

Union County Foundation

Community Needs Assessment



February 2020



**UNION COUNTY
FOUNDATION**
Building a Strong Community.

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Introduction

The Union County Foundation (UCF) reached out to Transform Consulting Group (TCG) to assist with engaging the community and gathering feedback to inform their Lilly Endowment GIFT VII community leadership development work. As part of their GIFT VII initiative, the Lilly Endowment awarded planning grants to community foundations to help them better understand opportunities and challenges in their community and determine which opportunities to pursue with additional implementation grant funding.

With surveys and community discussions advertised through social media, websites, emails, attendance at community events, and word of mouth, the Union County needs assessment incorporates the feedback of 359 community members from across the county. This report also includes countywide assessments and available public data. This report presents preliminary findings of the top issues in the county and is for the Foundation's internal use as they move forward with their GIFT VII planning activities.





Data Collection Methodology

TCG and UCF conducted a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative data collection. Printed surveys were distributed at events and online versions were made available through various channels. To further engage with communities, UCF staff conducted focus group style discussions with a variety of stakeholders at local community meetings. Data was collected from June through late October of 2019.

A general survey was created for community feedback. Mid-way through collection of the survey, a few questions were added to the survey in order to collect feedback on additional areas and topics. UCF staff and board members attended multiple community events and shared the survey with various organizations across the county. The survey was marketed and shared via the UCF website, email, social media, the local newspaper and word of mouth. A total of 185 surveys were completed either online, in person, or submitted on paper¹. Of these responses, 86 respondents completed the initial survey and 99 completed the revised survey with the added questions.

UCF staff and board members collected feedback through focus group style discussions at 15 community events/meetings. A total of 174 individuals were reached through these community meetings. Groups reached through these meetings include the 4H Association, local church congregations, parent groups, fire and sheriff departments, library staff, senior citizens, and cross-sector community meetings/gatherings. In total, 359 people contributed their input to this needs assessment for Union County.

In addition to the community feedback collected, TCG reviewed various countywide assessments and available public data for its analysis and completion of this report and the county profile section.

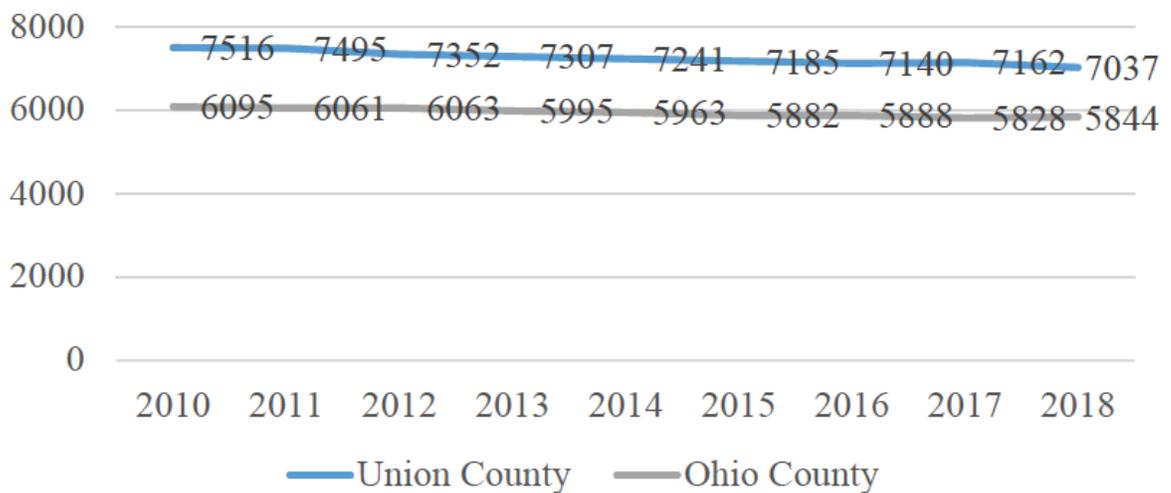
1. 190 responses were received, but 5 were duplicate submissions (identical name and responses).

County Profile

POPULATION

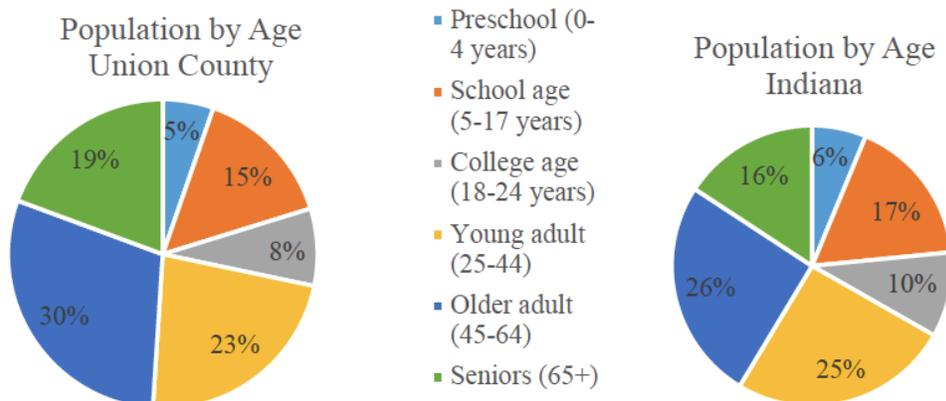
As of 2018, Union County's population was 7,037². This represents a -6.4% change from 2010. Based on population size, Union County is the second smallest county in the state, followed by Ohio County. Ohio County has seen population loss in the last several years as well, but the decline has not been as drastic (-4.4%) as in Union County.

Figure 1: Union County Population Trend



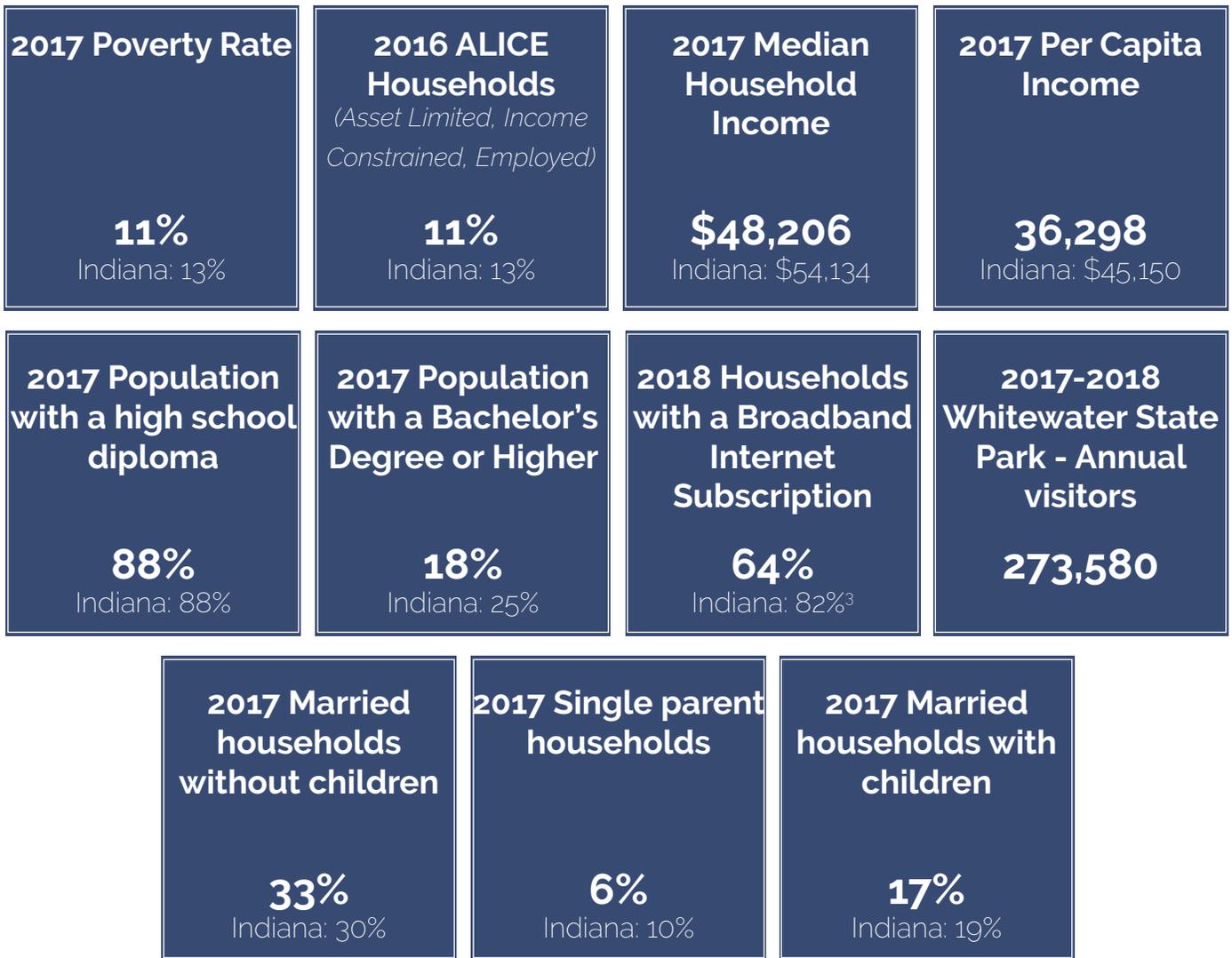
The median age of Union County residents is 44.1, which is older than the state median of 37.9. The highest percentage of residents are older adults, followed by young adults, seniors, school age, college age, and preschool age. Population composition by age in Union County is similar to the state composition.

Figure 2: Population by Age; Union County vs. Indiana



² U.S. Census Bureau; Indiana Business Research Center

POPULATION/COUNTY CHARACTERISTICS



HOUSING

In 2018, there were an estimated total of 3,259 housing units in Union County. Of those, 64% were owner occupied. The median monthly rent for Union County is \$504⁴.

WORKFORCE

Union County has a **3% unemployment rate**⁵, which is the same as the state unemployment rate. This demonstrates an improvement from the 2014 Union County unemployment rate of 6%. A total of 3,386 Union County residents are employed⁶:

- Of those, 634 (19%) work within Union County;
- 2,752 (81%) work outside of the county;
- An additional 617 individuals work within Union County, but live elsewhere.

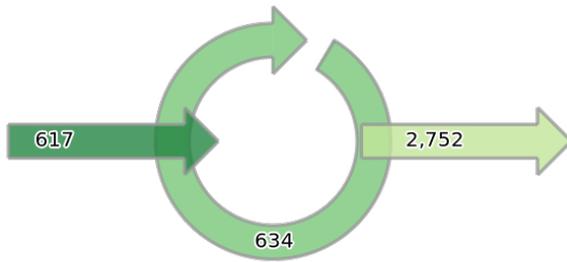
³ US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates

⁵ STATS Indiana, using data from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (2017)

Figure 3: Inflow-Outflow of Employees

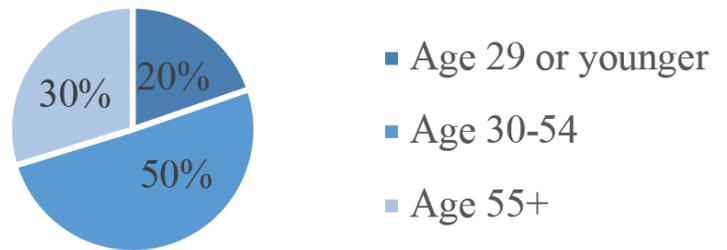


The top three places Union County residents were employed as of 2017 include:

1. Richmond (13%);
2. Liberty (13%); and
3. Oxford (13%).

Half of individuals who are employed in Union County are between the ages of 30-54. One-third of the workforce is made up of individuals over the age of 55 and a fifth of the workforce is under 29.

Figure 4: Union County Workforce by Age



The North American Industry Classification System classifies businesses and jobs by Industry. The top industry sectors within Union County in 2017 were:

- Education Services (19%);
- Manufacturing (16%);
- Retail Trade (15%); and
- Health Care and Social Assistance (10%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (2017).

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

As of 2017, it was estimated that 18% of children under the age of 18 in Union County live in poverty, which decreased from 22% in 2014⁷. Approximately one-third of students received free lunch and an additional 11% receive lunch at a reduced price. It is estimated that one Union County student experienced homelessness in 2017 and 16% of children between 2013-2016 were food insecure.

In 2018, 72% of students in grades 3-8 passed English/Language Arts ISTEP+ and 68% passed Math ISTEP+. The county high school graduation rate was 90%, which is similar to the state rate of 88%.

In Union County, there are 448 children under the age of 6⁸. Most households with children under the age of 6 are married-couple households. One-quarter of households with children under the age of 6 in Union County are single-parent households⁹.

⁷ Source: 2019 Indiana Kids Count Data Book. Indiana Youth Institute.

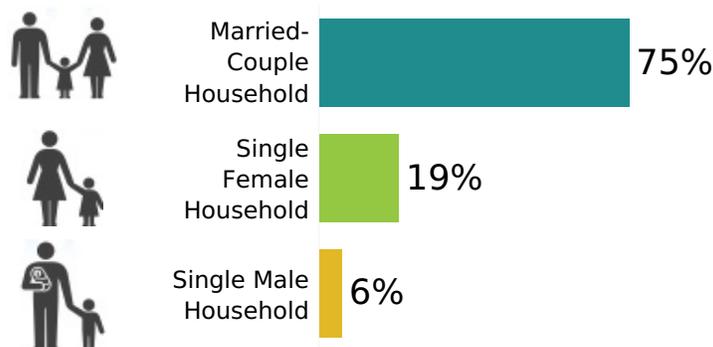
⁸ Puzanchara, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2018). Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2017. Online; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B23008.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101

Approximately 68% of children in Union County under the age of 6 are in need of child care because all parents in the home are working. There is only one known child care program in the county, which is a Level 3 in the Paths to QUALITY rating system¹⁰. The annual cost of tuition for high-quality care in the county is \$7,843¹¹.

Figure 5: Household Composition

What is the structure of family households with own children under 6 years old?



HEALTH

Hospitals are required to complete a community health needs assessment (CHNA) every three years. Reid Health's most recent CHNA was completed in 2016 and includes Union County data. This assessment identified three priority community health needs: Substance Abuse, Mental Health & Mental Disorders; Access to Health Services; and Exercise, Nutrition & Weight¹².

Substance Abuse, Mental Health & Mental Disorders

- In Union County, the mental health provider rate (providers/100,000 population) in 2015 was **14**. This was the lowest rate within Reid's service area of other surrounding counties. For example, Wayne County's rate was 476 and Fayette County had a rate of 60.
- Approximately **11%** of Union County's population was found to experience frequent mental distress, characterized by poor mental health for at least 14 of the last 30 days. This percent is similar to the other counties in Reid's service area.
- According to 2010 data, approximately 30% of mothers in Union County smoked during pregnancy. This rate was higher than the other counties in Reid's service delivery area. Approximately 20% of all adults in Union County smoked in 2014.

Access to Health Services

- Union County's primary care provider rate (providers/100,000 population) was 69 in 2013, which was higher than any other county in Reid's service area and higher than Indiana's rate of 67. However, according to the Indiana Indicators Dashboard, this rate dropped to 28 by 2019, which represents a **41%** decrease¹³.
- The Union County dentist rate (dentists/100,000 population) was **13** in 2014, which was the lowest in Reid's service area.

¹⁰ Early Learning Indiana, 2018; Family and Social Services Administration Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, May 1, 2017 - April 30, 2018; Indiana Department of Education, 2018

¹¹ Early Learning Indiana, 2018

¹² 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment. Reid Health, 2016.

¹³ County Health Rankings 2015-2019; Area Health Resource File/American Medical Association. Accessed at indianaindicators.org

- According to the Indiana Indicators Dashboard, **11%** of adults in Union County are uninsured and **6%** of children are uninsured¹⁴.

Exercise, Nutrition & Weight

- According to data from the Indiana Indicators Dashboard, **14%** of adults in Union County have diabetes and Union County's adult obesity rate is **33%**¹⁵.

TOURISM

Two of the main tourist attractions in Union County are Brookville Lake and Whitewater Memorial State Park. In 2017-2018, Whitewater State Park had an annual estimate of 273,580 visitors¹⁶. It is estimated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources that the impact of State Park visitors on local communities is approximately \$623 million. As a result, more than 14,000 private sector jobs are created across the state.



¹⁴. County Health Rankings 2015-2019; Small Area Health Insurance Estimates. Accessed at indianaindicators.org

¹⁵. County Health Rankings 2015-2019; CDC Diabetes Interactive Atlas. Accessed at indianaindicators.org

¹⁶. Indiana Department of Natural Resources.



Community Feedback

Responses to the community survey were collected from June through late October 2019. Mid-way through collection of the survey, a few additional questions were added to the survey in order to collect feedback on additional areas and topics. A total of 185 surveys were completed either online, in person, or submitted on paper¹⁷. Of these responses, 86 completed the initial survey and 99 completed the revised survey with the added questions.

The survey was distributed throughout the county online and made available in print. The link to the survey was shared through UCF emails and social media and included in the local newspaper. Print surveys were distributed at community events. The majority of respondents (76%) were residents of Union County. Approximately 10% were former residents of Union County and 11% reported being graduates. Approximately 13% of respondents reported being employed in the county and 3% were business owners¹⁸.

A quarter of total survey respondents were between the ages of 41-50. The next most represented age groups included those between 31-40 years old and 51-60 years old.

The updated survey, which received 99 responses, asked for additional demographic information. Of these respondents, four-fifths were female. Almost all respondents (98%) identified as white/Caucasian. There was a diverse distribution of respondents by education level (see Figure 7).

Figure 6: Age of Respondents

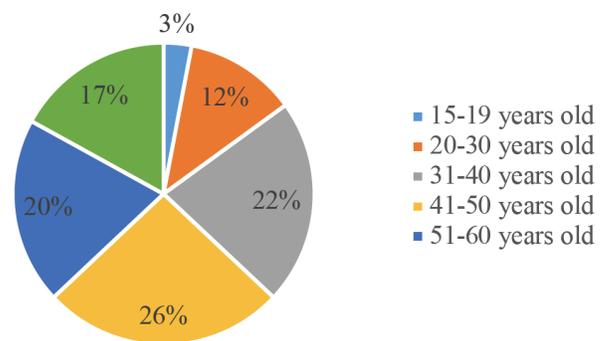
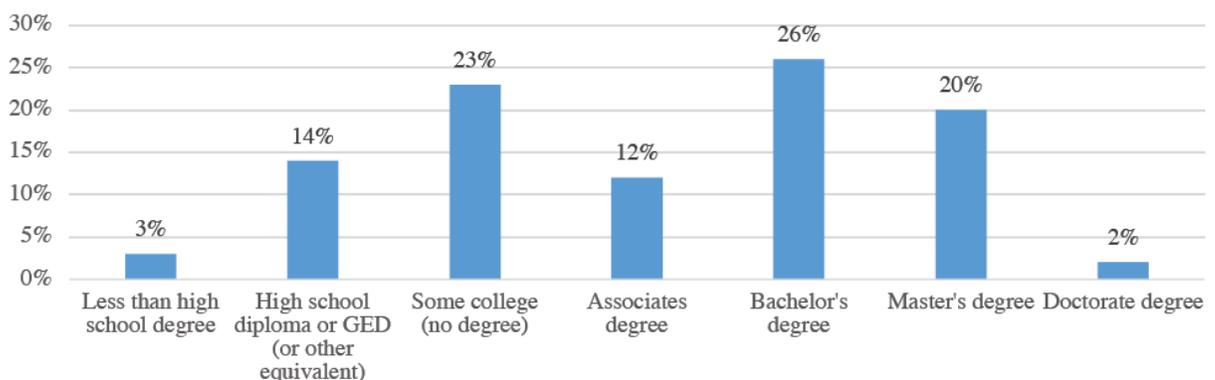


Figure 7: Education Level of Respondents



¹⁷. 190 responses were received, but 5 were duplicate submissions (identical name and responses).
¹⁸. Respondents were able to select more than one answer choice, so total percent may equal more than 100%.

The initial survey was mainly qualitative in nature. When asked what respondents loved about Union County, the following themes/responses were most common:

- Small-town atmosphere and close-knit community;
- Local businesses and community recreational activities and events;
- Natural beauty of the community and the state park;
- Quality of the local school system;
- Location-Union County is close in proximity to many larger towns and cities.

“ I love how close everyone is. It makes me smile to know that my community is so supportive and loving to everyone that lives here and that everyone is treated like family. ”

When asked about the strengths of the community, many respondents shared similar responses:

- The people and community;
- The school system;
- Community organizations that served as assets, including the library, UCF, and local churches;
- Local businesses and amenities;
- State park and natural beauty;
- Affordability, low cost of living.

Strengths of the Community



“ ...The people of Union County are its biggest strength! Also, our location to the parks and larger cities can be viewed as an asset. The Foundation has done an outstanding job of helping our citizens, businesses (non-profits) succeed. ”

When asked to reflect on the weaknesses of the community, the following responses/themes were most common:

- Lack of amenities, recreational opportunities, and access to retail and businesses;
- Not enough jobs, especially high-paying jobs;
- Poor economic development and a blighted downtown;
- Lack of resources and funding in the county to address social and community issues;
- Housing availability, and specifically a diversity in options. Many expressed that there was low-income housing available, but not as many options for middle-class families;
- Drug use;
- Community in general is not open to change, new ideas, and diversity. Many in the community stick to the status quo and are not open to growth opportunities;
- Poor leadership in the community and a lack of collaboration/cooperation between community leaders.
- Infrastructure.



I think our biggest weakness is the lack of jobs needed to draw people to and keep people in our community.



When asked about the greatest challenges faced by the community, respondents shared similar feedback:

- Drug and substance use;
- Difficulty in retaining and attracting residents, especially young people and those with children;
- A lack of job opportunities;
- A lack of resources in the community and comments about the overall poor state of the local economy.



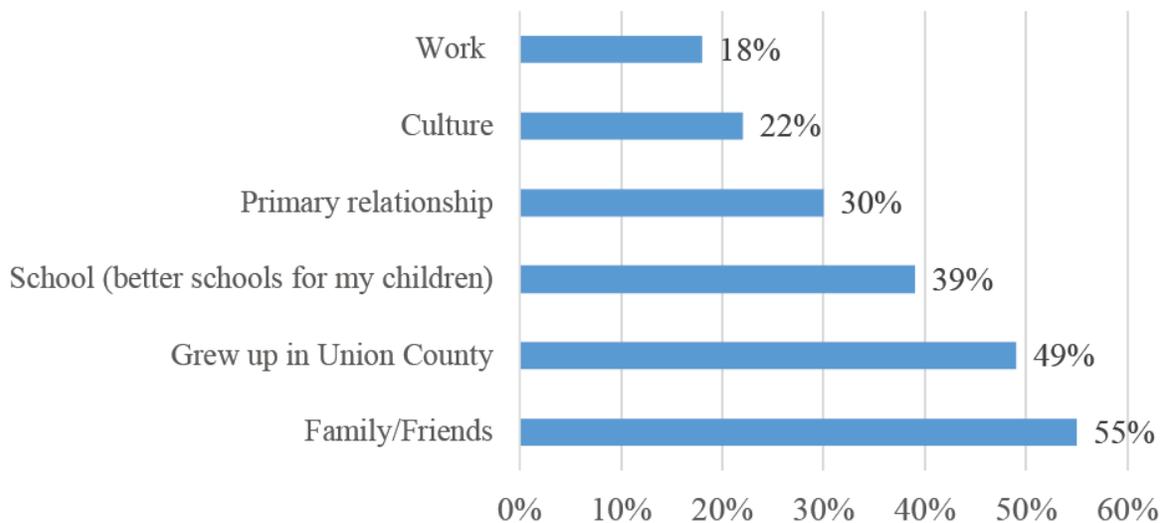
"Our community does not draw educated, motivated workers, whether singles or families. This means that we will not grow. We need to entice our graduates to want to return to UC and build businesses and invest their skills in our community."



Mid-way through data collection, the survey was updated to include additional questions that focused on specific community issues/topics. The following survey questions were answered by 99 respondents who completed the survey after this update.

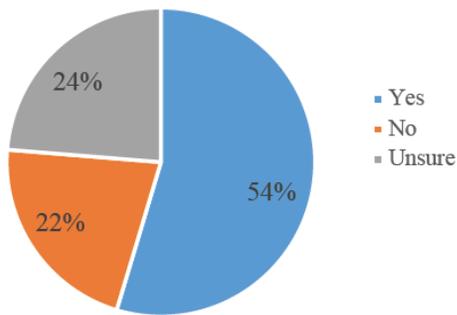
When asked why they had chosen to stay in or move to Union County, most respondents indicated wanting to be close to family or friends in the area. Almost half reported growing up in Union County. Other common reasons for staying in or moving to Union County included wanting better schools for their children, staying due a primary relationships (such as a spouse), the culture of the county, and work.

Figure 8: Why have you chosen to stay or move to Union County? Select all that apply



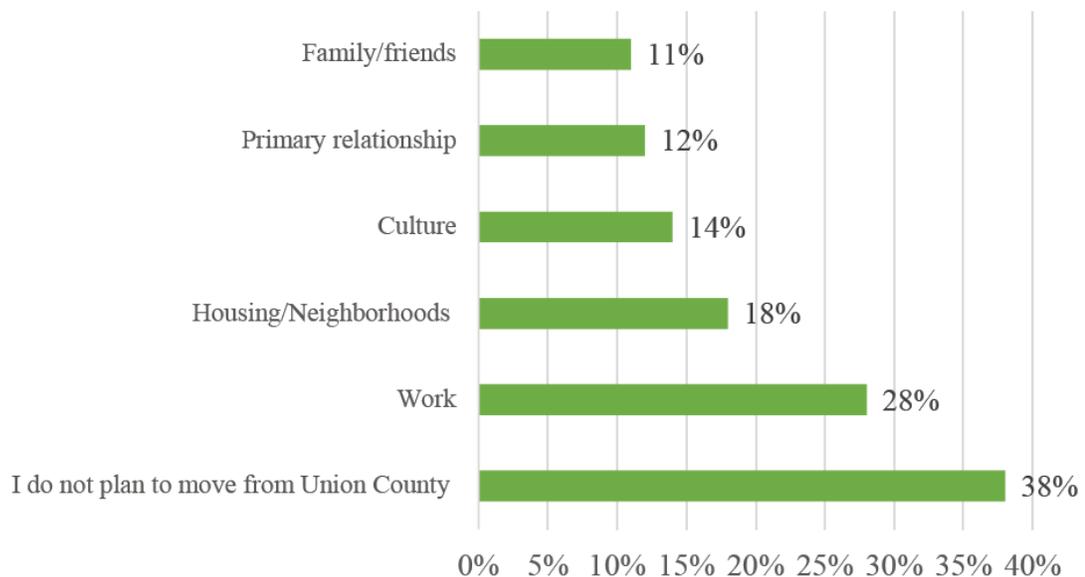
Most respondents indicated feeling extremely connected (22%) or very connected (38%) to the County. Over half of respondents reported that they thought they would be living in Union County in five years, while a quarter of respondents were unsure and a fifth of respondents did not think they would be living there in five years.

Figure 9: Do you think you'll be living in Union County in five years?



Respondents were also asked why they might choose to leave and move out of Union County. Over one-third indicated that they had no intention to move. Other respondents cited work, wanting nicer housing and neighborhoods, more cultural opportunities/activities, or moving because of a primary relationship or to be closer to family and friends.

Figure 10: If you moved out of Union County, why do you think you would leave? Select all that apply



Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a number of items in Union County on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 indicating "not happy at all" and 5 indicating "very happy"). The items with the highest average satisfaction rating include:

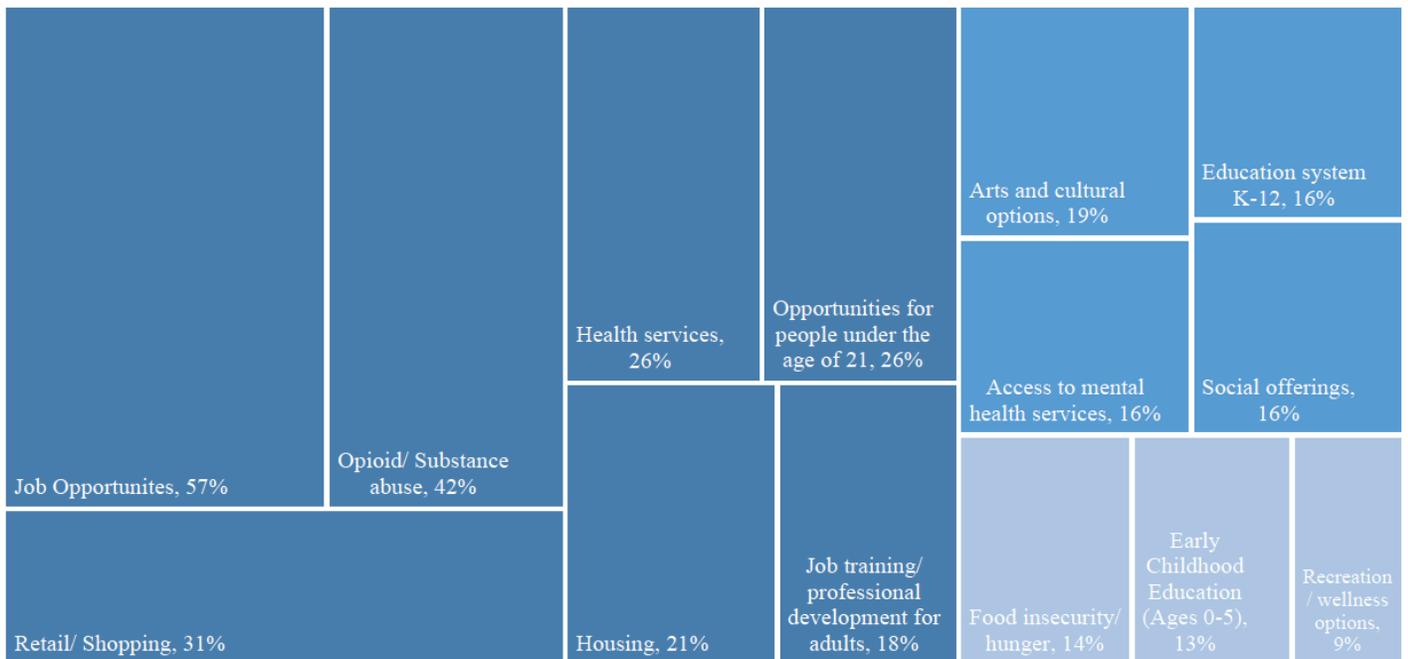
- Family-friendliness
- Your neighborhood
- Public safety
- K-12 Education system

The items with the lowest average satisfaction rating include:

- Job opportunities
- Retail/shopping
- Job training/professional development opportunities for adults
- Arts and cultural options

When asked to select the top 3 issues facing Union County, the most commonly reported issues were job opportunities, opioid/substance abuse, and retail/shopping.

Figure 11: Please select the top 3 issues facing Union County (select up to 3)



When asked how much of an impact respondents thought they could have in making Union County a better place to live, most responded either a moderate (40%) or small (26%) impact. Only 16% thought they could make a big impact and 6% thought they could make no impact at all.

The initial survey also asked how the Foundation can best serve the community and what respondents wanted and needed from the Foundation. The following responses/themes were most common:

- Many respondents expressed that they were pleased with what the Foundation was already doing;
- Need for increased communication, especially about what the Foundation does. Many respondents said that they didn't know what the Foundation did;
- The Foundation should act as a convener around big projects and new initiatives, including providing education to the community;
- The Foundation should support businesses or projects that would bring more jobs to the community;
- The Foundation should provide funding for youth activities.

“ The foundation can help guide future development through support of initiatives that further the community’s comprehensive plan.
Be a voice at the table for inclusion.
Advocate for bold change.
Challenge the status quo. ”

The survey also asked how the Foundation can best assist those interested in various leadership roles within the community. Respondents expressed the following suggestions:

- Create more opportunities for residents to provide feedback and have a voice;
- Bring the community together and do more outreach to recruit leaders and community members to participate in community initiatives;
- Provide trainings, workshops, and open community meetings;
- Support, encourage and foster new leaders- new leaders are not always supported in the community and it seems to be the same core group of leaders involved in many initiatives;
- Provide internships and leadership opportunities for youth;
- Provide incentives and support to leaders and community members (child care during meetings, pay, etc.).

“ By letting people like myself know I can be a community leader - I had no clue before this. ”

DISCUSSIONS AT COMMUNITY MEETINGS

UCF staff and board members collected feedback through focus group style discussions at 15 community events/meetings. A total of 174 individuals were reached through these community meetings. Groups reached through these meetings include the 4H Association, local church congregations, parent groups, fire and sheriff departments, library staff, senior citizens, and cross-sector community meetings/gatherings.

The feedback at these community meetings aligned closely to the feedback received through the survey. For example, the strengths and what people love about Union County included the small close-knit community, proximity to the State Park, and the county’s centralized location. Challenges and weakness identified included a lack of job opportunities, lack of recreational activities (especially for youth), drug use, and poor communication from community leaders.

During these discussions, community members encouraged the Foundation to:

- Continue providing funding to support community needs;
- Act as a centralized source for community communication and initiatives;
- Support and recruit leaders; and
- Provide training/education to leaders and community members.



Summary of Issues Raised

JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAINING/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A reoccurring theme in the survey responses and community discussions was the lack of job opportunities, especially high-paying opportunities. This is further demonstrated by the outflow of Union County residents working outside of the county. Survey respondents suggested that the Foundation support businesses or projects that would bring more jobs to the community.

LACK OF AMENITIES, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND ACCESS TO RETAIL AND BUSINESSES

Many individuals who provided feedback for this assessment expressed a lack of recreational opportunities and access to retail and businesses. Many respondents referred to vacant storefronts and the desire for a more vibrant downtown area. Respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities available for youth and suggested the Foundation fund more youth activities.

DRUG AND SUBSTANCE USE

One of the most pressing community challenges identified by respondents was the substance use epidemic. Respondents expressed a lack of services and resources for those struggling with substance use as well as a need for more prevention programming and education.

DIFFICULTY IN RETAINING AND ATTRACTIN RESIDENTS

Many respondents indicated that, for Union County to succeed and grow, the community needs to explore solutions and strategies to retain and attract residents, especially young adults and families with children. This challenge is further demonstrated by the population decline seen in Union County over the last several years. Respondents suggested that increasing job opportunities and community amenities would help to attract visitors and residents.

Recommendations/ Next Steps

Of the issue areas identified through this needs assessment, UCF has chosen to focus on **population loss and the difficulty in retaining and attracting residents**. In the next phase of the GIFT VII planning grant, UCF will develop strategies to address this issue.

In January and February of 2020, UCF collected additional feedback from the community through community discussions and luncheons to inform their strategy.

In March of 2020, UCF will apply for additional funding from Lilly Endowment to implement the identified strategies. UCF will also continue to work with community partners to raise overall awareness of the needs of Union County residents and encourage collaboration in the County to improve quality of life.



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