



UNITED WAY OF TARRANT COUNTY

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2018–2019



unitedwaytarrant.org



UNITED WAY OF TARRANT COUNTY



Dear Friends,

United Way of Tarrant County is pleased to share our 2018-2019 Community Assessment with you. The assessment, made possible by a grant from the Sid Richardson Foundation, is the third and final phase of discovery in support of our new Strategic Plan, which we launched in the spring of 2018. The Strategic Plan introduced Systems Change, a new way for United Way of Tarrant County to lead and allocate resources geared toward not just managing social issues, but solving them for particular populations. This Community Assessment now provides us with a clear directive of where Systems Change funding is needed in our community and how our donors and the people of Tarrant County expect us to allocate resources.

Through our partnership with the University of North Texas Health Science Center, we conducted numerous interviews and focus groups with key informants. We also analyzed and extracted key findings from existing research and publicly available statistical indicators. We found five major areas needing significant investment: housing and homelessness; health, mental health and wellness; transportation; education/early childhood/youth; and basic needs, emergency assistance and financial stability.

While many of these issues are not new, the Community Assessment highlights how they are interconnected, how they compound challenges for residents and their quality of life and how the root of many of these chronic issues is poverty. As a result, United Way of Tarrant County will specifically target the issue of intergenerational poverty with an emphasis on addressing gaps in the five major areas.

The Community Assessment results also show the need for better communication, collaboration and coordination among social service organizations, government entities and the private sector. We believe it is our role and our responsibility as a steward of investments by donors to be a leader in convening resources and facilitating communication and collaboration. We take that role seriously. To that point, we are providing a full technical report of all the data collected and analyzed for the Community Assessment. The technical report can be found at www.unitedwaytarrant.org/communityassessment.

The 2018-2019 Community Assessment is a powerful tool for United Way of Tarrant County, our partners and the communities we serve. We hope you will take the time to read the report and learn about the social issues facing Tarrant County. We look forward to working with the community to fulfill our mission to provide leadership and harness resources to solve Tarrant County's toughest social challenges.

Sincerely,

TD Smyers
President and Chief Executive Officer
United Way of Tarrant County



This community assessment was carried out by the University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC) School of Public Health in partnership with the United Way of Tarrant County and community stakeholders.

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HOW DID WE ASSESS TARRANT COUNTY?

METHODS

We used multiple strategies to gather information about the strengths, needs and concerns of Tarrant County residents.

PHASE ONE: PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DATA SOURCES

We began by finding out what other organizations in our community have learned through their own assessment projects. This included a review of more than 20 existing assessment reports, most of which addressed special topics such as community health, behavioral health, criminal justice, education, transportation and economic development.

Next, we collected publicly available data that helped us better understand how Tarrant County has changed over time and how we compare to other regions. These data sets were gathered from national, state and local sources, including but not limited to:

- United States Census and the American Community Survey
- United States Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Health and Human Services
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Local school districts, health systems and municipalities
- Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

PHASE TWO: PERSPECTIVES FROM RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

With support and assistance from United Way of Tarrant County and a large number of community organizations, we completed 25 key informant interviews and 20 focus group interviews. Lists of potential key informants were generated by staff from United Way of Tarrant County and supplemented by recommendations from other community stakeholders. The University of North Texas Health Science Center Institutional Review Board approved the human subjects research protocol for this phase of the Community Assessment. All 45 sessions were audio recorded and transcribed into text and demographic surveys were completed by the participants. The transcriptions were divided into distinct passages and coded by the UNTHSC

research team. This resulted in over 4,000 passages, of which 2,309 identified perceived needs and issues of concern to Tarrant County stakeholders. Based on feedback gathered from existing data, key informant interviews and focus groups, United Way conducted a donor survey and provided a summary of findings, which also are included in this report.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This report provides an overview of social issues facing residents of Tarrant County. It highlights what is going well, what needs to be improved, and what the community perceives about the role and influence of United Way of Tarrant County. This report is a brief summary of a large volume of data gathered for the assessment. Those who are interested in greater detail and other statistical indicators are invited to download our technical report, available at www.unitedwaytarrant.org/communityassessment. Since this assessment uses multiple sources of data, each source comes with limitations. Feedback from interview participants cannot be generalized to the region as a whole, public statistical data may provide an incomplete picture of an issue or not be available at the region or frequency desired, and existing reports are generally designed to meet the needs of a specific set of stakeholders. Taken collectively, however, these different data sources offer multiple perspectives on key issues facing residents of Tarrant County.

This report is designed to stimulate dialogue about how to build on community strengths and generate solutions to problems that interfere with quality of life.

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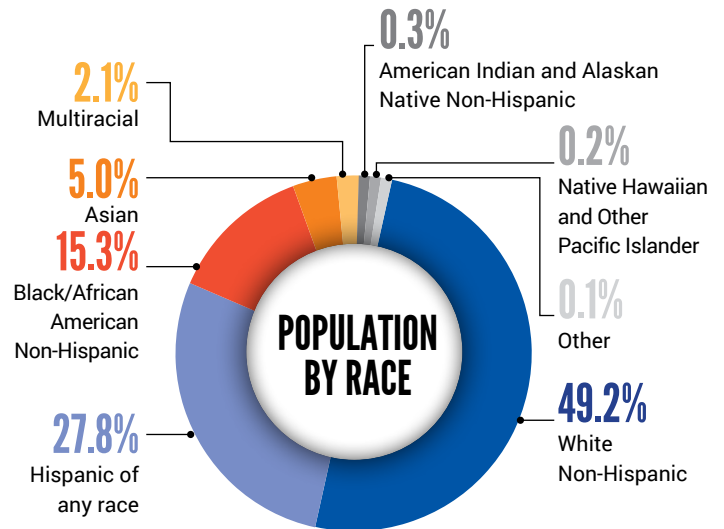
WE ARE TARRANT COUNTY

With an estimated population of more than 2 million people, Tarrant County is growing rapidly, having gained 237,058 new residents since 2010.¹ It is the third most populous county in Texas and the 16th largest in the United States. Like other counties in the metropolitan area, it is attractive to new residents and businesses because of its cost of living, quality of life, economic potential and cultural offerings.²

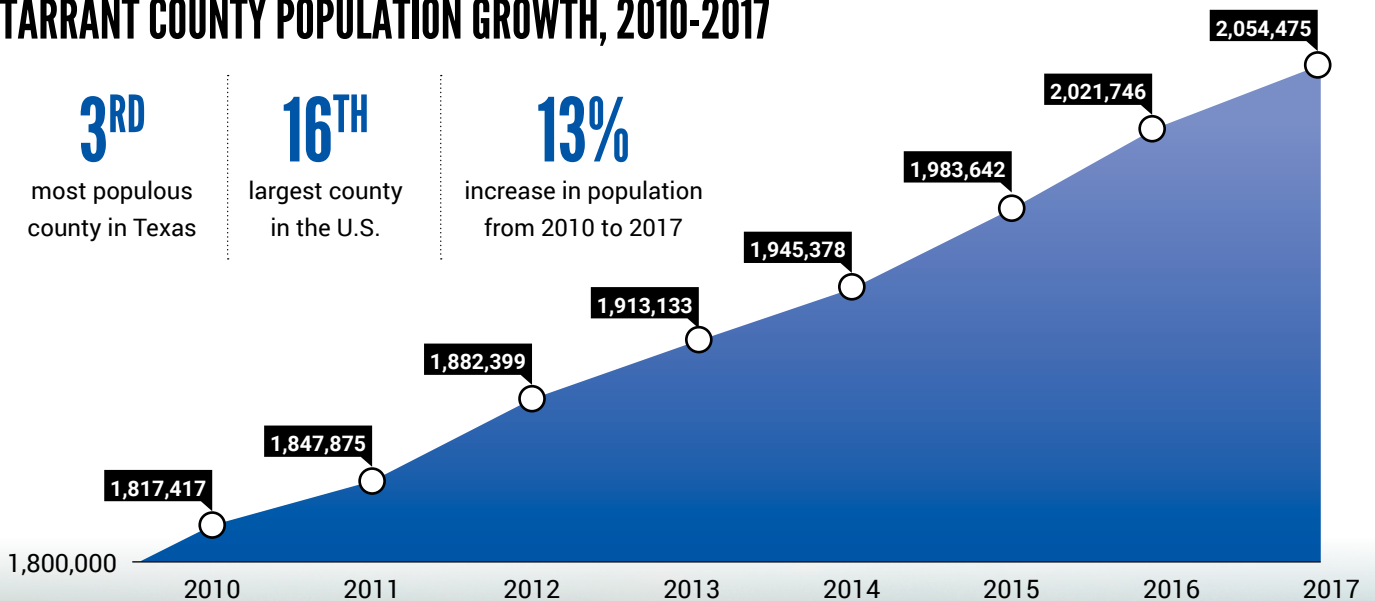
The county is racially and ethnically diverse, with a growing population of Hispanic residents. Languages other than English are spoken by 27% of households, with one in five speaking Spanish.³ Among adults 25 and older, the vast majority hold a high school diploma or equivalency (85%), and 21% have a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴ Tarrant County is also home to an estimated 110,560 U.S. military veterans. Full-time, year-round workers earn a median wage of \$46,091 per year.⁵ Approximately 12% of families in Tarrant County and 19% of children are living below poverty level.⁶

DID YOU KNOW?

Tarrant County is part of the fourth-largest metropolitan area in the United States.



TARRANT COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH, 2010-2017



TARRANT COUNTY: AN OVERVIEW OF KEY ISSUES

To identify the major issues affecting the lives of Tarrant County residents, the research team analyzed and extracted key findings from existing community assessment reports, publicly available statistical indicators, and transcriptions of key informant and focus group interviews. These were compared against one another to find areas of alignment. Details offered by interview participants helped to illuminate and provide context for statistical indicators. When analyzing indicators, the research team considered several dimensions, including trends over time, comparisons to other communities, state and national averages, rates based on population size and whether or not there were disparities among subgroups.

TOP IDENTIFIED ISSUES

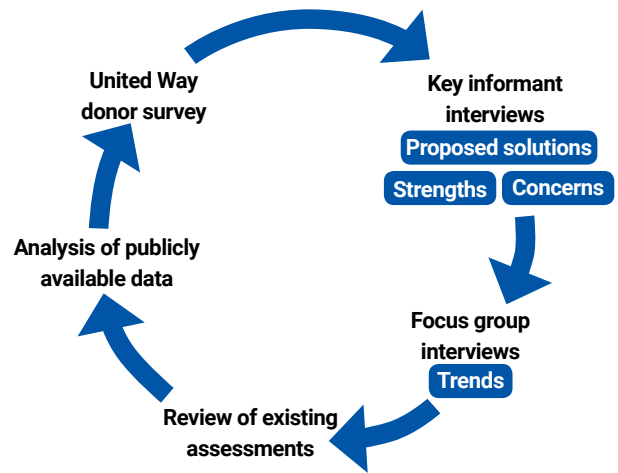
Housing and Homelessness

Health, Mental Health and Wellness

Transportation

Education, Early Childhood and Youth

Basic Needs, Emergency Assistance and Financial Stability



The major areas of concern are likely not a surprise to residents of Tarrant County, as these issues arose with great frequency during interviews. The issues also are in existing community reports and associated with compelling statistical indicators. Furthermore, these issues are entangled with one another, compounding challenges for residents who are trying to improve quality of life for themselves and their families. The lack of affordable housing leads many families to live paycheck to paycheck, unable to weather financial crises and relying on social service providers to meet basic needs. Employment opportunities that could increase financial stability may not be reachable by public transit, and for individuals living near the poverty level, public transit is not affordable. Going without needed health and mental healthcare also limits people's independence and capacity to pursue better educational and employment opportunities.

COMMUNITY VOICES

"[What is needed?] I would say ... affordable – no cost, or affordable – vocational training. And I know I sound like a broken record, but that getting a job at a living wage is the key to some of these issues that we're talking about ... because if you can get a job at a living wage and can afford a car, well then you can meet your housing and your transportation needs ideally."

– Focus Group Interview Participant

"... it's all so connected. The root issue is poverty, I believe. And one of the things ... I want to make sure I'm clear about is the need for living-wage jobs and often training has to go alongside that ... but I think that really poverty is the underlying issue that drives all of these issues, obviously. So ... I think we need pathways to help people get out of poverty. Living-wage jobs and affordable housing are probably the top two, I would say."

– Key Informant Interview Participant



HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing in Tarrant County is increasingly difficult to find. Housing prices continue to rise and the median home purchase price was approximately \$228,000 in 2018.⁷ A balanced housing market has about 6.5 months of inventory; however, Tarrant County has had less than 2.5 months of inventory since late 2015.⁸

Home ownership in Tarrant County (60.4%) is also lower than the national average (63.6%), despite median property values in Tarrant County being \$36,500 less than the national average.⁹



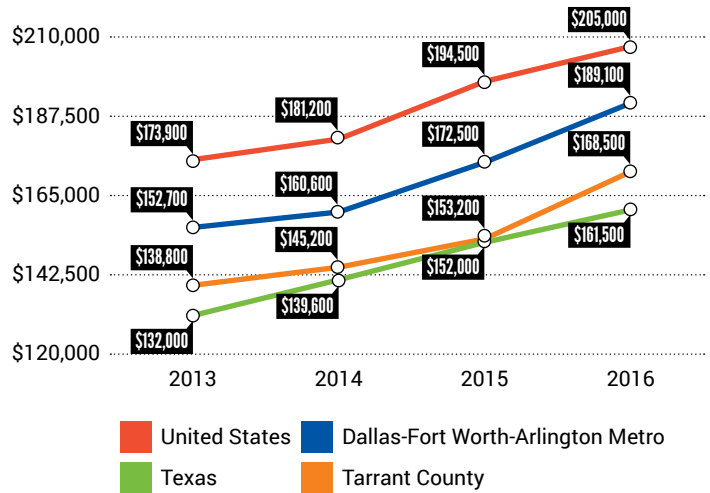
The need for more affordable housing was often brought up in interviews with community members. One Tarrant County resident explained: *“When I started looking for a place, the places I could afford I couldn’t get in because I didn’t make three times the rent. But the places that were over my limit were more lenient as far as acceptance to get me in. The places I could afford were too far from my daughter’s school, so I would have to figure out how to get her to school.”*

– Focus Group Interview Participant

HOMELESSNESS AND THE LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Not everyone has the same options when it comes to housing. **More than one in five (23%) Tarrant County families earn less than \$35,000, making housing unaffordable for over 100,000 families.**¹² In Tarrant County in 2018, more than 2,000 people were included in the homeless population point-in-time count, and an individual is homeless for seven months, on average, before finding permanent housing.¹³ The count reflects a 5% increase in homelessness between 2017 and 2018. Affordable housing and homelessness impact a diversity of people: veterans, children, seniors, families, trauma survivors and people experiencing mental and physical disabilities. The overwhelming majority of people experiencing homelessness reported that sudden unemployment and their inability to pay rent were the primary causes of their housing loss.

MEDIAN PROPERTY VALUE



HOUSING COST

\$1,200

Median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in 2018.¹⁰

115 HOURS A WEEK

is the amount someone earning minimum wage would have to work to afford rent and living expenses.

\$45,285 ANNUALLY

After-tax family income needed for two adults and a child.¹¹

DID YOU KNOW?

Tarrant County Homeless Coalition

has partnered with over 40 organizations in the community to provide care to people experiencing homelessness. **Their Housing Crisis System of Care delivered services to over 19,000 people in 2017.**

HOMELESSNESS IN TARRANT COUNTY

An abundance of organizations work together to address homelessness in our Tarrant and Parker County Continuum of Care. Over the past several years, community leaders have emphasized the quick return from homelessness to permanent housing and the importance of building the supply of affordable housing.

According to the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition:

*The housing math for extremely low-income families in our community simply does not work. With only 19 housing units for 100 households, we will continue to incur the extraordinary costs of homelessness (economic, social and individual) if we do not focus and go to scale on increasing the supply of affordable housing. Worse, the longer we wait, the more the cost of the solution will grow.*¹³

Point-in-Time Count — people identified as homeless in Tarrant County and Parker County each January



6,701 INDIVIDUALS

classified as homeless at any time during the prior year in the Continuum of Care in Tarrant County and Parker County¹³



WHO IS AT RISK IN TARRANT COUNTY?

Seniors

The number of homeless seniors has largely increased over the last decade because of growing poverty rates among older adults and the declining availability of affordable housing. Our interview participants were often concerned about the lack of affordable senior living facilities in the Tarrant County area. Participants also described a critical need for affordable memory care facilities.

Veterans

The Tarrant County Homeless Coalition reports that for every 100 people experiencing homelessness in our community, eight of those are veterans.¹³ **Nationwide, over 10% of those experiencing homelessness are veterans.**

Recently Unemployed

Unemployment is consistently identified as the number one cause of homelessness by unsheltered individuals who are surveyed during the point-in-time count.¹³ Families earning low wages are at particular risk of being unable to weather periods of unemployment.

Victims of Domestic Violence

Finding safety while fleeing domestic violence is a complex issue that is exacerbated by concerns over safety, health and financial resources. For many people, leaving their abuser is only the first step toward recovering from the trauma and many such people find themselves without shelter.

Children¹⁴⁻¹⁵

In 2014-2015 there were **7,709 children counted as homeless** in school districts in Tarrant County.

- In Texas, homeless students score 10-15% below all other students.
- One in four homeless youth is at high risk for human trafficking.
- They are at 5 times the risk of dropping out of school.
- They are more likely to interact with the criminal justice system for crimes intertwined with homelessness, including “survival sex.”

“You can’t solve early childhood homelessness without solving affordable housing.” — Key Informant Interview Participant

Families Without an Emergency Fund

Many different misfortunes that accumulate can realistically result in homelessness for any family. Depleting savings to fix a family vehicle, stay on top of bills or pay for a medical emergency could result in eviction if a family’s emergency fund is insufficient to cover the costs. The University of Notre Dame released a study that found that providing \$720 of emergency financial assistance can save individuals from homelessness — and save the community money in the long run too.¹⁶

Behavioral Health

Mental health and substance use disorders can both precede and be exacerbated by homelessness. In 2018, 18% of individuals counted as homeless were identified as severely mentally ill and 11% were reported to have chronic substance use disorders.¹³

18%

OF PEOPLE WHO WERE HOMELESS IN 2018 EXPERIENCED SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS

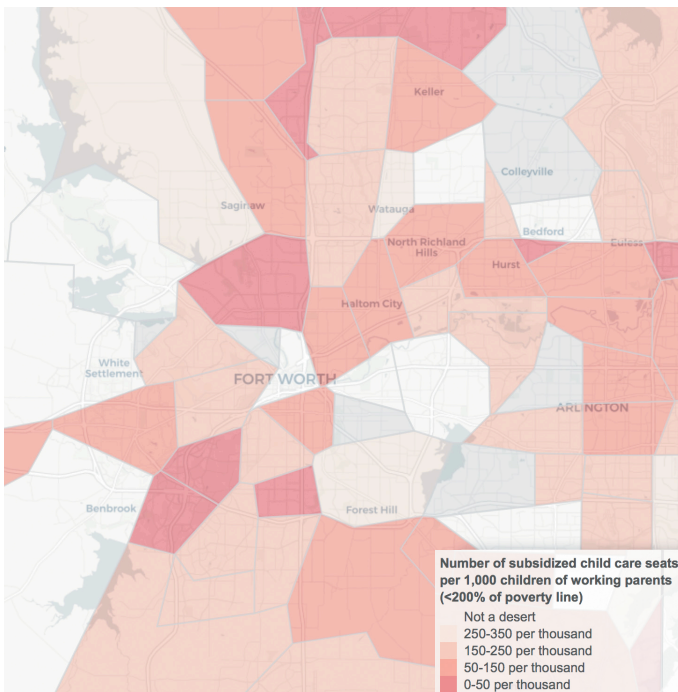
EDUCATION

CHILDCARE

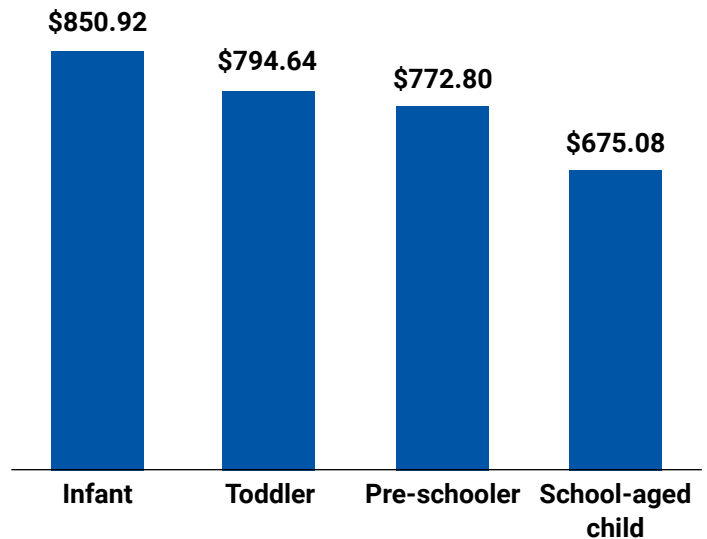
The ability to access affordable, high-quality childcare is necessary for parents and their children. Parents who have access to dependable, high-quality childcare resources can gain and maintain employment, while their children are provided with educational opportunities that will allow them to enter school kindergarten ready.



Childcare is a large expense for many families with young children. Subsidized childcare exists but is limited in availability. In the following map, a subsidized childcare desert is defined as a ZIP code of at least 30 children, ages 0-5, with working parents living below 200% of the federal poverty level and in need of childcare.¹⁸



Average Monthly Cost of Childcare for One Child in Tarrant County¹⁹



“We don’t have nearly enough subsidized childcare. The vast majority of people who need subsidized childcare, who are eligible for it, don’t get it. And that really increases the rate of poverty for families that have children under the age of 5, particularly single-mother households with children under the age of 5.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant

“To keep your job, you need childcare!”

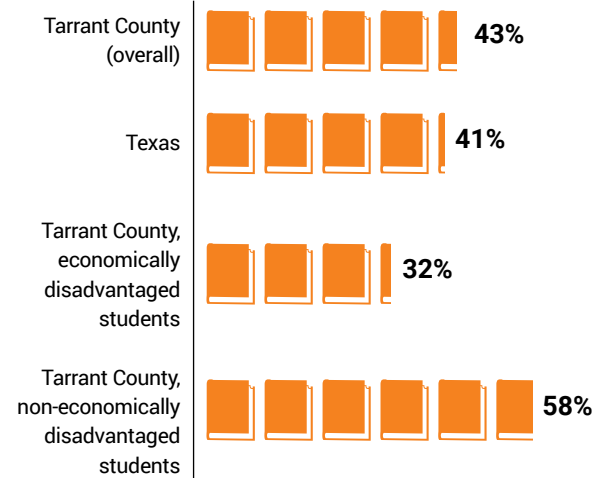
– Focus Group Interview Participant

AN EMPHASIS ON READING

Students who do not read on grade level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school.²⁰ According to Read Fort Worth, only 33% of Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) third graders were reading on grade level and community leaders recognized the long-term economic and social risks this posed for Tarrant County.²¹ Read Fort Worth is an innovative initiative supported by the FWISD, the City of Fort Worth and key stakeholders in business, philanthropy and nonprofit sectors. People throughout the county are excited about the program and many expressed interest in seeing it expand outside of Fort Worth.

“If we can get a child grade ready by the time they show up for kindergarten, their trajectory is dramatically different from that of a child who comes in and they’re behind from day one.”
 – Key Informant Interview Participant

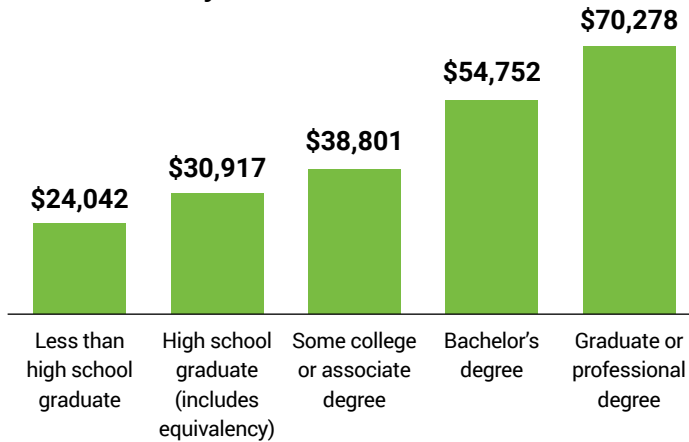
Rates of 3rd-grade reading proficiency²²



SECONDARY EDUCATION AND BEYOND

With every increase in educational attainment, earnings grow. In 2017, the average Tarrant County resident with a bachelor’s degree earned more than twice what someone who lacked a high school diploma or GED earned.⁵

Tarrant County Median Annual Income 2017



This demonstrates that education is essential for individuals and households to be financially stable and essential to support a strong economy. Almost 90% of students in Tarrant County graduated from high school in four years, for the 2015-2016 school

year.²³ This matches the Texas graduation rate and is better than the national average high school graduation rate of 84%.²⁴ Approximately 13.8% of 18- to 24-year-olds in Tarrant County do not have a high school diploma. Thirty percent have a high school diploma and 46% have some college education or an associate degree.²⁵

One in five high school graduates in Tarrant County (20.3%), in 2014-2015, enrolled in a Texas public four-year university.

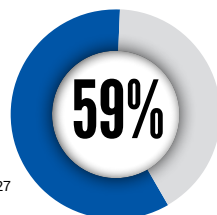
Another 29.5% of high school graduates in Tarrant County enrolled in Texas public two-year colleges that same year.²⁶

“I think that focusing on education and making sure that we are preparing young people for the workplace of the future, that is a very high priority in my mind.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“Just two years and the automotive people and the HVAC tech people are coming, but we can hardly get them out of the classroom graduated, and they’ve already got jobs.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

DID YOU KNOW?

Fifty-nine percent of students in the Education Service Center Region XI, which includes Tarrant County, met the criteria for college readiness in both English language arts and mathematics.²⁷



EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

Tarrant County College District has partnered with Fort Worth, Arlington, Mansfield, Everman, Grapevine-Colleyville and Crowley Independent School Districts to offer Early College High School (ECHS) programs to more than 3,000 students. These programs allow students to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate degree.²⁸

TRANSPORTATION

Covering 902 square miles, it's no surprise that transportation plays a major role in the lives of Tarrant County residents. People access healthcare systems, employment, grocery stores, social and entertainment activities through highways and streets, and people with limited income, physical challenges and other barriers often find transportation to be at the crux of their frustrations in getting the goods and services they need. Transportation is an integral part of a person's life – making safe, reliable and adequate transportation mechanisms vital to the health of communities. In Tarrant County, 4.52% of households do not have motor vehicles; this compares to 5.63% of households without vehicles in Texas.²⁹ With an average work commute of 27 minutes,³⁰ Tarrant County residents are spending substantial time and money on transportation costs to earn a living.

Interviews with community members revealed consistent concerns about access to public transit options. Not all municipalities offer bus or train routes, and among those that do, there are large areas without bus stops. Families may spend hours each day walking to bus stops, waiting, and transferring routes to go to work, drop children off at childcare and pick up necessities.

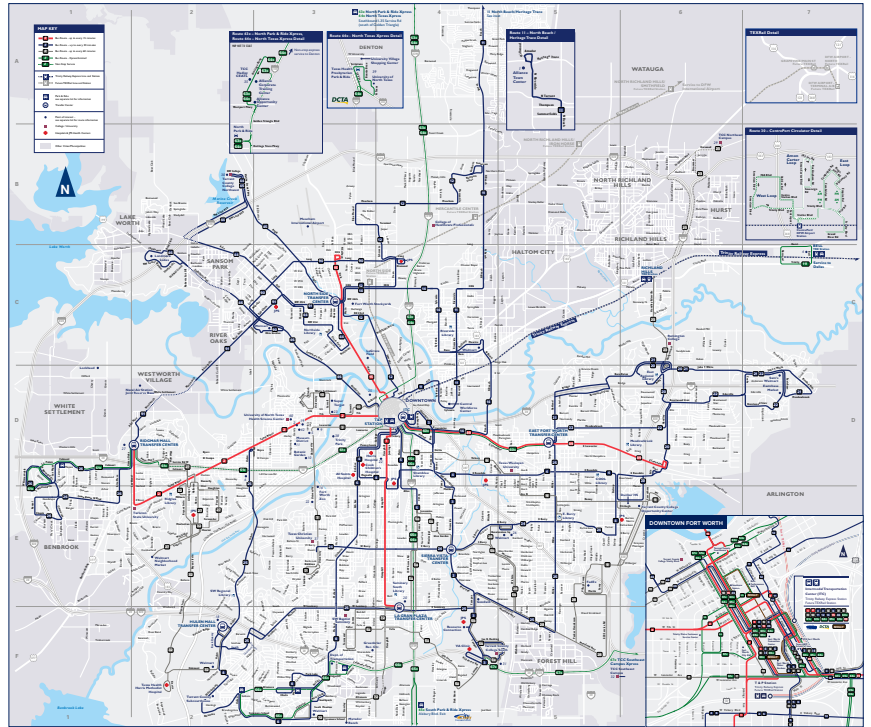
"... we have a deplorable lack of public transportation. People who don't own a car or can't afford a car, they are really trapped in the lowest levels of income because they can't get to work."

– Key Informant Interview Participant

Focus group and key informant interview participants described the barriers they faced, including the cost of bus fares, limited bus pass assistance from social service providers, long commute time to work or medical services and lack of reliable shelter at bus stops. The inability to get to employment opportunities, work or school also was a chief concern.

While some communities offer ride services, most of these require smart phones, credit cards or adequate financial resources to pay for them.

Some communities have begun to offer additional transportation services, which also have their own limitations. Services like Alliance Link and Arlington's Via prefer riders use their app, which requires a smartphone, and link their account



This Trinity Metro transit map³¹ shows bolded lines where public transportation routes are available in Tarrant County. Note the large geographic areas with no routes within walking distance in the southwest and northeast regions of the county.

to a credit card, debit card or pre-paid card. Milo the self-driving cars in Arlington are free but only serve a limited area in the entertainment district. Tarrant County College and the Trinity Metro are now offering free transportation to students to connect them to other campuses and the larger transit system. Other community organizations, such as Catholic Charities of Fort Worth, also provide limited transportation for qualified individuals.

"... it would be nice to get a monthly pass but you [have to] be a part of MHMR or something like that." – Focus Group Interview Participant

"Transportation, if you don't have money to get on a bus, how can you get somewhere?" – Focus Group Interview Participant

"Bus tickets, we used to have a bus ticket program that was very helpful, and they discontinued that, and now it's a big problem."

– Focus Group Interview Participant



BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTHCARE

Access to resources via public transportation is an important public health topic. Research has shown that in the United States, almost four million people do not get medical care because of transportation barriers,³² making it critical to provide an infrastructure that supports the ability to access care, particularly for vulnerable populations such as older adults and people with disabilities. Services exist that assist these groups in Tarrant County; however, there are still those who experience difficulties using medical transport services:



“There are doctor appointments that I have to go to but I have to leave two to three hours early because I have to walk to JPS.”
– Focus Group Interview Participant

“To have to go all the way from your neighborhood to downtown to get access to any number of programs and facilities and stuff ends up being too difficult.”
– Key Informant Interview Participant

“Yes. I have patients who call and have to cancel appointments because they don’t have a ride or their car broke down and they have absolutely no way to get to us.”
– Key Informant Interview Participant



LACK OF SAFE SHELTER

Lack of adequate bus stop shelters was another consistent theme mentioned by participants. In a 2013 study conducted in Tarrant County, the researcher discussed the interconnectedness of the stress related to walking to medical appointments, the lack of bus stop shelters and infant mortality.³³ The qualitative study examined this journey through the depiction of a pregnant mother who visited a medical clinic and then had to wait in the unprotected elements at a bus stop bench. Five years later, this remains an issue that was discussed by focus groups:

“And there’s not enough bus stops. Also, there’s not enough benches and covers.”
– Focus Group Interview Participant

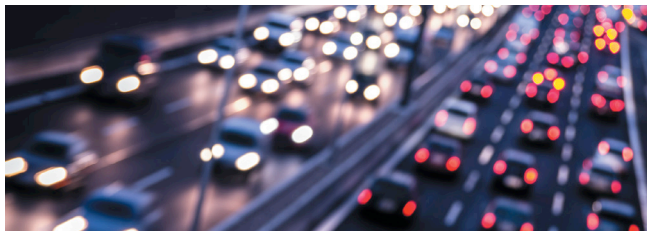
“Some bus stops have nice-looking benches with an awning. I’d welcome one.” – Key Informant Interview Participant



COST OF FUEL

Focus group participants also brainstormed opportunities to remove barriers to accessing grocery stores and other social services because of either the lack of transportation or the inability to afford increased gas prices:

“Gas vouchers – something like that. I’ve had lots of times where a client couldn’t come because of gas, or they changed their counseling attendance from once a week to once every other week, because they just can’t get here that often.”
– Focus Group Interview Participant



INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

While participants voiced concerns regarding transportation, there was discussion about the strengths of systems working together to help remove transportation barriers:

“Well I was going to the emergency room so often, and staying in the hospital you know overnight, and they have a program ... they put me on it ... someone comes out to my house twice a week and they take my vitals to make sure I’m OK ... MedStar, the ambulance, referred me to them ... I needed to go to a doctor and ... he said ‘I can get you a ride there’ ... he got on the phone and five minutes later I had a ride.” – Focus Group Interview Participant

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE

Every year the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation sponsors county health rankings that draw on an array of statistical data sources. For 2018, Tarrant County ranked 32 in health outcomes and 72 in quality of life indicators among 242 ranked counties in Texas (top 13th and 30th percentiles in the state, respectively).³⁴

While Tarrant County may fare better than most other Texas counties on health indicators, a substantial proportion of residents struggle with the causes and consequences of poor health:

- 21% are uninsured adults**
- 16% report being in poor or fair health**
- 11% report frequent physical distress**
- 11% struggle with diabetes**

“Our asthma rates are impacted by the lack of affordable housing. When housing is substandard ... whether it’s roaches or infestation and the conditions that children are living in when they are two, three, four families to a home ... those kids have terrible problems with health, with lead exposure, with asthma and all kinds of diabetes and health issues.” – Key Informant Interview Participant



Social, behavioral, environmental and economic conditions have a strong influence on health and are particularly concerning in Tarrant County.³⁴

- 35% get insufficient sleep
- 29% are obese
- 24% are physically inactive
- 20% of children live in poverty
- 18% report severe housing problems
- 18% drink excessively
- 15% smoke
- 14% are disconnected youth
- 17% are food insecure and 8% have limited access to food
- Air pollution levels exceed state and national averages



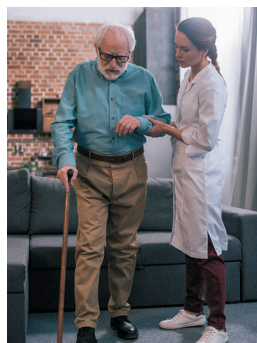
DID YOU KNOW?

Almost 14% of the Medicare population in Tarrant County was diagnosed with dementia, which is notably higher than the national average of 9.9%.³⁵ Alzheimer’s was the fifth-leading cause of death in Tarrant County,³⁶ and Texas ranks second in the nation for Alzheimer’s-related deaths.³⁷

ACCESS TO CARE

Among Texas counties with a population greater than one million people, Tarrant County ranks the worst in the ratio of residents to primary care providers, dentists and mental health providers.

There are 57 primary care physicians per 100,000 people in Tarrant County, which is much lower than the national average of 75 PCPs per 100,000.³⁴ Concerns surrounding the physician shortage emerged in the interviews, including a need for Spanish-speaking physicians.

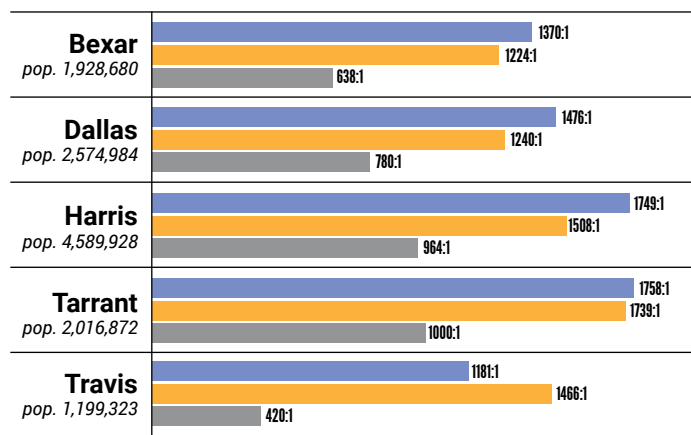


“There are doctor appointments that I have to go to but I have to leave two to three hours early because I have to walk to JPS.” – Focus Group Interview Participant

“The seniors need help with their medication because their medication keeps going up, and up and up!” – Focus Group Interview Participant

Ratio of health providers

Primary care physician ratio Dentist ratio Mental health provider ratio



STRENGTH: Despite the county’s shortage of health providers, health systems were identified as the fifth most common strength of the community during focus groups and key informant interviews. Interviewees described a combination of public and private systems, as well as smaller organizations that fill important gaps.

MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

On average, Tarrant County residents report spending about 3.5 days per month experiencing poor mental health, and more than 10% of residents report frequent mental distress.³⁴ In 2016, this contributed to more than 365,000 hospital visits in the county related to mental health, substance misuse or both.³⁸ Limited access to psychiatric care for both children and adults has been identified as a substantial concern by multiple community organizations. With fewer than 100 behavioral health providers per 100,000 residents, the need for care greatly outpaces the supply.³⁴ This problem is exacerbated for residents who are uninsured or underinsured and leads to high utilization of crisis services.

Assets: Despite the shortage of providers, a key strength is the collaboration of more than 40 organizations through the Mental Health Connection of Tarrant County, which is recognized nationally for strategic initiatives to raise awareness, improve quality of care and promote workforce development.

"This person here who is suffering from mental illness can become this person here: a contributing taxpayer, someone who contributes to the community in a healthy way."
 – Key Informant Interview Participant

About 3% of deaths (267) in Tarrant County in 2017 were from suicide.³⁹ This reflects an upward trend over the past four years. In the United States, suicide is the second-leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-34, and the overall suicide rate increased 28% between 1999 and 2016.⁴⁰

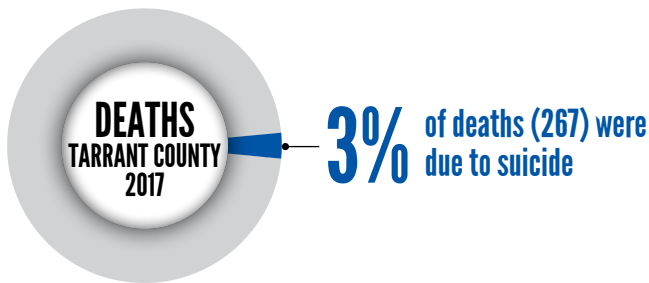
As of 2018, Tarrant County has 26 facilities that provide substance use disorder services.⁴¹ Rehabilitation and detox services are difficult to access for some people, but the primary concern surrounding drug cessation was people following through with a rehabilitation program, only to return to the same community environment that negatively influenced those lifestyle choices.

"I was going through a really hard time, and I was actively crying, and it was really, really [hard] ... I called [a health provider] and asked if I could talk to someone in mental health, and they said 'We can get you in here to see someone in a month.'"
 – Focus Group Interview Participant

"I just wanted somebody to talk to that would listen. And that first one I went to, they wanted to pawn me off to other ones and teach me skills at 64 years old. And I just want to talk and have somebody hear me." – Focus Group Interview Participant

"And so, it starts usually with the adults and then unfortunately usually translates down to the kids too ... there are some great substance use disorder faith-based places we can send people, and we do ... but, then again, you got a single mom and kids, and there's no other support family around ... and so, therefore, it makes it difficult ... mental health and substance [use disorder] probably is the number one thing that I would say that we wish we had more resources for people to get better."
 – Key Informant Interview Participant

SUICIDE BY THE NUMBERS

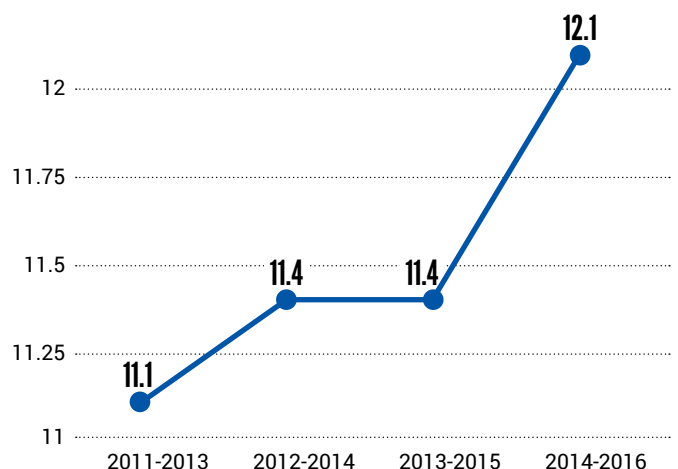


28%
 the rate suicide increased in the U.S. from 1999 to 2016.

2ND
 the rank of suicide as cause of death for individuals ages 10-34.

"[I] really am very concerned about the very long wait times and lack of resources for those with behavioral health issues."
 – Key Informant Interview Participant

Age-Adjusted Death Rate from Suicide in Tarrant County⁴²
 Deaths per 100,000 population



BASIC NEEDS

Feeding America⁴³ defines hunger as the physical sensation of being without food, while food insecurity is the absence of available resources to acquire the necessary amount of food to provide healthy meals to a household. Food insecurity is often compounded by external issues, including social isolation, illness, access and financial insecurity. Low-income Tarrant County families who experience food insecurity may be put in a position where they have to choose between buying food for their families and paying their utility bill. One focus group participant described how she felt when she found herself in this position. She explained:

“Ok, I had paid for the lights to come back on, but now I have to buy food for my kids. So, it’s like, now I have to figure out where am I going to get this food from and how am I going to ration it?”
 – Focus Group Interview Participant

Basic needs such as food, hygiene, electricity and clothing are occasionally overshadowed by larger concerns such as employment and education; however, they are critical parts of wellness. Food insecurity impacts physical health and educational achievement,⁴⁴ subsequently affecting employment, mental health and community relations.

In 2015, over a quarter of the population in Tarrant County was reported to have had low access to a grocery store or supermarket and almost a tenth of the population was considered to be low income, with low access to a grocery store or supermarket.⁴⁵ The food insecurity rate now exceeds 16% of the population, which is higher than both the Texas and nationwide rate.⁴⁶

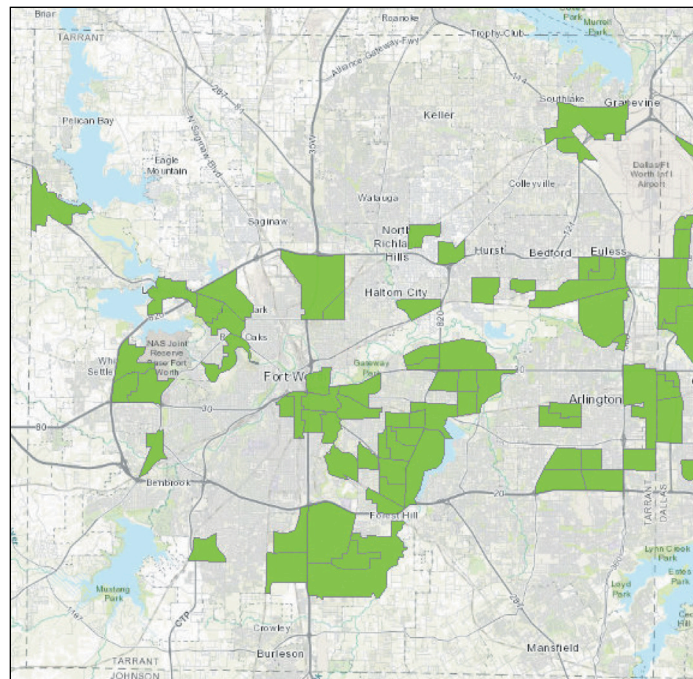
CRITICAL NEEDS

Hygiene, utility assistance and clothing also came up as critical basic needs throughout the interviews and focus groups. Among homeless focus group participants, access to consistent showers and laundry services was touted as critical to improving health and opportunities for employment. These concerns compound larger, more complex issues.

In summary, the four most critical basic needs to be addressed in Tarrant County are food, clothing, hygiene and utility assistance. By addressing these concerns, people will be better equipped to achieve financial independence, gainful employment and academic success.

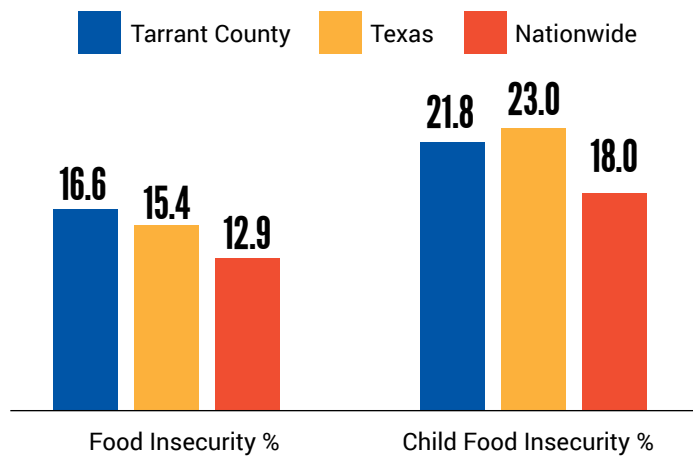
“They have an ‘interview closet’ where you can go and get at least two outfits ... if you’re living a comfortable life, you forget that there are gaps in between getting the skills, getting a job and being able to show up on Monday, dressed, with your lunch ready to go.”
 – Focus Group Interview Participant

Food Access by Census Tract⁴⁵



■ Census tracts with low access to healthy food

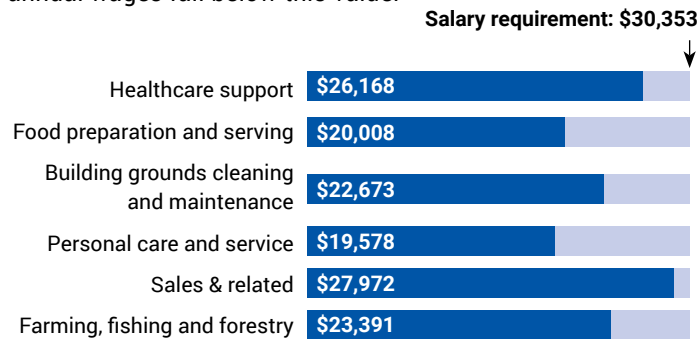
Food Insecurity Prevalence, 2016⁴⁶



“I’ve been homeless a little over a year now, and the housing thing – I don’t even know where to begin on that as far as trying to get some assistance in that regard because a lot of the time they look at me and they think, ‘You’re a guy, you should be able to work.’ That’s true to an extent, but you know there’s a lot of things that I don’t have as far as taking a shower every day and being presentable to be able to go to work.”
 – Focus Group Interview Participant

FINANCIAL STABILITY

For a family of four in Tarrant County (two working adults and two children), both adults would need to earn at least \$14.59 per hour to earn a living wage, requiring a pre-tax annual salary of \$30,353 per adult.⁴⁷ While this is feasible on some professional salaries, there are six employment sectors in Tarrant County where the typical annual wages fall below this value:⁴⁸



Based on U.S. American Community Survey data from 2016, these lower-wage employment sectors make up approximately 25% of our local workforce.⁴⁹

For Tarrant County residents who are employed in low-wage professions or are living on a fixed income, being able to live within their means is a day-to-day challenge. A common theme from our focus group and key informant interviews was that the cost of housing, childcare and transportation left them with limited options to break away from living paycheck to paycheck. A more desirable job might be located outside of bus routes or too far for unreliable vehicles and expensive gas. Rent for a safer home may cost more than 50% of their monthly earnings.

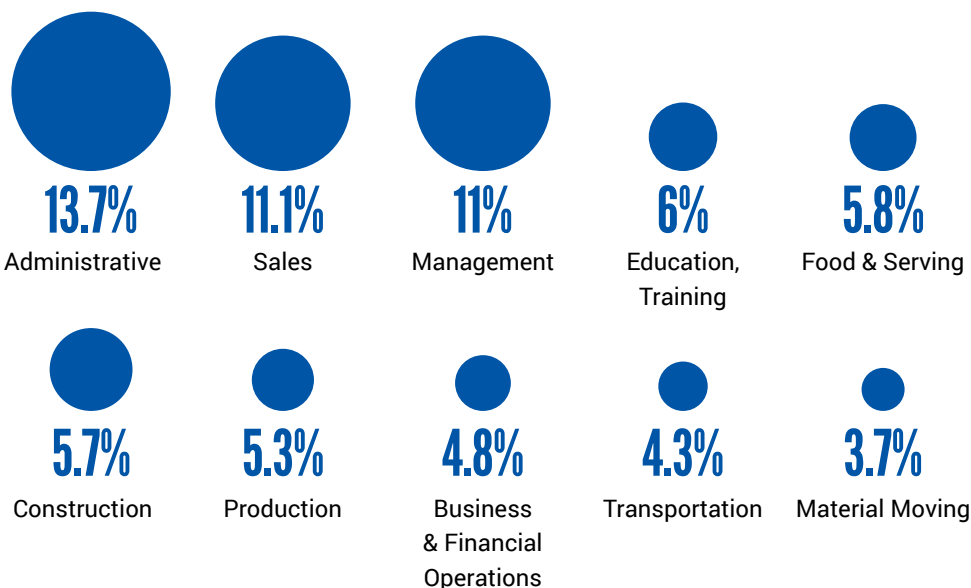


"The ones that we see more are elderly and then families, just needing rental assistance or electricity or water, car payments ... just not being able to get whatever it is. They almost always have a job." – Key Informant Interview Participant

"A few months ago I got in a car accident. I got rear-ended and shoved into another vehicle, and it compressed my knee. So I'm out of work for a whole month, and my job takes a while to kick in before any of the pay because of the accident, and I didn't get paid until I got back to work. So all of the bills are piling up and I'm talking to people and they're like 'Hey, contact these services, they have grants, they'll help you' because rent is coming and insurance bills. Bills, just the bills to live. And no one ever reached back out. And I made multiple calls and reached out multiple times, heard nothing ... I have April's bills on top of March's bills. Our lives don't get to stop. We have to keep going." – Focus Group Interview Participant

"The utility assistance is quite a wait. I know if you do it once, you have to wait a long time afterwards, but even initially there's [a wait] for a first-timer." – Focus Group Interview Participant

Top 10 Employment Sectors by Occupation in Tarrant County⁵⁰



DID YOU KNOW?

The Communities Foundation of Texas has supported the Working Families Success Model, developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Implemented by nine organizations in North Texas, this model includes an integration of employment services, income support and financial coaching.

Five municipalities in Tarrant County have passed ordinances to protect consumers through the regulation of payday lending:⁵¹

- Arlington
- Grand Prairie
- Bedford
- Hurst
- Euless

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development is defined as a process that serves dual functions: enabling individuals to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes for gainful employment or improved work performance; and providing employers with an effective

means to communicate and meet their demand for skills.⁵² The development of potential employees is critical with the ever-changing landscape of the job market. Having skilled workers who can meet these demands can help relieve long-term unemployment rates in Tarrant County. Locally, there are numerous agencies that serve residents and employers in Tarrant County

to ensure a stronger workforce for local industries, including, but not limited to, Tarrant County College, Alliance Opportunity Center, the Women’s Center, The Ladder Alliance and Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County. Tarrant County is expected to have a 53% employment growth within the next 20 years,⁵⁴ making it critical to continue strategic development efforts that prepare the local workforce to meet predicted industry demands in fields such as healthcare and technology.

“Five major strategic areas stood out as playing a critical role in the future development of the North Central Texas region: education and workforce development; strengthening economic competitiveness, including business attraction and retention, in the global economy; fostering a climate and culture that promote entrepreneurship; maintaining and improving a robust transportation and public infrastructure; and maintaining and improving the quality of life that makes North Central Texas such a great place to live, work and raise a family.”

– North Central Texas Council of Governments⁵⁴

DID YOU KNOW?
The North Central Texas region is home to 22 Fortune 500 companies.⁵³

EMPLOYMENT

Over the last five years, unemployment rates have continued to drop in the United States, Texas and Tarrant County. Unemployment rates as of July 2018 were: United States (3.9%), Texas (4%) and Tarrant County (3.7%). Currently, in Tarrant County there is a total of 995,557 employees.⁵⁵ Top employment industries in Tarrant County include retail and wholesale trade, healthcare and social services, financial activities, leisure and hospitality, construction, manufacturing, information technology, professional and business services, transportation and warehousing and education (public and private). Latest census information provides a perspective on employment firms located in Tarrant County and highlights the diversity of business ownership.⁵⁷

Assets: Tarrant County Workforce Solutions is an example of an agency that has worked with employers and people to connect employment opportunities. This agency has served over 68,970 employers and has placed 3,701 ex-offenders in jobs. Companies have also provided funding to local school districts to develop future engineers and other STEM opportunities.⁵⁶

Despite the hopeful outlook for Tarrant County employment opportunities, interview participants expressed concerns with barriers that get in the way of their self-sufficiency.

“To keep your job you need childcare!”
– Focus Group Interview Participant

“And then the jobs that do pay, they’re just not accessible. Probably lots of new jobs being created out in Alliance, but a lot of people can’t get to Alliance.”
– Key Informant Interview Participant

Tarrant County Business Ownership Information⁵⁷

| | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Men-owned firms | 89,352 |
| Women-owned firms | 66,250 |
| Minority-owned firms | 71,133 |
| Non-minority-owned firms | 96,361 |
| Veteran-owned firms | 16,470 |
| Non-veteran-owned firms | 149,220 |



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Focus group and key informant interview participants frequently mentioned ways that the built environment influences quality of life in Tarrant County. Community environments contribute to and influence overall health and well-being, including unoccupied buildings, access to safe recreational spaces, proximity to grocery stores and other community spaces. The infrastructure of a county is the backbone that influences transportation needs, economic development and future investments. Leadership decisions can lead to the growth and advancement of infrastructure that helps make services available to the people within a county. To promote sustainable development, the Regional Transportation Council⁵⁸ started the Sustainable Development Program in 2001 and since then has awarded \$163 million toward the support of sustainable development throughout this region.

Assets: Over the past several years, there have been successful projects that incorporated good use of land and created friendly suburban and urban environments for the community. The Alliance District has seen strategic growth in real estate development, transportation, housing and other amenities. The Alliance District has also been cited as “a national model of successful business development.”⁵⁹ In downtown Fort Worth, Sundance Square is seen as a city center that provides residents with entertainment, dining, shopping and residential communities.³ Magnolia Avenue, in Fort Worth’s Near Southside, was recognized by the American Planning Association as one of the 15 “Great Places” in America for 2018.⁶⁰ In Arlington, the Parks and Recreation Department won the 2018 National Gold Medal Award for Parks and Recreation Management from the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration and the National Recreation and Park Association.⁶¹

Threats: Challenges facing the community include relocating businesses and an increase in population not matched with an increase in wages.⁵⁹ As the region continues to grow, there is a need to develop the transportation system of roads and public transportation so that all residents have access to basic needs and services. Eleven ZIP codes within Tarrant County were defined as food deserts in 2013. Of these, four ZIP codes did not have any grocery stores.⁶² This problem persists today.

“We are not inner-city, by any stretch of the imagination, but with the transition of the community and demographics, we experience challenges with food deserts and sourcing, and having some of the availability for the other things, to be honest with you, and then you’re back to transportation issues.”
– Key Informant Interview Participant

Interview participants also discussed the lack of equity in economic and community development and the need for deliberate community planning in areas that experience higher poverty to either keep communities where they are or to make better use of preexisting buildings that will also improve the community:

“You see the pockets that are going to be your communities of color, and in those pockets there just aren’t many resources. If you go to the southeast side and try and find a Target, it’s like, forget about it.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“Yeah like in Arlington, there was a supermarket that went out of business and turned into a high school. So you can turn those facilities, old and abandoned, turn those facilities into usable space for clients to live.” – Focus Group Interview Participant



SAFE COMMUNITIES

Among the five most populous counties in Texas, Tarrant County enjoys the lowest overall crime rate and property crimes steadily declined between 2013 and 2016.⁶³

The majority of cases handled by the district attorney involve substance possession: There were 4,369 felony drug possession cases filed and possession of marijuana was the most common misdemeanor offense. Additionally, the district attorney reported 4,661 misdemeanor Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) and 553 felony DWI filings.⁶⁴

Addressing issues such as substance use disorder requires specialized approaches that acknowledge the influence of poverty, mental health and other factors that impact human behavior. Key assets in Tarrant County are the networks of criminal justice and social service providers who are collaborating to promote successful re-entry into the community for those who have been arrested or incarcerated.

Asset: The Arlington-Mansfield area YMCA⁶⁵ completed a survey of 1,299 residents in 2018 and reported that the most important areas of need related to youth were having “safe and secure community spaces” and opportunities to “build good character.”

VIOLENCE, ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION

Despite Tarrant County’s relatively lower crime rate, some violent crimes increased from 2015 to 2016, including murder and rape. In 2016, there were 12,882 reports of family violence made to police departments in Tarrant County, and in 2017, the District Attorney’s office handled 10,723 cases involving victims of crime.⁶⁶

Child Abuse

In 2017, Child Protective Services confirmed 6,132 allegations of child abuse and neglect in Tarrant County. Of these, 10% involved physical abuse, 7% involved sexual abuse and the remainder included other forms of neglect, emotional abuse and inadequate supervision.⁶⁷

Asset: In 2017, 418 CASA volunteers donated 42,000 hours of their time (an equivalent of \$1,013,880) and drove 260,000 miles to be a voice on behalf of abused children.⁶⁸

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2017, Tarrant County’s District Attorney office created the Elder Financial Fraud Unit. Since its creation, 79 cases have been filed with the unit, many of which include multiple victims.

The unit’s members meet with seniors through community organizations and our law enforcement partners to educate them on how to protect themselves against this form of abuse.⁶⁴



“Who doesn’t want to see people re-establishing themselves on a positive path? ... even if we are the justice system that has a punitive element, the evidence is clear: You can use that same authority and power for redirection and not just punishment.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant

“Re-entry ... I think that we are doing a much better job in Tarrant County ... [in] the last eight years than we had been doing prior to that. In terms of being serious about helping people re-integrate into the community so there’s not this revolving door of jail and prison.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant



328 POLICE OFFICERS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS

Tarrant County has the lowest number of police officers (per capita) when compared to Dallas, Harris, and Bexar counties. Further, compared to the previous three counties, Tarrant County has the lowest crime and incarceration rate.

“Tarrant County government has a workforce of approximately 4,000 employees, and approximately one-half are employed in criminal-justice related jobs. Tarrant County’s resident population is 1,849,815, with 5,854 police officers, which equates to 328 officers per 100,000 residents.”⁶⁹

Human Trafficking

The Tarrant County 5-Stones Taskforce⁷⁰ was created to develop a network of government, community agencies and concerned individuals to end domestic sex trafficking of minors in Tarrant County. The taskforce supports the Fort Worth Police Department, partnering agencies and works to develop innovative and effective response strategies.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

A paradox observed in focus groups and key informant interviews is the contrast between characterizing the community as friendly and compassionate, yet one that struggles with inequities, segregation and discrimination. A City of Fort Worth Task Force on Race and Culture systematically reviewed issues of inequity in seven community domains. The vision articulated by the group is that: **“Fort Worth will become a city that is inclusive, equitable, respectful, communal and compassionate.” – Task Force on Race and Culture,⁷¹ Onefortworth.org**

A report released to the public in the fall of 2018 highlights key indicators of inequity in the community and makes specific recommendations for improvement. The report shows key race and ethnic disparities in residents’ sense of safety, economic security and health.⁷¹ Our focus group and key informant interview results align with the findings of the task force; in Tarrant County, not all groups feel safe, included or treated fairly. The following interview quotes portray the county’s relational paradox.

| FRIENDLY AND COMPASSIONATE | INEQUITY AND EXCLUSION |
|---|--|
| <p><i>“It is a very friendly place to live, very welcoming. It is a community that, you don’t have to be from here, but if you come here and demonstrate a commitment to this community, people embrace you.” – Key Informant Interview Participant</i></p> | <p><i>“We have to get away from the silos that we have and work on racial equity from the standpoint of there’s a focus on the ‘all’ when it comes to Fort Worth and Tarrant County. And not just the beautified spots or people who are already in the economic system and being a part of it.” – Key Informant Interview Participant</i></p> |
| <p><i>“I love the atmosphere. The people in Tarrant County care. Especially in this little neck of the woods where we are – this is a very caring, loving community. They try to provide for the means of those who are less fortunate than they are.” – Key Informant Interview Participant</i></p> | <p><i>“I don’t mean to be negative, but I think they want to keep us exactly where we’re at. They don’t want to see us rise up. They don’t want to see our young people – the youth of the nation – they don’t want us to rise. They want to keep us exactly where we’re at.” – Focus Group Interview Participant</i></p> |
| <p><i>“The people are warm and friendly. The government has a lot of services that are accessible to people. And also we have a lot of nonprofits that provide a lot of good services and volunteer services and opportunities to volunteer.” – Key Informant Interview Participant</i></p> | <p><i>“It’s harder to do because I think people see their communities as distinct and having different problems, so I think that they are all kind of egocentric in terms of ‘no, we want services that address OUR problems in OUR community,’ which they see as different than Fort Worth’s or different than those in Northeast Tarrant County. I think that’s true of Fort Worth as well. I think we see our problems as different than theirs.” – Focus Group Interview Participant</i></p> |
| <p><i>“I think the sense of mutual support is a valuable commodity. That someone is there to catch you if you fall, no matter what aspect of your life that is. Whether it’s medical or it’s on a personal level, relationship-wise or even religion, I think it’s that mutual support that’s really a warm fuzzy feeling.” – Key Informant Interview Participant</i></p> | <p><i>“So people who are perceived as having a disability of one form or another or who have experienced intergenerational trauma or are mentally ill or who have a substance use history. All of those things make it very hard to live here, and there’s a lot of stigma attached to all of those things.” – Key Informant Interview Participant</i></p> |
| <p><i>“It is a town with heart also. If someone is in trouble they gather round.” – Focus Group Interview Participant</i></p> | <p><i>“Why is your heart in such a place that you think you can’t live with other people who are not in the same socioeconomic bracket as you?” – Key Informant Interview Participant</i></p> |

“The gift and the curse of Tarrant County is Southern hospitality. It’s a beautiful thing because we really do have a good face, and we present it well to the outside. But, the curse of that is that things are always swept under the rug, and we never want to bite the hard truths.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS THROUGH COLLABORATION, COORDINATION AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

A key theme throughout the focus group and key informant interviews was a call for better communication, collaboration and coordination across and among social service, health, education, transportation, workforce, criminal justice and governmental systems.



RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY INTERVIEWEES FELL INTO SEVERAL AREAS:

1. Seeking partnerships and opportunities outside of usual networks; for example between education systems, businesses and faith organizations, using a perspective of what may benefit more than each organization's or network's stakeholders.
2. Including community residents, consumers and other stakeholders in planning and decision-making.
3. Improving communication of what is being done across systems to promote utilization of services and programs, as well as coordination of similar efforts.

| NOT THE USUAL PARTNERS | STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION | BETTER COMMUNICATION |
|---|---|--|
| <p><i>"Our superintendent was the one that challenged us to begin to collaborate more together, versus every church in town is doing something to address 'back to school' or this or some initiative, irrespective of talking to the social service agency and figuring out what they've already done."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> | <p><i>"Having people who live in the neighborhood ... telling you 'these are the issues that we think are not being addressed' ... and approaching it with the mentality that they may know what they're talking about ... because every community is always going to be different. And, the more that you can allow them to have a feeling that they have their hands on the operation, the more buy-in you'll get from them, and the more success you'll have without having to fly in hundreds of social workers and station them on every corner."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> | <p><i>"We're going to be inundated with 'back to school' programs ... which is all good stuff ... but the problem is that of all those things that are going to happen, I guarantee if you go up to [neighborhood schools] ... some baby's going to walk in there without a backpack or not going to have school clothes, not going to have proper school supplies because there wasn't enough of a coordinated effort, wasn't enough communication to where people really understood where to go to access the things that they need."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> |
| <p><i>"It has to be a mindset of not necessarily what benefits me, but what benefits the whole."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> | <p><i>"I don't think [community residents are] consulted very much when it comes to some of those decision-making matters."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> | <p><i>"It needs to happen on the neighborhood level, needs to happen in the trenches with the people going door to door, but it needs to trickle all the way up the city or the county."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> |
| <p><i>"It's not that any one of them has the solution, but they all have a piece to the puzzle. Sometimes they don't even put their pieces out to make the puzzle, and I think that's the greatest dilemma."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> | <p><i>"Where can people find out about services? [Information can be provided] when I go to the daycare to get my kids or from the school when my kids bring things home."</i></p> <p>– Focus Group Interview Participant</p> | <p><i>"The amount of services and goods and programming that these places provide is [substantial] ... and yet, they are nowhere meeting the capacity of which they could of the people in need that they know about. And I don't think it's because they don't want to communicate. In fact, they would love to. It's that they don't have the know-how."</i></p> <p>– Key Informant Interview Participant</p> |

TARRANT COUNTY STRENGTHS

We asked interview participants what they appreciated about Tarrant County as well as what they wish would change. About 15% of all passages were flagged as identifying community strengths and assets.

The majority of strengths (64%) fell into six categories:

GENERAL SOCIAL SERVICES

nonprofits, faith organizations, community centers, etc.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

compassion, friendliness, neighborhoods

EDUCATION

early childhood initiatives, school district partnerships with community organizations, career readiness

RECREATION

cultural activities, arts, entertainment, bike trails, restaurants/shops

HEALTH

healthcare systems, children's services, health programs for underserved

BASIC NEEDS

food pantries



Participants repeatedly characterized Tarrant County as a region that feels like a small community but offers “big” urban experiences. Not surprisingly, most of these strengths are also areas where significant needs and concerns exist. In some instances, programs and services were highly valued but deemed insufficient to meet the volume of community demands (e.g., workforce development programs, court diversion programs, food/clothing assistance).

“There’s a whole host of nonprofit organizations that are providing care.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“I came here from out of state, and there are a lot of resources here that weren’t in my home state.” – Focus Group Interview Participant

“I think sometimes Tarrant County has a lot of things to brag on – and I don’t mean that in a negative way – but they really do. We’ve got a lot of services.” – Focus Group Interview Participant

“I think that hospital system [is a strength]. You can get some pretty tough diseases, and you don’t have to go across the county, like Cook Children’s ... is available to young people here. Not every community has a Cook Children’s available.”

– Focus Group Interview Participant

“Fort Worth has a small-town heart with big-city offerings.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant

“There’s a lot to do in Tarrant County. There’s arts, there’s nature, hikes, lakes – you name it – bike trails throughout Tarrant County.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“I would say we have ... probably the best public hospital in the country.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“Our hospitals are fabulous. It has been fun to watch all of them grow over the years.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant

“Actually, I think the early childhood intervention programs collaborate well with everyone. I’m very impressed by them. I think there are agencies that will share a bit, and it gives us a glimpse of how good it could be if everyone could do that together.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“I think it’s a place that people give back to, both with their volunteer time and their dollars. I think people in Tarrant County care about Tarrant County and contribute to Tarrant County in many, many ways.” – Focus Group Interview Participant

“It is a good place to turn your life around for the positive. And when you turn your life around, there are good services.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant

“You’d be surprised at how much care and love there is in this city. It doesn’t always present itself right there in front of you, but it’s there. There are people making sacrifices for us.”

– Focus Group Interview Participant

WHERE TO GO NEXT?

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNITED WAY OF TARRANT COUNTY

Interviewees were asked to provide their perspectives on how United Way of Tarrant County should allocate resources and engage the interest of donors. Nearly 6% of all coded passages in the interview transcripts were associated with ideas and recommendations for United Way of Tarrant County. Overall, 75% of recommendations fell into the following categories:

- Continued or expansion funding for existing social services
- Engagement of volunteers and coordination of donated resources
- Support and leverage for community planning and systems integration
- Initiatives focusing on education, transportation, housing, and workforce development



Continued or expansion funding for social services:

“Let’s really get back to the roots of the United Way, which is really around human services and social services.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant

“We need more capacity building for those agencies that are already doing the services.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“Sometimes we spend a whole lot of money starting something, but then we don’t spend the same amount of money to allow it to continue.” – Focus Group Interview Participant

“It’s not that there aren’t programs. It’s a matter of getting from this neighborhood ... to the programs. That becomes the issue.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“I think we’ve got a lot of solutions that work. We’ve just got to figure out how to bring those solutions to scale, and there’s always a price tag associated with that.” – Key Informant Interview Participant



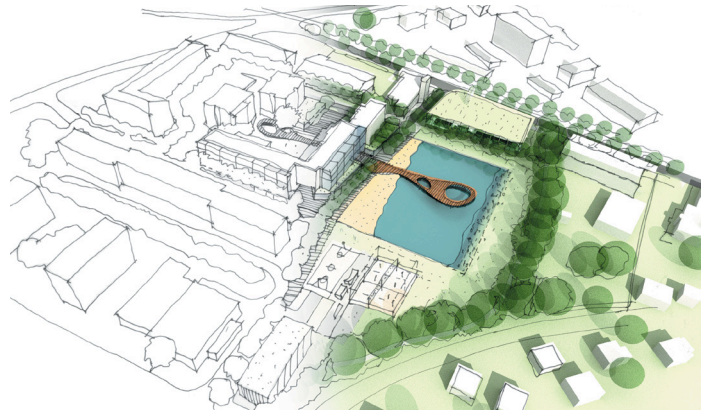
Engagement of volunteers and coordination of donated resources

“I also think that, when you start to hear the stories on the news ... it just kind of, pulls on the heartstrings and you just feel like, what can I do?” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“There are lots of really great causes out there. I think what really draws me is the mission.”

– Key Informant Interview Participant

“You [should] have a section [at the community center] where people can come and donate.” – Focus Group Interview Participant



Support and leverage for community planning and partnerships

“If we don’t have the partnership of the nonprofits, or even the arts council or the faith-based community ... we’re never going to make it because we’re not talking to each other, and we’re not on the same page.” – Key Informant Interview Participant

“You cannot pick just one or two things to focus on because it is all so intertwined and comprehensive in nature that you have to kind of touch on all of that.” – Focus Group Interview Participant



Initiatives focusing on education, transportation, housing and workforce development

"I think it's the earlier ages. You've got to get them off to a good start, even before kindergarten, but then you've got to get them through." – Key Informant Interview Participant

"Helping people prepare for and get good jobs, because people can't change their lives if they don't have income. They just can't." – Focus Group Interview Participant

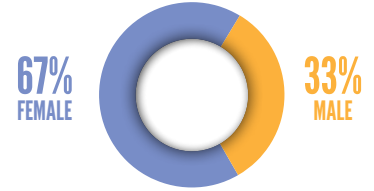
"I would also work on public transportation to the places that are not central to Fort Worth." – Focus Group Interview Participant

SURVEY OF DONORS

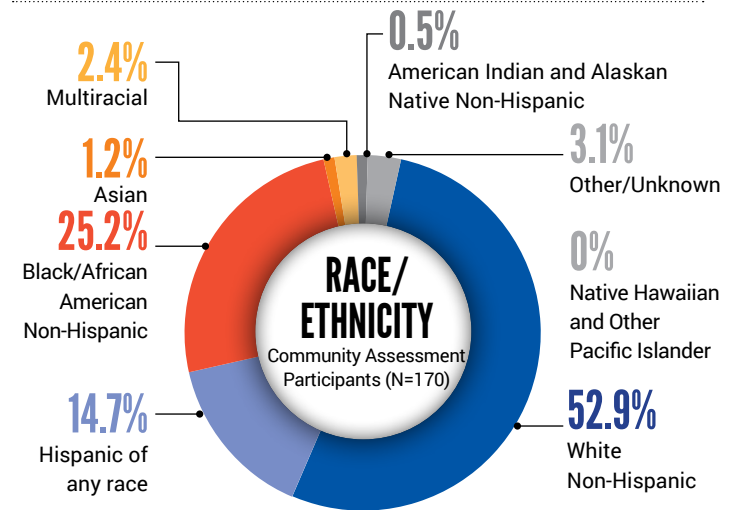
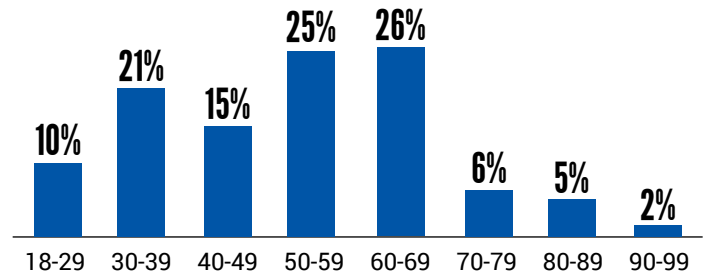
United Way of Tarrant County conducted a survey of its donors to gain perspective on what areas of concern in our community were the most important to them. Housing and Homelessness, as well as Early Childhood and Youth Education, were rated as the top two most important issues to donors. Donors also felt that United Way of Tarrant County could have a significant impact on issues like Early Childhood Education, Housing and Homelessness and continuing their support of Basic Needs and Emergency Assistance.

WHO DID WE INTERVIEW?

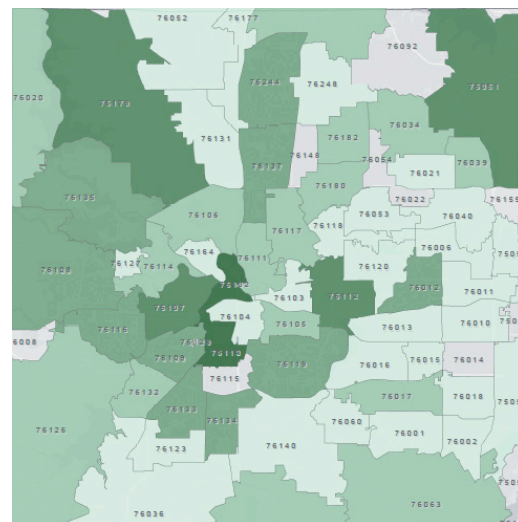
Approximately two-thirds of our study participants were female.



OUR PARTICIPANTS RANGED FROM 18 TO 96 YEARS OF AGE.



MOST WERE EMPLOYED EITHER FULLTIME (34.1%) OR PARTTIME (16.5%). 22.9% OF PARTICIPANTS WERE RETIRED. 16.4% WERE CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED BUT SEEKING A JOB, WHILE 8.2% WERE UNEMPLOYED AND NOT SEEKING A JOB.



The research team traveled throughout Tarrant County to speak with a diversity of residents and stakeholders, reaching 91% of ZIP codes in the county.



UNITED WAY OF TARRANT COUNTY

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT 2018–2019

This project would not have been possible without the financial support of the Sid Richardson Foundation and the contributions of these Tarrant County organizations:

- 6 Stones Mission Network
- AIDS Outreach Center
- Alzheimer's Association
- Arlington Chamber of Commerce
- Arlington Housing Authority
- Build A Better Hood Foundation
- Catholic Charities Diocese of Fort Worth
- Center for Transforming Lives
- Community Enrichment Center
- Community Frontline
- Community Link
- Fort Worth Independent School District
- Gatehouse
- GRACE Clinic
- Harvest International Ministry
- Hispanic Wellness Coalition
- Keller Methodist Church
- Lena Pope
- Lisa's Little Angels
- Mission Central
- Open Arms
- Pathfinders
- Sixty & Better (Haltom City & White Settlement Senior Centers)
- Tarrant County College
- Tarrant County Criminal Courts
- The Women's Center of Tarrant County
- True Worth Place
- Valiant Hearts
- YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth

**A list of cited sources in this document can be obtained at
unitedwaytarrant.org/communityassessment**

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