

“ [Housing is] expensive everywhere.”

“

Social Security is insufficient to meet our needs.”

“ For a small town, we are amazing.”

INSIGHTS

FROM

RESIDENTS

VILLAGE OF
Akron
AND TOWN OF
Newstead

JANUARY 2020



**Numbers
in Need**

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



A Mobile Safety Net Team
initiative established by
The John R. Oishei Foundation



Prepared by  University at Buffalo
Regional Institute
School of Architecture and Planning

Village of Akron and Town of Newstead

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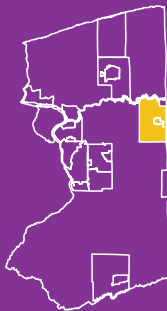
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Numbers In Need is an initiative designed to strengthen the safety-net of human services in Buffalo Niagara communities that are most in need.

Visit NumbersInNeed.org

About this Report

This report offers a snapshot of findings for the Village of Akron and Town of Newstead, with new data on the community's population that lives in or near poverty. It includes stories of individuals in need and perspectives from residents captured through surveys and conversations.

Research in this report was led by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute in partnership with the Mobile Safety-Net Team. It was commissioned by The John R. Oishei Foundation. This work updates and expands upon a community report completed by the research team in 2014.

A Mobile Safety Net Team initiative established by The John R. Oishei Foundation



Prepared by  University at Buffalo Regional Institute School of Architecture and Planning

Defining Need

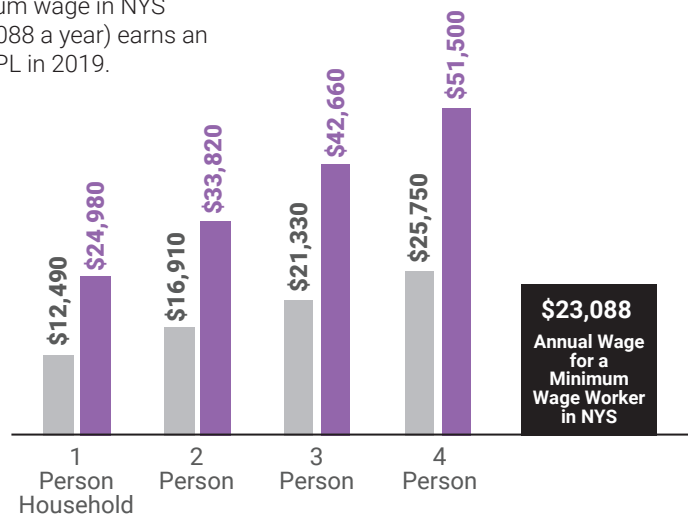
More than 1,640 residents in the Village of Akron and Town of Newstead (Akron-Newstead) live in or near poverty with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line.

The federal poverty line (FPL) is \$12,490 for a household of one, \$16,910 for a two-person household, \$21,330 for a family of three, and \$25,750, for a family of four. A single parent of two who works full time, year round at the minimum wage in NYS (\$11.10 per hour or \$23,088 a year) earns an income just above the FPL in 2019.

The FPL is adjusted annually by the federal government and varies by household size. It is often used to determine eligibility for programs that assist individuals and families with basic living expenses such as food, utilities, and rental housing. Households with incomes that exceed 200% of the FPL (up to \$51,500 for a family of four) generally do not meet income guidelines for most programs.

Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2019

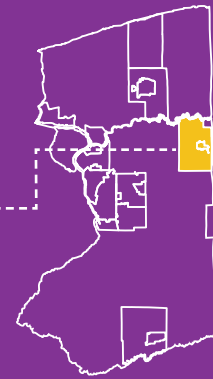
■ Federal Poverty Level ■ 200% of Federal Poverty Level



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Reports for this Community

This report is part of a comprehensive suite of reports for the **Village of Akron and Town of Newstead**, one of 12 representative communities in the Buffalo Niagara Region selected for assessment and investment as part of the Numbers in Need project.

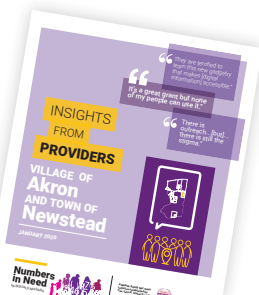


Each of these reports for this community is available online at NumbersInNeed.org



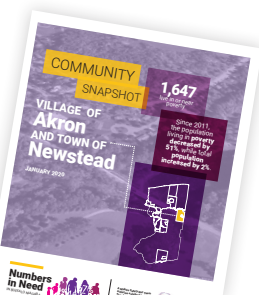
Insights from Residents

This report, *Insights from Residents*, presents a more detailed look at the community's vulnerable populations, their needs, urgent concerns, and barriers to programs and services. A survey of residents and conversations with residents inform findings in this report. Agency and community leaders can use this document as they develop programs and services that respond to the needs of residents and remove barriers to jobs, programs and services faced by residents.



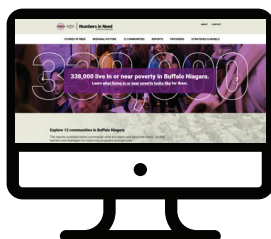
Insights from Providers

Insights from Providers explores the perspectives of service providers in the community with respect to gaps in the landscape of services, barriers to reaching residents, promising developments, and strategies for strengthening the landscape of programs and services. A focus group with agency leaders informed the findings presented in this document. Agency and community leaders can use this report to shape programs and services that respond to identified gaps and barriers, while leveraging system strengths and promising developments.



Community Snapshot

Community Snapshot presents an overview of findings from the research in this community, with new data and information on the people living in or near poverty, their barriers to programs and services, the landscape of service providers, and strategies for strengthening the community so that all residents can thrive economically. This report draws from more detailed findings available on the Numbers in Need website, as well as from Insights from Residents and Insights from Providers. Agency and community leaders can use this report to understand key findings and identify topics for further exploring.



Visit us online at NumbersInNeed.org

NumbersInNeed.org is an online tool that leaders can use to understand economically vulnerable populations in the Buffalo Niagara Region, their urgent needs and concerns, barriers to services and factors that matter such as access to good paying jobs, educational attainment, and transportation options. The website features individual stories, community and regional indicators, interactive lists and maps of service providers, strategies for strengthening communities and models to consider.

About the Resident Survey and Conversations

Exactly 100 residents from the community completed a two-page, 28-question survey over a two-month period in the summer of 2019.

To ensure that input was representative of community members living in or near poverty, surveys were conducted at eight locations in the community. Surveys completed in other communities by residents living in ZIP Codes in Akron-Newstead were also included.

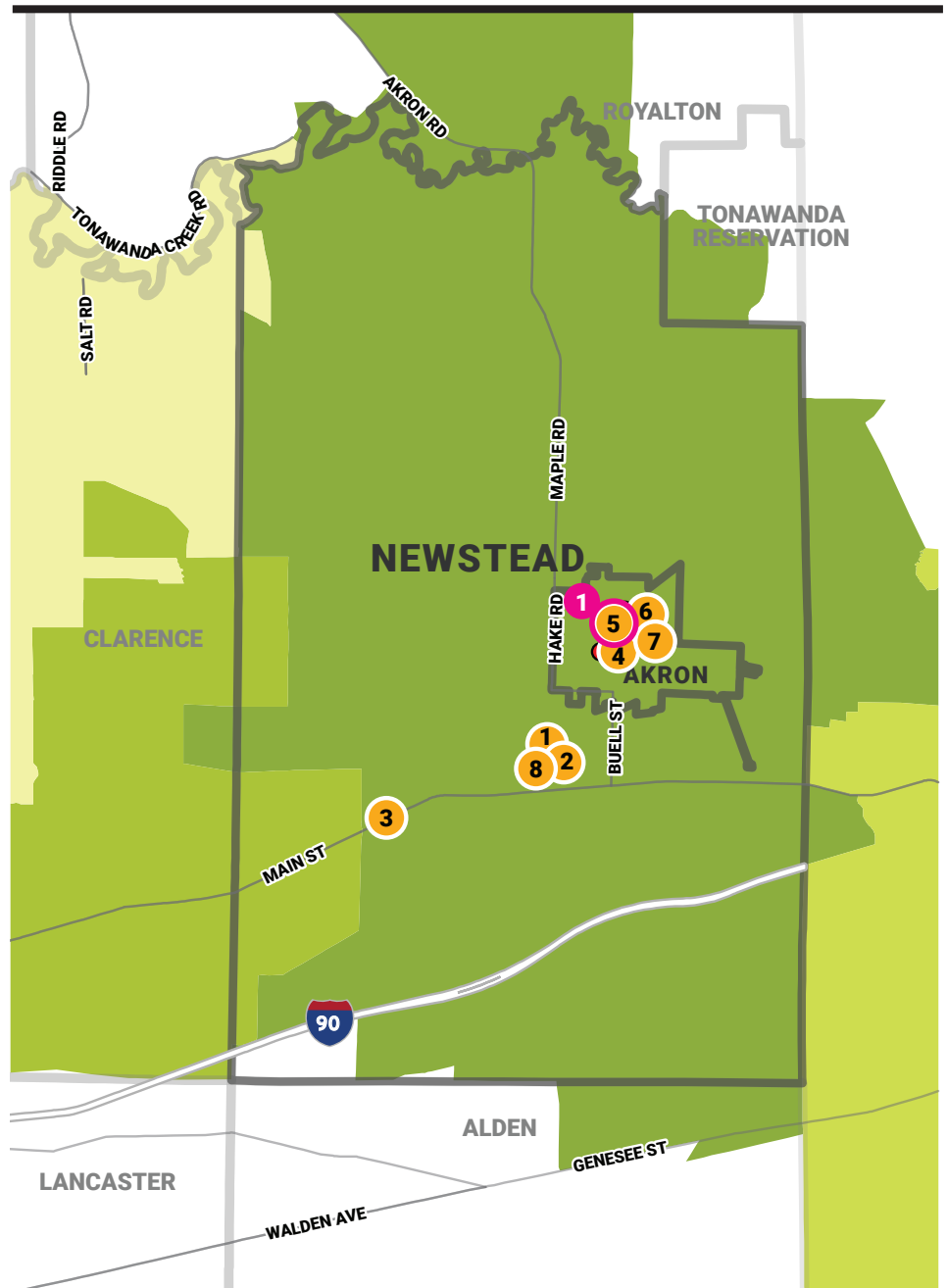
An online version of the survey was also available beginning in March and distributed via social media and email. One respondent completed the survey online.

To better understand the challenges identified by survey respondents and formulate priorities and solutions, a conversation was held at the Newstead Public Library with three residents, and two residents were interviewed by phone. Participants received a \$20 gift card to Pixley's Shur Fine Food Mart as an incentive and thank you for participating.

Percent of Survey Respondents by ZIP Code

- 1%
- 2%
- 3%-7%
- 8%-90%

- Survey conducted at this location
- Resident Focus Group



Resident Survey was conducted at 8 locations

1	Akron Senior Strawberry Social
2	Akron Good for the Neighborhood at Newstead Senior Center
3	Quarry Hill Estates
4	Akron Sidewalk Sale
5	Legislator Ed Rath's Annual Hotdog Roast at Newstead Public Library
6	Russell Park Family Fun Day
7	Akron-Newstead Alliance
8	Back-to-School Good for the Neighborhood at Akron-Newstead Senior Center



Resident Focus Group was held at 1 location

1	Newstead Public Library
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About the Residents who took the Survey

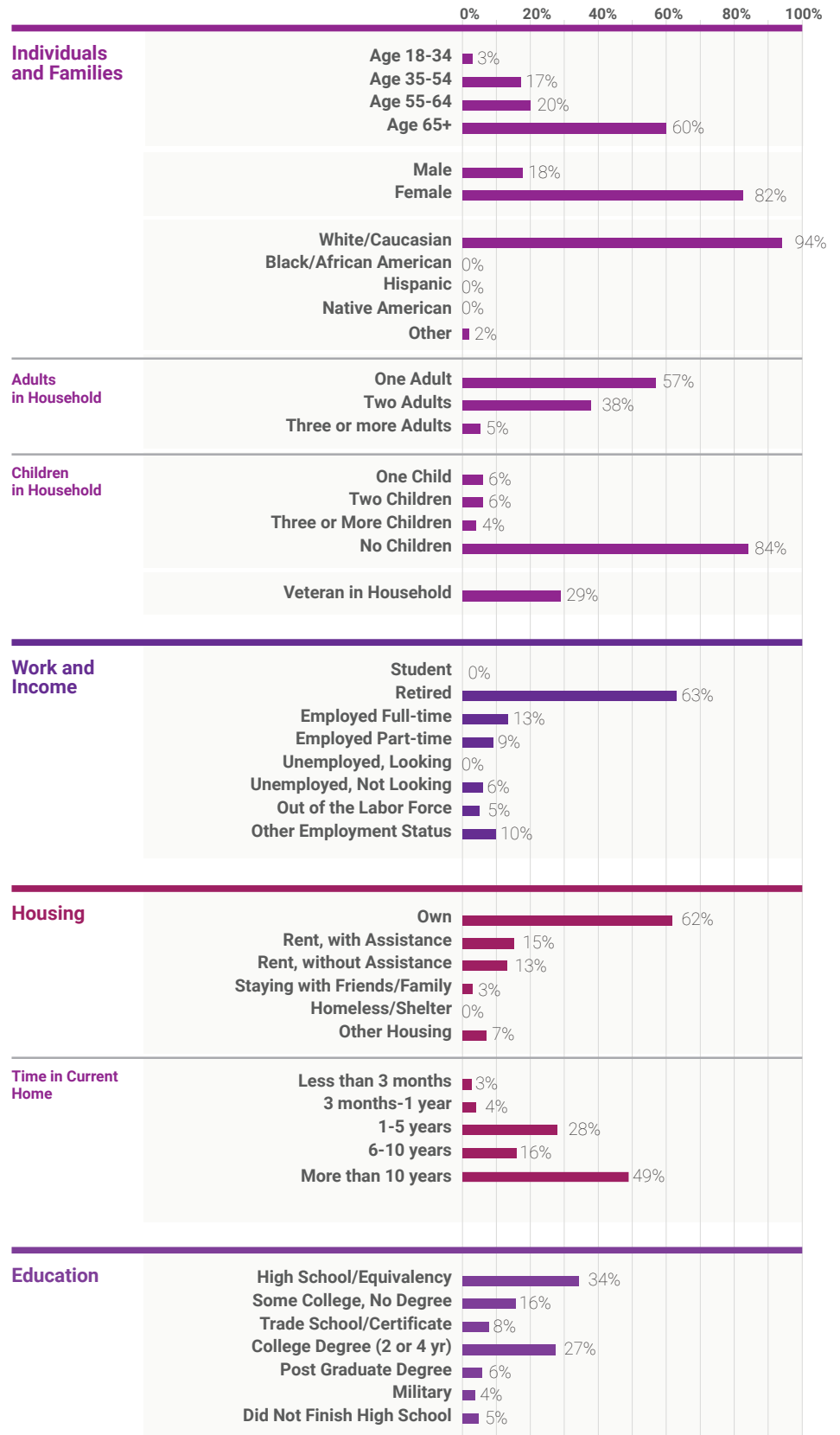
Although the survey aimed to gain perspectives from residents representative of the overall population in need, there are some differences. Compared to the total population, respondents were more likely to be female and 65 or older and were less likely to have a child under 18 in the home.

Most respondents are retired, and fewer than a quarter of respondents have a job. Eight percent of respondents listed their employment status as "disabled." A third of respondents have a college degree, while about the same amount did not pursue formal education beyond high school. Sixteen percent of respondents started college and didn't finish it. Less than 10% of survey takers went to a trade school or completed a certificate program.

More than half of respondents live alone. Out of the 16 households with children, just one respondent is the only adult in the household. Most respondents own their home. Of those who rent, most do so with rental assistance. Six percent of respondents own their home but rent the lot of land it is on. Most respondents are long-time residents, with 65% having lived at their current residence for six or more years.



100 Residents took the survey



Key Findings from Resident Surveys and Conversations



A lack of transportation options is a barrier to jobs and services.

Akron-Newstead is a rural community with no access to NFTA public transportation. Erie County offers a free senior transportation van, but trips are only available on certain days and must be scheduled well in advance. The Village of Akron is relatively easy to walk or bike around, but getting around elsewhere in town requires a car.

Owning a car is a large and ongoing expense for most people. After the upfront cost of purchasing or leasing a car, regular maintenance, gasoline, emergency repairs, insurance, and inspections all add up. But residents living in Akron-Newstead have little choice other than to own a car if they plan to travel to work, school, services, recreation, or run daily errands.

Nearly all survey respondents said driving is their primary form of transportation. More than a quarter said they experience issues with their cars, from repairs they cannot afford and failed inspections, to suspended licenses/registration and expired insurance.

Focus group participants noted a common catch-22: in order to travel to a job you need a car, but to afford a car, you need a job. Then there's the issue of mobility. Some residents are physically unable to drive a car, either due to age or disability. This severely limits a person's independence and ability to access jobs or much-needed resources in the community.

Even with large employers and good-paying jobs in the community, many residents struggle financially.

Akron-Newstead is home to several large employers, and residents in the focus group say those employers offer good-paying jobs. But residents also said it can be tough to get hired by these employers since many employees tend to remain in their jobs for a long time. In some cases employees need special training or education to qualify for a position.

One focus group participant had a hard time finding a job despite years of experience in the culinary and hospitality industry. Even though he's willing to work for a fast-food restaurant, he says employers won't hire him because of his age.

Young people often decide to move closer to the City of Buffalo in order to find better job opportunities or access education and training services, according to the focus group. But most still need a reliable car before they can pursue a job or schooling.

Some focus group members said their employment is sporadic, so they get through the summer using credit cards. Residents in similar situations may see credit card debt as the only way to get by when employment and supplemental income is not enough. This may explain, in part, why outstanding debt is residents' number one urgent concern, and their top financial concern is consumer debt.

Health-related issues can be a financial burden.

More often than not, residents with disabilities in Akron-Newstead are unable to go to school or work. Nearly half of households surveyed had at least one person with a disability. This restriction can be financially restraining on single-earner households, especially if the earner also doubles as a caretaker for a household member. Disabilities make getting to services more difficult as well; the third most common barrier to services was difficulty leaving the home.

Health insurance coverage is widespread among survey respondents. Only 2% of respondent households have an adult without coverage. Nevertheless, 29% of respondents said they have healthcare needs they cannot afford, including dental and optical care and prescription medicine. It comes as no surprise then that medical bills are the second-most frequent financial concern among respondents.

Youth need more programs and services.

Youth arrests have remained consistently low in Akron-Newstead over the last several years. However, graduation rates slumped to 84% in 2017, a seven-year low. Focus group participants believe youth in the town need more discipline, guidance, and activities after school.

The community is not without programs for youth. The focus group shared that the C. Dee Wright Community Center offers teen activity nights on Fridays, where kids can hang out, eat pizza, play games, and listen to music. Another local organization also used to have a teen and youth program, but it shut down due to misuse. The library is also an important asset to the community and offers programs for younger children.

When it comes to youth employment, the school district is working to build connections between education and the local economy with a work-study program during school hours. The district also works with a local market to help kids connect with employment opportunities.

Despite the positive youth-focused assets in the town, residents in the focus group also said that there are many kids who get into drug use and other illicit activities. One resident said that it seems like the police ignore the issue. Creating more afternoon activities and employment opportunities could help keep youth out of trouble.

Urgent Concerns, Special Needs and Barriers for Residents

Residents of Akron-Newstead may face a variety of challenges in their lives that cannot be captured in a brief survey. But when asked about their concerns, residents indicated that some challenges are more pressing than others.

Compared to other communities, survey respondents are less likely to report urgent concerns. But those with concerns overwhelmingly said outstanding debt is a challenge. After debt, not having enough money for food and utility shut-off notices are the most common concerns.

Getting help for these urgent concerns can be difficult for some residents. One in ten experienced a barrier or difficulty getting services. Most commonly, residents experience difficulty traveling to services, in addition to mobility limitations that make leaving the home a challenge.

Limited internet access is also a frequent barrier.

TRENDS

Today, a larger proportion of respondents have an urgent concern than in 2014 (17% vs. 10%). However, the things residents are worried about have not changed significantly. Utility shut-offs and food costs were the top two responses in 2014. A slightly smaller proportion of respondents today face barriers to services compared to 2014 (10% vs. 15%). Difficulty traveling was the top barrier in each year, but being turned away due to income limits is not as frequent a barrier today than in 2014.

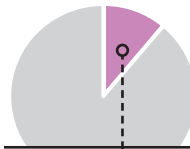


17%

REPORTED HAVING SOME TYPE OF URGENT CONCERN

TOP URGENT CONCERNS REPORTED BY THESE RESIDENTS

Outstanding Debt	71%
No Money for Food	35%
Utility Shut-off	24%
Legal Problems	12%
Cost/Availability of Childcare for work	12%
Foreclosure/Eviction	12%
Other	12%

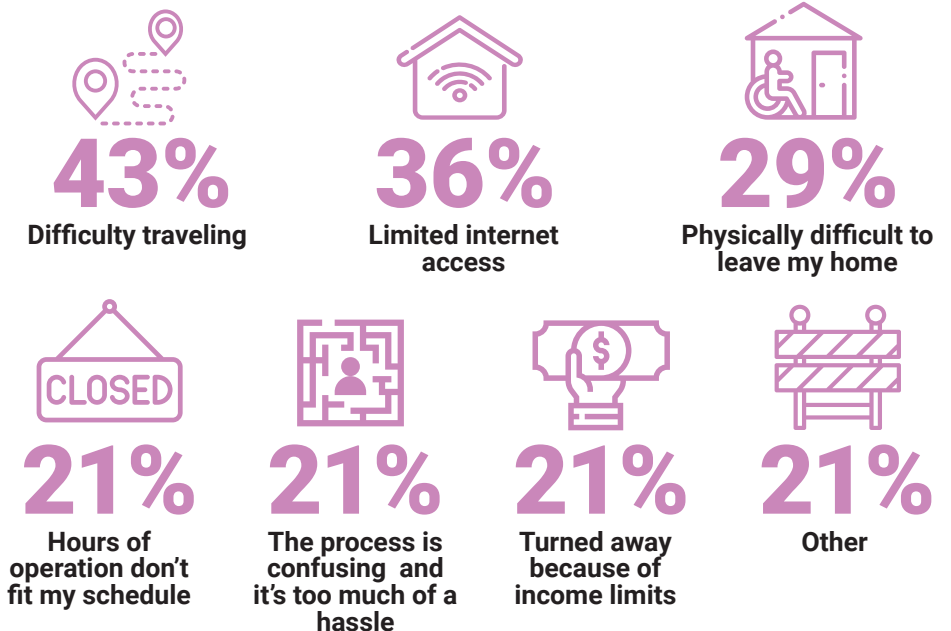


10%

REPORTED A BARRIER OR DIFFICULTY GETTING SERVICE



BARRIERS THESE RESPONDENTS FACE



Detailed Findings: Disabilities and Health Care Access

Having a disability may limit economic and educational opportunities for some residents. In fact, among the 45% of respondent households that have a disabled resident, more than two thirds say the disability prevents that person from being able to work or go to school. Disabilities in respondent households were most commonly physical, mobility-related, or mental health.

Nearly all adults in respondent households have health insurance, and zero children living in respondent households are uninsured. Medicare insures more than half of respondents. Private insurance, managed care, and Medicaid are the next most common types of insurance coverage.

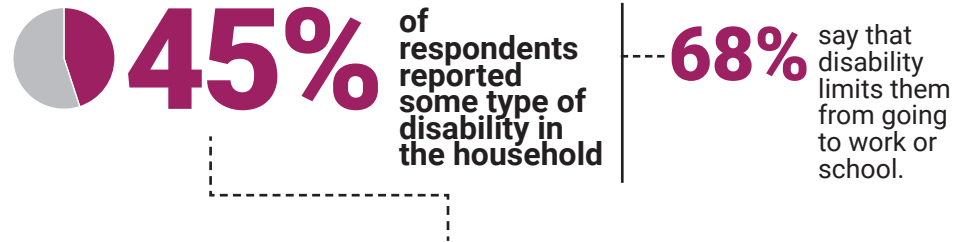
Almost a third of residents are in need of healthcare they cannot afford. Services not typically covered by health insurance like dental and optical care are the most common. Residents also have trouble affording prescription medicine, which may require large co-pays.

TRENDS

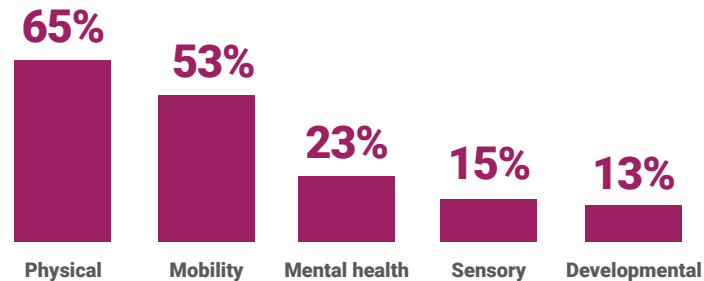


Health insurance coverage today is much more common than in 2014. The proportion of respondents without insurance decreased from 9% to 2% for adults and from 3% to 0% for children.

DISABILITIES IN HOUSEHOLDS



TYPE OF DISABILITIES REPORTED IN THESE HOUSEHOLDS



HEALTHCARE

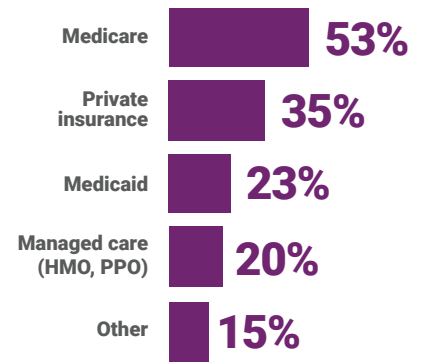
Lack of health insurance among...

2% Adults

0% Children

Just two percent of respondents said an adult in their household lacks health insurance. None of the children in respondent households are uninsured.

Top 5 Types of Health Insurance Coverage Used Among Respondents



29% of respondents were in need of some type of healthcare but can't afford it.

Despite the prevalence of health insurance coverage, many residents still have medical care they cannot afford, possibly because some care is not covered by insurance, or co-pays are too high.



Detailed Findings: Transportation

The number one barrier to services for survey respondents was transportation challenges. For most, a personal vehicle is the only option for accessing basic necessities like medical care, groceries, work, and school. Nearly all respondents get around by driving a car they own. Public transit service through the NFTA is unavailable in this community, although the Erie County Department of Senior Services offers a free curb-to-curb van service to those 60 and older.

As a necessity for most residents, cars can be a financial burden. Aside from the cost of buying or leasing a car, many respondents said they cannot afford needed repairs or their vehicle did not pass inspection (possibly because they cannot afford to fix issues preventing the car from passing).

TRENDS

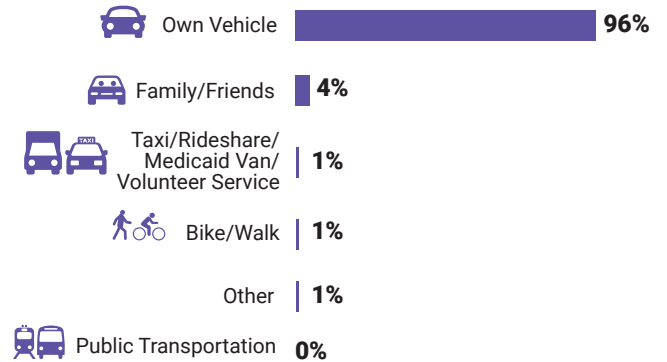
In both 2014 and 2019, respondents most frequently drove a car they owned to get around. **Alternative modes of transportation were used by 8% of respondents in 2014, and by 4% today.** Difficulty traveling remains the number one barrier to services.



TRANSPORTATION

For many residents in rural Akron-Newstead, driving a car is the only practical way to get around. But residents who might not be able to drive or who don't own a car use family or friends, taxis, rideshare, volunteer services, medical transportation, or biking/walking. However, very few respondents use these alternatives to driving.

How respondents get around

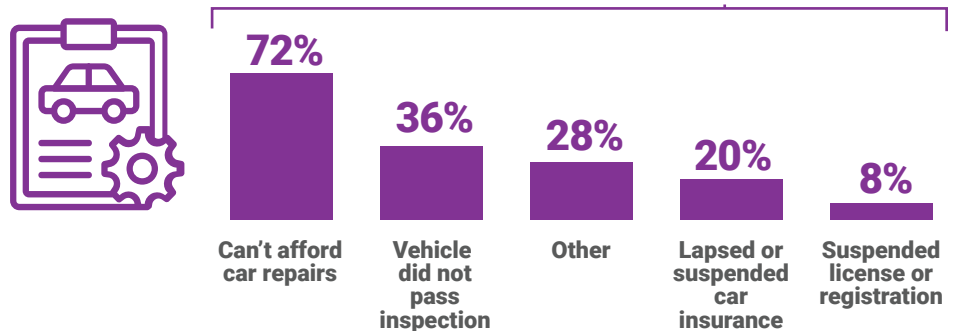


NFTA bus routes do not serve Akron-Newstead, yet a fifth of respondents said they have used public transit in the past and encountered some kind of issue. The most frequently cited issue was the lack of service to Akron-Newstead or destinations. Some residents also said they don't feel safe using public transportation.

Top reasons respondents don't take public transportation more often

- #1 No service in my community
- #2 No service where I need to go
- #3 I don't feel safe

25% of respondents reported owning a vehicle and having the following issues



The rural nature of Akron-Newstead nearly necessitates owning a vehicle to get to work, go to school, run errands, and participate in social, recreational, and civic activities. As necessary as cars are, they can be a financial liability. A quarter of respondents face an issue owning a vehicle. Most of these issues relate to expensive repairs, and not being able to pass inspection, possibly due in part to those same expensive repairs. A few respondents who identified "other" issues said they are leasing their car, or they were in a car crash.

Detailed Findings: Finances and Assets

Survey respondents in Akron-Newstead generally have low incomes, with three in four respondent households earning less than \$36,000 per year. The majority of this income comes from social security retirement, while only one in five respondents earns income from employment. Perhaps as a result of limited incomes from fixed sources like social security programs, forty percent of respondents are dealing with a financial concern.

Residents most frequently reported dealing with consumer debt and medical bills. Although debt is a broad category, it might result from the combination of low incomes and necessary expenses like food, utilities, housing, car payments and repairs and more. Similarly, medical bills are likely reported as a burden since many respondents have healthcare needs not covered by their insurance.

TRENDS

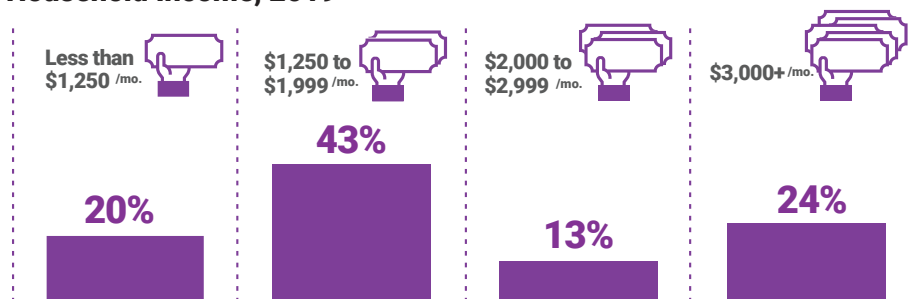
Financial comparisons between survey respondents in 2014 and today are difficult, given the fact that today's respondents are a far older group of residents. This may explain why far fewer residents today reported having a job or earning income from work. Incomes in 2014 leaned toward the higher end of the spectrum, with 40% of respondents earning \$36,000 or more in 2014 compared to 24% today. This is unsurprising, given the fact that many respondents today may rely on fixed incomes from social security, pensions, or other retirement funds.



FINANCES AND ASSETS

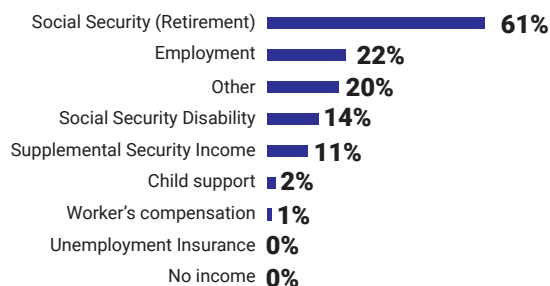
About two in three respondents earns less than \$24,000, just above the poverty level for a family of four. Nearly a quarter of respondent households make at least \$36,000 per year. However, simply making more money does not necessarily mean these households are without financial challenges.

Household Income, 2019



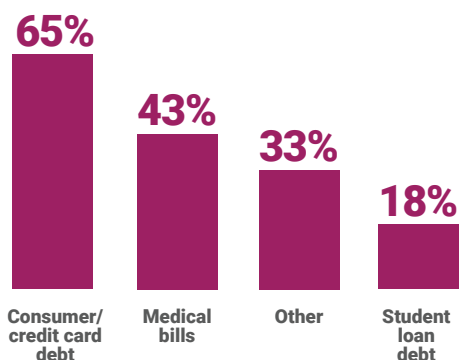
Given the high percentage of respondents who are older than 65, it is unsurprising that the number one source of income is social security retirement. Employment is the next most frequent source of income, but only for about one in five respondent households. The "other" category includes pensions, retirement funds, and annuities.

Sources of Household Income



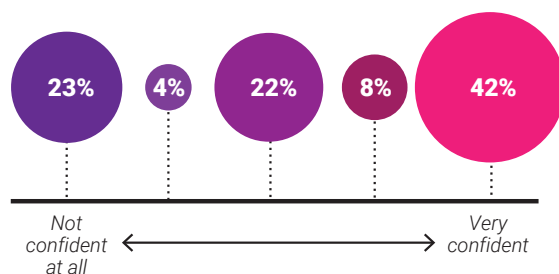
Top 4 Financial Challenges Households Experience

Forty percent of respondents are dealing with a financial challenge. Consumer debt is by far the biggest concern, followed by medical bills. Other responses include student loans, taxes, and high lot rents.



There are many reasons why one might feel confident in handling a \$500 emergency; higher incomes, support from friends/family, resourcefulness, or emergency savings are all possibilities. Almost twice as many respondents feel very confident than not confident at all.

Confidence to Handle a \$500 Emergency



Detailed Findings: Programs, Services and Supports

Three in five respondents receive aid through a variety of services. Only a handful of respondent households have pending assistance.

After HEAP, which helps with the cost of utilities, frequently used services help residents with the cost of food and healthcare, and supplement income for those with disabilities.

TRENDS

A significantly larger proportion of respondents receive support through programs and services today than in 2014 (61% vs. 27%), though this shift may also be due in part to the older age of respondents in the most current survey. The proportion of residents with pending applications remained the same. HEAP, food stamps/SNAP, and Medicaid are the top three services received in both years. Pending applications were also similar between 2014 and today; HEAP and food stamps/SNAP were in the top three each year.

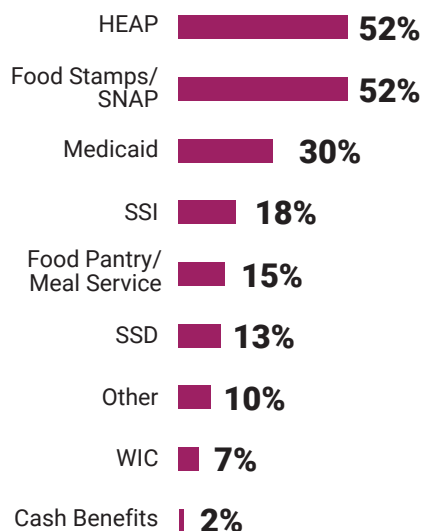


HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING SERVICES THROUGH PROGRAMS

Three in five respondent households receive some kind of services. As in many other communities, services that aid residents with the cost of utilities, food, and healthcare are the most common.

61% of households receive one or more services

Types of Services Received

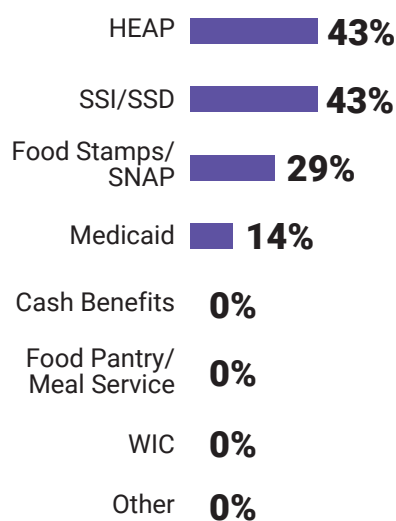


HOUSEHOLDS WITH PENDING APPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS

Only seven percent of respondent households have pending applications for assistance. All respondents with pending applications are currently receiving some other kind of assistance as well.

7% of households have pending applications for assistance programs

Types of Services Pending



During resident conversations, participants completed a brief exercise where they chose the programs and services they felt were strongest in the community, and those they believed need the most improvement.

Participants felt that education and training and senior programs are the strongest programs/services in Akron-Newstead. Residents also said transportation, affordable housing, and mental health programs need the most improvement.

Programs/services residents identified as...

...the strongest

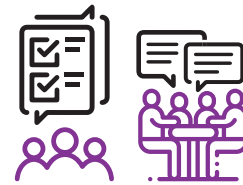
- #1 Education and Training
- #2 Senior Programs

...in need of improvement

- #1 Transportation
- #2 Affordable Housing
- #3 Mental Health/Addictions

Perspectives from Residents

While survey responses help us understand the community's broader trends, conversations with residents reveal deeper, more personal reflections on the issues residents face. In a group conversation at the Newstead Public Library, three residents shared their insights. Two other residents were interviewed over the phone as well. In these conversations, residents discussed community strengths, challenges, and ideas for how residents and local organizations could work to improve their community.



Strengths and Assets of the Community

Akron-Newstead has many well-used amenities for the whole community. Focus group members discussed how the town has two nice parks, which includes a lodge for skaters and birthday parties. Residents said the town has a lot of restaurants and a great library. The C. Dee Wright Community Center offers programs for youth and teens, and has space for other community groups to have meetings and events.

The people who live in Akron-Newstead give the town a strong feeling of community. Residents feel that the people who live in the community look out for one another. Whenever there is a fundraiser, or basket raffle, or some other kind of event, people will show up to support their community.

For a small town, Akron-Newstead has a lot of large employers. Focus group participants recognize how unique it is for a small town to have large employers in manufacturing. One participant listed several employers, including Strippit, Schwapps, Perry's, and Akron Rule. She said that once people get a job at these employers, they usually keep it.

The library is an asset to the community because of the services and programs it offers. Newstead Public Library plays an important role in the community in both the programs and services it offers, and through the information it shares with residents. Participants said the library has free internet access, meeting rooms, toddler programs, storytime, knitting programs, and reminiscing groups and card games for seniors. DVDs, CDs, and books can all be borrowed for up to 12 weeks with renewals, and items can be delivered from anywhere in the county library system. Information boards tell residents about upcoming events, programs, and services in the community.

The Akron Pennysaver is an important resource for learning about programs and events in town. Akron Pennysaver, the town's newspaper, is a vital resource for learning about programs, services, resources, and events in the community. Each week, the paper has three free ad slots set aside for groups in the community. Some focus group members even learned about a program to help them pay for a new roof through a listing in the Pennysaver.

The school district works to help kids find employment in the community. Residents said that the school district has a work-study program, where students can work and earn money while gaining experience during the school day. The district also partners with a local market to help connect students to employment opportunities.

Challenges in the Community

Kids, especially teens, need more activities to keep them busy and away from drugs. One of the focus group participants talked about how they sometimes see kids hanging out in the park after school using and dealing drugs. Others in the group agreed that kids need more constructive activities after school. Although there are some fun, weekly programs designed for teens at the C. Dee Wright Community Center, another teen program was shut down after misuse by kids. One resident felt that schools need stricter discipline to ensure that kids are respectful of authority, and that kids should not be medicated to change behaviors.

Akron-Newstead has very limited transportation options. All focus group participants have a car, but two share one car in the household. The couple who share a car said their car is old and has issues. Other than driving, the only other options are walking and biking, which works well in the village. They also said there are options like the Senior Citizen bus or Hearts and Hands, but they are limited to medical and other important appointments. However, they also noted that residents don't usually ask for transportation for "the little things". One other focus group participant owns a car and has no issues with it, but noted that distracted driving is an issue, and is concerned about the state government requiring residents to purchase new license plates.

Despite large employers around town, some residents still have a hard time finding work. The prevalence of big employers doesn't necessarily mean it's easy for everyone in town to get a job. Residents said that sometimes, the jobs that are available are just not a good fit for everyone. Some manufacturing jobs might train employees after they are hired, but other jobs require an associate's or bachelor's degree. A friend of a focus group member who has a high school diploma cannot get a job in manufacturing because of physical limitations. One of the focus group members also explained that although he has many years of work experience, he cannot even get an entry-level job in his field because of age discrimination. For those looking to work outside of town, transportation can be a barrier. As one resident put it, you need a car to get a job, but you can't afford a car unless you have a job.

Challenges in the Community, cont'd.

Whether you rent or own, housing is expensive everywhere.

One focus group participant described owning the home she lives in "along with the bank." This resident was in a bind when their homeowner insurance company threatened to cancel their coverage if they did not replace their roof. Fortunately, they found a program through an ad in the Pennysaver that offers home maintenance loans that do not need to be paid back unless the homeowners pass away, or the home changes hands. The only downside is the immense amount of paperwork required to complete the application process.

Another focus group member said the apartments where he lives offer financial assistance for those who need it. As a tenant, he says he's experienced some troubling legal issues in the past when a new landlord took over and demanded back rent, even though he paid rent and had receipts going back several years. Only after finding legal counsel was the resident able to avoid having to pay nearly \$2,000 in extra rent.

A parent of a focus group member experienced issues with lot rent suddenly jumping 50% when new owners purchased a mobile home park in town. Fortunately, New York State law prevented the increase from going into effect, and new tenant protections will limit future increases to 3% each year.

Ideas for Change in the Community

Make it easier for residents to learn about services. Although the focus group listed a few places where one can find information about services, they also reiterated that it should be even easier for residents to learn about resources in the community.

Give people hope. Citing a rise in suicides in the community, one resident said she wants to be able to give people in her community hope. Although she did not elaborate further, her idea for change may take the form of improving mental health services in the community, which focus group members felt was lacking.

Enhance the enforcement of laws in public spaces. One of the focus group participants felt strongly that people, especially youth, were able to hang out in Akron's Russell Park and take part in illicit activities without consequence. He feels that when he has tried to address the issue with law enforcement, they have not taken his concerns seriously.

Diana

A single mom sees Akron-Newstead as a wonderful place to raise her son, but thinks housing insecurity, lack of public transportation, and lack of after-school activities for youth are areas for improvement within the community.

Diana is a single mom who retired early to move back to Akron-Newstead to care for her aging parent. She stayed in the area so her teenage son could benefit from the good public school system in Akron. Diana works part-time to supplement her income. Like many in the “sandwich” generation, Diana tries to live within her means, but sometimes struggles financially because of the demands of caring for her mother and son at the same time.

Diana and her son live in a mobile home community, and they recently faced the possibility of lot rent almost doubling due to new owners. Some of her neighbors are on fixed incomes and would have had to make difficult choices in order to afford this increase. “You have your neighbors saying, well maybe if I take half of my medicine, then I can afford lot rent.” The residents of her mobile park community mobilized in partnership with the Upstate-Downstate Housing Coalition to advocate for protections for mobile home tenants across the state. Due in part to their efforts, the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 was signed into law in June, preventing unreasonable increases in lot rent and limiting future lot rent increases to 3% per year.



“ You have your neighbors saying, well maybe if I take half of my medicine, then I can afford lot rent.”

Although she’s very happy with the sports and music programs offered by the school system, Diana wishes there was more to do in Akron-Newstead for older teens, like her son. In her view, the C. Dee Wright Community Center caters more toward younger teens between the ages of 12 and 14. For this reason, Diana feels lucky that her church offers activities for children of all ages. “If somebody is not involved in a faith-based activity, I would wonder what is out there for kids.” Diana also believes that the Akron High School’s work-study program is a good opportunity for youth to learn a trade, but without a car, it can be difficult for youth to gain work experience outside of this program.

Lack of public transportation is not just a problem for youth, according to Diana, who wishes that there were more volunteers for local organizations such as Hearts

and Hands, which provides door-to-door transportation services for seniors. According to Diana, too few volunteers “results in seniors not getting to the appointments they need to get to” and contributes to the loneliness some seniors may feel who don’t have “any other connections to the outside world.” She also feels that the mobile home community in which she lives is isolated and disconnected from the community-at-large, and would like to see a bike path which would allow residents to walk and bike to amenities like stores, services, recreational activities, and jobs.

Despite some of these challenges, Diana doesn’t have any plans to leave Akron-Newstead, even after her son graduates, due to family ties and the community she’s found. “I’m planning on sticking around,” she says, “unless God has any other plans. I think He planted me here for a reason.”

Data Sources & Notes

Defining Need, Page 2

Federal Poverty Level: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2019.

Minimum Wage: New York State Department of Labor, Minimum Wage (effective 12/31/18).

Resident Survey

The resident survey was conducted from June 2019 through September 2019. Surveys were gathered at various sites across the community, all of which are listed on page four. Surveys at these locations were completed in person, administered by a Mobile Safety-Net Team Community Impact Coordinator or an agency staff member. The survey was made available in English and Spanish. One online survey was also completed, with a link to the survey distributed through partner agencies in the community through email and/or social media.

The analysis of the 100 responses included standardizing open ended responses and cleaning data for accuracy. Not all surveys were completed in full, and response rates for questions varied from 44 responses to 100 responses. In cases where percentages are used, these numbers represent the percent of people who answered the question, not the percent of all people who took the survey.

Although some questions asked for respondents to choose one answer, there were several instances where respondents chose multiple responses; in these cases, all answers were included. For instance, respondents could report more than one type of disability, financial challenge, urgent concern, medical need, challenge in owning a vehicle, and barrier to programs and services.

Resident Focus Group Interviews

The focus group conversation took place on September 18, 2019 at the Newstead Public Library. Participants for the focus group were recruited through the survey residents completed, in addition to in-person recruiting at the Newstead Public Library and through the town's Mobile Safety Net Team Coalition. Residents who participated in interviews were given a \$20 gift card to Pixley's as appreciation for their time. Notes were taken during interviews, and recordings of conversations were used to supplement the notes at a later date.

Detailed Findings: Programs, Services and Supports, Page 10

Programs/services residents identified as strongest and in need of improvement.

Resident interview participants were asked to identify the strongest types of programs and services in the community as well as the program and service types where need for expansion and/or investment was greatest. Each resident had three yellow dots for placing next to the strongest programs and three blue dots for identifying where need was greatest across 16 categories of programs and services. Dots could be used to identify up to three strengths and weaknesses or several dots could be allocated to fewer categories. The top strengths and needs/gaps are those program and service types that generated the largest number of dots from all residents.

Trends: As of December 31, 2018, minimum wage in NYS was \$11.10 per hour. A resident who works 30 hours a week for 4 weeks will earn \$1,356 a month, versus \$960 a month at a wage of \$8.00 per hour, the minimum wage in 2014, when the resident survey was last conducted. Minimum wages are provided by the NYS Department of Labor.

Social Security benefits also get adjusted over time for cost of living changes. The average monthly payment under the Social Security Disability Program was less than \$1,250 in 2014 but is now, in 2019, more than \$1,250 per month, according to average monthly benefit data provided by the Social Security Administration.

Inflation was calculated using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator, comparing buying power of \$36,000 between August 2014 and August 2019.

Stories of Need

Stories of need reflect the voice and experience of an actual resident living in Akron-Newstead. Names and other identifying information have been changed to protect the identity and confidentiality of those who were interviewed. The interview took place in October 2019. The interview was conducted over the telephone. The interviewee was recruited from the focus group interviews with residents, or represent individuals who volunteered to share their story. Interview questions explored challenges around topics covered in community reports such as access to jobs, job training, affordable housing, healthy foods, transportation, and other barriers to jobs and services. The story is intended to paint a picture of how these challenges play out in the lives of individuals and show how issues are interrelated.

Appendix

Resident Survey - English version

MOBILE SAFETY-NET TEAM COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your answers will assist us in better understanding the needs in the community and help us build a stronger safety net that more readily connects residents to the human services they need. Please select one response unless indicated otherwise. **Your answers will remain completely confidential.**

1 Age _____ **2** Gender _____ **3** Race _____ **4** Zip Code _____ **5** Survey Location _____

6 Including yourself, how many people are in your household?
Adults (18 and up) _____¹ Children (under 18) _____²

7 Has anyone in your household ever served in the armed forces?
 Yes¹ No²

8 What is your current employment status? *Select all that apply.*
 Student¹ Unemployed, not looking⁶
 Retired² Out of the labor force
 Employed full time³ (not working, not looking)⁷
 Employed part time⁴ Other: _____⁸
 Unemployed, looking⁵

9 What is your current living situation?
 Own¹ Staying with friends/family⁴
 Rent, with assistance² Homeless/shelter⁵
 Rent, without assistance³ Other: _____⁶

10 How long have you lived at your current address?
 Less than 3 months¹ 6-10 years⁴
 3 months-1 year² >10 years⁵
 1-5 years³ More than 10 years⁶

11 What is the highest level of education/training you've completed?
 High school/Equivalency¹ Post graduate degree⁵
 Some college, no degree² Military⁶
 Trade School/Certificate³ Did not finish high school⁷
 College degree (2 or 4 yr)⁴

12 Do you or does anyone in your household have any of the following disabilities? *Check all that apply.*
 Mental health¹ Developmental⁴
 Mobility² Sensory⁵
 Physical³ No Disability⁶

13 Do you or does anyone in your household have a disability that limits their ability to work and/or go to school?
 Yes¹ No²

14 What is your primary form of transportation?
 Bicycle¹ Medicaid van⁶
 Family/Friends² Uber/Lyft⁷
 Own Vehicle³ Volunteer service van⁸
 Taxi⁴ Public transportation⁹
 Walk⁵ Other: _____¹⁰

15 If you have ever used public transit, do you regularly encounter any of the following issues? *Select all that apply.*
 Too expensive¹ Service isn't reliable⁸
 Takes too long to get places² I don't feel safe⁹
 No service where I need to go³ Schedule is too confusing¹⁰
 No evening or weekend service⁴ Other: _____¹¹
 No service in my community⁵ None¹²
 Buses don't run often enough⁶ Have not used public transit¹³
 Too long to walk to bus stop⁷

16 If you own a vehicle, have you experienced any of the following over the last year? *Select all that apply.*
 Did not repair my car because I could not afford to¹
 Lapsed or suspended car insurance²
 Suspended license or registration³
 Vehicle did not pass inspection⁴
 Other: _____⁵
 None/Do not own a vehicle⁶

17 What are your household's sources of income? *Select all that apply.*
 Employment¹ Child support⁷
 Unemployment insurance² No income⁸
 SSI³ Other: _____⁹
 SSD⁴
 Social security retirement⁵
 Worker's compensation⁶

18 How much money is currently received from these sources to support your household each month?
 < \$1,250/month¹
 \$1,250-\$1,999/month²
 \$2,000-\$2,999/month³
 \$3,000+/month⁴

19 Are you or is anyone in your household currently receiving (any of the following)? *Select all that apply.*
 Food stamps/SNAP¹ SSI⁶
 Food pantry/meal service² SSD⁷
 Medicaid³ WIC⁸
 Cash benefits⁴ Other: _____⁹
 HEAP⁵ None¹⁰

20 Does anyone in your household have a pending application for any of the following? *Select all that apply.*
 Food stamps/SNAP¹ SSI/SSD⁶
 Food pantry/meal service² WIC⁷
 Medicaid³ Other: _____⁸
 Cash benefits⁴ None⁹
 HEAP⁵

21 Do any of the following financial issues apply to you? *Select all that apply.*
 Consumer/credit card debt¹
 Student loan debt²
 Underwater mortgage (owe more than your house is worth)³
 Unbankable⁴
 No bank account⁵
 Medical bills⁶
 Child support⁷
 Other: _____⁸

22 How confident are you in your ability to deal with a \$500 emergency expense, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "not confident at all" and 5 means "very confident"? *Circle one.*

1 2 3 4 5
1 = Not confident at all (Expense would be a burden.) 3 = Somewhat confident 5 = Very confident (I could financially manage this expense.)

(Survey questions continue on back side.)

Resident Survey, cont'd. - English version

MOBILE SAFETY-NET TEAM COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT (continued)

23 Does anyone in your household lack health insurance?

Select all that apply.

- Yes, one or more adults do not have health insurance¹
- Yes, one or more children do not have health insurance²
- No, we all have health insurance³

24 If insured, what type of health insurance is currently used by members of your household? Select all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private insurance ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> Government (VA) ⁵ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Managed care (HMO, PPO) ² | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Savings Account ⁶ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicare ³ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ ⁷ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid ⁴ | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know/Unsure ⁸ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> No health insurance ⁹ |

25 Over the last year, was there any time when you needed any of the following but did not get it because you could not afford it? Select all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health care ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription medicine ⁵ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health care or counseling ² | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation to doctor appointments or health services ⁶ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dental care (including checkups) ³ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ ⁷ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Optical care (including eyeglasses) ⁴ | <input type="checkbox"/> None ⁸ |

26 Are there any urgent concerns or special needs that you or someone in your household have? Select all that apply.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utility shut-off notice ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal problems ⁵ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreclosure/Eviction ² | <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding Debt ⁶ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No money for food ³ | <input type="checkbox"/> Hurt or threatened at home ⁷ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost/availability of child care for work ⁴ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ ⁸ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> No urgent concerns ⁹ |

27 Has anyone in your household encountered difficulty getting necessary services (food, housing, utilities, medical care, etc.) over the last year?

- Yes¹ No²

28 If "yes", describe what barriers were faced. Select all that apply.

- Traveling to get services is difficult¹
- I don't speak/read English well²
- I can't get there during hours the agency is open³
- I've been turned away because of income limits⁴
- It can be physically difficult for me to leave my home⁵
- It's too much of a hassle since the process is confusing⁶
- Limited Internet access⁷
- Other: _____⁸
- None⁹

OPTIONAL: If you would be interested in participating in a resident focus group, please provide the following:

NAME _____

Phone # _____

Resident Survey - Spanish version

EVALUACIÓN DE NECESIDADES COMUNITARIAS DEL EQUIPO MOBILE SAFETY-NET

Gracias por participar en esta encuesta. Sus respuestas nos ayudarán a comprender mejor las necesidades de la comunidad y nos ayudarán a construir una red de seguridad más sólida que conecte más fácilmente a los residentes con los servicios humanos que necesitan. Por favor seleccione una respuesta a menos que se indique lo contrario. **Sus respuestas serán completamente confidenciales.**

1 Edad _____ 2 Genero _____ 3 Raza _____ 4 Codigo Postal _____ 5 Lugar de encuesta _____

6 Incluyéndote, cuántas personas viven en tu hogar?

Adultos (18 y más) _____¹ Niños (menor de 18) _____²

7 ¿Alguien en tu hogar ha servido en las fuerzas armadas?

Sí¹ No²

8 ¿Cuál es tu situación laboral actual? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- Estudiante¹ Desempleado, sin buscar⁶
 Retirado² Fuera del servicio laboral (sin trabajar ni buscar)⁷
 Empleado tiempo completo³ Otro: _____⁸
 Empleado a tiempo parcial⁴ Desempleado, buscando⁵

9 ¿Cuál es tu situación actual de hogar?

- Propietario¹ Viviendo con amigos/familia⁴
 Alquiler, con ayuda² Sin hogar/refugio⁵
 Alquiler, sin ayuda³ Otro: _____⁶

10 ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas viviendo en tu dirección actual?

- Menos de 3 meses¹ 6-10 años⁴
 3 meses—1 año² Más de 10 años⁵
 1-5 años³

11 ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación/estudios que has completado?

- Instituto/Equivalencia¹ Título Universitario (2 o 4 años)⁴
 Algo universitario/sin título² Postgrado⁵
 Escuela Vocacional/Certificado³ Militar⁶
 No terminó el Instituto⁷

12 ¿Tienes tú o alguien en tu hogar alguna de las siguientes discapacidades? *Marca las que correspondan*

- Salud Mental¹ De desarrollo⁴
 Movilidad² Sensorial⁵
 Física³ Sin Discapacidades⁶

13 ¿Tienes tú o alguien en tu hogar alguna discapacidad que le limita para trabajar y/o ir a la escuela?

Sí¹ No²

14 ¿Cuál es tu medio de transporte principal?

- Bicicleta¹ Uber/Lyft⁷
 Familia/Amigos² Servicio voluntario de Furgoneta⁸
 Tengo auto³ Transporte público⁹
 Taxi⁴ Otro: _____¹⁰
 Andando⁵ Furgoneta Medicaid⁶

15 Si alguna vez ha usado transporte público, ¿encuentras algunos de los siguientes problemas? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- Demasiado costoso¹ Servicio no fiable⁸
 Tarda demasiado en llegar² No me siento seguro⁹
 No llega a donde necesito³ Horario muy confuso¹⁰
 No hay servicio de tarde o fin de semana⁴ Otro: _____¹¹
 No hay servicio en mi barrio⁵ Ninguno¹²
 Autobuses no pasan a menudo.⁶ No he usado transporte público¹³
 Mucho recorrido a pie a la parada⁷

16 Si posees un vehículo, ¿has experimentado alguno de los siguientes puntos en el último año?

- No reparé el auto porque no podía pagarlo¹
 Seguro de auto caducado o suspendido²
 Licencia o registro suspendido³
 Vehículo no pasó inspección⁴
 Otro: _____⁵
 Ninguno/No poseo un vehículo⁶

17 ¿Cuáles son las fuentes de ingreso de tu hogar? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- Empleo¹ Compensación al trabajador⁶
 Seguro de desempleo² Manutención de los hijos⁷
 SSI³ Sin ingresos⁸
 SSD⁴ Otro: _____⁹
 Jubilación de la seguridad social⁵

18 ¿Cuánto dinero recibes actualmente de estas fuentes de ingreso al mes?

- < \$1,250/mes¹
 \$1,250-\$1,999/mes²
 \$2,000-\$2,999/mes³
 \$3,000+/mes⁴

19 ¿Estas tú o alguien en tu hogar actualmente recibiendo alguno de los siguientes? *Marca los que correspondan.*

- Food stamps/SNAP¹ HEAP⁵
 Banco de alimentos/servicios de comidas² SSI⁶
 Medicaid³ SSD⁷
 Prestaciones en efectivo⁴ WIC⁸
 Otro: _____⁹ Ninguno¹⁰

20 ¿Alguien en tu hogar tiene una solicitud pendiente para alguno de los siguientes? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- Food stamps/SNAP¹ SSI/SSD⁶
 Banco de alimentos/servicios de comidas² WIC⁷
 Medicaid³ Otro: _____⁸
 Prestaciones en efectivo⁴ Ninguno⁹
 HEAP⁵

21 ¿Sufres alguno de los siguientes problemas financieros?

- Deuda de consumidor/tarjeta de crédito¹
 Deuda de préstamos estudiantiles²
 Hipoteca submarina (debes más de lo que vale tu casa)³
 No financiable⁴
 Sin cuenta bancaria⁵
 Facturas médicas⁶
 Manutención de los hijos⁷
 Otro: _____⁸

22 ¿Cuánta confianza tienes en poder hacer frente a un gasto de emergencia de \$500, e una escala del 1 al 5, donde 1 significa "nada de confianza" y 5 significa "confianza total"? *Marca uno.*

- 1 2 3 4 5
 1 = Sin confianza en absoluto (el gasto sería una gran carga) 3 = Algo confiado 5 = Muy confiado (Podría manejar el gasto sin problemas)

(La encuesta continua en la parte trasera)

Resident Survey, cont'd. - Spanish version

EVALUACIÓN DE NECESIDADES COMUNITARIAS DEL EQUIPO MOBILE SAFETY-NET (continuación)

23 ¿Alguien en tu hogar carece de seguro médico? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- Si, uno o más adultos no tienen seguro médico¹
- Si, uno o más niños no tienen seguro médico²
- No, todos tenemos seguro médico³

24 Si tienes seguro, ¿qué tipo de seguro médico utilizan los miembros de tu familia actualmente? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seguro Privado ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> Gobierno(VA) ⁵ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atención administrada (HMO, PPO) ² | <input type="checkbox"/> Cuenta de ahorros de salud ⁶ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicare ³ | <input type="checkbox"/> Otro _____ ⁷ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid ⁴ | <input type="checkbox"/> No lo sé/no estoy seguro ⁸ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Sin seguro médico ⁹ |

25 Durante el último año, ¿has necesitado alguno de los siguientes pero no has podido pagarlo? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atención médica ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicamento con receta ⁵ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atención de salud mental o asesoramiento ² | <input type="checkbox"/> Transporte a citas médicas o servicios de salud ⁶ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atención dental (incluidos chequeos) ³ | <input type="checkbox"/> Otro: _____ ⁷ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atención óptica (incluidas gafas) ⁴ | <input type="checkbox"/> Ninguno ⁸ |

26 ¿Hay alguna preocupación o necesidad urgente que tengas tú o alguien de tu hogar? *Marca las que correspondan.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notificación de corte de servicios (agua, gas, etc) ¹ | <input type="checkbox"/> Problemas legales ⁵ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ejecución hipotecaria/Desalojo ² | <input type="checkbox"/> Deudas pendientes ⁶ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sin dinero para comida ³ | <input type="checkbox"/> Herido o amenazado en casa ⁷ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coste/disponibilidad de cuidado infantil para trabajar ⁴ | <input type="checkbox"/> Otro: _____ ⁸ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Sin preocupaciones urgentes ⁹ |

27 ¿Alguien en tu hogar ha tenido dificultades para obtener servicios necesarios (comida, vivienda, servicios públicos, atención médica, etc) durante el último año?

- Sí¹ No²

28 Si la respuesta es "Sí", describe a que barreras se enfrentaron. *Marca las que correspondan.*

- Viajar para obtener servicios es difícil.¹
- No hablo/leo Inglés bien²
- No puedo llegar durante las horas en que la agencia está abierta³
- Me han rechazado por mis ingresos limitados⁴
- Puede ser físicamente complicado salir de mi hogar⁵
- Es demasiado complicado porque el proceso es confuso⁶
- Acceso a internet limitado⁷
- Otro: _____⁸
- None⁹

OPCIONAL: Si estás interesado en participar en un grupo focal de residentes, proporcione los siguientes datos:

NOMBRE _____

Teléfono# _____

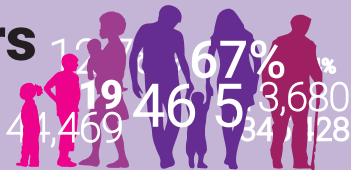
INSIGHTS FROM
RESIDENTS

Village of Akron and Town of Newstead

JANUARY 2020

Numbers in Need

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



A Mobile Safety Net Team
initiative established by
The John R. Oishei Foundation

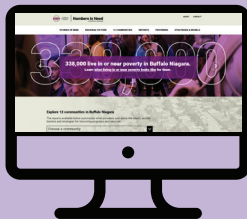


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