







**University of Kentucky**  
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment  
*Cooperative Extension Service*

Dear Community Member,

Thank you for your support and participation in the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Community Needs Assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to better serve you through targeted educational programming.

The Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service is the outreach arm of the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and Kentucky State University College of Agriculture, Communities and Environment. With offices in all 120 counties of the Commonwealth, Extension provides practical, research-based educational programs and information.

Extension values community input into educational program development and has from its inception more than a century ago. Every four years, each Extension office prepares a plan of work that includes gathering information from community members as well as secondary data to inform the plan.

Our state is changing, and new areas of need are emerging. To standardize our plan of work process, a committee of Extension personnel and community members developed the community needs assessment process to formalize that data gathering portion.

We expected a large response and we were not disappointed. Over 38,000 people completed the survey. More than 500 interviews and focus groups were conducted. We will use this information to develop local plans of work in our counties as well as regional and statewide initiatives to make a positive impact in the lives of Kentuckians.

We look forward to continuing to serve you.

Sincerely,

University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Administration

# ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

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In the fall of 2018, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service began a statewide assessment of community issues and priorities from across the Commonwealth. County Extension offices led the effort by collecting feedback from various county residents, stakeholders, and organizations. Each county collected feedback through surveys, focus groups, and interviews with community stakeholders. The goal of this project was to gain a better understanding of the needs and priorities facing communities in Kentucky. Gathering information from each county allowed both a broad view of state community issues and an opportunity to detail and address issues specific to counties. Utilizing the results, the University of Kentucky and Cooperative Extension Service can align resources and improve services and partnerships in response to the priority needs of each county. This report is a summary of the data collected in this county.

## Community Survey

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A community needs assessment survey was developed by a committee representing a mix of county Extension Agents, Extension Specialists from departments across the University of Kentucky, and community stakeholders. The assessment survey was shared with each county Extension office. In turn, Extension Agents invited county residents to participate in the community needs assessment survey. The survey was electronically distributed by social media and email, and was distributed on paper to individuals, groups and organizations to be completed.

## Focus Groups

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County Extension office staff convened community members in interactive focus groups in the fall of 2018. The focus group listening sessions were designed to allow community members to discuss their ideas on the future of the county in more detail than allowed on the survey. Participants in the focus groups were invited to discuss their vision for a more vibrant county, issues for the future, barriers to issue resolution, resources or information that would help the issues, and ideas for an improved future. A summarized reporting of the results of these listening sessions are included in this report.

## Interviews

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In addition to the survey and focus group sessions, county Extension Agents also conducted interviews with individuals in formal leadership roles in the county. The interview questioning followed a similar format to the focus groups, seeking information on pressing needs, long term needs, and exploring the role that Extension might serve to address future issues confronting the county.

## Secondary Data

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To complement the survey, focus groups, and interviews, detailed data profiles have been compiled for each county that correspond to topic areas covered in the survey. This information provides additional context to understand the role of identified issues in each county as well as historical data to highlight trends.

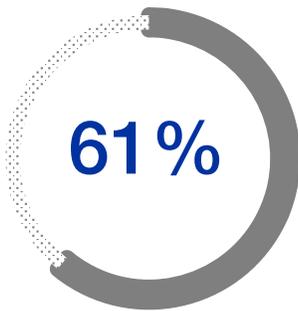
## Next Steps

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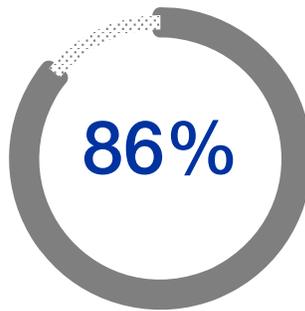
This report summarizes the information collected for this county. The report and the included secondary data compilation can serve as a starting point for deeper investigation into the issues of concern and priority for community members. The University of Kentucky and Cooperative Extension Service will support the county in addressing the priorities identified through this assessment.

# SURVEY RESPONDENTS

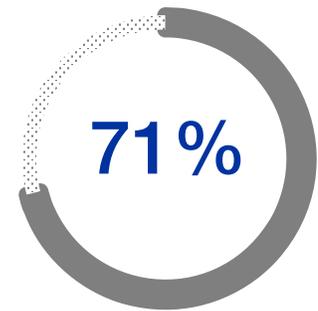
141 Respondents



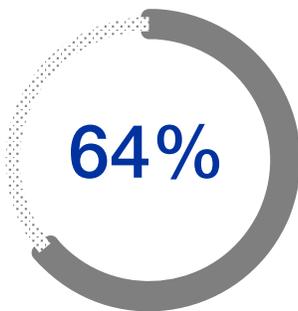
are Female



are White  
(non-Hispanic)



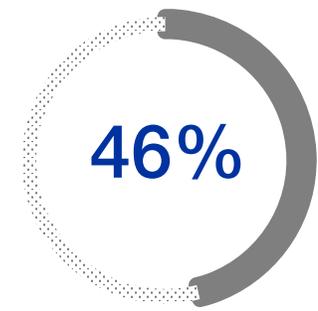
are 25-64 years old  
(working age)



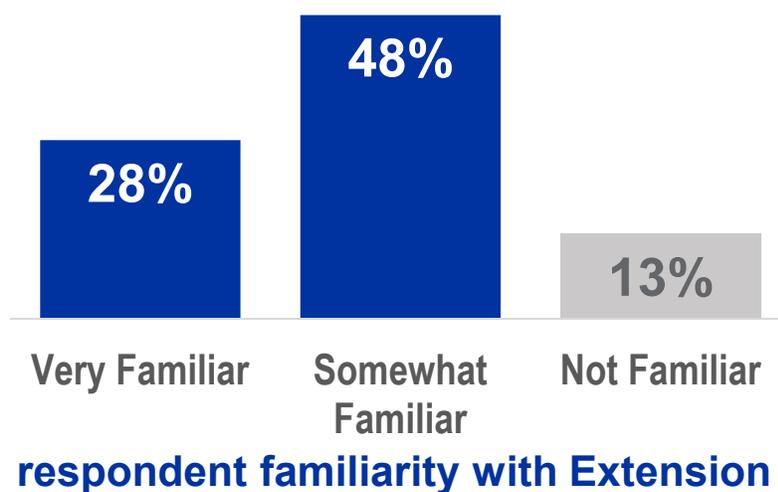
work or are  
self-employed



are retired



currently participate  
in Extension  
programming



## ISSUE IMPORTANCE

141 respondents ranked 62 community issues on a scale of “very important” to “not important.”

The table below lists all 62 community issues. The numerical value listed next to each issue represents the average rating across all respondents. Below is the scale used to determine the average rating:

Very important = 4      Important = 3      Not that important = 2      Not important = 1

The table is organized into two columns: the most important issue (on average) is listed at the top of the left column.

Category Legend:

▲ Health and Wellness      ♥ Youth and Families      ♦ Agriculture and Environment      ■ Jobs and Infrastructure      ● Community Vitality

3.88 ■ More jobs paying good wages with benefits	3.5 ♥ More support for relatives raising children of family members
3.79 ▲ Improved affordability of health care insurance	3.49 ♥ Stronger parenting and relationship building skills
Improved access to quality affordable health care providers	Better use of food safety practices (hand washing, storage, preservation, etc.)
3.75 ▲ (medical, dental, etc.)	3.49 ▲ More awareness and support for agriculture and agribusinesses
3.74 ■ Trustworthy and effective law enforcement	3.49 ▲ Safer use of prescription medications
3.73 ▲ Fewer overweight or obese youth and adults	More community marketing efforts (tourism, industry attraction, etc.)
3.72 ▲ Fewer chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc.)	3.48 ● More youth community leadership opportunities
3.68 ▲ Improved availability of health care insurance	3.47 ▲ More sources for buying safe, affordable, fresh food
More youth life skills training (money management, life decision making, etc.)	3.45 ■ More qualified employees for existing or new jobs
3.68 ■ Responsive emergency services	3.45 ● More active community volunteers
3.66 ♥ Better youth and adult career readiness	3.44 ♦ More profitable farms
3.65 ■ Access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet service	3.43 ● More effective cooperation between community organizations
Better family skills in reducing debt, increasing savings, and financial planning	Better employee “soft skills” training (communications, team work, etc.)
3.63 ♥	3.4 ■
3.61 ♦ Sustainability of family farms	3.38 ▲ Better skills for selecting and preparing healthier food
3.61 ■ Increased support for small business	3.37 ▲ More individual physical activity opportunities
3.6 ● More qualified leaders to prepare community for the future	3.37 ▲ Safer community places to walk, run, bike, etc.
3.59 ♦ Less illegal dumping and littering	3.36 ♦ More crop and livestock production opportunities
3.59 ♥ More support for prevention of school violence and bullying	3.34 ■ Better utilities (water, sewer, etc.) to attract industry
3.58 ▲ More sources for buying safe, affordable, fresh local foods	3.3 ♦ More land available for food production
3.57 ♥ More support for families and individuals with special needs	More healthy snacks and food options at restaurants and community events
3.57 ■ Better roads and bridges	3.3 ▲
3.56 ♥ Affordable, quality child care	3.29 ♦ Less pest, disease, and weed issues
3.55 ♥ More support for families with mental and emotional health issues	3.29 ♦ More farm-related jobs
3.54 ♥ More senior citizen support programs	3.28 ▲ Improved sidewalks and crosswalks
3.54 ■ Safe and accessible public water and sewer	3.23 ■ More part-time and summer job opportunities
3.54 ● More pride in the community and its assets	3.17 ■ More tourism-related businesses
3.53 ♥ More affordable, quality elder care options	3.11 ■ More public transportation options
3.52 ▲ Availability of substance use treatment	3.11 ♦ Increased tree and forestry management
3.52 ♦ More market opportunities for farmers	3.09 ♦ More training for food gardening skills
3.5 ● More citizens helping to solve local issues	3.08 ♦ More community gardens
3.5 ♥ More child and partner abuse prevention resources	3.02 ♦ Better landscapes for improved home value
3.5 ▲ Availability of substance use prevention programs	3.01 ♦ More community parks and green spaces

## TOP PRIORITY ISSUES

After respondents ranked the importance of issues in their community, they were asked to identify the top three priorities for their community in each issue category.

115 respondents chose issues by priority, and the resulting top three priorities for each issue category are listed below.

By prioritizing the issues, respondents are not just identifying how important each issue is for their community, but rather *which issues they would prioritize in their community*.

### Jobs & Infrastructure

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1. More jobs paying good wages and benefits
2. More qualified employees for existing and new jobs
3. More tourism-related businesses

### Agriculture & Environment

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1. More market opportunities for farmers
2. Sustainability of family farms
3. Less illegal dumping and littering

### Health & Wellness

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1. Improved affordability of health care insurance
2. Better skills for selecting and preparing healthier food
3. Availability of substance use prevention programs

### Youth & Families

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1. More youth life skills training (money management, life decision making, etc.)
2. Better youth and adult career readiness
3. Better family skills in reducing debt, increasing savings and financial planning

### Community Vitality

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1. More qualified leaders to prepare community for the future
2. More citizens helping to solve local issues
3. More pride in the community and its assets

The Mason County Extension Office convened community members in one interactive focus group consisting of members of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, business owners and company managers. The conversation focused on identifying the priority issues facing the county and proposed ideas of what residents would like to see in the future. While focus groups only offer a small sample of attitudes within the county, they do provide insightful first-hand perspectives from residents. The responses from the focus groups are summarized below.

## Vision for a More Vibrant Community

The following themes were raised by focus group participants when asked about their vision for a more vibrant community:

- A community with good economic opportunities for its residents
- A workforce aligned with the needs of businesses and industries
- A place where people take pride in their county and communities
- A county with good broadband connectivity
- A county with many community activities and entertainment options

## Identified Priorities

- Continued growth and economic development
- Respond to the drug epidemic
- Continued infrastructure improvement
- Agribusiness (hemp) processing plant
- Downtown lodging

## Priorities Discussion

The focus group participants indicated that growth and economic development was both an immediate and long-term priority. Participants expressed that residents in the county need more disposable income. Participants suggested that more entrepreneurial support was needed, and that the area needs to stop losing talented people to larger cities.

Coping with the drug epidemic is of high importance to the county. Participants noted drug use impacts on families, the police force, public services, emergency responders, and on the economy, including unproductive workers. They also pointed out the need for more drug treatment facilities.

Other priorities identified included continued road and bridge improvement. The infrastructure improvements support public safety as well as open up the door for growth.

Development of agribusiness was identified as important. A hemp processing plant would support economic growth. In addition, participants noted a desire for more downtown lodging.

The focus group participants discussed resources which would be helpful to the county, and many related to communication and marketing. They suggested having a county wide marketing platform and live events calendar. They said the county would benefit from knowing how to market events and programs. Participants also mentioned that more committed volunteers would be useful to create a more vibrant community. They also expressed a need for more drug prevention education.

One interview was conducted with an individual in a leadership role in Mason County. The following is a summary of the interview. The interview followed a similar format to the focus groups, seeking information on pressing needs, long-term needs, and exploring ways that Extension might serve to address issues confronting the county. The interview perspectives are compiled and summarized to represent key discussion ideas.

## Identified Priorities

- Economic and workforce development
- Recruiting qualified teachers
- Support of farming

## Priorities Discussion

The informant discussed the urgent need for economic and workforce development to bring more income to the community and replace lost jobs.

Education was another identified priority. The informant noted that a good workforce is dependent on having good teachers, and that the County needs the best and brightest in the classroom to educate youth. State politics and pension issues, in addition local considerations and budgets, create a challenge for recruiting qualified teachers.

Educating farmers about best management practices and possible financial assistance would help local farms stay viable. Helping farmers to diversify to be more resilient in the face of weather impacts which can ruin an entire growing season is important. Another priority suggested was to increase awareness of soil and water conservation practices, particularly in partnership with local groups.

The University of Kentucky and Cooperative Extension Service could help the county address priority issues by improving how they communicate services and research information, through websites, newsletters, vendor displays, and speaking to civic groups. Also, they could improve their website, make it simpler and easier for the general public and farmers, updating it and fixing any bad links. The informant suggested presenting material in a more understandable manner based on the level of the audience.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR SECONDARY DATA PROFILE

As part of the Community Assessment process, each county is provided with a profile of secondary data. The goal is to supplement the survey, focus groups and interviews with a wide range of secondary data. The data selected for the profiles correspond to the topics covered in the survey and a list of variables provided by the committee that designed the assessment process.

As counties begin to understand the results from their surveys, focus groups and interviews, these data provide an additional dimension to understanding the role of particular issues in each county.

### Profile Data

Data in each profile are organized as follows: county demographics; families and households; agriculture; jobs, economy and labor force; youth; and health and wellness. Because we all relate to data in different ways, within each section, the data are presented using three different formats:

- Tabular data
- Narrative
- Graphic

Comparison data over time or comparisons with the state as a whole are provided where space allowed.

**County Demographics**

**Families and Households**

**Agriculture**

**Jobs, Economy and  
Labor Force**

**Youth**

**Health and Wellness**

### Finding More Data

If you need additional data, many sources are available. On the back page of each profile, we provide information for each of the data sources we used. We also provide a list of websites where you may access them.

For easy access to a wide array of data, visit [Kentucky: By The Numbers](#), the [Building Strong Families Profiles](#) from Family and Consumer Sciences Extension, and the [County Data Profiles](#) from the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK).

If you need help in finding more data or if you need assistance in understanding this secondary data profile, please feel free to contact Dr. Julie N. Zimmerman ([jzimm@uky.edu](mailto:jzimm@uky.edu)) in the Department of Community and Leadership Development.



# Mason County Data Profile

**Mason County’s Data Profile** is provided by the **Kentucky: By The Numbers** program in the Department of Community and Leadership Development for the Community Assessments conducted by the University of Kentucky’s Cooperative Extension Service. These secondary data profiles supplement the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews conducted in each county across the state through the County Extension Offices and coordinated by Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK).

The overall goals for the Community Assessments are:

- To gain a better understanding of the county’s pressing issues;
- To enhance Extension’s place-based approach by providing information on locally relevant issues in counties;
- To gain a better understanding of how Extension can support important community change to improve Kentucky;
- To provide a statewide view of how top issues are distributed across the state.

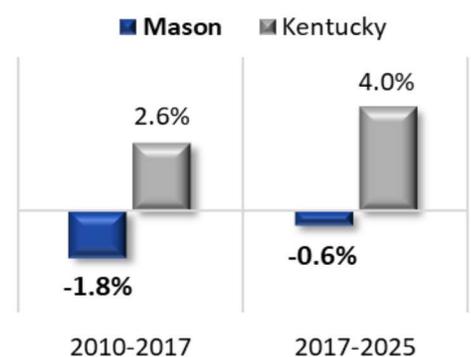
For more information on the Community Assessment process, visit <https://extension.ca.uky.edu/communityassessment>

For additional data or other data-related assistance, contact: Dr. Julie N. Zimmerman ([jjimm@uky.edu](mailto:jjimm@uky.edu))

## County Demographics

Population	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2017 <sup>2</sup>	2025 <sup>3</sup>
Total	17,490	17,174	17,074
Ages 65 and over	2,645		3,705
	<b>2010-2017<sup>4</sup></b>		
Net Migration (in/out)	-355		
Race/Ethnicity	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2016 <sup>5</sup>	
White	15,705	15,354	
Black or African American	1,128	1,049	
Asian	99	111	
Other and 2 or more races	310	377	
Hispanic	248	299	

**Percent Change Total Population<sup>6</sup>**  
2010-2017 and 2017-2025



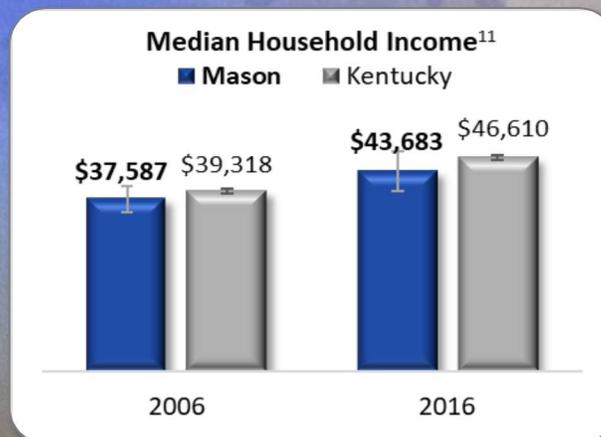
- From 2010 to 2017, the total population in Mason County **decreased** by **-316** people.<sup>2</sup>
- Between April 2010 and June 2017, there was an estimated **net out migration** of **-355** people.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2016, the composition of Mason County’s population is estimated to be **89.3%** White, **6.1%** Black/African American, **0.6%** Asian, **2.2%** other and 2 or more races, and **1.7%** Hispanic.<sup>5</sup>
- From 2017 to 2025, the total population in Mason County is **projected to decrease** by **-100** people.<sup>3</sup>
- As baby boomers are entering retirement, between 2010 and 2025 the population ages 65 and over in Mason County are **projected to increase** by **40.1%** compared to 51.9% for the state as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

## Mason County Data Profile

### Families and Households

Families	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2012-2016 <sup>7</sup>
Married couple		
... with own children	1,299	1,124 (+/- 172)
Female householder		
... with own children	572	488 (+/- 123)
Male householder		
... with own children	179	130 (+/- 62)
Nonfamily households (live alone/unrelated)	2,240	2,269 (+/- 221)

Poverty	2012-2016 <sup>7</sup>
Percent of families with related children who are below poverty	22.9% (+/- 5.4%)
Percent 65 and over below poverty	12.5% (+/- 4.0%)

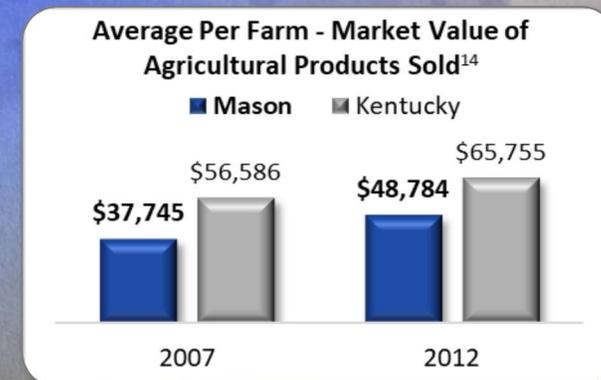


Grandparents living with and raising grandchildren <sup>3</sup>	2012-2016 <sup>7</sup>
	134 (+/- 71)

- In 2016, Mason County's official poverty rate was **19.4%** (15.9% - 22.9%), compared to 18.2% (17.9% - 18.6%) for the state as a whole.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2017, there were **8** child care centers in Mason County. Of these **6** were STARS certified.<sup>9</sup>
- Between 2012-2016, **5.5%** (+/-1.7%) of people ages 5 and over spoke a language other than English at home.<sup>7</sup>
- The Urban Institute estimates that **15%** people in Mason County with a credit bureau record in 2016 had student loan debt compared to 16% for the state.<sup>10</sup>

### Agriculture (Data from the 2017 Ag Census will be available in 2019)

Farms*	2007 <sup>12</sup>	2012 <sup>13</sup>
Total number of farms	753	634
Percent of land in farms	91.0%	82.5%
Average farm size (acres)	186	200
		<b>2012<sup>13</sup></b>
Income from agri-tourism and recreational services		\$30,000
Number of farms marketing products directly to retail outlets		10
Average value per farm of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption		\$2,148



Percent of Principal Operators	2012 <sup>13</sup>
... who are female	9.9%
... under age 35	4.1%
... farming as primary occupation	43.7%

- In 2012, the total market value of agricultural products sold in Mason County was **\$30,929,000**.<sup>13</sup>
- Of the total market value of agricultural products sold, **59.6%** was the value of crops and **40.5%** was the value of livestock, poultry, and their products.<sup>13</sup>
- The total farm production expenses (average per farm) was **\$41,631** compared to \$62,002 for the state.<sup>13</sup>
- In Mason County, there were **888** hired farm labor workers on **212** farms.<sup>13</sup>
- **91.3%** of farms were operated by a family or an individual compared to 91.0% for the state.<sup>13</sup>

\* A farm must sell at least \$5,000 to be defined as a farm operation.

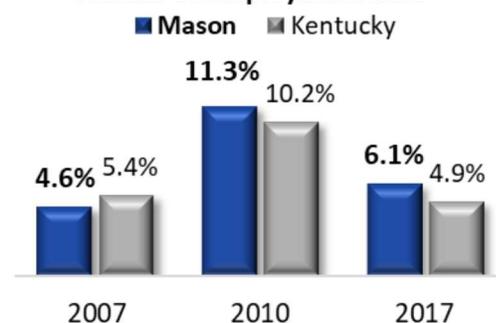
## Mason County Data Profile

### Jobs, Economy, and Labor Force

Jobs and Businesses	2010	2016
Total Employment (# of jobs) <sup>15</sup>	11,306	11,701
Total Establishments (w/ employees) <sup>16</sup>	466	428
... % with 1-9 employees	73.2%	70.6%
... % with 10-20 employees	14.4%	14.7%
Total NonEmployer Establishments (w/o employees) <sup>17</sup>	1,110	1,198

Education	2012-2016 <sup>7</sup>	
Percent of population 25 and over		
... with HS or higher	82.8% (+/- 2.2%)	
... with bachelors or higher	15.8% (+/- 1.9%)	
	Men	Women
Median Earnings (2012-16) <sup>7</sup>	\$29,023 (+/- \$3,720)	\$22,800 (+/- \$2,232)

Annual Unemployment Rate<sup>20</sup>



Avg Weekly Wage<sup>18</sup>

	2017
... All Industries (Private & Govt)	\$765
... Goods-producing (Private)	\$1,082
... Service-providing (Private)	\$691

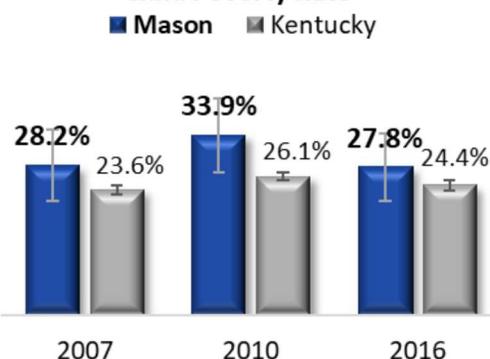
- In 2017, the number of private establishments covered by unemployment insurance in Mason County was **56** for goods-producing, **434** for service-providing, and **53** for hospitality & leisure.<sup>18</sup>
- Between 2012 and 2016, of the **6,976** (+/- 360) workers ages 16 and over, **70.9%** (+/- 3.6%) worked inside the county, **20.7%** (+/- 2.2%) worked outside the county and **8.4%** (+/- 2.2%) worked outside Kentucky.<sup>7</sup>
- Between 2012 and 2016, **3.1%** (+/- 1.6%) of workers ages 16 and over who worked full-time year round were below poverty compared to 3.5% (+/- 0.1%) for the state as a whole.<sup>7</sup>
- **25.7%** of 2016 HS graduates in the county earned an industry certificate compared to 19.2% for the state.<sup>19</sup>

### Youth

Population by Age	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2017 <sup>2</sup>	2025 <sup>3</sup>
Under 5 years old	1,197	1,088	1,044
5-9 years old	1,129	1,110	1,072
10-14 years old	1,237	1,133	1,148
15-19 years old	1,109	1,070	1,064

Children by Relationship to Householder	2012-2016 <sup>7</sup>
... Own Children (Biological, Adopted, Stepchild)	3,651 (+/- 143)
... Grandchild	189 (+/- 87)
... Other Relative	92 (+/- 60)
... Foster/Unrelated	57 (+/- 61)

Child Poverty Rate<sup>23</sup>



**19.6%** of students entered KY public postsecondary institutions underprepared in one or more subjects (2015).<sup>21</sup>

- Between 2012-2016, there were an estimated **202** (+/- 93) youth ages 5-17 who had a disability.<sup>7</sup>
- **32.8%** of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Mason County scored proficient or distinguished on math in the 2015-16 school year compared to 47.7% for the state.<sup>22</sup>
- **1,007** (+/- 306) youth under age 18 lived in households that received supplemental security income (SSI), cash public assistance, or food stamps/SNAP in the past 12 months (2012-2016).<sup>7</sup>

# Mason County Data Profile

## Health and Wellness

### Percent of Adults

... reporting poor or fair health (2016) <sup>24</sup>	22.0% (21.2%-22.9%)
... with hypertension (2013-15) <sup>25</sup>	53.4% (42.1%-64.4%)
... with obesity (2014-16) <sup>25</sup>	30% (20.7%-40.9%)
... with diabetes (2014-16) <sup>25</sup>	12.8% (7.6%-20.7%)

### Number of Individuals

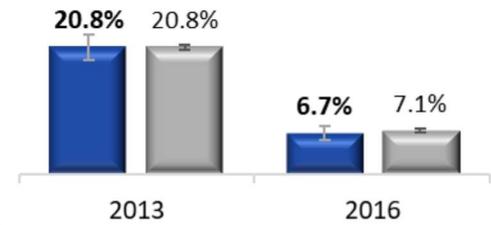
... receiving SNAP (food stamps) (2017) <sup>26</sup>	3,218
... who are food insecure (2016 estimate) <sup>27</sup>	2,790

### Number of Overdoses<sup>28</sup>

	2008-2010	2015-2017
... fatal overdoses	< 5	26
... nonfatal overdoses	117	168

### Percent of Population Ages 18-64 who are Uninsured<sup>29</sup>

■ Mason ■ Kentucky



### Number of Care Providers<sup>24</sup>

... Primary Care Physicians (2015)	14
... Dentists (2016)	12
... Mental Health Providers (2017)	59

- The estimated food insecurity rate for Mason County is **16.2%**, compared to 15.5% for the state.<sup>27</sup>
- From 2010 to 2016, the number of grocery stores **decreased** by **16.7%**, from **6 to 5** stores.<sup>16</sup>
- In 2013-2015, **27.7%** (23.5%-32.0%) of adults ages 20 and over reported no leisure time physical activity.<sup>24</sup>
- The Urban Institute estimates that **24%** of people in Mason County with a credit bureau record in 2016 had medical debt in collections compared to 27% for the state as a whole.<sup>10</sup>
- **15.7%** (8.8%-26.3%) of adults reported that there was a time in past year when they needed to see a doctor but could not because of the cost.<sup>25</sup>

### Sources

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- 2017 Early Childhood Profile. Kentucky Center for Statistics (Formerly KCEWS).
- Debt in America: An Interactive Map. Urban Institute.
- Chart: 2006 and 2016 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE). U.S. Census Bureau.
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- 2012 Census of Agriculture. U.S. Department of Agriculture.
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- County Business Patterns. U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder.
- NonEmployer Statistics. U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder.
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- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. Kids Count Data Center.
- 2017 Early Childhood Profile. Kentucky Center for Statistics (Formerly KCEWS).
- Chart: 2007, 2010, and 2016 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE). U.S. Census Bureau.
- 2018 County Health Rankings. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- Kentucky Health Facts. Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.
- Food and Nutrition Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture.
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- Custom Data Request. Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC).
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### Websites

- 2012 Census of Agriculture.  
<https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/>
- American FactFinder. <https://factfinder.census.gov>
- BEA Regional Economic Accounts.  
<https://apps.bea.gov/itable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=70&step=1>
- County Health Rankings. <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>
- Debt in America: An Interactive Map.  
<https://apps.urban.org/features/debt-interactive-map/>
- Food and Nutrition Service. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>
- Kentucky Center for Statistics (Formerly KCEWS). <https://kystats.ky.gov/>
- Kentucky Health Facts. <http://www.kentuckyhealthfacts.org/>
- Kentucky State Data Center. <https://factfinder.census.gov>
- Kids Count Data Center. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>
- Local Area Unemployment Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/lau/>
- Map the Meal Gap. <http://map.feedingamerica.org/>
- Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW).  
<https://www.bls.gov/cew/>
- Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE).  
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sahie.html>
- Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE).  
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saie.html>

Additional data are also available at:

Kentucky: By The Numbers (<http://www2.ca.uky.edu/snar/index.htm>),  
 the FCS Building Strong Families profiles (<http://hes.uky.edu/StrongFamilies>),  
 and the CEDIK county profiles (<https://cedik.ca.uky.edu/CountyDataProfiles>).

Mason County Priority Responses  
115 Respondents

## Jobs and Infrastructure

More jobs paying good wages and benefits	58.87%
More qualified employees for existing and new jobs	9.22%
More tourism-related businesses	7.09%
Responsive emergency services	6.38%
Access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet service	5.67%
Increased support for small businesses	4.96%
Better utilities (water, sewer, etc.) to attract industry	4.96%
Better employee "soft skills" training (communications, team work, etc.)	4.26%
Safe and accessible public water and sewer	4.26%
More public transportation options	3.55%
Better roads and bridges	3.55%
Trustworthy and effective law enforcement	2.13%
More part-time and summer job opportunities	0%

## Agriculture and Environment

More market opportunities for farmers	35.46%
Sustainability of family farms	34.75%
Less illegal dumping and littering	19.86%
More support for Kentucky agriculture and agribusiness	16.31%
More farm-related jobs	11.35%
More community parks and green spaces	11.35%
More profitable farms	10.64%
More crop and livestock production opportunities	7.8%
More training for food gardening skills	6.38%
Increased tree and forestry management	6.38%
Better landscapes for improved home value	4.96%
More community gardens	2.84%
Less pest, disease, and weed issues	2.13%
More land available for food production	2.13%

## Health and Wellness

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Improved affordability of health care insurance	20.57%
Better skills for selecting and preparing healthier food	15.6%
Availability of substance use prevention programs	14.18%
Fewer chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc.)	13.48%
Availability of substance use treatment	12.77%
More sources for buying safe, affordable, fresh food	11.35%
Improved access to quality, affordable health care providers (medical, dental, etc.)	10.64%
More healthy snack and food options at restaurants and community events	9.93%
More sources for buying safe, affordable, fresh local foods	9.22%
Improved availability of health care insurance	9.22%
Safer community places to walk, run, bike, etc.	7.09%
Safer use of prescription medications	6.38%
Fewer overweight or obese youth and adults	5.67%
Better use of food safety practices (hand washing, storage, preservation, etc.)	4.96%
Improved sidewalks and crosswalks	4.26%
More individual physical activity opportunities	2.13%

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## Youth and Families

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More youth life skills training (money management, life decision making, etc.)	29.79%
Better youth and adult career readiness	28.37%
Better family skills in reducing debt, increasing savings and financial planning	21.28%
More support for prevention of school violence and bullying	17.02%
Stronger parenting and relationship building skills	12.06%
More support for relatives raising children of family members	11.35%
More support for families with mental and emotional health issues	11.35%
Affordable quality child care	9.93%
More affordable, quality elder care options	9.22%
More support for families and individuals with special needs	7.09%
More senior citizen support programs	4.26%
More child and partner abuse prevention resources	2.84%

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## Community Vitality

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More qualified leaders to prepare community for the future	35.46%
More citizens helping to solve local issues	29.08%
More pride in the community and its assets	25.53%
More youth community leadership opportunities	17.73%
More active community volunteers	15.6%
More effective cooperation between community organizations	12.77%
More community marketing efforts (tourism, industry attraction, etc.)	11.35%

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## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



DATE

NAME  
ADDRESS  
CITY, KY ZIP

### Cooperative Extension Service

(Your) County  
Street address  
City, KY zip-speed  
(000) 000-0000  
Fax: (000) 000-0000  
<http://extension.ca.uky.edu>

Re: \_\_\_\_\_ County Extension Community Survey

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The **Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service (Extension)** is the local outreach arm of the **University of Kentucky** College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and **Kentucky State University** College of Agriculture, Communities, and the Environment. The goal is to provide practical, research-based education that helps individuals, families and communities solve problems and improve lives. Extension provides value to communities through educational programs and information in areas like farming, gardening, parenting, budgeting, healthy living, and youth, community, and economic development.

We are interested in better understanding the issues that are important to you in your community. In response, the Kentucky Cooperative Extension System can tailor new and existing programs to address the highest priority issues that directly impact you, your family and your community. You do NOT need to be familiar with Cooperative Extension to complete this survey. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete and all of your responses will be completely anonymous and confidential.

**Please return this survey to (Local office name and address) by \_\_\_\_\_.**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact (local office name and phone number).

Sincerely,

**Cooperative Extension Service**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Family and Consumer Sciences  
4-H Youth Development  
Community and Economic Development

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability. University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating.  
LEXINGTON, KY 40546



Disabilities  
accommodated  
with prior notification.

1. Please rate each of the following community issues on a scale of "Not Important" to "Very Important" by placing a check mark or "X" in the corresponding space. If you are uncertain if an issue is important to your community, select "I don't know."
2. After evaluating the importance of each issue within this category, please select the **TWO** issues you consider the highest priority for your community.

### Jobs and Public Infrastructure

	1.					2.	
	Not Important	Not that Important	Important	Very Important	I don't know	Select 2 issues	
More jobs paying good wages with benefits	<input type="radio"/>						
More tourism-related businesses	<input type="radio"/>						
Increased support for small businesses	<input type="radio"/>						
More part-time and summer job opportunities	<input type="radio"/>						
More qualified employees for existing or new jobs	<input type="radio"/>						
Better employee "soft skills" training (communications, team work, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>						
Better utilities (water, sewer, etc.) to attract industry	<input type="radio"/>						
Access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet service	<input type="radio"/>						
Safe and accessible public water and sewer	<input type="radio"/>						
Responsive emergency services	<input type="radio"/>						
Trustworthy and effective law enforcement	<input type="radio"/>						
Better roads and bridges	<input type="radio"/>						
More public transportation options	<input type="radio"/>						
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>						

### Agriculture and Environment

	Not Important	Not that Important	Important	Very Important	I don't know	Select 2 issues	
More farm-related jobs	<input type="radio"/>						
More market opportunities for farmers	<input type="radio"/>						
More crop and livestock production opportunities	<input type="radio"/>						
More profitable farms	<input type="radio"/>						
Sustainability of family farms	<input type="radio"/>						
More awareness and support for agriculture and agribusinesses	<input type="radio"/>						
More land available for food production	<input type="radio"/>						
Less pest, disease and weed issues	<input type="radio"/>						
More community gardens	<input type="radio"/>						

*This section continues on the next page.*

**Please rate each of the following community issues** on a scale of "Not Important" to "Very Important" by placing a check mark or "X" in the corresponding space. If you are uncertain if an issue is important to your community, select "I don't know." After evaluating the importance of each issue within this category, **please select the TWO issues** you consider the highest priority for your community.

### **Agriculture and Environment, continued**

	Not Important	Not that Important	Important	Very Important	I don't know	Select 2 issues
More training for food gardening skills	<input type="radio"/>					
More community parks and green spaces	<input type="radio"/>					
Increase tree and forestry management	<input type="radio"/>					
Less illegal dumping and littering	<input type="radio"/>					
Better landscapes for improved home value	<input type="radio"/>					
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>					

### **Health and Wellness**

	Not Important	Not that Important	Important	Very Important	I don't know	Select 2 issues
Better skills for selecting and preparing healthier food	<input type="radio"/>					
More healthy snacks and food options at restaurants and community events	<input type="radio"/>					
Better use of food safety practices (hand washing, storage, preservation, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
More sources for buying safe, affordable, fresh food	<input type="radio"/>					
More sources for buying safe, affordable, fresh local foods	<input type="radio"/>					
Fewer chronic diseases (diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
Fewer overweight or obese youth and adults	<input type="radio"/>					
Improved access to quality affordable health care providers (medical, dental, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
Improved availability of health care insurance	<input type="radio"/>					
Improved affordability of health care insurance	<input type="radio"/>					
Safer use of prescription medications	<input type="radio"/>					
More individual physical activity opportunities	<input type="radio"/>					
Safer community places to walk, run, bike, etc.	<input type="radio"/>					
Improved sidewalks and crosswalks	<input type="radio"/>					
Availability of substance use prevention programs	<input type="radio"/>					
Availability of substance use treatment	<input type="radio"/>					
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>					

**Please rate each of the following community issues** on a scale of "Not Important" to "Very Important" by placing a check mark or "X" in the corresponding space. If you are uncertain if an issue is important to your community, select "I don't know." After evaluating the importance of each issue within this category, **please select the TWO issues** you consider the highest priority for your community.

### Youth and Families

	Not Important	Not that Important	Important	Very Important	I don't know		Select 2 issues
Better youth and adult career readiness	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More youth life skills training (money management, life decision making, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
Better family skills in reducing debt, increasing savings and financial planning	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More support for prevention of school violence and bullying	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More support for families with mental and emotional health issues	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More support for families and individuals with special needs	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More support for relatives raising children of family members	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More child and partner abuse prevention resources	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
Stronger parenting and relationship building skills	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
Affordable quality child care	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More senior citizen support programs	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More affordable, quality elder care options	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				

### Overall Community Vitality

	Not Important	Not that Important	Important	Very Important	I don't know		Select 2 issues
More qualified leaders to prepare community for the future	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More youth community leadership opportunities	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More citizens helping to solve local issues	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More effective cooperation between community organizations	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More active community volunteers	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More pride in the community and its assets	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
More community marketing efforts (tourism, industry attraction, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>				

## Demographics

Please select your age:	<input type="radio"/> Under 18	<input type="radio"/> 18-24	<input type="radio"/> 25-44	<input type="radio"/> 45-64	<input type="radio"/> 65 and over
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Please select your gender?	<input type="radio"/> Male	<input type="radio"/> Female	<input type="radio"/> Non-binary
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Please select your Race/Ethnicity?	
<input type="radio"/> White, Non-Hispanic	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> African-American	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Hispanic, Latino	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Asian-American	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Two or more races	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Other	<input type="radio"/>

What is the highest level of education?	
<input type="radio"/> Some high school	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> High school degree	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Some college	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Associate's degree	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Bachelor's degree	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> Advanced degree (Masters, Doctorate, JD, MD, etc)	<input type="radio"/>

Please select the option that best describes your current employment status:						
<input type="radio"/> Retired	<input type="radio"/> Unemployed	<input type="radio"/> Self-employed	<input type="radio"/> Do not work	<input type="radio"/> Work full-time	<input type="radio"/> Work part-time	<input type="radio"/> Student

How familiar are you with the programs and services of the Cooperative Extension Service?		
<input type="radio"/> Very familiar	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat familiar	<input type="radio"/> Not familiar

Do you, or someone in your family, currently participate in any Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service program?	
<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No

What county do you live?	Do you live in the county seat?
_____	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

What other comments and/or suggestions do you have about important issues in your county?

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## FOCUS GROUP PROCESS

Focus groups are a commonly used method for gathering feedback or perspectives from a sampling of stakeholders. For this initiative, county Extension educators convened two or more small group meetings of community members to facilitate discussion on community priorities. Participants were invited to discuss their vision for a more vibrant county, issues the county is experiencing, barriers to issue resolution, resources or information that would help address the issues, and ideas for an improved future.

The questions were not intended to focus solely on Extension related priorities. Rather, the questions sought to learn about what county residents were concerned about and how those issues impact residents. The focus group also sought to learn what quality of life issues residents are most interested in addressing.

## FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- What is your vision for a more vibrant county?
- Based on your experiences, what would you say are the most pressing issues for this county in the next four years?
  - Follow up questions: How do these issues affect you or your neighbors? What other quality of life aspects does this issue affect?
- Based on your experiences, what barriers prevent us from addressing these issues?
- What type of information or resources would help to address the issues?
- Given everything discussed, what final thoughts would you add on being a vibrant county? Have we left anything out?

## INTERVIEW PROCESS

County Extension Educators were asked to conduct interviews with individuals in formal leadership roles in each county. These could include elected or appointed government leadership, public service or business organizational leaders, or leaders of healthcare or education institutions. The interview questioning followed a similar format to the focus groups, seeking perspectives on pressing needs, long term needs, and exploring the role that Extension might serve to address future issues confronting the county.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Based on your experiences, what would you say are the most pressing issues for this county in the next year?
- Based on your experiences, what would you say are the most pressing issues for this county in the next four years?
- What do you see as the broad (county wide) implications of the priorities you have identified?
- Based on your experience, what barriers obstruct addressing the issues?
- What type of information or resources could the University of Kentucky/Extension provide to help address these issues?

## UNDERSTANDING SECONDARY DATA RELIABILITY

A key issue in understanding the secondary data profiles is to be aware of the ways in which sources report the reliability of their data. Both margins of error (+/- ##) and confidence intervals (### - ###) tells us the range within which the estimate most likely falls. The American Community Survey provides a margin of error for each estimate. Health data often report a confidence interval as do estimates on poverty and income from the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates and those on health insurance from the Small Area Health Insurance Estimates.

Because their reliability can vary, we always need to look at the margin of error or confidence interval when we use data from these sources.

While we might not realize it, we encounter margins of error every time we hear about a poll in the news. When we see poll results and they say “plus or minus 5 points,” they are telling us the margin of error.

One way to think about margins of error or confidence intervals is to think of them as our “grain of salt.” We often use this phrase when we need to be cautious about taking something at face value. For instance, if the estimate is 30 (+/- 25), you will want to use a larger “grain of salt” than if your estimate is 30 (+/- 1).



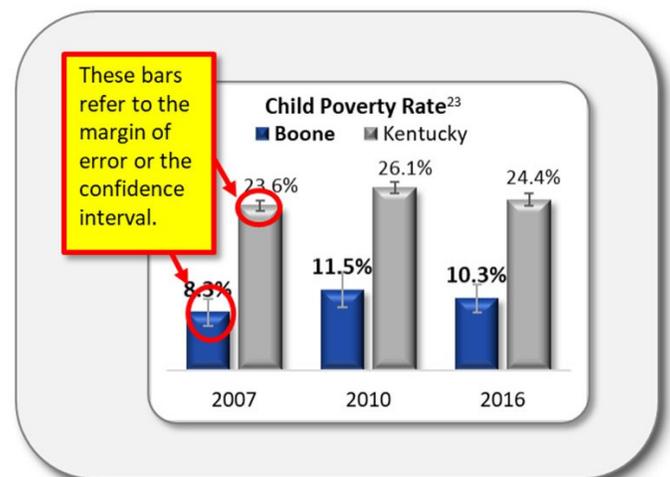
We can also think of margins of error and confidence intervals as “wobble room.” The larger the range, the more “wobble room” there is for the estimate. In other words, when the margin of error is smaller, the estimate is more precise or the focus is sharper. When the margin of error is larger, the estimate is more ‘fuzzy’ or ‘blurry.’

While a confidence interval gives us the actual range, for margins of error (or simply MOE) the plus/minus number gives us the information we need to determine the range. Since the estimate is generally the midpoint, finding the range represented by the margin of error is as straightforward as it seems.

To find the top of the range, add the margin of error to your number. To find the bottom of the range, subtract the margin of error from your number. (Remember, since confidence intervals already give the range, the math is already done.)

In the secondary data profiles, you will see the margins of error (+/- ##) or confidence intervals (### - ###) when they are part of the original data source. You will also see these reflected in the charts. They are called error bars. They look like the letter “I” and are located at the top of each bar.

One reason that margins of error and confidence intervals are important is because there will be times when they can be VERY large. This is especially the case for small groups or small places. Remember that “grain of salt?” The larger the range represented by the margin of error or confidence interval, the more cautious we need to be when it comes to interpreting the data.



# *It starts with us*

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability. UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY, KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND KENTUCKY COUNTIES, COOPERATING