

2018 DelawareFocus Report
Assessing Quality of Life in the First
State

October, 2018



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2018 Delaware Focus Report

Assessing Quality of Life in the First State

October, 2018

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Delaware Community Foundation

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Introduction to DelawareFocus

An Initiative to Assess Quality of Life

What makes the quality of life in a community great? Is it a thriving economy, high incomes, the opportunity for all residents to meaningfully contribute? Is it safety, affordability, a clean environment, vibrant arts and music, civic engagement, or the feeling about being connected to one another?

Community indicators are measurements of social, environmental and economic factors that affect quality of life. In a community indicator project, these factors are gathered and analyzed over time to monitor the community's well-being and assess whether it's improving, declining, or staying the same. These metrics help us decide how to focus our resources to improve our community, and then monitor the impact of our collective efforts.

Through the DelawareFocus project, we use reliable and consistently reported data to track many important components of quality of life, in order to create a holistic picture of Delaware and deepen our knowledge and understanding of our state.

DelawareFocus is an initiative of the Delaware Community Foundation. This "state of the community" website – found at DelawareFocus.org – provides data and analysis on critical topics that affect the well-being and progress of our state. It serves as a common source of information, spurring discussion and collaboration, and allowing all residents to continually monitor our quality of life.

This report is updated annually, and the online data is updated as data is released to allow for continual monitoring of the community's evolving needs. This year, DelawareFocus added more than 20 indicators exploring gender disparities in education, the economy and financial stability, health and other areas.

Using this data, the DCF strives to help the community build a common understanding of the quality of life in Delaware, and opportunities to make it better. The DCF will then facilitate partnerships and strategic initiatives that help align the community's resources to support the agenda.

DelawareFocus was developed with assistance from the Center for Governmental Research (CGR), based in Rochester, New York. CGR is a nonprofit research and consulting firm that has created several community indicator projects in New York State, Pennsylvania, Florida, Massachusetts and other locations.

Spotlight on Gender

In our 2016 report, we highlighted the trend of Delaware overall growing more prosperous but leaving some part of the population behind. In 2017, we focused on a related theme – growing diversity but persistent disparities, especially across outcomes for different racial and ethnic groups.

This year, with the addition of illuminating data on gender, we shine a spotlight on gender inequity and more generally how women in Delaware are doing on measures with available data. Three themes emerge: females do as well or better than males on many educational measures; women also fare well on some measures of social well-being, particularly health-related indicators; however, on economic measures, women continue to lag behind men.

Education: Delaware girls in 3rd grade outperformed boys on the state’s reading test, with 56% in 2018 scoring proficient compared to 48% of males. This disparity was present in later years as well, with 53% of female 11th graders scoring proficient on the SAT English exam compared to 46% of males. However, males performed a bit better on the SAT Math exam – 30% proficient vs. 27% of females.

Females were slightly more engaged as young adults in work or school. In 2016, 6% of females in Delaware were not in school and not working, compared to 8% of males. In addition, 10% of females 15 and older were enrolled in college or graduate school, compared to 8% of males in 2012-16.

As adults, there was little disparity in the share of Delawareans with a bachelor’s or higher degree: In 2012-16, 30% of male adults had at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to 31% of females.

Health and well-being: More women received care early in their pregnancies: In 2017, 81% of births in the state occurred to mothers who had received prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy, up from 75% in 2007.

Teen pregnancy was down, with a statewide rate in 2016 of 2.6%, a decline of almost 5 percentage points since 2000.

A smaller share of females in the state lacked health insurance: In 2016, 6% of female and 8% of male Delaware residents were without health insurance – both lower than the national rate of females and males (9% and 11% respectively).

More women than men were enrolled in Medicaid: In 2012-16, 21% of female and 18% of male Delaware residents were enrolled in Medicaid, similar to the national rates.

Men were more likely to experience homelessness: In 2017, Delaware had a homelessness rate of 12 per 10,000 residents for men and 9 per 10,000 residents for women. However, rates for homeless females increased 6% from 2015 to 2017, while homeless men held steady during the same period. The Delaware homelessness rates for both genders were well below national levels.

Economic security: Despite education levels and performance equal to or better than men on most available measures, women continue to earn less and are more likely to live in poverty.

In 2012-16, women in Delaware earned a median income of about \$36,800, or 69 cents for every dollar earned by men (a female to male earnings ratio of 0.69). This ratio was up 12% from 61 cents in 2000. The ratio was slightly higher than for the nation (0.65).

Since 2000, median income for both genders has decreased after adjusting for inflation, by 17% for men and 7% for women. This has resulted in the gap between men and women's median household incomes shrinking by 34% between 2000 and 2012-16, a bit more than the change at the national level of 28%.

The pay equity gap was smallest for workers in federal government, where women earned \$0.90 for every dollar earned by men for median earnings of \$56,348. It was largest for self-employed workers, where women earned \$0.58 for every dollar earned by men for median earnings of \$17,982. Delaware's pay gap was slightly larger than the national gap for every class of worker. Local Government was the one class in which the pay gap increased from 2007-11 to 2012-16 (women went from earning \$0.85 for every dollar earned by men to earning \$0.77).

Viewed by economic sector, Manufacturing had the smallest pay equity gap, with women earning \$0.94 for every dollar earned by men. The largest pay equity gap was in the retail trade sector, where women earned \$0.73 for every dollar earned by men. Delaware had larger pay gaps than the nation in the construction, government, and retail trade sectors.

Women were slightly less likely to be unemployed than men in Delaware in 2012-16, with a rate of 6.6% vs. 7.6% for men. This was a change from 2000 when the rates were more even for the two genders. Nationally, this trend is explained by job losses in more traditionally male industries such as manufacturing while sectors such as retail and services that are often considered more traditionally female have seen job growth.

In 2012-16, poverty rates in the state were higher for women with some college (6.6%) than men (4.5%). These were lower than the nation overall (at 8.6% for women and 6.1% for men), but represent a small increase for both genders from 2007-11.

In 2012-16, 3.6% of employed women in Delaware lived in poverty, in comparison to 2.8% of men. These rates were lower than the nation overall (at 4.6% of women and 4.0% of men), though the difference by gender was slightly larger.

In 2012-16, 31% of single-female Delaware families with young children lived in poverty, in comparison with 18% of single-male families and 4% of married families.

Trend Summary by Topic

Below, find a more detailed summary of trends within each of the DelawareFocus key topics.

Children and Youth

How well our children can meet the challenges of tomorrow matters greatly to our state. As with the overall data, the story is mixed. Child poverty across Delaware is less severe than our nation's. Even so, 1 in 5 children in Delaware are growing up in poverty, and rates in cities and among some racial and ethnic groups are much higher.

Poverty makes raising children more difficult and puts children at risk for a host of negative experiences and outcomes: health conditions, problems at school, violence in neighborhoods, and other issues. Research has documented that children who are born into poverty and spend multiple years living in poor families are more likely to drop out of high school, have children at young ages and be poor as adults. In 2012-16, 18% of children in Delaware were living in poverty, up from 12% in 2000 but still below the national level of 21%. In the cities of Dover and Wilmington, child poverty was higher at 30% and 39%, respectively.

Poverty rates were higher among African American and Hispanic children: 28% and 34% statewide, and even higher in Sussex County at 39% and 40%. Here too, however, the state's rates were lower than national rates. The poverty rate for African American children in Delaware was 10 percentage points below the national rate of 38%, though the rate among Hispanic children was slightly higher than the national rate.

Children raised by single parents are more likely to grow up in low-income households. In Delaware, 39% of families with children were headed by a single parent, up from 32% in 2000. Similar to trends in poverty, single-parent families were more common in the cities (73% in Wilmington and 57% in Dover) and in African American families (66% statewide, 87% in Wilmington and 76% in Dover).

A healthy start in life can be critical for a child's success, and this begins even before children are born. In Delaware, 81% of births were to women who began prenatal care in the first trimester of their pregnancy. Infant mortality, deaths of infants before age 1,

has been declining in Delaware and the 5-year average per 1,000 births in 2012-16 was 7.5.

In adolescence, children are prone to taking risks, and the consequences of risky behavior can be long-lasting. Teen pregnancy and lack of engagement in school or work are two examples. In Delaware, teen pregnancy has been declining and was 2.6% among females 15-19 in 2016, the latest year available. The rate of young people ages 16-19 who are not in school or employed was 7% in 2012-16, on par with the national rate.

Demographics

Delaware's [population](#) numbers almost 1 million (962,000 residents in 2017) and has grown by 23% since 2000. Our growth has outpaced the nation. The fastest growing counties in Delaware are Kent and Sussex, each gaining 40% and 44% respectively in population since 2000.

Like many other states and region, Delaware has an [aging population](#). The strongest growth since 2000 has been in the older populations: an increase of 52% in people 60-84 years old and 70% in people 85 or older. Those growth rates are a bit higher than growth rates among older populations nationwide.

Also similar to other areas, Delaware is [growing more diverse](#). Our Hispanic, Asian and African American populations have all had double-digit percentage increases since 2000 while the white population has increased just 10%. Delaware's diversity is increasing faster than the nation's. Delaware's population remains majority white (69%) though that is below the national percentage (73%).

A growing share of Delaware's population [speaks a language other than English at home](#) – 13% in 2012-16, up from 9.5% in 2000.

Economy and Workforce

A strong economy is the foundation for a healthy state. In Delaware, economic performance has been on par with the nation, though salaries are a bit higher and unemployment a bit lower.

Since 2000, Delaware [has gained 15% in jobs](#) and from 2015 to 2016, jobs increased 1.3%. Sussex County has had the strongest growth, gaining 36% in jobs since 2000. New Castle has had the weakest growth, with an increase of just 7% since 2000. Delaware's job growth has been very close to the national figure over the last decade, including during the recession years of 2008 through 2010, when Delaware lost about 3% of its jobs each year.

The [sectors with the most job growth](#) from 2001 to 2016 were Health Care, gaining 60%, Financial Activities (31%) and Government (10%). There were major declines in Manufacturing (32%), Information (32%) and Construction (7%). Among the counties, there were particularly large increases in Professional and Business Services in Kent County (118%) and Sussex (211%), and Health Care and Social Assistance in New Castle (54%). While Delaware's Health Care sector outperformed the nation's by almost 16 percentage points more than the nation, the state's sectors have largely tracked the nation.

The [average salary](#) in Delaware of \$55,800 was slightly higher than the national average. The [highest-paying sector](#) was Financial Activities, with an average salary of \$92,300, followed by Professional and Business Services at \$80,400. Though salaries were higher, [wage growth](#) in Delaware has lagged a bit behind the nation at 9%.

[Unemployment](#) in Delaware was 4.6% in 2017, up slightly from the previous year and similar to the nation. Among racial and ethnic groups, [unemployment was highest for](#) Black or African Americans at 9.5% but this was below the rate for the nation.

Tourism is an increasingly important part of the state's economy, especially in beach towns in the southern part of the state. [Visitors to the state spent](#) nearly \$4.6 billion in Delaware in 2016, with most spending occurring in New Castle and Sussex counties.

Education

Upward mobility and equality of opportunity rests upon our educational system. In Delaware, a growing share of students come from low-income families, and though most graduate high school, not all have the reading and math competencies necessary for success in a global marketplace.

Like other states, Delaware has raised academic standards by adopting the Common Core, and 2015 was the first year for a new testing regimen aligned to the new standards. These higher standards are faced by a more disadvantaged student population – the share of [students eligible for free or reduced price school lunches](#) has grown 5 points from 2000 to 38% in 2016. Rates are especially high in some school districts, including Seaford (55%) and Laurel (54%) in Sussex County. With the passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the National School Lunch Program now includes a "Community Eligibility" provision allowing districts with at least 40% of students qualifying for free meals to serve free meals to all enrolled students.

[Resources in school](#) can make up some of what low-income children may not have access to at home, though the debate over how much money matters in educational performance may never be settled. In Delaware, school districts as a whole spent \$16,000 for every student, up 23% since 2000 even after adjusting for inflation. This

was 26% higher than the national figure. Spending per student was even greater in the state's vocational and technical schools, rising above \$20,000, and much lower in some districts: \$11,500 in Delmar and \$12,000 in Smyrna in New Castle. In summer 2010, Delaware began receiving federal Race to the Top funding, which has impacted student spending levels between FY2011-2015.

As part of the shift to Common Core standards, Delaware, like many other states, has made changes to student testing in recent years, adopting the Smarter Balanced Assessments in 2015. Education leaders say the tests are more difficult than the previous versions, which about 70% of students passed. And in spring 2016, the SAT replaced the Smarter Balanced Assessment as Delaware's 11th grade test in an effort to streamline and reduce testing.

The state's new tests show just over half of all 3rd graders are at grade level in [reading](#), just under half of 11th graders are proficient in [English Language Arts](#) but less than a third of 11th graders are proficient in [math](#).

While 52% of 3rd graders met standards on the state test, performance was lower among some groups: 37% of [low-income students](#), 36% of [African American](#) students and 38% of [Hispanic](#) students were considered proficient. At 11th grade, [28% of students passed the SAT exam](#) for math and 49% for the [SAT English exam](#). With 2015 being the first year that Delaware administered the Smarter Balanced Assessments, aligned with Common Core standards, we can track trends over time going forward.

By 2017, 86% of Delaware's Class of 2017 had [graduated high school](#) on time, up from 80% in 2013 but below the 2010 rate of 87%. Several of the highest graduation rates in the state were at the vocational and technical districts: 95% at Polytech in Kent County, 94% at New Castle County Vocational-Technical District and 96% at Sussex Technical District.

Graduation rates were somewhat higher among white (86%) and Asian (96%) students compared with Hispanic and African American (81% and 82% respectively) students. While many districts had [disparities in graduation rates](#), the Polytech district in Kent County and the New Castle County Vocational-Technical district reported graduation rates above 90% for all groups.

The [adult population in Delaware](#) is about as well educated as the nation's, with 30% of adults holding bachelor's or higher degrees, 27% with an associate's or some college experience, a third with only a high school diploma and 11% lacking that basic credential. As in the nation, Delaware has stark racial disparities in adult education levels – while 69% of Asian residents have at least a bachelor's degree, 31% of white residents, 22% of African American residents and 15% of Hispanic residents do.

Financial Well-Being

How easy is it for Delawareans to support themselves and their families? How does poverty in our state compare to the rest of the nation and similar areas? The indicators in this section show a state with falling incomes and rising poverty but still more prosperity than the nation.

As in many parts of the country, incomes in Delaware, after adjusting for inflation, have fallen over the past decade. The [median household income](#) fell 11% since 2000 statewide and 12% in New Castle County. Yet Delaware's median income of \$61,000 is higher than the nation.

But that [relative prosperity is not evenly distributed](#) – median incomes are lower in some places and among some groups. In Wilmington, for example, the median income of \$40,060 is 66% of the state median. Statewide, median incomes among African American (\$47,450) and Hispanic (\$44,800) households are also significantly lower than the overall state median.

Yet, by one measure, Delaware's income inequality is less severe than the nation's. Our [ratio of incomes](#) at the 80th percentile to those at the 20th percentile is 4.3, below the national ratio of 5.0.

Delaware's [poverty rate](#) of 12% is up 3 percentage points since 2000 and higher in the cities of Dover and Wilmington (20% and 26%, respectively). But the nation had higher poverty (15%). As with income, disparities in poverty are striking, with 18% of African American residents and 26% of Hispanic residents living in poverty.

The affordability of housing is becoming an increasingly important issue within the state. [Homeownership rates](#) decreased slightly since 2000, at 69%, while the [median value of a home](#) has increased by 33% over the same period. At \$233,100 in 2012-16, the median value of a home in Delaware is considerably higher than the national median of \$184,700.

Delaware's [ratio of home value to income](#) rose 33% to 3.8 in 2012-16, above the 2-3 range considered affordable. Delaware was less affordable than the nation in 2012-16, which had a home value to income ratio of 3.3.

Delaware's [property tax burden](#) was far lower than the nation, with the median annual property taxes paid amounting to 0.5% of the median home value.

Rental units are also becoming increasingly costly for residents of Delaware. In 2000, 25% of the [median household income of renters went to pay for rent](#), below the 30%

threshold that is generally agreed to be the measure of whether or not housing is affordable. By 2012-16, that rate had climbed to 33%, mirroring a national increase. Whether they rent or own, Delaware residents are spending an increasing amount of their income on housing, which can displace other types of spending or savings.

Despite the rising cost of housing in our state, the prevalence of [homelessness](#) has steadily declined since 2000, and 2017 was no exception to that positive trend. Delaware's rate of homelessness is below the national figure, and decreased by 21% since 2005.

While a small share of Delawareans receive [public assistance](#), higher shares access government help such as [Medicaid](#) and [food stamps](#). Less than 3% of state residents receive public assistance, while 20% are enrolled in Medicaid, the government health insurance program for low-income and disabled people. About 16% of state residents receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, or food stamps – a dramatic increase from 4% in 2000. And 17% of Delawareans receive the Earned Income Tax Credit, which provides tax relief to people with low incomes. Delaware was comparable to the nation on these measures.

Health

Physical and mental health is a precursor to individual and community well-being. Like other areas, our state struggles with health problems like drug addiction, cancer and obesity. Yet most people have health insurance, and mortality rates have sharply declined.

Access to health care is critical for a community's well-being. In Delaware, 7% of residents [lacked health insurance](#) in 2016, below the national rate of 10%. In addition, since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, insurance coverage has expanded. Nearly 25,000 Delaware residents signed up for a qualified health plan on HealthCare.gov during the 2018 open enrollment period.^[1]

Overall [mortality](#) has declined sharply since 2000 in Delaware, as it has nationwide, as medical advances make it possible for people to live longer. The state's mortality rate of 75 deaths per 10,000 residents has fallen 17% since 2000. The mortality rate was highest in Kent County (79) and lower in both New Castle and Sussex (74 and 75 respectively).

Cancer is a leading cause of death. Delaware has a slightly higher [incidence of cancer](#) (new cases diagnosed within a year) but [cancer mortality](#) rates are comparable to the nation and similar areas. In 2015, the state's cancer incidence rate was 51 per 10,000 residents, compared with a national rate of 45. The mortality rate for cancer

was 18 per 10,000 residents in Delaware in 2016, slightly higher than the national rate of 16 per 10,000 residents.

Our behavior plays a large role in our health. Over a quarter of Delaware adults [do not report regular physical activity](#), and two-thirds are [overweight or obese](#) – similar to national rates. About a 15% engage in [binge drinking](#) down 4% since 2007, and 8% report using [illegal drugs](#) (including marijuana). These are also similar to rates throughout the nation and in comparable areas. About 2% of adults reported [needing but not receiving treatment for substance abuse](#).

Substance use is a special concern among young people. In 2012-14, 11% of Delaware youth ages 12-17 reported using [alcohol](#) in the previous 30 days, about the same as the rates in the nation. About 10% said they used [illegal drugs](#), slightly above the national rate of 9%.

About 4% of Delawareans 12 and older reported having a [serious mental illness](#) in 2014-16, similar to the national rate. The state's [rate of suicide](#) was 1.3 deaths per 10,000 residents, the same as the national rate in 2015. For Delaware, this was a 27% increase from the level reported in 2000.

[Air quality](#) has improved considerably in Delaware since 2000, with the percentage of days for which air quality was monitored and found to be good increasing from 43% in 2000 to 78% in 2017.

Community Life

What makes a community a great place to live? In this section, we present indicators tracking civic engagement, safety, the arts - all important components of community life.

[Voter turnout](#) has been declining in Delaware, both during presidential elections and non-presidential years. In midterm elections, Delaware's voter turnout dropped from 45% in 2010 to 32% in 2014. Voter participation was lower in 2014 than any of the previous three midterm elections. For presidential elections, the 60% voter turnout in 2016 was a bit higher than previous presidential election years.

[Charitable giving](#) is an important measure of civic engagement, and many non-profit organizations rely on donations to support essential services to the community and people in need. Delaware residents used to outpace the nation on a whole in terms of charitable giving, but have slipped behind the country in recent years. Our residents contributed an average of \$4,410 per tax return in 2015, a 13% increase from 2011.

[Serious crimes](#) decreased by 12% from 2016 to 2017. Delaware remains higher than the national figure, but continued to grow safer most years. [Violent crime](#) has also declined, by 34% since 2000 statewide.