

2022

Assessing the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Idahoans

McAllister Hall
Boise State University

Aisha Kayed
Boise State University

Lantz McGinnis-Brown
Boise State University

Publication Information

Hall, Mcallister; Kayed, Aisha; and McGinnis-Brown, Lantz. (2022). "Assessing the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Idahoans". *Idaho Policy Institute Reports*. https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/ipi_reports/68.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON IDAHOANS

CONTENTS

Forward	1
Summarizing COVID-19 Impact	2
Demographics and Characteristics of the Treasure Valley	3
Financial Stability	5
Employment and Economic Security	6
Housing and Homelessness.....	12
Housing Stability and Housing Conditions	13
Homelessness	14
Health	14
Health Care: Access and Affordability	15
Insurance.....	17
Behavioral Health: Mental Health and Substance Use	17
Suicide	21
Substance Use	23
Hunger and Food Insecurity	23
Food Insufficiency	23
Education	24
Early Childhood Education and School Readiness	25
K-12 Education	28
Reading and Math Proficiency	29
High School Graduation Rates	32
Postsecondary Education	32
Appendix	33

FORWARD

Over the past two years, Idahoans have experienced challenges like never before. From the spring of 2020, when the first COVID-19 case was detected in Idaho, to today, our community has faced incredible adversity. Yet, Idahoans have demonstrated resilience and care for one another. This report is a supplement to the 2020 Community Health Needs Assessment. An

opportunity to see a more holistic picture of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Idahoans, and where we can all lean in to better support our neighbors.

SUMMARIZING COVID-19 IMPACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has, in many ways, highlighted the challenges and benefits of our collective humanity. It brought us together, it tore us apart. It spread great fear, but also gave rise to great hope. It took the existing challenges facing the Treasure Valley – health, housing, education, and poverty, among others – and often made them more pronounced. Job losses and childcare capacity changes, and school shutdowns can be especially devastating for low-income families, and the stress of illness can accentuate financial stress. While these pandemic impacts occurred, Idaho's housing costs continued rising significantly, adding yet another challenge for income-restricted households. It is hard to deny that the pandemic was a time of hardship for many households.

However, by making these challenges more visible and more a part of our social conversation the pandemic also created opportunities. The financial assistance provided for struggling families during the pandemic may have helped to mitigate some of the worst possibilities from COVID-19. In addition, the conversations sparked by these challenges may benefit Idaho and the Treasure Valley in the future.

Collecting data on humans is always a challenge, and COVID-19 certainly did not improve that challenge. Most data reporting agencies faced delays and complications, making it difficult to get a clear picture of the impact COVID-19 had on different aspects of society. However, as time goes on, obstacles give way, or paths get built around them. This report represents best efforts to collect the latest data on the impacts of the pandemic on Idaho's Treasure Valley composed of Ada, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, and Owyhee Counties, with a focus on demographics, poverty, housing, health, and education. The Treasure Valley accounts for 42.7% of Idaho's population.

COVID-19

The Treasure Valley experienced COVID-19 in a series of waves. As time went on, the strategies used to address with each wave evolved. The initial economic shutdown had the most dramatic impact on unemployment and related economic measures. Following waves saw diminished economic impact, but continued to bring significant challenges in the form of healthcare, education, and other social elements.

The central tragedy of the pandemic cannot be understated – as of April 4, 2022, nearly 5,000 Idahoans had died from COVID-19. The Treasure Valley accounted for 1,876 of those deaths. The weight of these deaths can be felt throughout this report, and will continue to be felt in Idaho.

Demographics

Unlike many parts of the country, the Treasure Valley continued a strong pattern of population growth through the pandemic, spurred in large part by migration from other states. This growth presents a valuable opportunity for economic growth, and may have offset the economic impacts of the pandemic. At the same time, growth in the Treasure Valley can be associated with rising costs, increased competition for jobs and housing, and increased burden of

infrastructure, including the healthcare and education systems. Some of these challenges were made worse by the pandemic.

Poverty & Financial Stability

Close to a quarter of Idahoans surveyed by Idaho Policy Institute in 2021 stated that they and their families were worse off financially than before the pandemic. Unemployment, sickness, and childcare problems may have all contributed to this trend – women may have been particularly vulnerable to declining childcare capacity, rising childcare costs, and higher unemployment rates facing women-dominated service industries.

Housing

Reductions in non-essential court hearings, and temporary eviction moratoria in 2020 reduced the number of evictions by 30% during that part of the year, saving some households facing housing instability from having to navigate an especially challenging housing market in the midst of the pandemic. Financial housing assistance may have also helped to dampen the impact of the pandemic for some.

Health

The pandemic overwhelmed public healthcare systems on a few occasions, prompting the implementation of Crisis Standards of Care in the Treasure Valley. As a result of this and other factors, some people delayed or skipped medical care during the pandemic, either out of fear of contracting COVID-19 in emergency rooms, concerns about excessive delays, or the belief that they would not be treated.

Education

The switch to virtual schooling in many areas created a challenging educational environment for students and teachers as well as parents trying to adjust to children being at home. As a result, reading and math test scores declined in the 2020-21 school year, although they are expected to improve in the 2021-22 school year.

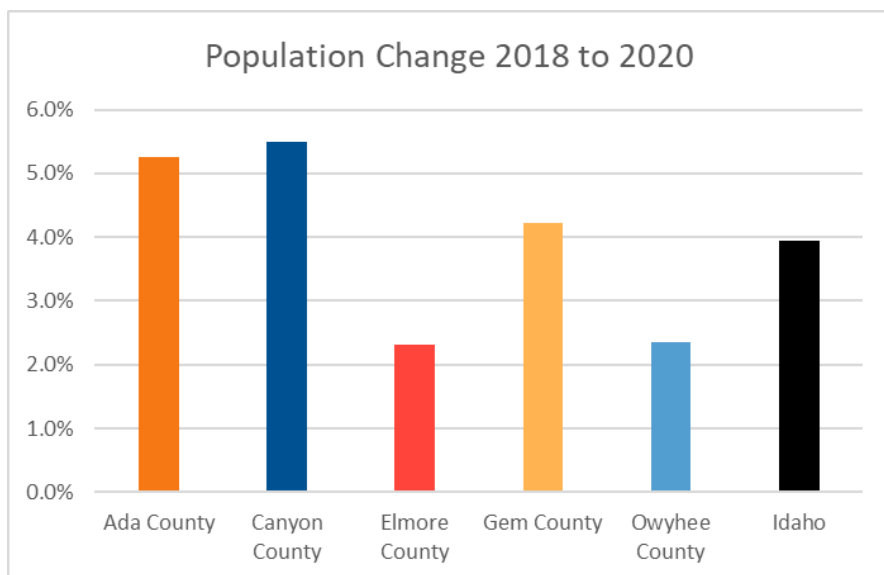
DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TREASURE VALLEY

Idaho's population growth continued during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, Idaho was the fastest-growing state in the nation. Much of this statewide population growth occurred in the Treasure Valley area.

As in past years, growth in 2020 largely came from migration from other states – mostly western states.¹ Much of this growth arrived in suburbs outside of urban centers, which can compound transportation challenges at times. The pandemic illustrated this in a number of ways, from the complex management of bed spaces between hospitals to the widespread adoption of teleworking methods that ease commutes.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Migration Flows

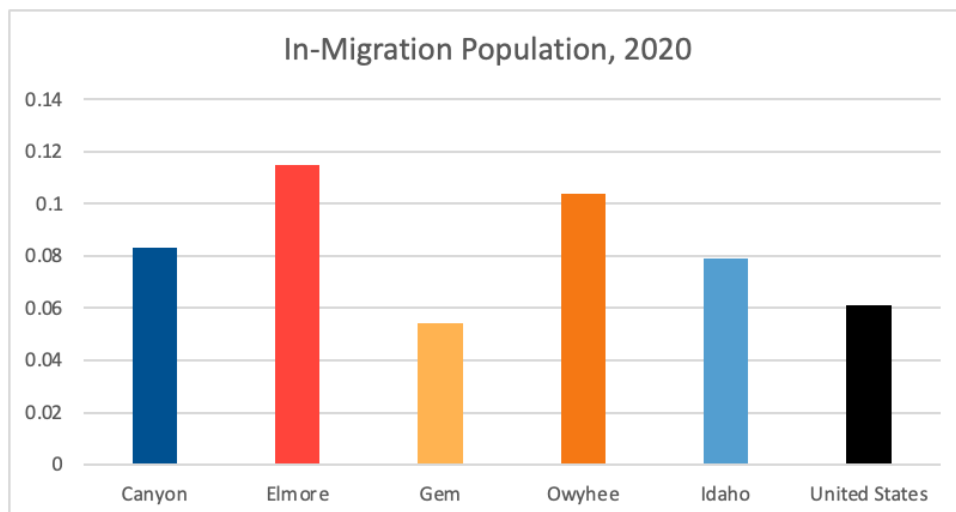
Figure 1



Data Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

In-migration refers to people who moved to a new household from outside the county, from outside the state, or moved from abroad.² In-migration during the pandemic was strong throughout Idaho (Figure 2). Most of Idaho's growth during the pandemic came from in-migration, rather than births. In Ada and Canyon County growth went up for populations who moved from a different county within Idaho and those who moved from a different state.

Figure 2

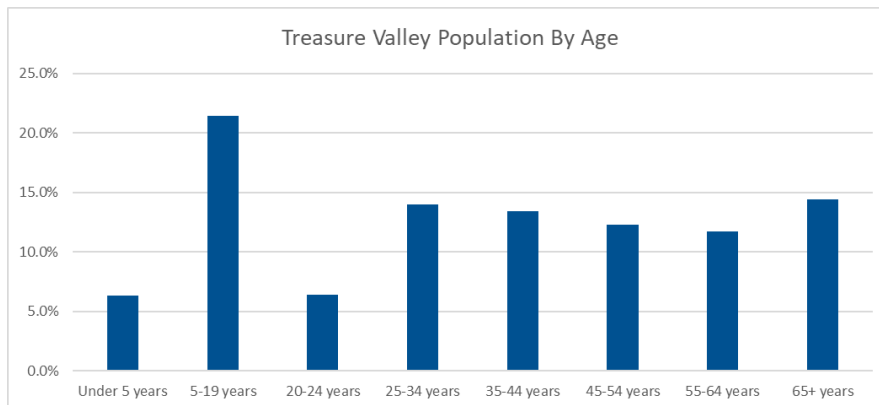


Data Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

² United Way of Treasure Valley. (2020). United Way of Treasure Valley 2020 Community assessment. Retrieved from https://www.unitedwaytv.org/sites/unitedwaytv.org/files/2020_UWCommunityAssessment_Appendix.pdf

The Treasure Valley population, 749,901, accounts for 42.7% of Idaho's population. The largest age group that consistently grows throughout all counties is 5-19 years, representing 21.4% of the total population. Gem County has the highest percentage of adults over 65 representing 21.7% of the population.

Figure 3

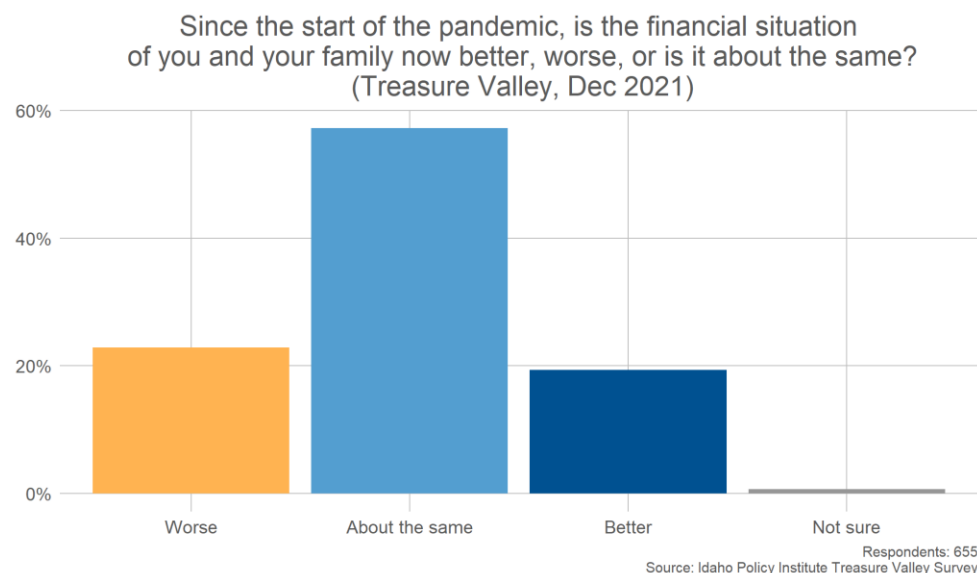


Data Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

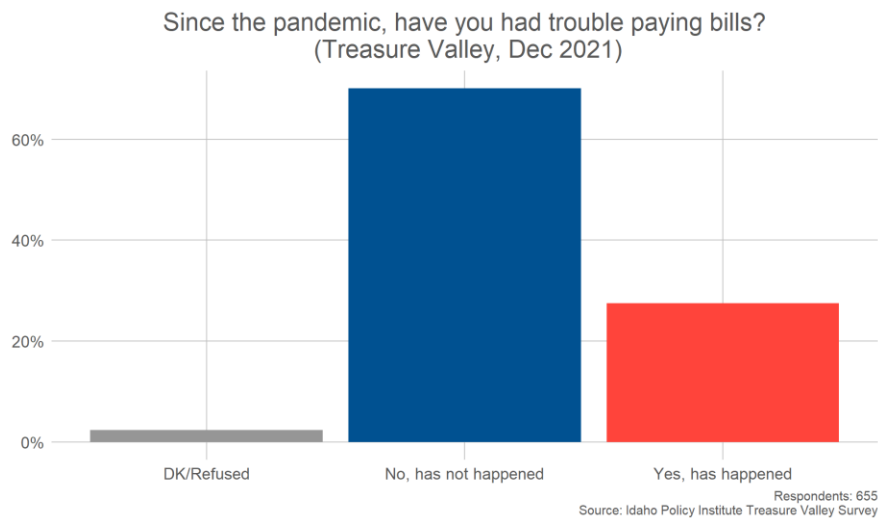
Stay at home orders, business closures, COVID-19 exposures and subsequent isolation of workers, lack of childcare options, and the housing crises all put pressure on the financial stability of Idahoans. While financial assistance programs, such as the Advanced Child Tax Credit, Economic Impact Payments, and Emergency Rental Assistance helped mitigate these challenges, Idahoans with limited incomes were sometimes more impacted by COVID-19 related challenges.

Figure 4



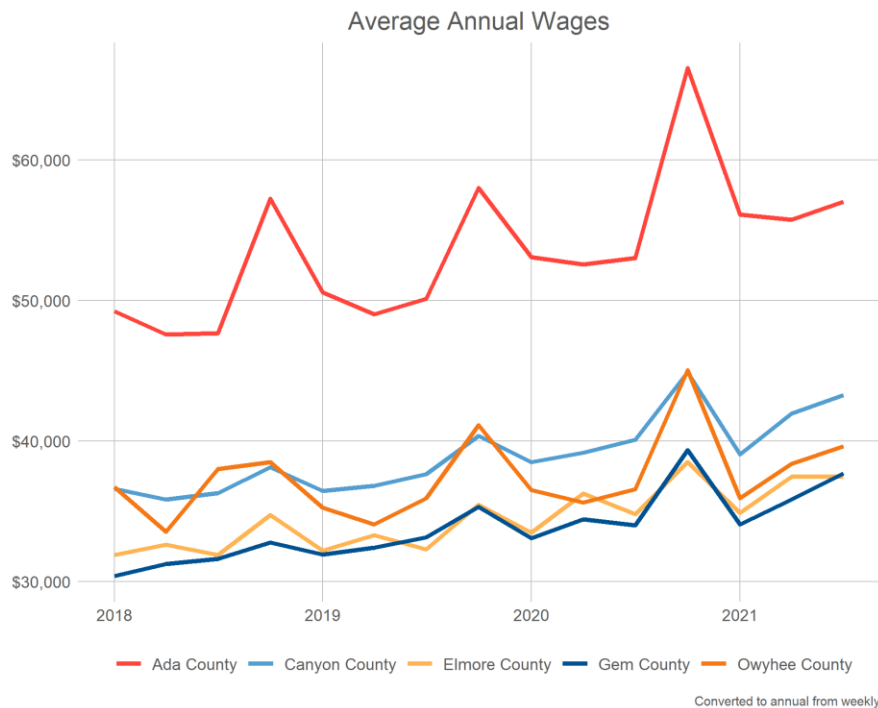
Idaho Policy Institute (IPI) asked a representative sample of Treasure Valley residents about the impacts experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 4). Close to a quarter said they were worse off financially than before the pandemic started. Roughly the same percentage of respondents said they had trouble paying their bills since the pandemic began (Figure 5). While this is substantial, government financial supports may have prevented a larger number of people from being financially damaged by the pandemic.

Figure 5



EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

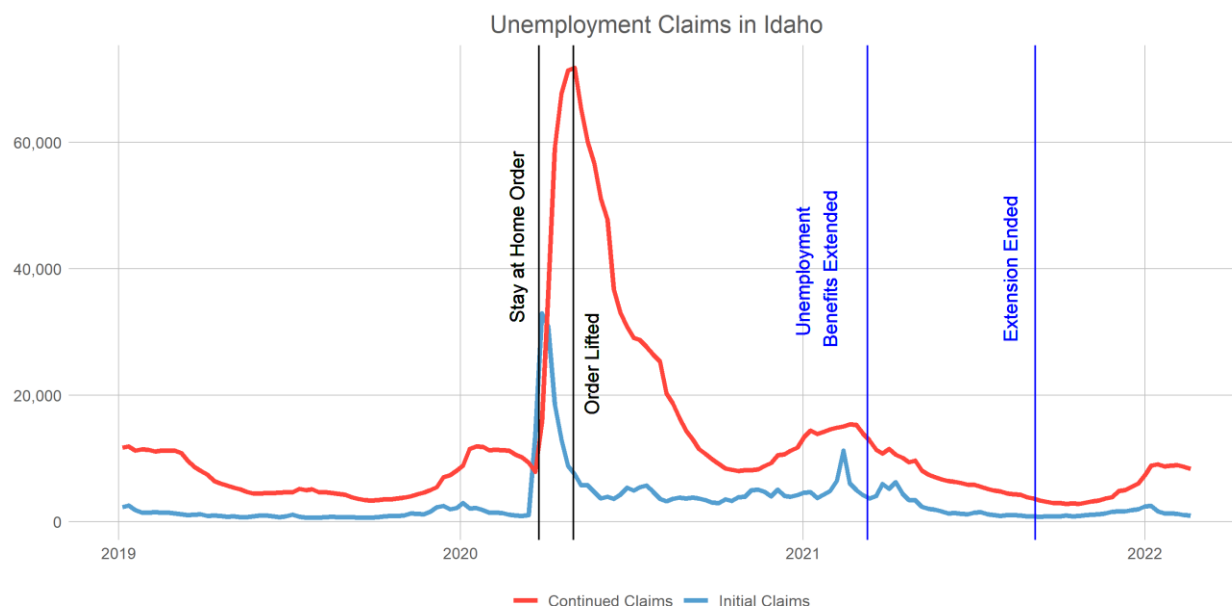
Figure 6



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Average wages across much of the Treasure Valley have steadily increased, although there is a noticeable gap in wages between Ada County and its neighbors (Figure 6).

Figure 7



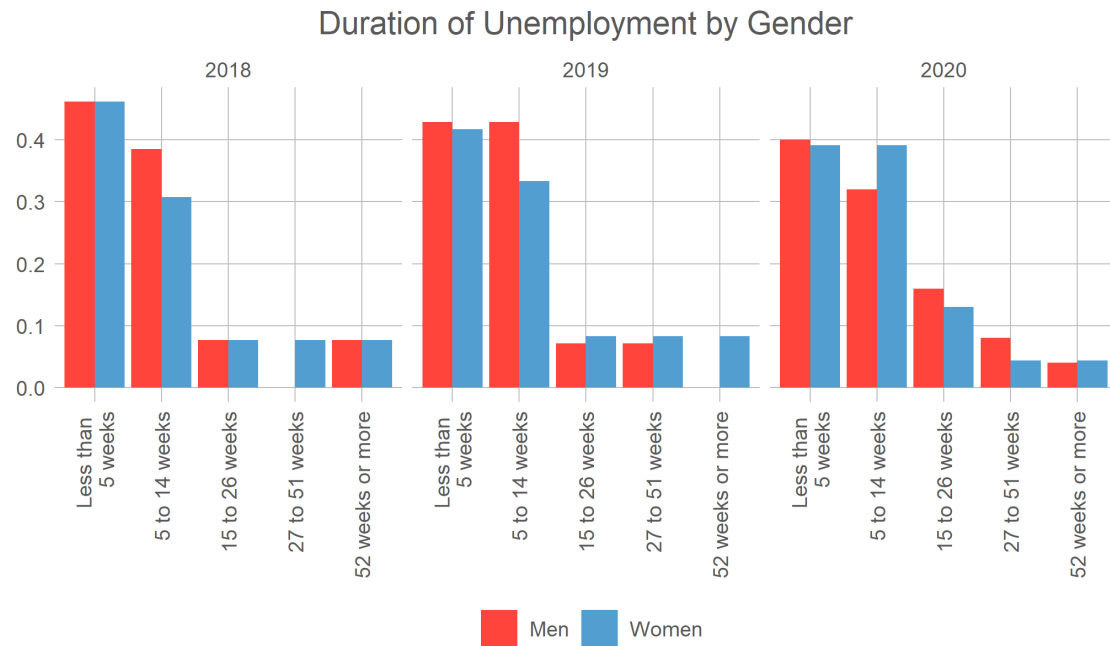
Source: Idaho Department of Labor Unemployment Claims Data

Idaho saw a sharp jump in unemployment claims during the initial months of the pandemic, especially following the Governor's stay at home order on March 25th, 2020 (Figure 7). Once the order was lifted on May 1st, unemployment claims sharply dropped, although it was not until late 2021 that numbers approached pre-pandemic levels. The Federal extension of unemployment benefits from March 11th through September 6th does not appear to have motivated a significant increase in filing of claims.

Idahoans between the ages of 25 and 54 saw the highest unemployment numbers, particularly at the start of the pandemic. However, unemployment claims from individuals under 25 increased as a percentage of total during the height of the pandemic, suggesting that this age group was hit unusually hard.³

³ Idaho Department of Labor Unemployment Claims Data

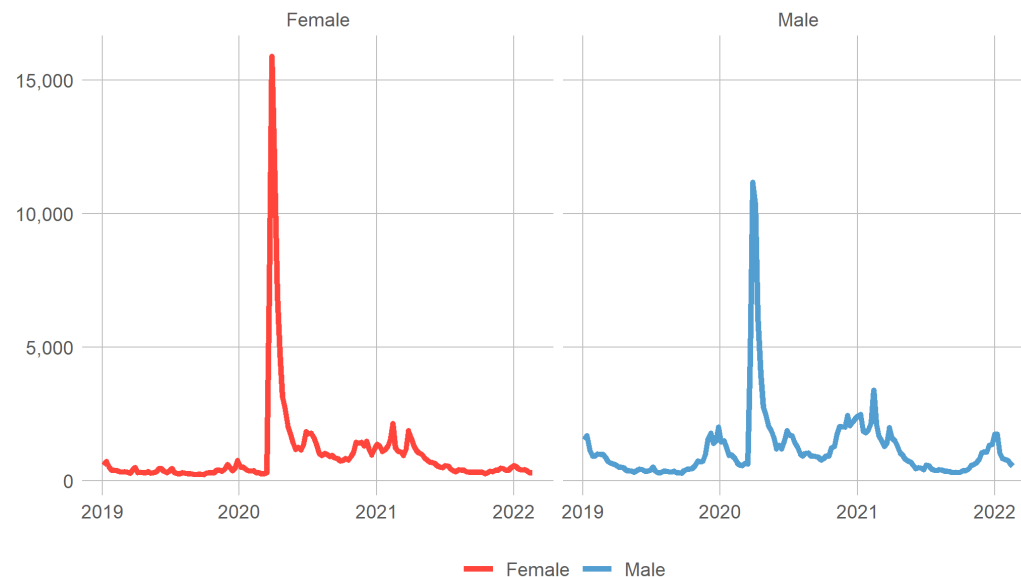
Figure 8



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment Data

In 2020, the percentage of men and women experiencing unemployment longer than five weeks increased. However, the percentage of women facing unemployment of 27 weeks or more decreased. This suggests that though the pandemic led to more Idahoans facing unemployment, those Idahoans were able to find work within a year.

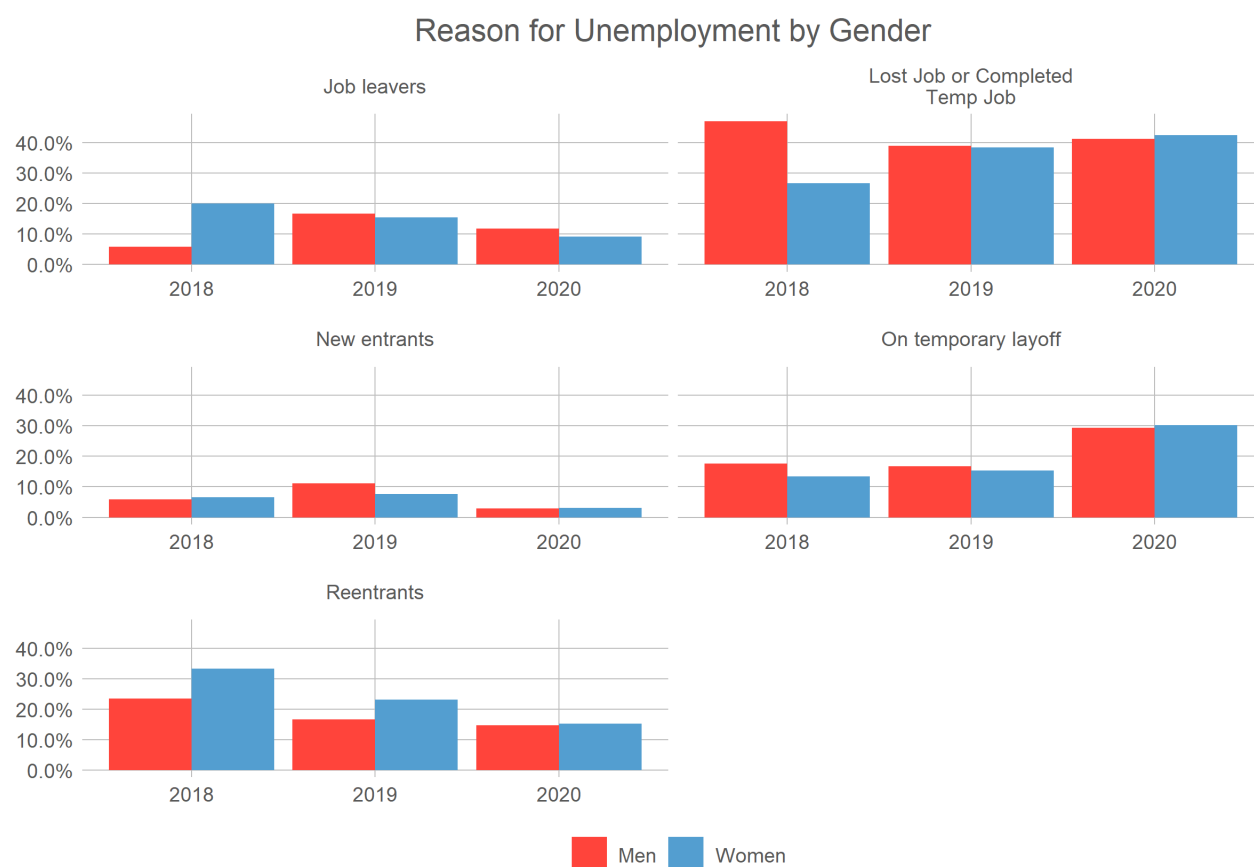
Figure 9: Unemployment Claims by Gender



Source: Idaho Department of Labor Unemployment Claims Data

Significantly more women filed for unemployment during the early days of the pandemic than men, while a larger number of men filed for unemployment during the waves of early 2021 and 2022 (Figure 9). The pandemic's immediate and outsized impact on the service and hospitality industries may explain why women had higher claims earlier on. Many childcare facilities and schools also closed or went remote, often placing a greater share of burden of childcare on women and impacting their work.⁴

Figure 10



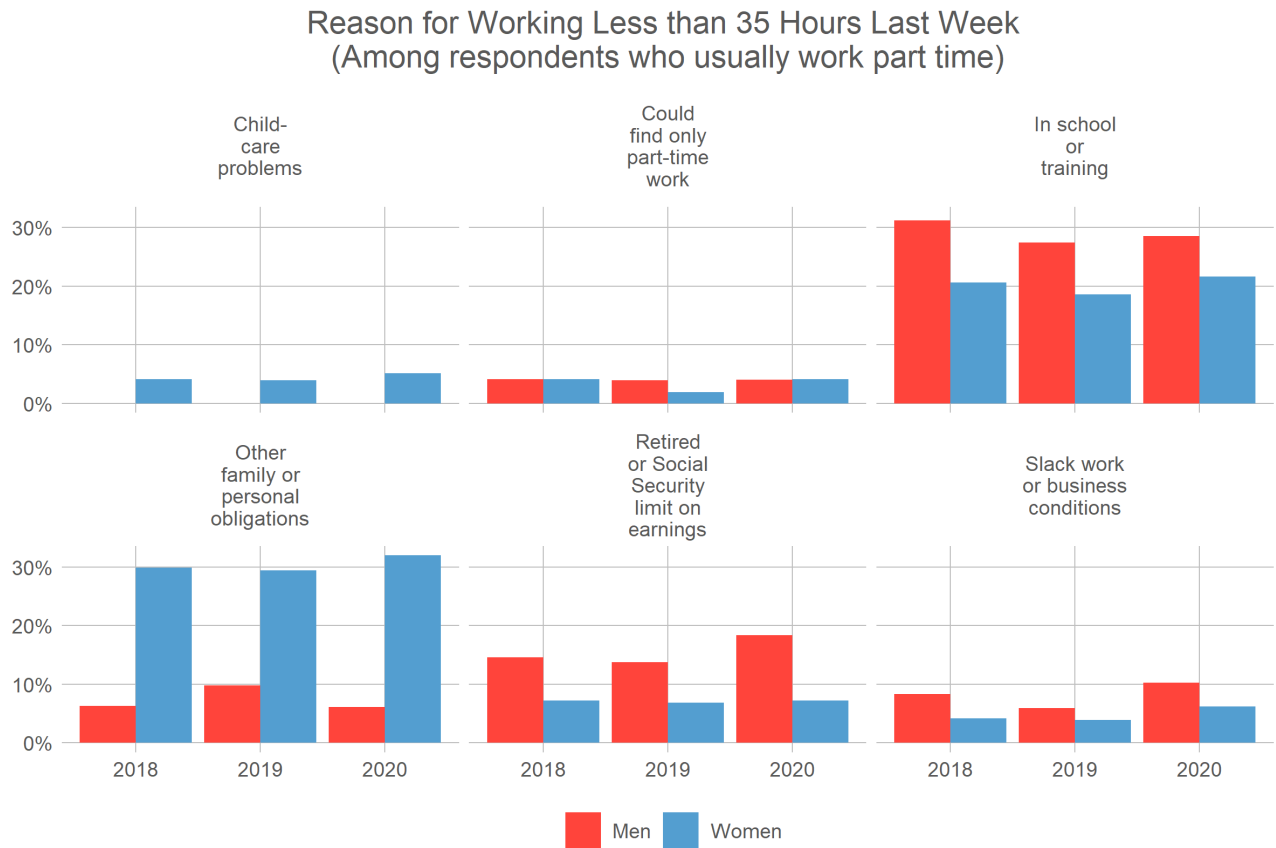
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment Data⁵

Among those applying for unemployment, 2020 saw a significant increase in the percentage of men and women on temporary layoff. Job leavers, new entrants, and reentrants made up a smaller percentage of total unemployment claims.

⁴ Alon, T., Doepke, M., Olmstead-Rumsey, J. & Tertilt, M. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w26947/w26947.pdf

⁵ The definitions for the terms used in this chart come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm#reasons>

Figure 11

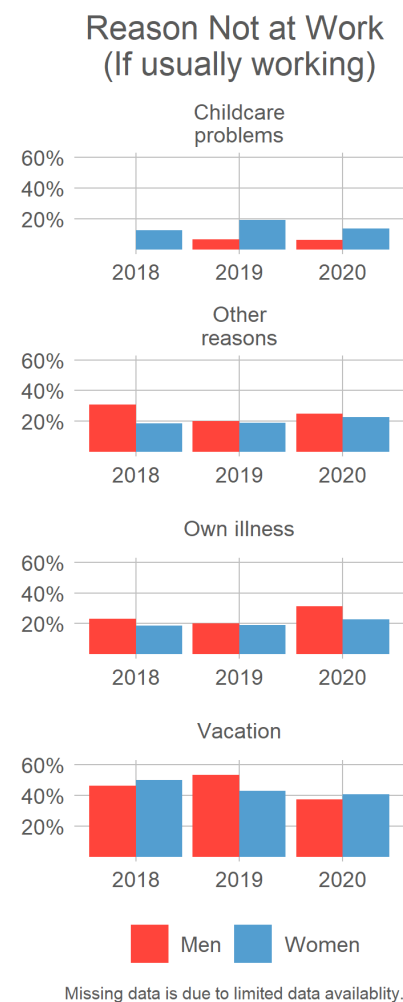


Missing data is due to limited data availability.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment Data

Among those surveyed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics who said they were working less than 35 hours a week, women were significantly more likely to be working part-time as a result of child care problems, and family or personal obligations. Both of these categories increased slightly in 2020. The slight increase of men retiring in 2020 suggests that some part-time workers may have retired as a result of the pandemic.

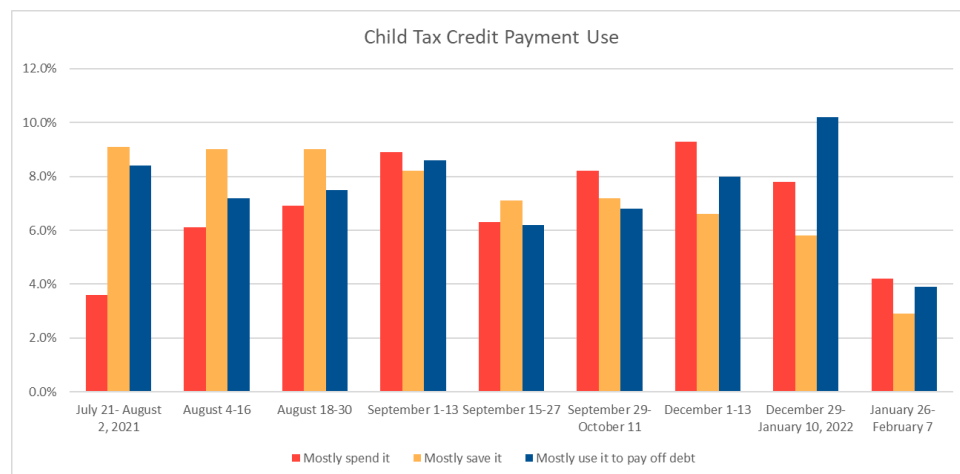
Figure 12



Among survey respondents who were not working when they normally would be, a larger percentage of female respondents were temporarily home from work due to childcare problems, although this percentage did not change significantly with the pandemic. The percentage of men and women off from work for illness increased, possibly as a result of exposure to or contraction of COVID-19.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment Data

Figure 13



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey

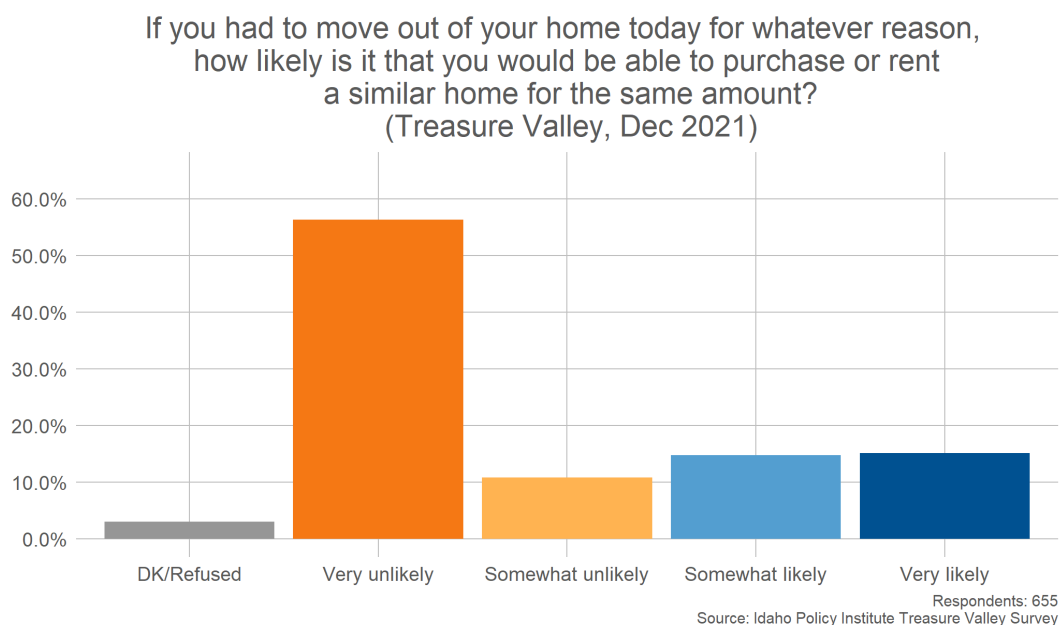
The Census's Household Pulse Survey asked adults in Idaho whether they had received a Child Tax Credit payment within the last four weeks and if they had, did they mostly spend it, save it, or use it to pay off debt. In Idaho most adults used the Child Tax Credit to save it and pay off debt. This suggests that the Child Tax Credit helped to alleviate economic hardships and help children during the pandemic.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the housing crises in the Treasure Valley. Population growth, increased housing costs, and escalated building expenses caused available and affordable units to dwindle. While federal programs such as Emergency Rental Assistance helped some Idahoans avoid housing instability or homelessness, in some cases these only temporarily delayed housing instability.

67.1% of respondents to IPI's 2021 Treasure Valley Survey indicated they would be unable to find another house for the same amount of money if they needed to move (Figure 14), suggesting that housing instability, whether caused by the pandemic or not, is a threat to people from many economic backgrounds.⁶ Data from the U.S. Census Bureau suggests low-income households may move more often.⁷

Figure 14



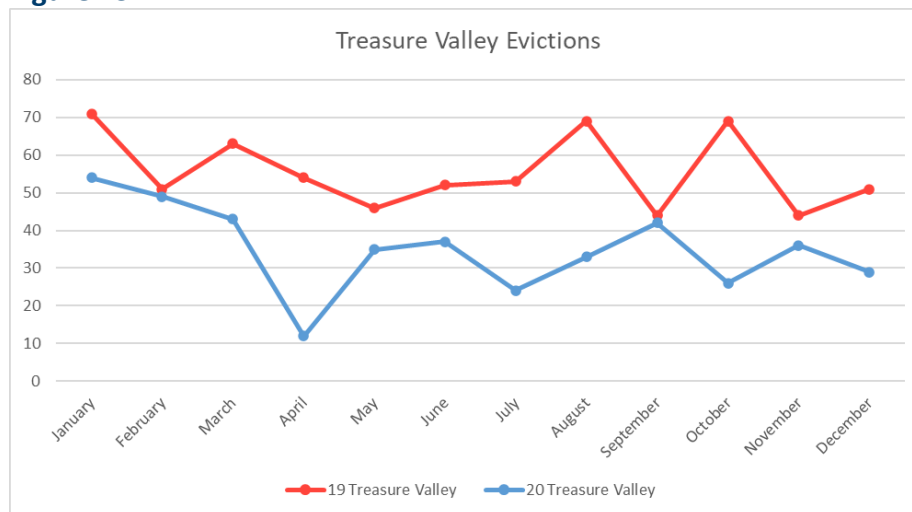
⁶ This survey asked Treasure Valley residents in general about their perspectives, and did not target any particular demographic.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5 Year Estimates, Tables B07010 & B07410

HOUSING STABILITY AND HOUSING CONDITIONS

Eviction numbers in the Treasure Valley dropped by 37% in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions (Figure 15). However, the numbers increased to near pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year. The Treasure Valley had 667 evictions in 2019 and only 420 in 2020. Eviction numbers across the state dropped by 30% in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions. However, the numbers also increased to near pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year.

Figure 15



Source: Idaho Supreme Court

The decrease in evictions in 2020 is due to policies and programs implemented as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most significantly, the Idaho Supreme Court halted non-essential hearings throughout the state from March 25, 2020 to April 30. After April, Idahoans could avoid eviction if they met qualifications in the CARES Act or CDC Moratoria. Along with meeting the qualifications, those wanting to benefit from the moratoria also had to know how to apply for the program and landlords needed to approve the use of moratoria funds. In addition to moratoria, Idahoans could access funds to prevent eviction through Idaho Housing and Finance Association's (IHFA) Housing Preservation and Emergency Rental Assistance Programs. These programs received an estimated \$175 million in assistance to distribute to Idahoans.

Between April 2020 and September 2021, IHFA distributed \$28.8 million in emergency rental assistance funds. These funds assisted 9,579 households (28,433 people) pay rent and/or utilities. Emergency rental assistance funds are made possible through the Idaho Housing Preservation Program, the CARES Act, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The current assistance period runs through September 30, 2022.

Figure 16

Breakdown of funds:	Region 3*	Region 7**	State
Households	2,869	2,606	9,579
Rent	\$7,977,954	\$7,163,485	\$26,895,665
Utilities	\$616,207	\$500,955	\$1,874,937
Total	\$8,594,160	\$7,664,441	\$28,770,603

*Region 3 = Adams, Washington, Payette, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee, Valley, Boise Counties

**Region 7 = Ada County

Source: *Idaho Housing and Finance Association*

On average, 51.7% of applications are approved. Invalid applications are most commonly the result of applicants not responding to follow-up communications from the housing authorities or a failure to submit necessary documents. 75% of those receiving rental assistance make less than 50% of their area median income.

HOMELESSNESS

Each January, HUD conducts a point in time (PIT) count to enumerate homelessness throughout the country. As such, the 2020 count is reflective of homelessness before the COVID-19 pandemic. While Ada County PIT numbers are unavailable for 2019 and 2021, the overall data show that homelessness statewide did not increase with the onset of the pandemic (See appendix).

Each year, Idaho Housing and Finance Association (IHFA) also releases a report enumerating homelessness. The IHFA count is the number of people seeking services related to homelessness as entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Using the HMIS count, homelessness numbers dropped throughout the state in 2020 and again in 2021. However, Treasure Valley numbers increased. This increase could be a result of increasing housing costs and/or the pandemic.

HEALTH

In March, 2020, Idaho's Governor declared a public health emergency that remained in effect until April 15, 2022. During this time, 441,938 Idahoans tested positive for COVID-19, resulting in 4,834 related deaths. The Treasure Valley accounted for 46.8% of those cases (206,953), and 38.8% of deaths (1,876).⁸

These cases overwhelmed the public health system at times. In early September, 2021, much of the state implemented Crisis Standards of Care in response to staffing, blood, and bed shortages. As a result, there were increased waits for hospital beds, patients were transported to other hospitals in other states or counties, operations were postponed, and there was a reduction in less-urgent procedures.⁹ Crisis Standards of Care were deactivated throughout most of Idaho in late November, 2021. On January 21st, 2022, three public health districts in southern Idaho (Southwest District Health, Central District Health, & South-Central District Health) activated Crisis Standards of Care again until mid-February.

Healthcare limitations affected more than just COVID-19 patients as well. Although Idaho Department of Health and Welfare guidelines encourage people not to avoid needed care, some

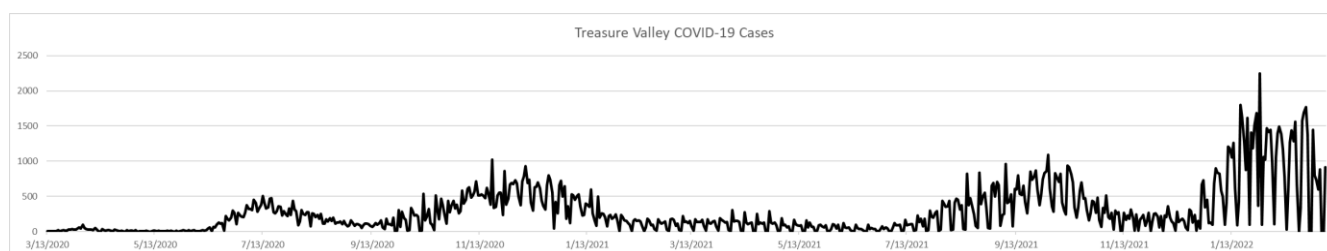
⁸ USA Facts, <https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map/state/idaho>

⁹ Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/health-wellness/community-health/crisis-standards-care>

of the data below suggests people avoided emergency rooms and other sources of medical care, possibly out of fear of contracting COVID-19, or the belief they would not be served.

In this report District 3, Southwest District Health, refers to Adams, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette and Washington counties. District 4, Central District Health, consists of Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley counties.

Figure 17



Source: New York Times, Coronavirus in the U.S.

Figure 18



Source: New York Times, Coronavirus in the U.S.

Figure 19: Percent of Population Vaccinated as of March 8, 2022

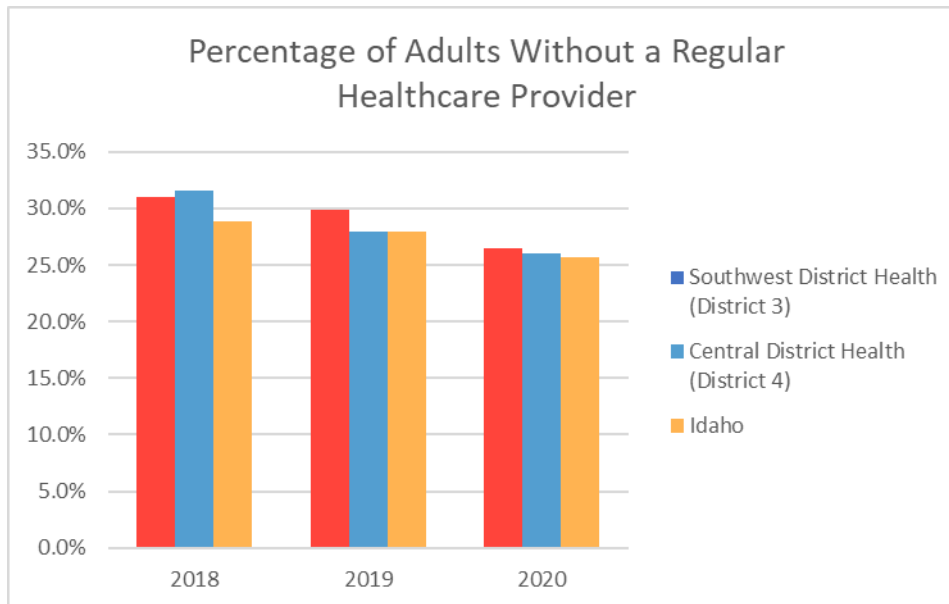
	At Least One Dose	Fully Vaccinated
Ada County	70.8%	63.6%
Canyon County	51.7%	45.8%
Elmore County	65.1%	53.3%
Gem County	45.6%	39.5%
Owyhee Country	40.3%	35.1%
Idaho	60.4%	53.3%

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Covid Data Tracker

HEALTH CARE: ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

The percentage of adults without a regular healthcare provider dropped across Idaho and the Treasure Valley in 2020. This decline may be associated with the growing concern with health the pandemic provoked, although it could also be reflective of a longer trend that began before the pandemic.

Figure 20

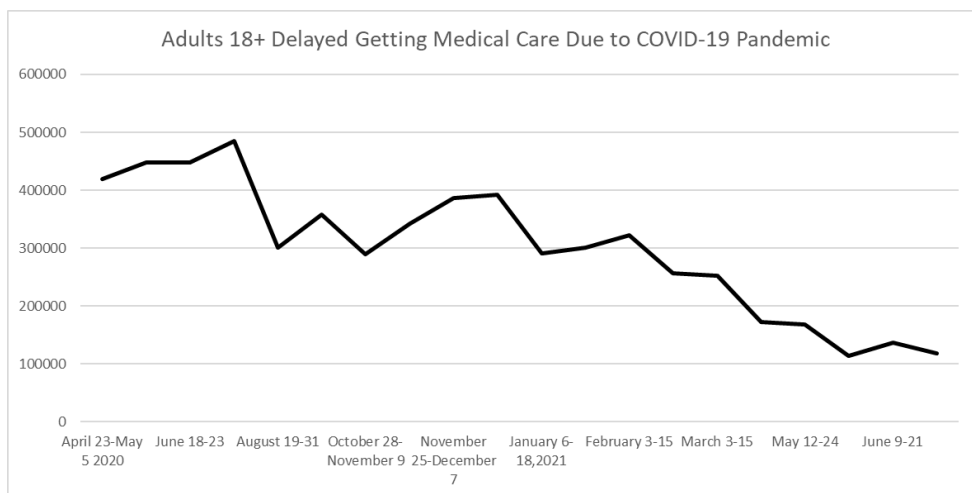


Source: Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, *Get Healthy Idaho, Idaho Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*

The U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey was created on March 2, 2020 to collect data on how people's lives were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰ Figure 21 suggests people may have been fearful to seek medical care due to COVID-19. As there were spikes in covid cases, more people delayed getting medical care. As cases went down, people sought care. In March 2021 fewer people delayed getting medical care. This may be suggestive of vaccines becoming widely available to everyone. Staffing shortages were not likely a cause of delayed care as the number of primary care physicians throughout Idaho and the Treasure Valley remained relatively stable throughout the pandemic.

¹⁰ US Census Bureau (2020). Household Pulse Survey Data Tables. Census.gov. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

Figure 21



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey

INSURANCE

Lack of health insurance coverage is one of the largest barriers to health care access and leads to inequities in health.¹¹ The pandemic furthered this inequity due job losses caused by the pandemic and the reliance of employer-sponsored health insurance.¹² While many lost their jobs, the uninsured rate in Idaho remained relatively the same suggesting there may have been enrollment in expanded Medicaid access which took effect in January 2020 (See appendix).¹³

Medicaid expansion came to Idaho beginning January 2020. Since then, Medicaid expansion has helped 16.9% of Idahoans.¹⁴ Medicaid expansion allows for Idahoans to see a doctor, get tested for COVID-19, get treatment if they are sick, and expanded medical services.¹⁵ The majority of Treasure Valley residents who receive Medicaid are under the age of 18.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

Behavioral health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and substance use affect people's ability to participate in health-promoting behaviors.¹⁶ The pandemic affected many people's mental

¹¹ United Way of Treasure Valley. (2020). United Way of Treasure Valley 2020 Community assessment. Retrieved from https://www.unitedwaytv.org/sites/unitedwaytv.org/files/2020_UWCommunityAssessment_Appendix.pdf

¹² McDermott, D., Garfield, R., Rudowitz, R., & Cox, C. (2020, December 9). How has the pandemic affected health coverage in the U.S.? Retrieved from <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/how-has-the-pandemic-affected-health-coverage-in-the-u-s/>

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Service, 2016-2020 5 Year Estimates

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Service, 2016-2020 5 Year Estimates

¹⁵ United Way of Treasure Valley. (2020). United Way of Treasure Valley 2020 Community assessment. Retrieved from https://www.unitedwaytv.org/sites/unitedwaytv.org/files/2020_UWCommunityAssessment_Appendix.pdf

¹⁶ United Way of Treasure Valley. (2020). United Way of Treasure Valley 2020 Community assessment. Retrieved from https://www.unitedwaytv.org/sites/unitedwaytv.org/files/2020_UWCommunityAssessment_Appendix.pdf

health and well-being due to worry and stress over the virus, job loss, isolation, and disruption to changes to family's daily routines.¹⁷ These mental health effects are shown in the following data.

Figure 22

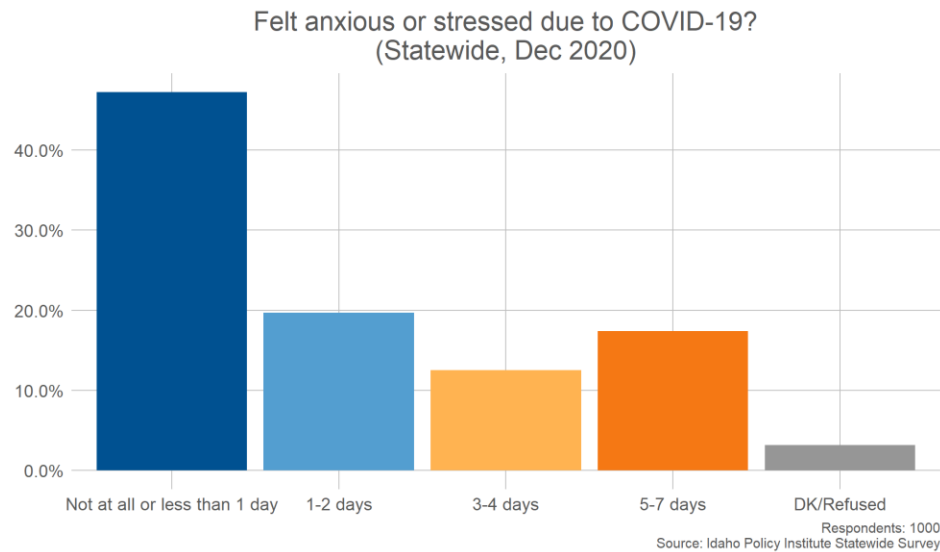
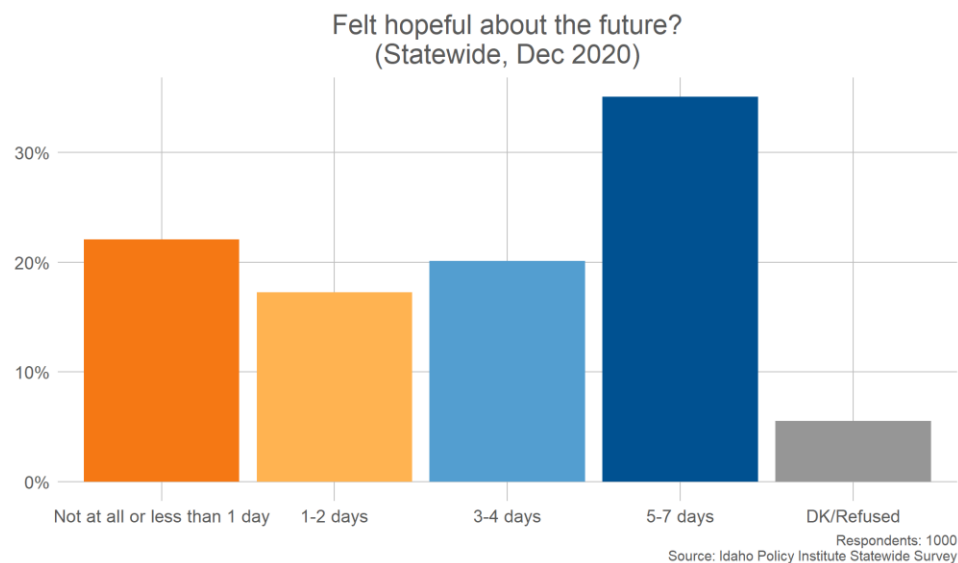


Figure 23



Idahoans displayed a tone of resiliency in their responses to IPI's December, 2020 statewide survey (Figure 23). In the midst of the pandemic, many Idahoans reported feeling hopeful about

¹⁷ Panchal, N., Kamal, R., Cox, C., & Garfield, R. (2021, July 20). The implications of COVID-19 for mental health and substance use. Retrieved from <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

the future most of the time. However, nearly 50% of Idahoans did report feeling COVID-19 related anxiety at least 1 or 2 days out of the week (Figure 22).

Figure 24

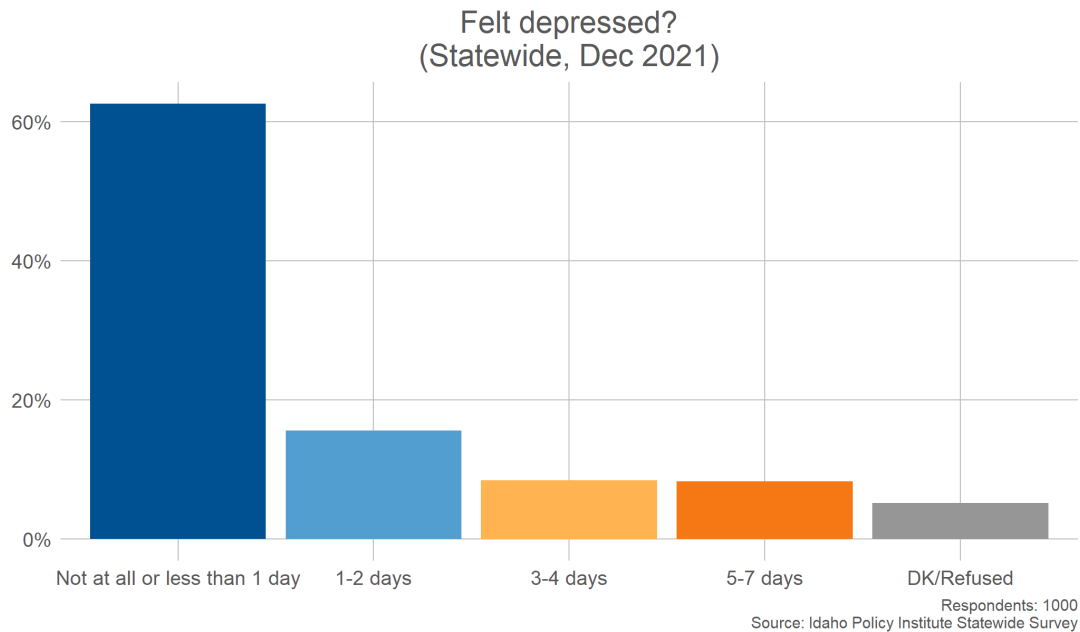
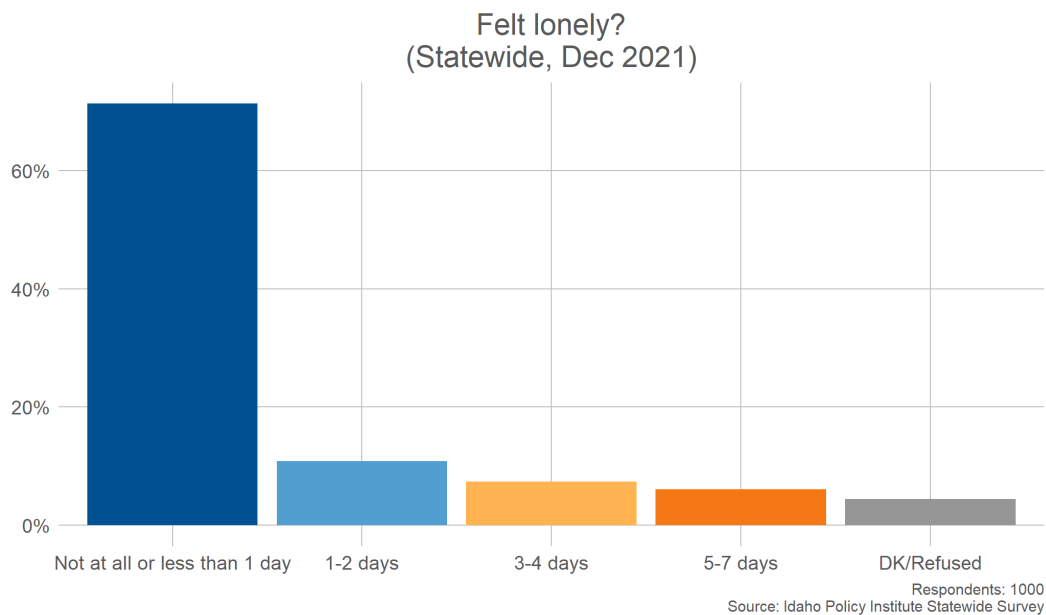
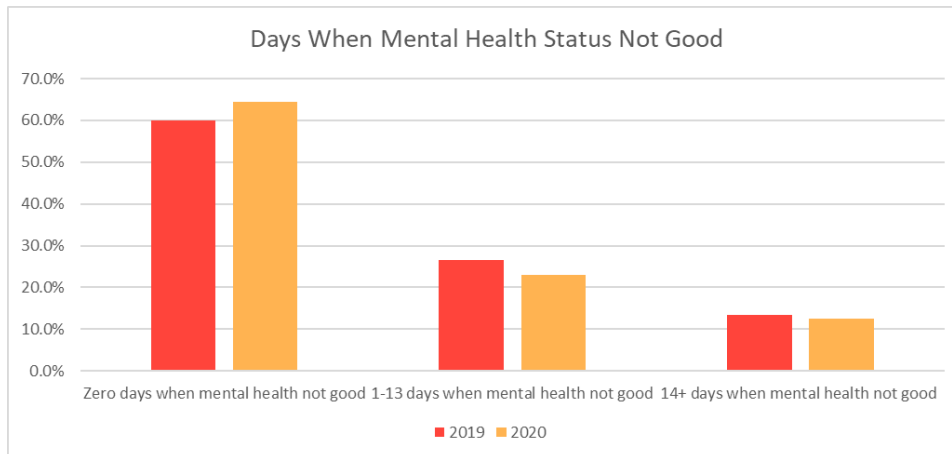


Figure 25



In December 2021, after more than a year and a half into the pandemic, Idahoans continued to report fairly low rates of loneliness and depression in IPI's statewide survey (Figures 24 and 25).

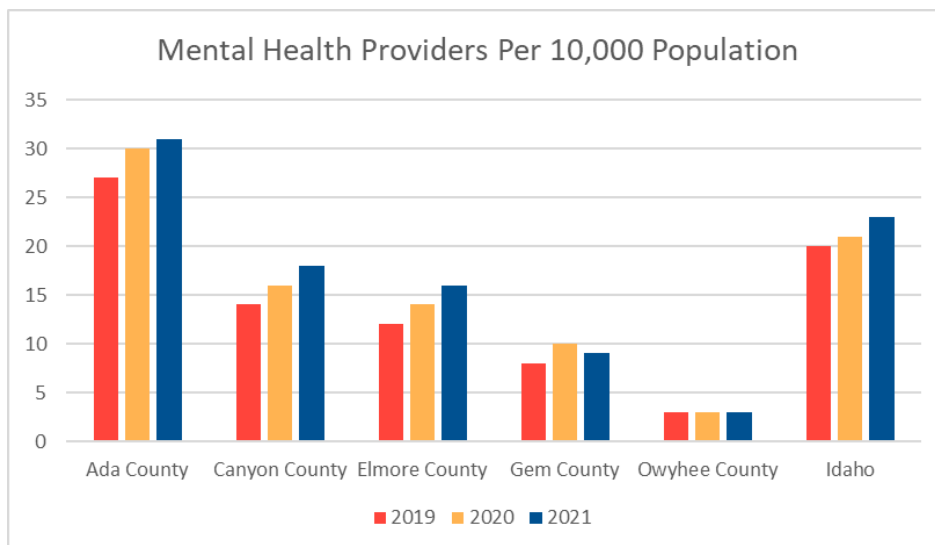
Figure 26



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducts a Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System with state health departments to collect data using a monthly telephone survey to ask residents questions regarding their health status and behaviors.¹⁸ Between 2019 and 2020 Idahoans remained relatively stable with mental health, with majority of survey participants responding with zero days of when their mental health was not good.

Figure 27



Source: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, County Health Rankings

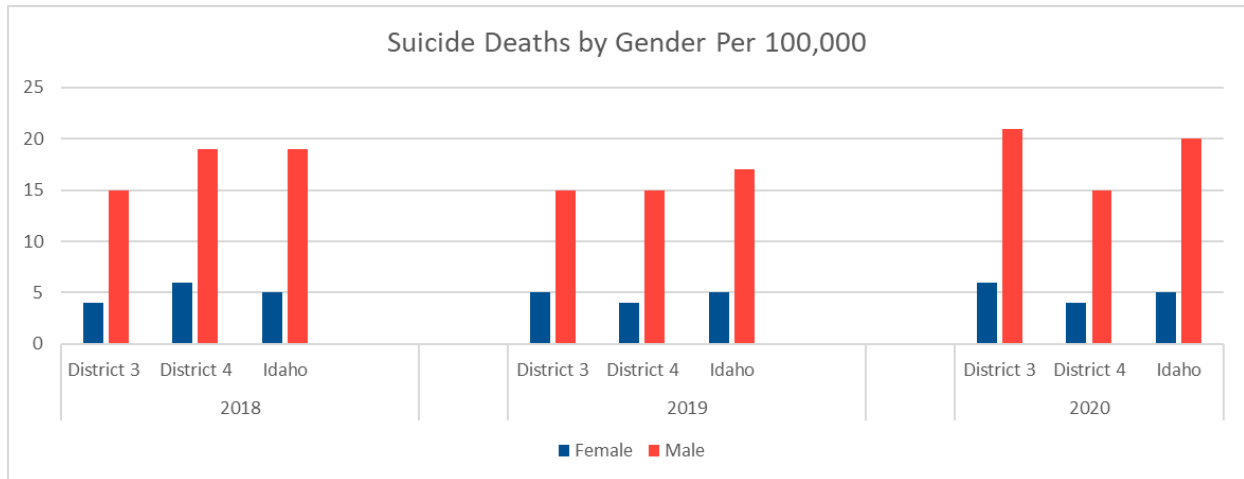
The number of mental health providers available to Idahoans increased in most counties in the Treasure Valley.

¹⁸ Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.html>

SUICIDE

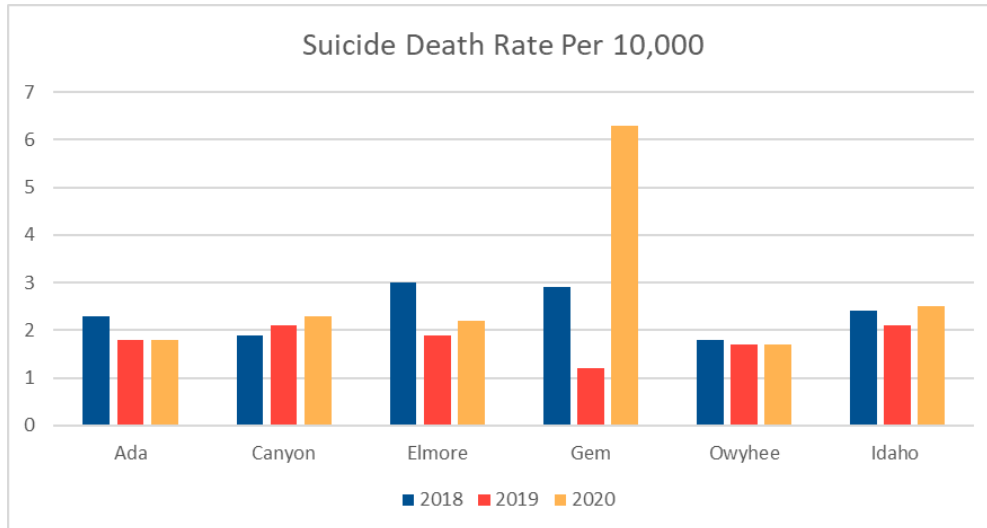
The number of suicide deaths in Health District 3 (Adams, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette and Washington counties), increased significantly in 2020, particularly among men. Gem and Canyon County saw the largest increases in suicide death rates compared to 2019 and 2018.

Figure 28



Source: Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, Get Healthy Idaho, Idaho Violent Death Reporting System

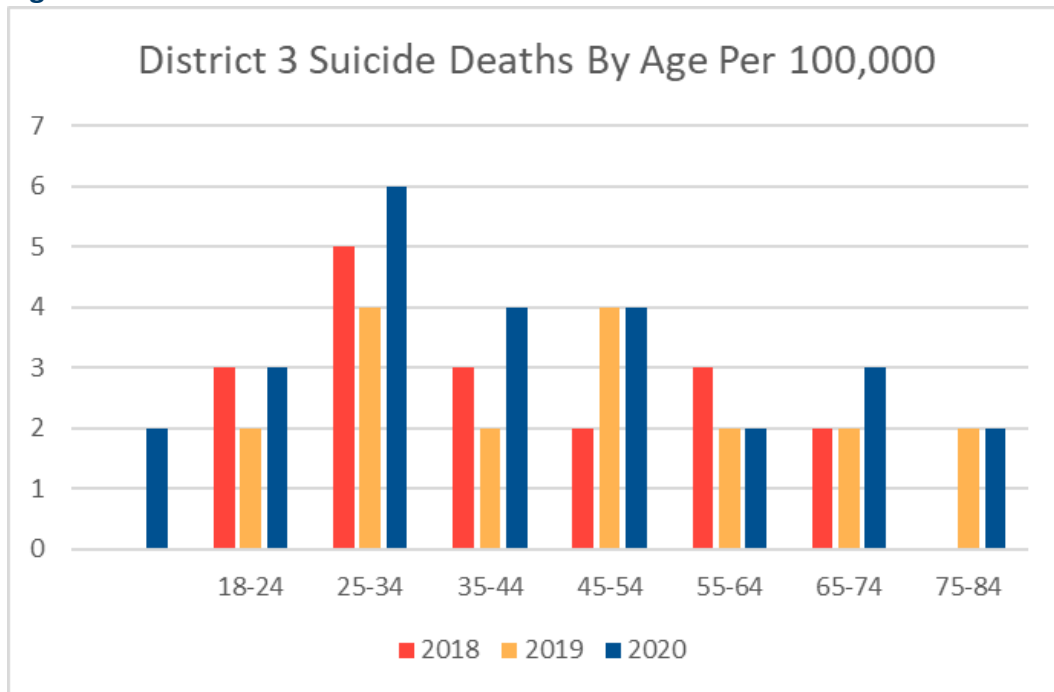
Figure 29



Source: Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, Get Healthy Idaho, Idaho Violent Death Reporting System

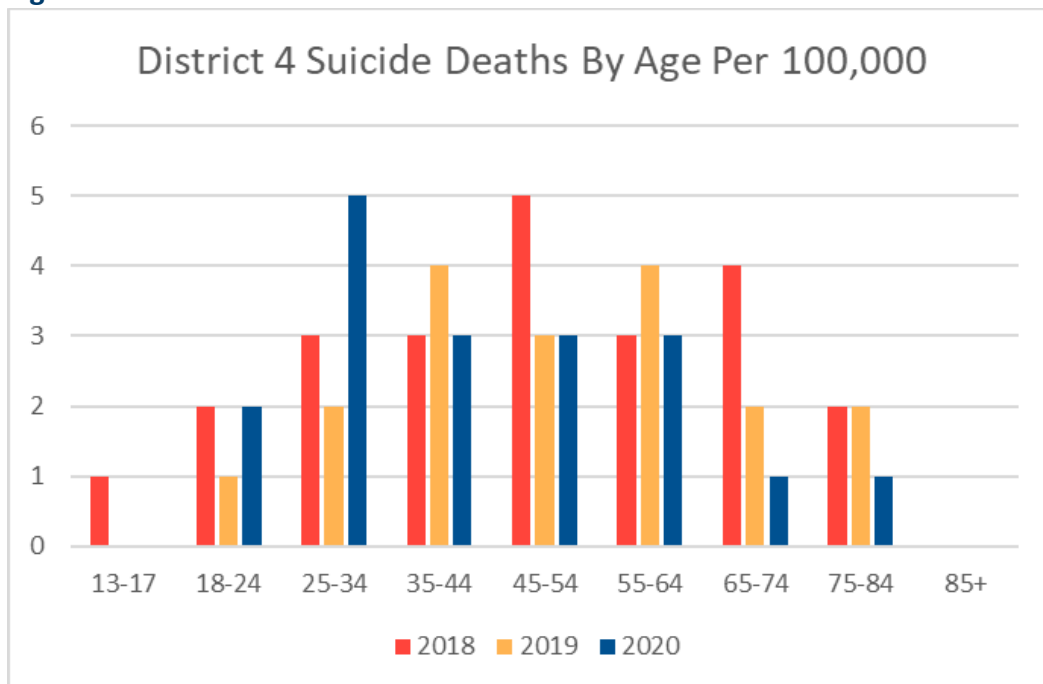
Idahoans between the ages of 25 and 34 saw the largest increase in suicide deaths. These individuals were also among those hit the hardest by pandemic-induced job losses, which may have played a role in increased suicide rates (Figures 30 and 31).

Figure 30



Source: Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, Get Healthy Idaho, Idaho Violent Death Reporting System

Figure 31

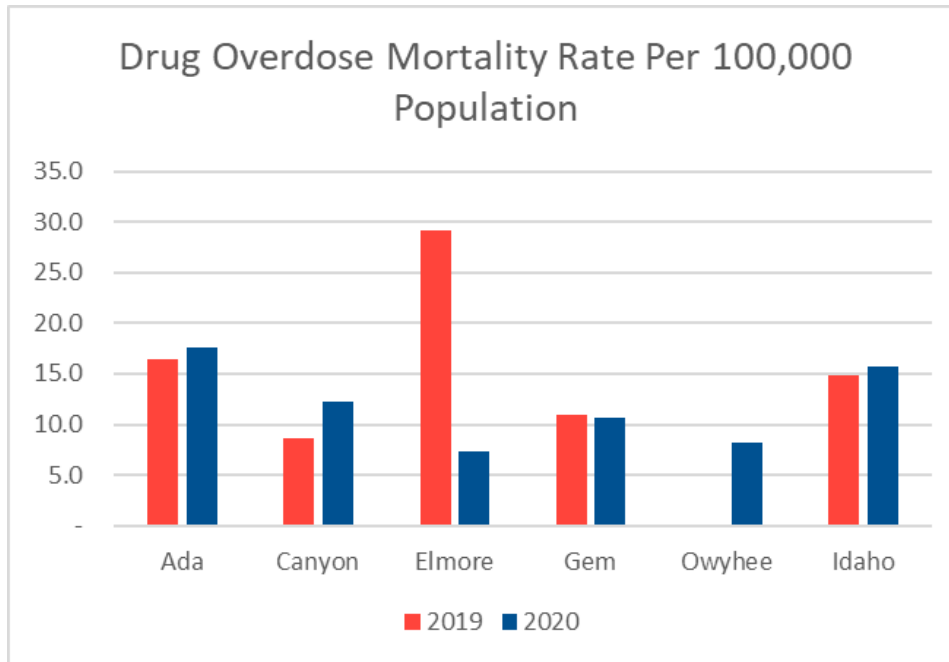


Source: Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, Get Healthy Idaho, Idaho Violent Death Reporting System

SUBSTANCE USE

Drug overdose refers to deaths that were accidental, due to suicide, homicide, or drug overdose deaths in which the manner of death could not be determined.¹⁹ In 2020 Idaho saw a 6.1% increase in drug overdose mortality rates, potentially pandemic related in some counties.

Figure 32



Source: Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, Division of Public Health

HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity, a long-term issue exacerbated by the pandemic, impacted many families. Food insecurity and poor nutrition are associated with chronic illnesses that put people at higher risk for severe complications of COVID-19. The disparities and inequality of access to food are even greater for communities as isolation, distance to grocery stores, few transportation options, and high unemployment within families occur. Children's food insecurity increased during the pandemic due to school closures limiting access to free or reduced priced meals. In 2020 the percentage of households and children under 18 receiving SNAP dropped, as did the percent of population below poverty level. It is difficult to pinpoint the cause for these decreases (See appendix).

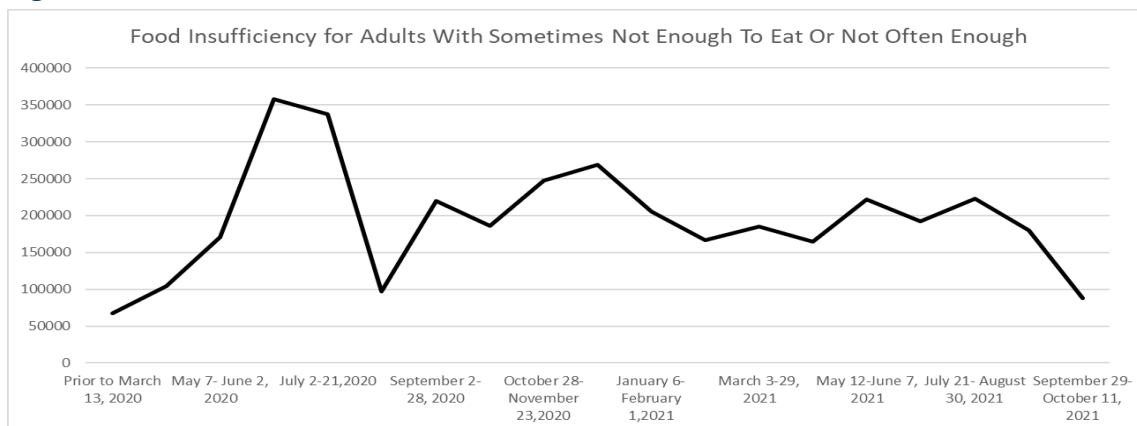
FOOD INSUFFICIENCY

The U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey asked Idahoan adults throughout the pandemic they sometimes did not have enough to eat or often did not have enough to eat. Prior to the pandemic less than 100,000 adults experienced food insufficiency. At the onset of the pandemic, approximately 350,000 Idahoans struggled with food insufficiency. As time went on

¹⁹ Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics (BVRHS); Division of Public Health. (2021).

and estimated 150,000-250,000 people experienced food insufficiency on any given week. From September 29-October 11, 2021 less than 100,000 Idahoans reported having food insufficiency.

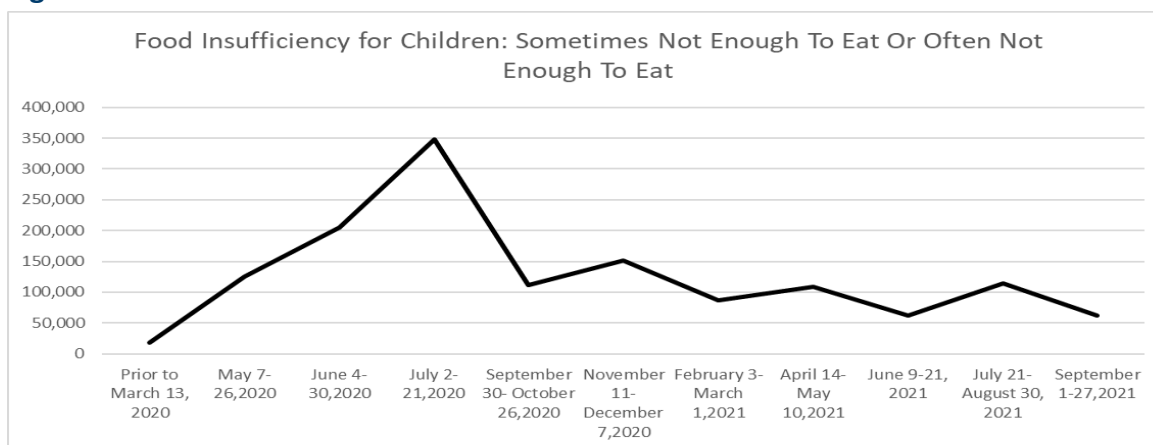
Figure 33



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey

For children during the initial months of the pandemic from March- July 2020, the Household Pulse Survey estimated high food insufficiency rates. The highest estimate was 350,000 children experiencing food insufficiency in mid-2020. This high estimation is likely related to school closures.

Figure 34



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey

EDUCATION

As Idaho schools went into spring break in March 2020, many planned to lengthen their breaks into two weeks instead of one. After the two weeks, all schools decided to move to virtual instruction which remained throughout the school year. The quality of the virtual instruction varied by school, with some schools offering weekly homework packets while others had virtual instruction and homework support from teachers. Students were not required to take standardized tests in the spring of 2020, leaving a gap in data when doing comparisons.

In fall 2020, many districts provided instruction in a hybrid format, with students alternating between in-person and virtual learning. Some schools allowed students to attend completely virtually while their peers were physically in school. In some cases, teachers were expected to teach both sets of students concurrently. At times, instruction moved to complete virtual learning when enough students or teachers were exposed to the virus.

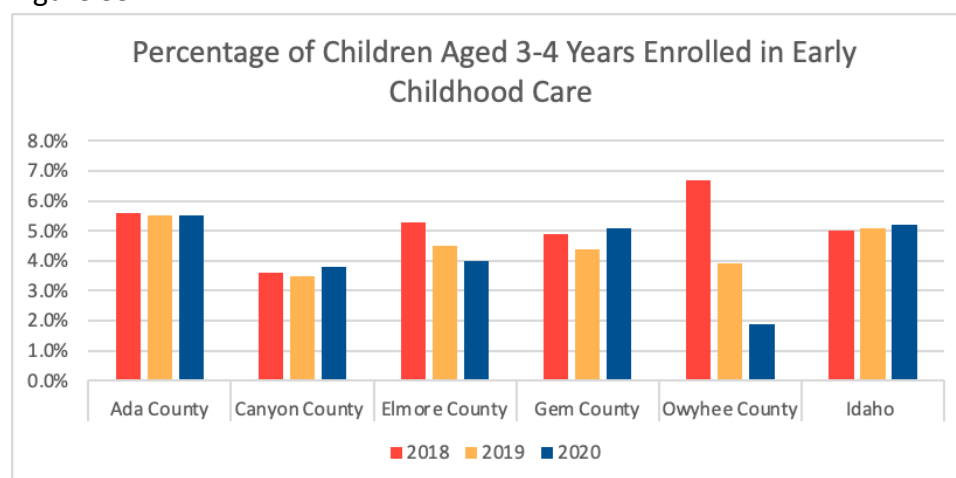
These precarious learning situations impacted student learning. Teachers reported students lacking in educational stamina and having social and behavioral learning gaps that impacted their ability to learn and progress. Teachers adjusted their curriculum to account for time lost, often prioritizing curriculum and eliminating content depth.²⁰ As a result, test scores in the 2020-21 school year were lower than usual but are expected to improve in the 2021-22 school year.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND SCHOOL READINESS

The Idaho Child Care Program at the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare developed a series of surveys to understand the issues childcare providers faced during the pandemic. This survey was distributed between summer 2020- September 2021. Providers responded that they struggle to offer affordable childcare, sustain their business, to balance support for families, and meet the emotional, educational and behavioral needs of children.

Providers mentioned the pandemic further exacerbated their ability to offer childcare at a rate families can afford. Finding and retaining qualified staff during the pandemic, while also paying staff a competitive wage, became challenging due to the need for staff to quarantine, staff burn-out and requests for hazard pay and raises. Child care centers were also met with new cost burdens due to the new recommended guidelines for the pandemic. Due to these challenges, child care centers often increased their rates to meet needs.

Figure 35



Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

²⁰ May, M., Hall, M., Fry, V. (2021, January). *Literacy intervention program evaluation*. Idaho Policy Institute, Boise State University.

In the Idaho Child Care surveys, 69% of respondents reported lower enrollment or capacity post pandemic. Providers feel enrollment constantly changes because of parent job loss, varying work schedules, and students quarantining after an exposure. Parental job loss led to lower enrollment from families who no longer needed childcare and could no longer afford it.

Between 2019 and 2020, the number of licensed child care centers remained relatively stable, declining by only 13.²¹ However, the capacity of licensed childcare centers dropped dramatically, by 55%. This drop may reflect distancing requirements or staffing shortages due to the pandemic.

Figure 36

Total Capacity of Licensed Child Care Center Slots	
2019	2020
45,541	25,088

Source: Child Care Aware of America

Figure 37

Idaho Child Care Program Local Market Rates for 2019: Full Time Child Care Centers		
Child's Age	Cluster 2: Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee	Cluster 3: Ada
0-12 months	\$600	\$790
13-30 months	\$550	\$726
31-60 months	\$501	\$650
61-72 months	\$471	\$578
73 months-12 years	\$428	\$471

Source: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

Figure 38

Idaho Child Care Program Local Market Rates for 2020: Full Time Child Care Centers			
Child's Age	Cluster 1: Elmore, Gem, Owyhee	Cluster 2: Canyon	Cluster 3: Ada
0-23 months	\$599	\$790	\$1039
24-35 months	\$550	\$725	\$950
36-59 months	\$514	\$650	\$877
5 years- 12 years	\$481	\$630	\$798

Source: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

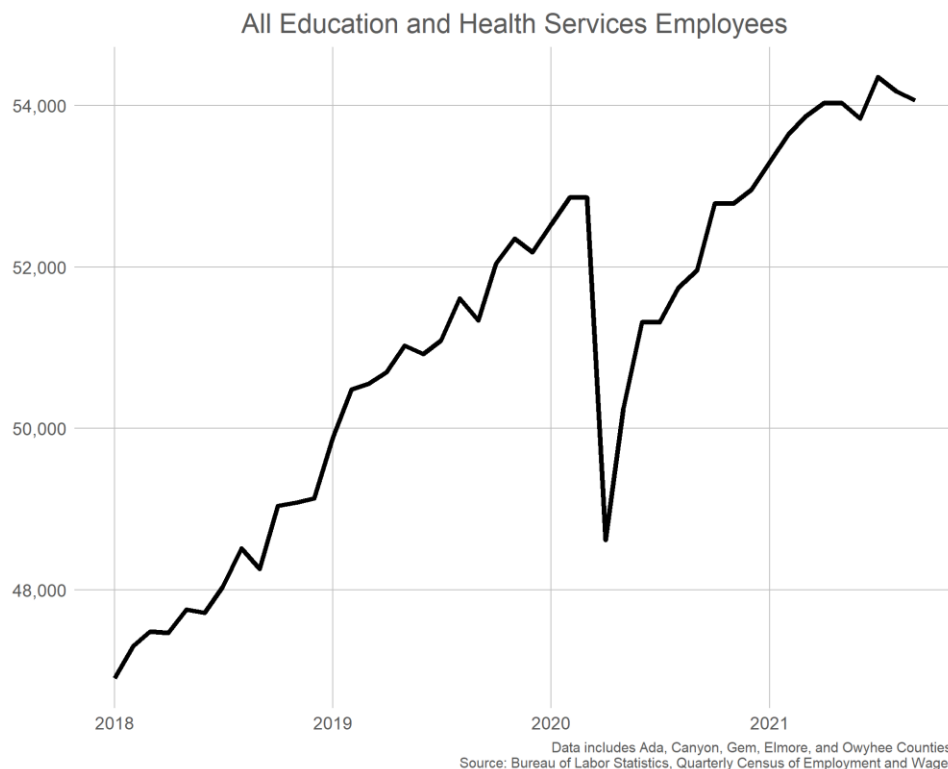
Between 2019 and 2020 child care market rates increased by 31%. The pandemic exacerbated the cost of childcare, making it more difficult for the average Idahoan to afford. The increase in rates can be explained by: cost of childcare supplies including pandemic related supplies, staff

²¹ Child Care Aware of America. (2021). Child Care Data Center & State Fact Sheets. Retrieved from <https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/research/ccdc/>

raises due to cost of living, helping children with online schooling by providing internet access, computers, and new curriculum, or increases in property taxes and rent for centers.

Childcare providers are included in a Bureau of Labor Statistics industry classification that includes other education and health services. Examining the business patterns of this industry category in the Treasure Valley, we see a sharp dip in employees in early 2020, followed by a recovery that was quick to bring back a portion of jobs. However, it took until early-to-mid-2021 before the number of employees began to approach the pre-pandemic trend.

Figure 39

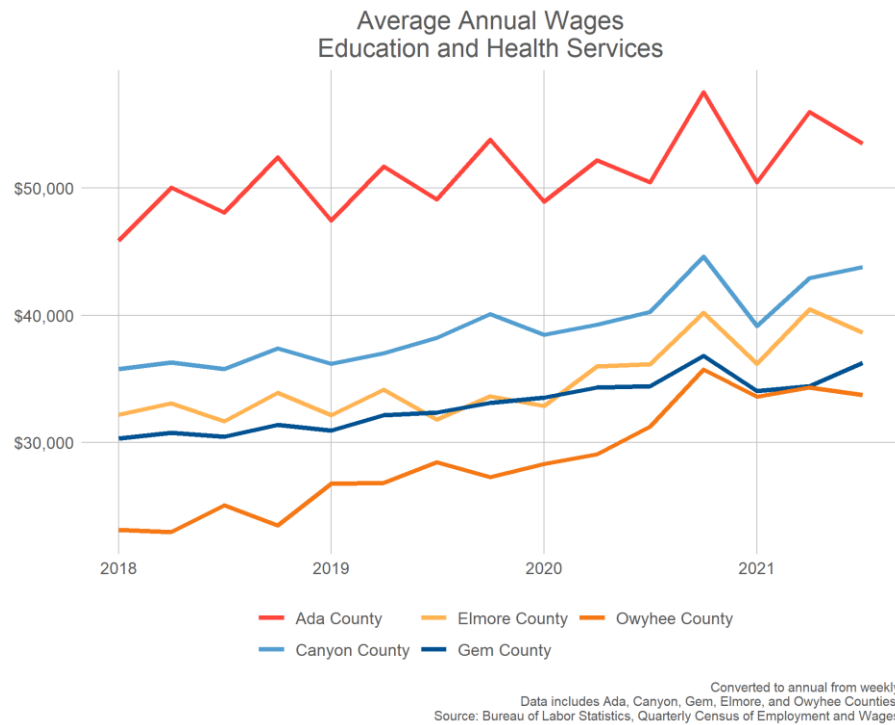


Despite the drop in employment, the number of education and health services establishments continued to rise at a rapid rate. The drop in employees combined with the rise in demand during this period may have contributed to a labor shortage.²²

Wages in the education and health services industry remained relatively even in 2020 (Figure 40), returning to pre-pandemic trends by the end of 2020. Wages in Ada County are noticeably higher than other counties, as they are across most industries.

²² Understanding America's Labor Shortage: The Most Impacted Industries. (2022). U.S. Chamber of Commerce. <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage-the-most-impacted-industries>

Figure 40

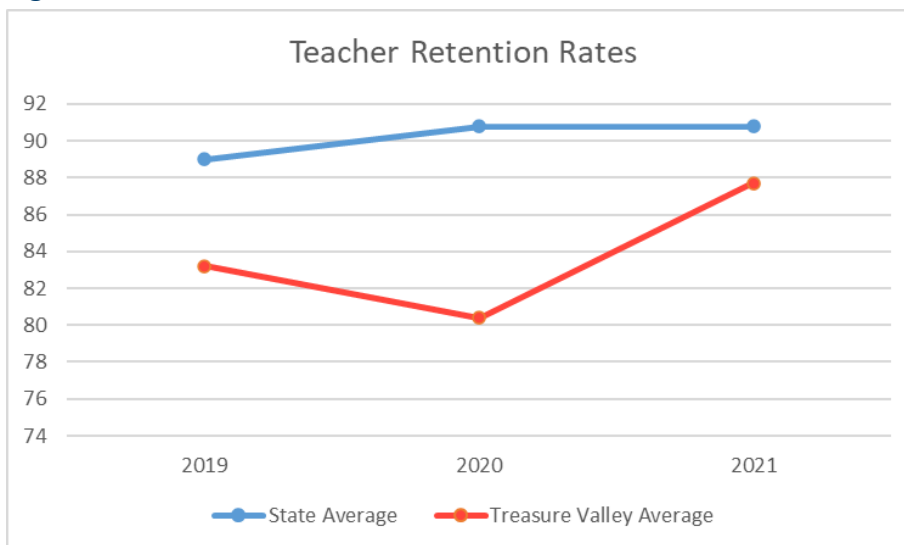


K-12 EDUCATION

The pandemic impacted many facets of education, including teacher retention, enrollment, and test scores.

Teacher retention in the state tends to remain steady. Treasure Valley retention rates dropped between 2019 and 2020 – when broken down, those rates decreased mainly in charter schools. Despite the many challenges facing teachers, teacher retention is improving overall.

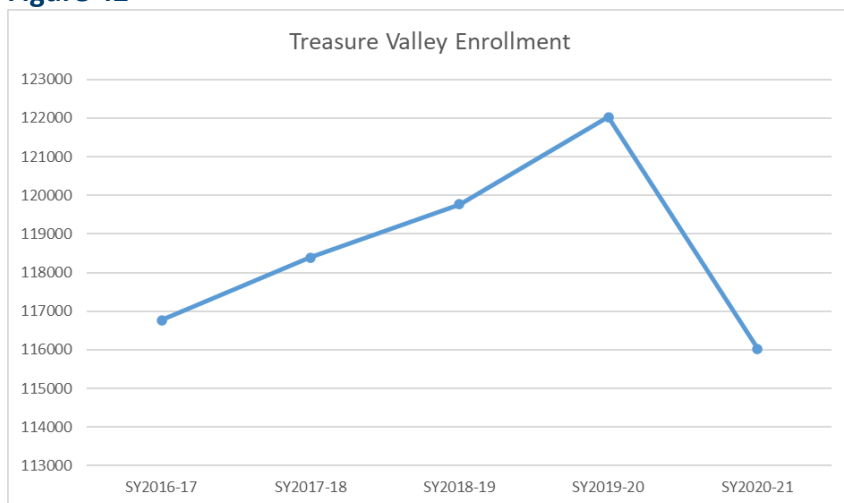
Figure 41



Source: Idaho State Department of Education

Boise School District enrollment dropped consistently between the 2016-17 and 2020-21 school years while other Treasure Valley schools saw an increase. Although as a result of the pandemic, Boise numbers decreased at the same rate as West Ada. Both West Ada and Boise had a greater rate of decrease than the state and Treasure Valley as a whole.

Figure 42



Source: Idaho State Department of Education

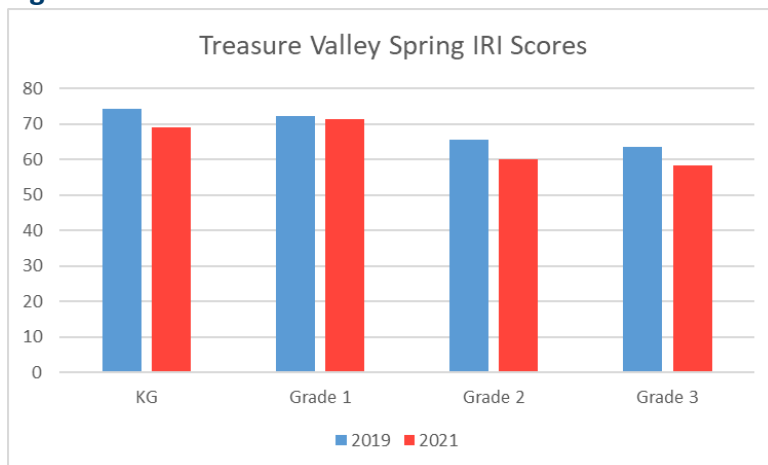
State and Treasure Valley enrollment rates are very similar. However, in the year after the pandemic initially hit, Treasure Valley schools saw a greater drop in enrollment. Overall, state enrollment decreased by 0.44% while Treasure Valley enrollment dropped by 4.9%.

READING AND MATH PROFICIENCY

Idaho K-3 students are evaluated with an early reading screener and diagnostic assessment known as the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI).²³ Students take the IRI in the Fall and then again in the Spring to measure learning growth and proficiency. All grades saw a drop in Spring IRI proficiency rates during the onset of the pandemic. However, Treasure Valley kindergarten rates dropped more than statewide kindergarten rates (See appendix). Conversely, Treasure Valley first grade rates dropped much less than statewide first grade rates.

²³ Idaho State Department of Education. <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/assessment/iri/>

Figure 43

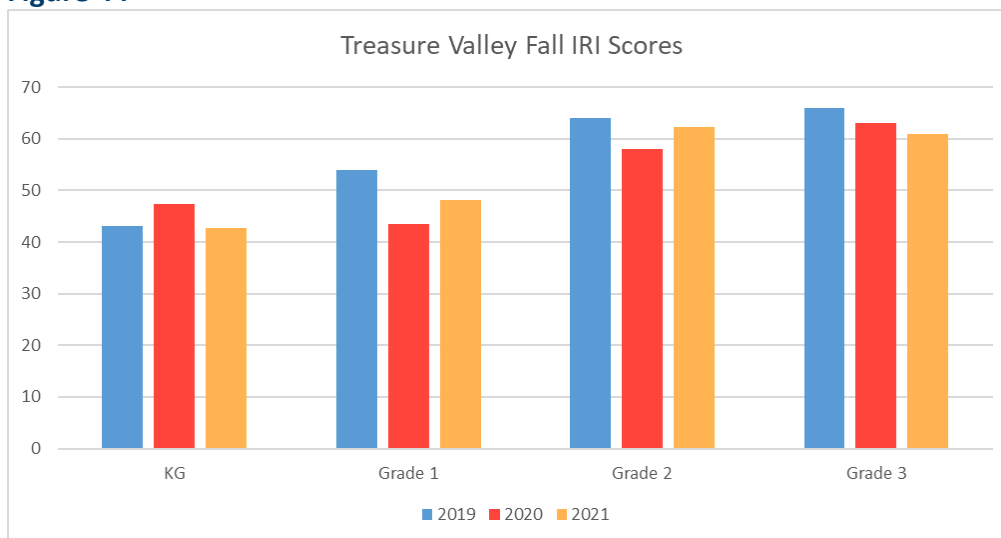


*Percentage of students in each subgroup meeting grade level expectations

Source: Idaho State Department of Education

In Fall 2021, proficiency rates in grades 1-3 improved across the state (See appendix), but Grade 3 and Kindergarten rates in the Treasure Valley decreased. Though no rates returned to pre-pandemic levels, all are improving after the initial drop.

Figure 44



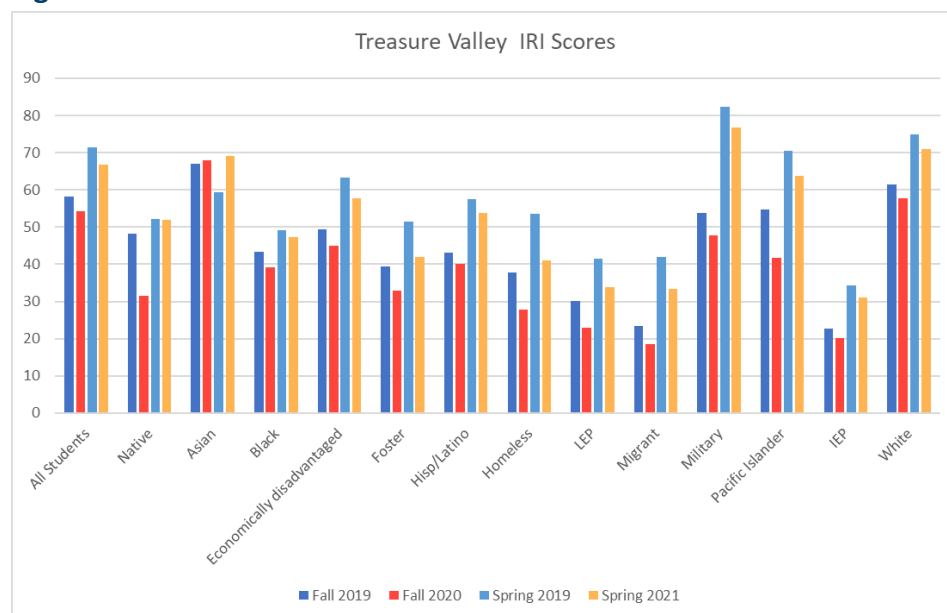
*Percentage of students in each subgroup meeting grade level expectations

Source: Idaho State Department of Education

Overall, more Treasure Valley students score proficient on the Spring IRI than their state counterparts – both before and after the pandemic (Figure 45). More native, economically disadvantaged, and Hispanic/Latino Treasure Valley students consistently reach proficiency on the IRI than their state counterparts.

Almost all demographic subgroups saw improvement in the Fall IRI both in the state and the Treasure Valley. Some subgroups, students with disabilities, migrant, Asian, Hispanic and Latino, and Native student are closest to their pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 45

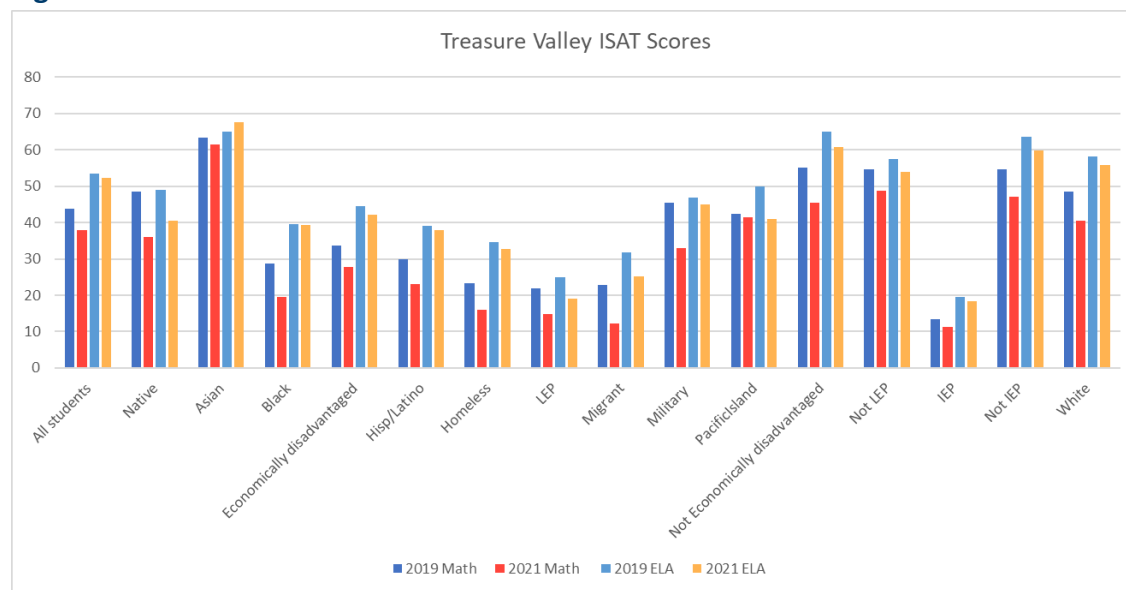


* Percentage of each group scoring proficient or better

Source: Idaho State Department of Education

Each year, Grade 4-10 students take the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) to monitor student progress. ISAT performance dropped overall in the Treasure Valley after the pandemic hit. On average, less Treasure Valley students score proficient on the ISAT compared to students in the state, both before and after pandemic (See appendix). Native, Black, and LEP students in the Treasure Valley perform better than their state counterparts. Asian students and IEP students saw the smallest change in percentage of students scoring proficient in both ELA and Math tests after the pandemic.

Figure 46

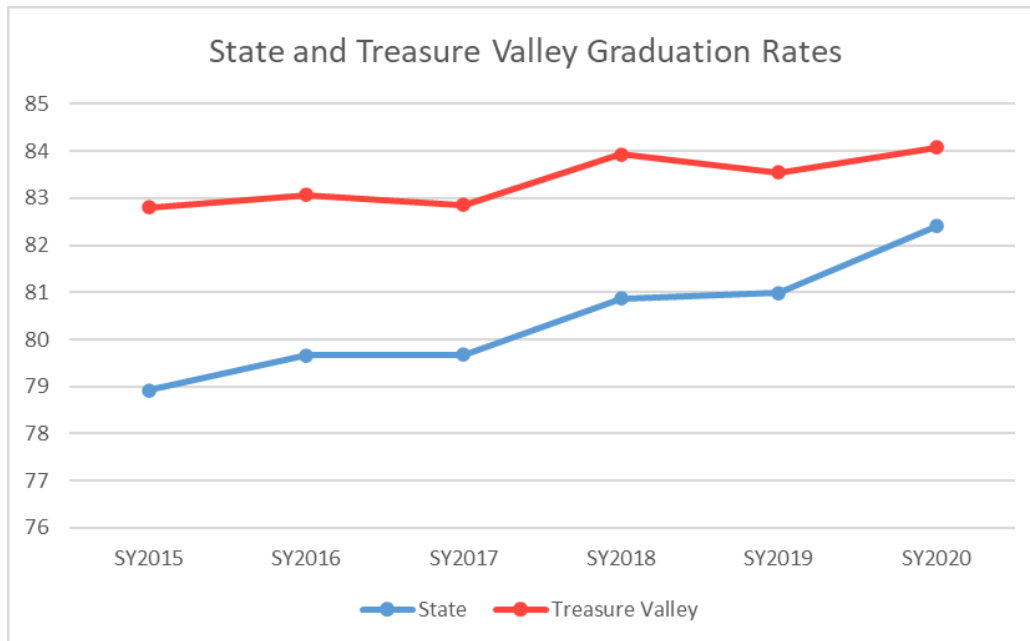


* Percentage of each group scoring proficient or better

Source: Idaho State Department of Education

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

Figure 47



Source: Idaho State Department of Education

Graduation rates in the Treasure Valley have always been higher than state averages. During the pandemic, the gap between state and Treasure Valley rates closed while TV rates remained similar.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Colleges and universities also experienced enrollment loss as result of the pandemic (See appendix). In the past ten years, Boise State has seen the most growth of any university in the state, increasing its enrollment by 31% since 2011. There was an 8% decrease in enrollment between 2019 and 2020, but in 2021, enrollment increased to nearly meet pre-pandemic levels.

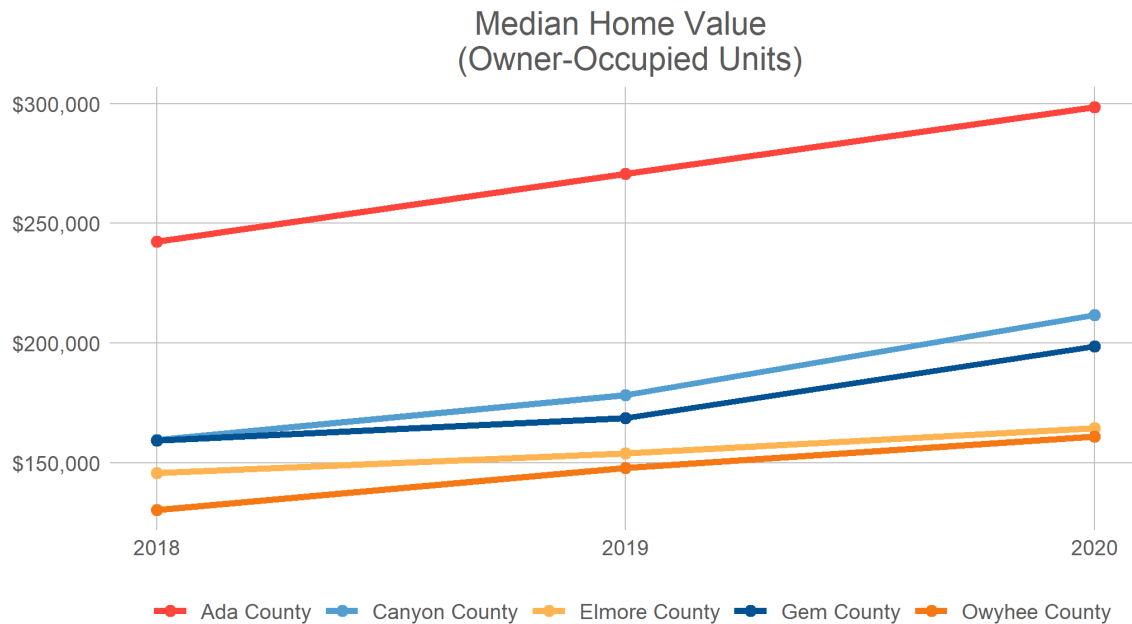
All other universities in the state have decreased in enrollment in the past ten years. University of Idaho's enrollment has dropped almost 9% since 2011 and was the university to experience the biggest drop in enrollment in 2020 (10%). All schools except for LCSC experienced a drop during the pandemic. However, LCSC did experience a drop in the year after.

Regardless of enrollment trends, postsecondary retention rates remain consistent (See appendix).

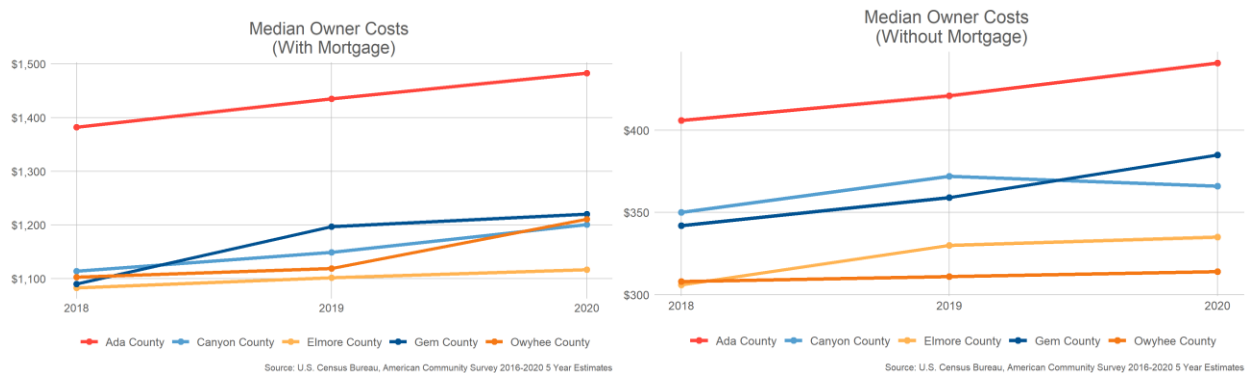
APPENDIX

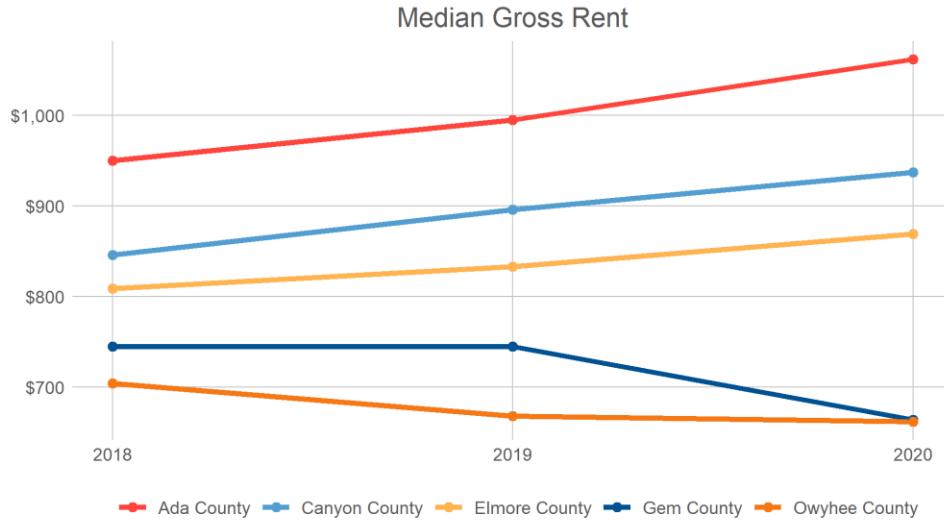
The data in this appendix supplements the data in the main report. Some of the following charts illustrate long-standing trends in Idaho that, while impactful, were not primarily impacted by the pandemic.

Housing Data



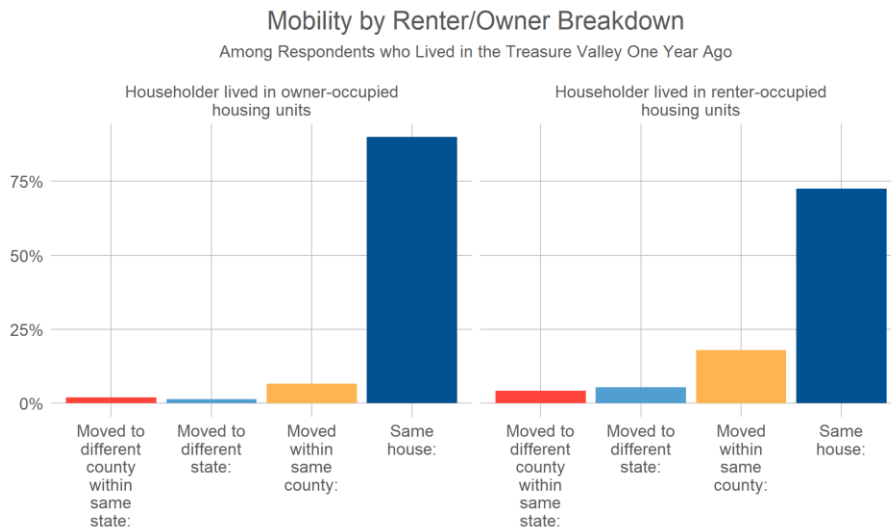
Median home values have been rising steadily across the Treasure Valley. For those with limited incomes, home ownership is an increasingly difficult goal to achieve.





Owner and renter costs have been increasing across much of the Treasure Valley. Increases in costs for owners without a mortgage may point to property taxes or utility costs as another factor that may be pushing home affordability out of reach for many limited income households.

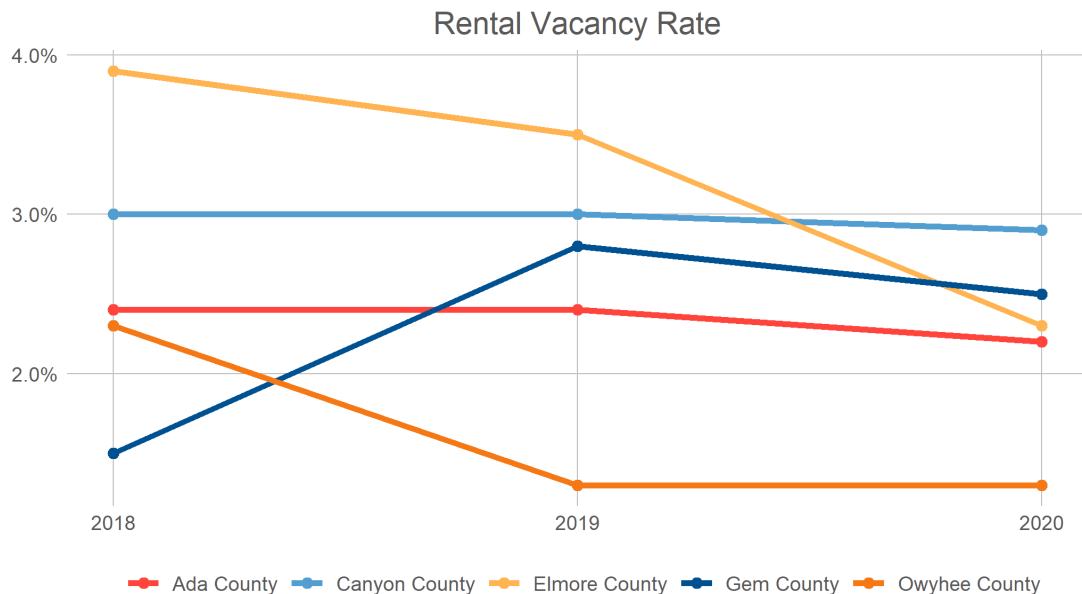
The percentage of renters to home-owners has been slowly declining throughout the Treasure Valley²⁴. This may point to more renters being priced out of the area, or it may reflect growth in the number of homeowners in the Valley. 2020 Census data shows that renters were less likely to live in the same house that they did a year ago, making them more vulnerable to increasing market costs. This may be one reason why renters who lived in the Treasure Valley a year ago were somewhat more likely to move to a different state or county, or even within the same county.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates

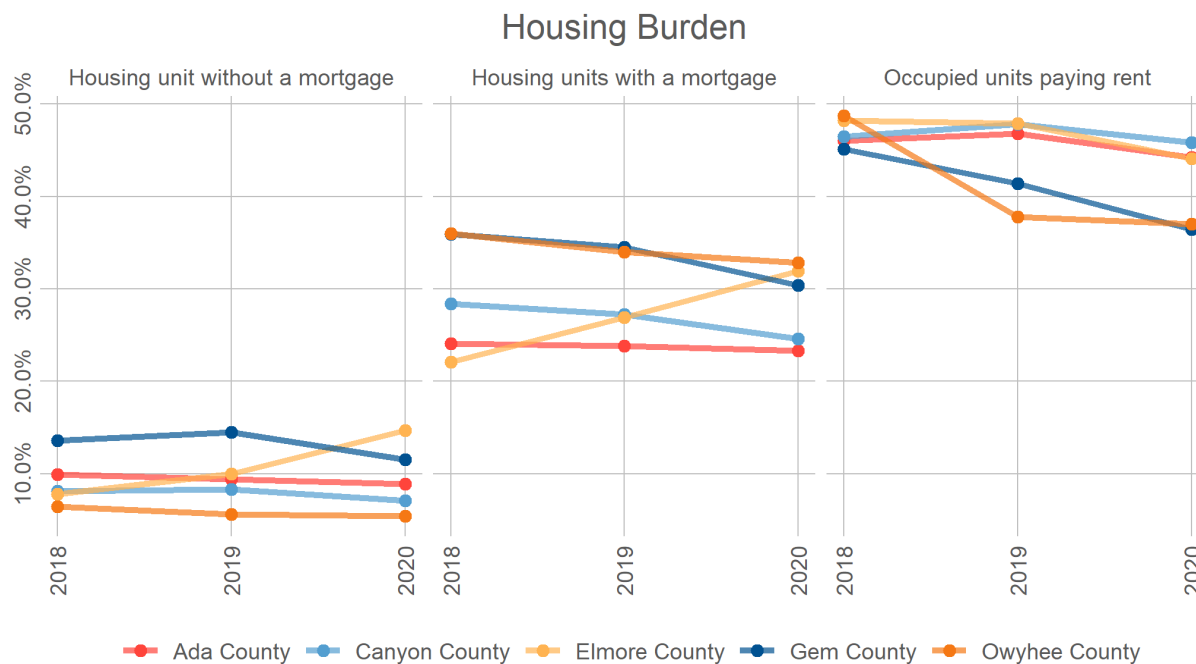
²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020 5 Year Estimates

Rental Availability



The rental vacancy rate in much of the Treasure Valley has remained low, or even decreased, in most counties. Increasingly low rental vacancy rates can make it hard for renting households to find places to live, and may drive rent prices higher.

Housing Cost Burden



Housing burden (the percent of households paying 30% of more of their incomes on housing)

costs) has decreased slightly for housing units with a mortgage and renting households. This could reflect growing incomes, an influx of higher-income households, or an outflux of lower income households.

Homelessness Counts

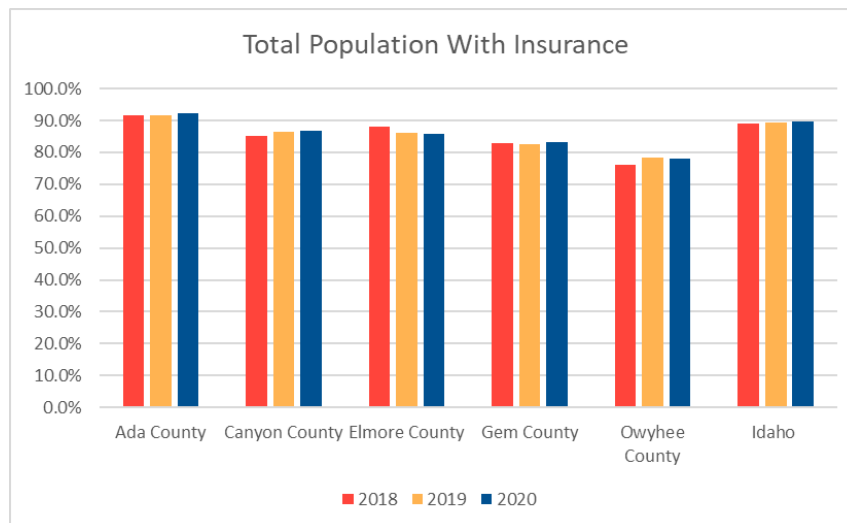
	Point in Time Count			HMIS Count		
	2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021
State	1,602*	2,315	1,314*	9,355	9,146	8,814
Region 3	852	815	633	1,034	1,131	1,054
Region 7	**	647	**	4,001	4,035	4,307
Treasure Valley	**	1,467	**	5,035	5,166	5,361

* State counts do not include Ada County

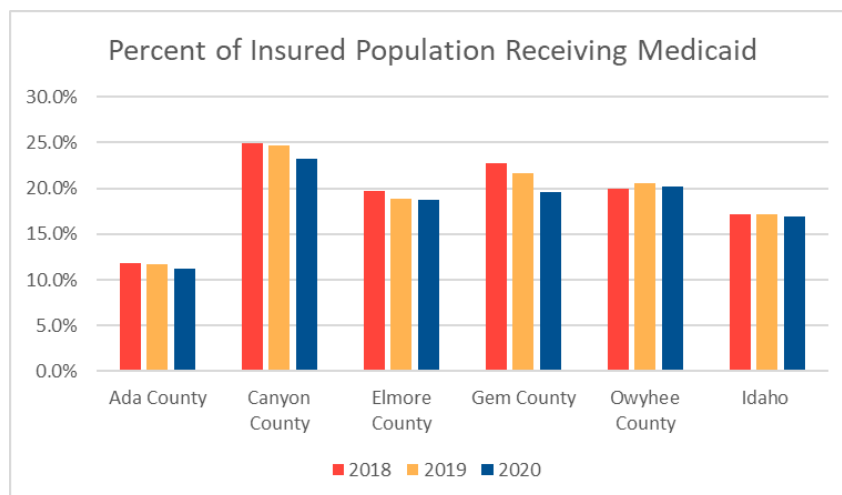
** Ada County Counts are unavailable for these years

Source: Idaho Housing and Finance Association

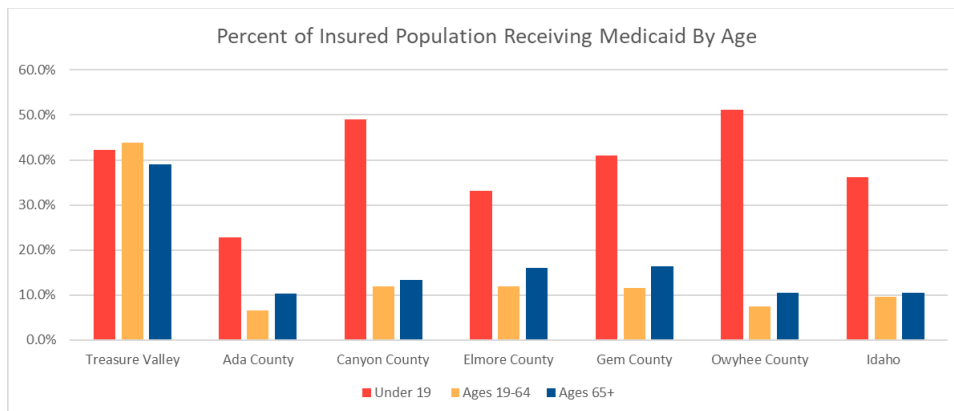
Insurance



Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

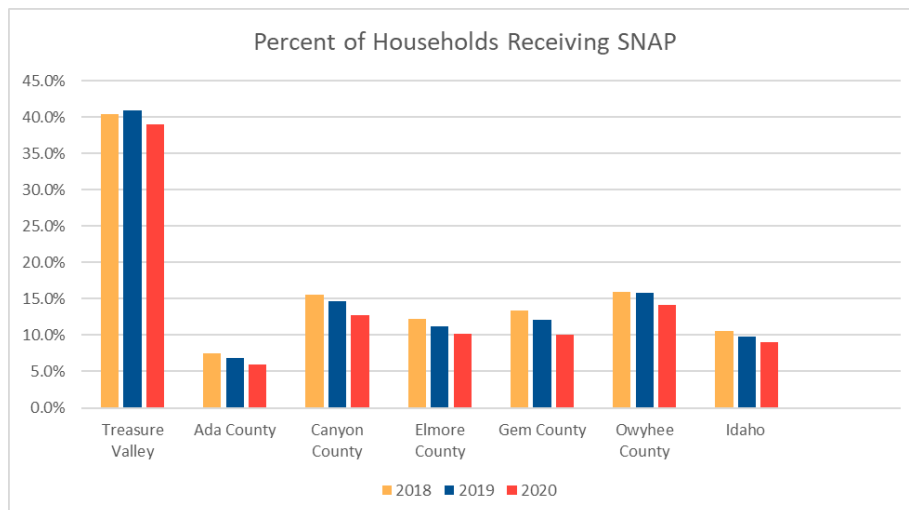


Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

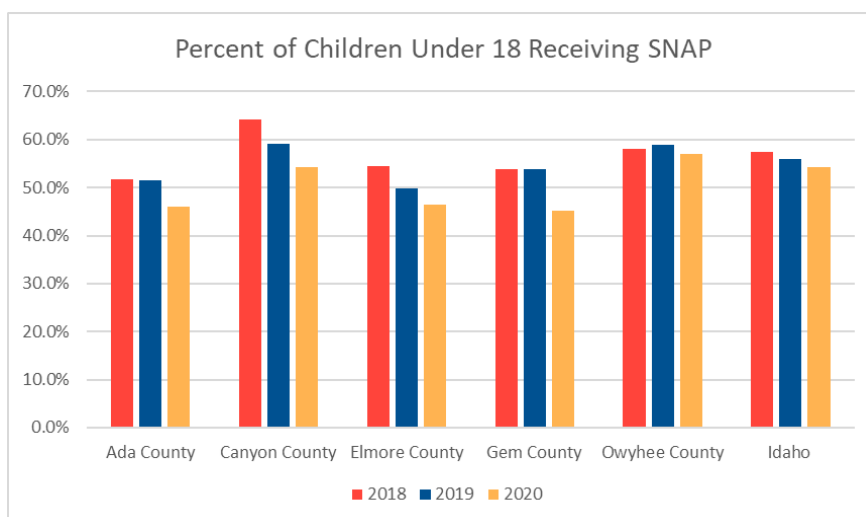


Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

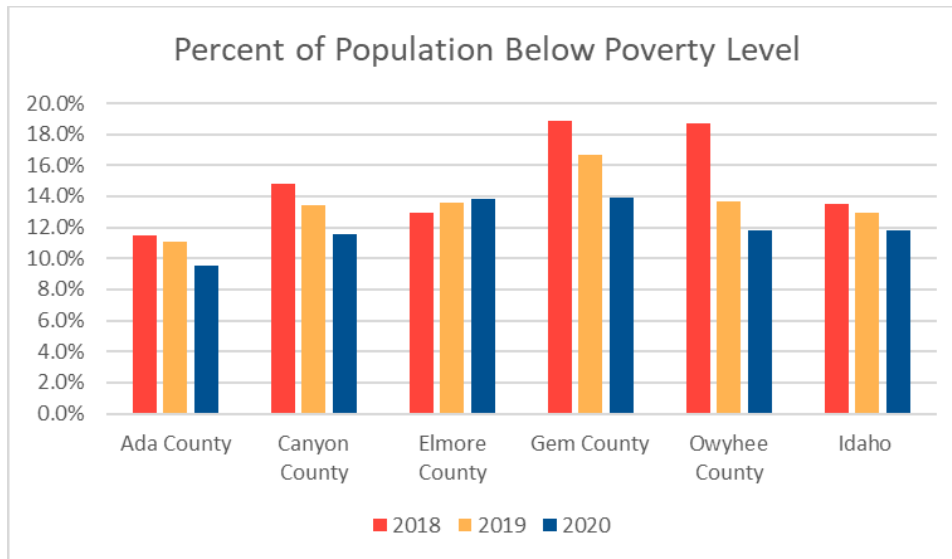
SNAP Data



Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

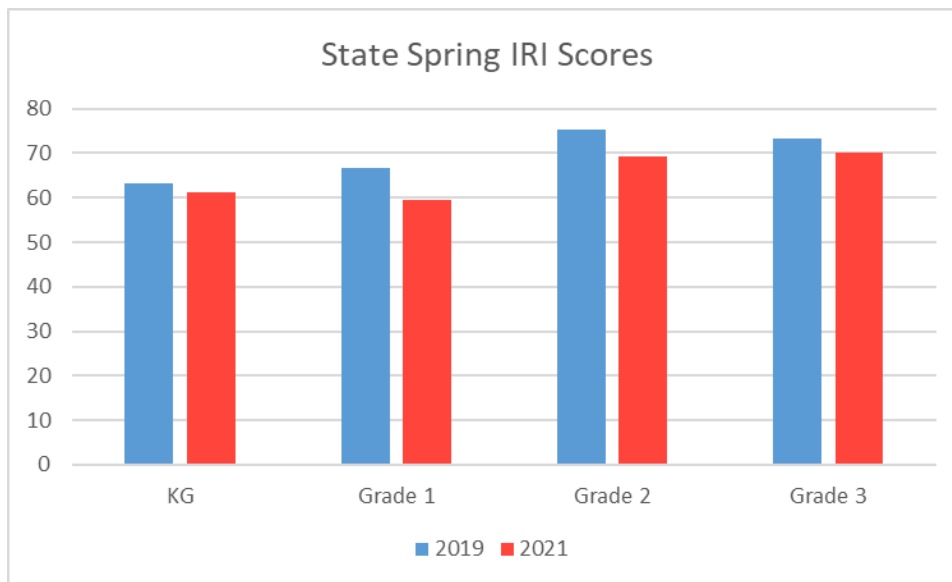


Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

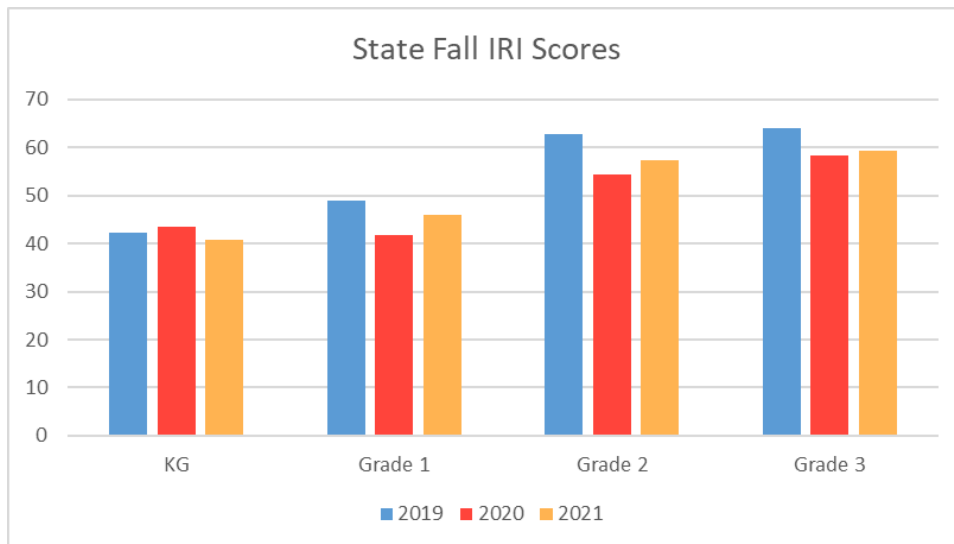


Data Source: US Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey, 2020 5-year estimates.

State IRI Scores

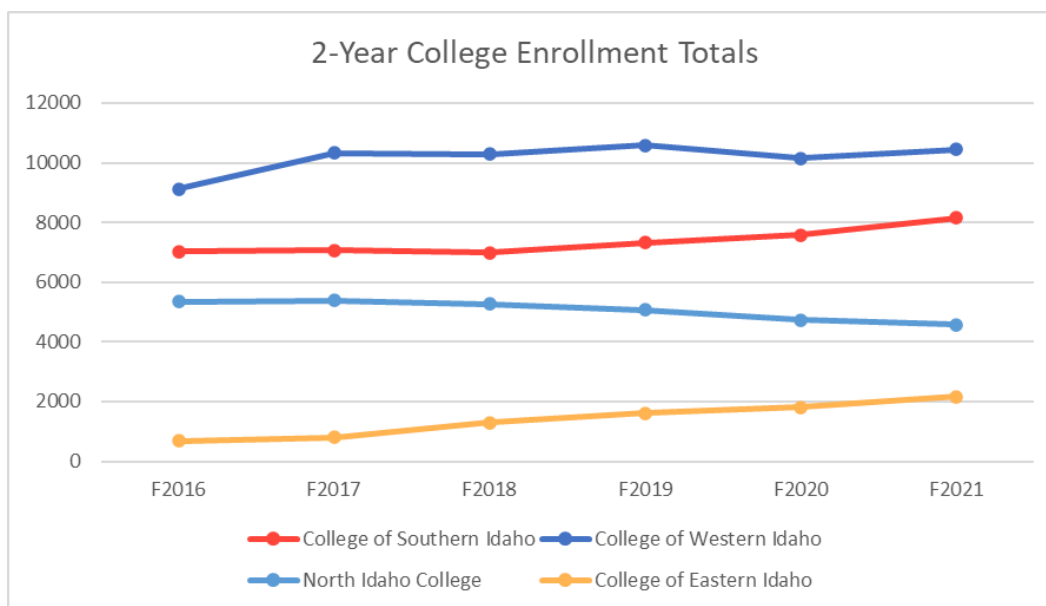


Source: Idaho State Department of Education

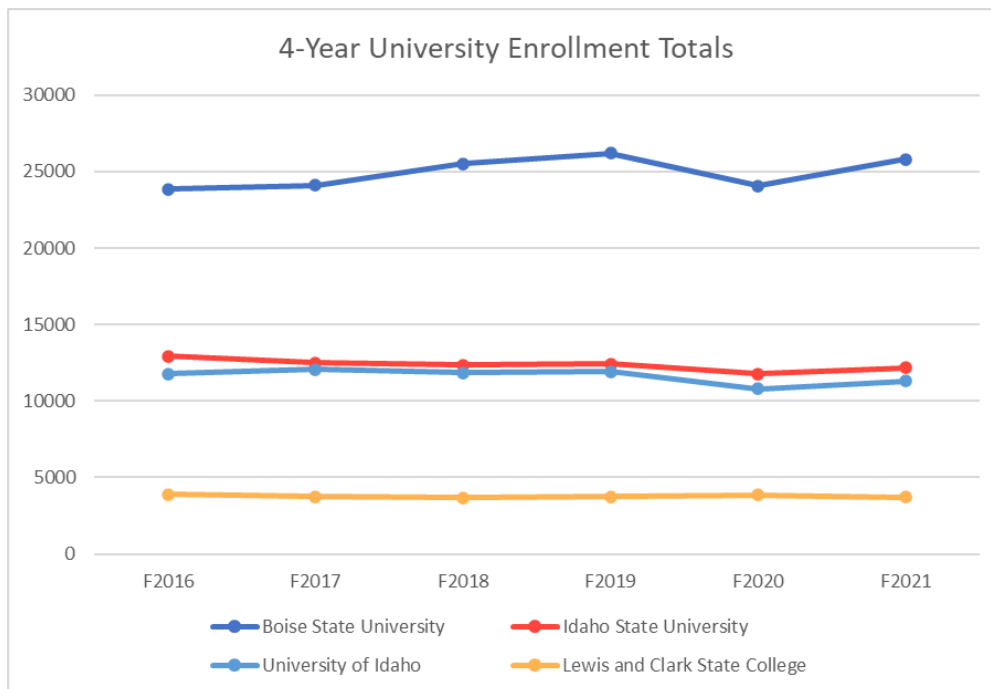


Source: Idaho State Department of Education

College Enrollment



Source: Idaho Office of the State Board of Education



Source: Idaho Office of the State Board of Education

Postsecondary retention

4-year School	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020
Boise State University	77%	80%	79%	79%	79%
Idaho State University	64%	63%	63%	64%	64%
Lewis-Clark State College	64%	58%	59%	54%	61%
University of Idaho	82%	77%	81%	77%	79%
2-year School					
College of Eastern Idaho	34%	39%	43%	42%	38%
College of Southern Idaho	57%	60%	58%	58%	61%
College of Western Idaho	49%	54%	56%	52%	61%
North Idaho College	52%	57%	53%	55%	56%

Source: Idaho Office of the State Board of Education