

Monroe County Summary*

General Overview

Monroe County is the region's urban center and reflects the highs and lows, and stark disparities, of the Finger Lakes region. It has the most educated adult population and high-performing suburban districts, but also the highest child poverty rate and the lowest high school graduation rate. Monroe is the most diverse county and home to most of the region's arts and tourist attractions. Monroe is one of nine counties in the Greater Rochester Region – Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates

Monroe is by far the largest county in the region, with almost two-thirds of the total regional population, giving it an outsized influence on regional statistics. Monroe is considered home to the urban and suburban portions of the census-defined Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), while the counties of Livingston, Ontario, Orleans, Wayne, and Yates comprise the exurbs and rural areas of the metro. All municipalities in the MSA with over 25,000 population are within Monroe County.

Monroe contains many of the most visited and well-known tourist attractions in the region, including The National Museum of Play, The George Eastman Museum, The Memorial Art Gallery, Seabreeze Amusement Park, Mount Hope Cemetery (home to the remains of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, among others), Seneca Park Zoo, and Highland Park (site of the Lilac Festival). In addition, Rochester hosts many well-attended festivals throughout the year, including the Lilac Festival, the Rochester International Jazz Festival, and the Rochester Fringe Festival.

Rochester is home to many prestigious colleges and universities, including the University of Rochester, Rochester Institute of Technology, Nazareth College, SUNY Brockport, and St. John Fisher College.

Throughout most of the 20th century, Rochester was known as headquarters of the “big three” imaging companies – Xerox, Eastman Kodak, and Bausch & Lomb – which together employed more than 15% of the nonfarm employment in 1981. However, their role as anchors of regional employment has abated as Kodak emerged from bankruptcy in 2013 and Xerox and Bausch & Lomb have moved their headquarters from Rochester. Today, the top regional employers are the University of Rochester, the Rochester Regional Health System, and Wegmans.

Various indicators highlighted below will include a comparison to the City of Rochester. Rochester has long struggled with entrenched and concentrated poverty, which is reflected in sometimes striking disparities between the city and the county for economic and quality of life indicators. It is important to note that the Monroe County figures all include the residents of the City of Rochester, so comparisons between Monroe and Rochester should not be interpreted as comparisons between the city and the suburbs.

**Please note, the indicator information included in this summary reflects the data available at the time of its composition. Some indicator data may have since been updated on our website. Visit actrochester.org/all-indicators for updates.*

Demographic Overview

Monroe County is the population center of the Rochester region, accounting for 62% of the total, yet the county's population has grown by just 1% since 2000. Monroe had just over 742,000 residents in 2018, with 28% of those residents living in the City of Rochester. Rochester lost about 6.3% of its population between 2000 and 2018, compared to a 3% increase in the state and a 16.3% increase nationwide.

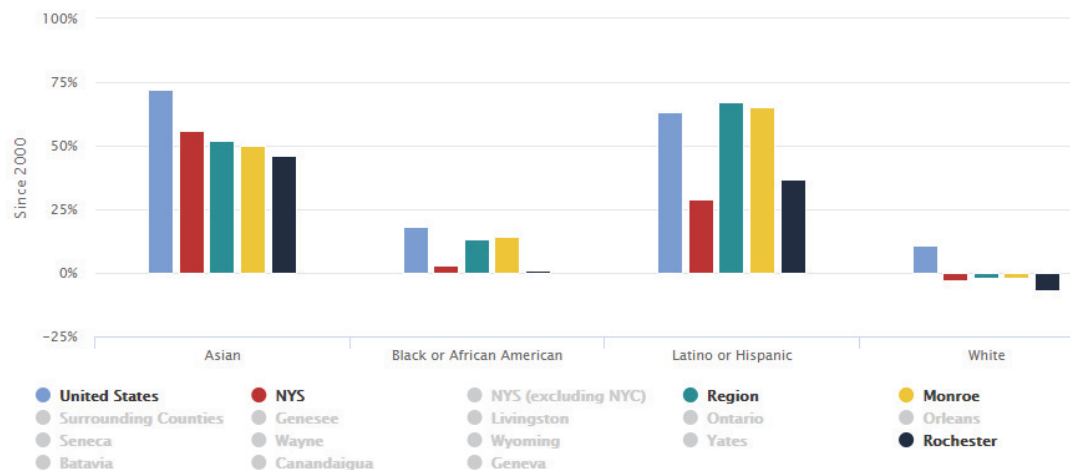
Similarly to the state, nation, and the rest of the region, Monroe's population is aging:

- From 2000 to 2014-18, the population 85 and over grew by 33% in Monroe, less than the 47% increase statewide and 49% increase for the nation. However, in stark contrast, the City of Rochester saw a decline of 32% in this age group over that period.
- Monroe's population between 60 and 84 grew by 41%, a higher increase than the nation (37%) and state (33%). This age group in the City of Rochester increased by 25% whereas all other age groups decreased in population.
- The share of residents 20 and younger in Monroe fell by 12%, compared to a statewide decrease of 9% and a national increase of 2%.

Monroe County is the most racially and ethnically diverse county in the region, and has become more diverse since 2000:

- The white population shrank by 2% in Monroe from 2000 and stood at 76% of the total population in 2014-18. This proportion is greater than the nation and the state (72% and 64% white respectively) and well below every other county in the region (all at 90% or above). Less than half (48%) of Rochester residents were white.
- African Americans made up 15% of the population in Monroe, above the nation (13%) and below the state (16%). The proportion in Monroe was more than twice as high as any other county in the region. The African American population grew by 14% in Monroe from 2000 to 2014-18, slightly below the nation (18%) and well above the state (3%). Rochester's African American population grew by 1% over that period, accounting for 41% of the total population in the city.
- Monroe County also had a higher share of Hispanic residents than the surrounding counties (9%), but was below the state (19%) and nation (18%). Monroe's Hispanic population has grown by 65% since 2000, similar to regional and national rates.

Change in Total Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2014-18



Community Vitality

Monroe County is the center of the region's cultural scene and home to most of our area's museums, sports venues and other attractions. Visitors spent over \$1 billion in 2018, an increase of 3% from 2005. Monroe's tourism revenue accounts for 63% of the total for the region. Total tourism revenue per resident was \$1,446, a decrease of 9% from its high of \$1,581 in 2007, but above the amount for the surrounding counties as a whole (\$1,375).

Spending by tourists on recreational activities was \$70 per Monroe County resident in 2018, below the region (\$80) and well below the state (\$362). Recreational spending per resident was down 11% from its high in 2007.

Voter registration in Monroe was higher than the state and regional rates:

- In 2018, 84% of the eligible population were registered to vote, above the state (82%) and the region (83%)
- Voter registration increased by 4 points since 2000, similar to the state, while the region increased by 1 point.

Voter participation in Monroe, like the region, outperforms the state:

- In the 2018 midterm elections, 48% of eligible voters in Monroe voted, similar to the region (46%) and 22 points above the state turnout.
- During the 2016 presidential election, Monroe's turnout rate of 60% was slightly above the region (59%) and the nation (55%), and well above the state (50%).

Monroe County's level of registered borrowers was the second highest in the region following Genesee:

- In 2017, 67% of residents of Monroe's county library system were registered borrowers, above the state (56%) and region (61%), and every county in the region except Genesee (72%).
- While library visits in Monroe County decreased by 4% since 2000 and were at 5.9 visits per resident, the City of Rochester had a much higher rate of 7 visits per resident.

For 2014-2018, Monroe County saw 11% of its households without a vehicle, a rate consistent since 2000, higher than the nation (9%), the region and the state excluding New York City (both 10%). Monroe maintains a higher percentage of households without vehicles than all other counties in the region except Yates (13%).

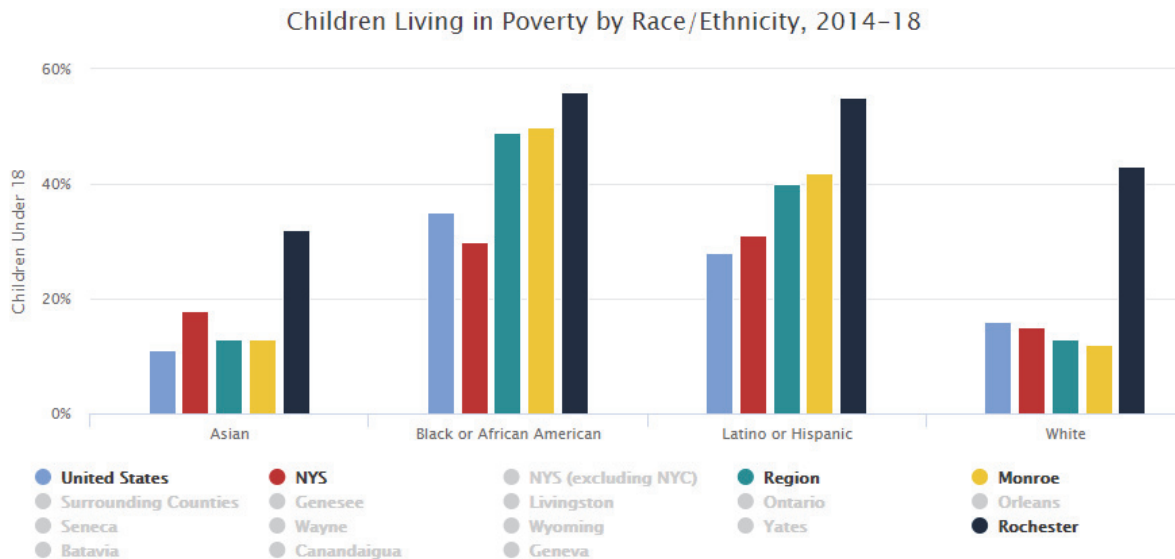
Children and Youth

Monroe County has a rate of child poverty that is similar to the nation, state, and region, and is driven primarily by high child poverty in Rochester:

- In 2014-18, 22% of the county's children lived in poverty, similar to the region (20%), state (21%), and nation (20%). The child poverty rate in Rochester was a troubling 51% in 2014-18.
- The county's poverty rate increased 6 points from 2000 to 2014-18; while a larger increase than the state and nation (1 and 3 points respectively), it was a much smaller increase than the City of Rochester (13 points).

Monroe County has a large disparity in child poverty between races/ethnic groups:

- The child poverty rate for African Americans in Monroe County is 50%, compared to 12% for white children, 13% for Asian children, and 42% for Hispanic children. Child poverty among the county’s African American children was higher than for the state and nation, while white child poverty was lower.
- The disparity between ethnic groups was smaller in Rochester, even though the rates were higher: Hispanic and African American children had poverty rates of 55% and 56% respectively, while white children had a rate of 43%.



Similar to the state and nation, Monroe County has seen an increase in the number of children living in single-parent families:

- In 2014-18, 42% of families were headed by single parents, up from 33% in 2000. The figures were dramatically higher in Rochester, where 74% of families were headed by one parent. Monroe’s rate was higher than the nation (34%), state (36%), and region as a whole (39%).
- Monroe’s increase of 9 points from 2000 was greater than that of the nation (5 points) and state (3 points) and similar to the region (8 points).

On several measures of early childhood health, the City of Rochester fared poorly compared to Monroe, the rest of the region, and the state:

- The rate of babies with low birth weight in the city was 13%, greater than in the region, the state and nation (all 8%).
- The infant mortality rate in Rochester has declined since 2006-08 with a reported 12.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015-17.
- The 8-point increase in the rate of mothers receiving early prenatal care in Rochester from 2000 to 2017 has shrunk the gap between the City (70%) and the region and state (both 77%). The overall rate in Monroe was 79%.

Monroe has consistently had one of the lowest county rates of indicated cases of child abuse and neglect in the region. Indicated cases are those reported and investigated where credible evidence of abuse or neglect is found:

- In 2018, there were 17 cases of abuse and/or neglect per 1,000 children, below the region (20) and on par with the state.
- However, Monroe's rate has increased 80% since its lowest reported year, 2013 (9), a higher increase than the nation, state and region during that time period.

The rate of foster care admissions is consistently low:

- In 2018, there were 2.5 foster care admissions per 1,000 children in Monroe, similar to the region.
- The number of admissions has fallen by almost 50% from 2000, a greater decrease than for the region and similar to the state.

The teen pregnancy rate has sharply declined in both Monroe County and the City of Rochester, but a large discrepancy between the two remains:

- In 2017, 2.1% of all females ages 15-19 in Monroe became pregnant, similar to the region.
- In Rochester, the rate was 5.1%, higher than the state (2.5%) and region (1.9%) as a whole.
- The rates for Monroe have been falling in step with the state and region, with Rochester decreasing 9 points from 2006.

In 2017, there were 14 live births per 1,000 females in Monroe County age 15 to 19, similar to the region and lower than the nation (19), but higher than the state (12).

Economy

Monroe's unemployment rate remained lower than the state and nation throughout the recession and through 2018:

- Unemployment grew from 4.4% in 2007 to 8.0% in 2010. Since 2010, the rate has dropped to 4.3% -- more than 3 points lower than at its peak and similar to that of the state and region.
- Rochester, whose rate has consistently been above that of Monroe, peaked at 10.8% in both 2010 and 2012 and now stands at 6% - higher than the nation, state, region, and every county in the region. The gap between Rochester's rate and Monroe's rate was at its lowest in 2000 (1 point higher in Rochester), peaked in 2011-2012 with a difference of 2.9 points, and has since decreased to a difference of 1.7 points in 2018.

Monroe County is the anchor of the regional economy, supplying 68% of the region's jobs in 2018. Monroe's job gains have fluctuated since 2001 with a high of 1.3% in 2018.

Reflecting the steady shrinkage of manufacturing in the region and the state, the largest sectors in Monroe County in 2018 were Education (55%), Financial Activities (37%), Healthcare and Social Assistance (27%), and Leisure and Hospitality (26%).

As the highest in the region, Monroe’s average salary has been flat since 2000 compared to the increases of the nation and state.

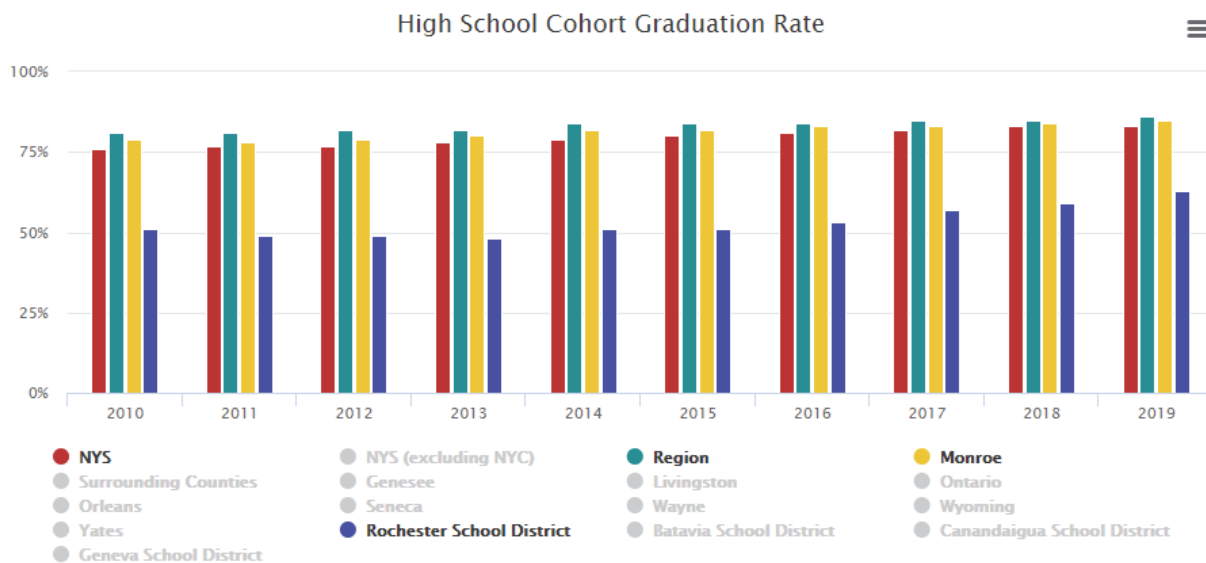
- Monroe County's average salary, at \$51,630 in 2018, was the high compared to other counties, but lower than the state (\$72,902) and nation (\$57,265).
- Salaries in Monroe County for 2018 were highest within the sectors of Information (\$71,146), Financial Activities (\$72,257), Manufacturing (\$69,679), and Education Services (\$64,446).

Education

Monroe County students perform near state levels on state tests; however, a persistent and extreme disparity exists between the county and the Rochester City School District, its largest district. Most of the other districts in Monroe perform at or above state averages, while Rochester is consistently ranked among the bottom 10 performing districts in the state.

- For example, 18% of RCSD students passed the 3rd grade English test in 2019, compared to 52% statewide and 45% for Monroe. The discrepancy was even higher for 3rd grade math – Rochester at 22%, versus 55% for the state and 49% for Monroe County.
- Performance was even lower for 8th grade exams – in English, just 10% of Rochester students passed, compared to 48% statewide and 37% in Monroe. For 8th grade math, 17% of Rochester students passed compared to 52% statewide and 49% in Monroe and the region.
- The same discrepancy was present for performance on high school Regents – 35% passed Common Core Algebra 1 and 59% passed English in Rochester, versus 68% and 81% passing in Common Core Algebra 1 and English respectively in Monroe.
- We note that a substantial number of students did not take state exams in 2019 due to parent concerns about testing in schools. In our region in 2019, 15% of 3rd-8th graders in the region opted not to take the English exam and 16% opted not to take the math exam.

In 2019, 85% of students across Monroe graduated on time, 10 points higher than in 2009. The rate was above the state (83%) and below the region (86%). In contrast, just 63% of Rochester students graduated on time; this increased from 59% in 2009.



Monroe County consistently has the highest levels in the region of educational attainment among adults:

- In 2014-18, 66% of county residents 25 and older had attended at least some college, 6 points above the state and national figures.
- There was also a higher concentration of adults with a bachelor's or higher - 38% - in Monroe more than in the state (36%), nation (32%), and region (33%).
- Only 10% of Monroe residents lacked a high school diploma or equivalent, a lower proportion than statewide or nationwide.

Spending per student by school districts in Monroe has increased 46% since 2000, a smaller increase than for the state (61%) and the region (50%).

- In 2018, Monroe school districts' overall spending per student was \$22,671, below the state (\$25,845) and the region (\$22,703). Overall spending in the Rochester district was \$24,689 per student in 2018, an increase of 44% since 2000.

At \$16,613 per student, Monroe spent more on classroom *instruction* (expenses directly related to a student's classroom experience) than most other counties, third only to Yates (\$17,462) and Seneca (\$17,236).

- However, instructional spending per student in the county has increased 41% since 2000, a lower increase than all other counties and far below the increase for the state (60%).
- Instructional spending in the Rochester district was \$18,209 per student in 2018, an increase of 44% since 2000.

Economic Security

The rate of disengaged youth (ages 16 to 19 not enrolled in school and not working) in Monroe County was 5% for 2014-18, 1 point lower since 2000:

- Monroe is one of five counties in the region to have experienced a decrease in this segment of its population (Genesee, Livingston, Ontario, Orleans and Seneca), if only at a notably slower rate.
- Wyoming and Yates reports an increase during the same period, while Wayne remained steady.

The City of Rochester has decreased 3 points since 2000, however it still currently stands at double the rate of disengaged youth for 2014-18 (10%).

Median household income has fallen faster than the nation, state, and region:

- In Monroe, median income fell by 15% from 2000 to 2014-18, a larger drop than for the region (12%) and nation (5%).
- In 2014-18, median income was \$57,479, similar to the region (\$57,350), but below the state (\$65,323) and nation (\$60,293). Monroe's median income was above most other counties in the region (except Genesee, Ontario and Wyoming). Rochester's median income was much lower, at \$33,399 for 2014-18.
- There was a vast discrepancy in Monroe between median income for white residents (\$64,468) versus African American (\$30,034) and Hispanic (\$31,331) residents.
- While median income was lower for each ethnicity in Rochester, the discrepancy was less (\$41,262 for whites versus \$26,038 for African Americans and \$23,497 for Hispanics).

Monroe's poverty rate was on par with the state at 15% in 2014-18.

- Monroe's rate rose by 4 points from 2000, a greater increase than the state (no change) and nation (2 points) and on par with the region.
- Rochester had both a much higher poverty rate in 2014-18 (33%) and a sharper increase since 2000 (7 points).

A larger portion of Monroe residents received temporary assistance than other counties:

- In 2018, 2.9% of Monroe residents received temporary assistance, similar to the state (2.7%) and region (2.3%).

In 2014-18, 15% of Monroe County households participated in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), equal to the state and similar to region and nation (14% and 12% respectively):

- The county's SNAP rate was above all other counties besides Orleans.
- Following the trend of other cities in the region, Rochester's SNAP participation was much higher than the county at 35% for 2014-18.

Health

Monroe County had a smaller proportion of people without health insurance than the nation and state:

- In 2018, 4% of Monroe residents lacked health insurance, lower than the state (6%) and nation (10%).
- Like the nation and region as a whole, Monroe's rate has decreased from 2008.

In 2017, there were 50 doctors per 10,000 residents in Monroe, a rate above the state and more than four times the rate for the surrounding counties (11 per 10,000 residents).

Monroe saw a decline (14%) in its overall mortality rate from 2000 to 2017. In 2017, the mortality rate was 682 per 100,000 residents, higher than the state (610) but well below the rate for the surrounding counties (729).

Monroe County's rate of Sexually Transmitted Infections have been higher than the state or the region since 2002.

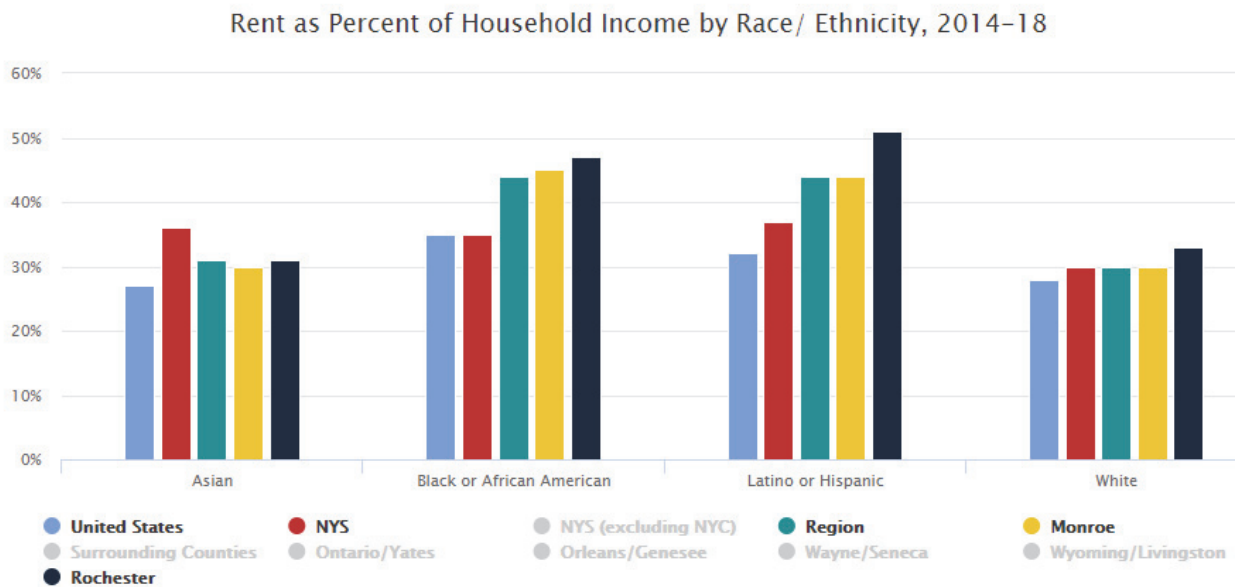
- Monroe's rate of chlamydia infection (72 per 10,000 residents) was the highest in the region and considerably above the state (61) and region (55). Chlamydia infection rates increased from 2010 in the state (19%), while Monroe and the region saw declines (7% and 2% respectively).
- Monroe's 2018 gonorrhea rate of 25 per 10,000 was the highest of all counties, the state and the region as a whole. However, Monroe County was the only regional county to report a decrease since 2000. The 20% decline was primarily driven by a drop in reported cases in the city of Rochester which had a 28% decline since 2000.

- The rate of people living with HIV in Monroe has increased by 23% since 2002. Monroe’s rate of 141 per 100,000 residents is greater than NYS (excluding NYC) and the region.
- Monroe’s rate of people living with AIDS, 179 per 100,000 residents, is greater than the state (excluding NYC) and region, and much greater than the counties in the region.

Housing

Housing has become less affordable for renters:

- In 2014-18, Monroe renters spent 35% of their income on rent, slightly lower than the state (36%) but more than the nation (32%). The rate increased by 5 points from 2000 to 2014-18 on par with the nation and below the state (8 points). Rent is considered affordable if it is less than 30% of income.
- In Rochester, 41% of income went to rent in 2014-18, up 6 points from 2000; while median rent was lower in Rochester than Monroe, median income was much lower, therefore rent was relatively less affordable in Rochester.
- Rent was considerably more affordable for white and Asian renters in Monroe than for Hispanic and African American renters.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In 2014-18, median rent in Monroe was \$902, lower than the state (\$1,240) and nation (\$1,023), but the highest in the region. Rent fell slightly (2%) in Monroe from 2000 to 2014-18, in contrast to increases in the state and nation (22% and 13% respectively).

Homes are relatively more affordable in Monroe compared to the state and nation:

- In 2014-18, the ratio of median home value to median income - a measure of housing affordability - was 2.5 in Monroe, similar to the region (2.4) and well below the state (4.6) and nation (3.4), but higher than all other counties. A ratio less than 2 or 3 is considered affordable.
- Monroe's ratio rose by 15% from 2000 to 2014-18. Greater increases were seen for the state (36%) and nation (28%) during this same period.

In Monroe, the homeownership rate was higher than the state and equal to the nation, but notably lower than for surrounding counties (driven by a very low rate in Rochester):

- In 2014-18, 64% of occupied housing units in Monroe were owner-occupied, compared to 54% statewide. The rate in Monroe remained relatively unchanged from 2000.
- In Rochester, the rate was just 36%, a decline from 40% in 2000.

Median home values in Monroe have decreased slightly since 2000:

- In 2014-18, the median home value in Monroe was \$144,700, higher than the region (\$135,915) but below the state (\$302,200) and nation (\$204,900).
- The median home value (inflation-adjusted) declined 2% from 2000 to 2014-18, in contrast to a 1% decline in the region, and increases in the state and nation (36% and 22% respectively).

Monroe County had among the lowest rate of vacant housing units in 2014-18 (8%), similar to Genesee for the same period. Monroe's vacant housing rate increased by 2 points since 2000, less than the state (4 points) and the nation (3 points), and similar to most other counties in the region except Yates (an area possibly impacted by seasonal vacancies).

Public Safety

Overall, crime has fallen in Monroe, but remains higher than most counties, driven primarily by high crime rates in the City of Rochester:

- In 2018, there were 226 serious crimes per 10,000 residents in Monroe, below the nation (257) but above the state (178) and region as a whole (190). In Rochester, the rate was 419, down 46% from 2000. Serious crime rates fell 38% for the nation, 42% in the state, 46% in the region, and 48% in Monroe from 2000 to 2018.
- Violent crime rates increased in Rochester and Monroe in 2018 while decreasing statewide and nationally. In 2018, there were 31 violent crimes per 10,000 residents in Monroe, just below the state and nation (35 and 37, respectively).
- Rochester's rate of 78 was more than twice as high as the nation and state, and three times higher than the region and every other county. Rochester's rate rose by 6% from 2000 to 2018.

Despite declining over the past 7 years, the rate of domestic violence in Monroe was higher than the state and region:

- In 2018, there were 75 reported victims of domestic violence per 10,000 residents in Monroe, a higher rate than the state excluding New York City (41) and region (59). The rate in Rochester (159) was twice as high as in Monroe as a whole.
- The rate in Monroe fell by 4% from 2009 to 2018, a greater decrease than the region. Rochester's rate increased 5% since 2009.

Monroe's arrest rate for 2018 was approximately 191 per 10,000 residents, lower than the state (209), but higher than the region as whole (188). Arrests in Monroe have declined 27% since 2000, similar to the declining rate for the state and region (31% and 24% respectively), and among the largest decreases of all the counties.

Monroe County saw an incarceration rate of approximately 11.7 per 10,000 residents in 2018, a lower rate than all other counties in the region except Wayne (10.3). Monroe's incarceration rate has dropped 15% since 2008, a larger decrease than the state excluding New York City (12%) and the region (7%).

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