

United Way of Treasure Valley 2017 Community Assessment Executive Summary



Executive Summary

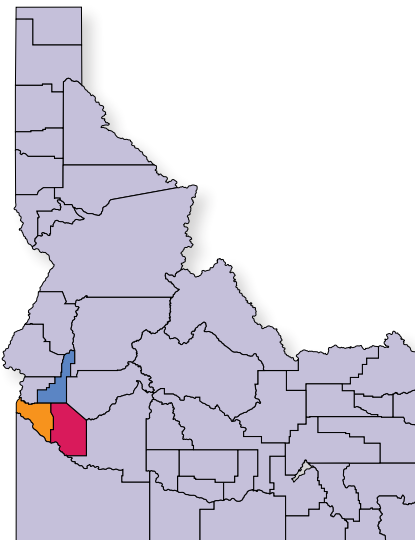
The United Way of Treasure Valley (UWTV) stands against poverty. UWTV fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community in the Treasure Valley.

UWTV periodically assesses community needs, resources, and potential solutions to our common challenges. The 2017 Community Assessment focuses on three of the most critical building blocks of a stable life for Treasure Valley residents—financial stability, health, and education. These continue to be priorities addressed by UWTV through collective impact initiatives.

The 2017 Community Assessment uses a combination of quantitative data (numbers) plus qualitative data (stories and observations) that were obtained via 14 focus groups and 22 one-on-one interviews conducted in the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017. This process helped to develop a consistent and comprehensive picture of the issues faced by residents of the Treasure Valley.

Overview of Results

A key theme that emerged in the qualitative data collection for this report was a shared sense of optimism among those interviewed that, although there are serious issues facing the Treasure Valley, **these challenges are solvable if collaborative action is taken**. Many stakeholders noted the strong community assets and partnerships that already exist. There are also synergies among some of the challenges, and in many cases, addressing one need (such as education) can help address other related problems (such as financial stability).



This Executive Summary provides an overview of the key findings from the 2017 Community Assessment. For additional data, stories, and recommendations, please see the full report at:
<https://www.unitedwaytv.org/community-needs-research/2017>

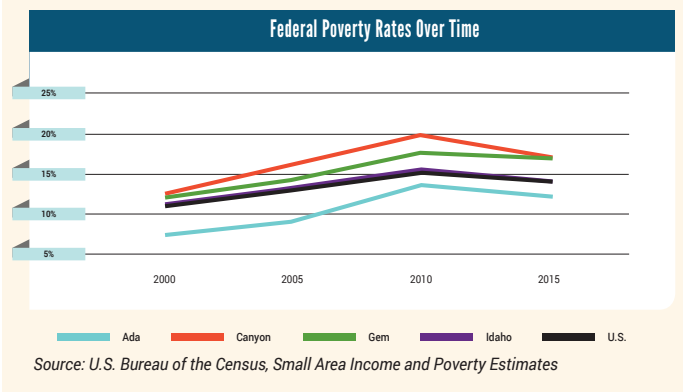


Financial Stability



Poverty rates are declining in the Treasure Valley and in Idaho, but focusing only on poverty misses a large—and struggling—segment of our community. United Way of Treasure Valley is committed to addressing the needs of the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE) population in all counties of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.¹

ALICE individuals and families often earn too much to be eligible for federal or state assistance programs, but their wages are not high enough to support a stable quality of life. Our ALICE calculations reveal a striking challenge: **More than 85,000 households in our region struggle financially every day.**



Results from interviews conducted with local community leaders and focus group participants comprised of residents in the Treasure Valley emphasized the need to consider not only people at or below the Federal Poverty Level, but also the ALICE populations. **The Treasure Valley runs on ALICE. They are the people who care for our children, assist us during medical and dental appointments, build our roadways, are checkers at the grocery store, and so forth.**

Employment and Economic Security

A key element of promoting economic stability is to ensure that Treasure Valley residents have opportunities for stable employment in well-paying jobs. Low wages were one of the top issues raised in focus groups. **Low wages continue to limit opportunities and financial stability for residents of the Treasure Valley, particularly in Canyon and Gem Counties.**

Seventy-two percent of jobs in Idaho pay \$20 per hour or less.¹ For a full-time job this yields about \$40,000 per year before taxes, which falls below ALICE's Household Survival Budget for a family of four.¹

The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable federal tax credit for lower-income workers. In 2016, 130,000 households in Idaho claimed this credit, but as many as 1 in 5 eligible people do not file for it. **The average Idaho EITC return was \$2,341.** Preserving and expanding the EITC is crucial.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Preserve the Earned Income Tax Credit
- ◆ Attract businesses to the Treasure Valley that offer living wage (or higher wage) jobs
- ◆ Promote use of UWTV's Bank On Program and Individual Development Accounts
- ◆ Increase the number of youth who go on to post-secondary education, including career and technical education for skilled careers

"It is tough if you are earning just enough, but not enough."

— Treasure Valley Focus Group Participant



ALICE

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

1,043

people were assisted with tax filing locally by the United Way of Treasure Valley in 2016. Almost one third of these people received the EITC.

Housing and Homelessness

Increasing home values, while beneficial to homeowners, have shut many Treasure Valley residents out of the homebuyer market and place a strain on family budgets.

Across the Treasure Valley, housing and transportation costs often add up to more than 50% of household income for a typical household.² **For those with household income close to the regional median, housing, and transportation costs are more than 65% of household income in all three counties.**

The number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness appears to have increased in the Treasure Valley since the 2014 Community Assessment, particularly in Canyon and Gem Counties.

More than 7,400 children and adolescents in Idaho experienced homelessness in 2015.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Provide education about personal finances. Topics could include household budgeting, interest rates, and the tax implications of renting or owning
- ◆ Encourage the passage and adoption of inclusionary zoning ordinances/laws
- ◆ Provide a variety of income-based housing options
- ◆ Promote education programs for landlords that provide information about the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, anti-discrimination laws, and compliance with the Fair Housing Act
- ◆ Increase use of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program
- ◆ Ensure adequate emergency shelters are available throughout the Treasure Valley that are inclusionary for all families
- ◆ Promote and scale Coordinated Entry and Housing First programs
- ◆ Invest in Rapid Re-Housing programs

Across the Treasure Valley, housing and transportation costs often add up to more than 50% of household income for a typical household. For those with a household income close to the regional median, housing and transportation costs are over 65% of household income in all three counties.

Housing and Transportation Costs, as Percent of Income

	Ada County	Canyon County	Gem County
Moderate Income (\$40,101)	69%	65%	67%
Typical Income (\$50,126)	56%	52%	54%

Source: H+T Index, Center for Neighborhood Technology

Transportation

Limited transportation options pose challenges for many Treasure Valley residents, particularly those with lower incomes and renters, many of whom do not have a vehicle.

In addition, traffic safety issues are key barriers to safe travel, whether in vehicles or as a cyclist or pedestrian. Ada, Canyon and Gem Counties accounted for more than 41% of the state's overall traffic crashes and 23.2% of the state's traffic fatalities. In 2015, the economic impacts from pedestrian and bicyclist crashes were \$157 million. The overall cost of motor vehicle crashes to Idaho in 2015 was \$3.8 billion.³

Having a vehicle available means having access to jobs, services, programs, and events.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Encourage agencies to adopt complete street policies and designs
- ◆ Initiate municipal plans that require sidewalks be installed when new housing developments are built, and around existing and new schools
- ◆ Examine the potential for vanpool or other types of carpooling services within Canyon and Gem Counties such as the ACHD Commuteride program
- ◆ Collaborate with ValleyRide Transit to promote the employer pass program with new and existing employers in the Treasure Valley
- ◆ Continue the graduated driver licensing programs for new drivers
- ◆ Enforce restrictions on impaired driving and texting while driving, and enforce the use of booster seats for children

Health



Health Care: Access and Affordability

The percentage of Idahoans that have health insurance is increasing, but not as quickly as national trends.⁴ The population at most risk of being uninsured are those persons between the ages of 18 and 65. Older adults are typically eligible for Medicare, and many children in Idaho qualify for the Children's Health Insurance Program. ***Twenty-one percent of Idahoans aged 18-64 are in the coverage gap—they do not qualify for Medicaid, but are not able to pay for premiums.***⁵ Idaho is one of only 19 states that has not adopted Medicaid expansion. The majority (71%) of respondents to the 2017 Idaho Public Policy survey favored having the state of Idaho take action to close this coverage gap.⁶

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Advocate for Medicaid Expansion
- ◆ Implement coordinated care among providers and systems
- ◆ Support the Statewide Healthcare Innovation Program (SHIP) efforts to increase the number of patient-centered medical homes and community-clinical linkages

Behavioral Health: Mental Health and Substance Use

Services for mental health issues represent a crucial—and unmet—need for many residents of the Treasure Valley. Mental health emerged as a top issue in the 2014 and 2017 Community Assessments. This is consistent with other assessments,⁷ which identify Idaho as having one of the highest mental illness rates in the nation, along with low numbers of facilities and service providers, and high rates of suicide.

Suicide is the second most common cause of death among Idaho youth aged 10 to 19 years, with the most common cause being unintentional injury. ***Data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2015⁸ revealed that 10% of Idaho high school students reported that they had attempted suicide in the past year, and 20% had seriously considered attempting suicide, up significantly from previous years.*** Substance use rates are also high and often co-occur with other mental health needs.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Provide education and messaging to reduce stigma around treatment for mental health and substance abuse issues in schools, among health care providers, and among the general public
- ◆ Increase the use of innovative telehealth strategies to provide access to mental health and substance use treatment in rural areas
- ◆ Increase mental health services that are specifically for children and adolescents in the Treasure Valley
- ◆ Integrate behavioral health with medical health systems
- ◆ Continue to utilize alternative legal services such as drug court, mental health court, and other rehabilitative systems in the Treasure Valley to provide treatment rather than punitive incarceration, as warranted

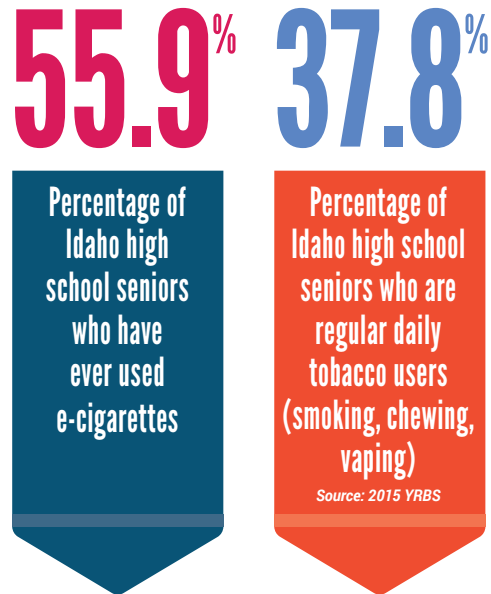
Tobacco

Rates of tobacco use remain unchanged in the Treasure Valley since 2011: More than 18% of adults in the Treasure Valley smoke, putting them at risk for serious health consequences.⁹

Cigarette smoking has decreased among teens, but use of e-cigarettes has increased dramatically: nearly one in three high school students use tobacco regularly, mostly through e-cigarettes.⁸

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Provide ongoing funding for existing community-based tobacco cessation classes
- ◆ Use innovative communication approaches, such as texting, social media, and other online media to promote health education and tobacco cessation programs
- ◆ Restrict the use of Idaho's Millennium Fund dollars to be spent only for tobacco prevention and control initiatives, and not for unrelated activities
- ◆ Enact municipal and state Tobacco 21 policies to increase the sale age of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, from 18 to 21
- ◆ Increase the state tobacco sales tax



Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity

In 2015, 65.2% of Idaho adults were overweight or obese.⁹ This is consistent with the national average, but varies substantially depending on where people live. **Nearly 3 in 4 adults (72.4%) were overweight or obese in Public Health District III (including Canyon and Gem counties), and 60.6% were overweight or obese in Public Health District IV (which includes Ada county).**

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Provide students opportunities to be physically active before, during and after school
- ◆ Establish workplace wellness programs to provide nutritious foods and encourage employees to be active
- ◆ Establish municipal and state nutrition standards for foods and beverages served in licensed childcare settings
- ◆ Support healthy school meals and Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards
- ◆ Provide affordable fresh fruit and vegetable options at convenience stores and other retail outlets
- ◆ Increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation, and the number of retail outlets accepting SNAP
- ◆ Develop "one-stop shops." Host community events that bring together multiple service providers (e.g., health, dental, nutrition) in convenient locations for residents
- ◆ Develop and promote Health in All Policies, which is a collaborative cross-sector approach that includes health considerations in policy decisions at state and local levels

26%
of Idaho high school students in 2015 were overweight or obese. This sets them up for lifelong health challenges.

Source: YRBS

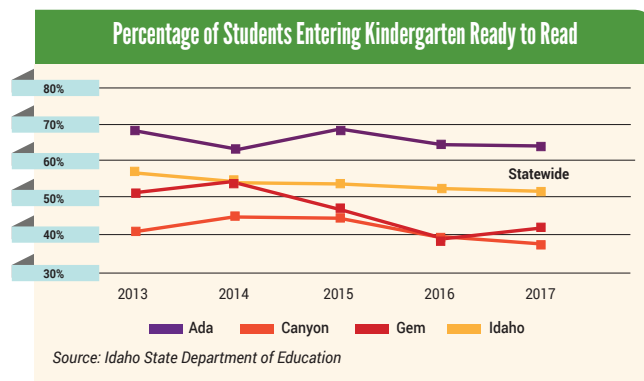
Education



Education is the most important issue facing the state, according to the 2017 Idaho Public Policy Survey.⁶ Yet Idaho schools spend less per student than any other state in the country.¹⁰ Likewise, the importance of education was mentioned repeatedly in focus groups. This included the need for access to affordable, quality educational opportunities, and assistance in creating cultural and family value for education as a tool for eliminating poverty.

Early Childhood Education and School Readiness

In the Treasure Valley, early learning options are uneven and high-quality care is often very expensive. A lack of affordable, high quality preschool options is having a direct impact on Idaho children's school readiness. *The percentages of students across Idaho who are reading at grade level when they enter kindergarten have slightly decreased over time, from 55.8% in 2013 to 51.1% in 2017.*



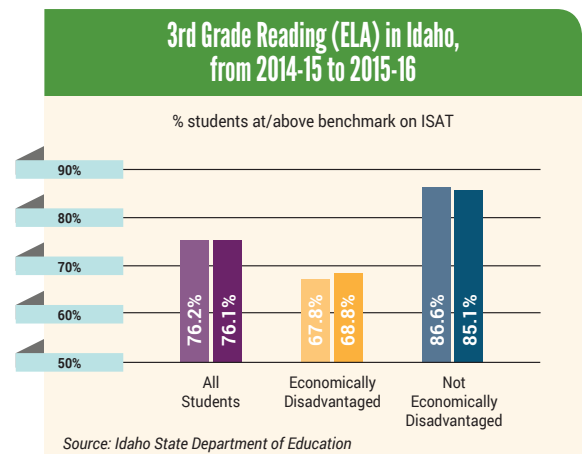
In 2017, only **51.1%** of students in Idaho were ready to read.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Advocate for the state utilization of federal funding for preschool
- ◆ Provide state funding for high quality preschool programming
- ◆ Expand the number of full-day preschool and kindergarten programs locally
- ◆ Scale up the Treasure Valley Education Partnership (TVEP) model to implement the Get Ready To Read screener and child care provider and teacher trainings for preschool programs
- ◆ Promote the utilization of IdahoSTARS resources for parents to aid in the selection of quality child care

K-12 Education

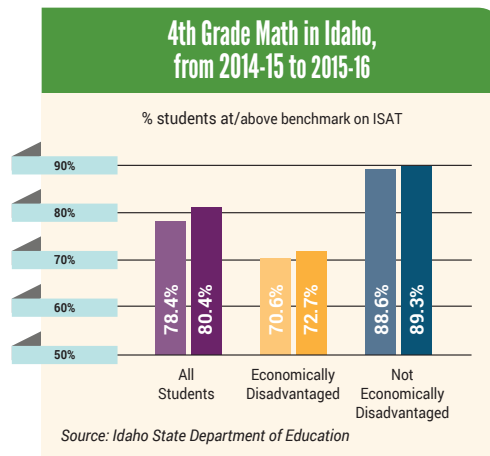
There is a well-known association between poverty and educational attainment.^{10, 11} Children raised in poverty have heightened risk factors, including emotional and social instability, chronic stressors, unsafe neighborhood conditions, malnutrition and poor health status, and many other factors that can make it difficult to succeed academically.¹²



Reading levels remain flat for Treasure Valley students. Third grade reading is a critical milestone in the educational performance of students. **Over time, the percentages of Treasure Valley 3rd graders reading at grade level have not changed much, revealing that 1 in 4 students are at risk of reading problems.** But there is a significant disparity, with 31% of economically-disadvantaged 3rd grade students not reading at grade level in 2015-16, versus 15% among those not economically disadvantaged.

Math proficiency is low but has slightly improved recently among 4th grade students, particularly for economically-disadvantaged students.

The poverty gap in math performance is evident in 4th grade, and widens by 8th grade. As of 2015-16, approximately 1 in 5 Idaho students in 4th grade were not at benchmark math levels. At middle school, 1 in 3 of the state's 8th grade students were not performing at benchmark levels.



Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Increase state and local funding to school districts: Idaho schools spent less per pupil on average, than any other state in the country in 2013-2014 and the average per-pupil expenditure in Idaho was \$3,500 less per student than the nationwide average.¹²
- ◆ Promise Partnerships and Community Schools: Promise Partnerships are aspirational neighborhoods committed to the success of children from cradle to career, leveraging local partnerships and resources to provide comprehensive supports for children, their families, and neighbors
- ◆ Provide high quality professional development for current teachers, including regional partnerships for professional development
- ◆ Ensure a healthy environment at all schools. Expand school breakfast programs, develop and implement strong school wellness policies, provide comprehensive school physical activity programs, and support Safe Routes to School programs
- ◆ Expand affordable out-of-school time activities

Opportunities Beyond High School

The Idaho State Board of Education has established a goal of 60% of young adults (ages 25 to 34) completing some form of post-secondary education or career or technical training, by 2020.¹³ However, **the rates for students going on to post-secondary education have been declining in recent years**, and was 46% in 2016.

Several Treasure Valley focus group participants pointed out that in addition to increasing college attendance, it is important to recognize that college isn't an option for everyone. Focus group participants recommended increasing opportunities for other types of post-high school programs. Suggestions included apprenticeship programs and technical certificates.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Solutions

- ◆ Invest in Career and technical education (CTE) during high school
- ◆ Promote the importance of post-secondary education and career planning before 8th grade
- ◆ Continue public funding support for the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship
- ◆ Provide a state match for college savings accounts
- ◆ Increase state funding to Idaho institutions of higher education
- ◆ Continue to offer state tax credit for college savings accounts, and increase the amount of the allowable deduction

30%

of students who entered community college in 2010 completed a credential within six years. Another 9% completed a credential at a four-year institution.

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Sponsors:

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