



Freeport Community Needs Assessment

United
Way



United Way
of Northwest Illinois



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**United Way
of Northwest Illinois**

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R3 RESTORE. REINVEST. RENEW.

State of Illinois Planning and Capacity Building Grant



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Executive Summary

In 2022, the United Way of Northwest Illinois applied for and received an R3 grant from the state of Illinois. *R3 Restore. Reinvest. Renew.* grants fund programs in Illinois communities that have been harmed by violence, excessive incarceration, and economic disinvestment. The communities that are eligible for R3 funding were identified, in part, by their rates of gun injuries, child poverty, unemployment, and incarceration.

The United Way of Northwest Illinois received a planning and capacity building R3 grant focused on the Freeport community. The goal of the grant is to identify community and programming needs related to gun violence prevention and develop a community needs assessment and plan to address these needs.

The Freeport Community Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing the Freeport community. By identifying Freeport's needs, priorities, and resources, we enable informed decision-making, strategic planning, and resource allocation that can improve the well-being of the community and its residents. Our intention is that this assessment and plan helps guide community development, allocate resources effectively, and ensure that services and programs meet the needs of the community in an equitable and sustainable manner.

The Freeport Community Plan framework includes three overarching priorities to address gun violence in Freeport: 1) Build Trust; 2) Invest in People; and 3) Invest in Place. The plan will include a combination of strategies in these three focus areas which will be identified at the Community Stakeholder Compression Planning Session on February 9, 2023. These focus areas were identified as a result of a comprehensive review and analysis of the primary and secondary data, which included 152 stakeholder interviews and surveys and covered topics including income and poverty, crime, education, health, housing, and more.

- 1) Build Trust** - While less tangible than the second and third priorities, building trust is the first strategy identified in this plan because it provides a solid foundation for coordinated community program development and investment. Building Trust is a central focus in the Freeport Community Needs Assessment and Plan planning process, which is why a concentrated effort was made to include representation from more than 150 stakeholders in the stakeholder interviews and surveys. It is important to note however, that improvement is still needed in this area, in particular with regards to including youth voices in the planning process. Building trust will require a combination of sustained and deliberate actions and attitudes including communication, transparency, empathy, responsibility, collaboration, and inclusiveness.
- 2) Invest in People** – The second priority involves investing in people - through both prevention and intervention programs that address the major social determinants of health – poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunity – that contribute to gun violence and are made worse by it. Evidence based-strategies include things like wraparound services such as helping individuals complete GEDs and find jobs and safe places to live, mentorship programs for at-risk youth, or violence interrupters programs.
- 3) Invest in Place** – The final priority focuses on the neighborhoods that have suffered most from gun violence - neighborhoods that have received the least support and investment. This is true for communities around the nation including Freeport. Investment in place, just like people, can take many forms and may look like more lighting and trees, fixing sidewalks and streets, cleaning up vacant lots, and tearing down abandoned, unsafe buildings.

It is important to note that there are existing programs and initiatives in Freeport that may address one or more of these priorities. The intention of this process and plan is not to replace this ongoing work, but instead to further support the programs that are making an impact and evaluate and implement additional evidence⁴ based strategies that meet the needs of the community.

Priority – Build Trust



Why Build Trust?

Building trust in the Freeport community is essential for its success, growth, and well-being. A foundation built on trust facilitates cooperation and collaboration, enhances communication, increases stability and security, and promotes a sense of belonging.

Building trust in a community requires a combination of actions and attitudes, including:

- **Communication:** Encourage open and respectful dialogue between different groups and listen actively to each other's perspectives.
- **Transparency:** Be honest and transparent in all actions and decisions; avoid actions that could be perceived as deceptive or manipulative.
- **Empathy:** Try to understand the experiences and perspectives of others; show compassion and understanding towards their feelings and opinions.
- **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for one's own actions and decisions; work towards finding mutually acceptable solutions.
- **Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration and teamwork; find common goals that can bring different groups together.
- **Inclusiveness:** Foster an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected, regardless of their race, background, or beliefs.

It's important to keep in mind that building trust takes time and effort from all parties involved, and progress may be slow at first. However, if approached with patience and determination, it is possible to build trust and bring a community together.

Several themes emerged from the data regarding lack of trust including concern for stalled past planning efforts, a narrow power structure in Freeport, and apathy by those whose racial and economic privilege may insulate them from the worst of the violence.

Priority – Invest in People



Why Invest in People?

People-based strategies work to interrupt the cycles of victimization, trauma, and retaliatory violence by engaging individuals at the highest risk for violence or altering the conditions that promote violence at the personal level. Studies have shown that community violence interruption programs have reduced gun violence.

Several types of community violence intervention program models have been used to reduce gun violence including outreach by credible messengers to individuals at highest risk, mediation of disputes that could potentially lead to shootings, promotion of nonviolent responses to conflicts, assistance with social services, and life coaching.

Survey respondents expressed concern that current resources aren't adequate for the number of vulnerable individuals in the community and more youth mentoring programs are needed.

Priority – Invest in Place



Why Invest in Place?

Place-based strategies that interrupt the cycle of disorder, decay, and crime by remediating untended and dilapidated buildings and land can reduce violence which in turn begins to create safer streets where residents build trust, interact in positive ways, and work collectively to reestablish social control in their neighborhoods.

The idea of place-based intervention to prevent violence has been guided by research and multiple theories such as:

- **Broken windows** - small, visible signs of disorder and decay such as loitering and graffiti can send a signal that a neighborhood is uncared for, creating fear and withdrawal among residents – which in turn results in there being fewer eyes on the street. Fewer people going outside and being engaged in community life creates the perception that these places are optimally available for engagement in more serious forms of crimes. Over time, as the cycle is perpetuated, neighborhoods continue to spiral into decay.
- **Human territorial functioning** - the interconnected link between norms of who has access to spaces, what activities are allowed, and who has control in those spaces. Vacant lots and abandoned spaces may promote violence by discouraging residents from having positive social interactions.
- **Situational crime prevention** - crime can be prevented by changing the situations that offer opportunity for offenders. Vacant lots and abandoned houses may increase anonymity in the streets, as fewer neighbors are outside, and may signal less ownership or guardianship of spaces. According to situational crime prevention theory, reducing the opportunity for anonymity and increasing the sense of ownership and surveillance of public spaces may deter potential offenders.
- **Busy streets** - addressing the source of physical disorder in public spaces—for example, by cleaning up vacant spaces or tending to abandoned buildings—creates opportunities for positive social interaction, reducing fear, increasing feelings of safety among residents, and ultimately reducing violence.

Source: Hohl, B. C., Kondo, M. C., Kajeepeta, S., MacDonald, J. M., Theall, K. P., Zimmerman, M. A., & Branas, C. C. (2019). Creating Safe And Healthy Neighborhoods With Place-Based Violence Interventions. Health affairs (Project Hope), 38(10), 1687. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00707>

The survey revealed a consistent concern regarding disinvestment and neglect in the City's poorest neighborhoods.

2022-2024 City of Freeport Strategic Vision and Goals

The 2022-2024 City of Freeport Strategic Vision and Goals document includes priorities that intersect with the findings and proposed priorities of this Community Needs Assessment and Plan. This is not surprising, and in fact, it's encouraging that City leaders and community stakeholders participating in both processes (some of whom overlap) share common ground. The table below shows where there is potential for overlap between the City's priority areas and those priorities identified in the Needs Assessment.

City of Freeport 2040 Priority Areas	Trust	People	Place
Thriving Neighborhoods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street improvement plan Demolition/blight reduction plan Water/sewer/storm sewer improvements Tree removal/replacement program Streamline and enhance code enforcement 			✓
Safe and Welcoming Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase police force census to support proven strategies such as community policing, gang units Hire and retain a diverse team (police, fire, City staff) to reflect the community we serve Deploy technology to reduce gun violence and improve efficiency of the police force Ensure neighborhoods and buildings are well kept to help change the narrative around safety in our community 	✓	✓	✓
Responsive, Efficient Government	✓		
Connected and Accessible Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund and execute the Sidewalk Plan Increase bike lanes and bike paths to major attractions 			✓
Strong Public/Private Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development: strengthen Greater Freeport partnership Education: encourage stronger education and workforce outcomes through partnership Healthcare: improve coordination with healthcare institutions Park District: coordinate land use and maintenance efforts 	✓	✓	✓
Growing Entrepreneurial Economy build on our Makers Heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage minority leaders to help encourage minority business start ups 		✓	
Quality Communications and Engagement	✓		
Effective Land Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review City Centre Plan and complete downtown master plan Complete master plan for 3rd Ward flood mitigation area Create vacant/abandoned property inventory and master plan Create Burchard Hills master plan 			✓
Vibrant Arts and Culture Experiences			✓

Community-Based Gun Violence Prevention & Intervention

Community-based gun violence and prevention strategies involve programs and initiatives that address gun violence at a local level. These strategies often involve partnerships between community organizations, local government, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to identify the root causes of gun violence and implement evidence-based solutions.



TRUST



PEOPLE



PLACE

Community-Based Gun Violence Prevention & Intervention Strategies

People-Based Strategies

People-based strategies focus on addressing the individual-level factors that contribute to gun violence, such as exposure to trauma, lack of social support, and involvement in criminal activity. These strategies aim to provide support and services to individuals who are at high risk of being involved in gun violence, with the goal of reducing their involvement in criminal activity and increasing their engagement in positive behaviors. Some common people-based strategies include:

- **Trauma-informed care:** This involves providing support and services to individuals who have experienced trauma, such as exposure to violence, in order to address the mental health and behavioral health needs that can contribute to gun violence.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy:** This type of therapy can help individuals who are at high risk of being involved in gun violence to identify and change negative thinking patterns and behaviors.
- **Job training and employment programs:** Providing individuals with job skills and employment opportunities can help reduce their involvement in criminal activity and increase their engagement in positive behaviors.
- **Substance abuse treatment:** Addressing substance abuse and addiction can reduce individuals' involvement in criminal activity and decrease the risk of involvement in gun violence.
- **Violence intervention programs:** These programs work with individuals who are at high risk of being involved in gun violence to provide support, counseling, and conflict resolution skills.
- **Youth development and mentorship programs:** Programs that provide positive role models and activities for youth can help reduce their involvement in gun violence.

People-based strategies often involve close collaboration between community organizations, health care providers, and other stakeholders to provide a comprehensive and coordinated response to gun violence.

Examples of Evidence-Based Programs:

Homicide Review Commissions (HRC) are a public health and public safety partnership that seek to analyze patterns and trends in gun violence, gather community input, and generate recommendations for action.

Community violence interventions (CVI) are promising programs that aim to identify and support the small number of people at risk for violence by helping them peacefully resolve conflicts and providing them with wraparound mental health and social support.

Group Violence Intervention (GVI) begins with an extensive data collection process by law enforcement to identify the small number of individuals and groups within a community that are most at risk for involvement in gun violence, and to track ongoing conflicts and other activities involving these individuals that may contribute to the violence. In group meetings with these high-risk individuals, known as “call ins,” law enforcement officials, community members, and social service providers communicate that gun violence must stop.

Cure Violence model attempts to prevent gun violence without the direct involvement of law enforcement. Violence interrupters and outreach workers who are credible messengers are hired by community-based organizations from impacted communities to build trust with those at highest risk, mediate disputes, promote nonviolent alternatives to conflicts, and facilitate connections to social services and job opportunities.

Community-Based Gun Violence Prevention & Intervention Strategies

Place-Based Strategies

Gun homicide tends to occur in highly concentrated areas. One analysis, for instance, found that in 2015, 26% of all firearm homicides in the United States occurred in census tracts that contained only 1.5% of the population. *(Aufrichtig A, Beckett L, Diehm J, & Lartey J. (2017). Want to fix gun violence in America? Go local. The Guardian.)*

Place-based strategies focus on addressing gun violence in specific locations or neighborhoods that have higher rates of gun violence. These strategies typically involve a comprehensive and coordinated approach that addresses both the social and physical factors that contribute to gun violence. Some common place-based strategies include:

- **Neighborhood revitalization:** This can involve improving physical and social conditions in high-crime neighborhoods through investments in infrastructure, housing, and community programs.
- **Closing off physical spaces for illegal activity:** This can include boarding up abandoned buildings, closing drug markets, and removing other physical features that may contribute to gun violence.
- **Addressing social and economic disparities:** This can include providing job training, education and other resources to individuals and communities in need, with the aim of reducing the social and economic conditions that contribute to gun violence.

Place-based strategies often involve close collaboration between community organizations, law enforcement, local government, and other stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated response to gun violence.

Examples of Evidence-Based Programs:

MAP is a model for how residents co-create safety in their communities through innovative problem-solving including Neighborhood Stat which brings together residents, community stakeholders, and city agency representatives to identify and solve public safety and quality of life issues

Street Outreach: This program model employs a public health approach to fight violence. The program has street outreach workers who actively work to mediate conflicts and prevent retaliatory violence between those who are at-risk to commit or become the victims of gun violence.

Hospital-Based Violence Intervention programs (HVIPs): These programs are located in trauma centers and emergency departments. They engage patients while they are still in the hospital, often just hours after a violent injury, to reduce the chance of retaliation and violent injury recurrence and offer subsequent case work and services in areas such as mental health counseling, financial and educational support, and more. They are based on the premise that there is a unique window of opportunity to engage victims of violence in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic injury.

Community-driven crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is a long-term gun violence reduction strategy centered on a multi-disciplinary approach of crime prevention that uses urban and architectural design and the management of built and natural environments. By investing in a community's physical environment and creating spaces in which community members feel safe, cities can discourage and reduce gun violence.

Freeport Community Organizations (1 of 5)

Organization	Service/Category
Abundant Life Christian	Food Pantry
Addus Health Care	Assisted Living/In home care
Alano Club	Support group
Al-Anon	
Amity Society of Freeport	Daycare and learning center; Thrift Store
Boy Scouts of America	
Boys and Girls Club of Freeport	Youth programs
Bridge Ministry	Assistance
Child Abuse Hotline	
Child and Family Connections - ROE	Education and support
Children's Dyslexia Center of NW IL	Education
City of Freeport	
Comfort Keepers	In-Home Senior Care
CONTACT of Northern Illinois	24-Hour Crisis Helpline; Kid/Teen Phone; Reassurance CONTACT
Creative Learning Center	Preschool
CUB Foods Brat Stand	
Doors Wide Open (DOW)	
Dr. Ravi and Mrs. Minu Vyas Crisis Stabilization Center at FHN Family Counseling Center	Behavioral health center
Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois	Activities and programs; Child care
FHN	Respiratory health; Breastfeeding Classes; Family Practice; Family medicine; Specialized Care, in-home/nursing home; Internal Medicine; Family & Specialty Medicine; Obstetrics and Gynecology; Pediatrics; Physician Referral Center; Prenatal Classes; FHN School Programs; Specialty health care; Urgent Care
FHN Family Counseling Center	Case Management; Outpatient Behavioral Health Care; Psychiatric Services / Medication Monitoring; Psychosocial Rehabilitation & Community Support Services; Youth Crisis Services
First Church of the Open Bible / Open Bible Learning Center	Open Bible Learning Center
Freeport Area Church Cooperative (FACC)	Chicago Ave Mission; Hero House; Hope House
Freeport Catholic Schools	Aquin Catholic Schools: High School Campus: Grades 7-12; St. Joseph Campus: Preschool-Grade 6
Freeport Community Foundation	Charitable organization empowering non-profits in northwest Illinois
Freeport Dream Center	Assistance

Freeport Community Organizations (2 of 5)

Organization	Service/Category
Freeport Fire Department	Emergency
Freeport Housing Authority (Housing Authority of the city of Freeport)	Housing and economic opportunity
Freeport Park District	Read Park & Krape Park; Recreation; Special Recreation Department; Oakdale Nature Preserve
Freeport Police Department	Law Enforcement Administration; Auxiliary Police
Freeport Pregnancy Center	Pregnancy support
Freeport Public Library	Internet Access and Education
Freeport School District 145	Blackhawk Elementary; Carl Sandburg Middle School; Center School; Empire School; Family & School Support Program; Freeport High School; Freeport Middle School; Jones-Farrar International Baccalaureate World School; Lincoln-Douglas School; Parent Enrichment Program
Freeport Township	General Assistance
Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois	Youth programs
Gospel Outreach	Food Pantry
Greater Freeport Partnership	
Hawthorne Inn at Liberty Village	Assisted Living and Supportive Living
Help at Home Inc.	In-Home Senior Care
Heritage Woods of Freeport	Assisted Living care
Highland Community College (HCC)	College courses; Adult Education & Literacy Program; Adult Education Program (GED/ESL)
Homestart	Housing counseling service
Hope Ministry	Financial Assistance (furniture, clothes, housing, food)
Housing Authority of the City of Freeport	
Illinois Adult Learning Hotline	
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)	Child protection agency
Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS)	Disability assistance
Illinois Division of Rehabilitation	Home Service Program; Vocational Rehabilitation
Illinois State Police Missing Person Hotline	
Immanuel Lutheran Child Care	Childcare
Immanuel Lutheran School	Preschool-Grade 8
Joseph's Pantry	Food Pantry
Kiwanis (Lincoln Douglas) Club	Service Group

Freeport Community Organizations (3 of 5)

Organization	Service/Category
Kiwanis (Noon) Club	Service Group
League of Women Voters of Freeport	
Liberty Village of Freeport	Assisted living / skilled nursing / long term / dementia
Lion's Club	Service Group
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI)	Affordable Housing Services, Intouch Home Care; Meadow Ridge; Prairie Ridge
Malcolm Eaton Enterprises	Community Employment Program
Malcolm Eaton Enterprises	Freeport Job Club
Martin Luther King Jr Center	
Meals on Wheels	Meal Assistance
Monroe Clinic - Highland Women's Care	Highland Women's Care
Monroe Clinic - Urgent Care	Urgent Care
Mother Hubbard's Kiddie Cupboard	Baby supplies
Mt Calvary Hearts that Care Whole Life Food Pantry	Food Pantry
NAACP Freeport Branch	
NAMI of Stephenson County	Support for Mental Illness
New Horizons Counseling Center	Mediation / Individual / Martial and Family Counseling
NICAA Golden Meals	Meal delivery
NICAA Head Start	Child and family development
Norman C Sleezer Youth Home	Community Outreach Counseling Program; Residential Treatment Services
Northwest Illinois Community Action Agency (NICAA)	CSBG (Community Services Block Grant); Low Income Heating and Energy and Assistance Program (LIHEAP); Weatherization
Northwest Special Education	Special education
Oakley Courts Assisted Living & Memory Care	Assisted living / memory care
Parkview	Senior Living Community
Peak Medical Home Care	In-Home Senior Care
Pearl Pavillion	Skilled nursing / long term care
Prairie State Legal Services	Legal Advocacy
Presence Saint Vincent	Developmentally delayed care
Pretzel City Area Transit	Public transportation
Provena St. Joseph Center/Ascension Living	Skilled nursing, long term care

Freeport Community Organizations (4 of 5)

Organization	Service/Category
RAMP	Brain Injury Case Management Program; Community Reintegration; Community Services; Independent Living Skills Training; Individual and Systemic Advocacy; Information and Referral; Peer Support; Personal Assistance Services; Youth Advocacy Services
Rebuilding Together Stephenson County	Housing
Regional Office of Education #8	Elevate Stephenson Youth Program
Rosecrance	Substance Use and mental health treatment
Rotary Club	Service Group
Schardt Orthodontics	Dentist/orthodontist
Senior Resource Center - Stephenson County	Community Care Program; Pretzel City Transit; Senior Citizen assistance
Sinnissippi Centers, Inc.	Mental Health Clinic
Social Security Administration	Assignment of Social Security numbers (SSN) for Children and Non-citizens; Dependent Child Benefits; Disability Insurance Benefits; Lump Sum Death Payment; Medicare; Public Information Presentations; Replacement Social Security Cards; Retirement Insurance Benefits
Star Ambulance	Paramedic Services
Stateline Area Crimestoppers	Crimestoppers
Stephenson County Crime Stop	Tip hotline and mobile app
Stephenson County Health Department (SCHD)	Affordable Care Act In-Person Counselor Program; Affordable Care Act Program; Affordable School Physicals; All Kids Insurance; All Our Kids (AOK) Network; Breastfeeding Education / Support & Breast Pump Loan Program; Community Health Education; Doula Program; Family Case Management serving Stephenson & JoDaviess Counties; Family Planning; Food Protection (Food Establishment Inspection) Program; Health Families Illinois (HFI); High risk Infant Follow-up; HIV / AIDS Counseling and Testing; igrow; Illinois Family Connects; Immunization Program; Lab Health Screenings; Medical Presumptive Eligibility (Health Insurance for Pregnancy) MPE; Nuisance Complaint Program; Private Sewer (Septic) Systems; Private Water Well Systems; Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Clinic; Tuberculosis Program; Vital Records; Well Women of NW Illinois; Women Infant Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program Serving Stephenson & JoDaviess Counties
Stephenson County Sheriff's Office	Emergency
Stephenson County Democratic Party	Economic Justice Committee
The Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital	Cancer Center
The Salvation Army	Emergency Food Pantry; Financial; Soup Kitchen; Food Pantry
The Workforce Connection	Employment Services; Apprenticeships
Township of Stephenson County	Freeport, Buckeye, Lancaster, Silver Creek Townships

Freeport Community Organizations (5 of 5)

Organization	Service/Category
Tri-County Christian School	Preschool-Grade 8
Tri-State Home Health Care LLC	In-Home Senior Care
Tyler's Justice Center for Children	Child victim advocacy and support
U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs	Veterans Benefits
United Way of Northwest Illinois - Stephenson Carroll and JoDaviess	Assistance
University of Illinois Extension - Unit 1 - Stephenson County	Assistance
Veterans Assistance Commission	Veterans Aid
VOICES of Stephenson County	Advocacy (legal, criminal justice, medical, case management); 24-Hour Crisis Line; Abuse Recovery Shelter; Domestic/Sexual Violence Rapid Re-Housing; Emergency Overnight Shelter; Individual & Group Counseling (domestic & sexual violence); Sexual Assault Services
Walnut Acres	Skilled nursing, long term care, dementia
WinnPrairie	Assisted living / memory care
YES Club	Empowering Children to say no to violence
YWCA Northwestern Illinois	Child Care Solutions; economic empowerment; racial justice and civil rights

The Freeport Community Organizations list was compiled using a number of sources including the FHN Community Resource Database, Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County Youth Resource Guide, and the Stakeholder Interviews and Surveys. Please accept our apologies if any organization has been unintentionally left off this list. Contact Connie Kraft at the United Way of Northwest Illinois to report an issue or omission so that the electronic version of this report may be updated.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

24 Stakeholder Interviews and 128 Stakeholder Surveys were completed as part of the assessment process. The Steering Committee identified community members who were then asked to either participate in an interview or complete the survey. Stakeholders were identified based on their work in the community as well as their unique personal and professional perspectives, knowledge, and understanding of the issues and needs within Freeport. This was an inclusive rather than exclusive process and no individual who desired to participate was turned away.

Survey and Interview participants answered the same set of questions – the only difference being the interviews allowed for the facilitator to ask follow-up questions and elicit more in-depth and detailed responses. The interviews lasted approximately 45-minutes each and were conducted over Zoom. The interviewees below gave their permission to be listed as having participated. Survey respondents were anonymous. Both the survey and interviews took place in November 2022.

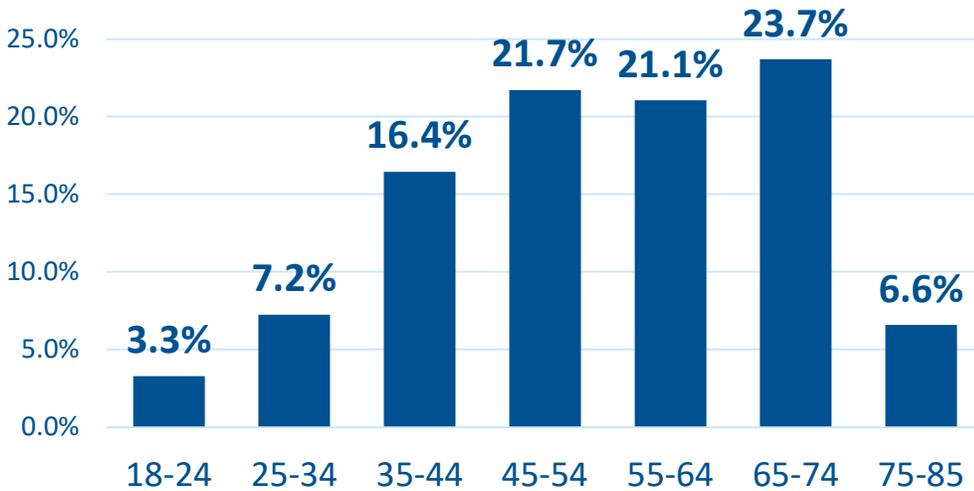
Community Stakeholder Interviews	
Anna Alvarado	Freeport School District FSD 145
Phylinese Brooks	Elevated Voices
Robbie Capp	Neighborhood Surveillance Camera Initiative
ShaNeka Collier	Freeport School District 145
Deontae Collier, Sr	Freeport School District
Renata Dadez-Hepler	FHN Family Counseling Center
Anthony Dedmond	Freeport High School
Nate Deline	FHS Alternative School
Angela Hiteman	Sentry Insurance
Elder Leon Ishmon III	VOICES
Justina Kidd	Stephenson County Probation Office
Connie Kraft	United Way of Northwest Illinois
Tom Madigan	Stephenson County State's Attorney
Tasha Mazique	Boys & Girls Club of Freeport & Stephenson County
Mayor Jodi Miller	City of Freeport
Samuel Newton	Stephenson County Board; Freeport Ministerial Alliance
Alana Paige	Elevated Voices
James Rhyne	Boys & Girls Club of Freeport & Stephenson County
Patrick Sellers	Freeport Township
Chris Shenberger	Freeport Police Department
Damon "Yancy" Shipp	Boys & Girls Club of Freeport & Stephenson County
Chief Matt Summers	Freeport Police Department
Sarah Swords	FHS Alternative School
Jerry Whitmore	Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

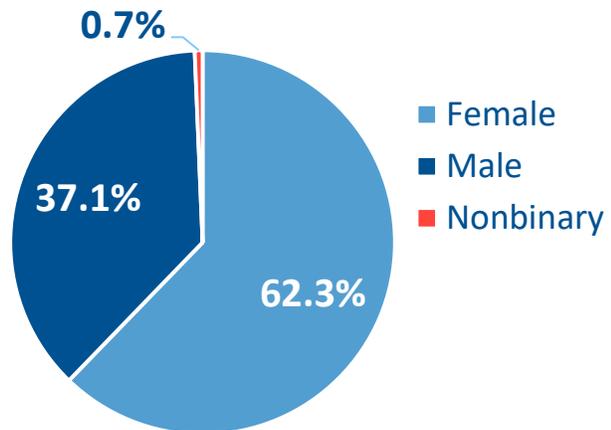
24 Interviews
128 Surveys
152
Total Participants

Demographic Profile of Respondents

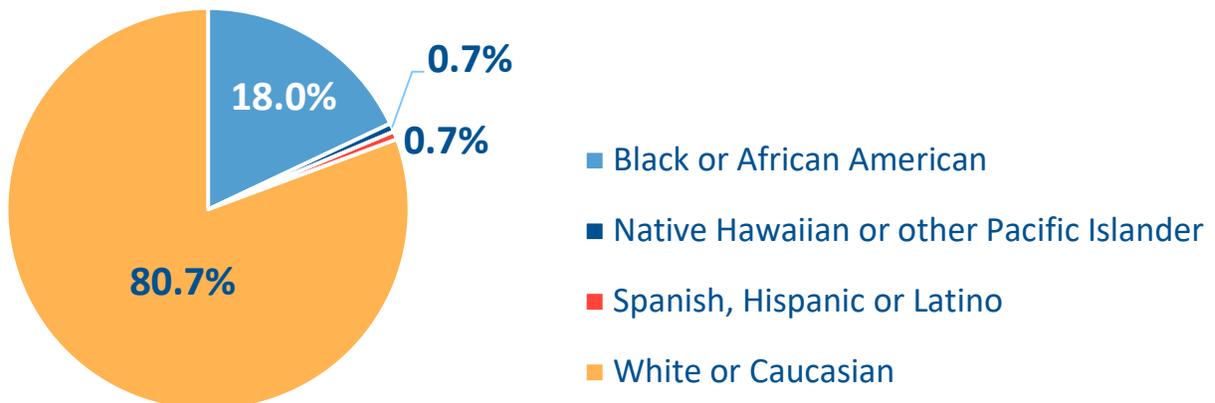
Age Range of Respondents



Gender of Respondents



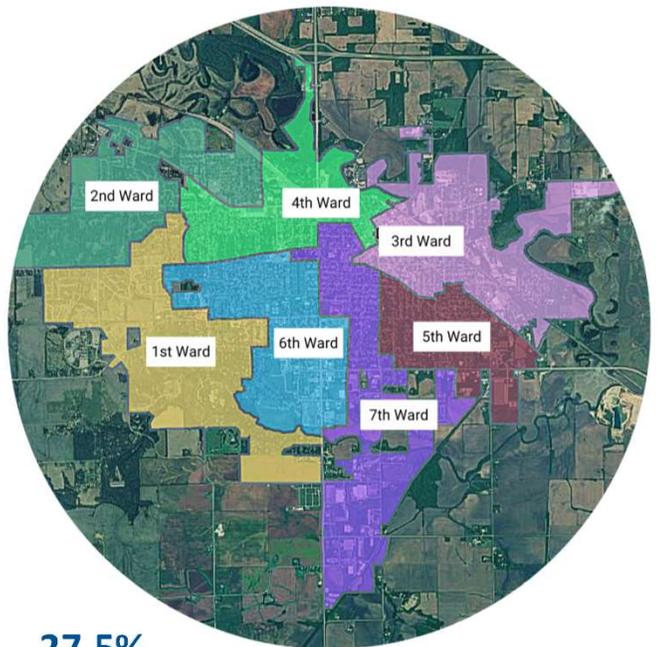
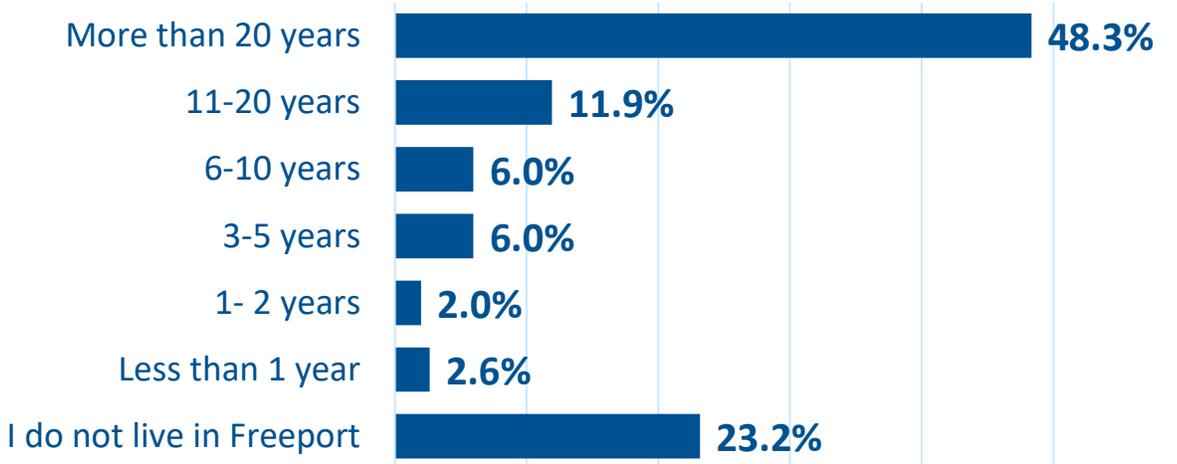
Race of Respondents



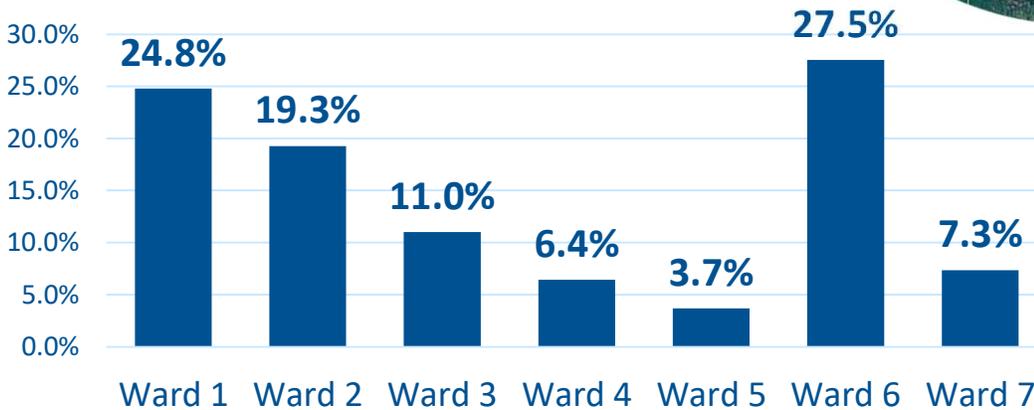
Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Length of Freeport Residency of Respondents



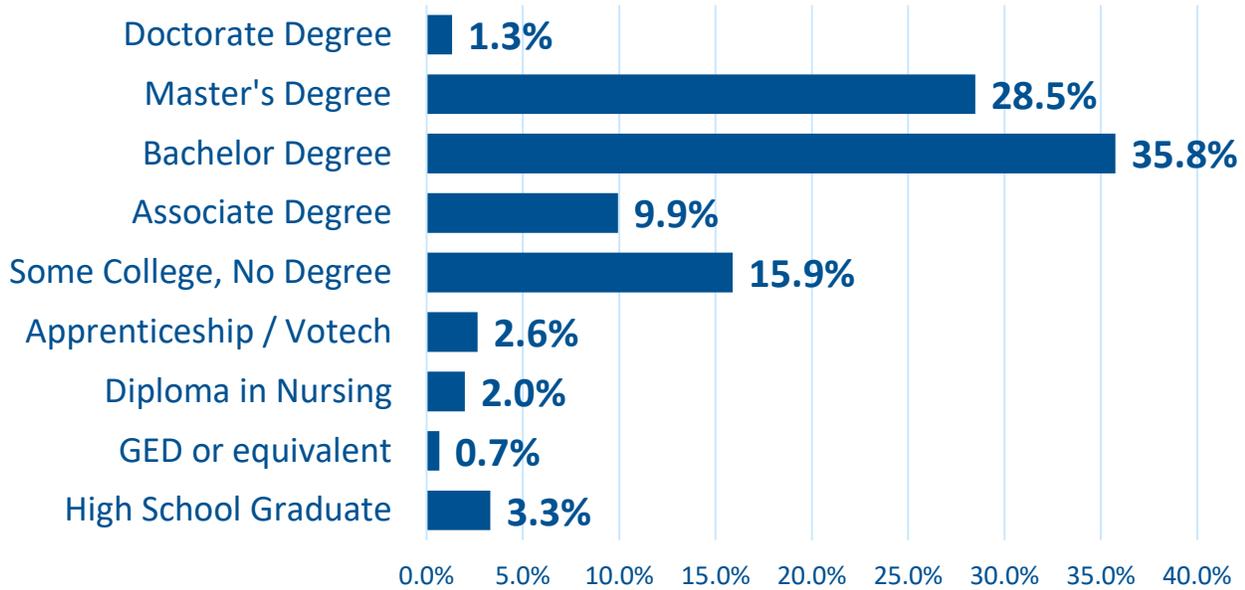
Ward of Respondents



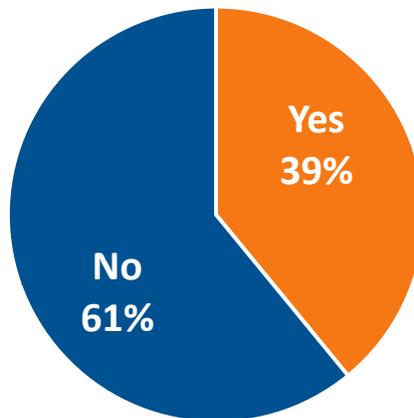
Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Education Level of Respondents



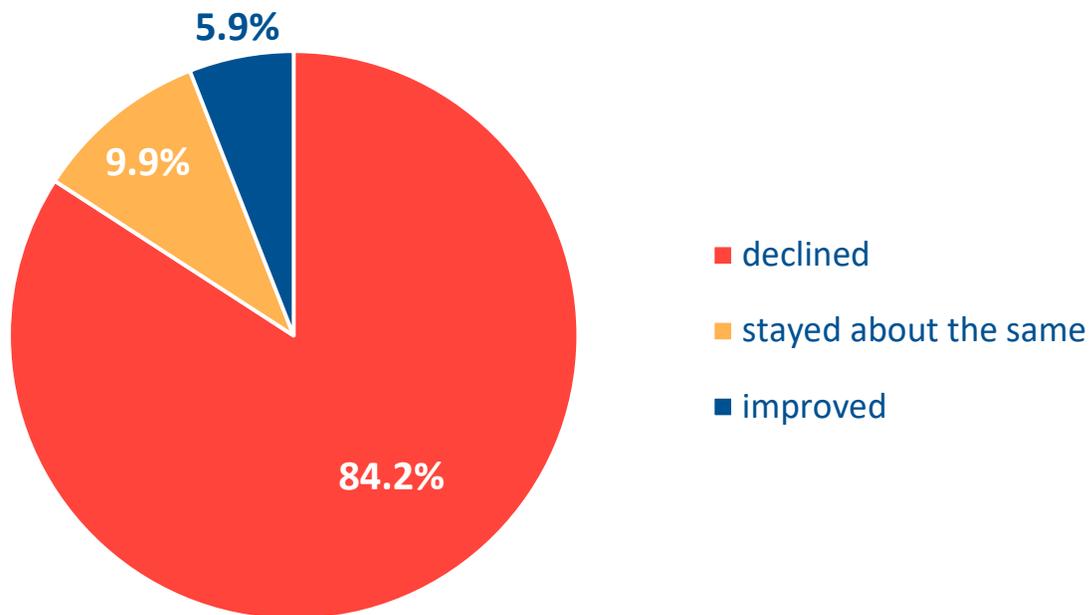
Have you been personally affected by violence in Freeport?



Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

Over the past five years, do you believe Freeport's quality of life has improved, stayed about the same, or declined? For our purposes today, quality of life is defined as the standard of health, safety, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual.

Of the 101 people who responded to this question, only six said the quality of life had improved. And of those who chose improved, there were caveats including “everything had improved ‘except violence,’ which is worse” and “quality of life improvements depends on where in Freeport you live” and further suggested that white residents have a better quality of life than do Black residents. Ten respondents thought things have remained about the same.



Of those respondents who answered that they believed Freeport’s quality of life has declined over the past five years, they identified the following contributing factors most frequently:

- Crime and violence, including youth gangs
- School problems, likely resulting from gangs and youth violence as well as a breakdown of family structures and a lack of options for young people
- Housing shortage, absentee property owners who do not maintain their properties, and lack of government (city) enforcement of statutes requiring such maintenance
- General blight throughout much of the city
- Infrastructure needs have been ignored, most notably streets, curbs, and sidewalks
- Large employers left with a void unfilled; other, smaller businesses failed because of Covid and haven’t been replaced
- Unresponsive city leaders

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews – What We Heard

Over the past five years, do you believe Freeport's quality of life has improved, stayed about the same, or declined?

- Freeport wasn't scary even 10 years ago. All kinds of activities, kids play at parks, not having to watch your backs. Now you need to check out who's around you when you get out of cars.
- Neighborhood decline has spread and become so heart breaking. Disinvestment, Decrepit houses, empty houses, crumbling streets and sidewalks, uncaring landlords unchecked by City government codes and ordinances.
- Students are very needy, emotionally, and physically.
- Infrastructure needs, particularly streets and curbing have been long neglected. Rental housing stock has deteriorated significantly because absent or 'hands off' landlords have avoided needed upkeep and repair to their properties. City government has been beholden to these landlords (and real estate entities) because of their political (monetary) lobbying and influence.
- Buildings are blighted, vacant lots are not mowed with dumping cleaned up, landlords are not held accountable for safety and sub-standard living conditions in rental properties. Streets across the city in neighborhoods are crumbling through the east side and west side, with the east side being the most neglected by the city. Removal of condemned structures doesn't happen soon enough allowing rodents and animals to infest those properties.
- Apparent rise in shootings and other crimes, coupled with a local government obsession about cutting taxes. Neighborhood bicycle patrols no longer done, which helped create rapport between officers and residents. This is largely because the number of full-time officers in the Freeport Police Department has declined from 61 to 36 in the last twenty years.
- Although, more resources are being set up, I feel like there is still a lack of it for the number of individuals who are vulnerable and struggling in the community.
- I have never witnessed so much crime and violence in Freeport. I fear being out at night even afraid to sit on my own front porch. Never thought I would have a security system installed, but I have one now.
- Our streets are in bad condition. There are houses in decay that are not being removed after years of sitting empty. There are no longer educational, fitness, and other programs for seniors. Gun violence has risen, and gangs are present. It's very sad to see my hometown in disrepair.
- There have been some improvements and some declines. The declines are due mainly to issues that confront the entire nation. Issues such as racial divide, declining education, lack of morality and integrity, lack of workers to do jobs, high cost of living, increased violence, lack of family structure, lack of accountability, not allowing the police to do their job, the pandemic, etc. There needs to be a shift in culture, in mind sets.
- COVID had a very big impact on this question. With remote learning, decreased jobs and less income, the stressors on the average person increased during this time. There has been a noticeable increase in unacceptable behavior and lack of tolerance. Increases in assaults, violent crime, and aggressors from outside the community are having an impact.
- Depends on what part of town you live in and what color you are. White has improved. Black declined.

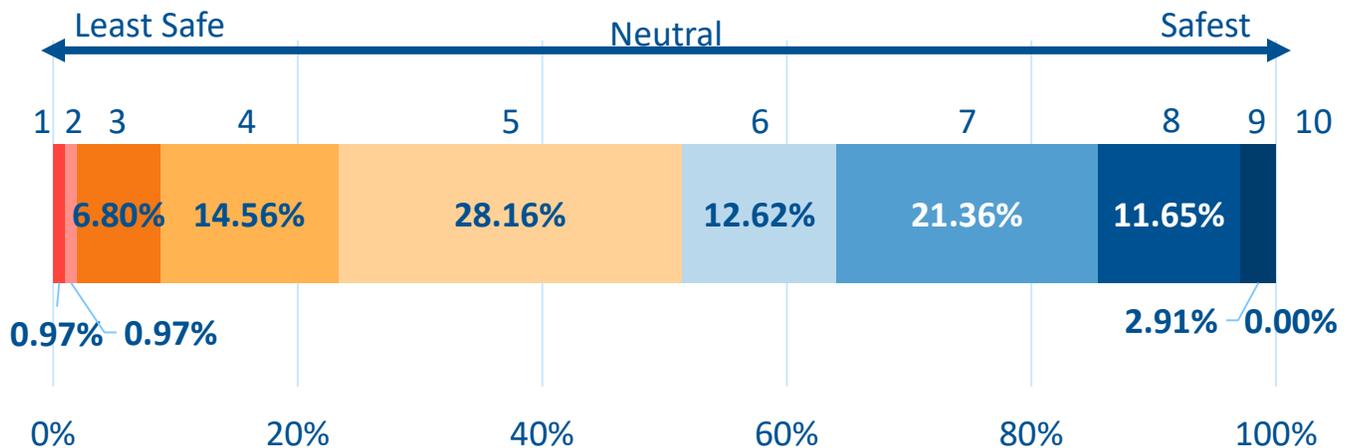
Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

How would you rate the overall safety of Freeport residents on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the least safe and 10 being the safest?

The responses to the question about the overall safety of Freeport residents fall more or less in the middle with many respondents clarifying that people who live in one part of town are safer than those who live in another part of town. Or, white Freeporters are safer than Black Freeporters. Or, poorer residents are less safe than those more financially secure. All three of these explanations may well be talking about the same thing, just using different identifiers.

Several respondents explained their ranking in the middle range by saying that the fear of being unsafe in Freeport would be on the high end while the overall likelihood of being the recipient of crime or violence was on the lower end.

Some respondents said that while this restriction of a general lack of safety to one area or population might have been true, the spread of violence and crime is growing to affect a larger area of the city every year. One respondent seemed to reconcile himself to the potential of violence by saying: "I think I am as safe as anyone who lives in a high violence community." It would be reasonable to assume that this particular respondent does not reside in the part of Freeport known for increased crime and violence. Such a level of complacency is not exhibited by most of the other respondents.



Stakeholder Survey & Interviews – What We Heard

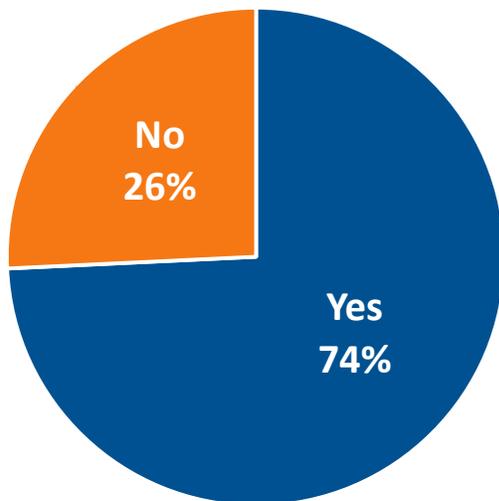
How would you rate the overall safety of Freeport residents on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the least safe and 10 being the safest?

- There is considerable defiance among students in our schools. They have not been raised to be considerate of others. Mindset is focused on self.
- There are robberies and shootings across the city. Young people are dying in our streets. City leadership is unwilling to learn about and invest in new models that could address social needs and cut down on crime.
- People living in poorer neighborhoods have expressed concerns for their daily safety.
- Certain neighborhoods are safe but others, particularly east central freeport south of downtown, I actively avoid due to reports of violence in the area.
- I think I am as safe as anyone who lives in a high violence community.
- I have concerns about the increased crime in Freeport. It does not stop me from enjoying our community, but I do consider the crime when visiting certain areas of town.
- The type of violence that occurs in Freeport is oftentimes in one part of the city or area, but violent incidents have been reported in all areas of the city and allows subjects to become victims at any time.
- This used to be a community of unlocked doors and neighbors looking out for each other. Law enforcement was respected and held people accountable for their actions. Today the community vibe is gone. Law enforcement has their hands tied by politics. There seems to be an overall lack of respect regardless of background, ethnicity, etc.
- Fear of people's safety would be 8 or 9. Very few would be victim of violent crime. Rise in violent crime, gun violence - pretty concentrated where it's at but headlines make it seem like Freeport is dangerous.
- It depends on where you live and who you are. West of the bridge may say 8/9 but others will say 4/5 If you grow up in a neighborhood you feel safer than those looking in. Times have changed, a level of decline.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

Do you personally feel safe in your community?

Most of the respondents reiterated that safety depends more on the part of town and that their sense of feeling safe depends on where they are. While not happy with the need to do so, a number of the respondents added that they have learned to be vigilant and aware of their surroundings, adapting to the reality of the situation.



WHAT WE HEARD

- Gang violence is out of control Blight is ridiculous, landlords, slumlords, and homeowners are not held accountable Housing is accepting former Chicago and Michigan inmates for some reason? Why does freeport allow criminals to settle here, pay for their housing, and wait for them to commit another crime?
- Go away from trouble or let someone else handle it who are trained to do so because people aren't as friendly to random strangers. Can see things formulating and help solve it before it becomes a problem.
- I have lived here all of my life. I am familiar with the community. At one time, everybody knew everybody and looked out for each other. But while that makes me feel safe about being here, I also am always on guard when I am out. I still enjoy myself, but I am watching my surroundings. There are a lot of new faces in Freeport that we didn't grow up seeing or went to school with.
- Know how to navigate and learn how to stay safe, how to read situations. If in tune to it you can feel safe, average person can't feel safe.
- I feel safer than many in our community might feel due to my racial and economic privilege. However, violence affects ALL kinds of people and shootings have happened in our front yard of a "good" neighborhood.
- I feel safe because I know how to protect myself and my family. I have kept my family informed of the violence in this city and trained them what to do in real life situations.
- Due to the rise of gun violence and gang activity I would feel unsafe while in the city due to the frequency of the gun related incidents and how they can happen anywhere.
- How can anyone feel safe in Freeport with all of the violent crime that has been occurring? Innocent people are literally being shot and killed. The fact of the matter is nobody is safe until the Freeport PD has the amount of officers they need to get control of the crime problem. To recruit and retain more police officers though the City of Freeport needs to make their pay and benefits package much more attractive.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

What are the TOP THREE most critical issues facing Freeport residents today?

When asked to identify the three most critical issues facing Freeport residents today, two areas were mentioned far more often than any other:

1) **Crime and Violence**

2) **Economy/Poverty/Jobs**

After those first two, the remainder of the issues identified as most critical include the following, listed in order with those mentioned more frequently at the top. Note that the text in italics following the issue grouping is an interpretation of some of the comments:

- **Parental Involvement / Youth Resources / Education System** – *parents are not managing their kids which leads to crime and violence as well as discipline problems in local schools, but the lack of resources for youth to provide an alternative are insufficient.*
- **Affordable Housing / Landlord Neglect / Blight** – *affordable housing is a problem made worse by landlords letting their properties decline which contributes to an overall sense of pervasive blight.*
- **Infrastructure / Transportation** – *crumbling sidewalks and streets, flooding in parts of town, transportation requires reservation*
- **Police Coverage** – *underfunded and understaffed*
- **Diversity / Racism** – *while not segregated, parts of town have larger populations of people of color and those living in poverty*
- **Leadership** – *perception that those in power indulge in cronyism with little diversity and are not focusing on the most important issues.*

There was a smattering of other issues such as: mental health issues and lack of treatment; lack of doctors; communication and information sharing; taxes; attracting professionals; the judicial system; re-entry to society from prison; and more.

It should be noted that most of these identified critical issues are worse in some sections of Freeport, the boundaries for the areas where violence and crime is more pervasive are increasingly fluid. A number of respondents noted that parts of Freeport which once felt 'safe' are now seeing an increase in crime and/or violence.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

What current efforts are you aware of that are addressing these issues?

In response to the question posed about what current efforts are addressing the identified critical issues, respondents suggested a wide variety of efforts in place with others under discussion. However, a good number of respondents suggested that nothing is being done or that efforts are too fractured for a small community, presumably meaning that with so many issues on the table, groups are not working together to solve issues with the result being that little progress is seen anywhere.

A proposed 'Crime Reduction Plan' was mentioned several times. Freeport Township Supervisor, Patrick Sellers, was referenced as the person behind the plan. However, it is a proposal, and at least one of the respondents suggested that other elected bodies, such as the Freeport City Council, are actively ignoring the proposal, and if that is true, it suggests getting community leaders working together might be another critical issue to resolve.

Efforts by the police were mentioned several times, but it was also suggested that such efforts might be more successful if the police force looked more like the community. The lack of Black officers is surely something the department is trying to address, but it is also true that people need to have an interest and aptitude, and it is not clear whether there have been qualified applicants in the past.

As with some previous responses, these often correlate with the issues identified by the respondent. For example, if crime and violence was the critical issue, the respondent would likely focus on efforts addressing that issue. That said, other respondents offered a laundry list of efforts, often just listing the organizations and institutions identified previously as making a difference.

A final note: several respondents, both here and in responses to other survey questions, have identified an issue being a lack of confidence in the judicial system: "Imagine being a victim of a violent crime and knowing that person will not be locked up." State legislation commonly referred to as the Safe-T Act was identified as something that would further feed this perception.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews – What We Heard

What current efforts are you aware of that are addressing these issues?

- Boys and Girls Club childcare services are helping.
- The schools are instrumental in giving children safety and resources. Emergency services are doing what they can with the limited resources they have. Freeport Area Church Cooperative provides some housing as does VOICES of Stephenson County.
- Greater Freeport Partnership is trying to address employment issues through economic development; several human services agencies working on issues with children and families; committed school board members and administration.
- United Way is the leading group trying to bring people together to address these issues. Local government is not doing a good job of leading/convening productive cooperative efforts to solve problems.
- Efforts are being made by some organizations such as the League of Women Voters and the NAACP to provide information and leadership for the community, but the local power structure work against such understanding.
- Doing as good as they can. It's going to take serious work to fix problems, otherwise change won't happen. Sometimes we need to step on people's toes. Thinking is too shallow, think above the problem. We have to evolve. Get ahead of it. We are being outsmarted by 17/18-year-olds. Bringing in programs and strategies in place where we know the problems may happen. Know where the drugs and guns being sold - if we know then we need to put a stop to it.
- The judicial system has no effect. The new laws coming Jan 1 will make everything a whole lot worse. Imagine being a victim of a violent crime and knowing that person will not be locked up. I have no confidence in our current state's attorney to make an extreme effort to combat this problem.
- A lot of talk about what we should do but nothing being done. In the area the violence is happening, the people turn a blind eye, won't talk about it, won't snitch mentality. Suggest neighborhood watch, but no one wants to do it. Not a fan of police department - if police looked like the community, it would be better - can't help it if there are no Black officers. Not sure what the community is doing to help curve the violence. People complain but it's not happening to them. They are killing each other, I'm not them so I can't do anything about it.
- The Crime Reduction Plan, The Boys and Girls Club Community Youth Services program, NAACP's YIELD (Young Adults Investing in Education and Live Development) and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, Stephenson County Democratic Party's Economic Justice Committee, NAACP's Labor and Industry Committee, Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency (NICAA), Workforce Connection
- I have sat in on many a meeting that discuss these issues, and that is where it stops, at the discussion. I don't see much action at all.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

Of these efforts, what are the TOP THREE programs, services, initiatives, and/or organizations currently helping Freeport residents? / What is making the biggest impact?

When asked to identify the top three programs providing assistance to Freeport residents, more than 20 organizations or institutions were mentioned. However, there were three that were mentioned most frequently:

- 1) Boys and Girls Club,**
- 2) Freeport Area Church Cooperative-FACC** (and churches in general), and
- 3) VOICES of Stephenson County,** an organization supporting victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

While respondents were not asked to rank their choices, the Boys and Girls Club was mentioned more than any other group in the first slot.

Other organizations / institutions mentioned more than once include: the school system and teachers; law enforcement; Greater Freeport Partnership (economic development, business service, tourism); various levels of government (state, municipal, township), Salvation Army; FHN (healthcare); Rosecrance (mental health and addiction treatment); United Way; NAACP; Martin Luther King, Jr Center; Freeport Community Foundation; Park District; YMCA; and Sinnissippi Center (mental health services).

With such a range of organizations and institutions identified as making a difference, it seems clear that respondents identified those organizations working in the area(s) identified by those respondents as critical issues. In other words, if a respondent identified the need for youth programs and services as the most critical need, he or she would likely then name the Boys and Girls Club or YMCA or King Center as those making an impact. If that respondent said that violence is the most critical issue, then law enforcement and government might be identified as the institutions making an impact – but youth programs and mental health programs certainly make a difference in reducing violence. If the economy or poverty were identified as critical issues, then FACC and the Greater Freeport Partnership would be the related organizations most likely to impact those issues. And so on.

However, the first point raised in the first paragraph is the most important to remember: there are more than twenty organizations or institutions that are perceived as working to address the critical issues facing Freeport and Stephenson County.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

What needs/gaps in our programs and services are not being met at this time? What is not happening right now that should be?

Responses to the question about needs, gaps, and unmet services appear to correspond to the issues the respondents identified as critical. If crime and violence was the identified issue, that is where the gaps and needs are located. There was no real consensus, in other words. Here are some summarized responses of interest:

- Youth need safe places to study, play, and just hang out. Mentoring programs would make a difference in improving school demeanor and success. Mentoring the youngest residents might deter them from 'gang life' when they're older. Give older students practical skills for living.
- There needs to be more cooperation between organizations seeking community improvement and among the various levels of government as the likely implementers.
- Housing should be affordable for all who want it. The city needs to enforce existing laws requiring property owners to maintain their property.
- More attention needs to be paid to the east side of Freeport.
- Give the police more funding to provide for training, new hires, and retention.
- Mental illness contributes to many other community issues and focusing on that will pay dividends.
- Parents need to take more responsibility for their children. It is possible that new parents, especially single mothers, would benefit from training in parenting skills and other supportive programs.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews – What We Heard

What needs/gaps in our programs and services are not being met at this time? What is not happening right now that should be?

- More programs for those at poverty level to voice what they need. Some are stuck with where they have to live because of what they can afford. Doesn't mean they should have to live near gang activity or area where houses are boarded up.
- Township, City and County need to be working together and addressing the needs of residents. Council members aren't listening to concerns.
- We lack a community vision; we lack quality elected leadership. We need to strive to bring the community together agree on goals and to work collaboratively on the issues.
- I think that for too long our city leaders have ignored the entire east side of Freeport. This has to stop.
- The people who need to be talking to each other are not talking to each other.
- The community needs more resources. Too many times I've had to refer individuals outside of Freeport for services and lack of transportation becomes a huge barrier for individuals to access the care/benefits/resources they need.
- The biggest gap is programs and services that target the youth to encourage them to be good students, reach high academic standards, and stay out of trouble.
- The issue of segregation in Freeport needs to be addressed. The entire side east of 26 has been sanctioned the "unsafe / bad" side. This is also the "black" side. There are no attempts by city leadership to assist the "bad" side simply pretend it doesn't exist- except for the weekly shootings.
- I hear discussion based on individual factions of our community. It might be gangs, or young Black males, or young Black females, or single school aged parents....but there isn't anyone working on the big solution or addressing the bigger problem. For example, you can make more money selling drugs vs. McDonalds... enough that the reward is worth the risk.
- Increase in funding for police department for trainings, new hires, and incentives for new officers to stay with Freeport as opposed to Rockton or Loves Park. Drop residency restrictions for officers to appeal to officers who may live farther away or whose spouses may work in Rockford and want to live closer to there.
- We have Kings Center on one side, the YMCA on the other = different clientele; adding additional funds to both, there's an imbalance on both sides. There's more space and activities at the YMCA, while Kings Center only has a basketball court and less hours open. Need more opportunities put into Kings Center. Get them off street for longer.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

What specific actions, policies, and/or funding priorities would you support to contribute to a safer and healthier Freeport?

As seen in many of the other questions, the responses provided often relate to the issues identified by the respective respondent. The result is little consensus and a good number of worthy recipients of actions, policies, and funding priorities.

One small exception to the above was what seemed to be greater mention of mental health and counseling, suggesting the provision of free or low-cost support. Other mentions include:

- Expanding school programs, including diversion programs and after-school programs.
- Clean up blight and rundown properties, particularly on the east side.
- Focus on prevention programs
- Programs that support public safety, not just policing but also intervention; improve police-community relations
- Infrastructure improvements, particularly streets and sidewalks
- Getting parents more involved in their children's lives
- Address cronyism in local government; stop drawing from a sheltered pool of experience

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews – What We Heard

What specific actions, policies, and/or funding priorities would you support to contribute to a safer and healthier Freeport?

- My main concern is the neighborhood decline - we need to increase vigilance, define our vision, work to clean up and oust absentee landlords, create funding programs for home ownership and maintenance after purchase.
- Anything that would put the money where it belongs and not in the pockets of those people who are in positions that make the decisions for the city.
- Diversion programs available in the schools at all levels - give kids an alternative to just hanging out until dark. Need good alternative activities, need good hang outs. Community spaces for adolescents that create excitement. After school programs, educational opportunities. Need a variety of things to meet needs of a variety of people.
- Not a policy, however, it would be great if we could get parents/families more positively engaged in our youth's lives. A tall task I know, but if that happened, that would take care a lot of our issues.
- Improve police/community relations. More openness among city council members to ideas that would hold landowners accountable.
- I believe in prevention and would support community services that provide financial, housing and transportation to families, free or low-income mental health service expanded, accessible drug and alcohol treatment for uninsured individuals, mental health day programs.
- Action has to be taken to address and restore the east side of town including rental properties. Action also has to be taken to bring "life" into the town via new stores and activities. So much is focused on "downtown" development and although I do place worth there it seems as though it is the "same old people" within the circle of importance getting priority. The city is downing in violence and poverty, and I am worried it will be unfixable very soon.
- Do not take away from Law Enforcement. Put the school resource officers back in the schools, not as deterrents, but as a support mechanism. Get businesses to participate in assisting with community service hours for non-violent offenders. Train community members to be advocates to help people of all walks of life get the opportunity to learn how to support themselves legally through education, employment, etc.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

What specific programs and services do you know of that are working in other communities that we should try here?

As with so many of the responses to questions, respondents appeared to tailor their thoughts about programs working elsewhere to their notion of critical needs. Those identifying crime and violence shared examples of mitigation programs or community policing. Those who responded that poverty was the most critical issue offered examples of programs aimed at connecting people with jobs or finding homes for the homeless. Flooding? Suggested a specific vendor that might help redirect the water flow, and so on.

One respondent answered that the need won't be found in specific programs as long as the "power structure" is confined to just a handful of people.

Several respondents suggested that communication – e.g., town hall meetings and the like – is the key to improvement, informing community members of the disparate living conditions in the community. However, presumably these differences are not a secret, so it is not clear how such information would make a difference. On the other hand, if there were community programs introduced with the goal of bringing people together, making sure that residents are kept aware of changes – successes, to be sure, but also setbacks with an accompanying analysis of what changes are made as a result.

It is somewhat interesting that the largest group of responses would fall under the category of "don't know" or "not sure," but a good number of those had the additional phrasing: "but I would like to know more." That speaks to a goal of researching best practices in those areas identified as critical issues as a way to begin.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews – What We Heard

What specific programs and services do you know of that are working in other communities that we should try here?

- Not anything different. Communities are tighter in smaller cities other than Freeport. I think there is a culture difference in Freeport. You are either very, very poor or you are well off. The people that fall in between are the ones who are scared. Well-off have secure houses, no gang member living next to them. Very, very poor don't have anything - not even car for transportation - just stuck and can't get out. No options. Not many choices for jobs.
- Drug and Alcohol rehab - Family Peace Center in Rockford is doing it well.
- We need to contact someone like Grade Solutions and see if we can manage the water and build retention ponds or re-direct the water flow.
- "Housing First" gets homeless people housed THEN supports them in staying housed (mental health services, mentors, help getting papers they need, help getting a job or into training or school.
- Citizen Emergency Response Training [CERT] (or a homegrown program) brings citizens from different parts of town.... opening lines of communication with a mutual goal. Citizen Police Academy to open communication & create support for officers.
- Not so much specific programs, but the need to broaden the power structure of Freeport.
- In St. Louis MO - a church has community-based ideas - want others to have healthy open spiritual relationship with whoever. Tabernacle that has resource center, recreation, helping to build storefront for new businesses and rebuild homes. Not government run but people from the community. Love for others is the message. More inclusive to everyone, all ages. Make it harder for someone to go down the wrong path.
- City-specific employment initiatives or a coop. Like a job finding site but specific to Freeport. Job seekers see what's out there and employers see what works as far as wages and other incentives to get people in the door.
- Anonymous call-in system to report violence, crime that can't be traced. More increase in violence coming into Freeport from the outside in last 6 months.
- Violence Interrupters type program in Kenosha. Community Police Unit in Freeport - it failed because police felt that was community police problem - need officers to work on community needs problems - bicycle police.
- Teen Reach, Mentor Programs. We have many kids who are a fatherless generation. Young men are impressionable and carry violence and abandonment their whole life. Emotionless generation because they've been told to not show emotion. Grieve and process. Life skills. Self-care. Kids are lost these days.

Stakeholder Survey & Interviews

How likely is it that you would recommend Freeport as a place to live to a friend or family member?

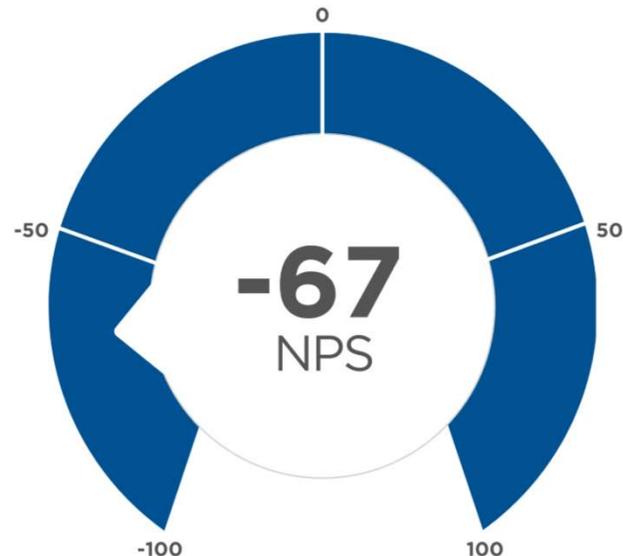
The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a widely used market research metric that typically takes the form of a single survey question asking respondents to rate the likelihood that they would recommend a specific thing (company, product, service, or in our case, place) to a friend or family member. Respondents are divided into promoters, passives, and detractors based on their ratings and the NPS is calculated based on the responses.

Net Promotor Score: - 67

Detractors (0-6): 74%

Passives (7-8): 18%

Promoters (9-10): 7%



What We Heard

- It saddens me that I feel so sad about Freeport after living here so many years; saddens me that my children have no intention of being here and I support them in that - there is nothing for them here; saddens me that leadership fails to LEAD.
- I think there is huge potential for this city. The current downtown work on infrastructure will help. I would recommend living here mostly because Freeport has the best parks and places to walk or ride bike for miles around in any direction including Wisconsin. It's also the right size to be close to everything one needs as a senior. There is also beautiful senior housing for every income range, great grocery shopping and many events. I think Freeport can build on that. We cannot let a few gang members let us lose sight of the positive things in this town.
- There is a lot of opportunity here, bigger city with smaller feel. Neighborhood connections, great housing prices, job opportunities.
- East side of town: abandoned buildings, torn up streets, heartaches. Wonder how kids focus when they deal with this as their everyday. Want kids to see hope and be heard to make the future better. You have to use your voice.
- Freeport is a wonderful community. We need more jobs, living arrangements. I'm still here, I want people to come here.

Appendix

Data Notes

Community Snapshot

Crime and Safety Data

Income and Poverty Data

Housing Data

Economy and Jobs Data

Education Data

Health Data

Gun Violence Research

Data Notes

Secondary data used in this assessment include local, county, state, and federal statistics and evidence-based research articles and reports. It covers topics including demographics, physical and mental health, education, socioeconomics, crime, and more. Sources include the U.S. Census Bureau, FBI, Illinois Departments of Education, Commerce, and Health, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, County Health Rankings, and others. The secondary data presented in this report can be used to support decision making, further research, and problem-solving.

Primary data is collected directly from first-hand sources which, in the case of this assessment are community stakeholders. This data gives us an accurate view of the unique challenges the Freeport community is facing as well as opportunities for improvement and growth. We also use this data to understand community sentiments and develop priorities. The primary data for this assessment includes:

- 24 Community Stakeholder Interviews
- 128 Community Stakeholder Surveys

Community Stakeholders were identified with the help of the Steering Committee and include representatives from community sectors such as government, social service, churches/faith, healthcare, business, education, and nonprofit organizations.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The secondary data presented in this report is the most current available. Some of the data predate the Pandemic, which began to affect almost all facets of life in March 2020. Data available after 2020 includes early impacts of the Pandemic. While we will not know the full impact of the Pandemic on individuals and communities for many years, emerging research indicates it will exacerbate the community's greatest challenges.

Margin of Error

You've probably heard or seen results like this: "This survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points." What does this mean? Most surveys are based on information collected from a sample of individuals, not the entire population. A certain amount of error is bound to occur — not in the sense of calculation error but in the sense of sampling error, which is the error that occurs simply because the researchers aren't asking everyone. The margin of error is supposed to measure the maximum amount by which the sample results are expected to differ from those of the actual population. Because the results of most survey questions can be reported in terms of percentages, the margin of error most often appears as a percentage, as well. If a particular result seems too high, or too low, investigating the original source to identify the margin of error might provide some enlightenment. But for the most part, anything included in this summary document can be regarded as trustworthy and good starting points for further discussion.

Data Collection Methodology

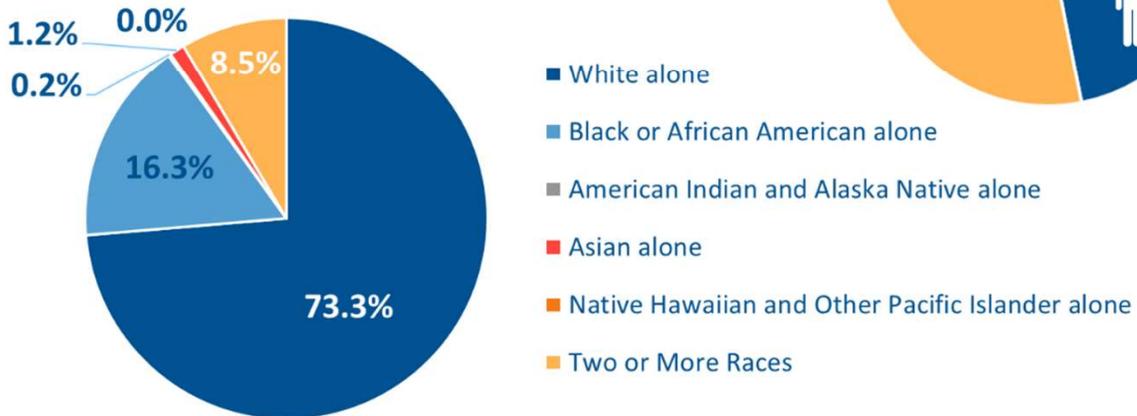
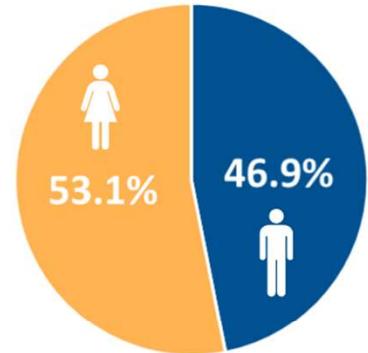
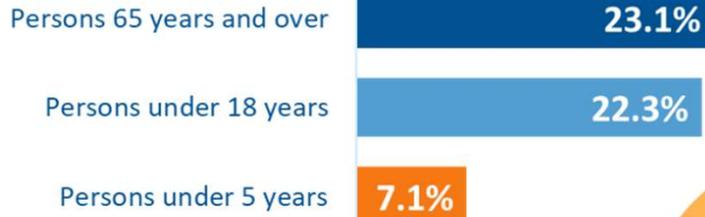
You will see different dates for different sources, but the facilitators of this process have strived to include the most current data available. Government agencies do not necessarily update data they collect on an annual basis. And with city and county-level data, which is the most useful to communities, a federal agency might take years to update data. So, if a data source in a document like this states the data is four years old, that almost always means it is the most current available. In recent years, the U.S. Census Bureau has updated data from that office annually by using formulas and algorithms along with a sampling of citizens who answer a survey every year (American Community Survey), but that office is unique in this practice.

Freeport, Illinois Community Snapshot

23,973



2020 Population



HOUSING	
Owner-occupied housing unit rate	59.2%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$71,000
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage	\$973
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage	\$486
Median gross rent	\$692
Households	10,828
Persons per household	2.16

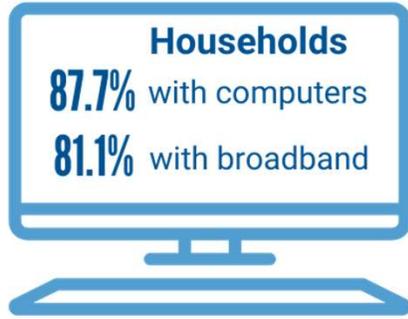
43.5 years
2021 Median Age

1.9% ↑

42.7 years
2011 Median Age

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts (2017-2021)

Freeport, Illinois Community Snapshot



90.3% High School Graduate or Higher
19.8% Bachelor's Degree or Higher

14.8% Persons with a disability under age 65 years
56.4% Persons in civilian labor force (age 16 years+)

\$41,831

Median Household Income
 (in 2021 dollars)

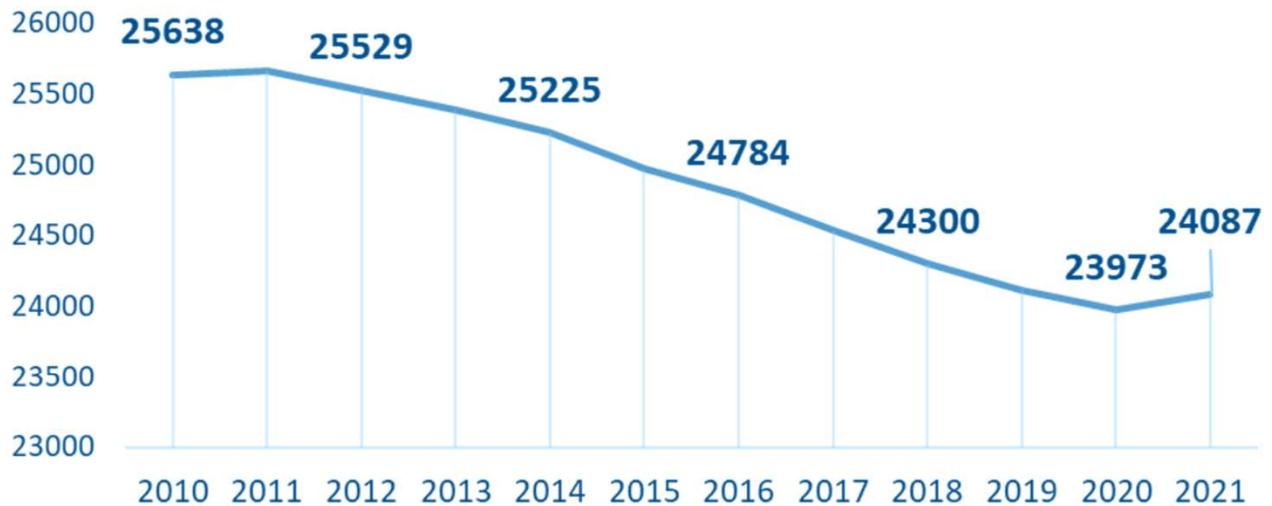
20.3%

Persons in Poverty

\$26,321

Per capita income in past 12 months
 (in 2021 dollars)

Population Trend



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts (2017-2021);
 Populations Trend - ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010-2021

Crime & Safety

Please be advised: This report contains themes related to gun violence which may be distressing or triggering for some individuals.

Nearly all violent crimes reported by the Freeport Police Department have trended upward between 2011 and 2021. This includes homicides, rapes, and aggravated assaults. The rate of robberies reported remained flat. Property crimes reported decreased over this same time period with the exception of arson which remained flat and motor vehicle theft which increased.

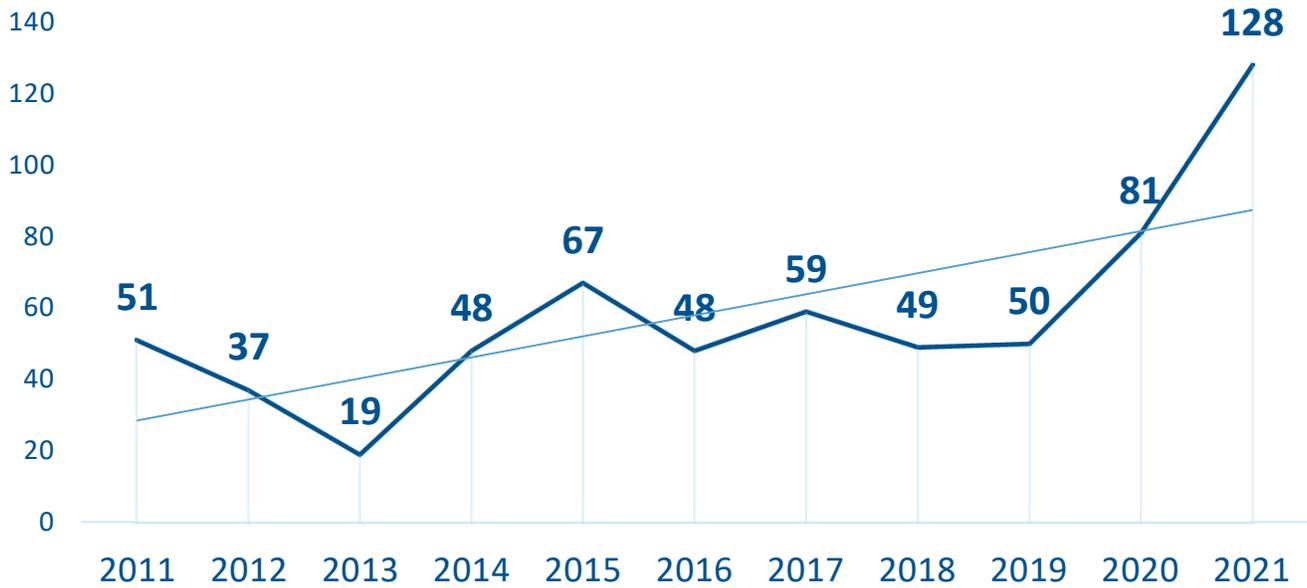
In 2021, there were 113 all violent crime incidents and 128 offenses reported by the Freeport Police Department. There continues to be significant age, sex, and racial disparities among both victims and offenders. 40% of victims of violent crime are between the ages of 10 to 19 while 38% of offenders are between the age of 20 to 29. The majority of offenders (87%) are male, while the majority of victims (78%) are female. When it comes to race, Black/African Americans represent 62% of offenders and 50% of victims while Whites represent 33% of offenders and 46% of victims.

Most violent crimes occurred in a residence or home (62) followed by public highways, alleys, streets, and sidewalks (48). When it comes to the type of weapon involved in the offense, personal weapons were used most often (34 cases) followed by firearms (24) and handguns (19). The relationship between the victim and offender was unknown in 17 cases, an acquaintance in 16 cases, otherwise known in 15 cases, and boyfriend/girlfriend in 11 cases.

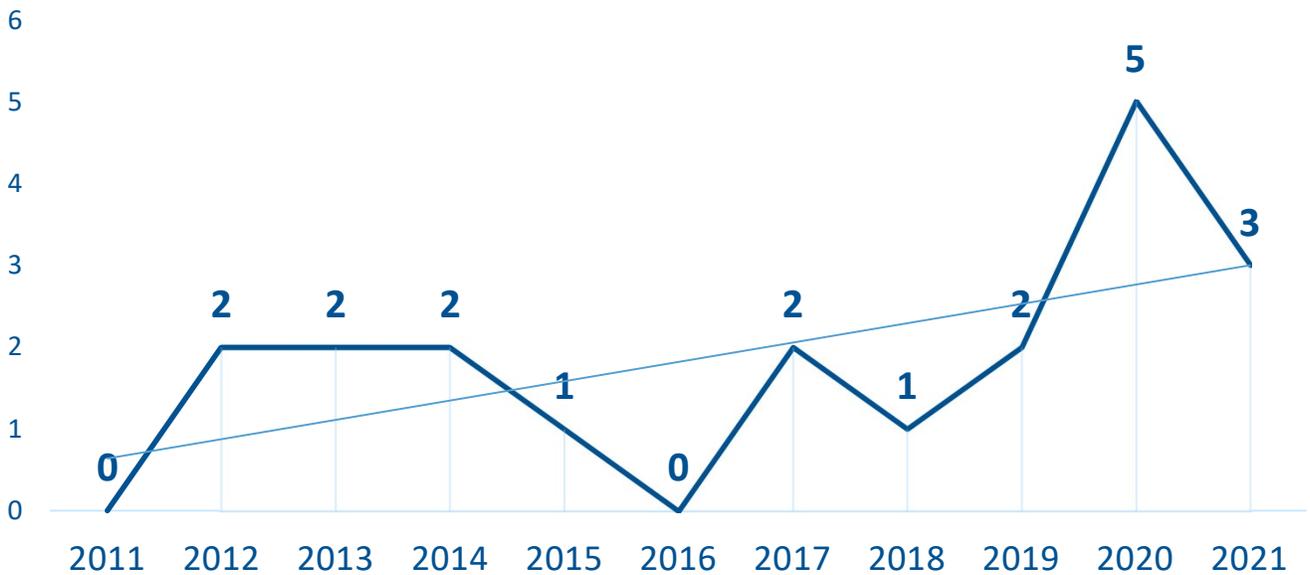
Crime & Safety

All Violent Crimes Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021

Volume of violent crime (murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and property crime (burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft).



Homicides Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021

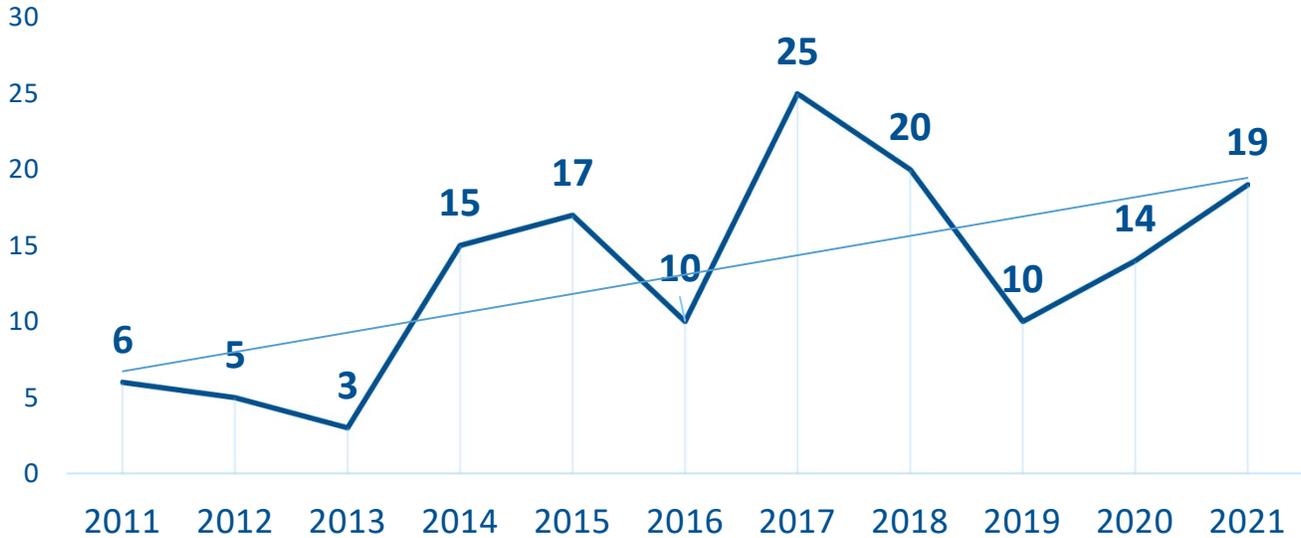


Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

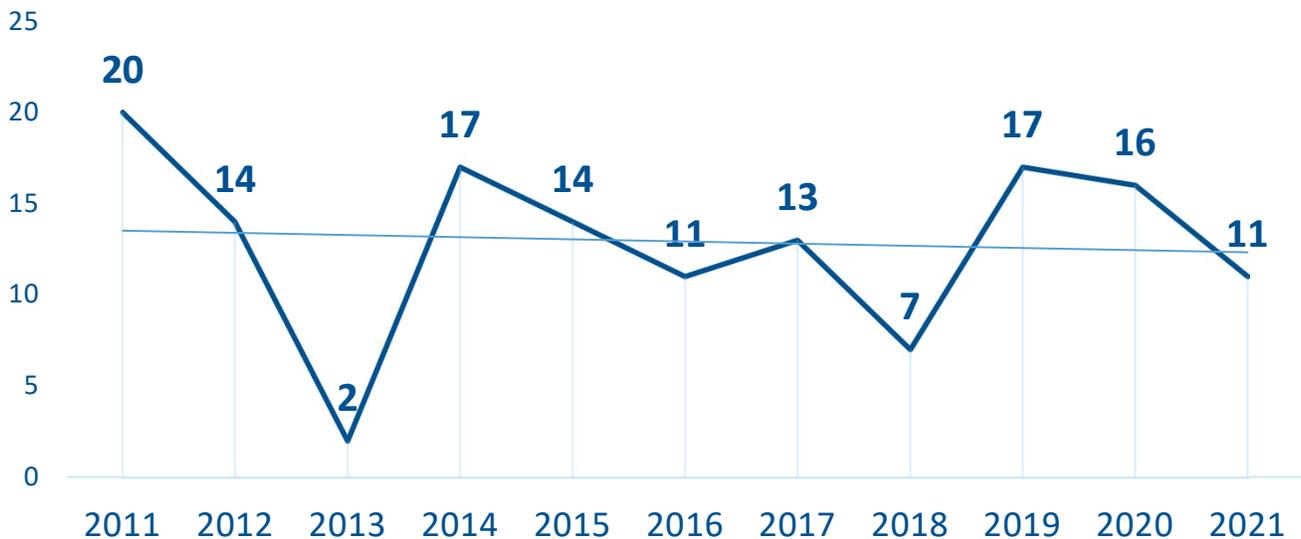
Crime & Safety

Rapes Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021

Legacy Rape Reported (2011-2013); Revised Rape Reported (2014-2021)



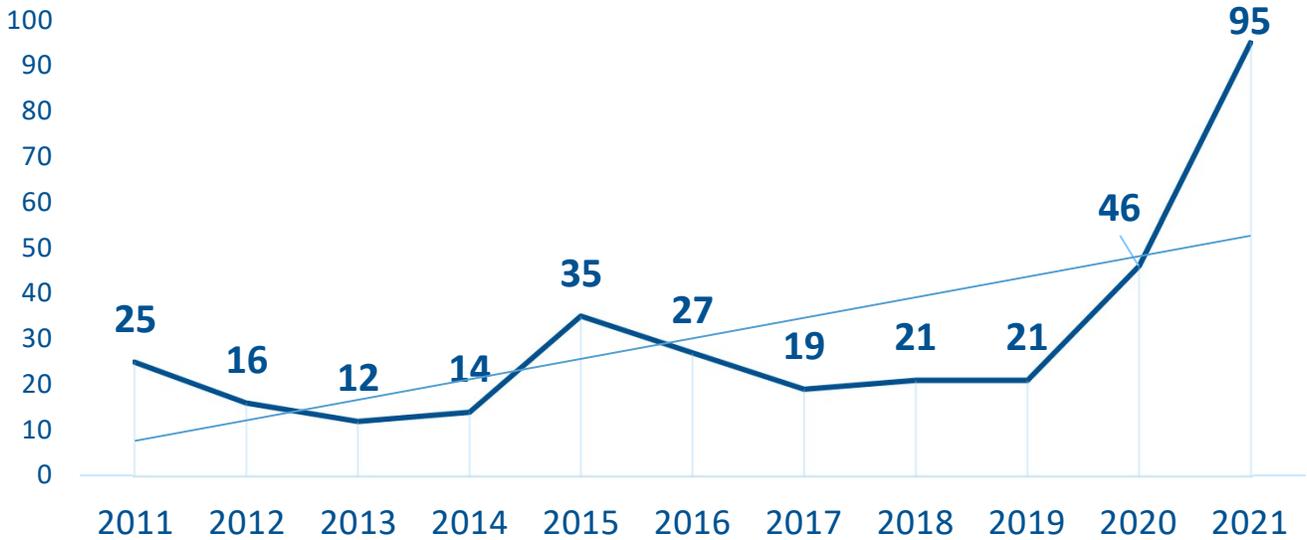
Robberies Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021



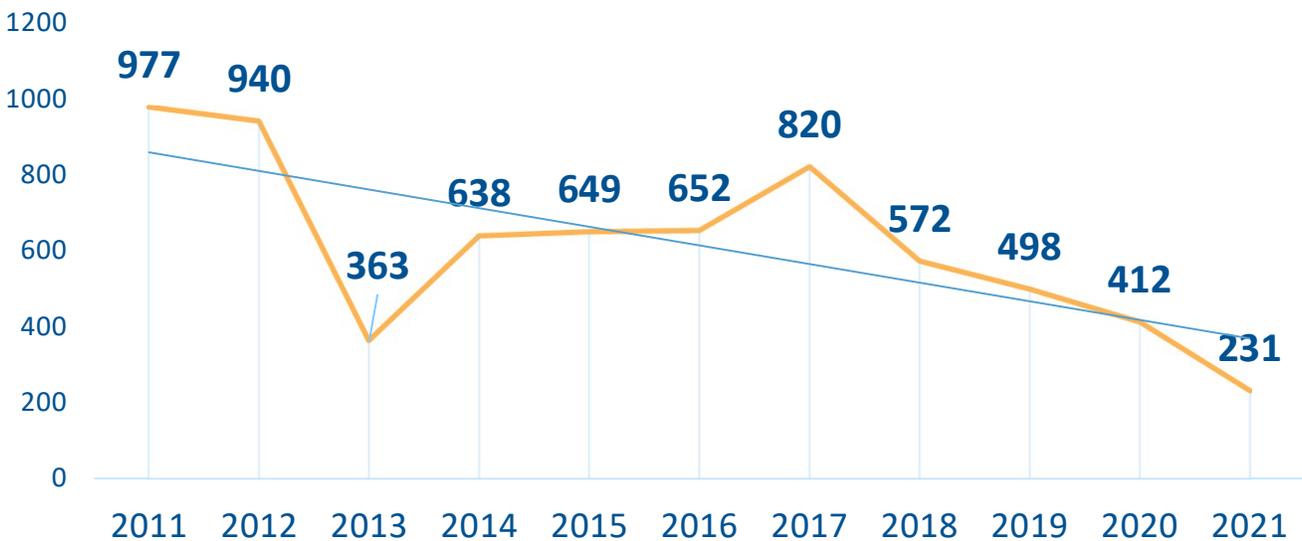
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

Aggravated Assaults Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021



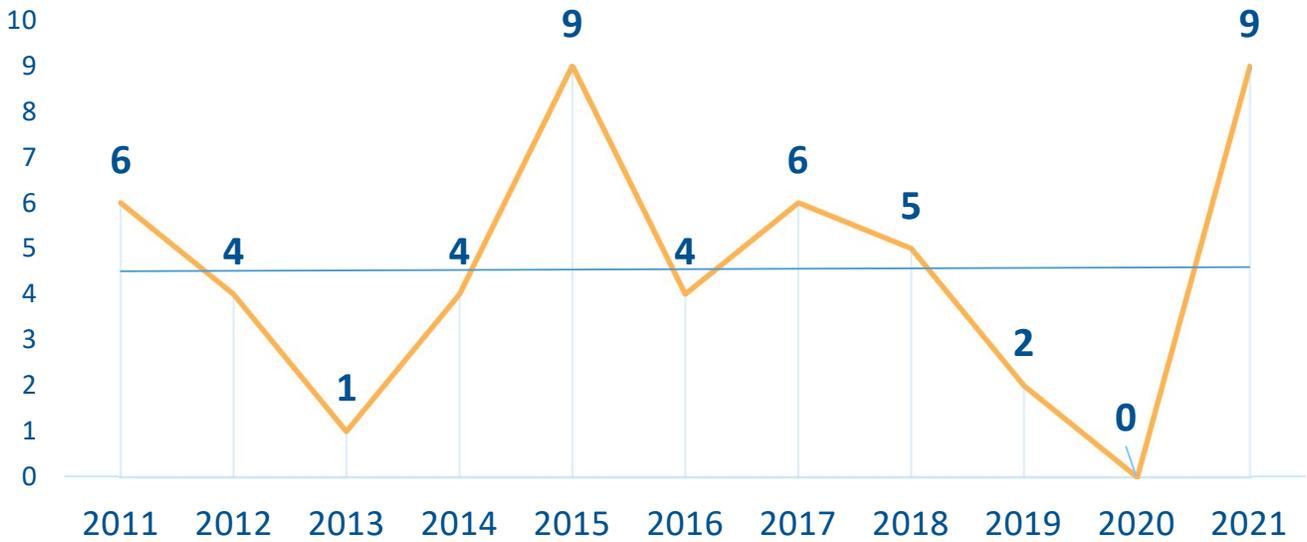
All Property Crimes Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021



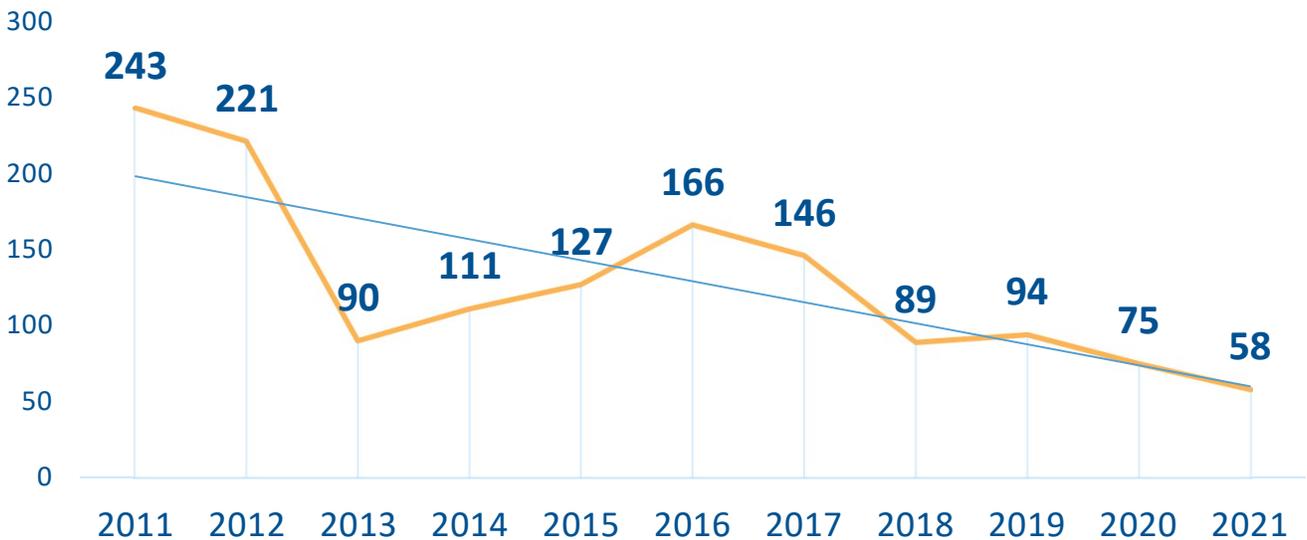
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

Arson Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021



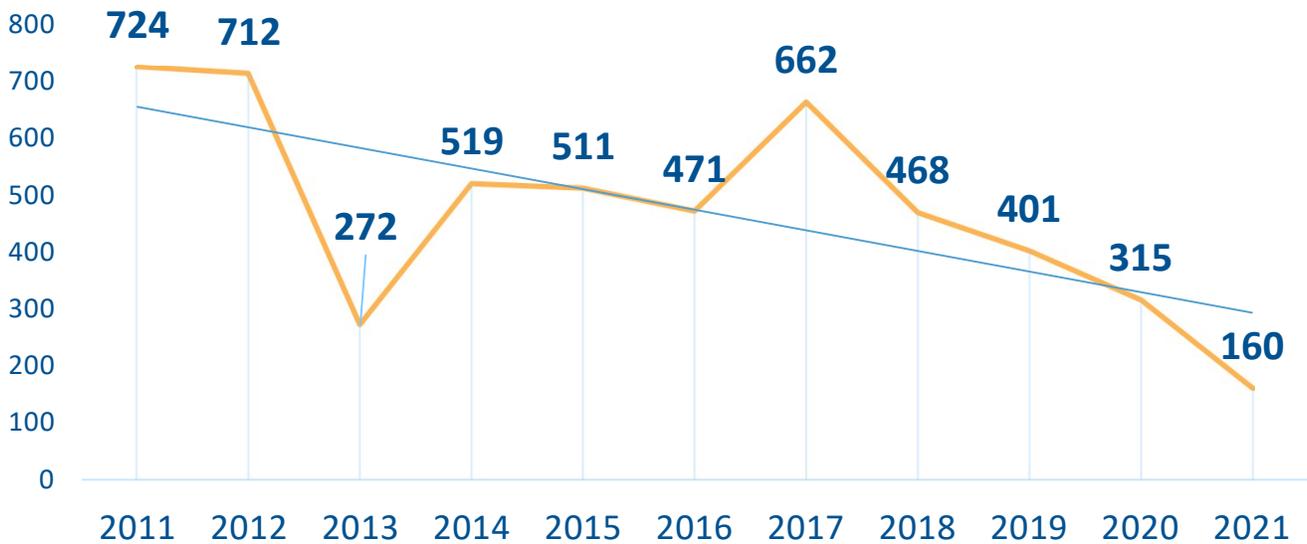
Burglaries Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021



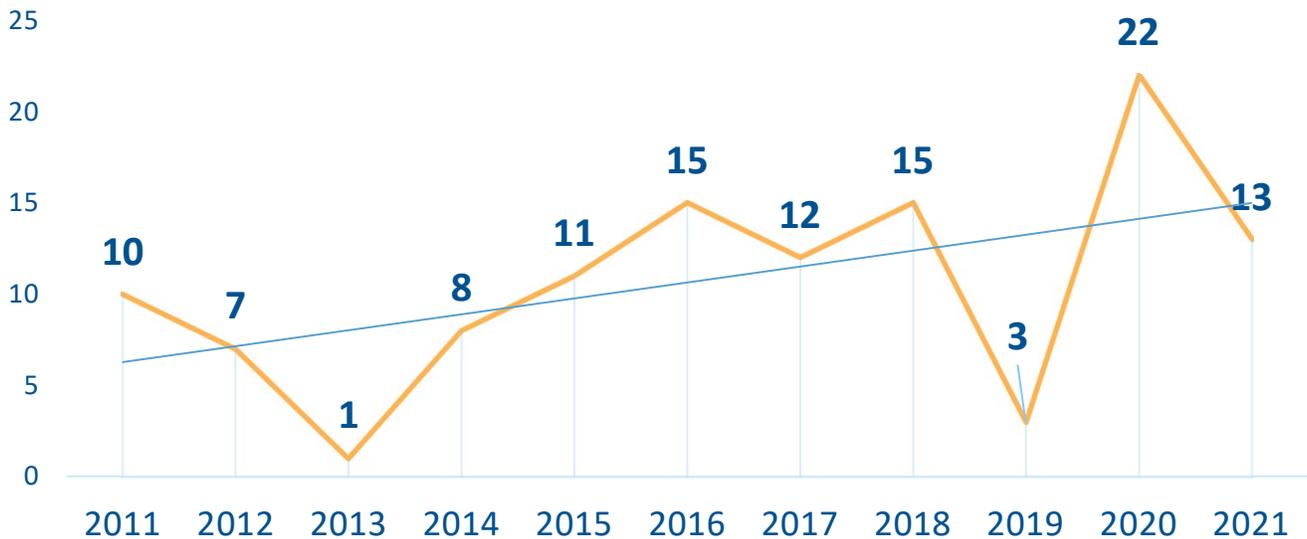
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

Larceny-Thefts Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021



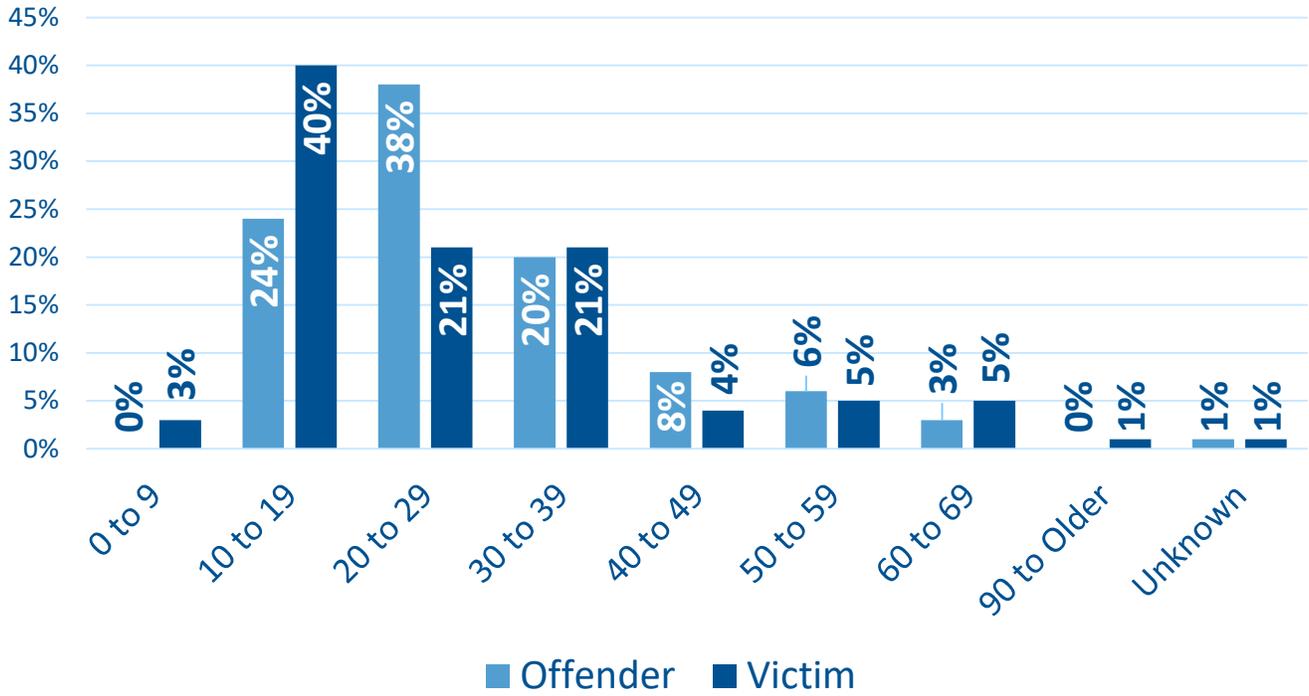
Motor Vehicle Thefts Reported by the Freeport Police Department 2011-2021



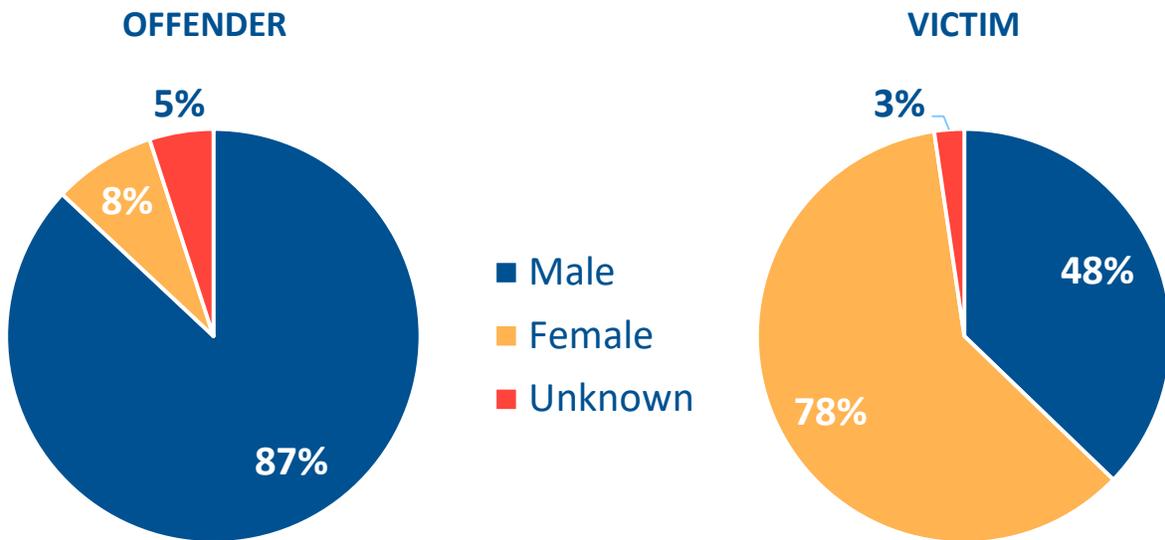
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

All Violent Crime Offender vs. Victim Demographics - Age



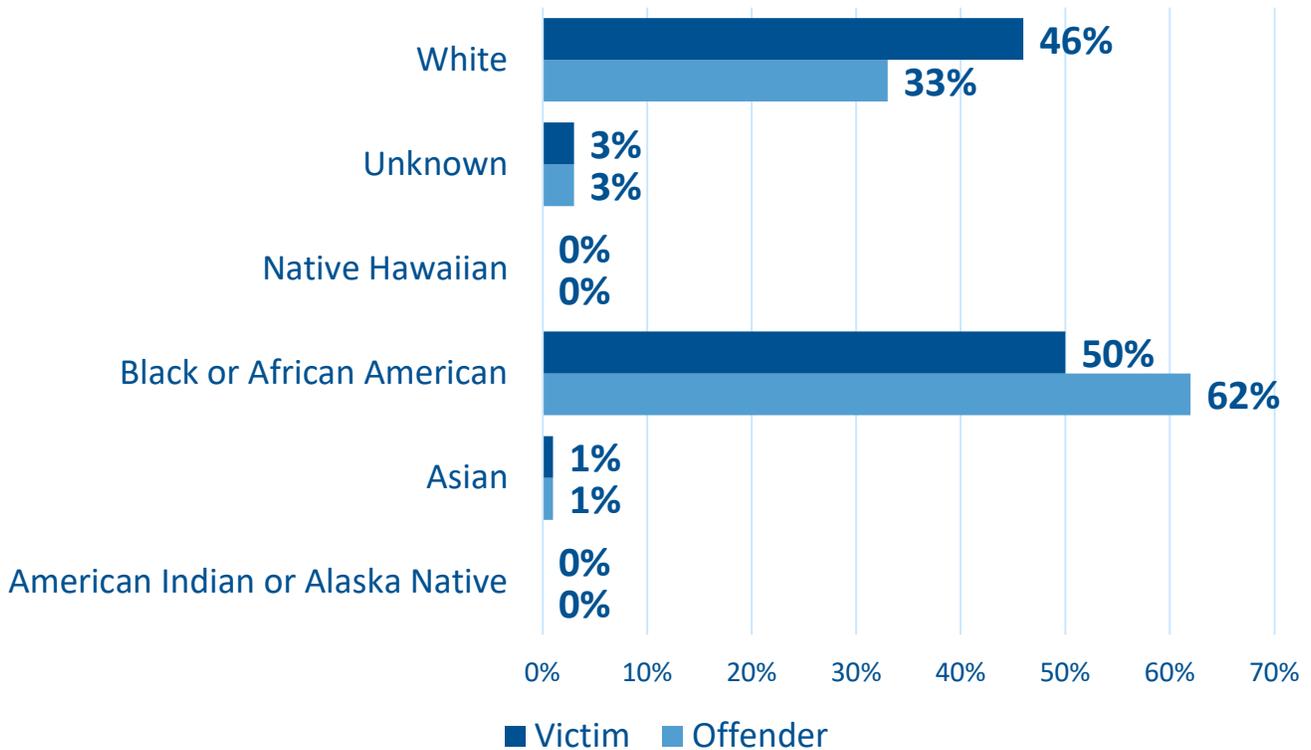
All Violent Crime Offender vs. Victim Demographics - Sex



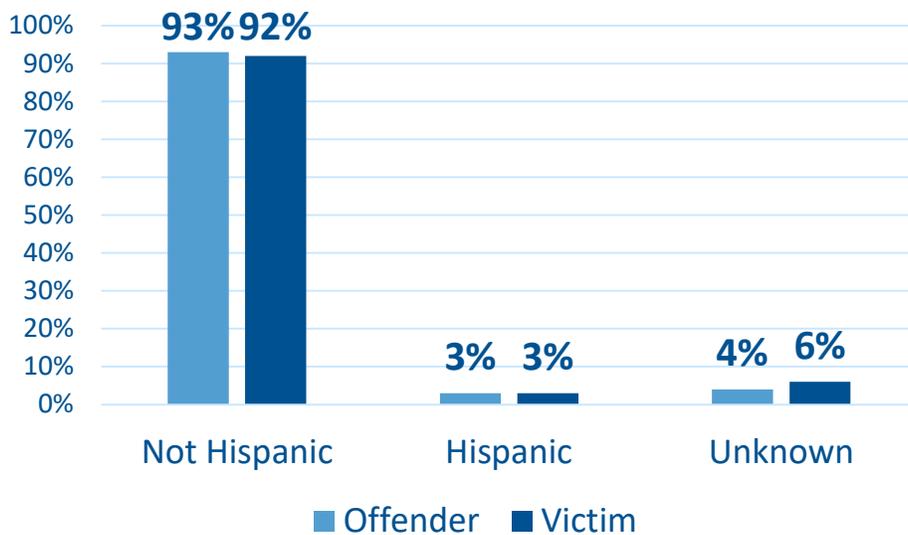
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

All Violent Crime Offender vs. Victim Demographics - Race



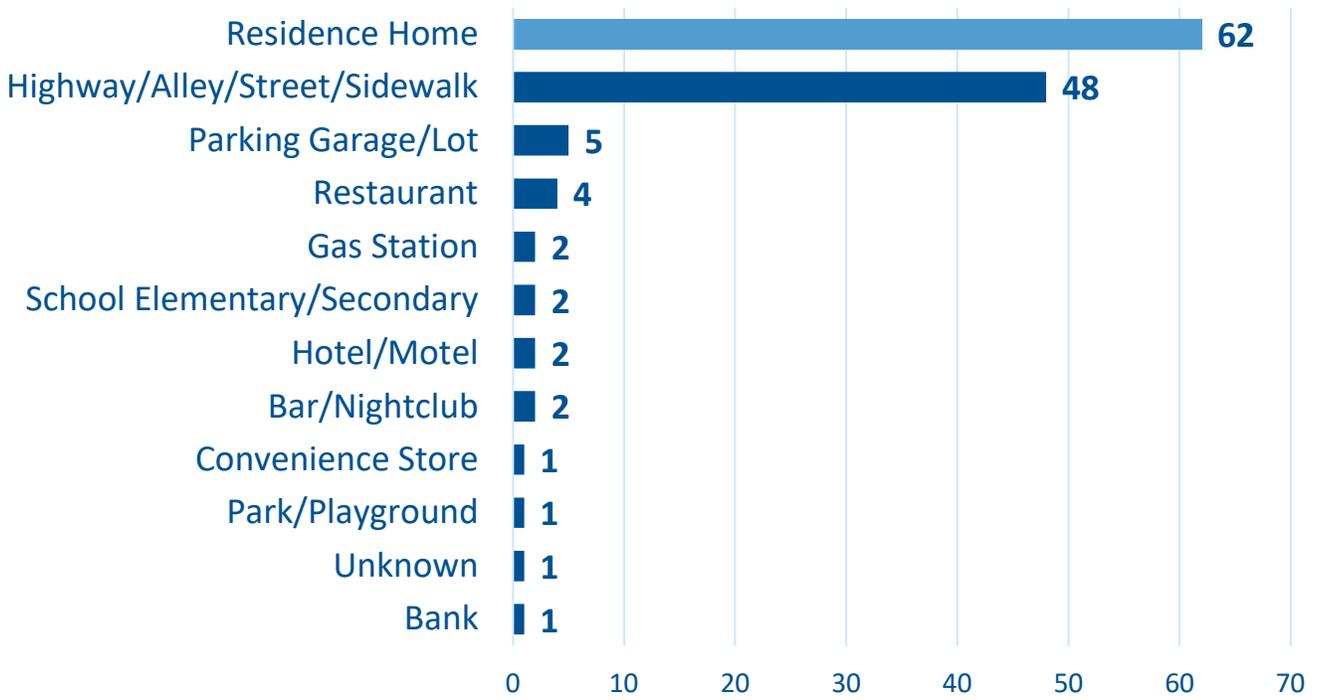
All Violent Crime Offender vs. Victim Demographics - Ethnicity



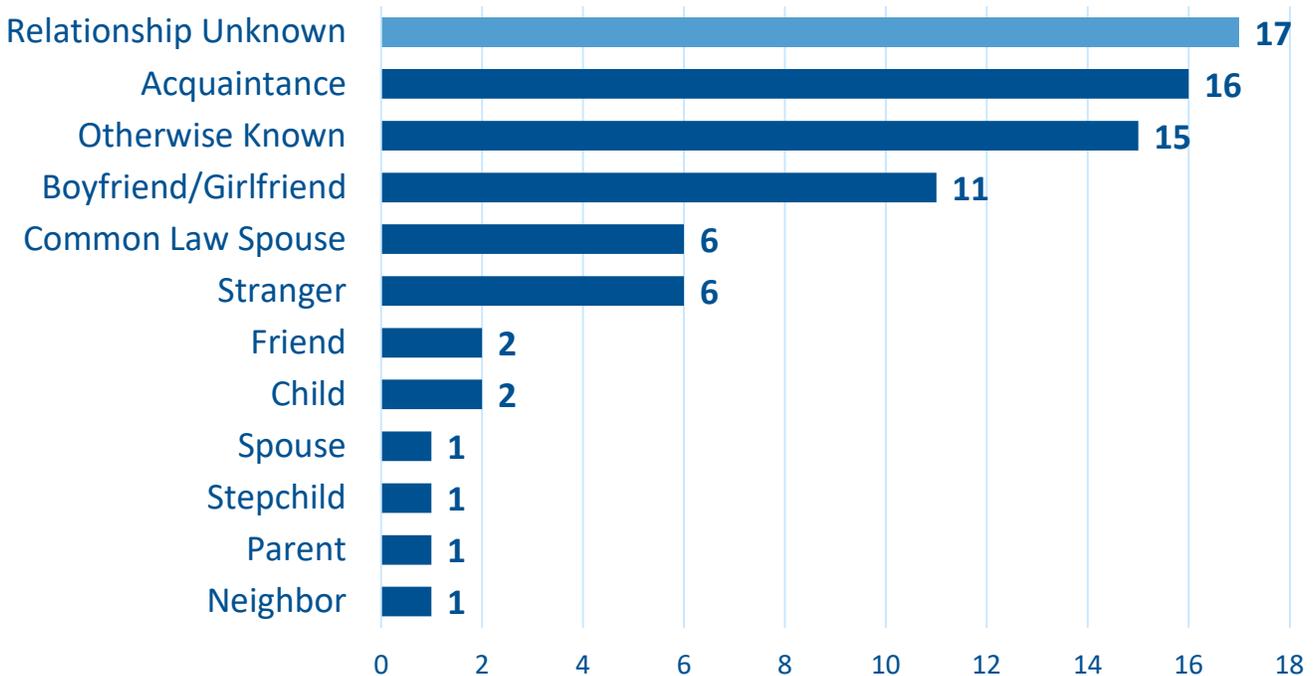
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

All Violent Crime Victim Demographics – Location Type



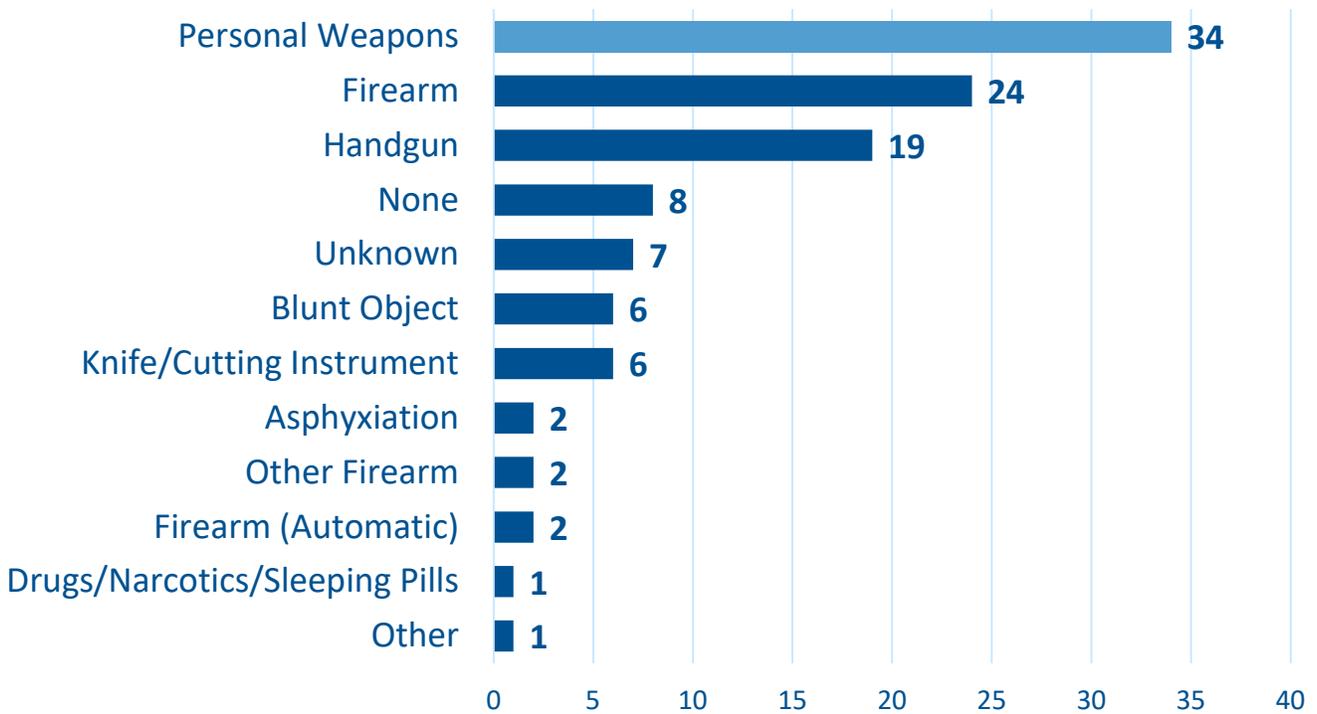
All Violent Crime Victim Demographics – Victim’s Relationship to the Offender



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

All Violent Crime Victim Characteristics – Type of Weapon Involved by Offense



All Violent Crime Victim Characteristics – Offense Linked to Another Offense



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer; Reported National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data from Freeport Police Department

Crime & Safety

Freeport Murder Cases from 1998 - Current

The names of victims and offenders have been redacted for this report.

Date	Murder/Involuntary	Victim(s)	Offender(s)	Disposition
12-2-98	Murder			Guilty – 40 year sentence
12-7-98	Murder			Guilty – life sentence
4-15-99	Murder			Guilty (2 nd degree Murder) – 20 years
11-7-04	Murder			Guilty – 60 year sentence
3-26-07	Involuntary			Guilty (2 nd degree Murder) – 16 years
6-30-07	Murder			Guilty – 30 year sentence
4-6-08	Murder			Guilty (mentally ill) – life sentence
9-23-12	Murder			Guilty – 20 year sentence Guilty (2 nd degree murder) – 17 year sentence
10-28-12	Murder		OPEN COLD CASE	OPEN COLD CASE
5-27-13	Murder			Guilty – 23 year sentence Guilty (Armed Violence) – 27 year sentence
6-30-13	Murder		OPEN COLD CASE	OPEN COLD CASE
9-25-13	Murder		OPEN COLD CASE	OPEN COLD CASE

Crime & Safety

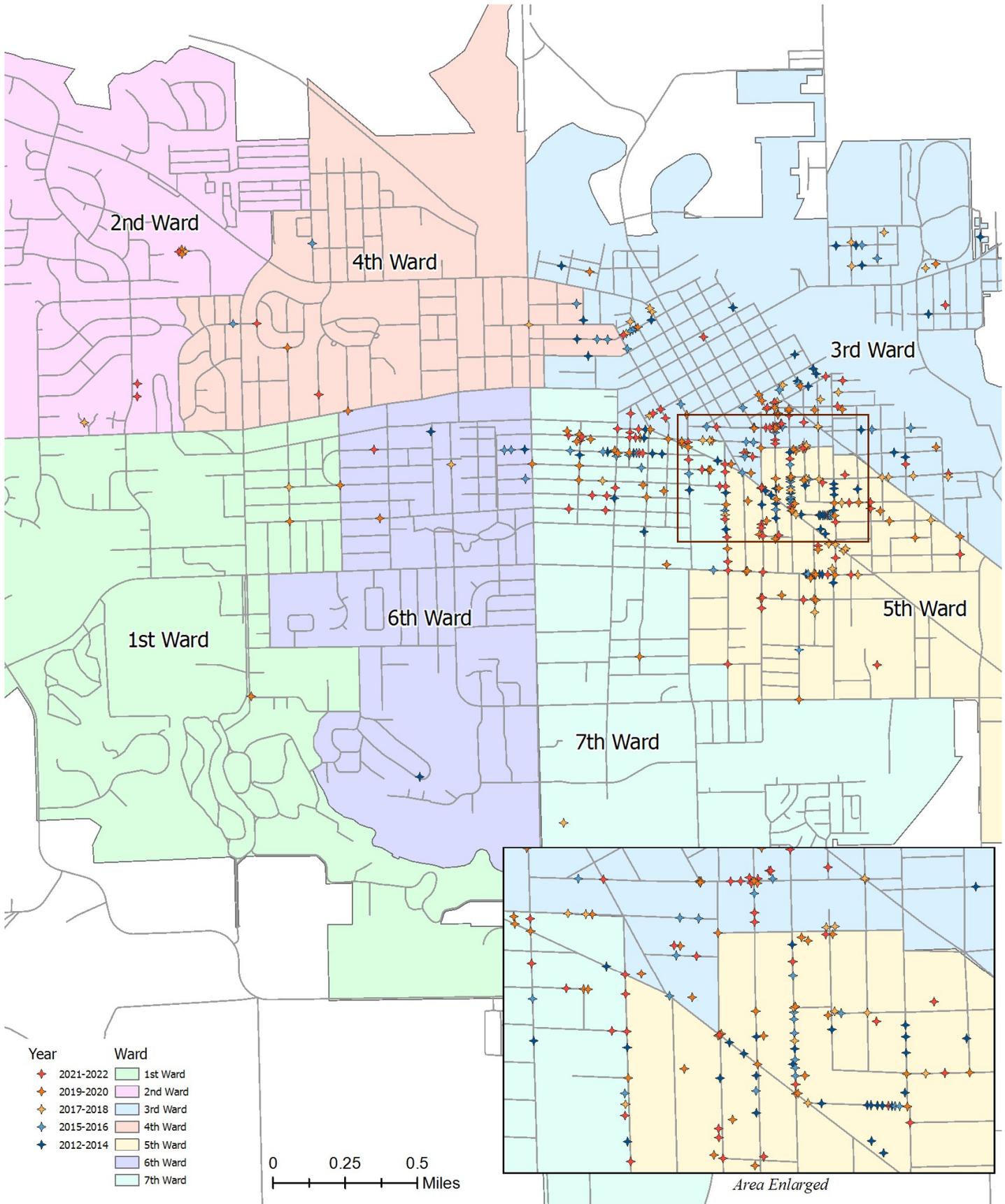
Freeport Murder Cases from 1998 - Current

Date	Murder/Involuntary	Victim(s)	Offender(s)	Disposition
10-16-13	Murder			Guilty – 52 year sentence
4-4-14	Murder			Guilty – 40 year sentence
11-13-14	Murder			Guilty – 25 year sentence
				Guilty – 33 year sentence
7-30-15	Murder			Guilty– 23 year sentence Guilty – 20 year sentence
2-15-17	Murder			Not-Guilty By Reason of Insanity
7-15-18	Murder			PENDING IN COURT
2-1-19	Murder			Plea of guilty – 47 year sentence
6-5-19	Murder			Plea of guilty – 35 year sentence
3-31-20	Murder			OPEN CASE
6-11-20	Murder			Not Guilty – Self Defense
7-5-20	Murder			OPEN CASE
				Plea of guilty – 32 year sentence
7-29-20	Murder			Plea of guilty – 35 year sentence

Crime & Safety

Freeport Murder Cases from 1998 - Current

Date	Murder/Involuntary	Victim(s)	Offender(s)	Disposition
8-4-20	Murder			OPEN CASE
5-15-21	Murder			PENDING IN COURT
5-20-21	Murder			Plea of guilty to 2 nd degree murder – 20 year sentence
9-19-21	Murder		OPEN CASE	OPEN CASE
11-18-21	Murder		OPEN CASE	OPEN CASE
2-10-22	Murder			PENDING IN COURT
6-19-22	Murder			PENDING IN COURT
7-21-22	Murder		Investigation On-going	OPEN CASE
7-29-22	Murder		Investigation On-going	OPEN CASE
09-16-22	Murder (Arson)		Investigation On-going	OPEN CASE

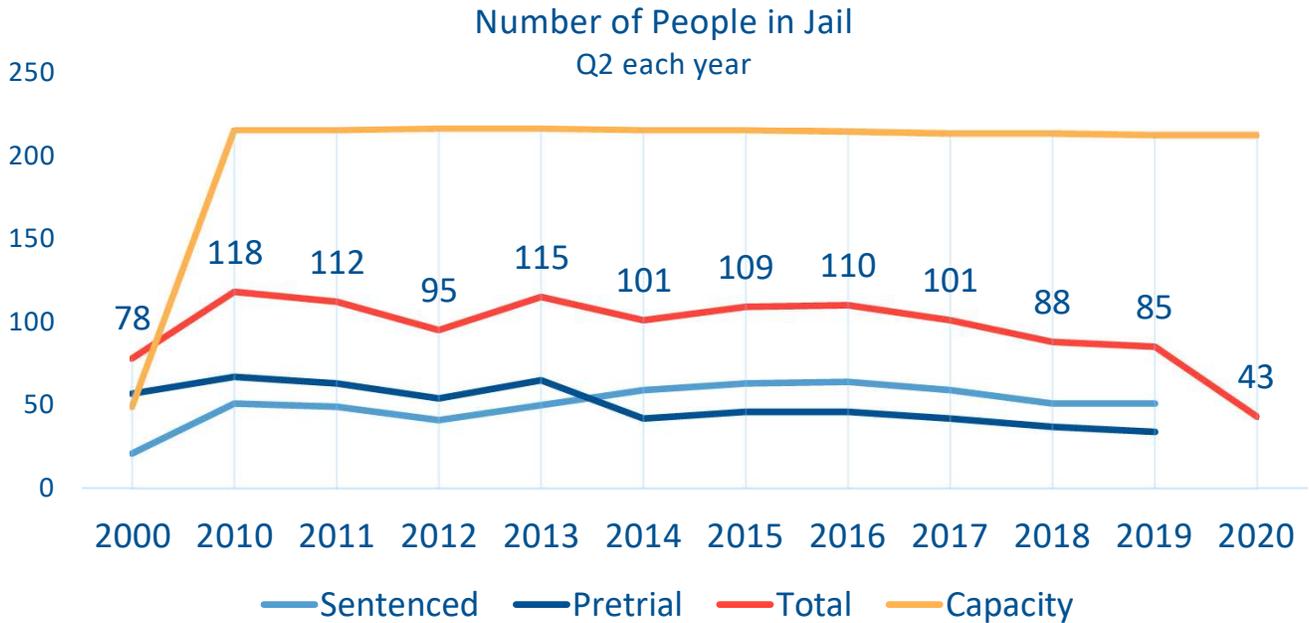


Locations of Shots Fired Freeport, Illinois 2012-2022

Crime & Safety

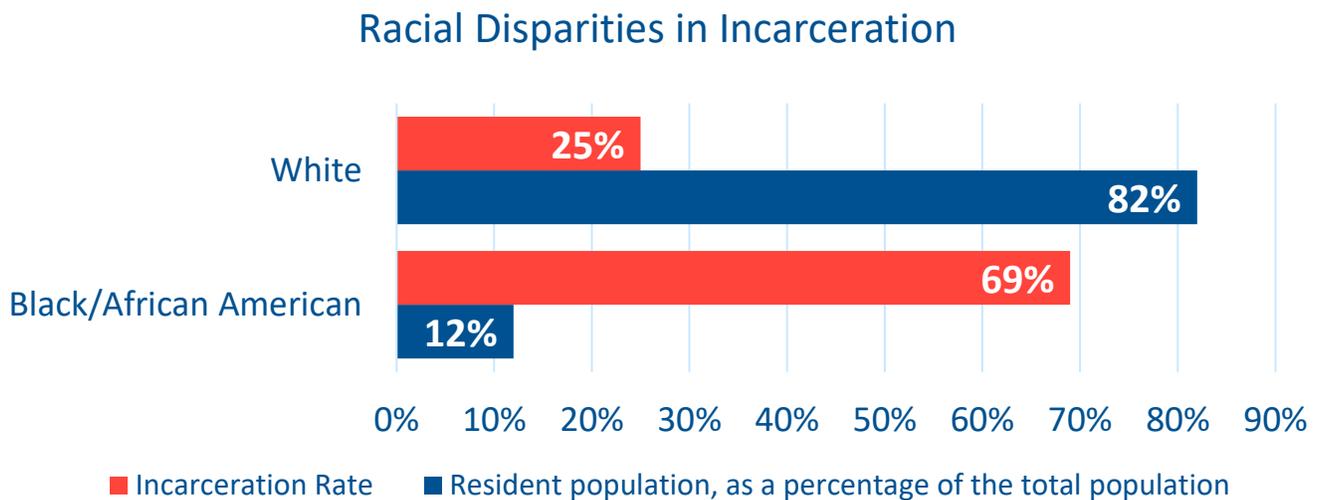
Local Incarceration Rates – Stephenson County

The charts below show how Stephenson County’s used of jail has changed over time. Local incarceration rates reflect the decisions of local law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, probation and parole officers, and the implementation of local, state, and federal laws. The sentenced population includes people who are serving sentences in a local jail. Jail sentences are typically given to people serving brief sentences, usually for misdemeanor or low-level felony convictions.



Racial Disparities in Incarceration – Stephenson County

Black people are treated more harshly than white people at every stage of the criminal legal process. As a result, people of color—and Black people in particular—are incarcerated at strikingly higher rates than white people in jails and prisons across the country. The bar graphs below show the proportion of people in jail who are White and Black/African American against that group’s share of the general resident population.



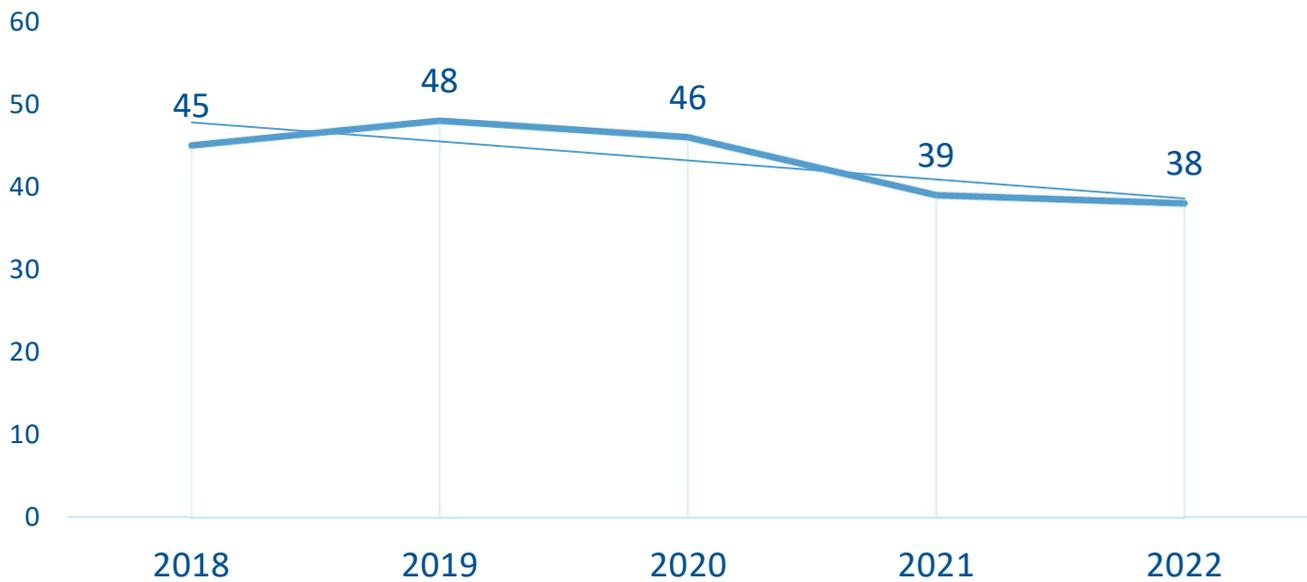
Source: Vera Incarceration Trends – federally collected data through the BJS Annual Survey of Jails (AJIS), Census of Jails (COJ), and Mortality in Correctional Institutions (MCI) data collections

Crime & Safety

City of Freeport Police Department

The Freeport Police Department currently has 38 police officers. This includes one officer in the Police Academy, two in their first month of FTO training, and one off for eight months as a result of an OJI. The Department is currently authorized for 47 officers. The Department also currently employs 19 civilian employees who act as dispatchers and other support staff.

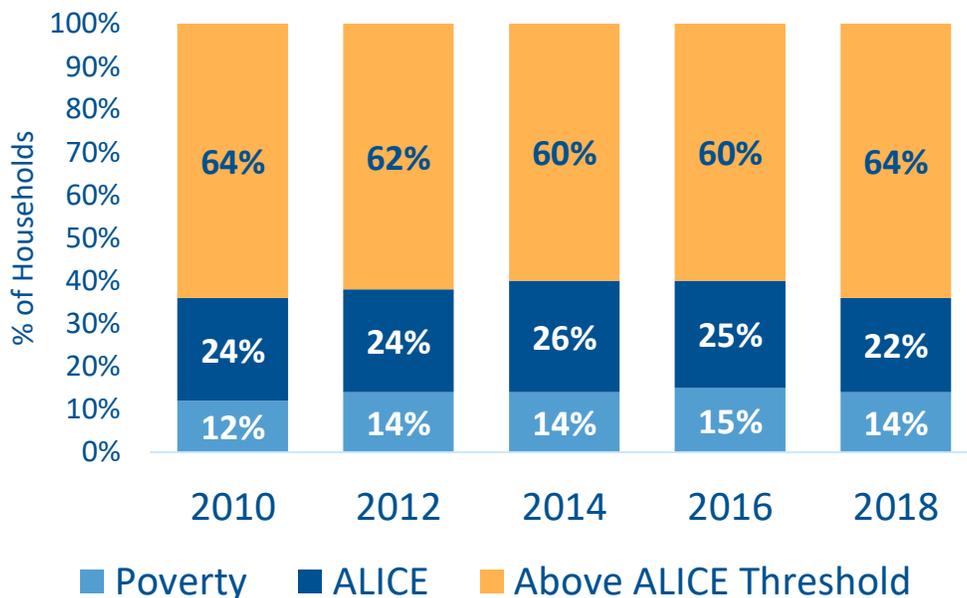
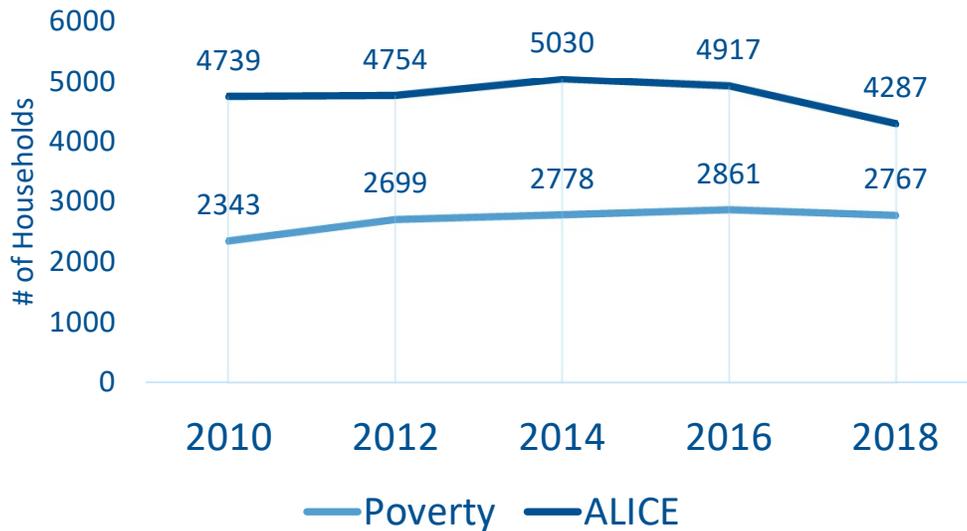
Number of Freeport Police Officers
(as of January 1 each year)



Income & Poverty

ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

In 2018, of the 19,609 total households in Stephenson County, 36% (7,054 households) were below the ALICE and poverty threshold. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE households earn above the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to afford basic household necessities. The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is a measure of income issued every year by the Department of Health and Human Services. FPLs are used to determine eligibility for certain programs and benefits. The 2022 FPL was \$13,590 for individuals (\$12,140 in 2018) and \$27,750 for a family of four (\$25,100 in 2018). Of the 36% total, 14% of households were at the poverty threshold and 22% were at the ALICE threshold.



Income & Poverty

ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

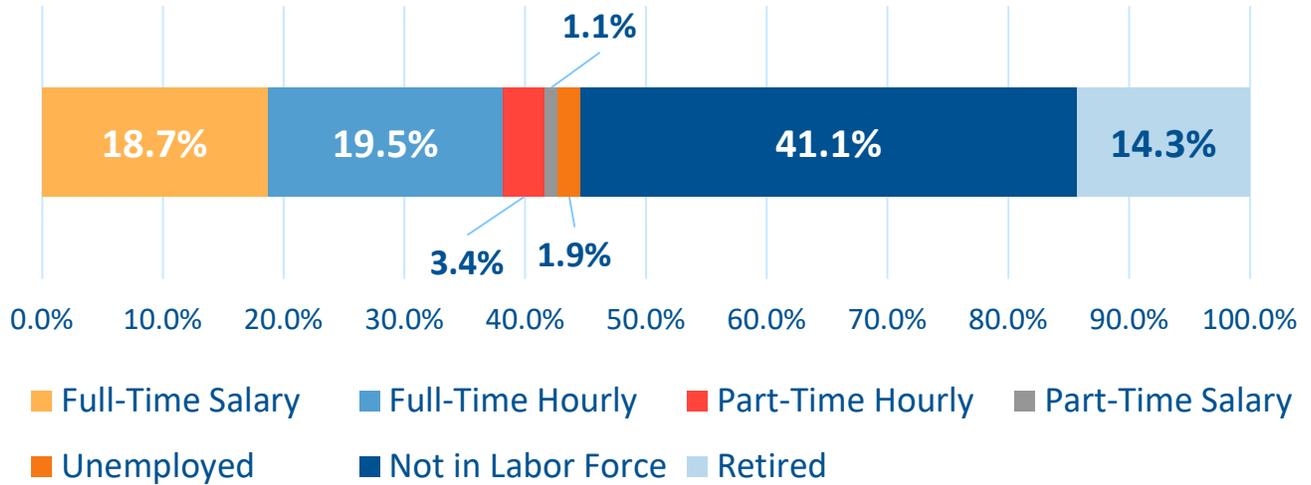
The Household Survival Budget reflects the bare minimum cost to live and work in the modern economy and includes housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, technology (a smartphone plan), and taxes. It does not include savings for emergencies or future goals like college or retirement. The bare minimum monthly budget for a family of two adults and two children in Stephenson County in 2018 is \$4,228.

	Single Adult	1 Adult, 1 Child	1 Adult, 1 In Child Care	2 Adults	2 Adults 2 Children	2 Adults, 2 In Child Care	Single Senior
Housing	\$442	\$504	\$504	\$504	\$670	\$670	\$442
Child Care	\$0	\$188	\$583	\$0	\$375	\$1,083	\$0
Food	\$244	\$421	\$352	\$507	\$847	\$740	\$208
Transportation	\$335	\$493	\$493	\$507	\$803	\$803	\$289
Health Care	\$208	\$439	\$439	\$439	\$745	\$745	\$460
Technology	\$55	\$55	\$55	\$75	\$75	\$75	\$55
Miscellaneous	\$148	\$230	\$272	\$232	\$384	\$464	\$165
Taxes	\$193	\$195	\$294	\$286	\$329	\$520	\$200
Monthly Total	\$1,625	\$2,525	\$2,992	\$2,550	\$4,228	\$5,100	\$1,819
Annual Total	\$19,500	\$30,300	\$35,904	\$30,600	\$50,736	\$61,200	\$21,828
Hourly Wage	\$9.75	\$15.15	\$17.95	\$15.30	\$25.37	\$30.60	\$10.91

Income & Poverty

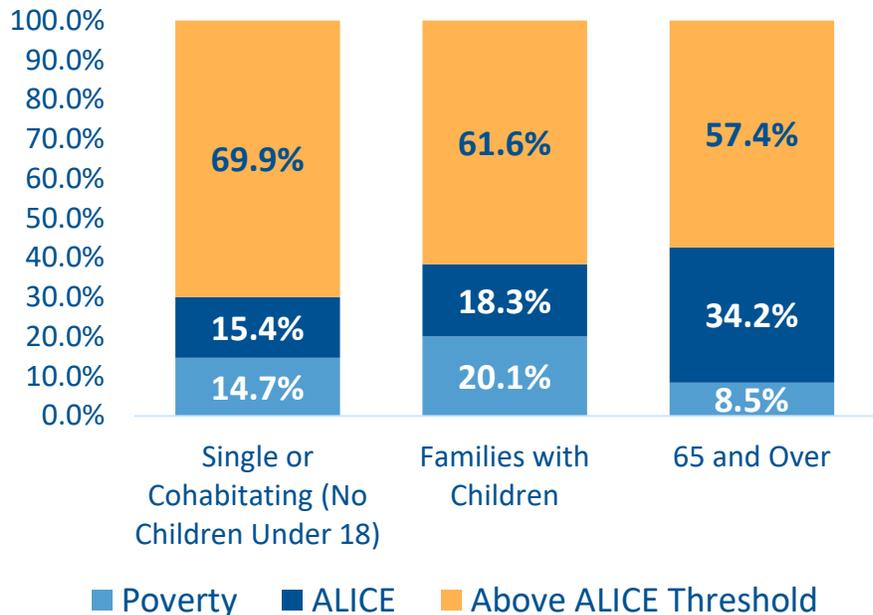
ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

A breakdown of the labor force shows a small portion of adults (16 years and older) who are unemployed and a large number who are working. However, a significant portion of full- and part-time workers are paid by the hour; these workers are more likely to have fluctuations in income and less likely to receive benefits. There is also a high number of workers outside of the labor force (people who are not employed and not looking for work), which has helped keep wages low: When more workers are available, employers have less incentive to raise wages to attract employees.



Sources: American Community Survey, 2018; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2018

In the past few decades, there have been major shifts in household composition. The share of American adults who have never been married is at a historic high, as is the number of senior households. There is also a growing number of people who live alone or with roommates, and an increasing share of grown children who live with their parents. Yet all types of households continue to struggle: ALICE and poverty-level households exist across all these living arrangements.



Sources: ALICE Threshold 2007-2018; American Community Survey 2007-2018

Income & Poverty

ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

There is significant variation in the number of households who live below the ALICE Threshold within Stephenson County. Freeport is the largest township in the county as well as has the highest percentage of households below the ALICE threshold at 44%.

County Subdivision	Total Households	% Below ALICE Threshold
Buckeye township	423	23%
Dakota township	300	39%
Erin township	218	27%
Florence township	502	23%
Freeport township	10,969	44%
Harlem township	978	28%
Kent township	240	26%
Lancaster township	541	17%
Loran township	521	20%
Oneco township	555	30%
Ridott township	652	27%
Rock Grove township	549	17%
Rock Run township	837	19%
Silver Creek township	311	33%
Waddams township	340	13%
West Point township	1,375	29%
Winslow township	216	27%

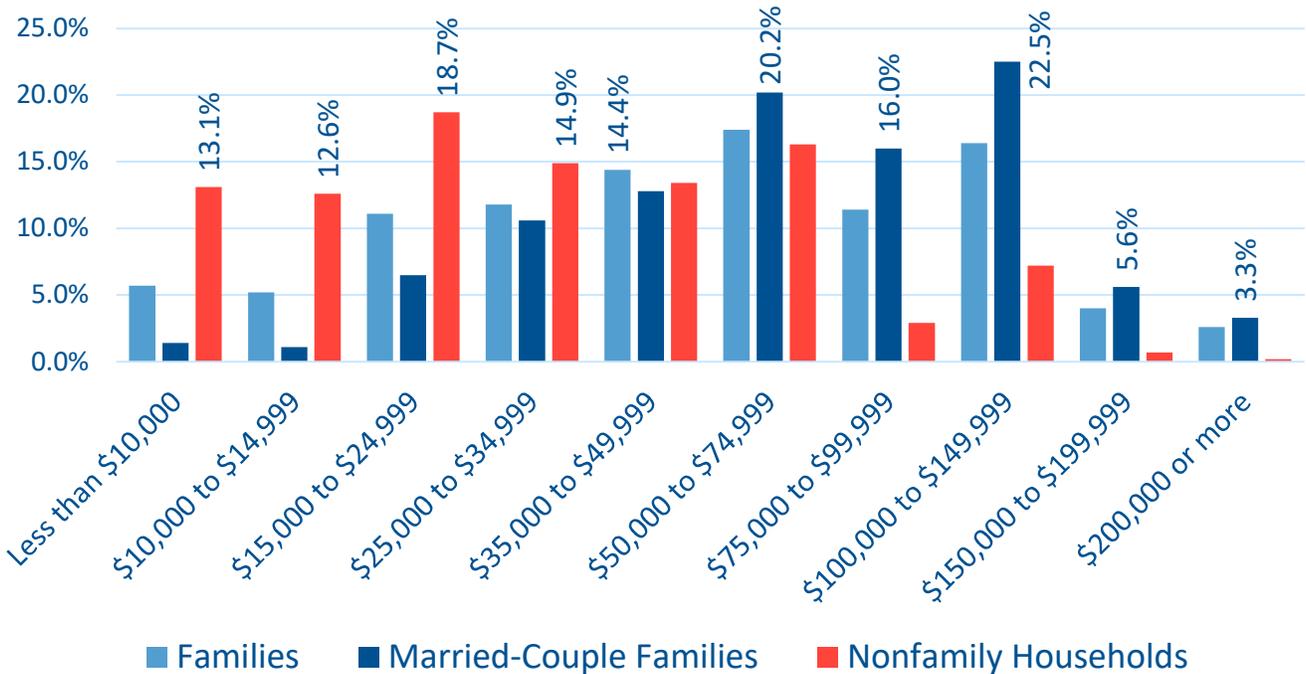
Income & Poverty

Median Income

The median household income in Freeport in 2021 is \$57,331. Nonfamily households have a significantly lower median income (\$26,862) than married-couple families (\$69,826).

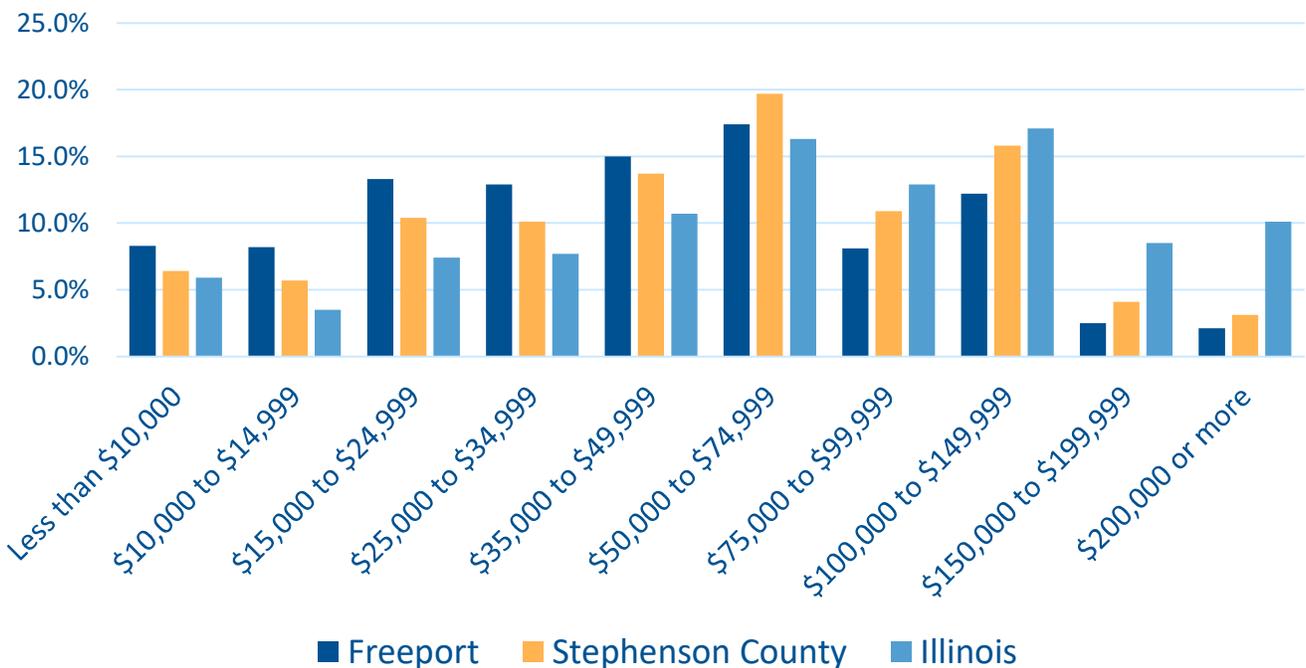
Median Income by Types of Families

Income in the past 12 months (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars)



Median Income Comparisons

Income in the past 12 months (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars) for Freeport, Stephenson County, and Illinois

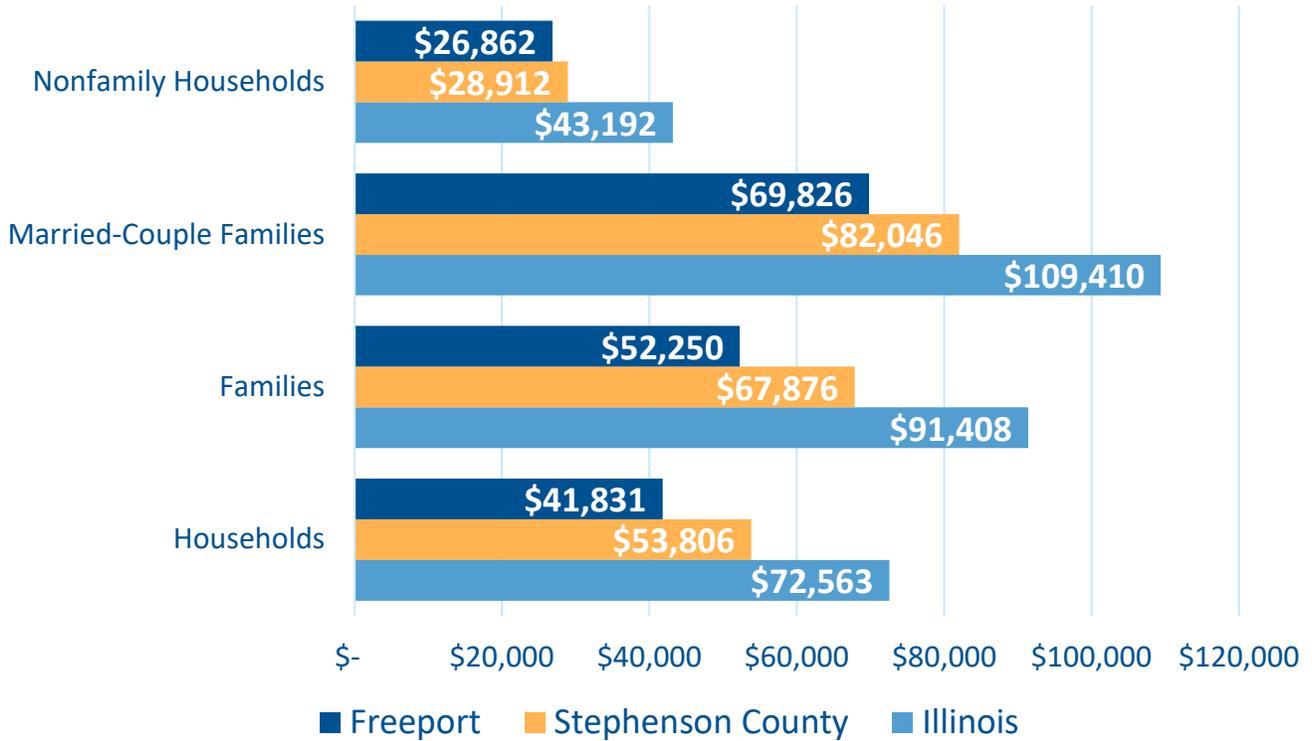


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2021

Income & Poverty

Median Income Comparisons

Income in the past 12 months (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars) for Freeport, Stephenson County, and Illinois shows that Freeport households of all types have a lower median income than households in both Stephenson County and the state of Illinois.



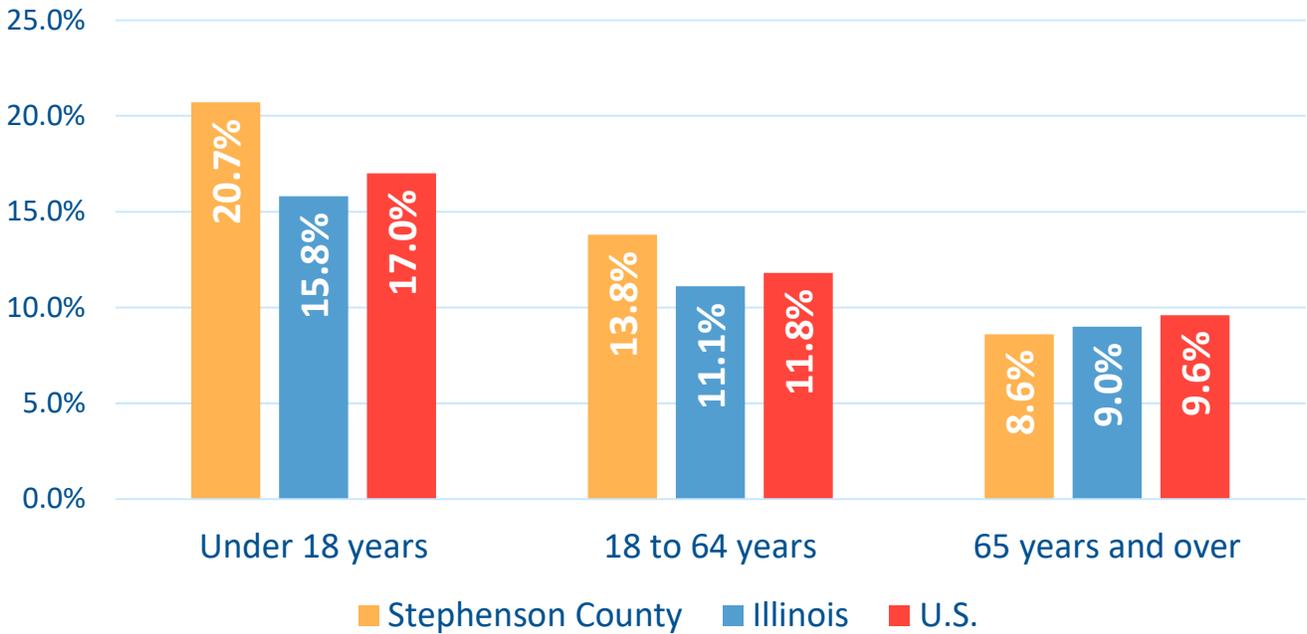
Income & Poverty

Poverty

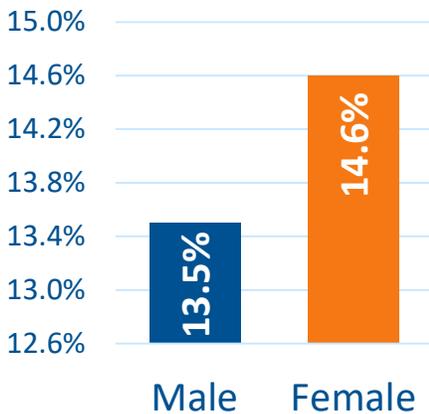
6,213 residents or 14.1% of the Stephenson County population (for whom poverty status is determined) lived below the poverty level in 2021. This is compared to 12.6% in the U.S. and 11.8% in Illinois. 14.6% of the female population live below the poverty level compared to 13.5% of the male population. Black residents represent 39.6% of the population living below the poverty level compared to 10.5% of white residents.

14.1%
Poverty Rate

% Below Poverty Level (Age)



% Below Poverty Level (Sex)



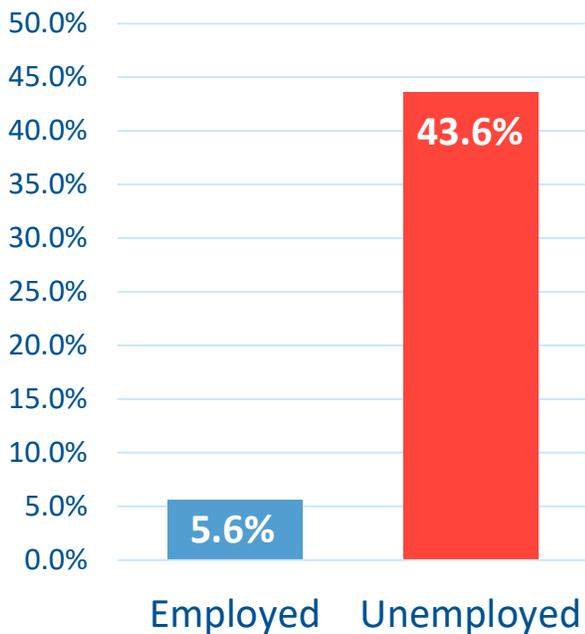
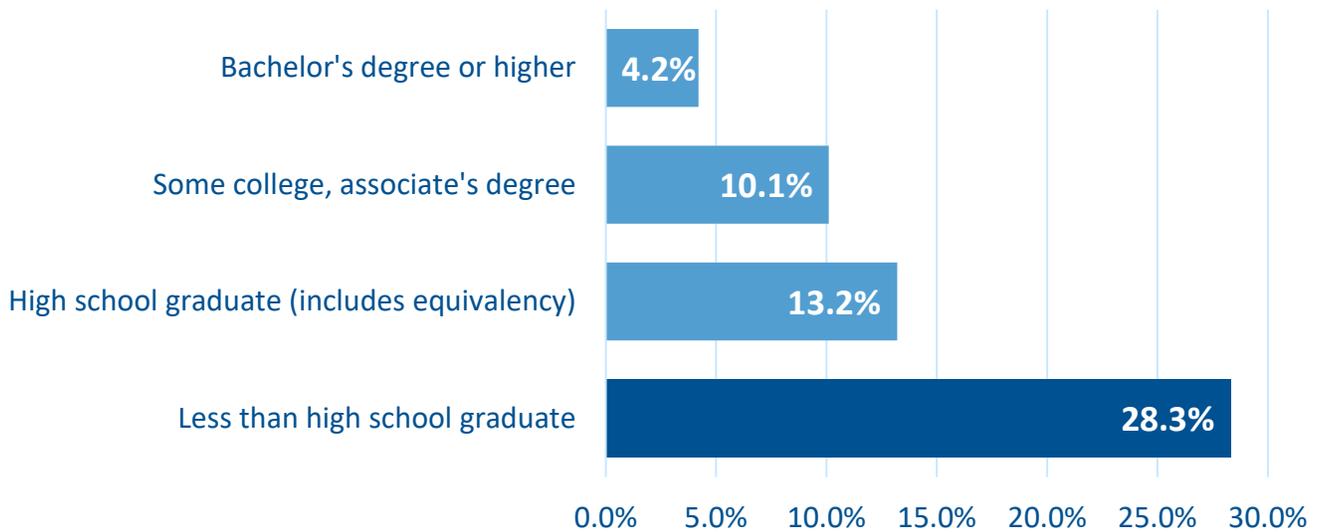
% Below Poverty Level (Race)

Race & Hispanic or Latino Origin	% Below Poverty Level
White alone	10.5%
Black or African American alone	39.6%
Some other race alone	29.2%
Two or more races	21.2%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	18.7%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	9.9%

Income & Poverty

Poverty

Education and employment matter. 28.3% of the population in Stephenson County with less than a high school degree live below the poverty level compared to 4.2% of the population with a Bachelor's degree or higher. 43.6% of the unemployed population lives below the poverty level.

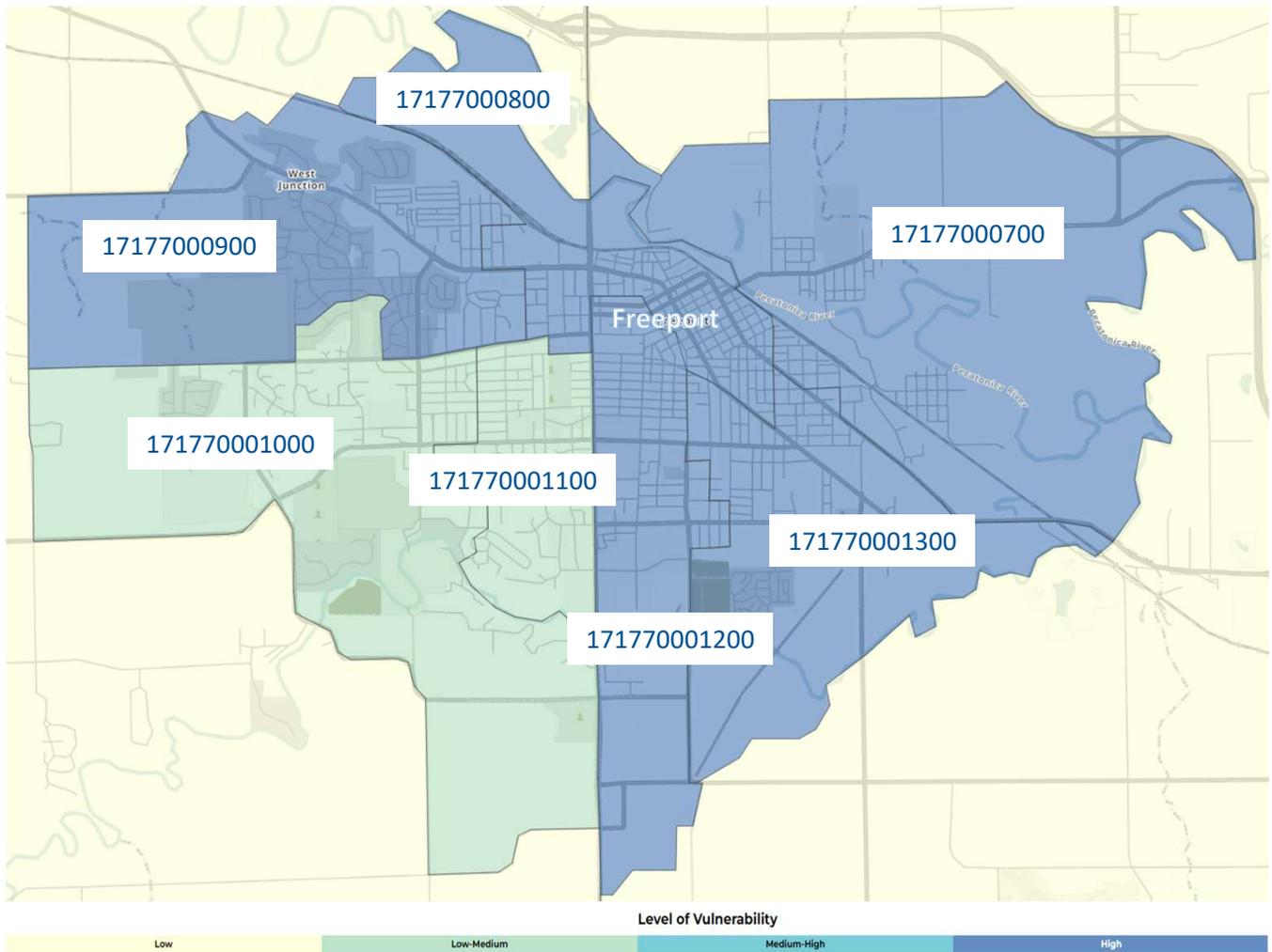


Income & Poverty

Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)

Social Vulnerability refers to a community’s capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events ranging from natural disasters to human-caused threats. The SVI accounts for factors including poverty, lack of access to transportation, and crowded housing and organizes data in four areas: socioeconomic status, household characteristics, racial and ethnic minority status, and housing type/transportation.

Freeport Census Tract	SVI Score	Level of Vulnerability
17177000700	0.8421	High
17177000800	0.8816	High
17177000900	0.7737	High
17177001000	0.4226	Low to Medium
17177001100	0.3326	Low to Medium
17177001200	0.7597	High
17177001300	0.7694	High



Income & Poverty

CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index 2020

STEPHENSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Overall Social Vulnerability¹



Social vulnerability refers to a community's capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events ranging from natural disasters, such as tornadoes or disease outbreaks, to human-caused threats, such as toxic chemical spills. The **CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (CDC/ATSDR SVI 2020)⁴ County Map** depicts the social vulnerability of communities, at census tract level, within a specified

county. CDC/ATSDR SVI 2020 groups **sixteen census-derived factors** into **four themes** that summarize the extent to which the area is socially vulnerable to disaster. The factors include economic data as well as data regarding education, family characteristics, housing, language ability, ethnicity, and vehicle access. Overall Social Vulnerability combines all the variables to provide a comprehensive assessment.

Income & Poverty

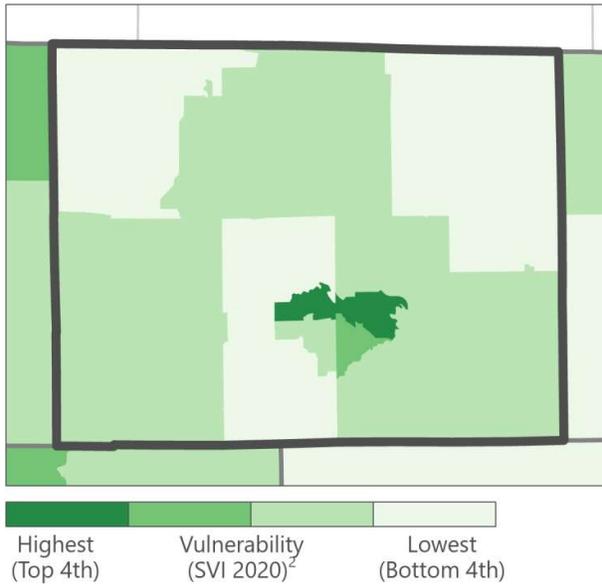
CDC/ATSDR SVI 2020 – STEPHENSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS



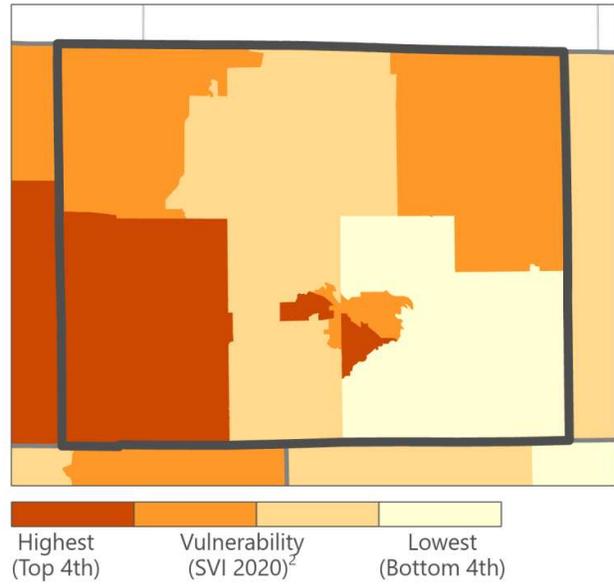
CDC/ATSDR SVI Themes



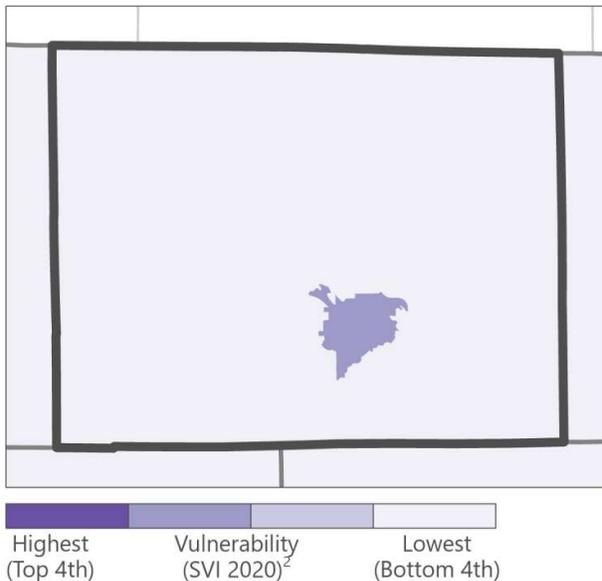
Socioeconomic Status⁵



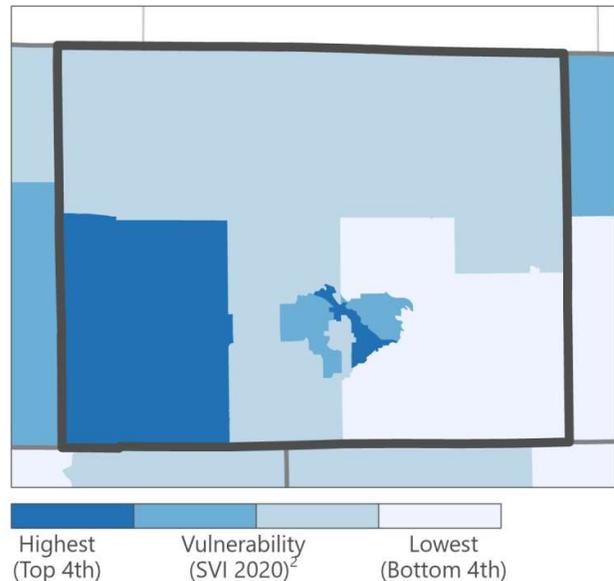
Household Characteristics⁶



Racial and Ethnic Minority Status⁷



Housing Type/Transportation⁸



Data Sources: ¹CDC/ATSDR/GRASP, U.S. Census Bureau, Esri® StreetMap™ Premium.

Notes: ¹Overall Social Vulnerability: All 16 variables. ²Census tracts with 0 population. ³The CDC/ATSDR SVI combines percentile rankings of US Census American Community Survey (ACS) 2016-2020 variables, for the state, at the census tract level. ⁴Socioeconomic Status: Below 150% Poverty, Unemployed, Housing Costs Burden, No High School Diploma, No Health Insurance. ⁵Household Characteristics: Aged 65 and Older, Aged 17 and Younger, Civilian with a Disability, Single-Parent Household, English Language Proficiency. ⁶Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino (of any race); Black and African American, Not Hispanic or Latino; American Indian and Alaska Native, Not Hispanic or Latino; Asian, Not Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic or Latino; Two or More Races, Not Hispanic or Latino; Other Races, Not Hispanic or Latino. ⁷Housing Type/Transportation: Multi-Unit Structures, Mobile Homes, Crowding, No Vehicle, Group Quarters.

Projection: Illinois Transverse Mercator NAD83 (ILGIC).

References: Flanagan, B.E., et al., A Social Vulnerability Index for Disaster Management. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, 2011. 8(1). CDC/ATSDR SVI web page: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>.

Housing

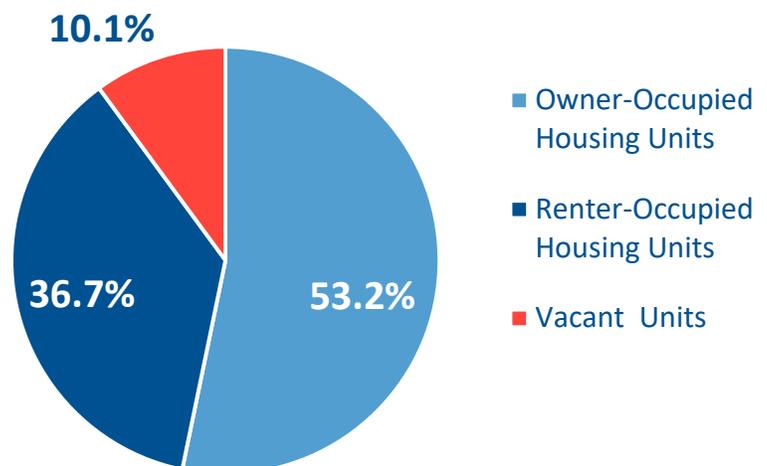
Of the 10,828 occupied housing units in Freeport in 2021, 59% (6,411) are owner-occupied compared to 41% (4,417) that are occupied by renters. The median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$71,000 according to this most recent available data. The median selected monthly owner costs with a mortgage is \$973 and without a mortgage is \$486. The median gross rent is \$692 per month.

Housing Overview	
Owner-occupied housing unit rate	59.2%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$71,000
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage	\$973
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage	\$486
Median gross rent	\$692
Total Occupied Households	10,828
Persons per household	2.16

Freeport Housing (2021)

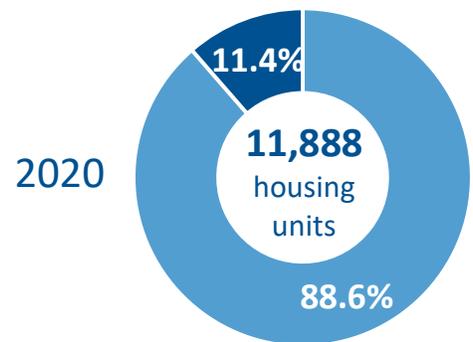
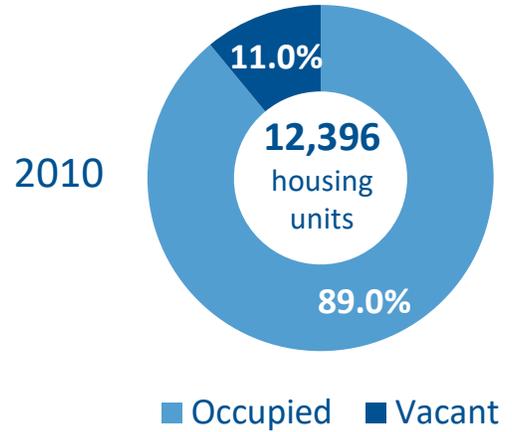
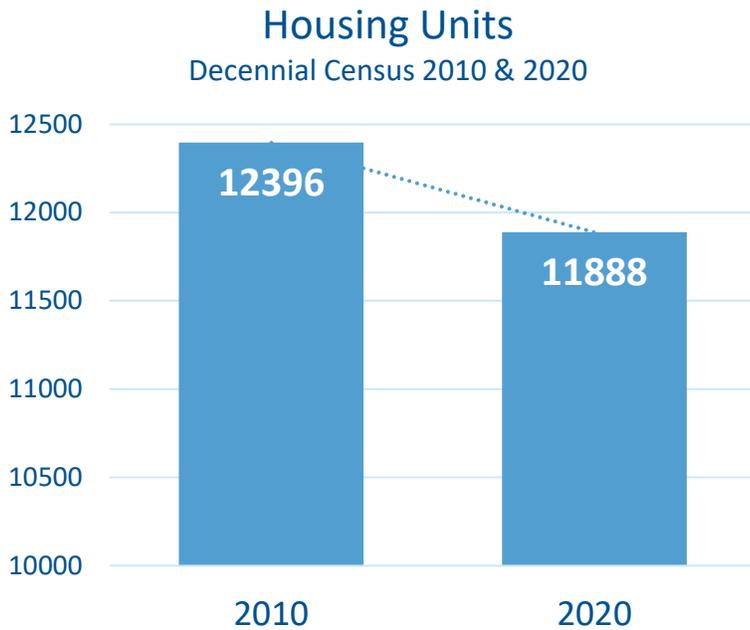
Severe Housing Problems

12% of Stephenson County households have at least 1 of 4 housing problems. This compares to 17% in both Illinois and the U.S. Severe housing problems include overcrowding (more than 1.5 persons per room), high housing costs (a cost burden of greater than 50%), lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities.

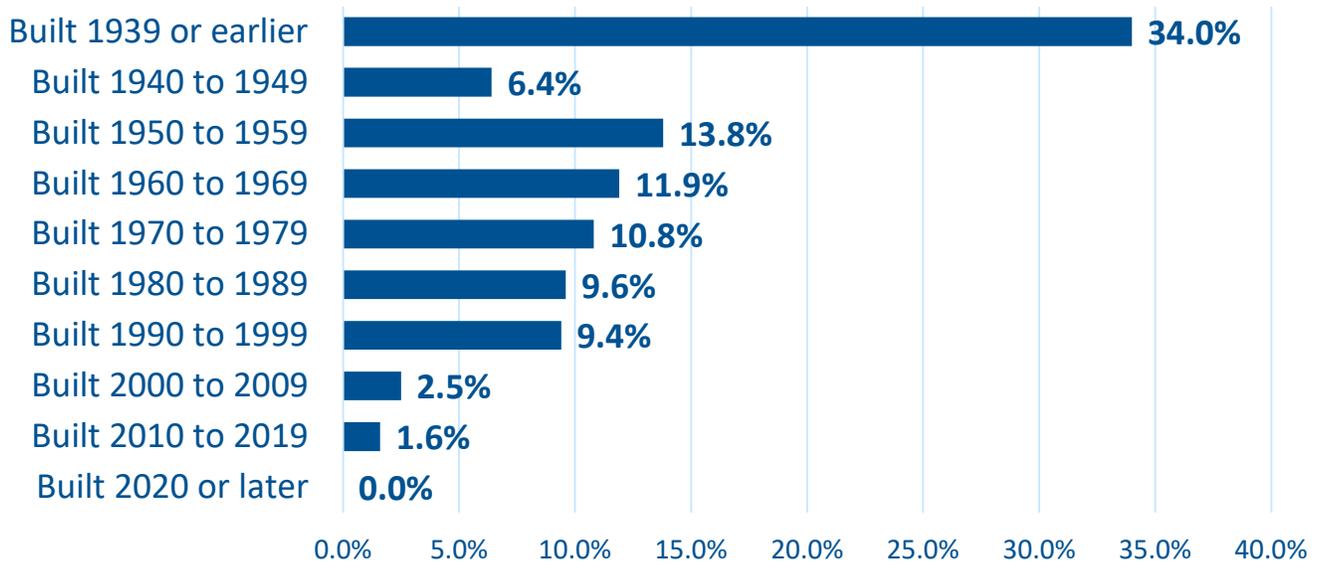


Housing

Between 2010 and 2020 (decennial census years), the total number of households in Freeport dropped from 12,396 to 11,888. During this same period, the percentage of vacant housing units increased by 0.4% to 11.4%. Freeport’s housing stock is also aging with 34% of housing structures having been built in 1939 or earlier.



Year Housing Structure Built



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2021; Decennial Redistricting Data, 2010 and 2020

Housing – Low Income

Working at Illinois' minimum wage of \$12 per hour, each week you have to work 47 hours to afford a modest 2-bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent in Stephenson County.

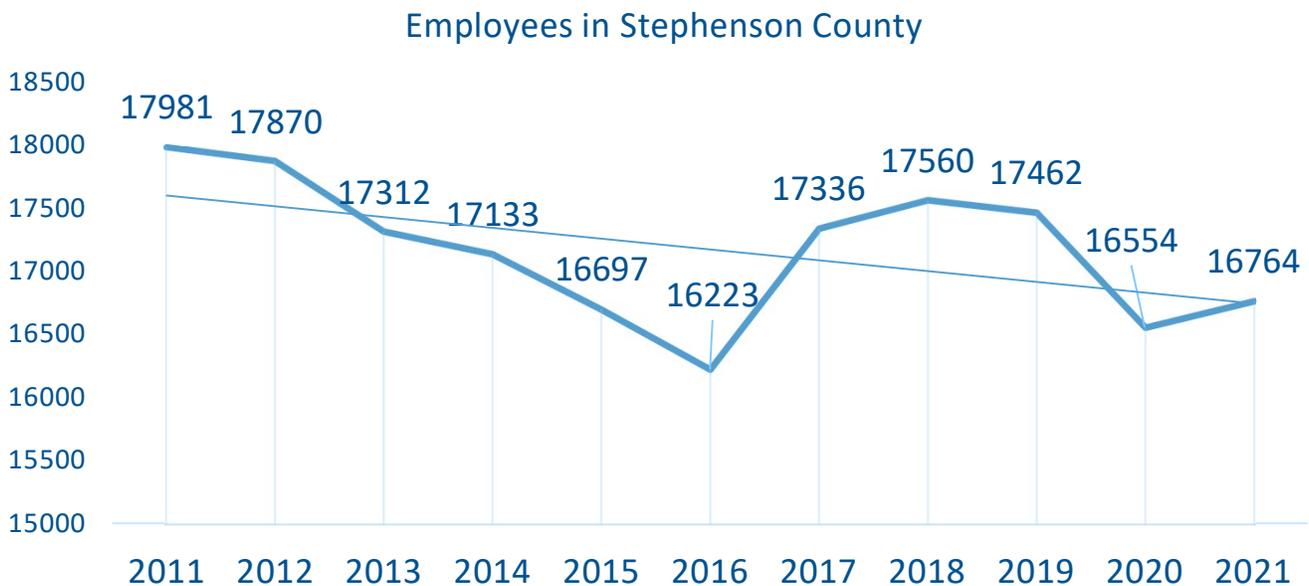
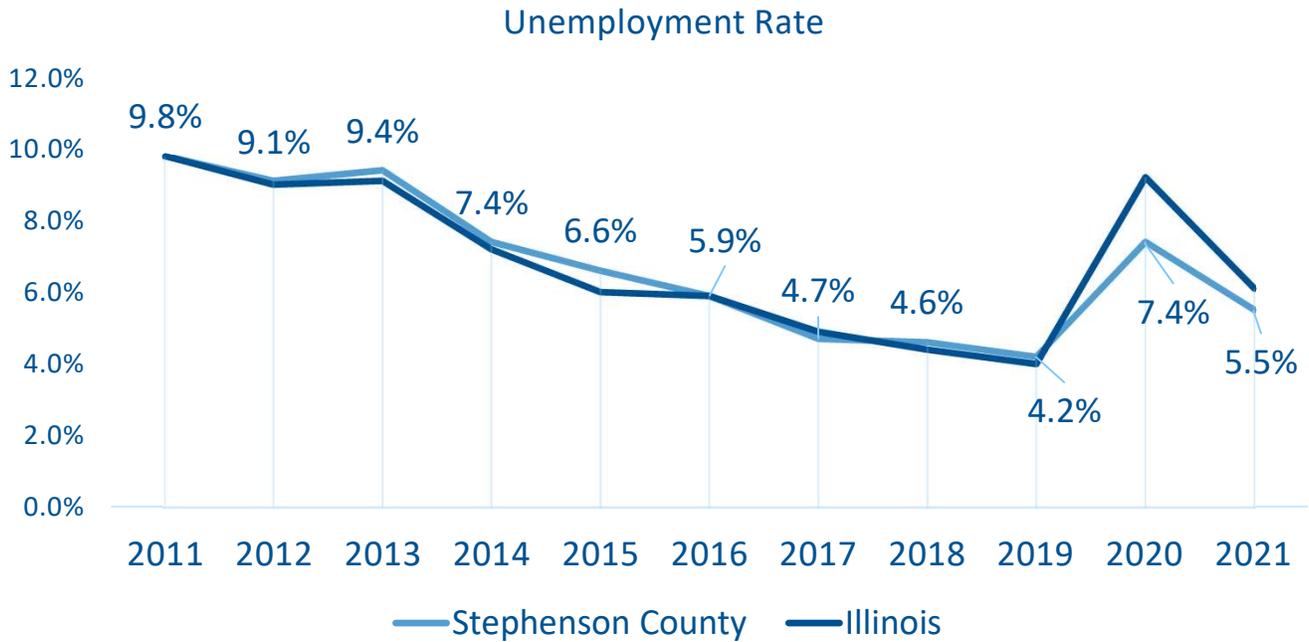
“Across Illinois, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low-income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Many of these households are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing.” – National Low Income Housing Coalition

Housing Wage	
1-Bedroom	\$ 10.75
2-Bedroom	\$ 14.13
3-Bedroom	\$ 18.23
Fair Market Rent	
1-Bedroom	\$ 559
2-Bedroom	\$ 735
3-Bedroom	\$ 948
Annual Income Needed to Afford	
1-Bedroom	\$ 22,360
2-Bedroom	\$ 29,400
3-Bedroom	\$ 37,920
Minimum Wage	
Illinois Minimum Wage	\$ 12.00
Rent Affordable for a Full-Time Worker at Minimum Wage	\$ 624
Work Hours Per Week at Minimum Wage	
1-Bedroom	36
2-Bedroom	47
3-Bedroom	61
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Payment	
SSI Monthly Payment	\$ 841
Rent Affordable to SSI Recipient	\$ 252
Income Levels	
30% of Area Median Income (AMI)	\$ 20,790
50% of Area Median Income (AMI)	\$ 34,650
Median Renter Household Income	\$ 29,999
Rent Affordable at Different Income Levels	
30% of Area Median Income (AMI)	\$ 520
50% of Area Median Income (AMI)	\$ 866
Median Renter Household Income	\$ 750

Sources: National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2022

Economy & Jobs

Unemployment rate trends in Stephenson County have largely mirrored the state of Illinois, trending up or down based on national recessions and the COVID Pandemic in 2020. The number of employees in Stephenson County has decreased over the last decade from a high of 17,981 in 2011 to the current post-pandemic number of 16,764 in 2021.



Economy & Jobs

The number of business establishments in Freeport has steadily declined over the last decade from a high of 1,188 in 2014 to 1,052 in 2021. Total wages have increased during the same time period.

Number of Business Establishments



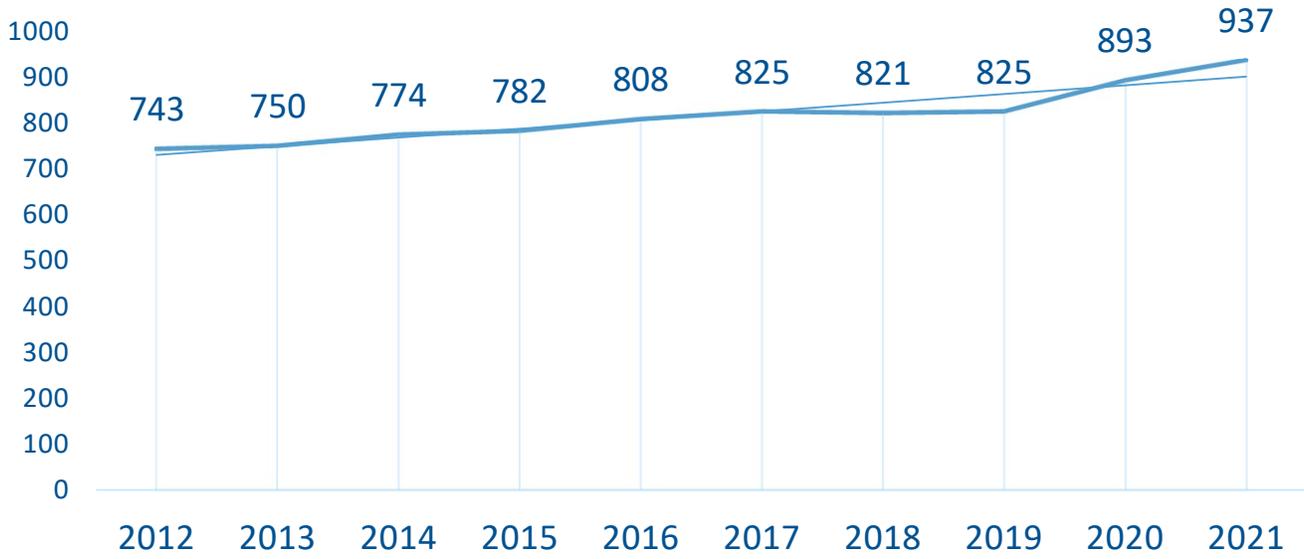
Total Wages (in thousands)



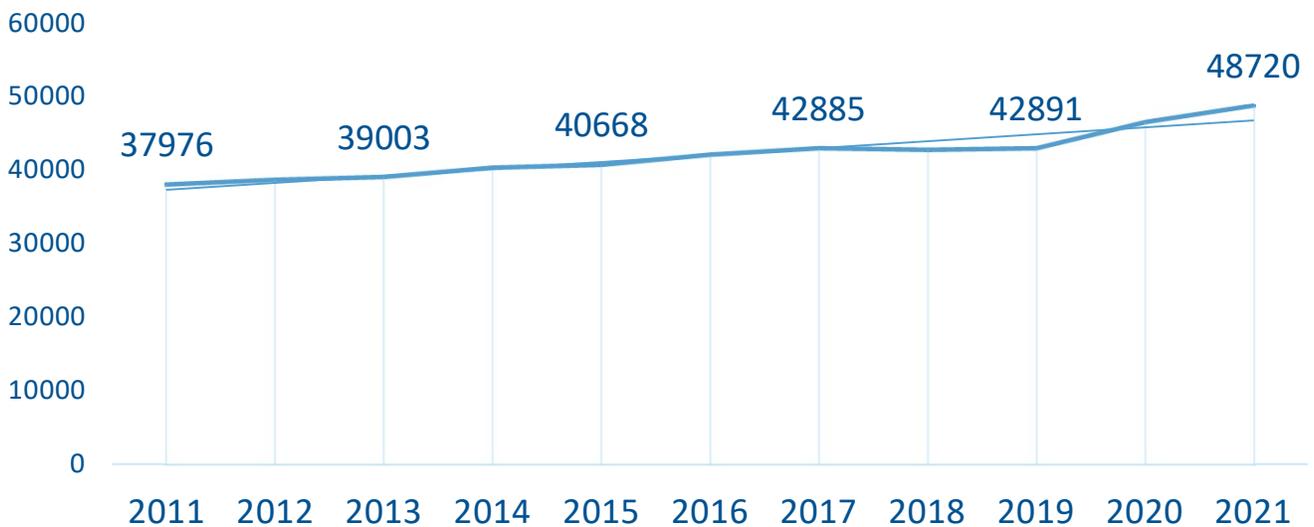
Economy & Jobs

Both average weekly wages and average annual pay have increased over the last decade with the greatest bump occurring between 2019 and 2021. This is most likely due to the combined effects of the COVID Pandemic and workforce shortage which has required employers to increase wages in order to attract and retain workers.

Average Weekly Wage



Average Annual Pay



Education

Freeport School District 145

All public schools that received a summative designation have that designation listed.

- Exemplary – Schools performing in the top 10 percent of schools statewide with no underperforming student groups.
- Commendable – A school that has no underperforming student groups, a graduation rate greater than 67 percent, and whose performance is not in the top 10 percent of schools statewide.
- Targeted – A school in which one or more student groups is performing at or below the level of the “all students” group in the lowest performing 5 percent of schools.
- Comprehensive – A school that is in the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools in Illinois and any high school with a graduation rate of 67 percent or less.

Student groups used in the calculations include major racial and ethnic identities, students with Individual Education Plans (special education), English language learners, and students from low-income families. In order to protect students’ privacy, a group must include at least 10 students in order to be counted in the calculation of Summative Designations.

School	Grades	Summative Designation
Freeport High School	9-12	Targeted
Freeport Middle School	7-8	Targeted
Blackhawk Elem School	PK-4	Commendable
Carl Sandburg Middle School	5-6	Commendable
Center Elem School	PK-4	Commendable
Empire Elem School	PK-4	Commendable
Jones-Farrar, an International Baccalaureate World School	PK-6	Targeted
Lincoln-Douglas Elementary School	PK-4	Comprehensive

Education

Equity Journey Continuum

Equity means having high expectations for every learner and providing supports and resources so each learner can meet those expectations. In practice, this may look like “a parity among student groups in terms of educational outcomes or access to a resource. A fit between resources and student needs. Adequate effort to lessen the effects of structural disadvantages that disproportionately affect different student groups.” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020. Building Educational Equity Indicator Systems: A Guidebook for States and School Districts. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.)

Freeport SD 145 has a plan to educate 50% of its staff in the area of equity, bias, cultural competence and culturally relevant pedagogy by June of 2023. This is reflected in our equity journey continuum as minimal gaps, meaning that we are addressing this need adequately.

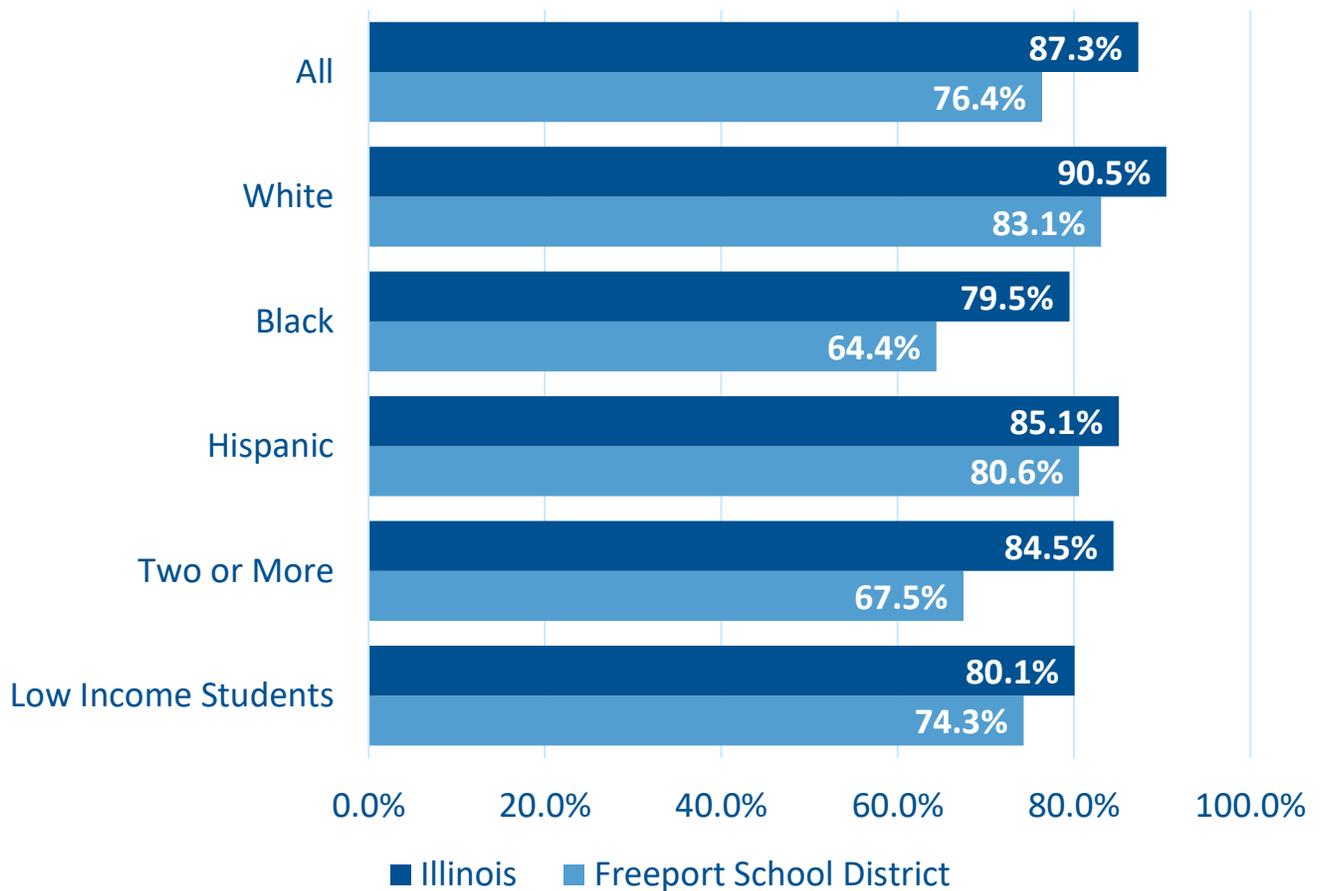
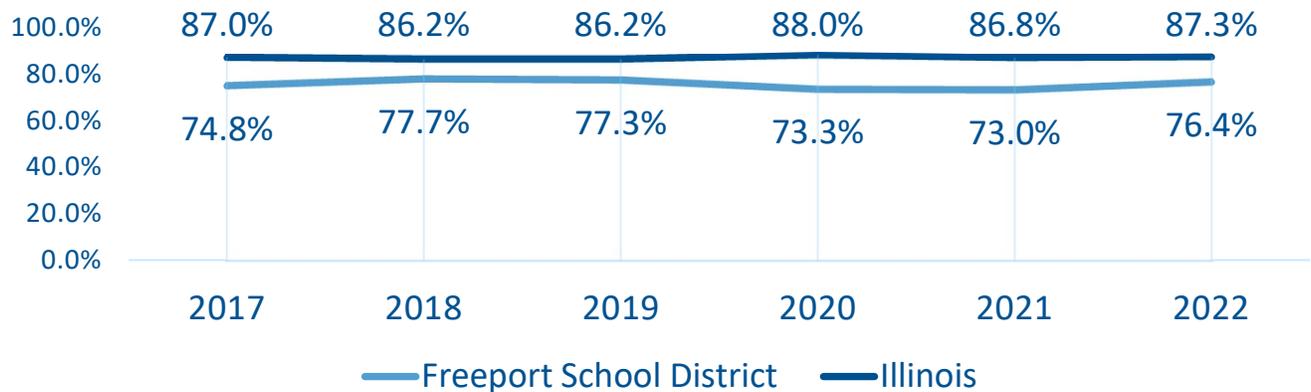
To address the moderate gaps in learning conditions Freeport School District 145 is providing training for 80% of the staff in social emotional learning structures, practices and curriculum as well as staff will demonstrate partial integration of SEL standards within the classroom.

To address the large equity gaps in student learning, staff will focus on improving student engagement and providing culturally responsive instructional practices as well as focus on family engagement and culture and climate to ensure students feel a sense of community.

Education Graduation Rate – 4 Years

These graphs display the percentage of graduating students who entered 9th grade for the first time four years prior to the year being reported – sorted by ‘All’ in the line graph (2017-2022) and by specific demographics in the bar graph (2022).

A high school diploma is vital both for students who plan to enter college and students who plan to enter the workforce. In order to ensure that graduates are ready for college and career, it is important to evaluate graduation rate in the context of student achievement, college-readiness, and career-readiness.

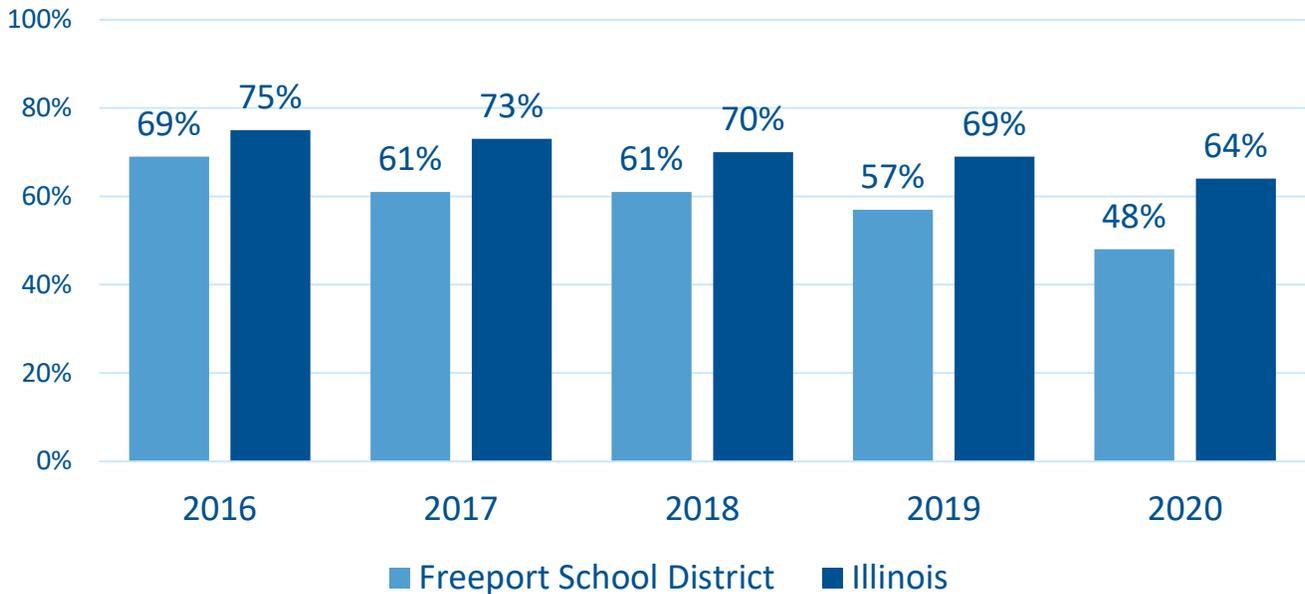


Education

Postsecondary Enrollment

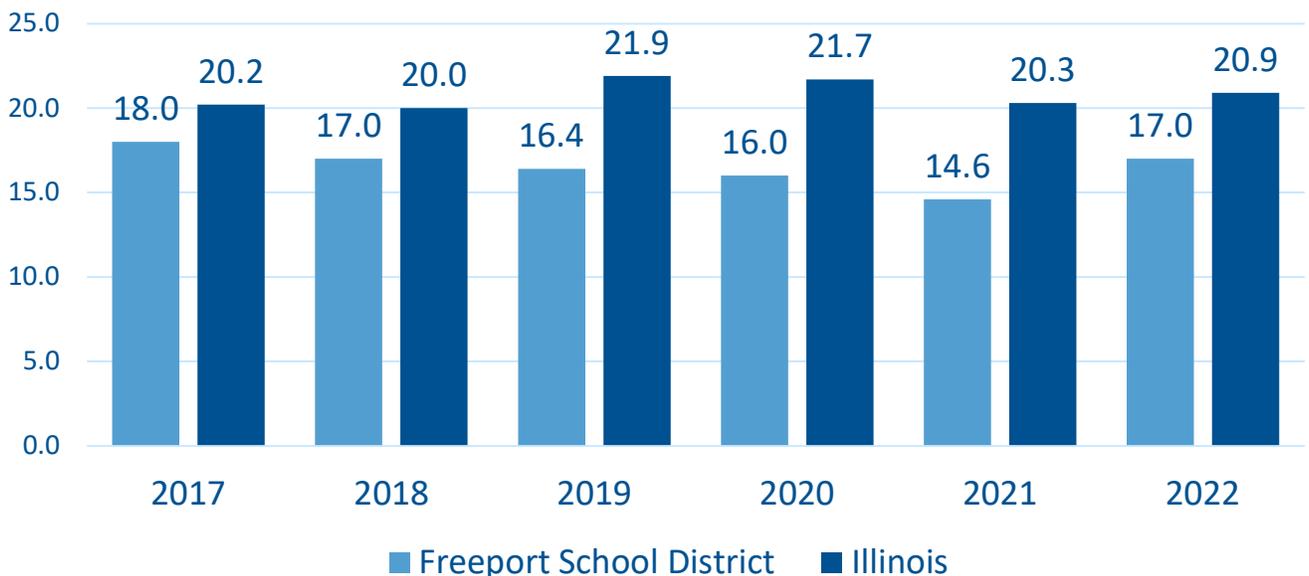
This graph displays the percentage of students who graduated with a regular high school diploma from a public high school in Illinois and enrolled in a two-year or four-year college in the U.S. within 12 months.

Young adults who earn college credit are more likely to be employed and stay employed. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 2012 the employment rate for young adults was 87% for those with at least a bachelor’s degree, compared with 75% for those who completed some college, and 64% for high school graduates.



Average Class Size

This graph shows the average number of students in each class at this school. District and state data are included for comparison.



Sources: 2022 Illinois Report Card

Education

School Finances

Average spending per student at each school in the district, as collected through the unaudited Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Site-Based Expenditure Report.

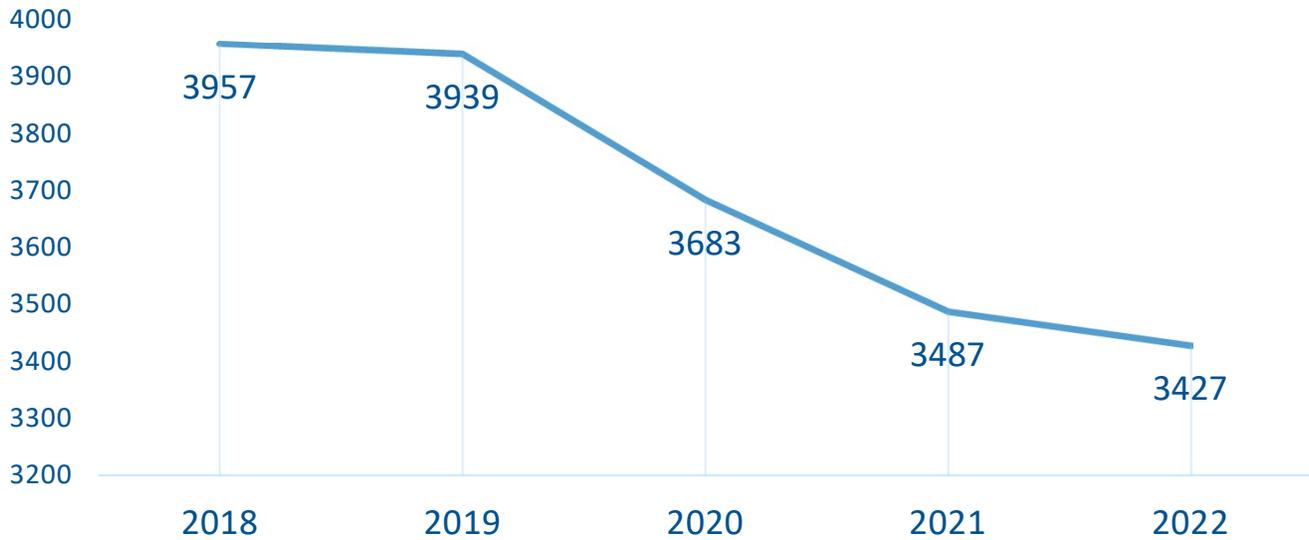
School	Fiscal Year	School Type	Total School Spending Per Student	% Change Total School Spending Per Student	Total Enrollment	Summative Designation
Freeport SD 145 - District Average	2022	District	\$ 17,734	14.66%	3490.75	-
Blackhawk Elem School	2022	Elementary	\$ 16,724	3.12%	290.5	Commendable
Carl Sandburg Middle Sch	2022	Elementary	\$ 18,970	18.93%	388.14	Commendable
Center Elem School	2022	Elementary	\$ 16,215	15.56%	281.5	Commendable
Empire Elem School	2022	Elementary	\$ 15,798	7.51%	338.85	Commendable
Freeport High School	2022	High	\$ 19,724	20.68%	959.24	Targeted
Freeport Middle School	2022	Middle	\$ 16,125	12.98%	523.24	Targeted
Freeport SD 145 - District Outplacements	2022	District	\$ 21,223	29.22%	119.14	-
Jones-Farrar, an International Baccalaureate World School	2022	Elementary	\$ 16,825	10.67%	314.5	Targeted

Education

Students

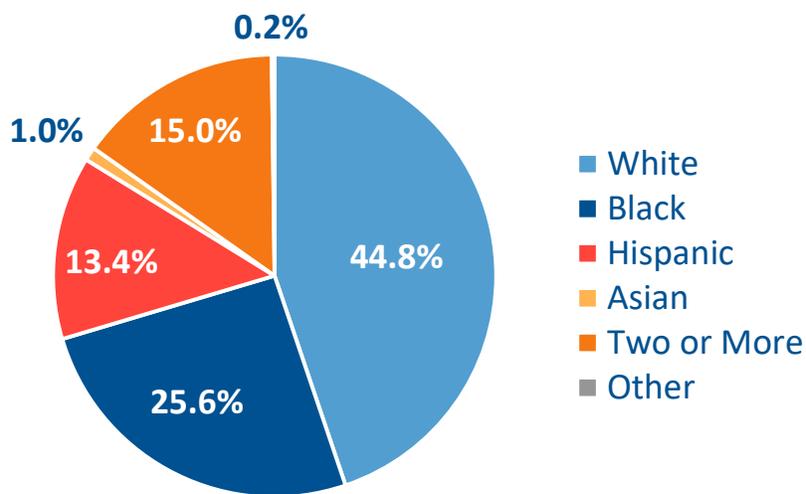
Enrollment Trends

This graph displays the total number of students enrolled in the Freeport School District between 2018 and 2022.



Racial/Ethnic Diversity

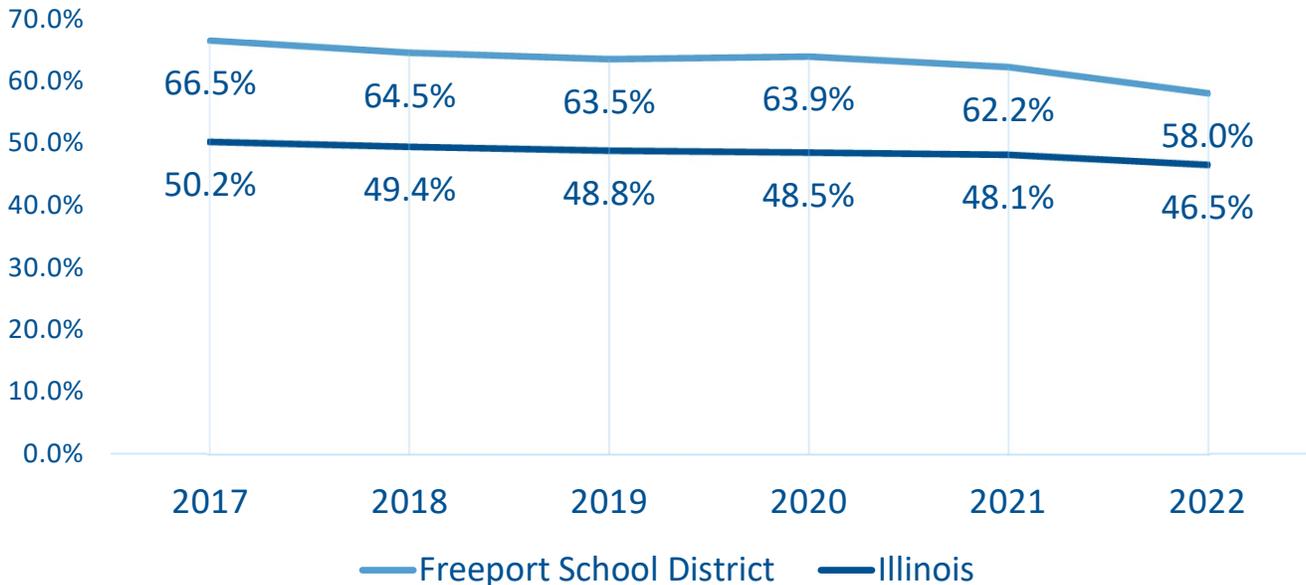
This graph shows the racial/ethnic diversity of students in this district by percentage.



Education Low Income Students Trends

This graph shows the percentage of students, in this district, eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches, live in substitute care, or whose families receive public aid compared to the state of Illinois from 2017 to 2022.

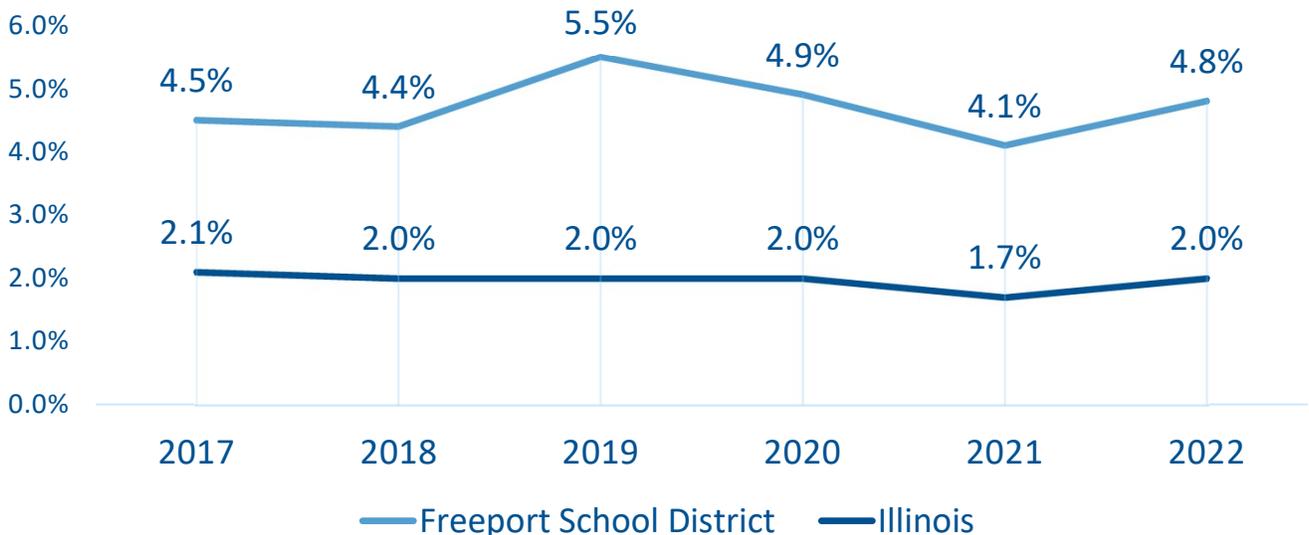
The State collects demographic information on the student body, including percentage of students who live in low-income households. Students ages 3 to 17 meet the low-income criteria if they receive or live in households that receive public aid from SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or TANF (Targeted Assistance for Needy Families); are classified as homeless, migrant, runaway, Head Start, or foster children; or live in a household where the household income meets (USDA) guidelines to receive free or reduced-price meals.



Homeless Students Trends

This graph shows the percentage of students, in this district, who do not have permanent or adequate homes.

Homeless students may include those who are sharing housing with other individuals due to loss of housing, living in non-housing locations, substandard housing, living in emergency or transitional shelters, are abandoned at hospitals, or awaiting foster care placement.



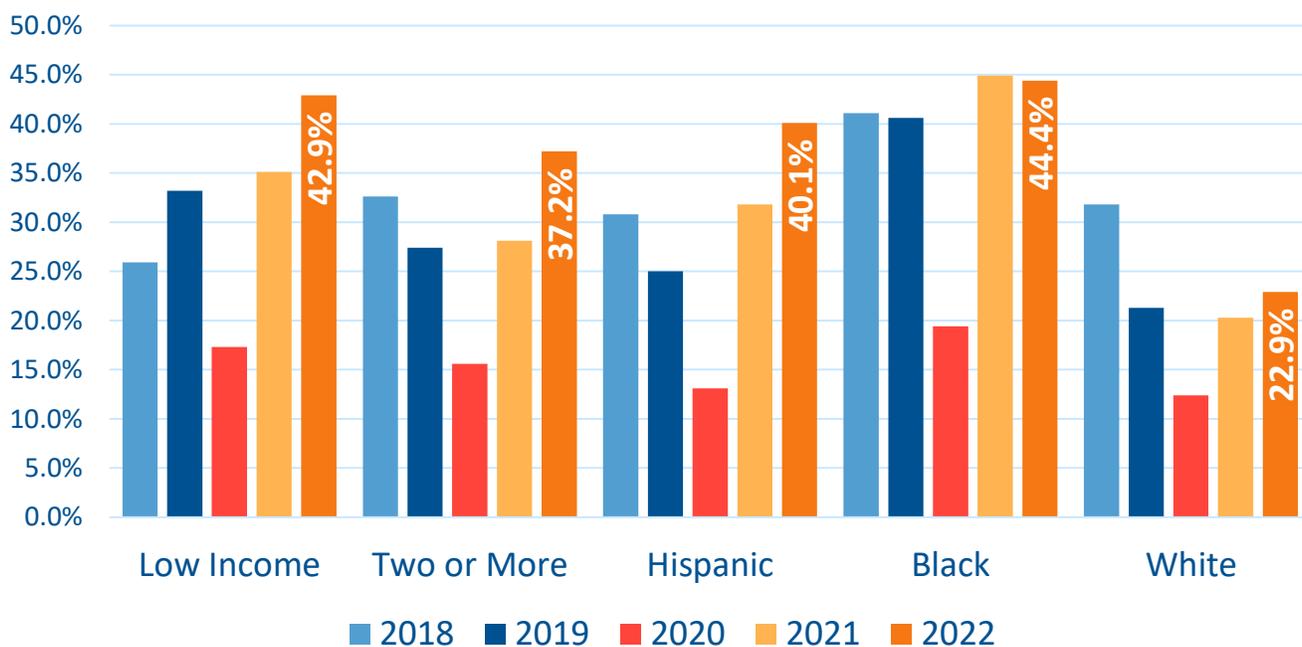
Sources: 2022 Illinois Report Card

Education

Chronic Absenteeism

These graphs show the percentage of students who miss 10% percent or more of school days per year either with or without a valid excuse – sorted by ‘All’ in the line graph and by specific demographics in the bar graph from 2018 to 2022.

Illinois law defines “chronic absentee” as a student who misses 10 percent of school days within an academic year with or without a valid excuse. That’s 18 days of an average 180-day school year. Excused absences include illness, suspension, need to care for a family member, etc. Students need daily instruction in order to succeed. Chronic absentees are at risk of academic and social problems.



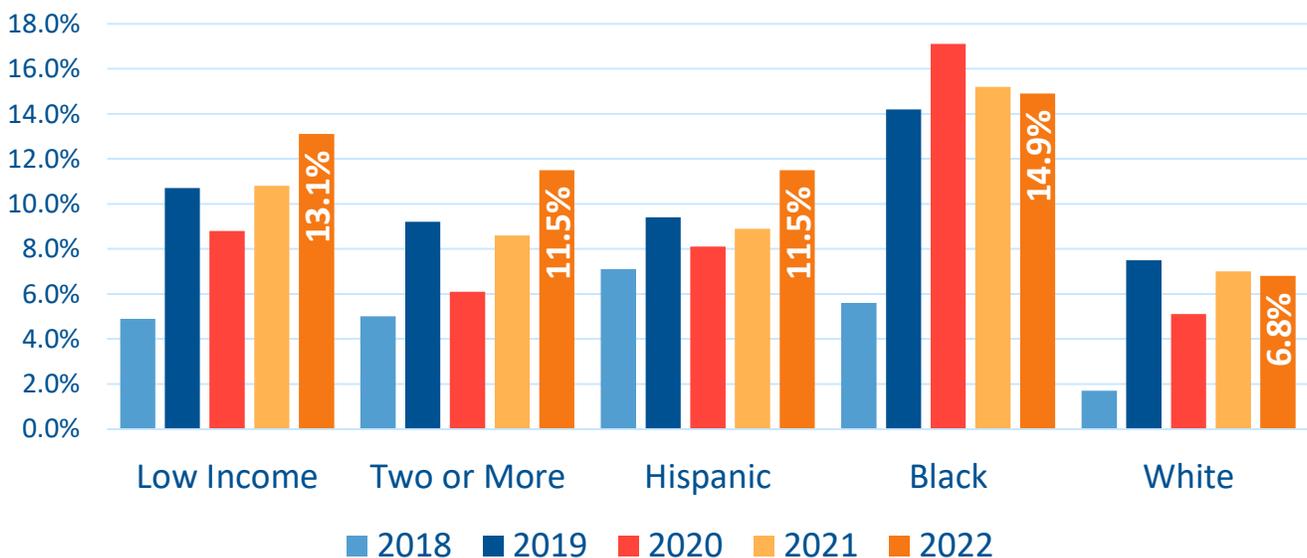
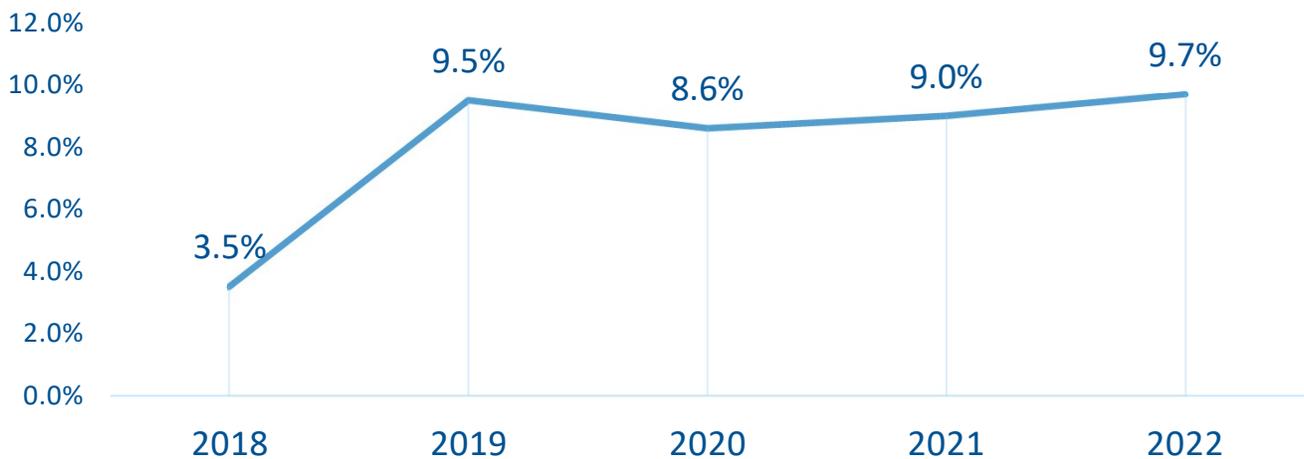
Education

Dropout Rate

These graphs show the percentage of students who are removed from the local enrollment roster before the end of a school term – sorted by ‘All’ in the line graph and by specific demographics in the bar graph from 2018 to 2022.

The most significant disadvantage high school dropouts face is lower expected income. Without a high school diploma, a person will find enrolling in a college or trade school to be difficult or even impossible. The increased likelihood of low income, along with the lowered possibility of higher education and career opportunities, tends to make high school dropouts more susceptible to crime, substance abuse, and other characteristics of poverty.

Districts that are successful in lowering the dropout rate usually follow a program of identifying the potential at-risk students, implementing interventions, and changing any factors that can be controlled at the school level.

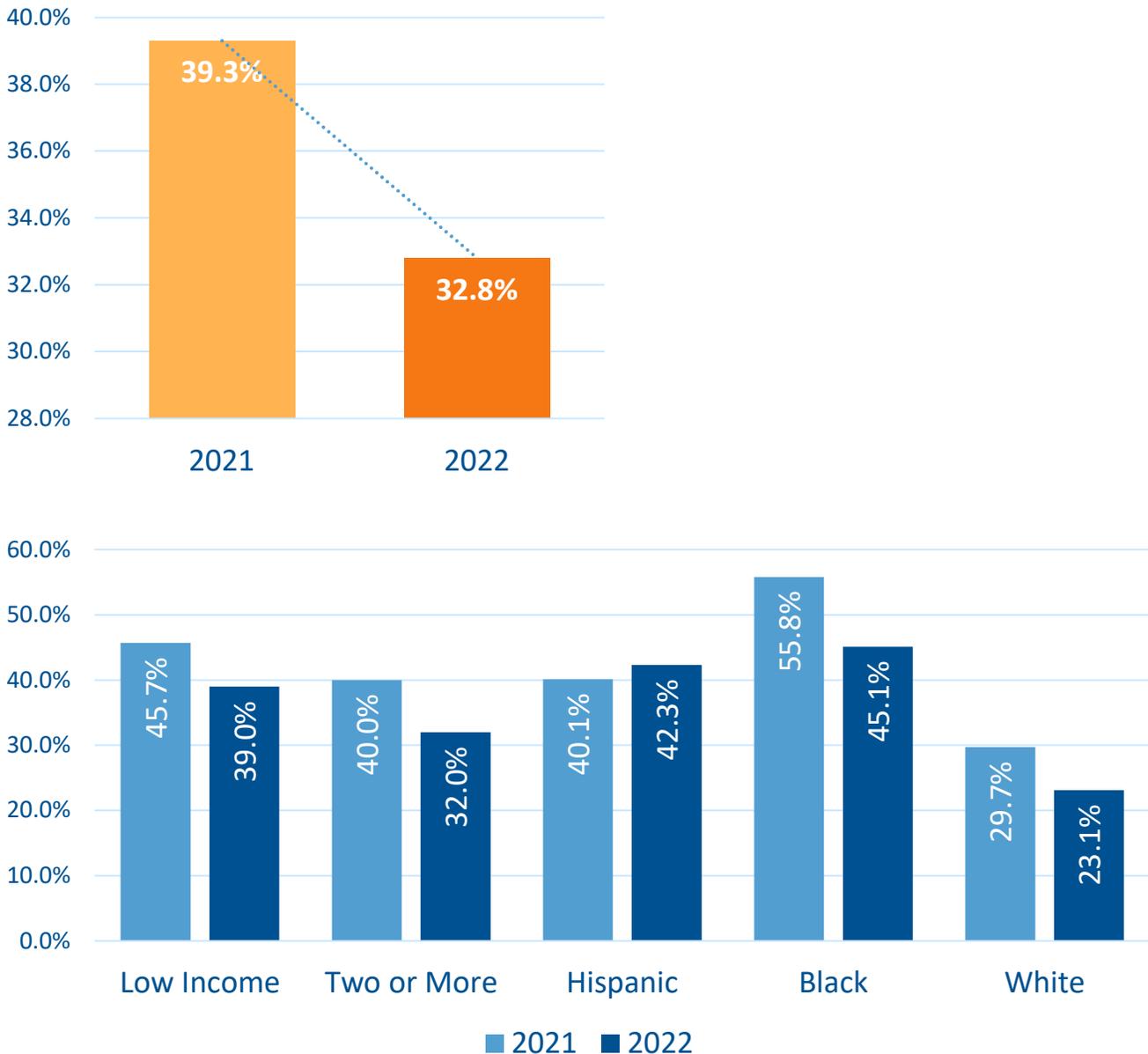


Education

Chronically Truant Students

This graph shows the percentage of students who miss 5 percent or more of school days per year without a valid excuse – sorted by ‘All’ and by specific demographics from 2021 and 2022.

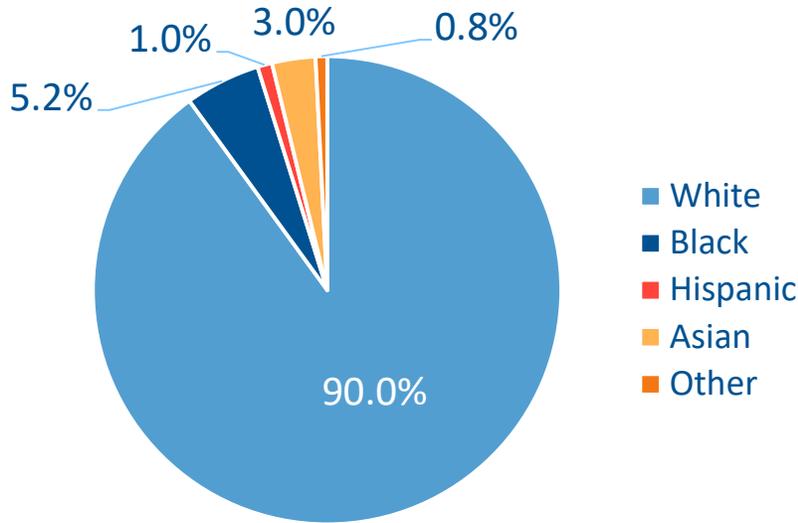
Illinois law defines “chronic truant” as a student who misses 5 percent of school days within an academic year without a valid excuse. That’s nine days of an average 180-day school year. The count of chronically truant students does not include students with excused absences. Chronic truants are at risk of academic and behavioral problems. Research shows that chronic truancy has been linked to serious delinquent activity in youth and to significant negative behavior and characteristics in adults.



Education

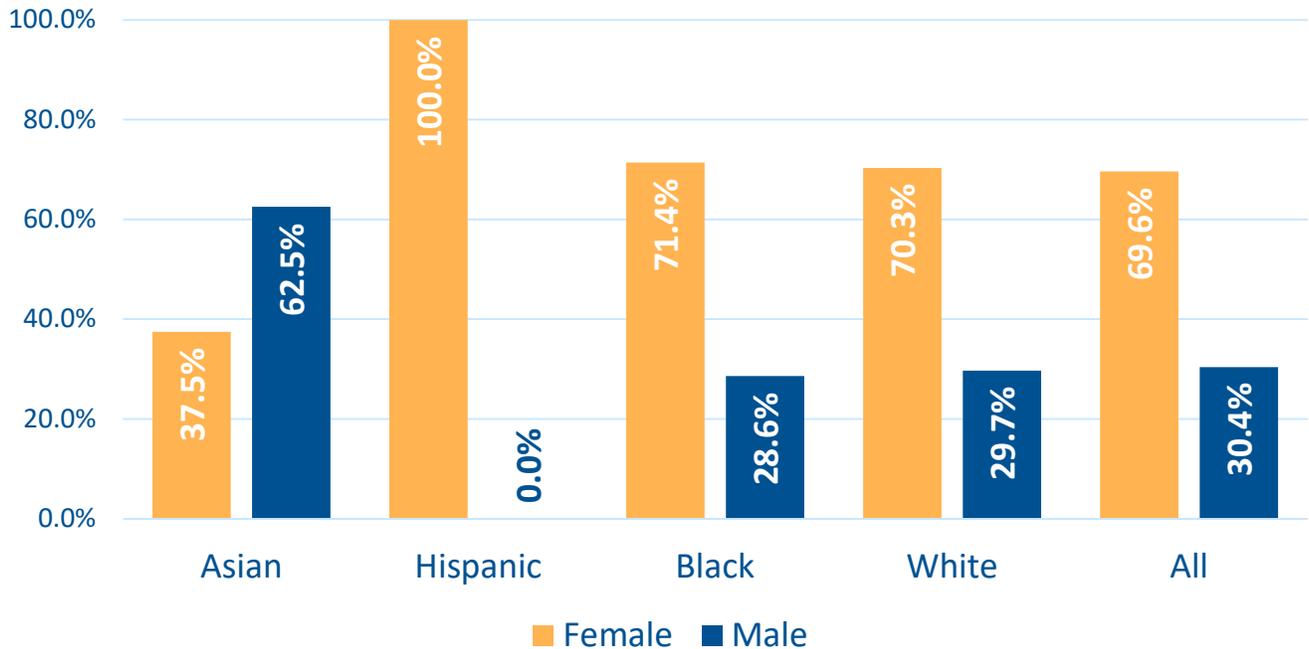
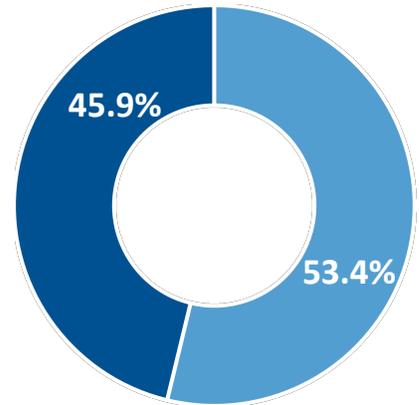
Demographics of Teachers – Race, Gender, & Education Distribution

The chart displays the race and gender distribution for teachers (FTE) in this district.



269.3
Total Teachers
(FTE)

■ Bachelor's Degree (53.4%)
■ Master's Degree or Higher (45.9%)



Sources: 2022 Illinois Report Card

Education

Student/Teacher Ratios

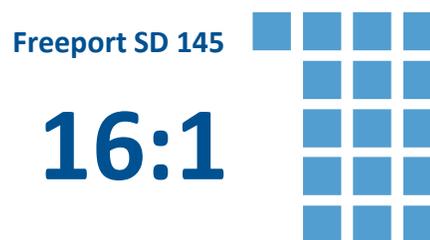
The display shows the average number of students per teacher. This is calculated using the fall enrollment for the school year divided by the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in the district.

Teachers classified as special education teachers are not included. Unit districts show both the elementary and high school student/teacher ratios on all displays. Research indicates that children in lower grades show the potential for higher achievement scores when they are in smaller classes. Many factors contribute to student achievement, and class size is only one part of this bigger picture. Special education classes are not included in this calculation.

Elementary School Students per Teacher

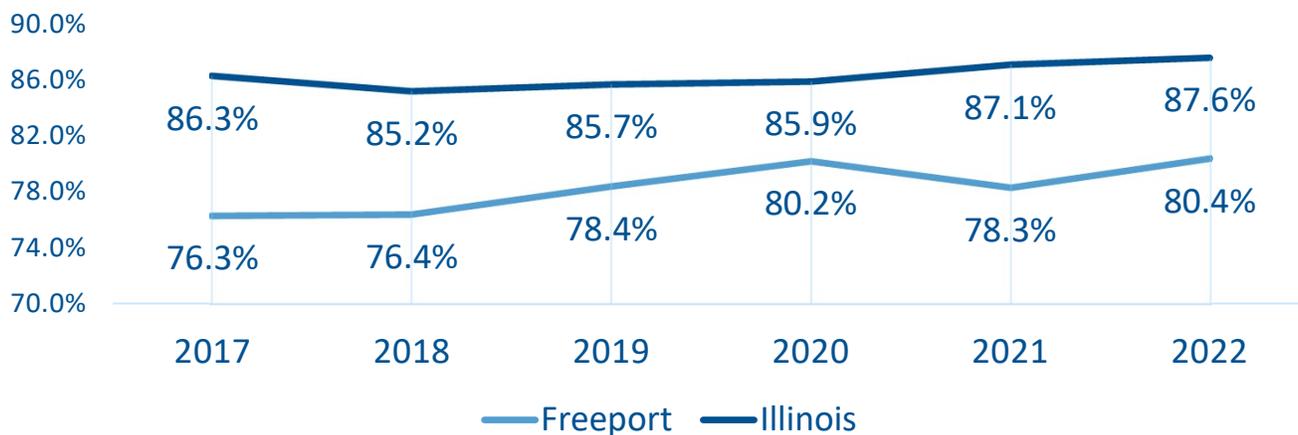


High School Students per Teacher



Teacher Retention

This display shows the Freeport district average for the 3-year average percentage of teachers returning to work at the same school. Stability in the teaching staff often helps to foster a collaborative environment in which teachers work together to advance student achievement. However, some movement of teachers in and out of schools is normal.



Sources: 2022 Illinois Report Card

Education

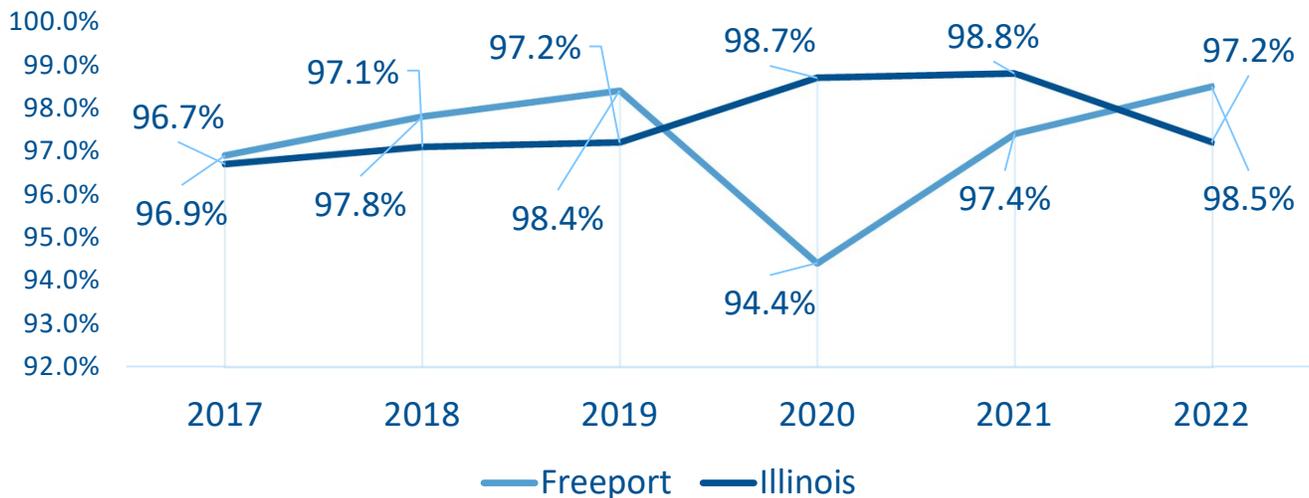
Teacher Salary Trends

The display shows the average salary for teachers over the past 9 years. These numbers are calculated by using the sum of all teachers' salaries divided by the number of FTE teachers. The annual salary for public school teachers varies greatly depending on location, years of experience, level of education, and financial resources of the district.



Teacher Evaluation Trends

The percent of teachers evaluated as excellent or proficient by an administrator or other evaluator trained in performance evaluations.



Education

Academic Progress – Illinois Assessment of Readiness

The displays on the following pages show the percentage of students scoring at each of the performance levels for the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics sorted by years (2019-2022) and demographics. No data is available for 2020 because of the COVID Pandemic.

The graph displays the percentage of students who achieved scores in the following IAR performance level categories:

- Level 1 Dark Orange - did not yet meet expectations
- Level 2 Light Orange - partially met expectations
- Level 3 Yellow - approached expectations
- Level 4 Light Green - met expectations
- Level 5 Dark Green - exceeded expectations

This is a zero-based graph. The percentage of students Ready for the Next Level are shown to the right of the zero line. The percentage of students in other levels are shown to the left of the zero line.

The Illinois Assessment of Readiness is a federally required measure of student mastery of the Illinois Learning Standards in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 – and their readiness for what’s next.

Same Standards, Same Content. Students, families, and schools will experience essentially no difference in the assessment this year. The Illinois Assessment of Readiness measures the same standards and includes the same high-quality test questions used the last four years. Using the same content and measuring the same standards ensures comparability from year to year – an essential commitment to including growth in our support and accountability system. IAR results are also be used to measure student growth for school and district accountability.

The Illinois Assessment of Readiness reduces testing time by about one-third to six hours or less. The Illinois Assessment of Readiness measures students’ mastery of the same skills and concepts with fewer questions. It’s similar to measuring a student’s height in inches, rather than in centimeters. Centimeters provide a more precise measurement than inches, but both assess the same quality – height. Both give “comparable” information that you can use in the same way to make the same kinds of decisions.

■ Did Not Meet ■ Partially Met ■ Approached ■ Met ■ Exceeded

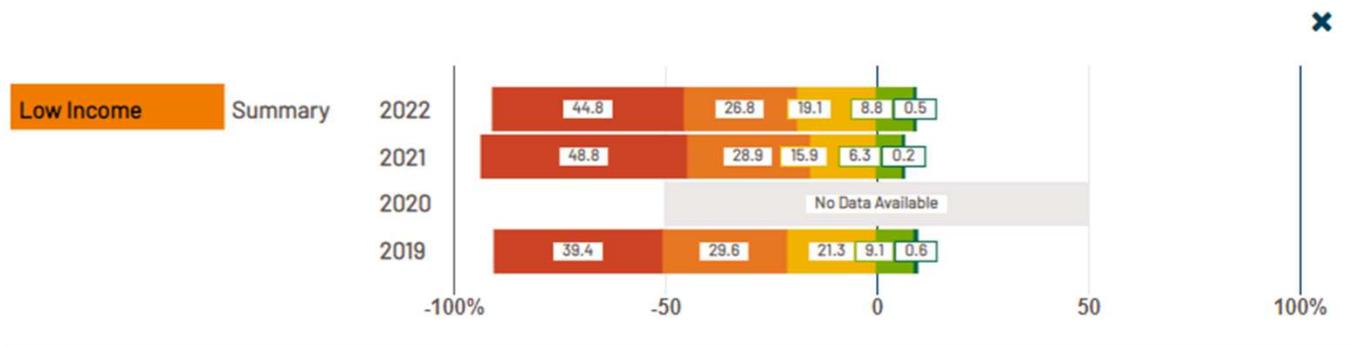
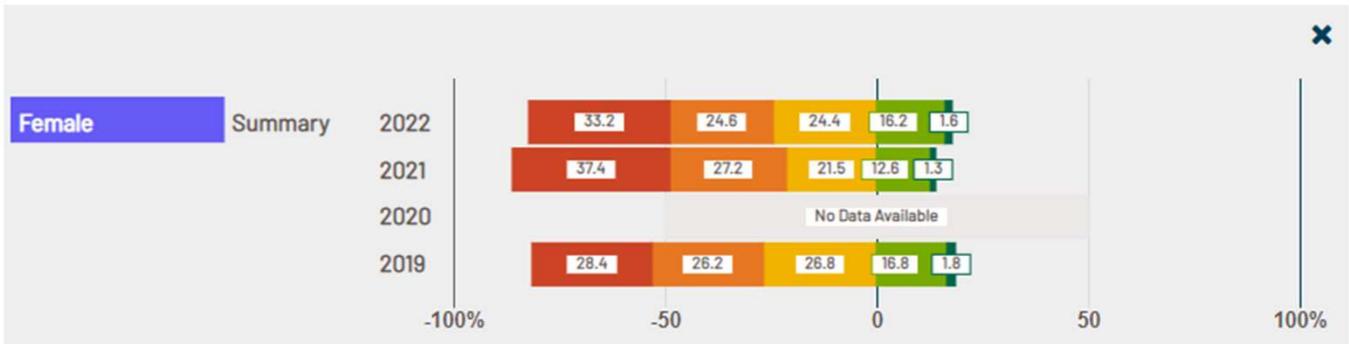
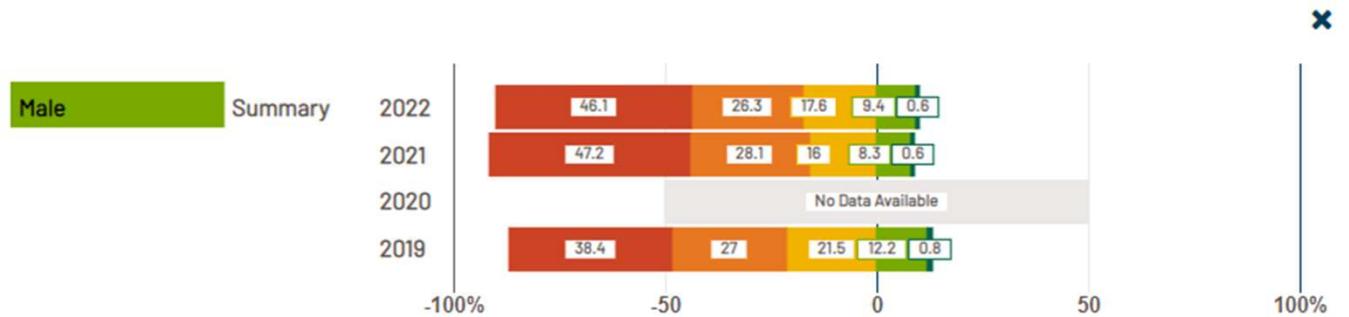
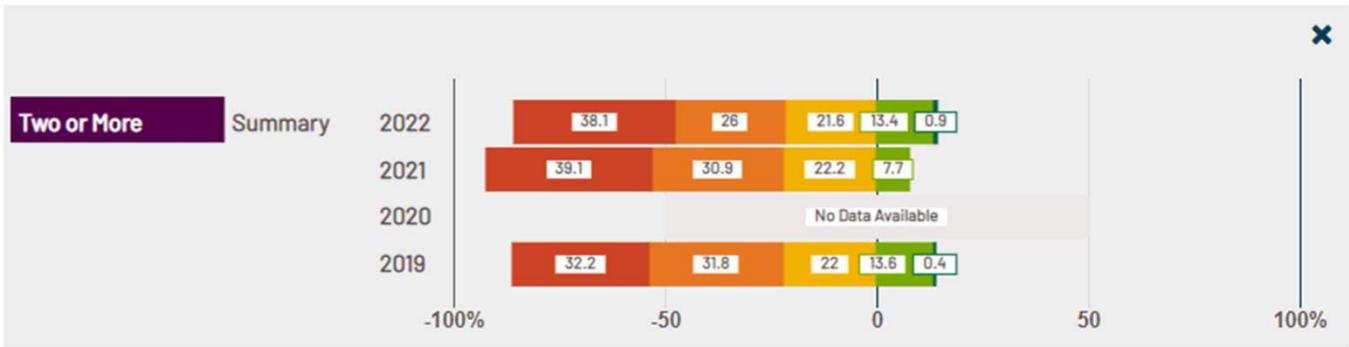
Academic Progress – Illinois Assessment of Readiness – English Language Arts (ELA)



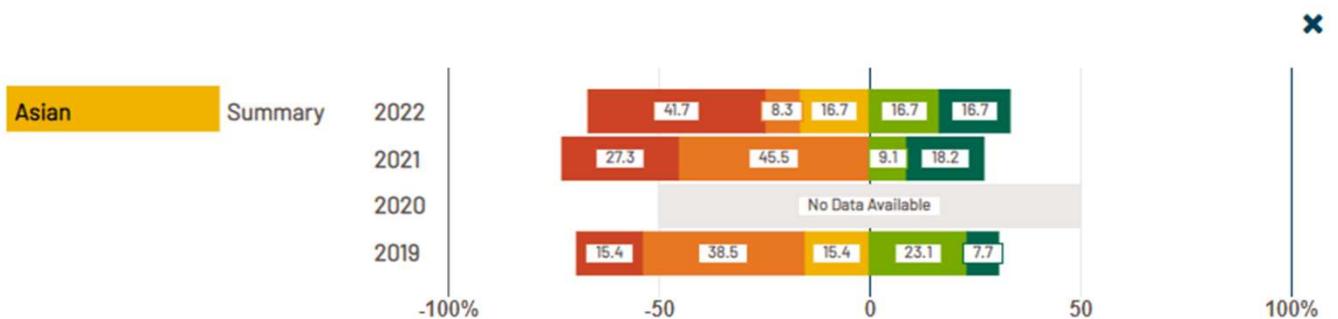
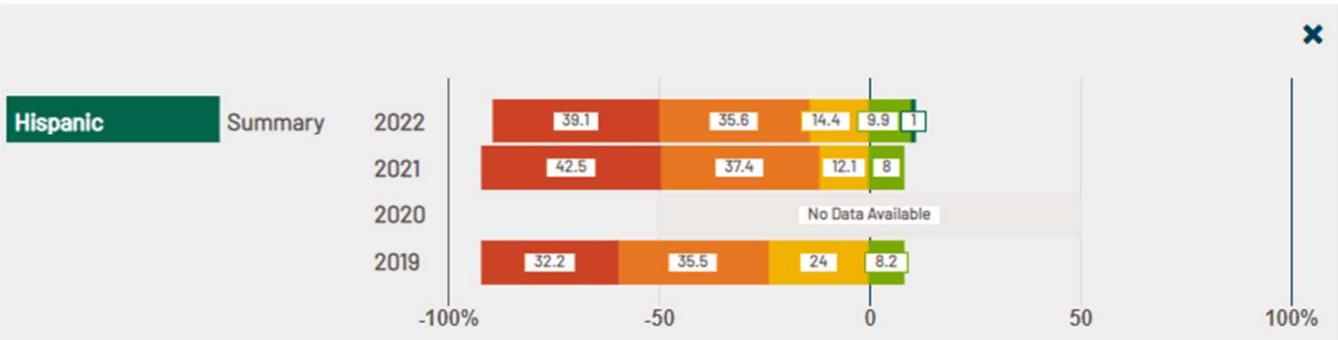
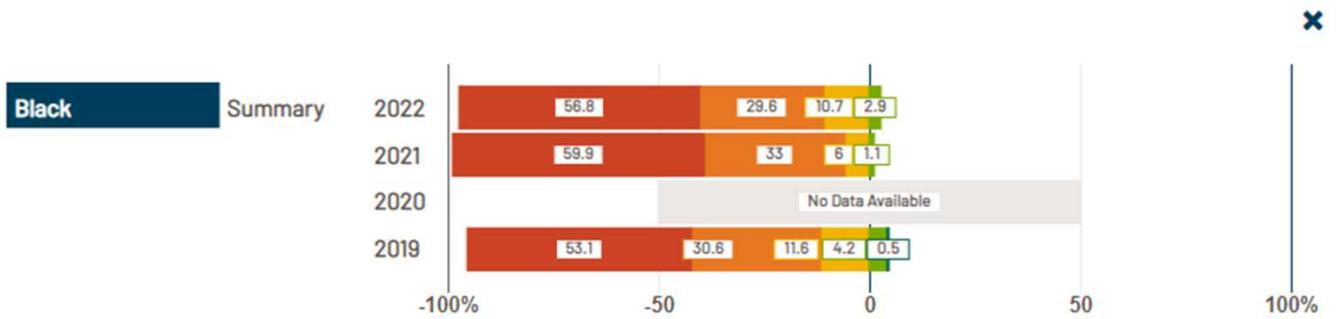
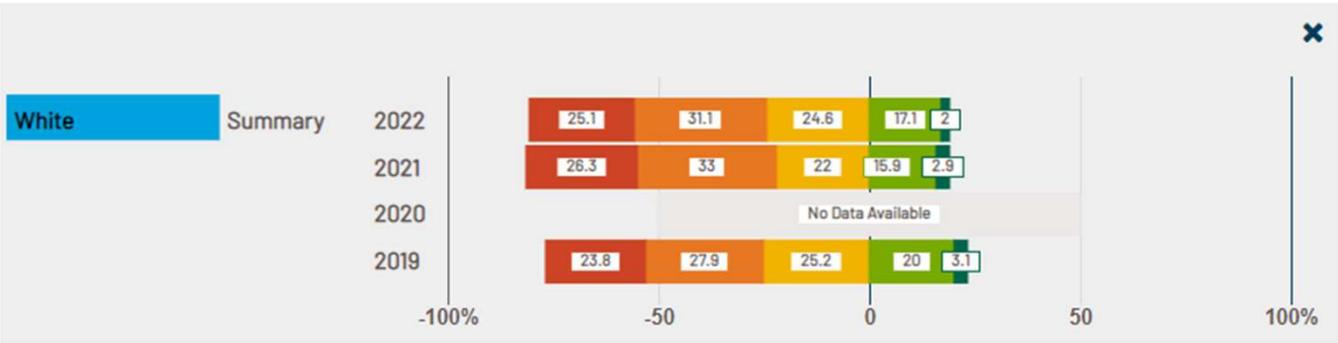
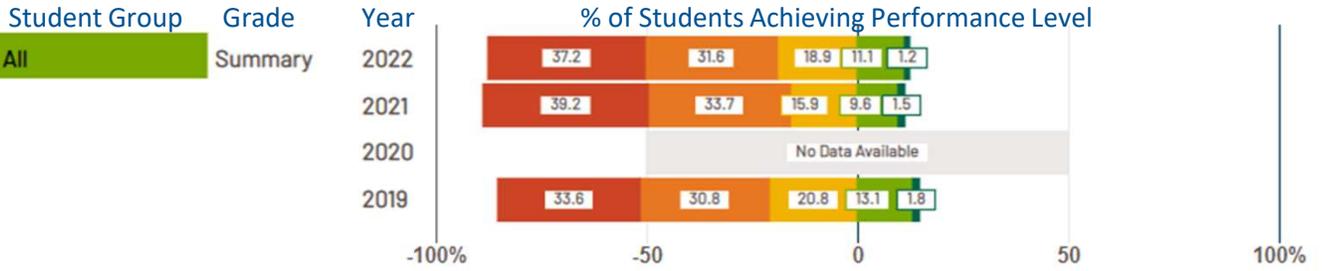
Sources: 2022 Illinois Report Card

Academic Progress – Illinois Assessment of Readiness – English Language Arts (ELA)

Student Group Grade Year % of Students Achieving Performance Level



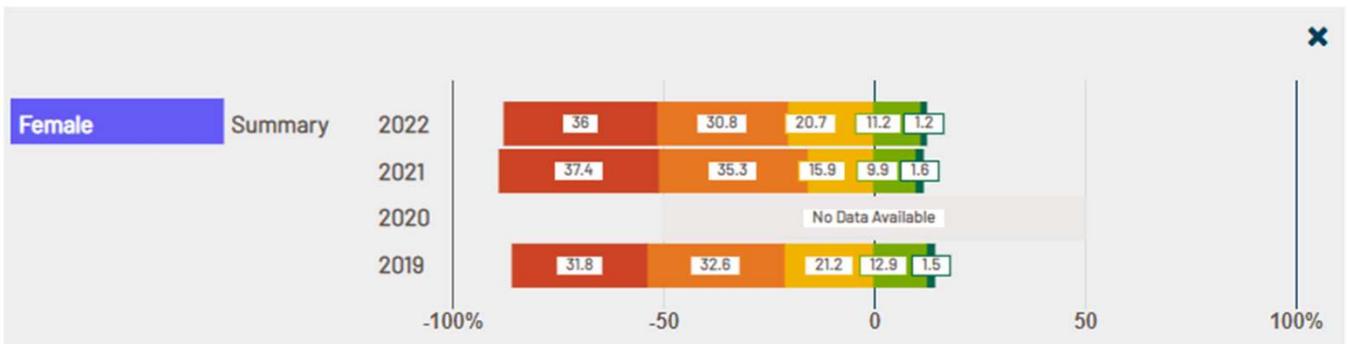
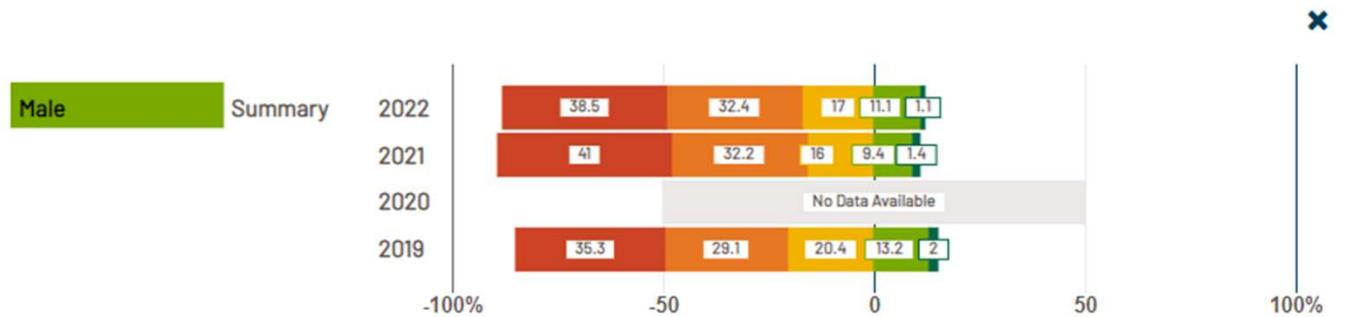
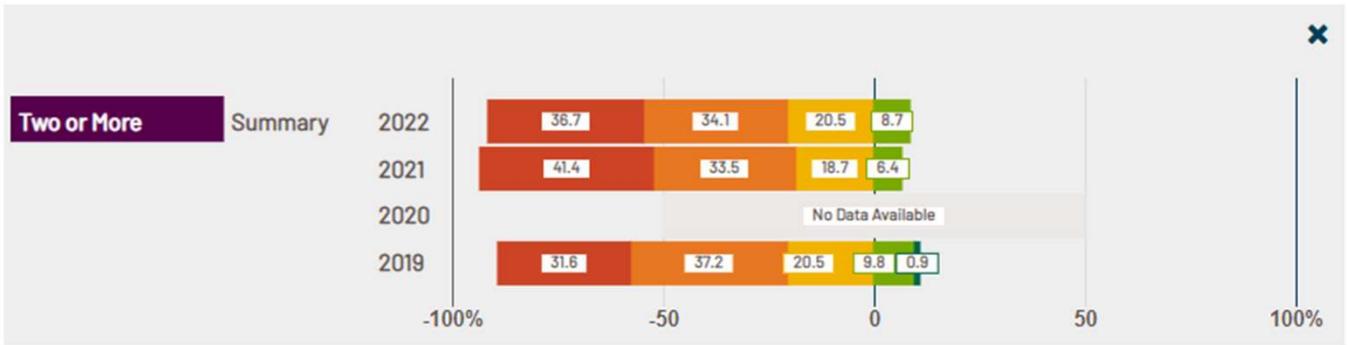
Academic Progress – Illinois Assessment of Readiness – Mathematics



Sources: 2022 Illinois Report Card

Academic Progress – Illinois Assessment of Readiness – Mathematics

Student Group Grade Year % of Students Achieving Performance Level



Education

Academic Progress – Illinois Science Assessment

The graph displays the percentage of students who fall into four levels: emerging, developing, proficient, and exemplary on the Illinois Science Assessment.

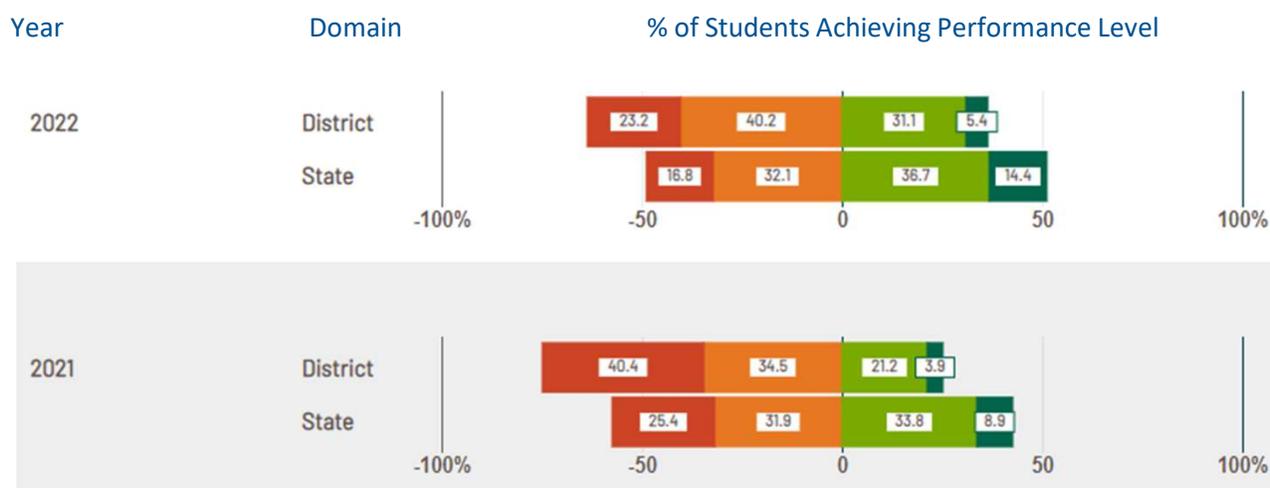
This is a zero-based graph. The percentage of students in the emerging category is shown to the left of the zero line. The percentage of students in the exemplary category is shown to the right of the zero line.

The Illinois Science tests are designed to measure performance against rigorous science standards. The tests require students to apply their science skills to answering questions. These skills are necessary in order for students to be successful in the real world. The science tests are given to students enrolled in grades 5, 8, and 11. The tests last about an hour, and students take them online.

Based on test scores, students are identified in one of the four levels of proficiency: emerging, developing, proficient, or exemplary. The chart below provides a description of each proficiency level.

- Level 4: Exemplary - Work at this level is of exceptional quality. It is both thorough and accurate. It exceeds the standard. It shows a sophisticated application of knowledge and skills.
- Level 3: Proficient - Work at this level meets the standard. It is acceptable work that demonstrates application of essential knowledge and skills. Minor errors or omissions do not detract from the overall quality.
- Level 2: Developing - Work at this level does not meet the standard. It shows basic, but inconsistent application of knowledge and skills. Minor errors or omissions detract from the overall quality. Your work needs further development.
- Level 1: Emerging - Work at this level shows a partial application of knowledge and skills. It is superficial (lacks depth), fragmented or incomplete and needs considerable development. Your work contains errors or omissions.

■ Emerging ■ Developing ■ Proficient ■ Exemplary

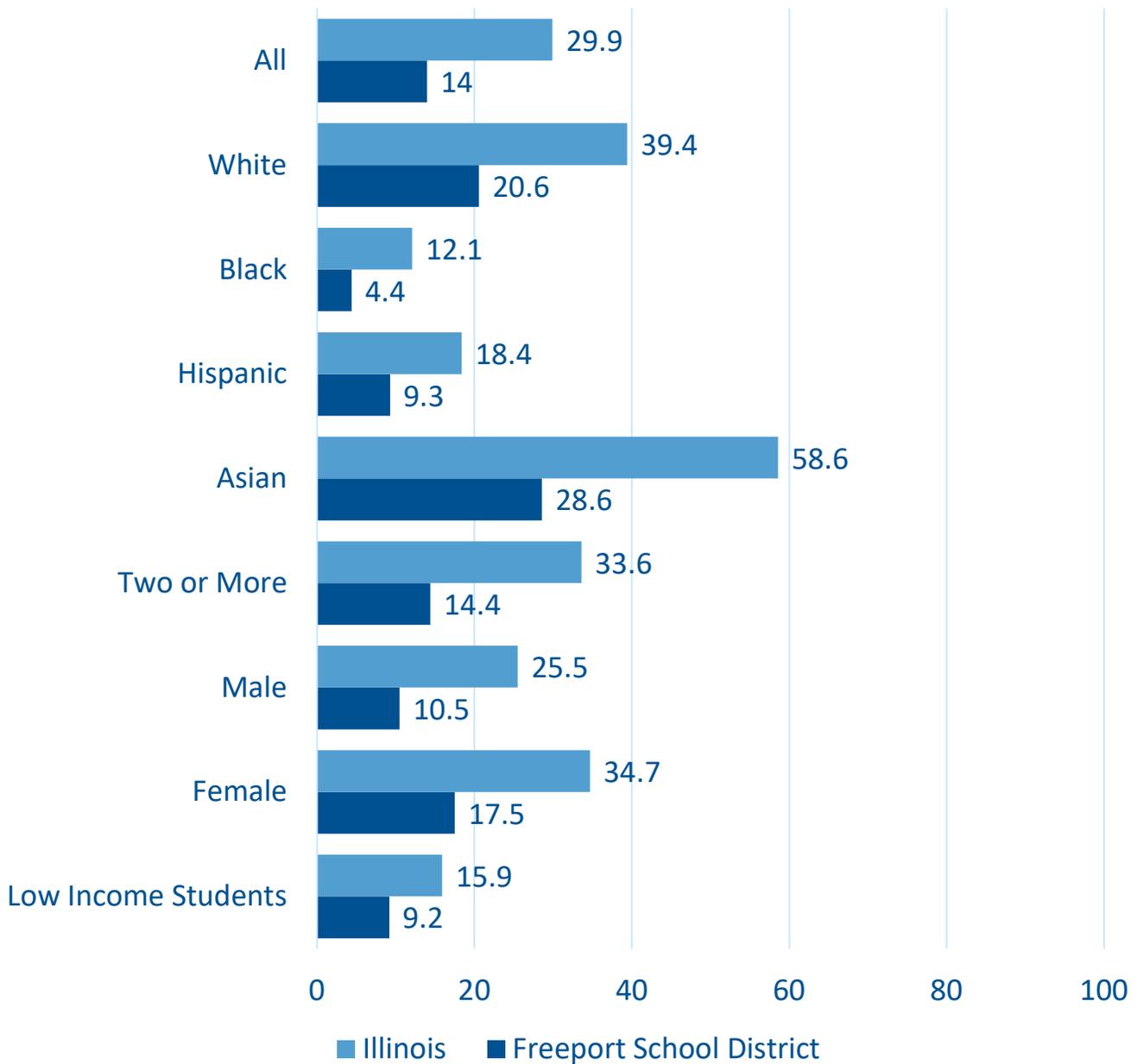


Education

Proficiency – English Language Arts (ELA)

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to assess their learning standards for English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. The following graph shows the 2022 proficiency of students sorted by demographics and compared to the state of Illinois.

The use of the term proficiency in educational data generally refers to students demonstrating or not demonstrating that they are “well advanced in ... a branch of knowledge” (from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Proficiency can be measured in a variety of ways, but for the purposes of the Illinois Report Card proficiency represents students’ success in achieving levels within standardized testing that indicate proficiency in English language arts (ELA), math, or science.

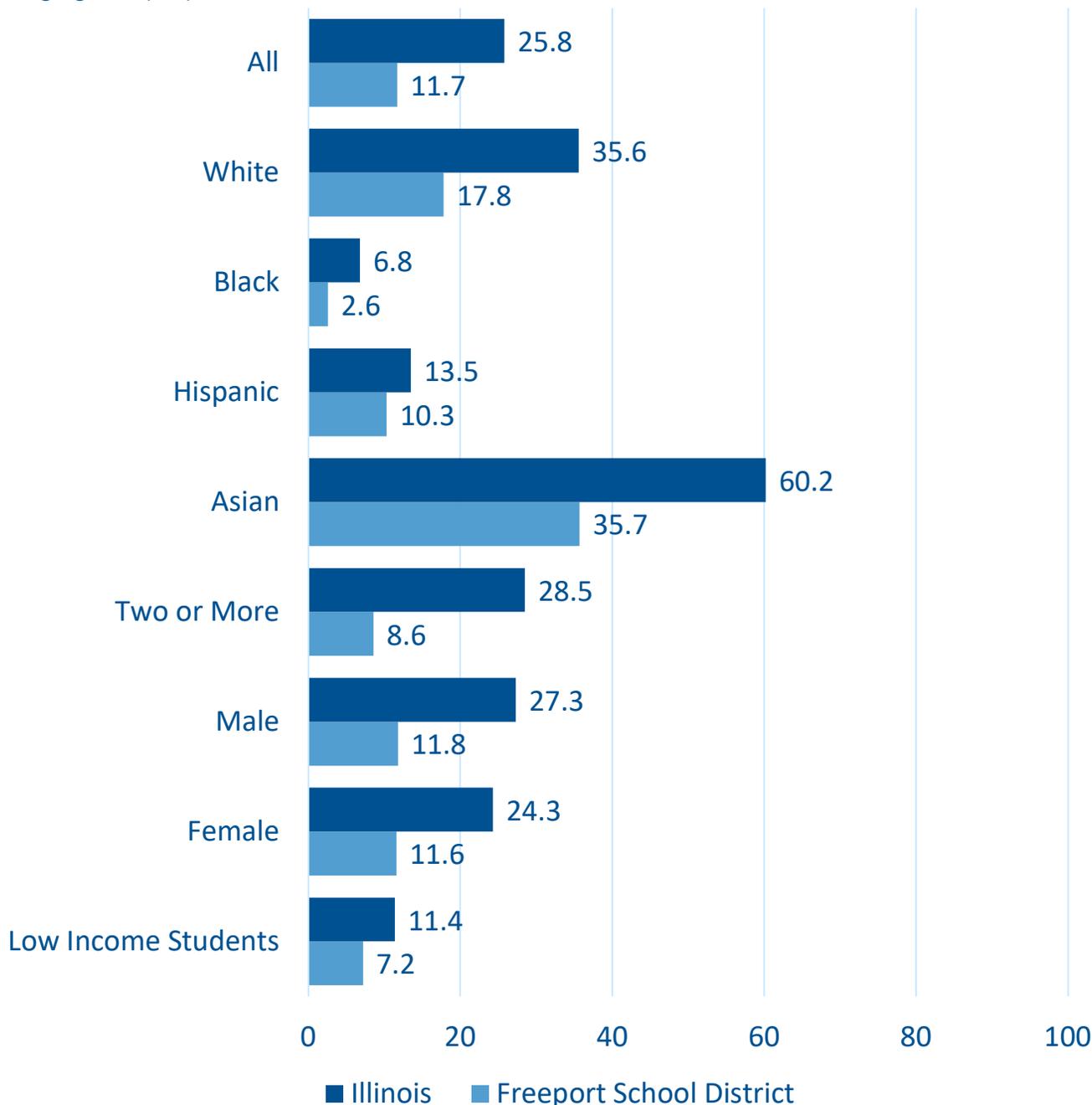


Education

Proficiency – Mathematics

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to assess their learning standards for English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. The following graph shows the 2022 proficiency of students sorted by demographics and compared to the state of Illinois.

The use of the term proficiency in educational data generally refers to students demonstrating or not demonstrating that they are “well advanced in ... a branch of knowledge” (from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Proficiency can be measured in a variety of ways, but for the purposes of the Illinois Report Card proficiency represents students’ success in achieving levels within standardized testing that indicate proficiency in English language arts (ELA), math, or science.



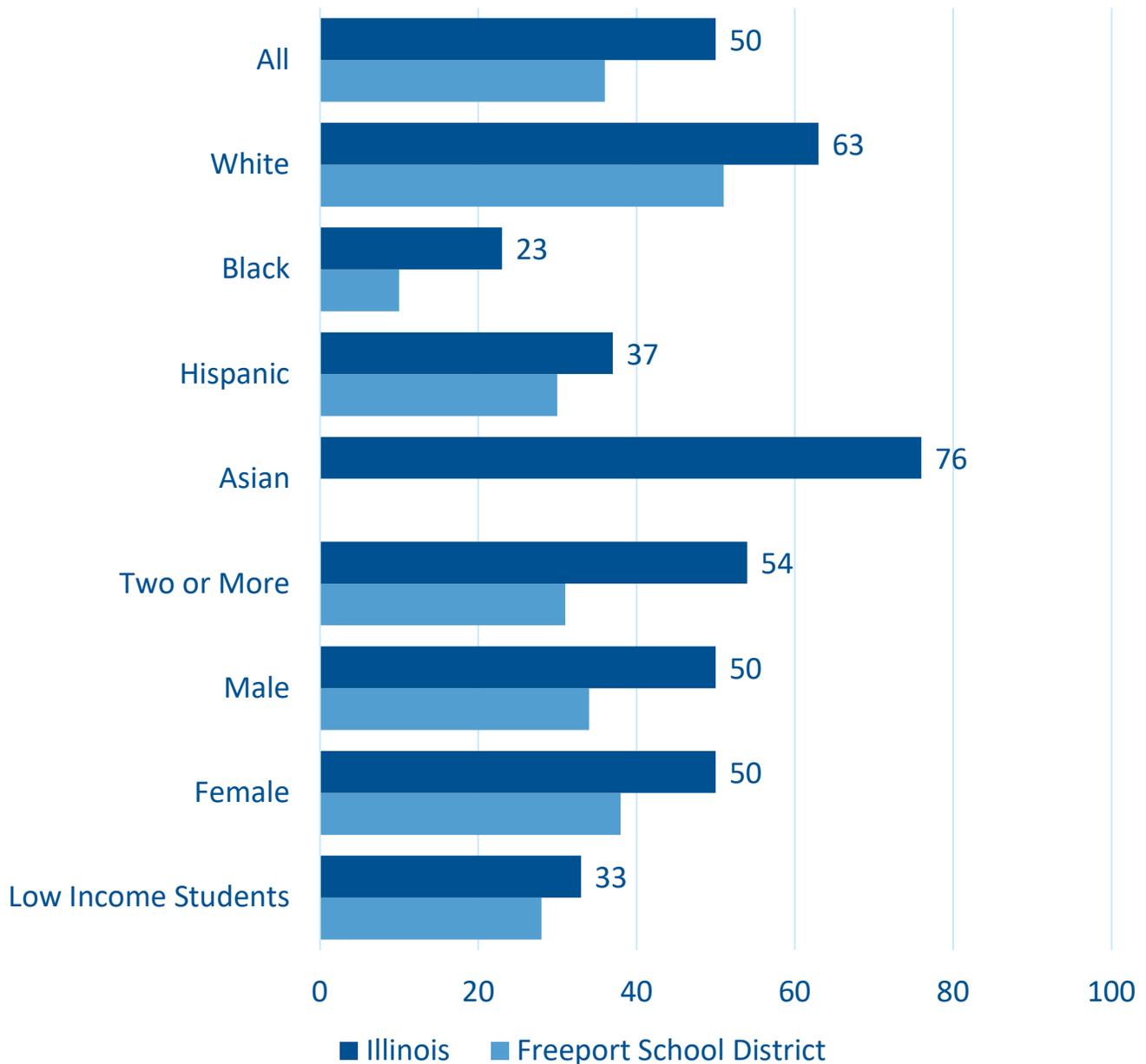
Sources: 2022 Illinois Report Card

Education

Proficiency – Science

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to assess their learning standards for English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. The following graph shows the 2022 proficiency of students sorted by demographics and compared to the state of Illinois.

The use of the term proficiency in educational data generally refers to students demonstrating or not demonstrating that they are “well advanced in ... a branch of knowledge” (from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Proficiency can be measured in a variety of ways, but for the purposes of the Illinois Report Card proficiency represents students’ success in achieving levels within standardized testing that indicate proficiency in English language arts (ELA), math, or science.

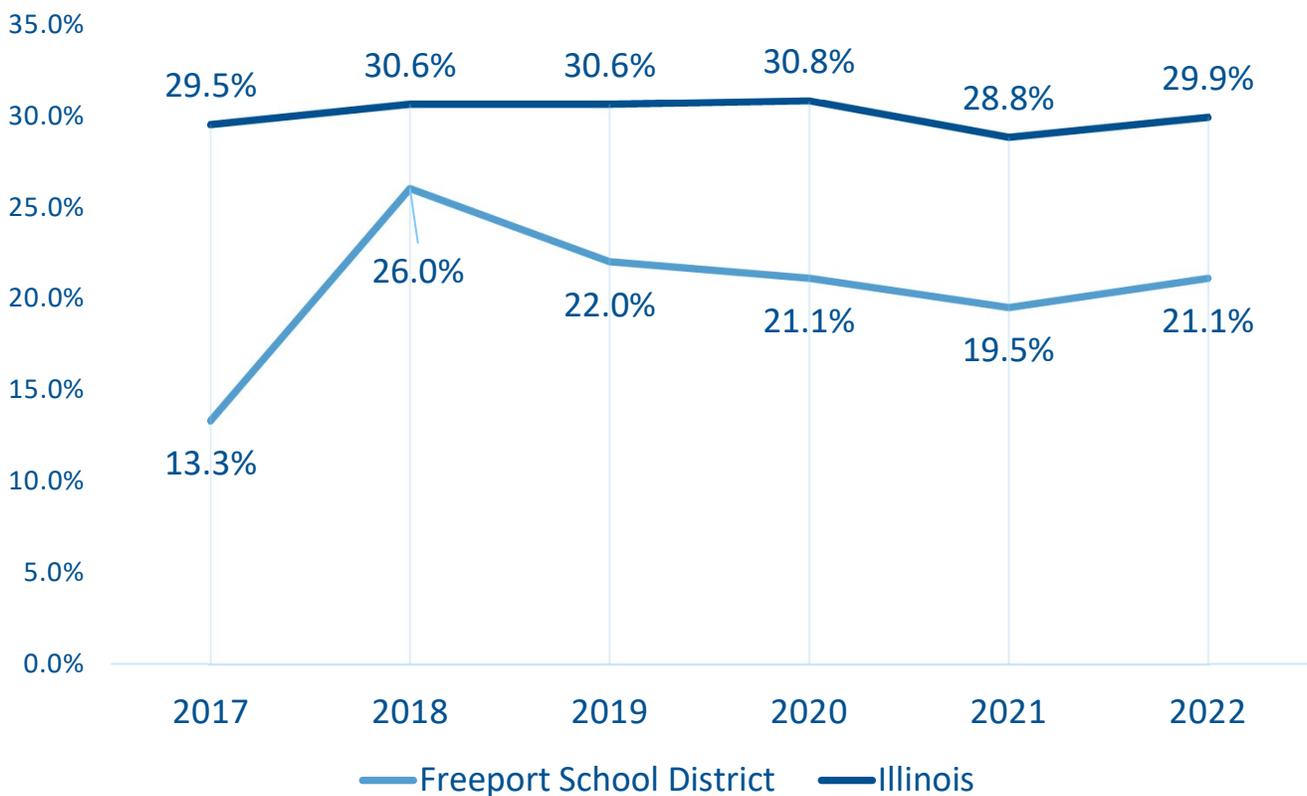


Education

Eighth Graders Passing Algebra 1

The graph displays the percentage of 8th graders passing Algebra I.

Algebra I is described as a gateway course because students typically need to pass Algebra I before moving on to high level math and science courses. A typical math course sequence would start with Algebra I and continue with Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, and Calculus. Students who pass Algebra I in 8th grade will likely have the opportunity to take Calculus before they graduate – a prerequisite for college STEM majors and careers.

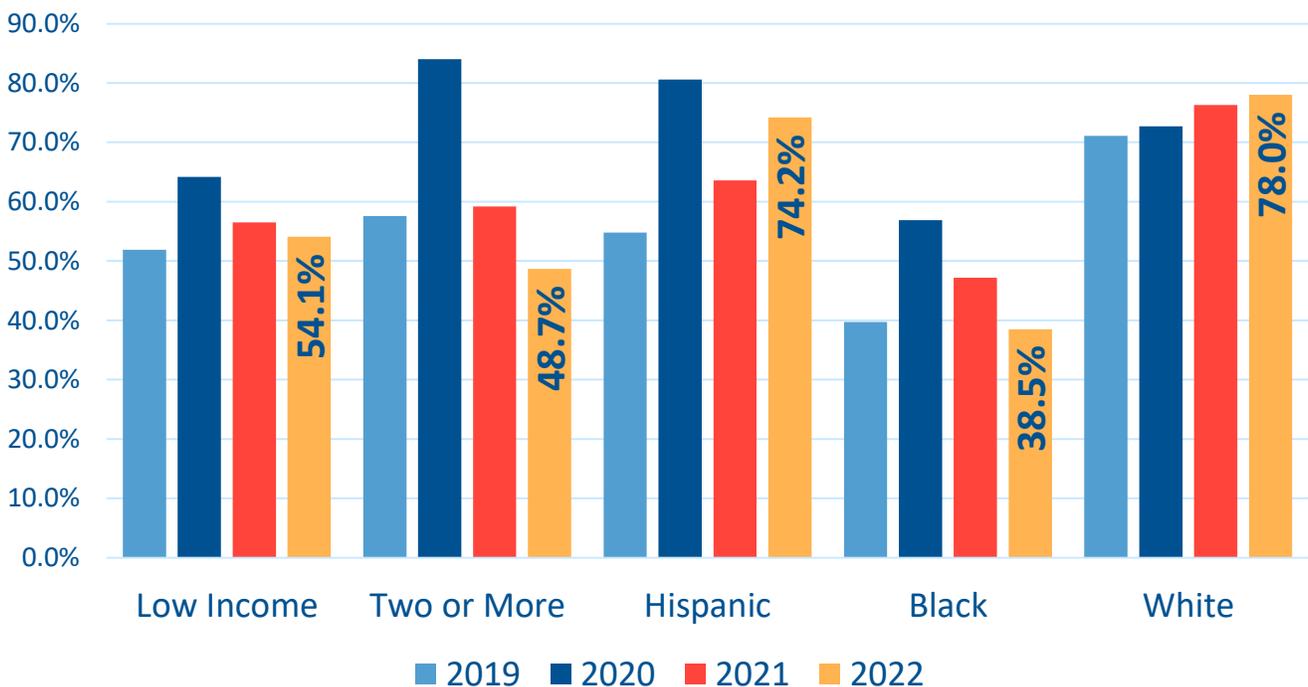
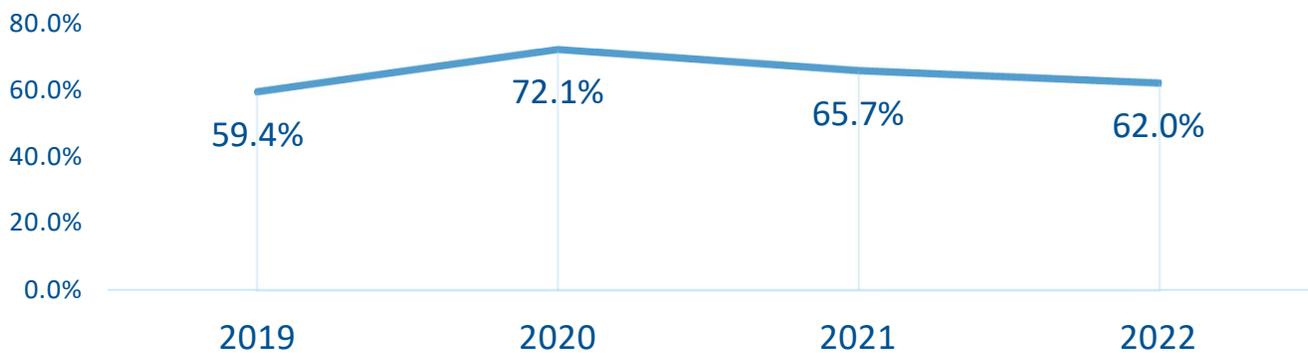


Education

Eighth Graders Passing Algebra 1

These graphs displays the number of freshmen on track in this school – sorted by ‘All’ in the line graph and by specific demographics in the bar graph from 2019 to 2022.

Students identified as “on track” have earned at least five full-year course credits (10 semester credits) and have earned no more than one semester “F” in a core course (English, math, science, or social science). Course credits from summer sessions are not included in this calculation. Freshmen on track is a key predictor of high school success. Students who finish the ninth-grade year on track are almost four times as likely to graduate from high school as students who are not on track. Research shows that the number of students on track and the graduation rate rise when schools actively intervene by identifying freshmen at risk and providing tutoring, additional instruction, and other individualized services.



Health

2022 County Health Rankings

Stephenson County ranks #72 for Health Outcomes out of 102 counties in Illinois. Health outcomes represent how healthy a county is right now, in terms of length of life and quality of life. Stephenson County is ranked in the lower middle range of counties in Illinois for Health Outcomes.

Health Outcomes	Stephenson County	IL	US	Explanation of Data	Years of Data
Premature Death	8,200	7,100	7,300	Years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population (age-adjusted)	2018-2020
Poor or Fair Health	18%	17%	17%	% of adults reporting fair or poor health (age-adjusted) In SC, 18% of adults reported that they consider themselves in fair or poor health.	2019
Poor Physical Health Days	4.1	3.6	3.9	Avg # of physically unhealthy days reported in past 30 days (age-adjusted) In SC, adults reported that their physical health was not good on 4.1 of the previous 30 days	2019
Poor Mental Health Days	4.8	4.2	4.5	Avg # of mentally unhealthy days reported in the past 30 days (age-adjusted) In SC, adults reported that their mental health was not good on 4.8 of the previous 30 days	2019
Low Birthweight	9%	8%	8%	% of live births with low birthweight (<2,500 grams) In SC, 9% of babies had low birth weights (under 5 lbs, 8 oz)	2014-2020
Life Expectancy	77.8	78.6	78.5	Avg # of years a person can expect to live In SC, the average life expectancy was 77.8 years	2018-2020
Premature Age-Adjusted Mortality	390	350	360	# of deaths among residents under age 75 per 100,000 population (age-adjusted) In SC, there were 390 deaths per 100,000 people age 75 or younger	2018-2020
Frequent Physical Distress	13%	11%	12%	% of adults reporting 14 or more days of poor physical health per month (age-adjusted) In SC, 13% of adults reported experiencing poor physical health for 14 or more of the last 30 days	2019
Frequent Mental Distress	16%	13%	14%	% of adults reporting 14 or more days of poor mental health per month (age-adjusted) In SC, 16% of adults reported experiencing poor mental health for 14 or more of the last 30 days	2019
Diabetes Prevalence	10%	10%	9%	% of adults aged 20 and above with diagnosed diabetes (age-adjusted) In SC, 10% of adults were living with a diagnosis of diabetes	2019

Health

2022 County Health Rankings

Stephenson County ranks #61 for Health Factors out of 102 counties in Illinois. Health factors represent those things we can modify to improve the length and quality of life for residents. Stephenson County is ranked in the lower middle range of counties in Illinois for Health Factors.

Health Behaviors	Stephenson County	IL	US	Explanation of Data	Years of Data
Adult Smoking	19%	15%	16%	% of adults who are current smokers (age-adjusted) In SC, 19% pf adults are current cigarette smokers	2019
Adult Obesity	37%	32%	32%	% of the adult population (age 18 and older) that reports a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30 kg/m2 (age-adjusted) In SC, 37% of adults had a BMI of 30 or greater	2019
Food Environment Index	8.5	8.6	7.8	Index of factors that contribute to a healthy food environment, from 0 (worst) to 10 (best) SC scored 8.5 out of a possible 10 on the food environment index, which includes access to healthy foods and food insecurity	2019
Physical Inactivity	28%	25%	26%	% of adults age 18 and over reporting no leisure-time physical activity (age-adjusted) In SC, 28% of adults reported participating in no physical activity outside of work	2019
Access to Exercise Opportunities	53%	87%	80%	% of population with adequate access to locations for physical activity In SC, 53% of people lived close to a park or recreation facility.	2010 & 2021
Excessive Drinking	23%	23%	20%	% of adults reporting binge or heavy drinking (age-adjusted) In SC, 23% of adults reported binge or heavy drinking	2019
Teen Births	26	18	19	# of births per 1,000 female population ages 15-19 In SC, there were 26 teen births per 1,000 females ages 15-19	2014-2020
Food Insecurity	11%	10%	11%	% of population who lack adequate access to food In SC, 11 of people did not have a reliable source of food	2019
Limited Access to Healthy Foods	2%	5%	6%	% of population who are low-income and do not live close to a grocery store In SC, 2% of people had low incomes and did not live close to a grocery store, limiting their ability to access healthy foods	2019
Insufficient Sleep	36%	34%	35%	% of adults who report fewer than 7 hours of sleep on average (age-adjusted) In SC, 36% of adults reported getting fewer than 7 hours of sleep per night on average	2018

Health

2022 County Health Rankings

Health factors represent those things we can modify to improve the length and quality of life for residents.

Clinical Care	Stephenson County	IL	US	Explanation of Data	Years of Data
Uninsured	7%	9%	11%	% of population under age 65 without health insurance In SC, 7% of people under the age of 65 did not have health insurance	2019
Primary Care Physicians	2,340:1	1,230:1	1,310:1	Ratio of population to primary care physicians There was one primary care physician per 2,340 people in SC	2019
Mental Health Providers	420:1	370:1	350:1	Ratio of population to mental health providers There was one mental health provider per 420 people registered in SC	2021
Preventable Hospital Stays	3,492	4,447	3,767	Rate of hospital stays for ambulatory-care sensitive conditions per 100,000 Medicare enrollees In SC, 3,492 hospital stays per 100,000 people enrolled in Medicare might have been prevented by outpatient treatment	2019
Mammography Screening	36%	44%	43%	% of female Medicare enrollees ages 65-74 that received an annual mammography screening In SC, 36% of female Medicare enrollees received an annual mammography screening	2019
Flu Vaccinations	50%	49%	48%	% of fee-for-service (FFS) Medicare enrollees that had an annual flu vaccination In SC, 50% of Medicare enrollees received an annual flu vaccine	2019
Physical Environment					
Air Pollution – Particulate Matter	9.3	9.4	7.5	Average daily density of fine particulate matter in micrograms per cubic meter (PM2.5) In SC, an annual average of 9.3 micrograms per cubic meter of fine particulate matter was measured in the air. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has primary annual average standards of 12.0 micrograms per cubic meter.	2018
Severe Housing Problems	12%	17%	17%	% of households with at least 1 of 4 housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities In SC, 12% of households experienced at least one of these housing problems	2014-2018

Sources: 2022 County Health Rankings

Health

2022 County Health Rankings

Health factors represent those things we can modify to improve the length and quality of life for residents.

Social & Economic Factors	Stephenson County	IL	US	Explanation of Data	Years of Data
High School Completion	92%	90%	89%	% of adults ages 25 and over with a high school diploma or equivalent In SC, 92% of adults (age 25 or older) had a high school degree or equivalent, such as a GED	2016-2020
Some College	66%	71%	67%	% of adults ages 25-44 with some post-secondary education In SC, 66% of adults (age 25-44) had completed some post-secondary education, including vocational/technical schools, junior colleges, or four-year colleges. This includes those who had and had not attained degrees	2016-2020
Unemployment	7.3%	9.5%	8.1%	% of population ages 16 and older unemployed but seeking work In SC, 7.3% of people age 16 and older were unemployed but seeking work	2020
Children in Poverty	17%	14%	16%	% of people under age 18 in poverty In SC, 17% of children lived in poverty	2020
Income Inequality	4.8	5	4.9	Ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to income at the 20th percentile In SC, households with higher incomes had income 4.8 times that of households with lower incomes	2016-2020
Children in Single-Parent Households	32%	25%	25%	% of children that live in a household headed by a single parent In SC, 32% of children lived in a household headed by a single parent	2016-2020
Social Associations	15.3	9.9	9.2	# of membership associations per 10,000 population In SC, there were 15.3 membership organizations per 10,000 people These include civic, political, religious, sports and professional organizations	2019
Violent Crime	128	403	386	# of reported violent crime offenses per 100,000 population In SC, there were 128 violent crimes such as rape, homicide, robbery and aggravated assault, reported per 100,000 people	2014 & 2016
Injury Deaths	109	70	76	# of deaths due to injury per 100,000 population In SC, there were 109 deaths due to injury such as homicides, suicides, motor vehicle crashes and poisonings, per 100,000 people	2016-2020

Sources: 2022 County Health Rankings

Health

Alcohol Use & Depressive Disorder

Binge Drinking is calculated at risk for men having 5+ drinks on one occasion and women having 4+ drinks on one occasion. Heavy Drinking is calculated at risk for men having >2 drinks per day and women having >1 drink per day.

	Stephenson County	IL (2020)
At Risk for Binge Drinking	17.5%	13%
At Risk for Heavy Drinking	5.1%	5.9%
Ever Told Have a Depressive Disorder	18.9%	14.7%

Mental/Behavioral Health Resources

The following facilities were identified in the 2022 FHN Community Health Needs Assessment as resources for mental/behavioral health needs:

Facility Name	Type(s) of Services
FHN Family Counseling Center	Behavioral Health Assessment and Treatment: Psychiatric Services, Psychological Assessment; Individual, Group or Family Therapy; Case Management; Community Support Services; Telehealth Counseling; Crisis Services; Psychosocial Rehabilitation; Substance Abuse Prevention and Education; Pet Therapy; Crisis Stabilization Center
Rosecrance Freeport	Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Assessments; Mental Health Services for Children, Teens, and Adults; Individual, Group and Family Therapy; Substance Use Disorder Services for Adults (Outpatient and Continuing Care Programs)
Sinissippi Center	Adolescent and Adult Care; Substance Abuse Treatment; Individual and Family Crisis Management; Family Counseling; Psychiatric Care and Medication Management

Health

Well-Being Index

The Sharecare Well-Being Index brings together more than 600 health risk factors into a single measure. By combining both individual and social factors, the index uniquely measures well-being across people and places. The index is based on decades of clinical research, health care leadership, and health economics. Sharecare conducts regular surveys within every community in the United States. They then analyze that data and score each community on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 representing the greatest possible well-being.

Well-Being Dimensions	Stephenson Co. Well-Being Index Score / IL Ranking	Explanation of Dimension
Overall	53 / 33	Individual and social factors of well-being across people and places
Community	62 / 66	Liking where you live and having pride in your community
Economic security	49 / 67	Rates of employment, labor force participation, individuals with health insurance coverage, and household income above poverty level
Financial	60 / 40	Managing your economic life to increase security and reduce stress
Food access	62 / 12	Presence of grocery stores within one mile of underserved populations, including children, seniors, and Black individuals
Healthcare access	52 / 23	Concentration of doctors of medicine (MDs), obstetrician gynecologists (OBGYNs), and pediatric specialists per 1,000 residents
Housing & transportation	44 / 85	Home values, ratio of home value to income, and public transit use
Physical	64 / 65	Having good health and enough energy to get things done daily
Purpose	62 / 53	Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals
Resource access	50 / 26	Quantity of libraries and religious institutions per 10,000 residents, employment rates for people over 65, and presence of grocery stores within 20 miles
Social	64 / 48	Having supportive relationships and love in your life

Health

2022 Illinois Youth Survey – Stephenson County

The Illinois Youth Survey Stephenson County Report provides county-level data on health and social indicators including drug use, bullying, school climate, and more. Students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades from Freeport Middle School and Freeport High School contributed to data in this report along with six other schools located in Stephenson County with a 62% completion rate.

Zip Code	8th	10th	12th
61032	51%	76%	68%

	8th	10th	12th
Free lunch	86%	94%	88%
Reduced price lunch	3%	2%	1%
Neither	11%	4%	11%

	8th	10th	12th
White	70%	66%	67%
Black/African American	9%	13%	18%
Latino/Latina	5%	6%	4%
Asian American	1%	3%	1%
Multi-racial	14%	10%	11%
Other	1%	2%	0%

Interpersonal Conflict, Violence, and Delinquency

	8th	10th	12th
Delinquency – How many times in the past year (12 months) have you:			
Been in a physical fight (1-2 times)	21%	15%	11%
Carried a weapon such as a handgun, knife, or club (1-2 times)	7%	8%	5%
Sold illegal drugs (1-2 times)	0%	2%	1%
Been drunk or high at school (1-2 times)	4%	4%	1%
Bullying Experiences – During the past 12 months, has another student at school:			
Bullied you by calling you names	33%	25%	21%
Threatened to hurt you	20%	17%	14%
Bullied you by hitting, punching, kicking, or pushing you	16%	10%	9%
Bullied, harassed, or spread rumors about you on the Internet, social media, or through text messages	23%	23%	19%

Health

2022 Illinois Youth Survey – Stephenson County

As can be expected, substance use increases as the youth get older with 47% of 12th graders reporting the use of alcohol in the past year compared to 34% of 8th graders. 15% of 12th graders report using marijuana in the past 30 days compared to 7% of 8th graders.

*Marijuana use among youth and young adults is a major public health concern. Early youth marijuana use is associated with:

- Neuropsychological and neurodevelopmental decline
- Poor school performance
- Increased school drop-out rates
- Increased risk for psychotic disorders in adulthood
- Increased risk for later depression
- Suicidal ideation or behavior

Drug Prevalence and Behaviors

Substance Used	8th	10th	12th
Used Past Year			
Any common substances plus vaping (including alcohol, tobacco products, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or other vaping products, inhalants, or marijuana)	32%	38%	46%
Alcohol	34%	40%	47%
Marijuana	8%	17%	23%
Any Illicit Drugs (excluding marijuana)	1%	2%	2%
Any Prescription Drugs to get high	2%	2%	3%
Used Past 30 Days			
Any tobacco products OR e-cigarettes or other vaping products	13%	12%	25%
Alcohol	11%	12%	25%
Marijuana	7%	12%	15%
Prescription Drugs not prescribed to you	1%	2%	2%

Sources: 2022 Illinois Youth Survey; *Preventing Marijuana Use Among Youth – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Health

2022 Illinois Youth Survey – Stephenson County

School Climate/Caring Adults

		Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult:					
8 th	Who really cares about me	9%	16%	37%	39%
	Who notices when I'm not there	12%	10%	39%	39%
	Who listens to me when I have something to say	9%	15%	35%	40%
	Who notices if I have trouble learning something	14%	27%	27%	32%
10 th	Who really cares about me	8%	29%	50%	23%
	Who notices when I'm not there	9%	33%	35%	22%
	Who listens to me when I have something to say	9%	25%	43%	22%
	Who notices if I have trouble learning something	16%	31%	34%	20%
12 th	Who really cares about me	12%	20%	33%	34%
	Who notices when I'm not there	10%	26%	31%	32%
	Who listens to me when I have something to say	10%	16%	39%	35%
	Who notices if I have trouble learning something	13%	22%	29%	36%

School Climate/School Connectedness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement about your school: I feel safe at my school					
8 th	6%	8%	19%	36%	31%
10 th	7%	10%	38%	37%	8%
12 th	9%	11%	24%	42%	14%

Health

2022 Illinois Youth Survey – Stephenson County

20% of 10th graders responding to the survey reported they seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months.

The suicide rate among youth is a significant public health concern. In the United States, suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 10-24. Risk factors for youth suicide include depression, substance abuse, access to firearms, and previous suicide attempts. It's essential to address these risk factors and provide support to youth who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.

Mental, Social, and Physical Health

	8th	10th	12th
During the past 12 months did you ever:			
Seriously consider attempting suicide	NA	20%	12%
Feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities	33%	48%	30%
Is there an adult you know (other than your parent) you could talk to about important things in your life?			
No	11%	18%	14%
Yes, one adult	16%	23%	18%
Yes, more than one adult	74%	59%	68%
During the past 30 days, how often did you go hungry because there was not enough food in your home:			
Never	69%	72%	74%
Rarely	22%	20%	15%
Sometimes	6%	6%	5%
Most of the time	1%	1%	3%
Always	2%	1%	4%

Gun Violence Prevention Research

Policy Recommendations for cities from the *Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Gun Violence Solutions* report titled, “A Year in Review: 2020 Gun Deaths in the U.S.”

Gun violence is a complex issue requiring many approaches to its prevention. We are committed to evidence-based policies, programs, and practices and ensuring that all of these preventative measures are designed and implemented equitably. Below, we highlight a few promising policy recommendations to stop gun violence in all its forms. For more information on gun violence solutions, visit our website at <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/gun-violence-solutions>.

Cities should prioritize funding for Homicide Review Commissions (HRC) and community violence intervention (CVI).

Homicide Review Commissions (HRC) are a public health and public safety partnership that seek to analyze patterns and trends in gun violence, gather community input, and generate recommendations for action. An HRC is comprised of three committees: a criminal justice review, a community-based review, and an executive committee review. The HRC is led by a public health researcher who serves as a neutral convener to review data, synthesize findings, and generate recommendations. Prior research of Milwaukee’s HRC found a 50% decline in homicide in the intervention districts compared to control districts.

Community violence interventions (CVI) are promising programs that aim to identify and support the small number of people at risk for violence by helping them peacefully resolve conflicts and providing them with wraparound mental health and social support. CVI is most effective when cities first establish an inter-agency process, like a Homicide Review Commission, to identify the drivers of violence within a city and deploy resources comprehensively to address these drivers of violence. Promising CVI initiatives that can help reduce violence include: violence interruption programs, group violence intervention strategies, violence reduction through blight remediation, hospital-based violence intervention programs, programs that use cognitive behavioral therapy, and programs that provide life coaching and case management to those at risk for violence.*

Gun violence prevention advocates, policy makers, and researchers should ensure that the policies they pursue to reduce gun violence are equitable and don’t unintentionally harm the very communities they aim to help. To do this, stakeholders should consider using a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) to examine policies through an equity lens, engage with impacted communities, anticipate the potential outcomes, and mitigate foreseeable risks. The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence and DC Justice Lab—in collaboration with five other organizations— have developed a Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tool specifically designed for gun violence.**

*Azrael D, Braga AA, & O’Brien ME. (2010). Developing the capacity to understand and prevent homicide: An evaluation of the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission. National Institute of Justice. Available:

<https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/developing-capacity-understand-and-prevent-homicide-evaluation-milwaukee> 16

**Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, DC Justice Lab, Cities United, March for Our Lives, Community Justice Action Fund, Consortium for Risk-Based Firearm Policy, and Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Prevention and Policy. (2022). Racial Equity Framework for Gun Violence Prevention. <https://efsgv.org/racialequity/>

Source: Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. (2022). *A Year in Review: 2020 Gun Deaths in the U.S.* Available: <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/gun-violence-solutions>.

Gun Violence Prevention Research

Evidence-based solutions from crime researcher Thomas Abt, *Bleeding Out: The Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence – and a Bold New plan for Peace in the Streets*

Abt underscores that approaches to urban gun violence should be focused, balanced, and fair. Focus is necessary because gun violence is highly concentrated among a very small percentage of the population and highly concentrated spatially even within neighborhoods with high rates of shootings. Balance refers to the use of social services and job opportunities along with effective enforcement that can deter gun violence. Fairness is important not only as a matter of justice, but research shows that compliance with laws and cooperation with law enforcement are highly dependent upon whether individuals view police and prosecutors as legitimate and fair.

Abt's ingredients of successful gun violence prevention can be seen in Oakland's efforts to reduce gun violence in a manner that promotes safety and justice. A cornerstone of Oakland's programs is its Ceasefire Strategy, which applies an approach known as Group Violence Intervention (GVI)—championed by the National Network for Safer Communities (NNSC)—that has an impressive track record of success.* GVI begins with an extensive data collection process by law enforcement to identify the small number of individuals and groups within a community that are most at risk for involvement in gun violence, and to track ongoing conflicts and other activities involving these individuals that may contribute to the violence. In group meetings with these high-risk individuals, known as “call ins,” law enforcement officials, community members, and social service providers communicate that gun violence must stop. While early iterations of the program model focused on law enforcement leaders warning individuals about the prospect of harsh sanctions against gun crime, the current program model focuses on “the moral voice of the community” to persuade those engaged in gun violence to turn away from it and on fairness in the application of the law. City officials make promises to provide immediate assistance to those individuals who need help turning away from violence (such as intensive mentoring, employment and training services, housing, and drug treatment). Street outreach workers engage those who are the focus of the intervention to support them in their efforts to turn away from violence. Law enforcement leaders promise to bring to justice those who perpetrate gun violence, dedicating a special unit to carry out this task. Importantly, the GVI approach also involves considerable engagement by police with the impacted communities, reconciliation for past injustices, and a commitment to police reforms demanded by the communities. This process generally results in fewer arrests for minor infractions and greater police focus on gun violence and the individuals perpetrating it.

*National Network For Safe Communities at John Jay College, “Group Violence Intervention,” <https://nnscommunities.org/strategies/group-violence-intervention>; and Anthony A. Braga, David Weisburd, and Brandon Turchan, “Focused Deterrence Strategies and Crime Control,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 17 (1) (2018): 205–250.

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The legitimacy of the effort to promote positive change is evidenced by swift and relevant assistance to address key determinants of violence, including lack of jobs and insecurity about immediate needs for housing and food among those at highest risk. The outreach and case management challenges are considerable but manageable under a city agency responsible for violence prevention within a mayor's office or health department. Researchers have estimated that Oakland's Ceasefire Strategy has contributed to a citywide 31 percent drop in gun homicides and a 20 percent drop in nonfatal shootings.* These findings are consistent with those from other studies of GVIs across a broad range of cities.** Unfortunately, with rare exceptions,** GVI evaluations have not reported the impact of the program on arrests and incarceration. As the NNSC has elevated the importance of policing and criminal justice reforms in its approach, future evaluations of GVI should measure the program's impacts on incarceration.

The New York City's Mayor's Office for Gun Violence Prevention (MOGVP) builds upon the Cure Violence model that attempts to prevent gun violence without the direct involvement of law enforcement. Violence interrupters and outreach workers who are credible messengers are hired by community-based organizations from impacted communities to build trust with those at highest risk, mediate disputes, promote nonviolent alternatives to conflicts, and facilitate connections to social services and job opportunities. New York's MOGVP established a crisis management system to ensure that necessary resources and services are delivered to high-risk individuals in a timely and supportive manner. Research that contrasted trends in gun violence in New York City's intervention neighborhoods with those of similar neighborhoods indicates that New York's program has reduced gun violence where it has been implemented.²⁰ The program was also associated with a significant reduction in the degree to which youth report that gun violence is justified under various scenarios.²¹ Cure Violence interventions have also yielded some success in reducing gun violence in selected neighborhoods in Chicago and Philadelphia.²² In Baltimore, the program's effects on gun violence have been inconsistent, with most sites failing to reduce gun violence.²³

*Darwin BondGraham, "Study Finds Significant Reduction in Gun Homicides in Oakland Via Ceasefire Strategy," August 22, 2018, <https://eastbayexpress.com/study-finds-significant-reduction-in-gun-homicides-in-oakland-via-ceasefire-strategy-2-1/>

**Ibid

***Caterina G. Roman, Nathan W. Link, Jordan M. Hyatt, et al., "Assessing the Gang-Level and Community-Level Effects of the Philadelphia Focused Deterrence Strategy," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 15 (4) (2018): 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-018-9333-7>

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Alcohol abuse is an important contributor to interpersonal violence and specifically violence involving firearms.²⁵ One study found that an individual's history of alcohol-related offenses predicted both future crime committed with firearms and prior violent offending.²⁶ Studies have consistently shown that the density of alcohol outlets is positively associated with violent crime after controlling for other neighborhood conditions.²⁷ Thus, alcohol abuse is an appropriate target for interventions to reduce gun violence. There is a robust research literature on the effects of alcohol-focused interventions on violence; unfortunately, these studies rarely isolate violent incidents involving firearms.

Local restrictions on the number and density of alcohol outlets in neighborhoods as well as enhanced regulatory oversight of alcohol outlets have been shown to reduce violence.²⁸ Shootings sometimes occur in response to altercations at bars and nightclubs. Restrictions on alcohol serving hours have been found to reduce violence, including lethal gun violence.²⁹ While increased taxes on alcohol reduce violence, they must be substantial to achieve moderate protective effects.³⁰ There are, of course, considerable political challenges to enacting tighter regulation over alcohol sales, yet the public health benefits of these actions extend beyond violence into fewer injuries and fatalities due to motor vehicle injuries. Indeed, a community intervention based on successful advocacy for changing alcohol laws and enhanced enforcement of alcohol laws that was primarily aimed at preventing deaths and injuries from drunk driving also had a strong protective effect in reducing injuries from assaults.³¹

Other promising models for community gun violence prevention include Los Angeles's Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program, which invests in efforts to promote alternatives to gangs and established a system for coordinated and timely responses to prevent retaliatory gang violence by street outreach peacemakers and law enforcement. GRYD's incident response system has greatly reduced retaliatory shootings involving gang members.²⁴ Implementation of Operation Peacemaker Fellowship, now known as Advance Peace—a highly targeted program that invests in the health, well-being, and personal development of those involved in violence, including modest stipends to participants who meet program objectives—has contributed to a 55 percent decrease in gun violence in Richmond, California.

*

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Gun homicide tends to occur in highly concentrated areas. One analysis, for instance, found that in 2015, 26% of all firearm homicides in the United States occurred in census tracts that contained only 1.5% of the population.*

The CDC does not provide census tract gun fatality data and therefore our analysis relies on the county level as the smallest geographic area to analyze. Because county size varies significantly within and between states, data at this level does not consistently portray the most accurate representation of the local areas most impacted by gun violence. Data at the census tract level is needed to truly understand concentrations of gun violence.

Despite this, even an examination of 2020 county level data can illustrate geographic disparities of firearm victimization in the U.S. For example, in Maryland from 2016–2020, someone living in Baltimore City was 30 times more likely to die by firearm than someone living 40 miles away in Montgomery County.**

Geographic disparities in gun victimization help to shed light on the upstream factors that often contribute to violence, including poverty, lack of opportunity, and concentrated disadvantage. The example above illustrates this, as Montgomery County is among the wealthiest counties in the country based on the median household income; and in contrast, one in five residents in Baltimore City live in poverty.***

Understanding the geographic disparities of gun violence, and how it concentrates in our most disadvantaged communities, is vital in developing effective policy solutions

*Aufrechtig A, Beckett L, Diehm J, & Lartey J. (2017). Want to fix gun violence in America? Go local. The Guardian. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2017/jan/09/special-report-fixing-gun-violence-in-america>

**Baltimore City is an independent city and thus classified by the United States Census Bureau as a county equivalent.

***QuickFacts: Montgomery County, Maryland; Baltimore city, Maryland. (2021). United States Census Bureau.

Available:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/montgomerycountymaryland,baltimorecitymaryland/PST045221>

***Income in the past 12 months (in 2019 inflation-adjusted dollars). (2019). United States Census Bureau. Available:

<https://data.census.gov/>

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Income%20and%20Poverty&g=0100000US%240500000&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1902>

Gun Violence Prevention Research

The following are excerpts from the Brookings article, *Mapping Gun Violence: A closer look at the intersection between place and gun homicides in four cities*

“To combat gun violence, invest in the community infrastructure that keeps neighborhoods safe”

“Rather than a widespread dispersal of gun violence within cities, the increases in gun homicides are largely concentrated in disinvested and structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods that had high rates of gun violence to begin with. This geographic concentration is a persistent challenge, not a new one—and it requires targeted solutions to improve outcomes in disinvested places rather than reverting to the old “tough on crime” playbook.”

“...each city’s gun homicide increases were driven predominantly by increases in neighborhoods where gun violence has long been a persistent fixture of daily life, alongside systemic disinvestment, segregation, and economic inequality. These patterns point to the longer-term need to address the place-based factors that influence violence and invest in the critical community infrastructure that has not only been proven to make communities safer, but can also help them thrive.”

“When we looked more granularly at gun homicides within these cities, we found that the burden of gun violence is unequally shared. Some communities are relatively untouched, while others live under the threat of gun violence on a regular basis, alongside systemic disinvestment, segregation, and economic inequity. Notably, poverty alone was not a predictive factor for high rates of gun homicides, but rather the intersection between poverty, racial segregation, and systemic disinvestment.”

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The following are excerpts from the Brookings article, *Want to reduce violence? Invest in place*.

...evidence-based community violence interventions (such as violence interrupters) and other community-based programs such as increasing summer employment opportunities, counseling availability, and wraparound services for youth living in disinvested areas.

...what's missing from that plan is a mechanism to encourage "focused investment in the high-risk places that allow violence to thrive." In other words, there are community interventions to treat the symptoms of violence, but not to transform the neighborhood conditions that create it.

A HOLISTIC LOOK AT PLACE-BASED DRIVERS OF—AND SOLUTIONS TO—VIOLENCE

A look at four key dimensions of community well-being can inform our understanding of how place-based factors influence violent crime and, in turn, how a holistic approach to addressing these factors can provide promising non-carceral alternatives for community safety.

1. The built environment (or physical conditions) of a neighborhood is strongly associated with rates of violence.

The most consistent evidence on the relationship between violence and place exists in the realm of housing and vacancies, with numerous studies finding that the renovation of housing, vacant buildings, land, and lots in disinvested communities significantly reduces violent crime rates.[14] For instance, in Philadelphia, researchers found that structural repairs to homes of low-income owners in majority-Black neighborhoods were associated with a 21.9% reduction in total crime.[15] Another study in Philadelphia found that efforts to transform and clean vacant lots in high-poverty neighborhoods led to a 29% reduction in violent crime.[16]

Evidence also finds that other improvements to the public realm—such as urban greening and tree canopy programs in urban neighborhoods—reduce violent crime, particularly adolescent gun violence.[17] In one Philadelphia neighborhood, a population-based case-controlled study conducted between 2008 and 2014 found that the presence of street lighting, painted sidewalks, public transportation, and parks was associated with at least 76% decreased odds of a homicide.[18]

These findings point to the need for urban planning, design, and placemaking practitioners to understand the intersections between gun violence and the physical attributes of a community—and to invest in safe streets, parks, and vacant lot remediation not only as a tool to create great places, but to support safe and thriving communities. Some communities, such as Brownsville, Brooklyn, have already begun to integrate holistic understandings of safety within their placemaking practices—engaging young people to map their levels of safety in different places within their neighborhood and launch creative placemaking projects to promote an overall safer neighborhood. The city of Milwaukee engaged in a placemaking process to promote public safety and social cohesion through extending a neighborhood trail to connect residents of Harambee (a predominantly Black and low-income neighborhood) and Riverwest (one of the Milwaukee's most racially and economically diverse neighborhoods) to arts and outdoor space.

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A HOLISTIC LOOK AT PLACE-BASED DRIVERS OF—AND SOLUTIONS TO—VIOLENCE (continued)

2. Economic disadvantage within a community—including income inequality—contributes to higher rates of violence.

Aside from the physical conditions of a neighborhood, a place's economic health has a significant influence on violent crime. Numerous studies have found that neighborhoods with higher poverty and unemployment rates (often due to systemic disinvestment and public and private sector abandonment) have higher rates of violent crime, and that income inequality within a neighborhood is associated with higher rates of violence.[19] For example, Brookings research demonstrates that boys born into poverty are over 20 times more likely to be incarcerated than those born to wealthy families, and that economically isolated neighborhoods worsen these trends. In Los Angeles, for instance, the incarceration rate for people who grew up in Westwood, Santa Monica, or Sierra Madre (wealthier neighborhoods) is essentially zero, whereas in neighborhoods in South L.A. or Compton (more economically and racially segregated neighborhoods), the rate is close to 7%.[20]

But the directionality between a place's economy and rates of violence goes both ways; by enhancing economic opportunity and reducing inequality within neighborhoods, places can significantly reduce crime. For instance, evidence shows that youth workforce development and employment programs, including summer jobs programs, can reduce youth involvement in violence by as much as 35% or 45%.[21] Universal basic income pilots have also been found to reduce crime and create numerous other community benefits.[22] This indicates a strong role for city leaders and economic development stakeholders to increase resources (including leveraging the influx of American Rescue Plan funding) in youth programming and workforce development efforts in those neighborhoods most impacted by crime.

Some cities have already begun to see progress in reallocating criminal legal system funding to workforce development in high-crime neighborhoods. Indianapolis, for instance, revamped its community safety grants to fund community organizations in its highest-crime neighborhoods, with funds for job training, mentoring, and housing programs. Philadelphia also expanded its violence prevention efforts to fund employment and career support among other community-based investments. Building Blocks DC, which provides grants for community-based organizations to lead skill-building and neighborhood revitalization efforts in Washington, D.C. neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence, is another promising example.

However, for communities to see truly transformative results, other sectors and city agencies—not just those that are explicitly violence-prevention-based—will need to come together to address the root causes of violence and poverty, not only through workforce development but also through coordinated efforts to enhance economic opportunity and connectivity within and between neighborhoods.

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A HOLISTIC LOOK AT PLACE-BASED DRIVERS OF—AND SOLUTIONS TO—VIOLENCE (continued)

3. Social connections between neighbors play a critical role in either mitigating or worsening violence.

Just as the physical and economic characteristics of a neighborhood shape rates of violence, so too do rates of social cohesion among residents. A robust body of evidence demonstrates the relationship between social cohesion and violent crime, with neighborhood attachment (residents' feeling of belonging to a neighborhood) and social cohesion associated with lower violent crime rates.[23]

The evidence linking social relationships and community cohesion with reduced violence forms the basis for many community violence intervention programs (like those uplifted in the Biden administration's plan). One particularly successful example is Advance Peace, a violence prevention program that hires formally incarcerated residents to build relationships with the small number of people responsible for gun violence in communities. The program contributed to a 20% drop in gun homicides in Stockton, Calif. between 2018 and 2020 and a 22% drop in Sacramento between 2018 and 2019.[24] Similar "peace-keeping" or "violence-interrupting" programs have contributed to significant declines in violence in high-crime neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Baltimore. As community leaders involved in Minneapolis' violence interruption program wrote in *The Washington Post*, "We know our young people, and they know us...We represent one of the strongest bastions of moral authority left in these areas: the Black church. We draw on the power of congregation—of family, of friends and of community—to try to interrupt the violence."

Research has also found that increasing the number of spaces for informal contact between neighbors is linked to a greater sense of safety for people in urban areas.[25] This speaks to the importance of investing in "third places"—such as parks, cafes, community centers, and restaurants—within areas that disproportionately lack access to them as a means to further the social cohesion that helps prevent crime. Some cities are already testing innovative practices to transform their community spaces into places for healing and community support; Baltimore, for instance, is training librarians to deescalate conflict and support residents experiencing trauma from high crime rates and violence, in hopes of ensuring that libraries remain safe city spaces.

Gun Violence Prevention Research

A HOLISTIC LOOK AT PLACE-BASED DRIVERS OF—AND SOLUTIONS TO—VIOLENCE (continued)

4. Civic infrastructure—particularly grassroots organizations—will be critical in combatting violence.

Nearly every non-carceral place-based solution to violence requires the leadership and dedication of civic and community-based organizations to succeed. As researchers at the Urban Institute recently pointed out, community-based organizations have long been testing “alternative, bottoms-up” solutions to safety in high-crime geographies—relying on their connections and community relationships to reimagine the relationship between place and violence.[26] Examples of these grassroots efforts are plentiful, and the researchers and activists behind Interrupting Criminalization and Project Nia are assembling a community-sourced data base of such community-led safety efforts. The challenge, however, is that while city resources are plentiful for increasing police presence in high-crime neighborhoods, cities routinely fail to fund and support the community infrastructure (like these grassroots organizations) that stabilize communities.

Aside from the importance of community-based and civic organizations in leading anti-violence programs, research indicates that the mere presence of community-based organizations within a neighborhood leads to reductions in violent crime. Princeton sociologist Patrick Sharkey found that in any given city with 100,000 people, “every new organization formed to confront violence and build stronger neighborhoods led to about a 1% drop in violent crime and murder.”[27] Sharkey contends that community-based institutions driven by residents and local organizations are effective in reducing violence, but the country has never provided them with the same resources that it does to law enforcement or the criminal legal system. The Biden-Harris administration is moving in the right direction to change this through increased funding for community-based organizations, but it will not be sufficient unless cities fundamentally change their valuation of community-led safety efforts.