2022

Community Needs Assessment

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc. (CDP)

Programs

- Head Start
- Housing Choice Voucher Program
  - Home Ownership Program
  - Family Self-Sufficiency Program
- Neighborhood Centers
  - Food ene
- Weatherization

cdp

Conducted by: crescendo

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 4

Organizational Background 4

- Mission 4
- Vision 4
- Values 4
- Service Area 5
- CDP Programs 6
- Secondary Data Summary 7
- Qualitative Summary 11
- One-on-One Interviews 11
- Focus Group Discussions 12
- Community Strengths 12
- High-Level Action Areas & Observations 12
- Community Survey 15

Organizational Background 18

- Mission 18
- Vision 18
- Values 18
- CDP Programs 19

Methodology, Purpose, and Data Limitations 20

- Methodology 20
- Community Needs Assessment Purpose and Goals 20
- Data Limitation 21

Overview of Community Served 22

- Service Area Description and Map 22

Strategic Secondary Research 23

- Social Vulnerability Index 23
- Demographics 25
- Social Determinants of Health 30

Economic Stability 31
Neighborhood & Physical Environment 36
Education 45
Food 49
Community & Social Context 52
Health Care System 55
Health Outcomes 57
Qualitative Research Summary 59
One-on-One Interviews 59
Focus Group Discussions 59
Community Strengths 60
High-Level Action Areas & Observations 60
Potential Interventions 66
Community Survey 67
Demographics 67
Economy and Workforce 70
Housing and Neighborhoods 74
Education and Childcare 75
Health Care, Mental Health, Substance Use, and Food Access 79
Conditions of Poverty 85
Communication 86
Appendices 88
Appendix A: CDP Program Data 88
Head Start 88
Neighborhood Centers 88
Appendix B: Stakeholder Interview Guide 89
Appendix C: Focus Group Interview Guide 92
Appendix D: Community Survey 96

Executive Summary

Organizational Background[1]

The St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, known as CDP, is a private, not-for-profit agency that serves St. Lawrence County. It is one of forty-nine agencies in a network in New York State and one of a thousand Community Action Agencies that exist in the United States.

CDP was incorporated in 1965 and operates programs and services for low-income families to assist them toward self-sufficiency. We encourage self-reliance and responsible community participation among those we serve. Through our programs, families gain access to resources and services that not only help alleviate the financial burden brought on by underemployment and an ever-rising cost of living, but also seek to ultimately move them towards self-support.

Our programs aim to offer a hand up, not a hand out.

Mission

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program is committed to encourage and assist individuals and families to attain self-reliance, dignity and self-sufficiency through education, guidance and services.

Vision

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program is a community organization that envisions equal opportunities and self-sufficiency for low-income individuals and families in St. Lawrence County

Values

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program aims to provide quality customer service to our current and potential program participants, support a work environment that fosters creativity and promotes the exploration of innovative ideas, and adhere to best practices in every aspect of the organization.

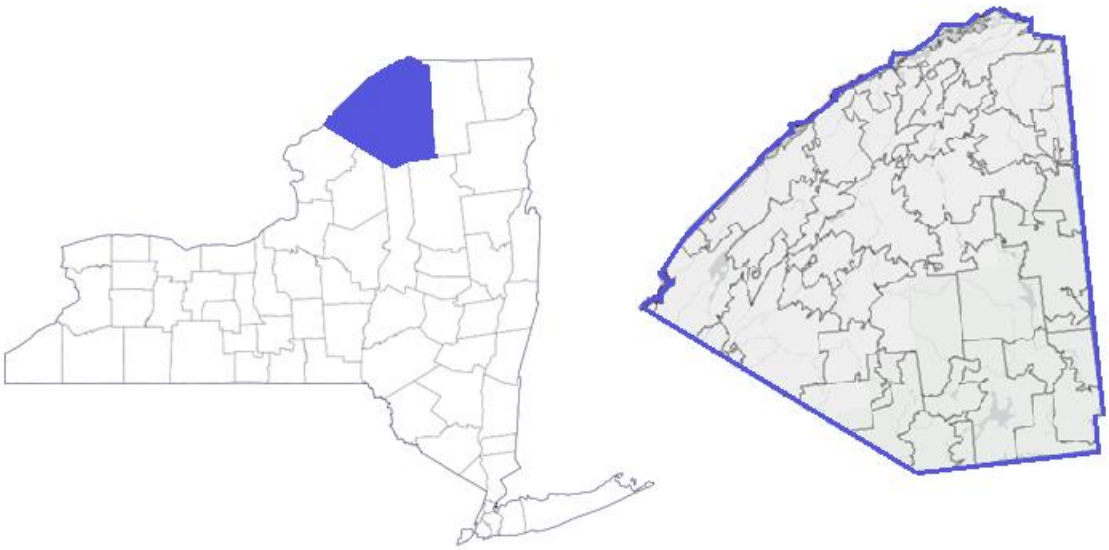
[1] St. Lawrence Community Development Program. About Us, 2022

Service Area

Located along the Canadian border in between the St. Lawrence River, the Thousand Islands regions, and the Adirondack Mountains, St. Lawrence County makes up 2,685 square miles. Within the county, there are 32 towns, 13 villages, and one city. St. Lawrence County is the geographically largest county in the state of New York and the 5th largest county east of the Mississippi River.[2]

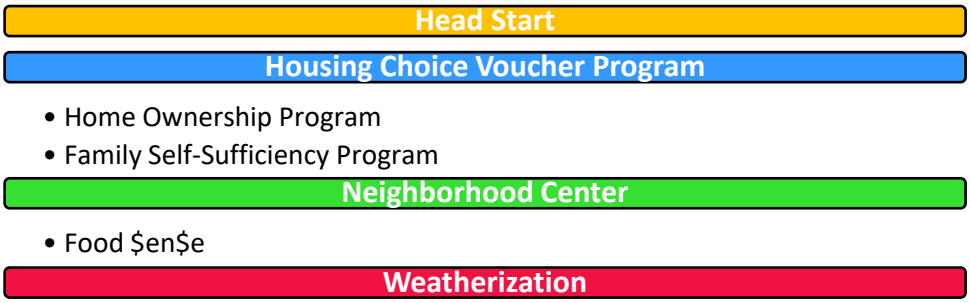
St. Lawrence County Community Development Program (CDP) serves low-income individuals and families throughout St. Lawrence County. CDP is one of 49 Community Action Agencies in the State of New York.[3]

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program Service Area



[2] St. Lawrence County Government. About St. Lawrence County, 2022.
[3] St. Lawrence County Community Development Program. About Us, 2022.

CDP Programs



Head Start is a federally funded comprehensive school readiness program for children between 3 and 5 years of age. Head Start has experienced, certified teachers who provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for children, including children with special needs. Head Start children will acquire skills in math, science, literacy, language, social/emotional, physical health and development. Through play, children learn to express their thoughts and feelings, increase self-confidence, and have positive relationships with others.

Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) is a program which is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with the purpose of providing rental assistance for income-eligible families. The ultimate goal is to provide renters with safe, affordable housing.

- **Home Ownership Program** is another program for HCVP participants. The focus of this program is to assist eligible families to purchase their first home. It allows a family to use their rental assistance voucher to make their mortgage payment.
- **Family Self-Sufficiency Program** is for HCVP participants who want to achieve economic independence. This involves personalized case management and referring families to local services.

St. Lawrence County CDP operates six **Neighborhood Centers** throughout the county. The centers are each staffed by a director and provide services to low-income families with the assistance of community volunteers; the services may be directly offered at the centers, or families may be referred to other agencies and resources as needed. Centers have food pantries and provide emergency aid if required with food, fuel, utilities, or shelter. Thrift stores with donated clothing and household items are available at the Canton and Gouverneur Neighborhood Centers.

- **Food ene**, a program provided by the Food Bank of Central New York, is a monthly food-buying co-op with no qualifications, subscriptions or requirements to participate. Anyone within the eleven counties served can utilize the service. Through the program, one has access to a monthly box of 12-15 staple grocery items at a discounted price.

Weatherization is designed for homeowners or renters to make their home more energy efficient. There are income guidelines for this program. This program provides a number of weatherization measures which include window and door replacement; attic and sidewall insulation; health and safety measures including smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; and furnace cleaning and tuning.

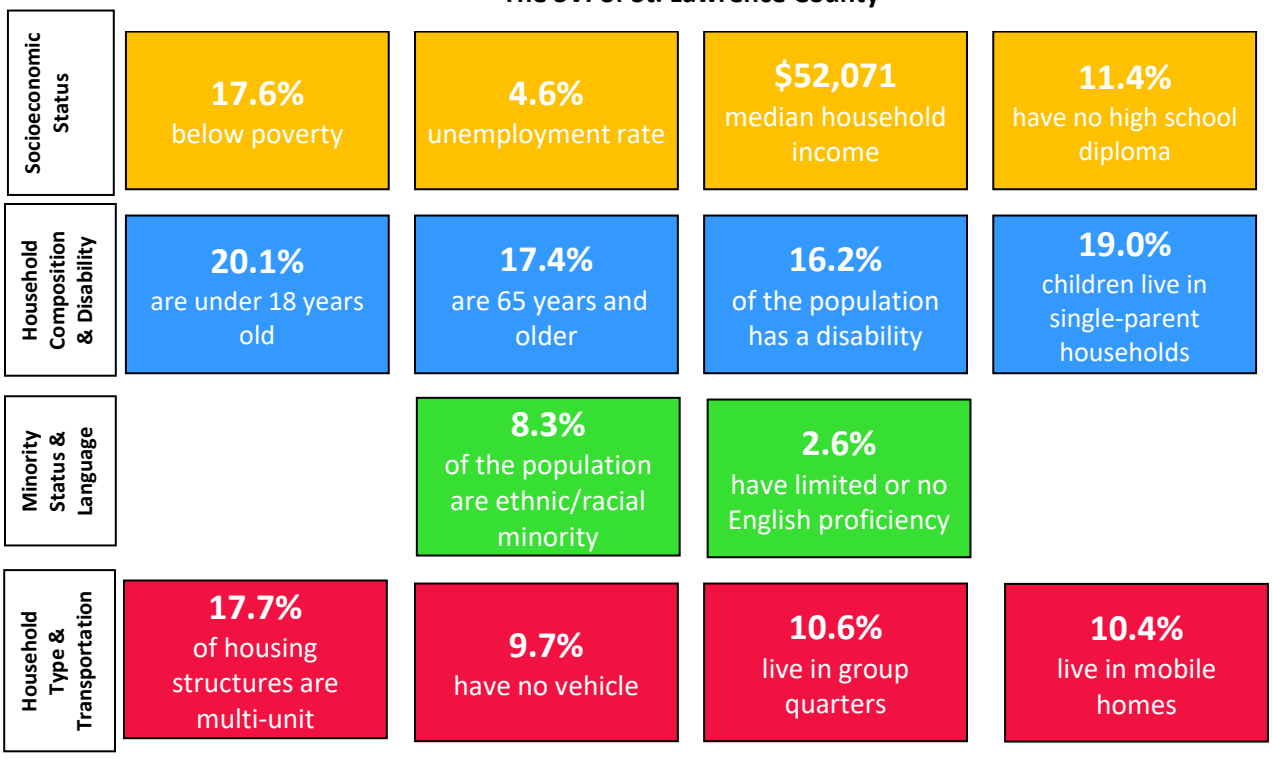
Secondary Data Summary

Social Vulnerability Index

As part of county-specific summaries, there are data change tables utilizing The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) model. The SVI was developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a metric for analyzing population data to identify vulnerable populations.

The SVI may be used to rank overall population well-being and mobility relative to County and State averages. The measures are grouped into four major categories: Socioeconomic Status, Household Composition and Disability, Minority Status and Language, and Housing and Transportation. The SVI can also be used to determine the most vulnerable populations during disaster preparedness and public health emergencies, including pandemics.[4]

The SVI of St. Lawrence County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- St. Lawrence County has a higher percentage of people living below poverty than the state and national averages.
- St. Lawrence County has an unemployment rate of 4.6% which is lower than the New York rate.
- The median household income in St. Lawrence County is $52,071 which is approximately $13,000 to $19,000 less than the corresponding national and state figures.

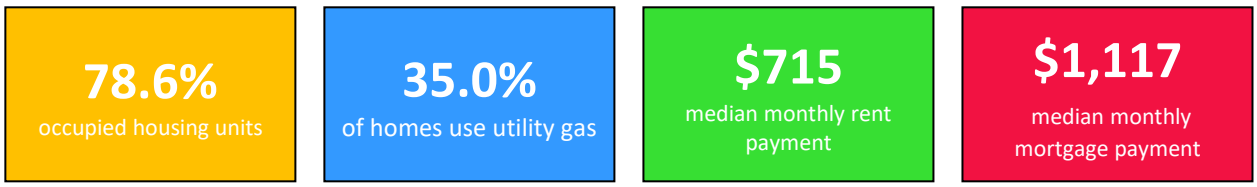
[4] Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index.

- The percentage of St. Lawrence County residents aged 25 years and over without a high school diploma (11.4%) is similar to the national percentage and slightly lower than the state percentage.
- St. Lawrence County has greater proportions of residents who are 65 years and older (17.4%) and/or living with a disability (16.2%) than the state or nation.
- In St. Lawrence County, nearly two in five children (19.0%) live in single-parent households.
- St. Lawrence County has a low proportion of residents who identify as an ethnic/racial minority (8.3%) compared to state and national averages (44.8% and 39.9%, respectively).
- Only 2.6% of residents in St. Lawrence County have limited or no English proficiency, compared to 13.1% of those in the state.
- Lower than state and national averages, 17.7% of housing structures are multi-units.
- Approximately 10.4% of housing units are mobile homes, compared to 2.3% of those across the state.
- More than one in ten of the population lives in group quarters (10.6%), compared to lower than three percent of the state and national populations.

Housing

The neighborhoods people live in have a major impact on their health and well-being. Many people in the United States live in neighborhoods with high rates of violence, unsafe air or water, and other health and safety risks. Racial and ethnic minorities and people with low incomes are more likely to live in places with these risks. In addition, some people are exposed to things at work that can harm their health, like secondhand smoke or loud noises.[5]

The housing profile of St. Lawrence County

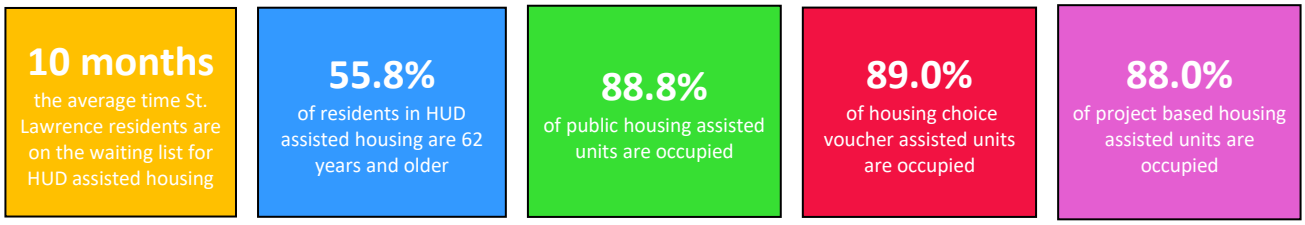


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

[5] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health, Neighborhood & Built Environment.

Housing instability encompasses a number of challenges, such as having trouble paying rent, overcrowding, moving frequently, staying with relatives, or spending the bulk of household income on housing. These experiences may negatively affect physical health and make it harder to access health care. This summary will discuss the cost of housing as well as the health effects of substandard housing and forced evictions. Certain populations may be more affected by housing instability, such as children who move frequently. [6]

The housing assistance profile of St. Lawrence County



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Assisted Housing: National and Local, Picture of Subsidized Households, 2021

Childcare

Early childhood, particularly the first five years of life, impacts long–term social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Healthy development in early childhood helps prepare children for the educational experiences of kindergarten and beyond. Early childhood development and education opportunities are affected by various environmental and social factors, including early life stress, socioeconomic status, relationships with parents and caregivers, and access to early education programs.[7]

Childcare cost-burdened households indicate childcare costs for a household with two children as a percent of median household income.

The number of childcare centers per 1,000 population under age five in St. Lawrence County is half the corresponding figure for New York State.

Childcare Centers

	New York	St. Lawrence County
Number of childcare centers per 1,000 population under five	6	3
Percent of household income required for childcare expenses	30.0%	33.0%

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2021-2022

- Per 1,000 children under five, there are 3 childcare centers in St. Lawrence County.
- Households spend approximately 33.0% of their income on childcare expenses.

[6] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Housing Instability.
[7] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Early Childhood Development & Education.

Compared to New York state, St. Lawrence County has higher rates of children in the foster care system and admissions into foster care.

Foster Care

	New York	St. Lawrence County
Foster care children in care (per 1,000)	3.0	9.4
Foster care admissions (per 1,000)	1.3	4.3
Foster care discharges	29.6%	25.6%

Source: NYS Education Department; Office of Information; Reporting and Technology Services, 2020

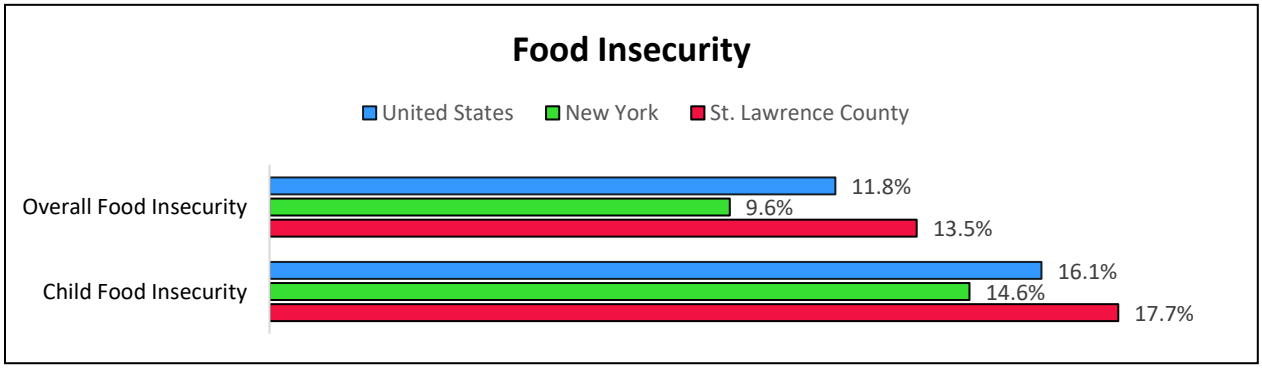
- In St. Lawrence County every 9.4 children out of 1,000 are in foster care, higher than the state average of 3 children out of 1,000.
- In 2020, St. Lawrence County had a rate of 4.3 children per 1,000 who were newly admitted into foster care, while in the state of New York the rate was 1.3 per 1,000 children.
- Approximately 25.6% of children in foster care were discharged from the foster care system and moved into a permanent home in 2020.

Food

Food insecurity is defined as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of a lack of money and other resources. Food insecurity may be long-term or temporary. It may be influenced by several factors including income, employment, race/ethnicity, and disability. The risk of food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available. Additionally, people living in some urban areas, rural areas, and low-income neighborhoods may have limited access to full-service supermarkets or grocery stores.[8]

Compared to state and national averages, St. Lawrence County has higher percentages of overall food insecurity and child food insecurity. The average meal cost that food-insecure individuals report spending on food ranges from $3.25 to $3.52 in the United States, New York, and St. Lawrence County.

Food Insecurity



Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2021: An Analysis of County & Congressional District Food Insecurity & County Food Cost in the United States, 2020

[8] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Food Insecurity.

- In St. Lawrence County 13.5% of the population has food insecurity. Approximately 30.0% of the food insecure population is above the 200% poverty threshold and does not qualify for SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs, comparable to the national level.
- There are 17.5% of children in St. Lawrence County who are food insecure. There are 14.0% of children who are food insecure in the county but are likely ineligible for federal nutrition programs because they live in households whose income is above 185% poverty, which is a lower percentage than the national level.

In St. Lawrence County there are households who receive SNAP benefits.

SNAP Assistance Program Enrollment

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Total households	122,354,219	7,417,224	41,925
Households receiving SNAP	13,892,407	1,057,725	6,554
SNAP authorized stores[9]	229,142	15,521	113

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- In St. Lawrence County 6,554 (15.6%) households are receiving SNAP, with 113 stores that accept SNAP. Nationally, 11.4% of households receive SNAP benefits.

Qualitative Summary

The qualitative primary research methodology consisted of stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions with key community stakeholders, policymakers, and residents.

Qualitative data collection resulted in a consensus of several top areas of need that can be described as qualitative themes**.** Each of these qualitative themes impacts the subsequent high-level action areas. The action areas include an overview of the subject and utilize de-identified illustrative observations in italics which are representative of respondents' consensus perspectives.

One-on-One Interviews

Twelve one-on-one virtual phone interviews were conducted, lasting approximately 30 minutes, although some community members chose to share a great deal of information and exceeded 30 minutes. These conversations provided the opportunity for:

- In-depth conversations about the strengths and challenges to receiving health care, services, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and ideas for solutions to improve their communities.
- In-depth discussions about health care, social service, mental health, and other service issues with leaders, community partners, and individuals from the community.

[9] U.S. Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service. Food Environment Atlas, 2017

Focus Group Discussions

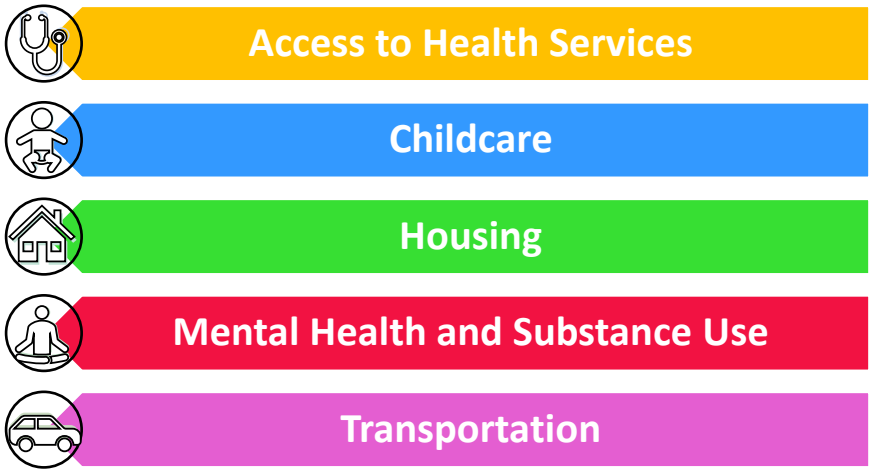
One community-wide focus group started with brief introductions, followed by participant sharing of their thoughts about select topic areas. Discussions were then narrowed down to focus on topics participants observed as the greatest concerns facing their community and what possible solutions they envisioned. Participants were encouraged to speak about their particular areas of concern, interest, or experience, as many opinions and observations were grounded in both personal and professional experiences.

Community Strengths

When asked what some of the positives and strengths that the St. Lawrence County community has to offer, many stakeholders emphasized that the community is tight-knit, and people always step in for one another when someone is in need. The diverse geography and beautiful landscape of the county makes the community unique. Community members also mentioned that many nonprofits work well together to provide resources and services to community members.

High-Level Action Areas & Observations

Listed below are the high-level observations and action areas gleaned from the qualitative data. In addition to the observations, certain actions flow naturally from the themes above. These are important to include in any planning response. The comments in the following high-level action areas are most representative of respondents' consensus in the qualitative interviews.



Access to Health Services

In 2019 there was one primary care physician per 1,860 residents in St. Lawrence County. In 2020 there was one dentist per 2,550 residents in the county.[10] Community members voiced many concerns regarding accessing health services in St. Lawrence County. Long wait times, lack of providers within the county, quality care, and affordability are challenges stated by community members. Access to care for children is an area where community members see large gaps in care.

> *"For those who are low-income, health care is harder to acquire but access needs to be a priority. Illness doesn't care what your socioeconomic status is."* – Community Member

Childcare

Access to safe and affordable childcare is an essential building block to the overall quality of life for families as parents and caregivers have more opportunities to pursue a career and higher education that contribute to stability and financial security.[11] The childcare industry has been stunned by the pandemic, along with the overall economy. Childcare workers are hard to attract and retain, and classrooms have shuttered because of a lack of teachers, creating at times waitlists for those seeking childcare. All the while, there is pressure on childcare operators to raise wages while keeping services as affordable as possible.[12] Interviewees cite a list of challenges concerning childcare, including a lack of brick-and-mortar childcare facilities and long waitlists to get into them.

> *"Childcare is not affordable. Before the pandemic I put my kids in a childcare center. At the time my husband worked for the county, and we struggled financially as two well-employed individuals to put them there. The only reason we can afford it is with a second and third child, you get a discount."* – Community Member

In St. Lawrence County households are spending 33.0% of their household income on childcare.[13] Approximately 19.0% of children live in single-parent households.[14] Childcare affordability, availability, and waitlists are concerns that community members mentioned. There are also challenges in increasing the number of childcare providers in the county.

[10] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2019-2021
[11] Hamm, Baider, White, et.al. America, It's Time to Talk About Childcare. October 2019.
[12] The Norwin Star, Covid Pandemic Puts Pressure On Pittsburgh Region's Child Care Services, March 2022.
[13] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2021-2022
[14] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2016-2020

Housing

Across New York, housing prices have increased, causing many households to be severely cost-burdened. Approximately 70.0% of renters who are low-income are spending more than half of their income on housing costs.[15] In St. Lawrence County the median monthly rent payment is $715, and the median monthly mortgage payment is $1,117.[16] The vast majority of public housing, housing choice vouchers, and project-based housing-assisted units are occupied in the county.

> *"The cost of housing is one thing, and the other thing is there is not a lot of housing stock. Once it goes on the market, it doesn't last long. We don't have much low-income housing."*– Community Member

When asked about their top concerns, interviewees noted quality, affordable housing as a priority community challenge. Community members frequently cited a sheer lack of units, long waitlists for low-income units, and the overall affordability.

Many community members said that there are people experiencing homelessness in the county and the population is growing. According to community stakeholders, there are very few supports for those experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

> *"People are talking about homelessness like it is a new thing, but it is not – it is just more visible."*-- Community Member

Mental Health and Substance Use

Conversations with community members have revealed that the lack of mental health access is a concern across St. Lawrence County. Approximately 16.0% of residents in St. Lawrence County have experienced 14 or more days of frequent mental distress in the last 30 days.[17] Community discussions indicate that high-level needs for mental health are rooted in the lack of local mental health services, wait times, and bed shortages. Community stakeholders mentioned that people are struggling with substance use in the county.

> *"It is kind of shocking to see obituaries of people in their 20s and 30s, and I give credit to families that say they passed away from addiction because it brings awareness. Unfortunately, it happens on a regular basis around here."* -- Community Member

Transportation

Public transportation can impact a person's health and influence health equity. Lack of transportation can cause an individual to miss their health appointments, which can cause poorer health outcomes and added health expenditures. Reliable transportation can improve stability in access to health, nutrition, employment opportunities, and social inclusion.[18]

[15] National Low Income Housing Coalition. New York, 2022.
[16] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020
[17] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2019
[18] Health Affairs. Culture of Health: Public Transportation in the US, 2021

Because St. Lawrence County is geographically large and rural, having a public transportation system that serves all residents throughout the county is a challenge. According to one community stakeholder, it takes around two hours to get across the whole county. Unreliability, scheduling barriers, and timely access to public transportation are also themes that were heard when talking to community members.

> *"Transportation is extraordinarily difficult if you don't drive or are at an income level where you can't afford a car to reliably get to where you have to go."*-- Community Member

Community Survey

The purpose of the CDP community survey is to help identify the top needs of residents and the barriers/gaps that may prevent residents from accessing community resources. The survey took respondents less than 15 minutes to complete. Answers were anonymous, and no personally identifiable information was used to identify respondents.

The community survey collected results from **335** respondents. The survey was deployed from August 25, 2022, until September 14, 2022.

Ranked Transportation, Workforce Development, and Employment Needs

Workforce development is a theme that respondents identified as an area where a lot more focus is needed. Over 50% of the survey respondents said that developing more livable wage jobs is the area that much more focus is needed (52.5%). Approximately 49.4% said that a lot more focus is needed to improve access to high-speed internet and technology and 41.5% said creating technical school, trade school, or other job training options is a lot more needed.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus needed
Developing more livable wage jobs	18.9%	52.5%
Improving access to high-speed internet and technology	18.0%	49.4%
Creating technical school, trade school, or other job training options	17.0%	41.5%
Providing job growth opportunities	21.3%	39.6%
Providing soft skills education (customer service, showing up on time, etc.)	16.7%	35.9%
Making public transportation available in rural communities	19.1%	34.0%
Adding better routes and time schedules to the current public transportation system	18.7%	26.6%
Providing help with the cost of vehicle repairs	12.4%	24.8%
Providing help with the cost of vehicle insurance and regular maintenance	12.7%	19.0%

Ranked Housing Needs

Approximately 50.2% of survey respondents ranked weatherization assistance as an area with the most needed focus. Increasing programs for major housing repairs and providing help with utility assistance was also ranked as a high need. As far as developing more housing options, more senior housing options (46.8%) and increasing the number of affordable housing (42.5%) are also ranked high up on the needs where a lot more focus is needed.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus needed
Providing help with weatherization	15.0%	50.2%
Increasing programs or major housing repairs (roofs, windows, etc.)	17.2%	48.1%
Providing more senior housing options	18.3%	46.8%
Providing help with utility assistance (heating fuel, electricity, etc.)	12.9%	44.0%
Increasing the number of affordable apartments	23.2%	42.5%
Developing rental and mortgage assistance programs	17.2%	40.8%
Creating more emergency shelter beds for people who are homeless	15.0%	39.5%
Increasing programs for minor housing repairs (paint, upgrades, etc.)	13.3%	39.1%
Providing hotspots for internet access	14.2%	37.9%
Creating more shelter beds for certain populations (children, women, families, LGBTQIA, veterans, etc.)	14.5%	36.8%
Creating higher quality rental apartments and houses	21.5%	36.5%
Helping more people who are homeless to find their missing identification documents (driver's license, social security number, etc.)	12.0%	35.0%
Increasing the number of affordable houses for sale	16.9%	33.3%
Increasing the number of landlords who accept housing vouchers	10.4%	28.7%

Ranked Childcare and Early Education Needs

Over 55.2% of survey respondents ranked providing more flexible and affordable childcare options for working parent(s) as an area where a lot more focus is needed. Increasing the number of affordable childcare providers, providing more after-school programs, and increasing the number of high-quality licensed childcare providers are high areas of need where more focus or support is needed.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus needed
Providing more flexible and affordable childcare options for working parent(s)	14.9%	55.2%
Increasing the number of affordable childcare providers	16.9%	48.7%

Providing more after-school programs for school-aged children	11.8%	44.4%
Increasing the number of high-quality licensed childcare providers	16.9%	42.9%
Providing more recreational opportunities for youth	13.7%	41.2%
Providing more transportation options to childcare services	9.2%	30.7%
Mental health services for children ages 4 and younger	15.6%	28.6%

Ranked Food, Healthcare, and Mental Health Needs

Making dental care more affordable is ranked as the top need where a lot more focus or support is needed (60.9%). Substance use and mental health related resources are areas that respondents ranked as a high need.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus or support needed
Making dental care more affordable	14.6%	60.9%
Reducing the amount of opioid misuse	15.1%	59.4%
Reducing the amount of other drug misuse (heroin, cocaine, etc.)	14.1%	57.8%
Increasing the number of mental health providers in rural communities	19.3%	50.9%
Accessible sources for affordable, nutritious food	17.9%	50.0%
Expanding crisis services for mental health and substance use disorder	14.2%	49.3%
Reducing stigma associated with mental health and substance misuse	16.7%	48.1%
Increasing the number of dentists who serve Medicaid patients	14.2%	46.2%
Reducing the amount of childhood obesity	17.0%	43.4%
Reducing the amount of adult obesity	21.2%	40.1%
Increasing the number of substance use disorder providers and services	16.5%	40.1%
Increasing services for people with disabilities	18.8%	36.5%
Reducing the amount of alcohol misuse	15.1%	36.3%
Reducing the amount of smoking and vaping	12.7%	35.9%
Increasing the availability of prepared foods for seniors (Meals on Wheels, etc.)	18.4%	34.0%
Increasing the number of detox facilities	20.2%	33.3%
Expanding open hours at food pantries	17.5%	28.9%
Expanding food options for people with dietary restrictions or allergies at food pantries	15.6%	22.8%

Organizational Background[19]

The St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, known as CDP, is a private, not-for-profit agency that serves St. Lawrence County. It is one of forty-nine agencies in a network in New York State and one of a thousand Community Action Agencies that exist in the United States.

CDP was incorporated in 1965 and operates programs and services for low-income families to assist them toward self-sufficiency. We encourage self-reliance and responsible community participation among those we serve. Through our programs, families gain access to resources and services that not only help alleviate the financial burden brought on by underemployment and an ever-rising cost of living, but also seek to ultimately move them towards self-support.

Our programs aim to offer a hand up, not a hand out.

Mission

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program is committed to encourage and assist individuals and families to attain self-reliance, dignity and self-sufficiency through education, guidance and services.

Vision

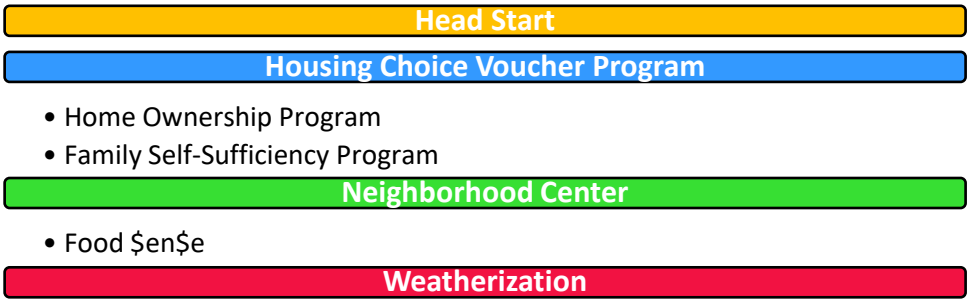
St. Lawrence County Community Development Program is a community organization that envisions equal opportunities and self-sufficiency for low-income individuals and families in St. Lawrence County

Values

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program aims to provide quality customer service to our current and potential program participants, support a work environment that fosters creativity and promotes the exploration of innovative ideas, and adhere to best practices in every aspect of the organization.

[19] St. Lawrence Community Development Program. About Us, 2022

CDP Programs



Head Start: is a federally funded comprehensive school readiness program for children between 3 and 5 years of age. Head Start has experienced, certified, teachers who provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for children, including children with special needs. Head Start children will acquire skills in math, science, literacy, language, social/emotional, physical health and development. Through play, children learn to express their thoughts, feelings, increase self-confidence, and have positive relationships with others.

Housing Choice Voucher Program: (HCVP) is a program which is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with the purpose of providing rental assistance for income-eligible families. The ultimate goal is to provide renters with safe, affordable housing.

- **Home Ownership Program:** is another program for HCVP participants. The focus of this program is to assist eligible families to purchase their first home. It allows a family to use their rental assistance voucher to make their mortgage payment.
- **Family Self-Sufficiency Program:** is for HCVP participants who want to achieve economic independence. This involves personalized case management and referring families to local services.

Neighborhood Centers: St. Lawrence County CDP operates six Neighborhood Centers throughout the county. The centers are each staffed by a director and provide services to low-income families with the assistance of community volunteers; the services may be directly offered at the centers, or families may be referred to other agencies and resources as needed. Centers have food pantries and provide emergency aid if required with food, fuel, utilities, or shelter. Thrift stores with donated clothing and household items are available at the Canton and Gouverneur Neighborhood Centers.

- **Food ene:** is a program provided by the Food Bank of Central New York is a monthly food-buying co-op with no qualifications, subscriptions or requirements to participate: anyone within the eleven counties served can utilize the service. Through the program, one has access to a monthly box of 12-15 staple grocery items at a discounted price

Weatherization: is designed for homeowners or renters to make their home more energy efficient. There are income guidelines for this program. This program provides a number of weatherization measures which include: window and door replacement, attic and sidewall insulation, health and safety measures including smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and furnace clean and tune

Methodology, Purpose, and Data Limitations

Methodology

The ultimate objective of this Community Needs Assessment (CNA) is to improve the quality of life for residents living in the CDP's service area. Specifically, the CNA provides a comprehensive picture of the health and well-being of residents in St. Lawrence County.

CDP worked with Crescendo Consulting Group (CCG) as a research and assessment partner to formalize and implement the CNA process. The process listed in the methodology section of the report outlines how the study was designed to evaluate the perspectives and opinions of area stakeholders and community members.

The CNA methodology includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods designed to evaluate perspectives and opinions of stakeholders and consumers – especially those from underserved populations. The methodology that was used helps prioritize the needs and establish a basis for continued community engagement, in addition to simply developing a broad, community-based list of needs.

The major sections of the methodology and report include the following:

- **Strategic Secondary Research:** This type of research includes a thorough analysis of previously published materials that provide insight regarding the community profile and health-related measures.
- **Qualitative Interviews:** This form of primary research includes stakeholder interviews (one-on-one interviews, and a focus group discussion) with CDP leadership, CDP clients, and community members across St. Lawrence County.
- **Community Survey:** Crescendo conducted an online survey with more 350 responses from community members. Survey results and analysis can be found in this report. The survey instrument is contained in the appendix.

Community Needs Assessment Purpose and Goals

A Community Needs Assessment (CNA) provides a framework using the available strengths and resources in the community to support and meet the needs of children, youth, and families.[20]

Community Action Agencies are required to complete a CNA every three years to receive Community Service Building Grant (CSBG) funding. Section 676(b)(11) of the CSBG Act states "…that the State will secure from each eligible entity in the State …a community action plan …that includes a community needs assessment for the community served, which may be coordinated with community needs assessment conducted for other programs…" A Community Needs Assessment must meet the CSBG Standards Category Three for Community Assessments.

[20] Child Welfare Information Gateway. Community Needs Assessment.

A Community Needs Assessment that meets the standards establishes a profile of a community, noting both needs, as well as the community resources. Community Action Agencies (CAAs) conduct these assessments of services related to a community that can be addressed and help identify the most impacted populations. CAAs should include both qualitative and quantitative data to assist in identifying needs in the community. The identification of needs at the family, community, and agency levels used in conjunction with a strategic planning process, can determine the outcomes that the agency plans to achieve for the next three years to implement and enhance services and activities for children, youth, and families to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities.

Data Limitation

In general, the secondary data utilizes the most current data sets available. The dramatic changes in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted some of the traditional projection tools, source data, and data collection methods. For example, the American Community Survey (ACS) which provides detailed population and housing information revised its messaging, altered their mailout strategy, and made sampling adjustments to accommodate the National Processing Center's staffing limitations.[21] Where relevant, the impacts or new data due to the COVID-19 pandemic are noted.

[21] U.S. Census Bureau. Measuring the Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses and People: Lessons from the Census Bureau's Experience, 2021.

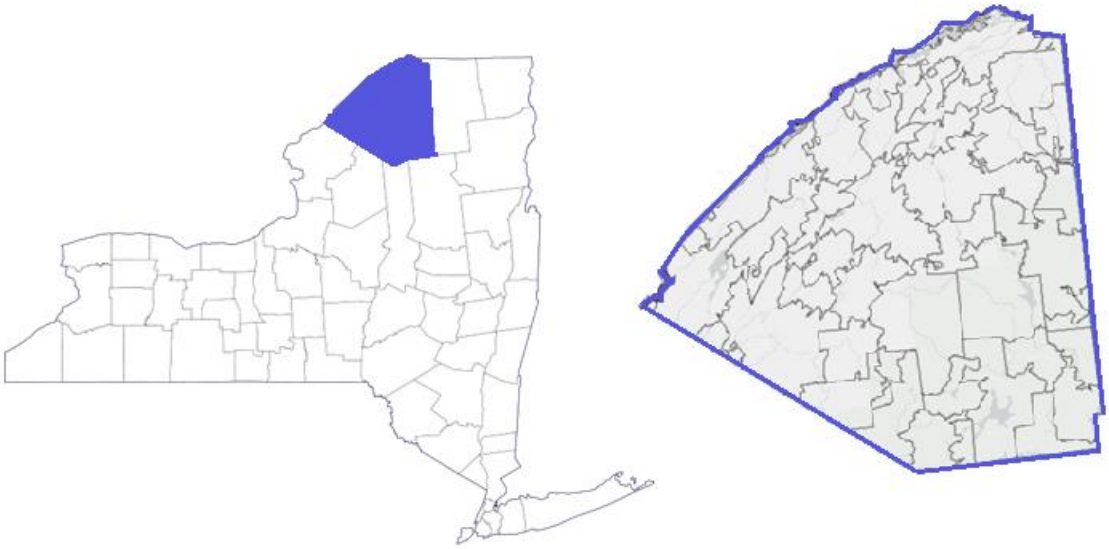
Overview of Community Served

Service Area Description and Map

Located along the Canadian border in between the St. Lawrence River, the Thousand Islands regions, and the Adirondack Mountains, St. Lawrence County makes up 2,685 square miles. Within the county, there are 32 towns, 13 villages, and one city. St. Lawrence County is the geographically largest county in the state of New York and the 5th largest county east of the Mississippi River.[22]

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program (CDP) serves low-income individuals and families throughout St. Lawrence County. CDP is one of 49 Community Action Agencies in the State of New York.[23]

Exhibit 1: St. Lawrence County Community Development Program Service Area



[22] St. Lawrence County Government. About St. Lawrence County, 2022.
[23] St. Lawrence County Community Development Program. About Us, 2022.

Strategic Secondary Research

Social Vulnerability Index

As part of county-specific summaries, there are data change tables utilizing The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) model. The SVI was developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a metric for analyzing population data to identify vulnerable populations.

The SVI may be used to rank overall population well-being and mobility relative to County and State averages. The measures are grouped into four major categories: Socioeconomic Status, Household Composition and Disability, Minority Status and Language, and Housing and Transportation. The SVI can also be used to determine the most vulnerable populations during disaster preparedness and public health emergencies, including pandemics.[24]

Socioeconomic Status	Below Poverty Unemployed Income No High School Diploma
Household Composition & Disability	Age 65+ Age Below 18 Disabled Single-Parent Households
Minority Status & Language	Ethnic/Racial Minority Limited or no English Proficiency
Household Type & Transportation	Multi-Unit Structures Mobile Homes No Vehicle Group Quarters

[24] Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index.

The following table highlights factors that impact the needs of those most vulnerable in St. Lawrence County Community Development Program's service area.

Exhibit 2: Social Vulnerability Index

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Total population	326,569,308	19,514,849	108,352
Below poverty	12.8%	13.6%	17.6%
Unemployment rate[25]	4.4%	5.3%	4.6%
Median household income	$64,994	$71,117	$52,071
No high school diploma	11.5%	12.8%	11.4%
Under 18 years	22.4%	20.9%	20.1%
Age 65 +	16.0%	16.5%	17.4%
Population living with a disability	12.7%	11.6%	16.2%
Children in single-parent households[26]	25.2%	10.0%	19.0%
Ethnic/racial minority	39.9%	44.8%	8.3%
Limited or no English proficiency	8.2%	13.1%	2.6%
Multi-unit housing structures	26.1%	50.5%	17.7%
Mobile homes	6.0%	2.3%	10.4%
No vehicle	8.5%	29.0%	9.7%
Group quarters[27]	2.5%	2.9%	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- St. Lawrence County has a higher percentage of people living below poverty than the state and national averages.
- St. Lawrence County has an unemployment rate of 4.6% which is lower than the New York rate.
- The median household income in St. Lawrence County is $52,071 which is approximately $13,000 to $19,000 less than the corresponding national and state figures.
- The percentage of St. Lawrence County residents aged 25 years and over without a high school diploma (11.4%) is similar to the national percentage and slightly lower than the state percentage.
- St. Lawrence County has greater proportions of residents who are 65 years and older (17.4%) and/or living with a disability (16.2%) than the state or nation.
- In St. Lawrence County, nearly two in five children (19.0%) live in single-parent households.
- St. Lawrence County has a low proportion of residents who identify as an ethnic/racial minority (8.3%) compared to state and national averages (44.8% and 39.9%, respectively).

[25] New York State Department of Labor. Local Area Unemployment Statistics, January 2022.
[26] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2016-2020
[27] A group quarters is a place where people live or stay, in a group living arrangement, that is owned or managed by an entity or organization providing housing and/or services for the residents

- Only 2.6% of residents in St. Lawrence County have limited or no English proficiency, compared to 13.1% of those in the state.
- Lower than state and national averages, 17.7% of housing structures are multi-units.
- Approximately 10.4% of housing units are mobile homes, compared to 2.3% of those across the state.
- More than one in ten of the population lives in group quarters (10.6%), compared to lower than three percent of the state and national populations.

Demographics

Slightly over 100,000 people live in St. Lawrence County. The county is trending older than state and national averages.

Exhibit 3: Population by Sex and Age

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Total population	326,569,308	19,514,849	108,352
Male	49.2%	48.5%	50.9%
Female	50.8%	51.5%	49.1%
Median age	38	39	39
Under 5	6.0%	5.8%	5.1%
5 to 9	6.1%	5.6%	5.4%
10 to 14	6.5%	5.9%	6.0%
15 to 19	6.5%	6.1%	9.0%
20 to 24	6.7%	6.6%	8.2%
25 to 34	13.9%	14.7%	11.8%
35 to 44	12.7%	12.4%	10.8%
45 to 54	12.7%	13.1%	12.3%
55 to 59	6.7%	6.9%	7.2%
60 to 64	6.2%	6.4%	6.7%
65 to 74	9.4%	9.3%	10.1%
75 to 84	4.7%	4.8%	5.2%
85 +	2.0%	2.4%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- The median age of residents in St. Lawrence County is 39 years old.
- St. Lawrence County has a higher percentage of the population age 65 or older (17.5%), slightly higher than state and national proportions (16.5% and 16.1%, respectively).

St. Lawrence County is primarily White and not Hispanic or Latino, with less racial or ethnic diversity than the state or nation.

Exhibit 4: Population by Race and Ethnicity

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Total population	326,569,308	19,514,849	108,352
White	70.4%	62.3%	92.6%
Black or African American	12.6%	15.4%	2.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.8%	0.4%	0.7%
Asian	5.6%	8.6%	1.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.0.%	0.0%
Some other race	5.1%	8.6%	0.9%
Two or more races	5.2%	4.7%	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino	18.2%	19.1%	2.4%
Not Hispanic or Latino	81.8%	80.9%	97.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Over 90% of residents in St. Lawrence County are White, compared to six in ten residents of New York State (62.3%) and seven in ten people nationwide (70.4%).
- Approximately 2.5% of residents are Black or African American, 1.0% are Asian, 2.2% identify as two or more races, and 2.4% are Hispanic or Latino. Proportions of each of these groups are greater in the state and nation.

Fewer than one in ten residents of St. Lawrence County speak languages other than English at home.

Exhibit 5: Languages Spoken

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
English only	78.5%	69.7%	92.6%
Language other than English	21.5%	30.3%	7.4%
Spanish	13.2%	14.7%	1.6%
Other Indo-European languages	3.7%	8.7%	4.6%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	3.5%	5.1%	0.8%
Other languages	1.1%	1.8%	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Approximately 92.6% of residents in the county only speak English, while 7.4% speak a language other than English. Statewide, three in ten residents (30.3%) speak a language other than English at home.
- The highest percentage of language spoken at home other than English is Indo-European languages (4.6%).

A greater proportion of St. Lawrence County residents are living with a disability than in either the state or nation.

Exhibit 6:Population Living with a Disability

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Population living with a disability	40,786,461	2,226,768	17,011
Male	12.5%	10.9%	16.5%
Female	12.8%	12.2%	15.9%
White	13.3%	12.0%	16.5%
Black or African American	14.0%	12.8%	8.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	16.9%	17.6%	17.2%
Asian	7.2%	6.9%	3.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	11.3%	11.8%	0.0%
Some other race	9.1%	11.0%	8.2%
Two or more races	10.4%	10.4%	17.4%
Hispanic or Latino	14.0%	12.1%	16.5%
Not Hispanic or Latino	9.2%	11.4%	12.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Over 17,000 people in St. Lawrence County are living with a disability.
- Approximately 16.5% of individuals who identify as White, 17.2% of individuals who identify as American Indian and Alaska Native, 17.4% of individuals who identify as two or more races, and 16.5% of individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino in St. Lawrence County are living with a disability.
- Although individuals who identify as American Indian and Alaska Native, or Hispanic or Latino, make up a relatively small number of the population (0.7% and 2.4%, respectively), more than one in seven of each group is living with a disability.

The percent of the population living with a disability increases with age in St. Lawrence County at levels that are higher than those in the state and nation.

Exhibit 7: Disability Population by Age

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Population living with a disability	40,786,461	2,226,768	17,011
Under 5 years	0.7%	0.6%	0.3%
5 to 17 years	5.7%	5.4%	6.1%
18 to 34 years	6.6%	5.5%	6.2%
35 to 64 years	12.5%	10.8%	19.3%
65 to 74 years	24.4%	21.4%	30.0%
75 years and over	48.1%	46.1%	50.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Higher than state and national averages, more than half (50.7%) of St. Lawrence County residents aged 75 years and over, and three in ten (30.0%) of those age 65 to 74 years, are living with a disability.

In the state of New York, the most common disability for children and youth is a learning disability. Approximately 154,705 youth and children aged 4 to 21 years have a learning disability.

Exhibit 8: Youth and Children with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Programs and Services

	New York					
	4-5 years	6-11 years	12-13 years	14-17 years	18-21 years	**Total**
Autism	5,583	25,760	7,601	11,954	3,931	**54,829**
Emotional disturbance	160	5,257	3,186	7,886	1,518	**18,007**
Learning disability	537	48,514	32,099	65,430	8,125	**154,705**
Intellectual disability	167	2,890	1,860	4,261	2,309	**11,487**
Deafness	42	433	186	298	102	**1,061**
Hearing impairment	142	1,245	479	826	89	**2,781**
Speech or language impairment	18,759	87,205	16,204	19,313	1,700	**143,181**
Visual impairment (includes blindness)	63	544	208	386	47	**1,248**
Orthopedic impairment	122	712	207	374	53	**1,468**
Other health impairment	3,004	34,823	15,527	28,441	2,098	**83,893**
Multiple disabilities	602	4,605	1,798	3,770	2,232	**13,007**
Deaf- blindness	0	6	1	6	5	**18**
Traumatic brain injury	15	235	115	267	101	**733**
Total	**29,196**	**212,229**	**79,471**	**143,212**	**22,310**	**486,418**

Source: New York State Education Department. Children with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Programs & Services, 2020

- Approximately 29,196 youth aged 4 to 5 years old have a disability in the state of New York.
- The majority of youth aged 4 to 5 have a speech or language impairment (18,759 youth).

- The second most common disability in youth aged 4 to 5 years old in the state of New York is autism (5,583 youth).

Populations living with a disability in St. Lawrence County are generally higher than the corresponding percentages of those living with hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, and independent living difficulties than state and national averages.

Exhibit 9: Disability Population by Type

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Population living with a disability	40,786,461	2,226,768	17,011
Hearing difficulty	3.6%	2.8%	5.5%
Vision difficulty	2.4%	2.1%	3.0%
Cognitive difficulty	5.1%	4.5%	5.5%
Ambulatory difficulty	6.8%	6.6%	8.7%
Self-care difficulty	2.6%	2.7%	2.6%
Independent living difficulty	5.8%	5.7%	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- The highest type of disability in St. Lawrence County residents is ambulatory difficulty (8.7%), followed by independent living difficulty (6.4%), cognitive and hearing difficulties (5.5%), vision difficulty (3.0%), and self-care difficulty (2.6%).
- The percentage of the St. Lawrence County population with hearing difficulty (5.5%) is greater than either the state (2.8%) or the nation (3.6%).

St. Lawrence County has a higher percentage of veterans than state and national averages.

Exhibit 10: Veteran Population

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Civilian population 18 and over	252,130,477	15,420,195	86,567
Civilian veterans	7.1%	4.4%	8.5%

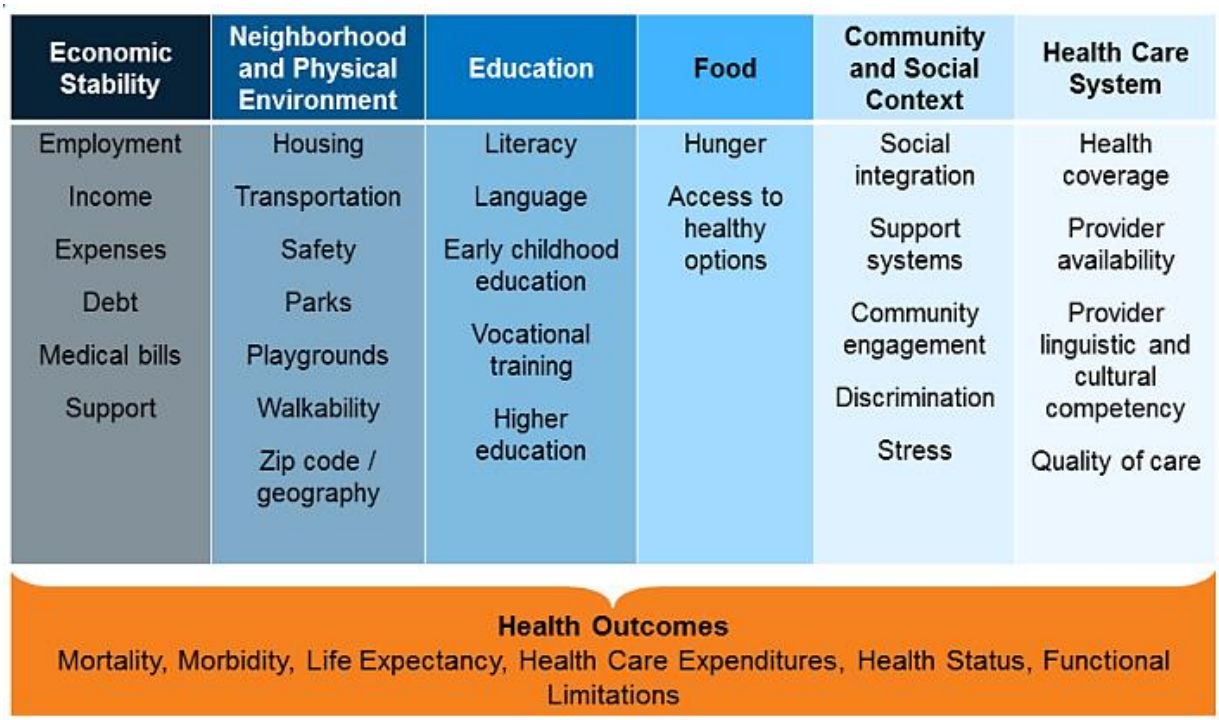
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Approximately 8.5% of residents are veterans in St. Lawrence County, nearly double the state percentage (4.4%).

Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and grow older. These factors affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

These conditions contribute to wide health disparities and inequities. For example, people who don't have access to grocery stores with healthy foods are less likely to have good nutrition. That raises their risk of health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity — and even lowers life expectancy relative to people who do have access to healthy foods.[28]



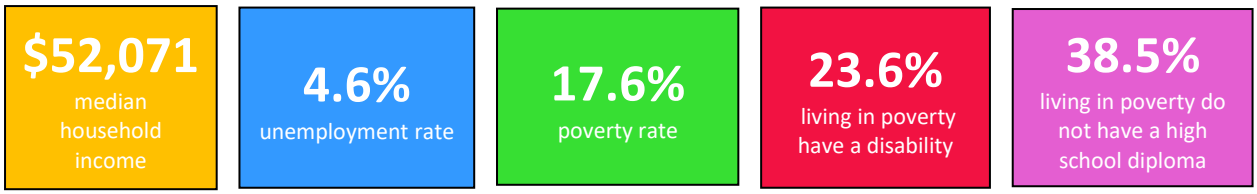
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

[28] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2030, Social Determinants of Health.

Economic Stability

Economic stability is a known social determinant of health as people living in poverty are less likely to have access to health care, healthy food, stable housing, and opportunities for physical activity. These disparities mean people living in poverty are more likely to die from preventable diseases.[29]

The economic profile of St. Lawrence County



Income & Employment

Income is an important piece that contributes to a person's socioeconomic status or the social standing or class of an individual or group often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation.[30]

The median household income in St. Lawrence County is $52,071 which is approximately $13,000 to $19,000 less than state and national averages.

Exhibit 11: Household Income by Age

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Median household income	$64,994	$71,117	$52,071
15 to 24 years	$34,805	$36,514	$22,255
25 to 44 years	$71,738	$81,159	$65,075
45 to 64 years	$78,550	$84,446	$59,891
65 years and older	$47,484	$48,539	$37,777

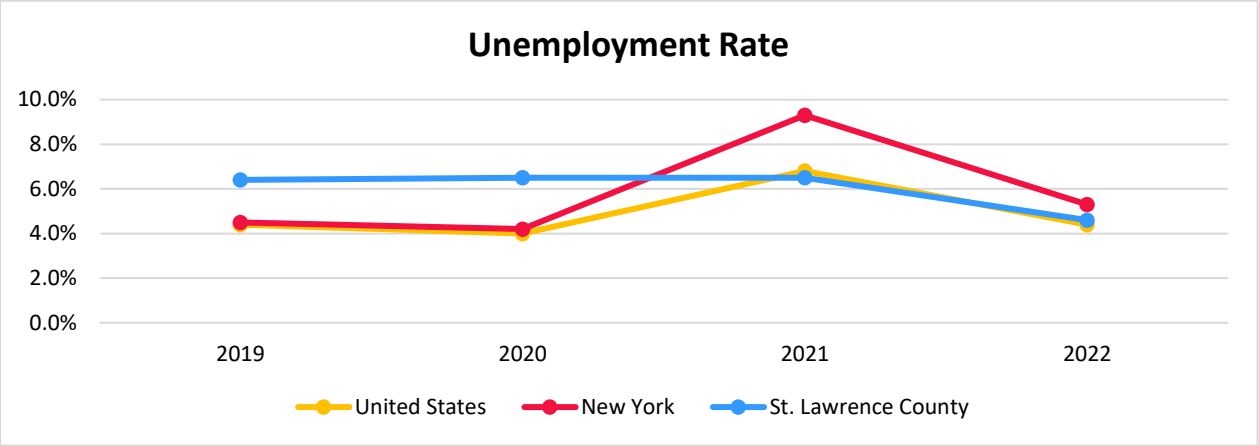
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Comparing state and county median household income, the largest gap in median household income exists among those age 45 to 64 years. In St. Lawrence County, the median income of those in that group is $65,075 while the median income of residents in New York is $81,159.

[29] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health, Economic Stability.
[30] American Psychological Association, Socioeconomic Status.

From 2019 to 2022 the unemployment rate in St. Lawrence County has decreased from 6.4% to 4.6%.

Exhibit 12: Trend of Unemployment Rates[31]



January	United States[32]	New York	St. Lawrence County
2022	4.4%	5.3%	4.6%
2021	6.8%	9.3%	6.5%
2020	4.0%	4.2%	6.5%
2019	4.4%	4.5%	6.4%

Source: New York State Department of Labor. Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2019-2022.

- In 2019 and 2020 the unemployment rate was higher in St. Lawrence County than the state of New York, however since 2021 the unemployment rate has been lower in the County.

The two largest service industries in St. Lawrence County are educational services, health care, and social assistance, and retail trade. St. Lawrence County's 10 largest employers are ALCOA, Clarkson University, St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES, Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, Canton-Potsdam Hospital, St. Lawrence County, United Helpers Organization, St. Lawrence University, St. Lawrence NYSARC, and SUNY Potsdam.[33]

Exhibit 13: Occupation by Industry

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	155,888,980	9,438,639	44,361
Agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting, mining	1.7%	0.6%	3.4%
Construction	6.7%	5.7%	5.9%
Manufacturing	10.0%	6.0%	7.4%
Wholesale trade	2.5%	2.2%	1.0%
Retail trade	11.0%	9.9%	12.1%
Transportation and warehousing, utilities	5.5%	5.5%	5.3%
Information	2.0%	2.8%	1.3%

[31] Rates are not seasonally adjusted.
[32] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate [UNRATENSA], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.
[33] St. Lawrence County Government. About St. Lawrence County, 2022.

Finance and insurance, real estate, rental/leasing	6.6%	8.1%	3.4%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	11.7%	12.2%	5.1%
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	23.3%	28.3%	34.6%
Arts, entertainment, recreation/accommodation, and food services	9.4%	9.0%	8.6%
Other services, except public administration	4.8%	4.8%	4.4%
Public administration	4.7%	4.8%	7.4%

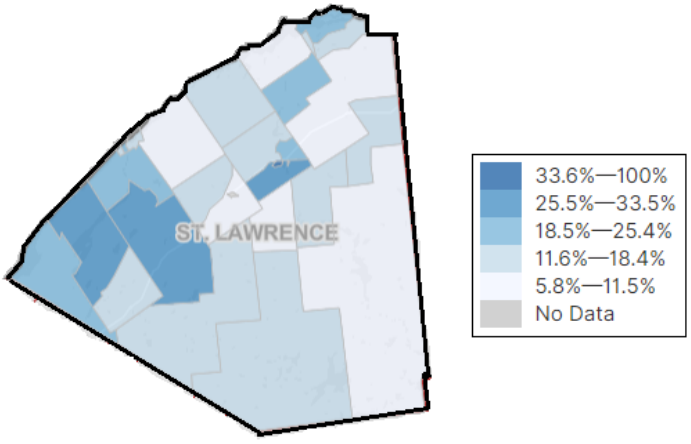
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Higher than the state and national averages, approximately 34.6% of employed residents of St. Lawrence County work in the educational services, health care, and social assistance industry.
- Slightly over 10% of the working residents in St. Lawrence County work in the retail trade industry (12.1%).
- Fewer St. Lawrence County residents work in professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (5.1%) than in either the state or nation (12.2% and 11.7%, respectively).

Economically Disadvantaged Populations

Socioeconomic status can be determined by a family's income level, education level, and occupational status. Despite the differences in definition between poverty and socioeconomic status, researchers agree that there is a clear and established relationship between poverty, socioeconomic status, and health outcomes, including increased risk for disease and premature death.[34]

Exhibit 14: Poverty Rate: Percentage of People Whose Income in the Past 12 Months is Below Poverty Level



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community

[34] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Poverty.

One in three children under age five (32.6%) are under the poverty rate in St. Lawrence County, compared to less than 20% of those in the state or nation.

Exhibit 15: Poverty Rate by Select Age Groups

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Poverty rate of total population	12.8%	13.6%	17.6%
Under five	19.1%	19.7%	32.6%
5 to 17	16.9%	18.3%	24.9%
18 to 34	15.4%	14.9%	22.9%
35 to 64 years	10.1%	11.0%	14.0%
65 and older	9.3%	11.5%	8.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Almost a quarter of individuals aged 5 to 34 years old are living in poverty in St. Lawrence County, compared to rates lower than 20% the state and lower than 17% in the nation.
- The poverty rate among those ages 65 and older in St. Lawrence County (8.9%) is lower than either the state or nation (11.5% and 9.3%, respectively).

Almost a quarter of people living with a disability live in poverty in St. Lawrence County.

Exhibit 16: Poverty Rate for People Living With a Disability

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
With any disability	20.1%	23.5%	23.6%
No disability	11.8%	12.3%	20.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Approximately 23.6% of residents who have a disability in St. Lawrence County live below the poverty line, and there is less of a gap based on disability status than there is in either the state or the nation.

Residents who do not have a high school diploma are more likely than those with higher levels of education to live in poverty in St. Lawrence County, and this gap is greater than in the state or nation.

Exhibit 17: Poverty Rate by Educational Attainment[35]

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Total population living below the poverty level	12.8%	13.6%	17.6%
Less than high school graduate	24.1%	27.4%	38.5%
High school graduate	13.4%	14.4%	15.2%
Some college, associate's degree	9.4%	10.1%	9.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4.3%	4.9%	5.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

[35] Population 25 years and older

- Approximately 38.5% of St. Lawrence County residents who do not have a high school diploma are living below the poverty level, compared to 27.4% of those in the state and 24.1% of those in the nation with the same level of educational attainment.

- For high school graduates and higher, differences in poverty rates across St. Lawrence County, New York, and the United States are smaller.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Living Wage Calculator estimates the cost of living in communities or regions based on typical expenses. This tool helps individuals, communities, and employers determine a local wage rate that allows residents to meet minimum standards of living.[36]

To maintain a minimum living wage, residents of St. Lawrence County must earn $13.20 an hour. Costs associated with food, childcare, medical, housing, transportation, and civic expenses vary based on number of adults and children.

Exhibit 18: Living Wage Calculator & Annual Expenses

St. Lawrence County	1 Adult, 0 Children	1 Adult, 1 Child	1 Adult, 2 Children	2 Working Adults, No Children	2 Working Adults, 1 Child	2 Adults, 2 Children
Food	$3,891	$5,734	$8,613	$7,133	$8,878	$11,446
Childcare	$0	$8,714	$17,427	$0	$8,714	$17,427
Medical	$2,741	$7,718	$7,505	$5,591	$7,505	$7,815
Housing	$8,050	$11,127	$11,127	$8,998	$11,127	$11,127
Transportation	$4,244	$7,531	$9,791	$7,531	$9,791	$11,565
Civic	$3,207	$5,149	$6,361	$5,149	$6,361	$8,307
Required annual income after taxes	$27,531	$53,963	$68,145	$42,393	$59,696	$78,280
Annual taxes	$6,848	$13,423	$17,335	$10,545	$14,850	$19,914
Required annual income before taxes	$34,380	$67,387	$85,480	$52,938	$74,546	$98,194
Living Wage	$16.53	$32.40	$41.10	$12.73	$17.92	$23.60
Poverty Wage	$6.19	$8.38	$10.56	$4.19	$5.28	$6.37
Minimum Wage	$13.20	$13.20	$13.20	$13.20	$13.20	$13.20

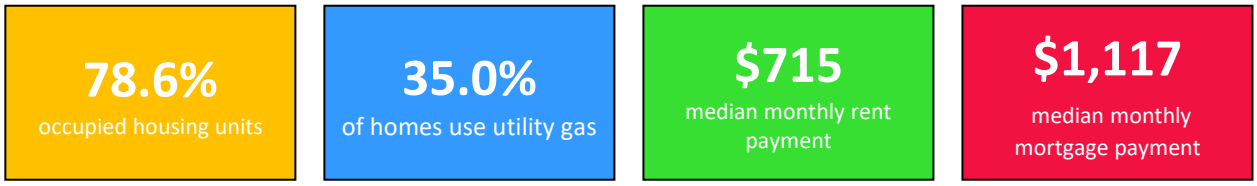
Source: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator, 2022

[36] Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator.

Neighborhood & Physical Environment

The neighborhoods people live in have a major impact on their health and well-being. Many people in the United States live in neighborhoods with high rates of violence, unsafe air or water, and other health and safety risks. Racial and ethnic minorities and people with low incomes are more likely to live in places with these risks. In addition, some people are exposed to things at work that can harm their health, like secondhand smoke or loud noises.[37]

The housing profile of St. Lawrence County



Housing

Housing quality refers to the physical condition of a person's home as well as the quality of the social and physical environment in which the home is located. Poor-quality housing is associated with various negative health outcomes, including chronic disease and injury and poor mental health.[38]

St. Lawrence County has a lower percentage of occupied housing units than the state or nation. Slightly more than one in four housing units are renter occupied, lower than proportions for the state or nation.

Exhibit 19: Housing Units & Occupancy

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Total housing units	138,432,751	8,362,971	53,328
Occupied housing units	88.4%	88.7%	78.6%
Vacant housing units	11.6%	11.3%	21.4%
Owner-occupied	64.4%	54.1%	72.5%
Renter-occupied	35.6%	45.9%	27.5%

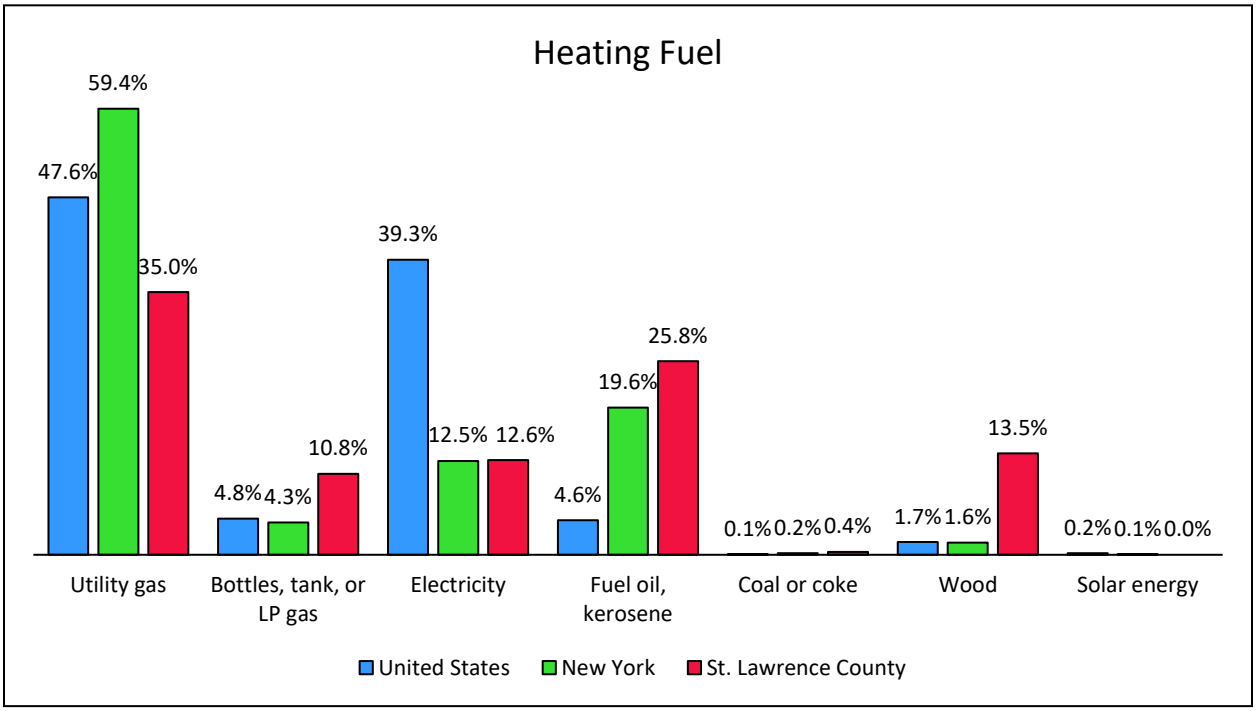
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- In St. Lawrence County, 78.6% of housing units are occupied, compared to more than 88% in the state and nation.
- Approximately 72.5% of housing units are owner-occupied, compared to only 54.1% in the state of New York and 64.4% in the United States.
- Only 27.5% of housing units in the county are occupied by renters, compared to nearly half of those in the state (45.9%).

[37] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health, Neighborhood & Built Environment.
[38] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health, Quality of Housing.

The majority of heating fuel used in St. Lawrence County homes is utility gas and fuel oil or kerosene, with more fuel oil or kerosene, as well as wood, used in St. Lawrence County than either the state or nation.

Exhibit 20: Sources of Heating Fuel



	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Occupied housing units	122,354,219	7,417,224	41,925
Utility gas	47.6%	59.4%	35.0%
Bottles, tank, or LP gas	4.8%	4.3%	10.8%
Electricity	39.3%	12.5%	12.6%
Fuel oil, kerosene	4.6%	19.6%	25.8%
Coal or coke	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Wood	1.7%	1.6%	13.5%
Solar energy	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- A higher percentage of St. Lawrence County homes use bottles, tank, or LP gas to heat their homes than the state and national averages.
- Over a quarter of homes in St. Lawrence County (25.8%) use fuel oil, kerosene, which is more than 5 times as much as the proportion of homes using this source nationally.
- Wood is the third highest type of heating source that is used in St. Lawrence County homes. Approximately 13.5% of homes are heated by wood in the county while 1.7% of homes in the United States and 1.6% of homes in the state of New York use wood to heat their homes.

Although very small percentages of homes in the county lack complete plumbing and/or kitchen facilities, the percentage of homes lacking these facilities is higher than state and national averages.

Exhibit 21: Selected Housing Indicators

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	0.4%	0.4%	1.6%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	0.8%	0.8%	1.3%
No telephone service available	1.6%	1.6%	2.7%
With a computer	91.9%	91.1%	87.6%
With a broadband internet subscription	85.2%	85.2%	81.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- A little over 1% of homes in St. Lawrence County lack complete plumbing and/or kitchen facilities.
- Approximately 87.6% of homes have a computer and 81.8% have a broadband internet subscription, each slightly lower than state and national figures.

The unit value of an owner-owned home in St. Lawrence County is less than a third that for such units in the state and half that for those across the nation.

Exhibit 22: Owner-Occupied Unit Value

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Median (dollars)	$229,800	$325,000	$97,000
Less than $50,000	6.6%	4.3%	13.9%
$50,000 to $99,999	11.0%	9.3%	38.0%
$100,000 to $149,999	12.3%	10.4%	18.0%
$150,000 to $199,999	13.6%	9.5%	12.4%
$200,000 to $299,999	20.0%	13.5%	9.8%
$300,000 to $499,999	20.5%	22.3%	5.6%
$500,000 to $999,999	12.3%	22.5%	1.6%
$1,000,000 or more	3.7%	8.2%	0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- The largest percentage of homes (38.0%) in St. Lawrence County has a value between $50,000 to $99,999; only one in ten such units are valued at this level in the state and nation.

Households are considered to be cost burdened if they spend more than 30% of their income on housing and severely cost burdened if they spend more than 50% of their income on housing. Cost-burdened households have little left over each month to spend on other necessities such as food, clothing, utilities, and health care.[39]

The median monthly rent of residents in St. Lawrence County is $715. More than one third of renters in St. Lawrence County (38.3%) are spending 35.0% or more of their income on rent while the majority of residents who have a mortgage (54.3%) are spending less than 20.0% of their income on a mortgage. The median monthly mortgage payment in St. Lawrence County is $1,315.

Exhibit 23:Monthly Owner Costs as a Percent of Renter & Household Income

Measures	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Occupied units paying rent	40,484,226	3,213,696	10,501
Less than 15.0%	13.4%	14.3%	16.5%
15.0 to 19.9 %	13.0%	11.9%	11.9%
20.0 to 24.9%	12.9%	11.6%	10.5%
25.0 to 29.9%	11.6%	10.8%	15.3%
30.0 to 34.9%	9.1%	9.1%	7.5%
35.0% or more	40.0%	42.4%	38.3%
Median rent	$1,096	$1,315	$715
Housing units with a mortgage	48,744,731	2,394,558	15,534
Less than 20.0%	46.7%	42.4%	54.3%
20.0 to 24.9%	15.6%	14.6%	12.7%
25.0 to 29.9%	10.3%	10.3%	9.5%
30.0 to 34.9%	6.8%	7.2%	4.4%
35.0% or more	20.6%	25.5%	19.2%
Median mortgage	$1,621	$2,174	$1,117

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Approximately 38.3% of renters are paying 35.0% or more of their income on rent while 54.3% of home owners are paying less than 20.0% of their income on mortgage payments.
- The median cost of rent in St. Lawrence County is $715, much lower than the median cost of rent in the state of New York ($1,315) and the United States ($1,096).
- The median mortgage payment in St Lawrence County is $1,117, much lower than the median mortgage payment in New York ($2,174) and slightly lower than the United States ($1,621).

[39] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Housing Instability.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses Fair Market Rent (FMR) to determine costs to rent moderately priced units for housing assistance programs.[40] The table below depicts the FMR for an efficiency rental, one bedroom, two bedroom, three bedroom, and four bedroom in St. Lawrence County.

Exhibit 24: Fair Market Rent

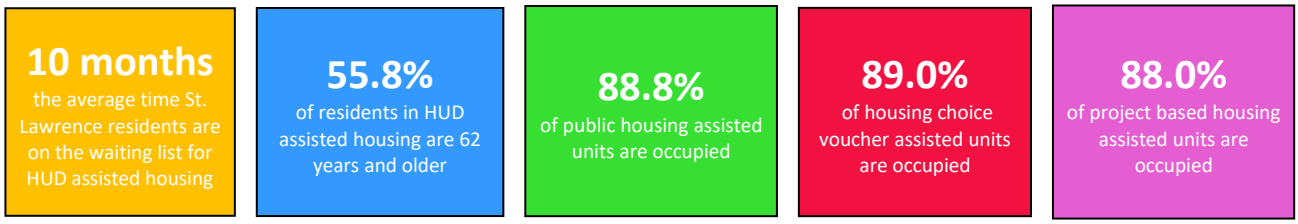
2022	St. Lawrence County
Efficiency rental	$594
One bedroom	$677
Two bedroom	$827
Three bedroom	$1,047
Four bedroom	$1,186

Source: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Program Parameters & Research Division: FY 2022 Fair Market Rent Documentation System, 2022

Housing Insecure Population

Housing instability encompasses a number of challenges, such as having trouble paying rent, overcrowding, moving frequently, staying with relatives, or spending the bulk of household income on housing. These experiences may negatively affect physical health and make it harder to access health care. This summary will discuss the cost of housing as well as the health effects of substandard housing and forced evictions. Certain populations may be more affected by housing instability, such as children who move frequently. [41]

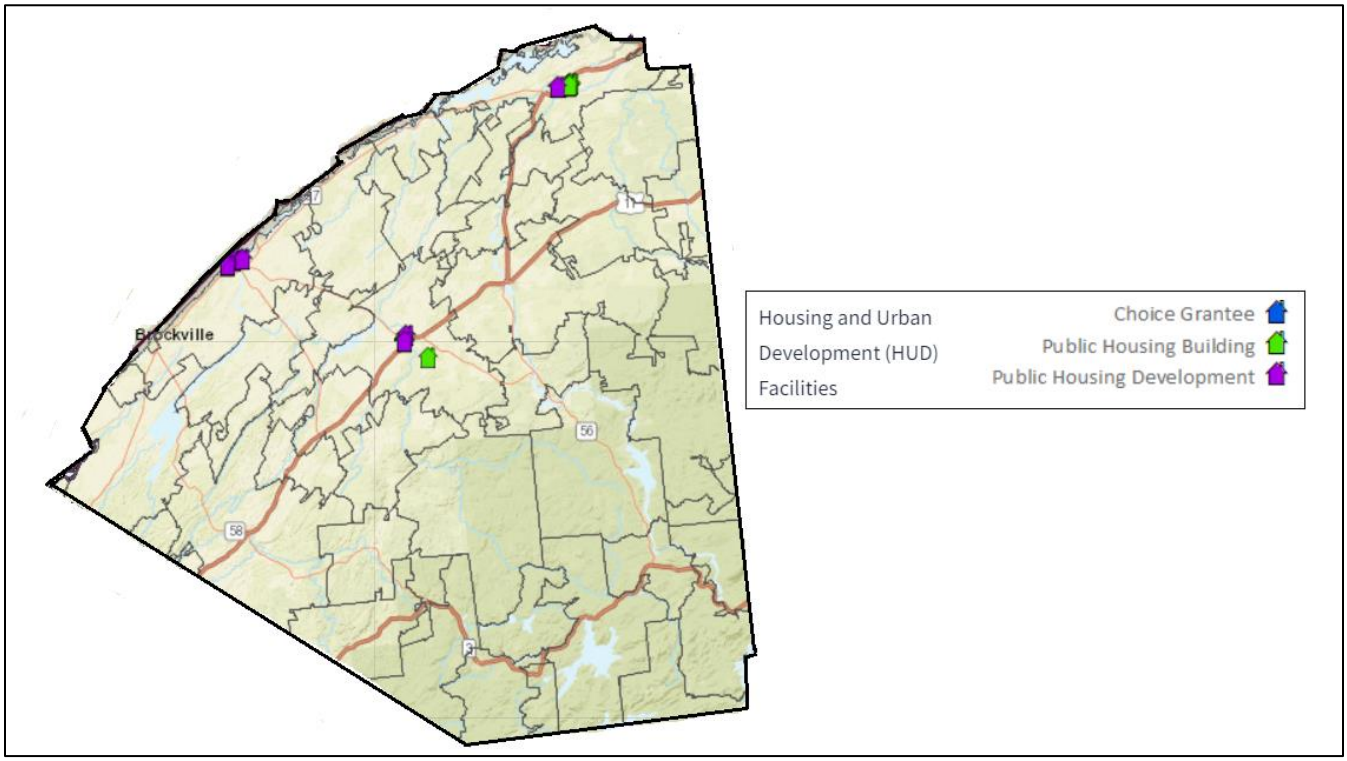
The housing assistance profile of St. Lawrence County



[40] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Fair Market Rents, 2022.

[41] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Housing Instability.

Exhibit 25: Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Facilities



Households in HUD assisted housing units in St. Lawrence County have a smaller household size and less waiting time to get into a unit than the state of New York and the United States.

Exhibit 26: HUD Assisted Housing Units

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Average household size in HUD assisted housing units	2	2	1
Average months on waiting list for HUD assisted housing units	27	37	10
Age of householder			
24 or younger	3.0%	2.0%	2.4%
25 to 50	39.0%	32.0%	18.4%
51 to 61	19.0%	22.0%	21.7%
62 and older	39.0%	45.0%	55.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Assisted Housing: National and Local, Picture of Subsidized Households, 2021

- The average household size of HUD assisted housing units in St. Lawrence County is one, while the average household size is two in New York and the United States.
- The wait list to get into HUD assisted housing in St. Lawrence County is approximately 10 months while 27 months in the United States and 37 months in New York.
- Over half of residents in HUD assisted housing in the county (55.8%) are 62 years and older.

Compared to state and national HUD assisted housing units, St. Lawrence County has the lowest percentage occupancy of units.

Exhibit 27: Public Housing Assisted Housing Units

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Public housing assisted housing units	931,624	187,699	638
People in public housing assisted housing units	1,731,689	348,671	808
% occupancy of public housing assisted units	93.0%	97.0%	88.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Assisted Housing: National and Local, Picture of Subsidized Households, 2021

- In St. Lawrence County there are 638 public housing assisted units and 88.8% of them are occupied.

Compared to state and national HUD assisted housing units, St. Lawrence County has the highest occupancy of housing choice voucher assisted units.

Exhibit 28: Housing Choice Vouchers Assisted Housing Units

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Housing choice vouchers assisted housing units	2,669,691	271,680	731
People in housing choice vouchers assisted housing units	5,192,254	489,047	949
% occupancy of housing choice vouchers assisted housing units	85.0%	86.0%	89.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Assisted Housing: National and Local, Picture of Subsidized Households, 2021

- In St. Lawrence County there are 731 housing choice vouchers assisted housing units and 89.0% of them are occupied.

Lower than state and national occupancies, St. Lawrence County has a lower occupancy percentage for project based housing assisted housing units.

Exhibit 29: Project Based Housing Assisted Housing Units

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Project based housing assisted housing units	1,496,727	131,687	400
People in project based housing assisted housing units	2,246,148	180,421	473
% occupancy of project based housing assisted housing units	90.3%	93.0%	88.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Assisted Housing: National and Local, Picture of Subsidized Households, 2021

- St. Lawrence County has 400 project-based housing assisted units and 88.0% of them are occupied.

Transportation

Transportation systems help ensure that people can reach everyday destinations, such as jobs, schools, healthy food outlets, and health care facilities, safely and reliably. Enhanced built environment interventions including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and public transit infrastructure can make physical activity easier, safer, and more accessible.[42]

The vast majority of residents in St. Lawrence County have a vehicle.

Exhibit 30: Transportation Indicators

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
No Vehicle	8.5%	29.0%	9.7%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	26.9	33.5	20.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- Higher than the national average but lower than the state average, 9.7% of residents in St. Lawrence County have no vehicle. Approximately 29.0% of residents in the state of New York do not have a vehicle but this number highly reflects residents in New York City and those who take public transportation such as the city bus and subway.
- The mean travel time that working people in St. Lawrence have to work is roughly 20 minutes.

Physical Environmental

Polluted air, contaminated water, and extreme heat are three environmental conditions that can negatively impact population health. Geographic location, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status affect an individual's environmental exposures and subsequent risk of negative health outcomes. Reducing harmful environmental exposures can improve population health and may contribute to decreases in health disparities.[43] Adults with recommended physical activity indicate the proportion who meet aerobic physical activity recommendations of at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes/week of vigorous intensity, or an equivalent combination.

Compared to the state of New York, physical inactivity is slightly higher in St. Lawrence County. Access to exercise opportunities is considerably lower in St. Lawrence County than in the state of New York.

Exhibit 31:Recommended Physical Activity

	New York	St. Lawrence County
Physical inactivity	27.0%	30.0%
Access to exercise opportunities	88.0%	42.0%

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2019-2022

[42] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Office of Health Policy. Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Examples of Successful Evidence-Based Strategies and Current Federal Efforts, 2022.
[43] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Environmental Conditions.

- In St. Lawrence County, 30.0% of the population is not meeting the weekly recommended aerobic physical activity.
- In St. Lawrence County only 42.0% of residents have access to exercise opportunities while the average in the state of New York is 88.0% have exercise opportunity access.

Education

Children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and children who routinely experience forms of social discrimination are more likely to struggle with math and reading. They're also less likely to graduate from high school or go to college. This means they're less likely to get safe, high-paying jobs and more likely to have health problems like heart disease, diabetes, and depression. The stress of living in poverty can also affect children's brain development, making it harder for them to do well in school. Interventions to help children and adolescents do well in school and help families pay for college can have long-term health benefits. People with higher levels of education are more likely to be healthier and live longer.[44]

A high school diploma is a standard requirement for most jobs and higher education opportunities. Dropping out of high school is linked to a variety of negative health impacts, including limited employment prospects, low wages, and poverty.[45]

Graduation from college has a positive impact on employment options. Higher education helps people secure better-paying jobs with fewer safety hazards. Income from these employment opportunities may improve health by increasing people's ability to accrue material resources, such as higher-quality housing, as well as psychosocial resources, such as higher social status. While there are several benefits associated with college graduation, various factors hinder college enrollment and completion.[46]

The vast majority of residents 25 years and older at the national, state, and county levels have a high school diploma or higher level of education.

Exhibit 32: Educational Achievement

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Population 25 years and over	222,836,834	13,649,157	71,681
Less than 9th grade	4.9%	4.9%	6.0%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	6.6%	6.6%	6.8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	26.7%	26.7%	25.5%
Some college, no degree	20.3%	20.3%	15.5%
Associate degree	8.6%	8.6%	8.9%
Bachelor's degree	20.2%	20.2%	20.9%
Graduate or professional degree	12.7%	12.7%	16.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

- Approximately 25.5% of residents in St. Lawrence County have a high school diploma, but no further education.
- Regarding higher education, 8.9% of residents have an associate degree, 20.9% have a bachelor's degree, and 16.5% have a graduate or professional degree.

[44] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health, Education Access & Quality.
[45] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, High School Graduation.
[46] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Enrollment in Higher Education.

New York State Education Department has levels of expectations of student learning standards. Students are expected to score at or above level 3 or higher proficiency for English Language Arts (ELA). If a student's performance is level three, the learning standards are met, meaning the student can demonstrate and understand the content expected in the subject and grade level.[47]

Compared to the state of New York, St. Lawrence County has a lower percentage of 3rd, 4th, and 8th grade students scoring at or above level 3 or higher for ELA and math.

Exhibit 33: Academic Indicators

	New York	St. Lawrence County
ELA performance 3rd grade[48]	52.3%	40.2%
ELA performance 4th grade[48]	47.7%	37.2%
Math performance 8th grade	33.2%	30.2%
Four-Year Cohort High School Graduation Rate[49]	84.8%	85.7%
Four-Year Cohort High School Graduation Dropout Rate[49]	5.1%	6.0%

Source: New York State Council on Children and Families: Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. KWIC County Report, 2020

- Less than half of 3rd graders and 4th graders are at or above level 3 proficiency in English Language Arts (40.2% of 3rd graders, 37.2% of 4th graders).
- Approximately 30.2% of 8th graders are at or above a level 3 proficiency in math.
- The graduation rate for students in high school is 85.7% in St. Lawrence County while the dropout rate is 6.0%.

Childcare

Early childhood, particularly the first five years of life, impacts long–term social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Healthy development in early childhood helps prepare children for the educational experiences of kindergarten and beyond. Early childhood development and education opportunities are affected by various environmental and social factors, including early life stress, socioeconomic status, relationships with parents and caregivers, and access to early education programs.[50]

Childcare cost-burdened households indicate childcare costs for a household with two children as a percent of median household income.

The number of childcare centers per 1,000 population under age five in St. Lawrence County is half the corresponding figure for New York State.

[47] Council on Children & Families: Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. KWIC Indicator Narrative, 2022
[48] The number reported is the number of students scoring at or above proficiency (level 3 or higher); NYS Education Department; Office of Information; Reporting and Technology Services, 2018-2019
[49] NYS Education Department; Office of Information; Reporting and Technology Services, 2019-2020
[50] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Early Childhood Development & Education.

Exhibit 34: Childcare Centers

	New York	St. Lawrence County
Number of childcare centers per 1,000 population under five	6	3
Percent of household income required for childcare expenses	30.0%	33.0%

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2021-2022

- Per 1,000 children under five, there are 3 childcare centers in St. Lawrence County.
- Households spend approximately 33.0% of their income on childcare expenses.

Compared to New York state, St. Lawrence County has higher rates of children in the foster care system and admissions into foster care.

Exhibit 35: Foster Care

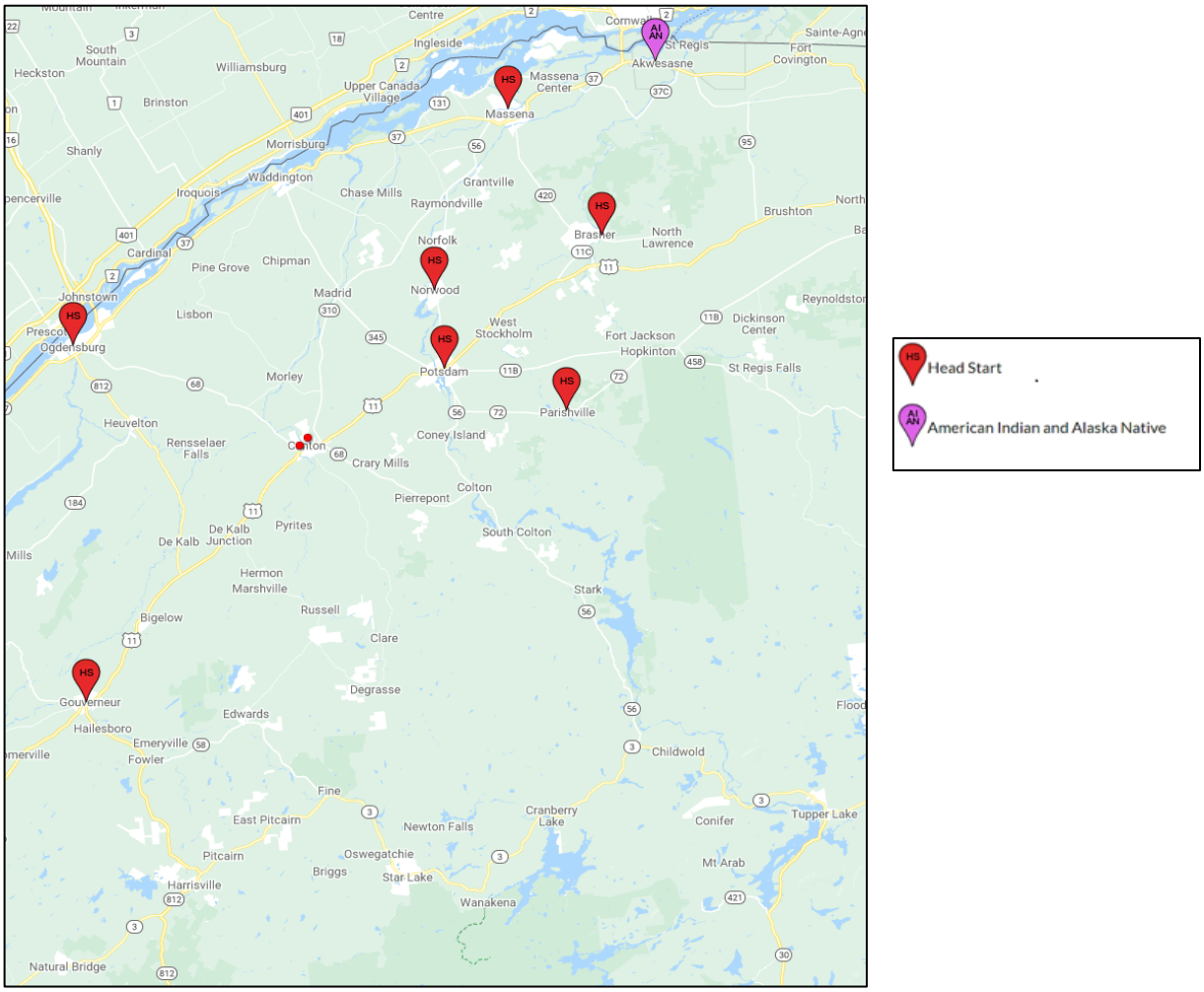
	New York	St. Lawrence County
Foster care children in care (per 1,000)	3.0	9.4
Foster care admissions (per 1,000)	1.3	4.3
Foster care discharges	29.6%	25.6%

Source: NYS Education Department; Office of Information; Reporting and Technology Services, 2020

- In St. Lawrence County every 9.4 children out of 1,000 are in foster care, higher than the state average of 3 children out of 1,000.
- In 2020, St. Lawrence County had a rate of 4.3 children per 1,000 who were newly admitted into foster care, while in the state of New York the rate was 1.3 per 1,000 children.
- Approximately 25.6% of children in foster care were discharged from the foster care system and moved into a permanent home in 2020.

There are 10 Head Start locations throughout St. Lawrence County. All but one location is run by St. Lawrence County Community Development Program. The Head Start centers run by CDP are Parishville Head Start, Canton Head Start, Potsdam Head Start, Home Based, Norwood Head Start, Brasher Falls Head Start, Gouverneur Head Start, Ogdensburg Head Start, and Massena Head Start. The Head Start center that is not run by CDP is called Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Head Start and it is run by the American Indian and Alaska Native Center.

Exhibit 36: Head Start Locations



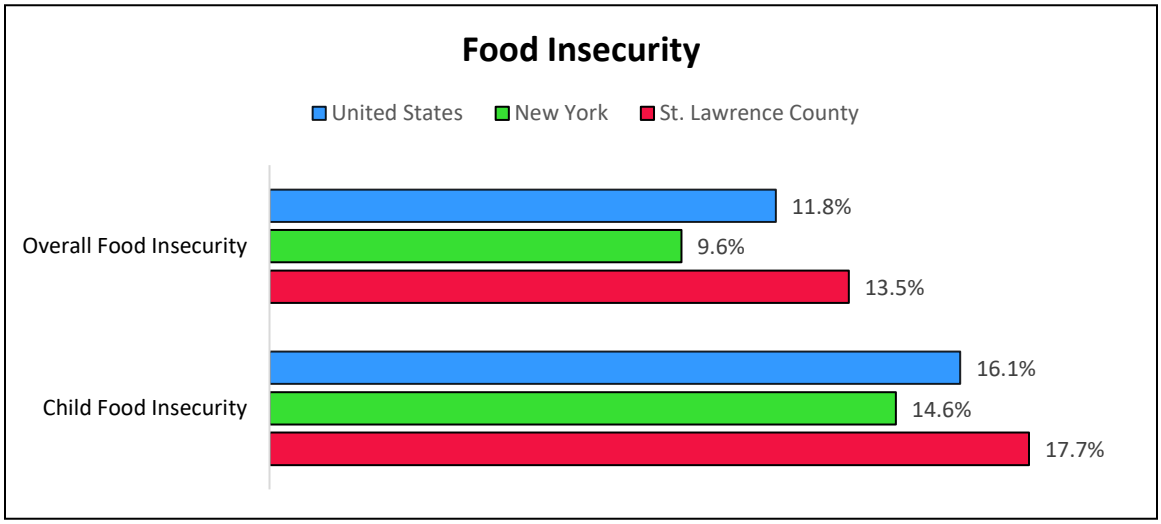
Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, Head Start Center Locator, 2022

Food

Food insecurity is defined as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of a lack of money and other resources. Food insecurity may be long-term or temporary. It may be influenced by several factors including income, employment, race/ethnicity, and disability. The risk of food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available. Additionally, people living in some urban areas, rural areas, and low-income neighborhoods may have limited access to full-service supermarkets or grocery stores.[51]

Compared to state and national averages, St. Lawrence County has higher percentages of overall food insecurity and child food insecurity. The average meal cost that food-insecure individuals report spending on food ranges from $3.25 to $3.52 in the United States, New York, and St. Lawrence County.

Exhibit 37:Food Insecurity



	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Overall food insecurity	11.8%	9.6%	13.5%
Above SNAP, Other Nutrition Programs threshold of 200% poverty	29.0%	23.0%	30.0%
Below SNAP, Other Nutrition Programs threshold of 200% poverty	52.0%	77.0%	70.0%
Child food insecurity	16.1%	14.6%	17.7%
Likely ineligible for federal nutrition programs (incomes above 185% of poverty)	21.0%	15.0%	14.0%
Income eligible for federal nutrition programs (incomes at or below 185% poverty)	79.0%	85.0%	86.0%
Average meal cost	$3.25	$3.52	$3.26

Source: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2021: An Analysis of County & Congressional District Food Insecurity & County Food Cost in the United States, 2020

[51] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Food Insecurity.

- In St. Lawrence County 13.5% of the population has food insecurity. Approximately 30.0% of the food insecure population is above the 200% poverty threshold and does not qualify for SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs, comparable to the national level.
- There are 17.5% of children in St. Lawrence County who are food insecure. There are 14.0% of children who are food insecure in the county but are likely ineligible for federal nutrition programs because they live in households whose income is above 185% poverty, which is a lower percentage than the national level.

In St. Lawrence County some households receive SNAP benefits.

Exhibit 38: SNAP Assistance Program Enrollment

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Total households	122,354,219	7,417,224	41,925
Households receiving SNAP	13,892,407	1,057,725	6,554
SNAP authorized stores[52]	229,142	15,521	113

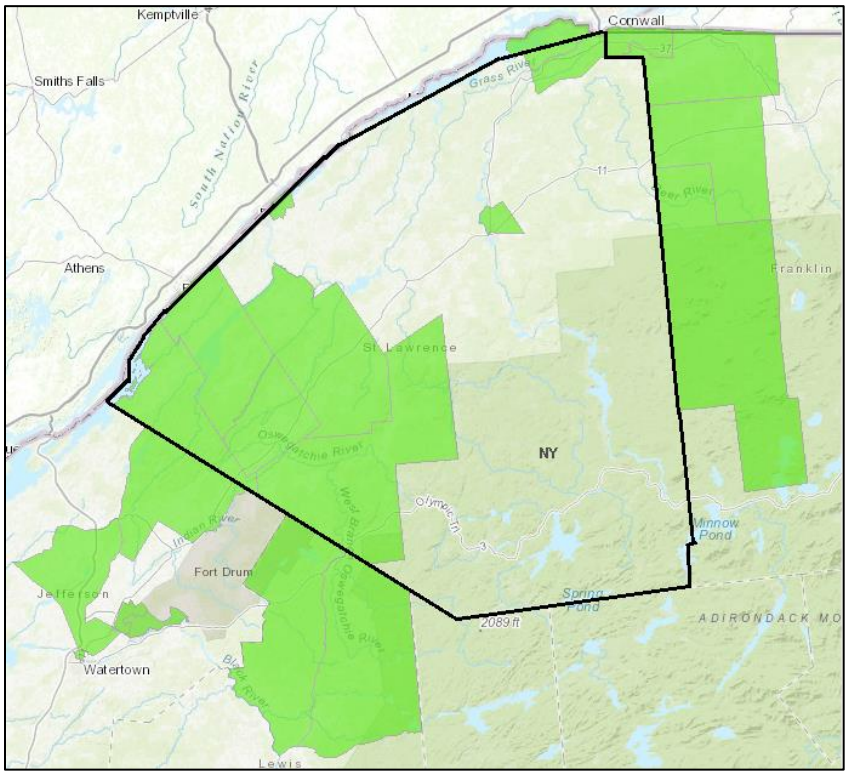
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- In St. Lawrence County 6,554 (15.6%) households are receiving SNAP, with 113 stores that accept SNAP. Nationally, 11.4% of households receive SNAP benefits.

[52] U.S. Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service. Food Environment Atlas, 2017

Throughout the county, there are areas where residents in rural areas are more than 10 miles away from a grocery store and in urban areas are more than one mile away from the nearest grocery store.

Exhibit 39: Food Access Research Atlas



Food Insecure Communities

The Food Access Research Atlas indicates low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is more than one mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.

The green shaded areas within the map indicate areas of potential food deserts within St. Lawrence County.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service, Food Access Research Atlas, 2019.

Community & Social Context

People's relationships and interactions with family, friends, co-workers, and community members can have a major impact on their health and well-being. Many people face challenges and dangers they cannot control — like unsafe neighborhoods, discrimination, or trouble affording the things they need. This can have a negative impact on health and safety throughout life.[53]

Crime & Violence

Violence can lead to premature death or cause non-fatal injuries. People who survive violent crimes endure physical pain and suffering and may also experience mental distress and reduced quality of life. Repeated exposure to crime and violence may be linked to an increase in negative health outcomes. Children and adolescents exposed to violence are at risk for poor long-term behavioral and mental health outcomes regardless of whether they are victims, direct witnesses, or hear about the crime.[54]

St. Lawrence County has higher rates of jail and prison incarceration than the average for the state of New York, but lower rates than the nation.

Exhibit 40:Prison Incarceration Rate

Per 100,000	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Jail incarceration	252	102	185
Prison incarceration	622	313	449

Source: Vera Institute of Justice. Incarceration Trends Q2 Total, 2020

- In 2020, the jail incarceration rate for people between the age of 15 and 64 in St. Lawrence County was 185 per 100,000 people- lower than the U.S. rate but higher than the New York state rate (252 per 100,000, and 102 per 100,000 people, respectively).
- The prison incarceration rate for people between the age of 15 and 64 in St. Lawrence County was 449 per 100,000 people– lower than the U.S. rate of 622 per 100,000, but higher than the New York state rate of 313 per 100,000.

[53] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health, Social & Community Context.
[54] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Crime & Violence.

In 2020 the top three offenses in St. Lawrence County were offenses other than traffic, simple assault, and drug abuse violations.

Exhibit 41: Annual Arrests by Offenses

	St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Office
All other offenses (except traffic)	65
Simple assault	38
Drug abuse violations	28
Driving under the influence	17
Larceny-theft	12
Vandalism	12
Aggravated assault	4
Fraud	4
Weapons: carrying possessing, etc.	3
Stolen property: buying, receiving, possessing	2
Arson	1
Burglary	1
Forgery and counterfeiting	1

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime Data Explorer, 2020

Young adults aged 18 to 24 in St. Lawrence County have higher rates of being arrested for driving while intoxicated and drug/use/possession/sale than young adults in the state of New York.

Exhibit 42: Young Adults Aged 18 to 24 Arrests

Rate per 10,000	New York	St. Lawrence County
Arrests for driving while intoxicated	19.8	28.2
Arrests for drug use/possession/sale	33.9	47.2
Arrests for property crimes	54.8	33.8
Arrests for violent crimes	42.7	15.5

Source: New York State Council on Children and Families: Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. KWIC County Report, 2020

The child abuse rate is the number of substantiated child victims per 1,000 children in New York by state fiscal year.

In 2020, a higher rate of children aged 0-17 were victims of abuse/maltreatment in St. Lawrence County than in the state of New York.

Exhibit 43: Child Abuse/Maltreatment

Rate per 1,000 children 0-17 years	New York	St. Lawrence County
Reports of abuse/maltreatment	14.6	21.7

Source: New York State Council on Children and Families: Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse. KWIC County Report, 2020

- In St. Lawrence County 21.7 children per 1,000 children were victims of abuse/maltreatment.

Civic Engagement

Civic participation encompasses a wide range of formal and informal activities including voting, volunteering, participating in group activities, and community gardening. Some are individual activities that benefit society (e.g., voting) or group activities that benefit either the group members (e.g., recreational soccer teams) or society (e.g., volunteer organizations).[55]

In the state of New York, the greatest number of registered votes are Democrats, outnumbering Republicans more than two to one. In St. Lawrence County the number of registered Democrats and Republicans is similar.

Exhibit 44: Voter Registration

February 2021	New York			St. Lawrence County		
	Total	Active	Inactive	Total	Active	Inactive
Democrat	6,748,526	6,216,759	531,767	22,222	21,244	978
Republican	2,914,704	2,745,827	168,877	22,339	21,494	845
Conservative	162,330	154,711	7,619	1,034	995	39
Working Class	48,207	44,358	3,849	262	253	9
Other	504,988	463,961	41,027	3,899	3,733	166
Blank	3,015,356	2,795,205	220,151	14,120	13,519	601

Source: Vote NYC. Voter Enrollment Totals, 2021

- In St. Lawrence County there are 117 more registered Republicans than Democrats.

[55] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2020. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Civic Participation.

Health Care System

Access

Inadequate health insurance coverage is one of the largest barriers to health care access, and the unequal distribution of coverage contributes to disparities in health. Out-of-pocket medical care costs may lead individuals to delay or forgo needed care (such as doctor visits, dental care, and medications), and medical debt is common among both insured and uninsured individuals. Additionally, primary care providers offer a usual source of care, early detection, and treatment of disease, chronic disease management, and preventive care. Patients with a usual source of care are more likely to receive recommended preventive services such as flu shots, blood pressure screenings, and cancer screenings.[56]

The majority of the population in St. Lawrence County has health insurance, and four in five have seen a doctor within the past year.

Exhibit 45: Health Care Access

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Insured, has health insurance coverage	91.3%	94.6%	94.2%
Uninsured, has no health coverage	8.7%	5.4%	5.8%
Doctor checkup in the past year among adults	76.6%	79.9%	80.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

- In St. Lawrence County, 94.2% of residents have health insurance coverage and 80.1% of residents have a visited a doctor in the past year, both of which surpass the same measures at the national level.

Residents in St. Lawrence County report higher numbers of poor physical health days and poor mental health days, and a greater proportion report frequent mental health distress, than those in New York State.

Exhibit 46: Quality of Life

	New York	St. Lawrence County
Poor physical health days[57]	3.6	4.3
Poor mental health days[58]	3.9	5.1
Frequent mental health distress[59]	12.0%	16.0%

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2019

[56] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Healthy People 2030. Social Determinants of Health Literature Summaries, Access to Health Services.

[57] Average number of physically unhealthy days reported in the past 30 days, based on responses to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System question: "Now thinking about your physical health, which includes physical illness and injury, for how many days during the past 30 days was your physical health not good?" The value reported is the average number of days a county's adult respondents report that their physical health was not good.

[58] Average number of mentally unhealthy days reported in the past 30 days.

[59] Percentage of adults who reported 14 or more days in response to the question, "Now, thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?"

- Residents in St. Lawrence County have had an average of four poor physical health days in the past 30 days.
- Higher than the state average, residents in St. Lawrence County had an average of five poor mental health days in the past 30 days.
- Approximately 16.0% of residents in St. Lawrence County have experienced 14 or more days of frequent mental distress in the last 30 days, higher than the proportion in New York State (12.0%).

The national shortage of healthcare providers is evident in the state of New York and in St. Lawrence County. St. Lawrence County has higher provider to patient ratios than the state.

Exhibit 47: Provider to Patient Ratios

	New York	St. Lawrence County
Dentists[60]	1,190:1	2,550:1
Mental health providers[61]	310:1	460:1
Primary care physicians[62]	1,180:1	1,860:1

Source: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2019-2021

- There is one dentist per 2,550 residents in St. Lawrence County.
- In St. Lawrence County there is one mental health provider for 410 residents.
- There is one primary care physician per 1,860 St. Lawrence County residents.

Substance Use

Compared to state and national figures, a greater percentage of residents of St. Lawrence County binge drink and regularly smoke cigarettes.

Exhibit 48: Adult Alcohol and Smoking

	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Binge drinking[63]	16.7%	18.6%	19.7%
Regular smoking[64]	15.3%	15.9%	19.8%

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. BRFFS Places, 2019.

- Approximately one in five adults in St. Lawrence County (19.7%) report binge drinking in the past 30 days, and a similar percentage (19.8%) of adults in the county report regular smoking.

[60] 2020
[61] 2021
[62] 2019
[63] Adults aged 18 and over who report having five or more drinks (men) or four or more drinks (women) on an occasion in the past 30 days
[64] Adults aged 18 and over who report having smoking 100 or more cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smoke every day or some days

A greater percentage of the population in St. Lawrence County is being prescribed opioids than in New York State.

Exhibit 49: Opioids

	New York	St. Lawrence County
Prescription pain medication misuse[65]	3.9%	3.4%
Opioid naive[66]	16.6%	17.8%
Overlapping opioid analgesic prescriptions[67]	16.3%	19.2%
At least one buprenorphine prescription[68]	419.1	1,516.8

Source: New York State Department of Health. New York State Opioid Data Dashboard- County Level: St. Lawrence County, 2020.

- Approximately 3.4% of adults 18 and over in St. Lawrence County have reported prescription pain medication misuse.
- There were 17.8% of patients who received an opioid but were opioid naïve for more than seven days.
- In St. Lawrence County 19.2% of patients received overlapping opioid prescriptions, compared to 16.3% in New York.
- More than triple the state rate, 1,516.8 patients per 100,000 population received a buprenorphine prescription to help with opioid use.

Health Outcomes

Leading causes of death are an indicator of a population's overall health status or quality of life.

Cancer and heart disease are the leading causes of death in residents in St. Lawrence County.

Exhibit 50: Death Rate

Per 100,000	United States	New York	St. Lawrence County
Accidents/unintentional injuries	58	42	35
Cancer (malignant neoplasms)	144	129	169
Chronic lower respiratory disease	36	26	39
Diabetes	25	21	45
Heart disease	168	184	173
Influenza/pneumonia	13	18	15
Kidney disease (nephritis, nephrosis)	13	10	18
COVID-19	85	139	32

Source: CDC Wonder. Cause of Death, 2020

- Deaths due to cancer in St. Lawrence County (169 per 100,000 residents) are higher than state and national averages.

[65] Percentage of adults who self-reported prescription pain medication misuse
[66] Percentage of incidents when patients were opioid naïve and received an opioid prescription of more than seven days
[67] *Percentage* of patients with two or more calendar days of overlapping opioid analgesic prescriptions
[68] Patients who received at least one buprenorphine prescription for opioid use per 100,000 population

- The diabetes death rate is almost twice as high in St. Lawrence County as in New York and the United States.
- Slightly lower than the state average, 173.3 per 100,000 die from heart disease in St. Lawrence County.
- The COVID-19 death rate was far lower in St. Lawrence County than in New York or the nation.

The rate of overdose deaths is far lower in St. Lawrence County than in the state of New York.

Exhibit 51: Overdose Death Rate

Per 100,000	New York	St. Lawrence County
Any drug[69]	18.6	2.8
Any opioid[70]	14.9	0.6
Heroin[71]	5.6	0.0
Opioid pain reliever (including illicitly produced opioids such as fentanyl)[72]	13.9	0.6
Methadone[73]	1.3	0.0
Synthetic opioids other than methadone[74]	11.9	0.0

Source: New York State Department of Health. New York State Opioid Data Dashboard- County Level: St. Lawrence County, 2020

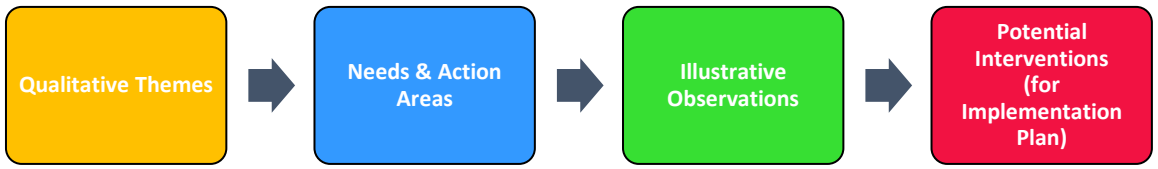
- In St. Lawrence County, 2.8 residents per 100,000 die from an overdose on any drug, compared to 18.6 per 100,000 in New York.

[69] Crude rate
[70] Age-adjusted rate
[71] Age-adjusted rate
[72] Age-adjusted rate
[73] Age-adjusted rate
[74] Age-adjusted rate

Qualitative Research Summary

The qualitative primary research methodology consisted of stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions with key community stakeholders, policymakers, and residents. The interview guide and focus group moderator's guide that were implemented to guide conversations are found in Appendix B and C.

Qualitative data collection resulted in a consensus of several top areas of need that can be described as qualitative themes**.** Each of these qualitative themes impacts the subsequent high-level action areas. The action areas include an overview of the subject and utilize de-identified illustrative observations in italics which are representative of respondents' consensus perspectives.



One-on-One Interviews

Twelve one-on-one virtual phone interviews were conducted, lasting approximately 30 minutes, although some community members chose to share a great deal of information and exceeded 30 minutes. These conversations provided the opportunity for:

- In-depth conversations about the strengths and challenges to receiving health care, services, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and ideas for solutions to improve their communities.
- In-depth discussions about health care, social service, mental health, and other service issues with leaders, community partners, and individuals from the community.

Focus Group Discussions

One community-wide focus group started with brief introductions, followed by hearing participants' broad thoughts about topic areas. Discussions were then narrowed down to focus on topics participants observed as the greatest concerns facing their community and what possible solutions they envisioned. Participants were encouraged to speak about their particular areas of concern, interest, or experience, as many opinions and observations were grounded in both personal and professional experiences.

Community Strengths

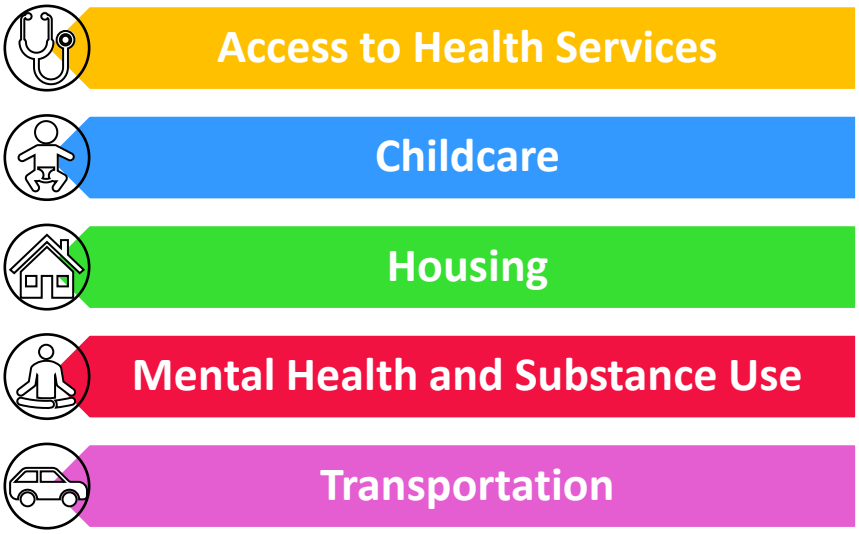
When asked what some of the positives and strengths that the St. Lawrence County community has to offer, many stakeholders emphasized that the community is tight-knit, and people always step in for one another when someone is in need. The diverse geography and beautiful landscape of the county makes the community unique. Community members also mentioned that many nonprofits work well together to provide resources and services to community members.

Sample voices from the community,

- *"St. Lawrence County is a small population in a large area. People are wonderful and work with each other. There are a lot of people involved with the community."*
- *"We have robust nonprofit environment here. St Lawrence County has a high number of nonprofits per capita than average in the country. We have a lot of higher education resources across fields. There are four universities that have different focuses. We are in reach of some decently large metropolitan areas."*
- *"Everybody works well together. It is not an us against them it is what can we do to help each other out."*
- *"We are very caring and people go out of the way to help each other."*
- *"In the human services sector, we play well together and support one another."*

High-Level Action Areas & Observations

Listed below are the high-level observations and action areas gleaned from the qualitative data. In addition to the observations, certain actions flow naturally from the themes above. These are important to include in any planning response. The comments in the following high-level action areas are most representative of respondents' consensus in the qualitative interviews.



Access to Health Services

In 2019 there was one primary care physician per 1,860 residents in St. Lawrence County. In 2020 there was one dentist per 2,550 residents in the county.[75] Community members voiced many concerns regarding accessing health services in St. Lawrence County. Long wait times, lack of providers within the county, quality care, and affordability are challenges stated by community members. Access to care for children is an area where community members see large gaps in care.

> *"For those who are low-income, health care is harder to acquire but access needs to be a priority. Illness doesn't care what your socioeconomic status is."*– Community Member

Sample voices from the community,

- *"Across the county there are a good number of primary care providers, although if you are a new client looking to establish care, there could be a few months push out. For specialty care there is not much locally and usually you have to drive an hour and 45 minutes away. The closest place to access specialty care is Plattsburgh, Syracuse, or Vermont an hour and 45 minutes away."*
- *"If you are looking for care for your broken arm, we have St. Lawrence Health System, and they take care of those things. If you have emergency care, they can take care of that but if it is more complicated, they transfer you out."*
- *"For community members on Medicaid it is nearly impossible to access dental care especially orthodontists and oral surgery."*
- *"We have a great FQHC that takes patients on a sliding scale regardless of insurance. The waiting list is long. You can't pick and choose providers like you want to."*
- *"I have to drive hours for a cancer screening every six months. People are being diagnosed and not being preventatively screened. They won't screen unless there's an indication of an issue. There are no preventative screenings."*
- *"Our pediatrician is wonderful, however we can't get in to [see] her when the kids are sick. The office tells us to take the kids to the ER or urgent care."*
- *"I've lost count of how many pediatricians my kids have had. It is not because we've changed; it's because they leave. It has created an issue getting my kids into early intervention. There are shortages of speech pathologists and occupational therapists. Access to dental and health care is a challenge but head start does a great job screening children."*
- *"If you're receiving any benefits you need to bring your kid to Syracuse (3 hours) for pediatric dental care. There are some local dental providers that will provide dental care to kids, but they aren't specialized in kids. Braces are a whole other level and not attainable for most families."*
- *"The health care here for adults is questionable; it is not great. I have narcolepsy and it took a year and a half to get a diagnosis because no one knew what to do. I went to Syracuse and had a diagnosis within a month."*

[75] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2019-2021

Childcare

Access to safe and affordable childcare is an essential building block to the overall quality of life for families as parents and caregivers have more opportunities to pursue a career and higher education that contribute to stability and financial security.[76] The childcare industry has been stunned by the pandemic, along with the overall economy. Childcare workers are hard to attract and retain, and classrooms have shuttered because of a lack of teachers, creating at times waitlists for those seeking childcare. All the while, there is pressure on childcare operators to raise wages while keeping services as affordable as possible.[77] Interviewees cite a list of challenges concerning childcare, including a lack of brick-and-mortar childcare facilities and long waitlists to get into them.

> *"Childcare is not affordable. Before the pandemic I put my kids in a childcare center. At the time my husband worked for the county, and we struggled financially as two well-employed individuals to put them there. The only reason we can afford it is with a second and third child, you get a discount."* – Community Member

In St. Lawrence County households are spending 33.0% of their household income on childcare.[78] Approximately 19.0% of children live in single-parent households.[79] Childcare affordability, availability, and waitlists are concerns that community members mentioned. There are also challenges in increasing the number of childcare providers in the county.

Sample voices from the community,

- *"There are childcare options, but affordability is another question. Both my youngest son and oldest pay someone for childcare. They are paying $250 a week for one child, before taxes $13,000 a year, which is a lot if you are only making $30,000 a year."*
- *"Childcare is available to some degree, but it is out of reach for some people."*
- *"You pretty much have to use your whole paycheck on childcare."*
- *"Our largest employer in the county is in health care and hospitals, and if you work at a hospital you aren't working a 9am to 5pm shift. When you are working a swing shift you need childcare for evening. Most of our childcare providers run 6:30am to 6:30pm at the most."*
- *"It is a struggle to find childcare. The waitlists are long and some of the locations are not wonderful. Some of our staff have decided to defer coming back from work because they can't find suitable childcare."*
- *"It is hard to find good childcare. One provider I know of is no longer offering services because of concerns about COVID."*

[76] Hamm, Baider, White, et.al. America, It's Time to Talk About Childcare. October 2019.
[77] The Norwin Star, Covid Pandemic Puts Pressure On Pittsburgh Region's Child Care Services, March 2022.
[78] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2021-2022
[79] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2016-2020

- *"There are large gaps and waitlists at childcare facilities. We do not have enough providers in the county. In 2008, childcare decreased dramatically, and it has been hard rebuilding that stock. We actually have 19 people interested in a new childcare worker training program".*
- *"It is very difficult to go through the registration process to become childcare certified. There is a burden on a provider to go through the process."*

Housing

Across New York, housing prices have increased, causing many households to be severely cost-burdened. Approximately 70.0% of renters who are low-income are spending more than half of their income on housing costs.[80] In St. Lawrence County the median monthly rent payment is $715, and the median monthly mortgage payment is $1,117.[81] Between 88.0%-89.0% of public housing, housing choice vouchers, and project-based housing-assisted units are occupied in the county.

> *"The cost of housing is one thing, and the other thing is there is not a lot of housing stock. Once it goes on the market, it doesn't last long. We don't have much low-income housing."* – Community Member

When asked about their top concerns, interviewees noted quality, affordable housing as a priority community challenge. Community members frequently cited a sheer lack of units, long waitlists for low-income units, and the overall affordability.

Sample voices from the community:

- *"Housing stock in rural areas is substandard. Owning a home used to be reasonable. My daughter is making almost $40,000 and can't find housing less than $200,000. There are maybe only five houses for sale in the school district."*
- *"There has always been an issue with lower-middle-income families buying a home. If they are able to purchase one, they can't pay for maintenance. Interest rates have pushed the possibility of getting a mortgage feasibly."*
- *"There is a lot of student housing but not a lot of regular homes and apartments. There are waiting lists at all complexes."*
- *"It depends on the area if homes and apartments are accessible for limited mobility. There is senior housing, but as the population grows, I don't think we will meet that need of housing for the senior population."*
- *"Prices are skyrocketed. Our home is fine, but it is small for us, but we can't afford to move to a bigger home. We can't build an addition because of the price of everything and there are limited supplies."*

[80] National Low Income Housing Coalition. New York, 2022.
[81] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2016-2020

- *"People who rely on social services, the maximum social services gives, isn't even enough for a one-bedroom apartment."*
- *"Folks with over median incomes in the county are also struggling. It's impacting middle-income earners as well. The rental stock is quite old."*
- *"It's impossible to come up with first month rent and a security deposit; they just don't have the money."*
- *"Families know where they are living isn't safe for children, but they have nowhere else to go. If you are a single mom living with 3 kids, you need a four-bedroom house but that's not how HUD sees it. If you're a mom with three kids, you'll be allotted for a three-bedroom or maybe even a two-bedroom."*

Many community members said that there are people experiencing homelessness in the county and the population is growing. According to community stakeholders, there are very few supports for those experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

> *"People are talking about homelessness like it is a new thing, but it is not – it is just more visible."*-- Community Member

Sample voices from the community:

- *"From what I know from our clients, homelessness is a struggle. We don't have any local shelters. The closest is an hour plus away. Most of the folks find friends and families to couch surf."*
- *"I'm not sure if the county understands the homeless population super well. A lot of folks that are homeless are invisible homeless. I have heard stories about families camping in tents on state land. It's not super visible and there is no homeless shelter at all. I know of a church that has set up a place with rooms that people can stay in at."*
- *"There is a homeless population. Some people stay under the bridge and that's where they prefer to be. There is no shelter. We try to get them into a HUD housing unit, but there are waiting lists."*

Mental Health and Substance Use

Conversations with community members have revealed that the lack of mental health access is a concern across St. Lawrence County. Approximately 16.0% of residents in St. Lawrence County have experienced 14 or more days of frequent mental distress in the last 30 days.[82] Community discussions indicate that high-level needs for mental health are rooted in the lack of local mental

> "It is kind of shocking to see obituaries of people in their 20s and 30s, and I give credit to families that say they passed away from addiction because it brings awareness. Unfortunately, it happens on a regular basis around here." -- Community Member

[82] County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. New York, 2019

health services, wait times, and bed shortages. Community stakeholders mentioned that people are struggling with substance use in the county.

Sample voices from the community:

- *"Schools don't provide too much in mental health and we are down to two agencies. We have a psych center for severe mental health issues but there is a shortage of beds."*
- *"We are getting better with services, but it is a six-month waiting list for mental health services. The crisis clinic just opened, which is 24 hours for inpatient treatment and outpatient treatment."*
- *"At our clinic [Citizens Advocates], our growth has been exponential. It is our first year in Massena and we have had a 552% increase in demand for services. We cannot keep up with the demand. At our second location in Ogdensburg, we can't keep up. On a daily basis we are getting multiple crisis calls and walk-ins. We have a 24-hour hotline and have seen an increase of calls. Since the pandemic, and in general, the demand for both services is increasing."*
- *"There is a lot being invested into mental health and substance use. The waiting times can be a challenge and post-intervention is limited. We had an outpatient clinic open up and more providers that are providing MET."*
- *"Substance use is huge here. There is a hospital in town that has detox beds, but they are full and people get referred out of town."*

Transportation

Public transportation can impact a person's health and influence health equity. Lack of transportation can cause an individual to miss their health appointments, which can cause poorer health outcomes and added health expenditures. Reliable transportation can improve stability in access to health, nutrition, employment opportunities, and social inclusion.[83]

Because St. Lawrence County is geographically large and rural, having a public transportation system that serves all residents throughout the county is a challenge. According to one community stakeholder, it takes around two hours to get across the whole county. Unreliability, scheduling barriers, and timely access to public transportation are also themes that were heard when talking to community members.

> *"Transportation is extraordinarily difficult if you don't drive or are at an income level where you can't afford a car to reliably get to where you have to go."* -- Community Member

Sample voices from the community,

- *"Public transportation exists, but it is not frequent and not in remote areas. The shuttle stops don't run frequently, and access is a challenge."*

[83] Health Affairs. Culture of Health: Public Transportation in the US, 2021

- *"There is transportation access, but it is not a huge system. Depending on where you are, you have to call someone because there is no defined route. Approximately two-thirds of residents that I see at our facility don't have a vehicle. If they go to work, they have to walk or ride a bike."*
- *"Our volunteer transportation services in the last five years have gone above and beyond. The barriers are if individuals don't have any money. It is not overly expensive, but it does cost money."*
- *"Transportation is getting better and growing, but still needs work. Walkability and a safe place to ride bikes is tough."*
- *"If you need to get from point A to point B, [like] from Massena to Canton at 1:00pm, you might be looking at an eight-hour day. If you call public transit and you ask them to help you, they almost always help you figure out the routes. They will send you directions in an email or email it to the library to print out."*

Potential Interventions

Stakeholders were asked the "magic wand" question: "If money and resources weren't a barrier, what is one thing you would do for your community?" Common solution themes included developing community housing services that would provide wrap around services, increasing work opportunities, improving home health care, and enhancing transportation services.

- *"Fix transportation issues so people can access health care."*
- *"I would provide more opportunities to invest in workers in the nonprofit sector."*
- *"I would revitalize our main street to provide more opportunities for retail use and employment."*
- *"I would love to put some kind of shelter in the area with wrap around services and a soup kitchen."*
- *"I would create lots of low-income housing in every community would have one place with wrap around services."*
- *"More services for home health care. There is a lot of people whose needs aren't being met like taking a shower and keeping house maintained."*

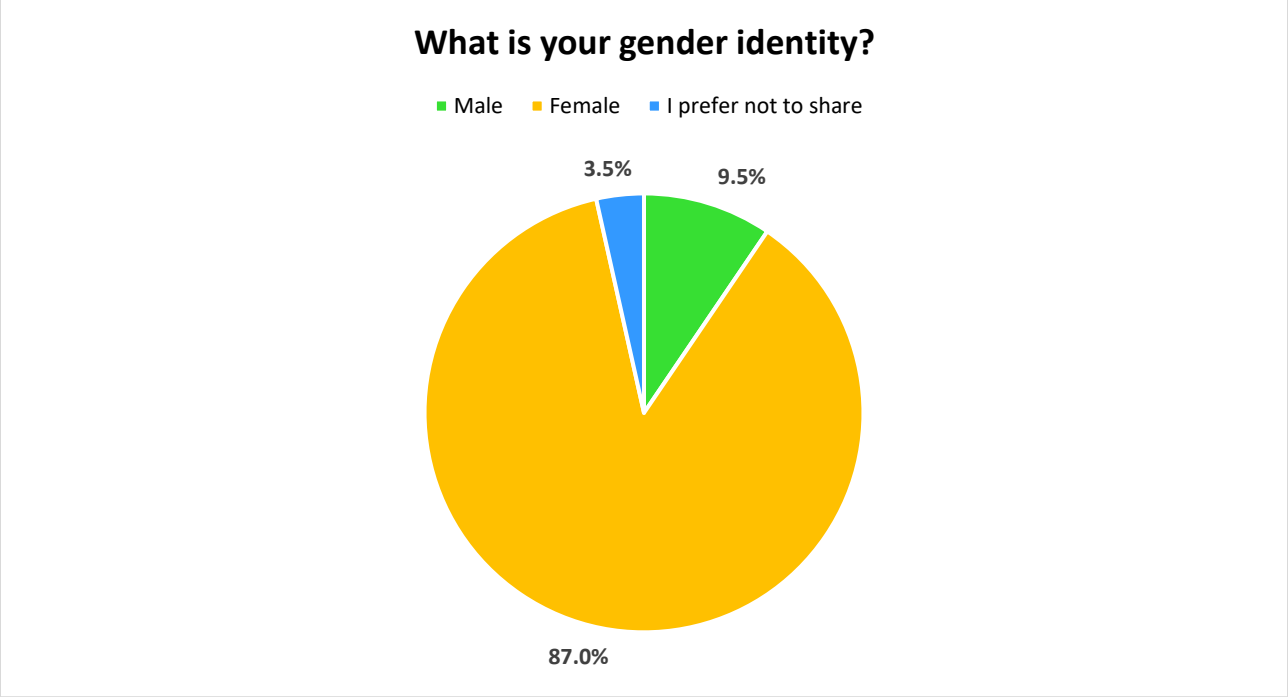
Community Survey

The purpose of the CDP community survey is to help identify the top needs of residents and the barriers/gaps that may prevent residents from accessing community resources. The survey took respondents less than 15 minutes to complete. Answers were anonymous, and no personally identifiable information was used to identify respondents.

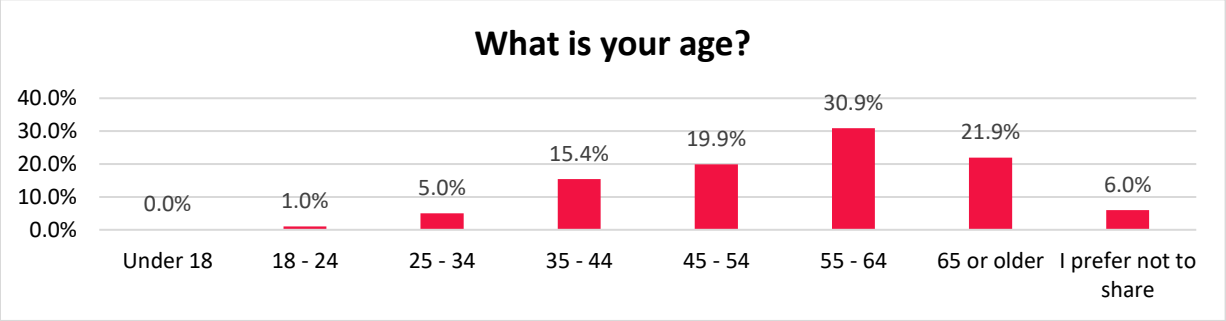
The community survey collected results from **335** respondents. The survey was out in the field from August 25, 2022, until September 14, 2022.

Demographics

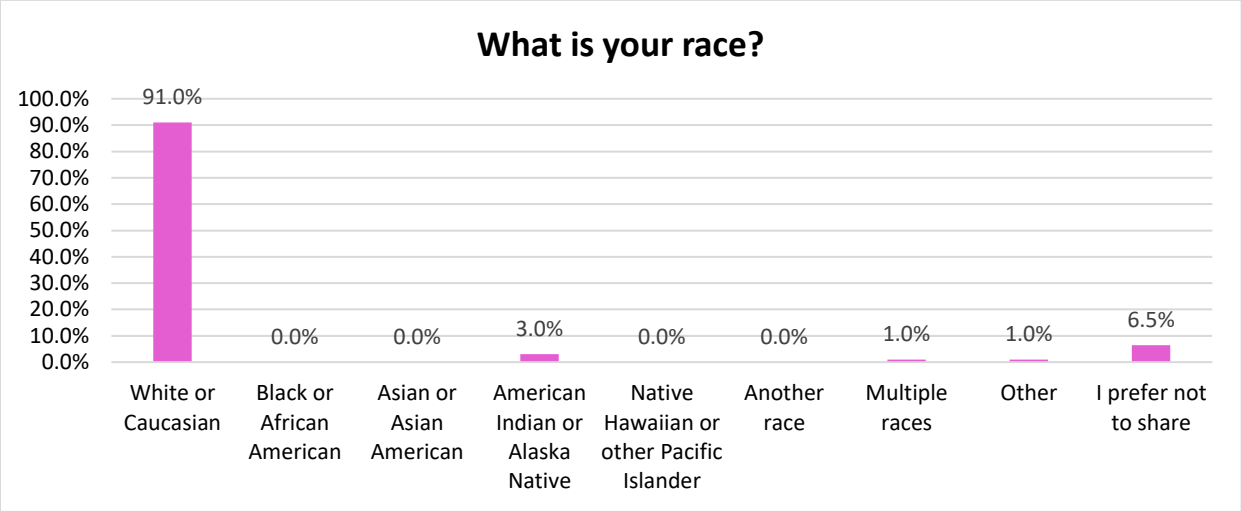
Out of the 335 respondents who completed the survey, 87.0% of them are female, 9.5% are male and 3.5% preferred not to share their gender identity.



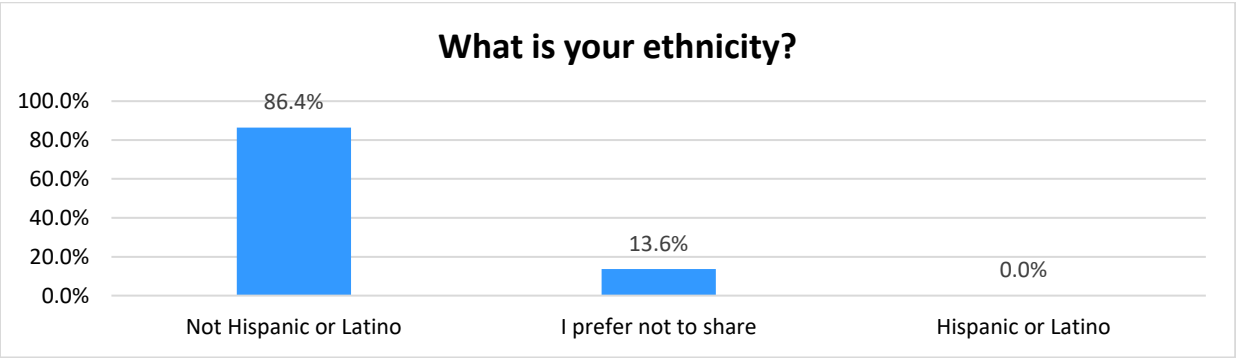
The largest percentage of survey respondents are between the ages of 55 to 64 (30.9%). Only 1.0% are between the ages 18 to 24, and 5.0% are between the ages 25 to 34.



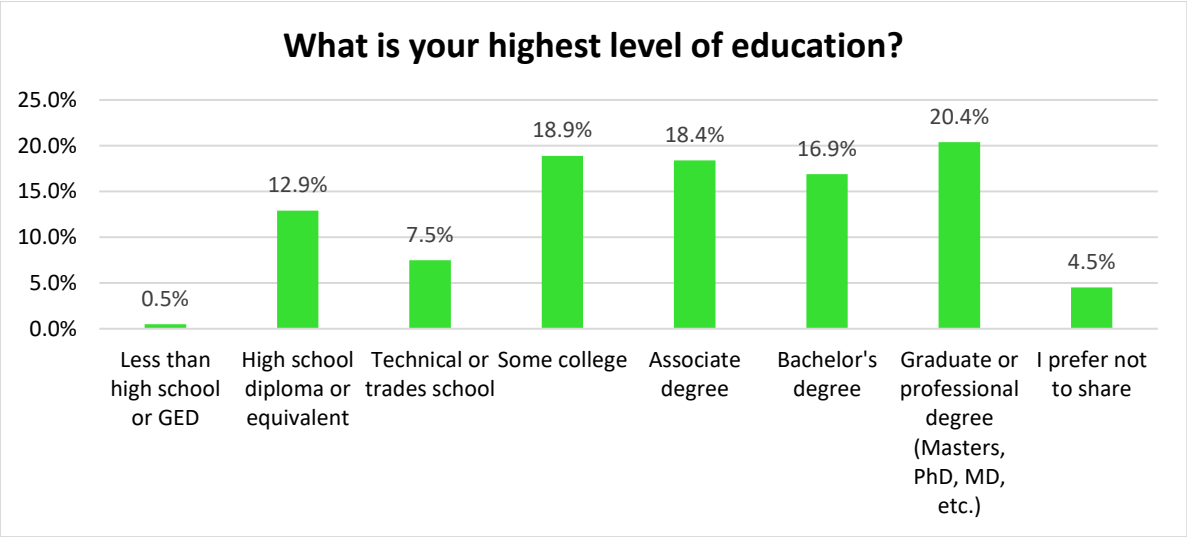
The vast majority of those who took the survey identify as White or Caucasian race (91.0%). Approximately 6.5% preferred not to share their race, 3.0% are American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.0% are multiple races, and 1.0% identify as another race.



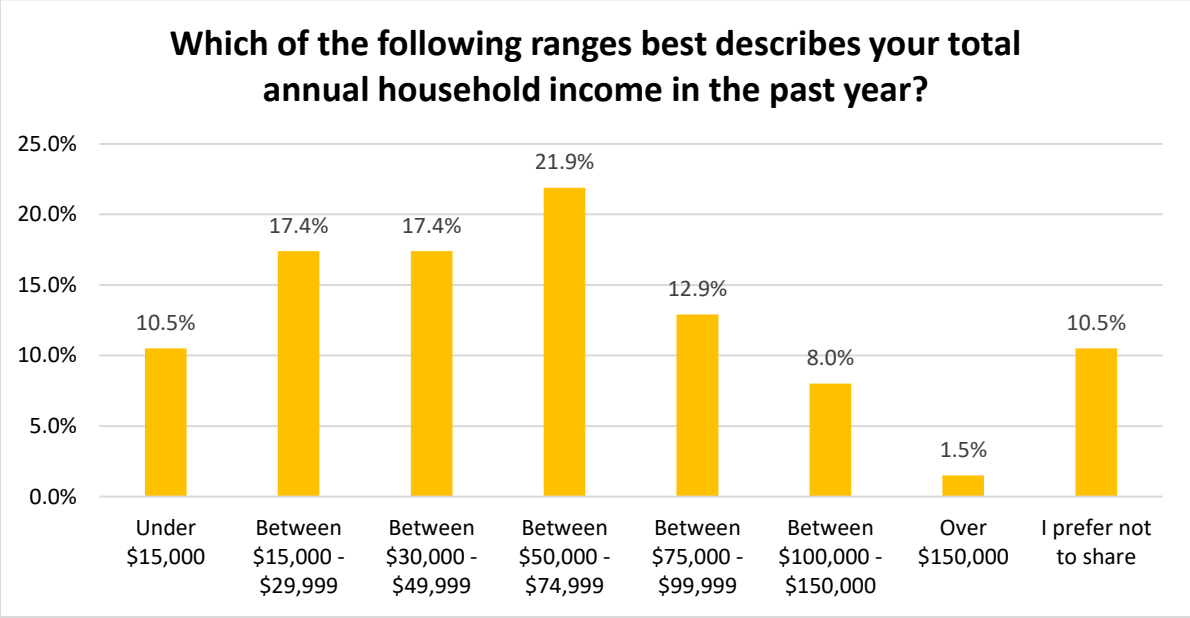
Approximately 86.4% of survey respondents identify as not Hispanic or Latino while 13.6% of survey respondents preferred not to share their ethnicity.



The distribution of survey respondents and their educational attainment level varied. Approximately 20.4% of respondents have a graduate or professional degree, 18.9% have completed some college, 18.4% have an Associate degree, 16.9% have a Bachelor's degree, 7.5% have completed technical or trades school, and 0.5% have less than a high school degree or GED. Slightly under 5.0% of survey respondents preferred not to share their highest level of educational attainment.

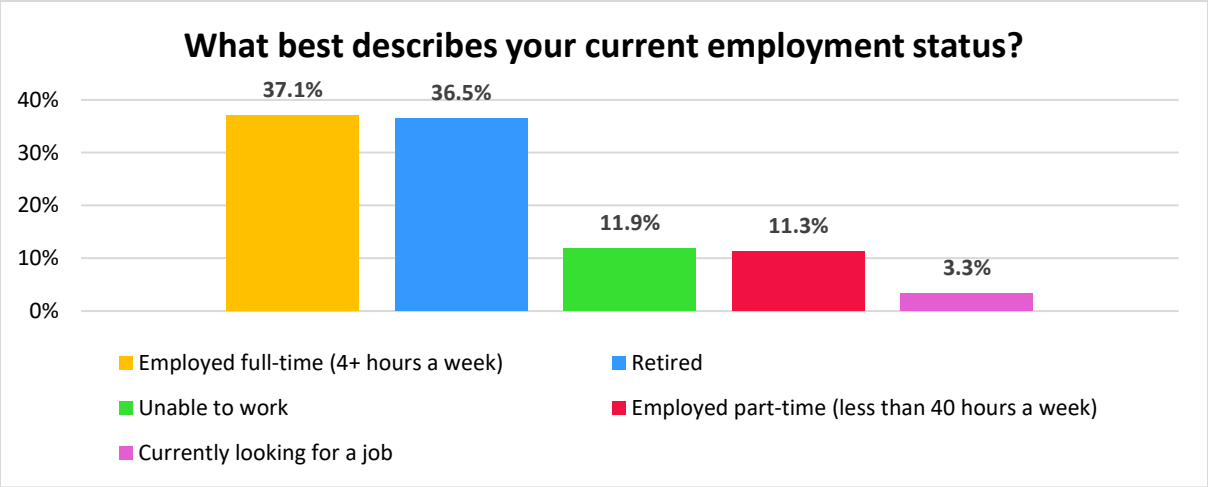


Annual household income of survey respondents varied. Approximately 21.9% of respondents made between $50,000 and $74,999 in the past year while 10.5% made under $15,000 in the past year.

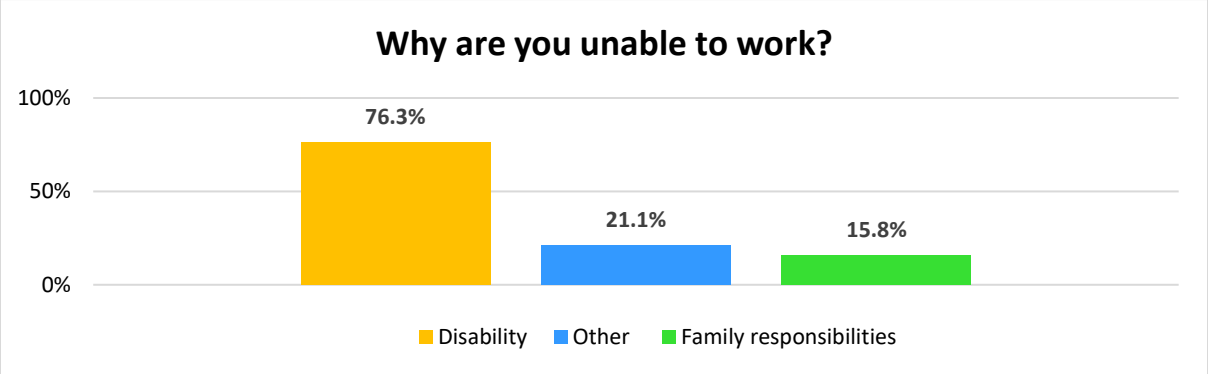


Economy and Workforce

The largest percentage of survey respondents are employed full-time (37.1%) or retired (36.5%). Approximately 11.9% of survey respondents are unable to work.



Survey respondents who responded that they were unable to work were asked why. Over three quarters are unable to work because of a disability. Approximately 15.8% are unable to work due to family responsibilities. Reasons from respondents who selected other are seen below.



For those who responded other:

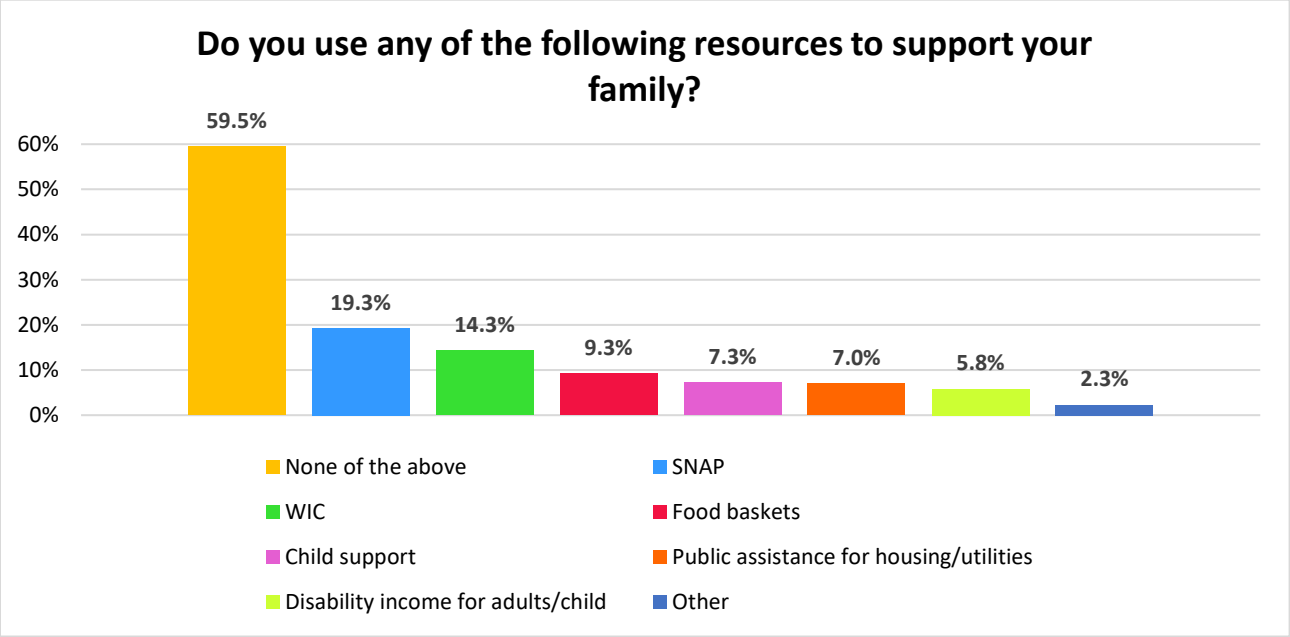
- *"Injury at work"*
- *"Maternity leave"*
- *"Cannot find infant care"*
- *"If I work my rent will go up and be too expensive"*
- *"Caring full-time for a family member"*
- *"Full-time caregiver for parent"*
- *"Spine, neck, and back pain"*

Question: How often, if ever, have you experienced any of these difficult work-related challenges in the past three years?

Many of the respondents face work-related difficulties due to limited wages. Approximately 46.2% of survey respondents often are unable to put any money towards savings or retirement, 45.1% often are limited to living wage opportunities in the community. Over a quarter of respondents often have work related challenges due to unavailable childcare or expensive childcare (28.1%) and their paycheck not covering basic living expenses (27.7%).

	Never/not applicable	Rarely, once a year	Sometimes, a few times a year	Often, every month
I am unable to put any money toward savings or retirement	28.3%	8.0%	17.5%	46.2%
There are limited living wage opportunities in my community	39.0%	3.7%	12.2%	45.1%
Childcare is not available or too expensive	66.3%	0.8%	4.9%	28.1%
My paycheck does not cover my basic living expenses	31.2%	11.1%	30.0%	27.7%
There are few opportunities for advancement at my current job	55.7%	6.9%	13.0%	24.4%
Lack of affordable health insurance	62.9%	6.1%	13.1%	18.0%
Reliable transportation	57.3%	13.3%	11.7%	17.7%
Additional education or training	65.2%	9.5%	12.9%	12.5%
Unable to find additional education or training (e.g., certifications, college/technical school, etc.)	71.6%	8.6%	9.9%	9.9%

The largest percentage of survey respondents (59.5%) do not use any resources (WIC, child support, disability income, SNAP, food baskets, housing assistance). For those who use support resources, SNAP and disability income support are the most used supports. Resource supports of those who responded other are seen below.



For those who responded other:

- *"SSI"*
- *"Parents help"*
- *"HEAP and Medicaid"*
- *"Social security"*
- *"Social security disability"*
- *"Food pantry"*
- *"HEAP"*
- *"Paid family medical leave"*
- *"Medicaid for disabled child"*
- *"Medical transportation reimbursement vouchers"*
- *"Do not qualify due to income but really could benefit from assistance at this time"*
- *"SSA pension"*
- *"Food sense program"*
- *"I fall a few dollars from being eligible"*
- *"Visit a food bank once a month"*

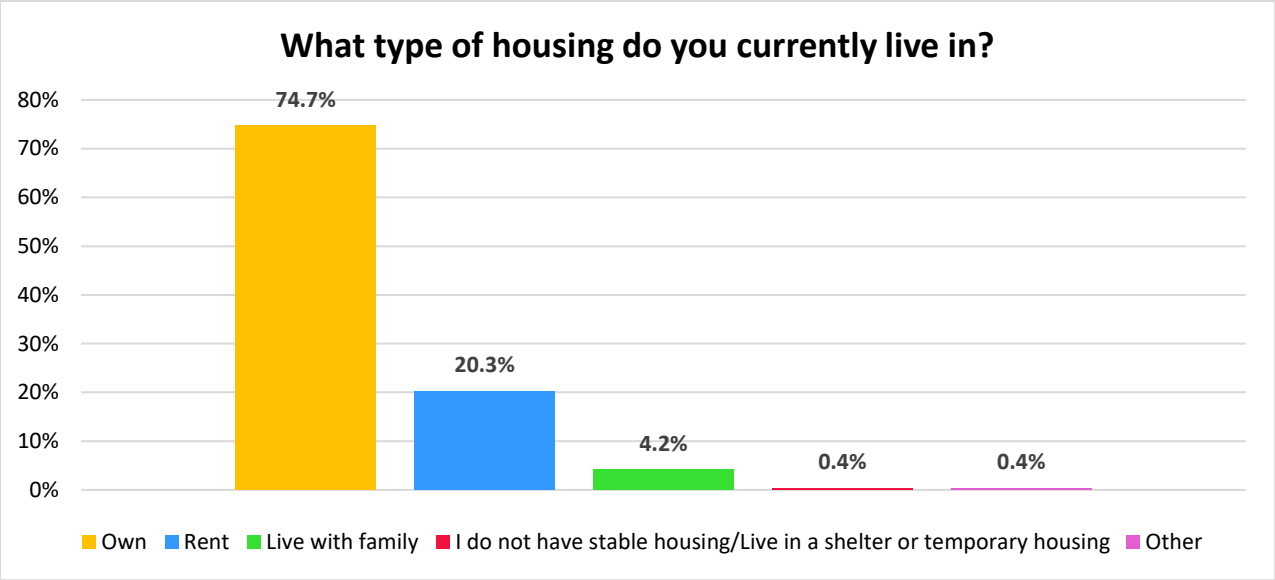
Question: How much focus should be given to each of following TRANSPORTATION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, and EMPLOYMENT needs?

Workforce development is a theme that respondents identified as an area where a lot more focus is needed. Over 50% of the survey respondents said that developing more livable wage jobs is the area that much more focus is needed (52.5%). Approximately 49.4% said that a lot more focus is needed to improve access to high-speed internet and technology and 41.5% said creating technical school, trade school, or other job training options is a lot more needed.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus needed
Developing more livable wage jobs	18.9%	52.5%
Improving access to high-speed internet and technology	18.0%	49.4%
Creating technical school, trade school, or other job training options	17.0%	41.5%
Providing job growth opportunities	21.3%	39.6%
Providing soft skills education (customer service, showing up on time, etc.)	16.7%	35.9%
Making public transportation available in rural communities	19.1%	34.0%
Adding better routes and time schedules to the current public transportation system	18.7%	26.6%
Providing help with the cost of vehicle repairs	12.4%	24.8%
Providing help with the cost of vehicle insurance and regular maintenance	12.7%	19.0%

Housing and Neighborhoods

The majority of survey respondents own their home (74.7%) while 20.3% rent their home, 4.2% live with family, and 0.4% do not have stable housing or live in a shelter or temporary housing.



Question: How much focus should be given to each of the following HOUSING needs?

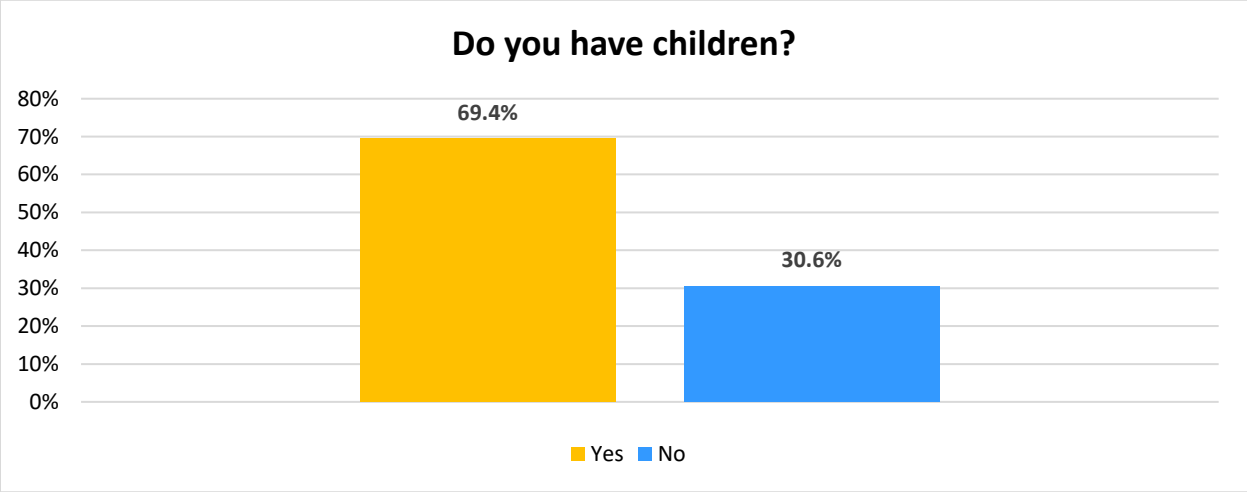
Approximately 50.2% of survey respondents ranked weatherization assistance as an area with the most needed focus. Increasing programs for major housing repairs and providing help with utility assistance was also ranked as a high need. As far as developing more housing options, more senior housing options (46.8%) and increasing the number of affordable housing (42.5%) are also ranked high up on the needs where a lot more focus is needed.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus needed
Providing help with weatherization	15.0%	50.2%
Increasing programs or major housing repairs (roofs, windows, etc.)	17.2%	48.1%
Providing more senior housing options	18.3%	46.8%
Providing help with utility assistance (heating fuel, electricity, etc.)	12.9%	44.0%
Increasing the number of affordable apartments	23.2%	42.5%
Developing rental and mortgage assistance programs	17.2%	40.8%
Creating more emergency shelter beds for people who are homeless	15.0%	39.5%
Increasing programs for minor housing repairs (paint, upgrades, etc.)	13.3%	39.1%
Providing hotspots for internet access	14.2%	37.9%

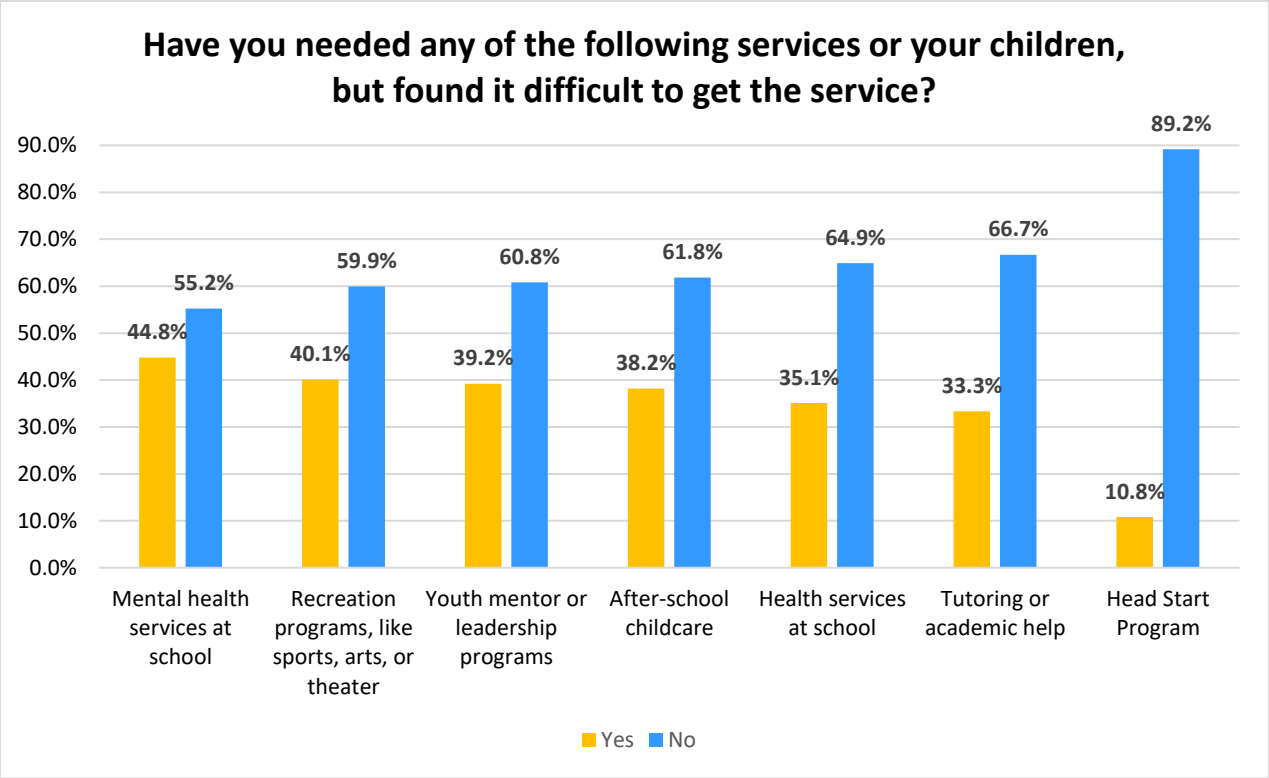
Creating more shelter beds for certain populations (children, women, families, LGBTQIA, veterans, etc.)	14.5%	36.8%
Creating higher quality rental apartments and houses	21.5%	36.5%
Helping more people who are homeless to find their missing identification documents (driver's license, social security number, etc.)	12.0%	35.0%
Increasing the number of affordable houses for sale	16.9%	33.3%
Increasing the number of landlords who accept housing vouchers	10.4%	28.7%

Education and Childcare

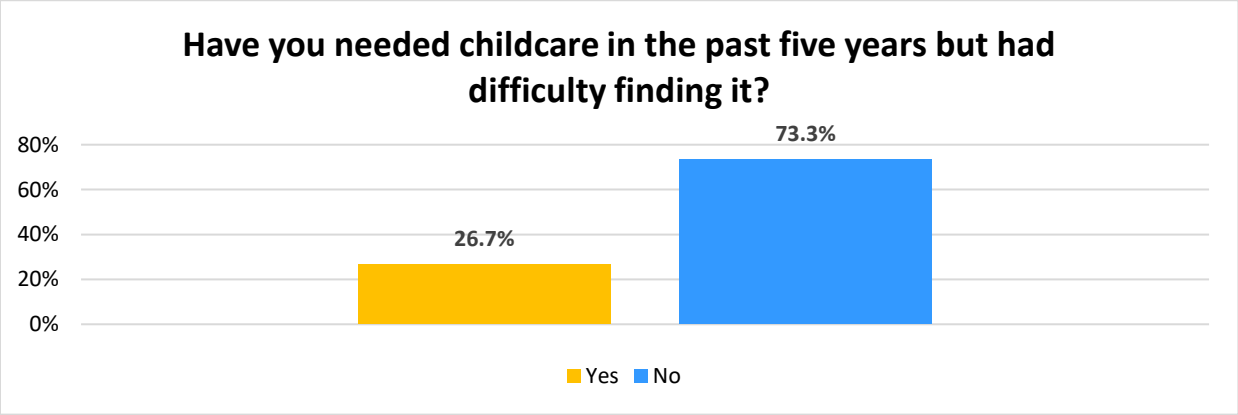
More than two in three survey respondents (69.4%) have children.



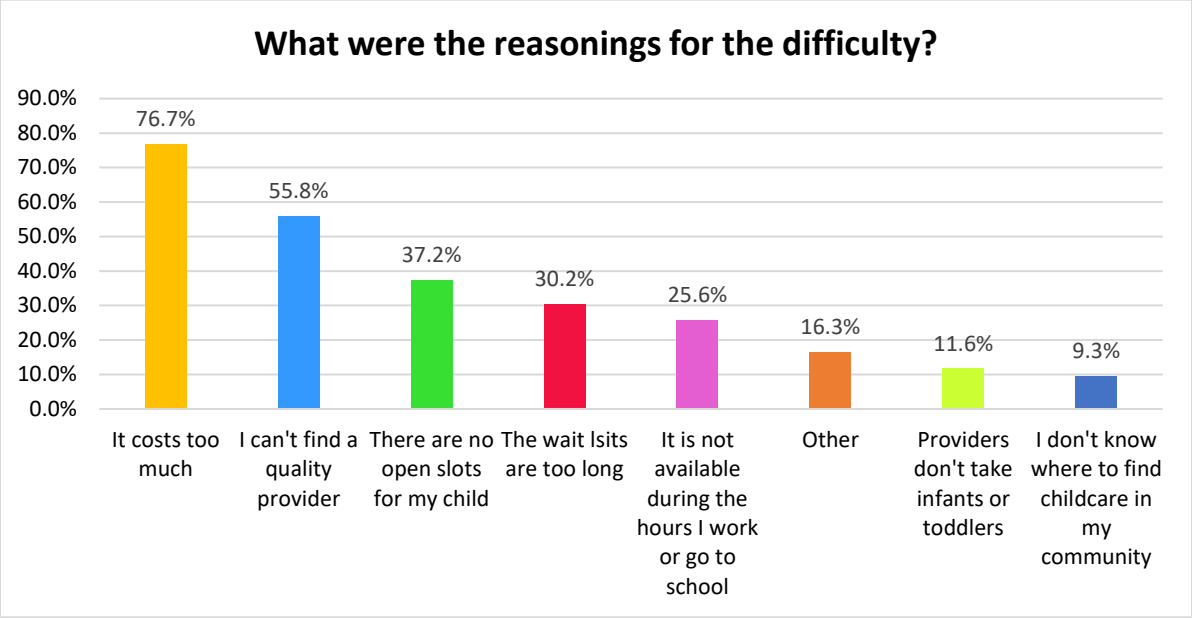
Survey respondents were asked if they had any difficulty accessing services for their children. Approximately 44.8% of respondents identified access to mental health services at school as a difficulty for their children. Approximately 40.1% find access to recreation programs for their children as a difficulty. Approximately 89.2% of respondents do not have difficulty access to the head start program for their children.



Over a quarter of respondents (26.7%) have needed childcare in the past years but have had difficulty accessing childcare.



For respondents who said they had difficulty accessing childcare, the top three reasons were that childcare costs too much (76.7%), lack of ability to find a quality provider (55.8%), and lack of open slots (37.2%). Other reasonings for respondents who said there were other reasons for childcare difficulty other than the reasons listed are seen below.



For those who responded other:

- *"My children are older and out of school for years"*
- *"I make too much for head start but that is the only option"*
- *"Usually use relatives"*
- *"Registered daycares cannot take unvaccinated children"*
- *"Don't know where to find temporary/fill-in/short-term options--all seem to be long-term placements rather than "I need a babysitter"*
- *"Daycare for kids with special needs is nonexistent. We also have 0 community resources for them"*

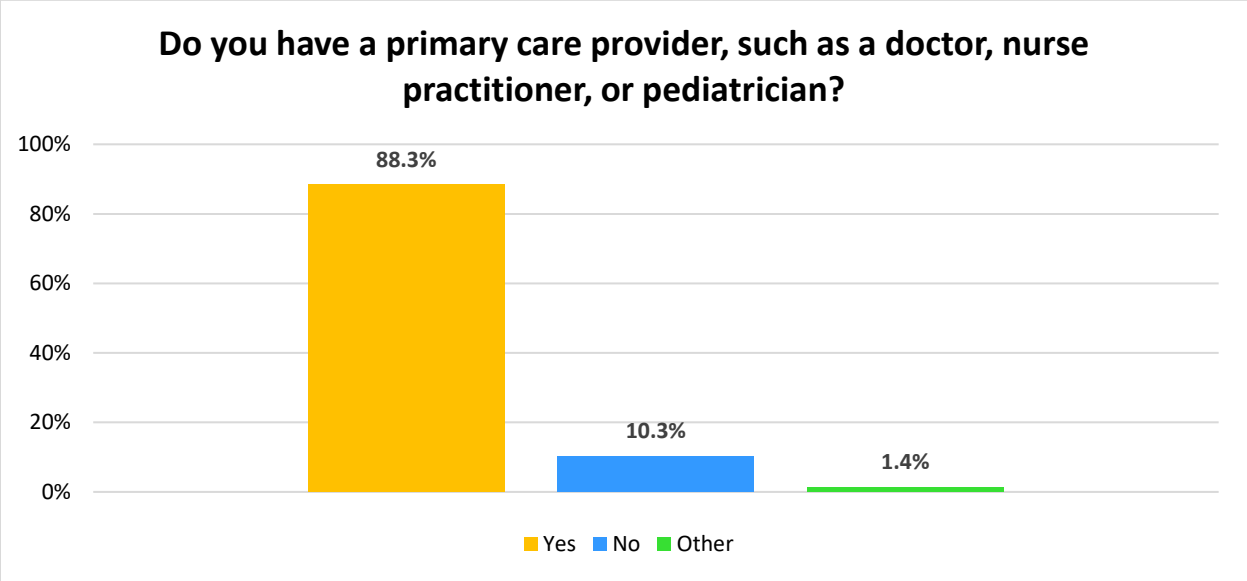
Question: How much focus should be given to each of the following CHILDCARE AND EARLY EDUCATION needs?

Over 55.2% of survey respondents ranked providing more flexible and affordable childcare options for working parent(s) as an area where a lot more focus is needed. Increasing the number of affordable childcare providers, providing more after-school programs, and increasing the number of high-quality licensed childcare providers are high areas of need where more focus or support is needed.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus needed
Providing more flexible and affordable childcare options for working parent(s)	14.9%	55.2%
Increasing the number of affordable childcare providers	16.9%	48.7%
Providing more after-school programs for school-aged children	11.8%	44.4%
Increasing the number of high-quality licensed childcare providers	16.9%	42.9%
Providing more recreational opportunities for youth	13.7%	41.2%
Providing more transportation options to childcare services	9.2%	30.7%
Mental health services for children ages 4 and younger	15.6%	28.6%

Health Care, Mental Health, Substance Use, and Food Access

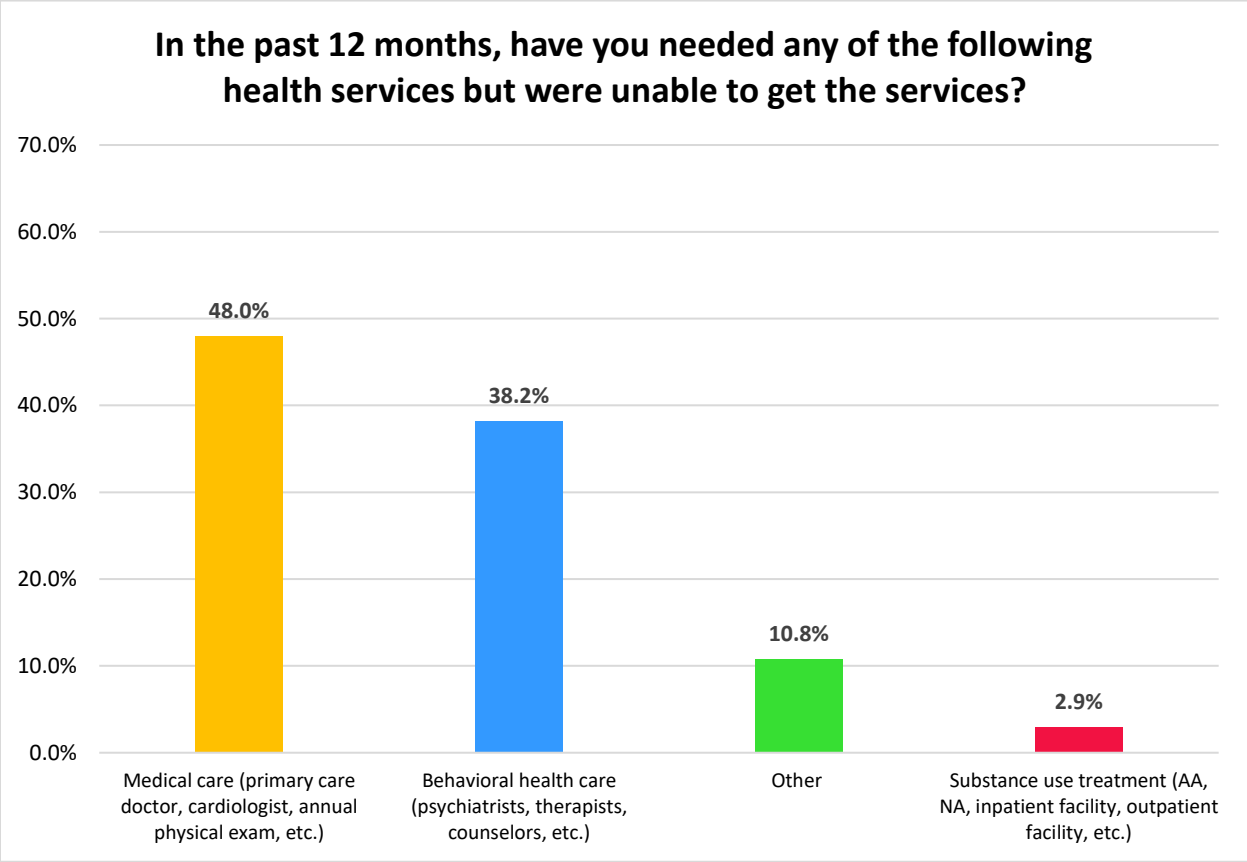
The majority of survey respondents have access to a primary care provider (88.3%).



For those who responded other:

- *"I do, but my partner can't find one"*
- *"Mine of years retired. Long wait to get established with provider who meets my criteria"*
- *"Veterans clinic"*

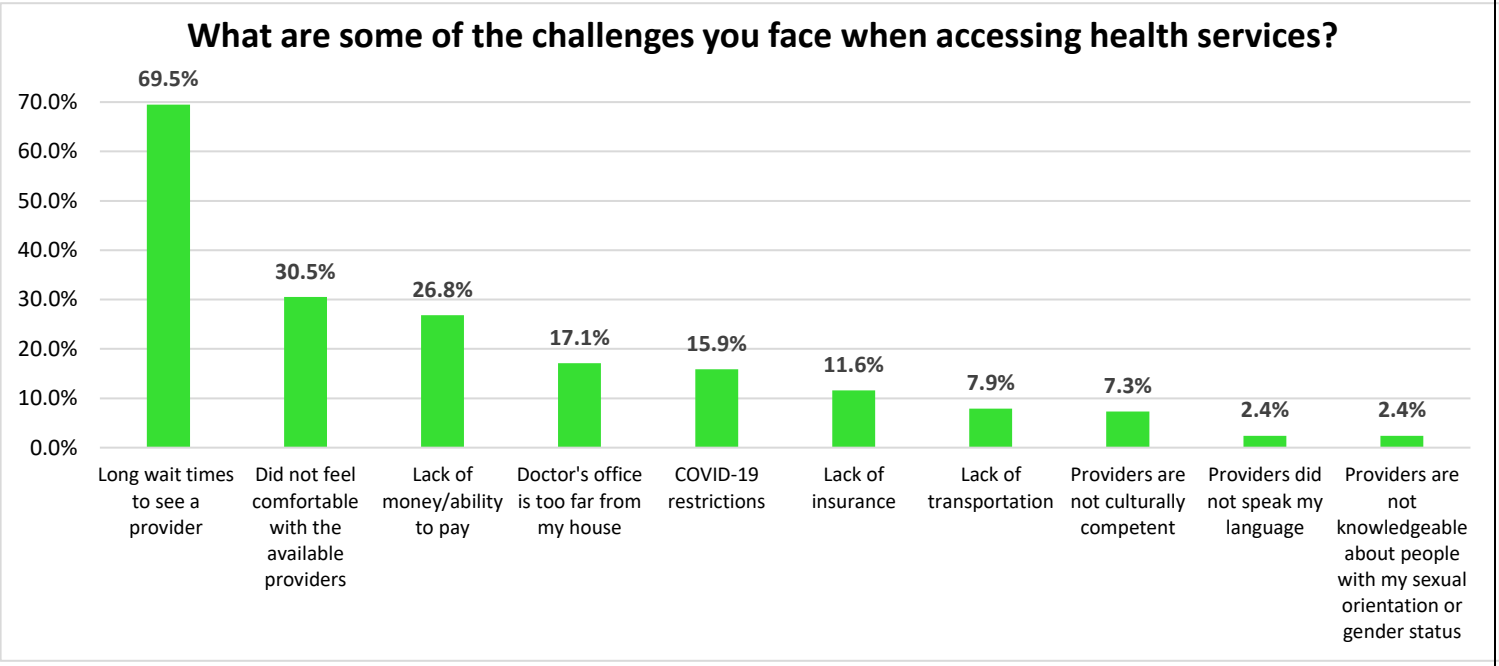
Three in five survey respondents were unable to access dental care in the past 12 months (60.8%). Medical care and behavioral health care are also health services that respondents were unable to access (48.0%, and 38.2% respectively).



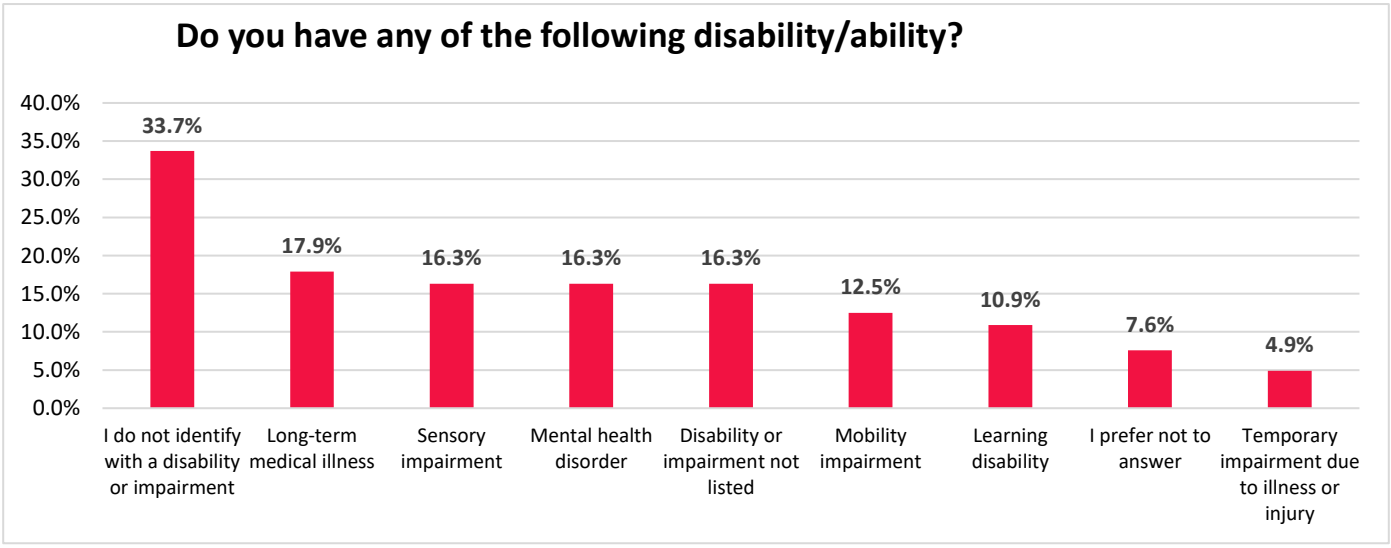
For those who responded other:

- *"Eye exam and glasses"*
- *"Eye care"*
- *"Optometrist"*
- *"Endocrinologist specialist"*
- *"Dermatologist"*
- *"Urologist"*

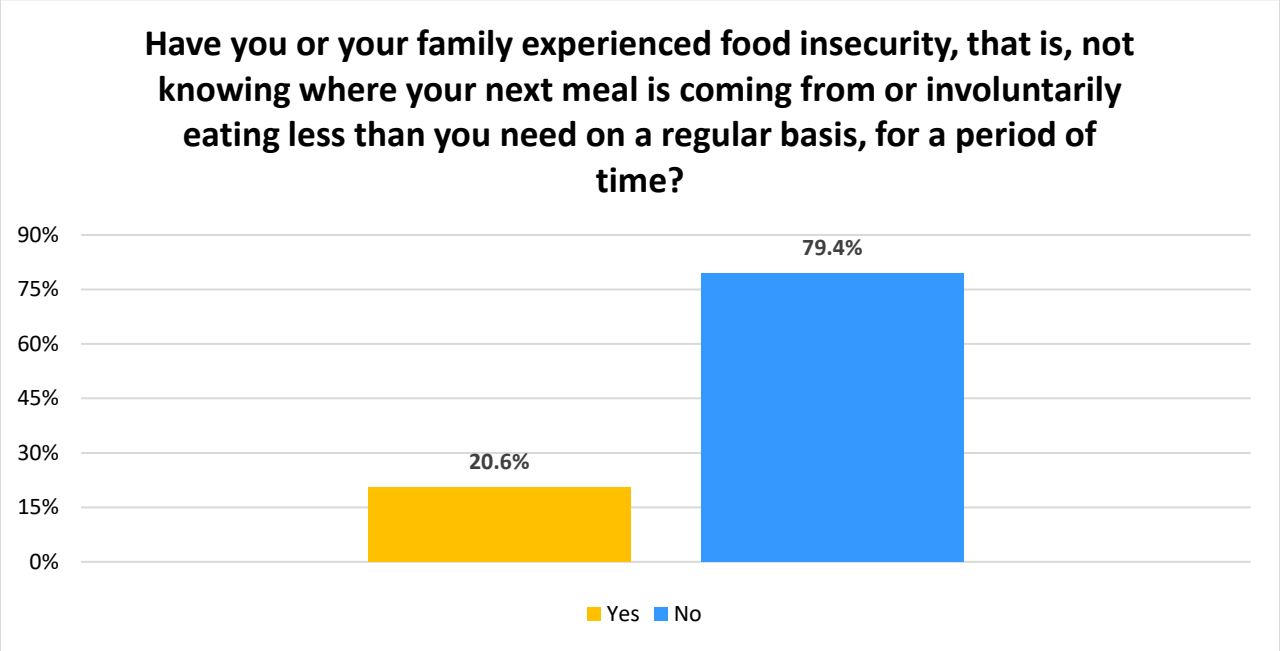
When asked what challenges respondents faced when accessing health services long wait times to see a provider was the highest challenge respondents faced (69.5%). Twice as many respondents selected this challenge as any other single challenge.



Approximately 33.7% of survey respondents do not have a disability/ability. Of those who do have a disability/ability, long-term medical illness, mental health disorder, and sensory impairment are the most common types of disability/ability that respondents have.



Over three-quarters of survey respondents or their family are not food insecure, but one in five survey respondents or their family (20.6%) have experienced food insecurity.



Question: How much additional focus or support should be given to each of the following FOOD, HEALTHCARE, AND MENTAL HEALTH needs?

Making dental care more affordable is ranked as the top need where a lot more focus or support is needed (60.9%). Substance use and mental health related resources are areas that respondents ranked as a high need.

	Much more focus or support needed	A lot more focus or support needed
Making dental care more affordable	14.6%	60.9%
Reducing the amount of opioid misuse	15.1%	59.4%
Reducing the amount of other drug misuse (heroin, cocaine, etc.)	14.1%	57.8%
Increasing the number of mental health providers in rural communities	19.3%	50.9%
Accessible sources for affordable, nutritious food	17.9%	50.0%
Expanding crisis services for mental health and substance use disorder	14.2%	49.3%
Reducing stigma associated with mental health and substance misuse	16.7%	48.1%
Increasing the number of dentists who serve Medicaid patients	14.2%	46.2%
Reducing the amount of childhood obesity	17.0%	43.4%
Reducing the amount of adult obesity	21.2%	40.1%
Increasing the number of substance use disorder providers and services	16.5%	40.1%
Increasing services for people with disabilities	18.8%	36.5%
Reducing the amount of alcohol misuse	15.1%	36.3%
Reducing the amount of smoking and vaping	12.7%	35.9%
Increasing the availability of prepared foods for seniors (Meals on Wheels, etc.)	18.4%	34.0%
Increasing the number of detox facilities	20.2%	33.3%
Expanding open hours at food pantries	17.5%	28.9%
Expanding food options for people with dietary restrictions or allergies at food pantries	15.6%	22.8%

Question: The following is a list of COMMUNITY needs that have been previously identified. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, do you think that the following issues are MORE important, LESS important, or about the same compared to the start of the pandemic?

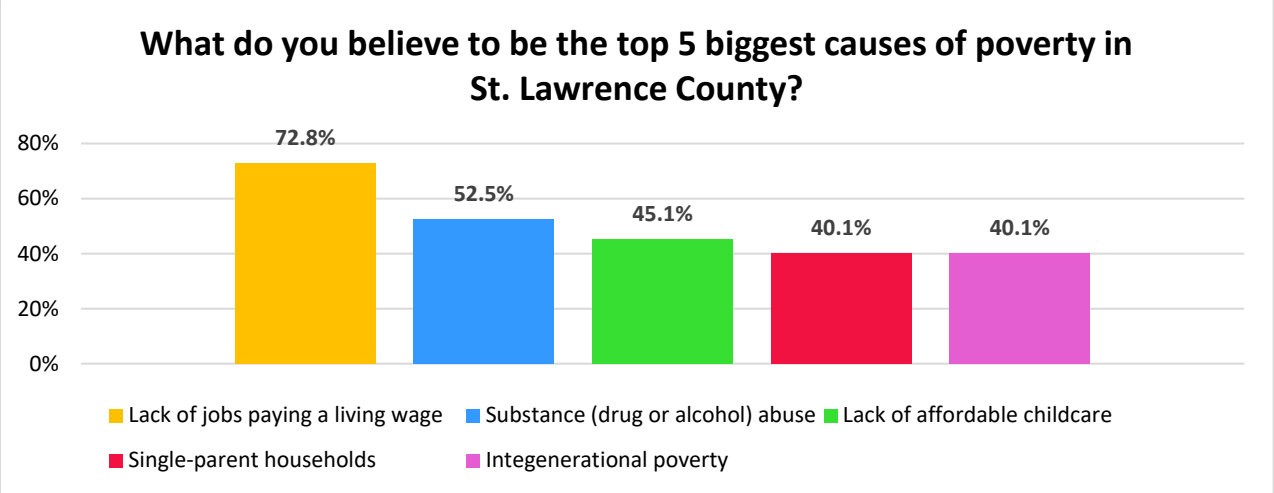
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents ranked access to mental health and substance misuse services (66.7%) as a need more important now than at the start of the pandemic. Access to healthcare, affordable rental housing, access to high-speed internet and technology, and childcare are areas that respondents ranked high as more important needs than at the start of the pandemic.

	More important now than at the start
Access to mental health and substance misuse services	66.7%
Access to healthcare	58.5%

Affordable rental housing	53.7%
Access to high-speed internet and technology	52.7%
Childcare	51.2%
Access to healthy food	49.3%
Affordable homes for sale	48.2%
Homeless services	47.8%
Utility assistance	46.1%
Rental or mortgage assistance	43.1%
Public transportation	42.2%
Relief and assistance for small businesses	41.2%
Job training/help finding a job	39.4%
Unemployment payments	11.4%

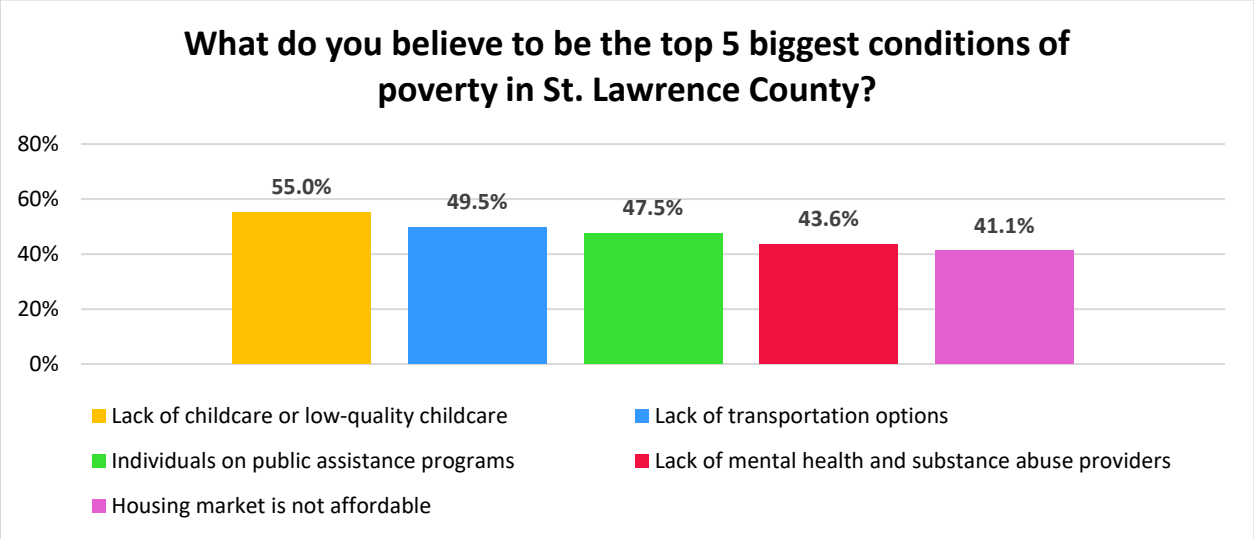
Causes of Poverty

Survey respondents were given a list of 16 options to choose from regarding causes of poverty. Out of the 16 options, respondents ranked lack of jobs paying a living wage, substance abuse, lack of affordable childcare, single-parent households, and intergenerational poverty as the top 5 biggest causes of poverty in the county.



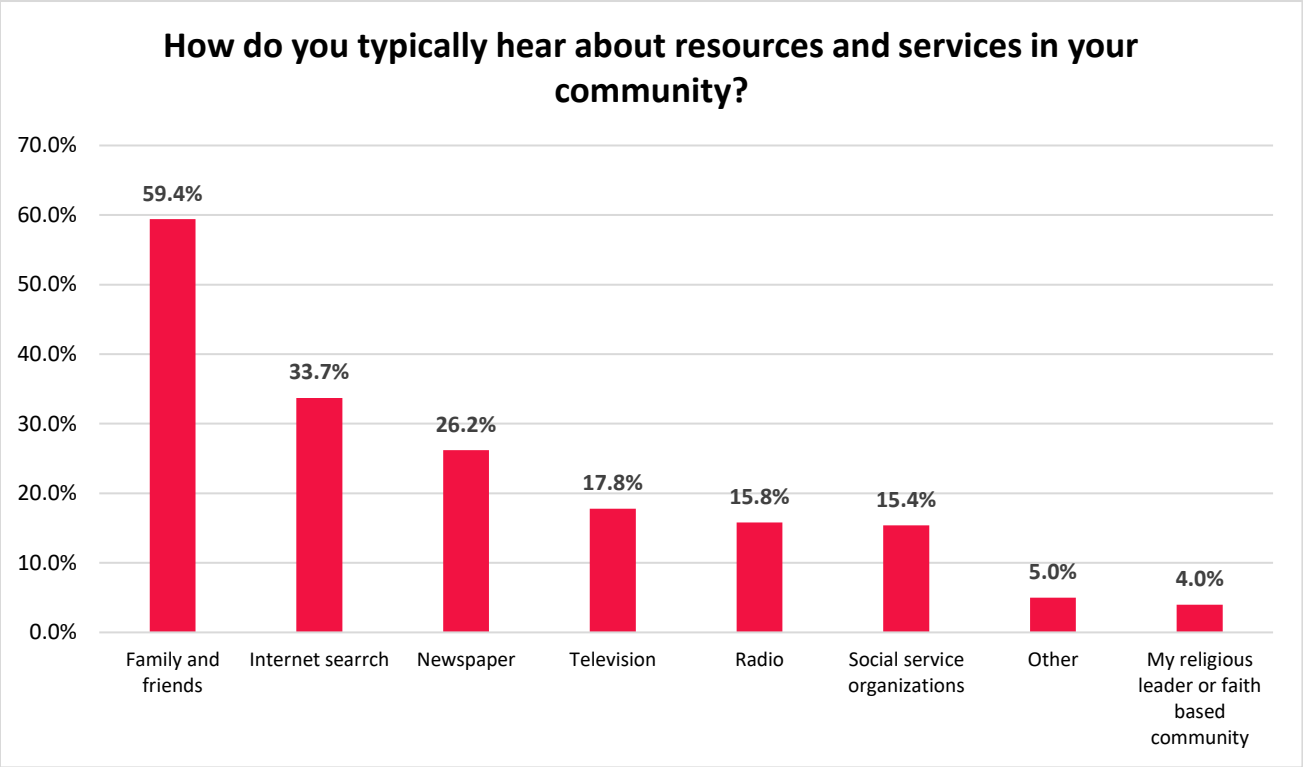
Conditions of Poverty

Survey respondents were given a list of 15 options to choose from regarding conditions of poverty. Out of the 15 options, respondents ranked lack of childcare or low-quality childcare, lack of transportation options, individuals on public assistance programs, lack of mental health and substance abuse providers, and a housing market that is not affordable as the biggest conditions of poverty in the county.



Communication

Most survey respondents hear about resources and services in St. Lawrence County through social media and family and friends.



Question: Are there any other needs of St. Lawrence County residents that you think are important for us to know?

Sample voices from the community,

- *"All kids need free breakfast & lunch at school & in summer, & all people need safe, warm homes & food, & adequate boots & other winter gear."*
- *"Places in Canton for our children to play. An outdoor lit basketball court that doesn't belong to SLU or SUNY canton."*
- *"There is a real lack of affordable middle-income housing!! Affordable homes and assistance for middle income and nice rental apartments for middle income that is not student housing. Assistance for middle income. New housing development, townhouses, condo options. Housing available in mid-range income levels need so much work."*
- *"I believe that more resources need to be extended to families just beyond the "eligible" income levels. I believe the working families are really struggling to make ends meet and do not qualify for assistance. I am a single mother raising three children with no child support and make just over "eligible" income. I struggle to provide for my children and feel there is nowhere to turn."*

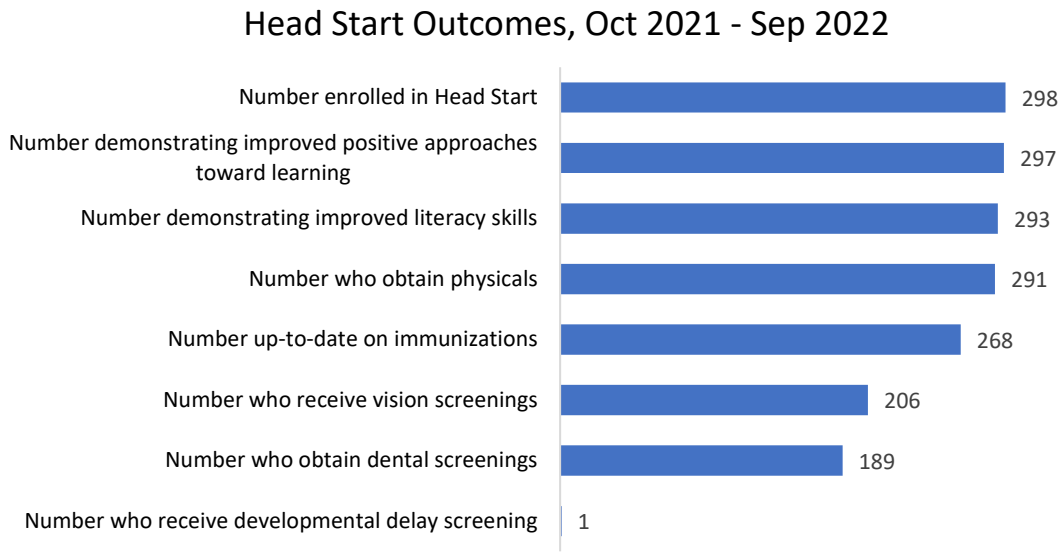
- *"Seniors need better living places and affordable, plus more nursing homes in our area."*
- *"More accessible and affordable trash and recycling system."*
- *"Home social workers, to spend a couple of hours at a time: help prepare menu, make out a weekly grocery list, show how to prepare meals, show how to launder, fold clothes, etc."*
- *"Emergency veterinary services. It's not feasible to drive 2 to 2-1/2 hours to Syracuse or Burlington if a pet is in an emergency situation, but ER services here are close to non-existent."*
- *"Yes if you are on NYS insurance they don't have dentists around this area that accept the insurance. What good is it if you have to travel out of the county to a dentist. Not sure about the eyeglass coverage yet."*
- *"A central source for connecting people from all needs and backgrounds to the available community resources, as well as assistance navigating these systems."*
- *"We absolutely need more public transportation and more affordable taxi service for those of us who can't drive due to a disability."*
- *"Reliable internet"*
- *"We should bring back night school for working adults that want to further their education while still being able to take care of their families."*
- *"I am witnessing many seniors afraid to leave their home, which is no longer appropriate for them, to move to "senior housing" because of the population in that housing. Ie substance abuse, mental health issues of the so called disabled living there. Seniors want to be housed in seniors only facilities. I hear this so frequently from seniors and their families".*
- *"Better cellular strength from towers, more cell towers and more options for high speed internet providers with lower costs"*
- *"Protection against predatory businesses (scams, Pyramid Schemes etc)"*
- *"LGBT resources and alliance centers"*
- *"Parent training and assistance for families overwhelmed by their children's physical and educational needs."*
- *"I think there is a significant lack of programs for teenagers and that's when the drugs and unwanted activity come into play. We have got to get these kids something productive to do"*

Appendices

Appendix A: CDP Program Data

Head Start

Over the October 2021 to September 2022 period, Head Start served nearly 300 children. Outcomes associated with participation in Head Start included dental screenings, immunizations, physical exams, vision screenings, and developmental delay screenings, along with improved literacy skills and improved positive approaches toward learning.



Neighborhood Centers

Over the October 2021 to September 2022 period, four neighborhood centers (Colton/Pierrepont/ Parishville, Gouverneur, Ogdensburg, and Potsdam) provided a variety of forms of support to individuals and families in the community, including rent and mortgage assistance, utility assistance, and food assistance, along with a variety of other services and supplies (see graphics below).

77 were assisted with rent → 60 avoided eviction

3 were assisted with mortgage payments → 3 avoided foreclosure

115 were assisted with utilities → 44 avoided shutoff

112,952	761	1,100
pounds of food distributed	assisted with Mobile Pantry services or food boxes	received information on nutrition in food packages

Appendix B: Stakeholder Interview Guide

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc.

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program Community Needs Assessment

Focus Group Moderators Guide

Introduction

As you saw in the invitation, Crescendo Consulting Group is assisting the St. Lawrence County Community Development Program (SLCCDP) in the process of conducting its 2022 Community Needs Assessment. We are inviting a wide range of individuals and organizations to share their ideas and recommendations about the community's strengths, challenges, and needs.

We appreciate your insights and opinions on the subject. Some of the goals of the process are to:

- Identify and understand area needs in the context of the multiple populations SLCCDP serves
- Determine the services and service levels required to meet those needs
- Identify barriers and gaps that prevent area residents from accessing services
- Build upon stakeholder engagement to maximize the effectiveness of federal, state, and local resources

The discussion will include questions from a few broad categories and will take less than 30 minutes. Shall we get started?

Access, Availability, and Delivery of Services

1. What are some of the positive things that the community has to offer? *[PROBE: outdoor activities, lifestyle, other]*

2. What are the three greatest challenges the community will face in the next three years?

Workforce, Housing, Unemployment, and Transportation

3. How is the job market in the area (pre-COVID)?
    a. Is it easy to find a full-time job with a livable wage including benefits and retirement?
    b. Can families live on the wage that is available in the area?
    c. Are wages adequate to keep the young people in the area? Why or why not?

4. What are job training opportunities like in your community?

5. To what degree do you (or your constituents) have access to reliable transportation to work, the grocery store, doctors, school, etc.?

6. Is it difficult to access and maintain affordable, adequate, and safe housing in your community?
    a. To what degree do community members struggle with utility bills or home maintenance needs?

7. What is internet/broadband access like in your community? What are your options? Is it affordable?
    a. How does access or lack of internet/broadband impact households in your community?

8. To what degree is homelessness and/or housing instability a concern within the community?

Head Start, Early Childhood Education, and Childcare

9. Is it easy for families to find affordable childcare in the area? What are some of the challenges or barriers?

10. What is your general perception of the ability of the area to meet Early Childhood (i.e., Head Start services for those prenatal to age 5) services and education needs in the area?

11. What is your general perception of the ability of the area to meet school-age childcare needs – including pre-care, after school care, and others?

12. What are the greatest challenges for families with complex needs such as learning disabilities or other special needs regarding early childhood services and education? What about school-aged children?

Affordability of Health Care and Basic Needs

13. What is health care like in this area (e.g., availability of doctors, access to care, primary care, specialized medical care, access to HIGH QUALITY care)? What are the challenges?

14. Describe the mental health and substance use disorder care services in your area? What are the challenges? What is working well?

15. To what degree are community members / families struggling with access to nutritious food, prescription medication, health care, or other services? [PROBE: What are some resources or services that work really well and not so well?]

16. What are some of the health challenges the community faces (i.e., obesity, diabetes, depression, etc.)?

COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts

17. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your area? What are people struggling with the most today?

18. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted how your organization provides services to the community? Are there adjustments you made that you plan to continue using after the pandemic?

19. Do you think the pandemic impacted any specific subpopulations (such as age groups, racial/ethnic groups, income brackets, etc.) more than others?

Enhancing Communications and Information

1. To what degree do you think that the community at large is aware of the breadth of available services in the area? What are the challenges to greater awareness and understanding of the availability of services and ways to access them? What might help overcome the challenges?

2. How do consumers generally learn about access to and availability of services in the county (e.g., On-line directory; Hotline; Word of Mouth)?

3. What are some of the community-level things that can be done to make an impact on the poverty, emergency services, food, employment, and housing needs in the area? Are there any "low hanging fruit" that would be addressed quickly?

Magic Wand Question: If money and resources weren't an issue, what is one thing you would do for your community?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C: Focus Group Interview Guide

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc.

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program Community Needs Assessment

Focus Group Moderators Guide

Welcome and Introductions

Hello. My name is Michaela Gerace from Crescendo Consulting Group. We're working with CDP to conduct the 2022 Community Needs Assessment. Thank you for taking the time to join us for this important discussion.

Explain the general purpose of the discussion.

- The purpose of our meeting today is to learn more about strengths and resources in your community, including ways that people generally seek community-based services, the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to collect your insights regarding service gaps and ways to better meet community needs.

Explain the necessity for notetaking and recording.

- We're taking notes to assist us in recalling your thoughts. We will describe our discussion in a written report; however, individual names will not be used. Please consider what you say and hear today to be confidential.

Describe logistics.

- Logistics are a bit different than normal since we're virtual, but we'd appreciate it if you gave us your full attention for the next hour or so. If you need to take a break to use the restroom, please do.

Describe the protocol for those who have not been to a group before.

- For those of you who have not participated in a focus group before, the basic process is that I will ask questions throughout our session, however, please feel free to speak up at any time. In fact, I encourage you to respond directly to the comments other people

make, as this is a conversation. If you don't understand a question, let me know. We are here to ask questions, listen, and make sure everyone has a chance to share and feels comfortable. Be respectful of the opinions of others. Honest opinions are the key to this process, and there are no right or wrong answers. I'd like to hear from each of you and learn more about your opinions, both positive and negative.

- If you have a private question, feel free to type it in the chat area of the software and I'll respond as soon as possible.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Access, Availability, and Delivery of Services

20. What are some of the positive things that the community has to offer? *[PROBE: outdoor activities, lifestyle, other]*

21. What are the three greatest challenges the community will face in the next three years?

Workforce, Housing, Unemployment, and Transportation

22. How is the job market in the area (pre-COVID)?
    a. Is it easy to find a full-time job with a livable wage including benefits and retirement?
    b. Can families live on the wage that is available in the area?
    c. Are wages adequate to keep the young people in the area? Why or why not?

23. What are job training opportunities like in your community?

24. To what degree do you (or your constituents) have access to reliable transportation to work, the grocery store, doctors, school, etc.?

25. Is it difficult to access and maintain affordable, adequate, and safe housing in your community?
    a. To what degree do community members struggle with utility bills or home maintenance needs?

26. What is internet/broadband access like in your community? What are your options? Is it affordable?
    a. How does access or lack of internet/broadband impact households in your community?

27. To what degree is homelessness and/or housing instability a concern within the community?

Head Start, Early Childhood Education, and Childcare

28. Is it easy for families to find affordable childcare in the area? What are some of the challenges or barriers?

29. What is your general perception of the ability of the area to meet Early Childhood (i.e., Head Start services for those prenatal to age 5) services and education needs in the area?

30. What is your general perception of the ability of the area to meet school-age childcare needs – including pre-care, after school care, and others?

31. What are the greatest challenges for families with complex needs such as learning disabilities or other special needs regarding early childhood services and education? What about school-aged children?

Affordability of Health Care and Basic Needs

32. What is health care like in this area (e.g., availability of doctors, access to care, primary care, specialized medical care, access to HIGH QUALITY care)? What are the challenges?

33. Describe the mental health and substance use disorder care services in your area? What are the challenges? What is working well?

34. To what degree are community members / families struggling with access to nutritious food, prescription medication, health care, or other services? [PROBE: What are some resources or services that work really well and not so well?]

35. What are some of the health challenges the community faces (i.e., obesity, diabetes, depression, etc.)?

COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts

36. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your area? What are people struggling with the most today?

37. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted how your organization provides services to the community? Are there adjustments you made that you plan to continue using after the pandemic?

38. Do you think the pandemic impacted any specific subpopulations (such as age groups, racial/ethnic groups, income brackets, etc.) more than others?

Enhancing Communications and Information

4. To what degree do you think that the community at large is aware of the breadth of available services in the area? What are the challenges to greater awareness and understanding of the availability of services and ways to access them? What might help overcome the challenges?

5. How do consumers generally learn about access to and availability of services in the county (e.g., On-line directory; Hotline; Word of Mouth)?

6. What are some of the community-level things that can be done to make an impact on the poverty, emergency services, food, employment, and housing needs in the area? Are there any "low hanging fruit" that would be addressed quickly?

Magic Wand Question: If money and resources weren't an issue, what is one thing you would do for your community?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix D: Community Survey

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc.

Community Survey

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program also known as CDP is conducting a Community Needs Assessment to help identify ways to better serve the residents of St. Lawrence County. The survey will help identify the top needs of residents and the barriers/gaps that may prevent residents from accessing community services.

The survey will take less than 15 minutes and all answers will be anonymous and confidential. You will not be asked any personally identifiable information.

Please complete the survey by September 14, 2022.

If you have any questions about the survey or the community needs assessment, please contact our research partner, Crescendo Consulting Group at mgerace@crescendocg.com.

1. **What is your zip code?**

Economy and Workforce

2. **Which best describes your current employment status?**
   - ☐ Employed full-time (40+ hours a week)
   - ☐ Employed part-time (Less than 40 hours a week)
   - ☐ Migrant seasonal farm worker
   - ☐ Currently looking for a job
   - ☐ Not employed and no longer looking for work
   - ☐ Unable to work [Go to Q3; all other answers go to Q4]
   - ☐ Retired

3. **Why are you unable to work? (Check all that apply)**
   - ☐ Family responsibilities
   - ☐ Disability
   - ☐ Unable to find a meaningful job in my community

- ☐ Afraid of losing my public benefits or assistance
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Childcare
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

4. **How often, if ever, have you experienced any of these difficult work-related challenges in the past three years?**

	Never/ Not Applicable	Rarely – once a year	Sometimes – a few times a year	Often – every month
My paycheck does not cover my basic living expenses				
Lack of affordable health insurance				
I am unable to put any money toward savings or retirement				
There are few opportunities for advancement at my current job				
There are limited living wage job opportunities in my community				
Childcare is not available or too expensive				
Reliable transportation				
Additional education or training				
Unable to find additional education or training (i.e., certifications, college/technical school, etc.)				

5. **Do you use any of the following resources to support your family?**
   - ☐ SNAP
   - ☐ WIC
   - ☐ Food baskets
   - ☐ Child support
   - ☐ Public assistance for housing/utilities (i.e., Housing Choice Vouchers, emergency rental or utility assistance, etc.)
   - ☐ Disability income for adults/child
   - ☐ Other (please specific)
   - ☐ None of the above

Please use a scale of 1 to 5 – where 1 means that "No More Focus is Needed" and 5 means "A Lot More Focus is Needed." You can also choose "I don't know."

6. How much focus should be given to each of the following **TRANSPORTATION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, AND EMPLOYMENT** needs?

	1. No More Focus or Support Needed	2. A Little More Focus or Support Needed	3. More Focus or Support Needed	4. Much More Focus or Support Needed	5. A Lot More Focus	I don't know
Making public transportation available in rural communities						
Adding better routes and time schedules to current public transportation system						
Providing help with the cost of vehicle repairs						
Providing help with the cost of vehicle insurance and regular maintenance						
Developing more livable-wage jobs						
Providing job growth opportunities						
Creating technical school, trade school, or other job training options						
Providing soft skills education (customer service, showing up on time, etc.)						
Improving access to high-speed internet and technology						

Housing and Neighborhoods

7. **What type of housing do you currently live in?**
   - ☐ Rent
   - ☐ Own
   - ☐ Live with family
   - ☐ I do not have stable housing / Live in a shelter or temporary housing
   - ☐ I have been "couch surfing" with friends and family
   - ☐ Other (Please specify)

The following sections each list a number of Community Needs and ask you to decide how much focus each issue should be given. Please use a scale of 1 to 5 -- where 1 means that "No More Focus is Needed" and 5 means "A Lot More Focus is Needed." You can also choose "I don't know."

8. **How much focus should be given to each of the following HOUSING needs?**

	1. No More Focus or Support Needed	**2. A Little More Focus or Support Needed**	**3. More Focus or Support Needed**	**4. Much More Focus or Support Needed**	**5. A Lot More Focus**	**I don't know**
Increasing the number of affordable apartments						
Increasing the number of affordable houses for sale						
Creating higher quality rental apartments and houses						
Developing rental and mortgage assistance programs						
Increasing the number of landlords who accept housing vouchers						
Increasing programs for major housing repairs (roofs, windows, etc.)						
Increasing programs for minor housing repairs (paint, upgrades, etc.)						
Providing help with weatherization						
Providing help with utility assistance (heating fuel, electricity, etc.)						

Providing hotspots for internet access						
Providing more senior housing options						
Creating more emergency shelter beds for people who are homeless						
Helping more people who are homeless to find their missing identification documents (driver's license, social security number, etc.)						
Creating more shelter beds for certain populations (children, women, families, LGBTQIA, veterans, etc.)						

Education and Childcare

9. **Do you have children?**
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No (skip to Q#14)

10. **Have you needed any of the following services for your children, but found it difficult to get the service?**

	Yes	No
Head Start Program		
After-school childcare		
Recreation programs, like sports, arts, or theater		
Tutoring or academic help		
Youth mentor or leadership programs		
Mental health services at school		
Health services at school		

11. **Have you needed childcare in the past five years but have had difficulty finding it?**
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No (skip to Q#13)

12. **If you answered yes, what were the reasons for the difficulty? (Check all that apply)**
   - ☐ I don't know where to find childcare in my community
   - ☐ It costs too much
   - ☐ It is not available during the hours I work or go to school
   - ☐ The wait lists are too long
   - ☐ I can't find a quality provider
   - ☐ I don't have reliable transportation
   - ☐ There are no open slots for my child
   - ☐ Providers don't take infants or toddlers
   - ☐ Other (please specify)

Please use a scale of 1 to 5 – where 1 means that "No More Focus is Needed" and 5 means "A Lot More Focus is Needed." You can also choose "I don't know."

13. **How much focus should be given to each of the following CHILDCARE AND EARLY EDUCATION needs?**

	1. No More Focus or Support Needed	**2. A Little More Focus or Support Needed**	**3. More Focus or Support Needed**	**4. Much More Focus or Support Needed**	**5. A Lot More Focus**	**I don't know**
Increasing the number of high quality licensed childcare providers						
Increasing the number of affordable childcare providers						
Mental health services for children ages 4 and younger						
Providing more flexible and affordable childcare options for working parent(s)						
Providing more transportation options to childcare services						
Providing more after-school programs for school-aged children						
Providing more recreational opportunities for youth						

Health Care, Mental Health, Substance Use, and Food Access

14. Do you have a primary care provider, such as a doctor, nurse practitioner, or pediatrician?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

15. In the past 12 months, have you needed any of the following health services but were unable to get the service? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Medical care (i.e., primary care doctor, cardiologist, annual physical exam, etc.)
- ☐ Dental care
- ☐ Behavioral health care (i.e., psychiatrists, therapists, counselors, etc.)
- ☐ Substance use treatment (AA, NA, inpatient facility, outpatient facility, etc.)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

16. What are some of the challenges you face when accessing health services? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of health insurance
- ☐ Lack of money/ability to pay
- ☐ Did not feel comfortable with the available providers
- ☐ Providers did not speak my language
- ☐ Providers are not culturally competent
- ☐ Concern about my immigration status
- ☐ Providers are not knowledgeable about people with my sexual orientation or gender status
- ☐ Lack of transportation
- ☐ Long wait times to see a providers
- ☐ Doctor's office is too far from my house
- ☐ COVID-19 restrictions

17. Do you have any of the following disability/ability?

- ☐ A sensory impairment (vision or hearing)
- ☐ A learning disability (i.e., ADHD, dyslexia)
- ☐ A mobility impairment
- ☐ A mental health disorder
- ☐ A long-term medical illness (i.e., epilepsy, cystic fibrosis)
- ☐ A temporary impairment due to illness or injury (i.e., broken ankle, surgery)
- ☐ A disability or impairment not listed
- ☐ I do not identify with a disability or impairment
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

18. **Have you or your family experienced food insecurity, that is, not knowing where your next meal is coming from or involuntarily eating less than you need on a regular basis, for a period of time?**
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

19. **How much additional focus or support should be given to each of the following FOOD, HEALTH CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH needs?**

	1. No More Focus or Support Needed	2. A Little More Focus or Support Needed	3. More Focus or Support Needed	4. Much More Focus or Support Needed	5. A Lot More Focus	I don't know
Increasing the number of dentists who serve Medicaid patients						
Making dental care more affordable						
Increasing services for people with disabilities						
Reducing the amount of smoking and vaping						
Reducing the amount of adult obesity						
Reducing the amount of childhood obesity						
Accessible sources for affordable, nutritious food						
Increasing the number of mental health providers in rural communities						
Increasing the number of substance use disorder providers and services						
Reducing the amount of alcohol misuse						
Reducing the amount of opioid misuse						
Reducing the amount of other drug misuse (heroin, cocaine, etc.)						
Increasing the number of detox facilities						

Reducing stigma associated with mental health and substance misuse						
Expanding crisis services for mental health and substance use disorders						
Expanding open hours at food pantries						
Expanding food options for people with dietary restrictions or allergies at food pantries						
Increasing the availability of prepared foods for seniors (Meals on Wheels, etc.)						

COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts

20. The following is a list of **COMMUNITY** needs that have been previously identified. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, do you think that the following issues are **MORE important, LESS important, or about the same compared to the start of the pandemic?**

	LESS important now than at the start	**About the SAME importance as the start**	**MORE Important now than at the start**	**I'm not sure**
Unemployment payments				
Job training / help finding a job				
Relief and assistance for small businesses				
Affordable rental housing				
Affordable homes for sale				
Access to healthy food				
Public transportation				
Childcare				
Utility assistance				
Rental or mortgage assistance				
Homeless services				
Access to health care				
Access to mental health and substance misuse services				
Access to high-speed internet and technology				
Other (please specify)				

Causes and Conditions of Poverty

"Causes of poverty" are negative factors that make it more difficult for low-income people to provide for themselves and/or reduce access to resources that might help them meet their basic needs.

21. What do you believe to be the top 5 biggest causes of poverty in St. Lawrence County? (Choose 5)

- ☐ Lack of jobs paying a living wage
- ☐ Substance (drug or alcohol) abuse
- ☐ Lack of affordable and safe housing
- ☐ Single-parent households
- ☐ Lack of jobs available
- ☐ Untreated mental health conditions
- ☐ Inter-generational poverty
- ☐ Systemic racism or prejudice
- ☐ Outdated policy or regulatory eligibility standards
- ☐ Lack of parental involvement
- ☐ Lack of reliable transportation
- ☐ Lack of affordable health care
- ☐ Lack of affordable childcare
- ☐ Teen pregnancy
- ☐ Lack of college, technical, or trade school education
- ☐ Disability

"Conditions of poverty" are negative environmental, safety, health and/or economic conditions that reduce investment or growth in communities where low-income individuals live.

22. What you believe to be the top 5 biggest conditions of poverty in your county? (Choose 5)

- ☐ Individuals on public assistance programs
- ☐ Lack of childcare or low-quality childcare
- ☐ Lack of employers
- ☐ Housing market is not affordable
- ☐ Lack of transportation options
- ☐ Lack of mental health and substance abuse providers
- ☐ Substandard or unsafe housing
- ☐ Lack of health care providers
- ☐ Lack of dentists
- ☐ Poor performing schools
- ☐ Homelessness
- ☐ Vacant housing
- ☐ Lack of adequate nutrition
- ☐ Lack of financial or budgeting education
- ☐ High crime rates

23. How do you typically hear about resources and services in your community?

- ☐ Friends and family
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Internet search
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Television
- ☐ My religious leader or faith-based community
- ☐ Social service organizations
- ☐ Other (please specify)

24. Are there any other needs of St. Lawrence County residents that you think are important for us to know?

A little bit about you

We would like to learn a little bit about you. As a reminder, all answers you provide us are anonymous.

25. What is your gender identity?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary / Gender diverse
- ☐ My gender identity isn't listed
- ☐ I prefer not to share

26. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 or older
- ☐ I prefer not to share

27. What is your race? Check all that apply

- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Asian or Asian American
- ☐ Native American or Alaska Native
- ☐ Another race
- ☐ Multiple races
- ☐ I prefer not to share
- ☐ Other (please specify)

28. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Not Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ I prefer not to share

29. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Less than high school or GED
- ☐ High school diploma or equivalent
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Technical or trades school
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree (Masters, PhD, MD, etc.)
- ☐ I prefer not to share

30. Which of the following ranges best describes your total annual household income in the past year?

- ☐ Under $15,000
- ☐ Between $15,000 and $29,999
- ☐ Between $30,000 and $49,999
- ☐ Between $50,000 and $74,999
- ☐ Between $75,000 and $99,999
- ☐ Between $100,000 and $150,000
- ☐ Over $150,000
- ☐ I prefer not to share

Thank you for participating in this important project!