

Poverty in Lake County

By

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Developed for the

Lake County Leadership Task Force

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This report was commissioned by the Leadership Task Force of Lake County, a group of leaders from the health and human services sector who are strategizing ways to improve services for Lake County residents in need. This report is part of a series on population groups and health and human services in Lake County, Illinois. These analyses are documenting major needs and opportunities in a county undergoing rapid demographic, social and economic change.

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Essential Demographics on Lake County Poverty

What does “poverty level” mean?

The federal government developed a definition of poverty for the first time in the 1960s, and based it on the costs of purchasing a basic set of goods. The poverty definition has remained largely unchanged over time, although the amount of income judged to represent the poverty line is adjusted annually.

As of 2010, the amounts displayed below represent average poverty thresholds for Illinois.¹ For example, a family of four persons is in poverty if it has income below about \$22,300.²

Poverty Thresholds	
Size of Family Unit	Poverty Threshold
One person (unrelated individual)	11,139
Under 65 years	11,344
65 years and over	10,458
Two people	14,218
Householder under 65 years	14,676
Householder 65 years and over	13,194
Three people	17,374
Four people	22,314
Five people	26,439

Source, and for more information:

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/>

About 46,000 Lake County residents are in poverty

There are about 46,000 persons living below the federal poverty line in Lake County, Illinois. These individuals represent approximately seven percent of the county population.

Persons in Poverty: Lake County, 2005-2009

	Persons	Pct of Total
Total:	686,154	100%
In Poverty	46,040	7%
Above Poverty	640,114	93%

Based on persons for whom poverty status is determined

¹ Poverty thresholds are not adjusted to reflect local costs, and this may understate poverty in an area with a high cost of living.

² Unless otherwise noted, this report uses findings from the American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, for the years 2005-2009. Survey records from the five year period are averaged to improve the reliability of estimates. These data were the most recent available at the time the report was prepared. Note that, contrary to previous decades, the decennial census of 2010 does not report on any socioeconomic characteristics.

About 86,000 Lake County residents are in poverty or close to it

Many persons have income far below the poverty level, and others have income only slightly above the threshold. For example, more than 19,000 Lake County residents have extremely low incomes that are less than half of the poverty level. For a family of four, this would mean having annual income below \$11,150.

Persons and families with incomes slightly above the poverty level may still be considered to be “low income.” If a threshold of 150 percent of poverty (i.e., 1.5 times the poverty level) is used, the low-income population in Lake County includes more than 86,000 individuals or 13 percent of county residents. This broader interpretation of poverty is relevant because many government assistance programs provide aid to persons with incomes somewhat above the poverty level.

Persons in Poverty by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level: Lake County 2005-2009

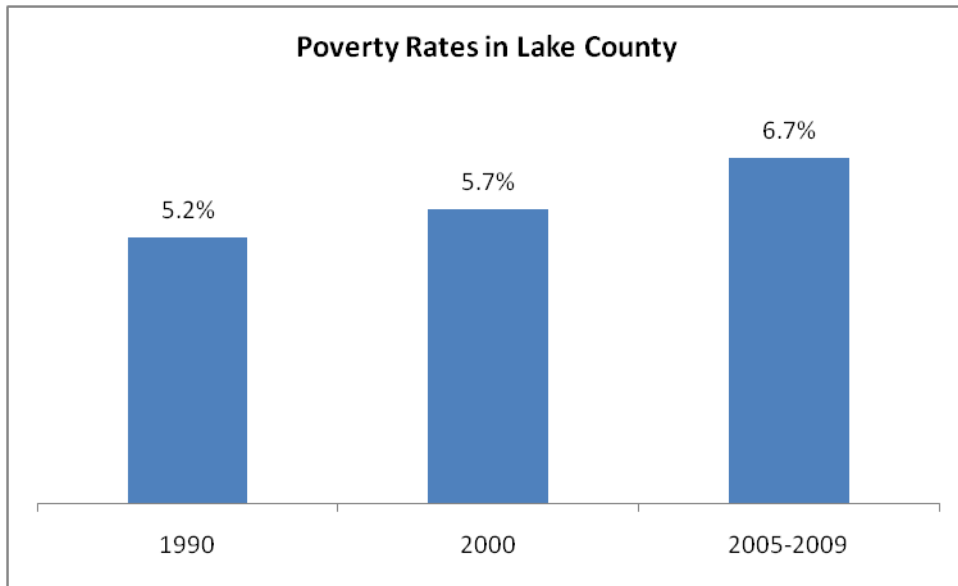
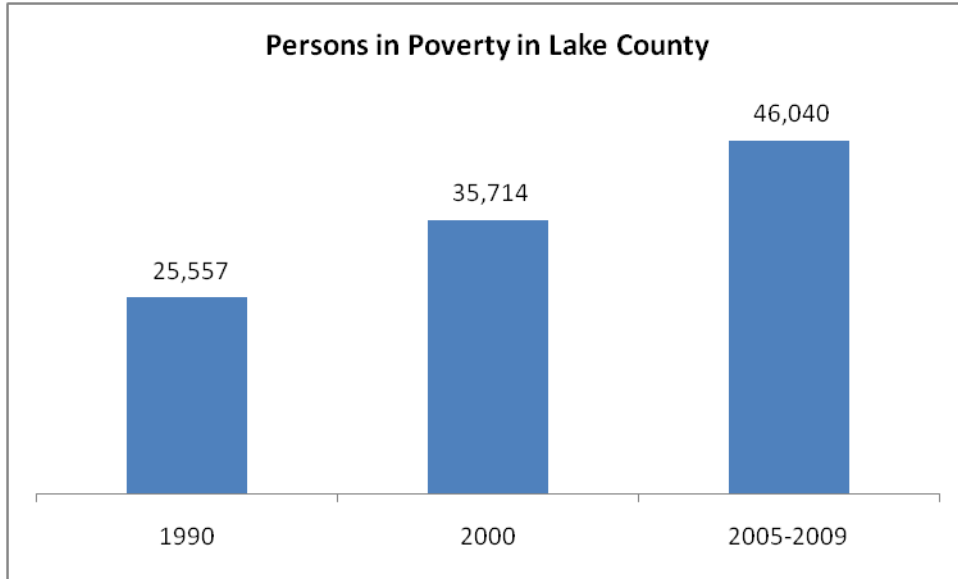
	Persons	Pct of Total
Total:	686,154	100%
Less than .50	19,057	3%
.50 to .99	26,983	4%
1.00 to 1.24	20,734	3%
1.25 to 1.49	19,517	3%
1.50 to 1.84	28,903	4%
1.85 to 1.99	11,928	2%
2.00 and over	559,032	81%

Based on persons for whom poverty status is determined

The Lake County poverty population has grown steadily

The number of persons in poverty in Lake County grew by more than 10,000 between the year 2000 and the 2005-2009 period. Annualizing this growth means that nearly 1,500 persons per year were added to the county's poverty population each year.

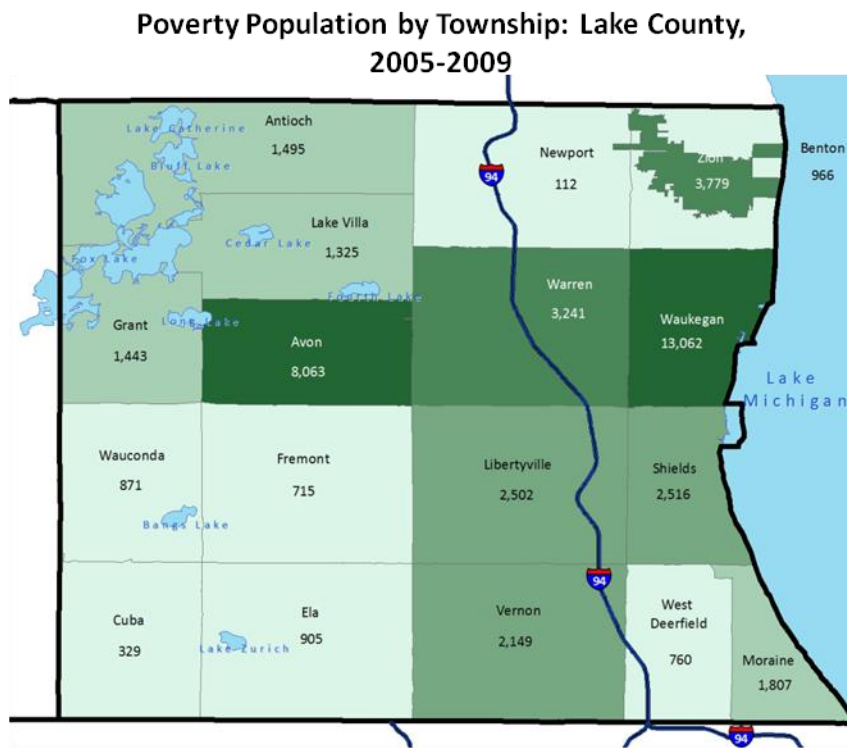
The percentage of persons in poverty in Lake County grew only slightly during the 1990s, from 5.2 percent in 1990 to 5.7 percent in 2000. But between the year 2000 and the 2005-2009 period the poverty rate rose by a full percentage point.



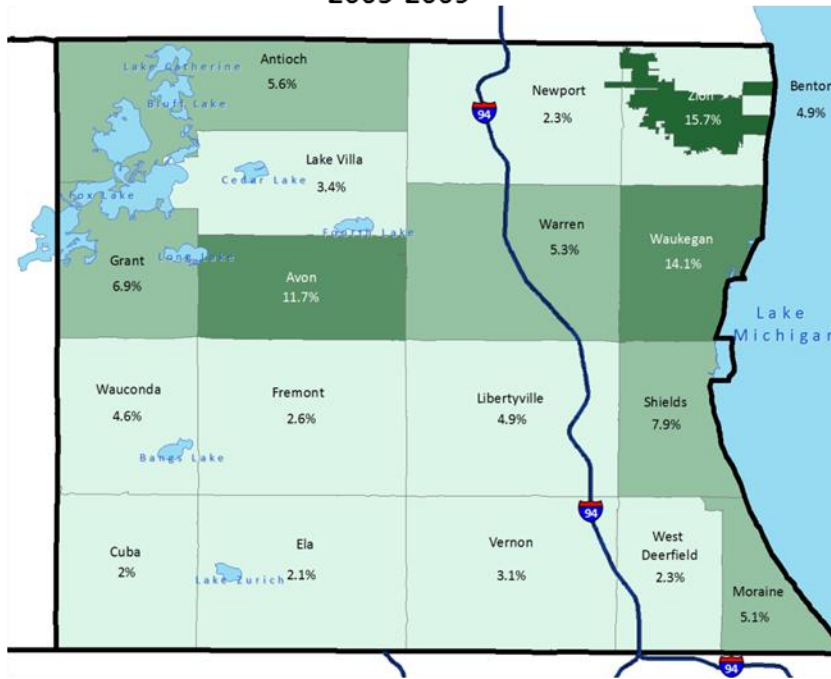
Eleven townships have at least 1,000 persons in poverty; poverty rates exceed ten percent in three townships

The highest numbers of persons in poverty are found in four townships in north and central Lake County : Avon, Warren, Waukegan and Zion. Among these, Waukegan has the highest number in poverty at 13,062 persons, followed by Avon (8,063), Zion (3,779) and Warren (3,241).

Poverty rates in Lake County townships exceed ten percent in Zion (15.7 percent), Waukegan (14.1) and Avon (11.7). Some townships are not among the highest in number poor, but have high percentages of residents in poverty. Grant Township, for example, ranks tenth in number of poor persons but has the fifth highest poverty rate in the county (6.9 percent). Antioch Township is ninth in number poor, but has the sixth highest poverty rate (5.6 percent).



Percent in Poverty by Township: Lake County,
2005-2009



Nine places have poverty rates exceeding ten percent

Poverty affects more than one in ten residents in nine places within Lake County. Of these, the poverty rates are highest in North Chicago (16.0 percent), Zion (15.7) and Round Lake Beach (14.0). Two of these places also have among the highest numbers of poor persons: North Chicago (4,051) and Round Lake Beach (3,859). Waukegan has the highest number in poverty in the county, at 11,422 persons.

Leading Poverty Populations by Place in Lake County: 2005-2009

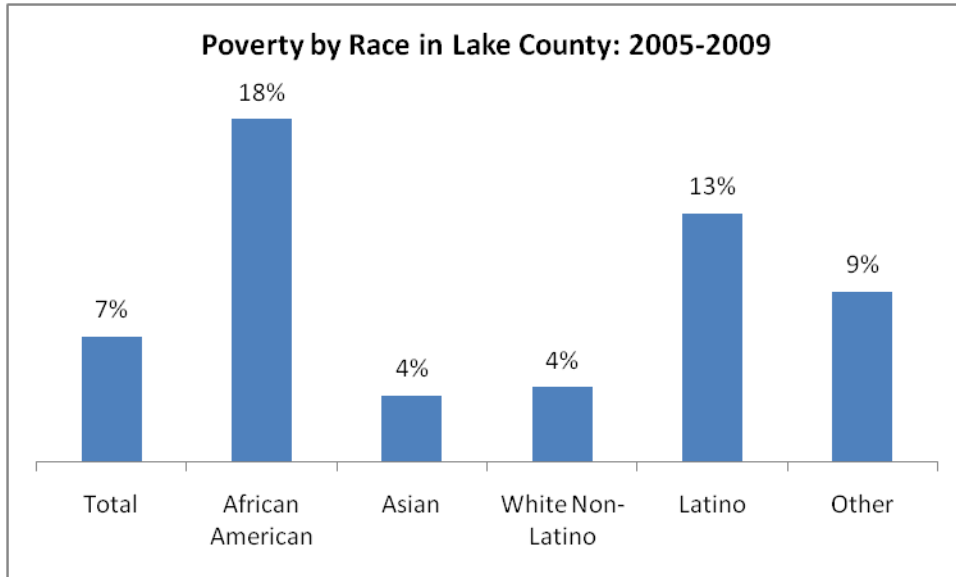
	Persons for whom Poverty Is Determined	Persons Below Poverty	Pct in Poverty
Lake County	686,154	46,040	6.7%
Waukegan city	88,021	11,422	13.0%
North Chicago city	25,337	4,051	16.0%
Round Lake Beach village	27,646	3,859	14.0%
Zion city	24,055	3,779	15.7%
Wheeling village	35,679	2,895	8.1%
Round Lake village	18,557	2,150	11.6%
Gurnee village	30,189	1,531	5.1%
Buffalo Grove village	42,317	1,389	3.3%
Highland Park city	31,046	1,324	4.3%
Mundelein village	32,251	1,294	4.0%
Fox Lake village	10,770	1,141	10.6%
Vernon Hills village	23,869	1,129	4.7%
Grayslake village	21,010	992	4.7%
Libertyville village	21,149	853	4.0%
Round Lake Park village	6,287	777	12.4%
Beach Park village	14,187	709	5.0%
Antioch village	13,238	688	5.2%
Park City city	6,976	624	8.9%
Barrington village	10,537	622	5.9%
Highwood city	5,296	580	11.0%
Wauconda village	11,548	530	4.6%
Island Lake village	8,445	528	6.3%
Lake Forest city	19,843	453	2.3%
Deerfield village	18,963	430	2.3%
Long Lake CDP*	2,748	352	12.8%

Includes places with 350+ persons in poverty

Long Lake is an unincorporated "Census Designated Place – CDP"

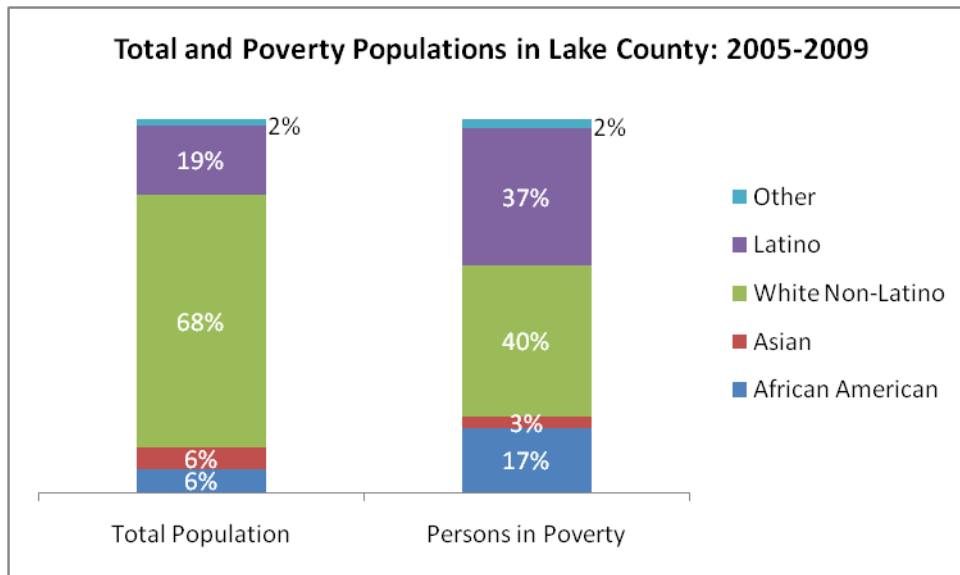
Poverty rates vary dramatically by race/ethnicity

Different racial/ethnic populations in Lake County have dramatically different rates of poverty. About four percent of non-Latino Asians and Whites have incomes below the poverty level. Some thirteen percent of Latinos, however, are in poverty, while the percent of African Americans in poverty – 18 percent – is more than double the overall county rate.



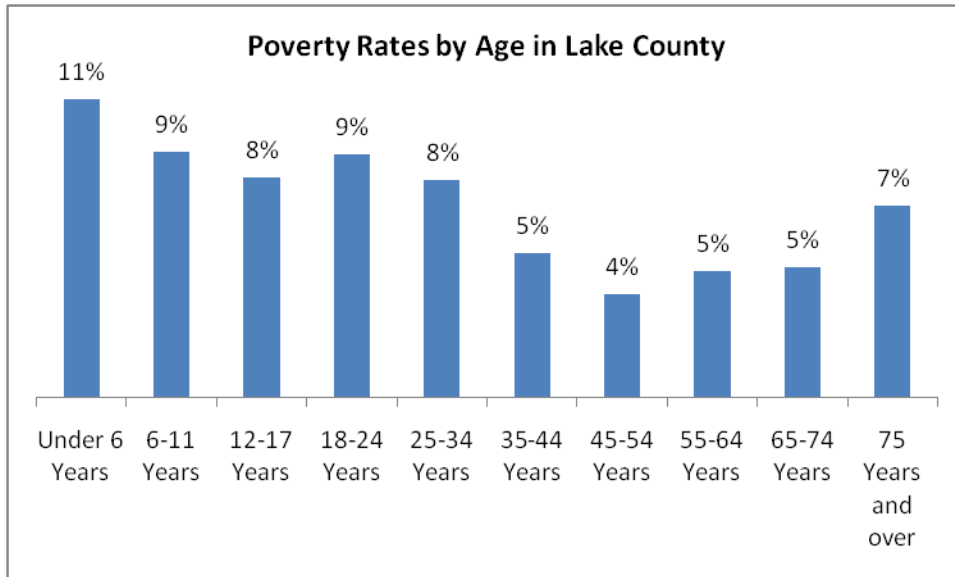
Disparate poverty rates mean the poverty population looks very different from the overall population

The chart below illustrates the disproportionate effects of poverty among the major groups in Lake County. White non-Latinos, for example, are 68 percent of the total county population but 40 percent of the poverty population. Blacks are 6 percent of all Lake County residents but they are 17 percent of persons in poverty. Latinos are about one in five county residents but they are nearly two in five of all residents in poverty.



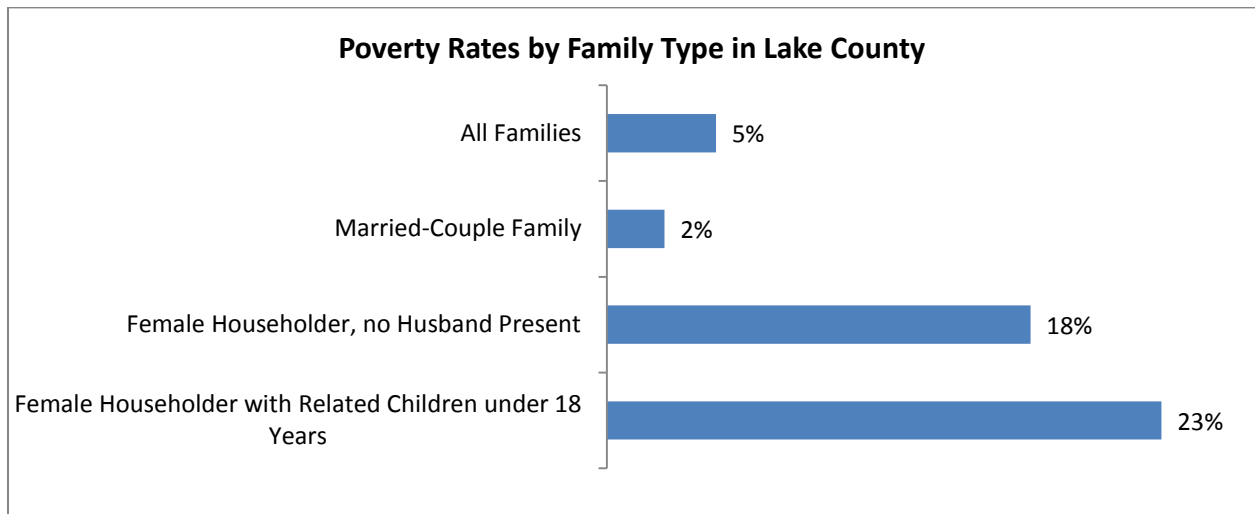
Children and young adults are the poorest Lake County residents

Poverty's impact on Lake County also varies by the age of residents. Children and young adults have the highest rates of poverty: including 11 percent of all children under six years of age. Poverty rates of middle-aged and older residents are mainly in the four-to-five percent range, depending on the cohort. About seven percent of the oldest county residents are in poverty.

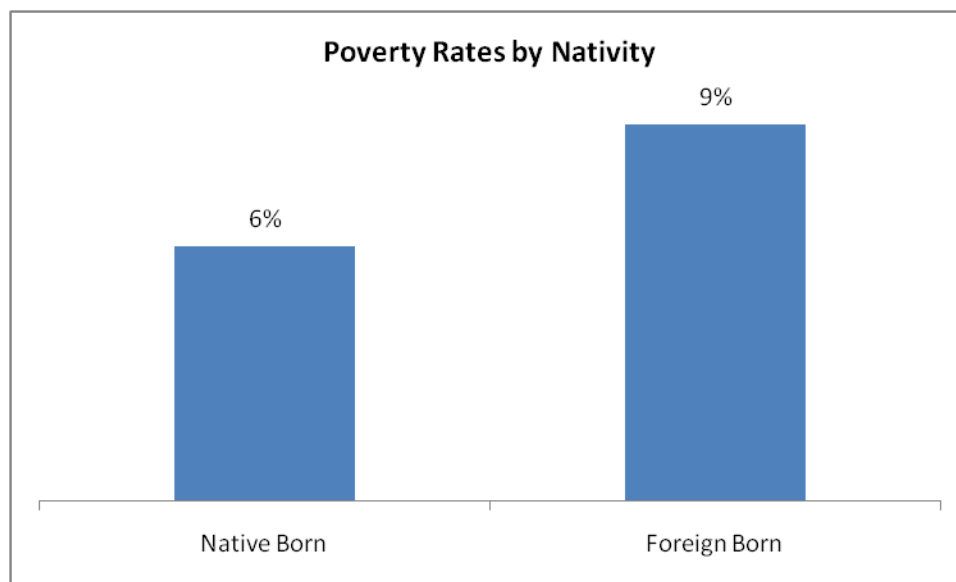


Female-headed families with children bear the highest burden of poverty

About 5 percent of all Lake County families are in poverty, but the type of family that a person lives in plays a large role in the likelihood that the individual is in poverty. The chart below illustrates that poverty rates among married-couple families in Lake County are 2 percent. In contrast, female-headed households have a poverty rate of 18 percent. When those female-headed households include children, close to a quarter of all such family arrangements are in poverty.



The foreign-born or immigrant population represents about 18 percent of Lake County residents, and so the economic situation for these persons is an important issue. As seen in the chart below, immigrants have a poverty rate that is 1.5 times that of the native-born population, at 9 percent for immigrants compared to 6 percent for the native born.



Discussion

Poverty is an important issue for Lake County. Tens of thousands of residents are below the poverty line, and their numbers have been growing steadily both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the county population. Portions of the county may have relatively low poverty rates but still have a significant number of poor persons.

While the causes and remedies of poverty are complex, certain issues bear emphasis. The markedly different rates of poverty across race and ethnic groups suggest that some segments of Lake County society require heightened attention if the county wants to ameliorate economic polarization.

The focus and the opportunities of poverty remediation may vary from one group to another. For example, African Americans are concentrated in certain townships, and that concentration may facilitate intensive services or investment. A large portion of the Latino population is foreign born, and more information is needed to understand whether immigrant poverty is being passed on to the second generation.

The highest rates of poverty are among the children of Lake County. This is of obvious concern because these children are literally the future of the county, not least as taxpayers whose financial contributions may be limited by childhoods spent in economic struggle. The high rates of poverty among children compared to seniors also highlight the different types of investment and support that exist for these groups (i.e., there is nearly universal income support – Social Security – available to seniors). Children in families headed by a single mother are at particular risk of poverty, as seen in this report, and efforts are needed to support these families' efforts to achieve work and financial stability.

Ultimately, addressing poverty in Lake County is a way to ensure a high quality of life for all residents. Diminishing poverty would contribute to creating a society where everyone has an opportunity to be as productive as possible and to make optimal social, civic and economic contributions. Achieving this will require investments in the health and human services necessary to minimize the percent of persons who lack adequate income and resources.

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Rob Paral and Associates is a consulting firm experienced in applied analysis of emerging populations and human service development. Examples of our work may be seen at www.robparal.com