



# **SCHUYLKILL COMMUNITY ACTION: 2024 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Executive Summary  
August 2024

# INTRODUCTION

## **Purpose of the Report:**

- To identify and report on pressing community needs in Schuylkill County

## **Goal:**

- Improve planning and coordination for social programs and services

# SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## COMMUNITY INPUT APPROACH

- Surveys distributed to human service providers, agency clients, stakeholders, and the general public across Schuylkill County.
- Available in both English and Spanish for wider accessibility.

## HUMAN SERVICE PROVIDERS

- **Targeted groups:** Schuylkill County HIVE, Homeless Liaisons, Social Service Agencies, Churches, SCA Staff and Board.
- **Method:** Email outreach, board meetings, staff focus groups.

## SCA CLIENTS

- **Participants:** Office clients, Food Pantry clients, Bridge House residents, CTS clients.
- **Format:** Online and paper surveys, with incentive (\$25 gift card drawing)

## GENERAL PUBLIC

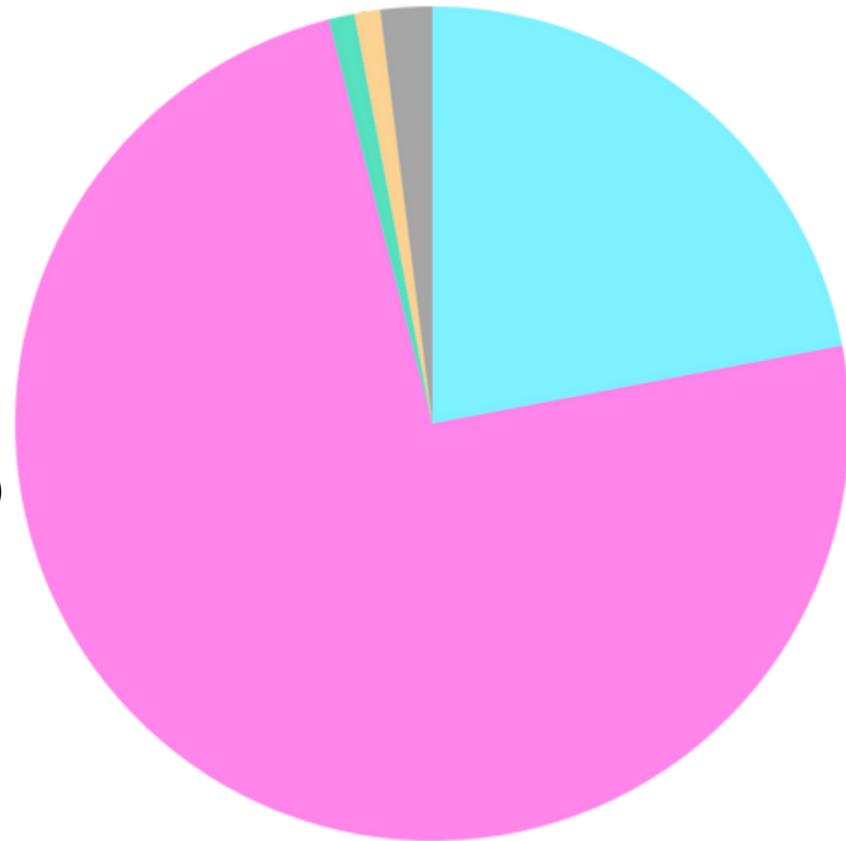
- **Reach:** Mailing list (donors, elected officials, etc.), social media, website, and newsletter.
- **Goal:** Broaden input from the wider community.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey responses were received from **283** local individuals.

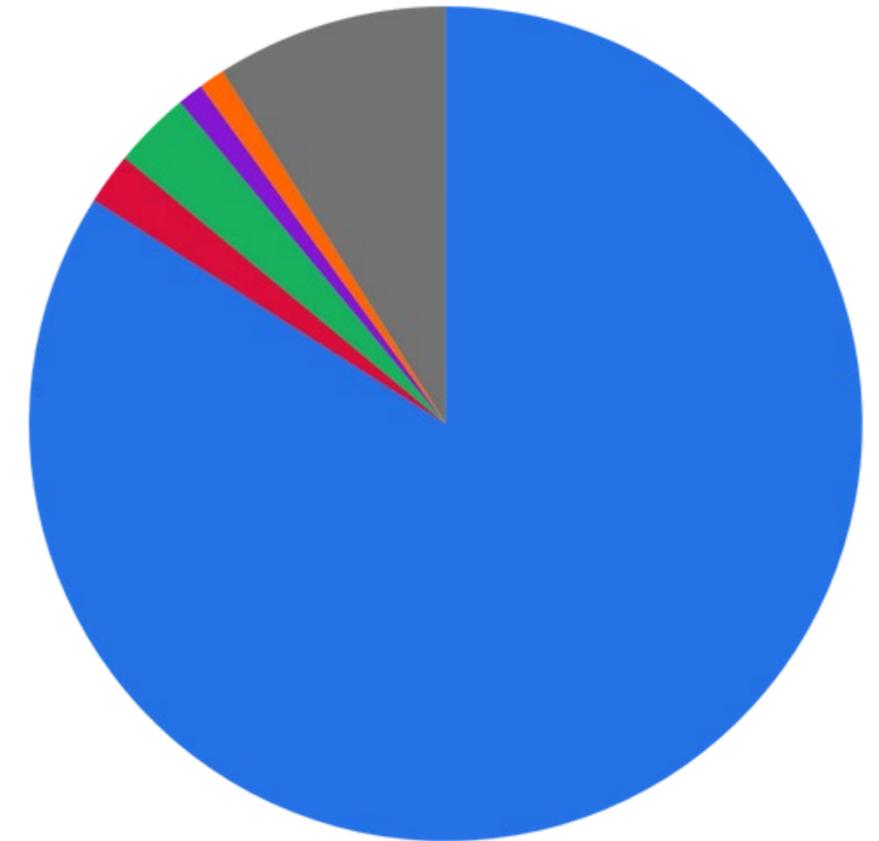
## GENDER

-  Male (22%)
-  Female (74%)
-  Transgender Man (1%)
-  Transgender Woman (0%)
-  Nonbinary (1%)
-  Prefer Not to Say (2%)

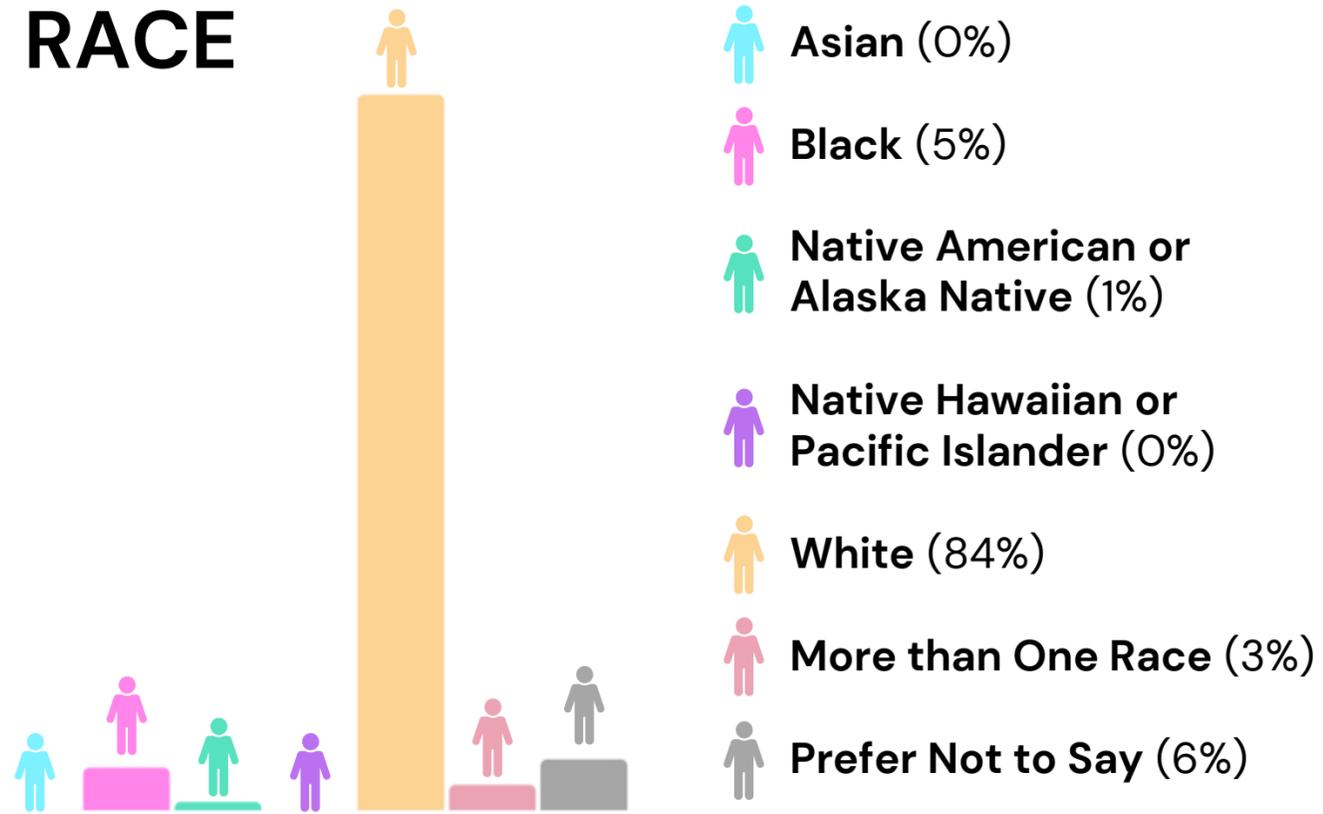


## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

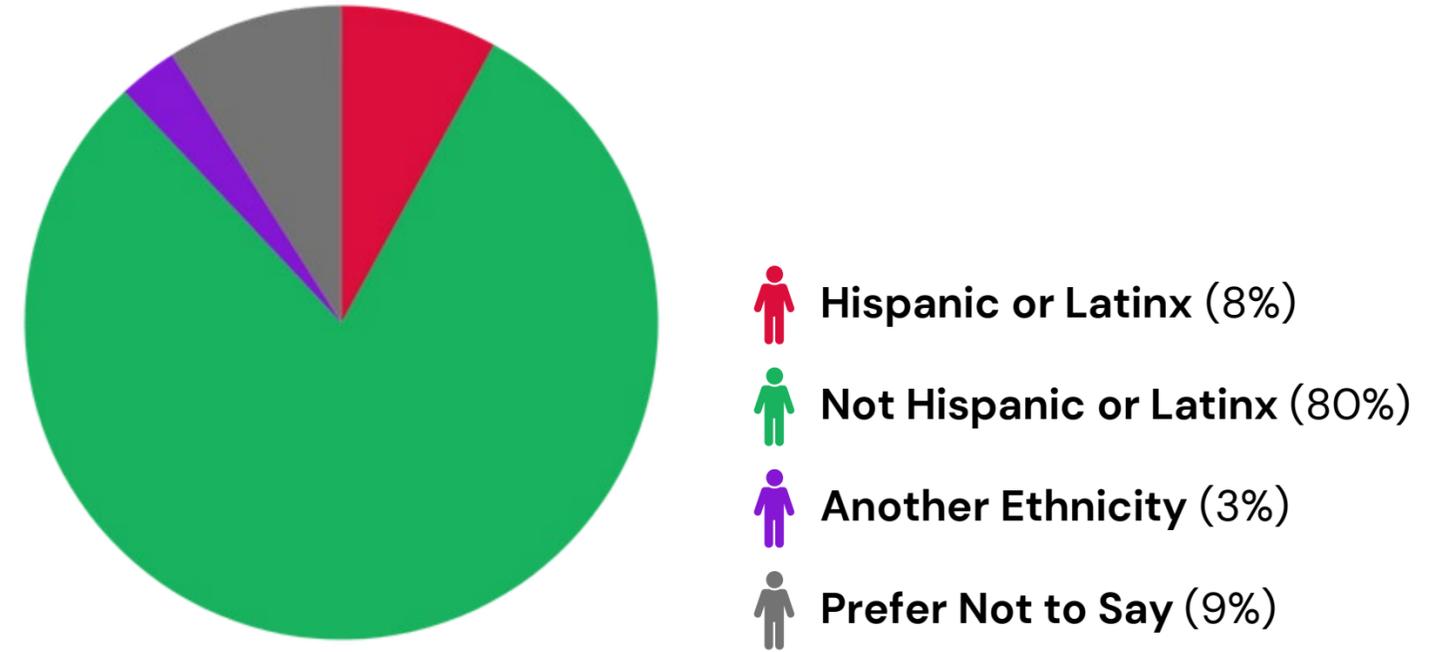
-  Heterosexual (84%)
-  Homosexual (2%)
-  Bisexual (3%)
-  Pansexual (1%)
-  Asexual (1%)
-  Prefer Not to Say (9%)



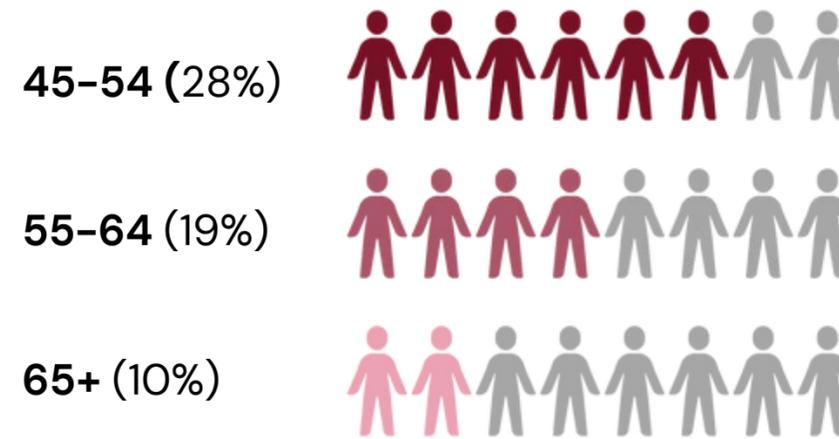
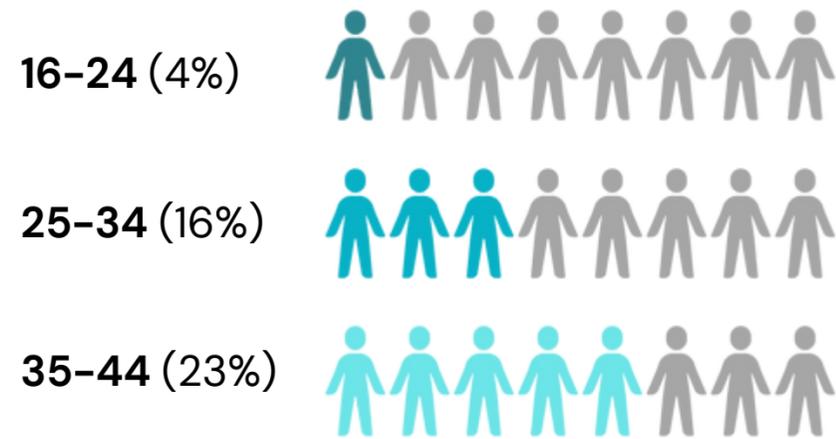
# RACE



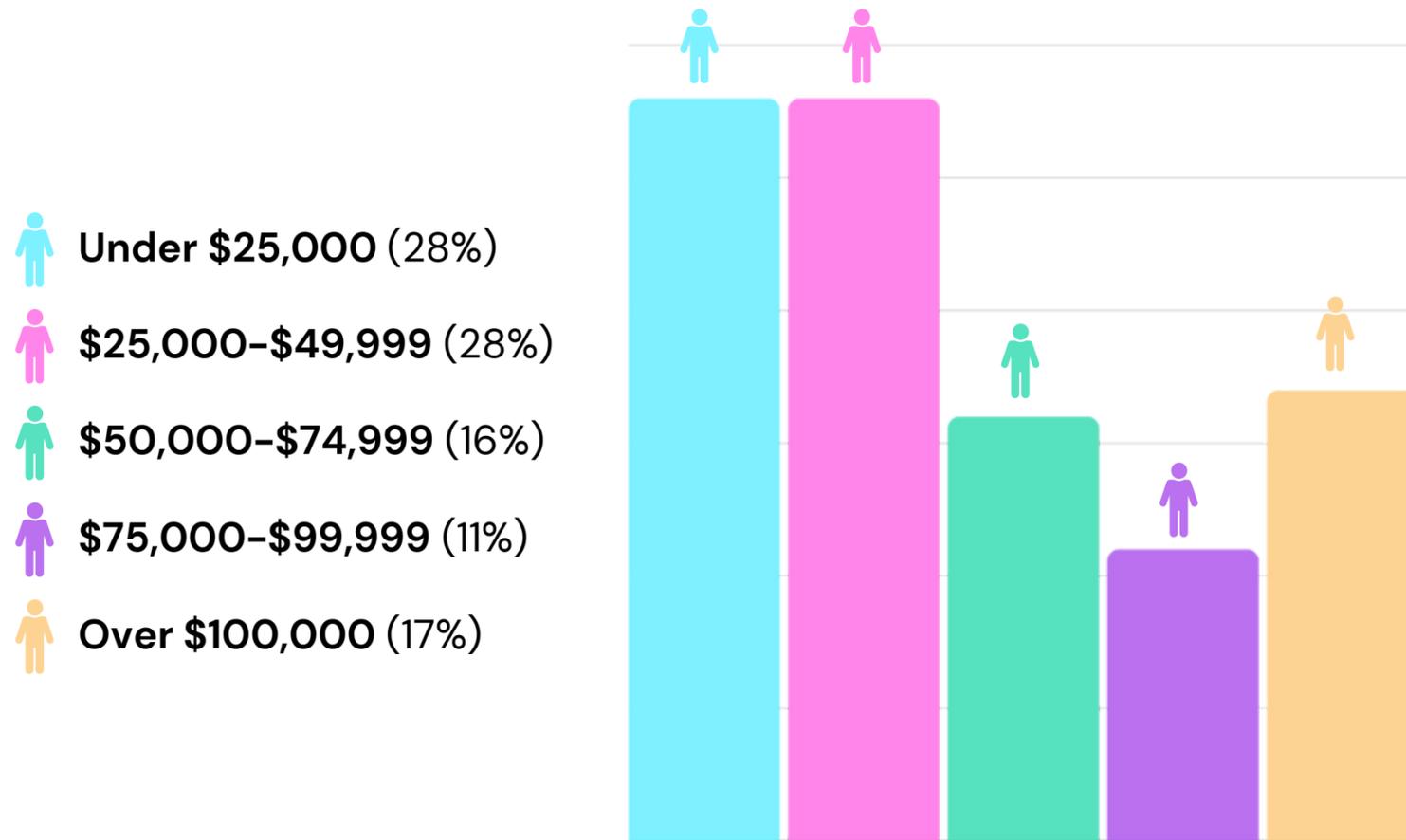
# ETHNICITY



# AGE

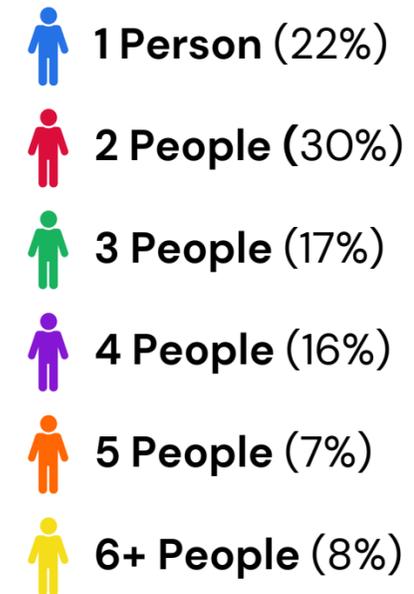


## HOUSEHOLD INCOME



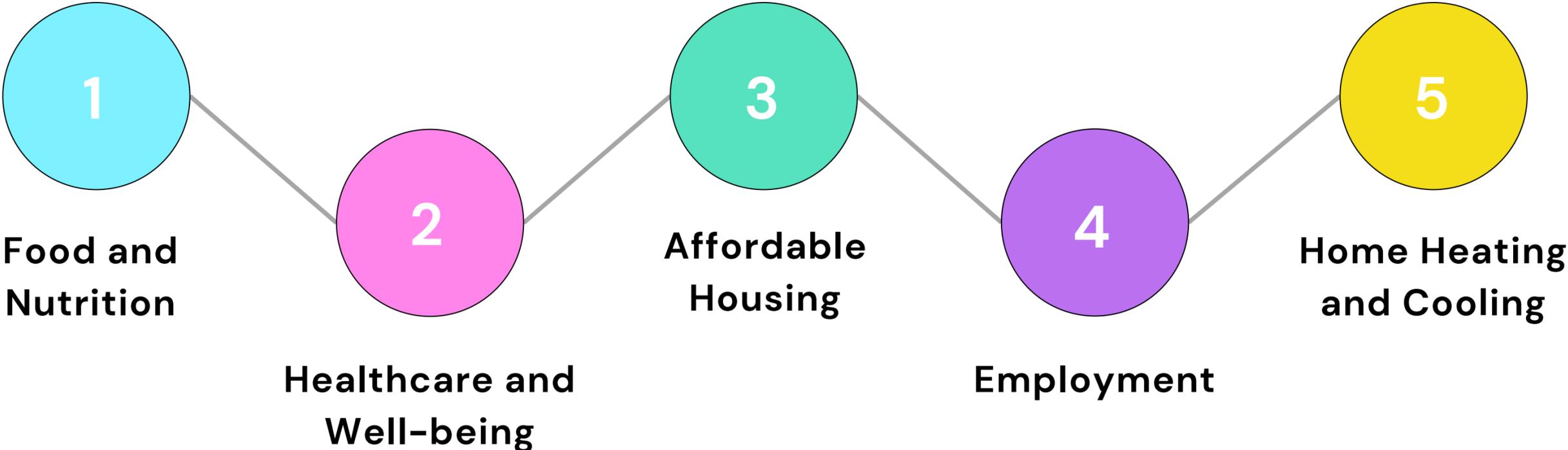
\*94% of SCA Client Households who participated in the survey have an annual income of less than \$50,000  
**63% are under \$25,000**

## HOUSEHOLD SIZE

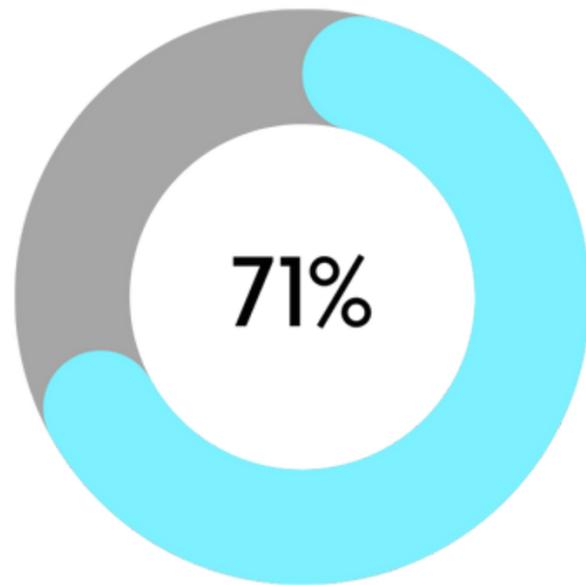


# SURVEY RESULTS

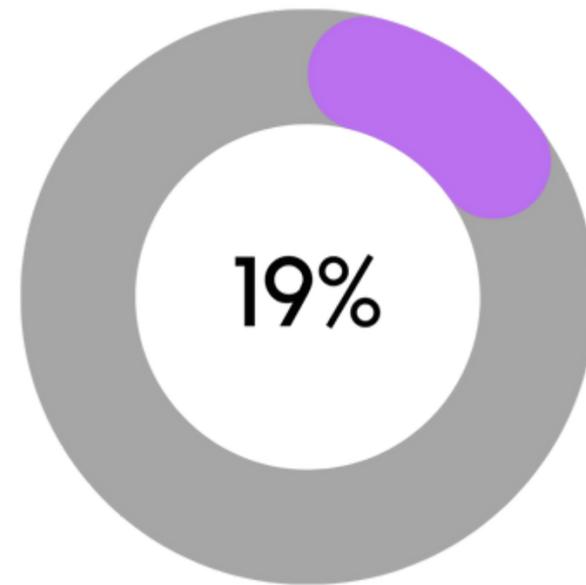
Top Five (5) Issues Participants Identified as Important to Their Households



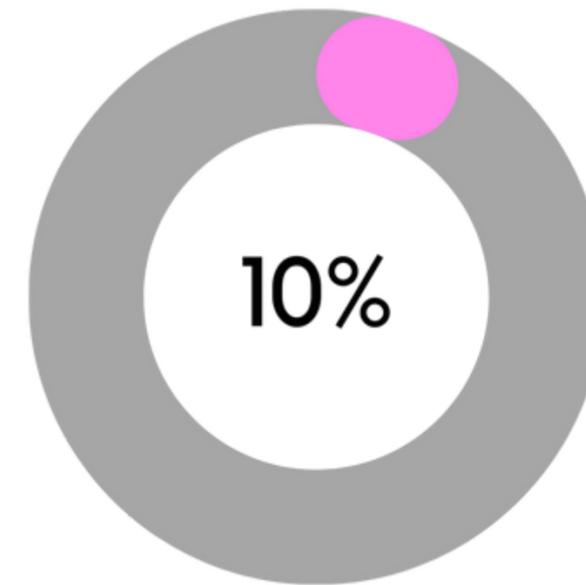
# EMPLOYMENT INSIGHTS



EMPLOYED



UNEMPLOYED



RETIRED

## Barriers to Employment:

- Key issues include low wages, job location, and transportation
- **Disability** – 30% of client participants cited disability as a primary reason for not pursuing or accepting employment opportunities

\*SCA Clients reported nearly **40%** being employed, **39%** unemployed, and **21%** retired

# HOUSING CHALLENGES

-  54% of participants are **homeowners**
-  33% of participants are **renters**
-  7% of participants **live with family**
-  6% of participants are **homeless**



\*Clients were significantly more likely to be renters than homeowners with over 58% of clients surveyed reporting they are renters.

## Top Five (5) Housing Affordability Concerns

-  Utilities
-  Rent
-  Home Repairs
-  Heating and/or Cooling
-  Property Taxes

\*Clients' top affordability concern was rent, compared to both Providers and General Public citing home repairs as their top concern.



**1 OUT OF 17**

**Survey participants** do not feel safe or secure in their current living situation



**1 OUT OF 11**

**SCA Clients** do not feel safe or secure in their current living situation

## What would make them feel more safe?



*“Secure housing”*

*“Deadbolt on door to apartment. Security cameras in building.”*

*“Knowing that there were other homes available. There are no available homes for rent and if there are, they are asking city prices (insane amounts). I just wish we all had a shot at better housing.”*

*“Lower rent, assistance with yard work”*

*“Need more space”*

*“Knowing rent wouldn't be an issue”*

*“Safe place to park”*

*“Home security system and better locks on the doors would make me feel safer.”*

*“Security cameras and regular police patrols”*

# FOOD & NUTRITION

## Food Accessibility



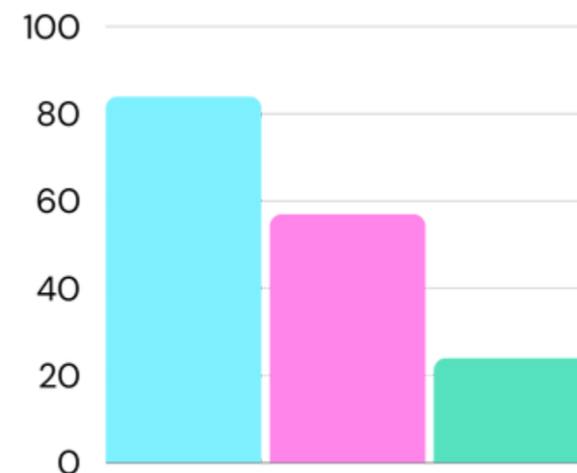
89% of participants reported the ability to access enough food for their household, including companion animals

11% face food insecurity

## How Households Decide Where to Shop for Food

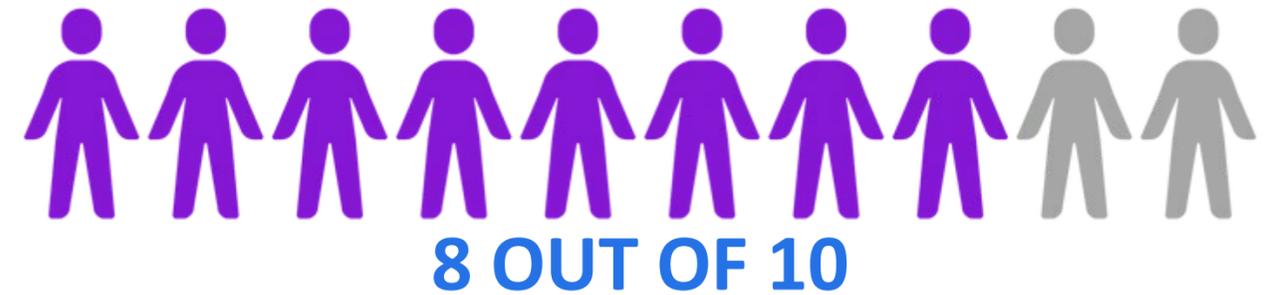
### Top Three (3) Responses:

- Cost (84%)
- Location (57%)
- Acceptance of SNAP Benefits (24%)



## The Top Three (3) Services Utilized by Participants

- 1 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- 2 Local Food Pantries/Food Banks
- 3 Free or Reduced School Lunch Program



Clients reported using local food pantries or food banks

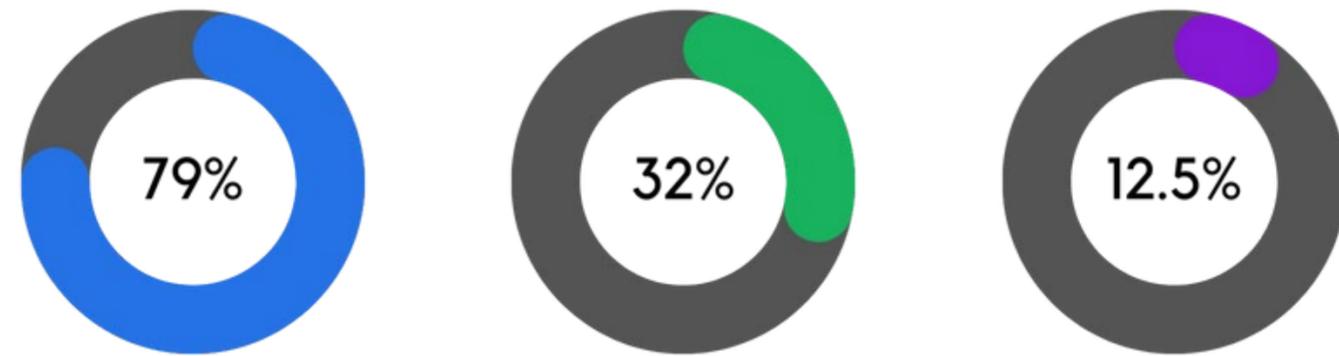


Clients reported participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

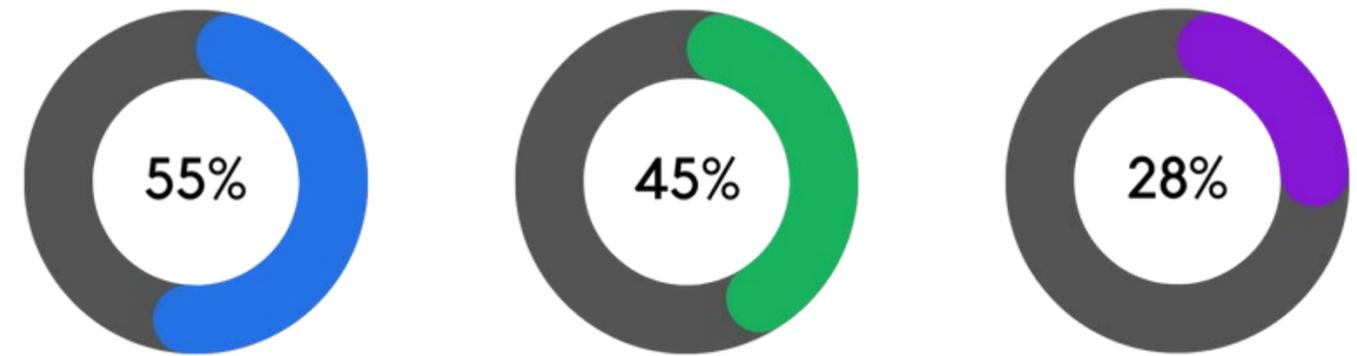
# TRANSPORTATION

## Primary Mode of Transportation Used in Households

### ALL SECTORS



### SCA CLIENTS



Personal Vehicles



Walking



Public Transit (STS)

### Challenges with Public Transit include:

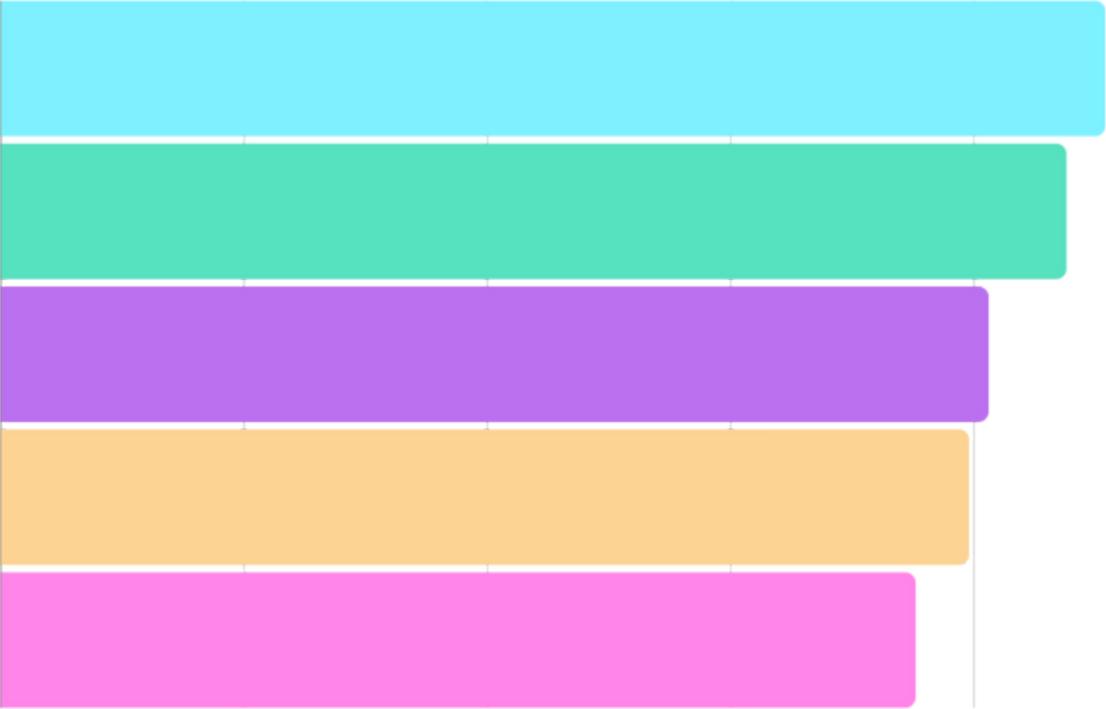
- Route Availability
- Cost

- Location of Routes
- Accessibility

# EDUCATION & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

## Key Areas of Need

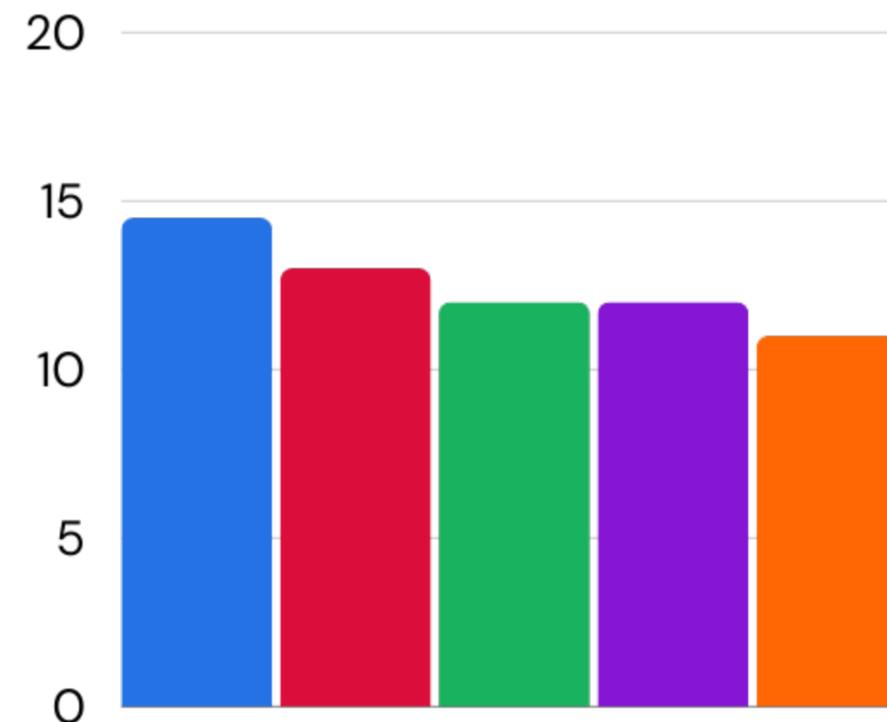
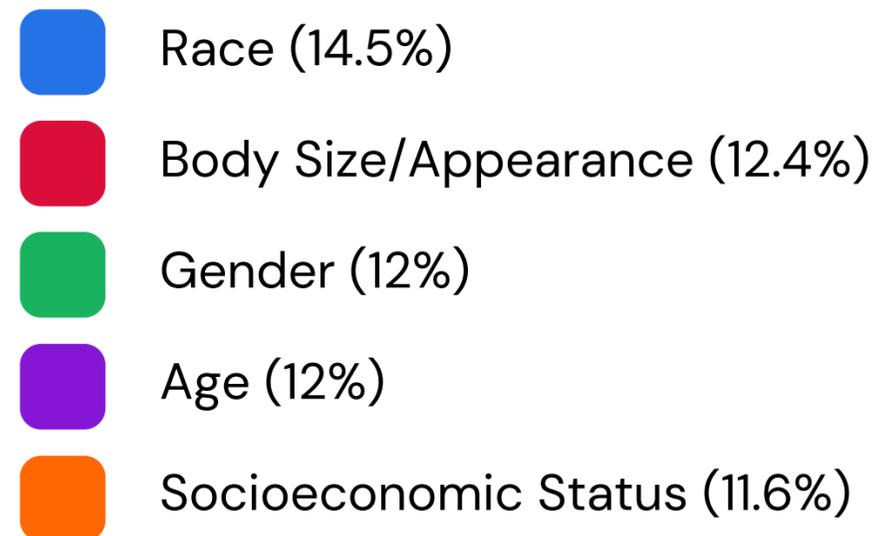
- First Aid (22.7%)
- Emergency Preparedness (21.9%)
- Financial Education (20.3%)
- Mental Health First Aid (19.9%)
- Digital Literacy (18.8%)



# COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES WITH DISCRIMINATION

Over 44% of participants reported feeling unsafe, unwelcome, or experiencing hostility or discrimination in their community or public spaces

## Top Five (5) Factors Associated with These Feelings or Experiences:



Provider Sector Discrimination:  
**Gender** (19%) cited as the number one area of discrimination.

Client Sector Discrimination:  
**Ability/Disability** (15%) cited as number one are of discrimination

# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON SAFETY & SERVICES

## Community Strengths



Crisis support awareness



Areas of the community that feel safer



Likelihood to report acts of harassment or discrimination to the authorities



Adequate support from family, friends, and community members



Feeling safe walking alone day or night

## Opportunities for Improvement



Affordable housing options



Adequate support services for those facing homelessness



Sufficient support services for the reentry population



Cultural diversity celebrated and valued in the community



Sufficient job opportunities in the community

# ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

"We need to be more inclusive with accepting members in our community."

"The services are out there but for my community, you have to travel because we are so rural. They are not easily accessible."

"Affordable housing options for all income levels"

"Safe clean up should be a priority."

"more parks and places to go"

"more opportunities for housing and youth"

"more resources for individuals experiencing mental illness and substance use disorders"

more help finding jobs with a criminal background.

"education/training for staff at preschools/schools locally in regard to children with special needs"

"Why big country concerts at 4th of July and beer, beer, beer? There are people who are craving actual intelligent, insightful, and self-developmental events."

"need for translation services and bilingual/multilingual employees within human services."

"Need more education on the use of Narcan and why people should have it"

"I would like to see more people volunteering and helping the community."

"Working people being able to afford essentials, pay bills, child care, and work at the same time"

"Homeless people need shelters"

"Our children matter! They need more education programs and high quality childcare."

"We need more resources for teenagers, especially during evenings and weekends."

# ACTION STEPS FOR IMPROVEMENT

## Top Five (5) Priority Areas

- 1 Provide Housing for Homeless Individuals & Families
- 2 Expand Access to Dental Services
- 3 Renovate or Rehabilitate Older or Abandoned Homes
- 4 Make the Community Safer, More Inclusive, and More Welcoming for All Residents
- 5 Improve Public Transportation to Rural Areas

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1

## **Provide Housing for Homeless Individuals & Families**

- Develop a comprehensive housing strategy
- Collaborate with local governments and other stakeholders to pool resources and expertise
- Increase funding and resources
- Supportive Services

2

## **Access to Dental Services**

- Increase dental clinics
- Mobile Dental Units
- Dental Health Education
- Partnerships with dental schools

3

## **Renovate or Rehabilitate Older or Abandoned Homes**

- Expand existing housing rehab programs
- Public-private partnerships to invest in rehab of blighted properties
- Community Revitalization to focus on entire neighborhoods

4

## **Make the Community Safer, More Inclusive, and More Welcoming for All Residents**

- Community Policing initiatives
- Anti-discrimination policies
- Inclusive community programs
- Safety audits and improvements

5

## **Improve Public Transportation**

- Expand transit routes
- Transportation vouchers
- Community-based transportation programs

# SCA STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

## **Vision of a Community Without Poverty**

- Economic Prosperity
- Community Well-being
- Social Equality and Inclusivity
- Accessibility and Transportation

## **Factors Perpetuating Poverty**

- Structural and Systemic Issues
- Economic Challenges
- Behavioral and Personal Factors
- Generational and Familial Dynamics
- Health and Well-being
- Employment Issues
- Other Barriers

## **Greatest Needs to Reduce Poverty and Aid Self-Sufficiency**

- Economic Stability and Employment
- Social Services and Support
- Support for Specific Populations

## **Agency Needs to Empower Residents**

- Top Priority:
  - Increased Funding
- High Priority:
  - More Outreach Opportunities
  - Long-term Programming
  - Public Awareness
- Medium Priority
  - Employment Training
  - Rental Assistance
  - Access to Nutritional Food
  - Increased Staffing

## **Steps for Reducing Poverty**

- Long-term Solutions and Self-sufficiency Programming
- Increased Funding and Capacity
- Enhanced Client Engagement and Accountability
- Expanded Access and Service Delivery
- Support Employment and Business Development
- Community and Client Resources
- Advocacy and Awareness
- Innovation and Adaptation

# CONCLUSION

## **Summary:**

The CNA highlights the need for improved access to housing, food, transportation, employment, and healthcare in Schuylkill County.

## **Next Steps:**

SCA will begin the process of developing a 3-year strategic plan.

# THANK YOU

[www.schuylkillcommunityaction.com](http://www.schuylkillcommunityaction.com)

