



CENTER FOR
ADVANCING
OPPORTUNITY

THE STATE OF OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA

Understanding Barriers & Identifying Solutions

2019



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The goal is to better understand barriers to opportunity in America's fragile communities by methodically studying the experiences and opinions of those who live in them.

About This Report

This second report on the State of Opportunity in America is based on a research initiative launched in 2017 when the Center for Advancing Opportunity (CAO) was created through a partnership between Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), the Charles Koch Foundation and Koch Industries, and in collaboration with Gallup, to give voice to members of “fragile communities” (FCs) across the country.

The goal is to help fulfill CAO’s mission of moving people living in fragile communities from promise to prosperity. CAO addresses that mission through three pillars of focus: ensuring all students have access to quality education, identifying barriers to entrepreneurship and job growth and supporting research to better understand and solve challenges within the criminal justice system. CAO has made investments to establish three research centers at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): 1) The Center for the Study of Economic Mobility at Winston Salem State University, 2) The Center for Justice Research at Texas Southern University and 3) The Center for Educational Opportunity at Albany State University.

Findings in the current report are based on the second representative survey of 5,784 residents in fragile communities in 47 states across the U.S.

According to CAO, fragile communities in America are characterized by high proportions of residents struggling in their daily lives and possessing limited opportunities for social mobility. This conception is closely tied to the literature on concentrated poverty and disadvantage that became prominent by the mid-1980s. Although people are not born fragile, too many are born into situations that make a transition from poverty to prosperity a daunting endeavor. Findings in this report come from people living in such circumstances, who identify barriers and offer solutions; as such, the report is important to stakeholders who are interested in an opportunity agenda.

This year’s report also presents the initial phase in the creation of an “Opportunity Index” that will allow researchers and policymakers to compare residents’ perceptions of specific factors that block or facilitate their access to opportunity across communities and over time. This first phase of index development has focused on residents’ perceptions of and experiences with their local police and the criminal justice system.

Contributing to a better understanding of the current challenges within the U.S. criminal justice system is part of CAO’s core mission, and a topic of great interest to our faculty partners. In particular, racial discrimination in policing and sentencing procedures has received considerable attention from scholars in recent years. Further, CAO was also a thought partner to federal administrators and lawmakers during a process that resulted in the 2018 enactment of the First Step Act, the most significant criminal justice reform legislation in a generation. We hope others will find value in the index and implement it within their own communities to measure progress on this important issue.

In the coming year, CAO and Gallup will continue to study the perceptions and experiences most strongly related to FC residents’ ability to realize their potential, and their overall confidence that they can improve their lives. Detailed analysis of data related to education and employment, combined with the criminal justice scores presented in the current report, provide stakeholders with a meaningful tool to use in designing interventions that help Americans struggling to find paths to upward mobility. We hope such efforts, in turn, result in a stronger economy and happier, more fulfilling lives for millions.

Key Findings

ECONOMIC STATUS

- **Many FC residents struggle to fulfill basic, day-to-day needs for themselves and their families, making it more difficult to pursue longer-term goals such as furthering their education or starting a business.** About four in 10 FC residents (41%) say there were times in the past year when they did not have enough money to buy food they or their families needed, vs. 23% of American adults overall in 2018.
- **About four in 10 FC residents have received Medicaid benefits in the past 12 months, while two in 10 say they have received disability benefits.** Black residents are more likely than whites or Hispanics to have received these health-related services; correspondingly, they are more likely to say they have been diagnosed with high blood pressure or diabetes.
- Among FC residents, blacks, Hispanics and women are particularly likely to report that they are not employed and have been actively looking for employment in the past four weeks. Almost one in four black women in FCs (24%) are looking for work.

CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- **Though black and Hispanic FC residents are less likely than whites to feel people like them are treated fairly by their local police or legal system, they are *more* likely than whites to say they would like the police to spend more time in their area.**
- **Half of black FC residents (50%) say they know “some” or “a lot” of people who have been unfairly sent to jail** – a far higher proportion than the 17% of white residents or 28% of Hispanic residents who give one of these responses. Further, 60% of black residents say they know some or a lot of people who have stayed in jail because they didn’t have enough bail money, as do 47% of Hispanic residents and 36% of white residents.
- **In the initial results from CAO’s new Criminal Justice Index (CJI), 18% of FC residents are categorized as “trusting” of their local police and justice system, while 45% are “skeptical” and 37% are “distrusting.”** As results from the individual items indicate, black residents are by far the most likely to be categorized as distrusting at 52%, followed by Hispanic residents at 34% and then white residents at 21%. Among the three cities oversampled for the study, distrust of local law enforcement is most prevalent in Chicago’s FCs, at 51%.

EDUCATION

- **Among FC residents with children under 18 in their households, less than half say they are “extremely satisfied” (9%) or “satisfied” (37%) with the quality of public K-12 schools in their area.** Among those living in Birmingham and Chicago’s FCs, the total satisfied figure drops to about one-third (32% and 35%, respectively).
- **Though the vast majority of FC residents say a college education is “very important” (62%) or “important” (22%), less than a third (29%) agree that all people in their area have access to an affordable college education.** This year’s survey also asked residents more specifically about their satisfaction with the availability of high-quality community college programs in their area; overall, 42% are “extremely satisfied” or “satisfied.” However, these results vary widely by city; among Chicago FC residents, just 25% are extremely satisfied or satisfied.

BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

- **Nine percent of FC residents say they are planning to start their own business in the next 12 months,** with black (13%) and Hispanic (9%) residents more likely than white residents (4%) to respond this way. However, among residents who say they are planning to start a business, 38% say they have the financial and non-financial resources to do so.
- **About one-third of FC residents who are not currently planning to start a business (34%) say they have considered becoming a business owner in the past but decided not to.** When asked why they decided not to, more than three-fourths (78%) say they do not have enough personal savings to start a business. For many FC residents, taking out a long-term business loan is either not possible or represents a prohibitive risk. Most say they do not have a person or place from which they could borrow \$500 for at least three months (34%) or that they would not consider taking such a loan (27%).

HEALTH

- **Almost half of FC residents (46%) say they have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, vs. 28% of Americans overall.** FC residents are also significantly more likely than U.S. adults overall to say they have been diagnosed with high cholesterol, diabetes or depression.
- **Job-seeking FC residents who say they have any of the five long-term conditions asked about (high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, depression or cancer) are far more likely than those who do not have any to say health problems are their biggest challenge in finding a job. More than one-third of job-seekers with any of these conditions say their health is their biggest challenge, vs. just 7% of those who say they have none of these health problems.**

Introduction

The State of Opportunity in America report is based on a nationwide survey of Americans in areas of concentrated poverty, referred to as fragile communities. The research is designed to study confluence of conditions in certain areas that makes it difficult for residents to identify and pursue avenues of opportunity that allow them to build better lives for themselves and their families. Such areas have complex challenges and can be found in rural areas such as Appalachia, dense urban neighborhoods like those in Chicago’s South Side, and, increasingly, suburban areas as the renovation of many inner cities has forced lower-income residents to relocate.

The current report updates a broad range of findings from the inaugural study conducted in 2017, and also spotlights new questions and data on residents’ perceptions of and experiences with the criminal justice system in their communities. Recognizing that flaws in the U.S. criminal justice system represent a key barrier to opportunity for many FC residents, CAO made criminal justice one of its three primary pillars for research and collaboration — along with education and entrepreneurship — when it was established in 2017.

Criminal justice received considerable attention from President Donald Trump and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle in 2018, resulting in a landmark reform bill, the First Step Act, signed into law on December 21, 2018. The push for reform has united policymakers from across the political spectrum who recognize that high incarceration rates for relatively minor offences represent a formidable barrier to opportunity in many communities, as well as a burden on taxpayers.

The inaugural Fragile Communities survey in 2017 included residents’ perceptions of crime and law enforcement as a main topic, an area which was expanded on in the 2018 study. The current study also includes new items that offer a more detailed look at health and access to education in America’s most disadvantaged communities.

The State of Opportunity in America report is based on a nationwide survey of Americans in areas of concentrated poverty, referred to as fragile communities.

METHODOLOGY

The initial qualitative phase of the fragile communities project consisted of in-depth interviews with participants in **Birmingham, Alabama, Fresno, California** and **Chicago, Illinois** to develop a preliminary picture of how residents in low-income areas view their own circumstances and the options available to them. The resulting insights helped inform the development of the quantitative questionnaire for the inaugural Fragile Communities survey in 2017.

The current report is based on results from the second survey, conducted July–September 2018. The questionnaire was mailed to 36,000 FC residents across the U.S., including both urban and rural areas, to get 5,784 completed surveys. For the purposes of this study, the following four criteria were used to select census tracts eligible for inclusion in the sample domain:

1. Employment

- Unemployment rate
- Percentage of working-age adults not in the labor force

2. Poverty rate

- Percentage of residents with household income below the poverty level
- Percentage of residents with household income below twice the poverty level

3. Education refers to the percentage of adults with a college degree

4. Composite score on index measuring five interrelated aspects of well-being: sense of purpose, social relationships, financial security, relationship to community and physical health.

U.S. census tracts were divided into quartiles using recent data in each of the four domains. To be included in the sample, a census tract had to be in the worst-performing quartile in at least three of the four. Thus, U.S. residents in this report are more likely than average Americans to be poor and have less formal education, and more likely to be jobless. Approximately one out of seven census tracts in the U.S. was selected for the study. At least one tract was selected in every state except North Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming.

As in the inaugural 2017 study, a larger share of surveys were gathered from FCs in the same urban areas that were chosen for the initial qualitative study – Birmingham, Chicago and Fresno – to provide for more detailed analysis of subgroups in these communities. These three communities were selected in part because they represent distinct geographic regions in the U.S., each with its own economic and historical influences, as well as different racial and ethnic compositions. For this report, residents of FCs in the northern and central Appalachian region, who are predominantly white, were also distinguished to provide another important point of comparison.

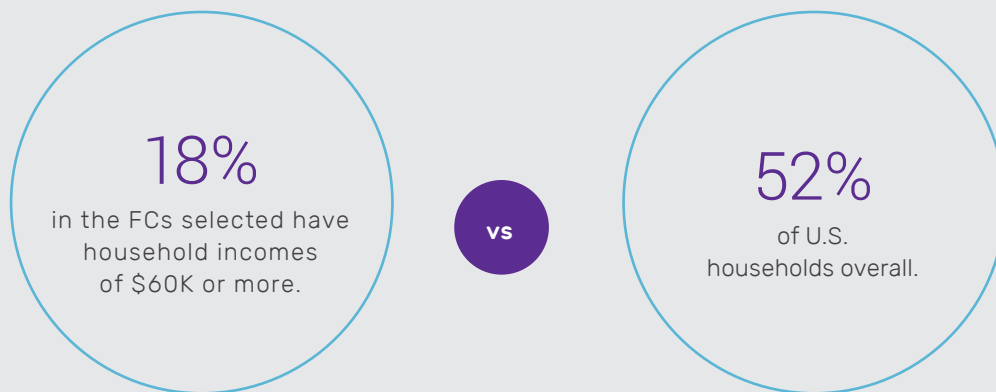
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Snapshot of Fragile Communities

The fragile communities included in the study are selected based on low average socioeconomic indicators (including income and educational attainment) and low wellbeing indicators among their residents. Overall, 18% in the FCs selected have household incomes of \$60K or more, vs. 52% of U.S. households overall (according to the most recent Census data). About one in eight FC residents (12%) have a bachelor's degree or more, vs. one-third (33%) of the total U.S. population.

The relationship between race and poverty in the U.S. is reflected in the high proportion of minority residents in the country's FCs. While two-thirds of Americans overall (67%) are white, just 29% of FC residents are white, while two-thirds are black (37%) or Hispanic (30%).

The spotlighted cities/regions in this report vary substantially in the racial makeup of their FCs. The vast majority of residents in Birmingham (87%) are black, while most of those in Fresno (55%) are Hispanic and most in the Appalachian region (80%) are white. Most residents of Chicago's FCs are black (57%), though one-third (34%) are Hispanic; relatively few (8%) are white. There are also notable differences in terms of income and education; for example, postsecondary degrees are least common in Birmingham and Appalachia.



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FRAGILE COMMUNITY RESIDENTS, 2018

		TOTAL U.S. (N=5,784)	BIRMINGHAM (N=696)	CHICAGO (N=569)	FRESNO (N=751)	APPALACHIA (N=455)
Education	Less than high school	13%	11%	12%	12%	12%
	High school graduate	33%	35%	35%	30%	35%
	Technical/Vocational school	12%	10%	10%	13%	14%
	Some college but no degree	20%	21%	16%	20%	19%
	Associate degree	9%	14%	7%	6%	12%
	Bachelor's or more	12%	9%	21%	19%	9%
Household income	\$23,999 or less	40%	51%	40%	37%	37%
	\$24,000 to \$34,999	13%	15%	9%	13%	11%
	\$35,000 to \$59,999	20%	17%	19%	22%	23%
	\$60,000 to \$89,999	10%	5%	10%	11%	13%
	\$90,000 or more	8%	4%	12%	10%	14%
Race/Ethnicity	Whites	29%	9%	8%	21%	80%
	Blacks	37%	87%	57%	11%	13%
	Hispanics	30%	2%	34%	55%	6%
	Asians	3%	0%	1%	12%	0%

Note: 2017 Census data used for income results; education and race/ethnicity data from Gallup general population survey, December 2018

Overall, FC residents are evenly divided between those who own (49%) and rent (51%) their homes. By comparison, Census data from the third quarter of 2018 showed almost two-thirds of Americans overall (64%) own their homes. A slight majority of FC residents (55%) live in detached single-family houses, while 24% live in apartment buildings, 9% live in single-family houses attached to one or more other houses and 6% live in mobile homes. Apartment living is much more common in Chicago, at 48%, reflecting the densely populated environments in which most of the city's FCs are found. Half of FC residents nationwide (50%) say they are satisfied with the availability of good, affordable housing in their area, but that figure is lower among apartment dwellers (42%) than those who live in single-family homes (53%).

As in the 2017 study, the 2018 survey finds that most people in America's FCs are long-term residents; 41% say they have lived there for at least 20 years, while an additional 20% have been there between 10 and 19 years. About one in four (24%) have lived in their area for four years or less. White residents have a particularly long average tenure; 53% say they have lived in their area for 20 years or more, vs. 39% of black residents and 32% of Hispanic residents.

LIFE EVALUATIONS

The survey tracks several basic indicators of subjective wellbeing, including a numeric assessment of the overall quality of their lives on a zero-to-10 "ladder" scale where zero represents the worst possible life for them and 10 the best. FC residents are first asked to rate their current lives on that scale and then asked to predict where on the scale their lives will be five years from now.

The average current-life rating given by FC residents in the 2018 survey is 6.2, similar to the 6.1 average recorded in the inaugural 2017 study, and below the 6.9 recorded among Americans overall in 2018. Correspondingly, the average FC rating of 7.6 for life in five years is similar to the 7.4 found in 2017.

Notably, though the average current-life rating for black FC residents is somewhat lower than the average for white residents (6.1 vs. 6.3), their average future-life ratings is half a scale point higher than that of white residents (7.8 vs. 7.3), suggesting black residents tend to feel their lives are likely to improve in the coming years. Hispanic residents' average future-life rating is identical to that of black residents at 7.8.

LIFE EVALUATIONS AMONG FRAGILE COMMUNITY RESIDENTS AND TOTAL U.S. POPULATION

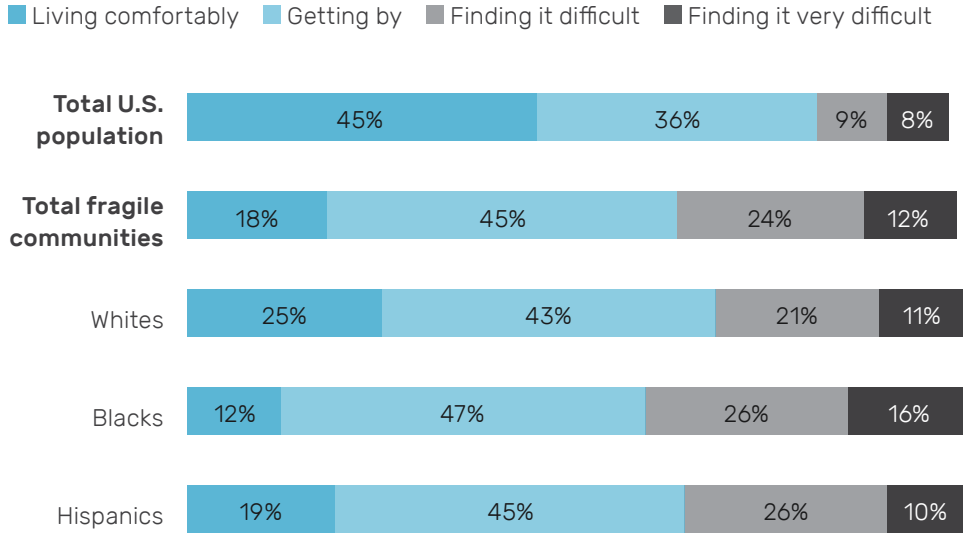
	AVERAGE, CURRENT LIFE	AVERAGE, LIFE IN FIVE YEARS	DIFFERENCE
Total fragile community residents	6.2	7.6	+1.4 pts.
Whites	6.3	7.3	+1.0 pts.
Blacks	6.1	7.8	+1.7 pts.
Hispanics	6.4	7.8	+1.4 pts.
Total U.S. population	6.9	7.8	+0.9 pts.

FINANCIAL STATUS

Just 18% of FC residents say they are “living comfortably” when asked to characterize their feelings about their current household income, which is less than half of the 45% of Americans overall who respond this way to the same question. Conversely, FC residents are more than twice as likely as Americans overall to say they are “finding it difficult” or “very difficult” on their current income, 36% vs. 17%, respectively.

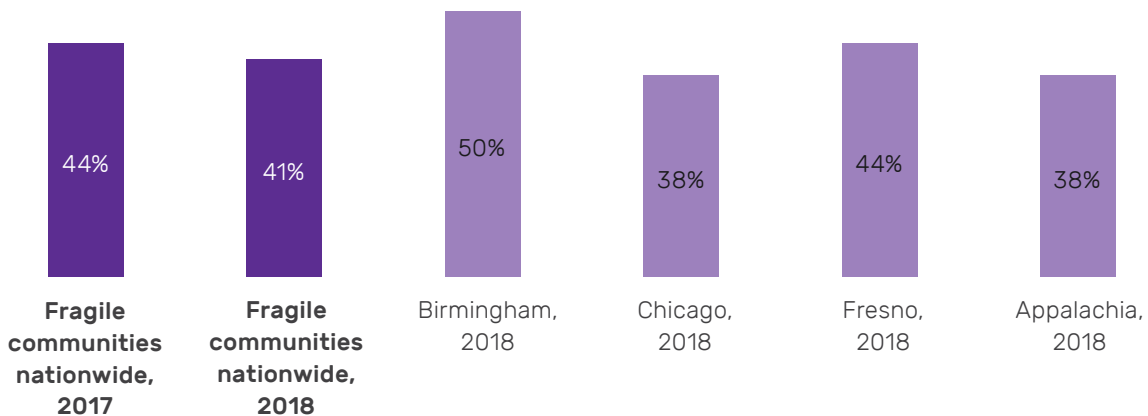
Just 18% of fragile community residents say they are “living comfortably” when asked to characterize their feelings about their current household income.

Which of these phrases comes closest to your own feelings about your household income these days?



As in 2017, just over four in 10 FC residents in the 2018 study (41%) say there were times in the past year when they did not have enough money to buy food that they or their families needed, substantially higher than 23% of American adults overall who responded this way in a separate 2018 survey. Half of Birmingham’s FC residents (50%) say there were times when they did not have enough money to buy food, reflecting in part the city’s large black population. Nationwide, black FC residents are more likely than white or Hispanic residents to respond this way.

Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed? Percentage “yes”



Women living in FCs are also particularly likely to say there were times in the past year when they did not have enough money for food, at 48% vs. 34% of male FC residents. Among black women in such areas the number rises to a majority, 54%.

Results regarding FC residents’ use of government services have not changed significantly since the 2017 survey. About four in 10 residents nationwide say they have received Medicaid (40%) or food assistance benefits such as food stamps (39%) in the past year, while two in 10 say they have received Supplemental Security Income (20%) or disability benefits (20%), and one in 10 have received housing assistance (10%) and unemployment benefits (9%).

Black FC residents are most likely to access several services, with about half saying they had received food assistance (52%) or Medicaid (48%) in the past year. Fifty-five percent of black women say they have accessed food assistance, similar to the proportion who say there were times in the past year when they did not have enough money to buy food for themselves and their families.

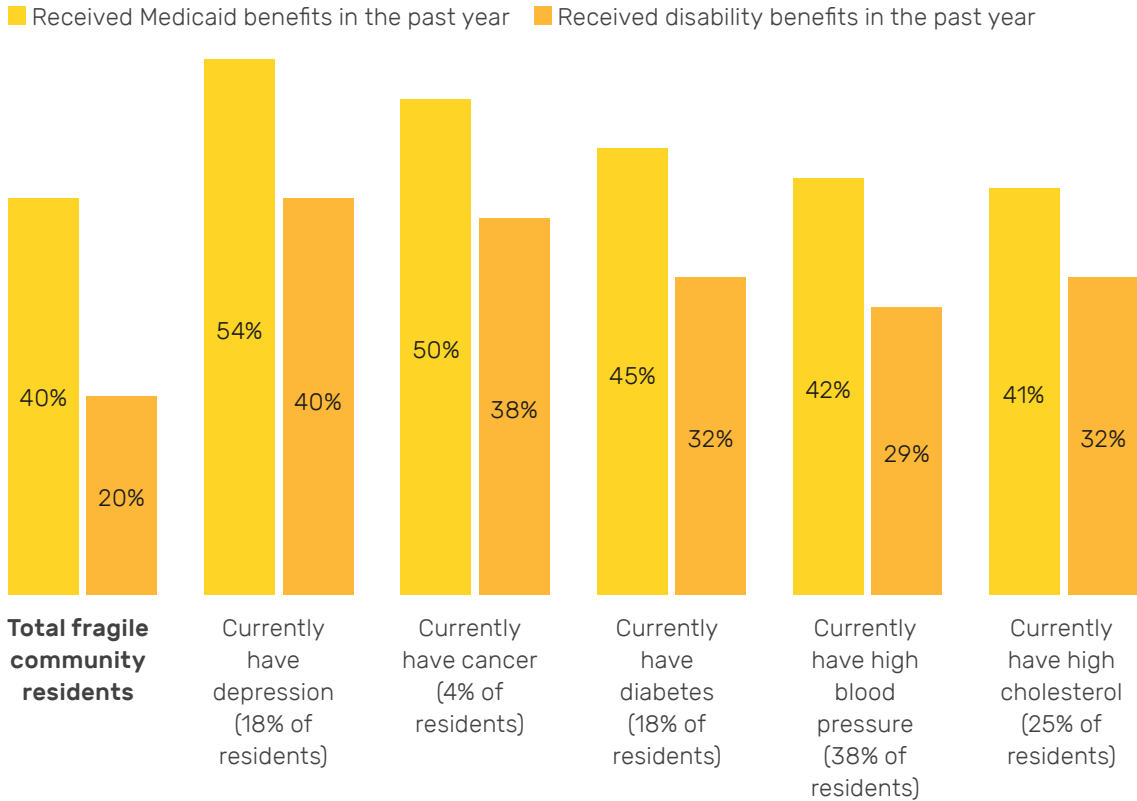
Have you or anyone in your household received any of the following government services and benefits in the past 12 months?

	Total fragile communities, 2017	2018 Fragile community results			
		TOTAL	WHITES	BLACKS	HISPANICS
Medicaid benefits	41%	40%	28%	48%	42%
Food assistance benefits	37%	39%	22%	52%	40%
Supplementary Security Income	21%	20%	15%	29%	17%
Disability benefits	20%	20%	17%	30%	15%
Housing assistance	12%	10%	5%	17%	9%
Unemployment benefits	8%	9%	6%	10%	11%

Black FC residents are also significantly more likely than white or Hispanic residents to have received health-related services – including Medicaid and disability benefits – in the past year. Black residents are particularly likely to have been diagnosed with certain chronic health conditions, including high blood pressure and diabetes (see page 50). National health statistics indicate that black Americans are more likely to live with these diseases at younger ages than those in other racial groups.

However, depression and cancer are the two conditions most strongly related to FC residents’ likelihood to receive health-related benefits. Both are relatively consistent across FC residents in different racial groups, though women are somewhat more likely than men to say they are currently being treated for depression (19% vs. 15%, respectively).

Percentage of fragile community residents with common health conditions who have received Medicaid or disability benefits in the past year



Many FC residents access social services because they have few other financial resources to draw on in difficult situations. About four in 10 residents (39%) say they have a person or place from which they could borrow \$500 and not pay it back for three months, while 34% say they do not and 27% say they would not borrow the money. Again, the results differ substantially by racial group, with 51% of white residents saying yes, vs. 41% of Hispanics and 29% of blacks who say the same. Not surprisingly, residents' likelihood to say yes trends sharply upward with their income and education levels.



Many fragile community residents have few financial resources to draw on in difficult situations — just four in 10 say they have a person or place from which they could borrow \$500 and not pay it back for three months.

2

**Crime and
Criminal Justice**

Criminal justice is one of CAO’s three “pillars” — areas of focus for research and collaboration. In August 2018, the organization brought stakeholders from justice systems around the country together with academics, policy specialists, nonprofit leaders and the formerly incarcerated to discuss strategies for lowering incarceration and recidivism rates, and for helping ensure formerly incarcerated individuals are able to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Scholars from the Center for Justice Research at Texas Southern University, one of three centers created by CAO, participated in the August meeting.

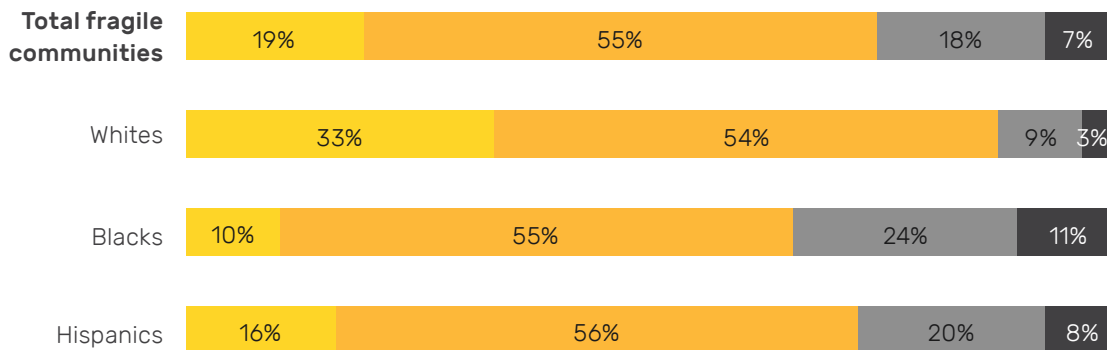
CAO was also involved in discussions among lawmakers and White House officials on the First Step Act, the bipartisan criminal justice reform bill enacted in December 2018. The legislation overhauls federal sentencing laws, reducing minimum sentences for drug offenders and narrowing the discrepancy between penalties for nonviolent crack cocaine crimes and those involving powder cocaine. Though the bill has no bearing on state prisons, where most of the country’s 1.5 million inmates are held, it is nonetheless regarded as a milestone achievement, and one that sets a clear precedent for states to follow.

Minority fragile community residents are far more likely than whites to say local police treat people like them unfairly

About three-fourths of FC residents nationwide (74%) say people like them are treated at least fairly by the local police, though just 19% say “very fairly.” Black (35%) and Hispanic (28%) residents are more likely than white residents (12%) to say police treat them unfairly or very unfairly.

How fairly or unfairly do you think local police treat people like you?

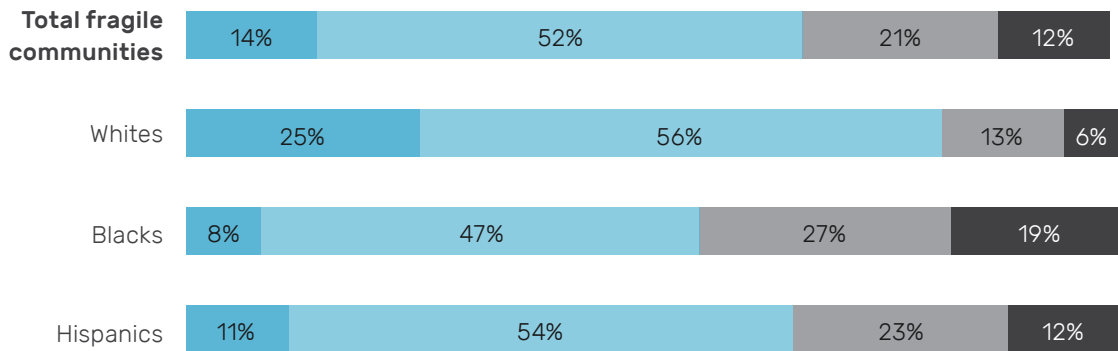
Very fairly Fairly Unfairly Very unfairly



Overall, two-thirds of FC residents in the U.S. (66%) say people like them are treated very fairly (14%) or fairly (52%) by the courts and legal system. Again, the results differ starkly by racial group; almost half of black residents (46%) and more than a third of Hispanics (35%) say the legal system treats people like them unfairly, vs. 19% of white residents.

How fairly or unfairly do you think the courts/ legal system treat people like you?

Very fairly Fairly Unfairly Very unfairly

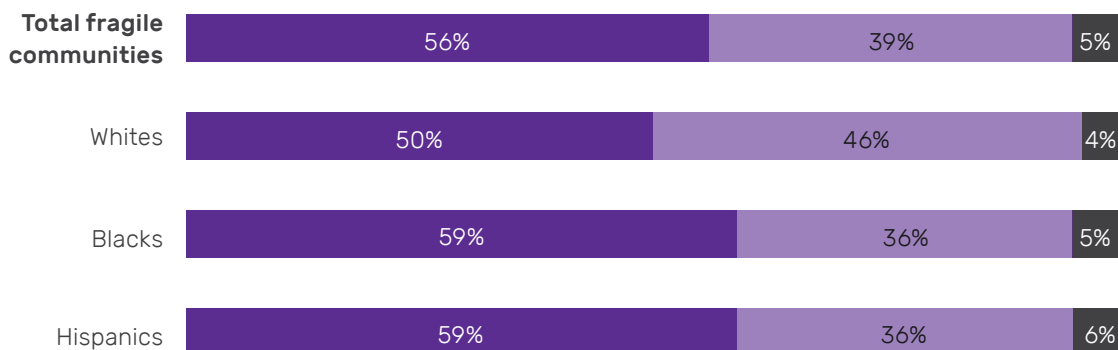


The finding that black and Hispanic FC residents are more likely to feel people like them are treated unfairly by the legal system than by their local police may surprise some. Incidents involving alleged mistreatment of minorities by the police are more likely to draw media coverage, but minority residents, especially blacks, are more likely to be worried about being treated unfairly in other aspects of the criminal justice system such as pretrial procedures, bail requirements, sentencing and parole.

However, the data highlight an important distinction. Minority residents of FCs aren't averse to law enforcement – in fact, they are particularly concerned about crime in their neighborhoods. Most black and Hispanic FC residents (59% in each case) say they would like the police to spend more time in their area than they currently do, making them more likely than white residents (50%) to respond this way. Just 5% of blacks and 6% of Hispanics in FCs would like the police to spend less time in their area.

Would you rather the police spend more time, the same amount of time or less time than they currently spend in your area?

More time Same amount of time Less time

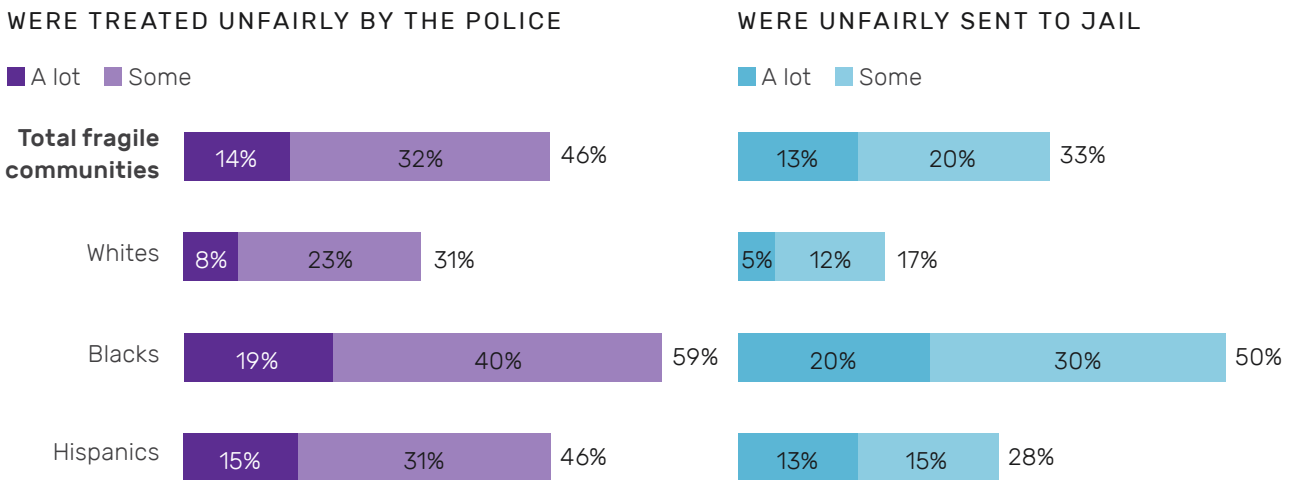


Crime and disorder in FCs put many residents at risk. As in 2017, they are much more likely to say crime in their area has increased (46%) than decreased (11%) in the last few years. More than one-third of FC residents (37%) say they have witnessed a situation in which someone was seriously injured or killed, or in which they feared they themselves would be seriously injured or killed. This proportion is somewhat higher among black residents (41%) than white residents (33%).

However, black and Hispanic residents of FCs want to be able to trust that they will not be treated differently from whites in their interactions with the police or criminal justice system. When asked how many people they know who had personally been treated unfairly by police, a clear majority of black FC residents say “a lot” (19%) or “some” (40%). By contrast, about three in 10 white residents (31%) give one of these two responses, with Hispanic residents falling in between at 46%.

The discrepancy between black residents and white or Hispanic residents in FCs is even wider when it comes to their perception of unfair incarceration. Half of black residents (50%) say they know some (30%) or a lot of (20%) people who have been unfairly sent to jail. White and Hispanic residents are far less likely to give one of these two responses, at 17% and 28%, respectively. Less than one in three black FC residents (28%) say they do not know anyone who was unfairly sent to jail.

How many people, if any at all, do you know who personally had the following happen to them – a lot, some, not many or none at all?



These results correspond with other studies indicating that both overall conviction rates and wrongful conviction rates are far higher among black Americans than others. For example, a 2016 study by the National Registry of Exonerations found that while black people make up 13% of the U.S. population, they represent 47% of Americans who have been wrongfully convicted of crimes and later exonerated since 1989.

Because of *de facto* racial separation by region or neighborhood, many of America's FCs are made up predominately of one or two racial/ethnic groups. Thus, race-based comparisons of how people feel they are treated by local law enforcement often reflect differences in perceptions between communities rather than differences by racial group *within the same* community. For example, 38% of residents in Appalachia's predominantly white FCs say they know some or a lot of people who have been treated unfairly by police, vs. 45% each in Birmingham and Fresno, and 60% in Chicago.

Half of fragile community residents know "some" or "a lot" of people who have stayed in jail because they could not post bail

Pre-sentencing practices such as bail-setting have also been criticized for race-based discrepancies. Those who are accused of crimes but cannot afford to post bail must await court hearings in prison, increasing the risk that they will lose their jobs or housing and exposing their families to possible hardship. They are also more likely to be convicted than if they hadn't been assigned bail, whether or not they actually committed a crime, because many take plea bargains just to get out of jail.

Some state and local systems, including New Jersey and Washington, D.C., have enacted bail reform laws that eliminate cash bail and use alternative pretrial measures such as check-ins with officers to help ensure court attendance. There is a growing focus on finding local solutions in other parts of the country as well; for example, a recent report published by the Center for Justice Research at Texas Southern University identified challenges with the pre-trial population in Houston, the nation's third-largest criminal justice system.

Overall, four in 10 FC residents say they know some (22%) or a lot (18%) of people who have stayed in jail because they didn't have enough bail money. Black residents are more than twice as likely as white residents to give one of these two responses – 56% vs. 26%, respectively – with Hispanic residents closer to whites at 33%.

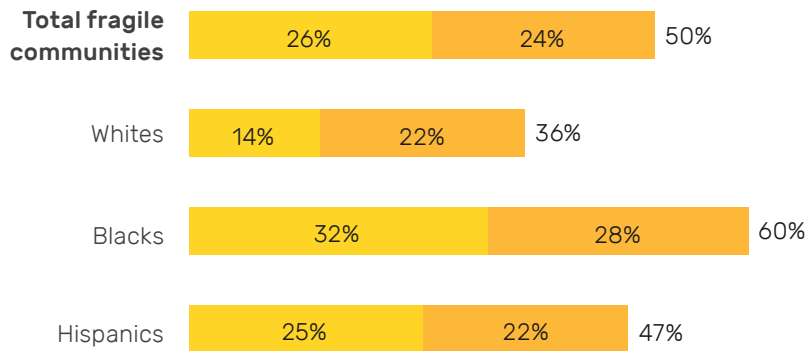
As would be expected, the likelihood of residents knowing people who could not post bail increases as income levels fall, reflecting class-based segmentation in networks of friends and family members. However, substantial race-based differences persist even after accounting for income levels. For example, among only those FC residents with annual household incomes under \$24,000, 60% of blacks say they know some or a lot of people who stayed in jail because they could not afford to post bail, vs. 36% of whites and 47% of Hispanics.

While black people make up 13% of the U.S. population, they represent 47% of Americans who have been wrongfully convicted of crimes and later exonerated since 1989.

How many people, if any at all, do you know who stayed in jail because they didn't have enough bail money – a lot, some, not many or none at all?

RESULTS AMONG FC RESIDENTS WITH ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOMES UNDER \$24,000

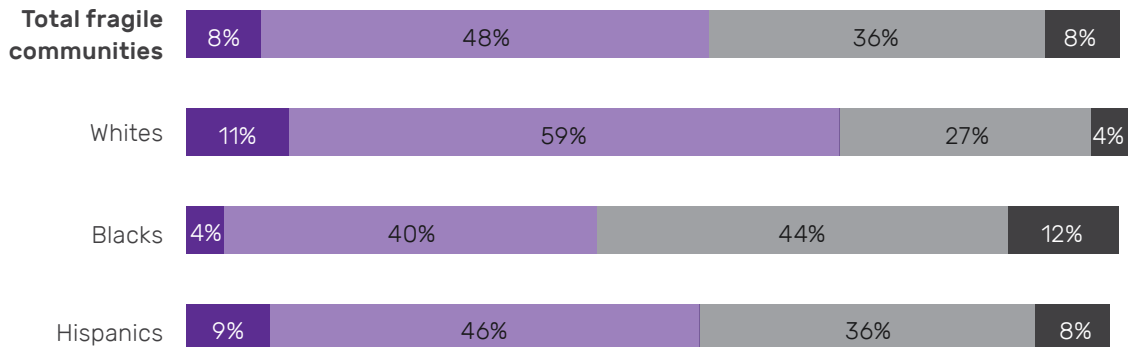
■ A lot ■ Some



The overall picture is one of deep-seated ambivalence toward law enforcement, particularly among black residents of FCs. While most see the need for a greater police presence to maintain order in their neighborhoods, many nonetheless hesitate to trust their local police officers based on perceived injustice in their own interactions with law enforcement, or those of their friends and family members. Thus, while at least half of white (57%) and Hispanic (51%) FC residents say they have “a lot” of respect for the police in their area, one-third of black residents (33%) respond this way. Black residents are also much more likely than whites to say most people in their area view their local police negatively or very negatively, 56% vs. 31%, with Hispanic residents in between at 44%.

How do most people in your area view your local police?

■ Very positively ■ Positively ■ Negatively ■ Very negatively



However, these results also vary substantially by region and city, likely reflecting in part differences in local approaches to policing. For example, black FC residents in Chicago are considerably more likely than those in Birmingham to say most people in their area view local police negatively – 66% vs. 47%, respectively. Chicago is perhaps the most prominent example of a major U.S. city in which a breakdown in trust between law enforcement and FC residents has hampered efforts to combat crime and disorder.

Criminal Justice Index highlights racial group differences in perceptions of law enforcement

Questions on residents' perceptions of their local police and criminal justice system were used to develop the CJI, a composite indicator that provides a more robust measure of the prevailing sentiment in a given community or demographic group. This new indicator is the first component of a broader opportunity index currently in development for introduction in the 2020 State of Opportunity report.

Out of all the questions about residents' perceptions of and experiences with their local police and the criminal justice system in 2018, the following five were selected as most relevant to their general level of trust in the system. Statistical analysis confirmed the unidimensionality of the five items (see appendix for more details).

1. *How much confidence do you have in the police in your area?*
2. *How fairly or unfairly do you think each of the following treat people like you?*
Local police?
3. *How fairly or unfairly do you think each of the following treat people like you?*
The courts/legal system?
4. *How many people, if any at all, do you know who personally had the following happen to them? Were treated unfairly by the police?*
5. *How many people, if any at all, do you know who personally had the following happen to them? Were unfairly sent to jail?*

In the initial CJI results, 18% of FC residents are categorized as “trusting” of their local police and justice system, while 45% are “skeptical” and 37% are “distrusting.” As results from the individual items indicate, black residents are by far the most likely to be categorized as distrusting at 52%, followed by Hispanic residents at 34% and then white residents at 21%. Among the three cities oversampled for the study, distrust of local law enforcement is most prevalent in Chicago’s FCs, at 51%. There are no significant differences by education category, though residents age 50 and older are somewhat more likely than their younger counterparts to be trusting of local law enforcement.

2018 RESULTS FROM CAO/GALLUP CRIMINAL JUSTICE INDEX OF TRUST IN LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

	TRUSTING	SKEPTICAL	DISTRUSTING
Total fragile community residents	18%	45%	37%
Birmingham	10%	47%	43%
Chicago	9%	40%	51%
Fresno	20%	49%	32%
Appalachia	24%	49%	27%
Demographics			
Whites	32%	47%	21%
Blacks	7%	41%	52%
Hispanics	18%	48%	34%

Moving forward, the CAO/Gallup State of Opportunity research will collect sufficient data to report CJI scores for all the largest U.S. metropolitan areas, which will then be continually tracked along with other dimensions of the broader Opportunity Index in development. As the debate about how to effectively reform federal, state and local criminal justice systems continues, these data will provide stakeholders with important information on community/law enforcement relations.

CRIME IN CHICAGO

Chicago's crime problem has drawn a great deal of national attention in recent years. The city saw 765 homicides in 2016, the most in 20 years. That number fell to 653 in 2017 and may drop again in 2018. Nonetheless, Chicago remains more dangerous than most of the country's other largest cities. Reflecting widespread concern about crime, 68% of Chicagoans in FCs say they would like the police to spend more time than they currently spend in their area, vs. 54% of other FC residents nationwide.

The concentration of minority residents in poverty-stricken communities is a major factor in Chicago's crime problem. One 2017 analysis found that Chicago is the second most segregated city in the U.S. (after Detroit), and its minority communities are the most vulnerable to violent crime. Another recent study by researchers at Northwestern University found that, while absolute levels of crime in Chicago have fallen since the 1980s, the decline has been greatest in less economically disadvantaged communities. As a result, relative inequality in crime between the city's safest and most dangerous neighborhoods has increased by 10% in recent years.

The current CAO/Gallup study finds that almost half of black residents in Chicago's FCs (47%) say they have witnessed a situation in which someone was injured or killed, or in which they feared they themselves would be injured or killed. That proportion is higher than the results among other racial groups in Chicago's FCs (39%) or among FC residents nationwide (36%). Further, despite the decline in homicides in the city since 2016, about half of Chicago's FC residents (49%) say crime in their area has increased in recent years, while just 11% say it has decreased.

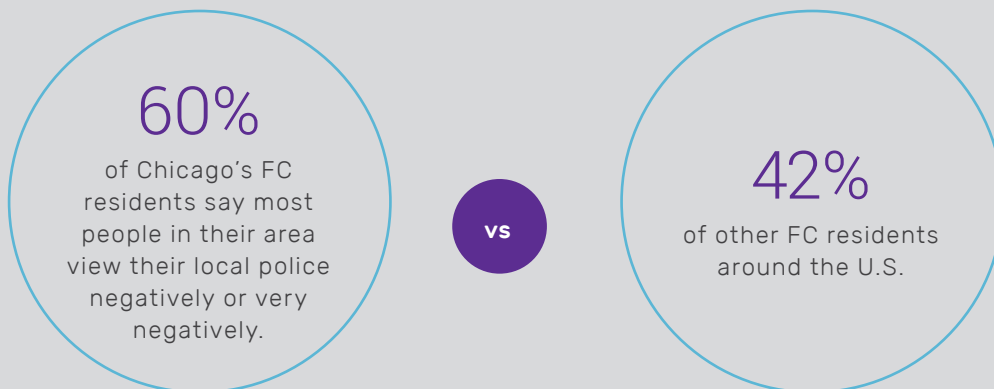
However, Chicago is also one of the cities in which FC residents are least trusting of their local police and criminal justice system. The rift between law enforcement and black Chicagoans in particular was exacerbated after the city's police department covered up for more than a year a 2014 dashcam video in which a black teenager was shot 16 times by a white police officer. The incident highlighted a longstanding culture of corruption and impunity in Chicago law enforcement that the city is still struggling to address. The current study finds that:

- Sixty percent of Chicago's FC residents say most people in their area view their local police negatively or very negatively, vs. 42% of other FC residents around the U.S.
- About one-third of Chicago's FC residents (34%) say they have "a lot" of respect for their local police, vs. almost half (48%) of all other FC residents.
- Six in 10 Chicago-area FC residents (59%) say they know "some" or "a lot" of people who have been treated unfairly by the police, vs. 45% of other FC residents.
- Almost half of Chicago's FC residents (48%) say people like them are treated "unfairly" or "very unfairly" by the courts and legal system, vs. 32% of other FC residents.

This seeming contradiction highlights the dilemma Chicago's FC residents face: Even though they want law enforcement to more effectively control crime in their neighborhoods, a lack of trust makes it difficult for them to partner with local police in this effort. As a recent investigation of the Chicago Police Department (CPD) by the U.S. Department of Justice concluded, trust between the CPD and residents of the city's crime-stricken neighborhoods, "...has been broken by systems that have allowed CPD officers who violate the law to escape accountability. This breach in trust has in turn eroded CPD's ability to effectively prevent crime; in other words, trust and effectiveness in combating violent crime are inextricably intertwined."

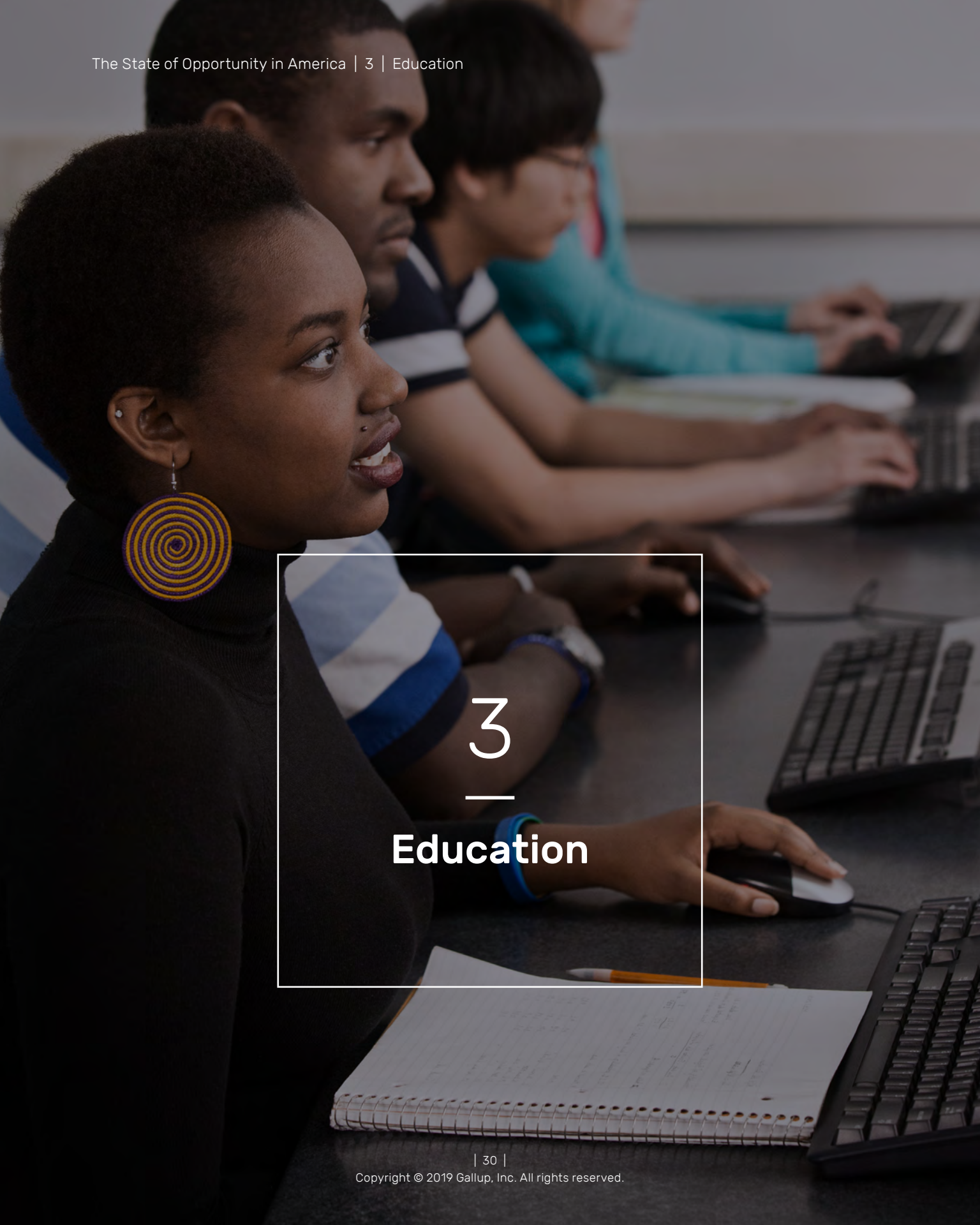
These findings highlight the extent to which Chicago's longstanding violent crime problem both causes and is perpetuated by lack of trust in law enforcement, especially in predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhoods. But the fact that more than two-thirds of the city's FC residents favor a greater police presence also suggests many are eager to move past that mistrust to restore order to their neighborhoods.

New York City has long been considered a model for crime-reduction strategies — though not without controversy, having achieved more than 20 consecutive years of falling crime through a combination of community policing and the visibility of non-profit groups addressing social needs like jobs, health and counseling. As the CAO/Gallup research demonstrates, poverty and crime are perpetuated by lack of opportunity in a combination of areas, including education, employment and health services. The results suggest that putting greater focus on a broad-based approach to facilitating development in FCs would help Chicago's leaders lower crime and improve relations with law enforcement over the long term.





According to CAO's new Criminal Justice Index, 18% of fragile community residents are "trusting" of their local police and justice system, while 45% are "skeptical" and 37% are "distrusting."



3
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Education

Access to high-quality education is another of CAO's three essential areas of focus, and a central topic in its State of Opportunity research. Prior research has consistently demonstrated the importance of ensuring all Americans have access to a high-quality education, including an array of postsecondary education opportunities, in order to improve social mobility and access to opportunity.

Although college is not necessarily for everyone, few investments yield as high a return as some form of postsecondary education produces over the course of a lifetime. As in the inaugural State of Opportunity survey, the 2018 study finds that FC residents' experiences and perceptions differ dramatically by educational attainment. In particular, having attained any form of education beyond high school – including vocational training and two-year associate degrees – is associated with substantially higher levels of economic optimism, in addition to improved employment and health outcomes.

Less than half of fragile community residents nationwide are satisfied with the quality of local K-12 public schools

As in 2017, the current study finds that about one in three residents of FCs nationwide feel all children in the area where they live have access to high-quality public schools. When asked to rate their level of agreement with this statement on a five-point scale where "5" means they strongly agree and "1" means they strongly disagree, 35% of residents choose a "5" or "4," while 33% indicate disagreement by choosing a "1" or "2." FC residents in Birmingham and Chicago are less likely than others nationwide to agree, at 26% and 28%, respectively. However, the current figure from Chicago is an improvement from the 17% recorded in 2017, when the city was in the midst of a school funding crisis.

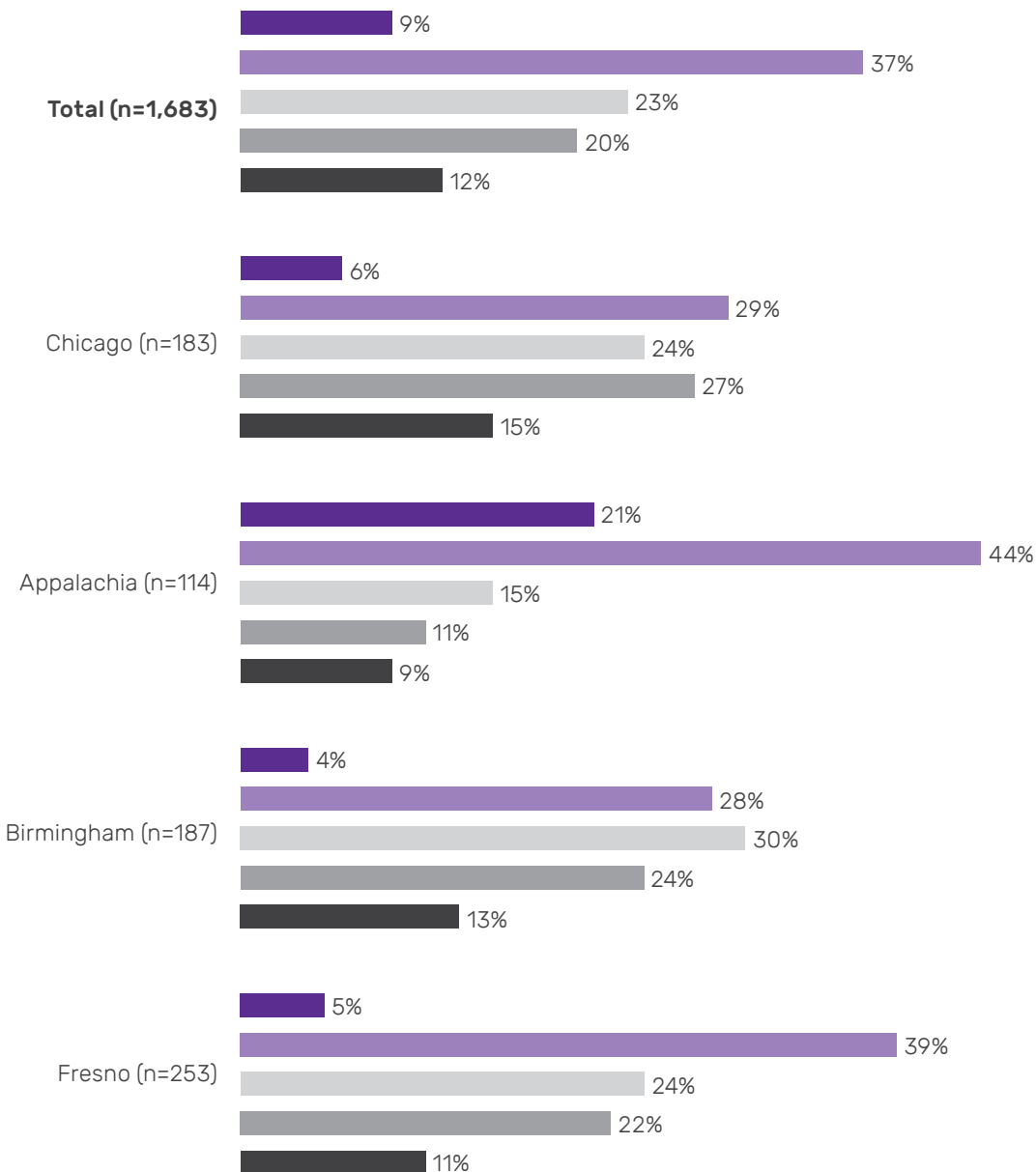
This year's survey further asked FC residents how satisfied they are with the quality of public K-12 schools in their area. Among those with children under 18 living in the household, 46% say they are either extremely satisfied (9%) or satisfied (37%). Among those living in Birmingham and Chicago's FCs, the total satisfied figure drops to about one-third (32% and 35%, respectively). Among Appalachian-region FCs, by contrast, almost two-thirds of residents are extremely satisfied (21%) or satisfied (44%) with public school quality.

About one in three residents of fragile communities nationwide feel all children in the area where they live have access to high-quality public schools.

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of public, Kindergarten through grade 12, schools in your area?

RESULTS AMONG FC RESIDENTS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN THE HOUSEHOLD

■ Extremely satisfied
 ■ Satisfied
 ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
■ Dissatisfied
 ■ Extremely dissatisfied



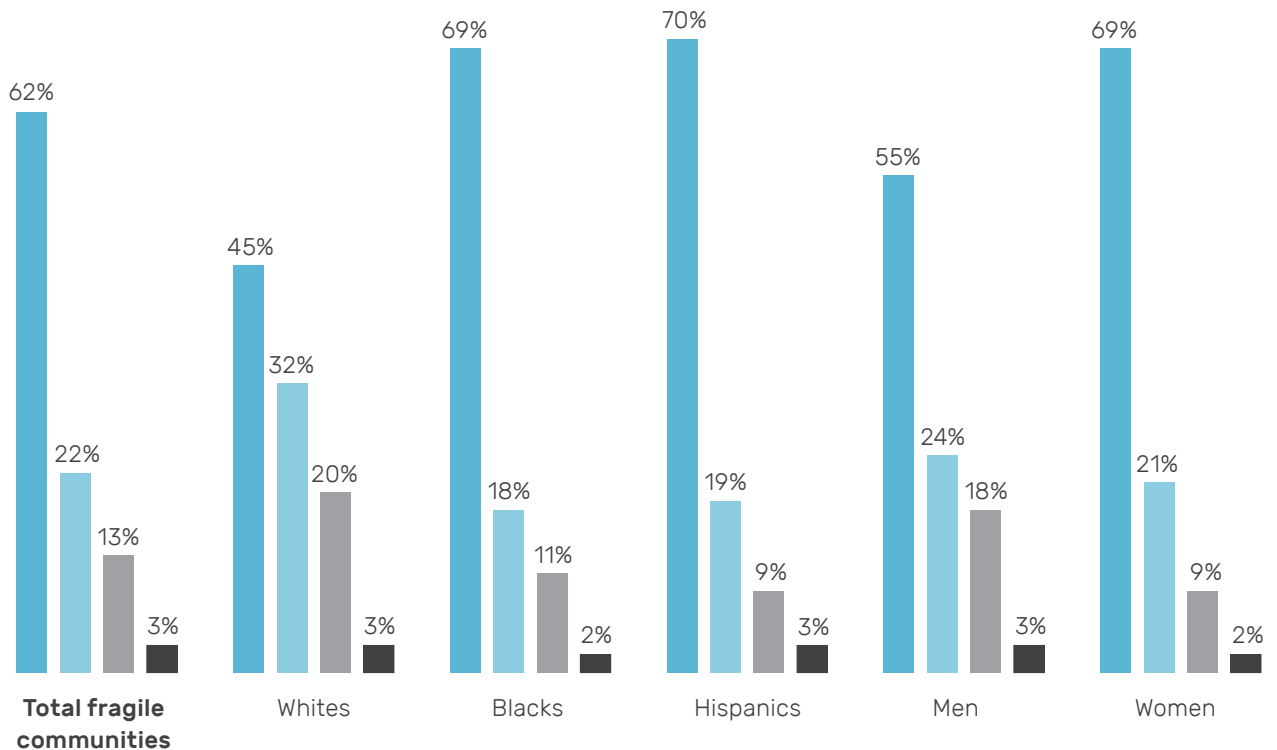
Fragile community residents are more likely to disagree than agree that people in their area have access to an affordable college education

Just 29% of FC residents nationwide agree that all people in their area have access to an affordable college education if they want it (by selecting “4” or “5” on a five-point agreement scale), while 44% disagree (“1” or “2”). In some areas, the results are significantly worse; for example, 22% of Chicago’s FC residents agree that college is available to everyone in their area while 56% disagree.

Nonetheless, most FC residents clearly recognize the value of postsecondary education in the U.S. today. At 62%, the overall proportion of FC residents who say a college education is “very important” is similar to the 66% recorded in 2017. As in the previous study, white residents are significantly less likely than black or Hispanic residents to respond this way (45% vs. 69% and 70%, respectively). Women living in FCs are more likely than men to say a college education is very important – 69% vs. 55%.

How important is a college education today?

■ Very important ■ Important ■ Somewhat important ■ Not at all important

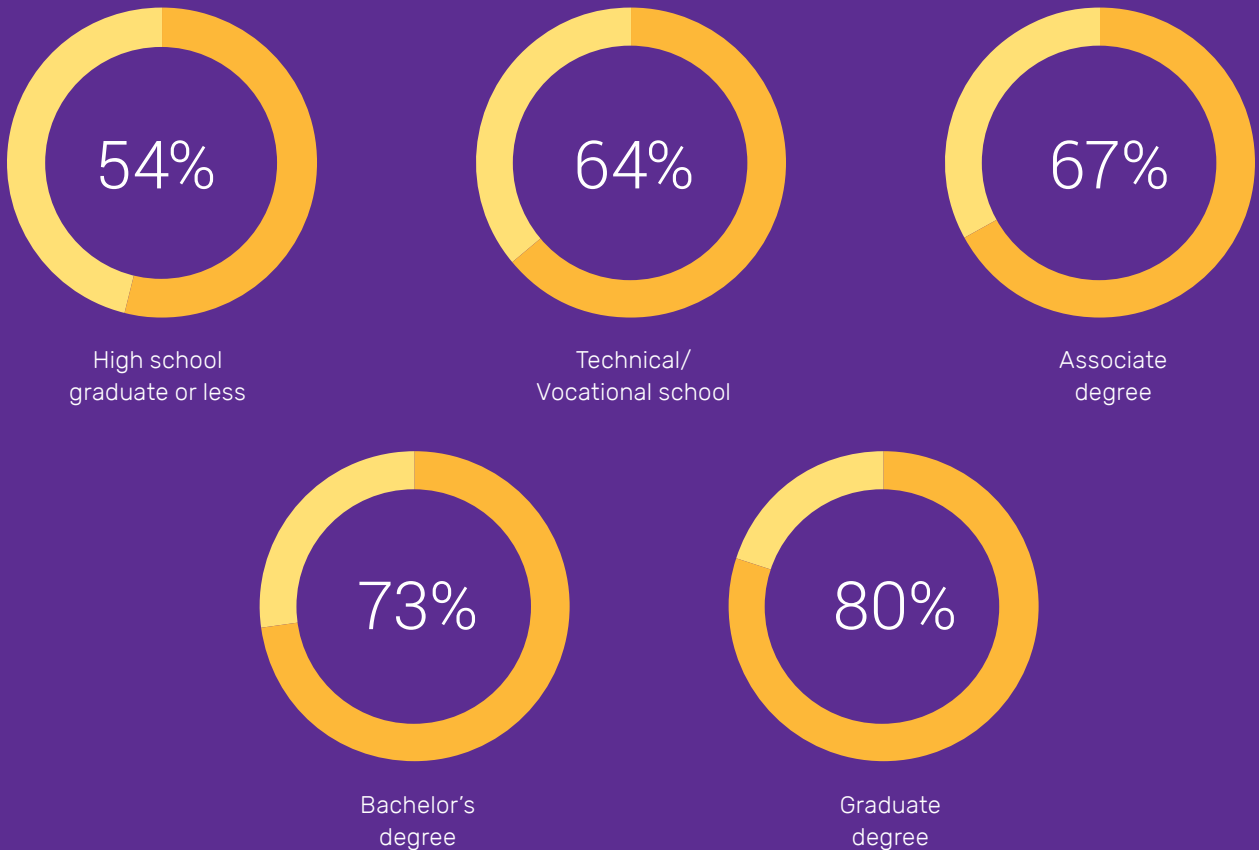


The difference education makes to the well-being and optimism of America's FC residents is reflected in the current data. As noted on page 12, FC residents give an average response of 7.6 when asked to predict how they will rate their lives in five years on a zero-to-10 scale. However, average ratings are significantly higher among those with an associate degree (7.8), bachelor's degree (7.9) or graduate degree (8.1) than among those with a high school education or less (7.5).

Not surprisingly, residents' confidence in their ability to achieve their career goals also trends upward with their education level. Those with any form of higher education – including vocational training or a two-year associate degree – are more likely than those with a high school education or less to say they are “very confident” or “confident.”

How confident are you in your ability to achieve career goals you set for yourself – very confident, confident, somewhat confident or not at all confident?

PERCENTAGE “VERY CONFIDENT” OR “CONFIDENT”
AMONG FC RESIDENTS, BY EDUCATION LEVEL



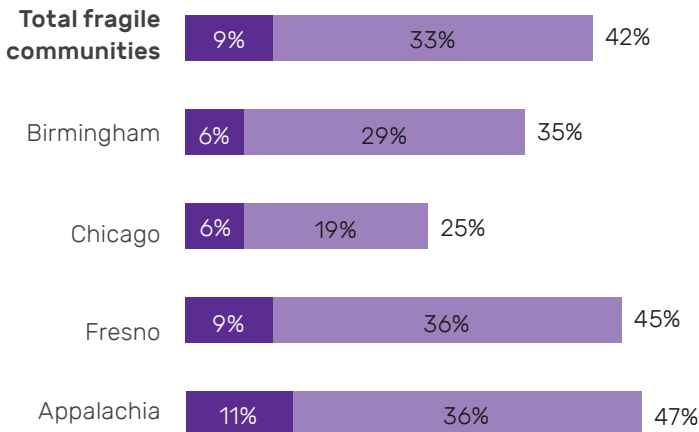
Given the benefits associated even with less financially burdensome forms of postsecondary education, the current study asked FC residents about their satisfaction with local community colleges and job training programs. Overall, one-third of FC residents in the U.S. (33%) are “satisfied” with the availability of high-quality community college programs in their area, with an additional 9% saying they are “extremely satisfied.” There is significant variation among the oversampled cities, with 45% of residents in Fresno’s FCs and 47% of those in the Appalachian region satisfied or extremely satisfied, vs. 35% in Birmingham and 25% in Chicago.

Just 6% of FC residents nationwide are “extremely satisfied” with job training programs in their area, and less than three in 10 (28%) are “satisfied” overall. Among oversampled cities, Chicago residents are again least likely to be satisfied, though by a smaller margin.

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following in your area?

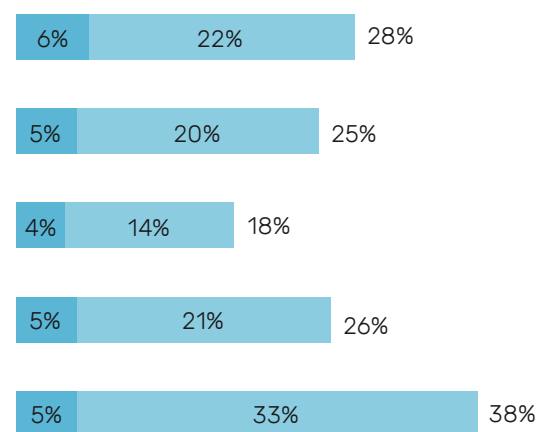
AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-QUALITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS

■ Extremely satisfied ■ Satisfied



AVAILABILITY OF JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS

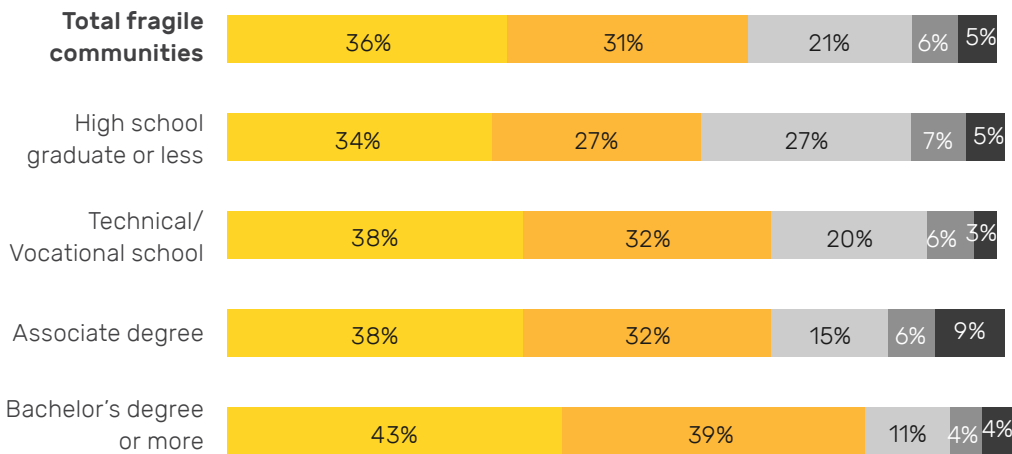
■ Extremely satisfied ■ Satisfied



Access to a range of postsecondary education programs is crucial to helping FC residents find one that best fits their own needs and those of the local workforce. Education is also important in giving residents opportunities for self-discovery – i.e., to help them maximize their potential by seeking available jobs and career paths for which they are best suited. Overall, two-thirds of FC residents give a “4” (31%) or “5” (36%) when asked to rate their agreement that they have a good sense of their unique strengths and talents. However, 61% of those with a high school education or less give a “4” or “5,” vs. 70% of those with vocational school or an associate degree, and 82% of those with a bachelor’s degree or more.

**Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement:
You have a good sense of your unique strengths and talents.**

Strongly agree 4 3 2 Strongly disagree



Educational attainment may be the single most important factor in helping young people find good jobs, acquire the resources to start businesses, and contribute to rising prosperity in their families and neighborhoods. The findings highlight the extent to which local conditions make this a difficult journey for many young FC residents, starting with substandard K-12 schools and continuing with a lack of affordable postsecondary education and job training opportunities. Rising student loan debt and delinquencies in recent years indicate that for many low-income students who do attend college, the cost represents a substantial long-term burden.

But these data also highlight the benefits of lower-cost postsecondary education options in FCs. Vocational training programs and two-year associate degrees not only help students develop marketable skills, they also elevate residents’ understanding of their unique talents and confidence that they can achieve their goals. For many, such opportunities are the stepping stone they need to begin fulfilling careers or move on to four-year colleges. Ensuring all residents have easy access to flexible community college programs, and a well-lit path from such programs to job placements or universities, is critical to developing the educational ecosystem needed in FCs.

THE NEED TO UPGRADE APPALACHIA'S WORKFORCE

America's Appalachian region has long suffered from economic stagnation. Many of its communities are rural and relatively isolated, and have been hit hard in recent decades by falling demand for coal due largely to reductions in the cost of natural gas. Eighty percent of residents in northern and central Appalachia (excluding the Appalachian regions of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina) are white, offering a demographic contrast to the oversampled communities in Birmingham (predominantly black) and Fresno (majority Hispanic).


In some cases, residents of Appalachia's FCs give more favorable responses than those living in other parts of the country. In particular, they are more likely to be satisfied with the quality of public K-12 schools in their area and much more likely to say the area where they live is a good place to raise children. Most say the cost of living is low in their area, and two-thirds are satisfied with the availability of good, affordable housing.

However, residents are also cognizant of the region's economic decline. Just 29% say "good economy" describes the area where they live, and 26% say it can be described as a "good place to find a job;" both figures are significantly lower than the aggregated results from all other FCs nationwide. However, though much of Appalachia desperately needs economic diversification, its FC residents also put less emphasis on postsecondary education; about half (49%) say a college education is "very important" today, vs. almost two-thirds (63%) of residents in other FCs across the country.

As in Birmingham's FCs, chronic health conditions are particularly common among those in Appalachia. Residents are more likely than those in other FCs across the country to say they are currently being treated for high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes. Appalachia's FC residents are twice as likely as those in other regions to say they have been diagnosed with a heart attack (10% vs. 5%, respectively). Recent studies have also documented rising substance abuse in the region, with some of the highest rates of opioid overdoses in the country.

Business and government leaders throughout Appalachia are trying to chart a more sustainable course by diversifying the region's economies to restore job growth. However, that requires modernizing residents' skills and cultivating a robust labor pool more likely to support business growth. The State of Opportunity results highlight widespread health problems and a lack of emphasis on postsecondary education among the challenges to be overcome in achieving this goal.



A photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a light blue shirt, sitting on a wooden rocking chair on a porch. She is reading a book. The porch has white siding and a hanging light fixture. In the foreground, another wooden rocking chair with a woven seat is visible. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

Just 29% of fragile community residents nationwide agree that all people in their area have access to an affordable college education if they want it.

4

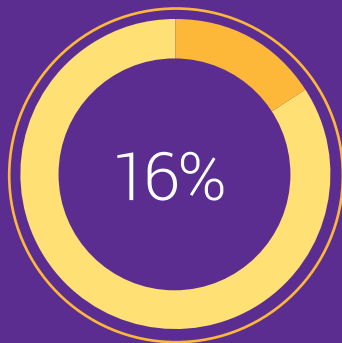
Employment and Business Ownership

Paths to well-paying and fulfilling jobs are perhaps the most fundamental requirement for FC residents seeking to live more prosperous and productive lives. Communities selected for this study are characterized by relatively high unemployment rates, and/or a high proportion of residents who are not active workforce participants.

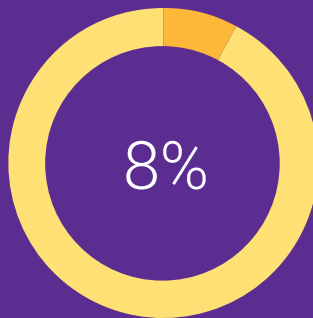
Not surprisingly, FC residents' likelihood to be employed by an employer rises sharply with their education level – from 37% among those with a high school education or less, to 61% among those with an associate, bachelor's or graduate degree. Black and Hispanic residents are more than twice as likely as white residents to be seeking employment – 20% and 19% vs. 8%, respectively. Women in FCs are also somewhat more likely than men to be looking for jobs. Among black women, about one in four (24%) are not employed and seeking work.

Job-seeking among fragile community residents by race and gender

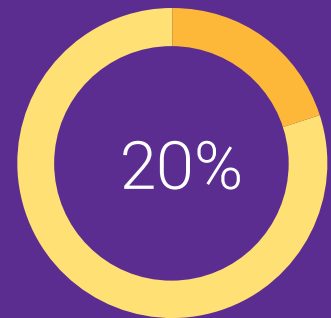
PERCENTAGE NOT EMPLOYED AND ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR A JOB



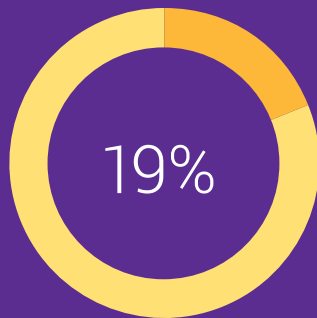
Total fragile community residents



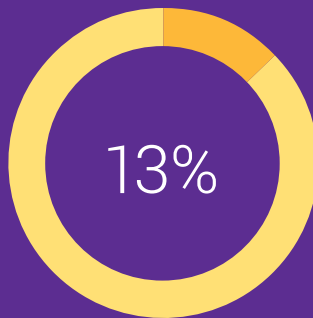
Whites



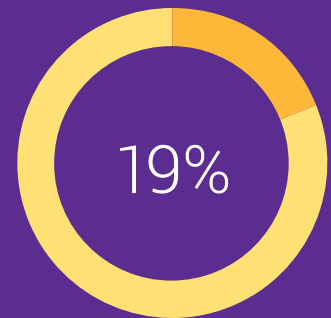
Blacks



Hispanics



Men



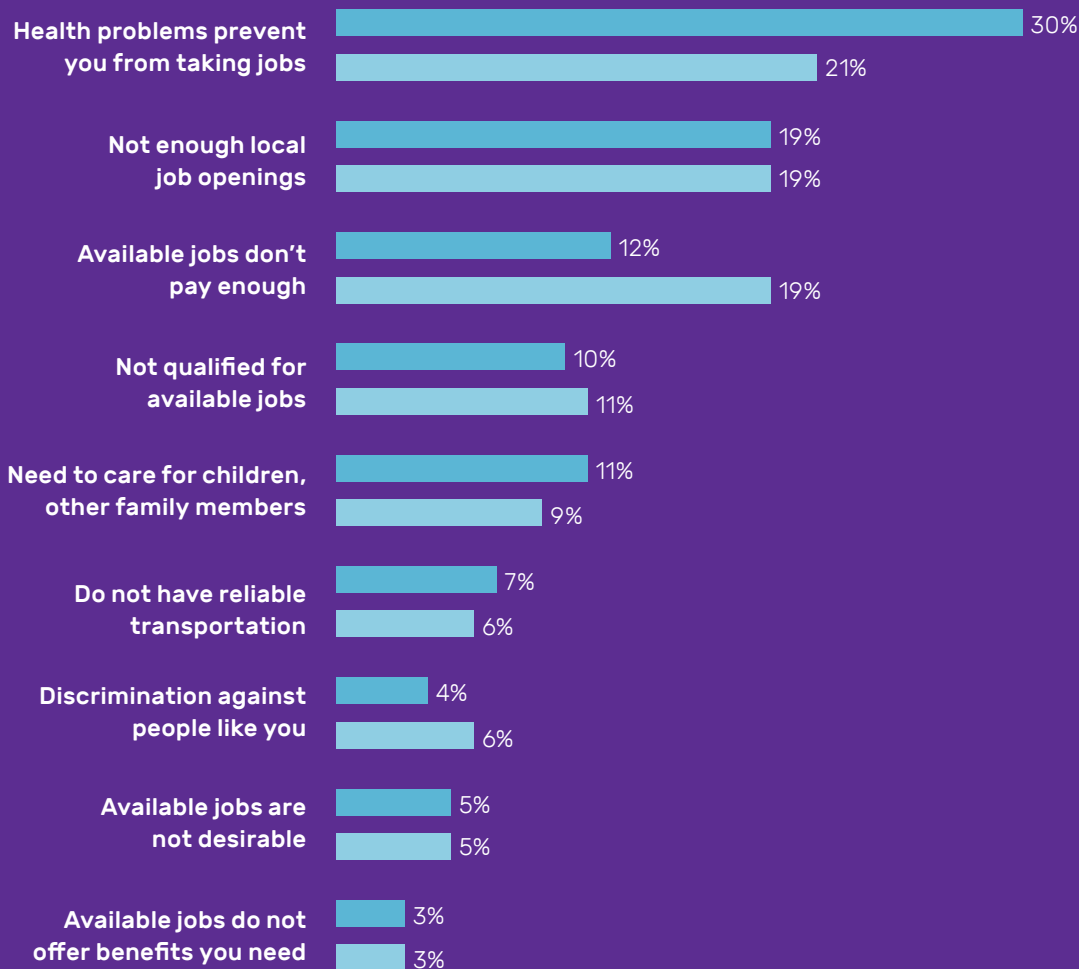
Women

Job-seeking FC residents were also asked to select from a list of nine possible issues the single factor that represents the biggest challenge for them in finding a job. The results are fairly consistent with those from the 2017 study, with two exceptions: 1) job-seekers were less likely in 2018 to cite health problems as their biggest challenge, though this remains one of the top three most common responses; and 2) job-seekers are more likely than they were in 2017 to say their biggest challenge is that available jobs don't pay enough. The latter finding highlights the importance of better understanding how wage stagnation affects employment decisions in America's lower-income communities.

In your opinion, which of the following is the biggest challenge for you in finding a job?

RESULTS AMONG FC RESIDENTS WHO SAY THEY ARE ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR A JOB

■ 2017 ■ 2018



In addition to their earnings, it may be important to consider how other aspects of their working lives affect the wellbeing of FC residents. Several questions were added to the 2018 survey to gauge employed FC residents' affinity for their jobs. One of them draws on the research of Yale management professor Amy Wrzesniewski, who proposed three orientations toward work, with implications for the likelihood that people will feel fulfilled and intrinsically motivated by their jobs:

- **Job:** Work is primarily about earning a paycheck, a necessity rather than a source of fulfillment or meaning.
- **Career:** Work is not just about making a living, but a way to satisfy ambition and have a sense of long-term momentum and achievement in one's life. However, it may or may not be emotionally satisfying.
- **Calling:** Work is aligned with one's personal values and sense of purpose and provides a deep sense of emotional fulfillment.

Somewhat counterintuitively, given that their range of job opportunities is often more limited than those in more affluent areas, employed FC residents are most likely to feel the "calling" orientation best describes their current work situation. More than four in 10 (44%) say they are passionate about their job and feel it allows them to make the world a better place. Conversely, 31% say they view work as simply a way to pay the bills. The remaining 25% choose the career orientation, focused on challenges and long-term growth.

Which one of the following best describes your current work situation?



Though the way workers view their jobs is related to the type of work they are doing, Wrzesniewski’s research indicates different people enjoy and find meaning in many different kinds of work, as long as they find ways to incorporate their motives, strengths and passions into it. That conclusion aligns with decades of Gallup research demonstrating that employees are more likely to be engaged in and enthusiastic about their job if they feel it gives them opportunities to do what they are good at.

Employed FC residents were asked to rate their agreement with two items about the extent to which they feel their jobs align with, and make use of, their strengths. Overall, a majority agree that they have the opportunity at work to do what they do best every day by rating their agreement at “5” (38%) or “4” (21%). Further, about half overall (51%) agree that their current job makes the best use of their talents, while less than a third (29%) disagree.

AT WORK, YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WHAT YOU DO BEST EVERY DAY.

■ Strongly agree
 ■ 4
 ■ 3
 ■ 2
 ■ Strongly disagree



YOUR CURRENT JOB MAKES THE BEST USE OF YOUR TALENTS.

■ Strongly agree
 ■ 4
 ■ 3
 ■ 2
 ■ Strongly disagree



Notably, there is little variation by educational attainment in these results among employed FC residents. For example, 61% of those with a bachelor’s degree agree that they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day, not much higher than the 55% of employees with a high school education or less who respond this way. The results seem to support the idea that talent can be productively applied across job types, and that interventions designed to promote self-awareness may help participants in any type of educational institution prepare to find a job that keeps them engaged and productive.

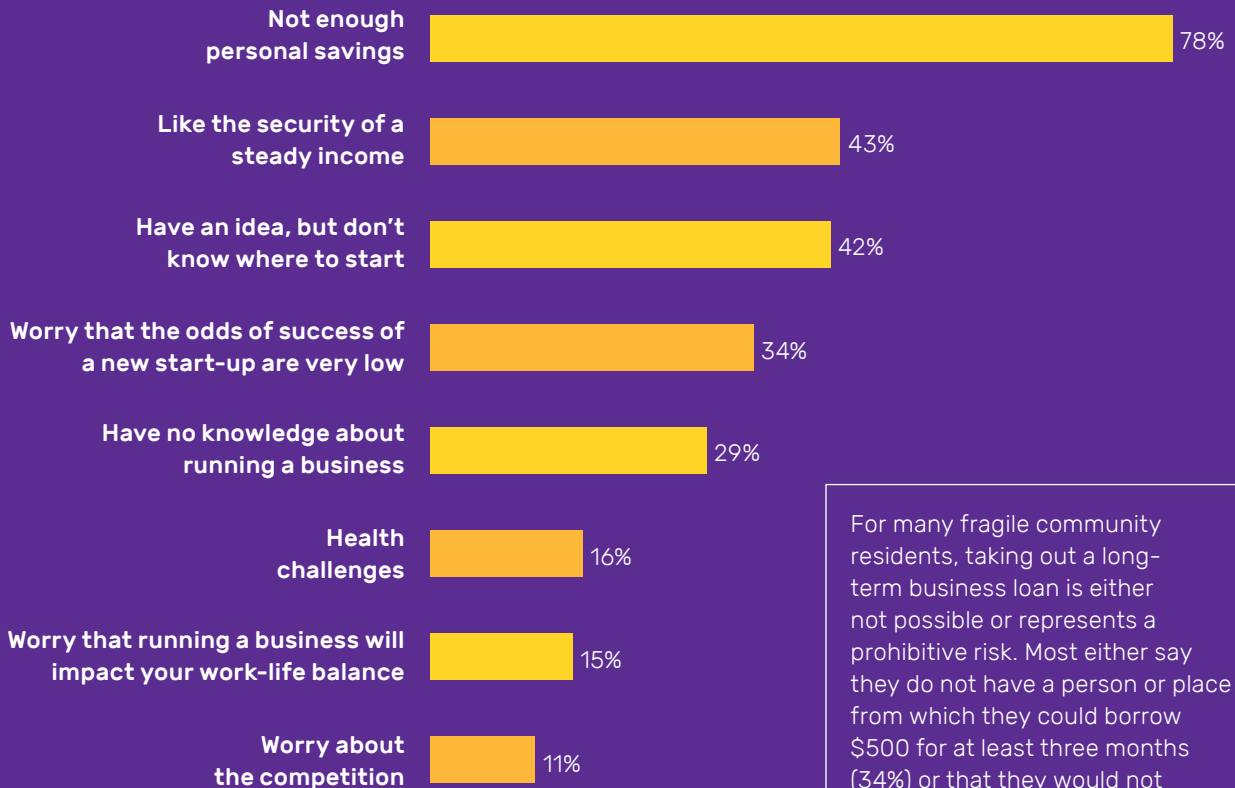
BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Though just 2% of FC residents are self-employed full time, 9% say they are planning to start their own business in the next 12 months, with black (13%) and Hispanic (9%) residents more likely than white residents (4%) to respond this way. However, among residents who say they are planning to start a business, 38% overall, and 31% of blacks, say they have the financial and non-financial resources to do so.

Lack of financial resources is by far the most common reason aspiring entrepreneurs in America's FCs do not start businesses. As in the 2017 survey, one-third of FC residents in the current study (33%) say they considered becoming a business owner but decided not to. When asked why they decided not to, more than three-fourths (78%) say they do not have enough personal savings to start a business.

Which of the following have played a role in your decision NOT to start a business?

RESULTS AMONG FC RESIDENTS WHO HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT STARTING A BUSINESS BUT DECIDED NOT TO



For many fragile community residents, taking out a long-term business loan is either not possible or represents a prohibitive risk. Most either say they do not have a person or place from which they could borrow \$500 for at least three months (34%) or that they would not consider taking such a loan (27%).



Forty-four percent of fragile community residents say they are passionate about their job and feel it allows them to make the world a better place, while 31% say they view work as simply a way to pay the bills.

5

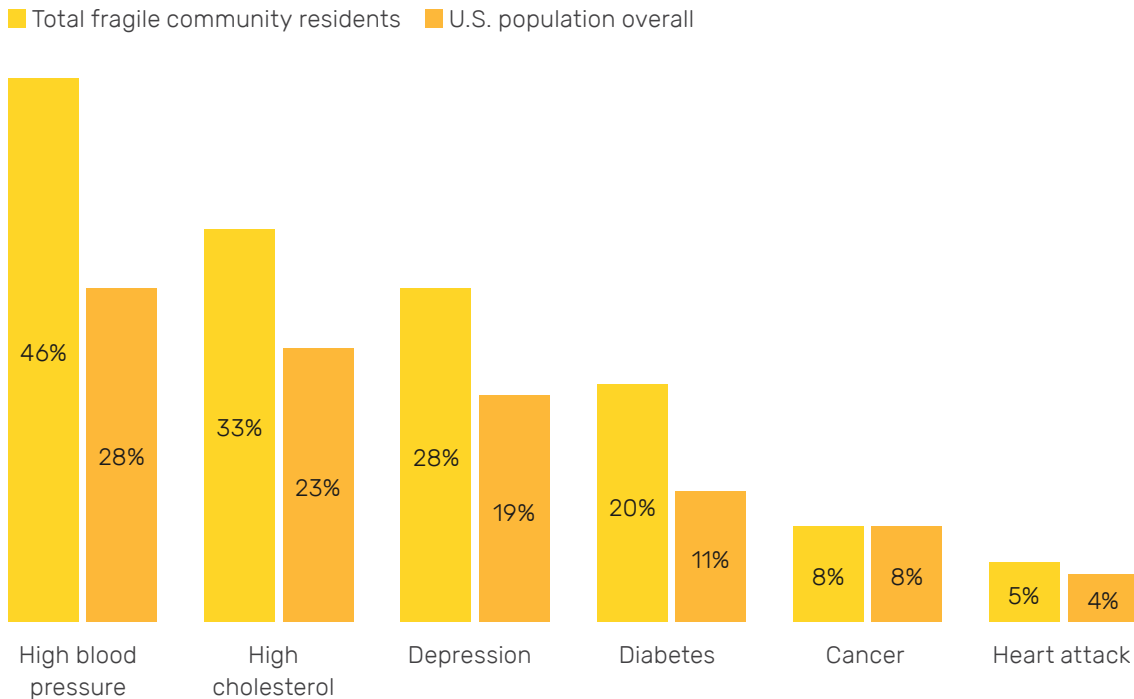
Health

Besides lack of education, poor health is one of the most common factors affecting FC residents’ ability to access opportunity. As in the inaugural survey, “health problems” is one of the most commonly chosen factors when job-seeking FC residents are asked to name their biggest challenge in finding employment – though it has fallen from 30% in 2017 to 21% in 2018. In the current survey, health problems are on par with lack of job openings overall, and lack of well-paying jobs.

To further investigate FC residents’ most common health problems, CAO and Gallup added a set of questions to the current survey asking them whether they had ever been diagnosed with, or were currently being treated for, several common ailments, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, depression or cancer.

High blood pressure is easily the most prevalent, with almost half of FC residents (46%) overall saying they have been diagnosed with it and 38% saying they are currently being treated for it. By contrast, 28% of American adults overall say they have been diagnosed with high blood pressure. FC residents are also significantly more likely than U.S. adults overall to say they have been diagnosed with high cholesterol, diabetes or depression.

Have you ever been told by a physician or nurse that you have...?*



* U.S. population data aggregated from Gallup–Sharecare wellbeing surveys conducted throughout 2017 (n=160,498).

Black FC residents are most likely to have been diagnosed with high blood pressure – 59%, vs. 45% of white and 32% of Hispanic residents. Further, a majority of black residents (52%) are being treated for high blood pressure, vs. 37% of whites and 24% of Hispanics. Black residents are also more likely than whites to have been diagnosed with diabetes, at 24% vs. 17%, respectively. However, white and black residents are equally likely to have been diagnosed with high cholesterol, at 36% each, followed by Hispanics at 27%.

Lower results for several conditions among Hispanic residents likely reflect, in part, a lower tendency among Hispanics to access healthcare services in order to have a chance to be diagnosed. Lack of insurance may be a factor here; Hispanic FC residents are particularly likely to say they do not have health insurance coverage at 19%, vs. 14% of whites and 15% of blacks.

Diagnoses of some conditions, including depression and diabetes, trend downward with respondents' education level. About half of FC residents nationwide with a bachelor's degree or more (51%) describe their overall health condition as "excellent" or "very good," compared to about one-fourth (26%) of residents with a high school diploma or less. This pattern reflects the reciprocal relationship between health and socioeconomic status. For example, more affluent, better-educated residents are less likely to live in urban "food deserts" with less access to affordable or high-quality fresh food. They are also more likely to feel confident navigating the healthcare system and receiving regular preventive care.

Common health conditions are a frequent impediment to finding and keeping jobs

Job-seeking FC residents who say they have any of the five long-term conditions listed above are far more likely than those who do not have any to say health problems are their biggest challenge in finding a job. About half of job-seekers (51%) say they are currently being treated for one or more of these conditions; the most common are high blood pressure (39%) and high cholesterol (25%), though about one in five say the same about depression (21%) and diabetes (19%).

Notably, job-seekers who are currently being treated for diabetes are about as likely as those who are being treated for cancer to say health problems are their biggest challenge in finding employment – 42% and 45%, respectively. Those being treated for high cholesterol (40%), high blood pressure (38%) and depression (36%) are only somewhat less likely to respond this way. By contrast, just 7% of job-seekers who do not currently have any of these conditions say health problems are their biggest challenge.

More than a third of job-seeking fragile community residents with common health conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure cite “health problems” as their biggest challenge in finding a job

	Percentage of job-seekers currently being treated for this condition	Percentage with each condition who say health problems are their biggest challenge in finding a job
High blood pressure	39%	38%
High cholesterol	25%	40%
Depression	21%	36%
Diabetes	19%	42%
Cancer	4%	45%
Do not currently have any of these five conditions	49%	7%

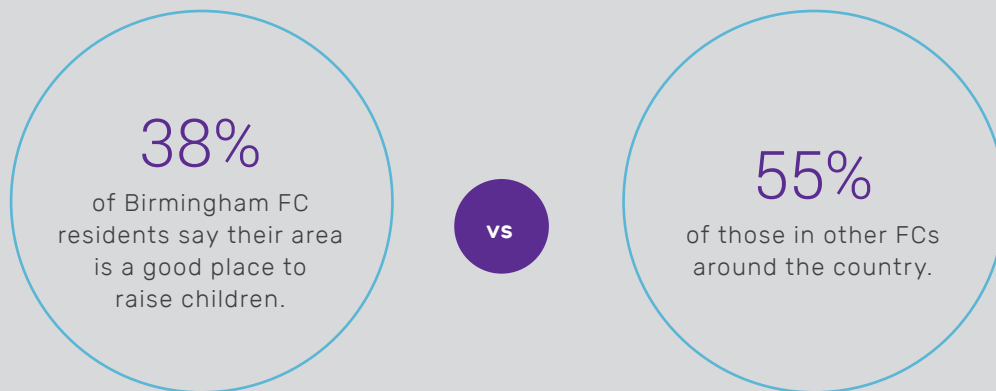
Job-seeking fragile community residents who say they have any of the five long-term conditions listed above are far more likely than those who do not have any to say health problems are their biggest challenge in finding a job.

POVERTY AND HEALTH IN BIRMINGHAM'S FRAGILE COMMUNITIES

Each of the three cities oversampled for the State of Opportunity study has distinctive regional and local characteristics. Birmingham, like many cities in the southeastern U.S., has a large black population, a high percentage of racially identifiable neighborhoods and ongoing economic challenges stemming from the decline of key industries (most notably, the steel industry in Birmingham).

The city's economic struggles help explain one reason why Birmingham's FC residents are even more likely than others around the country to have trouble meeting basic needs. Half say there were times in the past year when they didn't have enough food for themselves or their families, while one-fourth say there were times when they didn't have enough money to provide adequate shelter. Among the most telling findings are that just 38% of Birmingham-area FC residents say their area is a good place to raise children, vs. 55% of those in other FCs around the country. Further, only a third (32%) say they are satisfied with the quality of local public schools.

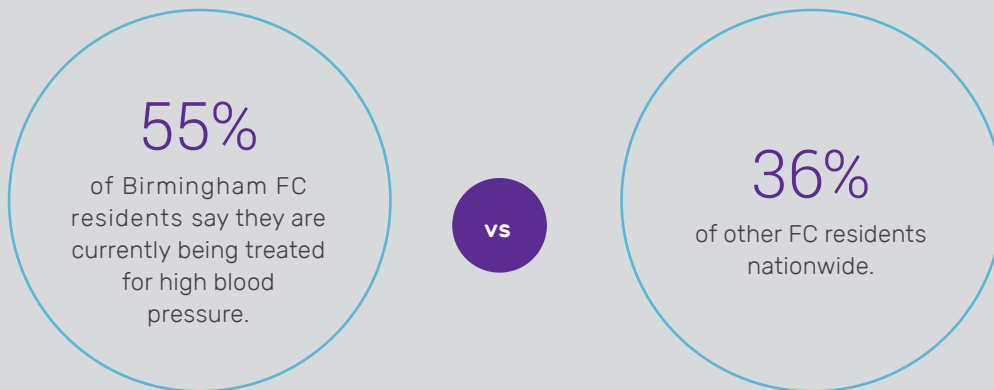
Birmingham's FCs also suffer from the corollaries of concentrated poverty, including poor health conditions. A majority of residents, 55%, say they are currently being treated for high blood pressure (vs. 36% of other FC residents nationwide) and about one in four (23%) are being treated for diabetes (vs. 17% of others nationwide). Job-seekers in Birmingham's FCs are also more likely than those in others nationwide to say health problems are their biggest problem in finding employment – 27% vs. 20%, respectively.




Like many disadvantaged areas, Birmingham's FCs suffer from a negative cycle that hampers economic opportunity and growth. Below-average educational attainment and poor health conditions leave much of these communities' potential human capital undeveloped, which makes it more difficult for city leaders to promote economic diversification and attract high-growth industries such as IT and engineering.

As the data from Birmingham-area FC residents demonstrate, the solutions require coordinated efforts on multiple fronts – including initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and targeted skills development – to help residents improve their workforce marketability over the long term. According to a report published by the Alabama Workforce Council's Statewide Educational Attainment Committee, the state will have to add 500,000 new high-skilled employees by 2025 to meet the demands of industry. Preparing Birmingham residents for jobs of the future is one way to address this goal.

Below-average educational attainment and poor health conditions leave much of these communities' potential human capital undeveloped.





An aerial photograph of a city with various buildings, including a prominent church with two spires, and a playground in the foreground. A large, dark blue semi-transparent rectangle is overlaid in the center of the image, containing white text.

Almost half of fragile community residents say they have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, vs. 28% of American adults overall. Fragile community residents are also more likely than other Americans to have been diagnosed with diabetes or depression.



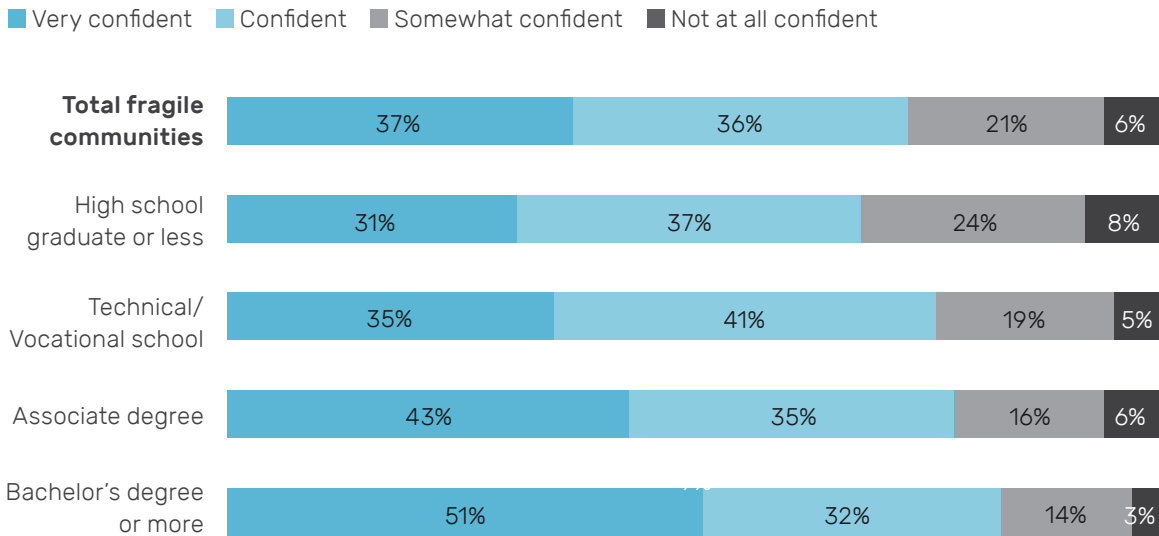
6

Mindset

The CAO/Gallup fragile communities research also addresses the mindset of Americans living in areas of concentrated poverty, specifically the extent to which they are able to maintain levels of self-confidence and determination needed to pursue long-term goals amid the challenging life circumstances so many of them face.

As in the 2017 study, the current results suggest most FC residents in the U.S. do not suffer from a sense of futility. Two-thirds (66%) say people in the area where they live can get ahead by working hard, a figure that is consistent across racial groups and among oversampled cities. On a more personal level, almost three-fourths of FC residents nationwide say they are “very confident” (37%) or “confident” (36%) that they can improve their own lives. That confidence trends upward with education, where at least two-thirds, even among the least-educated residents, give one of these two responses.

How confident are you that you can improve your own life – very confident, confident, somewhat confident or not at all confident?



Residents’ confidence about their ability to achieve more specific goals – including those related to their careers, finances and health – also rises sharply with their education level. Such findings are consistent with an extensive body of research showing that specific education interventions can improve self-efficacy toward a broad range of outcomes, from managing chronic health conditions to starting new businesses.

Measuring “grit” in America’s fragile communities

CAO and Gallup are exploring other ways to assess the psychological resources FC residents need to persevere through setbacks to achieve success. One validated assessment is the Grit Scale developed by University of Pennsylvania psychology professor Angela Duckworth. It measures two traits that Duckworth’s research has found to predict achievement:

1. **grit, defined as “the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals;”** and
2. **self-control, defined as “the voluntary regulation of impulses in the presence of momentarily gratifying temptations.”**

The 10-item version of Duckworth’s Grit Scale was included on the 2018 fragile communities survey. Respondents are asked to rate the extent to which each item describes them on a five-point scale, with five items positively related to grit and self-control, and the other five indicating a lack of those traits.

The vast majority of FC residents say “I am a hard worker” is very much (67%) or mostly (19%) like them. They are less likely to say the other four items positively addressing perseverance describes them, though in each case a majority says it is at least mostly like them.

The vast majority of fragile community residents say “I am a hard worker” is very much (67%) or mostly (19%) like them.

For each of the following, please describe how true each is in describing you – very much like you, mostly like you, somewhat like you, not much like you or not like you at all.

RESULTS AMONG ALL FC RESIDENTS

	VERY MUCH LIKE ME	MOSTLY LIKE ME		NOT LIKE ME AT ALL	NOT MUCH LIKE ME
I am a hard worker.	67%	19%	I have difficulty staying focused on projects that take more than a few months.	29%	31%
I finish whatever I begin.	42%	28%	I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	25%	33%
I am diligent. I never give up.	41%	31%	New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	20%	28%
I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.	38%	29%	My interests change from year to year.	19%	30%
Setbacks don't discourage me. I don't give up easily.	31%	27%	I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	18%	33%

The mindsets prevalent in America's FCs represent an important consideration in developing strategies for lowering barriers to opportunity. Self-efficacy, economic optimism and the capacity to stay focused on long-term goals are all vital in helping lower-income residents envision and work toward better lives for themselves and their families. CAO and Gallup will continue to develop ways to assess these psychological factors, in order to better evaluate the effectiveness of interventions related to education, strengths development and resilience-building.



Almost three-fourths of fragile community residents nationwide say they are “very confident” (37%) or “confident” (36%) that they can improve their own lives.

Conclusion

This report represents another step forward in CAO's partnership with Gallup to develop a set of actionable survey indicators that capture valuable inputs about opportunity barriers and solutions from residents of America's fragile communities. This approach is unique because it asks people closest to the matters at hand to share their hopes, fears and aspirations with people who may be far removed from the daily grip of fragility; yet, are fundamentally committed to moving residents from promise to prosperity in our age of agility.

The inclusion of our new CJI is the first phase in the development of a broader Opportunity Index that will allow stakeholders to compare perceived access to opportunity across communities and over time. This year's results provide a national baseline with regard to criminal justice, and highlight the challenges facing cities like Chicago that are desperately seeking to improve relations with law enforcement in neighborhoods plagued by violent crime.

The broader index, to be launched in 2020, will add dimensions that track perceived access to education and employment opportunities, as well as the psychological factors — such as resilience and self-efficacy — that help FC residents pursue their goals. Such information can be an invaluable tool for designing public, private and faith-sector initiatives to improve their own lives, as well as the stability of their families and broader communities.

Appendix: CAO/Gallup Criminal Justice Index

The 2018 wave of the CAO/Gallup Fragile Communities survey featured seven questions that were designed to measure different aspects of a person's perceptions of the legal system, as well as their own experiences, or those of other people in their lives. The items included:

1. *How much confidence do you have in the police in your area?*
2. *How fairly or unfairly do you think each of the following treat people like you?*
Local police?
3. *How fairly or unfairly do you think each of the following treat people like you?* The courts/
legal system?
4. *How many people, if any at all, do you know who personally had the following happen to them?* Were treated unfairly by the police?
5. *How many people, if any at all, do you know who personally had the following happen to them?* Were unfairly sent to jail?
6. *How much respect do you have for the police in your area?*
7. *How many people, if any at all, do you know who personally had the following happen to them?* Stayed in jail because they didn't have enough bail money?

As a first step in the index-building process, Gallup reviewed the results of each item overall and within key sub-groups. Over the course of this analysis, researchers determined items 6 and 7 should be excluded from the final composite indicator. Item 7, which touches on problems with the U.S. bail system, was dropped because responses are likely affected by factors other than perceived fairness of the system. The question wording may be revised in future waves of the survey with an eye toward adding an item on pre-trial process like bail to the CJI.

Though the remaining five items were assessed on the same type of scale (4-point), the interpretation of the scale differed from item to item. Researchers transformed all items to a 3-point scale with a more cohesive conceptual structure. In this process, the "negative" values of each item were combined into one category. Unidimensionality of concept was established using standard statistical techniques, including exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Scale reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha.

ABOUT GALLUP

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

ABOUT THURGOOD MARSHALL COLLEGE FUND

Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf) is the nation's largest organization exclusively representing the Black College Community. TMCf member-schools include the publicly supported Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly Black Institutions, enrolling nearly 80% of all students attending black colleges and universities. Through scholarships, capacity-building and research initiatives, innovative programs, and strategic partnerships, TMCf is a vital resource in the PK-12 and higher education space. The organization is also the source of top employers seeking top talent for competitive internships and good jobs. To date, the organization has awarded more than \$250 million in such assistance to its students and member-schools.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ADVANCING OPPORTUNITY

In 2016, TMCf received a \$26 million gift from the Charles Koch Foundation and Koch Industries to launch the Center for Advancing Opportunity (CAO) to expand educational, social and economic opportunities in our nation's most fragile communities through original research, educational programs and direct engagement with residents. By listening to different community voices and supporting scholars and students committed to making a positive difference, we work to empower people eager to put ideas into action and discover mutually beneficial solutions to bolster fragile communities across the country.

CAO is building the capacity of HBCUs to engage talented faculty in researching these issues and building a pipeline of talent that can contribute to developing solutions. In 2017, CAO established its first campus-based research center at an HBCU – The Center for the Study of Economic Mobility at Winston-Salem State University. In 2018, CAO established two more centers – The Center for Justice Research at Texas Southern University and The Center for Educational Opportunity at Albany State University.

Each year, CAO invites HBCUs to submit research proposals to broaden the field of scholarship on FCs and engage undergraduate and graduate students in the identification and implementation of evidence-based solutions. For information about future opportunities to apply for grants, please visit www.advancingopportunity.org.

ABOUT THE CHARLES KOCH FOUNDATION

Everyone has the ability to learn, contribute and succeed if they have the freedom and opportunity to do so. That's why, more than 50 years ago, Charles G. Koch began supporting education. The Charles Koch Foundation, founded in 1980, continues this work by funding research and education that help people expand their horizons, develop their skills and help others.

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This report and the data on which it is based represent another step forward in CAO's partnership with Gallup to develop a set of actionable survey indicators that capture valuable inputs about opportunity barriers and solutions from residents of America's disadvantaged communities.



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