Achievement Gap

By nearly every measure, education continues to be the area with disparities and a major contributor to long-term impact. Black students, as well as special education students, are suspended at much higher rates than white students who are not in special education programs. As of the 2018–2019 school year, Fairfield County school districts are more segregated than in previous years with 45 percent of the county’s students in grades K-12 living in either the six wealthiest school districts or 52 percent white. Based on the state’s standardized assessment for academic achievement, English proficiency for non-white students in 2018 was 38 percent compared to 76 percent for white students in Fairfield County.

Civic Participation

Measures of civic participation reveal that countywide there is a high degree of trust in neighbors, good relations with government, and a feeling of safety in communities. While government responsiveness is rated at 77 percent in Greenwich, Fairfield residents rated government responsiveness of 59 percent with Norwalk, Stamford, and Stratford reporting 48 percent, 41 percent, and 33 percent, respectively.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

READ the full Community Wellbeing Index 2019 Report.
ANALYZE the data.
ADVOCATE for the issues that resonate the most with you, your organization, and your community.
SHARE with your friends, colleagues, and elected officials.
COMMIT to implementing one or more of our recommendations, and let us know!

The Region We Serve

Fairfield County’s Community Foundation serves a vital and inclusive community where every individual has the opportunity to thrive. We are excited to share highlights from the Fairfield County Community Wellbeing Index 2019 to inspire reflection and dialogue.

Produced in partnership with DataHaven, the Community Wellbeing Index helps us better understand the complex issues facing our neighborhoods, towns, and county, as well as where we are headed. By focusing on the interconnections between quality of life, our economic competitiveness, and the social fabric of our communities, we can better appreciate our successes, acknowledge our challenges, and improve our ability to craft a strategic plan for a brighter future.

This summary highlights key information found in the full Community Wellbeing Index 2019 Report, which is located at FCCFoundation.org/cwi2019. Below are action steps to consider as you read.

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THE REGION WE SERVE

To download the full report go to FCCFoundation.org/cwi2019.
A Changing County
Fairfield County has experienced significant population changes that provide context to the challenges the county and the state will face in the coming years. Recent decades have seen an increase among children and younger adults, while simultaneously the immigrant population has grown throughout Fairfield County (22 percent). This immigrant population is concentrated in urban centers such as Stamford (44 percent), Bridgeport (39 percent), and Danbury (31 percent). The county also faces an aging population. Projections through 2035 show that the over-65 age population will increase by 11 percent compared to a meager 4 percent for people ages 18-34.

Regional Housing Affordability
Fairfield County continues to be an area where the cost of homeownership is high and a large percentage of renters are cost-burdened. In 2017, the median home value in Fairfield County was $417,800, nearly $150,000 above the state median. Nearly 30 percent of the renter households are severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 50 percent of their household income on housing.

The lack of housing affordability is nearly equally as pervasive in the wealthier cities as it is in the poorer cities. For example, in 2017 severe cost-burden rates rose to 24 percent in Greenwich compared to 26 percent in Danbury, 28 percent in Fairfield, and 34 percent in Stratford. The combined rental severe cost-burden rates of the six wealthiest towns rose to 23 percent for the same year.

Economic Inequality
Wage and wealth gaps based on race and gender remain. White men continue to outpace their peers with a median income of nearly $100,000 in 2016 compared to that of $67,000 for white women, $42,000 for Black women, and $40,000 for Latino men. Nationally, white adults age 60 to 70 have a net worth, or wealth, that is seven times greater than that of Black adults of the same age. These disparities result in rising rates of low income — defined as less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level — especially among minority children. In Fairfield County, the percentage of low-income children is 22 percent compared to 21 percent for all races and 18 percent in Bridgeport.
To download the full report, go to FCCFoundation.org/cwi2019

Fairfield County Community Wellbeing Index 2019

Fairfield County's Commu nity Foundation envisions a vital and inclusive communi ty where every individual has the opportunity to thrive. But without reliable data, we cannot measure our progress towards that vision. We are excited to share highlights from the Fairfield County Community Wellbeing Index 2019 to inspire reflection and dialogue.

Produced in partnership with DataHaven, the Community Wellbeing Index helps us better understand the complex issues facing our neighborhoods, towns, and county, as well as where we are headed. By focusing on the interrelationships between quality of life, health, and the economic competitiveness of Fairfield County, we can better appreciate our successes, acknowledge our challenges, and improve our ability to craft a strategic plan for a brighter future.

This summary highlights key information found in the full Community Wellbeing Index 2019 Report, which is located at FCCFoundation.org/cwi2019. Below are action steps to consider as you read.

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**THE REGION WE SERVE**

- Bethel
- Black Rock
- Blackstone
- Brookfield
- Danbury
- Darien
- Easton
- Fairfield
- Greenwich
- Groton
- Hamden
- New Canaan
- New Fairfield
- New Milford
- Norwalk
- Redding
- Ridgefield
- Shelton
- Sherman
- Stratford
- Trumbull
- Westport
- Wilton
- Weston
- Westhill

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- **Civic Participation**
  - Measures of civic participation reveal that countywide, residents feel a strong sense of trust in neighbors, good relations with government, and a feeling of safety in communities. While government responsiveness is rated at 77 percent in Greenwich, Fairfield residents rated government responsiveness of 53 percent with Norwalk, Stratford, and Stratford reporting 48 percent, 47 percent, and 33 percent, respectively.

- **Achievement Gap**
  - By nearly every measure, education continues to be the area with disparities that are widest and have the greatest long-term impact. Black students, as well as special education students, are suspended at much higher rates than white students who are not in special education programs. As of the 2018–2019 school year, Fairfield County school districts are more segregated than in previous years with 53 percent of the county's students in grades K-12 being white, while the wealthiest school districts are 82 percent white. Based on the state's standardized assessments for academic achievement, English proficiency for non-white students in 2018 was 38 percent compared to 76 percent for white students in Fairfield County.

- **Fairfield County's Wealthiest School Districts are Much Less Diverse Than the Larger Cities**
  - Six years after graduating high school, only 58% of Fairfield County public school students have a college degree.
  - Percentage of eligible voters who voted in elections, with Fairfield County's highest and lowest town rates, 2016-2018.
  - Voter turnout is high for national and state elections, but much lower in municipal ones.
A Changing County

Fairfield County has experienced significant population changes that provide context to the challenges the county and the state will face in the coming years. Racial diversity has increased among children and younger adults, while simultaneously the immigrant population has grown throughout Fairfield County (22 percent). This immigrant population is concentrated in urban centers such as Stamford (35 percent), Danbury (31 percent), and Bridgeport (30 percent). The county also faces an aging population. Projections through 2035 show that the over-65 age population will increase by 11 percent, compared to a meager 4 percent for people ages 18-34.

Regional Housing Affordability

Fairfield County continues to be an area where the cost of homeownership is high and a large percentage of renters are cost-burdened. In 2017, the median home value in Fairfield County was $417,800, nearly $150,000 above the state median. Nearly 30 percent of the renter households are severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 50 percent of their household income on housing. The lack of housing affordability is nearly equally as pervasive in the wealthier cities as it is in the poorer cities. For example, in 2017 severe cost-burden rates rose to 24 percent in Greenwich compared to 26 percent in Danbury, 28 percent in Fairfield, and 34 percent in Stratford. The combined rental severe cost-burden rate of the six wealthiest towns rose to 23 percent for the same year.

Economic Inequality

Wage and wealth gaps based on race and gender remain. White men continue to outpace their peers with a median income of nearly $100,000 in 2016 compared to that of $67,000 for white women, $42,000 for Black women, and $40,000 for Latino men. Nationally, white adults age 60 to 70 have a net worth, or wealth, that is seven times greater than that of Black adults of the same age. These disparities result in rising rates of low-income status — defined as less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level — especially among minority children. In Fairfield, the percentage of low-income children is 36 percent compared to 39 percent in Danbury and 64 percent in Bridgeport.
Fairfield County has experienced significant population changes that provide context to the challenges the county and the state will face in the coming years. Racial diversity has increased among children and younger adults, while simultaneously the immigrant population has grown throughout Fairfield County (22 percent). This immigrant population is concentrated in urban centers such as Stamford (35 percent), Danbury (31 percent), and Bridgeport (28 percent). The county also faces an aging population. Projections through 2035 show that the over-65 age population will increase by 11 percent compared to a staggered increase for people ages 18 to 34.

Fairfield County continues to be an area where the cost of homeownership is high and a large percentage of renters are cost-burdened. In 2017, the median home value in Fairfield County was $417,800, nearly $150,000 above the state median. Nearly 30 percent of the renter households are severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 50 percent of their household income on housing.

Economic Inequality
Wage and wealth gaps based on race and gender remain. White men continue to outpace their peers with a median income of nearly $100,000 in 2016 compared to that of $67,000 for white women, $42,000 for Black women, and $40,000 for Latino men. Nationally, white adults age 60 to 70 have a net worth, or wealth, that is seven times greater than that of Black adults of the same age. These disparities result in rising rates of low-income status—defined as less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level—especially among minority children. In Fairfield County, the percentage of low-income children is 20 percent compared to 29 percent in Connecticut and 37 percent in Bridgeport.
Achievement Gap

By nearly every measure, education continues to be the area with disparities that are wide enough to be the greatest long-term impact. Black students, as well as special education students, are suspended at much higher rates than white students who are not in special education programs. As of the 2018–2019 school year, Fairfield County school districts are more segregated than in previous years with 53 percent of the county's students in grades K–12 being white, while the six wealthiest school districts are 82 percent white. Based on the state’s standardized assessment for academic achievement, English proficiency for non-white students in 2018 was 38 percent compared to 76 percent for white students in Fairfield County.

In six years after graduating high school, only 58% of Fairfield County public school students have a college degree. Fairfield County’s schools have wide achievement gaps by race, per 100 students, 2018-2019:

- FC = 91%
- FC = 9%
- FC = 61%

SBAC: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Civic Participation

Measures of civic participation reveal that countywide there is a high degree of trust in neighbors, good relations with government, and a feeling of safety in communities. While government responsiveness is rated at 77 percent in Greenwich, Fairfield residents rated government responsiveness of 59 percent with Norwalk, Stratford, and Bridgeport reporting 48 percent, 47 percent, and 33 percent, respectively.