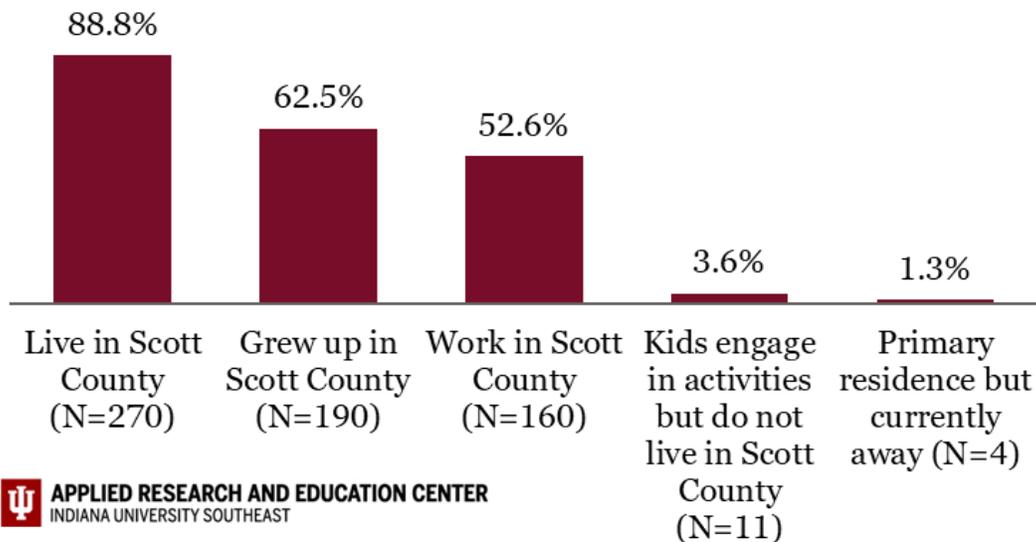
Church. At survey events, the research team took time to talk with people, sometimes one on one, but most often in small clusters of 2-4 with the researcher. At two events, we had larger group discussions with 6-8 people sharing ideas about the community's greatest assets, their hopes for the future, and what they see as the greatest challenges. In addition, the research team held group discussions with high school youth via Zoom (after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic). The primary researcher engaged 4-6 youth from each of the county's two high schools.

Community members completed 407 surveys. While 88.8% of respondents live in Scott County, only 47.4% live and work in Scott County (Figures 64 & 65), 41.4% live in Scott County, but work elsewhere, 5.3% live elsewhere, but work in Scott County and 5.9% neither live nor work in Scott County (Figure 65). Among respondents, 3.6% have kids who engage in activities in Scott County, but neither live nor work in the county, 1.3% claim Scott County as a primary residence, but are away at college or for military training or service. The majority of respondents live in the 47170 zip code (Scottsburg), with 47102 as a distant second (Austin).

The sample is skewed not just toward Scottsburg residents, but toward higher income (Figure 66) and education levels (Figure 67). People with higher levels of education and income are more likely to respond to surveys. In the case of a community assessment like this one, the nonresponse bias means the priorities, assets, and needs reported are from the perspective of those in the community with higher levels of income and education. Across income and education, the sample is skewed toward those more likely to engage (the survey took 20-30 minutes) and to believe that sharing their perceptions is important.

The sample does not include those who may struggle the most to get their needs met: people who are not visiting social service offices or public facilities, who may not have access to internet, and/or those who do not believe that sharing their perceptions will have any effect. With these limitations in mind, the research team will present

Figure 64: Respondents' relationships with Scott County (could select more than one) (N=304)



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some findings split between households earning less than \$50,000 per year and those earning more.

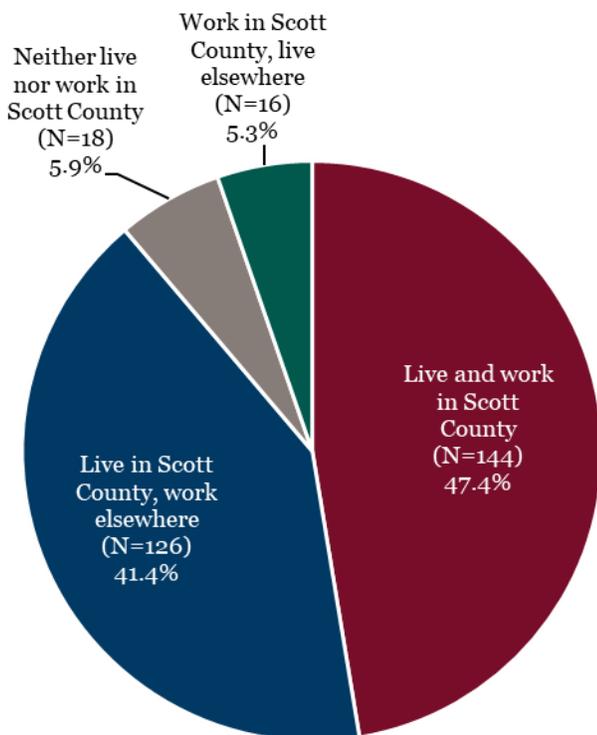
In order to examine possible differences between lower income respondents and higher income respondents, we created a variable that grouped the responses of those whose household income is less than \$50,000 annually and those

whose household income is \$50,000 or more. These groupings are what is possible based on our categorical income variable, but they also come fairly close to splitting the group at the median income of \$47,123.⁶⁰

When we compare income groups and those over age 65 to those younger, we use chi-square tests for statistical significance to tell us whether the difference in responses is likely to have happened by chance (not significant) or whether the difference suggests a strong correlation between income (or age for those where we looked at age) and the response provided. We included a single asterisk for those where the chance that the pattern is between five and 10 percent. Two asterisks indicates a less than five percent chance that the observed pattern is random, and three asterisks indicate a less than one percent chance that the pattern is random. In a few rare cases, we note a probably of only one in a thousand that the pattern is random.

The issues discussed here are real limitations of the sample. At the same time, the sample reflects the perceptions of those who are engaged in some way and are likely to engage in efforts to act on the findings and incorporate this knowledge into public and social service delivery, and economic development and business endeavors. Many respondents serve those who are underrepresented in the sample. Triangulating these survey findings with the public data that captures objective counts of key measures helps

Figure 65: Respondent residential or employment relationship with Scott County (N=304)



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Figure 66: Income distribution of respondents compared to the population of Scott County (N=296)⁶¹

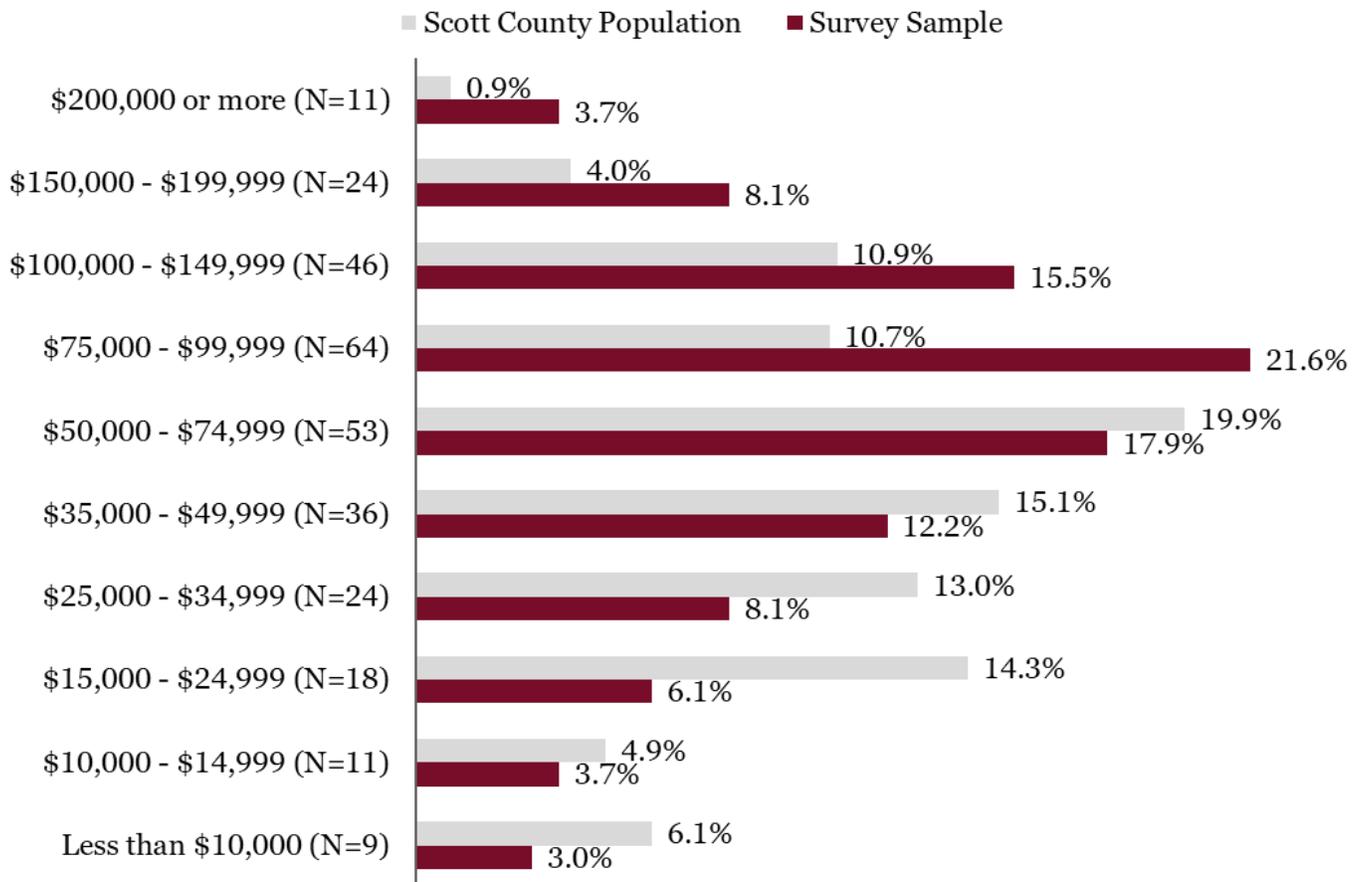
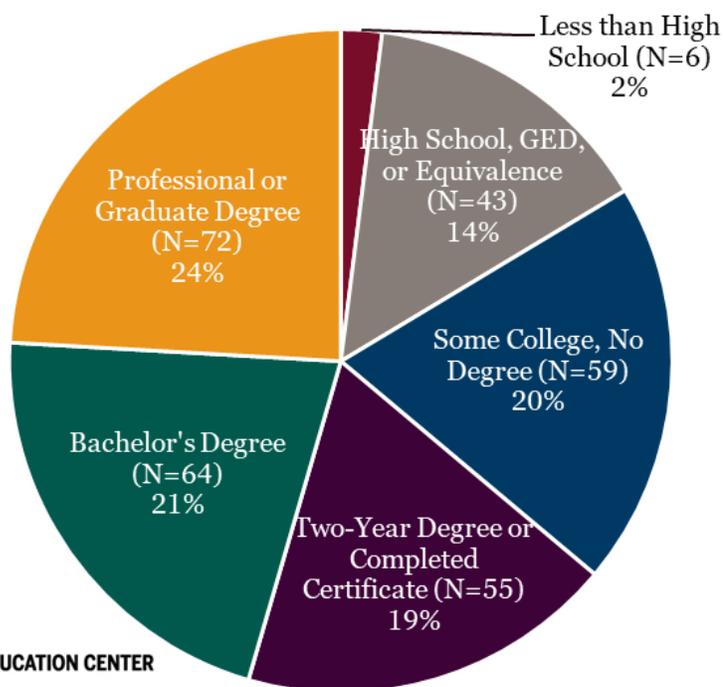


Figure 67: Educational Attainment of Survey Respondents (N=299)



to indicate places where this sample may be misunderstanding a particular social dynamic or economic reality.

In order to present findings on the full survey, the research team collapsed scaled responses into positive and negative sentiments (Strongly Agree combined with Agree; Strongly Disagree combined with Disagree; Excellent combined with Good; and Poor combined with Very Poor). This mutes some variability. In some instances, we have referenced the full frequencies to highlight important distinctions. Strategic planning efforts within particular areas of community action, should closely examine relevant frequencies.

Scaled items indicate areas of community strength or assets and areas where there is opportunity for improvement. Planning efforts

should include key stakeholders and actors who can provide specific information on systems to help identify specific bottlenecks and gaps to address. For each area, we provided a list of potential areas of concern, need, or priority and asked respondents to select three to five, depending on the length of the list. In some areas, respondents indicate very clear top priorities. In other areas, widespread need requires a closer look at how priorities might be related and where efforts may address more than one priority need through a single effort (these are leverage points).

The Survey data set combined with current public data on the state of community systems provides a baseline against which to measure progress and accomplishments.

APPENDIX B: SCOTT COUNTY ASSET MAP

Education

Schools, colleges, universities, training programs, libraries

- IUS/Ivy Tech/Hanover all close
- Two great libraries with recent endowments (Excellent library. Lexington has its own library – recent addition.)
- School Districts have consistently improved since 2001
- Scott 1-family atmosphere – small notables- huge benefits and resources
- Scott 2 – Some very strong professionals
- Mid-America Science Park – an asset with lots of training (Welding mentioned)
- Lexington Elementary – 4-star school, all grade schools excellent
- Two school systems with high expectations, available grants, cutting-edge opportunities, vocational certification
- Good effort to improve education (Elementary and High School)
- Vienna Finley Elementary School is a great addition to the county
- LifeLong Learning Center—High School Equivalency
- Austin H.S.
- Scottsburg H.S.
- Prosser Program
- Scottsburg Middle School

Employers & Employment

Businesses, non-profits, service providers, & other places of employment

- A lot of good jobs, lots of jobs available now
- Some employers working to support people in recovery/people with felony records
- Access to jobs in Southern Indiana population centers, Louisville, and Columbus
- Morgan's
- Samtec
- Tri Hawk
- Multi-Color
- American Plastic Molding Corporation
- government jobs

- Goat Milk Stuff

Food Systems

Farms & farmers, food pantries, farmers markets, agriculture organizations

- Farmers' Market April – Oct. – can use EBT.
- Farms – corn, soybeans, cattle.
- Clearinghouse. Clearinghouse provides transportation.
- Church pantries.
- Homeless Coalition Food Boxes.
- Lots of resources, but not necessarily high quality.
- Gleaners mobile pantries Gleaners mobile pantries 1x per month. Senior Citizen 16/mos.
- Goat Milk Stuff
- Local farm stands
- FFA

Health & Wellness

Hospitals, clinics, mental health & wellness providers & programs

- Scott Memorial Hospital (noted as asset, but with comment on the fact that it is for profit)
- Dr. Cook and Dr. H.
- LifeSpring
- Centerstone
- Home healthcare boom, but struggle to find employees.
- Ohio Valley Opportunities (OVO)
- Health Dept. – seems on top of things – very busy lately with drugs and AIDS
- Scottsburg VA is great.
- Schneck Family Care
- Numerous doctors
- CEASe programs.

Housing

Houses, trailers, assisted living facilities, apartments & retirement communities

- Just right amount of nursing homes and assisted living.
- Historically, affordable land and housing. People who bought 10 years ago are seeing values increase.
- Numerous apartments
- Five or more trailer parks
- Housing for retired folks

- Many rentals.
- Note: more than one responded: Not an Asset – Need housing at all levels – young professional types and middle class do not move here because of housing.

Leadership

Leaders (those with formal titles) and community “movers & shakers”

- Good “movers and shakers”
- Recovery community leaders
- A lot of great people in government.
- Older crowd.
- LeRoy Williams.
- Jaime Toppe of Community Foundation; Jaime Toppe is an outstanding community leader (two separate comments on this).
- Bill Graham
- Jene Bridgewater
- John Lizenby
- Chuck Rose
- Mark Slaten.

Natural Resources

Land, water, air, minerals, their availability, use & quality

- Air quality is good (note: individual indicated it is not as good as before—manufacturing is having an impact)
- Hardy Lake crown jewel.
- Excellent State Park (full most weekends.)
- Excellent fishing and hunting (probably attract others, but mostly used by locals).
- Parks, lakes, walking trail. Golf course.

Political & Public Services

Governmental entities, utilities, roads, public transport, broadband

- Have broadband
- Basic utilities
- Syringe exchange
- Road conditions improving – more than last 10 years
- Caring people
- Trustee office
- Both mayors
- Clearing house
- D.C.5

Recreation, Arts & Culture

Arts venues, festivals, traditions, parks, trails & destinations

- Youth sports are big and expanding

- Walking trails
- Parks
- Heritage museum and fair
- Festivals April – Oct (older crowd).
- Lake
- Bike trails
- YMCA
- 4H
- School sports
- Youth programs
- (Noted: multiple people said not much in arts and culture)

Social Networks

Social & volunteer organizations, churches, clubs, newspapers & media

- SC full of people that help others (even if limited), generosity of the people
- Radio
- Facebook
- Lots of churches – church life very important to those involved
- Older people in civic groups – Kiwanis – only 10-12 weekly
- Ball teams – parents
- Older folks volunteer
- Established families
- Sense of old school ways in terms of community. Spontaneous fundraisers – suspects this will end in next year or 2
- Many churches and programs, religion = discipline.
- Youth Grant Making Council.
- 4H programs.
- Community Foundation
- Lexington Presbyterian Church buys Lexington Elementary School supplies and shoes, Aaron Flucke Preacher.
- VFW – vets program
- Moose
- American Legion
- Kiwanis
- Lions Club
- School clubs

APPENDIX C: COMPARISONS TO SURROUNDING COUNTIES

FOR SELECT INDICATORS

Economy

Figure 68: Median Household Income

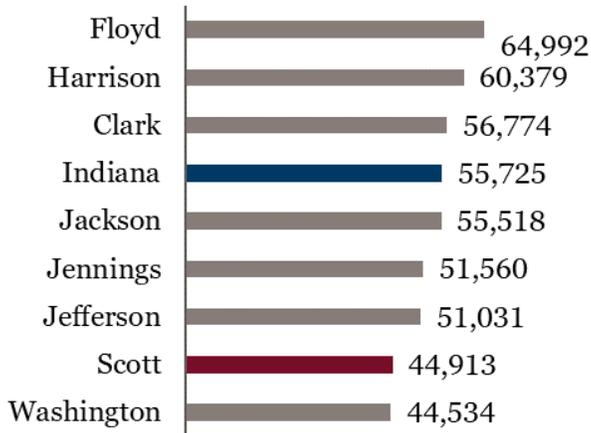
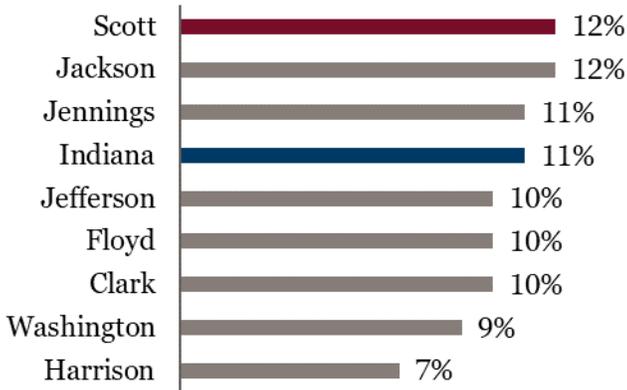


Figure 69: Percent with Severe Cost Burden



Severe cost burden means a household spends 50% or more of monthly income on housing and utilities.

Health in Scott County

Figure 70: Percent of Adult Smokers

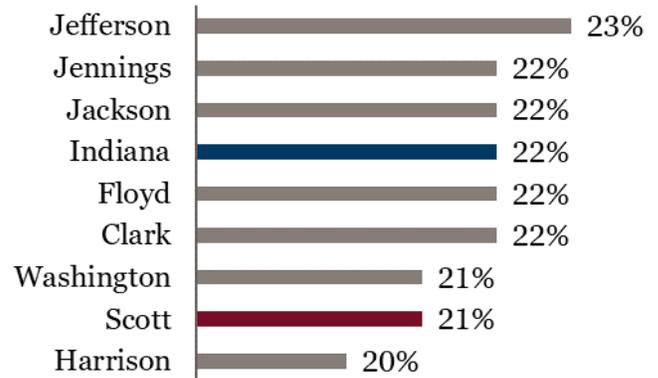


Figure 71: Percent of Adults with Obesity

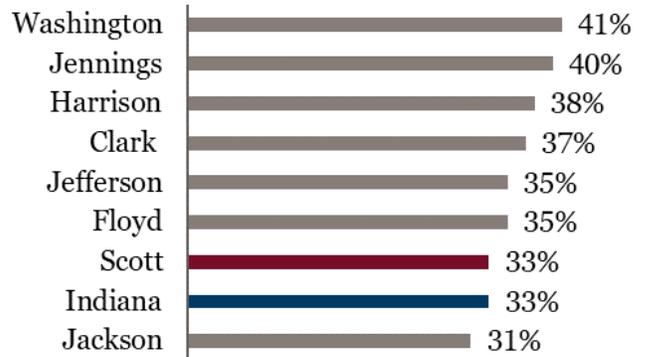


Figure 72: Percent Physically Inactive

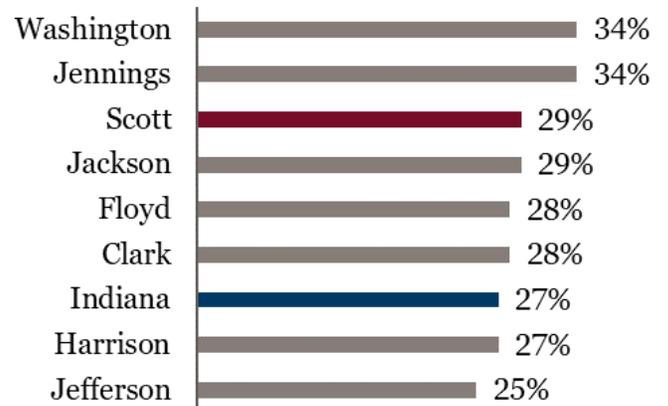


Figure 73: Number of Drug Overdose Mortality Rate per 100,000

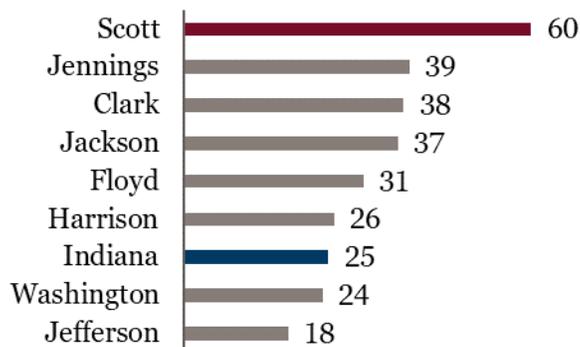


Figure 74: Teen Birth Rate per 1,000 Females

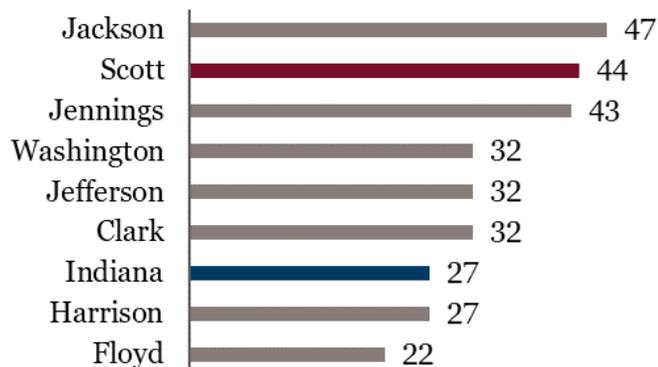


Figure 75: Life Expectancy (Years)

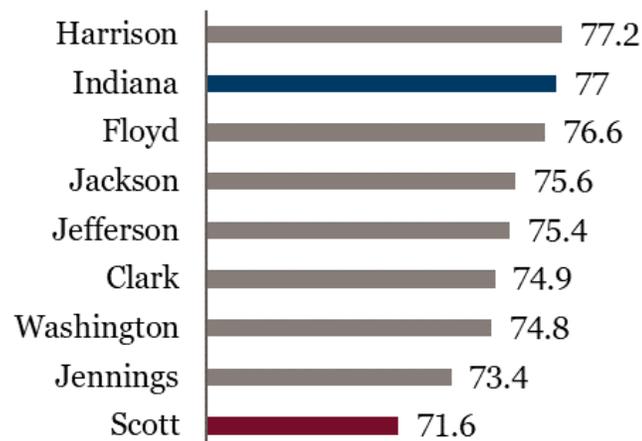
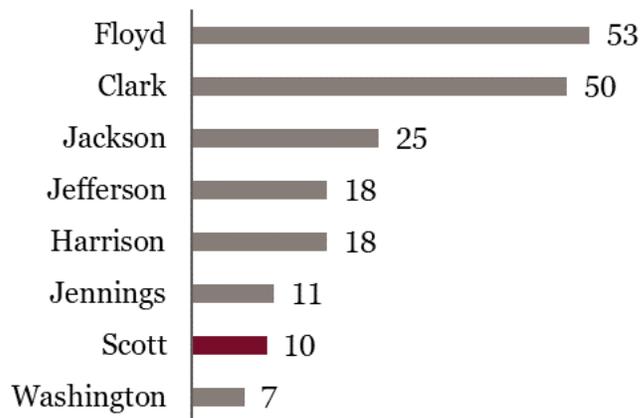
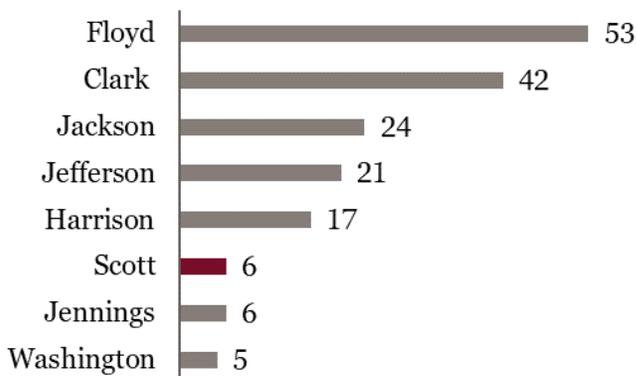


Figure 76: Number of Primary Care Physicians



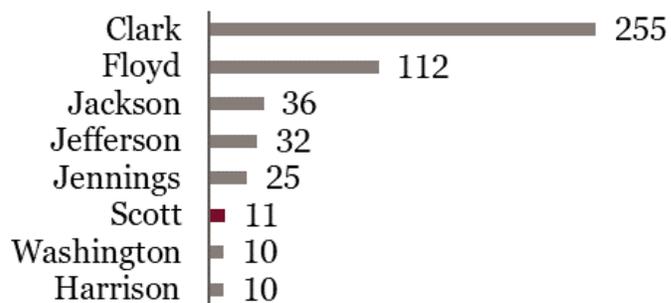
For primary care physicians, in Scott County there are 2,390 residents per one primary care physician. For Indiana, the ratio of primary care physicians is 1,510 residents per one primary care physicians.

Figure 77: Number of Dentists



The dentist ratio for Scott County is 3,980 residents to one dentist. In Indiana the ratio is 1,780 residents to

Figure 78: Number of Mental Health Providers



In Scott County there are 2,170 residents for every one mental health provider. For Indiana, the ratio for mental health providers is 620 residents per one mental health provider.

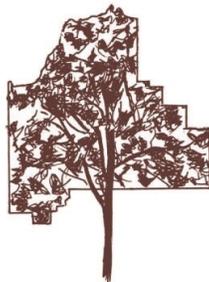
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