

Profiles of Population Groups

This section of the report provides a profile of five population groups that were frequently cited by key informants and focus group participants as groups that the community needs to pay particular attention to in human services planning: persons in poverty/working poor; children and teens; older adults; immigrants and ex-offenders. These profiles pull together information from the other sections of the report along with additional data that describe the trends, needs and service gaps of each group.

Donor and Agency Web Survey

A total of 566 web survey responses were received from United Way agency staff, volunteers, donors and others. Table PG-1 shows the percentages of respondents who thought the population groups listed in the survey had either “significant” or “some” unmet service needs.

Table PG-1
Unmet Service Needs of Population Groups
Donor and Agency Web Survey

Group	Significant Needs	Some Needs
People living in poverty/low-income	60.6%	22.6%
Working poor	60.4%	26.3%
Homeless persons	59.0%	24.9%
Children	55.8%	29.9%
Unemployed persons	47.3%	29.2%
Single parents with children	43.6%	38.7%
People with limited English skills	43.3%	32.0%
Grandparents raising grandchildren	42.2%	36.6%
People with disabilities	41.0%	36.6%
Seniors	36.7%	39.2%
Ex-offenders re-entering society	36.2%	27.9%
African Americans	34.8%	35.3%
Central city residents	33.7%	38.2%
Families	33.2%	43.3%
New immigrants	32.3%	31.8%
Youth/teens	31.8%	40.3%
Hispanics/Latinos	29.3%	37.8%
Somali	27.7%	33.0%
Native Americans	18.6%	31.8%
Middle-income households	18.0%	42.2%
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender	16.4%	32.9%
Asians	11.5%	37.8%
Suburban residents	3.7%	24.4%

N=566 survey respondents; not all respondents answered all questions

People in Poverty & the Working Poor: Current Conditions and Trends

In every state, a significant number of working families cannot earn enough income to meet basic families' needs for housing, food, clothing, transportation, health care, and child care; in fact, many working families earn less than the federal poverty threshold.

— Working Poor Families Project,
Brandon Roberts + Associates

In July 2003...there were 4.6 million part-time workers who wanted full-time jobs but were unable to find them. There were also 470,000 discouraged workers (persons who sought work...but had given up due to lack of prospects), and another, larger group (just below one million) who face some barrier between them and the labor force, such as child care or transportation.

— Labor Market Left Behind,
Economic Policy Institute, September 2003

Employment & Income

- **Three years of job loss.**

After gaining 192,700 jobs from 1991-2001, Central Ohio lost about 17,000 jobs in 2002 and 2003. The only sectors to have a net gain in employment during this period were personal services and government. The greatest job losses were in the manufacturing; transportation, information and utilities; professional and business services; and the retail sectors. (Source: Greater Columbus Blue Chip Economic Forecast)

- **Service occupation wages insufficient to meet basic family budget.**

In 2002, the mean hourly wage for a worker in a service occupation in the Columbus MSA was \$11.42, or \$23,754 a year for a full-time job. In 2002, an income of \$36,200 was required for a family of four to be at 200 percent of the federal poverty level, the income necessary to meet basic needs. (Sources: Economic Policy Institute; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; HHS Poverty Guidelines)

- **Most job growth in suburban areas, while most low-income residents live in central city.**

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission 2000-2025 projections indicate that, while the Columbus central business district will continue to be the most dense employment center in central Ohio, most new jobs will occur in the areas outside the I-270 outerbelt. This is a continuation of 1990-2000 job growth patterns, when over 90,000 jobs were created in northern suburban Franklin County, creating a spatial mismatch between job locations and the location of low-income persons in need of employment living in the central city of Columbus. (Source: Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission)

- **Most women with young children are in the labor force.**

In 2000, 68.0 percent of Franklin County women with children under age six were in the labor force, an increase of 35 percentage points since 1970. The 2000 Franklin County figure is higher than Ohio (67.5 percent) and the U.S. (63.5 percent). (Source: Census 2000)

- **After sharp decrease, recent increases in households receiving public assistance.**

As a result of the implementation of welfare reform, the number of Franklin County assistance groups (typically, a household) receiving Ohio Works First public assistance fell from 15,339 in 1998, to 10,546 in 2002, a decrease of 31.2 percent. However, between state fiscal years 2002 and 2003, demand for all major forms of public assistance increased in Franklin County. The sharpest increase was for non-public assistance recipients receiving Food Stamps, which increased by 21.1 percent, from 27,672 assistance groups in 2002, to 33,504 assistance groups in 2003. (Source: Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services)

- **Poverty rate is down, but number of persons in poverty unchanged.**

The poverty rate decreased from 13.0 percent in 1990 to 11.6 percent in 2000. However, because of the population increase, the number of persons in poverty in 2000 (121,843) was about the same as in 1990 (121,475). The group with the highest poverty rate is female-headed households with children under 5 years, with a poverty rate of 42.9 percent. There are 38,477 children under age 18 who are living below poverty in Franklin County. (Source: Census 2000)

- **Many families with income inadequate to meet basic needs.**

National research found that an income of at least 200 percent of poverty (about \$36,000 a year for a family of four) is required for families to avoid serious hardships related to food, healthcare, housing or child care. It is estimated that as many as 76,766 Franklin County families have incomes below this level. (Source: Census 2000; HHS Poverty Guidelines)

- **Persons of color are more likely to be low-income.**

Census data indicate that black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian persons are more likely than the white population to be unemployed, low-income or living in poverty. (Source: United Way 2003 Racial Disparities Report)

Education

- **Barriers to college access for low-income Ohio students.**

The I Know I Can program reports that Columbus low-income students enrolled in college at a rate of 49 percent, compared to 78 percent for high-income students. A national assessment of state performance in higher education gave Ohio an "F" in higher education affordability, finding that the state invests very little in financial aid for low-income students and families. (Sources: Ohio Board of Regents; I Know I Can; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education)

Housing

- **Many renter households pay more than half of income for housing.**

In 2003, a full-time worker needed to earn a wage of \$12.31 an hour, or \$25,600 a year, to afford rent and utilities for a two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent in Franklin County. In 2000, 117,615 households had incomes below \$25,000. Of the 189,165 renter households in Franklin County in 2000, 32,443 (17.2 percent) paid gross rent that was 50 percent or more of household income. (Sources: Census 2000; National Low Income Housing Coalition)

- **Family homelessness increasing.**

In 2003, providers of services to homeless families served 656 families with an estimated 1,500 children, an 18 percent increase in families served compared to 2002. In mid-2003, the demand for family shelter was 25 percent more than during same period in 2002. (Source: Community Shelter Board)

Health

- **About 100,000 residents lack health insurance coverage.**

The 2000 Community Health Risk Assessment found that at 8.5 percent (90,863 persons) of the Franklin County population lacked health insurance. This is below U.S. average uninsured rates of 16 percent. Young adults, non-white persons and persons below 200 percent of poverty are more likely to lack health insurance. (Source: 2000 Columbus/Franklin County Community Health Risk Assessment)

- **Health status of low-income persons worse.**

The 2000 Columbus/Franklin County Health Risk Assessment found that lower income households reported their health status to be worse than higher income households; were less likely to have visited a dentist in the past year; and were more likely to use alcohol and be at risk for depression. (Source: 2000 Columbus/Franklin County Health Risk Assessment)

Key Informant and Focus Group Comments

Needs of people in poverty and the working poor were cited by 30 percent of the 50 key informants (see Appendix C). Ten percent cited a service gap to address the needs of working poor and 48 percent cited the increasing poverty, unemployment/ underemployment as a trend that might affect human services delivery. These issues were also mentioned in 9 of the 18 focus groups (see Appendix D). The following are examples of the comments about these population groups:

We have a national mandate of welfare to work, reduced welfare rolls, but inability of the working poor to access or afford housing, hunger, health care and child care is challenging the national policy direction to sustain one's employment.

— Key informant interview

Some things are not as fundable. Employability development is needed. A lot of people don't know how to get a job. Need programs that teach people how to get and keep a job; this is important. Builds people's self esteem, but it's not as fundable as a computer training class.

— Key informant interview

People don't see success in their future if they're in low paying jobs.

— Focus group participant

People who work on minimum wages have to work 50-60 hours a week to afford housing and transportation. Overtime affects quality of life, time with kids and coping time.

— Focus group participant

Children & Teens: Current Conditions and Trends

In 2000, children below the age of 18 made up 25.1 percent (268,321) of the total Franklin County population. Of these, 91,710 children are in the age group of 0-5 years, and 106,951 children are in the age group of 6-12 years. There are 68,660 children in the age group 13-17 years.

— Census 2000

Maternal and Child Health

- **More mothers receiving early prenatal care, but barriers to access for uninsured women.**

In 2001, 87.6 percent of Franklin County mothers began prenatal care within the first three months. However, wait times for initial prenatal appointments are increasing across the community at clinics that accept uninsured women. (Sources: Ohio Department of Health; Franklin County Council on Health Mothers and Babies, Wait Time Study)

- **Infant mortality rate is dropping.**

The infant mortality rate for the Franklin County population was 7.8 per 1,000 live births (133 deaths) in 2001 compared to 10.8 (178 deaths) in 1990. (Source: Ohio Department of Health)

- **More children receiving scheduled immunization.**

In 2002, 84.5 percent of all Franklin County children received the recommended 4:3:1 immunization series coverage by age 3, compared to 78.4 percent in 2000. (Source: National Immunization Survey)

- **Fewer children with elevated blood lead.**

The percent of Franklin County children age 0-72 months screened who were found to have elevated blood levels of lead fell from 8.3 percent in 1995 (868 children) to 1.3 percent (145 children) in 2002. (Source: Ohio Department of Health)

- **Low birth weight births.**

The rate of low birth weight births in 2001 was 8.2 percent compared to 7.4 percent in 1990. The rate was 4-6 percentage points greater for black births than for other racial and ethnic groups. Hispanics had the lowest rate of low birth weight births. (Source: Ohio Department of Health)

- **Significant racial disparities in maternal and child health indicators.**

Black infant mortality rates are double those of whites and substantially higher than any other racial group. (Source: United Way 2003 Racial Disparities Report)

Childcare

- **Unmet needs for subsidized childcare.**

In 2002, Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services indicated that there were 18,563 children authorized for subsidized childcare in Franklin County. FCDJFS reported shortages in childcare service for evening hours and weekends and children with special needs. (Source: Franklin County Children Services)

- **Grandparents are caregivers.**

In 2000 there were 17,163 grandparents living with a grandchild under 18, and 8,388 were responsible for the care of their grandchildren. (Source: *Census 2000*)

Low-Income Students

- **More children eligible for free and reduced lunch program.**

In the 2002-03 school year, 33.6 percent of all students in Franklin County public schools (56,450 students) were eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program, compared to 30.0 percent in 1999-2000 school year. (Source: *Ohio Department of Education*)

- **Steep drop in students from families receiving Ohio Works First assistance.**

In the 1999-2000 school year, 15.6 percent of all students (25,575) were in families receiving benefits, compared to only 7.6 percent (12,697) in 2002-2003. (Source: *Ohio Department of Education*)

- **Low-income students change schools more frequently.**

Student mobility research found that highly mobile students in Columbus Public Schools are more likely to be from low-income families. Student mobility is associated with lower proficiency test scores and increased absence and discipline problems. (Source: *Columbus Public Schools Student Mobility Research Project, Community Research Partners*)

Family Violence

- **Children Services' system handling more difficult cases.**

In 2002, Franklin County Children Services served 27,601 children, a 10.4 percent increase over 2001. FCCS investigations found 2,536 substantiated or indicated cases of child abuse and neglect in 2002. Children in protective placement represent an increase from 13.4 percent of all children served in 1995, to 18.1 percent in 2002. (Source: *Franklin County Children Services*)

- **Domestic violence is one out of every five criminal misdemeanor charges.**

In 2002 there were 6,157 domestic violence charges and 561 violation of protection order charges filed in Franklin County. These cases represented nearly one out of five criminal misdemeanor charges in Franklin County in 2002. (Source: *Franklin County Clerk of Courts*)

Teen Risk Behavior

- **Fewer births to teens.**

The percent of all Franklin County births to females age 10-17 years decreased from 5.1 percent (816 total) in 1995 to 3.4 percent (588 total) in 2001. (Source: *Ohio Department of Health*)

- **Decreased alcohol use by youth.**

In 2000, 18 percent of Franklin County youth in grades 6 through 12 report drinking alcohol regularly (at least once a month). Twenty-four percent of ninth and tenth graders and 38 percent of juniors and seniors reported drinking alcohol regularly. These figures were all lower than in 1997, consistent with national trends in reduced use of alcohol by teens. (Source: *2000 PPAAUS; Monitoring the Future study*)

- **Decreases in most types of drugs by youth; increases in use of designer drugs.**

The incidence of regular marijuana, cocaine and steroid use among Franklin County youth in grades 6-12 was down in 2000, consistent with national trends in teen drug use. About 12 percent of those surveyed in 2000 reported regular use of marijuana; about one percent of high school youth reported regular use of cocaine; and about one-half percent of those surveyed reported regular use of steroids. About three percent of high school students reported using “designer drugs” (ecstasy, Special K, GHB) at least monthly. (Sources: 2000 PPAAUS)

- **Decrease in tobacco use by youth.**

Teen smoking has decreased in Franklin County and nationally. Fourteen percent of Franklin County youth in grades 6-12 reported smoking once a month or more in 2000, well below the 23 percent of teens in the U.S. who reported smoking cigarettes daily to once or twice a month. (Source: 2000 PPAAUS; *Monitoring the Future study*)

- **Decreases in youth in juvenile detention.**

In 2002 there were 3,802 admissions to the Juvenile Detention Center, down from 5,428 in 1997. There has been a significant decrease in admissions to JDC for the more serious felony crime, with a decline of 36.5 percent between 1995 and 2002. The number of Franklin County youth bound over to adult court decreased from 57 in 1997 to 21 in 1999. These decreases coincide with significant increases in the number of youth participating in early intervention and diversion programs. (Source: *Franklin County Court of Common Pleas*)

- **Increases in youth delinquent and unruly cases.**

The total number of delinquent and unruly youth cases (truancy is included in both types of cases) in Franklin County courts has increased each year since 1996. In 2002, there were 9,729 delinquency cases and 1,457 unruly cases handled by the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas in 2002, an 8.6 percent increase from 2000, and a 27.0 percent increase since 1996. Delinquency cases make up about 85 percent of the total each year. (Source: *Franklin County Court of Common Pleas*)

Key Informant and Focus Group Comments

Needs of children were cited by 22 percent of the 50 key informants (see Appendix C). Education/early childhood education was identified as a need by 38 percent, and child care was identified by 14 percent, of interviewees. Twelve percent cited child care as a service gap and 10 percent cited gaps related to education. Another 4 percent identified mentoring/substitute parenting as a gap. These issues were also mentioned in 11 of the 18 focus groups (see Appendix D). The following are examples of the comments about children and teens:

We are going to need a more integrated approach to solving the needs of families and children.

— Key informant interview

Children's issues [are important, including] abuse, neglect, and unruly and delinquent behaviors. Parents are incapable of effective parenting and need more parenting classes, anger management classes, to help people understand the responsibility of parenting.

— Key informant interview

In early education, there is a complete gap above where the subsidy cuts off for the very poor. There's a disincentive to achieve self-sufficiency. People have to choose between losing the subsidy and being productive at work, and paying a third of their income for childcare.

— Key informant interview

There is no place of children with mental health issues to go. Seven hundred children are currently on wait list for mental health services.

— Key informant interview

We need pre-school and after school opportunities. There is a general unavailability of affordable child care for infants and toddlers.

— Key informant interview

Violence is affecting kids' development.

— Key informant interview

We need mentoring and inter-generational programs to help youth with parenting education, role modeling and help transfer values between youth and seniors.

— Focus Group participant

A dangerous group is the 17 to 25 year old population that has nothing to do. We should tap those people into job training and literacy programs. They need to understand that there are viable alternatives if they are not going to college.

— Focus Group participant

Programs are needed for girls raised by single fathers and boys raised by single mothers to help with their social development.

— Focus Group participant

There should be more interaction between suburban and inner city youth.

— Focus Group participant

We need programs for homeless youth and youth aging out of foster care.

— Focus Group participant

There should be more job opportunities for youth, and job advertisements exclusively for teens.

— Focus Group participant

Older Adults: Current Conditions and Trends

There are over 4,000 senior households not residing within an age-restricted community, but would prefer to reside within one. Half of the 18 submarkets in Franklin County are without a congregate care facility, and over two-thirds of the assisted living facilities are located within the northern half of Franklin County.

— Senior Housing Needs Assessment,
The Danter Company

Lack of money for prescriptions is making our elderly people...self-medicate. The elderly patient is deciding how and when to take their medication and not following the doctor's orders. They think that this way they are extending their meds.

— 2002 Franklin County Health Assessment,
Osteopathic Heritage Foundation

- **A growing older adult population.**

Franklin County has 104,306 residents (9.8 percent of total population) age 65 and older. There were 47,575 residents age 75 or over in 2000, a 26.9 percent increase since 1990. The median age of the population increased from 30.8 years in 1990 to 32.5 in 2000. By 2020, the Franklin County population age 65 and over is projected to reach 152,060, a 45.7 percent increase over the 2000 figure. (Source: Census 2000; Ohio Department of Development)

- **Older adults living alone.**

In 2000, there were 32,651 persons age 65 and older in Franklin County living alone. (Source: Census 2000)

- **More older adults in the labor force.**

In 2000, 15.2 percent of Franklin County residents age 65 and older were in the labor force (15,898), compared with 13.5 percent in 1990. The 2000 Franklin County figure is higher than Ohio (12.6 percent) and the U.S. (13.3 percent). (Source: Census 2000)

- **Elderly poor.**

The elderly as a group are less likely to be poor than other types of households. According to Census 2000, 8.6 percent of population over the age of 65 is living below the poverty level. This compares to a 11.6 percent poverty rate for all Franklin County residents. (Source: Census 2000)

- **Grandparents as caregivers.**

In 2000, there were 17,163 grandparents in Franklin County living with a grandchild under 18, and 8,388 were responsible for the care of grandchildren. (Source: Census 2000)

- **Disabled older adults.**

Among persons (non-institutionalized) age 65 and over in Franklin County, 40.5 percent (40,127) reported a disability in 2000. (Source: Census 2000)

- **More older Ohioans receiving support services in their home.**

Ohio has experienced a continued shift in the way older Ohioans receive long-term care. Ohio's Medicaid home care program for older people, PASSPORT, increased from serving 6,000 individuals in 1992 to 24,500 in 2001. (Sources: Scripps Gerontology Center, May 2003)

Key Informant and Focus Group Comments

Needs of the older adult population were cited by 8 percent of the 50 key informants (see Appendix C). Twelve percent cited a service gap to address the needs of elderly and disabled, and 8 percent cited the growing population as a trend that might affect human services delivery. These issues were also mentioned in 11 of the 18 focus groups (See Appendix D). The following are examples of the comments about the older adult population:

There is a clear demographic trend in the aging population. In the next ten years, the baby boomers will have greater needs, at exactly the same time that government benefits will be in jeopardy.

— Key informant interview

In 2005, elder care in nursing homes will cost the Ohio budget \$18 billion. What to do about elder care is a huge issue. Elder care will be driving the state budget for years.

— Key informant interview

We have a waitlist for senior citizens with developmental disabilities to get into Goodwill sheltered workshops. There is a lack of funding to support them.

— Key informant interview

How much money is spent on elderly persons who are confined to their homes? There are transportation needs for the elderly.

— Key informant interview

Senior programs need to provide activities, education, exercise, information about community services, and socialization that helps seniors remain strong in the community.

— Focus Group participant

The aging population is a trend. A lot of resources are pulled and used by this population but they have expertise and we are not utilizing their strengths. More individuals in the aging population would love to be involved.

— Focus Group participant

The elderly need access to housing areas that have not been taken over by young individuals with mental illness. We need affordable housing in safe, well-lit neighborhoods.

— Focus Group participant

Seniors need help maintaining their homes and seasonal chores.

— Focus Group participant

Immigrants & New Americans: Current Conditions and Trends

Curtis McGuire, a black entrepreneur, has lived in Northland since 1986. He has witnessed many changes...His freight management company, Redleg's, is based in a building that now has a health center for Somali refugees. He has had to reach out to the Hispanic and Somali communities to recruit workers. 'We are a city of new immigrants,' says [Mayor Michael] Coleman, who just cut the ribbon for a Somali-owned mall. 'That is a good thing.'

— *The 'everyman' of America,*
USA TODAY, December 17, 2003

The U.S. Midwest is identified as a region of high growth in undocumented workers. It is estimated that there are about 50,000 to 75,000 undocumented immigrants in the Midwest.

— *Undocumented Immigrants: Facts and Figures,*
Urban Institute Immigration Studies

- ***Increasing racial and ethnic diversity.***

Franklin County is becoming an increasingly diverse community. Since 1990, the growth rates of the black or African American, American Indian, Asian and Hispanic populations far surpass that of the white population. (Source: Census 2000)

- ***Many new immigrants.***

According to Census 2000, there were 64,487 foreign born residents, representing six percent of the Franklin County population. Of these, 38,745 are new immigrants who entered the U.S. between 1990 and 2000. Immigrant groups over the past decade include Somali, Hispanic and refugees from the former Soviet Union. Providers of services to new immigrants indicate that the numbers are much higher than those documented by the census. For example, estimates of the Somali population in Franklin County by service providers and community organizations range from 15,000-30,000 in 2003. (Source: Census 2000; Community Research Partners)

- ***Many different languages spoken by Franklin County residents.***

In 2000, 89,198 Franklin County residents spoke a language other than English at home. Of these, 17,409 speak English "not well" or "not at all". Of this group, 41.5 percent speak Spanish at home; 17.8 percent speak other Indo-European languages; 27.2 percent speak Asian or Pacific Islander languages; and 14.5 percent speak other languages. (Source: Census 2000)

- ***Immigrants living in poverty.***

Of the foreign born residents in Franklin County, 12,561 (19.5 percent) are living below the poverty level. This compares to the 11.6 percent Franklin County poverty rate in 2000. (Source: Census 2000)

- ***Immigrants and refugees receiving public assistance.***

In December 2003, refugee or immigrant Ohio Works First assistance groups represented 8.5 percent of the entire caseload and 15.5 percent of the adult caseload. This included refugees and immigrants of all nationalities. (Source: Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services)

Key Informant and Focus Group Comments

Needs of the immigrant population were cited by 28 percent of the 50 key informants (see Appendix C). Immigration was identified as a trend by 38 percent of those interviewed, and 20 percent cited increasing diversity as a trend that might affect human services delivery. Six percent cited a service gap to address the needs of immigrants. These issues were also mentioned in 13 of the 18 focus groups (see Appendix D). The following are examples of the comments about the immigrant and new American population:

Columbus' immigrant population is increasing, and this population brings special kinds of needs. At the same time, we need to understand that there may be impediments to human service delivery that are culturally specific.

— Key informant interview

In the Somali culture they discipline their children in a 'don't spare the rod' way that by this culture's standards may be child abuse.

— Key informant interview

There is a greater need for ESL services and for staff training for agencies to work with immigrants. We need greater community organization and outreach

— Key informant interview

We need employer accommodation of non-English speaking workers. Many Latinos are willing to work at low paying jobs.

— Key informant interview

There is a need for translation of documents and conversations.

— Key informant interview

Refugees have needs all across the seven critical areas of UW needs. Children are in at-risk, poor neighborhoods. Parents don't have the opportunity to learn English like their children do, so there is a generation gap. There are isolation issues and language barriers as related to laws, rights and culture.

— Focus Group participant

We need more interpreters relating to health care and HIV services, preventive health care, mental health care and drug and alcohol services.

— Focus Group participant

Somali families need more housing choices to accommodate 10-12 kids.

— Focus Group participant

Child abuse and spouse abuse are problems.

— Focus Group participant

Ex-Offenders: Current Conditions and Trends

There were 22,769 prisoner releases to Ohio counties in 2001. Of these, 10.5 percent (2,517) were to Franklin County. Of the total releases from Ohio prisons in 2001, 62 percent were released to supervision.

— *A portrait of Prison Reentry in Ohio*,
Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center

There is a lot of churning in and out of prisons in Ohio...It is highly disruptive of families and community life...It poses enormous public-safety risks as people come out of prison unprepared to return home, with reduced attachments to jobs and families.

— Jeremy Travis, National Institute of Justice,
in "Released Inmates Flooding Cities",
The Columbus Dispatch, November 20, 2003

- **Prison population predominately male and black.**

In state fiscal year 2002, 21,787 persons were committed to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. Of this group, 45.9 percent were black males; 40.4 percent were white males; 5.7 percent were black females; 5.7 percent were white females; and 2.2 percent were of another race. Table PG-1 provides additional information about the characteristics of persons in the Ohio prison system. (Source: *Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Fiscal Year 2002 Commitment Report*)

Table PG-1
Characteristics of Persons at Intake to
Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Prisons, 2001

Characteristic	Males	Females
Unemployed	45.9%	61.1%
Not a high school graduate or GED	45.9%	40.6%
Indication of physical abuse as a child or adolescent	9.9%	24.7%
Indication of sexual abuse as a child or adolescent	5.1%	28.2%
History of mental health problems	21.9%	42.6%
History of drug abuse	86.2%	81.6%
History of alcohol abuse	69.7%	58.3%

Source: *Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Fiscal Year 2001 Intake Study*

- **Increase in prison releases and declining prison population**

The number of inmates released from Ohio prisons in 2002 is three times the number released two decades earlier. A surge in releases in the late 1990's, driven by changes in sentencing laws and parole guidelines, pushed release counts above admission counts and resulted in a declining prison population. (Source: *A Portrait of Prison Reentry in Ohio*, Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center)

- **Profile of prisoners released in 2001**

The inmates released from Ohio prisons in 2001 were predominantly male (89 percent) and were fairly evenly divided between blacks (53 percent) and whites (45 percent). Almost three-quarters of the release population were between the ages of 20 and 39. Similar proportions of the release populations had served time for drug offenses (26 percent) and violent offenses (23 percent), with 12 percent having served time for a technical violation committed while on post-release supervision. Two thirds of the released population served one year or less in prison. Forty four percent of the prisoners released had been incarcerated in Ohio prison at least once before. Of those released in 2001, 17 percent returned to an Ohio prison within one year. (Source: *A Portrait of Prison Reentry in Ohio*, Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center)

- **Preparation for reentry**

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections has been working on a post release reentry strategy, which will start six months prior to an inmate's release. It seeks to provide transitional linkages so that the inmate will continue to receive needed services after release. Some of the ODRC's core programming areas are: educational and vocational, substance abuse, mental health, sex offender, and restorative justice. (Source: *A Portrait of Prison Reentry in Ohio*, Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center)

Key Informant and Focus Group Comments

Needs of ex-offenders were cited by 4 percent of the 50 key informants (see Appendix C). Four percent of those interviewed also cited a service gap in addressing the needs of ex-offenders. This population was also mentioned in 6 of the 18 focus groups (see Appendix D). The following are examples of the comments about ex-offenders:

Felons who have done their time and are back in the community face living and housing barriers and a lot of other issues, particularly if they don't have families.

— Key informant interview

There is a lack of job opportunities for ex-offenders.

— Key informant interview

Services and policies are needed to reintegrate released prisoners into the community.

— Key informant interview

Prisons are opening the doors, but we do not have innovative programs to change ex-offenders lives. United Way could help to prepare for that kind of outreach and funding.

— Focus Group participant

Ex-offenders need health insurance, health care, and mental health services, especially for youth offender.

— Focus Group participant