Unless otherwise noted, data has been sourced from the 2000 US Census and the 2013 American Community Survey throughout this report. Additional data sources include:

- Economic Development Alliance of Southern Ohio
- Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Ohio Development Services Agency
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- ESRI
- Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics
- National Parks Service
This Community Snapshot for Ross County, Ohio provides a summary of the county’s existing conditions and trends within three organizing categories: People, Prosperity, and Place. Each topic highlights only the most critical data points. These are the points that, when taken together, help to write the story of the broader community. Some are positive and can be considered strengths to be nurtured, while others may be negative and represent challenges to overcome. In all, the Community Snapshot should begin a conversation about where the community is today and where it hopes to go in the future.

People p.1
The People section of the report focuses on the demographic conditions and trends within Ross County. Facts and figures summarize the population, household makeup, age, and diversity.

- **The County’s Population Growing, Cities & Towns Stagnant**
  - +6.1%
  - Between 2000 and 2013, the county’s population has increased by 4,457, Chillicothe remained stagnant

- **The Population Over Age 65 is Growing**
  - +21%
  - 1,900 additional residents now above retirement age, an increase of 21 percent

- **Single Person Households Are Becoming More Common**
  - 13\%
  - +873

Prosperity p.3
The Prosperity section of the report shares the statistics related to personal and economic health. Facts and figures summarize personal prosperity, economic vitality, education, and health.

- **Employment on the Slow Rise**
  - 26,402
  - Largest sectors include health care, social assistance, and manufacturing

- **Families in Poverty**
  - One in every six families live below the poverty line (2013)

- **Overall Health Ranks Low**
  - 81st
  - In terms of overall health outcomes, Ross County ranks in the bottom tenth of Ohio’s 88 counties

Place p.6
The Place section of the report focuses on the statistics and characteristics related to place-based data in Ross County. Housing and land use statistics have been included, along with a qualitative assessment of place.

- **Most Land is Rural Land Use**
  - 96%
  - Most of the county’s 689 square miles is rural, natural, or agricultural. Wildlife areas account for 44 square miles of the county.

- **Slightly Younger Housing**
  - 40%
  - Of the housing stock was built after 1990 with a median year built of 1972.

- **Housing is Mostly Owner Occupied**
  - 73%
  - A majority of homes in the county are owner-occupied. This percentage is 10% higher than the state and national averages.
PEOPLE

The People section of the report focuses on the demographic conditions and trends within Ross County. The data used are the latest available provided by the American Communities Survey, as well as other sources. Facts and figures summarize the population, household makeup, age, and diversity.

POPULATION

Population increasing slowly in the county, stagnant in the City. From a brief pause between 1960 and 1970, the overall population of the county has increased around five percent each decade. The cities and towns have been more variable. Chillicothe has remained relatively stagnant, adding 89 residents between 2000 and 2013. The growth, then is generally happening outside of the county’s cities and towns, and in then unincorporated townships. Regionally, central Ohio is expected to grow by around 500,000 residents by 2030. While not within the immediate growth area, Ross County could expect to receive new residents as a carry over from this growth.

Smaller towns remaining stagnant.
While the county added around 3,800 new residents between 2000 and 2013, a majority of this growth took place outside of the small towns. The small villages and towns across the county combined to lose to around 50 residents. Kingston, an outlier, added just under 275 residents over the period, a growth of 25 percent.

The population forecast uses a linear model to project the 2030 population to top 80,000.

FIG 1. POPULATION CHANGE 1950-2030

Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey, Ohio Development Services Agency
**COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT ROSS COUNTY**

**AGE**

*Aging along with the state.* As the Baby Boomers enter retirement, the state and the nation are seeing an increasing percentage of their population over the age of 65. Between 2000 and 2013 Ross County’s median age increased from 36.9 to 39.6, or seven percent. This trend mirrors the state’s increase over this period. While the county increase matched comparable trends, in Chillicothe the rate of increase was nine percent, pushing the median age to 43.5 or ten percent higher than the state. Between 2000 and 2013 the number of county residents over the age of 65 grew by 1,900 or by 21 percent.

**Largest age cohort approaching retirement.** Roughly 16 percent of the county’s population is between the ages of 50 and 59. This cohort is around ten percent larger than the state and the 20 percent larger than the country. The county’s population workforce – those between 18 and 64 – is weighted toward individuals approaching retirement age.

**HOUSEHOLDS**

*Small growth in the total number of households.* The number of households increased alongside the change in population from 2000 to 2013. A little over 1,100 new households were added increasing the total by four percent.

*The makeup of households is changing.* While the median household size remained static, the change in the makeup of households was far more dynamic. The largest growth was in single-person households, which increased by more than 850, or 13 percent over the measured period. Over 65 households also grew by 13 percent, or 351. Households with children, however, decreased over the period by 7 percent or 651 households. The number of divorced men and women in Ross County is two to three times higher than the Ohio and U.S. averages. Of the grandparents living with their grandchildren in Ross County, more than 50 percent are the primary caregiver for their grandchildren. This is notably higher than the Ohio and US.

**DIVERSITY**

*A relatively homogeneous community.* Just over 90 percent of the population identified as white in 2013. The two largest minority groups include Black or African Americans and individuals of two or more races, with each group representing just over four percent of the population. The Hispanic population increased by more than 400 residents between 2000 and 2013.

*Very small foreign-born population.* Compared with the state and nation, the county has a very small number of foreign-born residents.

---

**FIG 2. COUNTY AGE COHORT COMPARISONS, 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Ross County</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 29</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 49</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 59</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 69</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 to 79</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and over</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey

**CHANGE IN THE OVER AGE 65 POPULATION**

+21%

The population over the age of 65 grew by 1,900

**MEDIAN AGE (2013)**

39.6 years

In Chillicothe the figure is 43.5 years, more than 10 percent higher than the state.

**2.5**

Median Household Size

**Over-65 Households**

13% +351

**Single Person Households**

13% +873

**Households with Children**

-7% -651

**FIG 3. FOREIGN BORN POPULATION, 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross County</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just over three percent of residents speak a language other than English at home

Statewide, the foreign-born population is 4.1%.
PROSPERITY

The Prosperity section of the report focuses on the statistics related to personal prosperity, economic vitality, education, and health. The data has been assembled from a number of sources including the American Community Survey and local sources.

PERSONAL PROSPERITY

Lower levels of household income. The County’s median household income is lower than the state by almost $4,000. Over half of households (56 percent) earn less than $50,000 per year.

Wages trending upwards, but per capita earnings still below state levels. A majority of sectors reported wage increases from 2008, with the strongest growth in education and health services (26 percent increase). Even with these gains, however, the county still trails the state in per capita earnings by nearly $7,000. The 2013 estimate of $19,626 was about three-quarters the state and the two-thirds the national statistic.

Higher instances of families in poverty. Roughly one in six families are living at, or below the poverty line. Many of these families include children. Nearly a third of the county’s children (under age 18) are in families earning less than the poverty threshold.

FAMILIES IN POVERTY, 2013

One in every six families live below the poverty line

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2013

$43,072

$4,000 lower than the state median, $47,782

$35,421

Chillicothe
**ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT**

*Majority of private employment in service providing sectors.* Close to 60 percent of all employment within the county is service providing, with the largest share in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities. This sector includes jobs such as trucking, warehousing, and others. Out of all sectors, Education and Health Services recorded the largest growth in employment from 2008, adding just over 11 percent.

*Manufacturing still a vital component of the local economy.* Even with a loss in the overall number of establishments, the manufacturing sector was still able to add roughly nine percent to its employment since 2008. The sector accounts for roughly a sixth of county’s total economy by employment.

*Public sector jobs employ one in four.* Between federal, state and local government just under 25 percent of jobs in the county are in the public sector.

*Construction in slow recovery.* The construction sector reported a 23 percent drop in employment from 2008. This was the largest loss in any sector and a clear result of the national recession. Since 2010, however residential construction has trended upwards. A total of 55 new units were built last year, the most in five years.

*Top county employers include a mix of public and private sector companies, governments and institutions.* The county’s largest employer, Adena Health System, is a regional healthcare provider with three hospitals. Kenworth Truck Company and P.H. Glatfelter are manufacturers of heavy truck components and specialty papers respectively. Other major employers include local and county governments, and institutions.

**KENWORTH TRUCK PRODUCTION**

410,000

In 40-plus years of operation the Chillicothe plant has produced more than 400,000 trucks

*Data from the Ohio Development Services Agency*
Unemployment rate matching the state and nation. The rate of unemployment has decreased significantly from a post-recession peak of 11.9 percent to 5.2 percent in March of 2015. This ties the state and national averages.

Labor force participation lower than state average. Roughly 34,000 county residents, or 44 percent, are active members of the labor force. That compares to nearly 50 percent of state residents.

EDUCATION

Degree attainment trailing the state but improving. The number of the residents having completed a college degree improved markedly between 2000 and the 2013. Over this period, roughly 25 percent more residents achieved a Bachelor’s degree. The largest increase (up 81 percent) was in the number of Associate’s degrees.

High School graduation rate exceeds the state average. In 2014 the county graduated 90 percent of its high school students. This compares to 82 percent at the state.

HEALTH

Ross County ranks 81 out of 88 Ohio counties in overall health outcomes. Poor health behaviors, such as high rates of adult smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, and lack of access to exercise opportunities, greatly contribute to this low ranking.

Smoking and obesity rates are especially high. Roughly 32 percent, compared with the state’s 21 percent, of residents are smokers. More than 35 percent are obese, compared with the state average of 30 percent. Lack of access to exercise opportunities and physical inactivity are key contributors to high obesity levels.
PLACE

The Place section of the report focuses on the statistics and characteristics related to place-based information in Ross County. Housing and land use statistics have been included, along with a qualitative assessment of place.

HOUSING

Slightly younger housing stock. The median year built for housing in the county is 1972, with just under 40 percent constructed after 1990. The nineties were one the most active decades for construction when one in five homes were built. The national slowdown in home construction can be seen in the county’s slower performance after 2000, but over the 13 years measured the county still outperformed the state. Roughly 75 percent of housing structures are single-family homes. There is also a large percentage of mobile housing. This makes up 14 percent of all housing, and is much higher than the state average of four percent.

More owner-occupied housing. Homeowners represent 73 percent of the population. This is ten percent higher than the state and national averages.

New to current home. A large majority of residents moved in recently, with 61 percent reporting to have moved in after 2000. More than a quarter of the population moved in after 2005.

Lower median home value. The median home value of owner-occupied housing units is $106,000. This is about 80 percent the state’s amount of $127,000, and much less than the national average of $173,900.

LAND USE

A mostly rural place. Even with a big city like Chillicothe at the center, the county is dominated by rural, agricultural, or natural land. Roughly 96 percent of the county’s 688 square miles is covered by pasture (14 percent), cropland (38 percent), or forest (44 percent).

Urban developed area dominated by Chillicothe. Several small towns are spread evenly across the county, each less than a square mile in area. The city of Chillicothe, at just over ten square miles, is by far the largest urban area. The city peaked in population in 1960 with 24,957 residents, yet has continued to add more incorporated land each decade since.

FORESTED AREA

44%

The county has many natural areas including woodlands

ACREAGE OF NATURAL SPACE & PARKS

28,440

The county’s State Parks, forests, nature preserves and wildlife areas cover more than 44 square miles.
PLACE-BASED CHARACTERISTICS

There are a number of qualities about Ross County and its cities and towns that make it unique. Its history, geography, and location combine to form a unique setting with numerous assets and some challenges. Highlights of these include the following.

1. Historic urban centers. Chillicothe was the first capital of the state of Ohio. The city has a long history by state standards and its downtown helps to tell this story. The Majestic Theatre, the oldest continuously operating theatre in America, Adena, the 1807 home of Ohio’s sixth Governor, Thomas Worthington, and other similarly aged buildings have been maintained and help visitors get a sense of the community’s deep roots.

2. Walkable urban centers, surrounded by more auto-oriented development. Chillicothe was built in waves of development. These help to illustrate the major shift in transportation over its lifetime. The center of town is characterized by a tight, grid pattern of streets. There are small blocks and a general integration of uses. These characteristics combine to create a more walkable environment for residents and visitors. Farther out, more recent development has occurred at a larger scale. Vast parking lots, winding streets and cul-de-sacs, and limited access points make these areas accessible primarily by car.

3. Strong Recreational assets. The county is a destination for outdoor pursuits. These include hunting, water recreation, biking and hiking. There are four State Parks, and just over 20 miles of bike paths. The county has just over 28,000 acres of land within State Parks, forests, nature preserves, and wildlife areas.

4. Large and beautiful natural areas. While cities and towns dot the landscape, the county is primarily rural and open. Just over 44 percent of the land area is forested. Close to 52 percent is used for cropland or pasture. In all, more than 96 percent of county is non-urban.

5. Good regional access. The county is bisected by three major US routes. From north to south by US Route 23, and from northwest to southeast by US Route 35, and from the southwest to northeast by US Route 50. Each changes between a limited-access expressway and a major artery as it crosses the county. While no interstates run directly through the county, access is relatively close at hand, less than 40 miles to Interstate 71, and 50 miles to I-70.

6. A divided landscape. The county has been called the “foothills of the Appalachians”. This is because of its slow transition from its flat, agricultural plains in the northwest of the county, to its rolling, forested hills in its southeast. This transition was formed millennia ago by glacial activity, and is a unique feature.
COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT ROSS COUNTY

PLACE CHARACTERISTICS

1. Historic urban center
2. Walkable urban centers, surrounded by auto-oriented development
3. Strong recreational assets
4. Large and beautiful natural areas
5. Access is a challenge
6. A divided landscape