Local Community Viability

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- *Median household income*
- *Unemployment rate*
- *Affordable ownership housing supply & demand*
- *Affordable rental housing supply & demand*
- *Licensed childcare capacity for children under 5*
- *Licensed childcare cost*
- *Cost of health insurance*
- *High school graduation rate*
- *Voter participation numbers*

Individuals and families can thrive in Aspen. Workers are able to find subsidized or free-market housing options that allow them to live in or near Aspen, without excessive wait times. Housing that matches the needs of all stages of life is available. Aspen has affordable, accessible, high-quality childcare and excellent schools. After graduation, high school and college students are able to find work and start the next generation of Aspen residents. Aspen residents are healthy, with medical and mental health services that are nearby and reasonably priced. Opportunities for community engagement through schools, non-profits, businesses and local government are plentiful.

Local community viability reflects the relative standard of living or "livability" of a place. A community's viability depends on those factors that affect quality of life, including housing, education, childcare, and healthcare. It also involves opportunities for engagement such as voting and volunteerism, among others.

The viability of a community relates to both social and economic sustainability. For the purposes of this report, the key performance measures listed above are featured in the economic sustainability section. Looking at them through an economic sustainability lens gives insight into community prosperity and vitality. Whether residents can access affordable housing, childcare, and health insurance, for instance, helps to determine the livability and economic viability of a place. When these are viewed through a social sustainability lens, their contributions to social welfare, justice, and well-being are further illuminated.[33]

Aspen's community viability, the ability of Aspen to support and sustain its residents, plays a central role in economic sustainability within the context of a visitor-based and local economy. In fact, the relationship is mutually dependent. Residents encourage economic activity through their daily living and working – by consuming goods and services, paying taxes, and politically advocating for community issues. In turn, community taxes maintain area roads and infrastructure, support the local business community, and foster the recreational economy that collectively represent Aspen. A conceptual depiction of the community viability cycle is featured in Figure 1 (right).

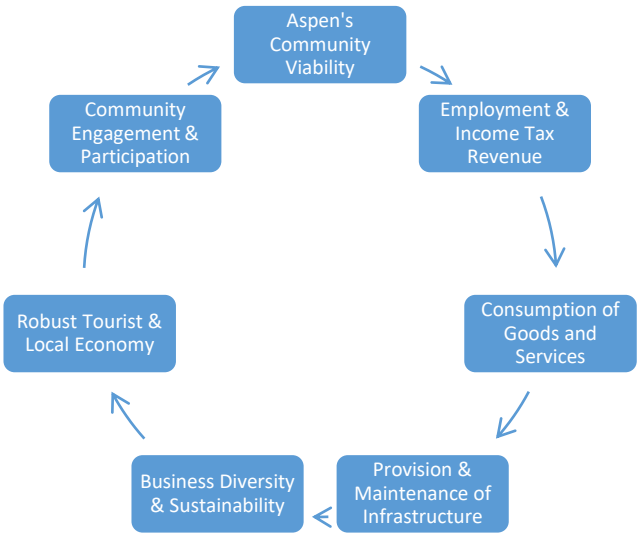


Figure 1. Conceptual cycle of local community

[33] *The social sustainability section is expected to be developed in a future iteration of the Sustainability Report.*

Income & Jobs

To support the residential community and the visitor experience, the area must offer adequate incomes and job opportunities. In 2016, the cost of living in Aspen was rated at 232.5, where an index of 100 represents an average cost of living nationally.[34] In the Aspen community, the relative high cost of living dictates the need for adequate employment opportunities that support viable household incomes.

Unemployment is another key indicator of a community's viability, as unemployment impacts economic capacity, productivity, and sustainability. As unemployment can affect an area more broadly, tracking rates for both city and the county provide a more wholesome view on employment and economic sustainability.[35]

The key performance measures that provide perspective on these areas include:

- *Median household income*
- *Unemployment rate*

Figure 2. Fresh produce and bikes at the Aspen Saturday Market[36]

Basic Necessities & Costs

Aspen's cost of living also dictates the need for residents to have access to affordable and available basic necessities, including housing, childcare, and health insurance.

An available and affordable housing stock strongly impacts the long-term sustainability of Aspen. Adequate, feasible housing allows individuals and families to reside in the area and contribute to the community.

Aspen's current cost of housing rating is at 516.0, where an index of 100 represents a national average cost of housing.[37] As appropriate housing options are necessary for a viable community, the Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority (APCHA) was established to assure a desirable, affordable supply of housing for employed community members. In this measure, total applications for both rental and ownership housing units are presented to show the supply and demand of the housing stock. This data helps to explain the suitability of the current housing environment in the Aspen community.

---

[34] *"Aspen, Colorado – Cost of Living." Sperling's Best Places, 2016. 10 Mar. 2016. Web. <http://www.bestplaces.net/cost_of_living/city/colorado/aspen/>.*

[35] *As unemployment rate data for key demographics can be informative for decision making, this report considered reporting rates for seniors and those with disabilities. These numbers were ultimately excluded due to high margin of error of the data.*

[36] *Babbie, Sheila. 2016.*

[37] *"Aspen, Colorado – Cost of Living."*

Figure 3. Truscott Place Affordable Housing[38]

Childcare is an equally important necessity for families. In 1992, Kids First was established to provide childcare of great quality, affordability, and capacity for the Aspen community. Since significant portions of family earnings go toward childcare, Pitkin County childcare cost data is presented to track affordability. Further, availability of childcare affects caretakers' abilities to work, earn income, and provide for other basic needs for their households. Some parents who have not been able to secure affordable childcare have identified the need to quit their job, work alternate hours, and bring their child to work with them.[39][40] Total number of childcare spots for Pitkin County programs are reported to give a sense for area capacity.[41]

Likewise, affordable healthcare is a necessary community offering. Affordable quality health insurance helps to ensure a thriving, able community. Valley Health Alliance (VHA) health insurance cost data is used to show access and affordability of health care to both employees and employers.

The key performance measures that provide perspective on these areas include:

- *Affordable ownership housing supply & demand*
- *Affordable rental housing supply & demand*
- *Licensed childcare capacity for children under 5*
- *Licensed childcare cost*
- *Cost of health insurance*

[38] *Babbie, Sheila. 2016.*
[39] *The 2016 Kids First survey of 332 area families provides insight on Pitkin County childcare affordability and capacity.*
[40] *2016 Kids First Survey, per City of Aspen Kids First Department.*
[41] *Operating capacity is not captured in this measure. Though Pitkin County childcare spots are currently limited and desired, the optimum capacity for childcare exists in the balance of providing for options for families, maintaining quality programming, and adequately compensating employees. These factors impact stress levels and community satisfaction, which in turn affect economic capacity.*

Education

A robust education system, measured by high school graduation rate, is further integral to the local viability of a place. Public education is cited as being one of the most important inputs for nations' social and economic outcomes.[42] A strong high school graduation rate can serve as an attraction to potential residents, as consumers of quality education are drawn to places where the standard of education is valued and high. In terms of economic sustainability, education supports the availability and development of human capital. This is clearly an important factor for economic and social prosperity and progress.

Political Participation

Aspen's local community viability is last represented by voter turnout in city and county elections. Turnout indicates the community's concern and interest in influencing local decisions, as well as, the community's level of political access, awareness, and involvement.

In order to sustain the ongoing cycle of community viability, Aspen must continue to support residents and maintain its community environment. This requires a focus on adequate employment opportunities and wages, as well as, affordable health insurance, housing (for purchase or for rent) and childcare options. A strong educational system must be available to accommodate families, and equally important is a community's level of engagement and participation.

As such, the key performance measures that provide perspective on these areas include:

- *High school graduation rate*
- *Voter participation numbers*

Together, these measures tell the story of the sustainability of Aspen residents, which in turn indicate the livability and economic prosperity of the City.

The listed measures are presented on the respective dashboards at the end of the section. Each highlights the key data/trends with a discussion about current/proposed actions to follow.

Current & Proposed Actions

Basic Necessities & Costs

- **APCHA Policy Study**
- **Aspen City Council Top Ten Goals**
- **Kids First: Programs & Financial Aid**
- **Valley Health Alliance**
- **Aspen NextGen Commission 2014 Annual Survey**

Education & Political Participation

- **Aspen Citizens Academy**
- **Aspen School District**
- **Aspen NextGen Commission**

[42] *Stifter, Catherine. "High school graduation rates are a community health indicator." Center for Health Journalism, 25 Feb., 2013. 10 Mar., 2016. Web. <http://www.centerforhealthjournalism.org/2013/02/24/high-school-graduation-rates-are-community-health-indicator/>.*

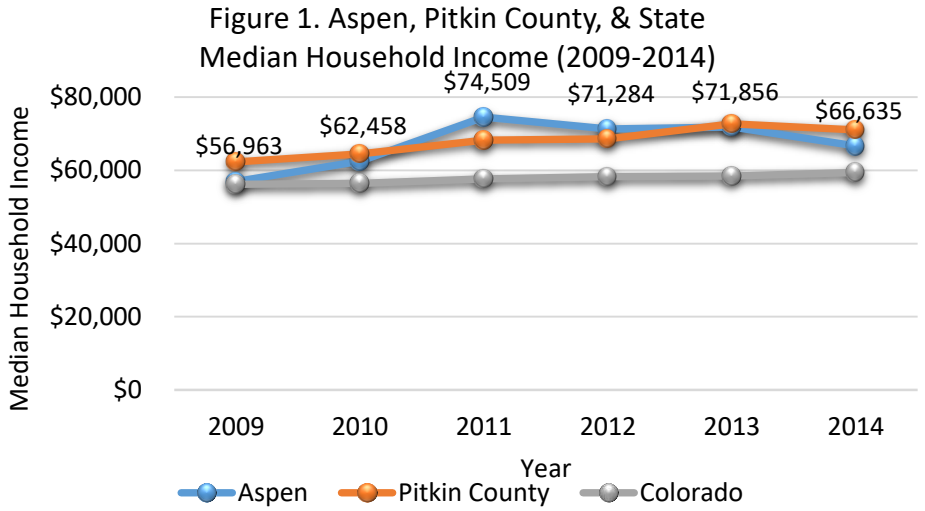
Median Household Income

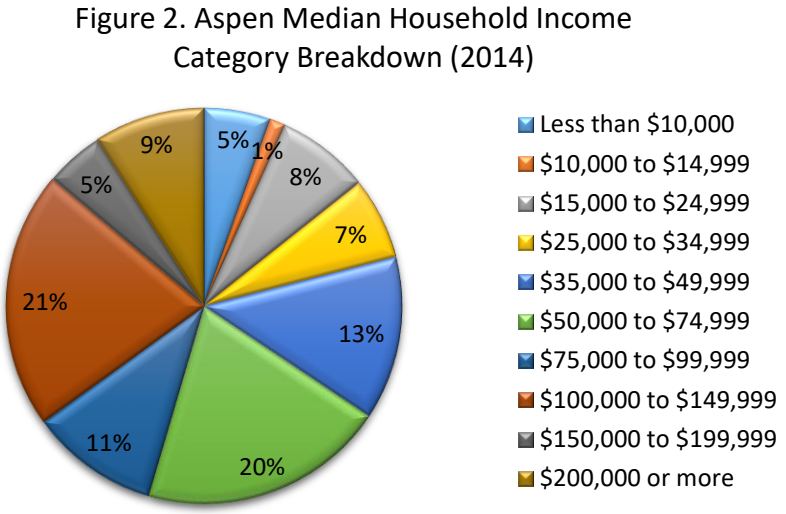
What is it? Why is it important?

Median household income represents the middle figure of earning households within a given population. This measure is an indication of economic prosperity as it gives a sense of households' capacity to afford basic goods and services. This includes such things as food, housing, healthcare, transportation, clothing, among other living costs. Median household income is often compared to cost of living, as sufficient and competitive incomes enable residents to maintain a certain standard of living. In the Aspen community, the relative high cost of living requires viable household incomes. This contributes to economic sustainability at individual, household, and community levels.

What does the data/trend say?

Comparisons between the city, county, and state provide perspective on median household income data. From 2009 to 2014, Aspen and Pitkin County incomes represented higher figures than those of Colorado (Figure 1).[1] From 2011 to 2014, Aspen median household income decreased overall by 3.6%. Aspen households saw a 19.3% increase in income in 2011, then in 2014 saw a decrease of 7.3%. In 2014, Pitkin County income decreased by 2.3% from the prior year. Meanwhile, Colorado figures have been steadily growing since 2009 at an average increase of 1.3% year-on-year. From 2009 to 2014, Aspen's average median household income was $68,274. Figure 2 shows the income category breakdown for Aspen households.[2]





Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

Median household income data was sourced from the American Community Survey; methodology can be found on the Census website.[3] While these numbers do not distinguish between sizes of households, they provide a reliable view on the typical income level in each area.

Sources: [1] American FactFinder. Web. 28 March 2016. <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml/>. [2] Ibid. [3] "Chapter 6: Survey Rules, Concepts, and Definitions." American Community Survey, 30 January 2014. Web. 28 March 2016. <http://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/design_and_methodology/acs_design_methodology_ch06_2014.pdf/>. [Photos] Holder, Michelle. 2016.

Unemployment Rate

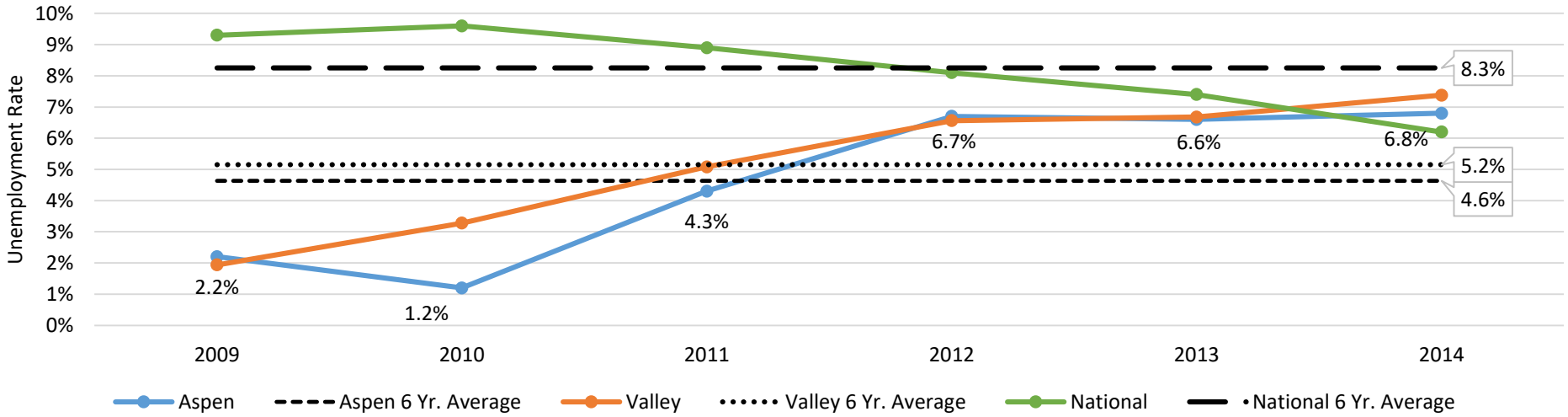
What is it? Why is it important?

Unemployment is the total number of individuals 16 years and older actively seeking a job who do not currently have one. Valley data represents averaged rates from Aspen, Snowmass Village, Basalt, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs. Local unemployment rates lend key insight into the state of the area economy more broadly and health of the job market more specifically. Unemployment results in loss of jobs and income. This adversely impacts the economy with decreased consumption and reinvestment in the community. High unemployment in the community effects worker employability, service levels, general attraction, and well-being.

What does the data/trend say?

Averaged annual unemployment rates for Aspen, the Valley, and the country are presented below (Figure 1).[12] To provide a baseline of comparison, averages over 2009 to 2014 are indicated for all rates. The Aspen unemployment rate grew .9% year-on-year, while the averaged Valley unemployment rate increased 1% year-on-year. Both rates increased from 2010 to 2012. Since 2012, the Aspen and Valley rates converged and remained relatively consistent with one another. The National rate was high in 2009 at 9.3% and has decreased roughly .6% year-on-year.

Figure 1. Aspen & Valley Unemployment Rates (2009-2014)



Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

Unemployment rate data for Aspen and the Valley was sourced from the American Community Survey. National data was sourced from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Sources: [1] American FactFinder, n.d. Web. 14 May 2016. <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml/>. [2] "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d. Web. 13 June 2016. <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000/>. [Photo] Babbie, Sheila. 2016.

Affordable Ownership Housing Supply & Demand

What is it? Why is it important?

Affordable ownership housing refers to workforce housing units available for purchase in the Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority (APCHA). The ability and timeliness of individuals and families to find housing impacts the economic climate of the community. Workers who cannot find housing within a reasonable period of time, budget, and other needs may forego the area in search of a more viable community. The Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority (APCHA) was established in 1982 to provide desirable, affordable housing for employed community members,[1] enabling Pitkin County and Aspen residents to become productive members of the community.

What does the data/trend say?

Ownership units are organized and managed by category, which are defined by household income and net assets of prospective buyers.[2] Data below depict the total inventory of APCHA ownership units and the supply and demand of units for sale based on bids and closures. Figure 1 shows the total supply of affordable ownership units by category as of July 1, 2016. Category 4 and Resident Occupied (RO) units comprise the majority of the APCHA ownership inventory (33% each).[3] Figure 2 displays the average number of bids per available ownership unit by category.[4] Since 2005, average bids per ownership unit have decreased overall by 38%. Over that same period, Category 1 and 2 units generally saw the highest average number of bids while categories 5, 6, 7, and RO generally saw the lowest number of bids.

Figure 1. Total APCHA Ownership Inventory by Category*

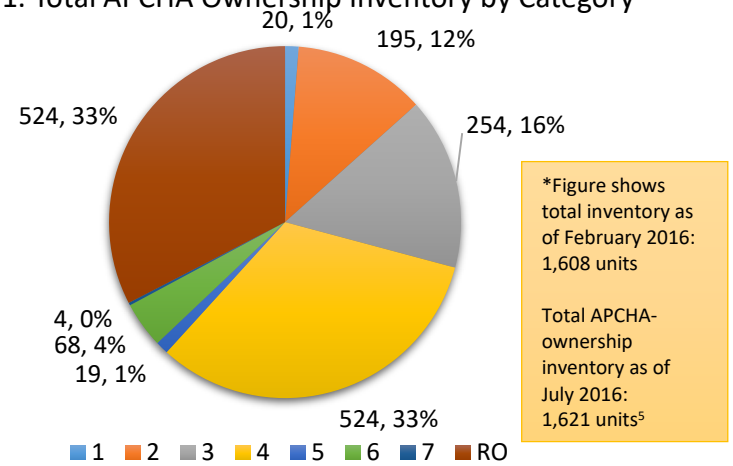
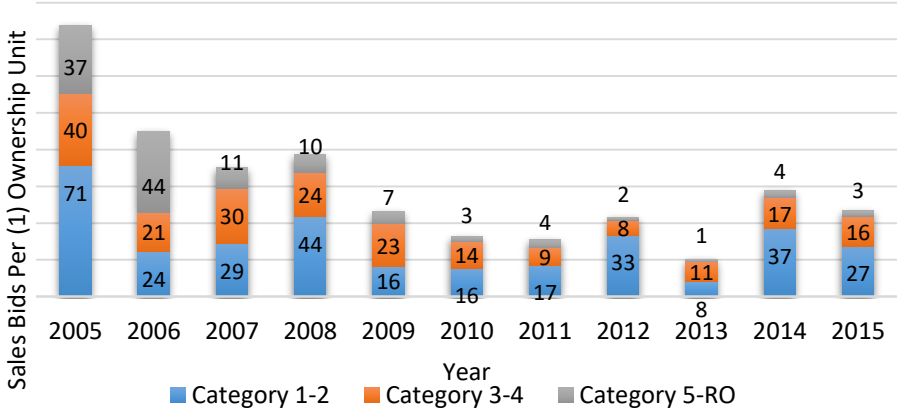


Figure 2. Average Number of Bids Per Available APCHA Ownership Unit by Category (2005-2015)



Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

Figure 1 shows inventory as of February 2016; new units have been added as of July. To simplify data presentation in Figure 2, categories 1-2, 3-4, and 5-RO were grouped together per APCHA. Figure 1 represents the total inventory of affordable ownership units while Figure 2 represents demand for only those units that became available for sale. It should also be noted that RO units span all income categories and are not strictly available to higher income households. Also, prospective owners often bid on more than one unit. Note that there is variability of average bids per unit based on new inventory that comes online. Burlingame Phase II is not reflected in Figure 2. Further, the data capture process is subject to be updated in the future.

Sources: [1] "Housing Guidelines." APCHA, 2016. Web. Mar. 2016. <http://www.apcha.org/sitepages/pid4.php/>. [2] "APCHA Employee Housing Guideline Tables." APCHA, Sept. 2015. Web. Mar. 2016. <http://www.apcha.org/2015FinalAdoptedGuidelinesTables(1).pdf/>. [3] "Policy Study: Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority Affordable Housing Guidelines." APCHA, 8 Feb., 2016. Web. Mar. 2016. <http://www.apcha.org/APCHA%20Policy%20Consultant%20Study%20Feb2016.pdf />. [4] "Sales Activity." APCHA. Web. Mar. 2016. <http://www.apcha.org/sitepages/pid77.php/>. [5] APCHA [Photo] APCHA

Affordable Rental Housing Supply & Demand

What is it? Why is it important?

Affordable rental housing refers to seasonal and long-term units available for rental for working households. The ability and timeliness of individuals and families to find rental housing impacts the economic climate of the community. Workers who cannot find affordable and available seasonal and long-term rental housing may forego the area in search of a more viable employment opportunity in another community. The Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority (APCHA) was established in 1982 to provide desirable, affordable housing for employed community members and the seasonal workforce.[1] APCHA enables Pitkin County and Aspen residents (including temporary ones) to become productive members of the community.

What does the data/trend say?

Rental units are organized by category, which are defined by household income and net assets of prospective renters.[2] APCHA provided total inventory and rental application and unit data below. Figure 1 shows the total supply of rental units by category. Category 3 (35%) and Resident Occupied (RO) units (32%) comprise the majority of the APCHA rental inventory.[3] From 2014 to 2015, the average number of applicants per available deed restricted rental unit increased in each grouping at 37% (Category 1-2), 67% (Category 3-4), and 2.4% (Category RO) (Figure 2).[4]

Figure 1. Total APCHA Rental Inventory by Category*

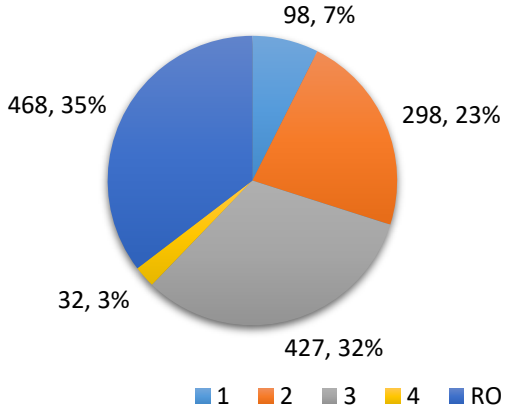
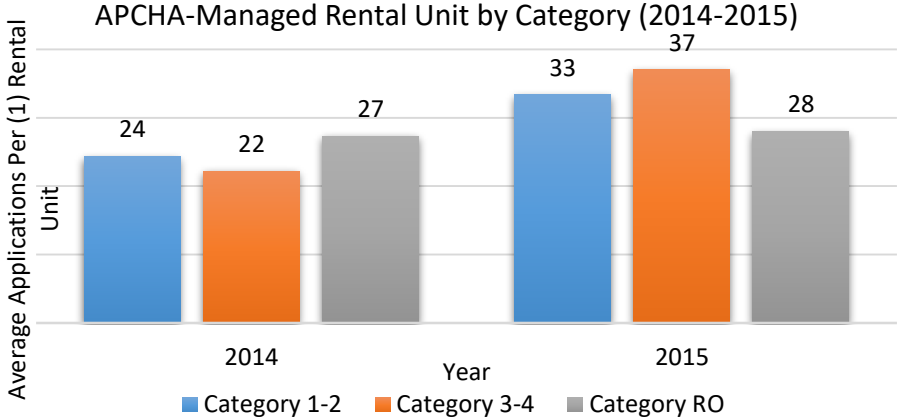


*Figure shows total inventory as of February 2016: 1,323 units

Total APCHA-rental inventory as of July 2016: 1,346 units[5]

Figure 2. Average Number of Applications Per Available APCHA-Managed Rental Unit by Category (2014-2015)



Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

Figure 1 shows inventory as of February 2016; new units have been added as of July. To simplify data presentation in Figure 2, categories 1-2 and 3-4 were grouped together per APCHA. Note that Figure 2 data includes only APCHA-managed property units. In 2014 and 2015, this includes units at the Aspen Country Inn and Truscott properties, while Smuggler Mountain units are also included in the 2015 data. Figure 1 represents the total inventory of units while Figure 2 represents demand for only those units that became available for rental. It should also be noted that RO units span all income categories and are not strictly available to higher income households. Also, prospective renters often apply for more than one unit. Note that there is variability of average applications per unit based on unit availability. Further, the data capture process is subject to be updated in the future.

Sources: [1] "Housing Guidelines." APCHA, 2016. Web. Mar. 2016. <http://www.apcha.org/sitepages/pid4.php/>. [2] "APCHA Employee Housing Guideline Tables." APCHA, Sept. 2015. Web. Mar. 2016. <http://www.apcha.org/2015FinalAdoptedGuidelinesTables(1).pdf/>. [3] "Policy Study: Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority Affordable Housing Guidelines." APCHA, 8 Feb., 2016. Web. Mar. 2016. <http://www.apcha.org/APCHA%20Policy%20Consult ant%20Study%20Feb2016.pdf />. [4] APCHA [5] Ibid. [Photo] Babbie, Sheila. 2016.

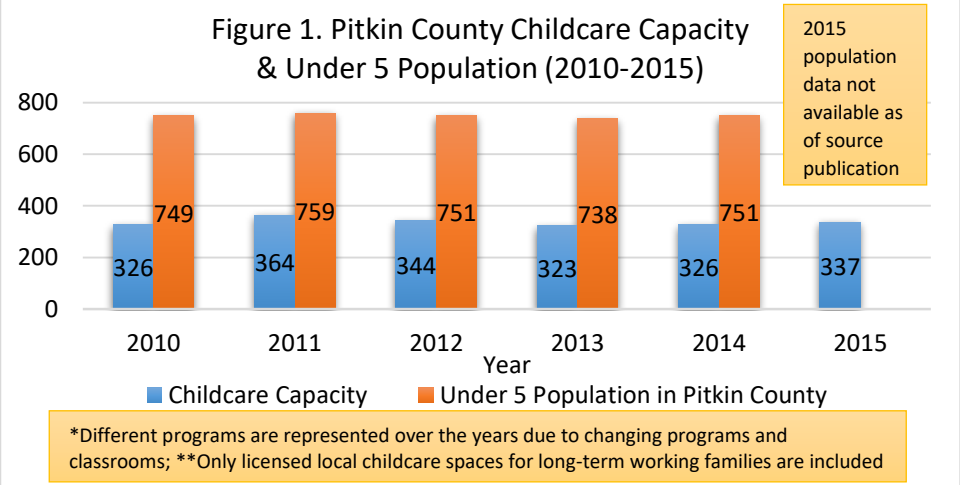
Licensed Childcare Capacity for Children Under 5

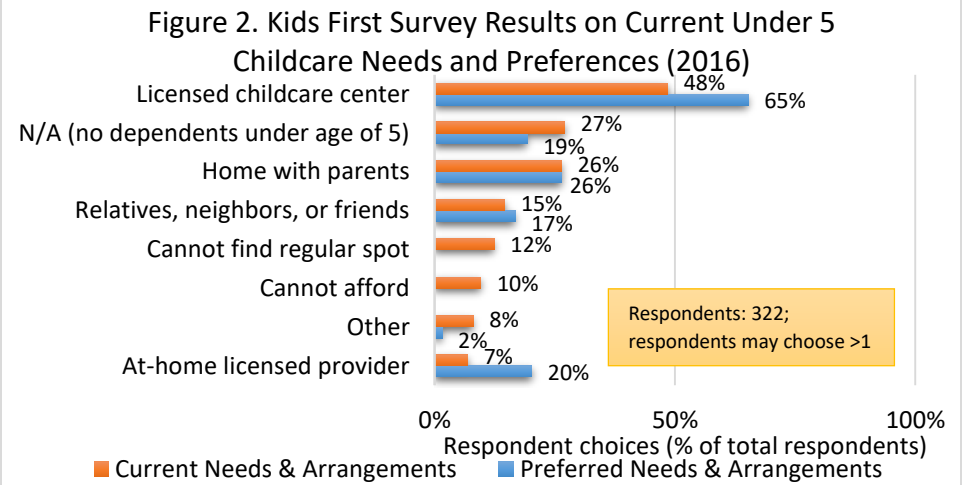
What is it? Why is it important?

Licensed childcare capacity is the amount of state-regulated center spots available for kindergarten age children (under 5 years) in Pitkin County. Pitkin County population counts are used to give a sense for childcare need. However, the demand for licensed childcare in Pitkin County extends to families who live outside of the county. Many factors impact the need for childcare, including maternal employment, family instability, single parenting, nonstandard work hours, and part-time work.[1] Childcare enables and enhances parents' abilities to work, earn income, and provide basic needs for their families. Investment in high-quality child care and early education strengthens families and creates more productive and livable communities in the long-term.[2] Kids First aims to maintain and increase capacity for local families in need of childcare.

What does the data/trend say?

Kids First provided childcare capacity data and survey responses, while population counts were taken from the Colorado Kids Count Report. From 2010 to 2014, children under 5 years old in Pitkin County averaged at 750, while area capacity is averaged at 337 spots (from 2010-2015) (Figure 1).[3,4] This fulfills nearly half of the potential need for childcare in the county annually. Similarly, Colorado licensed childcare spots account for roughly 45% of children birth to age 6 with working parents.[5] Figure 2 features local childcare needs and preferences from the 2016 Kids First Survey.[6] Of respondents, 65% prefer childcare in licensed centers compared to the 48% currently served. This may be an indication of an increased need for licensed childcare.





Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing and Considerations

Population data for 2015 is not available as of the Colorado Kids Count publication. In Figure 1, different programs are represented over the years due to changing programs and classrooms. Only licensed local childcare spaces for long-term working families are included. Figure 2 totals add up to more than 100% as respondents were allowed more than 1 answer choice.

Sources: [1] Bianchi, Suzanne M. "Changing Families, Changing Workplaces." Work and Family 21.2 (Fall 2011): n. pag. Web. 6 May 2016. <http://futureofchildren.org/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=76&articleid=550&sectionid=3796&submit/>. [2] "Unfinished Business." CED, 2012. Web. 6 May 2016. <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/cyf/CEDUnfinishedBusinessReportpdf.pdf/>. [3] City of Aspen Kids First Department [4] Ibid. [5] "Ensuring Access to High-Quality Child Care." Colorado Children's Campaign. Web. 6 May 2016. <http://www.coloradokids.org/issues/earlychildhood/ensuring-access/>. [6] City of Aspen Kids First Department [Photo] City of Aspen Kids First Department

Licensed Childcare Cost

What is it? Why is it important?

Licensed childcare cost refers to the cost of state-regulated center care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in Pitkin County. This includes both for and non-profit centers. In 2014, Colorado was ranked the 5th and 7th least affordable state for center-based infant and four-year old child care, respectively.[1] In general, a significant portion of family earnings go toward childcare. Without affordable childcare, parents would be limited in their ability to afford childcare services and other basic needs for their families. This is particularly important given the relative high cost of living in Aspen. In alignment with its founding principle, Kids First aims to offer affordable options for local families in need of licensed childcare.

What does the data/trend say?

Daily licensed childcare costs are provided below for three age groups: infants (0-1.5 years), toddlers (1-3 years), and preschool (2.5-5 years) (Figure 1).[2] Data below shows rates charged, but does not include any applicable financial aid, from which 109 children in area programs benefit in some form.[3] Averaged overall, daily rates from 2010 to 2015 show an increase of 3% on average each year. Following national trends, licensed child care is costlier for infants than toddlers and costlier for toddlers than preschoolers. Figure 2 compares average costs of licensed childcare for infants. In 2014, the average Pitkin County annual infant childcare rate[4] was 33% more costly than the state average.[5]

Figure 1. Pitkin County Daily Licensed Childcare Center Cost by Age Group (2010-2015)

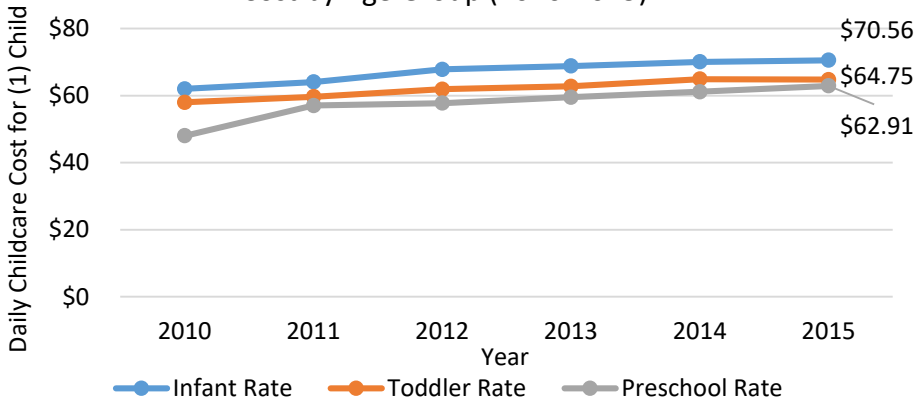
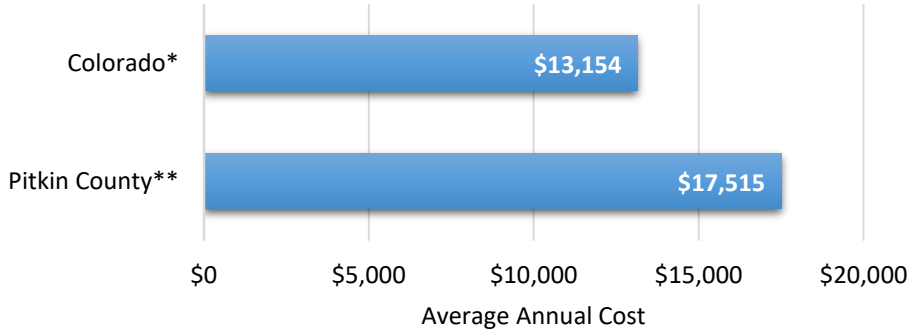


Figure 2. Annual Cost of Full-Time Infant Childcare at Center, Colorado & Pitkin County (2014)



NOTE: *Refers to children under 12 months old. **Refers to children 0-1.5 years.

Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

Childcare cost data is provided by Kids First and includes data from both for and non-profit centers. Data does not include any applicable financial aid. In Figure 2, the term "infant" is defined differently. The annualized county rate is based on average days open (250 days per year). Financial aid is not included in this data. Financial aid attributions are complex and based on a range of factors. A sample calculation may be developed in future iterations of this measure.

Sources: [1] "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2015 Report." Child Care Aware of America, 2015. Web. 6 May 2016. <http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Parents-and-the-High-Cost-of-Child-Care-2015-FINAL.pdf >. [2] City of Aspen Kids First Department [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid. [5] Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2015 Report. [Photo] City of Aspen Kids First Department

Cost of Health Insurance

What is it? Why is it important?

This measure refers to relative health insurance premium costs for Aspen employees and employers. This includes only payroll contributions toward health insurance coverage. Cost data was sourced from the Valley Health Alliance (VHA), a partnership between the five largest self-insured employers to promote health and well-being by collaborating to provide healthcare that is accessible, affordable, and high quality.[1] This data is used as a suitable proxy for broader area cost data that is not currently available. Tracking the cost of health insurance is important as it shows how accessible and affordable health care is to employees and employers in Aspen. Affordable quality health insurance contributes to wellness and thereby a healthy and thriving community.

What does the data/trend say?

Figure 1 shows the employer to employee cost breakdown of health insurance by each VHA employer member, as sourced from the Annual Performance Scorecard.[2] On average, VHA employers pay $564.71 and employees pay $119.93 of health insurance costs per member per month (PMPM). As employer plans are unique, member counts, the number of members on each employer's plan (including dependents), may help to explain some of the cost differential between employers due to an economy of scale in health care plans (Figure 1). Average cost percentage breakdowns for the state of Colorado show an 84%/16% split to employers and employees.[4] National figures[5] show a 74%/26% cost split. Figure 2 shows member counts for each employer.

Figure 1. Average Cost of Health Insurance Premiums by Five Largest Aspen Employers (2014)

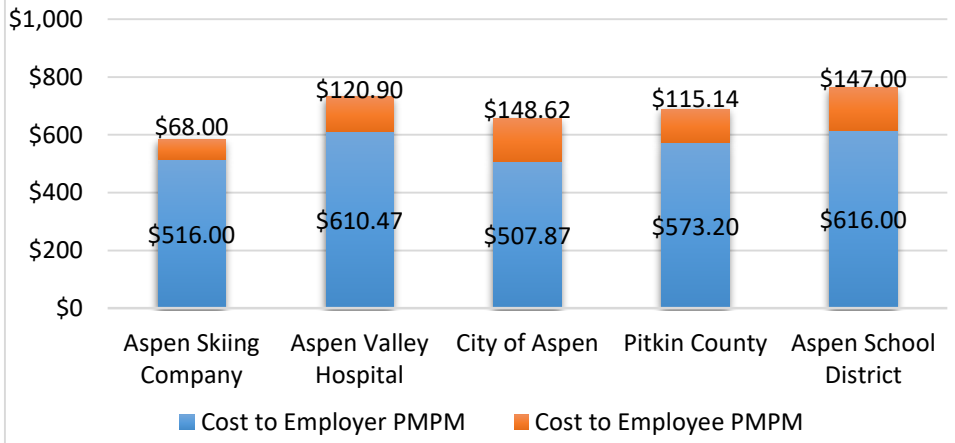


Figure 2. Employer Member Counts (2014)

EMPLOYER	MEMBER COUNT
Aspen Skiing Company	1850
Aspen Valley Hospital	641
City of Aspen	547
Pitkin County	419
Aspen School District	281

Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

VHA cost data includes medical and prescription costs only (vision and dental are excluded). Therefore, many costs associated with health care (e.g. costs outside of coverage, transportation/lodging for procedures) are not represented in these figures.

Sources: [1] "Our Mission and Vision." Valley Health Alliance. Web. May 2016. <http://www.ourvha.org/our-mission-and-vision/>. [2] VHA Annual Performance Scorecard. [3] Ibid. [4] City of Aspen Human Resources Department [5] Ibid. [6] VHA Annual Performance Scorecard. [Photo] Holder, Michelle. 2016.

High School Graduation Rate

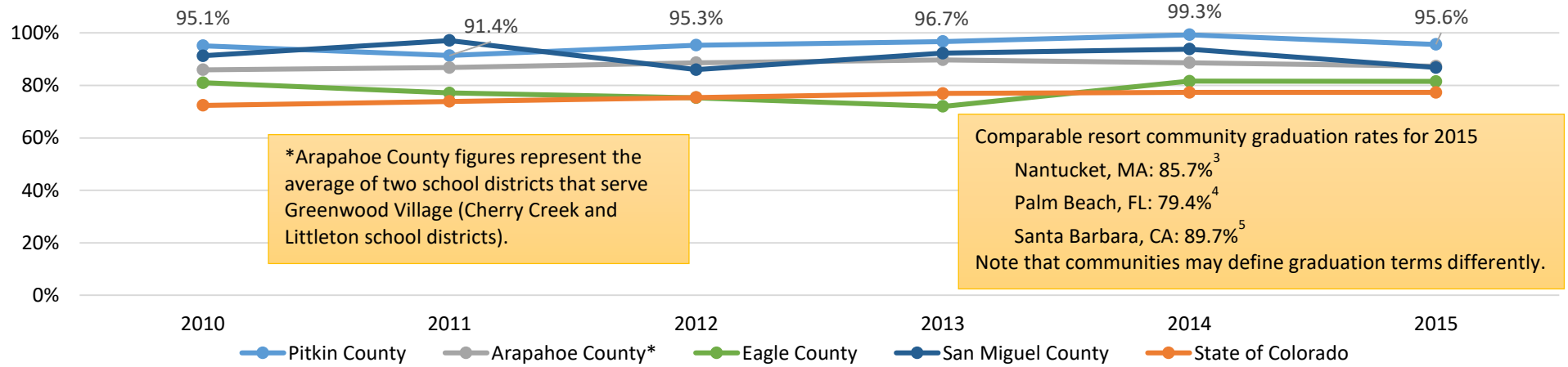
What is it? Why is it important?

High school graduation rate refers to the percent of Aspen High School (Pitkin County) students who receive a four-year "on-time" diploma. Graduation rates are calculated with a precise and consistent formula. For 2015, graduation rate is calculated by totaling the number of students receiving a regular diploma within four years of 8th grade transition. This number is then divided by the total students who transitioned from 8th grade at the end of the 2010-11 school year (including transfers in and excluding transfers out).[1] Potential drop-outs are included in the figures. High school completion enables individuals to better opportunities, attracting a population that values high quality education, and improving human capital resources and productivity in society. Completion allows individuals to gain access to better job opportunities and higher incomes, and is often required for progressing on to higher education.

What does the data/trend say?

High school graduation data was sourced from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Figure 1 represents graduation rates for Aspen (Pitkin County), Greenwood Village (Arapahoe County), Vail (Eagle County), Telluride (San Miguel County), and the State of Colorado.[2] From 2010 to 2015, Pitkin County graduation rates are 95.6% and completion rates are 97.2% on average. Compared to other resort communities in the state, Pitkin County rates are consistently higher except for 2011. Figure 1 also features 2015 graduation rates for three comparable resort communities around the country.

Figure 1. High School Graduation Rate, Pitkin County & Comparisons (2010-2015)



Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

Colorado high school graduation rate methodology and demographic breakdowns can be found for each year on its respective spreadsheet per the CDE website.[6] Note that out-of-state communities may define graduation terms differently and these figures may not be a direct comparison.

Sources: [1] "Graduation Statistics." Colorado Department of Education. Web. 18 February 2016. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradcurrent/>. [2] Ibid. [3] "2015 Graduation Rate Report (DISTRICT) for All Students." Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Web. 27 June 2016. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/>. [4] "High School Graduation Rates." Florida Department of Education. Web. 27 June 2016. <https://edstats.fldoe.org/SASPortal/main.do>. [5] "Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2014-15." California Department of Education Data Reporting Office. Web. 27 June 2016. <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CohortRates/GradRates.aspx?Agg=D&Topic=Graduates&TheYear=2014-15&cds=42767860000000&RC=District&SubGroup=Ethnic/Racial>. [6] "Graduation Statistics." [Photo] The Aspen Times

Voter Participation Numbers

What is it? Why is it important?

Voter participation numbers represent the number of voters who cast a ballot in an election in Aspen or Pitkin County. Because registered voter lists can include persons who no longer live in the area, voter participation rates are not used. Voter turnout (participation) indicates that community members care about and want to influence decisions that impact them. Ballot content, including those more popular or contested issues and races, can strongly impact voter turnout. Voter participation also gives some insight into the political access, awareness, and engagement of the community. Higher participation numbers may indicate more representation of the community. Since 2015, the city and county have transferred to all mail ballot elections.

What does the data/trend say?

Voter participation numbers for the city and county are provided by the City Clerk's Office and the Pitkin County Clerk's Office. In general, Pitkin County number of voters are more varied and higher than those of Aspen. From 2005-2015, Aspen's number of voters average around 2,252 while runoff election votes average at 1,716 (Figure 1).[1] From 2008-2015, the average Pitkin County voter participation is 6,747 (Figure 2).[2] Particularly high participation is seen in 2008 and 2012, which coincide with national elections and the trend that voter turnout is higher during presidential elections.

Figure 1. Aspen Municipal Election Number of Voters (2005-2015)

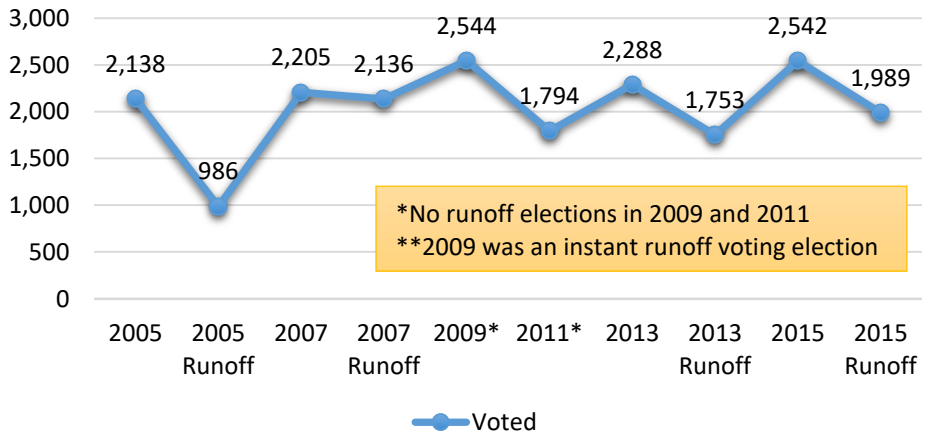
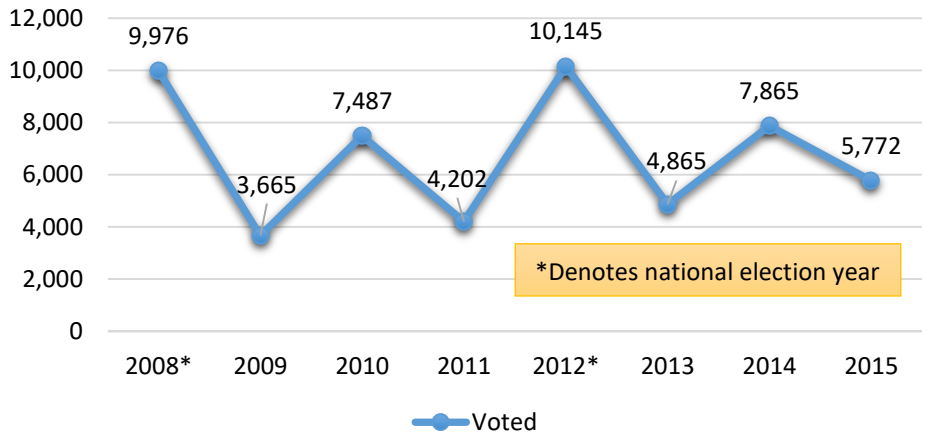


Figure 2. Pitkin County Election Number of Voters (2008-2015)



Targets

There is currently no target set for this measure.

Data Sourcing & Considerations

Note that the municipal elections did not require runoff elections in 2009 and 2011 and in 2009 there was an instant runoff voting election.

Sources: [1] City of Aspen Clerk's Office [2] Mast, Bill. "Re: Pitkin County Voter Participation Data." Message to the author. 29 March 2016. E-mail. [Photo] Babbie, Sheila. 2009.