

2018 | Community Status Report



**United
Way**



**United Way
of Amarillo & Canyon**

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If you're reading this letter, I hope it means you're about to begin a thorough analysis of the 2018 Community Status Report of the United Way of Amarillo & Canyon. I think you'll find it to be full of interesting information. Some of the information is good and encouraging. Some of it is not so good, and maybe even a little disturbing. Either way, it's true.

The focus of the United Way of Amarillo & Canyon is primarily on three issues: Education, Financial Stability, and Health of every person in Potter and Randall Counties. Everything we do as United Way, everything we put our resources toward, is to strengthen our community in these three areas. Our slogan is "We fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in our community." We believe the fight is real, it is noble, and it is right. We have tremendous men and women in our community who give of their time, their money, their resources, their

employees, and their hearts to work toward this common goal.

In the report, each of those three issues is addressed. As you study the education section, you'll see statistics on AISD and CISD as well as differences between Potter and Randall Counties, with a comparison to Texas statistics overall. The statistics look good, but we must never stop our fight. For example, high school graduation rates in Potter County have typically lagged significantly below those of the State – until now. Those rates are improving dramatically. This is a testimony to the work of our schools. One thing that I personally know is that both school districts are working in every way to encourage and prepare our students to graduate high school, and then enable them however they can to attain another level of education. We all know that statistically, the higher the level of education, the lower the possibility of poverty, which is addressed in the next section of the report.

The Income section is filled with interesting statistics on the effect of education on poverty, as I just alluded to. Education yields higher wages, and those higher wages rip at the fingers of the grip of poverty on our community. Unemployment rates in Potter and Randall County are small because the economy is strong and resilient.

Finally, the Health section addresses things like the uninsured, the fact that our community is not particularly healthy (based on deaths from chronic illnesses like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer), high instances of Sexually Transmitted Infections, and family violence. As I said before, we have work to do.

Our Communities will continue to work toward these challenges. The United Way of Amarillo & Canyon is a committed partner in that work. United is the Way we conquer the challenges faced every day by a staggering number of people in our community. Lives can be changed. Together, United, we win.

Randy Criswell

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Criswell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President, Board of Directors
United Way of Amarillo & Canyon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Potter and Randall Counties represent two co-existing and competing American realities. One, like Potter County, is predominantly minority with many socio-economic challenges. The other, like Randall County, is predominantly White and affluent with better educational outcomes and fewer community stressors. Over time the social trends in the two counties have been converging and influencing each other. These changes are largely driven by the rapid population growth and changing social landscape of Randall County.

Socio-Economic Convergence between Potter County and Randall County

Potter and Randall Counties are becoming more alike due to an increasing number of minority members, growing poverty, and increasing unemployment in Randall County, despite the overall strong economy. In Potter County, unemployment and poverty are decreasing, but only slightly. At the same time the income gap between the counties is widening due to the rapid growth in the proportion of wealthy individuals in Randall County; income inequality is growing within each of the counties. The counties are also converging in educational outcomes due to significant gains in math performance and the high school graduation rate in Potter County.

Common Strengths and Challenges

In addition to a strong economy and educational gains, Potter and Randall Counties also share a decline in the rates of child abuse, which hit a record low in 2016 for both counties.

The most significant challenge for the Amarillo community is health. Both counties have elevated rates of death from heart disease and cancer, and overall growing rates of diabetes.

Suicide is another health issue common to both counties, where death rates from suicide are much higher than the state and the national averages. Finally, both counties experienced an increase in the abuse of elderly and disabled individuals in 2016.

Unique Challenges

For Potter County, unique challenges include a high childhood poverty rate, a growing elderly poverty rate, high rates of STIs (especially chlamydia and gonorrhea), elevated (though declining) rates of child abuse, and skyrocketing rates of domestic violence.

For Randall County, the most important unique challenges are growing poverty and unemployment rates among working age adults in the face of increasing median income (inequality).

College and Career Readiness

College and career readiness indicators suggest that 33.2% of students in Amarillo ISD and 27.6% of students in Canyon ISD are not ready for college or career. Both Amarillo and Canyon ISD have room for improvement in the area of preparation for post-secondary success.



MISSION STATEMENT

The United Way of Amarillo & Canyon mission is to fund solutions to community problems through strategic partnerships with organizations directly addressing them.

INTRODUCTION

United Way of Amarillo & Canyon empowers local community organizations to deliver services to the residents of Potter and Randall Counties in the areas of education, income, and health.

This 2018 Community Status Report was commissioned by the United Way of Amarillo & Canyon, and created by Evaluation Essentials, to provide community data and an analytical framework for understanding major trends in education, income, and health, as well as to highlight important issues encountered by vulnerable populations of Potter and Randall Counties. The report begins with an overview of the demographic trends in the community, which have a strong influence on community outcomes, and then proceeds to address each of the areas of interest: education, income, health, and vulnerable populations.

This report is based on data for the five most recent years available. Most of the trends reflect data from 2012 to 2016, yet some of the trends represent data collected over a slightly different time frame. When possible, data for the United States, Texas, and Lubbock County are included for comparison.

New in the 2018 Community Status Report:

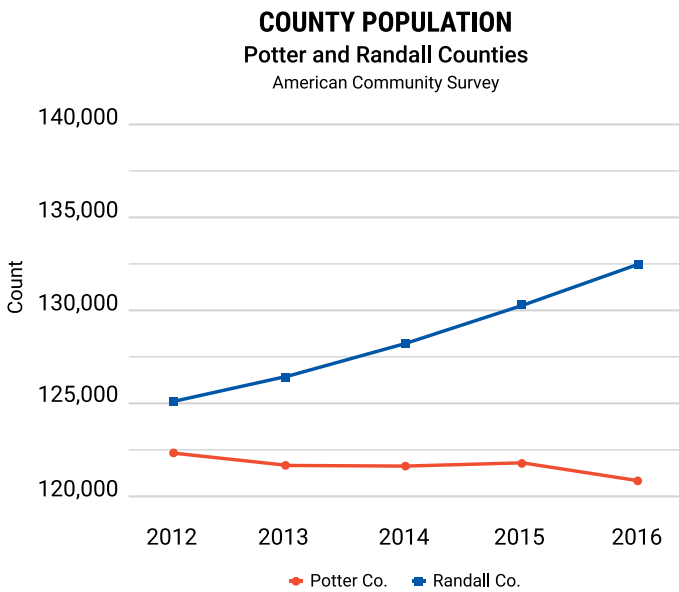
- New data on early childhood education enrollment for 3 and 4-year-olds.
- The inclusion of K-12 indicators for Canyon ISD for 5 consecutive school years.
- New indicators on AP/IB/Dual credit enrollment and performance for Texas, Region 16, Amarillo ISD, and Canyon ISD.
- New career and college readiness indicators for Texas, Region 16, Amarillo ISD, and Canyon ISD, as well as discussion on college and career readiness on the national level.
- New income distribution data for Potter and Randall Counties for 2016.
- A new section on the causes and means of committing suicide in the United States.
- Not available this year were the new data on HIV prevalence rates.
- Not available this year were the new data on motherhood indicators: prenatal care in the first trimester, low birth weight babies, birth to unmarried mothers, and birth to teenage mothers.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Understanding the changes that occur in the social fabric of a community lays the foundation for understanding other aspects of community life. The Amarillo community has seen some significant demographic changes since 2008 (the first year for which the United Way of Amarillo & Canyon produced Community Status Reports).

Between 2008 and 2016, the population of Randall County increased by 15.7%, nearly 2.0% per year.

The most obvious demographic change during this period has been the rapid population growth of Randall County. Between 2008 and 2016, Randall County's population increased by 15.7%, nearly 2.0% per year. During the same time the population of Potter County has declined slightly by 0.8%.

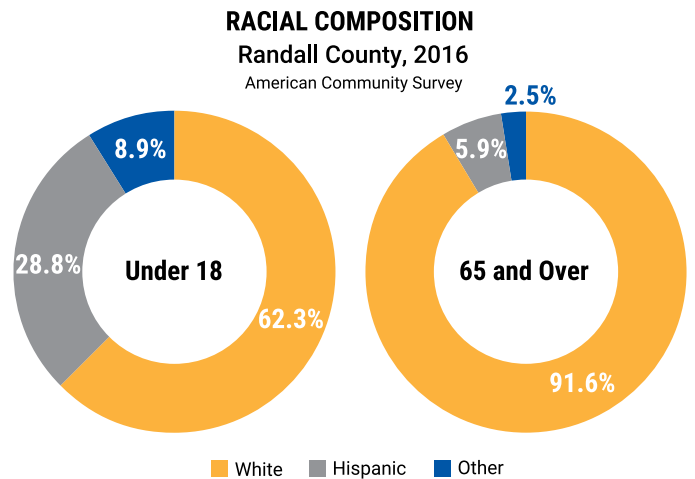


Another notable trend of the past decade has been the aging of the American population overall and the corresponding aging of the Amarillo community. In both the US and Texas, the segment of people over 65 years of age increased by 18.8% between 2008 and 2016. Randall County almost doubled this trend with a dramatic 35.0% increase, whereas Potter Country al-

most ignored the trend altogether only increasing its proportion of elderly by 3.4% over the period.

A third important demographic trend of the past decade has been a steady shift in the racial composition of Potter and Randall Counties, principally the rise in the proportion of the minority population of both counties. Potter County, which has been a minority majority county for over 10 years, has continued to experience growth in the minority population with an average growth rate of 0.8% per year (approximately 991 individuals), which is even more significant when combined with an overall declining population for the county. Randall County, on the other hand, remains predominantly White, but has experienced rapid growth in its minority population. Between 2008 and 2016, the proportion of minorities in Randall County increased by 65.9%. This constitutes an average rate increase of 8.2% per year or approximately 10,910 individuals. This growth was driven primarily by an increase in the number of Hispanic and other minorities. Simultaneously, the proportion of Black residents continued to decrease in both counties.

These shifts in the racial composition are even more pronounced when different age groups are compared. In Potter County in 2016, the percentage of minority children among all children was 68.2%, whereas the proportion of minorities among all the elderly was only 28.4%. A similar shifting dynamic exist in Randall County, where in 2016 minority populations made up 37.7% of children and only 8.4% of the elderly.



The influx of new residents into the community as well as internal demographic changes will continue to define the changing landscapes of education, income, and health, as well as the needs of vulnerable populations in the Amarillo area.

EDUCATION

This year’s community status report brings into focus the area of education with the inclusion of new data on early childhood education as well as indicators on Canyon ISD K-12 performance and post-secondary readiness.

Preschool

Research shows that early educational experiences have a profound effect on future development. Children who are read to on a daily basis¹, spend time in a rich and stimulating educational environments with competent and caring adults², engage in plenty of physical activity³, and have limited screen time⁴ perform better in school in subsequent years. They are also more likely to graduate from high school, to be employed, to raise a family, and are less likely to get involved with the criminal justice system⁵.

While children from families of a higher socioeconomic status tend to grow up in enriching environments (both at home and at childcare facilities), children from lower socioeconomic strata are at an increased risk of spending the majority of their childhood in developmentally poor environments⁶.



Enrollment in high-quality public preschool programs, which usually provide children with the above-mentioned elements for academic success, can help children from families of lower socioeconomic status catch up developmentally and excel in primary school.

Public preschools are subsidized by the government to be accessible to needy families and are based on stringent income criteria. Consequently, counties with lower median income have higher proportion of families who qualify for publicly subsidized preschools. In the 2015–2016 school year, the enrollment rate in public preschool programs in Potter County was much higher than that in Randall County: 51.0% vs. 4.1%. Such a stark difference in enrollment rates is without a doubt attributed to the differences in the poverty rates between the two counties. Compared to the year before, Potter County had a 2.4% increase in enrollment while Randall County had a 2.4% decrease. Potter County also had a much higher enrollment rate than all the other regions in the report. The enrollment rate in Potter County was 80.5% higher than in Texas on average and 56.6% higher than in Lubbock County.

Table 1. *Pre-school Enrollment for Children Ages 3 and 4 Years*

	Texas	Lubbock	Potter	Randall
2013 - 2014	29.70%	24.90%	53.10%	4.60%
2014 - 2015	28.20%	24.00%	49.70%	4.20%
2015 - 2016	28.20%	22.10%	51.00%	4.10%

K-12 Performance

From 2014 to 2016 Texas underwent significant changes in the measurement of academic success. Most notably, the Texas Educational Agency (TEA) introduced the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) along with new student performance measures and new measures of college and career readiness.

Grade 3 STAAR Math and Reading

STAAR tests are administered for the first time in third grade. The choice of this grade is not accidental, and follows research that clearly shows third-grade academic performance as a predictor of future academic success. At this age children typically learn to read

with reasonable fluency and begin to comprehend basic mathematic operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. This knowledge lays the foundation for future independent learning.

In 2017 the STAAR passing rate for third-grade math in Amarillo ISD increased by 13.4%.

Table 2. STAAR Performance Scores for Grades 3 and 8

	Year	Texas	Region 16	Amarillo ISD	Canyon ISD
3rd Grade Reading	2015-2016	73.00%	75.00%	76.00%	82.00%
	2016-2017	73.00%	74.00%	76.00%	82.00%
3rd Grade Math	2015-2016	75.00%	79.00%	81.00%	88.00%
	2016-2017	78.00%	79.00%	83.00%	86.00%
8th Grade English	2015-2016	87.00%	87.00%	87.00%	91.00%
	2016-2017	86.00%	86.00%	85.00%	89.00%
8th Grade Math	2015-2016	82.00%	83.00%	89.00%	87.00%
	2016-2017	85.00%	88.00%	92.00%	92.00%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports 2015-2016 and 2016-2017

For third-grade reading, performance in both Amarillo and Canyon ISDs remained the same for 2016-2017 as for 2015-2016: a 76.0% passing rate for reading in Amarillo ISD and an 82.0% passing rate in Canyon ISD. Both ISDs outperformed Region 16 and Texas, which scored at 74.0% and 73.0%, respectively. Unfortunately, the achievement gaps are predominantly attributed to the declining performance in Region 16 and the state, where between 2013 and 2017 the third-grade reading passing rate dropped by 9.5% and 11.0%, respectively.

Comparing Canyon and Amarillo ISDs, Canyon ISD third graders showed the highest reading performance with an 82.0% passing rate, 7.9% higher than Amarillo ISD's. A similar, though less extreme, dynamic was observed with math performance. Canyon ISD had the highest passing rate of 86.0%, closely followed by Amarillo ISD at 83.0%. Math performance improved for all comparison areas in recent years. Amarillo ISD showed the greatest gains in third-grade math increasing its passing rate by 13.4% up to 83.0% in 2017. Texas improved its math passing rate by 11.4%, Region 16 by 9.7%, and Canyon ISD by 1.2%.

Grade 8 English and Math

Indicators of eighth-grade performance are important for two main reasons. First, the indicators provide valuable information on the readiness of eighth-graders for high school. Second, eighth-grade indicators include those children who will not go on to high school and those who will subsequently drop out. Research indicates that the greatest attrition occurs in ninth grade⁷. Therefore, eighth-grade indicators provide a better understanding of the academic preparedness of all students in an educational cohort.

For Grade 8 English Language Arts, Canyon ISD had the highest passing rate of 89.0%, while Amarillo ISD had the lowest rate of 85.0% but the difference constituted only 4.7%.

The proportion of eighth-graders who passed STAAR Math was the same in Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD (92.0%), while Region 16 and Texas lagged slightly behind at 88.0% and 85.0%, respectively. The passing rates for STAAR Math have increased over the past 5 years in all regions considered in this report. Texas overall has experienced an impressive 11.8% increase

Canyon ISD performs better than Amarillo ISD on all K-12 indicators, but the gap decreases for upper grades indicating that Amarillo ISD is catching up.

in eighth-grade STAAR passing between 2013 and 2017. Compared to the average state rate, the increases in Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD were modest: 5.7% and 4.5%, respectively.

In summary, for all K-12 student performance indicators, Canyon ISD had higher passing rates than Amarillo ISD. The differences in passing rates were greater for lower grades, indicating that Amarillo ISD students were able to catch up with Canyon ISD students in upper grades. English passing rates have declined over the past 3 to 4 years while math passing rates have increased.

High School Graduation

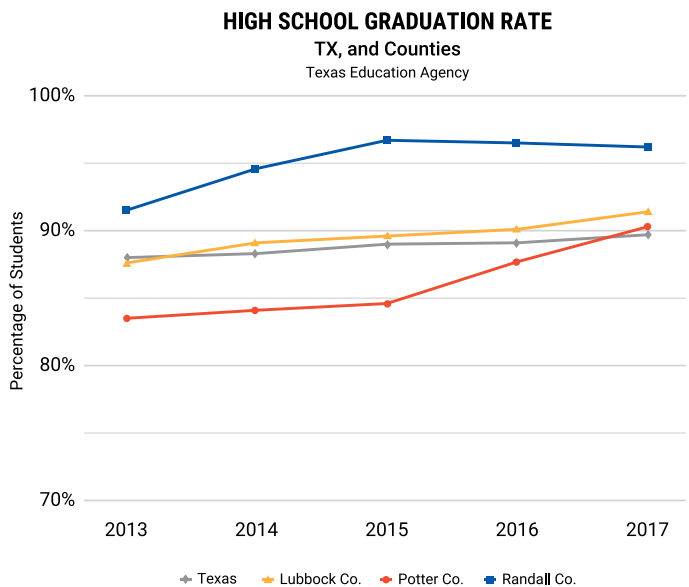
High school graduation is important to consider because it indicates what proportion of recent graduates have reached the first major milestone towards adult employment: a high school diploma. High school graduation rates create an encouraging outlook in both Potter and Randall Counties. Potter County's high school graduation rate has been on an upward trajectory since 2011, but last year it had a more dramatic increase. In the 2016–2017 school year the high school graduation rate was 90.3%, which was 3.0% higher than the year before and the county's highest rate since 2008. The gain was so significant that



for the first time in over a decade Potter County surpassed the state. The gain has significantly reduced the high school graduation gap between Potter and Randall Counties from 20.8% in 2008 to 6.1% in 2017.

Randall County experienced a slight decline in its already high graduation rate; dropping by 0.3% from 96.5% in 2015–2016 to 96.2% in 2016–2017. Overall, high school graduation rates continue to improve in the Amarillo community.

In Potter County the graduation rate for the 2016–2017 school year reached 90.3%, the highest rate in this county since 2008.



Predictors of Postsecondary Success

The 2018 Community Status Report includes new indicators on AP/IB and Dual Credit course participation and completion as well as measures of college and career readiness. These indicators shed light on the extent to which high school graduates are ready to transition to adulthood.

Dual Credit, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate Programs

Dual Credit, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are all forms of ad-

vanced courses designed to better prepare students for college. All three types of courses have rigorous curriculums and employ qualified instructors. They also require students to meet eligibility standards for participation and typically have a cost associated

with them, though some school districts may subsidize low income students who are eligible to enroll in these courses.

The main differences between these three types of advanced courses are summed up in the table below:

Table 3. Comparison of Advanced Course Types

Course Type	Curriculum	Credits	Result	Number of Courses	Typical Cost
Dual Credit	Targeted	College-specific	Completion	1 or more	\$59/course
AP	Targeted	Transferable	Test	1 or more	\$93/course
IB	Wholistic	Transferable	Test	Multiple/ Diploma	\$290 +

Source: Judson ISD⁸, Tarrant County College⁹, International Baccalaureate¹⁰

Dual credit courses are the most common type of advanced courses. They are university courses taught to high school students, usually at the university itself. They are typically tied to a local college and give students credits towards a chosen degree, though in certain instances these courses can be transferred to other colleges and universities. Dual credit courses require completion, but they do not require passing a comprehensive exam which makes them the least expensive option. They are targeted in nature, meaning that the student can choose a specific subject (e.g., Math or English) and take it as a stand-alone course.¹¹

AP courses are similar to dual credit courses, except they require attendees to pass an exam to earn credit and are typically taken at their high school. This exam makes AP courses more expensive, but also allows for easier transfers between colleges.

Unlike the stand-alone Dual Credit and AP courses, IB is a diploma-based approach, consisting of multiple courses. The IB is a more wholistic European-style approach to education. A student typically chooses a track (or multiple tracks) and completes them as a program, receiving a diploma. Because IB programs consist of multiple courses, they are the most expensive option among the three types of advanced course.

Students who complete these types of advanced courses can potentially save both money and time by accumulating a few college credits before entering college. In addition, students can get acquainted with

the requirements, academic rigor, and expectations of college life.



Dual Credit Completion.

Dual credit completion rate is defined as the percent of 11th and 12th graders who have completed at least one dual credit course. In the 2015–2016 school year dual credit completion rates were very similar across all regions. Texas had the highest completion rate (55.0%), followed by Canyon ISD (54.3%), Amarillo ISD

(53.1%), and Region 16 (52.3%). A very encouraging trend is the 12.3% increase in dual credit completion rate in Amarillo ISD between 2014 and 2016. Canyon ISD's rate also increased, but only by 1.9%.

AP/IB Participation.

The AP/IB participation rate is defined as the proportion of 11th and 12th grade students who take at least one AP/IB course. In terms of AP/IB participation both Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD had lower rates than Texas. Amarillo ISD had a 20.3% participation rate in 2016, which was 20.4% lower than the state rate. In Canyon ISD, only 12.3% of students were participating in AP/IB courses, which was 51.8% lower than the average participation rate in the state. Similar to Canyon ISD, Region 16 had a 13.0% participation rate, which was 49.0% lower than the state. Such low AP/IB course participation rates in well-performing Canyon ISD are puzzling.

Only 8.1% of all 11th and 12th graders in Amarillo ISD and only 6.9% in Canyon ISD passed at least one AP/IB course.

AP/IB Performance.

AP/IB performance is defined by the Texas Education Agency as the proportion of 11th and 12th graders who took and passed at least one AP/IB course at or above criterium. Amarillo ISD showed lower test-passing rates for AP/IB classes in 2016 than Canyon and the state, but better than the region. The proportion of 11th and 12th graders in Amarillo ISD who passed at least one AP/IB test was 39.9%, compared to 34.8% in Region 16, 49.5% in Texas, and 56.3% in Canyon ISD. To determine what proportion of all 11th and 12th graders passed at least one AP/IB exam, we needed to multiply the participation rate by the performance rate. Of all 11th and 12th graders in Amarillo ISD, only 20.3% participated in AP/IB classes, and of those participants only 39.9% passed at least one exam. The multiplication of the two rates revealed that only 8.1% of all 11th and 12th graders passed at least one AP/IB course in 2016. In Canyon ISD the situation was even

worse: of the 12.3% of 11th and 12th graders who took at least one AP/IB course only 56.5% passed at least one exam. This equates to only 6.9% of 11th and 12th graders in Canyon ISD passing at least one AP/IB course in 2016.

Table 4. *Participation and Passing of Advanced Courses and Tests, 2015–2016*

	Texas	Region 16	Amarillo ISD	Canyon ISD
Dual Credit *	55.0%	52.3%	53.1%	54.3%
AP/IB **	12.6%	4.5%	8.1%	6.9%
SAT/ACT ***	16.1%	12.0%	11.3%	19.5%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports 2015–2016 and 2016–2017

Notes: * Dual credit courses do not require a test; the numbers reflect the percent of 11th and 12th graders who completed at least one course. ** Participation and passing the test was measured as a percentage of students in 11th and 12th grades who earned at least one regular credit. *** Participation and passing the test was measured as a percentage of the total number of graduates.

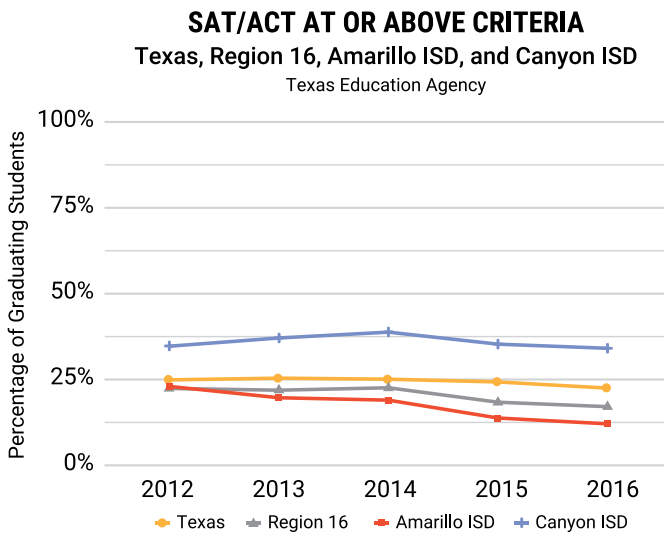
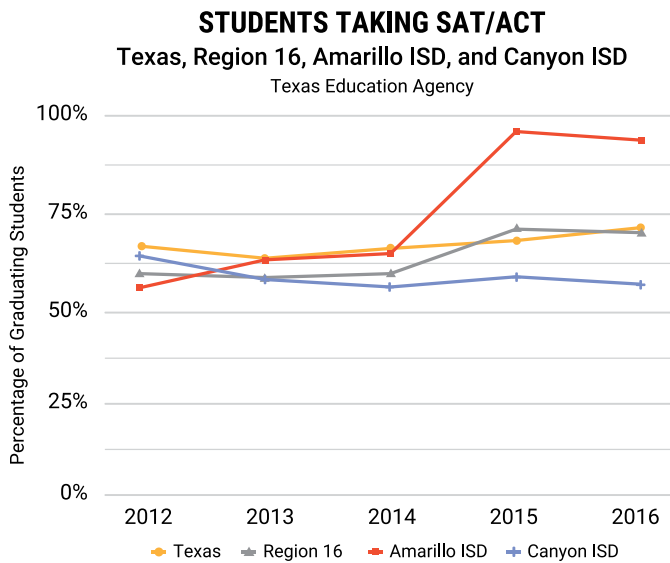
SAT/ACT Participation.

SAT/ACT participation and performance offer an alternative perspective on postsecondary readiness. Unlike AP/IB and dual credit courses, SAT and ACT do not have participation requirements and are open to all students. Because of this factor, participation and performance on these tests have an inverse relationship: higher participation is linked to lower performance and vice versa. When a large pool of students takes the test there is likely to be a large variation in academic ability among them. Smaller enrollment rates, on the other hand, usually indicate that the test is more exclusive and more likely to have drawn on an academically stronger pool of students.

In 2013, Amarillo ISD began covering exam costs for all students who want to take the SAT or ACT. This decision had a significant effect on both participation and passing rates for the exams. With the exam cost waived, the exam participation increased dramatically from 65.0% to 96.0% in 2015, while passing rates dropped from 19.0% to 13.8%. In 2016, the most recent year available, the participation rate decreased slightly from 96.0% to 93.8%, but remained substantially higher than participation rates in Texas (71.6%) and Region 16 (70.3%).

Canyon ISD, on the other hand, historically had high SAT/ACT participation rates, 64.4% in 2012, but the rate has decreased over the years to 57.2% in 2016. The reason for this decline in the participation rates of otherwise academically strong Canyon ISD is unclear.

SAT/ACT Performance.



Amarillo ISD students did not perform as well on SAT/ACT as Canyon ISD students. In Amarillo ISD 12.1% of students who took either the SAT or ACT scored above criteria on at least one of the tests. Canyon ISD students performed much better with a 34.1% rate. This constitutes a 64.5% difference in performance between Canyon ISD and Amarillo ISD. Even though

enrollment and performance on SAT/ACT typically have reverse trajectories, in 2016 Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD both experienced an atypical decrease in both enrollment and performance on these tests. This may be an indication that the 2016 cohort of students did not fare as well on these tests as did previous cohorts. The year 2016 was a low SAT/ACT performance year for all regions in this report: Amarillo ISD had the most significant decline in performance rates (-12.3%), followed by Texas (-7.4%), Region 16 (-7.1%), and Canyon ISD (-3.4%).

Combining (multiplying) the participation and performance data allows us to determine the proportion of all high school graduates who passed the SAT/ACT. In Amarillo ISD 11.3% of all high school graduates took and scored above criteria on at least one of the tests and in Canyon ISD it was 19.5%.

College Readiness

College readiness is measured as a combination of performance scores on the SAT/ACT and on the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA). The TSIA is a state-mandated assessment for all incoming college freshmen, except those who performed exceptionally well on the SAT/ACT. These scores are combined to determine the proportion of graduates who exceed the college-ready criterion.

For 2016 in Amarillo ISD 38.4% of students met the college-ready criterion, while in Canyon ISD 59.0% of students were college ready. In Texas and Region 16 college-ready rates were 38.7% and 37.5%, respectively. Compared to the previous year, 2015, the rate of college readiness increased for both Amarillo ISD and Canyon ISD graduates by 42.2% and 31.1%, respectively, as well as for Texas (+10.6%) and Region 16 (+29.3%).

College readiness data indicate that somewhere between 41% and 62% of graduates in the Amarillo community are not ready for college and need to explore alternative ways of preparing for gainful employment.

College and Career Readiness.

College is not the only path to success. A high school graduate may choose to enter the labor force directly or choose to get a professional certification instead of a college diploma. To account for these alternative paths the Texas Educational Agency (TEA) introduced the College and Career Readiness indicator.

The College and Career Readiness indicator expands the definition of postsecondary readiness to include dual credit completion and enrollment in vocational training, formally called Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. To be considered “college and career ready”, a student needs to meet at least one of the following requirements:

- meet or exceed the criteria for TSIA
- complete and earn credit for at least 2 dual-credit courses
- be enrolled in a comprehensive CTE career plan that involves taking CTE courses to earn 6 or more credits.

The interpretation of the TEA’s College and Career Readiness indicator should be done with consideration of three important points:



First, the indicator only includes students who graduated from high school and excludes anyone who did not go to high school or dropped out before graduation. To include these students would lower the college and career readiness rates.

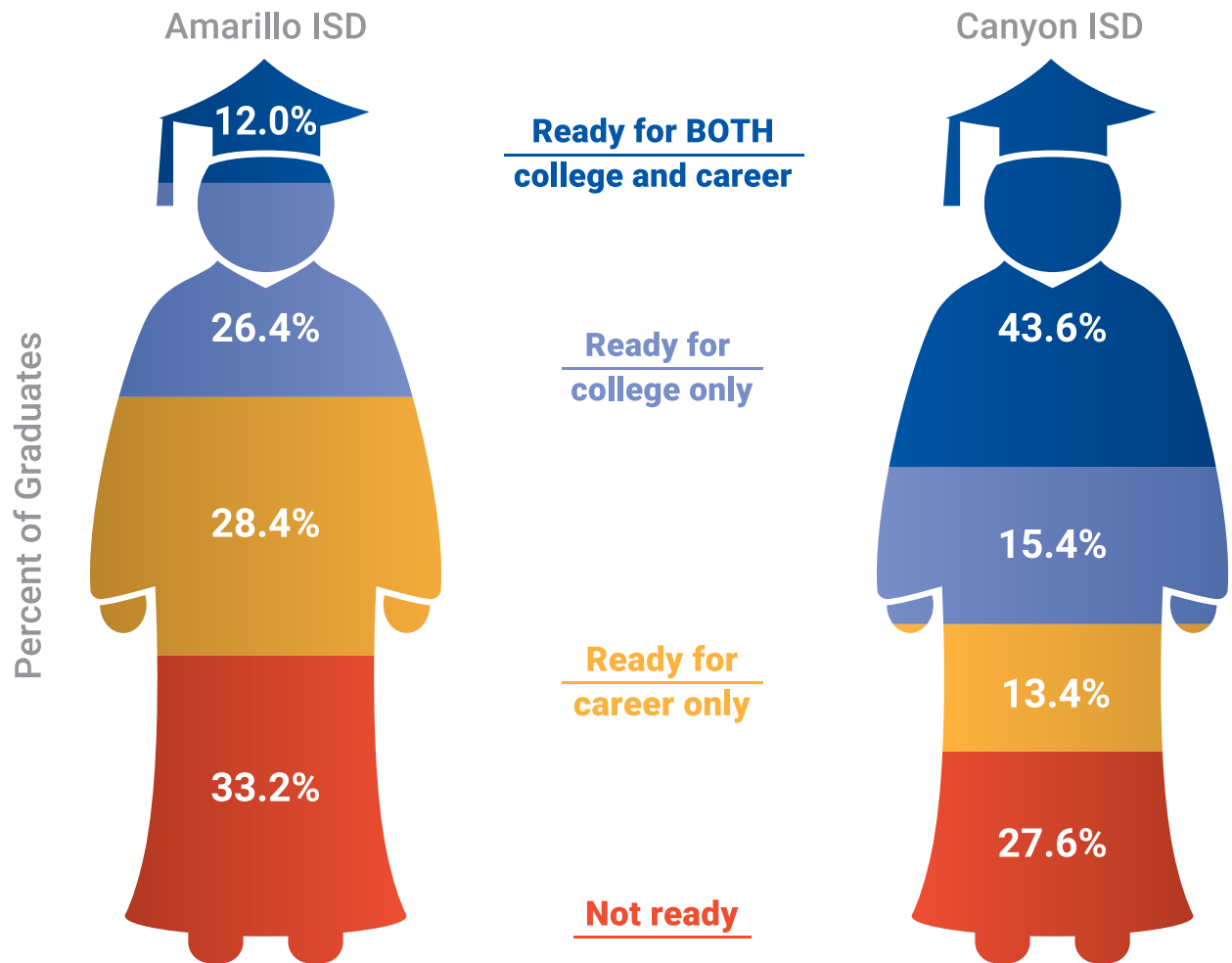
Second, even though this indicator is called “College AND Career Readiness,” by definition, it measures col-

lege OR career readiness. In other words, it identifies all the graduates who are ready for either college or career, not necessarily for both. The percentage of students who are ready for BOTH college and career in 2016 was 12.0% in Amarillo ISD and 43.6% in Canyon ISD.



Third, the College and Career Readiness indicator consists of three sub-indicators: college readiness, dual credit completion, and CTE course enrollment. The first two sub-indicators, college readiness and dual credit, are measures of performance (exceeding exam criteria for SAT/ACT or TSIA and completing a course, respectively), while the third sub-indicator is a measure of enrollment in a sequence of CTE courses. Enrollment is very different from performance because it measures intent rather than achievement. Achievement undoubtedly is a more valid measure of readiness than intent. To make the CTE sub-indicator achievement-oriented, one would have to know the proportion of graduates who completed a certain number of CTE courses. Unfortunately, CTE completion statistics are not currently available in TEA reports.

With these caveats in mind, 66.8% of Amarillo ISD graduates and 72.4% of Canyon ISD graduates were “college and career ready” according to the TEA definition in the 2015–2016 school year. Both of these rates were lower than the Texas rate of 75.9% . On a positive note, Amarillo ISD has seen a 14.6% improvement in its college and career readiness rate in 2016 over the previous year.



Source: Percentage of graduated calculated based on data from Texas Academic Performance Report, 2016-2017 by Texas Education Agency
 Infographic idea based on the Meandering Toward Graduation: Transcript Outcomes of High School Graduates report by the Education Trust

Putting both of the above rates together, of the 66.8% of Amarillo ISD students who were “college and career ready” 12.0% were actually ready for both college AND career, another 26.4% were ready for college only, and 28.4% were ready for career only. The remaining 33.2% were not ready for either college or career. In Canyon ISD 43.6% of graduates were ready for both college and career, another 15.4% were only ready for college, and an additional 13.4% were only ready for career. The proportion of Canyon ISD graduates who were not ready for college or career was 27.6%. Therefore, nearly one third of Amarillo and Canyon ISD graduates were neither college nor career ready.

College and Career Readiness on the National Scale
 Measures of college and career readiness vary from state to state, which makes comparison on state

and national levels problematic. To overcome this inconsistency, The Education Trust¹² (2017) recently examined transcripts from a nationally representative sample of students to see what proportion of students were ready for college and career. The study methodology was more stringent than the methodology currently used by TEA; therefore, the statistics from TEA and The Education Trust cannot be directly compared to each other. The methodology utilized by The Education Trust involved the examination of the transcripts of students to see if they completed and passed courses in English, math, science, and foreign languages that are typically required by colleges, and whether or not they completed a cohesive CTE program. This methodology is a much more valid measure of college and career readiness than the one used by TEA, because it looks at completion of spe-

cific courses necessary to succeed in college or in a vocation.

The report suggests that most high schoolers lack a clear understanding of a career path. They take a haphazard variety of classes that fit within their schedule and satisfy their interests, but do not support a particular career aspiration.

The report stresses that high schools play a major role in a student's success. One particular challenge identified in the study was that "rather than ensuring students have access to a cohesive curriculum that aligns high school coursework and students' future goals, high schools are prioritizing credit accrual, which treats graduation as the end goal."¹³

Rather than ensuring access to a cohesive curriculum that aligns with students' future goals, high schools are prioritizing credit accrual.

The entire coursework required to qualify for college and career readiness consists of 18 credits. High school students take 26 credits on average. This means that there is more than enough time to complete both college and career tracks. However, only 8% of the national sample completed the required credit sequence to be college and career ready.

The main barriers to college and career readiness were foreign language requirements, science, and algebra II. Algebra II is especially important for college readiness as it is strongly correlated to college admission and college success. About one third of students who did not satisfy the college ready requirement took multiple math courses but failed to take the required algebra II course. The Bromberg and Theokas (2016) report states that "students often get locked into a math trajectory based on their incoming math placement: Only 41 percent of students who took pre-algebra or lower as ninth-grade students eventually took an algebra II credit. By contrast, 70 percent of students who started out in algebra I and 75 percent

of students who started out in geometry eventually reached at least algebra II."¹⁴

The narrative is similar for science courses. Many students who missed the college and career readiness requirement took several science courses, but not the right combination of biology, chemistry, and physics. In the same vein, foreign language is required by most public universities, but it is not required by some high schools and many students fail to take the courses.

What can be done to improve student success and preparedness for postsecondary career and education?

First, the alignment of high school graduation and postsecondary admission requirements should become a priority for high schools. High schools could require the same math, language, and science courses for graduation that will subsequently be required by colleges and universities. Second, high schools could provide more targeted course selection guidance upon enrollment into high school to make sure students do not forego required courses and do not accumulate a large number of unnecessary credits. Third, high schools could develop success strategies to help college-bound students improve their GPA. Recent research shows that GPA is a much stronger predictor of college success than test scores.¹⁵ Fourth, high schools could work together with colleges and universities to help students pass dual credit and AP/IB courses. The low passing rates for AP/IB courses in



Amarillo and Canyon ISDs are particularly disheartening. Fifth, high schools could help students learn about a broad variety of careers and help them map their interests and aspirations to labor market demands.

In the Amarillo community, where the majority of high school graduates are not ready for college, the career readiness track should be given a greater educational priority. Career and technical education courses offered in Amarillo and Canyon ISD high schools could be matched with skills highly demanded by the local economy. Further, schools can assist graduates in finding internships and shadowing opportunities with local businesses.

The 2017 Community Status Report discussed how the Amarillo economy is, in fact, well suited for people without a college degree. There is a substantial number of well-paying jobs in security, business, and transportation that are accessible to people with high school diplomas and with professional certificates or associate degrees. Connecting these employment opportunities with high school course work could open doors to well-paying work for many high school students. In addition to the above recommendation outlined in The Education Trust report, the Amarillo community could benefit from developing strong collaborative networks of prospective employers, educational institutions, and young people in and freshly out of high school to help them find their place in the workforce.

Educational Achievement

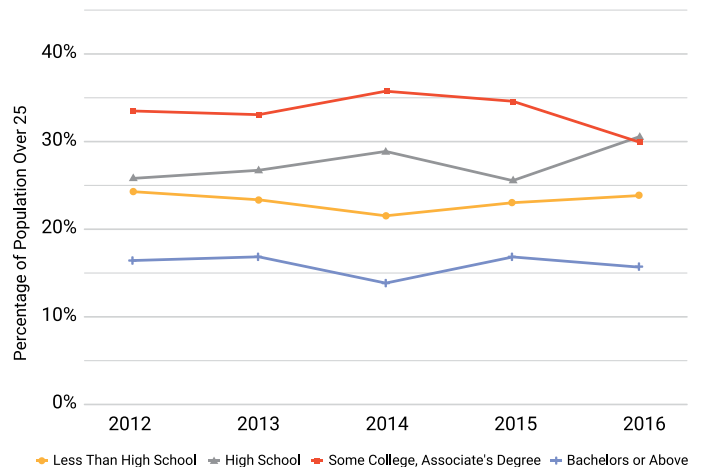
Strengthening the connection between educational requirements and the workforce could not only benefit high school students, but the community at large. According to the American Community Survey, 23.8% of residents in Potter County do not hold a high school diploma, and another 30.6% have a high school diploma, but no further training. Consequently, the majority of the population in Potter County (54.4%) lack the basic educational requirements necessary to succeed in the present-day economy. Unfortunately, in 2016 the proportion of residents with no postsecondary cre-

entials increased over the previous year by 12.2%. Some of Potter County residents with no postsecondary credentials may have work experience that offsets the lack of a postsecondary education, but many do not.

In Randall County 28.8% of the population have a high school diploma or below, and 31.8% have a bachelor's degree or above. The proportion of residents with no credentials past high school has decreased in 2016 from the previous year by 6.5%. The population of Randall County is highly educated even by national and state standards, while the population of Potter County lags behind educationally. Potter County undoubtedly has room for improvement in the area of educational attainment for both young people and adults.

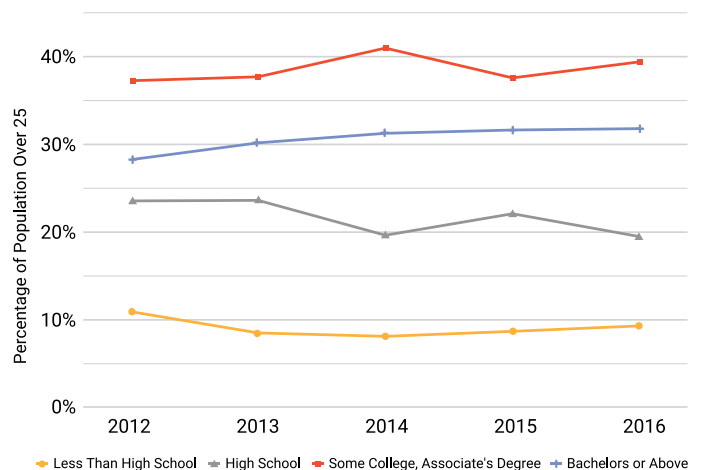
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS

Potter County
American Community Survey



EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS

Randall County
American Community Survey



INCOME

In the United States economy, education builds the foundation for earning a livable wage, with higher levels of education delivering greater financial returns.

Without the foundation of a high school diploma families are likely to be trapped in poverty.

To understand the relative value of these financial returns we can compare them to two benchmarks: the national poverty threshold, signifying the minimum standard of living, and the cost of living in the Amarillo metro area, signifying the typical level of expenses in the area. These two benchmarks vary by family size, and will be reported for a family of four, which is the most common family size in the Amarillo area. The national poverty threshold for a family of four in 2016 was \$24,755¹⁶; the cost of living in the Amarillo area for the family of the same size was \$38,170¹⁷ in 2016 dollars.



In 2016, individuals with no high school diploma earned \$24,349 in Potter County and \$24,492 in Randall County. These average earnings fell below the national poverty threshold of \$24,755. Without the foundation of a high school diploma for at least one of the

income earners in the household, families are likely to be trapped in poverty.

Compared to the individuals with no high school diploma, high school graduates earned an additional \$5,131 in Potter County and \$9,150 in Randall County, bringing the annual earnings to \$29,480 and \$33,642 respectively. A high school diploma moved the average annual earnings over the national poverty threshold, but not quite to the cost-of-living threshold.

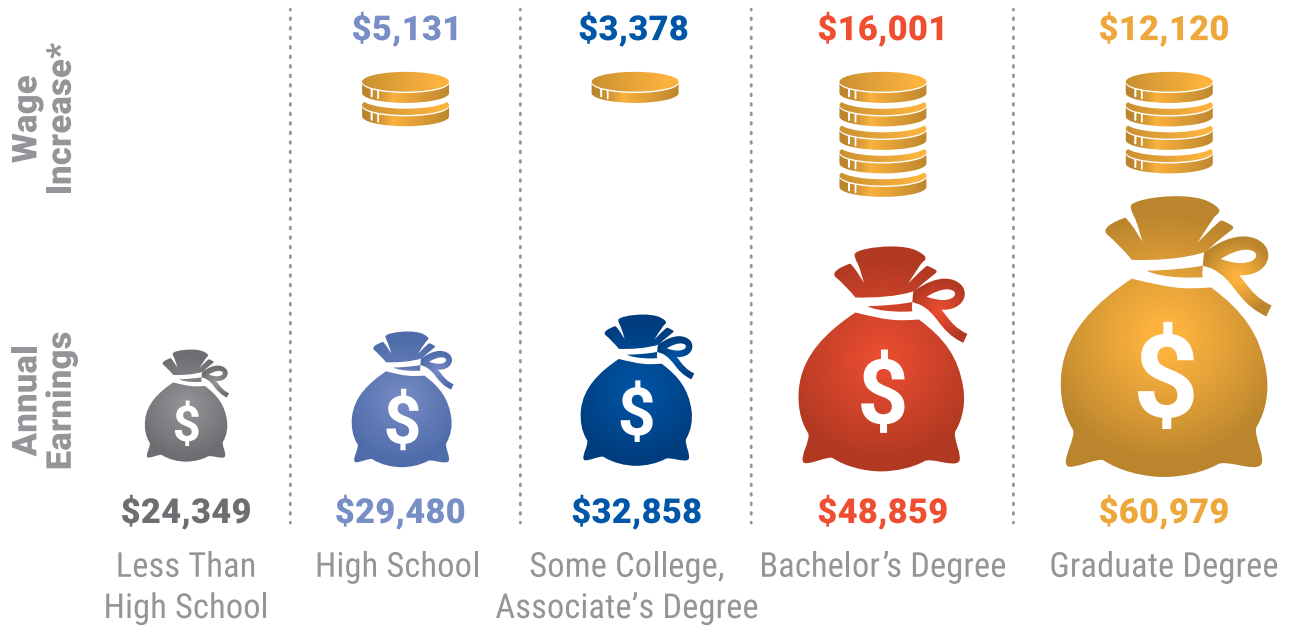
An associate degree or 'some college' brought an additional \$3,378 in Potter County and an additional \$2,496 in Randall County, but again the average earnings did not reach the cost-of-living threshold.



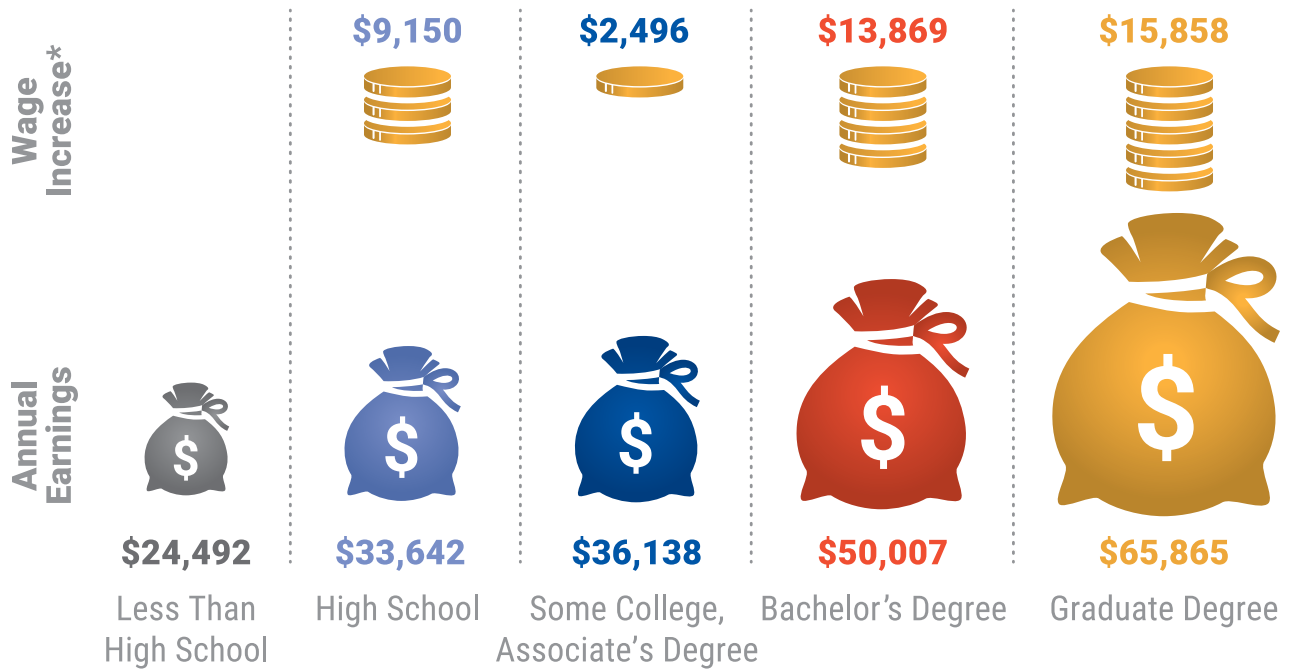
Postsecondary diplomas delivered the greatest increase in annual earnings. In Potter County, a bachelor's degree offered an additional \$16,001 compared to what was earned by residents with 'some college', bringing the total average wage to \$48,859. In Randall County, a bachelor's degree yielded \$13,869 over 'some college', increasing earnings to \$50,007. In both counties in 2016 individuals with bachelor's degrees made, on average, more than enough to sustain the cost-of-living in the Amarillo area for a family of four.

Finally, a graduate degree in Potter County yielded an additional \$12,120 in earnings, bringing the total average earnings to \$60,979. In Randall County, graduate degree awarded on average an additional \$15,858 over bachelor's degree earnings, or a total of \$65,865.

Potter County, 2016



Randall County, 2016



Source: American Community Survey, 2016

Note: *A wage increase is measured as the difference in annual earnings between the current level of education and the previous one. For example, the wage premium for a high school diploma is the difference in annual earnings between high school and less than high school.

While college and graduate degrees provide a sizable income boost, the pros and cons of additional education need to be weighed against other important factors such as the availability of jobs, the cost of education, the length of time needed to obtain a degree, as

well as the additional monetary and personal sacrifices involved in pursuing further education. Advanced degrees may not always make economic sense. Labor market projections show that 6 out of the 10 fastest growing industries in the United States do not require

a college education, but rather an associate degree or a postsecondary certification¹⁸, and many of them provide a livable wage.

The 2017 Community Status Report highlighted such blue-collar associate-degree level occupations in the Amarillo area. They include law enforcement; installation, maintenance, and repairs; transportation; business and financial operations; and fire-fighting and other protective services¹⁹. All of the above occupations pay on average over \$40,000 annually. Associate-level degrees and certificates in these occupations may be attractive avenues to a livable wage and stable employment with low educational expenses.

Unemployment

Amarillo is known for its resilient economy. In the past few years, the Amarillo economy has been able to accommodate a significant influx of new residents attracted by favorable economic conditions and an affordable cost of living. Despite the steep increase in the number of residents, and the ups and downs of the economic cycle, the Amarillo community has managed to maintain an unemployment rate well below the state and national averages. In 2016, Potter County had a 3.2% unemployment rate, which was substantially below the state and national averages (5.6% and 5.8% respectively). Compared to 2015, the unemployment rate in Potter County decreased by

23.8%, from 4.2% to 3.2%. Randall County, on the other hand, experienced a 52.0% increase in unemployment in 2016 compared to the year before, from 2.5% to 3.8%. However, such a dramatic fluctuation in the rate is not uncommon when values are very small. Randall County's unemployment rate was still well below the state and national averages, but above Potter County's rate.

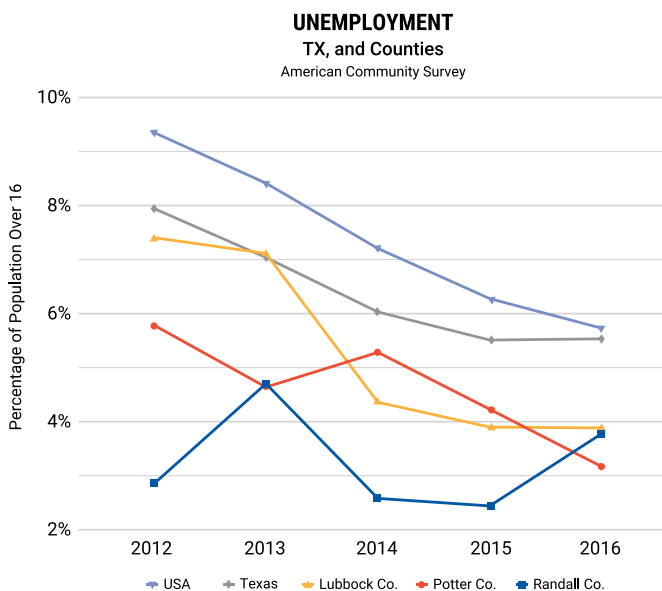
Despite a strong and resilient economy, it is not unreasonable to expect the unemployment rate in the Amarillo community to rise due to the rapid population growth. It remains to be seen to what extent the Amarillo economy is able to absorb rapid expansion to its labor force.



Labor Force Participation

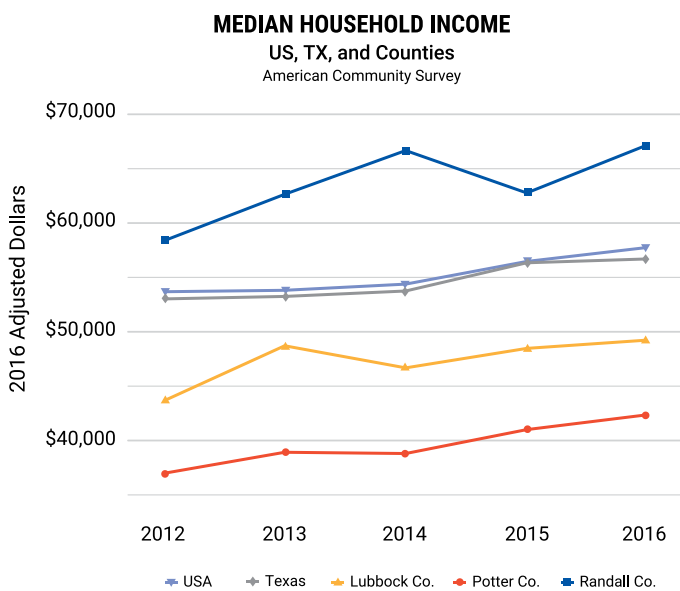
By definition, the labor force includes individuals 16 years of age or older who are either employed (including the self-employed, business owners, farmers, etc.) or looking for work. Individuals not in the labor force are those 16 years of age or older who are not looking for work. This includes students, retired individuals, disabled individuals, those with full-time home responsibilities (such as caring for children or sick relatives), as well as those who could not find employment and stopped looking²⁰.

A majority of people in this category do not participate in the labor force due to advanced age, disability, or the pursuit of education. However, there is also a fraction of individuals who exit the labor force because they are unable to find employment. This phenomenon is referred to as "hidden unemployment."



In Potter County, 42.5% of the population age 16 or older were not in the labor force in 2016. This represents a 15.5% increase over the year before. Potter County's rate was 19.7% higher than the 35.5% rate in Texas and 15.2% higher than the 36.9% rate in the United States on average. In Randall County in 2016, 27.9% of the population was not in the labor force, which constituted a 14.4% decrease from 2015. Randall County had a 21.4% lower rate than Texas and 24.4% lower rate than the United States.

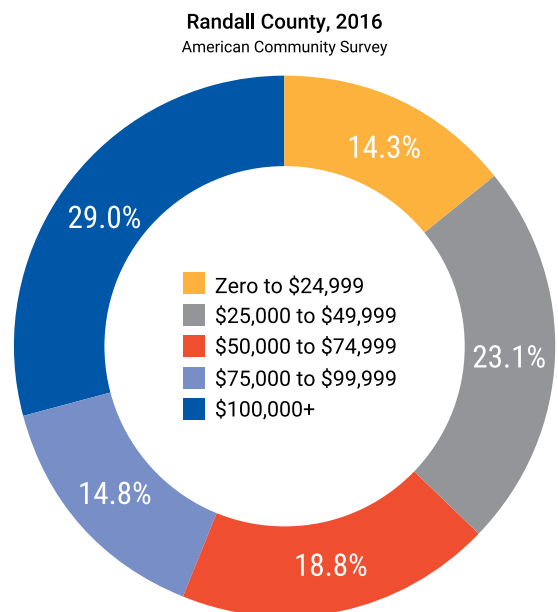
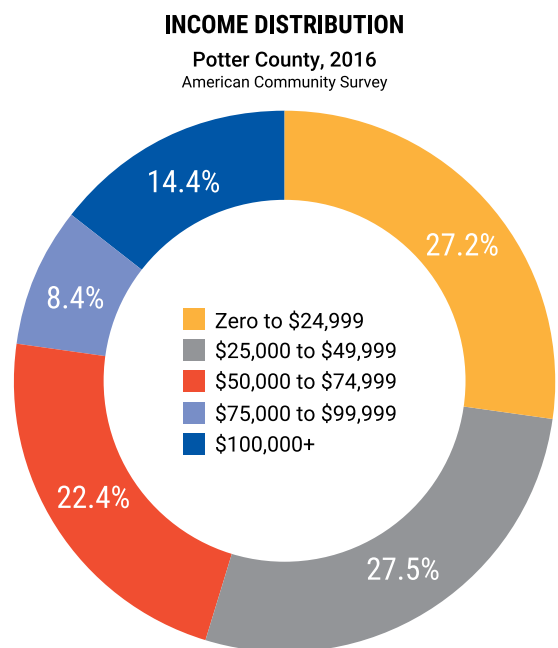
Median Income



Median household income increased in both Potter and Randall Counties in 2016. In Potter County, the median income was \$42,305 in 2016, a 3.3% increase from the previous year. In Randall County, the median income was \$67,015, a 7.0% increase from 2015. Unexpectedly, Randall County's median income increased despite a spike in unemployment in 2016. The simultaneous growth in unemployment and the median income was due to an increase in the proportion of residents making over \$100,000, which has increased by 9.4% since 2015 and by 37.4% since 2012.

Despite the 2016 increase, the median income in Potter County remains significantly below that of other areas. The income gap between Potter and Randall

Counties in 2016 was 58.4% or \$24,710. The difference in the economic well-being between the two counties is even more pronounced when the income is broken down into brackets. In Potter County, 27.2% of the residents were in the poorest income bracket, making less than \$25,000 a year, while in Randall County—only 14.3% were in that category. On the wealthy end of the spectrum 14.4% of Potter County residents were making over \$100,000 a year in 2016, while in Randall County 29.0% earned over the same amount. These statistics clearly show that the disparity in income between the two counties remains substantial.



HEALTH

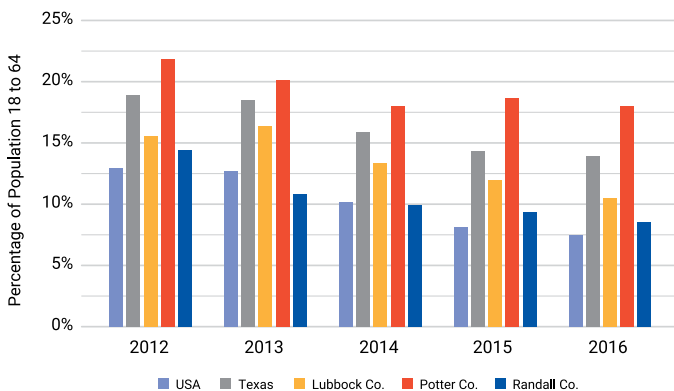
Public health is one of the key components of community well-being. Healthy residents make better citizens, more enthusiastic learners, and more productive workers.

Health Insurance

Children who do not have health insurance are at risk for incomplete immunizations, unaddressed developmental delays, higher rates of asthma, and poor dental health.

The chance of having a healthy life is greatly increased with access to health insurance. People without health insurance use less preventative care and bear a greater risk of dying of a host of illnesses including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. They are also more likely to suffer extreme adverse effects of untreated injuries²¹. Children who do not have health insurance get fewer wellness checkups and are at risk for incomplete immunizations, unaddressed developmental delays, higher rates of asthma, and poor dental health²².

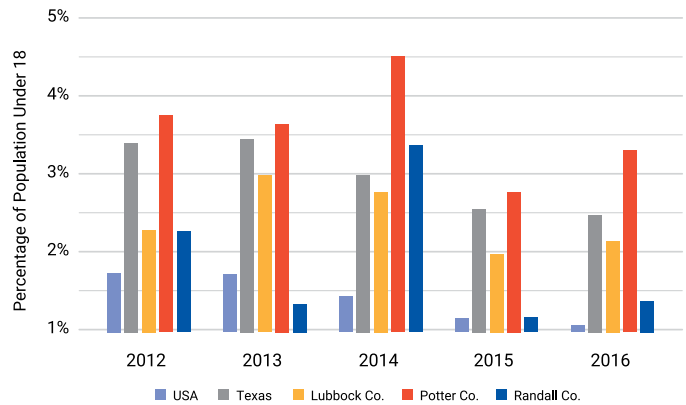
UNINSURED 18 TO 64
US, TX, and Counties
American Community Survey



In 2016, the proportion of uninsured adults decreased in all regions discussed in this report: in the United States

(-9.8%), Texas (-3.5%), Lubbock County (-11.8%), Potter County (-3.7%), and Randall County (-9.6%). Potter County had the highest proportion of uninsured adults, 18.0%, which was 143.2% higher than the 7.4% rate in the United States on average. Randall County's uninsured adult rate was 8.5%, which appeared to also be elevated considering the affluence of Randall County.

UNINSURED UNDER 18
US, TX, and Counties
American Community Survey



For children, the proportion of uninsured was overall much smaller than for the adults. In all five regions (United States, Texas, Lubbock County, Potter County, and Randall County) the children's uninsured rate hovered under 5%. As expected, Potter County had the highest uninsured rate for children, 3.3% in 2016, which was more than three times higher than the U.S. rate of 1.0%. Randall County's 1.3% uninsured rate among children was 30.0% higher than the U.S. rate. Both Potter and Randall Counties saw an increase in the proportion of uninsured children in 2016 by 22.2% and 18.2%, respectively.

Both Potter and Randall Counties saw an increase in the proportion of uninsured children in 2016 by 22.2% and 18.2%, respectively.

The uninsured rates for Texas and the two counties are consistently surpassing the average uninsured rates for the United States for both children and adults. The differences in the economic conditions cannot fully explain the gaps in insurance coverage,

especially if one takes into account low unemployment rates in both Potter and Randall Counties. Access to public and private health insurance is likely to play a role in the existence of insurance gaps and a potential area for improvement for the entire Amarillo community.

Chronic illness.

One of the major areas of struggle for the Amarillo community is chronic illness, including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Previous Community Status Reports covered the interconnectedness of these illnesses in considerable detail. To briefly revisit this discussion, heart disease and diabetes are closely related and influenced by the same factors (Community Status Report, 2016). Both conditions are linked to obesity, a lifestyle of low physical activity, and the prevalence of a “Southern diet” rich in fried foods, sweetened beverages, and processed meats²³. These factors also contribute to cancer. In addition to a problematic lifestyle, factors such as heredity, reduced access to preventative care, and exposure to pollutants play a role in the prevalence of and mortality associated with heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

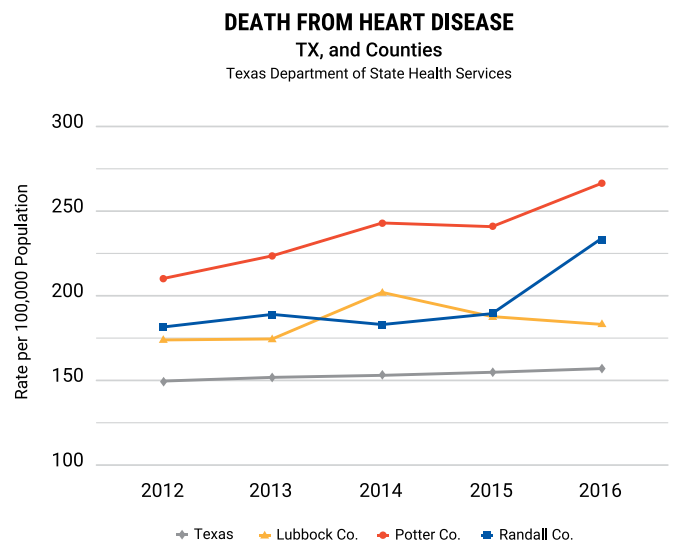
Both heart disease and diabetes are linked to obesity, a lifestyle of low physical activity, and the prevalence of a “Southern diet” rich in fried foods, sweetened beverages, and processed meats.

The Texas Department of State Health Services provides data on the number of deaths from several types of chronic illnesses including various forms of cardiovascular disease (referred to as “heart disease” in this report), diabetes, and various forms of cancer (combined under “cancer”). When adjusted for population growth, each indicator represents the number of deaths from chronic illness per 100,000 population; also known as the rate of death.



Death from Heart Disease.

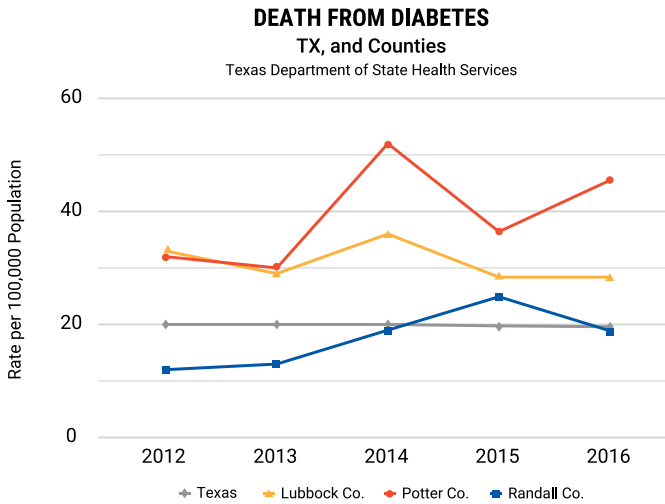
Unfortunately, in 2016 the rate of death from heart disease continued to increase in both Potter and Randall Counties. In Potter County, the rate grew by 10.7% from the year before, bringing the total rate to 266.5 deaths per 100,000 population. This rate was 69.7% higher than the 157.0 rate in Texas and 45.5% higher than the 183.1 rate in the neighboring Lubbock County. In Randall County, the rate of death from heart disease increased by 23.5%, bringing it to the total of 234.0 deaths per 100,000 population. This rate was 49.0% higher than the average Texas rate and 27.8% higher than the rate in Lubbock County.



Death from Diabetes.

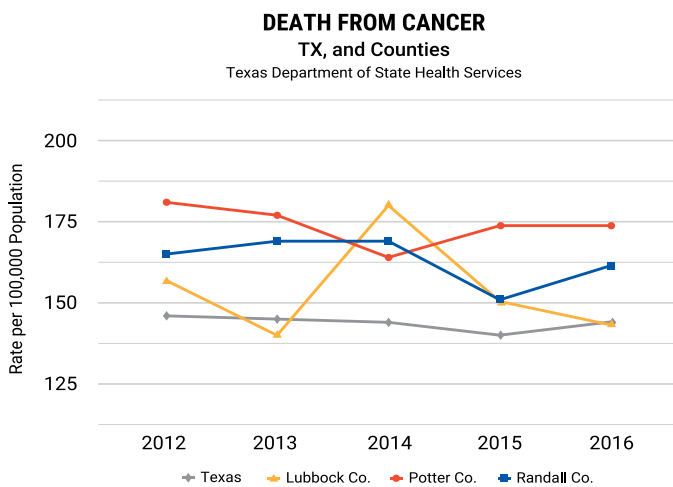
In Potter County, the rate dramatically increased in 2016 by 30.5%, reaching 45.5 deaths per 100,000 population. This rate was 132.4% higher than the 19.6 rate

in the state on average. In Randall County the rate was 18.9 deaths per 100,000 population, 58.6% lower than in Potter County and 4.5% lower than in the state. The rate decreased by 4.5% in 2016 compared to the year before. Diabetes rates fluctuate from year to year, but there appears to be an overall upward trend in diabetes-related deaths in both counties since 2013.



Death from Cancer.

In Potter County the rate of death from cancer in 2016 remained the same as the year before (173.8 deaths per 100,000 population), while in Randall County the rate increased by 7.0% from 150.9 in 2015 to 161.5 in 2016. Both Potter and Randall Counties had a greater number of deaths from cancer per 100,000 population than Texas, where the rate was 144.2 in 2016. Potter County's rate was 20.5% higher than the average Texas rate, and Randall County's rate was 12.0% higher than that of Texas. In the neighboring Lubbock County



the rate of death from cancer was also much lower than in Potter and Randall Counties (143.2 deaths per 100,000 residents). These numbers indicate that cancer continues to be a significant health issue in the Amarillo community.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

The data on sexually transmitted infections has some unique features. The cause-of-death indicators discussed above (heart disease, cancer, and diabetes) were measured as a number of deaths per 100,000 population and 2016 was the latest year for which the data were available. STI data are reported as the cumulative number of diagnosed cases (rather than the number of deaths) per 100,000 population, also known as the prevalence rate. Further, the STI data

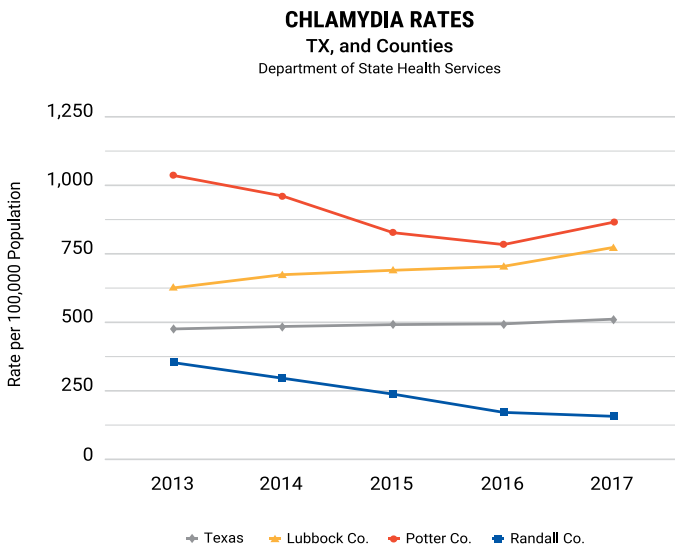


are reported 1 year ahead of other health indicators, making 2017 the latest year for which the data are available.

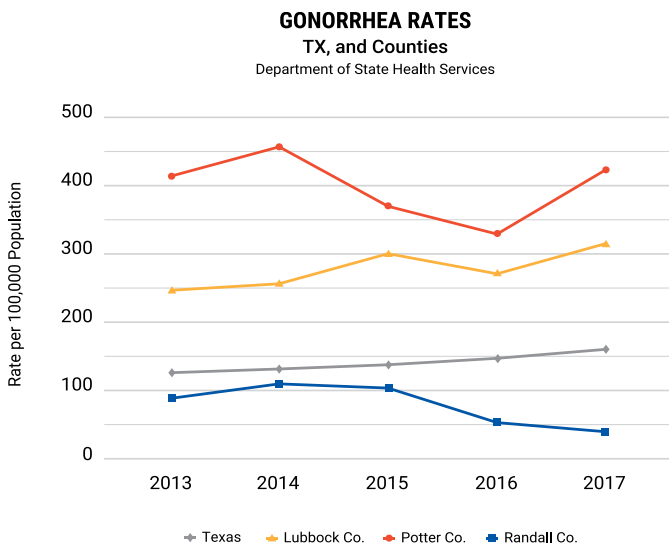
STI prevalence rates follow a fairly typical pattern across the state. Chlamydia is the most prevalent STI with a rate of between 400 and 1,000 cases per 100,000 population. Gonorrhea is the second most prevalent STI with about half the rate of chlamydia. Syphilis, HIV, and other STIs are much less prevalent with rates between 0-60 cases per 100,000 population.

STIs continue to be a major health issue in Potter County. The chlamydia rate in 2017 was 865.9 cases per 100,000 residents, 69.3% higher than the average Texas rate of 511.6. Unfortunately, the 4-year down-

ward trend in chlamydia rate that occurred in Potter County between 2013 and 2016 was halted in 2017 with a 10.5% increase.



The gonorrhea rate in Potter County in 2017 was 423.4 cases per 100,000 residents, 164.3% higher than the average Texas rate of 160.2. Like chlamydia, after several years of a downward trajectory, the gonorrhea rate increased in 2017 by 28.7%.



The rate of syphilis diagnosis in Potter County in 2017 was 56.6 cases per 100,000 residents. After a dramatic increase in 2016, the syphilis rate had decreased in 2017 by 16.6% but was still 39.4% higher than the average Texas rate of 40.6.

New data on the prevalence of HIV was not available in time for the current report and will be included next year.

For Randall County, STIs did not pose a significant health risk in the past decade as compared to Texas and Potter County. For chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis the rates were much lower than in the state and exhibited further decreases in 2017 compared to the rates of the year before.

Suicide

Mental health is a very important dimension of community wellness. Unfortunately, community data on mental health is scarce due to data collection difficulty resulting from the stigma associated with seeking mental health services. One indicator of mental health currently available from the Texas Department of Health and Human Services is the number of deaths due to suicide.

In 2016 over 45,000 Americans took their own lives.

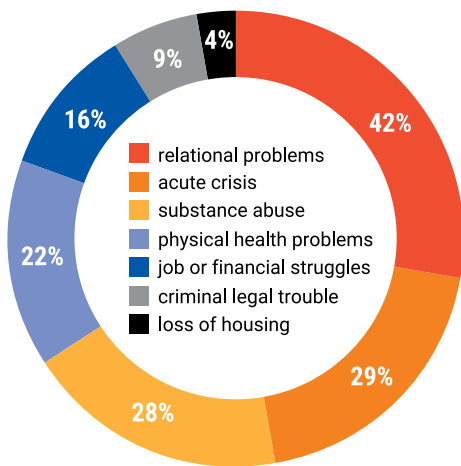
Suicide has become a major mental health issue in recent years in the United States and around the world. In the United States, suicide rates increased in 2016 in every state except Nevada.²⁴ The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that in 2016 over 45,000 Americans took their own lives. This represents an average rate of 14.0 suicides per 100,000 population. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the country and one of three rising causes of death alongside Alzheimer's disease and drug overdose.



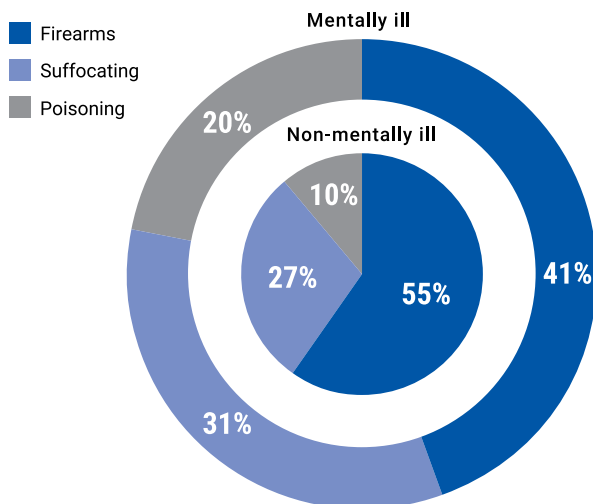
The reasons for the recent suicide epidemic are complex. Research shows that more than half of suicide victims did not have any previous record of mental ill-

ness.²⁵ Suicide can be triggered by many factors such as relational problems (42%), acute crisis (29%), substance abuse (28%), physical health problems (22%), job or financial struggles (16%), criminal legal trouble (9%), and loss of housing (4%). Both the mentally ill and those without previously diagnosed mental illness choose firearms as the most common means of committing suicide (41% and 55% respectively). Suffocating was the second most common way to commit suicide with 31% of mentally ill victims and 27% of those without previous history of mental illness choosing this method of suicide. Poisoning is the third most common means of suicide with 20% of diagnoses and 10% of non-diagnosed individuals using this method to take their lives²⁶.

CAUSES OF SUICIDE
US, 2016
Center for Disease Control and Prevention



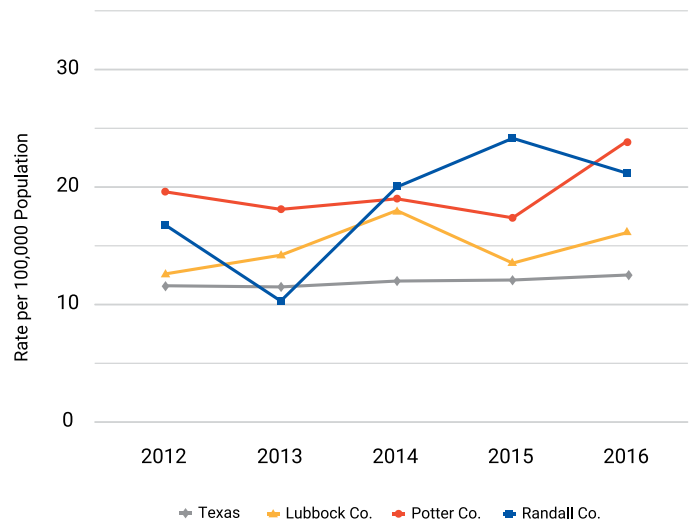
MEANS OF SUICIDE
US, 2016
Center for Disease Control and Prevention



According to the CDC, one important factor in suicide prevention is social connectedness. Connection to a caring and attentive individual can make the difference between a life saved and a life lost. The CDC lists the following strategies for improving social connectedness with potential suicide victims:

- asking the individual at risk about his or her suicidal intent,
- removing the potentially lethal means for suicide,
- spending time with the vulnerable person,
- helping the individual at risk to make other social connections,
- maintaining frequent follow-ups with the vulnerable individual.²⁷

DEATH FROM SUICIDE
TX, and Counties
Texas Department of State Health Services



Consistent with the national pattern, Potter and Randall Counties had elevated suicide rates in 2016. In Potter County, the suicide rate was 24.0, and in Randall County it was 21.1 deaths per 100,000 individuals. Both rates were higher than the average Texas rate of 12.5 by 91.7% in Potter County and 68.8% in Randall County. In 2016, Potter County experienced a 38.1% increase in its suicide rate as compared to the year before. This was the second highest suicide rate in all four regions since 2009, preceded only by the explosive 24.2 rate in Randall County in 2015. Fortunately for Randall County, in 2016 the rate dropped by 12.5%, decreasing to the aforementioned 21.1 deaths per 100,000 residents.

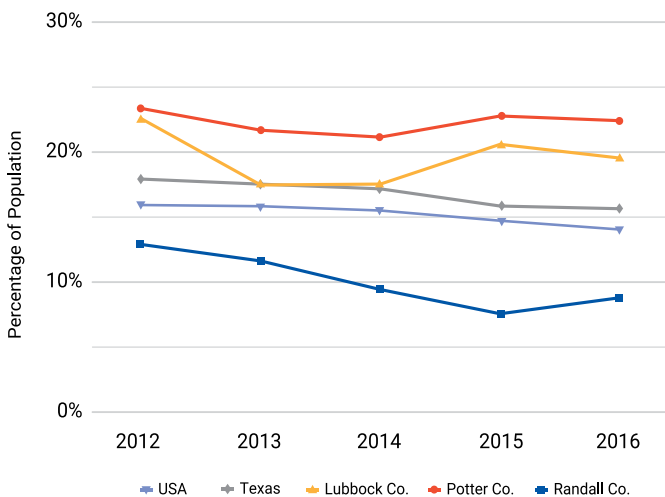
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

United Way of Amarillo & Canyon promote a mission of “Improving lives through the caring power of our community.” This mission is most tangible in how the community cares for people in distressing circumstances and those on the margins of society. The Amarillo community, and Potter County in particular, face many challenges in helping their most vulnerable residents.

Poverty

In Potter County the poverty rate has historically been much higher than in other areas of the state and of the nation. In 2016, the overall poverty rate in Potter County was 22.4%. This rate was 43.6% higher than the average Texas rate (15.6%), and 60.0% higher than the national rate (14.0%). Compared to the year before, the 2016 poverty rate in Potter County dropped slightly, by 1.8%, but it did not drop as fast as the poverty rates in other areas. The United States, for example, experienced a 4.8% decrease in the poverty rate between 2015 and 2016, reflecting an increase in the median income and a decrease in the unemployment rate. Unfortunately, the economic tide did not raise the economic well-being of all the counties in an even wave and Potter County continues to lag behind.

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

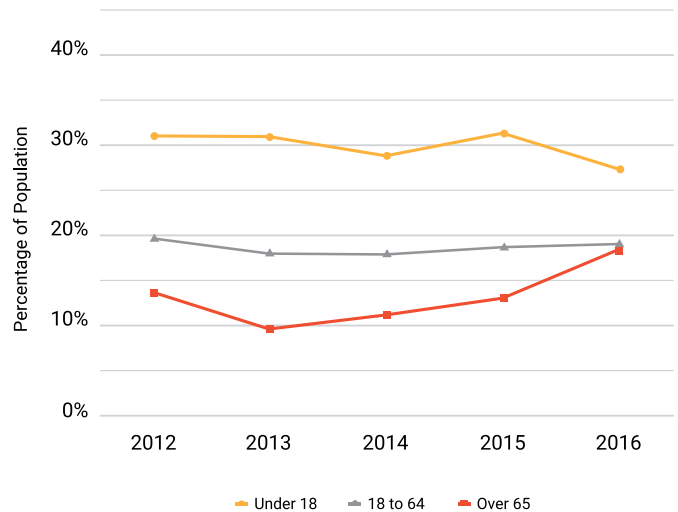


Randall County has had a low poverty rate throughout the last decade, much lower than those of the state, the nation, and the neighboring Potter County. However, in 2016 the poverty rate in Randall County grew by 15.8%, reaching 8.8%.

Poverty by Age

Area poverty rates vary substantially by age. In Potter County in 2016, children had the highest poverty rate (27.0%), followed by working-age adults (18.9%), and the elderly (18.3%). Poverty rates have fluctuated from year to year without a particular trend. This was the case between 2013 and 2016 for poverty rates among children and working-age adults of Potter County. However, over the same time period the poverty rate among the elderly in Potter County increased for 3 consecutive years, reaching 18.3%. This is the highest poverty rate for the county among the elderly since 2008, the first year for which this indicator was reported.

POVERTY BY AGE
Potter County
American Community Survey



In Randall County, the aforementioned 15.8% growth in the overall poverty rate was predominantly driven by an increase in poverty among working-age adults, which grew from 7.3% in 2015 to 9.4% in 2016. Interestingly, the poverty rate for working-age adults even surpassed the childhood poverty rate, which decreased to 8.8% in 2016. This trend is consistent with the increasing unemployment in Randall County.

Public Assistance

Public assistance to families and individuals in need is provided through a variety of programs. The Education section of this report highlights data on publicly subsidized childcare. In the current section, four additional programs are discussed: publicly subsidized health insurance for adults (Medicaid), Children’s Health Insurance Programs (CHIP), the food stamps program (SNAP), and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Enrollment rates in these programs are affected by many factors, including the availability of funds, participation requirements, availability of programs in the area, as well as the number of people in need of the program. Public assistance enrollment rates tend to be the highest in poorer areas, such as Potter County, but year-to-year differences in the rates can be driven by many of the above factors.

For all four programs, Potter County had the highest rate of enrollment in 2016. This is expected considering the county’s high poverty rate. Affluent Randall County, on the other hand, had the lowest enrollment rate across all programs.

Medicaid. For Medicaid, the rate of enrollment in 2016 was 20.1% in Potter County, which is 1.5% lower than the rate for the year before. Similar reductions in Medicaid enrollment were observed in Texas (-1.4%) and Lubbock County (-1.4%), while in Randall County the rate has not changed since 2015. Potter County’s Medicaid enrollment rate was 37.7% higher than the Texas average, while Randall County’s rate was 45.9% lower.

Table 5. *Enrollment in Public Assistance Programs, 2016*

Program	Texas	Lubbock	Potter	Randall
Medicaid	14.60%	14.10%	20.10%	7.90%
CHIP	1.30%	1.10%	1.40%	0.80%
SNAP	13.90%	13.80%	20.80%	7.10%
Cash Assistance	0.20%	0.20%	0.20%	0.10%

CHIP. For Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Potter County again had the highest participation rate of 1.4%, compared to 1.3% in Texas, 1.1% in Lubbock County, and 0.8% in Randall County. Compared to 2015, enrollment rates increased in Potter County (+16.7%), Lubbock County (+10.0%), and Texas (+8.3%), while they remained the same in Randall County.

SNAP. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously known as “food stamps”, provides financial assistance to needy individuals that can be spent on food and basic necessities. Following the pattern, in 2016 Potter County had the largest enrollment rate among the four regions at 20.8%, while Randall County had the lowest at 7.1%. Enrollment in SNAP increased in all four regions in 2016: in Potter County by 2.5%, in Lubbock County by 2.2%, in Randall County by 1.4%, and in Texas overall by 0.7%.



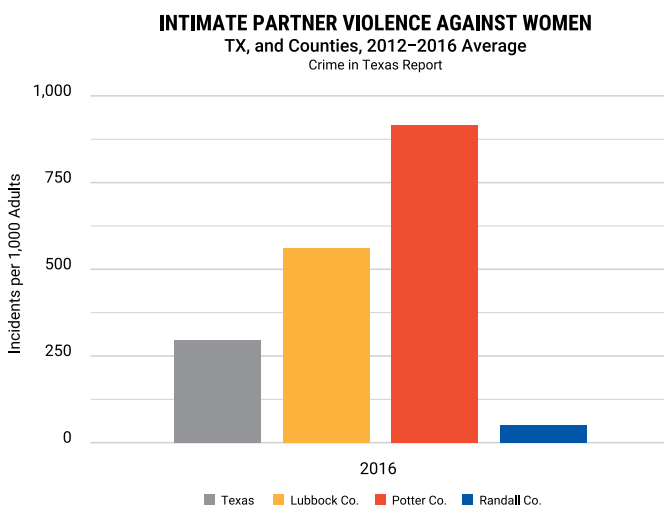
TANF. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is a cash assistance program available for a short duration to families who have fallen on hard times. Due to its temporary nature and stringent eligibility requirements, TANF has a small coverage area, serving less than 1% of the population. In 2016 TANF enrollment rates did not experience any change from the year before. Potter County, Lubbock County, and the state had a 0.2% enrollment rate, while Randall County had a 0.1% enrollment rate.

Family Violence

Another important aspect of community well-being is the prevalence of family violence. This report includes indicators on three types of family violence: intimate partner violence, child abuse, and abuse of the elderly.



Intimate Partner Violence. Intimate partner violence rates fluctuate considerably from year to year, which makes annual comparisons misleading. For this reason, the Community Status Report provides a 5-year average rate covering the span of 2012–2016. Generally speaking, violence against women in intimate relationships is much more prevalent than violence against men. In Potter County the 5-year average rate of intimate partner violence against women was 915.5 cases per 1,000 population, while the intimate partner violence rate against men was nearly one fourth of that (239.7 cases per 1,000 population). Similarly, in Randall County the rate of violence against women was 51.3 cases per 1,000 population, while the rate of violence against men was 13.5 cases per 1,000 residents.



Compared to Lubbock County, Randall County, and the state, Potter County continues to experience an elevated rate of intimate partner violence. The 5-year average rates of abuse against both women and men were over 200% greater in Potter County than in the state on average, and over 63% higher than in Lubbock County. The 2017 Community Status Report highlighted the connection between intimate partner violence and poverty. This fact makes the comparison with Lubbock County particularly pertinent, because it sheds additional light on the depth of intimate partner violence crisis in Potter County. Lubbock County and Potter County have similar poverty rates; in 2016 Lubbock County had a 19.5% poverty rate while Potter County had a 22.4% poverty rate, a 14.9% difference. At the same time, Potter County's rates of domestic violence against women and men were respectively 63.5% and 63.3% higher than in Lubbock County. Clearly, the elevated rates of domestic violence in Potter County cannot be fully explained by poverty alone and deserve community attention.

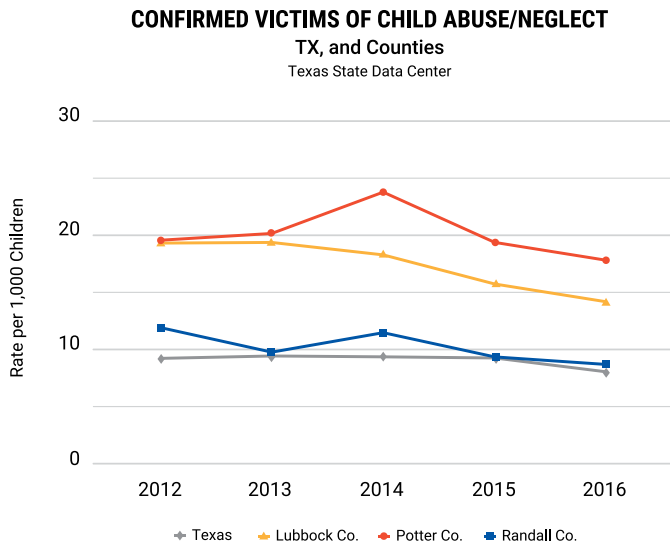
In the neighboring Randall County, domestic violence does not present nearly as significant of an issue. The 2012-2016 rate for violence against women was 51.3 cases per 1,000 population, which is 5.8 times lower than in the state on average. Violence against men in Randall County was much lower than violence against women (13.5 cases vs. 51.3 cases per 1,000 residents respectively). Violence against men in Randall County was also much lower than the violence against men in Texas and Potter County, by 6 and 16 times, respectively.



Child abuse. In 2016, Potter County, which has been historically plagued with high child abuse rates, had 17.8 confirmed cases of child abuse per 1,000 resi-

dents. This was the lowest rate since 2008, the first year for which the rate was published in the Community Status Reports. In fact, the rate dropped by 73.6% from its 2009 peak of 31.4 cases per 1,000 residents. Though the rate continues to be more than twice as high as the state average (17.8 in Potter County vs. 8.0 in Texas), the dramatic decline in the rate of child abuse is a definite victory for Potter County.

state, 8.7 in Randall County vs. 8.0 in Texas, however the steady downward trend gives a strong reason for hope and celebration.



In Randall County, the child abuse rate is also at its lowest point since 2008: 8.4 confirmed cases per 1,000 population. The rate has dropped 37.2% since its 2012 peak of 11.9 cases per 1,000 residents. The 2016 rate remained slightly higher than that of the

Elderly and Disabled. Unlike child abuse trends, the numbers of confirmed cases of abuse among the elderly and disabled increased in 2016 for both Potter and Randall Counties. In Potter County the rate increased from 4.2 in 2015 to 4.8 in 2016 (a 14.3% increase). In Randall County the rate increased from 1.8 cases per 1,000 in 2015 to 2.0 per 1,000 cases in 2016 (a 13.7% increase). Both rates were elevated compared to the 1.8 state average. Potter County's rate was higher by a substantial 157.9%, and Randall County's rate was higher by a more modest 9.0%.

CONCLUSIONS

Previous Community Status Reports discussed how Potter and Randall Counties represent two competing realities that exist in the United States. The first reality is predominantly encountered by minority populations and centers around poverty, low educational achievement, poor health outcomes, and exposure to many adverse circumstances such as teenage pregnancy and abuse. This reality broadly describes the life in Potter County. The second reality is predominantly encountered by White affluent communities, such as Randall County, and centers around good education, access to health care, and lower levels of stress in other areas of community life. Over time, however, these two realities are converging and spilling over into each other, both in the United States and in the Amarillo community. Racial diversity and income inequality are increasing in Potter and Randall Counties. Education and access to healthcare are slowly improving, while many health outcomes are deteriorating.

In terms of demographic changes, Randall County continues to experience significant population growth, while Potter County – a slight population decline. The proportion of non-Black minorities is on the rise in both counties. This growth in minorities is predominantly evident in younger generations. The population of Randall County is aging quicker than the nation on average, while the population of Potter County remains relatively young.

Socio-Economic Convergence between Potter County and Randall County

Increasing socioeconomic similarities between the two counties described in the previous Community Status Reports continue to occur, but new income data reveals another important trend, namely growing income inequality. While poverty and the unemployment trends in both Potter and Randall Counties continue to converge, the median income gap is growing. This phenomenon can be explained by an increase in income inequality within each of the counties, and more specifically a substantial growth in the proportion of the wealthy in Randall County.

Fortunately, convergence can also be observed in the area of education where Potter County has made significant gains in math performance and graduation rates. Even though in the lower grades Amarillo ISD students do not perform as well as Canyon ISD students, by grade 8 the differences in performance become minimal.

Common Strengths and Challenges

Potter and Randall Counties share many strengths and challenges. A low unemployment rate is perhaps the most significant strength of both counties, signifying that the Amarillo economy remains strong. Rates remain below the state and the national averages, despite a 2016 increase in the unemployment rate in Randall County. Median income has increased in both counties in 2016, though much more so in Randall County. The aforementioned educational outcomes are also an area of common strength, especially in math achievement and high school graduation rates where both counties (ISDs) outperformed the state. Finally, child abuse rates continue to decline in both Potter and Randall Counties with both counties hitting a record low rate in 2016.

The most important challenge common to both Potter County and Randall County is health. The rate of death from heart disease and cancer remains significantly higher than the state on average and higher than in Lubbock County. Previous Community Status Reports highlighted the contribution of a “Southern diet” (rich in fried foods, sweetened beverages, and processed meats), as well as a sedentary lifestyle and obesity to the prevalence of heart disease and cancer. These factors also contribute to another chronic illness: diabetes. The rate of death

from diabetes was elevated in Randall County in 2015 but declined below the state level in 2016. However, there appears to be an overall growing trend in diabetes-related death in Randall County since 2010. In Potter County diabetes remains a significant health issue with the rate 2.5 times as high as the state average.

Another health issue common to both counties is suicide. Suicide rates have skyrocketed all around the United States, but Potter and Randall Counties unfortunately surpassed both the nation and the state in their suicide rates. Factors such as a lack of social connectedness and easy access to lethal weapons increase the risk of suicide for vulnerable individuals.

In addition to elevated rates of violence toward self, both Potter and Randall Counties experienced an increase in the abuse of elderly and disabled individuals in 2016.

Unique Challenges

Potter County has many areas in need of improvement, including a high childhood poverty rate, the growing poverty rate among the elderly, high rates of uninsured adults and children, explosive rates of STIs (especially chlamydia and gonorrhea), elevated (though declining) rates of child abuse, and skyrocketing rates of domestic violence.

Randall County's most important unique challenges are growing poverty and unemployment rates among working age adults in the face of increasing median income, all of which point out to growing inequality in the county.

College and Career Readiness

The 2018 Community Status Report brought into focus the data related to post-secondary readiness. According to the TEA a little over 50% of students in Amarillo and Canyon ISDs are passing at least one dual credit course, while less than 10% are passing advanced placement courses. Only 12.0% of students in Amarillo ISD are ready for college AND career, another 54.8% are ready for either college OR career, and over a third are not ready for either. In Canyon ISD, the overall readiness is much better with 43.6% of students being ready for both college and career, and another 28.8% being ready for either college or career. However, nearly a third of students are not ready for either college OR career in Canyon ISD. The statistics on college and career readiness reveal that both Amarillo and Canyon ISDs have room for improvement in the area of preparation for post-secondary success. High schools and colleges could provide more targeted guidance to students, helping them choose the most appropriate courses and improve the performance on courses important for students' future careers.

FOOTNOTES

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Area	County	2016 Value	Trend	Better Than	Worse Than
Median Income	Potter Co.	\$42,305	↑		US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	\$67,015	↑	US, TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	
Unemployment	Potter Co.	3,20%	↓	US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.	
	Randall Co.	3,80%	↑	US, TX, Lubbock Co.	
Graduation Rate (2015)	Potter Co.	90,30%	↑	TX	Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	96,20%	↓	TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	
SAT/ACT	Amarillo ISD	12,10%	↓		TX, Region 16, Canyon ISD
	Canyon ISD	34,10%	↓	TX, Region 16, Canyon ISD	
Uninsured Adults	Potter Co.	18,0%	↓		US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	8,5%	↓	TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	US
Heart Disease*	Potter Co.	266.5 per 100,000	↑		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	234.0 per 100,000	↑	Potter Co.	TX, Lubbock Co.
Suicide	Potter Co.	24.0 per 100,000	↑		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	21.1 per 100,000	↓	Potter Co.	TX, Lubbock Co.
Chlamydia (2017)	Potter Co.	865.9 per 100,000	↑		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	156.9 per 100,000	↓	Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	TX
Poverty	Potter Co.	22,40%	↓		US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	8,80%	↑	US, TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	
SNAP (2017)	Potter Co.	20,80%	↓		US, TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	7,10%	↑	US, TX, Lubbock Co., Potter Co.	
Child Abuse	Potter Co.	17.81 per 1,000	↓		TX, Lubbock Co., Randall Co.
	Randall Co.	8.7 per 1,000	↓	Potter Co., Lubbock Co.	TX

