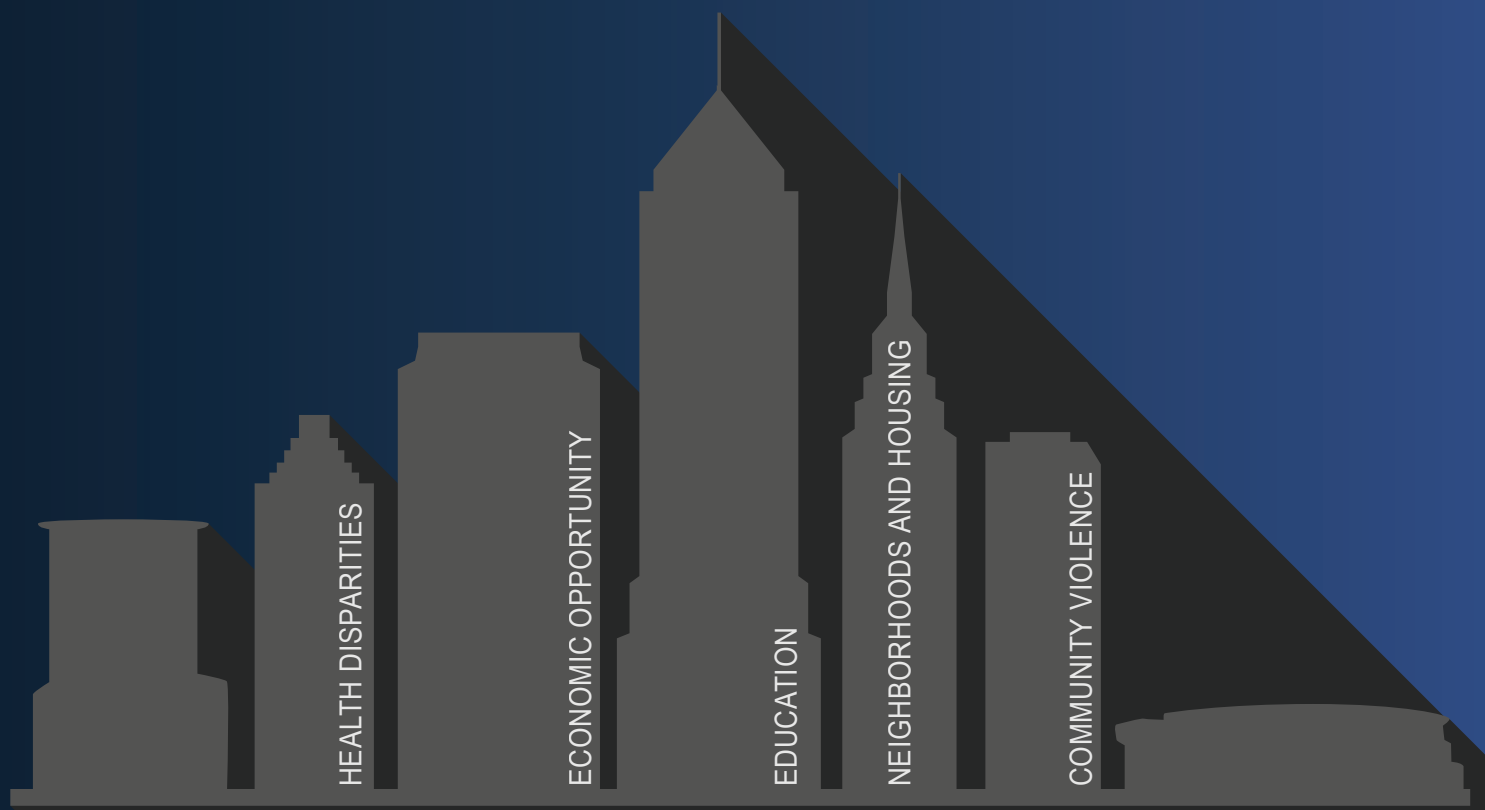




The State of Black



CLEVELAND



CLEVELAND

Troubled | Marginalized

The state of the Black community in Cleveland has been affected by many issues over recent years. Topics ranging from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the digital divide, systemic disinvestment in communities of color and much more have all contributed to troubling outcomes that have stymied progress and perpetuated poverty, unemployment and trauma. For the sake of this report, the following five areas are being highlighted for further review and analysis: Health Disparities, Education, Economic Opportunity, Neighborhoods and Housing and Community Violence. Challenges associated with these five areas have resulted in the current State of Black Cleveland being defined as “Troubled” or “Marginalized”.

The aforementioned issues are instigating cross-sector effects that are hurting Cleveland residents, especially African Americans. And even though the effects of issues such as the Coronavirus pandemic and systemic disinvestment in Cleveland’s Black community may seem like isolated issues, they are hurting several aspects of the city’s ability to thrive and grow, as all quality-of-life issues are interconnected. Unfortunately, Cleveland has been unable to weave these issues together to understand and demonstrate the importance of balanced economic and social prosperity for all its residents which has resulted in the lasting effects of racial segregation and discriminatory policies that continue to plague the city.

Health Disparities

Health Disparities continue to be prevalent in communities of color, particularly the black community. Environmental conditions and disparities combined with the lack of access to high-quality healthcare have created many chronic conditions and critical health issues within the black community, resulting in greater health risks and poorer health outcomes. Unfortunately, racial health disparities and the lack of healthcare coverage have also led to a gap in infant mortality rates as well as overall life expectancy for Cleveland's Black citizens.

Education

Education is the foundation of success for the black community, particularly for the youth who are preparing for a fast-changing, technology-centered work world. And although the Cleveland Metropolitan School District has made significant strides in recent years, the Covid crisis set many of our students back creating even more of a need for academic tutoring support and safety net services for the children who represent the second poorest big city in America. The future of the region's prosperity rests in the ability of its students to matriculate and become a vital part of the workforce.

Economic Opportunity

Economic Opportunity has evaded too many African Americans in the city's urban core, leaving large numbers of people without gainful employment, which typically spirals into other quality of life challenges such as lack of transportation, poor quality housing, and a withering away of community connectivity and engagement.

Neighborhoods and Housing

Neighborhoods have suffered many challenges and setbacks in recent decades, not the least of which was redlining. As a result of redlining, Cleveland is regarded as one of the most segregated cities in the country. The lasting effects and legacy of redlining in Cleveland are very prevalent today, which contributes to racial segregation and disinvestment in the neighborhoods where mostly Black Cleveland residents live. Disinvestment and urban decay demonstrate the weight of the burden to survive and thrive as African Americans in Cleveland.

Community Violence

Community Violence continues to reach record numbers in black neighborhoods with no end in sight. Gang activity is surging, while 90% of all children in the County's juvenile justice system are people of color. The onset of crime destabilizes communities, incites fear, and reinstates a "redlining" of sorts that relegates lower-income people to live in areas with the highest incidences of crime. As such, something must be done to address this issue in new ways, with new partners bringing forth new methods.

This report will delve deeper into many of these areas, with hopes that the gravity of the black experience in Cleveland will become clearer to key thought leaders, influencers and policymakers. The troubled state of Black Cleveland demands urgent attention, action, and resources.

Health disparities in the healthcare system were recently brought to the forefront showing how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Black community.



Health Care

5.6% Of the Black population in Cleveland **does not have health insurance**

Access to Healthy Food

59% Cuyahoga County Board of Health found that about **59% of the city's population is living in a food desert**

Chronic Disease

↑ Cuyahoga County found that **African American children had higher rates of asthma** compared to white children

The Cuyahoga County community health needs assessment found

↓ **Black, Non-Hispanic women have lower rates of prenatal care in the first trimester** compared to all other racial/ethnic groups

↑ **African Americans had the highest cardiovascular mortality rate** among all racial/ethnic groups in Cuyahoga County overall in 2017

25.8% **Diabetes rates are significantly higher among Black non-Hispanic residents (25.8%)** compared to White non-Hispanic residents (7.7%)

Trauma

↑ **African American children encounter more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** and are 30% more likely than non-Hispanic children to experience ACEs

70% **70% of non-Hispanic black children in Ohio** have experienced one or more ACEs throughout their childhoods

Lead Poisoning

5.2% In Ohio, 5.2% of the children have elevated levels of lead in their blood which is **more than double the national average of 1.9%**

4/5 Out of the five Cleveland neighborhoods with the highest elevated blood levels in kindergarteners, **four of them are neighborhoods that have a population that is heavily inhabited by African Americans**

Health Disparities

The legacies of inequality within the healthcare system have led to current health disparities and mistrust by African Americans of the healthcare system. Health disparities in the healthcare system were recently brought to the forefront showing how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Black community. In the city of Cleveland, Black people represent 42% of all confirmed covid cases. Additionally, Black people represent 55% of COVID-19-related deaths which has illuminated many health inequalities that exist between racial groups in our healthcare system. Black people have higher rates of pre-existing health conditions that directly lead to more COVID-19 complications, which in turn lowers their chances of survival. Black people also have less access to affordable healthcare since 5.6% of the Black population in Cleveland does not have health insurance. The lack of access to affordable healthcare combined with mistrust of the healthcare system leads to fewer doctor visits, affecting short-and-long-term health status.

Another healthcare issue illuminated by the COVID-19 pandemic is the historical mistrust among a considerable number of Black people in the healthcare system and the government. This has led to widespread mistrust of the COVID-19 vaccines. This is currently evident with the low vaccination rates of Black people living in the city of Cleveland. The percentage of Black people who have received their first shot in Cuyahoga County currently sits at 51.68% and only 46.78% have completed their primary vaccination series. This is far below the national vaccination rate of the primary series which sits at 69.2%.

Access to Healthy Foods

People from lower-income areas of the city do not have access to as many fresh foods as compared to those from higher-income neighborhoods due to the lack of grocery stores. In those neighborhoods that are close in proximity to downtown Cleveland, there is diminished availability and/or access to high-quality grocery stores. This causes people to eat poor-quality foods (including fast foods) because they are more accessible and affordable.

The quality of food consumed affects the body's vitality, thus making accessibility to fresh food important. Fresh foods have more nutrients than canned and processed foods, and are better for the body's overall health and well-being. Unfortunately, fresh food is more expensive than canned and processed foods and expires quicker which makes them less affordable and attainable to lower income people, thus, creating a disparity in the nutrients consumed. A 2018 study conducted by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health found that about 59% of the city's population is living in a food desert. In their report, they defined it as an area that is more than half a mile away from a supermarket.

Chronic Disease

Black people also suffer from chronic health conditions at younger and at higher rates than their white counterparts. Unfortunately, this is an issue that affects African Americans nationally as well as locally, and could be helped through various improvements to their communities. Chronic health conditions affect people's ability to recover or deal with illnesses or health problems that they may encounter their entire lives. Nationally, some of the(se) chronic health conditions that are prevalent in the Black community are diabetes, obesity, asthma, and high blood pressure. Black people also suffer with kidney issues at much higher rates than they are represented in the population. Nationally, black people are four times more likely to experience kidney failure than white Americans. A survey conducted in Cuyahoga County found that African American children had higher rates of asthma compared to white children with 21% among African American children and 10.3% among white children. Diabetes rates are significantly higher among Black non-Hispanic residents (25.8%) compared to White non-Hispanic residents (7.7%) and African Americans had the highest cardiovascular mortality rate among all racial/ethnic groups in Cuyahoga County overall in 2017. The Cuyahoga County community health needs assessment found that Black, Non-Hispanic women have lower rates of prenatal care in the first trimester compared to all other racial/ethnic groups.”

Trauma

Multifaceted trauma caused by living in urban communities has also affected Black Cleveland, both physically and mentally. African American children encounter more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and are 30% more likely than non-Hispanic children to experience ACEs. Additionally, 70% of non-Hispanic black children in Ohio have experienced one or more ACEs throughout their childhoods. Among the US population as a whole, people with 4 or more ACEs experience chronic diseases at higher rates along with being three times more likely to smoke cigarettes, and ten times more likely to experience "problematic drug use." They are also 5 times more likely to have major depression and thirty-seven and one-half times as likely to attempt suicide. This may be one of the contributing factors that clarify why African Americans experience chronic diseases at higher rates than their white counterparts. Unfortunately, exposure to gun violence (which is considered an ACE) at a young age can lead to a higher likelihood of problems which includes being more likely to have a gun and/or carry a gun and being more likely to threaten the use of a gun which can lead to more arrests for weapons crimes.

The mental health repercussions of experiencing or witnessing traumatic events can cause anxiety and depression as well. Suffering from mental health challenges can affect people in various aspects of their lives such as socialization and productivity, which blends into personal relationships and job performance. Unfortunately, mental health issues are harder to detect, thus affecting people's access to care or help. In addition to lacking the access to mental health resources needed, it is important to note that people may not recognize that they need help, leading to data that states that black people are less likely to receive mental health resources. A study reported by the National Alliance on Mental Illness reports "63% of black people believe a mental health condition is a weakness" and the American Psychological Association says only one in three African Americans who need mental healthcare will get it. Unfortunately, the failure to get help for mental health issues can also lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms, some of which can be very self-destructive and damaging to the person inflicting it as well as the people around them.

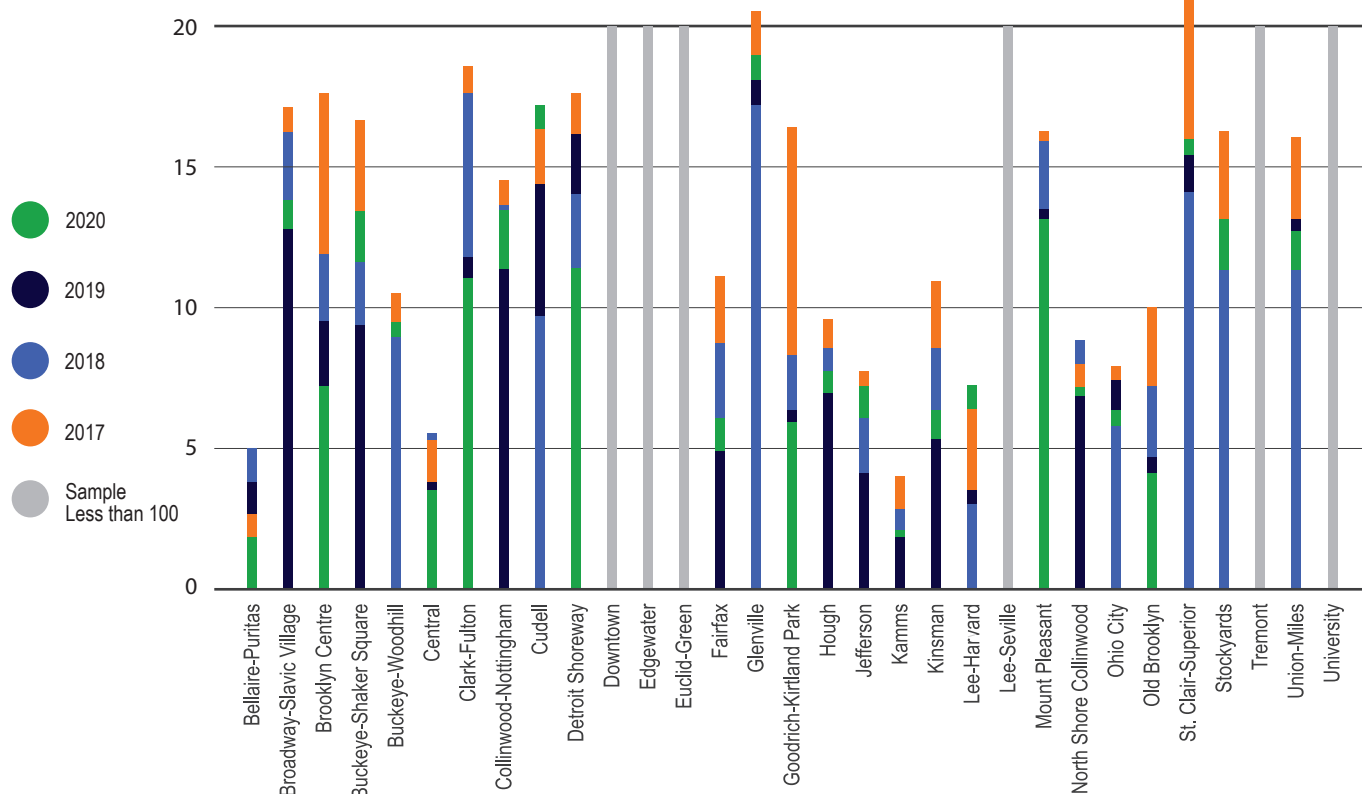
Lead Poisoning

A new study by JAMA Pediatrics found that Ohio has some of the country's highest lead levels in children. In Ohio, 5.2% of the children have elevated levels of lead in their blood which is more than double the national average of 1.9%. Cleveland specifically has had an issue with elevated lead levels in children for some time. A 2019 study by Case Western Reserve University found that a quarter of Cleveland Metropolitan School District Kindergarteners had tested positive for elevated levels of lead. Out of the five Cleveland neighborhoods with the highest elevated blood levels in kindergarteners, four of them are neighborhoods that have a population that is heavily inhabited by African Americans. The neighborhood with the highest percentage was Glenville, as 18.6% of children under the age of 6 have lead exposure in their blood. Unfortunately, Cleveland's blood levels are significantly higher when compared with lead blood levels in the State of Ohio.

Elevated lead levels cause many health issues in children and can affect many areas of the body and its functionality. Since any level of lead in the body is deemed unhealthy, elevated lead levels lead to many developmental issues for children and have been known to cause irreversible brain damage. It has been found that children who have elevated blood levels go on to have lower academic test scores and struggle more in school. Therefore, children with elevated lead blood levels face even more roadblocks to achieving upward educational mobility which will directly affect job prospects, socioeconomic mobility, and quality of life.

The effects of elevated lead levels in children have been known for many years and too little was done about it for too long. Fortunately, there have been recent local initiatives to reduce the lead levels in the city by the Lead Safe Coalition along with recent actions by the City of Cleveland. This effort has already raised over \$100 million dollars to help make homes lead safe while assisting landlords with financial resources to make necessary improvements. The Fund will also help families obtain temporary housing while their rental units are being abated. Community support and cooperation of landlords and tenants will be key to reversing this terrible trend.

Blood Lead Levels in Children by Neighborhood (≥ 5 micrograms per deciliter)



In Cleveland, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the development of children and brought attention to the many ways that inequalities through infrastructure and funding affects **education**.



Broadband Infrastructure

40% Of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District student population had **no internet access**

2/3 Of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District students **lacked an adequate device for online learning**

Unfinished Learning

6 Nationally schools with a majority of Black and Hispanic students had approximately **6 months of unfinished learning for math**

6 Nationally schools with a majority of Black students had approximately **6 months of unfinished learning for reading**

↓ The Cleveland Metropolitan School District saw **decreases in the percentage of students achieving levels of proficiency or higher** in all but one subject, across all grade levels

Mental Health & Depression

113K In Ohio, **113,000 kids** were diagnosed with depression

52% Of those children did not receive any care or treatment

Education

It is no secret that COVID-19 has had major effects on most if not all aspects of society. In Cleveland, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the development of children and brought attention to the many ways that inequalities through infrastructure and funding affects education. COVID-19 shutdowns caused schools to go to remote learning which led to lower test scores and a widened academic achievement gap between students of color and their white counterparts. One of the reasons for the widening of the achievement gap is the lack of broadband infrastructure which affects the student's access to reliable and affordable internet service. The proportion of students and their families who have access to computers is also an issue impacting students' academic performance.

Some households may only have one computer which causes issues for households with multiple students who would need to share that computer to get their schoolwork done. In our report, *Access Denied*, we highlighted the disparities in access to Wi-Fi and found that many people are still without adequate Wi-Fi in the city. A survey conducted by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District found that about 40% of its student population had no internet access and two-thirds lacked an adequate device for online learning. Therefore, even though school was going on as planned many students may not have been able to consistently attend their classes, thereby further impeding their education experience.

Attending school via computer has not had the same effect as in-person schooling. To this point, researchers found that there was a higher number of unfinished learning among schools nationally. This occurred when students were not able to master or learn the material that they were supposed to for a particular school year. Even though all students have fallen behind academically, it was found that nationally Hispanic and Black students were further behind in math and reading than their white counterparts. In a national study by McKinsey and Company, it was found that schools with a majority of Black and Hispanic students had about six months of unfinished learning for math. Schools with a Black majority population had six months of unfinished learning for reading. Hispanic majority population schools had five months of unfinished learning for reading. Families with a household income of less than \$25,000 had 6 months of unfinished learning. A study by Curriculum Associates during the winter of 2020-2021, found that nationally unfinished learning in reading and mathematics was higher than average, especially for schools that were majority Black and Hispanic.

This study also found that unfinished learning affected students in grades 1-3 more than older students. Chronic absenteeism of students increased significantly within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District during the pandemic. The Ohio Department of Education defines chronic absenteeism as missing 18 days or more of school. Chronic Absenteeism jumped from 29% in the 2019-20 school year to 54% in 2020-21 and 47% in 2021-22 in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Unfortunately, for the 2020-21 school year, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District experienced a rate of chronic absenteeism that was double that of the state which was 24% of Ohio's K 12 students. Due to the increase in chronic absenteeism in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, we can assume that the district faced an increase in unfinished learning. The lack of access to Wi-Fi and adequate devices combined with a decrease in school attendance has led to dire learning outcomes within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Across the board, the district saw decreases in the percentage of students achieving levels of proficiency or higher in all but one subject – English Language Arts 2 – across all grade levels.

The pandemic has affected the mental health of children at alarming rates which also affected their academic performance. Many students and parents alike have reported an increased need for mental health services due to the toll that the pandemic has taken on their or their children's mental health. A 2020 survey conducted by the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, found that nationally 69% said the pandemic was the worst thing to happen to them. A national survey conducted with high school students found that about a third of the students felt more unhappy and depressed than usual. Many students did not receive the support that they needed from their school environments due to a lack of resources and personnel. In Cleveland, the demand to see a therapist has increased since the pandemic started, and many people seeking help have had to wait months just to get an appointment. In Ohio 113,000 kids aged 12-17 have depression and a little under 52% of those children did not receive any care to treat it. Children's mental health is something that has constantly been overlooked, especially in terms of how it affects academic performance. Mental health affects all aspects of life including educational motivation and focus. Therefore, students are experiencing mental health issues that stem from the pandemic that have caused negative impacts on their retention, grades, and academic achievement in addition to their overall well-being.

Cleveland is continuously being named one of the poorest cities in the nation which highlights and brings attention to the significant number of **economic** and social issues confronting the city.

Poverty Rates

45.5% 45.5% of Cleveland's children live below the poverty line

29.3% 29.3% of the population of Cleveland lives below the poverty line

Of the 29.3% of people living below the poverty line:


11.7% have bachelor's degrees

6.1% work full time,

35.1% are African American



Wages

 In 2023, the Ohio minimum wage was increased to \$10.10 an hour for non-tipped employees and to \$5.05 for tipped employees

It has been determined that Ohio's minimum wage is not a livable wage

Poverty Outcomes

22.7% 22.7% of Cleveland residents do not have access to their own vehicle to take them to jobs that have moved further outside of the city

Economic Opportunity

Cleveland remains one of the poorest cities in the United States. Unequal investments in Cleveland neighborhoods where Black people reside is one of the contributing factors. Cleveland also continues to be one of the most racially segregated cities in America. The east side has a higher population of Black residents, and their neighborhoods are struggling and experiencing a decline in population and property values. 29.3% of the population of Cleveland lives below the poverty line and 45.5% of children live below the poverty line. Of the 29.3% of people living below the poverty line 11.7% have bachelor's degrees, 6.1% of people work full time, and 35.1% are African American. The city also has an unemployment rate of 12.3%. Of the people living below the poverty line about 48% of them are African American.

Cleveland continuously being named one of the poorest cities in the nation highlights and brings attention to the significant number of economic and social issues confronting the city. The poverty rating for the city has become a long-term problem, reflecting poorly on the city since Cleveland has been in the top 10 in poverty in the United States for far too many years without meaningful improvement. The city has never fully recovered economically from the 2008 recession and never fully recovered from the loss of jobs and people. Even though Cleveland has made strides in certain areas, many other areas are still behind and have been lacking since 2020. The unemployment rate of black people on average has remained twice as much as the white demographic.

However, it is not just the city's poverty rate that is problematic. Other economic factors like the amount paid for the minimum wage contribute to the poverty rate. In 2023, the Ohio minimum wage was increased to \$10.10 an hour for non-tipped employees and to \$5.05 for tipped employees which is higher than the nationally set minimum wage which currently sits at \$7.25. It has been determined that Ohio's minimum wage is not livable anymore due to rent increases and price gouging by various companies. If a person is working full-time or has a college degree, they should not be living in poverty. With that said, people are losing the ability to afford quality housing as wages remained constant and have even slightly increased but rental costs have increased even as home values are decreasing in some areas of Cleveland. Overall, home values increased by 20.9% in the past year and 115% in the last five years. Rents in Cleveland have increased by 10% over the last year and increased by about 20% over the past 3 years.

These costs are putting limitations on people's ability to build wealth and to have money to spend on things other than basic living expenses. The lack of disposable income for most wage earners means that there is less money circulating in the city's local economy, taking potential revenues away from businesses and the city. Leisure activities improve the quality of life for people by allowing for self-care while also putting money back into the city's economy to support schools and infrastructure such as roads and general maintenance. The nation is also experiencing a worker shortage as workers are quitting their jobs in record numbers. This shows that in the post-pandemic era that many people have realized that the long hours are not worth what they see as a reduction in their quality of life. Many people receiving unemployment may have found that it was not worth going back to work since they received more from unemployment benefits than if they were working full-time with jobs that were paying minimum wage. This recent worker shortage has exposed many problems in the American work culture which has previously and often been described as toxic, especially for people of lower-income households who are not making what they feel is their worth. Research conducted by PolicyBridge discovered that the way many people view employment has changed, and they have higher expectations for what they want out of a job beyond the financial compensation. There was broad consensus among workers about being treated with respect, valued, and having workplace flexibility to meet the needs of their families. There seems to be a broad consensus among workers to take back power from the employers to gain more enjoyable work experiences/environments. Since lower-income people are working longer hours and having to work more jobs to maintain their livelihoods, it has undermined their ability to have an enjoyable quality of life.

Many people also do not have the access to jobs that are currently available. 22.7% of Cleveland residents do not have access to their own vehicle to take them to jobs that have moved further outside of the city. These places are also harder to get to using public transportation or ridesharing services which limits their accessibility. In a report, Brookings found that the Cleveland-Elyria metro area experienced the largest drop (27 percent) in the number of jobs near the average resident from 2000 to 2012 among the 96 largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in the United States. 5.1% of Cleveland residents use public transportation to get to work which is higher than the national rate of 2.5%. The infrequency of buses on routes and the reduction in them has reduced the ability of workers to access these jobs due to the unreliability of transportation to consistently show up on time along with long wait times. It has also increased commutes to work which directly affects job accessibility, especially for single parents who have to worry about childcare. Thus, leaving out an entire demographic of workers who are hindered to reach these jobs by transportation inaccessibility.

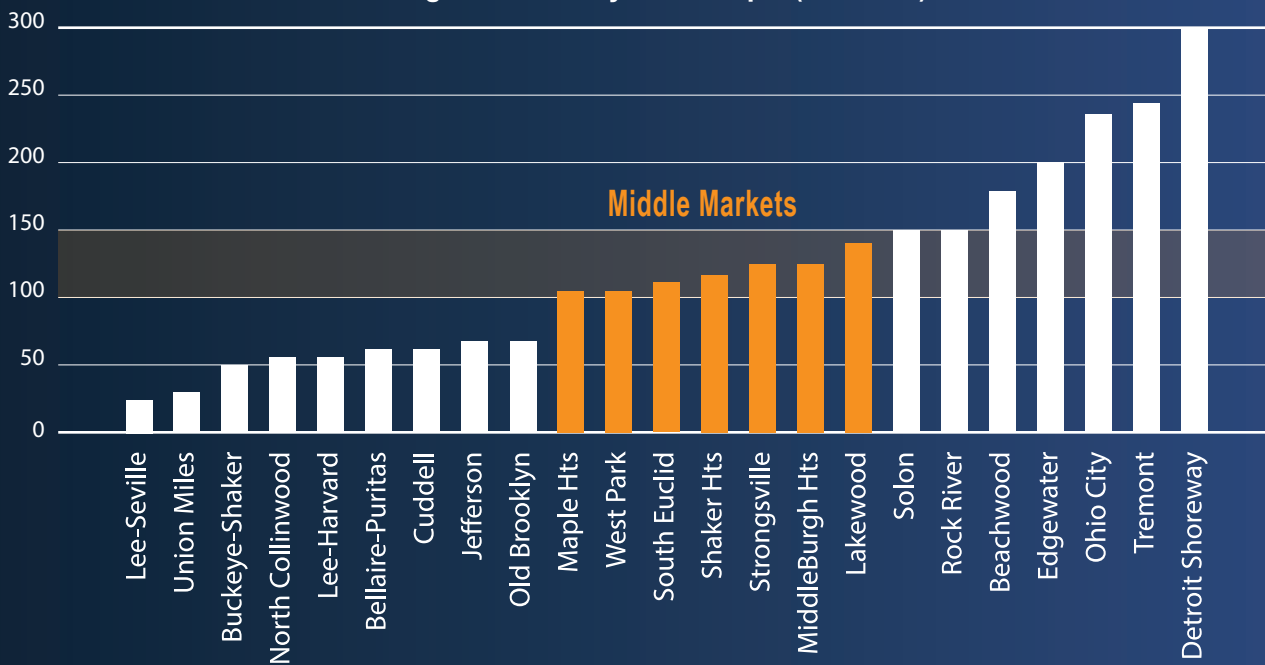
Finally, more must be done to support the efforts and challenges of African American entrepreneurs, who need access to capital, access to opportunity, and access to information. This includes the need for innovative loan products, business coaches, inclusive distribution channels and workforce development support. Economic opportunity for Black Clevelanders begins with empowering entrepreneurs with the tools they need to compete on equal footing.

It is no secret that neighborhoods within the city have received different levels of investment over time. Some neighborhoods have been getting continuous investments while other neighborhoods have not. This can be seen through shifts in household incomes within **neighborhoods and housing** values.

↓ **The loss of the middle and affordable housing population** spurred a decrease in an entire demographic of prospective residents within the city limits. These population decreases in turn have led to a loss of tax dollars for the city and revenue for local businesses.



**Regional Housing Market
Neighborhood by Price Sq/ft (2019 Q4)**



Neighborhoods and Housing

It is no secret that neighborhoods within the city have received different levels of investment over time. Some neighborhoods have been getting continuous investments while other neighborhoods have not. This can be seen through shifts in household incomes within neighborhoods and housing values. Those neighborhoods that did not see an influx of investments and new residents have struggled, and their property values have decreased as a result. Additionally, diminishing property values has caused people to leave these neighborhoods, which has led to a decrease in population. The unequal investments in Cleveland neighborhoods are evident to people who drive through them and have witnessed the changes that have been brought by time.

Many people are leaving the city, although the reasoning is not always clear. A decrease in the amount of affordable housing within the city could be a factor due to rapidly increasing rent prices. Another factor adding to the number of people leaving Cleveland is the loss of middle housing. Middle housing neighborhoods, according to Paul Brophy, Principal, Brophy and Reilly, LLC, are characterized as neighborhoods that are not in deep distress, but not thriving, either. In 2019, the vacancy rate for the five Cleveland middle housing neighborhoods (Old Brooklyn, Collinwood, Buckeye-Shaker, Harvard-Lee, and Bellaire-Puritas) was almost 16%. The loss of the middle and affordable housing population spurred a decrease in an entire demographic of prospective residents within the city limits. These population decreases in turn have led to a loss of tax dollars for the city and revenue for local businesses, including losses that would have been used to support school funding and provide more educational support to minority students. Overall, Cleveland's east-side population decline is not a good reflection on the city since it could also discourage investors from bringing businesses and other amenities that could bring in jobs and revenue which would help the city and its residents.

The legacy of redlining is still evident with the racial segregation that still exists and the disparities in property values in Cleveland's neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that are more traditionally Black have not seen much growth and have also experienced a decline in both property value and population. Conversely, neighborhoods such as Tremont and Ohio City have seen major increases in their average household income and home values. There has been an effort to invest in middle neighborhoods which in some cases are neighborhoods that are heavily populated by African Americans. But more can be done.

Middle neighborhoods which can be defined as neighborhoods that "are neither the poorest nor the wealthiest neighborhoods in a city" and where a lot of middle-income families reside. The Cleveland Middle Neighborhoods Initiative found that in 2019 the average price per square foot of a house in a neighborhood was either less than \$100 or more than about \$200, thus leaving no neighborhoods in between to serve as middle neighborhoods. Investments in the middle neighborhoods can help to increase the property value of the homes and in turn, increase the household wealth of the residents of the community.

Many banks and other institutions have invested money and created initiatives and/or partnerships to invest in various city neighborhoods. MetroHealth has invested a significant amount of its resources and money into the Clark-Fulton neighborhood where it is currently located and will continue to do so over the next few years. One example of MetroHealth's investments in this neighborhood is its plans to construct 250 apartment units around its main campus. The Clark-Fulton neighborhood is also receiving money in the form of tax credits to help create affordable housing solutions to improve housing affordability in the city. Former Mayor Frank Jackson created the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative whose goal is to "build wealth and stabilize historically fringed neighborhoods" through mixed-use, residential, entrepreneurship and workforce development support. The four neighborhoods that were picked for this initiative were Buckeye-Woodhill, Glenville, East 79th Street Corridor, and the Clark-Fulton Neighborhood. The Village Capital Corporation is also dedicating the \$1.5 million dollars that it received in a grant to lend out to investors and residents alike to invest in communities to bring back what is considered middle neighborhoods to the city since the city's traditional middle neighborhoods have only gotten weaker over time. Village Capital Corporation is working along with Cleveland Neighborhood Progress to strengthen and revitalize communities that have not received the same number of investments as other communities.

In an effort to offset neighborhood decline and disinvestment, we must also invest in quality-of-life amenities that make neighborhoods more desirable such as green space, enhanced infrastructure, recreational activities, and community engagement. Too many east side neighborhoods no longer have the social fabric to remain committed and organized to making their communities better.

Community violence and its statistical figures are often demonstrated in a way that leads to it being misused and misinterpreted. Community violence covers school violence, gun violence, and domestic violence all of which affect people and the community.



Stats

25x In 2020, the firearm homicide rate among Black males aged 15-34 was 25 times higher than white males of the same age group

64% Black men make up 7% of Ohio's population but account for 64% of the state's gun homicide victims

↑ Deaths caused by domestic violence have steadily increased from 2018-2022. Part of this can be attributed to the stay-at-home orders due to covid since many people were forced to stay indoors with their abusers

ACE Seeing violent acts in the community or in schools can also have significant health implications for both the kids and adults

LEAD Lead exposure in early childhood can increase delinquent behavior in adolescence

Community Violence

Unfortunately, community violence is something that has been perpetuated in cities for many years. However, the term is often used as a blanket statement to cover multiple types of violence. Community violence and its statistical figures are often demonstrated in a way that leads to it being misused and misinterpreted. Community violence covers school violence, gun violence, youth violence, and domestic violence all of which affect people and the community, although it also covers many other topics as well. These all occur at different rates, making combining them into one blanket category difficult. According to Chief Drummond, the Cleveland Police Department is down 257 police officers thus affecting the city's ability to adequately respond to crime. However, historically the police generally have a bad track record when responding to calls with the correct response in terms of force. It is important to mention that some specific types of violence are trending downward such as gun violence which had increased significantly between 2017-2021 but trended downwards in 2022. Like the rest of the country, gun violence is an issue that plagues the city of Cleveland as well as specifically the black community. Black Ohioans are disproportionately impacted by gun violence and in 2020 the firearm homicide rate among Black males aged 15-34 was 25 times higher than white males of the same age group. Black men make up 7% of Ohio's population but account for 64% of the state's gun homicide victims. There has also been an increase in the risk to students and school professionals alike due to multiple instances of lockdowns resulting from fears of guns or other weapons being present in schools. The risk of gun violence in schools and the recent murder of a John Adams High School student at a school bus stop has further traumatized students and school professionals alike which affects the education of our students.

There has been an increase in violence and disturbances in many school districts beyond the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. School districts are perpetuating violence among young children because they often fail to adequately discipline them for violent acts, which has led to worse behaviors according to some teachers. Because they are letting kids get away with these acts, it can and often does lead students to push the boundaries further. Some teachers also believe that some adults are becoming immune to things like foul language and fighting, reporting that "kids fight and just go back to class or they cut class and walk the halls with no accountability." This increase in violence is also affecting other students within the classroom as their educational experience is being negatively affected due to multiple and various disruptions. Seeing violent acts in the community or in schools can also have significant health implications for both the kids and adults as was mentioned earlier in the report, due to the trauma associated with it.

In addition to what was mentioned before, lead poisoning also has a connection to behavioral problems. Elevated lead levels can cause kids to become disruptive if not violent. Teachers have seen the effects and connections between lead poisoning and behavioral issues often result in affected students acting more aggressively. There is a great deal of research illustrating the link between lead exposure in early childhood and delinquent behavior in adolescence. Lead levels as low as 5ug/dL have been shown to harm a child's ability to reason and be successful in school. In November 2014, the state of Ohio adopted 5 ug/dL as the new threshold for elevated blood levels in children.

In the past few years, there has also been a rise in reported domestic violence cases. There was a rise at the start of the pandemic and numbers have continued to rise. Domestic violence is a crime that has historically been under-reported for various reasons. Deaths caused by domestic violence have steadily increased from 2018-2022. Part of this can be attributed to the stay-at-home orders due to Covid since many people were forced to stay indoors with their abusers which caused abuse to escalate and the opportunities for people to seek help to diminish. The danger assessment which helps to determine the level of danger an abused woman has of being killed by her intimate partner during the pandemic rose to 19.58 out of 20, which is extremely troubling considering that anything above 17 is considered a high risk for homicide.

Fortunately, there have been strides taken to decrease violence within the city. There are many initiatives underway to decrease crime, especially with proactive measures that directly impact children, aiming to root out these behaviors or risks before they become problematic. Studies have proven that community and children's programs and initiatives are effective ways to decrease crime. Mayor Justin Bibb has created a Violence Prevention Strategy and the City of Cleveland's Youth Violence Prevention Plan through the National Forum. The city of Cleveland also received a \$2 million grant from the Justice Department to develop community violence intervention programs. The city is using a grant of \$1.7 million from the governor's office to pay for programs to keep adolescents out of gangs, to help expand violent crime reduction teams, and to buy the National Integrated Ballistics Network, a national database of digital images of spent bullets that are used to match weapons to gun-related crime." Healthy Cleveland Violence Prevention Committee has also partnered with other organizations such as Cleveland Peacemaker's Alliance, A Partnership for a Safer Cleveland, and Impact 25 to work on violence prevention. However, community violence is extremely broad as originally stated (including gun violence, youth violence, domestic violence, etc.) and a snippet in this report will not do it justice and therefore warrants further research.



Conclusion &
Recommendations

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Conclusion

Our city has gradually seen improvements in some areas at the grassroots and municipal levels. However, Cleveland still has a long way to go in various subject areas due to structural racism, the history of uneven and unfair policies and neglect that has led to the creation of the issues highlighted in this report. Although there are organizations currently working to implement improvements to address many of the City's problematic issues, there is still more to be done within the city to positively impact the Black community and the city in general.

Therefore, it will be necessary to welcome fresh perspectives and people to create more inclusive community engagement and outcomes. There has been a recent influx of new community leaders within our city as a new generation is emerging and taking on various leadership positions. Hopefully, these new leaders along with established leaders can bring about the change that is desperately needed to move the city forward. Even though undoing the effects of structural racism, harmful policies from the past and initiating a redistribution of resources may take time and effort, it could result in a tremendous payoff for the city and all its communities....particularly the black community.

Recommendations

Health Disparities

- Expand access to fresh foods, especially for families living in food desert communities. Expand access to affordable healthcare to allow people to make and maintain regular doctor's appointments for people to be healthier both in the short and long term.
- Work to reduce factors that contribute to health disparities to reach health equity.
- Educate people on the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine and take aggressive steps to counteract COVID-19 misinformation circling within communities, especially the Black community.
- Connect health care to economic development planning and funding.
- Integrate health and wellness programming into sustainability and "green movement" initiatives. As sustainability and "green" movements continue to proliferate in Northeast Ohio, leaders of these initiatives should collaborate with health and wellness institutions and professionals to ensure strategic and tactical program integration to improve health, wellness, and quality-of-life outcomes.
- Establish a robust urban agriculture industry. Northeast Ohio has a fast-growing network of urban farms and organizations dedicated to fresh food access and sustainable practices. Local and state officials should continue to support and nurture this nascent industry by creating policies that allow for land assembly, rezoning, agriculture-friendly ordinances, and infrastructure improvements. The RID-ALL Urban Farm is one such example.
- Build cultural competency and minority capacity in the healthcare field.

Education

- Provide intensive tutoring support for students K-3 in particular to ensure that the fundamentals of reading are understood at an early age. Expand tutoring programs so that students of all ages have access to needed help.
- Ensure that wrap-around services remain a critical service for Cleveland students. Fill in need gaps when and where necessary.
- Explore various career pathways in partnership with CMSD and community colleges so that students who do not choose four-year colleges after high school have viable plans and resources in place.
- Engage teachers, school staff, parents, and community members for their opinions on how schools could be made safer. Publish and act on their recommendations.
- Continue to provide support for computer and internet devices for families in need.
- Create or expand a city/county Office of Digital Equity.

PolicyBridge is a research and advocacy think and action tank that prompts and sustains high quality discourse about public policy issues affecting African-Americans and other underserved communities which enlightens fellow community members and catalyzes action.

Economic Opportunity

- Increase transit access to jobs with increased routes and frequency.
- Better prepare workers to pursue blue-collar jobs that do not require more than a high school diploma. Improve the overall coordination of connecting available workers to all open positions in the region.
- Expand vocational training and create apprenticeship opportunities in high schools.
- Work with employers to reimagine work environments, livable wages, and benefits to meet workers' needs.
- Introduce legislation to allow for a more rehabilitation style of incarceration for inmates, including skills training, GED preparation and post-incarceration strategies that provide immediate employment opportunities for returning citizens.
- Provide more support to reentry support organizations.
- Provide support and resources to Black entrepreneurs and proprietors to help them start and grow their businesses and workforces. This could include creative financing tools and platforms and access to business opportunities.

Neighborhoods and Housing

- Invest in neighborhoods that have fallen behind, particularly on the southeast side of Cleveland.
- Improve aspects of the city to make it a desirable place for prospective residents to live including retail, green space and quality housing.
- Initiate community dialogue to discuss the legacy of race.
- Develop an equitable community and economic development strategy for Cleveland to ensure investments in and deployment of resources in neighborhoods are both balanced and fair.

Community Violence

- Invest in violence prevention community programs with a focus on children.
- Provide support to programs and services that aim to improve community/police relations.
- Support more gun control measures.
- Monitor the full scope and breadth of community violence (gun violence, school violence, domestic violence, etc.) and explore the intersectionality of the opportunities for shared learning and action.



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