

Shining a Spotlight on the Valley Region —

Shining a Spotlight is an executive summary of the 2025 Valley Community Index.

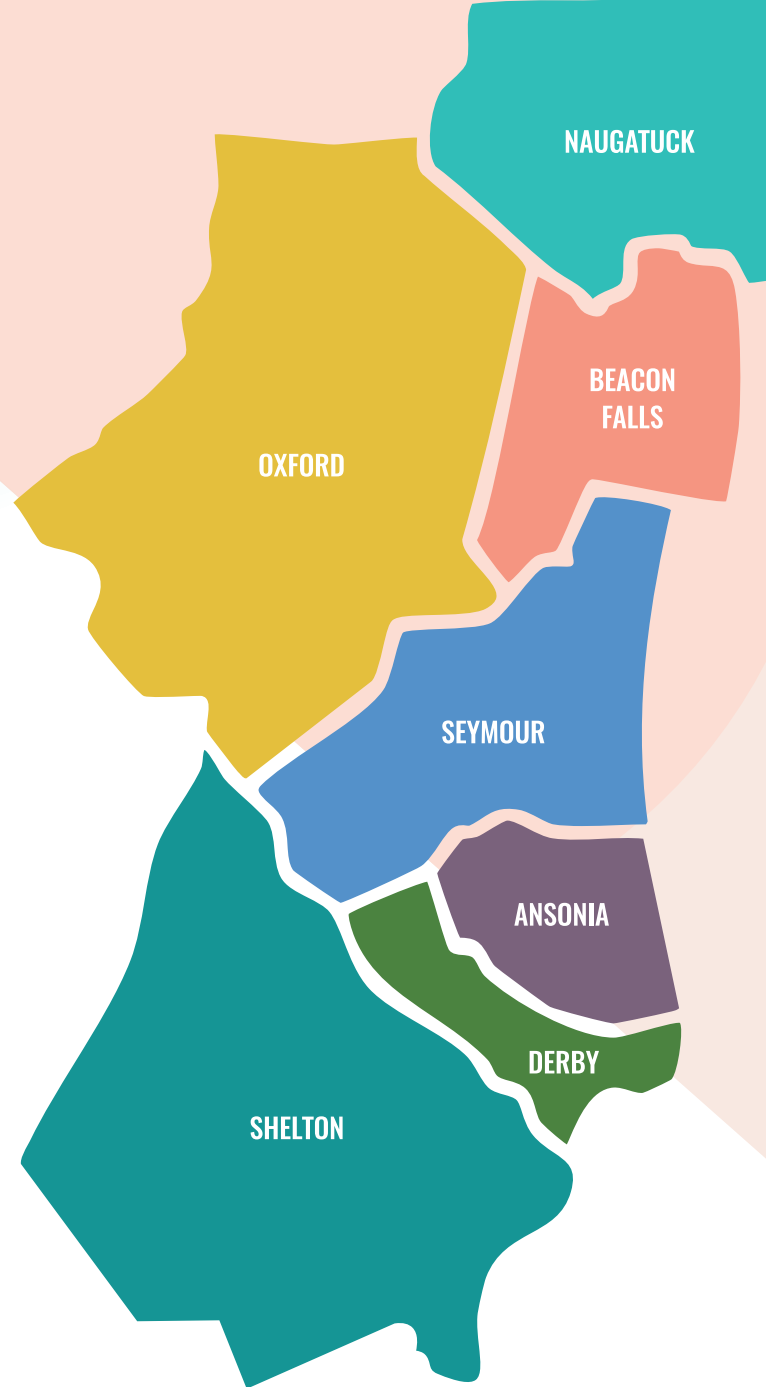
The reports identify areas where we as a region can “shine a light” on accomplishments and areas of vulnerability. It also encourages collaboration on strategic endeavors to make improvements where needed and enhance the quality of life in the Valley.

The Index offers a clear and grounded look at the conditions shaping life across Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton.

Drawing from local data, community surveys, and input from local residents and professionals, the Index lifts up key trends in food security, housing, healthcare, education, economic stability, and overall well-being

At first glance, the Valley appears stable, unemployment is low, incomes have risen, and many residents report general life satisfaction. But a closer look reveals disparities by town, race, income, and age that influence everything from who can access care to who has a stable place to live.

The Index brings those gaps to the surface and provides a roadmap for shared solutions. The following findings highlight key patterns shaping health and opportunity in the Valley.

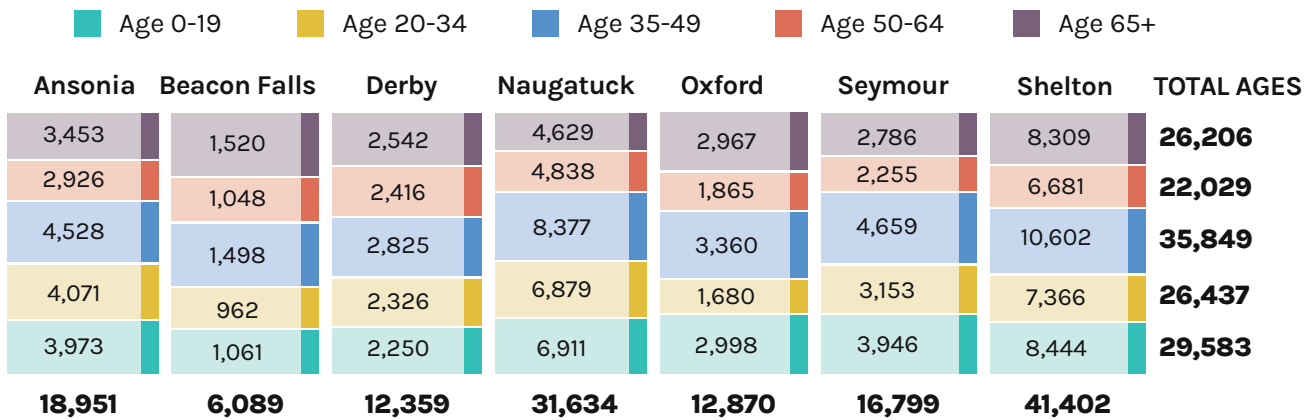


The Valley's strength lies in its people, its relationships, partnerships, and community connections. **More than 60% of surveyed residents report helping their neighbors** and **more than 78% volunteer with organizations or their towns and cities.** These are defining characteristics of the Valley.



The Valley is Growing More Diverse, Particularly in Ansonia, Derby, and Seymour.

Total Population by Age Group



140,104 people live in the Valley

Latino and Black populations are increasing, while the White population is declining.



Nearly **1 in 5** residents are seniors **aged 65+**



of the Valley population is **aged 17 and below.**

The Valley population is getting older.



The median age in the region is **43.9 yrs,**

which is higher than the state average.

Through committee discussions and community feedback, **five themes related to economic security and basic needs consistently rose to the top:**

- Housing Access and Affordability
- Food Insecurity
- Employment and Workforce Development
- Community Connection, and
- Transportation Access.

Educational attainment remains a key driver of economic mobility. Residents with a **bachelor's degree earned an average of \$73,000 annually**, compared to **\$46,000 for those with a high school diploma** and **\$36,000 for those who did not graduate from high school.**



Economic Instability Affects Nearly Every Aspect of a Person's Life.

The Valley is home to over 50,000 jobs, reflecting a 12% increase since 2003. However, manufacturing jobs have declined by 15% over the last two decades. As of November 2024, unemployment rates across the Valley were below pre-pandemic levels.

Across the region, Valley-wide, the median household income stands at \$99,800. Shelton and Oxford report some of the region's highest median household incomes, exceeding \$114,000, while Ansonia and Derby report medians under \$81,000.

Barriers to employment include limited access to affordable childcare, job training/skillset, and reliable transportation.





Almost One Quarter of Surveyed Residents

Self-report Feeling Financially Insecure.



In Ansonia & Derby
over half the households are ALICE
or living in poverty.

WHAT IS IT?

The **federal poverty rate** for a household of four members in 2025 as defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services is **\$32,150.00**



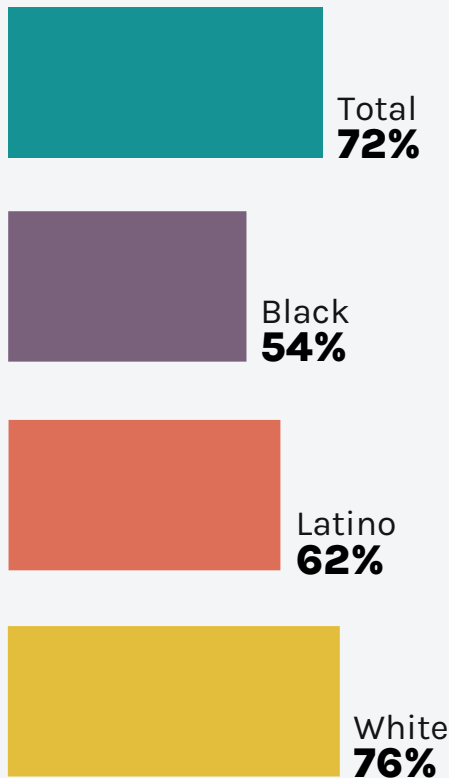
Nearly 1 in 5 Valley residents

reported **food insecurity** in the past year, and many experienced housing affordability challenges.

WHAT IS IT?

ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) describes a segment of the population that earns above the Federal Poverty Level but still struggles to afford basic necessities. **These households, while employed, lack sufficient income to cover the costs of housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, and technology.**

Homeownership in the Valley by Race/Ethnicity 2023



Housing Affordability Varies Significantly Across the Valley.

If you live in the Valley, you are less likely to own a home if you are Black (54%) or Latino (62%) than if you are White (76%).

Residents report difficulty finding available units, managing high utility bills and dealing with aging infrastructure. To afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in the Valley, in 2024, a worker must earn between **25.67 and 31.77/hour**.

15% of well-being survey respondents reported being unable to afford adequate shelter in the past year, **up from 9% in 2021**.

In Ansonia and Derby, many households are cost burdened. Within the Valley, the combined cost burdened and severely cost burdened rates range **from 24% in Oxford up to 45% in Derby**. This burden is felt by renters as well as homeowners.

WHAT IS IT?

Cost Burdened:

30.0%-49.9% of income spent on housing.

Severely Cost Burdened:

50% or more of income is spent on housing.





Food Insecurity Continues to Rise in The Valley, Closely Tied to Wages, Housing Costs, and Family Size.

In 2024
nearly



of respondents have reported
**experiencing food
insecurity.**



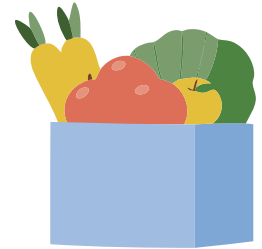
Food pantry use increased more than a third from 2023-2024.

with the steepest increases among seniors and
families with children.

Of those surveyed, food was ranked as the second
most important economic issue.

Despite growing efforts by local organizations to
expand food assistance, **the demand continues
to exceed available**

resources. Some school
districts have established
weekend food programs
to ensure children have
access to meals beyond
the classroom.



In 2024, There are 26,206 Seniors, 19% of the Valley's Total Population.

Between **2023 and 2024**, food pantry utilization among
Valley residents aged 60 and older **increased 31.4%**. Housing
for seniors is typically a major expense. The ability to age in
place is the second most prominent issue after food security.
Senior Centers are a hub and social outlet for many seniors
and they need affordable places to live and be connected.

Food Pantry Utilization

	Increase 2023-2024
Age 0-17	51.7%
Age 18-59	29.4%
Age 60+	31.4%
Total	36.7%

Senior friendly communication methods that help close the information gap:



Internet
Access



Digital
Literacy



Printed
Newsletters



Local Radio &
Newspapers

Older adults are deeply connected to their
communities. Most report satisfaction with their
local area. **75% of Seniors 65 and over reported
living comfortably/doing alright financially.**

Seniors suffering from elder abuse tend to be female and
across all senior age categories. The top three commonly
reported allegations are: **exploitation;**
self-neglect, and neglect by others.





Understanding the Social Drivers of Health

Plays a Critical Role in Shaping Health and Wellbeing Outcomes in The Region.

Nearly 30% of Valley adults surveyed report delaying medical care in 2024. Such as skipping medications and delaying doctor visits. Poor housing conditions, limited access to nutritious food and environmental exposures, elevate the risk for chronic illnesses

Disparities are not distributed evenly, they are often concentrated in neighborhoods with:



Higher Poverty Rates



Aging Housing Stock



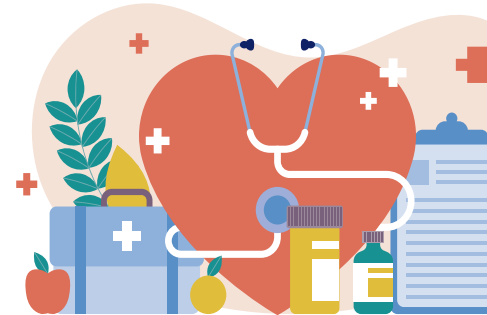
Limited Public Transit



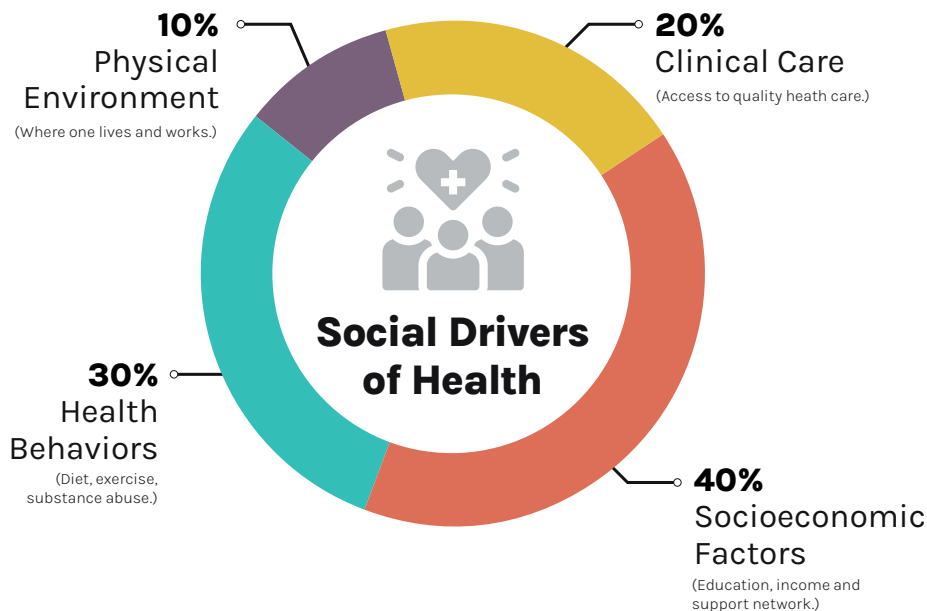
Heart disease in the Valley is **4% higher** than the Connecticut State average.

Life expectancy varies significantly, highlighting disparities tied to health, income, and environmental conditions, ranging from 76.4 years to 82.1 years.

In the Valley, falls and violence-related injuries continue to be significant drivers of emergency room visits.



Social Drivers of Health



Maternal health outcomes

remain an area of concern statewide...practitioners in the Valley note the lasting implications for both maternal and child health, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to improve access and outcomes across diverse populations.

Between 2019 and 2023 the total number of **years-of-life-lost before age 75 per 10,000 residents was 13.7% higher** in the Valley compared to the state average.





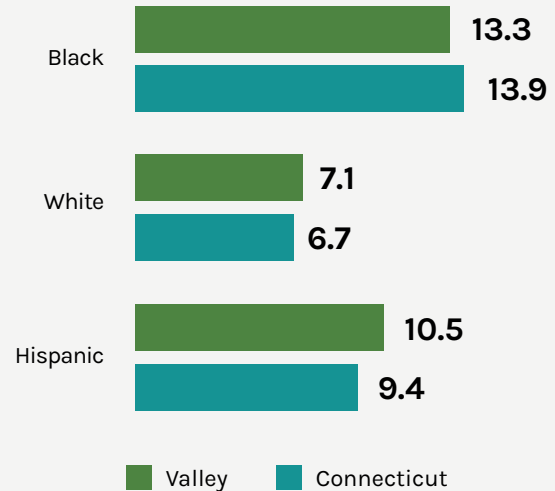
Mental Health Remains a Central Factor

Influencing the Overall Wellbeing of Valley Residents.

Mental health challenges begin early and persist across the lifespan. Access to mental health for youth remains limited across the region. While the regional overall rate for pediatric mental health hospital encounters is slightly lower than the statewide rate, disparities by race are higher than state rates.

The Valley's 762 mental health related encounters per 10,000 residents is lower than the state rate of 934 per 10,000.

Pediatric Mental Health Hospital Encounter Rates per 1,000



Mental Wellbeing & Support of Valley Community Members

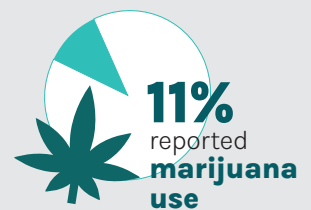
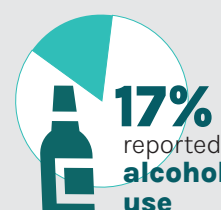
"How often do you get the social and emotional support you need?"	All	Age 18-34	Age 35-49	Age 50-64	Age 65+
Always	33%	18%	38%	30%	48%
Usually	34%	42%	26%	37%	31%
Sometimes	18%	15%	21%	22%	13%
Rarely	9%	21%	6%	6%	2%
Never	4%	3%	7%	3%	4%
DK/Refused	1%	0%	2%	3%	1%



Substance Use Such as Alcohol, Opioids, and Cannabis

Remains an Ongoing Public Health Challenge in The Valley.

In a **2024 student survey** from Ansonia, Seymour, and Shelton, students (during a 30-day period) reported:



The Valley did see a decline in overdose deaths in 2023.



Children Make Up 21% of the Valley Population



Nearly **half of all public-school students** in the Valley are eligible for **free or reduced lunch**.



All districts experienced **an increase in English Language Learners since 2021-2022** and make up a significant and growing portion of the student population.



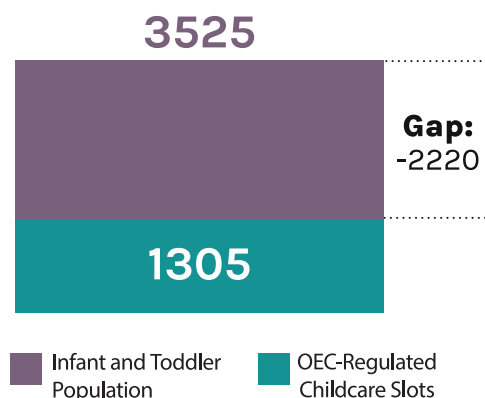
The region's overall **four-year graduation rate was high at 88%** similar to the state's graduation rates 89%, but disparities persist across towns and student populations.

Derby and Ansonia report the lowest graduation rates, reflecting broader systemic challenges. Black (80%) and Latino (83%) students were below the 88% graduation rate for all students.

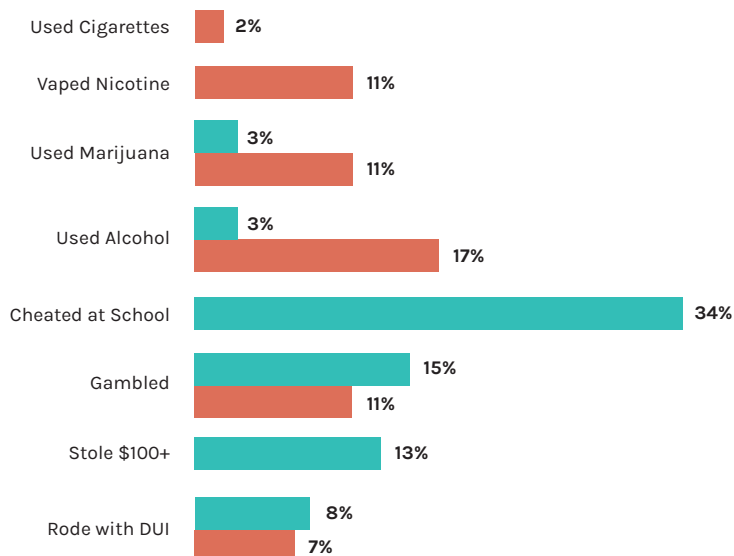
Chronic absenteeism is particularly pronounced in communities with lower income, housing instability and unmet basic needs. Most Valley communities are seeing a decrease in the percentage of students chronically absent.

Access to affordable, high-quality childcare remains a pressing challenge for some families in the Valley with small children.

Child Care Availability: Children 0-2 in 2023 Available Childcare Seats 2024.



Risky Behaviors Reported By *Valley Youth 2022-2024 Comparison



*Ansonia, Seymour and Shelton students surveyed. Some data categories not available for both years

WHAT IS IT?

Chronic absenteeism is when a student misses at least 10% of the school days during a school year.



Conclusion

The 2025 Valley Community Index reflects a detailed picture of life in the region, what is going well and where challenges still stand in the way of health and well-being. Across all seven towns, residents and partners shared their stories, concerns, and hopes, helping to paint a fuller picture of the systems that affect daily life, whether that is access to care, stable housing, education, mental health, or economic stability.

The gaps identified in the Index are not abstract. They impact families, youth, older adults, and working individuals every day. But so do the strengths, dedicated community organizations, resilient residents, and cross-sector partnerships committed to problem-solving and progress. The Valley has a long history of working together, and that collaboration is key to addressing the root causes of health challenges.



To download a full copy of the 2025 Valley Community Index scan the QR code.

Acknowledgments

The Valley Community Index is a collaborative effort that reflects the dedication, insight, and contributions of many individuals and organizations across the region.

A heartfelt thanks to the Valley Council for Health and Human Services and its member organizations for their guidance and support. The Index would not be possible without the commitment of community leaders, nonprofit partners, municipal officials, healthcare providers, educators, and residents who generously shared their expertise, time, and stories.

Special thanks to project collaborators and advisors, including: DataHaven; Griffin Health; local municipal health departments and town governments; members of the Community Index Coordinating Committee; the Naugatuck Valley Health District; and the Valley Community Foundation.

Special recognition goes to the tremendous contributions of community members who participated in listening sessions, responded to surveys, and lent their voices to this project. Their lived experiences are the foundation of the Index.

DataHaven



GRIFFIN HEALTH



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Naugatuck Valley
Health District**



VALLEY COUNCIL
for Health and Human Services

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Read** the full Community Index report. Utilize the Index data to help **create cross-sector solutions.**
- **Stay informed** about key issues affecting our region. Help instill the importance of community engagement in all our citizens.
- **Become an advocate for change** in your local municipality or school district and with state policymakers.
- Participate in local and regional **community conversations.**
- Focus your resources, time, and talents to have the **greatest impact for those most in need.**
- **Participate** in the Naugatuck Valley Health Improvement Plan.