

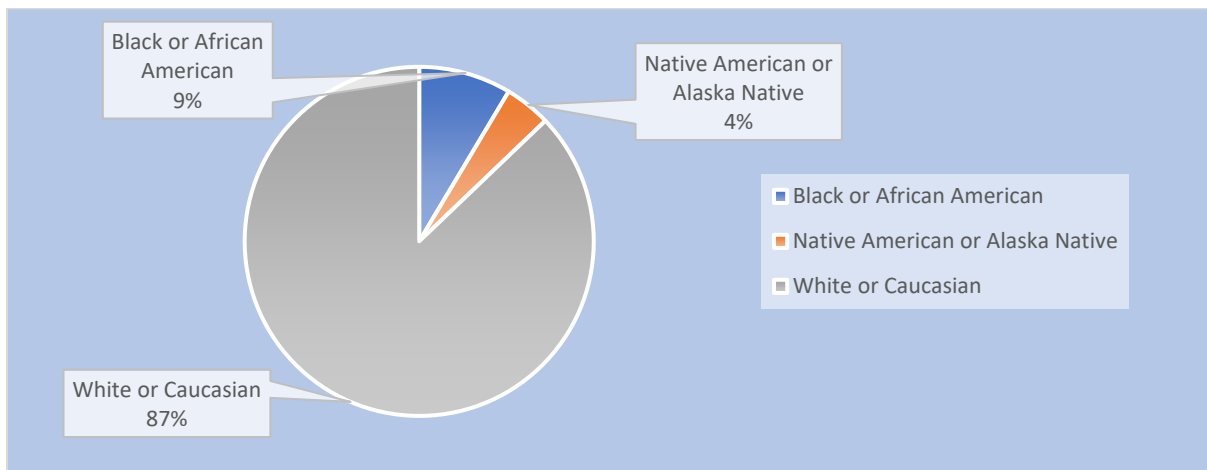
Community Needs Assessment 2024 - Provider Responses

Schuylkill Community Action conducted a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment utilizing surveys, focus groups, and public data sources to identify priority needs in the community. Survey information was collected from agency clients, human service providers, and the general public. The following section provides an analysis of the results of Schuylkill County Human Service Providers.

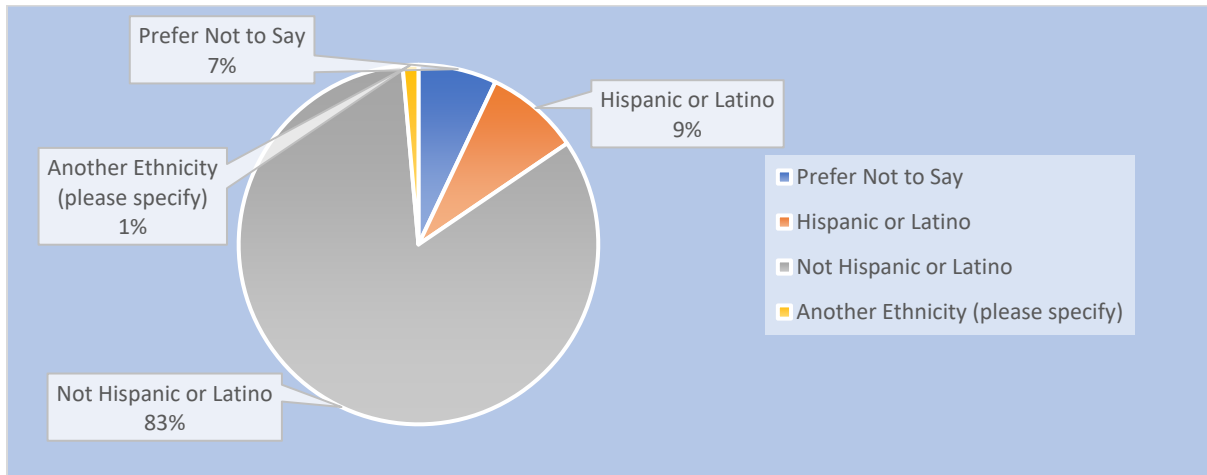
Demographics

Demographic breakdown of Schuylkill County service providers that participated in the Community Needs Assessment Survey is listed below. Demographics collected include race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, household income, and household size.

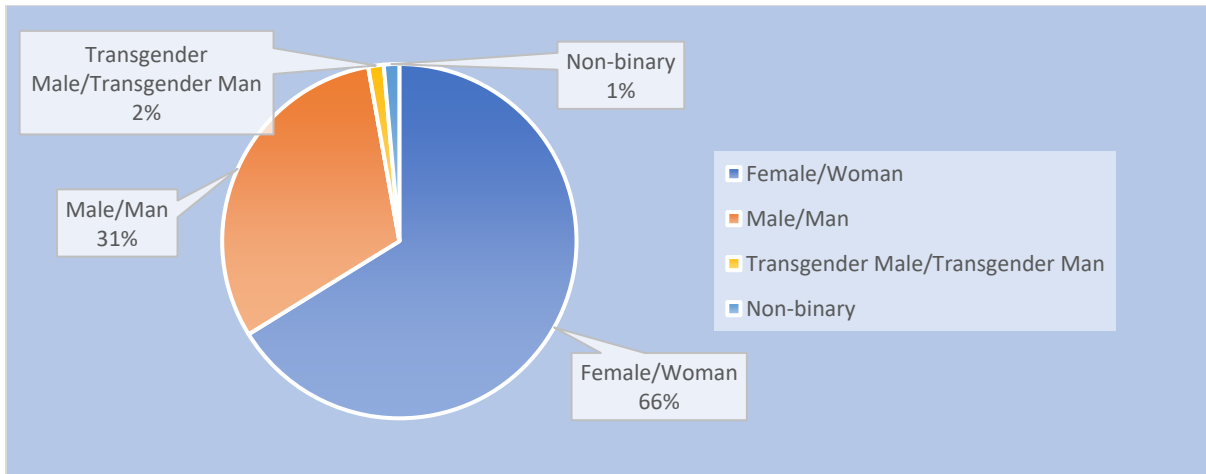
Race



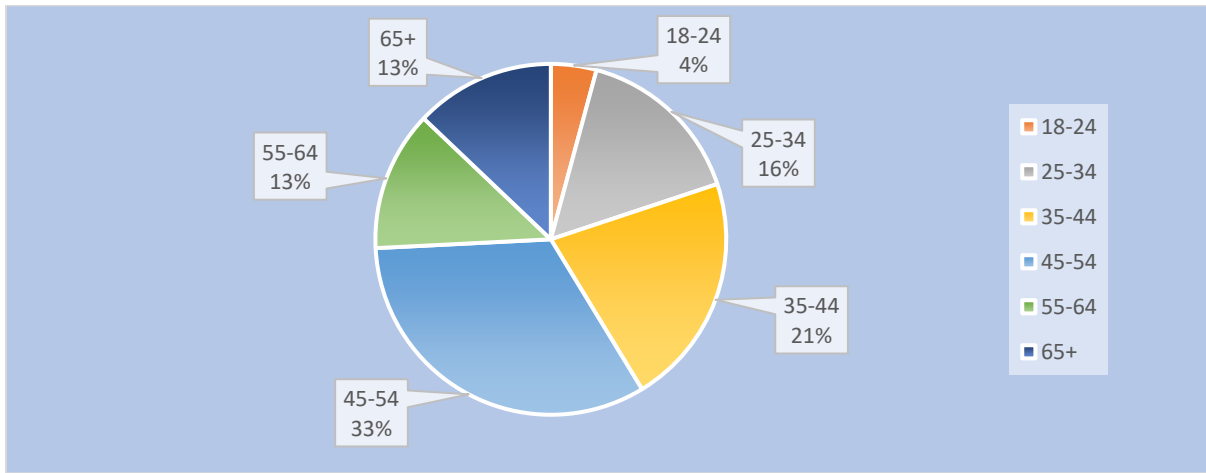
Ethnicity



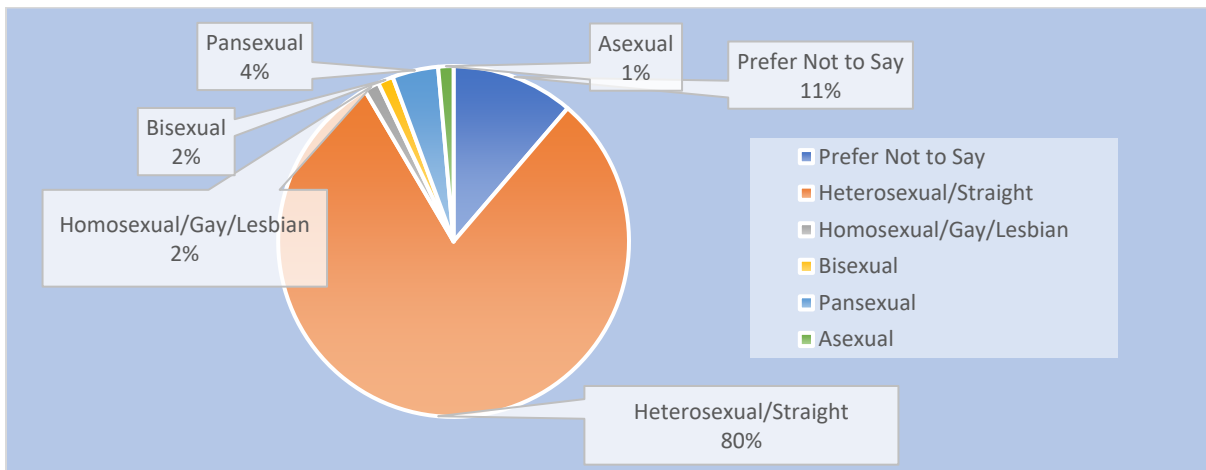
Gender



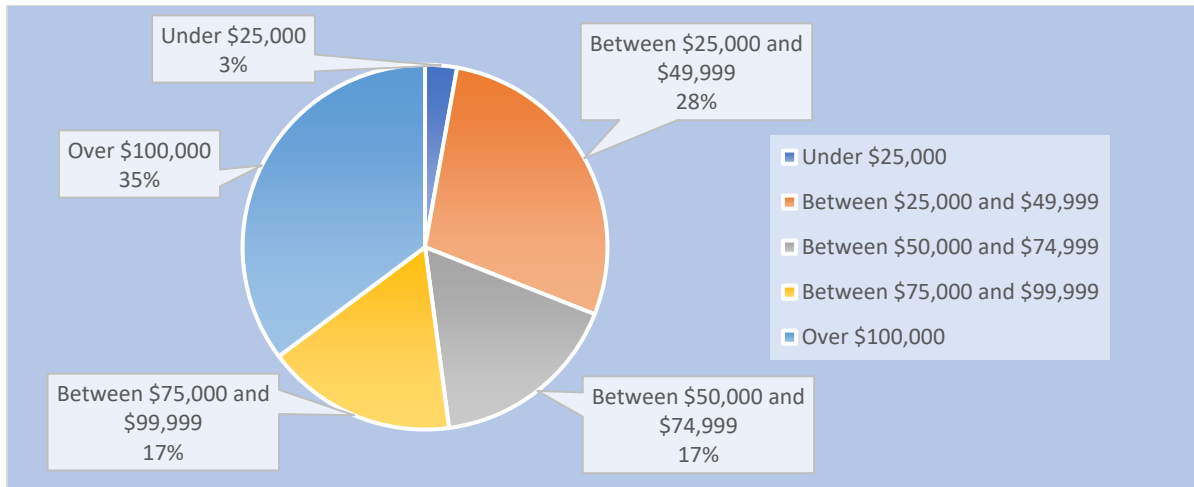
Age



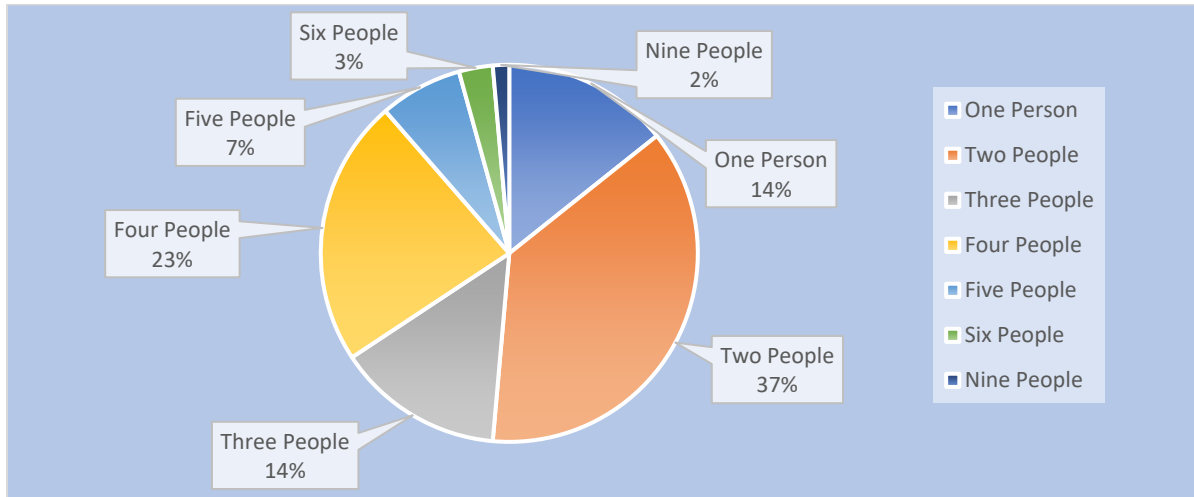
Sexual Orientation



Household Income

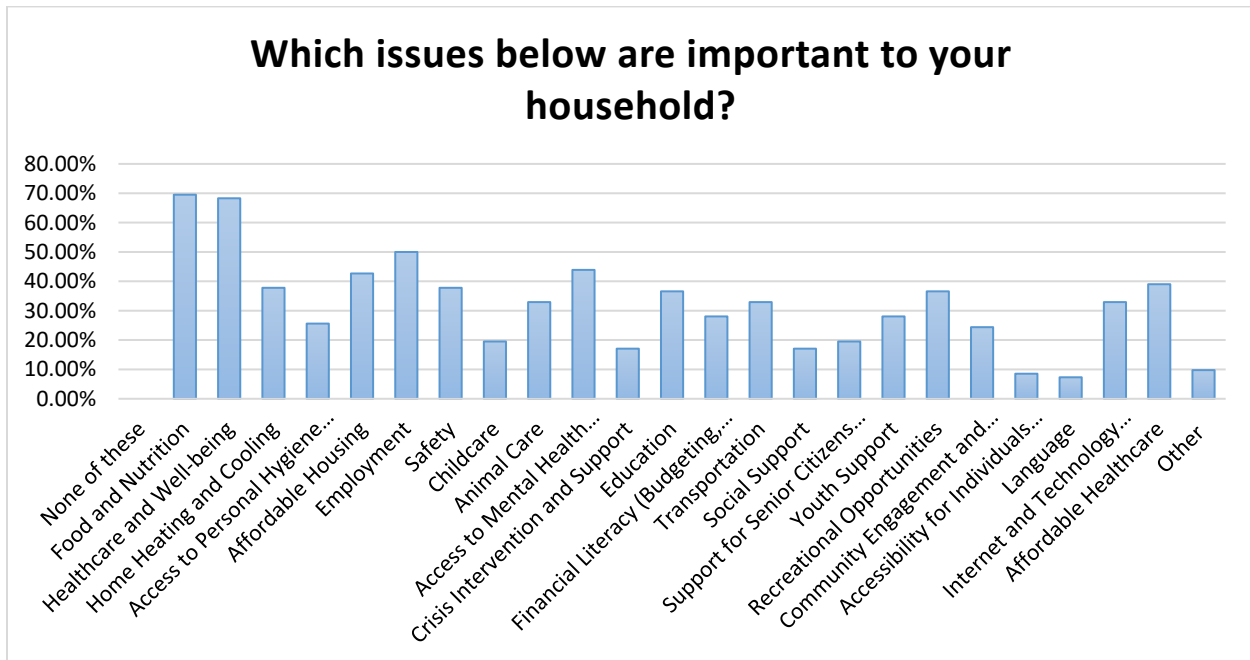


Household Size



Community Needs Assessment Survey Results

The survey received responses from 82 participants, highlighting a range of concerns and needs. Nearly 70% of participants cited Food and Nutrition as an issue of importance to their household. This was followed closely by Healthcare and Well-being (68%) and Employment (50%). A full breakdown of important issues is highlighted in the graph below:



Survey participants were then asked to identify the top four issues that were important to their household. Responses were scored on a priority ranking scale, where the top issue received 4 points, the second received 3 points, the third received 2 points, and the fourth received 1 point. This analysis identified the following as the top five most important issues for the households:

1. **Food and Nutrition**
2. **Healthcare and Well-being**
3. **Employment**
4. **Affordable Housing**
5. **Access to Mental Health Services**

Employment

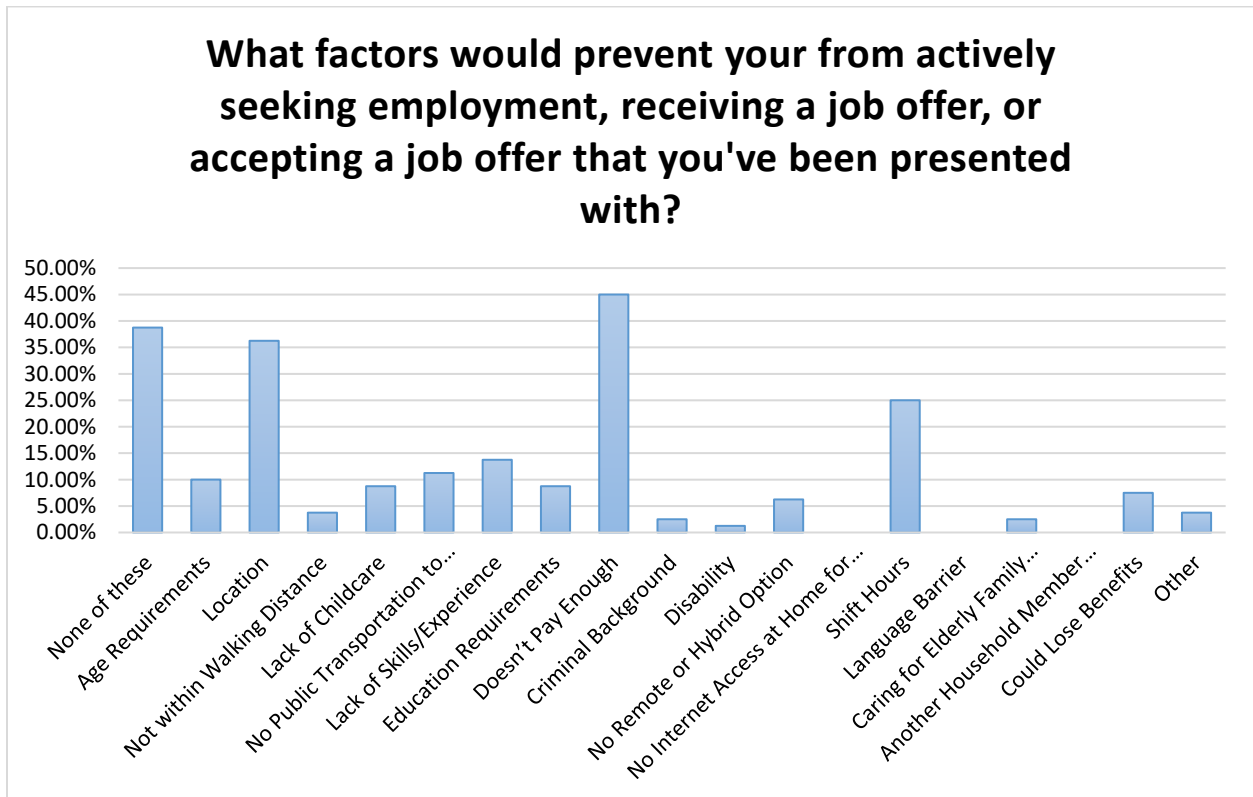
The next section of the 2024 Community Needs Assessment focused on employment. Over 93% of participants surveyed were employed with an additional 5% reporting they are retired and just over 1% citing not being employed.

The survey also explored factors that could prevent individuals from seeking or accepting job offers. The most significant barriers identified were:

1. **Doesn't Pay Enough:** 45% of participants cited inadequate pay as a primary reason for not pursuing or accepting employment opportunities.

2. **Location:** 36% of participants indicated that job location was a significant obstacle, making it difficult to accept employment.
3. **Shift Hours:** 25% of participants reported that inconvenient shift hours prevented them from seeking or accepting job offers.
4. **Lack of Skill/Experience:** 14% of participants that inexperience and lack of required skills would prohibit them from obtaining or pursuing jobs.
5. **No Public Transportation to Location:** 11% of participants reported that a lack of public transportation to employer locations would make it difficult to accept employment.

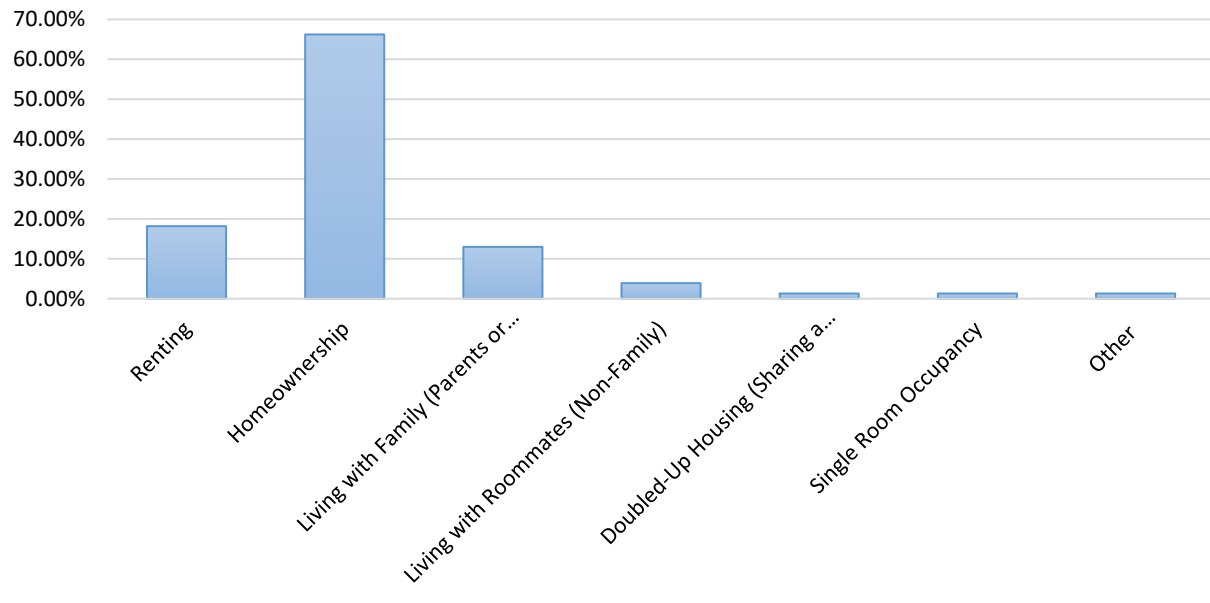
The table below represents the different barriers to employment identified by survey participants:



Housing

Survey participants were asked questions regarding housing. The first question asked participants about their current living arrangements. Over 66% of participants identified home ownership as their current living situation. 18% of participants identified they are currently living in rental properties. Nearly 17% identified they are currently living with family or roommates. A breakdown of their responses is below:

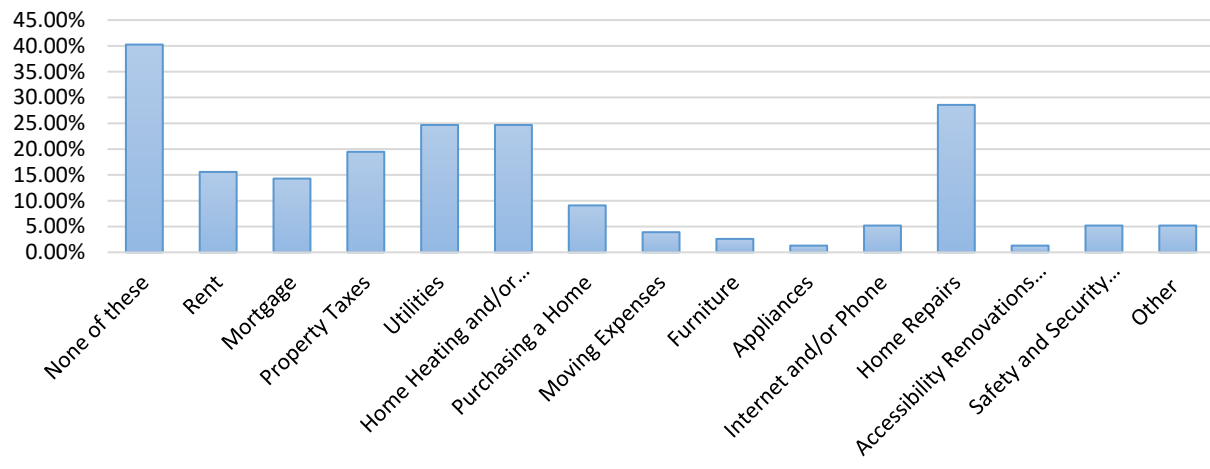
What is your current living situation?



92% of participants surveyed responded that they felt safe in their current living situation with the remaining 8% stating they felt unsafe. Those that felt unsafe used open-ended responses to highlight some actions that would make them feel safer. Actions cited include secured buildings, installation of home security systems, more regular police presence, and assisting homeless individuals and individuals suffering from substance use disorders with accessing supportive services, thereby helping the individual and community at large.

Survey participants were then questioned on housing needs that their households have struggled to afford financially. While just over 40% of participants surveyed reported no struggles, the majority faced some sort of financial burden with housing related needs.

Which of the following housing needs has your household faced and struggled to afford financially?



Survey participants were then asked to identify the top three needs that are most difficult to afford for their household. Responses were scored on a priority ranking scale, where the top need received 3 points, the second received 2 points, and the third received 1 point. The top five challenges are ranked below:

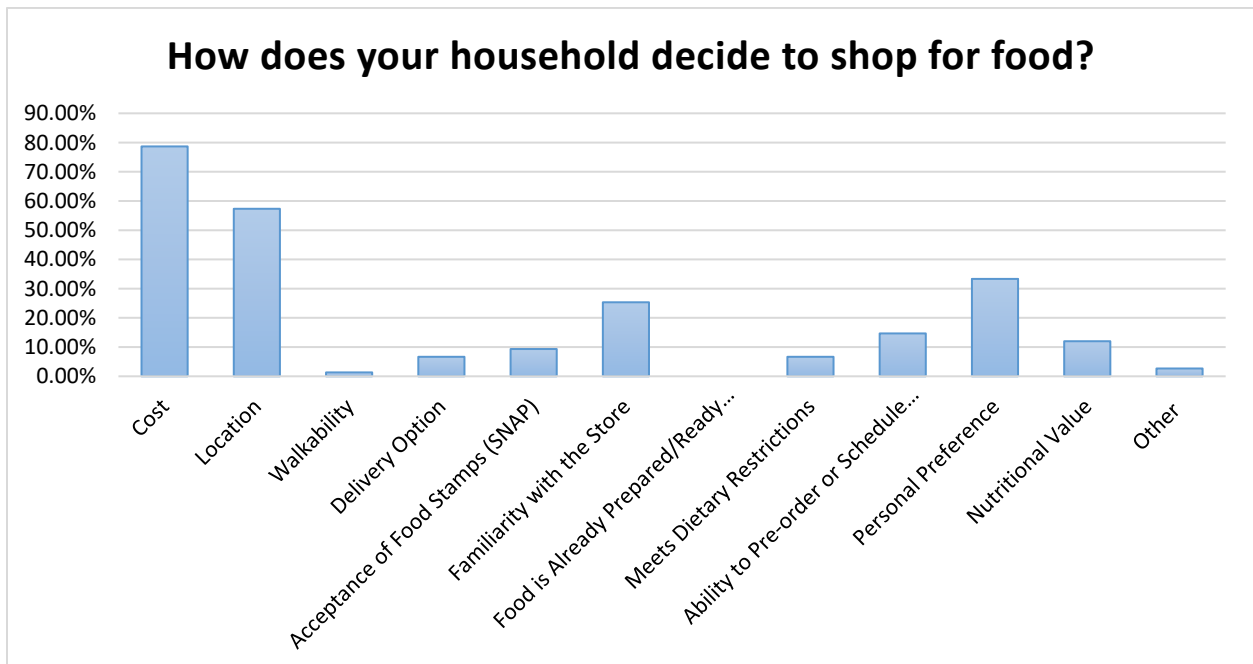
1. **Home Repairs**
2. **Home Heating and/or Cooling (tied)**
Property Taxes (tied)
3. **Utilities**
4. **Rent**
5. **Mortgage**

To close out the housing section of the survey, participants were asked about reliable internet access in their homes. 86% reported having reliable internet access. Nearly 12% reported having internet access that is unreliable, with the remaining 2% reporting they do not have internet. These findings underscore that while a significant majority enjoy consistent connectivity, a notable minority experience intermittent or no access to the internet, highlighting potential disparities in digital infrastructure and access across surveyed households.

Food and Nutrition

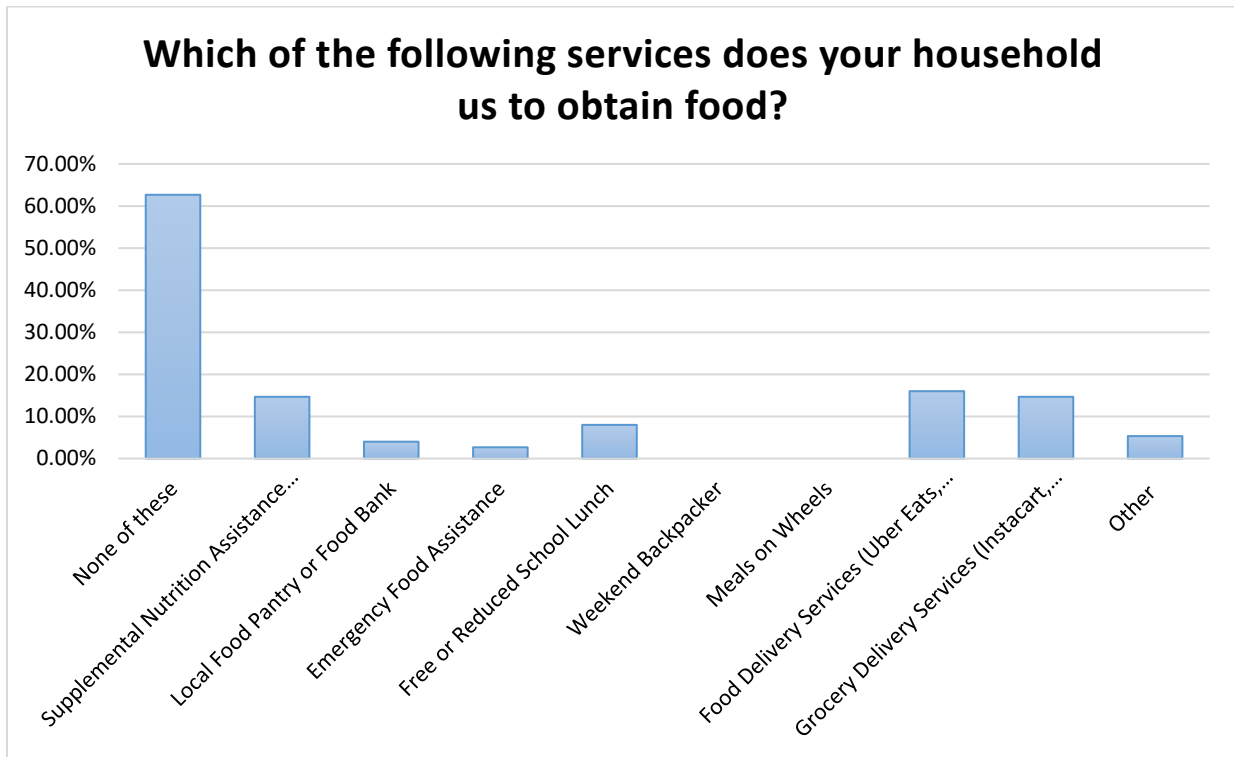
The next section of the survey asked questions around food and nutrition. 96% of participants surveyed reported having enough food to feed their entire household on a daily basis. 4% responded that they did not have enough food. Food insecurity can cause detrimental effects to an individual and families health and well-being.

Participants were surveyed on how their household decides where to shop for food. Response information showed that cost (80%), location (57%), and personal preference (33%) were the top three reasons. A complete breakdown of the responses is summarized in the below graph:



The next question posed regarding food was in reference to companion animals. 73% of participants felt they had enough food to provide to their animals on a daily basis, while 3% of participants stated they do not have enough food to provide. 24% of participants responded they did not have a companion animal in their home.

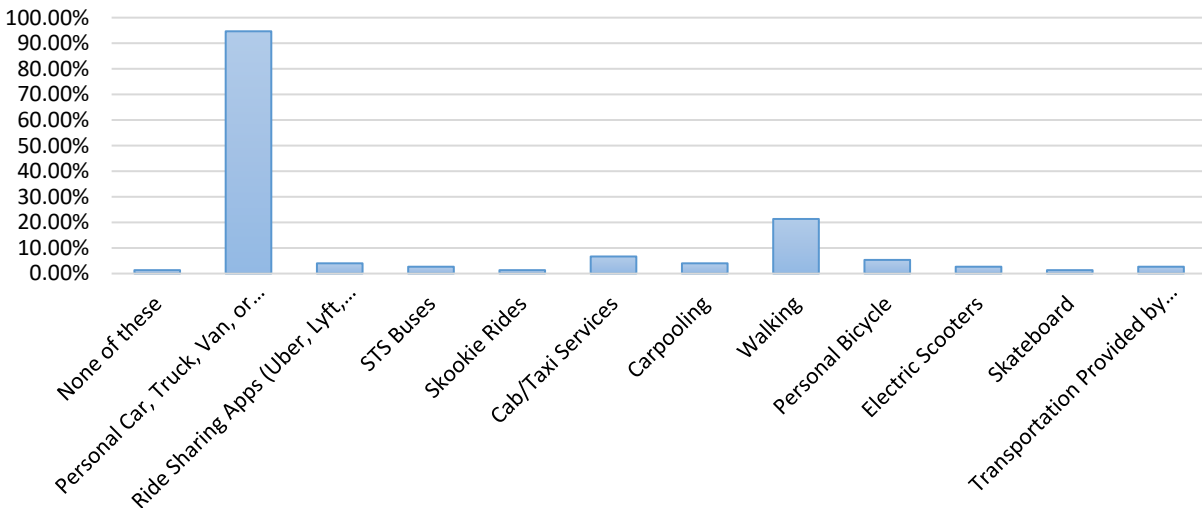
The final question inquired about food services that participant households use to obtain food. Nearly 63% reported not using any of the services listed, 16% reported using food delivery services such as Uber Eats or DoorDash, 15% said they participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and 15% said they utilize grocery delivery services such as Instacart or HelloFresh.



Transportation

Survey participants were questioned about the different types of transportation utilized to get to work, school, or take care of important tasks. An overwhelming majority of participants, 95%, utilize their own personal vehicle to meet their transportation needs. Walking was cited as the second most popular mode of transportation at 21%.

Please CHECK ALL of the transportation types listed below that members of your household currently use to get to work, school, or take care of important tasks.



Participants were then asked about whether public transportation met their household's needs. 76% of participants did not need or utilize public transportation. Of the remaining 24% of participants, 72% felt that public transportation was inadequate for the needs of their household.

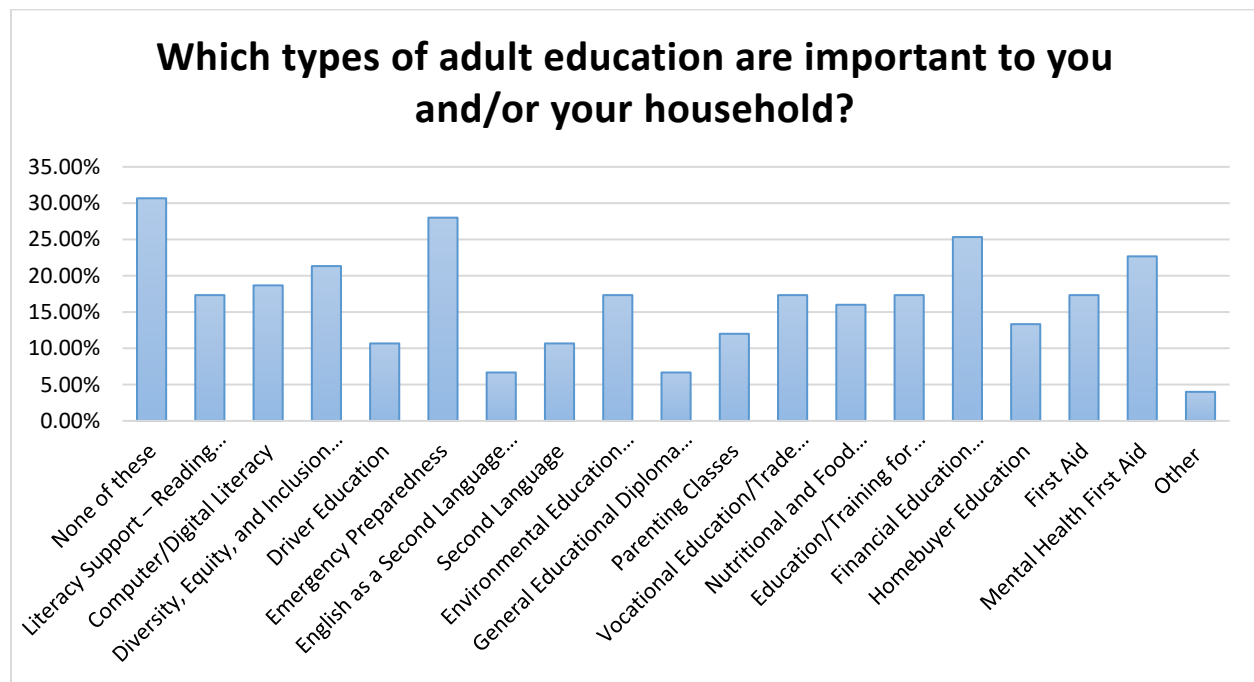
The survey participants identified several specific aspects of public transportation that do not meet their needs via open-ended responses. Key issues included:

1. **Lack of Overnight Services:** Those with overnight jobs reported having no access to public transportation during their work hours.
2. **Financial Barriers:** Some participants mentioned they did not have the money to afford public transportation fares.
3. **Limited Hours of Operation:** There were complaints about the restricted hours during which public transportation operates.
4. **Geographical Limitations:** The public transportation network was criticized for not covering enough areas, particularly for not running near some people's homes during their work hours.
5. **Bus Stop Schedules:** Issues with the clarity and accuracy of bus stop schedules were noted.
6. **Information Accessibility:** A clearer understanding of bus times and stops was requested, along with a better-designed app or website for the transportation service (STS).
7. **Real-Time Tracking:** Participants expressed a need for the ability to see where buses are in real time.
8. **Service Frequency and Availability:** There was a call for more frequent stops, extended evening hours, and increased availability of buses to specific locations, such as the Highridge Business Park.

These insights highlight the need for improvements in service hours, coverage areas, financial accessibility, schedule clarity, digital tools, and real-time tracking to better meet the needs of the community.

Education

Participants were asked to identify the types of adult education that are important to themselves and their households. A breakdown of adult education needs is summarized in the graph below:



Nearly 31% of participants stated they did not have a need for any of the types of education. Others identified a variety of adult education topics that are important to them. The top three priority adult education topics are:

1. **Emergency Preparedness**
2. **Financial Education**
3. **Mental Health First Aid**

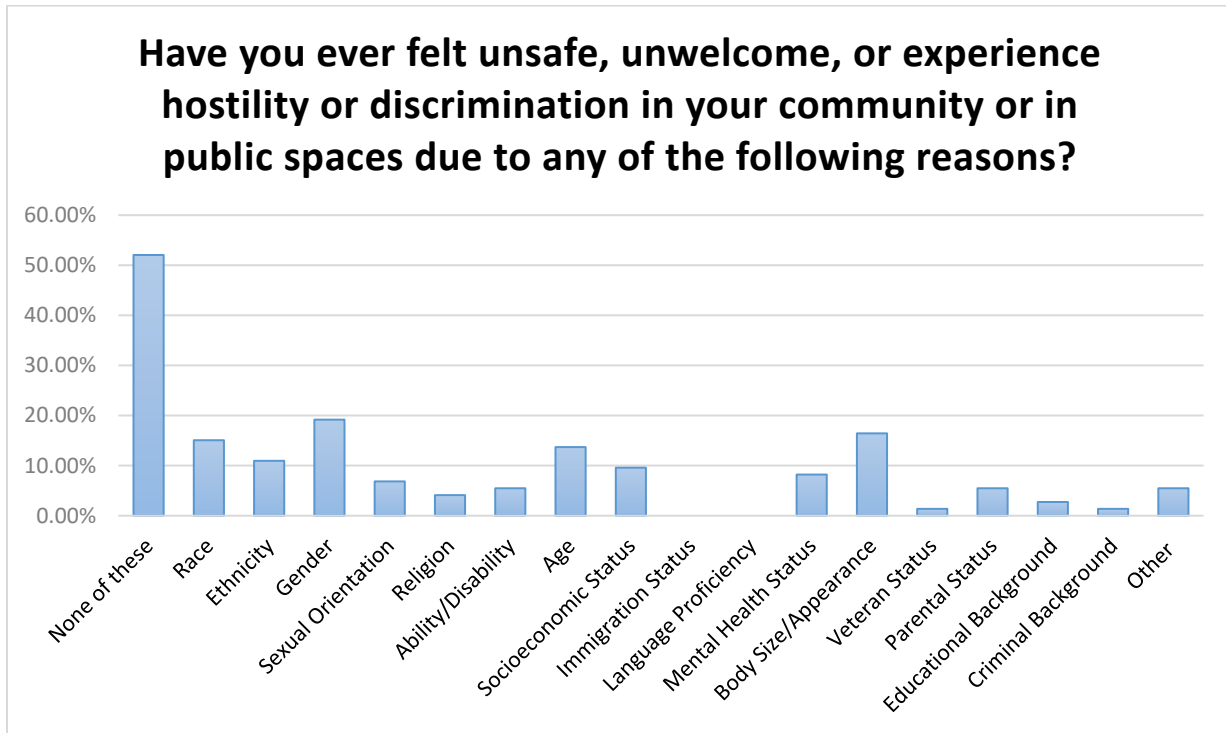
Thoughts and Experiences

Participants were questioned on whether they felt unsafe, unwelcomed or experienced hostility or discrimination in their community. A significant portion of participants (52%) reported that they have never felt unsafe, unwelcome, or experienced hostility or discrimination in their community or public spaces due to any of the factors listed. This indicates a slight majority perception of overall safety and acceptance within the community.

Among those who reported feeling unsafe or experiencing discrimination, the most commonly cited factors include gender (19%), body size/appearance (16%), race (15%), age (14%), and ethnicity (11%). Other notable responses include socioeconomic status (10%) and mental health status (8%). These findings highlight various dimensions of diversity and identity that can impact individuals' experiences

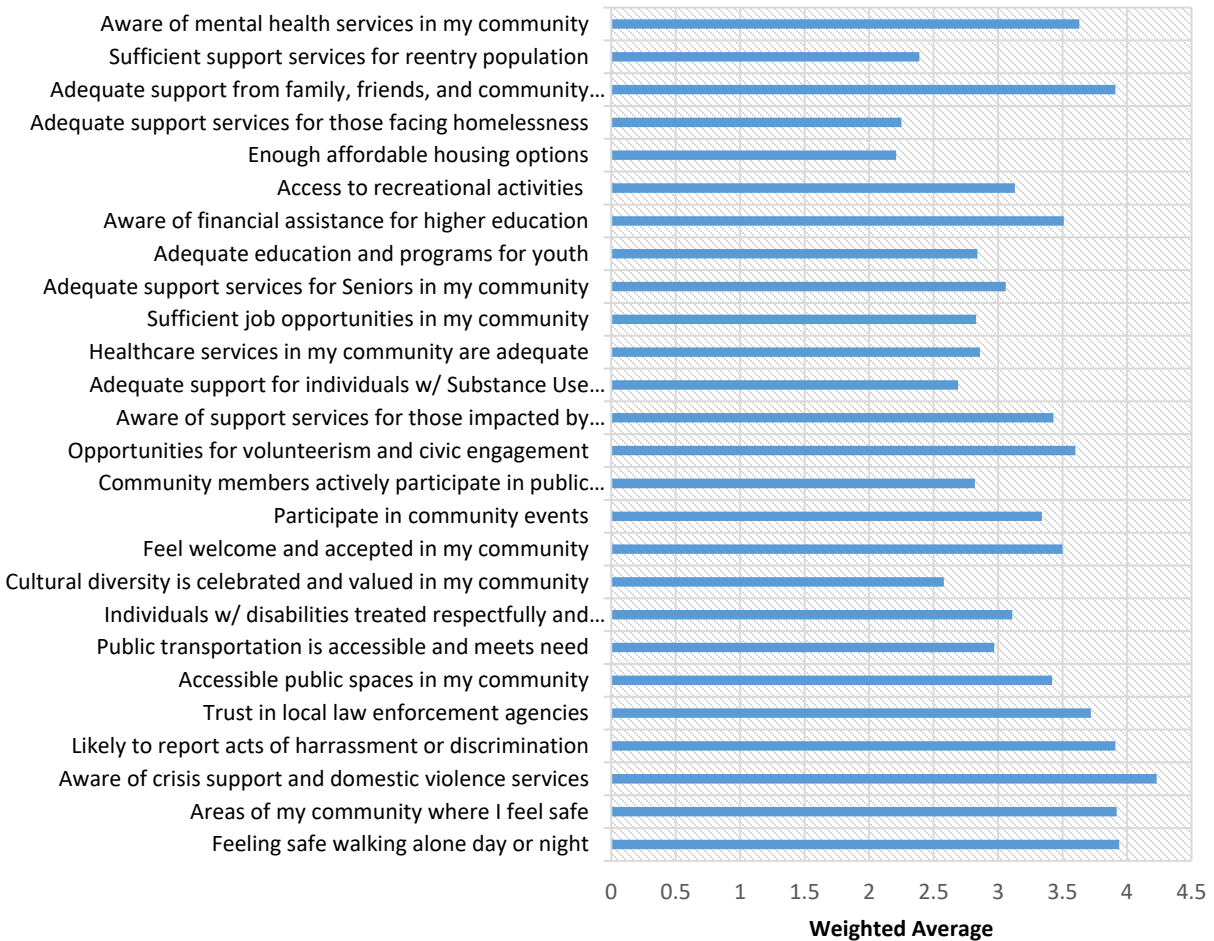
within the community, underscoring the need for expanded Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) education in our community.

A breakdown of the responses is below:



Participants were then asked to share their thoughts and experiences regarding a variety of issues in their community. Participants replied on a scale of 1-5 with a score of 5 indicating strong agreement. Any score under 3 demonstrates a disagreement to the statement. Their responses are highlighted in the following chart:

Please rate each of the following statements based on your level of agreement or disagreement. Choose the option that best reflects your thoughts and experiences.



The higher the score, the more agreement that the opportunities, services, or actions are adequate in our community. Below are the top five areas of strength in our community according to surveyed Human Service Providers in Schuylkill County:

1. **Awareness of crisis support services for victims of crime, domestic violence, sexual assault, etc., in the community**
2. **Feeling safe walking alone in their neighborhood during the day and night**
3. **There are areas in the community where people feel safer or more welcome than others**
4. **Feeling that there is adequate support from family, friends, and/or community members**
5. **Individuals who experience or witness harassment or discrimination in the community are likely to report it to authorities or organizations**

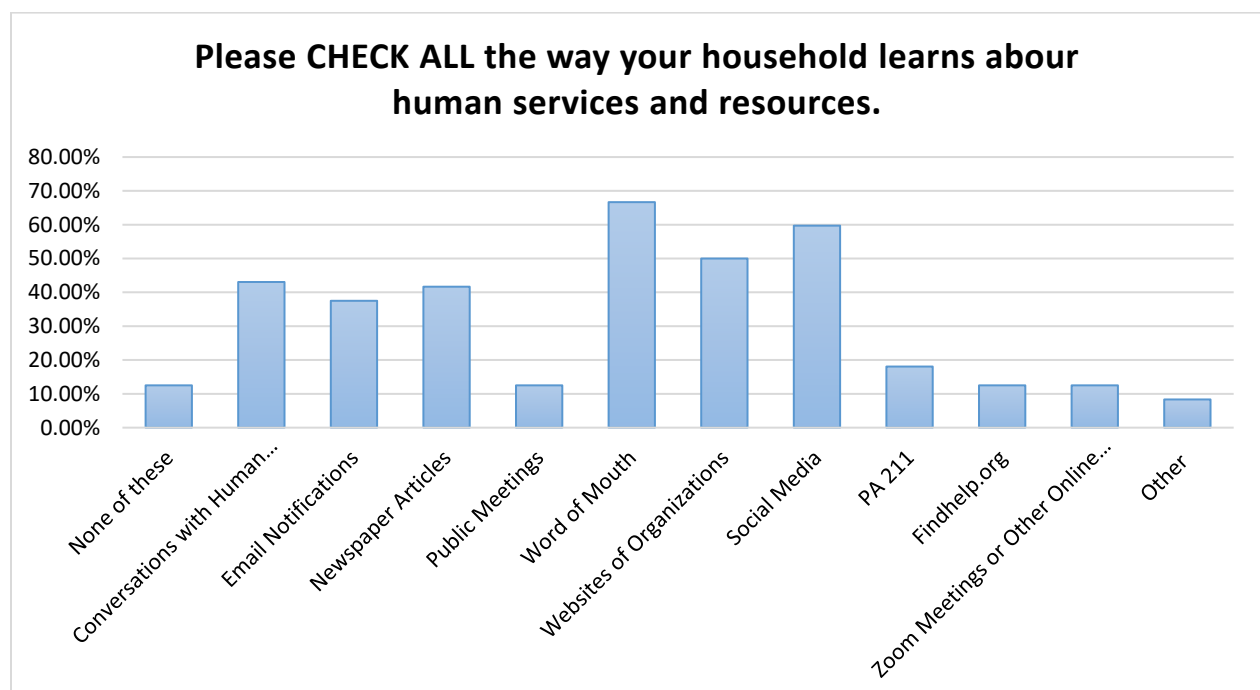
Conversely, the topics scoring the lowest represent areas of opportunity for improvement in the community. Below are the top five opportunities for improvement according to surveyed Human Service Providers in Schuylkill County:

1. **Feeling that there are enough affordable housing options in the community**
2. **Adequate support services for individuals facing homelessness and other emergency situations**
3. **Sufficient support services available for individuals reintegrating into the community after being incarcerated**
4. **Cultural diversity is celebrated and valued in the community**
5. **Adequate support services for individuals living with substance use disorder and/or mental illness**

The survey results emphasize the importance of addressing various factors that contribute to feelings of insecurity and discrimination in our community. While there are notable strengths in areas such as awareness of crisis support services and feelings of safety, there are significant opportunities for improvement, particularly in affordable housing, support for the homeless, reintegration services, cultural diversity, and support for individuals with substance use and mental health issues. Addressing these areas will require a concerted effort to enhance DEI education and implement targeted support services to foster a more inclusive and supportive community for all residents.

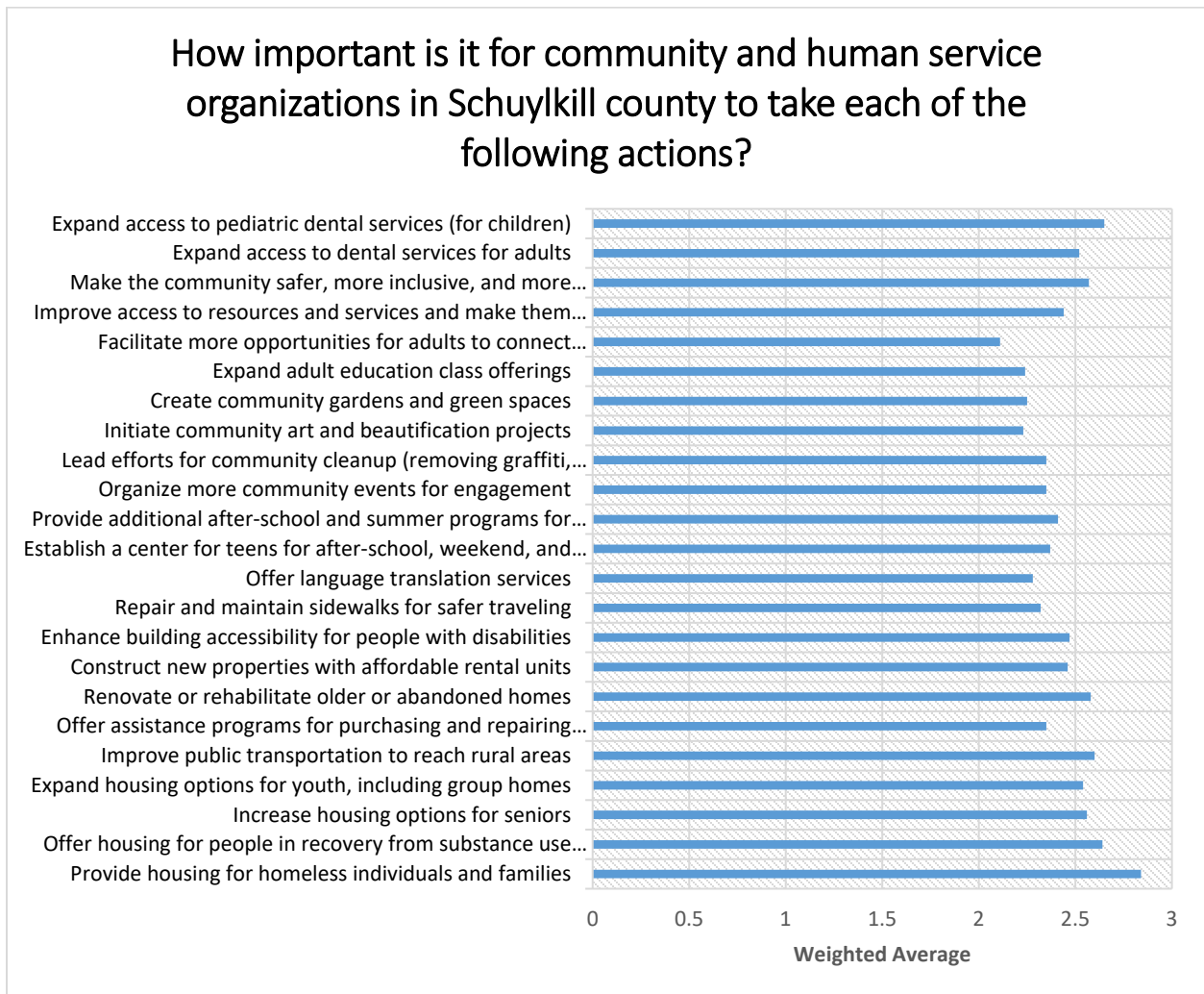
Awareness of Human Services

Participants were asked to indicate how their households learn about human services and resources. The top three methods identified were word of mouth (67%), social media (60%), and websites of organizations (50%). These insights highlight the importance of leveraging various communication channels to effectively reach and inform community members about available human services and resources. A complete breakdown of the responses is summarized in the below graph:



Action Steps

Surveyed participants were then questioned on how important it is for community and human service organizations to take specific actions. Each of the identified action steps received a weighted score above 2.0, indicating that they were all considered at least "somewhat important." Providing housing for homeless, expanding access to pediatric dental services, offering housing in sober living environments for people in recovery, improving public transportation, and renovating older or abandoned homes had the highest weighted averages noting their priority of importance.



Participants were then asked to identify their top three priority action steps to be taken from the aforementioned actions. Responses were scored on a priority ranking scale, where the top action received 3 points, the second received 2 points, and the third received 1 point. The following are the top five priority action steps to be addressed, ranked in order of priority:

- 1. Provide housing for homeless individuals and families**
- 2. Make the community safer, more inclusive, and more welcoming for all residents**
- 3. Renovate or rehabilitate older or abandoned homes**
- 4. Increase housing options for seniors**

5. Expand access to pediatric dental services

The prioritization of these action steps reflects a clear focus on addressing housing needs and enhancing community safety and inclusivity. By concentrating on these top priorities, the agency can make significant strides toward creating a more supportive, welcoming, and well-served community for all residents.

Additional Thoughts

Participants were asked to provide open-ended responses on any additional thoughts or concerns they have about the future needs or priorities of their community. A summary of those responses is outlined below:

1. **Economic and Social Support:**
 - Emphasis on the need for financial assistance, job training, and inclusion
 - Importance of affordable housing, childcare, healthcare, and addressing rising costs and inflation
 - The necessity of transportation improvements, especially in rural areas
2. **Health and Mental Health Services:**
 - More education on the use of Naloxone/Narcan and its importance
 - Need for more mental health and substance use disorder resources, including inpatient facilities and sober living environments
 - Expansion of mental health services across the county
3. **Community and Cultural Development:**
 - Advocacy for greater exposure to diversity and representation in leadership positions
 - Need for resources to combat stigma associated with substance use and mental illness
 - Development of resources and spaces for teenagers to engage in positive activities
 - Suggestions for a homeless shelter with a "housing first" approach
4. **Educational and Recreational Needs:**
 - Establishment of a teen center for social and educational support
 - More schools and educational programs for disabled individuals
 - Increased educational programs and high-quality childcare
5. **Housing and Environmental Concerns:**
 - More housing options for various groups, including seniors, disadvantaged families, and disabled families
 - Calls for the renovation and rehabilitation of older or abandoned homes
 - Focus on maintaining a clean and sustainable environment in the community
6. **Social Inclusion and Community Safety:**
 - Suggestions to make the community safer, more inclusive, and more welcoming
 - Addressing the divisiveness and negative behaviors in local social media groups
 - Emphasis on innovative and inclusive community events and activities

The responses from the Community Needs Assessment highlight a wide range of concerns and priorities for the future of Schuylkill County. Key areas of focus include improving economic and social support, expanding health and mental health services, fostering community and cultural development, addressing educational and recreational needs, enhancing housing options, and promoting social

inclusion and community safety. These insights underscore the need for comprehensive and targeted actions to address the diverse needs of the community, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment for all residents.

Conclusion

The Community Needs Assessment conducted by Schuylkill Community Action reveals a comprehensive overview of the current state of human services within Schuylkill County. The insights gained from the survey responses of 82 human service providers offer a critical perspective on the community's strengths, challenges, and priority needs.

Key Findings

- **Top Community Concerns:**
 - Food and Nutrition
 - Healthcare and Well-being
 - Employment
 - Affordable Housing
 - Access to Mental Health Services
- **Employment Barriers:**
 - Inadequate pay
 - Job location
 - Inconvenient shift hours
 - Lack of skills or experience
 - Insufficient public transportation
- **Housing Challenges:**
 - Home repairs
 - Home heating and cooling
 - Property taxes
 - Utilities
 - Rent and mortgage
- **Food Security:**
 - Majority have sufficient food daily, but a notable minority experience food insecurity.
 - Cost, location, and personal preference are the primary factors in choosing where to shop for food.
- **Transportation Issues:**
 - Heavy reliance on personal vehicles
 - Inadequate public transportation options for those who need it
- **Educational Needs:**
 - Emergency Preparedness
 - Financial Education
 - Mental Health First Aid
- **Community Safety and Inclusivity:**
 - Many feel safe and supported, yet concerns remain about discrimination, particularly based on gender, body size/appearance, and race.

- Areas of opportunity include improving affordable housing, support for the homeless, reintegration services, celebrating cultural diversity, and support services for individuals living with substance use disorder and/or mental illness.

Priority Action Steps

The community has identified the following top priorities for action:

1. Provide housing for homeless individuals and families
2. Make the community safer, more inclusive, and more welcoming for all residents
3. Renovate or rehabilitate older or abandoned homes
4. Increase housing options for seniors
5. Expand access to pediatric dental services

The findings from the Community Needs Assessment conducted by Schuylkill Community Action highlight essential areas of concern that must be addressed to enhance the well-being of Schuylkill County residents. By prioritizing housing, safety, inclusivity, and access to essential services, Schuylkill Community Action can make significant strides in meeting the needs of its residents.

Focusing on these priorities and fostering collaboration among stakeholders will allow Schuylkill Community Action to effectively respond to the identified needs. This approach requires targeted resource allocation and a commitment to advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives throughout the community. Addressing these challenges will not only improve the quality of life but also create a more supportive, engaged, and well-served community for all residents of Schuylkill County.

By concentrating on these key areas and implementing the identified action steps, Schuylkill Community Action can ensure a more robust and inclusive response to the community's needs, fostering a healthier and more resilient Schuylkill County.