Poverty and Disparities in Niagara County

Anna Blatto

Not Unusually Poor, but Unusually Unequal

The Buffalo-Niagara metro area is not unusually poor, but it suffers from pockets of deep poverty, particularly in its urban areas. In Niagara County as a whole, the poverty rate is lower than the national average. However, rates in the cities of Niagara Falls and Lockport are much higher. The other area of concentrated poverty is the Tuscarora Nation Reservation, where the level of poverty has steadily increased over the past five years.

Poverty in Niagara County is segregated and racialized, and the poverty *rate* for people of color is much higher than that for whites. Still, because Niagara County is 86 percent white, there are more whites than people of color living in poverty in the county. Put another way, the typical person experiencing poverty in the county is white, but people of color are much more likely to experience poverty.

Poverty in Niagara
County reflects
patterns similar to
that of Erie County
and the BuffaloNiagara metro area
as a whole. It is
racially disparate and
concentrated in
urban areas –
particularly Niagara
Falls – and on the
Tuscarora Nation
Reservation.

METRO, COUNTY, AND UNITED STATES POVERTY RATES

The Buffalo-Niagara Falls metropolitan region is not unusually poor. In 2017, the metro area poverty rate was

14.6%,

the same as the national rate. The Niagara County poverty rate is lower at

13.4%.

CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS POVERTY RATE

In 2017, the poverty rate for the City of Niagara Falls was

27.5%,

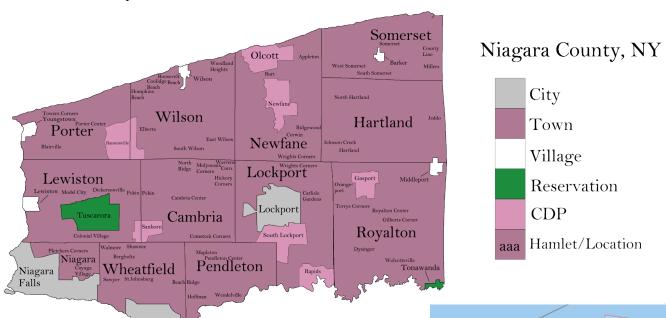
more than twice that for Niagara County as a whole.



The Geography of Niagara County

Niagara County is in the northern part of the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area. It is bordered by Lake Ontario to the north; the Niagara River and Ontario, Canada to the west; Erie County to the south; and Genesee and Orleans Counties to the east. It spans 1,140 square miles with a land area of just over 520 square miles. It contains Niagara Falls, a popular tourist destination and one of the most iconic sites in New York State.

Niagara County is home to three cities – Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda, and Lockport – as well as 12 towns, five villages, seven Census-designated places, and two Indian Reservations: the Tuscarora Nation Reservation and a portion of the Tonawanda Reservation.



Above: Map of Niagara County.

Source: Geography and Space, Map of Niagara County, New York, April 4, 2019, accessed through "Niagara County," Wikipedia, accessed August 9, 2019.

To the right: Niagara County in regional context.

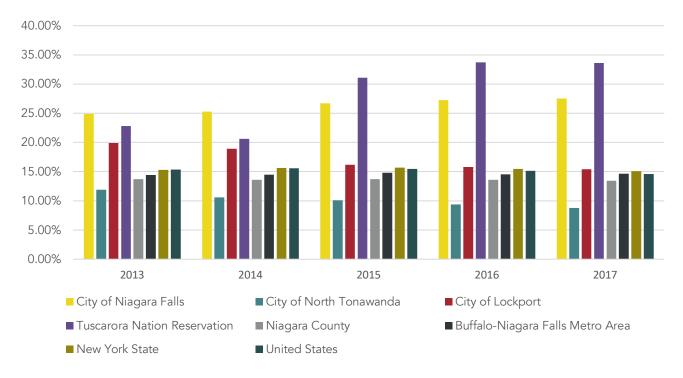
Tonawanda

Source: Google Maps.



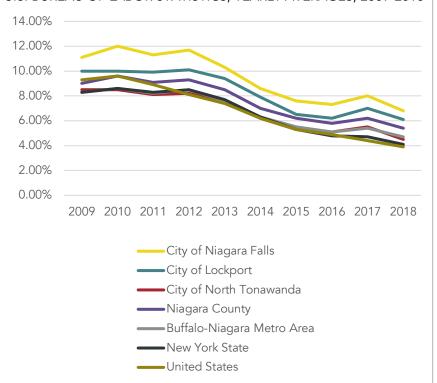
Percent of People Living Below the Poverty Line

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 1-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2013 - 2017²



Unemployment

U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, YEARLY AVERAGES, 2009-2018³



Cities in Niagara County, especially Niagara Falls, tend to have higher unemployment rates than regional and national averages.

The Tuscarora Nation Reservation also has high unemployment rates. While statistics for the Reservation are not available from Bureau of Labor Statistics, according to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the unemployment rate for the Reservation is 18.9 percent.³

Household Income

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2013 - 2017⁵ 6

	City of Niagara Falls	Tuscarora Nation Reservation	City of Lockport	City of North Tonawanda	Niagara County
Median Household Income	\$33,965	\$28,839	\$41,447	\$53,002	\$51,656
Income below \$10,000	2,498	80	711	711	5,734
Income between \$10,000 and \$14,999	2,176	35	507	699	5,104
Income between \$15,000 and \$24,999	3,247	65	1,208	1,549	9,818
Income below \$25,000	7,921	180	2,426	2,959	20,656

^{*}See Appendix A for Full Table

MEDIAN INCOME

In 2017, the median income was less than

\$34,000

in the City of Niagara Falls, while close to

\$51,000

in Niagara County.

The Tuscarora Nation Reservation's median income falls just below

\$29,000.

DEEP POVERTY

Deep poverty is heavily concentrated in the cities. Of households with incomes below \$10,000 in the region, nearly

44%

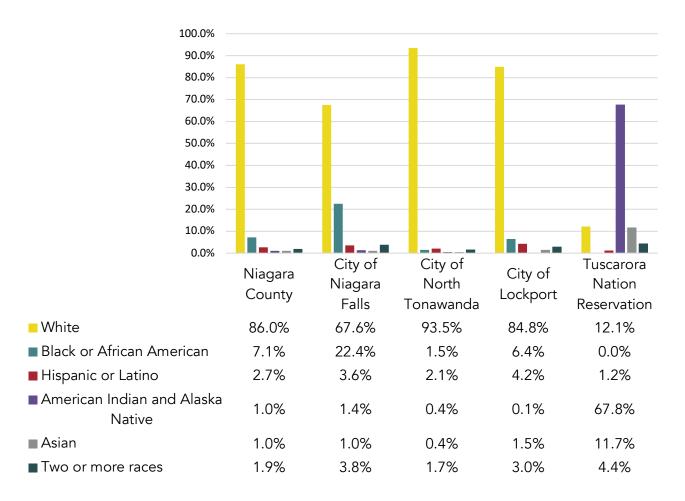
live in the Niagara Falls and

29%

live in Lockport and North Tonawanda.

Understanding Racial Disparities: Demographics of Niagara County

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2013 - 20177



While not as heavily segregated as Erie County, Niagara County is still segregated, with African-Americans concentrated heavily in the city of Niagara Falls. Hispanic or Latino residents are somewhat more evenly distributed, but they are overrepresented in Niagara Falls and Lockport.

The percentage of people of color in Niagara County is 12.8%; in the

City of Niagara Falls,

it is 31.2%.

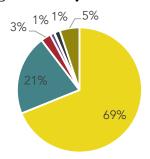
Over 85% of the Tuscarora Native Reservation's population identify as non-white.

North Tonawanda is an unusual city in that it has a higher proportion of white residents (93.5%) than Niagara County as a whole (86%).

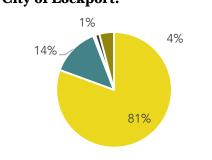
People Living Below the Poverty Line by Race

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 20178

Niagara County:



City of Lockport:



Legend:



American Indian and Alaska Native alone

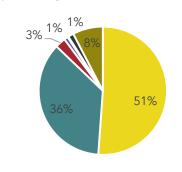
Asian alone

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone

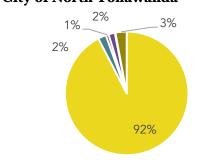
Some other race alone

Two or more races

City of Niagara Falls:



City of North Tonawanda



HISPANIC/LATINO POPULATION AMONG

THOSE IN POVERTY

5.8%

Niagara County

7.3%

Niagara Falls

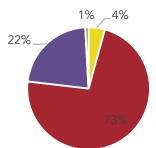
1.9%

North Tonawanda

8.0%

Lockport

Tuscarora Nation Reservation:



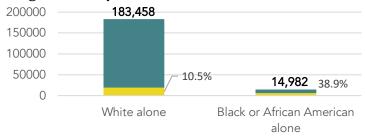
These pie charts show the racial make-up of the people living below the poverty line for each region. In the County, 69% of those living in poverty are white, and 21% are African American, whereas in Niagara Falls, 51% of those in poverty are white, and 36% are African American.

^{*}A full table with all demographic data is available in Appendix B.

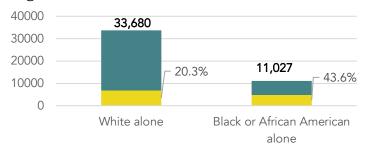
Percent of People Living Below the Poverty Line:

Those who identify as White Alone or Black Alone⁹
AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2017

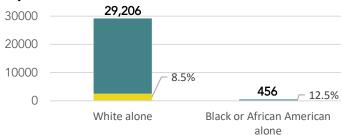
Niagara County:



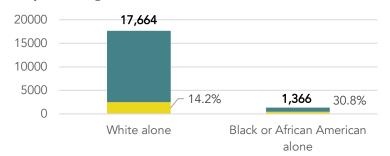
Niagara Falls:



City of North Tonawanda:



City of Lockport:



Legend:

Above poverty lineBelow poverty line

These graphs show the number of people in the two largest demographic groups in Niagara County and the percentage of people in poverty.*

Even though the poverty rate for African Americans in Niagara County is more than three times higher, there are still more whites living in poverty (19,263) than African Americans (5,828), because the county is 86% white. In fact, there are more whites living in poverty in Niagara County than the total number of African Americans living in the county.

*A full table with all demographic data is available in Appendix C.

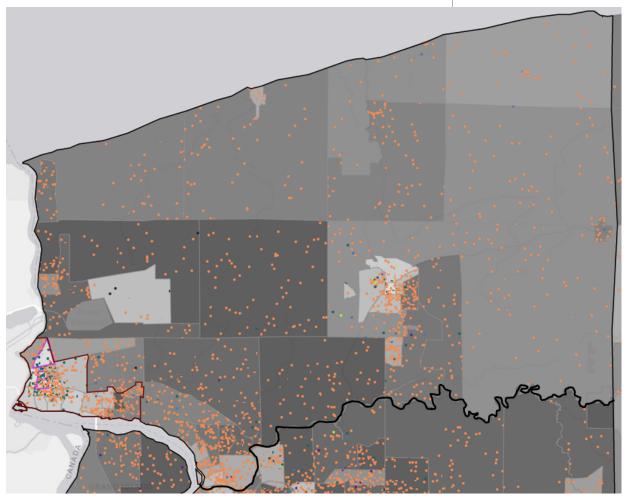
Race and Poverty

Poverty throughout Niagara County disproportionately impacts people of color. Even in cities like Lockport where the black population is relatively low, at around 6.4 percent, 30.8 percent of black residents of Lockport live in poverty, representing over 13 percent of those in poverty.

These numbers are even more stark in the city of Niagara Falls, where the black population is just over 22 percent of the total population yet represents 36 percent of those living in poverty. These trends are echoed throughout Niagara County.

The black population in Niagara Falls is just over 22% of the total population, yet represents

36% of residents in poverty.



This map demonstrates racial disparities when it comes to poverty. Lighter-shaded census tracts are experiencing poverty at a higher level.

Source: U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Map Tool, Map 12: Demographics and Poverty, November 2017, https://egis.hud.gov/affht/#.

Rent Affordability

According to the federal definition of rental affordability, less than 30 percent of income should go toward rent and utility expenses.¹⁰ In Niagara County, over 46 percent of renters are paying more of their income than what is considered affordable. Similarly, 43 percent of renters in Lockport and nearly 55 percent of renters in the city of Niagara Falls are paying more than what is considered affordable.¹¹

Homelessness

In 2017, 1,929 people experienced homelessness in Niagara County, 6.4 percent higher than 2016. Due to their disproportionate poverty, people of color are overrepresented in the homeless population. For example, while African Americans make up just over 7 percent of the Niagara County population, they account for nearly 40 percent of all people experiencing homelessness.

Of the population experiencing homelessness in Niagara County, 299 were children; nearly half were members of female-headed single-parent households, while about a quarter were unaccompanied.¹²

Over 50 percent of those experiencing homelessness list the City of Niagara Falls as their last place of residence.¹³

Vehicles

In Niagara County, almost 10 percent of households have no vehicles available. The statistic is similar for both North Tonawanda and Lockport, while only 5.6 percent of those on the Tuscarora Nation Reservation have no vehicle available¹⁴. In the City of Niagara Falls, over 20 percent of households have no vehicle available.¹⁵

Nearly half of renters in Niagara Falls pay

more than

30% of their income on housing expenses.

African Americans make up just over 7% of the Niagara County population, yet they account for

nearly 40%

of all people experiencing homelessness.

In the City of Niagara Falls.

over 20%

of households have no vehicle available.

High School Graduation Rates

County-wide, the four-year graduation rate for all students in the Class of 2018 is 82 percent; among economically disadvantaged students, the rate is slightly lower at 77 percent.¹⁶

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) defines economically disadvantaged as "those who participate in, or whose family participates in, economic assistance programs." NYSED notes "if one student in a family is identified as low-income, all students from that household...may be identified as low income." ¹⁷

School Districts in Niagara County	Graduation Rate ¹⁸	Graduation Rate Among Economically Disadvantaged Students ¹⁹	Economically Disadvantaged Students (K-12) ²⁰
Barker	97%	96%	51%
Lewiston-Porter	93%	80%	25%
Lockport City	87%	80%	56%
Newfane	88%	70%	47%
Niagara Falls City	63%	71%	76%
Niagara- Wheatfield	87%	81%	42%
North Tonawanda City	75%	71%	48%
Royalton-Hartland	91%	89%	42%
Starpoint	94%	84%	20%
Wilson	89%	86%	44%

In 2018, the Niagara Falls City School District had the lowest graduation rate in Niagara County –

63%.

This is followed by the North Tonawanda City Schools at

75%.

51%

of Niagara County public school students are economically disadvantaged, compared to

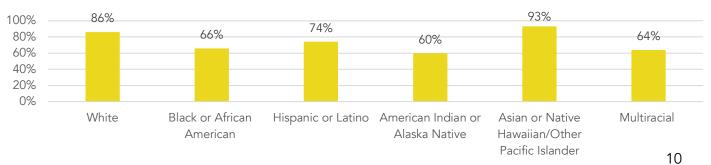
56%

in Lockport and

76%

in Niagara Falls.

In addition to economically disadvantaged students graduating at lower rates, there are racial disparities in graduation rates among students in Niagara County, as evidenced in the bar graph below. ²¹



Education and Poverty among Individuals Over 25

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2013 - 2017²²

	City of Niagara Falls	Tuscarora Nation Reservation	City of Lockport	City of North Tonawa- nda	Niagara County
Income in Past 12 Months Below Poverty Level	21.3%	28.6%	13.4%	7.5%	11.0%
Less than high school graduate	22.5%	14.3%	25.6%	18.1%	20.9%
High school graduate	37.4%	43.4%	31.1%	41.1%	37.6%
Some college, associate's degree	31.4%	37.6%	36.3%	28.7%	31.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	8.8%	4.8%	7.1%	12.0%	10.0%
Income in Past 12 Months Above Poverty Level	78.7%	71.4%	86.6%	92.5%	89.0%
Less than high school graduate	9.3%	8.6%	10.2%	6.3%	7.3%
High school graduate	40.3%	42.7%	29.2%	33.4%	34.2%
Some college, associate's degree	30.5%	26.3%	37.2%	34.8%	33.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	19.9%	22.1%	23.5%	25.6%	25.3%

On average, those with income above the poverty level are

14% more likely

to have education above the high school level.

Appendix A: Household Income - Full Table

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2013 - 2017 23 24

	City of Niagara Falls	Tuscarora Nation Reservation	City of Lockport	City of North Tonawanda	Niagara County	Buffalo- Niagara Metro Area	United States
Median Household Income	\$33,965	\$28,839	\$41,447	\$53,002	\$51,656	\$53,534	\$57,652
Income below \$10,000	2,498	80	711	711	5,734	35,041	7,942,251
Income between \$10,000 and \$14,999	2,176	35	507	699	5,104	28,261	5,768,114
Income between \$15,000 and \$24,999	3,247	65	1,208	1,549	9,818	50,088	11,637,905
Income below \$25,000	7,921	180	2,426	2,959	20,656	113,390	25,348,270

Appendix B: People in Poverty Broken Down by Race - Niagara County Alone

Among each racial group, percentage of people below the poverty line AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2017²⁵

	City of Niagara Falls	Tuscarora Nation Reservation	City of Lockport	City of North Tonawanda	Niagara County
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	51.1%	4.3%	80.6%	92.4%	68.9%
Black or African American alone	36.0%	0.0%	13.5%	2.1%	20.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2.6%	72.6%	0.4%	0.7%	2.6%
Asian alone	0.9%	22.3%	0.1%	1.7%	1.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0%	0.1%
Some other race alone	1.4%	0.0%	1.2%	0.2%	1.4%
Two or more races	7.6%	0.0%	4.1%	2.9%	5.1%
Overall	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	7.29%		8.0%	1.9%	5.8%

Appendix C: Percent of People Living Below the Poverty Line by Race - Full Table

Among each racial group in each geographic area, percentage of people below the poverty line AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA, 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2017²⁶

a	City of Niagara Falls	Tuscarora Nation Reservation	City of Lockport	City of North Tonawanda	Niagara County	Buffalo- Niagara Metro Area	United States
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	20.3%	11.4%	14.2%	8.5%	10.5%	9.2%	10.3%
Black or African American alone	43.6%		30.8%	12.5%	38.9%	34.7%	25.20%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	55.8%	0%	30.4%	7.6%	29.1%	36.1%	22.20%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	51.0%	35.8%	100%*	15.9%*	34.3%	32.0%	26.8%
Asian alone Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	26.5% 91.7%*	63.4% 0%*	1.3%	35.2%*	14.4% 51.4%*	32.2% 44.3%	11.9% 19.0%
Some other race alone	47.6%*	0%	34.0%*	2.6%*	31.5%*	47.3%	23.8%
Two or more races	45.9%	6.5%	17.0%	13.5%	30.0%	32.6%	18.4%
Overall	27.6%	33.6%	15.4%	8.8%	13.4%	14.6%	14.6%

^{*}These racial groups are less than 1% of the overall population; while the values do validly represent the population at hand, the sample size is comparatively small.

Sources

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Niagara County, New York," accessed August 9, 2019,

https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/niagaracountynewyork/LND110210.

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S1701, generated using *American Fact Finder*, accessed April 8, 2018,

https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/S1701/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US36063 I0600000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I060000 OUS3606353682I0600000US3606375748I310M300US15 380.

Additionally, Census data for the Tuscarora Nation may not fully reflect population in that area. Many indigenous people do not participate in the U.S. Census and/or other programs affiliated with the U.S. federal government. Some identify their citizenship with their tribal nations and not the United States. Others argue that it does not make sense to participate in a process that is race-based when tribal nations are sovereign nations and political entities. Logistically, around 25% of all "Native Americans" live in what are considered hardto-count census tracts where issues like poverty, education level, housing insecurity, and low-median age can be more prevalent and increase their risk of undercounting. Finally, while voter registration and polling sites accept identification issued by tribal governments, voters still need to have residential information in the form of a house number and/or a street name, which those living on reservations may not have.

³ United States Department of Labor – Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), 2009-2018 Yearly Averages, generated by using BLS One-Screen Data Search, accessed April 8, 2019.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table S2301, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019, https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS175YR/S2301/0100000USI0400000US3606351055l060000000S3606353682l0600000US3606375748l310M300US15380.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table B19001, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019, https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/B19001/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US360631060000US3606343082I060000US3606351055I0600000US3606353682I060000US3606375748I310M300US15380.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table B19013, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019, https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/B19013/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US360631060000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I06000_00US3606353682I060000US3606375748I310M300US15380.

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey,
 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019, https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/DP05/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US36063I_0600000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I060000_0US3606353682I0600000US3606375748I310M300US15_380_; see also: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table B03002, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed May 31, 2019,

https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/B03002/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US36063I0600000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I0600000US3606353682I0600000US3606375748I310M300US15380.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S1701, generated using *American Fact Finder*, accessed April 8, 2019.

⁹ Ibid.



¹⁰ Sam Magavern, Sarah Wooton, and Samantha Peterson-Borins, "Affordable Housing Strategies for the City of Buffalo," Partnership for the Public Good, December, 2018,

https://ppgbuffalo.org/files/documents/housing_neighborhoods/affordable housing policy for the city of buffalo.pdf.

¹¹ 2017 Homelessness Summary Brief Niagara County, Homeless Alliance of Western New York, July 10, 2018, https://wnyhomeless.org/app/uploads/2017-Niagara-Homelessness-Brief-Final-Version.pdf.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey,
 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table B08201, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019,
 https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/B08201/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US3606
 310600000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I06000
 00US3606353682I0600000US3606375748I310M300US1
 5380.

15 Ibid.

¹⁶ New York State Education Department (NYSED), School Data: High School Graduation Rate, 2018 Four-Year Outcomes as of June [2018], accessed April 8, 2019, https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?county=40.

¹⁷ New York State Education Department, Graduation Rate Glossary, NYSED Data Site, accessed April 8, 2019, https://data.nysed.gov/glossary.php?report=gradrate. NYSED's full definition of economically disadvantaged students is "those who participate in, or whose family participates in, economic assistance programs, such as the free or reduced-price lunch programs, Social Security Insurance (SSI), Food Stamps, Foster Care, Refugee Assistance (cash or medical assistance), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Safety Net Assistance (SNA), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), or Family Assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). If one student in a family is identified as low income, all students from that household (economic unit) may be identified as low income."

¹⁸ Ibid.

19 Ibid.

²⁰ New York State Education Department (NYSED), Enrollment Data, K-12 Enrollment, 2017-2018, accessed June 20, 2019,

https://data.nysed.gov/lists.php?type=district.²¹ lbid.

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey,
 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table B17003, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019,
 https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17
 5YR/B17003/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US3606
 3I0600000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I06000
 00US3606353682I0600000US3606375748I310M300US1
 5380

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table B19001, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019, https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/B19001/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US3606 3I0600000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I06000 00US3606353682I0600000US3606375748I310M300US1 5380.

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey,
 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates, Table B19013, generated using American Fact Finder, accessed April 8, 2019,
 https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17
 5YR/B19013/0100000USI0400000US36I0500000US3606
 3I0600000US3606343082I0600000US3606351055I06000
 00US3606353682I0600000US3606375748I310M300US1
 5380.

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S1701, generated using *American Fact Finder*, accessed April 8, 2019,

²⁶ Ibid.







617 Main Street, Suite 300 Buffalo, New York 14203 © 2019 Partnership for the Public Good

www.ppgbuffalo.org