



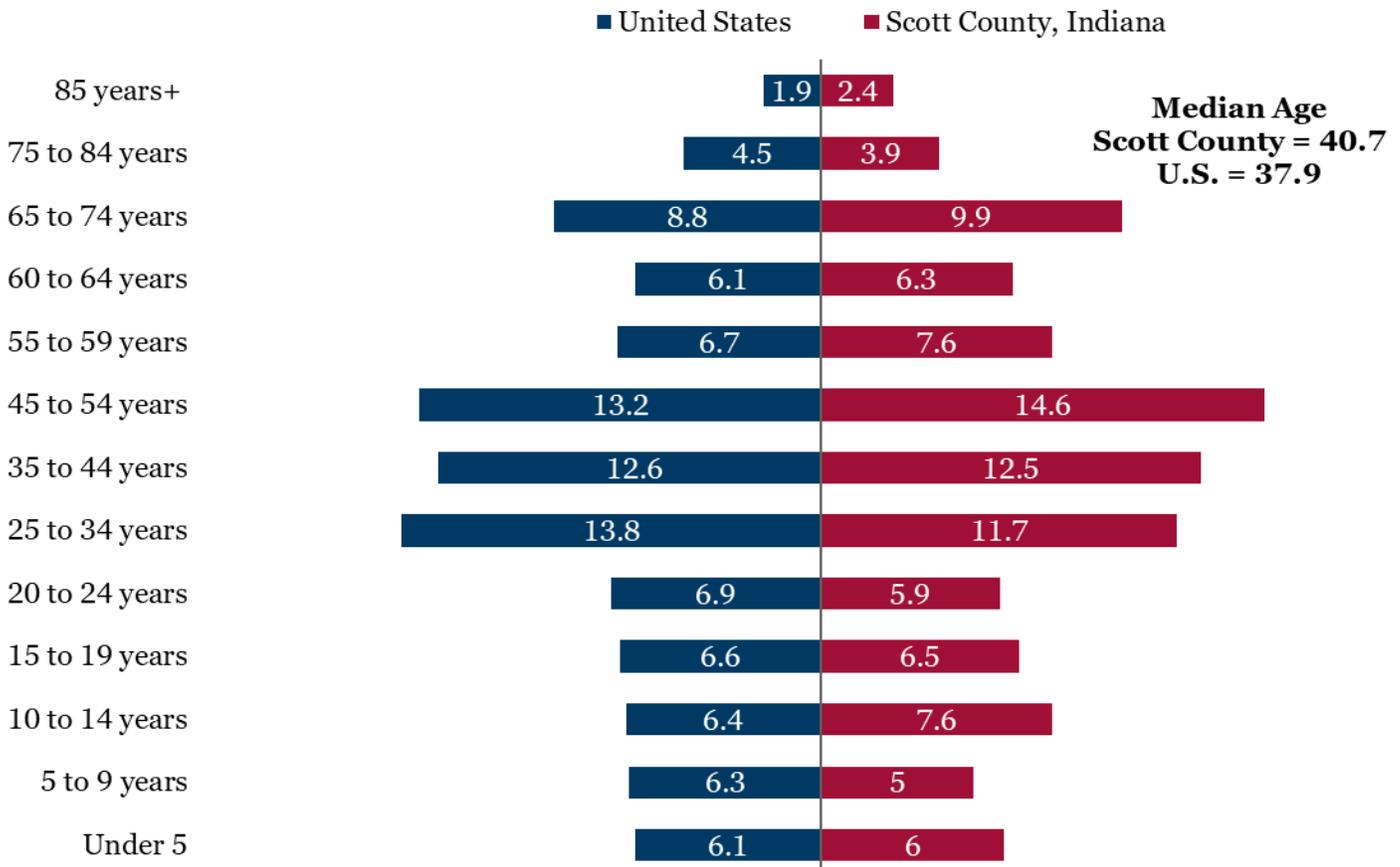
# Overview

Scott County is home to an estimated 23,928 people.<sup>11</sup> 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.).<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.

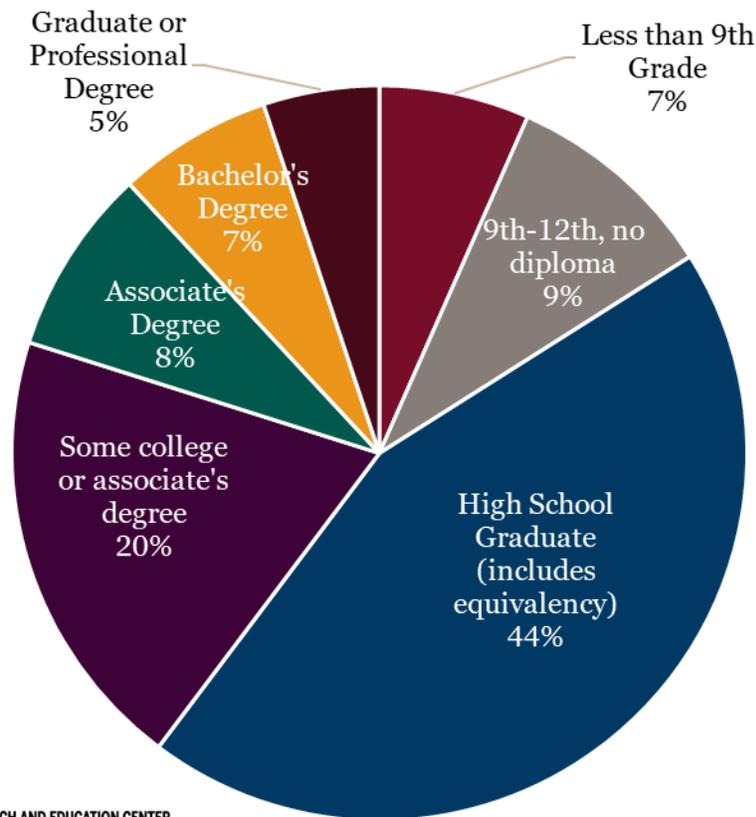
The County sits 30 miles north of Louisville, Kentucky, 110 miles west of Cincinnati, and about

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](http://www.data.census.gov).

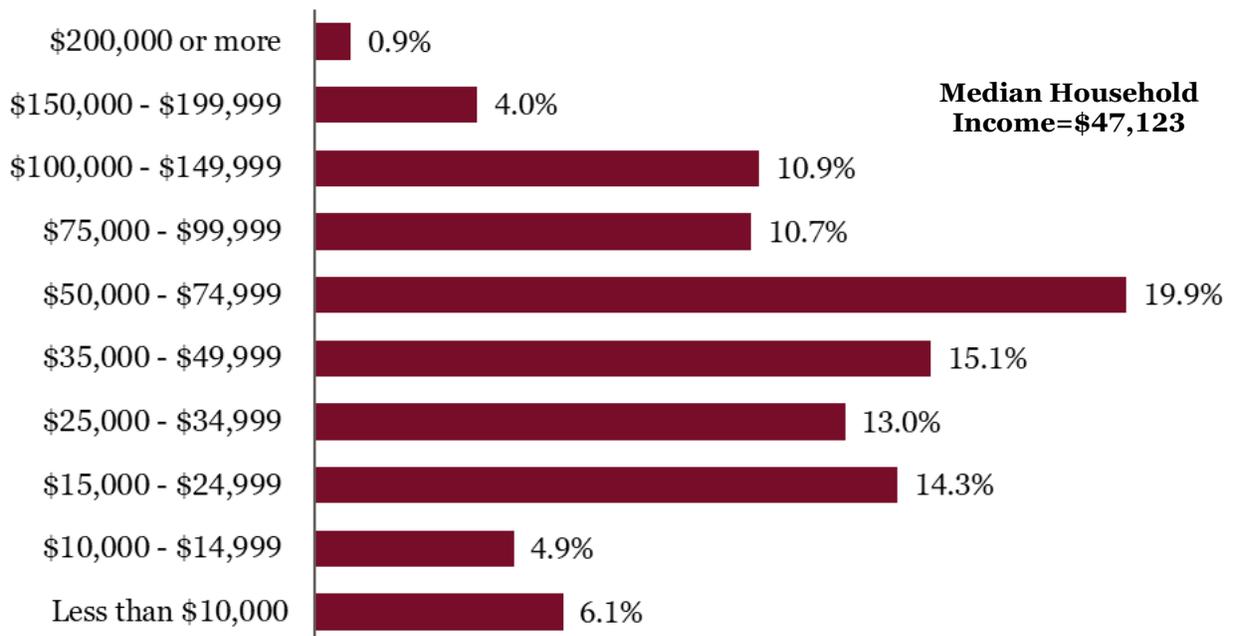
Figure 2: Scott County Educational Attainment



APPLIED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST

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



APPLIED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST

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.

The people of Scott County care deeply for their

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



community. Conversations at survey events and interviews, as well as comments on the Forward Together Survey, reflect a 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

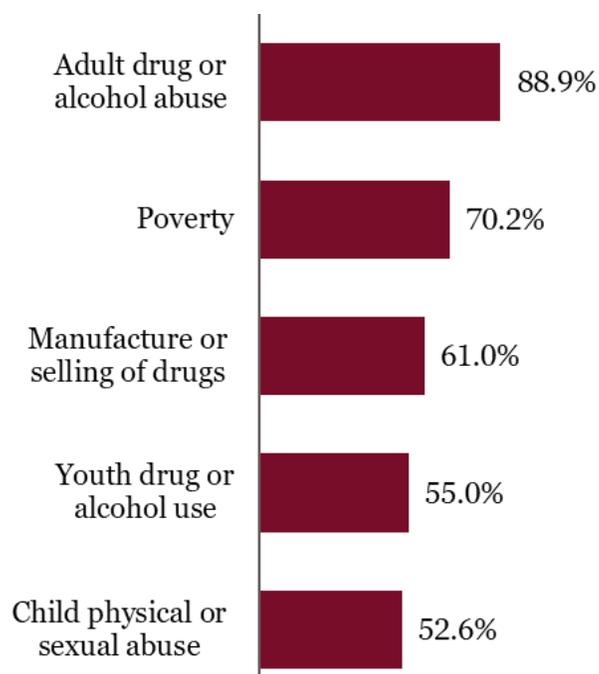
According to those who live here, Scott County’s greatest asset is its people: their compassion for one another and their dedication to the community. “Scott County is full of people that help others. Even if they don’t have much, the generosity of the people [is an asset].” The people we spoke with 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.

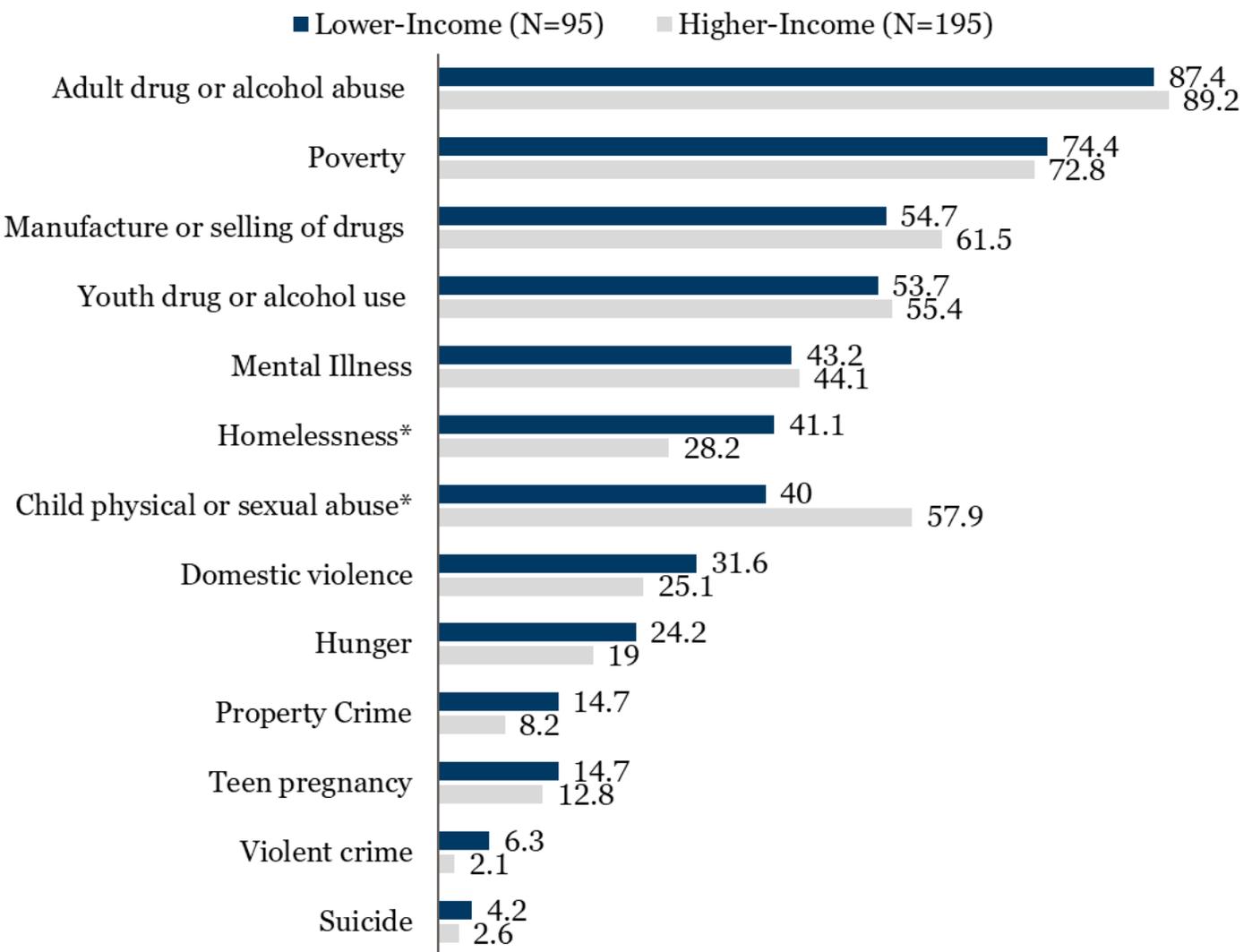
Scott County residents support one another and support their local schools.

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):

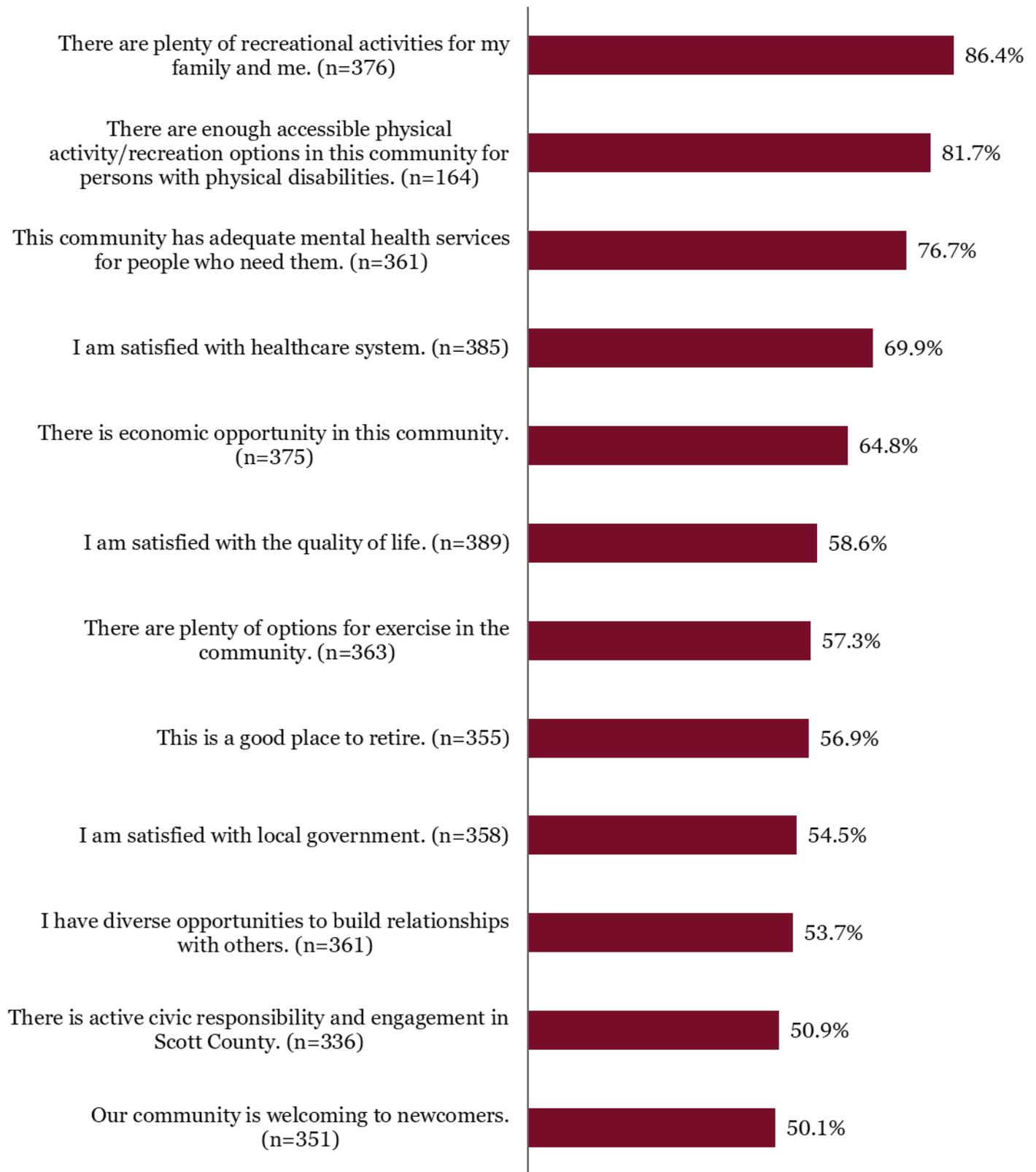
- Adult drug or alcohol abuse (88.9%, n=371)
- Prevention of youth drug or alcohol use (80.3%, N=320)
- Trade Certificates (74.3%, N=311)
- Getting and keeping good teachers (74.3%, N=313)
- Children's mental health services (60.0%, N=325)

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.

