

**City of Jamestown Poverty  
Reduction Initiative  
Needs Assessment**

May, 2017



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# City of Jamestown Poverty Reduction Initiative Needs Assessment

May, 2017

**Prepared for:**

United Way of Southern Chautauqua County

**Prepared by:**

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Project Directors



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# Executive Summary

CGR was engaged by the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County and the City of Jamestown to gather data and stakeholder perspectives to inform a needs assessment about the state of poverty in the City of Jamestown. The needs assessment will be used to create a work plan aimed at reducing the prevalence and impact of poverty. The City is one of 16 in the state receiving funding under the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI), which aims to identify and support locally developed anti-poverty efforts.

Our key findings include:

- While 16% of Americans lived in poverty during 2015, 29% of residents in the City of Jamestown did, including 43% of children under the age of 18.
- Although the official poverty rate in the City is 29%, another 25% of residents have income between 100% and 200% of the poverty threshold, which means they often struggle to make ends meet.
- Children, less educated adults, single-parent families and Hispanic residents are all populations more likely to be poor than others in Jamestown.
- Median household income fell 17% in the City of Jamestown from 2000 to 2011-15, though that was less than the county, state and nation.
- The number of jobs held by Chautauqua County residents (including those employed outside the county) has declined 7% since 2009, and the Manufacturing sector has had the largest losses, declining 27%.
- A lower share of Jamestown adults in prime working years (ages 25 to 64) are in the workforce (meaning working or looking for work) – 72% compared to 78% in the state and nation. And among less educated adults without a high school diploma, workforce participation is even lower – 42% in Jamestown compared to 60% or more in the state and nation.
- Of the 50,000 new jobs expected in Western New York by 2022, 64% require a high school diploma or less for entry into the field. But these jobs tend to be low-paying, with annual wages in the \$20-30,000 range.
- Transportation can be a major barrier to employment, with a quarter of Jamestown households lacking a vehicle and a public transit system that community members say is inadequate.
- Housing is problematic for low-income residents, as the cost of renting is very high and quality affordable housing is scarce.

Interviews with low-income residents revealed that many are frustrated and feel hopeless about ever being self-sufficient. Those with low-wage full-time jobs shared

concerns about being unable to make ends meet despite working 40 hours a week, and seeing their public assistance disappear as they increased their earnings. High school students from low-income families expressed frustration with the condition of their neighborhoods and the safety of their siblings and friends. Low-income seniors who lack familial supports described how they struggle to address their basic needs, and feel powerless to do anything to improve their living situation. While the specific set of frustrations varied by background, age, and employment status, nearly all residents who contributed their perspective to this study expressed a sense of frustration with the status quo, and a belief that there was little they could do to change it. The scarcity of time was also a theme frequently expressed, with residents discussing their difficulties completing necessary tasks over the course of a day or a week, a concern exacerbated for those lacking vehicles.

Residents also discussed concerns about specific issues including barriers to employment such as inaccessible jobs, limited hours and possible discrimination; the shortage of affordable, quality child care, especially during off-hours; substandard housing and unsafe neighborhoods; lack of access to needed health care specialists; and concerns about the public assistance system. Interviews with employers and leaders in workforce development pointed to some jobs going unfilled, mostly due to a lack of soft skills on the part of some employees.

## Acknowledgements

CGR would like to thank Tory Irgang and Krista Camarata of the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County and the Jamestown poverty reduction task force for their guidance and insights.

## Staff Team

This project was led by Pete Nabozny, with guidance and assistance from Erika Rosenberg. Amelia Rickard, Michael Silva and Katherine Bell provided data analysis.

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Introduction.....	1
Project Methodology .....	1
Quantitative Data Review.....	1
A Note about Data .....	2
Community Conversations .....	2
<b>Poverty in Jamestown, NY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Defining Poverty.....	4
Federal Poverty Threshold .....	4
Overview of Poverty in the City of Jamestown .....	5
Who is Poor in the City of Jamestown? .....	6
Major Issues Related to Poverty .....	11
Jobs and Labor Market.....	11
Unemployment in Jamestown.....	14
Labor Force Participation.....	15
Transportation.....	18
Household Car Ownership.....	18
The Location of Jobs .....	19
Employment Projections.....	20
Housing .....	22
Affordability.....	22
The Age of Housing.....	24
Education & Child Care .....	25
School Performance.....	25
Child Care .....	26
Health Care .....	27
Health Insurance.....	27
<b>Perspectives of Low-Income Residents.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Broad Themes .....	30

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Frustration .....	30
The Scarcity of Time .....	30
Specific Topics .....	31
Jobs .....	31
Housing .....	32
Education, Child Care and Youth Programs .....	33
Child Care and Early Childhood Education.....	33
K - 12 Education.....	34
Transportation .....	35
Public Health .....	36
Public Assistance .....	36
Public Safety .....	37
Perspective of Workforce Development Leaders and Local Employers .....	37
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>39</b>
Jamestown Poverty Initiative Public Meeting Notes 5_3_17 .....	39

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# Introduction

The prevalence and persistence of poverty is a matter of great concern in the United States today. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 16% of Americans lived in poverty during 2015, and the rate was much higher in many communities throughout the country, including the City of Jamestown, NY. In Jamestown, 29% of residents live in poverty, including nearly 43% of children. This level of impoverishment significantly affects this city of over 30,000 residents, straining social services, reducing the City's tax base, and perhaps most importantly, limiting the ability of low-income residents to become more economically self-sufficient.

The Center for Governmental Research (CGR) was engaged by the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County and the City of Jamestown to gather data and stakeholder perspectives to inform a needs assessment about the state of poverty in the City of Jamestown. This needs assessment will be used by the community to develop a work plan to reduce the prevalence and impact of poverty within the City, with a goal of improving the quality of life for City residents and helping low-income individuals and families achieve greater self-sufficiency.

This effort is part of New York State's Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI), which aims to identify and support locally developed anti-poverty efforts in over a dozen cities across the state.

## Project Methodology

CGR's assessment of the state of poverty in Jamestown, NY is based on our background in this practice area, analysis of available data related to poverty in this community, and conversations with individuals from many perspectives who contributed to this review, including a number of individuals experiencing poverty.

## Quantitative Data Review

U.S. Census Bureau data provides the foundation of our quantitative analysis on this project, and is responsible for the official poverty rate in the City and throughout the county. This assessment relies on Census Bureau data for exploring particular dynamics of poverty in Jamestown, including household composition, education levels, workforce participation, disability status, and income data.

The Census Bureau also maintains a considerable amount of longitudinal labor market and economic data through its Center for Economic Studies. Our team explored and analyzed this data for Jamestown and the surrounding areas to gain a sense of the changing labor market in the region

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Our team also examined U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis data to provide county-wide data about changing wage and employment data in the County.

## A Note about Data

The purpose of this report is to explore the dynamics of poverty within the City of Jamestown, and wherever possible, we report information at the City level. However, City data is often unavailable or unreliable due to insufficient sample sizes. In those instances, this report presents data and findings at the most granular level possible, often using countywide information. Throughout this study, we will specify the level of geography being used for each data series presented.

## Community Conversations

To better understand the perspective of low-income residents of the City of Jamestown, CGR conducted a number of small group community conversations in Jamestown during March 2017. Nearly 70 individuals in total participated in six different small group discussions. The participants were recruited by the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County and partner agencies in the community, and were selected to provide a broad range of perspectives. Individuals who participated in this process ranged in age from 15 to over 70 years old, and spanned educational levels, work statuses and experiences, and race/ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, CGR met with:

- Participants in the Family Learning Zone and Helping Hands Programs
- Teen mothers in the Teen Education and Motherhood (TEAM) program
- High School students in the Chautauqua Striders Mentoring Program
- Participants in the Parents and Children Together (PACT program) at Love Elementary School
- Residents of the Hotel Jamestown affordable housing development
- Low-Income members of the Conduit West church

Most of these meetings lasted 90 minutes, although due to scheduling limitations, the conversation with students in the Chautauqua Striders program was limited to a half hour. Participants in all of these discussions were promised anonymity to encourage them to freely speak their mind. Accordingly, no one is quoted or directly paraphrased in this assessment.

CGR staff followed two sets of questions in these community conversations, one tailored to adults and the other aimed at teens. Both focused on identifying the

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challenges low-income families face in Jamestown, and covered a number of different topic areas; including housing, jobs, education, transportation, health care, and public assistance.

Our staff also met with a number of employers in the community, along with representatives from several organizations that focus on workforce development and job training efforts. Finally, we met with several service providers, including Helping Hands and the YMCA.

CGR and the United Way of Southern Chautauqua County also led a larger community discussion about particular challenges for low-income residents of Jamestown. Over 50 community members from a variety of backgrounds attended this meeting, and contributed thoughts and suggestions across four major topic areas: Education, Jobs and Job Training Programs, Public Assistance, and Transportation. Together, these perspectives inform the qualitative assessment described in detail below.

## Poverty in Jamestown, NY

Poverty is not monolithic – not everyone in poverty became poor for the same reasons or experiences the same effects. For some, poverty is a temporary condition, alleviated when they find the next job or move to the next step in their career. For others, poverty is long-term, multi-generational, and endemic. Physical disabilities, mental health issues, regional and national economic declines, and challenging family situations can all contribute to the prevalence and persistence of poverty in a community.

Poverty and near-poverty are often accompanied by other challenges. Research has shown that the condition of poverty limits one's ability to plan for the future, as low-income families are just trying to successfully get through the day. The stresses related to poverty can lead to health and mental health issues, and people in poverty are more likely to experience trauma than individuals with greater economic security. Children who grow up in high-poverty communities are more likely to live in poverty as adults, and the often inter-generational nature of poverty limits the potential of children to lead fulfilling and comfortable lives as adults.

This analysis assesses the unique dynamics of poverty in the City of Jamestown on a number of different parameters, paying particular attention to the barriers that low-income individuals encounter when trying to achieve and maintain steady employment.

Poverty in the City of Jamestown shares certain characteristics with poverty found elsewhere. Children are more likely to be poor than seniors, for example. But there are also unique dynamics of poverty present in Jamestown that distinguish this community from others. This report focuses on the experience of low-income

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residents of the City of Jamestown, providing contextual data from other geographies as needed.

## Defining Poverty

While the causes and consequences of poverty are extraordinarily complex, the statistical definition of poverty in the United States is quite simple – a person is in poverty if their household’s cash income is below a certain level.

For the purposes of this study, we used a number of income thresholds to explore the issue of poverty in Jamestown. In many instances, we followed the federal government’s official poverty threshold. However, when applicable, we also found it appropriate to present information at different percentages of that federal poverty line. For example, 200% of the poverty threshold is generally understood to be a rough measure of self-sufficiency. The percentage of City residents who make less than 200% of the poverty threshold gives one a good sense of the percentage of residents who are struggling to make ends meet.

### Federal Poverty Threshold

Despite considerable changes in society over the last 50 years, our modern-day poverty threshold is simply based on the cost of food in 1963, adjusted for inflation and family size. The 2016 poverty thresholds for non-elderly families are in the table below.

**Table 1 – 2016 Poverty Thresholds for Non-Elderly Families**

Size of family unit	Related children under 18 years			
	None	One	Two	Three
One person	\$12,486			
Two person	\$16,072	\$16,543		
Three person	\$18,774	\$19,318	\$19,337	
Four person	\$24,755	\$25,160	\$24,339	\$24,424

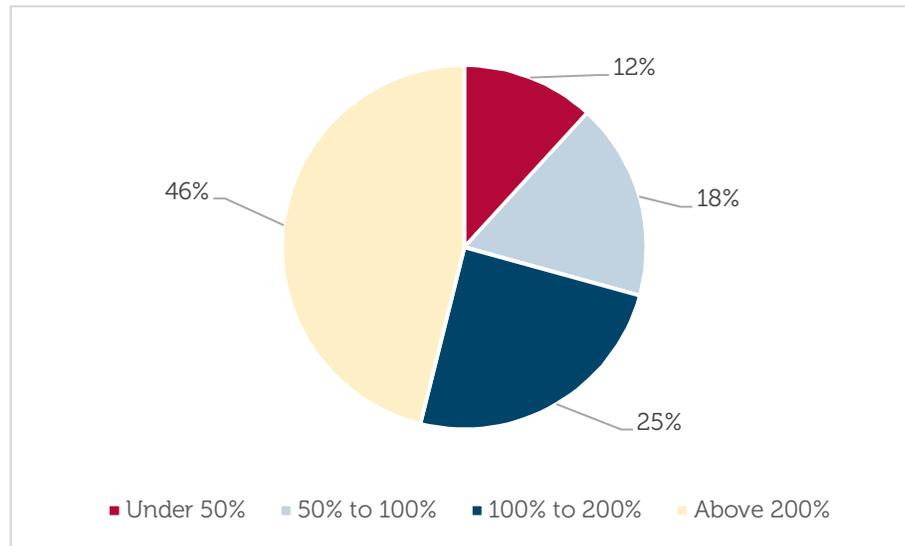
Most experts in this field believe that the proper measure of economic self-sufficiency is significantly higher than the federal poverty threshold, perhaps even more than double the poverty threshold. So while the actual poverty measure is a bit of a rough calculation, it still provides a widely understood and long-term baseline to measure the prevalence of low-income individuals and families in a community, and is particularly attuned to measure improvements of market income among poorer residents of a region.

## Overview of Poverty in the City of Jamestown

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly 8,600 residents of the City of Jamestown lived in poverty in 2011-15, comprising 29% of the City's population. This is up from 23% considered poor in 2006-10. Another 7,000 residents were in households that earn less than 200% of the federal poverty threshold, meaning that while they may not be technically considered poor, they likely do not earn enough to be economically self-sufficient. Together, these two groups comprise over half of the City of Jamestown population.<sup>1</sup>

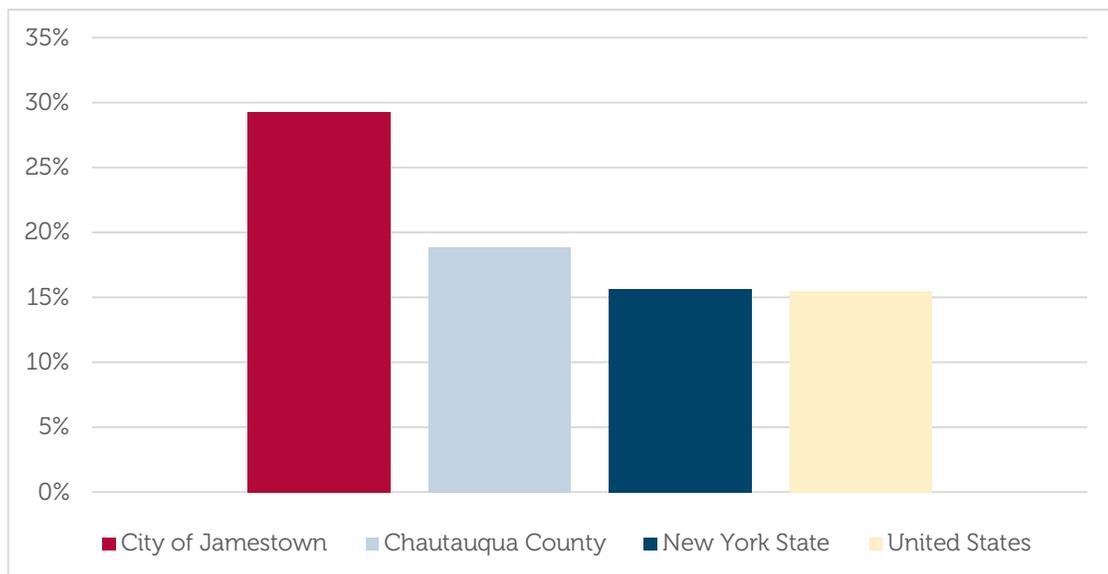
<sup>1</sup> All data in this section from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2011-15

**Figure 1 – Jamestown Residents at Different Levels of Poverty**



The City of Jamestown has a substantially higher percentage of residents in poverty than Chautauqua County, New York State, or the nation. The share of City residents in poverty is nearly twice as high as the state or national rate, and is 10 percentage points higher than Chautauqua County as a whole.

**Figure 2 – Individuals Living in Poverty**

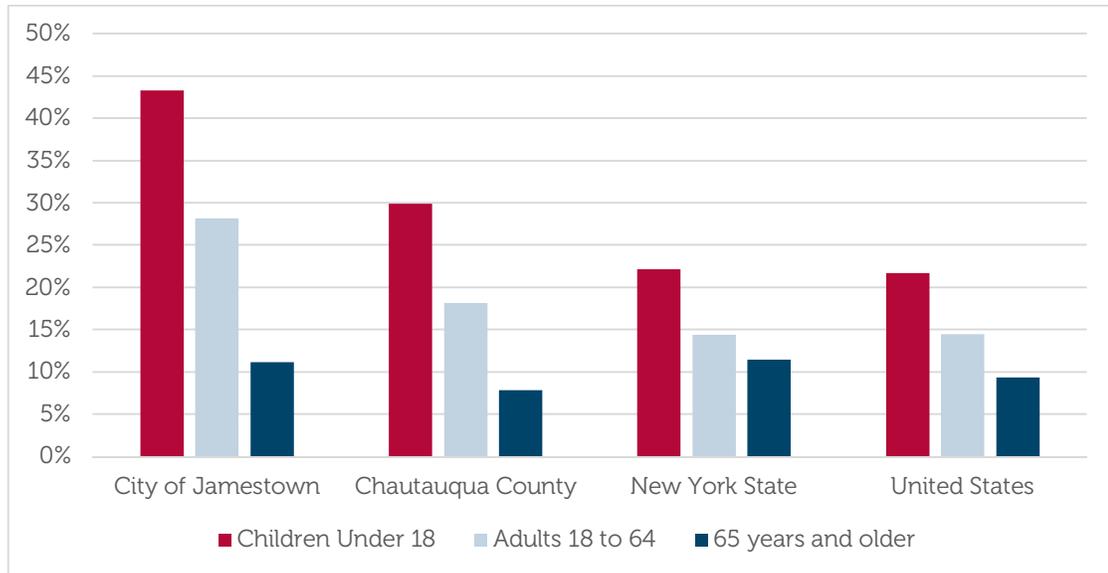


## Who is Poor in the City of Jamestown?

While the overall rate of poverty is higher in the City of Jamestown than in Chautauqua County, the state, and the nation, the difference is mostly found among children under 18 and working age adults. Over 40% of children in the City of

Jamestown reside in a household that earns less than the poverty threshold, higher than the 30% figure found in the County or the 22% rate in the state and nation.

**Figure 3 – Poverty Rate by Age Group**



	Children Under 18	Adults 18 to 64	65 years and older
City of Jamestown	43%	28%	11%
Chautauqua County	30%	18%	8%
New York State	22%	14%	12%
United States	22%	15%	9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

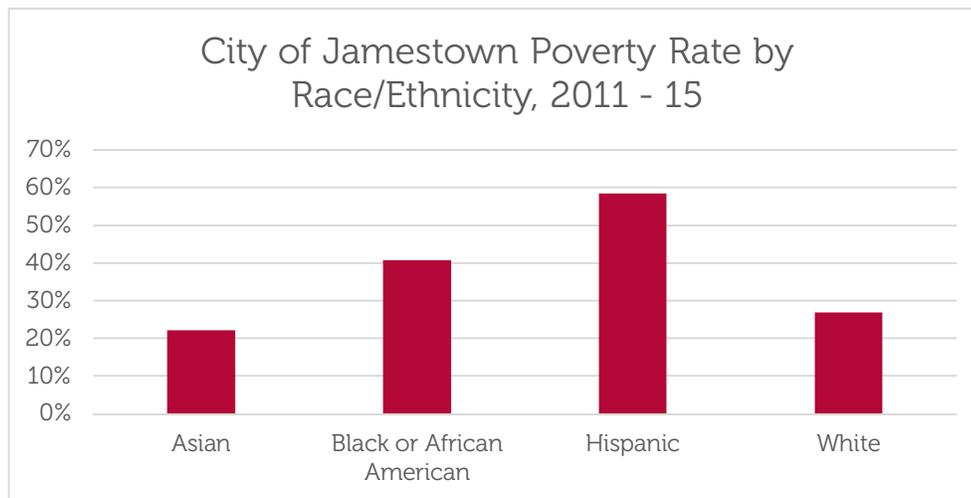
At 11%, the poverty rate among seniors in the City of Jamestown is a bit higher than the 8% figure in the County and the nationwide rate of 9% and close to the statewide rate of 12%. Poverty among seniors dropped precipitously after the introduction and expansion of Social Security, and seniors today are less likely to be in poverty than any other age group.

Like many places in the United States, Jamestown is experiencing growing racial and ethnic diversity in its population. Since 2000, the white population has declined by 8%, while the African American population grew 33%, the Asian population grew 52% and the Hispanic population increased 79%. However, the City remains 88% white.

The nonwhite populations are a bit small for reliable estimates about their poverty rates for the City of Jamestown, but the Census Bureau reports that the Hispanic population has the highest poverty rate among the major groups at 59%, more than double the white rate of 27%. It should be noted that the poverty rate estimates for all groups but white residents carry significant margins of error. For example, the

Hispanic poverty estimate has a margin of error of 24%, meaning the true rate could be 45%-73%.

**Figure 4 – Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity**



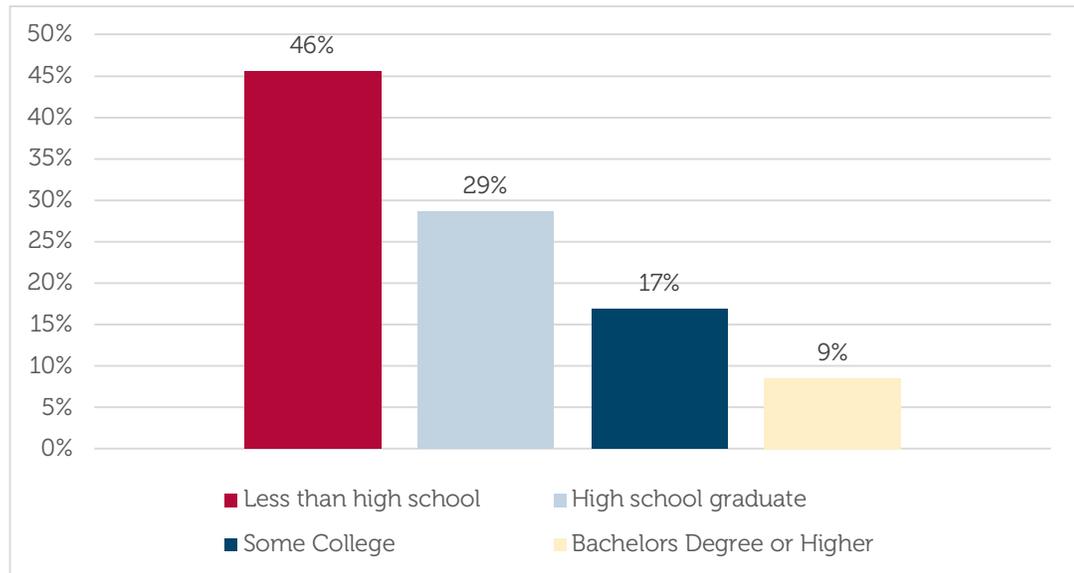
The table below shows the number of people in poverty by birth location. While the poverty rate is highest for the “Native, born outside the United States” category (which includes Puerto Rico), the vast majority of poor people in Jamestown were born somewhere in New York State.

**Table 1 – Poverty Rate by Origin**

Birth Location	Total #	# in Poverty	Share of Jamestown Residents in Poverty	Poverty Rate by Birth Location
Born in NYS	23,070	6,506	75%	28%
Born in another state	4,957	1,547	18%	31%
Native, born outside the United States	1,157	524	6%	45%
Foreign Born	487	114	1%	23%

Educational attainment among adults in a household correlates with the likelihood of poverty. In the City of Jamestown, individuals with less than a high school degree are 59% more likely to be in poverty than those with a high school diploma or GED, more than twice as likely as those who have attended some college, and nearly five times as likely to be poor than those with a bachelor’s degree.

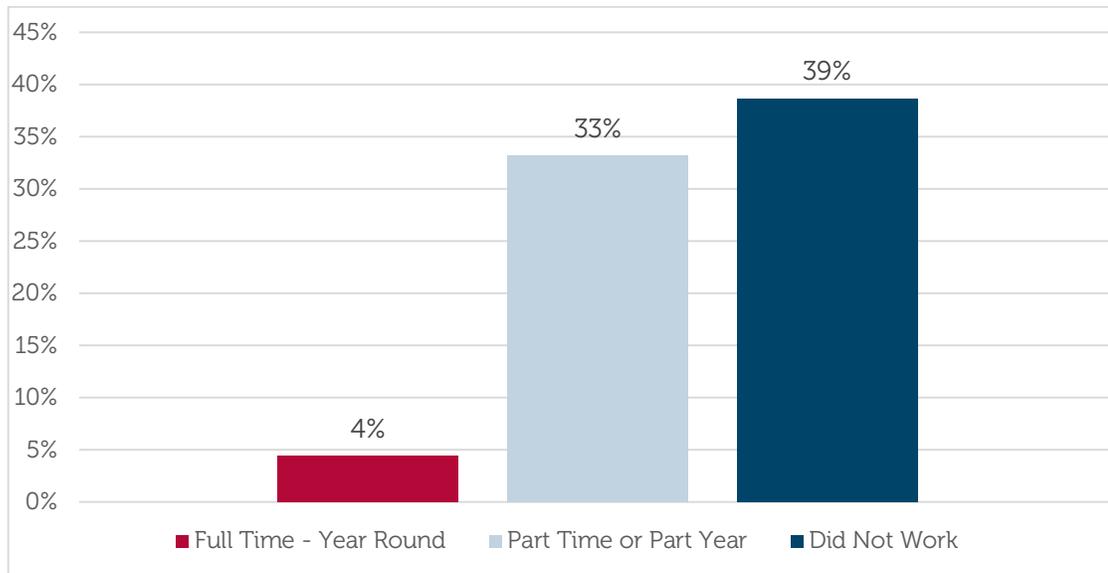
### Figure 5 – Poverty Rate by Education Level



Adults who maintain full time employment are much less likely to be in poverty than those who work part-time or part-year and those who did not work at all in the past year. This is somewhat a function of the low poverty threshold and minimum wage laws. A single mother with two children making \$9.70 per hour working full time will earn \$20,176 if she works for the entire year. While low-income, her family is technically not in poverty, as she makes more than the poverty threshold for a family of three.

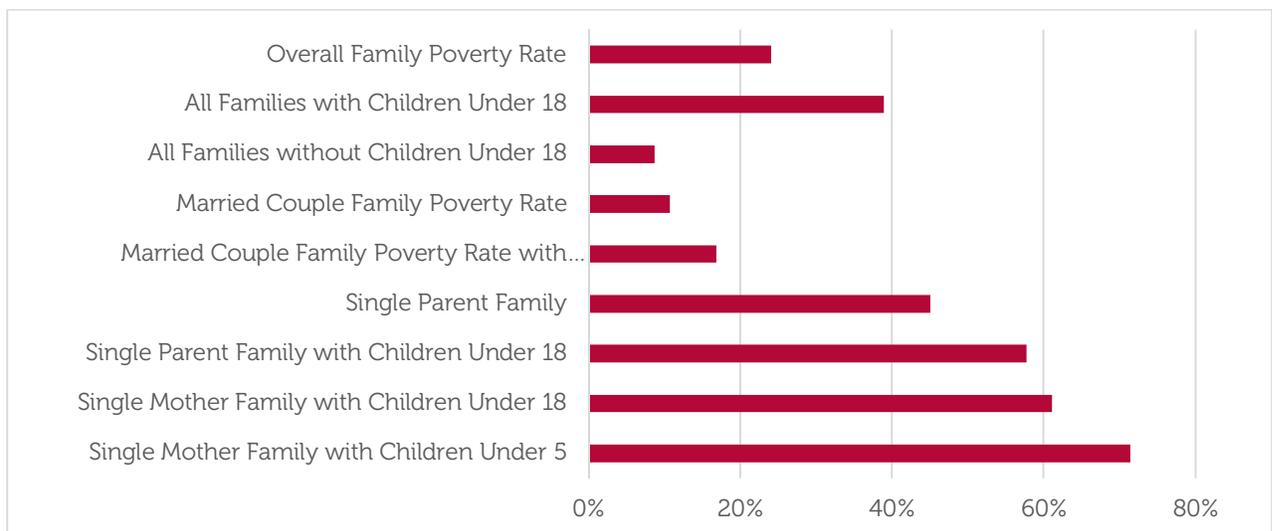
Still, the chart below does confirm the sense that the best path for most people out of poverty is a good paying full-time job.

**Figure 6 – City of Jamestown Poverty Rate by Work Status in the Past Year**



Among family types, the type most at risk of being in poverty is single mothers with young children. In 2011-15, 71% of these families were living in poverty, compared to about 60% of single-parent families with children under 18 and 39% of all families with children under 18.

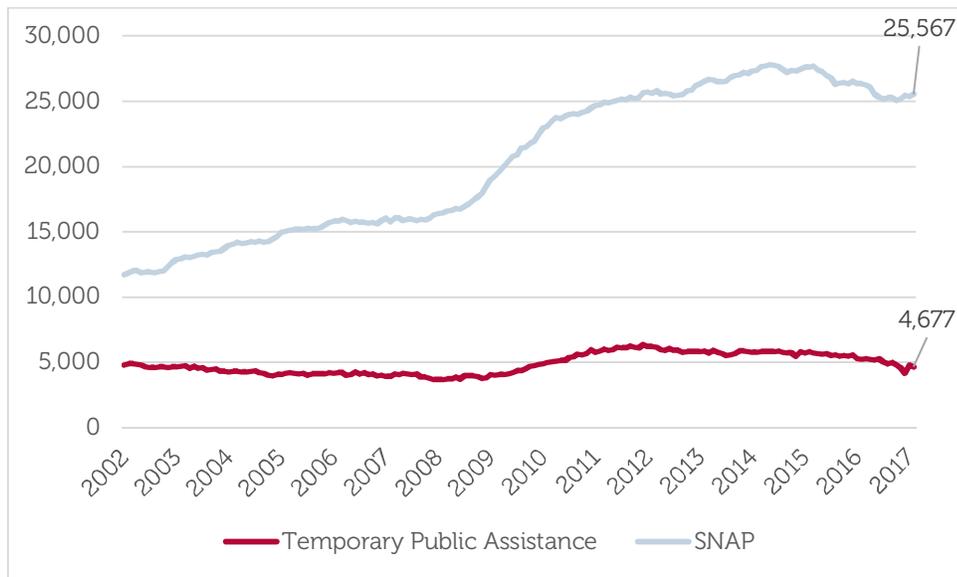
**Figure 7 – City of Jamestown Poverty Rate by Family Composition**



Median household income in the City of Jamestown fell 17% from 2000, dropping to just under \$31,000 in 2011-15. That decline was actually lower than the 22% decrease in Chautauqua County and the U.S., and the 27% drop in New York State.

As an indicator of the impact of poverty on residents, we present data on two public assistance programs. Reliance on public assistance programs has increased in Chautauqua County, particularly since the economic downturn in 2008. The number of people participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps) has more than doubled, while those receiving cash benefits grew 8%. It should be noted that eligibility requirements for enrollment in SNAP were changed by the federal government in 2008, resulting in an expansion of the program that coincided with the economic downturn that year. It is therefore difficult to easily compare pre and post-recession enrollment numbers

**Figure 8 – People Receiving Public Assistance in Chautauqua County**



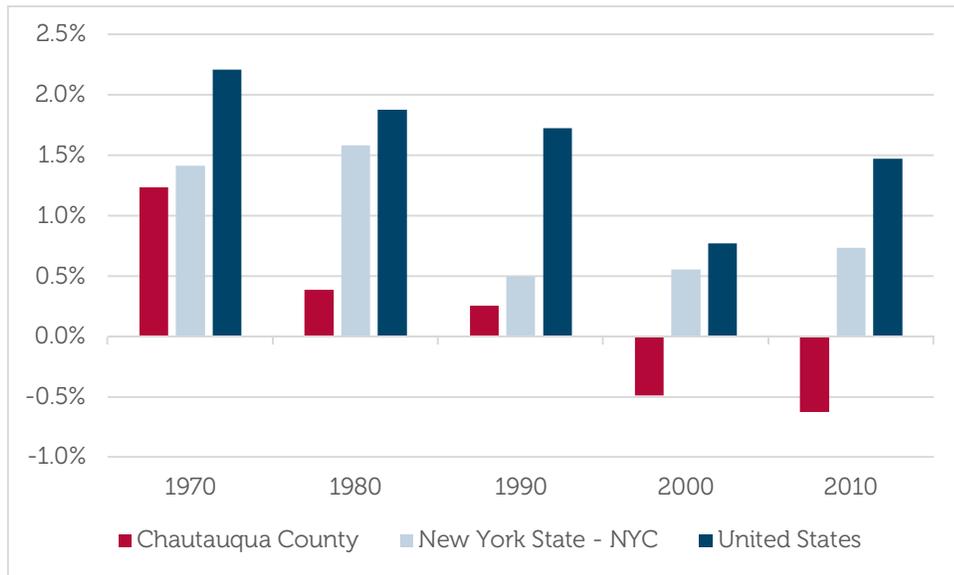
## Major Issues Related to Poverty

### Jobs and Labor Market

Jamestown, like many other cities across upstate New York, has experienced far less economic growth than other regions of the country over the past 30 years. But even when compared to the parts of New York State outside New York City, Chautauqua County has experienced less job growth over the past several decades. As the chart below indicates,<sup>2</sup> employment among County residents has grown little since 1970 and has actually declined since 2000.

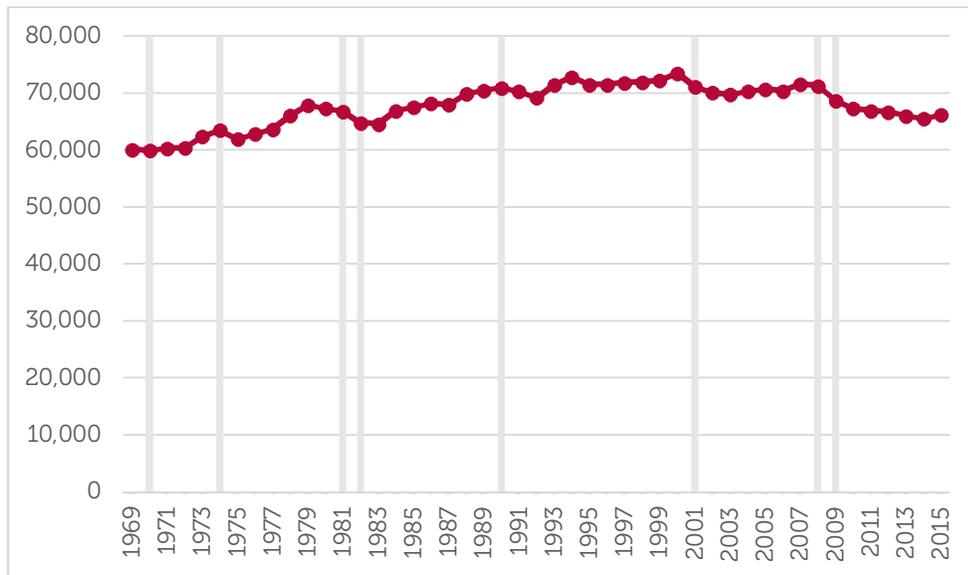
<sup>2</sup> All data in this section, except where noted, is from US Bureau of Economic Analysis and includes all jobs held by Chautauqua County residents, regardless of where they work.

**Figure 9 – Average Annual Job Change by Decade**



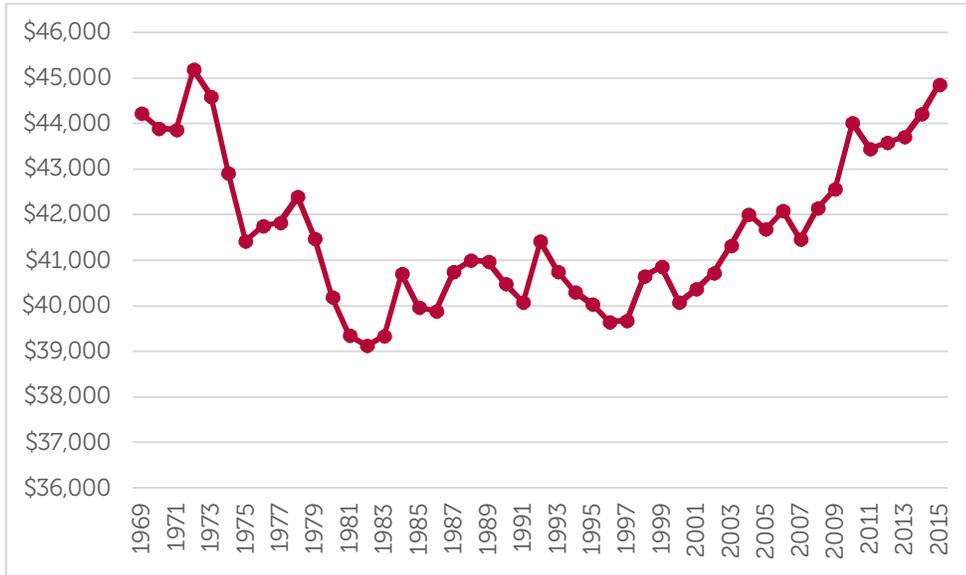
The chart below represents this data in a slightly different manner. The total number of jobs held by Chautauqua County residents (including both jobs in the County and outside it) was generally increasing until the 2000s, rising to about 70,000 jobs. The 2000s were generally flat, and in 2009, total jobs began to decline, falling 7% to about 66,000 in 2015.

**Figure 10 – Total Employment of Chautauqua County Residents**



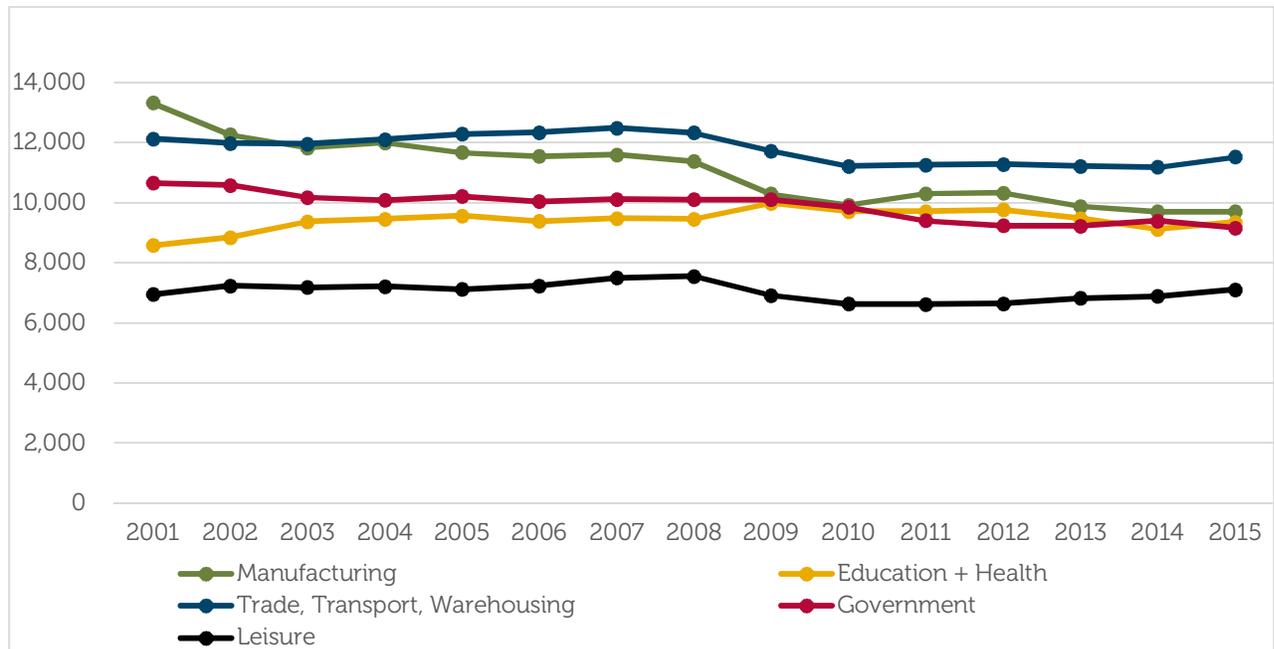
After decades of decline, and in the context of a declining number of jobs held by County residents, the average earnings per job held by County residents has increased to nearly \$45,000 in 2015.

**Figure 11 – Inflation Adjusted Average Earnings per Job**



The biggest change in the types of jobs available over the past 15 years has been the decline in the Manufacturing sector, which lost 27% of total jobs, falling below 10,000 jobs 2013.

Figure 12 - Change in Jobs in the Largest Sectors in Chautauqua County, 2001-2015



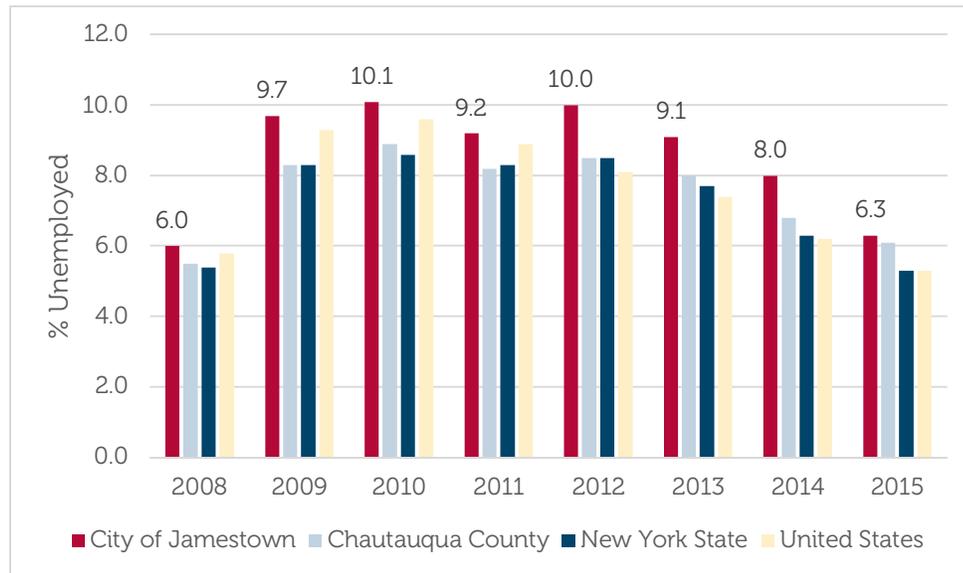
Chautauqua's manufacturing sector has continued to play an important role, representing 15% of all jobs, the second largest share of jobs by sector, behind Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, which lost 5% of its jobs from 2001 to 2015.

### Unemployment in Jamestown

Unemployment has been higher in the City of Jamestown and Chautauqua County than the state and United States since the economic downturn of 2008.<sup>3</sup> While the number of unemployed Jamestown residents has fallen from an average of about 1,400 people in 2009 to approximately 800 in 2015, the city still lags the state, county and country on this key measure.

<sup>3</sup> [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov). The unemployment rate is defined as the number of people out of work who are actively seeking work divided by the total size of the civilian labor force in a given area.

Figure 13 – Unemployment Rate

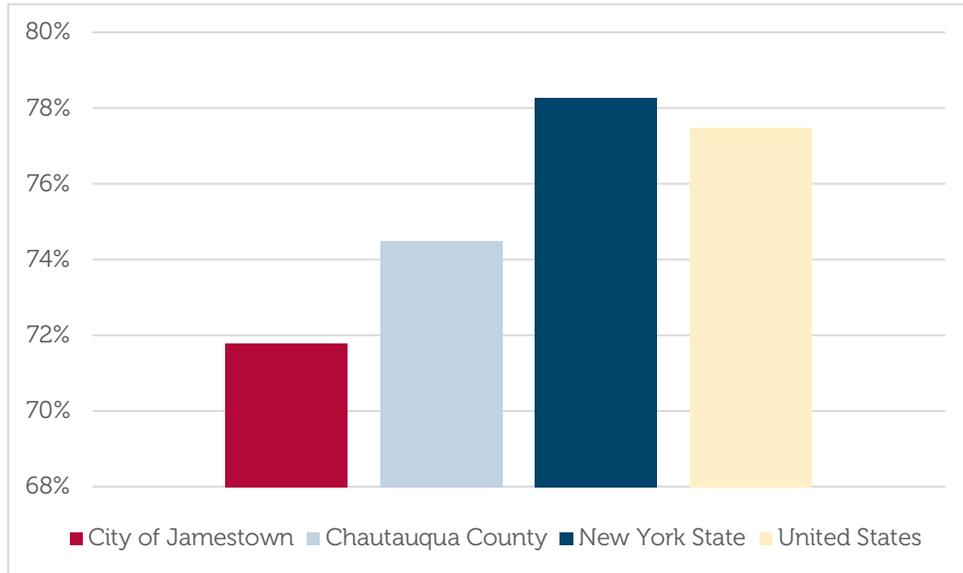


### Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rate in both the City of Jamestown and Chautauqua County are also quite low relative to comparison geographies. The labor force participation rate is defined as the total number of people either looking for work or actively holding a job as a percentage of the civilian population for a given age group. In Jamestown, about 72% of adults aged 25 to 64 are in the labor force.<sup>4</sup> This is substantially lower than the state and national figures of 78%.

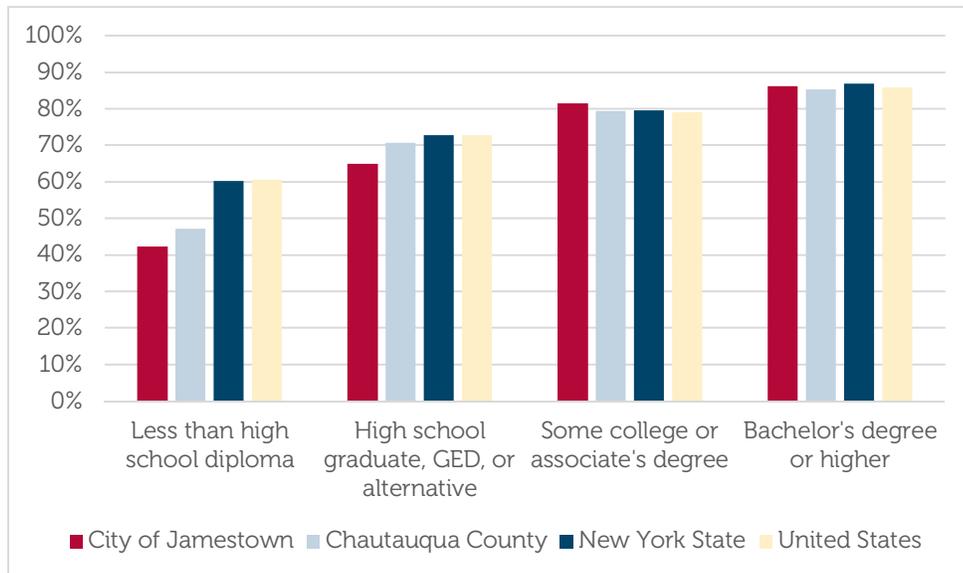
<sup>4</sup> All labor force participation data in this section is from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey.

**Figure 14 – Labor Force Participation, 25 to 64 Population**



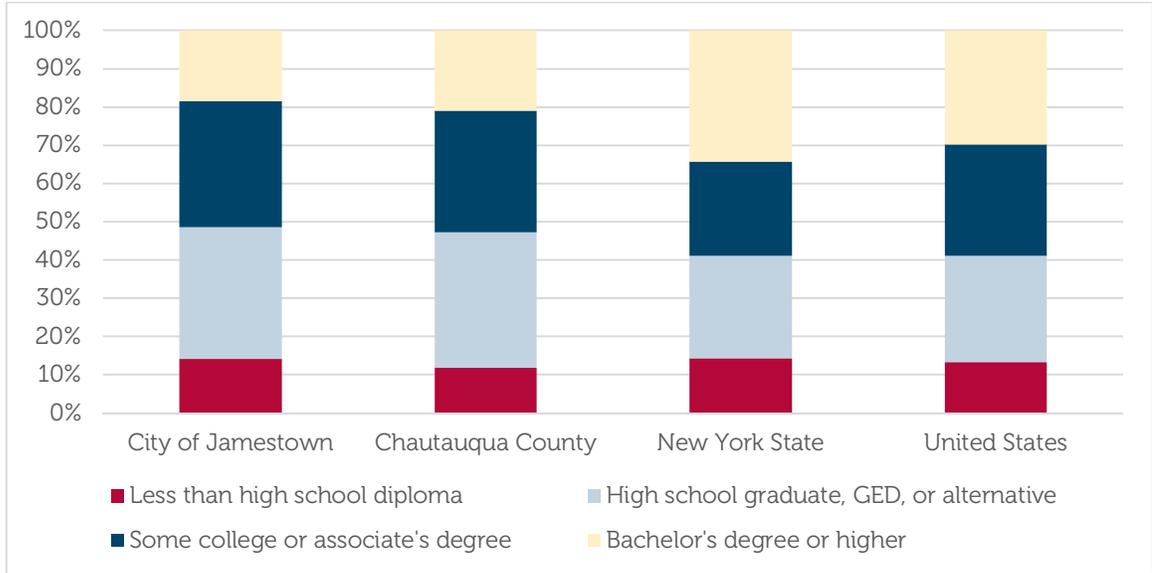
The percentage of adults in the labor force is correlated with educational attainment. Adults with more education (as measured by highest degree earned) are more likely to be in the labor force, while those with less education are less likely to work. Only 42% of City residents and 47% of County residents without a high school degree are in the labor force, as compared to 60% in the state and 61% in the nation. Those with some college education or a college degree are participating roughly at the same rate as New York State or the nation.

**Figure 15 – Labor Force Participation Rates by Education Level**



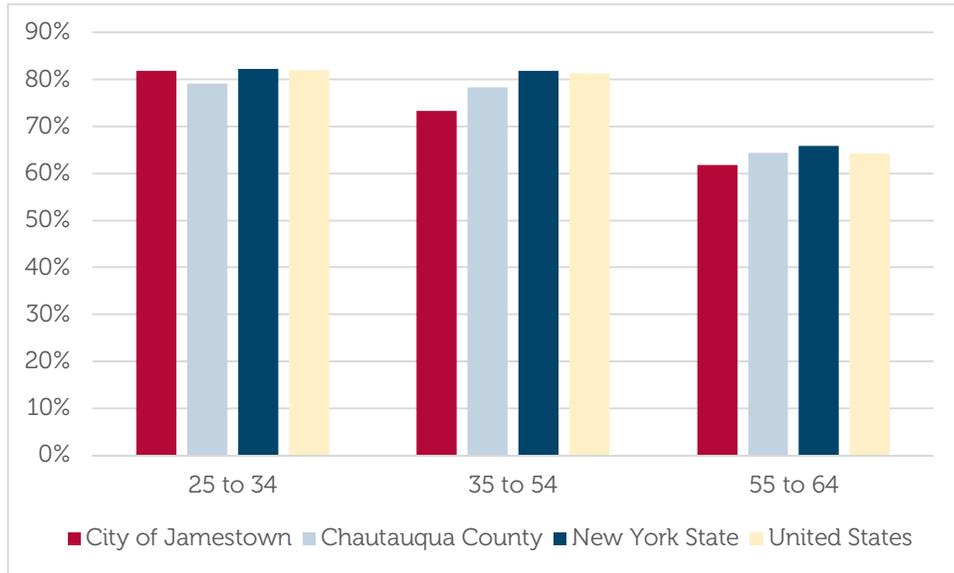
While labor force participation rates among more educated residents in the City and County are comparable to state and national levels, the City and County have fewer of those residents. In the City of Jamestown, 18% of residents 25 to 64 have at least a bachelor’s degree, a lower rate than the County (21%), state (37%) and the nation (31%). More Jamestown adults have as their highest credential a high school diploma – 35%, compared to 27% of state residents and 28% of adults throughout the nation.

**Figure 16 – Educational Attainment Shares, Adults 25 to 64**



Older working-age City residents are slightly less likely to be in the workforce than their peers in the county, state and nation. The gap in the labor force participation is largest among City residents ages 35 to 54.

**Figure 17 – Labor Force Participation Rate by Age Group**

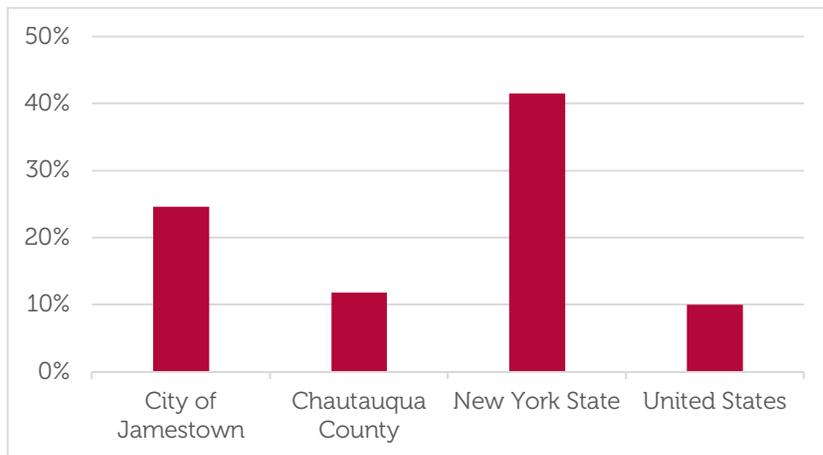


## Transportation

### Household Car Ownership

The U.S. Census Bureau tracks household car ownership, and the 2011-15 ACS survey reveals that 25% of households in the City of Jamestown do not have a single vehicle, compared to 12% in Chautauqua County. In a rural area such as Chautauqua, lacking a car can be a real barrier to employment – the majority of City of Jamestown commuters drove a car in order to get to work (78%).

**Figure 18 – Share of Households without a Vehicle**



## The Location of Jobs

Only 39%<sup>5</sup> of jobs held by City residents are located within Jamestown city limits. A third are found elsewhere in the County, and 28% of City residents work outside the County.

**Table 2 – Where do Jamestown Residents Work?**

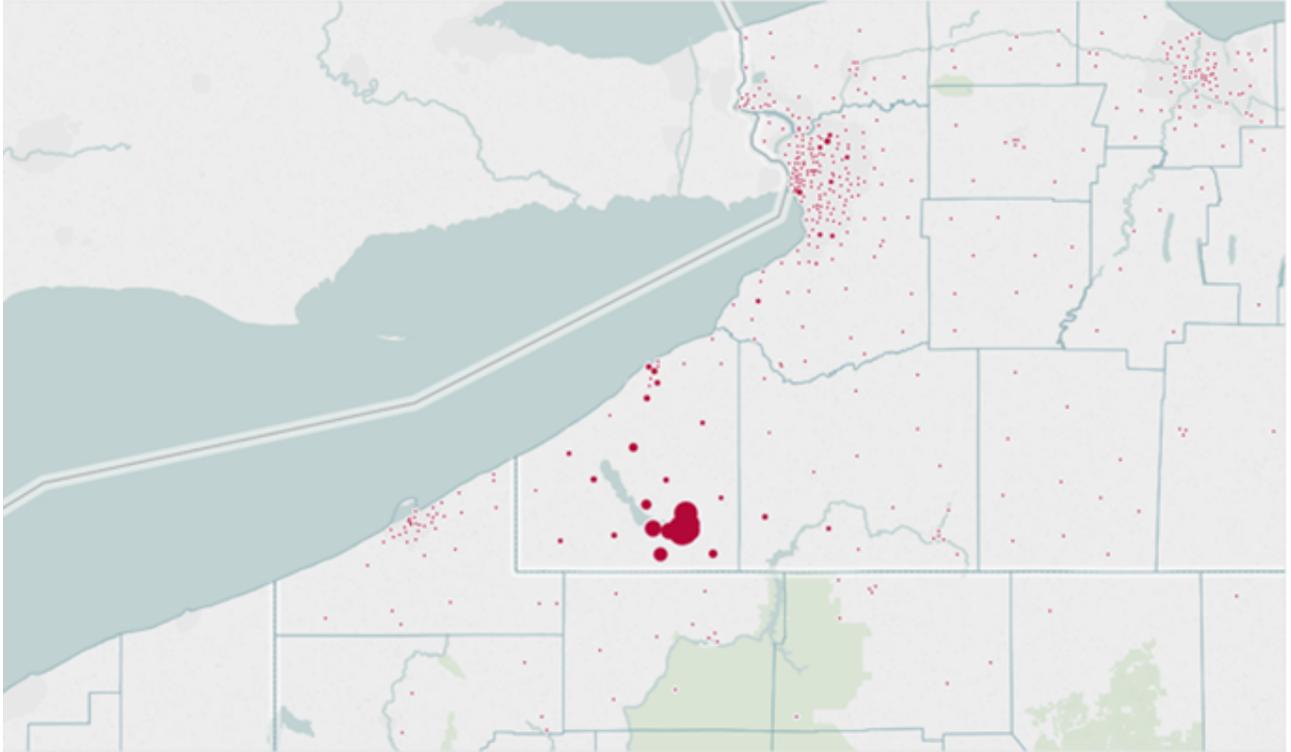
Location	Number of Workers	Share of Total
City of Jamestown	4,208	39%
Town of Ellicott	1,516	14%
Town of Busti	866	8%
Elsewhere in Chautauqua	1,181	11%
Erie County, NY	1,073	10%
Elsewhere in NYS	1,475	14%
Elsewhere in US	592	5%

For context, Jamestown is home to nearly 12,500 jobs. Just over one-third (34%) of jobs in the City are held by City residents.

The map below shows the location of every job held by a resident of the City of Jamestown. The size of the dot indicates the number of jobs found within a particular census tract. While the largest dots are found in the City of Jamestown, many are found elsewhere in the County and region, including a number of jobs in Erie County, NY and Pennsylvania.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Employment-Household Dynamics data

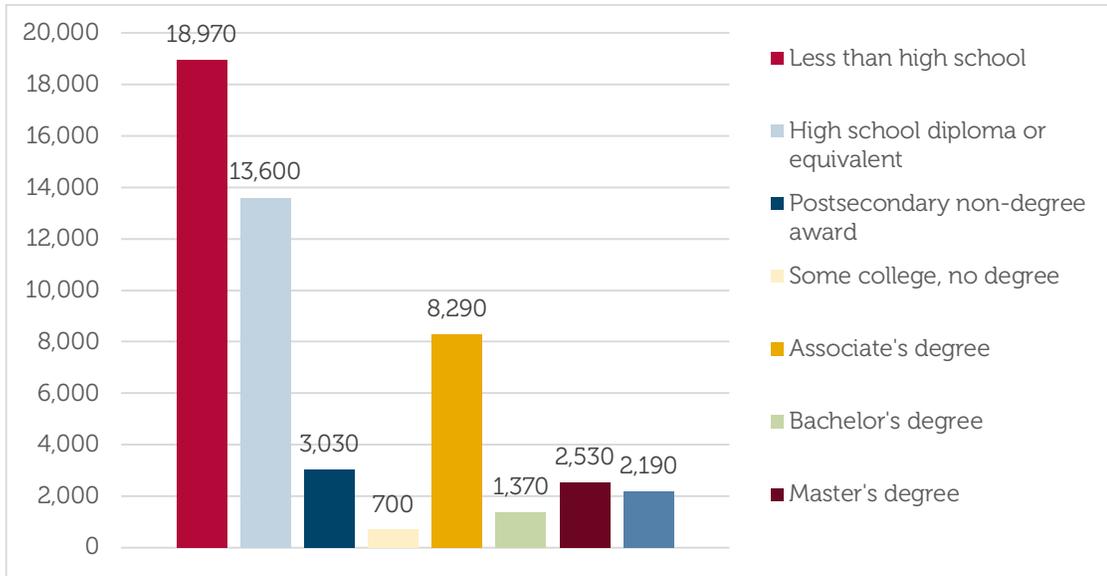
Figure 19 – Where do Jamestown Residents Work?



## Employment Projections

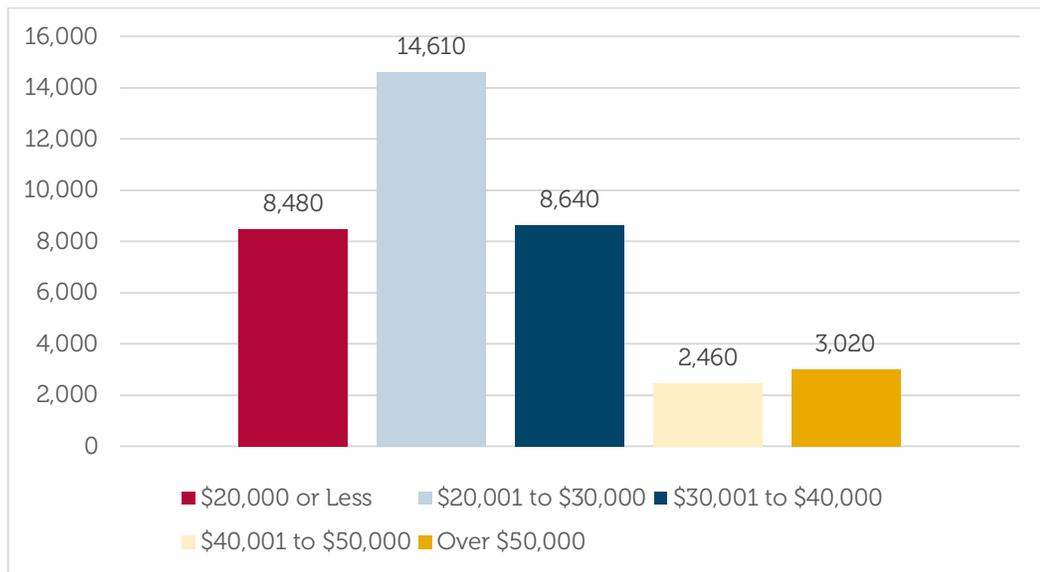
The New York State Department of Labor produces short and long term estimates of expected jobs by region in New York State. For the purposes of these estimates, Chautauqua County is included in the broader Western New York region, which also includes Erie, Niagara, Allegany, Cattaraugus counties. According to the Department of Labor's estimates, Western New York is projected to add over 50,000 jobs by 2022. The growth is clustered around occupations that require a high school diploma or less for entry into the field. These occupations make up 64% of the projected job growth.

**Figure 20 – Projected New Jobs in Western New York by Education Level Needed for Entry**



However, these lower skilled jobs that can be filled by someone with a high school diploma or less typically pay a full-time employee \$20,000-\$30,000 a year.

**Figure 21 - Projected New Jobs by 2022 in WNY Requiring a High School Degree or Less for Entry, by Median Wage**



Most of the net new jobs available to residents with a high school diploma or less in Western NY are concentrated in the food service, retail, and health services.

**Table 3 – Top 10 Lower Educational Occupations Expected to Grow the Most from 2012 to 2022 in the Western New York Region**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Projected Net New Jobs</b>	<b>Median Wage in 2016</b>
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	3,380	\$19,460
Personal Care Aides	2,530	\$23,640
Waiters and Waitresses	1,730	\$19,800
Home Health Aides	1,510	\$23,770
Retail Salespersons	1,350	\$20,320
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1,260	\$33,640
Cooks, Restaurant	1,220	\$24,790
Customer Service Representatives	1,220	\$33,610
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,160	\$24,510
Bartenders	960	\$19,630

Source: NYSDOL

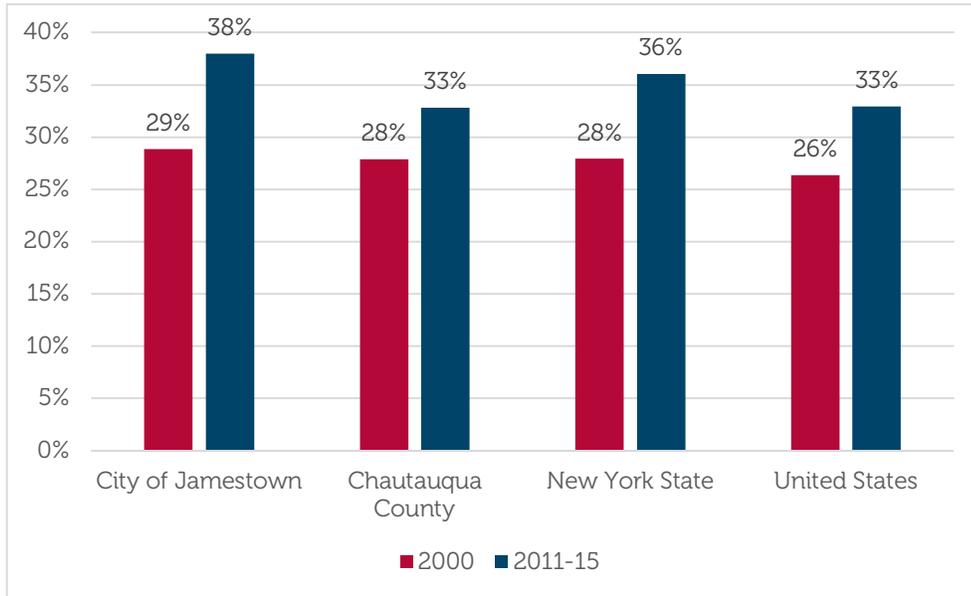
## Housing

### Affordability

If one has the choice, owning a home is much more affordable in the City of Jamestown than renting. The affordability ratio for homeowners (ratio of median home value to median household income) was 1.3 in Jamestown in 2011-15, which is considered very affordable and was less than the county (1.6) or state (3.5).

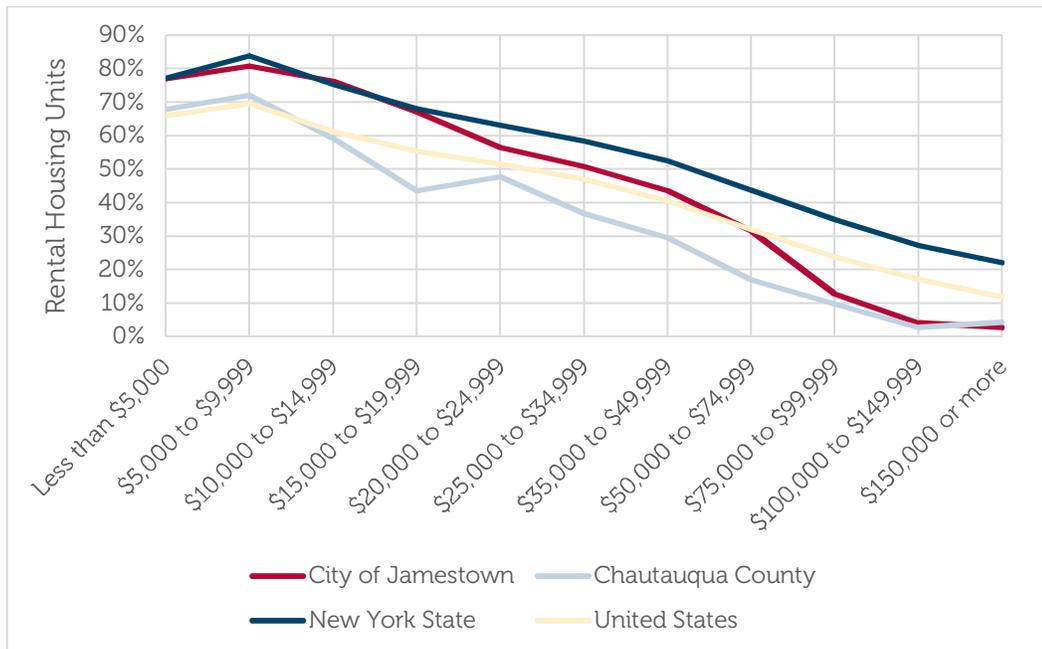
But renting has become increasingly unaffordable in Jamestown, consuming 38% of renters' income on average in 2011-15, up from 29% in 2000. This is higher than the figures for Chautauqua County (33%) and the state (36%).

Figure 22 – Share of Income Going to Rent



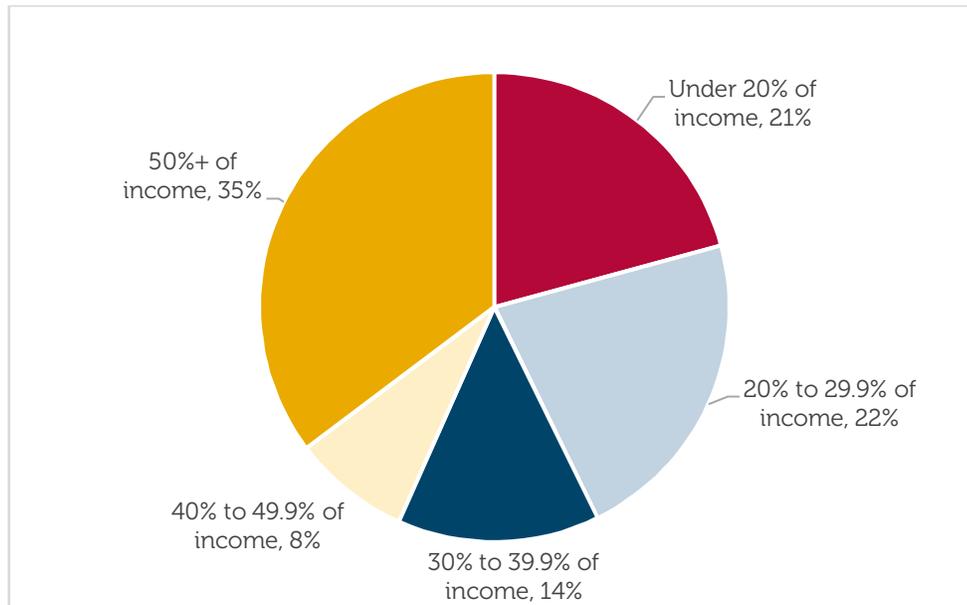
While about half of Jamestown’s 6,600 housing units are rental units, renting is far more prevalent among lower-income households. Among households earning less than \$15,000 a year, 70-80% were renting in 2011-15.

Figure 23 – Share of Renter-Occupied Housing Units by Household Income Level



And though Jamestown's median rent of \$587 was below the County as a whole (\$612), the state (\$1,132) and nation (\$928), 35% of rental units had more than half of household income going to rent. Over half of renters in the City pay more than the federal guideline of spending no more than 30% of their income on rent.

**Figure 24 –Share of Income Going to Rent**



### The Age of Housing

The City of Jamestown has an older housing stock, with 77% of all residential housing properties in the City built before 1940,<sup>6</sup> including most of the housing within the denser downtown parts of the City. About 50 residential properties have been built since 2000, with most new development taking place on the southern edge of the City. The tree map below depicts the share of residential housing in the City by the year built.

<sup>6</sup> New York State GIS

Figure 25 – Age of Jamestown Housing Stock



While older homes are often charming and add historic character to a region, they can also be quite expensive to maintain and can be difficult to retrofit for people with disabilities.

## Education & Child Care

Education is an important factor that is impacted by poverty. At the same time, schools and the education they provide are viewed as significant mediators to reducing poverty levels across generations.

### School Performance

We examined a few key measures of educational performance, with a focus on the performance of low-income students. In 2016, 74% of City of Jamestown students were considered economically disadvantaged, compared to the 58% in the county and 54% in the state. Compare that to 2006, when 29% of City of Jamestown students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch, a similar indicator of need.

As is true in most districts, low-income students in the City of Jamestown tend to have lower performance than their more advantaged peers. For example, on the key benchmark of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading, 15% of low-income students were proficient on the state's test in 2016, compared to 40% of other students. But the City's passing rate for low-income students was below the County's (20%) and the state's (31%). On 8<sup>th</sup> grade

math, 22% of the City's low-income students and 55% of other students passed in 2016 – the City's performance was more in line with the county and the state.

The City of Jamestown's graduation rate is notably lower for low-income students - 71% in 2016 compared to 81% for other students. Both the County and state had higher graduation rates for low-income students – 77% and 72%, respectively.

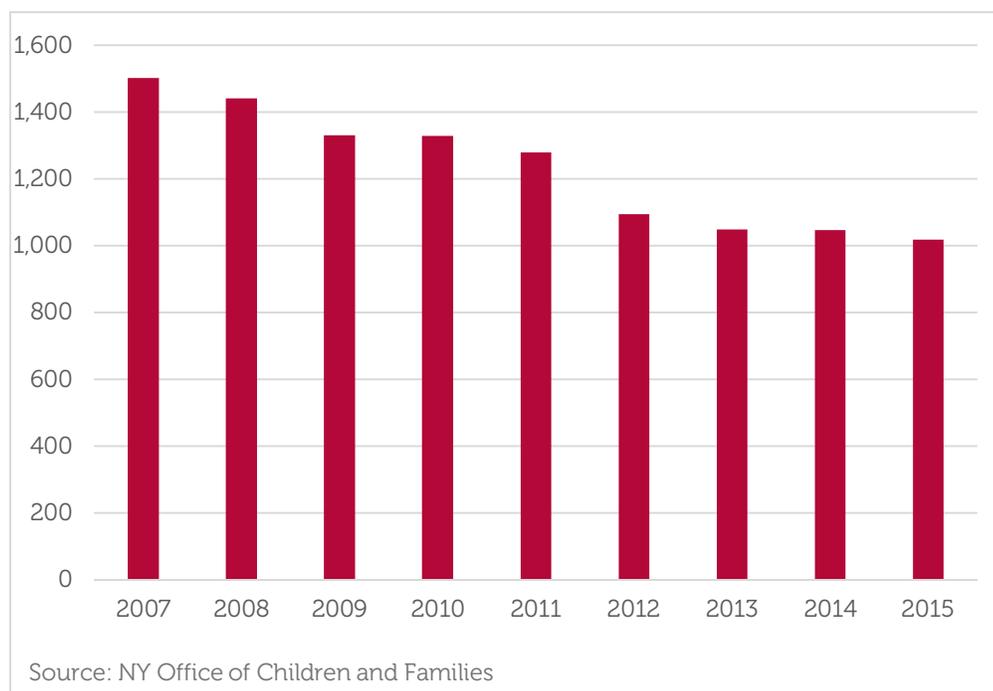
There were also disparities in test scores and graduation rates along racial and ethnic lines, as is true in most areas, though the numbers of African American and Hispanic students in each grade were quite low and so achievement data was suppressed in some cases. As an example of the disparities, 50% of Hispanic students in the 2016 cohort graduated on time, compared to 80% of white students.

## Child Care

Quality, affordable, accessible child care can be an important strategy for improving financial self-sufficiency among families with young children, who make up a disproportionate share of people in poverty. In the City of Jamestown, there are concerns about all three issues.

The number of subsidies available to low-income working parents in Chautauqua County has fallen 32% from more than 1,500 in 2007 to just over 1,000 in 2015. Additionally, CGR in a 2014 study estimated that based on income and employment status, 5,600 children in Chautauqua County could benefit from subsidies.

**Figure 26 – Low-Income Child Care Subsidies in Chautauqua County**



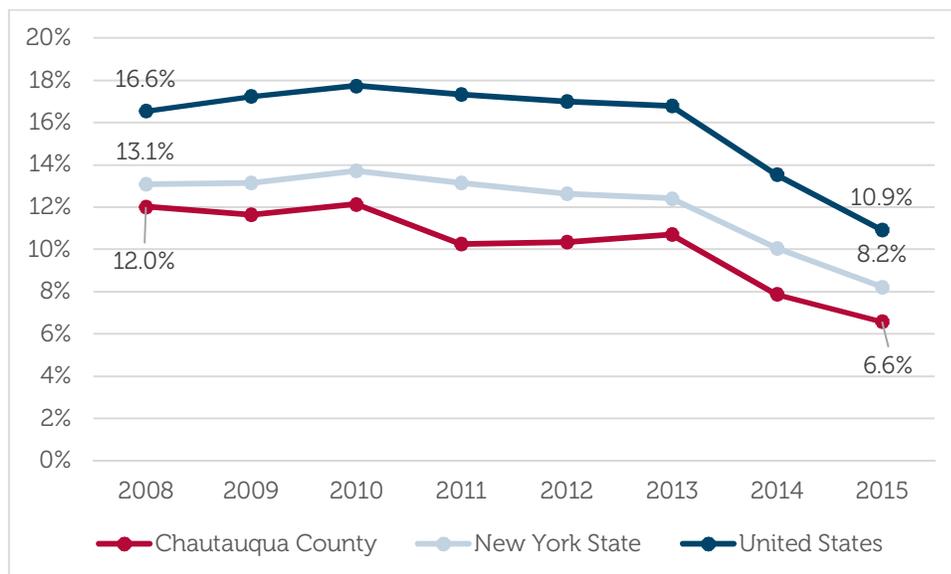
## Health Care

The links between socioeconomic factors and health status are increasingly clear, with poverty and income considered major “social determinants” of people’s overall physical, mental and emotional health. Just as living in poverty can negatively impact a person’s health, so too can poor health impact a person’s ability to hold down a job and be financially self-sufficient.

## Health Insurance

The percent of people with health insurance in Chautauqua County has been consistently lower than the state and national rates.<sup>7</sup> The uninsured rate in the County has fallen from 12% in 2008 to about 7% in 2015, and remains about 1 percentage point below the state figure and over 4 percentage points lower than the national rate.

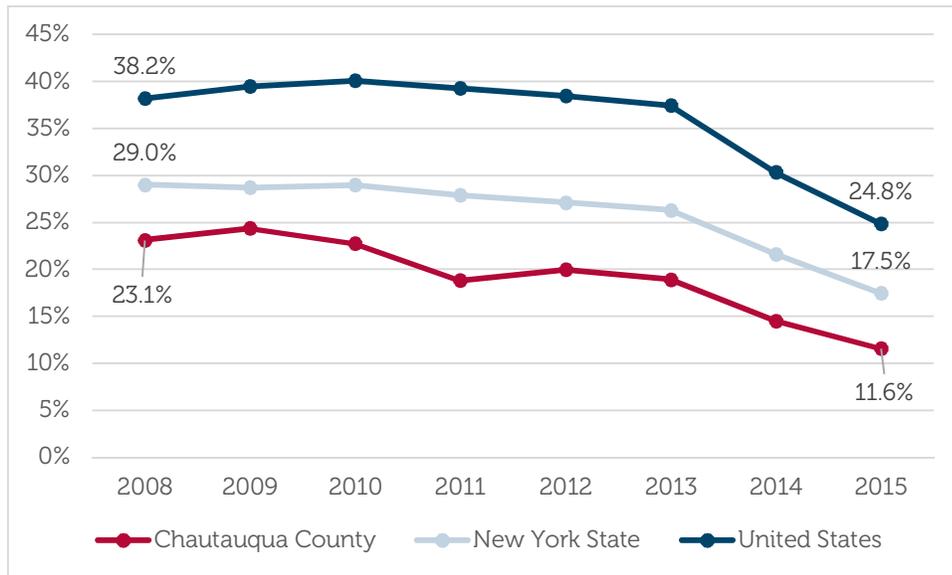
**Figure 27 – People without Health Insurance**



However, despite recent expansions in health insurance coverage resulting from the Affordable Care Act, a significant number of low-income adult County residents still lack health insurance: 12% of adults making less than 200% of the poverty threshold in the county lacked health insurance in 2015, the most recent year with available data. While this is down from 23% in 2008 and still better than the 2014 state figure of 17%, it is still roughly double the overall rate in the community.

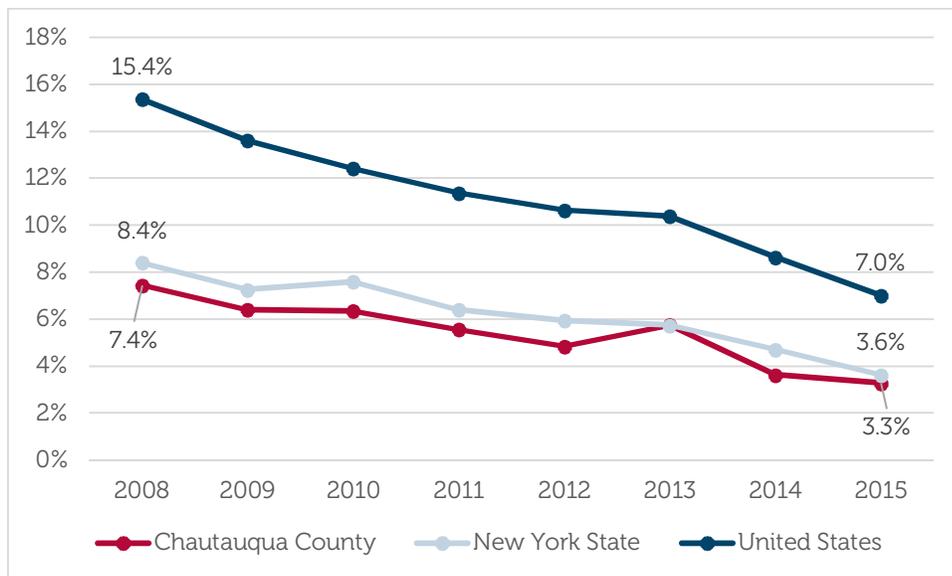
<sup>7</sup> Source: US Census Bureau Small Area Health Insurance Estimates

**Figure 28 – Low-Income Adults without Health Insurance**



Among low-income children, the rate in both the County and the State is under 4%. This low rate, which has steadily fallen since 2008, is a notable public health success.

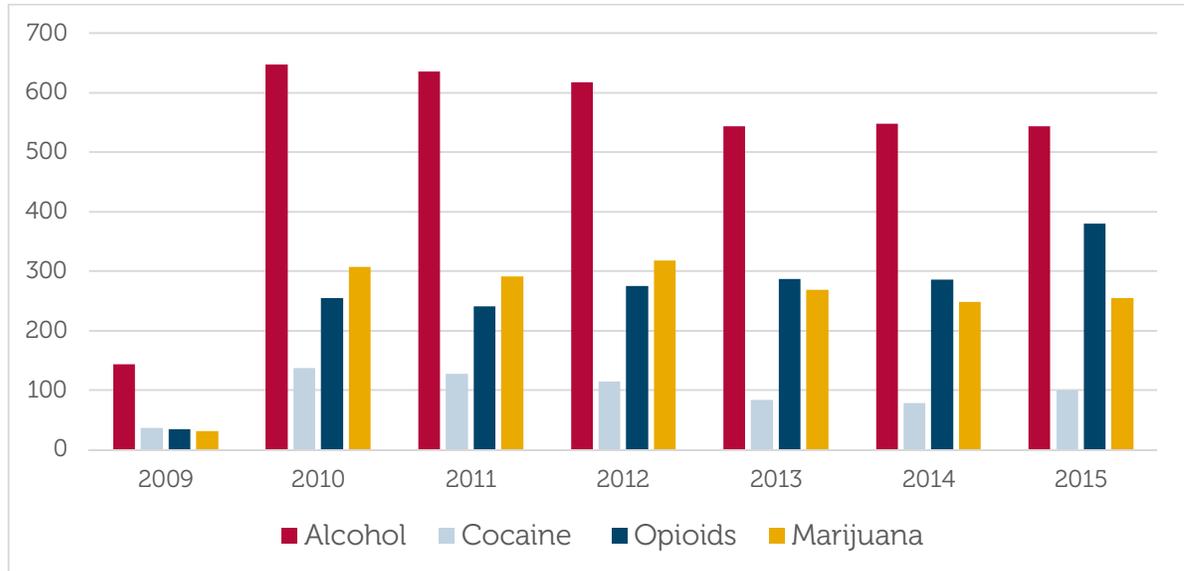
**Figure 29 – Low-Income Children without Health Insurance**



Substance abuse was a concern voiced in most of the community sessions held for this study. Available data do show an increasing problem, with admissions to substance abuse treatment in Chautauqua County up more than 400% from 2009 to 2015, according to the NYS Office for Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. The

largest increase was in admission for treatment of opioid addiction, which rose nearly 1,000%.

**Figure 30 – Admissions to Treatment by Substance**



There is also an increasing number of newborns in the County born with drug-related diagnoses. The 3-year average rate per 10,000 births has increased from 68 in 2006 to 306 in 2013, according to the NYS Department of Health.

On the positive side, the rate of teen pregnancy remains low in the County: 2% in 2013 down from 3% in 2000. That represented 41 pregnant teens in 2013, down from 93 in 2000.

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# Perspectives of Low-Income Residents

Our conversations with low-income Jamestown residents spanned a number of topics, and each meeting revealed a unique perspective on the condition of poverty in the community. While our focus group protocol followed a consistent format, the meetings each had a distinct set of themes and participants expressed a broad set of concerns about life in Jamestown for low-income residents. Participants did not always agree with one another, and a diverse set of perspectives were shared throughout this process. The perspectives described below are a summary of the major themes and specific concerns expressed by participants in these community conversations.

## Broad Themes

The conversations with low-income Jamestown residents revealed a number of specific concerns about topics including jobs, education, public safety, and transportation. But beyond these, broad themes emerged from our conversations with residents.

### Frustration

Across different ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and work statuses, nearly all Jamestown residents interviewed through this process expressed a palpable sense of frustration with their economic situation. For example, adults with part-time jobs described seemingly insurmountable barriers that prevented them from finding and maintain full-time employment. Individuals with low-wage full-time jobs shared concerns about being unable to make ends meet despite working 40 hours a week, and seeing their public assistance disappear as they increased their earnings. High school students from low-income families expressed frustration with the condition of their neighborhoods and the safety of their siblings and friends. Low-income seniors who lack familial supports described how they struggle to address their basic needs, and feel powerless to do anything to improve their living situation.

While the specific set of frustrations varied by background, age, and employment status, nearly all residents who contributed their perspective to this study expressed a sense of frustration with the status quo, and a belief that there was little they could do to change it.

### The Scarcity of Time

One of the most consistent themes expressed by low-income residents from a variety of backgrounds was a frustration about their inability to complete necessary tasks over the course of a day or a week. This frustration varied by an individual's situation, but the frustration about the scarcity of time was consistent. Residents without cars felt

this most severely, but even the few individuals with automobiles expressed exasperation about how they simply could not get ahead of the things they felt they needed to do on a daily or weekly basis.

The focus on how to accomplish a few discrete tasks today or tomorrow was in the front of mind for many interviewees, and the prospect of enrolling and completing a job training program or entering community college seemed distant and unachievable.

## Specific Topics

### Jobs

Each community conversation asked a series of questions about the job market in Jamestown and the barriers that prevent working-age people from finding and maintaining full-time employment. Participants in these community conversations had a range of educations, employment backgrounds, and status in the labor force. Despite these varied backgrounds, a few consistent themes emerged from the conversations.

When asked what barriers prevent individuals from successfully acquiring and retaining jobs, respondents cited a number of distinct challenges:

- **Gaps in work experience** – Several participants described how gaps in a person’s employment history, which could result from incarceration, child-rearing, substance abuse, caring for a loved one, and other factors, can limit one’s ability to successfully engage with the labor market
- **Lack of accessible jobs in neighborhood** – Jamestown lacks a robust public transportation system. Consequently, while some individuals noted that they can walk to work each day, many others indicated that many local jobs were located beyond an easy walking distance. This included both manufacturing jobs located outside residential areas of Jamestown and retail jobs located in Lakewood and other suburban locations
- **Limited hours** – Some individuals shared that, for a variety of reasons, they were unable to work enough hours to sustain themselves and their families. This could result from needing to care for a child, or a disabled or elderly family member. Or it could be the result of an employer not needing them to work full-time.
- **Loss of manufacturing jobs** – While Jamestown and Chautauqua County are still home to a number of manufacturing jobs, a number of focus group participants, including teens, noted that there are fewer good-paying factory jobs today and that the high-paying factory jobs of the past have been replaced by lower-paying

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retail or food service positions. Several participants mentioned that these jobs are often located in Lakewood, and are difficult to access without owning a vehicle.

- **Job training does not lead to full-time jobs** – Generally, participants seemed aware of the workforce development or job training programs in the area, and mentioned Jamestown Community College, Jamestown Business College, BOCES and organizations like Chautauqua Works as generally helping people become more equipped for jobs in the community. However, they often did not see a path from these programs into permanent employment.
- **Difficulty maintaining employment** – Community conversations with low-income residents revealed a great deal of turbulence in people’s lives. Residents spoke of substance abuse and mental health issues within their families, their own health concerns, domestic violence situations, housing instability and inconsistent child care. One individual commented that all of this personal tumult makes it hard to maintain a job, and others shared that they would always prioritize a sick child or other family responsibility above all else.
- **Discrimination** – Several residents shared a belief that certain members of the community face discrimination when seeking out employment opportunities in the community. At one particular community conversation, there was a broad consensus that Hispanic Jamestown residents face difficulty finding and maintaining jobs. Participants shared that while some of this perceived discrimination could be attributed to a particular individual lacking the English language skills required for a position, they also believed that some employers are reluctant to hire Hispanic workers more generally. Pregnant and parenting teens also expressed that they felt discriminated against when trying to seek work while pregnant.
- **English language learning supports** – Hispanic focus group participants also expressed a frustration that there were not enough language support programs in Jamestown to help them improve their English language skills and be able to access more jobs in the community.

## Housing

The issue of housing emerged as a key concern at each community conversation. Participants shared a broad range of concerns about the state of housing in Jamestown, particularly rental housing. Specifically:

- **Poor quality** – Participants in all six community conversations expressed a frustration with the quality of low-cost rental housing in Jamestown. They outlined significant safety concerns about many rental properties in the City, and described the infestation issues like bed bugs, cockroaches and rodents. Several individuals

shared a perspective that low-cost housing in Jamestown is usually poor quality housing, and they shared a frustration that it is nearly impossible to find safe housing at affordable prices.

- **Delinquent landlords** – While several residents expressed gratitude that they personally had responsive landlords who complete needed repairs in a short time frame, nearly all participants expressed a belief that the City has a large number of landlords who do not adequately maintain their rental properties.
- **Inadequate code enforcement** – A few focus group participants stated that the City should more aggressively enforce the City’s housing code and crack down on landlords who fail to properly maintain properties. They expressed a belief that some landlords will only act to fix things if sanctioned by the City.
- **Safety** – A number of people, including high school students, pointed to safety issues present in particular Jamestown neighborhoods. They also stated that many low-income residents feel forced to remain in these unsafe neighborhoods because the cost of rental housing is much higher in safer parts of the city. This concentration of poverty in particular parts of the City, coupled with unsafe housing and concerns about crime, are a concern to low-income parents and other community members.

## Education, Child Care and Youth Programs

CGR spoke with low-income residents broadly about the topic of education in Jamestown, with a particular focus on the challenges that family experiencing poverty face in the educational system. For the purposes of this assessment, education was defined broadly, and includes early childhood education programs, school-based programs and higher education programs. It also includes adult education programs like GED preparatory classes, although GED programs and community college certificate programs were also often discussed in the context of jobs and workforce development programs.

### Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Early childhood care and education programs were the top priority of parents with young children, and they shared a considerable amount of feedback about the topic. Themes included:

- **Informal methods to find providers** – When asked how parents in the community find child care, most individuals reported using either family members, close friends, or relying on word of mouth from their communities. A few were aware of the Chautauqua Child Care Council, but had not relied upon it to help them locate quality child care.

- **Safety** – The safety of their children was the paramount concern for parents with young children who participated in this community conversation. A number of parents indicated that they only trusted one or two people to care for their child, which may complicate their ability to find and maintain jobs. Participants also seemed unsure about how to best assess the ability of a potential child care provider to adequately care for their child.
- **Second shift coverage** – Focus groups participants, some of whom worked jobs with non-traditional hours, expressed frustration about the lack of child care available between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 a.m. Parents who piece together multiple jobs or work inconsistent hours cannot rely on a single child care provider. Child care subsidies can only be paid to one provider, so a parent who needs daytime coverage some days and evening coverage others, cannot rely on that subsidy to cover the cost of some of their child care.
- **Gaps in care** – The community conversation forum and one of the focus groups revealed a concern about gaps in care for children enrolled in UPK or Head Start - in particular, the lack of transportation to and from those programs, and the lack of after-school care for either of those programs. A working parent cannot rely on those programs to care for their child throughout the work day, and must therefore make other accommodations.
- **Cost** – The cost of child care, particularly for those families not receiving child care subsidies, was a significant concern for several focus group participants. Individuals at the community forum also pointed to the high cost of child care for families who make too much to qualify for subsidies but cannot afford quality care.
- **On-site child care** – The teen mothers enrolled in the TEAM program pointed to the on-site day care provided through that program as an invaluable service, and a community member mentioned that Jamestown Community College once provided on-site child care to students enrolled in programs at the college. This individual believed that restoring that program would allow parents to better access the college's programs and ultimately become more economically self-sufficient.

## K - 12 Education

CGR also raised issues related to the Jamestown Public School in our conversations with low-income community members. Our questions focused on the particular challenges that children from low-income backgrounds face in the school system, and what could be done to better support these students. The responses revealed a great deal of support for some of the existing programs that serve students from low-income backgrounds (including TEAM, PACT, and Chautauqua Striders), and uncovered some concerns as well.

- **Walking district** – Many of the parents who participated in these community conversations do not own a car. They shared that Jamestown’s lack of school busing can be a burden for families without vehicles, particularly during inclement weather. A number of Spanish-speaking students receive English Language Learning services at Jefferson Middle School, which is located in the southeast corner of town. Parents of these students expressed frustration about not being able to easily get to their child’s school.
- **Family engagement** – Opinions varied about the extent to which the Jamestown Public Schools engage parents in their children’s education. Some participants felt strongly that the school district tries to engage parents, while others expressed a belief that while some schools, principals, and teachers do make an effort to connect with parents, this engagement is inconsistent across the district. A few people shared the viewpoint that some parents do not want to be involved with the school district, and others pointed to the loss of volunteer liaisons in the schools and the diminishment of field trips as the cause of a perceived loss in parental involvement. Several individuals in different conversations pointed to the district’s half days as being a particularly difficult challenge for parents with young children who cannot easily take time off from work.

## Transportation

The lack of accessible and affordable transportation was identified by many low-income Jamestown residents as a substantial barrier limiting the ability of people to access and maintain jobs in the greater Jamestown region.

- **Lack of quality public transit** – Nearly every focus group participant shared the perspective that Chautauqua County’s public transportation system, CARTS, does not adequately meet the transportation needs of most City residents. The system’s frequency and coverage areas were generally viewed as not robust enough to connect Jamestown residents with jobs and services.
- **High taxi expenses** – Many focus group participants said that they spend some of their limited cash resources each month paying for taxis to take them to shopping centers in Lakewood and other locations on the periphery of Jamestown. Individuals indicated that these rides have gone up in price in recent years, and now cost \$10 each way. Others rely on these expensive taxis to take them to medical appointments, as the taxi system is considered more reliable than CARTS Dial-a-Ride service. Seniors, in particular, who do not drive and do not have family members to take them to appointments indicated that they spend a disproportionately high share of their available cash resources on taxis each month to meet their basic needs.

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- **Location of jobs outside urban center** – Individuals without cars described how their job prospects were often limited to places they could walk. These focus group participants indicated that many manufacturing, retail and food service jobs, are not located near their neighborhoods, and are difficult to access without a vehicle.

## Public Health

Jamestown is a regional center for many services to Chautauqua County residents, including health care services, but focus group participants expressed several concerns about access to quality care.

- **Pediatric care** – While pediatric care is not always easily accessible for families who do not own cars, most focus group participants seemed to indicate that their children are able to access routine care as well as emergency care when needed.
- **Adult primary care** – According to many focus group participants, the availability of adult primary care services for individuals with Medicaid in Jamestown is limited, especially when contrasted the availability of pediatric care.
- **Specialists are scarce** – While local health care facilities meet some of the specialized needs of Jamestown residents, several individuals spoke about particular services not available locally, and traveling to Buffalo or Pennsylvania for care can be extremely challenging for low-income families to manage. In particular:
  - Substance use disorder treatment – A number of focus group participants spoke about the unavailability of substance use disorder treatment in Chautauqua County. Residents said their family members and friends in treatment had to go to Buffalo or Erie, Pennsylvania for methadone maintenance or other treatments. The time required to travel to and participate in treatment puts an enormous burden on individuals striving to remain clean sober, and taxes their support systems as well. As the opioid epidemic has grown, this strain on Jamestown residents and their families has grown as well.

## Public Assistance

Low-income residents receiving various forms of public assistance (Temporary Assistance, SSI, Food Stamps, Section 8, etc.) expressed a sense that programs are continually being cut and increasingly do not provide adequate support for low-income households. Some also said they felt the county takes a strict approach in running benefits programs and seems at times to be looking for ways to keep people from receiving benefits. There was also a sense expressed that county workers are at times tough on recipients, including a feeling that Hispanic workers were harsh to Hispanic applicants.

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A number of low-income residents also expressed a frustration with what they see as a “benefits cliff,” and believe that the pace of the phase-outs of public assistance creates an incentive against work. They expressed feeling as though the system actually penalizes people if they try to become more economically self-sufficient.

It is important to note that our system of financial support for low-income households is extraordinarily complex, and while some programs are administered through the County, others are managed by the City, and still others are run directly by the Federal government (like the Earned Income Tax Credit). In addition, the County and City have little discretion over the rules governing these programs, which are mostly set at the Federal and State levels. The means-tested nature of a disparate array of social supports likely creates some number of incentive issues, and at the very least creates the perception of an incentive against work among many low-income residents. In addition, programs like food stamps, HEAP, and child care subsidies are helpful, but the resources associated with those programs are not fungible. One cannot use food stamps to pay for child care, buy toilet paper, or cover an unexpected car repair bill.

## Public Safety

Concern about the safety of neighborhoods in Jamestown was a key issue for many focus group participants, particularly parents and teens. A number of individuals shared a perspective that the community has grown increasingly unsafe in recent years. In particular, the opioid epidemic has increased drug-dealing activities in town, which they believe has increased drug-related violence and other types of crimes. A number of individuals stated that the City should crack down on drug dealers in town, and that addressing the crime problem in Jamestown would better support low-income families in the community that often bear the brunt of crime’s consequences.

## Perspective of Workforce Development Leaders and Local Employers

As noted above, CGR met with a number of local employers, representing the human services, food services, and manufacturing sectors, to better understand their perspective on the key challenges facing low income Jamestown residents in the labor force. We also interviewed several individuals leading workforce development or job training efforts in the County. Viewpoints varied, but a number of consistent themes emerged from these conversations.

- **Jobs exist** – Despite a narrative held by many in the community that Jamestown simply lacks the jobs once available to lower skilled workers, employers and job training experts all asserted that there are a number of available jobs in the community. Local employers across a range of sectors are continually looking to fill entry-level positions, and often struggle to do so. According to several local

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employers, this includes certain entry level manufacturing jobs that do not require advanced training or any certificate programs.

- **The importance of soft skills** – While entry level positions in manufacturing, retail, and the human services field require certain basic hard skills like reading and basic math, most employers pointed to soft skills as the biggest barrier preventing many people from maintaining consistent employment. These soft skills (also referred to as success skills) include things like showing up to work on time, interacting appropriately with one’s co-workers, responding well to coaching or managerial feedback, and generally behaving professionally in the work environment. Several employers pointed to deficits in these areas as causing more people to not succeed at their jobs than inadequate specific job-related skills.
- **Personal instability/unreliability** – Several employers expressed great empathy for the difficult personal challenges that some of their employees face. They acknowledge that these barriers can prevent individuals from consistently making it to work, or sometime being able to work effectively throughout an entire shift. However, in different ways, these employers also indicated that their first priority is to effectively manage their business operations. While they try to be accommodating about certain issues like child care, vehicle difficulties, or personal illness, they also feel the need to eventually draw a line with staff about the importance of managing those challenges and still showing up to work consistently.
- **Drug testing** – Federal requirements to drug test some employees before hiring or after incidents at work diminish the employability of some residents, or leads people to lose job.

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## Appendix

# Jamestown Poverty Initiative Public Meeting Notes 5\_3\_17

### Early Childhood Resources

- Not enough available
- 2<sup>nd</sup> shift\*
- Limits parent opportunity
- Transportation challenges for UPK\*, Head Start
- No transportation for Special Needs
- Parent Education of child development (parents as teacher)
- Short of openings for ages Birth-4
- Impact of single parent
- Gaps in subsidies\*
- Low pay affects staff retention
- Cost\*
- More foster care grandparents
- Educating parent and child together
- Need Spanish speaking programs
  - Limits opportunities
  - More service tailored to adults
  - More than basic English
- What to do with sick child
  - Chronic absenteeism
- Do we have access to birth control?
  - Access family planning?
- Parenting classes
- High quality care doesn't exist for modest income families

- 
- After school care for UPK and Head Start
  - Early morning care

#### K-12

- Difficult getting parents to open house
- Transportation
- Not affordable
- Not safe
- Walking
  - Weather
  - Kids in different schools
- ELL increasing challenge
- Teachers are expected to parent
- Hard to contact parents
- Students fall behind and lose focus and hope
- Social media
- Attendance
- Avenues for parent involvement?
- No volunteer coordination
- Fewer things off campus
- Importance of education?
- Increase family engagement programs
  - Transportation is key
- More mentors and advocates
  - Career Counseling
- High School life skills
- Failure to identify mental health issues
  - Compliance with IEP
- Peer pressure

- 
- Half days aren't family friendly\*
  - Families don't feel welcome
  - Evening parent teacher conferences
  - Summer learning loss
  - Home instability- limits consistency
  - Housing transiency – stock of housing
  - 15% dropout rate
  - More exposure to careers and opportunities
  - More communication between teachers and parents
  - Methods of communication are not consistent
  - Methods of behavior modification are not consistent
  - What to do with sick child when you have lack of support system
  - Teachers could stay with kids through elementary school
  - Not enough future planning going on

#### Post-HS Education

- Low rate of college completion
- Students can't do college-level work
  - Remedial work
  - Basic math
- HS should focus on HS Ed
- TAP and PELL spent on remediation
- Pay for part time and special education
- Working students only on (locations?)
- Scheduling:
  - Transportation
  - Childcare (bring back)
- Need 4 year school at Jamestown Community College
  - Have SUNY Empire College

- 
- Need paid internships
  - More skilled labor training
  - JBC offers programs too
  - Steer students to available jobs
  - Subsidized programs for certificates at vocational learning
  - Expectations and future planning

### Jobs and Job Training Programs

What are the challenges and barriers keeping people from finding jobs?

- Childcare\*\*
- Mental health issues\*
- Don't know where good job openings are\*
- Transportation\*\*\*
- Lack of opportunities
- Language – Spanish and English\*\*
- Job applications are in English
- Lack of education\*\*\*
- Lack of necessary skills\*
- Lack of interview skills\*\*
- Temp services\*
- Lack of internet access to apply for jobs
- Motivation
- Computer skills
- Lack of soft skills
- Criminal record
- Social media
- Lack of:
  - Innovation
  - Creativity
  - New jobs
  - Businesses

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What are the barriers that keep people from maintaining employment?

- Attendance\*
- Childcare\*
- Childcare when child is sick
- Healthcare, additional, mental\*
- Transportation\*
- Attitude
- Criminal records
- Work ethic
- Internet access
- Language barriers
- Presentation/appearance
- Lack of banking opportunities, cashing checks
- Put down phone
- Don't make enough money
- Lay-offs
- Social media posting
- Lack of respect for co-workers
- Not giving job long enough to get comfortable
- Need longer training time

What could job training programs do differently to better support people seeking employment?

- Training to fit available job
- Need programming/training for youth
- Schools and employers need to communicate
- Job training
- Making direct placements
- Internships\*
- Not everyone is aware of programs, need better advertising

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- Need transportation to training\*
  - More vocational for all ages\*
  - Better job placement for employee
  - Job training for jobs with livable wage
  - Allowing people to “sample” job to see if good fit
  - Provide training for HR directors to understand barriers that affect employees and provide resources for employers
  - More support for participants in training programs (peer program/mentoring)
  - Real, paid, internships. Connect with JCC and JBC
  - Offer more help/services for people to get GED

What kind of programs or services would help people gain good-paying jobs?

- Sending more children to BOCES
- Technical training
- More youth employment programs, start in HS\*
- Grants to help employers hire and train\*
- ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Program)
- Interview training
- Supplement workers learning new skills so they can continue to grow and earn more in the future
- Mentors
- Offer workplace attire once a month\*\*
- More paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities
- Pooling money to offer small businesses/non-profits ability to offer internships
- Supporting on the job bi-lingual education
- Peer-led language group
- Licensing prep courses for Hispanic migrants
- Advertise opportunities for training, WID, etc.

Public Assistance

- Adequate access to health coverage
- Education about nutrition and food prep

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- Jobs require higher skill levels
  - Location: only one and weather is a problem w/o transport
  - Thresholds are low – “cliff effect” – keeps people in poverty
  - Form is complicated
  - Long wait times
  - “jaded” workers – attitude toward clients
  - Families lack organizational skills to stay on top of paperwork
  - 45-day wait strains the charitable sector
  - Transportation
  - Transportation to office, Chautauqua Works
    - Work searching
    - Application is overwhelming, hard to understand, log – hinders eligibility

Do people have trouble accessing and maintaining it [public assistance]?

- Yes:
  - Non-native English speakers plays into compliance
  - Where to go to find it
  - Transient nature of those receiving it and don't get notices
  - Disconnect between local and state site
  - Application is intimidating
    - community agencies have to help
    - literacy challenges
  - not a dedicated case worker, “bounced around”
  - transportation hinders compliance with WEP requirements
  - limits on income are too low
  - food stamps should follow WIC guidelines for nutrition
  - limit food stamp use to healthy foods
  - don't cut people off just when they get on their feet – transition period
  - incentives needed and education to exit public assistance
  - mandatory participation programs
    - job skills
    - parenting

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- life skills
  - gear job training to local opportunities
  - exemplifying federal poverty level, update for today
  - flexibility in thresholds
  - help seniors overcome stigma
  - changing the mindset
  - start young

How can public assistance programs be improved to help working aged people keep and get good paying jobs?

- Education
  - Language
  - Skills
- Right placement
- Young mothers need
  - job training programs
  - help w/ transport
  - help w/ childcare
- bilingual workers (i.e. county caseworkers) to provide better help
- more workplaces for WEP
- mentoring program
- exit strategy with time limits
- incentive for family planning
- softskill training
- goal setting and empowerment skills offer hope
- WEP participation follow-up and sanctioning less arbitrary
- Meaningful work
- Thresholds encourage not working
- Need higher limit for earnings to get more in culture of working
- Gradual or step down benefits
- Soft skill understanding

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- Hygiene and personal care items are not included – creates an alternate market
  - 45- day wait triggers alternate (illegal) money-making
  - Parenting education to break the cycle of poverty – discipline
  - Parenting role model of working – pride in your job

What gaps are there in public assistance programs?

- 45-day wait
- Case workers don't know enough
- Emergency assistance criteria is difficult
- Sanctioned ever hurts(?)
- Pushes toward lower-paying jobs – trapped in cycle
- Education and training placement so not stuck – could be as simple as flexibility
- Training opportunities are during the day, night times needed
- Case worker meetings are during the day
- Utility assistance
  - Garbage
  - Water
- Emergency assistance once every five years

Transportation

What are the key challenges facing people who don't own a car?

- Headstart, special ed programs, children 2-4, all UPK, federal funding cut – no transport\*
- Unable to get to job, school, doc, etc. \*\*
- Public transportation limited – no nights or weekends\*\*
  - No late shift transportation\*\*
- Dependent on someone else
- Lost appointments\*\*
  - Public assistance appts
- No money – not Affordable

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- Phobia
  - Lack of motivation
  - Takes longer to get places\*\*
  - Recreation limited
  - Lack of communication
  - Stigma of walking
  - Unsafe walking conditions – code enforcement
  - Fear of: \*\*
    - Carpooling
    - Employer would deny you a job
  - Individuals living in rural communities have no options
  - Educate young people on managing finances\*\*
  - Youth assisting the elderly
  - Lack of CARTS locations\*\*

Are people able to rely on CARTS for transportation needs?

- Limited routes/time schedules
- Yes, as long as you fall within perimeters of CARTS
- Unaware of CARTS contact info
- No
- Routes are limited
- expensive\*
- unaware of what CARTS can provide
- lack of marketing

How does lack of transportation limit people's ability to access jobs and services?

- Can't maintain jobs if not transportation
- Can't accept a job
- Lack of personal needs
- Inflexible
- No time/too much time spent walking

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- Limited options
  - Work experience program

How do people without cars take care of basic needs like shopping?

- Taxis
- Friends
- Walk
- Convenient store shopping
- Ignore, unable to take care of needs
- CARTS

What are some suggestions you have that could improve transportation options for low-income Jamestown residents?

- Find a way to
  - fund public transportation
  - help people finance cars
- rebuild/redesign city layout
- employer commuter busses\*\*
- investigate what other communities are doing\*\*
- UBER
- Mobile services to the individual
  - Fruit stands
  - Food trucks
- Foundations to share change criteria on transportation
- Education to own car independently
- Bike system – attach to CARTS\*\*
- City bus\*\*
- Fix a car
- Education on maintaining a car
- Walking school bus
- Free transportation

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- Night and weekend options – extended bus routes\*\*
  - Subway
  - Bike – seasonal
  - Mopeds
  - Security system for bikes
  - School bus system – similar to hotel transportation

#### Additional Thoughts

- Breakdown racial barriers
- Look at the investments in the Buffalo Billion and how it encouraged job growth and other small business investment
  - Canal site
  - Outer harbor
  - Community engagement
- More SNAP benefits
  - to households whose children do not reside but come for a lengthy visit with the absent parent
  - for someone who is a 1-person household working limited hours w/ limited income
- City schools cancel for “bad weather” too often – send message that attendance isn’t important
- Access to family planning services
- End LGBT discrimination especially with respoor(?) to transgender person
- How do we prepare HS students with mental health issues for post HS life?
- “TEAM Expanded”
  - Young mothers out of high school
  - Provide transportation like TEAM program does now
  - ½ day soft skill/parenting training
  - ½ day vocational (certificate) training to allow for better job
- Day care provided on-site