Onondaga County Community Indicators 2010 (abridged report)

Syracuse University. Maxwell School. Community Benchmarks Program

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Introduction

The 2010 Community Indicators Report highlights how Onondaga County compares to the past and to other geographic areas. This report consolidates information on the trends and issues facing county residents to generate discussion, celebrate success and stimulate interest in collecting and reporting data. The report is not exhaustive and will expand as more data become available.

In addition to the city of Syracuse, Onondaga County has 19 towns, 15 villages and 18 school districts. There is an estimated population of 452,633.

One of the main economic engines supporting the county is the abundance of higher education facilities. The county is home to Syracuse University (SU), State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, LeMoyne College, State University of New York Upstate Medical University and Onondaga Community College. There are another 35 schools of higher learning within a 100-mile radius of Onondaga County.

The county is rich in recreational and cultural activities, offering events, venues and performing arts companies such as the Syracuse Symphony and New York State Fair. Other highlights include Alliance Bank Stadium—home of the Syracuse Chiefs—the SU Dome and the Oncenter Complex, war memorial, civic center and museums. Throughout the county there is a wealth of golf courses, skating rinks, community centers, over 50 local, county and state parks and a zoo featuring over 1,000 animals. Almost every summer weekend, free entertainment, arts and crafts and ethnic festivals are offered in downtown Syracuse and throughout the county.

This report shows how the county has changed and can be used to identify what areas need to be improved. More data can be found in the full report.
Aging

After working in and contributing to a region for much of their lives, the aging want certain amenities upon retirement. In Onondaga County there is an abundance of housing options and nursing home beds. There are also programs such as the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage in place to help seniors pay for medication. Along with the positive, Onondaga County is faring poorly in some areas. The mortality rate in Onondaga County is higher than in New York State and the US, and seniors in the city of Syracuse are more likely to have disabilities than those throughout the state.

Culture & Recreation

Onondaga County offers a variety of recreational and cultural activities. There are many events, venues and performing arts companies in the area. Some of which include the Syracuse Symphony, New York State Fair, Alliance Bank Stadium and the SU Dome. The Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, the Everson Museum of Art, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and the Great New York State Fair bring in patrons from around New York State and the country. The many parks in Onondaga County provide camping, miles of hiking trails, and winter and water sports. These options allow people in Onondaga County to be active year-round.
Economy

The economy was one of the central issues in the 2008 presidential election and is still a hot topic in Central New York. A healthy economy is essential for a community to grow in population.

**Unemployment Rate**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines the unemployment rate as the ratio of “the total aggregated unemployed to the labor force.” The unemployment rate is the percentage of people in the labor force who are actively seeking employment but do not have jobs.

![Unemployment Rates Graph](Image)

*Source: New York State Department of Labor, US Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**Comment:** National unemployment data were aggregated into an arithmetic mean from data spanning a 12-month period. Please note graph is not drawn to scale.
Economy

Cost of Living
Cost of Living Index (COLI) measures the aggregate average price for certain goods sold in a region. The baseline for the COLI is the national level, which is always 100. Thus, a region’s composite average is measured relative to the national baseline. If the COLI is above the average, this indicates that, generally, the included goods are more expensive than the national level.

Per Capita Federal Spending in Onondaga County
Per capita federal spending measures the amount the federal government contributes to services and programs for each person in Onondaga County. Per capita federal spending in Onondaga County rose by 61% between 2000 and 2008.

Source: The Council for Community and Economic Research
Source: US Census Bureau: Consolidated Federal Funds Report: Fiscal Year(s) 2000 and 2008 and 2006-08 American Community Survey
Education

Education is a vital part of every community. Children and adults attend academic and vocational institutions to gain knowledge and skills that are vital to the growth and economic vitality of the area.

*Educational Attainment*

Educational attainment measures the highest degree or the highest level of education completed for residents 25 and older. Obtaining a high school diploma or college degree opens the door to many job opportunities. Educational attainment is important; a well-educated and diverse work force may attract more employers to the area.

The percentage of residents with a high school diploma or higher and Bachelor’s degree or higher has increased in all geographic areas. New York State had a larger increase in residents with higher levels of educational attainment than did Onondaga County and the city of Syracuse, but increases at geographic every level are a positive indicator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2006-08e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>New York</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma or Higher</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syracuse MSA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma or Higher</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onondaga County</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma or Higher</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>City of Syracuse</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma or Higher</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Comment:* Data are unavailable for 2000 Syracuse MSA statistics. Data are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Source: US Census Bureau: Consolidated Federal Funds Report: Fiscal Year(s) 2000 and 2008 and 2006-08 American Community Survey
Education

*Graduation Rates*

The graduation rates to the right represent the percentage of students who began ninth grade in 2005 and graduated by the summer of 2009. Schools with higher graduation rates will likely attract more students and better teachers. In 2009, the majority of high schools in Onondaga County had four-year graduation rates of over 75%. The Syracuse City School District, however, graduated only 50% of its students in that period.

*Source: Syracuse Post-Standard*
Syracuse has become known as ‘The Emerald City’ because of increasing use of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) buildings, and innovation from Syracuse University and SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry and area environmental firms.

**Air Quality**
AIRNow, a branch of the Environmental Protection Agency, provides public information about air quality and potential risks. The Air Quality Index (AQI) demonstrates the number of days which the EPA has determined as having an unhealthy level. AQI is measured on a 0-500 scale with 0-50 representing ‘good’ air quality. The index measures levels of major air pollutants outlined in the Clean Air Act such as: ground-level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. Between 2006-08, the number of days of good air quality has decreased in the city of Syracuse and Onondaga County.

**Comment:** The above graph begins on the two hundred and seventieth day of the year in order to preserve the quality of the graph.

*Source: Environmental Protection Agency: Air Quality Index*
Environment

Water Quality
As part of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the Division of Water maintains water quality reports of regional water body segments with regard to various categories of use. The degree of severity of the water quality problem is categorized in the following terms of use: (in decreasing order) Precluded, Impaired, Stressed, and Threatened. This graph presents only bodies of water that were impaired or stressed.

2008 Water Body Segments
n=22

- Aesthetics: 10
- Fish Consumption: 12
- Habitat/Hydrology: 3
- Public Bathing: 7
- Recreation: 2
- Aquatic Life: 4

2008 Water Body Segments

Government

2010 has been financially challenging for Syracuse and Onondaga County. Debt per capita has increased in recent years in both the city and the county. The number of children and adults registered for government programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicare has increased. In Onondaga County the number of registered voters exceeds the number of active voters, which indicates that not all registered voters participate in government elections.

Source: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 2008
Individual health is a vital component to the condition of the community as a whole. Good health contributes to the economic strength, mental well-being, stability and happiness of residents who provide the framework for neighborhoods and business.

*Access to Physician Care*
Access to care is often dependent on the number of physicians practicing in a given area. “Physicians” are defined as those who are licensed by and participating in New York State, based on the latest data collected from the Center for Health Workforce Studies’ ongoing New York State Physician Licensure Re-registration Survey. Syracuse is a recognized leader in health care, with many quality health facilities and options available relative to the population of the area.

**Comment:** Available data could be disaggregated to represent Central New York only. The Central New York Region includes Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga and Oswego counties. Population figures are based on 2006 US Census estimates.

Health

The Uninsured
To keep track of the percent of uninsured the Census Bureau’s Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) program produces estimates of health insurance coverage for states and all counties. Onondaga County is performing well in terms of its uninsured population compared to state and national percentages.

2006 Percent Uninsured

US 15.8%
NYS 15.7%
Onondaga County 14.5%

Comment: The percent of uninsured is calculated by dividing the total number without insurance (government or private) by the total number of individuals in the geographic statistical area.

Source: United States Census Bureau’s Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE), 2009

Housing

Housing indicators illustrate an area’s economic health, desirability, quality of life and affordability. Purchase and rental prices are well below state and national averages.

Median Home Sale Price
The term “median home sale price” represents the middle value of home sales in one year. Although median home sale prices decreased steadily in New York State and across the United States in between 2007 and 2009, city of Syracuse and Onondaga County prices remained relatively flat.

Median Home Sale Price

Neighborhood safety is a top concern for area residents. Crime not only has a major impact on victims, but also disrupts the larger community. High crime rates, in addition to lowering property values, can scare away potential home-buyers and business owners.

**Violent Crimes**

Violent crimes are separated into the following four different categories by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault. The level of violent crimes reflects the safety of a neighborhood.

Between 2000 and 2008, the rate of violent crimes stayed relatively consistent in the United States, Onondaga County and the city of Syracuse. Onondaga County has fewer violent crimes per 10,000 people than the United States. The city of Syracuse, however, has an alarmingly high violent crime rate per 10,000 people, more than double that of Onondaga County and the United States.

**Comment:** The population numbers used to compute the rate per 10,000 for 2008 are from the 2008 estimated Census data, and for 2005 they are the exact numbers collected in the 2000 Census.

*Source: NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Crime Reporting Unit*
Public Safety

Property Crimes
Property crimes are offenses related to other people's personal possessions. Like violent crimes, property crimes are separated into the following four different categories by the FBI: burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson. Property crimes affect the safety of a community.

Between 2000 and 2008, the rate of property crimes per 10,000 people stayed relatively consistent in the United States, Onondaga County and the city of Syracuse. Although Onondaga County’s rate of property crimes per 10,000 people is lower than the national rate, the rate for the city of Syracuse is noticeably higher and also increased.

Comment: The population numbers used to compute the rate per 10,000 for 2008 are from the 2008 estimated Census data, and for 2005 they are from the 2000 Census.

Source: NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Crime Reporting Unit
Transportation

Onondaga County is conveniently located at the intersection of Interstate 81 and the NYS Thruway. The Hancock International Airport and the William F. Walksh Regional Transportation Center serve the area. One of the prominent initiatives in Onondaga County is the inclusion of clean-air, hybrid buses in the Central New York Regional Transportation Authorities (CNYRTA) Centro fleet. Over the next several years, CNYRTA plans to introduce hybrid technology in the majority of their buses.

Youth

According to the Census Bureau's 2006-08 estimates, 25% of the population of Onondaga County is under the age of 18, with 5.9% under the age of five. The County youth face lower risk of poverty than others in the U.S. and New York State, but still suffer from higher rates of child abuse, maltreatment and arrest.
Acknowledgements

The Community Benchmark Program researchers would like to thank those who provided encouragement and data important to the completion of this project.

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Greater Syracuse Association of Relators

Carol Terry
Syracuse City School District Coordinator of Fine Arts
The following is an exhaustive list of the indicators that are found in the full version of the Onondaga County Community Indicators Report. Sources appear in italics.

**Aging**
1. Population Living in Poverty  
   *US Census Bureau, 2005-2008 est.*
2. Percent with Disability  
   *US Census Bureau, 2000 & 2006-2008 est.*
3. Senior Housing Options in Onondaga County  
   *Onondaga County Department of Youth and Aging, 2007*
4. Nursing Home Beds per 1,000 Seniors  
   *Statehealthfacts.org and US Census Bureau, 2000-2008*
5. Number of Medicare Enrollees  
   *US Department of Health and Human Services, 2004-07*
6. EPIC Enrollment  
   *New York State Department of Health, EPIC Program*
7. Senior Mortality  
   *New York State Department of Health, Death Statistics (New York) and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Vital Statistics Report (US)*

**Culture & Recreation**
1. Art Galleries  
2. Festivals  
3. Museums  
4. Theater/Music  
5. Zoo  
6. Art Grants  
   *New York State Council on the Arts, 2010, nysca.org*
7. Recreation  
   *http://www.visitsyracuse.org/attractions/activity/sports*
8. Parks Attendance  
   *Onondaga County Parks Annual Report, 2006-08*
9. Volunteer Hours  
   *Onondaga County Parks Annual Report, 2006-08*

**Economy**
1. Labor Force  
   *New York State Department of Labor*
2. Employment  
   *New York State Department of Labor*
3. Unemployment Rate  
   *New York State Department of Labor, US Bureau of Labor Statistics*
4. Employment Percentage by Sector  
   *US Census Bureau, 2005-07 and 2006-08 American Community Survey*
5. Employment and Percent Change by Industry  
   *US Bureau of Labor Statistics*
   *Small Business Administration*
7. Median Annual Income  
   *US Census Bureau: 2005-07 and, 2006-08 American Community Survey*
8. Per Capita Federal Spending in Onondaga County  
   *US Census Bureau: Consolidated Federal Funds Report: Fiscal Year(s) 2000 and 2008 and 2006-08 American Community Survey*
9. Sales Tax Revenue  
   *New York State Office of the State Comptroller*
10. Cost of Living Index  
    *New York State Office of the State Comptroller*
Full List of Indicators

Education
1. Educational Attainment
2. School Enrollment
   US Census Bureau, 2006-08 est.
3. Per Pupil Spending
   New York State Education Department, 655
4. Attendance
   NYS Report Cards, Accountability and Overview Report, 2000-06
5. Suspension Rate
   NYS Report Cards, Accountability and Overview Report, 2000-06.
6. Graduation Rates
   Syracuse Post-Standard
7. LEP Rate
   New York State Education Department, 655 Report
8. English and Mathematics Regent Exams
   NYSED 655 Report, 2006
9. English Language Arts Exam
   NYS Kids’ Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse (KWIC) 2010
10. Mathematics Exam
    NYS KWIC 2010

Environment
1. Pesticide Use
   Pesticide Sales and Use Reporting – Cornell University Cooperative Extension and NY DEC
2. Recycling Rates
3. Per Capita Municipal Solid Waste
   Environmental Protection Agency: Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling and Disposal in the United States
4. Sprawl
   US Census 2000 Data
5. Toxics
   Environmental Protection Agency: Toxic Release Index
6. Air Quality
   Environmental Protection Agency: Air Quality Index
7. Water Violations
   EPA Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS)
8. Water Quality
   New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 2008
9. Water Treatment Levels
   New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 2004

Government
1. Expenditure by Sector
   OSC Open Book NY; New York State office of the State Comptroller
2. Debt per Capita
   OSC Open Book NY; New York State office of the State Comptroller
3. Registered Voters
   New York State Board of Election, 2008
4. Active Voters
   New York State; Board of Elections, 2008
5. Medicaid Eligible
   New York State; Department of Health, 2009
Full List of Indicators

Government (continued)
6. Number of TANF Individuals
   New York State; Department of Health, 2009
7. Online Access
   Jenna Kristal, Syracuse University 2010
8. Cost Containment
   U.S. Department of Labor; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010

Health
1. Access to Physician Care
2. Hospitals
   New York State Department of Health: Hospital Profiles, 2009
3. The Uninsured
   United States Census Bureau’s Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE), 2009
4. Obesity
   New York State Department of Health Assessment Indicators, 2003, Center for Disease Control Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2003
5. Diabetes
6. Smoking
   New York State Department of Health County Health Assessment Indicators, 2003
7. Asthma
   New York State Department of Health; Public Health Information Group, Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS), 2006
8. Sexually Transmitted Diseases
   New York State Department of Health, Sexually Transmitted Disease Data and Statistics
9. Cancer: Incidence Rates
   New York State Department of Health County Assessment Indicators, 2002-06, National Cancer Institute Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results, 2002-06
10. Cancer: Detection
11. Cancer: Mortality Rates
    New York State Department of Health County Health Assessment Indicators, 2002-06, National Cancer Institute Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results, 2002-06
12. Cause of Death
13. Mortality Rates
    Kids Wellbeing Indicators Clearinghouse (KWIC), 2010

Housing
1. Age of Housing Structure
   2006-08 American Community Survey; 2000 Census
2. Median Rent Values
   US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2010
3. Percent of Renter-Occupied Units
   2006-08 American Community Survey; 2000 Census
4. Homeownership Rate
   2005 American Community Survey; 2006-08 American Community Survey; 2009 American Community Survey; 2000 Census
Full List of Indicators

**Housing (continued)**
5. Rental Vacancy Rate
   2005 American Community Survey; 2006-08 American Community Survey; 2009 American Community Survey; 2000 Census
6. Homeowner Vacancy Rate
   2005 American Community Survey; 2006-08 American Community Survey; 2009 American Community Survey; 2000 Census
7. Median Home Sale Price
   Greater Syracuse Association of Realtors, 2010
8. Number of Homes Sold
9. Mortgage Lending
   2009 USA Today, 2010, RealtyTrac, 2010
10. Public Housing Authority Inventory
    Syracuse Housing Authority, 2010, City of Syracuse Consolidated Plan, 2009

**Public Safety**
1. Violent Crimes
   NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Crime Reporting Unit
2. Property Crimes
   NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Crime Reporting Unit
3. Domestic Violence
   DCJS, Uniform Crime Reporting system (as of 1/2010).
4. DWI Incidents
   2008 and 2005 Onondaga County Traffic Safety Data from the Institute of Traffic Safety Management and Research

5. Drug Crimes
   NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Crime Reporting Unit
6. Number of Service Calls
   Onondaga County Department of Emergency Communications, 2010

**Transportation**
1. Centro Ridership/Miles Traveled
   Central New York Regional Transportation
2. Hancock International Airport
   Hancock International Airport
3. Average Commute Time
   U.S. Census Bureau, 2002-2008
4. Gasoline Sales
   United States Energy Information Administration
5. Bridge Ratings
   Source: New York State Department of Transportation

**Youth**
1. Percentage of Families with Children Living in Poverty
   US Census, ACS 2008
2. Children Admitted to Foster Care
   NYS Office of Children and Family Services; Child Care Review Service
3. Percent of Children Receiving Public Assistance
   NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance; Bureau of Data Management and Analysis; Welfare Management System; United States Census
4. Reports of Children Abused/Maltreated
   New York State Office of Children and Family Services - National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).
**Full List of Indicators**

**Youth (continued)**

5. Registered Child Care Centers  
   *2007 Mapping Study on Child Care Solutions*

6. Serious Child Care Violations  
   *New York State Office of Children and Family Services*

7. Adolescent Pregnancies  
   *New York State Department of Health; Bureau of Biometrics - birth certificates and fetal death certificates*

8. Early Prenatal Care  
   *New York State Department of Health; Bureau of Biometrics - birth certificates*

9. Low Birth Weights  
   *New York State Department of Health Vital Statistics*

10. Youth Arrests  
    *New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services*

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