

United Way of Berks County

2022 OAKBROOK COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT



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Oakbrook Collective Impact Council

The Oakbrook Collective Impact Council (OCIC) is a local initiative working side-by-side with residents who live in Oakbrook Homes, Reading, PA, a public housing community managed by Reading Housing Authority (RHA). This large and stable neighborhood is home to over 850 children, nearly 500 (57%) are 10 and under.

Since 2018, OCIC has met 4-6 times per year, using the multi-year Collective Impact Model, a process that focuses on addressing the root cause of an issue and works to create cultural shifts. The group, comprised of Oakbrook residents, nonprofit representatives, education partners, and local companies, supported by United Way of Berks County (UWBC) staff, has worked together to address complex social problems. Utilizing the Collective Impact Model, the goal of the council is to prioritize the resident's identified needs and coordinate collaborative efforts to positively impact the families residing in Oakbrook Homes. The issues were identified from a 2017 bilingual door-to-door survey where residents shared their needs, concerns, and barriers relating to health, education, employment, and other topics.

In year one, OCIC utilized an inclusive process and identified two top issues to address and developed Problem Statements for each issue.



Awareness/Knowledge of Resources Problem Statement:

Collective impact recognizes that everyone possesses something to contribute. We are in the process of creating high impact-initiatives and community-driven programs with a goal to help Oakbrook residents live life fully.



Food Access/Insecurity Problem Statement:

Consistent, local access to adequate, nutritious, affordable food is one of our basic needs. Families who are food insecure experience greater health and social challenges compared to people who can afford healthy food. Keeping children well fed is of particular importance, as studies have shown that students who have food security have higher academic performance numbers and have better social development among other factors.

Oakbrook Collective Impact Council

- Established Work Groups to engage other community members and work towards common goals.
- Evaluated the use of the collective impact model by OCIC annually. Council members provided feedback.
- Recruited, trained, and engaged Resident Ambassadors to propel the work forward with residents.
- Created the Oakbrook Community Outreach Specialist, a collaborative position between Berks Community Health Center and UWBC, who connects with Oakbrook residents and supports OCIC.
- Partnered with Project REACH to obtain ongoing feedback from Oakbrook residents via surveys and community conversations.



Oakbrook Collective Impact Council

In addition to the work as a collective, because of convening the council and reviewing needs identified in the resident survey responses, community partners are communicating and making exciting opportunities happen with Oakbrook residents. Highlights from the past 5 years include:

- Brought the STEAM Technology van from the Reading Public Library to Oakbrook.
- Launched Rock the Block events in conjunction with Berks Community Health and Tower Health.
- Offered free developmental screenings for Oakbrook children in partnership with Easter Seals of Eastern PA and Alvernia University.
- Hosted the Oakbrook Holiday event in partnership with Reading Truck Group.
- Arranged the Mobile Market "Pop Up" event with Helping Harvest to allow residents to sample food and receive a bag of fresh produce.
- Through the Resident Engagement Work Group welcome baskets were provided to new residents.
- Provided bilingual resource packets to each Oakbrook household.
- Offered the Books for Bikes summer literacy program to children in Oakbrook.
- Planned and created the Oakbrook Community Garden with the 18th Wonder Improvement Association, Berks Community Health Center, Berks Nature and RHA. The Community Garden has provided residents the opportunity to grow fresh produce, participate in various classes, and has become a hub of activity during the summer.
- Provided English Forward Training in conjunction with the Literacy Council of Reading-Berks to train community members to teach English to others.
- Offered English as a Second Language classes to Oakbrook residents with RHA.
- Organized and hosted a Girls on the Run team for girls in and around the Oakbrook Community.
- Offered financial literacy classes for Oakbrook Residents.
- Feedback from 2021's Community Conversations included the need for family-friendly activities as well as programming for teens and young adults. As a result, OCIC collaborated with Barrio Alegria to launch the Oakbrook Location Art Sessions (OLAS). A variety of activities have been held throughout the spring and summer including a fashion show, painting workshops, science activities, hip hop classes, yoga and meditation class, drawing workshop, karaoke, and a movie night.

2022 Survey Snapshot

A 12-15-minute door-to-door survey was conducted by trained, bilingual teams, consisting of 37 individuals, including residents, community volunteers, Project REACH, and UWBC team members. The teams, investing over 205 collective hours, knocked on nearly 100% of all doors at least once.

Head of households who completed the survey received a \$10 gift card. A total of 218 surveys were completed (42%, based on 523 occupied homes at the time of the survey) compared to 39% in 2017.



DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS: data relating to a population at a certain point of time. Demographics include age, income, race, ethnicity, and gender and can be used to help design and implement programs to have the best impact for distinct communities.

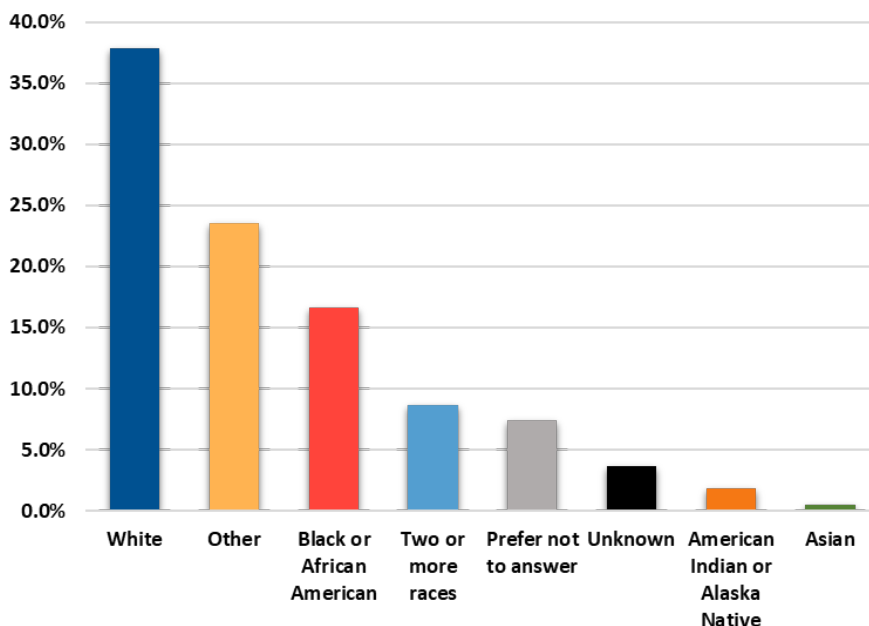
NOTABLE NUMBERS

- 218 households participated in the survey.
- 88% of the respondents were females.
- 52% of the respondents reported Spanish as their primary language at home, compared to the 2020 Census report, where 19% of Berks County residents spoke another language other than English.
- 9% of the Oakbrook survey respondents identified as non-Hispanic white. In the 2020 Census report, 69% of Berks County resident respondents identified as non-Hispanic white.

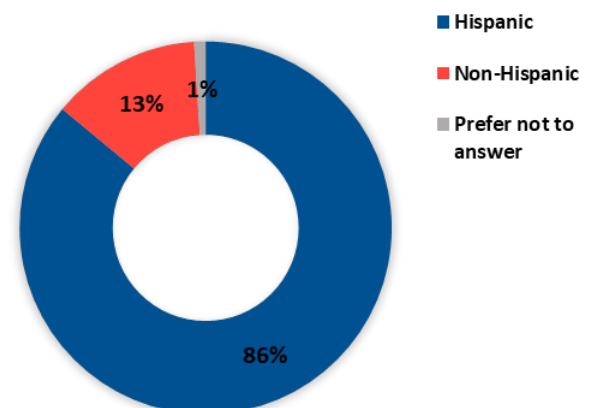
Ages of Oakbrook Community Members in Households Surveyed

Age	%
18 to 24	4.6
25 to 34	26.9
35 to 44	17.3
45 to 54	21.9
55 to 64	13.7
65 and older	15.1

Race

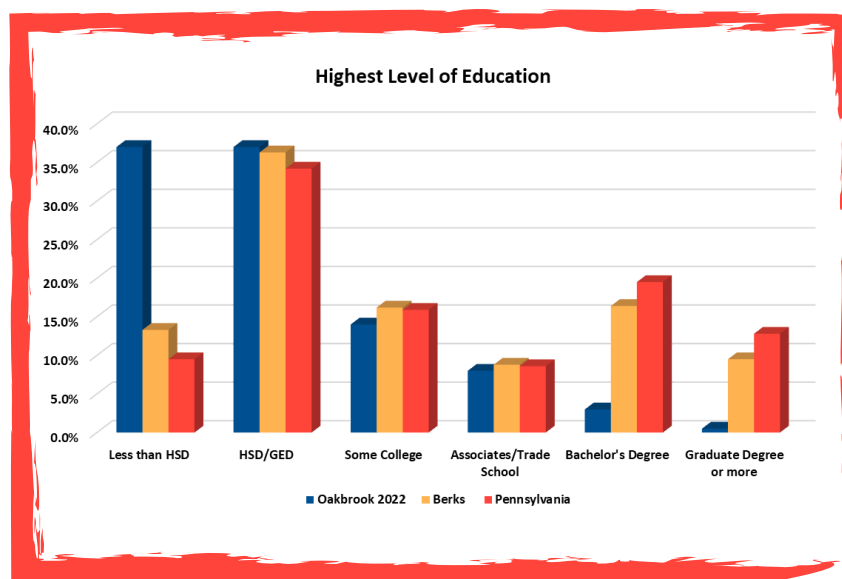


Ethnicity



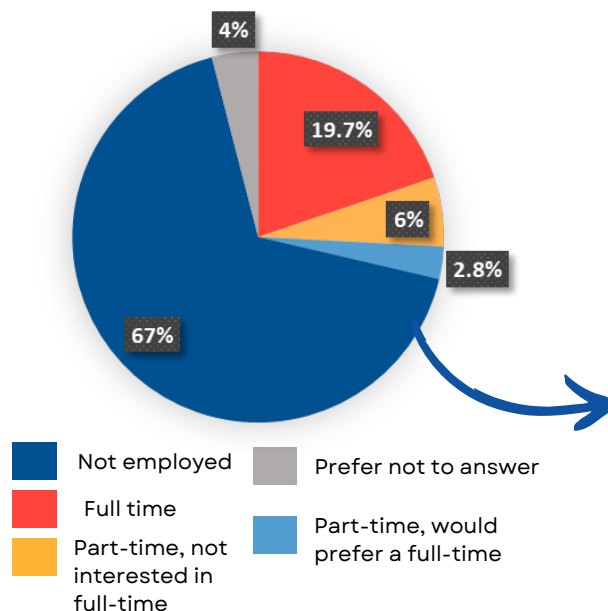
EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Survey responses show that **135 head of households** have their High School Diploma / GED or higher. Of the **36%** who do not have their High School Diploma or GED, **24%** are interested in pursuing a GED. A second question asked, "Do all other adults in your household have their High School Diploma or Equivalency (GED)?" **51%** responded yes and **11%** responded there is interest in learning more about obtaining their GED.

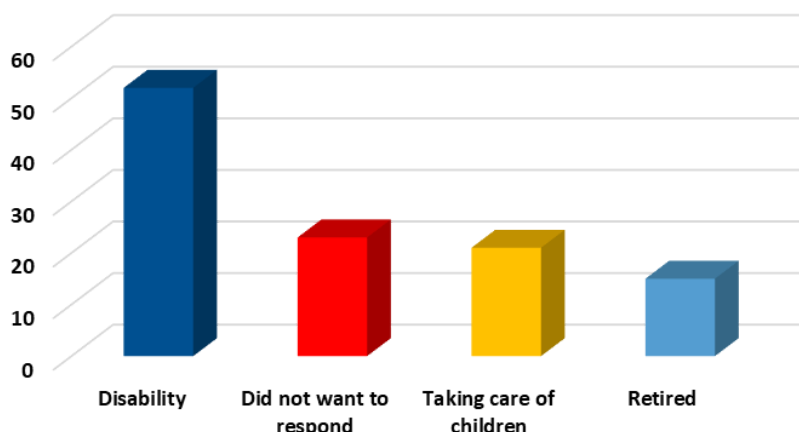


Oakbrook residents surveyed have a higher percentage of individuals who have not completed High School, compared to residents throughout Berks County.

Employment Status (n=218)



Main Reasons for Unemployment



According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in Reading, PA, in June 2022 was 4.8%.

CHILDREN

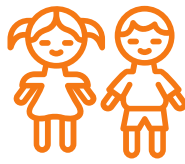
Per Reading Housing Authority, **343** homes have a total of **854** children living in them, and **57%** are 10 or under. Of the **218** surveyed households, **124** households reported having children under the age of 18 in the home, for a total of **310** children, an average of **2.5** children per household. Results of the survey showed **57%** of the children between 0-5 years of age are cared for by a parent, relative, or another person, and **43%** attended a childcare center or a preschool.

0-5 years old



29%

6-9 years old



23%

10-12 years old



22%

13-18 years old



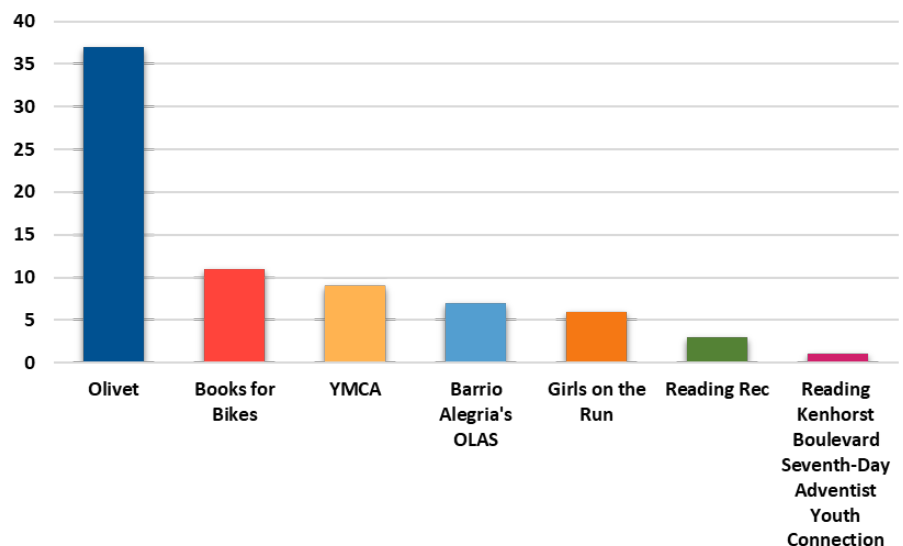
26%



Oakbrook Girls on the Run

Leading studies regarding the impact of extracurricular activities on child development show that academic grades, study habits, and school-based behavior all improve when children attend regular after-school clubs and team sports. Survey responses show that **41%** of households have at least one child participating in activities provided in the Oakbrook community.

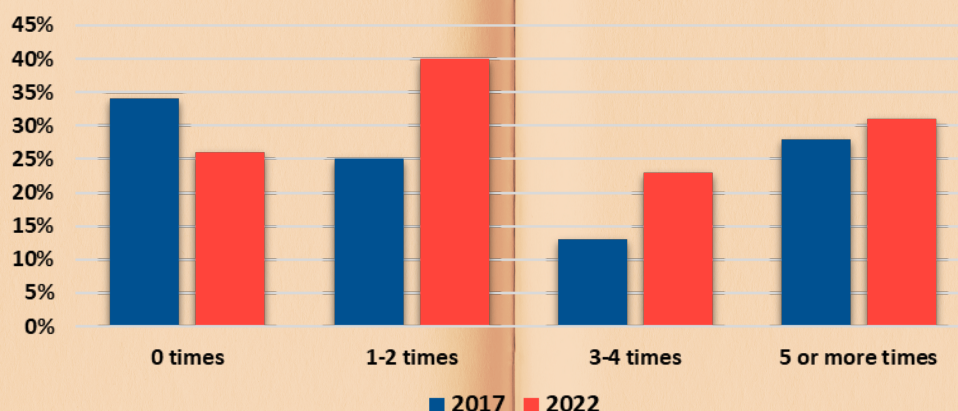
Numbers of children participating in programs



CHILDREN & LITERACY

Third-grade reading proficiency is a critical component of learning and an indicator of long-term educational and life outcomes. More than **43%** of Berks County third graders were reading below grade level, per the 2019 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment third-grade English Language Arts. That means that **1,996** children in our community in urban, rural, and suburban schools, are four times more likely to drop out of school and **13** times more likely to drop out if they also live in poverty.

In the past week, how many times did you read to/with your children? (n=124)



The survey showed 40% of heads of household read to/with their children one to two times, an increase from the 25% reported in the 2017 survey.

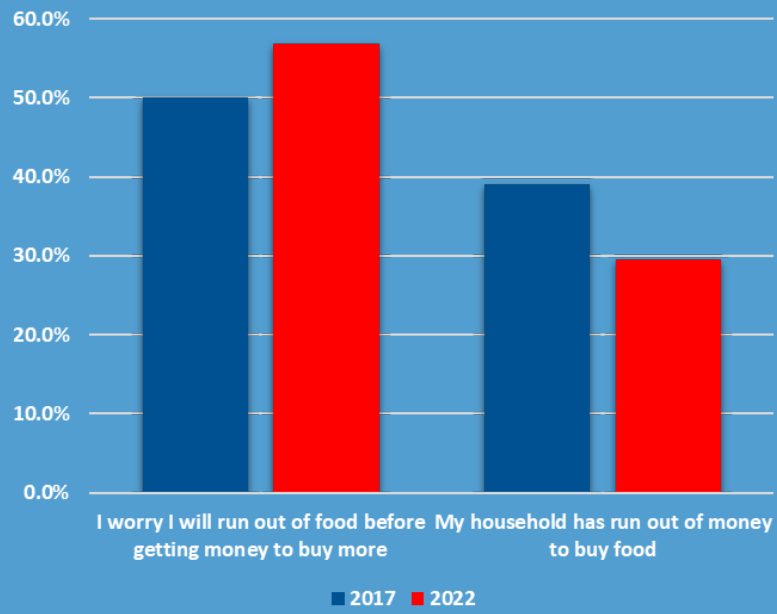


FOOD ACCESS & INSECURITY

Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life. Food-insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time and it may mean that a household needs to make trade-offs between important basic needs, such as paying medical bills, and purchasing nutritionally adequate foods.

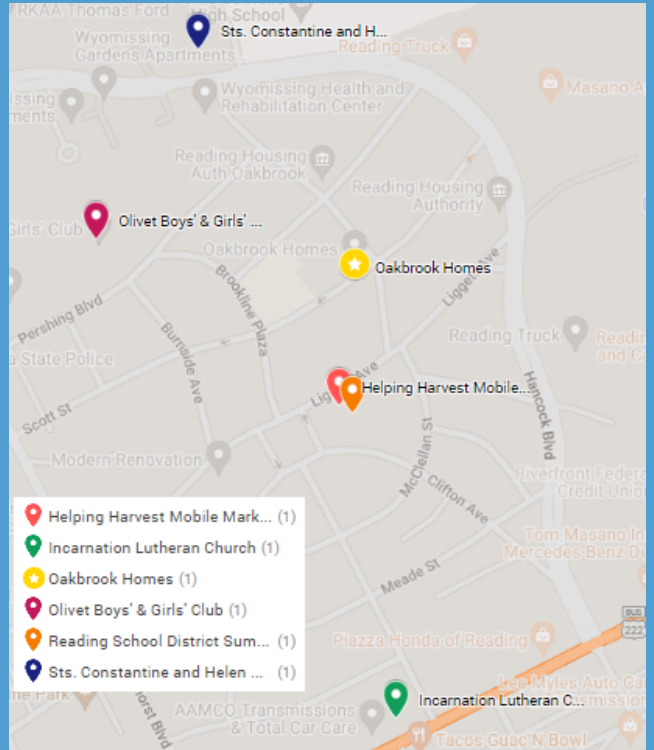
Almost **52%** of Berks County children are eligible for free or reduced lunches. Reported food insecurity in Pennsylvania is 8.9% while Berks County is **10.2%**. Food insecurity is influenced by multiple factors including poverty, unemployment, and a lack of household assets, all of which are disproportionately experienced by communities of color.

Food Insecurity as Reported by Oakbrook Residents



Based on the survey response rate over 56% of heads of household report worrying that they will run out of food before getting money to buy more.

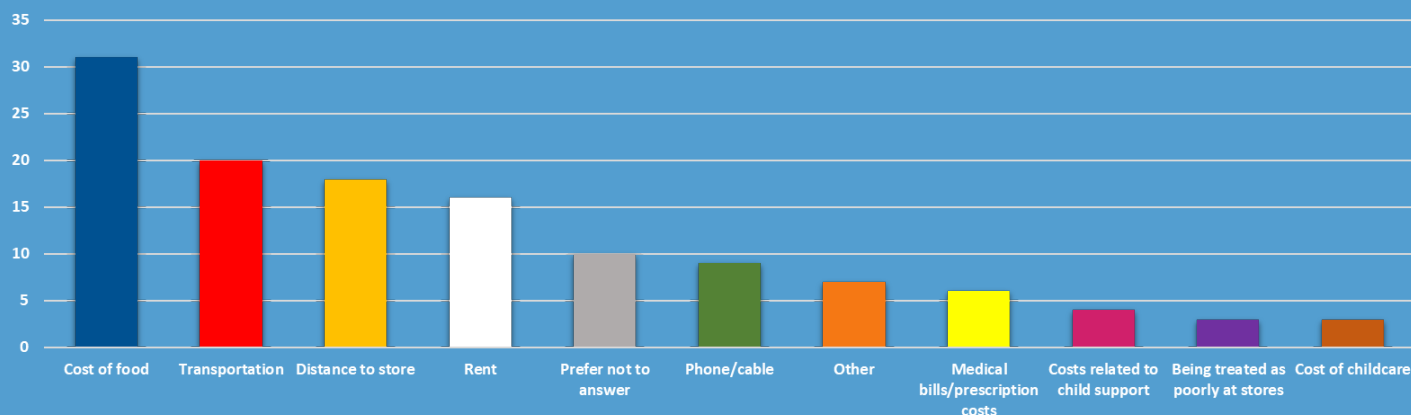
Food Access Locations Near or in Close Proximity to Oakbrook



FOOD ACCESS & INSECURITY

Key barriers identified that limit families from buying the food they need are the cost of food, transportation, distance to store, and rent. **83%** of survey respondents reported that they receive SNAP and **19%** reported they receive WIC benefits.

Which of the following, if any, stops your family from buying the food that you need?



January to September 2022, Helping Harvest's Mobile Market at Berks Community Health Center, has provided 4,000 individuals with almost 54,000 pounds of food.

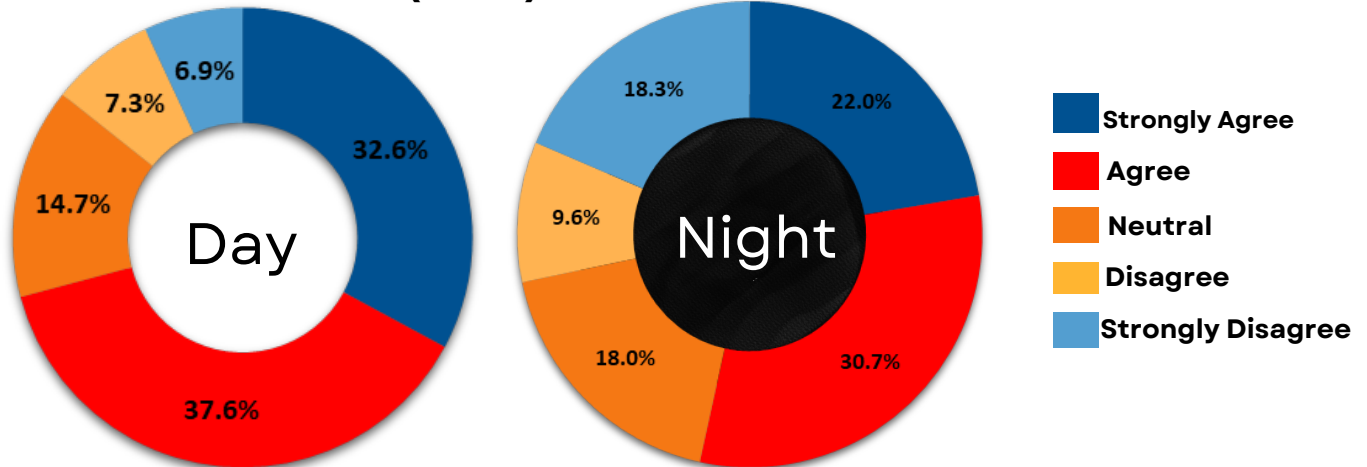


SAFETY

In June of 2022, the summary of crimes committed in the Oakbrook community and the surrounding half-mile area reports **19** recorded incidents. The top reported incidents are assault and fraud.

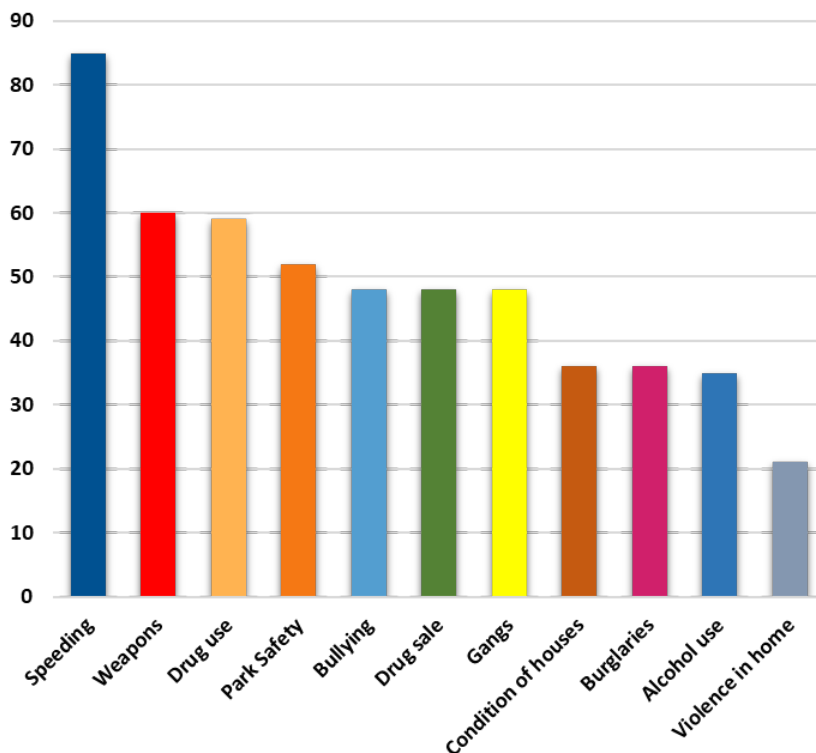
Results of the Oakbrook Community Needs Assessment showed that **70%** of respondents reported feeling safe during the day, and **53%** reported feeling safe at night in the Oakbrook community.

I feel safe in my neighborhood (n=128)



.9% of respondents preferred not to answer for the daytime question and 1.4% preferred not to answer for the nighttime question.

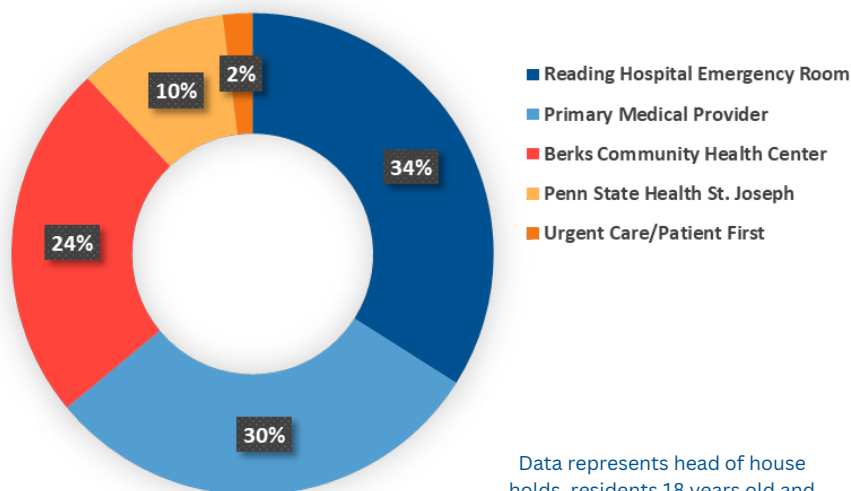
Issues and concerns in the community



Residents were asked their concerns, if any, with 11 different safety issues. 218 respondents cited a total of 610 concerns across those 11 issues. The most reported being speeding, weapons, drug use, and park safety.

HEALTH

Families Utilizing Health Care



Data represents head of household, residents 18 years old and younger, as well as residents 62 years old and older.

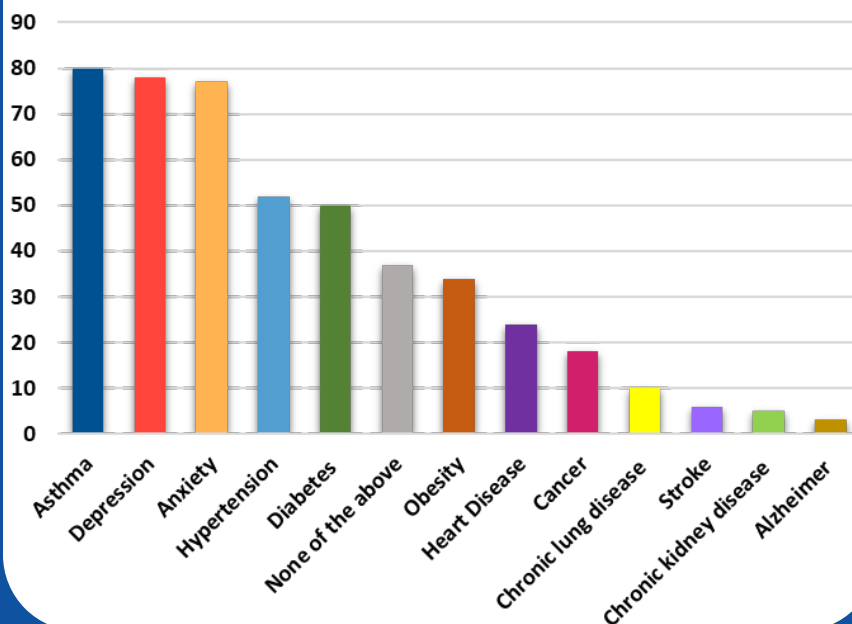
- 38.1% of Heads of Household utilize the Emergency Room (ER) for healthcare needs.
- 22.9% of the 18 years old or younger and 4.6% of the 62 years or older utilize their Primary Medical Provider for healthcare needs.

The prevalence of adult lifetime asthma in Pennsylvania increased from 12.9% in 2011 to 15.8% in 2019. The 2021 asthma registry data from the Reading Hospital shows that 23% of the patients are Hispanic and Latino.

During the pandemic, the overall mental health of the US population declined.

Communities of color experienced higher rates of COVID-19 infections and death along with greater exposure to pandemic stressors like unemployment and food insecurity. Therefore, a more pronounced decline in mental health is expected among Black, Hispanic, and Asian adults; the same groups having less access to mental health services.

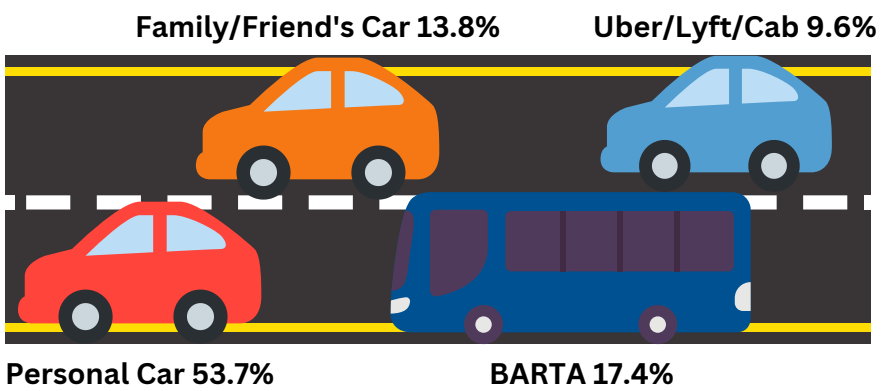
Have you or anyone in your household ever been diagnosed with...?



Asthma is the number one medical diagnosis of Oakbrook residents followed by depression, anxiety, and hypertension.

TRANSPORTATION & TECHNOLOGY

Primary Means of Transportation

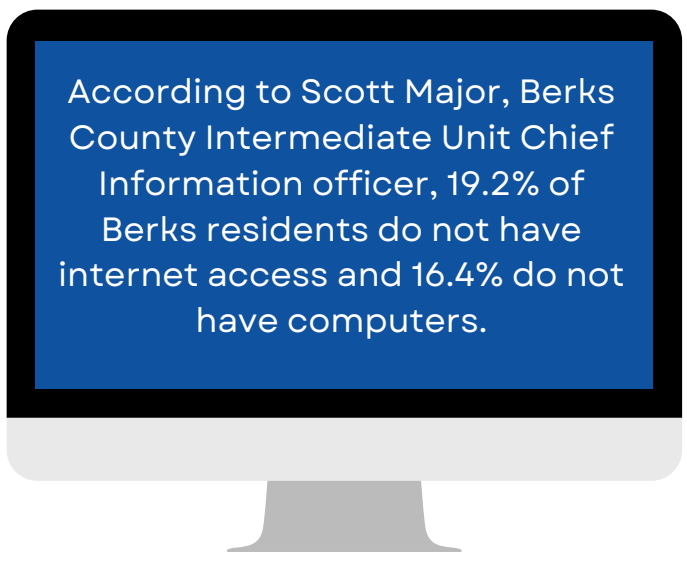
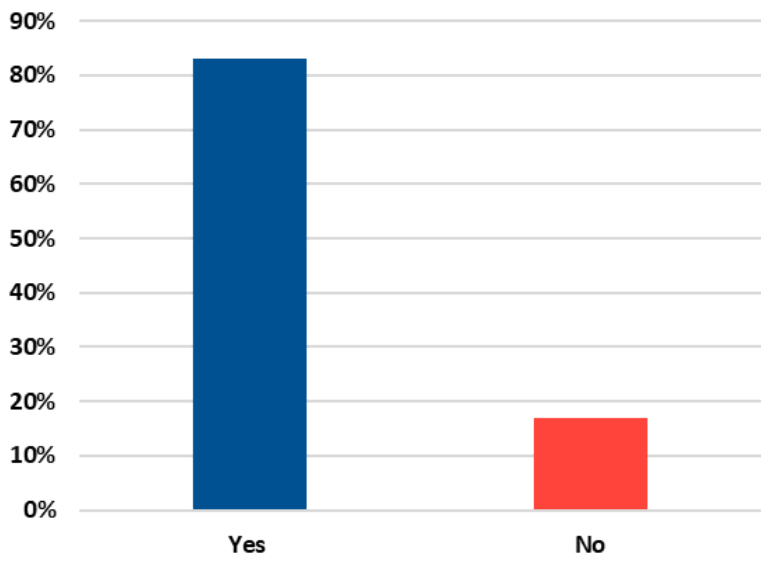


*Other and prefer not to answer = 5.5%

Average Cost for Round Trip Travel to Berkshire Blvd. Walmart from Oakbrook

Vehicle	Cost
Personal Car or Family/Friend's Car <small>(Cost based on IRS mileage rate of \$0.625 per mile)</small>	\$4.25
BARTA	\$3.60
Uber/Lyft	\$19.80
Cab	\$13.60

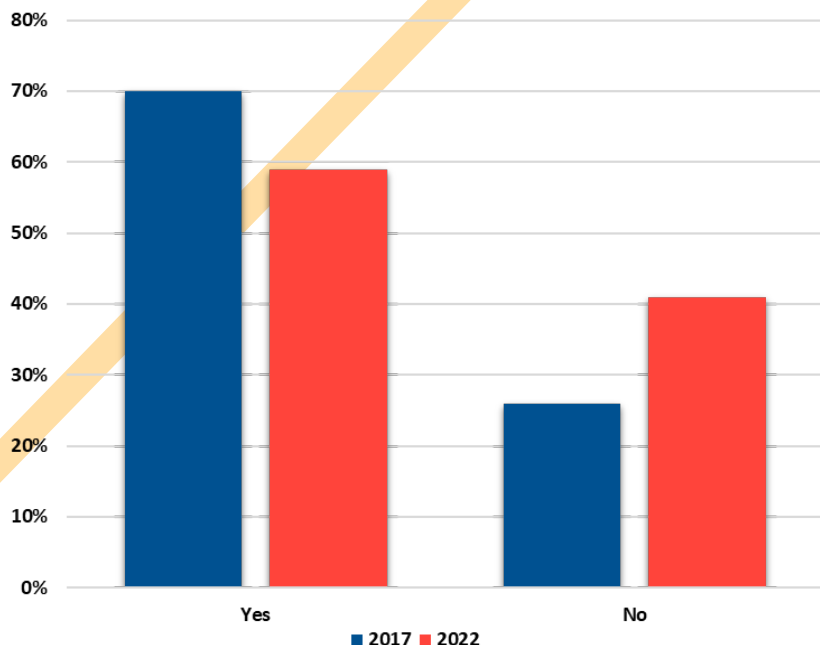
Do you have internet access in your home (not just via smartphone)? (n=218)



93% of households with children, reported having internet access.

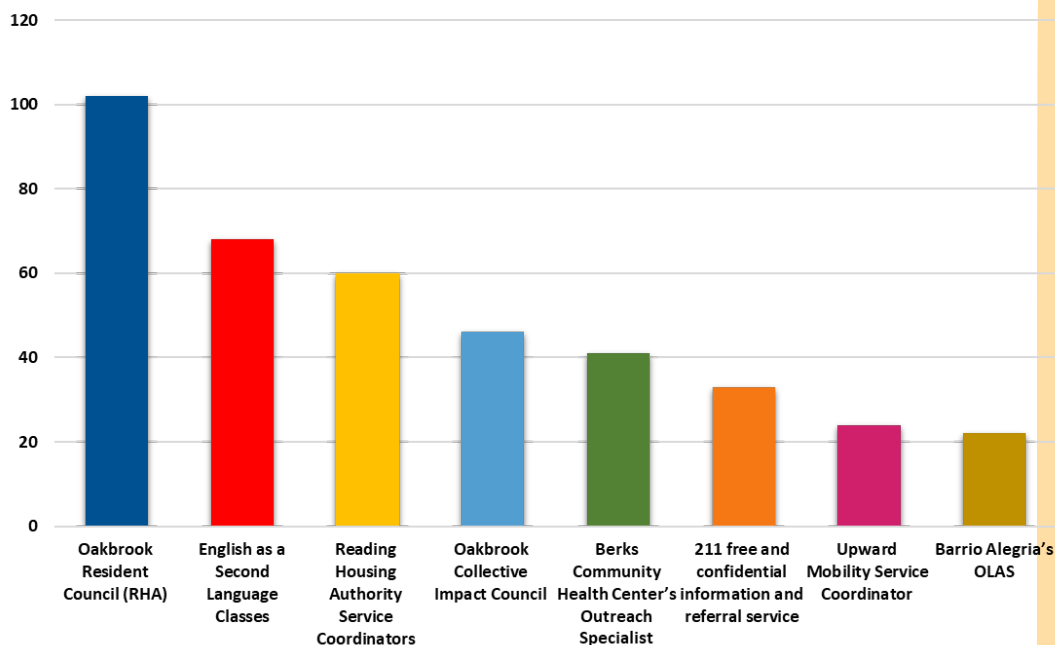
COMMUNITY

Do you feel connected to other members of the Oakbrook Community?



48% of Oakbrook community members reported that they would like to be involved in the decisions of the community. **47%** percent are willing to be a part of follow-up and focus groups and share their contact information.

Which of these community resources and activities are you aware of?



71% percent of Oakbrook residents said they were aware of at least 1 activity offered to the community. OCIC utilizes welcome baskets, yard signs and a community Facebook page to bring awareness to the community about these activities.

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