



# United Way of Treasure Valley

## 2020 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



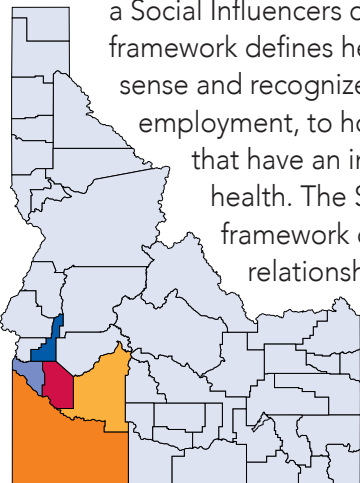
## INTRODUCTION

Every three years United Way of Treasure Valley (UWTV), an organization that fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community in the Treasure Valley, conducts a comprehensive assessment of the conditions, needs, and opportunities in the community. For the 2020 Community Assessment, UWTV is collaborating with Saint Alphonsus Health System, a mission-driven innovative health organization that strives to become the national leader in improving the health of communities and each person served. Together, we aim to help define the most pressing community needs, and drive the gathering and alignment of resources and implementation of needs-driven, evidence-based solutions to improve the well-being of the Treasure Valley's communities and residents.

This document was written during the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020. While the data included in this report is preliminary to the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is important to note that families from lower-income households are predicted to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

## APPROACH

This Community Assessment aims to examine the Ada, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, and Owyhee Counties through a Social Influencers of Health framework. This framework defines health in the broadest sense and recognizes numerous factors – from employment, to housing, to access to care – that have an impact on the community's health. The Social Influencers of Health framework considers the dynamic relationship between community members and the conditions in which they are born, grow, live, work, and age.<sup>1</sup>

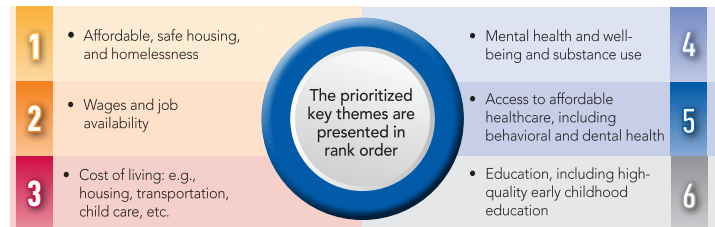


Quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (stories and observations) data were gathered from a variety of sources to understand the Social Influencers of Health and health outcomes that impact the Treasure Valley community.

## Priority Areas

Through the process of compiling and analyzing the data, a list of key themes, and significant health needs emerged. This list was then prioritized by key stakeholders, resulting in the following six community priorities:

### Top Six Significant Community Priorities



## KEY FINDINGS

### Demographics

**The population in the Treasure Valley has been steadily increasing over the years. While the residents are mostly White, there are areas that have higher percentages of Hispanic/Latino and immigrant/refugee populations.**

Idaho's population increased by 10.6% between 2010 and 2018, and Ada County experienced the largest growth in population (17.2%). Canyon and Owyhee counties have high percentages of Hispanic/Latino residents, at 25.1% and 26.6% respectively. The largest age group in the Treasure Valley is 5-17 years, representing one-fifth of the population. Elmore County is home to the largest population of veterans (23.6%).<sup>2</sup>

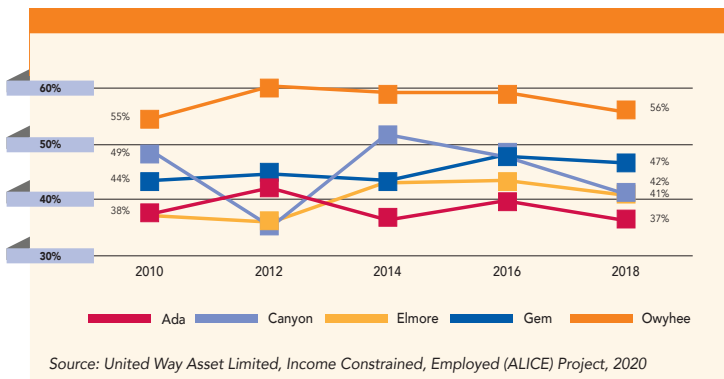
# Financial Stability



**While unemployment was relatively low at the time of publication (pre COVID-19), low wages in the Treasure Valley and income inequality continue to challenge households to meet basic needs.**

Low wage jobs dominate the landscape in Idaho with roughly 70% paying less than \$20 per hour.<sup>3</sup> Although Idaho adopted the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, the rate has not changed since 2009.<sup>4</sup> While federal poverty rates have been declining since 2008, the number of households struggling to meet basic needs has increased. Nationally, United Way coined the term "ALICE" to refer to Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed individuals, or individuals above the Federal Poverty Level who are working but unable to afford the basic necessities. With the exception of Ada County, nearly 1 in 2 households in the Treasure Valley are living in poverty or ALICE.<sup>3</sup>

### Percent of Households in Poverty or ALICE

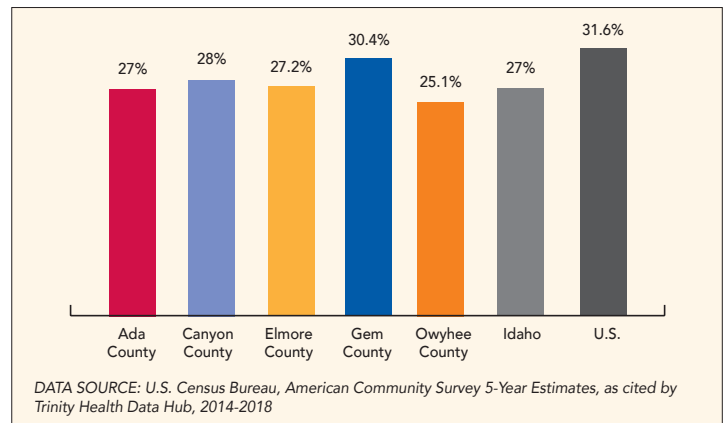


**The cost of housing in Idaho has risen for the 8th consecutive year<sup>5</sup> and has contributed to the lack of affordable housing and increase in homelessness in the Treasure Valley.**

Low wages and an increasing cost of living contribute to issues in housing and homelessness. Lack of affordable

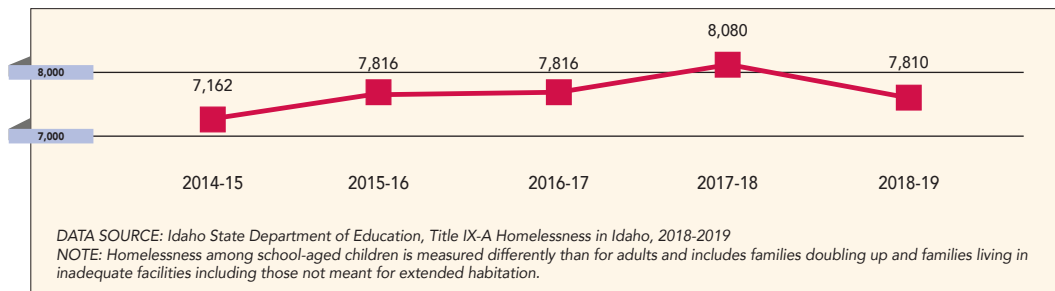
housing was a top concern among focus group, interview, and survey participants. Boise Metro Area's (Ada, Boise, Canyon, Gem, and Owyhee counties) rental vacancy rate for all property types was 1.55% in 2019. In 2019 alone, the median single-family home price in the Boise Metro Area increased by 20%.<sup>5</sup> Approximately 1 in 4 households in the Treasure Valley are cost-burdened, meaning they spend 30% or more of their income on rent or mortgage payments.<sup>2</sup>

### Percentage of Households That are Cost-Burdened



The most recent Point-in-Time (PIT) count of individuals experiencing homelessness (both sheltered and unsheltered) revealed that approximately 2,197 men, women, and children were experiencing homelessness on one night in the Treasure Valley. This is a 16.2% increase over 2018.<sup>6</sup> During the 2019 year, 9,255 individuals (including children) in Idaho sought services for homelessness.<sup>7</sup> Nearly 8,000 Idaho students were considered homeless in the 2018-19 school year.<sup>8</sup> The Treasure Valley accounts for almost half of all homeless students statewide.

## Number of Idaho Students Experiencing Homelessness



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### Due to lack of funding, public transportation services are often limited in geography, hours, and frequency around the Treasure Valley.

Less than 1% of Idahoans use public transportation to commute to work.<sup>2</sup> Idaho is one of two states in the nation with no state funding to support public transit options.<sup>9</sup> Nearly half of

survey respondents indicated that the availability of public transportation was of high concern, and contributed to the high cost of living. The lack of transportation options and increased commute time have challenged residents' ability to access goods and services.

## Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Recommendations

### Employment and Poverty

- Attract and incentivize business development in the Treasure Valley that can offer living wage, or higher wage, jobs such as recent efforts by Caldwell's Economic Development Department.
- Expand programming that encourages youth to go on to postsecondary education, including career and technical education for skilled careers, as recommended by the Idaho State Board of Education, in order to keep up with the growing demand in Idaho for a skilled workforce.
- Increase availability of affordable child care options for families so that families can afford child care and remain employed.

### Housing

- Increase affordable housing stock and innovative housing options.
- Increase the variety of income-based housing options through rent-controlled properties, properties accepting Housing Choice Vouchers, accessory dwelling units, and building higher-density housing.
- Support and promote the Housing First model, which prioritizes helping an individual/family

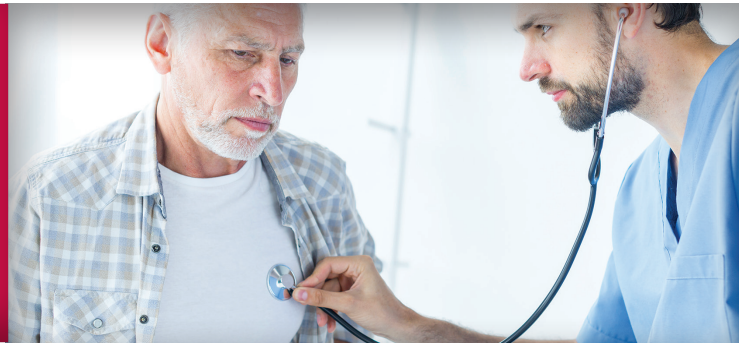
become housed before attending to other services needed.

### Transportation

- Support policies to limit rental application fees and require adequate notice of rent increases for tenants.
- Initiate municipal plans that require sidewalks be installed when new housing developments are built and require the construction of sidewalks around all schools, making it safer for students to walk to schools and alleviating congestion during school drop off and pick up times.
- Create a state funding mechanism to support the expansion of public transit services to promote easier access to public transit.
- Increase city funding from all cities to support the expansion of public transit accessibility, specifically increasing access to public transit outside of the city center.
- Expand busing hours to accommodate residents with nontraditional working hours.



# Health



**Within the Treasure Valley, access to health services varies widely, especially among communities of color where insurance coverage is much lower than it is in White communities.**

Many residents face barriers that prevent or limit access to needed health care services. Barriers include limited services, lack of awareness of services, cost, and insurance coverage. Race and ethnicity are associated with more limited access to primary care. Over 37% of Hispanic/Latino adults in Idaho had no consistent source of primary care in 2017.<sup>10</sup>

Approximately 15% of adults in the Treasure Valley have no health insurance. The Hispanic/Latino population in the Treasure Valley is disproportionately uninsured, at 34%.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, Idaho passed Medicaid Expansion,

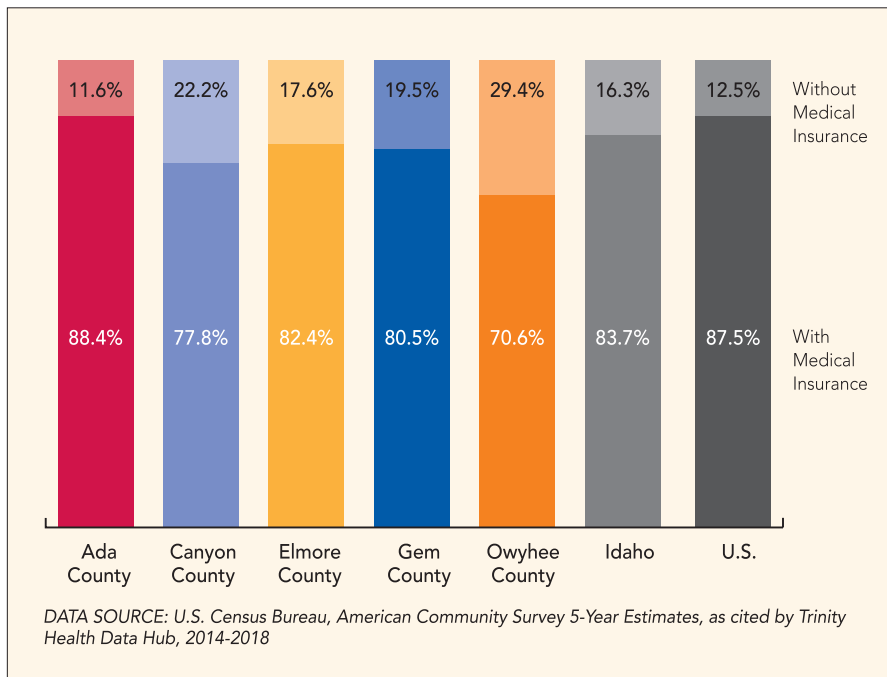
which could provide 91,000 Idahoans with healthcare coverage.<sup>11</sup>

**Idaho ranks high nationwide for mental illness and suicide rates.**

Mental health issues start young with one-fifth of Idaho children having experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).<sup>12</sup> On average, adults in the Treasure Valley experience approximately 3.7 poor mental health days per month.<sup>12</sup>

Over 21% of Idaho high school students reported they had seriously considered committing suicide in the past year.<sup>14</sup> In 2017, Idaho had the fifth highest suicide rate in the U.S. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Idaho residents ages 15-34.<sup>13</sup>

## Percent of Population Aged 18–65 Years With and Without Medical Insurance



## Deaths Due to Suicide, 2013–2017

Geography	Number of Deaths Due to Suicide
Ada	407
Canyon	196
Elmore	30
Gem	18
Owyhee	15
Idaho	1,734

DATA SOURCE: Idaho Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, Idaho Department of Health & Welfare; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; State Department of Education as cited by Suicide Prevention Program Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 2017

\*NOTE: Rates are unreliable when the rate is calculated with a numerator (number of deaths) of less than 20.

The drug overdose mortality rate in Idaho has nearly doubled since 2001, with a substantial increase in opioid-related deaths. In Idaho, 13.9% of adults are current smokers. With the exception of Ada County, all counties in the Treasure Valley have higher rates of smoking than statewide.<sup>13</sup> While adolescent use of cigarette, cigar, and chewing tobacco has declined dramatically in Idaho, more than one in five high school students reported using an e-cigarette or vape in the past 30 days.<sup>14</sup>

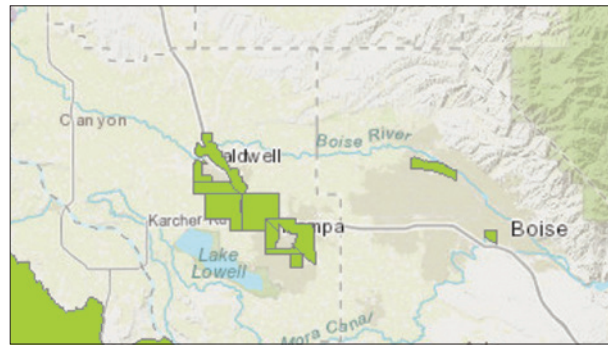
### **Obesity has not only persisted in the Treasure Valley, it has increased over time.**

Obesity has increased from 22.1% of Treasure Valley residents in 2004, to 28.5% in 2016.<sup>15</sup> Levels of physical activity directly relate to obesity. In Boise City, the percentage of adults engaging in physical activity has increased over the past few years, though it is still below the national average.<sup>16</sup>

Residents believed that the high cost of fresh foods and limited access to stores where they are sold were linked to poor diets. In the Treasure Valley, household food expenses increased 46% between 2013 and 2018,<sup>3</sup> highlighting the challenge of affordability.

There are 83,400 residents of the Treasure Valley who are not certain where they will get their next meal.<sup>17</sup>

### **Food Desert**



DATA SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, USDA – Food Access Research Atlas, 2015

NOTE: Food deserts are defined as areas where individuals have limited access to affordable or fresh foods.

## **Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Recommendations**



### **General Health and Well-Being**

- Provide the co-location of services to increase accessibility of existing resources, such as the Community School Strategy utilized by United Way of Treasure Valley and at 30 schools in southern Idaho.
- Provide integrated services where possible, such as behavioral health or dental health integrated into medical practices, etc.

### **Health Care Access**

- Implement coordinated care among providers and systems.
- Increase the number of Community Health Workers, Navigators, Peer Support Specialists, and Community School Coordinators to connect individuals and families with existing community resources.
- Increase provision and utilization of health services through Telehealth systems.

### **Behavioral Health**

- Increase access to school-based mental health services through innovative strategies such as private mental health providers co-locating at schools to provide individualized mental/behavioral health services.
- Incentivize behavioral health providers to practice in rural communities, or to work specifically with youth and adolescents.

### **Nutrition**

- Provide affordable fresh fruit and vegetable options at convenience stores and other neighborhood retail outlets.
- Attract and develop grocery stores and supermarkets in food deserts.
- Improve transportation access to grocery stores through innovative programs like the North Nampa Grocery Shuttle.

# Education



The Treasure Valley has a lack of affordable, high-quality early education and child care options. Idaho loses an estimated \$479 million annually due to child care issues.<sup>18</sup>

Idaho is one of four states where three and four-year-old children do not have access to state-funded preschool,<sup>19</sup> though 76% of Idaho voters support state investments in preschool.<sup>20</sup> Families with young children spend a significant portion of their income on child care. The annual price of having an infant in center-based care in Idaho is comparable to the average annual tuition of a four-year public university.<sup>21</sup> Given the lack of programs and the high cost of child care, the percentage of three and four-year-old children enrolled in early childhood programs is lower in the Treasure Valley compared to the U.S. overall.<sup>2</sup>

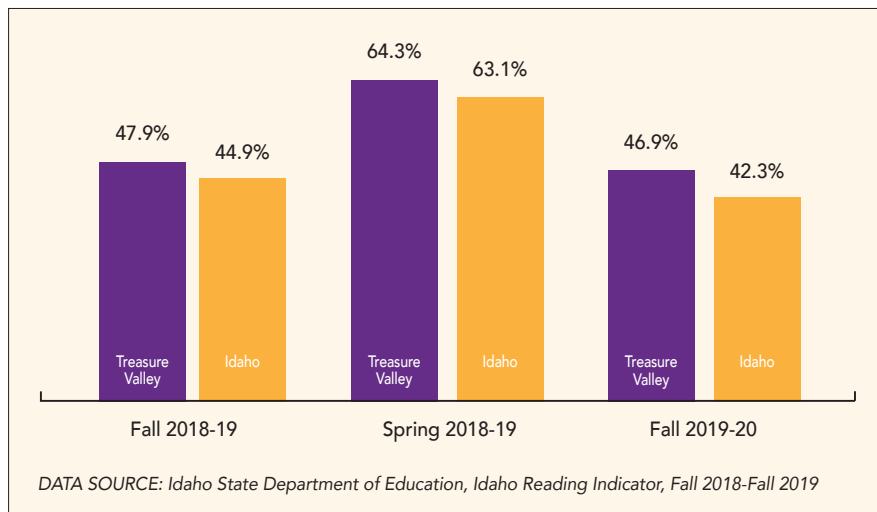
**Idaho’s K-12 assessment scores and high school graduation rates have remained relatively consistent for the last five years. Education funding has increased**

**slightly, but Idaho still ranks near the bottom in the nation for per-pupil spending.**

Less than half of beginning kindergarteners in the Treasure Valley are scoring at or above their grade level. Students who score below grade level in kindergarten not only start behind their peers, they often stay behind their peers. Overall, students are making significant growth during the academic year. However, from spring of one academic year to the fall of the next academic year,<sup>22</sup> many students are losing academic achievement gains. Statewide, 47% of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in 2016-17.<sup>23</sup>

While Idaho’s state budget for public education has increased since the Great Recession, Idaho still ranks 49th in annual per-pupil spending at \$7,486 versus the national average of \$12,201. Focus group participants explained that the lack of funding for education has led to bigger classroom sizes and an overall poorer quality of education in the Treasure Valley.

## Weighted Average Percentage of Kindergarten Students Scoring At or Above Grade Level on Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) Composite Score



## In 2018, only 48% of Idaho students started a postsecondary program within 12 months of graduating.<sup>25</sup>

This rate has remained fairly consistent over time, despite many efforts to increase postsecondary enrollment. Currently, only 26.9% of Idahoans aged 25+ hold a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>25</sup> Rising tuition has created a barrier

to postsecondary enrollment for Idaho students, and disproportionately impacts lower-income students.<sup>26</sup> As a result of increasing tuition, postsecondary education is inaccessible for some students in the Treasure Valley. Many are forced to take on increasing loads of student debt, and degree completion rates are impacted.

## Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Recommendations



### Early Childhood Education

- Increase state investment in high-quality preschool options to expand access for families.
- Increase the number of businesses offering on-site child care and preschool programs to increase access.
- Provide flexibility in hours of child care to match varying work schedules so parents with non-traditional work hours still have access to child care.

### K-12 Education

- Increase state funding for school districts.
- Increase state K-3 literacy funding which provides school districts with flexible funding to support strategies to increase third grade literacy.
- Implement the Community School Strategy at high-need schools to address family and student barriers to success, such as United Way of Treasure Valley and Saint Alphonsus Health System's work at Sacajawea Elementary in Caldwell; and Boise School District's Community Schools.

### Opportunities Beyond High School

- Include in district curriculum education/career planning to families before eighth grade through innovative programs like the Advancement Via Individual Determination programs in Boise and Vallivue School Districts.
- Offer more career internships for high school students.
- Increase availability of Career and Technical Education (CTE) during high school.
- Increase programs that offer basic needs support for current postsecondary students.

## Conclusion

While the Treasure Valley has many strengths and positive outcomes, the assessment has revealed various areas of need in the community. Conversations with community members and analysis of various data sources reveal the need to address the Social Influencers of Health to improve the overall well-being of the community. In order

to address these issues long-term, collective action around Policy, Systems, and Environmental changes will be needed. Data from this report and the six identified priority areas can guide the development of goals, objectives, strategies, and performance measures for community health improvement planning.

## Sponsors:

Saint Alphonsus Health System, Trinity Health Transforming Communities Initiative,  
and JPMorgan Chase & Co.

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**United Way  
of Treasure Valley**

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**This Executive Summary provides an overview of the key findings from the  
2020 Community Assessment.**

**For additional data, stories, recommendations, and assessment methods,  
please see the full report at:**

**<https://www.unitedwaytv.org/community-assessment-2020>**