

BACKGROUND and OVERVIEW

Community Research Partners (CRP) was formed in February 2000 as a nonprofit partnership of United Way of Central Ohio, the City of Columbus, and the John Glenn Institute for Public Service and Public Policy at The Ohio State University. CRP provides research, measurement, and evaluation services that advance human services and community development policy and practice in order to inform positive community change.

Community change is an ongoing process that requires:

- ▲ Understanding trends, conditions, assets, and needs;
- ▲ Establishing community and system goals and objectives for change;
- ▲ Increasing the capacity of funders and program providers to achieve measurable outcomes that contribute to community goals and objectives; and
- ▲ Evaluating, measuring, and describing progress toward change.

CRP's unique government, philanthropic, and university collaboration enables us to bring a comprehensive perspective to the process of community change.

Format of the Report

The Community Indicators Database Report is designed for a variety of users. Potential users include researchers, grant writers, funders, program developers, policy makers, planners, students, and the general public. There is enough detail on the data pages so that many users will not need to look further for information on community conditions. However, also included are graphs and charts, as well as bullet-point analysis and introductory summaries, for individuals seeking a quick overview of key concepts. The "links" pages provide roadmaps for those who want to delve further into the data.

The report is formatted so that each section, as well as each data page, can serve as a stand-alone resource. The following is the format of each of the six sections of the report:

Issue Area Introduction

- ▲ Overview of the data
- ▲ How the data can be used as indicators of quality of life
- ▲ Areas of progress and areas of concern

Data Pages (8-12 per issue area)

- ▲ Data in table format
- ▲ Data in graph/chart format
- ▲ Bullet-point analysis of the data topic
- ▲ Data sources, definitions, caveats, and explanations

Links

- ▲ Sources of additional data and information about the issue area

Evolution of the Community Indicators Database

Because we believe that data play an important role in the cycle of change, a core service of Community Research Partners is the collection, analysis, dissemination, and regular updating of original and secondary data on community conditions. Central to this service is the Community Indicators Database.

Work on the Central Ohio Community Indicators Database began with a review of over 30 similar projects. These included indicator, benchmarking, and database projects undertaken by cities, states, United Ways, federal government agencies, and national foundations. At the same time, CRP began the process of data collection and analysis.

In December 2000, Community Research Partners established the Community Database Advisory Group. This group (see Acknowledgments), which includes representatives of local government, academia, funders, and nonprofit service providers, gives advice to CRP on the design and implementation of the database. Members of the advisory group have also contributed data to the project and assisted in reviewing drafts of the report.

Next steps

This report represents the second phase of a planned multiphase process to fully develop the Community Indicators Database. The first phase of the Community Indicators Database was the 2001 United Way Caring Report. CRP provided data indicators for each of United Way's critical need areas. The third phase was launched in October 2005: the Franklin County DataSource, an interactive, online database that incorporates data on geographic subareas and neighborhoods for a variety of topics. DataSource may be accessed online at www.datasourcecolumbus.org. The Community Indicators Database Report will be posted on CRP's website (www.communityresearchpartners.org), and individual sections and data pages will be updated as new data become available.

What Is an Indicator?

CRP's review of indicator projects across the country provided a number of perspectives on the definition, purpose, and value of indicators. The following are a few examples.

▲ Indicators provide information about large systems.

The *Community Indicators Handbook* (Authors: Tyler Norris Associates, Redefining Progress and Sustainable Seattle) includes this definition of indicators:

"Indicators are small bits of information that reflect the status of larger systems... When we can't see the condition of something in its entirety—whether it's... a person, an educational system or a whole community—we need indicators to make these conditions visible. Indicators can't tell us everything, but they can tell us enough to make good decisions possible."

▲ Indicators help us see relationships among aspects of community life.

Redefining Progress, a nonprofit research organization, provides the following perspective on indicators:

"...indicators can bring many different sectors of the community together, foster new alliances and relationships, provide all citizens with a better compass for understanding community problems and assets... Unique partnerships for improving communities can be formed as community members begin to appreciate the linkages among seemingly unrelated aspects of community life."

▲ Indicators link the past to the future.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development describes the use of indicator data in this way:

“Societies measure what they care about. Measurement...provides an empirical and numerical basis for evaluating performance, for calculating the impact of our activities on...society and for connecting past and present activities to attain future goals.”

The Community Indicators Database is being developed with all of these viewpoints in mind. CRP hopes that the database will help the community to better understand its systems, gain new insights into the interrelatedness of community trends, and most important, develop consensus on data-driven goals for the future.

How the Indicators Were Selected

To prepare this report, CRP reviewed a great deal of data and then worked with the Community Database Advisory Group and other data experts to select a focused set of data topics for each of the following issue areas:

- ▲ Population
- ▲ Income and Employment
- ▲ Housing
- ▲ Education
- ▲ Health
- ▲ Safety

There are other issue areas that are sometimes included in indicator projects. These include measures of environmental quality, civic participation, arts/culture/recreation, transportation, and entrepreneurship/business climate. However, in order to produce the report in a timely manner, CRP chose to limit the scope of its research. Additional topics will be considered for inclusion as the Community Indicators Database evolves.

Criteria for data selection

CRP's research into other indicator projects helped to identify the most commonly used indicators for each of the issue areas. CRP also used the following criteria to select specific data:

1. Provide the best picture of community conditions and trends, both positive and negative;
2. Are reliable and accurate;
3. Are the newest data available;
4. Incorporate data that potential users will most frequently need and use;
5. Serve as a portal to a wider array of data and other data sources;
6. Introduce the user to new, interesting perspectives on an issue; and
7. Help to measure progress toward community goals and objectives.

Although it was not possible for every piece of data to meet all seven criteria, CRP believes that the report in its entirety is reflective of the criteria.

Database geography

The primary geographies used for data presentation are the City of Columbus, Franklin County, and Central Ohio/Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area. To provide a basis for comparison, many of the indicators also include data for other communities, the state of Ohio, and the U.S. A limited array of data is presented for other Franklin County jurisdictions, Central Ohio quadrants/market areas and the Columbus “older city.” The report also incorporates data from national and statewide studies that CRP believes can be helpful in understanding local conditions.

Age of the data

The process of collecting data from many sources is similar to trying to hit a moving target. New data are continually being released, and any report of this type will soon have certain indicators that are not the most up to date. This PDF file reflects the most current data available at the time of publication. CRP has established a process for updating all indicators in the database as new data become available. These updates will be made to the PDF file online and announced on our website.

Data labels and terminology

CRP chose to retain the terminology used by the original source when presenting data in this report. This is most evident in data labels for race and geography. For example, some data sources use the term “black,” while others use “African American.” There are also several variations on the concept of “central Ohio” used by CRP’s data sources. Definitions and explanations of the data labels are provided on the data pages.

Caveats about accuracy

CRP has been very careful in collecting, analyzing, and presenting data from a variety of sources to prepare this report. When questions arose regarding definitions, interpretation, or the numbers themselves, CRP checked with the original data source or other experts in the field. Data were not included in the report if there were questions about accuracy or validity. In addition, drafts of the data pages were reviewed and checked several times by CRP staff and experts from outside agencies. Although CRP has judged its data sources to be reliable, it was not possible to authenticate all data. If careful readers of the report discover data errors or typographical errors, CRP welcomes this feedback and will incorporate corrections into its periodic data updates.

Feedback

If you have comments, questions, or suggestions, or wish to have your name added to our mailing list for database updates and news, you can call CRP at 614.224.5917 or e-mail us at info@communityresearchpartners.org.

What the Indicators Can Tell Us about Quality of Life

Quality of Life Area	Data Pages
1. Communities are diverse and inclusive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household characteristics Racial and ethnic composition Age and gender Residential segregation Hate crimes
2. People have adequate incomes and financial resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic family budgets Household income Poverty Labor force participation Unemployment
3. The community has strong economic growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment profile Employment growth Location of employment growth
4. People have access to decent, safe, affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing condition Owner housing market Owner housing affordability Homeownership and race Market rate apartments Subsidized rental housing Rental housing affordability Homeless continuum of care
5. Children enter school ready to learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare and preschool education Economically disadvantaged students
6. Adolescents make successful transitions to adulthood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school graduation rate Proficiency test performance High school performance by gender and race Juvenile arrests and delinquency Juvenile detention Juvenile crime: race and gender
7. People have the skills necessary to live productive and happy lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational attainment Adult literacy
8. People are physically and mentally healthy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health insurance Infant health Childhood lead poisoning Behavioral health Suicide Leading causes of death Mortality rate by race and gender HIV and AIDS
9. People engage in healthy behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teen births Immunization Drug, tobacco, and alcohol use by youth Healthy lifestyles
10. People are free from abuse and neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic violence Child abuse and neglect
11. People are free from crime and violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violent crime Property crime Incarceration

How We Are Doing in Central Ohio: Areas of Progress and Areas of Concern

Population: Areas of Progress	Population: Areas of Concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population growth—Franklin County was one of only two urban counties in Ohio to experience positive population growth between 2002 and 2004. • Diversity—The population of Franklin County has grown more ethnically and racially diverse since 1990. • Residential segregation—Measures of residential segregation show decreased black/white segregation patterns since 1980 in the Columbus metropolitan area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration—From 1990-2004, Franklin County lost population to other counties in the MSA as a result of out-migration. • Central city population—The area of Columbus within the city's 1950 boundaries continued to lose population between 1990 and 2000. • Population characteristics—The Franklin County population is aging, and "persons 65 and older living alone" is the fastest-growing household type.

Income and Employment: Areas of Progress	Income and Employment: Areas of Concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic growth—The central Ohio economy gained 138,100 new jobs between 1994 and May 2005. • Unemployment—Despite an increase in 2004, Franklin County had the lowest unemployment rate of any urban county in Ohio and is below the state and national rates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic family budget—An estimated 175,000 persons in Franklin County are living in families with incomes insufficient to meet basic living costs. • Employment profile—55% of the jobs in Franklin County in 2004 are in the traditionally lower paying retail and service sectors. • Racial disparities—Poverty rates and unemployment rates remain significantly higher for blacks than for whites in Central Ohio.

Education: Areas of Progress	Education: Areas of Concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational attainment—An increasing percentage of adults are high school and college graduates. • Graduation rate—In 2004-2005, 57.5% of all high school students in Franklin County are in districts with rates above the state average. • School district report cards—Ten Franklin County districts were rated as "excellent" or "effective" for 2004-05. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial disparity—There is a large gap in 9th grade proficiency test passage rates between white and African American 10th graders. • Ohio Graduation Test—45% of all Franklin County students are in districts with below-average passage rates. • Literacy—119,706 Franklin County adults are estimated to be at the lowest literacy level.

Housing: Areas of Progress

- **Homeownership rate**—The homeownership rates in Columbus and Franklin County have increased since 2000.
- **Housing market**—The Columbus MSA housing market has been strong, with a 9.7% increase in home sales between 2003 and 2004.
- **Homelessness**—The number of persons entering the emergency shelter system in 2000 was 20% below 1997 levels, and new permanent supportive housing units have been opened.
- **Rental assistance**—The number of Section 8 rental vouchers available in Franklin County has increased by nearly 90% since 1995.

Housing: Areas of Concern

- **Owner housing affordability**—Over a quarter of Franklin County homeowners with a mortgage paid 30% or more of their household income toward owner costs in 2004.
- **Racial disparity**—The homeownership rate for black households in Franklin County is about 26% less than that of white households.
- **Renter housing affordability**—In 2004 a person needed an hourly wage of \$12.98 to afford Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Franklin County.
- **Subsidized housing units**—Public housing stock has been reduced in Franklin County by about 35% since 1995.

Health: Areas of Progress

- **Births to teens**—The number of teen births has declined dramatically since 1992.
- **Childhood lead poisoning**—The percentage of children screened found to have elevated blood lead levels dropped steadily between 1997 and 2004.
- **Use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs by youth**—There have been decreases in reported use among all age groups since 1997.
- **Suicide**—Deaths have dropped steadily since 1994.

Health: Areas of Concern

- **Infant mortality**—Rates for black infants remain over two times that for whites.
- **Four of five leading causes of death**—Columbus and Franklin County death rates are above Ohio and U.S. rates.
- **HIV/AIDS**—New diagnoses of HIV show a shift to women and minorities.
- **Overweight**—More than half of the Franklin County adult population is overweight.

Safety: Areas of Progress

- **Domestic violence**—The number of charges filed is down significantly from 1996 levels.
- **Child abuse and neglect**—The number of substantiated/indicated cases declined from 2001-2002.
- **Juvenile detention**—Franklin County JDC admissions are down, and admissions to diversion programs have increased.
- **Violent crime**—Despite recent increases, numbers are below mid-1990s levels.

Safety: Areas of Concern

- **Juvenile delinquency**—Franklin County delinquent and unruly cases increased over 2003 and 2004.
- **Violent and property crimes**—Numbers have fluctuated above mid-1990s levels.
- **Incarceration**—Numbers of adults incarcerated have increased, and offenders are disproportionately African American.
- **Substance abuse and crime**—State studies show 87% of males entering state prison have a history of drug abuse.

Technical Notes

Data Analysis

A bullet-point analysis on each data page summarizes conclusions that can be drawn from the data tables and graphs and also provides additional information on the topic.

U.S. Census Bureau Products

The Community Indicators Database Report incorporates data from the following Census Bureau products:

▲ Decennial Census (U.S. Census of Population and Housing)

The decennial census occurs every 10 years to count the population and housing units for the entire United States. The census short form asks a limited number of questions of all people and housing units, and is often referred to as 100-percent questions. The long form asks more detailed information from approximately a 1-in-6 sample, and includes the 100-percent questions as well as questions on education, employment, income, ancestry, homeowner costs, units in a structure, number of rooms, plumbing facilities, etc. Data from the short form data (SF-1) for Census 2000, which was released for Ohio in June 2001, the long form data (SF-3), which was released in the summer of 2002, as well as data from previous decennial censuses, are included in the Community Indicators Database Report.

▲ American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing, annual survey that the Census Bureau plans will replace the long form in the 2010 Census. Full implementation of the survey is planned for 2003 in every county of the United States if Congress allocates the necessary funding. Since 1996, the Census Bureau has been testing the ACS in about 50 cities and counties in the U.S., including Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio. ACS data are collected by mail with follow-up calls and visits from Census Bureau staff if a household does not respond. ACS data estimates have a 90 percent confidence interval and can be interpreted roughly as providing 90 percent certainty that the true number falls between the lower and upper bounds. There are some differences in how questions are asked in the ACS and the decennial census. These are explained on the U.S. Census website.

▲ Census 2000 Supplementary Survey

The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey reports the results of an operational test conducted as part of Census 2000. The survey used the American Community Survey questionnaire to collect demographic, social, economic, and housing data. These annual estimates for 2000 are based on monthly samples of about 58,000 households in 1,203 counties. Information from the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey is available for the United States as a whole, the 50 states, and the District of Columbia.