



# STARK COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

2023





## INTRODUCTION

Since 1981, Stark County Community Action Agency has been a significant program provider of services, working with a commitment and creativity to promote self-sufficiency among low-income persons. The SCCAA provides opportunities for approximately 20,000 individuals and families each year to improve their lives and contribute to the Stark County community. It is SCCAA's mission to assist Stark County's low-income residents to rebuild their hopes, dreams and dignity toward a better life for themselves and their families. The SCCAA worked with The Center for Community Solutions in 2023 to assess the current needs of the community and anticipate future needs. **Findings from the assessment will be carefully considered as future programming and service decisions are made to continue to best invest in the community's health, welfare, and education opportunities.**

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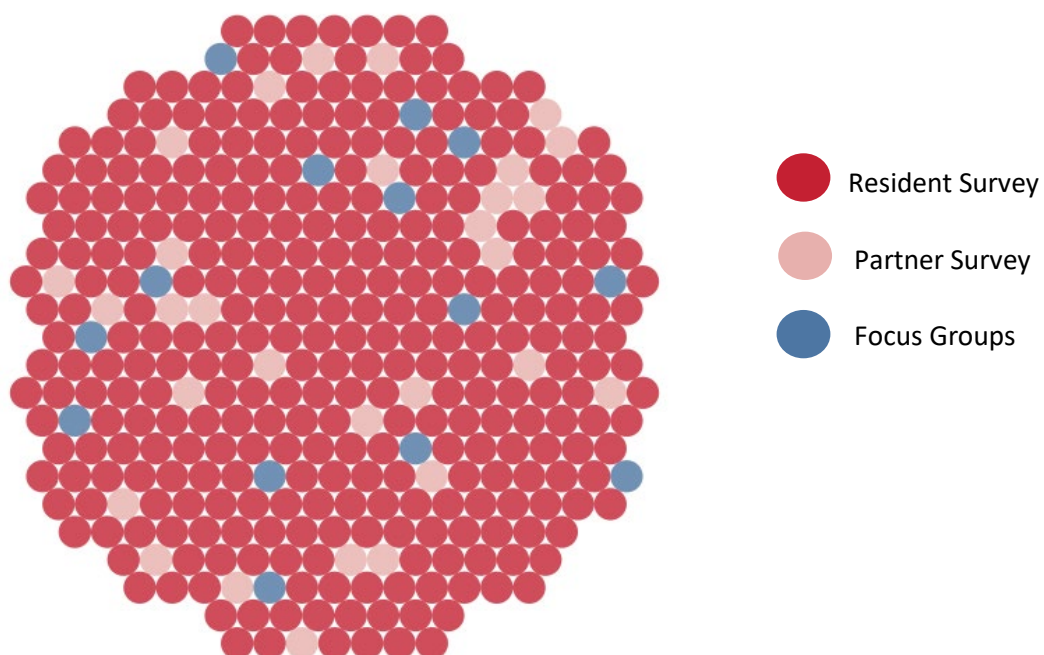
## METHODOLOGY

The assessment findings in the following pages include secondary data from sources such as the American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census Bureau, Community Health Rankings, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Governor's Office of Workforce Development. These trusted secondary data sources provide an overview of the current community conditions in Stark County as they relate to income, poverty, employment, education, and health.

Secondary data supplements the primary data collected through a survey mailed to residents, an online survey distributed to community partners, and direct conversations with community members and faith leaders. Primary data collection provides the opportunity to query residents and community partners directly about the programs and services offered by SCCAA, as well as gaps in service provision found within the county. **The combination of secondary and primary data provides a wealth of information that can guide SCCAA as they pursue their mission.**

This assessment gathered insight from 362 unique residents and leaders in Stark County: 317 through the resident survey, 13 through focus groups, and 29 through a community partner survey. The community survey was sent to both clients of SCCAA and to lower income postal route tracts. Focus groups were held with current Head Start families and faith leaders in the community. Both groups provided unique insight into the issues in their communities. Community partners from all sectors also provided insight through the community partner survey and the focus group.

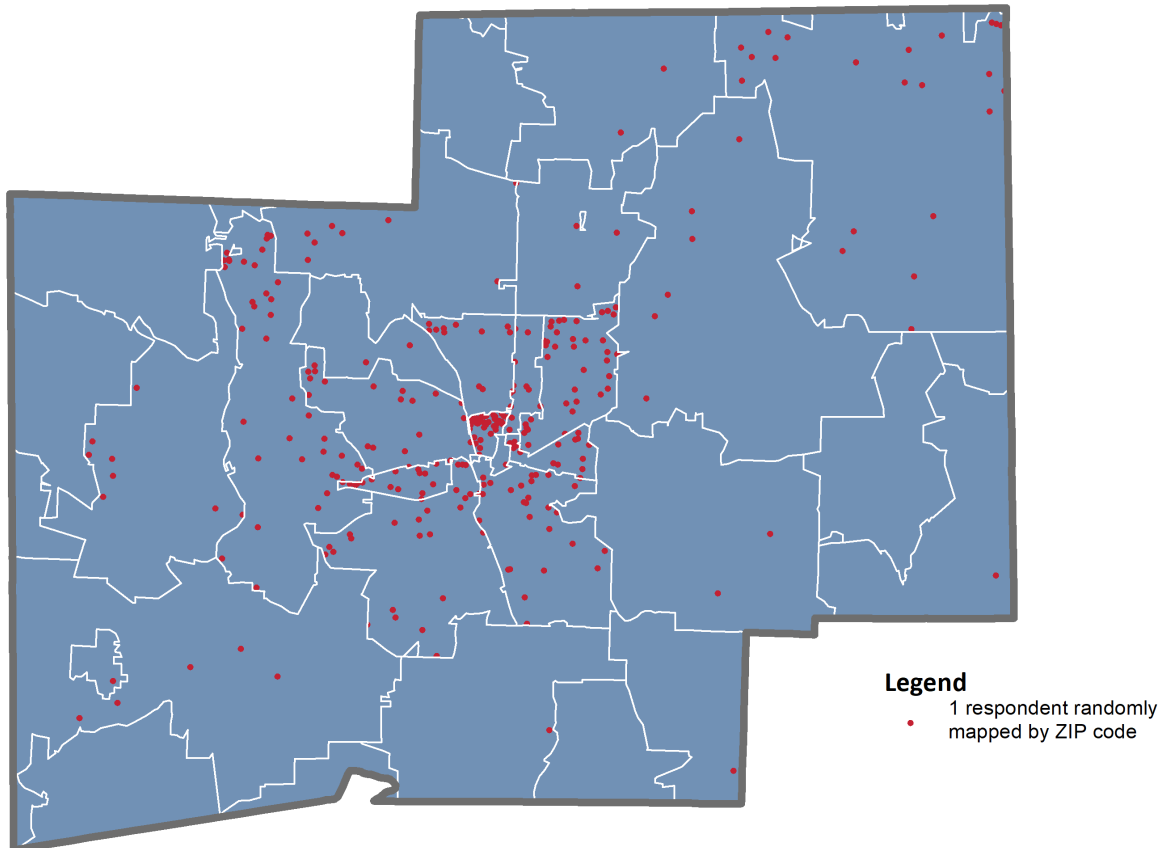
### Response to Community Assessment





Below also contains a map of survey respondents, as randomly mapped by zip code. The highest concentration of respondents was around Canton, which is where some surveys were targeted.

### Survey Respondents Mapped by ZIP Code



# RESIDENT PROFILE

Utilizing the data available from the most recently released 2021 five-year estimates from the American Community Survey from the US Census, insights about race, age and income can be drawn about Stark County.

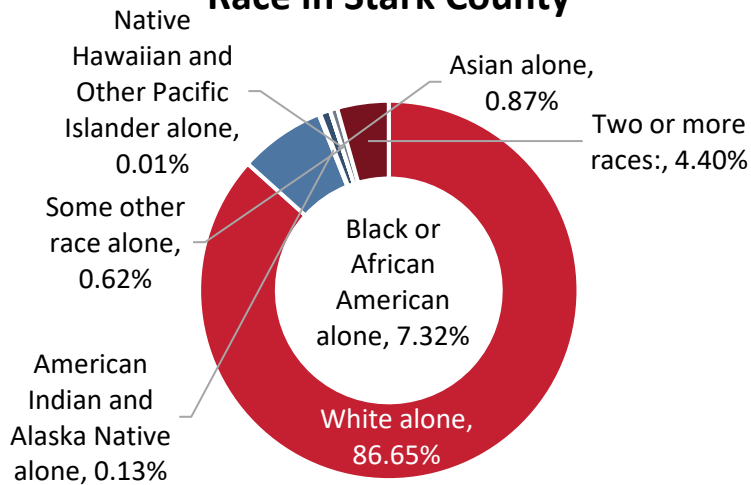
## Race and Ethnicity

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.

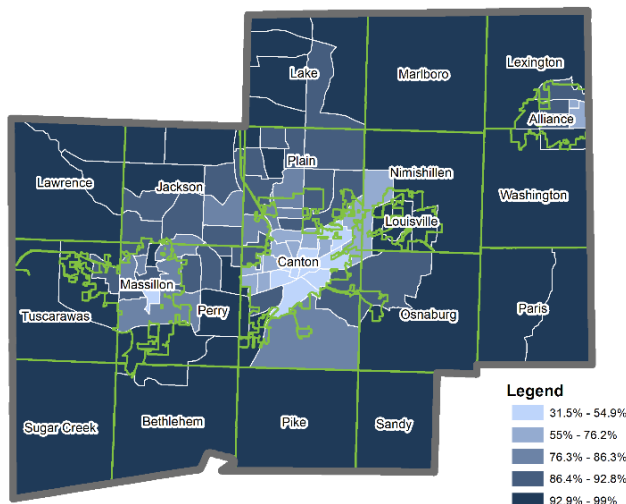
Most Stark County residents (87 percent) are white, which is more than the state average (80 percent). However, nearly 1 in 4 residents of Canton are Black, and another 9 percent identify as two or more races. The U.S. Census Bureau counts Hispanic or Latino as an ethnicity, meaning that people who identify as Hispanic or Latino can be of any race. Two percent of Stark County's residents are Hispanic or Latino, with Canton having the largest population at five percent.

The maps below present race and ethnicity by census tract.

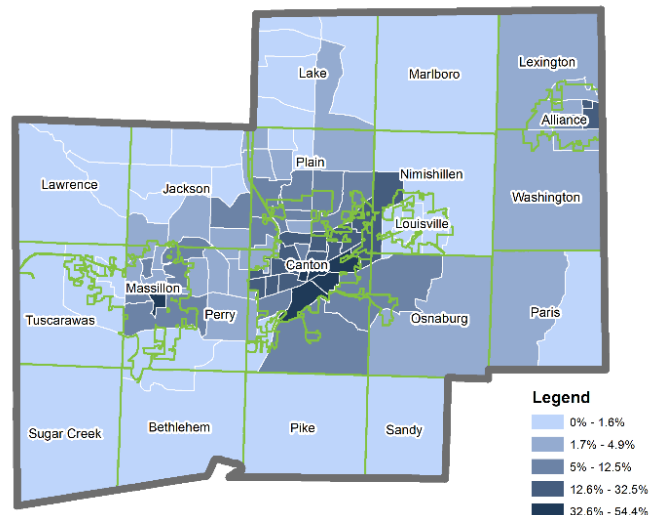
### Race in Stark County



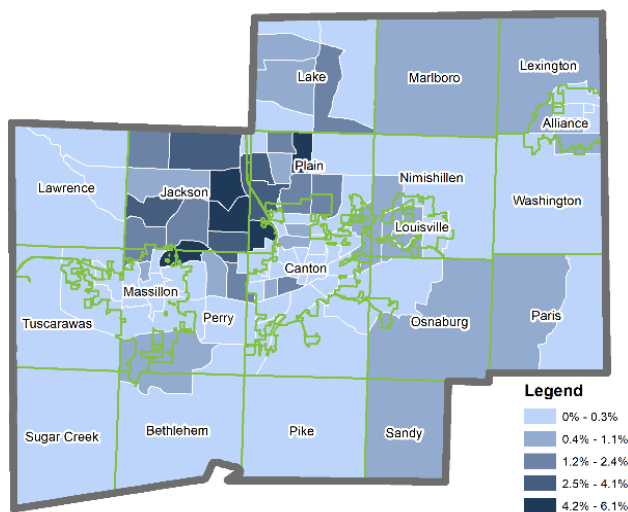
Percentage of White Stark County Residents Mapped by Tract



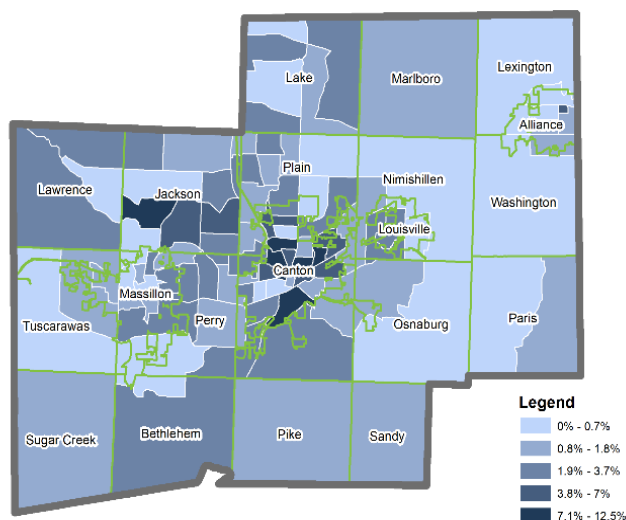
Percentage of Black Stark County Residents Mapped by Tract



Percentage of Asian Stark County Residents Mapped by Tract



Percentage of Hispanic/Latino (of any Race) Stark County Residents Mapped by Tract

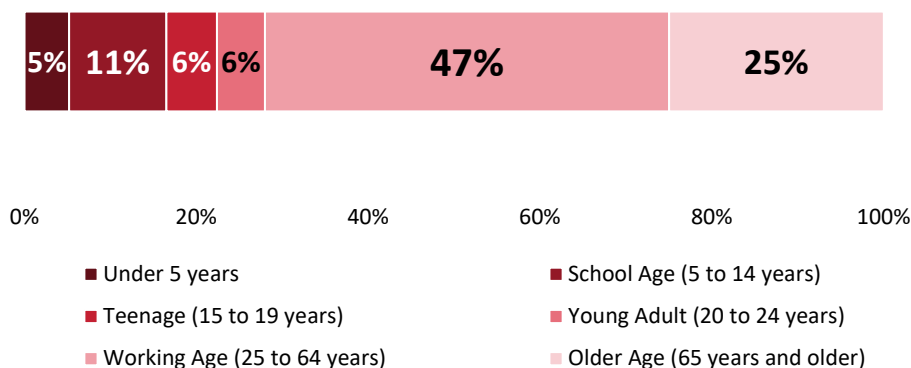


## Age

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.

Like the rest of Ohio and the rest of the country, Stark County is aging at an increased rate. Today, adults 60 years and older outnumber children under 18. There are an estimated 20,900 children under five living in Stark County. The communities with the most children under five are Canton, Plain Township, and Jackson Township.

## Age Distribution



Stark County has an estimated 20,900 children under five living within the community. The city of Canton has the most children under five living in the community at over 5,000, followed by Plain and Jackson townships with an estimated 2,756 and 2,158, respectively. Children under five are the most likely age group to need childcare and early childhood services including Head Start and Early Head Start.

Children Under 5	
Stark County	20,906
Canton city	5,227
Plain township	2,756
Jackson township	2,158
Massillon city	1,640
Perry township	1,604
Lake township	1,418
Alliance city	1,323
Lawrence township	680
Canton township	606
Sugar Creek township	467
Nimishillen township	430
Osnaburg township	396
Louisville city	378
Tuscarawas township	330
Marlboro township	293
Paris township	284
Bethlehem township	238
Washington township	215
Pike township	167
Lexington township	155
Sandy township	141

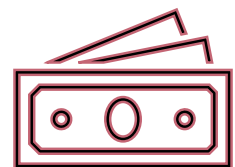
## Household Income

*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.*

Median income is the income where half the households in a community earn more, and half earn less. It is a clearer reflection of the actual economic conditions for families in an area than the statistical average (mean) income because a few households with very high incomes can skew that number.

**The median household income for Stark County in 2021 was \$58,170**, which is below Ohio's median income of \$61,938.

Before adjusting for inflation, median household income has increased in Stark County since 2000. However, median income in 2023 would need to be almost \$62,000 to have kept up with inflation.

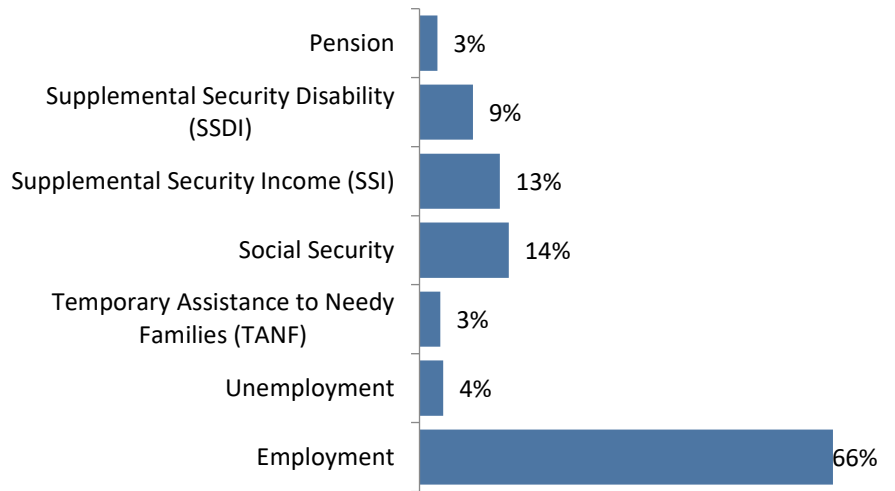


**\$58,170**

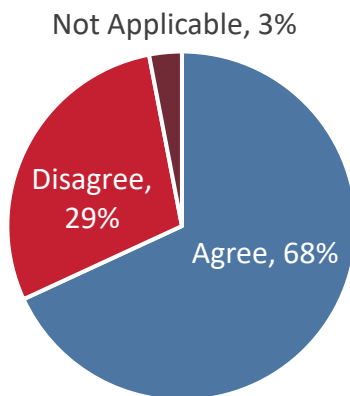


Two thirds of survey takers receive their income from employment and just four percent are receiving unemployment. Fourteen of households indicated they received income from Social Security retirement, 13 percent receive Supplemental Security Income (which provides income to people with disabilities and those without work history) and 9 percent receive Supplemental Security Income which provides a modest monthly income for those who are disabled and/or do not have a work history. Just 3 percent receive either a pension or TANF. Other sources of income included child support, severance from previous employment, SNAP, child support and school loans.

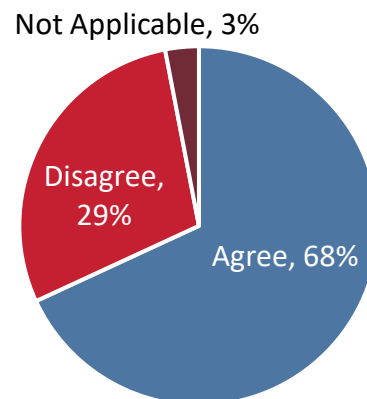
#### What are your household's sources of income? (select all that apply)



#### People in my household are able to budget money



#### People in my household know how to get the public assistance or local services they need



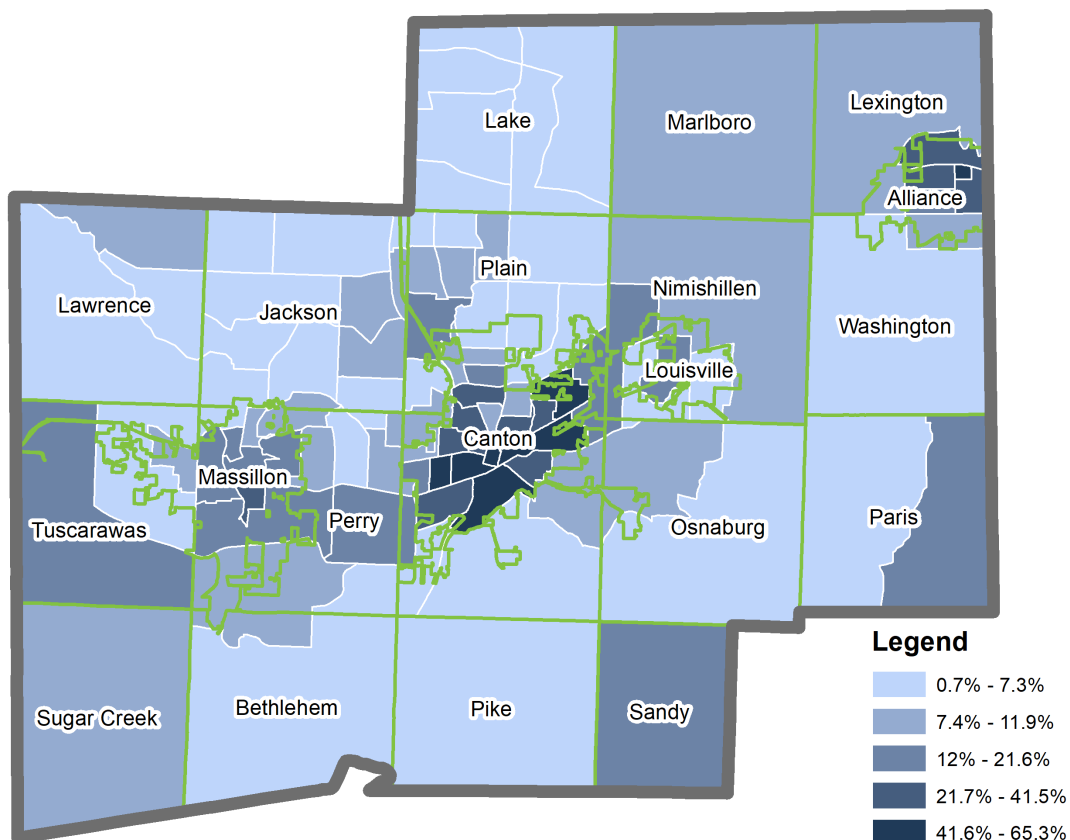
Just under 70 percent of people who responded to the survey reported their household could budget money, with 29 percent indicating they had difficulty managing their budgets. This indicates a sizable portion of the community who could use assistance with money management skills. Similarly, just 29 percent do not know how to find public assistance they need; this type of assistance would ease financial burden and increase the amount of money available to budget for the household.

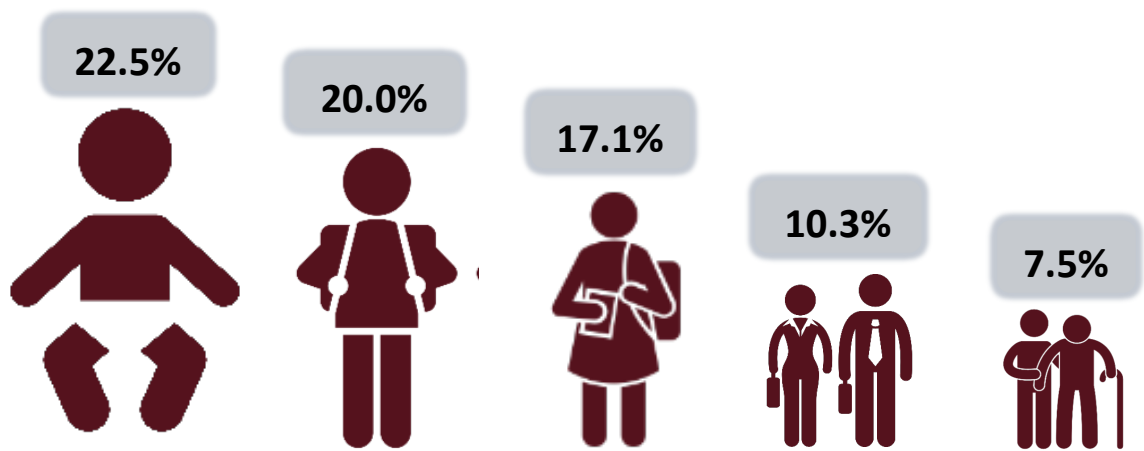
## Poverty

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.

**Stark County's poverty rate, at 13.4 percent, is equivalent to Ohio's average,** and most municipalities within the county are below Stark County's rate. However, the poverty rate in Canton is more than twice that of the county, while Alliance is a little less than twice as high. As the map shows, poverty is concentrated within certain areas of Stark County, in the larger cities.

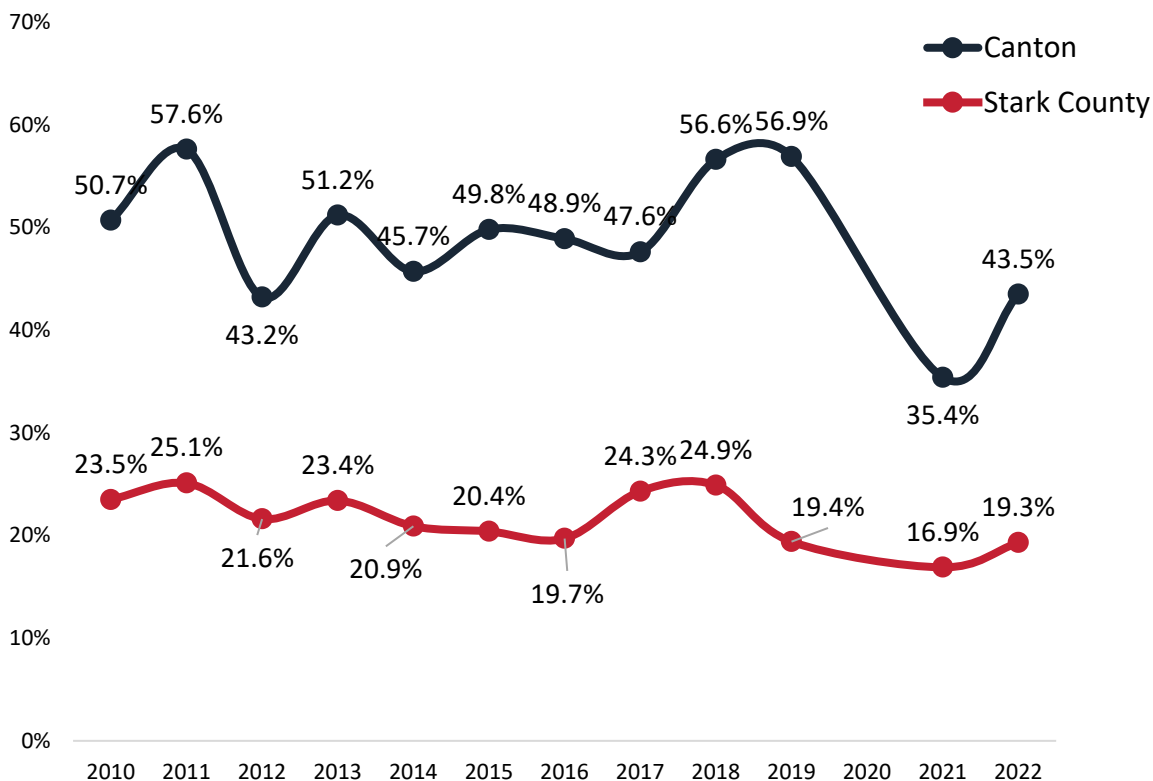
### Percentage of Residents Living in Poverty In Stark County Mapped by Tract





On average, **the younger you are, the more likely you are to be living in poverty.** This trend continues in Ohio and in Stark County. While more than 1 in 5 young children in Stark County live in poverty, just 7.5 percent of older adults over age 65 live in poverty. This is thanks largely to Social Security, which counts as income in poverty statistics. Child poverty in Canton is of particular concern as nearly half of all children in the city live below poverty. In Canton, 43.5 percent of children were poor in 2022. The graph represents the one-year estimates of poverty in Stark County and Canton. These estimates are less reliable than the 5-year estimates used in the rest of this assessment but represent the most recent data.

### Child Poverty Rate, 1-Year Estimates



Poverty can affect anyone, but Black people and other people of color are more likely to live in poverty, with **34.5 percent of Black Stark County residents** and **33.6 percent of Hispanic residents** living in poverty, compared to **10.5 percent of white residents**.

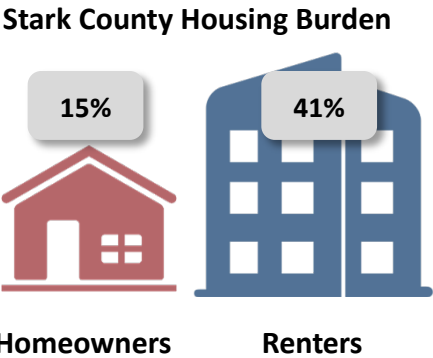
In an analysis of the one-year estimates from the American Community Survey, poverty is down by 2% in 2022 compared to 2018 for Stark County. It is important to note that the one-year estimates are not as accurate as the 5-year estimates used in the rest of this report. It is also important to note that the most recent data is from 2022 and does not capture the effect of the rollbacks of COVID-era supports. The one-year estimates were used to capture only the years mentioned above. In 2022, there were fewer households with children in poverty compared to 2018, with poverty rates down by 6%. Overall, most groups had lower poverty rates in 2022 compared to 2018, except for the unemployed population. Poverty was higher for this group by 10 percent, with it being 7 percent higher for males and 3 percent higher for females who were unemployed.

## Housing

*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.*

Housing is considered unaffordable when the rent or mortgage exceeds 30 percent of a household’s income. **In Stark County, renters are hit especially hard with over 40 percent living in unaffordable housing, compared to homeowners at 15 percent.**

Rental Type	Fair Market Rate, 2019	Fair Market Rate, 2024
Efficiency	\$473	\$613
One-Bedroom	\$539	\$690
Two-Bedroom	\$717	\$905
Three-Bedroom	\$916	\$1,134
Four-Bedroom	\$977	\$1,205

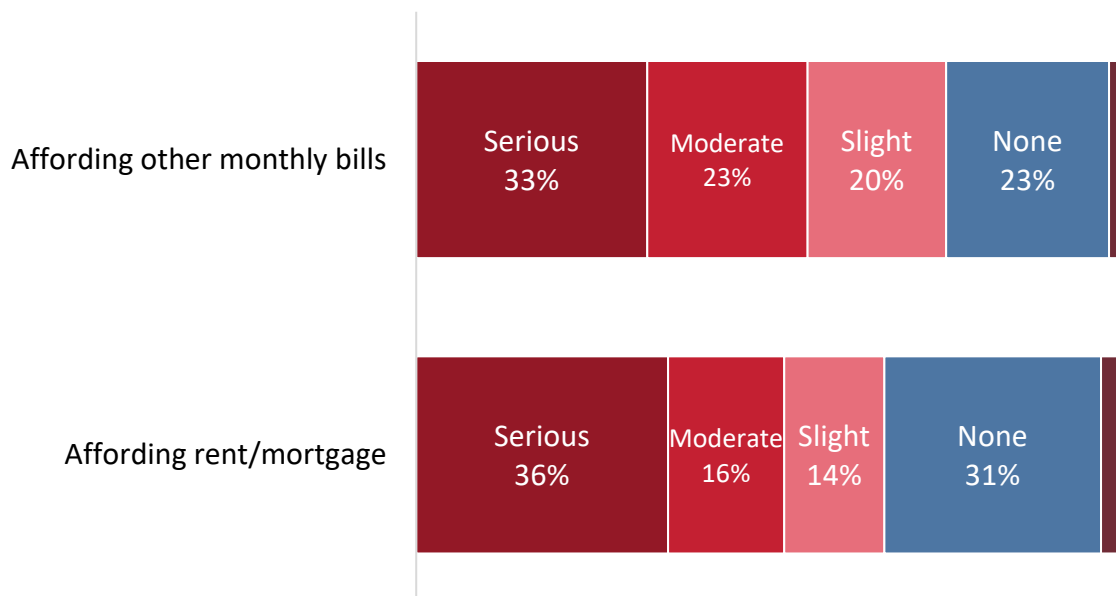


Over two thirds of residents have concern about their ability to afford their rent or mortgage with

36 percent having serious concerns. Three quarters of residents indicated concern about their ability to afford their monthly bills with over half being seriously or moderately concerned. The Stark County point in time count for homelessness in 2020 also showed that 73 children and 177 adults were considered unsheltered.

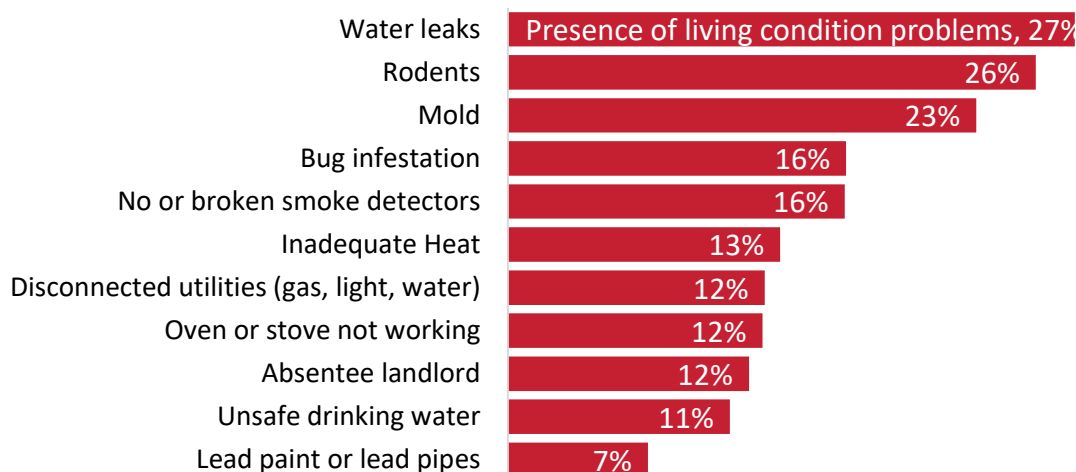
The fair market rate for housing in 2024, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, ranges from \$613 for an efficiency apartment to \$1,205 for a four-bedroom apartment, compared to a range of \$473-\$977 in 2018. However, this data is only available on a metropolitan statistical area level, which includes parts of Stark County and Carroll County.

Stark County currently has 2,288 public housing units and 2,200 are occupied. In 2022, there were 1,746 Housing Choice vouchers available, with 62% occupancy (1,315 units). There were also 2,004 Project Based Section 8 units available with 93% occupancy (1,888 units).



Unaffordable housing paired with additional basic needs costs can compound and result in the loss of housing and housing stability. Of those who completed the survey, twenty percent said they had experienced homelessness in the past three years. Nearly a third are worried they may not have stable housing in the next two months.

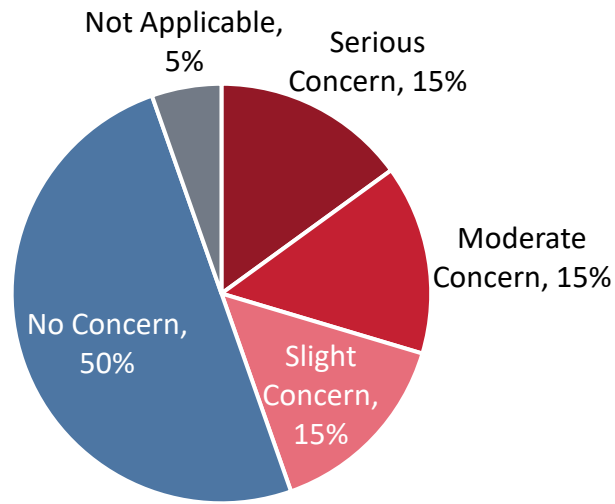
### The most common problems with resident's living situations included water leaks, rodents and mold



The quality of housing has a substantial impact on quality of life and health. Over a quarter of residents indicated having problems with water leaks and almost as many shared a concern with having mold in their homes. Mold can lead to multiple poor health outcomes including the exacerbation of asthma and other respiratory disorders. About 40 percent of residents have some concern about safe drinking water and reliable heating source within their homes. Weatherization can assist with reliable heating; 45 percent of residents have concerns about the current state of the weatherization of their homes.

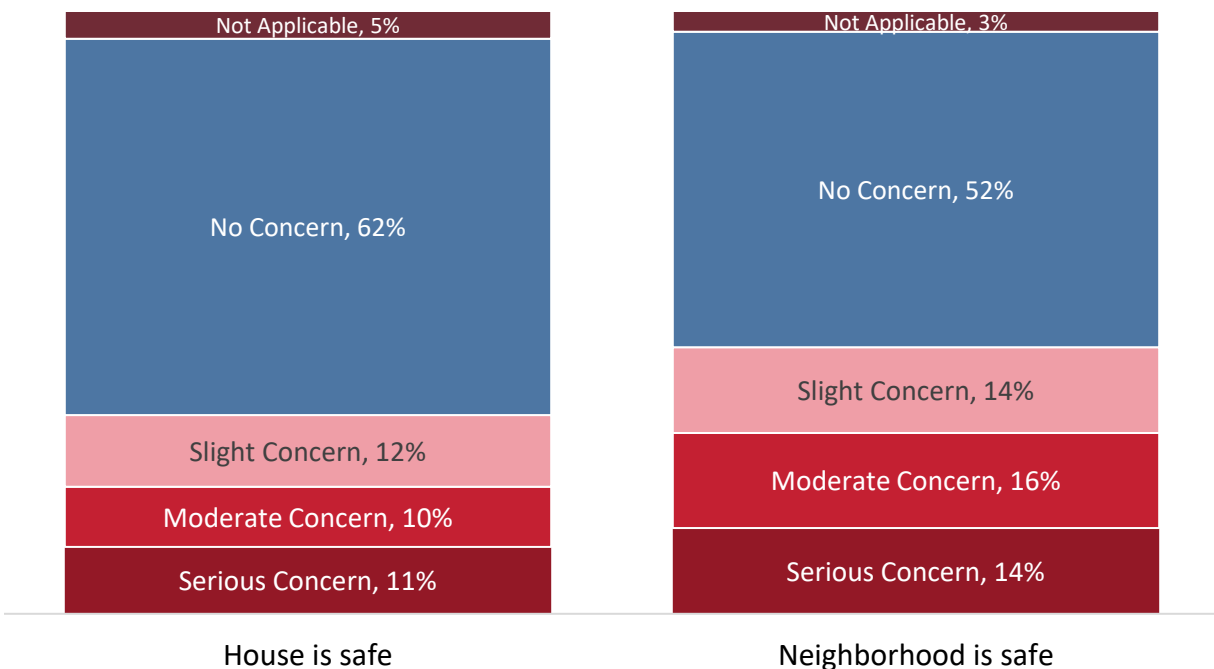


### 45% of residents have concerns about home weatherization



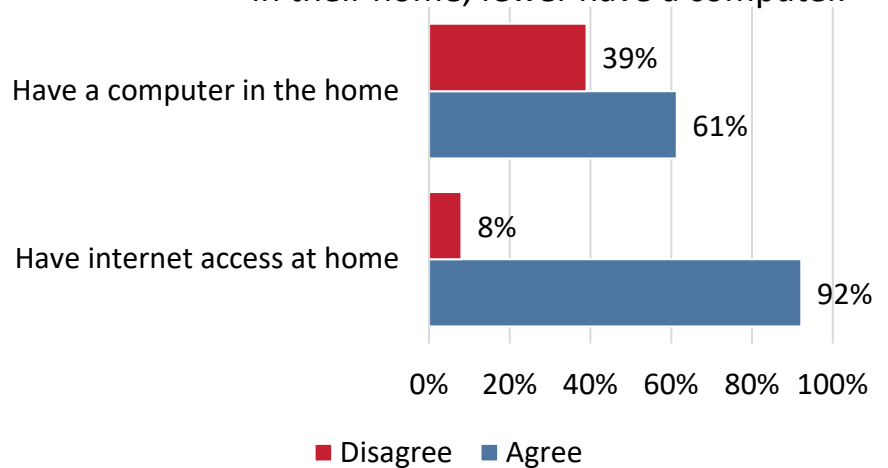
Over sixty percent of residents reported feeling safe in their homes. Of those who had concerns about their safety, 12 percent were slightly concerned, 10 percent moderately concerned, and 11 percent had serious concerns. These concerns could be related to safety from crime as well as safety from hazards within the home. A lower percentage of residents indicated feeling safe within their neighborhoods (52%). This is likely a reflection of concern about being victims of crime within the area immediately surrounding their homes.

### Residents rate safety in their home higher than safety in their neighborhoods



Residents in Stark County are well connected to the internet with 92 percent having access within their home. Digital connectivity became extremely important during the COVID-19 pandemic when many in-person services, schools and jobs were moved to virtual spaces. While in-person access has largely returned, maintaining connection to the community through the internet remains vitally important for many. It is interesting to note that nearly 40 percent of residents do not have a computer in their home. It is likely that these residents are using other devices including tablets and phones to connect to the internet within their homes.

While most residents have internet access in their home, fewer have a computer.



### What focus groups had to say about housing.

**Affordability.** Community leaders and residents agreed that housing is not affordable in Stark County and that a lack of a stable income hinders obtaining better housing. Community leaders have also noted that evictions are increasing and that prior evictions can prevent individuals from being approved for new housing, so assistance is needed to help these individuals.

**Safety.** Focus group members mentioned housing safety as a concern, especially for renters. A lack of landlord oversight leads to poor rental conditions, like pest problems, broken appliances, and utilities that do not work.

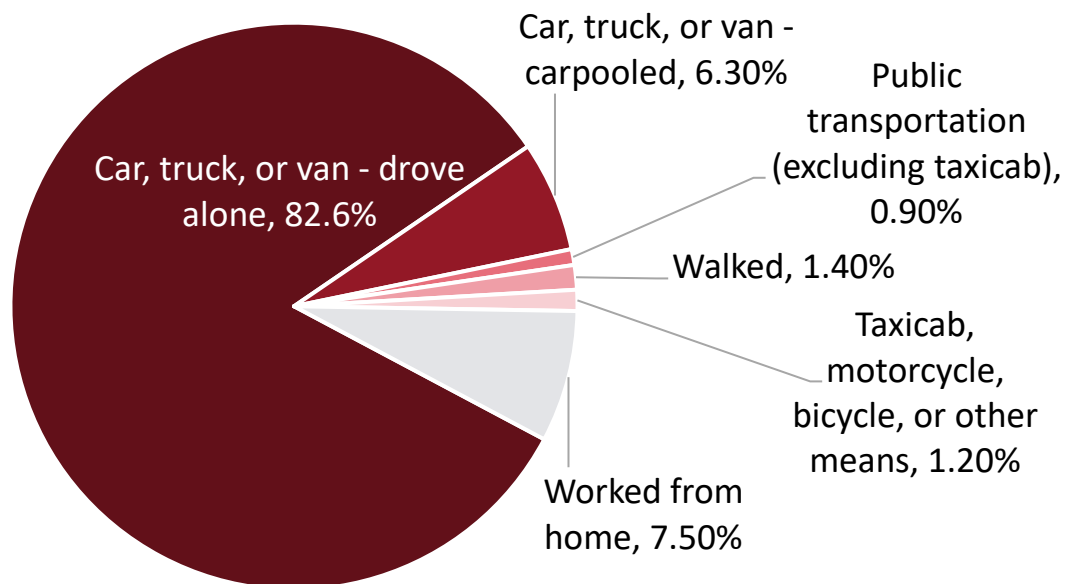
**Transience.** Student transience is an issue in Stark County, according to community leaders. There is a good amount of movement from school to school, often within the same district. This can be difficult for students because they are constantly moving to new environments in the middle of the school year. Leaders also noted that homeless shelters are often full and there is a lack of transitional and crisis housing.

## Transportation

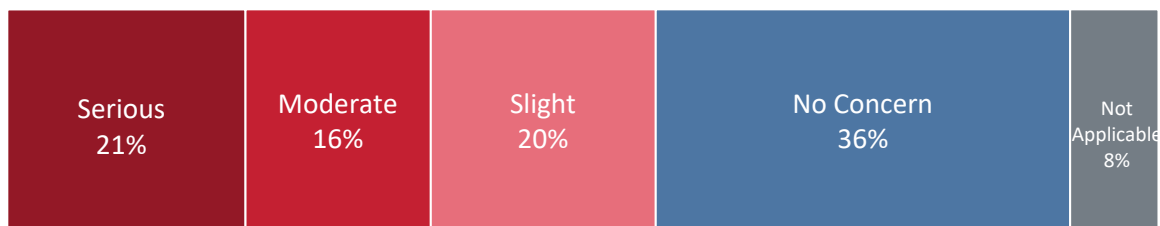
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.

Most residents of Stark County have at least one car that they take to work, **but 2.7 percent of residents do not own a vehicle**. The most common means of getting to work is driving alone in a car, truck, or van. Seven and a half percent reported working fully remote. Around six percent indicated that they carpool to work and only **less than one percent indicated that they take public transportation**. Public transportation rates are a little lower than the state rate of 1.2 percent and of neighboring counties, but higher than neighboring more rural counties.

### How Stark County Residents Get to Work

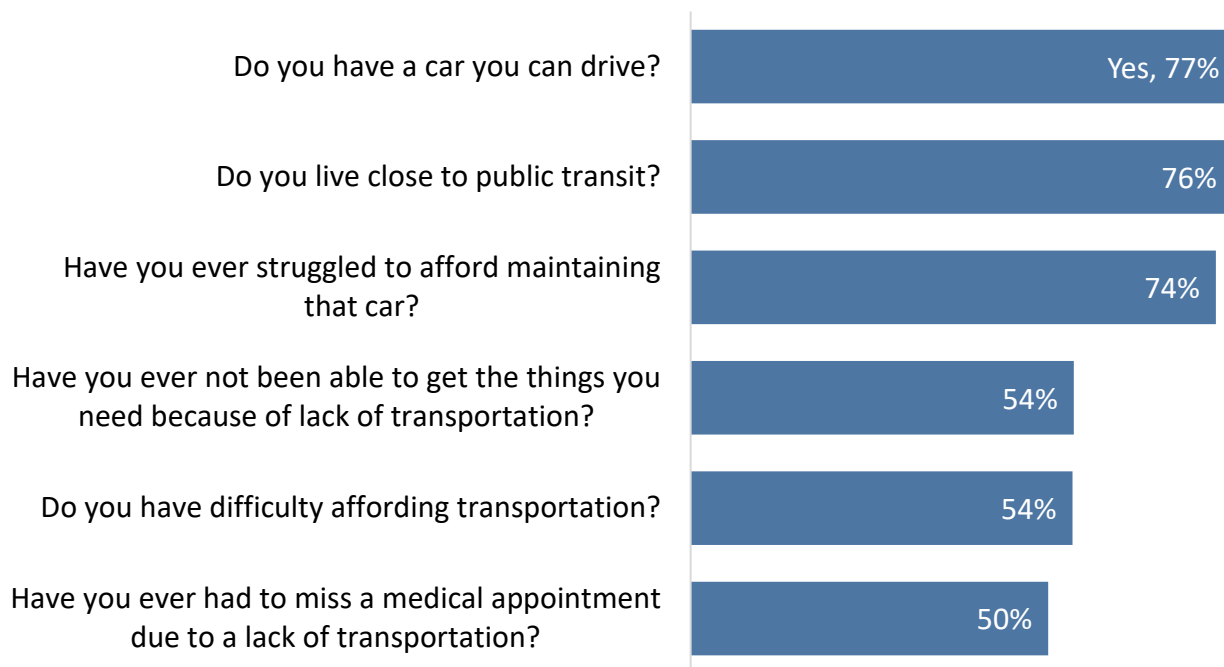


### Level of concern about reliable transportation



In Stark County, only 2.7 percent of residents do not own a car, but there are few options for that small percentage. Public transit is present, but the bus rides can be long, and the hours can be mismatched to what residents need to do, like picking up their children from after care programs. One leader mentioned that a lot of areas in the county do not have sidewalks, or the sidewalks are not handicap accessible. There were several mentions of roads being in disrepair as well.

### 3 out 4 residents have a car, as many struggle to afford car maintenance



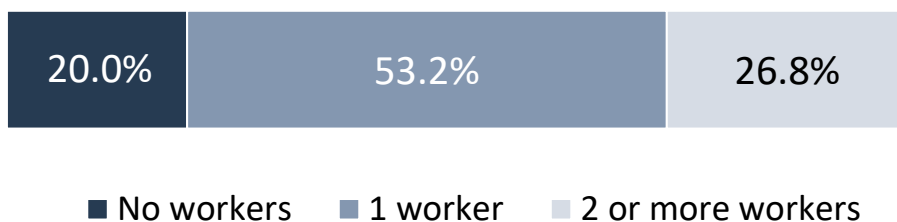
## Food and Nutrition

*Data Sources: Map the Meal Gap, USDA Food Access Research Atlas, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.*

**Twelve percent, or 44,780 Stark County residents are considered food insecure**, according to Map the Meal Gap by Feeding America.

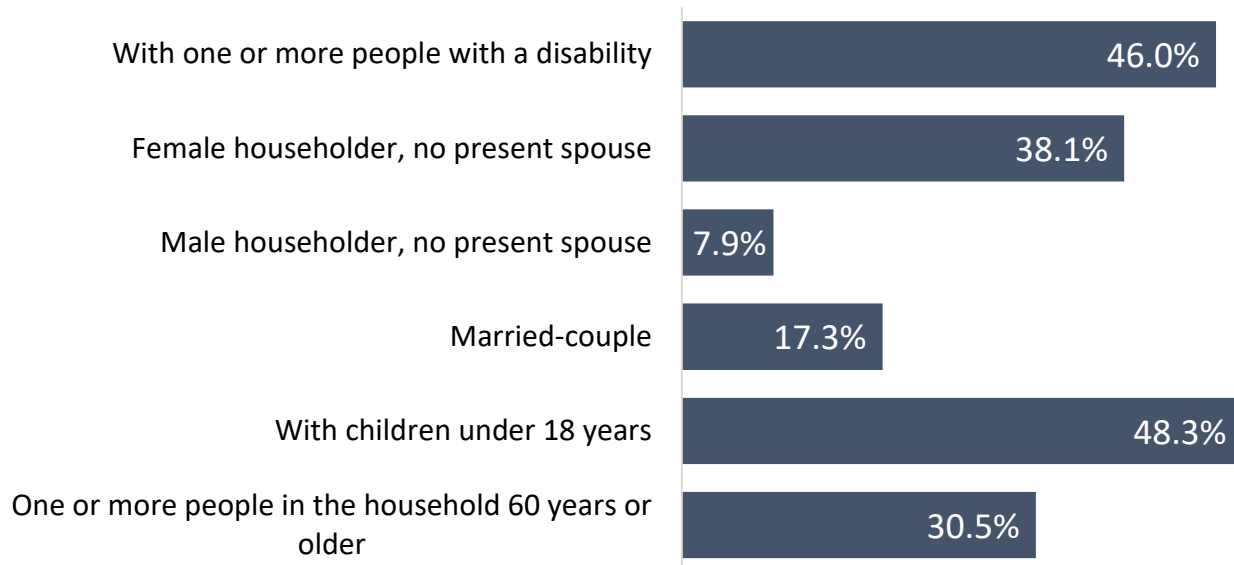
There are also several identified areas in Stark County that are considered “low-income and low-access” to healthy foods, formally known as “food deserts.” Nine census tracts are considered low-access, and around 30,000 Stark County residents live in areas where food is more than ½ mile away from their household.

### SNAP Enrollment by Number of Workers in Household last 12 months



Additionally, thirteen percent of households in Stark County are currently receiving SNAP benefits, which is about a half a percent higher than Ohio's average. Of those on SNAP, 51 percent are living below the poverty level. Over half of households also have one worker in their household, but interestingly, over 1 in 4 have two workers in their household.

### Household Characteristics on SNAP



Of those who are on SNAP, the highest percentage, almost half, have children under the age of 18 in the household. A little less than half also have one or more people in the household on disability. Most are in single female households, at 38 percent, followed by married couple households at 17 percent, with single male households at almost 8 percent.

Most SNAP participants are white, at 72 percent, and around 20 percent of SNAP participants are Black.



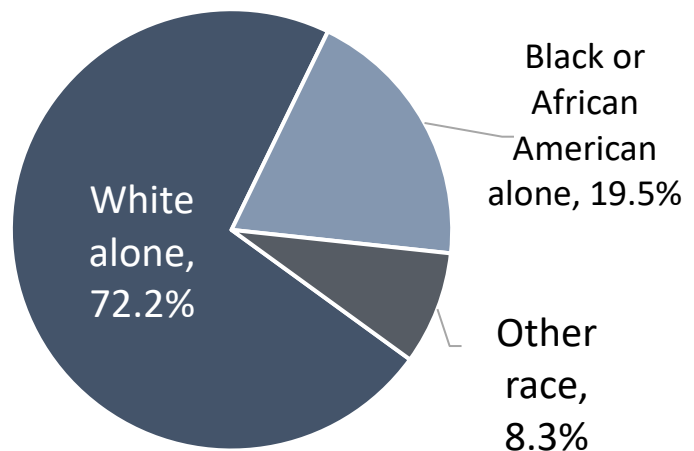
**2 in 3 have had to spend less on food to afford housing costs**

Food insecurity is a concern for residents in Stark County.

Two out of three survey takers

reported they must spend less on food to afford their housing costs. Eighteen percent of residents rarely or

### Race of SNAP users

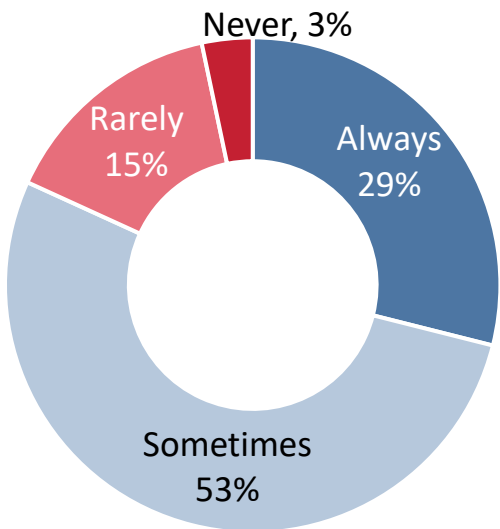




never can afford the food they need, and over half can only sometimes afford it. Twenty-three percent of survey takers indicated that people in their household do not have enough to eat. SNAP, food pantries and congregate meal programs can ease the nutritional gap for those who cannot afford enough food to maintain health.

People in my household...

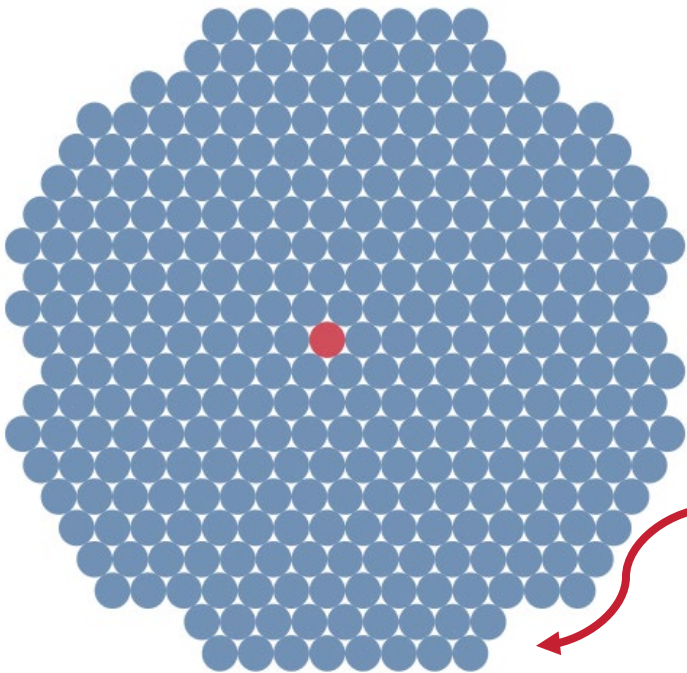
Less than 30% of residents can *always* afford the food they need



Health

Data Source: County Health Rankings, Ohio Medicaid Assessment Survey, CDC PLACES.

Stark County ranked thirteenth out of Ohio’s 88 counties for clinical care, which includes indicators of access to care, such as the number of providers and health insurance coverage, and the quality of care such as preventable hospital stays, mammography screenings and flu vaccinations. The ratios of providers represent the number of individuals served by one



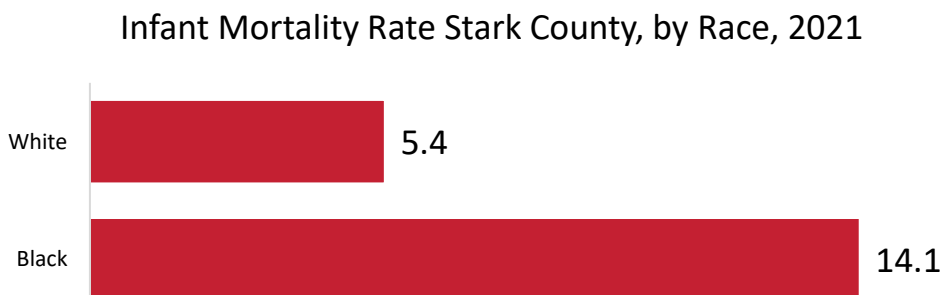
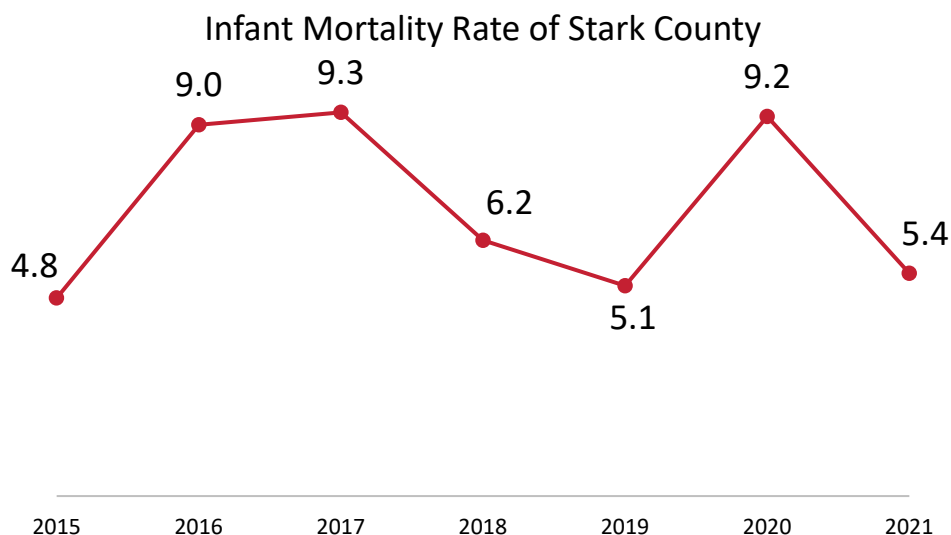
1230:1 Primary Care Providers

1570:1 Dentists

310:10 Mental Health Providers

provider in the county, if the population was equally distributed across providers. A lower ratio is desirable. Stark County's provider ratio for primary care physicians (1230:1), dentists (1570:1), and mental health providers (310:1) is better than the state average. The ratio of mental health providers to residents has changed significantly, with the previous ratio in 2017 being 420:1. The availability of providers contributes to the fact that 90 percent of adults and 99 percent of children have a usual source of care, according to the Ohio Medicaid Assessment Survey.

Infant mortality refers to the number of babies who die during the first year of life. In 2021, Stark County's infant mortality rate of 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births was well below the 2020 rate of 9.2 and below the Healthy People 2020 goal of 6.0. While Ohio's infant mortality rate has remained steady over the past several years, as the chart shows, Stark County's rate has fluctuated, but this is likely due to smaller numbers of births compared to the state. In 2021, the infant mortality rate for Black babies in Stark County continues to be higher when compared to white babies, with the most recent rates being 14.1 and 5.4, respectively.

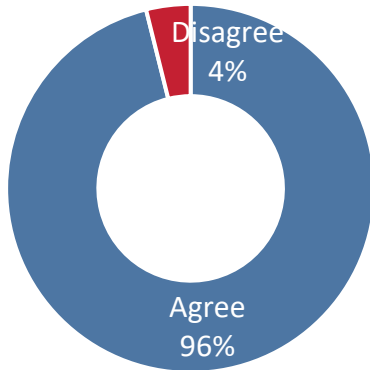


Chronic condition rates for Stark County are also listed in the table. This data comes from CDC PLACES and is the most recent data available, with most being from 2021.

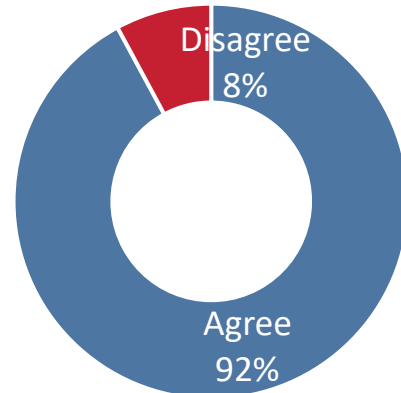
Forty-one percent of children under the age of 19 have Medicaid as their health insurance coverage, with 47 percent of children under the age of 6 having Medicaid. Fifty-eight percent of children under 19 are classified as having private insurance, leaving a small percentage as uninsured. Around 3 percent of children under the age of 6 and 4 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 18 are uninsured. Of those who live in family households, 6 percent are uninsured, with the highest rates being male head of households with no spouse present at 11 percent.

Chronic Condition	Rate in Adults over 18 Years
High Blood Pressure	39.0%
Depression	21.9%
Diabetes	13.1%
Asthma	10.3%
Cancer	8.3%
Heart Disease	8.1%

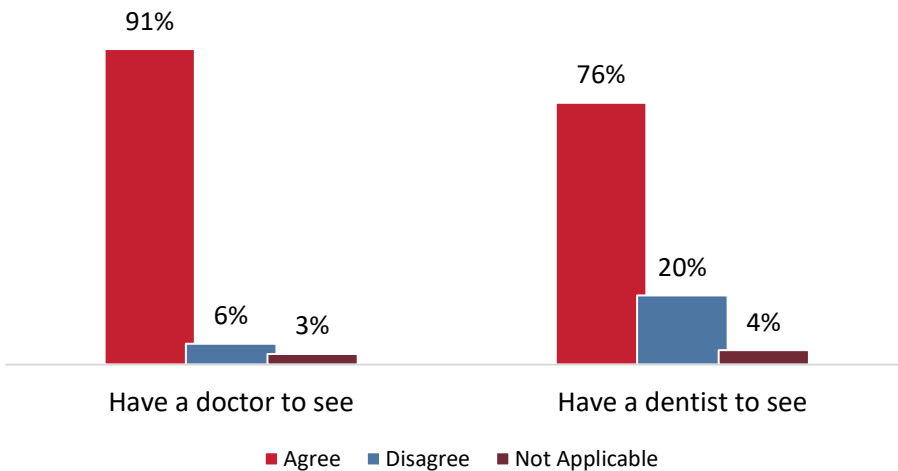
### Most residents have health insurance



### Most residents have dental insurance



### About 20% of residents do not have a dentist



Most residents have both health (96%) and dental (92%) insurance. Similarly, most (91%) have a doctor to see. Fewer residents have access to a dentist on a regular basis, with almost a quarter of residents indicating they do not have a dentist to see. Even with health insurance, medical costs can be daunting; two in three households indicate having to spend less on medications they needed to afford their housing costs.



**2 in 3 have had to spend less on medication to afford housing costs**

## Children

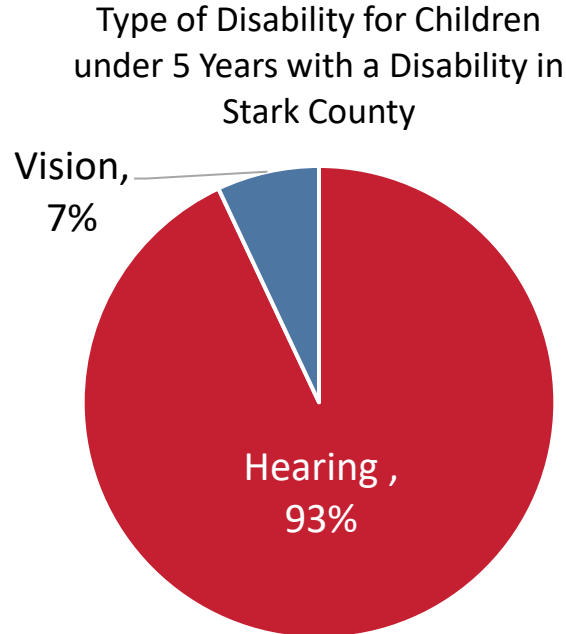
*Data Source: Stark County Job and Family Services Data Dashboard*

As of this publication, Stark County Department of Job and Family Services received 3,875 referrals in the calendar year of January 2023. Of those referrals, 2,683 did not meet the criteria for investigation. Children in the county's care include children in placements such as foster care, kinship care, independent living, congregate care, and other settings. Thirty-five percent of children were placed in family foster care, and 36 percent were placed in kinship care with relatives. Over half (53 percent) of all children removed from their homes were cases involving parental substance use or abuse. Children between the ages of one and three-years-old make up the largest share of children in county care, and one-quarter of children in county custody are in this age group.

Children in Stark County Custody, by Age	
Age of Child	Percent
Less than 1 Year	10 %
1-3 Years	24 %
4-6 Years	17 %
7-9 Years	17 %
10-12 Years	13 %
13-15 Years	11 %
16-18 Years	8 %

*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.*

In Stark County, 0.5 percent of children under 5 years of age have a disability and 6.5 percent of children aged 5 to 17 have a disability. The chart below outlines the types of disabilities for children under 5 years of age.



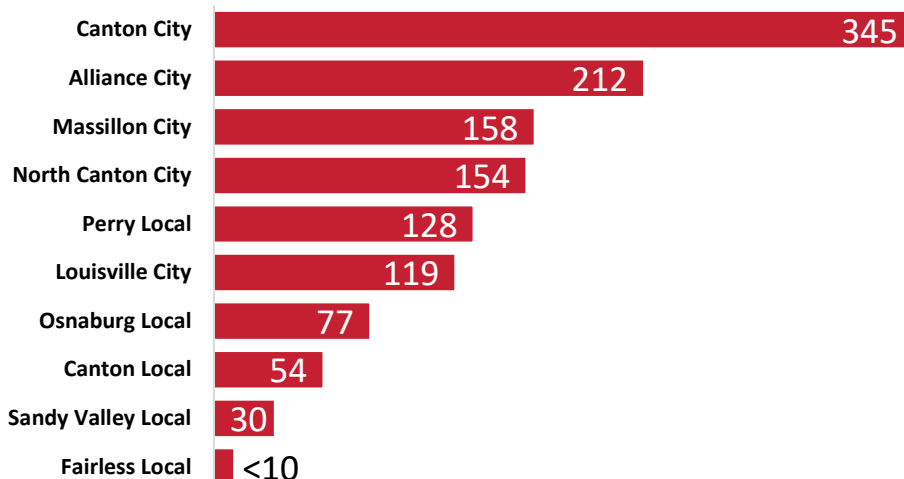
Canton city had the highest rate of women who have given birth within the past twelve months living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level with eighty four percent of births falling into this category. Multiple communities had half or more births by women with incomes less than 200% of the FPL including Canton township, Massillon, Louisville, Sandy, Paris, Alliance, and Bethlehem.

Women who had birth in past 12 months with incomes below 200% FPL		
Stark County	Number of births	Percent of total births
Canton city	1,033	84%
Canton township	107	71%
Massillon city	201	57%
Louisville city	40	57%
Sandy township	15	56%
Paris township	29	54%
Alliance city	140	50%
Bethlehem township	13	50%
Osnaburg township	45	38%
Tuscarawas township	26	38%
Plain township	203	38%
Perry township	113	36%
Pike township	24	33%
Lake township	48	32%
Jackson township	156	31%
Nimishillen township	19	30%
Lexington township	0	0%
Marlboro township	0	0%
Washington township	0	0%

*Data Source: Ohio Department of Education*

Ten of the seventeen school districts in Stark County have children enrolled in pre-school programs. Plain Local, Jackson Local, Lake Local, Minerva Local, Marlinton Local, Northwest Local, and Tuslaw Local are the remaining seven school districts that do not have children in pre-school programs. Fairless Local district has less than 10 children enrolled.

### Pre-School Enrollment in Stark County, 2021-2022

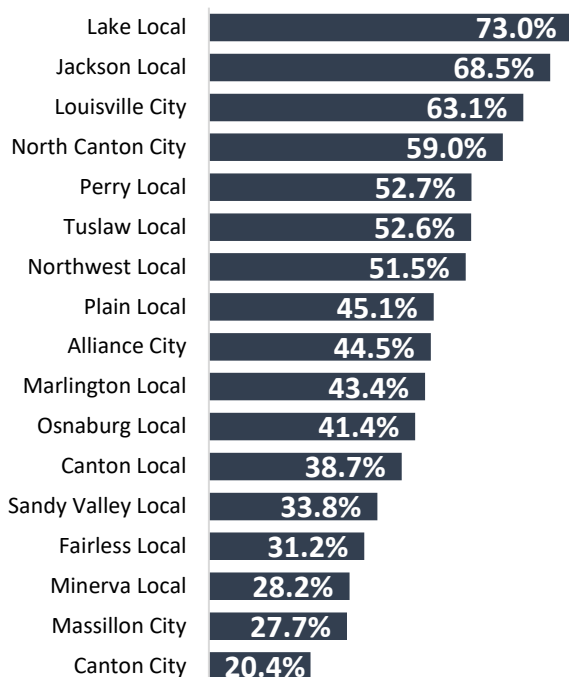




Students who enter publicly funded kindergarten classrooms take a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) that measures their current skill levels in language and literacy, math, physical well-being, motor development, and social foundations. Students receive an overall score to identify their skills as emerging, approaching, or demonstrating. The KRA also provides a measurement for language and literacy skills to gauge whether a student is on track or not.

Demonstrating students are considered to be fully prepared for kindergarten, while those whose skills are emerging are generally not prepared to learn in kindergarten without substantial additional assistance or interventions.

### Kindergarten Readiness Assessment: On-Track for Language & Literacy, 2022-2023



Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Scores By School District, 2022-2023			
	Demonstrating (270-298)	Approaching (258-269)	Emerging (202-257)
Lake Local	61.9%	25.0%	13.1%
Jackson Local	60.7%	27.2%	12.1%
North Canton City	54.1%	28.9%	16.9%
Louisville City	53.8%	27.1%	19.1%
Northwest Local	43.9%	38.6%	17.4%
Perry Local	40.2%	40.6%	19.2%
Tuslaw Local	38.5%	43.6%	17.9%
Alliance City	37.3%	32.1%	30.6%
Plain Local	33.6%	33.1%	33.3%
Sandy Valley Local	30.0%	33.8%	36.3%
Marlington Local	27.0%	36.9%	36.1%
Canton Local	25.2%	44.1%	30.6%
Fairless Local	22.6%	53.8%	23.7%
Massillon City	21.6%	36.6%	41.8%
Minerva Local	20.5%	41.9%	37.6%
Osnaburg Local	15.7%	44.3%	40.0%
Canton City	15.7%	36.1%	48.2%

Most districts in Stark County had 100 percent of third grade students meet the reading guarantee requirements in the 2022-2023 school year. These measures are set by Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee that requires students to demonstrate certain levels of literacy before they can be promoted to the fourth grade. The remaining districts came close to meeting the guarantee. These include Northwest Local (98.2 percent), Canton City (98.3 percent), Louisville City (98.8 percent), Jackson Local (99.5 percent), and Perry Local (99.6 percent).

## Childcare

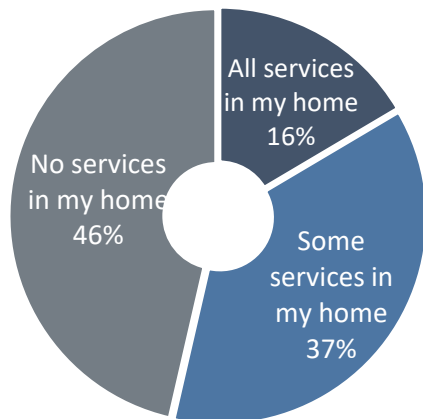
*Data Source: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.*

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services administers a five-star rating and improvement system for licensed childcare facilities. The star ratings are based on standards related to learning and development, administrative and leadership practices, staff qualifications, and family and community partnerships, with five stars being the highest rating. The listing of facilities below includes licensed Type A and Type B family childcare homes, licensed childcare centers, and Ohio Department of Education licensed preschools. As of publication, the rating program remains voluntary and about two-thirds of providers in Stark County participate. Around 14 percent of participating centers have one star, and more than one-fourth have achieved the highest five-star rating. The data on childcare providers is available only by ZIP code, so municipality names do not line up with the municipality data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

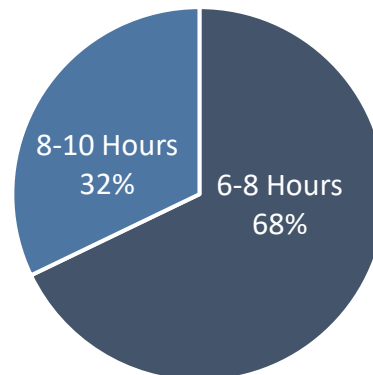
City by ZIP Code	Total Providers	No Rating	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star
Alliance (44601)	12	2	1	0	0	3	6
Canal Fulton (44614)	7	4	0	0	0	1	2
Canton (44701, 44702, 44703, 44704, 44705, 44706, 44707, 44708, 44709, 44710, 44711, 44714, 44718, 44720, 44721, 44730, 44735, 44750, 44767, 44799)	104	38	21	2	9	17	17
East Canton (44730)	3	0	0	0	1	1	1
East Sparta (44626)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Hartville (44632)	2	1	0	0	0	0	1
Louisville (44641)	9	5	0	0	0	0	4
Massillon (44626, 44647, 44648, 44662, 44706)	38	10	6	2	3	8	9
Minerva (44657)	3	1	0	0	0	1	1
Navarre (44662)	5	0	1	1	0	2	1
North Canton (44709, 44720, 44767)	21	10	0	1	0	3	7
Uniontown (44685)	4	0	1	0	0	1	2
Waynesburg (44688)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>51</b>

One hundred and two survey respondents have children aged five and younger living in the home. Of that group, 51 percent have children between the ages of zero to three and 49 percent have children between the ages of four and five. Just over ten percent of the children live with someone other than a parent; seven percent live with a grandparent, four percent with another relative and one percent with a foster parent.

Just over half of families prefer some or all child care services to be provided in their home



How often would you use Early Head Start or Head Start per day?



Fifteen percent of caregivers taking the survey indicated they had been told their child is behind in one or more developmental milestone.

Most families who indicated they use Head Start services or may plan to have their children engaged between 6 to 8 hours a day. About a third of families would utilize the service between 8 and 10 hours. Just over half (54%) would only use the services during the school year while 45 percent would utilize services year-round.

### Insights from families in the focus groups on childcare.

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*"If I had to do it all over again, I would choose Head Start instead of daycare for my first child."*

---

All the parents in the focus group had children in the Head Start Program. Each parent had very positive feedback for their Head Start experiences and described how excited their children were to go to school. The parents described issues that they have experienced in seeking childcare for their children outside of Head Start.

**Expensive.** Every parent mentioned how expensive daycare is and several described how they elected to quit their jobs to stay at home because it made more financial sense. While one parent described a system through Job and Family Services that will cover daycare costs, they said that the lengthy and confusing paperwork process was not worth it.

**Lack of assurance.** Safety was of the utmost importance to the parents when exploring childcare options. Several parents had stories to tell of family members and friends who have had safety issues at their daycare centers. These stories made these families nervous to put their children in the care of someone else.

---

*"It's easier to struggle every day and just get by than to find untrustworthy childcare."*

*"I would rather risk not providing for my family than putting my child in unsafe childcare where something could happen."*

---

**Communication.** Communication about their child's progress and safety was the top concern for families in the focus groups. One parent described how thankful they were that their Head Start teacher stays in good contact throughout the day and communicates any concerns that arise throughout the day.

**Stressful.** When describing their searches for childcare options, each family expressed how stressful the process can be. From long wait times to expensive fees, to mountains of paperwork, each family had a unique path that led them to Head Start. Each parent stated that once they found SCCAA, the process was very smooth, and they felt that their child was safe and well-cared for.

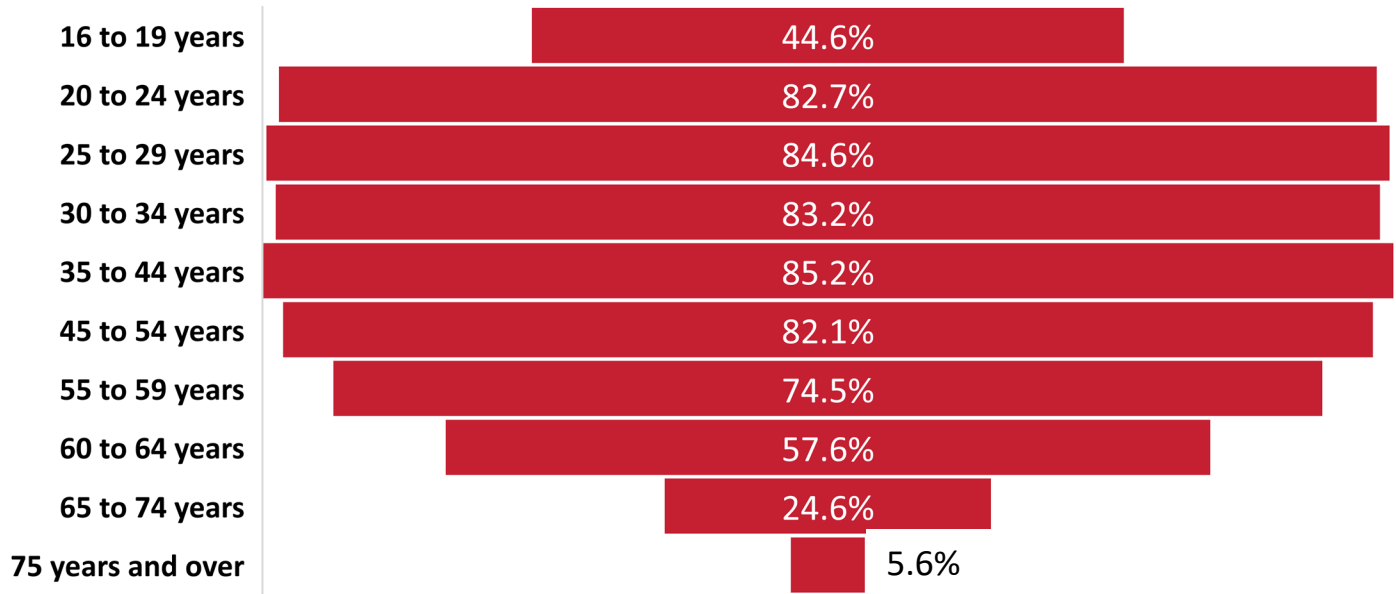
## Employment

*Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates.*

Labor force participation in Stark County was 62.1 percent and unemployment was 4.9 percent. Labor Force Participation counts the number of adults employed and currently unemployed but actively looking for work. The labor force participation rate for white people (62.1 percent), Black people (59.4 percent) and Hispanic or Latinos of any race (67.2 percent) in Stark County are similar. However, people of color are less likely to be employed and more likely to be looking for work. The unemployment rate for Hispanics or Latinos of any race in Stark County (11.4 percent) is nearly three times the rate for white people (4.2 percent), and the rate Black people, at 9.7 percent, is nearly twice as high as white people. In the state, unemployment is at or near record lows.

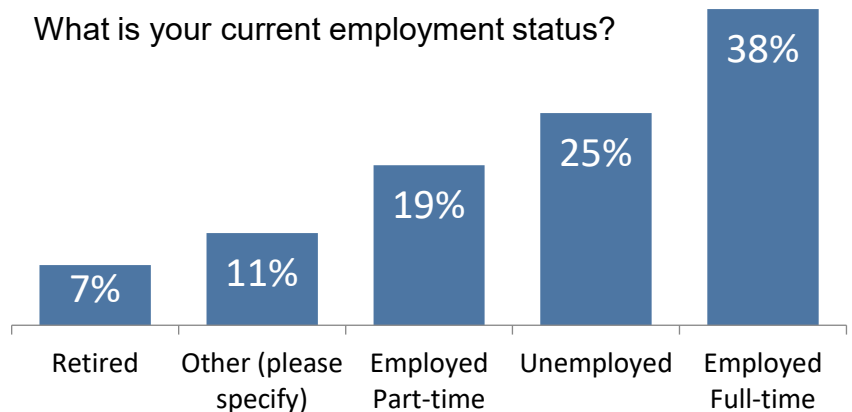
Labor force participation in Stark County is more than 80 percent for people ages 20 to 54. Beyond age 55, as they grow older, people are less likely to remain in the labor force, and they may retire or stop working or looking for work due to illness or disability.

## Labor Force Participation by Age Group in Stark County, 2021



Among survey takers, 38 percent are employed full time and 19 percent are employed part time. A quarter indicated they are currently unemployed, which is significantly higher than the percentage identifying unemployment as a source of income. This could be an indication of long-term unemployment, in which individuals have not found work and have exhausted their unemployment benefits.

### What is your current employment status?



### Level of concern about stable employment





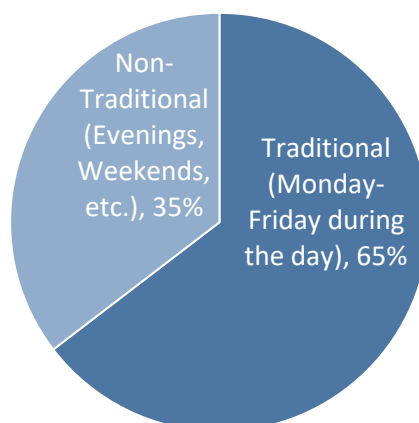
Over half of survey respondents are concerned about stable employment.

Of those who are working, 65 percent reported they work traditional work hours; Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. This leaves over a third of workers with nontraditional hours.

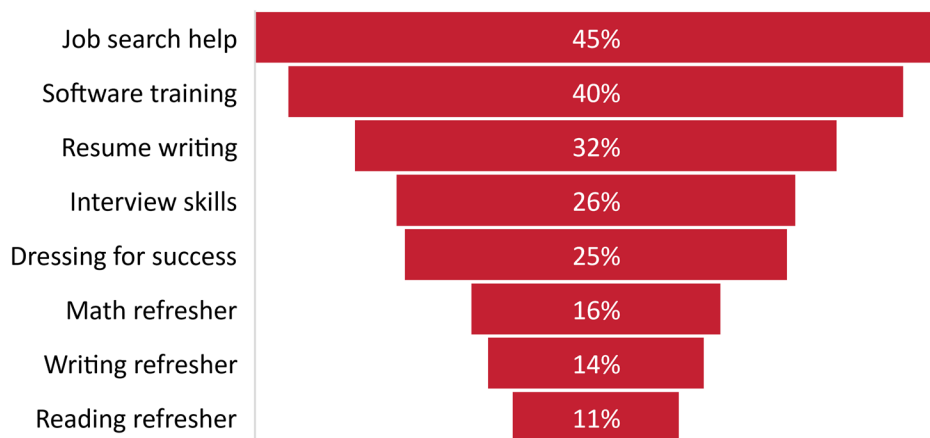
Working traditional hours can make it more difficult to access programs and services that are only offered weekdays during the day. The type of employment-related assistance

most frequently identified as being needed was help with job searching followed by software training and resume writing. Though it was the least selected option, over 10 percent of survey takers could use assistance with literacy skills.

### What are your typical work hours?



### Top areas of employment help needed



## Workforce Development

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates, Ohio Economic Profile Stark County, 2021.

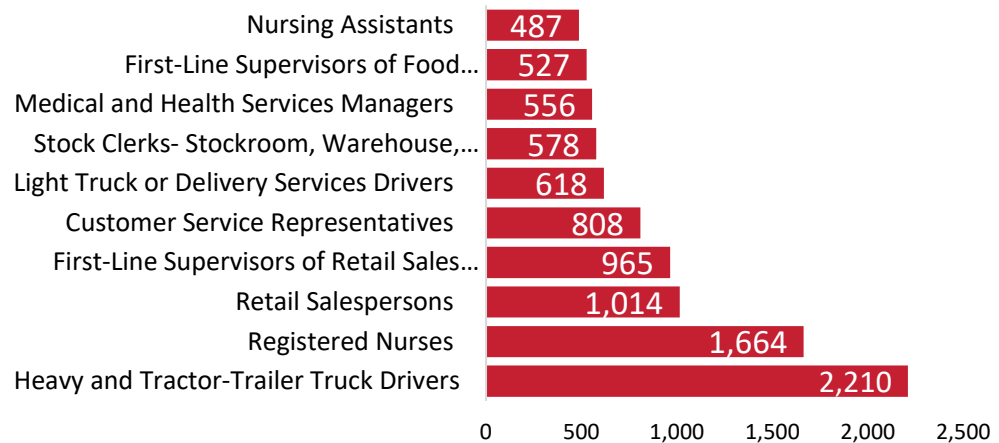
In 2020, the industry with the most online postings in Stark County was Health Care and Social Assistance, making up one-fourth of the ads for open positions. The following table contains the number of online ads placed for the county.

Industry	Number of Ads	Percentage
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,501	24.7%
Retail Trade	3,267	14.6%
Finance and Insurance	2,921	13.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,877	8.4%
Manufacturing	1,722	7.7%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,461	6.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,355	6.1%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	985	4.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	731	3.3%
Wholesale Trade	662	3.0%
Public Administration	357	1.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	321	1.4%
Educational Services	302	1.4%
Information	292	1.3%
Construction	283	1.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	189	0.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	47	0.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	29	0.1%
Total	22,302	100%

Source: Ohio Economic Profile Stark County, 2021.

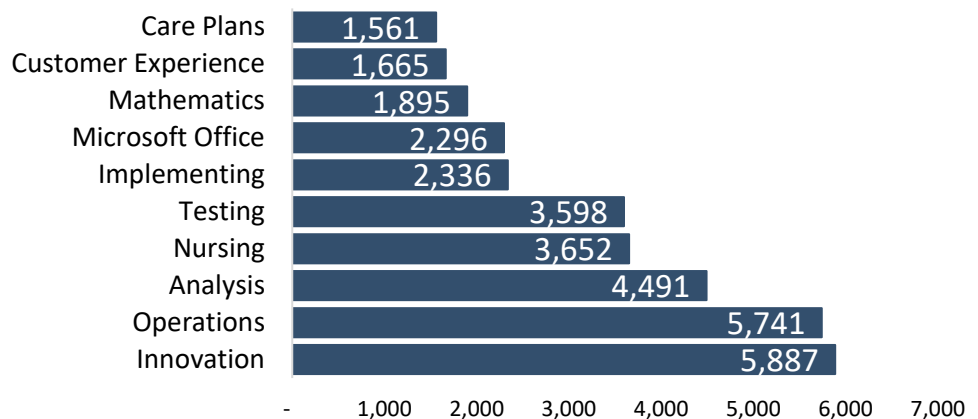
The following graph outlines the top occupations with the most online jobs in 2020. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Drivers was the occupation with the most ads at 2,210 online postings. An analysis of the top skills listed in online ads was also included, and the top 5 were innovation, operations, analysis, nursing, and testing.

### Top Occupations Based on Online Ad Posting, Stark County, 2020



The top skill sets for jobs in Stark County based on online job postings were fairly broad, with descriptors such as “innovation” or “operations”, but others contain more specific skills that would require training. Microsoft Word, nursing, care plans, and mathematics were all skills that may require prior training.

### Top Skills Based on Online Ad Posting, Stark County, 2020

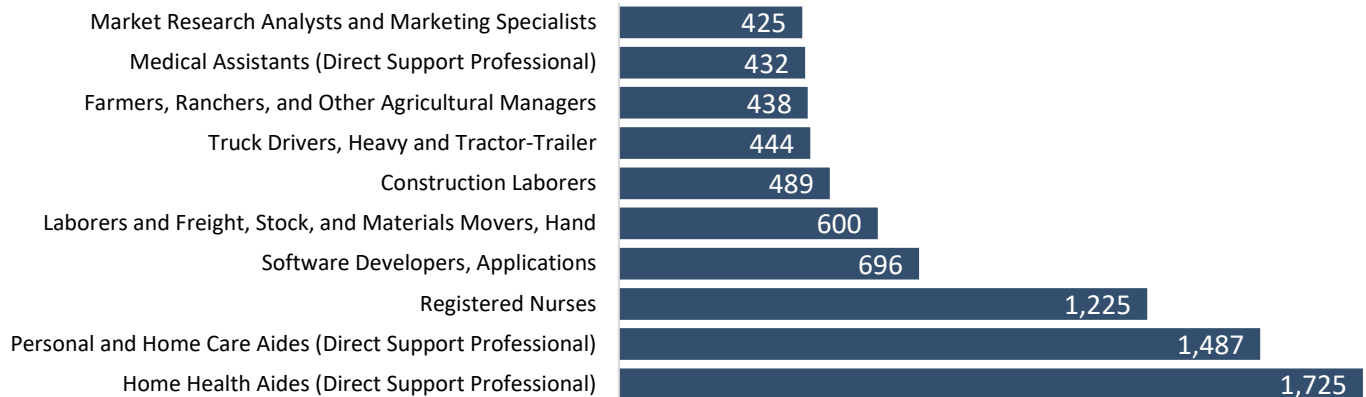


In Ohio, the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation compiles a list of top jobs in each region based on median salary, growth, employment, and openings. The following graphs outline the top 10 jobs in each category for the Northeast region, of which Stark County is a part of.

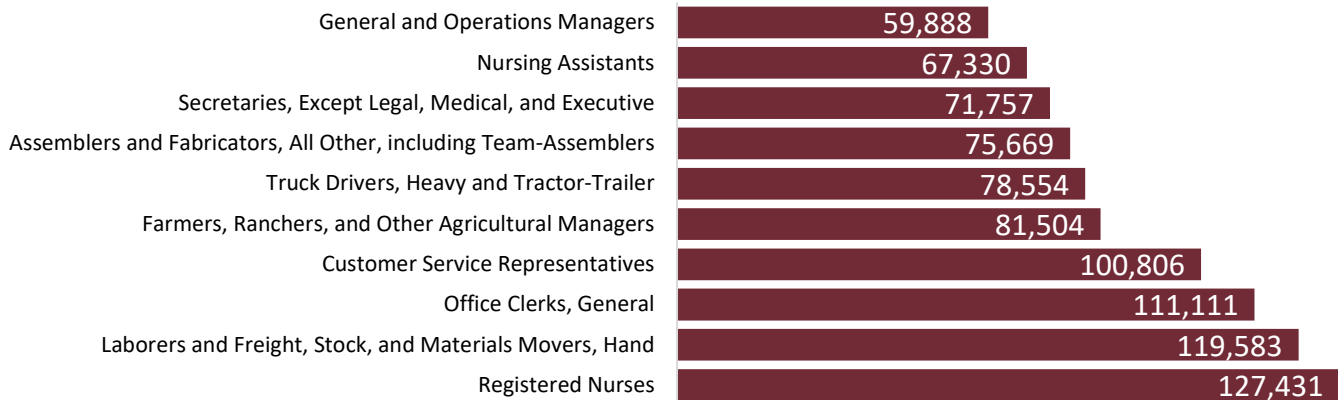
### Top Jobs by Median Income, Northeast Region, 2023



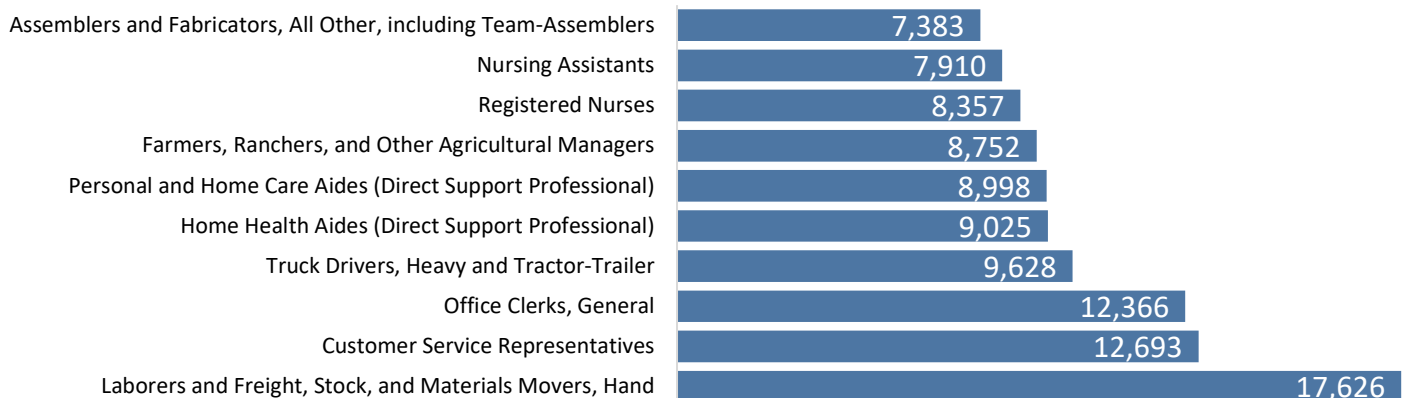
### Top Jobs by Growth, Northeast Region, 2023



### Top Jobs by Employment, Northeast Region, 2023



### Top Jobs by Openings, Northeast Region, 2023



The chart below outlines the median earnings for each sector in Stark County. The chart has main categories in darker red and the subcategories in a lighter red. The median earnings are from the U.S. Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2021.

Occupation	Median Earnings (Dollars)
<b>Management, business, science, and arts occupations:</b>	<b>54,669</b>
Management, business, and financial occupations:	58,269
Management occupations	60,694
Business and financial operations occupations	54,991
<b>Computer, engineering, and science occupations:</b>	<b>68,998</b>
Computer and mathematical occupations	66,718
Architecture and engineering occupations	77,226
Life, physical, and social science occupations	57,500
<b>Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations:</b>	<b>42,296</b>
Community and social service occupations	41,579
Legal occupations	71,442
Educational instruction, and library occupations	42,323
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	34,133
<b>Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations:</b>	<b>54,269</b>
Health diagnosing and treating practitioners and other technical occupations	63,119
Health technologists and technicians	37,689
<b>Service occupations:</b>	<b>18,298</b>
Healthcare support occupations	22,767
<b>Protective service occupations:</b>	<b>55,607</b>
Firefighting and prevention, and other protective service workers including supervisors	41,063
Law enforcement workers including supervisors	58,371
Food preparation and serving related occupations	12,347
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	21,558
Personal care and service occupations	14,142
<b>Sales and office occupations:</b>	<b>32,255</b>
Sales and related occupations	32,330
Office and administrative support occupations	32,222
<b>Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations:</b>	<b>44,448</b>
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	22,175
Construction and extraction occupations	45,392
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	44,633
<b>Production, transportation, and material moving occupations:</b>	<b>35,253</b>
Production occupations	40,579
Transportation occupations	37,111
Material moving occupations	27,158

## Community Strengths

*Data Source: Community Survey*

When asked about what they enjoy about living in their community, residents pointed to safety, community spirit, convenience, and resources available in their community. Many residents describe their neighborhood as safe and quiet, providing peace of mind for their families. Friendly neighbors and strong community engagement were listed as strengths. A family-friendly environment with community events and educational opportunities provide a strong sense of belonging among residents. Residents also find a sense of belonging through the various clubs, organizations and volunteer opportunities available to them within close proximity. Access to public services, local shopping areas, social service resources and employment opportunities were all included as assets in the community.

## Community Challenges

*Data Source: Community Survey*

Residents in this community also have a wide range of concerns and suggestions for improvement, with a common focus on safety, affordability, youth/family engagement and increased access to community resources. Crime and safety, including gun violence, drug use and traffic safety, were often mentioned of areas that needed attention within Stark County. Multiple residents would like to see increased programming and support for children and families, particularly single parents. Safe, accessible parks, playgrounds and recreational programs were suggestions for increasing opportunities for children and their families to become engaged in the community. Many residents shared concerns about housing quality, increasing housing costs and eviction worries. As housing costs rise, they would like to see assistance programs increase.



## SCCAA SERVICES

This section details the residents' knowledge of SCCAA, their experiences with the organization, and insights into how SCCAA can better provide their services and programs based on the resident survey that was completed. Eight out of 10 survey takers are familiar with the services offered by SCCAA and even more believe the services are important to the community. This indicates the community places high value on the agency's work.

**8 in 10** respondents are **familiar** with SCCAA services








**9 in 10** respondents believe SCCAA provides **important** services to the community



What Stark County Community Action Agency services have you or someone in your household used in the past?

The five most **commonly used** services:

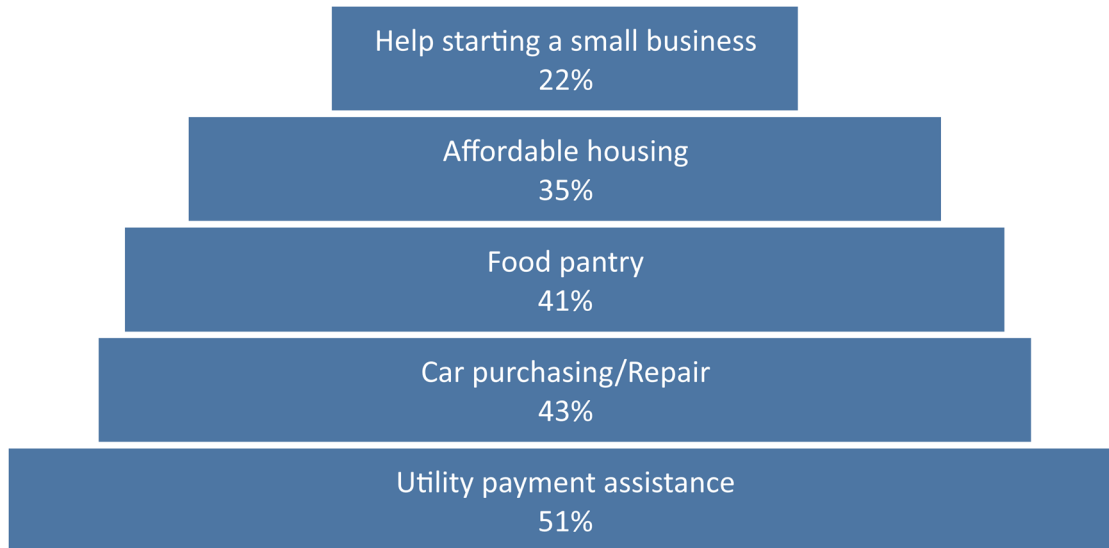
	Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) or Utility assistance	60%
	Rental/Mortgage Assistance	53%
	Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)	51%
	Head Start/Early Head Start	28%
	Food Vouchers/Food Boxes	10%



What services do you believe you or someone in your household would use in the next 12 months?

### Top Five Services

residents expect to utilize within the next year



### Services utilized in the past year

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) or Utility assistance	60%
Rental/mortgage assistance	53%
Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)	51%
Head Start/Early Head Start	28%
Food Vouchers/Food Boxes	10%
Water Assistance (LIHWAP)	9%
Home weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)	8%
Other*	8%
Car Seats	6%
Transportation	4%
Senior Services	2%
Money Management Classes	1%
Emergency Home Repair	1%

#### \*Other

Covid Assistance

SNAP

Formula

Medicaid & WIC

### Potential services respondents' households would use in the coming year

Utility payment assistance	51%
Car purchasing/Repair	43%
Food Pantry	41%
Affordable Housing	35%
Help Starting a small business	22%
Homebuyer Training	20%
Mental Health services	15%
Head Start/Early Head Start	13%
Childcare full-day	13%
Emergency home repair	13%
After school programs	11%
Matched savings program	11%
Other**	10%
Transportation for Doctor App.	9%
Computer Skills Training	8%
Childcare with alternative hour	8%
Childcare part-day	8%
Hot water tank repair/replace	7%
Furnace repair/replace	7%
Job-hunting training	6%

<b>**Other</b>	Tax return preparation	6%
Rental assistance	GED Instruction	4%
Bankruptcy	Home Health Care	2%
Driver's Training	Substance use services	2%
	Adult daycare	2%
	Foreclosure counseling	1%

“ In your own words, how do believe SCCAA could better serve you?

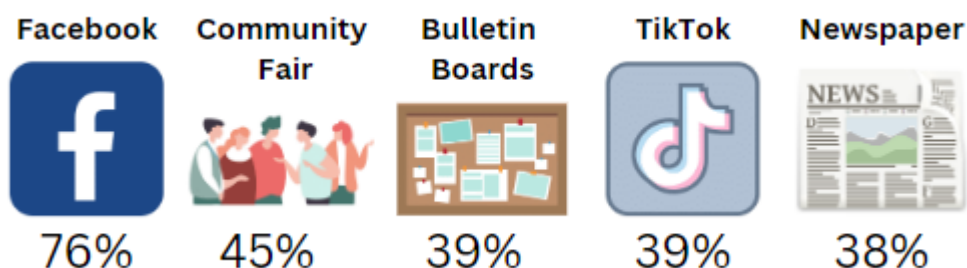
*“The resources in Stark County are scattered and impossible for me to successfully navigate. There needs to be a cohesive path or someone to help make everything more accessible.”*

To better serve the community, the Stark County Community Action Agency (SCCAA) could focus on improving communication and accessibility. Some residents have mentioned challenges in connecting with staff, delays in returning phone calls, and difficulties in obtaining appointments. Enhancing the availability of appointments, particularly for crucial programs like HEAP and PIPP, is crucial. Additionally, more transparent and publicized information about SCCAA's services and the application process would benefit the community. Residents also shared the difficulty of navigating the landscape of social assistance programs throughout the county and could benefit from warm hand-offs when referrals are made. Fostering a respectful and empathetic atmosphere is essential, as some individuals reported encounters with staff who were perceived as rude or dismissive. Continuing to build an efficient and approachable system will ensure that SCCAA can meet the needs of the community it serves.

*“A lot of people stigmatize seeking help. It makes me feel vulnerable going to apply for these things or when people find out. It wouldn't be so stigmatized if more people know about the programs.”*

***What are the best ways to tell people about the services available through Stark County Community Action Agency? Check all that apply.***

**Top responses:**



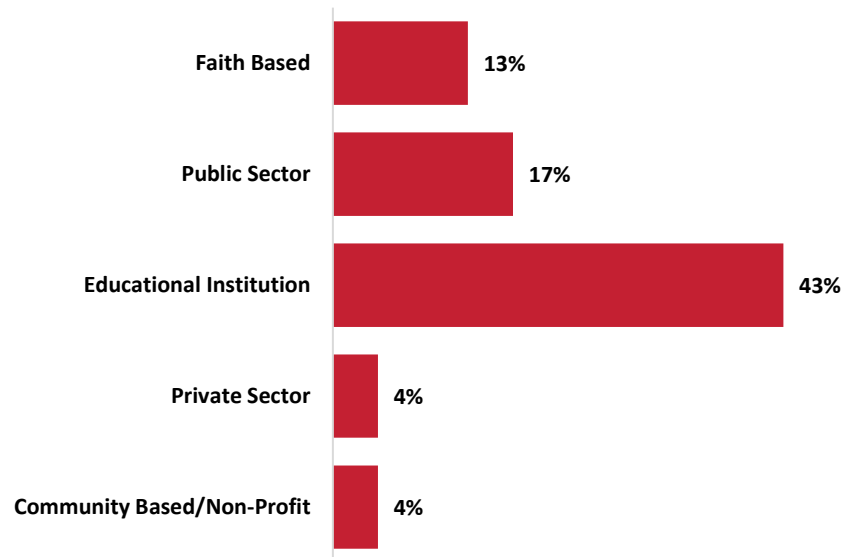
Residents become aware of the Stark County Community Action Agency (SCCAA) through a variety of channels. These include personal referrals from friends, family members, and neighbors who have utilized SCCAA's services. Some have heard about SCCAA through social workers, landlords, or case managers. Others learned about it through word of mouth in their community or via online sources, such as social media and the agency's website. Many residents have directly applied for assistance from SCCAA due to financial struggles, including rent, utilities, and COVID-related relief. Additionally, some have been connected to SCCAA through participation in programs like Head Start or youth internships. Overall, these diverse sources of awareness reflect the agency's vital role in providing support and resources to the community. When asked for suggestions on how to get the word out to other residents, two of the top five responses were social media; Facebook and TikTok. The other top answers were being present at community fairs, posting flyers on community bulletin boards and providing information to local newspapers about programs and services.

# COMMUNITY PARTNER INSIGHTS

A community partner survey was sent out to local organizations and elected officials in Stark County. Ninety percent of respondents worked in Stark County, with the remaining working in either Summit County or across multiple counties that included Stark.

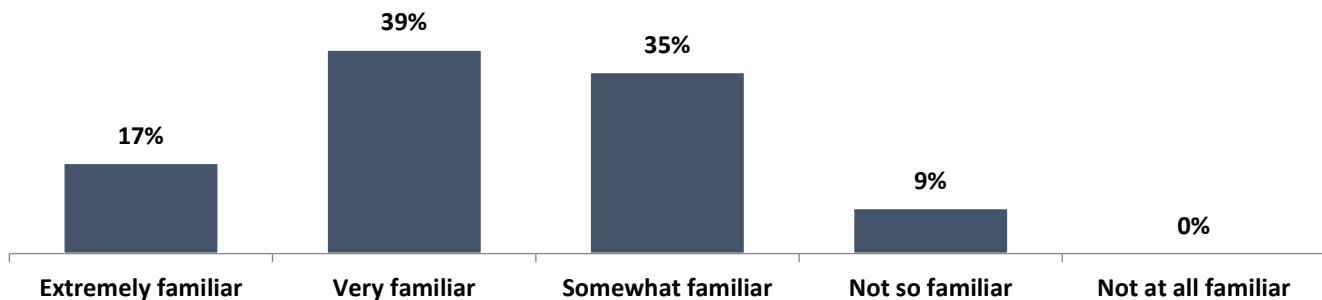
Most partners work in an educational institution in some capacity, with 43 percent indicating so. Seventeen percent identified the “other” option and covered hospital, counseling, civil rights, and childcare.

## Where do SCCAA partners work?



Except for nine percent, all community partners were at least somewhat familiar with SCCAA. The remaining nine percent were “not so familiar” with SCCAA and no community partners indicated that they were not at all familiar.

## How familiar are you with Stark County Community Action Agency?



### How often do you refer people to SCCAA?

- 26% Often
- 61% Occasionally
- 4% Rarely
- 9% Never before



Most community partners often or occasionally refer people to SCCAA. When asked about their experiences referring people, many had very positive feedback. One community partner mentioned that there is often a high volume of people trying to apply, which can be discouraging when people have immediate needs, but need to wait. The top 3 programs that community partners referred people to were Head Start/Early Head Start, HEAP or utility assistance, and rental/mortgage assistance.

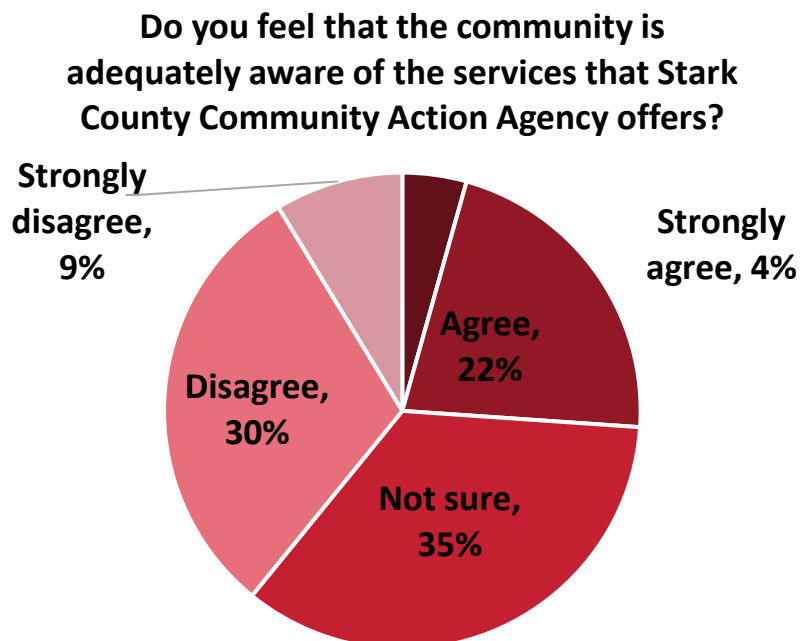
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*"I always refer families and children, because I know that SCCAA has many ways to access the resources they need."*

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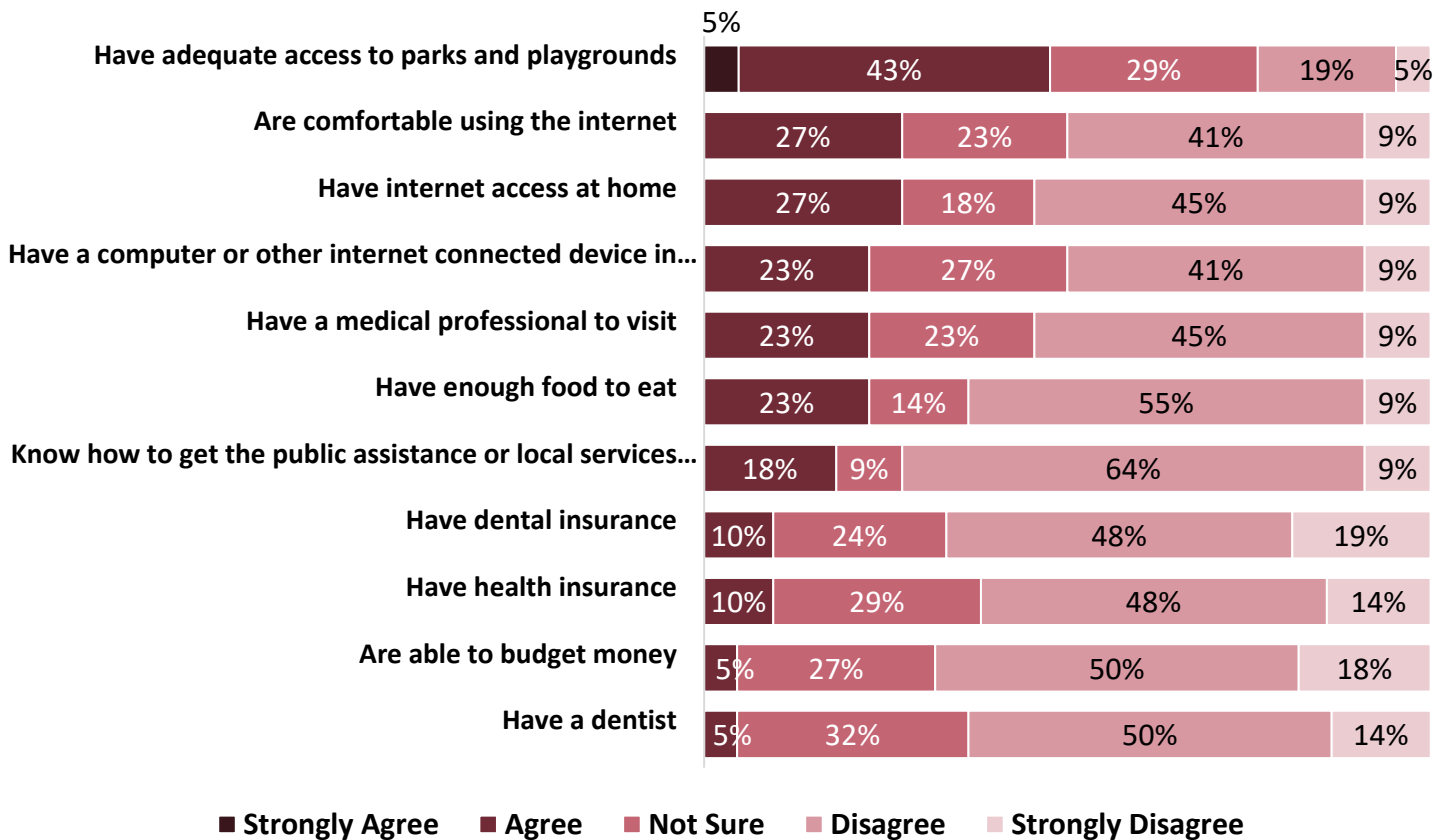
When asked if the community is adequately aware of the services that SCCAA offers, 35 percent said they were not sure, and 39 percent said that they disagreed or strongly disagreed. This data point, coupled with feedback from focus groups, indicates that the community may not know about the wide breadth of services that SCCAA provides.

Community partners were asked a series of questions about needs for people in Stark County. Notably, the community partners did not indicate that they strongly agreed with any of the statements besides that residents have adequate access to parks and playgrounds. The graph below is organized in descending order by need.

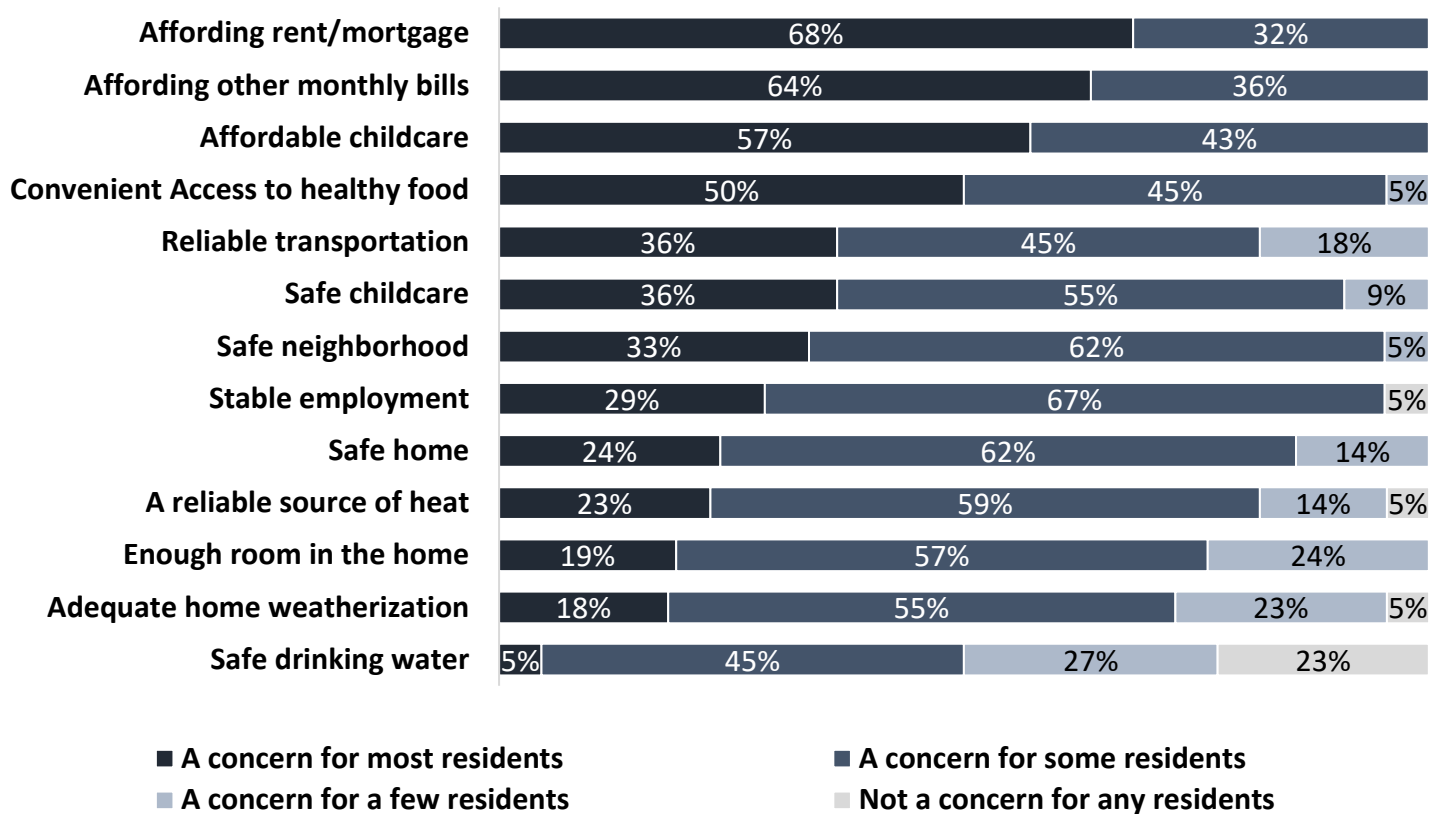




## In general, people in Stark County...



## Are accessing any of the following a concern for residents of Stark County?



### What programs and services do **community partners** feel are needed in Stark County?

**Education and Skills Development.** Community leaders wanted to see more assistance for adults with literacy and skills training. More assistance for students was also needed, including tuition support. One leader mentioned that before and after school care was needed for students whose programs begin early in the morning, such as clinicals in nursing school. Early childcare, from birth to 3, was also a need identified, as was tutoring for students.

**Support for Vulnerable Populations.** More homeless shelters and support for the homeless population was identified as a need in Stark County by community leaders. One leader pointed out that there is not much funding for household essentials that are not covered by SNAP/TANF. An increase in transportation options was also mentioned.

**Community and Social Services.** Community leaders wanted to see more funding and support for local churches and religious organizations to address social needs in the community, including social justice programming and restorative justice circles. Mentorship programs and on-call support systems were also mentioned. Liaisons to help people to take steps to improve their education, employment opportunities, and family life was also a need identified.

# APPENDIX

## Demographics of Survey Participants

		n	%
How many people live in your household?	1	31	13.9
	2	57	25.7
	3	53	23.8
	4	40	17.9
	5 +	42	18.8
	Total	223	100
What is your gender?	Man	26	11.7
	Woman	195	87.8
	Transwoman	1	0.5
	Total	222	100
What is your sexual orientation?	Asexual	5	2.2
	Gay	1	0.5
	Lesbian	7	3.2
	Bisexual	12	5.5
	Straight	185	84.5
	Self - Describe	4	1.8
	Prefer not to answer	5	2.2
	Total	219	100
What is your race, select all that apply	American Indian	10	4.5
	Asian	2	0.9
	Black/African American	101	45.7
	Native Hawaiian	1	0.5
	White	135	61.1
	Self-Describe	3	1.4
	Total (All who identified their race)	221	100
Are you Hispanic/ Latino/Latina?	Yes	5	2.3
	No	214	97.7
	Total	219	100
What is your marital status?	Single	129	58.6
	Partner	35	15.9
	Married	27	12.3
	Separated	7	3.2
	Divorced	20	9.1
	Widow	2	0.9
	Total	220	100
What is your highest level of education?	Some HS	12	5.4
	HS	80	35.9

	College Some	87	39
	2-year	24	10.8
	4-year	20	9
	Total	223	100
What is your age?	18-24	18	8.1
	25-34	75	33.8
	35-44	57	25.7
	45-54	38	17.1
	55-64	18	8.1
	65-74	15	6.8
	75+	1	0.5
	Total	222	100
What language is primarily spoken in your home?	English	219	99.10
	Other	2	0.9
	Total	221	100
What is your annual household income?	Less than \$14,580	84	39.3
	\$14,580 - \$18,309	32	15
	\$18,310 - \$23,029	16	7.5
	\$23,030 - \$24,859	10	4.7
	\$24,860 - \$29,999	19	8.9
	\$30,000 - \$35,139	17	7.9
	\$35,140 - \$40,279	9	4.2
	\$40,280 - \$45,419	5	2.3
	\$45,420 - \$50,559	5	2.3
	\$50,560 - \$59,999	4	1.9
	\$60,000 - \$69,999	5	2.3
	\$70,000 - \$79,999	3	1.3
	\$80,000 - \$99,999	3	1.3
	\$100,000 or More	2	0.9
	Total	214	100