

Legacy *Matters*

Shining a Spotlight
on the Valley Region



Special Edition

in this issue: Sept./Oct. 2016

Building an Informed
Community

Your Executive Summary
of the 2016 Valley
Community Index



October 2016

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253-A Elizabeth Street
Derby, CT 06418
203-751-9162
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As a reader of the *Legacy Matters* newsletter, I hope you have come to know and appreciate how much we, at VCF, value building an informed community. It is for this reason, as a special edition of the September/October newsletter, we are pleased to share with you - *Shining a Spotlight on the Valley Region*. This report is an executive summary of the newly released, 60-page **2016 Valley Community Index**.

The Community Index is a single-source report that provides timely, comprehensive socio-economic, education, health, and well-being data shaping our region. Local leaders have spent more than two years working together to identify the most important indicators that reflect the changing needs and opportunities of our Valley. The more we know about our region, the more we will be able to continue to engage with each other in meaningful dialogues to identify community needs and develop responsive strategies.

The Valley's well-being and strength is a reflection of how well we come together to solve challenges and issues for the common good. Each of us has a role to play in making the Valley a better place to live and work. It is our hope that once you have read this executive summary, there will be several data points that will surprise you, tug at your heart, and motivate you to learn more.

Please give me a call or contact any of the nonprofits involved in this work to learn ways in which you can help make a difference.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Sharon Closius".

Sharon L. Closius
President and CEO
Valley Community Foundation

P.S. This summary and the full Community Index are available at www.valleyfoundation.org.

For Good. For Ever. For the Valley.

Shining a Spotlight

ON THE VALLEY REGION

Ansonia
Beacon Falls
Derby
Naugatuck
Oxford
Seymour
Shelton

Informed decision making has significant impact on a community's well-being. Knowing where needs and opportunities exist and having data to support plans for change is essential for long-term success.

Shining a Spotlight is an executive summary of the 2016 Valley Community Index: Understanding the Valley Region. It identifies areas where we as a region can “shine a light” on our accomplishments and areas of vulnerability, and encourage collaboration on strategic endeavors to enhance the quality of life in the Valley.

The 2016 Community Index is part of an ongoing tradition of providing comprehensive socioeconomic, education, health, and well-being data of the Valley Region. The Index was developed through an inclusive and collaborative process, reflecting the strong community engagement of Valley leaders who are deeply committed to preserving and strengthening the resiliency, determination, compassion, and overall well-being that has long characterized this region.

Lead authors of the Index, DataHaven, provided data collected from federal, state, and local agencies, as well as information collected from Valley residents as part of the statewide 2015 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey.

This executive summary captures the essence of the full report. Continued growth requires a collective effort of individuals, key stakeholders, community leaders, and investors to drill even deeper into the data that has been provided in order to develop strategies for long-term success.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Since 1990, the population in the Valley increased by 12 percent, faster than Connecticut. The Valley's minority population doubled.

By age group, population change was relatively stable in Ansonia, Derby, and Seymour. Beacon Falls and Oxford populations grew across all age groups. Ansonia and Derby have the most racially and ethnically diverse populations; the largest number of self-identified racial and ethnic minorities lives in Ansonia (25 percent of all minorities in the Valley).

By 2014, 11 percent of Valley residents were foreign-born (just below 14 percent statewide). Immigrants bring to the Valley the cultural perspectives of approximately 90 home countries from every region around the world.

From 1990 to 2010, the population of **children (ages 0-17) living in the Valley hardly increased**. The number of **young adults (ages 18-34) decreased**.

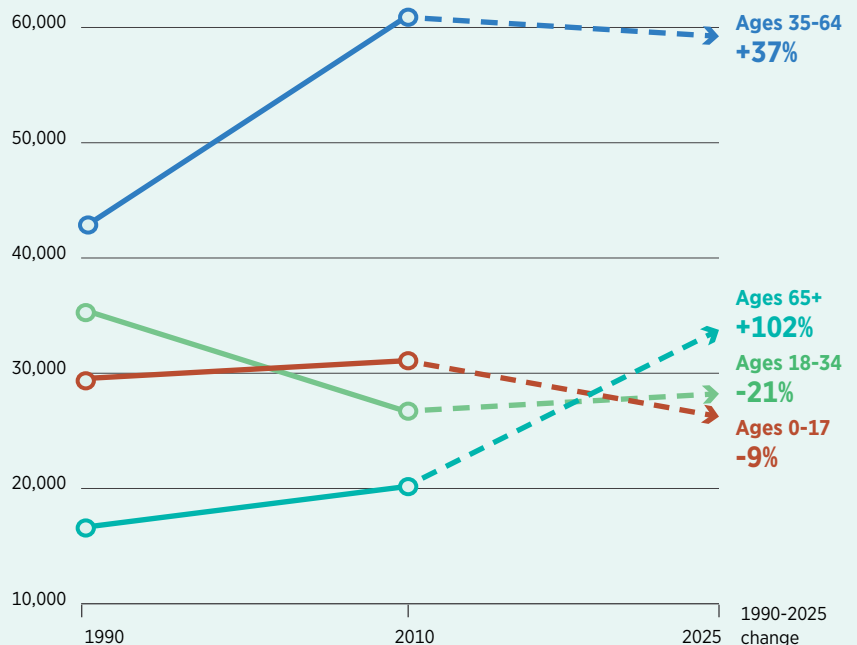
The population of **middle-aged adults (ages 35-64) grew** the most.

One in three children identified as a member of a racial or ethnic minority in 2014, compared to one in ten in 1990.



90% OF SENIORS WANT TO AGE IN-PLACE

Population and Projected Growth by Age in the Valley, 1990-2025



1 IN 3 CHILDREN

IDENTIFY AS A MEMBER OF A RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITY

Fewer children and more aging adults have made the total Valley population older in general, trends that mirror statewide changes. The growth in older adults is occurring nationally and internationally and is due to aging Baby Boomers, who began turning 65 in 2011.

This maturing population creates opportunities for a larger volunteer base but also presents challenges. Ninety percent of seniors want to age in-place in their home and community. This will require alternative modes of transportation, an increased need for access to in-home services and resources to remodel older homes to accommodate their physical needs.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Over the next decade, seniors are projected to become the fastest-growing age group.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Valley is outpacing statewide job growth, and unemployment in the Valley is at its lowest since 2008.

With a total population of more than 130,000, the Valley is on par with Connecticut's largest cities as an economic and political force.

6.1%
UNEMPLOYMENT
IN THE VALLEY

vs

5.6%
UNEMPLOYMENT
IN CONNECTICUT

The Valley is continuing to make a successful transition from a predominately manufacturing base to creating jobs in a wide range of sectors.

+2,500
NEW JOBS
IN THE VALLEY

From 2002 to 2014, **2,500 net jobs were added** in Valley towns, a growth rate of six percent (outpacing zero percent statewide growth).

The largest number of jobs were added in **health care, administrative and waste management, and company management**. Finance and insurance, as well as manufacturing, lost the most jobs.

In 2015, **the unemployment rate was 6.1 percent**, just above the state rate of 5.6 percent.

Wages at Valley jobs grew by an inflation-adjusted six percent, faster than four percent growth statewide.

Over the next several years, local developers are projected to build **hundreds of housing units in mixed-use developments** to attract current and prospective residents.

Reclaiming contaminated properties, known as brownfields, is one of the **largest opportunities for growth** in the Valley.

A Rich History of Community Engagement

The seven Valley towns share a common history and identity, a spirited community culture, and strong institutions, which have a longstanding reputation for working together to identify community needs and develop responsive strategies. Collective impact is intrinsic to community leaders in the Valley as illustrated by the following:

The Valley United Way's Volunteer Action Center—one of the few in the country, and including corporate, individual, and youth volunteers—collectively volunteered at least 42,500 hours during 2015, which has a monetary equivalence of approximately \$1,140,000.

Valley municipalities collaborated to receive recognition as the 20-town Naugatuck Valley Corridor, a federally-designated Economic Development District (EDD). Through EDD work, economic growth is more evenly distributed across the Valley, including the remediation of at least 303 acres of abandoned industrial sites or brownfields.

Early childhood collaboratives bring services to children and families throughout the region to ensure that access to education, health, safety, and family well-being activities are available to all Valley children and families.

The Valley Council for Health and Human Services, a group of more than 40 nonprofit organizations, problem-solve together on cross-sector issues facing the region.

Griffin Hospital and the Naugatuck Valley Health District worked together to proactively address issue areas such as childhood obesity, early detection screening for cancer, childhood asthma, and substance abuse prevention.

HOWEVER,
45% OF VALLEY WORKERS
EARN LESS THAN LIVING WAGE

WHAT IS IT?

Living wage is the income needed to cover the costs of living in the region. **In the Valley, living wage is \$40,000 per year.**

Socioeconomic disparities are rising, suggesting that Valley residents are not faring equally well in their education, employment, health, and well-being.

Socioeconomic status is measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation and reveals inequities in access to and distribution of resources. Residents living in low-income households report greater levels of severe financial stress, such as difficulty in paying for housing, childcare, and food.

Low socioeconomic status and its related issues—such as lower educational achievement, poverty, and poor health—ultimately affect everyone.

In the Valley, these factors disproportionately impact the diverse towns of Ansonia, Derby, and Naugatuck.

The United Way of Connecticut found that **a typical family of four in the Valley needed \$66,088** in 2012 to cover the basic expenses of housing, childcare, food, transportation, and healthcare.

Approximately **one in three Valley households earn less than what they need** to cover all necessary living costs.

WHAT IS IT?

People living in poverty have annual household incomes below the federal poverty guideline.

Under January 2016 guidelines, this is equivalent to \$16,020 per year for a family of two, or \$24,300 for a family of four.

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

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

9% OF THE VALLEY POPULATION LIVES IN POVERTY

20% OF VALLEY RESIDENTS ARE LOW-INCOME

39% OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE COST-BURDENED

17% OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE SEVERELY COST-BURDENED



1 IN 3 HOUSEHOLDS IN THE VALLEY EARN LESS THAN NEEDED TO COVER LIVING COSTS



1 IN 3 WORKERS HAD CHALLENGES FINDING EMPLOYMENT, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH LESS EDUCATION

37% OF LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS ARE IN GOOD HEALTH



Only **37 percent** of residents **earning less than \$30,000/year** report they are in good health.

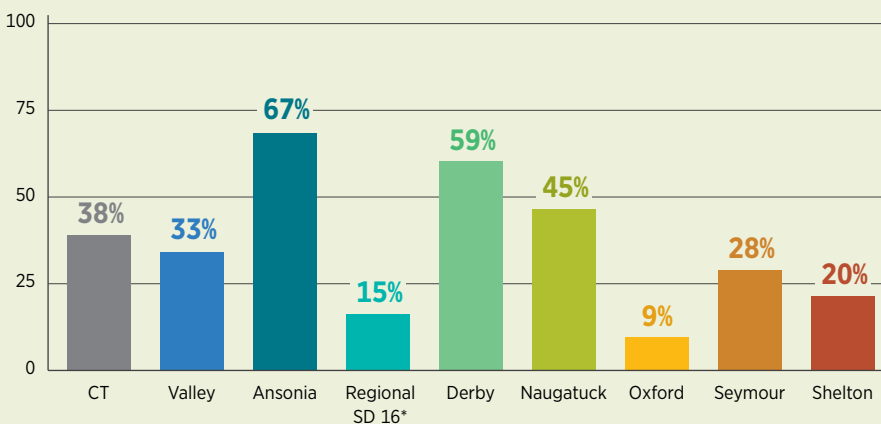
Adults with low household incomes are substantially **more likely to have used the emergency room** more than once in the past year.

FRPM-Eligible Students in Valley Public School Districts, 2014-15

WHAT IS IT?

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

* Regional SD 16 serves students from Beacon Falls and Prospect, CT.



54% OF LOW-INCOME CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL

VS

67% OF HIGHER INCOME CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL



75% OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS GRADUATED IN FOUR YEARS

VS

92% OF HIGHER INCOME STUDENTS GRADUATED IN FOUR YEARS

The number of low-income students, measured by enrollment in the Free and Reduced Price Meals program, **varies widely by town.**

Preschool enrollment is lower among children from low-income households (54 percent) compared to children from higher income households (67 percent).

Regulated childcare in the Valley costs between \$9,330 and \$13,390. **For a low-income household, one slot can cost up to 40 percent of their annual budget.**

WHAT IS IT?

Regulated childcare is approved by the Office of Early Childhood and provides care for infants, toddlers, or preschool-aged children (ages 0-4).

The four-year high school graduation rate for low-income students is lower: 75 percent, versus 92 percent for non-low-income students.

Nearly one third of Valley residents report challenges in finding **employment**, particularly those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Sixteen percent of Valley workers without a high school diploma were unemployed, versus five percent of workers with a bachelor's degree or more.

Seventy-five percent of Valley high school graduates who enroll at state or community colleges are placed in **remedial courses to relearn high school material.**

Most enrollments in adult education were for either a **high school completion class** (59 percent) or **English as a Second Language** (37 percent).



75% OF VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES NEED REMEDIAL COURSES IN COLLEGE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Just over half of Valley students pass third grade reading assessments. Less than one third pass eighth grade math assessments.

Early experiences matter—the prenatal months and first five years of life are a period of rapid social and intellectual development for young children. By age three, the brain has grown to 82 percent of its adult size; by age five, this number jumps to 90 percent. Regardless of socioeconomic background, positive interactions at home, in the community, and in other early childhood settings improve young children’s ability to learn, self-express, and engage with others.

Strong language and learning skills by the end of kindergarten set the foundation for reading proficiently by the end of third grade, enabling students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Children who do not develop these skills often have a more difficult time catching up and successfully graduating. Frequent absenteeism and transiency can further disrupt or delay student learning.

The Valley has a significant **shortage of regulated childcare** for very young children; there is less than one slot for every five children age 0-2.

The number of **high-needs students** in the Valley varies widely by school district.

Pass rates on school assessment tests **vary widely by town.**

Chronic absence and truancy are precursors to school drop-out and academic failure.

WHAT IS IT?

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

K-3 CHRONIC ABSENCE, 2013-14*

 **10%**
ANSONIA

 **13%**
DERBY

 **7%**
NAUGATUCK

 **4%**
OXFORD

 **7%**
SEYMOUR

 **7%**
SHELTON

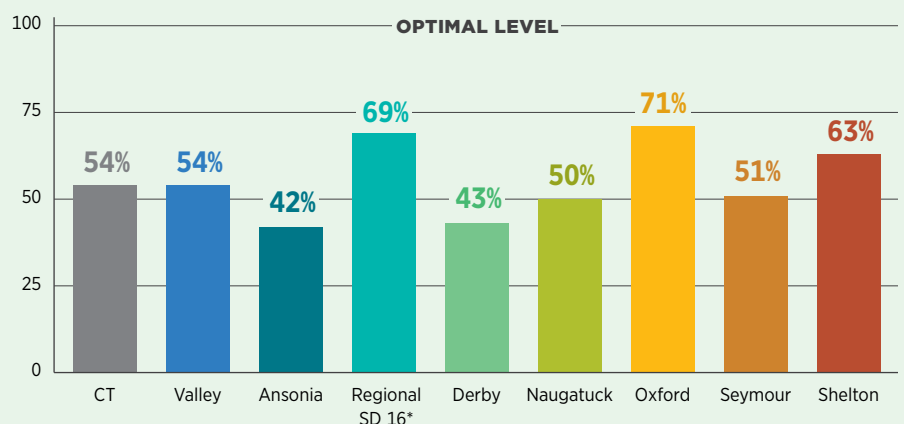
* The chronic absence rate was not available for Regional SD 16, which serves students from Beacon Falls and Prospect, CT.

Third Grade Reading SBAC Pass Rate, Valley Public Schools, 2014-15

WHAT IS IT?

Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is a standardized test that replaced the CT Mastery Test (CMT) in 2015. The pass rate constitutes proficiency.

* Regional SD 16 serves students from Beacon Falls and Prospect, CT.



WHY IT MATTERS

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

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

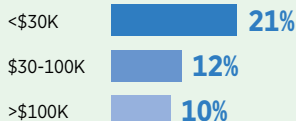
Leading causes of premature death differ among age and socioeconomic groups, but many are considered preventable.

An individual's good health and well-being has a positive ripple effect on his/her family, community, and workplace. Self-rated health among Valley residents is ranked high, but varies across the Valley by income, age, and geography. Mental health and physical health are closely connected, and poor mental health can become a disability that has significant impacts on employment, behavioral health, and overall well-being. Prevention is no longer just the right thing to do morally and ethically for our citizens, it is also the right thing to do to preserve the community's economic viability.

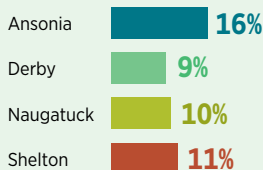
Asthma in the Valley, 2015



Valley, by income



Valley, by town*



* Survey estimates for Beacon Falls, Oxford and Seymour are not listed here due to smaller sample sizes and higher margins of error for estimates for those towns.

Obesity in the Valley, 2015



Valley, by income



Valley, by town*



DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to two rivers that attract boating, swimming, fishing, and scenic respite, the Valley has approximately 75 town-operated parks and recreational facilities and six state parks, which give access to trails, playgrounds, sports facilities, and nature centers.

Sixty percent of Valley residents report they are in good health, similar to statewide levels.

Forty-six percent of Valley residents earning less than \$30,000 per year **postponed or did not get needed medical care** in the past year.

One in five Valley women who gave birth **had non-adequate prenatal care** during pregnancy.

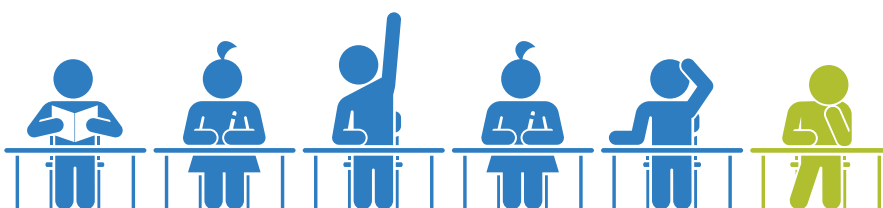
Leading causes of death in the Valley are considered preventable—including **heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes**.

Rates of **asthma and obesity are higher among low-income residents**.

Among older seniors (age 80+), 25 percent suffer from depression; 11 percent battle anxiety.

Almost **one in six students** in grades 7, 9, and 11 **reported having thoughts of hurting themselves**.

1 IN 6 STUDENTS IN GRADES 7, 9, AND 11 THOUGHT ABOUT HURTING THEMSELVES



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Transportation continues to be a major concern for Valley residents in terms of access to jobs and needed services.

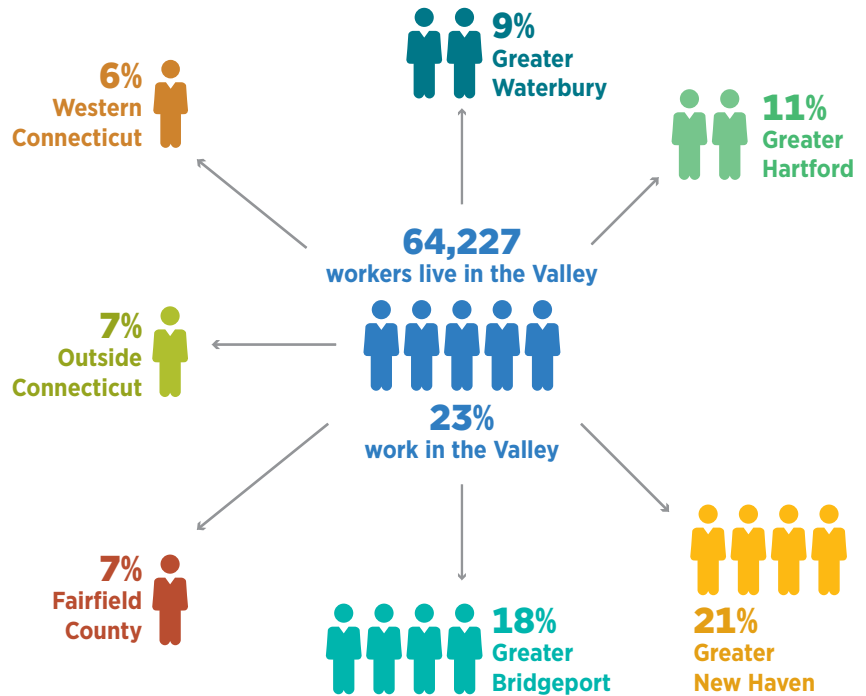
Approximately one-quarter of the Valley workforce had jobs in the Valley; **the rest commuted outside the region.**

Valley residents earning less than \$30,000 are **five times more likely to use public transit or walk** than those who make more.

Older adults who do not drive can use ADA-certified public transit to travel. **However, all of these services are “curb-to-curb,” not “door-to-door.”**

Public transit links the Valley to New Haven, Waterbury, Bridgeport, and beyond through buses, trains, and free reserve-ride services. However, service is infrequent—less than once an hour, or required to be scheduled in advance—and mostly limited to stops along the Route 8 corridor.

Current improvements to Valley transportation infrastructure will help residents without cars gain better access to jobs. State investments in Metro-North’s Waterbury Branch Line will increase Valley train service to Bridgeport and Waterbury.



At the Valley Community Foundation, we believe an informed community is directly connected to the long-term good of the region, today and for generations to come. It is undeniable that we are all connected and what happens to the least of us, happens to all of us. Together, we are all like colorful threads woven into a beautiful tapestry. What we want most of all is to continue to maintain and improve the quality of life for our residents.

Understanding the Valley and building a stronger community starts with knowledge. The more that we know about our region, the better we are able to engage with each other in meaningful dialogues about the pulse of the Valley and what actions are needed to create a more vibrant community.

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

For a complete listing of funders and members of the Advisory Committee, and to view a full version of the 2016 Valley Community Index, visit www.valleyfoundation.org.

For more information, please call the Valley Community Foundation at 203-751-9162.

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**.