



2019

Shining a Spotlight

ON THE VALLEY REGION

Ansonia
Beacon Falls
Derby
Naugatuck
Oxford
Seymour
Shelton

Information that is understandable and easily accessible is a key component of high-quality, cost-effective decision making. The 2019 Valley Community Index report provides this data to help community leaders understand and proactively address issues impacting the health and well-being of our region.

Shining a Spotlight is the executive summary of the 2019 Valley Community Index: *Understanding the Valley Region*. Key points from the Index are captured here to highlight trends that have occurred, as well as areas for special focus in the future.

This report reflects the most recent data collection efforts to examine the social, economic, and physical health of the Valley and expands upon data from the 2016 Valley Community Index. Created in partnership with DataHaven, regional leaders met for countless hours, volunteering their time to review and comment on the data collected from federal, state, and local agencies. Information collected from Valley residents as part of the statewide 2018 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey is also included in this report.

Data review indicates that socioeconomic disparities are rising, suggesting that Valley residents are not fairing equally well in their education, employment, health, and overall well-being. Continued analysis of and further exploration into the needs and opportunities that exist in the Valley is needed to maintain and improve the quality of life for all residents. By *Shining a Spotlight on the Valley Region*, the possibilities are endless.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



The population in the Valley is growing older and more diverse.

The Valley's population is on par with Connecticut's largest cities, with a total of 140,243 residents in 2017. The region's population has grown faster than the state overall, and future population growth is expected to be driven by seniors.

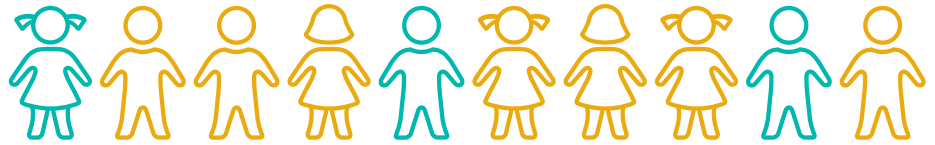
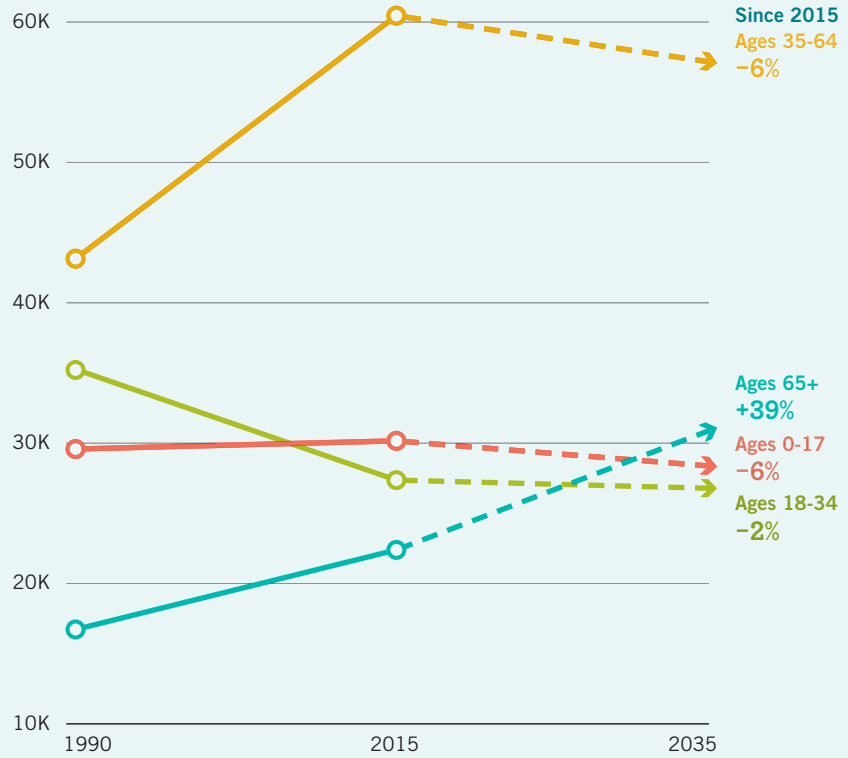
While the older population continues to expand, younger residents are increasingly diverse, particularly in the region's urban areas.

Between 2015 and 2035, **the Valley's senior population is projected to increase by 39 percent**—nearly twice as fast the statewide rate.

Older residents who need attentive healthcare will face high costs. **In 2018, a home health aide working 44 hours per week cost \$56,628 annually.** For round-the-clock care, the cost was \$216,216.

From 1990 to 2017, **the population identifying as a racial or ethnic minority grew from 6 to 22 percent.**

Population growth in the Valley has been uneven across age groups
Population and change by age group, 1990–2035



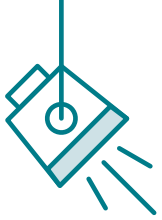
30% of children under five identify as a member of a racial or ethnic minority

A RICH HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Valley Region has long been known for cooperation and collaboration among its residents, for profit and nonprofit sectors, and municipalities. From Shelton to Naugatuck, a strong spirit of working together for the common good is demonstrated in the following examples.

Valley residents display high levels of civic engagement; across the most recent presidential, state, and local elections, **voter turnout in the Valley was above the statewide rates.**

The Valley United Way's Volunteer Action Center— one of the few in the country, and includes corporate, individual, and youth volunteers— collectively **volunteered at least 45,700 hours during 2018**, which has a monetary equivalence of approximately \$1,162,151.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The share of low-income students, measured by eligibility for the Free and Reduced Price Meals program, has increased to 40 percent.

Valley students have experienced an uptick in academic performance and high school graduation rates. However, significant challenges remain as compared to their peers throughout Connecticut.

Just **53 percent of Valley 3 to 4-year-olds were enrolled in preschool**, compared to 64 percent statewide.

Chronic school absence rates are stable and on par with the state. However, chronic absenteeism remains a concern.

Academic performance and high school graduation rates have improved, and Valley students are ahead of the state on both metrics.

WHAT IS IT?

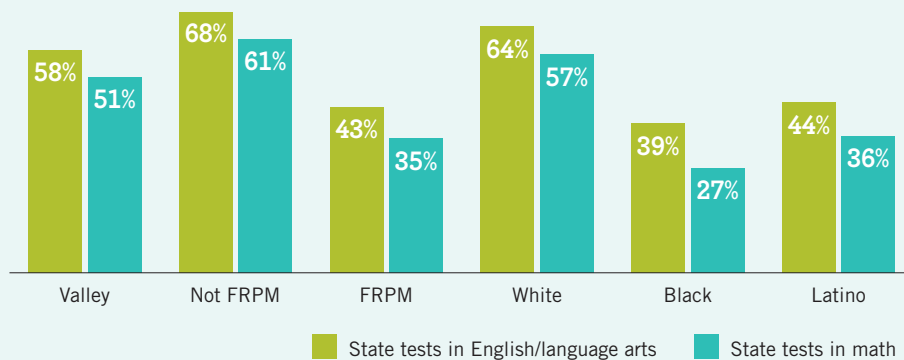
The federal **Free and Reduced Price Meals** (FRPM) program provides meals for students, based on low family income.

Chronic absence is defined as missing more than 10 percent of school days.

In standardized state math tests, **the Valley's pass rate has increased from 38 percent to 51 percent. The Valley's four-year graduation rate increased to 90 percent** in 2017, from 83 percent in 2011.

However, **the four-year graduation rate for low-income students drops to 82 percent**, versus 95 percent for higher income students.

There are achievement gaps for Black, Latino, and low-income students in the Valley
Share of public K-12 students meeting achievement measures, 2017–18



90%

of high school students graduate in four years

In 2013, Valley towns received recognition as the **20-town Naugatuck Valley Corridor**, a federally-designated Economic Development District (EDD). As part of the EDD, Valley towns have received over \$5,000,000 in state and federal grants to remediate brownfields, establish public open space, develop affordable housing, and create jobs.

Children's early experiences and environments are critical elements in promoting the development of lifelong health and success. In the Valley, **several regional initiatives exist to promote early care and education** by engaging families and providing services to ensure their needs are met.

The Valley Council for Health and Human Services, a group of more than 40 nonprofit organizations, collectively work together to problem solve on multilayered cross sector issues throughout the region. **Task forces on food hardship, senior services and early childhood and youth meet regularly** to address individual and family needs.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Although the community fabric of the Valley is strong, socioeconomic disparities are increasing between residents.

The Valley's median household income in 2017 was \$74,358, slightly higher than the state's median income. However, poverty and low-income rates are rising, and many residents who earn above these thresholds still struggle to make ends meet.

Between 2000 and 2017, the Valley's low-income rate grew from 15 to 21 percent.

During the same period, the poverty rate grew from 5 to 8 percent.

In 2017, 36 percent of Valley households were cost-burdened. Fifteen percent were severely cost-burdened.

The Valley's homeownership rate has increased to 72 percent in 2017, compared to 68 percent in 1980. However, homeownership rates vary between racial and ethnic groups.

Requests for shelter, as measured by calls to the state's 211 community information and referral services hotline, increased 28 percent between 2014 and 2018.

35%  of Valley residents have two months or less of household expenses in savings

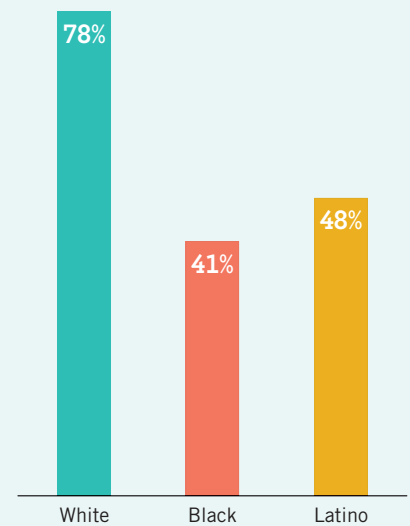
21% of Valley residents are low-income

8% live in poverty

36% of Valley households are cost-burdened

15% are severely cost-burdened

White householders in the Valley are more likely to own their homes than Black and Latino householders
Homeownership rate by race/ethnicity, 2017



In 2018, the average childcare facility in the Valley charged \$244 per week to care for infants and toddlers

WHAT IS IT?

People living in poverty have annual household incomes below the federal poverty guideline. Under January 2017 guidelines, this is equivalent to \$16,240 per year for a family of two, or \$24,600 for a family of four.

Low-income households have annual incomes less than two times the federal poverty guideline.

Cost-burdened households spend more than 30 percent of total income on housing costs. **Severely cost-burdened households** spend more than 50 percent of total income on housing costs.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Wages for jobs in the Valley have declined in recent years.

Reflecting larger economic trends, job opportunities in the Valley are shifting towards the service sector, and wages for these industries have been stagnant or declining since the early 2000s. Since just 23 percent of Valley workers are employed in the Valley, access to reliable transportation is critical for residents, as many must seek job opportunities outside the region.

WHAT IS IT?

Living wage is the income needed to cover the costs of living in the region.

In the Valley, living wage is \$40,000 per year.

43 percent of Valley households are considered below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) **income threshold**, which is \$80,364 for a family of four.

The average annual wage for Valley jobs declined by almost \$4,800 between 2000 and 2017, from \$64,648 to \$59,851.


The Valley added 892 jobs between 2000 and 2017. However, positive net job growth is limited to Oxford and Shelton. Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, and Seymour saw negative job growth.

Shelton is the Valley's employment center, containing half of all employment opportunities in 2017.

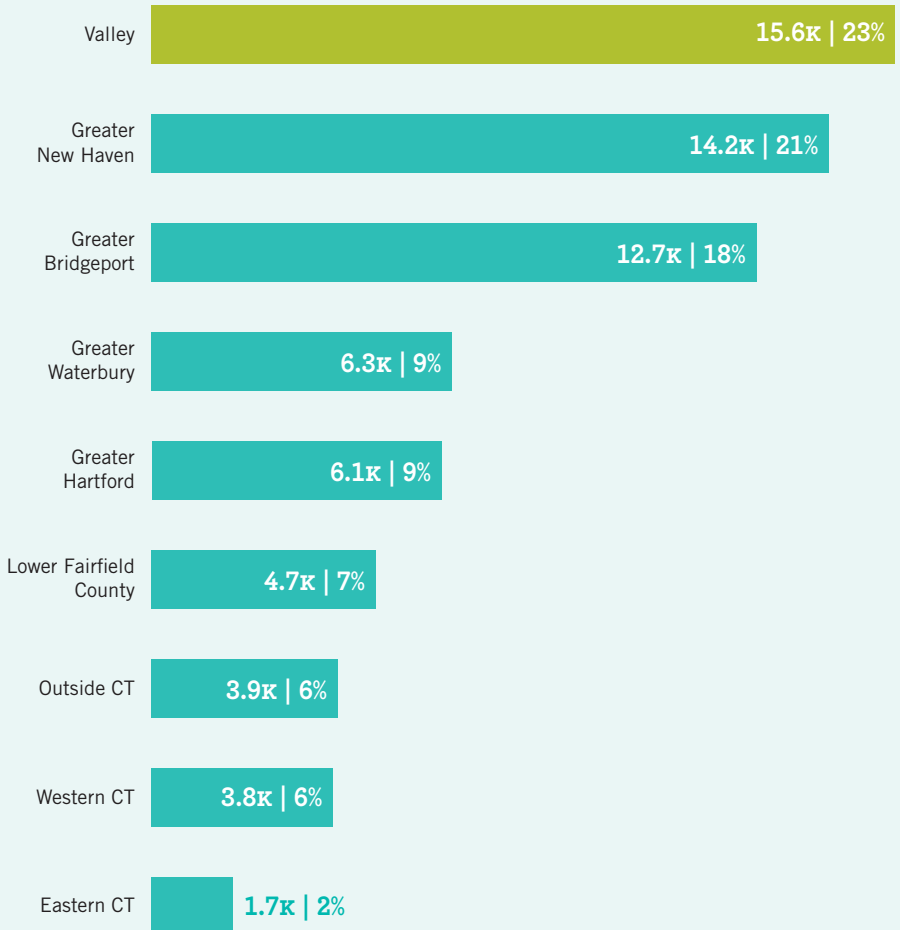
8%
unemployment in the Valley

7%
unemployment in Connecticut

Wages at Valley jobs declined
\$4,800

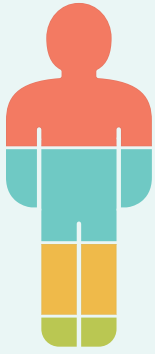
77% 
of workers commute to jobs outside the Valley

Less than a quarter of employed Valley residents work within the region
Where Valley residents work, 2015



WHAT GOES INTO YOUR HEALTH?

The conditions that shape the health a person experiences are known as the **social determinants of health**.



40%

socioeconomic factors

such as income, education, and a support network

30%

health behaviors

such as diet and exercise or substance abuse

20%

health care

such as access to and quality of health care

10%

physical environment

such as where you live and work

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



The opioid crisis has made headlines across the country and affects many Valley residents.

Behavioral health, including both mental illness and substance use disorders, is a growing concern in the Valley. Behavioral health disorders affect nearly one in five Americans—yet behavioral healthcare needs often go unmet. Nationwide, less than 11 percent of adults with a substance use disorder received treatment.

Between 2015 and 2018, the Valley averaged **30.1 drug overdose deaths per 100,000 residents** per year, compared to a statewide rate of 24.2.

Filtered for just opiate- and opioid-related deaths, the Valley's rate is 28.8, compared to 22.8 in the state.

From 2015 to 2018, **opioid overdoses were roughly tied with heart disease** as the second leading cause of premature death in the Valley.

In 2018, **5 percent of Valley adults reported drinking heavily** at least six times in the past month.

Six percent of all adults reported using marijuana more than 10 times during any given month. The rate among adults ages 18 to 34 was 9 percent.

30.1

drug overdose deaths per 100,000 residents in the Valley

24.2

drug overdose deaths per 100,000 residents in Connecticut

33%



of Valley residents know someone who has misused heroin or other opiates

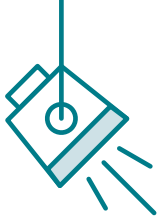
5%



of Valley adults drink heavily six times or more per month

DID YOU KNOW?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention characterizes the opioid epidemic as multilayered, with three distinct waves. Prescription opioids were the main drivers of the first wave in the 1990s; heroin was largely responsible for the rise in 2010; and synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, have driven the current wave, which began in 2013.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Valley's population has a lower life expectancy compared to the statewide average.

The Valley's lower life expectancy can be explained by looking at differences in the rates of premature death within the population. Lung cancer, heart disease, motor vehicle crashes, and drug-related deaths affect the region's lower life expectancy.

Infant health—beginning with proper maternal health—is also a concern in the Valley, as a healthy start impacts a person's health later in life.

WHY IT MATTERS

Asthma and obesity are chronic diseases that contribute to other health conditions and place significant burdens on overall health and quality of life.

Sixteen percent of mothers in the Valley received **non-adequate prenatal care**.

Chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and asthma **are among the most common causes for hospitalization and emergency department visits**.

The **premature death rate for lung cancer** in the Valley was 37 percent above the statewide rate.

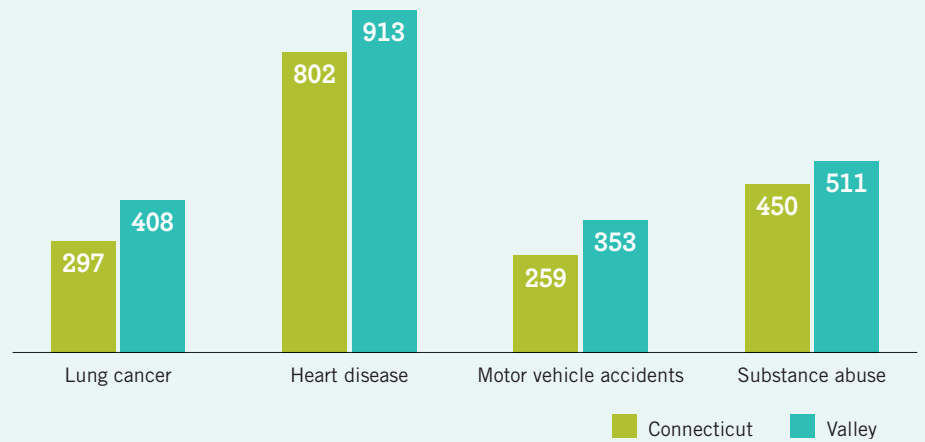
The **premature death rate for heart disease** has declined, but remains 14 percent higher in the Valley than the state overall.

The rate of low birthweight babies rose by 3 percent in the Valley over the past decade.

79.8 years
average life expectancy
in the Valley

80.3 years
average life expectancy
in Connecticut

Premature death rates in the Valley Years of potential life lost before age 75 (YPLL-75) per 100,000 residents per year by leading causes, 2010–2014



47%
of lower income adults
feel in very good health

67%
of higher income adults
feel in very good health



Although higher than the statewide level, the premature death rate for heart disease has declined

8%



8%
of babies born
in the Valley were
low birth weight

Now that you've read the data, join the community in acting to improve our Valley.

Griffin Hospital and the Naugatuck Valley Health District (NVHD) are continuing a longstanding tradition of working together to identify and address priority concerns. They use the index to inform the work of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which is updated every three years, as well as to meet regulatory and accreditation requirements.

A partnership of Griffin Hospital, NVHD, Yale–Griffin Prevention Research Center and BHcare is using the latest data found in the 2019 Index to inform the new CHIP. The three priority areas identified for the 2019–2021 CHIP are heart disease, maternal-child health, and behavioral health, including substance abuse. To learn more and for up-to-date information regarding health and well-being in the Valley, visit griffinhealth.org, nvhd.org, yalegriffinprc.org, and bhcare.org.

Active Valley CT (avct.griffinhealth.org) can help Valley residents/visitors find a variety of free or low-cost resources, including places to walk, run, hike, bike, swim, paddle a boat, play sports, use open fields, or enjoy winter sports. As part of ongoing health promotion efforts, Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center has developed this online guide to promote active lifestyles in the Lower Naugatuck Valley.

Lower Naugatuck Valley Youth Resources (valleycouncil.org/youth-committee/Naugatuck-valley-youth-resources) is a web-based guide to help young adults find things to do after school, learn about volunteer opportunities or find help with a challenge. This guide has been produced by the Valley Council for Health and Human Services Youth Sub-Committee.

During the development of the 2016 Community Index, we learned that **26 percent of children lived in low-income households** in 2014. By 2017, that number had risen to 28 percent, with some areas in the Valley reaching 60 to 80 percent.

A working group of 27 stakeholders from multiple sectors formed the **Valley Childhood Poverty Collective Impact** group (VCPCI) to dig deeper into this issue. This group plans to build strategies to address the root causes of childhood poverty and their effects, which can set the stage for further investigation into existing disparities.

26%
of Valley children
lived in low-income
households in 2014

28%
of Valley children
lived in low-income
households in 2017

Using data to examine disparities and shine the light on areas where change can occur helps us understand how connected we all are.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Read the full Community Index.

Share observations with family, friends, coworkers, community leaders, and public officials.

Stay informed about key issues affecting our region.

Help instill the importance of **community engagement** in all our citizens.

Become an advocate for change in your local municipality.

Participate in local and regional **community conversations** and forums.

Focus your resources, time, and talents to have the **greatest impact for those most in need**.

Thank you to our lead sponsors who made this data collection effort possible: Bassett Family Fund; Griffin Health Services, Inc.; Katharine Matthies Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee; the Valley Community Foundation, and the Valley United Way. We would also like to acknowledge the dedicated work of DataHaven and Morrison Downs Associates.

For a complete listing of funders and members of the Advisory Committee, and to view a full version of the 2019 Valley Community Index, visit valleyfoundation.org.

For more information, please call the Valley Community Foundation: **203.751.9162**