



2020-2021 COMMUNITY STATUS REPORT

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United
Way



United Way
of Amarillo & Canyon



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Goodness, what a year it has been! Fraught with challenges and difficulties, 2020 was also brimming with opportunities. At the United Way of Amarillo & Canyon, we saw our community pull together to lift each other up and do their part to help their neighbors through the pandemic. If you live in Potter or Randall County, you know that when we encounter a difficulty, we dig in our heels and rely on each other to get through it and come out the other side even stronger – that’s who we are.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report and learn more about the challenges we face. This Community Status Report provides an overview of your area’s demographics and the strengths and challenges that lie in the following dimensions: Education, Income, Health, and Vulnerable Populations.

The report is an excellent resource for local non-profit agencies when writing grants, for educational institutions on the cutting edge of research, and for governmental agencies striving to make the most informed decisions possible. However, this report is also for you, a local Potter or Randall County citizen who takes pride in our home and wants to learn more about how we can improve the lives of our friends and neighbors.

Although there are recurring elements, each issue of our Community Status Report is unique. The report is tailored to provide the most accurate and up-to-date picture of our counties and highlight the needs and opportunities that lie before us.

As you read this, I hope you will be proud of our strengths, motivated by our challenges, and inspired to make our great corner of Texas even greater. Thank you for being part of the caring power of our community and for continuing to Live United!

Jim Bryan

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J Bryan' with a stylized flourish at the end.

*President, Board of Directors
United Way of Amarillo & Canyon*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potter and Randall counties represent two opposing and converging realities, coexisting in the United States. Potter County is inhabited largely by economically disadvantaged minority residents who experience many struggles in the areas of education, income, health, and security. Randall County, on the other hand, is an affluent predominantly White county that boasts strong educational and economic outcomes and faces few community struggles among its residents. However, over time, the demographic changes have brought these two opposing realities together. The proportion of minority residents in both counties is increasing and the age of the population in both counties is advancing.

On the bright side, in our community Amarillo and Canyon Independent School Districts deliver strong K-12 education outcomes and relatively high graduation rates. Due to the robust Amarillo economy, both Potter and Randall counties have better than average economic indicators and provide many employment opportunities for people who choose not to go college after graduating from high school. Despite these economic and educational benefits, however, the income inequality in both counties is growing while the proportion of people in the middle of the income distribution is shrinking. In addition to the growing economic inequality, both counties face substantial challenges in the areas of physical and mental health. Chronic illness, obesity, and suicide are much more common in Potter and Randall counties than in the rest of the state. The declining health outcomes, in the years prior to the pandemic, likely contributed to elevated death rates from COVID-19 in 2020 experienced by both counties. Child abuse and neglect are also a major problems in the area. Potter and Randall counties' rates of child abuse and neglect are 1.5 and 1.3 times those of the state, respectively. In addition to the aforementioned challenges experienced by both counties in 2019, Potter County faced a 7-year low median income, elevated and further growing rates of poverty and family violence, and low educational attainment among the adult population.

Among special topics, the 2020-2021 Community Status Report highlights the issues of racial wealth inequality, the effects of the pandemic on vulnerable populations, and the local programs that serve people in need. Racial wealth inequality is reflected in the fact that typical Black and Hispanic families own respectively one tenth and one eighth of the wealth a typical White family owns. The differences in wealth stemmed from homeownership, liquid retirement accounts, student loans, and federal asset-building subsidies. These differences were further exacerbated by the global pandemic, which had a disproportionately strong damaging effect on low-income communities and communities of color. These communities had higher rates of COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death and, consequently, suffered greater economic losses than those suffered by high income communities. Families with small children have also suffered disproportionately high economic hardship during the pandemic, including falling behind on rent, not having enough food, and losing employment due to the necessity to care for children at home. The 2-1-1 program in the state of Texas connects people in need with available human service resources in their local community. In Potter and Randall counties, the 2-1-1 network made over 17,000 referrals to services in 2020. The top four requests were help with rent and housing, utility payments, health care and COVID-19, and food. Perhaps the greatest hardship was experienced by individuals and families who lost their housing and became homeless. To meet their needs, the City of Amarillo established the *Coming Home Initiative* based on the Housing First model. In this model, homeless individuals are provided housing and treated as typical renters without any requirement for participation in other programs. Since November 2018, 130 individuals found sustainable housing through the program, and 11% of program participants graduated into independent living outside the program.



MISSION STATEMENT

TO UNITE COMMUNITY IDEAS
AND RESOURCES TO FIGHT POVERTY AND
CREATE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

INTRODUCTION

The United Way of Amarillo & Canyon Community Status Report seeks to provide the most recent community statistics in the areas of education, income, health, and and security. What sets the Community Status Report apart from other community-based reports is the use of the highest quality representative surveys and the original state-wide data sources. These sources include, but are not limited to, the American Community Survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Vital Statistics, and the Department of Family and Protective Services.

In addition to using high quality data sources, the Community Status Report strives to integrate the latest research and scientific thought to create an analytical context around community issues and enable community leaders to understand and act upon the evidence-based insights provided in the report.

The 2020-2021 Community Status Report combines 2 years of new data on most community indicators, as some of the data were unavailable last year. Whenever possible, the report includes the available data on the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential ripple effects on the community.

New in the 2020-2021 report:

- Enrollment in publicly subsidized childcare programs for 3- and 4-year-olds from the Annie E. Casey foundation; 4 new school years (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020) for Texas, Lubbock County, Potter County, and Randall County.

- New data on school attendance for Texas, Region 16, and Amarillo and Canyon ISDs

- Rapid unemployment data for the City of Amarillo for 2020

- 50 occupations that pay a living wage and have good job growth prospects

- Economic inequality by race

- Mental health status and access to mental health care

- Racial and socioeconomic disparities in COVID-19 infection rates

- Economic hardship during COVID-19 for low-income Americans, minorities, and families with children

DEMOGRAPHICS

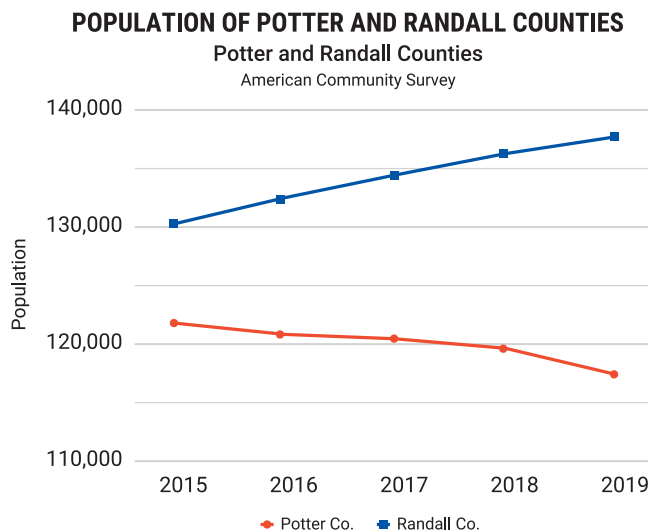
The COVID-19 pandemic and its ripple effects brought significant demographic changes to every community in the United States and around the world in 2020. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention¹, as of April 6th, 2021, the United States lost an estimated 373,167 people to COVID-19 and its complications. Among them were 29,877 Texans and 709 residents of Potter and Randall counties. An additional unknown number of people lost their lives to the ramifications of the pandemic such as deteriorating mental health, increased substance abuse, reduced access to medical care, and increased family violence.

Alongside the unprecedented death rate, communities across the country experienced demographic changes spurred by the dramatic expansion of remote work and by closures of businesses and schools, resulting from administrative policies enacted to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Working from home enabled many metropolitan dwellers to move to smaller communities or even to relocate to states with a lower cost of living. State-to-state differences in COVID-19-related restrictions on businesses and schools further encouraged between-state migration.

Between 2017 and 2019 Randall County added 3,271 new residents while Potter County lost 3,043 residents.

Despite some evidence for these COVID-19-related population changes, the data on the demographic effects of the pandemic are still scarce and the effects cannot be reliably quantified. As of January 2021, year 2019 is the most recent year for which the data are available from the American Community Survey, the primary data source for the demographic section of this report. The 2020-2021 Community Status Report reflects the most recent data on the key population trends in Potter and Randall County for the 5-year period of 2015–2019.

The first important demographic trend is the growth in population of Randall County. Since at least 2008, the population of Randall County has been growing at the annual rate of 1.8%, reaching 137,713 residents in 2019. In just two years, 2017–2019, Randall County gained 3,271 new residents. The population of Potter County, on the other hand, continues to decline. Between 2017 and 2019, Potter County lost 3,043 residents, settling at 117,415 people in 2019.

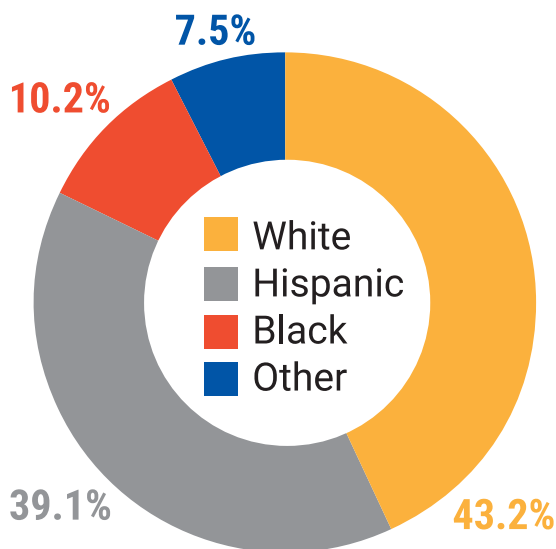


The second notable demographic trend is the growth in minority populations in both counties. In Potter County, the proportion of Hispanic residents increased from 38.3% in 2017 to 39.1% in 2019. With the continued decline in the proportion of White non-Hispanic residents (from 44.0% in 2017 to 43.2% in 2019), Hispanics are on track to become the largest ethnic group in Potter County. This expansion is even more visible among the children of Potter County. In 2019, 48.9% of Potter County’s children were ethnically Hispanic compared to 31.0% of White non-Hispanic children and to 10.2% of Black children. The Black community of Potter County is also experiencing slow but steady growth from 9.9% in 2017 to 10.2% in 2019. At the same time, the proportion of “Other” minorities, comprised of people of Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Middle Eastern descent, has decreased slightly from 7.7% in 2017 to 7.5% in 2019.

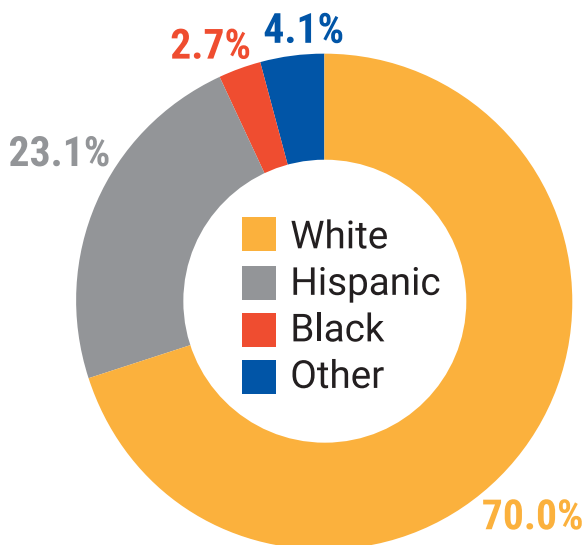
In Randall County, the proportion of minority residents is much smaller than that in Potter County but is also on the rise. In 2019, 70.0% of residents in Randall

County were White non-Hispanic, but their proportion has decreased by 2.1% since 2017 and by 16.0% since 2008. The remaining 30.0% of Randall County residents were minorities. Hispanics, once again, were the largest minority at 23.1%. The proportion of Hispanic residents in Randall County grew by 6.0% in just 2 years (2017–2019). Black and “Other” minorities comprised 2.7% and 4.1%, respectively, and their proportion in Randall County’s population fluctuated slightly between 2015 and 2019.

RACIAL COMPOSITION
Potter County, 2019
American Community Survey



RACIAL COMPOSITION
Randall County, 2019
American Community Survey



The third noteworthy demographic trend is the persistent aging of the population in both Potter and Randall counties. In Potter County, the proportion of population over 65 years of age expanded from 11.6% in 2017 to 13.4% in 2019, a 15.5% increase. In Randall County, the proportion of senior citizens grew from 14.7% in 2017 to 15.8% in 2019, a 7.5% increase. Concurrently, the proportion of people of working age, 18-65 years old, shrunk by 2.6% in Potter County and by 2.1% in Randall County. The proportion of children in both counties remained stable, at 27.3% in Potter County and 24.0% in Randall County in 2019.

EDUCATION

Education has taken a backseat in 2020, as communities around the country have focused on battling the pandemic. With COVID-19 restrictions in place, schools, parents, and students had to scramble to find ways to continue learning with shelter-in-place restrictions and new health and safety regulations. The rapid transition to digital instruction, virtual classrooms, and limited opportunities for socialization undoubtedly had a plethora of effects on everyone involved in the education process, but especially on children. These effects are still to be measured and reported, as state and local education agencies return to operating at full capacity. The 2020-2021 Community Status Report highlights the most recently available education data, which, with the exception of a few indicators, comes from the 2018-2019 school year and does not reflect the effects of the pandemic.

Preschool enrollment for 3- and 4-year-olds

The Annie E. Casey Foundation provides county-level data on preschool enrollment for 3- and 4-year-olds, in their annual KIDS COUNT report. The report only contains information from publicly subsidized, early childhood education programs, which serve predominantly low-income families. Although these data are useful in understanding preschool enrollment of the most vulnerable children, they do not reflect the over-

all enrollment of children in families of all income levels. As expected, the differences between communities, with respect to enrolled rates, are related to the levels of childhood poverty but can also be influenced by other factors such as funding and the availability of childcare providers.

Table 1. Pre-K Enrollment for 3- and 4-year-olds

	Texas	Lubbock Co	Potter Co	Randall Co
2015 - 2016	28.2%	22.1%	50.9%	4.1%
2016 - 2017	28.4%	21.5%	49.3%	3.9%
2017 - 2018	28.3%	27.3%	54.4%	3.4%
2018 - 2019	28.6%	27.9%	55.5%	3.3%
2019 - 2020	29.8%	28.0%	54.5%	3.8%

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Report, 2020

In the 2019-2020 school year, Potter County had the highest enrollment in subsidized preschool programs among the four regions compared in this report (Texas, Lubbock County, Potter County, and Randall County). Potter County's enrollment rate was 54.5%, compared to 29.8% in Texas, 28.0% in Lubbock County, and 3.8% in Randall County. Noteworthy, the childhood poverty rates essentially followed the same pattern in 2019, though the differences in the poverty rates between the regions were less dramatic than the differences in the enrollment rates. In 2019, Potter County had the highest rate of childhood poverty at 25.3%, followed by Lubbock County at 23.8%, Texas at 18.9%, and Randall County at 13.7%.

Compared to the previously reported 2015-2016 school year, the pre-K enrollment rate in the 2019-2020 school year increased by 7.1% in Potter County, by 5.7% in Texas, and by 26.7% in Lubbock County. In Randall County, where the enrollment rate has historically been very low, the enrollment further declined by 7.3%, reaching the aforementioned 3.8% in the 2019-2020 school year. Based on the childhood poverty data, the enrollment in publicly subsidized childcare in Lubbock and Randall counties appears lower than one would anticipate. One potential explanation for Randall County would be that the availability of childcare spots has not caught up yet with the growing childhood poverty rate. On the other hand, Potter County's rate may appear somewhat elevated. The high enroll-

ment rate in Potter County can be attributed to the eligibility of a large proportion of residents to enroll their children in public preschools among families whose annual income is slightly more than the regional poverty threshold, which was (\$20,5781 in 2019 for a family with one child under 18). According to the American Community Survey, 32.1% of households in Potter County earned less than \$25,000 in 2019, and another 28.8% earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000. Depending on the size of the household and the number of children under 18, a substantial number of children in Potter County could qualify for publicly subsidized childcare.

K-12 Attendance

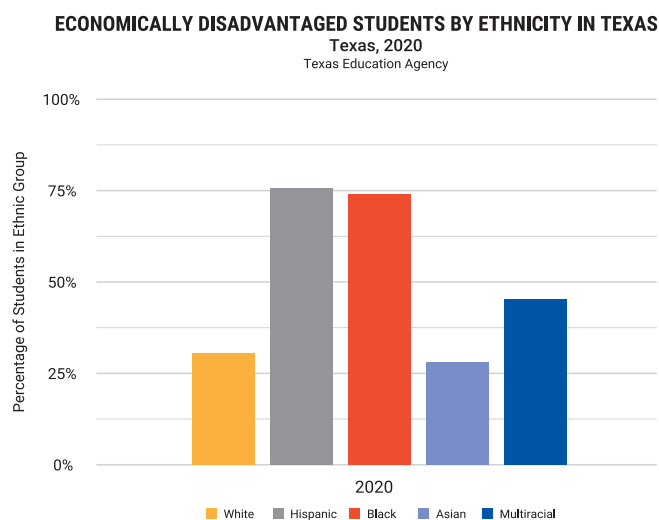


Attendance is crucial to any successful academic endeavor. Overall, the state, the region, and both school districts had robust attendance in the 2018-2019 school year. In Amarillo ISD, attendance was at 94.8%, slightly lower than in Region 16 (95.3%) and in the state (95.4%). In Canyon ISD, the attendance was at 95.70%, higher than in the region and the state. When examined by race and ethnicity, school attendance was the highest among Asian students in both school districts (96.4% in Amarillo ISD and 97.0% in Canyon ISD). In Amarillo ISD, White students had the second highest attendance at 95.2%, while Hispanic and Black students attended at 94.4%. In Canyon ISD, African American students had the second highest attendance, at 96.1%, followed by White and Hispanic students at 95.7% and 95.5%, respectively.

K-12 Economically Disadvantaged Students

According to Texas Education Agency (TEA), students are considered “economically disadvantaged” if they qualify for free or reduced school lunches under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program². Neighborhoods with higher poverty rates, like Potter County, in which Amarillo ISD is located, will have more economically disadvantaged students in their schools. As expected, Amarillo ISD had the highest proportion of economically disadvantaged students in the 2018-2019 school year (67.9%), followed by Texas (60.2%), Region 16 (59.5%), and Canyon ISD (31.5%). Compared to the previous school year, the proportion of economically disadvantaged students has not changed significantly for Region 16 and Amarillo ISD, but it has increased in Canyon ISD and Texas by 7.5% and 2.4% respectively.

The proportion of students in the economically disadvantaged category varied by race. In 2020, the ethnic group with the greatest proportion of economically disadvantaged students was Hispanic, at 75.7%, closely followed by Black, at 74.1%. The multi-ethnic group had 45.3% of students in the economically disadvantaged category, while White and Asian students had 30.4% and 28.1% in the economically disadvantaged category, respectively.



K-12 Performance

The most recent school performance data from the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), put forth by the TEA, is available for the 2018-2019 school

year. The TEA website notes that the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores and other important indicators of academic performance will not be available for the 2019-2020 school year, because the STAAR was canceled in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. Therefore, the academic performance section of the TARP for the 2019-2020 school year will not be updated.



When considering academic performance, there are two important milestones that predict the long-term outcomes for learning. The first one is the reading level attained at the end of the third grade. Research demonstrates that reading proficiency at the end of third grade is the foundation for learning for the rest of one’s school life³. The second important milestone is eighth-grade performance in math and English. Most students who drop out of high school do so in the ninth grade⁴. Therefore, eighth-grade scores reflect the performance of all of the students in the school cohort, including those who will subsequently drop out of high school.

Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD have historically outperformed both Region 16 and the state on third- and eighth-grade performance measures in math and English. In the 2018-2019 school year, 80.0% of third graders in Amarillo ISD and 83.0% of third graders in Canyon ISD passed the reading test with scores that ‘approached or exceeded their grade level’⁵ for reading; only 76.0% in Texas and 78.0% in Region 16 could boast of this achievement. Compared to the previous 2017-2018 school year, the reading performance in

both ISDs declined slightly, by 1.2% for Amarillo ISD and by 3.5% for Canyon ISD, but both still remained above the state and regional levels.

Similarly for math, both Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD third-grade students outperformed the region and the state: 81.0% of students in Amarillo ISD and 87.0% of students in Canyon ISD had STAAR math scores that approached or exceeded their grade level, compared to 79.0% in Texas and 80.0% in Region 16. Compared to the 2017-2018 school year, third graders in Amarillo ISD scored on the same level as did the previous cohort, whereas in Canyon ISD 2.2% fewer third graders passed the 'approaching or above grade level' criteria.

Third-graders in Amarillo and Canyon ISDs consistently outperform their peers in Region 16 and the state in reading and math.

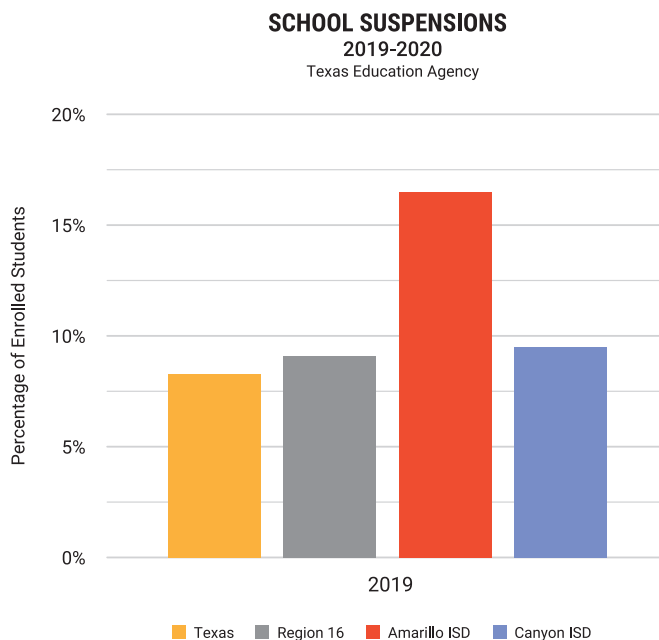
For eighth-grade English, Amarillo ISD performed slightly worse than the Region, with 85.0% of students in the district as compared to 86.0% in Region 16 earning scores that approached or exceeded the grade level. Canyon ISD, on the other hand, performed better than both the region and the state, at 88.0%. Compared to the previous school year, Amarillo ISD's performance remained the same, while Canyon ISD's performance dropped by 2.2%.

In terms of eighth-grade math scores, Amarillo ISD performed better than Region 16 (94.0% vs. 92.0%), while Canyon ISD performed at the same level as the Region (92.0%). Compared to the year before, both ISDs improved their performance by 2.2%.

K-12 Disciplinary Actions

Research indicates that poor academic performance and school suspensions are strongly associated⁶. On one hand, academic difficulties can trigger misbehavior and thereby lead to suspensions. On the other hand, an absence from class due to suspension can lead to further decline in academic performance⁷. Experts recommend implementing positive behavior

modification strategies to improve school performance and reduce the need for suspensions⁸.



In Amarillo ISD, a total 16.5% of students experienced some sort of school suspension, while in Canyon ISD, 9.5% of students were suspended. Both of these rates were higher than the rates in Region 16 (9.1%) and the state (8.3%).

Table 2. *In and Out-of-School Suspensions by Ethnicity and Race in Amarillo and Canyon ISDs, 2019-2020*

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions	
	Amarillo ISD	Canyon ISD	Amarillo ISD	Canyon ISD
All Students	9.7%	7.6%	4.7%	0.8%
White	8.2%	7.1%	3.5%	0.7%
Black	17.9%	7.8%	9.8%	0.0%
Hispanic/Latino	9.5%	9.2%	4.8%	1.2%
Other*	6.2%	4.3%	6.9%	N/A

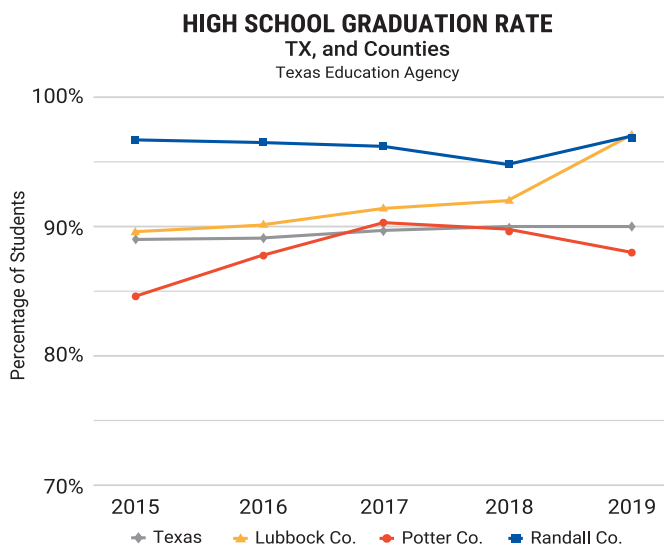
Note: *Other: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, two or more races; Not reported for out-of-school suspensions
Source: Discipline Report 2019-2020, Texas Education Agency

In the 2019-2020 school year, Amarillo ISD reduced the rate of in-school suspension by 14.5% and the rate of out-of-school suspension by a remarkable 27.0%. Minority students in Amarillo ISD experienced the greatest reduction in suspensions. Among African American students, the reductions in suspension rates were 18.9% and 23.3% for in- and out-of-school suspensions,

respectively. For Hispanic students, the reductions were 15.0% and 27.5% for in- and out-of-school suspensions. For students of Asian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, American Indian, Middle Eastern, and multiethnic descent (combined into the “Other” category), the reduction was 29.5% for in-school suspension, while out-of-school suspensions were too few to be reported. Among White students, the rates of in- and out-of-school suspension were reduced by 7.6% and 21.2%.

In the 2019-2020 school year, suspension rates fell considerably in both school districts. It is unclear to what extent these reductions have resulted from qualitative change in the approaches to school discipline and to what extent they were driven by the school closure between March and May of 2020. Future disciplinary data will shed light on whether these positive changes will be sustained in the long term.

High School Graduation



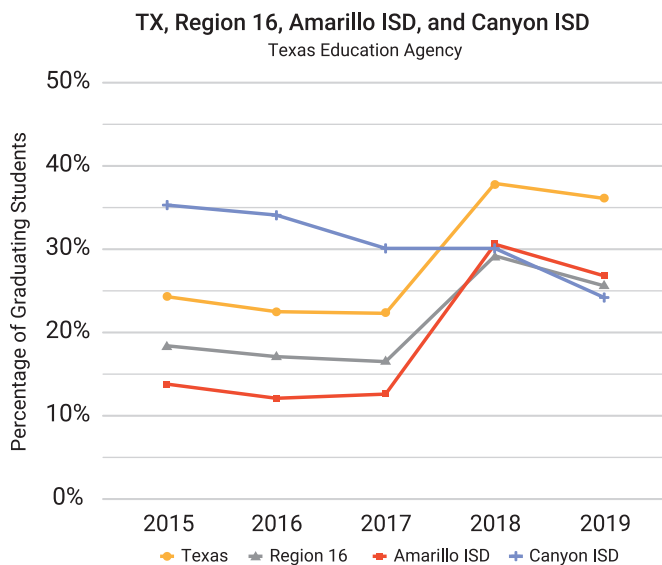
High school graduation is a crucial developmental step in transition to independent adulthood. In the 2018-2019 school year, 88.0% of high school seniors in Potter County graduated from high school, compared to 89.8% the year before (a 2.0% decrease in the graduation rate). Potter County’s graduation rate was 2.2% lower than the state rate of 90.0%, and 9.3% lower than the graduation rate in Randall County. In Randall County, the graduation rate improved in the 2018-2019 school year, increasing from 94.8% to 97.0% (a 2.3% increase). Randall

County’s graduation rate was 7.8% higher than the state rate and 10.2% higher than the rate in Potter County.

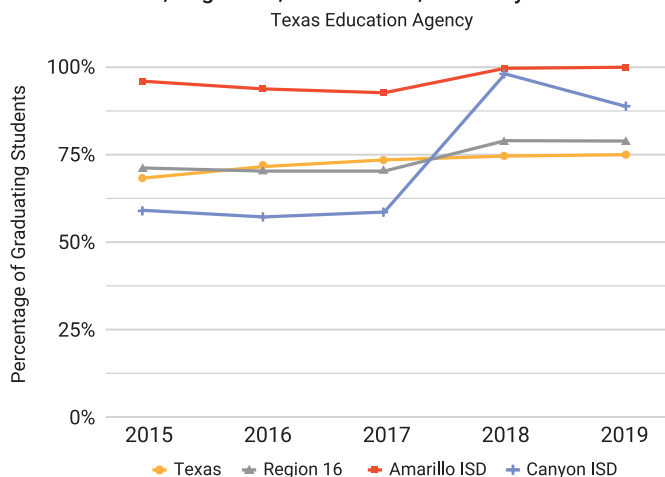
SAT/ACT

SAT/ACT participation was very high in both school districts in the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years. Amarillo ISD has been offering college entrance exams free of charge to its students since 2013. In the 2018-2019 school year, the district reached a remarkable 100% participation in ACT/SAT. Following the example of Amarillo ISD, Canyon ISD began to offer ACT to its juniors at no charge in the 2017-2018 school year. As a result, ACT/SAT participation increased by 67.4% in a single year, reaching 98.1% participation. In the 2018-2019 school year, the participation rate

GRADE 12 STUDENTS WHO SCORED AT OR ABOVE CRITERIA ON SAT/ACT



SAT/ACT PARTICIPATION AMONG GRADE 12 STUDENTS



dropped to 88.8%, but still remained well above the 58.6% in the year prior to the cost waiver.



Typically, participation and performance on the SAT/ACT are inversely related. This means that high participation rates usually result in lower performance and vice versa. When an exam is offered free of charge, it becomes accessible to all students who want to take it, regardless of ability or preparation. With a larger pool of students taking the test, the difference in performance is likely to be greater and average scores lower because of the participation of students who typically would not take the test. When the student (or parent) must bear the cost of the exam, participation rates are smaller, and the pool of students tends to be

In Amarillo ISD, 26.8% of high school students took and passed either SAT or ACT, compared to 21.8% in Canyon ISD and 27.1% in the state.

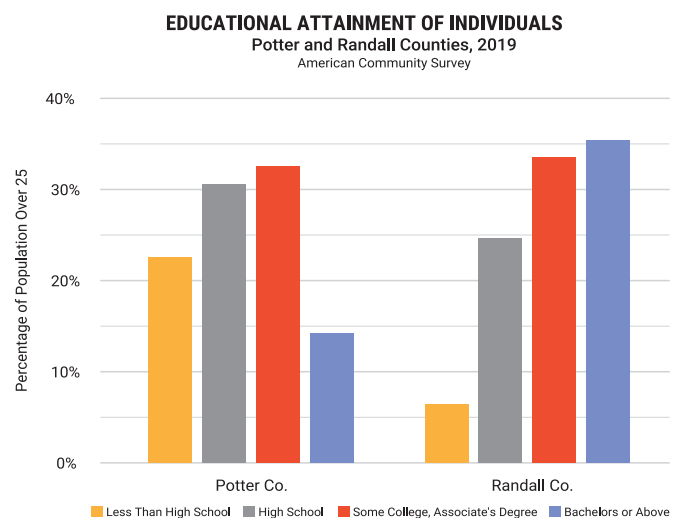
academically stronger. Remarkably, this pattern was not true for either of the school districts. Both ISDs managed to improve or maintain performance while increasing test participation in the 2017-2018 school year. Even though in the subsequent 2018-2019 school year test performance declined, the overall effect of the expansion of participation was profound. In the 2016-2017 school year, the proportion of students who took and passed the ACT/SAT (what this report refers to as the Participation and Performance Rate [PPR]) was 11.7% in Amarillo ISD and 17.6% in Canyon ISD. Considering that the main goal is to maximize the number of students who take and pass the ACT/SAT (the PPR), both school districts improved their outcomes from the 2016-2017 to the 2018-2019 school

year. The PPR for ACT/SAT increased over two school years by 129.4% in Amarillo ISD, reaching 26.8% PPR, and by 21.8% in Canyon ISD, reaching 21.5% PPR. Despite these gains, both Amarillo and Canyon ISDs remained below the 27.1% PPR for ACT/SAT in Texas in the 2018-2019 school year. Nevertheless, the school districts are making great strides in the right direction.

Educational Attainment

Potter and Randall counties continue to vary greatly in the levels of education of its residents. While in Potter County, only 45.1% of the residents had an education beyond high school in 2019, in Randall County the majority of the residents (68.9%) had a degree beyond a high school diploma. Furthermore, in Randall County, 35.4% of residents had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to only 14.3% in Potter County.

The general level of education among people of working age increased since 2017 in both Potter and Randall counties. In Potter County, the proportion of people without a high school diploma decreased from 23.9% in 2017 to 22.6% in 2019 (a 5.5% reduction), while the proportion of people with an education beyond high school grew from 45.1% in 2017 to 46.9% in 2019 (a 4.0% increase). Similarly, in Randall County the proportion of people without a high school diploma decreased from 6.8% in 2017 to 6.5% in 2019 (a 4.4% reduction), while the proportion of residents with an education beyond high school grew modestly from 68.3% in 2017 to 68.5% in 2019 (a 0.9% increase).



INCOME

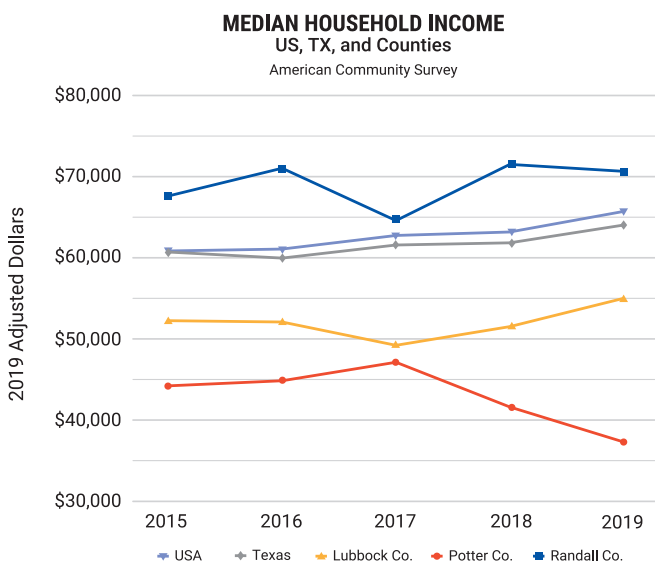
The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically reshaped the economic well-being of many Americans. A recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research released in August 2020 found that in April 2020, unemployment increased by 8%, which constituted the sharpest one-month increase in US history. During the

In April of 2020, U.S. unemployment rose by 8%, which constituted the sharpest one-month increase in national history.

same time period, earnings fell by 10%.⁹ Subsequently, the expansion of the unemployment insurance program and the rollout of the Economic Impact payments softened the blows to employment and income but not enough to return to pre-COVID-19 levels of economic well-being. The full impact of COVID-19 on the economic well-being of America, and more specifically, on the economic well-being of Potter and Randall counties, is yet to be determined. As of January 2021, the year 2019 is the most recent year for which county-level data on median income and other economic indicators are available from the American Community Survey.

Median Income

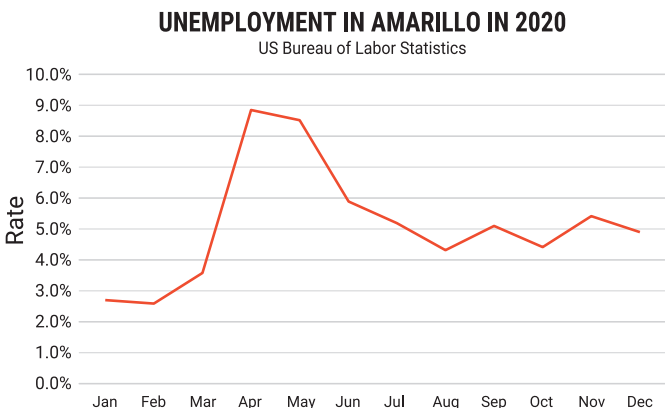
The median household income in Potter County in 2019 hit a seven-year low. In 2019, the median income of



\$37,297 was 4.0% lower than in 2013 and 20.9% lower than in 2017 (all values in this section are reported in the 2019 inflation-adjusted dollars). During the same two-year period (2017-2019), the median income in Randall County grew from \$64,582 to \$70,651, a 9.4% increase. Consequently, in 2019 the median income of Randall County was almost double that of Potter County.

Unemployment

Unlike other community indicators that tend to lag one or two years behind, 'rapid' unemployment data are available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics with only a two-month lag. At the beginning of 2020, the unemployment rate in the Amarillo Metropolitan Area was 2.7%. The rate rose rapidly to 8.8% in April, and then dropped to 5.9% in June. Since June, the rate has remained under 6.0%. In December 2020, the rate dropped to 4.9%, but was nearly twice the January rate of 2.7%. According to the projections from the Congressional Budget Office, the long-term, post-COVID-19, unemployment rate is likely to remain higher than the pre-COVID-19 rate.



50 Jobs that Pay a Living Wage

One of the unique features of the Amarillo economy is a plethora of opportunities to earn a living wage without a college degree. A "living wage" is defined in accordance with the budget calculator provided by Every Texan (formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities) as the amount of money a family needs to earn to cover basic needs, such as housing, food, education, transportation, and emergency savings. If a family has access to employer-funded health insurance, the living wage for a family of four in Amarillo amounts to \$39,864 per year.

Table 3. Occupations that Pay a Living Wage in the Amarillo Area in 2019

Occupation	Annual Wages in Amarillo	Growth in Texas	Entry Degree Required
Manufacturing			
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$ 45,180	13%	Post-Secondary Certificate
Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	\$ 46,640	14%	Post-Secondary Certificate
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	\$ 46,870	19%	High School Diploma
Machinists	\$ 50,140	11%	High School Diploma
Millwrights**	\$ 50,400	13%	High School Diploma
Robotics Technicians*	\$ 52,000	13%	Associate's Degree
Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians*	\$ 52,000	13%	Associate's Degree
Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	\$ 52,630	9%	Associate's Degree
Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	\$ 58,320	16%	High School Diploma
Mechanical Engineering Technologists and Technicians	\$ 62,940	11%	Associate's Degree
Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door	\$ 65,580	15%	High School Diploma
Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technicians	\$ 70,510	8%	Associate's Degree
Healthcare			
Massage Therapists	\$ 42,340	28%	Post-Secondary Certificate
Dental Laboratory Technicians	\$ 43,040	26%	High School Diploma
MRI Technicians	\$ 58,050	19%	Associate's Degree
Radiology Technicians	\$ 58,310	16%	Associate's Degree
Cardiovascular Technologists	\$ 60,270	16%	Associate's Degree
Occupational Therapy Assistants	\$ 62,960	36%	Associate's Degree
Physical Therapist Assistants	\$ 64,530	29%	Associate's Degree
Dental Hygienists	\$ 70,380	35%	Associate's Degree
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	\$ 72,020	26%	Associate's Degree
Nuclear Medicine Technologists	\$ 77,360	14%	Associate's Degree
Medical Equipment Repairers	\$ 89,170	12%	Associate's Degree
Construction			
Sheet Metal Workers	\$ 41,960	13%	High School Diploma
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	\$ 42,210	13%	High School Diploma/ Job Training
Construction and Building Inspectors	\$ 51,340	14%	High School Diploma
Electricians	\$ 54,080	14%	High School Diploma
Boilermakers (installation and repair)	\$ 58,990	11%	High School Diploma
Elevator and Escalator Install and Repairs*	\$ 82,250	12%	High School Diploma
Safety			
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	\$ 49,170	26%	Associate's Degree
Private Detectives or Investigators	\$ 57,550	19%	High School Diploma
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	\$ 61,050	7%	Associate's Degree
Firefighters	\$ 62,630	10%	High School Diploma/ Job Training
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	\$ 69,050	9%	High School Diploma
Fire Inspectors and Investigators	\$ 70,780	10%	High School Diploma/ Job Training

Occupation	Annual Wages in Amarillo	Growth in Texas	Entry Degree Required
Services			
Chefs and Head Cooks	\$ 56,550	21%	High School Diploma
Morticians, Undertakers, and Funeral Arrangers	\$ 52,590	4%	Associate's Degree
Food Service Managers	\$ 65,120	21%	High School Diploma
Real Estate Agents	\$ 92,580	19%	High School Diploma
Business			
Insurance Sales Agents	\$ 50,880	18%	High School Diploma
First-Line Supervisors of Helpers, Laborers, and Material Movers	\$ 53,350	15%	High School Diploma
Sales Representative Wholesale	\$ 55,370	15%	High School Diploma
Aerospace			
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	\$ 48,900	8%	Post-Secondary Certificate
Aerospace Engineering and Operations Technologists and Technicians	\$ 65,710	8%	Post-Secondary Certificate
Commercial Pilots	\$ 94,400	13%	Post-Secondary Certificate
IT			
Web Developers and Digital Interface Designers	\$ 40,150	21%	Associate's Degree
Computer User Support Specialists	\$ 44,880	19%	Associate's Degree
Other			
Wind Turbine Service Technicians	\$ 49,840	83%	Post-Secondary Certificate
Agricultural Inspectors	\$ 45,500	8%	High School Diploma
Transportation Inspectors	\$ 91,110	12%	Associate's Degree

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics and O*NET OnLine https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_11100.htm

* only Texas data is available

** a person who designs or builds mills or who maintains mill machinery

The table above contains the list of 50 occupations in the Amarillo area with three attractive features: they yield a living wage or more, they do not require a bachelor's degree, and they have better than average projected job growth in the state of Texas.

Wind turbine service technicians have an 83% projected job growth in Texas.

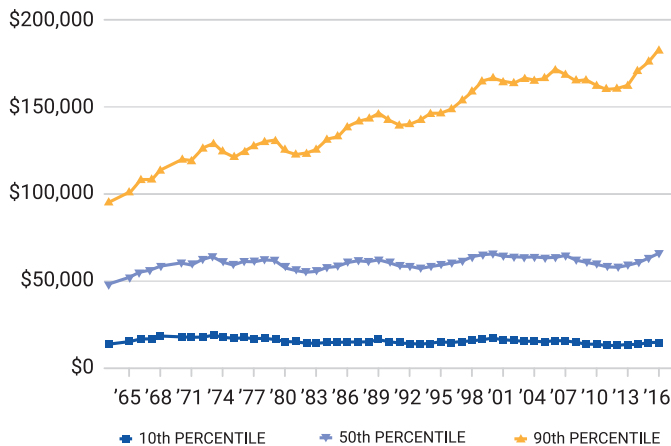
The two primary industries in Amarillo that offer well-paying jobs without requiring a bachelor's degree are manufacturing and healthcare. For example, electrical and electronics engineering technicians and diagnostic medical sonographers typically earn over \$70,000 a year and are expected to hold only an associate's degree for entry-level positions. Construction and safety industries also offer plentiful opportunities for individuals without a

bachelor's degree. For example, in the construction industry, elevator and escalator installation and repair technicians typically earn over \$80,000 dollars per year. Among all sectors, the top three well-paid occupations are transportation inspectors (earning \$91,110), real estate agents (earning \$92,580), and commercial pilots (earning \$94,400). The top three occupations with the greatest projected job growth are dental hygienists (35% projected job growth), occupational therapy assistants (36% projected growth), and wind turbine service technicians (83% projected job growth). Much like the rest of the economy, these projections are likely be affected by the pandemic and by political changes in the United States. Nevertheless, even in the midst of a pandemic, healthcare and wind energy will continue to present many lucrative opportunities for high school graduates in the Amarillo area.

Economic Inequality

Economic inequality is growing in the United States. Some degree of economic inequality is expected in any society. However, when economic inequality reaches a certain degree, large segments of society can experience diminished economic mobility and increased socio-economic segregation. In the long-term, high economic inequality may not only affect the economic growth of a nation but also lead to political unrest and societal disintegration. It is estimated that since 1980, economic inequality in the United States has increased by 20%¹⁰. Increasingly greater shares of both income and wealth in the United States have been transferred to the wealthiest Americans.

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME, 1963-2019

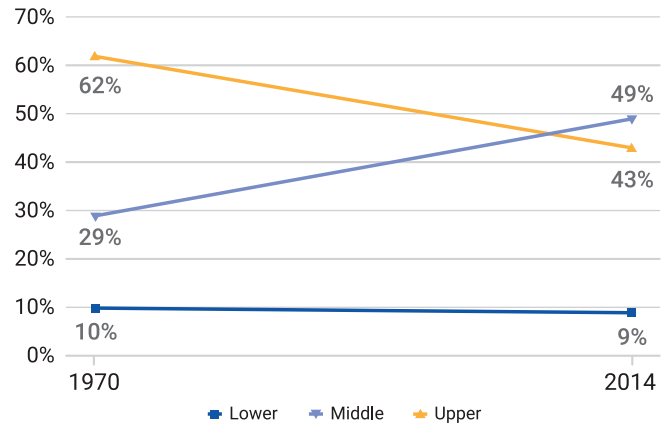


Sources: Karen Smith, Urban Institute's tabulations from the Current Population Survey 1963–2017.

Between 1970 and 2018, the share of national income earned by the middle class (defined as those who earned between \$48,500 and \$145,500 in 2018¹¹, which represented 52% of American adults), shrank from 62% to 43%, while the share of the national income earned by the upper-income group (those who earned over \$145,500, which represented 19% of American adults) increased from 29% to 43%. At the same time, the share of the national income earned by the low-income group (those who made less than \$48,500, which represented the remaining 29% of the population) shrank from 10% in 1970 to 9% in 2018.

Income from employment is only one of many ways to receive financial compensation. In addition to employ-

SHARE OF U.S. AGGREGATE HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1971 and 2015

Note: The assignment to income tiers is based on size-adjusted household incomes in the year prior to the survey year. Shares may not add to 100% due to rounding.

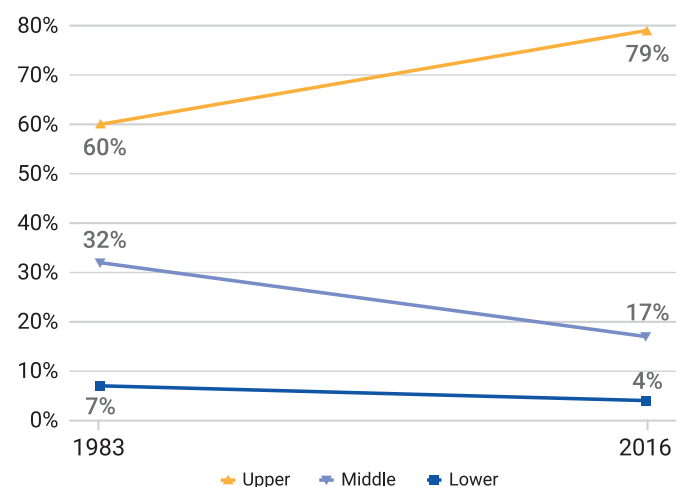
ment-earned income, individuals can receive financial gains from investments, value of owned assets (houses, cars, land, etc.), gifts, inheritance, subsidies,

The share of the national wealth owned by the middle class shrank from 32% in 1980 to only 17% in 2016.

and public assistance. Hence, to accurately measure the degree of economic inequality, it is important to not only consider the gaps in earnings but also the differences in cumulative financial well-being.

The term “wealth,” defined as the value of all assets minus all debts, is often used to describe an individual’s total financial well-being. For aggregate wealth,

SHARE OF U.S. AGGREGATE WEALTH



the proportion held by the middle class shrank from 32% in 1980 to 17% in 2016, while the proportion of wealth owned by the upper class increased from 60% to 79%¹³. The proportion of national wealth earned by low-income individuals, which is comprised of 29% of U.S. adults, shrank from 7% to 4%.

Economic Inequality and Race

The inequality gap is even more pronounced when the data are broken down by race. For a White man born between 1950 and 1954, the earned average lifetime wages are \$2,706,000. These wages are 52% higher than the average lifetime earnings of a Black man (\$1,780,000) and 35% higher than the average lifetime earnings of a Hispanic man (\$2,011,000)¹⁴.

Even though the earnings (income) gap between races in the United States is significant, the wealth gap is truly staggering. In 1983, a median White family had 8 times more wealth (as opposed to 1.5 times income) than a median Black family and 11 times more wealth than a median Hispanic family. In the subsequent 20 years, the inequality gap continued to expand for the Black community and shrank somewhat for the Hispanic community. In 2016, a median White family had 10 times more wealth than a median Black family had and 8 times more wealth than a median Hispanic family had. Therefore, even though for every \$1 earned over a Black man's lifetime a typical White man earned

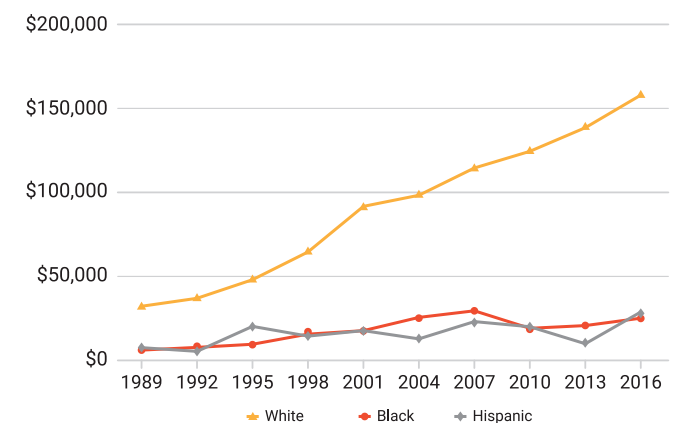
\$1.5, for every \$1 of wealth owned by a typical Black family a typical White family held \$10 of wealth.

In 2016, a median White family had 10 times more wealth than a median Black family.

Economists have identified four primary sources of wealth inequality: homeownership, liquid retirement accounts, student loans, and federal asset-building policies.

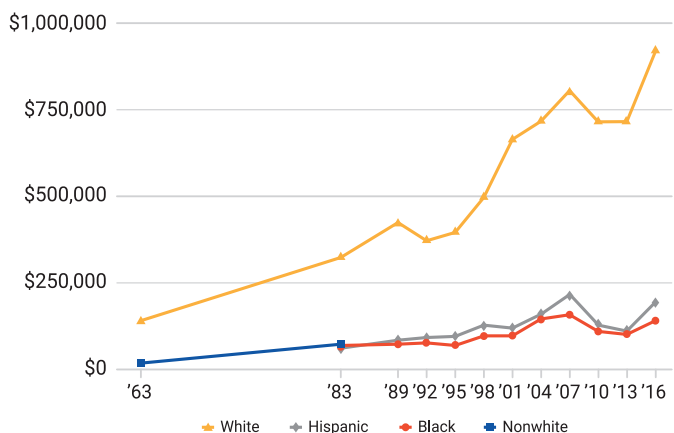
In 1976, 68% of White families were homeowners compared to 44% of Black families and 43% of Hispanic families. From 1976 to 2016, the rate of homeownership remained the same for White families (68%), increased from 43% to 46% for Hispanic families, and declined from 44% to 42% for Black families¹⁵.

AVERAGE FAMILY LIQUID RETIREMENT SAVINGS, 1989-2019



Sources: Urban Institute calculations from Survey of Consumer Finances 1989-2016
 Note: 2016 dollars. Liquid retirement savings include dollars in accounts such as 401(k), 403(b), and IRAs. Median liquid retirement savings for Black and Hispanic families were zero from 1989 to 2013. Median liquid retirement savings for whites were zero through the mid-1990s, about \$1,500 in 1998, and \$10,000 in 2016.

AVERAGE FAMILY WEALTH BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 1963-2019

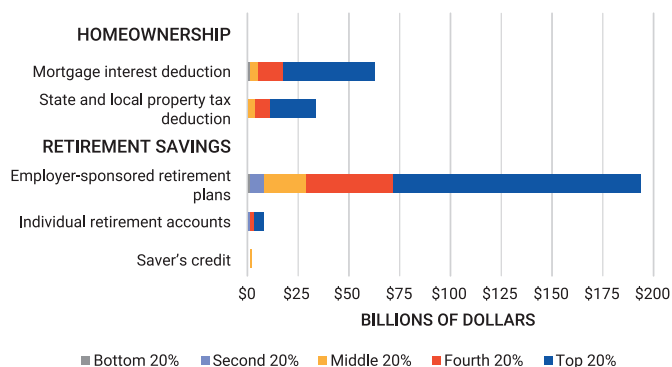


Sources: Urban Institute calculations from Survey of Financial Characteristics of Consumers 1962 (December 31), Survey of Changes in Family Finances 1963, and Survey of Consumer Finances 1983-2016
 Note: 2016 dollars. No comparable data are available between 1963 and 1983. Black/Hispanic distinction

Liquid retirement accounts, such as 401(k)s and IRAs, are the second major source of wealth in the United States. These investment vehicles became popular in the 1990s and continue to be the primary way to fund retirement. In 1989, an average White family held \$32,649 in liquid retirement savings accounts compared to \$5,954 held by an average Black family and \$7,122 held by an average Hispanic family. By 2016, the average White family owned \$157,884 in liquid investment accounts, while the average Black and Hispanic families owned \$25,212 and \$28,581, respectively. The differences in these types of investments

increased in 27 years with White families owning 5.5 times more than Black families in 1989 to 6.3 times more than Black families in 2016. Similarly, White families went from owning 4.6 times more than Hispanic families in 1989 to 5.5 times more than Hispanic families in 2016.

SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF SELECT ASSET-BUILDING TAX SUBSIDIES, 2017



Source: Updated estimates from **Steuerle et al. (2014)**.
 Note: "Income" refers to the Tax Policy Center's "expanded cash income" measure, which is described in **Rosenberg (2013)**.

The next source of wealth differences are student loans. In 1989, the typical burden of student loans was \$1,100 dollars and was nearly identical for all racial groups. By 2016, an average White family carried \$11,108 in student loans, compared to \$14,225 for a typical Black family and \$7,494 for a typical Hispanic family. Data show that White families are five times more likely to receive large gifts and inheritance than are Black families and that these funds are frequently used to pay for college education. At the same time, Black students are half as likely to graduate from college as are White students¹⁶, which can significantly limit Black families' capacity to pay back student loans.

72.6% of all mortgage tax deductions go to the individuals earning over \$221,846 per year.

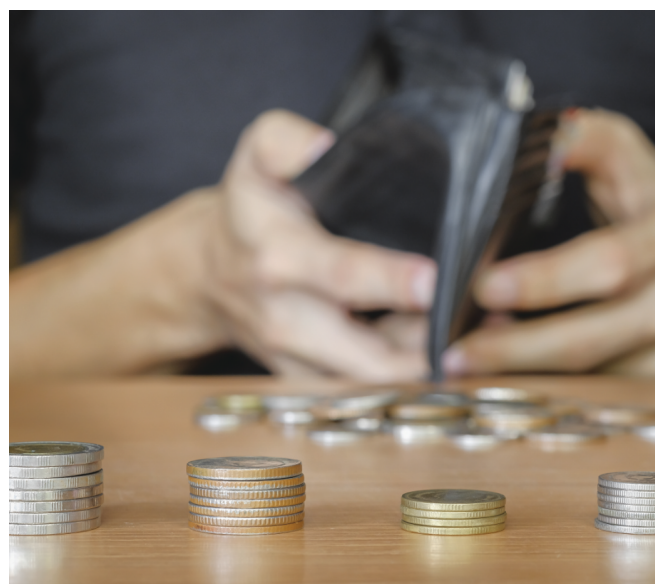
The fourth significant source of racial disparities in wealth is the federal asset-building policies that disproportionately favor high-income earners, who also tend to be White. The U.S. government spends \$400 billion each year to support asset building, primarily through homeownership and retirement subsidies.

Homeownership subsidies include mortgage subsidies and local and state property tax deductions. Of all mortgage subsidies in 2017, 72.6% went to the top quintile (top 20%) of income earners: those earning over \$221,846 per year¹⁷. The income earners in the bottom two quintiles, the bottom 40%, who were making less than \$47,110 per year in 2017, only received 1.2% of mortgage subsidies that year. Of all state and local property tax deductions in the same year, 66.7% went to the top quintile income earners vs. only 1.3% to the bottom two quintiles. To put things in perspective, the 2017 median income in Potter County was \$45,312. This means that if Potter County followed general U.S. trends, then the majority of its residents received little or no mortgage or property tax sub-

Saver's credit, the only asset-building subsidy that favors low-income earners, represents a meager 1% of all asset-building subsidies.

dies. The same would be true for retirement subsidies, of which over 60% went to the top income earners, and less than 5% dispersed to the bottom 40%.

The saver's credit was the only subsidy that favored low-income earners, who received 53.8% of the money allotted for this purpose. However, the entire amount of saver's credit was only 1% of the total amount of asset-building subsidies expended in 2017.



These governmental approaches to asset building exacerbate racial wealth inequality because low-income families also tend to be minority families. The median household income of Black families in 2017 was only \$39,506. This means that the majority of Black families in the United States received little or no mortgage or retirement subsidies that year. Hispanic families were earning on average \$50,347 in 2017, which placed them in the middle quintile for mortgage and retirement subsidies. The middle quintile received 6.7% of mortgage interest reductions and 10.6% of employer-sponsored retirement plans. White and Asian families earned considerably larger incomes in 2017, \$68,434 and \$81,685 respectively and, therefore, likely received the greatest proportion of asset-building subsidies.

Income Distribution

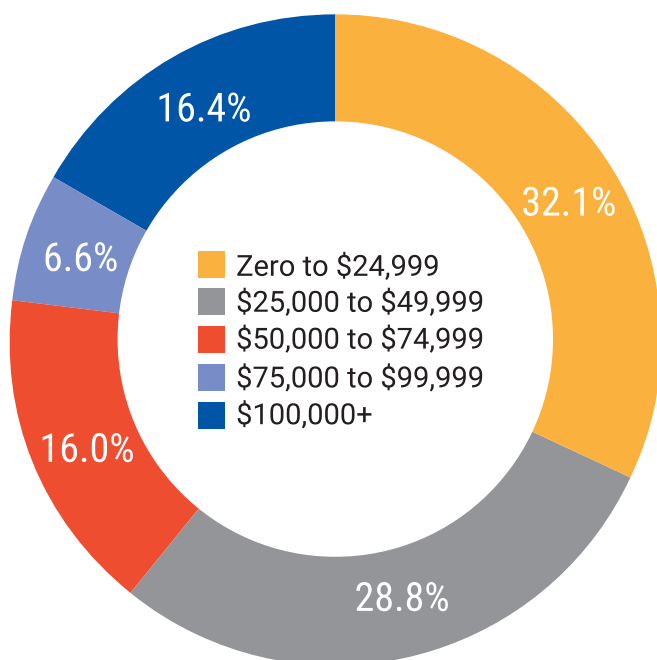
The distribution of income data from the American Community Survey suggests that the gap between

high- and low-income earners is also widening in Potter and Randall counties. In Potter County in 2019, 32.1% of residents earned less than \$25,000 per year. This income category increased 15.9% since 2017. On the other end of the annual income spectrum, 16.4% of Potter County residents earned over \$100,000. This constituted a 12.3% increase since 2017. During the same two years, the proportion of people in Potter County who were in the middle of the income distribution (making between \$50,000 and \$75,000) shrank by 29.2%. Randall County experienced similar dynamics between 2017 and 2019. In 2019, 15.5% of Randall County residents earned less than \$25,000 annually, compared to 14.4% in 2017 (a 7.6% increase in this demographic). On the other end of the spectrum, 32.0% of Randall County residents earned more than \$100,000 per year, compared to 28.4% in 2017 (a 12.7% increase). The middle segment of the income distribution, those making between \$50,000 and \$75,000, shrank in Randall County by 13.1% between 2017 and 2019.

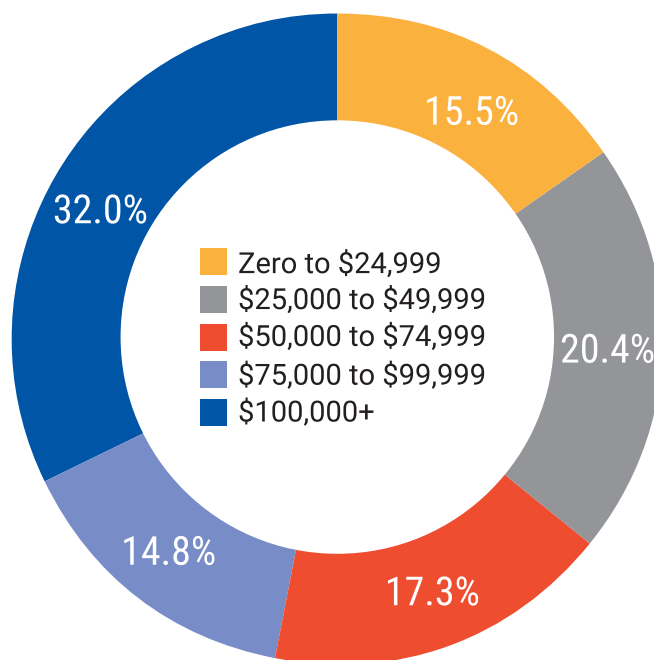
HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION

American Community Survey

Potter County, 2019



Randall County, 2019



HEALTH

Health had become the number one priority during the global pandemic. As of February 25, 2021, 14.5% of residents in Potter County had been diagnosed with COVID-19 (16,840 diagnosed cases), and among them 2.4% had succumbed to the virus (404 deaths). In Randall County, 11.6% of residents had been diagnosed with the virus (16,175 cases), and 1.7% of those (272 people) died from it. Research shows that low-income communities tend to have higher transmission and death rates than do high-income com-

The rate of death from COVID-19 was higher in Potter and Randall counties than in the state.

munities³¹. Potter County, the poorest of the four geographic areas compared in this section, had a higher infection rate than those of Texas and Randall County, but a lower infection rate than that of Lubbock County. Lubbock County had the highest COVID-19 diagnosis rate, 15.2%, but a comparatively low death rate of 1.6% (possibly due to a higher infection rate among college students). The death rate, on the other hand, was the highest in Potter County: 2.4% compared to 1.7% in Randall County, and 1.6% in Lubbock County and Texas. Randall County, the wealthiest geographic area among the four compared, had unexpectedly high rates of both infection and death from COVID-19.

Table 5. COVID-19 Diagnosis and Death Rates

	Texas	Lubbock Co	Potter Co	Randall Co
Diagnosis Rate	8.9%	15.2%	14.5%	11.6%
Death Rate	1.6%	1.6%	2.4%	1.7%

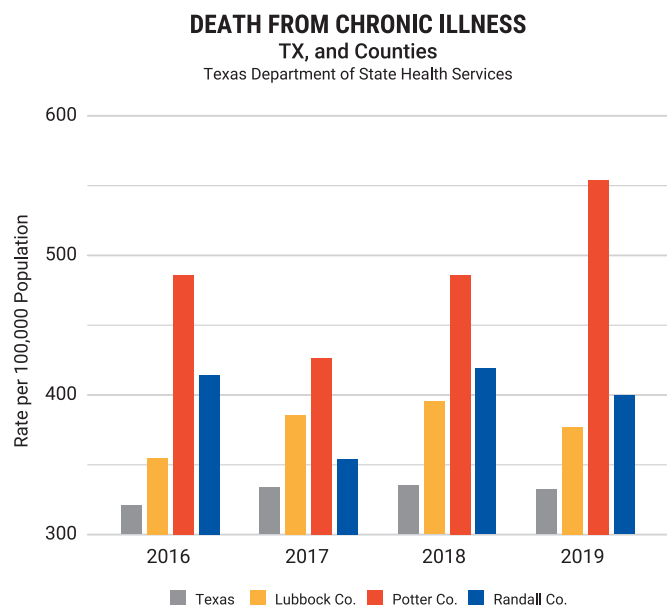
Source: The New York Times, Texas Coronavirus Cases and Death Count

Note: Diagnosis rate is a percent of total population, population estimates from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/tx/>; Death rate is a percent of all cases

Chronic Illness

According to the CDC, people who carry excess weight or have chronic illnesses are more likely to die from COVID-19 or need hospitalization than are peo-

ple who have a healthy weight and no chronic health conditions³². The elevated rates of death from COVID-19 in Potter and Randall counties in 2020 could, therefore, have been precipitated by the high rates of obesity and chronic illnesses in the Amarillo area in preceding years. According to the Amarillo Community Health Assessment, 70.5% of respondents were overweight or obese in 2018, compared to 68.6% in Texas and 64.6% in the United States. Furthermore, 21% of the respondents were diagnosed with diabetes, 8% reported having had a heart attack, and 6% reported having a stroke diagnosis. In the subsequent year, 2019, the rates of death from chronic illnesses in both Potter and Randall counties were considerably higher than in the rest of the state. Potter County's rate of death from chronic illnesses was 553.7 per 100,000 residents and Randall County's rate was 399.4 per 100,000 residents. These rates were 66.7% and 20.2% higher than in the state, for Potter and Randall counties, respectively. Compared to 2018, the rate of death from chronic illnesses increased in 2019 in Potter County, but not in Randall County. Between 2018 and 2019 the combined rate of death from heart disease, cancer, and diabetes increased by 14.0% in Potter County, and declined by 4.7% in Randall County.



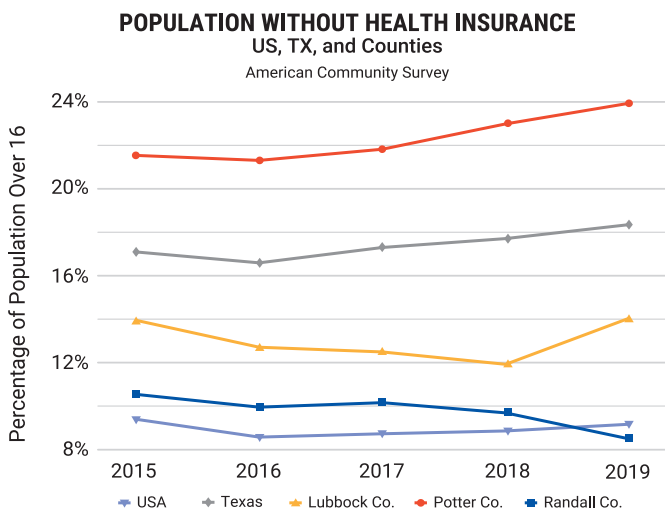
Individuals Without Health Insurance

Research shows that individuals without health insurance are less likely to seek medical treatment, more

likely to suffer from adverse health effects, and are more likely to use emergency medical services³³. During the pandemic, the issue of health insurance, or the lack thereof, moved to the forefront of public health. Unfortunately, the most recent county-level data on the number of uninsured are available from the American Community Survey for the year 2019. Concurrently, a 2020 study of insurance coverage in the United States (no county-level data were available) indicated that the uninsured rates in the United States in 2020 were not substantially different from those in 2018³⁴.



Potter County’s already high uninsured rate continued to grow in 2018 and 2019. The rate of 23.9% in Potter County in 2019 was 29.9% higher than the Texas rate and 159.8% higher than the national rate. Compared to the 2017 rate, the uninsured rate in Potter County grew by 9.6%. Randall County’s uninsured rate of 8.5% was 53.8% lower than that of the state and 7.6% lower than the national rate. From 2017 to 2019, Randall County’s uninsured rate decreased by 16.7%.



Mental Health and Access to Care

Mental Health America (MHA), a community-based, nonprofit organization, offers free mental health screening tools on its website. The MHA reports are not representative of the general population of Americans, because, in order to get screened, one has to have access to a computer, have Internet access, be literate in English, and be aware of the MHA website. Moreover, people outside of the United States can also get screened on the MHA website. However, in 2020, 2.5 million people were screened by MHA, which makes it the largest and most recent mental health survey, albeit not a representative one. For this reason, MHA provides the most current snapshot of mental health among Americans.



According to the MHA data, the mental health of Americans has worsened considerably in 2020, with over 10.3 million adults struggling with serious suicidal thoughts. This represents an increase of 450,000 people compared to the year before. The prevalence of mental illness tends to be higher in northern states (possibly due to limited sunlight). To account for that, the current Community Status Report compares Texas to two other demographically similar southern states, California and Florida, and to the nation. In 2020, Texas had better mental health outcomes and access to care than the other two southern states. In Texas, the reported rate of mental illness among adults in 2020 was 16.2%. This rate was 6.8% lower than the Florida rate of 17.4% of adults with mental illness and 12-13% lower than the

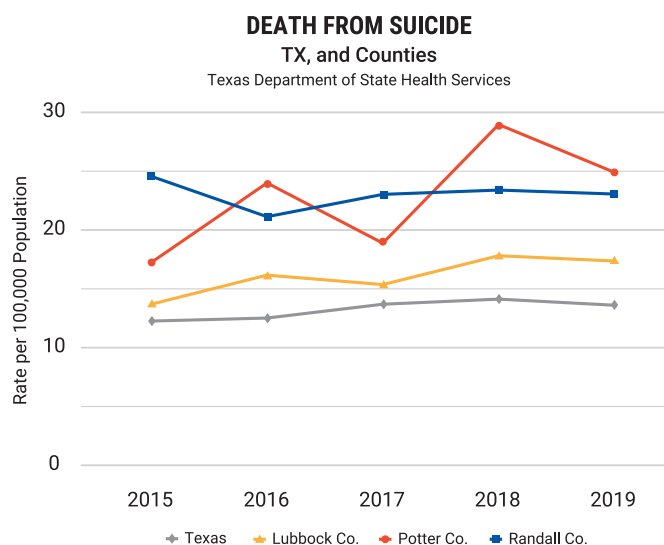
rates in California and the nation (18.5% and 18.6% of adults with mental illness, respectively).

In 2020 there were over 10.3 million adults with serious suicidal thoughts – an increase of nearly 450,000 people since 2019.

The proportion of adults with serious suicidal ideation in 2020 was at lower levels in Texas and Florida (3.7% in both states) and higher in California and the nation (4.0% and 4.2%, respectively). Lack of access to mental health treatment was also lower in Texas than in the other two southern states, but higher than in the nation on average. In Texas, 59.6% of MHA respondents did not receive treatment for their mental illness compared to 63.0% in Florida (a 5.4% difference) and compared to 65.0% in California (an 8.3% difference). The United States on average had a lower rate of non-treatment than did Texas: 57.2% of MHA responders in the United States compared to 59.6% in Texas did not receive treatment for their mental illness in 2020, (a 4.2% difference).



Suicide



Despite Texas having better mental health outcomes and access to mental health care compared to other states, both Potter and Randall counties continue to have elevated rates of death from suicide. In Potter County in 2019, the rate of death from suicide per 100,000 residents was 24.9, 83.0% higher than the Texas rate of 13.6 death per 100,000 people. Similarly, the rate of death from suicide in Randall County in 2019 was 23.1 per 100,000 people, which was 69.4% higher than the state rate. Fortunately, compared to 2018, suicide death rates in both counties decreased in 2019, by 14.0% in Potter County and by 1.5% in Randall County. In Texas, the rate also declined from 2018 to 2019, by 3.7%.

Table 6. Prevalence of Mental Illness and Access to Care

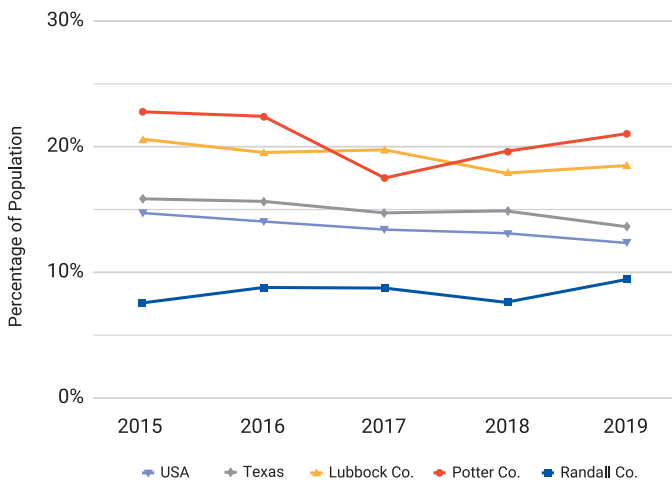
	U.S.	California	Florida	Texas
Prevalence of mental illness	18.6%	18.5%	17.4%	16.2%
Adults with serious thoughts of suicide	4.2%	4.0%	3.7%	3.7%
Adult with mental illness who did not receive treatment	57.2%	65.0%	63.0%	59.6%

Source: Mental Health America (2021). 2020 Adult Data.
<https://www.mhanational.org/issues/2020/mental-health-america-adult-data#two>

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Before the pandemic struck the country, poverty rates in the United States and Texas were on a downward trajectory. Between 2017 and 2019, the national poverty rate shrank by 8.2%, and the state poverty rate shrank by 7.5%. Despite these positive national and state trends, the poverty rates in Potter and Randall counties continued to increase. In Potter County the poverty rate increased by 20.0% between 2017 and 2019, reaching 21.0%. In Randall County the poverty rate grew by 8.1%, reaching 9.4% in 2019.

INDIVIDUALS IN POVERTY
US, TX, and Counties
American Community Survey

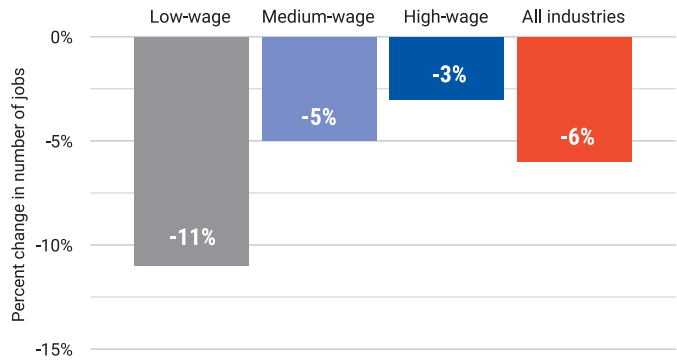


Pandemic and Poverty

The pandemic has further exacerbated global and national poverty. Poor communities have been hit with disproportionately high rates of infection and death from COVID-19. According to information from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)¹⁸ in 2020, the infection rates in poor communities can be as high as 50%, whereas in wealthy neighborhoods the rates stay at 10% on average. Low-income people are also twice as likely to die from COVID-19 as are wealthy people. The IMF identified three main reasons for high infection and mortality rates. First, low-income individuals are more likely to be essential workers (working at the grocery stores and delivery services) and less likely to have jobs that could allow for the possibility of remote

work. Second, low-income neighborhoods tend to be densely populated, which is conducive to faster spread of infection. Third, low-income individuals have limited savings and other resources that would allow them to remain in isolation for extended periods of time. Low-income individuals are also more likely to use public transportation. Furthermore, low-wage earners are much more likely to lose their jobs than are high-wage earners. According to the analysis of the Current Population Survey data by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 57% of all jobs lost in the pandemic were in industries with low paying jobs. Low-paying industries eliminated 11% of their jobs, while only 5% of medium-wage jobs were eliminated and 3% of high-paying jobs were lost.

JOB LOSSES LARGEST IN LOW-WAGE INDUSTRIES
February to December 2020



Source: CBPP calculations of Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Note: Industries were ranked by average wages in February and divided into three groups containing roughly the same number of jobs.

Economists agree that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the expansion of unemployment benefits reduced the financial burden on many low-income individuals. However, even with these economic measures in place, American families, especially those among low-income and minority groups, still experience a great degree of economic hardship.

Table 4. *Economic Hardship in 2020 in US and Texas*

Economic Hardship in 2020 in US and Texas	Percent of Households	
	US	TX
Did not have enough to eat in past 7 days	11%	13%
Children did not have enough to eat in past 7 days	20%	23%
Increase in SNAP enrollment	17%	20%
Behind on rent	18%	23%
Having difficulty covering expenses	35%	42%

Source: Household Pulse Survey by the Census Bureau, analyzed by Brynne Keith-Jennings, "Food Need Very High Compared to Pre-Pandemic Levels, Making Relief Imperative," CBPP, September 10, 2020.

According to the newly established Household Pulse Survey by the Census Bureau, 11% of households in the United States and 13% of households in Texas reported not having enough to eat in the 7 days prior to completing the survey in the fall of 2020. To the contrary, only 3.4% of U.S. households experienced food shortages before the pandemic. In addition to food shortages, 18% of households in the United States and 23% of households in Texas were behind on their rent payments. Overall, 35% of U.S. households and 42% of households in Texas reported that they did not have enough money to cover their basic expenses. As a result, both the nation and the state experienced a sharp increase in SNAP enrollment, by 17% and 20%, respectively.

Pandemic and Race

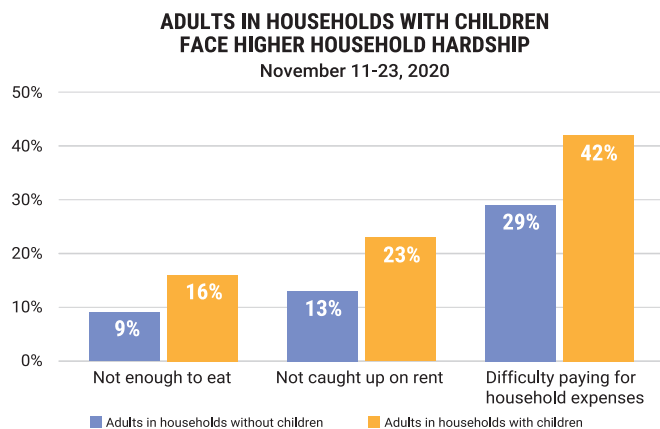
The effect of race can be difficult to isolate from the effect of socioeconomic inequality. Many of the woes afflicting minority communities during the pandemic are likely to be driven by economic reasons already discussed above, such as overcrowded living conditions, a higher probability of being an essential worker, fewer resources available for long periods of social isolation, and the necessity to take public transit to work. In addition to the socioeconomic effects, racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to live in multi-generational homes and more likely to suffer from underlying health conditions such as diabetes²¹. Whatever the cause, the pandemic is having a uniquely devastating effect on people of color. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the age-adjusted hospitalization rate for COVID-19 among non-Hispanic Native American and Alaskan Native people is 3.7 times that of non-Hispanic White people²². Among Black and Hispanic people, the hospitalization rates for COVID-19 were 3.3 times and 3.8 times that of non-Hispanic White people.

Black and Hispanic people are hospitalized for COVID-19 at a rate that is more than 3 times that of White people.

Pandemic and Families with Children

Families with children experienced much greater difficulties during the pandemic than did households with-

out children. According to the Household Pulse Survey¹⁹, 20% of U.S. families with children and 23% of Texas families with children experienced food shortages since the beginning of the pandemic, compared to only 9% of U.S. households without children. Households with children were also more likely to be behind on rent: 26% of U.S. families with children reported being behind on rent compared to 13% of households who did not have children under 18.



Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables for November 11-23
Note: Not enough to eat=sometimes or often not enough to eat in last 7 days.
Difficulty paying for household expenses=somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses in last 7 days. Chart excludes individuals who did not respond to the question.

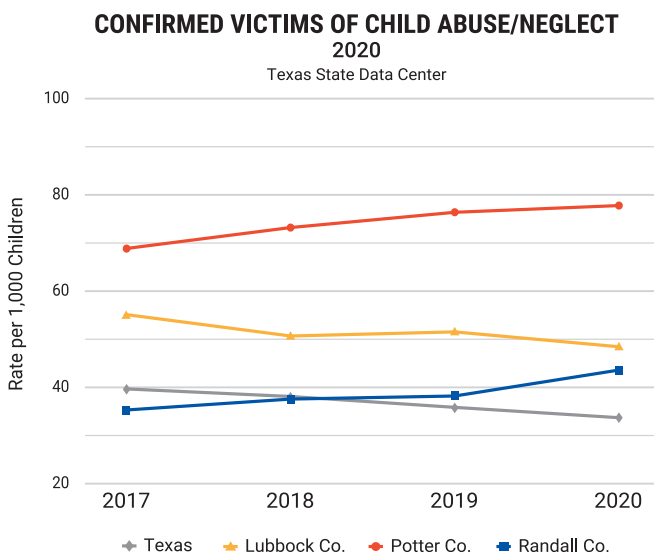
In addition to financial difficulties, parents of small children had to face the challenges associated with remote schooling, including the increased need for childcare and assistance during the school day and insufficient or unreliable Internet access. For many parents, the only solution was to abandon employment to assist with distance learning. One study shows that among all working adults, women between the ages of 25 and 44 were three times more likely than men to suspend their employment due to increased childcare responsibilities. Women in states that implemented stay-at-home orders and initiated extended school closures were 68.8% more likely to leave their employment due to childcare demands than women in states where such policies were not implemented²⁰. Overall, in the United States, 19.6% of working-age adults were not working due to the increased need for childcare.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Some child abuse prevention advocates were concerned that the combination of shelter-in-place orders and school closures during the pandemic would lead



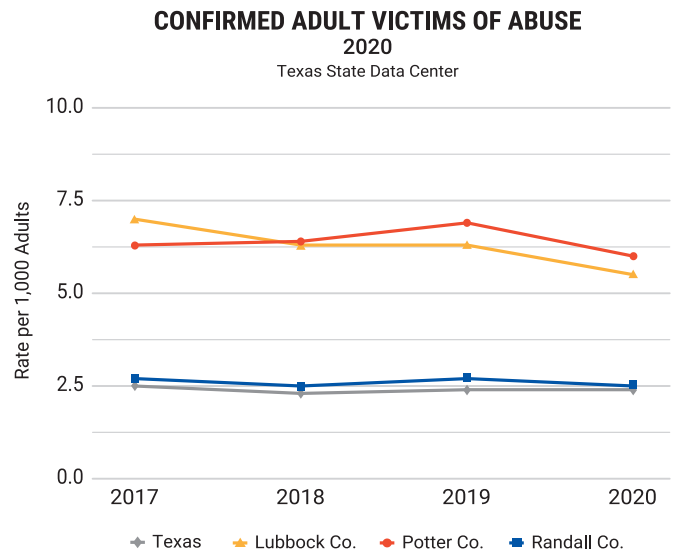
to a dramatic increase in the rate of child maltreatment. According to data from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), the rate of confirmed cases of child abuse actually decreased in 2020 in Texas by 6.1%, from 35.9 cases per 1,000 children in 2019 to 33.7 cases per 1,000 children in 2020. Unfortunately, in Potter and Randall counties, which already had elevated child abuse rates, the rates increased further in 2020, by 1.8% in Potter County and by 14.1% in Randall County. As a result, in 2020 Potter County's child abuse rate of 77.8 confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect per 1,000 was 130.8% higher than that of the state. Similarly, Randall County's child maltreatment rate of 43.6 cases per 1,000 children was 29.4% higher than the state's rate.



Abuse of Elderly and Disabled Individuals

Abuse of elderly and disabled individuals has not increased with the pandemic, according to the most re-

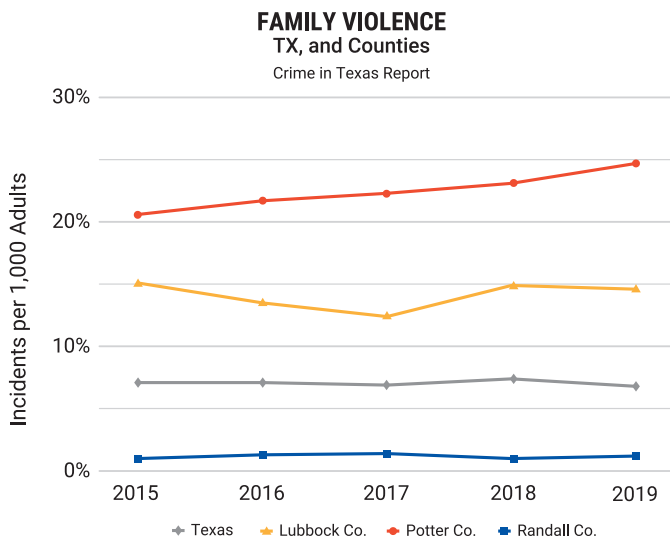
cent data from the DFPS. In Texas, the rate of maltreatment did not change in 2020, remaining at 2.4 cases per 1,000 adults. In Potter County, the rate of maltreatment of the elderly and the disabled decreased in 2020 by 13.0%, from 6.9 cases per 1,000 adults in 2019 to 6.0 cases per 1,000 adults in 2020. The rate also declined in Randall County from 2.7 cases per 1,000 adults in 2019 to 2.5 cases per 1,000 adults in 2020 (a 7.4% decrease).



Family Violence

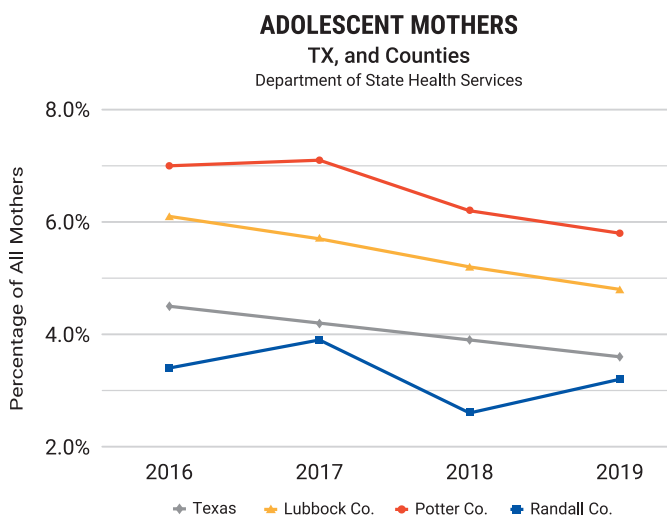
Unlike child and elderly abuse and neglect data, family violence data was not available for Potter and Randall counties for 2020. In 2019, the rate of family violence remained elevated in Potter County. Potter County's 2019 rate of 24.7 incidents of family violence per 1,000 people was 3.6 times higher than the state rate of 6.8 incidents per 1,000 people. Furthermore, Potter County's rate increased by 7.2% between 2018 and 2019 while the state rate dropped by 8.4%. In Randall County, the rate of family violence also increased from 1.0 incident per 1,000 people in 2018 to 1.2 incidents per 1,000 in 2019 (an 11.5% increase). Despite a very modest increase, the family violence rate in Randall County was less than one-fifth of the state rate. Preliminary evidence suggests that the rate of family violence has substantially increased during the pandemic²³. The four most common types of family violence are murder, assault, robbery, and sexual offense²⁴. According to preliminary data from the Texas Department of Public Safety for Texas (no county data were available at the

time), the rate of murder increased by 70.3% in 2020, the rate of assault increased by 32.2%, the rate of robbery increased by 9.2%, and the rate of sexual offenses increased by 16.4% (all rates were adjusted for population growth and reported per 1,000 population)²⁵. Only a portion of these crimes can be attributed to family violence, but the growth in all four of these crime rates is alarming, nevertheless.



Adolescent Mothers

In this current Community Status Report, the indicator ‘birth to adolescent mothers’ has been changed from the percent of births to adolescent mothers to the percent of adolescent mothers among all the mothers who gave birth that year. The mothers who gave birth to more than one baby in a given year are only counted once. This change speaks more closely to the issue at heart: What proportion of teenage girls become mothers at or before 18 years of age?



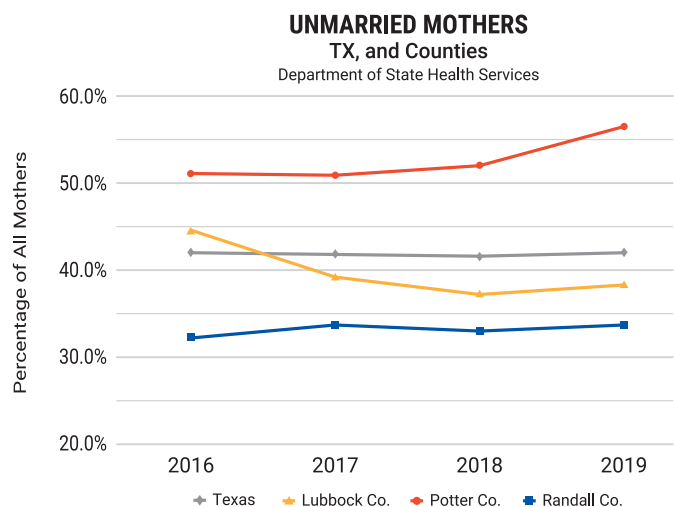
Since 2016, the percent of adolescent mothers has declined in every geographic area compared in this report: Texas, Lubbock County, Randall County, and Potter County.

Between 2016 and 2019, the percent of adolescent mothers decreased in Texas from 4.5% to 3.6% (a 20.0% decline), in Lubbock County from 6.1% to 4.8% (a 21.3% decline), in Potter County from 7.0% to 5.8% (a 17.1% decline), and in Randall County from the high of 3.9% in 2017 to 3.2% in 2019 (a 17.9% decline). In 2019, Randall County had the lowest percent of teen mothers, 3.4% of all mothers, while Potter County had the highest, 5.8% of all mothers.

Unmarried Mothers

As with the ‘adolescent mothers’ indicator, the 2019 ‘unmarried mothers’ indicator was changed in this report from the proportion of births to unmarried mother to a percent of unmarried mothers among all mothers who gave birth that year. Among the four geographic areas, Potter County had the highest percentage of unmarried mothers. In fact, the majority of mothers in Potter County since 2016 were not married. In 2019, 56.5% of mothers in Potter County did not have a spouse, compared to 42.0% in Texas, 38.3% in Lubbock County, and 33.7% in Randall County.

The percentage of unmarried mothers in Texas has not changed substantially since 2016 when 42.0% of mothers indicated they were not married at the time of birth. The rate also remained flat in Randall County at



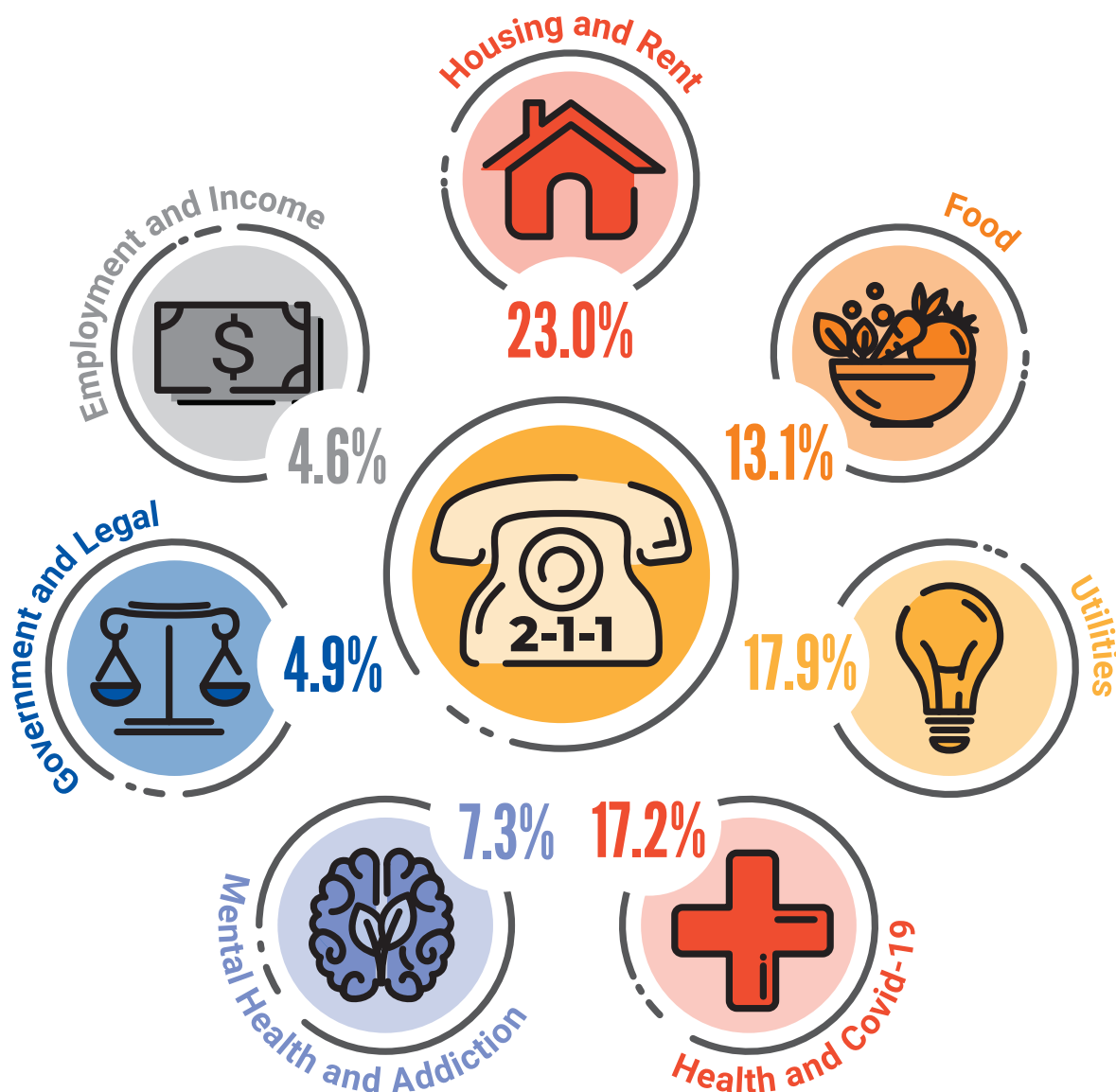
around 33%. In Potter County, on the other hand, the rate increased by 10.6% since 2016 and by 8.7% since 2018.

2-1-1 Texas Panhandle United Way Helpline

The 2-1-1 was created by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission as a well-organized one-stop connection to health and human services provided by the state. The hotline is available by phone and the Internet free of charge 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During the pandemic³⁰, Potter County had 85.9 requests per 1,000 population, compared to 49.7

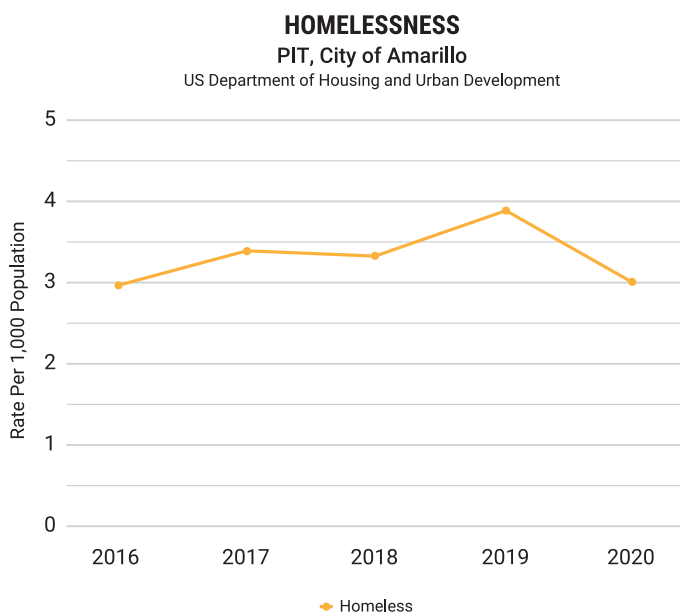
for Randall County and 72.1 for Texas. Across both counties and the state, the top three areas of requests were those associated with housing and shelter, utilities, and health and COVID-19 assistance. Housing and shelter assistance were the most frequently requested services, at 24.8% of all requests in Texas, 23.0% in Potter County, and 22.6% in Randall County. For the City of Amarillo, housing and rent assistance also was the number one need and amounted to 23.0% of requests, followed by requests for utility payments at 17.9%, health care and COVID-19 assistance at 17.2%, and food assistance at 13.1%.

TOP REQUESTS FOR 2-1-1 SERVICES for the City of Amarillo



Homelessness

The Point-in-Time (PIT) data provided by the City of Amarillo show that homelessness has decreased in the city from the rate of 3.9 cases per 1,000 residents in 2019 to 3.0 cases per 1,000 residents in 2020 (a 22.7% decline). The decline was especially significant for families with children. Only 8 families with children were counted among the homeless in 2020 compared to 35 in 2019 (a 77.1% decrease). It is too early to say whether the 2020 reduction in the rate of homelessness is a long-term trend. PIT data vary greatly depending on the temperature outside at the time the data is gathered. Relatively mild weather conditions on the day of counting on January 24th, 2020, could have resulted in fewer homeless individuals spending time in shelters and other indoor locations where counting is easier.



Coming Home Initiative

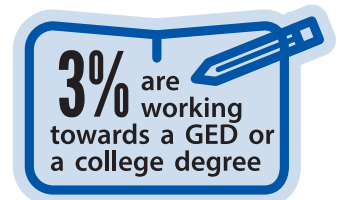
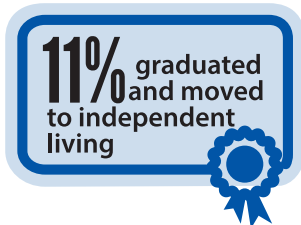
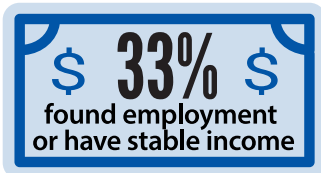
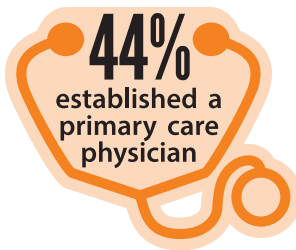
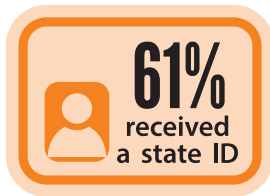
Coming Home Initiative in Amarillo is based on the Housing First model implemented in several large metropolitan areas of the United States, including Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Austin, Texas. Housing First approach has been developed in the 1990s in New York. Housing First focuses on removing homeless individuals off the streets into permanent housing and then providing additional support services on an as-needed voluntary basis. No condi-

tions or prerequisites are placed on the residents beyond those of a typical renter. This approach has been adopted by many cities in the United States and around the world.



In 2018, the City of Amarillo implemented the Coming Home Initiative based on the Housing First approach to help individuals transition out of homelessness. In just two years, 130 individuals found housing through the program. The program's case managers have been made available to the residents to help them acquire state issued IDs and social security cards, connect the residents with health care and mental health providers, and arrange for rehabilitation services. Case managers also are able to connect formerly homeless individuals with educational, employment, and income opportunities. As a result, among the 121 individuals currently participating in the Coming Home Initiative in Amarillo, 43 have found reliable sources of income, either through employment or disability, and four are taking GED or college classes.

Coming Home Initiative Amarillo



CONCLUSIONS

Potter and Randall counties, which are located next to each other and share the City of Amarillo, in many ways represent the competing and converging realities of life in America. In Potter County, with its high minority, high poverty reality, people face many challenges in the areas of postsecondary education, health, and safety, and in Randall County, with its White affluent reality, challenges are few. Even though this Community Status Report does not contain data on the migratory pattern between the two counties, it is noteworthy that population gains in Randall County were very close to population losses in Potter County. With the counties located side-by-side, it is reasonable to suppose that those residents who can flee the impoverished Potter County in search of better opportunities in Randall County do so, leaving their less successful neighbors behind.

Common Strengths

As a combined community, Amarillo and Canyon continue to boast a strong economy and K-12 education. Despite the spike in unemployment during the pandemic, which was experienced everywhere in the United States and around the world, the unemployment in the Amarillo metropolitan area remained lower than in the United States on average. The community offers many job opportunities for residents who decide not to pursue a university degree, although the majority of these job opportunities do require some sort of postsecondary credential such as an associate's degree or a certificate. For K-12 education, both Amarillo and Canyon school districts continue to outperform or perform on par with the region and the state in math and English. One of the biggest educational gains of the 2018-2019 school year was the introduction of the cost waiver for juniors in Canyon ISD to take the ACT college entrance exam. Now, both Amarillo and Canyon ISDs boast very high college entrance exam participation rates and a growing percentage of students who take and pass the test.

Common Challenges

Amarillo and Canyon communities also face a few common challenges. First, both Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD have high rates of student suspensions from school. However, the good news is the rates in both ISDs fell in the 2019-2020 school year. Second, the inequality is growing in the area. The proportion of people earning less than \$25,000 a year and the proportion of people earning over \$100,000 a year are growing in both counties, while the proportion of people in the middle of the income distribution is shrinking. In Randall County, a greater proportion of people have transitioned to the highest income bracket, while in Potter County, a greater proportion has transitioned into poverty. The third common challenge in Potter and Randall counties is the ongoing decline in health. The rates of chronic illness (heart disease, diabetes, and cancer) and obesity are higher in the Amarillo area than in Texas and the United States. These poor health outcomes could have precipitated the elevated rates of death from COVID-19 in Potter and Randall counties in 2020. Fifth, mental health is another common area of concern for both counties. Potter and Randall counties have a long history of elevated rates of death from suicide, higher than in the state and in Lubbock County. This sad reality continued to be true in 2019, when the rate of death from suicide in Potter and Randall counties was 1.8 and 1.7 times that of the state. Nevertheless, the rate of death by suicide declined in 2019 in both counties compared to the year before. Finally, child abuse rates are already high in both counties and continue to rise, despite declining in the state. Specifically, the rate of child abuse in Potter County is 2.3 times that of the state rate, and in Randall County, the rate is 1.3 times that of the state rate.

Unique Strengths and Challenges

In addition to the common strength and challenges, each county has its own unique features. In Potter County in 2019, the median income hit a seven-year low, while the poverty rate increased by 20%. The rates of high school graduation and postsecondary education are lagging behind in Potter County. Associate's degrees and certificates are especially important for Potter County residents as a way to achieve economic stability. In addition to health challenges common to both counties, Potter County has a high rate of uninsured adults, which undoubtedly contributes to poor health outcomes. Finally, the high rate of family violence in Potter County remains a significant area of concern, as does the high proportion of unmarried mothers. The rate of family violence in the county was 3.6 times that of the state rate in 2019. At the same time, 56.5% of mothers who gave birth in the same year were not legally married, compared to 42.0% in Texas.

In Randall County, most community indicators are better than those in the state and in the neighboring Potter County. However, there are still a few areas of concern. Growing economic inequality, physical and mental health indicators, as well as the elevated rate of child abuse are worse than one would expect in an affluent county like Randall County.

Racial Wealth Inequality

The 2019-2020 Community Status Report highlights three special topics: racial wealth inequality, the effects of the pandemic on vulnerable populations, and two local programs (2-1-1 Texas and the Coming Home Initiative) serving people in need in Amarillo. Racial wealth inequality is evident in the fact that a typical White family owns 10 times more wealth than a typical Black family owns and 8 times more wealth than a typical Hispanic family owns. The main sources of differences in wealth are homeownership, liquid retirement accounts, student loans, and federal asset building subsidies, all of which are impacted by the intersection of income and race, meaning they favor high income earners who tend to be White.

Pandemic and Vulnerable Groups of People

Income and wealth inequality have further been exacerbated by the global pandemic. Low-income communities and communities of color had higher COVID-19 infection rates, hospitalization, and death rates and suffered a greater adverse economic impact than did high-income communities. During the pandemic, the American economy lost a much greater share of low-paying jobs than medium- and high-paying jobs. Another group substantially impacted by the pandemic were families with young children, especially women between the ages of 25 and 44, many of whom had to abandon employment in order to support their child's learning and care at home.

2-1-1 Texas Panhandle United Way Helpline

The 2-1-1 Texas network matches individuals with services in their local community. According to 2-1-1 data, the program served over 16,000 requests from Potter and Randall residents in 2020. The number one request for help in the City of Amarillo was for housing and rent payment assistance, followed by help with utility payments, health and COVID-19 assistance, and food.

Coming Home Initiative

Finally, over the past decade, Amarillo has faced a growing homelessness crisis and, consequently, has developed a Coming Home Initiative based on the Housing First model to combat it. The model treats homeless individuals as typical renters and provides free or affordable housing to them with no additional program participation requirement. Since its inception in November 2018, the Coming Home Initiative has housed 130 previously homeless individuals and connected them with a large variety of services, including services for healthcare, education, and employment. Thus far, 11% of program participants have transitioned from the program to independent housing.

FOOTNOTES

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Area	County/ISD	2019 Value	Trend*	Better Than	Worse Than
Median Income	Potter	\$45,312	↓		US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall	\$62,098	↓	US, TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	
Unemployment	Amarillo ISD (2020)	4.9%	↓	US, TX	
Graduation Rate	Potter	88.0%	↓		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall	97.0%	↑	TX, Potter Co.	
SAT/ACT Passing	Amarillo ISD	26.8%	↓	Region 16, Canyon ISD	
	Canyon ISD	24.2%	↓		TX, Region 16, Canyon ISD
Uninsured	Potter	23.9%	↓		US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall	8.5%	↑	TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	US
Chronic Illness	Potter	553.7 per 100,000	↓		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall	399.4 per 100,000	↑	Potter Co.	TX, Lubbock Co.
Suicide	Potter	24.9 per 100,000	↓		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall	23.01 per 100,000	↓		TX, Lubbock Co.
Poverty	Potter	21.0%	↓		US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall	9.4%	↓	US, TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	
Child Abuse	Potter (2020)	77.8 per 1,000	↓		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall (2020)	43.6 per 1,000	↓	Potter Co., Lubbock Co.	TX
Family Violence	Potter	24.7 per 1,000	↓		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall	1.2 per 1,000	↓	Potter Co., Lubbock Co.	TX
Adolescent Mothers	Potter	5.8%	↓		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	3.2%	↓	TX, Potter Co., Lubbock Co.	TX

*A green arrow indicates the trend is positive



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