

# COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

## SUMMIT & MEDINA COUNTIES 2023

PREPARED BY



THE CENTER FOR  
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS EST. 1913  
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AKRON  
COMMUNITY  
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# Introduction

Akron Community Foundation (ACF) is committed to improving the quality of life in greater Akron, and one of the key ways this is accomplished is through partnerships with nonprofits, funders, government groups, and businesses, in order to gather and share knowledge that improves the community. The Center for Community Solutions (CCS), in close partnership with ACF, embraced this approach to conduct a meaningful community needs assessment. Comprehensive groups of community members, leaders, and content experts were spoken with to gather and synthesize information. This was an iterative process, as each group of individuals informed who was included in the next group of individuals and how they were invited to participate.

## Proactive Grantee Interviews

The process began by interviewing thirteen CEOs, Directors, and Organizational Leaders across multiple organizations in the region. These individuals represented organizations that had been recipients of grant funds tied to ACF's three proactive priorities: Older Adults; Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and Addiction/Substance Use. The interviews were exploratory in nature, and among other things, interviewees were asked about what emerging and unmet needs they were seeing in their communities. A summary of these interviews and what we learned is summarized in the proactive grantees summary section of this document.

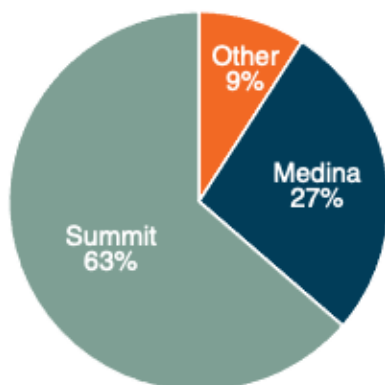
## Community Survey

A survey was developed to capture a wide scope of information. The survey centered on gathering information around ten identified topic areas of concern: Housing, Food Insecurity, Mental Health, The Technology Gap, Employment Concerns, Transit; Addiction/Substance Use, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Social Isolation, and Public Safety. These topics were identified based on thematic analysis from the interviews with proactive grantees, insight from recent community needs assessments, and discussion between CCS and ACF. An "other area of concern" topic was also added to give respondents a chance to discuss something they felt was missing from the survey. For each topic, respondents were asked how concerned they were about issues related to the topic on a scale of Extremely Concerned to Not at All Concerned. Given the complexity and potential enormity of these topics, these questions were explored qualitatively. Respondents who felt any of the topics explored were of Extreme Concern or Very Concerning, were prompted to respond to the following three questions:

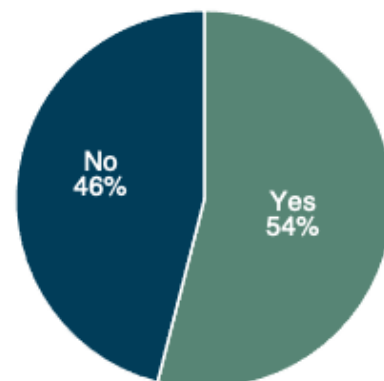
- What are you seeing in your work or personal life that led you to rank [topic area] as a cause for concern?
- Who is most affected by [the topic area]?
- What can be done about this problem?

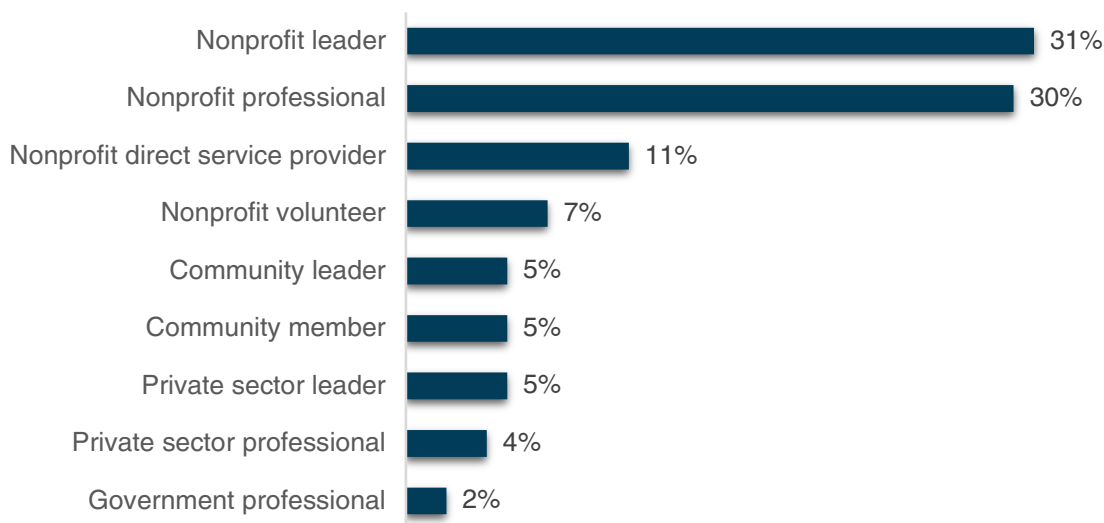
The survey was sent out on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, to a convenience sample of everyone on ACF's mailing list. Upon closure on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, the survey had received 194 responses. This is who responded:

Respondent's County



Respondents who had worked with ACF in the Past





This sample represented a deeply informed and invested community of individuals. The majority of respondents were connected with local nonprofits in the community (72 percent) and had worked with ACF before in some capacity (54 percent).

Respondent's rankings of concerns were used to identify eight primary topic areas of concern, three in Summit County and five in Medina County.

Summit:

- Housing
- Mental Health
- Public Safety

Medina:

- Housing
- Mental Health
- Addiction/Substance Use
- Food Insecurity
- Transit

Respondent replies within these primary topic areas were then analyzed using a technique called summative content analysis, in which themes are first identified in the text and then tallied for prevalence.<sup>1</sup>

## Community Leaders & Content Expert Interviews

Based on the findings from the survey, two focus groups were hosted on December 5<sup>th</sup> with nonprofit leaders in Summit and Medina County. These leaders were identified by ACF for their experience and expertise. During the conversations the identified areas of concern from the survey were discussed to develop more insight into the scope of the situation. In total, 21 individuals attended the focus groups.

Interviews were also scheduled with three leaders from Summit County in the areas of housing, mental health, and public safety and four leaders in Medina County in the areas of housing, mental health, addiction and substance use, and food insecurity. These leaders were identified by ACF for their experience and expertise.

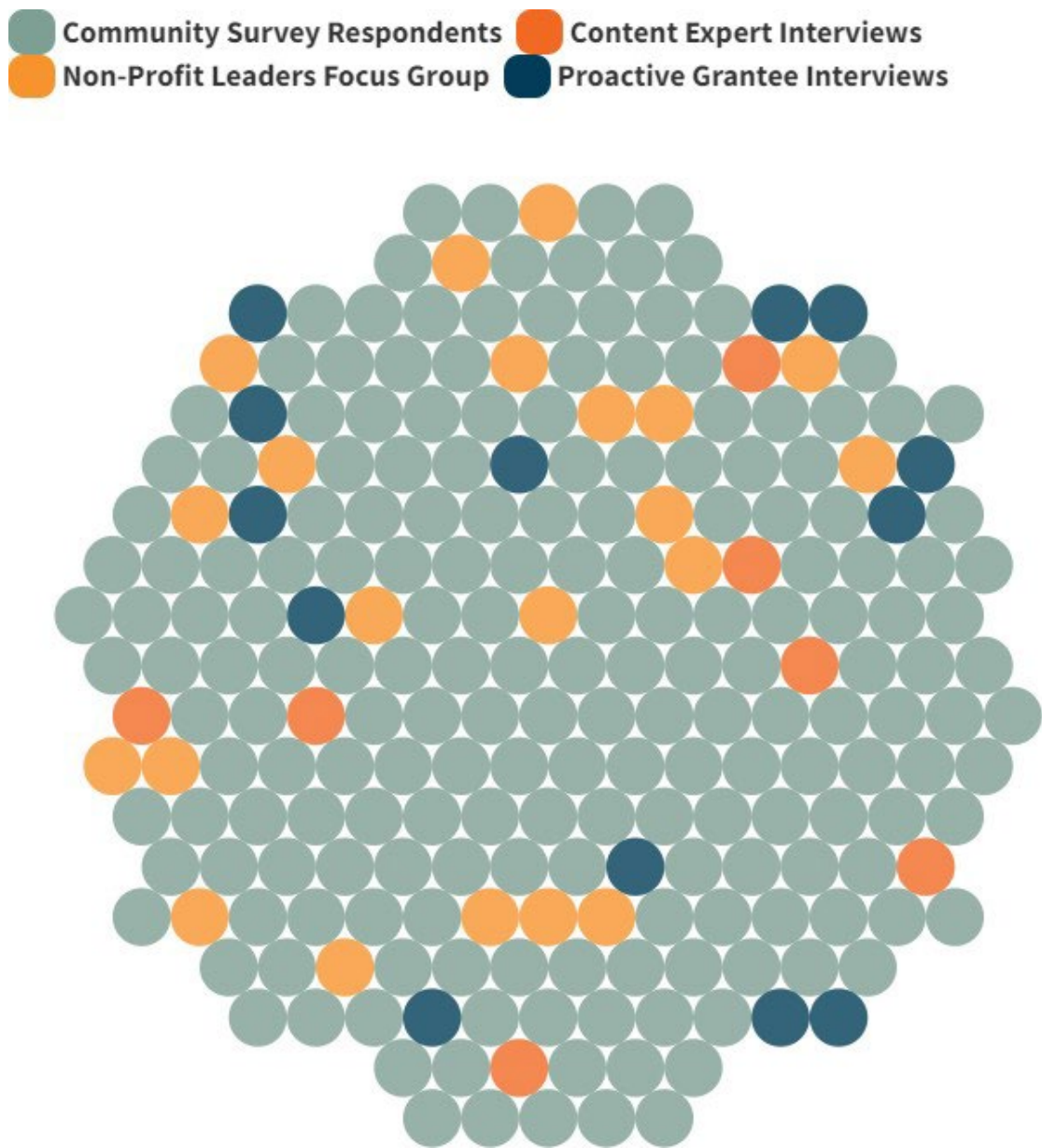
<sup>1</sup> Hsieh H-F, Shannon SE. Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2005;15(9):1277-1288. doi:[10.1177/1049732305276687](https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687)



The focus of these conversations was to ask the content experts about their thoughts on how best to address the topic area of their expertise, and the ways in which they foresaw ACF, the Medina County Community Fund (MCCF), and/or the Medina County Women’s Endowment Fund (MCWEF) as being able to assist with these efforts. The conversations took place throughout December 2022.

Participant Distribution

In total, we heard from 235 individuals for this needs assessment, either through survey (n=194), focus group (n=21), or interview (n=20).



# Review of Existing Assessments

## Related to ACF's Proactive Grantmaking Priorities

In 2017, ACF instituted a Proactive Grant program to fund projects aimed at addressing one of three issues: Older Adults; Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and Addiction/Substance Use. Since the birth of the grant initiative in 2017, multiple needs assessments have been completed by organizations in Summit and Medina counties – the region served by ACF. The assessments cover a diverse range of topics, but all include topics that affect Summit and Medina County residents and have been identified as necessary priorities to be addressed.

### Aging Residents

Despite having the fifth largest population of older adults, Summit County is the only large county in Ohio without having a dedicated senior levy or general human services levy to provide funding for senior services.<sup>2</sup> Many issues surround individuals growing older in Summit County. The affordability of housing is a primary concern for older adults. Many senior-dedicated facilities have long wait lists and older adults are burdened with trying to secure affordable housing. Transportation was a primary theme seen in most assessments as well, with very few wheelchair or mobility accessible options locally. Walkability is also a desire of Summit County older adults. Forty percent of surveyed older adults said that they don't have sidewalks and another 22 percent said that their sidewalks are uneven or unsafe. Over half of the older adults surveyed are not able to safely walk in their neighborhoods due to these issues.

The health and well-being of the older adults living in Summit County is a concern to be addressed. The prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is higher in Summit County than the Ohio rate. The rate of older adults who died by suicide was also higher than the rate in the State of Ohio.<sup>3</sup> Calls for older adult specific centers and programming were echoed in several surveys, and the Greater Akron LGBTQ+ Assessment emphasized the need for culturally competent care in the aging LGBTQ population.<sup>4</sup>

The Western Reserve Office on Aging provides services for older adults in Medina County. Medina County has higher than average rates of dementia and a growing 65 plus population that will require a more comprehensive care system in the future.<sup>5</sup>

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Over half (56 percent) of Summit County residents surveyed felt that structural or institutional racism was a serious problem in the county. However, unsurprisingly, this varied across several different demographic groups. Seventy-three percent of non-white respondents thought that racism was a serious problem compared to 52 percent of white residents.<sup>6</sup>

In Greater Akron for every \$100 in income that a white family earns, a Black family earns \$52.26. Nationally, for every \$100 in wealth that a white family has, a Black family has \$5.70.<sup>7</sup> Disparities among Black and white residents exist in all facets of living in Summit County. The poverty rate is three times higher for Black individuals living in Akron when compared to white individuals. Remnants of redlining are still present within the city limits, with a high Black/white homeownership gap at 33.6 percent (38.1 percent vs 71.7 percent).<sup>8</sup> When asked to rank five issues in Greater Akron in order of most significant, Black respondents ranked public safety and the judicial system much higher than their white counterparts (#2 vs #5). In Ohio, Black youth make up 17 percent of the population, but represent half of youth felonies committed and 82 percent of the youth transferred to adult court. According to a newly published Akron Children's Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment,<sup>9</sup> over half (60 percent) of parents in the study sample reported that their Black children experienced discrimination in the last year, compared to 36 percent of all other respondents. The same assessment reported that Black caregivers and parents were significantly less likely to be satisfied with the quality of life their children had in their community. Relatedly, only 47 percent of Black parents and caregivers reported receiving culturally appropriate services for their children when they seek healthcare.

<sup>2</sup> An Analysis of Senior Tax Levies in Ohio, The Center for Community Solutions, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Akron General, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Greater Akron LGBTQ+ Community Needs Assessment, Kent State College of Public Health, 2022

<sup>5</sup> Community Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Medina Hospital, 2019

<sup>6</sup> Community Pulse Report Summit County 2022, Center for Marketing & Opinion Research, 2022

<sup>7</sup> Economic Case for Inclusion, Elevate Greater Akron, 2021

<sup>8</sup> Greater Akron Comprehensive Community Assessment, Akron Community Foundation, 2018

In a first of its kind for the region, the LGBTQ+ Greater Akron Community Needs Assessment surveyed a comprehensive sample of individuals in the LGBTQ+ community from the region.<sup>10</sup> Findings indicated that individuals faced significant discrimination due to their LGBTQ+ identity. Specifically, 30 percent reported that in the last year they were called names or insulted a few times a month or at greater frequency, and nearly half (44 percent) reported being threatened or harassed because of their LGBTQ+ identity more than once in the last year. For trans individuals, 57 percent reported being threatened or harassed under the same parameters. When it comes to accessing medical services, about a quarter of respondents (26 percent) reported putting off seeking medical care at least sometimes because of their LGBTQ+ identity.

An examination of women in the workforce in Summit County revealed that women are vastly underpaid and underrepresented across the public and private sectors in Greater Akron. When compared to national data, Summit County is lagging in representation and pay equality for women, especially women of color. On average, publicly held companies in Northeast Ohio paid their female top earners 75 cents on the dollar that their male counterparts made. In Summit County's private sector, 18 percent of senior leadership were women, compared with the national average of 30 percent, and women of color held only 1 percent of senior leadership positions in Summit County.

Though women dominate the nonprofit world in Summit County, their presence diminishes at the leadership level. Women hold 41 percent of board seats locally when compared to 48 percent nationally. The nonprofit world holds more promising statistics for women of color compared to other workforce sectors, holding 9 percent of senior leadership and 7 percent of Board seats. In the public sector, women make up the majority of judges at 66 percent, but are the minority in all other elected positions. In Summit County, women mayors make up only 5 percent of the workforce, compared to 22 percent nationally.

More women also perceive that their gender played a role in missing out on workplace advancement and believe that their gender makes it harder to advance in the workplace than men.<sup>11</sup>

### **Addiction/Substance Use**

Addiction/substance abuse was perceived as having the greatest impact on the health of Akron by over half of individuals surveyed.<sup>12</sup> Residents felt that, coupled with poverty, there was a general lack of affordable treatment options and case management.<sup>13</sup> In Summit County, the rate of deaths due to accidental poisoning and exposure to drugs exceeds the State of Ohio by more than 50 percent. In 2018, Summit County had the second highest deaths related to driving while alcohol-impaired<sup>14</sup>. Pre-pandemic, drugs and addiction dominated as the number one problem that Summit County residents identified, with between 22-32 percent of respondents indicating so. However, this concern has decreased recently, with only 10 percent of respondents naming it as the most important issue facing Summit County in 2022.<sup>15</sup>

Alcohol abuse is a serious concern in Medina County. Medina county is in the bottom quartile of Ohio counties for excessive drinking, as well as alcohol-impaired driving deaths, with only 3 counties having a greater number of deaths.<sup>16</sup> Though binge drinking has decreased since 2016, Alcohol-induced mortality has increased by 66 percent.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Akron Children's Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment, Akron Children's Hospital, 2022

<sup>10</sup> Greater Akron LGBTQ+ Community Needs Assessment, Kent State College of Public Health, 2022

<sup>11</sup> Gender Equity & Women's Leadership Study, Women's Network, 2019

<sup>12</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Summit County Public Health, 2019

<sup>13</sup> Greater Akron Comprehensive Community Assessment, Akron Community Foundation, 2018

<sup>14</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Akron General, 2019

## Related to General Needs in the Community

Aside from the specific proactive grant making priorities, recently released assessments and reports were also reviewed and synthesized to develop a list of general emerging needs in Summit and Medina Counties. Many of the findings from these assessments corroborate the findings from this community needs assessment.

### Mental Health

A pervasive and recurrent theme is the emerging needs around mental health. When asked what health conditions are having the greatest impact on the Akron community's overall health and wellness, 34 percent of the sample said mental health issues. Mental and behavioral health has also become a significant concern for children, with 17 percent of parents in an Akron Children's Hospital Community Health Assessment reporting concern for their children's mental health, and one in three parents reporting that their children were suffering from stress or anxiety problems<sup>18</sup>. Similarly in Medina County, mental health was identified as a top area of concern. A community health needs assessment identified that depression, suicide, and feelings of hopelessness, were perceived to be on the rise<sup>19</sup>. Suicides in Medina County have increased 130% since 2001<sup>20</sup>, and is one of the top five leading causes of death for people under the ages of 60, with a mortality rate of 77.8 fatalities per 100,000 residents.<sup>21</sup> This has led to mental health being a key priority for the more recent Medina Community Health Improvement Plan<sup>22</sup>, a concern echoed by the Cleveland Clinic in Medina County. Specific to youth, only 61 percent of parents in the Northeast Ohio region rated their children's mental health as "very healthy", and roughly a third of parents of teens are not satisfied with mental health services available to their children. Many parents also expressed concern regarding the negative impact of social isolation experienced by their children during Covid-19 lockdowns to their mental health.<sup>23</sup> There is also concerning data that identified youth who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community were more likely to be bullied, purposefully hurt themselves, and contemplate/try to kill themselves<sup>24</sup>.

The key to maintaining strong mental health is access to effective and affordable treatment. In Medina County, however, access to mental health care is often challenging due to cost, insurance benefits limits, and a lack of psychiatrists.<sup>25</sup> Medina has only one mental health provider for every 680 residents, nearly half as much as the state of Ohio, which has a mental health provider for every 350 residents.<sup>26</sup> Barriers to mental health access in Summit County were similar; a lack of awareness of services, an inability to pay for treatment, and not enough providers<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Community Pulse Report Summit County 2022, Center for Marketing & Opinion Research, 2022

<sup>16</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Akron General, 2019

<sup>17</sup> Medina County Community Health Improvement Plan, Living Well Medina County, 2022

<sup>18</sup> Akron Children's Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment, Akron Children's Hospital, 2022

<sup>19</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Medina Hospital, 2019

<sup>20</sup> Medina County Community Health Improvement Plan, Living Well Medina County, 2022

<sup>21</sup> Suicide Fatality Report 2016-2020, Medina County Health Department 2021

<sup>22</sup> Medina County Community Health Improvement Plan, Living Well Medina County, 2022

<sup>23</sup> Akron Children's Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment, Akron Children's Hospital, 2022

<sup>24</sup> Youth Risk Behavior Survey Summary, 2013 and 2018, Summit County Public Health, 2019

<sup>25</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Medina Hospital, 2019

<sup>26</sup> County Health Rankings, Medina County 2021

## **Transportation as a barrier**

Another common barrier to mental health treatment, as well as accessing health care in general, was transportation. Both in Medina County and much of Summit County, there is limited public transportation, and in the more rural parts of the region public transit is nearly nonexistent. This lack of transportation has negative impacts on one's access to health care, healthy foods, and employment options.<sup>28,29</sup> Transportation is particularly of concern for older adults, especially those in more rural areas. A recent needs assessment of older adults in Summit County evidenced that many older adults who cannot drive are reliant on friends and family to help them with transportation given the limited public transit offerings.<sup>30</sup>

## **Public Safety and Violence**

Public Safety and violence have been identified as a concern in Summit County, and a contributor to other health problems such as mental health issues, or a concern of being outside and active in neighborhoods experiencing violence.<sup>31</sup> When respondents were asked which issues were having the greatest impact on your community's health and wellness, top responses included gang related violence (mentioned by 21 percent of respondents), and gun related injuries (mentioned by 20 percent of respondents). Approximately one in ten older adults in Summit County indicated that they were fearful that they would be a victim of crime in their neighborhood, and another 16 percent said they weren't sure how they felt about it.<sup>32</sup> A report released by the City of Akron indicated that, after discussions with youth in the Summit County Juvenile Detention Center, reasons youth engage in illegal and potentially violent behavior included: hanging with the wrong people; living in the wrong neighborhood/environment; lack of money and employment that pays a decent wage; and a lack of resources, among other things.<sup>33</sup> The insight about lack of resources of poor employment opportunities is an important thing to remember in light of a recent report from Elevate Greater Akron, which identified Akron as one of the worst metro areas in the United States for Black employment opportunities and Black wealth growth.<sup>34</sup> It is important to remember how systemic racial disparities impact all facets of life.

## **Housing**

The number one thing Summit County residents identified as being an issue that would have the greatest impact on their community's health and wellness was homelessness. In both Summit and Medina Counties, many residents are unable to find housing that is both affordable and safe. Low income and elderly populations were identified as especially vulnerable, and poor housing contributes to lead exposure and falling risks, among other health problems.<sup>35,36</sup> Similarly, racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to live in houses that are in poorer conditions, old, and more likely to cause lead or mold-based health problems. Compounding this problem and depending structural disparities, low income and racial/ethnic minorities are less likely to be approved for home purchase/improvement loans<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Akron General

<sup>28</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Medina Hospital, 2019

<sup>29</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Akron General, 2019

<sup>30</sup> Age Friendly Summit County Needs Assessment, The Center for Community Solutions, 2021

<sup>31</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Akron General, 2019

<sup>32</sup> Age Friendly Summit County Needs Assessment, The Center for Community Solutions, 2021

<sup>33</sup> Youth Violence Prevention, City of Akron, 2019

<sup>34</sup> Economic Case for Inclusion, Elevate Greater Akron, 2021

<sup>35</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Medina Hospital, 2019

<sup>36</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Cleveland Clinic Akron General, 2019

<sup>37</sup> Community Health Needs Assessment, Summit County Public Health, 2019



# Proactive Grantees

## A Summary of Recipient Interviews



As a first step in this community needs assessment, the directors/CEOs/leaders from local nonprofit organizations were interviewed. All of these organizations had been awarded grant money to address ACF's three proactive grant priorities: Older Adults, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and Substance Use Disorder/Addiction. The interviewees were asked about their experience receiving funding, and the progress they've made towards their goals. They were also asked about emerging and unmet needs they were seeing in the community. Given the rich variety of organizations represented in these interviews, this summary will prioritize broadly applicable insights.

### Progress Towards Goals After Receiving ACF Funding

The additional funding from ACF allowed organizations to increase capacity through hiring necessary positions to carry out their missions. The increased capacity allowed organizations to focus more efforts on connecting with harder to reach populations. These connections lead to an increased awareness of the issues affecting marginalized populations and created links to services for the populations who would not have otherwise had access to them. Some organizations had recently received funds and could not yet weigh in on goal progress. Overall, the Proactive grantees reported a higher degree of financial stability that provided support to underserved populations. All organizations indicated that their initiatives would have still been a priority had they not received ACF funds, and they all mentioned they would have still tried to engage in their goals, just in a diminished or piecemeal capacity. One organization, however, outright said ACF funds would make or break their capacity to enact their program.

### Workforce Concerns

Concerns around workforce hiring was universal amongst nearly all grantees. Organizations have been struggling to find and maintain staff. Concerns included stiff competition with other agencies and an inability to pay competitive wages. Older adult serving agencies are facing crisis level shortages of home health aides, and addiction/substance use disorder treatment facilities are struggling to retain licensed clinicians. Organizational leaders indicated that for both the fields of substance use disorder treatment and older adult care there, is a lack of "payoff" for the amount of work one has to put in to be qualified for employment. A number of licensed clinicians have switched to private practice with the advent of telehealth. Workforce hiring challenges aren't limited to specialty positions however, multiple organizations said they are struggling to hire all types of positions. Another concern brought up by leaders in the substance use disorder treatment field was the difficulty in diversifying their staff

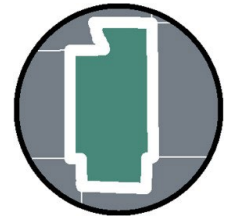
## Emerging Needs in the Community

The emerging needs below were discussed by multiple interviewees:

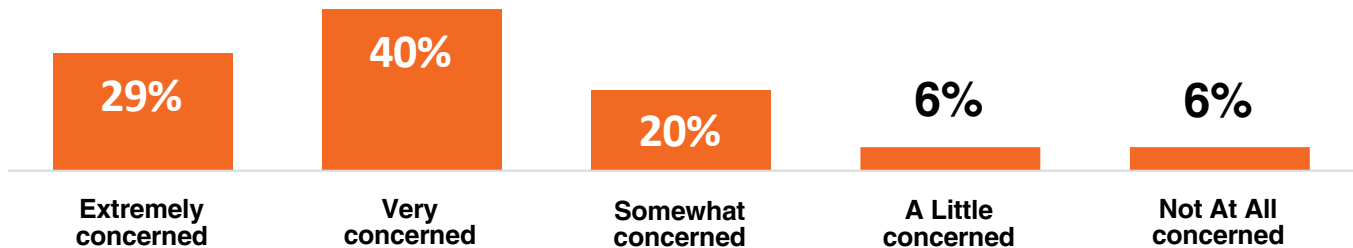
- Housing
  - Rents/Housing is unaffordable
  - Stock is old, in need of repairs
- Food Insecurity
  - Food is becoming more expensive
  - Benefits are not keeping up
  - Food deserts and a lack of healthy food options
- Mental Health
  - Severe shortage in availability and affordability
  - Problems going untreated
  - Need for reducing stigma around mental health and addiction
- Technology Gap/Education
  - Lower-income, older adults, refugees, all have poorer access to technology and understanding of how to use it
  - Negative impacts for online education for children
- Employment
  - Low wages/lack of opportunities for higher wage employment
  - Need for job preparation training (i.e.: how to make self a marketable candidate)
  - Need for affordable childcare options
- Transit
  - Barrier for older adults and lower income folks
  - Safety concerns with pandemic and public transit

These needs directly informed the community survey, and all six of these identified areas were included in the community survey for further exploration.

# Housing In Summit County



Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about housing, specifically around affordability and availability, in Summit County. Nearly 70 percent reported being either extremely or very concerned about issues related to housing.



## What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses.

- Lack of affordable housing
- Rising costs of rent and home ownership
- Housing/rentals are unsafe and/or poorly maintained
- Lack of services for those in need
  - Long wait lists for affordable housing
- Problems with landlords
  - Not wanting to rent to low-income individuals and families
  - Not keeping up with maintenance
- Increases in people who are experiencing homelessness
- Lack of housing options for people living with disabilities
- High rates of eviction
- Feeling that leadership isn't doing enough to address the problem

## In their words

*Many landlords are no longer accepting vouchers, as the rental market is strong. Persons with disabilities on fixed incomes are struggling to find affordable and accessible housing.*

*The housing stock is low, older, and the cost for improvements increase the amount of rent landlords need in order to break even or make money and therefore low-income renters cannot afford to live in a home that is safe.*

*The resources seem to be fewer and fewer as the demand gets ever higher. It seems that aside from 211 no one is doing anything with it.*



## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems? These were the most common responses:

- Households with low-income
- BIPOC individuals
- Households with moderate income
- Families
- Single Parents
- Children
- Individuals with disabilities/mental health concerns
- Older Adults
- Individuals experiencing homelessness

## What the leaders said

Two focus groups of nonprofit leaders in Summit and Medina provided their thoughts on this topic:

- Summit County, Akron in particular, has the highest rates of evictions in all of Ohio, and there just isn't a plan in place to address this.
- Homeownership is critical first before any other needs can be addressed.
- Severe lack of affordable housing. Everything is overpriced. Rent is out of control.
- Need systemic and federal change to housing.
- There may be laws for source of income protection, but these laws aren't enforced.
- Federal dollars and efforts should prioritize affordable housing, not mixed-income projects.
- Need full transparency with federal dollars spending.
- With any affordable housing efforts, or with rising property taxes, we need to be purposeful not to gentrify neighborhoods.
- Akron has a lot of housing programs, which means that a lot of people come in from other counties for assistance.

## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

Housing affordability and availability are prevalent themes among the suggestions and responses from Summit County respondents. Responses varied from calls to build more housing to rehabbing and renovating existing houses in Summit County. Despite varying suggestions, there was consensus on the need for more housing available at all price-points. Investments in homeownership programs was identified as a necessity to get people into their own homes.

The unhoused, low-income, developmentally disabled, and older adults were populations of concern frequently mentioned. Many emergency shelters in Summit County are faith-based or church operated, which concerned some respondents. One respondent mentioned that those who have been hurt by faith communities may not feel safe or want to seek spaces that operate within the faith sphere.

Safe, inclusive, and affordable housing is needed for people with disabilities, with suggestions to cluster housing together to create a community in which caregivers can provide appropriate support to this population. Intergenerational communities were suggested as a solution to creating housing for older adults, with a need for more single-story homes. Landlord accountability was also called for by respondents concerned about the low-income population.

Stricter guidance and more oversight are needed for rental owners and landlords, as Summit County experienced a "mass-casualty" incident recently when an apartment complex did not have carbon monoxide detectors installed in their units. Calls for federal policy advocacy were mentioned to supplement local solutions.

### **Opportunity for Impact**

We heard that the county needs to do a better job of offering affordable housing units, with waitlists of an estimated 20,000 people waiting for assistance. Waitlists are a problem in severe need of federal investment on a large scale, and while federal dollars do exist, they are very competitive.

On a more local level however, there is a need to educate landlords throughout the county on the benefits of accepting rent subsidies. Many landlords outside of Akron choose not to accept these subsidies, which has the effect of concentrating poverty within the city of Akron.

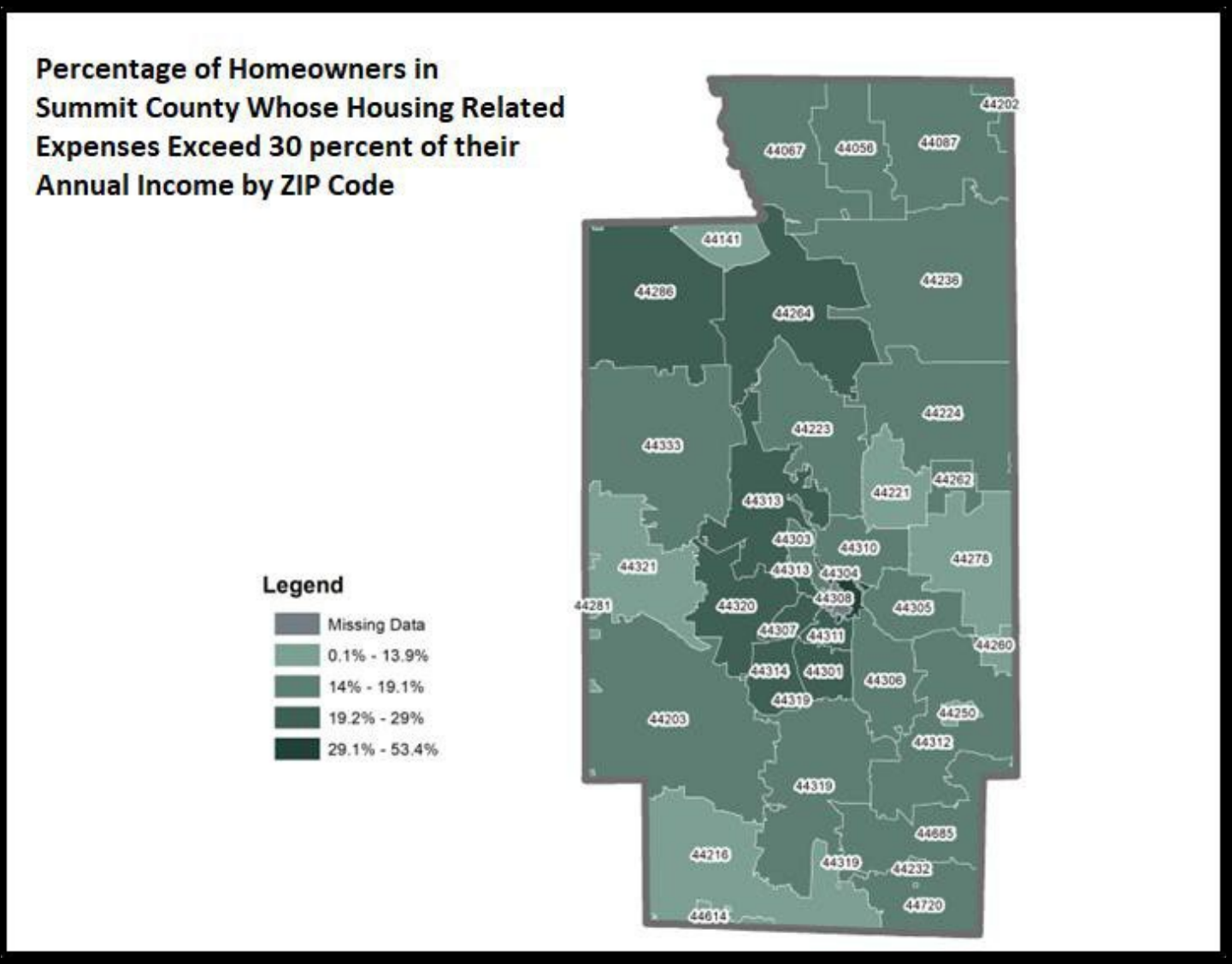
While the enormity of this problem is likely outside of the scope of ACF, a proper housing affordability study of Summit County is sorely needed. Leaders of housing focused agencies do not have an accurate assessment of the situation and have been working on best estimations.

# Housing Burden by ZIP Code

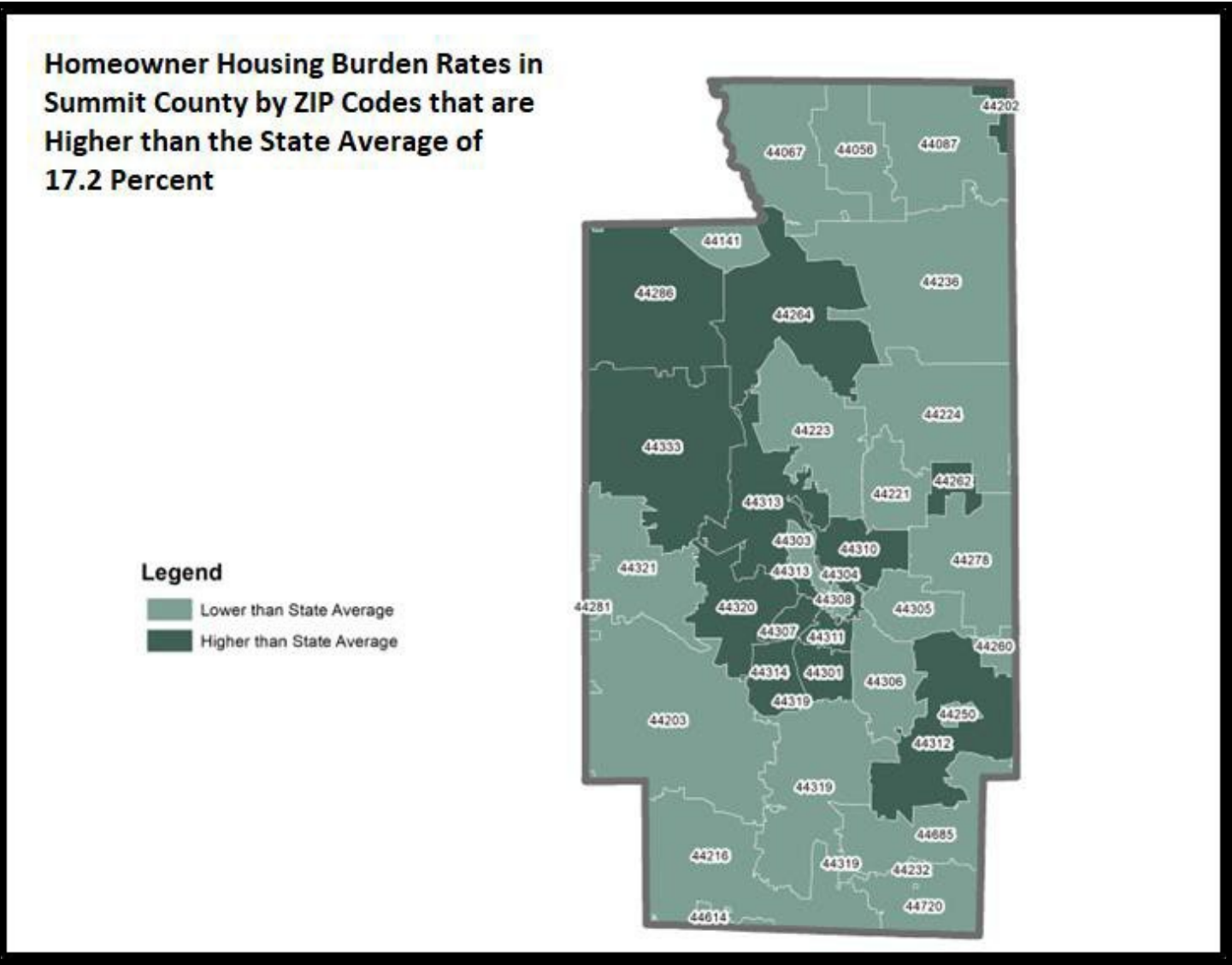
In an effort to better understand the geography of housing concerns in Summit County, maps of housing burden were developed. Housing burden is defined as when more than 30 percent of a household's income is spent on housing related costs, such as rent, mortgage, and utilities. These maps have been split up by homeowners and renters, who face different kinds of housing pressures. All information in these maps comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2021 five-year estimates.

## Homeowners

The map below shows the concentration of homeowners experiencing housing burden, with the highest concentrations occurring in the central and northeastern parts of the county.

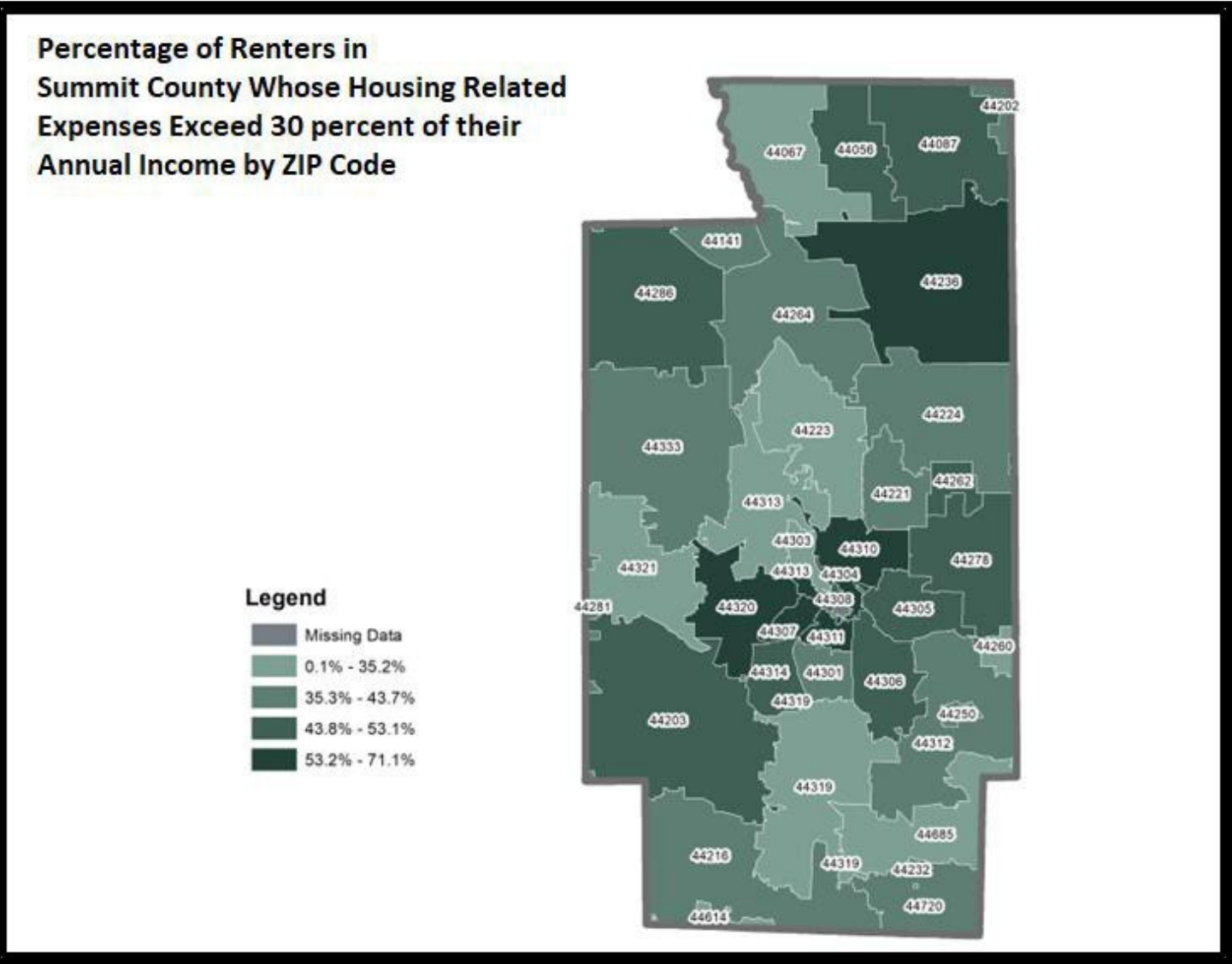


For more context, the map below shows the ZIP codes in Summit County for which the housing burden rates are higher than the state average of 17.2 percent. These areas represent regions in which housing burden for homeowners is a significant concern. As to be expected, the identified regions are similar to the previous map, concentrated to the center and northeastern parts of the county.

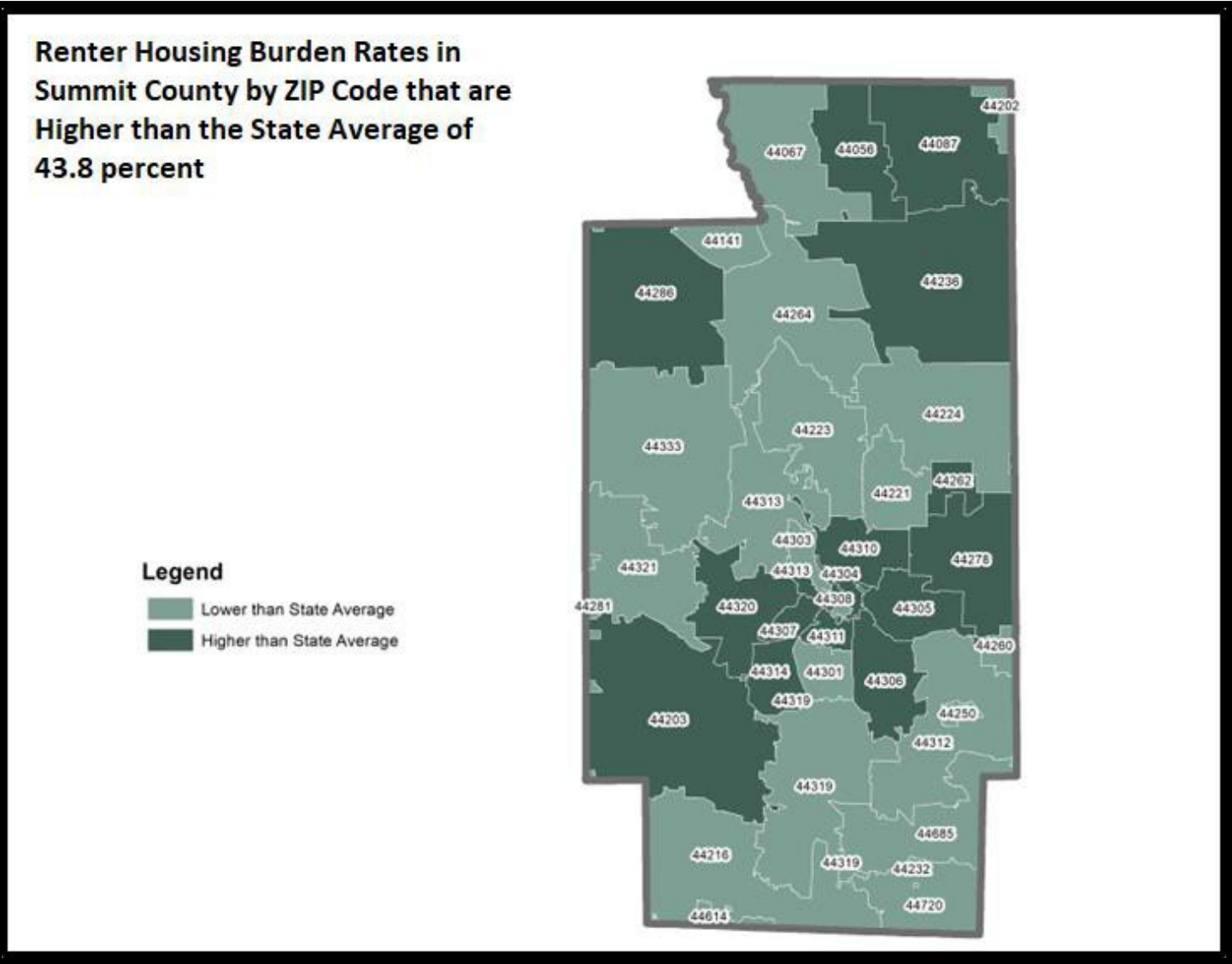


# Renters

The map below details the concentration of renters experiencing housing burden, with the highest concentration occurring in the central part of the county. In general, housing burden is experienced by a far greater proportion of renters than homeowners.

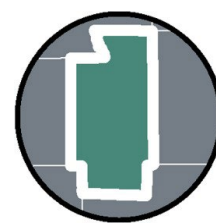


For more context, the map below shows the ZIP codes in Summit County for which the housing burden rates for renters are higher than the state average of 43.8 percent. It is interesting to note how these patterns of ZIP codes with higher than state average housing burden for renters differs from homeowners. Whereas homeowners' housing burden was concentrated to the central and northeastern parts of the county, *renters'* housing burden, while still concentrated in part in the center of the county, was much more disparate, and impacted more geographic regions of the county.

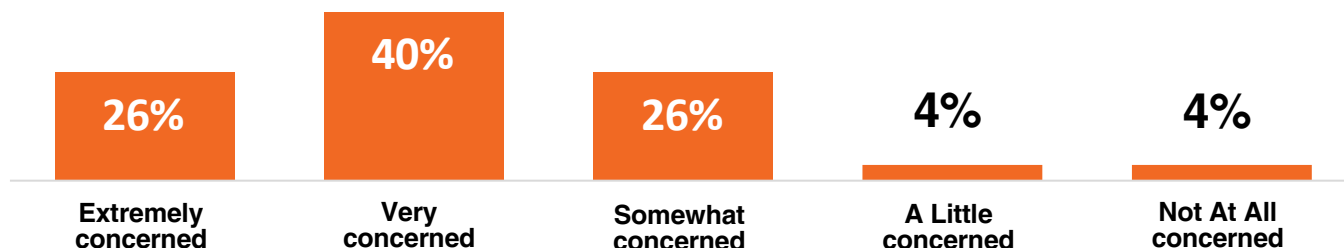


# Mental Health

## In Summit County



Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about mental health, specifically **accessibility**, **affordability**, and **stigma**, in Summit County. Two thirds of respondents (66 percent) reported being either extremely or very concerned about issues related to mental health.



### What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses.

- Mental health needs are a growing problem in the community
- Individuals in need struggle to find help/ there are not enough resources in Summit County
  - Long waitlists to receive services
- Covid-19 made the situation worse
- There are staff shortages in the mental health field
- There is stigma associated with getting help
- Mental health needs are inexorably intertwined with addiction and substance use problems
- There is a lack of information/awareness on how to get help
- A barrier to receiving help is the cost of assistance

### In their words

*I am seeing people having significant wait times for services and there is a large turnover rate of mental health providers, so people are being juggled from one to the other without gaining anything from therapy.*

*In work, I see that Summit County has heavily invested in addiction treatments and recovery, most often for those formerly incarcerated. This is an understandable investment considering the state of the opioid epidemic in our area, but in doing so, they have fallen behind in serving the diverse communities of Summit County struggling with other mental health concerns.*

*This puts out a message that treatment can't be accessed until someone reaches a dire point in their life. Additionally, the treatments they have promoted and invested in are becoming outdated and lack inclusivity.*



## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems? These were the most common responses:

- Everyone in the community
- Children
- Individuals who are low-income
- Older adults
- BIPOC individuals
- Individuals with addiction/substance use disorders
- Teenagers

## What the leaders said

Two focus groups of nonprofit leaders in Summit and Medina provided their thoughts on this topic:

- So many new stressors, the pandemic, disruption of routines, and the increasing difficulties of obtaining basic needs, has led Summit County into a mental health crisis
- Severe shortage in mental health clinicians resulting in long waits to receive help
- Should take the “clinical” aspect out of mental health, which would normalize taking care of one’s mental health and remove stigma
- Should be called “wellness” instead of mental health
- Stigma around getting help is a real concern, and the panels wanted to see trusted leaders in the community setting an example in taking care of their mental health
- Stigma is particularly prevalent in BIPOC and immigrant communities
- Wished there were more care options, such as art therapy and wellness circles, which the group believed would do a better job of reaching BIPOC communities
- Need for investment in translation services for immigrant communities who need care
- Nonprofit professionals are so burnt out right now. How can we build resilience among this workforce?



## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

Summit County is not immune to the shortage of mental health providers occurring nationally; many respondents echoed the need for more workers. Calls were made for increased wages, loan forgiveness, and training a diverse pool of providers and mental health professionals. More education about resources, facilities, and the definition of behavioral health was a repeated solution to the mental health crisis facing Summit County.

Better facilities were also mentioned by several individuals with an emphasis on 24-hour crisis centers for police and first responders to take individuals in a mental health crisis. Providing easily accessible services can begin to break down the stigma from seeking mental health. Placing mental health professionals in schools and workplaces can normalize behavioral and mental health being treated as seriously as physical health ailments.

Reducing stigma surrounding behavioral and mental health can make room for preventative education and care. One respondent wrote, *"Getting into counseling can be extremely hard because of insurance and availability. Kids need to have better access to start the process young that it's ok to have feelings and it's ok to talk about them."* Mental health access may be a cyclical system: increasing insurance and facility availability will make it easier for people to seek help, thus reducing the stigma, and then potentially increasing providers and facilities due to demand.

Mental health access needs to be accessible to all, including marginalized populations such as the LGBTQ+, re-entry, and immigrant/noncitizen communities.

### Opportunity for Impact

We heard resounding calls that mental health should be normalized like a regular health checkup. Mental health should be thought about as a continuum and not a diagnosis. Otherwise, people will continue to receive services only when experiencing a crisis.

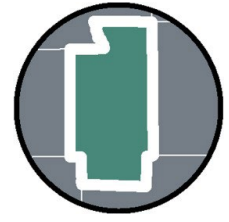
Summit County needs to be pursuing people through non-traditional means, including workplaces. There is a dire need to target and tailor mental health services to the Black community, and to address the extreme spike in overdoses of Black residents of Summit County.

From the perspective of community leaders in the behavioral health space, ACF has been a strong partner through grantmaking with the opiate funds and convening organizations to build infrastructure. More help is needed to assist smaller mental health organizations operate more like a business. Nonprofit behavioral health organizations could use help with budgeting, understanding deficits, and finding ways to save money. Ideally ACF could help behavioral health organizations with recruitment and retention, especially of Black mental health professionals.

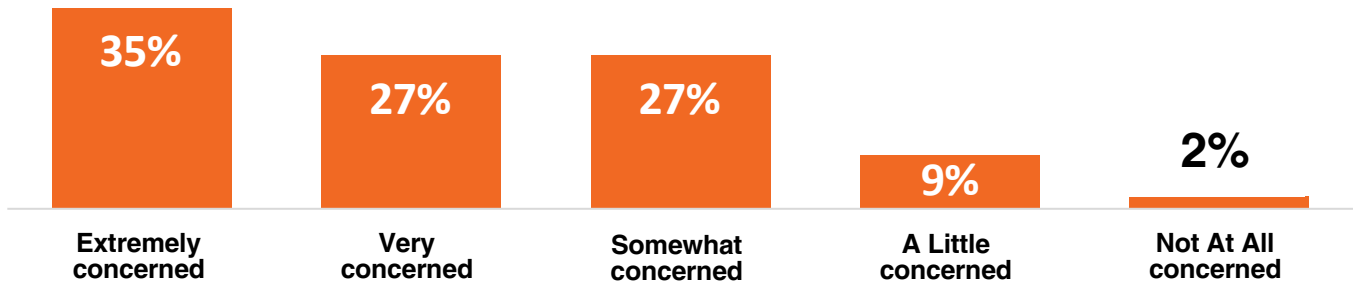
Finally, ACF could work with employers to help promote mental health friendly workplaces, and working with businesses to hire individuals with mental health needs.

# Public Safety

## In Summit County



Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about Public Safety, specifically around **crime, safety, and law enforcement presence**, in Summit County. Just under two thirds (62 percent) reported being either extremely or very concerned about issues related to public safety.



### What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses. In general, crime in the community has been on the rise. Specifically, violent crime in the community has been on the rise.

- Community members expressing frustration with the police
  - Lack of trust
  - Being targeted
- Individuals reported not feeling safe in the community
- There are sentiments that the police force is both understaffed and not well supported
- There is frustration with local government for not doing enough
- There is concern about how this is impacting the children in Summit County

### In their words

*I feel that the crime rate is too high. There are definitely areas where I do not feel safe. I also do not feel that law enforcement is "on my side." Need for people to feel secure in their neighborhood. Safety is always the number one concern for clients- being able to get to and from work safely, going to court, just trying to live their life but being scared to do so gets in the way.*

*The frequent stories of people of color being targeted unfairly by law enforcement has raised distrust in the establishment.*

## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems?

These were the most common responses:

- Everyone in the community
- BIPOC Individuals
- Individuals who are low-income
- Young Adults/Teens

## What the leaders said

Two focus groups of nonprofit leaders in Summit and Medina provided their thoughts on this topic:

- This is a problem deeply entrenched in the other areas of concern, such as mental health care access, addiction, affordable housing.
- Working with community leaders/neighborhood “mayors.” Neighborhoods need to be empowered, including fiscally. This could be done by offering small neighborhood grants with non-prohibitive requirements/applications that pay money upfront.
- It is the youth who are so deeply affected by this, therefore we need to find ways to involve youth in solutions and pay them for their expertise and experience
- There is racism in our systems. Systems such as: schools; hospitals; and the criminal legal system. This of course exacerbates problems.
- Leaders wanted to know: how can anyone be held accountable when data is not well recorded or transparent, especially in the criminal legal system?
- A significant group of local leaders were frustrated with the premise of this topic because they felt that informative work was already being done to address concerns of public safety by community organizations that was being ignored by decision makers.

## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

Accountability, more funding, defunding, stricter gun laws, fewer police, more police; while contradictory, each theme appeared repeatedly from survey respondents. For each respondent that ranked public safety as an area of concern, respondents were encouraged to answer what they believe can be done in Summit County. Accountability and transparency of law enforcement officers and elected officials was a resounding theme throughout the responses.

Honest, facilitated conversation with community involvement was suggested with an importance placed on creating space for these meetings in the community. Respondents often suggested violence and safety education should begin in the home.

Youth violence has been of increasing concern among residents of Summit County. Black youth, law enforcement, and community activists were identified as key stakeholders recommended to be involved with conversations to determine actual need, as opposed to perception and assumption of needs related to public safety.

Prevention of crime and issues with public safety were also mentioned, with encouraging education of violence prevention and gun safety beginning in the home. Respondents suggested that solutions to public safety meant both hiring more officers or having fewer officers, or replacing officers with unarmed mental health aids, but the answer is likely somewhere in-between.

As summed up by one respondent, “we can create police oversight and still recognize the dire need for policing.”

**Opportunity for Impact**

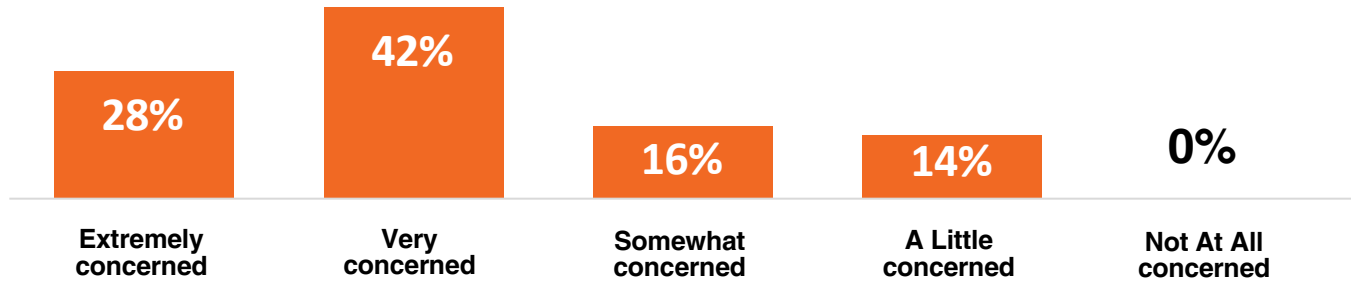
Local government leaders echoed much of what has been shared by community members. Everybody has a role to play in creating public safety, much of which starts by addressing the root causes of these issues: mental health, addiction, and poverty. Government has a role to play in this process, but the exact extent of that role is hard to define.

Local leaders were not entirely sure what role ACF could play, with the exception of the work they do in convening the right voices at the table. Improving public safety within Summit County will require cohesive and diverse partnerships.

# Housing In Medina County



Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about housing, specifically **affordability**, **availability**, and **finding places to rent**, in Medina County. Over two thirds (70 percent) reported being either extremely or very concerned about issues related to housing.



## What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses.

- Lack of affordable housing
- Rising costs of rent and home ownership
- Lack of services for those in need
- Long wait lists for housing services
- Lack of available recovery housing

## In their words

*Our organization largely serves low-medium income constituents in our service area. Significant numbers of them struggle with making ends meet in part because of the cost of housing for themselves and their families.*

*Rent has increased significantly in the past 18 months. Individuals on fixed income are being priced out of affordable housing.*

*There is NO place for people without housing to go in Medina County and not enough programs/funds to help people 1) get emergency shelter and 2) assist with the root causes of their homelessness, e.g., mental or physical health, poor rent history, unemployment, etc.*

*The waiting list for subsidized housing units to individuals in my community are very lengthy. There is a clear substantial need for this and not enough available. The same need is very high for housing vouchers, as the application acceptance is only available for very limited times throughout the year.*

## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems? These were the most common responses:

- Households with low-income
- Households with moderate-income
- Individuals with disabilities/mental health concerns
- Single parents
- BIPOC individuals
- Families
- Individuals with substance use disorders

## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

Affordable housing was a theme appearing in many responses from Medina County across multiple topics. Most topics discussed both in the community survey and the community leader panel saw mention of affordable housing as a necessary addition to the solutions proposed. The expansion of housing assistance to include families in lower middle class was mentioned, along with developing and offering financial literacy classes and budgeting support.

Responses from Medina County focused on addressing issues that may cause an individual to be unable to afford housing, instead of the need to build additional housing. A call for access to greater support was mentioned, which includes affordable childcare for parents who are currently staying at home to rejoin the workforce and pursue better paying jobs. Increased local support of food pantries was mentioned multiple times along with financial assistance to cover the costs of daily living.

### Opportunity for Impact

While there are some organizations providing affordable housing options in the area, there are still unmet needs. For example, there is a need to provide weatherization for unsafe rentals and housing units to ensure safety in the colder months. More radical solutions included building affordable tiny homes, and business sponsored employee housing.

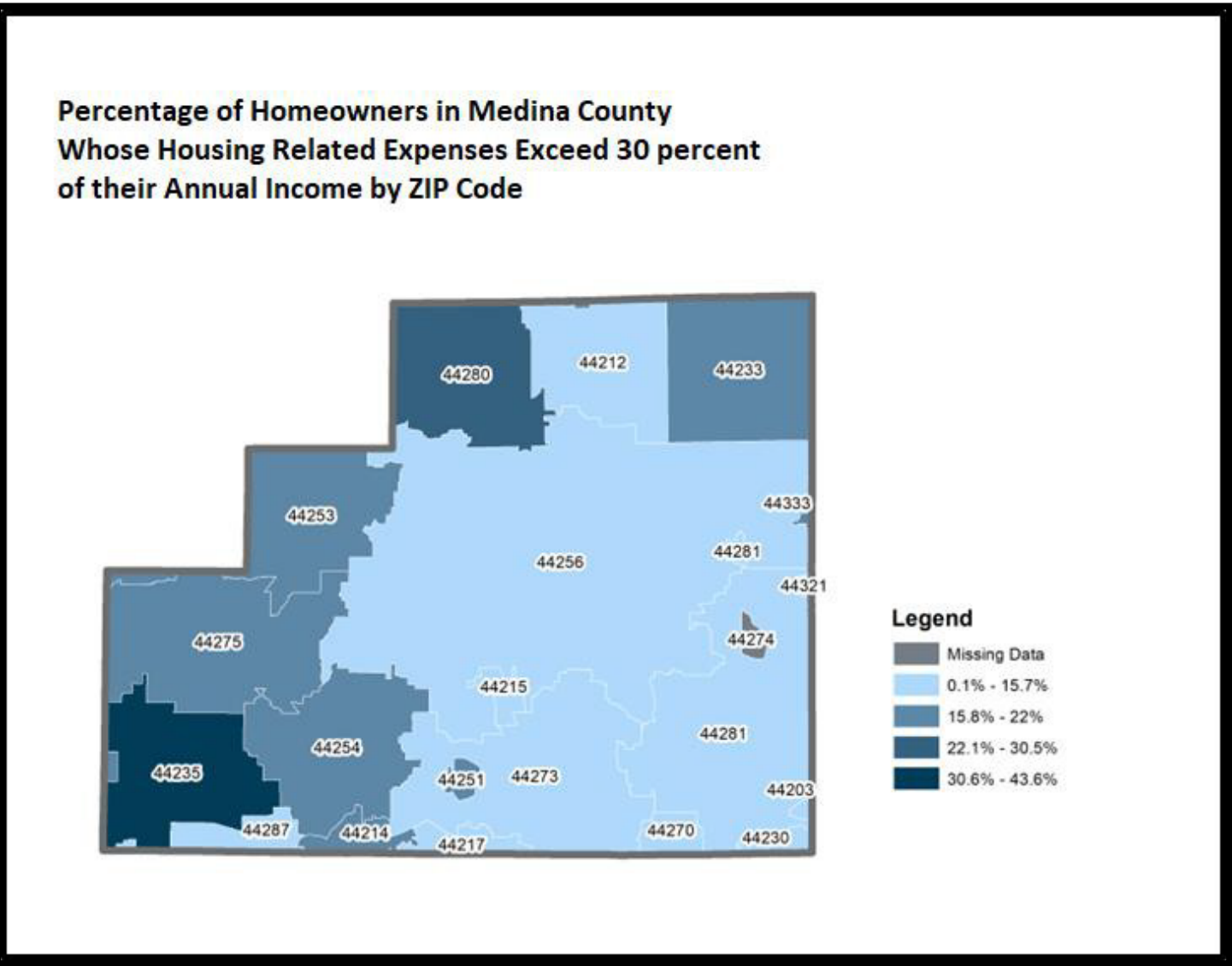
Medina County Community Fund/Medina County Women's Endowment Fund could potentially play a role in exploring the feasibility of long-term housing solutions. While short term “band aids” on the problem, such as rental and utilities assistance, are critical to helping residents survive, there is an opportunity for creative ideas to be explored. Medina County Community Fund/Medina County Women's Endowment Fund could play a role in reframing messaging in the community around what “affordable housing” is to combat the “not in my backyard” sentiment of residents not wanting affordable housing built too close to their homes. Positive framing could include messaging highlighting affordable housing as beneficial for the local economy in the long term as it increases affordability of Medina County.

# Housing Burden by ZIP Code

In an effort to better understand the geography of housing concerns in Medina County, maps of housing burden were developed. Housing burden is defined as when more than 30 percent of a household’s income is spent on housing related costs, such as rent, mortgage, and utilities. These maps have been split up by homeowners and renters, who face different kinds of housing pressures. All information in these maps comes from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2021 five-year estimates.

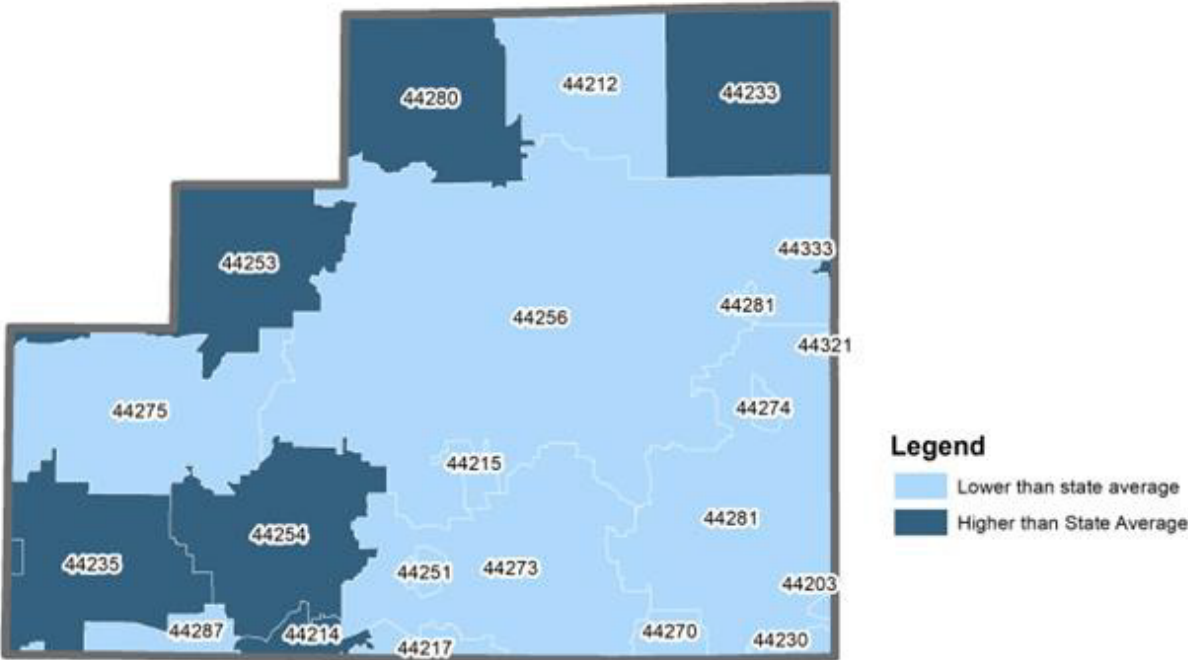
## Homeowners

The map below shows the concentrations of homeowners experiencing housing burden, with the highest concentrations occurring in the southwestern and western part of the county. For the majority of the county, housing burden falls below roughly 16 percent of the county.



For more context, the map below shows the ZIP codes in Medina County for which the housing burden rates are higher than the state average of 17.2 percent. These areas represent regions in which housing burden for homeowners is a significant concern.

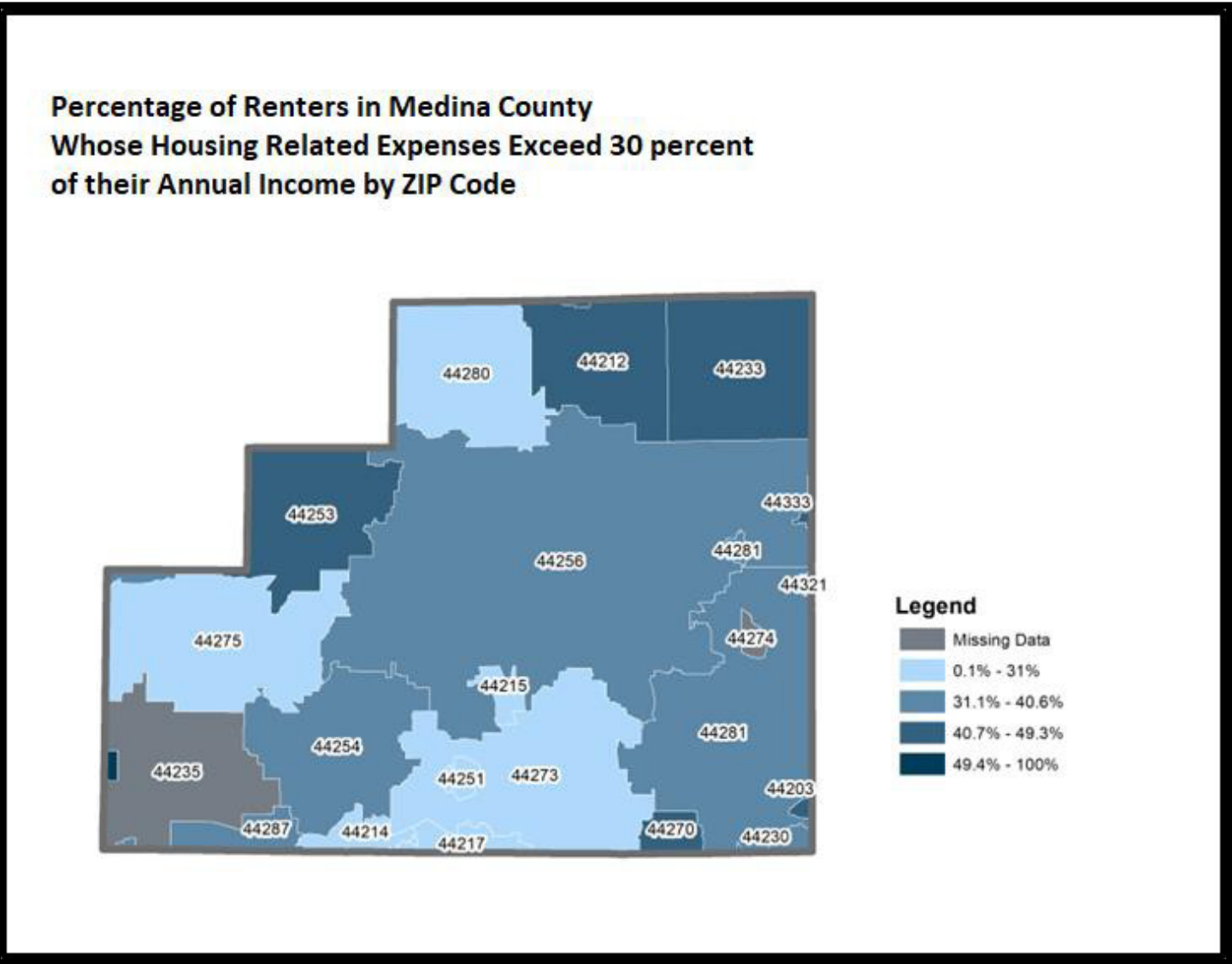
**Homeowner Housing Burden Rates in Medina County  
By ZIP Code that are Higher than the State Average  
of 17.2 Percent**



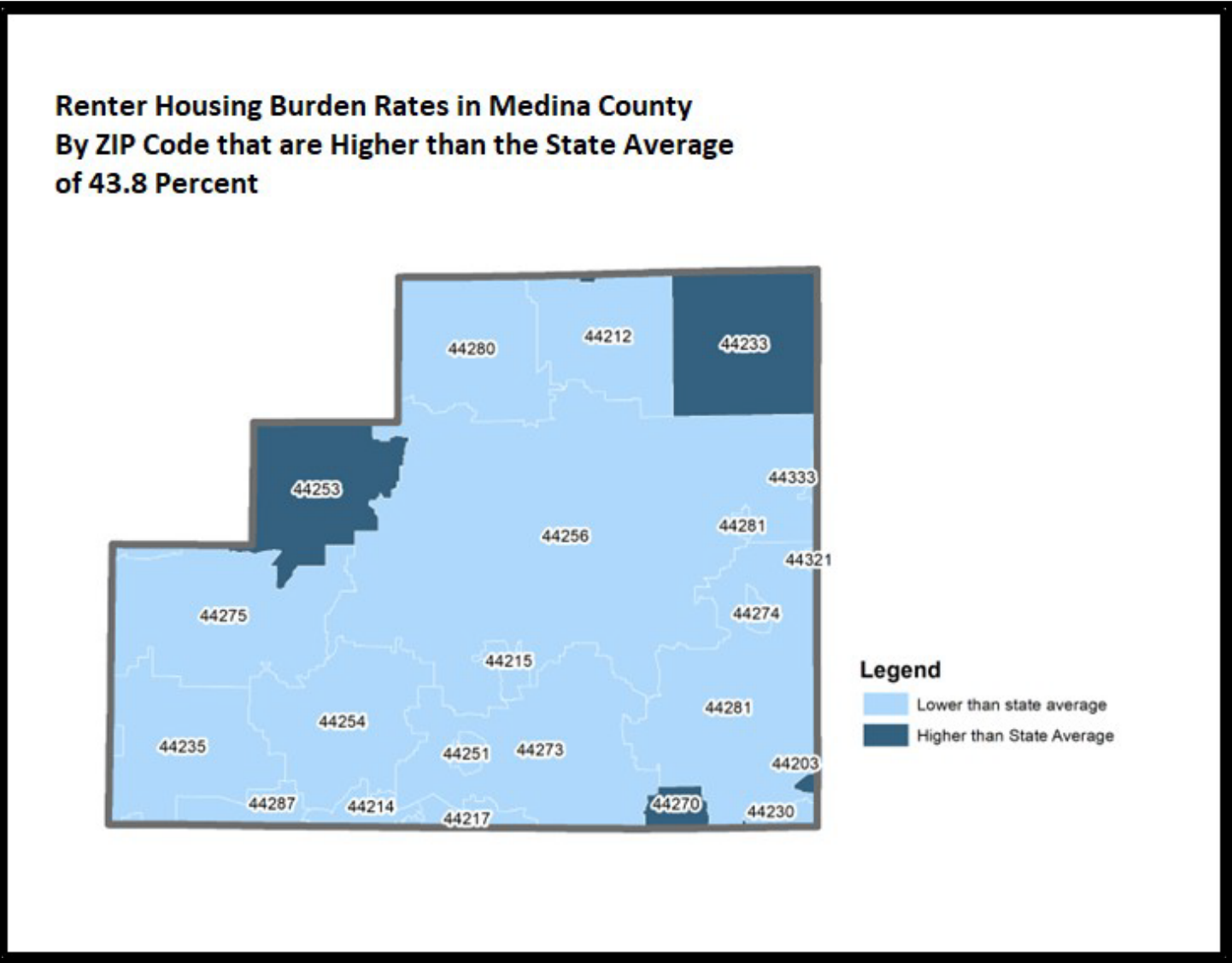


# Renters

The map below details the concentrations of renters experiencing housing burden, with the highest concentrations occurring in the Northeastern part of the county. In general, housing burden is experienced by a far greater proportion of renters than homeowners.



For more context, the map below shows the ZIP codes in Medina County for which the housing burden rates for renters are higher than the state average of 43.8 percent. These northwest and northeast corners represent regions in which housing burden for renters is a significant concern.

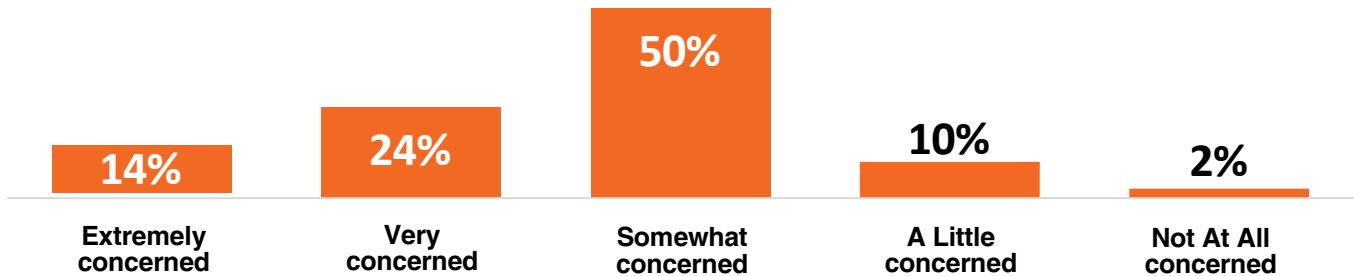


# Mental Health

## In Medina County



Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about mental health, specifically **accessibility**, **affordability**, and **stigma**, in Medina County. Nearly 40 percent reported being either extremely or very concerned about issues related to mental health.



### What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses.

- Mental health needs are a growing problem in the community
- Individuals in need struggle to find help/there are not enough resources in Medina County
  - Long waitlists to receive services
- There are staff shortages in the mental health field
- Covid-19 made the situation worse
- Lack of information/awareness about how to get help

### In their words

*The increase in mental health issues for children and adults has increase since the onset of the pandemic. There is a lack of providers and resources.*

*Getting mental health treatment by a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist can be difficult, depending on where you live. I live in Wadsworth, but the closest mental health service provider is in Barberton. That kind of a drive to get treatment is not accessible for everyone. Resources in Medina County are not well publicized.*

*We are in a mental health crisis especially among our teens and our seniors. The amount of fear, anxiety, depression is exponential.*

## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems? These were the most common responses:

- Everyone in the community
- Children
- Teenagers
- BIPOC individuals

## What the leaders said

Two focus groups of non-profit leaders in Summit and Medina provided their thoughts on this topic:

- Despite both Summit and Medina Counties struggling with mental health needs in the community, there was an importance placed on not assuming the problems in Summit County regarding mental health are identical to Medina County
- Medina County's more rural population can be difficult to reach
- Medina County has limited resources in terms of mental health treatment options, and much of what does exist only takes private insurance
- There is room for improvement when it comes to reaching people who could use help

## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

The focus of Medina County respondents' suggestions to the mental health crisis focused on funding. Respondents felt that more funding was needed for mental health and substance use treatment organizations to support local organizations willing to make low or no-cost services a priority. Greater awareness of available resources was also noted as a necessity as well, including publicizing where help is available. One respondent suggested that mental health marketing should include high profile individuals who talk about their struggles with mental health and where to receive help to help destigmatize mental health care. The LGBTQ+ community was mentioned as population of concern. Addressing the workforce shortage through incentives to retain current staff and reducing caseloads to prevent burnout were also suggested.

### Opportunity for Impact

The disparate wage gap in Medina County was highlighted in this work; there are both many high-income residents and many low-income residents. Based on perceptions related to income, Medina County has the appearance of not needing any assistance in meeting the mental health needs of residents. Despite having a strong and flexible mental health board, Medina County struggles with reaching its higher income populations. Although not typically the focus of mental health boards, it is not uncommon for higher resourced residents to believe they do not need any assistance with their mental health. These residents cite mental health care as too expensive and "not a big deal."

Medina County Community Fund/Medina County Women's Endowment Fund could help with innovative and targeted messaging to higher-income residents about how mental health should be treated like general health; getting regular check-ups and investing in care. In an effort to normalize investing in mental health, individuals should also be targeted via their employers, bosses, and physicians. Perhaps even having creative ideas like a "try before you buy" system where individuals can sample a few mental health sessions before making a further commitment.

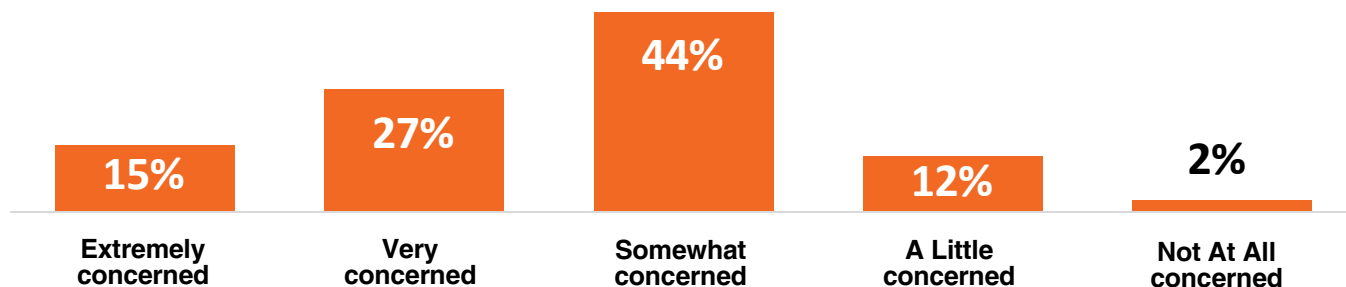
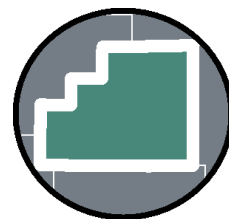
Related, small administration funds are needed to cover the costs of things that larger grants usually can't accommodate in treatment facilities, such as coffee/snacks for treatment groups.

**Opportunity for Impact**

Another opportunity for impact in Medina County is around youth mental health concerns. There is a new youth resiliency center being built in Medina County which will primarily focus on needs related to trauma by building resiliency. It is purposefully built to be a calming space; “a blank canvas” for which new services and programming could live. Medina County Community Fund/Medina County Women's Endowment Fund could have a significant impact on mental health needs for youth in Medina by creating funding opportunities for different services and programming within the new youth center.

# Addiction/Substance Use In Medina County

Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about addiction and substance use, specifically **access to treatment** and **stigma**, among other things, in Medina County. Roughly 42 percent reported being either extremely or very concerned about issues related to addiction and substance use.



## What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses.

- Addiction and substance use is a growing problem in Medina County
  - Particularly opioids and fentanyl
- Overdose deaths are of serious concern
- There is a lack of comprehensive programs to treat substance use disorder in Medina County
- Concern around stigma keeping people from getting help

## In their words

*I have had two friends pass away from drug overdoses. I see people weekly at our organization's events who are under the influence of heroin and other substances. We have wonderful organizations in Medina County working to break the stigma and offer a variety of recovery options to people suffering from addiction, but our community certainly has many people actively addicted.*

*This is the real unspoken pandemic that is impacting everyone across the region and touching so many families.*

*It is even more difficult to find employers and college programs which support the transition from addiction and associated poverty and health consequences to established, trustworthy and to-be-trusted status that is often needed by middle class and upwardly mobile members of society.*

## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems? These were the most common responses:

- Everyone in the community
- Children and families
- Veterans

## What the leaders said

Two focus groups of nonprofit leaders in Summit and Medina provided their thoughts on this topic:

- Medina County used to be more insulated from these problems, but that's no longer the case
- Things got worse during the pandemic; isolation, stress, and trauma worsened addiction and substance use.
- Some frustration with social media keeping the struggle of addiction hidden and making people feel like they're the only person struggling, which creates stigma around needing help

## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

Awareness, education, and more access to treatment were resounding suggestions to the substance use and addiction issues in Medina County. One respondent stated that the issue of addiction and substance use needs to be made a regional priority and called the occurrence, "a crisis of epic proportion." Access to traditional treatment programs is essential, but so is the reimagining of what a treatment program looks like. Respondents stated that the underlying causes of addiction need to be addressed, and that courts should focus on removing barriers to education and employment for those with drug or alcohol related offenses.

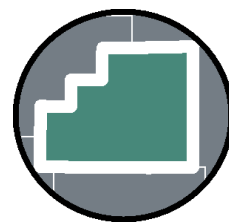
### Opportunity for Impact

There have been some recent capital projects to expand Medina County's capabilities and offerings in substance use disorder treatment. The use of peer recovery support individuals to lead the effort in finding individuals who need help and connecting them with treatment options was also highlighted. Continued support in hiring, training, and retaining recovery coaches is of critical importance for addressing substance use related issues.

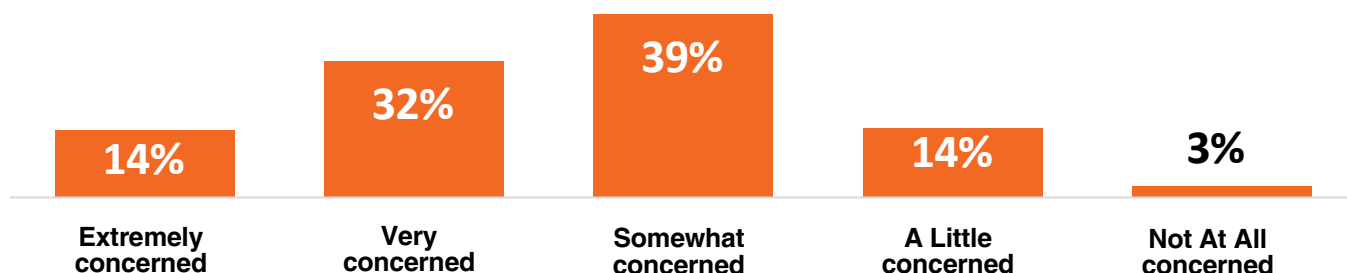
An innovative program was highlighted in the conversation with community leaders. This new program in Medina County will provide both housing and teach work skills for individuals in recovery as they learn to grow food. The program will be run by recovery coaches with a plan to donate all grown food to a local foodbank. Support from Medina County Community Fund/Medina County Women's Endowment Fund for this program would have a meaningful impact as they continue to work toward launching the program. Medina County needs more progressive messaging about addiction and substance use disorder to reduce the stigma and educate residents of the treatment options available in the county.

# Food Insecurity

## In Medina County



Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about food insecurity, specifically **affordability** and **accessibility to healthy foods**, in Medina County. Roughly 45 percent of respondents reported being either extremely concerned or very concerned about issues related to food insecurity.



### What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses.

- Recently seen increased usage and reliance of food banks.
  - Multiple respondents mentioned working at organizations with small food pantries that are struggling to keep up with demand.
  - People without reliable transportation may struggle to reach these benefits.
- The current economy; rising prices and inflation, is making affording food difficult.
- Individuals with fixed or low income are being hit the hardest.
  - Benefits/assistance is not enough.
- There are food deserts in part of Medina, making it hard to access healthy foods. However cheap fast food is prevalent.

### In their words

*I work for a food pantry and demand for services has increased by over 400% since the onset of the pandemic. It continues to rise, as more and more low-to-moderate income households struggle to keep up with inflation.*

*Food deserts, lack of fresh produce in some areas of the community, food prices.*

*We work in partnership with a local food bank on several food security initiatives. With inflation at some of the highest rates in recent years, families are unable to make ends meet. The foodbank has a shortage of resources which seems to be impacted by the pandemic and inflation. Middle class families who were on the bubble of making ends meet are now in need of assistance but sometimes don't qualify for SNAP.*



## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems? These were the most common responses:

- Households with low-income
- Older adults
- Children
- Families
  - Especially single parent households
- Individuals who are homeless

## What the leaders said

Two focus groups of nonprofit leaders in Summit and Medina provided their thoughts on this topic:

- Food insecurity being listed as a top concern by the community came as a bit of a surprise to the expert panel, especially given the coordination of food resources in Medina
- Despite strong coordination of resources, there are still limited pick-up times for food banks, and missing one of these times could leave someone without resources
- Need to acknowledge the stigma of needing food assistance in a tight knit community, which can keep people from seeking help
- Pandemic assistance helped, but food insecurity will become a growing problem as assistance wanes

## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

Food insecurity was identified as a top emerging need in Medina County. While respondents agreed that there were quite a few resources available for those who are food insecure, there is little coordination between the existing resources and systems. Respondents stated that the existing resources need to be easier to sign up for and eligibility should be expanded for programs such as SNAP, WIC, and food distributions. Automatic referrals were also discussed, for instance if an individual qualifies for WIC and meets category eligibility, they should be automatically signed up for SNAP, or at least provided with the resources to do so themselves. Program coverage was also called to be expanded, for WIC or SNAP to cover the cost of diapers and wipes was given as an example.

### Opportunity for Impact

Solutions to reduce food insecurity put forward should prioritize anonymity when providing assistance. During COVID-19 a drive through process was implemented and heavily utilized. This increased utilization was in part due to the ability to stay more anonymous in receiving assistance. Given the rural nature of much of Medina County, future efforts should focus on spreading out distribution sites, and expanding the delivery of food to older adults and residents with disabilities, for whom transportation is a barrier.

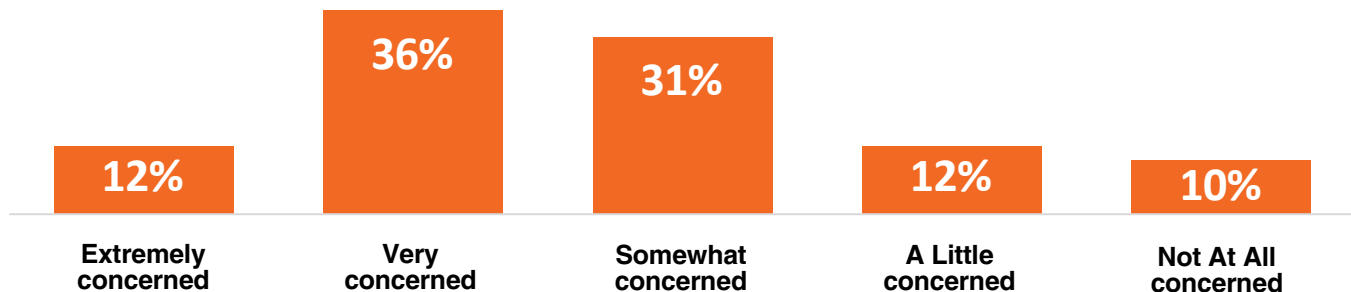
It can be difficult to find funding opportunities for Medina County, as most opportunities go to larger counties with higher rates of low-income residents. There is a difficulty in shaking the “wealthy” perception of Medina, despite being need here. Funding opportunities to address food assistance in Medina County are critical. ACF making the effort to be a presence in Medina County to discuss assistance and provide support shows respect and creates a feeling of being connected. Grants that come with less intensive applications/reporting requirements are always helpful, because they can otherwise be prohibitive for a smaller organization.

# Transit

## In Medina County



Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about transit, specifically **accessibility** and **affordability**, in Medina County. Nearly 40 percent reported being either extremely or very concerned about issues related to transit.



### What we heard from the community

Survey respondents who were extremely or very worried were asked to provide more details about their concern. Using content analysis, these were the most common themes from their responses.

- Public transportation needs to be more accessible and convenient
- There are very few transit options for people who live in rural parts of the county
- Public transit is related to the workforce issue; without a car it can be hard to maintain a job
- Public transit options are confusing and people don't even know what their options are

### In their words

*This is a HUGE issue for our constituents! We serve a fairly large number of folks living in more rural areas. We consistently lose the opportunity to serve folks seeking out our services because they don't have transportation and we can't provide it.*

*While Summit County has public transportation, Medina has a limited system for the elderly and disabled only. Metro is not always convenient; some routes just are not easy to negotiate and it ends up taking extensive time to go under 5 miles. Uber and Lyft provide access but are not affordable for people in poverty.*

*There's no public transport to speak of in Medina County. While the transit system in Medina County does a great job with the resources they have, they continue to struggle with employing drivers to have enough routes for the community.*

## Who is most impacted?

Survey respondents were also asked who is most impacted by these problems? These were the most common responses:

- Households with low-income
- Individuals without cars or who cannot drive
- Individuals with disabilities
- Employees and employers

## What the leaders said

Two focus groups of nonprofit leaders in Summit and Medina provided their thoughts on this topic:

- Medina County lacks a county-wide transit system
- Rideshare services have been utilized in the past to accommodate for people without transportation, but can be prohibitively expensive
- Transportation is inherently intertwined with other aspects of health in the community, such as food security, employment, and making health/mental health appointments
- Some organizations provide transit services to appointments, which is invaluable, but doesn't help people with their other basic needs

## What can be done?

### Summary of Community Responses

Transit issues were identified as a top emerging need in Medina County. Respondents suggested the creation of a mass-transit system was key to addressing the transit issue. Medina County lacks a formal bus system, so travel vouchers to Uber and Lyft were suggested in the interim. Overall, the need for a large-scale public transit system that is affordable was the most frequent suggestion by the respondents.

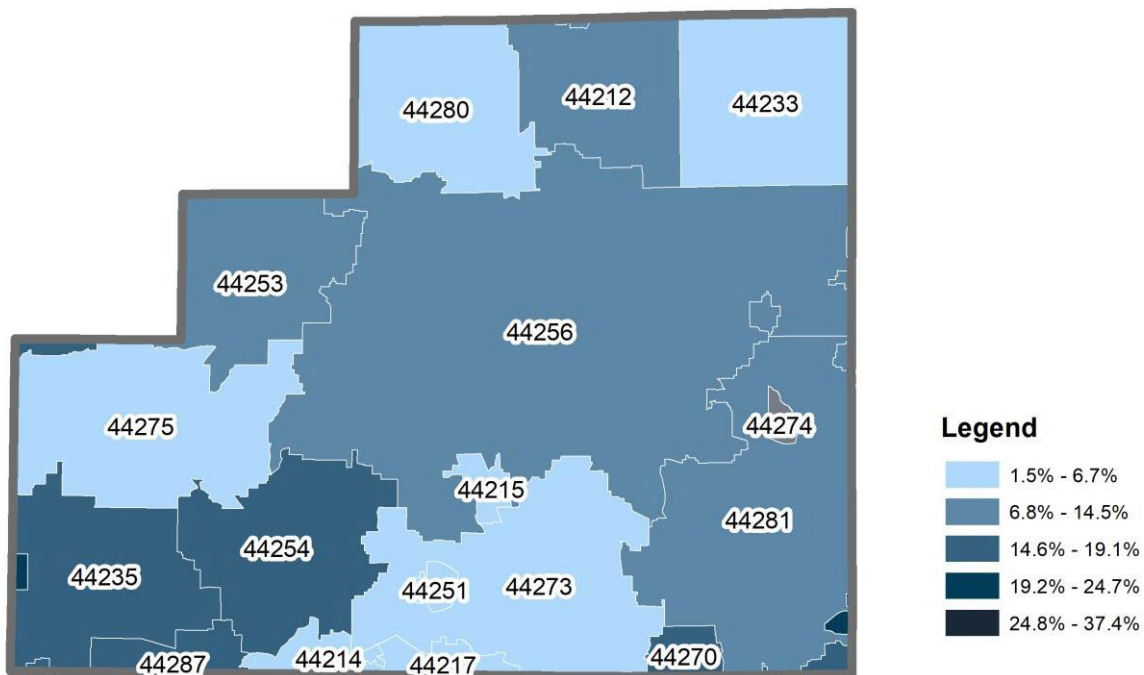
Certainly, creating a county wide public transportation system is a massive undertaking and far beyond the scope of any one organization. Creative solutions will continue to be necessary however given the interconnectivity of transportation and other needs.

## Identifying Regions for Transit Assistance

As a means of identifying where in Medina County the need for transportation assistance may be greatest, a map was developed to visualize the proportion of households that do not have access to a vehicle. As mentioned above, not having a vehicle in Medina County can make taking care of one's basic needs difficult. The map below identifies regions where individuals may be struggling with transit issues. All information in this map comes from the American Community Survey 2021 five-year estimates.

What the map shows is the greatest concentration of potential transportation needs are located in the southeast region of the county, with roughly 19 to 25 percent of households not having access to a vehicle at their residence. This region includes the communities of Lodi and Homerville.

**Percentage of Households in Medina County Without a Vehicle at their Residence by ZIP Code**



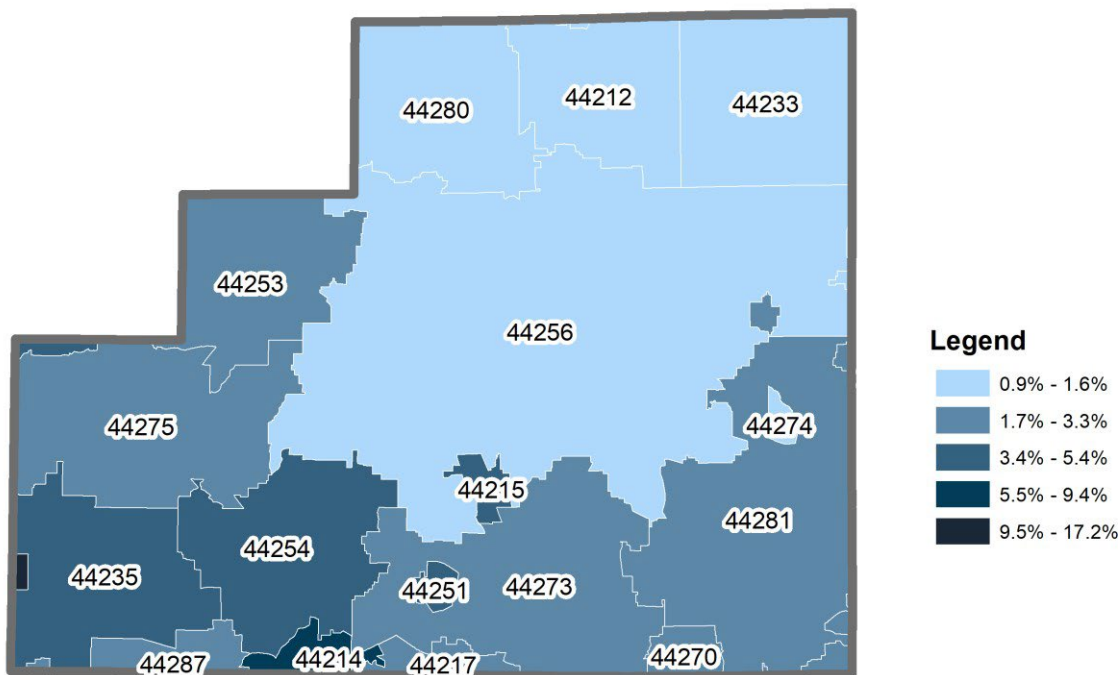
# Poverty

## In Medina and Summit Counties

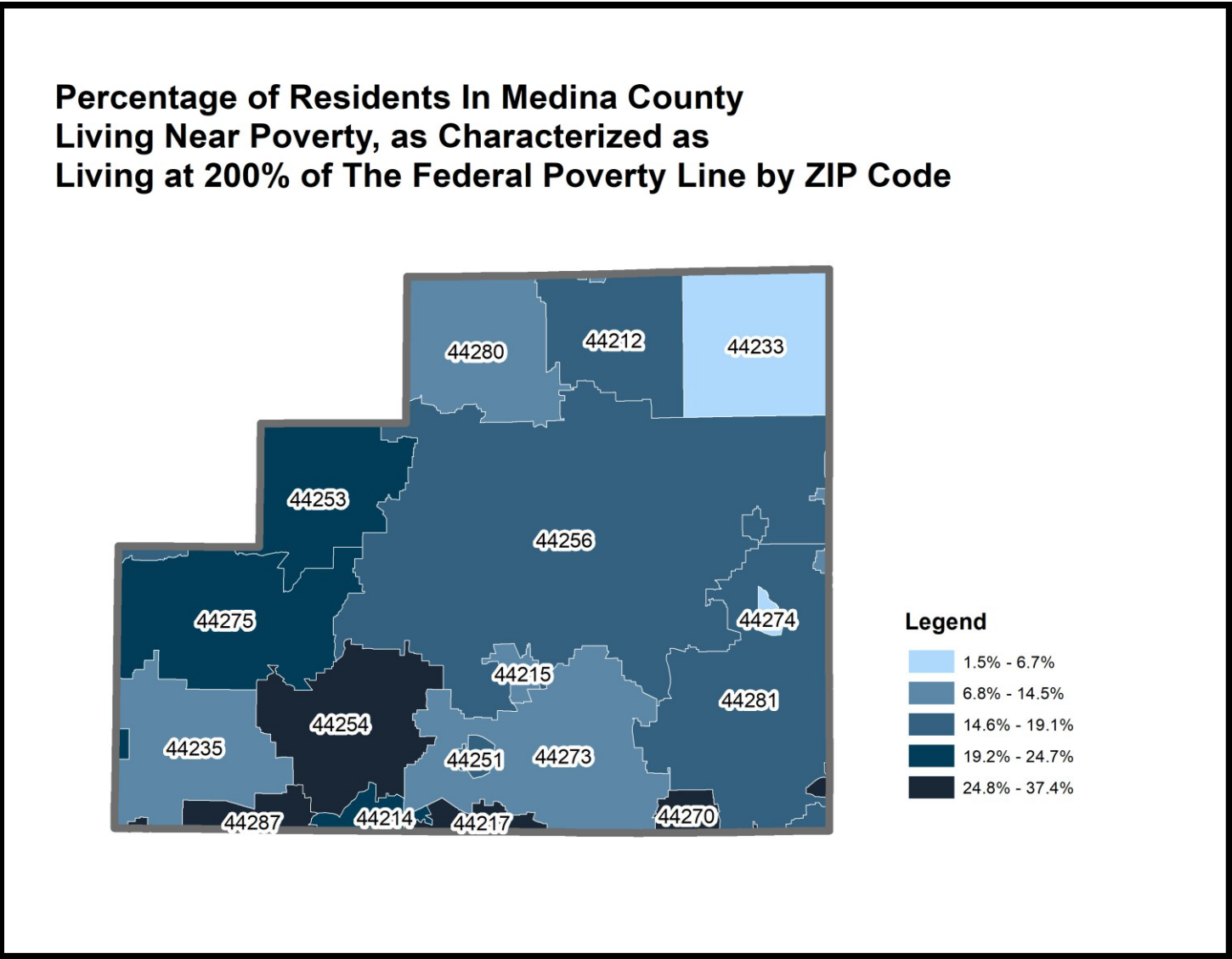
Nearly all of the identified areas of concern in Medina and Summit Counties that have been identified in this needs assessment are, in part, the effects of the underlying cause of poverty. Whether it's affordable housing, food insecurity, transit issues, or mental health, living in poverty is both a root cause and an exacerbator of these problems. It is of little surprise then, that for many identified areas of concern, when the community was asked *Who is most impacted by these problems?* Low-income individuals were identified as bearing the brunt of the burden. We also know that much of poverty is geographical, and place is incredibly important when identifying areas of need. With this in mind, a series of maps were made to identify the areas in Medina and Summit Counties which have the greatest concentrations of poverty, and ostensibly are suffering the most from these identified problems. All information in these maps comes from the American Community Survey 2021 five-year estimates.

### Medina County Poverty Rate

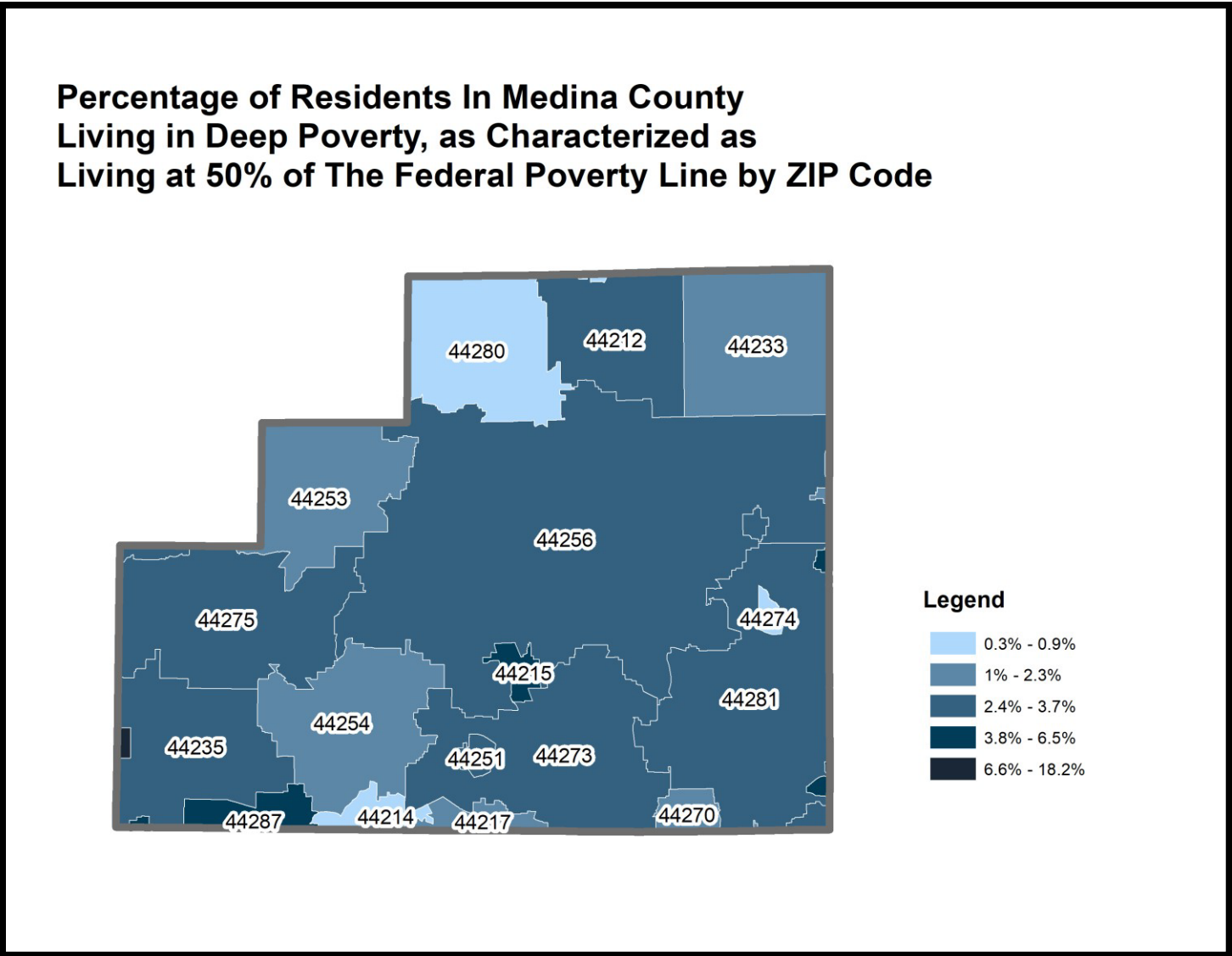
**Percentage of Residents In Medina County  
Living Below The Federal Poverty Line by ZIP Code**



Medina County Near Poverty



Medina County Deep Poverty



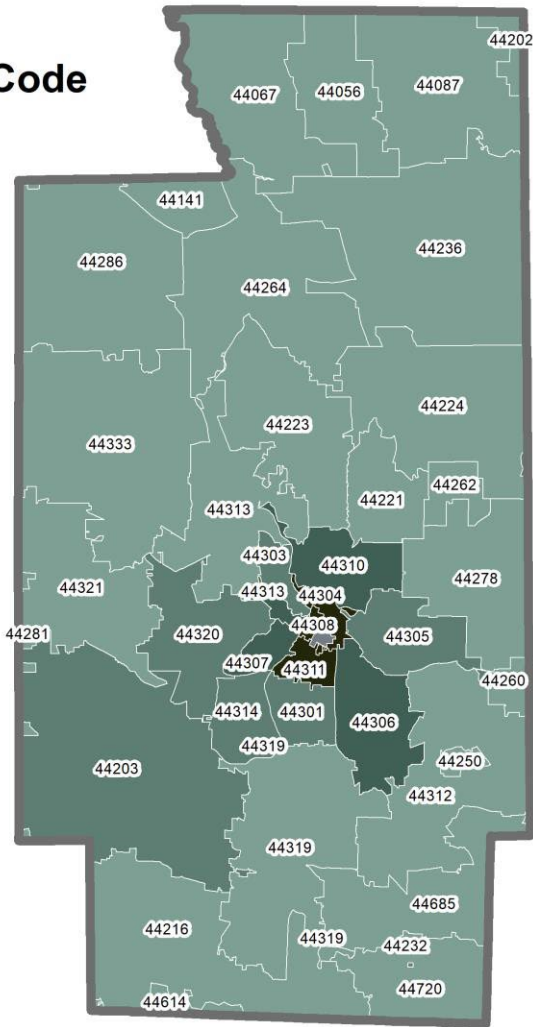


Summit County Poverty Rate

Percentage of Residents in Summit County Living Below The Federal Poverty Line by ZIP Code

Legend

- Missing Data
- 0.1% - 10.9%
- 11% - 23.6%
- 23.7% - 33.9%
- 34% - 68.1%

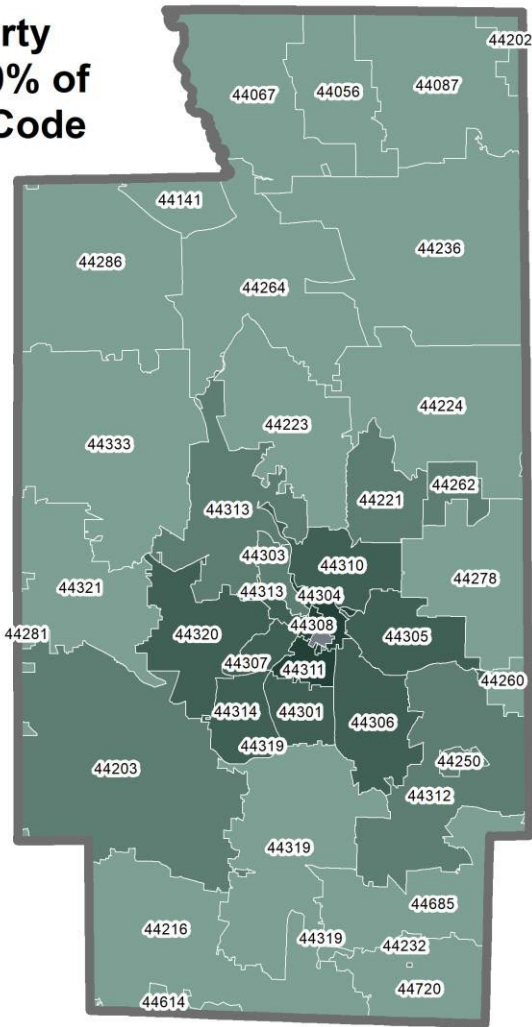


Summit County Near Poverty

Percentage of Residents in Summit County Living Near Poverty As Characterized as Living at 200% of The Federal Poverty Line by ZIP Code

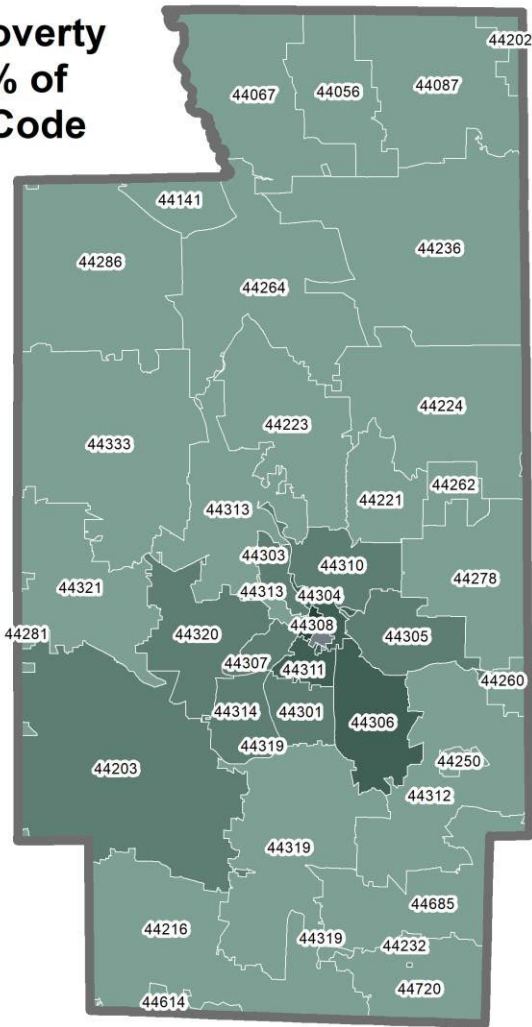
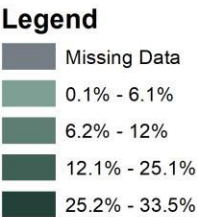
Legend

- Missing Data
- 0.1% - 20.8%
- 20.9% - 35.8%
- 35.9% - 62.6%
- 62.7% - 81.8%



Summit County Deep Poverty

Percentage of Residents in Summit County Living in Deep Poverty As Characterized as Living at 50% of The Federal Poverty Line by ZIP Code



# Limitations

Despite the important findings in this assessment, there are some limitations that are necessary to discuss. The primary limitation is that much of the data collected came from members of the nonprofit community. This is a result of using a convenience sample of the Akron Community Foundation's mailing list to promote the survey. So, while the survey was available to everyone, and ACF encouraged their partners to share the online survey within their networks, there was naturally an overrepresentation of nonprofit professionals in the sample, many of whom were familiar with ACF. Given the insight and expertise of individuals involved in the local nonprofits, this was not enough of a limitation to significantly change our methodologies for data collection, however the results are therefore not necessarily representative of the community as a whole.

The sample is also relatively small, with 194 survey responses, 21 nonprofit leaders who participated in focus groups, and 20 individuals who participated in key informant interviews. For some comparison however, Summit County Public Health utilized a community survey for their 2019 Community Health Assessment, which provided insightful results from a sample of 127 completed surveys. They also supplemented that data with focus groups and secondary data. So, while the survey sample of 194 is smaller compared to some needs assessments, the insight gleaned from the data is certainly still valuable, and not an unreasonably small number.

The sample also skewed female, with 66 percent of respondents who provided their sex reporting female, and 29 percent reporting male. This is in all likelihood a result of the oversampling of nonprofit professionals, who tend to be female. The sample also slightly skewed white. Of the respondents who chose to provide information about their race (143), 85 percent were white, 11 percent were Black/African American, two percent were Asian, and two percent selected self-describe because the provided racial categories did not describe them. Only one respondent identified as Hispanic/Latino/Latina of any race. According to the most recent census data, in Summit and Medina Counties 81 percent of the population was white, 11 percent was Black/African American, three percent was Asian, and just under three percent was Hispanic/Latino/Latina of any race. So, while the survey data from this assessment may loosely resemble the census data, with the smaller sample size, it would have been ideal to try to oversample racial groups that were not white and prioritize hearing from Hispanic/Latino/Latina voices.

In light of these limitations, it is important to use caution in generalizing the experiences and insight from the data gleaned within this assessment. While this information tells a meaningful and comprehensive story, it does not tell a fully complete one.

## Medina County Factsheet



Demographics	Medina County	
<b>Population</b>	179,116	
<i>Under 18</i>	39,989	22.3%
<i>Ages 18-59</i>	95,043	53.1%
<i>Ages 60+</i>	44,084	24.6%
<b>Race</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>White</i>	169,293	94.5%
<i>Black/African American</i>	2,490	1.4%
<i>Asian-American</i>	1,815	1.0%
<i>Other race reported</i>	5,518	3.1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Hispanic/Latin(o)(a)(x) (of any race)</i>	4,100	2.3%
<b>Language Spoken At Home</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>English</i>	162,304	95.7%
<i>Spanish</i>	359	1.5%

## Medina County



Income, Employment & Poverty	Medina	Medina County	Ohio
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$66,691</b>	<b>\$</b>	
<b>Employment (Age 16+)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Labor Force Participation Rate</i>	69.8%	67.5%	63.2%
<b>Poverty</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Persons living below poverty</i>	8.2%	5.8%	13.6%
<i>Children (Age 0-17) below poverty</i>	10.6%	7.2%	19.1%
<i>Families with children living below poverty</i>	9.7%	6.3%	16.1%
<i>Older Adults (Age 60+) below poverty</i>	7.4%	5.1%	9.0%
<i>Persons in or near poverty (under 200% of poverty)</i>	25.1%	17.1%	30.5%
<i>Persons in deep poverty (under 50% of poverty)</i>	3.4%	2.5%	6.1%
<b>Food</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Households with limited access to food</i>	-	9.4%	11.6%
<i>Number of households receiving SNAP benefits</i>	10.3%	5.8%	12.6%

## Health Outcomes in Medina County

Adults who consider themselves to be in Poor or Fair Health



State Average: 18%

Average Number of Poor Mental Health Days in the last 30 days



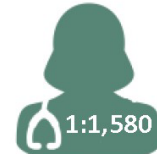
State Average: 5.2

Ratio of Mental Health Providers to Residents



State Average: 1:350

Ratio of Primary Care Providers to Residents



State Average: 1:1,290



## Medina County Factsheet

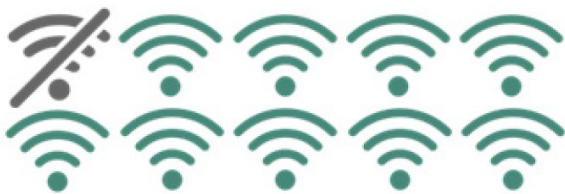


Education	Medina	Medina County	Ohio
<i>Less than a high school diploma</i>	4.3%	5.3%	9.2%
<i>High school diploma or equivalent (GED)</i>	30.4%	30.7%	32.8%
<i>Some college or associate degree</i>	30.3%	30.1%	29.1%
<i>Bachelor's degree or higher</i>	35.1%	33.9%	28.9%
<b>High school Graduate or Higher by Race</b>	%	%	%
<i>Black</i>	95.0%	94.5%	86.4%
<i>Hispanic/Latin(o)(a)(x)</i>	84.9%	82.3%	77.3%
<i>White</i>	95.7%	95.2%	91.7%

Health	Medina	Medina County	Ohio
<i>No health insurance coverage</i>	4.6%	3.6%	6.2%
<i>Medicaid coverage (alone or in combination)</i>	15.7%	11.1%	20.5%
<i>Disability status (with a disability, all ages)</i>	12.4%	11.3%	14.0%
<i>Older adult disability status (with a disability, age 65+)</i>	36.2%	30.7%	34.0%

### Internet Access

About **1 in 10** households in Medina County didn't have an internet subscription in 2020.



### Housing Affordability



About **1 in 5** households, or 20.9% in Medina County live in housing that is unaffordable to them, meaning their housing costs exceed 30% of the gross household income.

Access & Benefits	Medina	Medina County	Ohio
<b>Housing Affordability</b> ( <i>housing is considered unaffordable if housing costs are more than 30% of the household income</i> )			
<i>Owner-Occupied households in unaffordable housing</i>	16.4%	16.7%	11.6%
<i>Renter-Occupied Households in unaffordable housing</i>	40.1%	37.1%	44.1%
<b>Public Benefits Income</b>	%	%	%
<i>Households with Social Security Income (OASDI)</i>	29.4%	31.7%	32.0%
<i>Households Supplemental Security Income</i>	4.8%	2.8%	5.9%
<b>Technology</b>	%	%	%
<i>Household has one or more computing device (smart phone, tablet, laptop)</i>	94.9%	94.7%	90.7%
<i>Household has an internet subscription</i>	89.6%	89.5%	84.9%

Sources: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, compiled by The Center for Community Solutions.

## Summit County Factsheet



Demographics	Summit	
<b>Population</b>	540,810	
<i>Under 18</i>	113,436	21.0%
<i>Ages 18-59</i>	292,168	54.0%
<i>Ages 60+</i>	135,206	25.0%
<b>Race</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>White</i>	420,095	77.7%
<i>Black/African American</i>	77,705	14.4%
<i>Asian-American</i>	19,919	3.7%
<i>Other race reported</i>	23,091	4.2%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Hispanic/Latin(o)(a)(x) (of any race)</i>	12,164	2.2%
<b>Language Spoken At Home</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>English</i>	475,232	93.1%
<i>Spanish</i>	6,731	1.3%

## Summit County



Income, Employment & Poverty	Akron	Summit	Ohio
<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$40,281</b>	<b>\$59,253</b>	<b>\$58,116</b>
<b>Employment (Age 16+)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Labor Force Participation Rate</i>	63.5%	64.7%	63.2%
<b>Poverty</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Persons living below poverty</i>	23.0%	12.8%	13.6%
<i>Children (Age 0-17) below poverty</i>	36.1%	18.5%	19.1%
<i>Families with children living below poverty</i>	31.5%	16.0%	16.1%
<i>Older Adults (Age 60+) below poverty</i>	13.7%	8.4%	9.0%
<i>Persons in or near poverty (under 200% of poverty)</i>	48.2%	29.8%	30.5%
<i>Persons in deep poverty (under 50% of poverty)</i>	10.1%	5.7%	6.1%
<b>Food</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Households with limited access to food</i>	-	12.5%	11.6%
<i>Number of households receiving SNAP benefits</i>	23.8%	13.2%	12.6%

## Health Outcomes in Summit County

Adults who consider themselves to be in Poor or Fair Health



State Average: 18%

Average Number of Poor Mental Health Days in the last 30 days



State Average: 5.2

Ratio of Mental Health Providers to Residents



State Average: 1:350

Ratio of Primary Care Providers to Residents



State Average: 1:1,290



## Summit County Factsheet

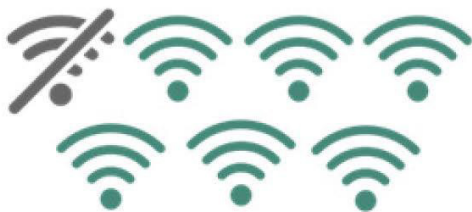


Education	Akron	Summit	Ohio
<i>Less than a high school diploma</i>	12.7%	7.9%	9.2%
<i>High school diploma or equivalent (GED)</i>	33.4%	29.9%	32.8%
<i>Some college or associate degree</i>	32.4%	29.4%	29.1%
<i>Bachelor's degree or higher</i>	21.5%	32.8%	28.9%
<b>Highschool Graduate or Higher by Race</b>	%	%	%
<i>Black</i>	87.7%	88.7%	86.4%
<i>Hispanic/Latin(o)(a)(x)</i>	67.7%	79.8%	77.3%
<i>White</i>	89.4%	93.8%	91.7%

Health	Akron	Summit	Ohio
<i>No health insurance coverage</i>	8.9%	5.8%	6.2%
<i>Medicaid Coverage (alone or in combination)</i>	34.1%	20.8%	20.5%
<i>Disability Status (with a disability, all ages)</i>	16.3%	13.5%	14.0%
<i>Older Adult Disability Status (with a disability, age 65+)</i>	37.2%	32.9%	34.0%

### Internet Access

About **1 in 7** households in Summit County didn't have an internet subscription in 2020.



### Housing Affordability



About **1 in 4** households, or 26.4% in Summit County live in housing that is unaffordable to them, meaning their housing costs exceed 30% of the gross household income.

Access & Benefits	Akron	Summit	Ohio
<b>Housing Affordability</b> ( <i>housing is considered unaffordable if housing costs are more than 30% of the household income</i> )			
<i>Owner-Occupied households in unaffordable housing</i>	21.1%	18.0%	11.6%
<i>Renter-Occupied Households in unaffordable housing</i>	46.8%	43.0%	40.1%
<b>Public Benefits Income</b>	%	%	%
<i>Households with Social Security Income (OASDI)</i>	30.7%	32.4%	32.0%
<i>Households Supplemental Security Income</i>	8.5%	5.0%	5.9%
<b>Technology</b>	%	%	%
<i>Household has one or more computing device (smart phone, tablet, laptop)</i>	88.0%	90.3%	90.7%
<i>Household has an internet subscription</i>	82.0%	85.7%	84.9%

Sources: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, compiled by The Center for Community Solutions.

# Appendix A

The table below indicates the percentage of females, males, Black respondents, and white respondents who endorsed each of the ten areas of concern as either being “very concerned” or “extremely concerned”. Other races and genders/sexes were not included because there was not enough available data.

This table provides an *approximate* overview of concern, not an *exact* overview for a number of reasons. First, not every respondent elected to provide demographic information, so responses with no associated sex or race information was unable to be captured here. Second, this review assumes that every person from each category answered every question about their level of concern for each area of interest. It is likely that this is not the case, and therefore one should assume that the percentages are slight under reportings given the likelihood that despite making it to the end of the survey to provide demographic information, some respondents may have skipped some questions. Third, there is a small representation of Black respondents, so caution *must* be utilized when interpreting the results.

With the limitations in mind, this table can still provide interesting insight into which areas of concern were most prevalent amongst different types of respondents. For example, regardless of demographic indicator, housing remained the topmost concern. For Black individuals, there was much greater proportion of respondents concerned about issues related to Diversity Equity and Inclusion than amongst white respondents. A much greater proportion of female respondents were concerned about Food insecurity compared to males, and there was really only one topic area in which a greater proportion of males were concerned; the technology gap.

## Respondent Demographic Identifiers by Percentage of Respondents who Reported Being Very or Extremely Concerned about an Area of Concern

	Female	n=95	Male	n=45	Black	n=15	White	n=122
<i>Housing</i>	65	68.4%	25	55.6%	13	86.7%	80	65.6%
<i>Food Insecurity</i>	54	56.8%	15	33.3%	7	46.7%	62	50.8%
<i>Mental Health</i>	57	60.0%	23	51.1%	9	60.0%	69	56.6%
<i>Technology Gap</i>	15	15.8%	10	22.2%	6	40.0%	19	15.6%
<i>Employment Concerns</i>	38	40.0%	15	33.3%	6	40.0%	47	38.5%
<i>Transit Concerns</i>	34	35.8%	10	22.2%	3	20.0%	40	32.8%
<i>Addiction/Substance Use</i>	45	47.4%	22	48.9%	6	40.0%	60	49.2%
<i>Concerns about DEI</i>	36	37.9%	16	35.6%	11	73.3%	42	34.4%
<i>Social Isolation</i>	18	18.9%	8	17.8%	1	6.7%	24	19.7%
<i>Public Safety</i>	41	43.2%	19	42.2%	8	53.3%	53	43.4%



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