

REGIONAL

REPORT

337,900+

live in or near
poverty

THE
**Buffalo
Niagara**
REGION

Since 2011, the
population in
poverty grew by
5%, while the total
population grew
by 0.1%.

JULY 2020



**Numbers
in Need**

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA

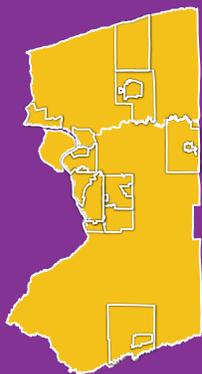


A Mobile Safety Net Team
initiative established by
The John R. Oishei Foundation



The Buffalo Niagara Region

- 2 About this Report
- 2 Defining Need
- 3 What Went Into the Numbers in Need Reports
- 4 Key Findings and Regional Insights
- 6 How Are We Doing As a Region?
 - 6 Interrelated Challenges
 - 8 Poverty
 - 10 Work and Income
 - 12 Education and Training
 - 14 Transportation
 - 16 Housing
 - 18 Disability and Healthcare
 - 20 Quality of Life
- 22 Regional Strategies, Models to Consider, and Promising Developments
- 26 Looking to the Future: Ramifications of COVID-19
- 28 Conclusion
- 30 Data Sources & Notes



Numbers In Need is an initiative designed to strengthen the safety net of human services in Buffalo Niagara communities that are most in need.

Visit NumbersInNeed.org

About this Report

This report presents key findings from research in 12 communities across the Buffalo Niagara region with insights from residents who live in or near poverty and the service providers who work with these residents. This report also presents strategies, models, and considerations for the future, including the potential ramifications of COVID-19.

Nearly all research in the 12 communities was completed prior to March 11, 2020 when COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. **Findings offer a pre-COVID-19 baseline and shed light on challenges facing residents and service providers that the pandemic will likely intensify without new resources, interventions, and innovative solutions.**

Research was led by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute in partnership with the Mobile Safety-Net Team. Numbers in Need was commissioned by The John R. Oishei Foundation, updating and expanding on 12 community reports completed by the research team over six years ago.



Community Data compiled from various public sources.



150+ Residents participated in small group conversations or one-on-one interviews.

2,650+ Residents responded to a survey.



140+ Providers shared insights through an agency focus group or interview.

A Mobile Safety-Net Team initiative established by The John R. Oishei Foundation



Prepared by



University at Buffalo

Regional Institute

School of Architecture and Planning

Defining Need

Nearly 338,000 residents in the Buffalo Niagara region live in or near poverty with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line.

The federal poverty line (FPL) is \$12,760 for a household of one, \$17,240 for a two-person household, \$21,720 for a family of three, and \$26,200 for a family of four. A single parent of two who works full-time, year-round at the minimum wage in NYS (\$11.80 per hour or \$24,544 a year) earns an income just above the FPL in 2020.

The FPL is adjusted annually by the federal government and varies by household size. It is often used to determine eligibility for programs that assist individuals and families with basic living expenses such as food, utilities, and rental housing. Households with incomes that exceed 200% of the FPL (up to \$52,400 for a family of four) generally do not meet income guidelines for most programs.

Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2020

■ Federal Poverty Level ■ 200% of Federal Poverty Level

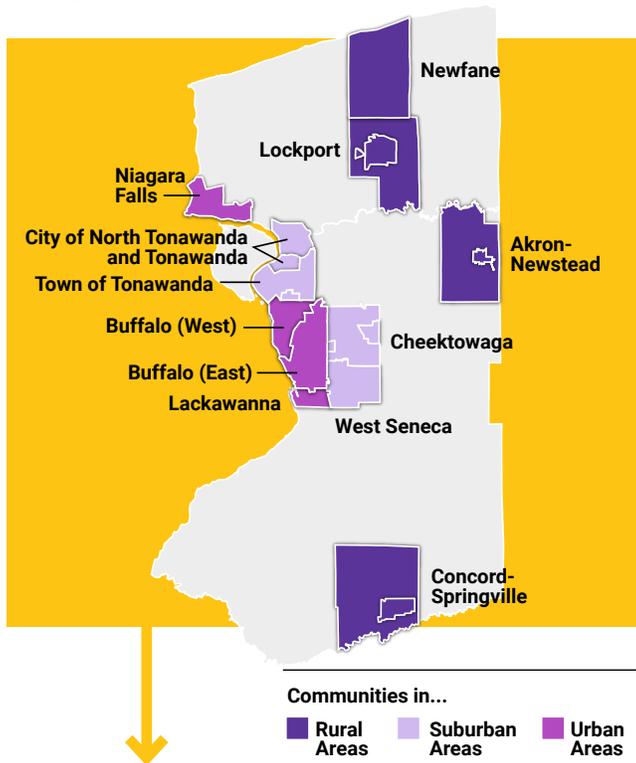


Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

What Went Into the Numbers in Need Reports

THE REGION AND THE 12 COMMUNITIES

These 12 communities, in rural, suburban, and urban areas, represent over half of the region's population living in or near poverty.



A suite of reports for each of these 12 communities is available at NumbersInNeed.org



How to Understand the Data

Data in this report represents different geographies and different sources. Here's how to understand what the data represents:



Data at the Buffalo Niagara Regional Scale (Erie and Niagara Counties)



Data for the 12 Communities Studied for Numbers in Need



Data From Resident Focus Groups

Different communities have different needs

The 12 communities across the Buffalo Niagara region selected for this study are the same communities the research team reported on in 2013-14. Back then, the study assessed challenges coming out of the Great Recession related to people and places in poverty; and a safety net of services that is often threatened in times of economic crisis due to rising demand, fiscal pressures, funding cuts, and infrastructure needs.

This study's 12 communities are located in urban, suburban, and rural areas across Erie and Niagara counties. Together, they capture over half of all individuals across the region who live in or near poverty. The 12 communities are representative of the challenges and opportunities facing other economically distressed areas in the region. In other words, there are insights in this report that can benefit all communities in the Buffalo Niagara region.

This report sheds light on how cross-cutting challenges such as transportation and housing are uniquely experienced in rural, suburban and urban communities. It also identifies how residents in different community types experience poverty in distinct ways based on their location and distance from jobs and service providers.

Engaging Residents and Providers

Over 3,000 residents and service providers contributed to the findings in this report through resident surveys, agency questionnaires, and focus groups and interviews with residents and providers. Most resident surveys and focus groups were conducted at service provider sites across the 12 communities to get input from individuals living in or near poverty. Many shared their stories, experiences, challenges, and barriers to services. The insights offered ideas for strengthening communities and leveraging strengths and assets to lift residents out of poverty. This comprehensive approach helped the research team understand data, trends, and opportunities for expanding pathways out of poverty. Through community roll-outs, findings from the research were taken back into the communities with the goal of spurring thought, conversation, and community-tailored, community-driven solutions.

What did we learn?

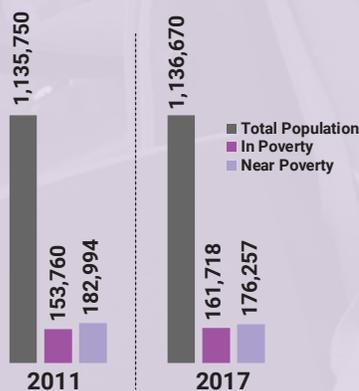
Seven key findings emerge from the research completed in 12 rural, suburban, and urban communities across the region during 2019-20. Findings synthesize regional and community-based data, as well as input from providers and residents. Insights consider research-driven strategies and shed light on a historic moment in time created by the COVID-19 pandemic to double down on what is working, narrow gaps, and work toward strengthening the safety net of human services.

A strong economy expanded economic opportunity but did not eliminate poverty.

Employers across the Buffalo Niagara region added nearly 20,000 jobs and more than 1,400 firms since 2011. Even still, over 337,000 individuals lived in or near poverty prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This number represents a 5% increase in the number of individuals living in poverty since 2011, even as the region's overall population remained relatively stable, increasing 0.1% since 2011.

With barriers to education, training, and employment, single parents, young adults, refugees and immigrants, and children experience poverty at the highest rates. Most residents surveyed for this study were working or actively seeking work, not including the retired. Yet many lived on a household income under \$24,000 a year—near the annual earnings of a full-time minimum wage worker and just above the poverty level for a household of three.

Population and Poverty in the Buffalo Niagara Region, 2011 and 2017



Source: US Census, American Community Surveys, 5-Year Estimates, 2007-11 and 2013-17.

Integrated solutions are needed to address interrelated factors that lead to poverty.

Many interrelated factors contribute to economic vulnerability, including education and training, work and income, housing, transportation, disability and healthcare, quality of life, and the unique circumstances facing populations such as single parents, seniors, young adults, and refugees and immigrants, which make them more vulnerable to poverty.

Residents with lower incomes often have multiple challenges. One problem easily leads to another. For instance, disability affects one's ability to find a job and work, which lowers income, makes it harder to maintain a home, afford transportation, and receive training. Strategies that address residents' myriad needs at once are more likely to be effective. Examples include affordable housing with wraparound services providing on-site skills training and childcare, community resource hubs, and resource guides that raise awareness of all existing resources.

Many providers contribute to a safety net that helps to lift people out of poverty.

Over 1,050 service providers contribute to quality of life in this study's 12 communities and offer a lifeline to residents for food, homeless services, education and job training, youth programs, health care, and more. Most service providers are located in neighborhoods with a high need for services. This proximity to those in need opens opportunities for individuals looking for services, but can also create challenges for providers to keep up with local demand for services.

Residents and providers agreed on many of the same strengths and needs of the service landscape, but there were some contrasting findings. Providers identified information and referral as a top strength as well as a need. This suggests the existence of resources that form a strong foundation, but that more could be done to increase awareness of existing resources, strengthen partnerships for information and referral, and leverage technology.



New insights shed light on interventions for strengthening the safety net of services.

Across the 12 communities, over half of residents surveyed identified household financial challenges, with consumer debt being the leading concern. Mental health disabilities affect over a quarter of households in some communities. In other communities, close to a third of residents need dental health care but cannot afford it. These are a few examples of some of the household challenges that have come to the forefront since 2013-14.

While new challenges are made clear in this regional report, there are also models from the region and elsewhere that show how providers can create stronger, healthier communities that are more resilient to economic disruptions through financial literacy, affordable vehicle repairs, expanded mental health screening, partnerships with employers, and more.

Aligning economic and workforce development could lift more people out of poverty.

Over 300,000 adults across the Buffalo Niagara region have no education beyond high school. Many could potentially increase their earnings through training that is aligned with what employers seek. Some individuals attended college but left school with debt and no degree. Without some formal training or education beyond high school, many will remain economically vulnerable, qualifying for only lower-wage work.

Provider focus groups suggested that greater emphasis on vocational training leading to jobs in the skilled trades and manufacturing offers a way for more adults to secure higher-paying work that does not require a college degree and addresses existing employer demand. Providers emphasized the need for training with wrap-around services that help individuals overcome barriers to training and employment such as childcare, transportation, literacy, and remedial courses.

Transportation is a pressing barrier for residents with lower incomes.

How residents travel and where they go for work, school, and services impacts their ability to meet household needs and move out of poverty. In most rural and suburban communities, many residents see owning a vehicle as a basic need. Yet for lower-income residents, vehicle ownership can lead to frequent, costly repairs and debt.

For those without a car, simple trips can consume hours or require time off work, and are sometimes too costly or simply impossible. Even for residents in urban areas who live near public transit, routes may not reach jobs and services outside the community. While some communities offer a safety net of resources to help residents access programs and services, most communities are limited in their ability to provide the flexible, affordable transportation options that adults need.

The ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic raise new questions for further exploration.

In some communities, the number of individuals living in or near poverty declined over the last six years. Due to COVID-19, to what extent will these households fall back into poverty, and new individuals be pushed into poverty through long-term unemployment? How many households will take on additional consumer debt to meet basic needs during and after this crisis? Will creditors have access to residents' federal stimulus money? Will work-at-home orders and home-schooling amplify the impacts of unsafe, unhealthy housing? Can safety nets strengthen to meet rising demand?

Ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis are unknown. These questions are presented to guide further exploration and development of policy, strategies, and models. With greater need, there are more opportunities to strengthen partnerships, raise awareness of services, and improve basic services such as food, childcare, and education through technology and new, innovative delivery methods.

How are we doing as a region?

Interrelated challenges contribute to poverty.

Many individuals and families living in or near poverty face multiple challenges that make it difficult to achieve a more stable financial situation, such as eroding economic conditions and limited access to higher-paying jobs, the need for more education and training, inadequate and expensive housing, unreliable or unaffordable transportation options, poor health and disability, and communities with limited resources.

The topics examined in this report identify pressing interrelated challenges faced by hundreds of thousands of residents in the Buffalo Niagara region. They also reflect important opportunities for investment, expanded programs and services, and stronger policies that will help residents get on a pathway out of poverty toward economic health and well-being.

Nearly a third of residents across the Buffalo Niagara region live in or near poverty.

POVERTY

Living in or near poverty influences where people shop for food and other necessities, what people purchase, how people travel, and where people live. Living on a low income can be expensive. Some pay more for groceries at the corner store. Others face high rents simply to be near public transit. Others pay exorbitant rates on debt incurred to meet basic needs.

Many adults would benefit from additional job training or education.

WORK AND INCOME

Limited education, or training that is not well aligned with what employers seek, contributes to low-wage employment and joblessness. These factors combined with student loan debt, make it difficult to purchase a home or car, or move to a community with higher quality of life.

Many adults with low-wage jobs face barriers to economic stability.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Limited access to higher-wage jobs can leave even full-time, year-round workers in or near poverty. They are unable to afford the purchase of a home, car, healthcare, or childcare, which would enable a second parent to work. Because of low-wage work, some take on debt to provide for basic household needs.

Transportation is a major obstacle to jobs, programs, and services.

TRANSPORTATION

Adults who lack affordable, reliable transportation are limited in where they can work and go to school, and often face barriers to healthcare, affordable, high-quality housing, and programs and services in the community.

Increasing rents, absentee landlords, and limited supports all challenge lower-income households.

HOUSING

Low-income households that spend a large portion of their income on housing have little left over for other expenses such as transportation, childcare, or nutritious food. Inadequate, unsafe housing conditions can contribute to poor health and limit achievement at school or work.

Disability is common among lower-income households.

DISABILITY AND HEALTHCARE

Adults and children who lack health insurance often forgo important preventive care. Unaffordable healthcare needs contribute to poor health, disability, and household debt. Disability creates barriers to work, education, and training.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Strong services contribute to quality of life, but are uneven across communities.

Not-for-profit organizations and government agencies can mitigate the impacts of poverty, reduce barriers residents face, and expand pathways out of poverty through a variety of free and low-cost programs and services. But some communities do not have enough services to meet residents' needs.



Nearly a third of residents across the Buffalo Niagara region live in or near poverty.

POVERTY Poverty continues to be a pressing challenge across the Buffalo Niagara region. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, people living in or near poverty accounted for nearly a third of the region's total population. With the onset of the pandemic, those living in or near poverty are likely to be hit hardest, as they often work in lower-wage jobs in sectors such as retail and hospitality that faced shutdowns, layoffs, and furloughs. Others are new to the safety net, needing help with food and other basic necessities for the first time in their life. Many have disabilities that put them at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Others face risky working conditions that could lead to health and mental health challenges. Many have no

“We were not always poor.”

- Resident, Town of West Seneca

savings. Less than half of residents surveyed felt confident they could handle a \$500 emergency expense before the economic crisis. The region's economically vulnerable will likely require additional resources over longer periods of time to rebound. The challenges faced by single parents and refugees and immigrants leave them particularly vulnerable to poverty.

The typical service provider is located within 1 mile of 7,200+ people living in or near poverty. If each was equipped to make referrals, more residents would connect with the programs and services they need.



Avg. Population In/ Near Poverty Within 1 Mile of a Typical Service Provider

RURAL	2,272
SUBURBAN	3,645
URBAN	9,958

Urban areas are hit hardest by poverty. But poverty also persists in many suburban and rural communities.

Population In or Near Poverty, 2018

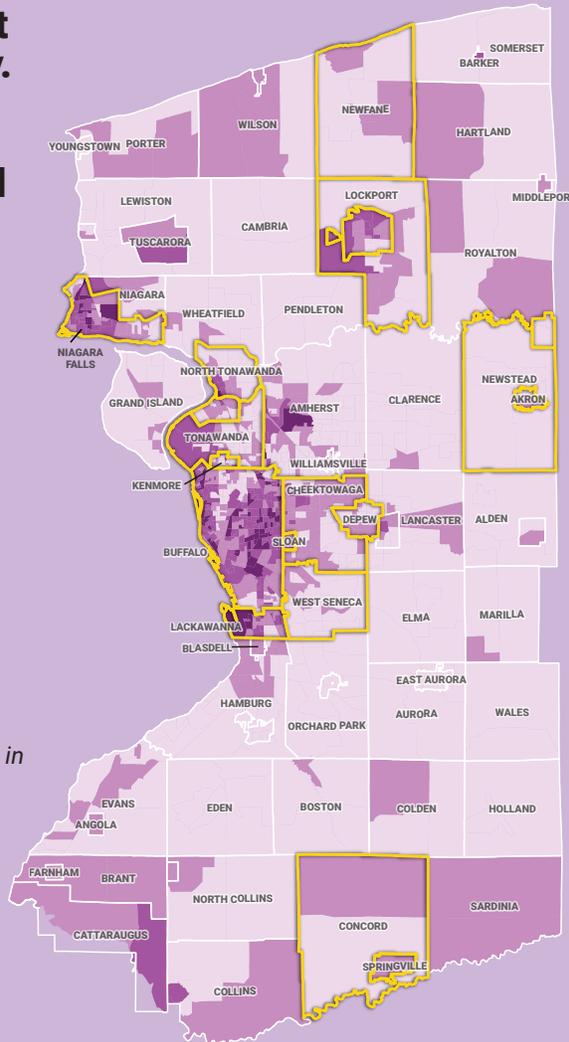


12 Communities studied for Numbers in Need

These 12 communities capture over half of the total population in poverty across the region.

View trends in poverty since 2011 on NumbersInNeed.org

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, 2013-2017.



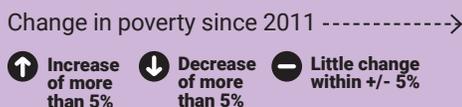
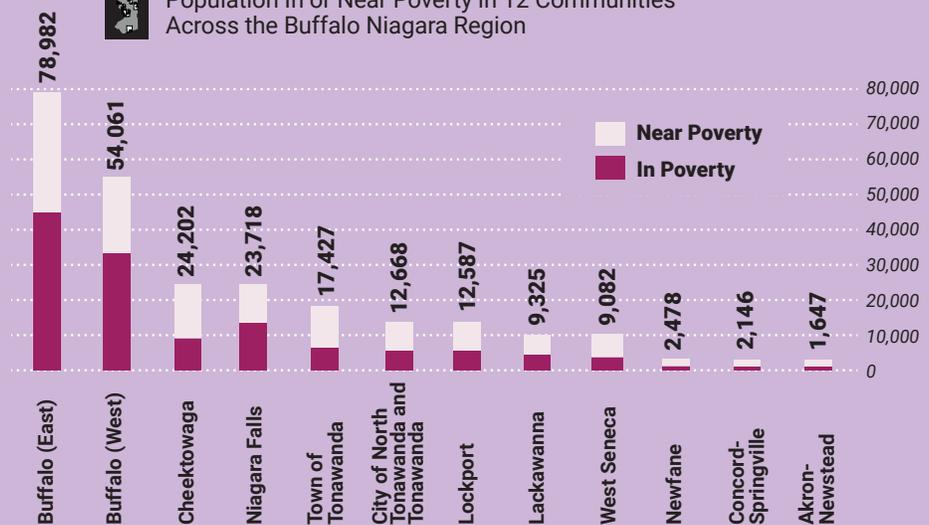
Single parents and refugees and immigrants are most likely to live in poverty, but children are the largest group in poverty.

Population In Poverty, Buffalo Niagara Region, 2017	Percent in Poverty	Number in Poverty
Single Parents	36%	17,990
Refugees & Immigrants	25%	17,494
Children Under 18	22%	50,142
Young Adults (25-34)	15%	23,041
Seniors 75+	10%	8,095
Married Couples with Children	6%	4,852

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, 2013-2017.

Poverty declined in several communities, but other communities saw little change or an increase in poverty since 2011.

Population In or Near Poverty in 12 Communities Across the Buffalo Niagara Region



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, 2007-2011 and 2013-2017.

Many adults with low-wage jobs face barriers to economic stability.

WORK AND INCOME

While most lower-income individuals in the region were working or retired prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, many households did not earn enough money to make ends meet and cover basic household expenses such as food, housing, and transportation. As one resident from Buffalo put it, “A mom and dad can work 40 hours each and still struggle to support their family.” With little or no savings, many households take on debt to purchase basics and cover emergency expenses. Expanded options for affordable, high quality childcare could open up opportunities for more parents to work full time, advance in their career through training, and raise a family. This is especially true



Full-time childcare in the region can cost between \$5,200 and \$13,000 per child per year, which is equivalent to 21% to 53% of a minimum wage worker's annual wage.

Source: NYS Office of Children and Family Services, New York State Child Care Demographics, 2017.

for single parents who face poverty rates that are six times higher than those for two-parent families. Other barriers to employment and economic stability that residents and providers identified include low literacy levels, limited English proficiency, the need for affordable, flexible transportation to neighborhoods where employers are hiring, and a minimum wage that reflects a living wage.

Stories
OF
Need

Jenny

Jenny wishes there were more early childhood education options available to meet demand.



They only have two [pre-K programs], and they're packed."

Making ends meet can be a financial challenge, even for families living above the poverty line.

Maggie, Paul, and their two-year-old son Ethan offer an example of a family near poverty. Both adults work minimum wage jobs, and together they earn about \$32,000 a year or \$2,664 a month.

Rent consumes almost a third of their income, but childcare is their biggest expense. They put their son in daycare to maintain their jobs and access to benefits. After rent, food, childcare, and transportation, **the family has \$150 a month left over to cover everything else.**

What living near poverty looks like for a family of three every month



Maggie, Paul and Ethan
Both adults working **full-time minimum wage** jobs bring in \$1,332 each

- \$763 Rent
- \$150 Transportation
- \$661 Food
- \$940 Childcare

Total Monthly Income
\$2,664
(\$31,968/yr)

Total Monthly Expenses
\$2,514
This total excludes medical bills, utilities, unexpected repairs, and other expenses.

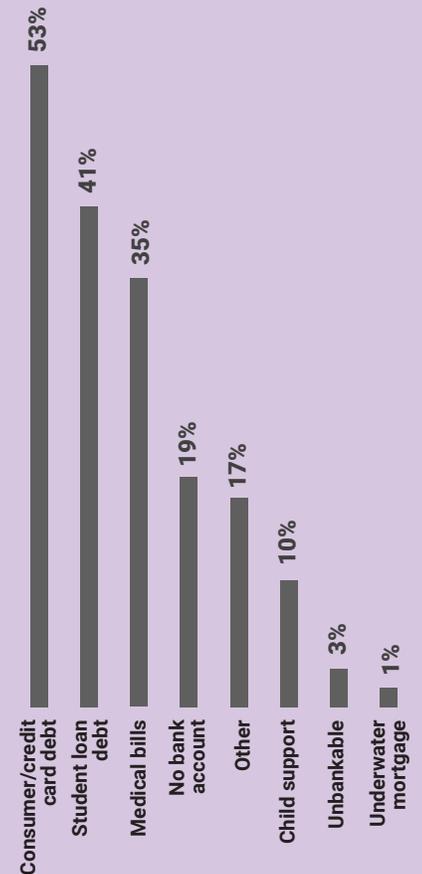
\$150
remaining at the end of the month for all additional expenses

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2020 (published in the Federal Register on 1/17/20). Additional sources are in Data Sources & Notes.

Debt is the top financial concern. Some residents take on debt to cover household needs such as food and upkeep on homes and vehicles.



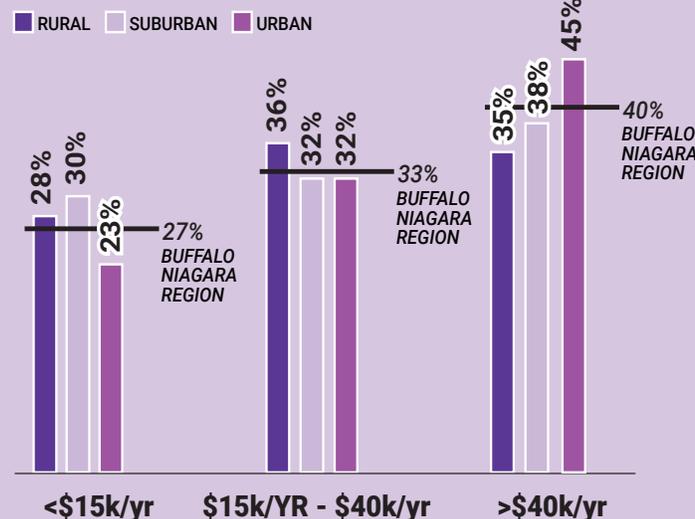
Top Financial Challenges That These Survey Respondent Households Experience



Source: Numbers in Need Resident Survey, 2019-20.

Jobs paying more than \$40,000 a year are least common in rural areas, requiring residents to travel further for higher-paying work.

Jobs by Income Level in the Buffalo Niagara Region by Community Type, 2015



Source: US Census Bureau, LEHD.

Many adults with lower income would benefit from additional job training or education.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

While many residents hold jobs paying wages that leave them in or near poverty, service providers say that higher-paying jobs in manufacturing and the trades sometimes go unfilled, or are hard to fill, because there are not enough qualified applicants. A key theme emerging from the provider focus groups was that not enough youth consider career pathways that lead to higher-paying, middle-skill jobs such as welders, plumbers, electricians, and machinists. Less than 10% of residents surveyed reported going to trade school. Rather, many attended college after high school and did not attain a degree, incurring debt without the added earnings potential power that a college credential can offer. Even more residents have no

“**In manufacturing right now, there’s 3,000 open jobs that are living wage jobs ...**”

- Provider,
City of Buffalo (East)

education beyond high school and need wrap-around services such as remedial support and childcare to pursue additional training. With some postsecondary training or education beyond high school, adults in the Buffalo Niagara region can reduce the likelihood of living in poverty by approximately 50 percent.

Stories
OF
Need

Atarah

Atarah takes on more responsibility at work but never gets promoted.



Not having that piece of paper (a GED) is really hindering me from the things I want to do.”

Transportation is a major obstacle to jobs, programs, and services.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation emerged as a leading challenge in communities of all types across the Buffalo Niagara region. This is a byproduct of a spatial mismatch between where people live and work, participate in training, and access critical human services. Residents without a vehicle in urban areas often described the difficulty of traveling to the suburbs for work, where many employers are located, but where bus service is limited. Those without a vehicle in rural areas often talked about the challenges of getting into the city to get to jobs and training,

While nearly all service providers in urban areas are located within a short, 1/4 mile walk of an NFTA bus stop, only about half of providers in suburban areas and a fifth of providers in rural areas are similarly accessible by public transit.



Providers with 1/4 mile of NFTA bus stop

RURAL	19%
SUBURBAN	55%
URBAN	95%

Source: UBRI analysis of service provider location data

specialized health services, and regional service providers. Residents in car-dependent suburban and rural communities explained how vehicle dependency can lead to expensive car repairs and bills that lower-income households can't afford. In most communities, provider focus groups identified transportation as a barrier they face in reaching more residents with programs and services. Meanwhile, public transit ridership declined rapidly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A slow rebound could result in further service cuts, compounding existing transportation issues.

Stories OF Need



Shelly

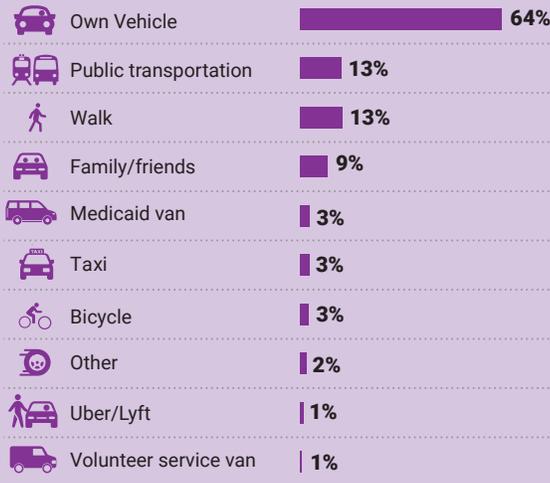
Shelly worries about her older car breaking down, as costly repair bills become more frequent.

“If I didn't have a car, I'd be in trouble.”

Survey respondents are less likely to get around in their own vehicle than those in the region overall (64% vs. 82%).

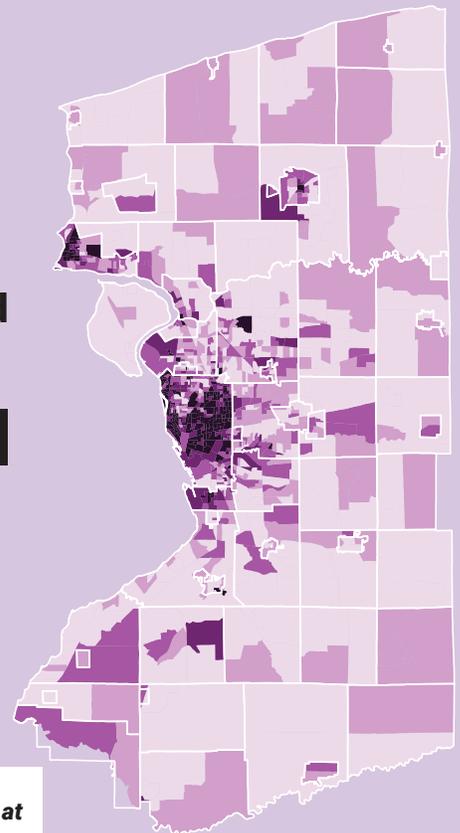


Primary Form of Transportation among Survey Respondents in the Buffalo Niagara Region, 2019-20



Source: Numbers in Need Resident Survey, 2019-20.

Households with no vehicle are mostly in urban areas but are also seen in suburban and rural areas.



% of Households With No Vehicle



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, 2013-2017.

Create this map for your own community at NumbersInNeed.org

Without a vehicle, residents face barriers to work, training, and services. Even where public transit is available, trips can take hours.

Examples of Public Transportation Challenges by Community Type

<p>Niagara Falls Calumet Ave Residence</p> <p>GEICO Crosspoint Pkwy, Getzville Day Shift 9-5 pm</p> <p>2 hours, 27 minute NFTA ride (ONE WAY)</p> <p>Must leave home at 6 AM Return home at 9 PM</p> <p>8-hour work day is 15 hours long, with commute. Destination is 25 miles away.</p> <p>COST</p> <p>NFTA (Day Pass) \$5 UBER (Round trip) \$73.20</p>	<p>Twin Cities Main St, Tonawanda Residence</p> <p>SUNY Erie 6205 Main St, Wmsvl Classes 8 am-5:30 pm</p> <p>1 hr, 37 minute NFTA bus ride (ONE WAY)</p> <p>Leave home at 6 AM. Return home at 7:40 PM</p> <p>9.5-hr school day is nearly 14 hrs with commute. Destination is 12 miles away.</p> <p>\$5 \$36.72</p>	<p>Springville North Buffalo St Residence</p> <p>Erie County Dept. of Social Services 478 Main Street, Buffalo 8:30 am Appointment</p> <p>40 minute UBER ride (ONE WAY)</p> <p>Public transit is not an option in Springville. Closest NFTA stops are 20 miles away in Orchard Park and/or East Aurora.</p> <p>Not applicable \$91.46</p>
--	--	--

Sources: Google Maps; SUNY Erie 2019 Fall Schedule for Industrial Technology Courses; and UBER Price Estimator.

Increasing rents, absentee landlords, and limited supports all challenge lower-income households.

HOUSING

Over 106,000 households across the region pay nearly a third or more of their income on housing. For an apartment renting at the regional median of \$763 a month, a minimum wage employee must work 65 hours a month just to cover the cost of rent. This leaves little for other necessities such as utilities, food, medication, transportation, or even a small savings for the future purchase of a home or car. With rising rents, month-to-month leases, and absentee landlords, some renters put up with unsafe and unhealthy conditions because they like their communities and access to jobs, transit, and services. For some, homelessness is the only alternative. Meanwhile, lower-income homeowners often face unaffordable repairs, home maintenance expenses, and property taxes.

“Clients tell me how much they pay for rent, and it’s the same amount I pay for my mortgage. But due to lack of credit, they’re unable to get a mortgage.”

- Provider,
Town of Cheektowaga

In many communities, older residents looking to downsize find limited options for renting within their budgets. While mobile homes can offer an affordable living arrangement, as well as the opportunity to build wealth through ownership, recent increases in lot rents put many residents at risk. A recent change in NYS law now limits this practice.

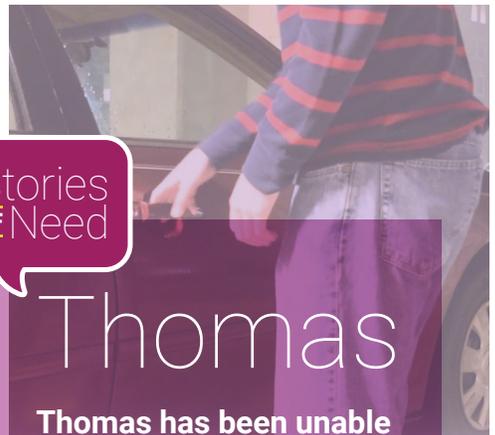
Stories OF Need

Bernie

After being evicted, Bernie now lives in a neighborhood with affordable rents, but his landlord has yet to address needed repairs.

“The landlord decided to up the rent from \$650 to \$1,200 per month and rent to different tenants.”

Disability is common among households with lower income.



DISABILITY AND HEALTHCARE

Individuals who live in or near poverty experience disability at high rates. Nearly half of residents surveyed reported that they or someone in their household has a disability. More often than not, these disabilities limit their ability to go to school or work. Mental health disabilities are nearly as common as physical disabilities. Factors related to poverty such as unsafe housing conditions, debt and financial stress, limited food access, and barriers to medical care can put individuals at risk of poor health. Although 94% of residents surveyed reported that everyone in their household has health insurance, unmet healthcare needs are still common in the Buffalo

“ We don’t have the time or money to take over what the for-profit health system is leaving behind.”

**- Provider,
Cities of Tonawanda and
North Tonawanda**

Niagara region. In several rural and suburban areas, over a quarter of survey respondents need affordable dental care. In over half of the 12 communities, more than a tenth of survey respondents said they need mental health care or counseling. Improving health care access for lower-income populations could improve economic outcomes.

Stories
OF Need

Thomas

Thomas has been unable to work for 15 years. He feels he needs more mental health services that just aren’t available in the area.

“ I’m on disability for mental illness.... A lot of people don’t know where to turn when they have problems.”

Many residents face health-related barriers to work and education. Mental health disabilities are nearly as prevalent as physical disabilities.



% Survey Respondents Reporting a Disability in Their Household

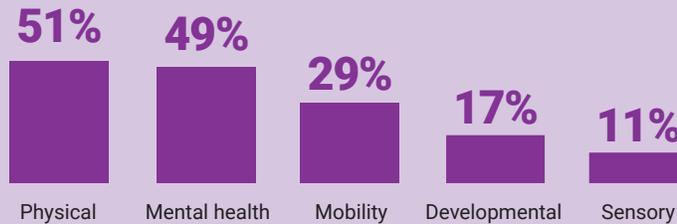
51%

reported some type of disability in their household

66%

say that disability limits them from going to work or school.

TYPE OF DISABILITIES REPORTED IN THESE HOUSEHOLDS

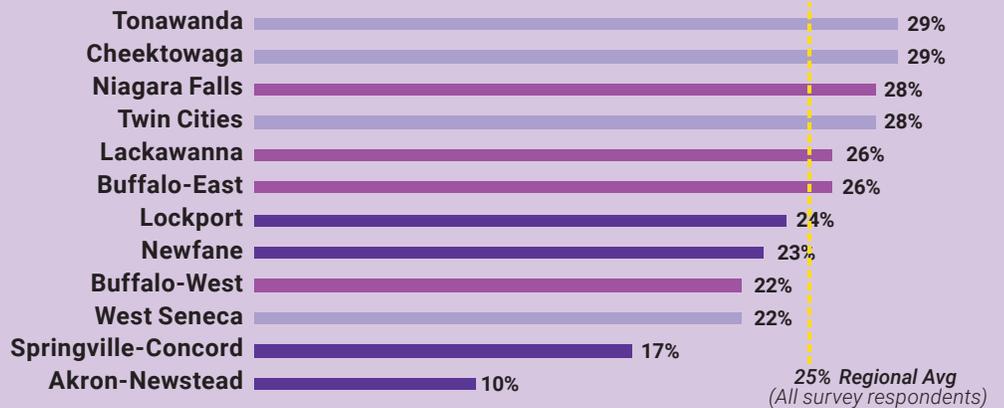


Source: Numbers in Need Resident Survey, 2019-20.

The incidence of mental health disabilities may point to the need for expanded outreach, screening, and access to services.



% Survey Respondents Reporting a Mental Health Disability in Their Household, By Community, 2019-20



BY COMMUNITY TYPE

URBAN SUBURBAN RURAL

Source: Numbers in Need Resident Survey, 2019-20.

Note: Percentages were calculated based on the number of survey respondents who answered the survey question, including those who said nobody in their household has a disability.

Unmet healthcare needs are common, even though most survey respondents had health insurance.



% Survey Respondents Reporting Needing Medical Care They Could Not Afford

40%

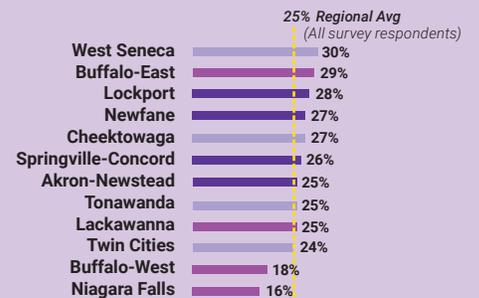
of respondents were in need of some type of healthcare but can't afford it.



- 57% Dental
- 40% Optical care (including eyeglasses)
- 33% Prescription medicine
- 28% Healthcare
- 21% Mental health care or counseling
- 20% Transportation to appointments or services
- 6% Other



% Total Survey Respondents Reporting They Need Dental Care But Can't Afford It



BY COMMUNITY TYPE

URBAN SUBURBAN RURAL

Source: Numbers in Need Resident Survey, 2019-20.

*Residents could report more than one type.

Note: Percentages of total respondents reporting they need dental care but can't afford it are based on the total number of survey respondents who answered the survey question, including those who indicated that nobody in their household had a need for healthcare that they could not afford.

Strong resources contribute to quality of life but are uneven across communities.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Resident focus group participants commonly described the presence of service providers in their community as a great asset and strength. The existence of these community supports, which include schools, senior centers, libraries, community centers, youth programs, food pantries, and affordable housing, can help individuals and families not only survive but thrive when family resources are limited. Yet both residents and providers also described how beneficial resources can be underutilized when people don't know about them. In other cases, not all residents who need help actually qualify. Across the region, barriers to accessing services are common. Lack of access to affordable, flexible

“ There seems to be more programming for seniors and adults than kids.”

- Provider,
City of Lackawanna

transportation remains a cross-cutting challenge. Post COVID-19, lack of internet access and not having a computer at home present critical access challenges. Strengthening our safety net of programs and services will be important to COVID-19 recovery efforts and supporting residents who have been hit hardest by the pandemic.

Stories
OF
Need

Maurice

Maurice aspires to go to college, and wishes there were more creative outlets outside of school for youth.

“ There’s just a park and a basketball court, but not everybody plays basketball.”

Food programs are a top strength across communities. Regional challenges include affordable housing and transportation.

Resident Focus Groups' Top Strengths and Needs by Community Type



Source: Numbers in Need Resident Focus Groups, 2019-20.



Focus Group Ranking of Strengths and Needs in all 12 Communities

Residents and service providers agree on many of the top strengths and needs.

TOP STRENGTHS

RANK	RESIDENTS	PROVIDERS
#1	Food	Food
#2	Education/ Training	Youth Programs
#3	Clothing	Senior Programs
#4	Senior Programs	Information/ Referral
#5	Health/Wellness	Education/ Training

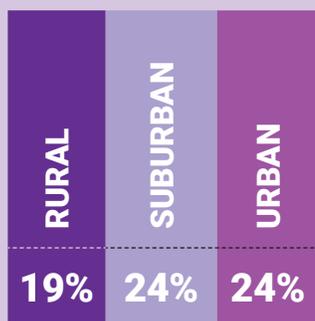
TOP NEEDS

RANK	RESIDENTS	PROVIDERS
#1	Affordable Housing	Transportation
#2	Transportation	Affordable Housing
#3	Mental Health	Mental Health
#4	Senior Programs	Education/ Training
#5	Youth Programs	Information/ Referral

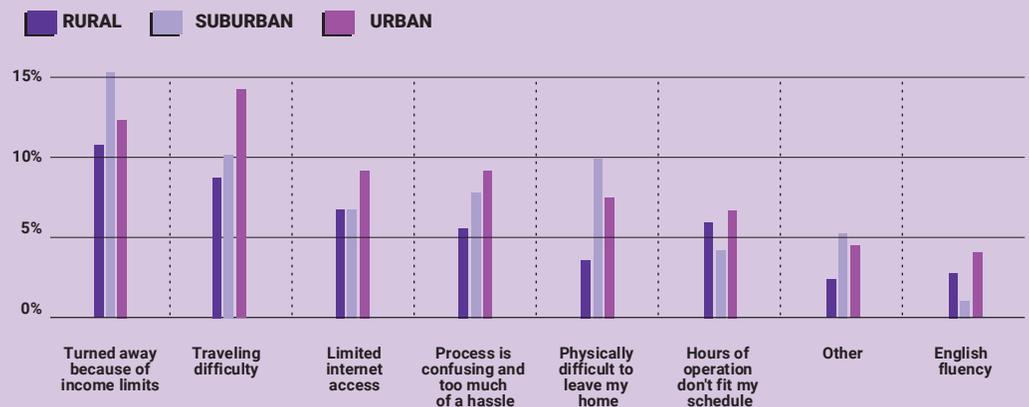
Source: Numbers in Need Resident and Provider Focus Groups, 2019-20.

Traveling difficulty is a common barrier to programs and services, especially in urban areas.

% Survey Respondents Reporting a Barrier to Service



% Survey Respondents Reporting a Barrier to Service, by Type



Source: Numbers in Need Resident Survey, 2019-20

Regional Strategies, Models to Consider, and Promising Developments

Regional Strategies, Models to Consider, and Promising Developments

Finding solutions to community challenges begins with laying out strategies for addressing their root causes. Strategies outline potential action steps that can be implemented, name some of the actors who could be involved in completing those actions, and be supported by models of their implementation. Models from other places in the region, country, and world demonstrate how other communities have carried out a similar strategy, and serve as a starting point for understanding how strategies can be successfully implemented in the Buffalo Niagara region.

The following strategies and models are only examples of all the possible solutions to regional challenges. Please visit NumbersInNeed.org to view a more comprehensive collection of strategies and models that cover a broader range of topics.

Learn more about these strategies and models on NumbersInNeed.org



REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Nearly a third of residents across the Buffalo Niagara region live in or near poverty.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Raise awareness of existing programs and services for individuals and families.

Build and strengthen community service hubs in high-need neighborhoods.

Bolster programs and services that promote economic self-sufficiency of refugees and immigrants.

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Community Resource Hubs
Various locations in the Buffalo Niagara region

Hennepin County Human Services
Hennepin County, MN

Tacoma Community House
Tacoma, WA

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

Numbers In Need website offers a new tool for assessing and strengthening service capacity and the landscape of programs for people in or near poverty.



REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Many residents are in low-wage jobs and face barriers to economic stability.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Reduce barriers to training and employment by incorporating wraparound support services into training programs.

Jeremiah Program
Minneapolis, MN and various locations across the U.S.

Expand affordable, quality daycare options that enable parents to work more, or better hours.

Quebec Parental Insurance Plan
Quebec, Canada

Create and expand opportunities for small, family-run businesses in high-need neighborhoods and communities.

Westminster Economic Development Initiative: West Side Bazaar
Buffalo, NY



REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Many lower-income adults would benefit from additional job training or education.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Partner with local employers to develop training programs that equip workers with the skills needed by industry now and in the future.

Northland Workforce Training Center
Buffalo, NY

Adopt non-traditional educational models, such as online training, to expand job opportunities for diverse populations.

Mobile Career Center
Florida

Enhance career pipelines for youth into good-paying jobs in the skilled trades that do not require a four-year college degree.

BEGREEN P-TECH
Buffalo and Alfred, NY

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

An expansion of Erie County's Childcare Subsidy program will cover childcare for education and training.

The Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) for Western New York has elevated childcare needs and potential solutions as part of its strategies and actions related to state priorities.

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

The Buffalo Billion's Workforce Development Challenge offers funding to not-for-profits with industry-driven workforce training for underserved populations.

The 2017 Buffalo Niagara Labor Market Assessment identifies regional target industries, workforce needs, and opportunities.

The NYS Excelsior Scholarship enables NYS residents earning up to \$125,000/yr to attend college tuition-free at all CUNY and SUNY two- and four-year colleges, starting in fall 2017.



REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Transportation is a major obstacle to jobs, programs, and services.



REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Increasing rents, absentee landlords, and limited supports for homeowners all challenge lower-income households.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Enhance and promote public transit to increase access to jobs and services.

PSTA Direct Connect
Pinellas County, Florida

Improve the viability and safety of active modes of transportation—like walking and biking.

Olean Walking School Bus
Olean, NY

Leverage partnerships, volunteers, and technology to improve transportation options for people with mobility challenges or access barriers.

Lift Garage
Minneapolis, MN

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Expand options for quality affordable housing, including homeownership, in neighborhoods of high opportunity.

Duvall Riverside Village
Duvall, WA

Strengthen supports to address and prevent homelessness.

Chicago Homeless Prevention Call Center
Chicago, IL

Expand aging-in-place supports for seniors.

Canopy of Neighbors
Buffalo, NY

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

Moving Forward 2050 considers transportation investments that support job access, catalyze economic development and strengthen communities.

Shared Mobility Inc. held a week-long workshop in February 2020 that considered how transportation technologies can expand and improve options for traveling in future years.

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

The NYS Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 offers new protections for tenants and mobile homeowners.



REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Disability is common among households with lower income.



REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Strong resources that contribute to quality of life are uneven across communities.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Bring health and mental health services to residents in need through community outreach, mobile services, and online tools.

Friendship Benches
Zimbabwe

Expand access to affordable, healthy foods through healthy corner stores, farmers markets, community gardens, and mobile markets.

Healthy Corner Store Initiative
Buffalo, NY

Promote healthy communities, active lifestyles, and access to preventive health care services to improve health outcomes.

Albert Lea Blue Zones Program
Albert Lea, MN

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

In 2020 Crisis Services launched “Be A Man” campaign to reduce mental health stigma among men.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

MODELS TO CONSIDER

Create high opportunity neighborhoods as part of urban revitalization and economic development strategies.

Bailey Green
Buffalo, NY

Strengthen and expand afterschool programs, especially mentoring, for at-risk children.

Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center
Buffalo, NY

Build a human services coalition for providers to collaborate in core service areas, like education, housing, and more.

Community Coalitions
Various locations in the Buffalo Niagara region

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

Investments in Buffalo’s East Side Avenues will support job growth, business development, training, and quality of life.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:

Ramifications of COVID-19

While individuals and businesses throughout the nation will be affected in some way by COVID-19, the ramifications on human service providers and the vulnerable residents they serve will be distinct and, very likely, pronounced. Some of these challenges and opportunities to identify ways community leaders, policymakers, funders, and the human services sector can target efforts to support the most economically vulnerable residents and help all service providers stay programmatically, operationally, and fiscally strong are highlighted here:



HIGH DEMAND FOR SERVICES

As COVID-19 spread across the United States, more than 36 million workers filed for unemployment over an eight-week period between March and May 2020. In the Buffalo Niagara region, over 80,000 jobs are in high-risk, hard-hit industries that may be slower to rebound even as the economy continues to reopen. Until a rebound is achieved, service providers could face higher demand from residents who are out of work and need help with food, meal deliveries, affordable housing, transportation, health and mental healthcare, and information and referrals. Without new or expanded funding sources and additional approaches to delivering services, providers could be challenged in delivering more services since many incurred reductions in staff, volunteers, and revenues.



PROGRAMMATIC ADAPTATION

As in-person meetings and gatherings are postponed or canceled, some service providers are considering how they can adapt programs and services for virtual delivery including distance learning, telehealth, videoconferencing, digital programming, and telephone-based assistance. Others must look at new ways they can continue to deliver programs in person while protecting vulnerable residents, volunteers, and staff. Supporting providers through digital delivery toolkits, investments in technology, and personal protective equipment can help ensure these organizations continue to meet the needs of residents and adapt to new realities that may require sustained support. Digital adaptations may also require efforts to remove access barriers that many residents face.



PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE PERSONS

Many service providers regularly interface with communities of color and residents who are older or have a disability—people who are most vulnerable to COVID-19. In addition, many providers largely rely on volunteer workers who are in their retirement years and therefore more vulnerable. Solutions may entail new ways of delivering existing services, new technologies, expanded pools of staff and volunteers, and new agency partnerships. Supporting organizations in keeping everyone healthy and safe will enable service providers to continue to deliver services while engaging and protecting volunteers, staff, residents, and our communities.



FISCAL RESILIENCE

Many service providers face revenue reductions. Some providers already scaled back or cut in-person programs and services. Others had to cancel and rethink fundraisers that attracted large crowds in past years. Some organizations lost individual donations because of unemployment. Others are delivering services online but may be receiving a lower reimbursement rate. Some organizations face reduced patient and client loads because not all residents have technology for online engagement. While unprecedented levels of governmental relief are available to assist businesses and cover some operational expenses, the smallest nonprofits may need technical assistance to access these new resources.



DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Numbers in Need offers a variety of resources to providers and community leaders who wish to use data to maximize impact with limited resources. Website users on NumbersInNeed.org can use the provider tool to identify potential partners, high-poverty areas for outreach, and locations for mobile services that are in close proximity to large numbers of people living in or near poverty. Community reports can foster understanding of the urgent concerns of our most vulnerable populations, as well as barriers they face to accessing resources. The 12 community pages offer baseline measures for assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on people in poverty, employment, income, housing cost burden and more.



STRONG COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The need for information and referrals has grown as some residents find themselves in need for the first time in their lives, and programs and services are evolving on a day to day basis. Without strong, reliable, up-to-date information channels, that both providers and residents know about, some individuals and families could slip through the cracks. Raising awareness of regional resources such as 2-1-1 WNY and NumberInNeed.org, and keeping these resources up to date, will increase the likelihood that valuable resources are utilized by residents who need them.



INNOVATION

The COVID-19 pandemic forced human service providers to consider how to deliver human services while avoiding physical contact. By nature, it forces innovation and solutions that are outside the box of traditionally delivered programs and services. Community leaders and funders can help to foster such innovation by supporting collaborative solutions that focus on the most vulnerable, support digital content delivery, strengthen and leverage technology, and prioritize regional challenges such as affordable, flexible transportation and affordable housing, and community-specific challenges such as mental health and high-quality youth programs.

Conclusion

“ It (the pandemic) has absolutely crystalized publicly the very serious problems we have—and we’ve talked about them, homelessness, hunger, mental illness, substance abuse, housing, & childcare, and on and on and healthcare, and on it goes. We’re in a moment where out of chaos can come great creativity and newness—how we grab it, I don’t have a clear handle on it but it just seems that moment is right now for us.

– Sister Beth Brosmer, Heart, Love & Soul

The Numbers in Need website is a report out of research findings from 12 key communities in the Buffalo Niagara region. This reporting identifies some of the most urgent needs affecting the most vulnerable populations in our region. It is our hope that this report will serve as a tool toward developing strategies, leveraging resources, and forging partnerships that lead to effective meaningful solutions.



While the majority of the research and data collection for Numbers in Need took place prior to the emergence of COVID-19, the report has been expanded to address the potential impacts of the pandemic and discuss how it has exacerbated the many challenges we have identified among underserved, vulnerable, and marginalized populations.

While the full impact of COVID-19 is still unknown, it is apparent that the pandemic has further exposed the deep rooted disparities within the Buffalo Niagara region and has motivated us to recognize the litany of inequities we see affecting our economically insecure and at-risk neighbors.



If anything beneficial can be derived from the catastrophe of COVID-19, it would be the heightened attention brought to the existence of health disparities affecting our communities of color; the enhanced focus that should be placed on the safety and security of seniors; and the recognition of the expanding digital divide experienced by many of our underserved communities in both the urban core, suburban and rural areas. These are just samples of what has been recognized to this point.



There is now a sense of urgency for our community to rise to this challenge and implement immediate solutions that will dismantle the barriers that impact our most vulnerable residents and provide a pathway to significant and sustainable change.



Data Sources & Notes

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Resident Survey

A total of 2,693 resident surveys were completed between January 2019 and March 2020. Surveys were completed at various sites in this study's 12 communities, including food pantries, senior centers, youth programs, schools, community events, community health clinics, public housing facilities, head start sites, and more. Individuals living in or near poverty were the target audience for the survey.

Surveys at these locations were completed in person, administered by a Mobile Safety-Net Team Community Impact Coordinator or an agency staff member. The survey was made available in English, Spanish and Arabic. Over 440 online surveys were also completed, with a link to the survey distributed through partner agencies in the community through email and/or social media.

The analysis of survey data included standardizing open ended responses and cleaning data for accuracy. Not all surveys were completed in full, and response rates for questions ranged from 1937 (Question 21, Financial Issues) to 2,693 responses. In cases where percentages are used, these numbers represent the percent of people who answered the question, not the percent of all people who took the survey. Although some questions asked for respondents to choose one answer, there were several instances where respondents chose multiple responses; in these cases, all answers were included.

Surveys were analyzed in aggregate and by community type, including 1,519 surveys from urban communities, 708 surveys from suburban communities, and 436 surveys from rural communities. 30 surveys from communities outside the 12 communities were included in the aggregate regional analysis but not in the analysis by community type.

Resident Focus Groups

20 resident focus groups and/or one-on-one interviews engaging at least 148 residents were completed between February 2019 and March 2020. Interviews explored residents' thoughts on strengths and assets of their community, challenges in the community such as access to jobs, transportation, housing, healthcare needs, and healthy food, and ideas for change.

At least two focus groups were completed in Buffalo (East), Buffalo (West), Lackawanna, Niagara Falls, Tonawanda, and the cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. One focus group was completed the other six communities.

In some communities, one-on-one conversations replaced a small group conversation with residents to capture residents while they were available to talk, such as while waiting for their number to be called at a food pantry, or immediately after picking up their food at a pantry. Interview questions mirrored those that were asked during focus group conversations.

Participants were recruited through the resident survey, where respondents could opt to provide contact info if they were interested in participating in a focus group. Additional participants were identified through collaboration with community partners and service providers.

Resident focus group participants were given a \$10 gift card to a store in the local community as appreciation for their time. Public notes were taken during the meeting, then later transcribed and analyzed.

Resident Interviews

One-on-one interviews with residents were completed in all 12 communities to develop 23 "Stories of Need." These stories reflect the voice and experience of actual residents living in the 12 communities. Names and other identifying information have been changed to protect the identity and confidentiality of those who volunteered to share their story.

Interviews were conducted over the telephone and/or in person. Interviewees were recruited from the resident focus groups and the one-on-one interviews conducted in lieu of a focus group in selected communities.

Interview questions explored challenges around topics covered in community reports such as access to jobs, job training, affordable housing, healthy foods, transportation, urgent concerns, barriers to jobs and services, and interventions that have been helpful.

The stories offer a picture of how various challenges play out in the lives of individuals, demonstrating how issues are interrelated.

Stories of children reflect a composite individual, drawing from the experiences and input from several children in the community generated through small group conversations with youth, completed in Niagara Falls, Lackawanna and Tonawanda.

Provider Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups with providers were completed in all communities except the Town of Tonawanda, where a scheduled group was canceled twice, first for reasons related to the weather, and then for reasons related to COVID-19. In this one community telephone interviews and a provider questionnaire were completed by six service providers, in lieu of the focus group.

Provider focus group conversations explored provider areas of concern, barriers that providers face in reaching more residents with programs and services, and promising developments.

Preliminary findings from the community data and resident survey were shared with providers prior to the conversation to get their insights on emerging trends and topics of concern.

Provider focus group participants were selected by the Mobile Safety-Net Team, in partnership with UBRI. Groups included anywhere from 7 to 23 participants and engaged a total of 134 service providers.

Telephone interviews with additional providers were conducted in some communities, to capture input from providers who were unable to attend the focus group, or to follow up on new topics raised by focus group participants.

DEFINING NEED

Federal Poverty Level: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2020.

Minimum Wage: New York State Department of Labor, Minimum Wage (effective 12/31/19).

KEY FINDINGS

Contextual information comes from the following source:

Employers across the Buffalo Niagara region added nearly 20,000 jobs and more than 1,400 firms since 2011: NYSDOL, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2011 and 2017. Data shows that employment across all industries in the Buffalo Niagara region increased by 19,065, and the number of firms increased by 1,408.

HOW ARE WE DOING AS A REGION?

Poverty

Typical service provider is within 1 mile of 7,200...: UBRI analysis of provider locations relative to populations in/near poverty.

Work and Income

Jenny's story is from:

Mobile Safety-Net Team and University at Buffalo Regional Institute, "Insights from Residents, City of Lockport," March 2020, p. 15, https://numbersinneed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Lockport_Residents_FINAL.pdf.

Making ends meet...

Paul and Maggie's monthly income assumes that both adults work approximately 30 hours a week at \$11.10 per hour, the minimum wage in NYS during 2019.

Monthly expenses shown reflect \$763 per month for rent, the median in the Buffalo Niagara region, according to the US Census, 2017 American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates; \$150 for transportation to cover the monthly cost of an NFTA pass both adults; \$661 for food, an estimate of about \$50 per person per week, based on MIT's Living Wage Calculator; and \$940 for childcare, reflecting weekly market rates for day care for a two-year-old in Erie and Niagara counties in 2019, according to NYS Office of Child and Family Services.

Jobs paying more than \$40,000 are least common in rural areas...: While not shown on the chart, the study explored jobs per labor force participant by community type. Findings reveal that urban areas have close to 50% more jobs per worker than rural areas, with 1.09 jobs per worker, compared to .75 jobs with worker in rural areas. Suburban areas have closer to one job (.84) for every worker. This analysis combines data shown in the chart from the US Census, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamic (LEHD) with labor force participant data for the 12 communities from the US Census, 2018 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

Education and Training

With some postsecondary training or education beyond high school, adults in the Buffalo Niagara region can reduce the likelihood of living in poverty by approximately 50 percent: This statement is based on data for the Buffalo Niagara region from the US Census, 2018 American Community Survey (5-year Estimates). The rate of poverty among adults with no more than a high school education is 8%,

while the rate of poverty among those with some college or a college degree is 3%. Similarly, the poverty rate among single-parent and married-couple families is 34% for householders with no more than a high school education, and it is 17% for householders with at least some postsecondary education.

Atarah's story is from:

Mobile Safety-Net Team and University at Buffalo Regional Institute, "Insights from Residents, City of Buffalo (West)," September 2019, p. 14, https://numbersinneed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/BufaloWest_InsightsResidents_FINAL.pdf.

Transportation

Shelly's story is from:

Mobile Safety-Net Team and University at Buffalo Regional Institute, "Insights from Residents, Town of Newfane," December 2019, p. 15, https://numbersinneed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Newfane_InsightsResidents_FINAL.pdf.

Transportation

Bernie's story is from:

Mobile Safety-Net Team and University at Buffalo Regional Institute, "Insights from Residents, City of Buffalo (East)," September 2019, p. 14, https://numbersinneed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/BufaloEast_Residents_FINAL.pdf.

Transportation

Thomas' story is from:

Mobile Safety-Net Team and University at Buffalo Regional Institute, "Insights from Residents, Village of Springville and Town of Concord," November 2019, p. 14, https://numbersinneed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SpringvilleConcord_InsightsResidents_FINAL.pdf.

Data Sources & Notes

Examples of Public Transportation Challenges:

One-way commute times reflect the average of the commute time to work and the commute time back home. These times varied by no more than 10 minutes.

Estimated work day lengths, including commutes to work and back home, include the time it takes to walk to bus stops, wait for work shifts or classes to begin, and wait for the bus for the commute back home. It also assumes an individual must arrive at work and/or school no later than when their work shift or class begins.

Quality of Life

Maurice's story is from:

Mobile Safety-Net Team and University at Buffalo Regional Institute, "Insights from Residents, City of Niagara Falls," October 2019, p. 15, https://numbersinneed.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/NiagaraFalls_InsightsResidents_FINAL.pdf.

Top Strengths and Challenges

Resident and provider focus group participants were asked to select the three strongest programs in the community as well as the three programs and services where the greatest needs exist. Each was given three yellow dots for placing next to their choice of strongest programs and three blue dots for identifying where need was greatest across 16 categories of programs and services. Dots could be used to identify up to three strengths and weaknesses or several dots could be allocated to one or two categories. In instances where individuals selected more than three (which happened on an online version of this exercise), all selections by that provider were included in the analysis. Data generated through this exercise were analyzed by focus group type (resident and provider groups) and by community type (rural, suburban and urban).

Top strengths and challenges by community type shown in this report reflect the four categories that were selected most often by residents. Where there was a tie, both categories are included in the chart.

Barriers to programs and services: Data from the chart is from the survey of residents. Survey participants could select more than one barrier. Some of the "other" barriers described by residents included not knowing where to go and what's available, having a disability, health insurance related barriers, and program funding running out.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES, MODELS TO CONSIDER AND PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

Strategies and Models To Consider are selected from those on the Numbers In Need website. They represent selected strategies and models that address the regional challenges presented in this regional report.

The following resources offer more information about the promising developments described in the report.

Many residents are in low-wage jobs...:

Mobile Safety-Net Team and University at Buffalo Regional Institute, "Insights from Providers, Town of Cheektowaga," May 2020, p. 10, https://numbersinneed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Cheektowaga_Providers_FINAL.pdf.

NYS Regional Economic Development Councils, "State of the Region: Western New York 2019 Progress Report," p. 26, <https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/2019WesternNYProgressReport.pdf>.

Many lower-income adults would benefit...:

Empire State Development, Western New York Workforce Development Challenge, May 20, 2020, <https://esd.ny.gov/western-ny-workforce-development-challenge>.

Invest Buffalo Niagara, "2017 Buffalo Niagara Labor Market Assessment, Who's Our Economy?," 2017.

Invest Buffalo Niagara, "2017 Buffalo Niagara Labor Market Assessment, Where Are Our Opportunities?," 2017.

NYS Higher Education Services Corporation, Excelsior Scholarship Program, May 20, 2020, <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/nys-grants-scholarships-awards/the-excelsior-scholarship.html>.

Transportation is a major obstacle...:

Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council; University at Buffalo Regional Institute, The State University of New York at Buffalo, School of Architecture and Planning; Cambridge Systematics; TY Lin International. 2018. "Moving Forward 2050: A Regional Transportation Plan for Buffalo Niagara."

Puma, Mike, "The Future of Mobility: Remaking Buffalo for the 21st Century," BUFFALO RISING, February 25, 2020.

Increasing rents, absentee landlords...:

Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s6458>.

Disability is common...:

WGRZ Staff, "Crisis Services launches 'Be a Man' mental health campaign," WGRZ, February 19, 2020.

Strong resources that contribute to...:

East Side Avenues: Providing Economic Benefits for Buffalo's East Side, May 20, 2020, Website homepage, <https://eastsideavenues.org/>.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: RAMIFICATIONS OF COVID-17

Except as otherwise noted, findings in this section draw from community partner needs and impacts identified by The John R. Oishei Foundation and the Mobile Safety-Net Team between mid March to early April

2020. Through a survey and telephone conversations, about 70 nonprofit organizations across the Buffalo Niagara region offered input on their immediate needs and community impacts resulting from COVID-19.

Findings also draw from and are consistent with findings from Buffalo Niagara Partnership's (BNP) COVID-19 Business Impact Survey, conducted in April 2020.

UBRI analyzed raw survey data provided by BNP to distill impacts of COVID-19 on the 149 nonprofit organizations and governmental entities that responded to the survey. Over 90% were located in Erie and Niagara Counties.

Key findings from these nonprofits and governmental entities include:

- * Over half are concerned about a decline in revenues, both short term and over the long term.

- * About 15% are concerned about loss of employees, both short and long term.

- * 20% were not ready for remote work.

As COVID-19 spread across the United States, more than 36 million workers filed for unemployment over an eight-week period: Cohen, Patricia and Tiffany Hsu, "Rolling Shock' As Job Losses Mount," NEW YORK TIMES, May 14, 2020.

In the Buffalo Niagara Region over 80,000 jobs are in high-risk, hard-hit industries: Mark Muro, Robert Maxim, and Jacob Whit, "The Places a COVID-19 recession will likely hit hardest," THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, Tuesday, March 17, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/03/17/the-places-a-covid-19-recession-will-likely-hit-hardest/>

REGIONAL REPORT The Buffalo Niagara Region

JULY 2020

Numbers in Need

IN BUFFALO NIAGARA



A Mobile Safety Net Team
initiative established by
The John R. Oishei Foundation



Visit us online to
learn more about
this and other
communities
in need across
Buffalo Niagara.



NumbersInNeed.org