



# **Coconino County Community Needs Assessment Report 2017**

**Sponsored by  
Coconino County Community Services  
and  
United Way of Northern Arizona**

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ARIZONA  
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## **Executive Summary**

- Coconino County Community Services (CCCS) and United Way of Northern Arizona (UWNA) contracted with the Laboratory for Applied Social Research (LASR) within the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Northern Arizona University to help conduct a 2017 Community Needs Assessment.
- The Community Needs Assessment was envisioned as a way to examine community and family vitality (defined as “the capacity to live, grow and develop with a purposeful existence”) in Coconino County, among individuals of low-to-moderate income (defined as those whose income is up to 200 percent of poverty level).
- In the summer of 2017, LASR conducted eight focus groups with low-to-moderate income residents in communities across Coconino County: Doney Park, Flagstaff, Fredonia, Mountainaire, Page, Tusayan, and Williams. Two focus groups were conducted in Flagstaff: one in English, and one in Spanish. Questionnaires were distributed in the Marble Canyon area in lieu of a focus group there.
- Topics of discussion at the focus groups included general concerns, employment, transportation, housing, education, health, nutrition, and criminal justice/law enforcement.
- In addition, LASR reviewed and summarized a number of secondary sources of data about poverty in Coconino County, including a variety of reports by local and national organizations, as well as a series of profiles of Coconino County communities, entitled “Listening In,” that appeared in Flagstaff’s *Arizona Daily Sun* newspaper from April to August, 2017.
- LASR also analyzed data from the US Census Bureau, including information from the American Community Survey, as well as demographic and survey data related to CCCS customers.
- The analysis of focus group discussions and secondary data shows that the experience of poverty in Coconino County can be framed around two major themes: geographic isolation and social disregard. The sheer size of the County and the remoteness of many of its communities exacerbates the experience of poverty, and there is a sense among many of the County’s poor that they have been forgotten or ignored by those in more privileged positions.

## **Introduction**

Coconino County Community Services (CCCS) and United Way of Northern Arizona (UWNA) contracted with the Laboratory for Applied Social Research (LASR) within the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Northern Arizona University to help conduct a 2017 Community Needs Assessment. This report outlines the findings of this assessment, both in terms of the results of eight focus groups and analysis of secondary data sources and United States Census Bureau data related to Coconino County, Arizona.

As a designated Community Action Agency and recipient of Community Services Block Grant funds, CCCS is required to conduct a Community Needs Assessment every three years. Findings from this assessment will be incorporated into CCCS's 5-year Strategic Plan that will be developed in the second half of fiscal year 2018. This Strategic Plan will be submitted to the Arizona Department of Economic Security Division of Aging and Adult Services (ADES-DAAS) and will be incorporated into CCCS's work plan and budget for fiscal year 2019.

United Way of Northern Arizona will utilize the results of the Community Needs Assessment in the development of its Strategic Plan as well, as part of its desire to expand its presence in Coconino County.

The Community Needs Assessment Partners of CCCS and UWNA (referred to as the Partners going forward in this document) assembled a Community Needs Assessment Working Group to help guide the 2017 assessment. Also included were representatives from LAUNCH Flagstaff, a local initiative to improve educational opportunities, the Coconino County Superintendent of Schools, and the Flagstaff Unified School District. For a complete list of the members of the Community Needs Assessment Working Group, please see Appendix A.

The group envisioned this year's Community Needs Assessment as a way to examine community and family vitality (defined as "the capacity to live, grow and develop with a purposeful existence") in Coconino County, among individuals of low-to-moderate income (defined as those whose income is up to 200 percent of poverty level).

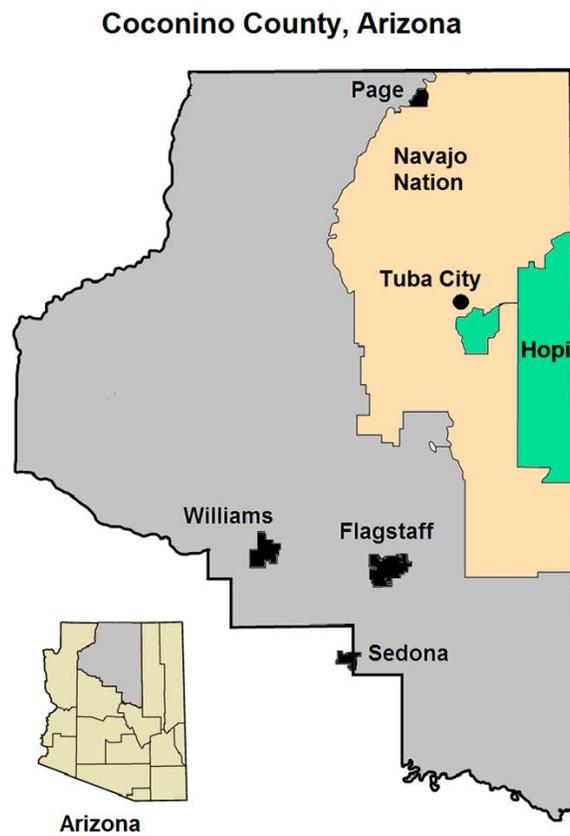
The previous Community Needs Assessment had involved the implementation of a survey of low-to-moderate income individuals across the county (Northern Arizona University Laboratory for Applied Social Research, 2014). In Spring 2017, the Coconino County Community Needs Assessment Working Group, in conjunction with James Bowie of LASR, decided that this year's assessment would be conducted in the form of a series of focus groups across the county, along with an analysis of both U.S. Census

data on the county and secondary data about the county, in the form of recent reports on Coconino County from a variety of agencies and organizations.

The focus group methodology was chosen over the previous survey methodology with the hope that it would better provide the Partners with a rich, in-depth perspective on the attitudes and opinions of low-to-moderate income Coconino County residents regarding their current situations and the challenges they face.

## **Methodology**

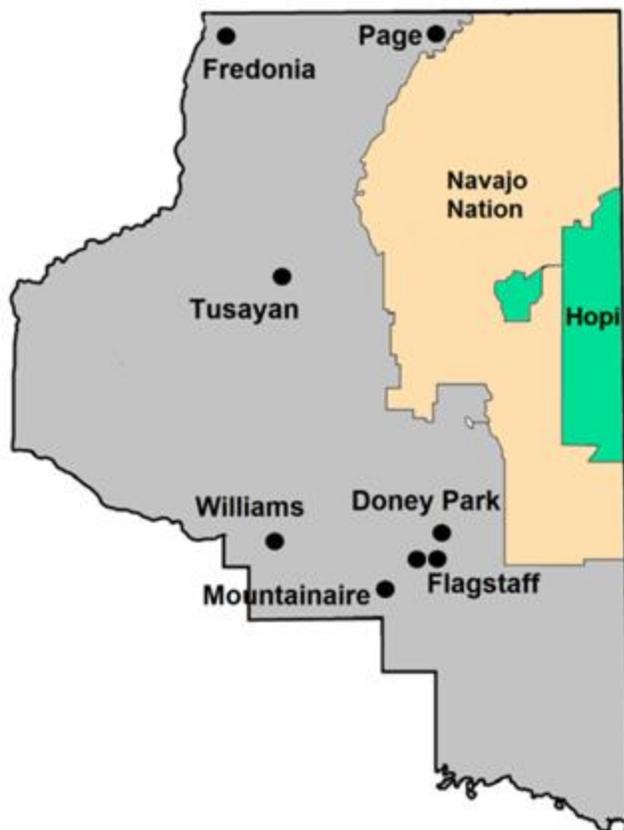
The Partners and LASR staff faced geographic challenges in working together to organize a series of focus groups around Coconino County. At 18,661 square miles, Coconino County is the second-largest county in terms of land mass in the continental United States, and is approximately the size of the states of Vermont and New Hampshire combined. The county is predominantly rural, with about half of its population of 136,701 concentrated in the county seat, Flagstaff, while the other half is dispersed widely around smaller cities like Page, Tuba City, Williams, and outlying rural areas. Grand Canyon cuts across the county, intensifying the problem of geographic isolation for some communities.



The Partners and LASR determined that a series of geographically dispersed focus groups would enable the voices of low-to-moderate income residents from around the county to be heard. Focus groups were scheduled in the communities of Doney Park, Flagstaff, Fredonia, Mountainaire, Page, Tusayan, and Williams. An eighth focus group, to be conducted in Spanish, was scheduled in Flagstaff in order to ensure that the perspectives of the county’s Spanish-speaking population would not be overlooked.

It must be noted that due to the particular requirements of CCCS’s federal funding contract , the community needs assessment does not encompass the areas of Coconino County that are part of federally recognized Native American reservations. In addition, the non-reservation areas of Coconino County fall under the purview of UWNA. Another United Way organization serves the reservation areas. Consequently, communities such as Tuba City, on the Navajo Nation, were not covered by the focus groups. However, as detailed in the next section of this report, 28 percent of focus group participants would identify as Native American.

Focus groups were conducted in 2017 on the following dates in these communities:



June 28 – Williams/Parks/Ash Fork;  
11 participants

July 6 – Flagstaff (English);  
7 participants

July 12 – Doney Park/Winona;  
7 participants

July 18 – Flagstaff (Spanish);  
10 participants

August 2 – Fredonia; 10 participants

August 9 – Mountainaire/Kachina  
Village/Munds Park; 10 participants

August 16 – Page; 9 participants

August 24 – Tusayan/Grand Canyon  
Village/Valle; 10 participants

Each focus group was held midweek (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday) from 5:30 to 7:30 pm, as it was determined that these time periods would be most convenient for prospective focus group participants.

Focus group discussions were held in community facilities such as fire stations and schools that were central, well-known, easily accessible, had adequate parking, and had sufficient space for not only the focus group itself, but for a childcare area, as CCCS staff offered to provide childcare in order to assure attendance by potential focus group participants with young children.

Focus group participants were contacted and recruited by Coconino County Community Services staff, making use of client lists held by Community Services offices around the county, as well as contact lists provided by the United Way of Northern Arizona.

As an incentive for participation, focus group participants were offered a \$40 Visa gift card, which was distributed at the end of the focus group session. CCCS staff also provided dinner from local restaurants to participants at each focus group; these meals served not only as an additional incentive to participate, but helped to make participants comfortable with the focus group setting, encouraging an atmosphere of a “dinner conversation.”

The seven English-language focus groups were facilitated by Dr. James I. Bowie, Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Coordinator of the Laboratory for Applied Social Research at Northern Arizona University, while the Spanish-language focus group was facilitated by Dr. Sara Alemán, Professor Emeritus in Social Work and Ethnic Studies at NAU.

At the beginning of each focus group session, participants signed a consent form (see Appendix B) and completed a brief demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). United Way of Northern Arizona staff assisted with the translation of the consent form and demographic questionnaire into Spanish for use at the Spanish-language focus group (Appendices D and E).

The number of participants in the focus groups ranged from seven to eleven, with an average of 9.25.

Following the introduction of the focus group facilitator by CCCS staff, participants were informed of the “ground rules” of the discussion, including being given assurance that their comments would be kept confidential.

The Community Needs Assessment Working Group, in cooperation with Dr. Bowie, developed a focus group agenda to guide the discussion (see Appendix F).

The agenda featured a timetable for the discussion and a series of questions around topics identified as important to the assessment:

- General concerns
- Employment
- Transportation
- Housing
- Education
- Health
- Nutrition
- Criminal justice / law enforcement

The agenda was conceived of as a general outline only. Focus groups are designed for flexibility, allowing for the discussion to flow in a way that gives the participants the best opportunity to express their opinions and concerns. Consequently, it was recognized that some of the topics and questions on the agenda might end up taking more or less time to discuss than indicated. The questions listed on the agenda were seen simply as “jumping-off points” intended to spark discussion, and it was acknowledged that the responses given by the participants might lead the discussion in various directions.

Each focus group was audio-recorded. Participants were made aware of the audio recording and assured that the recordings would not be shared outside of the research team.

At the conclusion of the two-hour focus group session, each participant was given a \$40 Visa gift card, as well as contact information for the focus group facilitator (see Appendix G), in case there was anything regarding the focus group discussion that they wanted to add later.

A focus group was not able to be scheduled in the Marble Canyon area, but, in order to provide community members there with a chance to be heard, a questionnaire similar in nature to the focus group agenda was distributed to residents by Coconino County staff. A total of 31 of these questionnaires were collected from the communities of Marble Canyon, Cliff Dwellers, and Vermillion Cliffs. Responses from this questionnaire were analyzed along with the recordings of the eight focus groups.

## **Focus Group Participant Demographics**

In all, 74 low-to-moderate income Coconino County residents participated in the eight focus group discussions. All participants were contacted and recruited by Coconino County Community Services staff, making use of client lists held by Community

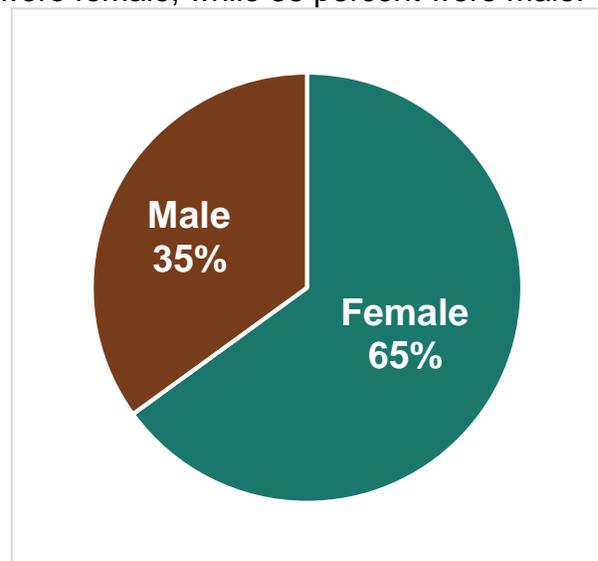
Services offices around the county, as well as contact lists provided by the United Way of Northern Arizona.

The purpose of focus group research is to obtain qualitative insights at a greater level of depth and richness than would come from traditional survey research. The relatively small number of participants in a focus group project means that, unlike a survey that makes use of a sample of respondents that is hopefully representative of a larger population, there is no expectation that the focus group participants will be necessarily representative of the larger population from which they are drawn, and that, therefore, it cannot be presumed that the opinions expressed in the focus group can be generalized to represent those of the larger population in general.

That being said, it is still useful to address the demographic characteristics of focus group participants. Before each focus group, participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire which asked their city of residence, zip code, age, sex, race, employment status, marital status, number of children living in their home, and 2016 household income (see Appendices C and E). Based on the responses to these questionnaires, we can characterize the focus groups as follows:

### **Gender**

Sixty-five percent of focus group participants were female, while 35 percent were male. In comparison, data from the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the United States Census Bureau shows that the population of Coconino County is 50.6 percent female and 49.4 percent male. It must be noted, however, that these Census numbers represent the entire population of the county, rather than the population of low-to-moderate income individuals which is the focus of this project. Among those identified by the Census as being below the poverty line in 2015, 53 percent are female and 47 percent are male.

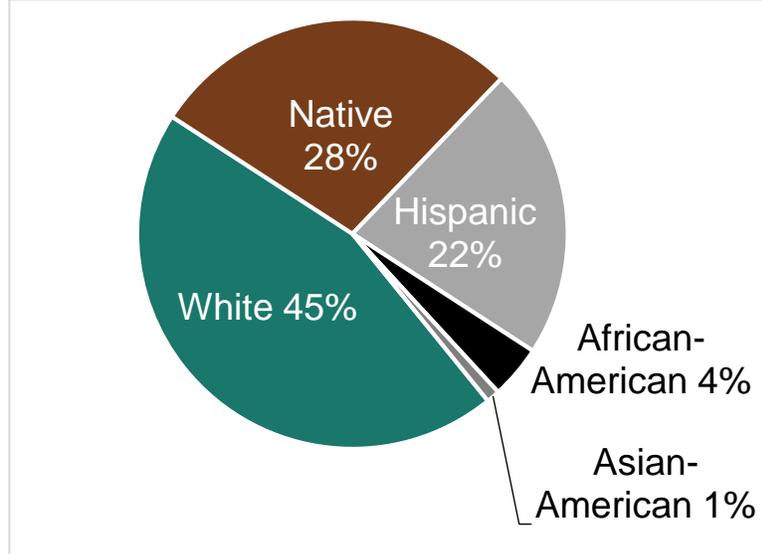


### **Age**

The average age of focus group participants was 49.7 years, compared to the median age of 30.8 reported by the 2015 American Community Survey. Of course, only adults 18 years of age and older were considered for participation in the focus groups, and 29.1 percent of the Coconino County population is under 18 years of age.

## Race and Ethnicity

Among focus group participants, 45 percent identified themselves as White (non-Hispanic), 28 percent as Native American, 22 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 4 percent as African-American, and 1 percent as Asian-American.

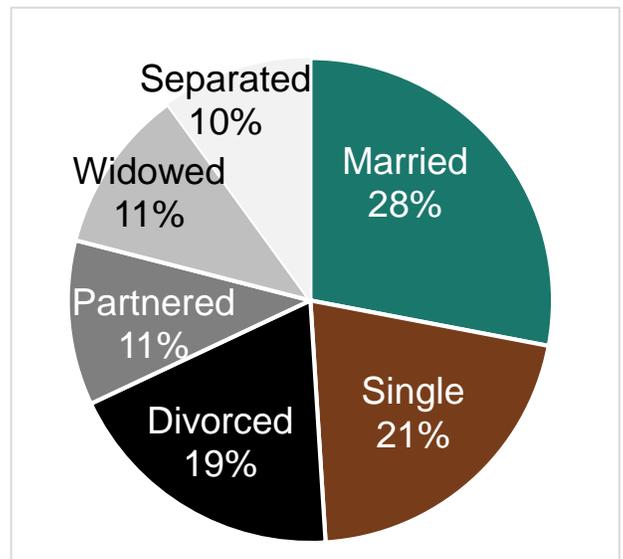


In contrast, 2015 ACS data show that the population of Coconino County is

55 percent White (non-Hispanic), 26 percent Native American, 14 percent Hispanic or Latino, 2 percent Asian-American, and 1 percent African-American. Among those in poverty, 41 percent are Native American, 37 percent are White (non-Hispanic), 18 percent are Hispanic or Latino, 3 percent are Asian-American, and 1 percent are African-American.

## Marital Status

Twenty-eight percent of focus group participants reported that they are married, 21 percent are single (never married), 19 percent are divorced, 11 percent are living with a partner in a marriage-like relationship, 11 percent are widowed, and 10 percent are separated.



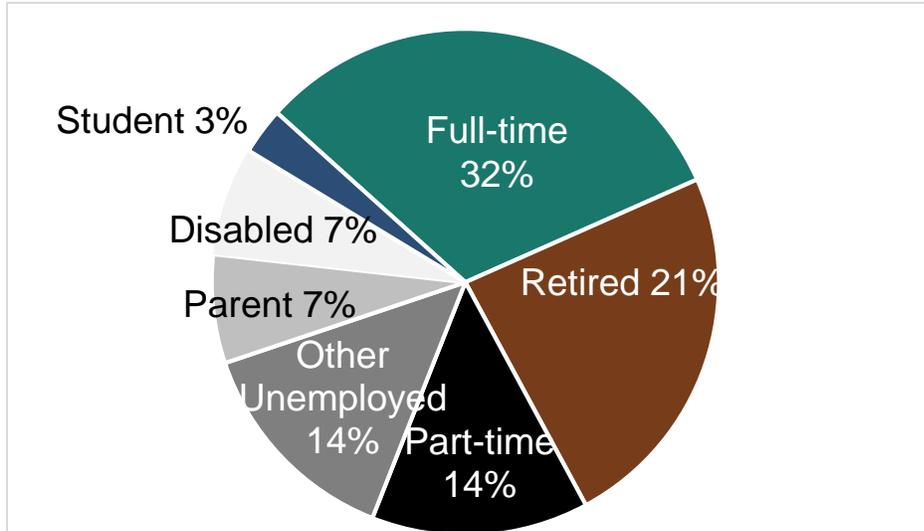
The 2015 ACS reports that, among Coconino County residents aged 15 or over, 41 percent are married, 44 percent are never married, 10 percent are divorced, 3 percent are widowed, and 1 percent are separated.

## Children at home

Focus group respondents report, on average, that 1.76 children are currently living in their home. According to the 2015 ACS, the average Coconino County household contains 0.64 children.

## Employment

The largest group of focus group participants, 32 percent, indicate that they are currently employed full-time, while 24 percent are retired, 14 percent are employed part-time, 7 percent are stay-at-home parents, 7 percent are disabled, 3 percent are



students, and 14 percent are otherwise unemployed. The 2015 ACS shows that 38 percent of Coconino County residents over age 15 worked full-time, 32 percent worked part-time, and 30 percent did not work. Among those

in poverty, 9 percent worked full-time, 47 percent worked part-time, and 44 percent did not work.

Focus group respondents reported an average 2016 household income of \$16,378, as compared to \$68,735 for Coconino County as a whole, according to the 2015 ACS.

It is apparent that, although the focus group methodology does not attempt to make use of participants who are representative of a larger population in the same way that the survey methodology seeks to interview a representative sample of the population, the participants in the 2017 Coconino County Community Services Community Needs Assessment focus groups were quite similar demographically to both the population of the county in general, and the population of those in poverty in Coconino County.

## **Focus Group and Secondary Data Analysis by Topic**

On the pages that follow, the main topic areas of the focus group discussions are examined one by one, and relevant quotations from focus group participants are highlighted. The topics are addressed in this order: community/poverty, employment, transportation, housing, education, healthcare, nutrition, and criminal justice/law enforcement.

As a supplement to the focus group analysis, LASR staff reviewed and summarized a number of secondary sources of data about poverty in Coconino County, including a variety of reports by local and national organizations, as well as a series of profiles of Coconino County communities, entitled "Listening In," that appeared in Flagstaff's *Arizona Daily Sun* newspaper from April to August, 2017.

Also analyzed was data from the US Census Bureau, including information from the American Community Survey. It should be noted that such data about Coconino County is inclusive of the entire county, including the Native American reservation areas of the county that are not part of this community needs assessment.

Following the analysis of the focus group discussion in each topic area is a presentation of secondary data analysis for that topics area.



## **Community / Poverty**

Many residents expressed a deep appreciation for the natural beauty of Coconino County, including aspects such as amazing views, clear air, peacefulness, enjoyable weather, and four seasons.

*“There’s something very spiritual up here. It has a draw, I don’t know if it’s the land or the lake (Powell). You have no other choice but to enjoy it.” [Page]*

For many, a positive sense of community was clearly present. In particular, the rural environment and small-town atmosphere of the County was seen as making it a good place to live.

*“Everyone is friendly. Everybody waves. It makes you feel wanted. It validates you. You don’t feel like you are running the rat race.” [Williams]*

*“Everybody knows everybody. Everybody supports everybody.” [Williams]*

*“(Flagstaff) is a wonderful place to raise a family.”*

*“Everyone knows each other, and are willing to help each other out.” [Marble Canyon]*

*“I don’t have to lock my doors.” [Cliff Dwellers]*

A common theme that emerged in the focus groups was to compare Coconino County favorably to other places that the participants had lived, especially “big cities” such as Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Detroit. Some County communities, such as Williams, were viewed positively because they evoked memories of how small towns had been in the past.

*“It’s a time-hop.” [Williams]*

*“This town (Williams) brings me back to my childhood...back in the 50s. We didn’t lock our doors.”*

*“In Phoenix you don’t really know your neighbors at all. Here (Mountainaire), I know everyone on my street.”*

*“It’s peaceful and relatively safe. There’s not a million people bumping into each other.” [Fredonia]*

A number of participants spoke of Coconino County as a destination that they were happy to have ended up living in.

*“A friend of mine brought me up here for nine days, and I never left.” [Page]*

Other participants had lived in Coconino County their whole lives, clearly identifying it as “home.” They could not conceive of ever living anywhere else. When presented with a hypothetical situation of “winning the lottery” and having the opportunity to move wherever they wanted, very few participants indicated that they would want to leave Coconino County.

*“I’d never want to live permanently anywhere but here [Page].”*

On the other hand, though, some participants pointed out negative aspects related to life and community in the County. Beneath the general positivity there seemed to exist a sense that things were on the wrong track for people in Coconino County.

*“A lot of things are very, very wrong in Flagstaff and that’s all I can say.”*

*“It’s fun living here, but it’s a struggle. You have to have two incomes in order to make it.” [Fredonia]*

*“It’s not easy to be a disabled person, after 22 years, when...I was disabled, instantly, I found, I’m no longer welcome in this town. There’s no place for me.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“Okay, I don’t own 40 acres, I live in a mobile home park, but still, I don’t know my neighbors, I’ve lived there 15 years, and everybody keeps to themselves,*

*everybody has children, there's nothing to do there and I always wonder, what do the kids do there in the summertime?" [Williams]*

Participants in the Flagstaff Spanish-language focus group were particularly critical of the local community and the divisions they saw within it. Perhaps as a reflection of the current national political climate, they felt that their lives had taken a turn for the worse:

*"It's a fragmented community."*

*"The Whites are separated from the Hispanics"*

*"There used to be more community"*

*"It needs to be a more integrated community and become more involved, because there are a lot of problems"*

*"The attitude has changed towards Hispanics."*

*"We are treated as criminals."*

*"In the past it didn't matter if we were citizens, but now we have to prove it."*

One Doney Park resident found the community to be not what was expected:

*"[When we moved here], we were expecting it to be simple everyday living, not the rat race of Phoenix or nothing... We didn't realize it was a resort place. We didn't realize there was a college here. We didn't know that stuff was going to be expensive here... We jumped from one frying pan to another frying pan."*

Fredonia residents were most pessimistic about their community:

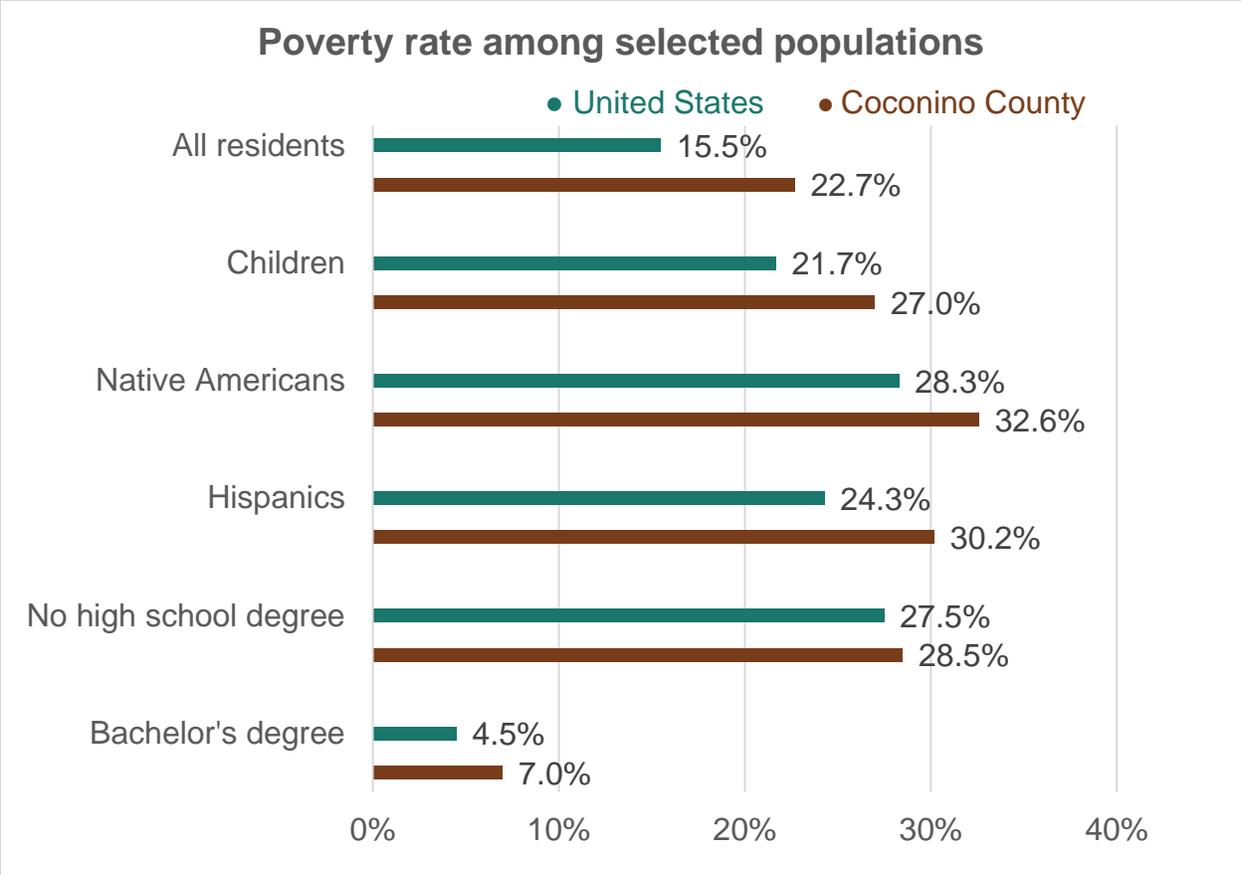
*"I personally feel this is becoming a ghost town and there is no point in living here."*

*"It's going downhill; it's going down quickly."*

### Secondary data analysis

Poverty is widespread in Coconino County, especially when viewed in comparison to the United States as a whole. The 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) from the US Census Bureau reports that 22.7 percent of County residents are below poverty level, compared to 15.5 percent nationally. Among the American Indian and Alaska Native population in the County, the poverty rate is 32.6 percent (compared to 28.3 percent nationally), and for those of Hispanic or Latino origin, it is 30.2 percent (compared to 24.3 percent nationally).

The Family Assets Count (2014) reported that 35.9 percent of the population of Coconino County had a household income less than \$25,000, while 25.5 percent of households had an income between \$25,000 and \$50,000.



In 2014, Coconino County Community Services (CCCS) reported that 54.15 percent of its clients had a household income up to 50 percent poverty level. Almost 17 percent were within 51 percent-75 percent the poverty level (2014). In 2015, the percent of households with income up to 50 percent poverty level decreased from 54.15 percent to about 44 percent; and households with incomes between 51 percent-75 percent of the household was 26 percent (2015).

In 2016, we see an increase in the percent of households with incomes up to 50 percent of poverty level, and there is a decrease in the percentage of households with income between 51 percent and 75 percent of poverty level.

According to data from the 2016 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau, 9.8 percent of households in Coconino County receive aid from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), compared to 12.4 percent of U.S. households as a whole. Among County households with a female householder and no husband present, the figure jumps to 34.5 percent. Fifty-seven percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native households in Coconino County benefit from SNAP.

There is a close connection between poverty and education level. In Coconino County, 34.2 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the 2016 ACS. But at the lower end of the education spectrum, great disparities can be seen in terms of

race. Just 4.4 percent of non-Hispanic Whites do not have a high school diploma or GED, compared to 21.9 percent of Hispanics and Latinos and 22.2 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The median income in Coconino County for an individual without a high school diploma or GED is \$21,368, while for those with for a bachelor's degree, it is \$41,131. The poverty rate in the County for adults 25 years of age and older who have a bachelor's degree of higher is 7 percent (compared to 4.5 percent in the U.S. as a whole). Coconino County's poverty rate for those without a high school diploma or GED is 28.5 percent, as opposed to 27.5 percent for the nation as a whole.

## **Employment**

Finding a good job in Coconino County was a struggle for many focus group participants. Many complained that the local economy was heavily tourist-based, resulting in jobs that were often seasonal, part-time, and low-paying.

In some of the smaller communities, residents noted that there were very few places to work. Consequently, there was a sense that it was necessary to travel long distances, particularly to Flagstaff, in order to find work.

*"There's nothing in Ash Fork unless you get into the Family Dollar." [Williams]*

*"Seligman, Ash Fork, Williams and Parks all depend on other larger towns; we depend on Flagstaff." [Williams]*

*"Very few opportunities for long-term employment." [Marble Canyon]*

But in the Flagstaff area, some participants felt that the presence of Northern Arizona University and its students diluted the job market, making it harder for non-students to find good work.

*"The biggest problem up here is that 90 percent of our businesses' jobs are part-time. Who are they hiring? The college students."*

*"All the communities around here are growing at a rapid rate, but jobs are not. And the city and the county are not doing one thing to increase jobs here. They're trying to protect the good ol' boys from way back, and not let any competition in... They tried to bring Walmart in and stopped them because it was going to be a two story business. It doesn't stop NAU from creating these five-story dorms. They need to realize the community needs jobs, not apartments for NAU students."*

*"Unless you have a Ph.D. or are a garbage collector, there aren't any jobs in between."*

Spanish-speaking residents of Flagstaff were generally able to find work, but had to deal with low pay and poor working conditions.

*“If people need to find work they can find it, there is a lot of work here, in motels and restaurants.”*

*“People have to work two to three jobs to pay rent.”*

*“People have to work really hard to make ends meet”*

*“We put ourselves out there. We are passionate and we do the job”*

*“People are hurt on the job and forbidden to talk about it”*

Some of these residents also faced challenges related to employment due to their immigration status:

*“If you are undocumented, you have to do more work and be better than other people.”*

*“If you are here illegally, then you can’t be promoted.”*

*“The only thing that keeps us from getting ahead is a piece of paper.”*

In the communities of Page and Fredonia in the northern part of Coconino County, there were concerns with long-established employers leaving, with tourism jobs becoming increasingly important. Page residents saw tourism employment as plentiful, with more and more of it becoming available.

*“I have noticed even here in Page (seasonal jobs) are popping up a lot earlier in the season.”*

*“There’s a lot of job openings in Page, earlier and later on in the seasons too. Good help is hard to find, too.”*

*“There’s a lot of hotels coming in, so there’s a lot of work, if you gotta work.”*

Even in the face of the impending closure of the Navajo Generating Station coal power plant, many in Page seemed optimistic that tourism jobs would help sustain the local economy.

*“I don’t think the plant shutting down will have a major impact on the town.”*

*“In the long run, after the plant goes, the tourists will keep things afloat.”*

Fredonia residents were less hopeful following the closure of many longtime employers, including the Kaibab sawmill. The jobs available in Fredonia were seen as involving long hours for low pay.

*“If you’re willing to work 60 hours a week minimum wage, there’s lot of jobs. No retirement.”*

*“No benefits, no retirement, no 401K, you get part-time, you get to work 3 jobs.... They won’t even give you unemployment.”*

*“Eighteen plus hours a day.”*

*“The only jobs here are the Family Dollar, the two gas stations, or the city. Those are the only job opportunities.”*

Many Fredonia job seekers were forced to go to Utah, or even Las Vegas, to look for work. Fredonia focus group participants seemed resentful of the opportunities that were available in Utah, but not in Arizona. They tended to blame local government for this situation, insisting that local officials prevented new businesses from coming to Fredonia in order to preserve the status quo.

*“They have lots of hotels in Utah. Why can’t they bring one down here?”*

[In response] *“They tried that, it got denied. They denied it.”*

*“My husband had to move on. He got a job in Vegas, but he was always gone.”*

*“People have to leave to find a job. People have to leave to support their family.”*

*“We have the highest taxes, and the town’s still broke.”*

In Tusayan, just south of Grand Canyon, the community was defined in large part by employment. The tourism-related jobs held by the focus group participants were often the sole reason that they lived in Coconino County. Few of them had any connection to the area other than their job.

In a sense, Tusayan, including the neighboring Grand Canyon Village, is a “company town” where employers exert tremendous influence over the lives of their employees. The workers’ housing situation, down to even who they live with, is dictated by their employers.

Tusayan residents note the abundance of jobs in the area, and agree that advancement, benefits, and raises are made available. But they see a trade-off: committing to a job in the area often means compromising other aspects of the worker’s life, as they have little opportunity to own their own homes and it is a difficult place to raise a family.

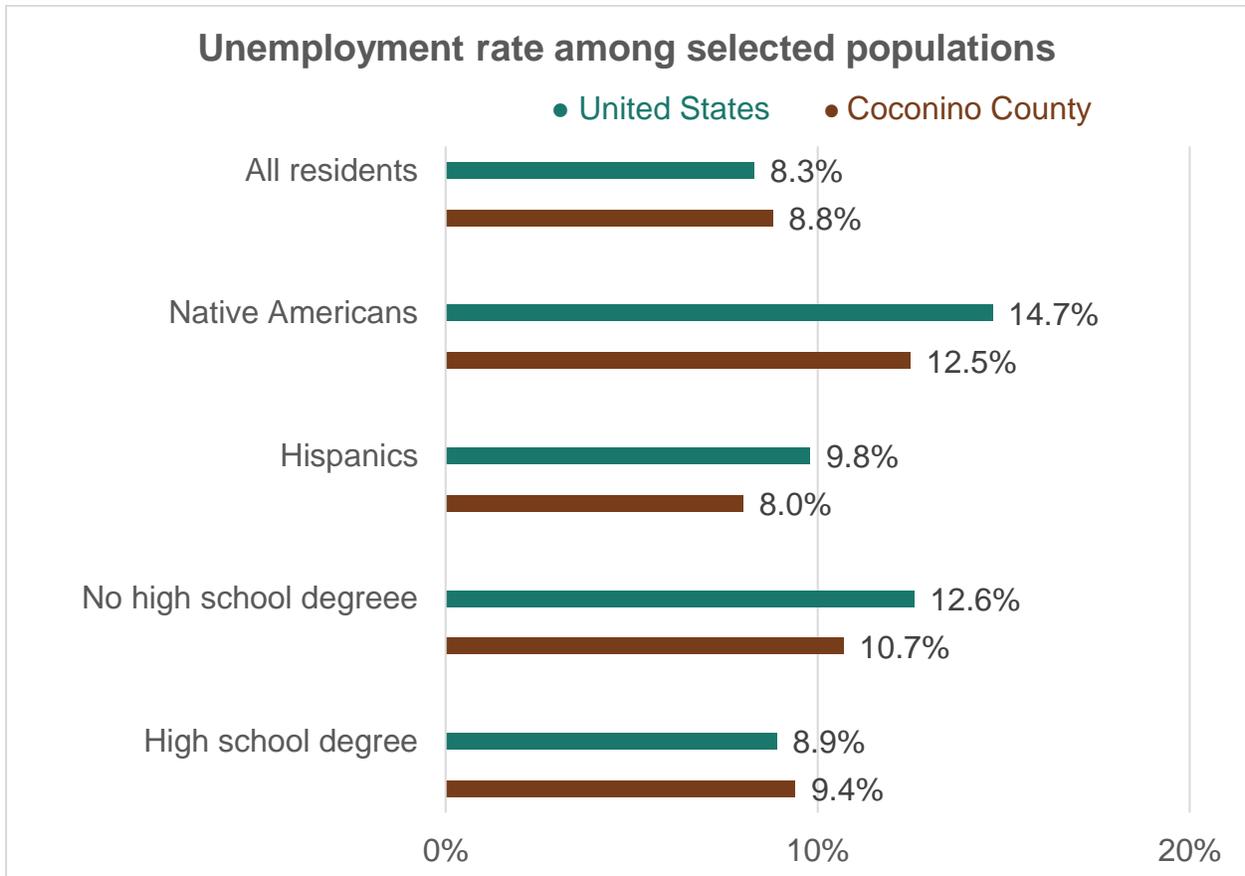
*“You can’t lay down roots here.”*

The only Tusayan focus group participants with connections to Coconino County were Native Americans. The other participants had come to Grand Canyon from around the U.S., and the world. One White resident said that he thought that employers treated Natives better than Whites:

*“I think some of the managers abuse their authority...I, myself, was fired by the manager. I got in an argument with a coworker who was Native, and instead of us working it out, I got fired...They don’t fire Natives.”*

## Secondary data analysis

According to the 2015 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau, the unemployment rate among Coconino County residents aged 16 or over is 8.8 percent (compared to 8.3 percent for the U.S. as a whole). In the County, White residents have the lowest unemployment rate, at 7.0 percent, compared to 12.5 percent for American Indians and Alaska Natives and 8.0 percent for Hispanics or Latinos. The unemployment rate for those without a high school diploma or GED is 10.7 percent, while it is lower for those with such a degree (9.4%).



The scarcity of jobs in the outlying areas of Coconino County means that many workers must endure long daily commutes to Flagstaff. In Leupp, “every weekday morning sees a long line of cars driving off the reservation as workers leave for jobs in the surrounding communities” (Adams-Ockrassa 2017c).

Approximately two-thirds of all workers who live in Flagstaff are employed in “education, health care services, arts, accommodations and recreation, retail trade, and manufacturing” (NACOG, 2017 p. 5). However, it is important to note that many of the positions in education, health services, arts, and accommodations and recreations are not full-time positions. This is relevant because employment status directly impacts and shapes the quality of life for low-income residents in Flagstaff.

The effect of joblessness on homelessness is illustrated by the City of Flagstaff's 2016 HUD Consolidated Plan Executive Summary (CPES), which reported that nearly one-third of unsheltered homeless people surveyed asserted that their primary reason for homelessness was lack of employment. Furthermore, it is asserted that one of the greatest needs of families at risk of becoming homeless is securing "adequate employment" (2016, p. 44). Additionally, the lingering impact of the "economic recession and housing crisis" resulted in more households needing public housing, and supportive services.

Because employment status has been shown to be directly related to housing status, the City of Flagstaff and agencies located in Flagstaff have provided a variety of services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. In addition, considerable progress was also made towards providing more economic opportunities and a "relatively large number of individuals benefitted from financial [counseling]...and several benefitted from employment training" (2016: 2). However, there are areas where improvement can be made.

A significant discussion about low-income populations and employment in Flagstaff must address the disparity between education level, skill level, and employment opportunities. In general, the skills of a large number of people with Bachelor's Degrees (10,390) or some college (7,864) in the workforce in Flagstaff do not align with the common occupations mentioned above.

Flagstaff's CPES (2016) reports that during the consultation process of the study, respondents indicated that "emphasis on college education is not a match for many of the jobs that are available" (p. 73), and the local employers continue to say they struggle finding workers with the skills needed for their available positions. This means that many employed workers either are likely "underemployed based on their education alone" or do not have the appropriate technical skills for available jobs.

In addition, Flagstaff's CPES (2016) noted that low-income residents need access to employment that matches their "education and skill level." This is a concern for employed workers in the general population in Flagstaff (p. 34). The report elaborates on this point, asserting that while there may be economic and employment opportunities for low-income populations, many are confronting a reality of "insufficient moderate- and higher wage employment opportunities" which contribute to their precarious living situations (p. 44).

Therefore, a challenge exists in providing low-income residents with an appropriate match between their qualifications and job requirements, as well as providing them with work that pays a "meaningful employment of sufficient wage." Doing so would help low-income residents gain support for a higher quality of life in Flagstaff (2016, p.34).

The concern about matching workers and their qualifications with jobs is one shared by employers. According to Flagstaff's Housing and Community Sustainability Nexus Study (2008), Flagstaff employers had concerns about employee recruitment and retention.

While employers asserted that problems with recruitment and retention appeared to be the result of the concurrence of three economic factors, including “relatively low wages, rapidly increasing housing prices, and lack of job opportunities for spouses/partners” (p. 11), the study also called attention to serious recruitment issues like lack of qualified applicants (p. 33).

Additionally, employers were finding it difficult to attract and retain qualified employees, due to the relatively “lower wages and higher housing costs in Flagstaff,” compared to neighboring cities including Phoenix and the Las Vegas metro area (p. 33). In that same study, 80 percent of business representatives indicated that housing was a serious barrier to recruiting and retaining employees in Flagstaff (p. 34). Lastly, two common reasons for employee turnover were “moving on to other opportunities” (cited by 34 percent of business representatives) and high housing costs and cost of living (cited by 31 percent)” (p. 37).

Low-income residents have been and continue to be impacted by these issues as a potentially unqualified workforce, dealing with both rising costs of living and housing prices. Compared to workers who have moved on to take advantage of better employment opportunities, it is less likely that low-income populations have the means to uproot their lives and gain meaningful employment elsewhere. Wages have not been increasing to offset the cost of increasing housing prices and cost of living, which detrimentally impacts low-income residents.

Economic downturns have often tended to affect remote areas of Coconino County, where employment may be concentrated in one or two particular industries, in a disproportionate way. For example, the housing market crash of 2008 drastically reduced the demand for flagstone to be used in new housing construction, forcing layoffs in the Ash Fork stone yards (Adams-Ockrassa 2017a). The once-thriving timber and mining industries in Fredonia disappeared in the 1990’s, severely damaging the town’s economy and eliminating good jobs. One Fredonia resident noted, “Basically, if you work around Fredonia, you pay for it, and that’s by not getting paid” (Cowan 2017b).

Bureau of Labor Statistics data highlight the ways in which insufficient wages have manifested themselves in Coconino County in comparison to the national average, Arizona’s average, and the average in U.S. metropolitan areas. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that earnings per employee in Coconino County were \$41,129. Coconino County employees made almost \$17,000 less per year than employees in other U.S. metropolitan areas (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2013).

In addition, the per capita personal income in Coconino County was \$35,933; in comparison, the average per capita personal income in U.S. metro areas was \$46,177 (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2013). In 2013, the employment-to-population ratio in Coconino County, which exceeded both Arizona’s and the national ratio, was 62.1, while the average employment-to-population ratio was 58.7 in U.S. metro areas. Lastly, in 2014, the unemployment rate in Coconino County was greater than the national average; the unemployment rate was 7.2 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014).

## Transportation

Coconino County's immense size, combined with the needs of residents of outlying communities to travel to larger population centers for jobs, healthcare, and shopping, makes transportation a crucial issue, especially to those of low-to-moderate income.

For those living in the smaller communities around Flagstaff (Ash Fork, Doney Park, Kachina Village, Mountaineer, Munds Park, Parks, Williams, and Winona), there is often a critical need to be able to travel easily to Flagstaff. Many focus group participants from these communities lamented the lack of public transportation in the area.

*"Public transportation? There isn't any!" [Williams]*

*"It would be nice to at least have a bus going down Townsend-Winona Road for someone to catch the bus." [Doney Park]*

*"There's no transportation for anybody to get into town and go to work." [Doney Park]*

Williams residents were most adamant about the transportation problems they face; one participant stated that, after providing opportunities for children, transportation was the most important problem the city faced. Many people in Williams work in Flagstaff, but cannot afford to live there. It can be difficult for them to get to Flagstaff as often as they would like.

*"I'm dependent on a car, but I can't afford to use it."*

*"A lot of people have cars, but can't afford gas money."*

*"We go once a month to Flag, to go to Sam's Club. If we could afford to go to Flagstaff more often, we would."*

*"Arizona Shuttle picks you up at Grand Canyon Railway, they leave three or four times a day, and they charge 24 dollars to go to Flagstaff, one way."*

*"My husband has to go to Flagstaff for work. He puts in 50 bucks a week for gas; that's 200 bucks a month! We have to pay it."*

Residents of Doney Park, Page, and Fredonia reported that walking, combined with hitchhiking, is a common mode of transportation for the poor across rural landscapes, and a primary mode for some.

*"Most people do walk around here." [Doney Park]*

*"We can walk where we need to go." [Page]*

*"I see people walk (to Page) all the way from K-town (Kayenta, Arizona - a distance of 100 miles)." [Page]*

*“I happen to see one guy hitchhike from Kanab (in Utah, seven miles away) to Fredonia every day. And he’s elderly.” [Fredonia]*

*“I walk to Kanab all the time. I get picked up if someone stops.” [Fredonia]*

Residents of outlying communities were often quite resourceful in attempting to meet their transportation needs. In Fredonia, residents would post requests on the library bulletin board or on Facebook for rides to nearby cities, such as St. George, Utah. A church shuttle takes members from Kanab to St. George. Tusayan residents get to Flagstaff on shuttles run by their employers or by a recreation center. Mountaineer residents use a casino shuttle to get to Twin Arrows. Those from Page fill their gas tanks up just enough to be able to reach the gas station in Gap, which, because it is on the Navajo Nation, does not charge federal taxes on gas, making it ten to fifteen cents less expensive per gallon than in Page.

In Flagstaff, the presence of the Mountain Line bus system is helpful to low-income residents, but some complained that buses do not run late enough, and several reported that the system was not conducive to use by those with disabilities.

*“I have a real problem with them (Mountain Line). You can’t use Mountain Line if you have disabilities...They (Mountain Lift) are asking for a red and white Medicare card. That card doesn’t exist anymore!”*

*“They kicked off my son for having a seizure... he was having a partial focal seizure and they thought he was drunk. He tried to explain he was having a seizure and they wouldn’t listen to him and they dropped him off way on the other side of town. Six hours later someone found him and called me. He didn’t know where he was at.”*

Spanish-speaking residents of Flagstaff reported additional concerns with transportation in the city, including those related to costs and immigration status.

*“It’s difficult to get to where we need to be. We walk a lot.”*

*“I had to take a taxi one day and it cost 24 dollars. That’s a full day’s pay.”*

*“People are afraid to drive to work because they don’t have documents and might get stopped.”*

Doney Park residents were notable for their concern with poor road conditions in the County. They complained about local gravel and dirt roads becoming muddy and sometimes flooded. Propane trucks were seen as creating ruts in roads. One focus group participant told of an unsuccessful effort to have the road they lived on paved by the County.

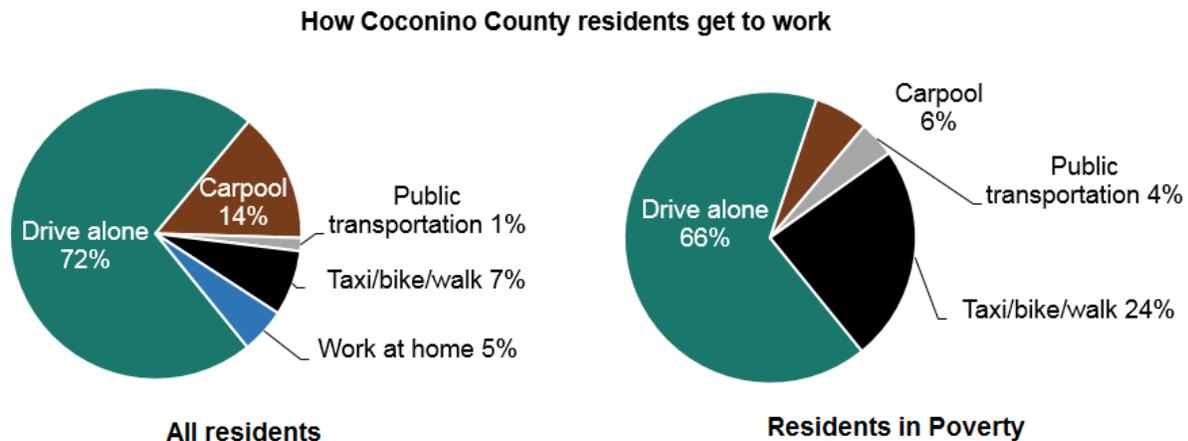
*“People started to put a petition together to have the road paved...The County came out and said, they’d pave it, but everyone would have to pay five thousand dollars apiece. If you can’t afford to pay the five thousand dollars, they would put a lien against your house for the money, and when you sell the house they get*

*the money back. Wait a minute, you're telling me you're taking some of my property to pay for some of this road...This is a county road, this isn't a private road!"*

### Secondary data analysis

Public Transportation is a significant community asset in low-income neighborhoods. It shapes the ways in which people access health care and medical services, obtain groceries, and reach places of employment (NACOG 2017, p. 5).

Analysis of 2016 American Community Survey Census data shows that 72 percent of Coconino County workers drive alone to work, while 14 percent carpool, 7 percent walk, bicycle, or take a taxi, 5 percent work at home, and 1 percent use public transportation. Of those using public transportation, 55.8 percent were women, and the median age of a public transportation rider is 29.1 years old. In Coconino County, 42.8 percent of those earning incomes of less than \$10,000 used public transportation, compare to just 14percent for the U.S. as a whole. Twenty-two percent of those who used public transportation had incomes below the poverty level, as did 10.5 percent of solo drivers and 6 percent of carpoolers. More than half (50.6%) of all who used public transportation in Coconino County speak a language other than English.



Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transport Authority's Choices Report (2017) examines existing transportation issues and alternatives to remedy these conditions. It calls attention to the transportation needs of several populations, including low-income people. In addition, the report discusses several goals related to transportation in Flagstaff, including making sure that people "with severe needs for transit (due to income, age, or disability) have access," regardless of where they live (p. 7). According to the report, there exists a high density of residents "at and around NAU campus," including on the south side of Interstate 40 (p. 11).

However, places where people live in “moderate or high densities” are not arranged along a “small set of common corridors” (p. 11). As a result, transit services cannot easily run a route that simultaneously travels in a “straight line” and also “serve(s) dense residential areas” (p. 7). This information is pertinent to low-income residents and their access to transportation services due to the relationship between residential and poverty density; low-income residents appear to live in spaces where the report indicates there is high residential density. In Flagstaff, low-income people appear to be concentrated in “far-flung dense developments” and that, ultimately, creates conflict between transit’s goals of achieving high ridership on one hand, and insuring that low-income people have access to transportation services, on the other (p. 15).

A clear, significant concern that arises for NAIPTA is the ability to connect low-income people who live “great distances from other activities and developments” with service that runs through “low rider spaces,” while addressing the greater cost-to-ridership relationship (p. 7). Therefore, it is important to provide “useful and reliable” transportation services for the different trips that low-income people may make (p. 7).

It is important to call attention to the ways in which access to transportation impacts the elderly in Flagstaff, because most of the elderly population surveyed and reported on in the Northern Arizona Council of Governments Proposed 4 Year Plan (2017) indicated that their yearly income was only between \$10,000 and \$20,000. According to the NACOG proposal, about 33 percent of the respondents who participated in their need assessment survey indicated that transportation was their most significant unmet need, and identified their need for transportation to access medical services and shopping.

Most importantly, transportation was highlighted as the *greatest* barrier to health care (2017). Further, it was indicated that the main barriers to transportation are the cost of transportation services and the costs to own and operate one’s own mode of transportation. Respondents expressed an overall need for transportation and “vouchers and or subsidized transportation”.

Similarly, Flagstaff’s CPES (p. 45) reported that elderly renters are in need of more affordable housing in “close proximity to transportation and services.” Fortunately, a significant goal for NACOG is to increase the ability of older adults to “remain active, healthy and living independently in their communities” (2016). Providing low-income elderly residents with access to transportation increases the likelihood that they may be able to live full lives.

If NAIPTA and the community choose to shift the direction of transportation to favor higher ridership, the impact would direct transportation away from far-flung, densely populated developments in Flagstaff and has the potential to prevent residents from receiving equal access to transit (p. 6).

This scenario would be depicted as one where the transit service would run all of its buses on streets where there are “large numbers of people, walking to transit stops is easy,” and where buses can travel along straight routes that seem direct and fast to

customers (p. 17). However, in Flagstaff, low-income residents can represent either a “strong market for transit or a need for coverage service” depending on the built environment around them (p. 14).

For those who are able to commute to Flagstaff from outlying communities such as Kachina Village and Mountainaire, area winters often bring the challenge of icy, hazardous roads (Adams-Ockrassa 2017b). In more remote areas such as Mormon Lake, winter can mean complete isolation as some roads become impassable (Adams-Ockrassa 2017d).



## Housing

The high cost of housing is perhaps the most critical issue facing low-to-moderate income residents of Coconino County. Across the County, finding affordable housing is the biggest challenge they face.

Because Coconino County’s natural beauty makes it such an attractive place to live and visit, those in poverty are confronted with housing prices that have been driven up due to demand from tourists, summer residents, second-home owners, California transplants, and weekend visitors.

*“They get you here because these are summer homes. They raise the price on those.” [Williams]*

*“So many people are selling their houses in California and moving to our area, so it made the price of things go up. So someone like me, my rent is 650 bucks and I make 735 dollars, and there’s no give. I go without so much, and it’s not fair.” [Williams]*

*“Two years ago, a house by me cost \$800 a month to rent. Now with weekend renters, it’s up to \$1,800 a month, in just two years.” [Mountainaire]*

*“We’re having problems with realtors renting houses for weekends. They (the renters) think they’re in the woods and go through your property, letting their dogs run loose. The county won’t act on it, they just let it go.” [Mountainaire]*

Fredonia residents believe that new “sharing economy” internet home rental services such as Airbnb have contributed to higher housing costs. Absentee owners have discovered that they can rent homes to vacationers on Airbnb and make more money than they would renting to local residents.

*“People come out here and spend \$4,000 a month on an Airbnb, and they stay the month or two weeks.”*

And in the Flagstaff area, the increasing numbers of Northern Arizona University students have made it even more difficult for the poor to find adequate, affordable housing.

*“It seems we keep building more housing for students.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“Everything here is centered around the college: jobs, housing, anything. We’re on the outside looking in, saying ‘What about us?’ We’re being left behind.” [Doney Park]*

*“They put up three apartment complexes (for NAU students) and screw the people who actually live here. It’s like they’re completely making it so that they’re almost trying to run the people who are actually from here out, and make it one hundred percent students.” [Mountainaire]*

*“What about us who are actually from here? Born, raised, for many, many years. We have to live here all the time, not just for two semesters or four years. This is our home.” [Mountainaire]*

*“There’s more of a drive for students and housing. At the same time, I haven’t heard of any new development for low-income or vulnerable populations that is needed.” [Mountainaire]*

Spanish-speaking residents of Flagstaff reported additional problems in finding affordable housing related to immigration status:

*“When a person gets an apartment and they find out they don’t have documents, they raise the rent because they don’t have options.”*

*“Sometimes when you’re not a citizen, they won’t rent to you or you pay a higher amount.”*

Focus group participants indicated that they spent significant chunks of their income on housing expenses. Doney Park residents reported that 80 percent of their income went to rent. One Fredonia participant put the figure at 92 percent.

*“I was a single parent for eleven years. Everything that was earned went to housing and food.” [Flagstaff - Spanish]*

*“What is spent on housing? Everything.” [Flagstaff - Spanish]*

*“One whole paycheck (goes to housing). Half of my income.” [Page]*

*“I have another job just so I can afford rent.” [Mountaineer]*

Many focus group participants reported living in far-flung rural areas far from their jobs or desired home locations due to an inability to afford anything closer, thus exacerbating issues with transportation.

*“That’s why we’re out here (Williams), because we couldn’t afford it (Flagstaff).”*

One respondent told of her struggles related to moving her family from the Los Angeles area for her husband’s new job in Flagstaff:

*“I love Williams. I don’t plan on leaving Williams, but to be honest, Williams wasn’t where we were intending to go. We were intending to go to Flagstaff. My husband got a job in Flagstaff, and we’re supposed to be out in Flagstaff by a certain date and we could not find a house, due to in part the college, the kids. And the rent was way too high. It was literally like leaving L.A. and going right back into L.A., pricewise...We’re a family of six in a two-bedroom, it’s not ideal, it’s a tight fit, but people have done it before and we’ll do it until we buy.”*

Ultimately, unaffordable housing costs drive some of the Coconino County poor to live in the forest:

*“There’s a lot of people living out in the woods out here.” [Williams]*

The housing situation in Tusayan and Grand Canyon Village is unique in that, because of the “company town” nature of the area, most focus group participants lived in housing provided by their employers, often at very low prices. Several participants reported paying just \$72 per week in rent to their employers.

But this affordability came at the price of limited personal freedom and independence. Workers must accept the roommates assigned by employers to live with them. Affordable housing outside of the context of the employment relationship simply does not exist.

*“Business owners don’t want you to have your own housing because they want you to stay dependent on them and stay working for them forever.”*

When asked about their awareness of programs or services to help them with issues around affordable housing, Coconino County focus group participants seemed quite familiar with public housing, but believed that receiving public housing required waiting for years.

*“Waiting for public homes is like 5 years.” [Flagstaff - Spanish]*

*“A lot of people aren’t expecting Section 8 no more.” [Flagstaff - English]*

Others seemed frustrated by their earlier attempts to receive help with affordable housing, citing struggles with bureaucratic red tape and poor treatment from providing agencies.

*“It’s horrible, they (Legal Aid) treat you as though you are literally dirt under their feet.” [Flagstaff - English]*

In general, low-to-moderate income Coconino County residents did not seem to have a lot of knowledge about how to receive help with affordable housing issues, and when they did, they often seemed uncertain about whether it was correct. Some called for better dissemination of information about housing programs.

*“Workshops would be helpful. We have all this information and it’s not getting out.” [Williams]*

### Secondary data analysis

Income status has a profound impact on housing status and quality of housing. Households identified as “extremely” low-income are likely burdened with severe housing cost burdens and are at a greater risk of experiencing homelessness. HUD defines “low income” households as households earning between 50 and 80 percent of the area median income (Economic and Planning Systems, 2008, p. 47).

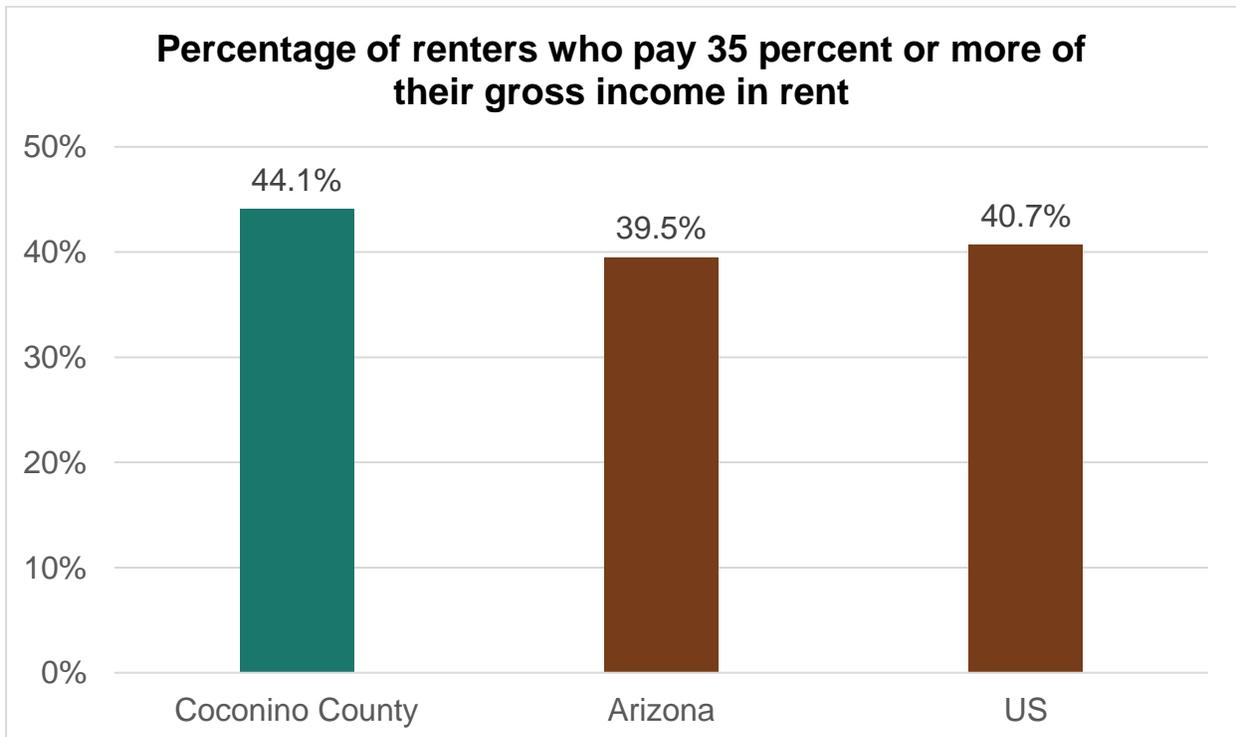
The City of Flagstaff’s 2016-2020 HUD Consolidated Plan Executive Summary (CPES) reports that for families in this position, there are several needs that must be met for them to acquire housing: securing employment, accessing social services, and developing the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve greater financial stability and remain permanently housed (p. 25). Flagstaff has made considerable progress towards investing in housing, as well as investing in public and supportive services for vulnerable populations. The City of Flagstaff Council established Goals in 2017 regarding affordable housing as follows:

- Increase the number of affordable rental units.
- Promote energy efficient rental units.
- Improve the distribution of affordable rental units throughout the community and neighborhoods. Seek private developer partnerships to increase affordable housing inventory in both rental and ownership units.

- Pursue financing strategies for affordable housing to create additional rental and ownership housing opportunities.
- Modify the building and zoning codes to encourage more affordable housing options.
- Adopt a primary property tax rate increased to the maximum allowed with additional funds dedicated to setting up robust city-managed rental housing units.
- Establish an employer assisted housing program.

Census data from the 2016 American Community Survey reveals that 40 percent of Coconino County residents are renters (the figure for the state of Arizona as a whole is 36 percent). Thirty percent of renters pay less than \$500 a month in rent, compared to 19 percent for the nation as a whole. The median monthly housing cost in Coconino County is similar to both the state of Arizona and the U.S. as a whole (\$982, \$975, and \$1022, respectively). However, 44.1 percent of Coconino County renters pay more than 35 percent of their income in rent, compared to just 39.5 percent of Arizona renters and 40.7 percent of U.S. renters.

A pressing concern for low-income populations in Flagstaff is affordability of housing. Flagstaff’s 2016-2020 HUD Consolidated Plan Executive Summary (CPES 2016) reports that the most common housing problems are severe housing burden (paying 50percent of income for housing) and housing burden (paying more than 30 percent but less than 50 percent of income for housing) (p. 18).



In particular, extremely low-income renters, those earning less than 30 percent of the area median income, are the largest “cohort experiencing housing cost burden and severe housing cost burden,” and low-to-moderate income owners, those with income between 50 and 80 percent of area median income, experience high rates of cost burden and severe cost burden (p. 18). Extremely low-income renters with a severe housing burden are at a greater risk of becoming homeless (p. 25).

Further, current HUD data indicate that there are 855 “nonelderly large and small family rental households” in Flagstaff in this precarious situation (p. 25). In addition, single parent households in Flagstaff, particularly when the head of the household is female, often suffer additional cost burdens due to current gender-wage disparities (p. 25).

Affordable housing for low-income residents in Flagstaff presents itself as a greater concern considering future projected increases in median home value and median rent costs. Flagstaff’s CPES reports that both median home values and rent costs are expected to increase as the housing market continues its recovery (2016).

This trend is not a new phenomenon. Flagstaff’s Housing and Community Sustainability Nexus Study (2008) called attention to the increasing disparity between wages and household incomes, and how housing prices have shaped the affordability of housing in Flagstaff. In the 2008 report, housing costs were cited as having grown at a “much more rapid pace” than wages and income in Flagstaff (p. 38).

Between 2000 and 2006, the median housing price increased 14.9 percent per year to reach \$380,000 in 2006 (p. 38); however, wages only increased at an average annual rate of 3.5 percent, and median household income grew about 2.6 percent per year in that time frame (p. 38). In other words, the median home price in Flagstaff was 11.8 times the average annual wage, and 8.4 times the median household income by 2006 (p. 38). Although this specific trend is not occurring today, there continues to be a disparity in wages and income, and housing costs in Flagstaff remain detrimental to low-income residents.

Flagstaff’s CPES (2016) reports that the primary factors or contributors to homelessness in the city are the “high cost of housing combined with insufficient moderate-and higher-wage employment opportunities” (2016, p. 44). Additionally, there is a discrepancy between the suggested fair market rent and actual rent price averages that impacts those low-income residents who rely on rental voucher programs to attain affordable housing in the city. The 2017 Rental Attainability Report for Flagstaff (Housing Solutions of Northern Arizona 2017) highlights this discrepancy as it details the suggested fair market rents and the actual rental average for various apartment sizes in the city. For example, the suggested fair market rent for a studio apartment is \$704, while the actual rental average for a studio apartment in Flagstaff is \$783.

Additionally, the suggested fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,037 and the actual rental average for a two-bedroom apartment in Flagstaff is \$1,427 (2017). These differences between speculated and actual costs are significant to address when

discussing access to affordable housing, because many low-income residents rely on rental voucher programs to avoid losing stable housing.

However, rental voucher programs are based on HUD's Fair Market Rental rates, which are inconsistent with the reality of rental rates in Flagstaff and will continue to "complicate low-income households' ability to rent." (2017, p. 1).

One way to deal with the high cost of Flagstaff housing is to live in adjoining communities such as Kachina Village and Mountaineire, where the median price of homes is significantly lower. While, according to the Northern Arizona Multiple Listing Service, the median price of a house in Flagstaff was \$315,000 in early 2017, in Kachina Village it was \$232,750 and in Mountaineire it was \$250,000 (Adams-Ockrassa 2017).

In addition to the ways in which the discrepancy between suggested and actual market rates for housing exacerbate conditions for low-income residents in Flagstaff, the Rental Attainability Report (Housing Solutions of Northern Arizona 2017) highlights the ways in which those working minimum wage jobs are less likely to be able to afford housing in the city. For instance, to afford an average two-bedroom apartment while avoiding paying more than 30 percent of its income on housing (housing cost burden), a household must earn about \$27.44 per hour at a full-time job, working 52 weeks per year. In other words, an individual earning the minimum wage in Flagstaff, \$10.50 per hour, would have to work almost three full time jobs to afford the rental rate average of \$1,427.

Low-income populations are likely experiencing a poor quality of life due to the expense of housing on their incomes. This impacts the elderly, mentally ill, and disabled individuals who are also categorized as low-income residents who are often on fixed incomes.

Low-income residents in Flagstaff are more likely than moderate to higher-income households to experience a substandard quality of housing. For example, a considerable number of low-income households surveyed in Flagstaff indicated that they experience overcrowding, which is defined as having more than one person in a room, or are living in substandard housing where they lack complete plumbing or kitchen facilities (City of Flagstaff 2016, p. 58).

US Census data indicate there are 37 units in Flagstaff that lack complete plumbing facilities and 192 that lack complete kitchen facilities; however, these units may be illegal accessory dwelling units. Additionally, HUD data indicates that 2,290 pre-1980 housing units occupied by households with children may contain lead-based paint, which could lead to serious pediatric health problems like lead poisoning (p. 61). This information indicates that low-income residents in Flagstaff are not experiencing quality and adequate housing, and are even living in dwellings that may jeopardize their health and the health of their family members.

A discussion about housing in Flagstaff and how low-income residents experience attaining it, and the quality of that housing, requires an assessment of the available housing options and programs for low-income residents. As of 2016, the City of Flagstaff Housing Authority provided 265 public housing units, 18 “mod-rehab units,” 365 Housing Choice Vouchers, and 66 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers (City of Flagstaff, 2016, p. 36). There were 1,245 subsidized low-income rental units in the City of Flagstaff (p. 28). According to information provided by the Arizona Department of Housing there were two affordable housing properties “containing 68 units with periods of affordability or use agreements,” of which, one expired in 2016, and the other will expire before the end of 2025 (p. 28).

In addition to the 265 public housing units and 80 affordable rental units owned and operated by the City of Flagstaff Public Housing Authority, there were 888 affordable rental units in 12 apartment complexes funded with the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC) (2016, p. 28). LIHTC units are generally targeted to households with income less than 60 percent of the area median income. LIHTC units may be targeted to specific populations, and 60 units are geared towards elderly and disabled households (p. 28). The remaining 828 units are targeted to families (2016, p. 28). Additionally, there were 12 HUD-funded Section 202 units that served very-low income people with disabilities (p. 52).

During the period in which the public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs were accepting applications, the approximate wait time was 18 months to 3 years or more for a Housing Choice Voucher, and between 6 months and 2 years for public housing (p. 36). While it is apparent that there were assistance programs available to qualified low-income residents, the waiting period to receive that assistance can be detrimental to the residents, for it is likely that they applied for help at a time it was needed.

Currently, the lack of available, affordable housing units is a pressing concern for low-income residents in Flagstaff. However, this trend was highlighted in a housing report conducted almost 10 years ago. At the time of Flagstaff’s Housing and Community Sustainability Nexus Study (2008) there was already a tight supply of rental housing and a need for low-income senior housing (p. 116).

Additionally, the report predicted that over the next 15 years, 1,400 new affordable rental units would be needed for residents at 30 to 60 percent of annual median income, and 1,100 units would be needed for residents at 60 to 80 percent of annual median income (p. 14). At the time of the report’s publication, the existing inventory of affordable “income restricted rental propert[jies]” was 1,259 units, including Section 8 rental vouchers (p. 105).

This information indicates that affordable housing shortages for low-income residents in Flagstaff are a common trend, at least over the past ten years. The Rental Attainability Report (Housing Solutions of Northern Arizona 2017) calls attention to the decrease in available market rate units over the past year. While 3.33 percent of units were

available to rent in 2016, only 2.56 percent were available this year (2017). Housing Choice voucher holders expressed the need for unoccupied units to lease that were within the payment standard (2016, p. 40), while VASH Voucher holders seeking 1-bedroom units that meet Housing Quality Standards have found it challenging to find quality affordable housing units. In short, while the demand for rental and owner units is present, the supply of affordable housing is lacking in Flagstaff.

One significant factor in the availability of quality, affordable units in Flagstaff, is the student population at Northern Arizona University (NAU). More specifically, the demand for student housing as NAU's enrollment increases is resulting in more demand for affordable rentals in general, but these rentals continue to be "out of reach for the average Flagstaff worker" (Damara 2016). Construction of student housing complexes, like the Hub and Freemont Station, in conjunction with the limitations presented by Flagstaff being surrounded by National Forest land result in less space for the construction of affordable units for Flagstaff workers.

The main NAU campus is located in Flagstaff, and appears to have a significant impact on housing availability, as an estimated "1,480 open-market units are occupied by students," many of who are rooming together in larger units. It is likely that the presence of a large quantity of students is negatively impacting the availability of "three-bedroom and larger rental units suitable for large families" (2016).

According to an article from the Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting, NAU's enrollment at the main campus has "grown by 42 percent in the past ten years" and the student population makes up almost a third of Flagstaff's residents; the school's enrollment appears as though it may increase by another "15 percent by 2025" (Damara 2016). The influence of NAU's off-campus student population may continue to hamper availability of affordable rental spaces for low-income residents in Flagstaff.

Even outside of Flagstaff, in communities such as Williams, there is a shortage of affordable housing. As the tourism business booms in Williams, service-sector workers cannot find adequate housing in the city, and many commute from Flagstaff and Ash Fork (Cowan 2017a). In Tusayan, housing tends to be owned by employers; efforts to develop affordable housing are tied up in the political struggle between developers and those who oppose intrusive new development close to Grand Canyon (Cowan 2017e). In Fredonia, development of available land is impeded by lack of capital to build on or improve properties. Some landlords, lacking the ability to fix up rental properties, simply let them sit vacant (Cowan 2017b).

## **Education**

Many of the Coconino County focus group participants had had direct experience with local schools, as a parent or a student, or both. Opinions on the local educational system were mixed, with some participants expressing quite positive views of the schools, and others raising pointed criticisms.

Some local schools garnered high praise from focus group participants:

*“I don’t know a lot of other places that do STEM through kindergarten.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“The school system allowed my son to excel.” [Mountaineire]*

The education system in general was deemed unfair in many ways to the poor by some participants.

*“Which (school) district the kids are in determines what is available to them.” [Mountaineire]*

*“I do see how the funds are distributed unfairly.” [Mountaineire]*

*“They take the money by Walmart, it’s a little higher-class area, whereas over on the east side (of Flagstaff), where I chose to put my kids, they get lesser money. So it’s not evenly distributed between the schools.” [Mountaineire]*

*“Just in general, I think our educational system needs to be revamped, with taxes maybe redistributed a bit more evenly. It shouldn’t be just because you live in a poor neighborhood, you’re gonna get less quality education.” [Mountaineire]*

The quality of education received at Coconino County schools was also called into question.

*“My kids brought home a math book last year and it was dated 1987. That tells you how bad it is.” [Fredonia]*

*“There have been two or three principals since I’ve been here, and they always push teachers around. My son’s fifth grade teacher was the first grade teacher... and now it’s whoever. So there’s no stability.” [Tusayan]*

*“They (teachers) are only there to get their paycheck and that’s it. They don’t care if that kid fell, or that kid commits suicide.” [Fredonia]*

School administrators also came in for criticism:

*“You walk in (the school) and you see the principals and assistant principals all sitting at their computers, playing games.” [Doney Park]*

*“Administrators get plenty of money. They need to start giving it to the school.” [Mountaineire]*

*“Upper management, upper staff members...how do I want to say this...there’s no listening to the parent. It’s a pick-and-choose of who they want to listen to. There’s favoritism in the school system.” [Doney Park]*

One Williams resident criticized the approach of local schools as “one size fits all.”

*“When they are testing across the board, they are testing for elephants. Not everyone is an elephant. You’ve got ducks, and geese, and when the kids get filed into a box, then they feel that they are average and below average, but they are not. They excel somewhere else and they are just not being molded in that part...They need to be shown where they flourish.”*

A common complaint was that parents struggled to pay fees and charges associated with schools, for everything from clothing to lunches to extracurricular activities.

*“It’s still expensive, I’ve had to pay each year for my kids to go to Coconino...My daughter lost a book, and couldn’t get her cap and gown until she paid \$110 for a used book.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“I have to pay for books. I have to pay for arts...You have to pay to rent the drums, and my daughter with the violin. Then if you don’t have food stamps, or anything, then you have to pay for their lunch. I could not do that and they sent me a bill for one hundred and something dollars.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“You have to buy certain types of clothes...It’s a dress code, and I have to go out there and buy that for my kids.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“Music classes cost extra, and even for sports, there is a fee. It’s expensive” [Mountaineer]*

*“I feel if you don’t have the money, you can’t do certain things.” [Flagstaff - English]*

Several focus group participants who are parents indicated that they had chosen to home school their children.

*“I home school; there are a multitude of reasons. One being religious, I believe God needs to be in school, that is just my belief. The only way I was going to get God into school was to home school. I have a son who is very rambunctious...I was told at a ripe age of 10 that if I didn’t control my son he was going to be following the lines of the gang members... I did not agree with preschool here*

*either, to me it was more of a daycare...We decided to take the home school path. There are other reasons, I feel I find one every day.” [Williams]*

One explained his decision to home school based on what he saw happening in the public schools:

*“Things that used to happen in 8th or 9th grade were now happening in 1st or 2nd, and there was drinking or drugs or sexual perversions, things like that... older kids grooming younger kids, things that were happening were just really, really sick.” [Doney Park]*

Fredonia residents reported that home schooling was common in the area due to the perceived low quality of the local schools. Another option was to send their children to school in Kanab, Utah, seven miles away.

*“It costs \$2,000 a semester to transfer to Utah, but it’s worth it to give the kids the education they need.”*

Questions were raised about the seeming disappearance of vocational training in schools.

*“What happened to trade classes being offered? I never hear about Job Corps anymore...it was a great thing.” [Williams]*

Those in the Flagstaff Spanish-language focus group were critical of the quality of education in general in the state.

*“The money has dried up for programs for children and parents.”*

*“The children are high achievers. They have the ability, but they don’t have the support.”*

*“There are 50 states and Arizona is like 49th or 50th in education. The problem is really big.”*

They also had particular concerns related to issues of education, based on their experience as minorities.

*“Children who are brown in school are treated differently than whites. They are sent to the principal for every little thing.”*

*“Anglos need to realize their way is not the only way.”*

*“Kids aren’t learning about our culture in schools, so no one is learning about it.”*

*“Families don’t go to school because they don’t speak English.”*

*“There is just one person there (at the school) who speaks Spanish and supports the students.”*

*“Kids need to find a teacher who speaks Spanish to encourage them.”*

Spanish-speaking focus group participants also related their own experiences related to attempting to learn English and become U.S. citizens.

*“Every time I start to take classes to learn English, something happens and I get pulled away, and I forget what I learned.”*

*“I go to classes, but they ignore me. But I keep going.”*

*“I took two years to study to become a citizen, and I went in and it was over in just five minutes.”*

In Page, Native American focus group participants seemed to have a higher regard for the local schools than Whites did, and were particularly happy about the fairly recent racial integration of the schools.

*“I think the quality of education has improved a lot, compared to a few years back. A lot of it has to do with schools being able to recognize the Native American population in school. They finally decided to integrate the schools, rather than have the majority of one group going to one school and then the other minority going to another school.”*

*“It’s helped out a lot. In a way it’s good for the community itself, because that’s how the kids are able to interact a lot better now, then like segregating them.”*

*“It made the community more aware, a cultural sense of awareness.”*

*“I think the high school has gotten better here, way better.”*

*“I have a nephew who’s going to school now. They’re way stricter on some stuff and they push the students further.”*

Outside of the K-12 system, focus group participants seemed pleased with both preschool opportunities and adult education. Head Start was specifically cited by Page and Fredonia residents as an excellent program; however, Page residents reported that getting into Head Start was difficult, due to its popularity and its income restrictions.

Adult literacy programs, GED tutoring, community college programs, and online programs were mentioned as educational resources for adults.

*“Kinsey is the best school. They teach English classes to help study for their GED.” [Flagstaff - Spanish]*

Coconino Community College was seen by many as quite valuable.

*“You can transfer credits from CCC to NAU.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“I was actually driving to Flag, Tuesdays and Thursdays, just to go to class (at CCC. Then I got pregnant, and did it online. I used my phone internet, and I was able to submit my assignments like that.” [Tusayan]*

A particular concern with online education for Tusayan residents was the spotty internet service in the area. The lack of reliable internet made online programs less feasible.

## **Healthcare**

A primary healthcare concern for those in outlying areas of Coconino County was simply the difficulty they have in actually getting to a physical location where they can receive care. In Williams, Tusayan, and particularly Page and Fredonia, it is not possible to get quality healthcare without traveling a great distance to Flagstaff, Phoenix, or St. George, Utah. Local options were seen as inferior and untrustworthy.

*“If you have more than a cold, or something other than minor-minor-minor, you’re shipped out (of town).” [Page]*

*[On healthcare in the area] “Oh please, we have to go to Flagstaff!” [Williams]*

*“There is a clinic here in town that is a circus.” [Williams]*

*“I won’t take my kids there unless it’s urgent care.” [Williams]*

*“The clinic’s term for it is, they don’t provide care to any ‘functional part’; your toes, your feet, your hands, your face.” [Tusayan]*

*“I have AHCCCS (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System) and last year I had a situation where I had to go and get a lung capacity test done. You’d think that would be reasonably available in Page or St. George, but they sent me to Peoria (an eight-hour drive away).” [Fredonia]*

*“You go to Page Hospital, and you’re gonna die. That is a morgue, not a hospital.” [Page]*

In Flagstaff, where healthcare is physically accessible, there remains the problem of affordability. Having health insurance, or having a particular kind of insurance, was seen as a sort of signifier of social status. Those without the “right” type of insurance felt that they were looked down upon by healthcare providers.

*“To say you don’t have any insurance is to say, ‘I have leprosy’...people recoil at the fact that you don’t have any insurance.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“As soon as they heard ‘AHCCCS’ they didn’t say anything...We don’t have the health insurance that says ‘Rich’ on it.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“You can go to the doctor but you can’t go any further if something’s wrong. They’ll manage that chronic condition forever before you can ever get to a surgeon to do anything, or a specialist... Only the ‘good’ people get more care.” [Flagstaff - English]*

In general, low-to-moderate income residents of Coconino County depend on AHCCCS, Medicaid, or federally-supplied healthcare for Native Americans. But some were unable to qualify for these services. Some low-income Arizonans make just enough money to disqualify themselves from AHCCCS. Native American tribal standards for membership based on a percentage of Native blood can mean that a parent may qualify for healthcare, while their children may not.

*“My kids are on AHCCCS, but I don’t qualify because they look at gross income, not net. If I need health care, I have to go back to the reservation.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“AHCCCS is denying adults who are talking care of children.” [Fredonia]*

Not all views of healthcare in the County are negative. Several participants reported having very positive experiences with health care providers and health insurance programs:

*“I’m on AHCCCS, and I think the health care here is pretty good.” [Mountaineire]*

*“Thumbs up for AHCCCS!” [Mountaineire]*

*“It’s hard to get on it (AHCCCS), but once you’re on it, it helps in so many ways.” [Mountaineire]*

*“Because I lost my source of income, I was able to get put on AHCCCS...I think they did a really good job.” [Tusayan]*

*“My son had surgery at FMC (Flagstaff Medical Center), and they were really nice. We actually didn’t have insurance at the time, and they were really respectful.” [Doney Park]*

*“FMC is good, they’re really, really cool; they just aren’t affordable.” [Mountaineire]*

Receiving services for mental health was identified as a difficulty for a number of participants.

*“Mental health, if you have AHCCCS, you have some access. If you don’t have AHCCCS you don’t have access.” [Mountaineire]*

*“Psychological problems don’t get addressed. There are only English services, no Spanish.” [Flagstaff - Spanish]*

*“There are very few resources for mental health.” [Flagstaff - Spanish]*

In the Flagstaff Spanish-language focus group, participants pointed out that Spanish speakers, particularly those who are not U.S. citizens, encountered additional problems in attempting to procure healthcare.

*“The majority of people who are diagnosed with cancer are told to go back to Mexico.”*

*“I worked at North Country (Healthcare), and there were people who would come without documentation, and they would make them leave.”*

*“Many don’t seek help because they don’t feel safe.”*

*“The whole system is unfair because we pay taxes, but don’t get services because we aren’t citizens.”*

*“People are afraid to ask questions because we don’t feel we have rights.”*

Turnover among medical personnel was also mentioned as a common problem in the County.

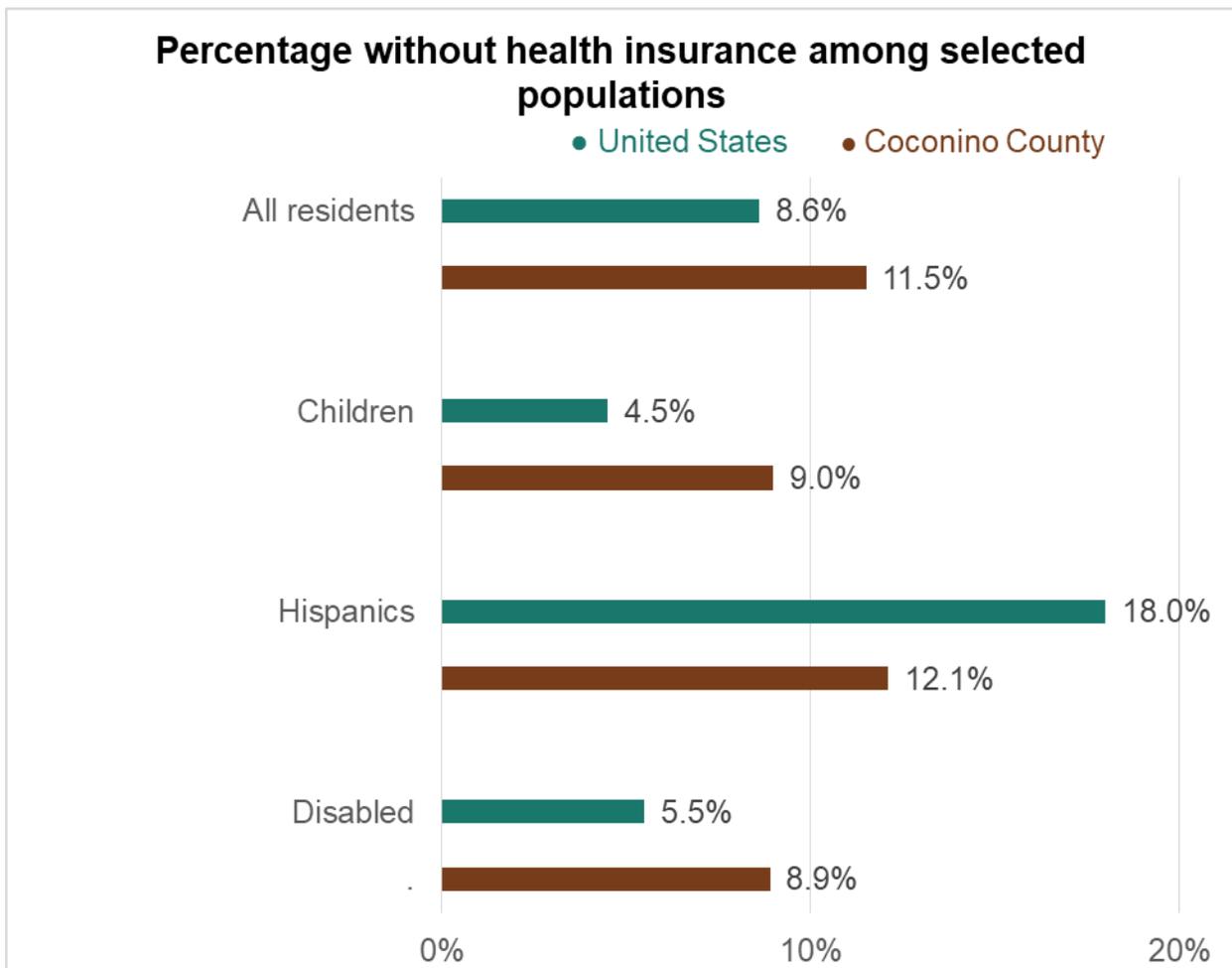
*“You build a rapport with a doctor and then they’re gone within a few years, because even they can’t afford to live here.” [Doney Park]*

*“Although my nurse practitioner had as much knowledge as those doctors, she quit...Now I have this young girl under 30, and I know as much as she does in some regards.” [Williams]*

### Secondary data analysis

Household income is a primary factor that shapes access to and quality of health care individuals receive. As well, it informs the different health issues and concerns low-income individuals face.

Census data shows that 11.5 percent of Coconino County residents lack health insurance. Nine percent of County children are uninsured, compared to just 4.5 percent for the U.S. as a whole. Coconino County residents with disabilities are more likely than Americans in general with disabilities to lack health coverage (8.9 percent, compared to 5.5 percent).



According to the Northern Arizona Healthcare Community Health Needs Assessment (2016), 28 percent of children who live in Flagstaff live in poverty. For many residents of Coconino County, access to affordable and quality healthcare is a pressing concern.

According to a needs assessment survey conducted by the Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG) Area Agency on Aging in 2017, respondents identified healthcare as the “fourth unmet need” in Northern Arizona; almost 30 percent of respondents identified healthcare as a significant unmet need for their family and themselves.

Similarly, Coconino County Public Health Services District (2015) conducted a needs assessment survey and found that access to health care was a significant theme that requires further attention amongst respondents. NACOG’s report highlights several key barriers to meeting the healthcare needs of the elderly population in the region. Respondents assert that transportation, availability of healthcare and information about healthcare are their primary barriers to accessing healthcare.

Information provided by NACOGs’ proposal highlights the realities faced by vulnerable people. It calls attention the concerns of the elderly who may live on fixed or limited incomes, who may lack access to several services industries (e.g. transportation) that may be essential to their ability to access the care they need. Additionally, this discussion about health care in Coconino County sheds light on the state of health care and medical services in the region, and the ways in which low-income residents experience health care.

Additionally, it is important to address affordability and quality of health insurance in Coconino County. According to the American Community Survey (2016), 14.6 percent of the population in Coconino County does not have health insurance.

Further, NACOG (2017) reports that respondents indicated that their need for prescription medication was unmet. They expressed concern about affordable plans for prescription coverage based on the medication they require. It is likely that the considerable proportion of the population that is categorized as low-income, homeless, not in stable housing, or experiencing severe housing cost burden cannot afford health insurance, or *quality* health insurance plans.

For example, one respondent stated the following about health issues that were important but not covered in the survey:

“[P]eople without health insurance and work lower income jobs cannot afford the [h]ealthcare marketplace insurance and therefore get very little preventive care which is very important for future generations. [E]very community should have available services for the homeless and mentally ill [;] a facility where they feel welcome and can receive the help they need.”

This respondent’s comment encompasses many of the issues facing low-income residents, including the elderly, mentally ill, and disabled, as they navigate affordable health and medical services available to them. Additionally, other respondents commented about increased premiums, rising co-pays, and health care plans that do not provide affordable dental, mental health, and vision coverage (2015).

As mentioned earlier, a significant percentage of children in Coconino County and Flagstaff live in poverty, which impacts their health status and access to quality

services. Specifically, Coconino County Public Health Service District Clinic's assessment noted the significance of oral health, as preschool children in Arizona have oral health "below national recommendations" (2016).

The assessment does state that dental insurance status is not significantly related to whether a child had untreated tooth decay; however, affordable, quality dental care must be a priority for children of all income levels (2016).

Although affordable preventative care was an important health concern for some respondents, it is important to address a way in which Coconino County was able to help thousands of people in the region in accessing certain preventative treatments. During 2016, Coconino County Public Health Service District Clinic highlighted the need for people of all ages to receive vaccinations (2016).

By assisting low income patients through assistance programs, sliding scale fees, and helping clients in accessing insurance benefits when available, the Clinic provided more than 3,200 vaccinations during 2016 (p. 22). The Clinic provided greatly needed assistance and vaccinations to low- income communities that may not have received them otherwise.

## **Nutrition**

When asked whether they were able to buy nutritious food in their communities at an affordable price, many Coconino County focus group participants answered "no." The problem is most acute in the outlying areas of the County, and is exacerbated by grocery stores charging what participants referred to as "tourist prices" for a poor selection of food.

*"There isn't a place to buy healthy food." [Williams]*

*"I don't ever buy food in this area. I go to Flagstaff." [Tusayan]*

*"This is the worst meat and produce I've ever come across." [Page]*

*"There are no stores around." [Marble Canyon]*

Many participants were aware of local food banks and similar services, and took advantage of them.

*"There is a guy from Camp Verde who comes up on Fridays and gives vegetables out of his car from ten to one." [Flagstaff - English]*

*"The food bank offers food boxes twice a month and really is a life-saver at the end of the month." [Fredonia]*

*"We have the food bank that comes up once a month." [Tusayan]*

But one participant offered a warning:

*“I’ve gotten food poisoning twice from the food bank.” [Flagstaff - English]*

A number of focus group participants employed savvy strategies to deal with challenges around food. They are often vigilant about watching the sales at grocery stores in order to get bargains on food. They are aware of patterns in the fluctuations of food prices, and they take advantage of them.

*“You really gotta know where you are going to shop, and what you are going to buy.” [Mountaineire]*

*“My husband always checks the ground beef (prices). When I get my check, it is 5-something (dollars), but then at the end of the month it goes down to 2-something (dollars).” [Fredonia]*

One Tusayan focus group participant had a complex strategy for eating healthily and affordably despite living in what is essentially a dormitory room in Grand Canyon Village. He had procured three mini refrigerators and two hotplates for his room, and carefully planned regular trips to Sprouts, Natural Grocers, and Whole Foods in Flagstaff to get the best deals on quality produce. He also ordered meat online and had it delivered directly to his home, and was able to cook himself three healthy meals a day.

A Page resident told how her family would send money to her husband’s mother, who lived in an area with more affordable groceries. The mother would go shopping for their food, and then they would drive to meet her halfway and pick it up.

Some participants believed that residents of Coconino County needed education about how to eat healthily.

*“There are a lot of families here that don’t know nutrition.” [Williams]*

*“People are not educated on nutrition.” [Williams]*



## **Criminal Justice / Law Enforcement**

Opinions varied as to the job done by law enforcement officials in Coconino County. Some focus group participants found police officers to be polite, friendly, and helpful, while others complained of mistreatment.

A common complaint in both far-flung communities such as Fredonia and Ash Fork as well as in the county seat of Flagstaff was that law enforcement officers were often young and inexperienced (“rookies”), with little knowledge of the local community, and that constant turnover in personnel meant that this situation was likely to continue indefinitely.

*“The pay is low, and there’s a lot of turnover. They’re not getting the support they need to do their job.” [Fredonia]*

*“The problem lies with (Flagstaff) being a training facility, and we get a bunch of new kids (officers) up here, looking to make a name for themselves.” [Flagstaff - English]*

*“Too many (officers) are immature.” [Mountaineire]*

*“Those (officers) that do pass get burnt out, because they aren’t getting the raises or the help.” [Mountaineire]*

Some members of more rural communities complained of a sense of lawlessness that resulted from their isolation.

*“From what I’ve seen in seven years, there’s a really low crime rate (in Munds Park). But at the same time, it’s like a second-home town. So people think there’s no rules, or laws don’t apply to them. They’ll either trash the place or hurt people, or do something else. There’s no sheriff out there, so they think they can get away with whatever.” [Mountaineire]*

Some focus group participants reported that they felt profiled by police, whether for their appearance or their race.

*“My kid’s walking to school, getting harassed (by police), missing the bus because his hair was long...He was constantly being harassed. I was constantly being pulled over because I went to work at midnight. They were always looking for a reason.” [Flagstaff - English, Native American resident]*

*“A lot of profiling by Coconino Sheriffs. I was pulled over for a cracked windshield and they brought the K9 unit to search me for no reason.” [Marble Canyon, Native American resident]*

Others saw improvement with regard to racial profiling by police. One Page resident, who was a Native American with a criminal record, had this to say:

*“Being in the system as a juvenile, I did a total of 15 years (in jail/prison), and never here has it been an issue with my background. I have come a long ways from where I used to be. I hear there is a lot of prejudice. I have experienced some but not directly at me. Our town is divided though.”*

## **Analysis of CCCS Customer Data and Surveys**

Over the two-year period from July 2015 to June 2017, Coconino County Community Services collected 890 one-page paper surveys (titled “Coconino County Arizona Customer Survey”; see Appendix H for an example of this form) from its customers in order to assess its performance in serving these individuals.

LASR staff entered the data from these paper surveys into an electronic database to allow for analysis using SPSS, a data analysis software program. On a small number of occasions, the form administered to the customer was an earlier version of the survey. In these cases, LASR staff made their best effort to code the survey in terms of the later version.

In addition, LASR analyzed demographic data on Coconino County Community Services customers for the fiscal years 2014-2016. Presented below is LASR’s analysis of the CCCS survey and demographic data.

According to reports provided by CCCS, it served 2,719 people over the three year period covering Fiscal Year 2014 through Fiscal Year 2016, an average of 906.3 customers per year. Over that same period, 579 people received more than one service from CCCS. A total of 875 families were served, and 583 households received more than one service.

Nearly half (49.6%) of families served by CCCS had an income of less than 50 percent of the poverty level.

<b>Income level of CCCS families, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Up to 50% of poverty level	434	49.6%
51%-75% of poverty level	178	20.3%
76%-100% of poverty level	94	10.7%
101%-125% of poverty level	54	6.2%
126%-150% of poverty level	18	2.1%
151%-175% of poverty level	19	2.2%
176%-200% of poverty level	7	0.8%
201% or more of poverty level	18	2.1%
Served under No Attached Poverty Guidelines	53	6.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The largest percentage of customers served (25.6%) fell into the 24-44-year age category.

<b>Age of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
0-5 years	437	16.1%
6-11 years	534	19.6%
12-17 years	423	15.6%
18-23 years	149	5.5%
24-44 years	697	25.6%
45-54 years	235	8.6%
55-69 years	181	6.7%
70 or more years	63	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2719</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Among households served, the most common household size was a single individual (23.9%).

<b>Household size of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
1	209	23.9%
2	155	17.7%
3	172	19.7%
4	156	17.8%
5	104	11.9%
6	50	5.7%
7	19	2.2%
8+	10	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Over one-third (34.1%) of CCCS customers are high school graduates.

<b>Education level of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
No information	6	0.5%
Grade 0-8	31	2.6%
Grade 9-12	239	20.3%
High School graduate	401	34.1%
GED	75	6.4%
Some college	255	21.7%
College degree (2-year or 4-year)	169	14.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1176</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Women (56.1%) make up the majority of CCCS customers.

<b>Gender of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
Male	1195	43.9%
Female	1524	56.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2719</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In terms of race, Native Americans (55.2%) comprise the majority of those served by CCCS.

<b>Race of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
No information	5	0.2%
American Indian / Alaska Native	1502	55.2%
Asian	3	0.1%
African-American	65	2.4%
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	1	0.0%
White	775	28.5%
Biracial / multiracial	108	4.0%
Other	250	9.2%
Unspecified	10	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2719</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In terms of ethnicity, 19.4 percent of CCCS customers are Hispanic or Latino.

<b>Ethnicity of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
No information	8	0.3%
Hispanic / Latino	527	19.4%
Non-Hispanic	2183	80.3%
Unspecified	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2719</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The type of family most commonly serviced by CCCS is a single-parent, female-headed household; 36.3 percent of families meet this description.

<b>Types of households serviced by CCCS, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
No information	10	1.1%
Single parent female	318	36.3%
Single parent male	21	2.4%
Two-parent family	184	21.0%
Single person	202	23.1%
Two or more adults, no children	76	8.7%
Other	1	0.1%
Grandparent raising children	14	1.6%
Extended family	6	0.7%
Mixed adults with children	43	4.9%
Unspecified	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

When asked about the sources of income that they receive, CCCS customers are most likely to cite a “paycheck” (40.5 percent of income sources mentioned).

<b>Sources of income of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
No income	114	10.5%
TANF	9	0.8%
SSI	150	13.8%
SSA	32	2.9%
Paycheck(s)	440	40.5%
Interest	1	0.1%
Pension	20	1.8%
AFDC	5	0.5%
GA	4	0.4%
SSDI	94	8.6%
Unemployment	30	2.8%
Workman’s compensation	5	0.5%
VA	15	1.4%
School loans / grants	5	0.5%
Child support	90	8.3%
Self-employment	33	3.0%
Alimony	1	0.1%
Other	25	2.3%
VA benefits	1	0.1%
PA - Food stamps	10	0.9%
PA - UI	1	0.1%
PA - AHCCCS	2	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1087</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The great majority (77.7%) of CCCS customers rent their homes; only 15.5 percent own their home.

<b>Housing situation of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
No information	11	1.3%
Rent	680	77.7%
Own	136	15.5%
Temporary quarters	0	0.0%
Other	28	3.2%
Homeless	20	2.3%
Unspecified	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Among CCCS customers, 13.1 percent report that they have a disability.

<b>Disability status of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
No information	22	0.8%
Disability	357	13.1%
No disability	2340	86.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2719</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Most (82.7%) CCCS customers are covered by health insurance.

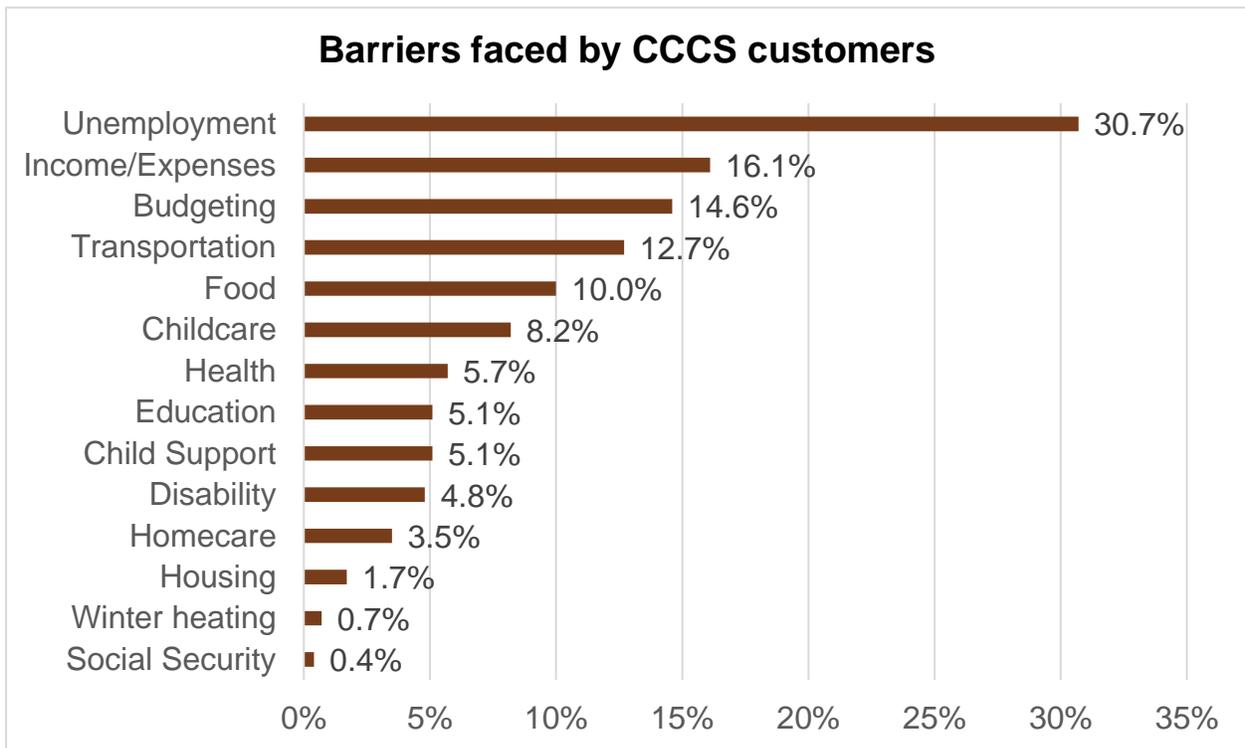
<b>Health insurance status of CCCS customers, FY 2014-2016</b>		
	N	%
Has health insurance	2246	82.7%
No health insurance	282	10.4%
Unspecified	188	6.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2716</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Customers were first asked, “Do you feel you were treated respectfully and professionally?” In all, 98.5 percent of respondents answered “yes” to this question. When analyzed by month, there is relatively little variation in the high number of positive responses to this question, with the possible exception of two months, September 2015 and February 2017, when the percentage fell to 94.4 and 91.7 percent positive, respectively.



An identical percentage of respondents (98.5%) answered “yes” to the second question on the survey, “Was a specific staff member particularly helpful?”

A later open-ended survey question asked, “Describe some of the barriers you face (i.e., unemployed/underemployed, transportation, lack of child support, childcare, food, budgeting, education, homecare, etc.)” LASR staff coded respondents’ open-ended answers into categories, and subsequent analysis showed that the most commonly-mentioned barrier faced is unemployment/underemployment. Almost one-third (30.7%) of respondents mention this problem, followed by lack of income/dealing with expenses (16.1%), budgeting (14.6%), and transportation (12.7%). Note that customers could provide more than one response to this question, so response categories do not total 100 percent.

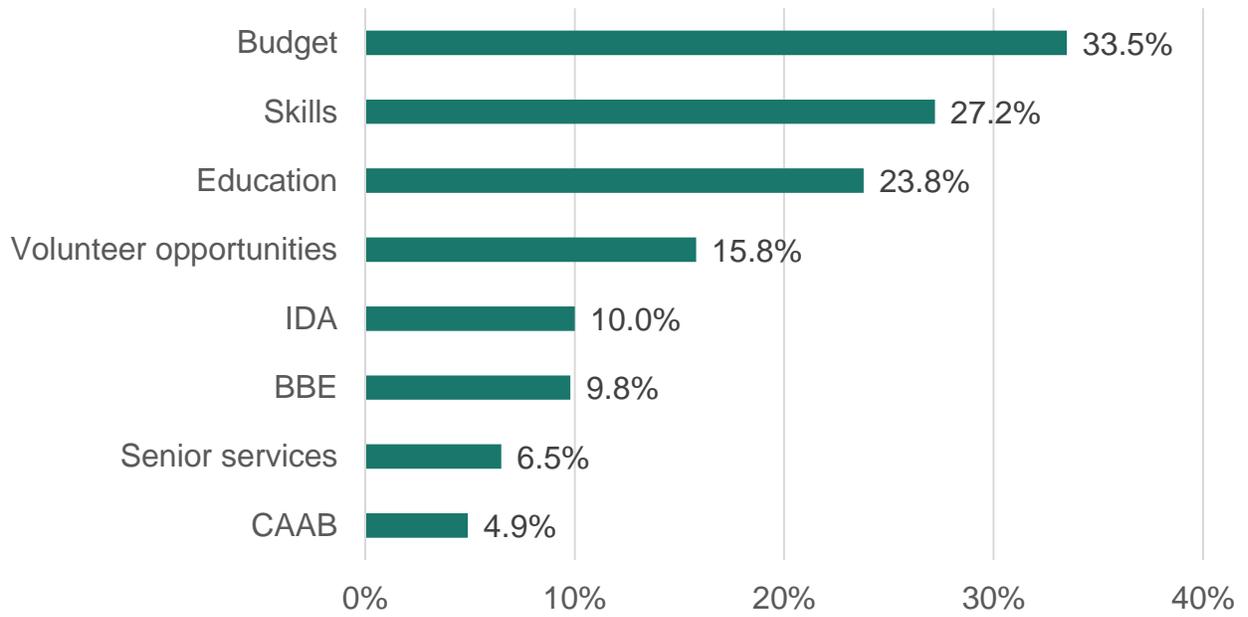


Customers were then asked whether they were interested in receiving follow-up communications from CCCS related to a series of eight topics:

- Making a budget/learning about credit cards, credit, and credit reports/financial coaching
- Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to save for a business or education
- Information on skills that will help me get better jobs and pay
- Continuing my education (high school/college)
- Senior Services (Nutrition – congregate/home delivered meals, Case Management, & Homecare Services)
- Volunteer opportunities in my community
- Information on becoming a Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB) member
- Basic Business Empowerment (BBE) Program (12-week course to start your own business)

The highest percentage of CCCS customers (33.5%) expressed interest in receiving information about budgeting and credit, followed by skills to get a better job (27.2%), continuing education (23.8%) and volunteer opportunities (15.8%).

### Customer interest in receiving follow-up information on topics



## **Conclusion**

The analysis of focus group discussions and secondary data presented here shows that the experience of poverty in Coconino County can be framed around two major themes: geographic isolation and social disregard.

The geographic vastness of Coconino County produces isolation that affects low-to-moderate residents in a number of negative ways. Almost every challenge faced by the poor in the County is entangled with and exacerbated by geographic isolation. To deal with these problems means having to travel, which means transportation expenses and loss of time, both in personal terms and in terms of time spent with family. Good jobs, when they can be found, must be driven to. Affordable housing is often affordable only because it is geographically remote; living in a more central location like Flagstaff is extremely costly. Accessing healthcare requires traveling long distances, as does being able to purchase nutritious food. Protection by law enforcement officials is hampered by the time it takes them to travel to where they are needed. The educational system is hamstrung by the difficulty in maintaining quality schools in far-flung areas.

This sense of geographic isolation was most notable in Fredonia, certainly one of Coconino County's most remote communities. Focus group participants there complained that, quite literally, Fredonia was not even on the map in the sense that Google Maps and other electronic mapping systems had not properly registered its addresses into their databases, making it difficult to receive deliveries and to sign up for services online. To the rest of the world, it is almost as though Fredonia does not exist.

Indeed, when our focus group was initially scheduled in Fredonia, the address for the meeting site did not appear on online maps, necessitating a phone call to local officials to clarify the location. The *Arizona Daily Sun* profile of Fredonia in its "Listening In" series was entitled "Is Fredonia Forgotten?" (Cowan 2017b), and it is hard not to think that the town, and other County communities like it, have been forgotten in some senses. Local governments and social service agencies, with their limited resources, face a tremendous struggle in trying to provide assistance to residents of these communities who find themselves in poverty.

The theme of social disregard also echoed through many focus group discussions and appeared in secondary data sources. Those in poverty in Coconino County are at the bottom of the social hierarchy, losing out to a series of more economically-privileged groups.

The beauty of Coconino County attracts many who have the resources to successfully manage the challenges that life in the County presents. Wealthy outsiders from Phoenix

and California are able to buy second homes in Coconino County in order to enjoy the benefits of life here.

Less-wealthy visitors can dominate the rental market, booking temporary stays and pleasant vacations; this situation has recently tilted more in favor of these visitors and against the local poor as internet-based services such as Airbnb have made it easier for outsiders to rent.

As more and more students, often from affluent families, come from outside the County to Northern Arizona University, those in poverty in the Flagstaff area are further priced out of the housing market.

Tourists from around the world, flush with disposable income, come to visit Grand Canyon and other wonders of Coconino County, resulting in bumps in prices for food, gasoline, and other items, and these price increases must be borne by locals in poverty as well.

To the Coconino County low-income resident, it can seem that all of these groups are more important than them, and that they are held in complete disregard. And to the undocumented residents of the County, their own concerns seem even less important relative to the lives of these others.

In attempting to aid those in poverty in the County, then, local governments and social service agencies must not only overcome geographic isolation, but the social isolation that these people experience. There is a need to show the poor of Coconino County that they are not forgotten, and that they are important and valued members of the County community.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Coconino County Community Services Community Needs Assessment Working Group**

##### **List of members**

- Steve Peru, United Way of Northern Arizona
- Paul Kulpinski, LAUNCH Flagstaff
- Robert Hagstrom, Flagstaff Unified School District
- Risha VanderWey, Coconino County Superintendent of Schools
- Leah Bloom, City of Flagstaff, community representative on the Community Action Advisory Board
- Dorothy Staskey, representative of County Supervisor Art Babbott on the Community Action Advisory Board
- Joyce Browning, consumer representative on the Community Action Advisory
- Sonya Montoya, Northern Arizona Council of Governments / Head Start representative on the Community Action Advisory Board
- Janet Regner, Director, Coconino County Community Services
- Norma Gallegos, Assistant Director, Coconino County Community Services
- Scott Neuman, Special Projects Program Manager, Coconino County Community Services
- Robin Ferrel, Volunteer in Service to America, Coconino County Community Services

# Appendix B

## English-language consent form



**COCONINO COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS GROUP**  
**August 16, 2017**                      **Page, Arizona**

Consent Form

I understand that I am willingly participating in the Coconino County Community Needs Assessment Focus Group. I understand that the two-hour session will be audiotaped. I have been informed that the recording will be summarized, without any reference to names or other personally identifying information. I acknowledge that I will receive a \$40 stipend for participating in the focus group at the end of the session.

I understand that the Laboratory for Applied Social Research (LASR) at Northern Arizona University will be conducting this focus group, and that my participation will remain confidential. Provided responses will not be connected to any identifying information. LASR will provide a report summary of the results to Coconino County and the United Way of Northern Arizona.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C

## English-language demographic questionnaire



COCONINO COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS GROUP  
August 16, 2017 Page, Arizona

### Demographic Information

Please answer the following demographic questions. All of your answers will remain confidential and will only be reported as part of a group response.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

City of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Employment status:  Currently employed full-time  
 Currently employed part-time  
 Currently unemployed  
 Student  
 Stay-at-home parent  
 Retired

Marital status:  Married  
 Living with a partner, but not married  
 Separated  
 Divorced  
 Widowed  
 Single (never married)

Number of children living with you: \_\_\_\_\_

2016 Household income from all sources: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix D

## Spanish-language consent form



### GRUPO DE ENFOQUE DE EVALUACION DE LAS NECESIDADES COMUNITARIAS DEL CONDADO DE COCONINO

18 de julio de 2017      Flagstaff, Arizona

#### Formulario de Consentimiento

Entiendo que estoy participando voluntariamente en el Grupo de Enfoque de Evaluación de las Necesidades Comunitarias del Condado de Coconino. Entiendo que la sesión de dos horas será grabada. Se me ha informado que la grabación se hará sin ninguna referencia a nombres u otra información de identificación personal. Reconozco que recibiré un estipendio de \$40 por participar en el grupo de enfoque al final de la sesión.

Entiendo que el Laboratorio de Investigación Social Aplicada (LASR por sus siglas en inglés) de la universidad de Northern Arizona University llevará a cabo este grupo de enfoque y que mi participación seguirá siendo confidencial. Las respuestas proporcionadas no estarán conectadas a ninguna información de identificación. LASR proporcionará un resumen del informe de los resultados al Condado de Coconino y a la organización de United Way del Norte de Arizona.

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre en Letras de Molde: \_\_\_\_\_

Dirección: \_\_\_\_\_

Código Postal: \_\_\_\_\_

Número de Teléfono: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix E

## Spanish-language demographic questionnaire



### GRUPO DE ENFOQUE DE EVALUACION DE LAS NECESIDADES COMUNITARIAS DEL CONDADO DE COCONINO

18 de julio de 2017      Flagstaff, Arizona

#### Información demográfica

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas demográficas. Todas sus respuestas permanecerán confidenciales y solo serán reportadas como parte de una respuesta de grupo.

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Ciudad de residencia: \_\_\_\_\_

Código postal: \_\_\_\_\_

Edad: \_\_\_\_\_ Sexo: \_\_\_\_\_ Raza: \_\_\_\_\_

Empleo:    \_\_\_ Actualmente empleado de tiempo completo  
          \_\_\_ Actualmente empleado de tiempo parcial  
          \_\_\_ Actualmente desempleado  
          \_\_\_ Estudiante  
          \_\_\_ Padre o madre que se dedica al cuidado del hogar  
          \_\_\_ Jubilado

Estado Civil: \_\_\_ Casado  
              \_\_\_ Vive con pareja pero no casado  
              \_\_\_ Separado  
              \_\_\_ Divorciado  
              \_\_\_ Viudo  
              \_\_\_ Soltero (nunca casado)

Número de niños que viven con usted: \_\_\_\_\_

Ingresos del hogar del 2016 de todas las fuentes: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# **Appendix F**

## **Focus group agenda**

### **United Way / Coconino County Community Needs Assessment Focus Group Agenda**

**Mountaineire / Kachina Village area focus group  
Highlands Fire Department  
3350 Old Munds Highway  
August 9, 2017, 5:30-7:30 pm**

*Note: the following agenda is to be used as a general outline only. Focus groups are designed for flexibility, allowing for the discussion to flow in a way that gives the participants the best opportunity to express their opinions and concerns. Consequently, some of the topics and questions below may end up taking more or less time to discuss than indicated. The questions listed below are simply "jumping-off points" intended to spark discussion. The responses given by the participants may lead the discussion in various directions.*

#### **I. Introduction (5:30-5:45)**

1. Greet participants as they arrive; complete paperwork: sign-in; hand out name tags; complete consent to participate; provide food and drinks
2. Welcome group. Janet Regner to introduce focus group moderator Jamie Bowie
3. Personal Introductions
4. Discuss focus group dynamics/Establish ground rules
5. Discuss Confidentiality
6. Obtain consent to have session recorded

#### **II. General concerns (5:45-6:15)**

1. What is life like for you in your community today?
2. What is good about your community?
3. What is bad about your community?
4. What are the biggest problems facing low-to-middle income people in your community today?
5. All in all, are you satisfied with your life here, or would you prefer to live somewhere else?

#### **III. Specific concerns: Employment, Transportation (6:15-6:35)**

1. What is the employment situation like in your community?
2. What are the challenges to people getting good jobs in your community?
3. Is it easy or hard for people to get where they need to go?
4. How useful are different types of transportation locally (private, public)?

#### **IV. Break (6:35-6:45)**

#### **V. Specific concerns: Housing, Education (6:45-7:05)**

1. Are low-to-middle income people in your community able to afford good places to live?
2. How much of their income do people spend on housing?
3. How does the availability or lack of availability of housing have an impact of people's lives in the community?
4. What do you think of the educational opportunities available to children in your community? (Including early childhood education, parenting education and pre-school opportunities)
5. What do you think of the educational opportunities available to adults in your community?

#### **VI. Specific concerns: Health, Nutrition, Criminal Justice (7:05-7:25)**

1. Is quality healthcare available to low-to-middle income people in your community?
2. What are the barriers to obtaining quality healthcare in your community?
3. How difficult is it to find and buy nutritious food in your community?
4. How effective is law enforcement in your community?
5. What sorts of experiences have people in your community had with the criminal justice system?

#### **VII. Conclusion (7:25-7:30)**

1. Closing Remarks/Last thoughts on any of the issues discussed
2. Thank participants for their time
3. Provide contact information for any follow-up thoughts
4. Distribute stipend

## **Appendix G**

### **Focus group facilitator contact information**



#### **COCONINO COUNTY COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOCUS GROUP**

##### **Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about tonight's focus group, or would like to provide additional information, please contact focus group moderator Jamie Bowie at [james.bowie@nau.edu](mailto:james.bowie@nau.edu) or (928) 523-1752 or PO Box 15300, Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5300.

# Appendix H

## Coconino County Customer Survey form

<b>Coconino County Arizona Customer Survey</b>	
Date: <u>4-4-17</u>	
Coconino County Community Services/Social Services is committed to providing quality services. Your opinion will help us continuously improve our programs as well as recognize what's working. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:	
Please respond to the following questions:	
Do you feel you were treated respectfully and professionally?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO
Was a specific staff member particularly helpful? If so, please state the name of the staff person(s).	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO
<u>Susan</u>	
Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Intake process?	
<hr/> <hr/>	
Describe some of the barriers you face? (i.e. unemployed/underemployed, transportation, lack of child support, childcare, food, budgeting, education, homecare, etc.)	
<u>Lack of child care and our vehicle</u>	
<hr/> <hr/>	
Please check below if you are interested in receiving a follow-up communication:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Making a budget/learning about credit cards, credit and credit reports/financial coaching	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to save for a business or education	
<input type="checkbox"/> Information on skills that will help me get better jobs and pay	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continuing my education (high school/college)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Services (Nutrition - congregate/home delivered meals, Case Management, & Homecare Services)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer opportunities in my community	
<input type="checkbox"/> Information on becoming a Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB) member	
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic Business Empowerment Program (BBE) Program (12-week course to start your own business)	
If you are interested in more information on the above, please give us your:	
NAME <u>[REDACTED]</u>	PHONE # <u>928 [REDACTED]</u>
Email Address <u>[REDACTED]@gmail.com</u>	
Are you willing to discuss the services you received at Coconino County Community Services and their impact with the media? Yes or No (i.e. by newspaper and/or television reporters, phone interview, etc.) If so, how do you prefer to be contacted? (phone or email) <u>[REDACTED]@gmail.com</u>	
If you answered yes, your information will be forwarded to the Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA) who may/will contact you for additional information.	
 	
Revised 7/9/2015	

# Appendix I

## Poverty in Coconino County, Arizona Rural Policy Institute, NAU



### Poverty in Coconino County

### An Analysis of the 2011-2015 American Community Survey Data

Prepared for  
Coconino County

Prepared by  
The Arizona Rural Policy Institute  
A Unit of the Alliance Bank Business Outreach Center

Thomas Combrink, Arizona Rural Policy Institute

This Report was prepared in part with funding from Northern Arizona University, Coconino County, Alliance Bank, and the United States Economic Development Administration



# Poverty in Coconino County

## Background

A recent article appeared in the *Arizona Daily Sun* titled, “High childhood poverty rate in Coconino County affects overall well-being” (July 23, 2015). In addition, the 2014 KidsCount data book ranked Arizona 46th among the 50 states for the well-being of children, a rank similar to that received by the state in 2013. (See [http://azdailysun.com/news/local/education/high-childhood-poverty-rate-in-coconino-county-affects-overall-well/article\\_5443ce34-601f-5c40-b226-2f6b8b690701.html#.VbRNggj9GG\\_0.email](http://azdailysun.com/news/local/education/high-childhood-poverty-rate-in-coconino-county-affects-overall-well/article_5443ce34-601f-5c40-b226-2f6b8b690701.html#.VbRNggj9GG_0.email) )

The KidsCount data book uses 16 indicators of well-being to rate Arizona and its 15 counties. Among these are included: the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds in preschool; children in poverty; the rate of babies born to teen mothers; the percentage of children without health insurance; and, proficiency of students in math and reading” (*Arizona Daily Sun*, *ibid*).

This short analysis looks at poverty in Coconino County and its major communities and compares the count to the state overall. The analysis looks at all age groups, not only children, and examines the age cohorts and their respective ratios of income to poverty.

## Definitions

The following definitions from the U.S. Census Bureau are applied to the analysis.

**Poverty:** Following the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). See Table 1 for the 2016 poverty thresholds by size of family and number of related children under 18.

Table 1. Poverty Thresholds 2016 by size of family and related children, 48 contiguous states.

Poverty Thresholds for 2016 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years										
Size of family unit	Weighted average thresholds	Related children under 18 years								
		None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more
One person (unrelated individual):	12,228									
Under age 65.....	12,486	12,486								
Aged 65 and older.....	11,511	11,511								
Two people:	15,569									
Householder under age 65.....	16,151	16,072	16,543							
Householder aged 65 and older.....	14,522	14,507	16,480							
Three people.....	19,105	18,774	19,318	19,337						
Four people.....	24,563	24,755	25,160	24,339	24,424					
Five people.....	29,111	29,854	30,288	29,360	28,643	28,205				
Six people.....	32,928	34,337	34,473	33,763	33,082	32,070	31,470			
Seven people.....	37,458	39,509	39,756	38,905	38,313	37,208	35,920	34,507		
Eight people.....	41,781	44,188	44,578	43,776	43,072	42,075	40,809	39,491	39,156	
Nine people or more.....	49,721	53,155	53,413	52,702	52,106	51,127	49,779	48,561	48,259	46,400

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

There are two slightly different versions of the federal poverty measure: poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines. The poverty thresholds are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes — for instance, preparing estimates of the number of Americans in poverty each year. The poverty guidelines are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes — for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. The poverty guidelines are sometimes loosely referred to as the “federal poverty level” (FPL), but that phrase is ambiguous and should be avoided, especially in situations (e.g., legislative or administrative) where precision is important.

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-and-federal-register-references>

Poverty guidelines since 1982 for the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia can be calculated by addition using the figures shown below. (This simple calculation procedure gives correct guideline figures for each year, but it is not identical to the procedure by which the poverty guidelines are calculated from the poverty thresholds each year; see an [example calculation](#).) Before 1982, the poverty guidelines were issued by the Office of Economic Opportunity/Community Services Administration.

**NOTE: The poverty guideline figures below are NOT the figures the Census Bureau uses to calculate the number of poor persons. The figures that the Census Bureau uses are the [poverty thresholds](#).**

**Table 2. HHS Poverty Guidelines (Annual)**

Year	First Person	Each Additional Person	(Four-Person Family)	Page with Complete Details
2017	\$12,060	\$4,180	( 24,600)	2017 Guidelines
2016	\$11,880	<a href="#">Varies</a>	( 24,300)	<a href="#">2016 Guidelines</a>
2015	\$11,770	\$4,160	( 24,250)	<a href="#">2015 Guidelines</a>
2014	\$11,670	\$4,060	( 23,850)	<a href="#">2014 Guidelines</a>

**Poverty rate:** The percentage of people (or families) living below the poverty line.

**Ratio of income to poverty:** People and families are classified as being in poverty if their income is less than their poverty threshold. If their income is less than half their poverty threshold, they are below 50% of the poverty line; less than the threshold itself, they are in poverty (below 100% of poverty); less than 1.25 times the threshold, below 125% of poverty, and so on. The greater the ratio of income to poverty, the more people fall under the category, because higher ratios include more people with higher incomes.

- "Below 100% of poverty" is the same as "in poverty."
- "Below 200% of poverty" includes all those described as "in poverty" under the official definition, plus some people who have income above poverty but less than 2 times their poverty threshold.

**Income deficit/income surplus:** Income deficit is the number of dollars that the income of a family in poverty (or unrelated individual) falls below its poverty threshold. If income is negative, the deficit equals the threshold. Income surplus is the difference in dollars between the income of a family or unrelated individual above the poverty level and its poverty threshold.

## Comparisons of Poverty between Arizona and Coconino County

Slightly more than 18 percent of the Arizona population is defined by the US Census Bureau as living in poverty. Coconino County, however, has a poverty rate that is 4.5 percentage points higher than the state average (22.7%). All data are from the American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year series.

Table 2. Population in poverty, comparison between Arizona and Coconino County

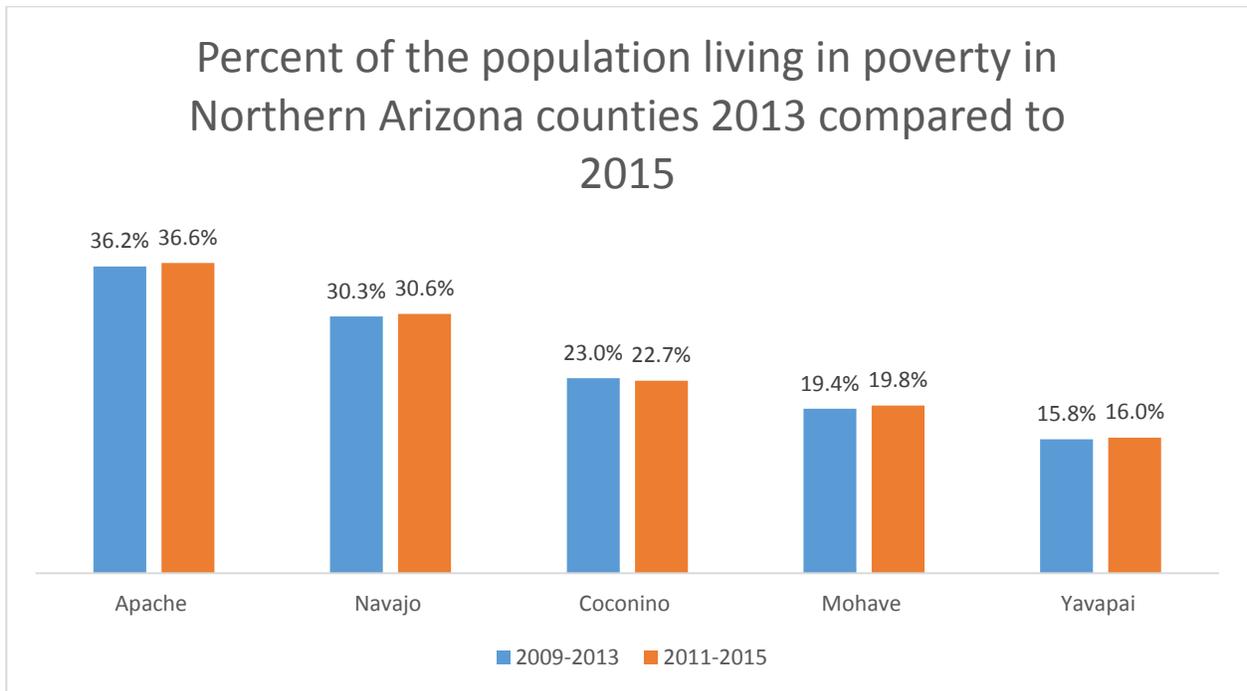
ACS 2015	Arizona	Coconino County
Population in poverty	1,180,690	28,824
% of population in poverty	18.2%	22.7%

Compared to all Arizona counties, Coconino County has the fourth highest percentage of people living in poverty (22.7%). It is interesting to note that the northern tier of counties have three out of the top five counties with the highest percentage of the population living in poverty – Apache (36.6%), then Navajo (30.6%), and Coconino (22.7%). See Figure 1. Other top five counties not in the northern tier are Santa Cruz (22.7%) and Graham County (22.6%). The state’s two urban counties, Maricopa (673,527) and Pima (187,250), account for the largest absolute number of people living in poverty, but at lower rates than most counties, including Coconino. See Table 3.

Table 3. Counties ranked by percentage of population living in poverty.

	% of population below poverty	Number of people below poverty
Apache County	36.6%	25,852
Navajo County	30.6%	32,141
Santa Cruz County	23.5%	10,970
Coconino County	22.7%	28,824
Gila County	22.7%	11,839
Graham County	22.6%	7,446
Yuma County	20.7%	40,508
Mohave County	19.8%	38,874
Pima County	19.3%	187,250
La Paz County	19.1%	3,824
Cochise County	17.9%	21,102
Pinal County	17.3%	63,201
Maricopa County	17.0%	673,527
Yavapai County	16.0%	34,117
Greenlee County	13.7%	1,215
Total persons in poverty		1,180,690

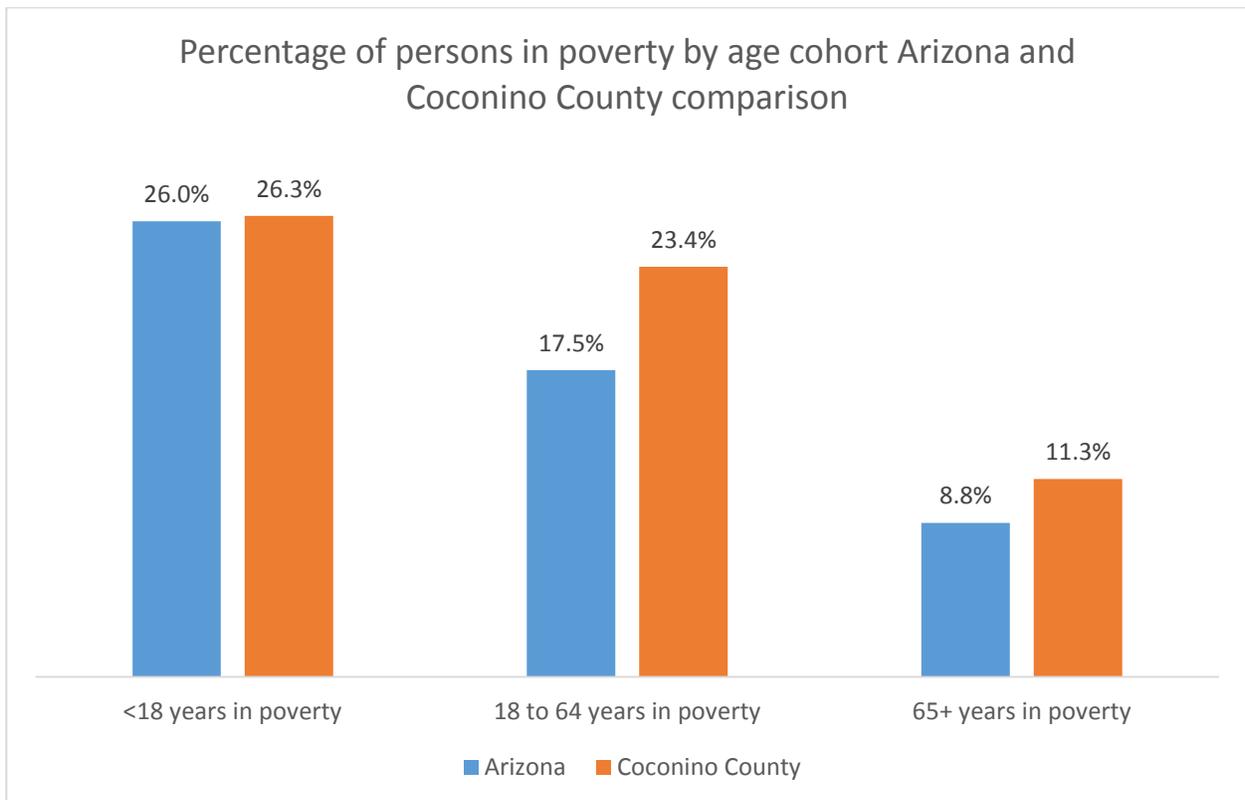
Figure 1. Percent of the population living in poverty in Northern Arizona counties 2013 compared to 2015.



## Comparison of Poverty by Age between Arizona and Coconino County

Typically the census determines poverty by age cohorts, including: those under 18 years of age (i.e., children in the home); those between 18 and 64 years of age (i.e., those in the labor force); and, those aged 65 and over (i.e., those retired or no longer in the labor force). Coconino County has higher rates of poverty for all three age cohorts compared to Arizona overall: a higher percentage of children in poverty (26.3%) compared to the state (26.0%); higher percentage for those in the labor force (23.4%) compared to the state (17.5%); and, a higher percentage of the retired population living in poverty (11.3%) compared to the state overall (8.8%). Across age cohorts, the greatest disparity (5.9%) is among those in the 18 to 64 year cohort which represents working age adults.

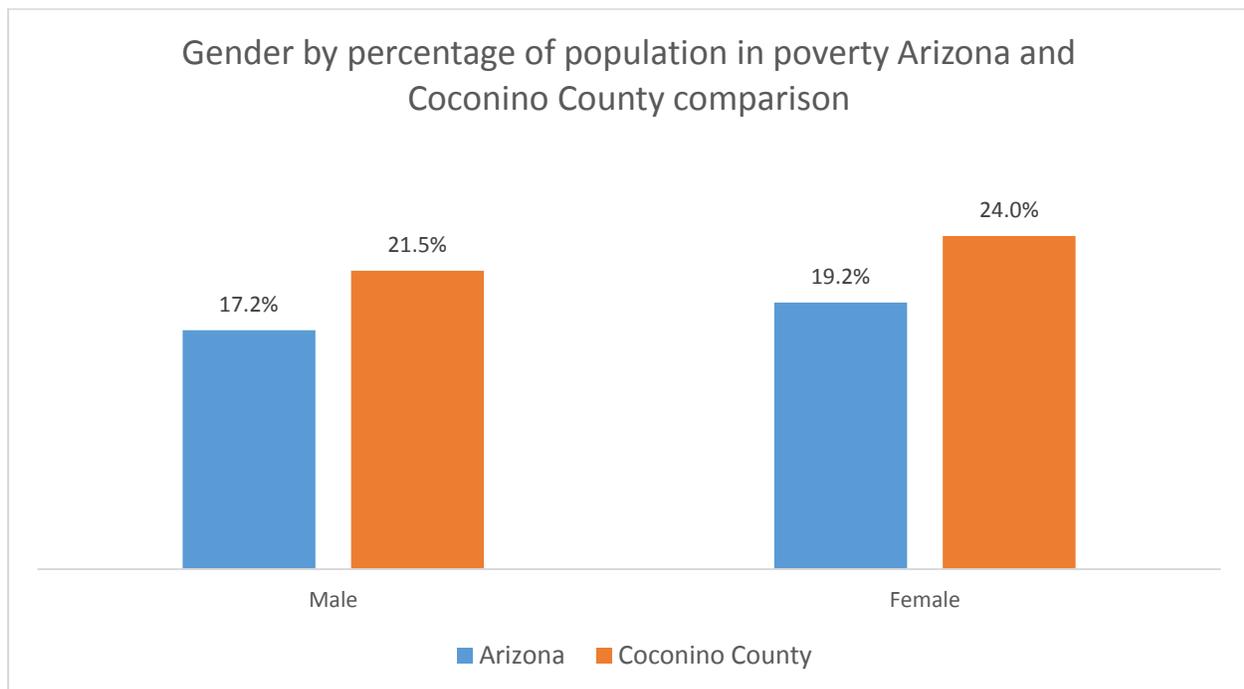
Figure 2. Percent of the population in poverty by age cohorts.



### Comparison of Poverty by Gender between Arizona and Coconino County

Coconino County once again exhibits higher poverty rates by gender than the state overall. Of concern is the greater number of females in poverty in Coconino County (24.0%) compared to the state (19.2%), a 4.8 percent difference. High female poverty rates reflect single female heads of households and contribute to higher poverty rates for children in those households. For males, the disparity between the state poverty rate (17.2%) and Coconino County (21.5%) is not as great, with a difference of 4.3 percent.

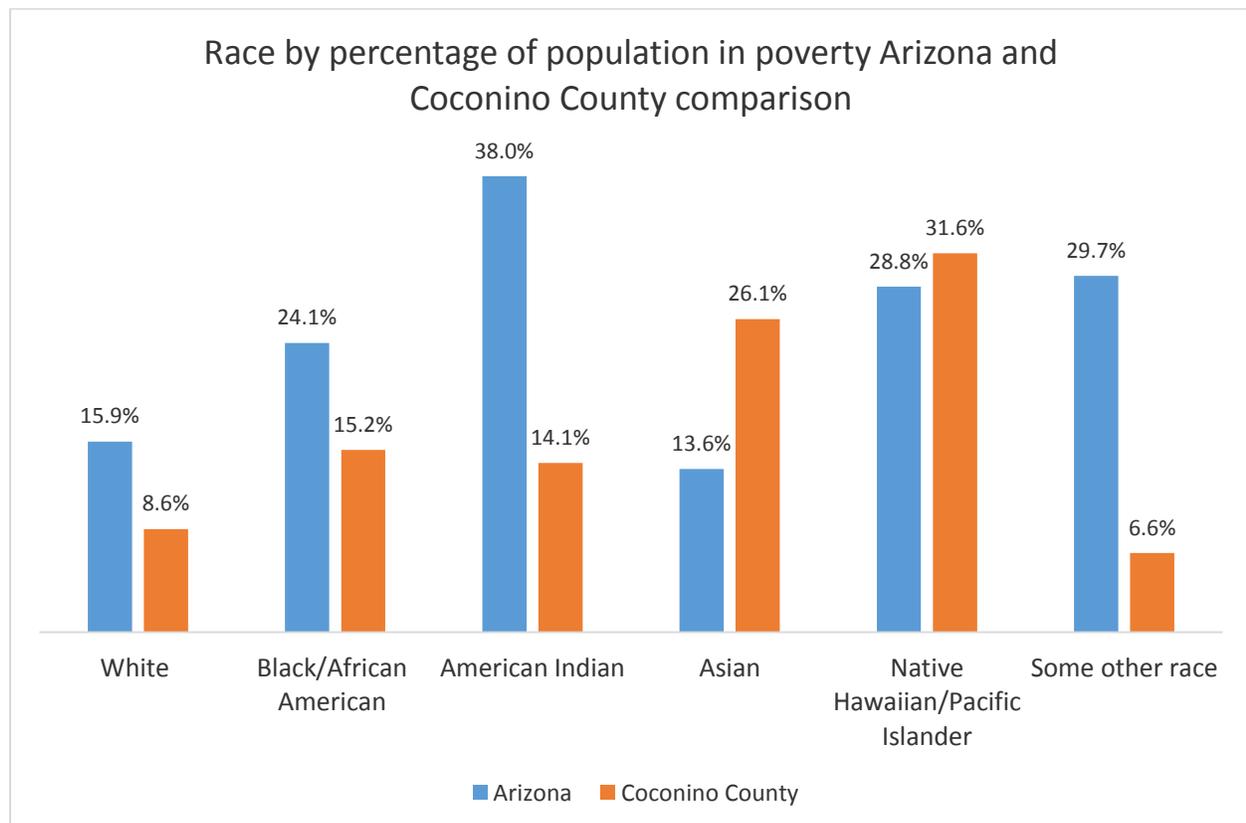
Figure 3. Percent of the population in poverty by gender.



## Comparison of Poverty by Race between Arizona and Coconino County

Differences are also evident when comparing Coconino County to the state on poverty by race. Fewer African-Americans are in poverty in Coconino County (15.2%) than the state (24.1%). Interestingly, the state percentage for Native Americans (38.0%) is higher than Coconino County (14.1%), perhaps because the state represents all 19 tribes while Coconino only represents portions of four tribes (Navajo and Hopi, and smaller populations of Havasupai, and the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians). Poverty rates in Coconino County for Asians and Native Hawaiians are significantly higher than for the state overall, but in absolute numbers these populations are quite small in both the state and county. The total population of Asians in the county is 2,267, with Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders accounting for an estimated total of 173 persons.

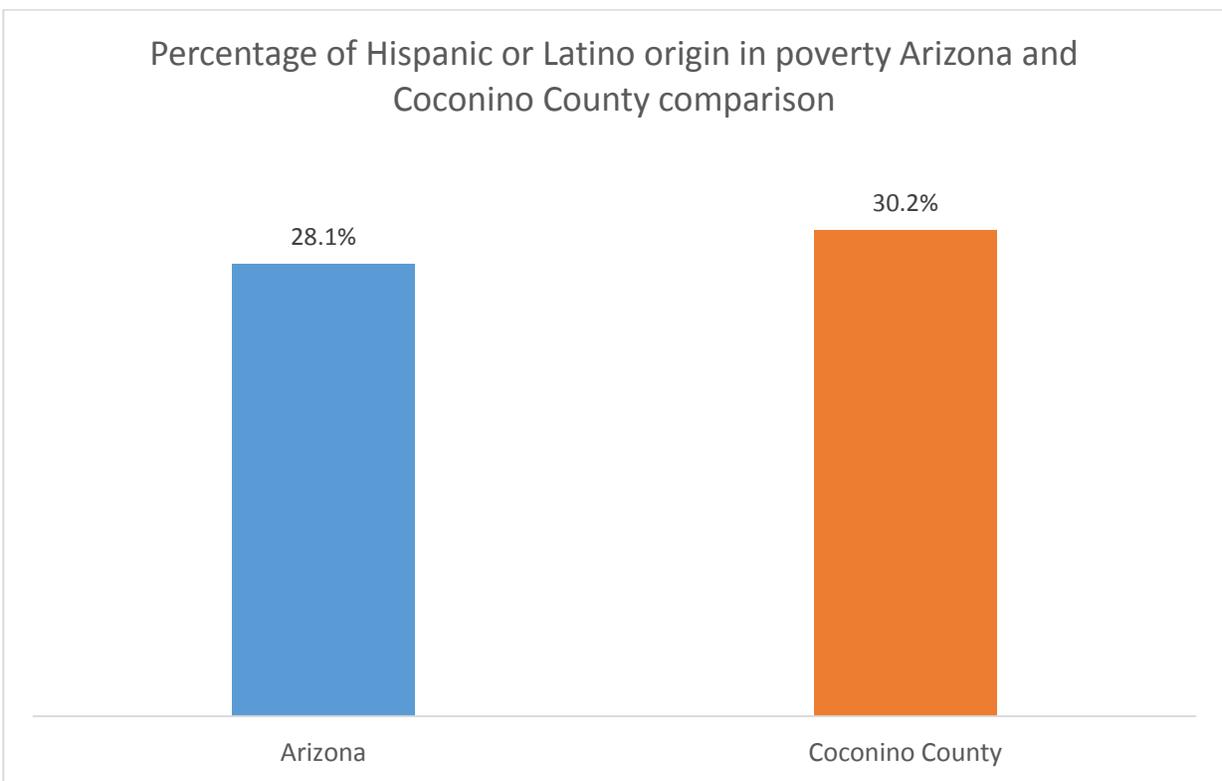
Figure 4. Percent of the population in poverty by race.



## Comparison of Poverty by Hispanic Origin between Arizona and Coconino County

Coconino County's Hispanic or Latino population has a higher rate of poverty (30.2%) than the state overall (28.1%).

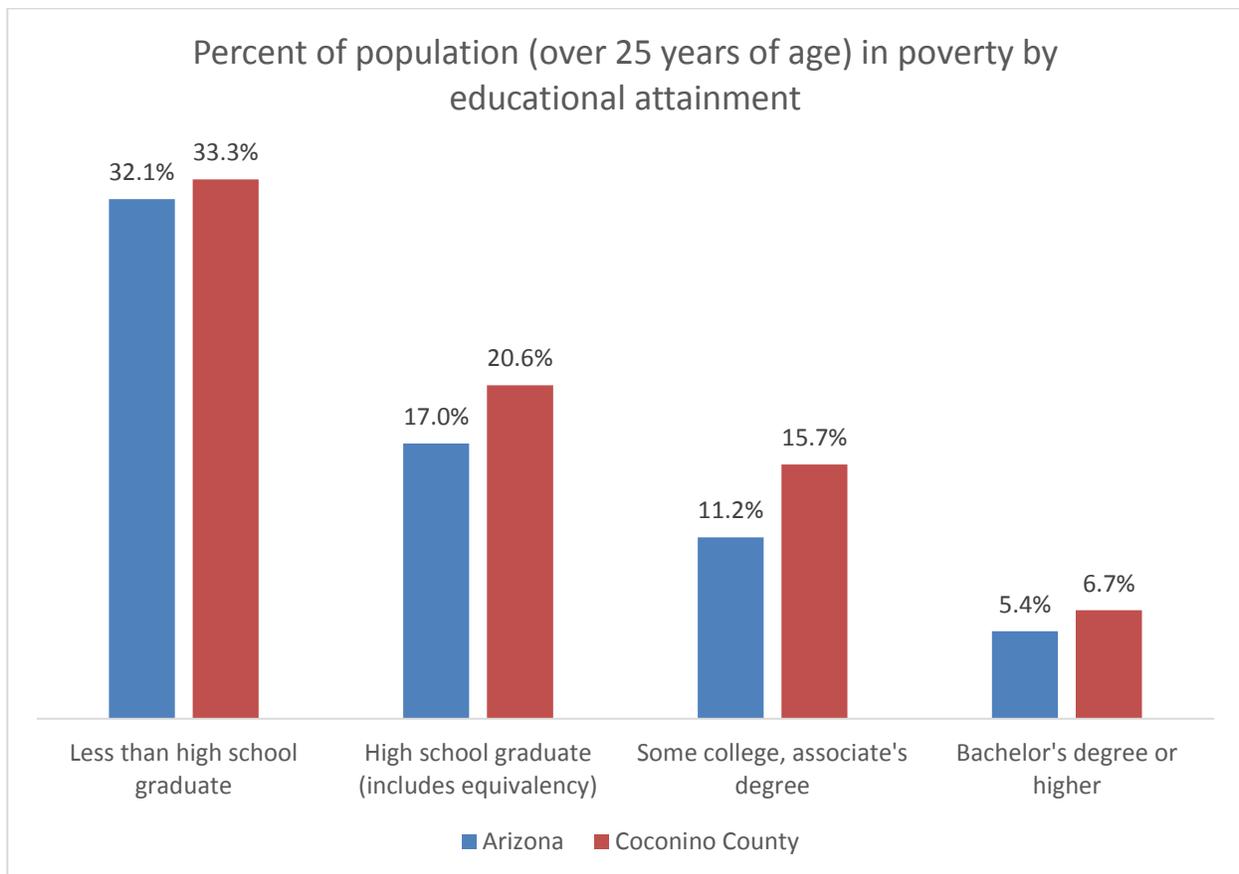
Figure 5. Percent of the population in poverty by Hispanic origin.



## Comparison of Poverty by Education (for population over 25 years) between Arizona and Coconino County

The relationship between education and poverty indicates that an increase in educational attainment is a pathway out of poverty. This holds true in part for Coconino County, where the highest levels of poverty are found in the population that has less than a high school diploma; here the rate is the same for both the county and the state are high, the County at 33.3% is slightly higher than the state at 31.2%. For high school graduates, Coconino County has a higher poverty level (20.6%) than the state (17.0%); the same is true for those with some college or an associate's degree, where the county rate (15.7%) is higher than the state rate (11.2%). These rates may be influenced by generally higher levels of unemployment in the county. Only a slight difference exists between the state and the county in the poverty rate for those with a bachelor's degree or higher, a testament to the benefit of a college education.

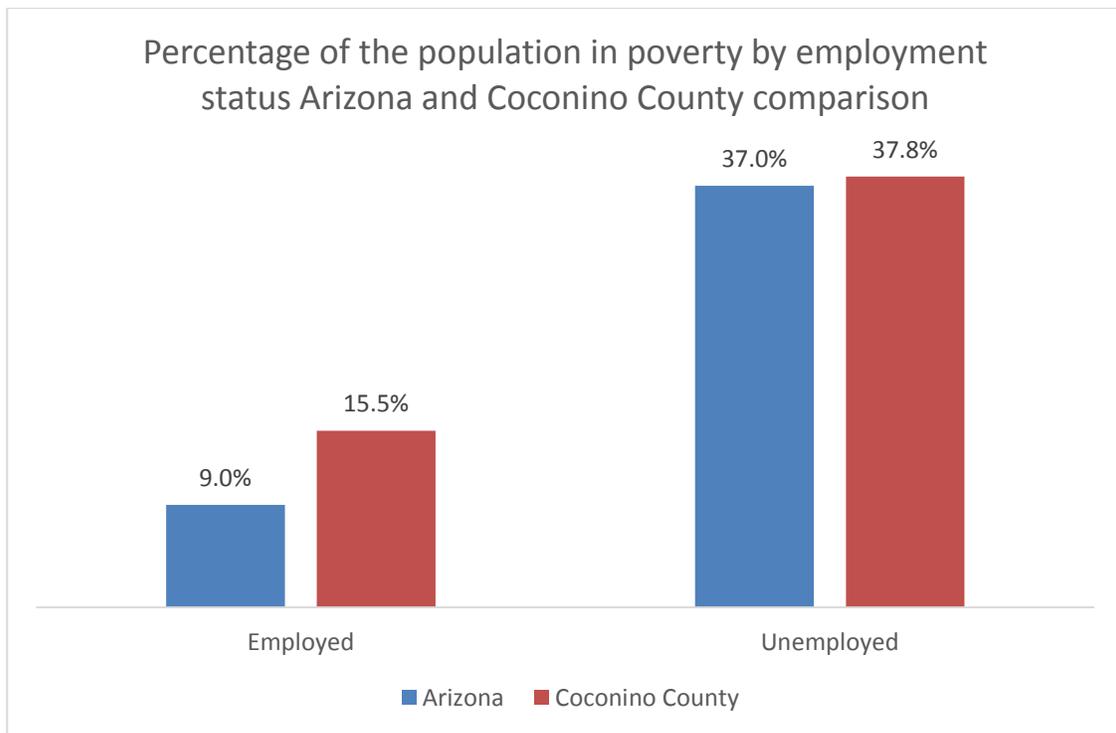
Figure 6. Percent of the population, over 25 years in poverty by educational attainment.



## Comparison of Poverty by employment between Arizona and Coconino County

How does employment affect poverty rates? For those who are unemployed, there is no significant difference between the state (37.0%) and the county (37.8%). However, the percentage of those in Coconino County who are employed and living in poverty (15.5%) is almost twice that of the state rate (9.0%). This group of persons could be identified as the working poor.

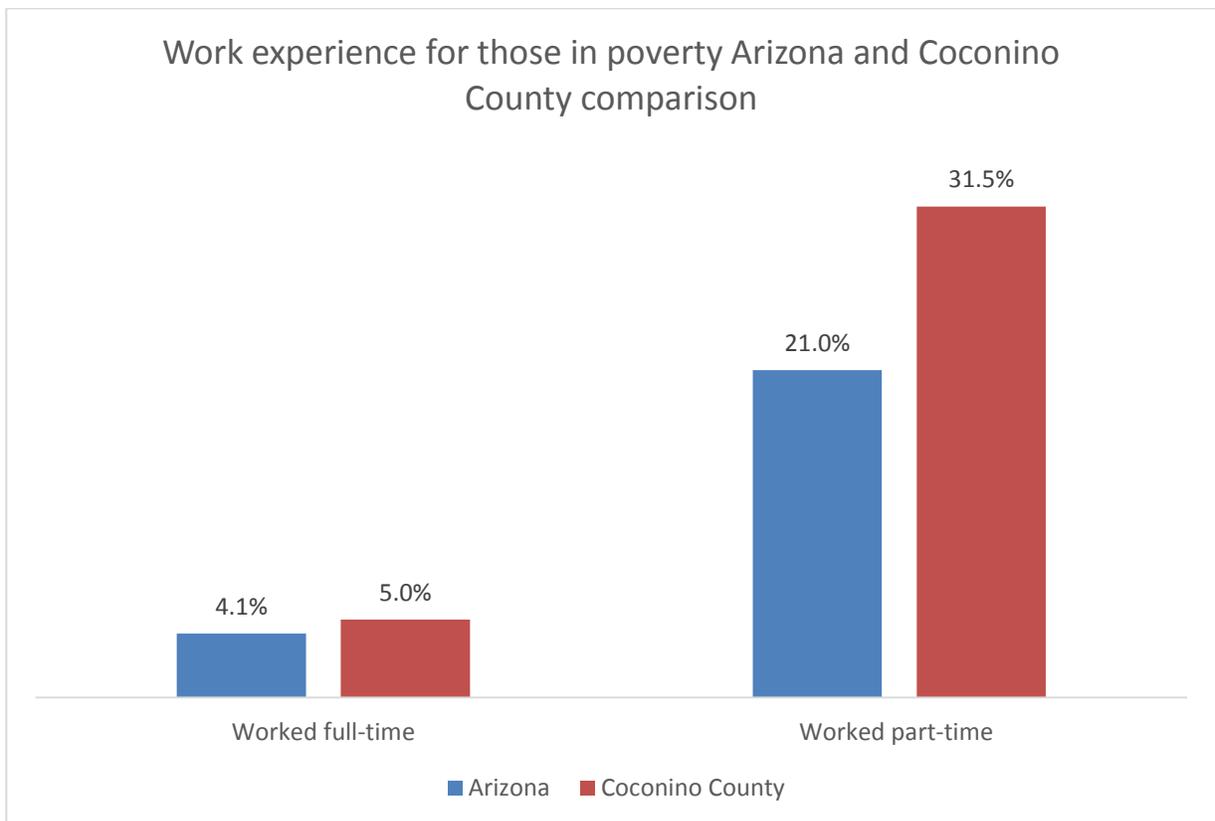
Figure 7. Percent of the population in poverty by those who are employed.



## Comparison of Poverty by work experience between Arizona and Coconino County

Further exploring the percentage of the population that is in poverty, Coconino County residents who work full-time are somewhat more likely than the state population overall to live in poverty – 5.0% for the county vs. 4.1% for the state. However, those in Coconino County who work part-time are considerably more likely (31.5%) to live in poverty than those at the state level (21.0%). Once more this data reflects the nature of employment in the county.

Figure 8. Percent of the population in poverty by work experience.

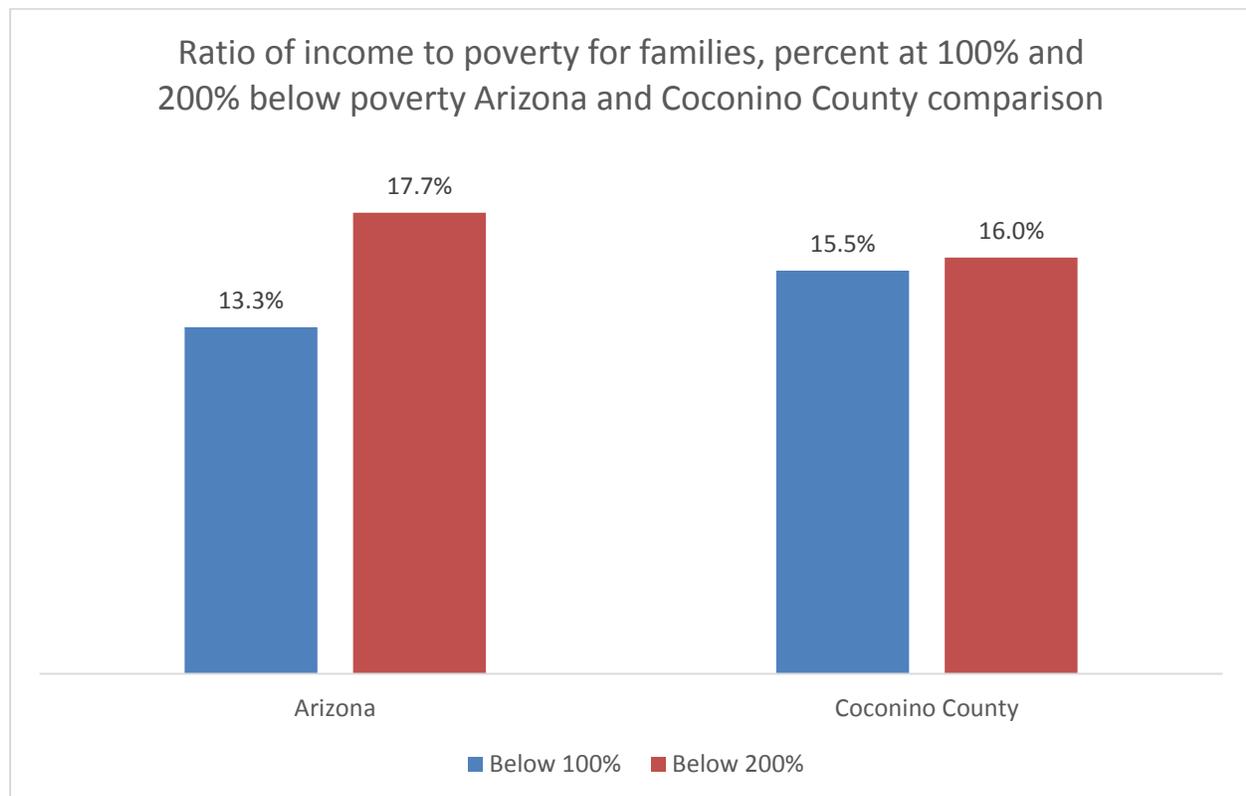


## Comparison of Poverty to Income Ratios for families between Arizona and Coconino County

Both people and families are classified as being in poverty if their income is less than their poverty threshold. If their income is less than half their poverty threshold, they are below 50% of the poverty level; less than the threshold itself, they are in poverty (below 100% of poverty); less than 1.25 times the threshold, below 125% of poverty, and so on. Below 200% of poverty includes all those described as "in poverty", plus some people who have income above poverty but less than 2 times their poverty threshold. See pages 3 and 4 for an explanation of poverty to income ratios and thresholds.

In relative terms, more families are living in poverty (below 100% of poverty) in Coconino County (17.7%) than in the state overall (13.3%). For those families with incomes above the poverty level but not more than 2 times the poverty threshold, there is no discernable difference between the state and the County for what has been described as the "near poor."

Figure 9. Percent of the families with poverty to income ratios at 200% below poverty.



## Comparison of Poverty in Coconino County with the Cost of Living Index

The final analysis is to determine the difference in the number of people living in poverty in Coconino County if the cost of living index (CLI) is factored into the calculation. The argument used here is that poverty thresholds generally do not take into account the cost of living, although thresholds are adjusted by the consumer price index on an annual basis. Two articles are germane in this regard; the first, “The Cost of Living and the Geographic Distribution of Poverty,” by Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture, and “How Differences in the Cost of Living Affect Low-Income Families,” by the National Center for Policy Analysis. Both articles argue that the prevalence of poverty is greater in non-metro areas, and that the poverty thresholds which are not adjusted to geographical regions but rather to the 48 contiguous states, are not a meaningful definition of minimal living standards. In short, how much a family can buy with those minimum benefits depends on where they live.

The cost of living index for Coconino County is 123.1, considerably higher than the Phoenix Metro areas CLI of 98.9. The analysis simply used the difference between 100% of the cost of living index and the CLI for Coconino County, an increase of 23.1%.

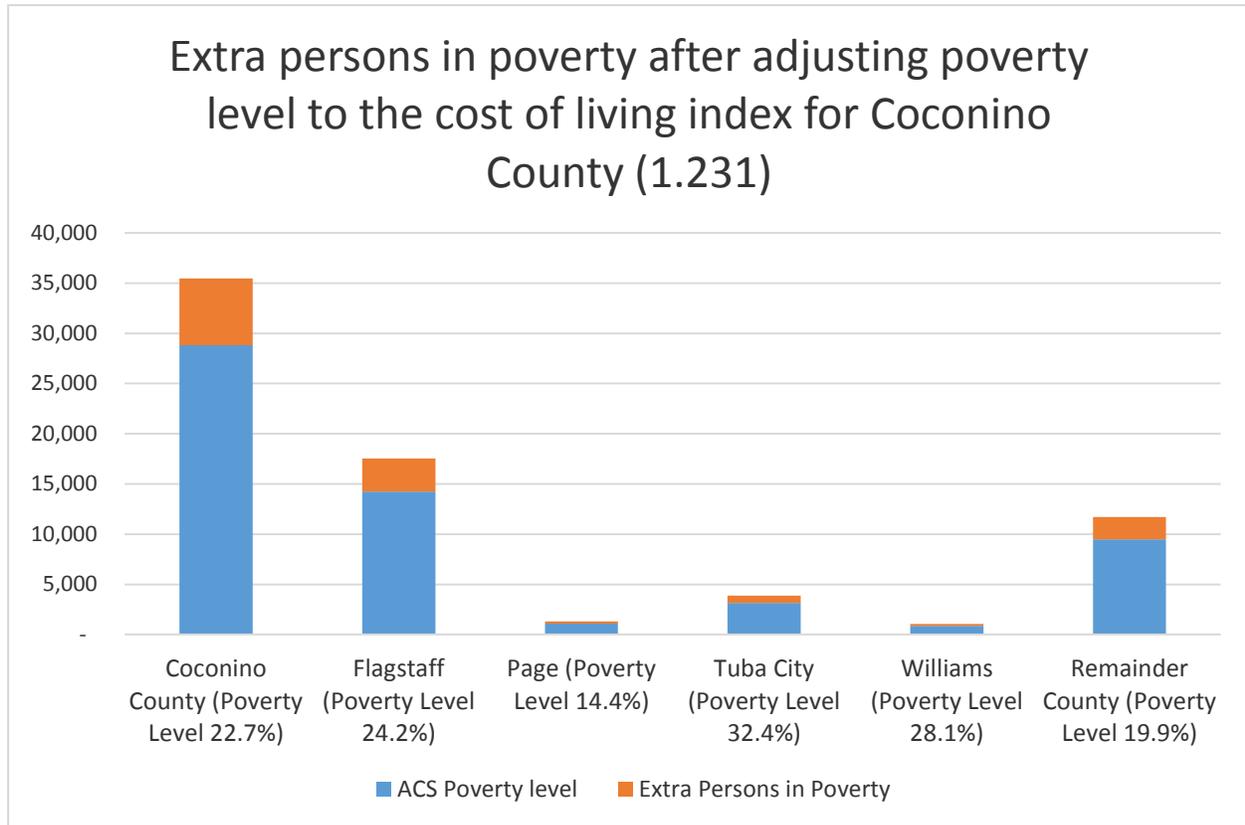
Thus, adjusting for the higher cost of living in Coconino County, the number of persons in poverty is increased by 1,805 children under age 18, by 4,487 persons in the labor force, and by an extra 366 persons aged 65 and over. Table 4 illustrates the difference resulting from the adjustment for the CLI.

Table 4. Increase in persons in poverty by adjusting poverty levels to the cost of living index.

	Coconino County		
	ACS 2015	Adjusted	Difference
<18 in poverty	7,814	9,619	1,805
18 to 64 years in poverty	19,426	23,913	4,487
65+ years in poverty	1,584	1,950	366
Total	28,824	35,482	6,658

Adjusting the poverty thresholds in Coconino County by the cost of living index results in an increase of the County poverty rate from 23.5% to 8.0% an increase of 6,658 persons in poverty in the County.

Figure 10. Extra persons in poverty by adjusting poverty levels to the cost of living index.



### Conclusion

Coconino County overall has higher levels of poverty indicators than the state of Arizona. In terms of the overall percentages, 22.7% of the total population of Coconino County is considered to be living in poverty compared to 18.2% for the state. The county has a larger percentage of all three age cohorts (under 18 years, 18 to 64 years, and 65 years and over) living in poverty than does the state, with the largest difference occurring in the 18 to 64 age group representing those in the labor force. Despite their employment, Coconino County residents are almost twice as likely to be employed yet living in poverty (15.5%), than the state average (9.0%).

## **Appendix J**

### **Continuum of Care Network Questionnaire**

United Way/Coconino County Community Services 2017 Community Needs Assessment

#### **Continuum of Care Network Questionnaire**

A Survey Monkey questionnaire consisting of eight questions was emailed to the Continuum of Care Network on September 18<sup>th</sup>. Below is a summary reflecting the top 5 barriers based upon received responses.

1. What are the biggest issues facing low to middle income individuals/families in our community today?

Housing	16
Employment/low wage	8
Childcare	3
Transportation	3
Food Insecurity	3

2. What do you see as challenges that clients face in accessing services and what challenges does providers face in delivering services?

Transportation	9
Lack of Funding	5
Bureaucracy	5
Mental Health/Physical Health Issues	4
Housing	3

3. What do you see are the challenges to people getting adequate wages in our community?

Livable wage	8
Seasonal/Service-type jobs	5
Education	4
Cost of living	2
Loss of Employers	2

4. How do you feel about the educational opportunities available to children and adults in our community? (Include early childhood education, parenting education, and pre-school opportunities)

Good	7
Head Start (open to all)	4
Adult Ed/Short-term classes needed	2
More preschools/ECE staff	2
More adult trade/cert opportunities	2

5. How does the availability or lack of available housing have an impact of people's lives in our community?

Creates instability/homelessness	8
Stress	4
Relocation/transient community	4
Quality of life/high cost of living	4
Multi-family sharing	3

6. How difficult is it for people to find and buy nutritious food in our community?

Good selection	7
Healthy food expensive	6
Lacking in rural areas	2
Lack of transportation	1
Lack of cooking facility	1

7. Is quality healthcare available to low-to-middle income individuals/families in our community?  
If not, what barriers to see that are preventing quality healthcare in our community?

Yes, if AHCCCS eligible	11
Cost of insurance coverage	3
Lack of preventative dental care/vision	3
Basic, not quality healthcare offered	2
Educate community about resources	2

8. What types of experiences are individuals/families having with the criminal justice system?

Skipped question/unknown	10
Substance abuse	2
Cost of fines/court scheduling	2
Lack of communication/respect	2
Lack of support by adult probation	1

## **Appendix J**

**Advancing Wellbeing in Northern Arizona (Executive Summary), Center for Health Equity Research, NAU**

**Advancing Wellbeing in Northern Arizona:  
A Regional Health Equity Assessment  
September 6, 2017**



This report was prepared by the Northern Arizona University  
**Center for Health Equity Research**

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This report was commissioned by The NARBHA Institute  
in partnership with the Northern Arizona Healthcare Foundation.



## Executive Summary

Northern Arizona's health challenges are complex. The geographical, cultural, political, and socioeconomic conditions in this region require an assessment process that considers health indicator data in the context of dynamic social and environmental influences that affect population health and individual wellbeing. This assessment was designed to provide critical information on outcomes from this vital context. Its results are intended to inform dialogue among diverse partners and service delivery organizations so that novel solutions can be developed, implemented, and evaluated to address disparities that may be prioritized for collaborative intervention.



## Why Health Equity?

Wellbeing and good health are not equitably distributed. As defined by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, health equity is:

**“ the state in which everyone has the chance to attain their full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other defined circumstance”.<sup>1</sup>**

Targeted solutions designed to address health equity needs and challenges in northern Arizona can improve health status indicators, reduce costs in medical care, and promote vibrant community development with benefits across the social and economic spectrum.

## Scope of Study

The NARBHA Institute, in partnership with the Northern Arizona Healthcare Foundation, commissioned the NAU Center for Health Equity Research (CHER) to conduct a regional health equity needs assessment to inform the goal of advancing wellbeing in northern Arizona. This report summarizes findings from CHER's comprehensive study of health disparities across the six-county region of northern Arizona encompassed by Apache, Coconino, Gila, Mohave, Navajo, and Yavapai Counties. This extensive area, which covers 66,223 square miles, is ethnically diverse and largely rural, with a mix of tribal, public and privately owned lands. Twelve of the 22 federally recognized American Indian tribes in Arizona live in this region.

## Methods

The comprehensive nature of the analysis is unique; the report authors are not aware of any previous studies occurring in the region with a similar breadth and scope. The project team collected and analyzed diverse quantitative and qualitative data in an iterative process, which allowed team members to regularly discuss ongoing findings and identify areas for further exploration.

Qualitative data collection occurred through:

- Detailed review and synthesis of 57 existing reports from the region;
- Engagement in 18 stakeholder meetings, 13 conferences and community forums, 62 interviews with community leaders and service providers, and seven focus groups with 49 participants.

The quantitative team completed:

- Primary data analysis of the Arizona Department of Health Services Hospital Discharge, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC WONDER), and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) datasets;
- Secondary data analysis of county-level information in diverse sectors (e.g. health, employment, poverty, food security, education, crime, youth behavior and neighborhood environment).

## Framework for Analysis

Social factors determine health outcomes more often than medical care. The assessment was guided by the *Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)*<sup>2</sup> framework to allow for exploration of the complex intersections of social, cultural, economic, and systems level influences on health and wellbeing. Information was gathered in 5 categories: access to healthcare, economic stability, education, neighborhood and built environment, and social and cultural contexts. Such a holistic approach is fundamental to ongoing efforts to identify system-level changes that offer the potential to reduce health inequity in the region.<sup>1</sup>

## Result Highlights

Among the many results identified in the assessment, noteworthy findings include:

- **Higher Fatality Rates**

When comparing Arizona and United States age-adjusted causes of death, the six-county region has significantly higher fatality rates from heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, accidents, suicide, chronic liver disease and assault/homicide. These leading causes of death varied by county and community, with the top three causes of death overall for the region being diseases of the heart, cancer and unintentional injuries.

- **Increased Rates of Injury and Suicide**

Among the leading causes of death, accidents and suicide were of particular note for northern Arizona given their comparatively high rates. Suicide rates were highest among non-Hispanic whites, while fatalities from unintentional injuries were highest among American Indian populations. Suicide and self-inflicted injury rates were also highest among people ages 13-28 across the region.



- **Burden of Chronic Disease**

Chronic health conditions, especially diabetes, heart disease, obesity, respiratory conditions and dental health were highlighted qualitatively as important health priorities. Across the region, the leading causes of death largely aligned with the health priorities identified by participants in the qualitative analysis, including diseases of the heart, diabetes and respiratory conditions.

- **Impact of Substance Use and Poor Behavioral Health**

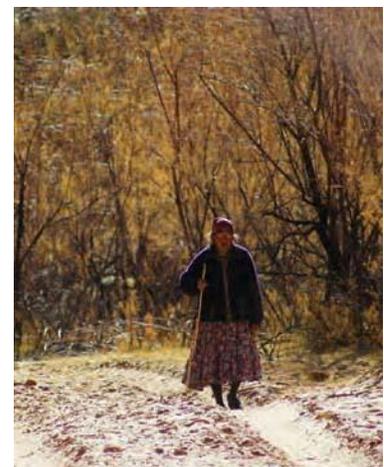
Study participants identified substance use and behavioral health conditions as critical priorities because of the influence these issues have on accidents, suicide, chronic illnesses and violent crime, as well as their negative effects on educational attainment, economic self-sufficiency and social engagement.

- **Population-Specific Disparity Patterns**

Participants emphasized the key role that population level analysis will play in ongoing improvement efforts. Specific populations identified for additional "deeper dive" analysis and potential targeted interventions included American Indians (including elders), Hispanics, Veterans, aging adults, children, rural populations, low-income populations, members of the LGBTQ community and individuals with disabilities.

- **Opportunity for Interdisciplinary Partnerships**

While appreciative of the existing services that bring diverse individual and community benefits, many participants stressed the need for more cross-sector, inter-agency collaboration in data collection and analysis, strategic planning and resource sharing, and program implementation.



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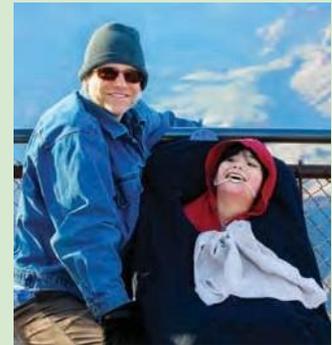
## SDOH Findings

Participants identified a range of social, environmental and system issues affecting health equity and wellbeing in the northern Arizona region. This information is summarized within the SDOH five-dimensional framework as follows.

### ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

#### Access to healthcare was the most discussed barrier to achieving good health.

- There is a shortage of providers and services across primary care, behavioral health and dental care. Specialty provider visits, especially for children, require residents to travel long distances, often traveling outside the region.
- Although many people report having some type of health insurance coverage, residents regularly experience difficulties accessing care because of an insufficient number of providers, the cost of services or a lack of system navigation competency.
- Recruitment and retention of rural-based providers has proven challenging and there are long wait times reported for many facilities.
- There is limited capacity for receiving behavioral health services, partially because of a lack of providers, but also, due to eligibility requirements and inadequate service options.
- There is a common perception that people most likely to receive needed behavioral health services are those who are AHCCCS-eligible, have a serious mental illness or are in crisis. Resident behavioral health needs that are less severe are often unmet.
- Because they frequently interface with community members with mental health problems, law enforcement officials need more training to recognize mental health conditions and navigate the behavioral health system.
- Participants highlighted inadequate home health care for older adults and people with disabilities, and a shortage of palliative care for people with serious conditions.
- Access to dental services for preventive care is reported as limited across the region. Poor dental coverage with many insurance plans also creates major barriers.



## ECONOMIC STABILITY

### A significant percentage of the population in the northern Arizona region live in poverty.

- All six counties have a higher percentage of children living in poverty than national rates and five out of six counties experience overall higher poverty rates compared with the national average.
- Lack of employment opportunities, in particular among American Indian communities, contributes to high poverty rates.
- High cost of living and unavailability/unaffordability of housing options impact residents' ability to procure healthy foods, health care services and other basic resources.
- Limited local access to healthy food options also contributes to high food insecurity. Expanded access to nutritious foods in schools is vital.
- County-specific associations were identified between lower household income and increased mentally unhealthy days, lower self-rated health status, increased functional limitations and higher cardiovascular risk factors.



## EDUCATION

### Educational attainment significantly correlates with reports of health status.

- Associations were identified between lower education levels and higher mentally unhealthy days, increased cardiovascular morbidity and higher self-reported functional limitations.
- Variation across the region is seen in high school graduation rates, with Navajo, Gila, and Apache counties having the lowest rates.
- American Indian youth have the lowest high school graduation rates in the region, followed by Hispanic students.
- There is a need for improved information-sharing and understanding on the benefits of preventive health care, strategies for managing health (especially for those with chronic physical or behavioral health conditions}, and health system navigation.



## SOCIAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

**Social and cultural factors have both positive and negative influences on health equity in the region.**

### Strengths

- There are many close-knit communities in the region whose residents support one another despite social and environmental challenges.
- Local and regional organizations serving the area have an understanding of the SDOH and often use this framework for holistic approaches to support health and well-being.
- American Indian populations especially demonstrate resiliency and strong communities supported by cultural revitalization efforts.



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### Challenges

- Limited social activities and productive engagement opportunities are felt to result in higher rates of substance use and other risky behaviors in youth.
- The stigma associated with seeking mental health services is felt to be palpable.
- Limited transportation, loss of mobility, and insufficient community and social supports result in social isolation and poor access to resources like food and medication for aging adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Some members of the American Indian communities identified historical trauma and loss of culture as contributing to health disparities.
- There is some distrust reported with health systems, especially among the Hispanic population.
- Representatives from both the Hispanic and American Indian communities identified incongruences between traditional health beliefs and western medicine practices.

## NEIGHBORHOOD & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Important environmental factors were identified, including:

- Transportation options are often limited, and, if available, are frequently not affordable.
- Access to parks, sidewalks, and other recreational infrastructure is varied, with residents of Apache, Mohave and Navajo counties having less access as compared to the state average.
- Although most counties in northern Arizona rated better than the state average in the quantitative measurements of violent crime, residents of specific neighborhoods in the region reported high rates of crime and violence, partly attributed to substance use.



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### Assessment Limitations

Gaps in data available to inform this assessment included:

- Hospital discharge data for IHS and Tribal 638 facilities. These facilities are not required to report such information to the Arizona Department of Health Services.
- Data on outpatient healthcare and mental health-related encounters. Such data sources are not easily available for integrated analysis.
- Data sources specific to the health status of members of the LGBTQ community.
- Linked data sets, to help identify patterns of individual utilization/needs over time and further population-specific needs for priority populations otherwise identified by the assessment.

The intent of this assessment was to gather and summarize quantitative and qualitative data related to health equity across a wide, six-county geography. Consequently, information regarding innovative, best practice programs that are underway across the region was not systematically gathered. In addition, the assessment was not designed to specify the priority in which interventions might be collaboratively developed and implemented to address issues identified in the assessment. Such prioritization should occur as part of future activities within and among organizations serving this region.



## Next Steps

Review of this report's findings in diverse community and organizational settings may serve to:

1. Validate its major themes and findings;
2. Formulate plans to address gaps in data and refine topics for further inquiry;
3. Build collaborative dialogue that will facilitate expanded regional information sharing and interdisciplinary program planning.

Further programmatic planning will benefit from the following considerations:

- **Improvements in health equity and wellbeing depend on inter-sector and intra-region collaboration.** This collaboration can be facilitated by building capacity to more easily communicate, collect and share data and information, and align goals. Fifty-seven existing health reports and community needs assessments were reviewed as part of this regional report. Opportunities exist to combine resources for future assessments. The NAU Center for Health Equity Research would be pleased to participate in planning related to such efforts.
- **Solutions for the multi-factorial challenges identified in this report necessitate interdisciplinary approaches to service delivery; many have either not been previously attempted or have only been demonstrated locally in select communities.** New sources of data - and the ability to establish links among data sets - will be fundamental to future population health collaborations and their evaluations. Because this comprehensive health equity needs assessment included the formal acquisition of data from regional, statewide and national data bases, detailed analysis is now possible of population health conditions that are unique to the region, along with comparative studies of issues that are common across the region, state and nation.
- There was widespread community uncertainty about service availability in different parts of northern Arizona. **Stakeholders should work to create and maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date list of available resources across the region.** Resource information should be convenient and readily available, as well as be culturally, linguistically, intellectually, and age appropriate.

We hope that this report will establish a solid foundation for continued collaborative efforts to advance wellbeing in northern Arizona.

<sup>1</sup> Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity. Report by the *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*, January 2017.

<sup>2</sup> CDC. Healthy People 2020. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/healthy\\_people/hp2020.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/healthy_people/hp2020.htm). Accessed 9/29/16.